

LOCUST

BY

CHUDI . C . OKOYE

WGA:1515833  
2011 (c)

Chudiokoye00@hotmail.co.uk  
Euston Road, London  
NW1-3JD  
GOD SPEED!

FADE IN:

INT. BRADFIELD DENTAL CLINIC, OPERATING ROOM - DAY

A GAPING MOUTH, tongue drooping over lower lip, saliva kept to a minimum by ejectors, steel wire fastened around teeth by latexed fingers.

RICHARD BAINES, Berkshire County's finest and only dentist, has done this procedure a million times and it shows.

He never fails to create an environment that allows parents such as MR and MRS. STEVENS to feel at ease as their dearest daughter EMILY goes under the dental knife for some braces.

Moments later, the procedure comes to an end and FLORA, his long-serving nurse, adjusts the dental chair to an upright position.

Richard moves a mirror towards Emily and by the effusive expression on her face- it's a job well done, again.

Mr and Mrs. Stevens offer concurring nods of approval: *it's wonderful, it really is.....etc*

Flora puts away the surgical tools whilst Richard freshens up at a nearby sink.

He removes his surgical mask to reveal a face disloyal to his age of 54, save for the greying moustache that lends him a disarming if not slightly comical look.

MR. STEVENS

(to Richard)

Thanks Richard, we tried telling her there was nothing to worry about.

RICHARD

(to Emily)

And you didn't believe them?

Emily looks away timidly.

MRS. STEVENS

Wasn't she a brave girl though?

RICHARD

She most definitely was, and she deserves a reward for that.

Emily smiles in anticipation as Richard takes out a fresh bag of candy from a drawer.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY  
Can I choose?

MR. STEVENS  
May I.....

MRS. STEVENS  
(scoffs)  
Oh please.

RICHARD  
Of course you may.

Emily's eyes scan the vast reservoir of candies and after what seems like forever-- she points at a pink lollipop.

Richard hands it to her.

EMILY  
(to her mum)  
Can I eat-

MRS. STEVENS  
(cutting her off)  
Only after supper dear.

Emma does as she's told and tucks the candy into her pocket.

RICHARD  
She's adorable.

INT. RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

Richard waves goodbye to the Stevens as they exit the building.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Richard, your wife left you a message.

The voice belongs to SARAH COLTS; Richards's affable receptionist.

RICHARD  
Did you tell her I was with a patient?

SARAH  
Of course I did. She just wanted me to remind you about lunch with the Golding's, before Andrew's match.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
(disappointed)  
The Golding's.....

SARAH  
She sounded rather excited, as  
always.

RICHARD  
(half-jokingly)  
Watch it!

Richard goes to leave, but turns back.

RICHARD  
I need some.....

SARAH  
(finishing his sentence)  
Red wine.....I sent Jeff to buy one  
already.

RICHARD  
Where would I be without you?

Sarah smiles.

EXT/INT. GOLDING'S RESIDENCE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

Richard is at the front door of a sprawling country house.  
He looks a little irritated, as if he's been waiting out  
here for quite some time.

He presses the door bell.

Moments later, JACK GOLDING, a balding round man in  
bifocals, answers it.

JACK  
Richie.....you alright mate?

RICHARD  
I'm good and yourself?

JACK  
Just about living.

They chuckle. Jack's restless eyes fall upon a bottle of red  
wine resting in Richard's hand and he snatches it.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Calm down. Just a little gift.

JACK  
(drooling)  
73 chateau neuf.

RICHARD  
Is that what it is?

JACK  
Reminds me of my uni days at  
Oxford.

RICHARD  
Well, I'm glad you approve.  
(beat)  
Are you going to let me in by any  
chance?

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - SAMETIME

CAROLINE BAINES (42) and CYNTHIA GOLDING (45) sit across from each other at a table in the middle of a meticulous garden.

With their impeccable posture, glistening loafers, and bright polo cardigans snuggling around their necks- the term middle-upper class might as well have been invented for them.

They are in mid-conversation about gardening when Jack saunters in with Richard.

JACK  
Look what the cat brought in.

CYNTHIA  
The busiest man in Berkshire  
county.

RICHARD  
(with affection)  
Cynthia.....

CYNTHIA  
(embracing Richard)  
You look dashing.

RICHARD  
Blame the job.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Evidently. You really do look fabulous though, doesn't he Jack?

JACK

I told him that already.

Jack uncorks the wine bottle as Richard takes a seat at the table.

CAROLINE

(to Richard)

What took you so long?

RICHARD

My patient took longer than I had anticipated.

CYNTHIA

Carol, leave him alone. At least you have a husband who saves lives for a living.

Jack pours each of them a glass.

JACK

"Saves lives". The man's a dentist for Christ sake!

CYNTHIA

Yes, and do you know what the perfect smile can do for you? Life saving.

JACK

Nonsense. No offence Richard.

RICHARD

None taking.

Caroline reads the time on her watch.

CAROLINE

Oh no! Andrew's match starts in an hour.

JACK

You have plenty of time.

CAROLINE

Yes, but we have to be there well before hand.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Ok-ok. Grab a glass everyone.

They obey and clink their glasses with one another, followed by a chorus of cheers.

CAROLINE

Richard, where is the headmaster's wine?

RICHARD

Was I supposed to buy one for him?

CAROLINE

(rolls her eyes)

I reminded you about it this morning.

RICHARD

I'm sorry, we just have to get another one on our way.

CYNTHIA

Nonsense, I'm sure Jack can donate one from the cellar.

JACK

I have the perfect bottle. 76 Pinotage, it's South-African.

EXT. BRADFIELD COLLEGE, RUGBY PITCH - DAY

It's halfway through the second half of a pulsating rugby match. The score line reads '10-7' to Bradfield's FIRST 15.

Richard is at one end of the sideline watching his son, ANDREW (16), brace himself for a run on the left wing.

The boy is very quick and elusive- dodging tackles this way and that way and never holding on to the ball for too long.

Caroline keeps herself busy on the sideline by mingling with the headmaster MR. REGIS BROWN- a tall, pot-bellied old man with a stoic expression that lends him the aura of a disciplinarian.

Caroline seems to be distracting him from the ongoing match but he manages to remain affable.

The opposing team concedes a try and the home support erupts into applause. Even Caroline manages to feign attentiveness with a beautifully orchestrated cheer.

(CONTINUED)

A few plays later and the home team regains possession, they are in the ascendancy- sensing imminent victory.

Andrew catches a pass and sets off on one of his meandering runs- breaking desperate tackles with impressive ease.

Suddenly, he is tap-tackled by a deft touch and he lands awkwardly on his right shoulder.

A collective gasp reverberates amongst the home support- they fear the worst.

Richard and Caroline, the latter having just realized what has happened, look on with an almost disturbing gaze as players from both teams surround Andrew.

Andrew clutches his right shoulder and grimaces in pain as the referee motions for a medic to come quickly.

Caroline can't bear to look. Richard approaches her and consoles her with a hug.

The medics help Andrew onto his feet and then off the pitch to a solemn chorus of applause.

INT. BRADFIELD CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - EVENING

Richard sits in an empty waiting room save for Caroline; who is pacing back and forth.

RICHARD

It's probably just a dislocation.

CAROLINE

"Just a dislocation".....

RICHARD

He'll be back playing in no time.

CAROLINE

The season will be over by then  
Richard. Then what?

RICHARD

There's always next season.

CAROLINE

There won't be any scouts next  
season.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
He's too good for that. Talent  
always attracts suitors, trust me.

CAROLINE  
And what if he loses something?

RICHARD  
Something.....?

CAROLINE  
I don't know.....he can't catch  
the ball as well or tackle as  
efficiently or-

RICHARD  
Carol. Don't do this to yourself.

Caroline is about to respond when the forlorn image of  
Andrew, right shoulder in a sling, comes into view.

Caroline moves closer to embrace him.

ANDREW  
(wincing)  
Mum!! be careful.

CAROLINE  
(kissing him)  
I'm so sorry.....

RICHARD  
What did the doctor say?

ANDREW  
Dislocation of the shoulder. I'll  
be out for 2, maybe 3 months.

CAROLINE  
Oh honey! That's awful. Can you at  
least write?

ANDREW  
I don't think so.

RICHARD  
Yes he can.

ANDREW  
Dad I'm serious. I think it's best  
if I stay home.

RICHARD

I don't think you know what's best  
for yourself.

A cell phone rings- it's Caroline's. The caller id reads  
"EMMA"- the final member of the Baines family

CAROLINE

(in a loud whisper)  
It's Emma.

She picks up the phone.

CAROLINE

Hey Emm, I'm so sorry but we had to  
dash to the hospital. It's your  
brother.

(beat)

Nothing too serious. A dislocated  
shoulder from rugby.

(beat)

I know, I was telling your father.

(beat)

Oh, that would be wonderful. See  
you back home then.

(beat)

Love you too, bye.

Click.

RICHARD

Is she getting a lift home?

CAROLINE

Yes, with Martha.

(to ANDREW)

Did the doctor give you a note for  
the pharmacy?

ANDREW

Yeah, I almost forgot.

Andrew takes out a piece of paper from his pocket and hands  
it to his mum.

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Baines family are tucking into a delicious spread.

EMMA

Dad, are you really considering  
letting Andy skip school tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Who told you that?

EMMA  
(glancing at Andrew)  
He did.

CAROLINE  
I don't think it's a bad idea. I  
mean after all.....he does need  
some well earned rest.

ANDREW  
Love you mum.

EMMA  
(unconvinced)  
Please. Give me 12 hours of  
standing on a pitch over learning a  
Bach solo any day. I'm the one who  
needs the rest.

CAROLINE  
Emma that's rude.

ANDREW  
She's just jealous.

EMMA  
I'm just saying. Music is a lot  
more physically and mentally  
strenuous than rugby.

ANDREW  
You've obviously never played rugby  
or any other sport for that matter.

CAROLINE  
Well speaking about rest.....your  
father did promise to take us on a  
skiing trip this weekend.

The kids instantly stare at Richard in excitement.

RICHARD  
I don't remember making any  
promises.

EMMA  
Dad.....

RICHARD  
Plus Andrew isn't in any position  
to be skiing.

CAROLINE  
I'm sure he wouldn't mind chilling  
out in the alps.

Andrew nods his head in agreement.

RICHARD  
Well, we'll have to see about that.

CAROLINE  
Don't worry kids, dad or no dad,  
we're taking that skiing trip.

The landline rings, saving Richard from having to respond to that last comment. He opts to answer it.

**HALLWAY- SAMETIME**

Richard lets the phone ring once more before picking up.

RICHARD  
Hello?

NO response is forthcoming save for MUFFLED BREATHING on the other end of the line.

RICHARD  
(puzzled)  
Hello.....who is this?  
(beat)  
Hello.....?

