

HARPER MASON

Written by

B. Isabella Bodnar

Isabella.bodnar@gmail.com
310-869-2659

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - GEORGIA - NIGHT

In serious need of a makeover, this "off the grid" 2-story house is nowhere close to neighboring homes or a paved road.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME

In a cramped, but tidy eat-in-kitchen, two people eat across from each other. Country music plays on the radio.

PHIL GARDNER (29)-- baby face, tall, bloodshot eyes, dons a "USCF" baseball cap -- eats chicken with peas. His right grip on the metal fork is weak from a scarred over recent cut.

HARPER MASON (19) -- biracial, delicate, uncombed dark hair -- sits with her back to us and devours her food with a plastic fork. Dirty fingernails suggests poor hygiene.

A piece of chicken slips off Phil's fork and plops on the floor. As he bends down to get it...

With a magician's speed and stealth, Harper reaches across the table and swipes the fork from his loosened grip and...

Jabs it into Phil's upper back before he can even figure out what happened. He screams and crumbles forward.

Harper pops up from her chair and bolts through the...

LIVING ROOM...

Toward the front door, her exquisite face filled with panic and determination as she cups her pregnant belly and shrieks.

Phil pulls the fork out of his back. Blood blossoms from the wound. He lunges to his feet, pissed, and chases after her.

PHIL
You fucking bitch!

As Harper touches the metal handle of the front door...

Electricity zaps her. She twitches.

An angry DOG BARKS O.S.

Phil races to Harper and hits a button high above the door where she couldn't reach if she jumped.

The jolts stop. Harper's legs buckle, and Phil catches her before she tumbles back. She thrashes to loosen his grip.

Phil, livid, grabs her and throws her to the ground. She barely catches her fall, protecting her belly the whole time.

As he reaches down to grab her, she pulls her knees in and kicks him in the torso, launching him into the couch.

She hops back on her feet and grabs one of the many "US CHESS FEDERATION" CHESS TROPHIES lining a shelf behind her.

Phil lunges at her again and she swings at him. He ducks.

PHIL

I don't want you getting hurt.

Harper's not ready to back down. She hurls the trophy at him. He covers his head. It hits his arm.

Harper screams like a banshee as she sprints through the...

KITCHEN...

To the back door. The dog's bark grows closer and fiercer.

She grabs a kitchen chair for protection and swings the door open just as Phil runs into the kitchen and grabs a KNIFE.

GROUCHO, a Pittbull-Rottie mix, growls like a maniac and lunges at Harper from the outside. A chain stops him short.

PHIL

Groucho, down! Down boy!

Groucho retreats, and Harper, seeing the deadly knife, gives up. She throws her hands in the air, winded and defeated.

PHIL

It's check mate, Harper... You don't learn, do you?

Phil grabs her by the hair firmly. She hisses. He yanks her and "escorts" her through the living room, down a set of basement stairs, his legs buckling from too much booze.

Harper protects her 6-month pregnant belly and whimpers.

HARPER

Don't hurt me or the baby. Please.

He opens a massive steel door to a FEMA-certified storm shelter, meaning: nothing could destroy it. They enter...

INT. STORM SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

A dingy, windowless 10x8 room with steel walls, a soiled mattress, and a white plastic bucket serving as a toilet.

CHAINS extend from the walls into shackles. Clothes, crayons, and impressive drawings litter the floor.

PHIL

Sit the fuck down!

Phil motions with the knife for Harper to sit on the mattress. Harper obeys, not wanting more trouble or pain.

Phil places a metal ankle cuff around her chaffed ankles. Locks them with a padlock. She's now secured and chained to the walls that no bare hands could break. Harper hardens.

HARPER

Can't wait for you to rot in prison
one day! Because you know you will!

She spits after him as he exits and bolts the door shut.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - A BIT LATER

Phil stands before the mirror, shirtless, holding the sink for balance, and tends to his fork wound on his upper back.

He sprays it with a disinfectant. Hisses from the burn.

Slathers Neosporin on the injury and slaps on a Band-Aid.

Washes his face and stares at his reflection, watching water drip from his stubbles. He punches his own face repeatedly.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A BIT LATER

Phil pours himself a glass of Jack Daniels as his happy pooch, Groucho, chews on a raw hide stick at Phil's feet.

On the table is a binder and tiny box. He opens the box and retrieves a velvet pouch. Slides its content into his palm. It's a silver COIN - a "1000 MANAT." He strokes it adoringly.

He opens the binder brimming with a meticulous collection of coins. Each coin has its own little plastic slot, and next to them, with elegant penmanship, a country name in black ink.

He flips over to a page with "T" countries: TURKEY, TAIWAN and THAILAND each have their own labeled slots with a coin.

Phil slides the Manat in its "TURKMENISTAN" slot.

His phone DINGS. A CHESS APP pops up. He opens it, studies the board, then puts "MARK" in check with his bishop.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper sits on her mattress and blanket that are in need of washing, and with tedious precision, bites her really long left nail on her thumb and spits it into her palm.

She tries to fashion something from the nail to fit it into the lock that secures her ankle braces. Fiddles around, adjusts the nail. Trims it with her teeth. Spits.

Her face contorts from a sharp pain. She cups her cheek and nudges a tooth in the back of her mouth with her tongue.

EXT. MASON HOUSE - ATLANTA - DAY

A very pretty 2-story blue house with flowers and rose bushes in its front yard in a house-proud neighborhood.

INT. MASON HOUSE - HARPER'S ROOM - DAY

An immaculately made bed is covered with a handmade quilt that matches the curtains and pillows. A pair of jeans and a top are laid out on the bed for a girl that never came back.

An oak desk, dresser, and a beanbag chair round out the room.

On the walls are photos of MAYA ANGELOU, AMANDA GORMAN (inaugural poet), TONI MORRISON and "HAMILTON" the musical.

Goofy and playful pictures of Harper with her BFF, REGINA THOMPSON (18), a cheery Black girl, cover the dresser.

A wall MAP next to it dons colorful handwritten sticky notes.

A flyer with Harper's smiling face reads: "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" Another flyer says: "\$10,000 REWARD."

An ATLANTA JOURNAL article features Harper and Regina: "A TRAGIC CAR CRASH AND A BIZARRE DISAPPEARANCE."

Harper's mom, LORI (50s), white, pretty, overweight by too many pounds, leads Private Investigator MICHAEL CALLISON (60s), a dapper Black man, through the room as he...

Punches in some numbers on a cell phone. Checks the screen...

Then hands it to Harper's dad, DARRYL MASON (50s) dark skin, grizzled, clad in a sharp track suit and a fedora.

MICHAEL

Your phones are set up to record all incoming calls. We don't want to miss anything.

Darryl tucks the phone into his pocket.

MICHAEL

I've studied Harper's files extensively. There were some glaring gaps in the investigation.

LORI

That's 'cause no one cared about some "drunk brown-skin girl." They moved on to white-people problems.

DARRYL

Cops theorized that Harper fled the crash scene. On foot. My ass.

LORI

They labeled her a runaway and closed the case.

DARRYL

Our girl would never leave us. Not like that. We're a tight family.

Lori scans clippings and Harper "treasures" in a folder. She eyes a handwritten page -- a poem. Beams like a proud momma.

LORI

She loved writing poems in her room for hours. She had goals. Dreams.

She draws in a heart-broken breath and swallows her tears.

LORI

Our daughter ain't no runaway.

DARRYL

And she didn't crawl out of that car and vanish into thin air. Someone had to have seen something.

LORI

The local police are useless trash.

MICHAEL

Can't disagree... I can promise to
not leave any stones unturned.

Lori clutches the folder, her breath quivering.

LORI

Even if she's with the Lord, we
just want answers.

Darryl offers his extended hand to Michael. He slides his
hand into Darryl's for a firm and warm handshake.

DARRYL

Thank you, Mr. Callison --

MICHAEL

Just Michael. Call me Michael.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phil lounges on the sofa and plays a video game on the big
screen TV. Groucho's head in his lap.

He chugs his half-empty Jack Daniels bottle like it's water.

The ash from the tip of his cigarette drops into his lap. He
flicks it off before it burns him and puts out the cig...

Gets up but instantly loses his balance and takes a spill.
His face ends up just inches from the coffee table corner.

He scoops himself up and falls back into the couch.

INT. STORM SHELTER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Harper sits on her dirty mattress and devours spaghetti from
a paper plate. She cuts up the pasta with a plastic spoon.

Her ankles are unbound. She's free to move around her room.
She wears sweat pants and a tank-top that barely fits.

She chugs water from a plastic bottle and jumps in surprise.
Rubs her belly. Talks to it...

HARPER

You'll have a good home one day.

Harper digs through her box of crayons. Finds a black one and
opens a notebook to a clean sheet of paper and writes:

"I'M HARPER MASON. I WAS KIDNAPPED BY PHIL GARDNER. PLEASE RESCUE ME. I'M SIX MONTHS PREGNANT."

She folds the note and slips it into her pocket. Crosses to the door. Presses her ear against the door...

And musters the kindest, sweetest, friendliest tone ever...

HARPER

Phil. Hello? I really need your company. Can we hang out? Please.

(a beat)

I really want to be with you...

She cringes from her own words, disgusted.

Glass shattering comes from upstairs. She startles. Listens.

HARPER

Phil! You hear me? I really-really needed to be with you real bad.

She frowns in disgust... Presses her ear to the door and involuntarily presses on the door handle and...

For whatever reason, the door is unlocked. She's in total awe, but is also suspicious... Takes a few steps back.

Scans the room and brews up an idea: locates two pairs of sweat pants and wraps them around her neck strategically.

She wraps clothing articles around her ankles and wrists too, padding them well and tucking them securely in place.

She inches to the door. Opens it. Swallows a knot in her throat and stealthily tiptoes up the long set of stairs.

Shouting and crashing sounds grow louder...

As she reaches the top and turns, she realizes - it's the TV.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phil is dead asleep on the couch. Snores like a boar. On the TV, "SCARFACE" plays at high volume.

Harper takes a deep breath as she creeps through the room...

The floorboard creaks under her feet. She pauses. Waits. Phil is out like a light. Harper glances around...

On a side table, she spies an empty bottle. Grabs it firmly. Inches toward Phil. Lifts the bottle, ready to strike when...

Vicious GROWLING startles her. She whips around and sees...

Groucho at the bottom of the 2nd floor stairs, 15' away. He flashes teeth. Gives Harper a death stare. She whispers...

HARPER

Hi sweet Groucho. Who's a good boy?

She glances at the front door. Then toward the back of the house through the kitchen. Considers the shortest route.

Groucho sprints toward Harper, snarling. She bolts to the...

KITCHEN...

And SCREAMS a terrified scream as Groucho catches up.

HARPER

Down Groucho! Down!

But Groucho gives no shits and leaps to attack. Harper holds out her arm to intercept, but Groucho goes for her ankle instead. Despite the protection, the pain is real.

Harper drops the bottle. It rolls away intact.

With her bare hands, she tries to unhinge Groucho's jaw.

HARPER

Let go!

Groucho growls and drags a terrified Harper by her ankle.

PHIL (O.S.)

Groucho! Drop it! Now!

Phil sprints to Groucho and yanks him away by his collar just as he "drops" Harper's ankle like an obedient dog.

Phil trips on his own feet and he falls forward but pops right back up, barely able to steady his legs and gaze.

Blood seeps through Harper's makeshift protection around her ankle. She slowly stands but winces from the searing pain.

As Phil leads Groucho out the back door and secures him...

Harper hobbles to a kitchen drawer and yanks it open. Quickly extracts a steak knife as Phil steps back inside, sans dog.

Harper wields the knife. She's not fucking around.

HARPER

I'll kill you if you come near me!

Phil inches toward her, teetering and barely even awake.

PHIL

How did you get out?

HARPER

How? You left my door unlocked.

Phil scrunches his eyes, trying hard to remember.

PHIL

Nah. I never forget.

HARPER

Then I must be a ghost and walked through the walls. Huh?

PHIL

(re: Harper's ankle)
Groucho got you real good.

HARPER

Fuck your dog! Come near me and I'll cut your fucking head off.

He snickers like it's the joke of the day. Shakes his head.

PHIL

We've been down this road. Come on, I gotta get some sleep.

HARPER

Fuck sleep! You have to let me go. I'll never tell anyone anything. I swear to God. You know I won't. Just drop me off somewhere and go live your life. I don't care.

PHIL

You know I can't do that.

Phil takes another step closer. Harper holds her ground.

HARPER

I'll just say you're my boyfriend and I ran away with you. I'm a world-class liar. Ask my parents.

Phil holds onto the counter for support.

The standoff continues as Phil tries to inch his way to Harper and the deadly weapon she clutches.

HARPER

Stay back or I'll fuck you up.

Phil glances at the gnarly scar on his hand, then slowly lifts his hands in defeat, and stops at a safe distance.

HARPER

I can't have the baby here. I don't know anything about giving birth, and I know jack shit about babies.

PHIL

I'll take care of you and the baby. We'll work it out.

HARPER

There's no "we!"

PHIL

Listen to me, Harper. Let's put the knife down and have some chocolate ice cream, okay? You can sleep in my bed. I'll stay down here. Okay? I promise I won't hurt you.

Phil throws a sad face at Harper and it's starting to work. He's now super close to her. Keeps his hands up. Whispers.

PHIL

I'll draw you a bath tomorrow and then we can watch a movie. Okay?

Harper's face tightens. She starts to tremble. Her eyes well and she bursts into tears. Can barely see Phil through them.

HARPER

I wanna go home so bad.

She collapses to her knees, gripping the knife tightly.

Phil creeps toward her. He can now reach her. But he doesn't.

PHIL

I know... Come, I'll get you as much ice cream as you want. Okay?

Harper sobs and nods, lowers the knife, and Phil grabs her wrist and extracts the knife with poise, then slowly wraps her in a seemingly genuine hug.

She welcomes the false sense of comfort and security.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Harper devours a mountain of ice cream from a plastic bowl.

Phil unwraps the clothes from her ankle and studies the injury. Her other ankle is cuffed to the kitchen table leg.

PHIL

Not as bad as I thought. I'll fix
it up good, don't you worry.

Harper nods and Phil crosses out of the room.

She scoops ice cream into her mouth. Instant brain freeze.
Taps the side of her head to make it go away.

Harper stands and quickly pulls the "I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED"
notes from her pocket and reaches toward the garbage pail.

But the cuffs on her ankles don't quite let her reach it, so
she drags the table with her. It screeches loudly.

She freezes as Phil's footsteps near. Startled, she drops the
paper. Instant panic. She quickly sits back down as...

Phil enters with a First Aid kit and sees the piece of paper
on the floor, turned face down; the writing not visible.

The blood freezes in Harper's veins. Her heart thumps. As
Phil's fingers connect with the paper, Harper SCREAMS --

HARPER

Ow, my belly!

Phil eyes her with concern as he disposes of the note.

HARPER

Ow, ow. It hurts. It hurts.

PHIL

Shit, are you okay?

Harper's scrunched forehead relaxes. She side-eyes the
garbage can, and then Phil. Takes a deep breath.

HARPER

I shouldn't eat so fast. I'm good.

INT. STORM SHELTER - DAY

Harper has freshly washed bedding. She lies on her side and
caresses the dome that is her belly.

The radio plays in the background.

She suddenly grabs her right cheek and grimaces in pain.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - DAY

Michael and his forensics expert partner, FAY CHADWICK (30s), mad scientist type, scan the ground at the crash site.

Fay wears gloves and binocular glasses. Holds a camera. Both her and Michael wear sterile shoe coverings.

Michael studies the 10 month-old, faded skid marks on the road as he tediously scans the ground with a metal detector.

MICHAEL

Anything organic or out of sorts
has to come back to the lab. Even
if it's a dead squirrel.

FAY

On it. Dead squirrel... sure.

She spies blood-tinged broken glass on the ground. Squats and takes a couple of pictures.

Collects a few fragments with a tweezer. Tosses them in a plastic bag and admires her find...

She then notices a weathered cigarette butt nearby...

Treating everything like a "smoking gun," she excitedly and meticulously extracts the butt with a fresh pair of tweezers.

...And gently places it into a different bag. She trots over to Michael. Dangles both bags before him, enthused.

FAY

Gonna need a miracle to find DNA on
the cig. Prayers are encouraged.

Michael notices a faded "KENT" mark on the cigarette filter.

MICHAEL

Kents, huh? My father smoked Kents.

Through headphones, he hears crackling. Motions to Fay.

She's on it... methodically and gently unearths something...

It's a foreign silver coin covered in dirt. With a sterile brush, she gently removes the soil and blows on the coin.

Avoiding contamination, she holds the coin at the edges.

FAY

There better be some finger prints
on this little guy.

