

T H E D Y I N G G A M E

by
Adam Stephen Kelly

FOURTH DRAFT

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

PANTING.

Feet run across a leaf-strewn forest bed.

A YOUNG WOMAN sprints through the trees...

For her life.

She's dirty and her face is awash with wet grime and tears.

Handbag swinging wildly, she's running from something. Or someone. But the force giving chase we cannot see.

She continues to power on straight, where a towering tree stands imposingly right in the middle of the direction she's running.

The woman throws herself behind the tree and leans back against the bark.

She closes her eyes and tries to control her breathing, quietening down and regaining her wits.

When...

From behind the tree, a HAND whips a length of BARBED WIRE around the trunk and the young woman's neck. Another hand catches the end of the wire and pulls back, all in one fluid motion.

SMASH TO BLACK

MOMENTS LATER

The young woman is sat on the ground, back against the tree trunk, arms slumped at her sides. Lifeless. Dead. We cannot see above her shoulders.

A PAIR OF LEGS, those of a man, walk into frame.

The woman's open handbag is tossed to the ground before us, followed by a miscellany of items from within...

Then, a CONCERT TICKET hits the dirt. We hang on this clearly readable ticket for a moment before we...

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - DAY

A vibrant blue summer sky carries the beaming sun as it shines down upon a stylish hatchback that drives along a winding country road.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

AMELIA, who looks like she could very well be Paris Hilton's BFF, has the wheel, while PEPPER, natural beauty, rides shotgun. REILLY sits in the back. They are all of college age.

We join them in mid-conversation...

PEPPER

-- Yeah, so you keep saying, but there's no way she'd get with you.

REILLY

And why's that?

PEPPER

Just look at you.

REILLY

Oh, okay, thanks a lot. I appreciate the confidence boost, really.

Amelia laughs heartily.

PEPPER

No, not like that. Look, come on, you've got to be the nerdiest of the nerds.

REILLY

So I like video games and movies. Who doesn't? Why should that stop an honest guy's chances?

PEPPER

It's not just your video games and *Star Wars* and whatever of the *Living Dead*... it's the geek chic.

REILLY

The what?

Reilly looks down at what he's wearing, looks confused through his George Romero glasses, but sure enough Pepper's words reign true.

PEPPER

Do you honestly think a girl of any class is gonna look at you with those glasses and think, "what a catch"?

REILLY

What's wrong with them?

PEPPER

Hello? Only crinkly old college professors wear glasses that thick.

REILLY

But they're fashionable.

PEPPER

Yeah, in your circles maybe, but not in Misty's.

AMELIA

Only a nerd would get laid by a nerd with those on their face. You wanna look hot.

REILLY

I don't know any girls like me.

PEPPER

Then unless you wanna live out your days glued to *World of Warcraft*, I suggest you change.

Reilly opens his mouth, but for a beat no words come out.

Then...

REILLY

Change?

AMELIA

Get sexified.

REILLY

What?

PEPPER

Wear something that's actually appealing to the opposite sex.

REILLY

Like?

PEPPER

You just need to match your style with what makes you look good.

REILLY

Just? That's my problem, apparently.

Reilly sighs, annoyed.

REILLY (CONT'D)

Let's just change the subject.

PEPPER
If you insist, Astro Boy.

Amelia suddenly leans forward at the windshield...

She spots something...

AMELIA
What's --

A POP. The car VIOLENTLY JOLTS and leans down to one side, forcing Amelia back hard against her seat.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Shit!

She stamps on the breaks instinctively.

The car SCREECHES as it slows on the empty road...

...and comes to a quick stop at the side of the lane, but still to one side.

Pepper, mouth agape.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
What the fuck was that?!

Amelia bolts out of the car and stands before the hood, surveying her vehicle for damage...

The front left tire has BLOWN.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Pepper and Reilly both open their doors and step outside.

PEPPER
What is it?

AMELIA
Take a look at the tire.

Pepper shuts the door and steps forward to look at the tire as Reilly walks around to join his friends.

They each inspect the now useless wheel.

REILLY
Great...

But something's stuck in it...

AMELIA
What the fuck is that?

