

SILENCE MEANS VIOLENCE

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INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

On the laptop screen, OLIVER (29), a mysterious man, smiles enigmatically.

OLIVER
Very simple...

An active video camera is positioned nearby, displaying the recording on the screen.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Just as goodness conquers any evil,
virtue will conquer any cruelty...

The camera shuts off, ending the recording on the screen. Oliver sits at the table, a folder with photographs in front of him. An unknown person sits in front of him.

Oliver smirks and looks to his right, observing orderlies nearby, then speaks slowly.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I'll miss this place...
(turns to the person)
Of course, I understand that
outside, it's all the same... But
it's here that I finally realized
running away is pointless.
(points at the person)
Fears will always haunt you...
You'll see them everywhere. In
everything. In everyone... The only
way to break free from them is to
confront them.

Oliver looks at the photos on the desk.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
It's an essential condition.

He lifts his gaze and leans forward slightly.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
"Let him turn away from evil and do
good... Let him seek peace and
pursue it".
(beat)
Or... let him create it by his
self.

The mysterious smile.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 7TH FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The corridor of the apartment building is cluttered with belongings and children's toys. From apartment 717, screams, sounds of dishes breaking, and furniture being thrown can be heard.

A delivery worker casually walks by the door as a young boy BILLY (12) slowly walks towards the apartment. He wears a jacket, a hiking backpack on his back, soaking wet because of the rain outside.

Billy stands in front of the door, grabs the handle, and listens to the voices inside. For a moment, the conflict subsides, and Billy lowers the handle and opens the door.

At that moment, a loud sound of a broken plate echoes. Billy enters and closes the door behind him. The sounds of fighting and struggle come from inside the apartment again.

INT./EXT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

It's drizzling outside. A police patrol car is parked near a store. Officer GRAHAM (50s) sits in the driver's seat, sipping coffee, and gazing out the window.

INT./EXT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

At the checkout counter stands a young man in a police uniform, Officer RICE (28). He engages in a friendly conversation with the cashier and holds a bouquet of flowers along with a teddy bear.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Graham looks away, checks the police radio frequency, then looks back towards the store and honks.

INT./EXT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Rice turns his head, waves, and then returns his attention to the cashier, shaking his hand warmly.

INT. PATROL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Graham looks at the road through the windshield. Rice gets into the car and tosses the toy with the flowers onto the backseat. Graham looks at Rice and disapprovingly taps his wristwatch with his finger.

GRAHAM
30 minutes, Rice. What were you
talking about for so long?

RICE
Guess, Graham. I spent 3 years
buying only flowers here.

Rice wipes the windshield and then looks at the control
panel, adjusting the radio.

RICE (CONT'D)
All quiet? Did I miss anything?

Graham starts the car and looks at the backseat, smiling
slightly.

GRAHAM
Um... In some way-

RICE
Come on. I'm serious.

Graham buckles up.

GRAHAM
What did you expect to happen? Look
at the weather; all the criminals
are staying home.

RICE
So, you suggest we pay them a
visit, huh?

Graham smiles and pulls onto the road.

GRAHAM
Looking for adventure?

RICE
Not exactly. I just wouldn't mind a
reward.

Rice buckles up.

RICE (CONT'D)
If you only knew how much I paid
for this bear.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 7TH FLOOR CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The corridor is empty. From apartment 717, screams and sounds
of slams can be heard. The sound of an arriving elevator is
heard from the end of the corridor.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - PARENTS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy enters the room and gently closes the door. Sounds of an argument come from the adjacent room, and rain can be heard outside the window.

Billy takes off his hiking backpack and places it in the corner. He removes his jacket and crawls under the bed with it.

He takes a flashlight from his jacket, turns it on, and hangs it from the bottom of the bed.

Colorful pencils and sheets of paper with beautiful comic-style drawings lie on the floor. Billy begins to draw.

From the next room, a loud knock on the front door is heard. Silence comes. A little beat.

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)

Who's there?

INT. PATROL CAR - LATER

The car with the officers is on the move.

GRAHAM

I don't even know what you're hoping for... It's just routine patrolling, Rice. A little bonus. You know that yourself.

RICE

What if we come across something big?

GRAHAM

Unlikely... If you want something big, transfer to the investigation department. They have a higher salary and bonuses.

RICE

I'm already working on it.

Graham looks at Rice in surprise.

GRAHAM

Oh, shit. Really?

Rice doesn't answer and looks away.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Are you planning to become a detective?

RICE

Why not? Prospects, career growth,
good benefits package-

GRAHAM

Permanent stress, dealing with
killers, a nice view of dead
bodies, and sleepless nights at
work... Maybe I forgot something?

RICE

Uh... Come on. Little nothings of
life.

GRAHAM

Oh, yeah.

Graham asks rhetorically.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

And why do you need all this?

Rice shrugs in silence and looks in the rearview mirror.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

What's your plan? How are you going
to break through to them?

RICE

They have one cold case; trying to
catch a maniac for 5 years. I'm
helping them with the
investigation... I think it will
help me when they will catch him.

Graham ponders.

GRAHAM

5 years? Is that the sick psycho
who draws crosses on the walls?

RICE

Yes, that's him... "Holy Punisher".

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - PARENTS' ROOM - LATER

Bloodied crosses, religious symbols, and writings are drawn
on the walls of the room.

Billy cowers under the bed with a frightened expression on
his face. Blood drips onto his head from above, and the
flashlight hangs nearby, now turned off.

The feet of an unknown person appear in front of Billy, and
they step towards the door.

Billy wipes the blood from his face, accidentally brushing the flashlight, causing it to fall onto the jacket with a slight noise.

The person stops and turns their feet towards the bed. Billy freezes, staring ahead, holding his breath.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Graham looks at the road as the car stops at a traffic light.

GRAHAM

"Holy Punisher", what a stupid name... And how many people has he killed?

RICE

12.

GRAHAM

Jesus Christ... Where does so much cruelty come from people?

(beat)

And how does it happen that some people, after reading the Bible, go help others, while others go on to kill innocent people?

DISPATCHER (RADIO)

All units, we have a call at 45 Damper Street.

Rice grabs the radio, anticipating the call.

RICE

(into the radio)

This unit 16. What's the situation?

DISPATCHER (RADIO)

...Complaints about noise from neighbors.

RICE

(into the radio)

Got it. We'll be there in 5 minutes.

Graham turns on the flashing lights and turns off the main street.

GRAHAM

(sarcastically)

Now, this is serious! I suggest not wasting time and deciding what you'll spend your bonus on.

Rice smiles and checks his gun, nodding towards the backseat.

RICE

Do I have another choice?

Graham chuckles and notices the gun in Rice's hand.

GRAHAM

Do you think that will come in handy?

RICE

Are you afraid we'll wake the neighbors?

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The patrol car stops at the entrance of the building. The officers get out of the car and look around.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 7TH FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The officers walk down the corridor with an elderly woman, DOLORES.

DOLORES

They live upstairs and often make noise.

RICE

Have you tried talking to them?

DOLORES

It's useless. Outside, they act like a perfect family. But I constantly hear them arguing inside their apartment.

RICE

How many people live there?

DOLORES

Husband, wife, and a child.

RICE

I see. So, the husband and wife don't get along?

DOLORES

That's putting it mildly.

The officers and Dolores stop at apartment 717.

GRAHAM

That's door?

DOLORES

Yes.

Graham listens through the door.

GRAHAM

Nothing.

RICE

(to Dolores)

When did you last hear them?

DOLORES

Um, just recently... Literally 2 hours ago.

GRAHAM

2 hours?! Why did you call the police only now?

DOLORES

They suddenly went eerily quiet. It's not like them at all.

Rice rolls his eyes and looks dissatisfied. He notices a small puddle of blood near the edge of the door, seeping out from the apartment.

RICE

Graham.

Rice points to the blood and draws his gun. Graham cautiously takes out his gun and stands against the wall.

GRAHAM

(to Dolores)

Go back to your apartment now!

Dolores gets scared and backs away down the corridor. Graham listens carefully through the door once more.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Quiet.

Rice and Graham take positions on either side of the entrance. Graham forcefully knocks on the door and shouts.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

It's the police! Open the door!

Rice listens and looks at Graham, shaking his head negatively. Graham loudly knocks on the door again.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Police! Open up!

The door of the neighboring apartment opens slightly. A man looks out with curiosity.

RICE

Get back into your apartment, sir!

The man partially closes the door, but continues observing with interest. Graham looks at Rice and nods approvingly. Rice steps in front of the door and kicks it open.

RICE (CONT'D)

Police! Nobody moves!

Rice and Graham enter the apartment, covering each other.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The furniture is overturned on the floor, broken dishes scattered everywhere. Two bloody trails lead from the center of the room to a closed crimson door.

Graham and Rice carefully survey the living room, looking at each other and at the trails leading to the door.

GRAHAM

I'll check another room. Watch the front door.

Graham cautiously enters another room. Rice inspects the living room and the kitchen. He notices a framed photo on the coffee table, approaches it carefully, and scrutinizes it.

On the photo, there's a man with a woman, and discreetly hidden behind them is Billy. Rice senses a smell, picks up an ashtray from the table, and brings it to his nose. Graham returns to the living room.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

It's clear.

They move toward the crimson door and stop at the threshold, looking at each other.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Ready?

RICE

Let's do it!

Rice pulls the handle, and Graham kicks the door open, pointing his gun into the room.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - PARENTS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The officers enter the room and look around. Rice freezes and slowly lowers his gun. Graham turns his head and is horrified.

In the corner, there's a blood-soaked bed. Two disemboweled bodies are sitting on it, both with their intestines turned inside out, and they're bound with them.

On the wall, there are Christian symbols and a phrase written with blood - "ED O OT HN MARV ALLWFDYTDIRO OGEIM AUN AHPK A ESNE SDIUUEE C EMPTEU ILRT".

Rice feels a wave of nausea, but manages to hold it back. Graham covers his mouth and rushes out of the room.

Rice looks at the faces - it's the man and woman from the photo. He leans against the wall, breathing heavily, covering his mouth with his hand. He looks toward the open window and quickly approaches it.

Rice peeks outside, trying to catch his breath. He notices a partially extinguished cigarette butt on the windowsill. Graham comes back into the room, wipes his mouth with a handkerchief, and looks at the wall.

GRAHAM

Damn it... it's the same maniac.

RICE

Yeah... "Holy Punisher".

GRAHAM

Shit.

(beat)

Looks like we'll have to wake up the commissioner.

A strange sound comes from under the bed. Rice and Graham react and take cover, aiming at the bed.

RICE

Hey! Come out!

GRAHAM

Come out and put your hands up!

Graham stands in the doorway, aiming his gun.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Hey! Can you hear?! Come out of there!

Rice keeps the bed in his sights, crouching near the window. Graham turns on the flashlight and shines it under the bed.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Holy shit... Rice, look at that.

Graham gestures for his partner to come closer. Rice approaches Graham and looks at the flashlight's beam. Trembling, Billy is lying in a pool of blood under the bed.

INT. BUTLER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

COMMISSIONER BUTLER (60s) enters the room, tosses his phone on the table, looks inside the fridge, and takes out a bottle of milk. He wearily sits down at the table, drinks the milk, and gazes at the shelf.

There are two photos on the shelf, capturing Commissioner Butler with his wife and son. His son stands somewhat apart from the parents, his arms covered in tattoos. Commendation certificates for Butler's service are displayed nearby.

The phone on the table vibrates. Butler hopes it's his son calling. With anticipation, he picks up the receiver and looks at the screen. Displeasure appears on his face. He answers the phone.

BUTLER

(into the phone)

Robinson, what the hell? Do you see what time it is?

(beat)

What? When?

(beat)

Don't let the press in, I'll be there in 30 minutes. Call Detective Maxwell.

Butler gets up and quickly leaves the room.

INT./EXT. MAXWELL'S CAR - NIGHT

The car enters the courtyard, with DETECTIVE MAXWELL (40s) behind the wheel. He turns off the engine and lets out a heavy sigh. Takes out a wedding ring from the glove compartment and puts it on his finger; looks at the rearview mirror, wiping off a stain on his neck.

INT. MAXWELL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maxwell enters the house, turns on the lights, and quietly takes off his shoes. In the corner of the room is the detective's wife, GRACE. She sits in the armchair and looks at her husband disapprovingly.

Maxwell doesn't notice her and carefully looks towards the stairs, takes off his jacket quietly, and hangs it up.

He accidentally notices his wife and startles.

MAXWELL

Oh, Jesus! You scared me... What's the matter? Why aren't you sleeping?

Grace doesn't answer, looking at her husband with dissatisfaction. Maxwell ignores her look and heads towards the kitchen.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Nightmares again?

Grace stands up from the armchair and follows him.

GRACE

Where have you been, John?

MAXWELL

Is this an interrogation?

GRACE

So, where?

MAXWELL

Where else could I be, Grace?

(beat)

At work, as usual.

GRACE

I called the department, and you weren't there.

MAXWELL

That's right. I was in the suburbs, coordinating the surveillance. Can we continue this in the morning? I'm really tired.

Maxwell opens the fridge and takes out a can of beer.

GRACE

You didn't mention that you had surveillance today.

MAXWELL

Darling, I don't have to report my actions to you. I have the commissioner for that. So I-

GRACE

(stressed)

Enough! Enough, John. Stop it... I know everything.

John sits on a chair and opens the beer.

MAXWELL

What everything?

GRACE

You weren't in the suburbs... I know it.

MAXWELL

What are you talking about?

GRACE

You were at the club! I know!

MAXWELL

What the hell, the club?

GRACE

Club "Gomorrah". Don't you remember?

MAXWELL

What? I don't understand what you mean-

GRACE

Stop lying! They just called me from there. You left your wallet there.

MAXWELL

Listen, I have no idea who's calling you in the middle of the night. Frankly, it's looking suspicious to me-

GRACE

So, you weren't there?

MAXWELL

Where?! I've never even heard of this place! What is "Gomorrah"?

GRACE

Then where's your wallet, John? Come on. Show it to me!

Maxwell doesn't answer.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Come on.

He slowly feels his pockets, reaches into his pants and takes out the wallet, demonstratively shows it to Grace, and puts it loudly on the table. Grace looks guiltily at her husband.

MAXWELL

Are you happy now?

Grace looks at the wallet, then guiltily at Maxwell.

GRACE
But they told me... They called
your name! They-

MAXWELL
Maybe they just made a mistake?
Huh? Didn't you consider that?

GRACE
I'm-

MAXWELL
And why didn't you ask me directly
about it? Why make a scene?

GRACE
I didn't mean to. I don't-

MAXWELL
Did you intentionally want to
provoke me?

GRACE
No, I didn't mean to-

MAXWELL
Why do you treat me like this?!

GRACE
I'm... I'm sorry.

Grace sighs heavily and covers her eyes with her hand.

MAXWELL
What did I do to deserve this? Do
you really think I'm such a
terrible husband?

There is a short pause. Grace looks subdued. It seems to her that Maxwell has taken the pressure off, and now would be a good time to respond.

GRACE
I don't think so.
(cautious pause)
Just lately, everything has been so
difficult for us... And it's not
just about that phone call...
You're rarely ever home-

Maxwell raises his voice and pressures Grace even more.

MAXWELL

Well, excuse me, Grace! I have to work a lot to provide for us! And is this your way of showing gratitude?!

GRACE

I didn't mean to-

MAXWELL

Your support?

Grace gestures for a pause and takes a deep breath, then goes to the cabinet, takes out some pills, and pours a glass of water. Satisfied with his victory, Maxwell drinks his beer.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I've told you every time. Stop taking those pills. They make you irritable.

Grace takes the pills and confidently responds.

GRACE

It's not because of the pills, John... You're growing distant from us.

MAXWELL

Oh, come on. You worry for no reason. I've already told you - it's temporary. I'll catch that guy soon, and everything will be back to normal.

GRACE

You said the same thing last time.

MAXWELL

And this time it will be different! You'll see!

Maxwell drinks his beer. The little boy, TOMMY, comes down the stairs in a colorful pajama. He stops at the railing and watches his parents.

GRACE

What about your son? He'll soon forget that he has a father.

MAXWELL

Don't be dramatic. Tommy is a big boy already.

GRACE

He's only 8.

MAXWELL

At 8 years old, kids want to spend time with their friends, not their parents. Enroll him in soccer or a church choir. What does he love the most?

GRACE

You don't even know what he's interested in.

MAXWELL

Why do you have to start this again?

Grace sighs heavily and puts the glass away on the shelf, pointing her finger at the fridge.

GRACE

I hung them here specifically. Hoping that one day you'd notice...

Maxwell looks at the fridge's door, where colorful comic-style drawings are displayed.

GRACE (CONT'D)

When will you once again take a beer from the fridge...

MAXWELL

So what? They're just drawings... For instance, when I was his age, I traveled the whole state with my baseball team. I was the best batter in the team.

GRACE

Well, perhaps Tommy will become a good batter someday too... if he finds a good pitcher.

Grace looks reproachfully at her husband. Maxwell looks back with dissatisfaction and shamefully averts his gaze, noticing Tommy.

MAXWELL

(to Tommy)

It's already midnight. Why aren't you in bed?

Tommy doesn't respond.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Hey! I'm talking to you. Go to your room now!

Tommy remains unresponsive. Maxwell stands up threateningly from his chair.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Can't you hear what I'm telling
you?

Grace stops her husband with her hand and goes to Tommy.

GRACE
I'll handle this myself.

Grace approaches Tommy, takes his hand, and leads him upstairs. Maxwell watches his wife and son. The phone on the table vibrates, Maxwell picks up the receiver.