Still no response. He hangs up and returns to the-

**DINNING ROOM- SAMETIME**

Caroline notices the concerned look on Richard's face.

CAROLINE  
Who was it?

RICHARD  
No one.

CAROLINE  
What do you mean no one?

RICHARD

No one answered. I just heard something that sounded like..... laboured breathing.

CAROLINE

(mystified)

Breathing.....?? That's odd. Did you call back?

RICHARD

No, probably just a wrong number.

Caroline nods her head.

CAROLINE

Well, I think it's time to clear up.

(rising to her feet)

Emma darling, would you give me a hand?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Richard and Andrew are half-awake while watching the highlights of a rugby game on the tele.

The landline rings and rings but neither of them move to answer it.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Can one of you two get that please!!

RICHARD

Andrew, you heard your mother.

Andrew sighs before doing as he's told.

**HALLWAY - SAMETIME**

Andrew picks up the receiver.

ANDREW

Hello?

Again the ensuing response from the other end takes the form of muffled breathing.

ANDREW

Who is this?

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW (cont'd)  
Hello.....?

Caroline comes over.

CAROLINE  
Who is it?

ANDREW  
I don't know.

Caroline takes the phone from him.

CAROLINE  
(sternly)  
Excuse me, who is this?  
(beat)  
Hello.....?

Still nothing but the breathing. Richard comes over.

RICHARD  
Hang up.

Caroline does as she's told.

Richard attempts to redial the number but it's a private id.

CAROLINE  
Well that doesn't help.

RICHARD  
Maybe they can't hear us.

CAROLINE  
And the breathing?

Richard shrugs his shoulder in bemusement.

CAROLINE  
I'm going to finish up in the  
kitchen. Get the kids to bed would  
you.....and make sure Emma really  
puts away her violin.

Richard acquiesces but not before casting a quizzical look  
at the phone.

## INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richard lies half-awake in bed. He glances over to Caroline's side of the bed where she snoozes like a child. He smiles and climbs out of bed.

## INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Richard stands in front of a pile of cardboard boxes stacked on top of each other. He unstacks them to reveal a rusted metal door, which he then proceeds to unlock.

He pulls out a flashlight and illuminates a short flight of stairs leading into a squalid room.

**ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Richard sits in front of two surveillance monitors barely illuminated by a flashlight dangling from the ceiling. He taps a few buttons on a small keyboard and the monitors roar to life.

The monitors display surveillance recordings of the past day activities such as Caroline baking a pie and tending to the back garden.

He switches to a camera in Andrew's room and rewinds the tape momentarily.

He freezes on an image of Andrew pulling out a magazine from underneath his bed. Richard zooms in on Andrew and watches-transfixed- as Andrew turns to a page depicting a naked pornographic model.

Andrew unzips his pants and begins masturbating.

Andrew works himself into a ferocious frenzy and from the orgasmic expression on his face- he is near the point of climax.

Suddenly, a short rap on the door startles him and he quickly makes himself descent, just in time, before Caroline walks into the room.

Richard grins and switches to a camera surveying the hallway. He rewinds the tape until Caroline comes into view. He plays the tape and zooms in on Caroline who is talking on the phone.

Richard zeroes in on her face and he notices that she's crying. He frowns in annoyance as he is unable to discern the source of her tears.

He stays on this image momentarily then turns off the monitors.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Richard drops the kids off at school. He pauses briefly in front of the school gate and watches as Andrew's friends tease him about his injury.

INT. CORNER STORE - LATER

Richard scans the nutritional contents on the back of an energy drink. He is in full concentration mode until a voice behind him snaps his attention.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Hello Richard.

Richard turns to look and by the bemused expression on his face-- he does not recognise ANNA LANGFORD.

Anna is frail, pale, middle-aged, and in an electric wheelchair. She also sports an odd tattoo of a LOCUST perched on a bean stalk on the side of her neck.

Richard, discretely, glances at it.

RICHARD  
I'm sorry, do I know you?

ANNA  
They said you've changed a lot, and by the looks of things they weren't joking.

RICHARD  
"They".....?

ANNA  
That's not important.

RICHARD  
Ok....

ANNA  
(chuckling)  
You really don't remember me.

RICHARD  
I'm sorry....I'm usually good with faces but yours just doesn't  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD (cont'd)  
register with me. Did we meet  
somewhere?

ANNA  
Please, you make it sound like  
you're having an affair.

Richard is startled by this comment. He takes a sharp intake  
of breath.

RICHARD  
I'm late for work.

ANNA  
We should talk Richard.

RICHARD  
(confused)  
And what would that be about?

ANNA  
What you did to me. I haven't  
forgotten you know. And I must  
say this little game your putting  
on is.....well irritating.

RICHARD  
I'm really late for work.

Richard briskly walks over to the counter. He pays for his  
energy drink and exits the store--pretending not to notice  
Anna's piercing gaze.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Richard is in the process of pulling out a decayed tooth  
from an old man's mouth. He's perspiring at an usual rate  
and his hands are visibly unsteady.

Richard finally yanks the tooth out and the old man lets out  
an agonising shriek. Flora quickly tends to his pain by  
massaging his jaw.

RICHARD  
(embarrassed)  
I'm so sorry sir. Are you ok?

The old man mutters something underneath his breath- he's  
still reeling from the pain.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
(to FLORA)  
Why don't you finish up here.

Flora peers at him- concerned.

FLORA  
Yeah, of course.

Richard takes off his latex gloves and tosses them into a bin.

He exits the room.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - LATER

A SILVER-FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of Caroline, Emma, and Andrew rests on a desk. Behind it, Richard sits pensively.

A gentle knock on the door.

RICHARD  
Yes, come in.

Flora walks in.

FLORA  
Is everything alright?

RICHARD  
When did this knocking business start?

FLORA  
I don't know Richard. I thought you might need some space.

RICHARD  
I'm fine.

FLORA  
We can't all be perfect you know.

RICHARD  
Who's next on the list?

FLORA  
A miss Anna Langford.

RICHARD  
Start prepping her, I'll be there in a minute.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Richard walks into the room and as soon as his eyes fall upon the image of Anna being helped onto the examining chair-- he freezes in his tracks.

ANNA

Hello doctor.....

Richard doesn't respond until Flora shoots him a hard-lined look.

RICHARD

H-hello.

Richard opens his file and skims through Anna's information.

ANNA

It's been a while since I got my teeth examined.

Richard nods his head. He's trying desperately not to seem flustered but Flora senses an awkward tension between them-- regardless of the subtlety.

FLORA

How long has it been?

ANNA

Too long. Far too long.

RICHARD

So, it says here that you're considering the JK veneers treatment.

Anna smiles widely- like a Cheshire cat- to reveal a perfect set of 'British teeth'.

ANNA

About time isn't it?

Richard glances at Flora- hoping that she'd reply instead of him. Flora says nothing.

RICHARD

(stalling)

W-Well.....let's ummm....let's take a closer look.

Richard performs a quick dental examination, making sure throughout to avoid eye contact with Anna.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Well I have to say your teeth are  
in great condition.

ANNA

"Great".....?

RICHARD

Healthy condition. You don't need  
the JK veneers. I would suggest  
something less invasive,  
say....lumineers.

Anna ponders his suggestion.

RICHARD

It's up to you.

ANNA

It is isn't it?

(beat)

Let's try the lumineers.

RICHARD

I'll call the pharmacy and make  
sure we have one in stock.

ANNA

Good. Thank you.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - LATER

A tall and wiry BLACK MAN wheels Anna towards a vehicle.  
Richard watches them from behind the office window. The  
black man dons a black leather jacket and black leather  
trousers. He looks like trouble.

The office intercom SQUAWKS- it startles Richard.

SARAH

Richard--

RICHARD

Yes.....

SARAH

Kenneth Long is on the phone for  
you.

RICHARD

Ok, put him through.

A beat, as Sarah transfers the call.

(CONTINUED)

KENNETH

Richie.....how goes it?

RICHARD

Not too bad. Yourself?

KENNETH

Oh fine-fine. Umm....I just wanted to confirm that you'll be in Edinburgh this weekend.

RICHARD

(straining)

Umm.....of course-of course. I'll be there.

KENNETH

I know how much you resent attending these kind of events but we would really appreciate it if you could come down, say a few words. Maybe even a few more words about the new products. How does that sound?

RICHARD

A few words.....?

KENNETH

I mean nothing too grand. Just a few words. We could really use the wisdom of an experienced dentist like yourself.

RICHARD

Well, how can I say no to that?

KENNETH

I'll take that as a yes then. Thanks Richard.

RICHARD

I'll see you there then.

INT. FRONT STALL WAY - NIGHT

Richard arrives home- utterly exhausted. He hangs his jacket on a coat stand and grabs a stack of mail scattered on a nearby table.

He quickly looks through them but none are for him- this irritates him slightly.

(CONTINUED)

A roar of laughter, emanating from the living room, startles him. He rolls his eyes and mutters an audible 'shit'- evidently he isn't the biggest fan of whomever is laughing.

Caroline steps out from the kitchen with a tray of refreshments and approaches Richard.

He acknowledges her with a smile - making sure to remove any facial vestiges of annoyance.

CAROLINE

What time do you call this?

RICHARD

I left you a message, I had to work late.

CAROLINE

And I called your office, and they said you'd call back, which you never did.

RICHARD

I'm sorry, it was a tough day.

He kisses her on the cheek.

RICHARD

How was your day?

CAROLINE

Just fine. Have you seen my father?

RICHARD

Oh! He's here.

CAROLINE

Yes, and we've been waiting for you to eat.

Richard gently takes the tray from her hands.

RICHARD

Well how about I help you with this and you can get supper ready.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAMETIME

Richard walks into the living room and sets the tray down on the coffee table.

(CONTINUED)

MITCHELL or MITCH as he's known around town has a great rapport with Andrew and Emma and it shows. They are so transfixed by his funny anecdotes that they barely even notice that Richard has just walked into the room.

RICHARD

Hi Mitch.

MITCH

Richard.

(shaking his hand)

How are you?

RICHARD

I'm very well thank you. And yourself?

MITCH

Over the moon. I can't complain.

RICHARD

Carol mentioned that you were admitted recently.

MITCH

Yes I was actually. I picked up an ankle injury during one of my afternoon jogs. Really hurt myself.

RICHARD

Wow, still jogging....?

MITCH

As long as you're healthy, I don't see why not.

RICHARD

and the ankle?

MITCH

Fully recovered.

RICHARD

I'm glad to hear that. We were all very worried.

MITCH

Oh please. Don't worry about me, I can take care of myself. How are things down at the clinic?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Fine....fine. Same old really.

(beat)

Did you see what your grandson did  
to his shoulder?

MITCH

Yes I have. I'm just surprised that  
it's the first injury he's ever  
picked up. Back in my days--

ANDREW

Oh God!! Not this story again.