Amelia slowly leans in to the tire, fingers primed to collect something from the rubber...

But Reilly pushes her hand away.

REILLY
Don't touch that!
(beat)
It's barbed wire. D'you have
your tetanus shot back in school?

AMELIA
I can't remember that far.

REILLY
You could snag yourself and have
all kinds of bacteria in your
blood.

AMELIA
Well who the hell left that in
the middle of the road?

REILLY
Have you seen where we are?
Long, empty roads, no houses, no
cars for miles, and now this.

Amelia and Pepper check their surroundings. It's been oblivious to them before in the shock of the incident, but they stand in the shadow of A HUGE WOODLAND, the sun can barely shine through.

AMELIA
What happened to the sun?

REILLY
Yeah, barbed wire on the road
doesn't look so out of place
here, does it?

PEPPER
You watch too many movies.
Alright, relax. Okay, the tire's
out, so the next step is --

REILLY
Put on the spare.

PEPPER
Right.

Pepper and Reilly turn to Amelia.

Her eyes wonder and she swallows hard.

REILLY
 You... don't have a spare, do
 you?

AMELIA
 (ashamedly)
 No.

REILLY
 Well that's just great.

PEPPER
 Alright, alright, calm it. We'll
 just have to make a call and get
 a spare out to us.

REILLY
 Out here? And I know you're not
 gonna have any reception. Look.

Reilly pulls out his cell phone. He's right, no bars of
 signal.

Pepper and Amelia take out their phones and check for
 coverage.

Amelia shakes her head.

PEPPER
 Shit.

AMELIA
 Now what?

VOICE (O.S.)
 There's a service shop nearby.

The trio turn around in a flash, startled, fixing their
 eyes upon the MAN who stands before them.

MAN
 Oh, I'm sorry guys, didn't mean
 to startle you.

PEPPER
 That's alright...

MAN
 I was passing through and
 couldn't help but overhear your
 dilemma.

PEPPER
 Yeah, tire's out, we're just
 about stranded. You said
 something about a shop?

MAN

That's right. The road ahead goes right to it, but that's not much use on foot... But you can cut through the woods and you're there in twenty.

AMELIA

(uneasily)

The woods?

MAN

Yes indeed, just follow the path through them trees and you're at bingo.

PEPPER

Thanks, we appreciate that. So what are you doing out here? To us this is pretty much the middle of nowhere.

MAN

I can't argue with that, it's like the back of beyond around here, but that's how we like it. As for what I'm doing out here... well, what can I say? There's nothing else like a walk in the fresh country air.

REILLY

Fair enough.

MAN

Exactly, exactly. What about you guys?

PEPPER

We're headed to a gig up at the Coliseum. We've come a long way, but this is the first hiccup.

MAN

Damn. I sure hope old Ernie can fix you up.

(beat)

I don't want to take up anymore of your time, you're gonna have to get going, I guess, but it was nice meeting you three.

REILLY

See ya.

PEPPER

Bye.

The man smiles and nods his farewell, then strolls off up the road.

REILLY
I'd hate to have missed that
dude.

AMELIA
There's no way I'm going in
there.

PEPPER
You mean the woods?

AMELIA
(facetiously)
Yes, the woods.

PEPPER
What choice do we have?

REILLY
Yeah, what are we gonna do, walk
to the Coliseum?

PEPPER
The guy said we can get the car
fixed up if we cut through the
woods, so that's what we've gotta
do.

AMELIA
But who knows what's in there.

PEPPER
Amelia, it's the middle of the
day and there's three of us,
okay? If we don't go now, we'll
never make it.

REILLY
If you're not coming, stay in the
car, we'll be back soon.

AMELIA
No!

REILLY
Then come on.

Reilly and Pepper make their way across the road to the woods. Amelia stays by the car for a second, sighs, then follows with haste.

The trio enter the massive woodland...

EXT. WOODLAND - A LITTLE LATER

Pepper, Amelia and Reilly walk along a dirt path amidst the dense forest.

REILLY
Is this really that bad?

AMELIA
Don't be an ass all your life,
Reilly.

