

COMPLETE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - TIMELESS

A first aid kit sits on the tile floor, covered in bloody fingerprints. Rudimentary medical tools and traces of black thread protrude from inside.

A butcher knife and handsaw of about the same size lie in a pool of blood inside the tub. Bits of flesh stick between the saw's teeth. More blood is splattered on the sides of the tub, the adjacent wall and a nearby sink.

Shredded sinew and tiny bits of bone clog the tub drain.

A bloody gloved hand reaches into the tub drain and digs out a handful of meat. Fingers feel around the mess and produce a diamond engagement ring wrapped around a thick strand of sinew.

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

Two gloved hands rinse the ring in the sink. Their trembling fingers peel the sinew.

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

FADE OUT.

ROLL TITLES

FADE IN:

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

NIKKI (27) approaches the front door. Dark bangs cover her doe eyes. She has a little too much makeup on.

She reaches out for the front door, stops and turns to a mirror beside it. She throws an index finger at her reflection.

NIKKI

You are a pillar of composure.
You're talking to yourself in the
mirror again. We're going to have
to talk about that later. But in
the mean time... composure.

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

Nikki sits at a table next to the sidewalk. She sips a cup
of coffee and watches people on the street pass by.

SYDNEY (O.S.)

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

Nikki looks up to see SYDNEY (32). He's tall with blonde
hair, pale complexion and bookish glasses.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

You don't look so bad yourself.

SYDNEY

That's good to know.

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

That's okay. We just need to find a
jumping off point.

NIKKI

(mock-enthusiastic)

They say we've been matched based
on compatibility.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

You first.

SYDNEY

Okay.

NIKKI

Like I said. Formalities.

SYDNEY

I'm an engineer.

NIKKI

That's cool. What kind of engineer?

SYDNEY

An everything engineer. Basically,
I keep the lights on, the water
running, the warm places cool and
the cold places warm.

NIKKI

Sounds complicated.

SYDNEY

It can wear you out, that's for
sure. But people need schools,
hospitals, etcetera, etcetera. I
used to work on houses too. With
all that in mind, there's a real
sense of accomplishment once the
work is done.

Nikki nods as she sips her coffee.

SYDNEY

Anyway, that's me.

Sydney looks at Nikki expectantly. Nikki sighs and looks
down at the table.

NIKKI
I'm a waitress.

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

NIKKI
Disappointing, huh?

SYDNEY
Not really. Lots of waitresses in Bethesda.

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

Sydney shrugs, somewhat taken aback.

SYDNEY
That's okay.

Nikki looks up.

NIKKI
You don't think that's...

Nikki seems to hint at something. Sydney doesn't want to go there.

SYDNEY
I don't think that's anything.

NIKKI
You might be the only person who thinks so.

Nikki returns her attention to her coffee. Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY
I'm not here to judge you, Nikki.

Nikki sets down her cup.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. You can run away now if you want. But if you don't want to run away, can we start over?

SYDNEY

Sure. If you want.

NIKKI

Hi, I'm Nikki. I'm not always this awkward.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY

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

DENISE

There she is.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

Denise raises her glass. Nikki does the same.

DENISE

To vodka.

NIKKI

To vodka. A girl's best friend.

Nikki and Denise clink glasses and drink.

DENISE

How was your date?

NIKKI

He seemed like a nice guy. But I'm pretty sure I scared him off with my atrocious social skills.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

You know, at first I thought I should be more worried about the guys online than they should be of me. Now I think it might be the other way around.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

You're not a matchmaker. You just set up my account.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

You're a bad apple.

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

NIKKI

Hello.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I know this is sort of breaking the rules and somehow I think you might be really surprised to hear me say this but I just wanted to tell you I had a nice time today.

NIKKI

Me too, Sydney.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Have a good night.

NIKKI

You too.

Nikki ends the call.

DENISE
What'd I tell you?

EXT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A red brick building on a narrow street.

Nikki and Sydney kiss at the base of a stoop.

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

SYDNEY
Not necessarily.

Nikki breaks away from Sydney. He throws up his hands.

SYDNEY
I'm not trying to cross my
boundaries.

Nikki sighs in relief. She nods for Sydney to follow her as
she walks up to the front door.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door opens. Nikki leads Sydney.

NIKKI
This is it. Like everyone says.
It's not much but it's home. Or
maybe everyone doesn't say that but
you get the idea.

Nikki crosses her arms and looks at the floor.

SYDNEY
I like it.

NIKKI
I'm like a cat lady without cats,
right?

Sydney looks at Nikki.

SYDNEY

You okay?

NIKKI

I don't entertain much.

SYDNEY

I think I see what's going on here.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

It's not the apartment, Nikki. It's you. We've made it this far. You obviously think there's something here worth pursuing. What's wrong?

Nikki turns her back to Sydney.

NIKKI

I feel very fragile. Sometimes I know why. Sometimes I don't.

SYDNEY

I think everybody feels like that.

NIKKI

You mean everybody's like me? I find that very hard to believe.

SYDNEY

I mean nobody feels that self-assured all the time. Sometimes people have to put on masks, just so other people think they are.

Nikki turns to Sydney.

NIKKI

Maybe that's what my problem is. I don't know how to put on a mask.

SYDNEY

I don't think that's a problem,
Nikki. I think that makes you
special.

NIKKI

Why?

SYDNEY

It makes you honest. Something a
lot of people are afraid to be.
That's honestly the thing I like
most about you.

Nikki smiles.

SYDNEY

Because when you smile, I know
you're smiling for real.

NIKKI

I don't want to smile if it's not
for real.

Nikki steps forward. Sydney smiles.

