



by

Richard Gecko

OVER BLACK

A phone RINGS, then--

CLICK.

MAN

Hey, Sweetheart. How's the search going? Any luck?

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a middle-aged man's sweaty face. This is MICHAEL GUNN, 40, a thin guy with a pencil mustache and a wicked widow's peak.

A cellphone is pressed against his ear.

WOMAN (V.O.)

(over the phone, exhausted)

No. We've been combing East Fork, but we've still got nothing.

Michael stares down at something as he listens to the Woman.

MICHAEL

You can't give up hope. Have to stay positive, ya' know? I just wish I could be out there with all of you.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Babe. You were out here for *fourteen hours* today. You need to rest.

MICHAEL

I know.

(sighs)

I just feel...

ANGLE ON Michael, who stands naked over a scared LITTLE BOY, 12, bloodied and beaten.

The poor child lies on the concrete floor with a ball gag lodged in his mouth and his hands and feet bound with heavy-duty zip-ties. He looks up at Michael with tear-filled eyes, releases a muffled whimper.

The dark and dingy basement is surrounded by stone walls. The only light source comes from a dim ceiling bulb.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Guilty.

Michael shoots a devilish grin down at the terrified boy.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Stop it. You've done so much. Just,
get some rest.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I guess. But, after a power nap,
I'm heading back out there.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Hopefully we find him before then. I
love you.

MICHAEL

Love you too, Sweetheart.

Michael hangs up, then tosses his phone onto a nearby shelf.
He squats down beside the boy, who trembles with fear.

MICHAEL

Ya' hear that, Buddy? I think I just
bought us a few more hours of
playtime! So...

Michael lunges forward, grabs the defenseless child by the
throat, and squeezes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If you can hold your breath for four
whole minutes, I'll let you go home to
your parents.

He squeezes tighter.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But if you pass out... I get to have
some more *fun*.

The terrified boy's eyes bulge as his face turns blue. He's
about to pass out.

A twisted grin spreads across Michael's face as he lets out
an awkward, excited cackle.

FADE OUT.