

SAW ZERO

written by

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Based on
'The Midnight Man' by
Patrick Melton & Marcus Dunstan

7 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

7

As Lynn steps forward, Darren flicks the light switch, quickly growing frustrated when it doesn't work.

DARREN

Damn. What's that, the third time this week?

LYNN

Maybe you should get that guy to look at it - the one doing all that work for Michael. What's his name?

DARREN

If finding out means having to talk to Mike, then I don't wanna know.

LYNN

It's just a conversation, Darren. It wouldn't kill you.

DARREN

Exactly. There'd be nothing to put me out of my misery.

8 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

8

Lynn runs her fingertips over her sutured mouth. She tries to tear her lips apart, a wail rattling in her throat.

Blood trickles from her mouth to her chin, but it's all for nought, and she quickly gives up, gasping for breath.

9 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

9

Darren smiles as he wraps his arms around his wife, planting a quick kiss on her lips.

DARREN

One of us is gonna have to check the fusebox.

LYNN

I'm in heels.

DARREN

I'm in-toxicated.

LYNN

We could just start a fire - light
some candles. That would be
romantic.

Darren playfully rolls his eyes as he breaks away. Lynn
smiles with satisfaction.

DARREN

I'll be five minutes.

LYNN

I'll keep our bed warm.

10 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT** 10

As Lynn tries and fails to pull her drilled hand free from
the wall, we see a RIGID TUBE suspended above her from a
clamp. A thin, barely visible WIRE runs from the clamp to the
door.

11 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 11

Lynn sits on the bed in the dark, fruitlessly flicking the
switch up and down on a bedside LAMP.

Eventually, she stops, reclining against the propped up
pillow with a sigh.

Apropos of nothing, the lamp flickers on, filling the room
with a dim, warm light.

Lynn smiles, but that smile gives way to confusion when she
spots a foreign object in the corner of the room.

She climbs off the bed, approaching it cautiously. It's a
LARGE RED TRUNK. She runs her fingers over its SILVER TRIM.

Then, her fingertips settle over the latch. For a beat,
nothing. Then, *CLICK!*

We don't see what's inside the box. But, whatever it is, it
sends Lynn into a fit of terror. She stumbles back with a
scream...

... landing right at the feet of a TALL FIGURE DRESSED IN
BLACK.

She screams again as the figure lunges at her with gloved
hands outstretched.

12

INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

12

The scream is distant and muffled, but Darren hears it as he throws himself at the basement door. It refuses to budge.

Frustrated, he steps away from the door, disappearing down the wooden stairs...

... only to return with a CROWBAR that he jams into the door space. It's a Herculean effort. He has to wrench the crowbar back and forth multiple times.

But, eventually, the door is pulled open.

A TAPE PLAYER has been duct taped to the other side of the door.

DARREN

What the fuck?

He uses the crowbar to tear it away. Holding it in front of him as he clicks the play button.

At first, there's only a burst of crackling static. Then...

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

(through tape)

It's Midnight, Mr. Wharton. Do you know where your wife is?

The tape ends. Darren stares at the player, too shocked to move.

Then, another long scream erupts from the other side of the house, and he takes off.

13

INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

13

Lynn is screaming because she is trying as hard as she can to pull herself free from the wall. The flesh squelches and the drill bit audibly scrapes against bone.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! Her attention is snatched by the sound of Darren throwing his weight at the door.

DARREN (O.S.)

Don't worry, I'll only be a second!

Lynn's eyes dart to the tripwire at the door, and then widen with alarm.

DARREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I've almost got it, honey!

She tries to scream - to beg him to stop - but she can't articulate any words with her sewn up mouth.

With a gurgling shriek, she tears her hand free from the wall as the door slams open, revealing Darren.

He flinches, sniffing the air.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Wait... is that-

The broken tripwire causes a loud *CLICK* as part of the tube suspended above Lynn breaks away.

There's a burst of light and smoke as the tube is revealed to be a *FLARE*.

Before Darren and Lynn can react, the clamp opens, dropping the flare into the bathtub.

On contact, the tub's contents fills with raging flames. It's not water... it's *GASOLINE*.

Darren watches in horror as the fire consumes his wife, distorting her cries of agony. He's so absorbed at this terrifying sight that he doesn't notice the mysterious dark figure behind him.

THWACK! Darren is knocked out, crumpling to the floor in a heap

As the fire rages on, Darren is slowly dragged away.

INSERT TITLE: SAW ZERO

14

EXT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - DAY

14

The house is beset by the rest of the neighborhood, who have all congregated as they stare at in curiosity. They murmur amongst themselves.

A MAN trudges toward the commotion, taking big swigs from a CUP OF COFFEE. This is DETECTIVE MARK ELTON (early 50s), and he looks like sleep is something he has but a passing familiarity with.

The closer he gets to the house, the more everybody parts, allowing him through.

He reaches the front door and steps inside...

15 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS**

15

... where the forensics team is moving back and forth, examining various parts of the house. The place is buzzing with activity.

 ELTON
 (calls out)
 Dunst!

 DUNST (O.S.)
 Up here!

Elton makes his way up a nearby flight of stairs...

16 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

16

... where he greets DETECTIVE OREN DUNST (late 40s). Dunst does a better job at hiding the stressors of the job - being more clean cut and properly dressed than his partner.

 ELTON
 Let me guess-

 DUNST
 You don't need to.

 ELTON
 I figured. I was going to humor
 you.

 DUNST
 Next time, humor me by showing up
 on time.

 ELTON
 (another gulp of coffee)
 Slept like shit.

 DUNST
 Well, I got just the thing to wake
 you up.

Dunst pushes the door open to the bathroom, and they step inside...

17 **INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

17

... where, a pair of forensics are moving back-and-forth. Flash bulbs go off. DNA samples are taken.

The aftermath of the previous night is in full display. Lynn's charred, skeletal corpse reaches for the ceiling, her jaw hanging agape. Around her, the bathroom has seen extensive damage from the fire.

ELTON
 Yep. That'll do it.
 (to Dunst)
 Any signs of the husband?

DUNST
 Drops of blood, bits of teeth and hair - it's likely he was in the basement while all this went down.

ELTON
 And you're sure she didn't... you know...

Dunst gives Elton a disapproving look as Elton runs a finger across his throat.

ELTON (CONT'D)
 I'm just saying - disaffected housewife, loser husband, no direction in life, shitload of money they don't need? Statistically, she's either planning on killing her husband or herself.
 (shrugs)
 Guess that's patriarchy for you.

Dunst keeps his eyes on Elton, rummaging through his coat pocket and pulling out the tape recorder.

He rewinds the tape, then he clicks the play button.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
 It's Midnight, Mr. Wharton. Do you know where your wife is?

As Dunst pockets the tape recorder, Elton nods his head in understanding.

ELTON
 That's our guy.

Dunst and Elton step into the basement, which shows the aftermath of a forensic investigation - tape, markers, evidence bags everywhere.

DUNST

It looks like he blew the fuses to lure one of them down here.

ELTON

Is that how he picked them?

DUNST

Maybe. It's still hard to say.

ELTON

Makes sense, right? He leads the husband away, puts the wife in the tub, then kidnaps the husband while she burns.

Dunst exasperatedly rubs his eyes.

ELTON (CONT'D)

You okay?

DUNST

If I knew this was gonna play out like all the others, I would've slept in too.

19

EXT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - DAY

19

An exhausted Elton and Dunst leave the house to an explosion of chatter from the crowd of bystanders.

ELTON

Everybody go home! Nothing to see here!

SHAWNEE "SHAW" BELL (late 20s) a frazzled reporter-type, rushes over to the duo, brandishing her own tape recorder.

BELL

Detectives! Care to comment on the speculation that this could be the latest in the Midnight Man murders?

ELTON

We'd like to repeat that the name 'Midnight Man' was coined by the zealous media and not an official police designation.

BELL

What do you call him? The one that got away?

DUNST

Unlike my pal here, I'm going off-the-record, Bell. Do me a favor and fuck off!

Bell watches them leave with a curious smirk.

20

INT. TUCK'S OFFICE - DAY

20

A PEN scribbles notes on a small LEGAL PAD. It is resting on the lap of JILL TUCK (30), a beautiful bespectacled blonde.

She takes a deep breath, choosing her words carefully.

JILL

John, I see a lot of clients who have an intrinsic need for control over every aspect of their lives. Would you say that best describes you?

She's talking to JOHN KRAMER (30), fresh-faced and untouched by the violent legacy of his puzzle-obsessed alter-ego.

JOHN

I would.

JILL

Would you say that is sometimes to your detriment?

JOHN

You saying I should do something reckless? Quit my job?

JILL

I'm only trying to drill into the problem. That's all.

(beat)

It's interesting that you went straight to your job, though.

John sighs. She's got him there.

JILL (CONT'D)

When you were in your twenties, you could afford to be a little more idealistic, right? So, what was your goal?

JOHN

I wanted to build homes for those that needed them the most.

JILL
That's really admirable.

She looks down at her pad, taking more notes.

JILL (CONT'D)
And, I assume you worked toward
that goal.

JOHN
I did. I got my degree in civil
engineering and minored in
architecture. I researched
abandoned housing, I read every
study into homelessness there was-

JILL
So, what caused your life's path to
change?

JOHN
I couldn't find anybody to invest
with me. People thought my project
carried too great a risk.

JILL
Do you agree with their assessment?

JOHN
I look at the people I work for,
and all of the money that they
waste on extensions and renovations
they don't need. I think about
where all of that could go.

Jill closes the notepad and removes her glasses, staring at
John with striking eyes - regarding him less like a client
and more like a friend.

JILL
Then, those feelings of resentment
you harbor make perfect sense. I'm
sure it feels like you're at the
exact opposite of where you want to
be.

(beat)
And, I'm sure you told yourself
that it was temporary, right? Like
you were just building capital
until you had what you needed.
Only, before you know it, years
have passed and you feel as though
you haven't made any headway, which
leads to that feeling of inertia-

JOHN

And fear?

Their eyes meet. There's a mutual understanding.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What was your dream?

JILL

You want to provide accessible housing. I want to provide accessible healthcare.

JOHN

Also really admirable.

JILL

(beat)

Do you hate your job, John? Like, in a vacuum?

JOHN

No. I enjoy the work, the clients are nice, and all things considered I still make a decent living.

JILL

So, it turns out we actually have a lot in common.

The two sit on that in silence. Is that chemistry?

A couple of beats pass before Jill clears her throat, placing her glasses back on as she pours over her notes.

JILL (CONT'D)

I think we're starting to get at the core of this depression you're experiencing.

JOHN

Does that mean it's time to med me up, doc?

JILL

I'm not a physician, John. I can't do that.

She closes her notebook.

JILL (CONT'D)

Besides, I don't think that will be necessary.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

This doesn't read to me like a chemical imbalance so much as you're just... stuck.

JOHN

Stuck?

JILL

Yeah. It happens more often than you'd think. What it means is that our next few sessions are going to focus on untangling you from the patterns and behaviours that are holding you in place.

(beat)

Of course, that's if you wish to continue.

JOHN

I think I would like that very much.

JILL

Should we book for a couple of weeks from now?

Before he can answer, the door opens.

ELTON (O.S.)

Excuse me.

John and Jill turn to see Elton and Dunst standing in the doorway.

JILL

Can I help you, officers?

ELTON

(to John)

You wouldn't happen to be John Kramer, would you?

JOHN

Yes, I am. Is something wrong?

John is now seated at a cluttered DESK, staring in disbelief at the crime scene photos splayed out before him. They are of the Wharton house, and they include Lynn's jet black skeleton.

Elton and Dunst leans against the desk, hovering over John and observing his every move.

JOHN

Why are you showing me this?

DUNST

Did you ever work for the Whartons?

JOHN

No.

DUNST

That's surprising. You've worked for pretty much every other house in that neighbourhood, right?

JOHN

I guess so.

DUNST

Did you ever speak to Darren or his wife at all?

JOHN

Maybe in passing - a 'hi' here or there.