MAXWELL
(into the phone)
Maxwell.
(beat)
When?
(beat)
I'll be there soon.

Maxwell puts the phone back in his pocket, the beer back into the fridge, and examines the drawings on the door.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - ARCHIVE SECTION - NIGHT

The phone on the edge of the table vibrates, showing a call from "Defective Maxwell". Next to it lies an open folder with the case of the "Holy Punisher", containing photos of dismembered and disemboweled bodies, religious symbols on the walls. The phone stops vibrating.

On the other side of the table lies another folder with a Oliver's photo, documents, reports, and an excerpt from a psychiatric clinic. SARAH (28) enters the office with a box in her hands, walks past the table, and enters the adjacent room.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - EVIDENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah places the box on a shelf and examines its content wearing rubber gloves. Inside, there are ropes, chains, an unusual red-colored lock with a key inside.

In the corner of the box are two ventriloquist dummies and a Bible. Sarah examines the lock and takes out the red key.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - ARCHIVE SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah comes out of the room looking sleepy, sits down, and checks her phone.

She notices a missed call from Maxwell and rolls her eyes.

She pulls the folder with Oliver Donovan's case closer. Filling out papers, she looks at his photo and flips to a page containing information about his parents.

In the father's field, there's a picture of an elderly man and crime scene photos. The mother's field is empty, and Sarah places a photo of a woman there.

Shortly after, she starts a video recording of Oliver's interrogation on her laptop.

The videotape shows Oliver sitting at a table.

OLIVER (ON THE SCREEN)
(into the camera)
Is recording necessary?

SARAH (ON THE SCREEN) (O.S.)
It's a standard procedure.

VIDEOTAPE:

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Sarah steps away from the camera and sits down in front of Oliver. He looks into the camera, smiling slightly.

SARAH
Okay, let's start... What will you
do once you get out of here?

A brief pause.

OLIVER
Um, I don't know. Go back home,
take care of routine matters.

SARAH
Like what, for example?

OLIVER
(thinking)
Um... I'll go to work, watch TV,
pay bills. Just like everyone else.

A brief pause. Sarah writes down his answers on paper.

SARAH
Are you content with your life?

OLIVER
Quite.

SARAH

Do you have any dreams or goals
you'd like to achieve?

OLIVER

Like everyone, I guess.

SARAH

And what's your dream?

OLIVER

Although it's not exactly a dream,
more like a wish.

SARAH

What do you wish for?

OLIVER

I want there to be less evil and
violence in the world.

SARAH

What kind of evil are you referring
to?

OLIVER

It's hard to explain... Most people
just don't notice it.

SARAH

They don't notice? How do you
manage to see it then?

OLIVER

(into the camera)

God points it out to me, He speaks
to me.

(to Sarah)

Through His eyes, I can see all the
cruelty in this world.

SARAH

Do you consider this world cruel?

Oliver smiles and looks to the right at the orderlies.

OLIVER

Look around you... Cruelty begets
cruelty.

A short pause. Sarah takes notes.

SARAH

How would you solve this problem if
you were in God's place?

Oliver smiles mysteriously.

OLIVER
Very simple...

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. POLICE STATION - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Graham is changing near his locker, while Rice stands nearby in his police uniform, holding an open folder with the crime scene report, lost in thoughts.

GRAHAM
I can't believe a normal person is capable of such things.

RICE
How can you assume he's normal?

GRAHAM
If he were a psycho, he'd be in a psychiatric clinic by now.

RICE
Maybe he's just good at pretending?

A brief pause. Graham closes his bag and throws it over his shoulder.

GRAHAM
Are you staying here?

RICE
(looks at Graham)
Yeah, I am. This is the first time the victims have been discovered this quickly. I think we have a good chance to catch him tonight... I can't miss this opportunity.

GRAHAM
What about your family?

RICE
I'll drop by to see them in the morning.

Graham gives Rice a disapproving look, and Rice catches his gaze.

RICE (CONT'D)
Come on, It's such an opportunity. I just need one high-profile case to get noticed. And I even discovered the crime scene... Can you imagine what it would be like if I'm the one to solve it?

Graham smiles and points at himself and Rice.

GRAHAM

We. We discovered it.

RICE

(smiling)

Sorry, of course, "we"... Don't worry, Graham, when I become the commissioner, I'll make you my assistant for sure.

GRAHAM

No, thanks. My grandkids wouldn't forgive me for that... By the way, speaking of the commissioner, weren't you supposed to see him?

RICE

I want to wait for Sarah.

Rice brings the phone to his ear. Graham looks at Rice and shrugs in confusion.

RICE (CONT'D)

Assistant Detective. She's gathering material on the case. I told you about her.

GRAHAM

Ah! It's her, who literally sleeps on the job?

RICE

(smiling)

Little nothings of life.

GRAHAM

And then don't say I didn't warn you about it.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - ARCHIVE SECTION - LATER

Sarah is sleeping on her desk, with a laptop in front of her with the screen turned off. The phone at the corner of the desk vibrates, showing an incoming call from "Officer Rice".

The phone falls off the desk, and Sarah wakes up from the noise. She looks around and listens, then picks up the phone. Messages from Rice appear on the screen.

OFFICER RICE: Where are you? Call me.

OFFICER RICE: Found 2 bodies. Holy Punisher.

SARAH

Oh, shit!

Sarah closes the laptop and the case files. She grabs her phone, which displays 2 missed calls, one from Rice and the other from Maxwell. Sarah leaves a voicemail.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

I'll be at the department in 10 minutes. Where are you right now?

Sarah calls Maxwell. The call goes unanswered, and Sarah looks displeased.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(looks at phone screen)

What a prick!

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Maxwell walks down the corridor, looking at his phone and then putting it in his pocket. He approaches a door, opens it, and enters.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark, with a surveillance camera hanging in the corner. The lights shine through the two-way mirror from the interrogator's room, where Billy and DR. DANIELS are present.

Commissioner Butler stands by the mirror, attentively observing the scene. Maxwell approaches him.

BUTLER

Damn it! Where have you been wandering?

MAXWELL

I came as soon as I could.

Maxwell stands to the right of Butler and peers through the mirror.

BUTLER

The experts have already gathered the initial evidence! The bodies are sent for a medical examination! Everything is ready, and you're just arriving at the department!

MAXWELL

Cool down, please...
(points at Billy)
Who's that kid?

BUTLER

A witness.

Maxwell raises an eyebrow in surprise.

MAXWELL

No fucking way...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Frightened, Billy sits on the floor in the corner of the room next to a chair. Dr. Daniels sits in front of him, looking at the young man with sympathy while conducting a medical examination.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BUTLER

Finally! The first witness in 5 years. We can't miss this chance.

MAXWELL

Alright.

Maxwell heads towards the exit.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I'll go to the crime scene. Return in the morning and-

BUTLER

Have you lost your mind?! Where are you going?

MAXWELL

I need to inspect the crime scene.

Butler harshly hands Maxwell a folder.

BUTLER

Read the report and get to the interrogation!

INT. POLICE STATION - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Sarah steps out of her car and hurries towards the elevator. On her way, she notices some police officers with a small ladder standing in a corner under a surveillance camera.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAXWELL

What interrogation? He's just a kid.

BUTLER

And what's the problem?

MAXWELL

Commissioner, you know I'm not great with kids. Let someone else handle this.

BUTLER

It's your job, Maxwell! In 5 years, you haven't produced any results. No leads!

MAXWELL

It was the same last time.

BUTLER

"Last time", huh? When there wasn't a single page in the case file?

Butler looks at the camera and talks more quietly to Maxwell.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

If I hadn't covered your back, you would've ended up behind bars yourself.

Maxwell looks disdainfully at Butler and then shifts his gaze towards the interrogation room.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

And why are you alone again?! Where's Sarah? I told her to assist you.

MAXWELL

Why does she need to be here? She's useless anyway.

Butler rolls his eyes and turns away from Maxwell.

BUTLER

Just like of you...

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sarah steps out of the elevator, and Rice swiftly passes by her.

SARAH

Rice!

Rice turns around on the spot and stops.

RICE

Sarah! Finally.

Sarah catches up with Rice, and they walk together down the corridor.

SARAH

What do we know?

RICE

Two victims - a husband and wife.
Judging by the handwriting, it's
our guy.

Rice hands her the report, and Sarah looks at the crime scene photos as they walk.

SARAH

Oh, goodness.

RICE

We found a witness, the son of the
murdered couple. The boy's name is
Billy, and during the murders, he
was hiding under the bed.

Sarah looks at the photos of the bodies on the bed.

SARAH

Right under them?

RICE

Yes. It seems like the killer just
didn't notice him.

SARAH

Or he intentionally left him alive?

Rice and Sarah exchange puzzled looks.

RICE

That's quite possible.

SARAH

Did he say anything?

RICE

No. Ever since we found him, he
hasn't said a word.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Daniels examines the boy's hands, they are covered in bruises. Billy pays no attention to the doctor, sitting on the floor with his knees hugged to his chest. Dr. Daniels puts away his instruments into his bag.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell and Butler observe the examination through the two-way mirror. Detective Maxwell lights a cigarette.

MAXWELL

So, what should I do with him?

BUTLER

I don't know, figure something out.

The door to the room opens abruptly, Sarah and Rice enter.

MAXWELL

Well, well, look who decided to show up...

Sarah aggressively approaches Maxwell. He turns around and looks her in the eyes.

SARAH

You, asshole, aren't answering my calls!

Maxwell is surprised by such a bold answer.

MAXWELL

What? Did you lose your fucking fear? It's you who should be answering! When I call you!

SARAH

Oh, really? Maybe I would answer more, if you only called for business!

Maxwell is confused, looking around to each in the room and feeling humiliation.

MAXWELL

Since when did you become so cheeky?! You better tone down your attitude if you want to avoid trouble! Remember, you're still working for me!

SARAH

Oh, wow! Who's fucking important here?! I work with you, not for you!

MAXWELL

(in a rage)

Shut up right now! You fucking-

BUTLER

(yelling)

Enough, both of you, stop it!

The room falls silent.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Sort out your issues later! We need to focus!

(looking through the mirror)

I'm sure the maniac is unaware that we found the bodies. That means we might catch him off guard. We need to find something before dawn.

Sarah and Maxwell calm down and look at Butler.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

(to Maxwell)

Work together, no arguments.

(to Rice)

Officer Rice, what the evidence do we have?

RICE

The first samples have been sent for expertise.

BUTLER

Oversee the process if you really want to help us. We need to find a lead as quickly as possible. Any information will be useful. Check every suspect!

RICE

Yes, sir, but... But I don't think we can check everyone before dawn. The list of suspects is too extensive.

Butler turns to Maxwell with displeasure.

BUTLER

Fucking hell, Maxwell! Half of the city is under suspicion again?

MAXWELL

I have my own methods of work.

The door opens, and Dr. Daniels enters.

BUTLER

Do you have any good news for us,
Dani?

DR. DANIELS

I doubt about this.

(beat)

Well, the boy seems perfectly
healthy. There are only a few
bruises and scratches on his body
from a week ago.

RICE

The neighbor mentioned family
disputes.

Butler shrugs.

BUTLER

Well. And what's next? Why is he
not talking? We need to interrogate
him.

MAXWELL

Is he always like this?

DR. DANIELS

Very likely. I've dealt with
similar children before. They are
difficult to approach. They don't
trust anyone, especially strangers.

BUTLER

Maybe we can bring his friends or
relatives?

DR. DANIELS

I doubt it would help. Usually,
friends and relatives are unaware
of what's happening in such
families. They will find it
difficult to approach the boy.

(looks at Billy)

Unfortunately, as long as the
children continues to be silent, no
one will hear them.

A short pause.

BUTLER

What do you suggest then?

DR. DANIELS

First, you need to give him time to recover. He's in shock... At best, he might open up within the next week.

BUTLER

No, no. That's not good enough; it's too long. We need his testimony right now!

DR. DANIELS

There are specialists for cases like this. You could turn to them. They might have specific methods and techniques. Perhaps, they can get him to talk?

Butler puts his hand on Dr. Daniels' shoulder and leads him to the door.

BUTLER

Alright, thanks, Dani. Stay here until morning, just in case.

Dr. Daniels nods and exits the room. Maxwell puts off his cigarette in the ashtray. Butler stands facing Sarah, Rice, and Maxwell.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Okay, here's the plan. Officer Rice, handle the evidence. If you find anything, I want to know about it as soon as possible.

RICE

Got it.

MAXWELL

(to Rice)

Start checking with men aged 30-35.

Rice nods and leaves the room. Butler points his finger at Sarah, and she eagerly awaits what he's about to say. But Butler shifts his finger to Maxwell.

BUTLER

Proceed with the interrogation.

MAXWELL

Maybe we should still consider getting a specialist?

BUTLER

It will take time to find one and bring him here.

(MORE)

BUTLER (CONT'D)

In the meantime, get the boy to talk.

(looks to Billy)

Try to extract something from him.

MAXWELL

Fucking crap...

Maxwell rolls his eyes in annoyance. Sarah notices Maxwell's reaction and speaks up to Butler.

SARAH

Commissioner, allow me to conduct the interrogation.

MAXWELL

What?! Are you crazy? You don't have enough experience for this!

SARAH

Remind me, who interrogates your suspects?

MAXWELL

It's not the same thing! Anyone can get these psychos to talk. Don't meddle until you're called-

BUTLER

Enough! For God's sake! I'm sick of this!

Sarah and Maxwell fall silent. Butler hands a folder to Maxwell.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Check out the report.

MAXWELL

(takes it)

During the process.

Maxwell exits the room. Sarah takes his place and looks through the one-way mirror into the interrogation room.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maxwell enters the room. Billy looks at the floor and clutches his knees even tighter to his chest.

Nervously looking around, Maxwell grabs a chair and places it next to Billy. He coughs slightly and sits down with the folder in his hands, attempting to look at Billy. But he can't seem to focus his gaze on him.

MAXWELL

Um, Billy, right? I'm Detective Maxwell.

Billy doesn't respond and looks frightened, still staring at the floor.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Listen boy, I need to know what happened in your house. I mean, at your place. In your apartment.
(looks in the folder)
Um... you live on Dumper Street, 45, right?

Billy pays no attention to Maxwell. He looks confused, and Maxwell looks at the one-way mirror, then back at the folder.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Tell me, how did you end up under the bed?

Maxwell nervously shuffles the photos in the report while Billy remains silent.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Okay. Um, you're a student, right? What school do you go to?

Billy remains silent, and Maxwell feels awkward.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Okay, let's try a different approach... Um, do you like to draw? Maybe comics? Do you like comics?

Billy still doesn't respond. Maxwell gives him an annoyed look, then changes his tone to a more aggressive one.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Hey, Billy. I have a secret for you. It's between you and me.

(beat)

Listen, the odds are not in your favor. Think about it. You were found at the crime scene. The victims' blood was found on your clothes. You don't have an alibi. So, you're the only suspect... I can lock you up for life. Is that what you want?

Billy remains silent, and Maxwell visibly becomes more nervous.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I guess you don't want that... Then tell me what really happened there, alright? Come on. Tell me.

Awkward pause. Billy still doesn't respond, and Maxwell loses his temper and raises his voice.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Hey, kid! Can you hear me?! I'm talking to you!

Two knocks are heard on the one-way mirror. Maxwell turns and looks at his reflection, calming himself down.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks at Butler with a puzzled expression. Butler removes his hand from the mirror.

SARAH

And he calls that an interrogation?

BUTLER

Maxwell is good at playing the role of the bad cop... But, after all, it's just a kid.

SARAH

Bad, good cop?
(thinking)
But he works alone always.

BUTLER

Right.

SARAH

Then who plays the good cop?

BUTLER

Usually, he doesn't get to that part.

Sarah raises her eyebrows understandingly. It's as if she's learned information about Maxwell, which explains a lot.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

We need to give him some time.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell looks at Billy and nervously shakes the folder in his hand and taps his foot.

MAXWELL

Did you see anything, huh? Or hear anything? Any noise or someone's voice?

(beat)

Did your parents talk to this person? Did they call him by name?

Billy looks at a fixed point and remains silent.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Come on, say me something, for fuck's sake!

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler shakes his head disapprovingly and knocks twice on the mirror.

SARAH

It's hopeless. After such an interrogation, he might completely forget how to speak... Jesus Christ, "Bad, good cop". Who still uses this method?

BUTLER

Your father and I used it once. Bruce was always great at playing the good guy... Sometimes I even regret that in his regular life, he was a completely different person.

Sarah ponders.

SARAH

I'll go check on the evidence.

Butler nods approvingly, and Sarah walks slowly to the door.

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah walks down the corridor with a thoughtful expression, stops at the elevator, and presses the button.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION - INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT - DAY

SARAH'S FATHER (40s) sits behind a desk, studying the materials spread out in front of him. YOUNG SARAH (8) runs between the other desks.

A group of officers passes by in a cheerful mood. A DETECTIVE approaches Sarah's father from behind and pats him on the shoulder.

DETECTIVE

Hey, Bruce! Stop sitting there, come to the bar with us! Your partner became a commissioner, aren't you happy about it?!

The Detective laughs and heads towards the door.

SARAH'S FATHER

Go ahead, I'll catch up with you.

The officers leave. Sarah's father continues studying the case, while young Sarah runs around the office, trips, and falls into a corner. Her Father looks up with concern.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Sarah?

