

SLAY THE DEMONS

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES -- NIGHT

BAM! BAM! BAM BAM!

Firecrackers.

Colorful explosions against a black backdrop of sky. Like gunshots piercing the darkness over a city on the Fourth of July. The CAMERA turns slowly, passing the tops of buildings, moving in a circle, scanning a city in celebration.

And then it stops, looking at one building in the distance, one floor near the top, one window on the floor where one man is framed, one man who apparently isn't in the mood to celebrate.

Moving closer, the man can be seen clearly standing on the ledge of the window, staring with tear-filled eyes at the sky and the firecrackers beyond.

BAM! BAM! BAM BAM!

Reds, blues, oranges, and greens. Happy, happy bursts of enjoyment. The thrill of the shot, the brilliance of the color, and then, like everything else in life, it quickly fades away.

The man, BRENT FISCHER, is not, after all, alone. Another man stands inside, by the window, desperation of a different kind clearly shown in his face. TONY KRISHTON reaches out to Brent, trying to coax him back inside.

TONY

Brent... Brent... Come on in here, man. Emily's on the way. You want her to see you like this? You want to scare her like you're scaring me? She loves you, man... A lot of people do. We love you and we need you and we want you to stay here, with us, making our lives better for knowing you...

Brent closes his eyes and a flood of tears rolls down his face. His breathing is shallow and without rhythm. His mouth is in a kind of scowling frown. A small voice echoes in his mind, questioning him from the great beyond.

COREY (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

DAD (V.O.)

You wanna know about Christmas, Core?
You wanna know about Santa Claus?

COREY (V.O.)

Well where is he? When does he come?

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT (V.O.)

If Santa's not real, who brings us
the presents?

(beat)

When has Dad ever given us a present?

COREY (V.O.)

Yeah.

Brent whimpers. Whimpers and slides one foot slowly toward the edge, toward the great expanse of air and death that waits just a short step away.

TONY

Brent, don't. Don't do it, man.
Don't you give up on me. I'll help
you, we'll all help you. We'll help
you face whatever you're facing.
Let us in, man. Just let us in.

The door of the room behind Brent opens, and a young blonde woman, EMILY MOSS, rushes in. She sees him on the ledge and stops.

EMILY

(quietly)

How is he?

Tony moves over to her.

TONY

Emily, thank God... I can't get
through to him, he just stands
there...

EMILY

What happened?

TONY

I don't know. I noticed he wasn't
anywhere at the party, and I came
looking for him and found him here.
I have no idea what's going on.

She nods and glances over at a table nearby, where a near-empty plastic bag sits, white powder lining its bottom.

She walks slowly to the window and climbs out, standing behind him, her feet spread wide and almost next to his because there isn't very much room.

She leans up close to him and whispers in his ear.

EMILY

Brent...

He whimpers again and sags slightly.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brent, you have to listen me now. I love you. You are the only man I have ever truly loved. You are the only man who has ever cared about me in my entire life. I would be nothing without you, Brent. An empty shell. A perverse imitation of a human being. You are everything, you are *me*, and I cannot, will not live without you.

She slowly lifts her arms and wraps them around his chest.

EMILY (CONT'D)

So you have a decision to make, right now. If this is it... if this is how you want it to end... then you had *better* take me with you.

He sobs and falls back into her arms. She hugs him to her and presses her cheek against his. And slowly they back through the window and collapse to the floor, and they lay there, and they cry, with Tony looking on in relief.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITYSCAPE -- SUNRISE

Los Angeles. Sunrise. Reds and pinks and yellows paint the sky with beauty. A perfect picture, a perfect moment, frozen forever in time.

Like an invisible gust of air, the camera pans across the cityscape and moves toward the real world, the busy world filled with people too consumed by their lives, too rushed and important to stop and admire the wondrous portrait above.

Two such people are talking to each other now, their voices coming from nowhere, their bodies hidden within the walls of one of the distant buildings. Brent Fischer. Emily Moss. Lovers, friends, future man and wife.

EMILY (V.O.)

Where are you going?

BRENT (V.O.)

Work... Where else?

EMILY (V.O.)

No, don't. Don't go. You don't go to work, I won't go to the airport, we can stay here and order in and practice for this summer at the nudist colony.

BRENT (V.O.)

Hey, I'm on board. I'll call Krish right now. But are you really gonna leave Terry hanging in New York?

EMILY (V.O.)

(groans)

No...

A few seconds pass. We hear a door open and close as the camera follows its invisible path.

EXT. LOS ANGELES -- CONTINUOUS

Moving through the streets, passing quickly and silently over the heads of so many incredibly busy pedestrians and even more incredibly slow-moving cars.

Beep beep beep beep beep beep beep... The unmistakable sound of a touch tone phone being dialed, ringing, ringing again. A new voice, another woman, JANINE.

JANINE (V.O.)

Hello?

BRENT (V.O.)

We still on for tonight?

JANINE (V.O.)

(a smile in her voice)

You know it, babe.

BRENT (V.O.)

It's gonna be a blast. Bring some friends.

The camera curves abruptly and sharply upward and to the right, passing through a third-floor window and into

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A bed, a dresser, a closet, a desk. From the other room we hear a door once again open, once again close.

Turning toward the sound, the camera is met with an entranceway of its own, blocked by an inanimate oaken guard. Moving low, it slides beneath the jamb and into

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

A short hallway, three steps, a U-turn into

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Another door leading, presumably, to the hall. *Ping!* An elevator arrives. The camera passes through the keyhole, into

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

as the elevator doors close. At the end of the hall, a MAN comes out of the stairwell. The camera streaks through the empty doorway-

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

-and down three flights of stairs. A WOMAN enters the stairwell, allowing access to

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

A quick, circular pan reveals the lobby to be empty, save one young man, FREDERICK, in a bellboy's uniform. As a MAILMAN enters the building, the camera exits onto

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS -- CONTINUOUS

where the camera turns left, facing down the street as a black sports car rockets toward it, oblivious to the invisible thing in its path.

The car grows larger, closer, covers the screen with its blackness and-

INT. LAX TERMINAL -- MORNING

The airport terminal is crowded with people, travelers, some coming and some going, some on vacation and some hard at work.

There's people with families chatting and laughing, there's people with cell phones working on deals.

There's one man with a daughter, a young daughter at his side, and he's scolding her for some infraction.

AIRPORT FATHER

We don't have time now! You should have said something ten minutes ago!

AIRPORT DAUGHTER

I wasn't hungry ten minutes ago!

AIRPORT FATHER

That's too bad! You'll just have to
wait and eat on the plane!

Beyond them, on one of the benches of hard plastic chairs,
Emily sits staring.

And in her head she hears labored grunting, the sound of a
man having sex. And over that, a man's voice, dismissive,
cold.

MAN (V.O.)

Go play in your room. Go on, get
out of my hair.

She closes her eyes, gets up, walks off away from the father.
People cross between her and him, she gets lost in the crowd,
and-

EXT. HIGHWAY -- MORNING -- AERIAL SHOT

The camera follows the sports car as it weaves its way through
traffic, not quite reckless but in no way safe. Fast, anxious
music plays in the background.

The camera closes in on the car as Brent talks on the car
phone to his secretary, TAMMY.

BRENT (V.O.)

Put him off until tomorrow. ... No,
I'm not working this afternoon! ...
Of course Krish knows, he set-- ...
That's right...

It circles around to the front of the moving car, looking at
Brent through the windshield. He is tall, thin, handsome.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I'm at my exit, Tam... I'll be there
in a few.

He pushes a button next to him, closing the connection, and
pulls onto an exit. The camera pulls back and moves skyward
once again, focusing on the

HOLLYWOOD SIGN

INT. LAX TERMINAL -- MORNING

A bathroom door with a small stick woman. It opens, and
Emily comes out. She checks her watch and pulls out a cell
phone, dials, waits for an answer.

EMILY

Hey, Tammy. Brent's not there yet,
is he?

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

... No, I'm at the airport, I have a meeting in New York. These panties don't sell themselves.

(a laugh)

No, just tell him I called, I'll try back later. ... Thanks.

She slides the phone back into her coat and frowns, checking her watch, then walks off to catch her flight.

INT. TONY KRISHTON LITERARY AGENCY -- MORNING

Tony Krishton Literary Agency. That's what it says on the door as Brent enters.

The room is alive with people at work; talking on the phone, talking to each other, talking to themselves.

Tammy intercepts him halfway to his office and walks with him, handing him slips of paper. She's a short woman with red hair.

TAMMY

Emily called from the airport. She said she'll call again when she gets to New York. Gary called about his script. He's coming up in a week or two and was hoping to squeeze in a pitch. Carl called from the studio. They stuck him with a new producer who 'don't know jack about movies.' And Mr. Krishton stopped by to make sure you're keeping your appointment this afternoon.

(beat)

Oh, and Dave's on line two, he's returning your call.

Brent rolls his eyes, snatches the messages, walks into

INT. BRENT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

and locks the door. He takes off his coat, sits down and picks up the phone.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

--This is his job, his life. To make people listen, to make people believe and want to see the movies he's selling. He loves it, it invigorates him, and he's definitely good at it.

BRENT

(into phone)

Dave, hey!

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

Listen, I've got a script here you've gotta see. You'll love it! It's perfect for Gwyneth Paltrow...

--

BRENT (CONT'D)

Trust me, Bill, it's great! I'll fax it over. It's perfect for Jack Nicholson...

--

BRENT (CONT'D)

It's excellent, Nancy, phenomenal. Best thing I've read all year. Perfect for Greg Kinnear...

--

BRENT (CONT'D)

Perfect for Julia Roberts...

--

BRENT (CONT'D)

Perfect for Cameron Diaz...

--

BRENT (CONT'D)

Perfect for Russell or Bruce...

INT. CONTINENTAL FLIGHT 241 -- AFTERNOON

BRENT (V.O.)

Seriously, Craig, I've got a new kid here and *man* is he hot. You've gotta take a look...

Emily sits in a window seat, her arm resting next to the glass, her hand holding her wallet, open to a picture of Brent.

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Just take a look...

She stares at it longingly, then flips to another picture, a picture of a man with greying hair and a blank, bored expression.

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Just let him pitch you, you'll be begging for the script in four minutes flat...

And the sound of the grunts of ecstasy come back, louder, growing more and more impassioned.