ELTON

Where were you last night?

JOHN

(beat)

Is that what this is? I'm a suspect?

ELTON

Of what?

JOHN

(indicates to the photos)

Whatever this is?

ELTON

I never said 'this' was anything. I just asked you a simple question.

JOHN

Fine. What time?

ELTON

Midnight.

JOHN
Sleeping, like most people.

DUNST
Is there anybody that can confirm
this? Make our jobs a little
easier?

JOHN
Sorry. I live alone. What's going
on here?

Elton raises the tape recorder and presses the play button.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
It's Midnight, Mr. Wharton. Do you
know where your wife is?

ELTON
Surely, you've heard of the
Midnight Man.

John shakes his head.

DUNST
Jesus. You don't pay attention to
the news?

JOHN
Why would I do that? I'm already
miserable enough as it is.

Dunst chuckles, prompting a smirk from John.

ELTON
I wouldn't be smiling if I were
you. Guy's a serial killer, and it
looks like he's set his sights on
your client base.

JOHN
What's that supposed to mean?

ELTON
He goes after wealthy people,
especially families. Kinda like
what you do, if you think about it.

John rises from his seat.

DUNST
Hey-

JOHN

Do you have anything to actually
accuse me of?

ELTON

I'm just making an observation.

JOHN

In that case, I'm leaving. Best of
luck catching your Midnight Man.

He turns and hastily leaves.

DUNST

John. John! John, hey!
(to Elton)
What the hell was that for?

ELTON

Guy was a bit too flippant for my
liking.

DUNST

Goddamn it.

ELTON

He's a handyman, Dunst. People
trust him. They let him into their
homes.

DUNST

So?

ELTON

So, he probably knows how to build
booby traps.

DUNST

He doesn't give me serial killer
vibes.

ELTON

We're going off vibes now?

DUNST

(shrugs)
At least 'til we get some evidence.
Last I checked, we don't have any
of that, yet.

Elton sinks into his chair with a sigh.

ELTON

You're right. I'm sorry.

DUNST
I get it. It's...

Dunst turns back to the macabre pictures, unable to hide his disgust.

DUNST (CONT'D)
... frustrating...

After a beat, he looks up. His eyes widen.

DUNST (CONT'D)
Hey!

He storms out.

22

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

22

John has been stopped by Bell, listening intently as she speaks. That is until Dunst confronts her.

DUNST
Get the hell away from him!

BELL
Why? He's not under special protection or something, is he?

DUNST
Listen, I've had it up to here with you-

BELL
Yeah? Well the public's had it up to here with you two fumbling the Midnight Man case.

DUNST
And you think you're gonna make headway by lurking around and harassing said public?

BELL
I'll bet I know more about this case than you think. You'd be surprised what I managed to learn just by approaching Mr. Kramer here.

JOHN
Oh no. Don't bring me into this.

Bell and Dunst turn to see John hurrying away.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (over his shoulder)
 I think you're both fucking crazy!

23

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - DAY

23

We are inside an EMPTY SAFE as the door opens to reveal the face of MICHAEL CHASE (40s), a sturdily built, earnest family man.

He fills the space, pushing dark shapes towards us -- too close to make out.

We cut to outside the safe, where Michael is crouched over a DUFFEL BAG. The space around him is immaculately clean. Its furnishings suggest a den that is slowly coming together.

He pulls out the last item from the bag -- a CASSETTE TAPE. There's a small LOVE HEART on the label, which reads "MAKEOUT MIX 6/18/75."

As he gives it a once over, he smirks.

MICHAEL
 How'd that get in there?

He closes the safe's door and exits the room, climbing the stairs.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hey, babe! Babe! You're never gonna believe what I found!

24

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

24

Michael ventures through the house. They've only just moved in, yet it's starting to look more like a home.

Of course, that's if you ignore the harsh sounds of power tools being used elsewhere.

VICTORIA (O.S.)
 Michael, are you down there?

MICHAEL
 Coming, honey!

He takes a step towards the stairs, only to turn toward John, who is lining up a window with a frame, easing it open and closed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Everything coming up alright, John?

JOHN
Just about good as new.

MICHAEL
Excellent. All that's left for today is the bathroom door and the last of the window bars.

JOHN
No problems, sir.

MICHAEL
Vicky insists on Detroit-decor. I keep telling her, we couldn't be in a safer neighborhood if we tried.
(beat)
Oh! Almost forgot. Victoria wants me to ask you what you can do about the laundry chute. Can we put a child lock on the door or something?

JOHN
(shrugs)
I guess.

MICHAEL
Perfect. Anyway, I'll catch you later-

JOHN
Actually, I was hoping I could talk to you about something.

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Michael!

MICHAEL
Can it wait?
(points up)
Wife's calling.

JOHN
It's about payment. I still need last week's-

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Michael, come on!

Michael shrugs, as if to say "what can you do?". As he walks away, John stares, hiding his bitterness with the mightiest of poker faces.

25

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - HANNAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

25

HANNAH (6), a wide-eyed little girl you could never say no to, lifts a tall, plastic KETTLE and pours water into a series of TEA CUPS on a small circular table.

She's hosting a tea party, and her guests are several STUFFED ANIMALS and DOLLS.

Oh, and a very tired JOHN.

John sips the "tea" and forces a smile on his tired face.

JOHN
It's very good.

HANNAH
He made it!

She points to a STUFFED PLUSH PIG. John regards it with a nod.

JOHN
It's very good, sir-

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Jesus Christ, Vicky. She's
eighteen. If she doesn't want to
go, she doesn't have to!

The argument catches John's attention. He tilts his head, listening in.

VICTORIA (O.S.)
This is the last summer we have as
a family! I'd rather she spend it
with us than her stoner boyfriend.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
How did you spend the month before
you went to college?

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Goddamn it, Michael! This is
different!

MICHAEL (O.S.)
How?

VICTORIA (O.S.)
My parents were assholes!

We don't see Michael's reaction, but we can probably guess what it conveys.

VICTORIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(scoffs)
Just talk to her, will you? We all know she's more likely to listen to you.

Michael slams the bedroom door open and moves into the hallway, visible from the entrance to Hannah's room.

MICHAEL
I've already got my hands full,
honey!
(double take)
John?

John awkwardly stands up, approaching Michael.

JOHN
Tea party. Hannah invited me.

MICHAEL
(beat)
Oh.

JOHN
I got the door working.

MICHAEL
Right. Thank you.

Michael takes an ENVELOPE from his pocket and hands it to John. John opens it and checks the contents — money. But his eyes tell us everything. It isn't enough.

JOHN
Sir-

Before he can continue his protest, Michael exits the room. John follows, but he only makes it to the doorway before.

HANNAH (O.S.)
Mr. John?

John turns to face her. She's pouting. The tea party's not finished.

JOHN
I'm sorry, Hannah. The tea was
lovely.

Before she can guilt him into staying further, he heads
toward...

26

INT. WHARTON RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

26

... where he turns as the MASTER BEDROOM DOOR opens behind him. Inside is VICTORIA CHASE (40s), perfectly groomed and ready for the day, but in an open silk house robe exposing her underwear.

VICTORIA
Michael!

Then she sees that it is not Michael in the hallway. A standoff of sorts occurs - Victoria is unfazed as John does everything in his power to keep eye contact without staring.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
John.

JOHN
Ma'am.

John looks down at the envelope in his hand. He contemplates asking.

VICTORIA
Is something wrong?

John's about to ask, but the words don't come out. He simply sighs.

JOHN
Nothing.

He hastily gets out of there. She watches with eyes narrowed. What an odd young man.

27

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SUNSET

27

John makes his way across the front lawn, exhausted and disappointed.

MADS (O.S.)
Rough day?

He turns to see MADDIE "MADS" CHASE (18), your typical "problem child", leaning against a tree.

She's holding a worn down NAIL FILE, but John cares more about the CIGARETTE she's smoking.

JOHN

Not sure your parents would approve.

MADS

What if I told them they drove me to it?

JOHN

(hands raised)
I'm convinced.

John goes to walk away when she calls out to him.

MADS

Y'know Dad's stiffing you, right? Guy's a tight-ass. He's gonna do everything he can to not pay you in full.

(drags cigarette)
Does it to all his workers.

John doesn't answer. He simply walks away.

28 **INT. POLICE STATION - ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

28

It's quiet, save for the rain hitting the windows. Dunst is about to leave for the night.

A thump catches his attention. He turns, staring suspiciously into the dark.

DUNST

Hello?

29 **INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

29

Gun raised, Dunst makes his way down the corridor, listening out for the slightest sound.

They come from nearby, prompting him to keep moving.

30 **INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT**

30

A CRT TV blasts static at a SILHOUETTED FIGURE IN A CHAIR, its head slumped over.

Dunst takes cautious steps forward.

DUNST

Hey!

The figure stirs with a grumble.

DUNST (CONT'D)

Hands in the air!

It obeys the command, slowly raising its hands.

ELTON

You gonna shoot me?

DUNST

(holsters gun)

Jesus Christ!

Dunst rushes over, standing next to the seated Elton.

DUNST (CONT'D)

You're still here?

ELTON

(shrugs)

Catching the Midnight Man means overtime, right?

DUNST

Not if you're sleeping on the job.

Elton gets up and flicks on his DESK LAMP, shifting the mess atop his desk.

ELTON

So get us some coffee and let's nail the son of a bitch.

As Elton continues to move things into place, Dunst sighs.

31

INT. BAR - NIGHT

31

John, still in his work clothes, carrying his TOOL SATCHEL, hovers at the counter. He stares at the thin envelope as he twirls it in his hand.

Then, with a groan, he slots it into his bag as a BARTENDER places a BEER in front of him.

John takes the drink, fidgeting with that instead.

JILL (O.S.)

I was late today.

32

INT. TUCK'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

32

John fidgets with a bottle of water in the same fashion as he and Jill are having another session.

JOHN

So?

JILL

Doesn't that annoy you? You went to the trouble to get here early and I was late.

JOHN

You apologized.

JILL

You didn't think to ask why?

JOHN

I'm sure you have a good reason.

JILL

How can you know for sure? How do you know I didn't just take my time coming here?

JOHN

You're a professional.

JILL

And you're spending a lot to be here. Isn't it in your best interest to make sure you're not wasting your money?

John doesn't answer, but his expression says "I guess."

JILL (CONT'D)

Are you worried that I will be offended if you ask? That I will see it as a personal attack on my professionalism?

JOHN

(beat)

May I ask why you were late?

Jill makes notes in her book, before turning back to John.

JILL
 John, for our next session, I'd
 like you to tell me about a
 situation where you put yourself
 first, okay?

JOHN
 (thinks it over)
 Okay.

JILL
 Great.
 (beat)
 And John?

JOHN
 Yeah?

JILL
 My alarm clock stopped working.
 That's why I was late.

JOHN
 Oh. Maybe I could come over and fix
 it somet-

He stops himself as Jill smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. That's unprofessional,
 isn't it?

JILL
 I appreciate the thought
 nonetheless.

33 **INT. BAR - NIGHT**

33

John picks up the beer and downs it.

The second the bottle is empty, John knocks on the table.

JOHN
 Barkeep!

34 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

34

It's dark. The neighborhood is calm and empty, with the only
 signs of life being the bright lights from the street lamps.

ELTON (O.S.)
 Michael Chase.

35

INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT

35

Elton has laid out all kinds of documents and photos on the table between he and Dunst.

ELTON

Moderately wealthy guy. Lives in the neighborhood. Wife. Two-kids. Could certainly be in the crosshairs.

DUNST

What separates him from the others on our list, though? Is there anything that pushes him to the front?

ELTON

(beat)

Well, there's... y'know.

DUNST

Oh no. Not that. Completely unfounded.

ELTON

Do we know he didn't pay for that verdict?

Dunst bristles. This is a conversation they've had many times.

DUNST

Even if you were right, I don't think the Midnight Man cares. He's not a vigilante.

ELTON

Yeah. I guess.