PEPPER
Knock it off, guys, just focus on
sticking to the path so we can
get back.

Reilly pulls a juvenile face at Amelia, who shrugs it off.

AMELIA
I don't like having to leave
Princess alone out there.

REILLY
Princess?

AMELIA
My car.

REILLY
Princess? As in Princess Di?

AMELIA
Who?

Reilly just shakes his head, dumbfounded.

PEPPER
Don't worry, it'll be fine.

Reilly suddenly TRIPS over something and falls flat on his face. The girls look back and burst into hysterics.

REILLY
Damn roots.

PEPPER
You should watch where you're
going.

REILLY
Funny.

Reilly gets back to his feet and dusts himself off. Pepper and Amelia turn back around to continue the walk, but...

They stand in a junction where there are many paths leading onto different routes through the woods.

REILLY (CONT'D)

Where the hell are we supposed to go now?

AMELIA

That guy only mentioned one path.

They scan their surroundings, looking up each of the paths that lead on before them.

PEPPER

Right, he said to follow the path straight through, so surely we keep going forward?

REILLY

I guess so.

Pepper takes the lead and begins walking the path that continues up ahead through the trees.

LATER...

Pepper, Amelia and Reilly continue to journey through the woods, looking at the enclosed area around them as they press on.

Amelia lets out a loud sigh.

Reilly and Pepper look at each other, scheming. Reilly smirks and nods at Pepper, she returns the look. They both suddenly stop in their tracks and Amelia, oblivious, continues on...

Reilly and Pepper try and hold in their laughter as Amelia gains more and more distance... But then --

A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM.

Amelia. She wails at something in front of her. Reilly and Pepper race over.

PEPPER

Amelia, what is it?

Amelia leaps at Pepper and wraps her arms around her.

A BODY, that of a male, lies face down in a bed of leaves.

REILLY

Oh Jesus.

PEPPER

Fuck. Reilly, go see if --

REILLY

I'm not going over there.

The body begins to painfully GROAN.

PEPPER
Shit, help him!

Reilly rushes to the body and kneels down beside it.

Pepper holds the frightened Amelia close and tight.

REILLY
Hey mister, are you alright?

The body slowly rises and Reilly helps him up to his feet... to reveal... a scruffy man in his thirties.

REILLY (CONT'D)
You okay?

SCRUFFY MAN
Where am I?

REILLY
You're... uh, in the woods.

SCRUFFY MAN
The woods? Oh, yeah... the woods.

PEPPER
What happened?

SCRUFFY MAN
What happened to me? I, I... I don't know.

REILLY
You were just lying here, with your face in the ground.

SCRUFFY MAN
I was? Damn, I can't remember. Wait, I do remember falling, tripping maybe. I guess I must have stumbled and... hit my head on a rock or something.

REILLY
I guess so.

SCRUFFY MAN
Thanks for helping me up there, buddy.

Reilly nods in approval.

PEPPER
Hey, you may be cut, let me have a look.

Pepper goes over to the scruffy man. He bows his head and she inspects it for any damage.

SCRUFFY MAN
You three college kids?

PEPPER
We are.

SCRUFFY MAN
You're not from around these parts, are you?

PEPPER
Nope, we're not.

SCRUFFY MAN
And I bet my bottom dollar you're on your way to the West River Coliseum.

Pepper shines a slight smile.

PEPPER
How'd you guess?

SCRUFFY MAN
That's the only reason folks your age come by here. So, what do you three study?

PEPPER
Well, I'm working towards being a nurse.

SCRUFFY MAN
A nurse? So that's why you got your pretty little eagle eyes on my teakettle.

PEPPER
I guess so... And you're right as rain, not a scratch.

SCRUFFY MAN
Well thank you very much, --

PEPPER
Pepper.

SCRUFFY MAN
Pepper. I like that. I'm Red.

PEPPER
Red? Why Red?

REILLY
Maybe it's because he's Irish.

RED

What?

REILLY

Don't worry.

RED

Well, Pepper, if you weren't so sweet you'd make sugar taste just like salt. Or pepper. How about that? I think you'll make a fine nurse someday.