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Trust me on this one Dave...

--

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Gordie, listen...

--

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Carrie...

--

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Kyle...

--

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Jess...

She closes her eyes, a tear escapes, and the man in her head reaches a climax.

She reaches to the back of the seat in front of her and picks up the AirFone and dials.

INT. BRENT'S OFFICE -- DAY

BRENT
Look, the bottom line is, Spielberg wants to get this done. ... That's right. ... You're a doll, Kel. I'll be waiting for your call.

He drops the receiver onto its hook, leans back in his seat and sighs. Looks over at the clock. Just about 12:30. He rubs his eyes, grabs his coat, and heads out.

INT. TONY KRISHTON LITERARY AGENCY -- CONTINUOUS

Tammy meets him at his office door.

TAMMY
Ben called, he wants to do lunch next week. Gary called again about the script. And Emily just called from the plane, she wanted to say hi. I have to say, she's too cute.

Brent smiles, walking briskly toward the exit. Tammy falls away and goes back to her desk.

JACK TILLIS, thin, African-American, cuts across a row of desks and brushes Brent's shoulder as he passes. Brent turns and points at him, backing toward the door as he talks.

BRENT

You're coming tonight, right?

JACK

(smiles, still walking)
Three feet of horse shit couldn't
keep me away!

BRENT

(a laugh)
It's gonna be a blast!

And he's out the door.

INT. CONTINENTAL FLIGHT 241 -- AFTERNOON

Emily sits back, staring at the phone on the back of the seat. She lifts up the wallet and stares at the picture, the picture of the man who isn't her fiancé.

MAN (V.O.)

Don't you ever cook anything new?
Buy a recipe book or something...

She looks angry and sad and lonely.

MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Whatever... Let's go have dessert.

She closes her eyes again, for a second.

MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Let's go have dessert... Let's go
have dessert... Let's go have
dessert...

A door slams shut. She blinks and then shakes her head at the picture.

EMILY

(whispering)
I'm over you. We're done.

She shuts the wallet with a snap and shoves it into her purse.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brent's made you go away.

And in her head the door closes again, and she hears a new voice, a woman, quiet and dejected and a little bit frustrated.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Get to bed... I'll see you in the morning.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DR. KATE GRISSOM'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

An office. A psychiatrist's office. Shelves, books, a couch, a chair.

A woman sitting behind a mahogany desk. A blond woman with nice skin and pretty hair. DR. KATELYN GRISSOM, PH.D.

She's scratching notes on a legal pad, notes about her last patient presumably. She finishes up, sets down the pen, picks up her tape recorder and pushes a button.

KATE

June 14th, 2002, 1:13 p.m. 1:15
session about to begin with patient--

Brent waltzes through the door and plops himself on the couch.

KATE (CONT'D)

(forced smile)
Brent Fischer...

She sets the recorder on her desk.

KATE (CONT'D)

How are you today, Brent?

BRENT

Never better.

KATE

How are things?

BRENT

(looks over at her)
Isn't that the same question?

KATE

I suppose it is... How's Emily?

BRENT

Peachy.
(claps and points at her)
Did I tell you we're engaged?

KATE

(a little put off)
No... Congratulations. When did that happen?

BRENT

Last month.

She sags in her seat, just a little. He sits there, slouching, arms behind his head, smiling.

KATE

Last month?

BRENT

Yeah. The sixth, I think.

KATE

Do you know that it's been almost a year since we met?

BRENT

That long?

KATE

That long...

BRENT

So what do we do to celebrate? Have a party? Get drunk? Sleep together?

KATE

Normally I'd bring you a little token to commemorate the occasion, a pin or a tie tack or something. To symbolize the *friendship* we've developed. But normally my patients don't go six sessions without even telling me they've gotten engaged.

BRENT

Never came up.

KATE

That kind of news usually falls under the 'how are things' category.

BRENT

I *did* not know that.

KATE

Now you do.

Brent nods.

They sit there for some time, not talking.

She stares at him, watches him closely, and finally breaks the silence.

KATE (CONT'D)

Are you clean?

BRENT

Yep.

KATE

Are you sure?

BRENT

That I'm clean? I think I'd know if I wasn't...

KATE

But would you tell me?

BRENT

Look, I'm here. I don't wanna be, but I am. Why? Because Krish says if I wanna keep my job, and I *do* wanna keep my job, I have to come see you once a week and I have to stay off drugs. If I were gonna do drugs, why would I keep coming here?

KATE

That's a good point, I'm sorry.

Another long pause.

KATE (CONT'D)

So what have you been doing?

BRENT

Can I go?

KATE

Excuse me?

BRENT

I've got plans tonight. Can I take off?

KATE

No, Brent, you can't take off. We've got about, well, fifty-nine minutes left.

BRENT

Fifty-seven, and all we ever do is sit here.

KATE

Well if you'd open up a little...

BRENT

Open up? Why?

KATE

So I can help you.

BRENT
I don't need any help.

KATE
I think you do.

BRENT
And you'd know best...

KATE
I think I know better than you.

BRENT
Yeah, you think you know a lot of things.

Another pause.

KATE
You don't need help...

BRENT
Nope.

KATE
You're completely in control of your life...

BRENT
Yep.

KATE
You don't have *any* problems...

BRENT
Not that I can think of.

KATE
Then why are you here?

BRENT
What?

KATE
Why are you here?

BRENT
You know why I'm--

KATE
Yes, but do you?

BRENT
Of course I do.

KATE
Then tell me. Why are you here?

BRENT
Because Krish says--

KATE
Yes. Tony Krishton, your boss, your
friend, says you need to come here
to keep your job. Why?

BRENT
Why what?

KATE
Why does he make you come here?

BRENT
You know why he--

KATE
Yes. I do. Do you?

BRENT
Of course I do.

KATE
Then say it...

BRENT
Why?

KATE
Because I want you to.

BRENT
Will it get me outta here faster?

KATE
It might...

BRENT
Fine.

He opens his mouth, pauses, laughs.

BRENT (CONT'D)
You know why I'm here.

She stares at him for a few seconds.

He laughs again.

BRENT (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
What are you looking for from me?
That I tried to commit suicide?

KATE

Thank you. You climbed out onto the ledge of a seventh floor window and threatened to jump.

BRENT

It was the ninth floor. And we've covered this. We covered this like a week in.

KATE

At rehab, yes. Good. You remember.

Brent rolls his eyes.

KATE (CONT'D)

Would you have done it?

BRENT

What?

KATE

If Tony hadn't found you, would you have jumped?

BRENT

(shaking his head)

We did this a long time ago.

KATE

Let's do it again.

BRENT

Why?

KATE

Because I want to.

BRENT

Why?

KATE

Because I do. Would you have jumped?

BRENT

(laughing)

Yes. I probably would have jumped.

KATE

Why?

BRENT

(stands up)

Oh! I see! You're trying to get me to talk about Corey!

KATE
Corey. Your brother.

Brent just laughs and shakes his head.

KATE (CONT'D)
Why don't you tell me what happened
to him?

She waits for a response.

There is none.

KATE (CONT'D)
He died, right? When you were very
young?

BRENT
You've been trying to get this story
for eleven months, why not give it a
rest?

KATE
Because I'm interested. I want to
know.

BRENT
Well maybe I don't want you to know!

KATE
You were twelve, right? He was ten?

He turns, runs his hands through his hair, laughs some more.

KATE (CONT'D)
It was Christmas... 1982...

BRENT
(whirls to face her;
yells)
What do you want me to say? You
want me to tell you I killed him?
You want me to tell you it's my fault
he's dead?

KATE
I want you to tell me what happened!

BRENT
Not likely!

KATE
Why not?

BRENT
Because it's none of your *fucking*
business!

Another long pause.

Brent's chest heaves as his anger dies down.

She once again just watches him, watches how he reacts.

KATE

My business... my job... is to make you well. To make you realize why you turned to drugs.

BRENT

(holds his arms out)
I know that one already. Because it was fun.

KATE

Fun?

BRENT

Yeah, fun. The drugs, the sex, the booze, it was great. A real hoot. The *high* life.

KATE

Then how did you end up hanging out of a ninth story window instead of drinking and smoking and living it up at the party downstairs? Why were you celebrating Independence Day with one foot in the grave?

He stares at her for a long time.

BRENT

I wanted to see the fireworks.

She looks down and nods.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Can I go?

She nods again. He turns and opens the door, then turns back.

BRENT (CONT'D)

So I guess I don't get my tie tack...

KATE

(can't help but smile)
Not likely.

BRENT

Damn.

He leaves. She puts her head in her hands and sighs.

INT. CONTINENTAL FLIGHT 241 -- AFTERNOON

Emily sits in her seat, leaning back. People are exiting. She looks a little annoyed, inconvenienced. The pilot speaks over the aircraft's intercom.

PILOT

We're sorry for the inconvenience, but better to err on the side of caution. The delay will be short as we have some engineers check the engine and top off the fuel tanks. We'll be back in the air before you know it. In the meantime, enjoy Las Vegas, where the temperature is a balmy eighty-three degrees. But it's a dry heat, with humidity checking in at just seven percent. Welcome to the desert everyone...

She checks her watch, sighs, gets a bag from the overhead compartment and heads for the door.

INT. LAS VEGAS TERMINAL -- AFTERNOON

She comes through the gate with her cell phone to her ear.

EMILY

That's right, I remember. All right, sorry to bother you again, Tammy. ... No, I'll just talk to him later. ... Yep... Yep, you too. ... I will. Bye.

She slaps the phone shut, then opens it again, stopping by a bench and dropping her bag and dialing a speed dial with her thumb.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Terry? It's me. ... I'm stuck in Vegas, the plane blew an engine or something, I don't know. ... I'm not sure. ... No idea. Have you heard from Victoria's? ... Uh huh... No, no, wait. That's... No, don't let them... No! We agreed on thirty-five, I'll talk to them about it. Maybe we'll set up a meeting for tomorrow, since we're there anyway. I'll call them. ... No, I'll do it.

She stares at the nearby departure board.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Maybe we should push back today's meeting, too. ... I don't know,
(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

they didn't say how long. You know airlines. ... Are you sure you can... All right. I'll probably be there anyway. ... Okay, talk to you later. ... I will... Talk to you later... Bye.

She hangs up and goes to the board for a closer look.

