KILLING CLARE

by

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EXT. SUNSHINE MOTEL - MORNING

Dogshit Hollywood.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

JOSEPH COSGROVE, a tired 45 year old decked out in a shabby suit, is sitting on the edge of a bed facing another man, NATE, only a towel around his waist.

Joseph is uncomfortable because he’s never done anything like this before and it shows.

JOSEPH
I... I want you to kill my wife.

NATE
Why?

Nate’s a New Jersey tough talker, maybe a child of the Vietnam era, a king Cobra inked down his right arm.

JOSEPH
Clare and I... we’re fighting... all the time. First wife, Emma, took everything. Pension. House. Even ruined my credit.

(beat)
Never. Again.

NATE
Got a raw deal first time round and still didn’t learn your lesson.

(beat)
Wanna avoid more alimony bullshit too.

Joseph nods.

JOSEPH
Been promoted at work.

NATE
Pull the plug before she gets her hand in the cookie jar.

(beat)
Does she have an insurance policy?

JOSEPH
No.

NATE
Good. No smoking gun.
Nate picks up a pack of gum and offers Joseph a stick.

    JOSEPH
    No... thanks.

    NATE
    Did you know the United States military supply soldiers with gum because it helps to soothe nerves and relieve stress?

    JOSEPH
    Actually, yeah. My old man’s a jarhead.

    NATE
    I like him already.

Nate offers the gum. Joseph takes one, puts it on the bed.

    NATE
    Did you bring the dough?

    JOSEPH
    Yeah.

Nate glares around Joseph’s half of the room.

    NATE
    I don’t see it, are you a magician?

    JOSEPH
    It’s... it’s in the car.

    NATE
    Why is it in the car?

    JOSEPH
    How... how do I know you’re not a cop?

Nate is perplexed. Waves his hand over his bare chest.

    NATE
    Do you see a wire? Or do you think I took a shower at the start of a meeting because I’m rude?

    JOSEPH
    This whole room could be filled with hidden cameras?

Nate gestures around the room.
NATE
Be my guest. But you just asked me to kill your wife, that’s conspiracy right there.

This lands heavily on Joseph. But--

NATE
--I’m too smart to be a cop because I do my homework. If I was a cop I probably wouldn’t know that you bought a microwave dinner from Ralphs last night. That’s after you stopped at the Shell on third to fill up and buy a Pepsi. Regular, in a can, not a bottle.

Joseph sits up – Nate suddenly commanding more respect.

NATE
Do you trust the person who recommended me?
(beat)
Repeat, do you trust--

JOSEPH
--Ye..yes. Yes.

NATE
Then you know I’m not a cop.
(beat)
The green you’re gonna pay me with, where’d it come from?

JOSEPH
What’s... what’s it to you?

Nate quips--

NATE
--Look, refrain from questioning me like I’m some sort of idiot, pal, we live in a nation of idiots. I see in the paper this morning that a guy held up a bank with a ransom note scribbled on the back of his pay-stub. Busted an hour later.

Point taken.

JOSEPH
I... I’ve been withdrawing it, bit by bit, over six months. The rest I got from selling a boat.
NATE
Good. You’re an investment banker after all, I guess you know how to hide money better than any of us.
(beat)
Did you bring a copy of the front door key and a layout of the house like I asked?

Joseph plucks a key and a scrap of paper out of his pocket, hands them to Nate.

NATE
After it’s done I’ll break a window and make it look like a robbery gone shit shaped.
(beat)
Do you have any pets, I don’t wanna roll up and start doing the tango with an eighty pound rottweiler?

JOSEPH
Just a fish. I gotta goldfish.

NATE
I can handle a goldfish. Any guns in the house?

JOSEPH
No.

NATE
Burglar alarm?

JOSEPH
No.

NATE
Well after this... get one. There are over six hundred home invasions in Los Angeles county every month, don’t be a fucking ignoramus.

Nate leans to a bedside table and opens a drawer taking out a sandwich bag containing a cell phone and charger.

NATE
This is an unregistered phone I bought from a Seven Eleven.

Nate throws it into Joseph’s lap.
NATE
I have another one.
(beat)
I programmed my number into it.
It’s the only one there. Double
check it now by calling me.

Joseph takes the phone out of the bag. It’s a flip phone.
Flips it and navigates the menu hitting “call”.
A cell phone on Nate’s bed starts RINGING.

NATE
Good.

Joseph hangs up.

NATE
On the day of the job I’ll call you
one hour before you go to work to
confirm. Make sure your phone’s
switched on, charged, and that
you’re somewhere you can take the
call.
(beat)
Immediately after we’ve spoken,
destroy the phone. Some cells
still triangulate even when they’re
switched off, so get rid of it.
(beat)
Did you pick a time you’ll know
she’ll be home?

JOSEPH
Next Wednesday. Between ten and
eleven. Works mornings in an
accountant’s office, but Wednesdays
are her day off.

NATE
Good, routine is good. I’ll aim to
be there at ten thirty, you’ll be
at work, correct?

Joseph nods.

NATE
Ensure you act normal. Laugh at
people’s jokes, dribble over the
hot girl, don’t let nerves give you
away.
(beat)
(MORE)
NATE (cont'd)
Don’t speak about this, don’t send any emails, don’t even tell the goldfish. I’ll be long gone but it’s you that has to maintain face. After today we’ll never meet again. Questions?

Joseph shifts his weight on the bed, clears his throat.

JOSEPH
Will, will it be with a... gun?

NATE
I can handle the steel but if I pop her between the eyes it’ll look exactly like a hit. Weapon of choice will be a random household object, something heavy, and dense.

His final words hang in the air.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - MORNING

CLARE COSGROVE sits up in her bed. She’s petit, from behind you’d think she was no more than a school girl. Takes a moment to acclimatize.

The other side of the bed hasn’t been slept in.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Clare, wearing a bathrobe, is leaning up against a sink.

SUDDENLY she VOMITS into it.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

Skyscrapers.

EXT. DOWNEY INVESTMENTS - MORNING

SECURITY CAMERA POV - As it clocks Joseph’s SUV drive into an underground parking lot.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph is sitting in a cubicle toying with the flip-phone.

A photo of himself and Clare on the corner of his desk. Happy times on the deck of a yacht.
Behind Joseph, a haggard looking zombie in his thirties, DANIEL, is pushing a mail cart along and dumping envelopes onto desks. From the look in his two dead eyes -- he’s been stuck in this game for a while.

Daniel comes to Joseph and hands him a wad of envelopes. Joseph takes them but Daniel keeps his grip.

Joseph yanks them away, Daniel sniggers.

Joseph faces his computer as a colleague, MICHAEL, steps up.

Michael’s a few years younger than Joseph and of Indian ethnicity but he’s more American than the President--

MICHAEL
--Goddamn new district manager, couldn't manage his own asshole.
(beat)
Just think... that’ll be you soon.

JOSEPH
(dull)
Good morning.

MICHAEL
Nothing good about this morning my friend.

Joseph gives him a look -- wanting more.

MICHAEL
They’re only bumping you to management.
(beat)
Liquidating the rest of us chumps.

JOSEPH
You’re kidding.

Michael holds up a document.

MICHAEL
Notice, forthwith.

Joseph is tongue-tied.

MICHAEL
Anyway. How you two doing? Still cruisin’ for the big ‘D’?

But Joseph suddenly jumps to his feet and beelines to a door.
INT. VICE PRESIDENT’S OFFICE – DAY

Joseph is sitting facing white haired WALTER WALLACE, a man with a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp.

Walter sits there cracking and eating peanuts.

JOSEPH
I know we’re not a charity, but we can’t get rid of him. He’s got a newborn. He’s a good kid. Sharp.

WALTER
Sorry, Joe. Not my call.

JOSEPH
Look, Walt. Recruitment are appointing me an assistant when I move up. Maybe Mike could do it.

WALTER
But you already know that we can’t pay him what he makes now. He’ll have to take a haircut.

JOSEPH
I’ll take the haircut. I’m gonna be pulling down more than enough. I’ll help him with the mortgage every now and then, he deserves it.

Walter almost chokes on a peanut.

WALTER
Holy shit, Joe. If only we all had friends like you.

EXT. NORTH HOLLYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL – AFTERNOON

The end of a school day. We favour a parked Saab.

INT. SAAB – STATIONARY

Clare is sitting at the wheel, tears streaming down her cheeks as she watches kids with their parents.

A flustered super mom, JENNIFER, approaches the Saab’s back door, pops it open and helps her six year old daughter, MARIA, in.
JENNIFER
(to Clare)
Thanks for meeting us. We should have the car back tomorrow.

Clare quickly wipes her eyes.

CLARE
No problem.

JENNIFER
(noticing)
You... okay?

CLARE
Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. Just a bad headache all day.

Clare winks at Maria.

CLARE
Hey, sweetie.

EXT. DRIVEWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT
Joseph parks his SUV next to Clare’s Saab.

Next door, two MOVERS are lifting a sofa. The new home owner, VIC, nods at Joseph.

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE
Joseph steps through the front door - hangs his jacket.

Leans down to a phone table and grabs an address book, opening it.

CLOSE IN ADDRESS BOOK: Hand written phone numbers.

Joseph grabs a pen and then takes Nate’s flip phone from his pocket, flipping it open to display Nate’s number.

In the address book he scribbles down the words, ASSET MANAGER, followed by Nate’s digits.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Joseph shuffles into the room to find Clare laying on the sofa with a mask over her eyes.

JOSEPH
You awake?
CLARE
No.

JOSEPH
Another headache?

CLARE
(sour)
No, eye masks are all the rage.

Joseph shrugs her off and sits down at the dining table raising the lid of a laptop.

JOSEPH
Have you fed the fish?

CLARE
Yeah.

She slips her mask off but catches Joseph curiously glancing over the bowl.

CLARE
What? You don’t trust me?
(beat)
Rich... coming from you.

JOSEPH
It’s a simple request, Clare, I don’t see any food floating around.
(beat)
And what happened to buying the bigger bowl that I asked you a few days ago?

CLARE
Buy it yourself.

Joseph grips the edge of the table.

JOSEPH
Jesus, I’m working sixty hours a week, how are we gonna be happy again if I can’t even ask you to do one simple thing rather than laying around on your ass all day!?

CLARE
I had another migraine--

JOSEPH
--Well go to the doctor.
CLARE
I’ve been to the doctor.

JOSEPH
So go again!

Joseph turns back to the computer. Clare sneers under her breath.

CLARE
And to think... you wanted to start sharing the same bed again.

Joseph suddenly scoops the laptop up with both hands and SLAMS it down onto the table top, BAM, cracking the screen--

JOSEPH
--Goddamn it!

CLARE
Great. You’ve broken it.

Joseph twists to her.

JOSEPH
(ignoring)
And yes, three weeks ago I did wanna start sleeping together, but now... fuck it, I’m better off in the guest room.

Clare jumps to her feet.

CLARE
The guest room! Hell, lets just do each other a favour and get a fucking divorce done with, I’d rather be dead than married to you!

JOSEPH
Fine!

Clare glances at the goldfish bowl.

CLARE
And you know what else!

She charges over to the bowl and violently grabs it.

CLARE
I’ll fix this... right, now!

JOSEPH
What are you do--
--But Clare storms over to a patio door that overlooks the backyard and fiercely slides it open.

EXT. BACKYARD
Clare marches toward a swimming pool, and as she nears it she throws the entire goldfish bowl into it --
-- SPLOOOOOSHHHHH! Joseph dashes out behind her.

JOSEPH
No!

CLARE
Big enough?!

Clare barrels back inside. Joseph grabs a net and tries to scoop the fish out.

FADE OUT:

SUPER:

wednesday

INT. GUEST BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - MORNING
Joseph, awake, is laying in bed with bags under his eyes. A digital clock reads: 6:49am
At 6:50am an alarm BLARES.

INT. BATHROOM
Joseph vigorously brushing his teeth.

INT. KITCHEN
Clare, wearing a bathrobe, is standing with her back to us while doing some ironing.
Joseph saunters into the room wearing his office attire and holding a briefcase. Pauses, docile.

JOSEPH
You’re up early.

CLARE
So are you.
Continues ironing.

JOSEPH
Look. Clare.
(beat)
I’ve said some things lately that
I’m not very proud of. For what
it’s worth... I’m sorry.
(testing)
I... I love you.

But it’s the cold shoulder.

JOSEPH
You know... sometimes... I wonder
how we got here.

CLARE
You deceived me... that’s how we
got here.
(beat)
How did you ever expect this
marriage to work when it was built
on deceit?

Her voice haunts him.

EXT. PORCH
Joseph closes the front door. Hard to believe she’ll be dead
by lunchtime.

EXT. PARK - MORNING
Joseph, holding the flip phone, is standing at the edge of a
lake.

The phone starts RINGING - he flips it, puts it to ear--

JOSEPH
--Hello?

NATE (V.O.)
Are we good?

Joseph with the kind of face you never forget. Then--

JOSEPH
--We’re good.

CLICK - the line goes dead.
INT. ALLEY - SAME

Nate takes his flip phone into both hands and bends it backwards -- SNAPPING it.