MITCH

No I'm serious. Back in my days,  
rugby was much more violent.  
Players would get injured literally  
every match. You were only as good  
as your injuries.

ANDREW

That makes no sense. The best  
players avoid injuries.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Suppers ready.

RICHARD

Andrew, Emma, table. Right now.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Caroline passes around a second helping of classic English  
pudding.

MITCH

Carol dear, your pudding never  
fails to remind me of your mother.

Caroline is visibly touched by this comment.

EMMA

(to Mitch)

What was grandma like?

MITCH

She was exactly like your mother.  
No difference at all.

Caroline's eyes are now moist. She changes the subject in  
order to avoid crying.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Emma, tell your granddad about the concert.

EMMA

Oh that. Well. There's this huge student classical concert at the opera house in London in a couple of weeks. More importantly, there's a violin solo and it's either going to be me or this other girl playing it. So.....I'm really excited and nervous about that.

MITCH

So what's her number?

EMMA

Whose number?

MITCH

This other girl. I'll just give her a quick ring and tell her to kindly do the right thing and sit this one out.

CAROLINE

Dad. Stop it.

They all laugh.

ANDREW

I doubt you could even reach her, she probably doesn't even have a phone. She's a bit of a loner.

EMMA

No she's not, she's a really nice girl actually. She's just not popular that's all.

CAROLINE

Andrew, you shouldn't call people names.

RICHARD

I almost forgot to mention. I'm off to Edinburgh this weekend for a dental conference. Apparently, I'm just the right man to say a few words about products that I've never seen before in my life.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

And there was I thinking that you'd change your mind about the skiing trip.

RICHARD

I told you, I'm too busy.

CAROLINE

Dad. You should take us instead. You know you hardly spend time with your grandkids.

MITCH

That doesn't sound like a bad idea.

ANDREW

Yesssss.

MITCH

But, I'd prefer it if Richard joined us.

CAROLINE

Didn't you just hear him?

MITCH

I mean that I'd rather wait. So we can go as a whole family.

The doorbell rings.

Caroline casts an inquisitive look at Richard.

CAROLINE

Who could that be at this time?

The bell rings again. Richard answers it.

**FRONT STALL WAY - SAMETIME**

Richard peers through a peeping hole on the front door but sees nothing at the other end. He looks bemused.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Who is it Richard?

He is about to respond when CRACK!! the sound of shattered glass accompanied soon after by cries of *look out!!* erupts from the dining room.

Richard rushes back into the room.

**DINING ROOM - SAMETIME**

(CONTINUED)

He screeches to a halt at the sight of the carnage in front of him: a broken window and a dinner table littered with pieces of broken glass.

Caroline and the children are crouched underneath the table while Mitch looks around for something.

Richard locates the object before he does.

It's a large rock resting behind a damaged piece of furniture.

MITCH

Richard, check the window.

Richard gazes out through the hole in the window, making sure the coast is clear before helping Caroline and the kids out from underneath the table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mitch is keeping the kids busy while Richard and Caroline talk to JOHN COLTS- a police officer. He jots down some notes as Caroline narrates the frightful events.

CAROLINE

Mitch just yelled "everyone down" and thank God we listened because the next second there was glass every where.

JOHN

And Richard, you answered the door bell?

RICHARD

Yes I did.

JOHN

And you saw no one?

RICHARD

No one.

CAROLINE

John, we've been getting strange calls lately.

JOHN

How so?

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Well, whoever calls refuses to respond. The only thing we hear from the other end is just..... very laboured breathing. So someone has to be on the other end.

JOHN

That is very odd. Did you recognise the number?

RICHARD

No, it was a private number.

John flicks his note pad closed.

JOHN

Well, I'll tell you this much. We've never had anything like this before. So my best guess is.....a bunch of idle teenagers. Maybe jobs from Newbury.

RICHARD

Teenagers?

JOHN

It's a possibility.  
(beat)  
Is there anything else?

Caroline and Richard exchange blank looks.

RICHARD

That's everything.

JOHN

I thought as much. We'll see what we can do with this information and I'll get back to you as soon as we have something. In the mean time, I would suggest you stay calm and try to keep this incident contained. We don't want the whole neighbourhood worried.

RICHARD

Of course.

CAROLINE

Thanks John.

Caroline hugs John.

JOHN

You're welcome. I'll see myself out. Bye Andrew, bye Emma, bye Mitch.

They all wave goodbye at John as he walks out of the front door.

CAROLINE

Dad, I think you should really stay here tonight.

MITCH

Nonsense. I'll leave soon.

CAROLINE

Dad, please.

RICHARD

Mitch, maybe you should stay.

MITCH

Are you sure?

RICHARD

Yeah, of course.

MITCH

Ok.

CAROLINE

Andrew, Emma, get ready to pack it up. You have a busy day tomorrow.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is sifting through some paper work on his desk when Sarah walks in with some tea and biscuits.

RICHARD

Thank you.

Richard stirs his tea and takes a sip.

SARAH

How are you holding up?

RICHARD

I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

How about Carol and the children?

RICHARD

Their ok. A bit shaken up obviously, but they'll live.

SARAH

That's good.

RICHARD

And I'm sorry that we had to call John at such an inopportune time.

SARAH

Don't be silly. He is the bloody police after all.

Richard chuckles.

RICHARD

I'm going to be away for the rest of the afternoon. It's Andrew's first check up with the doctor since his injury.

SARAH

Oh! Would you like me to reschedule Mrs. Appelgate then?

RICHARD

Yes please. Thank you.

INT. HOSPITAL CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Richard glances over at Andrew, who vacantly thumbs through a SPORTS MAGAZINE. He pauses to catch up on the latest exploits of THE LONDON IRISH. A nurse calls out from the reception

NURSE

Andrew Baines?

Richard and Andrew rise to their feet. As they walk towards the nurse, Richard notices the black man from the parking lot waiting in a queue at the hospital pharmacy.

ANDREW

Dad, what's wrong?

Richard doesn't respond; he simply stares at the black man as the latter moves closer to the front of the queue.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Go on without me, I have to speak  
to someone.

ANDREW

(concerned)

Ok.....

Andrew tromps off while Richard waits for the black man to attend to his pharmaceutical needs. Once the black man collects a medical package, Richard follows him to the car park.

EXT. CAR PARK/FREEWAY - SAMETIME

The black man lights a cigarette and then climbs into a black corolla. Richard calmly trails him in his car- making sure always to keep one car length away from him.

INT. RICHARD'S CAR - LATER

Richard manages to remain inconspicuous as he trails the black man into a quiet neighbourhood.

The black man slows down and pulls into the driveway of a small cottage.

Richard drives past him and parks his car at a distance that enables him to watch the black man discreetly.

The black man exits his car and approaches the front door of the cottage. A small, frail old woman opens the door as soon as he knocks on it.

The black man says something to her that Richard can't make out, then hands her the package from the pharmacy. The old woman takes it and reenters the house.

The black man takes out a cigarette and lights it. He takes a long hard drag and glances out toward the street-

Richard ducks down in the driver seat, trying to see without being seen.

The black man raises HIS ARMS and STRETCHES-

Richard slinks even lower in the seat.

The corolla backs out of the driveway and heads down the road, passing Richard's apparantly empty car.

Richard resurfaces from the floor of the car looking completely relieved.

EXT/INT. COTTAGE, FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Richard raps lightly on the front door. Two knocks later and the old woman answers the door.

OLD WOMAN  
(sharp and alert)  
Yes, can I help you?

RICHARD  
I'm sorry to disturb you but I was wondering if by any chance you had a young woman living here with you?

OLD WOMAN  
(protective)  
Yes there is, she's my tenant. What is it you want with her?

RICHARD  
I need to speak to her please. It's rather important.

OLD WOMAN  
She isn't here.

RICHARD  
Well, do you know where I can reach her? Perhaps at her work place.

OLD WOMAN  
I'm sorry but I don't know.

RICHARD  
Ok, do you mind passing on a message for me?

OLD WOMAN  
What message?

RICHARD  
That she needs to be more careful.

OLD WOMAN  
I'll tell her.

RICHARD  
Thank you and again I'm sorry for having disturbed you.

(CONTINUED)

The old woman frowns as she steps back inside and slams the door.

Richard's cell phone rings. He reads the caller id- it's Andrew. Richard picks up.

RICHARD

Andrew I'm so sorry. I'm on my way right now. How is the shoulder?

(beat)

Good. I'll be with you soon.

INT. BRADFIELD COLLEGE, MUSIC DEPARTMENT - DAY

Emma is playing J.S. Bach's Sonata for violin solo. Her eyes are closed, rendering the sheet music in front of her redundant.

The music is absolutely mellifluous- almost perfect.

The piece ends and a short off-screen applause commences. Emma turns around and sees Anna applauding.

Anna looks genuinely astounded by the prodigious talent before her.

EMMA

Thank you.

Anna moves closer to Emma by pushing a lever on her arm-rest.

ANNA

That was stupendous.

EMMA

Wow! That's very kind of you to say.

ANNA

The crescendo at the end, c'etait magnifique.

EMMA

Thank you.

ANNA

(putting out a hand)

I'm Anna.

They both shake hands.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Emma. Nice to meet you.

ANNA

Likewise.

EMMA

Do you play?

ANNA

I wish. I used to play the piano, but I never had the passion for it so I quit. I'm sure you'd agree that without passion.....music is soulless.

EMMA

I would actually.

ANNA

I'm assuming you don't get many visitors wandering into your practice sessions uninvited.

EMMA

No, but I don't mind. I appreciate a captive audience.

Anna smiles. She looks around- marvelling at the vast array of musical instruments on display

ANNA

I can see why my sister was so keen on sending her kids to Bradfield. It's quite a set up you have here.

EMMA

Yeah.....but just between me and you, this is as good as it gets.

Anna chuckles.

ANNA

You're secret safe with me. You know.....you look very familiar.

EMMA

Really?

ANNA

Very much so. You wouldn't happen to be related to a....Frank Daniels now would you?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

No, I'm sorry. Anyways they're only so many faces in the world, I guess were bound to resemble someone at some point.

ANNA

I guess so.

(beat)

Do you mind playing something else?

EMMA

(sarcastically)

Do I mind?

Emma turns to a page in her music sheet and after a brief scan of its contents; she shuts her eyes and serenades Anna in classical bliss.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Richard is fast forwarding through scenes of the last 24hrs, he stops and rewinds the tape on the image of Caroline on the phone. He zooms in on Caroline's face and then freezes the tape.

He runs his fingers down the monitor- as though attempting to feel Caroline through the screen.

He puts on a set of headphones and plays the tape.

CAROLINE

(on the phone)

I don't even know him anymore. It's not the same man I married.

(beat)

Dad, he's changed so much.