DETROIT	ON TIME	1:22 PM
NEW YORK	DELAYED	TBA
LOS ANGELES	ON TIME	3:17 PM

She checks her watch and goes back to pick up her bag.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- AFTERNOON -- AERIAL SHOT

Brent's driving is fast, gutsy, selfish. He swerves from lane to lane, passing car after car, too important to wait for someone to move out of his way, too hurried to bother with a blinker.

Angry music plays in the background. He turns onto an exit. The beach can be seen in the distance.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- AFTERNOON -- AERIAL SHOT

The black sports car screeches to a halt in the empty driveway of a beach house, large and luxurious and with a great view of the ocean. Just yards from the water, right out on the sand.

Waves crash against rocks, foam tries to stay on the shore but inevitably slides away.

Brent jumps out of his car and jogs into the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

EMILY (V.O.)

(through dissolve)

Hey, Tammy, last time, I promise. Do you know where he is? ... No, I tried the penthouse... Our beach house? ... No, I just... We haven't been there since before last year... Well if you talk to him tell him I'm looking for him. ... Thanks.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT -- AERIAL SHOT

Twilight at the beach. The moon reflecting off the ocean, the stars twinkling in the sky, the sand sparkling in the moonlight.

Cars line the driveway, music blasts from the house. Fast music, happy music, party music. Mixed in with the songs and the waves and the chirping of crickets is laughter and chatter and the clinking of glasses. A party is on, in full swing. It's time to have some fun.

The camera moves around the side of the house and into the sand-filled backyard.

A hill leads off to the left, going up a rocky embankment and leading to a cliff.

In the backyard is a Jacuzzi, filled with PEOPLE, men and women, drinking and laughing and kissing and fondling.

On the back porch are more people, more drinks, more lips locked in passion.

One WOMAN has her back to the wall, a MAN pressed against her, his tongue down her throat.

Another WOMAN comes out the back door, and the camera moves inside.

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

A MAN at the counter inhales a line of coke, a WOMAN by the sink gives herself an injection.

PEOPLE move in and out almost constantly; some laughing, some singing, all taking their turns with their drug of choice.

Off the kitchen is

INT. BEACH HOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

with a bathroom on the right, where a COUPLE is virtually naked, having sex right there on the floor, paying no attention to the open door.

Brent comes down the hall from the other end, where the music is coming from. There's a smile on his face and a drink in his hand.

He turns left, into

INT. BEACH HOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Another COUPLE is on the bed, completely naked, getting hot and heavy on top of the sheets.

They pay no attention to Brent as he smiles at them and goes to the dresser and pulls a bag of white powder from the top drawer.

The camera follows him back into

INT. BEACH HOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

and toward the music, into

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

where the real bulk of the party is. Dancing and loud music and drinks all around.

Jack comes up to him and hands him a fresh drink. Brent chugs the one he has and exchanges with the man without even missing a step.

They're laughing and shouting over the music.

JACK

Where you find all the hussies?

BRENT

Escorts, my man, they're escorts!

Jack pats him on the shoulder and laughs some more and falls back into the crowd.

Off to one side, a MAN trips and falls and spills his drink on the floor.

BRENT (CONT'D)

(turns and points)

Hey, hey, no alcohol abuse!

Then he sees her, coming toward him through the crowd. She's a red-haired, pale-skinned, would-be supermodel. She smiles at him. He opens his arms to welcome her.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Janine!

They embrace.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I told you to bring *some* friends,
not a fleet!

JANINE

If you can pay for em, I can get em
here!

They laugh, he glances back and sees the couple from the bedroom rejoining the crowd. He smiles at Janine and nods toward the back and they head that way.

He stops for a second and calls out.

BRENT

Hey, hot wheels!

A man in a wheelchair turns and looks at him from across the room. Brent tosses him the bag of powder.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Save some for me!

HOT WHEELS catches the bag.

HOT WHEELS
(laughing)
You get my scraps if I get yours!

Brent and Janine disappear into the bedroom.

HOT WHEELS (CONT'D)
Oh yeah! Get some. Get some.

He turns to a nearby HOTTIE.

HOT WHEELS (CONT'D)
Go fix me turkey sammich...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEACH HOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A little while later. Brent and Janine are in the bed, side by side, naked and satisfied and basking in the afterglow.

Brent turns his head, smiles at her. She smiles back.

BRENT
Let's go for a walk.

He jumps out of bed and starts getting dressed.

JANINE
A walk?

BRENT
Yeah. Out on the beach, by the moonlight, it's romantic.

JANINE
You know you still pay me, right?

He stops and looks at her.

BRENT
Yes I know I still pay you. Does that mean you don't like romance?

JANINE
It's cold out. I don't have any gloves.

BRENT

It's June!

JANINE

We're by the beach... My hands get cold really fast.

BRENT

Aw, I'm sorry.

He pulls on his shirt, thinking.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Here, take these.

He reaches over to the dresser and grabs a pair of

EMILY'S GLOVES

They're made of purple suede, with small puffs of white fur around the trim.

He tosses them over to her. She shakes her head and laughs.

JANINE

Okay. We'll... take a walk on the beach.

Brent smiles at her again.

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Brent has his arm around her. They walk across the living room laughing, smiling, being happy.

Brent snatches the bag of powder from a coffee table without missing a stride. Hot Wheels gasps, watching him go.

HOT WHEELS

Yo, that's bootleg!

He turns to a different HOTTIE.

HOT WHEELS (CONT'D)

Go fix me turkey sammich?

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

They walk away from the house slowly. Janine wraps her arms around Brent's waist, puts her head on his shoulder.

The surf invades the beach and tries to occupy, but is ultimately doomed to be sucked back into the ocean. It almost touches their feet, but not quite.

It's quiet, with just the party music heard dully in the background.

Even that's fading away as they get further from the house.

JANINE

Where are we going?

BRENT

Not far. I know this great little spot down there a ways. Very private.

She steps away from him a step and pulls on the gloves.

He wraps his jacket around her shoulders.

When the music is completely gone, Brent stops and points.

There's a rock formation on the beach. It forms a small overhang, like a tiny little tent made by nature to look over the ocean.

BRENT (CONT'D)

(slyly)

We'll have to lay down, but that's okay, right?

She doesn't get a chance to answer.

A GUNMAN runs by, from the direction of the house, and slams into Brent, knocking him away from Janine. Brent stumbles, almost falls, and--

BAM! BAM! BAM BAM!

Gunshots.

Brent falls to the beach, only half on purpose. He covers his head with his hands.

A SECOND GUNMAN runs up and falls to one knee, firing at the man who knocked Brent down.

The first gunman ducks behind the overhang, pulls out a gun, returns fire.

Brent is terrified. His face is buried in the sand, muffling the sound of his sobs.

For a few seconds the noise is deafening, the gunshots, bullets flying in both directions.

At one point someone chokes, falls, hits the ground with a thud.

And then it stops. And both gunmen continue down the beach, the one chasing the other.

Brent gasps, coughs, spits sand granules from his mouth. He gets up slowly; dazed, confused, buzzing something fierce.

He turns just as slowly and looks down.

BLOOD

A pool of it. Spreading out toward him. He moves his eyes along the trail to

JANINE

Dead. Lying at his feet.

He chokes and gasps and stumbles back. Bends over but doesn't vomit. Falls to one knee. Puts his head in his hands. Cries.

The bag of cocaine is right beside him, sitting where he dropped it when the man bumped into him.

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Look, I'm here. I don't wanna be, but I am. Why? Because Krish says if I wanna keep my job, and I *do* wanna keep my job, I have to come see you once a week and I have to stay off drugs.

He sobs and lets one hand fall to his side. His eyes are closed, tears run down his cheek.

KATE (V.O.)

How's Emily?

BRENT (V.O.)

Peachy.

(a clap)

Did I tell you we're engaged?

KATE (V.O.)

No... Congratulations. When did this happen?

BRENT (V.O.)

Last month.

He groans and tries to get control of himself, tries to stand up, but falls back to his knees.

TAMMY (V.O.)

And Emily just called from the plane, she wanted to say hi. I have to say, she's too cute. ...she's too cute. ...too cute. ...too cute.

He looks up and yells at the top of his lungs. Just a noise, somewhere between a growl and a moan, cursing fate, cursing God, cursing the moon. Cursing everything. Cursing the world for the spot it's put him in.

He loved Janine, in a weird hooker/client sort of way. But he loves his job and he loves Emily and this could destroy them both.

He gets up and stumbles over to the body and starts dragging it across the sand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT

He searches through his car trunk and pulls out a shovel.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OVERHANG -- NIGHT

Janine lies at his feet as he digs a hole under the rock. It's a shallow grave, but it'll have to do.

He rolls the body in.

Emily's gloves stick up, the purple contrasting the color of the beach as he covers the body with sand.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

The surf invades the beach and tries to occupy, but is ultimately doomed to be sucked back into the ocean.

And now it carries Janine's blood with it.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT -- BLACK & WHITE

Brent is alone. Back on the beach. There's no overhang, no house in the distance, just darkness, surf, and miles and miles of sand.

He turns a circle, takes a step back.

A hand touches his shoulder. He jumps and whirls around.

It's Janine. Her face is white, her eyes are red. There's a hole in her chest where the bullet went in. She smiles a ghostly smile.

He backs away, toward the ocean.

JANINE

Why, Brent?

Her voice is soft and hollow. He backs away faster.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Why did you let me die?

He bumps into something behind him, jumps, turns to face it.

A small boy, also dead looking, also smiling a ghostly smile. His face is cut and bruised, the side of his head grotesquely deformed.

COREY

Why did you let me die?

He backs away, parallel with the ocean now, until he can see them both.

They're walking toward him slowly, repeating the question again and again and again and again.

JANINE

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

COREY

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

(beat)

Why did you let me die?

He turns and runs as fast as he can.

The ghosts fall away, don't give chase, and he's once again alone, but he keeps running.

Suddenly there's someone there, in front of him. A DREAM MAN, an old man, smiling at him through crooked and dirty teeth.

Brent stops just inches away and stares at him.

The man raises a hand, swings, hits Brent across the face.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- MORNING

Brent wakes up, breathing heavily. He licks his lips, swallows hard, and looks over at the clock.

10:16.

BRENT

Oh, shit!

