

"F A Ç A D E"

written by

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The screenplay is to be shot in black-and-white, to imitate classic Hollywood film noir.

FADE IN:

INT. ADAMSON HOME - LOS ANGELES, 1955 - NIGHT

A fancy picture frame. In it pose BARBARA (44) & DONALD ADAMSON (48), a middle-aged couple with their teenage son, NATHAN ADAMSON (15). They are smiling, outwardly appearing to be the perfect, idyllic, 50's suburban family.

BEGIN OPENING CREDITS

Propped up all along the wall are other series of picture frames. These photos present a timeline of the family's life:

- Barbara and Donald grinning, cradling a baby Nathan in their arms.

- The family posing for a picture in the park.

- Family portraits throughout the years. Everyone's posed with such high dignity, the same smiles plastered on their faces.

The living room is very high-end, gorgeously decorated with floral arrangements, pastel colors, fancy furniture. The idyllic home.

We finally come to rest on a rotary dial telephone, sitting on a table.

END OPENING CREDITS

A hand moves into frame and picks up the telephone receiver. It rotates the dial, dials a number.

The hand carries the receiver up to her ear -- the hand belongs to Barbara. Anxiety and desperation shows in her face as she dials. She waits patiently, then finally the other end picks up.

BARBARA

(into phone)

Hello? My name is Barbara Adamson. I would like to report a missing child.

(beat)

Yes, it's my son. Nathan Adamson.

(beat)

Earlier tonight. I went up to his room to check on him, and he wasn't there, and his window was open.

(beat)

Thank you. Please find my son.

She places the phone down in its cradle.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

An empty road, outside of town. The surrounding area is covered with thick forest. It is midday.

In the distance, police sirens grow. A squad of police cars appear on the horizon, moving in fast. They hurdle down the street.

They continue along the road, then turn off the street into the dense wood.

WOODS

The police cars maneuver through the trees until it reaches a small clearing in the middle of the forest. The place is already surrounded by yellow crime tape.

Photographers, reporters, and police detectives populate the area. Camera light bulbs flash repeatedly. Police officers take notes on the scene.

The police cars come to a halt. A door opens, and out steps AVERY GRAYSON (49), a tall, dashing man with a Humphrey Bogart-like persona. A cigarette sits between his lips, and a puff of smoke escapes his mouth.

DESMOND WALLACE (38), a younger, energetic man, steps out from the other side of the car.

WALLACE

Come on, Grayson, not on the crime scene.

Grayson smiles. He takes the cigarette from his lips and puts it out on the roof of the police car. They walk together towards the scene. Grayson lifts the tape and crouches under it.

GRAYSON

So, what have we got?

WALLACE

Nathan Adamson, 15 years old.

They stop at the base of a tree. Nathan, the boy from the picture frames, lays lifeless below the tree. His skin is covered with bruises, and a clear gunshot wound is visible on his chest. Photographer's light bulbs go off in rapid succession.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Gunshot wound to the chest, bruises on the skin and neck.

Grayson crouches down, looks into Nathan's lifeless eyes.

GRAYSON

It's such a pity. And at such a young age.

WALLACE

He was killed. Murdered. And somebody's responsible.

Grayson stands up. Pats Wallace on the shoulder.

GRAYSON

Keenly observed, Wallace. Keenly observed.

He walks away.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

It is a crisp, beautiful day. The upper middle-class Adamson home is spruced up with bright flowers and a neatly trimmed lawn, complete with idyllic white picket fences.

INT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

Barbara walks down a hallway, carrying a basket of laundry. The walls are lined with beautiful photo frames, floral arrangements, sculptures, and the like.

MONTAGE:

- She arrives at a set of closet doors and opens them, revealing a washing machine. Barbara dumps the laundry inside and switches on the machine.

- Barbara rolls a bulky vacuum cleaner back and forth along the carpet.

- Barbara stands at the kitchen sink, vigorously scrubbing a pot. Next to her on the counter is a pile of dirty china and silverware.

LIVING ROOM

Barbara paces along the wall, staring in pride at the immaculate room around her. She eyes the picture frames on the wall as she moves along.

She pauses at the picture frame from the opening shot. It's slightly crooked. She gently pushes on the edge of the frame until it evens out. Lets out a sigh of satisfaction. Her eyes linger on her son, Nathan, in the photo.

The phone RINGS. She looks up in surprise. She walks over to the phone and picks it up.

BARBARA

Hello?

(beat)

Yes, this is Barbara Adamson.

A look of horror gradually washes over her face.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(calm)

Oh my goodness. You found my son?

(beat)

He's dead?

Her hand slowly moves to her chest as she tries to calm herself. She's petrified, her lips quiver as she musters the words from her mouth.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Okay. I will. Thank you very much for calling.

Her hand shaking, Barbara hangs up the phone. She stands motionless for a moment. Then she grabs the phone again, dials.

INT. DONALD'S OFFICE - DAY

Donald sits at his desk working. The phone rings. He picks up.

DONALD

Hello?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

BARBARA

(shaken)

Donald. It's me. They found him. They found Nathan's body.

Donald sits there in silence and shock, mouth agape. He sighs, takes a moment to compose himself.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I don't know if I can handle this, Donald.

DONALD

I know, but be strong, okay? Don't panic. We'll get through this.

Barbara nods, still shaken up.

BARBARA

Okay.

DONALD

We've been prepared to hear this news for a while now. We'll get through this.

BARBARA

(sniffles)

Alright. Anyway, they want me to go down and identify the body. I'll see you tonight.

She hangs up the phone. Stands there grief-stricken for a moment. She places her hand on her chest, breathing deeply. She's calm.

She gracefully walks toward the door, opens it and leaves.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Barbara and Grayson walk abreast of each other down a dank corridor.

GRAYSON

He was found in the woods, a few miles outside of town off the main road. He was shot, and there are bruises and signs of assault as well. The coroners are still working on the details.

They stop walking as they arrive at a door.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Nathan's right in here. Are you ready to see him?

Barbara breathes deeply.

BARBARA

Yes, Mr. Grayson, I'm ready.

Grayson opens the door, Barbara enters first. Inside the room is a table, a tarp covering its contents. A NURSE stands beside the table.

Grayson signals at the nurse giving the go-ahead. The nurse grabs the tarp and slowly pulls it back, revealing Nathan's face.

Barbara's hand flies to her mouth. She looks away.

BARBARA

(meekly)

That's him.

The nurse pulls the tarp back, concealing Nathan's body once again. Barbara, still shaken, walks out of the room. Grayson follows.

Grayson places a compassionate hand on Barbara's shoulder. She turns and looks into his eyes.

GRAYSON

I'm very sorry for your loss, Mrs. Adamson. I know exactly what you're going through.

BARBARA

You do?

GRAYSON

Yes. I lost a loved one several years back. My wife. She was killed. I know what the pain feels like. It's overwhelming.

(beat)

I promise I will do whatever it takes to find your son's killer, if it's the last thing I do.

Barbara snuffles, composes herself.

BARBARA

Thank you, Mr. Grayson.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

The yard is looking as pristine as always. Cars are parked along the curb, and a few guests dressed in black flock towards the front door.

INT. ADAMSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

A memorial service for Nathan is in session. The living room is sparsely filled with mourners, dressed to the nines, grieving. Some mild chatter is going on.

A giant photo of Nathan, smiling and dressed in high fashion, sits propped up in the middle of the room.

KITCHEN

Barbara stands alone at the kitchen counter, preparing a tray of hors d'oeuvre for the guests with fierce concentration. Donald walks in.

They are both lavishly dressed -- Donald in a dark suit, Barbara in a black dress, hair tied up, dark red lipstick and a pearl necklace.

DONALD

Honey? What are you doing in here?

Barbara doesn't respond, she just continues to be hard at work preparing food. Donald sees this.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Barbara, give it a rest, okay? You've been through enough. I can't believe after all this, you're still focused on being the hostess.

BARBARA

I can't rest, Donald. You're right, I am the hostess. It's my responsibility. There's a room full of people out there, and it's my duty to make sure they don't go hungry.

She finishes up. Picks up the tray, quickly glances over at Donald.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

What kind of hostess would I be?

She walks out. Donald has a defeated look on his face, but he follows her out.

LIVING ROOM

Barbara walks around gracefully, offering hors d'oeuvre to nearby guests. A GUEST approaches her, offering her condolences.

GUEST

Barbara, dear. This is so tragic, I'm so sorry, from the bottom of my heart.

Barbara smiles graciously at her guest.

BARBARA

Thank you very much for your sympathy, we really appreciate it.

She shakes hands with the guest, smiles. The guest walks away.

Donald stands from afar, watching Barbara.

WOMAN (O.S.)

She's really outdone herself this time, huh?

Donald whirls around. ANNE PHYLLIS, a beautiful woman in her thirties, stands smiling before him.

DONALD

Oh, yeah. That seems about right.

ANNE

She seems to be handling it quite well. I know I'd be a blubbing mess if I had to deal with what she's going through.

DONALD

Well, that's Barbara.

(beat)

I'm sorry, but please remind me again who you are?

ANNE

I'm Anne Phyllis, we go to the same church.

DONALD

That's right. My apologies, it seems quite odd I'd forget a face like yours.

Anne smiles, but becomes serious again.

ANNE

Donald, I really just want to offer my deepest condolences to you and Barbara.

DONALD

Thank you very much, Anne.

Anne's hand slowly reaches forward, and she begins to stroke Donald's arm, just very gently.

On the other side of the room, Barbara takes a deep breath, then she steps forward.

BARBARA

(aloud)

Excuse me, everyone.

The chatter gradually ceases. Everyone turns to face Barbara.

BARBARA

Thank you so much again for coming today. It really means the world to us that so many of you cared for our son, Nathan. He was such a good kid. He didn't deserve this.

Barbara falters for a second. Meanwhile, Grayson discreetly walks in through the front door. He stands at the back of the crowd and listens.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Nathan was such a loving, compassionate young man. He always put others ahead of himself. He was polite, a true gentleman, he was. And now he's gone. And he's never coming back.

(beat)

Nathan will always be remembered in our hearts as the brilliant young boy we've come to know and love. Again, I want to thank you all for being here. And I just want all of you to know, deep down, how wonderful Nathan really was. He will be missed. Thank you.

Grayson watches from the back, a wave of pity washes over him.

LATER

Barbara and Donald stand at the front door, seeing to the guests as they leave. Barbara shakes the hand of a visitor as she exits.

BARBARA

Thank you very much for coming.

DONALD

Goodbye.

The guest leaves. Grayson approaches the couple.

GRAYSON

Good afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Adamson.

BARBARA

Mr. Grayson. Good afternoon to you as well. We appreciate you coming.

GRAYSON

Once again, I am sorry for your loss. But I think it's time we get down to business regarding Nathan's death.

DONALD

What do you have in mind?

GRAYSON

I know now probably isn't the best time for you, but the earlier the better. I was hoping we could sit down and I could ask both of you a few questions about the circumstances surrounding Nathan's disappearance.

Barbara and Donald exchange glances. Then she looks back at Grayson and nods.

BARBARA

Of course. Now is not a problem at all. Right this way.

She shuts the door, ushers Grayson over to the living room. They all take a seat.

BARBARA

Would you like anything, Mr. Grayson? Some tea, or bruschetta?

GRAYSON

No, that's quite alright. I had the opportunity to sample your cuisine earlier during the service actually. You are an exceptional cook, may I add. Your deviled eggs were particularly exquisite.

Barbara actually cracks a modest smile. She shoots a look in Donald's direction, then back at Grayson.

BARBARA

Thank you.

They all sit in awkward silence for a moment.

DONALD

What would you like to know about Nathan?

GRAYSON

If you would, please elaborate on the circumstances surrounding the time Nathan ran away. Hopefully that would put into perspective what was going through his mind and possibly lead us along the right path, so to speak.

Barbara and Donald exchange glances. Barbara speaks, her tone subdued.

BARBARA

As a matter of fact, yes, there were some things he was going through around that time. It was sort of a rough patch for all of us. I think this will be of particular interest to you, Mr. Grayson.

GRAYSON

I'm listening.

BARBARA

This... ordeal all started a few months ago. He had just entered high school, and things only seemed to be going downhill from there.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - MORNING (3 MONTHS AGO)

Barbara, Charles and Nathan are seated around the large breakfast table. Big platters of eggs, bacon, toast, and other breakfast foods are neatly assorted on the tabletop. Everyone is munching on food.

BARBARA

Don't forget, Donald. We have that church convention later this afternoon. Make sure you don't work too late. Do you recall last year's disaster?

DONALD

(sarcastically)

Yes, actually, I recall walking in two minutes after it began. You're right, it was a total disaster.

BARBARA

It was. You don't remember the whole place staring at us as we walked in? Now I don't want to be late this time, understand? Otherwise we're certainly going to hell.

DONALD

(smiles)

Alright, baby, you got it.

Barbara smiles teasingly back at him. She takes a sip of orange juice, then glances over to Nathan, who is slumping in his seat.

BARBARA
Straighten up, Nathan.

Nathan immediately sits up straight.

NATHAN
Yes, mother.

BARBARA
How is everything going at school?

NATHAN
Great.

BARBARA
Anything to report?

NATHAN
No, ma'am.

Barbara gives him an unconvincing look, but shakes it off.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I have to go to the bus stop now.
Thank you for breakfast, mom.

BARBARA
Alright, sweetie. You have a great
day at school, okay? I love you.

NATHAN
I love you, too, mother. I will.

Nathan grabs his backpack and rushes out the door.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Nathan strolls through the quintessential 50's suburban neighborhood. It is a bright, sunny morning. Nathan arrives at a street corner and waits.

Moments later, the ROARING of the school bus grows. The bus squeaks to a halt in front of Nathan. The doors open.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Nathan steps inside. The doors shut, and the bus continues on. Nathan walks through the aisles, garnering stares from the other STUDENTS. He scans the rows of seats for an empty spot.