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The sound of the elevator arriving brings Sarah back to the present. The doors open, and Sarah steps inside.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - NIGHT

Rice stands by the wall with boxes, going through case files. In another corner of the room, GOBS (30s), the evidence expert, is examining the samples from the crime scene.

On his table, there's a bag with cigarette butts, sealed containers, Billy's flashlight, and other items. Gobs uses tweezers to place the cigarette butts into capsules for analysis.

GOBS

Are you sure we have what we need here? It would be disappointing if we end up with nothing.

Rice watches Gobs rummage through the cigarette butts and speaks monotonously, looking at folders.

RICE

Don't worry about it. I think they'll let you keep this bag if we don't find anything.

GOBS
(looks at Rice)
Oh, great. That's very funny.

Sarah enters the office.

SARAH
Hi, Gobs.

GOBS
Hi, Sarah!

SARAH
How are we doing with the samples?

GOBS
Almost done. We'll start soon.

Sarah approaches Rice and helps him with the folders.

RICE
How is the interrogation going? Did
the kid say anything?

SARAH
Let's just say... For now, all hope
is on us.

GOBS (O.S.)
As usual!

Sarah places the folders on another table and examines the evidences, walking over to Gobs and inspecting the content of the bags.

SARAH
Will you be able to analyze all of
this overnight?

GOBS
Even if there was just one
cigarette butt, it could take weeks
to determine a match. Have you seen
the list of suspects?

Rice approaches Gobs with a large stack of folders in his hands.

RICE
Here! All the men aged 30-35.

GOBS
Good. Put it on the table. I'll be
back soon.

Gobs puts on a lab coat and exits the room.

After a few moments, Rice stands by the printer, takes out the stack of papers, staples them together, and flips through pages with photos and data of the suspects.

RICE

Damn, there are 328 people. How are we going to manage all of this?

Rice flips through the pages, and Sarah looks at the photos of the suspects.

SARAH

Familiar faces.

RICE

Anyone you recognize?

SARAH

Oh, yeah.

Sarah sits down on a chair and sighs heavily.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Everyone...

Rice holds the list in his hand and puzzled, looks at Sarah.

RICE

And how did he solve the previous case? I don't understand.

SARAH

It seems that he took everyone by guess and hoped that sooner or later, he'd get lucky.

RICE

(smiling)

And he got it.

SARAH

Perhaps... Who knows what talents he has?

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Maxwell sits in front of Billy on the chair, his face red of anger.

MAXWELL

Just say something! Give me something to work with!

(beat)

Tell me, and we'll let you go right away.

Billy remains silent.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Did you hear the killer say
anything? Did you hear his voice?

(beat)

Did he mention anything about God?
Religion? Huh?!

(losing control)

Kid! Can you hear me, damn it?!

Two loud thuds on the mirror. Maxwell stands up and pushes his chair aside, looking dissatisfied at his own reflection.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rice and Sarah arrange the case files on the table.

RICE

Good Lord, will they ever end? It
would have been easier if Billy was
more talkative.

SARAH

Yeah... It's just hard to wrap my
head around how parents could drive
a child to such a state.

RICE

That's for sure... I'll do
everything possible to make sure
something like this never happens
to my boy.

Sarah looks surprised and gazes at Rice.

SARAH

Your boy?! You never mentioned
becoming a father.

RICE

(checks his watch)

It happened four hours ago.

SARAH

What?! So why are you still here
then? Why aren't you with him?

RICE

(points at the folders)

And who's going to deal with all
this, huh?

SARAH

Wait a minute... You said that you were the one who found the bodies, right? So, you chose patrolling the streets over being with your wife during childbirth?

RICE

They offered me extra hours with extra pay. You know that rarely happens... I had to agree.

SARAH

I can't believe this, Rice! It's your son's birthday!

Rice points at the folders again and grows a bit upset.

RICE

Yes, I know, Sarah! But all this is for him... So that my son lacks nothing. So that he's happy.

Sarah looks away and smiles sadly.

SARAH

My goodness... You know how to surprise me.

RICE

There's nothing surprising here... I remember how hard it was for my mom to raise my brother and me. She had to send us to school with pizza crusts and maple syrup instead of lunches.

Sarah sorts through the files and nods approvingly.

SARAH

Yeah, it's a good motivation, no doubt.

RICE

My motivation is ensuring a happy childhood for my boy.

(beat)

When we solve this case, I won't need to take extra hours at work just to take my boy to a kid's café.

(beat)

I believe I'm doing the right thing. Someday, my son will understand it and thank me.

Sarah feels a little disappointed and gazes thoughtfully at Rice.

SARAH

You know what? You remind me of my father... He also always believed he was doing the right thing.

RICE

Wasn't it because of him that you joined the academy?

SARAH

It seems like I didn't have much of a choice. He prepared me for it since childhood.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION - INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Young Sarah is lying on the floor, holding her elbow. Her Father stands up from his desk and walks to her.

SARAH'S FATHER

Sarah! What are you doing?! The doctor said no running for you!

He lifts her up from the floor.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Behave properly; you are at a police station.

YOUNG SARAH

(upset)

But I want to play.

SARAH'S FATHER

You can play at home, not here.

(looking around)

I'll find something else for you to do here.

The Father sits Sarah at a nearby desk, places a thick book in front of her, and opens it.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)

There!

(points at page)

Look at the pictures and study ballistics. It'll be useful for you in the future.

Sarah pushes the book away unhappily.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)
 Stop sulking! I don't want you to
 distract me, so be quiet. Do you
 understand? If you behave nicely,
 we can go on a hiking trip next
 week. How does that sound?

Young Sarah frowns with dissatisfaction.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)
 Don't worry, you'll enjoy it next
 time.

Her Father sits back at his desk and continues studying the
 case materials. Sarah reluctantly pulls the book towards
 herself and silently looks at the pictures.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rice encouragingly puts his hand on Sarah's shoulder.

RICE
 And his preparation didn't go
 unnoticed.

SARAH
 Come on, Rice. I'm just a
 detective's assistant.

RICE
 For now. Soon, we will catch the
 maniac, and your career will be on
 the rise.
 (smiling)
 As mine, I hope.

Sarah gives a sad smile and looks away. Gobs enters the room
 and takes the stack of sheets.

GOBS
 So! What do we have here?
 (flips through it)
 Seriously? Oh, God...

RICE
 Why he couldn't narrow down the
 list of suspects after all these
 years?

Sarah takes the stack from Gobs and flips through it.

SARAH

You won't believe it, but it used to be three times larger. For five years, I selected only the best.

RICE

Can you mark someone?

SARAH

I can mark those whom Maxwell suspects the most... Um, about ten people, for a start.

RICE

Is there anyone who is your suspect?

SARAH

Yes. I have one candidate, but... But he's 29.

Gobs smiles and shakes his head.

GOBS

Oh, it's bad luck for you...

SARAH

Yeah...

Awkward pause. Rice looks puzzled.

RICE

So what? What's the problem? Let's check him out!

GOBS

You don't know Maxwell. He hates it when someone does things differently than he orders.

RICE

What if this guy turns out to be the maniac?

GOBS

And what if he's not?

RICE

He just won't know that we checked him. That's it.

GOBS

All the results automatically go into the common database.

SARAH
 (to Rice)
 Maxwell doesn't collect the materials himself, but he constantly checks the results.

RICE
 No big deal. I'll take the hit.

Gobs laughs and sits on a chair.

GOBS
 You don't know what you're getting yourself into.

SARAH
 (to Gobs)
 He probably won't know it. In any case, I'll be the one to blame, as usual.

Sarah takes a seat next to Gobs. Rice stands there with a puzzled expression, looking at suspects.

GOBS (O.S.)
 (to Sarah)
 Why "as usual"? I've been blamed too. Remember the Harrington case?

SARAH (O.S.)
 When you mixed up the samples?

Rice looks at the suspects' files and notices that they all have mental health issues.

GOBS (O.S.)
 That idiot showed up at my house at 3:00 AM just to scold me. He said I messed up the whole case! He even filed a complaint with the commissioner!

SARAH (O.S.)
 Oh, you got off easy.

Rice turns to them.

RICE
 Explain to me why he's such a jerk?

GOBS
 (to Rice)
 He became very irritable after that previous case.

RICE

That famous case he solved all by himself?

GOBS

And for which he got nothing.

RICE

Nothing? But he caught the maniac. The "Irishman" case. The whole department knows about it.

GOBS

But he didn't gather the materials for the case. Butler covered his ass back then, but with the condition that all the bonuses go to him.

SARAH

(sighs deeply)

Some got bonuses and some got tons of paperwork.

GOBS

(to Sarah)

I don't remember, were you in the department back then?

SARAH

Yes. I came right around that time. The most fucking bad time...

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION - WAITING ROOM - DAY

5 YEARS AGO

Sarah sits in a chair near the door to Commissioner Butler's office. Opposite the door is the secretary's desk, but she's absent. Sarah listens attentively to the conversation from inside the office.

BUTLER (O.S.)

Why do you constantly bring nothing but trouble, John? Do you want me to micromanage every of your moves? For God's sake, get it together!

Sarah looks at the letters of thanks on the wall, Butler's photos with the politicians.

BUTLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Everything is slipping out of your control! You should have arrested him a long time ago!

MAXWELL (O.S.)
 I don't understand what the problem is? The killer is caught, the case can be closed.

INT. POLICE STATION - COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Butler and Maxwell sit behind the desk. Butler tosses an empty folder in front of Maxwell.

BUTLER
 Look at this! This is what you call a case?! What am I supposed to present to the prosecutor?! Why didn't you properly document all the evidences on time?! It's the standard procedure, for God's sake!

MAXWELL
 I thought someone else would handle that. I can't do everything by myself.

BUTLER
 It's your job!

MAXWELL
 But I don't have time for this.

BUTLER
 But you're gonna have to fucking do it! If you don't like it, you can get out of here!

MAXWELL
 (curls his fingers)
 I have witness interrogations, suspects, surveillance, evidence collection—all on me. I can't keep up, Dean!

BUTLER
 Goddamn it! Are you really stupid? What's the use of all this if it doesn't reflect in the paperwork?!

INT. POLICE STATION - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah eavesdrops on the conversation. THE SECRETARY slowly walks to her desk.

BUTLER (O.S.)
 You knew about this guy from the
 very beginning! He has been on your
 suspect list for a long time!

INT. POLICE STATION - COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Butler tries to calm down.

BUTLER
 Enough of this. That's it... Now
 the case is over. They could put
 you behind bars.

MAXWELL
 Come on! His lawyer won't go for
 that.

BUTLER
 (looking away)
 We still need to cover our bases,
 whether you like it or not. If this
 goes to a jury trial, we'll have
 problems.
 (speaks clearly)
 We need to come up with a strategy.

Maxwell looks away unhappily, as if realizing what the phrase
 means to him.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
 It has taken too long for us to
 just slack off now... And from now
 on, you'll report on everything you
 do.

MAXWELL
 How do you expect me to do that?

SECRETARY (SPEAKER)
 Commissioner Butler, Sarah Bartel
 is here.

BUTLER
 (pushes the button)
 Let her in.

Sarah timidly enters the room.

SARAH
 Commissioner Butler? Good day.

BUTLER
 Hi, Sarah! Come in, you're just in
 time. Have a seat.

Sarah enters, looks at Maxwell, and takes a chair next to him. Maxwell turns to Sarah and looks her over.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Wow! I can't believe it, you've grown up so much. How old were you when I last saw you? About 15?

SARAH

Um, no. Actually, we saw each other six months ago... At the funeral.

BUTLER

Oh, that's right... Of course. I'm sorry, my mind is swamped with work, you know... How's your mother?

SARAH

She's fine, thank you.

BUTLER

That's good to hear... You've just finished the academy, right? You must be eager to start working?

MAXWELL

(rises from his chair)
Maybe I should go?

BUTLER

No! Sit down!

Maxwell sits back down.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

(to Sarah)

Sarah, meet Detective Maxwell. From now on, you'll be interning under him.

MAXWELL

(to Butler)

What?! Are you kidding me?! I already have more than enough work! I don't have time to babysit kids!

Sarah involuntarily looks embarrassed.

BUTLER

(to Maxwell)

You seemed to have said you didn't have enough time, right? Sarah will assist you with that. And in return, you'll teach her everything you know.

MAXWELL
 (mumbling)
 It's fucking ridiculous.

BUTLER
 (looking at Sarah)
 I think she has great potential.
 Right, Sarah?

SARAH
 Yes, I'm sure.

BUTLER
 That's the spirit! Welcome to our
 team! You're in good hands.

Sarah smiles modestly. Maxwell grumpily looks away and shakes his head.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Maxwell and Sarah enter the detective's office. Inside, it's cluttered with folders, papers, and photos.

Maxwell sits down at the desk and sifts through the papers. Sarah sits on a chair next to him, awkwardly looking at Maxwell.

SARAH
 What case are you working on now?

Maxwell doesn't answer.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Maybe I can help you with
 something-

MAXWELL
 You're not ready to work on cases
 yet.
 (points at the desk)
 See that desk?

Sarah turns around and sees a desk piled with various folders and documents.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 You need to sort through all of
 that and organize it. Check for
 signatures, stamps. Once you have
 all the information ordered, we can
 proceed. That's all. You can get to
 work now.

SARAH
 Can't you give me- ?

MAXWELL

All questions after you finish.

Sarah sadly gets up from the chair and heads to the desk, while Maxwell discreetly watches her go.

She stands at the desk with her back to Maxwell, opening one of the folders. Photos spill out along with reports and other documents.

Sarah sighs heavily and looks out the window, noticing in the reflection that Maxwell is giving her a strange look.

She slowly turns her head and looks at Maxwell. He sits motionless, examining a document in his hands, noticing Sarah's gaze.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Have you finished everything already?

Sarah smiles sweetly in response and shakes her head negatively. She turns back to the folders on the desk.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Sarah quickly sorts through the documents on the desk, looking tired. Maxwell casually approaches the desk.

MAXWELL

Gather and prepare the materials for the "Irishman" case by tomorrow morning. Can you handle it?

SARAH

Yes, of course.

Maxwell exits the office, leaving Sarah in panic as she looks at the mess of papers and wipes the sweat from her forehead.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarah actively sifts through documents, reports, and forensic results. She is fully engaged in her work, determined to complete the task.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Sarah looks disheveled and tired as she struggles with the documents. Maxwell abruptly enters the office.

MAXWELL

What the hell are you doing in here?! The trial is about to start. I asked for the case to be on my desk by morning!

SARAH

(rummages papers)

I'm sorry, I... I can't figure it out-

MAXWELL

What?! Why did you even take on this task then?!

SARAH

Sorry, I didn't know-

MAXWELL

Fucking hell! You set me up!

BUTLER (O.S.)

Maxwell!

Butler peeks into the office.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

What are you doing in here? It's time for you to leave!

Maxwell looks contemptuously at Sarah and obediently leaves the office with Butler.

BUTLER (O.S.)

Don't worry, I've sorted everything out.

Sarah sits alone in the office, surrounded by papers.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah packs case files into boxes on the table.

SARAH (V.O.)

Soon, I realized this would go on indefinitely... All these cases, documents, reports...

Maxwell approaches from behind with a stack of papers and deliberately brushes against her with his body.

MAXWELL

(casually)

All of this needs to be checked.

Sarah silently takes the papers, and Maxwell goes back to his desk.

SARAH (V.O.)
 Fucking pervert... The number of suspects in the "Holy Punisher" case keeps growing every day.

Sarah sorts through the files, checks the signatures, arranges the photos, and organizes everything into drawers.

INT. POLICE STATION - COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Butler sits at his desk with a phone in his hand. Sarah stands in front of him, talking and gesturing.

SARAH (V.O.)
 This is not what I had in mind... In two years, Maxwell never let me participate in any of his investigations. I got tired of it, so I decided to talk to Butler...

Butler listens to Sarah with the phone in his hand and nods, gesturing to stop.

BUTLER
 Sorry, not today. I'm busy right now.

Butler leans back in his chair and continues his conversation on the phone.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 Yes, Mr. Mayor. I'll take care of it, don't worry.

Sarah sadly turns around and leaves the office.

SARAH (V.O.)
 But nobody cared about me...

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - EVENING

The office is now less cluttered, and there is a look of order. Maxwell sits at his desk, studying the case. Sarah hesitantly approaches Maxwell.

SARAH
 I'm done.

MAXWELL
 (looking in the case)
 Done with what?

SARAH

All the cases are organized and classified.

MAXWELL

Good...

Maxwell doesn't pay much attention to Sarah.

SARAH

When will I get to participate in investigations?

MAXWELL

You already are.

SARAH

But that's... I want to know about versions, leads-

MAXWELL

Everything you need to know, you already do.

Awkward pause.

SARAH

But it's not enough. I want-

MAXWELL

(looks at Sarah)

Listen! You're not here to do what you want. Got it? You're here to do what I order you to do.

Sarah feels awkward and looks away.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

If you're done with the materials, you can start questioning. Create a psychological profile with conclusions for each suspect.

Sarah is taken back and looks at the boxes of case files. She turns back to Maxwell.

SARAH

For each suspect?! It will take months, maybe even years.

MAXWELL

We need information, don't we?

SARAH

But I can't do this all alone-

MAXWELL

Stop complaining, please! It's your job! If you don't like it, you can get out of here.

Sarah turns away and obediently goes to the boxes of case files, while Maxwell smugly watches her.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - LATER

Sarah sits at a desk, and Rice looks at the case files.

GOBS

I still don't understand how the "Irishman" case was solved so easily?

(beat)

No evidence, no witnesses, absolutely nothing pointed to him. Maxwell just kept him under surveillance, and on the same day, he caught him in the act.