He jumps out of bed and starts to get dressed.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- MORNING -- AERIAL SHOT

He's driving like a madman now. Reckless would be an improvement.

INT. TONY KRISHTON LITERARY AGENCY -- MORNING

He bursts through the door to find a virtually empty office.

He stops, looks around, confused. There are only about five people working.

A man walks up to him. Tony Krishton.

TONY

Hey, Brent. What are you doing here?

BRENT

Krish... What... What do you mean?

TONY

I just haven't seen you work Saturday in a long time.

BRENT

Satur... No, I'm not. I... just came in to grab something from the office.

TONY

Oh. Well good. I don't want you pushing yourself too hard.

Tony walks away.

Brent lets out his breath and closes his eyes and sinks to the floor by the door.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Brent is sitting on his couch, hunched forward, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. He breathes deeply. His eyes are closed.

The phone rings.

He chuckles. Such a normal thing, a ringing phone, invading a world that's gone to hell.

He takes one last breath, reaches over and picks it up.

BRENT

Yeah...

FREDERICK THE BELLBOY (V.O.)

Mr. Fisch--

JACK (V.O.)
Tell this overdressed clown I'm not
gonna rob you or rape you or gouge
out your eyes with my thumb.

BRENT
(sighs)
Let him up, Freddy.

He hangs up and goes to the door, opens it, goes back to the couch, puts on a happy face.

A moment later Jack walks in. He tosses a newspaper onto the coffee table.

JACK
You seen that yet?

Brent leans forward and reads the headline.

HOOKER FOUND DEAD - BURIED AT BEACH

He chokes, almost falls, catches himself and leans back on the couch.

JACK (CONT'D)
Well that answers my next question.

Brent hunches over, bites his lip. He's dizzy. He can't breathe.

JACK (CONT'D)
She was there, right? At the party?

He closes his eyes tight and rocks back and forth.

JACK (CONT'D)
I thought I recognized the picture.
What was her name?

BRENT
Janine...

Jack nods and goes into the kitchen.

JACK (O.S.)
You want a beer?

BRENT
There's... no...

JACK (O.S.)
Oh, right, you're supposed to be off
all that.

He comes back in the room and hands him a bottle of water.

Brent takes a long drink and tries to compose himself. He looks up at Jack.

BRENT
Nobody can find out about the party
last night.

JACK
No kidding...

BRENT
I'll lose my job. I'll lose my
fiancé.

JACK
(laughs)
Not to mention us all going to jail.

BRENT
You... Go home... Get on the phone...
Make sure everyone knows it never
happened.

EMILY (O.S.)
What never happened?

Brent and Jack look up. Jack left the door open, they didn't hear her come in.

EMILY (CONT'D)
What's the matter?

Brent jumps up and throws his arms around her. Jack snatches the paper and shoves it under the couch.

BRENT
What are you doing here, Em?

EMILY
I... came home early. I missed you.

BRENT
I missed you too.

He kisses her.

JACK
I should skedaddle, let you two
playmates alone.

Jack practically flies out the door. Brent kicks it closed.

EMILY
So what's going on?

BRENT
With what?

EMILY

What never happened?

BRENT

Oh! That was... something with work.
A real... script... fiasco. Not
good.

EMILY

Oh... Is it going to be okay?

BRENT

Yeah, yeah, it'll be fine. Jack'll
take care of it.

EMILY

You sure?

BRENT

Absolutely.

EMILY

Good. I'm gonna go unpack.

Emily carries her bag into the bedroom.

Brent turns and watches her go. He leans back against the
door and runs his hands through his hair and moans.

EXT. BEACH -- MORNING

DETECTIVE ISAAC RITCHIE is kneeling by Janine's body, which
is laying next to a pile of sand and an empty hole. He gets
to his feet and looks around.

DR. ANDREW SCORTINI, the coroner, comes up beside him.

RITCHIE

What you got for me?

DR. SCORTINI

Not much really. Three shots to the
chest. Kill wound through the heart.

RITCHIE

Anything on ID?

DR. SCORTINI

Not from my guys. She's a prostie,
won't carry a license. We'll run
fingerprints with the report, but
other than that...

RITCHIE

All right, well get it to me quick,
will ya?

DR. SCORTINI

Quick as I can. Can I take her?

Ritchie nods and wanders down the beach a ways.

Dr. Scortini and his assistants get the body onto a gurney and cart it away.

DETECTIVE PAUL KROWLEN walks up to Ritchie anxiously. He's Ritchie's student, protégé. Ritchie looks over at him.

RITCHIE

Find anything?

KROWLEN

We're too close to the water. Tracks, blood, even a wallet or earring or... anything... would have been washed out overnight.

Ritchie nods and rubs the back of his neck, staring off into the distance.

KROWLEN (CONT'D)

So what do we do? Wait for the autopsy?

RITCHIE

(looks over at him)

And what? Sit on our hands? No, you never, *never* sit on your hands. There's always a question you can answer, even if it's not whodunit.

KROWLEN

So what's the question here?

RITCHIE

How many hookers you know roam the beach? What was this girl doing here last night? Who was she with? Who buried her?

(beat)

Better yet, who dug her up?

He looks toward the horizon again. Krowlen follows his gaze.

There, down the beach, sits the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CURRANGIO'S RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Currangio's is a family-owned Italian-style restaurant, authentic all the way. From the checkered tablecloths to the pictures on the wall to the old-fashioned Italian cuisine, the place screams ambiance.

Brent and Emily walk through the door and confidently up to the MAITRE 'D.

BRENT
Fischer, party of two.

The maitre 'd consults his reservation book.

Emily looks over at Brent and smiles. Brent pecks her on the cheek.

MAITRE 'D
I'm-a sorry, Mr. Fischer. I don't-a see you here.

BRENT
What? I called this morning...
Fischer, eight o'clock.

MAITRE 'D
I check again...

BRENT
Do that. Thank you.

Brent blows air out through pursed lips and looks around the restaurant.

Red and brown walls, black and white pictures, candles and homemade rolls and parmesan cheese on the tables. Ambiance. If there's anything Italians can do it's serve a meal.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Did you find it?

MAITRE 'D
(still looking)
I don't-a see a Fischer. If you'd-a like to come back another time...

BRENT
No I don't want to come back another time!
(quiets down)
Why don't you check once more? F...
I... S...

AL PACINO
Is there a problem here?

Brent turns and looks.

Pacino is standing in front of the maitre 'd counter, holding a glass of red wine.

BRENT

Al! This moron can't seem to find my reservation...

MAITRE 'D

As I say to Mr. Fischer, it's just not-a here.

PACINO

Hey now, Antony, this is Mr. Brent Fischer. Check one more time, I'm sure it's there.

MAITRE 'D

Of course, Mr. Pacino.

(glances down)

Ah, here it is. I apologize.

(calling)

Vito, would you please-a seat the Fischers?

A youngish-looking waiter, VITO, comes over and nods at them, then starts toward the tables.

BRENT

Thank you.

Brent and Emily walk passed the desk, arm in arm.

Pacino stops him.

PACINO

Brent, a word...

BRENT

Sure.

Brent nods. Emily and the waiter disappear into the restaurant.

INT. POLICE STATION -- EVENING

Police. Busy at work. Phones ringing, people moving, officers running back and forth.

Ritchie comes in and goes to his desk, calling to the PAA as he walks.

RITCHIE

Any messages for me, Lily?

LILY

Nope.

He sits.

RITCHIE

Nothing from a Yancy Ogabon? A real estate guy?

Lily chomps on a piece of gum, pretends to look down at her message slips, looks over at him and smiles an annoyed smile.

LILY

Nope.

Ritchie frowns and shakes his head and looks down at another case file. He flips through pages of material, looks at some pictures, glances at a tape cassette and sets it aside.

LILY (CONT'D)

Detective Ritchie?

He looks up at her.

LILY (CONT'D)

Phone call. Line three.

He snatches up the receiver.

RITCHIE

Detective Ritchie...

CALLER (V.O.)

You're on the beach hooker murder?

The voice is muffled and distorted, like the person is talking through a handkerchief or a cup. Ritchie sits up and gets a pen.

RITCHIE

Yes I am.

CALLER (V.O.)

I know who she is.

RITCHIE

(glances around)

The victim?

CALLER (V.O.)

No! She wasn't a victim. She was just a stupid bitch in the wrong place at the wrong time.

RITCHIE

(clears his throat)

Okay...

CALLER (V.O.)

You're not going to find the man who killed her.

RITCHIE

Why not?

CALLER (V.O.)

Because he is nameless. Faceless.
A phantom. Him and the man he was
chasing.

RITCHIE

You were... there when it happened?

CALLER (V.O.)

(hurried)

Her name is Janine. She was working
last night, at the beach house down
shore. You've seen it?

RITCHIE

(flustered)

Yes. Yes, I saw it. What's your--

CALLER (V.O.)

Find the man who owns the beach house.
Find the man who threw the party
there last night. Then you'll find
out who she was.

The line goes dead. Ritchie stares at the receiver.

A witness. That changes everything.

INT. CURRANGIO'S RESTAURANT -- EVENING

EMILY

(calling)

Brent!

She's standing at a table not far from Brent and Pacino.
She waves him over.

Brent extends an arm, holding up a stalling finger. He backs
toward her, pointing at Pacino with his other hand.

BRENT

I'll get back to you on that, Al, I
will. There's a script on my desk
right now. I think it's just what
you're looking for.

He sits down, laughing. Emily smiles at him as she takes
her seat.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You think these guys are using their
real names?

EMILY

Who?

BRENT

The waiters... Antony, Vito, I saw another one named Giuseppe...

Emily laughs.

There's a short pause as they stare into each other's eyes.

EMILY

I like that.

BRENT

What?

EMILY

(touches her mouth)

This.

He looks confused, touching his lip, wiping at it lightly.

EMILY (CONT'D)

The smile! You haven't smiled all day...

For just a moment, Brent had been able to forget the problem that had been dominating his mind. The party, the cops, his job, Janine. But now they all come rushing back, and when he speaks again, his voice is thick with worry.

BRENT

Sure I have.

EMILY

Not really. You've faked a couple, but... Anyway, apparently talking to Al did you some good.

She fiddles with her place-setting. Her eyes take on a strange expression. Almost sadness, but not quite.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Why don't you tell me about last night?

BRENT

What?

EMILY

Last night. What'd you do while I was gone?

BRENT

Nothing.

EMILY

You must have done something... I
tried calling the penthouse.

BRENT

I... was out.

EMILY

(fishing)
Out where?

BRENT

Work stuff, you wouldn't be
interested.

EMILY

(masked disappointment)
How do you know? I like hearing
about your work.

Vito comes up to them.

Brent tries to hide his relief.

VITO

Something to drink?

BRENT

Black Russian.

Emily stares at him.

VITO

And for you, miss?

As far as she knows Brent hasn't had a drink in almost a
year. And now he just orders one like it's nothing. She's
shocked. She stares at him like he's gone insane.

He just looks back at her, unaffected.

VITO (CONT'D)

Miss?

EMILY

Club soda.

VITO

Very good.

Vito goes over to the bar.

EMILY

What are you doing?

BRENT

Don't start, Em.

EMILY

Don't start? You--

BRENT

I'm not an alcoholic.

EMILY

I didn't say you were.

BRENT

But you're thinking it.

EMILY

I'm thinking you've been clean for eleven months and--

BRENT

(quiet but forceful)

There! Right there! I'm not an alcoholic, so having a drink isn't a slip...

EMILY

Brent. Last time you drank you--

BRENT

I know what I tried to do!
(deep breath; quieter)
Why the hell does everyone suddenly think I've got amnesia? Look, you're here, you'll make sure I don't do anything crazy. I just really need a drink right now, okay?

EMILY

You *need* a drink?

BRENT

I want a drink.

EMILY

You *want* a drink.

BRENT

Yes. Want. I'm not an alcoholic, Emily. I wasn't only drinking that night.

Vito comes back and sets their drinks in front of them.
Brent takes a long sip, staring at Emily the whole time.
She sighs and looks down at her napkin.

VITO

Are we ready to order?

INT. BRENT'S PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Brent and Emily burst into the apartment locked in a passionate embrace.

Brent pushes her away and kicks the door shut, then pounces on her again. They spin in circles, kissing and moving toward the couch.

Emily is the one who hits the cushions first, with Brent just a half second behind, unbuttoning his shirt. He presses himself against her and pins her down.

The camera moves lower, past their legs, focusing on the floor at their feet.

Emily moves her feet, sliding them on the floor, laughing and panting and grunting with delight.

Her heel kicks momentarily under the couch, catching a corner of newspaper, and pulls it out with her.

Not all the way out. Not even enough to really notice it. But the corner is there, visible if you look, waiting, just waiting to be found.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT -- BLACK & WHITE

On the beach. The empty beach. The empty beach that reaches forever into the cold, dark night.

Brent stands there, shivering, staring at the ocean.

He suddenly jumps with a start, looks to the left, looks to the right. Turns, stares into the distance, and sees that it's not empty.

The house. The beach house. There, down the shore.

He finds himself walking toward it, walking toward the house.

He stares at it, in the distance, a symbol of normalcy, a symbol of the way things are supposed to be.

Silence surrounds him, an eerie silence, an abnormal silence.

No noise, not even the waves.

The house is safety, the house is where everything will return to normal.

He's almost there, just yards away from the front steps, and suddenly the silence is broken.

Broken by the high, shrill scream of a child in pain.

Brent stops, stares at the door, forced into paralysis by fear. He recognizes that scream, it haunts him, its sound is engraved in his brain.

The child screams again, screams from inside Brent's house. He opens his mouth and tries to speak, but his voice is caught in his throat.

The screams are replaced by a soft, echoing cry. A child's tears. A child's crying. The sound that comes when you've given up, when you've resigned yourself to fate.

Now Brent finds his strength, finds his voice. He screams as loud as he can.

BRENT

Corey!

The call, the name echoes through the empty space around him.

He runs forward, onto the steps, and tries to open the door.

Locked. He's locked out. Corey is crying. There's nothing Brent can do.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Corey!

He jumps off the steps and runs to the nearest window, peering in, trying to see.

Nothing there. Just an empty room.

Not a room of the beach house, either. A strange room, a room he recognizes from his past. A room made of wood.

A wooden table, wooden chairs, wooden walls.

There's a window, one, on the far side, looking out at a night sky.

But no people, no occupants. Just the sound, the crying, the whimpering of a child in pain.

COREY (O.S.)

Why did you let me die?

Brent jumps and whirls around.

The boy is there, the boy from his earlier dream. Corey. His brother.

Brent opens his mouth but no words come. A tear rolls down his cheek.

COREY (CONT'D)
 Why did you let me die?

BRENT
 Corey. I...

COREY
 Why did you let me die?
 (beat)
 Why did you let him kill me?

Corey looks passed Brent, at the house, at the window. Brent turns back to it slowly.

Something flies through it from the inside.

Glass sprays against his face.

He recognizes the flying object as Corey for only a split second before--

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- DAY

Brent's eyes burst open. He's panting and sweating and licking his lips.

The sound of a faucet is coming from the next room, the bathroom. The sound stops, Emily walks in wearing a silk robe.

EMILY
 Did you say something?

Brent closes his eyes, opens them, calms himself.

BRENT
 No. What time is it?

EMILY
 Almost eleven. After last night, I figured you could use the sleep.

She winks at him. He feigns a smile.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 You sure you didn't say something?

He nods.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

The room is bare, grey, with an atmosphere that leaves you feeling empty and alone. There is a table, two chairs, and a mirror on one wall. That's it. Nothing else.

A girl sits at the table, facing the mirror that everyone knows is one-way.

She's young and pretty and dressed in clothes that clearly define her profession.

She's alone in the room, staring at her hands folded on the table.

The camera backs away from her and turns to the mirror, moves toward it, moves through it into

INT. POLICE STATION OBSERVATION ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

where Ritchie and Krowlen stand, staring at the girl on the other side of the glass.

RITCHIE

She says she worked with her?

KROWLEN

She says they were friends. Won't admit what she does, as if we can't tell.

RITCHIE

Never take anything for granted, Krowlen. Maybe she isn't what she seems.

KROWLEN

Look at her...

RITCHIE

If you're gonna survive, you need to expect the unexpected. That's all. What's her name?

KROWLEN

Pearl.

RITCHIE

(laughs)

And then there's some people who show themselves right on the surface... She came in on her own? She's cooperating with us?

Krowlen nods.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Then let's not keep her waiting...

They leave the room.

The camera backs through the glass into

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

as they come in.

PEARL looks up at them. Ritchie smiles at her.

RITCHIE
I'm Detective Isaac Ritchie. You've
met my partner...

She nods slowly.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
How old are you, Pearl?

PEARL
Eighteen.

RITCHIE
Yeah. Me too. So... You knew the
girl... who was killed?

PEARL
(nods again)
Janine.

Ritchie's eyes glimmer with name recognition. The witness was telling the truth, at least partially.

RITCHIE
What can you tell me about her?

PEARL
What d'you wanna know?

RITCHIE
How did you two meet?

PEARL
On the street. At a bar.

RITCHIE
Which one?

PEARL
We met outside a bar.

RITCHIE
What were you doing at a bar?

PEARL
What does anyone do at a bar?

RITCHIE
But you're only... eighteen.

Pearl gives him a look like he's naïve. He smirks.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Okay. So what can you tell me about
Friday night?

PEARL
What d'you wanna know?

RITCHIE
Were you with Janine?

PEARL
Not when it happened.

RITCHIE
But before...

She frowns and nods.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
At the beach?

She nods again.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
What was going on there?

PEARL
There was... this party. At this
guy's beach house.

RITCHIE
What guy?

PEARL
I don't know his name.

RITCHIE
So you were working...

PEARL
I don't have a job. I was there to
party.

Ritchie nods patronizingly.

RITCHIE
A guest. But you don't know the
host's name.

PEARL
Janine knew him.

RITCHIE
I see. So you're at this house...
this party... and Janine, what?
Left?

PEARL
I guess.

RITCHIE

Was she with someone?

PEARL

I don't know. Didn't see her go.

RITCHIE

When was the last time you saw her?

PEARL

She was going into the back... the bedroom... with some guy.

RITCHIE

What guy?

PEARL

I don't know who he was.

RITCHIE

Know someone who might?

PEARL

Maybe. Maybe this guy I was talking to there, seemed to be friends with everybody.

RITCHIE

What's his name?

PEARL

Jack. Jack... Tillis.

RITCHIE

Jack Tillis. Got an address?

PEARL

(chuckles)

I just met him the other night.

RITCHIE

Right. Anything else you can tell me?

Pearl shakes her head.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

You sure?

PEARL

Can't think of anything.

RITCHIE

You've got Detective Krowlen's number, right? In case you do think of something?

She nods. So does Ritchie.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
I guess that's all then. Thanks for
coming down, talking to us. You've
been a big help.

She smiles a little and heads for the door.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Hey Pearl...
(beat)
You stay outta trouble, okay?

She rolls her eyes and leaves.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
(to Krowlen)
Get me an address for Jack Tillis.

INT. TONY KRISHTON LITERARY AGENCY -- DAY

The desks are empty, the phones are silent. Three people
are in the office. One of them is Jack Tillis.

He's on the phone when Ritchie and Krowlen walk in.

The two detectives move to the center of the room and look
from one person to the next to the next.

RITCHIE
Excuse me.

The three men look up.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Which one of you is Jack Tillis?

Two of them go back to work. Jack stares at the detectives.

JACK
(into phone)
We're clear, right? ... Good. Catch
ya on the flip side.

Ritchie raises an eyebrow. Jack hangs up and walks over to
them.

RITCHIE
Catch ya on the flip side?

JACK
What can I do for you?

RITCHIE
Catch ya on the flip side?

JACK
Something wrong with that?

RITCHIE
Haven't heard it in awhile is all.

JACK
What can I do for you?

Ritchie glances at Krowlen and Krowlen steps forward.

KROWLEN
My name is Detective Paul Krowlen,
this is my partner Detective Ritchie.
We were hoping to ask you a few
questions.

Jack puts his hands in his pockets.

The detectives involuntarily stiffen, just a tad.

JACK
Questions about what?

KROWLEN
What were you doing Friday night?

JACK
Friday night...

KROWLEN
There was a party, right? At the
beach?

JACK
I don't think so... No. Friday night
I was... yeah, I was home. Playing
poker with some friends.

KROWLEN
You sure?