They both study the coin -- on one side is a 6-piece chess theme. It's a Cuban 1 Peso 1988 special edition.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

LANDSCAPERS are putting in new plants - final aesthetic touches to a high-end house.

INT. RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION - KITCHEN - DAY

Phil supervises a crew of FOUR HANDY GUYS -- two install exquisite cabinets, and two carry in a stainless fridge.

PHIL

Leave space for the water line.

HANDYMAN #1

Got it, boss.

The men place the massive fridge in its precise location.

One of the Handymen wipes sweat off his forehead. Scans Phil who looks like a steamroller doused in liquor ran over him.

HANDYMAN #1

You look like dog shit, man. Wild
night?

PHIL

I wish.

The other two Handy guys chuckle and throw him a look. Handy Guy #3 makes a drinking gesture - glug-glug-glug.

HANDYMAN #3

Nothing gets you down Hell's
Chimney faster than the bottle. AA
saved me, bro. Just sayin'.

Phil laughs it off with them. They're close work buddies.

EXT. FAST FOOD JOINT - DAY

Phil's Nissan drives through a fast food joint. At the window, he picks up two paper bags of food.

INT. NISSAN (MOVING) - DAY

He perches behind the wheel. Reaches into the To Go bag and retrieves some fries. Shoves them into his mouth.

INT. STORM SHELTER - DAY

Harper, clad in a hoodie, sits against the steel wall of her room, writing a letter with a crayon. The page is half full:

HARPER (V.O.)

Hey Regina. Hope you got into Alabama State, and that everyone's still looking for me. I didn't run off. And I'm not dead. Although sometimes I feel like I am.

Her gaze lands on the steel door. She notices something, gets up, crosses over to it and sees that the top door hinge screw has come slightly loose. She tries to rotate it. It gives.

Excited, she continues to unravel the massive screw until she succeeds. She victoriously cups it in her hand then...

Attempts to loosen the other screw with her finger nails, but it's way too tight and she badly mangles all her nails.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Harper tries to enjoy her over-due bath although she appears lackluster. She hides her body under the sea of bubbles.

Phil sits on the floor and reads from an Ipad while taking swigs from a bottle of Jack Daniels and smoking a cigarette.

PHIL

"As soon as the baby comes out, towel him off and bring him onto your chest. Skin-to-skin contact will keep him warm and calm. To stimulate first breaths, vigorously rub the sides of his back and rib cage up and down at about the pace and pressure of washing your hair..."

Harper washes her hair. Rubs her scalp vigorously.

PHIL

(reading)

"if the baby isn't breathing, continue patting his back..."

Phil looks up. His eyes meet Harper's anxiety-riddled gaze.

HARPER

I can't do this shit alone and you
don't look like a midwife to me.

Harper hisses from a jolt of pain. Cups her jaw gingerly.

PHIL

What's wrong?

HARPER

Tooth. Been hurting.

PHIL

Let me see.

As soon as Phil touches Harper's skin, he reels back.

PHIL

Shit. You're burning up.

Phil feels her forehead. Then fumbles for his phone with drunken hands and clicks on his flashlight.

PHIL

Open.

Harper opens. Points to a tooth in the back. Phil studies it.

PHIL

Fuck. It looks infected.

Phil digs through the medicine cabinet, knocking over vitamin and pill jars, as well as his toothbrush holder. Bingo!

An old prescription of "AMOXICILLIN." Three pills left. He uncaps the bottle and pours a pill into his palm.

Rinses a cup and fills it with water. Holds out the pill.

PHIL

Antibiotics. You have to take it.

Harper swallows the pill with water, no questions asked.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phil spoons Harper in his bed. Slowly and methodically, he thrusts into her, barely obvious that they're having sex.

Harper stares with vacant eyes.

A couple of bottles of empty booze on the night stand next to him, and an ashtray filled with Kent cigarette butts.

Light emits from a massive, impeccably maintained FISH TANK atop his wooden dresser against the window.

It has state-of-the-art lighting and corals, and an unusual aquarium décor - a QUEEN chess piece - sitting on the bottom.

The fish living in this "gated community" are rare and exotic: discus, angelfish, blue-eyed pleco and pufferfish.

PHIL (O.S.)
Tell me you love me.

He thrusts again. Harper winces. He nibbles her neck and ear.

PHIL
Say, "I love you, Phil."

HARPER
I...

He kisses her back and neck. She doesn't resist.

PHIL
Come on. Say, "I love you."

Phil thrusts harder. He licks her neck, slobbering.

From afar, they look like a sexy couple making love.

HARPER
I... love you.

PHIL
I love you, too... I want you to
come for me, baby. Please come.

Harper tries to muster a "normal" tone and "normal" response.

HARPER
I already did.

Phil stops thrusting. Sweat drips from his forehead.

PHIL
No you didn't. I want you to come.

Harper cringes, swallows her tears. Tries to act "normal" in this far from normal situation.

Phil speaks softly like a caring, sweet "boyfriend."

PHIL

Not quittin' till it's one-one. I
wanna feel your body quiver,
Harper. Lie on your back. Come on.

Reluctantly, Harper lies on her back, and just as Phil's face disappears below the dome of her belly...

The doorbell RINGS. Huzzah - she's "saved by the bell."

Groucho's vicious BARKING follows.

Startled, Phil's head pops up with urgency and Harper snaps her legs shut. Sits up and sighs in deep relief.

PHIL

Who the Hell is that?

The doorbell RINGS again. And again.

Phil gets up. Hops back into his clothes. Zips his pants. Shuffles to the window and looks out. Instant panic.

PHIL

Shit!

HARPER

Who is it?

PHIL

You make one peep and you'll never
see the outside of that basement.

HARPER

I'll be good. Who's out there?

No reply. Phil gestures for her to get up. She does. Dresses quickly as Phil retrieves a...

HANDGUN from under a stack of t-shirts in his dresser.

Harper eyes his every move, "recording" it all for later.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME

A Police Cruiser is outside the house. A petite FEMALE OFFICER (50s) paces and scans the house and its windows.

INT./EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Phil, his gun tucked in the back of the waist of his pants, a lit cigarette dangling between his lips, swings the door open and grins at the friendly officer. Tries to act sober.

FEMALE OFFICER
Evenin' sir.

PHIL
Evenin'. What can I do you for?

FEMALE OFFICER
Sorry for the late visit. We're investigating a series of burglaries in the neighborhood.

PHIL
This neighborhood? For real?

FEMALE OFFICER
Yes... Have you seen any suspicious cars recently? Anyone lurking?

PHIL
I can't say I have. No.

The Officer takes a few steps back. Observes the windows.

FEMALE OFFICER
A lot of folks don't have window locks. I'd keep them secured with a wood beam or bar... or a stick.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper presses her ears against the door in hopes she can hear what's going on upstairs, but she hears not a peep. She hugs herself as though chilly. Probably from a fever.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SAME

The Female Officer studies Phil. Something seems off to her.

FEMALE OFFICER
Do you live alone, sir?

PHIL
Just me and my dog. He lets me know if someone uninvited shows up.

Groucho barks in the distance. Phil smirks.

PHIL

See. He's got my back.

The POLICE SCANNER goes off in the car. Sounds urgent. She glances back toward it... and that's her cue.

FEMALE OFFICER

Stay safe. Have a good night.

PHIL

Thanks for the head's up. 'Night officer.

Phil takes a drag of his cigarette and closes the door.

INT. STORM SHELTER - A BIT LATER

Phil, wasted and fumbling, slathers Neosporin on Harper's dog bite wound and wraps it fresh gauze. She shivers from fever.

PHIL

Never been burglarized. You ever had a break-in growing up?

Harper shrugs, but it's a story she loves to tell...

HARPER

Yeah. When I was six. Got home late from a weekend trip and we saw two teens walking out of our house with our TV. My dad told them to get their punk asses home to their mamas, but the kids pulled a gun on him and threatened to execute his family so my dad let 'em go. He ended up tracking both of them down and got them arrested. We moved out of state next day.

PHIL

I like your dad.

HARPER

Everyone does.

PHIL

When mine wasn't drunk and bringing home crackheads behind my mom's back, he was selling fake Rolex watches. Put on a nice, dignified suit and feigned wealth. Feds threw him in prison where he fuckin' belonged.

PHIL (CONT'D)

My mom did all right, but my dad just couldn't escape his DNA. Got dealt bad cards is all.

Phil, emotional, shuffles and sways toward the door.

HARPER

Sometimes you just gotta tell your DNA to fuck off. "*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.*" You know who said that?

PHIL

The Pope? Fuckin' Bob Dylan?

Harper chuckles. Grabs her painful jaw.

HARPER

No. Maya Angelou. Someone who knew a thing or two about bad cards.

A beat. Phil lets it all sink in.

Harper pulls her blanket to her chin and nods.

Phil exits and bolts the door with a loud clank.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - STORM SHELTER STAIRS - DAY

Phil steadies himself on a ladder as he installs a RING camera/motion detector aiming at the storm shelter door.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper presses her ear against the door and listens to the drilling. She grips her face again to soothe the throbbing pain. Her right cheek is swollen and she looks unwell.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER

Phil secures a RING camera on the doorframe of the back door.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - LATER

Phil installs another RING camera next to the front door.

INT. BRAND NEW HOUSE - DAY

Phil, in his "USCF" baseball cap, does a walk-thru of a new construction getting final touches...

A FLOOR GUY staples floorboards to the ground... Elsewhere, an ELECTRICIAN installs a light fixture.

PHIL

Make sure that one's on a dimmer.

ELECTRICIAN

On it, boss.

Phil's phone DINGS. He glances at a message from MAGGIE:

"CHUCK AND I ARE STOPPING BY FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY. NO IFS ANDS OR BUTTS. HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A YEAR, DOOFUS."

Phil sighs and tucks the phone back into his pocket and shuffles to the open front door.

The Electrician splices wires with a pair of pliers.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Harper, slouched in a chair in the middle of the living room, whimpers in pain. Phil hands her a pair of PLIERS.

PHIL

You have to do it, Harper. The pain meds should help some.

Harper sits up. Draws in a deep breath - "here we go."

Phil holds up a magnifying mirror. She scrunches her face in tremendous discomfort; it even hurts to open her mouth...

She reaches in with the pliers and makes contact with the tooth. Metal on bone. She stares in the mirror and makes a half-ass attempt at pulling the tooth. The pain is too much.

HARPER

I can't. I can't. Take me to the dentist, please. I hate this!

She slaps the pliers into Phil's hand in total defeat.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - SAME

Groucho lies inside a dog house. Chains secure him to its wall. He hears something and sharpens his ears. Whimpers.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LATER

Harper is tied to the chair. Her hands are bound and secured to the chair's side. She couldn't flail if she wanted to.

Her feet are tied to the chair's legs. Courage in her eyes.

PHIL

You sure about this?

Harper nods a resounding "yes." Phil uses a flashlight to see into her mouth. Fenagles the pliers firmly around the molar.

PHIL

I don't like this either. Trust me.

Phil starts to yank the tooth. Harper screeches and thrashes.

He tries to loosen it by wiggling it side to side. Harper screams, her eyes widen, but Phil knows it's now or never.

He cringes as he puts muscle into it.

Saliva streams from Harper's mouth as she howls in torture.

Phil pauses to regrip the handle. Harper pleads.

HARPER

I can't do it. I can't.

PHIL

We have to do it, Harper. Open.

Reluctantly, Harper opens her mouth. Phil secures the pliers around the infected tooth and begins to pull. She emits a bloodcurdling scream and thrashes to try to stop him.

Phil gives it a few big tugs and retrieves from her mouth the troublesome bloody molar at the end of the pliers.

Blood and spit pour from Harper's mouth. She screams and cries out in pain and in relief.

INT. STORM SHELTER - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Harper's scream morphs into Phil's bloodcurdling howls that come from the other side of the steel door.

Harper trembles and cowers against the farthest wall of her room. Her belly is enormous, as though carrying septuplets.

Sudden silence, then loud thuds like something heavy rolling down the wood steps. It crashes into the door.

Steps are heard. The storm door's bolt is unlocked. The door flies open and Harper's best friend (from photos on pg 4)...

REGINA stands there covered in blood, gripping a machete. She sports a prego belly big enough to house a baby T-Rex.

Harper looks down at her own belly -- her baby bump is gone! Stunned, she feels her flat and taut tummy then sprints to Regina and throws herself in her arms. They embrace deeply.

Regina grabs Harper's hand and urgently leads her out.

At the bottom of the steps by the door, Phil's severed head with bulging eyes stare right at Harper. She yelps in horror.

The stairs are covered in blood and severed body parts - limbs, chunks of flesh, exposed bone, tangled guts...

The stairs are so long, Harper can't see the top.

The two girls wade through squishy human flesh and fat as they race up the endless stairs, but Harper slips on blood...

and as she slides down, shrieking, she grabs flesh chunks to stop her fall, but she slips right back into the storm room.

Once inside, the door slams shut. The bolt clanks into place.

Harper hops to her feet and leaps to the door and bangs on it with desperate bloody hands.

HARPER

Regina! Regina! Don't leave me!

A HAND pats Harper's shoulder. She whips around. Screams.

It's Regina. She stands there with her mouth gaping open, regurgitating 1000s of teeth like some broken coin machine.

INT. STORM SHELTER - NIGHT

Harper sucks in air and awakens with a terror-stricken face and a huge gasp. For a moment, she doesn't know where she is.

She feels her belly. The baby bump is back. Everything is "normal" again. If only "normal" wasn't this Hell.

INT. MICHAEL CALLISON'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Michael perches at his neatly organized desk. A photo of him and a TEENAGED GIRL on her graduation day sits to his right.

On the hutch, an urn with the inscription: LOVE NEVER DIES. Michael kisses his hand and touches the side of the urn.

On his extra wide computer screen is a large photo of a now cleaned up silver coin he found: A 1988 100th Anniversary of Jose Raul Capablanca Chess silver CUBAN 1 Peso.

He studies the image on the front with six chess pieces.

Prepares a text message to LORI MASON and types:

"DOES HARPER COLLECT RARE COINS OR HAVE ANY CUBAN FRIENDS? IS SHE A CHESS PLAYER?"

Michael pulls up another photo that's an enhanced image of a partial finger print and a note from Fay: "INCONCLUSIVE."

His phone dings. It's Lori Mason with a reply:

"NO CUBAN FRIENDS. NO COIN COLLECTION. SHE HATES CHESS. WHY?"

A friendly TABBY CAT, seemingly out of nowhere, jumps into his lap and snuggles up to Michael. He pets it lovingly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phil sits in front of the TV and plays an internet CHESS GAME on the TV as Harper scribbles into an almost full notebook.

A glass of booze sits next to Phil. He fills it to the top.

Harper studies the soles of Phil's VANS as his feet extend out toward her. Her brain spins ideas. Wicked good ideas.

HARPER

I've always wanted to learn chess.

PHIL

Yeah? I'll teach you. Let's see...

Phil opens a "BEGINNER LEVEL" chess game on the TV screen.

Harper scoots over to him and fills a glass to the top with hard liquor, and throws Phil a winning smile.

She hands him the drink. He takes it gladly. Grins slyly and does a "cheers" gesture and chugs his Jack Daniels.

LATER --

Harper pours Phil another full glass. Hands it to him. He takes a sip. Then another sip. Then throws it all back.

PHIL
 You finally know the difference
 between the queen and king.

Harper shoots him a flirty, sexy smile. He totally buys it.

INT. MASON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lori sits in her nightgown at a round kitchen table and eats out of an ice cream tub and reads one of Harper's poems.

Darryl shuffles in and ties the belt of his robe. As he sits beside his wife, Lori chokes up.

LORI
 She wrote this when she was ten.

Darryl extracts reading glasses from his pocket and slides the piece of paper to his side of the table and reads.

DARRYL
*Sweet dreams they wish me.
 Give ice cream to cheer me.
 Their soft hands wipe my tears.
 Their warm hugs last me years.*

YOUNG HARPER'S VOICE (V.O.)
*... They tell me to be strong.
 That my skin color ain't wrong.
 They say, "be proud and be brave."
 Got 80 years until I see the grave.*

Darryl tucks his glasses back into his pocket and swallows tears. Wraps his wife in a warm embrace. Lori's eyes well.

LORI
 I swear to Jesus I won't survive if
 our baby girl is dead. I swear.

DARRYL
 I know. I know, baby.

They both compose themselves. Lori remembers something.

LORI
 Does Harper know any Cubans? Do we?

DARRYL
 I only know of one -- Ricky Ricardo
 from I love Lucy.

He chuckles. Lori is amused. Sniffles. Shoots him a look.

LORI

A TV character don't count, Darryl.