PEPPER

Thanks, I sure hope so.

Pepper and RED share a smile.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

So how do you feel?

RED

I'm fine, honestly.

(beat)

Well, I suppose I'll go and find my way back then. It was nice meeting you.

PEPPER

How far have you gotta go?

RED

Oh not far, I hope. No, maybe five minutes or so unless I'm barking up the wrong tree. Let's all hope I know these woods as good as I think.

PEPPER

Reilly, go with Red, make sure he doesn't have another accident.

Reilly's face shows that he is far from keen on that proposal.

RED

No, really, it's fine.

PEPPER

I insist. Who knows what could happen out here if you have another fall.

RED

I suppose you're right... and if I'm honest, I think I may have just tweaked my leg a little.

(MORE)

RED (CONT'D)

This place can get pretty dangerous. It's not so hard to run into the wrong folk around here. I appreciate that.

(re Amelia and Pepper)

Goodbye you two, enjoy the Coliseum.

Pepper smiles as Red walks off. Reilly stays put.

REILLY

(a stern whisper)

Stay here.

Reilly then follows Red.

MOMENTS LATER

Red and Reilly walk side-by-side along a pathway.

RED

I think it's just up here.

(beat)

So your name's... what was it your friend Pepper said?

REILLY

Reilly.

RED

Ah, that's it. Well, I sure hope it's just up here, I wouldn't want to keep you from your friends.

REILLY

It's okay, I can find my way back along the trail.

RED

So what do you think of Pepper?

REILLY

What do you mean?

RED

What do you think I mean, son? She's a pretty little thing ain't she?

REILLY

Oh... right. Yeah, she is.

RED

Yep. I'd sure like to fuck her.

Reilly stops still as stone.

REILLY

Excuse me?

Red also stops.

RED

I said, I'd sure like to fuck her. Wouldn't you?

Red steps right up to Reilly's face.

RED (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you? I said wouldn't you like to fuck her? Wouldn't you?

Reilly stares blankly into Red's glaring eyes.

RED (CONT'D)

No? Your eyes telling me no? Are you a faggot? Some kind of faggot? Are you a faggot? Yeah, I bet you are. You and your little four-eyed faggot face. And what was that you said to me? "Because I'm Irish"? Irish? Fucking Irish?

Red grabs hold of Reilly's head and DRIVES HIS FACE INTO A TREE.

Reilly drops to the ground.

RED (CONT'D)

Do I look Irish to you, you mother fucker? Do I?

Red KICKS REILLY'S HEAD LIKE A FOOTBALL, over and over.

A barrage of full-force boots cave in his skull and his face is awash with BLOOD.

Red continues his assault even after Reilly would surely be dead.

RED (CONT'D)

(whilst kicking)

You stupid fuck.

Red finally stops the onslaught and looks down at the dead teenager floating in a sea of blood. Red smiles to himself.

BACK TO

Amelia and Pepper. They stand awaiting Reilly's return, right where he left them.

AMELIA

How long has he been gone?

PEPPER

Five minutes maybe. The guy said it was about five minutes ahead, and he's gotta come back remember.

AMELIA

Can't we just follow the path and meet Reilly on his way back? I don't like just standing here.

PEPPER

Alright, we'll go, but let's hope he's right dead ahead.

The girls take the path that Red led Reilly along.

MINUTES LATER

We rejoin Amelia and Pepper as they walk deeper into the forest.

AMELIA

The quicker we get out of here the better. I hate this place. And that guy, what was with him?

PEPPER

Red? He seemed fine to me.

AMELIA

Didn't you see the way he was looking at you and smiling? What a perve. And what kind of a name is "Red"?

PEPPER

I thought he was sweet.

AMELIA

Yeah, sweet for something, that's for sure. He had a... an ultimate motive.

PEPPER

Ulterior.

AMELIA

Whatever. He was definitely trying to get into your pants.

PEPPER

I don't see how a little smile can make someone a pervert.

AMELIA

It's all in their eyes. If you look carefully enough, it's easy to spot.

Suddenly, Red emerges from the trees ahead of them.

PEPPER

Red.