(beat)

I feel like such a fraud around him. Having to pretend like I'm still in love with him.

(beat)

It's killing me.....it really is dad. I can't live in this house any longer-

(beat)

I know....the kids would be devastated.

Richard pauses the tape and takes off his headphones- he's heard enough.

INT. EDINBURGH, HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Richard is at the reception making some last minute adjustments to his reservation. When:

KENNETH (O.S.)

Richie.....

Richard smiles thinly, anticipating the identity, before turning around.

RICHARD

Ken.

They shake hands.

KENNETH

How goes it mate?

RICHARD

Not too bad actually. I like this venue.

KENNETH

It's a lot better isn't it?

RICHARD

I suppose we have you to thank for that, being the chairman and all.

KENNETH

Well, a few others and myself do deserve a bit of credit. We did say right from the very start if we're going to demand for a larger membership fee, then we had better use some of it on these annual conferences. It's only fair.

RICHARD

I couldn't agree more.

KENNETH

You know everyone is really excited to hear what you have to say tomorrow.

RICHARD

(sarcastically)

Is that a fact?

(CONTINUED)

KENNETH

I'm serious Richie. You're one of the highlights, up there with the complementary crab cakes and new prosthetic dentures.

RICHARD

That's some company.

Kenneth laughs acerbically- he's a real chipmunk of a man.

Richard glances at a clock hanging on a wall.

RICHARD

I have to make a call, do you mind?

KENNETH

Of course not, go ahead. But make sure you join us at the bar afterwards, there are a few people I'd like to introduce you to. You'll love 'em.

Richard nods his head half-heartedly. He walks over to the payphone area and calls Caroline on his cell.

CAROLINE

Hello?

RICHARD

Hey, it's me. I'm sorry that I had to leave so early.

CAROLINE

No, it's fine. How is it coming along?

RICHARD

Good, if Kenneth is anything to go by.

CAROLINE

You mentioned you had to say a few words....

RICHARD

Yeah, nothing too grand. I guess they want a countryside perspective or something like that.

CAROLINE

That sounds wonderful.

An awkward pause ensues. Then-

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Carol.....is there something you're  
not telling me?

CAROLINE  
I'm sorry?

RICHARD  
I have this odd feeling that there  
is something not quite right  
between the two of us.

CAROLINE  
And when did you start feeling this  
way?

RICHARD  
Lately I guess.

CAROLINE  
Well, I'm sorry Richard but I can't  
help you there.

RICHARD  
Are you sure?

CAROLINE  
Listen Richard, if there's  
Something you want to say, just say  
it. Don't patronize me.

A short pensive moment.

RICHARD  
I'm sorry.

CAROLINE  
Me too. Look, I have to go....I'll  
talk to you later.

RICHARD  
Wait-

She's already hung up. Richard hangs up, closes his eyes,  
and steels himself. He looks utterly defeated.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Richard watches a power-point presentation of some new  
dental technology from the back row. Everyone, except  
Richard, seems rapt with attention.

(CONTINUED)

The presentation has reached a new chord of tedium and Richard reacts by moving restlessly in his chair.

He can't take it anymore and he exits the room as quietly as possible.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Richard is urinating when he notices the black man, from his peripheral view, emerging from a bathroom stall. Richard quickly faces forward, trying to remain calm, but he can't help but keep glancing towards the black man's direction.

The black man washes up at the sink and struts past Richard- seemingly incognizant of the latter's presence. Richard hastily follows him out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - SAMETIME

Richard follows the black man for a couple of meters and just as he's about to say something the black man stops unexpectedly and turns around slowly to face him.

The black man grins at Richard- a cold, menacing grin.

RICHARD  
(sternly)  
Stop it.

BLACK MAN  
Excuse me.....?

RICHARD  
I know it's you and that woman who came to my house the other night, and I want it to stop- now!

BLACK MAN  
(chuckles)  
She was right about you. You don't take responsibilities.

RICHARD  
Just stop whatever it is you're trying to prove.

BLACK MAN  
Or else what?

A pause, as Richard searches for a deliberate response.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Please, just stop it.

The black man nods his head in disbelief, as though disappointed by the lack of venom in that last response.

BLACK MAN  
She was right about you.

And with that, the black man saunters away. Richard watches him, with a weird mixture of relief and fear, as he exits the hotel.

INT. RICHARD'S SUITE - NIGHT

Richard is at his computer trying desperately to come up with a 'few words' for day 2 of the dental conference.

By the looks of things, he's suffering from a mild case of writers block or perhaps it is simply a case of being distracted by the events of the last few days.

He composes a sentence then after reading it to himself, he deletes it.

The hotel phone rings. Richard reluctantly answers it.

RICHARD  
Hello?

VOICE  
Scots tavern across the road. Be there in ten.

RICHARD  
(confused)  
What.....who is this?

The anonymous caller has already hung up. Richard angrily hangs up and grabs his coat.

INT. SCOTS TAVERN - LATER

Richard walks into a busy pub, he surveys the premises looking for the anonymous caller.

Anna waves at him from a table at the corner. Richard shoots her an angry look and marches over to her table.

This behaviour merely amuses Anna as she chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Now now Richard, no need for that kind of attitude. Please, sit down.

Richard takes a seat- his eyes never leave Anna's for one second.

ANNA

Can I interest you in anything? Their scotch is really good for some strange reason.

Richard doesn't respond.

ANNA

Well it's your loss. How's your family Richard? Are they well?

RICHARD

Stop it.

ANNA

Stop what Richard?

RICHARD

Stop playing games with my life.

ANNA

Jesus Richard! You should hear yourself sometimes.

RICHARD

The anonymous phone calls, the broken window.....you could have really done some damage.

ANNA

But Richard, I'm innocent.

RICHARD

What do you want?

Anna glances over Richard's shoulder and smiles at the black man who has just strode into the bar. She motions towards him to join their table.

The black man comes over and takes a seat next to Richard. They barely acknowledge each other.

ANNA

You two have already met right?  
(to Richard)  
You even followed him at one point I hear.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

I asked you a question.

ANNA

Oh.

(to the black man)

He was just asking me what it is we wanted.

BLACK MAN

And what did you say?

ANNA

I didn't have the time to respond.  
You distracted me.

The black man turns to face Richard

BLACK MAN

(stoically)

We want 12 million pounds.

A brief silence ensues as Anna, Richard, and the black man each exchange unflinching looks.

Anna cracks up, the black man laughs as well.

ANNA

Blackmail? God no. We're not that pathetic, plus it's too easy.

RICHARD

(frustrated)

Then what is it?

ANNA

Can you at least stop pretending that you don't know me? Do me that little favour Richard.

Richard has had enough; he moves to stand but the black man sits him back down with a firm hand on his shoulder.

ANNA

(coldly)

I'm not finished with you.

Richard's fists are clenched now- he looks like a man trying desperately to stop himself from doing something violent.

ANNA

Does your wife know?

Richard doesn't respond; he merely looks away in annoyance.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Look at me Richard.

Richard refuses to do so.

ANNA

(raising her voice)

Look at me!!

Richard reluctantly obeys.

ANNA

How do you live with yourself knowing what you did to me? All those lies you told the police.....how do you do it? Does it ever haunt you? Do you ever think about the consequences? Am I even the only one?

RICHARD

What do you want?

She leans over the table and snarls in a frigid and unforgiving voice:

ANNA

I want to destroy your life like you did mine, and then some more.

Richard considers the threat a moment.

RICHARD

If you come near my family again, I'll go to the police and trust me, you'll be put away for life.

ANNA

Oh I'm very aware of what you're capable of.

And with that, Richard rises to his feet. The black man moves out of his way; allowing Richard, this time, to leave.

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, RICHARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Richard is helping Andrew with his math homework. He looks surprisingly calm and collected considering the unnerving events that just took place the previous night.

The front doorbell rings and after the second ring, someone answers it.

(CONTINUED)

Moment's later, someone knocks on the door.

RICHARD

Yeah.....

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Richard, John's here.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Richard and Caroline stand yards away from each other as they listen closely to John's update on the police investigation into the other night.

JOHN

Well, like I told Caroline, I have some really good news and thankfully no bad news.

CAROLINE

Thank God for that.

JOHN

It was a bunch of school boy yobs who threw that rock. They hit the Grange's the other night.

CAROLINE

(riveted)

Oh my God!

JOHN

Yes, but fortunately one of them couldn't live with the overwhelming guilt of their actions. So this morning, he came down to the station and confessed. Even gave us information on the others whereabouts.

Caroline breathes a sigh of relief while Richard looks slightly bemused.

JOHN

We rounded up the rest of the group this afternoon except for one. The ring leader. He knew we were coming and made himself scarce. But we'll soon find him. I tell ya, kids nowadays uhh....

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Honestly. How about the phone calls? Were they also behind that?

JOHN

I'm afraid not. That one still remains a mystery but we're working on it.

CAROLINE

Well regardless it's great news. I think I might sleep well for the first time since that night.

JOHN

Aww you poor thing. I'm just happy that I can help.

RICHARD

Thanks John.

JOHN

No worries. Well, I best be leaving you two now.

CAROLINE

Oh please, won't you stay for some tea?

JOHN

Thanks but I can't.  
(to Richard)  
You know how Sarah complains.

Richard manages a smile and nods his head in agreement. Caroline hugs John.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is in the middle of a consultation with an elderly patient. He flips open a large dental portfolio that contains adverts for denture models.

Richard points to a particular model.

RICHARD

I always advise my patients to try this one. Primarily because of the comfort level and the pricing is, as you can see, not too bad either.

The patient looks impressed.

(CONTINUED)

The intercom rings.

RICHARD

Excuse me.

Richard answers it.

RICHARD

I'm with a patient.

SARAH

Sorry Richard but your daughter called. It's about Mitch.

RICHARD

.....Mitch? What did she say?

SARAH

He's in the E.R, she said it's bad Richard.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Caroline steps out from a hospital room holding a stack of sloppy kleenecks. She looks distraught.

RICHARD (O.S.)

How is he?

Caroline turns to see Richard, whose face spells a look of genuine concern.

CAROLINE

He's in a coma.

RICHARD

JESUS!! What happened?

CAROLINE

H-he was.....he....

(swallows her pain)

....he was run over by a car.

Richard looks away in anger - like a man seized by a sudden chest pain.

CAROLINE

He was just trying to cross the road....

(sobbing)

Just trying to cross the road. Why would anyone.....

(CONTINUED)

Richard moves closer and consoles her. Caroline weeps in his arms.

**A HYPERACTIVE DOOR BELL RINGS OVER-**

INT/EXT. COTTAGE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The old landlady, clad in pyjamas, answers the front door after the fifth ring. She doesn't seem surprised to find Richard standing on her front door at such an ungodly hour.

OLD WOMAN  
(sharp and alert)  
What now?