RICE

Police luck?

SARAH

Who knows...

Rice pauses for a moment, deep in thoughts.

RICE

Who was he? The maniac.

SARAH

Just an ordinary window cleaner. Completely unremarkable, suffered from a personality disorder. There were some doubts right after the arrest, but Maxwell got a confession out of him.

GOBS

Yeah, after interrogating him for 8 hours.

A tense pause.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Billy sits huddled, knees to his chest, silently staring at the floor.

Maxwell looks at him and then shifts his gaze to the table where a folder with a report lies, along with a pencil. There's also a sheet of info about Billy: his name, residence, school.

Maxwell contemplates for a moment, takes a blank sheet of paper from the file, and places it in front of Billy, keeping the clean side up. He puts the pencil next to it.

MAXWELL

Listen, kid... What if you just write down for me what happened there? You know how to write?

Billy doesn't react. Maxwell adds with restraint.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Or you can draw it.

Billy remains unresponsive. Maxwell scans the room and notices a surveillance camera in the corner. He carefully places his hand on Billy's neck.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Please, be a good boy. Take this pencil and draw something for me. It's so simple... Come on.

Billy gazes into space. Maxwell grimaces with anger, applying pressure to Billy's neck, and whispers in his ear.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

It's better not to provoke me, kid. You have no idea what I'm capable of...

Billy endures the pain and remains silent. Maxwell tightens his grip on Billy's neck.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I can turn your life into a real nightmare. And your lousy parents will seem like angels compared to me. Trust me...

Billy breathes heavily and whimpers from the pain. Maxwell scans the room and pulls Billy's head closer to his own. He picks up the pencil and holds it in front of Billy's eyes.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I strongly advise you to take the pencil and do as I said... Do you hear me, pup?

(MORE)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 Or I'll shove this pencil so deep
 up your ass that you'll never be
 able to bend like you do right now.
 Do you understand me?

Billy clenches his knees tighter and looks at the pencil,
 breathing heavily, on the verge of tears.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 Quickly. Take. This. Pencil.

Tense pause.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 (shouts in a rage)
 Take this fucking pencil!

A series of loud knocks on the mirror. Maxwell releases his
 grip on Billy's neck, stands up, and angrily looks at the
 mirror, pointing at his own reflection.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 Back off and let me do my job!
 You're just ruining everything!

A single muffled knock in response. Maxwell adjusts his
 collar and kicks the chair into the corner in frustration.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - LATER

Gobs sits at the computer, jotting something down in a
 notebook. On the screen, there's a photo of a message from
 the crime scene - "ED O OT HN MARV ALLWFDYTDIRO OGEIM AUN
 AHPK A ESNE SDIUUEE C EMPTEU ILRT".

Rice is at the neighbor computer, flipping through suspect
 files and looking at Gobs' screen.

RICE
 What are you doing?

GOBS
 I'm trying to figure out what this
 says... It's an anagram. Maybe
 there's a clue here?

Rice turns to Sarah.

RICE
 What about that guy you were
 talking about? The one who's 29
 years old.

SARAH
Another freak. Maxwell throws them
my way in droves.

RICE
What's his name?

SARAH
Oliver Donovan.

Rice types on the keyboard, and Oliver's profile with a photo appears on the screen. Sarah stands behind Rice, looking at the screen.

RICE
Looks pretty normal.

SARAH
They all look normal until they're
in straitjackets.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Two orderlies roughly seat Oliver, wearing a straitjacket, on a chair and walk away. Oliver kicks his legs and watches after them, laughing.

Sarah sits at the table opposite, observing the scene, then opens the folder in front of her.

SARAH
Well, shall we continue our
conversation?

Oliver remains silent, giving her a slight smile.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Tell me, how long have you been
receiving treatment here?

OLIVER
13 years... But I can't say I'm a
regular patient.

SARAH
Did you come here voluntarily?

OLIVER
Yeah. Almost.

SARAH
Your first visit here was even
before the incident...

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
(looking in the folder)
...with your father. Right?

OLIVER
About 3 years before that.

SARAH
(looks up)
Why did you seek this treatment?

A brief pause.

OLIVER
Um, I don't know. I thought they could help me solve my problem. I hoped they would cure me. But soon, I realized I was mistaken. The rules of the play remained the same; only sets and costumes changed... Yet here, I found hope.

SARAH
You started hoping that they might cure you after all?

OLIVER
(smirks)
Um... Not quite.
(looks to orderlies)
They aren't very good doctors.
(looking at Sarah)
If you catch my drift... Oh, no...
I gained hope for healing.

SARAH
(looks in folder)
Um, your diagnose is not specified here. What is it?

Oliver grins and pauses for a moment.

OLIVER
It's hard to explain in words.
(beat)
One day, my father decided to get a dog. He went to the city and bought an expensive, pedigreed puppy... It was perfectly healthy, but it had one unpleasant feature. It barked incessantly as darkness fell.

Sarah listens attentively to the story.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

It barked and barked, non-stop. As a result, with all the noise in the house, no one could sleep. My father tried everything. He locked him in the shed, in the basement, taped his mouth shut. Nothing worked. Even leaving the lights on at night didn't solve the problem. Everyone in the neighborhood knew about it, and my father couldn't sell him to anyone. But he didn't want to get rid of him either. So, they performed a surgery on the puppy - they cut its vocal cords.

Sarah winces slightly.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

It did help, of course, but... but he still didn't stop barking at night. He just did it as if in... in mute mode. He opened his mouth, and he barked. But there was no sound.

(smiling strangely)

That's... the diagnose.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Billy sits in the corner, looking at the floor, with a sheet of paper and a pencil in front of him.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Detective Maxwell stands with his back to the mirror, sleeves rolled up, adjusting his collar. Commissioner Butler stands next to him in the same posture.

BUTLER

Don't overdo it.

(beat)

I'll be closely watching you.

MAXWELL

Don't worry, everything will be fine.

Maxwell takes his belt from his pants and heads towards the exit.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

A good spanking never hurts anyone.

Butler turns to the mirror and switches off the surveillance camera in the interrogation room.

After a few moments, in the interrogation room, Detective Maxwell reappears with a belt in his hand.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - LATER

Sarah looks at Oliver's case file on the monitor with a sad expression.

GOBS

Done! We can start now.

Sarah places her list in front of Gobs on the table.

SARAH

I marked a few people. Just go in order.

Gobs flips through the list; one of the pages is marked with a cross in the corner.

GOBS

Alright...

RICE

(to Gobs)

How long does the check take? We don't have much time until dawn.

GOBS

15 minutes per person.

RICE

We have 328 people... That's...

GOBS

82 hours of continuous work. I've already calculated everything.

RICE

(sarcastically)

Oh, nice. Sounds great.

Sarah stands up from her chair and heads towards the door.

SARAH

I'll go check on the interrogation progress. If you find anything, let me know.

Rice nods, and Sarah leaves the room. Rice looks thoughtfully at his monitor, at Oliver's photo.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Maxwell stands near Billy, tosses the belt on the table, and tries to catch his breath. His shirt is soaked in sweat.

Billy looks disheveled, sitting in the corner, knees pulled up, looking at the floor, quietly crying.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler stands by the mirror, looking into the room. Sarah enters, and Butler notices her and returns his gaze to the mirror.

BUTLER

How's the evidence coming along?

SARAH

They just started the check now.

BUTLER

(checks his watch)

Good Lord. Only now? We're the only hope.

SARAH

(smiling)

As usual.

Sarah approaches the mirror and looks at Maxwell, noticing the belt on the table.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What's going on here? What the hell is he doing?!

Sarah heads towards the door, and Butler gently stops her with his hand.

BUTLER

Hold on a minute, Sarah.

Sarah stops and pulls her hand away.

SARAH

No! He has no right to do this!

BUTLER

Calm down, don't panic. Everything is under control. I'm keeping an eye on the situation.

SARAH

What situation?

(points at Billy)

He's just a child!

BUTLER

He's not just a child. He's our only witness, and we need his testimony.

Sarah looks sadly towards Billy.

SARAH

What? Don't you see that he's not saying anything precisely because of this?!

BUTLER

Calm down, Sarah. I understand and agree with you... That's why I need you.

Sarah looks puzzled at Butler.

SARAH

What? Don't even ask me! I won't be a part of this!

BUTLER

I need a "good cop", Sarah... Just as good as your father was.

Sarah calms down and looks at Billy.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

I'm willing to give you a chance.

Butler turns to the mirror.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

You probably don't know, but I owe you a small favor.

Sarah looks at Butler, puzzled.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell stretches his neck and picks up the belt from the table, tightening it, menacingly looking at Billy.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler looks into the interrogation room through the mirror.

BUTLER

When your father and I were partners, we solved one dead-end case after another.

(MORE)

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Our successes caught the attention of the press, and we both knew that someday we would compete for the commissioner's position... To be honest, I had little chance in fair competition with him... But then you came along.

(looks to Sarah)

You were born a sick child, weren't you?

Sarah doesn't respond. Butler turns back to the mirror.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Your father had to take care of you a lot... And I used that opportunity.

(beat)

So, in a way, I became a commissioner thanks to you.

Butler knocks on the mirror five times, as if passing a message. Maxwell looks towards the mirror and heads for the exit.

Sarah silently looks at Billy with a sad expression. Butler turns to her.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Your father always wanted to be proud of you, Sarah...

Sarah looks at Butler with a heavy gaze. A brief pause. Maxwell enters the room.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

...I'm sure you want that too.

MAXWELL

What's going on?

Sarah silently leaves the room, and Maxwell stands by the ashtray, taking out a cigarette.

BUTLER

Take a break, Maxwell. Have a smoke.

Maxwell lights the cigarette and looks at Billy.

MAXWELL

This kid is about to crack.

Butler doesn't respond. Sarah enters the interrogation room. Maxwell gets angry.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
What the hell is she doing?!

Maxwell moves towards the door.

BUTLER
Stop! Get back to your place right
now!

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah cautiously approaches Billy, bringing a chair along.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAXWELL
Why the hell did you let her do
that?! He's my witness! She's going
to ruin everything for me!

BUTLER
I don't give a shit! Get back to
your place right now!

Maxwell reluctantly shakes his head and returns to his seat,
looking at the interrogation room.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks at Billy cautiously, places a chair next to him,
and sits down. She changes the tone of her voice to a softer
and more gentle one.

SARAH
Hi, Billy... My name is Sarah...
Can I join you?

Billy remains in the same position, hugging his knees to his
chest, and nervously rocking back and forth.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You don't want to talk to me?

Billy doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I understand. It's hard for you
right now... I wouldn't want to
talk to anyone after something like
that either...

Billy remains silent, and Sarah looks away, adopting a more
relaxed tone.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Hm, I just remembered a similar story from my life.

(beat)

I have a son. He's about your age. Once, he stopped talking to me for a whole week. Can you imagine? I was really worried about it.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell and Butler watch the interrogation through the mirror.

MAXWELL

What fucking son? What is she talking about- ?

BUTLER

Shut up, Maxwell!

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SARAH

He was very offended then. I had promised to take him to the zoo, and he was looking forward to it. But, unfortunately, I had a lot of work... And I couldn't make time for him.

Sarah pauses for a moment and leans closer to Billy.

SARAH (CONT'D)

My son's name is Alan. At first look, he may seem like a bright kid, but deep down, he's a very mature and responsible boy for his age... And, of course, he wasn't upset just because he couldn't see elephants and monkeys.

Billy stops shaking.

SARAH (CONT'D)

He simply wanted to spend time with me. And I treated his wish just like another whim... You know how we made up? We went on a camping trip, just the two of us.

Billy's expression changes slightly.

SARAH (CONT'D)

We pitched a tent by the woods,
made a campfire, roasted
marshmallows over the flames, and
just sat there in peace and quite.
I thought, if I couldn't talk to
him, maybe I should find a place
where we could just sit together in
silence.

Billy's breathing becomes more regular.

SARAH (CONT'D)

We pretended that there was no one
else in the world, but us. Just me
and him.

Billy listens attentively and looks at a point on the floor.

SARAH (CONT'D)

We sat by the campfire, gazing at
the flames. At some point, I
stepped away to the tent, but I
forgot to take my marshmallow off
the fire. It was burnt...

(looks at Billy)

You know what Alan did?

Billy slowly lifts his head and turns slightly to Sarah.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler and Maxwell notice the movement in the room and become
alert.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah notices Billy's interest and smiles gently.

SARAH

He quietly swapped our sticks
without me noticing.

Billy listens attentively.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And when I came back, he was still
silently watching the fire. As if
nothing had happened... In that
moment, I realized that he no
longer held any grudge against me.

Billy slowly turns to Sarah and looks at her, slightly
opening his mouth. Sarah gazes back at Billy and smiles in
response, visibly excited.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Sometimes close people don't need words to express their love. Everyone will find his own way to do it...

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BUTLER

Look at that! He's about to speak.

Butler and Maxwell watch in anticipation. Maxwell puts off his cigarette in an empty ashtray.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SARAH

I'm sure your parents had it such way too...

Sarah's phone receives a notification. Billy gets startled by the sound and turns away. Sarah takes out her phone and looks at the screen, a message from Rice.

OFFICER RICE: We have something.

Sarah smiles and puts the phone back in her pocket, then stands up and nods approvingly at Billy.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Billy. I won't let anyone harm you. Everything will be fine soon.

Sarah smiles at Billy and slowly walks to the exit.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler looks puzzled at what's happening.

BUTLER

What... what's going on? Where is she going?

Maxwell quickly heads to the exit, looking displeased.

MAXWELL

I'll go find out.

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sarah exits the room and walks down the corridor. The next door opens, and Maxwell rushes out, stopping Sarah with his hand.

SARAH
What's the matter?

Sarah tries to bypass him, but he presses his hand against the wall, blocking her way.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Let me pass!

MAXWELL
Who do you think you are?

Sarah remains silent.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
You think you can make an impression on the commissioner?

SARAH
I'm thinking about catching the killer.

Sarah tries to move past him, but Maxwell blocks her with his hand.

MAXWELL
I see dealing with psychos has been beneficial for you.

SARAH
Is that what you call working under your leadership?
(tries to remove the hand)
Let me pass!

MAXWELL
I don't recall you being so cocky. Tired of being the quiet one? But your approach won't work here. You need a firm hand in this case.

SARAH
Interesting theory, Detective. I'll be sure to consider it once I get the witness's testimony.

Maxwell aggressively stares into Sarah's eyes.

MAXWELL

Testimonies alone won't be enough.
We need confessions, evidence,
clues.

At the end of the corridor, Rice appears, holding a sheet of paper. He notices Sarah and raises the paper up.

RICE

(yells)
Sarah!

Maxwell turns to face Rice. Sarah swiftly slips under the arm and hurries to Rice, looking back at Maxwell.

SARAH

You'll get everything.

Maxwell looks concerned as he watches Sarah leave. Rice looks at Maxwell suspiciously, their eyes meeting briefly.

Rice and Sarah leave around the corner and walk down the corridor.

RICE

What did that jerk want from you?

SARAH

Don't pay attention to him. What did you find?

RICE

We ran tests on your suspect -
Oliver Donovan.

Sarah stops and takes the results paper.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Maxwell enters the room. Butler stands expectantly by the mirror.

BUTLER

Well? Where's Sarah?

MAXWELL

Who? Oh, she left.

Maxwell returns to his seat.

BUTLER

What do you mean she left? The boy was about to talk! What if he gives us the name of the killer?

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

On the paper is a photo of Oliver with his information. The analysis result is negative.

RICE
Unfortunately, it's not him.

SARAH
(looking at photo)
...This can't be. Are you sure you did everything correctly?

RICE
Yes. His DNA was not found.

Rice looks guiltily away. Sarah looks lost and shows the paper.

SARAH
Maxwell will see this...

RICE
So... Now we have to find the killer at any cost.

Sarah steps back against the wall and lets out a heavy sigh.

SARAH
Oh, fuck...

Rice comfortingly puts his hand on Sarah's shoulder.

RICE
Hey! Don't worry... I won't let anything happen to you.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler is angry.

BUTLER
Why the hell did you let her go?
Get her back now!

MAXWELL
Commissioner, you don't know her well... She's been under my command for 5 years. All this time, she has never been at a crime scene. Her job is just paperwork.

BUTLER
Nonsense. She was close to get him to talk.

MAXWELL

Come on, it was just a reaction to her stupid stories.

(points at Billy)

He opened his mouth in surprise.

BUTLER

Even if that's true, it's still something. Your method hasn't yielded anything for us.

MAXWELL

Because I've only just started. You know I need time to get results. To show who's in charge here. Once the kid realizes that, he'll do whatever I say.

BUTLER

I told you to just warm him up!

Butler exhales and looks at Billy.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Fucking hell, Maxwell... He's just a child. Not some hardened street thug...

MAXWELL

You think I enjoy this? I'm doing it because it's necessary... And it's not easy for me either! But in that moment, I'm also thinking about other kids. I'm thinking about other people the maniac will kill if we don't catch him.

Butler lets out a heavy sigh.

BUTLER

Enough of this... Let's wait for the specialist.

EXT. POLICE STATION - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Rice and Sarah sit on the bench with cups of coffee. Sarah looks thoughtfully at the photo of Oliver and the negative DNA analysis result.

RICE

I watched the video of your interview with him. Why did you latch onto him?

(drinks)

I think he's just trying to get attention.

SARAH

It only seems like that. He's really playing with us.