RED

Where did he go?

PEPPER

What?

RED

Your friend... Reilly, where did he go?

PEPPER

But he was with you.

RED

He's not with you? One second he was there, and the next he was gone, out of sight.

PEPPER

How could he leave you just like that? He didn't fall did he?

RED

He must have got bored and gone back for you two... but I guess he got lost.

Something catches Amelia's eye.

PEPPER

Why couldn't he have some patience for once?

Amelia steadily steps over to some bushes.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Amelia?

A BLOODY HAND hangs out of the bushes. Amelia SCREAMS.

Red GRIPS AMELIA BY THE THROAT with both hands and begins to SQUEEZE the life out of her.

Pepper CHARGES AND LEAPS at Red from behind and tries to WRESTLE Amelia free, then pulls back on his neck, breaking one hand away from Amelia's throat.

Red retracts his free hand and THROWS HIS FIST at Amelia, sending her FLYING BACKWARDS, unconscious.

Pepper continues to pull back on the neck of Red, but with Amelia out of the way, he THROWS HER TO THE GROUND. She lands face down in the leaves beside the bushes.

Red climbs onto Pepper's back and lies on top of her. He shoves her face into the dirt by her hair and laughs.

RED

Oh look, your friend was here all along.

Red reaches out and grabs the dead hand, then drags the BLOODY BODY OF REILLY out from the bushes.

Reilly's dead face stares blindly into Pepper's eyes. Tears begin to fall and she cries for her life.

RED (CONT'D)

You're so dead it's funny. But, pretty thing, first we're gonna get to know each other a little better.

Red maneuvers himself atop Pepper's back and begins to RAPE HER, pressing his face against hers with his mouth agape. Saliva dribbles out onto Pepper's face, then Red rests his tongue against her cheek.

RED (CONT'D)

Do you like that? Huh? Do you like that, cunt?

Pepper VOMITS.

Red laughs maniacally and with one hand sticks three fingers into his mouth and gags, heaves, then THROWS UP all over Pepper's face. He laughs again, then continues the assault.

Out of nowhere, WHAM! Amelia PUNTS Red in the head with all her might. Red falls sideways off Pepper's back and rolls onto the dirt.

AMELIA

Pepper!

Amelia, tears in her own eyes, helps Pepper up, her face covered and her hair tangled in dirt, spit and vomit.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Come on, Pepper, come on.

The girls make a run for it as Red gets back to his feet.

Blood trickles down from a corner of Red's mouth. He spots Pepper and Amelia flee and sprints after them.

Pepper and Amelia zoom into the trees with Red hot on their tail. *They dare not look back.*

The girls run at top speed to a clearing and the sun beams down on them, illuminating the grunge on their bodies. They fly across the clearing and back into another section of dense woodland.

Red runs across the clearing, the girls no longer in sight.

Pepper and Amelia flee for their lives past tree after tree.

Amelia looks behind her and Red is nowhere to be seen.

Gone.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

I think we lost him.

A GIANT TREE with a particularly thick trunk is up ahead.

PEPPER

(pointing to the tree)

There.

Pepper and Amelia make a mad dash for the huge tree and dive behind it.

The girls exhaustively lean back against the safety of the bark and quietly regain their breath.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

He's gone?

AMELIA

He was when I looked back.

Other than the tune of the birds, silence...

CRUNCH.

A twig snaps somewhere close.

Amelia GASPS and the girls turn to each other with wide, frightened eyes.

Then, a ROAR as Red appears at the other side of the tree WILDLY SWINGING A SLEDGEHAMMER.

A heavy THUMP as the tool collides with the tree.

Pepper and Amelia SPRING back into motion, but SPRINT in opposite directions from each other.

Red takes after Amelia with the sledgehammer... She has some distance...

In the background, Pepper disappears into the trees.

Amelia looks back over her shoulder at Red.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
What do you want from me? What
do you want?

She looks again at the advancing Red, then faces front.

Suddenly, a SNAP like a whip crack and Amelia flies head-over-heels, tumbling through the air and landing violently. She immediately CRIES in pain.

Amelia's ankles are SLICED OPEN, bleeding profusely.