A half empty seat is just up ahead. Nathan approaches it. But the kid already sitting there moves his backpack, in a not-so-subtle manner, into the empty spot. Nathan just stares at him in disbelief, but moves on.

Nathan makes a swift dash for another nearby empty spot, sits down. The student next to him shoots him a nasty look.

A bully, SPENCER McFADDEN (18) pops up from the seat behind Nathan, a mischievous grin spread across his face. In an instant, he snatches Nathan's backpack away from his lap. Nathan turns and looks at him, visibly annoyed.

NATHAN
Give it back, Spencer.

SPENCER
(enjoying it)
No.

NATHAN
I mean it, give it back.

SPENCER
Or what, loser? What are you gonna do?

Nathan launches towards him, but he moves his arms beyond Nathan's reach. Spencer laughs wickedly. Instead, he tosses the backpack to another bully towards the front of the bus.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Here, go fetch!

The bullies toss the backpack back and forth amongst each other, all the while laughing and enjoying it. Nathan can only sit helplessly in the middle of it all.

BUS DRIVER
Cut it out back there!

Spencer flashes one final evil grin, then forcefully throws the backpack towards Nathan. It smashes into his face, and he falls back into his seat. The bullies share a laugh amongst themselves.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

The school bus pulls into the main driveway of the school. Students flock to the doors to try to get to class on time.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus pulls to a stop. The students shoot up onto their feet and maneuver towards the exit.

Nathan stands up. As he begins to move, Spencer pushes through from behind him, knocking him down to the floor.

Spencer and his friends exit the bus laughing. Nathan glares at them as they disappear. He gets up on his feet, brushes himself off, and steps off the bus.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

As Nathan walks towards the entrance of the school building, he scans the school grounds.

He looks to the right. A group of TEENAGE GIRLS are chatting in a circle. Another GIRL comes running up and joins them. They greet each other in a wave of giggles.

He looks to the left. A handsome TEENAGE BOY waits at the front of the school. His GIRLFRIEND walks up to him and they embrace and kiss.

He looks again to the right. A CLUSTER OF FRIENDS walk abreast of each other, laughing and smiling at each others' jokes and catching up on the latest gossip.

He looks again to the left. A group of MALE JOCKS play a game of catch with a football. Another BOY joins them and they greet with a "cool-guy" handshake.

Nathan gives a heavy sigh. He pushes open the doors and enters the school building.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The room is quiet, all the STUDENTS are concentrated on the assignments on their desks. The TEACHER sits at the front of the room. Nathan's desk is near the front, and Spencer is near the back.

Spencer discreetly prepares a spitball -- he stuffs a wad of paper into a straw. He aims. Fires.

It hits Nathan square on the neck. Spencer and his nearby friends burst into muffled laughter. Nathan turns around and glares.

The teacher conveniently looks up.

TEACHER

Nathan, turn around. Keep your eyes on your own paper, please.

Nathan immediately turns back around, frustrated. He remains silent. Spencer continues laughing quietly, clearly enjoying his torment.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

It is lunch time. Nathan sits alone in the back corner of the cafeteria. All around him, various cliques sit and chat, catching up the latest gossip and what have you. They don't pay any particular attention to Nathan. He's invisible.

BARBARA (V.O.)

We had no idea the bullying was this bad. Actually, for a long time we were completely unaware of the fact Nathan was being bullied at all. Nathan rarely ever spoke to us about his life at school. Unfortunately for all of us, things were only about to get worse.

The school bell RINGS loudly.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

A door opens into an empty courtyard. Nathan walks out.

Suddenly, Spencer appears around the corner. He's carrying a BASEBALL BAT. He slaps it against his palm in a threatening manner. Nathan stops in his tracks. Frightened, he turns and moves in the opposite direction.

Spencer charges after him. Soon enough, he's chasing Nathan, but not for long. Failing to outrun Spencer, Nathan is caught in his grasp. Spencer shoves Nathan against a brick wall. He goes down hard.

Nathan struggles to get back onto his feet, but Spencer just pushes him back down again.

SPENCER

Stay down, loser!

NATHAN

What do you want from me?

SPENCER

To shut up and take it!

Spencer SHOVES HIS BOOT straight into Nathan's gut. Nathan clutches his stomach, grimacing in pain. Spencer raises his arm with the baseball bat high over his head... Nathan braces himself.

Spencer SWINGS his bat, striking Nathan's back. He screams in pain. But Spencer doesn't stop, he continues beating and kicking Nathan in the stomach over and over again.

SPENCER

Maybe this'll teach you to never show your ugly face around here ever again...

He punches Nathan in the face.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

...you creep.

When the beatings come to an end, Spencer swiftly runs from the scene. Nathan can only hopelessly lie there on the ground, sobbing.

BARBARA (V.O.)
That was a grim day for everyone,
Nathan especially.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. ADAMSON HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Barbara and Donald are seated on the couch, Grayson across from them, listening intently.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
We were in complete shock when we heard the news. Nathan spent two weeks in the hospital recovering. He suffered from multiple fractured ribs, broken bones, bruises. It was a complete nightmare.

Barbara sits back, sighs, exhausted, as if reliving the stress.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Spencer was, of course, expelled from school. He was eventually arrested on battery and assault charges. We thought it would be all over. But for Nathan, it was anything but. He became particularly fragile during this time, and I don't blame him, after all the trauma he went through. Nathan was more reserved than ever. We, as parents, naturally wanted to help him move past this.

Barbara glances over to Donald, a look of guilt in her eyes.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
So we resorted to the only thing left we could think of. Therapy.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - NIGHT (ONE WEEK AGO)

The family is seated once again around the dinner table. Lighted candles emanate an orange glow and cast shadows along the table's surface. Nobody seems to be paying attention to one another.

Nathan prods around his food with his fork. There are faint bruises on his face, otherwise he's recovered nicely.

BARBARA

Nathan?

Nathan gives a mere "mmhm", without looking up.

BARBARA

I want you and Father Thomas to have a chat tomorrow, after sermon. I already called him earlier, he knows and he's willing to help.

Nathan freezes. He looks up at Barbara.

NATHAN

(annoyed)

Why? Is there something wrong with me?

Offended, Barbara reaches her arm across the table and places it firmly on Nathan's.

BARBARA

(comfortingly)

Sweetie, no! Nothing is wrong with you.

DONALD

We know you're still shaken up about the incident. We think if you discuss it with Father Thomas, he could really help you open up and get past what you're feeling.

BARBARA

Please understand, this is for your own good.

Nathan seems to glare at them. He drops his fork to his plate with a clatter.

NATHAN

I'm not hungry anymore.

He stands abruptly and walks out. Barbara won't have it. Her eyes widen in surprise and outrage.

BARBARA

Nathan! Get back here. Do not just leave the table like that, do you hear?

But he's already out of earshot. Donald places a hand comfortingly on Barbara's arm, holding her back.

DONALD

It's okay. Just let him be.

BARBARA

No, I will not have my son behave to me this way!

DONALD

Just leave it, alright? I'll talk to him. Just let him be for now, he's been through a lot.

Barbara slightly calms. She breathes deep, then grabs her fork again. They resume their eating as gracefully as they were.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

We're in the middle of a sermon. FATHER THOMAS, a stoutly man in his sixties, stands at the front podium, speaking with great authority.

FATHER THOMAS

What does it mean to sin?

As Father Thomas continues, we drift down the aisles, through the pews of churchgoers, all listening intently. Eventually we come to rest on Barbara, Donald, and Nathan, sitting several pews from the front.

Barbara and Donald stare straight ahead, fully engrossed in Father Thomas' sermon. Everyone's dressed in high-class suits, dresses, Barbara with her pearls.

FATHER THOMAS (CONT'D)

How many of us sitting here today have done something, something that may have brought great shame or guilt upon yourself?

Barbara eyes Nathan sitting next to her. He looks bored, slumping in his seat and resting his head in his hand.

BARBARA

(sharply)

Nathan.

Nathan sits up immediately.

FATHER THOMAS (CONT'D)

John, the apostle, said "He who does what is sinful is of the devil". Does this mean everyone who is guilty of sin is destined to go to hell? No.

(MORE)

FATHER THOMAS (CONT'D)

One must call upon our Lord, for God's word is our only path to salvation. Only then, when we accept the word of the Holy Spirit, and accept our responsibility for our sins will we be forgiven and achieve true purity, and only then can we reach Heaven.

Barbara nods to herself, clearly into it.

BARBARA

(to herself)

Amen.

Father Thomas continues on with his sermon.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Churchgoers shuffle around for the exit. Barbara approaches Father Thomas, who is gathering his things at the podium. He sees her and instantly flashes a warm smile.

FATHER THOMAS

Barbara! How are you?

BARBARA

Good morning, Father. I'm great, thank you.

(hesitates)

I'm afraid Nathan isn't doing as well.

FATHER THOMAS

Ah, I see. How is he holding up?

BARBARA

Not so well, I'm afraid. He's recovered quite nicely since the attack, but I think it's left a more lasting emotional scar.

FATHER THOMAS

You can't blame the poor child... I'm ready to talk to him anytime if you'd like.

BARBARA

Please.

She smiles graciously. Motions for Nathan to approach. Father Thomas ushers Nathan towards his office. As Nathan walks away, he turns back towards his parents. There's a hint of a glare in his eyes.

LATER

Barbara and Donald are seated on a bench outside of Father Thomas' office. They sit stiffly, staring blankly ahead in deep thought, when Barbara breaks the silence.

BARBARA

How do you think he's doing in there?

DONALD

I'm sure he's doing just fine, Barbara.

BARBARA

I'm worried about Nathan.

DONALD

You need to quit worrying about him, baby.

BARBARA

I can't. I just want him to be... normal again.

DONALD

Do you ever stop to think that maybe this is why he's so reserved? Stop pressuring him to be so perfect all the time, and just let him figure things out on his own.

Barbara scoffs at the remark.

BARBARA

That's ridiculous.

DONALD

Are you sure about that?

BARBARA

What are you insinuating?

DONALD

I'm just saying, Barbara. Maybe your incessant need for perfection is just making Nathan realize his imperfections more than anything.

Barbara scoffs again. She attempts to find her words, but her concentration is interrupted when the door to Father Thomas' office opens suddenly. Nathan walks out, followed by Father Thomas.

Donald and Barbara eagerly shoot up from their seats, awaiting the details.

BARBARA

Well?

Nathan takes a seat, and Father Thomas pulls the parents off to the side.

FATHER THOMAS

Things went well, Mrs. Adamson. We sat down, Nathan spoke to me about some things, and I offered him some of my advice that I hope will bring him some peace regarding the incident.

BARBARA

What kind of things did he say?

Father Thomas hesitates a bit.

FATHER THOMAS

I apologize, Barbara, but I'm afraid I can not divulge that information.

BARBARA

(shocked)

What? Why?

FATHER THOMAS

You see, Nathan had asked me specifically to keep the contents of our discussion secret.

DONALD

How come?

FATHER THOMAS

I'm not sure, but as you all know, Nathan has been going through a tough time recently, and he feels it's best you don't know the details of our talk.

BARBARA

That's absurd. Father, how do you expect us to help him if you won't tell us what's wrong with him? I'm his mother, I have the right to know!

Barbara's voice starts to elevate, completely oblivious that Nathan is sitting right nearby. Donald tries to shush her.

FATHER THOMAS

I apologize again, Barbara, but as pastor, I always respect the decisions and privacy of others. Now, I can't tell you exactly what we discussed, but I'll just give you my own bit of advice.

Father Thomas leans in closer. Barbara sighs, tries to calm down.

FATHER THOMAS (CONT'D)

Become a friend to your son. Take him out for ice cream, or to the movies. Play games with him, and take interest in everything he does. Try and overlook his problems. The main goal here is to find out what is bothering him and become a person he can trust and talk to when he needs it.

(beat)

No matter how good the child there is always some amount of strife before the job of raising him is finished. Do the best you can and forgive yourself when you fall short.

Beat. Barbara sighs, then nods.

BARBARA

Thank you, Father.

She turns swiftly.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Come, Nathan.

Barbara marches straight for the exit, her heels clacking against the tile floor. Nathan stands up and follows her, Donald right behind.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Barbara is preparing dinner. Donald sits at the table. Barbara rushes back and forth between the kitchen and dining room, putting food on the table. She's fuming.

BARBARA

Can you believe it? I'm his own mother, and I can't even know how he's doing?

DONALD

Honey.

But Barbara is relentless, keeps going.

BARBARA

I want to be able to do my part and help him at home. How can I comfort him and support him if I don't know what's wrong with him?

DONALD

Barbara! Keep it down, please!

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nathan stands next to his bedroom door. The door is ajar, and we can hear the parents' discussion from downstairs.

DONALD (O.S.)

Have you ever considered the possibility that when you say that something's wrong with him, that just pushes him further away from you?

Nathan's expression is a mix of anger and sadness. He turns towards his closet.

His closet door swings open and Nathan rummages through the mess. He takes out a duffel bag and tosses it onto the floor.

He starts grabbing his clothes. His shirts, pants, underwear, socks, belts... tosses them down as well.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BARBARA

Why would Nathan want this information private from his own parents, anyway? I'm his mother, for God's sake! He doesn't realize that we're trying to help him.

DONALD

Listen, baby, we did the right thing. Father Thomas is very smart, and he knows what he's doing. Leave it to him. We weren't able to help him on our own anyway.

Barbara stops for a moment, takes a few calming breaths.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Nathan is a very self-conscious boy. He probably doesn't want us to know about how he's feeling.

(MORE)

DONALD (CONT'D)

He probably already thinks that we think he's strange. I think you've made it clear enough just how worthy you make him feel. He doesn't want to make it worse.

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nathan approaches his bedroom window. He looks back cautiously. He inhales deeply, then exhales.

He turns back toward his window and begins fiddling with the latch.