RICE

Oh, really? I'd even say he's overplaying. Seriously, his act is on the level of a children's party entertainer.

SARAH

"Children's party entertainer"?
(smiling)
Jesus, Rice... Maybe you should take down his phone number then? You might need his services soon.

RICE

(smiling)
No, thanks. I'll find someone better for my boy.

Brief pause.

SARAH

Have you already chosen a name for him?

RICE

We've been thinking about it for a while. My wife wants Jean-Pierre because she loves everything French... But I think it's too much... So we settled on Robert.
(drinks)
After my father.

SARAH

(confused)
But you said he abandoned you. Didn't he? When you were a child.

RICE

Yes, he did it.

SARAH

Then why name your son after him?

RICE

My mom said he left us for his dream. He wanted to become a great artist. It was always his vanity driving him... Imagine what will happen when he finds out he has a grandson named after him. He'll definitely want to see my boy.

(MORE)

RICE (CONT'D)
 (drinks)
 But I won't let him do that... I'll
 strike at his most vulnerable spot.

SARAH
 (puzzled)
 Um, don't you think that's too
 cruel?

RICE
 It was cruel to leave a woman with
 two kids to fate... I'll never
 forgive him for that.

Sarah looks down, lost in thoughts.

SARAH
 My father wasn't great either too.
 He was always strict with me...
 Saying it was for my own good.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

SARAH (V.O.)
 ...And when he was dying...

Sarah's father is in a critical condition, lying in a
 hospital bed. Sarah sits in front of him with a downcast
 gaze, watching him. Her father is saying something.

SARAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He made me promise that I...

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. POLICE STATION - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Sarah struggles to speak.

SARAH
 ...That I would become a detective.
 Just as good as he once was. It was
 very important to him. But I... I
 wanted... It seems...
 (teary eyes)
 I don't even know how to say it-

RICE
 Hey...

Rice approaches Sarah and puts his hand on her shoulder.

RICE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. You're just at the beginning of your journey; you have everything ahead of you.

SARAH

(looking away)

Yeah... You're right.

RICE

You'll become an excellent detective, I'm sure of it.

Sarah awkwardly smiles and takes Rice's hand.

SARAH

Of course.

Rice smiles and takes out a sheet with a photo of Oliver, showing it to Sarah.

RICE

All we need is to catch this guy. And all our problems will be solved instantly. You could say we're already halfway there.

Sarah looks at the photo and smiles.

SARAH

Yeah. But the DNA test came back negative. So...

RICE

(looks at the sheet)

Oh, shit. Right... So, it looks like we're back to square one.

Rice becomes upset and sits down, staring at the sheet with Oliver's photo.

RICE (CONT'D)

So you say he's just playing with us?

SARAH

I think so.

RICE

Then maybe he purposely left the stain on the windowsill? And took the butt with him.

SARAH

(drinks)

Everything is possible.

RICE

It's strange... He's a typical psychopath, right?

Sarah shrugs with a look of "maybe".

RICE (CONT'D)

I mean, Maxwell usually picks only those. What makes him different from the others?

Sarah ponders.

SARAH

At first, I thought he was just like everyone else too...

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Sarah sits at a table. In front of her is MICHAEL, a stout man with sunken eyes and slow speech.

SARAH (V.O.)

...Like every psycho I've ever had to interview. Sometimes it seemed to me that Maxwell included them in his list without any logic... As if he did it on purpose... Just to piss me off.

Sarah picks up a folder and looks at Michael.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Are you Michael Stevens?

MICHAEL

Yes.

SARAH

How long have you been here?

Michael doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Do you remember why they admitted you here?

Michael doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You used to work at the church-

MICHAEL

I'm not well.

SARAH
 (confused)
 Yeah, alright...
 (looks in the folder)
 Um, you worked as a gardener at the
 church. Do you remember?

Michael doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 You were accused of seduction...
 The court found you mentally ill.
 However, the victims' testimonies
 tell me otherwise.

Michael doesn't respond. Sarah presses him harder.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 None of the clergy ever suspected
 you... How did you manage to
 pretend all this time?

He doesn't respond. Sarah starts to get nervous.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Or maybe you're pretending now?
 Pretending to be mentally ill to
 avoid a prison sentence. Huh?

Michael remains silent.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 It's unlikely that you could
 manipulate your victims in such a
 state.

Michael trembles slightly, and Sarah notices it, changing her
 tone to a more aggressive one.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 I think you simply used the fear of
 God to silence your victims. Isn't
 that right?

He trembles even harder.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 They could barely look at you in
 the courtroom. And...
 (confused)
 What? What are you doing?

Michael continues trembling.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 What's happening to you? Stop it!
 Stop it right now!

Michael doesn't stop trembling.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Just stop-

Michael stands up from the table, without pants, and masturbates towards Sarah, leering at her.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Oh my God!

Sarah is frightened, gets up and steps back from the table, keeping a safe distance from Michael, looking away with disgust.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Shit...

She calls for the orderlies standing outside the door. They enter and grab Michael, trying to take him away.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

In front of Sarah sits a patient, RICHARD. He looks around nervously.

SARAH
 Richard.

Richard doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Richard? Can you hear me?

Richard shakes his head, as if a bird is flying around the room.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Richard, I have a couple of questions for you. Could you please-

RICHARD
 (looking around)
 What is that?!

SARAH
 Excuse me?

RICHARD
 What the hell is that?!

SARAH
 Where?

Sarah looks around.

RICHARD
It's here! It's everywhere!

SARAH
There's no one else here, but us.
Please, calm down.

Richard suddenly stops shaking his head and calms down, looking at Sarah.

Sarah smiles gently, but keeps an eye on the orderlies, who are standing outside the door.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Alright... Richard, don't worry. I won't take up much of your time. Try to answer quickly and briefly.

RICHARD
What do you want to know from me?

SARAH
In your case, it says that you were convicted of inflicting serious bodily harm due to jealousy. You attempted to harm your wife-

RICHARD
Elizabeth? My darling!

Richard was suddenly interested in the conversation and became nervous. Sarah is a bit at a loss.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Is she okay? What happened to her? Where is she?

SARAH
At the moment, she is safe... Um, don't worry. But she pressed charges against-

RICHARD
(turns head)
It's back again!

SARAH
What's back?

Richard suddenly stands up from his seat and backs away from the table. Sarah is scared and looks at the window; the orderlies are nowhere to be seen.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Okay... Let's calm down.

RICHARD

It's here. There it is!

Richard points his finger into emptiness, then his wild gaze subsides slightly. He turns to Sarah and looks at her. Sarah looks back, trying not to show her fear.

SARAH

Everything's okay. Please calm down.

RICHARD

It's here.
(points in void)
Right there!

Suddenly Richard calms down. He turns to Sarah and looks at her.

SARAH

Well... Richard. Let us go-

Richard lunges at Sarah and tries to strangle her. He pins her down to the floor and sits on top of her. Sarah struggles and screams, looking to the window.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Help! Someone!

No one can be seen at the window. Sarah looks back at Richard, who is deranged.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(muted)
Richard, please...

Richard continues to strangle Sarah with a maniacal aggression.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(muted)
Please, don't...

It seems like there's nothing Sarah can do now.

SARAH (CONT'D)

...My darling, please.

Richard hesitates and loosens his grip. Sarah strikes him on the face and manages to throw him off, quickly getting up.

Richard stands up abruptly, and Sarah prepares to defend herself, but Richard points his finger again into empty space.

RICHARD

It's here! It's here!

Sarah backs away quickly to the door, keeping her eyes on Richard. She holds her throat and bangs hard on the glass. The doors open, and orderlies rush into the room.

SARAH

Where were you, the fucking hell?!

The orderlies restrain Richard. Sarah composes herself and tries to catch her breath.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Sarah sits at a table, feeling dejected. In front of her is a patient, EMIR, who is looking away, frightened.

SARAH

Emir, let's talk.

EMIR

I will only speak with my lawyer.

SARAH

Emir, we are in a psychiatric clinic. There are no lawyers here.

EMIR

Where is my lawyer?

SARAH

Don't worry. You're not being accused of anything. Five years ago, you were suspected of a religiously motivated murder, but the case was closed.

EMIR

I need a lawyer.

SARAH

You came here voluntarily, didn't you?

EMIR

I need a lawyer, I need a lawyer...

SARAH

Emir, I just have a couple of questions for you. Answer them, and I'll leave.

EMIR

I need a lawyer. Where is my lawyer?

Sarah sighs heavily, looking at Emir with tearful eyes.

SARAH

Emir, please... There's a serial killer on the loose in the city. I'm sure it's not you, but I still need to question you. Just let me make sure I'm not mistaken... Please, help me...

Emir looks at Sarah with a mournful expression and pauses.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Please...

Emir looks away and shouts.

EMIR

I need a lawyer! I need a lawyer! A lawyer!

Sarah loses control and shouts in anger, knocking her hands on the table in fury.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Sarah sits at the table with an empty stare, jotting something down on a sheet of paper in front of her.

SARAH (V.O.)

When it was Oliver's turn, I already didn't care about anyone... But he managed to get my attention.

The orderlies bring Oliver into the room. He smirks at Sarah and sits on a chair. Oliver eagerly looks at Sarah, who doesn't react to him at all.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(writing)

Are you Oliver Donovan?

OLIVER

(smirks)

That's me.

Quiet pause. Sarah continues to write something and ignores Oliver.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Is that all?

SARAH

Yes. That's all.

An awkward pause.

OLIVER

I was called here only to ask my name?

SARAH

Everything else is in your file. You've been interviewed before.

Oliver is slightly surprised. He holds a brief pause.

OLIVER

But that was five years ago... A lot has changed since then.

SARAH

Do you have anything to tell since then?

Oliver changes his tone to a more mysterious one.

OLIVER

Oh yeah, I have something to tell.

Sarah continues writing.

SARAH

(sarcastically)

Mm, very interesting...

A silly pause. Oliver looks puzzled at Sarah, who continues to pay no attention to him.

OLIVER

You're missing out by not wanting to hear me out.

(beat)

Though it doesn't really matter. I prefer my actions to speak for me... "For he who has the light of good deeds in his thoughts, darkness flees from him".

Sarah stops writing and looks at Oliver.

SARAH

What does that mean?

OLIVER

It's a message... from my Father.

Sarah looks into Oliver's case file.

SARAH

Did he say this to you before he died?

Sarah takes out a photo of a man's body and shows it to Oliver.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You were convicted of killing him, right?

OLIVER

I don't consider that man my father. And I don't acknowledge earthly judgment... As for my other actions, I will be held accountable for them only before the Almighty.

SARAH

What "actions" are you referring to?

Oliver notices Sarah's interest and adopts a condescending tone.

OLIVER

You must understand. I am here to heal this world... The Lord has granted me the ability to see through people. I see their darkest sins... No matter how hard they try to hide them, I still find them.

SARAH

And your father was one of such people?

OLIVER

His name was whispered to me by the Lord.

SARAH

Curious, what other names has He whispered to you?

OLIVER

It's not as simple as you think...

Sarah looks puzzled at him. Oliver closes his eyes as if listening carefully.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Now-now... The Lord is speaking to me... He is telling me names...

Sarah looks at Oliver as if he were just another madman.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Tamara Browning... Emma Johnson... Ryan Blackstone.

Sarah rolls her eyes and continues writing in the folder.

SARAH
Enough, please. These names mean
nothing to me.

Oliver opens his eyes and smiles, looking at Sarah.

OLIVER
There are so many names. And they
are always different... But I
remember them all. No one will
escape punishment!

Sarah avoids looking at Oliver and nods to him distantly.

SARAH
(writing)
Uh-huh... that's wonderful.

Oliver sees Sarah's skepticism and looks at her
enigmatically.

OLIVER
I remember them all... Even those
who have already faced my wrath...
John Simmons... Ellen Stinks...

Sarah stops writing and looks suspiciously at the next sheet
in the folder. In the folder, there is a list of names with
photos: John Simmons, Nicole Simmons, Clyde Stinks, Ellen
Stinks, Viola Barnes, Andrew Mitchell. Sarah lifts her gaze
and looks at Oliver.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Andrew Mitchell... Viola Barnes-

SARAH
And why were these people supposed
to be punished? What did, for
example...
(shows photo)
Viola Barnes?

Oliver remains mockingly silent, and Sarah starts to get
nervous.

SARAH (CONT'D)
So, what was it? She didn't attend
church on Sundays?

Oliver doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Or she didn't obey her husband?
Uttered God's name in vain?

Oliver smiles and looks at Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Or perhaps she treated her children
poorly?

OLIVER
Maybe you should ask them about
that personally?

Sarah looks angrily at Oliver. He provocatively smiles.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Or maybe the triplets just didn't
want to talk to you?

Sarah looks at him, contemplating. She looks into the folder, where there's information opposite Viola Barnes' name: a 31-year-old woman, mother of two children. Sarah thinks and then frustratingly looks back at Oliver.

SARAH
Ah... I see now...

Oliver looks at Sarah and smirks.

OLIVER
All these people had a choice. But
they didn't-

SARAH
I remember that night... when Viola
Barnes and Andrew Mitchell were
killed. I had a report on my desk
with detailed descriptions and
photos. Two bodies, organs
scattered all over the apartment.
(beat)
Soon after, they brought the two
girls, the murdered spouses' twins.
Nicole and Katie.

Oliver looks arrogantly at Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)
The news made a deliberate mistake.
They said there were three girls...
One of the sisters died from an
illness a year before the incident.
But the reporters decided that a
photo with three girls would look
better in the broadcast.
Apparently, it "enhances the
dramatic effect".

Sarah's gaze fills with hatred. Her eyes tear up.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 ...But who cares, right? Two or three? Nobody cares about that. People are interested in the corpses, the killers... That's what matters. That's the fun part. Right?!

Oliver doesn't respond, looking guilty.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Right?! You bastard!

OLIVER
 I wanted to say-

Sarah abruptly grabs the folder and throws it at Oliver's head. Oliver reacts at the last moment, deflecting the folder with his hand.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 Hey, what the fuck?!

SARAH
 (shouting)
 You fucking son of a bitch! Do you think it's funny?! Trying to play games with me, you freak?!

Sarah stands up.

OLIVER
 Cool down! I didn't mean-

SARAH
 What's so funny about people dying?! About children losing their parents?! Huh?!
 (beat)
 Answer me! You fucking animal!

Oliver remains silent.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Burn in hell! You monster!

Oliver breathes heavily and remains silent. Sarah sits back and grabs her head, starting to cry quietly.

A short pause. Oliver notices a photo of his father's corpse on the table. He takes the empty folder from the table and shows it to Sarah.

OLIVER
 What are you trying to achieve with these interviews? What good does it do?

Oliver looks at the scattered photos on the table, pulling some of them closer to him.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
You're only tormenting yourself in
vain... Give up this nonsense.

Sarah tries to stabilize her breathing and comes to her senses.

SARAH
(sniffles)
I can't...

OLIVER
Why not?

SARAH
...I made a promise.

Sarah wipes her eyes and confidently taps her finger on the table.

SARAH (CONT'D)
And I will keep it!

OLIVER
Well, well! How original... Let me
guess. You made a promise to your
father?

Oliver looks at Sarah, waiting for her reaction.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Right before he died, huh? For
fucking "dramatic effect"! Yeah?!

Sarah calms down abruptly and looks at him as if she swallowed her tongue.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
(points at Sarah)
Bingo!

Sarah guiltily looks away.

SARAH
You don't understand.

OLIVER
(smirks)
No, you're the one mistaken. I
fucking understand everything.

Oliver places his index finger vertically on the photo of his father.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Trust me - these people will never leave you in peace; they will haunt you for the rest of your life... And you won't be able to hide from them anywhere!

Oliver takes the photo and examines it. It's a picture of Oliver's father's body.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I spent my entire childhood on a ranch with my mother and that bastard - my father. He constantly beat me. When I turned 16, I packed my things and ran away from home, intending to start a new life.

Oliver ponders, while Sarah examines the room.

SARAH

But it didn't work out?

OLIVER

At first, it was alright. But after a while, my father somehow found me. He called me and said that my mom was seriously ill. He told me she wanted to see me one last time to say goodbye.

Oliver looks at the blank page of his file where his mother's photo should be.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

When I came home, he immediately started persuading me to stay. He complained that he was terribly afraid of being alone...

(smiling)

Like we were ever close.

Sarah listens attentively.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

And after I refused, he decided he could force me to stay.

Oliver looks at a photo of a long screwdriver stained with blood and outlined with chalk.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

But I also gained force and managed to fight back...

SARAH

Why didn't you go to the police?

OLIVER

I was scared... We lived far from the city, and to everyone, we seemed like a normal family. No one could even think of what was happening in our house.

(looking at photos)

Once, we were at the store. My father lost control - he hit me. Someone noticed it, and the next day, two officers from the child protective services came to us...

OLIVER'S FLASHBACK:

INT. OLIVER'S RANCH - LIVING ROOM - DAY

YOUNG OLIVER (10) sits on the floor, looking frightened towards the living room. Toys are scattered around him, including some ventriloquist dummies.

OFFICER MARTIN (40s) and OFFICER ELLEN (20s) walk through the house with OLIVER'S FATHER, talking to him.

OLIVER (V.O.)

I wanted to tell them everything, but my father had intimidated us so much, both me and my mother...

Oliver's Father cordially interacts with the caseworkers, but when he looks at Oliver...

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

...All he needed was just to look at us...

He quickly changes his look to a more serious, disdainful one, unnoticed by everyone else. He looked at Oliver as if accusing him of betrayal.