NIKKI

All I really want in this world is
someone to make me smile.

SYDNEY

Hopeless romantic, huh?

NIKKI

Very hopeless.

Nikki takes another step and kisses Sydney.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney sits on a cushy couch and watches TV. He's dressed business casual. His tie hangs over the side of the couch. His shoes lie on the floor.

ON THE TV

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

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

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney watches transfixed.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nikki unlocks the front door.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE TV

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

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

NIKKI

Hey sweetie. What're you watching?

SYDNEY

Nothing. Just surfing. But if you'd care to join me, we can see what's On Demand.

Sydney pats the seat beside him.

Nikki lies down next to him and makes herself comfortable.

SYDNEY

How was work?

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What's that make you then?

Sydney smirks. Nikki smiles.

NIKKI

Rub my feet?

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

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

I thought you didn't like school.

NIKKI

I didn't like fashion design. But maybe I could've done something else.

SYDNEY

Like what?

NIKKI

I don't know. Anything.

SYDNEY

You're too hard on yourself, Nikki.
You don't need to think about what
could've been. That's how I kicked
painkillers. Regret doesn't lead
anywhere good.

NIKKI

I don't regret anything, Sydney.
Maybe a year ago, when I was alone,
I would have. I did. But now I have
you. All I have to do now is lean
back and let you do your thing.

Nikki nods toward her feet.

SYDNEY

That, you should.

Nikki shuts her eyes.

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney and Nikki lie in bed together. Nikki rolls on top of
him and kisses him on the neck and behind his ear with
passion.

NIKKI

Let's make a baby!

Sydney struggles to speak as she locks lips with him.

SYDNEY

Are you serious?

NIKKI

Yeah! Come on!

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

SYDNEY

Hold on!

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Always with the babies.

NIKKI

It's babies with every girl, sweetheart. Our biological clocks are in constant tick.

SYDNEY

Constant tick. Not ticking out.

Nikki shoves Sydney playfully.

NIKKI

Come on. You know I want to make lots of babies with you. You don't even want to make me your wife yet.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

I'm not going anywhere.

NIKKI

You know, for a guy who always says the right thing, you're not doing so hot right now.

SYDNEY

I guess I have my off days.

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

You don't feel complete?

NIKKI

If you have to ask...

SYDNEY

Point taken.

NIKKI

But maybe you're right. We should enjoy the ride. Speaking of which...

Nikki climbs back on top of Sydney.

NIKKI

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

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

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

Sydney gets up and proceeds to a nearby closet. He opens it and removes some clothes.

INT. JEWELERS - DAY

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

A SALES CLERK appears beside him.

CLERK

Can I help you?

Sydney turns to the clerk.

SYDNEY
I think I'm okay for now.

CLERK
Let me know if you want to take a
look at anything.

SYDNEY
Will do. Thanks.

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

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

SYDNEY
I thought you'd be sleeping in.

NIKKI
Where'd you go?

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

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

SYDNEY
You mad?

NIKKI
Sad.

SYDNEY

You know I hate to disappoint you, sweetheart. I'll blow them off next time no matter what. I promise.

NIKKI

You don't have to promise anything like that.

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

SYDNEY

I'm not leaving til the afternoon.
Lunch?

NIKKI

Brunch.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Sydney munches on a cheeseburger. Nikki shoves a forkful of whipped cream-topped strawberry crepe into her mouth across from him. He chuckles at her.

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Nothing wrong with a little chub.

Sydney slaps his belly. Nikki laughs.

NIKKI

You know I can't compete with that.

SYDNEY

You better believe it.

NIKKI

So when are you coming back?

SYDNEY

Hopefully, Sunday. Unfortunately, the real answer would be whenever we get through all the meetings. In

this case, it's sort of unpredictable.

NIKKI

What are you working on?

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

Then next week-

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

I'll try my best not to be.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

SYDNEY

I'll see you soon.

NIKKI

Love you.

SYDNEY

Love you too.

Nikki waves as Sydney drives away.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

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

EXT. FURNITURE STORE - DAY

Sydney's car parks in front of the store. Sydney exits the car and enters the building.

INT. FURNITURE STORE - DAY

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

SYDNEY

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

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

SYDNEY

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

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

No, I haven't asked anyone else. I thought better of it. You're the only one I can trust. This requires a certain intimacy. It's something very special to her and me both. The last thing I need is for someone to get the wrong idea.

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

SYDNEY

Look. I haven't ironed out all the details but I really want this to happen soon. Next week. I've been planning this for a very long time and frankly, the waiting is starting to grate on me.

Sydney exits the aisle and proceeds further into the store.

SYDNEY

Of course we'll have the proper conditions. I'm very good at my job. You're not the only expert I've consulted.

Sydney enters an aisle of candlesticks.

SYDNEY

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

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

SYDNEY

That can be arranged, of course.

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

You're a true friend, Donald. I really mean that. Thank you.

Sydney ends the call and drops his phone in his pocket. A moment later, it vibrates. He takes it out again.

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

EXT. FURNITURE STORE - NIGHT

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki lies on the couch. The TV flickers before her. She holds a cell phone to her ear.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached the cell phone-

Nikki sighs and closes her phone.

MOMENTS LATER

Nikki sends the text message "Miss you" and sets her phone on the coffee table before her. She stares at the TV with a bored look on her face.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

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

NIKKI

Hey Denise.

DENISE

Long time, no see.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I should've called.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

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

DENISE

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

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE

What are you doing here all by yourself?

NIKKI

Sydney's gone for the weekend.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

Could I have a gimlet?

Denise fixes Nikki a vodka gimlet. Nikki takes a sip.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

I do. I just need to get my priorities straight.