Elton goes back to surveying the evidence.

ELTON (CONT'D)

If I were a killer, where would I be?

36

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

36

BAMBAMBAMBAMBAM! John pounds the front door. He's not drunk, but there's certainly liquid courage in him.

JOHN

Michael! We need to talk!

No response. He pounds the door again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm not going away, damn it! Pay me
what you owe me!

Still nothing. Suddenly, self-consciousness hits John like a tidal wave. He turns to look at the houses across the road.

There are no signs of life. Everybody's asleep. Does he really want to wake everyone up.

John peels away from Michael's front door, heading down the front yard.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Stupid.

But then, he stops. He's exactly where he was standing when-

MADS (O.S.)
... He's gonna do everything he can
to not pay you in full...

The thought incenses John. He turns and marches back to the front door.

JOHN
Fine. Let's play your game.

He moves to the side of the house, jumping over a SMALL WOODEN GATE.

37 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

37

A slit between two drawn curtains shows where John was standing.

We pull back through the dark, quiet house. The further back we go, the more audible a harsh dragging becomes.

It's heavy breathing, muffled under a mask.

38 **INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT**

38

A NEWSPAPER is held. On its front cover is a sensationalist story with the title "THE MIDNIGHT MAN IS WATCHING YOU!"

The featured photo is of Dunst, battered and bloodied, outside another picturesque suburban family home.

39 **INT. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

39

BAM! Elton kicks down the front door of a house not too dissimilar the Wharton or Chase residence.

ELTON

Dunst?!

We follow him as he ventures through the dark space, his gun and flashlight outstretched before him. This isn't a cautious man. He's rushing - reckless, even.

Eventually, he bursts into a room to find Dunst lying on the floor, brutalised. Dunst weakly turns his head.

DUNST

Elton?

ELTON

(holsters his weapon)

Shit!

40 **EXT. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

40

Elton helps Dunst limp through the front door of the house and onto the front lawn.

ELTON

Can you stand?

DUNST

Yeah... I think...

Elton steps back, letting Dunst stand.

DUNST (CONT'D)

We can't let him get away.

Before Elton can respond, a CLICK and a CAMERA FLASH blasts Dunst.

41 **INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT**

41

Elton looks at the story, scowling in distaste.

ELTON

You know that feeling you get where you read the same word over and over again - but the more you read it, the stranger it looks?

DUNST

Yeah?

Elton continues to stare at Dunst, who appears oblivious.

Then, realization forms, as Dunst scrunches his face while Elton slowly nods.

DUNST (CONT'D)

You don't seriously-

ELTON

I do.

DUNST

It's way too early.

ELTON

For this? She won't mind.

DUNST

I mind.

Elton rises from his seat and grabs his coat.

ELTON

Breakfast is on me.

He leaves. Dunst slumps his shoulders.

42

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

42

Next to the back door is the small console for the NAPCO MAGNUM ALERT 900 SECURITY SYSTEM. All of the LEDs are blank. It has no power.

John presses at the keys, perturbed. He wasn't expecting this.

Oh well. He places a FLASHLIGHT between his teeth as he hunches over and opens his tool satchel. After a quick rummage, he procures a small 10-TPI JIGSAW BLADE and an even smaller SCREWDRIVER.

Using PLIERS, he bends the screwdriver into an L-shape. With the blade, as well as his makeshift tension wrench, John picks the lock to the back door.

CLICK! The door opens. Stealthily, John lets himself in.

43 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 43

John tiptoes into the dark space, scanning the room with his flashlight. Nothing looks out of place from earlier in the day.

He stops at the stairs that lead to the second floor. From there, he listens out for any movement upstairs.

Nothing. He slinks away from the stairs. He's not going up.

44 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 44

Pitch black, until John's flashlight beam slides over the wall and settles on the safe.

He crouches beside it, ear pressed to the thick steel. He stops when something catches his eye.

There's a TAPE RECORDER on the floor.

No time for distractions. He starts working the safe. In the silence of the room, it's easy to hear the clicks of the safe's internal mechanisms.

But, John's not making any progress. He's getting frustrated. His curiosity is getting the better of him.

He plucks the tape recorder off the floor and presses the play button.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
(through tape)
It's Midnight, Mr. Chase. Do you
know where your family is?

As if answering the question, there's a sudden, prolonged gasp next to John. It causes him to freeze.

Silence.

John whips the flashlight next to the safe, only to illuminate a prone Michael, raising his head to let out an agonised wail! He's covered in blood. Beaten to a pulp. There are cuts all over his face and body.

Before John can react, Michael throws himself at him, and the two have a scuffle.

MICHAEL
John! I knew it!

JOHN

Michael?

MICHAEL

Why are you doing this?!

JOHN

I don't know what you're-

MICHAEL

I'll kill you! I'll fucking kill
you!

John smacks Michael across the head with the flashlight, changing the room back into darkness.

We hear movement. Footsteps. Thick. Heavy. Getting closer and closer.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

J - J... John?

BAM! The door bursts open. A LARGE SILHOUETTE appears in the doorway, barely lit from the small bulb in the adjacent room.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh God.

After a beat, the figure steps forward and crouches down, joining the sea of darkness. Michael screams and pleads as we hear the sounds of violence.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Why are you doing th-

His voice is cut off as a boot lands on his throat, causing him to gag and wheeze.

With a click, another flashlight beam pours into the room, bathing the front of the safe. It's THE MIDNIGHT MAN. We still can't make out any of his features.

In the shadows is John, sitting behind the safe and trembling as he white knuckle grips a CLAW HAMMER, anticipating a fight.

But, the flashlight clicks off, and Michael's screaming fades as he is dragged further and further away into the house.

The door that John picked open now sports an elaborate NEW LOCK. John stares at it in disbelief.

He jams the claw of the hammer into the frame of the lock, trying to pry it apart. This thing won't budge.

A distant bump startles John. He backs away from the door.

46

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

46

John moves to one of the covered windows and pulls aside the drapes. The windows aren't just barred, they're boarded.

He turns away, frantically searching for another means of escape.

THE PHONE! A bright cherry red landline. He races over to it, wrenching the receiver from its cradle, pressing the buttons... not hearing the snap of a thin wire, nor the ticking of mechanisms inside.

As soon as he presses the phone to his ear, we hear the *PUNCH* of metal through flesh. John screams in pain.

Slowly... painfully... he pulls the receiver away from his head, revealing the *NEEDLES* that are now poking through.

He drops the phone to the floor as he cups his bleeding ear. We can see it in his eyes. He's getting desperate.

Then, he spots a *CRACK* between two of the wooden planks on the window. He lunges over to them, trying to pry them apart with the claw of the hammer.

No luck. There must be something in the way. John reaches through the crack, trying to feel for an obstruction.

Suddenly, John winces. He tries to pull back, but his hand is stuck.

RAZORS are holding it in place.

THUMP! John turns to the stairs. The Midnight Man is coming.

He raises the hammer, cringing at the thought of what comes next. Then, he jams the claw between his wrist and the wall and pulls.

It's hell. John grunts in pain as he pries himself free from the trap. His flesh tears as he separates from the wall.

He assesses the damage. Luckily, he hasn't degloved himself. Still, there are deep gashes on either side of his wrist that are liberally oozing blood.

He dives away as...

47

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

47

... The Midnight Man emerges.

We stay over his shoulder as he moves in, looking for the source of the noise.

He scans the room with his flashlight, not seeing anything unexpected.

That is until he stops. There's blood on the floor.

With big, booming steps, he approaches the stain and crouches down, examining it closely. No trail.

But, he can guess where it came from. The Midnight Man turns to the trap that John just escaped from. He places a gloved finger against the razors and pulls it back.

He examines the fresh blood. The prey is nearby.

But, he has all the time in the world to play. He moves away from the window and approaches one of the doors, opening it.

Just as it closes behind him, we cut.

48

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

48

Bell closes her front door as Elton and Dunst step inside.

BELL

Do you know what time it is?!

ELTON

As long as it's not midnight, am I right?

BELL

Very funny.

(to Dunst)

So, what made you come to me?

DUNST

It wasn't my idea.

ELTON

You said it yourself, Bell. You know more about this case than you're letting on.

BELL

More than you?

ELTON

I don't know. I'm kinda hoping to find out.

BELL

So call me to the station. At least give me time to prep before our next shouting match.

Elton steps forward.

ELTON

No shouting match, I promise. We're here because... well... maybe you do know more than we think.

BELL

And you acknowledge that you've been a bit stubborn?

ELTON

(beat)
Sure.

BELL

Bull-headed, even?

ELTON

(groans)
Fine.

BELL

(smiles)
Alright. I'll show you what I've got.

49

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - DARK ROOM - NIGHT

49

This room is a sight to behold. The walls are covered in NEWSPAPER articles connected by threads. CRIME SCENE PHOTOS hang from the ceiling like a horrifying mobile. Everything is bathed in INTENSE RED LIGHT.

Dunst is unable to believe his eyes. Elton is impressed.

Bell makes her way around the room, approaching a MAP with PINS in various locations.

BELL

I've been tracking the Midnight Man since he started - profiling the victims, marking the sites.

(MORE)

BELL (CONT'D)

I thought it would make a cool story. Then, a pattern emerged.

DUNST

(shrugs)

We've been doing the same thing.

BELL

Yeah, but have you noticed the link?

ELTON

What? That he's targeting wealthy families?

BELL

Christ. If that's all you got, we're all screwed.

DUNST

I knew this was a bad idea.

BELL

Think about it. He's not going door-to-door, so the wealth can't be the only factor. I'm talking about the actual link between all of the families he targets.

ELTON

Enlighten us.

Bell strides over to a STACK OF PACKED FILES on a nearby table, snapping them up and shoving them into Elton's stomach.

BELL

Crimes.

With that, she starts indicating toward the different photos. They are candid shots of SEVERAL UPPER MIDDLE CLASS MEN. Darren Wharton is one of them.

BELL (CONT'D)

I don't blame you for putting it off, though. I can't imagine the paperwork. It's not exactly light reading.

Dunst moves to Elton, peering over his shoulder at the stack of files.

DUNST

Shit. Don't tell me he's a vigilante after all.

Elton places the files on a nearby table, slotting one of them into the center. It belongs to *Michael Chase*.

With the opening of the folder, we see legal documents accompanied by his bitter MUGSHOT.

ELTON

How did you even get a copy of this?

BELL

Ask your recordkeeper...

She looks up at Elton, her voice trailing.

BELL (CONT'D)

(smirks)
... actually, don't.

Elton and Dunst locks eyes. They know. Elton chuckles while Dunst scoffs.

DUNST

I'm gonna fire that horny little fucker.

ELTON

I promise it'll be the first thing on my to-do list after we crack this case.

Elton snatches the document with Michael's face, approaching the map with all of the pins.

DUNST

(to Bell)
I hope you're having fun.

BELL

Yeah.

She turns to one of the hanging photos, any signs of levity draining from her face.

BELL (CONT'D)

This is all just one big fucking barrel of laughs.

50 INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

50

John sits on the tiled floor, wincing as he DUCT TAPES a TEA TOWEL around his bleeding wrist.

Every so often, he peers over his shoulder for any signs of movement in the adjacent room.

Nothing.

Once the towel is wrapped tight enough, he stores the tape back in his tool satchel. He flexes his fingers. It hurts like a motherfucker, but he won't bleed to death.

Suddenly, a SCREAM - upstairs, high-pitched. A woman's.

Victoria.

John comes out from his hiding spot, scurrying into...

51 INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

51

... where he freezes. There's a silhouette on the other side of the room.

SILHOUETTE

John?

It's Michael. He steps forward.

MICHAEL

John, what's going on-

CLICK! A wire snaps. Before Michael can react, a CHANDELIER falls from the ceiling, the entire collection of kitchen knives attached to its surface piercing Michael and pinning him to the floor.

JOHN

Michael!

John rushes to Michael's side. It's not a pretty sight. The man has been pierced in numerous locations, and is now struggling to breathe, let alone talk.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Michael, I'm sorry-

MICHAEL

John... why-

JOHN

I'm not a part of this. You have to believe me.