Oliver guiltily lowers his gaze to the floor. His Father shows Martin around the house, sharing something charming; everyone is in a good mood.

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

His behavior was so peculiar... I was ready to forgive him for everything that had happened before. I just didn't want to ruin that moment.

Martin goes upstairs with Oliver's father. Ellen approaches young Oliver and looks around the room. She sits in front of him, gazing with care.

ELLEN

Hi, Oliver. My name is Ellen. How are you doing here?

Oliver doesn't respond.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Oliver nods shyly. Ellen looks down.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

You have so many toys here...
What's your favorite?

Oliver picks up a nearby toy. It's a ventriloquist dummy, and he shows it to Ellen.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Oh, I see... Do you like playing
with dolls?
(smiling)
Hm, that's unusual for a boy.

Ellen smiles and picks up another dummy.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

But don't worry. It's even
beneficial. It helps develop social
skills.
(beat)
Your dolls have names?

Oliver shakes his head negatively.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Alright. Let's call my doll
Freddie. And your doll... Maggie.
Is that okay with you?

Oliver nods shyly. Ellen puts her hand into her dummy and slightly opens her mouth, speaking in a distorted voice.

FREDDIE

Hi, Maggie! It's me, Freddie! How are you?

Oliver looks bewildered at Ellen.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey! Are you here? Respond me!

Ellen points at Oliver's dummy.

ELLEN

Come on, Oliver. Respond him.

Oliver puts his hand into the dummy and hesitantly speaks in a distorted voice.

MAGGIE
Hi, Freddie...

Ellen smiles and continues speaking with her mouth slightly open.

FREDDIE
Maggie, what did you do today?

A brief pause. Ellen looks at Oliver.

MAGGIE
Today, I played in the yard, spent time with the dog, and... and watched TV.

FREDDIE
Watched TV? And what was on?

MAGGIE
A movie.

FREDDIE
How interesting! Must have been a cartoon movie, right? Maybe a children's fairytale?

MAGGIE
Yes.

FREDDIE
And what was the title?

Maggie doesn't answer.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Can't remember the title?

Maggie remains silent. Young Oliver anxiously looks at Ellen.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
And what about the story, huh? Do you remember? Tell me more about it.

A beat.

MAGGIE
There... There was a castle. Where lived a scary monster.

FREDDIE
I see...

Ellen smiles.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Was it very scary?

Young Oliver doesn't smile.

MAGGIE
Yes.

FREDDIE
And what did it look like?

MAGGIE
It looked like a human... Walked,
talked, ate... But instead of
regular food... it ate children.
And they screamed in pain... They
screamed, but no one-

MARTIN (O.S.)
(yells from another room)
Ellen!

Ellen hesitates for a moment, takes the dummy off her hand,
and speaks in her own voice.

ELLEN
Um, that's a bit strange. What
scary movies are you watching,
Oliver... Maybe?

Young Oliver breathes heavily and looks at Ellen, hoping for
help.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Maybe your dad-

MARTIN (O.S.)
(yells)
Ellen! Where are you?!

Ellen turns towards Martin's voice as he and Oliver's father
comes down the stairs.

ELLEN
I'm here!

Ellen turns back to Oliver and whispers to him.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Maybe your dad doesn't know you're
not ready for such things yet? He
should keep a better eye on you...
But don't worry. I'll talk to him
about it.

Ellen stands up and waves to Oliver.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
It was nice meeting you, Oliver.

Ellen walks to the exit. Oliver sits on the floor with the dummy in his hand, helplessly watching her leave.

BACK TO SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

Sarah listens to Oliver's story attentively and looks him in the eyes.

OLIVER
They left and never came back. My father was very angry that day.

Oliver unbuttons his collar and shows a scar on his neck.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I got hurt badly. So did my mother. Since then, I realized that nobody will help me. I am on my own...

Sarah ponders on his words. Oliver sadly gazes at the photo of his father.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - DAY

Sarah's car pulls up to the house.

SARAH (V.O.)
He was discharged from the clinic shortly after that. I tried to find him, but all I had was his old house address. So, I went there hoping to learn something about him.

Sarah stops her car in front of the house, gets out, walks up the porch, and knocks on the door. A middle-aged woman, Oliver's mother, MRS. DONOVAN (60s), opens the door.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Good day, Mrs. Donovan. My name is Sarah Barthel.
(shows police badge)
I'm with the police.

MRS. DONOVAN
Good day. How can I help you?

SARAH

I would like to talk to you about your son. Don't you mind?

MRS. DONOVAN

Oliver? Has something happened?

SARAH

Everything is fine. I just need to clarify a few things. Routine procedure.

MRS. DONOVAN

Alright, come in.

Sarah enters the house.

INT. OLIVER'S RANCH - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah and Mrs. Donovan sit on the couch in the living room.

MRS. DONOVAN

Oliver hasn't lived here for a long time. I don't even know how I can help you. He didn't do anything wrong, did he?

SARAH

Oh, no. Don't worry. I just wanted to ask you about that day... when that... um, incident happened in your house.

MRS. DONOVAN

Oh... Okay. But the case has been closed for a long time. The court ruled it as self-defense.

SARAH

Yes, of course. The case is not going to be reopened. It's just that some documents were lost, and I was tasked with recovering them.

MRS. DONOVAN

Alright. So, what do you need from me?

SARAH

You were the only witness in this case, right?

MRS. DONOVAN

Yes. It happened right in front of my eyes.

SARAH

How did it happen? Can you describe it briefly?

She pauses for a moment and changes her tone from friendly to cautious.

MRS. DONOVAN

Oliver came to visit us; it had been a long time since we last saw him. My husband, Donny, and I were very happy about his visit.

(thinking)

It seems Oliver was working as a plumber at that time... He came to us in his work clothes, as if he was on another job call, not visiting his parents whom he hadn't seen in a while... And just 10 minutes after he arrived, he was already planning to leave us.

(sighs heavily)

Donny didn't like it at all... He started persuading Oliver to stay. But Oliver wouldn't listen to him.

Sarah listens attentively to the story.

MRS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Then, Donny got very angry, and they started arguing, shouting at each other. Donny hit Oliver, and I got really scared... Then Oliver hit him back... Donny grabbed a knife from the table, which was within his reach. And Oliver took out a screwdriver from his pocket... And, well, it happened like that.

(looking down sadly)

Unfortunately, the wound turned out to be deep. We live very far from the town, and the ambulance took a long time to arrive.

A hard pause.

SARAH

Why do you think Donny got so angry?

MRS. DONOVAN

I don't know. Maybe he just wanted Oliver to stay with us a little longer.

Sarah looks suspiciously at Oliver's mother.

SARAH

It seems a bit strange that Oliver came in his work clothes. Don't you think?

MRS. DONOVAN

Maybe he had a lot of work to do.

SARAH

And he traveled all the way here just to spend 10 minutes with you?

MRS. DONOVAN

Perhaps he had some sudden business during his visit.

Sarah looks at Oliver's mother, who looks away shyly.

SARAH

Tell me, when Oliver lived with you, did your family have similar conflicts?

Mrs. Donovan nervously shakes her head.

MRS. DONOVAN

No, I don't remember anything like that.

SARAH

Not even once?

MRS. DONOVAN

Well, maybe there was something, but they never held grudges against each other.

SARAH

Never at all?

MRS. DONOVAN

(tries to smile nicely)

No.

Mrs. Donovan struggles to maintain eye contact with Sarah, who looks back with sadness.

SARAH

One last question... Do you suffer from any serious illnesses?

MRS. DONOVAN

(smiles, surprised)

It seems not.

SARAH
 Alright, thank you very much. Can I
 take a look at Oliver's room?

MRS. DONOVAN
 Yes, of course.

INT. OLIVER'S RANCH - OLIVER'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah walks around the room, inspecting it. She notices the ventriloquist dummies - Freddie and Maggie. An old Bible lies on the shelf, in very good condition, as if it has never been opened.

SARAH (V.O.)
 It seems like no one has been in
 this room for a long time... As if
 Oliver died for her that very day,
 along with her husband... Or maybe
 she just wanted it to seem that
 way.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. POLICE STATION - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Rice stands with a cup of coffee, attentively listening to Sarah's story.

RICE
 Yeah... It seems this guy has every
 reason to hate this world... It's
 just madness.

SARAH
 There's just one thing I don't
 understand... He seems like an
 ordinary person, nothing
 outstanding about him.

RICE
 Five years and no evidence, no
 witnesses.

SARAH
 Luck?

RICE
 It doesn't seem like luck.

SARAH
 Then how does he do it?

A brief pause. Rice looks away.

RICE
 I don't know...
 (looking away)
 Maybe he's just a puppet in someone
 else's game?

Sarah ponders and whispers quietly.

SARAH
 A doll in someone's hands...

RICE
 What?

Sarah stands up and looks around anxiously.

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

SARAH
 I've got an idea!

RICE
 What idea?

Sarah heads towards the door.

SARAH
 I'll be back soon! Wait for me at
 Gob's.

RICE
 Alright.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER

In the room, facing away from the mirror, Butler and Maxwell stand. Maxwell is smoking, and Butler takes his phone away from his ear and puts it in his pocket.

BUTLER
 Damn it! The specialist won't come.
 And we don't have time to search
 for another one... Curse it! Where
 did Sarah go? Did you call her?

MAXWELL
 She's not answering.

A short pause. Maxwell takes a drag from his cigarette and looks at it.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I remember when my father found the cigarettes I was hiding behind the old shed... He called me over and just stared into my eyes with his stern look. Within 3 seconds, I confessed him everything.

(beat)

That's what I call upbringing. And it didn't require a team of specialists to make me talk.

BUTLER

It's a different time now, John.

MAXWELL

That's bullshit... You heard it yourself. This guy grew up with strict discipline. It's the only language he understands.

BUTLER

"Strict discipline"? That's what you call it? Good Lord...

MAXWELL

You can call it whatever you want, but such methods are beneficial for children.

BUTLER

I'm afraid to think what would happen to my son if I raised him using such methods.

MAXWELL

Oh, yeah?

Maxwell takes a drag and looks at Butler.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

And where is your son now?

Butler turns to face Maxwell, their eyes meet. Butler ponders for a moment and then turns back to the mirror.

BUTLER

Alright... Let continue.

Maxwell puts out his cigarette and silently leaves the room.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maxwell enters the room and stands by the door. He looks aggressively at Billy and rolls up his sleeves.

Billy pays no attention to him, but senses the looming threat.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - LATER

Gobs and Rice sit at the table, staring at the monitor. On the screen, a progress bar shows DNA match analysis - 99%.

The two eagerly watch the monitor. The result appears on the screen. It's negative.

RICE
Damn it!

GOBS
Who's next?

Rice checks the list.

RICE
Terry Glisson.

Gobs types the name into the computer, and Terry Glisson's case file with his photo appears on the screen.

GOBS
Come on, buddy, don't let us down.

Gobs presses the "Start" button, and the progress bar appears on the screen. Sarah enters the room with a black sports bag in her hand.

SARAH
Hey guys! How's it going?

RICE
Not so great yet. We just started the fifth one.

Rice hands Sarah the list and continues to watch the monitor.

RICE (CONT'D)
Will you mark down anyone else?

Sarah flips through the pages, crossing out some names and marks others. Rice notices the sports bag.

RICE (CONT'D)
Is that a baseball bat in there?

SARAH
What?

Rice points at the sports bag near Sarah's feet.

RICE

Is that your brilliant idea? Didn't think you'd stoop to their level.

Sarah hands the list back to Rice, takes the sports bag, and walks out of the room, turning around.

SARAH

A baseball bat requires a firmer hand... That level is not for me.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Billy sits in the corner, hugging his knees. Maxwell stands by the table, soaking a towel in a basin of water, looking at the boy with malice.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler watches the situation through the mirror as Sarah enters the room.

SARAH

Commissioner Butler!

Butler turns to face Sarah.

BUTLER

Where were you?!

SARAH

I'm sorry, I had-

BUTLER

You have no right to leave the interrogation like that! I gave you an order! I trusted you!

SARAH

Yes, I know. I apologize; it won't happen again-

BUTLER

Of course, it won't happen again! Maxwell is handling the interrogation now.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Detective Maxwell takes out the towel and twists it. Billy looks scared, staring at the floor.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SARAH
Commissioner, please, give me one more chance.

BUTLER
No! You missed your shot.

SARAH
Please! I know how to get through to him. His silence is just a defensive mechanism. He just needs a different way to express himself.

BUTLER
Detective Maxwell is already working on that. The boy will talk soon.

Butler turns back to the mirror, while Sarah looks compassionately to the next room.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell wraps the towel around his fist and menacingly stares at Billy.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks back at Butler.

SARAH
(points at Maxwell)
Commissioner! Maxwell is a deranged maniac, he's more dangerous than the criminals he himself catches! Imagine what will happen to the boy after such torture!

BUTLER
He has already lost his parents, it can't get any worse for him. And we don't have time to play his games! We need to catch the killer!

SARAH
But then how are we any better than the killers after this?

Butler doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What if it was your son?

BUTLER

(turns to Sarah)

Maybe my son would benefit from it!
And he would-

(keeps control)

I advise you to keep your emotions
in control, Sarah! You're a
detective, not a mother. And here,
on duty, you should only think
about solving the crime!

Butler turns away. Sarah ponders.

SARAH

I'm sorry, Commissioner, but at the
moment, I see a crime happening
behind the next wall. And the
traces of this crime may be noticed
by the accused's lawyer... If the
case goes to trial by jury...

Butler contemplates and turns back to Sarah.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell approaches Billy, grabs him by the collar, and
roughly lifts him up. The boy whimpers and trembles.

The door to the room opens, and Sarah enters with a black
bag. Maxwell turns around and looks angrily at Sarah.

MAXWELL

What the hell do you want?! Get the
fuck out of here!

Sarah doesn't respond. Maxwell releases Billy, and the boy
falls to the floor, hugging his knees to his chest. Maxwell
heads to Sarah.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Can't you hear what I'm telling
you, you cunt?!

A series of knocks on the mirror are heard - five strikes.
Sarah and Maxwell stand and look at each other's reflections.

SARAH

(to Maxwell reflection)

Seems like it's you.

MAXWELL

(turns to Sarah)

Yeah? Or maybe it's you? Get the
fuck out of here, I said!

Maxwell gets up close to Sarah and looks menacingly at her. Sarah confidently locks his eyes. A tense pause. Maxwell's phone starts ringing.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

(quietly)

After I'm done with this little puppy, you're next in line...

A tense pause. Sarah leans to Maxwell's ear.

SARAH

(whispering)

Unpleasant, isn't it? When someone else dictates the rules to you.

MAXWELL

This night will end soon, and everything will be as it was before... I advise you not to forget that.

Maxwell doesn't answer the call and brushes past Sarah, intentionally bumping her shoulder. Sarah was prepared for this and nudges him back with her shoulder.

Butler turns around, clearly not expecting this. Sarah doesn't look at him and provocatively smiles. He exits the room in a silent rage. Sarah approaches Billy, smiling kindly at him.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler watches Billy and Sarah through the mirror. Maxwell storms into the room, furious.

MAXWELL

Have you completely lost your fucking mind?!

BUTLER

Hey! Watch what you say, you moron!

MAXWELL

Fuck yourself, you asshole! You're ruining everything I do!

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Sarah sits down next to Billy on her knees and intends to place the bag nearby. She clears some space and freezes for a few seconds, staring at the floor.

Then she snaps out of it, puts the bag on the floor, and looks at Billy, nervously smiling.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell stands facing Butler. Both are tense.

BUTLER

Hey! You better shut your fucking mouth before-

MAXWELL

You son of a bitch, Butler!

BUTLER

I said-

MAXWELL

You set me up on the first case!

BUTLER

Just shut up-

MAXWELL

And now you want to do the same thing!

Butler remains silent as Maxwell steps closer and continues his pressure.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

You think I don't see what you're trying to do?

BUTLER

You're crossing a line here-

MAXWELL

Oh, I see right through you!

Maxwell stands inches away. Butler is barely holding back.

BUTLER

...Listen, you moron-

MAXWELL

Yeah, yeah... I know what you're planning...

BUTLER

One more word-

MAXWELL

But you won't get away with it, you bastard. I'll tell everyone who you really are!

Butler unexpectedly punches Maxwell in the jaw. Maxwell steps back and presses against the wall. Butler delivers a few more blows. Maxwell tries to defend himself but fails. He falls.

BUTLER

(kicking)

I said shut your fucking mouth, you sucker! And don't you dare talk to me in that tone!

(continues punching)

If you don't calm down right now, I'll kick you out of here! You got it?! I'll disgracefully fire you! You fucking got it?!

Butler moves back to the mirror. Maxwell regains his composure and wipes the blood from his lips. He stands up and calmly speaks.

MAXWELL

(points at Butler)

You're making a big mistake.

BUTLER

It's you who will make a mistake if you don't shut up right now! Do you understand me?!

Maxwell silently walks to the ashtray and lights a cigarette. A brief pause.

Butler calms down and looks into the interrogation room. Maxwell wipes the blood from his lips and looks at Sarah.

MAXWELL

I'll enjoy watching you, when she tastes your blood.

BUTLER

Don't worry about it. I have a leash for each one here.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy looks down and sways slightly. Sarah leans in carefully to him.

SARAH

Billy, hey... It's me again, Sarah.
(beat)
How are you feeling?

Billy doesn't pay attention to Sarah's voice.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I just went home, wanted to check on Alan. I thought about inviting him over to see you, but he was sleeping so deeply, I didn't want to wake him.