The window creaks open slowly.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DONALD

Now. Do you love Nathan?

BARBARA

Yes, of course.

DONALD

And you want him to recover and return to his old self?

BARBARA

Yes...

DONALD

Then you have to relax, and instead of trying to force things out of him, just sit back and be a comforting mother and be there for him when he needs you. Got it?

Barbara sighs.

BARBARA

Okay. You're right. I'll try.

(beat)

Well. Dinner's just about ready. I'll go and get Nathan.

She brushes off her apron, then heads for the stairs. Her shoes clack loudly as she scales the staircase.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. ADAMSON HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Donald, Barbara, and Grayson sit on the couch. Grayson seems very engrossed in Barbara's story.

BARBARA

That was the last day we ever saw our son. He was already gone when I went up to his room. Shortly after, that's when I reported him missing to the police. And then a week later, you discovered his body and that he was murdered. And here we are now.

Barbara sighs heavily, emotionally toiled. Grayson just sits there for a moment.

GRAYSON

That really is an incredible story.

BARBARA

I don't suppose it was any help to you?

GRAYSON

No, of course it was helpful. This... Spencer McFadden. Did he have any particular reason for targeting Nathan?

Barbara wipes a tear.

BARBARA

Uh, I'm not sure. Why? Do you think he was the one who did this?

GRAYSON

I can't be sure, but it definitely seems like a start.

Donald and Barbara exchange glances. Grayson stands up.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Well, thank you very much for your time. I'll be sure to inform both of you about any new developments in the investigation.

Donald and Barbara stand as well. Donald shakes hands with Grayson.

DONALD

You're very welcome.

GRAYSON

Once again, I'm sorry for your loss.

BARBARA

Thank you.

With a smile and a tip of his hat, Grayson heads towards the front door.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Grayson sits behind his desk. He pulls out a cigarette, strikes a match, and lights it. Takes a puff.

GRAYSON

Alright people, lay it on me.

Wallace, and a few other INVESTIGATORS are in the room. They're mid-discussion.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Start with Nathan. Any reports on him after he ran away?

INVESTIGATOR #1

According to the police department, there were no calls or tips regarding the whereabouts of Nathan after he ran away. He was never spotted.

GRAYSON

Not once? What about neighbors, friends?

INVESTIGATOR #2

We also interviewed Nathan's neighbors, classmates, teachers... no one had seen Nathan since he went missing.

WALLACE

So either Nathan was just really good at staying hidden, or he was killed not long after he ran away.

GRAYSON

(facetious)

You think I'm stupid, don't you Wallace?

He sits up in his chair, takes another puff of his cigarette. Wallace rolls his eyes at him.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Do you have the coroner's report?

Wallace hands it to him. Grayson snatches it from his grasp.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Gimme that.

WALLACE

There's the gunshot wound to his chest...

GRAYSON

Obviously.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

...The coroner also reported significant bruising on Nathan's body, particularly around the neck. They came to the conclusion that he was strangled, among other things.

Grayson looks confused, in deep thought.

GRAYSON

So he was strangled and shot?

WALLACE

Sounds about right.

GRAYSON

Why would anyone shoot someone, then strangle them?

WALLACE

Somebody really needed to get it all out of their system.

Grayson rubs his chin, thinks for a bit.

GRAYSON

Anything else on there you wanna tell me?

WALLACE

Yeah. In addition to the markings around the neck, there were additional bruises throughout his back and chest. The coroner likened them to shoe prints and markings resembling that of a club or baseball bat.

GRAYSON

So he was clearly attacked. This was murder, no doubt.

WALLACE

Keenly observed.

He smiles slyly at Grayson. But Grayson's deep in thought.

GRAYSON

Did you say baseball bat?

WALLACE

Yes.

GRAYSON

Spencer McFadden used a baseball bat.

WALLACE

Spencer?

GRAYSON

Spencer McFadden. Mrs. Adamson told me about him. He was a student who used to bully Nathan constantly, and he beat him up one day. He used a baseball bat.

WALLACE

Any chance it's a coincidence?

GRAYSON

Doubtful.

WALLACE

Looks like lightning struck twice. Unfortunately for Nathan.

GRAYSON

Let's pay this kid a visit.

EXT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - DAY

Grayson and a few POLICE OFFICERS have gathered around Spencer's house. One of them pounds on the front door.

A few seconds later, the door swings open. Spencer stands in the doorway, looking confused.

SPENCER

Hello?

GRAYSON

Are you Spencer McFadden?

SPENCER

Yes. Something wrong?

GRAYSON

We'd like you to come with us. We have a few questions we'd like for you to answer.

SPENCER

Why? I haven't done anything!

GRAYSON
We'll see about that. Now come on,
we haven't got all day.

The police officers step forward and grab Spencer's arms. He struggles in their grasp.

SPENCER
You can't do this! Let me go! I
didn't do anything!

GRAYSON
Then you won't have anything to
worry about. Come along now.

He struts away nonchalantly as the police officers escort a struggling Spencer away towards the patrol cars.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Spencer sits in front of the table, much calmer now. He looks ashamed, nervous, and confused. Grayson walks in, plops down into his chair.

GRAYSON
Let's get this started, shall we?

He lights another cigarette. Spencer is not amused.

SPENCER
Please, tell me what I'm doing
here. I didn't do anything wrong!

GRAYSON
Do you remember Nathan Adamson?

Spencer suddenly falls silent.

GRAYSON
You're not deaf now, are you?

SPENCER
No.

GRAYSON
So?

SPENCER
Yeah, I remember him.

GRAYSON
Can you tell me when was the last
time you saw him?

Spencer thinks it over for a second.

SPENCER

I don't know... a few months ago.

GRAYSON

Really? So you never ran into him, say, sometime in the last week or so?

SPENCER

No... Why are you asking me these questions?

Grayson's chair creaks slightly as he sits up, looks at Spencer straight in the eyes.

GRAYSON

Because he's dead.

Spencer becomes silent once again. His eyes widen in pure shock.

SPENCER

What?

GRAYSON

You seem surprised.

SPENCER

Well, I am! You think I killed him?

Grayson sits back into his chair. Takes a puff of his cigarette.

GRAYSON

I understand about three months ago, you had an unfortunate encounter with Nathan. Where you ambushed him after class, then proceeded to beat the living soul out of him with a baseball bat.

Spencer sighs, ashamed.

SPENCER

Alright, yes, I did beat him up once. But I didn't kill him!

GRAYSON

We received word from the coroner. There were marks resembling those of a baseball bat on Nathan's body, as well as shoe prints. Your two weapons of choice?

Spencer is speechless again. He finally musters up the words.

SPENCER

That could have been anyone. I'm telling you, I'm innocent.

GRAYSON

We searched through your home and recovered your bat. The same one you used on Nathan? We found small traces of blood on it.

SPENCER

Well, I don't know what you're talking about.

GRAYSON

Tell me, Spencer, where you were Sunday of last week.

SPENCER

I didn't do it!

GRAYSON

Just answer the question, kid.

Spencer falls silent, thinking it over.

SPENCER

I was at home.

GRAYSON

Can anyone vouch for you? Were your parents home?

SPENCER

No, I was home alone.

GRAYSON

Can you tell me what you did? Did you go anywhere that night?

Spencer sighs heavily.

SPENCER

I don't think so.

GRAYSON

You don't think so?

SPENCER

I don't know.

Grayson pauses for a moment.

GRAYSON

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and ask... was there any alcohol in your home?

Spencer doesn't answer, only a look of shame on his face.

GRAYSON
How much did you drink that night?
That why you don't remember
anything?

SPENCER
(quietly)
I guess.

GRAYSON
You really must have been cruisin'
for a bruisin' that night. Looks
like murder ain't the only thing
you're in trouble for.

SPENCER
I didn't murder anybody!

GRAYSON
I'll let the head of homicide take
the rest of this.

Grayson gets up, nonchalantly exits the room. Spencer just looks down in shame.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Grayson stands by his desk, the phone receiver at his ear.

GRAYSON
Don't give me that! If he really
did kill Nathan, then prove to me
he did.
(beat)
Then make him talk.

Grayson sighs. He shifts the phone to his other hand, while rolling his eyes in frustration.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
Alright, well does he have any
alibis? Talk to everyone, and make
sure his actions are accounted for
all of last week.
(beat)
Good. Now get me some results!

He slams down the receiver, sighing loudly in exasperation. The phone suddenly rings again. He picks it up.

GRAYSON
What is it?
(beat)
(MORE)

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Alright, good. Send them in,
please.

He hangs up. Grayson walks around to the other side of his desk and falls into his chair. He cradles his tired head in his hand. There's a light rap on the door.

GRAYSON

Come in!

The door opens. Barbara and Donald walk in.

GRAYSON

Good afternoon, Mr. and Mrs.
Adamson.

DONALD

Good afternoon.

BARBARA

Is something the matter? We were a
bit worried when you called us on
such short notice.

GRAYSON

Please sit.

He motions towards two empty chairs next to his desk. They sit down.

GRAYSON

So, after a bit of digging, there
are some things we found out that
you both should know.

BARBARA

What is it?

GRAYSON

Well, we think you're right. We
have good reason to believe Spencer
may have done this.

Barbara and Donald exchange glances. They don't appear to be very surprised.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

There were baseball bat marks on
Nathan's body. We brought him in
for questioning, and it turns out
his actions can't be accounted for
the night Nathan ran away. Now,
it's still not enough evidence to
convict Spencer, but we're gonna
get there, I promise.

Barbara and Donald sit in silence for a beat, taking in this information.

BARBARA

I can't say we're too surprised.
We knew after the incident, he
would end up doing something like
this eventually.

GRAYSON

I'm sorry, again.

DONALD

Is that all?

GRAYSON

Well, we're still interrogating
Spencer and searching for evidence.
So far, he hasn't been talking
much. We're working on it.

BARBARA

Where is he?

GRAYSON

We have him in a holding cell for
now, until we find enough evidence
to have him convicted.

(beat)

Would you like to see him?

A long silence.

BARBARA

Could we?

GRAYSON

If you choose. Right this way.

INT. HOLDING CELL AREA - DAY

The door creaks open. Barbara and Donald slowly make an entrance, Grayson right behind.

Spencer sits motionless behind the bars of his holding cell. Their entrance sparks movement in him. He looks up, genuinely surprised to see Barbara and Donald. They are both as serious-faced as ever.

SPENCER

What are you doing here?

BARBARA

We wanted to talk to you. Face to
face.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

So you can see the devastation
you've caused to my family. The
pain you've put us through, the
hole in our hearts.

SPENCER

(meekly)

I didn't kill Nathan.

BARBARA

You did! I have my certainty. You
hated my son. You tormented him
and made his life a living hell.
Then you beat him, for no reason at
all! I'm not surprised it's you.
You are an atrocious human being,
and you're finally getting the
treatment you deserve!

Spencer just sits there, taking it. A hint of a tear forms
in his eye.

Donald steps forward, hand on Barbara's shoulder, holding her
back.

DONALD

(quietly)

Barbara...

BARBARA

No! I won't. You deserve this. I
want you to feel more guilt than
you ever have before. I want you
to know the pain and turmoil we're
going through. I want for you,
sitting alone in your prison cell
years from now, to look back on
this and have the guilt and shame
eat you up from the inside, the
same way our grief is eating at us.

SPENCER

Stop it!

Spencer's screaming now, his emotion pouring out of him.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry! I'm sorry for beating
up Nathan, okay? I'm sorry. I
swear if I could go back, I
wouldn't have done it. I was
stupid, and I admit it was wrong.
I'm sorry. But I *didn't kill him!*
You have to believe me!

Barbara stares at him for a long time.

BARBARA

I'm sorry, but I don't. My indifference to you knows no bounds.

With that, she spins around and strides out of the room without another word. Donald stands there a moment, a quick glance at Spencer, who is in tears, then leaves as well.

Grayson turns, about to leave, but stops. His eyes linger on Spencer -- he sobs quietly alone in his cell.

INT. CAR - DAY

Donald and Barbara are driving down the road. Donald is at the wheel, Barbara in the passenger's seat. No one is talking. Donald then breaks the silence.

DONALD

That wasn't necessary.

BARBARA

What?

DONALD

Back there, all those things you said to him. I can't help but feel a little bad for the guy.

Barbara shoots Donald a look of disbelief.

BARBARA

Are you listening to yourself, Donald?

DONALD

I'm just saying, he's a kid for God's sake. He doesn't deserve this.

BARBARA

He *does* deserve this. How can you possibly have pity for him, after what he did to Nathan?

Donald is silent. Barbara sighs, gazes blankly out the window.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

We all agree this is what has to be done. He has to pay the price. This is about justice, for Nathan.

Donald sighs this time, but remains silent. He focuses on the road as he drives.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Grayson sits motionless at his desk. His eyes gaze out the window, pensive. The venetian blinds cast a stripe-like shadow effect across Grayson's face.

Wallace walks in. Grayson still stares out the window, concentration unbroken.

WALLACE

I'm heading out, just wondering what you're up to.

Grayson doesn't respond. Wallace is about to leave, but pauses.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

What are you thinking about?

GRAYSON

Let me ask you something, Wallace.

WALLACE

Shoot.

GRAYSON

If you did something really horrible or wrong, you would feel bad about it, right?

WALLACE

Uh... yeah.

GRAYSON

And if you truly do feel bad about it and you regret doing it, would you turn around and do it again?

WALLACE

(confused)

No. Why?

Grayson sighs, then rotates his chair around, face to face with Wallace.

GRAYSON

It's Spencer. He says he regrets what he did to Nathan, and that he didn't kill him.

WALLACE

Oh, come on, don't tell me you believe him. Don't fall for his tricks.

GRAYSON

Well, I'm not sure what to believe at this point.

WALLACE

A bully like that is not to be trusted, I would think.