RICHARD  
Where is she?

OLD WOMAN  
(Snapping)  
Look young man, go home or I'll  
call the police.

Richard cups his hands around his mouth.

RICHARD  
(shouting)  
WHERE ARE YOU?

OLD WOMAN  
(matching his tone)  
Young man I asked you to leave and  
you had better do as your told or I  
will call the police.

The old woman steps back inside and tries to slam the door, but Richard catches it with his foot, and kicks it open even wider.

OLD WOMAN  
I'm calling the police.

As soon as the old woman starts to the living room, Anna appears at the top of the stairway.

ANNA  
Don't bother Margaret. He'll be  
leaving soon, I promise you.  
(beat)  
Richard please, let's talk in my  
room.

Richard briskly climbs the short flight of stairs and follows Anna into her room.

INT. ANNA'S BEDROOM - SAMETIME

Anna reclines back in her wheelchair and smirks at Richard-she's enjoying this.

RICHARD  
You killed him.

ANNA  
I beg your pardon?

RICHARD  
Do you even realise what you've done?

ANNA  
I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about.

RICHARD  
He has nothing to do with you and I. He's completely innocent.

ANNA  
I was innocent to Richard, don't forget that.

Richard grabs Anna by the shirt and lifts her out of her wheelchair.

He shoves her hard to the floor.

Anna is hurt badly but she doesn't scream. She merely braces her teeth in a grimace and even manages, albeit grudgingly, to remount her wheelchair.

ANNA  
You haven't changed much Richard.

Richard gives Anna one final menacing stare down, then storms out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL, EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Mitch's lifeless body rests on a hospital bed; Caroline and Richard are seated adjacent to it.

They both look utterly dejected.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

You know you don't have to be here.

RICHARD

I want to be here.

CAROLINE

I can do this on my own. You have patients to worry about.

RICHARD

Do you not want me here?

Caroline scoffs at this question.

CAROLINE

I don't want you to stay here for the wrong reasons.

RICHARD

"The wrong reasons"?

CAROLINE

You two never got along. You practically told me you hated him.

RICHARD

I admit we had our differences, but I never once said anything remotely like that.

CAROLINE

I don't want to get into an argument with you. Especially under these circumstances.

RICHARD

I'm not trying to argue with you, I'm just-

CAROLINE

(cutting him off)

Please Richard, I can't do this right now.

Caroline tromps off into the bathroom.

Moment's later, Richard's cell phone rings. He answers it.

RICHARD

Hello?

(beat)

Yes this is he.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)  
Are you sure?  
(beat)  
Of course, I'm on my way.

Richard approaches the bathroom door.

RICHARD  
Carol, I just got a call from the  
headman's secretary, they want us  
to come down as soon as possible.  
It's about Andrew.

INT. BRADFIELD COLLEGE, HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Caroline and Andrew sit pensively before an expansive office  
desk occupied by Regis.

Regis takes off his spectacles and massages his forehead  
lightly.

REGIS  
There's been a recent family  
tragedy?

CAROLINE  
Yes, my uh.....my father was run  
over by a car a few days ago.

REGIS  
(riveted)  
Oh! That's terrible. How is he  
doing?

CAROLINE  
He's in a coma. But the doctors say  
there's a good chance he might come  
around soon.

REGIS  
My condolences.

CAROLINE  
Thank you.

RICHARD  
We appreciate it.

REGIS  
Unfortunately, what I'm about to  
say won't assuage the wounds so to  
speak. Andrew is in very big  
trouble I'm afraid.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

What kind of trouble?

REGIS

Well this morning, as I walked into my office I was greeted by a brown envelope on my desk. Inside the envelope were five photographs, each depicting Andrew smoking marijuana with a group of fellow students.

Caroline nods her head in utter disbelief. Richard, for his part, is completely emotionless.

CAROLINE

That can't be. Andrew would never do that. We both spoke to him about drugs.

Regis pulls open a nearby drawer and removes a brown envelope from it. He opens it, takes out a stack of photographs, and hands them to Caroline.

Caroline scans the photographs with a look of visceral disdain. Richard doesn't even bother looking. He merely fixes his empty gaze on Regis.

Caroline has seen enough. She sets the photos back down on the desk.

REGIS

Now I'm sure you are aware of our strict drug policy here at Bradfield. We do not tolerate this kind of behaviour. Especially when it's violated by one of our star sportsmen.

CAROLINE

Andrew's a good student. He's never been in trouble before.

REGIS

Yes, he does have a clean record. And we took that into consideration before deciding on his punishment.

CAROLINE

Already....?

(CONTINUED)

REGIS

I'm afraid so. Andrew is as of this moment, suspended until further notice. The disciplinary board will decide when to reinstate him.

CAROLINE

Is there nothing we can do?

REGIS

No. We can't make exceptions. Even for our best students.

(beat)

I will make sure he's kept on track in regards to his school work. We don't want him lagging behind when he returns.

CAROLINE

....thank you.

REGIS

You're welcome. I always tell parents who find themselves in this situation to try and stay calm, and talk to their children. A little communication goes a long way.

CAROLINE

Thank you.

REGIS

Again, I hope your father makes a speedy recovery.

CAROLINE

Thank you.

Richard and Caroline both rise to their feet and after shaking hands with Regis, they exit the office.

#### **HALLWAY - SAMETIME**

Into a hallway where Andrew leans against a wall, his eyes cast down in shame. Caroline, incensed, marches straight past Andrew without even acknowledging him.

Richard casts a pitiful look at Andrew.

RICHARD

Get your things. We're leaving now.

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW  
Dad, I'm sorry.

RICHARD  
I know.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

A MAN sits in a car parked in front of an empty barnyard, his face masked by a tattered hood save for his darting eyes that are visible through two carved out holes.

The air is filled with the faint, muffled sound of coughing emanating from the back seat.

Pull back to reveal- A HALF NAKED FEMALE FIGURE, bound and sporting the same hood over her face. She attempts to remove the hood with her hands but they are so tightly bound that she is unable to flex her fingers.

The man places his hands ontop of the steering wheel and squeezes intently.

**SUDDENLY-**

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, BEDROOM - SAMETIME

Richard bolts up in bed, sweating. He looks around frantically as if searching for a misplaced item. He turns to his side and fortunately for him, he hasn't woken up Caroline.

**A DIALING TONE PLAYS OVER BLACK.**

THEN

CLICK. And A VOICE- 'Hello?'

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is on the phone with John. There's an uneasy tension about him as he fiddles with a pen.

RICHARD  
Hi John, it's Richard.

JOHN  
(surprised)  
Richard.....

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Yes, I hope you don't mind but I asked Sarah for your private number.

JOHN

Of course not. I hope everything is alright? I heard about Mitch, I'm dreadfully sorry.

RICHARD

Thanks John.

JOHN

How is Carol holding up?

RICHARD

She's devastated.....but I think we'll pull through. The doctors are optimistic.

JOHN

Well I'm glad to hear that. And just so you know, we're doing our part here. Whoever did this will be caught. I promise you.

RICHARD

I appreciate it John.

(beat)

I need to ask for a favour.

JOHN

Of course, anything.

RICHARD

Are you at your desk?

JOHN

Yes.

RICHARD

Good. I need some information on the owner of this plate number. H, 4, K, 2, 4, L. Can you run it through your system?

JOHN

I can try. Give me a second.

The sound of rapid tapping can be heard as John runs the plate number through the police database.

A few seconds later-

(CONTINUED)

JOHN  
I'm sorry Richard, but we don't  
have anything on that number.

RICHARD  
That's a pity.  
(beat)  
Do you have access to another  
police database? Perhaps London  
metropolitan?

JOHN  
Richard. You know I have to ask  
you-

RICHARD  
(cutting him off)  
I know. But I can't tell  
anyone....not now anyway.

A brief silence ensues from John's end.

JOHN  
I'll call you back.

RICHARD  
Ok.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - LATER

Richard's cell phone rings and he answers it immediately.

JOHN  
What's your email?

RICHARD  
R.Baines@hotmail.co.uk.

JOHN  
I'm sending you everything on that  
number you gave me.

RICHARD  
Thanks John.

JOHN  
I hope you know what you're doing.

RICHARD  
I do. Thanks again.

(CONTINUED)

Richard hangs up and turns on his computer. He logs on to his email account and clicks on the flashing new message from John in his inbox.

Once opened, he downloads an attached file despite being advised to do the opposite by his antivirus software.

A page pops up that contains a MUG SHOT of the BLACK MAN and his detailed criminal record.

Richard scans the document and his eyes soon come across a photograph of a tattoo on the black man's right shoulder blade. The tattoo depicts an enlarged locust feeding on a wheat plain- similar to the one he saw on Anna's neck.

A note printed beneath the photograph describes the tattoo as the official sign of a notorious south-east crime syndicate in London.

He is about to write down a home address under the heading of 'current status' when a rap on the door startles him.

RICHARD  
(irritated)  
Who is it?

CAROLINE  
It's me Richard.

Richard looks even more startled now.

RICHARD  
Come in.

He minimizes the page on his computer and stands up to greet his wife with a hug.

CAROLINE  
Sorry to show up unannounced like this.

RICHARD  
Don't apologise.

CAROLINE  
Sarah told me you were taking a break.

RICHARD  
Not really but please, sit down.

Caroline sits down.

RICHARD

Do you want anything?

CAROLINE

No I'm fine, thank you.

(beat)

You know....I haven't been here since Andrew was 11.

RICHARD

Wow! that long....?

CAROLINE

(looking around)

Yep. I've missed it.

RICHARD

Well it's missed you.

Caroline manages a smile.

CAROLINE

Sarah is so lovely. I'm sure everyone loves her warmth.

RICHARD

Yeah, I don't know what I'd do without her.

CAROLINE

I can imagine.

RICHARD

How's dad?

CAROLINE

Still in the coma.

RICHARD

What did the doctors say?

CAROLINE

Nothing they haven't already said before. "Be strong, hang in there, he could wake up when you least expect it".

RICHARD

You should listen to them.

CAROLINE

I wish I had the strength....I wish.....

(CONTINUED)

Caroline looks at Richard with eyes wrought with sorrow and without warning she is overcome. She lurches forward, burying her face in her hands.

The sobs come unrestrained, violently, like a sudden tidal wave. Richard looks away, unable to watch as his wife unravels right before him.

CAROLINE

I-I don't know what I would do if  
he di...

The office intercom squawks, prompting Caroline to wipe away her tears.

SARAH

Richard, Mr Greenbalt just arrived.

RICHARD

Ok. Thanks.

Caroline moves to stand.

RICHARD

You don't have to go. He can wait.

CAROLINE

No please, go ahead. I'm fine.

RICHARD

I can make him-

CAROLINE

Richard please, I'm fine.

RICHARD

Are you sure?

She smiles at him and nods her head to quell his concerns.