JACK
I should think so.
(laughs)
I didn't have *that* many beers.

Krowlen glances over at Ritchie, not sure what to do.

Ritchie takes a step back.

KROWLEN
We talked to a young woman earlier
today, and she said she was with you
at a party on the beach that night.

JACK
She's wrong.

KROWLEN
Because you were at home...

JACK
Playing poker.

KROWLEN
All night.

JACK
(another laugh)
And some of the morning.

KROWLEN
How many people were there?

JACK
Five or six...

KROWLEN
Which?

Jack glares at him for a second.

JACK
Six.

KROWLEN
Friends from here?

JACK
A couple of them.

KROWLEN
What are their names?

JACK
I'm sorry?

KROWLEN
Their names... Can you give me their names?

JACK
Why?

KROWLEN
I'd like to talk to them.

JACK
Why?

Ritchie's jacket starts ringing. He steps away from the conversation and pulls out a cell phone.

RITCHIE

Ritchie here.

LILY (V.O.)

Yancy Ogabon is on the line. You want me to patch him through?

RITCHIE

Absolutely.

He glances over at Krowlen as he waits. The two men are still talking, nothing seems to have changed.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Yancy, hi! What you got for me? ... That's the one. What's the name on the lease? ... Great, Yance, thanks a bunch. I'll, uh...

He looks at Jack.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

I'll catch ya on the flip side. ... What? People say it...

He laughs and hangs up and walks back over to his student.

JACK

I'll give you the names, fine. I just don't see the point in--

RITCHIE

Tony Krishton at the poker party?

JACK

(beat)

Tony Krishton's my boss.

RITCHIE

Yeah, I saw his name on the door. He there Friday?

JACK

No... We don't... socialize.

RITCHIE

But you were at his beach house Friday night...

JACK

(laughs)

Guess you don't hear too good. I wasn't at the beach--

RITCHIE

No, of course not.

(MORE)

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Because if you were and you lied
about it, that would implicate you
in murder.

Jack stares at him.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Why don't you take your hands out of
your pockets?

JACK
Why? You think I'm gonna shoot you?

RITCHIE
I think you're lying about where you
were the other night and that makes
you a suspect and that means I can't
trust you.

JACK
Anything you see in my pocket is all
me, okay? Ain't no gun in here...

RITCHIE
I'd still like to see your hands, if
it's all the same to you.

Jack chuckles and raises his hands above his head mockingly.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Tony Krishton at the poker party?

JACK
No.

RITCHIE
He here today?

JACK
No. He generally takes a nap on
Sundays.

RITCHIE
Why are you?

Jack raises an eyebrow.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Working... on Sunday...

JACK
Why are you?

RITCHIE
Murderers don't generally take naps...

JACK
Neither does Hollywood.

RITCHIE
You know where Tony Krishton...
sleeps?

JACK
No.

RITCHIE
Know how I can find out?

JACK
Nope.

RITCHIE
Wouldn't it be in some sort of
database on one of these computers?

JACK
Could be I suppose.

RITCHIE
Why don't you look for me?

JACK
(long pause)
Sure.

He goes to one of the desks and sits at the computer.

Krowlen looks over at Ritchie, Ritchie nods toward Jack,
Krowlen steps over and watches the computer screen.

Ritchie steps away a couple steps and opens his phone back
up and dials three digits.

RITCHIE
Los Angeles. Krishton, Tony. ...
Yes, please.
(pause while it rings)
Mr. Krishton? My name is Detective
Isaac Ritchie. ... Detective...
Isaac... Ritchie... I'm with LAPD, I
was hoping I could come by and see
you today. ... I'd really rather
wait till I see you. ... Great!
And... what's your address?

He pulls a pen from his pocket and writes on his hand as he
listens.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Okay. I'll see you in a few minutes
then.

He hangs up and walks over and pats Krowlen on the shoulder.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

JACK

What?

RITCHIE

You've been a big help, Mr. Tillis.

(smiles)

I'll catch ya on the flip side.

The detectives leave. Jack stares at them as they do.

INT. TONY KRISHTON'S CONDO -- DAY

Tony's condo is mapped out with the kitchen and living room attached to each other, the front door sort of on the border between the two. The bedrooms and bathrooms are in the back.

Tony is standing at the kitchen counter, staring at the door and drumming his fingers, anxious to know what Detective Ritchie wants.

He's been racking his brain, trying to figure out what it could be about, and all he keeps coming back to is Brent. The way he acted at the office, the abnormality of being there on Saturday, the night he tried to throw himself out a window and Tony had to talk him down.

His fingers drum faster.

There's a knock at the door. Tony almost leaps over the counter, but rushes around it instead. He opens the door and sees the two detectives. They come inside without waiting to be asked.

RITCHIE

Mr. Krishton?

TONY

Yeah.

RITCHIE

I'm Detective Ritchie, we spoke on the phone. This is my partner, Detective Krowlen. We just-

TONY

What's this about?

RITCHIE

It's about your beach house.

TONY

My beach house... The one in Santa Monica?

KROWLEN

How many you have?

TONY

Two. But I haven't been down to Santa Monica in years. When I get a day off I don't wanna spend it that close to home, you know? I usually fly out to Cape Cod. Quieter there. Prettier.

RITCHIE

(looks down at his shoes)

Mr. Krishton, we have a problem here. We were told that there was a party at the Santa Monica house Friday night. A fairly... wild... party. Is there anyone who may have used your house for something like that?

TONY

(fear flashes across his face)

Not... really. I mean, no one asked for permission or anything. What exactly do you mean by wild?

RITCHIE

We can't be sure. We assume there were booze, we think there were drugs, we know there were hookers.

TONY

And, uh... Why are you involved?

RITCHIE

We're homicide detectives, Mr. Krishton.

TONY

Homicide?

RITCHIE

One of the prostitutes was killed.

TONY

I see. How did it...

RITCHIE

She was shot. Then buried in the sand. Then someone else dug her up and called us.

TONY
So there was a witness...

RITCHIE
There may have been.

TONY
When... What night was she killed?

RITCHIE
Friday.

TONY
(looks up at the
ceiling)
Maybe...

A pause as the detectives wait for him to finish.

RITCHIE
Maybe what, Mr. Krishton?

TONY
Oh, I was just thinking out loud.

RITCHIE
(smiles)
Well why don't you finish the thought?

TONY
I just... It's probably nothing.

RITCHIE
Tell us anyway.

TONY
He hasn't been up there for at least
a year, far as I know.

RITCHIE
Who?

TONY
A friend of mine. He works for me.

KROWLEN
Jack Tillis?

TONY
What? No. What does he have to do
with this?

RITCHIE
Who hasn't been up there, Mr.
Krishton?

TONY

A few years ago, when I stopped using the house, I gave the keys to a friend of mine. He needed a place to get away with his girlfriend. I... He's been sober for almost a year. I was thinking maybe he got nostalgic and went down there and maybe he witnessed something.

RITCHIE

What's his name?

TONY

Brent. Brent Fischer.

He goes to a table by the couch.

TONY (CONT'D)

I have his address in my book, I'll get it for you.

Ritchie looks over at Krowlen and smiles.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Brent is sitting on the couch, his head back, his eyes closed. Footsteps come from the back. Hurried footsteps, moving back and forth. The phone rings.

EMILY (O.S.)

Can you get that? I need to scoot...

Brent sighs and sits up and looks for the phone. It's a portable, always in the last place you look, this time hiding in plain sight on the coffee table in front of him.

BRENT

(into phone)

Yeah. ... Hey Jack- what? When? Wait, Krish knows? ... When did they leave? How much did they know?

Emily hurries toward the door, pulling on her coat. She stops and gives him a quick peck on the cheek.

EMILY

See you later.

BRENT

(nods at her, listening to Jack)

You think they bought it? Then why did... Hang on.

He watches Emily leave, waits until he hears the *ping!* of the arriving elevator.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Why did they call Krish if they bought the poker story? ... Christ. This is bad. Does everyone know the party never happened? ... All right. All right, I guess there's... I guess it's my problem now. I'll just have to wait and see if they show up. Thanks for trying. ... I know. It's... not your fault. I'll... it's not your fault.

He hangs up and falls back onto the couch, bringing his hands to his face.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Christ!

There's a knock at the door. His head whips toward it, he stares at it, suddenly very sure it's the detectives Jack just told him about. He gets to his feet very slowly.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Co...
(clears his throat)
Coming.

He stops with his hand on the knob, takes a deep breath, turns it and opens the door. There's nobody there.

He steps forward to look around and kicks a box at his feet. He looks down at it, bends to pick it up. His eyes immediately go to the return address. But there is no return address. Just a word where a name should be. A single word.

WHY?

He looks down the hall, to the stairs. Nobody there, already gone.

He grabs the box and jumps to his feet and takes it to the table by the couch, kicking the door shut behind him.

With that done, with the package inside and out of sight, he takes two steps away from it and runs his hands through his hair. The one-word question could only refer to one thing, and only one person knew about that one thing, and she can't be sending him packages, for obvious reasons. He goes to

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

and opens the refrigerator, then slams it shut, remembering there's no booze in the house.

He groans and looks back at the other room. He taps his foot rapidly, trying to think, trying to decide what to do. Finally he nods and snatches a knife from the counter.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He walks purposefully to the table, sits down on the couch, cuts through the package's tape. He drops the knife and swallows hard and rests his hands on the lid. Closing his eyes, he pulls the box open. With one last breath, he opens his eyes and looks inside.

A PLASTIC BAG COVERED WITH BLACK TAPE

And a note attached to it, three more words.

WITH LOVE, JANINE

He looks at it as if it's evil, pulls it out, smacks the box across the room. Dropping the bag onto the table, he grabs the knife and slices into it. He stares at what's inside.

EMILY'S GLOVES

JANINE (V.O.)

It's cold out. I don't have any gloves.

BRENT (V.O.)

It's June!

JANINE (V.O.)

We're by the beach... My hands get cold really fast.

BRENT (V.O.)

Aw, I'm sorry.

(beat)

Here, take these.

He closes his eyes tight for a second.

His hand is suspended inches above the gloves, terrified. Terrified because there's something in the gloves, something filling them. Terrified that they're filled with Janine's hands.

He holds his breath, picks up one of the gloves and tips it and stares at what spills out.