EXT. STREET

Nate steps out of the alley and dumps the broken phone into a garbage can. From the inside of his jacket he slips out a long, thin, strip of metal better known as a slim jim and approaches an old white Honda parked on a corner.

Slides the slim jim down the driver’s side window.

EXT. PARK - SAME

Joseph takes a deep breath and suddenly swings his arm back and hurls the flip phone out into the lake - PLOP.

INT. ELEVATOR, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph is riding the elevator. Disney music.

His hand is trembling. Tries to steady himself.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

CLOSE ON: A clock on a wall - 8:14am and ticking.

Joseph looks down from the clock and stoops over a water dispenser just as Michael bowls into the room with a smile as wide as the grand canyon.

MICHAEL

Joseph feigns glee - act normal, act normal, act normal.

JOSEPH
Yup. Welcome back. Now you’re stuck with me.

A man hug.

MICHAEL
Listen. Springsteen’s playing next Thursday. I got two tickets months back but I want you to have ‘em... you could take Clare--
JOSEPH
--No, no, that’s not nec...

MICHAEL
--Bullshit! You just saved my ass. I know you two are having problems but who knows... could be fun.

Joseph considers it. Not really a possibility.

JOSEPH
I don’t think so.

MICHAEL
C’mon, when’s the last time you surprised her? Really...

He’s right, and something suddenly dawns on Joseph.

JOSEPH
Yeah. Deal. I’ll surprise her.

MICHAEL
Boom!

Fist bump.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Corporate America sitting around a polished table.

Joseph is one of the SUITS. Another SUIT is making a presentation but Joseph isn't listening.

WE HEAR WHAT JOSEPH HEARS: The Suit making the presentation is talking -- but Joseph has zoned him out - SOUNDS like a deep, dull drone - like a cassette playing in slow motion.

Joseph checks his watch: 08:31am

INT. STAFF CAFETERIA

Joseph is sitting at a table with some of the OFFICE BOYS.

Everyone’s shooting the shit, but Joseph gazes up at another clock - 9:09am.

Looks at his donut. Must eat. Must be normal.

Stay cool. Ice cool. Act normal.
INT. RESTROOMS

SOUND of someone vomiting inside a stall.

INT. WAITING ROOM, DOCTOR’S SURGERY - SAME

Clare is sitting reading a magazine.

A NURSE opens a door and gestures for her.

NURSE

Clare.

INT. JOSEPH’S CUBICLE, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph is sitting at his desk, fidgeting.

Eyes the time on his computer display:  9:42am - only 48 minutes.

Suddenly his land-line BUZZES and he picks up--

JOSEPH

--This is Joe.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Mr. Cosgrove, your wife’s on the line.

Joseph’s caught off guard.

JOSEPH

My wife?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Yes. Can I connect her?

JOSEPH

Y... yes... put her through.

Another line connects.

JOSEPH

Clare?
CLARE (V.O.)

Joe?

Clare sounds tearful.

INTERCUT CONVERSATION: Clare is sitting in her bedroom on the edge of the bed - tears streaming down her cheeks.

JOSEPH

What’s wrong?

CLARE

I... I was up early... cos I had an appointment with a Doctor.

Joseph’s all ears.

CLARE

I have a brain tumor, Joe.

JOSEPH

What?

CLARE

About the size of a golf ball. It’s been pushing down on my brain, causing the migraines.

JOSEPH

What... I mean... can they do something?

CLARE

They think they caught it early enough but I have to have an operation.

Joseph is floored.

CLARE

I’m sorry I ignored you this morning... I’ve just... been overwhelmed. I love you too, I’ve always loved you. I don’t wanna get a divorce, I wanna make this work, I really wanna try and make this work again.

Joseph goes rigid.

CLARE

I think we should adopt, Joe. If I get through this, I think that’s what we should do.

(MORE)
Can you come home, I really need to be with you right now.

Joseph falls back in his chair for a moment until the situation comes rocketing back to him--

JOSEPH
--I’m on my way!

Joseph SLAMS the phone down and jumps to his feet.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Clare wipes her eyes and gets up putting the phone down onto a dressing table.

She climbs into bed and curls up in the fetal position.

INT. ELEVATOR, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph urgently thumbing an elevator button.

INT. MAILROOM

Joseph bowls into the mailroom – a lone CLERK stacking boxes--

JOSEPH
--Dan, where’s Dan!

CLERK
He’s doing the mail rounds.

JOSEPH
Fuck!

Joseph slips his Blackberry out, navigates to a number and hits send but --

-- A cell phone on a desk next to him Starts RINGING.

CLERK
(re: ringing phone)
That’s Danny’s.

Joseph hangs up, dashes over to Daniel’s cell snatching it.

CLOSE ON PHONE – Joseph navigates through the phone book.

JOSEPH
(to himself)
C’mon... c’mon.
Selects the letter ‘N’ - but the only entry is for NICK.

INT. JOSEPH’S CUBICLE

Joseph steams back to his cubicle and grabs the land-line.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - SAME

SOUND of the land-line RINGING.

But Clare is laying in bed with her eyes closed. Turns away and throws the covers over her head.

INT. JOSEPH’S CUBICLE, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph hangs up. Checks the time. INSERT: 10:06am

    JOSEPH
    Fuck!

Urgently dials another number.

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Clare’s purse is on the bottom step of the stairs. Inside, her iPhone is RINGING.

INT. JOSEPH’S CUBICLE

Joseph hangs up.

    JOSEPH
    Shit, shit!

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph thunders through a stop sign holding his Blackberry to his ear.

    JOSEPH
    Dan, it’s me, where the fuck are you--
INT. DOWNEY INVESTMENTS - DAY

Daniel is wheeling the mail cart through the office block.

    JOSEPH (V.O.)
    --I need you to call Nate and call
    him off, something’s come up and
    I’ve lost his number, just call him
    off!

Daniel stops at Joseph’s empty desk, throws some envelopes onto it.

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph floors the gas pedal; SUV clock showing 10:13am.

Joseph punches in another phone number.

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Inside Clare’s purse her iPhone is RINGING again.

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph weaves through traffic.

    JOSEPH
    --Clare, it’s me, I need the number
    for an “asset manager”, it’s in the
    address book, it’s really
    important, if you get this it’s--

    --But he suddenly swerves - ERRCCHHHHH, almost crashing.

    JOSEPH
    JESUS, FUCK!

Steadies his Blackberry and dials again.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

CLOSE ON: An answer machine as Joseph’s voice crackles--

    JOSEPH
    --Clare, it’s me, you gotta get out
    of the house, you gotta get out of
    the house, go next door, go to
    work, you gotta get out, right
    now...
INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph on his Blackberry.

JOSEPH

...Call me as soon as you--

But suddenly... the blast of a SIREN cuts him off --

-- an L.A.P.D motorcycle riding alongside him.

Talking and driving - not in this state.

EXT. JOSEPH’S SUV - STATIONARY

Joseph has pulled his SUV over. The MOTORCYCLE OFFICER is writing Joseph a ticket.

The Motorcycle Officer looks at his watch and writes the time on the ticket:

CLOSE ON TICKET: 10:28am

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph guns his SUV down a street going faster than ever, Blackberry to his ear.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Come on, come on!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

The land-line is RINGING again. Clare finally sits up and climbs out of bed picking up the phone.

CLARE

Hello.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Clare! Clare, thank, God!

--But Clare hears a NOISE downstairs, lowers the phone.

CLARE

Joe?

A CLICKING sound as a latch turns and a door is pushed open.
TOP OF THE STAIRS

Clare, holding the phone to her chest, steps out of the bedroom and edges to the top of the stairs just as a MAN wearing black and with a ski-mask over his head, who we know as Nate, steps through the front door directly below her.

Clare SCREAMS and bolts back into her bedroom but Nate leaps up the stairs.

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV

Joseph hears Clare SCREAM down the phone line.

JOSEPH
No!

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Joseph’s SUV ROARS up outside the house. A white Honda parked next to Clare’s Saab.

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Joseph blasts through the front door.

JOSEPH
Clare!

SOUND of a THUD from upstairs, like a hundred pounds hitting the floor.

Joseph double times up.

TOP OF THE STAIRS

Joseph hits the top just as Nate steps out of the bedroom.

NATE
What the...

JOSEPH
NO!

Joseph glances into the bedroom to see Clare laying on her stomach - head covered in blood, a bloody clothes iron next to her body... but above all - still alive.

Clare turns her head toward Joseph - forcing him to react in the only way possible--
--By suddenly SLAMMING Nate up against a wall.

NATE
What are y--

--But Nate seizes Joseph’s throat in return.

They wrestle out of the bedroom doorway and stumble over, toppling down the stairs, KER-KLUNK, KER-KLUNK, KER-KLUNK...

BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Nate lands with the upper hand - tries to get to his feet.

NATE
What the fuck are you doi--

--But Joseph surges forward shouldering Nate through a doorway, BAM, and onto the floor in the living room.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joseph struggles on top of Nate. Nate lashes out with his legs, knocking the goldfish bowl off the coffee table which SMASHES across the floor.

Joseph gets a grip on Nate’s head and BANGS it into the wooden floor, WHAM --

--But Nate bites into Joseph’s fingers - Joseph SCREAMS...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Clare, still laying on her stomach, has the phone in her hand. Taps those three famous digits...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Nate staggers upright and reaches for his ankle but --

-- HE INADVERTENTLY STEPS ON THE GOLDFISH AND SLIPS CRASHING BACKWARDS ONTO THE FLOOR, WUMP!

Joseph throws himself at Nate again, flipping Nate over the back of the sofa...

Nate, pinned, drives his hand up and grabs Joseph’s dangling tie - gets both hands on it and tugs, slowly lowering Joseph’s head toward his own --

-- And as Joseph’s head sinks lower and lower, Nate whispers--
NATE
--She... Tasted... Sweet.

Joseph suddenly finds the strength of a thousand men.

His hand flaps around for something - anything - fingers touching a cable - the laptop power cord.

Joseph whips up the cord and loops it around Nate’s neck, pulling both ends as tight as he can.

Nate’s eyes begin bulging through his ski mask...

NATE
S-- stop...

Both men strangle each other - but Joseph is bigger and heavier than Nate.

Nate’s hands weaken - breaks his grip on Joseph’s tie and tries to pull the power cord off his neck but Joseph pulls it tighter.

NATE
Stop-- St- st...

Nate GASPS. And GURGLES. And is still.

Joseph lets go of the power cord and pulls Nate’s mask off.

Nate is dead.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Joseph rushes into the bedroom dropping to his knees beside Clare.

JOSEPH
Oh, God, oh, God!

She’s unconscious... but still has the phone in her hand, 911 OPERATOR’S VOICE crackling through--

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
--Ma’am, Ma’am? Police and ambulance are on route Ma’am.

Joseph grabs the phone.

JOSEPH
Please! My wife, come quick...

But he suddenly stalls as a cold washes over him.
STAIRS
Joseph ploughs down the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Joseph dashes in and drops down beside Nate’s body frantically checking the pockets in Nate’s black combat pants but they’re empty.

Deags his hands up and down Nate’s torso looking for something.

Crawls around on all fours, fish water and broken glass everywhere.

Levels his head to the ground – checks under the sofa.

Whatever it is – it’s nowhere.

SIRENS...

INT. PORCH
Joseph dashes to the front door – opens it... angles his elbow up against a glass panel – then rams it through SMASHING the glass – ensuring the shards fall inside.

LOUDER SIRENS...
Joseph races into the road waving his arms.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. POLICE CAR, STATIONARY – AFTERNOON
Joseph sitting in the back of a Police Car opposite his house, blanket around his shoulders, POLICE OFFICER sitting in the front.

JOSEPH’S POV OUTSIDE: More Police Cars and an ambulance.
A FEMALE OFFICER approaches Joseph’s window.

FEMALE OFFICER
E.M.T’s have stabilized her.
They’re gonna move her shortly.
INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE'S HOUSE

DETECTIVE BILL WALKER’S in his fifties and has a gut like he’s swallowed a bowling ball, but being slow on his feet doesn’t mean he’s slow in the head.

Meticulously steps through the crime scene.

Squats at Nate’s body.

SNAPS latex gloves on and runs a hand over Nate’s black shirt and down his inner leg to his foot. A lump at the ankle.

He lifts the hem of Nate’s pants to show an ankle holster concealing a short range revolver.

INT. POLICE CAR - STATIONARY

Joseph’s Blackberry starts RINGING.

He takes it out of his pocket and eyes the screen:

DAN

Lets it RING until it stops.

But SUDDENLY --

-- He bolts upright. Fear strikes Joseph.

Raises his Blackberry and stabs in a number.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Detective Walker is edging through the kitchen.

On a counter, a red light on an answer-phone is blinking.

INT. POLICE CAR

Joseph urgently enters a four digit code on his Blackberry.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Beside Detective Walker – the answer-phone light stops blinking.
INT. POLICE CAR

Joseph glances out as two PARAMEDICS carry Clare out on a stretcher. The Police Officer up front pivots back.

POLICE OFFICER
We’ll follow behind.

But Joseph looks down at his Blackberry and another mental alarm bell goes off--

JOSEPH
--Wait!