Sarah takes out a photo from her pocket and shows it to Billy.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This is his photo.

Billy looks at the photo, where is showing little Oliver.

SARAH (CONT'D)

So, what do you think? Does he look like me? I think you two would get along. You're around the same age, and he's also very kind and brave.

(beat)

He even goes to the same school as you. Dumper Street, 52, right?

Billy calms down a little and listens.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - SAME TIME

Gobs and Rice are looking at the monitor. The loading bar reaches 100%. The result of the analysis is negative. Rice looks disappointed and lowers his gaze.

GOBS

Next one!

Rice checks through the list for a while, crossing out the checkboxes on the pages.

RICE

Here, found it. Type Tyler Maxwell.

GOBS

Oh, God... Who's that? His cousin?

RICE

Seems like he doesn't trust anyone at all.

Gobs types the name, and a photo of the suspect Tyler Maxwell appears on the monitor.

GOBS

Well, damn. They even look alike.

Rice looks thoughtfully at the photo, and Gobs is about to press "Start".

RICE

Wait. Don't press it.

GOBS

Why?

Gobs looks puzzled at Rice, who has mysteriously look.

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

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah is slightly nervous, but continues the conversation.

SARAH
Maybe you've seen him in school?
What if you both attend the same
activities? Play together after
lessons... Do you know him?

Billy looks at the floor and doesn't respond.

SARAH (CONT'D)
No?
(looks away)
Well, it's not surprising... My
Alan doesn't have many friends;
he's constantly bullied at school.

Sarah reaches into her bag.

SARAH (CONT'D)
But that doesn't scare him; he
never feels alone. You know why?

Billy remains unresponsive.

SARAH (CONT'D)
He has a friend who will always
protect him from any trouble...
Someone who will always help and
listen to him.

Sarah carefully takes out her hand with a Freddie dummy
placed on it and shows it to Billy.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Meet, Billy! This is Freddie!

Billy looks at the dummy suspiciously.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Freddie, meet Billy! Say hello to
him!

Sarah slightly opens her mouth, and the Freddie dummy starts
speaking in a distorted voice. Sarah controls his jaw.

FREDDIE
Hi, Billy! My name is Freddie!

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell raises his hands in bewilderment.

MAXWELL

What the hell is going on?

BUTLER

Shut up.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy slowly turns his head and looks at the dummy, then returns his gaze to the floor.

BILLY

(softly)

Hi, Freddie.

Sarah looks at Billy in shock, and her breathing quickens.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler grabs his head.

BUTLER

Jesus Christ! He spoke!

Maxwell lights another cigarette and visibly gets nervous.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah tries to maintain her composure and opens her mouth again, coughing nervously.

FREDDIE

How are you, Billy?

Billy speaks very softly.

BILLY

Not good.

FREDDIE

Oh! What happened to you today?

Billy doesn't respond.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Billy! You know what happened to me today? You won't believe it! I was eating hazelnuts, and I almost broke my tooth! Look! Aaah!

The mouth of the Freddie dummy opens wide. Billy looks at it askew and smiles slightly.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

And what did you do today, Billy?

BILLY

Today I went on a camping trip...
And then I went home... It was
raining...

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler watches with interest.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy breathes nervously and struggles to speak.

BILLY

At home, I got under the bed to
draw... Then someone came... They
were-

Slam! Suddenly, Freddie's jaw falls off and loudly clatters to the floor.

SARAH

(whispers)

Oh, shit!

Billy gets scared, curls up in the corner, and looks down in fear. Sarah picks up the fallen jaw, turns away from Billy, and reattaches the piece to the dummy.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler is frustrated.

BUTLER

Goddamn it!

Maxwell stubs out his cigarette and smirks.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

She almost did it...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy trembles in fear. Sarah turns back with the whole dummy in her hand and opens the mouth slightly. Freddie's jaw is stuck, and it no longer opens.

FREDDIE
Who came, Billy?

Billy remains silent and shakes, slightly turning his head.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Hey Billy, did you get scared?

Billy doesn't respond. Sarah looks at the mirror's reflection, then back at Billy, and reaches into her bag with her other hand.

SARAH
Hey, Fred! Did you come here all by yourself?

FREDDIE
Of course not! I came here with my girlfriend!

SARAH
You have a girlfriend? You never mentioned her. Where is she?

FREDDIE
She's somewhere here! She's in the bag!
(to the bag)
Hey, come out! Maggie!

Billy calms down a bit and looks at the bag warily. Sarah slowly takes out the Maggie dummy from her bag.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell rolls his eyes and gets angry.

MAXWELL
Fuck me... Do we have a puppet show going on here?

BUTLER
(turns to Maxwell)
Good Lord! Can you finally shut up?!

Maxwell looks at Butler with disdain.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy turns to Sarah and looks at the Maggie dummy. Sarah extends the dummy to Billy, who looks at it cautiously. Sarah opens the mouth slightly.

FREDDIE

Maggie! Are you here? Are you with us?!

Sarah gently brings the dummy closer to Billy's hand and watches him, nodding approvingly.

Billy takes the dummy and looks at Sarah.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Maggie! My love!

Billy cautiously puts his hand into Maggie's dummy.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Maggie, baby! Where are you?

Billy looks at Freddie, raises the hand with the Maggie dummy, and looks at it carefully. Sarah watches Billy carefully, hoping he'll understand what needs to be done.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Maggie! Where are you, my darling?

Billy looks at Freddie and opens his mouth slightly. Maggie speaks with a distorted, soft voice.

MAGGIE

I'm here...

Billy looks at Sarah with pity, mouth slightly open. Tears well up in Sarah's eyes.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler puts his hands on the mirror, leaning forward slightly, and observes with interest.

BUTLER

Excellent!

(beat)

Come on, kid, tell us something.

Maxwell remains silent and looks enviously at what's happening.

INT. POLICE STATION - LAB ROOM - SAME TIME

The loading progress on the analysis monitor reaches 91%. Gobs and Rice nervously watch the screen.

GOBS

If we mess this up, we're fucked.
Do you realize that?

RICE

Don't worry, I'll take the hit.

GOBS

Whatever you do after this, you
won't get a promotion. Never.

(beat)

I hope you know what you're doing.

Rice fidgets and looks at the monitor screen.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks at Billy with her mouth slightly open.

FREDDIE

Maggie! My love, where have you
been all this time?! It's sooo
boring without you!

Billy looks at Freddie with his mouth slightly open.

MAGGIE

I was at home...

FREDDIE

Home? And what were you doing?

MAGGIE

I was drawing...

FREDDIE

Really? I never knew you loved
drawing! Will you show me your
drawings somehow?

MAGGIE

Yes...

FREDDIE

Fantastic! What else did you do?

A brief pause.

MAGGIE

Then I watched TV...

FREDDIE

TV? Probably some TV show, right?

MAGGIE

Yes.

FREDDIE

A TV show with a little brave boy as the main hero, yeah? Who lives with his parents on the seventh floor and faces challenges every day... Am I right?

Sarah looks at Billy hopefully. He looks back at her with his mouth open.

MAGGIE

Yes.

A brief pause.

FREDDIE

Maggie... Will you tell us what happened in today's episode?

Billy looks at Freddie.

MAGGIE

Today, the boy was at school... His classmates bothered him again... And in the evening, they all wanted to go on a camping trip with the class...

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler and Maxwell watch the interrogation thoughtfully.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maggie speaks with trembling voice.

MAGGIE

But it got canceled because of the rain. And everyone went home.

A brief pause.

FREDDIE

But that's not the end of the episode, right? What happened next, Maggie? What happened at home? In the apartment on the seventh floor?

A brief pause.

MAGGIE

Someone came...

Sarah watches Billy anxiously, her mouth slightly open.

FREDDIE
Who came, Maggie?

MAGGIE
Some people...

FREDDIE
Did the boy see them?

MAGGIE
No, he hid under the bed.

FREDDIE
Did these people say anything?
Maybe he overheard them?

Maggie doesn't respond.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
What did they say, Maggie? Did they
call each other by name?

A brief pause.

MAGGIE
They were shouting... loudly.

A brief pause.

FREDDIE
What happened next, Maggie?

MAGGIE
Someone entered the boy's room...

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler and Maxwell watch intently through the mirror, with their arms crossed and frowns on their faces.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy looks at Sarah with an open mouth.

MAGGIE
These people were walking around
the room and throwing something on
the bed... And the boy was covered
in blood...

FREDDIE
Dirty bastards! What else have they
been doing?

A brief pause.

MAGGIE

Then they started talking... They had male voices...

FREDDIE

What were they talking about?

MAGGIE

They talked about God... About some ranch.

Sarah hesitates, opens her mouth again, and looks at Billy.

FREDDIE

What about else?

MAGGIE

One of them went to another room... And the other one approached the window and started talking. The room smelled like cigarettes...

Billy breathes heavily and looks at Sarah with his mouth slightly open.

FREDDIE

What did he say?

MAGGIE

He talked about some club... He said he forgot his wallet there...

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell lowers his hands, squints his eyes, raises an eyebrow in surprise.

BUTLER

Great!

MAXWELL

(whispering)

Oh, you fucking bitch...

BUTLER

His documents could be there!

Maxwell slowly turns around and heads for the door.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Hey, where are you going?

Maxwell doesn't respond.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Well, never mind. Get the fuck out
of here! You're useless anyway.

Maxwell stops at the door, turns around, and looks at Butler
with an angry look.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FREDDIE

What club was that, Maggie?

Maggie doesn't answer.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Did that man mention its name?

A pause. Billy looks at Freddie and breathes heavily.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Tell me, Maggie, do you remember
the name?

Maggie remains silent. Sarah looks at Billy hopefully.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Did the brave boy hear the name?

A pause.

MAGGIE

Yes... Gomorrah.

Sarah hesitates and looks at her reflection in the mirror.

Maxwell kicks the door open. Sarah and Billy, scared, look at
him. He draws his gun and aims it at the corner of the room.
Sarah and Billy are in the line of fire. Maxwell fires.

Sarah jumps aside, draws a chrome pistol in mid-air, aims,
and fires towards the door. A third shot immediately comes
from the corridor.

Sarah lies on the floor with the pistol in her hands, pointed
towards the door. Maxwell's body lies in the doorway with a
gunshot wound at his head, and there's a bloodstain and a
bullet hole on the door.

On the corridor wall, there's another bullet hole from
Sarah's shot. Rice appears in the doorway with a gun in his
hand, carefully approaches Maxwell's body, and looks at
Sarah.

RICE

Are you okay?

INT. POLICE STATION - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Gobs stands behind Rice, holding a piece of paper in his hand. He notices the body and turns away, covering his mouth. Butler emerges from the observation room, angry and holding a revolver with a bloodied lip.

BUTLER
(yelling)
You fucking bastard! Come here!
I'll show you!

Butler notices Maxwell's body.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck! What the hell is going
on?

Gobs hands the piece of paper to Butler, which contains a photo of Maxwell with his information. The analysis result is positive.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
(looks at results)
Jesus Christ...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah lies on the floor with the gun in her hand.

SARAH
(checks herself)
It seems... It didn't hurt me.

Rice looks at Billy, who has his knees drawn up to his chest. The boy slowly falls to his side.

RICE
Oh, shit! Billy!

SARAH
Oh, no!

Sarah tosses the pistol aside and quickly crawls to Billy. He has a gunshot wound in his torso, and he's bleeding heavily. Sarah grabs a nearby piece of paper with some drawing on it and tries to press it against the wound.

SARAH (CONT'D)
No, no!

RICE
(to the corridor)
Quick! Get a doctor here!

Sarah tries to apply pressure the paper to the wound, but the bleeding doesn't stop.

SARAH
No, Billy! No, no, no!

Rice tries to help Sarah, but the bleeding is too severe. Billy smiles and looks at the Maggie dummy on his hand, which is now covered in blood.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Don't close your eyes! Can you hear me?!

Billy closes his eyes as Sarah and Rice desperately try to save him, but it's useless. Billy dies.

INT. POLICE STATION - PARKING GARAGE - DAWN

Sarah places her bag with the dummies on the front seat of her car, closes the door, and walks towards the trunk. Butler is standing by the car.

BUTLER
How are you holding up?

Sarah struggles to hold back tears.

SARAH
I'm okay. Thanks.

BUTLER
I'm sorry it happened this way...
You did everything you could.

Sarah lets out a heavy sigh.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
And you were right about Maxwell...
He was hunting the same maniac he
couldn't catch.
(looking away)
No wonder he couldn't get him.

SARAH
And I was helping him all this
time.

BUTLER
Come on, it's not your fault! You
hear me? I know he kept you away
from the investigation. Probably
afraid you'd figure it out.

Butler places his hand on Sarah's shoulder. Sarah lets out another heavy sigh.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Go home. Rest and gather your strength. I'll take care of everything.

Sarah wipes her tears and speaks in a serious tone.

SARAH

It's just emotions... We're not finished yet. Billy said there were two killers.

BUTLER

Don't worry, we'll catch the other guy. We'll check the club, find out about the ranch they mentioned... But you need to rest.

Sarah wipes her tears and responds confidently.

SARAH

Thank you, Commissioner. But I'd prefer to finish the case.

BUTLER

Yes, of course. You're right... But it's a bit more complicated than it seems. We shouldn't rush just yet.

(beat)

The police detective turned out to be a killer. Reporters will sniff that out soon, and we'll be in a real mess. We need to prepare for it; I'll have to take the hit to protect everyone.

(speaks clearly)

We need to come up with a strategy.

Sarah raises her gaze and looks at Butler reproachfully, as if to convey that she understands what he's planning.

Butler awkwardly nods in response and turns away, moving aside. He turns away from Sarah.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

You did an excellent job, Sarah. Your father would be proud of you.

Sarah sits on the trunk and looks around suspiciously.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

You know... I've heard this story before. About the campfire. Your father told me about it.

(turns his head to Sarah)

I never thought you were so close to him.

SARAH
Why did he tell you that story?

BUTLER
(turns back)
At that time, my son was born, and everyone wanted to share some advice or a meaningful story from their own experience... As an instructive example.

Butler looks at the patrol car in front of him and smiles slightly.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
The funniest thing is that none of those stories actually came in handy for me.

Sarah steps down from the trunk and straightens up, showing a newfound confidence. She looks around again.

SARAH
So, what's instructive about this story?

BUTLER
Your father wanted to tell me how important it is to instill the right qualities in a child... Qualities that will serve them well in the future.

Sarah quietly opens the trunk with her back facing the car.

BUTLER (CONT'D)
Then, at the campfire, you lost your concentration...

Sarah looks at Butler's back, deep in thought.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

EXT. CAMPING SITE - NIGHT

Young Sarah sits thoughtfully by the campfire, twirling a stick with a marshmallow over the flames. Her father is busy near the tent, not far from the fire.

He makes a noise. Sarah gets scared slightly, turning to look at him with concern.

Then she turns back to the flames, realizing that the marshmallow on her father's stick is burning. Sarah panics and quickly removes his stick from the fire, blowing out the flame.

She nervously looks back at her father, who returns to the campfire, looking around.

Breathing rapidly from fear and anxiety, Sarah tries to think of something to avoid getting scolded by her father. She swiftly swaps her stick with the burnt marshmallow for her father's stick.

Sarah's father approaches the campfire, takes his seat, and opens a can of beer. Sarah sits next to him, slightly trembling, holding the stick with the burnt marshmallow. She tries to act as if nothing is wrong, so as not to arouse suspicion.

Her father silently removes the marshmallow from his stick and inspects it. Then he looks at the marshmallow in Sarah's hand, contemplating.

Sarah sits there, waiting anxiously and breathing rapidly. Her father looks at her with a satisfied grin. He drinks his beer and removes the marshmallow from his own stick with his teeth.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks down contemplatively.

BUTLER

...You made a mistake, but you were able to recognize your guilt. You even punished yourself for it... Displayed resilience, discipline, a sense of justice... Exactly what your father wanted to instill in you.

Sarah steps down from the trunk and slowly approaches Butler. She keeps her hand behind her back.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

And you know what? As a result, these very qualities helped you achieve your dream.

Sarah suddenly stops, looking surprised.

SARAH

My dream?

BUTLER

Of course. You graduated from the academy, you became a detective... You achieved everything you dreamed of.

SARAH

But who said I dreamed of all this?

Butler squints in confusion. Sarah appears behind him and shocks him in the neck with a stun gun.

Butler loses consciousness and falls down. Sarah picks him up and drags his body to her car. She throws him into the trunk, shocks him again, and looks around. Sarah takes out the car keys from his pocket.

She also takes out a red key from her pocket, wipes her fingerprints off it, places it in Butler's pocket, and closes the trunk.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - LATER

Sarah sits in the driver's seat, looking around, and adjusts the rearview mirror. She takes a pack of tissues from her bag, where the dummies, Freddie and Maggie, are kept.

Sarah wipes her hands and face, looks ahead through the windshield, trying to calm her breathing. Suddenly, she snaps and slams her hands on the steering wheel in frustration. She screams and tosses the bag with the dummies down under the seat.

The dummies spill out of the bag, lying on the floor mat, their mouths open like if they were smiling. Sarah takes deep breaths, trying to steady herself, and covers her face with her hands.

She leans back in her seat, breathing deeply, as the seat reclines slightly. Sarah gazes up at the car's ceiling, lost in her thoughts.

SARAH'S FLASHBACK:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 7TH FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The sound of an elevator arriving is heard. Indistinct shouts from a domestic dispute can be heard coming from apartment 717.

Sarah and Oliver appear at the end of the corridor, walking to the door. Both are dressed in wet plumber uniforms, and Oliver holds a black bag.