GRAYSON

Mrs. and Mr. Adamson had a talk with Spencer earlier. I could see it in his eyes. He was guilty about what he did to Nathan. Think about it, Wallace. If he was so ashamed, why would he just suddenly murder Nathan?

WALLACE

You can't trust the guy, Grayson. All the evidence we have so far points to him, and it makes sense.

GRAYSON

I have a hunch about this.

WALLACE

A hunch? So you're going to put a lot of extra weight on your shoulders because you have a hunch?

GRAYSON

If it means finding the real murderer, then yes. That's a silly thing to say.

Grayson shoots him a strange look, then sighs.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I will not let them go through what I went through.

WALLACE

What did you go through?

GRAYSON

Audrey. My wife. They never found her killer.

He looks into Wallace's eyes. Wallace is silent.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Imagine coming home one day to find your wife dead. And then never knowing what happened to her. It's a horrible feeling.

(beat)

(MORE)

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I loved Audrey. Even though we started to drift apart towards the end, I still loved her with all my heart. I never wanted her dead.

(beat)

I don't want anyone to ever have to know that kind of pain. The pain of not knowing.

WALLACE

(beat)

I see.

GRAYSON

Good. Meanwhile, I'm gonna go find some answers.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Barbara and Donald sit at the dining table. Candles are lit, and freshly prepared food is on the table. They eat in silence for a while.

BARBARA

How do you like the food?

DONALD

Good. As always.

BARBARA

That didn't seem like much of a strong reaction.

DONALD

It's great. What do you want me to say?

Barbara gives him a quizzical look.

BARBARA

Are you okay, Donald? Something bothering you?

DONALD

I'm sure you already know the answer to that.

BARBARA

Look, I know Nathan is gone. It's been hard for both of us, but we have to move on.

Donald shoots Barbara an almost offended look.

DONALD

Has it been? Really?

BARBARA

Donald...

DONALD

Let me ask you something. Do you even care about Nathan?

BARBARA

Excuse me?

DONALD

Ever since that night, you've been acting as if you don't even care about what happened.

BARBARA

How dare you, I loved Nathan. I'm devastated that he's gone, just like you are.

DONALD

Wouldn't hurt to show it once in a while.

BARBARA

What do you want me to do? Burst into a blubbering mass of tears every time someone mentions his name?

DONALD

Why not? What's wrong with showing a just a tiny smidgen of emotion about your dead son? People will understand. You don't have to remain perfectly composed at all times.

Barbara solemnly looks away.

BARBARA

Our situation is precarious, you know that.

DONALD

And who's fault is that?

BARBARA

(quietly)

Please stop this. I don't want to talk about this any longer.

Donald sighs, calms down a little. He jabs his fork into his food and puts it in his mouth.

DONALD

Sure.

They are quiet now. They resume eating gracefully in silence.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Church proceedings are over. People stand around talking with each other.

Grayson enters. He looks around, spots Father Thomas near the back, talking with some people. Grayson walks up to him. He waits patiently until Father Thomas frees up.

GRAYSON

Father Thomas?

FATHER THOMAS

Yes?

GRAYSON

My name is Avery Grayson. Do you have a moment?

FATHER THOMAS

Yes. What is it?

GRAYSON

I'm actually part of an investigation. Can we talk somewhere in private?

FATHER THOMAS

Alright. Why don't you come into my office?

GRAYSON

Thank you.

They walk away.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the room is Barbara and Donald. Barbara walks off, chatting with her group of female friends, maintaining her picture perfect smile and persona. Donald just stares at her.

Anne, from the memorial service, walks up to Donald from behind.

ANNE

Donald?

Donald spins around to face her. Anne flashes an amicable grin.

DONALD

Anne.

ANNE

It's nice to see you here.

DONALD

Likewise.

ANNE

How are you holding up?

DONALD

I'm hanging in there. Thank you for your concern.

ANNE

It's nothing. I like to be nice to people.

DONALD

I can see that. You're a very nice woman.

He eyes her up and down. They smile flirtatiously at each other.

Their flirting is interrupted by Barbara.

BARBARA

Donald, we should get going now.

DONALD

Alright, baby.

They walk away together. But not before Donald turns back, gives a quick look at Anne. They smile.

INT. FATHER THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

Father Thomas and Grayson are seated around his desk.

FATHER THOMAS

What can I help you with?

GRAYSON

As you know, Nathan Adamson was murdered recently.

FATHER THOMAS

Ah, yes. Such a tragedy.

GRAYSON

Exactly. I'm currently investigating the murder. From what I understand, you had a talk with Nathan recently?

FATHER THOMAS

Yes, I did.

GRAYSON

If you would, I'd like to know what you both discussed. Who knows, there might be some useful information.

Father Thomas sighs, thinking, trying to recall.

FATHER THOMAS

What would you like to know?

GRAYSON

Just start from the beginning, please.

FATHER THOMAS

Well, it began quite like the way we are right now. Nathan sat in that chair. And we talked.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. FATHER THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY (ONE WEEK AGO)

Nathan and Father Thomas are seated across from each other.

FATHER THOMAS

So, your parents tell me you're going through some trouble.

NATHAN

I guess so.

Beat.

FATHER THOMAS

Okay, well they tell me you don't really talk much or communicate things to them. Can you tell me why?

NATHAN

I don't know. I just don't have much to talk about.

FATHER THOMAS

I'm sure there are plenty of things to talk about, Nathan. Talk about what goes on at school, or things you do with your friends.

NATHAN

Not much happens to me at school, and I don't have any friends.

FATHER THOMAS

Why not? You should talk to people, you'd be surprised there are a lot of people willing to be your friend.

NATHAN

I doubt it. I always get picked on and bullied at school. Nobody cares about me enough to be my friend.

FATHER THOMAS

Why don't you talk about that with your parents. It's something they should know.

NATHAN

I don't want them to know. They already think I'm weird. Especially my mom. She keeps yelling at me to sit up straight, or smile or whatever. It gets on my nerves.

(beat)

I just wish they would leave me alone sometimes. They care more about looking nice and perfect than they do about me.

(beat)

I feel like I'm trapped. With all the troubles at school, I just want nothing more than a comforting home to return to. But it's not. Sometimes I feel like I just want to run away and free myself from them.

Nathan sighs.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Please don't tell them that. Actually, could you not tell them about anything we talk about in here?

FATHER THOMAS

Are you sure? They're trying to help you, Nathan. I just want you to know that. If they know what's going on with you, it might help them to connect with you more.

NATHAN

That's the thing. I don't want them to think there's something wrong with me. I just want them to think I'm normal with normal feelings.

FATHER THOMAS

I understand. If that's what you really want, I won't say anything to your parents.

NATHAN

Thank you, Father.

He sighs again.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I don't know why I'm like this. Everyone thinks I'm strange, and I can't help it. Nothing I can do will change what they think of me. Even my parents.

FATHER THOMAS

Don't worry about how other people see you. Just be friendly and be yourself, and people will see you are a great person. You know, I speak to many kids who are bullied at school. I always tell them the same thing. Don't let them see that you are bothered by it. Stand up to them. Bullies take pleasure in seeing kids suffer. If they see that you don't suffer, they'll leave you alone.

NATHAN

I hear that all the time. But it doesn't work. I've ignored people before, but they still pick on me. I've never done anything to Spencer. I've never spoken to him in my life, but he still beat me up.

Beat.

FATHER THOMAS

Let's talk about that.

NATHAN

What's there to talk about? He makes fun of me and bullies me. So he attacked me.

FATHER THOMAS

How has it affected you? Has it made you any stronger?

Nathan almost laughs.

NATHAN

If anything, it made me weaker. I never thought anything like that would happen to me. But it did. It killed me to know that someone would want to beat me up.

He sighs.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

If Spencer could beat me up for no reason, I just know. He's going to kill me one day. I know it.

Nathan and Father Thomas stare at each other for a long silence.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. FATHER THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

We're back with Grayson and Father Thomas. They sit across from each other, Grayson pondering.

FATHER THOMAS

That's the gist of it.

GRAYSON

He really thought Spencer would end up killing him?

FATHER THOMAS

That's what he said to me.

GRAYSON

I guess he thought right...

Grayson stares ahead blankly in deep thought.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Grayson sits at his desk, pensive.

GRAYSON
So, what do you think?

Wallace is standing beside his desk.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
We definitely have a reason why
Nathan ran away. I'm not certain
about Spencer, but it sure makes
sense.

Wallace smiles at Grayson, a sort of wink in his eyes.

WALLACE
Not until you hear this.

GRAYSON
What did you find out?

WALLACE
I did some extensive research on
the bullet that was found in
Nathan's body, and I was able to
match the bullet to this gun.

He places a photo of a 1950's REVOLVER on the desk before
Grayson.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
A Smith & Wesson.

Grayson picks up the photo, studies it curiously.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
We searched through Spencer's home,
and found no trace of any gun like
this one. Even more yet, we looked
through their records -- Spencer's
family isn't recorded to have ever
purchased a gun of any kind.

Grayson looks up at Wallace.

GRAYSON
Do you think he could have borrowed
the gun from someone else?

WALLACE
Way ahead of you, Grayson. I
thought of that as well, so I took
the liberty of searching through
gun records for the families of
Spencer's friends, and they don't
have any record of purchasing this
specific model.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Of course, we can't be sure that Spencer didn't borrow a gun from somebody else or that it even could've been stolen.

Grayson ponders this for a moment.

GRAYSON

What would he do with the gun once the dirty work was over? He obviously didn't take it home with him. There's a good chance he would have disposed of the gun somewhere, somehow.

WALLACE

That's true. However, as of right now, we haven't located the gun. *If* it were disposed of.

GRAYSON

Hmm. This sounds like a start. Good work. I guess the question now is which is more likely? Spencer obtaining a gun without anyone knowing, or Spencer telling the truth about not murdering Nathan.

Wallace just shrugs.

GRAYSON

Didn't think so.

They smile jokingly towards one another. Wallace heads towards the door.

WALLACE

I'll let you know about any new developments.

GRAYSON

Good. Now get outta here.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY STREET - NIGHT

Grayson strolls down the sidewalk as RAIN falls in heavy sheets from the sky. He's got his suit and fedora donned, and holds an umbrella over his head. Steam rises out of vents on the ground.

A taxi drives away down the street. A MAN walks along the sidewalk towards Grayson. He's currently cloaked in the shadowy darkness.

He walks closer, and passes Grayson without a look at him. Grayson catches a swift glimpse. It's DONALD.

Grayson stops in his tracks, does a double take. He watches as Donald walks away from him. Suspicion aroused, Grayson turns and follows.

He keeps a safe distance behind Donald as he follows stealthily. Donald rushes across the street towards an apartment building. He arrives at the front door and stops.

Grayson quickly backs up into the shadows just as Donald turns his head, watching very conspicuously behind him. Grayson eyes him suspiciously.

The coast is clear. Donald opens the door to the apartment building and enters. Grayson just a step behind. He walks up to the building and carefully follows him inside.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Grayson shakes off his umbrella and scans the room. Other than a few PEOPLE lounging and the RECEPTIONIST behind the desk, the room is empty. Donald is nowhere in sight.

Grayson paces about the room a bit more, but Donald is gone. He sighs in frustration.

INT. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A door. On the glass read the words "Roger Davis - Private Investigator". Grayson opens it and walks into the office.

Sitting behind the desk smoking a cigar is ROGER DAVIS (50). He wears a shiny brown suit and fedora, reading a newspaper. He looks up and smiles at the sight of Grayson.

ROGER

Avery Grayson.

GRAYSON

Roger Davis. Good to see you.

Roger stands and they shake hands. Then they sit.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I have a favor to ask of you.

ROGER

Why else would you have come all the way over here?

GRAYSON

There's someone I want you to... investigate.

ROGER

You're a detective, ain't that your job?

GRAYSON

You're the best private investigator I know. And you've been out of a job for how long now? You'd be doing yourself a favor, as well as mine.

ROGER

Alright, alright. Just tell me who the lucky person is.

GRAYSON

Donald Adamson.

He shows Roger a photo of Donald. Roger examines it closely.

ROGER

Hmm... You never asked me to follow him before, did you?

GRAYSON

No. Why?

ROGER

He looks familiar. Must be confusing him for someone else. Why him?

GRAYSON

I'm investigating his son's murder. It seems our prime suspect is in the clear, and since then I've been getting a mysterious vibe from these people. Late last night, I saw Donald walking alone. I followed him to an apartment complex before I lost him. It could be nothing at all, but still. I can't shake the feeling he might be up to something.

ROGER

Sounds good enough for me. I take payment up-front.

Grayson smiles, gets out his checkbook and starts scribbling down numbers.

GRAYSON

I'll pay you the rest once I see the photos. How soon will I hear from you?

ROGER

How long was I out of a job again?

GRAYSON

Then I won't expect any delay.

He rips the check from his checkbook, forks it over to Roger.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY STREET - NIGHT

Donald walks swiftly and determinedly down the sidewalk into the night. Roger emerges from the shadows behind Donald and carefully stalks him.

Donald continues on towards the same apartment building. The same conspicuous look of caution behind him, then he enters.

Roger observes from a distance. Through the windows, he sees Donald stroll down a hallway, then knocks on a nearby door. Roger rushes over into the adjacent alley and crouches beneath the window right below the room, peering into the glass, camera at the ready.

Roger sees a WOMAN from behind as she goes up to the door and opens it. Donald stands in the doorway, a big grin on his face.

DONALD

Hello.

WOMAN

Hello, Donald.

Donald slams the door shut behind him, grabs the woman in his arms and plants a big kiss on her lips.

As they pull away, the woman turns her head in a way so that it can be seen through the window -- the woman is ANNE. They smile and kiss again.

Roger watches in shock and awe, and begins snapping photos.

INT. ANNE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Donald sits on the edge of the bed, getting dressed. Anne sits up from the bed wrapped in the sheets and embraces Donald.

ANNE

You are welcome. Glad to be of service.

