

UNDER THE STAIRS

written by

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Second Draft

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

A typical night in cliché suburbia. Sprinklers hissing away. No sign of life as far as the eye can see. No cars out. All the homes are dark and quiet.

INT. NIKKI & HEATH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight streaming through the curtains illuminates a sleeping figure: HEATH, mid 30s. He's so still you might mistake him for dead.

He breathes a few slow, deep breaths. Good, he's not dead.

Heath rolls over, burrowing under the covers. He instinctively reaches out to the spot beside him -- pillow and blankets sunken down in the outline of a person.

Someone was recently sleeping here.

SUDDENLY --

A FEMALE SCREAM comes from the bathroom.

Heath wakes violently, getting his bearings.

INT. NIKKI & HEATH'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Heath SHOVES the door open.

NIKKI, 30, visibly pregnant, sits on the white tile floor. A LARGE POOL OF BLOOD surrounds her, soaking through her underwear, running down her legs.

Nikki rocks back and forth, cradling her stomach.

She looks up at Heath, tears streaming down her face.

Heath stares down at her, frozen in fear.

SMASH TO BLACK:

TITLE CARD: THREE MONTHS LATER

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Summer is in full swing. KIDS playing in the street, people mowing their lawns, BBQs.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

A UHAUL sits out front of a brick two-story, the rear hatch open. Only a dozen boxes or so left to unload.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - DAY

Nikki stands near the door, box on her hip. She's eyeing the interior of the house, scanning everything from the floor to the ceiling.

Heath descends the stairs. He heads for the front door. Stops as he passes Nikki.

HEATH
What's wrong?

Nikki doesn't take her eyes off the closet.

NIKKI
It's just weird... I don't know.
It feels weird.

HEATH
Are we doing this again?

Heath takes the box out of her hand. Sits it on the floor. Takes Nikki's face in his hands, kissing her gently.

HEATH
This is our fresh start. Our
chance to move on. We have to try.

NIKKI
I'm sorry. I just worry.

HEATH
I know. You don't need to. That's
why you have me.

He turns, heading out the door.

HEATH
We need to hurry. We've only got
the Uhaul for another hour.

Nikki scans the room once more.

This time, her eyes linger on a CLOSET UNDER THE STAIRS.

She stares at it, almost transfixed. Finally, she pulls her gaze away and follows Heath outside.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

ROCK MUSIC plays from Nikki's phone as she and Heath unpack some boxes. They hang pictures on the walls, stack some DVDs on the entertainment center.

Heath is doing his best to lift Nikki's spirits. Playfully bumping her with his hip, kissing her cheek, helping her place pictures on top of a bookcase.

Nikki smiles at him, but it's forced. She's just going through the motions.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Boxes of dishes are piled on the floor. Bags of trash in the four corners of the room.

Nikki and Heath sit at the table, eating pizza. They look tired.

Heath looks around the room. Leans back in his seat to peer into the living room.

HEATH

This is good, right? We got a good place.

Nikki nods, mid-bite. She swallows, then wipes her face on her sleeve.

NIKKI

Yeah... We did good.

Heath's smile fades. Genuinely concerned.

HEATH

Is there anything I can do to make you happy?

Nikki looks slightly offended by this.

NIKKI

I'm sorry this is such an inconvenience on you.

HEATH

I didn't mean it that way. It's just... I don't know... I'm worried about you, sweetheart.

NIKKI

I'm fine.

HEATH

Okay, no woman has ever said she's fine and meant it.

Heath reaches down. Takes Nikki's hand in his. He stares down at it, flooded with emotion.

HEATH

I don't wanna lose you, too.

NIKKI

I'm not going anywhere.

HEATH

I wanna believe that. Really, I do. But sometimes it feels like we're a million miles apart even when we're in the same room.

(beat)

I can't pretend to imagine what you're going through. Please know you're not going through it alone, okay?

Nikki nods. The faintest flicker of a smile.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki and Heath are out cold, a few boxes still sitting around their bed.