He shrugs and slides Lori's ice cream tub to his side.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The chess lesson is now a dance party. HIP HOP music blasts through speakers. Harper dances. Her belly doesn't stop her.

She chuckles and engages Phil to dance, stopping only to pour him more booze, and to shove the glass into his hand...

He beams, guffaws, and wobbles like his legs are gonna quit. But Harper doesn't let him or his legs quit.

PHIL

Do we have to listen to this hip hop shit the whole night?

HARPER

Only if you wanna be not boring.

Phil cracks up even though nothing funny was said. He stops Harper in her tracks. Locks eyes with her. Grabs her softly.

PHIL

Slow-dance with me, Harper.

Phil grabs the remote. Finds a SLOW COUNTRY TUNE and reaches for Harper's waist and pulls her into a slow dance.

As they move, she glances around, spying objects on shelves-- Trophies. Books. A porcelain ashtray.

Phil's hands tighten on hers. He pulls her closer. Leers.

PHIL

You are so fucking exquisite.

Phil cups her face, teeters and forces his lips on hers. She capitulates and feigns sexual interest.

HARPER

Come. Let's go upstairs.

PHIL

Yeah? I'm gonna make you my Queen.

Harper smiles and grabs the almost empty Jack Daniels bottle.

PHIL

Get me a smoke while you're there.

Harper retrieves a single Kent cigarette and crosses over with a lighter. Sticks the cig between his grinning lips.

He yanks the lighter from her. Lights his own smoke.

She holds onto his waist and helps him climb up the stairs.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Atop the bed, Harper straddles Phil. Rides him. He's lost in concentration with eyes shut. Squeezes Harper's butt. Grunts.

Harper stops. Phil tries one more desperate, flaccid thrust.

PHIL

Shit. It's not happenin' tonight.

HARPER

I can try to help another way.

Phil gently pushes her off him. Stumbles out of bed, naked.

PHIL

I want you sleeping next to me. K?

Harper's eyes light up. This is exactly what she hoped for.

Phil teeters over to his dresser and addresses his fish friends in the expansive aquarium sitting on top.

PHIL

You like watching human porn? Does that turn you on? 'Cause fish porn doesn't give me a woody no matter how sexy ya'll think fish fuckin' is. I reckon human fucking is super confusing to ya'll. Hah!

With his backside to us, he gets on his tippy toes to show off his schlong to the fish. He swings it side-to-side.

PHIL

I bet you ladies would love it if your aquatic men gave you just one-tenth of this. Heck, one-twentieth.

Harper takes in the room, scanning every inch, formulating a plan. She slips her nightgown on and scoots out of bed...

Phil opens a drawer and retrieves a pair of HANDCUFFS.

Harper's face falls in total disappointment.

Phil dangles the cuffs and stumbles into bed. Harper freezes.

PHIL
Come here.

She weighs her options, hesitates, then joins him in bed.

HARPER
Please don't. You don't have to.

Phil snaps one cuff around Harper's right wrist, and secures the other cuff around his left, then...

...hurls the key on the floor next to his side (the left side) of the bed, impossibly out of reach to Harper...

He shoots her a triumphant, shit-eating inebriated grin.

HARPER
The baby is on my bladder. I can't hold it all night.

PHIL
Wake me up if you have to pee.

Phil's eyelids are heavy. He can barely stay awake.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Groucho lies next to the back door, a chain secured to his collar. He whimpers. Scratches the door. Wants to go inside.

He hears something. Ears sharpen. He pops up, alert.

SEES A CAT. It puffs its tail and hisses. Taunts Groucho who pulls on the chain, practically strangling himself.

The chain's end that's secured to a huge metal hook in the ground starts to come loose. Groucho pulls a little more...

The cat bolts and Groucho unearths the metal hook. He's free.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Phil is sound asleep and snoring. Harper nudges him gently.

HARPER
Phil? I have to pee. Phil.

Phil is out cold. Harper steps over him to climb out of bed, dragging his arms along as she steps off the bed.

She squats down and spies the handcuff keys next to his VANS, but no matter how hard she stretches, they're out of reach.

She tugs on Phil's arm to which she's attached, and almost rolls him over as the cuffs cut into her wrists.

Stretching her leg as far as she can, she tries to reach with her toes, but still can't get to the keys.

Quick thinking -- she peeks inside the bedside drawer. Spies a BALLPOINT PEN. Her eyes light up - Eureka!

She clasps the pen between her toes and reaches past the shoes toward the keys and accidentally flips over the Vans.

A lightbulb goes off in her brain. She picks up the shoes and, keeping one eye on Phil, writes:

"I ABDUCTED HARPER MASON"...

The black ink is thick against the white rubber. She goes over it several times to make the letters more bold.

Phil snores. Stirs. Then all goes dead quiet. Harper waits for the next grunt or breath. Total silence. *Did he awaken?*

Panicked, she takes a peek at Phil's face. He's still out like a light. She blows out the air she's been holding in...

And places the pen between her toes again and stretches toward the keys but still no cigar.

She grabs the other half of his Vans, and with trembling hands, hurriedly writes the same message on the soles:

"I ABDUCTED HARPER MASON."

She makes the letters extra chunky and places both shoes, soles down, next to the bed...

Then gives the keys one last shot with the pen scrunched between her clasped toes...

Finally, the tip of the pen connects with the keys and she carefully drags them toward her, tightening every muscle.

Able to reach with her hands now, she swipes the keys from the floor and unlocks Phil's half of the cuff, then her own.

She is unbound! She rubs her chaffed wrists, grips the pen like it's a weapon, and wastes no time...

Quiet as a mouse, she hurries to the door toward freedom.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Harper digs through drawers with a burglar's stealth.

Listens for Groucho, expecting to hear his barks. But no barking is heard anywhere. She continues to rummage...

There are zero knives in the drawer, but she finds a giant GRILLING FORK that's sharp and deadly. It'll do just fine.

She opens a cabinet and reaches behind a stack of plates...

Retrieves an antique tin can. Opens the lid. Amid a stack of HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS, she locates...

A SET OF KEYS. She grips them but immediately drops them.

The metal clank against the floor seems so loud to her, might as well be a fire truck's horn. She freezes. Not a peep.

Waits. Listens. No Groucho. No Phil. Only crickets outside.

She scoops up the keys and bolts to the back door and unlocks it from the inside, then slips outside...

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

And is immediately greeted by Groucho, eying her with a fiend's gaze and blocking her path to freedom. Harper gasps.

The dog snarls menacingly, and as he lunges at Harper, with a swift, kneejerk defensive motion, she...

...plunges the grilling fork into the dog's neck. The dog yelps and crumbles to the ground. Twitches and cries out.

Harper, sickened from what she's done, collapses in horror.

The dog is suffering. She knows what to do -- she stabs the dog again, this time snuffing the life out of him.

Blood pools under the canine. Harper jumps out of the way.

HARPER

I'm so sorry. God, I'm so sorry.

No time to grieve, she pivots and catapults to the Nissan in the driveway. Its door is locked. Her hands tremble as she tests different keys. Finally, she unlocks the door and...

Hops in. She tries to steady her hands and manages to insert the key and turn the ignition. The engine kicks in.

But before she can put the gear into reverse...

The car door flies open, and the barrel of a gun presses against her temples. Harper yelps and raises her hands.

HARPER
Please don't kill me!

Phil aims the gun to her head. He's barefoot, and his legs are like wet rags; he can barely stand up straight.

Phil grabs a fistful of her hair. She bites her lip in pain.

PHIL
Cut the engine and get out.

Harper obliges. Turns the ignition off. Phil tightly grips her hair. Gives her a tug to urge her to get out. She does.

PHIL
You killed my dog. Man's best
friend. My best friend. I loved him
like I love you.

He's overcome with grief and shock, doubles over and pukes.

He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and teeters past her toward the tool shed, aiming the gun at Harper's face.

Harper swallows a knot of fear.

Keeping his cool, Phil swings the shed door open. Tries to flick the light on. Misses.

Tries again: lights on.

PHIL
Get a shovel. And don't even look
at me like you're scheming. Kay?

Harper turns ashen. Eyes widen. She dreads his next move.

She trudges inside, fearing this just might be her end.

LATER --

Behind the shed, Harper whimpers in fear as she digs a deep hole while Phil supervises and scrutinizes her every move.

INT. STORM SHELTER - A BIT LATER

Harper is curled up on her mattress, exhausted. Her hands and feet are covered with dark soil, but she's resolute...

Sits up and opens a notebook and grips a sharpie. With the aid of a night light, she begins to write a poem --

HARPER (V.O.)
*Doin' time. Doin' fine... This life
ain't mine... Lord send a sign.*

The door unlocks. Creaks opens. Harper is on high alert.

Phil enters with a large paper bowl in one hand, and a bottled water in the other. He is completely wasted.

He tosses the plastic water bottle in her direction and frisbees the bowl to her, then pivots to leave...

PHIL
Bon Appetite.

Harper lifts the bowl to her face. Disgust washes over her.

Groucho's BLOODY collar sits atop a pile of WET DOG FOOD.

She grimaces and hurls the bowl against the door just as Phil bolts it from the outside. She screams in mental torment.

INT. MICHAEL CALLISON'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Michael perches at his desk. His cat snoozes in his lap.

In front of him on his monitor, a list of EBAY coin sellers.

His phone RINGS. The display reads: FAY. He picks up.

MICHAEL
What've you got for me?

INT. FORENSICS LAB - SAME

Fay studies graphs and photos of cross-sections of a cigarette butt on her monitor. She speaks thru blue tooth.

FAY

The cigarette butt had a lot of contaminants so I tried to selectively remove inhibitors from the trace sample, and get this -- I was effectively able to isolate DNA markers... Also, based on the disintegration levels, whoever tossed it probably did it roughly around the time the crash occurred.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

(over bluetooth speakers)

You're a genius, Fay. Can you send it over so I can get moving on it?

FAY

Sure thing, chief.

They hang up. Fay prepares an email and sends a file.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Harper hand-washes dishes as Phil breaks a handful of dry spaghetti into a pot of boiling water next to her.

Peeking out of the waist of his pants is his handgun.

Harper rinses the last plate and takes glances at the boiling water, the pot, the plate, the gun. Phil knows what's up.

PHIL

I'm watching you. Go sit down.

She towels her hands dry and takes a seat at the table.

Phil stirs the pasta and sits across from her.

Harper notices that he's not wearing his Vans with the abduction message. Has his Nikes on today. She sighs deep.

Phil takes a few big swigs of hard liquor from a glass.

HARPER

Why are you an alkie?

(off Phil's confusion)

Alcoholic.

Phil lights a cigarette. Takes a long drag. Stares her down.

PHIL

Shitty DNA.

HARPER

Are all your excuses your dad? Did he also pass down the *piece of shit rapist gene*? Huh? Because a smart and cute guy like you should've had a bitchin' life. Yet you act like you're some kind of victim.

Instead of the expected rage, Phil's eyes fill with dismay.

PHIL

I didn't choose who I am. Like you didn't choose who you are.

HARPER

Sounds like you're refusing to take responsibility for your actions.. You're fucking pathetic.

Anxiety and mental discomfort overcomes Phil. He hops up.

Stirs the pasta. Turns off the burner under the pot.

Sits back down. Takes another deep inhale of nicotine.

HARPER

You know, I could just say that I was laying low to hide my pregnancy. I'd... I'd even get you a shit-ton of cash.

PHIL

A "shit-ton" of cash? From where?

Phil sucks on his cig and exhales a ton of smoke.

HARPER

I dunno yet. But I'd figure it out.

She wafts the smoke from her face.

HARPER

You realize second-hand smoke can make the baby come out all...

Harper contorts her body and face into a hideous ghoul.

Phil takes an irritated drag and puts his cigarette out.

EXT. MASON HOUSE - DAY

The entire living room is filled with moving boxes as Darryl brings more and adds them to the pile.

Lori rests in a chair with a photo of a BABY HARPER. She fans herself with a magazine -- she's overheated and unwell.

DARRYL

I'm sorry it's come to this. I know Michael is worth every penny. Just wish our pockets were deeper.

LORI

I'd sell both kidneys to get our little girl back. A house is just a house. The memories are in here --

Lori points to her heart and brings the photo to her chest.

INT. BLACK BEAR PUB - NIGHT

A cute local dive bar, and the last place to ban indoor smoking, this joint is always packed with colorful types.

At the bar, in a sharp-looking jacket, Michael sips Coke and chats with a BARTENDER (30), easy on the eyes but rough around the edges. He's a pro at juggling drinks and convos.

Michael motions to the photo on the counter of a beaming Harper and her friend. The Bartender peers at it.

BARTENDER

You think she's still alive?

MICHAEL

I'm not looking for a body.

BARTENDER

I seen them two before. Super flirty. Always chattin' up men.

MICHAEL

Any chance some of these men are here tonight? Some of the regulars might've seen or heard something.

The Bartender scans the patrons. Motions to BILLY (35) - big gut, tats, beard. Then to a HISPANIC MAN (40s), sitting alone with a shot glass and a toothpick in his mouth.

BARTENDER

Those two are here every weekend.

He then points out two well-dressed smoker GAY FRIENDS (20s).

BARTENDER

The gay dudes are here a lot, too.

Michael pulls a twenty dollar bill from his wallet. Extends it to the Bartender who protests, but Michael leans forward and shoves the bill in the Bartender's ripped shirt pocket.

The Bartender pulls out the money and nods, "thank you."

Michael spies a full ashtray. Pulls it closer and examines the butts: Marlboros, Newports, Camels. No Kents.

He stands and eyeballs the bubbly gay friends smoking Marlboros. He opts to talk to a tough-looking Billy instead.

Crosses over to him and takes a seat. Billy throws back his beer straight from a bottle. Michael notes his wedding ring.

MICHAEL

Can I get you another one?

Michael doesn't wait for Billy and motions to the Bartender for another round. Billy is instantly uncomfortable.

BILLY

Oh hey, I don't do Brokeback Mountain, if you catch my drift.

Michael chuckles and wastes no time -- slides a picture of Harper and Regina toward him.

MICHAEL

Me neither. It's just a bro-beer... I'm actually investigating the disappearance of a young woman. Her and her friend were last seen here.

Michael stealthily pulls Billy's empty beer bottle toward himself as the Bartender returns with a new beer.

Billy glances at the picture. Thinks. Points to Harper...

BILLY

Harper, right?

MICHAEL

You know her?

BILLY

No, but I remember her cuz she asked me to buy her and her friend a drink. I didn't cuz they were just kids, you know? Some drunk *ass hat* next to me boozed them up good.

MICHAEL

Your memory is... astonishing.

BILLY

Some call it a gift, but it ain't.

MICHAEL

What more can you tell me about this... "ass hat?"

BILLY

30-ish. Wore a khaki-and-blue baseball cap with an "80." Maybe an anniversary hat? Golf? Not sure.

TITLE CARD: TEN MONTHS EARLIER

INT. BLACK BEAR PUB - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The place is jam-packed and loud. A local band plays rock cover songs. Drunk patrons enjoy some good ole fun.

Harper and Regina (both barely 18) wear revealing clothes, full makeup and styled hair. They sip on Cokes at the bar.

HARPER

I can't decide on a tat. I really want something profound or woke.

REGINA

Like MLK's face or somethin'? My parents would still kill me.

HARPER

Get one on your butt cheek. Or your poon. They'll never know.

Regina swings her head back as she guffaws. Harper chuckles.

REGINA

An MLK tat on my poon? Epic.

She can barely stop laughing. Nearly chokes on her Cola.

The Bartender, a busy bee, refills drinks at the bar. Harper gets his attention.

HARPER

Can we get two Bud Lights?

BARTENDER

Can I see some ID?

HARPER

We're twenty-two, okay?

REGINA
We're seniors at UGA.

BARTENDER
Yeah, and I'm a NASA engineer.

HARPER
You sayin' we look too dumb to be
in college? That's so racist.

BARTENDER
No, darlin'. I'm saying, it'll be
eight dollars, and I ain't servin'
you more than one beer each.

He winks at the girls and gets back to mixing drinks.

Harper digs into her purse. Opens her wallet. It's empty. She
checks her pockets - nothing there either. She's mortified.

HARPER
Ugh. Do you have cash or plastic?

REGINA
Plastic? Do I look like a
Kardashian or somethin'?

Regina checks her purse. She finds two singles which she
places on top of the bar, totally bummed out.

Harper eyeballs Billy, the bearded inked guy.

Next to Billy, Phil in a plaid shirt, drunk as a skunk, downs
his Jack Daniels and twirls a silver coin on the bar top.

He wears a khaki-navy baseball cap with a large "80 YEARS" on
the front. Below, with tiny letters, the words "US CHESS."

Harper crosses over to Billy and flirts like a pro.