Another scream. Whatever Victoria is going through, it's not pretty. Michael's horrified face says it all.

MICHAEL

Victoria... please save-

JOHN

I will, Michael. I promise.

Michael reaches out with a bloodied hand, wrapping it around John's uncovered wrist.

MICHAEL

Safe... safe in basement... gun...

JOHN

What's the combination?

But, he's losing Michael. The man's about to pass out. John grabs his face.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Michael, I need the combination!

MICHAEL

(beat)

Fifteen... Twenty Four... Seven...

With a bloody finger, John crudely draws the numbers on his forearm.

JOHN

Thank you, Michael.

He motions to pull away, but Michael doesn't release his grip.

MICHAEL

Only the gun... touch... touch
nothing else... please...

With that, Michael passes out. He hasn't got long left.

John rises to his feet. He knows the Midnight Man is coming. He dashes out of frame.

52 INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

52

John is back at the safe, swiveling the dial back and forth, trying to get the door open.

JILL (O.S.)

John?

53 INT. TUCK'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

53

John is jolted, like he's woken up from a daydream.

JOHN

Sorry?

JILL

You zoned out for a second there.
Care to share what's on your mind?

He shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

JILL (CONT'D)

Of course, that's only if you're
comfortable.

He mulls it over, trying to find the right words.

JOHN

It's weird. When you do the kind of
work I do, you see these families
up close.

JILL

And?

JOHN

Well, they're all the same. So much
anger and resentment bubbling under
the surface. But they bury it --
keep it a secret like they do with
everything else. All this wealth
and security, and they don't
realise it's slowly killing them.

JILL

How does that make you feel?

JOHN

Like I need to open their eyes. I
wish they could just see this
festering cancer attached to their
life.

JILL

Does it bother you that they could see it, and they don't care?

JOHN

I wonder. Is it my responsibility to make them care?

JILL

I can't tell you how to live your life, John. I can offer you my opinion, if you're interested.

JOHN

Always.

JILL

When you do the kind of work that I do, you see how complicated people and their lives can be. I know how it feels to want to help everyone, but there are times where you have to be prepared to accept your limitations and walk away.

JOHN

How do you know when that time is?

JILL

I follow my heart.

John's brow furrows. If anybody except Jill said that, he'd think they were a quack.

JILL (CONT'D)

It's a bit of a cliché, but when your head's all fuzzy, your body has a way of cutting through the fog and getting you where you need to be.

She leans forward.

JILL (CONT'D)

So tell me, John; regarding your situation, what does your heart tell you?

CLICK! The safe door opens with a slow swing. John peers inside. Sure enough, there's a HANDGUN next to a small RED AMMO BOX.

John slots the box into his satchel, examining the gun. He's about to walk away when he spots more inside.

Curiosity gets the better of him. He pulls out a FISTFUL OF CASH -- crisp hundred dollar bills in a stack. He eyes it with curiosity. Does he have it in him to take the money?

No. He's not a thief. He places the money back inside. But then he sees a FOLDER.

He pulls it out, opening the contents. John's face says everything. It's disgusting. He flips through more of it. His disgust grows until it reaches fever pitch.

The folder drops to the floor, the documents and pictures scattering. We see a YEARBOOK PHOTO OF A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR. We only see part of her name, the rest obscured by other documents.

Annaleigh.

55

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

55

Dunst is sinking into a COUCH near a small COFFEE TABLE. He looks up as Bell enters with a COFFEE in one hand and a STACK OF PAPERS in the other.

She lays both on the table. As Dunst sips the coffee, he peruses the documents. In there is the SAME YEARBOOK PHOTO, accompanied by others of HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS.

DUNST

What the fuck is this?

BELL

The victims of Michael Chase.
Allegedly.

DUNST

The case was dismissed.

BELL

At least five different girls
accused him-

DUNST

They didn't have enough evidence.

BELL

Maybe your killer thinks they did.

Dunst rises to face her.

DUNST
So why wait until now?

BELL
I don't know, Detective. I was hoping you were here to help me figure that out.

DUNST
I would if you could convince me that any of this got us closer to the Midnight Man.

Bell starts to pace back and forth, growing frustrated.

BELL
Think about what we know. The Midnight Man has targeted multiple families across different neighborhoods. The only connections are that each family is rich, and they have at least one crime associated with them.

DUNST
And it can't be the money, because he doesn't take anything.

BELL
Exactly!

DUNST
So?

BELL
Michael Chase fits the bill, and his house looks like it's right in the killer's path! If you just send a cop to his place, we can intercept the Midnight Man and end this once and for all!

DUNST
And what if you're wrong? What if the Midnight Man recognizes that Chase was never actually convicted of a crime? What if he picks an entirely different neighborhood on a whim?

Bell bristles. This is getting nowhere. She storms off.

BELL (O.S.)
I need a smoke!

Dunst watches her go. He looks just as frustrated, hanging his head once again.

Elton emerges from the bathroom.

ELTON
Where'd she go?

56

EXT. BELL'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - NIGHT

56

Bell smokes a cigarette as she looks out onto the empty street.

ELTON (O.S.)
Mind if I join you?

BELL
You smoke?

Elton joins her, leaning on the railing and looking out.

ELTON
When in Rome.

Bell sighs as she snatches a CIGARETTE BOX from her pocket and hands one to Elton.

BELL
If you tell me these will kill me,
I'm throwing you over.

ELTON
Noted.

He takes the cigarette and puts it in his mouth. She lights it. He takes a long drag.

ELTON (CONT'D)
That's the good stuff.

BELL
That's what happens when we work
together.

Elton turns to the GLASS DOOR, looking in at Dunst, who is still on the couch, pouring over the documents Bell left him.

ELTON
For what it's worth, we both think
you're onto something.

BELL
Really? Even him?

ELTON

We both take our work very seriously. He just wants to make sure you're a hundred per cent right.

Bell takes another drag of her cigarette. There's so much that she wants to say, but she keeps it to herself.

57

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

57

We start at the top of the FOUR-POST BED, where an STEEL FRAME is attached. The only sound is that of a pathetic whimper.

We descend further down the posts, revealing several strands of FISHING WIRE. Further down we go until...

... we see Victoria. Her hands are shackled and spread out like a Christ figure. She is blindfolded. We see the point of the fishing wire, as numerous HOOKS are digging in her skin - too many to count.

A VHS CAMERA is mounted on a tripod, recording footage to a tape. The camera is connected to a blocky old TV, playing the grainy, staticky footage in real time.

JOHN (O.S.)

Holy shit.

John stands in the doorway, staring in disbelief. More fish hooks hang from the ceiling, blocking his path to her.

VICTORIA

What? Who is that? Who's there?

John frantically shooshes her.

JOHN

It's John! Please, you need to be quiet-

VICTORIA

What is this?! Please, just let us go!

JOHN

Goddamn it!

He practically dives into the hooks as Victoria continues to scream. The hooks get all over his body, creating all kinds of small, agonizing tears.

But, John doesn't stop. He can't.

As soon as he reaches Victoria, he places a hand over her mouth, practically whispering through his teeth in her ear.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Shut the fuck up.

She stops screaming muffled words into his hand, instead hyperventilating.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Victoria, I promise, I'm here to help. But I need you to be quiet. Okay?

It takes a beat, but Victoria nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm going to take my hand off your mouth. Promise me you won't scream.

Another nod. John removes his hand from Victoria's mouth, slotting the blindfold off her face.

VICTORIA
What is this?!

JOHN
I don't know. But the guy responsible is somewhere in this house, so you've gotta work with me.

VICTORIA
What about Michael?

JOHN
Michael's dead. There was nothing I could do.

Victoria bites her trembling lip. She wants to scream in anguish, but knows she can't.

VICTORIA
Hannah... my baby... we told her to hide. Please go get her. Get her out of here.

JOHN
I promise Victoria. I promise. I'll get both of you out of here.

He turns to leave, but then he stops himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Victoria. I need to know...

He turns to her, looking her in the eye.

JOHN (CONT'D)
... did you know about Michael?
About what he was doing?

VICTORIA
What are you talking about?

JOHN
In the safe, in the basement. I saw
what Michael did. I saw all the
evidence. I think that's why you're
being targeted.

VICTORIA
John, I...
(beat)
I haven't got a fucking clue what
you're talking about. Just please
go save my goddamn daughter.

John eyes her closely. No signs of a lie.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Go!

John flinches, turning and carefully making his way back into
the fishing hook web.

Victoria turns to the shackles around her hands. She's not
going anywhere anytime soon.

58

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

58

Dunst turns to see Bell and Elton return from the balcony. He
gets up from his seat.

DUNST
You reek.

BELL
Figures. You come into my house and
immediately shit on my hospitality.

DUNST
If it helps, I'm shitting on him
too.

BELL

Are we done here? I'm going back to bed.

DUNST

Mind if we stay, Bell? I've got a few things to discuss with my partner.

BELL

You can't do it back at the station?

DUNST

I want you to join us when you wake up. I think we're close to cracking this.

Bell appears apprehensive. Ultimately, she shrugs.

BELL

Okay. Just wake me up if you change your mind, I guess.

She leaves, closing the door behind her.

Dunst turns to Elton, a grave look on his face.

ELTON

I need a minute.

59

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - DARK ROOM - NIGHT

59

Elton enters to find Dunst pacing back and forth.

As soon as Dunst registers Elton's presence, he slams the door shut.

He then corners Elton.

ELTON

What's gotten into you?

DUNST

I don't trust her.

ELTON

Yeah. I know. You're being really obvious about it.

DUNST

I mean it. She's hiding something.

ELTON

What makes you say that?

DUNST

(indicates outward)

Look around you. She's been keeping up with us this whole time.

ELTON

So, that just means she's overzealous.

DUNST

But why? Especially when we're not any closer to catching the killer?

ELTON

(shrugs)

Okay. I'll bite. Why?

Dunst snatches an article off the wall and smacks it against Elton's gut. Its photo is the same Yearbook photo that John saw in the safe.

DUNST

There's a personal connection we missed.

Elton reads the article.

ELTON

(reading)

"Complainant in Chase civil case found dead. Police rule it a suicide... rule out foul play..."

(to Dunst)

So?

DUNST

Look at the name.

ELTON

"Annaleigh... Bell."

Elton looks up at Dunst, alarmed.

DUNST

The whole fucking time, and we didn't even notice!

ELTON

Wait. Do you hear that?

As they pause, they realize that a LANDLINE has been ringing the entire time.

They turn to each other. Do they answer it?

There's an awkward pause.

60 **INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

60

Elton snatches the phone's receiver off its cradle and holds it for the two of them to hear.

ELTON

Hello?

At first, there's no response. Then...

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

(through phone)

It's Midnight, detectives. Do you know where your suspect is?

61 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - HANNAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

61

John slides the door open carefully, expecting traps on the other side.

There don't appear to be any, so he steps inside.

JOHN

Hannah...

He's about to start looking when-

THUMP! From inside the closet!

John pulls the doors open to reveal the box from the opening. At first, there's nothing.

Then, *THUMP!*

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hannah!

He flips the latches open, but Hannah doesn't emerge from the box. Instead, leaping upward and gasping for air like a twisted jack-in-the-box is the mangled and mutilated Darren Wharton.

When his mouth opens, we see that he only has a partial tongue, a lump of scar tissue and air taking up half the space. We can hear the jingling of chains and a shackle coming from the box, keeping him in place.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Gah! Fuck!

Darren grabs his shoulders.

DARREN

Where is he?! Is he coming?

JOHN

Who are you?

DARREN

Darren. My name's Darren. Please, get me out of here before-

JOHN

Darren Wharton?

DARREN

Yes. Please! You have to get me out. I'm chained to this thing!

John steps back.

DARREN (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing? Help me!

JOHN

You were in Michael's folder. You were in on the whole thing.

DARREN

I didn't do anything, man! I didn't touch any of them!

JOHN

You covered for him!

DARREN

I had to! Michael was gonna bury us if we talked! But that's all I did! I swear!

JOHN

Looks like you still ended up buried.

DARREN

Hey, I didn't fucking deserve this!
Okay? You didn't see what that
monster did to my wife! Nailed her
to a wall and burned her to a
fucking crisp-

JOHN

Why is he doing this? Why are you
still alive?

DARREN

I don't know why he's doing this.
As for me...

JOHN

What?

DARREN

... I'm the bait.

Footsteps. Oh fuck.

John violently shoves Darren back into the box, neglecting to
flip the latches.

He slams the closet doors shut.

62

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

62

Victoria spots the Midnight Man as he passes the doorway. She
steels herself, unable to believe what she's about to do.

She screams.

There's a pause. Maybe it didn't work.

Then, the Midnight Man steps into the room, moving the
fishing line aside with his arm, like he's shuffling past a
beaded curtain.

Victoria looks up at him, terrified.

63

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

63

John stumbles past the doorway as Victoria screams, peering
around the corner.

The Midnight Man holds a pair of PRUNERS and PLIERS in each
hand. The pliers are holding Victoria's tongue, which is now
sandwiched between the pruner's blades.

One move, and her tongue will be separated from her body. For now, though, there's no blood. This is just a warning.

The Midnight Man shushes. But Victoria is preoccupied with the doorway, where she glares at John, as if to say 'Quit stalling and find my fucking daughter.'

John peels away, moving further into the house.

64

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - DARK ROOM - NIGHT

64

Dunst continues his presentation to Elton, plucking pieces of evidence off the wall and thrusting them forward.

DUNST

What do we know about Michael Chase? He was accused of running a posse with his rich pervert friends that groomed girls from the local high school.

ELTON

But he was acquitted.

DUNST

Then, he was sued by one of his alleged victims - Annaleigh Bell.

ELTON

But that also fell through-

DUNST

Because she killed herself.

ELTON

Sad.

DUNST

Exactly. Think about what that would do to her sister. If Bell has made one thing clear, it's that she's big on justice.

ELTON

It would explain some things.

DUNST

She would have wanted to go after Chase and all his rich friends, right?

ELTON

What about the families in other neighborhoods? They weren't involved.

DUNST

But it establishes a motive for the Midnight Man that distracts from her. If it's not targeted, and he's just a vigilante-

ELTON

Wait a minute, are you saying that you think Bell is the Midnight Man?

65 **INT. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 65

A BOWIE KNIFE punches through Dunst's stomach, stabbed by the Midnight Man.

As the dark figure escapes through the back, Elton kicks down the front door.

ELTON

Dunst?!

66 **INT. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 66

The Midnight Man retreats near the back entrance, ripping off their mask to reveal Bell.

DUNST (O.S.)

How did she keep beating us to every crime scene?

ELTON (O.S.)

Because she was the one committing the crimes.

67 **EXT. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 67

Elton steps back from Dunst, letting him stand.

DUNST

We can't let him get away.

Before Elton can respond, a CLICK and a CAMERA FLASH blasts Dunst.

It's Bell, having changed her clothes, now in full reporter mode.

68

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - DARK ROOM - NIGHT

68

Dunst continues his rant as Elton has sat back down.

DUNST

Why is she so fixated on working with us?

ELTON

She wants to know how close we are to the truth?

DUNST

Exactly!

ELTON

So, what about Michael Chase? If she was going to have her revenge on him, why warn us first?

Dunst slams the table in frustration.

DUNST

Because she knew my stubborn fucking ass wouldn't send anyone in until we had enough evidence.

Elton leans back on his chair, impressed.

ELTON

So, if you're right-

DUNST

If I'm right, she played us! She's playing us right now!

69

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - CLOSET - NIGHT

69

The box remains inside the closet where it was left. All is quiet and still.

Then, movement. We hear Darren grunt. The box shifts. More grunts. More shifting, back and forth.

CRACK!

Darren screams in agony.

Suddenly, he shoves the lid open, leaning against the edge. The box tips over and he lands with a painful thud...

70 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - HANNAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS** 70

... where he winces and gags, trying not to scream again, now that he's back in the open. One of his legs is badly broken, practically inverted at the ankle, a broken bone jutting out.

Fighting the tears, he drags himself away.

71 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MADS' ROOM - NIGHT** 71

John slides the door open, crouched on one knee.

He leans over and pulls out a WIRE CUTTER from his tool satchel.

He then uses it to snip one end of the wire. Before it can slither into the room and unleash a horrible trap, he holds it in place.

JOHN

Gotcha.

He then slowly and deliberately lets the wire go, bit by bit. With each successive time he lets go, we see a weapon swing down from Mads' room into her doorway.

It's a cross between a SLEDGEHAMMER and a BAT WITH NAILS, and it was meant for someone unsuspecting to walk headfirst into.

It's exactly what you'd expect from a rebellious eighteen year old -- provocative, messy, full of secrets.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hannah?

Nothing. He approaches the window. It's not boarded. The bars he installed have done the Midnight Man's work for him.

Or have they? The closer John gets, the more he notices somethign that the Midnight Man did not.

The points where the bars meet the wall have been filed down.

72 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 72

Mads leans against the tree, smoking as she holds the nail file. Now we know what it was for.

73 INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MADS' ROOM - NIGHT

73

John grips the bars. With a push, they tilt upward, creating a gap that a teenage girl could fit through.

Below the gap in the windows is a THICK TREE BRANCH that can no doubt support a person's weight.

John's eyes widen. Has a chance for escape presented itself?

74 INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

Victoria is exhausted, practically unconscious. Her head hangs, her eyes dulled.

Then, she stiffens as the light returns to her eyes. She's about to scream when John cups a hand over her mouth.

JOHN

Sorry!

One of the fishing lines is snagged on his wrist. He shakes it free, continuing to pick the lock to one of her shackles.

It comes away with a *CLICK*, falling to the bed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Great. One to go.

He gets to work on the other shackle.

VICTORIA

Did you find her? Did you find Hannah?

JOHN

I don't think she's in the house.

VICTORIA

What?!

She goes to move, as if she's forgotten the situation she's currently in.

JOHN

Stop! Listen to me! I think I know how she got out!

VICTORIA

What are you talking about?

JOHN

Thank Mads.

VICTORIA
What? Mads isn't even here!

JOHN
Exactly. She snuck out, right?

VICTORIA
Yeah, but I have no idea how.

JOHN
Trust me. She's smarter than you
give her credit for.

CLICK! The second shackle drops to the bed. Victoria slumps over, her numb arms flopping forward. John moves around her, removing the fish hooks from her skin.

Lines of blood ooze from the wounds, but Victoria is unfazed as she turns to John.

VICTORIA
John...

JOHN
Yes?

VICTORIA
... thank you.

That hits him. He softens a little, exhaling deeply.

Then Victoria turns and screams.

John follows her sight.

The Midnight Man is standing in the doorway, looking right at them! He steps toward them, tearing out the fishing line from the ceiling and tossing it aside.

JOHN
Victoria... don't-

Too late. Victoria panics, launching herself from the bed and bolting through the door. The Midnight Man watches her leave.

When the Midnight Man turns back, John points the late Michael's gun at him.

CLICK. The safety's on! Of course it would be. Michael was a piece of shit, but he was also a responsible gun owner.

78

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

78

Mads steps inside, followed by CHAD (19) who is exactly what you'd expect from a high school boyfriend with that name -- jock, letterman jacket, gelled hair.

CHAD

Can't see fucking shit in here.

MADS

Lights aren't working. Figures.
First night we have alone together
and there's a blackout.

CHAD

We've been alone together before-

MADS

I mean in a house, not your
brother's garage.

CHAD

Yeah, well, so far I'm unimpressed.

MADS

Don't worry. We'll make it smell
like weed and piss in case you get
home sick.

CHAD

Har har.

Mads takes a couple of steps.

MADS

Kitchen's this way.

Before she can leave, Chad grabs her by the waist.

CHAD

Lemme hold on so I don't get lost
in the dark.

They chuckle as Maddie leads him away.

79

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

79

Mads is bent over, searching the fridge as Chad grinds and gropes against her like the horny bastard that he is.

MADS

Do you want me to grab you a beer
or not?

CHAD
You're a woman, can't you
multitask?

Mads straightens up, BEER BOTTLES in each hand.

MADS
It worries me that we're about to
kill more of your brain cells.

CHAD
What's the matter? Afraid I'll get
more savage?

He playfully plants a kiss on her lips. She reciprocates, and it's not long before they're making out.

As they move to the nearby bench, they don't realize that their feet are grazing up against a TRIP WIRE that lies on the floor.

He picks her up, planting her on the bench in front of him.

CHAD (CONT'D)
(sighs)
This fucking sucks. I can barely
see you.

MADS
Use your imagination. You know what
I look like.

PSSSH! Mads opens one of the beers and takes a long swig as Chad leans in, kissing her neck and running his hands up her shirt.

CHAD
I think my eyes are starting to
adjust.

He works his way down her body, kissing her as he goes.

80 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 80

John carefully makes his way across, trying not to make any sounds or spring any traps.

He stubs his toe against part of the furniture.

81 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT** 81

Chad hears the noise. It pulls his attention away from Mads.

CHAD
Did you hear that?

MADS
Hear what?

CHAD
(beat)
Are you sure your family's not
here?

She plants a hand on his head.

MADS
Don't be such a fucking pussy.

With that, she pushes his head down, only to flinch and retreat.

MADS (CONT'D)
What the fuck?!

Chad turns and jumps to his feet. The Midnight Man is watching the two of them.

CHAD
I thought you said noone was here!

MADS
I don't know who the fuck that is!

BLAM! John leaps up from behind the Midnight Man, shooting him in the back with his gun.

The Midnight Man goes down.

CHAD
(raises hands)
Holy shit! Don't shoot!

John stuffs the gun back into his satchel.

JOHN
Maddie, I need you to stay calm!

MADS
John?

CHAD
Who the fuck is John?

MADS

John Kramer! He's been working on the house. What are you doing here? Where's Dad?

JOHN

I'm here to help, but you need to listen to me!

CHAD

This is fucking weird, man. I'm outta here.

Chad steps back, snapping the tripwire. There's a *CLICK* above his head.

He looks up.

SNAP! A big ass BEAR TRAP descends from the ceiling, suspended by a bungee chord. Its powerful metal jaws clamp over his head and slam shut.

His legs go limp, and he hangs in place. His blood splatters all over Mads, who erupts into hysterics as John rushes toward her.

MADS

What the fuck is this? What the fuck is going on? Who the fuck was that guy?

JOHN

I don't know, Mads! I don't know!

MADS

What do you mean you don't know? Why are you even here?

JOHN

I can't answer any of your fucking questions until you calm down!

The words manage to get through to Mads, and she reduces her screams to hyperventilation.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I was here to talk to your Dad when I stumbled on all of this, just like you did.

He points to the unconscious Midnight Man.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I don't know who this guy is,
but I think he might be after your
father.

MADS

Dad? Why?

John takes a deep breath, trying to carefully choose his
words.

JOHN

Your Dad's a bad man, Mads. He did
some awful things to some girls at
your school, and I think he's maybe
being punished for it.

Mads cautiously eyes John up and down.

MADS

What're you talking about?

JOHN

Look, it's too much to explain now,
but your Dad has a safe in the
basement. There are files in that
safe -- evidence of his horrible
crimes. Hell, it probably
implicates half the men in this
neighborhood.

These words strike a chord with Mads, who starts looking
around the kitchen. Her eyes settle on a PAIR OF SCISSORS
that rests on the bench, practically calling out to her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

A lot of bad people are going away
for a really long time once all
this is over.

John turns away from Mads, ready to leave.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Anyone who helped him with his sick
little-

Mads lunges for the scissors, pulling them up, not noticing
the wire attached to them. as she does so, a STEEL WIRE NOOSE
tightens around her neck.

Her eyes bulge as she tries to grab the thin wire digging
into her neck. As she coughs and splutters, John turns around
and sees her in peril.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hold on!

He rushes to her aid, plucking the pair of pliers from his satchel.

But, she pulls too hard on the noose, lifting a nearby COUNTER WEIGHT from its perch. It sails to the floor, cracking the kitchen tiles on impact.

Mads is pulled upwards, the steel wires cutting into her neck.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Mads!

Her rapid ascent comes to a stop, leaving her body to seize in place as the life is choked from her.

John can only stare in shock at the gushing bodies in front of him.

Then, he spots something out of the corner of his eye.

The Midnight Man has disappeared!

Fuck.

82

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

82

Dunst kicks the door down to reveal a tiny, crappy little bedroom. He and Elton pour inside, their guns raised.

The window has been pulled open, the curtains fluttering with the light breeze. A RADIO SCANNER crackles nearby.

DUNST

Shit!

He rushes toward the window, placing one foot outside where it rests on a FIRE ESCAPE -- the one Bell just used.

He can only watch as Bell, on the other side of the street, raises an arm.

BELL

Taxi!

A YELLOW CAB screeches to a halt and Bell wastes no time diving inside.

The car speeds off into the night, leaving a dumbfounded Dunst. He pulls himself back inside.

DUNST

We need to call it in! Let everyone know the license plate of that goddamn cab!

ELTON

Why go to all that trouble?

DUNST

She's getting away!

ELTON

Dunst, think about it.
(points to radio scanner)
You know exactly where she's going.

DUNST

What are you talking ab...

His voice trails. He knows.

DUNST (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

ELTON

Get in the car!

Dunst slams the window shut.

83

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MADS' ROOM - NIGHT

83

John slides the window up, leaning out and gripping the bars.

He pushes them out, creating a gap that, in theory, should be wide enough for him to climb out... emphasis on 'in theory.'

As he goes to climb out, we hear screaming. It's Darren. His cries suggest horrific torture.

John's expression is pained with conflict. He wants to jump in. He wants to help!

But, he ultimately wants to make it out of here alive.

He dips a leg out of the window, but he's hesitant. This small gap is clearly meant for a teenage girl, not a grown man.

Darren's screams slowly come to a close. It's time to act.

John pushes himself through the gap in the bars. It's slow and painful, as the jagged edges of the filed down bars cut against his clothing and dig into his skin, but John forces himself through.

The strap of his tool satchel is torn apart. It falls into the bushes below, disappearing from sight. John doesn't notice. He's too busy focusing on his escape.

His feet touch the branch. He then lowers himself and stretches his arms out, bracing himself against the sturdy tree.

John takes a deep breath. He's done it. He's free.

He carefully climbs down the tree. Can't mess up now.

JILL (O.S.)
I'm sorry, John.

84

INT. TUCK'S OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

84

Jill sits in her chair, looking up with weary eyes.

JILL
It doesn't work like that.

John stands on the other side of the room.

JOHN
It works however we want it to,
Jill. We can *make* it work.

JILL
What do you want me to do, John?
Sneak around like we're in high
school?

JOHN
Surely it can't be that bad.

JILL
What if I don't want to risk it?
Look, John, I've...

She lowers her voice. This isn't the type of thing you want others to hear.

JILL (CONT'D)
... I've already crossed
professional boundaries, okay? I
didn't mean to, but there are
things I've said to you-

JOHN

Like what? That I'm not crazy?
That, perhaps, there is something
between us that maybe wouldn't be
the worst thing ever to explore?

JILL

If word got out, it would cost me
my job-

JOHN

A job you don't even like-

JILL

I never said that.

JOHN

You said it held you back.

JILL

(shakes head)

No, John. You don't get to do this.
You don't get to treat my life like
some kind of device that you can
just tinker with until it works the
way you want.

JOHN

I'm just trying to figure out why
we can't have what we clearly want.

JILL

John, there are rules-

JOHN

Oh, *fuck* the rules!

Jill flinches, stunned. After a beat, John slumps down,
exasperatedly burying his head in his hands.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Jill. I...

He can't find the words.

JILL

(beat)

I should be the one apologizing. I
have been extremely unprofessional
with you, and it was wrong of me to
entertain any of this.

She takes the open notebook in her lap and closes it.

JILL (CONT'D)
I don't think I can be your
psychiatrist anymore.

JOHN
Jill, please.

JILL
I'll refund today's session, and
I'll send you a list of my
colleagues that you can contact.

JOHN
This isn't necessary.

JILL
Yes it is. I'm clearly not fit for
this role.

JOHN
(beat)
So, is that it? We just go our
separate ways and return to normal?

JILL
That would be for the best.

John gets up and heads for the exit.

But, before he leaves, he turns around.

JOHN
Here's hoping we can just go back
to normal.

Jill watches him leave with a tinge of regret.

85

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

85

John reaches the bottom of the tree, his feet touching the
soft, freshly mowed grass.

He leans against the tree, catching his breath, feeling lucky
to even be alive.

After a beat, he pushes himself away. He's about to leave and
never look back when-

HANNAH (O.S.)
Mr. John!

He freezes.

JOHN

Hannah?

Sure enough, in one of the slits in the nearby windows is a red, peeping, tear-filled eye. It's Hannah.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh god. Hannah!

She sniffles and whimpers.

HANNAH (O.S.)

Mommy and daddy... they're all dead!

JOHN

I... I'm sorry, Hannah! I did what I could!

HANNAH (O.S.)

Please help me before the bad man comes back.

JOHN

Of course! I'll be back as soon as I can, and I'll have help. Everything is going to be okay-

Her eye whips out of view. She shrieks.

HANNAH (O.S.)

He's coming!

JOHN

Hannah!

She runs away.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll get help, I promise!

John steps away, taking a couple of steps.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

I'll... I'll get help!

But he stops, looking up at the window he just climbed out of. There's no way he's thinking of going back in there! It would be much smarter to go and get help.

John winces. He knows that's bullshit. There's only one way to get to Hannah in time to save her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Shit!

Meanwhile, another eye enters the slit, staring out into the garden. It's the Midnight Man.

But, he only sees an empty backyard.

John is climbing the tree. With his injuries, to say it's difficult would be an understatement.

But, he doesn't stop. With gritted teeth, he continues the climb.

86 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

86

The Midnight Man breaks away from the makeshift peephole, rising to his feet.

He proceeds to stalk Hannah through the room, passing the mutilated corpses of her parents.

Eventually, he reaches...

87 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS**

87

... where he spots the front door.

He grabs the doorknob, giving it a sharp pull. Still locked. Hannah is clearly still inside the house.

After a beat, he turns to the stairs and starts making his way up them; step-by-step, taking his time.

We follow him for every step, until he reaches...

88 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

88

... where he continues his prowling, passing the open doors. He doesn't give them a second glance.

One door has his attention. It's the one to Hannah's room, and it's the only one that's closed.

He pauses as he reaches it, firmly gripping the doorknob. He slowly twists it.

The door won't budge. He takes a step back.

On the other side of the door, a SKIPPING ROPE has been tied around the handle. The other end is tied to one of the legs of Hannah's bed, keeping it taut and preventing the door from being opened.

The terrified Hannah wraps her arms around John as he holds her close.

JOHN
Hannah, I can get us out of here.

HANNAH
You can?

JOHN
Uh-huh.

He crouches, getting eye level with her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Mads left us a way out-

HANNAH
Maddie's here?

JOHN
(gulps)
No.

HANNAH
Is she okay? Please be okay.

John can sense it. Hannah's about to start crying again.

JOHN
I'm sure she's okay.

Gross. Still, too late to stop now.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(gulps)
Maybe, once we get out, we can
catch up with her! We just gotta
get out of here first!

The kind of smile that would melt a person's heart forms on Hannah's face, like this is the first time all night that she has felt any kind of joy.

Inversely, John looks like he's about to throw up as he gets to his feet.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come on.

He leads Hannah to the door.

WHAM! They jump back.

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! A large weight is being thrown at the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Shit!

HANNAH

Don't let the bad man get in!

JOHN

Right.

John frantically scans the room. What kind of weapon would be in a little girl's room?!

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

He turns to the skipping rope. It's barely holding. He needs to do something, and quick.

His gaze stops on a LAMP -- cutesy, pink, and most importantly, switched on. It's plugged into a lengthy extension cord.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Of course!

(to Hannah)

Hannah, do you remember our tea party this morning?

HANNAH

(between sobs)

Y-Yes!

JOHN

How much tea did you... did *Mr. Pig* make?

HANNAH

(sniffles)

Lots.

JOHN

Is there any left?

Hannah nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I could really use some, right now!
I need you to bring it all here!

She rushes away, returning with the kettle. He holds it in his hand, sloshing the contents, feeling the weight. It'll have to do, but he looks uncertain as he hands it back to Hannah.

JOHN (CONT'D)

When the bad man comes in here, I want you to throw all of this tea on him, and then get back to me as quick as you can. Got it?

HANNAH

Yeah.

JOHN

Okay.

He shuffles to the lamp, picking it up off its pedestal and unscrewing the lampshade.

HANNAH

But what'll that do? It's not even hot anymore!

John tosses the lampshade aside, staring at the lit bulb.

JOHN

Don't worry. It's gonna hurt.

He SLAMS the bulb against a nearby DRESSER, the glass shattering as it exposes the filament inside.

HANNAH

Mr. John?

JOHN

Yes?

He looks down at her, meeting her gaze as she looks up at him through puffy red eyes.

HANNAH

Thank you for coming in and helping me.

John lingers on those words for a beat, then gives her a smile.

JOHN
You're welcome. We're gonna make
it, okay?

WHAM!

They get into position. Hannah opens the kettle, holding it
at the ready.

WHAM!

John braces himself. Please let this work.

WHAM!

The knot tying the skipping rope slowly comes loose. It's not
going to hold anymore.

WHAM!

The door flies open. A large mass bursts in.

Hannah flings the kettle, splashing the figure with water.

As she skitters away, John launches himself at the figure,
brandishing the lamp like it's a red hot poker.

He prods it at the figure, aiming so the filaments touch the
figure's damp clothing.

BZZT! Sparks fly from the outlet and the lamp as the figure
is electrocuted on contact. The room is plunged into darkness
as he collapses onto the floor.

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hannah? Are you okay?

HANNAH (O.S.)
I can't see anything!

JOHN
Stay back! I'll make sure we got
him.

John crouches down beside the figure, reaching for the mask
on his head.

Wait... that's not a mask... it's a BLACK BAG.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No...

John yanks it off, revealing Darren. His eyelids and lips
have been sewn shut.

JOHN (CONT'D)

No!

He leans back with the vacant eyes of somebody processing their first kill, especially that of a (relatively) innocent person.

He seems lost to this fugue state, until...

HANNAH

Mr. John?

John snaps out of it, turning to Hannah.

JOHN

We need to move. Now!

But Hannah's eyes are fixed on the door. She screams.

John turns, wincing as he knows exactly what's coming.

Sure enough, there's the Midnight Man in the doorway, brandishing his signature bowie knife.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hannah...

The Midnight Man steps forward, knife raised.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Mads' room! Window! Run!

Hannah bolts for the door. Before the Midnight Man can stop her, John launches himself at him.

The two scuffle. The Man manages to slice at John's torso, adding to his list of injuries.

But, John doesn't give up. He refuses to let the Midnight Man go, even for a second. Hannah is going to make it. She is going to be safe.

90 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT** 90

Hannah sobs and stumbles as she flops into the hallway. We follow her as she dashes into...

91 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MADS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 91

... where she throws herself at the window, her hands on the broken bars.

Darren rises from the floor, not so dead after all! But, he clearly wishes he was, as his lips bulge with the scream that's trying to escape from his closed mouth.

He's trying to undo the stitches, blood trickling from between the knots lining his eyelids and lips.

Like a chicken with its head cut off, Darren scuttles out of the room. The distracted Midnight Man watches him leave.

John takes the opportunity to shove the Midnight Man to the floor and get to his feet.