Nikki stirs. She slowly gets out of bed and heads for the bathroom.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nikki emerges from the bathroom, going back to bed. She's half-way to the mattress when she hears --

THUD! THUD! THUD! THUD!

Coming from downstairs.

Nikki FREEZES in her tracks. Then hears the noise again.

Nikki dart over to Heath, shaking him.

NIKKI

Heath... Heath! Get up! I heard something downstairs!

Heath grunts.

HEATH

It's probably just the wind blowing a branch against the house or something. We've got an alarm system, if someone was breaking in, we'd know.

NIKKI

That's it? You're not gonna go check?

No response. He's already out.

Nikki sighs, rolling her eyes. Grabs the BASEBALL BAT from the corner.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nikki stands on the landing, hands gripped firmly on the bat. Cautiously, she tiptoes down the stairs, peering over the banister.

She reaches the bottom. Flicks on the lights.

Everything is in order. No signs of a break-in.

Nikki checks the front door. It's still locked. She glances into the living room -- nothing in there either.

She turns. Starts for the kitchen. As she passes the closet --

THUD... THUD... THUD...

Nikki spins around, eyes transfixed on the closet. Moves closer.

A SOFT SCRAPING comes from the interior of the closet. Like fingernails clawing for escape.

Nikki inches closer... Closer... Closer...

She jiggles the handle. It's LOCKED.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Help me!

Nikki SCREAMS. She turns. Books it up the stairs.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki bounds into the room. Throws herself onto the bed. She shakes Heath violently.

NIKKI
Someone's in the house!

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - NIGHT

Heath pulls on the doorknob. It still won't budge.
Nikki stands behind him, still holding the bat.

NIKKI
Why is it locked, anyway?!

Heath continues to struggle.

HEATH
I don't know. The realtor never
gave us a key for it.

Heath gives up. BANGS on the door.

HEATH
Anyone in there?

They wait.

No response.

Heath turns to Nikki.

HEATH
Sure you weren't dreaming or
sleepwalking or something?

NIKKI
I know what I heard. Someone's in
there! It sounded like a child.
They wanted help.

HEATH
So you think the owners of this
house moved, locked a kid in the
closet, left them alive, and just
took off?

NIKKI
I heard it. You have to believe
me.

Heath turns back to the closet. BEATS on the door.

HEATH

If someone's in there and needs help, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Nothing.

Heath turns off the light. Takes Nikki's face in his hands.

HEATH

You've been under a lot of stress. With losing the baby and moving... You just need some rest. Come back to bed.

Heath climbs the stairs.

Nikki looks at the closet, not sure if she's crazy or if it really happened.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Heath is in the process of mounting the TV on a wall mount.

Nikki sits on the couch, her gaze locked on the closet door.

Heath sees her.

HEATH

We didn't hear anything for the rest of the night. We've haven't heard a peep all morning. I'm telling you it was just a dream.

NIKKI

I wasn't dreaming. It felt so real.

HEATH

They usually do, babe. That's how dreams work.

Nikki doesn't look remotely calmed by this.

Heath decides to try a different approach.

HEATH

Things will be fine. I promise. I'm not going to let anything hurt you, okay?

Nikki nods. Still unconvinced.

Heath digs through the plastic bag that came with the wall mount. Can't find what he's looking for. He tosses his screwdriver onto the floor.

HEATH

Great. They didn't give me enough screws for the damn mount.

NIKKI

Won't it work without it?

Heath grabs the TV with one finger, then gives it a very gently shake.

The TV wobbles, BANGING into the metal frame of the mount.

HEATH

That answer your question?

Heath grabs his keys from the hook by the door, throwing on his shoes.

NIKKI

You don't have any in your toolbox?

HEATH

Not this size. I'm gonna run to the hardware store. You wanna come?

NIKKI

No. I'll just wait here.

HEATH

You sure?

NIKKI

I'll be fine.

Heath doesn't look convinced.

NIKKI

Really. I'll be okay.

HEATH

All right. I won't be gone long.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - MORNING

Heath's truck backs out of the driveway.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Nikki watches the car disappear down the road.

Without hesitation, she turns and heads towards the closet.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - MORNING

Nikki stands at the closet door, summoning her courage. She sighs, then KNOCKS on the door.

NIKKI

Is anyone in there? Can you hear
me? Do you need help?

She waits.

Nothing.

She knocks again. HARDER this time.

NIKKI

Is anyone in there?!

Still nothing.

Nikki drops to the floor, crossing her legs. She puts her face in her hands.

NIKKI

Maybe I am crazy...

From inside the closet, come a low, barely audible sound --

KNOCK... KNOCK... KNOCK...

Nikki whips around, terrified, but pleased she's not crazy.

Nikki tries the handle -- again, it won't budge.

NIKKI

Who's in there?

NIKKI (PRE-LAP)

I swear I'm losing my fucking
mind...

EXT. PARK - DAY

CHILDREN play. PARENTS watch them from picnic tables, in the midst of conversation.

A few PEOPLE walk their dogs. Some JOGGERS run the track.

Nikki sits on a bench with her sister, ASHLEY, 20s.

Ashley looks genuinely concerned, rubbing Nikki's back comfortingly.

ASHLEY

You're not losing your mind.

You're just...

Nikki looks at her, waiting for a response.

NIKKI

See? I'm crazy.

ASHLEY

No you're not.

NIKKI

Then what the hell would you call it? I can't sleep. I can't eat. I can't think... and I think someone's trying to talk to me through a closet door.

ASHLEY

You've been through a lot recently. Maybe your mind is just trying to work stuff out?

NIKKI

Well I wish it would stop already, because I don't know how much more of this shit I can take.

ASHLEY

What does Heath think of all this?

NIKKI

He thinks I'm crazy too.

Ashley looks stunned.

ASHLEY

Did he say that?

Nikki pulls away from her sister, almost repulsed by human contact. She puts her face in her hands, wanting more than anything to block out the whole world.

NIKKI

No. He says it's all in my mind.

(MORE)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

He's trying to be nice about it without coming right out and saying he thinks I've lost it.

ASHLEY

He cares about you. A lot. He's worried. After you lost the baby, he would call me every day after he called you from work to ask if there was anything I thought you needed.

Nikki sighs, trudging up her feelings. At first, she fights it. Gives in -- she needs this.

NIKKI

You know I didn't sleep at all for two weeks after losing the baby?

Ashley just stares at her sister. Not knowing what to do other than be there for her.

NIKKI

My mind wouldn't shut off. I would lay awake for hours staring into the darkness thinking. What would the baby have been like, would they have loved us as parents...?

Nikki fights tears. Nearly choking on her emotions.

She collects herself.

NIKKI

It just feels wrong that it never got to have a life, you know? But then I look around at the state the world's in and think maybe it's a good thing they don't have to live through this...

(beat)

Then that makes me feel guilty. Maybe it's good that the baby didn't have to grow up with a mother that can't handle things.

Ashley opens her mouth, but can't find the words. She embraces Nikki, pulling her close.

ASHLEY

Jesus, sis.

NIKKI

Told you I'm fucked up.

Nikki wipes her tears away, taking deep, slow breaths to calm herself.

NIKKI

What if Heath decides I'm too crazy to deal with? What if he wants to leave me for someone else?

ASHLEY

He wouldn't.

NIKKI

Are you sure?

ASHLEY

Positive.

Ashley smiles faintly, trying to lighten the mood.

ASHLEY

And if he did, then he ain't worth it, girl. You deserve someone who'll stay with you through everything. He loves you. He's not going anywhere.

NIKKI

I hope you're right.

ASHLEY

I'm always right. Like, always.

NIKKI

Rub it in, why don't you?

ASHLEY

That's what I was doing.

Ashley sees an ICE CREAM STAND a few yards away from them.

A lightbulb goes off in her head.

ASHLEY

I got an idea! How's two scoops of rocky road sound? Nothing's better on a depressed stomach than a bunch of sugar.

NIKKI

Make it three and you've got a deal.

Ashley gives a faux wince as she fishes her wallet out of her purse.

ASHLEY

Ouch. You think I'm made of money
or something?

NIKKI

It would make me feel better.

Ashley rolls her eyes.

This is their dynamic.

ASHLEY

Fine. But you gotta smile.

Nikki does her best to comply. It's something between a smile
and severe constipation.

Ashley stands, nodding.

ASHLEY

Okay, I guess that counts. Next
time try to not look like a serial
killer who's ready to shit their
pants.

NIKKI

Ha ha ha.

Ashley heads for the ice cream stand.

Nikki rubs her temples vigorously. Trying to calm down.

FROM SOMEWHERE BEHIND HER --

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.

Nikki nearly jumps out of her skin. Spins around, looking
behind her.

Just one problem...

There's no one in sight.

The children have moved to another section of the park with
their parents.

The only thing behind her are tree branches swaying in the
wind.

Nikki scans the area, desperate to find the source of the
laughter.

SHE HEARS THE LAUGHTER AGAIN.

Still, there's no one in sight. No sign of anyone at all.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
What's wrong?

Nikki turns around.

Ashley stands there, holding a pair of ice cream cones. A freaked out look on her face.

NIKKI
Did you hear that?

Ashley looks around, confused.

ASHLEY
Hear what?

Nikki looks over her shoulder in the direction of the noise. Wheels turning in her head.

Maybe she is crazy after all.

Nikki turns back to her sister.

NIKKI
Nothing... I'm fine...

Ashley stares. Less than convinced.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Heath lies in bed, reading.

Nikki walks out of the bathroom. Nude. Puts her hands on her hips.

Heath perks up. Puts his book on the night stand.

HEATH
Are you sure?

ASHLEY
It's been three months. I think
we're good.

Nikki walks forward. Removes Heath's shirt. Pulls off his pajama pants.

They kiss, pulling each other close.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Heath and Nikki are under the covers in the throes of passion. Heath kisses down her neck, getting on top of Nikki.

HEATH
Are you ready?

NIKKI
I'm ready. Stick it in.

Heath obliges... Or, at least, tries to.

Heath stops.

HEATH
Are you sure?

Nikki nods.

NIKKI
Yeah. Why?

Heath tries as hard as he can to be sensitive here.

HEATH
You don't... *feel* very into it.

Nikki sighs. Covering her face out of embarrassment.

NIKKI
I'm sorry. I thought I could...

Heath rolls over beside her.

HEATH
It's okay. I'm sorry.

Nikki can't bring herself to look at him.

NIKKI
Don't be sorry. It's not your
fault... it's mine...

Heath doesn't know how to respond. Or if he should respond at all.

They just lie there. Off in their own worlds.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Heath lies on the couch, reading a magazine.

Nikki walks in from the bathroom, dressed in dirty pajamas.

NIKKI
You love me even though I'm crazy,
right?

Heath drops the magazine onto his stomach. He stares at Nikki. He can't help but chuckle at the absurdity of the question.

HEATH
What?

NIKKI
You heard me.

HEATH
Is this about last night?

NIKKI
It's not about anything. Just
answer the question.

Heath moves to a sitting position, motioning for Nikki to sit beside him.

She does.

Nikki keeps her head low -- more a shell than an actual person.

Heath lifts her head gently with his hand on her chin. Looks lovingly into her eyes.

HEATH
Sweetheart, if I didn't love you,
I wouldn't be with you. All right?

Nikki is on the verge of tears.

NIKKI
Promise?

HEATH
YES! You're stuck with me. If that
bothers you, then you shouldn't
have married me. Now you're
trapped.

Nikki lays her head on Heath's chest.

NIKKI
That doesn't sound so bad I guess.

HEATH
Good.

Heath slumps back further into the couch, taking Nikki with him. Grabs the blanket from the back of the couch and covers Nikki with it.

Heath kisses her head.

Nikki's eyes stay on one thing and one thing only --

THE CLOSET DOOR.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Heath is asleep. Snoring.

Nikki lies beside him, staring at the ceiling. Not even trying to get some rest.

She looks over at Heath. Gives him the slightest shake.

Nothing.

Sure he's in a deep sleep, Nikki slinks out of bed.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki makes a pot of coffee. She braces herself on the counter for support. Barely enough strength to stand.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki sits on the couch, coffee in hand, watching the closet door. Waiting. Eager. Manic.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Very late now. That awkward hour of the night where no one in the world is probably awake.

Nikki is still in her seat. Ever vigilant.

Her head starts to droop, eyes barely able to remain open.

She JERKS awake. Violently. Thinking she heard something.

Did she?

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nikki has finally passed out, laying face-down on the couch. Still facing the direction of the door.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

The ALARM goes off.

Heath shuts it off, yawning. Rolls over, expecting to find Nikki lying beside him.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Heath enters, throwing on his shirt. Finds Nikki asleep on the couch.

Heath sighs as he crouches down beside her. It's taking everything he's got to remain calm.

He shakes Nikki gently.

HEATH

Sweetheart... You okay?

Nikki stirs. Looks around quickly. Panicked.

HEATH

It's okay. It's just me. You're fine, you're fine.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I couldn't sleep. I fell asleep watching a movie. I didn't wanna keep you up.

Heath stares at her, not buying it. He stays patient.

HEATH

You sure that's it?

NIKKI

Of course.

HEATH

If you need to me to, I can take the day off work. We were just laying some carpet for the new house. They can do it without me.

NIKKI

No. I'm fine. I swear.

HEATH

You haven't seemed fine.

NIKKI

I am. Honestly. Please believe me.
I'll be fine.

Heath stares at her. Eyes still filled with doubt.

NIKKI

Trust me, please. I'm okay.
Really.

HEATH

Fine. But if you feel off in any
way, or like you just need
someone, have Ashley come over. If
it gets too bad, I'll come home
early.

NIKKI

Why won't you believe me? I'm
fine.

HEATH

You don't seem fine. You've been
off, or whatever recently.

NIKKI

I'm fine. Now if you don't leave
for work, you'll be late and
you'll get fired, and we'll lose
the house. Don't know about you,
but I am not sucking dick to pay
the bills.

HEATH

Yeah... me neither.

NIKKI

Then go. I'll be fine. I promise.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - MORNING

Heath's truck backs out of the driveway.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LAUNDRY ROOM - MORNING

Nikki SLAMS open the cabinet. Rifles through, shoving junk to
the side.

She finds what she's looking for -- a flat-head screwdriver.
Smiles.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - MORNING

Nikki goes to work on the doorknob. Coming at it from every possible angle. She tries jabbing at it, getting between the joint where the knob housing meets the wood.

Nothing...

Nikki tries harder, using more pressure. She's losing it. She starts hacking at the doorknob The Shinning style.

Under normal circumstances, she'd surely break the damn thing.

But not this door.

No matter what she does, it won't budge.

Nikki SLIPS.

The screwdriver GASHES her hand. BLOOD runs down her arm.

Nikki SCREAMS -- releasing months of pent up emotions.

She THROWS the screwdriver into the wall. BANGS on the door with her good hand.

NIKKI

Please! If anyone's in there, I need to know... I just want to know I'm not crazy...

She waits.

Nothing.

Uncomfortable, unapologetic SILENCE.

NIKKI

PLEASE!

NOTHING.

Nikki collapses onto the floor, back against the wall.

She looks from the screwdriver across from her down to her bloody hand.

Her voice breaks --

NIKKI

(low)
I am crazy...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

No you're not...

Nikki freezes. Slowly looks up at the door.

No longer terrified, now she's at the point where she's just happy to hear the voice again.

She crawls forward. Places her ear to the door. Pats it gently with her hand.

NIKKI

I knew you were in there. I knew I wasn't crazy. They didn't believe me, but I knew.

(beat)

I knew...

Nikki waits for a response... but none comes.

NIKKI

Please... PLEASE! Don't. Say something. Anything. Yell at me, call me a bitch. I don't care. I just need to hear your voice.

Still nothing.

Tears run down Nikki's face. She pounds on the door. Begging.

NIKKI

Please...

Nothing...

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - EVENING

Heath enters and stops in his tracks.

Nikki is asleep on the floor beside the closet door.