DENISE

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

NIKKI

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

DENISE

You guys fight or something?

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE

Then don't worry about it. He'll call back. Sydney doesn't strike me as the cheating type and I've seen my share.

Nikki chokes on her drink.

NIKKI

I never said anything about cheating!

DENISE

Come on, Nikki. I know you. It's obviously crossed your mind.

NIKKI

It's just that last night, I started talking about marriage and kids and stupid stuff.

DENISE

Oh boy.

NIKKI

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

DENISE

Yes, you would.

Nikki shoots Denise a look.

DENISE

I'm sorry. But what?

Nikki takes a drink.

NIKKI

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

DENISE

Seems a little too soon to call him distant.

NIKKI

It always starts with the small things.

DENISE

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

Nikki sighs in defeat.

NIKKI

I was kind of hoping to get wasted tonight.

Nikki takes another drink.

NIKKI

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

DENISE

Don't worry about it. We can always drink on a better day.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney's car pulls up in front of a darkened cottage. Its headlights illuminate timber.

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

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. SHRINE - TIMELESS

Pitch black.

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

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

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

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

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

Sydney enters. Nikki pretends to be asleep.

Sydney takes a seat beside her and strokes a lock of hair from her cheek. She opens her eyes.

SYDNEY

Rise and shine.

NIKKI

Why didn't you call?

SYDNEY

Strict no cell phone policy. I forgot to ever turn it back on.

NIKKI

You're lame.

SYDNEY

Shitty excuse, right? I hope you don't mind me asking how your weekend was.

Nikki shrugs.

SYDNEY

Not too lonely?

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What time is it?

SYDNEY

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

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What kind of vacation?

SYDNEY

Is that a hint of reluctance I detect?

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

You had me going for a second there.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

I thought that was your parents' place.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

You think I'm the only one who thinks you need a break, Nikki? I doubt anyone at work would mind if you took a couple days off. Besides, it's not like we're going anywhere for Thanksgiving.

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

You know I missed you too. What do you say? I think we're both overdue for some hibernation.

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

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

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

SYDNEY

You ready?

NIKKI

Yes sir.

SYDNEY

Let's go.

Sydney starts the car.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sydney's car pulls away.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car speeds down the road.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

Nikki turns to Sydney.

NIKKI

You mean I'm not special enough?!

SYDNEY

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

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

NIKKI

I mean up until now.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What things?

SYDNEY

I'm afraid I can't say.

NIKKI

Asshole! Tell me!

Nikki slaps Sydney's shoulder a second time.

SYDNEY

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

Nikki pouts. Sydney pats her shoulder. She relaxes.

SYDNEY

Just wait til we get there, huh?

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car drives through the forest.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

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

NIKKI

Are we almost there?

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

You're a dork.

Sydney chuckles.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

Sydney winks at Nikki.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

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

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

SYDNEY

Wait til you see the inside.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

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

SYDNEY

Let me give you the grand tour.

Sydney leads Nikki into the KITCHEN straight ahead. She follows his lead and looks around.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki emerge from the kitchen.

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

NIKKI

What is this?

Sydney chuckles and puts his arm around Nikki.

SYDNEY

That's nothing.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

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

SYDNEY

What are you waiting for?

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Knock yourself out.

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

NIKKI

Very old school, baby.

SYDNEY

Check the bathroom.

INT. COTTAGE, BATHROOM - DAY

The same bathroom from the opening scene.

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

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

NIKKI

Hon, you went all out.

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

NIKKI

How'd you find the time to prepare all this?

SYDNEY

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

Nikki gasps and slaps Sydney's chest.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

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

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The candles are lit. Nikki and Sydney eat a fancy Italian dinner. Sydney leans forward and refreshes a glass of wine for Nikki.

NIKKI

This is beautiful, my love. But I'm still confused. You want to tell me what this is all about?

SYDNEY

Now's as good a time as any.

Sydney walks over beside Nikki. He stops for a moment. She raises an eyebrow. He takes a knee. She gasps.

SYDNEY

Nikki...

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

SYDNEY

Will you marry me?

Nikki can only bring herself to nod. Her eyes well up.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Why would you think that?

Nikki looks at the ring.

NIKKI

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

LATER

Nikki lies on her back and moans as Sydney kisses her neck and chest. He works his way down her body until his head disappears under the blanket.

DREAM SEQUENCE

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

NIKKI

No! Lower!

UNDER THE BLANKET

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

Sydney retracts.

NIKKI (O.S.)

Please!

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

LATER

The fire has reduced to embers.

Sydney and Nikki spoon.

NIKKI

Tell me I'm beautiful.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A car pulls up beside Sydney's.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

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

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney and Donald sit at a table in the kitchen.

DONALD

Let's see it.

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

SYDNEY

It's what we agreed.

DONALD

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

Sydney scoffs.

SYDNEY

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

DONALD

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

SYDNEY

Take the money, Donald.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

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

NIKKI

(groggy)

Shit.

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

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

DONALD

What was the dose?

SYDNEY

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

Donald's gaze shifts past Sydney. Sydney turns.

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

SYDNEY

Hey sweetheart.

NIKKI

What's going on?

SYDNEY

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

DONALD

How are you feeling about today?

Nikki furrows her brow.

NIKKI

Okay, I guess—

SYDNEY

Will you excuse us, Donald?

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki stand beside the kitchen entrance. The wall hides them from Donald's view.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What do you mean?

Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY

You had a lot to drink last night.

NIKKI

Really? I don't remember...

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Sounds good. Feel better.

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

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

LATER

A gently hand nudges Nikki's shoulder.

SYDNEY

Nikki.