Donald just looks at her and smiles.

DONALD

I should go.

ANNE

So soon?

DONALD

Barbara will be wondering where I am.

ANNE

Oh. Barbara.

DONALD

She can't know about this.

ANNE

Oh, of course. Definitely.

DONALD

She'd kill me if she knew about us.

ANNE

Is that so? She always seemed like such a lovely person.

DONALD

Oh, she's far from it. That's just a mask she puts on for everyone to see, but in reality, she's not nearly as lovely as she seems. Trust me.

Anne smiles. Sits up on the bed.

ANNE

I see. You must be quite the daredevil, then.

DONALD

I know. I must be crazy to do this to Barbara, of all people.

ANNE

It's understandable, Donald. Don't feel bad. You're going through so much, especially since you lost your son. If your own wife isn't going to comfort you, I'd be happy to do the job.

Donald smiles.

ANNE (CONT'D)

And not to mention -- and forgive me for saying this, but from what you said, Barbara... how should I put this? She's a shrew.

Donald looks into her eyes and grins.

DONALD

You really are a nice woman.

Anne smiles alluringly back at him.

ANNE

I try.

Donald stands up.

DONALD

I'm gonna want more of where that
came from the next time I see you.

ANNE

Absolutely.

They smile flirtatiously one last time, then Donald leaves.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Roger drops a manila envelope on Grayson's desk. Grayson
removes a cigarette from his lips and stares at it.

ROGER

Here you are. Your photos.

Grayson grabs the envelope and opens it.

GRAYSON

So was there anything going on?

ROGER

Oh, there was definitely something
going on alright.

Grayson removes the photographs from the envelope, and his
eyes widen at the result. He scans through photo after photo
of Donald and Anne kissing.

GRAYSON

So I was right in that respect.

(continues perusing the
photos)

I guess I was wrong about them.
This was not what I was expecting.
I never realized he was unhappy
enough with Barbara to go behind
her back like this.

ROGER

Take it from me, over twenty years
of private investigating. People
are never the way they seem.

GRAYSON
You got that right.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - LATER

Grayson walks briskly down a hallway, an INVESTIGATOR next to him trying to keep up.

INVESTIGATOR
It's always the same thing, sir.
We're not getting anything out of
him.

GRAYSON
He keep denying that he did it?

INVESTIGATOR
Yes, sir. He also claims he's
never seen the gun, and never even
used a gun before in his life.

Grayson sighs.

GRAYSON
At which point do you think we'll
believe he's telling the truth?

INVESTIGATOR
When you hear this. The coroner
was able to estimate the time of
death to approximately one week
ago, on the same night Nathan ran
away. If that's accurate, and if
Spencer is telling the truth, that
would mean he was at home when
Nathan was killed.

GRAYSON
Can you prove it?

INVESTIGATOR
Sort of. We interviewed Spencer's
neighbors. One of them admitted to
knocking on Spencer's door
complaining about the noise. They
said it was around 9 PM. They also
observed that Spencer was a bit
tipsy upon answering the door,
which matches Spencer's statements.

GRAYSON
Looks like he got his alibi.

INVESTIGATOR

Besides that, however, we still can't hold Spencer accountable for anything that happened after that. For all we know, he still could have left his home and done who knows what.

They arrive at the door to Grayson's office. Wallace is standing there waiting.

GRAYSON

What have you got?

WALLACE

The autopsy report, finally.

GRAYSON

Alright. Come in.

He opens the door to his office, and they enter.

GRAYSON

Wallace, hit me with it.

WALLACE

So, you know how we all assumed Nathan's death was by gunshot?

GRAYSON

It wasn't?

WALLACE

Where do you think I'm going with this? Of course.

Wallace pulls out an envelope with the autopsy report inside, hands it to Grayson, who begins perusing it.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

According to the people who performed the autopsy, the bullet only came into contact with superficial tissue, causing no damage to any underlying organs.

GRAYSON

(looks up)
A flesh wound?

WALLACE

That's right. The gunshot wasn't the cause of Nathan's death. So how did he die?

Grayson looks back down at the autopsy report.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Nathan's lungs were swollen, due to lack of oxygen. There was also signs of hemorrhaging in his eyes and neck. You remember the bruises around Nathan's neck?

GRAYSON

(in surprise)

It was asphyxiation.

WALLACE

Someone had strangled Nathan to death.

GRAYSON

Why would someone strangle someone to death, then shoot him?

WALLACE

It could've been the other way around. Obviously shooting him once wasn't enough.

GRAYSON

If somebody shot him and it didn't kill him, why would he strangle him instead? He's already got the gun in his hand, just pull the trigger again. Simple.

WALLACE

Maybe he ran out of bullets.

GRAYSON

That wouldn't make any sense either. The gun that was used was a revolver, correct? No one in their right mind would only load one bullet into a revolver and hope that it fires on the first shot. It'd be more like a game of roulette.

WALLACE

Just saying, it makes more sense than shooting someone after they were already strangled to death.

GRAYSON

None of this makes any sense.

Grayson sighs, confused.

WALLACE

(beat)

You still think Spencer did it?

GRAYSON

I'm not sure. There's something about him, though. I don't think he could have done this.

WALLACE

Going with your hunch?

Grayson looks up at Wallace and smiles.

GRAYSON

My hunch is never wrong, Wallace. You'll see.

INT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

A loud KNOCK on the door. Barbara rushes over and opens it. It's Grayson.

BARBARA

Mr. Grayson. What a surprise. Can I help you?

GRAYSON

Yes. There are just some things regarding this case I would like to discuss.

BARBARA

Of course, come in.

Barbara welcomes Grayson inside, and closes the door behind her.

BARBARA

I apologize for the mess. You caught me by surprise. I wasn't prepared for any guests.

Grayson stares at the immaculate room around him and smirks.

GRAYSON

That's quite alright. Is Mr. Adamson present?

BARBARA

Not at the moment, I'm afraid.

GRAYSON

We'll just discuss this one-on-one.

They move towards the davenport and sit.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

What is it you want to discuss?

Grayson lets out a heavy sigh.

GRAYSON

I know it might pain you to hear,
but I have a feeling Spencer is
innocent.

BARBARA

(shocked)

What are you talking about? That's
impossible! How do you know that?

GRAYSON

The main thing we know right now is
that the gun that was used on
Nathan had never been purchased by
Spencer or his family. In fact,
they aren't even licensed to bear
arms.

BARBARA

Well, he must have borrowed someone
else's.

GRAYSON

It's possible, but it's not likely.
Spencer also claimed he had never
seen or used a gun before.

BARBARA

He's a lying, scheming, conniving
monster. How can you possibly
believe him? Spencer must have
killed Nathan. I know it.

GRAYSON

With all due respect, Mrs. Adamson,
your feelings towards Spencer are
getting in the way.

BARBARA

What about the baseball bat
markings? The shoe prints?

GRAYSON

It's most likely just coincidental.
It could have been anyone.
Besides, we were also able to
confirm through the testimony of
his neighbors that Spencer was at
home on the night Nathan died.

Barbara sighs, calming down slightly.

BARBARA

Who else could have possibly done this? Who else would want to hurt my son?

GRAYSON

Honestly, I don't know. Probably someone who's not very bright, I'm guessing.

BARBARA

Why do you say that?

GRAYSON

Apparently the gunshot wasn't the cause of Nathan's death. It was only a flesh wound. The bullet only hit superficial tissue and caused no major harm to his body, so it's highly unlikely the gunshot killed him.

There's a look of horror washed over Barbara's face as she listens. Her hand slowly moves to cover her agape mouth.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

The true cause of Nathan's death was asphyxiation. Strangulation.

BARBARA

That's... quite a surprise.

She tries her best to keep it together and remain composed. Barbara takes a few calming breaths.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

How do you know that?

GRAYSON

Those were the results of the autopsy we performed on Nathan.

BARBARA

You performed an autopsy? How come I never knew about this?

GRAYSON

We have the right to perform an autopsy, especially when the causes of death are unclear. Besides...

Grayson leans forward, looks into Barbara's eyes.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

...I thought you wanted to bring justice to your son and find out who killed him. You do, don't you?

BARBARA

Yes, I do.

GRAYSON

Well, this is going to help us do that. I don't understand why you're so upset.

BARBARA

I do, I want whoever did this to be caught and punished. It's just... I wanted to prepare a proper burial for him. A traditional funeral.

GRAYSON

You don't have to worry about that. The bodies are always reassembled and prepared for the funeral home. You can still have the funeral you want.

Barbara just stares at him, a little embarrassed.

BARBARA

Oh. Never mind, then.

Grayson looks at her curiously.

BARBARA

So... are you certain Spencer isn't the murderer?

GRAYSON

I can't be completely certain until we have concrete proof, but I have strong reason to believe so, yes.

BARBARA

Okay.

GRAYSON

I'll keep you posted. If you find out anything, don't hesitate to contact me.

Barbara nods and smiles politely.

BARBARA

Of course.

Grayson stands and walks towards the door. A worried look returns to Barbara's face. Grayson stops suddenly, then turns around.

GRAYSON

One more thing.

He reaches inside his coat and retrieves a manila envelope.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I've thought long and hard about whether or not I should give this to you. The last thing I want to do is meddle with your personal life, but I figured you'd want to know the truth. I know I would.

Grayson hands Barbara the envelope. She says nothing, just stares at him, confused.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Good day.

He walks out the door.

INT. ANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

We're once again in Anne's palatial bedroom. Donald sits on the edge of the bed getting dressed. Anne's laying on the bed, wrapped in the sheets. She gently places her arm on Donald's.

ANNE

How are you, Donald? Talk to me.

DONALD

Could be better.

ANNE

What did she do this time?

Donald chuckles.

DONALD

Oh, you know. Barbara's just Barbara.

ANNE

You sound like you're part of a very happy marriage.

DONALD

I can assure you, it's not.

Anne sits up, positions herself next to Donald.

ANNE

Why do you love her? Why are you
still with her?

Donald sighs. He thinks to himself for a beat.

DONALD

When I first met Barbara... she was
perfect. She *is* perfect. And
that's precisely why I don't love
her anymore. And after Nathan
died, things just started to fall
apart.

ANNE

Why? What happened?

Donald hesitates.

DONALD

I can't... talk about this with
you.

ANNE

Okay, well if there's anything you
want to discuss, I'm here for you.

Donald looks into her eyes and smiles.

DONALD

That's why I love you, baby.

Anne smiles right back at him, flattered.

ANNE

I love you too.

They embrace and kiss passionately.

DONALD

Why are you so nice to me?

ANNE

Why shouldn't I be?

DONALD

Because I'm off-limits. With a
crazy woman watching over me like a
hawk.

ANNE

Well, that never stopped you, did
it?

DONALD

Just answer the question. I'm curious.

ANNE

What's not to like? You're handsome, you have a nice job, nice house, nice family. You're loaded. In more ways than one.

She smiles naughtily, and they both laugh.

ANNE (CONT'D)

You're a good person. Barbara would probably think differently if she saw us right now, but despite that, you really are a kind man with a good heart. And that's why I love you.

Donald stares ahead blankly. He stands suddenly, walks over to a nearby mirror. Gazes into his reflection.

ANNE

What's wrong? Most people would be thrilled to hear that.

DONALD

I'm not a good person.

ANNE

Why do you say that?

DONALD

I'm a terrible person. I've done something horrible. I can never forgive myself.

ANNE

(brushing it off)

Oh, come on, Donald. What Barbara doesn't know won't hurt her. Now come back here.

DONALD

I'm not talking about this.

ANNE

(confused)

Well, what are you talking about?

He starts hesitating again.

DONALD

I don't know if I can tell you.
You'll never want to speak to me
again.

ANNE

You're scaring me. What is it?
You can trust me.

DONALD

Can I? Trust you?

ANNE

Of course you can.

Donald turns around to face her. He walks back to the bed
and sits down. He looks at Anne dead in the eye.

DONALD

No one can know what I'm about to
tell you, understand?

ANNE

I'm all ears.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Grayson raps lightly on the door, then enters. He balances a
cigarette between his lips. Roger works at his desk and
looks up as Grayson walks in.

ROGER

I don't want that in my office.

Grayson raises an eyebrow, points towards an empty carton of
cigarettes on his desk.

GRAYSON

Those yours?

ROGER

Only I can smoke in my office.

Grayson takes out a pack from his coat, holds out a cigarette
towards Roger, who takes it from him.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I guess I can bend the rules a bit.
For an old friend.

They smile. Grayson sits down, takes out a lighter and
lights Roger's cigarette.

GRAYSON

How about you bend a little more rules for me? Regarding payment? For an old friend.

ROGER

No can do. I'm gonna need that.

GRAYSON

Worth a shot.

He takes out his checkbook and starts writing.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

This is what I get for being a little too suspicious.

Grayson rips the check out and hands it to Roger.

ROGER

And this is what I get. I love my job.

Grayson just rolls his eyes. Roger pockets the check. He stands up, picks up a stack of folders from his desk and walks over to a nearby cabinet and opens it. Organized inside are shelf after shelf of manila folders filled with documents and folders of past clients.

Roger struggles to squeeze in the new collection into the existing ones. In his carelessness, he inadvertently pulls out a handful of them and they spill out of the cabinet all over the floor. Roger sighs in frustration.

GRAYSON

And in your twenty years, you've never been caught? Unbelievable.

ROGER

I'm not on the job here, now help me.

He stoops down and starts picking up the mess. Grayson walks over. The contents of all the folders have spilled out as well, scandalous photo after photo strewn all over the carpet.

Grayson crouches down and starts collecting the photos into a pile, stacking them slowly one at a time. Something catches his eye -- he freezes.

A photo, peeking slightly out of a manila folder, is within reach. Grayson pulls it out, his eyes widen in pure shock.

GRAYSON
Where did you get this?

ROGER
Just one of my clients.

Grayson shoves the photo in his face.

GRAYSON
Where did you get this?!