Between the two trees she has just passed, a BARBED TRIP WIRE is tied in between.

Red reduces his run to a slow walk with accomplishment etched on his face.

Amelia looks at her bloody ankles and then sees Red approaching.

She throws her arms ahead of her and drives her fingernails into the dirt, then pulls her whole body along the forest floor.

Red reaches Amelia and she continues to drag herself along to escape.

He GIGGLES GHOULISHLY.

Red forces the length of barbed wire off the two trees. He doesn't even flinch as blood seeps out of his fists.

Red stands over Amelia as she crawls, then wraps the rusty wire around her neck like it was a block of cheese or a chicken bone.

He steadily pulls on two ends of wire wrapped around his fists... Amelia's neck constricts and bleeds.

Red looks to the sky with a euphoric expression.

Amelia GARGLES under the pressure and blood begins to emerge from her mouth.

Red closes his eyes and tilts his head down to Amelia, then JERKS BACK.

In an instant, blood EXPLODES out of Amelia's neck and then GUSHES OUT as her jugular vein is SEVERED.

The sound of the slashing brings a smile to Red's face, then he releases the wire and opens his eyes.

Amelia's body slumps into lifelessness.

BACK TO

Pepper, racing through the trees, zooming past her surroundings.

A SQUELCH. Pepper falls face first onto the ground. She looks back to find REILLY'S CORPSE.

She's ran back the way she came.

Pepper lets out a horrifying SCREAM.

ON RED, still beside Amelia's body. He hears the scream and turns to attention, follows his ears.

BACK TO

Pepper. She gets to her feet and bursts back into a sprint, dashing through the woods as fast as her legs can carry her.

Then, RED APPEARS IN FRONT OF HER, like a wall, out of nowhere, still brandishing the sledgehammer.

Red SWINGS the sledgehammer, Pepper barely avoids it, leaping backwards out of harm's way.

Pepper instantly gets back up and runs like hell away from the murderer.

He gives chase.

Pepper manages to get a little distance on Red and enters a clearing with a large FALLEN TREE, all hollowed out.

Without hesitation, Pepper bolts onto her knees at the tree and crawls inside, just as Red emerges into the clearing.

Red stops and scans his surroundings, then focuses his attention on the fallen tree.

He wonders around it... circling it... sliding his free hand along the dead bark...

Inside, Pepper sits in the foetal position drawing silent breaths and shivering with fear.

Red's footsteps suddenly stop... then silence... then a BOOM as the sledgehammer strikes the tree trunk.

Red repeatedly THROWS the hammer down onto the tree.

Pepper crawls out of the tree trunk and into the light like an animal fleeing its habitat, *like prey*.

Pepper and Red stand off with only the fallen tree in between them. They stare deep into each other's eyes.

Red grins.

RED
Here little piggy.

Red SNORTS like a pig and laughs.

The killer lays his sledgehammer across the tree trunk.

RED (CONT'D)
Go on, take it.

Red keeps the smile on his face and continues to gaze at Pepper. She glances at the sledgehammer, then looks back into his eyes.

Pepper makes a grab for the hammer, but so does Red.

They grip the handle with both hands at the same time.

Red starts to lift it up with ease, overpowering Pepper.

RED (CONT'D)
I don't think so.

Pepper suddenly lets go of the sledgehammer and pushes it forward with everything she's got, catching Red off guard and sending him STUMBLING BACKWARDS.

Pepper JETS from the fallen tree and runs out of the clearing and back into heavy woodland.

Pepper runs like the wind through the dense woods, but it begins to thin out with every step she takes and more and more sunlight pours in...

Red is nowhere to be seen.

Pepper continues on straight and the woods still become thinner and thinner and now an opening is just up ahead, an exit, freedom.

Pepper reaches the opening and into...

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Pepper runs onto it without a care in the world for oncoming traffic, but there is none.

She races up the road and there it is, PRINCESS, Amelia's car, still parked in the same place as it was left.

Pepper scampers to the car and frantically tries to open the door.

Locked.

PEPPER
Shit, the keys.

Pepper looks back and forth between the car and the woods.