Pops his door open.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Joseph is hustling toward the house.

Approaches a POLICE OFFICER on the front door.

POLICE OFFICER
Sir, it’s still a crime scene--

JOSEPH
--I’m going to the hospital, I need to get some things.

POLICE OFFICER
I understand, but I can’t let--

JOSEPH
--Blood pressure pills, I need my pills. I gotta have ‘em.

The Police Officer meets him halfway.

POLICE OFFICER
Okay... I’ll get ‘em myself, just tell me where they are?

Past the Police Officer, Joseph spots Clare’s purse on the bottom of the stairs.

JOSEPH
Kitchen cabinet. Above the sink.

The Police Officer turns away and as soon as he’s out of sight Joseph immediately puts a foot into the house -- reaches inside Clare’s purse and pulls out an iPhone.

Thumbs the voicemail icon deleting the latest one - from himself. Dumps the iPhone back.
EXT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A Station Wagon with three adults inside SCREECHES up. Two WOMEN and a MAN get out.

INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM

Clare is laying in a bed hooked up to a heart monitor.

Face is black and blue, a patch of hair has been shaved revealing an ugly wound.

Joseph is sitting at the foot of the bed.

EXT. HALLWAY, CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM

Both Women and the Man from the Station Wagon are standing before DR. WILLIAMS.

FIONA is Clare’s younger sister, and bearing up next to her is NEAL, Clare’s father, but he’s only just clinging onto sanity himself.

HILLARY is Clare’s well-to-do-mother but she’s currently living every well-to-do-mother’s worst nightmare.

Dr. Williams is tactfully gentle.

DR. WILLIAMS
Clare had a serious cranial bleed, but we’ve managed to contain it. It’s hard to tell... she could wake up in a day, week... month, but when she does... we do need to be prepared because there’s a high chance she could suffer partial or even total memory loss.

The family are devastated.

DR. WILLIAMS
This also changes things regarding her tumor. We’re going to have to expedite the surgery because her trauma could accelerate the tumor’s rate of growth, like water to a plant if you will.
HILLARY
--Wait, what?
(beat)
Tumor?

Dr. Williams takes a breath. Big news.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT
ABC news truck parked outside, a REPORTER yapping to camera.
An old, BLACK MUSTANG with dark windows crawls past.

EXT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT
Opposite the entrance, the BLACK MUSTANG skids to a stop.
Joseph comes bowling out of the hospital’s sliding doors clutching his cell phone as Daniel gets out of the Mustang.

JOSEPH
Jesus, are you outta your mind, I told you her parents are here--

DANIEL
--Mind explaining what the fuck went down!? I switch the news on to find Nate’s been iced and they’re calling you a fuckin’ hero.

JOSEPH
I tried to call you, I tried to call him off!

DANIEL
Funny that when I hooked you up... you forgot to mention Clare was the bull’s-eye.

JOSEPH
Think I’m gonna have a village meeting about it?

DANIEL
And you think you’re just gonna pick up and carry on with shit after nailing my Goddamn guy? (beat) We did a five stretch together, asshole! (MORE)
He even took some heat for me, helped me make parole, and now you put him in the fuckin’ bone yard.

Joseph tightens as Daniel leans closer.

DANIEL
Worse. He owed me. Past commissions. So guess what?
(beat)
You rubbed him out, you’re paying his dues.

JOSEPH
I already paid you.

DANIEL
But he didn’t. Sixty five, large.
(beat)
And way I see it, you don’t got much choice--

--Daniel takes out his cell phone. Taps a button and holds it up as Joseph’s voice crackles out--

JOSEPH’S VOICEMAIL
--Dan, it’s me, where the fuck are you. I need you to call Nate and call him off, something’s come up and I’ve lost his number, just call him off.

The blood drains from Joseph’s face.

Daniel turns to his Mustang as Joseph spits venom.

JOSEPH
After all I’ve done for you! Without me... you wouldn’t even have a job--

DANIEL
--It’s just business, cuz. (beat)
I got a kid, how the fuck am I supposed to support a family on chump change?

JOSEPH
Should’a thought of that before starting a career chopping cars.
Daniel
Easy for you to say, college boy.
Sixty five. Three days.

Daniel gets into his car and SLAMS the door. Switches the engine on and ROARS away, VROOMMMMMMMMM.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT
Neal’s Station Wagon is parked in the lot.

INT. JOSEPH’S HOTEL ROOM
Joseph is sitting on a bed in the same way he conspired with Nate except this time he’s facing Neal, Hillary and Fiona.

JOSEPH
She called me and told me about the tumor. I rushed home... and that’s... when I found him...

EXT. BALCONY, HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT
Through a window – Joseph continues explaining to his family.

INT. JOSEPH’S ROOM - NIGHT
A digital clock reads: 3:02am. Joseph’s wide awake.

Suddenly the phone on his bedside table starts RINGING. He rolls over and grabs it.

JOSEPH
Hello?

EXT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT
Neal’s Station Wagon SCREECHES up, four silhouettes inside.

INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT
Clare is laying in bed with her eyes open.

On one side of her, Hillary is sitting holding her hand, Fiona and Neal next to her.

On the other side, Joseph is holding her other hand.
CLARE
(to Fiona)
Hey sis. How do I look?

FIONA
(re: bald patch)
I like your new haircut.

Clare smiles. Slowly twists her head to Joseph.

CLARE
Thank you.

Tightens her grip on Joseph’s hand.

EXT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAWN

The sun is edging up.

INT. WAITING ROOM, HOSPITAL - MORNING

Fiona sits down in a chair with a newspaper.

Unfolds it to find a photo of Joseph on the front page followed by the headline: HERO HUSBAND

But concern creases her forehead.

INT. DR. WILLIAM’S OFFICE - MORNING

Dr. Williams is sitting behind his desk, Joseph, Neal and Hillary on the other side.

DR. WILLIAMS
Despite the wonderful news that Clare has retained her memory we must urgently address her tumor.

NEAL
Please... just level with us. What’s the risk here?

DR. WILLIAMS
Surgery near the brain is always risky, but luckily, Clare’s tumor is still in the early stages. The surgery won’t need to be overly invasive.

Good news to everyone.
DR. WILLIAMS
The neurosurgeons do want to move forward without losing any more time though.

Dr. Williams slides a paper laden clipboard to them.

DR. WILLIAMS
This is a consent form. Clare’s sedated, so we can’t really be sure she understands what she’s signing... but a parent or spouse’s consent would be legally acceptable.

Neal and Joseph eye the clipboard like it’s some sort of death warrant.

But Joseph suddenly grabs it and signs on the dotted line.

JOSEPH
Anything to save her.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR SLAMS the back door of a truck.

The truck pulls away as an unmarked Lincoln rolls up and parks. Detective Walker gets out.

INT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL CAFE - AFTERNOON

Joseph, Neal, Hillary and Fiona sat around a table.

JOSEPH
I... I could’ve prevented it... if I’d have got there sooner.

Hillary cups Joseph’s hand.

HILLARY
You didn’t know, Joe.
(beat)
The good Lord’ll see us through this.

Joseph, glum, gazes past Hillary... to Fiona... but what he sees unsettles him.

Fiona’s staring the life out of him, hostile, almost as if she knows something.
Joseph deflects.

JOSEPH
(ala Nate)
There are over six hundred home
invasions in Los Angeles county
every month.
(beat)
I’m gonna get an alarm system
installed. When she comes home, I
want her to feel safe.

NEAL
Hell, we’ll even pay for it.

But the family are suddenly distracted by a MAN in his late
fifties who steps up to their table. His name is SCOTT.

SCOTT
(to Joseph)
Son.

Joseph gets to his feet and hugs him. He has a tattoo of an
eagle on his sagging bicep, the mark of a U.S Ranger.

SCOTT
Took the first flight I could get.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE – SAME

Detective Walker has a cell phone to his ear.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Inform the family they can return.
Thank you.

He hangs up and steps out of the room.

INT. LANDING

Detective Walker takes one last look around – turns to the
guest room and pushes the door open.

Peers inside – and something stirs his interest.

The guest room has been occupied. Bed is messed up – shirts,
ties and other men’s clothing draped around the room.
INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM, LAKE COUNTY - EVENING

Clare sips water.

Neal, Hillary and Fiona are sitting in chairs on one side of the bed, Fiona holding Clare’s hand.

Joseph is sitting on the other side, Scott sitting at the foot of the bed.

Clare hands the water to Joseph, who takes it.

JOSEPH
That’s it. You gotta go dry now.

Clare nods and eyes Scott.

CLARE
Thank you for coming. Alice would’ve been proud of him.

SCOTT
Be proud of both of you.

Scott stands up taking a ring sized box out of his pocket.

SCOTT
I brought you something.

He flips the lid to show her a military medal.

CLARE
Your bronze star?

SCOTT
You wanted to see it.
(beat)
Keep it. I’m giving it to you.

He walks around and places it on Clare’s bedside table.

CLARE
I can’t keep that.

SCOTT
It’s awarded for bravery. You earned it.
INT. NEAL’S STATION WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

Neal is driving, Hillary next to him.

In the back, Fiona is squeezed between Scott and Joseph. Seems uncomfortable. A single tear rolls down her cheek. Scott drapes an arm around her.

SCOTT
She’ll pull through. You’ll see.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room is still smashed up. Joseph, sombre, is sitting at the dining table with his father.

JOSEPH
I strangled a man with my bare hands.

SCOTT
Not a man. A monster.

Joseph nods. Feels better. Time for a change of subject.

JOSEPH
What if something goes wrong in surgery?

Scott sits up.

SCOTT
We’ve been here before, remember?

JOSEPH
Mom had liver cancer... this is on the brain.

SCOTT
But look how many surgeries she went through? Clare faces one... and she’ll be fine. Positive thoughts son.

(beat)
Now go up and get some sleep. Clare needs you strong.

Scott gets to his feet.

SCOTT
Meantime, if I’m crashing on the sofa I gotta start clearing some of this shit up.
He picks up a broken coffee table leg.

STAIRS

Joseph, holding a glass of water, reaches the top of the stairs. Pauses spotting Neal on his hands and knees in the master bedroom scrubbing Clare’s blood off the carpet with a bucket and sponge.

Hillary makes the sign of the Holy cross against her chest.

INT. OPERATING THEATRE, HOSPITAL - DAY

MONTAGE;

Clare having a cat-scan.

CLOSE UP of the tumor on an X-RAY

Clare with an oxygen mask over her mouth – anesthesia pumped in...

Clare’s eyes closing

The bright lights of an operating room

Two SURGEONS behind Clare

SOUND of cranium drills boring holes into Clare’s skull

Joseph, Scott, Neal, Hillary and Fiona in the waiting room

A Surgeon working a cutting tool inside Clare’s head

Clare’s E.C.G.

Joseph pacing

More drilling on Clare’s skull

Fiona and Hillary embracing

Neal sitting with his head in his hands

Concerned expressions on the Surgeon’s faces – blood all over their gloves
INT. WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

One of Clare’s Surgeons, now in clean scrubs, pushes through a set of double doors and faces everyone.

SURGEON
Clare’s surgery was a success.

Fiona and Hillary hug. Neal breaks down. Joseph is all smiles.

INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM

Clare’s sitting up in bed with a bandage around her head.

Joseph, Scott, Neal, Hillary and Fiona are sitting around her, everyone radiant.

CLARE
(to Joseph)
I wanna go home.

JOSEPH
Whoa, slow down sweetie. Soon.

Despite the pain, she smiles.

WOMAN’S VOICE (V.O.)
Mr. Cosgrove, I’m a therapist and I work with victims of violent crime on behalf of the L.A.P.D.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Joseph is walking with a woman who means all business. She is DR. RUBEN.

DR. RUBEN
Often we find that victims of violent crime pay a mental price.

Joseph listens.

DR. RUBEN
As Clare’s husband, you’ll play the biggest part in her rehabilitation. With your love she should slowly begin to trust the world again.

Joseph nods.
And to help you both deal with this, I’d like you to come to my office together, twice a week, for some reintegration sessions. How does that sound to you?

Joseph stops walking.

JOSEPH
Sounds like a plan.

Dr. Ruben smiles but Joseph’s cell phone starts RINGING.

He takes it out and checks it.

JOSEPH
Excuse me.

INT. DETECTIVE WALKER’S OFFICE, POLICE DEPARTMENT – AFTERNOON

Clinical clean. No papers, files or pictures on the wall.

Only a glass topped table and a laptop, Detective Walker sitting on the business side, Joseph opposite.

DETECTIVE WALKER
I’m glad she’s in the clear.

JOSEPH
Can’t wait to come home. Doesn’t even wanna go to the rehab centre.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Women and hospitals don’t mix. My own wife was hit by a car and even then... she wanted out.

Joseph almost swallows his tongue.

JOSEPH
Ugh, hope... she was okay.

DETECTIVE WALKER
She died.

Joseph is unhinged.

DETECTIVE WALKER
It’s okay.
(beat)
She was a cop too though.
(MORE)
I like to think I work twice as hard now. For myself, and Karen.

A Detective with a hard-on for justice — the last thing Joseph needs.

Detective Walker reads from his laptop.

