

A Crowbar To The Skull

written by

A Reservoir Dog

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

On the table: twelve anabolic steroid bottles, two syringes, a hunting knife, six lines of cocaine, hundreds in cash.

Thickly-muscled BEN SLATER, screams at CISCO HULBERT, 20s.

BEN

I'll bust your face, jackass.

CISCO

Go on then.

Lunging across the table, vibrating with 'roid rage, Ben seizes Cisco's neck, crushing his windpipe.

BEN

Wanna rip me off?

The table tips. Money, drugs all over the floor.

Ben's grip tightens. Cisco shudders, eyes bulged.

BEN

Fuck me over and you die.

Kicking, arms flailing, Cisco catches some luck: his right hand finds a syringe that had skittered onto the floor.

Cisco stabs the needle deep into Ben's ribs.

Ben howls and recoils: a bull pierced by the matador.

Next comes the hunting knife. Cisco finds it and drives it into Ben.

Ben stands, stuck on both sides. Syringe in the left ribs, knife in the right.

Ben pulls out the syringe and returns the favor, plunging it into Cisco's gaping mouth. It rams through his tongue.

Ben rains down blow after blow upon Cisco. Blood flies.

Cisco swings spastically and catches Ben in the temple.

A painful hum drowns out all sound. Ben winces, stands, stomps on Cisco's head, killing him.

Ben slumps down, soaked in blood, ears ringing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SOME OTHER TIME)

Modern furnishings. Expensive. Soft music. Classical.

Ben sits, the top of his head covered in bandages.

He's much thinner. Twenty-five pounds melted away.

He stares, expressionless.

The music fades, drown out by the ringing in Ben's ears.

The ringing takes over everything. Loud, incessant.

Tears in Ben's eyes.

His hand balls into a fist.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY (A DIFFERENT DAY)

Glorious sunshine on an expansive lawn.

Thin, healthy, clad in a crisply-laundered shirt, Ben strolls the manicured grass with BRIDGET SLATER, 30s, his wife. A barefoot excursion for both.

BEN

You wanted chrysanthemums and shrub roses, so I put in an order.

BRIDGET

We could go with the hollyhock.

BEN

No. Your instincts are right.

Her hair waves in the spring breeze.

BRIDGET

Climbing roses would be nice for the pergola.

He nods, takes her hand.

BEN

Let's walk along the footprint.

They move along the outline of their future garden, toes wiggling in the grass.

BEN

It will roll out there and then swoop back in.

BRIDGET
Adventurous.

BEN
I am. And it will be uniquely ours.

BRIDGET
Here's the million dollar question:
hornbeam hedges or boxwood hedges?

Instead of answering, he gently leans forward, brushes her hair aside, and kisses her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (ANOTHER TIME)

Bridget sleeps alone. The nightstand clock is at 3 a.m.

Clamor elsewhere in the house. Footsteps. Laughter. The bedroom door flies open.

Into the room spill Ben and a MINI-SKIRTED WOMAN, 20s, She clutches a gin bottle, long hair falling over her face.

Ben lifts her with bulging arms and drops her on the bed. He kisses her. A handgun sticks from his back waistband.

Bridget cries out, startled by the rude intrusion.

He jerks his thumb at Bridget.

BEN
Get outta here. Now.

Mixed confusion and terror in Bridget's eyes.

BRIDGET
Ben?

BEN
Take your shit and get out.

BRIDGET
Who's this woman?

Ben resumes his make-out session.

Bridget slaps them both. She grabs the strange woman and pulls her down, gin spilling from the bottle.

BRIDGET
This is my husband, you whore. This
is my house.

Ben snatches Bridget's ankle. He drags her to the doorway.

Bridget resists. Her nails dig into the hardwood.

He pulls her to the threshold. He releases her from his grasp, dumping her off. He reaches for the gun, but stops.

Bridget watches in horror as Ben trudges back to the strange woman in his bed.

He never looks back.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY (NOT SO LONG AGO)

Bridget conferences with DR. ODOM.

BRIDGET
So it's like amnesia?

DR. ODOM
No. He remembers you. He knows you.

BRIDGET
Then that just makes it more awful.

DR. ODOM
Over time, his personality traits might resurface.

BRIDGET
Might resurface? Might?

A tear rolls down her cheek.

BRIDGET
Who is he? How do I love him in this state? I try, but I can't. The way he talks. The drugs. Steroids.

Dr. Odom flashes sympathy.

DR. ODOM
Phineas Gage was the most famous case involving brain trauma and personality. Do you know that name?

She stares. No clue.

DR. ODOM
He was a foreman on the railway, and his accident was quite gruesome. After that, he wasn't exactly the same...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (A DIFFERENT NIGHT)

Ben and Bridget sleep, but not for long. A crash inside the house awakens them.

Bridget is first out of bed.

BRIDGET
Did you hear that?

He stares in confusion.

BEN
Maybe something fell.

He blinks away sleep. He rubs his thin neck.

BRIDGET
You need to check it out.

BEN
Really?

She nudges him.

BRIDGET
Please. Just a quick peek.

She pushes him again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben examines the room. No signs of disturbance.

Shadows behind him. A HOME INTRUDER. A creak. Ben turns.

A crowbar slams into his head. He collapses. All sound is drown out by the ringing in his ears.

Vision blurred, he watches Bridget streak toward the front door. The intruder chases.

She opens the door and flees into the night, the intruder following.

All goes dark for Ben.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Cash stuffed into his pockets and bleeding from Cisco's knife attack, Ben staggers into his garden and collapses among the chrysanthemums and shrub roses.

He musters just enough breath to cry out toward the house.

BEN

Bridget!

A light in the window. A moment later, Bridget steps outside.

Catching sight of him, she gasps.

BEN

I'm cut. I need your help.

She takes an awkward step forward, but just one.

BEN

Bridget. Help.

She stares. She whispers.

BRIDGET

I can't.

Ben rolls over. A few bloody bills flutter into the garden.

He reaches out briefly, but his hand drops onto the chrysanthemums. He clutches, pulls, uproots.

BEN

I'm not sorry. This's who I am now.

BRIDGET

No.

BEN

These flowers, fuck 'em.

He uproots more. Petals everywhere.

BEN

Never wanted 'em. You should know.

His gaze softens. Maybe there's a flash of his kinder nature, but it emerges too late.

He tries to say more, but cannot.

Bridget Slater watches Ben Slater die amid the flowers: the man she loved and a total stranger, one in the same.

FADE OUT: