

EVANGELINA

by

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Inspired by true events

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FADE IN:

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A disoriented TEENAGE GIRL's hazy view of a slow-moving ceiling fan. She reaches up, her wrists bound by yellow rope.

Headbanger music becomes clear as a door to the room opens, then muffled again with the door closed.

Through blurred vision she sees a shirtless BLOND TEEN BOY in a backward blue baseball cap climb on top of her.

She whimpers. He shushes her. Her protests go unheeded...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Enigmatic DR. DON PARKS (40ish) slumps in a chair at his desk. A happy family photo of him, his wife and young son stares back at his unhappy, haunted face.

A chime draws his attention to a digital timer on the desk: "4:00 p.m."

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mute colors and sparse decor suggest the handiwork of an uninspired consultant's touch in the quiet room.

Emotionally clamped AUTUMN (13) stares at the sleep-inducing art on the wall opposite the couch where she sits.

Next to her, MEG RUDOLPH (35), a frazzled mom, pretends to read a magazine. Her knee bounces. She chews her nails.

Autumn puts her hand on Meg's nervous knee.

Meg flashes a smile and puts her hand over Autumn's.

RECEPTIONIST/JENNA (O.S.)

Autumn?

Autumn looks up, nods, takes a deep breath. She stands. Pulls her oversized sweater close around her and heads in.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Autumn appears small and frail in the spacious love seat across from Don, who slouches in his easy chair.

Autumn makes a quick check of the dim, boring room. She spots a nice view of Lake Michigan through a long bank of windows.

Her eyes settle on Don. An air of mysterious melancholy hangs over him.

DON
So, what's on your mind?

AUTUMN
Just wondering why you're so depressed.

DON
(surprised)
Why do you say that?

AUTUMN
Just look at this place. I've only been here a few minutes and I'm already getting depressed--

Something catches Autumn's eye by the windows. Don attempts to pull her attention back.

DON
Think I need a decorator?

AUTUMN
Maybe. At least you got a view--

A WHOOSH of gray gusts from Don's end of the room to Autumn's in front of the bank of windows.

Autumn jerks her head to look. Nothing. She's freaked.

DON
What's wrong?

Though distracted, Autumn doesn't miss a sarcastic beat.

AUTUMN
I thought we were talking about you.

Don smiles at her snarkiness. He sits up a bit straighter.

DON
I'm pretty sure we're here to talk about you. Something happened a few weeks ago, right?

Autumn gestures toward the windows.

AUTUMN
You didn't see anything just now?

DON

Birds sometimes hit the window.
I've stopped ducking whenever they
come at me.

AUTUMN

Frickin' condor, then... So you're
a bird murderer. What else should I
know about you before I spill my
guts?

DON

(holds back a chuckle)
What do you want to know?

AUTUMN

(dead serious)
Why should I spill my guts to you?

Don reaches for a blue file on the end table and flips
through it. He opens his mouth to speak--

AUTUMN

Yeah, I know. I'm a mess. I get it.

She pretends to be hiding behind a sheet and mocks...

AUTUMN

I see dead people.

Don's not amused. He looks back through the file, troubled.

AUTUMN

What's it say there? I suppose my
mom told you all my dirty secrets.

DON

I haven't spoken with her yet, but
she did provide some information.
(looks up at her)
Nothing too damning. Some imaginary
friends, a few lies, a bit of
partying, arguing--

AUTUMN

Typical tweenybopper crap, right?

DON

She says there was some kind of
incident you won't talk about...?

He hesitates to see if she wants to fill in the blank.

She looks toward the window again, distracted. Wraps her sweater around her as if chilled.

AUTUMN
Is it normal that I haven't gotten
my period yet?

DON
(taken aback)
You mean since the--

AUTUMN
NO! I mean ever. I'll be fourteen
in a couple months, and nada.

She pulls at her loose-fitting top.

AUTUMN
Nothin' under here. Flat as a
pancake. I'm a freakazoid.

She looks at him closely for the first time, cocks her head.

AUTUMN
Shouldn't I be talking to a chick
about all this?

DON
That's up to you. If you want, I
can refer your mom to someone else.

Autumn looks over toward the window.

ELINA (V.O.)
(crushed windpipe voice)
Stay.

Autumn turns, as if the voice was behind her. She looks back at Don who is oblivious as he waits for a response.

Don leans forward. Scrutinizes her.

She cowers back a bit, but is still distracted.

DON
Is there something here I'm
missing?

AUTUMN
(monotone, serious)
I told you, I see dead people.

Don makes a note in his folder then looks back up to find her staring at him with tears in her eyes.

DON

We can talk about that... Or are you ready to talk about what happened at school?

When he offers a genuine smile, Autumn breaks down in tears.

AUTUMN

It wasn't actually at school. It was a sports banquet at the community center. He was on the summer baseball team. I played tennis...

Don reassures with a nod for her to continue.

AUTUMN

I think he put something in my pop... I woke up and he was already on top of me...

Don listens as she spews everything through sobs.

Behind Autumn, a gray shadow hovers.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Red-eyed, Autumn walks in. Meg stands, moves toward her.

Autumn shakes her head and rushes past her to the exit. Meg starts to follow.

DON (O.S.)

She just needs some air.

Meg turns to see Don enter with a clinical, caring smile.

DON

You must be "mom"?

Meg nods and shakes his offered hand. He doesn't let go of her hand right away as he assures...

DON

It got a little intense, but she'll be okay.

Meg smiles slightly and withdraws her hand.

MEG

Was she awful to you? I wanted to go in, for your sake, but Autumn wouldn't let me.

DON

She's embarrassed to talk about it. And she's working through the other issues too. Which is why you came to me, right?

MEG

(nods)

It's like she's matured in reverse lately... I just wish she'd talk to me.

Don smiles with understanding.

MEG

But she talked to you?

He nods.

MEG

I gotta tell you, I expected we'd be referred to a woman. I mean with her history and what's happened--

DON

I'm happy to refer you, but she seemed to get comfortable pretty quickly. She's smart. Kinda funny.

MEG

That's a nice way of saying she's a smart aleck. You must have a brood of kids at home to have such a high tolerance.

Don's expression falls suddenly serious.

DON

I've been working with kids awhile.

MEG

Thank you. I'd better go get her--

DON

I'd like to see her in a couple days. Both of you. Together.

MEG

Am I part of the problem?

DON

I don't think so, but you can be part of the solution.

MEG

I'll check my schedule and call.

Don nods. Meg leaves. He watches her go.

Receptionist JENNA, young, pretty, slides open the glass partition to the check-in desk, pokes her head out.

Don doesn't seem to notice. He still stands there, faces the door, pondering.

JENNA

(annoyed)

Love at first sight?

Don snaps out of it, turns to her.

DON

Don't be absurd. She's a little girl.

Jenna rolls her eyes.

JENNA

The mom. Kinda hot.

Don walks back into the office and faces her on the other side of the check-out desk.

DON

Is she? I didn't notice. That kid is something, though...

He shakes his head and walks back toward his office. He rolls his shoulders and stretches his arms overhead, as if doing a morning stretch after a good, long sleep.

DON

Weird. I feel great.

He stops and turns back to Jenna.

DON

Any more appointments today?

JENNA

Dr. Li is stopping by at five thir--

DON

Cancel. I need to play some tennis. I feel like I could take on John McEnroe, bad attitude and all.

Jenna, suspicious, watches him go into his office.

JENNA
(to herself)
Okay... Whoever John McEnroe is...

INT./EXT. CHICAGO - PUKE GREEN AMC GREMLIN (MOVING) - DAY
Autumn stares out the window. She seems far away. Forlorn.
Meg drives. She glances at Autumn, worried.

EXT. CHICAGO - AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Gremlin is parked in front of a low-rent small duplex decorated with cheesy Halloween props and uncarved pumpkins.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Posters of female tennis stars. A couple tennis trophies.

The bottom bunk of a metal-frame bunk bed is strewn with clothes, schoolbooks, junk-food wrappers.

Autumn lies on the top tier, chats on her cell phone while painting her nails black.

AUTUMN
You have got to be kidding me. You can't wear that to school... Not even for Halloween. You'll be expelled--

MEG (O.S.)
Autumn, our show's on.

Autumn rolls her eyes and resumes her phone chatter.

AUTUMN
Huh? Oh nothing. Mom just wants me to watch her lame show... Yeah, we used to watch it together once a week when I was like ten!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Meg sits curled up on the couch, watches Wheel of Fortune. She glances at the empty end of the couch. Sighs.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg awakens to a thud followed by a cry of pain.

She throws aside the cover and dashes out half dressed.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Meg charges in to find Autumn lying on the floor.

Autumn looks up at Meg.

AUTUMN

It felt like someone pushed me.

Meg's panic turns to skepticism.

MEG

Are you hurt?

Autumn looks up at the bunk. She shakes her head.

AUTUMN

Knocked the wind out of me, though.

Meg puts out a hand and helps her to her feet. Gives her a hug, holds on a bit longer than Autumn would like.

AUTUMN

I'm okay.

MEG

I hope so, kiddo.

Meg finally lets go and heads out the door. Stops.

MEG

Time to clean that bottom bunk and sleep a little closer to Earth?

Autumn shrugs and climbs back up to the top bunk, but stops. She looks at Meg. Pleads with her eyes.

MEG

Okay. C'mon. My room it is. Just for tonight, though.

Meg puts her arm around Autumn, kisses her and leads her out.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg and Autumn sit on the love seat together.

Relaxed, Don absently tosses a tennis ball up and down.

DON

You've been "pushed" out of bed before?

MEG

After her dad left, she started to make up friends. Well, frenemies, she called them. They weren't always friendly.

Don looks at Autumn whose curious eyes scan the room.

DON

Do you remember those friends?

Autumn shrugs, distracted.

MEG

Some had weird names. All ages.

AUTUMN

What's different in here?

DON

(looks around)

Nothing.

He looks back to Autumn to find her staring at him.

AUTUMN

It's you. Something's different about you. You're... lighter.

DON

(laughs)

Actually, I'm darker. I caught a few rays playing tennis the last couple days...before it gets too cold.

MEG

Autumn's a star singles player.

DON

So I gathered... Maybe varsity next year?

Autumn shrugs.

Don leans forward to get to business.

DON

So what happened to all your "frenemies"? Any still come around?

AUTUMN

Of course not.

MEG

She seemed to grow out of them a couple years ago--

AUTUMN

They moved on. They always do.

Don makes a note in the file on his lap.

MEG

We had to move a lot. Of course she made up friends. That's normal, isn't it?

DON

(shrugs)

Still gathering data.

AUTUMN

Now you sound like Mom.

DON

Gathering data? That's what she does?

AUTUMN

What was that Spanish thing... the Inquisition?

Don holds back a smile. Meg frowns.

MEG

Listen, after what happened to you, I'd think you'd want me to be a bit overprotective.

DON

She told you what happened?

MEG

(nods)

Finally. But won't talk about it.

Autumn goes into her own world, stares off.

AUTUMN

They were so mean. I hated them. Why do we have to talk about them?

DON

(alarmed)

Them? There was more than one?

Autumn looks at him, back to reality. Shakes her head "no."

MEG
(confused)
Isn't that why we're--

Don waves Meg off. He realizes Autumn's jumped topic again.

DON
Who do you mean, Autumn?

Autumn shrugs.

DON
The frenemies?

Autumn gets up and goes to the window. She leans against the glass. She's done.

Don turns to Meg who's become emotional. He offers a smile.

MEG
What now?

DON
It's not as bad as you thought. The incident triggered something. It may have sent her backward a bit, but with another session or two we'll have a game plan.

MEG
Did she tell you where she used to find her imaginary friends?

Don shakes his head.

MEG
Online obituaries.

DON
(mild surprise)
Maybe it's time she ventured out with some real friends.

MEG
Really? Even after--

DON
Especially now.

They look at Autumn. She's a million miles away.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Young families trick-or-treat as twilight settles.

Four costumed TWEENER GIRLS ring Autumn's doorbell.

Two are goth. Two are zombies, one with a bloody hatchet in the head, the other with obvious strangle marks on her neck. The latter has longish dark hair with bangs.

The door creaks open. The girls try to peer in. A recorded spooky laugh track plays from inside.

SKANKY GOTH GIRL/CHELSEA

Autumn?

Autumn leaps out at the girls, evoking a collective screech. She's punked out with blue hair - half goth, half zombie.

CHELSEA

Nice outfit!

GLOOMY GOTH GIRL/GRACE

(disappointed)

Couldn't decide whether to go goth
or zombie, huh?

Autumn steps out. She shouts back before closing the door.

AUTUMN

See ya later, Mom.

MEG (O.S.)

Eleven sharp! ...Have fun.

The girls head down the street.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - SAME

Concerned, Meg sneaks a peek out the window. Bites her nails.