HARPER
Hey, handsome. What's your name?

BILLY
Billy.

HARPER
Hey Billy. I'm Harper. My gorgeous
friend and I were wonderin' if a
nice guy like you would buy two
nice girls like us a drink.

Bill reveals his wedding band. Throws Harper a look.

BILLY

You're cute and all, but I got a pregnant misses who's gonna be here any minute to pick me up --

HARPER

-- We're not looking to hook up. Just want a couple of drinks.

BILLY

Unless you got a designated driver, I'd stick to Cokes, you hear?

HARPER

Jeez, you're such a buzz kill.

Harper, ticked, retreats back to Regina. The two girls sip their Coca Colas like two children.

Phil continues to spin the coin. As it slows, the image on the front becomes vaguely clear... Is it CHESS PIECES?

He snaps the coin up and tucks it into his shirt pocket and turns his head and notices Harper. His breath is taken away.

He stares. No, he LEERS. And Harper notices. She throws him a flirty smile. Phil smirks. Raises his glass to toast her.

She makes the international sign of "drinking," then places her hands in prayer and makes a sad puppy-dog face.

Phil waves the Bartender over and mutters something. The music drowns them out but the Bartender flips open two Bud Lights and places them in front of Harper and Regina.

Harper is thrilled. Sends kisses and a thumbs up to Phil.

EXT. "BLACK BEAR" PUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Regina and Harper stagger to their WHITE VOLKSWAGEN JETTA. They both head to the passenger door, almost in unison.

REGINA

You're drivin'.

HARPER

No fuckin' way.

REGINA

I barely know my name. Come on.

Regina leans against the car to steady herself.

HARPER

I don't wanna be the stupid one.

REGINA

You might as well be. You got us the drinks, you figure it out. I'll help you navigate. We'll go slow.

Harper crosses over to the driver's side door. Nearly trips.

HARPER

You think I coulda fucked that guy?

REGINA

Girl, you coulda fucked any guy in there. You know it.

Harper climbs in and plops behind the wheel.

HARPER

They were all fuggly. Except one.

Regina snickers and tumbles in on the other side.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - JETTA (MOVING) - MINUTES LATER

No houses anywhere. Just woods. And darkness. The Jetta drives erratically on this narrow, desolate road with barely any lights to illuminate the street and surroundings.

INT. JETTA (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harper and Regina groove to a HIP HOP HIT on the radio.

Regina finds a piece of paper in her seat. Harper instantly tries to yank it from her. Regina reads it dramatically:

REGINA

It's me. The Sea. Salty. Deadly.
Faulty. Raging. Engaging. Swirling.
Twirling. Queen Sea is Me.

HARPER

It's a shit poem. Give it! Come on.

Harper swats at Regina's hand. Regina ups her performance:

REGINA

I wave and wave. Towering.
Devouring. I'm cool. I rule.

In good fun, Harper swipes the paper from Regina who turns the music way up and busts out moves. Harper does too when...

Bright headlights of a MINIVAN come out of nowhere. Both cars going 50 mph. Harper heading straight toward the headlights.

The Minivan's horn BLARES...

Harper jerks the steering wheel to avoid a head-on collision.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - WHITE JETTA - CONTINUOUS

The Jetta swerves back into its own lane, but it loses control and fishtails toward a ditch and...

Flips over twice before settling into the ditch upside down.

The Minivan doesn't stop. Doesn't even slow down. Possible that the driver never even saw what happened.

EXT./INT. NISSAN - NIGHT

Phil smokes a cigarette behind the wheel. A pack of KENT on the passenger seat. COUNTRY MUSIC plays on his pre-set. He drives with laser sharp focus to overcome his inebriation.

He spies the freshly wrecked Jetta and slams on the breaks, pulls over and catapults from his Nissan.

No cars on the pitch dark roads. It's just him and the upside down Jetta with its horn blaring through the eerie quiet.

He tosses his cigarette. Races to the car. Crawls on his belly to peek inside. Uses his phone's flash-light to see...

Regina, eyes wide open. Skull cracked. Blood everywhere.

He races to the driver's side. Peers through the shattered window and sees Harper squished up against the steering wheel, lying on the horn. She stirs, clearly alive.

He tries to open the mangled car door. It's jammed. He reaches through the broken window and jimmys it open.

As he struggles to carefully extricate Harper, his silver coin slips out of his shirt pocket, unnoticed.

He pulls Harper from the Jetta. The blaring horn stops.

She gasps for air. Her eyes go in and out of focus. She has no idea what's going on. Groans in pain. Scrapes and cuts cover her body, and one of her legs is totally askew.

Phil glances down the dead and dark road, then furtively hoists Harper in his arms and rushes back to his car, his legs nearly buckling from being totally sloshed.

INT. NISSAN - MOMENTS LATER

Phil gets behind the wheel and drives off like a bat out of hell. No hesitation. Pure impulse. No thought.

In the REARVIEW MIRROR, he sees the Jetta catch fire, flames lapping the hood. The image fades into an orange oblivion.

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - A BIT LATER

A small-town hospital. The "EMERGENCY ENTRANCE" neon letters flicker. Not a soul in sight.

The Nissan is parked about 200 yards away, hidden past trees.

INT. NISSAN - SAME

Still completely out of it, Harper in the back seat throws up and barely even knows it. She coughs and passes out again.

Behind the wheel, Phil eyes the hospital, considering it hard. He takes deep inhales of his cigarette and...

Peers into the REARVIEW MIRROR. Sees that Harper's top has rolled up above her breasts covered by a lacy bra.

His body floods with testosterone, rolls down his window and tosses his cigarette and...

Tilts his seat back, sinks into it, and unzips his pants. Glances out the window, making sure he's got no company.

As his eyes fixate on the rearview mirror, he jerks off to Harper's image. Harper grimaces and moans in pain.

PHIL'S FANTASY: Phil and Harper have passionate sex in the back seat of the car. She pulls him deeper inside her and moans in pleasure. She orgasms out loud. So does Phil.

Phil's face twists into pleasure. He grunts as he climaxes. Satisfaction and guilt creep up on his placid face.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BLACK BEAR PUB - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

A WOMAN with an INFANT baby in a carrier crosses over to Billy at the bar. The couple greet each other with a kiss on the lips. Billy coos to the cute baby. Turns to Michael...

BILLY

Good luck crackin' the case.

Billy and Michael shake hands. Billy takes off with his wife.

Michael glances around, and with a thin fabric in his hand, he grabs Billy's empty beer bottle and sneaks it into his inner jacket pocket like a spy, then grabs his Coke and...

Beelines toward the solo Hispanic Man who gets up and crosses to the bathroom, leaving an empty glass behind...

Michael checks his ashtray. No Kents. Grabs the empty glass and slickly slides it into his other inner jacket pocket.

Michael's phone RINGS. He checks it. Picks it up urgently.

INT./EXT. BLACK BEAR PUB - A MINUTE LATER

As Michael opens the door to exit, phone against his ear...

Phil enters the pub in his Vans shoes and "USCF" cap.

Michael holds the door for him as they pass in the doorway. His gaze holds Phil's for a moment, and Michael looks away precisely the moment Phil retrieves his...

Kent cigarettes and walks into the pub.

SLOW-MOTION: As Phil walks in, the message on the soles of his Vans on display: "I ABDUCTED HARPER MASON".

Michael paces in the parking lot with the phone to his ear.

MICHAEL

Yello...

(ecstatic)

He did?... Two carat diamond? Well, size don't matter, right?... He treats you like he won the Lotto - that's what matters. Your mother would say the same... I know. He's the best thing to happen to you in a long while... Okay, talk soon.

He hangs up. Spies the Hispanic Man crossing over to an enormous tricked-out truck.

Michael takes a surreptitious pic of the truck's license plate as it pulls out and revs its loud, obnoxious engine.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

In her bare, dingy room, Harper orchestrates her next plan...

She rips the cover off a notebook and strategically drips water on it, soaking the paper and letting it soften...

Then molds, shapes and presses it as if making a snowball.

She breaks some crayons into little pieces and places them in the middle of the paper ball for greater weight and density.

Once the ball is compact, she finds a long-sleeve shirt and shoves it in the arm and ties it off at the end.

She grips the shirt and swings it like it's a mace, and bludgeons her pillow to try it out. She grins with triumph.

INT. BLACK BEAR PUB - SAME TIME

Phil sits on the "pre-warmed" stool where Michael Callison sat minutes earlier. Inhales deep from his cigarette...

Tucks his feet on the lowest rung of the stool, the writing on the bottoms of his Vans possibly visible to passersby.

The Bartender crosses over to Phil.

PHIL

Jack Daniels please.

(quick change of mind)

Um, actually, scratch that. I'll just have a glass of ice water.

The Bartender nods, and grabs a glass to fill it with water.

Phil slaps a dollar on the bar. Rubs his sweaty temples.

DRUNK WOMAN (O.S.)

(enunciating)

Har...der. Harper?

And like an adrenaline shot to his heart, Phil stiffens, gasps, then whips around and nearly falls off the stool.

A very DRUNK WOMAN (30s) sways behind him and cracks up as she tries to read Phil's shoes. Her FRIEND pulls her away.

DRUNK WOMAN

What does his shoes say?

FRIEND

I dunno, but let's get you home.

The friends make a beeline to the exit as the Bartender side-eyes the whole thing, although it's unlikely he heard them.

Phil lifts his feet and looks at the bottoms of his shoes. Panic and rage spread across his face as he spies the words:

"I ABDUCTED HARPER MASON."

The whole world spins on its axis for a moment as Phil gasps for air. A sense of doom washes over his expression.

His eyes follow the two drunk women as they exit the pub.

Mortified, Phil rips off his Vans shoes and furtively tucks them under his shirt and bolts through the bar...

EXT. BLACK BEAR PUB - MOMENTS LATER

Phil tries to hide his panic as he watches the women get into a BLACK CHEVY. The Drunk Woman almost falls over.

He tries to play it cool and crosses over to his car...

INT. PHIL'S NISSAN (MOVING) - MINUTES LATER

Laser focused on the road ahead, Phil's face twists into anger as he white-knuckles the steering wheel and seethes.

EXT. FAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael knocks on the door of a modest house. Enthused, Fay opens it and throws him a sly look. She holds her hand out.

With a thin fabric between the glass and Michael's hand, he hands Fay the empty beer bottle (Billy's) from the pub.

Then reaches into his other pocket to retrieve the bar glass.

MICHAEL

You're my favorite person in the world, you know that, right?

Fay grins. Rolls her eyes at him playfully. Michael pivots.

Phil crosses over to Harper who's now curled up on the floor, and bends down to smack the side of her face. Harper screams.

Phil instantly regrets his actions. Shakes out his hand.

HARPER

You'd do the same if you were me!
Go ahead, hurt me all you want!

PHIL

I don't wanna hurt you, but if you
keep pulling this shit, I'm gonna
be forced to leave you down here
permanently.

As Phil turns around, Harper narrows her eyes and musters the courage she needs, and...

Grabs the weaponized long-sleeve shirt with the hardened paper-ball, and hops to her feet with it and...

Swings it at Phil's head with full force. Phil startles, and pivots around to block the blows of the "weapon"...

PHIL

What the fuck?

But Harper clobbers him with relentless anger as he backs into the doorway where he gradually crumbles to his knees...

And finally collapses in the doorway, barely conscious.

Harper steps over him to launch herself up the stairs as...

Phil shakes off the K-O and gradually regains his faculties.

Still out of it and teetering, he pushes himself to his feet and sprints after Harper who shrieks like a maniac...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harper runs full-throttle straight toward the front door...

Phil whips off his t-shirt and catches Harper and swiftly throws his t-shirt over her head, blocking her vision.

He pulls it tightly around her neck and face as she thrashes.

PHIL

You need to calm down.

He grabs her wrist and bends it to incapacitate her. She shrieks in pain and her knees buckle. She's totally subdued.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER

Inside a plastic bucket filled with water and Phil's Vans, Phil pours a container of bleach on top while icing his face.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT (MONTAGE)

-- Phil gathers all empty liquor bottles from his kitchen cabinets and places them in a sturdy garbage bag...

-- He pours liquor down the kitchen sink drain...

-- He walks through the house and collects bottles and tosses them in the garbage bag...

-- He removes beer bottles from his fridge...

-- Phil stuffs two bags of garbage (booze) into a giant garbage receptacle in his back yard.

END MONTAGE.**INT. MICHAEL CALLISON'S HOME OFFICE - DAY**

At his desk, Michael scans THE NATIONAL DNA INDEX SYSTEM on his computer screen as his cat settles into his lap.

MICHAEL

Not a criminal, are you, Mr. Kent?

He switches to another window -- EBAY. Types in the search field: "1988 CUBAN 1 PESO." Only a few results populate.

His phone rings. It's "FAY." He picks up on speakerphone.

FAY (V.O.)

I got DNA and some gorgeous fingerprints from the beer bottle and glass. They don't match the partial print on the coin, but we still have lots to work with here.

MICHAEL

You never fail to amaze me, Fay.

FAY (V.O.)

You sound just like my wife, chief.

Michael snickers. They hang up.

INT. STORM SHELTER - DAY

Harper squats over the plastic bucket and urinates. Nothing to wipe with, she pulls her panties and sweat pants up.

She crosses over to the door, and with the aid of a Sharpie cap, she tries to undo the other screw in the door hinge but it won't budge... The Sharpie cap bends against the steel.

She tries with her fingernail, but her attempts fail...

She grabs her pillow and inserts the zipper's metal slider into the screw's groove. Wiggles it. Tries to turn it.

It starts to loosen, but the tension snaps the metal slider.

Frustrated, Harper screams from the top of her lungs and kicks the steel door with Hulk's rage.

INT. MICHAEL CALLISON'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

On Michael's computer screen, the DMV's website. Under a photo of the Hispanic Man from the pub, the name: MANOLO RICARDO RUIS. Birth place: GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA.

Michael clicks elsewhere. Sees "NO VIOLATIONS."

He switches to the NATIONAL DNA DATABASE. The computer screen reads: "NO MATCHES FOUND."

Michael's cat jumps up on his desk. Michael picks him up. The cat meows. Michael talks to him...

MICHAEL

Billy and Manolo have no priors.
They're innocent, huh, Buddy?

Michael's phone DINGS. It's a TEXT from "FAY":

"THE BLOOD ON THE GLASS FRAGMENTS IS THE VIC'S. NO NEW DNA."

Michael sighs a useless sigh, then pulls up a new window and types into the search bar: "80TH ANNIVERSARY BASEBALL CAP."

Presses enter. Clicks on a khaki baseball cap pic and voila:

"80TH ANNIVERSARY US CHESS FEDERATION." He perks up.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Phil pulls an envelope and a tiny package from the mailbox. Glances at the box, and suddenly, he has a dizzy spell.

Everything spins. Blurs. Sounds go in and out of clarity.

He clutches the mail box for dear life. Closes his eyes.
Takes a few breaths. His vision and hearing normalize.

He steadies his gaze and footing, and beelines to the house.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

Phil perches on the couch, his coin binder in his lap.

He illuminates the coin with his cell phone flash light. It's a HUNGARIAN 2000 FORINT gold coin with a Vizsla (dog) on it.

Phil opens his binder, turns to "H" and slides the Hungarian coin in its slot next to a HONDURAS coin.

INT. STORM SHELTER - MOMENTS LATER

Phil stands in the doorway with Harper's pee & poo bucket, totally sober but clearly unwell, pale and clammy.

Harper, in an over-sized tank tight around her belly, is at her breaking point. An anxiety attack coming on.

HARPER

Please let me get some fresh air. I
can't... breathe down here! Please.

The doorbell RINGS. They both lift their heads. Phil panics.

PHIL

Shit-shit-shit! Keep quiet and I'll
get you all the fresh air and
sunlight you want. K? Not a peep.

Harper nods and crosses her heart, desperate and obedient.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Phil empties the contents of Harper's bucket into the toilet. Plop. Splash. He turns his head away. Grimaces. Then flushes.

Leaves the bucket behind the shower curtain in the tub.

INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Phil opens the front door. The world's most obnoxiously jolly couple flashes him the most obnoxious smile --

His sister, MAGGIE (32) and her husband, CHUCK (40), both rotund and energetic. Maggie extends a cake box to Phil.

MAGGIE Happy birthday baby bruh!
CHUCK Happy birthday Phil-Man.

Phil gulps. Sweats. Wipes his forehead. Steadies himself. He stares at the couple like he's trying to will them away.

The two love-birds just wait. And wait. Ball in Phil's court.

MAGGIE
Umm... I know you got my text.
(in Phil's "voice")
I did. Come on in Maggie and Chuck.

Phil glances behind his shoulder as Maggie and Chuck beeline to the front door. Phil blocks them. Clears his throat.

PHIL
It's not a good time right now.

CHUCK
Why? You gotta finish dismembering
a body or somethin'?

Chuck and Maggie break into laughter and Maggie bulldozes herself into Phil's house. Chuck follows obsequiously.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper writes a letter with a crayon...

HARPER (V.O.)
Hi Mom and Dad... I'm alive and
hanging in there... I'm so lonely
and miss you guys so bad... I'm
going to do everything to see you
again... And Regina...

She glances around. Her eye catches a thin black sharpie.
She uncaps it and begins outlining a face on her shoulder.

INT. PHIL'S HOME - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

The cake box rests on the kitchen table. Phil opens cabinets.

PHIL
I don't have drinks to offer you.

Maggie's jaw nearly drops. Slaps on a shit-eating grin.

MAGGIE

My alcoholic brother has no booze
in the house? Well, Dorothy, I'm
afraid we're not in Kansas anymore.

Maggie and Chuck crack up like two mega twin dorks.

PHIL

You don't have to say it like that.

MAGGIE

Oh, okay, PC Police. My perpetually
inebriated brother --

PHIL

Come on, Maggie. You're being --

CHUCK

She's just kiddin'. Open your cake.

MAGGIE/CHUCK

(chanting)

Cake! Cake! Cake! Cake!

Phil breaks the seal on the box and lifts the lid. A CHESS
THEMED cake with a "HAPPY 30th BIRTHDAY" sits before him.

CHUCK

Was my idea. Cuz you love chess.

Maggie paces. Snoops. Sticks her head out the back door.

MAGGIE

Where's Groucho, that killing
machine you call a "pet?"

She cracks herself up again as Phil grabs two Pepsis from the
fridge. Hands one to Chuck. The other one to Maggie.

PHIL

He um... had cancer... Spread fast.
Had to put him down.

Maggie and Chuck shoot Phil an over-the-top sympathy look.

MAGGIE

So sorry.

CHUCK

Sorry man.

Chuck slides open a drawer and Phil leaps to his feet...

But too late, the drawer crashes to the floor.

CHUCK

I'm sorry.

PHIL

It's broken.

Maggie helps to pick up the cooking utensils.

PHIL
Keep forgetting to fix the track.

MAGGIE
Want me to do it for ya?

PHIL
No, Maggie. I can fix shit myself.

CHUCK
(searching)
Where do you keep your knives?

Phil reaches high up behind plates. Retrieves a large knife.

MAGGIE
You child-proofing your home?

Chuck and Maggie share an overly cute, secretive grin.

MAGGIE
We actually have some news.

CHUCK
I'm gonna be a daddy!

MAGGIE
Which means, I'm gonna be a mommy!
Which means - you're gonna be an
uncle! Yay for uncles.

Maggie pulls Chuck close and plants rapid kisses on his lips. Phil watches with half disgust, half envy. Mostly disgust.

PHIL
Congratulations.

Maggie offers Phil a hug before Phil is ready for one.

MAGGIE
I'm thirteen weeks today. Was sick
as a dog the first ten.
(catches herself)
Oh sorry, how insensitive of me. I
was probably not as sick as Groucho
was, but man, the first trimester
was brutal. Right, Chuckie-Whuckie?

CHUCK
Brooh-tahl.

Phil tries to hide his annoyance with every pore in his body as he cuts the cake and plates a corner slice for Chuck.

Maggie continues to snoop and survey every corner.

Phil grips the knife firmly, at the ready.

MAGGIE

Why haven't you fixed up this dump?
You're a construction wizard and
live in a house built in "B.C."

CHUCK

Honey, your mom's wishes are
important to your brother.

MAGGIE

Oh pooh. She's been dead for four
years. Why doesn't he sell this
thing and live in one of his new
developments closer to the city?

PHIL

I like living in the sticks.

MAGGIE

Yeah-yeah. Sure you do.
(sees the cake)
Oooh, cake! Let's eat.

She plops onto a chair and digs in. Savors the bite.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper tries to listen through the steel door. Hears nothing.

Her left shoulder has a male portrait (inked with a black sharpie) that's very possibly MLK. In fact, it is MLK.

HARPER

(quietly to herself)
Someone please rescue me. Please.

She rubs her baby bump. Inhales sharp. Exhales long. Paces.

Frustration spreads across her face. She's close to snapping.

She tackles that loose screw in the door hinge again, and mangles what nail she has left to unravel it and remove it.

She studies the long, pointy screw and realizes she has no use of it. Filled with rage, she hurls it against the door.

CLANK! The sound is much louder than she anticipated.

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN - SAME

The clank is heard in the distance. Maggie and Chuck startle. They look up. Phil tries to pretend he heard nothing.

MAGGIE
What was that?

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper panics. Retreats to the back wall, scared and guilty.

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN - SAME

Phil tries to shrug it off like it's no big deal.

PHIL
Rats, probably.

CHUCK
Yeah, radioactive ones.

MAGGIE
I bet it's Groucho's ghost. Pets,
like humans, love to haunt houses.

CHUCK
I'd definitely burn some sage.

Maggie notices the newish scar on Phil's hand. Grabs it and takes a closer look, examining it expertly.

MAGGIE
You're lucky you don't have any
nerve damage. What did you do?

PHIL
Staple gun.

MAGGIE
You're Senior El Boss-0 now. Let
the Mexicans do the heavy lifting.

CHUCK
She's right.

Phil rubs his hand. Tries to hide the scar.

PHIL
I umm... have to be somewhere.

Maggie smiles ear-to-ear. Playfully punches Phil's shoulder.

MAGGIE
Oh-la-la. What does she look like?

PHIL
Black. She's Black.

Chuck and Maggie share a stunned glance and pipe down.

PHIL
It's a doctor's appointment. OK?

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Phil, Maggie and Chuck stop in front of a shiny Toyota Camry.
Maggie locks her gaze with Phil's. Looks deep into his soul.

MAGGIE
Find yourself a smart, hot babe.
Love cures everything. As does sex.
You seriously need endorphins.

She chuckles and wraps Phil in a much needed, warm hug.

MAGGIE
I want your niece or nephew to have
a really cool and happy and sober
uncle to teach him or her chess.

PHIL
Done deal. Piece of cake.

Phil pulls away from the hug and fist-bumps Chuck. Maggie and Chuck hop into their car and take off.

Phil could not be more relieved to watch them leave.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - STORM SHELTER STAIRS

Phil races down the stairs leading to Harper's prison and stops on a dime at the door. Tries to compose himself...

Unbolts the lock and instantly senses that something is amiss. Like the door is just a tad too loose or wobbly.

He slowly slides the bolt back into place. Stands alert.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper, eyes trained on the door, grips the large screw; its point sticking out between her index and middle fingers.

She raises her fist. Squints her eyes, determined to strike.

PHIL (O.S.)
Everything okay, Harper?

Harper is scared but focused. Not a peep. Game on.

The bolt unlocks with a loud clank and the door slowly opens, but Phil knows something's up and leaps back instantly.

Harper charges him, but he's bigger, stronger, and prepared.

With the speed of a cobra, Phil blocks her blow and grabs her wrist and arm. She manages to yank herself from his grip...

And with fury in her eyes, she throws her fist at him...

But Phil ducks the last possible moment, and Harper hits the wall with the screw, leaving a significant scrape on it.

Phil, like some CIA assassin, manipulates her arm behind her back and pins her to the wall and extricates the screw...

And before she realizes she's overpowered, the tip of the large screw is an inch from her eyeball in Phil's grip.

PHIL
Blink and I'll take your eye out.

Harper calms her breath and doesn't dare to blink.

HARPER
You love me too much to hurt me.

Phil's face says "fuck you," but he knows she's right.

HARPER
What would I tell our child? *Your* child? That mommy's eye was scooped out by her daddy? Will she think that daddy will do the same to her - Cut out her eye, too? Will she --

PHIL
-- Enough! Sit down!

Phil drags her to the mattress. Forces her to sit. As he leans close to her face to tell her something...

Harper spits into his eye. Phil instantly grabs her neck and squeezes hard. And harder.

Harper locks eyes with him. Doesn't fight him. Just stares.

Perhaps she's ready to die. But Phil's not ready to kill her. His grip loosens around her neck and she gasps for air.

AN HOUR LATER --

Harper, shackled to the wall, wolfs down pizza and cookies like she's absolutely famished. She side-eyes Phil who's busy tightening the door hinge screw with an electric drill.

HARPER

I know a girl who dropped her two-day old baby off at a fire station. They don't ask questions. They don't even try to find the parents.

Phil turns to her and throws her a cold stare, then exits.

INT. FAIRMONT HOSPITAL - ER - DAY

Michael Callison slides a picture of Harper to NURSE WESTNICKLE (40s), kind but reserved. She studies it.

MICHAEL

What I'm looking for are men or women who came in with suspicious injuries in the last ten months.

NURSE WESTNICKLE

Define "suspicious?"

MICHAEL

Gunshot wounds, stab wounds, cranial hematomas, and a cockamamie story on how it happened. Refusing to name an attacker or press charges. That sort of thing. Abductees often fight back.

NURSE WESTNICKLE

She was abducted? I didn't read a thing about that, Detective...?

MICHAEL

Callison. Michael. I'm looking at all angles no matter how loony.

NURSE WESTNICKLE
I'm happy to check our database
later. I'm a little busy right now.

MICHAEL
Thank you. Much appreciated.

Michael hands her his card. She tucks it into her pocket.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shivering and sweating, Phil groans in discomfort as he steadies his hands to drop food into his aquarium.

PHIL
There you go, Lilly. And you, back
there, Izzy. Come on out.

He turns around and collapses into bed from withdrawals.

INT. STORM SHELTER - NIGHT

The steel door is open, but Harper is restrained by a chain attached to ankle cuffs. She writes by a nightlight.

Her stomach rumbles. She reaches for an empty paper bowl. Looks inside, dismayed. Licks out every last morsel of food.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - AA MEETING - NIGHT

The AA banner at a community center reads, "LOOZE THE BOOZE."

A DOZEN men and women sit on chairs in a circle. AVERY (30) moderates the group. She's whimsical and lively, with excessive makeup that covers years of misery on her face.

Phil, looking unwell, sinks into his chair. All eyes on him.

PHIL
My name is Phil. Not Phillip. I
umm... I've been drinkin' like a
goddamn fish for years. Blacked out
so many times, I don't remember
half my adult life. I'm here
because I've tried to do this alone
before, and failed. I also hate
talkin' about myself. That's it.

Avery claps. Others follow suit. Phil tries to be invisible.

AVERY

We're all very proud of you for finding the courage to not only walk through these doors, but to open up so graciously. Seeking help in a community where you can feel safe and appreciated is the biggest step you'll ever make. We are so proud of you, Phil. Anyone care to share something?

A stick-thin woman in her 40s, pretty rough looking, but very spirited, raises her hand. Avery nods to her.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - A BIT LATER

As Phil exits the building, Avery catches up to him. He's not up for chit-chat but she pressures him anyway.

AVERY

Hey, Phil. Thanks for the honesty in there. Very brave of you.

PHIL

I'm not sure the community thing is for me though.

Avery is clearly disappointed. But turns on the charm.

AVERY

If the group setting is too intimidating, a one-on-one could be an option too.

PHIL

I'm just not good with people.

AVERY

I wasn't either. But as you get healthier, you'll be better at everything. It's been two years for me since I turned my life around. Without the community support I'd probably be, I don't know, living with some abusive, drunk asshole.

Phil is uncomfortable with this.

AVERY

Listen, this is the hardest thing you'll ever do. You have my number. Call or text me if you need me to talk you off the ledge. Okay?

Phil blows out a deep breath. Gathers himself. Nods.

EXT. DRIVE-THROUGH - LATER

Phil picks up an order at the window and drops the paper bags in the passenger seat next to him.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LATER

Phil ambles to his mailbox. Opens it. Retrieves a single envelope filled with foreign markings and stamps.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phil sits on the couch with his coin binder in his lap. Holds a single coin and studies it --

It's an **INDONESIAN 200 RUPIAH** with a bird sitting on a branch, and the words "Jalak Bali" above its head.

Phil slips the coin into the designated slot and caresses the coins that fill the page. It's clear he loves his collection.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Phil and Harper eat a fast food dinner. Phil studies her as she devours a burger and dips her fries in tons of ketchup.

Phil rubs beads of sweat off his face and chugs water.

HARPER

You can't leave me down there all day with no food. And you promised me fresh air. And sunlight. And I haven't had a bath in forever.

PHIL

I've given you too many chances as is. You keep blowing them.

HARPER

I know. And I was wrong. I'm sorry. Won't happen again. I don't want you hurting me or the baby.

PHIL

You don't give a shit about that baby. I'm the only one who does.

Harper throws him a pathetic look and continues to eat.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Harper sits in a tub filled with bubbles. Phil kneels beside her and scrubs the last of the MLK "tat" off her shoulder.

He dries his hand and sits across from her. Grabs his iPad and hoists it in his lap and reads an E-book...

PHIL

... "When having a baby unexpectedly, it's better not to bear down since you could risk the baby coming out too quickly and tearing your..."

(a beat)

Panting can help, since this keeps you from holding your breath... If your baby arrives despite this, try to ease him out gently by pushing each time you feel the urge."

Harper washes her hair as she pays rapt attention.

PHIL

"Do not pull; just guide baby out gradually. Once the head is out, gently push it slightly downward while pushing with the next urge. This should deliver the shoulders; the rest of the body should come easily after that."

HARPER

I could barely get through a tooth extraction. I can't do this.

PHIL

I'll get you something strong for pain. The body knows what to do.

HARPER

Oh yeah? You try squeezing a cantaloupe through your dick hole... And what if the baby dies? Or if I die?

PHIL

Nobody will die.

HARPER

You better hope so.

(a beat)

Umm... can I please sleep upstairs on the couch?

HARPER (CONT'D)

My mattress is so lumpy and awful.
I swear to God I'll be good.

Phil practically looks through her. Harper rinses shampoo from her hair. Squeezes the water out of it methodically.

Phil hands her a towel, his face unreadable. Devoid of life.

PHIL

Not after what you pulled last
time. Don't even ask again.

Harper tries to make eye contact with Phil but he won't look.

HARPER

You're a fucking monster. At least
leave my door open when you leave.
Chain me up. Whatever. I just can't
stand that claustrophobic box.

(a beat)

You don't need a baby. Or me. I'm
no use to you anymore anyway. You
know you want me gone, Phil.

PHIL

I can't undo what happened. I'm
sorry, Harper. I just... can't.

Phil squints his eyes at Harper, then looks away.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Phil is sprawled out on the floor next to the couch, clad in
underwear only. The sun blares through a window, waking him.

He squints, rubs his eyes. Comes to. Sits. Takes in his
environment, trying to piece together his whereabouts.

He licks his dry lips. Grabs his throbbing head like it's
about to fall off. A hangover migraine no doubt.

HARPER (O.S.)

Hello? Where am I? Hello?

And like a lightning bolt into his skull, he's jolted awake.
He crawls to standing, steadies himself, then sprints...

DOWN THE STAIRS...

Slips and falls the last few steps and smashes into the steel
door of the bunker. He gets back up and swings the door open.

INT. STORM SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Harper is curled up naked on the floor next to a pile of clothes - half hers, half Phil's. Cuts, bruises and blood stains cover her body.

Her right leg is unnaturally twisted away from her hip.

Phil's eyes widen. His jaw drops. He inches back in disbelief. His face twists into confusion and fear.

Harper is too weak to move. Tries to steady her tired eyes.

HARPER

I'm in a lot of pain. Please take me to a hospital. I think I was in a car accident. Where's Regina?

Phil wipes his face. Shakes his head "no, this can't be."

PHIL

How did you get here?!

HARPER

How the fuck should I know?!

(recognizes Phil)

You're the guy from the bar.

What... what did you do to me?

Harper erupts into sobs in total and utter anguish.

Phil scans the room. Spies his jeans and shirt on the floor. He urgently scoops them up with a look of utter bewilderment.

PHIL

I'll... umm... get you a blanket and food... I'm gonna help you.

Phil turns around and shuts the steel door and bolts it, crumbles to the floor and weeps into his palms.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. STORM SHELTER - DAY (PRESENT)

Harper, shackled and chained to the wall, listens to music on an antiquated radio and writes a letter: "DEAR REGINA..."

Her door is wide open so she can feel less... claustrophobic.

An idea hits her and she crosses to the door. Her chain is long enough to allow her to reach the doorway.

She grabs a portion of the chain and folds it over and strategically places it in the doorway...

Grabs the door's handle and repeatedly slams the door onto the chain, but the chain is indestructible. Harper crumbles.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

A HONDA with tinted windows stops in front of Phil's house. From the passenger side, JOHNNY ROSCOE (28) in a sharp suit and a briefcase in his hand, hops out.

He's short and skinny, has shoulder-length greasy hair and a budding, weak mustache.

The Honda takes off. Johnny looks around. Scans the area.

Instantly notices the RING camera. He turns his back to it and opens the briefcase. Removes a hair net and slides it over his hair; tucks all the strands under it...

Puts on a mask in the image of THE GODFATHER (Marlon Brando), then slips on a pair of gloves and pivots around.

Crosses to the Ring and spray-paints it black, then peers through the back sliding door. Listens for sounds.

He retrieves a metal tool and forces the back door open. A deadbolt keeps the door from opening.

He tries a window. Easy. He pulls himself up and squeezes in.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He pops open a switchblade as he enters the kitchen...

Unlocks the deadbolt from the inside for an easy escape...

EXT. NEW CONSTRUCTION SITE - SAME

Phil is overseeing ROOFERS at a new residential construction. His phone DINGS. It's a text from Avery. The message reads:

"U DOIN OK? WOULD LUV TO GRAB COFFEE SOMETIME."

Phil starts to reply when an alert on his RING app pops up.

It reads: "MOTION IS DETECTED AT YOUR BACK DOOR."

A huge jolt of panic. He pulls up his Ring app and clicks. Sees the "GODFATHER" perp spraying the camera. Blackout.

Dread flashes in his eyes, but he pulls himself together.
The Roofer on top of the roof holds up two shingles for Phil.

ROOFER
Hey boss, I don't think these --

PHIL
-- Just fix it. I gotta bounce.

Roofer attempts to reply, but Phil bolts with great urgency.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Quietly, Johnny opens a few cabinets. Pulls open drawers.
The "broken" drawer falls to the ground with a loud crash.
Johnny freezes. Looks around. Pulls a switchblade out, steps over the mess and peers over his shoulders.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper, her chains intact, hears the crash upstairs and sticks her head out to glance to the top of the stairs...

HARPER
Phil? You home? Hello?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Johnny is startled by Harper's voice. He freezes. Readies his switchblade and inches through the room...

Checks some drawers. Finds a pack of Kents and pockets it.

HARPER (O.S.)
Phil! Can I get some water?

Johnny continues toward the voice. The wood floor creaks under his shoes. He stops. Waits for a response. Nothing.

INT. PHIL'S NISSAN (MOVING) - SAME

Phil white-knuckles the steering wheel. Tension spreads through his face. His eyes are glued to the road ahead.

The radio is on. A news report in progress...

REPORTER (V.O.)
 ... a group of hikers in the North
 Georgia mountains spotted a family
 of black bears yesterday...

Blinded and deafened by his determination to get home ASAP,
 he puts pedal to the metal. The speedometer reads: 75 mph.

Phil sees a POLICE CAR in his rearview mirror. Tenses up.

PHIL
 Shit.

He lifts his foot off the gas pedal. Taps the breaks.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

"Godfather" trashes the place, searching for valuables. Spies
 the chess trophies and sees the name: PHIL GARDNER.

Johnny flips over the couch cushions. Nothing.

HARPER (O.S.)
 I'm starving! You didn't leave me
 enough food asshole!

Curious who this desperate-sounding person might be...

He follows Harper's voice while watching his own back.

Johnny turns the corner and glares down the set of stairs
 leading to the storm shelter and sees...

Harper in the doorway, chains on her ankles, hair askew.

She doesn't know what to make of the mask and inches back.

HARPER
 Who are you?

JOHNNY
 The motherfuckin' Godfather.

HARPER
 (oblivious)
 The who? Who's Godfather?

Johnny doesn't want to deal. He pivots to leave.

HARPER
 Wait! I'm a prisoner. I was
 kidnapped. Please help me!

Johnny turns. Studies the chains. Tries to connect the dots.

HARPER
Do you know Phil?

A beat. Johnny is conflicted, but not interested in her.

HARPER
Are you robbing us? I mean, him?

Johnny just stares through the eye holes.

HARPER
You are, aren't you? I'll tell you
where the cash is if you help me
escape.

Intrigued but cautious, he pivots and starts down the stairs,
one ginger step at a time, the blade in front of him.

JOHNNY
Yeah? Where's the money at?

HARPER
Give me your knife.

JOHNNY
I ain't giving no chained-up bitch
a knife.

HARPER
Google "Harper Mason." I've been
missing for almost a year. Tell the
police you found me.

JOHNNY
You trippin'? I ain't tellin' the
police shit.

HARPER
Have you heard of an anonymous tip?
You don't have to give them your
name. I don't wanna have my baby in
this hell hole. Please help me!

Harper tears up in utter desperation, drops to her knees and
places her hands in prayer.

Johnny takes a couple of steps toward her.

JOHNNY
How about you disclose where the
cheddar's at, and I don't cut you,
bitch!

HARPER

If you kill me, you won't find it.

Johnny extends his switchblade to threaten even more.

JOHNNY

Where's the money at?!

A beat. Harper carefully chooses her next words.

HARPER

Give me your knife first.

Johnny shakes his head and heads back up the stairs.

JOHNNY

I don't need no bitch to help me
excel at my profession.

He closes his switch-blade and turns the corner.

HARPER

Don't leave me and my baby to die!

Johnny's masked face glances back at Harper who tugs on her chains and shrieks as she tries to free herself.

HARPER

I beg you! Don't leave me!

But Johnny disappears to the other side of the wall, and Harper collapses to the floor. Sobs quietly.

EXT. ROADS - PHIL'S NISSAN - DAY

Phil has been pulled over. A PORTLY OFFICER (50s) checks his driver's license. Phil acts cool, but he's a ball of tension.

PORTLY OFFICER

My great-grandmother's maiden name
is Gardner. Any relation to Ruthie?

PHIL

I'm afraid no.

Officer hands Phil a speeding ticket. Phil starts to sweat profusely. Glances at his phone on the passenger seat.

PORTLY OFFICER

Now remember, this is a 55 zone.
Not a 75. Wasn't far from here
those two teens crashed their car.

PORTLY OFFICER (CONT'D)
Still haven't found that poor girl.
Some say that aliens took her.

PHIL
And I believe 'em. I do.

Phil grips the steering wheel tighter as Portly Officer shakes his head and chuckles to himself annoyingly.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Johnny, at the top of the steps of the storm shelter counts out some cash, then snaps his switchblade closed...

And casually tosses it down the stairs. Harper jumps back.

The knife lands by her feet. She scoops it up, in awe.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - LATER

Johnny hops back into the passenger side of the Honda.

The car shoots down the dirt road. Dust billows behind it.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper tries to pry open a chain link on her ankle cuffs. She almost snaps the blade...

But then the link moves... and she manages to twist it open.

She's FREE! She squeals with delight. Pure elation. With knife in hand, Harper bolts up the stairs to the...

LIVING ROOM...

Glances around. No one there. She rushes to the staircase leading to the 2nd floor and stops. Hesitates...

Grips the switchblade, holding it at the ready and...

Races up the stairs and bursts into Phil's bedroom.

INT./EXT. PHIL'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Phil is definitely breaking some speed limits again.

He passes a car and guns it. His eyes are steely, focused.

INT. PHIL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Harper digs through Phil's dresser drawers desperately, and finds what she's looking for --

Phil's GUN.

She slides the closed switchblade into her sweatpants and...

As she turns her head toward Phil's walk-in closet, she notices that the door is wide open, and on the inside...

Newspaper clippings and articles cover it top to bottom. Her eyes narrow in on an image of herself and sprints to it.

She scans the clippings with great curiosity. Sees the same ATLANTA JOURNAL article that Harper's parents have displayed:

"A TRAGIC CAR CRASH AND A BIZARRE DISAPPEARANCE."

Harper's friend, Regina, in another article: "ALABAMA STATE HOPEFUL DIES IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A DRUNK DRIVING TRAGEDY."

Harper gasps in horror and slaps her hand over her mouth. Another article reads: "HARPER MASON, VICTIM OR MURDERER?"

Harper's eyes well, but she's too shocked to shed tears.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Phil's Nissan screeches to a stop behind the house and Phil catapults from the car and beelines to the back door...

And quietly slips in, gently closing the door behind him.

INT. PHIL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Harper wipes away a tear and notices the "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" flyer. "\$15,000 REWARD"...

Harper quickly unglues her eyes from the door and flies down the stairs as fast as she can into the...

LIVING ROOM...

As she turns the corner, Phil and her almost crash into each other. They both freeze. Harper screams and steadies her gun.

HARPER
Stop! Don't move!

Phil stops and holds his hands out as if to stop a bullet.

PHIL
Did anyone hurt you? I got the
alert on my phone and rushed home.

HARPER
You're the only one who's ever hurt
me, you monster.

Harper clutches the gun with trembling hands. Aims at Phil.

HARPER
Why didn't you tell me that my best
friend died in the crash?

Phil didn't expect this. Thinks how she might know. Puts two
and two together -- she was in his room.

PHIL
I don't like giving bad news.

Tears collect in Harper's eyes. She wipes them away.

HARPER
I should've called my parents to
come pick us up. I... I killed her.

PHIL
No you didn't. It was an accident.

Phil inches closer to Harper. Almost unnoticed. Almost.

PHIL
I tried to save her. I couldn't.
But I saved you, Harper. You
would've burned alive in that car.

Harper is aghast. She can't even fathom that.

HARPER
Let me go. Right now. Or you die.

Phil inhales a quick breath. Roots his feet into the ground.

PHIL
Did you tell the intruder your
name?

HARPER
What do you think?

Phil knows the answer. And he knows he's fucked.

PHIL
Go ahead. Leave. You're free.

He motions to the front door, calm as a cucumber.

Harper shakes like a leaf. She eyes him with suspicion. Her feet have taken root into the ground, unable to budge.

PHIL

Go on.

Harper's eyes narrow. A year of anger launched into this one moment. She pulls the trigger, intending to kill.

But the safety is on. She scrambles to undo it, clueless.

And Phil takes the opportunity to lunge at the gun when...

BANG!

It goes off. Or did Harper pull the trigger? Either way, Phil is hit in the thigh. He screams out. His legs buckle.

Harper pulls the trigger again, but nothing happens.

Phil winces and stifles a scream. Muscles to his feet and pounces on Harper who pulls the trigger again. No bullets.

Phil tackles her for the gun. She puts up a massive fight, but he pretty easily takes possession of the weapon.

Harper SHRIEKS and tries to bolt but Phil grabs her and instantly puts her in a skilled chokehold and squeezes.

Her eyes widen. She fights to breathe.

Phil's blood trickles from his leg and soaks his pants.

He drags Harper toward the basement stairs, barely able to put weight on the injured leg.

She claws at his arm, desperate for air. Flails and thrashes.

Harper's lips turn blue and she passes out and slumps to the floor. Phil catches her before she hits the ground.

He carries her down the stairs, limping, bleeding, wincing.

Something hits the floorboard. Phil startles. Glances down: it's the switchblade that has slipped from Harper's pocket.

Phil eyes it with scrutiny but he's about to collapse with Harper in his arms, and races her into the storm shelter.

FADE TO BLACK.

A GASP. A COUGH. HEARTBEATS SLOW... THEN STOP. ERRATIC HEARTBEATS TURN TO RHYTHMIC, STEADY ONES.

INT. FAIRMONT HOSPITAL - ER - DAY

Phil, calm and sedated, lies in an ER bed. A plastic bag of blood attached to a tube drips into his vein in his forearm.

A YOUNG DOCTOR (30s) in surgical gear, expertly inserts a surgical tweezer into the bullet hole in Phil's thighs and...

With precision, gingerly extracts the bullet and plops it into a metal basin with a clank.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Almost done. Just have to clean out the wound and get a few stitches in there... How are you holding up?

Phil sticks his thumb up to signal "all good."

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Let's get you up here, Mrs. Mason.

Phil's eyes pop open - "*Mrs. Mason?*" He's jolted awake and tries to look past the blue privacy curtain between the beds.

YOUNG DOCTOR

You need to hold still for me, sir.

Phil, drowsy, lies back down but keeps his ears sharpened.

THE MASON'S SIDE OF THE CURTAIN...

Harper's mom, Lori, looks ill and pale as a SEASONED NURSE (50s) connects an EKG machine to her chest.

Darryl stands by her side, worried. Pats her shoulder.

SEASONED NURSE

The cardiologist will see you shortly. You'll be just fine.

The Nurse pivots around and exits with pep in her step.

PHIL'S SIDE OF THE CURTAIN...

He holds still and fights the sedatives. Tries to listen.

LORI (O.S.)

I knew worryin' about my little girl would kill me one day.

Phil reaches up and pulls the privacy curtain to the side. Darryl and Phil lock eyes. Phil musters a friendly smile.

PHIL
What happened to your little girl?

DARRYL
She went missing a year ago.

PHIL
That's terrible. What's her name?

LORI
Harper. My precious little angel.

PHIL
Well, I'm gonna pray real hard for little Harper angel to come home.

YOUNG DOCTOR (O.S.)
You gotta hold still, Mr. Gardner.

Phil lets go of the privacy curtain. Leans his head back.

INT. STORM SHELTER - NIGHT

Harper is curled up on her mattress. Clicks a night light on. Off. On. Off... On.

Each time, she looks more distressed. She's clearly in pain and grabs her belly where it hurts. Her face contorts.

She reaches between her legs and brings her hand to her eyes:

BLOOD.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

A dumpy motel. Just "motel." Too lame for even a name.

It's adjacent to a 7/11. Of course.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME

Two single beds. Small TV. Particle wood dresser. Lamps that time-traveled from the 60s. Wallpaper. Stains on the carpet.

Johnny, sans Godfather mask, studies his iPhone while his tough-looking partner-in-crime, EMILIO (30s), rolls a blunt.

Beer bottles litter the place.

EMILIO

Why you care so much about this bitch? She hot or somethin'?

JOHNNY

What? No. She got a big belly and shit. I'm not trying to fuck her.

EMILIO

Then why you even care, bro?

JOHNNY

Cuz fifteen Gs for a reward. That's a lot of green for one phone call.

Emilio narrows his eyes and flashes a condescending grin.

EMILIO

So you gonna call the cops and say, hey, I found that Harper Mason chick while I was robbing a place? Can you Venmo me my reward pretty-please?... You stupid, man?

JOHNNY

We get a burner phone and call in an anonymous tip.

EMILIO

Did your momma get knocked up by the weakest sperm, retard? How's an anonymous tip getting us a reward?

Johnny stops in his tracks. Remembers something. Frowns.

JOHNNY

Shit. I gave her my switchblade.

EMILIO

The fuck you do that for? There goes your reward, moron.

JOHNNY

Shut the fuck up, okay?

EMILIO

You need to forget this bitch. We're not talkin' to no cops. I ain't cut out for jail, Johnny.

A beat.

JOHNNY

You're right, Emilio.

EMILIO
'Course I am. I'm always right.

INT. FAIRMONT HOSPITAL - ER - DAY

The Young Doctor fills out forms at the counter where the Head Nurse, Nurse Westnickle, finishes a call and hangs up.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Classic "my gun went off as I was cleaning it" story. Not my place to say, but I didn't buy any of it--

The Doctor zips it as a UNIFORMED OFFICER crosses over to the nurse's station. His walkie crackles with inaudible chatter.

NURSE WESTNICKLE
How did it go, Officer?

UNIFORMED OFFICER
Seemed like an honest but real stupid mistake. Happens more often than you'd think... Well, ya'll have a nice day.

NURSE WESTNICKLE
Thank you, Officer. Same to you.

YOUNG DOCTOR
(to the nurse)
He's ready to be discharged.

The Young Doctor hands the Nurse the discharge paperwork then rushes off one direction. The Officer exits in the other.

Nurse Westnickle glances at the name on the discharge forms. Furrows her brows, remembering something.

She types "Phil Gardner" into a patient database. His name pops up. He's been here before.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Phil plants flowers over Groucho's makeshift grave. Pats the dirt with the tenderness of someone who misses his dear pet.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Michael scans member names on the "UNITED STATES CHESS FEDERATION" website on his computer screen. Jots something down in a notebook when his cell RINGS. He picks up...

MICHAEL

Yello... Ah, yes... Of course I
remember you, Nurse Westnickle...
Uh-huh... Interesting... No
problem... M'Kay, thank you.

Michael hangs up and flips the page of his notebook to a long list of hand-scribbled names. Barely legible.

He scans them until he finds "PHIL GARDNER." He circles it.

EXT. MASON HOUSE - DAY

A big "FOR SALE" sign out front. Prospective buyers are in and out of the Mason's house during a midweek open house.