PEPPER (CONT'D)
Amelia.

She scurries back into...

EXT. WOODLAND - A MOMENT LATER

Pepper cautiously creeps through the trees, eyes peeled.

Now, after taking the new route, the clearing that Amelia and Pepper hustled across is already visible.

Pepper treads carefully to the clearing, then looks in all directions as if it were a road... then passes quickly across.

And there it is, in the distance, sticking out like a sore thumb, the CORPSE OF AMELIA.

Pepper spots her friend's body and stumbles, she leans against a tree for support and fights for breath, almost hyperventilating.

She realizes she's all alone now.

She looks like she's going to be sick. She bows over and WRETCHES, but dry heaves.

She hocks and spits, then moves towards Amelia's cadaver.

Beside the body, Pepper drops to her knees and breaks down, void of the caution she took to get there.

Her hand reluctantly enters a pocket on Amelia's person and returns clutching CAR KEYS.

Pepper takes one last look into the dead eyes of her friend and stands, then backs away. BUT...

A MAN APPEARS BEHIND HER.

It's the walker. She backs into him. She gasps and turns to see him, relief writes itself on her face.

PEPPER
Oh, thank God.

But he clutches a RIFLE. Pepper spots it.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Where did you get that? Have you seen him? He's gone after me, he's killed my friends, he's killed Reilly and Amelia. You've got to help me, please!

Pepper throws herself into the walker's arms and holds him tightly, eyes shut, but he stares widely over her shoulder.

WALKER

Damn, my brother's two points up.

Pepper's eyes open in a flash and she slowly steps away from him...

PEPPER

What?

WALKER

My brother's got two points and I got shit.

Pepper's face drops.

He THROWS Pepper to the ground.

PEPPER

No, not you...

WALKER

What, you thought I was gonna save you? You thought I was gonna be the knight in shining armor? The hero? I'm not a hero. The world doesn't make heroes, and this is a family business.

PEPPER

Fuck you.

The walker smiles.

WALKER

Now I do believe I found you first, which means I get to collect this point. Damn bastard's still gonna be winning two to one.

PEPPER

You sick fuck! You bastard!

WALKER

Calm down, pretty thing, it's not personal, it's just sport. They say madness doesn't come with age, doll, and you're just prey.

PEPPER

I said fuck you!

WALKER

Red's gonna be pissed that I killed you. He was looking forward to taking his time with you, I know it, cut you up a little. He likes that.

Steve strokes his gun like it's a pet, then puts it to his line of sight and takes aim at Pepper's head, her eyes closed.

STEVE

Game on.

Steve's index finger presses slowly on the trigger...

Then...

He YELPS, and it's almost a WHEEZE.

The rifle falls to the ground and his eyes widen.

Pepper opens her eyes.

A HAND removes a COMBAT KNIFE from deep in his back and red expands through his shirt.

He drops to his knees and falls to the ground, revealing...

RED STANDING BEHIND WITH THE KNIFE.

RED

Game over, brother.

In Red's other hand is a length of bloody barbed wire.

PEPPER

You... you killed your own fucking brother.

RED

Half.

(beat)

Now, I just pulled this wire out of your friend's throat. What was her name... Amelia? I just want you to know that she bled good.

(MORE)

RED (CONT'D)

It was a real bloodbath when this wire cut through her neck, you could've swam in it. And you know what? I'd really like an action replay of that moment, when that blood poured out of her like the River Nile or some shit. Like a pig.

Red bends over Pepper and fidgets with the barbed wire.

RED (CONT'D)

So I'm just gonna tie you up here and let you savour the moment too.

Pepper spits on Red's face. He wipes it off and licks his hand.

PEPPER

You fucking sick bastard.

RED

Thank you, sweet pea.

Red binds Pepper's hands tightly together with the wire.

RED (CONT'D)

Don't you move now, stay still, or those barbs will stick into your wrists like a pincushion.

He steps back over to the dead body of his half brother.