DETECTIVE WALKER

‘Wayne Warner. Ex military, did six years for misconduct. A known drug user, he probably broke in to feed a habit, traces of crystal meth showed in his toxicology report’.

News to Joseph.

DETECTIVE WALKER

Seems you got home just in time.

Joseph nods.

INT. CORRIDOR, POLICE DEPARTMENT — AFTERNOON

Detective Walker is showing Joseph to the door.

DETECTIVE WALKER

I’m curious about the status of your relationship with Clare. How is it?

Joseph tiptoes — unsure where this is going.

JOSEPH

It’s.. it’s fine.

DETECTIVE WALKER

Have you been sleeping separately? I couldn’t help but notice a bunch of your personal things in the guest room.

Joseph pauses. *Shit!*

JOSEPH

Yeah... yeah we’ve... had a few issues lately, been giving each other a little space, that’s all.

Detective Walker nods but we can tell he wants more.
DETECTIVE WALKER
I understand.

Curious eyes.

EXT. LAKE COUNTY HOSPITAL - EVENING

Joseph pulls up and parks next to Neal’s Station Wagon.

Stares at the foreboding hospital building, the weight of the world on his shoulders.

His Blackberry starts RINGING. He takes it out and checks the screen: DAN

Hangs it up.

INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Clare is sleeping. Joseph sitting one side of her - Fiona the other side -- there’s an obvious elephant in the room.

JOSEPH
(soft)
Gave her some painkillers. Doing well, but had a headache though.

Fiona nods... but she’s got something else on her mind.

FIONA
My mother. She’s got an irregular heartbeat. Might need a pacemaker.

JOSEPH
I know.

FIONA
Clare never wants to cause mom any stress. Never talks to her about stuff. Talks to me though.

She stares him down -- challenging.

FIONA
I’m grateful for what you did... but I know that you’re having problems.

JOSEPH
Everyone has problems.
FIONA
She told me the other day... that you smashed her laptop screen.

Joseph pulls a face.

JOSEPH
She exaggerated.

Battles to suppress his voice in front of his sleeping wife.

JOSEPH
I dropped it. It was an accident.

FIONA
So she lied to me?

Joseph quickly eyes Clare - hopes she really is sleeping.

JOSEPH
She exaggerated... Jesus Christ, yes we had some problems but we’re gettin’ over ‘em, even had a date at the Springsteen concert--

FIONA
--I also know that you’re the one who caused the problems.

Joseph sees her sincerity.

FIONA
You didn’t tell Clare before you got married that you couldn’t have kids. The ‘real’ reason your first marriage broke down.

She may as well have kicked him in the balls.

JOSEPH
She never even wanted kids when we--

FIONA
--But she changed her mind, Joe!

JOSEPH
No thanks to you, she was fine until you started pushing kids out and bringing ‘em over--

FIONA
You’re infertile! And you hid it from her because you already got burned by it once and--
JOSEPH
--She had no right discussing tha--

FIONA
--She had every right, she’s my sister!

JOSEPH
We... we could’ve adopted--

FIONA
--Adoptions not for everyone, Joe.

Joseph is stonewalled.

FIONA
How long did you pretend trying for a baby?
   (beat)
   Before you told her?

He can’t win - screwed if he answers, screwed if he doesn’t.

FIONA
You left her... to think that she was the one who had the problem... right up until you went to a doctor, even though you already knew.

JOSEPH
I made a mistake. But we’re getting through it.

FIONA
Good. I just hope that when she recovers from all this, she’ll be able to explain her, ‘exaggerations’ in more detail, because believe me, I’ll be asking.

A dangerous smile. That’s right.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joseph is laying in bed with a night light on. Wide awake but drunk with fatigue.
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, LAKE COUNTY - DAY

Clare, sitting upright, sips from a cup of soup, Neal and Hillary standing at the foot of the bed.

CLARE
Thank you. I've been craving this.

She turns to two seats next to her, Joseph and Fiona.

CLARE
(to Joseph)
Where's your dad?

JOSEPH
Fixing up the house.

CLARE
Always the soldier.

But before she can take another sip, the door is opened and Daniel steps in holding a bunch of flowers.

Joseph springs to his feet.

JOSEPH
What the Hell do you want?

Clare freezes up, confused - maybe a little frightened.

Daniel shuffles in - a prickly pear among peaches.

DANIEL
Ugh, you know... family's family. Heard about it at the office. (to Clare)
I know we've had our differences, but just wanted to wish you well.

Daniel awkwardly places the flowers on the end of the bed, Joseph's eyes drilling holes into him.

NEAL
And... you are--

JOSEPH
(to everyone)
--Just someone I work with.

DANIEL
Ah, don't be so modest, I know I mean more to you than that.

We almost see the vein in Joseph's neck raise.
CLARE
(to her parents)
This... is Daniel... Joe’s cousin.

Alarm bells start ringing through the family.

DANIEL
(to everyone)
Pleased to finally meet you all.
(to Clare)
Pretty close call. Lucky Joe got back when he did.

HILLARY
We’re extremely thankful.

Daniel stares Joseph dead in the face.

DANIEL
If it wasn’t for Joe, who knows what would’a happened.
(to Clare)
You’re very lucky to have him.

Joseph wants to gouge his eyes out.

DANIEL
Well. Best get back to the office.

He shoots Joseph a final eye-fuck.

DANIEL
Cell not working? I been calling?

Daniel turns to the doorway and makes tracks.

CLARE
That was weird.

Joseph left sucking lemons.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE – EVENING

Crickets.

INT. LIVING ROOM

A banner is draped across a clean and tidy living room:

WELCOME HOME

Another goldfish cruises in a much bigger bowl.
INT. KITCHEN
A chocolate cake, flowers and cards.

INT. HALLWAY
A new alarm panel is bolted to the wall. Blinking red light.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE – EVENING
The Station Wagon sweeps up onto the driveway.
Joseph hops out of the front and opens the rear door. Gently guides Clare out, a bandage around her head.
Clare gazes at her house. Her eyes well up.

    JOSEPH
    It’s alright.

But as Joseph helps her, he spots Dan’s black Mustang pull out from a space opposite and slip away.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Joseph, Clare, Hillary, Neal, Scott and Fiona are sitting around the dining table. Everyone has some cake but Clare hasn’t touched hers.

Eyes the new goldfish bowl, fish identical to the old one.

    CLARE
    Mr. Stevens has a bigger bowl.

    JOSEPH
    Sure does. He’s a survivor.

    CLARE
    I’m sorry, I should have got one sooner.

    JOSEPH
    Don’t worry about it.

    CLARE
    So, is everyone staying here, is there room?

    NEAL
    Relax honey, plenty of room.
    (beat)
    (MORE)
Joe gave us your keys too use, everything’s clockwork.

Hillary clasps her daughter’s hand.

HILLARY
How do you feel, sweetie?

CLARE
Tired. Really tired.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT
Joseph carries Clare into the bedroom. New carpet.
Gently places her on the bed and sits down next to her.

CLARE
A new carpet?

JOSEPH
The other one was worn.

CLARE
It was barely a year old.

Joseph shrugs.

JOSEPH
I’ll get you some water?

But Clare quickly grabs Joseph’s hand.

CLARE
Don’t leave me.

Joseph is thrown.

JOSEPH
I won’t. I’m not going anywhere.

Clare squeezes Joseph’s hand and whispers...

CLARE
I want us to start sleeping together. I want us to be together now.

Clare shifts... places her head into Joseph’s lap.
Joseph peers at the bandage on her head. Rests a hand on it.
EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE   MORNING
A MAIL MAN stuffs envelopes into the mailbox.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE
Clare is asleep. Gradually opens her eyes, groggy.
Slowly turns and gazes across the bed but --
-- Suddenly panics.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Neal, Hillary and Fiona are eating breakfast at the table.
Suddenly, Clare, wearing a bathrobe, rushes in.

CLARE
Joe!

HILLARY
He had to check in at work, honey.

NEAL
Didn’t wanna wake you.

Clare’s face sinks like a lead balloon.

EXT. LITTLE ARMENIA - MORNING
Graffiti. Trash-bags littering the sidewalk.
Definitely not Joseph’s place of work, but his SUV rolls up
and parks outside a rundown house, chain-link fence around
it.

INT. LIVING ROOM
A southern woman, BRITNEY, once proprietor of a stripper body
until she got knocked up again, is holding a baby in one hand
and a phone to her ear in the other.

BRITNEY
Your cuz, Joe’s here... wanting to
speak to you. Why is he comin’
here, you work at the same place?

INTERCUT WITH DANIEL - IN THE MAIL ROOM.
DANIEL
What?

BRITNEY
Is everything okay, Danny?

DANIEL
Put him on.

Britney heads into the kitchen and hands Joseph the phone.

Joseph takes it while admiring a ten year old girl, CHLOE, as she eats a sandwich that probably weighs more than she does.

Joseph veers towards a back door.

EXT. BACKYARD
Broken toys. Joseph paces with the phone to his ear.

JOSEPH
Chloe’s grown.

DANIEL
Get the fuck out of my house.

JOSEPH
I see why you need that dough, I wouldn’t wanna raise a family in this dump either.

DANIEL
Get. The. Fuck. Out--

--But Joseph is adamant.

JOSEPH
You listen to me. I’m your sponsor, not your sugar daddy. I sponsored you when you got out and you go pulling this shit... and comin’ to the fuckin’ hospital!

(beat)
This is what’s gonna happen. A ten grand advance and a promotion. Management asked me to find an assistant, I’m gonna fudge your resume and bump you. Long term, it’ll be worth more than your little phone scam.

DANIEL
Eat shit. I need my bankroll.
JOSEPH
Eat shit? Oh, yeah, eat shit!

Joseph plays his trump card.

JOSEPH
With you at work and Britney home
with a bun in the oven it must be
tough knowing Chloe has to walk to
school... on her own... in this
neighborhood.

Joseph takes the deepest breath of his life.

JOSEPH
Anything could happen.

Daniel grips the phone so hard his knuckles whiten.

JOSEPH
I take it by the silence we gott’a
deal then. Just stay away from my
house.
(beat)
And when I get to the office...
I’ll get my own fuckin’ mail.

He hangs up.

INT. BRITNEY’S LIVING ROOM

Joseph steps back inside and eyes Britney’s bump.

JOSEPH
How far along are you?

BRITNEY
Seven months.
(beat)
Twins. As if one wasn’t enough.


He dumps the phone down and takes his wallet out throwing a
$100 bill onto a table.

JOSEPH
Well... congratulations, Danny just
got promoted. Dinner’s on me.

And with that, he heads for the door.
INT. JOSEPH’S NEW OFFICE, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS – MORNING

An office with a ten story view. Leather power chair behind a desk long enough to land an aircraft on, some cards and flowers on it.

A block reads: JOSEPH COSGROVE – FINANCE MANAGER

But across the other side of the room, Clare, baseball cap over head bandage, and Fiona, are anxiously sitting on the edge of an executive sofa.

Joseph suddenly flings the door open and blasts in.

JOSEPH
Clare!

Clare, WEEPING, torpedoes straight into Joseph’s arms.

FIONA
(to Joseph)
Sorry. She wanted to come.

JOSEPH
(to Clare)
What’s wrong?

CLARE
I woke up and you were gone.

JOSEPH
I had a breakfast meeting.

He hugs her.

JOSEPH
Like the new office?

INT. DOCTOR RUBEN’S OFFICE – AFTERNOON

Joseph is sitting in a chair holding Clare’s hand. Dr. Ruben is sitting facing them.

DR. RUBEN
Joseph, you are indeed a victim too, but it’s important that you’re both clear what happened that day wasn’t your fault.

Joseph swallows the lump in his throat.
However you both feel about it, from this moment on, you need to attribute complete forgiveness over yourselves and each other.

Dr. Ruben faces Clare.

Clare. Since this happened, how do you feel about being home now?

Afraid. Never knowing who might come through the door.

Who do you think might come through the door?

Someone who wants to hurt me.

Why would someone want to hurt you?

Joseph loosens his collar.

Neal, Hillary and Fiona are sitting by the pool.

Scott brings a tray of coffee out and sits down beside them.

(to Scott)

Hillary and I are gonna buy Joe and Clare a cruise. I know Joe’s always wanted to go on a cruise.

Always with the boat fascination. Growing up, he was hooked on building the little model ones.

Maybe he’ll pass it on to their kids and we’ll have a sailor in the family.

Joseph doesn’t want kids, Mom.
Everyone is taken back.

SCOTT
What?

FIONA
(to Scott)
I thought you’d have known that?

SCOTT
Guys always say that when they start out.

NEAL
Heck, I did. Four years later, two screaming pie holes to feed.

HILLARY
That was your own fault. After Clare you had expansion on the brain.

FIONA
It’s been seven years though.
(beat)
Hardly starting out.

Everyone reflects.

FIONA
Sorry. Don’t want any false hopes.

But Scott is perturbed.

INT. DETECTIVE WALKER’S OFFICE – AFTERNOON

Detective Walker is sitting at his desk pouring over a document. Highlights something.

CLOSE ON DOCUMENT: An AT&T phone record.

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV – STATIONARY

Joseph pulls onto the driveway in his SUV. Twists to Clare who’s in the passenger seat.