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

SYDNEY

It's time to go downstairs.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

Downstairs. You remember?

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

NIKKI

I remember.

Nikki takes his hand.

FADE OUT.

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

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

Nikki's voice trails off.

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

SYDNEY (V.O.)
Just a second.

DONALD (V.O.)
Take your time.

SYDNEY
I'm ready.

FADE IN:

INT. COTTAGE, BASEMENT

A basement renovated as an operating theater.

Nikki opens her eyes.

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

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

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

DONALD
Tourniquet's secure. Saw.

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

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

SYDNEY

What's wrong?

DONALD

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

SYDNEY

It's what you asked for—

DONALD

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

SYDNEY

Shouldn't you do it?

DONALD

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

SYDNEY

Jesus Christ, Donald!

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

SYDNEY

This is my fiancé!

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

DONALD

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

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

DONALD
I'm shutting this down.

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

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

Nikki turns and looks over her shoulder.

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney approaches an ajar basement door.

SYDNEY
Donald, I couldn't find-

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

Sydney turns around and heads back through the living room.

INT. BASEMENT

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

DONALD
Are you alright—

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

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

DONALD
Wait! It's not—

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

Nikki takes off down the hallway.

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki opens a drawer of silverware and reaches inside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney retrieves a maroon briefcase from the back of Donald's trunk. He opens it. Surgical equipment. No saw.

SYDNEY
Son of a bitch!

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney enters.

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

SYDNEY

Nikki?

KITCHEN

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

NIKKI

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

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What just happened downstairs
then?! What is this place?! A lab?!

SYDNEY

No. Nothing like—

NIKKI

What was the saw for?!

SYDNEY

I don't—

NIKKI

Don't lie to me! I saw everything!

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What?!

DONALD (O.S.)

She doesn't know anything, Sydney.

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

DONALD

Does she?

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

DONALD

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

NIKKI

What's he talking about?

Sydney stammers.

DONALD

Tell her, Sydney.

Sydney gulps.

SYDNEY

(to Nikki)

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

NIKKI

Help me do what?

SYDNEY

Be complete.

NIKKI

I don't understand.

Sydney steps forward. Nikki raises the knife in defense.

NIKKI

Stay back!

Sydney reaches forward.

SYDNEY
Give me the knife, Nikki.

Nikki shakes her head.

SYDNEY
I just want to talk to you.

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

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

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

SYDNEY
Nikki, wait!

ENTRANCE HALL

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

LIVING ROOM

Nikki races through the living room.

HALLWAY

Donald appears around the corner opposite Nikki and blocks her path.

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

SYDNEY
No! Not in there!

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

SYDNEY
No!

Sydney falls to his knees and pounds on the door.

SYDNEY
Get out of there!

NIKKI (V.O.)
No!

SYDNEY
There's something terrible inside-

NIKKI (V.O.)
I don't believe you!

INT. SHRINE

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald approaches Sydney.

SYDNEY
Wait downstairs.

Donald nods and proceeds downstairs.

Sydney leans his back against the door.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

SYDNEY
Nikki, are you listening to me?

NIKKI
I thought you loved me.

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

NIKKI
Do what?

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

You want my...

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

SYDNEY

This wasn't the way things were supposed to happen. But I can fix everything if you let me.

NIKKI

No!

Nikki snuffles and takes a moment to calm herself.

NIKKI

What happened to you, Sydney?

SYDNEY

Nothing happened. This is me.

NIKKI

This can't be you.

SYDNEY

I tried therapy. Needless to say, it didn't work. Therapists don't really care how you feel. They only care about what they consider normal. Drugs didn't help either. So I turned to the Internet. I went online and I found a site for people like me. I met some girls who'd had their legs removed after serious accidents.

Nikki reacts.

SYDNEY

After that, everything changed. At first, I thought it was for the better. But in the end, no matter how much I opened my heart to them or they opened theirs, I never felt connected to them. I came to realize that if I wasn't there to experience their change, something would always be missing.

Nikki breaks down. She locks her arms around her right leg.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

Believe me, Nikki, I do. But as long as things stay the way they are, we'll always be in flux.

Sydney steps away from the door and turns around.

SYDNEY

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

END INTERCUT

INT. SHRINE

Nikki waits for Sydney's footsteps to fade in the distance then stands and flips on the lights.

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

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

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

The leg is freeze-dried. It looks plastic with an unnatural shimmer. Its stump is sewn up with thick black sutures.

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

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

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

Nikki bursts into tears and curls into a fetal position.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney washes his wounded shoulder at the sink.

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

Sydney enters.

SYDNEY

What are you doing?

DONALD

I'm leaving.

SYDNEY

You can't leave. I already gave you—

DONALD

You can keep your money. I plan on distancing myself as far from this situation as possible. I don't know what I was thinking.

SYDNEY

Please! You knew exactly what you were getting into—

DONALD

She didn't!

Sydney shrinks slightly.

SYDNEY

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

DONALD

It would. This has been negligence from the start. All things considered, I should go to the police and tell them what I've gotten myself into.

SYDNEY

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

DONALD

Or worse. But if I don't go, even worse. I'll have to take my chances.

Sydney proceeds to the cot and grabs the prosthetic leg.

SYDNEY

You want to leave?

Sydney returns to the operating table.

SYDNEY

Go ahead.

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

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

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

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

Sydney regains himself.

SYDNEY

You ruined everything!

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

DONALD

I wouldn't.

SYDNEY

Donald. Drop the saw—

DONALD

Shut up, you pervert!

Donald starts the saw. Sydney throws up his hands.

DONALD

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

Donald spits on the floor.

DONALD

Get out of my way.

SYDNEY

Just because I'm not like you—

DONALD

I said get out of my way!

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

DONALD

Let go or I'll open up your throat!

Donald tugs hard at the saw. It slips from Sydney's hands. The revolving blade slices into the side of Donald's head.

Donald screams and falls onto his back. The saw carves through the side of his face. Flesh and bone fly off the blade and fleck the floor. The wound blossoms with blood and leaks all over the place.

Sydney stumbles backward in shock and falls to the floor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sydney takes a moment to catch his breath and wipe Donald's blood off his face.

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

Sydney gets to his feet and proceeds across the room.

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

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

LATER

Donald lies propped against the wall. Sydney wraps gauze tight around his head.

LATER

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney waits for a response. Nothing.

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

Sydney releases the doorknob.

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. SHRINE

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

Banging at the door. Nikki bolts upright.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Nikki?!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney kneels in front of the shrine door.

SYDNEY

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

INT. SHRINE

Nikki gets to her feet.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney lays his hand on the door.

SYDNEY

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

INT. SHRINE

Nikki stops beside the door.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

NIKKI
Are they dead?

SYDNEY
Who?

NIKKI
The other girls.

Sydney hangs his head.

SYDNEY
Yes.

Nikki whimpers.

NIKKI
All of them?

Sydney chokes up.

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

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

NIKKI
Were there others?

SYDNEY
No. Just three.

Nikki breaks down.

SYDNEY
I'm not a killer, Nikki. You have to believe me. They were all accidents and they all happened to willing participants.

Sydney sighs.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

Then why this?

Nikki caresses her right leg.

NIKKI

It's just my body.

END INTERCUT

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald moans downstairs. Sydney gets up.

INT. BASEMENT

Donald lies on his side. The whites of his eyes show. His eyelids flicker. Blood seeps through the gauze around his head and drips on the floor in a sluggish trickle.

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

SYDNEY

Shit!

Sydney runs back up the stairs.

INT. SHRINE

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

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney grabs a hand towel off the rack and races out.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom.

INT. SHRINE

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney proceeds down the hallway and turns into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

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

INT. SHRINE

Nikki presses her ear against the door. Silence.

After a moment, she unlocks the door.

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

INT. SHRINE

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

Footsteps downstairs. Nikki shuts the door.

INT. BASEMENT

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

INT. SHRINE

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney tries the door one last time then returns to the basement.

INT. SHRINE

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

INT. BASEMENT

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

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door once again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The shrine door opens a crack. Nikki peeks out for a moment then creeps into the hallway. All the while, she holds the doorknob like it was life support.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney inhales the gas with easy breath. His eyes close.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney's eyes snap open.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki enters the bedroom and locks the door behind her.

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

911 (V.O.)

911, please state your emergency.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

SYDNEY

Nikki?

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

SYDNEY

I know what you're thinking. How could this happen to me? How could my world be falling apart so fast? I promise you I won't let that

happen. We'll make it through this.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds her cell phone to her ear.

911 (V.O.)
Are you safe?

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

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

Nikki looks to the window behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

SYDNEY
You've been in there for some time
now. Alone with your thoughts.
Haven't you given me the benefit of
the doubt yet? Don't you think
there's a reason you feel so
insecure? Trapped in your own
existence?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds her phone to her ear.

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

NIKKI
Thank you.

Nikki ends the call. She grabs her peacoat off the front of the bed frame and throws it on.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney turns toward the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, are you listening to me?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki shoves her phone into her coat pocket and turns to the window. She grabs it from the bottom and pulls up. It doesn't budge. She pulls harder.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney stands up.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney tries the doorknob. The door opens.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki shoves the window further open and climbs through it.

INT. SHRINE - NIGHT

Sydney enters the empty room. He balls his hands into fists.

SYDNEY

No!

EXT. COTTAGE, DECK - NIGHT

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

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door shudders as loud banging fills the room.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Don't do this to me, Nikki!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki clutches her coat close to her body as she runs through the snow along the side of the cottage.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

SYDNEY

Where are you?!

Sydney looks up from beside the bed. He spots the missing cell phone.

His eyes flick up to the window. He walks up to it for a closer look. Nikki's handprint is fresh on the foggy glass.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

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

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

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

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

DONALD'S CAR

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

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

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

A police patrol car drives down the forest road.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Officers BELL and SIMPSON (both late 30s) sit in the car. Their names are embroidered on their uniforms. Bell drives.

BELL

So do you believe it?

SIMPSON

The story about the leg? What, are you kidding?

BELL

Just asking. I don't believe it.
I'm positive this girl's freaking
out on acid.

SIMPSON

Nah. Kids aren't that stupid. If
they're all on acid, she's sure as
hell gonna keep part of her
functioning brain on reserve just
so she don't call the cops on
account of some bad trip.

BELL

I'll bet you a round of beers after
our shift it's acid. That shit'll
make you believe all sorts of shit.
Me and my buddies dropped some the
day before prom night. For six
hours, this one girl was convinced
she was in a cryogenic storage
unit. At the end of those six
hours, she was wrapped in three
blankets shivering with blue lips.

SIMPSON

See. That's why we didn't hang out
that much in high school. That mind
over matter shit freaks me out.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The police car speeds ahead.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

He opens the backseat. It's empty.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

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

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

Sydney scoffs, dumbfounded.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki holds her breath as Sydney tries the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney crouches and looks under the car.

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

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

SYDNEY

You were better off inside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

SYDNEY

Shit.

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

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. DECK - NIGHT

Sydney creeps onto the deck and enters the cottage.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell rings the doorbell.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

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

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

SIMPSON
Are you alright?

NIKKI
I'm fine.

SIMPSON
Are they both still inside?

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

SIMPSON
What about the other one?

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

SIMPSON
What's your name?

NIKKI
Nikki.

Simpson turns to Bell.

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

Bell nods. Simpson turns back to Nikki.

SIMPSON
Alright, Nikki. Officer Bell is going to take you to our patrol car. He's going to stay with you while I check the place out.

Nikki nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney looks out the window. He watches Nikki exit Donald's car. The police escort her to the patrol car and let her into the backseat.

The police share a brief exchange then break. Simpson proceeds past Donald's car toward the end of the cottage.

Sydney disappears O.S.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Simpson follows Sydney's footprints around the side of the cottage. He stops dead in his tracks as the cottage goes black. He grabs his radio from his side and brings it to his lips.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Bell sits in the passenger seat. His radio crackles to life. He holds it up to his lips.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

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

BELL

The whole place.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

I'm calling back up then I'm going in. Radio silence from here on out.

BELL

Copy that.

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

He turns back to Nikki in the backseat.

BELL

You alright?

Nikki nods.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sydney's hand grabs the discarded butcher knife off the floor.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Simpson creeps onto the deck with a pistol in hand.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simpson enters and shuts the door behind him. He tries a light switch beside the door. It doesn't work. He produces a flashlight.

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

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson turns into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Simpson enters and proceeds to the center of the room. Sydney stands behind him with his back against the wall. He sneaks quietly out of the room.

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

Simpson checks the bathroom and closet before he exits.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

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

He creeps up behind Simpson. Simpson freezes. Sydney does the same.

Simpson senses the other man's presence. He waits for a moment then proceeds forth.

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

SYDNEY

Don't move—

Simpson is ready for the ambush. He slams the butt of his pistol into Sydney's nose. Sydney falls to the floor.

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

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

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

EXT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

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

Bell brings the radio to his lips.

BELL

I didn't catch that, man.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

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

Sydney stands in a defensive stance several feet away.

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

Simpson's radio crackles on the floor.

BELL (V.O.)

Hey! Do you copy?

Simpson drops his pistol and falls to the floor.

EXT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Bell stows his radio.

BELL

Shit.

He arms a pistol.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

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

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

SYDNEY

(quiet)

I'm sorry.

Sydney grabs the pistol.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Bell opens the backseat door and hands Nikki a radio.

BELL

I have to check this out. If anything happens, call me on this. I'm on channel six.

NIKKI

Don't leave me.

BELL

Back up's on its way. You'll be safe. I promise.

Bell shuts the door and heads toward the cottage.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simpson's limp feet drag into a darkened room.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Bell enters. He checks the light then produces a flashlight. He scans his surroundings.

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

Silence. Bell listens.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Another thud. Bell aims his flashlight and proceeds forward.

KITCHEN

Bell enters and looks around. His flashlight illuminates several drops of blood on the floor.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bell stands and scans the rest of the kitchen.

Someone moans in the distance. Bell whirls around.

ENTRANCE HALL

Bell emerges from the kitchen and heads down the hallway.

LIVING ROOM

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

HALLWAY

Bell proceeds down the hallway.

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

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

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

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

DOWN THE HALL

Sydney reacts to the gunshot.

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

BELL

Shit!

Bell's radio crackles.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Officer Bell?

Bell grabs the forceps protruding from his crotch. He yanks them out and tosses them aside. He grabs his radio and brings it to his lips. He squeezes his wounded groin with his other hand.

BELL

I'm still here. Sit tight, Nikki.

Bell picks up his flashlight and proceeds down the stairs.

BASEMENT

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

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

INT. BASEMENT

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

BELL

What the fuck?

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

SYDNEY

Turn around.

Bell stiffens.

SYDNEY

If I wanted to kill you, you'd be dead already. Turn around.

Bell turns.

BELL

Where's Simpson?

SYDNEY

He's outside. Put the gun and the flashlight on the floor.

Bell glances at Sydney's hand. It shakes slightly.

BELL

There's no turning back now. You
are so fucked.

SYDNEY

Why am I fucked?

Bell puts on a blank face. Sydney narrows his eyes.

SYDNEY

Put your shit on the floor.

Bell crouches to set the items on the floor.

SYDNEY

Turn the flashlight so that I can
see you.

Bell sets down the items and turns the flashlight toward
his feet.

SYDNEY

Now call them off.

BELL

What?

SYDNEY

Your back up.

Bell's face droops. Sydney nods. "Do it."

Bell grabs his radio and brings it to his lips.

BELL

This is Bell to HQ.

Bell stares at Sydney. Sydney widens his eyes.

BELL

You can call off that back up.

RADIO (V.O.)

What's going on over there?

BELL

Nothing. Just a power outage.
Everything's under control.

RADIO (V.O.)

Are you sure?

BELL

We're still outside the house.
There's nothing else to report at
the moment.

RADIO (V.O.)

Be careful out there, Bell. No
more false alarms.

BELL

Copy that.

SYDNEY

Turn off your radio and put it on
the floor with the rest.

Bell turns off his radio and sets it on the floor. He
stands up and faces Sydney.

SYDNEY

Kick the gun toward me.

Bell kicks the flashlight instead. It strikes the wall
hard. The room goes black.

Sydney fires two shots, whirls around and scrambles up the
stairs. Gunshots fire at him from the dark.

HALLWAY

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

Moments later, Bell emerges, pistol in hand, and follows in
Sydney's direction.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Bell turns the corner and freezes. Moonlight from the end
of the hallway illuminates streaks of blood on the floor.

Something creaks in the bedroom. Bell proceeds toward it.

BEDROOM

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

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

As soon as he arrives, he realizes the breathing is coming from behind him. He turns around and faces the closet.

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

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

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Shots echo through the night. Nikki trembles in her seat. After a moment, the gunfire ceases.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bits of fabric float through the air.

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

Bell lies on his belly. He gasps for air.

Sydney steps forward and raises the pistol.

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

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

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

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

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

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

He composes himself then grits his teeth and pulls the wood out of his arm. Blood dribbles out in a sluggish stream.

Sydney looks at Bell.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

Sydney lowers the pistol.

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

Sydney exhales and drops the pistol.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki clutches the radio with a trembling hand.

NIKKI

Officer Bell? Are you still there?

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The entire cottage lights up.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki looks up in surprise as light fills the area. She ducks down in her seat and peeks out the window.

INT. BASEMENT

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

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE DINING ROOM

Sydney races down the hallway. He stumbles to a halt at the site of Simpson's corpse in the dining room. He gags and shambles toward the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

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

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki holds the radio to her lips.

NIKKI

Please tell me you're there.

Nikki awaits a response. She begins to tremble as the silence grows. After a moment, she hurls the radio on the floor.

She ducks down beside the window and stares outside.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

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

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

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney bursts out of the cottage and stomps toward the patrol car.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki jumps up and screams at the sight of him. He stops in front of the passenger side window and slams his fist against the glass.

SYDNEY

If you don't open this door, I'll
have to break in and grab you!

Sydney tugs at the door. Nikki screams for help..

SYDNEY

That's it!

Sydney leaves the window and heads toward Donald's car.

Nikki watches him through the plastic barrier between the front and backseat. He rummages through the contents of Donald's trunk.

After a moment, Sydney stomps back toward the patrol car. He clutches an indistinct blunt object.

Nikki scrambles away from the window. Sydney reappears beside it. He swings a surgical mallet forward. It strikes the window hard but the glass doesn't break.

Nikki screams. Sydney comes back with a second blow. The glass cracks.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

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

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki takes off toward the forest. Sydney runs after her. He catches up to her and grabs her around the waist.

Nikki screams, kicks and fights tooth and nail as Sydney takes her into his arms and throws her over his shoulder.

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

NIKKI

Let me go!

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

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

INT. SHRINE

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

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

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

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

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

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

SYDNEY

People are dead, Nikki.

NIKKI

It's not my fault!

SYDNEY

It's not your fault. But still.

Sydney lowers the mallet.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

What kind of question is that?!

SYDNEY

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

Sydney crouches in front of Nikki.

SYDNEY

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

Nikki whimpers and clutches her legs to her chest.

SYDNEY

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

Nikki starts to cry.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

I don't want your flesh!

Nikki turns away from Sydney.

SYDNEY

There're some things that are bigger.

NIKKI

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

SYDNEY

You're wrong—

NIKKI

You're the one that has to change—

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney raises the mallet in frustration. Nikki looks at him with tearful eyes.

NIKKI

What are you going to do? You want to break my leg? Just get it over with already!

Sydney blinks as if to hold back tears.

SYDNEY

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

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

SYDNEY

I want you to do it.

Nikki looks at the mallet, confused.

SYDNEY

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

NIKKI

Then why are you making me do this?

SYDNEY

Because deep down, I know you want to.

Nikki hesitates to take the mallet.

SYDNEY

Take it.

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

She looks at Sydney. Sydney looks anxiously at the mallet.

SYDNEY

You can do it, Nikki.

Sydney looks at Nikki.

SYDNEY

Do it.

She shakes her head.

NIKKI

I can't.

Nikki lowers the mallet.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney hobbles toward the living room.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

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

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

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs for the patrol car. Sydney pursues with haste.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki dives into the passenger seat.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

SYDNEY

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

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki swings the door toward her but doesn't shut it. She holds onto it with one hand and opens the glove box with the other. She paws through its contents.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Sydney approaches the door. He reaches out to open it.

Nikki throws the door open and gives it a kick with both feet. It flies into Sydney's knuckles. He yelps and doubles over in pain. Nikki gives the door another kick and strikes Sydney in the elbow. He stumbles back.

Nikki slams the door shut and locks it.

Sydney shakes out his arm and steps toward the car. He swings the mallet back and smashes it against the window. It cracks in a spider web fashion.

Nikki scoops a handful of contents from the glove box and dumps it on the floor. A can of mace lies amongst it. Her eyes lock on it.

Sydney shatters the window. Glass showers over Nikki. She shuts her eyes.

Sydney jerks open the car door and grabs at Nikki's legs. She kicks at him as he attempts to pull her out of the car.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sydney shrieks and curses as he continues to slam her ankle in the door. Her foot bends to the side with each blow.

Sydney releases the door.

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

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

Nikki reaches forward and slams the door shut.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney's eyes are swollen shut. He snatches up several handfuls of snow and slathers it over them but to no avail. He cries out in frustrated pain.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki shudders as shock kicks in. She holds up the mace defensively, expecting Sydney to attack again. His cries suggest otherwise.

Nikki stares at her ankle. It's bent at a grotesque unnatural angle and swollen red.

Nikki holds the can of mace straight ahead but drops her head and breaks down into tears.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney stuffs his face with several mouthfuls of snow. He chokes and coughs them up.

He growls and scrambles to his feet. He runs toward the front door but in his blindness, veers away from it.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki's eyes glaze over. She drops the mace.

She fumbles in her jacket for her phone. She attempts to dial a number. Her hands tremble so violently, she drops it onto the floor.