Watching from across the street in his car, Phil is slinked into the driver seat with his baseball cap pulled way down.

INT. PHIL'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Phil sits atop his bed with a laptop. Next to him is the switchblade that fell from Harper's pocket.

He types a Google search: "COUNTRIES WITH NO EXTRADITION TREATY WITH THE US."

He scans the articles with rapt attention. Types another search: "LIVING CHEAP IN BALI."

He toggles between screens and lands on a CHESS GAME. His online opponent is "KING LARRY."

Phil makes a sweet move. "KING LARRY" writes: "Nice one!"

Phil glances at his fish. Hops out of bed and shuffles to the glass to study his beloved pets. From under the tank he gets a small spray bottle and a rag and cleans the glass.

PHIL

Hey there Anderson. And Lilly.

The fish respond excitedly. Like they know their names.

INT. STORM SHELTER - LATER

Harper lies on her messy floor, sleepy. A pair of soaked with blood panties are strewn on the floor.

On the wall above her is a huge, BLOODY hand-painted message:

"HARPER MASON PERSEVERED"

Phil enters and his jaw nearly drops when he reads the message. He gasps and holds his breath. Swallows a knot.

He crosses over to her and puts a plate of food (burger and fries) on the floor and spies the panties as he stands up.

HARPER
Something happened to the baby.

PHIL
What did you do?

HARPER
I think you killed her.

Phil, ashen, collects a few of Harper's clothes. Wraps the bloody panties in the pile of laundry and exits.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Phil soaks Harper's dirty clothes in the tub. Adds a lot of bleach to the water. Mixes it with his bare hands.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Phil chows on his burger as he watches on his phone an OB/GYN DOCTOR talk in a YOUTUBE VID --

OB/GYN DOCTOR
Maternal morbidity may be caused by acute hemorrhage, and the fetus may be compromised by uteroplacental insufficiency and premature birth. Timely intervention is crucial...

Phil slams his phone down, clearly upset. Buries his head into his hands and lets out a deep groan of masculine anger.

He then limps down the STAIRS, anxiety and mental anguish propelling him through the...

LIVING ROOM...

And down the basement stairs, hobbling all the way down. He unbolts the door. Swings it open.

INT. STORM SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Harper lies on her side, super drowsy. She tries to steady her gaze. Her eyelids fall.

HARPER

You fucking... drugged me.

PHIL

The baby is gonna be perfect...
just like his mother. You hear me?

Harper, groggy, slurs her words...

HARPER

She hasn't moved in days...

Phil is genuinely frightened by this possibility.

PHIL

You must be thrilled. You've wanted
the baby dead from day one.

Harper is overcome with guilt but is too drugged to reply.

INT. PHIL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Phil kicks down the bathroom door and leaps toward Harper (not yet visibly pregnant) who sits on the floor and pours pills into her mouth. Next to her are more pill bottles.

Phil urgently grabs her face and desperately tries to scoop the pills out of her mouth with his fingers. She screeches.

He flips the toilet seat up and drags her to the toilet...

Forces her mouth open and shoves two fingers down her throat. She makes almost no attempt to stop him and throws up violently into the toilet bowl. Harper cries in despair.

BACK TO PRESENT

Phil grabs Harper and lifts her from the ground. She tries to stand but her legs are wet noodles and she's now half-asleep.

He props her up and escorts her out the storm shelter.

INT. PHIL'S BEDROOM - A BIT LATER

Harper sleeps in Phil's bed. She's handcuffed to the bedpost.

INT. STORM SHELTER/DOORWAY - LATER

In the doorway, a mop and a bucket keep each other company.

Phil exits the shelter with two garbage bags and Harper's handwritten poem in his hand. He sits on the stairs. Reads.

HARPER (V.O.)

*Contemporary Girl
With a yearning face
A discernible race
Her dreams shattered
Her limbs shackled
Childhood gone, gone, gone.
Contemporary Girl
Eyes deep as a well
Thrust into Hell
Slave life ain't worse
Living the black curse
Childhood gone, gone, gone.
Contemporary Girl
Fleeting existence
Stronghold and resistance
Skirts left in the past
Wears armor at last
Childhood gone, gone, gone.*

Phil sighs, folds up the paper and tucks it into his pocket.

INT. PHIL'S NISSAN (MOVING) - NIGHT

Phil's passenger seat is filled with giant Walmart bags. Clearly he's returning from a shopping spree.

EXT. AVERY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Phil and Avery, whose makeup is flawless for this early in the day, sit on the porch of her cute house on a farm.

Phil sips black coffee from a mug with WALTER WHITE's face on it. Avery studies Phil. She sees through his worry.

AVERY

You're not hiding it well, Phil. I
can see through your glass cage.
What's nagging you. Talk to me.

Phil snickers - "yeah right." Takes a sip of coffee.

PHIL

You play chess?

AVERY

Haven't in a long while. But I'm up for it if that's your jam.

PHIL

You know what the king feels when he's run out of squares to move to?

AVERY

Complete demise? "Checkmate?"

PHIL

Complete demise -- yes. Surrounded. Cornered. Defeated.

AVERY

Sounds like someone's got a lot of troubles and way too much tension.

She gets up. Places her coffee mug on a table...

Squats in front of Phil. He's unsure what she's up to until her hand slides up his pant leg toward his crotch.

AVERY

Your "king" could use a little TLC. Huh?

Avery begins to unzip Phil's pants. He stop her.

PHIL

What are you doing?

She shoots him an irresistibly sexy gaze and smirk.

AVERY

It's part of our reward system for being sober for one month.

She cracks up and shakes her head.

AVERY

I'm totally kidding... Relax.

Phil runs his index finger across her lips. Slips his thumb into her mouth. Avery sucks on it as she rubs Phil's package.

INT. STORM SHELTER - MORNING

Harper's eyes open. They slowly adjust to her surroundings.

She instantly notices her fresh sheets, a new blanket and pillow. Her room is spotless, her clothes clean and folded.

She rolls over to her other side and sees a portable baby bassinet - a Moses Basket - and a onesie for a newborn.

She sits up, rubs her eyes, grabs her head. Spies a tray of breakfast goodies: orange juice, toast, sausages, fried eggs.

Her eyes light up and she digs in with gusto.

INT. AVERY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Avery is curled up in Phil's arms in post-coital bliss. Phil is pensive but trusts her welcoming arms. They are very cozy.

AVERY

Do you ever wish you could just
make your current life... vanish?
Get a fresh start somewhere far?

PHIL

Funny you should say. I'm leaving
for overseas.

Avery scoots up in bed, shocked. Pulls the covers over her breasts and shoots Phil an outraged expression.

AVERY

What? Where? Your life is about to
get better. As is mine --

PHIL

Wanna come with me?

AVERY

Wait. What? We barely know each
other... Where are you going?

PHIL

Paradise.

AVERY

Hm... that's kind of cryptic.

PHIL

Pristine beaches. Fresh start. You
and me.

Avery is super intrigued. She locks lips with Phil.

EXT. PHIL'S HOME - DAY

A black car with completely tinted windows drives up to Phil's mailbox. The back window rolls down...

A GLOVED HAND inserts a brown envelope into the mailbox.
The mysterious black car peels out in a cloud of dust.

INT. FAIRMONT HOSPITAL - DAY

Lori Mason is being prepped for surgery by two attentive SURGICAL NURSES. One inserts an IV line into Lori's vein.

The other places a loose surgical cap on Lori's head.

SURGICAL NURSE #1
You're going to start feeling very
sleepy, Mrs. Mason.

Darryl stands next to her. He squeezes her hand. Lori really fights to stay awake. She glances up at Darryl.

LORI
If something should happen...

DARRYL
Nothing's gonna happen.

Lori's flaccid hand slips from Darryl's. And she's out.

SURGICAL NURSE #1
Sir, you can wait outside.

Darryl watches the nurses whisk away his beloved wife. He chokes up but stays strong. Draws in a deep, worried breath.

INT. MICHAEL CALLISON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Michael perches behind the wheel and dons a tight, conceal holster shirt with his GUN tucked into a right-side pouch.

His sports jacket and a hat rest on the passenger seat next to a stack of notes and printouts. The notes on top read:

PHIL GARDNER... HAND LACERATION... GUN SHOT WOUND TO THIGH...

US CHESS FEDERATION...

Michael is in the middle of a call over blue tooth.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
... He wants an intimate affair,
and I want everyone I know and
their pets to celebrate with us.

MICHAEL

You could do what your mother and I did: elope to Belize and exchange your vows in the sand. Budget-conscious and romantic.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

But then you wouldn't be there. You have to be there. Come on, Dad.

MICHAEL

I wouldn't miss my little girl's wedding for a billion dollars.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I know, Dad. Talk soon. Love you.

MICHAEL

Love you, too.

The two hang up and Michael smiles to himself.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - HALF HOUR LATER

Michael's car comes to a slow stop outside Phil's house.

He steps out of the car. Moves gingerly. Instead of immediately crossing to the front door, he decides to look around. Sees the DIY window gate on the lower level.

He follows the driveway to the back. Sees the Nissan.

He does a dry-run reach for his gun with his left. Just to test out what it feels like if he actually had to do it.

Finally, he crosses to the front door. Rings the door bell.

Waits patiently. The door swings open. Phil sticks his head out, cigarette in his mouth.

MICHAEL

I'm looking for a Phil Gardner.

PHIL

What can I do you for?

MICHAEL

I'm from Fairmont Hospital. Have a few questions regarding your recent ER visit.

Phil narrows his eyes. He's intimidated yet intrigued.

PHIL
You know, you could've just called.

MICHAEL
I was already in the neighborhood.
Got plenty of time for a chat.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper tries to listen through the steel door but hears nothing. She has an idea --

Glances into her bucket that is her toilet. It's empty.
She picks it up and hits the door as hard as she can.

INT./EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME

The THUD is loud enough for Phil and Michael to hear.

Phil stops in his tracks. An awkward silence. Then...

Another loud THUD against the steel door...

Phil pulls his cigarette from his lips and blows out smoke in a side-lip fashion. Michael notices the writing on the cig--

KENT.

A gratifying dread tickles Michael as he goes into *cop mode*.

MICHAEL
Does anyone live with you?

PHIL
My five year-old... Indy. He's not
the quiet type... as you can tell.

MICHAEL
Is his mother home?

PHIL
No mother. My wife umm... passed
away... Tragedy... Drowning.

Phil gets a glimpse of the holster shirt and puts two and two together -- *this guy is not from the hospital*.

He slowly reaches into his pocket. Finds the switchblade.

Michael pretends he doesn't see it, but he does.

PHIL

Want to come in and meet him?

Michael steps inside but stays close to the door and uses all his heightened "Spidey cop senses" and stays vigilant.

Phil locks the door. Michael doesn't like that one bit.

PHIL

What was your name again?

MICHAEL

Michael Callison.

Phil extends his hand. Grins.

Michael accepts it. They shake. Both uneasy. Both hiding it.

Michael scans the living room. Sees the chess trophies, eyes the Kent cig, and knows he's exactly where he should be.

Another loud THUD, followed by barely audible SHOUTING.

Michael swivels his head toward what sounds like a person in peril, and instantly reaches under his coat for his gun...

And yanks it out with his trigger finger at the ready...

But Phil's reaction-time matches Michael's, and he too whips out the open switchblade from his pocket...

And the two weapons practically collide.

Phil slices deep into Michael's hand as he pulls the trigger.

BANG!

Phil freezes. Glances at his chest in horror. HE'S NOT HIT.

Harper's screams are louder and more desperate.

Michael hisses in pain. His right hand bleeds profusely, and despite the severed muscle, he steadies his gun. Sheer will.

MICHAEL

Blink and I'll shoot you.

Phil snaps out of his shock and slowly lifts his hands.

MICHAEL

That's not your son, is it?

Michael is already inching toward the basement stairs. Blood drips from his hand. His eyes glued on Phil's knife-hand.

PHIL
(calling)
Indy, come upstairs to Daddy!

Michael's injured hand can barely grip the gun. Phil notices.
They inch toward the basement steps, about ten feet apart.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper slams the empty bucket into the steel door.

HARPER
I'm down here! Help me! HEELP!

Harper waits. Presses her ear against the door. Dead quiet.

HARPER
Someone help me!

She slams the bucket into the door with all her might. THUD.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Michael stops at the top of the stairs leading to the storm shelter. Looks down. Then glances at Phil. Waves his gun.

MICHAEL
You first. Move it.

Phil, unsure how to get out of this, tries to hatch a plan.

He moves slowly toward the stairs. Michael moves away, sweating now from the pain. He can barely hold it together.

And with lightning speed, Phil charges Michael who attempts to pull the trigger, but he just doesn't have the strength.

Phil's eyes fill with desperation, and he grabs Michael and hurls him toward the basement stairs.

Michael loses his footing at the top. Fights to hang on...

But tumbles down the unpadded stairs. Hard. Real hard.

Phil bolts after him, knife in hand...

And as Michael settles at the base of Harper's prison door...

He can clearly hear the desperate teen on the other side:

HARPER (O.S.)
Hello!!? I'm Harper Mason!

And those are the last words he'll ever hear.

Phil plunges the switchblade deep into his chest.

Through his heart.

Michael is completely stunned. His eyes widen in plea.

Blood soaks his shirt, creating a sort of bullseye image.

Phil can't believe what he's done. *How did this happen?*

Crimson liquid spreads under Michael's body.

In utter disbelief, Phil watches this stranger try to take a last breath that never comes. He's dead. Phil's a murderer.

PHIL
No, no, no, no. Fuck. FUCK!

Phil gasps for air in panic and sprints up the stairs...

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He frantically splashes his ashen face with cold water.

Fear and guilt flood his pores. He looks at his reflection in the mirror and screams, then crumbles to the floor and wails.

INT. STORM SHELTER - SAME

Harper trembles and sobs. With a closed fist, she bangs on the door with rhythmic thumps like that of a heartbeat.

BEGIN CRIME SCENE CLEAN-UP MONTAGE:

-- Still shaken, Phil pulls the switchblade from Michael's chest, then locates Michael's keys and phone. The phone's screen reads: "8 MISSED CALLS FROM DARRYL MASON." He finds Michael's business card and now knows who he really is.

-- Phil drives Michael's car around the back of the house...

-- Phil finds super-human strength within, and drags Michael up the stairs, leaving a streak of blood behind.

-- Phil's car barrels down a stark, dark road. He rolls down the window with gloved hands and tosses the iphone out...

-- Phil frantically scrubs blood off the wooden stairs and floor and tosses his cleaning supplies into a garbage bag.

-- Seemingly impossible to pull off, he somehow lifts the body rolled-into-a-blanket into the trunk of Michael's car.

-- In pouring rain, Phil drives Michael's car to the edge of a lake, hops out, and surveys the area with a flashlight.

-- Michael's car speeds toward the lake. Phil bursts from the driver seat the last second; lands hard on his healing leg...

-- The lake bubbles as the roof of the car, pounded by rain, disappears under the surface. Lightning flashes through the night, illuminating Phil who stares at the lake and soaks.

END MONTAGE.

INT. PHIL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Phil sits on his couch with a laptop. A travel site is open on his screen. He types "BALI" in the "GOING TO" field...

And "GROUCHO THOMAS CLARK" in the "PASSENGER" field.

INT. PHIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Phil zips up a large suitcase on his bed. Next to it is the mystery brown envelope, opened. A passport rests beside it.

He sips black coffee and crosses over to the aquarium.

Slowly, he reaches inside the tank's lukewarm water. The fish flock to his hand as though greeting a friend.

Phil extracts the queen chess piece on the pebbled floor, dries his hand and wipes the water off the chess piece and...

Plops on the bed, slides open a tiny metal cover on the bottom of the queen, and shakes out its contents...

Two DIAMONDS tumble out, about 1.5 carats each. He examines them and stuffs them back inside his prized queen.

The floorboards creak. Phil whips his head around.

Michael Callison stands in the doorway, blood dripping down his chest. His clothes red. He points a gun at Phil.

Phil jumps off his bed and almost crashes into his tank. He does a double-take and the conjured-up Michael is gone.

INT. STORM SHELTER - A BIT LATER

Phil unbolts the steel door and enters. Harper rests on her side, depressed and spent, with a thousand-mile vacant stare.

She notices the cup of orange juice in his hand. He crosses over to her with it. She sits up. Her belly seems huge today.

PHIL

We're taking a ride to get fresh
air and sunlight. We both need it.

Phil leans down and brings the OJ to her lips. She violently smacks it out of his hand. Juice splashes everywhere.

HARPER

You shot someone, didn't you?
DIDN'T YOU?! DID SOMEONE FIND ME?!
DID YOU KILL SOMEONE, YOU FUCK?!