JOSEPH
Sweetheart. I need you to go inside now. Everyone’s home so you won’t be alone. I gotta go finish some contracts, I’ll be back later.
But his cell phone starts RINGING. Glances at the screen.

    JOSEPH
    Speaking of the office...

He takes the call.

    JOSEPH
    Cosgrove.

But--

    DANIEL (V.O.)
    --From now on I’ll be sure to call
    the office so they patch me
    through... at least you answer.

Joseph plays it cool in front of Clare.

    DANIEL (V.O.)
    We need to straighten shit. I
    suggest you let Cinderella go
    inside, then you’re gonna hit the
    road and buy me a beer to apologize
    for the little house call earlier.
    (beat)
    Don’t let me down hero, or my next
    stop’s gonna be your doorstep.

CLICK, the line goes dead.

Joseph is spooked but fakes a goodbye.

    JOSEPH
    Yeah, yeah, got it. On my way.

Joseph hangs up but covertly glances into his side mirror.

    JOSEPH’S POV THROUGH MIRROR: Daniel’s Mustang is parked
    across the street.

Joseph faces Clare.

    JOSEPH
    I gotta go.
    (beat)
    Remember. Baby-steps.

Clare looks to the house like it’s some sort of trap.
EXT. THE RED ROOM BAR AND GRILL, PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Daniel’s Mustang swings into a lot behind a bar and he parks. Joseph follows in his SUV.

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV

But as Joseph parks, spots Daniel get out of the Mustang with a baseball bat, a THUG getting out of the passenger side.

JOSEPH
What the...

Joseph shifts into reverse but a pickup SCREECHES behind...

With a concrete wall in front, he’s boxed in.

Joseph locks the door and goes for his cell but --

-- Daniel thrusts the end of the baseball bat through the driver’s window, SMASHING it.

Joseph SCREAMS as Daniel and his Thug haul Joseph out through the window, dropping him onto the ground with a THUD!

The tip of a baseball bat hits Joseph in the face - WUMP!

DANIEL
Surprise, mother fucker!
(beat)
I’ll take the job, but come near my girls again, I’ll subtract your ass.

Daniel kicks Joseph in the face, KWAP!

Joseph curls. Daniel clubs him with the bat again, WUMP.

DANIEL
I want my advance tomorrow, bitch!

Daniel spits on Joseph and then turns away with the Thug.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - EVENING

Hillary slides a tray of freshly baked cookies out of an oven, places them on the work surface. Clare saunters in and takes a seat.

CLARE
Cinnamon cookies?
HILLARY
Correct, for three points.

Clare beams, but she’s here for a reason.

CLARE
Mom?
(beat)
I never asked you. Was I planned... or was I an accident?

Hillary pinches Clare’s cheek with a twinkle in her eye.

CLARE
You can tell me the truth.

HILLARY
You were a wonderful accident. So wonderful, we had another accident. And we even thought about hav--

CLARE
--When you married... did you both want a family?

Hillary can tell where this is going.

HILLARY
Honey. If you really love each other... you’ll find a way.

CLARE
I just... see how you are with Fiona’s boys. I don’t want you to be disappointed if--

HILLARY
--Sweetie. Your father bought a Porsche and drove it into a tree. That’s something to be disappointed about.

Clare nods, but it’s halfhearted.

HILLARY
Joe’s an exceptional man and I have every faith that when he married you, he’d meet your every expectation. And he hasn’t let you down yet, right?

CLARE
Right.
Hillary smiles and turns back to her cookies, but she accidentally knocks a wine glass off the counter - it SMASHES as it hits the floor, the noise STARTLING Clare a little more than it should.

HILLARY
Darn -- I got it, I got it.

But as Hillary goes for a broom, Clare stares at the glass like it’s unlocked something inside her.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER is sitting behind a desk filling out a report -- Joseph facing him with a fat lip and black eye -- some band aids over his cheek.

POLICE OFFICER
How many of ‘em were there?

JOSEPH
Four. All Asian.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joseph walks in and grabs a bottle of water downing it like he’s been lost in the desert.

On the kitchen counter, he notices the laptop wallpaper’s now displaying a shot from his wedding day.

Unimaginable happiness - except for the crack in the screen.

Suddenly -- VOICES outside...

Joseph edges to the kitchen window and glimpses out.

JOSEPH’S POV - Clare and Fiona are sitting talking. Joseph quietly pushes the window open.

FIONA
I spoke to him about a few things that happened between you, but he denied them.

CLARE
Joe’s a good man. We’ve had some ups and downs but he doesn’t mean any harm.
FIONA
Clare, he avoided telling you
something to cover his own, selfis--

CLARE
--But look at what he’s done now.

FIONA
That’s not the point. I just hope
there’s nothing else he’s hiding.
(beat)
He also denied breaking your
laptop. Said it was an accident.

Clare stoops her head like a shamed schoolgirl.

CLARE
Yeah. I’m sorry I told you that.
(beat)
It was an accident. It just
slipped out of his hand.

Fiona’s disappointment is obvious.

CLARE
I just... I was upset and--

FIONA
--It’s okay. It doesn’t matter.

But clearly it does. Fiona gets to her feet.

FIONA
Look. I’m probably gonna have to
go home soon. The kids and all.
(beat)
Start looking for a flight.

Fiona heads inside prompting Joseph to clear the window.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

Joseph, bag of frozen peas to his cheek, steps out behind
Clare who’s still sitting.

JOSEPH
Don’t panic.

Clare jumps to her feet and turns to him.

CLARE
Oh, my, God!
JOSEPH
Some punks tried to steal the car.
Been with the police. I’m okay.

She hugs him.

CLARE
What... I can’t believe--

JOSEPH
--I’m okay. Bit shaken, but don’t worry. Where is everyone?

CLARE
Getting dinner.

Suddenly - a KNOCK on the front door.

Joseph reacts by turning away, but he pauses as a thought crosses his mind. Turns back.

JOSEPH
You wanna try gettin’ this? Might think it’s Halloween if I go.
(beat)
Baby-steps?

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

It’s dark outside and through the frosted glass the figure is eerie. Clare glances back to Joseph.

JOSEPH
I’m here.

Clare touches the handle and slowly opens the door to find the new neighbor, Vic, standing in the porch.

VIC
Hey, Clare. How you feelin’?

CLARE
Hi, Vic. I’m getting there.

VIC
Great. Well my real estate guy was coming over with my contract tonight, want me to send him over so you can talk about your valuation?

But suddenly Joseph shoves into the doorway--
JOSEPH
--Hey, Vic, no, actually... that won’t be necessary.

VIC
(re: Joseph’s face)
Whoa... you confiscate Clare’s credit card or something?

JOSEPH
Slipped at work, no biggie.

CLARE
(to Vic)
Why would we want a valuation?

VIC
Well, Joe came over just before we moved in and was asking--

JOSEPH
(to Vic)
--We were never ‘actually’ selling.

Joseph faces Clare.

JOSEPH
I just thought it would be interesting... to get the market value, see how much it might be worth.

CLARE
You didn’t tell me.

JOSEPH
I forgot... you know, with everything.
(to Vic)
Thanks but don’t worry, we’re not really interested in moving anyway.

VIC
Gotta. Well call me when you’re feeling up to it, we’ll do dinner.

JOSEPH
Love to.

Vic heads away. Joseph closes the door but Clare wants more.

JOSEPH
I don’t wanna sell the house.
Before all this... I...

(MORE)
JOSEPH (cont'd)
I thought we were separating.
(beat)
Gonna take a shower.

Joseph heads up the stairs leaving Clare feeling weird.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT
Neal’s Station Wagon rolls up and parks behind Joseph’s SUV.
Scott notices the SUV’s broken window.

INT. BATHROOM
Joseph, a towel around his waist, is sitting on the toilet holding an ice pack over his lip.
Scott is balanced on the edge of the bathtub.

SCOTT
You reported it?

JOSEPH
Yeah. Caught ‘em breaking the window but they jumped me.

SCOTT
You gotta be more careful son, first your mom, then Clare and now this, I don’t know how much more I can take.

JOSEPH
I’ll live.

SCOTT
I have a flight out tomorrow. If you don’t feel up to it I’ll get Neal to take me to the airport.

JOSEPH
No, I’m okay.

SCOTT
Mind if we go a little early? Get some chow?

JOSEPH
Sounds good.

FADE OUT:
FADE IN:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Joseph, laying in bed, opens his eyes. The night has been cruel to his face.

INT. DR. RUBEN’S OFFICE - MORNING

Dr. Ruben is sitting before Joseph and Clare.

DR. RUBEN
Joe, how do you feel about Clare being alone now?

JOSEPH
I worry.

DR. RUBEN
How do you think you could try and get back to a normal way of life?

JOSEPH
I don’t know.
(beat)
Living alone maybe. Gott’a houseful at the moment.

Joseph faces Clare.

JOSEPH
Maybe... going out, a little...

DR. RUBEN
Clare. Joseph tells me that you don’t like leaving any doors unlocked or any windows open. How do you think you can start feeling more secure?

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - MORNING

CLOSE ON ALARM PANEL: A finger double taps the number ‘2’.

Scott turns away to face Clare who’s watching him.

SCOTT
Double tap it fast and it’ll trigger. It’s the panic code.
CLARE
Thank you. Feeling safer already.

Scott nods. But awkward, he clears his throat...

SCOTT
I’m... sorry I’m leaving. It’s just, I’ve been called back.

Clare affectionately touches his forearm.

CLARE
Don’t be sorry, you’ve done so much. I feel bad you had to sleep on the couch.

SCOTT
Actually I like sleeping here... on the couch. Seeing you around your mother. Reminds me... of--

CLARE
--I know.

Clare hugs him.

SCOTT
I’ve been in two wars, yet you’re the strongest person I ever met.

Scott turns to the doorway and hugs Hillary.

EXT. JOSEPH’S SUV, DRIVEWAY - STATIONARY - AFTERNOON

Joseph is sitting in the driver’s seat with the engine running. His Blackberry BEEPS -- incoming text.


JOSEPH
Goddamn it!

Scott throws a sports bag into the back and SLAMS the door.

INT. JERRY’S DELI - AFTERNOON

Scott and Joseph are in a booth finishing lunch.

SCOTT
Son?
(beat)
(MORE)
Fiona said something that’s been riding me pretty hard.

JOSEPH
She does that.

SCOTT
Said you don’t want kids. Was kind’a hoping it wasn’t true.
(beat)
You know what mom always said.

JOSEPH
(remembering)
‘Never give up on family’.

Joseph, sincere, puts his fork down.

JOSEPH
There’s something I should’ve told you.

Scott is eager to hear.

JOSEPH
Clare... can’t have kids. She had an infection when she was younger. Damaged her ovaries.
(beat)
Nobody knows. Not even her mom. She’s pretty insecure. Thinks she’s less of a woman and all...

Scott is setback.

JOSEPH
I tell people that I don’t want kids, you know... to protect her.

SCOTT
She’s infertile?

Joseph’s expression confirms it.

SCOTT
You could always adopt.

JOSEPH
Adoption’s not for everyone.

Scott contemplates the end of his blood line.

SCOTT
You knew this before you married?
JOSEPH
Of course. But what you gonna do?

SCOTT
I admire her for telling you.
(beat)
At least she didn’t hide it.

Joseph doesn’t betray his calm demeanor.

SCOTT
Whatever you do son, you two have a second chance here. Some of the shit I’ve seen... they were better off dying, but you two are clean. Clare survived, and she’s gonna be okay. Enjoy yourselves.

Joseph understands. Scott lightens up.

SCOTT
And you remember what today is?

JOSEPH
I know.

SCOTT
You got it covered, right?

JOSEPH
Relax, I said I know.

SCOTT
Good. Cos if you forgot that, you can expect a bunch more bruises.

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV - MOVING - AFTERNOON

Joseph drives his SUV into his space at Downey Investments and parks but before he can un-clip his seat belt--

-- Daniel pops the passenger door open and slides in SLAMMING it behind himself.

Joseph’s jaw tightens as Daniel eyes his bruises.

DANIEL
Ouch.
(beat)
I should see the other guy, right?

JOSEPH
Get out of my car.
DANIEL
Chill, partner. Here for my advance. Figured you wouldn’t wanna do it in the office.

JOSEPH
There is no advance. You lost that after your little baseball game.

Daniel nods to himself, as if finally accepting it, but we can tell that a storm’s coming.

DANIEL
If that’s how you wanna play it.

Joseph stews.

JOSEPH
I went through your phone... looking for Nate’s number.

Daniel scoffs.

DANIEL
Snake. In the pen... we called him Snake. Cos of his ink.

Joseph faces him, sincere.

JOSEPH
You play that voicemail... and you’re just gonna fuck yourself.

DANIEL
Yeah, but I can turn state’s evidence. I been in lock down before, I can handle it. Question is... can you?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS - AFTERNOON

Joseph is sitting alone at the sprawling conference table a nervous knee bouncing at hyper-speed.

Michael bowls through the door and seats himself opposite.

MICHAEL
Howdy. You put a shout out for me?

JOSEPH
Yah.