SAND

The gloves are filled with sand. He forces himself to breathe, to think. He jumps up and practically runs to

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

From one of the cupboards he pulls a box of matches and a bottle of lighter fluid. From beneath the sink he pulls a trash can. Armed with these things, he goes back to

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

and the evidence that must be destroyed.

With a sweep of his arm, the gloves and the sand and the black plastic bag drop into the can. He jabs the knife into the lighter fluid and drops the whole bottle inside. A match is struck, a fire is set, the evidence burns.

The phone rings. There's a knock at the door.

He grits his teeth and glances around.

BRENT
(calling)
Just a minute...

He pulls off his shirt quickly and uses it to pick up the burning can, carrying it into

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The phone stops ringing as he shuts the door and puts his shirt back on and goes back out to

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

and over to the door.

BRENT
Who is it?

RITCHIE (O.S.)
Police.

He takes a step back and bends over and puts his head in his hands, suppressing a scream.

BRENT
(half-opening the
door)
Something I can do for you, Officer?

RITCHIE
Detective. Detective Isaac Ritchie,
and this here's Detective Paul
Krowlen. Can we come in?

BRENT
Actually, I'd rather you didn't.
The place is kind of a mess and-

RITCHIE
Oh we don't mind.

They push past him and into the living room. He turns to face them, trying to hide his fear with anger.

BRENT
What do you want, Detective?

KROWLEN
You go to a party Friday night?

BRENT
No.

RITCHIE
Is something burning?

BRENT
(to Ritchie; sharper
than intended)
No!

KROWLEN
You weren't at the beach?

BRENT
No...

KROWLEN
Where were you?

RITCHIE
You sure nothing's burning?

Ritchie takes a step toward the stairs, toward the back.
Brent steps in front of him.

BRENT
Nothing's burning.
(to Krowlen)
I was here.

RITCHIE
It smells like—

BRENT
I burnt a roast!

RITCHIE
A roast?

Brent stares at him, trying to hide his desperation.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Isn't that the kitchen over there?

BRENT
Yeah...

RITCHIE
It's coming from—

BRENT
(puts a hand on
Ritchie's chest)
I told you it's nothing.

RITCHIE

All right, let's have a look in the
bedroom.

BRENT

I don't think so.

Ritchie chuckles and tries to go past, but Brent pushes him
back.

RITCHIE

Watch it.
(beat)
Move aside.

Krowlen steps up, a hand in his jacket.

BRENT

(trying to act strong)
Show me a warrant.

RITCHIE

I think I can prove probable cause.

BRENT

Not the way I see it.

RITCHIE

There's something burning back there.

BRENT

I told you there isn't.

RITCHIE

What is it? Evidence? Clothes?
Pictures of her?

BRENT

I don't know what you're talking
about.

RITCHIE

Gloves? The gloves you were wearing
when you did it?

BRENT

Did what?

RITCHIE

That's it, isn't it? Move aside.

BRENT

I want you to leave.

RITCHIE

Move aside.

BRENT

No.

RITCHIE

Krowlen, move him.

Krowlen steps forward and grabs Brent's arm. Brent shrugs him away, turns.

BRENT

Don't you touch me!

Ritchie's gun is half out of its holster.

RITCHIE

Get up against the wall and stay there. Krowlen, go check out the back.

Krowlen starts toward the stairs.

Brent steps up to him, Ritchie grabs him, gun drawn, and shoves him away.

Brent stares at the barrel pointed at his face, breathing heavily and sweating badly.

Krowlen disappears into the back.

Brent closes his eyes, licks his lips.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

There's still time, Fischer. Cooperate. Just cooperate. It'll go so much easier if you do.

He swallows hard and tries to control his breathing.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

It's a matter of seconds. Seconds. Krowlen's gonna come back out with... what? A basket? A trash can full of ashes? Maybe it burned, maybe it's unrecognizable, but we'll figure out what it is. We'll make our case, Fischer. You *will* go down.

His eyes are on fire. His head is spinning.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

And even if we can't, even if it's completely destroyed, we'll have more than enough for a warrant. We'll come back here in an hour or two and turn this place upside down. I mean really tear it apart.

(MORE)

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

What'll we find? Drugs? Coke? Or
is there another corpse or two hiding
behind the tub?

BRENT

Shut up! Just shut up! Just shut
up and leave me alone!

RITCHIE

Why? Am I getting to you? Am I
touching a nerve?

He turns away and clenches his eyes shut and bites his lower
lip.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Something you wanna say, Fischer?
Something you wanna tell me? Say
it... It's that easy. Just open
your mouth and... speak.

He clenches his teeth and holds his breath.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Running outta time, Fish. Running
outta—

Brent steps forward, shouting, forcing Ritchie to back away.

BRENT

No! Don't call me that! Don't you
fucking call me that!

His hand is raised, poised to strike.

KROWLEN (O.S.)

Step away!

Krowlen is at the top of the stairs, gun aimed at the back
of Brent's head.

KROWLEN (CONT'D)

Back away right now.

Brent stares at Ritchie, takes a deep breath, steps back.
Krowlen moves to his partner's side, strafing, keeping his
gun on its target.

RITCHIE

Looks like time's up. What'd you
find?

KROWLEN

Nothing.

DREAM MAN

Running outta time, Fish! Better
make a choice!

10-YEAR-OLD BRENT

I... I shouldn't even be here...

DREAM MAN

Well you are! You are because I'm
your dad! Now make a frickin' bet!

10-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Red! Red even!

DREAM MAN

(drops some chips on
the table)

Red even!

The wheel spins, the people cheer. The man cheers. Brent
just looks at his feet and breathes.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

He sobs one more time, jumps to his feet, runs up the stairs
and to

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He spins a circle, looking around. It's gone. The trash
can is gone. He looks over at the window, stunned. The
curtains blow up, billowing in the wind.

He stares for just a second, then runs over and looks out on
the fire escape. Nothing there, either.

He staggers back and falls onto his bed and brings his hands
to his face, his chest heaving with relief, confusion, and
more than a little fear.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. CASINO -- NIGHT -- BLACK & WHITE

10-year-old Brent and his dad, the dream man, are walking
into the crowded casino. The room is filled with the sounds
of gambling. Spinning wheels, shouts of victory, moans of
loss sail through the air. Brent looks nervous, glancing
around, pulling at his dad's shirt sleeve.

10-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Dad...

(beat)

Dad...

(MORE)

10-YEAR-OLD BRENT (CONT'D)

(beat)

Dad...

The man finally stops walking and looks over at him.

10-YEAR-OLD BRENT (CONT'D)

Dad, the sign. It says you gotta be eighteen.

DAD

Don't worry about it! They know me here, you're all right. Now look...

He hands Brent some chips.

DAD (CONT'D)

These are yours to lose, okay? You can do whatever you want with them. This is gonna be great, Fish! You want a Coke or something?

Brent nods, not excited at all.

DAD (CONT'D)

All right, wait here.

The man pats him on the shoulder and goes over to the bar. Brent looks down at the chips in his hand, shakes his head, looks back up.

COREY

Why did you let me die?

Brent jumps back, drops the chips. Corey is standing right in front of him, pale and bruised and cut, the side of his head brutally caved in.

COREY (CONT'D)

Why did you let him kill me?

Brent's mouth drops open slightly. He backs away. He shakes his head. He bumps into someone's legs.

JANINE (O.S.)

Why did you let me die?

He whirls to face her, his breathing shallow. He stumbles back, turns, looks around wildly. They're gone. His dad walks over with a soda.

DAD

What's the matter, Fish? Where're your chips?

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- DAY

Brent is laying on the bed, sprawled out as he fell, his eyes closed and his breathing slow.

EMILY (O.S.)

Brent?

He rolls onto his side, pulling his legs up onto the bed.

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

(closer)

Brent?

He groans and begins the journey back to the waking world. The door opens, Emily walks in.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brent?

He sits up slowly and opens his eyes.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You okay?

BRENT

What? Yeah, I'm fine.

EMILY

(long pause, staring
at him)

Tony called.

Brent groans and falls back.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Said to call him right away, it was on the machine when I got home.

BRENT

All right.

EMILY

(fishing)

About that script problem?

BRENT

The script... Yeah, probably. You could say that.

EMILY

Didn't Jack take care of it?

BRENT

(staring at the floor)

No. And it's starting to get outta control.

She sits down on the bed with him.

EMILY
(hopeful)
Anything you want to talk about?

BRENT
No. I can handle it.

He gets up and goes to the window.

EMILY
Are you sure? Brent... I'm worried
about you.

He turns to her.

BRENT
Why?

EMILY
You... Why did you go to the beach
house Friday night and not tell me?

BRENT
What?

EMILY
Why did you go to the beach house
Friday night and not tell me?

BRENT
How did you...

EMILY
Tammy. You weren't here, so I called
Tammy. She said you said something
about a party, about the beach, but
you haven't thrown a party in a year
and that's our house...

BRENT
Emily, I...

EMILY
And it's not like you to lie, Brent.
I've never known you to lie, not to
me. So what happened? What's wrong?
Why did you go to the beach house
Friday night and not tell me?

Brent rubs his face and turns away, trying to think what to
say.

BRENT

I... It was just a little thing, me and Jack and a couple people. Poker. No big deal.

EMILY

(disappointed)
Then why did you lie about it?

BRENT

I didn't lie...

EMILY

Yes you did, Brent! At the restaurant you did. I asked you where you were and you said...

BRENT

I said I was out.

EMILY

You said you were working. And then you wouldn't tell me what on.

BRENT

Well I was working, sort of. There was... The script thing, it started Friday, and we spent a lot of the night trying to figure out what to do about it...

EMILY

But you just said you were playing poker!

BRENT

We were! God, Em, what do you want from me?

EMILY

I want you to tell me the truth!

BRENT

I can't!

He stops and looks down and can't believe what he just said.

EMILY

Why not?

He puts his hands on the window and closes his eyes.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brent? Why not? If you tell me, I promise I'll try to understand...

He sobs quietly, half a chuckle.

She goes to him, wraps her arms around his waist, puts her head on his shoulder.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I love you, Brent. You know I do.
I need you or else I can't survive.
That's what a relationship and
marriage and life are all about.
We're engaged to be married because
we love each other *that* much, because
life would be pointless and loveless
and... lifeless... without it.
Without each other we can't go on.
So just tell me. Tell me what
happened. I'll help you get through
it. I'll help you get past it.
Tell me and we can end your pain.