She exits the office. Richard sighs and casts a look at his computer.

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, DINNER TABLE- NIGHT

The Baines family sit down to a quiet and sullen dinner of, mediocre looking, spaghetti bolognese.

Andrew has barely touched his food. He looks at Richard and then at Caroline, and after what seems like forever murmurs-

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW  
Can I be excused?

CAROLINE  
No.

Andrew sulks like a petulant teenager.

Emma, on the other hand, looks like she's itching to say something. She puts down her cutlery and clears her throat audibly.

CAROLINE  
What's the matter Emma?

EMMA  
I have something to say that might cheer us up.

CAROLINE  
I would certainly like to hear that.

EMMA  
Remember that student opera thing I told you guys about? Well....I got the violin solo.

Caroline smiles in subdued excitement- she's trying her best to be supportive.

CAROLINE  
Congrats Emma, I'm so proud of you.

RICHARD  
Well done. Good job.

EMMA  
Thanks.

CAROLINE  
I think this calls for some champagne. Richard, do you mind?

**DINNER TABLE- MOMENTS LATER**

Richard uncorks a bottle of champagne.

Andrew's face lights up as Richard pours a little bit of champagne into his glass.

Richard serves the rest of the family and then raises his glass to make a toast.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Maybe Andrew should make the toast.

Andrew frowns a little before taking his cue.

ANDREW

A toast to Emma, for her hard work and perseverance. A toast, that I may follow in her footsteps. And a toast to grandpa, for renewed health.

Everyone joins in in a chorus of cheers and then the toast is capped off with the obligatory clinking of glasses.

Caroline smiles at Richard and he reciprocates the gesture.

EXT. BARNYARD - NIGHT

The HOODED MAN from the earlier scene drags the HOODED GIRL by her legs across the muddy grounds of a barnyard.

He drags her amidst her muffled cries and then halts-slamming her legs hard to the ground.

The girl rolls around in a frenzy.

The man reaches down and grabs her hands. He holds them steady as he takes off her hood to reveal the bloodied and bruised face of a YOUNGER LOOKING ANNA.

Her face spells a look of profound trepidation as the man pulls out a knife and dangles it at a precarious distance from her face.

Anna tries to remain still despite her entire body trembling with fright.

The man places the knife underneath the gag over her mouth and in one quick swoosh! He cuts it in half.

He lets go of her hands and Anna begins coughing violently-as though accursed by an asthma attack.

A FIRM KNOCK AND-

INT. LONDON HOTEL SUITE, BATHROOM SINK - EVENING

Richard, dressed in a sharp black tuxedo, snaps out of his nightmare.

CAROLINE (O.S.)  
Richard, what's taking you so long?  
we're going to be late.

Richard stares at himself in the mirror as though scrutinizing his appearance.

CAROLINE (O.S.)  
Richard.....?

RICHARD  
Sorry, I'll be out in a second.

Richard turns on the tap and splashes some water on his face. He dries his face and turns to leave but turns back when a bloodstain on his white windsor shirt catches his attention.

RICHARD  
Shit!!

A blood rivulet leaks from his nose. He wipes it off and stops the nosebleed quickly with the aid of some kleenexs.

CAROLINE (O.S.)  
(angry)  
Richard!!!

RICHARD  
I'm almost done.

CAROLINE (O.S.)  
What are you even doing?

RICHARD  
Have some patience ok.

He quickly untucks his shirt and grabs a face towel and a bar of soap. He turns on the tap and shifts the lever towards the red marker that signals hot water.

He lets the water run for a bit and dampens the face towel. He rubs some soap on the towel and then scrubs off the bloodstain at a feverish pace.

The blood disappears soon enough but leaves behind a noticeable water stain. He winces.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Shit.

Richard takes off his jacket and steps back into the room where Caroline, looking incandescent in a long black dress, throws up her hands in bewilderment.

CAROLINE

What is going on?

RICHARD

(pointing at the stain)

I have to change.

He walks over to a drawer and pulls out a new shirt.

ANDREW

Good thing you came with an extra.

CAROLINE

Andrew, help your father change.

I'll call a taxi.

Andrew assists his father by holding his jacket as Richard quickly puts on his new shirt.

Caroline hangs up the hotel landline.

CAROLINE

Are we done? There's a cab waiting  
for us downstairs.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Caroline's cell phone rings as they walk towards an elevator. Caroline picks up.

CAROLINE

Hello?

(beat)

Linda, how are you?

(beat)

Emma....? You mean she's not with  
you?

The three of them freeze on that last question.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I don't understand. I thought she  
and Sarah had planned to go  
together. Is she not picking up her  
phone?

(CONTINUED)

(beat)  
Umm...well we're actually on our way there right now. She probably just went along with the main group. I'll try calling her myself.  
(beat)  
Thanks Linda.

Caroline hangs up and immediately rings Emma.

They all wait apprehensively as the dialling tone goes unanswered.

Caroline leaves a voicemail.

CAROLINE  
Emma darling, this is your mother. Sarah's mum just called to tell us you weren't with them. What's going on? I thought the plan was to get a lift with them? Please call me or your father back. We are really worried. Please call us as soon as you get this message. I love you.....bye.

She hangs up and looks at Richard and Andrew for some much needed reassurance.

RICHARD  
She must have gone with the main group.

CAROLINE  
It's so unlike her though, to not call before changing plans.....

RICHARD  
I'm sure she's there. She has to be there.

INT. LONDON OPERA HOUSE, LOBBY - EVENING

Richard, Andrew, and Caroline are sat pensively in a busy reception area.

A stout brunette in bifocals steps out from an elevator and immediately looks towards their direction.

ANDREW  
Mum, that's her....Miss Dyer.

(CONTINUED)

Caroline waves at her and MISS LINDSAY DYER briskly walks over.

LINDSAY  
Mrs. Baines?

CAROLINE  
Please call me Carol.  
(pointing to Richard)  
This is my husband Richard.

They shake hands.

LINDSAY  
Very nice to meet you. I don't  
suppose Emma is getting something  
from the car?

The blood drains from Caroline's face.

Richard and Andrew appear largely unshaken- but we can discern their genuine concern.

CAROLINE  
Oh God! we were hoping that she  
came with you.

LINDSAY  
With me? I don't understand. She  
was given permission to travel with  
a friend.

CAROLINE  
Yes, that was the plan. But I got a  
call from her friend's mum as we  
were leaving the hotel, asking if  
we knew where she was.

LINDSAY  
That's strange. I tried calling her  
several times, she never picked up.

CAROLINE  
We can't reach her either. It's so  
unlike her.

LINDSAY  
When was the last time you spoke to  
her?

CAROLINE  
Right before she left this morning.  
Why?

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY

I don't know....did she seem different? A little upset maybe?

CAROLINE

No, the complete opposite. I've never seen her so excited.

(to Richard)

You dropped her off at school, she looked her normal self right?

RICHARD

Yes, very much so. Extremely happy for obvious reasons.

CAROLINE

Maybe her band mates might know something. Do you mind asking?

LINDSAY

I already did. They don't know anything.

CAROLINE

Please, ask again.

LINDSAY

Ok, I'll call my assistant upstairs. She's with the students rehearsing.

Lindsay walks over to the concierge and asks for a room number to be dialled. They do as requested and hand her a receiver.

Caroline, Richard, and Andrew all watch with an almost disturbing gaze as Lindsay inquires about Emma's whereabouts.

Moments later, Lindsay nodes her head in despair.

Caroline looks away- tears now beginning to cascade down her cheek.

INT. BAINES HOTEL SUITE - LATER

Caroline is sat at the dressing table while Andrew and Richard pace back and forth. There's a palpable sense of apprehension in the air as Caroline fiddles with a photograph of Emma.

A knock on the door, Richard answers it.

(CONTINUED)

Andrew walks over to his mother.

ANDREW

Mum, do you want anything?

CAROLINE

No, thank you.

Richard comes back in with two police officers: Detective Chief Inspector NATHAN STROUT and Chief Inspector TOM LONGDEN.

STROUT

Good evening, I'm detective Strout,  
this is inspector Longden.

CAROLINE

Carol.

They exchange handshakes.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Please tell me you have some good  
news.

STROUT

I'm afraid not. But all our  
officers have been notified,  
including Thames Valley police. If  
she's out there, we'll find her.  
The important thing is to stay calm  
and to avoid thinking about the  
worst.

CAROLINE

Which is?

STROUT

.....abduction.

Caroline fights back a tear.

LONGDEN

If that's the case we should be  
contacted, at the very latest, in  
three days.

STROUT

I just have a few questions for the  
both of you if you don't mind?

Caroline and Richard nod their assent.

(CONTINUED)

STROUT

Good. First off, has Emma ever done anything like this before?

CAROLINE

What? Gone missing?

STROUT

No. But you mentioned that it was highly unusual for her to change plans without letting you two know. Has she been distant lately, at home or at school?

CAROLINE

No. Not that we know of anyway.

STROUT

So you're not sure?

RICHARD

Emma's been the same. Forever smiling and looking forward to perform today.

STROUT

So there's no chance she might have.....ran away?

CAROLINE

Emma's a happy girl, a great student. Hard working, diligent, always home early, never a cause for complaint. I don't see why she would do anything like that.

STROUT

Sometimes the motives are very unclear.

CAROLINE

Even if, why today of all days? Tonight was practically the culmination of a life's long ambition. Why would she suddenly sacrifice that?

STROUT

True. But as I said sometimes these things aren't as clear cut as they seem.

(beat)

What do you do for a living madam?

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE  
I'm a.....I stay at home.

STROUT  
(to Richard)  
And you sir?

RICHARD  
I'm a dentist.

STROUT  
Ok, I'm just asking because some occupations come with special hazards such as enemies. You wouldn't happen to know anyone that might want to harm your daughter in order to get to you? That applies to your personal lives as well?

CAROLINE  
God no!

Caroline turns to Richard.

RICHARD  
Same here.

STROUT  
Well that's enough of the questions for now. I'm going to station an officer right outside your door for tonight.

CAROLINE  
Thank you.

STROUT  
You're welcome. You might also be contacted tonight. Make sure the officer is in here before answering and put the phone on speaker, so he can monitor the conversation.

The officers turn to leave.

CAROLINE  
What if no one calls us tonight? Is there a deadline for these things?

STROUT  
Well like inspector Longden said, we can only go by previous cases which indicate that families are  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STROUT (cont'd)  
usually contacted within the first  
two days of a reported abduction.  
But, like I said, it's best we try  
to remain as calm as possible.

CAROLINE  
Thank you.

STROUT  
You're welcome.

Richard escorts the officers out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - SAMETIME

Richard follows them out onto the hallway.

RICHARD  
When you asked us if we had any  
err.....enemies. I didn't want to  
say anything because it might have  
uhh.....might have upset my wife  
even further.