Joseph shifts in his seat. Rubs his face. It’s serious.
JOSEPH

Look. Mike. There’s no real easy way to say this...

But Michael can already sense it. And then he knows.

JOSEPH

In... internal politics and all...

INT. HALLWAY

Michael bursts out of the conference room, Joseph chasing--

JOSEPH

--Mike! Michael!

MICHAEL

Clare was right all along. You are a fuckin’ douchebag.

Joseph -- left squirming.

INT. JOSEPH’S NEW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Joseph, sedate, is sitting in his chair looking out of the window. It’s an ugly world out there.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - EVENING

Cosy lighting.

Clare is sitting at the dining table -- been set for two.

Joseph eases into the living room holding a posh, silver serving platter with a solid silver lid over the top of it.

JOSEPH

Dinner is served.

CLARE

How have you been cooking for two hours, I don’t smell anything?

But Joseph lowers the platter, as if a butler, places his hand on the lid and whips it off to reveal --

-- Four McDonald’s cheeseburgers, two cartons of french fries and two cans of coke.

CLARE

Oh, my, God.
JOSEPH
A repeat of our wedding meal.

Joseph sits down. Cracks a coke and toasts.

JOSEPH
Happy anniversary.

CLARE
Happy anniversary.

They clink and sip. But Clare puts her drink down and reaches into her pocket taking out the small box containing Scott’s bronze star.

CLARE
Joe?

(beat)
I want you to have this. Think of it as an anniversary gift.

Joseph puts his drink down.

JOSEPH
I can’t take that. Dad gave it to you.

CLARE
Yes. It’s mine, to do whatever I please with. And I want to give it to you.

(beat)
You’re the real hero, Joe. My hero.

Joseph is touched. Forces a smile... and takes it.

JOSEPH
Thank you.

Suddenly it’s just the two of them in the whole wide world.

CLARE
I... I think I’d like to take a walk, after this feast.

Joseph is impressed.

JOSEPH
Wanna walk the dog? Like old times?

Clare smiles.
EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Joseph and Clare are strolling arm in arm. No dog.

CLARE
What movie did they go see?

JOSEPH
Something your mom picked. Bound to suck.

Clare snickers.

CLARE
Remember how hot our wedding day was?

JOSEPH
Nothing like Vegas in a tux'.

But Clare’s tone hardens.

CLARE
Joe?

JOSEPH
(playful)
Clare?

CLARE
I’ve been thinking of us... before all this.
(beat)
I think that... I’m probably to blame... for a lot of the situation. I had my share of moodswings--

JOSEPH
--Hey. It’s in the past. Lets keep it there.

Clare smiles - but it’s unenthusiastic.

JOSEPH
Probably the tumor causing the moods. But it’s gone now, like the old Clare. I prefer this one much more.

Clare beams. They close in on the house.
CLARE
I miss Barney. Maybe we should get another dog. A guard dog.

JOSEPH
Good idea.

CLARE
Like a... Rottweiler.

A chill runs up Joseph’s spine - of all the breeds.

They pause outside the house.

JOSEPH
You eh, wanna try and stay home alone, just the two of us? Ship Ren and Stimpy back to Sacramento?

Clare giggles.

CLARE
My sister’s going home tomorrow.

JOSEPH
They could all go together?

Clare entertains the thought just as Neal’s Station Wagon pulls up.

CLARE
Speaking of...

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Neal, Hillary, Joseph and Clare are sitting around the dining table sharing leftover popcorn.

CLARE
Daddy, we didn’t mean you had to go now.

NEAL
Fiona’s gotta be back in the morning. If we all go tonight she’ll get a refund on her airfare.

HILLARY
(to Clare)
You know what he’s like in traffic, rather leave tonight anyway.

Joseph gets to his feet.
JOSEPH
I’ll bring your bags down.

But first he holds up two cruise ship tickets.

JOSEPH
Thanks again for these.

NEAL
Happy anniversary.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

Fiona is packing her bag. Joseph lingers in the doorway.

JOSEPH
(knowing)
Have your little chat with Clare?

Fiona zips her bag up and turns to him.

FIONA
I owe you an apology.

JOSEPH
It’s okay.

FIONA
No. It’s not.
(beat)
It takes two. I’m sorry I pointed a finger at you.

JOSEPH
Forget it. What do you say we just bury the hatchet, right here, right now.


EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Joseph slams the Station Wagon’s back door, Fiona inside.

Clare and Hillary - hugs and kisses. Hillary digs a hand into her jacket and hands Clare her keys.

HILLARY
Almost forgot.

Clare takes them.
HILLARY
We’ll be back on the weekend.

Neal and Joseph shake and squeeze.

NEAL
Take care of my little girl.

JOSEPH
You know it. Thanks again for the cruise.

NEAL
Just one of the perks of running your own travel company.

Clare slams the door after her Mom.

NEAL
(to Clare)
You’re in safe hands here.

CLARE
I know, Daddy.

Clare blows a kiss. Neal slams his door and starts the car.

INT. BATHROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE – NIGHT

The light is dim.

Joseph splashes water into his eyes.

Studies himself in the mirror.

The bathroom door is ajar casting a shadow over half his face.

Half man.

Half criminal.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Clare, wearing pajamas, takes Joseph’s shirt off the back of a chair and holds it up to admire. It’s all creased.

Joseph steps in and notices her.
CLARE  
(re: shirt)  
What kind of wife lets her husband  
go to work like this?  

JOSEPH  
One who just beat a brain tumor.

Clare moves in and hugs him. Tender.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - MORNING  
Detective Walker’s Lincoln pulls up on the driveway.

EXT. PORCH  
Detective Walker knocks on the front door, THUNK, THUNK.  
After a moment, Joseph opens it.  

DETECTIVE WALKER  
(re: Joseph’s face)  
Joe? What happened?

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE  
Joseph and Clare are sitting in the living room facing  
Detective Walker who’s eating one of Hillary’s cookies.  

DETECTIVE WALKER  
Joe... at 10:28am on the day of  
Clare’s attack, you were ticketed  
near your residence for being on  
the phone while at the wheel. Who  
were you talking to?

JOSEPH  
Clare. Was upset about the tumor.

DETECTIVE WALKER  
Your cousin, Daniel Cosgrove, works  
with you at Downey Investments,  
correct?

A nuclear bomb detonates behind Joseph’s eyelids.  

JOSEPH  
Ugh... yeah. Yes.
CLARE
But they don’t really talk much...
the family doesn’t get on with him.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Because of his criminal background?

Clare nods. Joseph pales.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Well on the morning of the attack,
Joe’s cell records indicate that he
called Daniel’s cell and spoke for
38 seconds. What was that about,
Joe?

Joseph’s face goes dead.

JOSEPH
I... I don’t really remember.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Must’ve been pretty important... at
a time like that.

JOSEPH
He ugh... works the mail room,
probably just something regarding a
delivery.
(bluffing)
Why don’t you ask him?

DETECTIVE WALKER
I intend to.

Joseph’s gut coils like a rattlesnake.

CLARE
What’s this got to do with
anything?

DETECTIVE WALKER
Probably nothing.

But there’s a distinct impression he means exactly the
opposite.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS - MORNING

Joseph’s SUV SCREECHES into a space.
INT. MAILROOM, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS

Joseph, clutching his Blackberry, storms into the mail room to find a CLERK packing a box.

JOSEPH
Where’s Dan, he’s not answering!

CLERK
He took a sick day.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Clare is sitting on the sofa - her mind heavy with something. She picks up a business card. Detective Walker’s card.

INT. DETECTIVE WALKER’S OFFICE, POLICE DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

The same, clinical clean office, but this time it’s Clare in the hot seat facing Detective Walker. She’s cautious -- yet bleeding nerves.

CLARE
Why are you looking at my husband’s phone records?

DETECTIVE WALKER
We have to be thorough.

CLARE
You... you don’t actually think...

But she can’t bring herself to finish...

DETECTIVE WALKER
Clare?
(beat)
In your statement, you said that Joe got up early that day.

CLARE
Yes.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Does he ever get up that early?

Daunting. Detective Walker leans back in his chair.
INT. DETECTIVE WALKER’S SQUAD CAR – MOVING – AFTERNOON

Detective Walker’s driving, Clare in the passenger seat.

CLARE
First time I’ve been out on my own.

DETECTIVE WALKER
I’m honoured. Will you be okay?

But she’s got something else on the tip of her tongue.

CLARE
I couldn’t sleep that morning... because I knew that I was getting the results of the brain scan.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Understandable. And as you said, Joseph was up early to get ahead in the office.

She can tell that he’s not entirely convinced though... and now that the seed of doubt is planted... neither is she.

Lincoln rolls up outside the house.

CLARE
Thanks again.

Clare gets out and SLAMS the door leaving Detective Walker biting his lip.

He turns back to the front and taps the steering wheel -- but suddenly --

-- He’s startled by a thought...

DETECTIVE WALKER
Son-of-a-bitch!

Jams the car into gear.

INT. SECURITY BOOTH, DOWNEY INVESTMENTS – AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON A BLACK AND WHITE MONITOR: As Joseph’s SUV is seen driving under a barrier and into the company parking structure. A time display reads: 8:04am
INT. JOSEPH’S NEW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Detective Walker, alone and drinking from a Starbucks cup, is sitting in a chair facing Joseph’s vacant desk.

Joseph breezes in and closes his door.

JOSEPH
Hey! Twice in one day?

Joseph takes his seat opposite.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Told you I like to work for two. Actually I was here to see Daniel.

JOSEPH
He took a sick day... apparently.

DETECTIVE WALKER
I know that now.

Detective Walker puts his drink down.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Quick question. (beat) On the day of Clare’s attack, you left the house early, right?

JOSEPH
Yeah. Playing catch-up with a bunch of paperwork.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Get it all done?

JOSEPH
Yeah.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Strange. Because there’s a security camera over the parking garage. I just looked at the tape for that morning... but you got here at your usual time, just after eight.

Joseph’s blood runs cold.

He drops back in his chair as the penny drops.
JOSEPH
You didn’t come here to see Daniel.
(beat)
--What... you... you think I’m
involved? That I hired some junkie
to kill my wife but then went home
and killed him myself?

DETECTIVE WALKER
You left home early on the day your
wife was almost murdered, but you
didn’t get to work any earlier, so
where did you go?

JOSEPH
Who knows, I stopped for coffee...
got stuck in traffic--

DETECTIVE WALKER
--Where did you stop?

JOSEPH
Where I usually stop.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Cash or credit?

Obvious where this is going.

JOSEPH
I think you need to leave now,
Detective.

DETECTIVE WALKER
I think you’re probably right.

Joseph watches him get to his feet, but it’s not over yet.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Did you know that Wayne was armed,
Joe?

JOSEPH
You told me. I was lucky.

DETECTIVE WALKER
(knowing)
That’s right. I did. Odd how he
had a gun... yet attacked Clare
with a clothes iron.
(beat)
Unless he was trying to make her
murder seem like something it
wasn’t.
And with that, Detective Walker doesn’t bother waiting for a reaction.

Joseph - starting to feel the heat. Stands up and paces. Suddenly grabs his land line and dials.

INT. DANIEL’S MUSTANG, MOVING - AFTERNOON

Daniel is driving - his cell starts RINGING and he picks up.

    DANIEL
    If it ain’t about my money, I’m busy.

INTERCUT: With Joseph in his office.

    JOSEPH
    Sick?! Where the Hell are you?

    DANIEL
    Sorry, I can’t talk now, got an appointment with your wife.

The hairs on Joseph’s neck stand.

    JOSEPH
    What!

CLICK, Daniel hangs up.

Joseph SLAMS the phone down. Think. Grabs his keys.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A minivan is parked in the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Clare and Jennifer are enjoying homemade lattes - Jennifer’s little girl Maria playing an iPad game.

    CLARE
    He never, ever, gets up that early.

    JENNIFER
    You told me he was getting promoted, maybe he was just eager to make a good impression.
CLARE
And the house thing? I can’t believe he went so far as to looking into its value, he loves this house.

JENNIFER
I don’t mean to defend him, but you two were pretty much done at one point, he really could’ve just started looking into it.

A possibility.

JENNIFER
Look. Clare?
(beat)
Do you still love Joe?

Clare takes a moment... then positively nods.

JENNIFER
Then it’s worth more than a random early morning. He almost died for you. Let it go.

Clare stoops her head... and nods again. Makes sense.

Jennifer leans down to a large bag and takes a clothes iron out dumping it onto the kitchen counter, CLUNK.

JENNIFER
And here... before I forget.

CLARE
Thanks.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Daniel’s Mustang rolls up opposite Joseph’s house.

INT. MUSTANG - STATIONARY

DANIEL’S POV - at the house. Clare, on the doorstep waving to Jennifer who’s getting into the minivan.

Clare heads back inside closing the door.
INT. KITCHEN, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON
Clare walks in and eyes the clothes iron.
A painful memory, but as she picks it up --
-- a loud KNOCK on the front door startles her.
She tenses - but she knows what she has to do.

INT. JOSEPH’S SPEEDING SUV - SAME
Joseph drives like a Demon but his Blackberry starts RINGING.
Slows down and answers--

    JOSEPH
    --Hey, hon.