MONTAGE - TOO OLD TO "TRICK OR TREAT":

- The girls brazenly "trick or treat" at multiple doors
- Homeowners are surprised at their age, but give the girls candy anyhow
- A mom with 2 young kids refuses to give them anything
- Autumn, chipper Chelsea and shy hatchethead/SUE write "I TURN TRICKS FOR TREATS" in soap on the windows of the car in front of the mom's house
- Gloomy Grace and Strangled Zombie Girl stand off to the side, watch the mischief in apparent silent protest

- An old couple admire the girls' costumes - take Polaroids of them and put them in their candy bags along with Snickers

- Autumn waves goodbye to the girls, goes inside her house with a bag full of candy

END MONTAGE

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits at her triple-mirrored vanity removing makeup and eating candy while talking on the phone with the speaker on.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Get any Reese's? I didn't even get one.

AUTUMN

Nah, but I got a Snickers. We made up for it in volume, though.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Yeah. My mom says all the fat ladies gave up their stash so they could stay on their diets!

Autumn laughs.

CHELSEA'S MOM (V.O. IN THE B.G.)

Lights out!

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Whoops. Gotta go.

AUTUMN

Me too. Good night.

Autumn picks up the phone to turn it off then stops.

AUTUMN

Hey, wait! Chelsea?

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Still here.

AUTUMN

I meant to ask you who that girl was. I mean, why'd she keep ditching us all night? Kept going off on her own. Didn't seem to really want any candy. Kinda weird.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Grace? She didn't approve when we played tricks. Geez, you know her, with or without the makeup. And trust me, she got plenty of candy. She got two Snickers bars!

AUTUMN

No, not Grace. I think her name was Elina...? She seemed shy, like Sue. Spoke real soft... weird voice.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Hmm. What was she wearing?

Autumn digs in her bag and pulls out the Polaroid.

AUTUMN

C'mon, you know... the other zombie girl, with fake finger marks on her neck. Her makeup was so awesome. Totally gray skin. Matted hair.

Autumn looks at the photo.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

O.M.G., Autumn. Did you smoke something before we picked you up?

The photo shows all the girls except the strangled zombie.

AUTUMN

What the...?

A WHOOSH of gray passes behind Autumn.

She looks up and sees the zombie girl in the vanity's reflection standing behind her.

Autumn drops the phone and looks around her room. Nothing.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Autumn? Hello?

Frazzled, Autumn picks up the phone.

AUTUMN

Never mind. Gotta go. Bye.

CHELSEA (V.O.)

Happy Hallow--

Autumn shuts off the phone, rushes out of the room, slams the door behind her.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Autumn sits, a cereal bowl in front of her. Meg cooks unappetizing-looking eggs in the greasy pan.

MEG

You know you can't keep sleeping in my room, Autumn.

Autumn sits back, uninterested in the cereal.

MEG

I think we should talk about it with the doctor next time.

AUTUMN

We? Hate to break it to ya, Mom, but that was a one-time deal.

Meg turns around, puts the eggs on the table and sits.

MEG

You don't want me there?

AUTUMN

Definitely not.

MEG

Will you talk to the doctor about whatever's going on lately?

AUTUMN

Nothing's going on.

Meg watches, concerned, as Autumn physically withdraws.

INT. CHELSEA'S HOUSE - REC ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits with Chelsea, Grace and Sue, sans makeup, in PJs.

They share their spread of leftover Halloween candy in a huge pile surrounded by a circle of their sleeping bags.

A slumber party.

CHELSEA

Mom says this is the last time we can do this.

GRACE

Why? Are you moving or something?

Chelsea stuffs some candy in her mouth, talks through it.

CHELSEA

No. She says we're too old for all
this. Time to grow up.

Autumn stuffs her mouth as full as possible with chocolate.
The others laugh. She tries to chew it but laughs, ready to
snort it all out.

GRACE

Yeah. Grow up. Fat chance!

Grace and the others grab handfuls and stuff their faces.

With her mouth overloaded, Chelsea perks up.

CHELSEA

(barely understandable)

Let's play Bloody Mary!

The others look at her like "Huh?" She spits her candy out
into her hands.

CHELSEA

Bloody Mary. My sister still plays
that, and she's a junior.

GRACE

(mouth full)

Who's Bloody Mary?

LATER

Lights dim. The girls sit in an orderly circle, legs crossed.

CHELSEA

...Mary Worth lived here a hundred
years ago...

GRACE

(gullible)

Here?

Chelsea nods.

AUTUMN

(rolls her eyes)

I heard she was in England.

CHELSEA

Whatever. They said she was a witch
and that she attacked a child.

Autumn looks around, uncomfortable. The others are rapt.

CHELSEA

She scratched the child's face,
disfiguring her for being more
beautiful than her. And if that
wasn't bad enough...

Chelsea leans forward for effect.

CHELSEA

It was her own daughter.

Gasps all around.

CHELSEA

The people of the town convicted
her and put a mirror in front of
her to show her shame as she died.

Chelsea makes violent slashing motions.

CHELSEA

Each person sliced her face with
whatever sharp object they had, and
made her watch in the mirror as her
face became bloody and hideous.

Grace swallows hard.

CHELSEA

Then, she cursed the town and swore
to seek vengeance on them all just
as the child's father delivered a
fatal stab to her heart.

She looks at each girl, whose terror is evident.

CHELSEA

Her spirit is said to be trapped in
the mirror, waiting for someone to
believe in her so she'll be
released.

SUE

(in awe)

Cool.

GRACE

How do you free her?

CHELSEA

Look into the mirror and say
"Bloody Mary" three times.

GRACE
Let's go free her!

All get up, enthused, except Autumn who follows slowly.

INT. CHELSEA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Two candles light the room. Chelsea stands in front of the mirror, staring, freaks herself out. She screams.

CHELSEA
O.M.G. I see her! That is so
freaky! C'mon, Autumn. Your turn.

AUTUMN
No way.

GRACE
C'mon. You have to. We all did.

CHELSEA
Time to grow up, Autumn!

They physically place Autumn in front of the mirror and hold her head so she can't look away.

CHELSEA
Say it!

Autumn struggles. She closes her eyes and struggles against them.

AUTUMN
Stop it! Let me go.

Autumn becomes frantic and goes into full panic mode, squirms and struggles to get away.

The girls finally take her distress seriously and let go.

Autumn crumples to the floor, into fetal position.

INT. MEG'S GREMLIN - NIGHT

Meg drives with Autumn curled up in the passenger seat, still in PJs.

MEG
Want me to talk to Chelsea's mom?

Autumn stares out the window.

MEG
Talk to me, babe. What happened?

AUTUMN
Doesn't matter.

Meg is near tears as Autumn shuts her out.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits on the top bunk, bites her nails. Stares at the vanity mirror that reflects her poster-filled walls.

She pulls herself into her long sleeves and tucks her feet under herself as if suddenly very cold.

She looks around, wary.

AUTUMN
Who are you?

Dead silence.

LATER

Autumn sleeps, tightly tucked in her warm comforter.

CLINK. The metal bed frame rattles.

Autumn resists waking up.

The bed shakes violently. Autumn sits up. She rubs her eyes and looks around. Freezes in fear.

Strangled zombie girl ELINA stands at the corner of the bed.

Elina opens her mouth to speak. No sound.

Autumn stares in disbelief.

Elina realizes she's not being heard. She screams uncontrollably. NO SOUND.

Autumn calms herself, mesmerized by the display.

AUTUMN
Elina?

The screaming motion stops immediately. They lock eyes. Without moving her lips, Elina emits an ethereal, strained voice as if from a crushed windpipe...

ELINA (V.O.)
Elina.

They stare at each other.

The door crashes open. Meg flips on the light as she enters.

MEG
What's wrong?

Elina is gone.

MEG
I heard a scream.

Autumn snaps out of it and meets Meg's worried gaze.

MEG
Another nightmare?

AUTUMN
You heard a scream?

Meg steps toward Autumn. Shivers.

MEG
Why is it so cold in here?

Officially freaked, Autumn throws off her covers, jumps down all in one motion.

She rushes past Meg, out of the room.

Meg sighs then calls out to her...

MEG
Okay, one more time, but Dr.
Parks'll back me up on this...

Meg leaves the room, stops in the doorway to look around, clicks the light off, closes the door.

MEG (O.S.)
You need to sleep in your own room,
Autumn... Eventually.

A WHOOSH sweeps through the room.

Meg opens the door as if she heard it. Looks around. Nothing.

The door closes. All is dark.

ELINA (V.O.)
(whisper)
Autumn...

EXT. DON'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Across the street, a gray sedan idles with a VAGUE MAN in a backward baseball cap in the driver seat. He watches...

Autumn glances at him then enters the building.

The car's tinted driver-side window goes up.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

In session with Autumn, Don's restless. His leg bounces.

DON
The girls physically held you down?

AUTUMN
(annoyed)
Duh. That's what I just said.

DON
(unfazed)
Did they know you were assaulted?

Not expecting that question, Autumn hedges.

DON
Have you told anyone?

AUTUMN
Besides you?

DON
And your mom... You've told her.

Autumn shrugs.

Don sits forward, more focused.

DON
Autumn, what did you tell your mom?

AUTUMN
Shouldn't you have asked that when you met her? Or were you too busy looking at her butt?

Don's puzzled, and a bit agitated.

AUTUMN
Whoops. Too far?

DON
I don't know. Are you being snarky
or protective?

AUTUMN
Observant.

DON
You think I'm..."hot for" your mom?

She shrugs.

DON
Words, Autumn. Enough with the
shrugs.

AUTUMN
I think you want to hump her brains
out. Enough words for you?

She stands and shuffles over to the window. Looks out.

Don takes a deep breath and stands. He sits against his desk.

DON
Back on topic. Why does your mom
think you're here?

Autumn continues to focus on something outside, talks over
her shoulder.

AUTUMN
Hello? She thinks I'm nuts.

DON
No she doesn't.

AUTUMN
How do you know? Maybe she just
thinks I'm having "woman" troubles.

DON
Well, you are--

AUTUMN
(under her breath)
Who the hell is this guy?

DON
(thinks she means him)
Now that's crossing a line...

She looks at him, then back out the window.

AUTUMN

Not you.
(points outside)
Him.

Don steps over to the window and looks out.

The gray sedan with the dark windows is still there.

DON

What guy?

AUTUMN

The driver. He's been there since I
arrived--

DON

Nothing unusual about that.

AUTUMN

--the first time. He's been here
every time I've come.

DON

Can we focus on you here? I see the
same cars out there all the time.

AUTUMN

With a guy sitting in them for
hours?

Don goes to the drawstring, threatens to close the curtains.

Autumn gives in and steps away, still suspicious. She sits.

Don's phone buzzes. They both look at the clock on the desk:
"4:50 p.m." Autumn grins and gets up to leave.

DON

When does your mom get off work
tomorrow?

AUTUMN

Why?

DON

(dry sarcasm)
I want to ask her out.

She makes a face at him and exits. Don goes to the window and
glances out.

A man's arm protrudes from the sedan's now open window.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Autumn walks to school alone. She slows when she sees Chelsea and Sue walking ahead.

Sue notices Autumn behind them and nudges Chelsea.

Autumn turns, crosses the street, goes another direction.

CHELSEA

Autumn! C'mon...

Autumn continues to walk away, until...

She stops abruptly. At the end of the next block she spots Elina waiting, staring.

Autumn turns to see Chelsea waiting for her with Sue.

Autumn can't decide. She looks back and forth.

Finally, Chelsea and Sue shake their heads and move on.

With one last glance at Elina, Autumn turns to follow Chelsea, though she keeps her distance.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A square envelope falls out as Autumn opens her locker.

She looks around at passing students, suspicious. She pulls out a greeting card:

"Best friends?" in loopy handwriting with hearts and smiley faces.

Autumn contemplates the note for a bit, when...

CHELSEA (O.S.)

We cool?

Autumn turns to face Chelsea. Autumn shrugs.

Chelsea takes it for a yes and gives her an excited hug.

CHELSEA

Good! Now wait 'til I tell you who just asked me out.

Autumn makes an exchange of books while Chelsea hints...

CHELSEA

He's an older man...

Autumn freezes. She knows what's coming...

CHELSEA
Chad Kensington!

Autumn SLAMS her locker shut.

AUTUMN
I thought your mom said you were
too young to date.

CHELSEA
I'm almost a year older than you.

AUTUMN
My birthday's late in the same
year. You're still just a freshman.
He's a junior... Are you sure he
wasn't asking about your sister?

Chelsea's bubble is burst.

CHELSEA
Why are you being so mean about
this? You know I've liked him
forever. And it's no thanks to you
by the way...

The bell rings. Autumn walks to class. Chelsea follows.

CHELSEA
I thought you were going to talk to
him for me at that sports banquet.

Autumn turns on her, on the brink of explosion.

AUTUMN
I DID try to talk to him... Trust
me. Talking isn't his thing.