STROUT  
I understand.

RICHARD  
In fact, I don't know if I can  
really label it as an enemy but  
ehh.....well there's this woman  
who's been bothering me lately.  
She's been showing up at my  
practice.....

STROUT  
A stalker.....?

RICHARD  
You could say that.

STROUT  
Do you know her?

RICHARD  
No. Don't even know her name. But  
she claims the opposite.....insists  
that we had some kind of a history  
together. The way she tells the  
stories.....I think she's a  
lunatic. I could see her pulling  
off something this daring.

(CONTINUED)

STROUT

Do you know where we can find her?

RICHARD

I have her Bradfield address.

He takes out a scrap of paper from his shirt and hands it to Strout.

Strout takes a quick look at it and nodes his head.

RICHARD

And please, try and keep this between us. It's probably not even anything.

STROUT

Will do.

Richard watches the officers as they leave.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAMETIME

Richard steps back into the room and shuts the door. He walks into the bedroom and sees Andrew gazing out the window.

RICHARD

Where's your mother?

ANDREW

In the loo.

RICHARD

I know this must be hard for you.

ANDREW

I'm fine.

RICHARD

Are you sure? You know you can talk to me right?

ANDREW

I know.

(beat)

I'm fine.

Richard approaches the bathroom door.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Carol.....?

CAROLINE  
I need to be alone.

RICHARD  
You really think that--

CAROLINE  
(cutting him off)  
Please.

Richard pulls back, sighs, then trudges over to Andrew's side.

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, DINING TABLE - DAY

A bedraggled-looking Caroline sits with Andrew by the phone. A solicitor is here as well.

MONTAGE- of chaos and panic. London Metropolitan police are trying to set up shop. Tape recorders. Listening devices. Video cameras.

EXT. BACKYARD - SAMETIME

DCI Strout is updating Richard on his 'stalker' tip.

STROUT  
Her name is Anna Langford. She moved out here to reacclimate herself with nature. Her words, not mine.

RICHARD  
Did you search the house?

STROUT  
We can't do that without a warrant. Plus she claims she's never seen or heard of your daughter and has never harassed you in any way shape or form.

RICHARD  
(raising his voice)  
I'm telling you she has. She tracked me down the other week at a conference in Edinburgh and threatened me.

(CONTINUED)

STROUT

Why didn't you report it immediately?

RICHARD

I don't know. I told her I would go to the police if she didn't stop.

STROUT

And why didn't you?

RICHARD

I thought she would stop.

STROUT

I wish I could press the matter further but this woman is severely handicapped, literally.

RICHARD

She's working with someone, a black guy....he's always with her.

STROUT

I didn't see anyone. And even so, we would need more than belated accusations of harassment to obtain a search warrant.

The O.S. sound of a ringing phone erupts like a bomb exploding from the inside. Strout and Richard rush back into the house.

INT. DINING ROOM - SAMETIME

A technician answers. Everybody is on headsets, monitoring. Strout hands Caroline the receiver. Caroline takes a deep breath.

We hear the conversation.

CAROLINE

Hello?

CYNTHIA

Hello....is that you Carol?

A collective sigh of disappointment reverberates around the room.

Carol nods her head in annoyance. Strout signals to her to cut off the phone with a hand to his neck.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Carol are you there? Carol.....

Without responding, Carol slams the phone down in frustration and storms off.

Everybody watches her leave- they understand.

INT. KITCHEN/BEDROOM - LATER

Richard is applying finishing touches to a tuna sandwich. He grabs a bottle of water from the fridge and heads up the stairs with the food.

Richard walks into the master bedroom and parks the food on a table.

Caroline emerges from the bathroom dressed like she's about to go out.

RICHARD

Where are you going?

CAROLINE

I just got a call from the hospital. Dad's finally woken up.

RICHARD

(elated)

That's fantastic!

CAROLINE

It's not that great. He can only move his eyes. But I thought I'd better give him some good news.

Caroline grabs her handbag and starts for the door.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Sorry about the food. I don't have an appetite for anything at the moment.

RICHARD

I'll come with you.

CAROLINE

Don't be silly. Someone has to be here.

Caroline is putting up quite a brave face for the first time. She even manages to plant a kiss on Richards's lips before leaving.

(CONTINUED)

Richard is visibly surprised.

RICHARD  
(in a loud whisper)  
Bye.....

Richard gazes at the food he just brought in. He exhales audibly and settles down to eat it.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Andrew pats Richard on the shoulder in an attempt to wake him up from his nap.

ANDREW  
Dad....Dad....wake up.

RICHARD  
(half-awake)  
What....?

ANDREW  
The police!

Richard is fully awake now.

RICHARD  
W-What?

ANDREW  
The police, they found something.

**DOWNSTAIRS: SAMETIME**

Richard and Andrew make their way down the stairs.

At the bottom of the stairway, Caroline watches in bemusement as an officer holds up a minuscule wireless surveillance camera.

STROUT  
(to Richard)  
One of my men accidentally stumbled  
on this.

Strout points at the camera in the officer's hand.

RICHARD  
What is it?

(CONTINUED)

STROUT

It's a wireless covert camera, similar to the one we use in drug busts. It fell out of a picture frame in your daughter's bedroom.

Richard looks at Caroline, who has her hand firmly placed over her mouth in utter bewilderment.

STROUT

I've already asked your wife and son and they both claim they don't know anything about it. And I'm assuming Emma doesn't either, because this is pretty advanced stuff. That leaves you, having owned the house before-  
(pointing at Caroline)  
she moved in, did you install any cameras without their knowledge.

RICHARD

(indignant)  
No!! Of course not.

STROUT

Then perhaps it's safe to assume that this might be the key to finding your daughter.

Caroline looks away in horror.

STROUT

Have you had any break-in's recently?

RICHARD

No. We've never had any.

STROUT

None that you noticed anyway.

ANDREW

Are we being watched?

STROUT

Only time will tell. I already called in a team to conduct a thorough sweep of the house. I have a feeling there's plenty more where that came from.

(CONTINUED)

They react as two vehicles pull up outside. Chaos as the front door opens. MEN IN SUITS, several POLICEMEN each armed with high-tech covert camera detectors.

Strout barks out some orders, designating some policemen to one area of the house and others to another.

MONTAGE: The thorough sweep for bugs commences.

INTERCUT WITH SCENES OF RICHARD, CAROLINE, AND ADREW WAITING APPREHENSIVELY IN THE LIVING ROOM.

The cops carefully fan their detectors over everything including, family portraits, picture frames, smoke alarms, wardrobes, toilets, drawers, doorknobs, clocks, carpets, book cases, computers, plants, and their vases.

The red lights on the detectors flash non-stop as most of the enumerated items conceal an almost inconspicuous wireless camera.

Once a cop locates a camera, he carefully uproots it and puts it in a large cardboard box.

At the end of the tedious search, the box is more or less full.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Caroline, Richard, and Andrew watch closely as the box is closed, sealed, and carried out of the house by two officers for inspection.

Strout strides purposefully over. He looks about as mystified as they do.

ANDREW

What are you going to do with them?

STROUT

We're going to check them for fingerprints then run it through our database, see if it comes up with anything. But that might be wishful thinking, I'm assuming anyone smart enough to carry out such an expansive installation process wasn't stupid enough to leave fingerprints. We're also running a product trace right now, maybe we find the seller and that'll lead us to whoever's behind this.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Maybe.

STROUT

I'm afraid that's all we have. I've never seen anything like it before. It must have taken weeks, even months to set up and extensive surveillance system like this one, and right under your very noses.

CAROLINE

Should we leave? I mean.....are you sure you found everything?

STROUT

We checked everywhere possible and impossible to put a camera of this size. But just to be on the safe side, we're going to install a 24 hour infrared tracking device around the house. It'll pick up any hidden camera signals.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

Richard is having a quiet smoke alone- pondering over the events that just took place.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

I didn't know you smoked?

RICHARD

Sorry.

He puts it out.

RICHARD (cont'd)

I quit right before we met.

CAROLINE

That's convenient. For me that is.

An awkward silence ensues.

Caroline moves closer to Richard as though about to tell him a secret.

CAROLINE

Richard, if there's something you want to tell me. Now's the time.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

What?

CAROLINE

I know we've had our issues but I have always respected you nonetheless. And I know you don't want anything bad to happen to her.

RICHARD

(shocked)

What?!! Carol come on, you can't really be-

CAROLINE

(angrily interrupts)

Please. Just tell me. I won't tell them, I promise.

Richard looks her dead in the eye and says-

RICHARD

There is nothing to say. I had nothing to do with that.

(beat)

How can you even suggest that I would do anything to hurt Emma.

CAROLINE

That's the problem isn't it? Far too much *suggesting* going on around here.

Caroline trudges back into the house- the last few hours are beginning to take their toll on her.

Richard gazes, desolately, at Strout as he converses with some policemen in the kitchen.

He nods his head in dismay and briskly renters the house.

#### **FRONT ENTRY WAY**

Richard grabs his coat and exits the front door much to the confusion of the onlooking policemen. Caroline, for her part, doesn't even acknowledge his departure.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Richard punches in an address into his GPS. A map directing him towards the location appears. He studies it and accelerates ahead.

INT. CAR- LATER

Richard is parked across the street from a decrepit council estate. He gawks intently at the building then exits the car.

EXT/INT. ESTATE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Richard approaches a door with a plaque that reads '133'. He pauses momentarily then peeks through a small window to his right. He sees nothing but darkness.

He looks to his sides, making sure the coast is clear, then presses his ear against the door- all is quiet on the western front.

He draws back, exhales, and feels the simple doorknob style. He reaches into his coat pocket and takes out a paper clip.

He straightens out the paper clip and pushes the pick into the hole in the knob.

One turn, two turns, and on the third turn; the door clicks open- he's obviously done this before.

He looks to his sides once more before stepping in.

He feels the sides of the wall- searching for a wall switch. He finds it and flicks it on to reveal an unremarkable apartment littered with beer bottles, ice buckets, and Chinese take out.

Richard winces from the foul stench.

He walks into a miniature kitchen and checks the fridge; as though expecting to find some incriminating evidence in there.

He makes his way down a short corridor and into a surprisingly capacious-

BEDROOM

He looks around- nothing catches his eye. He checks the wardrobe and the space underneath the bed- nothing there less dirty laundry.

(CONTINUED)

Next, he checks the bathroom and pulls back the shower curtain to reveal a tub in dire need of some cleaning.

THE O.S. SOUND OF SLUGGISH FOOTSTEPS EMERGES FROM THE BACKGROUND.

Richard turns around swiftly- he's left the lights on.

He races back to the living room and switches off the lights as the footsteps draw nearer and nearer until they pause in front of the door.

O.S. sounds of keys clanging against metal as someone unlocks the door.