RED (CONT'D)

Yep, he was half my brother. We had different mothers. Kyle was his name, never quite got the hang of the family tradition. He killed quickly, usually with that gun I see your pretty eyes glaring at. He never had any fun, never enjoyed the thrill of the chase, the thrill of the hunt. But anyhow, who gives a fuck about him, the cunt's dead now, yep, and I dare say you're about to join him. But I'm gonna take my time.

Red KICKS Pepper onto her back, she cries in pain as the barbed wire restraints penetrate her hands with the weight.

He drags his half-brother's corpse to his knees by his hair and holds him over Pepper.

He looks over his bloody knife as it twinkles in a beam of sunlight, then...

He DIGS the knife into his brother's throat and begins to JAGGEDLY CUT along the flesh, slowly.

The wound BLEEDS OUT as the flesh is severed, dripping crimson all over Pepper with a PITTER-PATTER like rain.

She spits out blood that drops into her mouth, while Red looks to the sky with that euphoric expression again, ears perked, savoring the sound of the bloodletting...

Red watches the bleed out for a moment, then simply tosses the body aside like trash.

RED (CONT'D)

My God, you've made me wanna fuck you even more than before. No bitch to get in the way this time, no, she's too busy being fucking dead, ain't she? I think I'm gonna doll you up a little more first.

With his back turned to us, Red kneels down to his brother's body and maneuvers in some way with the knife, as if he's sawing something...

A beat and a CLICK. Like bone.

Red turns back and faces Pepper, and in his hand he holds...

A SEVERED THUMB.

Fleshy tissue and bone all exposed.

He mounts Pepper like a cage fighter and runs the gory thumb suggestively all over her body... then her face... then her lips...

RED (CONT'D)

Eat it.

Red presses the thumb against her lips, but she rejects the force feeding.

RED (CONT'D)

Fucking eat it.

Red presses harder and pushes the thumb into Pepper's mouth, then seals her lips and jaw tight with his hand.

RED (CONT'D)

Is it good? Do you like that?

Red moves in close as if to kiss her or even swap the thumb from her mouth to is... but Pepper KNEES HIM IN THE CROTCH.

Red BELLOWS in distress and Pepper spits the thumb into his face, then he topples over her, almost crushing her head. She uses all her upper body strength to pick herself up.

And there it is.

Right in front of her eyes, beside Amelia's body...

THE SLEDGEHAMMER.

She darts over to the tool as the blood from the posthumous throat cutting drips down her.

Pepper grabs the sledgehammer in a tight grip with both hands just as Red gets back on his feet and CHARGES at her with a PRIMAL SCREAM.

A foot away from her, Red looks to take her down, but as he does, Pepper SWINGS the sledgehammer as wildly as the murderer did and the anvil-like head CRASHES into his skull, sending blood splattering out.

He falls to the floor limp with the impact of a boulder.

Pepper glares at the killer, spread eagle, his eyes shut.

She breathes a sigh of relief and takes one hand off the sledgehammer, letting it hang by her side, staring at the bloody face of Red.

But Red's eyes suddenly open and he ROARS like a lion.

Pepper instantly fixes her grip back on the hammer.

She counters Red's roar with the SCREAM of a tigress.

Pepper BRINGS THE HAMMER DOWN across Red's skull once again.

Blood now POURS out of his head.

His eyes close up again.

Pepper inspects the lifeless body...

But she's not taking any chances.

Not now. Not anymore.

PEPPER
Game... set... match.

Pepper somehow raises the sledgehammer high above her head and behind her back, then THROWS all her strength down on the tool, sending it PLUMMETING DOWN at incredible speed onto Red's skull, COMPLETELY CAVING IT IN, destroying it, turning it into wet chunks of bone and brain and God knows what.

With nothing left of Red, Pepper's satisfied, and she drops the sledgehammer to the ground, gives her last look over the man who took the lives of her friends away, and who knows how many others, and walks away...

LATER

Pepper limps through the forest.

She comes to a stop.

She reaches into her pocket and removes THREE CONCERT TICKETS. She looks at them for a moment, then tosses them aside.

Straight-faced, covered in dirt, saliva, blood, human flesh and vomit, Pepper carries on, the survivor.

CLOSE ON THE CONCERT TICKETS AS WE...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END