As she reaches for it, the police radio connected to the car comes to life. She grabs the receiver. Her finger slips off the button as she attempts to speak into it.

Nikki trails off. She drops the receiver and vomits onto the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney stumbles through the snow toward the dark forest, now some distance from the cottage. He trips and falls into the snow.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Nikki coughs up some last remnants of vomit. Tears stream down her cheeks. She lays her head down on the seat. Her vacant eyes flutter.

After a moment, they roll back into her head. Her eyelids slip closed.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney lies on his hands and knees and burrows his face into the snow.

LATER

Sydney lies in a fetal position sprinkled with accumulated snow. He twitches for a moment than rolls over and lifts himself onto his knees.

He lifts his head with some effort. His face is raw and inflamed. He keeps his eyes shut tight.

He collects some snow and rubs it over his eyes. He blinks a few times before he's able to open them.

He takes a moment to dust the snow off him. He shivers and rubs himself down for warmth. He breathes into his hands, rubs them together and repeats the process.

Sydney looks up toward the distant police car and struggles to his feet.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Sydney opens the passenger side door.

Nikki lies unconscious across the front seat. Her skin is pale. Her swollen ankle is engorged and dark purple.

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

LATER

Sydney pulls Nikki out of the driver side door. He strains to take her into his arms.

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

Sydney struggles to get back on his feet. He gasps. Blood seeps through his pant leg.

After some effort, Sydney regains himself and carries Nikki toward the cottage. It's a long struggle. He's forced to stop several times out of pain. His wounded ankle leaves bloody tracks in the snow.

INT. BASEMENT

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

Sydney lies on the floor. A roll of gauze, a bag of cotton balls and a bottle of rubbing alcohol sit beside him.

He pulls up his bloody pant leg to reveal an even bloodier sock. He removes his shoe. He winces all the while. A small amount of blood spills out of it as it comes off.

Sydney grabs the tip of his bloody sock and pulls it away. He whimpers at the sight of his wounded ankle. Ragged flesh scraped to the side exposes a small spot of cracked bone. A sliver of it falls away.

Sydney douses a cotton ball in alcohol and inches it towards his ankle. He stops, takes a deep breath and dabs the exposed bone. He whines in pain.

MOMENTS LATER

Sydney wraps his ankle with the gauze

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney stands shirtless before a running shower. He's bent forward to allow the jet to hit his face. Blood and mace wash down the drain.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAWN

A cloudy sky hangs over the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki lies on the operating table the same as before. The color has returned to her face.

The door opens at the top of the stairs. Sydney descends and arrives with his glasses returned to his face.

MOMENTS LATER

Sydney stands before the operating table and snaps on a fresh pair of gloves.

MOMENTS LATER

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

Sydney produces the saw and turns it on. He looks at Nikki's peaceful face then at her ruined leg.

Sydney lowers the saw toward her leg. It slices her skin just below the sleeve. Blood sprinkles Sydney's scrubs. Nikki winces in her sleep.

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

He looks at the new gash on her leg.

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

INT. SHRINE

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

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

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

A fire burns in the fireplace.

Nikki lies on the couch covered in thick blankets. Her broken ankle is propped up on a stack of towels and covered with a bag of ice.

Sydney kneels beside her.

SYDNEY

I'm so sorry for what I've put you through. I've never been so wrong.

Sydney takes her ring hand into his.

SYDNEY

Back when we first met, I told you people wear masks. It was true then and it's even truer now. I've been wearing a mask for a very long time.

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

SYDNEY

But I know what I have to do now.

Sydney kisses Nikki's cheek.

SYDNEY

I'll be missing you.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney lies on the floor beside the operating table. He pulls up his right pant leg up past his knee. Several faded scars, minute and barely visible, crisscross the flesh above his knee.

MOMENTS LATER

Sydney lies in his boxers. The surgical tourniquet wraps around his right thigh. His pants lie off to the side. The saw lies on a metal shelf under the operating table.

Sydney pulls the breathing mask over his face and turns on the gas. He several deep breaths until his eyes go wild with euphoria. He removes the mask and tosses it aside.

Sydney removes his scrubs top, twists it around and bites down upon it.

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

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

The saw shrieks as it buzzes into Sydney's bone. Sydney bites his gag hard. Drops of blood fleck his face.

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

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

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

INT. BASEMENT

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

Sydney releases his gag and shoves the breathing mask over his face. He inhales anesthetic in deep, exasperated breaths then yanks off the mask and tosses it aside.

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

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

911 (V.O.)

911, please state your emergency.

Sydney takes a deep breath.

911 (V.O.)

Hello? Hello.

Sydney shakes uncontrollably as he speaks.

SYDNEY

I'd like to turn myself into the police. I've killed three people tonight including the two officers you sent over here. There's also three more buried in the basement walls. They've been dead for years. And there's a girl here. She's alive and needs medical assistance.

911 (V.O.)

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

SYDNEY

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

911 (V.O.)

What do you mean compromised?

SYDNEY

You'll find out soon enough. Send the paramedics please. And whoever you want to pick me up.

Sydney ends the call and places his phone back in his pants pocket.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Nikki awakens on the couch with a gasp.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney stares at the bloody stump where his leg used to be.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Nikki stares straight ahead as she slides her hand down her right thigh. She gasps as her fingers stop at the gash above her knee.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney reaches past his right thigh.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Nikki slides her hand past her knee and feels her leg.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney fingers the empty space left in his leg's absence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Nikki caresses her leg. She laughs in relief.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney's mouth hangs open in awe with the faintest hint of a smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Nikki's eyes glisten on the brink of tears as she laughs.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney laughs and cries at the same time.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: COMPLETE

THE END