ROGER
What are you talking about?
Someone paid me to take them and I
did. Why? Who is that?

Grayson points at the WOMAN in the photo. She's in the midst of passion, a MAN, whose face is turned away, fondling her.

GRAYSON
She's my wife. That's Audrey,
that's my wife! When did you take
this? Who's the man in the photo?
Who paid you to take this?

ROGER
(flustered)
I don't know! I've had hundreds of
clients, you expect me to remember
each one?

GRAYSON
Where are the rest of them?

Roger motions towards the mess on the floor.

ROGER
I don't know, wanna help me look
for them?

Grayson sighs in exasperation. He grabs the folder the photo was originally in and heads for the door.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Hey, where are you going with that?

Grayson slams the door shut as he leaves. He stops in the hallway, examines the folder. Etched on the folder tab is the name: "Patricia Schaeffer".

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Grayson stands at his desk, hastily getting his things together. Wallace walks into the office.

GRAYSON
Can't talk now. I have to go.

WALLACE
You have a lead? Who?

GRAYSON
Sort of.

He hands Wallace a sheet of paper. Wallace scans it.

WALLACE
Patricia Schaeffer? What does she
have to do with anything?

GRAYSON
I don't know, that's what I'm going
to find out.

WALLACE
Her last known residence was
fifteen years ago, all the way on
the other side of town.

GRAYSON
Look, Wallace. I just found out
Audrey may have been having an
affair when we were together. This
Patricia paid a private detective
to spy on her. If she has any
information about my wife, I need
to know! It's my wife, dammit!

WALLACE
You're on a case, Grayson. Get
your priorities straight.

Grayson ignores him, rushes to the door.

GRAYSON
It's my wife.

He marches out. Wallace sighs in defeat.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Grayson's car pulls up to a house. It's relatively nice and decorated. He gets out of the car. He stares at the house, down to a paper in his hand, and back. He walks up to the front door and knocks.

There's no answer. He sighs. CAROL STRAUSS (64), an elderly woman with a friendly smile, walks up to the fence from the house next-door.

CAROL
They're not home, I'm afraid.

Grayson looks at her.

GRAYSON
Oh. Thank you.

CAROL
I'm Carol Strauss. May I help you?

He approaches the fence.

GRAYSON
I'm Avery Grayson. Do you by any chance know Patricia Schaeffer? She used to live in this house.

CAROL
(delighted)
Oh, the Schaeffers! Of course I know them.

GRAYSON
You do?

CAROL
Oh yes, Patricia and her husband Martin. Everyone called him Marty. They were such a lovely bunch. No children, though they always dreamed of having some.

GRAYSON
Martin, huh? Do you know if there's any way I can contact them?

CAROL
Unfortunately I don't. They moved away suddenly many years ago. I haven't heard from them since. Such a shame.

GRAYSON
(muttering)
You're right about that.

CAROL
Would you like to come inside? I can make some tea, and I can tell you more about them if you'd like.

GRAYSON
That would be great, thank you.

Carol motions him towards her home.

CAROL
Come on in.

INT. CAROL'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carol and Grayson sit on the couch around a coffee table, chatting and sipping tea.

CAROL
They really were wonderful neighbors. I've known them for years before they moved. Patricia especially was such a fabulous cook.

GRAYSON
Is that so?

CAROL
Of course. I'd do anything for just one more bite of her strawberry rhubarb pie.

Grayson chuckles. They take a sip of tea.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Everyone loved her cooking.
Everyone loved *her*.

GRAYSON
Even Martin?

Carol shoots Grayson a strange, confused look.

CAROL
Especially Martin. Why do you say that?

GRAYSON
(under his breath)
No particular reason.

CAROL
May I ask, what makes you so interested in the Schaeffers?

GRAYSON
(beat)
I just found out there may have been some sort of connection between them and my late wife.

CAROL

What kind of connection?

GRAYSON

A... romantic connection.

CAROL

I see. I'm shocked, to be honest. They seemed incredibly happy together. I never would have known about any affair.

Grayson lets out a hopeless sigh.

GRAYSON

I never thought Audrey would do this to me. We had a little falling out towards the end, we said some things we didn't mean. But I never thought she'd betray me like that. I had no idea.

CAROL

I'm sorry.

GRAYSON

This was about fifteen or sixteen years ago, around the time my wife was killed. I discovered some photos of her taken by a private investigator. The client was Patricia, so I assume the man in the photograph was Martin. That's why I'm here. To get some answers.

He reaches inside his coat. He pulls out a folder and opens it. It's the photo of Donald and Anne -- he pulled it out by mistake. He places it down on the coffee table and starts fumbling around in his coat again. Carol peers at the photo on the table.

CAROL

Your wife is beautiful.

GRAYSON

I'm sorry, that's not my wife. That's a separate case, excuse me.

He pulls out the correct photo of Audrey from his coat.

CAROL

What do you mean? That's Marty.

Grayson freezes.

GRAYSON
 (confused)
 What?

CAROL
 That's him. That's Martin
 Schaeffer.

She points firmly at Donald in the photo of him fondling Anne. Grayson just stares at her in mixed awe and confusion.

GRAYSON
 What are you talking about? That
 can't be him.

CAROL
 Of course it is. I've known him
 for years. I'd recognize his face
 anywhere.

Grayson holds up the photo of Audrey. His eyes dart back and forth between the different photos. The formerly unrecognizable man suddenly begins to resemble Donald.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Donald and Anne sit on the edge of the bed. There's an ashamed look on Donald's face, and Anne looks quite speechless, as if she just learned some terrible news.

DONALD
 Please. Say something.

ANNE
 I... I don't know what to say.

DONALD
 I don't suppose you ever want to
 talk to me again?

Anne places a reassuring hand on Donald's shoulder.

ANNE
 Of course not. I still care about
 you. I just don't know what to
 make of this.

DONALD
 Me neither. Ever since then, I
 can't think, I can't sleep...

ANNE
 It's okay, it's not your fault.
 You didn't do anything wrong.

DONALD

Are you deaf? Or do you have a hearing problem? Because I know you're not that old, baby. Did you listen to anything I told you?

Anne just keeps quiet.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I told you, didn't I? I'm a horrible person, and I did a horrible thing. I actually judge you for not leaving me.

A tiny smile forms on Anne's face.

ANNE

I would never. You aren't a horrible person, Donald. And the fact that you feel so much guilt proves that.

They sit in silence for a long beat.

ANNE

She made you do this, didn't she? Barbara.

Another beat. Donald doesn't say anything.

ANNE (CONT'D)

It amazes me that you still continue to put up with her insanity.

DONALD

What do you want me to do? If I could go back, I never would have done it.

ANNE

You have to get away from her, Donald. Move on, and don't look back.

DONALD

It's not that easy, Anne. Do you know what would happen if this were to come out?

ANNE

No one else has to find out.

DONALD

How do you expect to go about that?

ANNE

You know Barbara more than anyone.
And you know what would devastate
her more than anything? If this
were to come out.

DONALD

Where are you going with this?

ANNE

Blackmail.

Donald is quiet, staring into her eyes.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Tell her you'll go to the police if
she doesn't do what you say.

DONALD

I can't do that. I'm just as
liable as she. If I go to the
police, I could be locked away for
a long time.

ANNE

That's not going to happen. You
know why? I know for certain
Barbara will go to great lengths to
keep you quiet. Even if it means
you leaving her forever.

Donald sits stiffly, mulling over Anne's words. A smirk
gradually begins to form on his face.

DONALD

You're right.

ANNE

I told you, didn't I?

Donald turns and gazes passionately into Anne's gleaming eyes
and grins.

DONALD

I love you.

He grabs her and kisses her on the lips.

ANNE

I love you too, Donald.

They kiss again, then embrace tightly.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Barbara sits motionless on the davenport, her eyes stare
blankly ahead. The door opens and Donald walks in.

BARBARA

There you are. I was wondering where you've been. But then I realized I already knew.

Donald freezes, rigid.

DONALD

What do you mean?

Barbara stands up and tosses a photo of Donald and Anne together onto the table. Donald is silent, his face reddens with shame.

BARBARA

How could you do this to me again? Don't you ever learn?

DONALD

Where did you get those?

BARBARA

That doesn't matter. What matters is why you're with that tramp! Anne Phyllis?! We go to church together, for God's sake.

Donald sighs, dejected, but then steps up to match her intensity.

DONALD

You really want to know why? I've had enough of you. That's why. I don't love you anymore, and I'm leaving you. There, I said it. I didn't expect to tell you that so soon. I guess it's just a stroke of luck, for me anyway.

Barbara's mouth is agape, and her eyes start to water.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Don't worry about me, I won't be lonely without you.

BARBARA

I can't believe you would betray me like this. Especially with all that's going on with Nathan and the investigators.

DONALD

Why, they find out anything new?

BARBARA

Grayson visited earlier today. He said they didn't think Spencer killed Nathan. He said they didn't have much reason to believe Spencer would have done it. They have no record of Spencer or his family owning a gun.

(beat)

It get's worse. They know it wasn't the gunshot that killed him.

Donald looks at her in surprise. He lets out a heavy sigh.

DONALD

I told you. It was only a matter of time.

BARBARA

How can you be this calm?! These people are not idiots! What if... what if they find out what we did?

DONALD

I told you, Barbara. I told you it never would have worked.

BARBARA

Please, this is not the time...

DONALD

No, it's the perfect time! This is all your fault. This is all because of you. It was one-hundred percent your idea!

BARBARA

Donald, please.

He ignores her, continuing relentlessly.

DONALD

We wouldn't be in this situation if it weren't for you. You just dug both of us into a deeper hole, and now you can't get out. I told you it would end this way.

BARBARA

Stop saying that! You're just as accountable as me.

Donald scoffs at her.

DONALD

Don't you try to pin the blame on me. This was all your doing.

BARBARA

Then why did you do it? Huh, Donald? Why?

DONALD

Because I was stupid enough to let you take control of me. But I learned my lesson. You're just not worth the trouble. I've had it with you. You have no idea how good it feels to say that after all these years together, I'm finally leaving you.

Barbara gasps, heartbroken, tears flowing.

BARBARA

You can't be serious.

DONALD

Serious as I'll ever be.

BARBARA

How could you betray me again? Especially now, when I need you more than ever?

DONALD

It was easy. You have no feelings for me to hurt.

Barbara stares, open-mouthed, in disbelief. She begins sobbing quietly.

BARBARA

Why would you say such a thing? Of course I have feelings.

DONALD

Don't kid yourself, baby. You don't, and you never have. None of this would have happened if you had loved and cared for Nathan.

This irks Barbara, and she blows up at him.

BARBARA

How dare you! I did love my son!

DONALD

Then why did you do it? Answer that question for me, baby.

BARBARA

I did it for you! For me! For all of us!

DONALD

That's nonsense. You did it for you, and you only. You selfish woman. Spencer was never responsible for Nathan's death. It was you! It was you all along.

Barbara breaks down, sobbing uncontrollably.

BARBARA

Stop...

DONALD

It's true. I mean it. With all my heart.

(beat)

I'm going now. And you're gonna let me. Because if you don't, I'll spill everything to the police.

BARBARA

You wouldn't dare.

DONALD

You'd be surprised. Goodbye, Barbara.

Donald turns around. He takes a few steps towards the door... then:

BARBARA

Don't walk away from me.

Donald turns to face Barbara, and he freezes. She's standing there with a GUN in her hand, the barrel pointed straight at him. His eyes go from the gun, to Barbara, and back.

DONALD

Don't you point that thing at me! I never want to see that ever again, you hear me? Not after what happened.

The gun remains pointed at Donald, her hand shaking, tears flowing down her face. Her voice quivers as she speaks.

BARBARA

Don't do this, Donald. Please. Don't betray me like this. I need you. We can be happy again. Remember how perfect we used to be?

DONALD

You're right. I can be happy.
Just not with you. We were never
truly happy. I fooled you too,
didn't I?

BARBARA

(sobbing)

Don't do this, please. I'm begging
you.

DONALD

I already fell for your begging
before. I'm not making that
mistake again.

Barbara gazes fixedly at him with solemn, glistening eyes.
She doesn't move or speak, only her quivering hand. Donald
takes a few steps backward towards the door.

DONALD (CONT'D)

If you're going to shoot me, you'd
better do it now.

He inches closer and closer to the door. Barbara's hand is
shaking, tears streaming, her finger on the trigger... Donald
reaches the door, his hand on the doorknob. He opens it
slowly.

DONALD

Goodbye, Barbara.

Donald turns and slips out the door and closes it. He's
gone. Barbara lowers the gun as she desperately tries to
control her sobs.

She stands there quietly for a moment. Then she eyes down
conspicuously at the gun in her hand.

INT. ANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Furious KNOCKING on the door. Anne opens it. It's Donald.

ANNE

Donald! What is it, what happened?

DONALD

Come with me. Let's go away
together. Right now.

Anne's a little taken aback.

ANNE

Right now?

DONALD

Yes. Barbara knows. I told her everything. I'm leaving her. For you. What do you say?

Anne smiles, looking up at Donald. How can she resist?

ANNE

Yes. I will.

Donald pulls Anne up close to him in a tight embrace. She looks up at him, he looks down at her into each others' eyes.

DONALD

It'll be just you and me, baby.

They kiss passionately.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Donald is driving a car down a desolate road. Anne sits beside him in the passenger's seat.

ANNE

Where are we going?

DONALD

I don't know yet.

ANNE

This is great. No where to live, no clue where we're going, driving around aimlessly into the night. It's just like I've always dreamed.

They smile and laugh.

DONALD

We'll have each other, at least.

ANNE

Of course.

DONALD

There is one thing, though, that I've already got figured out.

ANNE

And what is that?

DONALD

What we're going to do once we get there.

They share a naughty smile.

ANNE

Slow down, Donald, I'd say you're driving a little too fast.

DONALD

Am I?