He rushes over to Hannah.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay. Now we run!

He leads her out into the...

95

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

95

... where they turn to the direction of Mads' bedroom. They're about to run when-

BLAM! It sounds like Darren just took both barrels to the head.

A beat.

The Midnight Man lunges from the doorway, knife raised at the pair.

They duck just in time, and the knife slams into the wall in front of them.

As the Midnight Man tries to pull the blade free, John leads Hannah away.

They reach the staircase, but John stops them. He has an idea.

He reaches to a nearby CUPBOARD, opening it to reveal a small SQUARE SHAPED DOOR. It's the entrance to the LAUNDRY CHUTE.

He opens it. Too small for him, but perfect for Hannah.

JOHN
Hannah, here's what I want you to do...

Meanwhile, the Midnight Man finally gives a sharp yank, pulling the knife free from the wall.

Hannah, who has climbed into the chute's entrance, looks up at John.

He gives her a reassuring nod as he closes the door.

As soon as the door closes shut, John stands tall, not noticing that the Midnight Man is right next to him...

... that is, until the Man grabs the back of his head and slams it into the adjacent wall.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

96 **ON BLACK.** 96

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Breathing.

97 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 97

SPLASH! A bucket of cold water brings a coughing and spluttering John back to consciousness. His nose is swollen and broken.

He's hanging upside down. His wrists are tied. The Midnight Man looms over him.

JOHN

You're not going to tell me why
you're doing this, aren't you?

The Man responds by raising his fist, which is sporting gnarly makeshift KNUCKLE DUSTERS.

He sends a powerful punch to John's gut, like he's a boxer working on the bag.

John sways back and forth, struggling for breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Is it the Michael thing? Because,
if it is, I get it. He deserved
everything he got. He was one
twisted fuck.

Another punch.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Did he... did he hurt someone close
to you?... A daughter? A niece?

Another punch. John groans.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I get it... I really do... But his
wife? Hannah? They're innocent-

No more punches. Instead, the Man launches a kick with one of his thick, steel-toed combat boots. All of the wind is knocked out of John's lungs.

John hacks and coughs, but he doesn't stop talking. He chokes out the rest of his words.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Fine... Don't tell me...
(coughs)
It doesn't matter... you're never
getting Hannah... she's safe...
she's... safe...

The Midnight Man pauses at that, tilting his head.

After a beat, he explodes out of the room.

98 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LAUNDRY - NIGHT**

98

The Midnight Man bursts into the confined room, bounding over to one of the small CUPBOARDS.

He yanks the door open, revealing the inside of the LAUNDRY CHUTE. The bottom is covered in jutting nails, all pointing up, waiting for any unsuspecting people.

People like Hannah.

But she's nowhere to be found.

99 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT**
(FLASHBACK)

99

The Midnight Man slams John's head against the wall, knocking him out.

He then picks up John's unconscious body and carries it away, moving down the stairs.

After a beat of silence, the door to the laundry chute swings open, and Hannah climbs out.

100 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - MADS' ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 100

Darren's dead body leans against the wall, skull fragments and brain matter leaking out from the stump of his eviscerated neck. A wisp of gun smoke stretches out to the ceiling.

Hannah, resisting every urge to cry, scream, and puke, slowly maneuvers herself around the deceased Darren, unable to avert her eyes from the mass of pulp and teeth that used to be his head.

She reaches the windows, pushing the bars open and climbing through.

101 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 101

Hannah makes her way down the tree.

She eventually reaches the ground, running away.

102 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LAUNDRY - NIGHT** 102

The realization hits The Midnight Man. He has been outsmarted.

Enraged, he slams a foot into the wall, shattering the tiles.

103 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 103

John listens to the Midnight Man's furious outbursts.

He slowly allows himself a satisfied grin.

104 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - DAWN** 104

Dunst and Elton's CAR screeches to a halt. The duo step out.

DUNST

Fuck me.

The house is completely bathed in a raging fire.

ELTON

We have to find Bell.

DUNST

She can't have gone far. You stay out the front. I'll check the back.

Elton nods, and Dunst rushes off.

Now alone, he stares up at the burning building.

105

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAWN

105

Dunst rounds the corner, where he finds Bell by the tree. In one hand, she holds John's tool satchel. In the other, she holds Michael's gun.

Dunst points his gun at her.

DUNST

Bell!

She looks up at him, sullen.

BELL

He's gone.

DUNST

You're under arrest!

BELL

He got away!

There's a small burst from above, and all chaos breaks loose. Debris and sparks land on Bell and Dunst. They are thrown to the ground.

It's too hard to tell who shoots first, but guns are discharged from both sides.

106

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAWN

106

Elton tears around the back to find Bell and Dunst lying supine, bullet holes in their bodies.

Dunst weakly turns to Elton.

DUNST

Elton?

ELTON

(holsters his weapon)

Shit!

107

EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - DAWN

107

Elton helps Dunst limp around the side of the house and onto the front lawn.

ELTON
Can you stand?

DUNST
Yeah... I think...

Elton steps back, letting Dunst stand.

DUNST (CONT'D)
We didn't... we didn't let them get
away...

Before Elton can respond, SIRENS blare in the distance. The
cavalry has arrived far too late.

108 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAWN** 108

Bell lies on the ground, glazed by the morning dew. Her skin
is pallid, as the blood has all but drained from her. Her
eyes are wide open, showing their lifelessness.

A line of blood trickles from a BULLET HOLE in her forehead.

109 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - DAWN** 109

The street is abuzz as NEIGHBORS gather and gossip. FIRE
TRUCKS put out the massive fire that has engulfed the
building.

Dunst is loaded into an ambulance. Elton briefs the officers
on the scene.

110 **INT. SHITHOLE APARTMENT - DAY** 110

A small TELEVISION plays a flashy 80s NEWS BROADCAST.

NEWSREADER
Citizens can breathe easy, now that
the police have made an official
statement closing the Midnight Man
case. The press conference came
this morning, after a confrontation
with the killer reached an
explosive end.

The footage cuts to a PRESS CONFERENCE where Elton is
addressing the crowd of snapping camera shutters and murmurs.

ELTON

My partner and I apprehended Shawnee Bell once we deduced that she was the serial killer known as the Midnight Man. When the suspect turned hostile at the prospect of finally facing judgment for her crimes, we were forced to defend ourselves.

(beat)

While we lament the unimaginable tragedy of these events, we are confident that this marks the end of the case of the Midnight Man.

Back to the studio. Behind the newsreader are photos of Bell and Michael.

NEWSREADER

Powerful words. If you've heard the name Shawnee Bell before, it was because she was a journalist who made waves when she and her sister, Annaleigh Bell accused millionaire consultant Michael Chase of sex crimes. At the time, the accusations were seemingly unfounded, but a recent break in the case has-

CLICK! The footage pauses.

Then, after a beat, it rewinds back to Elton's press conference.

ELTON

... this marks the end of the case of the Midnight Man-

CLICK! Rewind. Play.

ELTON (CONT'D)

... the Midnight Man-

CLICK! Rewind. Play.

ELTON (CONT'D)

... the Midnight Man-

CLICK! Another button is pressed. A tape whirs to life.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

It's Midnight, Mr. Chase. Do you know where your family is?

CLICK! With a mechanical cry, a VHS tape ejects from a VCR underneath the TV.

CUT TO BLACK.

111 **ON BLACK.** 111

A RIP CORD is pulled. The gears sputter, but they don't activate just yet.

A couple more pulls though, and the mechanism roars to life.

Lights flicker, until they brighten to reveal...

112 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 112

... an unconscious Elton strapped to a chair. The basement is still standing, but the furniture has been removed. The walls are blackened and warped from the fire.

The light is from a PROJECTOR plugged into a GENERATOR. Home movies, family photos, crime scenes, news stories -- all of them play on the wall, the images distorted by its uneven surface.

Elton stirs, slowly waking up. Next to him is the box that previously held Darren. It's lid hangs open.

ELTON

... the fuck is that smell?

He looks around, trying to find a landmark in the featureless room.

JOHN (O.S.)

What's the problem, Mark? Not sure where you are? Don't worry. You've been here before...

John steps out from the darkness, his wounds having been tended to. A BACKPACK dangles from his fist.

Elton pulls at his bindings like a rabid animal.

ELTON

John? John Kramer? Have you lost your fucking mind? Get me out of here, you psycho!

JOHN

I'm glad we're on the same page,
now. It's not fun to be tied up
down here.

John moves closer to Elton, practically whispering in his ear.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But I can't let you go. We have so
much to talk about.

John steps away, pacing around his captive.

ELTON

I have nothing to say to you. At
least, not until I get out of this
damn chair.

JOHN

You will, detective. All in good
time.

GASP! Dunst bursts from the box, taking in lungfuls of air.
We can hear the jangle of the shackle around his ankle.

Elton's struggling stops.

ELTON

Fine. You wanna talk? Let's talk.
Where do you wanna start?

JOHN

Tell me, detective. What time is
it?

ELTON

What? How the fuck should I know?
You tied my fucking watch behind my
b-

Then it hits him.

ELTON (CONT'D)

It's midnight, isn't it?

JOHN

(smiles)
Now you're getting it.

Dunst continues his heavy breathing, but his eyes have
adjusted, and he stares at John and Elton in shock.

DUNST
What the fuck is happening? Elton?

ELTON
Our friend here suspects that I am
the Midnight Man.

Dunst glares at John, as if to say 'are you fucking serious?'

JOHN
I'm sure you have questions, as any
detective would.

He approaches Dunst, handing him a stack of PHOTOGRAPHS.
Dunst takes them and flips through them.

They are candid shots of Elton. He's being followed, and he's
acting suspicious. Maybe there's something here.

DUNST
(to John)
Go on.

JOHN
Here's what happened to me that
night.

113 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 113

John listens to the Midnight Man's furious outbursts. He
slowly allows himself a satisfied grin.

But then, he hears something else... the pouring of liquid.

114 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 114

The Midnight Man is pouring the contents of a GAS CANISTER
all over the room.

Then, he pulls out a ZIPPO LIGHTER and flicks it open,
tossing the open flame onto the floor.

The fire starts immediately. He's going to burn the place
down.

115 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 115

John knows what's happening, and he desperately struggles
against his bindings.

116 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 116

The Midnight Man steps away from the front door, locking it behind him. From outside, we see very little signs of the fire.

He then calmly walks over to his car and climbs into the driver's seat.

117 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM (FLASHBACK)** 117

John bursts from the basement entrance, carrying the duffel bag filled with money and evidence. His wrists are badly bleeding from his escape.

He stumbles over to the stairs, keeping his head down against the thick plumes of dark smoke.

118 **EXT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 118

John tosses the bag out of Mads' window. As soon as it hits the ground, he climbs out, lowering himself onto the tree.

119 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 119

John turns to Elton.

JOHN

Tell me, Detective Dunst, did you ever find it weird that Elton was working late on the Midnight Man case without consulting you?

Dunst's face says it all.

120 **INT. POLICE STATION - ENTRANCE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 120

It's quiet, save for the rain hitting the windows. Dunst is about to leave for the night.

A thump catches his attention. He turns, staring suspiciously into the dark.

DUNST

Hello?

121 **INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 121

Gun raised, Dunst makes his way down the corridor, listening out for the slightest sound.

They come from nearby, prompting him to keep moving.

122 **INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 122

Elton slams the window shut, furiously tearing off his Midnight Man garb to reveal his cop uniform underneath.

As soon as he turns on the TV and slumps onto the chair, Dunst enters from the other side of the room, taking cautious steps forward.

DUNST

Hey!

Elton stirs with a grumble.

123 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 123

Elton joins the conversation with a tilt of his head.

ELTON

And what about Bell? How do you know she wasn't the killer

JOHN

Her last words.

DUNST

(to himself)

'He's gone. He got away.'

ELTON

(scoffs)

You idiot. She was talking about you!

JOHN

How would she know where I was?

ELTON

Your tools! She found your tools in the backyard.