Heath looks at the screwdriver... at Nikki's hand...

Putting the pieces together.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

Heath carries Nikki up the stairs toward their bedroom.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - EVENING

Nikki stirs. Looks around.

Heath stands by the window, arms folded. He looks like he's at his wit's end. Not sure what to do.

Heath clears his throat, barely able to get his words out.

HEATH

I want you to know I love you.
Okay?

Nikki nods. Still trying to get her bearings.

She looks down at her hand -- it's been bandaged.

Nikki looks at Heath, ready to talk her way out of it.

NIKKI

I can explain. I was just --

HEATH

Please. Just please stop
pretending like I'm an idiot. I
know what's going on. It's that
goddamn closet.

Heath looks on the verge of tears. He doesn't get like this often. It's an odd image. A knight without armor.

HEATH

I don't know what to do anymore. I
really don't. I want to be there
for you. I want to help you, but I
don't think I can anymore.

Heath stares, pacing the room. He can't even bring himself to look at Nikki, keeping his eyes on his feet instead.

HEATH

You need help. Real help. More
than what I can give you.

NIKKI

Why is this starting to sound like
an intervention.

Nikki tries to catch Heath's gaze. Hoping to hear him say he's joking. That she's wrong.

But that's not what she gets.

Heath plows through his speech. Like he's rehearsed this many times.

HEATH

I'm worried about you.

NIKKI

Why? I'm fine.

HEATH
No! You're not!

Nikki recoils.

This may be the first time she's heard Heath raise his voice.

She's not sure how to react.

HEATH
You tell me you're fine. You say
you're okay. Then I come home and
find you passed out on the floor
with your fucking hand cut open.
You're obsessed. Whatever's going
on here is getting deep.

Heath stops.

Finally, he looks up at Nikki. His eyes welling up.

Nikki looks at him. Getting the gravity of the situation.

HEATH
I don't want to lose you.

NIKKI
You won't.

HEATH
I already am. You're not you
anymore. I don't know how to fix
it.

NIKKI
I don't need fixed.

HEATH
Then what would you call it?

NIKKI
I... I don't know...

HEATH
Then how can we fix this?

Heath takes a seat beside her. It takes everything he's got to trudge up the words.

HEATH
I want you to see someone. A
professional. Maybe it'd do you
some good to talk to someone about
what you're going through. Someone
who knows what to do.

NIKKI

You want me to see a shrink? Have you lost your fucking mind?

HEATH

No...

(beat)

But I'm afraid you have.

Nikki swallows hard. She briefly considers a comeback, but recants after seeing the look on Heath's face.

This is no joke.

This is genuine concern.

NIKKI

I can get better. On my own. I swear. I've been through a lot in the last three months. I'm just mentally exhausted is all.

HEATH

I don't think so. This is more than mental exhaustion. This is much more.

NIKKI

Do have any idea what I went through? My body? My mind? You think you can just snap your fingers and I get over it?

HEATH

No. That's not what I'm saying at all. See, this is what I mean. You need to talk to someone who can talk about what you're going through better than I can.

Nikki looks away. Part of her can't believe what she's hearing, but the other part understands where he's coming from.

HEATH

Please. If you love me at all, please. I just want you to get better.

Nikki thinks this over. A war of thoughts raging in her brain. Ready to explode.

NIKKI

If I do this for you, will you drop it and stop treating me like some kind of nutcase?

HEATH

Don't do this for me. Do it for yourself.

Heath embraces her.

A long beat.

No words. No movement. Just raw emotion.

Two people in love going through the ringer together.

NIKKI

Fine.

Heath looks up. Intrigued.

NIKKI

I'll do it. I'll talk to someone. But you have to be there too. I want you to hear it when they say I'm not crazy and you're reading too much into things.

Heath nods. Willing to make just about any compromise at this point.

HEATH

Fair enough.

NIKKI

And after they tell you I'm okay, no more treating me like a bomb that's going to go off at any moment.

HEATH

Deal.

NIKKI

I want to be your wife again. Not some crazy lady you're having to take care of.

HEATH

Okay.

NIKKI

No.