CHELSEA
What's that supposed to mean?

Autumn takes a deep breath, shakes her head and walks off.

Chelsea stares after her.

CHELSEA
Wait... Did you guys...

Autumn disappears into the crowd.

CHELSEA
 (to herself)
 No way...

Chelsea stands there contemplating.

A pair of masculine hands come from behind to cover her eyes.

Chelsea touches the hands. Smiles.

She turns to face CHAD (16), a sandy-haired jock wearing a blue Chicago Bears baseball cap.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don sits across from nervous Meg.

DON
 What exactly did she tell you?

MEG
 Just that she got her period in gym class, and at first she thought the blood was a field hockey injury, so it scared her and she screamed. Some other girls mocked her and...

Don smiles to himself, which ticks Meg off.

MEG
 What?

DON
 Haven't you ever seen "Carrie"?

MEG
 What's that? A T.V. show?

DON
 Famous movie. They just did a remake.

MEG
 What about it? I work three jobs to keep a roof over our heads. I haven't got time to watch--

DON
 Her story is a famous scene from the movie. She lied to you.

MEG
 Son of a bitch! So what did happen?

DON
I'd rather she tell you.

MEG
So would I.

Don nods, sympathetic to Meg's angst.

EXT. LAKE VIEW HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Red-and-white Wildcat emblems everywhere.

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

A pep rally. The whole school's there.

Chelsea cheers with the squad. Chad sits with the jocks.

Autumn shrinks into her oversized sweater not far from Sue and Grace. Autumn ignores their glances in her direction.

Elina WHOOSHES in to sit behind Autumn.

The PRINCIPAL steps up to a mic.

PRINCIPAL
Okay all you Wildcats, let's hear
you...

The entire auditorium erupts in a cougar-like cat call.

PRINCIPAL
We're four and two this season.
Time to put up some W's!

Cheers go up. Chelsea does her thing with the cheerleaders.

Elina grins and puts her hands on Autumn's shoulders. Autumn grows very quiet and still.

Just as the cheers die, Autumn stands, her fist in the air.

AUTUMN
Go Cowboys!

Everyone looks in her direction.

Embarrassed, Autumn sits back down, tries to disappear.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The bell rings.

Autumn, books clutched close, hurries out, down the sidewalk.

Chelsea emerges from a rush of exiting kids and catches up.

CHELSEA

O.M.G., Autumn. What was that?

Holding in emotion, Autumn breaks into a run down the street.

Elina waits for her at the end of the block.

Autumn fumes upon seeing her but rushes right at her, THROUGH her, losing Chelsea somewhere behind her.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Meg walks past Autumn's closed door.

Hears whimpering. Stops. Listens.

Meg puts her hand to the door to knock, decides against it. She listens a bit longer, sad with sympathy.

EXT. DON'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Meg goes inside. Autumn follows until she notices...

Elina stands behind the gray sedan parked across the street.

Incensed, Autumn glares at the darkened window.

The sedan's engine revs and it takes off. Autumn looks at the TURQUOISE LICENSE PLATE but it's already too far off.

She's clearly puzzled. Looks up. Elina is gone.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg, tearful, paces by the window as Autumn finishes in quiet monotone where she sits on the loveseat...

AUTUMN

...Sorry I lied. I didn't know how to tell you what really happened.

Don, in his chair, looks at Meg.

DON

You okay, Meg?

Emotions tongue-tie her. She's about to lose it.

AUTUMN

Meg? First-name basis?

Don ignores the comment but it stirs something in Meg.

MEG

Really? Even now you're being a smart ass?

Immediately regretful, Meg rushes to Autumn's side.

MEG

Why didn't you tell me sooner?

Meg hugs her.

ELINA (V.O.)

Schizo--

Autumn breaks from Meg. She gets up, looks around...

In the corner, Elina's vague figure struggles to remain visible. Her lips don't move as she strains to speak.

ELINA (V.O.)

--phrenia.

DON

What's wrong?

AUTUMN

(glares at Don)

You specialize in schizophrenia?

A look of guilt between Don and Meg confirms it.

AUTUMN

You think I made this story up?

MEG

Of course not--

AUTUMN

Then why take me to a doctor for schizos?

Autumn turns to leave.

DON

Tell us about what happened at the pep rally.

Autumn scowls at Elina who, drained of energy, fades away.

AUTUMN

Who told you?

MEG
I'm still the mom. The one who gets
the calls from the principal.

Autumn turns on Meg, furious.

AUTUMN
You know what? I don't need this.

Glowers at Meg.

AUTUMN
I want to live with Dad.

She runs out the door. A WHOOSH follows after her.

Meg gives an apologetic look as she rushes out after Autumn.

Don stands and stares a moment, then goes to his desk.

EXT. DON'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Autumn rushes outside. Looks around. Relieved. No car.

She slumps against the building, buries her face and sobs.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nervous, Meg dials on the landline.

INT. DON'S APARTMENT - DEN - NIGHT

The walls are bare, save the remnants of nails and wires of recently removed pictures.

Don's on his knees surrounded by photos of his family, a few sports trophies and other trinkets of his life. He places them into a box as the phone rings.

He reaches to the desk and answers.

DON
Hello?

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

MEG
Dr. Parks? This is Meg. Autumn's--

DON
Hello, Mrs. Rudolph.

MEG

So sorry we ran out like that. I got your message. Is this a good time to talk?

Don stands and moves to the desk where a blue file is laid.

DON

How's Autumn doing?

MEG

Okay, I guess. She turned in early.

DON

I just wanted some more information about Autumn's dad.

MEG

Nothing to tell. Deadbeat. Gone.

Puzzled, Don flips through some notes in his file.

DON

Autumn seems to think he's--

MEG

I lied to her, okay? For years. I've been doing the fake-letters-at-holidays thing for nearly a decade.

Meg sits, defeated.

MEG

Guess we know where she gets her lying tongue from now, huh?

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - SAME

Autumn surfs the net on her laptop.

She brings up various state license plate images until she finds a turquoise one like the one on the gray sedan.

The plates logo reads: "New Mexico: Land of Enchantment"

Autumn searches around the room.

AUTUMN

Why New Mexico?

INTERCUT - DON'S OFFICE / MEG'S KITCHEN - SAME

Don makes a few notes as Meg dumps on him.

MEG

I mean, you try raising a kid without any help and no real skills to speak of. I was too young when I married that... He was such a jerk! As soon as it got tough, he just split. Autumn barely remembers him. But she idolizes him. I'm sure she thinks I drove him away...

(revelation)

Maybe I did?

She waits for Don's assurance.

Don notices the silence. Stops writing.

DON

Don't worry. This isn't about you... I'd like to do some tests.

He takes out a prescription pad, scribbles on it.

MEG

What kind of tests?

He rips the prescription off and paperclips it to the file.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg and Autumn sit snuggled watching "Wheel of Fortune."

Autumn holds on to her mom like a little girl.

ON TV: VANNA WHITE turns letters on a half-filled puzzle.

MEG

Angelina Joli and Brad Pitt!

Autumn smiles until she realizes it looks distorted...

ON TV: The image of the hangman letters expand to show two more letters before the first name: "E-V"

Autumn sits up.

AUTUMN

Evangelina?

Meg looks at the screen then at Autumn.

CONTESTANT (V.O.)

Angelina Joli and Brad Pitt!

PAT SAJAK (V.O.)
That's right!

The applause fades as Autumn concentrates on what she sees:
"Evangelina" on Vanna's hangman board.

Behind the couch, Elina looks relieved, but weak. She fades.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Alone, Don stands over the open blue file on his desk. He
dictates into a digital recorder.

DON
Jenna, case R-three-three-three.

He looks at the photo and gives it a ritualistic finger kiss.

DON
Some progress in the prodromal
stage, but the risk phase remains--

Don watches in disturbed amazement as the photo's glass
begins to crack from where he'd just touched it.

Perplexed, he crumples into his chair and stares at it.

Elina stands behind him with a smirk.

INT. MALL - DAY

Crowded. Thanksgiving decor all around.

INT. GAMESTOP STORE - DAY

Autumn plays Pikman at a Wii demo station.

Nerdy employee JIMMY (26, blond) approaches and watches as
Autumn easily goes for the win.

JIMMY
You're good.

Startled, Autumn puts down the controller and backs away.

Jimmy offers an apologetic, warm smile.

JIMMY
Weren't you here for last week's
demo?

Autumn shrugs. Nods.

JIMMY

It's okay, you know. I just went through employee orientation. They specifically told us to never call the cops on someone who just comes for the demos.

(conspiratorial whisper)

Especially if they're cute and win a lot. Good for business.

Autumn manages a shy smile.

INT. MALL - DAY

Autumn walks along distracted by her earbuds as she shuffles through a playlist on her MP3 player.

As she passes the food court she stops when she hears...

CHAD (O.S.)

Well, if it isn't the Cowboys fan.

Laughter follows.

Autumn turns to see Chelsea arm in arm at a table with Chad, who wears his signature Bears cap. With them are Grace, Sue and a couple other JOCKS.

One of the jocks turns a chair in invitation.

CHELSEA

C'mon, Autumn. We got room.

Autumn's eyes dart around. Indecision freezes her.

Wary, Autumn pulls one earbud out and walks toward them. The tinny music continues through the earbud.

CHELSEA

We were just talking about you.

The others snicker.

Autumn glares at them. Avoids eye contact with Chad.

CHAD

You got a hot new boyfriend over at Coleman High?

Autumn doesn't get it.

CHAD

You know. Coleman "Cowboys"?

JOCK #1

Yee-haw!

The others laugh out loud.

Autumn turns and walks away.

CHELSEA

No, c'mon. Don't go. I'm really curious. What happened to you?

The question jolts Autumn physically.

She spins around, a murderous look in her eye as she focuses in on Chad, whose smile disappears as she steps up to him.

AUTUMN

You want to tell them, Chad? Tell them "what happened"?

He puts his hands up to say "What are you talking about?"

Chelsea back hands Chad in the chest.

CHELSEA

Did you two do it?

Autumn's rage turns on Chelsea.

AUTUMN

Do it? Why would ANYONE want to DO anything with SUCH A JERKWAD!?

Chelsea stands, face to face with Autumn. Fierce.

CHELSEA

That's my boyfriend you're talking about, bitch.

AUTUMN

Yeah, well, tell him to leave me alone.

(to Chad)

Stop following me.

Autumn turns and rushes away, shocked at her own behavior.

CHELSEA

(to Chad)

Following her? What's going on?

Chad watches Autumn with a hint of worry.

CHAD

Why would I give a crap about a wacko like that? Can't believe a thing that chick says.

Chelsea turns back to her friends as Chad watches Autumn disappear into the crowd of shoppers.

EXT. DON'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Autumn and Meg enter. Autumn looks back. No gray sedan.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Autumn and Meg take their seats across from Don, who smiles.

DON

Good news, ladies.

AUTUMN

Aren't you chipper today?

DON

I had a great game of tennis and...

(to Autumn)

...your test results are good.

First, you're not pregnant--

Autumn is nearly bowled over by the remark. She stands up.

AUTUMN

Pregnant? Who said I might be?

(to Meg)

What the hell, Mom?

Don waits patiently for her to sit down. As she does...

DON

Second, I think there is a bit of a hormonal imbalance. It would explain some of the behavior and why you haven't begun menstruating.

MEG

And that's good?

Don starts to answer but Autumn cuts him off--

AUTUMN

What behavior? How is a girl supposed to act when someone drugs her and...?

Don leans forward, very serious.

DON

That's why we're here, Autumn. You should never have been made to deal with something like this, but your mother is supporting you one hundred percent and I'm here to help. You need to trust us.

Autumn crosses her arms and leans back, mumbles to herself...

AUTUMN

Yeah, until the insurance runs out.

MEG

Young lady, I'd take on a fourth job to pay for this if I had to. Are you mad at Don...Dr. Parks... for getting paid to do his job?

Autumn shrugs and tunes them both out, stares at the windows.

Don takes a deep breath. Speaks to Meg, his eyes on Autumn.

DON

There's a mild drug on the market...

He watches for Autumn's response. She's elsewhere.

DON

It'll help her sleep, and it should balance things out, hormonally.

MEG

I'm not keen on drugs, doctor. And after the way things went down with this guy... Are drugs the answer?

DON

Temporarily. It's not just about what happened. It's what's going on now...

Meg follows his gaze to see Autumn staring at the window.

ELINA (V.O.)

Autumn.

Trance-like, Autumn stands, goes to the window. Looks down.

The gray sedan is parked. The blue bill of a baseball cap pokes out the open window.

Enraged, Autumn turns, rushes toward the door--

DON
What's going on?

AUTUMN
Is it normal to want to kill the
guy?

She runs out and Meg stands up.

MEG
What in the world?

Don moves to the window and sees the car. He rushes out after Autumn, leaving Meg alone, confused.

EXT. DON'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Autumn runs out and across the street. She makes it through the oncoming traffic...

In the opposite lanes, a semi heads right for her.

Focused on the sedan, she shouts...

AUTUMN
Haven't had enough, punk? Go get
your own life, you--

Don grabs her as the truck brakes, hisses, strains gears.

They tumble back into the slowed opposite traffic.

The rattled DRIVER shouts back at her out the window.

TRUCK DRIVER
Are you insane, kid? I could have
killed you!

The truck driver pulls away... The gray sedan is gone.

Don leads Autumn back to the entrance where Meg greets her with a bear hug.

DON
I'll write that prescription,
pronto.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Autumn exits the bathroom, bewildered. She meanders into her
BEDROOM

She sits on the bunk and opens a search engine on her laptop.

Before she can type, letters begin to appear in the search engine field: "EVANGELINA"

Autumn looks around, angry.

AUTUMN

What do you want from me?

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Autumn sits alone eating some toast, deep in thought.

Meg rushes in, grabs a slice of toast from Autumn's plate.

MEG

I'm running late... Sleep well?

Autumn nods.

Meg takes out an orange juice bottle and drinks straight from it then puts it back.

She puts the toast between her teeth while she puts a coat on and grabs keys off the counter.

MEG

Good. Gotta go, kiddo. Love ya.

She pulls the toast from her teeth and gives a crumbly kiss to Autumn's forehead then disappears out the door.

MEG (O.S.)

Have a great day! Don't be late.

Autumn brushes the crumbs from her forehead and tells the empty chair across from her...

AUTUMN

I got my period...

She takes another bite and stares into space.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don, glasses on his nose, hovers over paperwork.

The door swings open. Autumn steps in. Don looks up.

DON

Hey there. How are the meds--

AUTUMN

I wanna tell.

Don puts down his glasses and sits back.

DON
Tell what?

AUTUMN
Not what. Who. I want to tell the
police. About Chad.

Don stands and motions for her to sit.

DON
Is that the boy's name?

She nods as they take their usual seats opposite each other.

DON
You want to press charges?

Tears well. She nods.

DON
Good...no, great. But...

He looks to the door.

DON
Where's your mom?

AUTUMN
Work.

DON
You'll need her support. Things may
not go the way you hope.

AUTUMN
What do you mean? That jerk needs
to be in jail, not dating--

She stops herself.

DON
You're worried he'll do this to
someone else?

She nods.

DON
You're probably right. I won't
sugarcoat. These are tough cases to
prosecute.

AUTUMN
How do you know?

DON
I've testified in a few.

ELINA (V.O.)
Tell...

Autumn looks around. Can't find Elina. Looks at Don.

AUTUMN
What do you mean? For other patients?

DON
(nods)
In my Albuquerque practice it came up a couple times. It's always a "he said, she said" and when the accuser is a mental health patient, the scales can tip the wrong way.

AUTUMN
Yeah, well, everyone already thinks I'm crazy...

DON
However, it can be good for you. Take your power back. Regardless of the legal outcome.

ELINA (V.O.)
...the truth!

Jarred by Elina's insistence, Autumn stands.

AUTUMN
Sorry to barge in. I just thought I should let you know.

Don stands and smiles warmly.

DON
Do you want me to talk to your mother about it, or set up an appointment?

AUTUMN
I don't know. I'll...think about it.

Autumn heads to the door, opens it, hesitates.

AUTUMN

Doc, Albuquerque... It's in New Mexico, right?

DON

(nods, smiles)

I practiced there twelve years before coming here a few years ago.

AUTUMN

Why'd you leave?

The smile is gone. Don returns to his place behind the desk, puts on his glasses and becomes instantly busy.

DON

Long story.

Autumn stares at him a moment, then leaves.

Once gone, Don removes his glasses and wipes welled-up tears.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Corner dive with half-lit neon signs.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

A disheveled Meg bussing a table.

Autumn walks in and sits at a clean table while Meg busies herself back and forth from the table to the counter.

MEG

Hey, chicklet. Bring your homework?

Autumn plops her backpack on the table, pulls out books.

MEG

Sorry I had to stay late tonight. Other gal's got the flu.

Autumn looks around the diner. Empty, except for an overly affectionate young couple in the corner.

MEG

Need anything?

AUTUMN

Advice.

Meg stops scurrying and looks to where the COOK is cleaning in the kitchen with his back to them.

Meg sits across from Autumn.

MEG

Shoot.

AUTUMN

I spoke to the doc, and he thinks
maybe I should go to the police--

Meg reaches for Autumn's hands. Reluctant, Autumn acquiesces.

AUTUMN

But he doesn't seem to think I have
much chance of getting justice.

Meg sees the cook turn around. She squeezes Autumn's hands
and stands quickly as if wiping down the table.

Meg leans over Autumn and kisses her on the forehead.

MEG

Whatever comes, I'm with ya, babe.

COOK (O.S.)

Two hamburgers up.

Meg pats her shoulder on her way to get the food.

Autumn watches the couple in the corner as Meg delivers their
food then leaves them to their amorous selves.

Disgusted, Autumn turns back to her books and homework.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Meg and Autumn stand outside a moment. Meg wraps her arm
around Autumn's shoulder. They enter.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Meg walks past Autumn's door, stops, listens.

Music emanates from within.

Meg smiles and moves on to her own room.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Dressed in a suit, Don looks at his watch as people pass him
to enter a courtroom.

Meg and Autumn, dressed nicely, step off the elevator.

Don smiles at them as they approach.

Chelsea comes from another direction and goes up to Autumn.

CHELSEA

You are such a bitch. I can't believe we were ever friends.

Don steps up to physically place himself in front of Autumn.

MEG

What are you doing here, Chelsea? Shouldn't you be in school?

Chelsea backs off from Don and Autumn to face Meg.

CHELSEA

Didn't your bitch of a daughter tell you? She's jealous that I have a boyfriend. She's just making this all up to hurt me.

Chad and his spiffy-looking father approach, but stop short of confrontation.

CHAD

(to Chelsea)

C'mon, babe. Let's ignore them.

Chelsea gives the evil eye to Autumn then joins Chad as they enter the courtroom.

DON

(to Autumn)

You okay?

Autumn takes a deep breath and stares at the courtroom door a moment before nodding.

Don escorts them both inside.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Don, Autumn and Meg exit the building and head to the

PARKING LOT

Autumn is giddy.

AUTUMN

Can you believe it?

MEG

You were something else in there, kiddo! I'm so proud.

DOC

Me too.

AUTUMN

Doc, you were great. After you testified I even believed I might be sane!

Don laughs, then his face sours into a hint of worry.

AUTUMN

(deflated)

What?

DON

A protection order is just paper. Steer clear of him at school.

AUTUMN

School? He's off to jail!

DON

I doubt bail will be too high for his Armani-wearing dad.

MEG

(worried)

So it's not over?

DON

We still have some work to do. But legally? Yeah. I think it's over.

Meg stops at her ugly Gremlin.

DON

What's say we celebrate? On me. Ice cream?

Autumn gives him an "Are you crazy?" look.

AUTUMN

That's for kids. I've been craving chocolate.

DON

Oh, and that's more grown up?

Meg punches his arm lightly.

MEG

Take it from a woman. Chocolate is definitely for grown-ups.

Don smiles and leads the way to his Lexus.

EXT. CHICAGO - MAGNIFICENT MILE - DAY

The trio approach through a nice little park and halt to see:
Ghirardelli is directly across the street from Hershey's.

AUTUMN

I've died and gone to heaven!

Meg seems equally pleased.

DON

Which one, ladies?

AUTUMN

Hershey's!

MEG

Ghiardelli!

Don smiles and leads the way to Hershey's.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The three sit bundled up on a park bench enjoying chocolate
and ice cream out of bags from both establishments.

EXT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Don's Lexus is parked behind the Gremlin on the street.

Meg opens the front door. Autumn runs inside the house.

Meg turns to Don.

MEG

I hope that medication can override
two tons of sugar.

DON

Been awhile since I've spoiled a
kid. Maybe let her sleep late
tomorrow.

MEG

(shakes her head)
School day.

DON

I don't know if she should go to
school for a couple days anyhow.
Call her in, and maybe give a heads
up to the principal about the
situation.

MEG

Yeah. Especially with Chelsea. She and Autumn were so close. I've never seen that girl so angry and hateful.

The TV goes on in the b.g.

STUDIO AUDIENCE (V.O.)

Wheel...of...Fortune!

An awkward silence for a moment.

DON

I better go.

MEG

Thanks. For everything.

Don nods, turns to leave.

Impetuous, Meg stops him, then plants a big kiss on his lips.

She steps back. Don seems stunned.

AUTUMN (O.S.)

C'mon, Mom. You're missing it.

MEG

Um... Do you want to join us? We--

Don pulls her in for a deeper kiss before pulling away.

DON

You two are doing well. Keep the momentum going... I'll, uh, call you. That okay?

Meg nods. Both smile, still awkward. She watches him leave.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits at the vanity, contemplating different hairstyles.

Mesmerized by her own reflection, she moves closer and tries to make her hair look like Elina's - with bangs.

Trance-like, she stares at her reflection until she begins to see Elina's face.

Autumn breaks away from the hypnotic gaze and shoves herself backward. Elina's image fades.

AUTUMN
Bloody frickin' Mary!

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits on the lower bunk. Stares at her open laptop. She types "Don Parks, Albuquerque" into a search engine.

The headline "Family Murdered in Home" of the *Albuquerque Journal* pops up. The date is about ten years old.

Breathless, Autumn clicks and pages down through the article, taking in the information. She stops when it hits a FAMILY PHOTO: Don, his wife and a young boy.

Scrolling down the article, words highlight: "home invasion," "tragedy," "wife and child," and finally, "Dr. Donovan Parks, a suspect in..."

Autumn slams the computer shut and looks around the room.

AUTUMN
Okay. I give. Talk to me.

Elina's image returns to the mirror. She appears weak.

ELINA (V.O.)
He...knows.

Elina's strength seems spent. She fades away.

AUTUMN
Knows what!?

ELINA (V.O.)
Everything.

Wary, Autumn opens the laptop.

"Evangalina Vazquez" populates the search field.

Autumn looks around. No Elina. She clicks on a link.

ARTICLE HEADLINE: "No New Leads on Cold Murder Case"

A photo of Elina at a Dallas Cowboys game stands out. She's decked out in a Cowboys jersey and fan paraphernalia.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don looks out the window as Autumn enters the building. He looks around. No gray car.

LATER

Autumn fidgets in her seat across from Don.

DON

Are you scared to go back to school
Monday?

AUTUMN

Why should I be? I didn't do
anything wrong. It's not like I
murdered my family or anything.

Autumn measures his response. Nothing seems to register.

DON

I know, but what if your friend
gives you a hard time?

AUTUMN

I don't need Chelsea. I could care
less what she does or thinks.

DON

What about Chad?

AUTUMN

He's in jail... Isn't he?

DON

(shakes his head)
Out on bail.

Autumn stands, paces.

AUTUMN

You mean he'll be at school? For
real?

DON

Remember, this was always a
possibility--

Autumn spins and faces him.

AUTUMN

Yeah. You know all about the wheels
of justice, don't you?

Don shoots her a puzzled look.

AUTUMN

I know all about Albuquerque. I
only came here to let you know I'm
(MORE)

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
not coming back. I don't need a
doctor--

Elina WHOOSHES by between them, physically blowing Autumn's hair a bit.

Don looks at the windows. They're closed. He shakes it off.

DON
I don't know what you think you
know, Autumn, but I can tell you
that in my professional opinion--

Another WHOOSH knocks Autumn off her feet back onto the sofa.

DON
What the--

AUTUMN
Keep lying, doc. She's happy to
make life hell for you. She's done
a great job of it for me so far.

DON
Who? And...what am I lying about?

AUTUMN
(to the air)
C'mon, Elina. Show yourself to the
good doctor. Maybe it'll do him
good to see your face again.

Don goes white.

DON
Did you say...Elina?

AUTUMN
I'm not sure, but I think her real
name is Evangelina.

Don looks ready to have a heart attack. His pale face turns red with anger.

DON
What have you been...? Are you
trying to be cruel?

Elina settles herself in the corner. A cool confidence overtakes Autumn as she looks at Elina.

AUTUMN
Should you tell him or should I?

Don looks around. No one there.

Don gets up, cautious and slow, worried he might spook Autumn into some violent action.

He steps toward his desk and presses an intercom button.

DON
Jenna? Could you come in here a moment?

JENNA (V.O.)
Coming...

He looks around, then at Autumn.

DON
Who's in here right now?

AUTUMN
I told you. Elina.

DON
Anyone else?

The door opens and Jenna walks in.

AUTUMN
(smirks)
And her.

Perturbed, Don stares at her a moment.

DON
Mind if I call your mom?

AUTUMN
(sarcastic)
Finally going on a date?

Don ignores Autumn, speaks to Jenna.

DON
Can you get Meg Rudolph here A.S.A.P.?

AUTUMN
She's at work. Dentist's office.

DON
(to Jenna)
Do we have the number?

Jenna nods and rushes out.

Don leans against the desk and studies Autumn who smiles over at Elina, proud of her confrontation.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Incredulous, Meg stares at Don sitting across from her.

MEG

Observation? What does that mean?

DON

Exactly that. Plus a few non-invasive tests. We need time to--

MEG

We? Who?

DON

Experts in the field.

MEG

Of schizophrenia?

DON

Among other things, but yes.

MEG

And what if she isn't schizophrenic? What if she's still just trying to grow up? Let go of her imaginary friends? Or--

DON

There's no diagnosis going in. Our minds are open.

MEG

What if it's not explainable by science?

DON

You mean paranormal?

Meg nods.

DON

I doubt that it'll--

MEG

Open minded?

Don gives in with a Boy Scout salute.

DON

I promise we'll be thorough, and we'll come out of this with the best modern science has to offer in explanation. If it's unexplainable, I'll be first to admit it.

MEG

How long?

DON

Seventy-two hours. Tops.

MEG

And then we'll know?

DON

Hopefully.

MEG

If not?

DON

One step at a time.

Don glances to see Jenna lost in paperwork behind the partition.

He reaches his hand to Meg's and squeezes it. She falls into his arms, a blubbering mess.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Meg can't believe her eyes. She watches through a large picture window as Autumn, dressed in a hospital gown, undergoes questioning from a PSYCHOLOGIST.

Meg turns to Don, also watching.

MEG

I thought this kind of stuff only happened in the fifties.

DON

It's the only way to control the variables. While a team assesses, another team observes.

MEG

And what do you observe?

DON

A confused little girl trying to become a woman.

MEG

Then why are we here? That's what
I've been seeing for the past year.
And especially since the assault.

A NURSE steps up to the glass and watches. Don pulls Meg
aside out of earshot but with a view of the room.

DON

Yes but she's turned a corner.
Paranoia. Accusations.
Hallucinations.

MEG

Why now?

DON

Why not? Adolescence is when this
kind of thing rears its head. Then
there's genetics.

MEG

Her father?

DON

You've admitted there's a
possibility her dad had mental
issues.

MEG

I think I said he was mental.
There's a difference.

DON

Well, we don't know where to find
him to figure it out. That's why I
grilled you about his history as
much as about yours and Autumn's.

Meg sighs, looks at Autumn.

MEG

What if she is...?

DON

So far, her symptoms are positive.

Meg looks at him like he's the crazy one.

DON

That means that they're treatable.
Negative symptoms...disassociation
and severe confusion...are harder
to treat.

MEG
By "treat" you mean...?

DON
Medicate.

Meg sighs. Shakes her head in denial.

INT. SECLUSION ROOM - NIGHT

Alone, Autumn lies on the bed in the sparse, sterile room.

She looks at the huge mirror. Stares at it. Glares at it. Peers as if able to see beyond her reflection, through it.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME

Don, alone, looks back at Autumn. Seeing the intensity of her gaze, he picks up his notepad.

INT. SECLUSION ROOM - SAME

Autumn sits up and moves closer to the foot of the bed.

AUTUMN
You're right, Elina. He should
confess...

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME

Don backs up instinctively.

DON
What are you up to, Autumn?

She grins, as if at him.

DON
What do you think you know?

He looks at the scribbles on his notepad, then writes in block letters: "BUCK CARTER"

INT. SECLUSION ROOM - SAME

Elina is the only "reflection" Autumn sees.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Looking haggard from work and lack of sleep, Meg rushes into the room where Don and the psychologist confer in murmurs.

Meg goes to the glass and leans her forehead against it, watching Autumn sleep like a lamb as the nurse fusses about.

The psychologist excuses himself and leaves.

MEG

Did you say breakthrough on the phone? My reception was whacked.

DON

Well, I wanted to check with you before I tried to force a breakthrough.

He motions for her to sit.

DON

She's got it in her head...
(hesitant, guilt ridden)
There's something I need to tell you. Maybe I should've told you sooner, but not sure how, or why...

Meg tries to follow along. Confused.

DON

I was married.

MEG

Weren't we all?

DON

It was a great marriage. I loved my wife, adored my little boy--

MEG

You have a kid?

DON

Not anymore. He died. So did my wife.

He takes a deep breath and exhales in a spew of words...

DON

Ten years ago. It was a home invasion. I'm the husband...they suspected me right away, then they cleared me. I left my practice there when patients started dropping off. I came here to...start over.

Meg is dumbfounded.

DON
You heard the "they cleared me"
part, right?

She nods.

DON
And...?

MEG
This is what Autumn's paranoid
about? She found out?

He nods.

MEG
How?

DON
I'm not sure. She keeps talking
about one of my patients. A tragic
case. She was about fifteen.

MEG
What happened?

DON
(nods)
She was borderline schizophrenic.
Responded well to meds. Very well.
But she got pregnant and went off
the meds...and off the grid. She
eventually turned up dead. Some
bastard left her like trash along
the road. They locked up the guy a
few days later. It was her
boyfriend.

Meg looks at Autumn, teary eyed.

MEG
That poor girl. Her poor mother.

DON
I didn't want to tell you... Not
like this. Not now. But Autumn's so
focused on me right now, I thought
I'd ask if it's okay if I bring in
a friend...

INT. SECLUSION ROOM - NIGHT

Don, Meg and strong-jawed Texan BUCK CARTER (60s) enter the
room. Buck holds a 10-gallon cowboy hat in his hands.

Autumn jumps off the bed and cowers in the corner like a frightened mouse.

MEG

Autumn, honey, we want you to meet someone. I have to get to work. I just want you to know I talked this over with Don, so please listen to what they have to say. Okay?

AUTUMN

When can I leave?

MEG

Tomorrow for sure. Maybe tonight if things go well. Cooperate, okay?

Autumn, reluctant, stands up straight and nods, but doesn't budge from the corner.

MEG

This is Sheriff Carter. He has something to tell you.

Meg goes to Autumn and gives her a one-sided hug and kiss, then exits.

Don pulls up chairs for Buck and himself.

INT. MEG'S GREMLIN - NIGHT

Meg waits at a red light.

MEG

Change, dammit!

Looks upward.

MEG

Can you give me just one break?
Does EVERYTHING have to be so HARD!?

The light turns green.

Meg stares at it, then breaks down in tears. A horn honks. She gives the driver behind her the finger through the back windshield then takes off, wiping away tears.

INT. SECLUSION ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn sits at the edge of her bed, physically as far from the two men as possible. She glances at the mirror.

AUTUMN
Who's watching us?

Don looks at the mirror.

DON
Do you see someone?

AUTUMN
(rolls her eyes)
Um, I mean on the other side. In
the next room?

DON
Oh. Dr. Gabriel.

Autumn waves at the mirror.

Don is troubled by her behavior but plows on.

DON
Do you recognize Sheriff Carter?
Maybe his name?

Autumn thinks a moment. Shrugs.

BUCK
I worked a murder case back in New
Mexico.

AUTUMN
Oh! Yeah. I did see your name.

Don writes something in the blue file.

DON
You saw my name in a news article?

Autumn nods.

DON
So you read about what happened
to...my family?

AUTUMN
Sure.

DON
Why did you do that?

Autumn's shoulders slump.

DON

Were you curious? What key words led you to that story? How did you know anything?

AUTUMN

(looks at Buck)

Wait... Am I in some kind of trouble?

DON

No. Not at all. This is part of the assessment. I'm trying to figure things out for you, Autumn.

AUTUMN

I don't wanna talk about it.

DON

(frustrated)

You think I do? You made this personal...

(checks his emotions)

Do you remember what you promised when we started this process?

AUTUMN

About answering every question honestly?

DON

(nods)

With no worries about consequences. It's all about collecting data.

Autumn considers a bit.

AUTUMN

Well, I know you think you mean that, but being put in a rubber room is a consequence.

DON

This isn't a rubber room.

AUTUMN

That's the next step from here, isn't it? If I tell you, you won't believe me, then you'll lock me up for good.

DON

That's not going to happen... What won't I believe? Something to do with Elina?

Buck is taken aback by the name.

Autumn nods.

DON

What about her? What does she have to do with my family?

AUTUMN

Dunno. Albuquerque? I just know she wouldn't leave me alone until I looked stuff up.

DON

She told you what to type?

AUTUMN

No. She typed it. Just like when she kept telling me her real name was Evangelina.

Buck stands and turns to Don.

BUCK

What's all this? I thought this was about your family. Those two cases have nothing to do with each other--

AUTUMN

Yes they do. All the victims knew Dr. Parks. And they're all in Albuquerque.

BUCK

Darlin', I flew here to assure you that Don had nothing to do with his family's murder. And he sure as hell didn't have anything to do with Elina Vasquez's murder, so--

Autumn's countenance morphs from mousey to ferocious.

AUTUMN

What do you know? Maybe he lied to you!

BUCK

His alibis were rock solid. Trust me.

AUTUMN

Why? Why is everyone asking me to trust them? You know who told me to trust them?

The psychologist opens the door, concerned, but Don waves him off. The door closes as Autumn continues in possessed rage.

AUTUMN

CHAD DAVIS. THAT'S WHO!

Buck gives Don a "who is that?" look.

Don motions for him to sit down. As they sit, Autumn paces.

AUTUMN

"Trust me. We're on the same team. I would never hurt you." Then he puts something in my soda and next thing I know...

Autumn looks around, dizzy. The room sways.

AUTUMN

He takes me to that weird trailer, with that weird burlap sofa. That stupid ceiling fan. It was so hot, but the fan just squeaked around. Dead air.

Autumn stares into the mirror.

Elina looks back at her. Gestures for her to continue.

Buck has a look of alarm on his face.

Don is enthralled.

DON

Then what?

AUTUMN

You know. I told you.

She looks at Buck. Her voice changes to a western drawl.

AUTUMN

But you didn't hear me. You wouldn't listen.

Don looks through a stack of files frantically. He pulls a yellow one out and flips through it.

DON
What else? What happened?

AUTUMN
I told him I wanted him to let me
go home. He tied my wrists.

Don shows Buck something in the file.

BUCK
What did he use to bind your hands?

AUTUMN
That plasticky yellow rope - like
they have on boats. And he kept
making me drink that awful stuff.

BUCK
Vodka?

AUTUMN
I guess so. I never had more than a
beer in my life. I told him to stop
it. I didn't want the alcohol to
hurt the...

Autumn snaps out of it and stares at Don. He looks up.

DON
The baby?

Autumn is mortified. She looks at the mirror. Her own
reflection.

AUTUMN
What baby?

BUCK
(whispers to Don)
Is this for real?

Don looks at Autumn, shrugs.

DON
I have no idea.

BUCK
How'd she know about the yellow
rope?

Autumn plops down on the bed. Her voice returns to normal.

AUTUMN

I hate it when grown-ups whisper.
Stop it.

DON

I thought you were grown up now.

AUTUMN

Yeah, well I want my mommy. And I
want her now. I'm cooperating. I've
told you everything about my life.
What more could there be?

Buck draws her gaze as he leans forward, dead serious.

BUCK

Then how come you're tellin' us
about Elina's attack?

Autumn is stupefied.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

The mood is somber.

Meg wrings her hands. Autumn puts her hand over Meg's.

Don flips through files, chooses two, steps around to face
them. He holds up a blue file. It's thick with papers.

DON

Autumn's file.

MEG

Do you have a diagnosis?

DON

I'm getting to that...

Don holds up a thinner yellow file.

DON

Elina's file.

Meg is confused. She looks from Autumn to Don.

MEG

Who's Elina?

Don waits for Autumn to answer.

AUTUMN

I don't know. Just some girl.

MEG
Real or imaginary?

AUTUMN
(eyes well)
I don't know.

She looks up at Don.

AUTUMN
Is she real?

Don ponders how to answer. He takes a seat across from them.

DON
Elina was real. Very real. Not much
older than you. But that was ten
years ago. Before she was murdered.

MEG
Murdered?

DON
Her scumbag boyfriend Luis has been
locked up ever since.

AUTUMN
Why? He didn't do it.

Meg is shocked.

DON
(exasperated)
Twelve of his peers said he did.

AUTUMN
Elina says he didn't.

DON
So who does she say it was?

AUTUMN
I don't think she knows for sure...
She was drugged. Like me.

Don stares at Autumn, his impatience overtaking him.

MEG
I don't understand any of this.
What does this have to do with
anything? I thought we came here
for a diagnosis.

Don smiles, sympathetic.

DON

You did.

Autumn stretches her arms out.

AUTUMN

Measure me for the straitjacket.

DON

(unamused)

While I love your sense of humor,
it is a bit off sometimes.

(to Meg)

We're going to try some simple
meds.

MEG

For what?

DON

I can only tell you what it isn't.
We've ruled out the usual
suspects...thyroid, adrenal gland,
Cushings, dementia, epilepsy--

MEG

But you specialize in
schizophrenia...

DON

Jury's still out on that. Her
reaction to stronger meds will clue
us in.

MEG

So now she's a science experiment?

AUTUMN

(crushed)

I knew no one would believe me.

DON

You'd be surprised how much I do
believe. Give it a couple days. I
think these meds will change your
life...and your outlook. But you
have to follow directions exactly.

Don pulls a prescription out of the blue file, hands it to
Meg who can only stare at it through welling pools of tears.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Alone at the counter, Autumn stares at her own reflection.

AUTUMN

Looks like no one believes me.
Guess that means no one's gonna
believe you either. And if this
magic potion does its job...

She waits.

The door opens. Meg peeks in.

MEG

Need help?

AUTUMN

Need to hover?

MEG

Don did say I need to be a hundred
percent certain you're taking them
correctly.

AUTUMN

To be sure I'm taking them at all.
Right?

Sympathetic, Meg smiles and steps in. She looks at the meds
laid out on the counter.

MEG

Ready?

Autumn nods, fills a cup with water and takes 3 different
pills one at a time.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Lost in thought, Autumn walks to school, hugging her backpack
in front of her.

The bell rings. Other kids run to go inside.

Autumn keeps up a slow pace.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

At her locker, Autumn exchanges books for the next class.

She freezes when she hears...

CHAD (O.S.)

Lying bitch.

She keeps her head down as Chad and his jock friends walk by.

INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Autumn sits alone, reads while she eats the cafeteria slop.

CHELSEA (O.S.)
Mind if I sit here?

Autumn looks up to see Chelsea, food tray in hand.

Autumn shrugs. Goes back to reading.

Chelsea sits. Waits for Autumn to look up. She doesn't.

CHELSEA
You know, I've missed you.

Autumn reads.

CHELSEA
Nothing's the same now.

AUTUMN
(without looking up)
You have Chad now.

CHELSEA
Doesn't mean there's no room in my
life for you.

Autumn gives her a cold stare.

AUTUMN
Even though I'm a lying bitch?

Chelsea searches for a reply while she eats.

AUTUMN
Or maybe I'm just crazy?

CHELSEA
I still don't really get why you
said those things... And going to
court? He promised me he didn't do
it. And I believe him. Why would
you make something like that up?

AUTUMN
Yeah. Why would I?

Autumn goes back to her book. She's done with Chelsea.

Defeated, Chelsea picks up her tray and moves to another table where Sue and Grace are.

Autumn looks away from the book in deep thought.

AUTUMN
 (to herself)
 Why would I make that up?

Jock #1 walks by.

JOCK #1
 Crazy bitch is talking to herself.

Autumn continues pondering.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meg and Autumn sit on the couch watching their show.

Meg's into it. Autumn's eyes are glazed.

MEG
 I already got this one. You?

Meg turns to Autumn who just stares at the TV.

MEG
 Food and drink. C'mon--

AUTUMN
 (monotone)
 Fruity drinks with umbrellas.

MEG
 Yep!

Meg keeps her eyes on Autumn, worried.

MALE CONTESTANT (V.O.)
 Fruity drinks with umbrellas?

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg and Autumn sit across from note-taking Don per usual.

DON
 I'll adjust the dosage on the
 olanzapine. That should take away
 the listlessness. Any other side
 effects?

AUTUMN
 I got my period again, but just one
 day. Isn't that weird?

DON

It's normal not only with the meds,
but at the onset of pubescence.
Your body hasn't found its stride
yet. It could be another year or
two before you're regular, with or
without the medication.

Meg clearly doesn't like the answer. Don catches her look.

DON

But we can adjust the aripiprazole
as well.

Don puts down his notes.

DON

How are things otherwise?

AUTUMN

You mean, do I still see dead
people?

Don waits.

AUTUMN

Well, I have no friends at school
and now I have no "friends" at
home. So I guess everything's
progressing as planned.

Don and Meg exchange a look of mutual sympathy.

MEG

It'll get better, sweetie. We just
have to be patient.

(to Don)

Right?

DON

(smiles)

I know it seems like all the fun
has been taken away, but part of
that is finding the balance. It'll
get better. That's the goal we all
have. Isn't it?

Autumn nods, not fully agreeing.

Don's cell alarm goes off. He stands. So do Meg and Autumn.

DON

You're my last patient today.
What's say you let me treat you

(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)
gals to a fun dinner? Ever been to
Ed Debevic's?

MEG
Haven't done much eating out since
we moved here. But you don't have
to--

AUTUMN
Duh, Mom. He's just looking for an
excuse to spend time with you.

Meg gives an apologetic look to Don who cops to it.

DON
(to Autumn)
And you.

A genuine smile threatens to curl Autumn's lips.

INT. ED DEBEVIC'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A loud, colorful retro '50s vibe fills the air.

Don, Meg and Autumn sit in a booth, looking around.

DON
You're gonna love the wait staff,
Autumn. In fact, you should get a
job here someday. You'd be a
natural.

MEG
I should get a job here. This would
be fun.

DON
Not sure about that...

A FRUMPY WAITRESS, with really bad makeup, wild teased hair
(adorned with Barbie dolls) and a mouthful of bubble gum,
saunters to the table.

WAITRESS
What ya gonna order that'll fill
your skinny bellies and get you out
of here the fastest?

Autumn and Meg look at each other in surprise, then break
into laughter.

The waitress smacks her bubble gum then snaps her fingers.

WAITRESS

C'mon, c'mon. Haven't got all night, ya know. Got a bunch of other slobs waiting for this table.

Don picks up his menu ready to order...

EXT. ED DEBEVIC'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Don rubs his stomach as they walk toward his Lexus.

Meg and Autumn are all smiles, equally full. Autumn carries a large take-home bag of food.

Don pops the locks with a beep on his Lexus.

Autumn rushes to the car and gets in the back. Pilfers fries from the bag.

Don stops and turns to Meg.

DON

We should do this again sometime.

Meg is a bit uncomfortable. She glances at his Lexus.

MEG

It's not because you feel sorry for us or anything, is it?

DON

(genuinely confused)

Why would I?

MEG

You know. The struggling mom with the troubled daughter routine. We need rescuing by the rich, handsome doctor with all the answers.

DON

You think I'm handsome?

Meg smiles.

DON

You guys don't need rescuing. You just need some...momentum.

MEG

(mildly sarcastic)

So you don't make a habit of trying to date the moms of all your patients?

Don lets that sink in.

DON
Actually, no. I don't. Ever.

MEG
Why me, then? I mean, I kind of
live in Dullsville.

DON
Are you kidding? Three jobs and a
kid like Autumn? I'm the dull one
here. No life. A little tennis here
and there...

(suddenly remembers)
Hey. Why don't you and Autumn come
to the club? I want to see what
that tennis champ of yours can show
me on the court.

Meg looks at Autumn in the car. Autumn's face is pressed
against the glass, bored, impatient.

MEG
(hesitant)
Tell us when and where and I'll see
if I can get time off.

DON
Good. It's a date.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Autumn sits on the sofa across from Don.

AUTUMN
You know this every-day-after-
school bit is destroying my budding
social life.

DON
It's just while we're trying to get
the meds right. We'll go back to
once a week soon.

AUTUMN
And when do we go back to zero
times a week?

Don feigns a hurt look.

DON
Let's talk about progress. Any
signs of the frenemies?

Mixed emotions fill Autumn's face as she shakes her head.

DON
You miss them?

She shrugs.

DON
Words...

AUTUMN
I don't have any words. I can't
decide if it's good or bad. I mean,
I kinda thought of Elina as a
friend.

Don bristles at the name.

AUTUMN
You don't like me mentioning her.
Sorry.

DON
It's not about me. Why was she a
friend?

AUTUMN
When I started to figure out what
happened to her, it seemed we had
something in common... You know.
What happened to her. It's kinda
the same, I thought...

DON
And now?

Autumn musters all her courage to say it aloud.

AUTUMN
Now... I'm starting to think maybe
Chelsea and Chad were right...
Maybe... I suppose it's possible...

Her eyes well and choke her into silence.

DON
(flabbergasted)
It's possible nothing ever happened
to you?

Autumn nods and buries her face in her hands.

AUTUMN

Maybe I read that article awhile ago? I don't know...

(looks up)

Did I accuse an innocent guy?

Autumn sobs into her hands.

DON

Even if you read that article, your...situation...your details are different. You weren't making it up. What you told me sounded real.

AUTUMN

(looks up)

You believe me?

Don sits forward and pulls Autumn's hands from her face.

DON

I believe in you.

Autumn's countenance changes. She manages a smile as she looks into his eyes.

Don panics, realizes he's too close and pulls away.

INT. TENNIS COMPLEX - DAY

Almost like a Beverly Hills tennis club, only indoors.

Don, in tennis attire, sits at a table with beers alongside Buck, ever the cowboy, at the sidelines.

Two semi-pros finish off a set on the court in front of them.

BUCK

It ain't like you to get so involved with your patients.

DON

Yeah, I know. It's like that kid has some spell on me.

BUCK

And the mom?

DON

Her too...

A look of guilt overcomes Don. He knows he's crossing lines.

BUCK

Shoot, maybe it's about time you got a little spellbound. After all you've been through, you deserve to find a bit of happiness...

(salutes with his beer)

'Least that's my diagnosis.

DON

I knew calling you would be the right thing. You're a good friend.

BUCK

(serious)

A better friend would've found that killer by now.

Don nods, solemn. They clink beers and chug.

Autumn, in her tennis outfit, and Meg, painfully aware that she's a bit underdressed for the club, approach.

Don stands when he sees them. So does Buck.

Autumn gives a wary glance.

AUTUMN

You still here?

BUCK

You remember me, huh?

AUTUMN

Sort of.

BUCK

You were kinda out of it.

All sit.

MEG

Don't you need to get back to New Mexico?

BUCK

Retired. I can live it up here in balmy Chicago a few more days.

Meg gives a questioning glance to Don.

DON

Buck and I became good friends over the years.

AUTUMN

Still trying to catch the killer,
huh?

Meg's shoulders slump in embarrassment. She touches Autumn's knee to shush her. Autumn shrugs it off. Looks around.

The semi-pros on the court finish their match and walk off.

DON

That's our cue.

Don stands and leads Autumn to a counter where rackets can be rented, leaving Meg alone with Buck.

MEG

(quietly)

Do you have any clues who killed
Don's family?

BUCK

Plenty. Just no suspects.
Everything's gone cold.

Meg looks out at the court where Don and Autumn square off.

MEG

It must eat him up. But...he seems
like a really good guy.

BUCK

He's practically Ward Cleaver.

She doesn't get the reference.

BUCK

Ozzie Nelson?

Blank stare.

BUCK

Dang, I'm old... Squeaky clean.
He's good people.

Meg sits back, somewhat relieved. Watches Autumn serve an ace against Don.

In the corner, Elina watches, unnoticed by all.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - DAY

Autumn sits on the lower bunk, now devoid of clutter. She listens to music with earbuds while reading.

Meg stands at the open door watching. She smiles faintly before knocking on the door jamb and walking in.

Autumn pulls one earbud out and moves over on the bunk to make room.

Meg broaches the subject delicately as she sits...

MEG
You doing okay?

AUTUMN
Yeah... I am.

MEG
No more frenemies? No more nightmares? No--

AUTUMN
I really am doing good, Mom.
(pensive)
Only...

MEG
What?

AUTUMN
It's really hard at school. I'm one of those...what's it called? Oh... pariah.

MEG
Anything I can do to help?

AUTUMN
Can't think of anything. Just don't try to butt in.

MEG
Your birthday's next week. No party?

AUTUMN
Who would I invite?

Meg stares at her matter-of-fact affect.

MEG
How does that make you feel?

AUTUMN
Can't resist the armchair shrink stuff, can ya?

MEG

Seriously. What are you feeling about all this?

Autumn furrows her brow in search of words. None come.

MEG

When you see Dr. Parks tomorrow, tell him what you're feeling. If you don't feel anything, make sure he knows.

AUTUMN

You think he's turned me into a zombie or something?

Autumn mocks with a guttural zombie impression.

Meg smiles. Gets up, goes to the door.

MEG

Lights out at ten, kiddo. I have to work early, so you need to get yourself up in the morning.

Autumn nods and resumes reading.

Meg watches her, concerned.

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Dressed as an assistant, Meg sits at the computer. She looks out at the reception area. Empty.

She looks back to the patient hallway. A drilling sound in one of the rooms.

On the computer, Meg opens up a browser and types in:

"Don Parks - murder - Albuquerque"

The same article Autumn had read pops up. But several others also pop up. She clicks on a link that says "Still no suspect in cold case" and begins to read.