JOHN

If she were the Midnight Man, she'd have known I lost them before she caught me.

DUNST
She was talking about Michael.

Everyone turns to Dunst.

DUNST (CONT'D)
The fire. It would've destroyed him, as well as any evidence he had of his crimes.
(beat)
That's why she cared so much about the Midnight Man case. She wanted Michael to see true justice, not just death at the hands of a serial killer.

124 **INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 124

Dunst kicks the door down to reveal a tiny, crappy little bedroom. He and Elton pour inside, their guns raised.

As they leave the frame, we focus on the RADIO SCANNER as it crackles nearby.

DUNST (O.S.)
Shit!

125 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 125

Dunst turns to John.

DUNST
The radio scanner! She knew about the fire and was rushing to save the evidence.
(to Elton)
She was probably coming to tell us when she heard our conversation.

ELTON
(beat)
Are you fucking listening to yourself?

JOHN
If she only knew I'd saved the evidence when I escaped. She might have still been alive.

DUNST
But I killed her...

JOHN
(smiles)
I somehow doubt that.

He turns to Elton.

JOHN (CONT'D)
A fatal shot to the head, right?

ELTON
How do you know all this? How do we
know you're not just bullshitting
us?

JOHN
Simple, detective.

Time for Exhibit B. John pulls out a STACK OF RECORDS and
gives it to Dunst.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I did the reading.

DUNST
It's our statements!

ELTON
So you paid the record keeper for
confidential records? That's a
crime, John.

JOHN
Exactly. That's why I didn't pay
him. You did.

ELTON
(beat)
Excuse me?

JOHN
He appreciates the raise, even if
he doesn't know it came from you.

ELTON
The fuck are you talking about?

JOHN
What do you think I did after I
took all of those pictures of you?

126 **EXT. ELTON'S LAIR - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 126

Elton, dressed in unassuming civvies, closes the large sliding door to a STORAGE UNIT.

He then walks away, trying not to arouse suspicion.

Unfortunately for him, he doesn't notice John, CAMERA bobbing around his neck.

He creeps toward the door and crouches beside it, readying his tools.

127 **INT. ELTON'S LAIR - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 127

John slides the door upward, bringing a stream of daylight into the once dark room.

It's surprisingly spacious, and full of what you'd expect for the lair of a serial killer -- MANNEQUINS, SCRAP METAL, TRAPS, BLUEPRINTS, VICTIM PROFILES, MAPS, etc.

There's even a fully stocked WORKBENCH, as well as a ton of CONFISCATED MONEY AND VALUABLES.

He steps in, watching the shelves in wonder. This could all be very useful to him.

128 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT** 128

Elton gives a nervous and unhinged chuckle.

ELTON

So; you stalked me, you broke into my storage unit, you supposedly got all this dirt on me -- why go to all that trouble if you weren't gonna go to the cops?

JOHN

The same cops that let Michael Chase go free? That punished his victims? That killed two innocent sisters? They couldn't deal with you were you were right under their nose.

ELTON

So you're gonna kill me yourself? Get justice for all my poor victims? Is that what you want?

JOHN

No...

He reaches into the backpack and pulls out one last object. It's a METAL HEADBRACE with a pair of CAPTIVE BOLT PISTOLS welded to the front.

JOHN (CONT'D)

... I want to play a game.

CUE MUSIC. As the ICONIC HELLO ZEPPE THEME BEGINS TO PLAY...

129

INT. DINER - DAY

129

John sips a coffee, a FOLDER in front of him. Jill sits opposite him.

JILL

I'm sorry I was late.

JOHN

Alarm clock?

JILL

No. It's more complicated than that.

JOHN

Well, I appreciate you making the effort.

JILL

You saved that little girl, John. It was the least I could do.

JOHN

I did what anybody would've done in that situation.

JILL

I don't know if that's the case.

130

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

130

John slots the head brace onto Elton, the bolt guns placed over his eyes. He then locks it into place.

JOHN

The rules are simple. You've relied on your partner's incompetence to save you up to this point.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, you two will need to work together to earn your freedom.

ELTON

Fuck you! You think this scares me? The second I get out of your little girl scout knots, I'll kill you both with my bare fucking hands!

131

INT. DINER - DAY

131

John clears his throat. He's more afraid here than he is with the serial killer.

JOHN

I... uh... I just wanted to tell you how I've been since that night.

JILL

How have you been?

JOHN

Well, as you can probably guess, it's been a lot to process. But, I think I've been doing so in a healthy way.

JILL

What would that be?

JOHN

I've been keeping busy.

He pushes the folder toward her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm working on a little project.

132

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

132

Elton outstretches his arms, flexing his newly freed fingers.

ELTON

You're fucked now!

He leaps from his seat, only to pause at the sound of a wire snapping.

TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK-

JOHN

It's an interesting little device.
I built it from the scrap metal in
your workshop. I'd love to know
which of your victims owned cattle.

ELTON

Fuck you!

He desperately tries to swing at John, but he can't see.
Dunst watches this display, practically shell-shocked.

DUNST

So it's true.

ELTON

What?

DUNST

The whole time. You were the
Midnight Man. The whole time.

133

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - DARK ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

133

Elton snatches the phone's receiver off its cradle and holds
it for the two of them to hear.

ELTON

Hello?

At first, there's no response. Then...

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

(through phone)

It's Midnight, detectives...

134

INT. BELL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

134

A TAPE RECORDER rests next to a blocky 80s DYNATAC CELL
PHONE.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

(through tape recorder)

... do you know where your suspect
is?

135

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

135

Elton groans.

ELTON
Cry me a fucking river!

JOHN
Perhaps you should be a bit nicer
to the one person who can save you.

136 **INT. DINER - DAY**

136

The folder lies open in front of Jill. She reads the contents.

JILL
John, what the hell is this?

JOHN
A business proposition.

Her mouth opens. She wants to reply, but where to even begin?

137 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT**

137

Elton feels his way to the box where Dunst is standing.

ELTON
Listen, partner; tell me how to get
out of this and I'll let you take
me in personally. You can get all
the credit for catching the
Midnight Man.

DUNST
How the hell should I know?
Besides, they'd probably think I
was in on it and stick me in the
cell next to you.

ELTON
You're right. That would be a fate
worse than death.

138 **INT. DINER - DAY**

138

John fidgets as he tries to gauge her reaction.

JOHN
What do you think?

JILL
I mean, I love the idea, and it
looks like you've done your
homework.

We see the contents of the folder. It's the documentation for
a HEALTH CLINIC and SOCIAL HOUSING -- stuff like floorplans,
a land deed, legal paperwork, contracts, financial plans,
etc.

John has done the shit out of his homework.

JOHN (O.S.)
It's what we both want, and we can
do it together.

139 **INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT**

139

Elton brings his hands down on the box.

ELTON
Listen, you idiot; if you don't
help me, you're gonna die here too!
Is that what you want?

DUNST
You said you were gonna kill me!

ELTON
I am gonna kill you!

He wraps his hands around Dunst's throat and squeezes as hard
as he can.

140 **INT. DINER - DAY**

140

Jill closes the folder, hanging her head.

JILL
Sorry, John. This was a mistake.

JOHN
No, Jill. The mistake would be
walking out of that door and going
back to our ordinary, dead-end
lives.

She doesn't respond. John leans in.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Look, you were right. I need to be
assertive.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I need to tell the world what I
 want. That's what I did that night,
 and it's what I'll do from now on.

He sits back and takes a deep breath. No more nervousness.

141

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

141

John watches the two men bicker with a wry amusement.

JOHN
 You know, Detective Elton...

Elton stops strangling Dunst, turning to John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 ... you never really answered my
 question last time we were here.
 Why did you target those families?

ELTON
 You're so smart, you figure it out!

JOHN
 Well, was it because you wanted to
 punish them for their crimes? Or
 was it a little more broad? Did you
 see the way they were rotting in
 their diseased little simulacrum of
 a life?

ELTON
 John...

JOHN
 Because, I see it too. I look at
 men like Michael Chase, and I want
 to do something about them. I want
 them to understand the preciousness
 of the life they wasted, even if I
 have to beat it into them.

ELTON
 John!

142

INT. DINER - DAY

142

Jill looks at John, too curious not to hear him out.

JILL
 John?

JOHN

I want to wake up every morning knowing that my actions make the world a better place. I want to help build the shelter that will offer the vulnerable a chance to heal. I want to look back on my life, including moments like these and think 'that's what this is all about.'

He outstretches his hand, placing it face up on the table.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And, I want to do it with you. I want to realise our vision. I want us to create this thing together.

JILL

But John, we don't have any money.

JOHN

We have everything we need. I promise.

Jill winces. She wants to believe John so bad.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I just need you to trust me.

143

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

143

John folds his arms, ready for Elton's answer.

ELTON

You wanna know why I targeted those families? It's because it was easy! Rich people trust the cops. They just let them in. I got house tours, I learned their schedules -- I even fucked a few bored housewives while I was at it!

John's brow furrows. He feels nothing but boiling contempt for this man.

ELTON (CONT'D)

Besides, mansions are the best place for booby traps. There are so many places to set them up! Plus, the architecture's always more interesting. And they're always doing construction, so it's easier.

(MORE)

ELTON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Is that satisfying enough for you?
Are you finally gonna let me go?

JOHN

(beat)

I was afraid that would be your
answer. Can't believe I allowed
myself to think otherwise.

Before Elton can respond, Dunst lunges at him, pulling him
back into a chokehold.

144 **INT. DINER - DAY**

144

Jill rests her hand in John's.

JILL

God, John. I want this. I want this
so much. I just -- I'm scared.

JOHN

We'll face it together.

145 **INT. ELTON'S LAIR - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

145

John is cleaning out the evidence of the Midnight Man's
crimes.

He tears down all of the Midnight Man's papers, from the trap
blueprints to the maps to the victim information.

He takes the mannequins away.

He clears out the gnarly looking booby traps.

JOHN (O.S.)

I will dedicate my life to this,
and to you. That, I can promise
you.

146 **INT. DINER - DAY**

146

Jill mulls all of this over.

JOHN

We'll be responsible. We'll set
ground rules-

JILL

Oh, *fuck* the rules.

She leans forward, pulling John into a deep, passionate kiss.

147

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

147

Elton slams the back of his head into Dunst's face, crunching it with the metal of the head brace.

As Elton pulls away, Dunst cringes at his chipped teeth and torn lip.

Before he can react any further, Elton grabs him, headbutting him repeatedly with the weight of the heavy steel device.

ELTON

(WHACK!)

Get

(WHACK!)

me

(WHACK!)

the fuck

(WHACK!)

outta here!

He pulls away from Dunst, who is now sobbing at his mangled face. His nose is swollen and bent. Broken shards of cheekbone are poking through his skin. His jaw is dislocated.

Elton roars, ready to put his former partner down.

Suddenly, the ticking stops.

CRUNCH! In an instant motion, the bolt guns punch through his eye sockets.

He immediately falls onto the floor; a mix of blood, vitreous fluid and specks of brain matter oozing from his face.

Dunst whimpers at the sight of his dead partner, sinking into a seated position inside the box.

148

INT. DINER - DAY

148

A HEFTY CASH TIP has been left on the table.

In the background, John and Jill make their way to the entrance, holding hands as they excitedly begin the next chapter of their lives.

149

INT. CHASE RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

149

But another chapter is about to end. With Elton dead, John moves over to Dunst, who gazes back with pleading eyes.

JOHN

The key to your shackle is in his pocket. The key to his device was in yours.

Desperate, Dunst wails. He can't articulate words through his fucked up mouth, so it's just a pathetic whine.

It's not enough for John, who unsympathetically grasps the box's lid.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Game over.

He brings the lid down, trapping Dunst inside.

150

INT. ELTON'S LAIR - DAY

150

John stares at the results of his handiwork. You would never suspect that this was once the lair of a serial killer. It looks like a well-stocked workshed, ready to serve John's vision.

He brings the sliding door down, leaving us in darkness.

THE END

(until a fateful cancer diagnosis changes everything)