Bad news.

    JOSEPH
    What!
    (beat)
    Put him on.

Joseph pulls over.

INTERCUT WITH DANIEL IN THE PORCH - as Clare hands him the phone.

Daniel steps out of ear shot.

    DANIEL
    (into phone)
    Surprise.

    JOSEPH
    Get the Hell off my property.

    DANIEL
    What, you can make a house call but I can’t?
    (beat)
    All I gotta do is hold up my phone, hit play, and your ass is grass.

    JOSEPH
    Who do you think you are?

    DANIEL
    I’m the guy who knows your dirty little secret.
Joseph tenses.

    DANIEL
    I want my advance, now, and it’s double... or game over.

Joseph bites his tongue.

    DANIEL
    And another thing. I checked with recruitment. The job only pays
    four grand more than I get now. I want ten. Fix it.

Joseph’s anger smoulders like the heat of a furnace - needs a way out of this, now.

    JOSEPH
    There’s a coffee shop at 3rd and LaBrea. Be there in twenty
    minutes.

Joseph hangs up. Jams the heels of his hands into his eyes.

EXT. GRINDERS COFFEE - EVENING

Joseph storms up to an open air table, Daniel - as cool as shit - already sitting with a drink.

    JOSEPH
    You know that Clare doesn’t like you!

    DANIEL
    Not my problem, cuz.

Frustrated, Joseph pulls a chair out, sits down and leans in.

    JOSEPH
    Oh, yeah! Wanna know what is your problem. She knows something.

    DANIEL
    I don’t give a wet, rat’s ass--

    JOSEPH
    --I don’t think you understand. (beat)
    I’m not buying your lock up bullshit, not from a father of one
    with another on the way. (MORE)
If Clare puts two and two together and I get busted, they’re gonna wanna know where Nate... Snake... Wayne, whoever the fuck, came from. And even if I don’t talk, they’re gonna come shake down everyone at home... and in the office.

(beat)
What do you think’s gonna happen when they find out you two were bunked up in San Quentin together? Enjoy kissing your kids through a sheet of glass for the next fifty years.

Daniel’s face sinks, but Joseph’s one step ahead. He exhales -- this is big.

JOSEPH
Look. I’ve figured out what to do.

(beat)
Have... have you got a gun?

DANIEL
A gun? What, you’re gonna ice her yourself? How’s that gonna look, Einstein?

JOSEPH
Answer the question?

DANIEL
You’ve seen where I live.

JOSEPH
Is it registered?

DANIEL
I’m a convicted felon, dumbass.

Joseph sits back, uneasy.

JOSEPH
Clare and I have been going to therapy.

(beat)
Sometimes... victims of violent crime are known to spiral into depression... and... end their lives themselves, cos they can’t cope with what’s happened.

Daniel raises an eyebrow.
DANIEL
She survived a tumor and then shot herself?

JOSEPH
It’s a tragedy.

Joseph suddenly gets to his feet - but there’s more.

JOSEPH
We gotta be quick about this.
She’s asking questions she was never supposed to be asking.
(beat)
I’ll come get it later, and I’ll pay you the advance for it.

DANIEL
You can’t come to the house, Brit’s there.

JOSEPH
So tell her to take a walk.

DANIEL
She’s pregnant, asshole.

Joseph looms over the table.

JOSEPH
Well if you want your money, fix a place. And make sure there’s no cameras.

Joseph stalks away.

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV - STATIONARY - EVENING

Joseph has parked opposite his house. Sitting in the drivers seat on the phone, cruise tickets in his hand.

JOSEPH
What’s the earliest availability then, what if I upgraded?
(listens)
Okay, thanks, I’ll think about it.

He hangs up.

JOSEPH’S POV - back at his house. The living room light is on. A glimpse of Clare as she walks past the window.

Joseph dips his head to his lap. An envelope full of cash.
EXT. BILLY BOB’S BURGER BAR - NIGHT

A BUM with junkie eyes is leaning against a wall.

BUM
Spare change?

Joseph, holding a tray of food, shuffles past and approaches a table.

Daniel is sitting picking at a carton of onion rings.

Joseph sits down opposite.

DANIEL
You’re late.

JOSEPH
I was getting your money.

Joseph places an extra food bag onto Daniel’s tray.

Daniel returns the gesture by dumping a heavier bag onto Joseph’s tray.

DANIEL
Slugs are loose.
(beat)
Ever used one before?

JOSEPH
My old man’s a soldier, remember.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Daniel approaches his Mustang - but the front tire is flat.

DANIEL
Mother...

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV - MOVING

Joseph is driving - heavy fast food bag on the passenger seat.

EXT. DANIEL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel rolls up and parks.
INT. LIVING ROOM

Daniel hustles through the back door, closing it.

    DANIEL
    Brit’!

But suddenly, a muffled gunshot, TUNK, and a bullet SLAMS into Daniel’s back knocking him to the ground.

Joseph steps out from a shadow holding a cushion over the gun, his heart beating like a jack hammer.

Daniel GASPS like a beached carp.

    DANIEL
    You... you burst my tire.

Joseph advances, still holding the cushion over the gun.

    DANIEL
    Brit’... what about Brit’?

    JOSEPH
    He didn’t owe you any money, did he? Same old story, just a cheap, fuckin’ opportunist.

Joseph leans closer - superior...

    JOSEPH
    Think you can just threaten me, huh? Like the others.
    (beat)
    Should’a just dealt with all this myself.

Joseph fires again -- the slug blasting into Daniel’s chest, WUMP!

Daniel GROANS.

He EXHALES... and is dead.

Joseph drops the cushion and the gun but from the look on his face it wasn’t as easy as he thought.

He’s wearing leather gloves and scoots down taking the money bag out of Daniel’s pocket. Blood has stained the corner. He stuffs it into his own pocket.

Searches Daniel’s other pockets - finds his cell phone.
CLOSE ON PHONE: Joseph opens the VOICEMAIL menu, scans through it and deletes his own message.
Slips the phone into his pocket and makes for the door.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A stressed RECEPTION NURSE shakes her head at Britney whose standing before the desk crying and holding SCREAMING Chloe.

RECEPTION NURSE
I’m sorry, there’s just no record of your husband here.

BRITNEY
God, damn, it, I got a call from a Dr. Tapia, telling me my husband was involved in a car crash and I need to get my ass down here a-sap!

RECEPTION NURSE
I’m sorry, we don’t even have a Dr. Tapia registered here.

INT. JOSEPH’S SUV - MOVING - NIGHT

Joseph, adrenaline pumping, weaves through traffic.
A cell phone in his pocket starts RINGING. It’s Daniels.
Joseph pulls up at a red light and takes the phone out checking the screen: BRIT

Stuffs it back into his pocket and pulls away from the light, but suddenly --

-- Notices something on the other side of the road.
U-turns.

EXT. BILLY BOB’S BURGER BAR - NIGHT

Joseph steps out of the burger joint with two food bags.
Turns to the Bum and hands him one.

JOSEPH
Merry Christmas.
The Bum takes the bag.
Thanks, bro.

Joseph heads away as the Bum opens the bag and looks in.

BUM’S POV - Cash and a cell phone.

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door is unlocked from the outside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Joseph breezes into the living room holding a BILLY BOB’S BURGER bag but the TV is switched on, volume DEAFENING.

He steps over a vacuum and turns the volume down prompting Clare to walk in from the kitchen. Not wearing her bandage anymore.

JOSEPH

Hey.

CLARE

Oh. You scared me.

Clare gestures to the TV.

CLARE

Dr. Ruben said that if I’m home alone, turning the TV on loud so I can hear voices might help.

JOSEPH

I see.

(beat)

Look, I’m... sorry about Dan. I thought I’d be here, but got stuck with a client. I had to sign a contract... should’a told him to wait for me rather than bring it.

Clare shrugs and Joseph moves to diffuse the situation with a kiss to the forehead.

JOSEPH

Proud of you. First night alone.

Joseph holds up the food bag.

JOSEPH

And to celebrate... take-out.
CLARE
Great. I’m just gonna finish here.

Clare hits the vacuum button – it ROARS to life.

She turns towards the sofa, picks up a cushion roughing it up and --

-- That’s when the key falls out and hits the floor.

Nate’s key.

The copy of the front door key that Joseph was so desperately looking for.

Joseph quickly lurches forward stepping on it.

He scoots down and hits the vacuum’s power button, killing it’s juice.

Clare turns to him, inquisitive.

JOSEPH
I... I, ugh, didn’t wanna worry you but... I’m late because... I was almost in an accident.

CLARE
What!

JOSEPH
A car, ran a red... almost hit me.

CLARE
What, oh, my, God, are you okay, do you want to sit down?

Clare turns back to the sofa but Joseph pulls her back--

JOSEPH
--No, no, please. I’m okay.

(beat)
Think you could get me a glass of water, feeling a little dizzy.

CLARE
Sure.

Clare heads into the kitchen leaving Joseph alone.

He bends down, grabs the key and pockets it just as Clare comes back into the room and hands Joseph a glass of water.

He takes it and gulps it down.
JOSEPH
Thanks.
Puts the glass down next to the goldfish bowl.

JOSEPH
Listen, sweetheart.
(beat)
I was thinking about... maybe...
taking that cruise sooner, rather
than later.

CLARE
How soon?

JOSEPH
Well... maybe... the weekend?

CLARE
But Mom and Dad are coming again.
(beat)
Why the rush?

JOSEPH
I... just thought... with all that
you’ve been through, might be nice
for you to get away... a change of
scenery... help aid your recovery.
I worry about you.

Clare smiles - and once again is awash with that intense
sensation when things were good.

CLARE
Joe. That’s very sweet. I think I
need a little more time though.
I’m just not ready to travel yet.

JOSEPH
No... no problem.

But Clare moves closer, a twinkle in her eye. Takes Joseph’s
hand.

CLARE
However... I do think I’m ready for
something else...

Joseph is floored. He knows those doe eyes.

JOSEPH
What? Now?
CLARE
Screw the cleaning. What’s that saying, ‘no time like the present’.

She leads him out of the room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT
Joseph, awake, is laying in bed with Clare’s head on his chest. She has her eyes closed.

Together again. But who could sleep after a day like his.
Clare stirs and Joseph quickly snaps his eyes shut.
Clare sits up, restless.
Watches Joseph sleeping.
Seems content. Not a worry in the world.

INT. KITCHEN
Clare switches the light on. She’s wearing pajamas.
Approaches the clothes iron.
Slowly moves her hands to it -- touching it.
Takes a breath.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM
Clare flits back into the bedroom and Joseph shuts his eyes again - but when he opens them -- she’s gone.

INT. KITCHEN
Clare hangs Joseph’s freshly ironed shirt against the back of a door.
Pours coffee from a fresh pot and sips from a mug.
Puts the mug down and throws Joseph’s pants across the ironing board dipping a hand into a pocket but--
-- Her fingers touch something.
Something cold -- and small.
Slips a key out. Examines it.
Recognizes its contours. But it can’t be.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Clare edges through the dark.
Heads over to a change bowl and picks up a key chain comparing a key to the one in her hand.
The same key is already on the key chain.

INT. HALLWAY
Clare eases to the front door.
She takes a breath.
Raises her key hand.
Touches the key against the lock and pushes --
-- It slots in, perfectly.
This can’t be happening.
She turns the key to be sure, CLICK, the door is unlocked.
Clare GASPS as the door opens slightly, but SUDDENLY --
-- A hand from behind SLAMS the door shut, FWACK!

JOSEPH
What are you doing?

Clare turns around to face Joseph who’s only wearing shorts and a T-shirt, her past speculation now a solid belief.

CLARE
I didn’t hear him break in that morning, because he didn’t break in... did he?

She raises the key.

CLARE
He used this... to open the door.

JOSEPH
What? It’s just a spare I had cut.
CLARE
But we didn’t have any spare keys, Joe.

JOSEPH
I got it for my Dad.

CLARE
Your Dad?
(beat)
And he’ll confirm that if I call him?

Joseph shrugs her off.

JOSEPH
Just give me the key.

Joseph holds his hand out - but Clare clenches a fist around it.

CLARE
You know... I keep trying to convince myself that I didn’t hear a window smash... after he attacked me.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARE’S BEDROOM - MORNING

Clare is bloody and beaten but her eyes are open.

SOUND of glass SMASHING from the doorway downstairs.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HALLWAY, JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joseph is intrigued at Clare’s attention to detail.

CLARE
How could I hear a window smash... after he got in?
(beat)
Because... you smashed it... to make it look like he’d broken in.

JOSEPH
You’re being ridiculous.
CLARE
Am I? You wanted to check the value of the house because you were gonna sell it after I was gone.

JOSEPH
No, I thought we were divorcing--

CLARE
--Why do you want the key then?
(beat)
Afraid his fingerprints might be on it. Afraid his fingerprints might be on the key that I found in your pocket?

JOSEPH
They’re not.

CLARE
We’ll let the police be the judge of that.

Clare spins around to the door and opens it --
-- but Joseph’s hand SLAMS it shut again, FWACK!

Clare turns back to him but his tone darkens a notch.

JOSEPH
Clare. Give me the key.