Unseen, behind her, Elina watches. She outstretches her hand as if making a typing motion.

Meg doesn't notice. Nothing changes on the computer.

Meg scrolls to a photo of Don's family. Meg stares at the beautiful wife. Sighs.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don rips a prescription from his pad and hands it to Autumn.

DON

I'm not keen to lower dosages just yet. But I've added something that might help you feel those highs and lows again.

AUTUMN

Anti-zombie meds? Cool.

Autumn takes the prescription and stuffs it in her pocket.

Don watches her as she exits. Smiles.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Autumn watches a YouTube video on her laptop.

ON COMPUTER: A cat chases a dog.

Autumn laughs.

ON COMPUTER: Mid-video, a new browser window pops up over the YouTube page.

AUTUMN

What the...?

In the search field, letters appear:

"E V A N G--"

Autumn stands up. Bumps her head on the top bunk. She looks around the room.

Sensing something, she turns slowly to face the mirror.

From inside the mirror Elina glares at her, angry. She shouts at Autumn, but nothing is heard. She points at the laptop.

EXT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - SAME

Meg gets out of the car with armloads of groceries.

ELINA (O.S.)

LOOK! NOW!

Meg drops both bags. Scrambles for her keys to the door.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - SAME

Autumn sits down and looks at the laptop. She takes a deep breath and hits "enter."

ON COMPUTER: Yearbook photos of Elina pop up on the screen. Fill the screen. A small window with a link pops up.

Autumn looks up at Elina who continues to point at and manipulate the computer.

Autumn clicks the link and watches the screen.

Up pops a blog entitled "Elina's Murder Still Unsolved" subtitled "Help find the scumbag."

There are no words in the article until they start typing onto the screen:

"Evangalina Vasquez was NOT a victim of 'domestic violence' from her boyfriend. Only one person knows what happened..."

Meg comes bounding into the room, out of breath.

MEG

What's going on? Was that you yelling?

Autumn looks at her puzzled for a moment then slowly moves her gaze to Elina.

Meg follows her gaze. She doesn't see anything, but she definitely senses it.

MEG

Elina? She's back?

Just as disappointed as Meg, Autumn nods. She looks back at the computer and turns it for Meg to see.

The screen is a mess of electronic mumbo jumbo.

MEG

What? Your computer broke down?

Autumn turns the computer back and looks at it. Still has Elina's photos and the self-typing article on it.

She looks up. Elina is completely engrossed as she continues to "type."

Autumn reads from the screen...

AUTUMN

"Only one person can explain what happened between the night that Evangelina disappeared and the day her body was found..."

Autumn stops cold as the typing continues furiously then stops. She looks up at Meg.

MEG

What are you reading?

AUTUMN

(reads aloud)

"At the center of it all is one man. A man once arrested for child molestation..."

MEG

What? Who?

AUTUMN

(looks up, drained)

"Dr. Donovan Parks."

Elina collapses. Disappears.

Meg blinks at Autumn, then holds on to the bed post to steady herself.

INT. DON'S APARTMENT - DEN - NIGHT

Don sits at his desk. Rubs his face with his hands. Contemplates an untouched glass of brandy in front of him.

He reaches for the glass and taps it with his finger until it moves about an inch across a gold-leaf groove on the desktop.

DON

Crossing too many lines...

He lets the glass hypnotize him a bit longer, then smacks it across the room...

Right through Elina, who glowers at him.

EXT./INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - MEG'S GREMLIN - DAY

Meg sits in the parked car, thinking.

She picks up her cell phone and dials.

JENNA (V.O.)

Hello?

MEG

Um, hi... Jenna, right?

JENNA (V.O.)

Yes, how may I help you?

MEG

This is Mrs. Rudolph. Autumn's mom.

JENNA (V.O.)

Of course! Would you like me to see if the doctor's available?

MEG

No! No, I just... I was wondering if you might have the number for his friend who's in town. Buck.

JENNA (V.O.)

Buck Carter? Well... I'm not sure I should--

MEG

Oh, I totally understand. I'm actually trying to put together a birthday party for Autumn, as well as a bit of a thank you for Don...Dr. Parks. So I want it to be a surprise. I just want to make sure Mr. Carter hasn't changed his plans to go back home too early.

JENNA (V.O.)

Well... I suppose I could have Buck call you. Would that work?

MEG

(relieved)

Yes. But don't forget, keep it under wraps from Dr. Parks.

JENNA (V.O.)

Will do.

MEG

Thanks. Bye.

Meg shuts the phone and takes a few deep breaths.

She starts the car after a long stalling sound, revs it, then takes off.

The gray sedan with New Mexico plates drives into the vacant parking spot, sits idle.

The front door on the house opens. Autumn steps out.

The car takes off.

INT. GAMESTOP STORE - DAY

Just a few customers. A teenage boy plays an intense game at the demo stand.

Autumn, unintrusive, watches nearby. Waits her turn.

Jimmy steps up beside her. Nudges her and whispers.

JIMMY

He's not as good as you.

Autumn shrugs.

The kid loses to the computer, throws a fit.

JIMMY

Show him how it's done, champ.

Autumn smiles with a boost of confidence as she steps up to the demo controls.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don looks at his watch: "4:30"

He presses the intercom button.

JENNA (V.O.)

Yes, doctor?

DON

Have you heard from Autumn Rudolph
or her mother?

JENNA (V.O.)

(hesitant)

Well... no.

DON

Would you give Autumn a call? She's
never been late.

JENNA (V.O.)

Will do.

Don sits at the desk, looks back and forth at the two closed file folders. He rubs his eyes. Weary.

Elina stands in the corner, glares at him with fury.

The intercom chimes.

JENNA (V.O.)

No answer. Straight to voicemail.
Want me to call the mom?

DON

I'll give it some time. No need to
alarm her at work.

Don opens the two folders simultaneously.

Elina steps forward.

Don looks around. He rubs his arms as if chilled.

EXT. GIRLIE CLUB - NIGHT

Sleazy dive in a red-light district.

INT. GIRLIE CLUB - NIGHT

Female dancers in various stages of undress entertain the
mostly male clientele.

Meg, in skimpy costume, makes her way through the crowd
bearing a round tray of empty glasses and bottles.

She spots Buck slouched in a corner booth. He watches the
dancers with mild "been there, done that" interest.

Meg sits across from him. Hands him a fresh beer.

He takes a swig without looking at her.

BUCK

You work up there?

She follows his eyes to the dancers on stage.

MEG

I haven't done anything like that
since I was a kid.

BUCK

Kid. That sounds about right. These
little ladies look like they just
got their braces off.

Meg, exasperated, waits for him to look at her.

Buck straightens up and gives her his full attention.

MEG
So, what else can you tell me
about--

BUCK
No more dishin' on Don, darlin'.

MEG
(disappointed)
Okay... Just tell me more about
this Vasquez girl.

BUCK
(surprised)
You too? What's all this interest
in that poor little gal? You got
some new intel or somethin'?

MEG
Maybe. Not sure. Did you ever make
a connection between the murder of
Don's family and that girl?

Buck doesn't like the question. Shakes his head, suspicious.

MEG
Anything. Like the rope that Don
said was so important? Or...

BUCK
Nothing like that. I'm tellin' you,
missy, Don had nothing to do with
anyone's death. Not anyone.

Meg sits back, miffed.

MEG
You sound more like a protective
friend than a lawman, Mr. Carter.

BUCK
Maybe, but I can tell you that
there's just no disputing those
alibis.

MEG
What alibis?

BUCK
He was on call at the local
hospital...during both murders
actually. About thirty witnesses
can place him on the opposite side
of town.

MEG

And you checked to make sure he couldn't have done anything between shifts? Or slipped away for an hour or two?

Buck removes his hat to scratch his head a moment.

BUCK

No need. He had no motivation.

Meg smirks as she pulls a print-out from her pocket. She slaps it on the table in front of him.

Buck squints at it in the dim light. He takes out granny glasses and peruses it. His eyes show surprise, then resolve as he reads at the bottom of the page.

BUCK

Says right down here that Don was cleared of the charges. This kind of crap plagues all doctors who specialize in child care. You find a doc who ain't been accused a few times and I'll bet he's the only guilty one in the crowd.

Meg is dubious.

BUCK

I'm tellin' you, Don Parks ain't no child molester. Ain't no killer either.

A bell rings at the bar. Meg turns to see an angry bartender glaring at her with a tray full of fresh drinks at the ready.

MEG

Can you stay a bit? I want to talk more. Drinks on me?

Buck nods and Meg gets up to rush off, but stops.

MEG

Until I get back, think it over. Please? There has to be some kind of connection. Something that struck you as odd. Maybe his accuser? A name? Another patient. Anything.

BUCK

Why do you think--

She's gone before he can finish.

INT. DON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Don listens on his cell phone to endless ringing.

INT. GIRLIE CLUB - SAME

With one hand balancing drinks, Meg pulls her phone from a hidden pocket. It shows Don calling. She hits "ignore" and delivers drinks to a grabby group of drunk old men.

INT. DON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Don dials another number and waits.

INT. GIRLIE CLUB - SAME

Buck takes out his phone and sees it's Don. He picks up.

BUCK

Yo. Your ears burnin'?

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DON

Huh?

BUCK

No worries. Just thinkin', actually. You recall you had a patient I asked you about after that poor girl's murder.

Don takes a deep, agitated breath.

DON

Is this about Elina?

BUCK

Don't get your panties in a wad. I'm just askin'. Seems to me there was some fella we questioned. I liked him for the murder, but then we got the tip on the boyfriend.

DON

Yeah, I know who you mean. I've got the files here...

Don flips through a manila file.

DON

Here it is. James Sjostrom. I can't remember the real pronunciation - kind of a Swedish jawbreaker. The kid had a crush on Elina, and he had some big problems. I referred him to another doctor.

Looks closer at the file.

DON

I recommended some heavy-duty tests. Have no idea what the follow-up was. All hell broke loose when...well, you know.

BUCK

Name does sound familiar. I'll follow up. Meanwhile, what about the name Lydia Feldman?

Don goes white. He nearly throws the phone across the room but stops short.

DON

What the hell, Buck? You know I never touched that little girl.

BUCK

How would I know? You never brought it up during the investigation.

DON

Why should I dig up crap like that? You knew my alibi. That was enough.

BUCK

Was it?

Buck disconnects the call. He dials another number as Meg comes and sits down. He puts his finger up for her to wait.

BUCK

(into phone)

Hey, chief. Buck Carter here. Yeah, been awhile... And you?... Good. Listen, I know it's late, but I was hoping you could look into something for me about an old case.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Don's head is buried in his folded arms on the desk.

Elina hovers over him, frustrated.

Don sits upright, wipes away the emotion.

Elina SCREAMS into his ear, unheard.

Nostalgic, Don gathers up some piled photos and shuffles through them. Fans them out like a hand of cards.

Don kisses them collectively and lays them down. A moment of decision hits him.

DON

I've got to put an end to this.

He stands, grabs his coat and exits, on a mission.

On his desk are the myriad photos of his wife and son atop the case files for Elina and Autumn.

INT. GIRLIE CLUB - NIGHT

Buck hangs up and looks at Meg.

BUCK

Where's your kid right now?

MEG

At home. Probably eating junk food instead of doing her homework.

Buck stands, hands in his pockets.

BUCK

What do you usually make on a Friday night here?

MEG

About a hundred. Cheapskates.

Buck puts two Ben Franklins in her hand.

BUCK

Take the night off. I wanna talk to that girl of yours...if you think she's strong enough.

Meg nods, grateful.

MEG

Let me change...

She runs off to the back.

Buck sits again, watches the dancers. One dancer looks his way and makes seductive gestures.

BUCK

I got a granddaughter older'n you,
child.

He gets up and goes to wait by the door.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Autumn steps off the stairway and heads for the

KITCHEN

carrying her meds. She places them on the counter in an orderly line-up.

She pulls up a stool and stares at the meds, pondering what to do.

The doorbell rings.

A shadow of a man with a baseball cap appears at the back kitchen door behind Autumn.

Not noticing, Autumn gets up and goes through the

LIVING ROOM

to the front door.

Autumn peers out. Surprised, she opens the door.

Chelsea stands there. Looks nervous.

CHELSEA

Hi.

AUTUMN

Hi.

Autumn looks around past Chelsea.

AUTUMN

You alone?

Chelsea shakes her head. She looks off to the side and motions for someone to join her.

A sense of dread overcomes Autumn and she slams the door when she sees Chad's baseball cap peek around the corner.

CHELSEA (O.S.)
C'mon, Autumn. We just wanna talk.
I promise.

Autumn backs up and bumps into the couch. She turns and sees the silhouette at the back door.

She runs toward the kitchen, then stops, afraid to get too close to the back door.

She spies the knife block on the counter. Looks back at the looming silhouette... Paralyzed.

INT./EXT. DON'S LEXUS (MOVING) - SAME

Don drives over a bridge, cell phone to his ear.