ANNE

The speed limit's forty-five. You're going about ninety.

DONALD

Well, then come over here and give me a ticket.

ANNE

Maybe I will.

They both exchange dirty smiles. Donald focuses back on the road.

Something suddenly catches his attention. Donald squints to see through the black night.

DONALD

What is that?

A car is parked in the middle of the road, far into the distance. It rises out of the darkness, like a ghostly apparition, as they approach. Donald and Anne watch it curiously, trying to get a good view.

Suddenly, a GUNSHOT cuts through the night air. Both of them jerk up startled.

Two more GUNSHOTS RING OUT. Donald attempts to swerve the car chaotically out of their path. Tires scrape and screech against the road. Anne is screaming.

A final GUNSHOT fires. It strikes the windshield, penetrating it, and hitting Donald. He lets out a grunt, then slumps over the wheel.

ANNE

(hysterical)

Donald!

The car swerves uncontrollably. Anne reaches over for the wheel and desperately tries to take control of the car. She lets out one final ear-splitting scream...

The car careens off the road and plunges into the ditch next to it.

The car sits motionless, upside-down, by the side of the road in the still of night, engines steaming. Everything is silent.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

It's a crisp, sunny day. Ambulances and police cars have flocked around the wreckage of the car. Photographer's light bulbs flash repeatedly over one another.

A group of MEDICS roll a stretcher towards the ambulance. Anne lay unconscious on the stretcher. Her body is covered with cuts and bruises.

Grayson stands watch from a distance, Wallace next to him. They can only stare in awe as the CORONERS roll away Donald's dead body on a stretcher.

WALLACE

Man... tough time for Barbara. Her son and husband dead, and only within a few days.

Grayson doesn't say anything. He stares at Donald's body. A gunshot wound in the center of his chest.

WALLACE

That looks awfully familiar, doesn't it?

GRAYSON

You're right.

WALLACE

You know, it'd be funny if both their killers turned out to be the same person too.

GRAYSON

(pensive)

That would be funny, wouldn't it?

The coroner pulls a sheet over, concealing Donald's body.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I want a look at his death report, as soon as it's ready.

He turns, heads towards his car.

WALLACE

I was only joking, Grayson. You seriously think...?

Grayson whips around. He's about to say something, but Wallace beats him to it.

WALLACE

You have a hunch. I got it.

Grayson just smiles and winks at him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Anne lies stiffly on the bed, with an oxygen mask over her nose and mouth. Her eyes are closed, and she's deep in a comatose state.

The door OPENS then CLOSES. The room then becomes silent. Barbara's hand moves in, gently rests on the edge of the bed. She just stares at Anne for a long time. There's a hint of a glare in her eyes.

BARBARA

Hello, Anne.

Anne remains still, just breathing ever so slightly.

BARBARA

So I guess Donald was right. Both of you really were going at it behind my back.

(beat)

You have no idea how much it pains me to do this. However, my reputation is already hanging by a thread. And I'm not going to let some hussy put the nail in the coffin for me. Do you realize the damage it would cause if everyone learned that my husband was having an affair with another woman? My life would be over.

She looks Anne up and down for a beat.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I'd much rather it be you. Unfortunately, you leave me no other choice. You know far too much.

Her hand reaches up and grasps Anne's oxygen tube. She slowly wraps her fingers around it and squeezes tightly.

Anne's body starts to convulse. Barbara just watches with a dead stare as she sucks the life out of the woman laying before her.

Anne finally becomes still, lifeless. Barbara's hand quivers as she releases her grasp on the oxygen tube.

BARBARA
(whisper)
God, forgive me.

She looks at Anne with a sinister stare, then turns gracefully towards the door. Barbara walks with dignity and poise, a blank expression on her face, then she slips out.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Wallace throws a folder down on Grayson's desk. Grayson looks up in surprise.

WALLACE
His death report. Just like you asked.

GRAYSON
Good.

He opens the folder, begins reading through its contents.

GRAYSON
Have you already looked through it yourself?

WALLACE
Yep.

GRAYSON
Anything noteworthy?

WALLACE
Yep.

Grayson finds something. He picks up a sheet of paper and peers at it closely.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
Looks like your hunch hasn't let you down just yet.

GRAYSON
So the bullet found in Donald's body was the exact same type found in Nathan's. It can't be a coincidence, it just can't.

WALLACE
Probably runs in the family.

Grayson sits back, lets out a loud sigh.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

The woman he was with was identified as Anne Phyllis.

GRAYSON

Yeah, I know who she is. She was Donald's lover.

WALLACE

The woman you caught Donald with?

Grayson nods.

GRAYSON

How far do you think a woman would go after learning her husband had an affair?

WALLACE

(shrugs)

Depends. Sounds like a reasonable motive, though. You gotta admit.

GRAYSON

Barbara... there's really something fishy going on with her.

WALLACE

What kind of things did she do?

GRAYSON

Last I saw her, she was acting quite strange. She flipped out when I told her we didn't think Spencer was the killer. She got even more hysterical when she heard the news about Nathan's autopsy.

Grayson eyes down at the photos of Audrey, the folder with the name "Patricia Schaeffer" etched on the tab.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Just to name a few.

WALLACE

Why do you think that is?

GRAYSON

It's obvious. She's trying to hide something by diverting the blame to someone else. And now she's afraid we're going to piece it all together.

WALLACE

She has no idea what's coming,
then, does she?

Grayson looks up at Wallace.

GRAYSON

Now the question becomes, do you
think Barbara is crazy enough to
kill her husband for having an
affair behind her back?

Wallace stares at him with a "duh" expression on his face.
Grayson looks down at the photograph of Audrey on his desk.

GRAYSON

I was afraid of that.
(beat)
I'm going to pay her a visit.
Let's finally get some answers.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

Grayson's car pulls up to Barbara's lavish home. The car's engine shuts off, and Grayson steps out. He has a cigarette in his mouth. He takes a puff as he stares at the beautiful, pastel façade before him.

It is about midday, and the sun is shining and the weather is perfect. Grayson slowly strolls up the front walk to the door. He knocks.

GRAYSON

Mrs. Adamson!

No answer. He waits patiently, then knocks again. It appears nobody is home.

GRAYSON

It's Grayson, open up!

After some fruitless waiting, Grayson steps back from the door, venturing around the side of the home, towards the garage. He approaches a window on the side wall.

Grayson reaches for it cautiously, looks around him. There's no one here. He slides it open. One last look behind him. Then he slips stealthily inside.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Grayson gets up, brushes himself off a bit. The cigarette stays securely placed between his lips. He scans the room around him. The garage is neatly organized.

His eyes scan through the shelves. They stop suddenly when they come to rest on a baseball bat sitting on one of the shelves. Grayson's eyes widen as they linger agape on the baseball bat.

Grayson slides the baseball bat off the shelf and peers at it suspiciously.

He looks up. Now determined, he puts the bat back on the shelf. He struts over to the door and enters the home.

INT. ADAMSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Grayson enters in the kitchen area, closing the door as quietly as possible. He looks around. The house is quiet, not a soul to be seen. A little too quiet.

Grayson continues exploring the home. He walks into the lush living room. The curtains are drawn, and the room is dark.

He moves on. As he strolls down the hallway, he stares at the Adamson family portraits all along the wall. Big smiles plastered on all their faces.

Grayson reaches the foot of the stairs. He gazes up, then begins to ascend them.

As soon as Grayson disappears up the stairs, a HAND conspicuously enters the frame, reaching for a small end table in the living room. It slides open a drawer, reaches inside, and pulls out a GUN.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grayson stands in the threshold of the doorway, peering into the bedroom. Takes a puff of his cigarette.

He steps in, slowly. Grayson carefully surveys the room. His eyes dart from the elegantly made bed, to the floral patterned davenport next to the wall, to the makeup table and vanity mirror.

Grayson walks by the bureau and makeup table. His fingers run across Barbara's various assortments of makeup. The top of her bureau is covered with a cornucopia of jewelry. Pearl necklaces and earrings populate her massive jewelry collection.

He makes his way over to the vanity mirror. Gazes into it.

BARBARA (O.S.)

I don't allow smoking in my house.

Grayson spins around almost immediately, startled. Barbara stands near the doorway, holding the gun in her hand. It's pointed straight at Grayson.

At first Grayson remains frozen. He stares in awe at Barbara. His eyes move from the barrel pointed at him, then back at Barbara.

Still silent, he slowly raises his finger and pulls the cigarette from his mouth. Then he brings it down and puts it out on the table next to him. Barbara stares at him in disbelief.

Both of them just stand there in silence. It's a stare-down. Barbara raises the gun. Finally, Grayson lunges at her. He gets a firm grasp on Barbara's wrist and twists it up so the gun is pointed to the ceiling. Barbara cries in pain.

Both Grayson and Barbara are locked in a struggle for a while as he attempts to disarm her. Barbara tries her hardest to release herself from his grip, but he's too strong. He twists her arm around her back, then shoves her up against the wall so that her front is pinned.

BARBARA

Let go of me.

GRAYSON

Let go of the gun.

Grayson tugs her off the wall and pries the gun from her fingertips. He releases, tossing her towards the chair in front of the mirror. She falls right into the chair, grasping the back of it tightly.

Now he's pointing the gun at Barbara. Another stare-down. They both are breathing hard. There's a slight victory smile on Grayson's face.

GRAYSON

So you were home.

(beat)

You should've fired when you had the chance.

She just glares up at him without a response. Grayson brings the gun closer to his eyes, examining it.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Look at that. A Smith & Wesson.

Are you wondering how I knew that?

Still, she doesn't respond. Grayson points the gun back in Barbara's direction. She's clutching the back of the chair tightly with both arms.

BARBARA

What are you doing here?

GRAYSON

You've got a lot of explaining to do, Barbara. Or should I say, Patricia Schaeffer.

BARBARA

(stunned)

What did you say?

Grayson pockets the gun. Takes out Roger's photograph of Audrey and throws it in front of Barbara. Her eyes widen in pure astonishment.

GRAYSON

Meet Audrey, my wife. Have you met before?

BARBARA

How did you get that?

GRAYSON

Roger Davis, private investigator. I'm sure you recall sauntering into his office fifteen years ago.

Barbara says nothing, completely speechless. Grayson suddenly grabs her by the collar, pulls her up so that he's staring into her eyes. She cries in fear.

GRAYSON

(quietly)

What did you do to her?

No words come out of Barbara's mouth.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

(shouting)

What did you do to her?!

Grayson slaps her across the face. She stares back at him, tears welling up now. She still says and does nothing.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

What did you do to her?!

He slaps her again.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Tell me!!

He slaps her again. Barbara falls back into the chair.

BARBARA
 (sobbing hard)
 I didn't know she was your wife, I
 swear.

Grayson falls silent. He recoils back, losing his breath.
 He can't believe what he's hearing.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry...

GRAYSON
 (in shock)
 My Audrey? How could you?

BARBARA
 I didn't mean to do it. I was just
 so angry and heartbroken. It just
 happened.

GRAYSON
 Why?! She was my wife, I loved
 her. You had no right to take her
 from me! Take it out on your
 husband, leave my wife alone.

BARBARA
 I couldn't, even with all that
 anger, I couldn't. I needed him.
 Nathan needed him.
 (beat)
 I just found out I was expecting.
 And I was going to give Nathan the
 perfect life, with a family and a
 mother and a father. I used that
 to convince my husband to forget
 what happened and start all over.
 We changed our names so no one
 could know what we had done. And
 then we moved here.

Grayson shakes his head, a mix of anger, sadness, and
 disbelief. He swallows hard, inhales deep as he tries to
 compose himself.

GRAYSON
 You *will* pay for this. One way or
 another.

BARBARA
 If you're going to kill me, just do
 it now.

GRAYSON

I wish more than anything I could. But there's no way I'm letting you off that easily. No good will come of that. You'd be dead, and we'll never know the truth about Nathan. It's funny you mention him. You sound like you really cared about him.

BARBARA

Of course I cared about him.

GRAYSON

Then why did you kill him?

Barbara snaps back at him angrily.

BARBARA

That's not true.

GRAYSON

Of course it's true. You killed your husband, didn't you? You discovered he was having another affair. So you shot him. It's what any loving wife would do, right? With Nathan out of the picture this time, I'm sure it was no trouble at all.

Barbara just glares, ashamed.

BARBARA

Stop it. That's not true.

GRAYSON

Still trying to play the innocent card, huh? I gotta admit, you were winning for a while. But it all makes sense now. You killed Nathan and then you let Spencer take the fall for it. That's why you were so horrified when I told you we didn't believe it was him.

BARBARA

I would never kill my son!

GRAYSON

Why should I believe you? It's all coming together. The bullet in his body came from this gun.

(takes out the gun)

And of course the baseball bat, which I discovered in your garage.

(MORE)

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

It was you all along, wasn't it?
You're responsible for Nathan's
death.

BARBARA

No, stop saying that!

Tears start flowing now. She holds tightly to the back of the chair as if it were a lifesaver, letting all her emotion pour out.

GRAYSON

It would take a miracle to convince me otherwise. You're a cold-blooded murderer. The shoe fits.

BARBARA

I didn't kill Nathan!

GRAYSON

It comes as no surprise. From what I hear, you hated Nathan. You pestered him constantly, and he still let you down. You were ashamed to have him as your son. Ashamed enough to end his life.

BARBARA

That's absolutely ridiculous! I loved my son, and I would never take his life!

GRAYSON

Then explain yourself! Tell me why all the evidence points to you! Why the bullet in his body came from your gun!

BARBARA

I can't...

GRAYSON

So you admit that there *is* something to tell?

BARBARA

(quietly)

No...

Grayson shoves the gun in her face.

GRAYSON

What is it? Tell me! You're trapped, Barbara. You can't go anywhere, and I'm not letting you.

Barbara's sobs uncontrollably. She shakes her head, and opens her mouth, but no words come out.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
 Unless you want to be forever known
 as the mother who killed her own
 child, I suggest you spill it.