Joseph’s stewing and he’s fast about to boil.

CLARE
(realizing)
Daniel... helped you... didn’t he?

Joseph - sweating bullets.

CLARE
How about that cruise? What were you gonna do... wait till we dock and then take off into Mexico?

Joseph - a raging bull, but Clare’s finally at the end of the line.

CLARE
Sorry I survived the surgery, Joe.
(beat)
Guess you hoped it’ll kill me for you--
--And with that, she suddenly BOLTS into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clare snatches the phone but Joseph races over to the base and rips the cable out of the wall.

Clare throws the phone at Joseph, dashes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Clare grabs the clothes iron - and as Joseph races after her, she throws it at him but he deflects it with his arm, BWOK!

She swipes a kitchen knife out of a block and slashes it at him.

JOSEPH
Clare, put the knife down--

CLARE
--Why, so you can kill me properly and make up some other bullshit story?
   (beat)
   You deceived me and you knew all along a judge would side with me, didn’t you?

Joseph’s silence betrays him worse than any comeback.

CLARE
You’ll never be half the man your father is.

Joseph snaps and suddenly makes a move but Clare whips the coffee pot off the machine and throws boiling water in his eyes.

Joseph YOWLS.

INT. HALLWAY

Clare sprints over to the alarm panel and double taps the panic code - but no BEEPS.

She punches it in again - but the display reads; INVALID...

Suddenly Joseph is in the doorway with his own knife.
Clare SCREAMS but she can’t make the front door without getting a blade in her back, so she --

-- Dashes up the stairs - Joseph stumbling after her.

INT. BATHROOM

The door CREAKS open and Joseph peers inside.

JOSEPH’S POV - empty.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

Joseph steps into the bedroom that he used to sleep in on his own, hand firmly around the knife handle.

He eyes the bed.

He squats and glances underneath.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Joseph walks up to the open doorway and scopes out the room.

A window overlooking the backyard is flapping open. Joseph races over to it and looks out.

JOSEPH’S POV - but there’s no ledge - she’d break a leg jumping.

Joseph turns back to the room.

His gaze falls upon a closet.

He approaches it. He grips the knife and--

-- suddenly whips the door open.

Clare SCREAMS and slashes her knife at him but Joseph sidesteps and punches her in the face, KWAP!

Clare crumples dropping her knife.

Joseph towers over her - blood is seeping out of her nose.

Joseph picks up her knife.

Clare GROANS.

Joseph steps out of the room.
Clare WAILS.

CLARE’S POV - blurry vision.

Joseph steps back holding a roll of duct tape.

Clare WEEPS.

Joseph kneels down on top of her, his weight pinning her.

JOSEPH
Wanna hear a new story?

He leans down speaking frightfully calculated.

JOSEPH
Woman suffering depression after violent attack goes missing.
(beat)
Local police and distraught husband find body at bottom of cliff.

Clare SCREAMS and fights him as he grabs her wrists and duct tapes them together.

CLARE
Please... please... Joe...

Clare SOBS as Joseph rips off a strip of tape she knows is for her mouth.

CLARE
Wait, wait, you forgot something.

She opens a fist showing him the key.

CLARE
Won’t they find this suspicious?

She suddenly whips the key into her mouth and swallows.

JOSEPH
NO!

Joseph seizes her throat and squeezes.

Clare tries to swallow.

Joseph tightens his grip – spit and saliva -- but she forces a swallow.

She COUGHS and SPLUTTERS – but her mouth is empty.
JOSEPH

Stupid... bitch!

Joseph grabs a fresh tape strip, SLAMS it over Clare’s mouth.
Moves down her body wrapping tape all the way around her back and over her chest, completely pinning her arms to her side.
Slides down to her ankles and duct tapes them together.
With her body secure, Joseph gets to his feet and heads out.

INT. GARAGE

Joseph switches the light on and heads for a roll of some of the old bedroom carpet.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Joseph, also carrying a bottle of bleach, dumps the carpet down and unrolls it revealing the dried blood stain.
Kneels beside Clare and unscrews the bleach cap.

JOSEPH

Traces of cleaning products were found in her lungs after a previously failed suicide attempt.

Joseph rips the tape off her mouth and pinches her nose.
Clare struggles but keeps her mouth shut.
She jars her head away but his grip is sturdy.
Her face is turning purple.
She parts her lips but Joseph is in with the bleach.
It burns - Clare spits - but it runs down the back of her throat.
She SCREAMS and GAGS.
Lolls onto her side and THROWS UP... the key glistens in a puddle of vomit.

CLARE

P... please... please--
But Joseph SLAMS another piece of tape over her mouth, wrapping it all the way around the back of her head and re-covering her mouth several times.

He gets up and grabs her by the ankles, dragging her onto the flat of the carpet roll--

-- Takes a knee.

JOSEPH

When Emma divorced me, I even had to pay her attorney fees.
(beat)
Fuckin’ believe that! She raped me... and I had to pay for it. You gonna pull the same shit too, huh, after everything I’ve worked for!
(beat)
I couldn’t even afford an apartment after her... and now you!

Clare is hysterical.

JOSEPH

Why can’t I have the woman back who didn’t want kids.
(beat)
What happened about not being the motherly type?

He grabs the edge of the carpet but looms over her...

JOSEPH

You. Deceived. Me.

And with that, he rolls the carpet all the way over her and wraps her inside it.

Grabs the duct tape and starts winding it around the carpet, securing her inside.

But as he gets to his feet -- a male VOICE from downstairs--

VOICE (O.S.)

--Hello!

Joseph is startled.

STAIRCASE

Joseph, at the top of the stairs, spots a neighborhood PATROL OFFICER at the open door. Glow of a siren from the street.
JOSEPH

Hey!

The Patrol Officer points his gun in Joseph’s direction but keeps it levelled at the floor.

PATROL OFFICER
Sir, I’m with A.D.F. Security, I need you to identify yourself.

JOSEPH
I’m Joseph Cosgrove, I live here.

PATROL OFFICER
Is there a problem at this location?

JOSEPH
No. Why?

PATROL OFFICER
Sir, I’m gonna need to see some I.D.

JOSEPH
Sure.

Joseph heads away and then returns and descends the stairs.

INT. CARPET ROLL
If only Clare could SCREAM louder.

INT. HALLWAY
Joseph hands the Patrol Officer his drivers license.

The Patrol Officer takes it noting Joseph’s coffee stained shirt. Eyes the license.

JOSEPH
What’s this about?

PATROL OFFICER
Got a code 4 from this location. Tried calling but the phone’s dead.

JOSEPH
A code 4?
PATROL OFFICER
It’s when someone cuts through the alarm cable. You have a secondary service that sends a silent alert back to HQ.

Joseph stunts his surprise.

JOSEPH
Right. Course. Must be faulty though, everything’s good here.

PATROL OFFICER
Mind if I take a quick look around?

JOSEPH
Feel free.

INT. LIVING ROOM
The Patrol Officer skirts through the living room. Seems in order.

INT. KITCHEN
The Patrol Officer edges through the kitchen, Joseph tagging behind.

Broken coffee pot on the floor.

JOSEPH
I ugh... burnt myself.

INT. HALLWAY
Patrol Officer steps back into the hall with Joseph.

PATROL OFFICER
Can I take a look upstairs?

JOSEPH
Be my guest.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM
The Patrol Officer hits the light and glances around.

No sign of disturbance.
INT. MASTER BEDROOM

The light’s already on.

The Patrol Officer walks into the room to find the rolled up carpet – with a person inside.

    PATROL OFFICER
    What the...

But before he can react, Joseph grabs the kitchen knife and PLUNGES it into the Patrol Officer’s back.

The Patrol Officer SCREAMS dropping his gun and collapsing with a THUMP!

Hands clench as his body spasms.

Clare SHRIEKS through the carpet.

Joseph picks up the gun and dumps it onto the bed --

-- But he spots something... along the bottom of the wall.

A line of wire has been severed – the alarm wire.

    JOSEPH
    Clever girl.

Leans down to some drawers opening one and removing clothes.

INT. GARAGE

Joseph clicks the light on again. His shorts are replaced by jeans and shoes. Goes for another roll of old carpet.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Joseph is wrapping duct tape around a second roll of carpet, securing the Patrol Officer’s body inside.

Glances to Clare’s roll, WHIMPERING coming from inside.

Joseph gets to his feet and reaches into a drawer removing a pair of black leather gloves. Slips them on and then heads out of the room...

FOOTSTEPS down the stairs. Clare frantically wriggles.

Manages to push her head out of the top of the carpet roll.
She rolls herself over, wriggling and writhing... more and more desperate.

Rolls over KNOCKING against a bedside table. As she struggles, she hits the table again, CLUNK... and Scott’s Bronze Star falls off landing next to her face.

It’s shaped like a starfish with five sharp points.

A lifeline. Struggles to push her hands up past her face.

Forces her hands out of the top of the carpet, her wrists still bound, but grabs the Bronze Star.

Angles the tip of the star’s sharp point onto the duct tape around her wrists and starts pushing it through the plastic strip.

Makes a hole and starts hacking at the tape, splitting it.

Wriggles out of the carpet roll even further.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Joseph is sitting in a Security Patrol Car.

Reverses it up the driveway as close to the house as he can and then pops the trunk open.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Joseph steps into the room, surveys the two duct taped carpets.

Clare is back inside her carpet roll but writhing wildly.

Joseph steps to her and kneels.

He takes the carpet into both arms... and then lifts.

Clare SCREAMS through the tape but Joseph heads towards the door.

He angles the carpet sideways to get through the doorway, but as he does --

-- a gunshot rings out, BLAM!

Joseph wobbles - but keeps his grip.

He pauses, looking down to find a small, smoking hole in the side of the carpet.
But what’s even more disturbing -- is the bloody stain on his T-shirt.

Joseph glances back to the bed - the Patrol Officer’s gun has gone. Panic in his eyes.

Turns back toward the stairs. Takes a shaky step forward but collapses... tumbling down the staircase and taking the roll of carpet with him.

INT. HALLWAY

Joseph and the carpet land at the bottom with a THUD!

Joseph has fallen against a wall, his breathing heavy and labored.

Clare, SOBBING, wriggles halfway out of the carpet, her wrists free of duct tape, one hand clutching the gun.

She drops the steel and pulls the tape off her mouth GASPING for air. Focuses on the man she married.

    CLARE
    You... got up early that morning...
    to go arrange it... didn’t you?

Joseph’s eyes close.

    CLARE
    My... my-- murder?

But Joseph’s chest stops expanding and his head droops.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

A sea of sirens.

INT. AMBULANCE - STATIONALY

Clare is laying in the back of an ambulance.

EXT. JOSEPH AND CLARE’S HOUSE

Two CORONERS walk a stretcher with a body bag on top of it through the doorway - Detective Walker following behind.

The stretcher is placed into a van.

FADE OUT:
FADE IN:

INT. CLARE’S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Clare, alone, is sitting on the edge of her bed - legs dangling, toes brushing against shiny floor. A large band aid over her the side of her forehead.

Still and solemn.

As if the events over the last few months are only just catching up on her.

She finally reaches for her iPhone - a measure we get the feeling she’s been contemplating for a while.

Dials a number.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
411 information, which state please?

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY

A bright, warm day. Clare is sitting facing EMMA, a dainty blonde in her forties and who’s been crying. Wipes her eyes with a tissue.

EMMA
Thanks for telling me. Would’ve been quite the shock seeing it on the news.

Clare nods - but she tilts her head, curious.

CLARE
Emma? Was... was your divorce with Joe, really... the only way... after the doctor diagnosed him?

EMMA
I know it sounds it harsh and I did feel guilty.
(beat)
We tried some treatments, but back then, nothing worked. Joe got fed up. We ended up arguing. Daily.

Clare can relate.

CLARE
You didn’t want to adopt?
Emma takes a deep, deep breath, the kind of breath you take when about to reveal something big.

EMMA
I was adopted.
(beat)
Having my own children wasn’t just a desire, more... a need. My own flesh and blood, who’d always be there, no matter what.
(beat)
Now I have two beautiful sons.

Clare smiles for her.

CLARE
Before he confessed, he always told everyone that he divorced you... because you cheated on him.

Emma is almost humored.

EMMA
Of course.
(beat)
During the divorce he slipped into a hole. I worried he might even harm himself. He kept saying his father was a war hero, yet, he was only half a man. In the end, I decided to keep his thing a secret... incase it embarrassed him. We agreed to tell people we just grew apart.

She shrugs her shoulders.

EMMA
But... of course he told you that. He was bitter about the whole divorce... because it wasn’t really his fault. He couldn’t help it.

Clare takes Emma’s hand across the table, finally privy to the truth.

CLARE
It wasn’t yours either. You had your reasons.
(beat)
Joe just let it get the better of him.

Both women connect on a higher level.
Two wives.
Two broken marriages.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - MORNING
Sunlight reflecting off glass.

INT. JOSEPH’S NEW OFFICE - MORNING
Joseph’s vacant desk.
It seems sad.
SOUND of the office door opening --
-- And Michael slowly edges into FRAME holding a box full of stuff.
Places his box on the desk and plops down into the executive chair.
He smiles - but it’s spiritless.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END