Heath stares at her.

NIKKI
Don't just say okay. Mean it.
Really fucking mean it.

HEATH
Okay.

Heath kisses her.

HEATH
So tomorrow we'll make an
appointment to see a therapist?

Nikki nods.

NIKKI
So we can spend hundreds of
dollars just for them to tell you
I'm not crazy?

Heath doesn't respond. But it's clear he doesn't think that
will be the outcome.

Nikki cuddles up to Heath.

NIKKI
I love you.

HEATH
I love you, too.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Heath has finally fallen asleep, though he hardly looks
comfortable.

He tosses and turns. Restless.

Nikki lies beside him, staring at the ceiling. The day's events
playing in her head.

Then she hears --

A THUD, followed by a SCRAPING NOISE.

Coming from downstairs.

Nikki sits up. Her eyes focused like a diligent worker ready to
start their task.

Nikki calmly gets out of bed, careful not to disturb Heath.

She leaves the room as quietly as possible.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nikki walks robotically toward the stairs. An unnatural stillness about her. Almost like she's hypnotized.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - NIGHT

Nikki comes down the stairs.

The THUD and SCRAPE grow louder.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Help me... Help me... Someone...
 Please...

Nikki walks to the closet. Sits down in front of it. Sedate.

NIKKI
 I can help you... or, at least, I
 can try. I don't even know if any
 of this is real. Maybe it's all in
 my head... But I'll try...

The noise ABRUPTLY STOPS.

Finally, the voice responds --

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
 You're not afraid of me?

NIKKI
 I was at first. But I think if you
 were going to hurt me, you would
 have by now.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
 I don't want to hurt anyone. I
 just want to get out of here.

NIKKI
 How long have you been in there?

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
 I don't know. I've been in here as
 long as I can remember. You're the
 only one who can hear me. I think
 my mom and dad left me here.

Nikki struggles to take this in.

NIKKI

Who could do that to their child?

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

I don't think they wanted me.

(beat)

Will you be my new mommy?

NIKKI

I don't think you want me as your
mom. I'm not cut out to be a
mother.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Why? That's not fair.

Tears stream down Nikki's cheeks.

NIKKI

No. It's not. It's not fair at
all.

Suddenly, the lights flick on.

Nikki looks up --

Heath stands at the foot of the stairs. Groggy and confused.

HEATH

Who are you talking to?

Nikki wipes the tears on her sleeve.

NIKKI

There's a child in there. You have
to believe me. I know you think
I'm crazy, but please believe me.
Please!

Heath rubs his eyes.

HEATH

This has to stop. There's no one
in there, honey.

NIKKI

I swear there is. Please believe
me.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Heath grabs a HAMMER out of his toolbox. Storms back into the house.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, FOYER - NIGHT

Heath SMASHES the doorknob to the closet. It skirts across the hardwood floor.

Heath KICKS the door open. Pulls the string for the light inside.

Heath stops, shaking his head.

It's empty. Just some dusty boxes of old cleaning supplies and brooms.

Heath steps to the side, allowing Nikki to get a better look.

HEATH
There's nothing in here.

NIKKI
That's not true. There has to be.

HEATH
Look for yourself.

A beat.

Nikki summons her courage. Takes a couple steps toward the closet.

Nikki takes a few deep breaths. Looks inside. Her mouth DROPS. More tears FLOW DOWN HER FACE as she reacts to what she's seeing.

Heath looks confused.

He looks again to make sure he's isn't missing something.

HEATH
What's wrong? Nikki?!

She doesn't answer. Her gaze is frozen inside the closet.

HEATH
NIKKI!

NIKKI'S POV:

A YOUNG BOY HANGS FROM THE NECK BY A DIRTY ROPE.

Heath looks back in the closet, trying to see what has Nikki's attention. He still sees nothing.

Heath takes Nikki by the shoulders, shakes her gently.

HEATH
Nikki, what is it?

Inside the closet, visible only to Nikki, the young boy LIFTS HIS HEAD. Brings a finger to his lips.

YOUNG BOY
Shhhhh.

SMASH TO BLACK:

END.