Phil seethes. Fights an urge to hit her and leaves instead.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Phil escorts Harper outside. Duct tape covers her mouth, and handcuffs secure both her hands behind her back.

The Nissan's trunk is open. Completely empty inside. Harper wants none of this. Starts backing away. Phil grabs her.

PHIL

You could've been riding in the
back seat if you drank the OJ.

Phil forces her inside the trunk as she screams from behind the tape. She kicks and thrashes. Phil grabs her ankle, firm.

PHIL

I'm doing this for you. Let's have
a nice hike, okay?

She nods and mumbles into the tape. Phil slams the trunk.

He shoves his suitcase in the back seat and places a stuffed backpack on the passenger side. Fires up the engine.

INT. PHIL'S CAR (MOVING) - TRUNK - A BIT LATER

Inside the dark trunk, Harper methodically rubs her face against the carpet to peel the tape from her mouth.

She succeeds and lets out a long, anguished scream.

EXT. NORTH GEORGIA WOODS - LATER

Phil takes a turn onto a narrow dirt road in a wooded area...

He encounters no other cars... keeps going deeper in.

Veers off road and carefully maneuvers between trees until the forest is too thick to drive through.

The car startles a family of DEER. They bolt to safety.

Phil cuts the engine and gets out. Beelines to the back.

Pops the trunk and sees Harper, her eyes and face scrunched, in pain. He removes her handcuffs and she grabs her belly.

Phil extends a hand to her. She waves him away and pounds the floor of the trunk with her fist, trying to ease the cramp.

PHIL

What's going on? You okay?

Harper's face softens. Her breath slows. The pain subsides.

She uses both hands to push herself to a seated position.

HARPER

Cramps. I think the baby is dead.

Worry washes over her face. She draws in a deep breath as Phil helps her climb out of the trunk.

PHIL

You'll be able to see a doctor soon.

Harper's eyes light up, but there is a twinge of fear, too.

HARPER

What do you mean?

PHILLIP

I'm letting you go.

HARPER

Bullshit. You're going to kill me, aren't you? Aren't you!?

Harper is terrified. Scans her surroundings - no one would hear her scream here. This can't possibly be her "lucky day."

PHIL

I would've already done it if I really wanted you dead.

Phil retrieves a ziplock of chess-themed push pins from the stuffed backpack, then throws the backpack over his shoulder.

He crosses over to a tree, retrieves one of the round pushpins. They are white; the chess images on it are black.

He pushes a pawn into a tree in plain sight. Harper eyes him.

PHIL

In case we get lost. Breadcrumbs.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Johnny, totally on edge, glances out his pickup truck window as he extracts a "burner" flip phone from its packaging.

He inserts a sim card... fires it up. Skips the setup...

Pulls out his iPhone. Looks up something. Breathes nervously.

Glances back and forth between his iPhone and burner as he dials a number on the burner. Lifts the phone to his ear.

Someone picks up on the other end, and Johnny presses the "CYBORG" icon on a voice changer app on his iPhone, and plays a pre-recorded message for the person on the burner phone:

JOHNNY (V.O.)

(as a "cyborg")

I know where Harper Mason's at, and
I'm only gonna say it once.

EXT. NORTH GEORGIA WOODS - DAY

Phil pushes another chess tack into a tree as they enter a clearing. Remnants of a camp fire is left behind.

Harper doubles over in pain again. This time she lowers herself to her knees and folds into a "child's pose."

HARPER

Ow, ow, ow, owwww!

She moans. Cups her belly. Waits for the pain to subside.

It's now clear -- she's having a contraction. She's in labor.

Phil eyes her. Rushes over to her as she gathers herself.

HARPER

Oh my GOD! Something's wrong.

PHIL

It's too early for the baby to
come. You're not even eight months.

Harper recovers and slowly stands, drained and out of it.

Phil retrieves an insulated water bottle. Hands it to her.
She waddles over to the fire pit as she sips the water.

As Phil pushes a chess tack into the tree, Harper spies...

A silver TENT PEG/SPIKE left in the ground near the fire pit.

Quickly, behind Phil's back, she pulls it from the ground.

It's about 6" long with a deadly point. Quickly, she slips it
into her pocket as Phil turns to her and shuffles toward her.

Harper is overcome with immense fear. She can't even move.
Tears stream down her face. Phil stops in front of her.

PHIL

I remember your quote, and now that
I know better, I wanna do better. I
swear on this baby, I never planned
on being a fucking shit human.

Phil takes a few steps toward Harper. Goes in for a cautious
hug. Harper's grip tightens around the tent spike.

Phil wraps her in a hug. She weeps as he tries to comfort
her. She starts to relax. Her grip loosens on the tent spike.

A twig CRACKS nearby. Both Harper and Phil whip around and
Phil yanks out his gun and aims it into the woods.

Nothing there, he puts the gun away.

Dense dark clouds hover overhead. A breeze caresses the air.

Phil walks deeper into the woods, his phone in hand. Studies
the map. Motions for Harper to follow. She doesn't budge.

HARPER

I'm not taking another step. Where
are we going anyway?

Phil stops. Glances around. Surveys the area. Shrugs.

PHIL

You know what? This will do.

Thunder roars in the distance. A storm is nearing.

Phil tucks his phone into his pocket and beelines to a large tree. Retrieves his gun and waves Harper over with it.

She approaches him with determination. And a plan.

She grips the metal spike in her pocket and charges like a nuclear missile with no cancel code.

Phil bends over to retrieve a blanket from the backpack. Places it at the base of a tree.

Then pulls out a pile of chains that spill to the ground.

Harper sees this and panics. Picks up the pace. Pulls the spike from her pocket, and before Phil can turn around...

She lifts her hand to strike in murder...

But she's overcome with severe contractions. Pain so bad that she drops the spike in the grass, unseen by Phil, and sits.

She hisses as she tries to will away the pain, but the contractions only increase. Phil doesn't know what to do.

Harper holds her breath, but that doesn't help so she moans deep, from her very core. A long, Exorcist-like groan.

Phil helps her lie down on the blanket. She pulls her knees in and squeezes her eyes shut. Her face twists into pain.

And her water breaks. No - pops. It gushes through her sweatpants, and suddenly that makes the pain even worse.

HARPER

It fucking huuuuuurts!

PHIL

Slow, steady breaths, okay?

Harper slows her breath. Her contraction slowly dissipates, and she rolls up into a ball and tries to regroup.

Phil runs a chain around the tree trunk. Both ends of it have ankle shackles. Phil tries to put them on Harper but...

She kicks him square in the jaw. He stumbles. Grabs his chin.

PHIL

Listen to me: Someone's gonna come to release you as soon as I'm on a plane, okay? Trust me, I have to do it this way. You'll be free soon.

Phil tries to grab her foot but Harper kicks him in the balls and crawls away on her fours to look for the tent spike...

Phil recovers from the stabbing testicle pain just as Harper finds the "weapon" in the tall grass. She grins triumphantly.

Phil manages to snap the ankle cuff on one of Harper's ankles as she turns around with the metal spike in her grip...

And with all the fury of a soldier in battle, Harper jams the spike about three inches into the side of Phil's neck.

He runs his fingers on the metal object in his neck. His eyes widen in horror and disbelief. He freezes mid-breath. Blinks.

But he doesn't go down. The spike missed his carotid artery.

He can't talk. Can barely breathe. It hurts like actual Hell.

He pulls out his gun and aims as Harper tries to scoot away.

BANG!

The bullet rips through Harper's right trapezius muscle, missing her neck, missing her chest, her head, her veins.

She screams bloody murder as blood gushes and a new contraction sets in. This one worse than the previous.

She curls up and pulls her knees in. The only position that feels good. Her moans morph into guttural screams.

Phil, barely alive, snaps the other ankle cuff on Harper's ankle... then stands... Wobbles, still stunned and shocked.

He grips the metal spike and slowly pulls it from his neck, his face showing horrible pain. He hacks up blood. Spits.

Blood bubbles from the wound. Phil slaps his palm over it.

Unable to speak, he watches Harper writhing in pain as he grabs his backpack, and like some zombie, lumbers away.

Harper's shirt is a bloody mess. But she can only focus on breathing through her immense pain. She hyperventilates.

Phil's legs buckle and he faceplants out of reach from Harper. His backpack crashes to the ground next to him.

She gets up on all fours and rocks back and forth. That seems to help. She slowly comes out of the pain. Her breath slows.

She tries to crawl away but realizes: she's chained to the tree. She musters all the vocal strength she has left...

HARPER

Phil! You can't leave me here!!

But Phil, face down on the ground, doesn't answer.

Rain starts coming down in buckets. Harper has no shelter. She grabs the blanket from under her and uses it as a roof.

Thunder CRACKS. Lightning flashes in the darkening sky.

INT./EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME

A SWAT TEAM with guns drawn enter Phil's home after the front door is blown off with controlled explosives.

They use secret signs and gestures to move around the house.

Two guys move down the basement stairs. One goes to the back.

Two head up the stairs to the bedroom.

INT. STORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two SWAT men point their guns at the ready, but find a cleaned up room. No mattress. No clothes. No chains. Zero visible signs of a prisoner ever having lived here.

INT. PHIL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Two SWAT guys ready their weapons. Find no one upstairs.

There's a note on the bed: "FEED THE FISH ONCE A DAY."

They turn to the fish tank and notice that inside the tank is a laminated hand-written poem titled: "CONTEMPORARY GIRL."

One of the Swat guys reaches in to retrieve it. He reads it.

EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - SAME

A DETECTIVE ushers in three FORENSICS experts dressed in full protective gear.

EXT. NORTH GEORGIA WOODS - NIGHT

It's been hours since Harper's been alone. At least the rain has stopped. But it's pitch dark, and Harper is terrified.

She sobs as she tries to reach the backpack. New idea:

She grabs the corners of the blanket and makes a sort of jump rope with it. She stretches as far as the chains will let her and tries to loop the blanket over the backpack.

Success! Slow and steady, she pulls the backpack toward her.

She chuckles victoriously, but she's so weak, she barely has the energy to open the bag. It's all adrenaline from here.

She extracts a water bottle and chugs from it. Then pulls a hoodie that looks too small to fit over her belly.

She retrieves a heavy duty GARDEN TROWEL from the bottom, examines it and wonders what purpose this tool might have.

Finally, she finds a flashlight. Turns it ON. A streak of light illuminates the woods. A deer startles and trots off.

She digs through the side pockets for keys, but comes up empty-handed. In utter defeat, she breaks down in sobs.

She turns to her side and braces herself with the incoming contractions. Meditates; inhales and exhales methodically.

She gets on all fours. Rocks back and forth and moans deep, like an animal. This is Harper at her worst.

HARPER

God, help me through this, please.

She whimpers. Whines. The pain is too strong to ignore.

INT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Avery sits next to an INDONESIAN AIR gate. The last person boards. She looks around, desperately searching. Her face twists into utter chagrin. She sighs deeply.

Checks her phone again. No texts or calls whatsoever.

She sees that they're about to close the gate and hops from her seat. Cranes her neck. Checks her phone again, then walks away from the gate. From Bali. From the future.

EXT. NORTH GEORGIA WOODS - DUSK

The sun barely illuminates Harper who's in active labor.

She has removed her pants and panties in anticipation of giving birth. She tries everything to stay comfortable, but it's the least comfortable thing a person can experience.

She screams as she bears down. She has the urge to push.

Holds her breath, scrunches her face and pants. She's sweating despite the cool temps. She feels the need...

And pushes while blowing out small breaths. Pushes slightly. A look of fear and astonishment sweeps across her face...

She reaches down between her legs...

More tiny breaths. Her face contorts in agony. She screams, and like she's doing crunches, she pushes one last time...

And slowly pulls a tiny baby from between her legs.

It's covered in blood and gunk and amniotic fluid, and is limp like a crinkly rubber doll. Harper is in a daze.

It's a BABY BOY, about 6 lbs, with a head of wet, black hair, and still attached to her through a coily umbilical cord.

Harper is terrified. Doesn't know what to do. Places the baby on her chest. He doesn't breathe or move. She remembers --

PHIL (V.O.)

*...To stimulate first breaths,
vigorously rub the sides of his
back and rib cage up and down at
about the pace and pressure of
washing your hair...*

Afraid of hurting him, she rubs her newborn's back, but it's futile and Harper starts to grieve. She bursts into tears.

The baby is bluish and appears beyond hope.

HARPER

I don't want you to die, baby boy.

She sobs like she's never sobbed before.

INT./EXT. PHIL'S HOUSE - INVESTIGATION - SERIES OF SHOTS

A team of crime scene technicians, forensic investigators, officers and detectives fill every nook of the house.

-- Harper's room is methodically being torn apart...

-- Phil's bedroom closet door is being scanned by cops...

-- Outside, an investigator digs through a trash bag...

-- A cop finds the baby bassinet in the shed.

EXT. NORTH GEORGIA WOODS - DUSK

Harper, eyes closed, weeps and gives it one more go and rubs and pats the baby's back in utter despair.

As she opens her eyes to take a look at her lifeless baby...

A BLACK BEAR towers over Phil's dead body 10 feet from her.

Harper makes eye contact but doesn't breathe or blink. Plays dead, unsure if that's what she should even do.

The bear sniffs Phil, snarls, and the massive beast starts lumbering toward her and her newborn son.

The animal is so big, Harper knows it could swallow her tiny baby son with one gulp.

The bear moves closer, and Harper has a change of plan --

She stealthily locates the garden trowel and grips it at the ready as the black bear roars and flashes teeth.

It snaps its jaw at Harper and she smacks it with the trowel.

The bear snorts and curls back its lips. Harper holds her baby tightly and scoots back as far as the chains let her.

The bear inches toward her, and as she kicks out her leg toward it, the bear snaps its jaw and teeth toward her...

And it bites down onto the chain and rips it in two!

She is now free but she's paralyzed from fear, but manages to muster the loudest roar and scream a human has ever produced:

HARPER
GET AWAY FROM MY BABY!! GO! GO!!

She growls again like she's the Alpha. The bear doesn't like her aggressive voice and barks back...

But then a moan startles both the bear and Harper: it's Phil. His purposeful groans grow louder. His eyes pop open. He locks eyes with Harper as though to say "good-bye" before...

The bear stands on its hind legs and roars, then clamps down on Phil's back with sharp teeth and drags him into the woods.

Harper tries to unfreeze. Holds her breath. Total silence...

Her baby emits a grunt and squeak, and lets out a robust cry.

Harper gasps in surprise and begins to laugh with joy through her tears. She rocks her baby rhythmically.

HARPER

Shh-sh-shhh, mommy's here.
Everything's gonna be fine.

She kisses the top of her son's head with so much bliss, she never imagined such happiness. She then glances around...

Her eyes land on a QUEEN chess tack pressed into a tree.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Harper rests comfortably in a bed. Medical dressing covers her gunshot wound, and she's hooked up to an IV drip.

Her feet are wrapped with gauze from her various injuries.

In a newborn bassinet next to her, her baby son is swaddled in a blanket. A blue knit cap covers his head. He's asleep.

A KNOCK on the door. Harper waits. Sits up anxiously.

A NURSE opens the door and Darryl and Lori enter. Darryl pushes Lori in a wheelchair. Bandages cover her chest.

The second Lori sees Harper, she bursts into tears.

Harper pops out of bed and dives into her parents' arms.

HARPER

Daddy! Mom!

The three stay in a long hug. Tears stream from Lori's eyes. Darryl barely keeps his at bay. Harper's eyes well.

LORI

I knew I'd see you again.

DARRYL

I love you, baby girl.

HARPER

Don't cry, Mom. I'm here now. It's okay. Don't cry.

(sees the bandages)

Are you okay? Why the bandages?

DARRYL

Your mother had triple bypass surgery.

(off Harper's look)

DARRYL (CONT'D)

It's all good though. Her ticker is probably better than mine now.

Harper and Lori plant many kisses on each other's cheeks.

LORI

Never letting you outta my sight.

Harper chortles. Wipes her mom's tears away as Darryl crosses over to check out the adorable baby boy.

DARRYL

Look at this little fella here. Can I touch him?

HARPER

Of course.

Lori wheels herself to the baby. Admires him amid tears.

LORI

What's his name?

HARPER

Hm... I don't know yet.

Darryl gingerly picks up the newborn and dotes on him. Lori joins in, and her joy instantly dries up her tears.

Something hits Harper. She hops out of bed, determined and fierce, and shuffles over to her parents.

Looks at the baby, and with winning confidence blurts out:

HARPER

Bear. His name is Bear.

DARRYL

I'll be damned. Bear... He's the spitting image of you, Harp.

Bear cracks open his eyes and gazes at his loving family.

Harper leans in and kisses Bear's teensy little nose.

THE END