The lights come on revealing the BLACK MAN.

He squints intently, as though he's noticed something out of place. He nods his head- it's nothing.

He staggers towards the kitchen- he's intoxicated. He almost falls but manages to hold onto a nearby table.

He whacks his head violently and tries again.

This time, he makes it to the fridge and takes out a bottle of water, which he downs in one gulp. He tosses the bottle to the side and lets out an almighty belch.

BATHROOM

He staggers into the bathroom and urinates- it's a long one.

He flushes and as he starts to the sink, Richard emerges from behind the shower curtain and shoves him hard against the wall.

The black man goes in head first and collapses to the ground.

Richard circles his body.

The black man comes around. He feels the huge gash on his forehead and grimaces in pain.

RICHARD  
Where is she?

The black man opens his mouth to speak but nothing comes out.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD  
Where is she?

The black man looks like his about to pass out. Richard grabs him by the shirt and props him up against the damaged wall.

The black man spits in Richard's face.

Richard, unperturbed by the saliva cascading down his cheek, continues his interrogation.

RICHARD  
For the last time, where is my  
daughter?

The black man grins and breaks into a raspy laugh. Richard hurls him into the bathtub.

Richard grabs the shower hose and wraps it around the black man's neck. The black man reaches up to try to get his hands under the strangling hose.

Richard brings pressure. His wrists whiten around the hose. The black man's legs writhe and stamp.

He moves clumsily from left to right, crabbing around the pivot-point of Richard's back arched against the wall.

The black man's flailing legs kick over several toiletries resting on the lip of the bathtub.

Blood creeps around the friction point where the hose bites the black man's throat. He spits out blood.

Richard feels with his thumb at the black man's neck and averts his own face. A yank of the chain ruptures the carotid artery.

It jets blood. The blood hits the bathroom wall, drumming hollowly. Richard lets go of the black man's body and stares at it with visceral disdain.

He moves over to the sink and washes his hands and the streak of saliva off his face.

Richard turns his attention to the limp body of the black man and searches its pockets. He pulls out some random business cards and a wad of cash, which he discards in frustration.

He rolls the body over and removes a cell phone from the back pocket.

(CONTINUED)

Richard quickly scans the caller id and stops at a number that reads 'LOCUST' in bold dark letters.

He dials the number and Anna answers immediately.

ANNA  
Is there a problem?

Richard doesn't respond.

ANNA  
Are you there?

RICHARD  
Where is she?

A brief pause ensues from Anna's line.

ANNA  
What have you done Richard?

RICHARD  
Where is she?

ANNA  
What have you done?

RICHARD  
Where is she?

Anna hangs up.

ENRAGED, Richard hurls the phone against the wall. The phone shatters on impact.

EXT. WASTELAND - LATER

Footbridge over railway sandwiched between freeway. Empty train blazes through. Dangerous, deserted downtown neighborhood. Looks more like "war torn Beirut", burnt out cars and trash.

EMOTIONLESS, Richard watches a small BONFIRE ablaze at a distance. A group of HOODED BLACK KIDS on bicycles ride menacingly around the growing flame.

The kids soon disperse leaving Richard and the dancing flame to taunt each other with their melancholy.

EXT. BRADFIELD PARK - MORNING

The croaking of some dismal raven punctuates the frigid air of an early morning.

Move in on a FEMALE FIGURE cowering underneath a slide. Her head mummified in tape leaving one ear exposed.

The figure shivers and unclenches her palm to reveal a broken piece of bridge from a violin.

INT. BAINES RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

A handful of policemen mill about the living room. Caroline and Andrew walk in with some refreshments: tea and biscuits to be exact. The policemen don't need a second invitation to help themselves.

The back door alarm sounds off momentarily- Richard has just walked in

INT. KITCHEN- SAMETIME

Richard is rummaging through the fridge when Caroline tromps in with an empty tray. She sets it down on a table and eyes Richard from top to bottom- she doesn't like what she sees.

CAROLINE

Where have you been all night?

Richard doesn't respond.

CAROLINE

I asked you a question.

Richard takes out a carton of orange juice and reads the expiration date. Caroline moves closer and grabs Richard by the arm.

Richard shoots her a stern look and Caroline immediately lets go of his arm. He slams the fridge door closed.

STROUT (O.S.)

Sorry to interrupt.

Strout comes into view. Caroline manages a thin smile to undercut the tension.

STROUT

We found her.

INT. HOSPITAL, EMR - DAY

Emma hooked up. Tubes running in and out of her. And She's suddenly surrounded. Caroline, Andrew, Richard, and a Doctor all stand at the foot of the bed.

CAROLINE  
(to doctor)  
May I?

She motions towards Emma.

DOCTOR  
Of course.

Caroline moves closer and gently pulls back a long strand of hair resting on Emma's forehead. Emma's face is surprisingly unscathed.

CAROLINE  
How long has she been like this?

DOCTOR  
She fell unconscious in the ambulance about 2 hours ago. Most likely induced by hypothermia, she was out in the cold for a long time.

CAROLINE  
Will she come around soon?

DOCTOR  
She should. Fortunately, we haven't found any injuries, she came out pretty unscathed.

Caroline can't fight back the tears any longer and she starts sobbing. The doctor leaves. Andrew consoles his mum with a deep embrace and for the first time, he too sheds a few tears.

Richard, on the other hand, stands motionless as though paralyzed by the scene of family solidarity playing out before him.

He extends an arm but retracts it immediately- it's too soon, far too soon.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A hand shakes a few pills onto a saucer. Pull back to reveal Caroline as she reaches for a tumbler and fills it with tap water.

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - SAMETIME

Caroline walks in on the unsettling image of Emma struggling to play her violin.

Emma drops the violin in frustration. Caroline picks it up and lays it gently on the bed. Like an infant.

CAROLINE

Darling, don't rush it. It'll come back.

Emma nods her head like a mute.

Caroline hands her the saucer. Emma doesn't even look at it, she just stares into the empty space in front of her.

CAROLINE

Emma you have to try. If not the food at least the medication.

Emma keeps staring aimlessly.

CAROLINE

Emma please?

Emma remains unmoved.

Caroline sighs and looks away- she's utterly deflated. She leaves the medication for Emma. Like a zookeeper.

She exits the room and makes her way downstairs.

The doorbell rings.

INT. FRONT ENTRY WAY - SAMETIME

Caroline opens the door to reveal DCI Strout.

STROUT

Hi Carol.

CAROLINE

Nathan.

(CONTINUED)

STROUT  
How are things?

CAROLINE  
I should be overjoyed but....I sort  
of feel worse.  
(beat)  
Does that make me a bad person?

STROUT  
It's normal. I can't tell you how  
many times I've heard that from  
other parents. You have to be  
patient.

CAROLINE  
Is that even possible?

STROUT  
What?

CAROLINE  
Normality. Once it's taken from you  
in such a traumatizing manner, can  
it ever be regained?

STROUT  
Some families pray about it.  
Others....well, they hope. But you  
have to talk about it, pretending  
it never happened is seldom the  
answer.

Caroline nods in concurrence.

**EMMA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Strout and Caroline quietly walk in on Emma as she settles  
down to take a nap. She frowns at the sight of them.

Caroline glances at the untouched saucer.

CAROLINE  
Emma. I want you to meet detective  
Strout. He was the man in charge of  
finding you. He's also been a  
really good friend.

Emma looks at him and then averts her gaze.

STROUT  
Emma, I can't imagine what you must  
be going through right now. No one  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STROUT (cont'd)  
can, but sometimes talking about it  
helps.

Strout moves closer to Emma and takes a knee.

STROUT  
Can you tell me what happened?  
Anything you can remember, perhaps  
the people who took you?

Emma slumps her head like a child sulking at an unwanted  
christmas gift.

Strout looks at Caroline as though trying to obtain  
permission to continue. Caroline wipes away a tear.

STROUT  
Emma, you want these people to pay  
for what they did right?

Emma maintains her obstinate posture.

STROUT  
Well, you have to give us  
something, anything.

His words fall upon deaf ears.

INT. FRONT ENTRY WAY - LATER

Caroline sees Strout out the front door.

CAROLINE  
I'm sorry.

STROUT  
Don't be. Honestly, I didn't really  
expect her to be receptive. She's a  
very brave girl nonetheless.

CAROLINE  
I know.

STROUT  
Take care Carol.

CAROLINE  
You too.

Strout goes to leave, but turns back.

(CONTINUED)

STROUT  
Where's Richard?

CAROLINE  
....I don't know.

Strout nods his head; he's not going to pry any further.

INT. DENTAL CLINIC, RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is at his desk, diligently, filing away some documents. He looks a picture of complete serenity unlike Caroline.

The office phone rings. He answers it.

SARAH  
Richard, there's an inspector  
Burton from London Metropolitan on  
the line for you.

RICHARD  
(calmly)  
Put him through.

Richard reclines in his leather chair.

A beat as the dour voice of Inspector FRANK BURTON emerges.

BURTON  
Mr. Baines. I'm F--

RICHARD  
(cutting him off)  
I know who you are. You did a favor  
for John....

FRANK  
That is correct. I'll get straight  
to the point then. Where were you  
on thursday night, march 7th?

RICHARD  
At home.

FRANK  
And that can be corroborated?

RICHARD  
By my wife, yes.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Mr. Baines, the young man whom you asked John for some information on was found dead in his apartment this morning, by his parole officer.

RICHARD

Was that a question or a comment?

FRANK

Both.

RICHARD

Wasn't he gang affiliated?

FRANK

Yes, but we have to cover all our corners on this one. And having expressed keen interest in him, you qualify as one of those corners.

RICHARD

Sorry, but it wasn't me.

FRANK

I never said it was you.

RICHARD

Oh. My mistake.

FRANK

What was your relationship exactly with MR. WILLIAMS?

RICHARD

A friend of a friend.

FRANK

And who is this friend?

RICHARD

Anna Langford.

FRANK

Do you know where I can reach her?

RICHARD

Of course, I'm going to hers right now.

Richard hangs up the phone.

EXT/INT. COTTAGE - LATER

Richard approaches the front door of the cottage. He notices that the door is slightly ajar and he pushes it open.

He walks in and takes in the scene of domestic banality.

He strides to the bottom of the stairway and stares up a moment.

He marches up the steps and then into Anna's-

BEDROOM

Where Anna sits in an almost catatonic state on her wheelchair. Blood rivulets dripping from two incisions on both her wrists.

Richard stares at the slit wrists, then perches down on the bed next to her.

Anna's eyes suddenly blink wide open. She cranes her head lethargically to the side and regards Richard.

Richard looks at her with a placid expression.

Anna pulls back her lips in a rictus of madness.

ANNA  
(stammering)  
J-Join....me.

Richard grimaces in an extraordinary contortion of wrenching pain and self-loathing.

FADE OUT:

THE END