Still, Barbara doesn't say anything. Just shedding tears profusely.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
 Tell me!

BARBARA
 Alright!

Suddenly, everything becomes silent, save for Barbara's quiet sobs. Beat.

GRAYSON
 Anytime you're ready.

Barbara sits in the chair crying quietly to herself. She snuffles and calms down a bit. She places her hand on her chest and takes a few deep breaths. Wipes the tears off her face.

BARBARA
 It was like any other day. I never
 would have known...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ADAMSON HOME - NIGHT

BARBARA (V.O.)
 I was just calling Nathan down for
 dinner.

Donald is seated at the table, and Barbara is fuming. They are discussing about Nathan and Father Thomas earlier that day.

DONALD
 You have to relax, and instead of
 trying to force things out of him,
 just sit back and be a comforting
 mother and be there for him when he
 needs you. Got it?

Barbara sighs.

BARBARA
 Okay. You're right. I'll try.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Well. Dinner's just about ready.
I'll go and get Nathan.

She brushes off her apron, then heads for the stairs. Her shoes clack loudly as she scales the staircase.

BARBARA

Nathan? Come down, dinner's ready.

No response.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Nathan?

She ascends the rest of the stairs and walks up to Nathan's bedroom door. Knocks lightly.

BARBARA

Nathan?

Still no answer. She grabs the doorknob, turns it. It opens. She pushes it, and the door creaks open slowly.

BARBARA

Nathan, are you in here?

Barbara ventures into the room. It appears to be empty. Her eye catches the window -- it's wide open. Her heart drops, and she's suddenly gripped with worry. She scurries up to it.

The silence is suddenly shattered by Barbara's ear-splitting scream.

Nathan hangs from his bedroom window. A necktie, one end attached to a table leg, hangs out the side of the window, the other end tight around Nathan's neck. His eyes... wide open. Colorless and expressionless.

Barbara just continues screaming.

BARBARA

(hysterical)

Nathan! No!! Nathan!

She grabs the necktie and tugs with all her might, but to no avail.

BARBARA

Donald!! Donald!!

At this point, tears stream down her face. Donald finally runs in. Without hesitation, he comes to her aid, grasping the necktie and lifting Nathan up back through the window.

They all collapse into a heap on the floor. Donald immediately goes for the tie, tearing it from its bind around Nathan's neck.

Barbara's hand is over her mouth, the tears coming profusely.

BARBARA

No... Nathan. Please.

Donald is also stunned, but he desperately attempts to resuscitate him. He applies chest presses repeatedly. He murmurs under his breath rhythmically with each press:

DONALD

Come on, Nathan. Come on. Come on!

He grabs Nathan's face in his hands, gently slapping his cheeks. Nothing. He continues cardiac massage.

BARBARA

(sobbing)

Please... God, please.

Donald's compressions become slower and slower. He finally stops. Nathan's not coming back.

BARBARA

What are you doing? You can't stop, you have to save him!

Donald check's Nathan's pulse. Nothing.

DONALD

(stunned)

He's gone, Barbara. He's gone.

BARBARA

(hysterical)

No! This can't be, you have to keep trying!

She flails in wild desperation, diving towards her son, but Donald restrains her.

DONALD

No, Barbara. He's gone.

BARBARA

Nathan!!

DONALD

He's gone!

He holds her back. Barbara collapses into quiet sobs. She cries into Donald's shoulder, and they embrace for a long silence, mourning the loss of their son.

After a while, Donald reaches over and closes Nathan's eyelids. They sit in another moment of silence. Then Donald stands up.

BARBARA
Where are you going?

DONALD
To call the police.

Barbara shoots up onto her feet immediately.

BARBARA
No!

DONALD
What?

BARBARA
You can't call the police!

DONALD
Why not?

Barbara hesitates. She looks back at Nathan laying on the floor, then back into Donald's eyes.

BARBARA
Donald, he... just committed
suicide.

DONALD
I know. I can see that.

BARBARA
You can't go to the police...

Donald looks into her eyes, starting to get the drift.

DONALD
(in disbelief)
Oh, no. No, Barbara.

BARBARA
You don't understand! Suicide is a
sin! An act denounced by God.

DONALD
You can't be serious. For God's
sake, your son is dead!

BARBARA
We can't let this go public,
Donald!

DONALD

I've had enough of this, I'm going to call the police.

He turns around and moves for the door, but Barbara's hand on his shoulder stops him.

BARBARA

No! Donald, listen to me. This would devastate us. It would ruin everything we worked for.

DONALD

You're crazy. People will understand.

BARBARA

Understand what? That our son was in pain, enough to take his own life? And that we stood by and did nothing to help him? That's how you want to be remembered? As the unsupportive, thoughtless, incompetent parents who let their son suffer? You want Nathan to be remembered as a... coward who'd rather kill himself than face life?

Donald just stares into her imploring eyes in pure disbelief.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

We *can't* let this go public.

DONALD

What do you suggest we do?

Barbara turns, paces around Nathan's dead body. She's horror-stricken, contemplating hard. After a beat, she looks up, straight into Donald's eyes.

BARBARA

I have an idea.

(beat)

We make it look like he was killed.

DONALD

(in protest)

Barbara, you can't --

BARBARA

Just hear me out, okay? The Bible doesn't say anything wrong about falling victim to murder.

DONALD
How do you expect to accomplish
that?

Barbara thinks to herself for a beat.

BARBARA
Spencer. It's perfect. He
attacked Nathan before. They'll
believe he did it again.

DONALD
(unsure)
Jesus, Barbara...

BARBARA
Please, Donald! I really need your
support right now.

DONALD
You can't just frame an innocent
person for murder!

BARBARA
Spencer is *not* innocent! He
attacked our son! And he got away
scot-free. He must pay the price,
and this is the perfect way to do
that. Spencer deserves this, and
you know it, deep down.
(beat)
Please, I'm begging you.

Donald just stares at her, disbelieving, unsure,
contemplating hard.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - NIGHT

It's pitch black, in the middle of the night. The street is
silent, only the faint sound of night, crickets chirping in
the distance. Nobody is around. Barbara and Donald emerge
from the house, carrying Nathan's body, wrapped in a
bedsheet.

BARBARA (V.O.)
So that's what we did. I convinced
him it's what was needed to be
done.

They reach the car on the driveway, and stuff his body in the
backseat.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The car drives down a desolate road. It turns off the street
into the thick woods.

BARBARA (V.O.)
 We took him to the woods, a few
 miles outside of town. And we left
 him there.

The car comes to a stop in a clearing in the forest. Barbara and Donald get out of the car, and they pull Nathan's body out of the back seat. They drag him towards the base of a tree and position him there.

BARBARA (V.O.)
 There was only one way for us to
 implicate Spencer for the crime.

Barbara reaches into the car, and retrieves a BASEBALL BAT. She hands it off to Donald.

BARBARA (V.O.)
 And then of course, there was the
 murder itself.

Barbara's hand then reaches into her pocket, and pulls out the GUN.

She walks up next to Donald. They stare longingly into their dead son's eyes for a final moment of silence.

Then Barbara raises the gun.

A GUNSHOT reverberates into the night, at the exact same instant we

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - NIGHT

It's a quiet, peaceful night on the street.

Barbara and Donald pull up to their driveway in their car. The engines silence and the headlights go out.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The front door opens. Barbara and Donald walk in, nonchalantly, as if nothing had just happened. Barbara brushes off her blouse, and takes a deep breath.

DONALD
 Is everything ready?

BARBARA
 I believe so.

DONALD
 So what's next?

She doesn't respond immediately. Her eyes just linger on his for a moment. Then she turns gracefully and strides away.

She walks up to the TELEPHONE from the opening scene. She picks up the receiver and brings it to her ear. We see the anxiety in her face as she dials.

After a few seconds, the other end picks up.

BARBARA
 (into phone)
 Hello? My name is Barbara Adamson.
 I would like to report a missing
 child.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. ADAMSON HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Barbara sits clutching the back of the chair tightly. She's silent. She can't bring herself to look at Grayson. Shame and guilt overwhelm her. Grayson just stares at her in disbelief.

GRAYSON
 That's... got to be the craziest
 thing I've ever heard.

BARBARA
 Stop it. I feel humiliated enough
 as it is.

GRAYSON
 You should feel humiliated. You're
 rotten and selfish. You're so
 preoccupied with how people see
 you, enough to pull something like
 that. It's astounding. Have you
 no love, no respect, no compassion
 for your son? None of this would
 have happened if you had just loved
 and accepted him for who he was.

BARBARA
 (quietly)
 That's enough. Please.

She hangs her head low in shame. Barbara turns around, folds her arms on the table and sobs quietly into them.

GRAYSON
 You're not a very bright woman, are
 you?

(MORE)

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Next time you try to frame somebody for a murder, make sure all your tracks are covered, and don't leave all your fingerprints behind.

(beat)

I gotta admit though, you had me for a while. I was practically playing on your team.

Grayson stands there a moment, then he walks over to a telephone on a nearby table. He picks up the receiver, which catches Barbara's attention.

BARBARA

What are you doing? You can't let this go public.

GRAYSON

You committed a crime. I won't guarantee you'll go quietly.

BARBARA

Please. Everything I've done to protect my secrets will all have been for nothing. I'm begging you.

GRAYSON

I don't care. The entire world will soon know what you've done, so you better get used to it.

(beat)

You killed my wife. I want you to feel more guilt and shame than you ever have before. I want for you, sitting alone in your prison cell years from now, to look back on this and have it eat you up from the inside, the same way my grief was eating away at me. You are an atrocious human being, and you're finally getting the treatment you deserve.

BARBARA

(sobbing)

No... I'm not. I just... want to be perfect.

GRAYSON

That right there's your problem. You are the most imperfect woman I've ever met. And I mean that.

Barbara just gazes imploringly, her eyes glistening with tears. She suddenly bursts into sobs.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

My indifference to you knows no bounds.

She continues sobbing. Grayson turns around to the phone again and dials. A few seconds later, Wallace picks up.

GRAYSON

Wallace? It's Grayson. I'm at Barbara Adamson's house. Yes. And bring the cops with you.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

It's a bright, sunny day. The street in front of Barbara's house is populated with numerous cop cars.

INT. ADAMSON HOME, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barbara stands by the window, glancing nervously behind the curtains at the police cars and reporters that occupy the front lawn of her home.

Grayson is leaning against the door frame of the bedroom door, watching her intently. Wallace walks in.

WALLACE

Hey. Where is she?

Grayson nods in Barbara's direction.

WALLACE

I heard about what happened. So much for your hunch being right all the time.

Wallace smiles. Grayson shoots him a look.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about Audrey.

Grayson says nothing. He becomes solemn, glaring over at Barbara with sheer contempt.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

How do you know she's not just lying again about Nathan? To get out of another murder charge?

GRAYSON

She's not. I can see it in her eyes.

He just watches her. Barbara ventures back to the makeup table and sits. She cradles her head in her hands.

WALLACE

Alright, so what are we arresting her for?

GRAYSON

Obstruction of justice. Perjury. And murder. Two counts.

WALLACE

Make that three.

Grayson peers at Wallace curiously.

GRAYSON

What's that now?

WALLACE

Remember Anne Phyllis? We heard from the hospital she was at. She died earlier today when her oxygen tube was obstructed. Barbara was seen exiting the hospital at precisely that time.

Grayson stares at Wallace, then towards Barbara in disbelief.

GRAYSON

My goodness... Though I can't say I'm too surprised.

(beat)

I never would have given her those photos if I knew she would do this.

WALLACE

It's not your fault, Grayson. You did the right thing. You just didn't know how insane she really is, that's all.

GRAYSON

That's definitely true.

(beat)

I guess you can never know who someone really is behind closed doors. No one is ever the way they seem.

A few COPS enter the room. Grayson still stares fixedly at Barbara. She looks up and notices the cops approaching her.

BARBARA

What is this, what's going on?

GRAYSON

You're getting arrested.

BARBARA
I can't. Not with all those people
out there.

GRAYSON
You don't have a choice.

BARBARA
Please, it's not too late.

GRAYSON
Yes, it is.

Barbara becomes silent. She turns back around in her chair, gazing into her reflection. She wipes the tears off her face.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
You're going to have to come with
us.

The cops move forward, but Barbara stops them.

BARBARA
Wait.

With a graceful hand, she reaches over for her cosmetics and begins applying wild makeup. She fixes her blush and mascara.

Barbara undoes her hair, shakes it a bit. She quickly brushes it, then ties it up. Then she applies a thick coat of deep, red lipstick.

When she's finished, Barbara slowly rises to her feet. Staring deep into the mirror.

BARBARA
Hold on.

The finishing touch. She picks up an elegant pearl necklace from the table. Her eyes are fixed on her reflection as she fastens the necklace around her neck. Her fingers gently run down the pristine pearls. She looks flawless. Barbara takes a deep breath.

BARBARA
There. Now we can go.

EXT. ADAMSON HOME - DAY

Barbara emerges from the house, looking beautiful and pristine as ever. There's no trace of any emotional toil in her face. She just holds her head high as the cops usher her down the front walk.

Reporters and detectives flock around her, pestering her with questions, and relentlessly taking photos. But Barbara tunes them out, focused, eyes forward.

Neighbors emerge from their front doors to view the spectacle. Housewives watch from inside their windows in judgment. Grayson stands at the porch, glaring towards her in contempt.

But despite all this attention, Barbara holds her head high with dignity. She no longer tries to hide her desperation and humiliation. Right now, she's perfect. Just like she always dreamed.

They reach the end of the front path and approach the cars. Barbara is ushered into the back seat of a police cruiser, and the door shuts behind her. The trail of police cars take off down the street and vanish into the distance.

The street then becomes silent. Everything, from the white picket fences, to the finely manicured lawns, and the beautifully decorated homes, is perfect once again.

THE END