OLIVER

What a downpour... Forgot to check the weather forecast.

SARAH

Statistics show that most serial killings happen during rain showers... The water washes away all the evidence, and the noise muffles sounds and screams.

OLIVER

(smiling)

Oh, you don't have to worry about the noise.

Oliver stands by the door and hides the stun gun behind his back. Sarah takes out a chrome-plated pistol and also conceals it behind her back.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Ready?

SARAH

(sighs excitedly)

Yeah. I'm ready.

Sarah looks visibly nervous, and Oliver notices it.

OLIVER

Don't worry.

SARAH

I'm not worried.

OLIVER

Just keep them in your sight. This time, I'll handle everything.

SARAH

Alright, I understand.

(beat)

Are you sure the boy isn't home?

OLIVER

That's for sure. His teacher told me they're going on a weekend camping trip... Don't worry about him. His life will soon be back on track.

Sarah nervously nods and knocks on the door. The sounds of the domestic dispute subside.

SARAH

Why did the teacher tell you that?

OLIVER

I introduced myself as the boy's father. It seems he's never heard his voice-

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)
Who's there?

OLIVER
(smiling)
We even arranged to meet him.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

Rain pours outside the window. The corpses of the wife and husband lie on the couch, tied together with disemboweled intestines.

Religious symbols and the inscription "ED O OT HN MARV ALLWFDYTDIRO OGEIM AUN AHPK A ESNE SDIUEE C EMPTEU ILRT" are drawn on the wall in blood.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah washes her face with trembling hands, breathing heavily, and looks at herself in the mirror. She takes her chrome-plated pistol from the shelf and hides it behind her back, where her black service gun is also visible.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - PARENTS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver sits on the bed, cleaning the bloody knives and brushes, putting them in a bag. There's a deformed bullet nearby. A sound is heard from the next room.

Oliver takes the bullet from the bed and puts it into the right pocket of his shirt. Sarah enters the room and looks at the corpses, bringing her hand to her mouth. Oliver wipes the knives and packs his things into a bag.

OLIVER
Are you okay?

SARAH
Yes... I'm sorry, I got a bit overwhelmed.

OLIVER
It's alright. The first time is always like that. Honestly, it was truly intense.
(looking at man's face)
This scum wanted to see if your hand would shake... Well, he only hastened his own punishment.

A brief pause.

SARAH

The neighbors might have heard the gunshot.

OLIVER

So what?

SARAH

They might think something happened here.

OLIVER

Yes. They might.

An awkward pause. Sarah looks to the entrance door.

SARAH

What if they called the police?

Oliver points at the corpses of the husband and wife.

OLIVER

They used to have loud arguments here every day. Their neighbors have long been dreaming of something happening here.

(beat)

The police will be called when the stench of corpses becomes unbearable for everyone...

(smiling)

Or when it becomes unusually quiet here.

Sarah covers her mouth with her hand and looks into the corner where Billy's backpack sits. She seems to dismiss it and then shifts her gaze to the wall, looking at the inscription.

Oliver stands up from the bed and walks to the window, lighting a cigarette.

SARAH

Why all of this?

OLIVER

(turns to Sarah)

This?

SARAH

(points at the wall)

The disemboweled corpses, religious symbols, the inscription.

OLIVER
(smoking)
The red herring. I lead you on a
false trail.

SARAH
But you were already on the suspect
list. All of this adds extra risk
for you.

OLIVER
There's no risk... During your
interrogations, I could sense how
the investigation was progressing.
I intentionally led you astray.

Sarah looks at the religious markings.

SARAH
So, all these symbols, your
statements, and the words during
the interrogation, it's all-

OLIVER
A cover-up. Yeah.
(points at the wall)
I couldn't care less about all this
shit. I just needed to conceal my
true motive with something.

Sarah looks at the bodies and wrinkles her nose, disgusted.

SARAH
And your father?
(beat)
Was it really self-defense?

OLIVER
(smiling)
What normal person carries a
screwdriver to a family dinner?

Sarah contemplates.

SARAH
Is that really necessary?

OLIVER
Of course. You must free yourself
from tyranny.

Oliver finishes his cigarette, stubs it out on the
windowsill, and is about to throw it out the window.

SARAH
Wait. Don't throw it away.

OLIVER

Oh, damn. Got a bit distracted.

Sarah approaches Oliver and reaches out to take the cigarette butt. Oliver smiles at her and puts it into the left pocket of his shirt.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

It's time to leave.

Sarah exits the room, and Oliver takes the bag from the bed, turning to the door. Behind him, a sound of a fallen flashlight from under the bed can be heard.

Oliver hears it and slowly turns back, looking around. He looks at the religious symbols on the wall, then turns and walks away.

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

Sarah and Oliver walk to the front door. Sarah peeks into the corridor and listens, while Oliver stands by the table, noticing the ashtray filled with cigarette butts.

SARAH

We can go, no one is here.

Sarah walks cautiously out of the apartment.

INT./EXT. OLIVER'S CAR - NIGHT

The car drives along the road with the sign "Repair of Drain Pipes" on the side.

Oliver sits behind the wheel with a cigarette in his mouth. Sarah is in the front passenger seat with her bag on her lap, staring thoughtfully at the road.

OLIVER

Don't take it too hard; we did what we had to do. And they got what they deserved.

SARAH

(whispering)

I shouldn't have fired my gun.

OLIVER

Agreed, things went a little off plan. Now the situation didn't happen in the best way.

(beat)

But don't worry. I'm sure you'll enjoy it next time.

Sarah looks suspiciously at Oliver. Her father used to say the same thing. She turns her gaze back to the road.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

And when our plan will work, there will be less dirty things to do.

SARAH

I still feel a bit uneasy about it.

OLIVER

I understand... When that feeling comes, try to think about the children. And how their life will soon get better.

Sarah looks at Oliver, uncertain about his words. They continue driving down the road, heading to an uncertain future. A short pause ensues.

SARAH

How did you find them? This family.

OLIVER

When I do my job, tenants often complain about their neighbors... But this time, I didn't even have to check it. I heard them arguing on the same day. Then I met the boy in the corridor... I looked into his eyes, and everything became clear to me.

SARAH

What happens to the children afterward?

OLIVER

Child Protective Services takes them. Then they are placed with relatives... I think... Honestly, I'm not sure.

SARAH

But what if they suffer in the new family as well?

OLIVER

That's no longer my problem.

Sarah looks ahead at the road. Oliver rolls down the window, takes out another cigarette from his right pocket, and throws it out the window along with the one that was in his mouth.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I give them hope, a chance... It may not be enough, but it's more than what I had!

SARAH

But what if they were okay with their life as it was?

OLIVER

Every child in such situations dreams of their tyrant parents being punished for what they do! Trust me. I know... And if our plan succeeds, we will be the ones delivering justice. We will make this world cleaner. Heal it.

Sarah looks at the bag with the evidence from the crime scene.

SARAH

One set of evidence might not be enough to put the commissioner and detective behind bars.

OLIVER

It doesn't matter. The media will blow up the scandal anyway, and their reputations will be destroyed... They will have to step down from their positions.

SARAH

You underestimate Butler. He won't give up that easily.

OLIVER

Of course, not... His vanity drives him. The more crimes he solve, the more cases he close. He doesn't need to address the root causes of the problems.

(looking at Sarah)

And he is personally responsible for your ruined childhood. Don't forget.

Sarah turns to Oliver.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

It was him who shattered your father's career, which led to his ruthless treatment of you.

Sarah nods in agreement.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Our plan will work, Sarah. Don't worry, you are in good hands.

Sarah reflects for a moment. These words sound familiar to her.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Once you become the head of the department, evil will no longer be able to hide from us and remain unpunished.

(beat)

Seek peace and pursue it...

SARAH

Or create it yourself...

Oliver looks proudly at the compliant Sarah and then turns his attention back to the road.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Oliver's car pulls up to the house, next to which Sarah's car is parked. Oliver gets out and walks slowly to the porch, while Sarah gets out of her car and looks around.

SARAH

Do you still live here?

OLIVER

No. This house was left to me by my mother. She passed away a year after my father's funeral.

Oliver moves forward, and Sarah follows him.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Nobody has lived in this house for a long time, and I rarely come here... I mainly use it as a-

Shock! Sarah stuns Oliver from behind with an stun gun. Oliver falls to the ground in convulsions, and Sarah looks at him with contempt before scanning her surroundings.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah, wearing rubber gloves, handcuffs Oliver to a pipe on the street. She searches the left pocket of Oliver's shirt and takes out the cigarette butt, placing it in an evidence bag.

INT. OLIVER'S RANCH - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah walks around the house with a flashlight and an empty box, collecting Oliver's belongings. She takes a photo of Oliver's mother from the shelf.

INT. OLIVER'S RANCH - OLIVER'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah tosses Oliver's belongings, ropes, dummies Freddie and Maggie, toys, and his Bible into the box.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah comes out with the box, walks past Oliver, and throws it into the trunk of her car, closing it. She takes out her phone and makes a call.

SARAH
(into the phone)
John Maxwell?
(beat)
Good night, Mrs. Maxwell. Sorry for the late call. My name is Irene, and I'm the manager of the Gomorrah club... Your husband left his wallet here...

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. SARAH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sarah raises the car seat to an upright position, takes Butler's keys, and exits the car.

INT. POLICE STATION - PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator doors open, and Rice, looking tired, steps out onto the parking lot. He notices Sarah near the car and waves to her, slowly coming closer.

Sarah notices him, but doesn't show any sign of being anxious. She adjusts the stun gun behind her back, walks to the trunk, and sits, crossing her arms.

RICE
How are you? Are you okay?

SARAH
I'm okay, thanks. And you?

RICE
(sighs heavily)
Seems like my legs can't carry me
anymore.

Rice sits on the trunk of the patrol car parked in front of Sarah's vehicle.

SARAH
This night has been tough for
everyone.

RICE
No kidding... It's a shame things
turned out this way for Billy.

Sarah nods sadly.

SARAH
Yeah.

A brief pause. Rice yawns and looks at Sarah.

RICE
What do we do next?

SARAH
What do you mean?

RICE
Billy said there were two killers,
right? Maxwell is dead. The other
one must be Oliver, I guess?

SARAH
Why do you think that?

RICE
Well, you heard it yourself. Billy
mentioned the ranch. It's probably
the same place you talked about.
(checks his watch)
It's not yet morning; we might
catch him off guard.

Sarah tenses slightly. She moves her hands behind her back, closer to the stun gun. Rice pauses, deep in thought.

RICE (CONT'D)
...You know, I noticed something.
When I entered the room after
shooting that scumbag, I smelled
the same scent as in the
apartment... scent of gunpowder.

Sarah listens attentively.

RICE (CONT'D)

I'm guessing it's Maxwell's gun. Something must have gone wrong in the apartment, and he had to use the weapon.

(beat)

We definitely need to conduct ballistics testing.

SARAH

Yes, probably.

RICE

And if he used his service weapon, he must have tried to cover his tracks from the beginning. Remember, it was him who ordered to check suspects between the ages of 30 and 35. And Oliver Donovan is exactly 29... He certainly didn't want us to trace him. He was grooming him for himself, just like the Irishman. It's quite possible they were even in cahoots.

Sarah nods, breathing nervously. Rice stands up from the trunk and turns around, leaning his hands on the patrol car and looking through the rear window.

RICE (CONT'D)

I have a feeling that all the answers lie on that ranch.

Sarah looks sadly at Rice's back, takes out the stun gun from behind her and looks around.

SARAH

So you think we should go there?

RICE

Absolutely! And the sooner - the better.

Sarah steps off the trunk and takes a step forward. She walks slowly toward Rice, as if deliberately delaying the moment. She doesn't want to hurt him, but she realizes he's getting very close to the truth.

RICE (CONT'D)

So, don't waste any time... Gather your team and head there immediately, you need to finish this case.

Sarah stops and puts the stun gun back behind her.

SARAH

What about you? Don't you want to go?

Rice walks to the rear door, opens it, and takes out flowers with a toy.

RICE

I have more important things to take care of.

Sarah keeps her hands behind her back and looks surprised at the toy.

SARAH

And what about your career then?

RICE

(smiling sadly)

You know, today I saw the price I would have to pay for it... It's not what I want for my boy.

Sarah looks at Rice with a sad smile.

SARAH

...Yeah, I remember... "A happy childhood for my boy" - your words. Your motivation.

RICE

Yes. A good motivation... But an unhappy childhood can also be a...

SARAH

...A good motive.

RICE

...Exactly. I can't allow that.

Sarah ponders for a moment.

RICE (CONT'D)

Well, I better get going. They must be waiting for me.

Rice wearily heads towards the elevator.

RICE (CONT'D)

Good luck on the ranch. I'm sure you'll stop that monster.

Rice leaves. Sarah watches him go, smiles, and shouts after him.

SARAH

Send regards to Robert!

Rice turns around and shouts back to Sarah, smiling.

RICE
Not to Robert! To Jean-Pierre!

Sarah stands by the car with a thoughtful expression on her face.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - MORNING

Oliver wakes up to the shining sun, looks around, and tries unsuccessfully to free himself.

The sound of an approaching car is heard, and Butler's SUV arrives on the road. It stops near Oliver, facing him with the rear bumper.

Sarah gets out of the car, wearing rubber gloves and boot covers. She walks slowly to the trunk, looking at Oliver with an impassive expression.

OLIVER
What's going on?

Sarah doesn't respond.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Hey! I'm talking to you!

She opens the trunk and dumps Butler on the ground with a bag over his head, his hands tied. Oliver tries to break free from the handcuffs, but he can't.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
What the hell are you up to?

Sarah closes the trunk and drags Butler's body to an empty spot in front of Oliver. The bag slips off his head, and Oliver sees his face.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Damn it! Are you planning to kill the commissioner? Right here? Have you lost your mind?

Sarah takes out the chrome-plated pistol and Butler's revolver from behind her back, wiping them with a cloth. Oliver looks at Sarah in bewilderment.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
What does all of this mean?

Sarah remains silent.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing? We had a plan!

Sarah nods. A brief pause.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Are you trying to set me up? Do you want to pull all of this off on your own? It won't work! Do you hear me?

Sarah doesn't respond. Oliver adopts a more confident tone.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Sarah! You're making a huge mistake. We need each other; you can't do this alone... If you kill me, you'll become just as much of a monster as he is!

(points with his eyes at Butler)

He also betrayed his partner! You remember? He cut off everyone around him and turned into a lonely, pathetic paranoid... Snap out of it, Sarah! This is what you wanted to fight against!

SARAH

And I'm still fighting against it... Right now.

Sarah sits down and aims the gun at Oliver.

OLIVER

(scared)

What? Do you consider me a monster? You're wrong, Sarah. I'm not a monster. And I'll never become one. I'm just trying to save the world from them... And that's what I'm fighting against! Not you!

SARAH

Oh, yeah... You're fighting... with your own fears... until now.

(beat)

And you're not ridding the world of problems, Oliver. You're only making them worse... Your fight will be endless. Because you suffer from the same disease you're trying to cure in others.

Oliver looks at Sarah with disdain.

OLIVER

You shouldn't be the one to judge me. You're just the same... And you will fail, for sure. How are you any better than me?

Sarah searches Oliver's right pocket, takes out the deformed bullet and the butt.

SARAH

I'm not...

Sarah looks at the cigarette butt and smiles annoyingly. She tosses it aside.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It's not about me.

Sarah stands up and walks to Butler's body. Oliver is upset that Sarah has taken away his only leverage against her.

OLIVER

So is this your new plan then? You just want to get away with it?

Sarah stands next to Butler's body, with her back to Oliver.

SARAH

Only a healthy doctor can cure a patient from the sickness.

Sarah points the chrome-plated gun at Butler.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Otherwise, the infection will spread to everyone.

Sarah calmly shoots Butler in the chest.

OLIVER

Oh, shit! Shit, shit...

Oliver becomes scared and tries to break free.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Sarah, stop! Don't do this! Please!

Sarah ignores Oliver and looks at Butler's lifeless body on the ground.

She turns around and walks to Oliver, sitting next to him. She takes off her glove, uses her bare hand to touch the bullet, leaving her fingerprints.

SARAH

And for people like us, there will be no place...

She puts it back into Oliver's pocket. He looks at her in confusion.

SARAH (CONT'D)
...In this healthy world.

Sarah stands up, takes out Butler's revolver from behind her back, and aims it at Oliver's chest.

OLIVER
Listen, I'm... What a...

Oliver looks away hopelessly. He finally realizes he has no chance to change her mind and resigns himself to his fate.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Just look around, Sarah... All this doesn't make any sense... We are all sick... Every one of us...

SARAH
No. Not everyone.

Sarah shoots Oliver. He gasps heavily and looks ahead. Sarah walks to Butler's body, checking for his pulse. She removes the handcuffs and carefully places the revolver in his hand.

She walks to Oliver's body and removes the handcuffs, placing the chrome-plated gun in Oliver's hand. It looks like a shootout between them.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - LATER

Sarah adjusts the rearview mirror. On the next seat, there is a bag with Maggie's dummy sticking out. Sarah turns to the dummy and opens her mouth.

MAGGIE (BILLY'S DISTORTED VOICE)
(softly)
Is it all over?

SARAH
Yeah, Maggie... It's all over...
(starts the car)
Now everyone will hear your silence.

EXT. OLIVER'S RANCH - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Next to Butler's car, two bodies lie with guns in their hands. Oliver's car drives on the road and fades into the distance.

THE END