DON
Dammit.

He throws the phone down.

DON
(reassuring, to himself)
Man up, Don. Just gotta do this one thing, then move on.

He hits the steering wheel in frustration.

DON
Never should have called Buck.

Behind him the bridge goes up for a passing sailing yacht on the Chicago River.

INT./EXT. MEG'S GREMLIN - SAME

The Gremlin gets caught in traffic behind the rising bridge.

Meg's in the driver seat. Buck's stuffed into the cramped passenger seat.

MEG
Damn! Who takes their yacht out a week before Thanksgiving?

Meg looks at her phone. It's dialing Autumn. No answer.

INT. AUTUMN'S ROOM - SAME

Autumn's phone, face up on the vanity seat, vibrates. It's Meg calling.

LIVING ROOM

Indecisive, Autumn stares at the block of knives, then at the silhouette still hovering at the door.

INT./EXT. MEG'S GREMLIN - SAME

Meg hangs up the phone. Turns to Buck.

MEG

Why do I feel such a sense of urgency?

BUCK

Part of bein' a mother, I s'pose.

He looks at her.

BUCK

That intuition thing is usually about as good as a cop's gut.

She slams her hand on the horn, which is busted.

MEG

What's your gut saying right now?

BUCK

(ominous)

Kinda curious to know what Don's up to.

He pulls out his phone and dials.

EXT./INT. DON'S LEXUS - SAME

Don's car is parked down the block along Autumn's street.

His phone sits on the console attached to its charger. Buck's ID makes it buzz. It goes unanswered.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Autumn makes a mad dash for the

KITCHEN

and takes a knife from the block.

AUTUMN

(to the back door)

Get out of here. LEAVE ME ALONE!

A pot flies past Autumn's head and smashes into the door. She spins to find...

Elina.

They both look at the door. The shadow is gone.

ELINA (V.O.)

It's him.

Autumn looks all around, at every window.

AUTUMN

Who?

Frustrated, Elina looks at the medications on the counter. They rattle under her scrutiny.

AUTUMN

Chad?

Elina concentrates hard, losing strength. The pills burst open and explode into the air.

A bottle lands at Autumn's feet. The label is torn off except for "Dr. Donovan Parks." Autumn picks up the bottle.

She looks around for Elina who's disappeared.

AUTUMN

What the...? Are you saying Don--

The doorbell rings again, followed by pounding.

CHELSEA (O.S.)

Autumn. Let me in. It's cold. I just wanna talk.

Autumn creeps through the

LIVING ROOM

to the door.

AUTUMN

What do you mean "I"? Where's Chad?

CHELSEA (O.S.)

He...went home.

AUTUMN

Go away. I don't wanna talk to you right now.

Chelsea bangs harder. The solid door vibrates under her pounding.

Autumn backs away.

AUTUMN

Leave, or I'll call the police.

CHELSEA (O.S.)

Don't be ridiculous! I came...to apologize. You were right. Chad's a jerk. I believe you now.

Autumn glances back at the kitchen. Sees Chad's shadow return. He tries the door. Locked.

Autumn grabs the phone by the couch. She starts to dial, then listens. It's dead.

AUTUMN'S ROOM

The cell phone's vibrations knock it from the seat to the floor with a THUMP.

LIVING ROOM

Autumn jumps at the noise overhead.

With the knife in her trembling hand, she approaches the door and peeks out the window.

Chelsea's hand smashes up on the other side of the glass.

Autumn reels back in shock.

CHELSEA (THROUGH THE WINDOW)

Let me in! O.M.G.! Someone's out here...

AUTUMN

Who?

Autumn looks back through the rooms to the kitchen door. She sees Chad's shadow lurking, then sees the silhouette of another man grab him and pull him back.

Autumn opens the door a crack when it flies out of her hands to slam shut.

Autumn turns around to find Elina shaking her head. She SCREAMS "NO" - no sound.

INT. MEG'S GREMLIN - SAME

Meg looks around, fearful.

MEG
What was that?

Buck looks at her.

MEG
You didn't hear a shout?

BUCK
All I hear is your dang motor
conkin' out.

Meg looks down at the gages. They go haywire.

MEG
No! Damn. What do we do?

BUCK
Shoulda gone with my gut to get a
cab.

The car dies.

MEG
If I didn't know better I'd think a
ghost did that.

BUCK
Yeah - the ghost of a thirty-five-
year-old engine, rest its soul.

The bridge finally lumbers down again.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - SAME

Chelsea continues to pound on the door outside.

Autumn tiptoes through the house toward the

KITCHEN

Autumn raises the knife as the muffled sounds of a struggle
seem to be right outside the door.

Chelsea's pounding stops.

CHELSEA (O.S.)
Fine. I'll come back tomorrow.

Autumn looks at the light switches by the back door.

Apprehensive, she goes and flips one up.

Flood lights go on in the back yard.

Autumn can see two men in silhouette fighting. Neither has a hat now and it's impossible to make out who is who.

AUTUMN

The police are on their way!

One man hesitates a moment. The other takes advantage and knocks him down. He's out cold.

The victor wipes his brow and heads toward the door.

AUTUMN

Don't come in here!

MAN (O.S.)

It's okay, Autumn. You're safe now.

AUTUMN

(leery)

Who is that? Don?

The silhouetted man stops and bends over. When he stands up straight, he puts the cap on his head.

AUTUMN

CHAD?! Go away. The police are coming.

Autumn runs to the

STAIRS

and races up. At the top she hesitates. She chances it and runs into her

BEDROOM

She looks for the phone and realizes it was the thud noise.

Relieved, she picks it up and dials "9-1-1." She is about to hit "send" when the kitchen door SMASHES in downstairs.

The phone nearly falls from her hand. She slices herself accidentally with the knife trying to catch the phone.

She ends up dropping both.

DON (O.S.)

Are you okay?

Autumn reels to find Don, worse for the wear of a backyard scuffle, standing in her doorway.

Autumn is frantic to get the knife as he steps forward.

He reaches for her and she grabs the knife in time to swipe and slice his arm.

DON

Dammit, Autumn. Why'd you do that?

She waves the trembling knife at him.

AUTUMN

DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!

DON

What are you talking about? I just want to know if you're okay. Obviously you're--

He takes a step toward her, unknowingly kicking the phone under the bed.

She swipes a radius to hold him back.

AUTUMN

Where's Chad?

Don shakes his head sadly.

DON

I found him outside. He's dead.

AUTUMN

Found him?

Autumn's confusion puts her guard down for a moment.

AUTUMN

I saw you attack him.

Elina fills the reflection of the vanity mirror, bursting out the glass from the two side panels.

Don jumps back. Autumn moves closer to the intact center mirror in solidarity.

DON

I swear it, Autumn. He was dead when I arrived. Someone nearly took off his head with a shovel. And he--

A blue baseball cap appears behind Don in the hall.

AUTUMN

Jimmy?

Don turns to face Jimmy, the guy from Gamestop, who's covered in bloody cuts from the kitchen door's glass. Jimmy raises a knife matching Autumn's from the kitchen.

Not comprehending, Autumn watches them struggle.

DON

Get out of here.

Jimmy plunges the knife into Don's arm. Don yells in agony.

Autumn slides

UNDER THE BED

and reaches past a clutter of junk to find the phone.

IN THE DOORWAY

Don pushes Jimmy out into the

HALLWAY

deflecting his attempts to stab him more.

DON

Jimmy, it's over. I already called the police. They're on their way.

UNDER THE BED

Autumn finally finds the phone. She pushes "send." The call fails.

HALLWAY

Jimmy rushes Don back into the

BEDROOM

smashing him up against Autumn's posters.

MAN/JIMMY

You took her from me, you bastard.
I had to make you pay. And now
you're keeping me from her too.

Don is losing strength.

Autumn peeks out from under the bed.

AUTUMN

Who?

Jimmy suddenly releases Don, who slumps to the floor, spent.

JIMMY

You.

AUTUMN

Me what? Who are you?

Autumn looks up at the mirror. No Elina. Autumn looks around and finds Elina kneeling by Don.

Elina looks up at Jimmy, stands, points. Silently SCREAMS the word "HIM!"

Jimmy backs up, covering his ears. He drops the knife.

JIMMY

What is that?

Autumn crawls to her feet and stands by Don and Elina, knife in hand.

AUTUMN

Elina.

Elina continues to scream in silence, which sends Jimmy to his knees. He looks around, not seeing her, but looking directly at her.

JIMMY

Evangelina?

The sound of footsteps through the house and up the stairs draws Don and Autumn's attention.

Buck arrives at the door, assesses the situation, puts a gun to Jimmy's head.

BUCK

Don't even flinch, boy.

As Buck subdues Jimmy, Meg enters, sees Autumn and Don. Rushes to them.

MEG

(to Autumn)

Are you alright?

Autumn looks at Elina and smiles.

AUTUMN

Yeah. I'll be fine.

Buck leads Jimmy out the door as sirens draw near outside.

Meg drops to her knee to give aid to Don.

DON

I came here to break things off.
Remove myself from Autumn's case.

Meg tears his shirt sleeve.

DON

I've been acting like an
unprofessional fool. I could...
should lose my license for how I've
behaved.

MEG

Yeah, well I was going to fire you
anyway.

They smile at each other.

Autumn steps past them and faces Elina.

Simultaneously, they mouth "thank you."

Elina smiles. She slowly fades from Autumn's sight.

EXT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crawling with cops inside and out.

Two detectives hover at the open back door of a cop car,
talking down to Jimmy who's freaking out in the back seat.

Shaking, Chelsea talks to a couple cops as a coroner pulls a
tarp over Chad's crumpled body in the b.g.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An EMT gathers his things and exits, leaving Don patched up
on the couch next to Meg.

Autumn, hand bandaged, sits in an easy chair adjacent.

Buck enters from the kitchen with mugs on a tray.

BUCK

Hot chocolate for the little lady.

He hands a big mug to Autumn who gladly accepts. He distributes the coffee before sitting across from them all.

AUTUMN

(to Don)

So this Jimmy guy was your patient?

Don nods. Winces at the pain in his arm.

BUCK

And he not only killed Elina, but then he killed Don's family.

AUTUMN

Why?

BUCK

(shrugs)

He's spillin' the beans to detectives right now.

DON

My guess is that he blamed me for keeping him away from Elina, then once he took her, he felt he had to kill her. I guess he blamed me for that too.

Meg squeezes his good arm in sympathy.

AUTUMN

But why kill Chad?

BUCK

Dumb kid was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

AUTUMN

Wait. Why did Jimmy come after me?

DON

(ashamed)

He must have trailed me to Chicago. You became his new obsession. I just wish I could've seen all this coming. He's always been a sick young man.

AUTUMN

So that was his car following me? And he just took that job at the mall because of me?

Don nods.

AUTUMN

That's wack. I'm only fourteen.

MEG

Next week. You're still my little girl for another six days.

AUTUMN

Even sicker. I'm just thirteen.

MEG

That reminds me. Will you be in town next week, Buck?

BUCK

No ma'am. I'm jettin' out of here first thing Monday to make sure that kid sittin' in jail the last ten years gets a hearing in front of the right judge A-SAP.

He stands as if to go.

BUCK

Besides, I got three invites from kids and grandkids for Thanksgiving.

DON

That must be nice... To be wanted by loved ones at the holidays.

He looks at Meg expectantly.

MEG

Autumn's birthday falls on Thanksgiving this year.

Don smiles.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A few wrapped gifts sit on the coffee table. One is obviously a tennis racket.

DINING ROOM

Meg carries a good-sized roasted turkey out from the kitchen.

Autumn takes a picture.

AUTUMN

No one will ever believe me without proof.

Meg sticks her tongue out at her and puts the plate down on the dining table in front of Don.

MEG

Have at it.

Don is about to carve--

AUTUMN

Wait. Aren't we supposed to say what we're thankful for?

They all look around at each other and smile. It's obvious what they're thankful for.

AUTUMN

Well, this is my birthday, and I'm going to say it out loud.

Don and Meg are all ears.

AUTUMN

No meds for five days. And no frenemies for six.

DON

No more ghosts?

AUTUMN

Nope.

Don raises his glass. They all salute with wine and eggnog.

As Autumn raises the glass to her lips, she hears...

CHAD (V.O.)

Autumn!

She whips around.

Chad stands by the fireplace looking like someone just hit him in the face with a shovel.

MEG

What is it?

AUTUMN

Nothing.

Chad's voice gurgles, though his mangled mouth doesn't move.

CHAD (V.O.)

It wasn't Jimmy who killed me...

KNOCK on the door.

CHELSEA (O.S.)
(sings)
Happy birthday to you...

Don and Meg look at each other, then at Autumn who zooms in on Chad, knowing... He nods.

CHAD (V.O.)
It was Chelsea.

Meg stands to go get the door.

AUTUMN
NO!

FADE OUT.