He turns to her and pushes her away.

BRENT

I can't tell you because it's a secret
project, Em. It gonna be big, the
next *Titanic*. *Titanic* and *Jurassic*
Park and *E.T.* all in one. That's
why it's so hard, and that's why I'm
wrapped up in it. Just bear with me
a few days, maybe a week, and we'll
be set for life. Okay?

She stares at him, her eyes watering.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I swear, that's all it is.

She blinks away some tears and looks past him at the window,
staring off into space.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I swear, Em. I love you too. I
love you just like you love me, more
even. I swear it on everything I
am. But I can't let you in on this
one yet, I have to handle this myself.
It doesn't mean I don't love you.
I'm doing it for you. I'm doing it
to make sure we never end up apart.
We'll be together forever and have
nothing to worry about. I swear it.
I swear it. Okay?

She sighs and shakes her head, then nods.

EMILY

(masked anger)

Okay. Okay. You do what you have
to do.

She turns and starts for the door, then stops and smells the air.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Did you burn something?

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY -- AERIAL SHOT

Brent's black sports car moves slowly, avoiding the place he is going but knowing he has to go there. Slow, sad music is playing in the background.

INT. TONY'S CONDO -- DAY

There's a knock at the door. Tony comes out from the back and opens it. Brent brushes past him, storming inside.

BRENT

(angry)

What did you tell them?

TONY

Excuse me?

BRENT

The cops! What did you tell them?

TONY

I... I told them you used to use the-

BRENT

Damn it, Krish! I got a pair of hard-up sherlocks trying to pin me up for murder, and you're handing em the nails!

TONY

All right, wait just one second, Brent! Were you or were you not at the beach house Friday night?

BRENT

I was not! But they don't believe me! Why? Because you told them to look at me!

TONY

I didn't tell them to do anything! They said there may have been a witness, that there probably was, and I thought maybe you were it!

Brent sinks. He'd built himself up all the way over, preparing himself to put on a show, and Tony stopped it cold. A witness...

TONY (CONT'D)

I thought maybe you went to see the old place, to do some thinking, and saw something you shouldn't have! I thought that was maybe why you were all flippy at the office yesterday! I did not tell them you're a murderer! I did not tell them to look at you!

BRENT

(blinks and looks up at him)

That's horse shit. What else did you tell them? Did you tell them about the drugs? Did you tell them I tried to kill myself?

TONY

No, I didn't tell them that. Should I have?

They stare at each other.

BRENT

I'm clean, Tony. Have been since that night. Will be for many nights to come.

TONY

Good. I'm glad.

BRENT

Are you? Maybe you'd like me to slip. Maybe you'd like me to have killed that girl. Then you'd have an excuse to cut me loose.

TONY

Oh, just shut up! Before you really piss me off...

BRENT

(laughs)

That's rich! Before I piss you off! Yeah, you're the victim here! I'm attacking you! Stupid old Brent Fischer, doped up again, flying off the handle!

TONY

I don't think you're—

BRENT

Don't patronize me, Krish! Don't patronize me and don't play along to get rid of me!

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

You think I'm paranoid! About the cops, about you out for blood! Or maybe you want me to think you think I'm paranoid when really I'm right on the money!

TONY

Brent-

BRENT

I'm the best agent you *fucking* got, you know that? Know who I saw last night? Al Pacino! Al Pacino! Wants a new movie, asked *me* for a script! So maybe you better stop and think before you throw me to the wolves.

Brent storms out, slamming the door shut behind him. Tony stares after him and shakes his head slowly.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Ritchie is sitting at his desk, Krowlen is sitting on top of it. Ritchie is on the phone.

RITCHIE

Right, I know. ... Thanks anyway.

He hangs up. Krowlen looks at him.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

No good. Judge Green says we need more to go on.

KROWLEN

He attacked you!

RITCHIE

I provoked him, Krowlen! I was trying to push his buttons. It worked.

KROWLEN

So what now? He's our guy, how do we get him?

RITCHIE

Go talk to him again tomorrow, see if he leaves anything laying out for us to find.

KROWLEN

Meantime?

RITCHIE

It's Sunday. Go home. Get some sleep.

KROWLEN

Home? Thought this was home...

RITCHIE

Common misconception. Seriously, go. I'm going to, once I finish up some paperwork.

KROWLEN

Yeah?

Ritchie nods. Krowlen sits there for a few seconds, looking down, contemplating the idea, then shakes his head and walks away.

Ritchie opens a file on his desk, glances over it, turns to his computer. Lily walks over and tosses an envelope down in front of him.

LILY

Just came for you, Detective.

She walks away. He glances at the envelope, addressed to him. No stamp, self-delivered. No return address. He opens it and pulls out the contents.

Pictures.

His eyes widen.

RITCHIE

(under his breath)

Never sit on your hands...

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Brent is sitting on Jack's couch, his foot tapping and his hand twitching. Jack comes in from another room carrying two bottles of beer. He hands one to Brent. Brent guzzles from it hungrily.

BRENT

Thanks, man. Christ... I'm in a load of shit.

JACK

The good detectives pay a visit?

BRENT

Krish sent em right to me. Right fucking to me.

JACK

How'd it go? What'd you tell them?

BRENT

I didn't tell them anything, but I
blew it. I still managed to blow
it.

JACK

What happened?

Brent empties the bottle and sets it on the table. He sniffs
shortly and pulls a small plastic bag from his pocket, tosses
it to Jack.

BRENT

Want some?

Jack looks at it. Filled with leaves and buds.

JACK

Weed?

BRENT

Best I could do. Short notice.

JACK

I ain't done this shit in... what?
Three years. Let me go get something
stronger.

Jack gets up and runs to the back.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The penthouse is empty. A key works in the lock. The phone
rings. The door opens and Emily walks in, hears the phone,
tosses her keys on the table by the couch and runs to get
it. She doesn't see the keys slide across the glass and
fall to the floor.

She answers the phone from somewhere in the other room.

EMILY (O.S.)

Emily Moss... Tony, hi, no he's not
but I'm glad you called.

She comes back into the living room, notices the keys, bends
down to grab them, stops, staring at the couch. Staring at
the newspaper beneath the couch. She pulls it out and looks
at the headline.

HOOKER FOUND DEAD - BURIED AT BEACH

The sound of the man grunting and panting plays through her
head while she talks into the phone, growing gradually louder
and faster and more passionate.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I wanted to have a little dinner party tonight here at the penthouse. ... You, me, Brent, maybe Jack... You know, nothing big, just some fun. ... Well I don't know when Brent'll be back, so I guess just stop by in an hour or two. ... Great. See you then.

She hangs up, sets the phone and the paper on the table, stands up slowly. The man in her head is moaning now, grunting fast and incredibly loud, and then he suddenly lets out a long groan of completion. Emily takes out her wallet and looks at the picture of the man in the sleeve after Brent.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOSS HOUSE -- EVENING

A kitchen/living room painted in yellows and whites. A table in the center, cheap, square. A YOUNG GIRL sitting at it, staring off into space. A door in the far wall, which opens now.

A WOMAN, dressed in a silk robe, comes out and stops. She cocks her head and stares at the girl, gets a strange look on her face, like something she should have known for years has just suddenly occurred to her.

WOMAN

Get to bed... I'll... see you in the morning.

And the woman goes off into a hallway.

And the girl stares after her sadly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Emily stares at the picture angrily.

EMILY

(to herself)

All right, Dad... Now it's finally over.

She snatches her keys and walks briskly out the door.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Brent is leaning back, laughing. He sniffs, wipes his nose. Half a plate of cocaine sits on the table between him and Jack.

BRENT

Ah, man. The cops... they really do
have incredible timing, don't they?

Jack is leaning forward, straw in hand. He tosses the straw
down and blinks a few times.

JACK

Like a radar. Like when you're in
bed with another woman, your girl'll
show up, sure as church on Sunday.

BRENT

(spits with laughter)
You don't go to church...

JACK

No, but some people do.

Brent shakes with laughter, ripples with it, leans forward
and clutches his stomach and roars with it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Dude, calm down. Wasn't that funny...

This gets him going even more. He starts to stand, stumbles
forward, almost falls into the table. Jack starts to laugh
too, helps Brent sit back down.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay... Okay already!

Brent starts to calm down, the laughter dies away. He
chuckles a few more times and sits back.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay? What happened with the craps?

BRENT

The...

He starts laughing again, harder than ever.

JACK

What? What I say?

BRENT

The cr- The cra-

JACK

The cops, moron! What happened with
the cops?

BRENT

Oh, Christ... What happened with
the...

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

(another short
convulsion)

With the cops... You know... Ten
minutes earlier, twenty minutes later
and everything woulda been fine.

JACK

But...

BRENT

But! But! But they had to show up
right when it was burning. Right
when I set the damn thing on fire.

JACK

Fire? Set what on fire?

BRENT

The gloves! I set the fucking gloves
on fire!

JACK

Wait a minute, what I miss? What
gloves?

BRENT

The gloves! The ones I...
(looks down)
The ones I gave to Janine.

JACK

(glances around)
The ones... The ones you gave to
Janine when?

Brent sits there, staring down at the cocaine.

JACK (CONT'D)

Brent?

He looks up at Jack slowly.

JACK (CONT'D)

The ones you gave to-

BRENT

That night! The night of the party.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Ritchie jogs up to Lily's desk, searching the room with his
eyes.

RITCHIE

Detective Krowlen leave already?

LILY

Just a minute ago. Want me to page him back?

RITCHIE

No. No, don't bother. Get Judge Green on the phone.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

JACK

What are you telling me, Brent? You gave her some gloves and she went for a walk?

BRENT

We. We went for a walk.

JACK

You and Janine. Went for a walk.

Brent nods, then blinks slowly, dizzy from the movement.

JACK (CONT'D)

You're telling me you were... with her when... when... when it happened? When she died?

Brent's eyes suddenly focus, or try to focus, on the man across the table from him. Fear floods his face. Guilt. He swallows hard and licks his lips.

BRENT

I don't think I should talk anymore.

JACK

No, I think you should... I think you should tell me exactly what we're dealing with.

BRENT

(stands up slowly,
supporting himself
on the table)

No. I think I should go.

JACK

You're not driving like that.

He lets go of the table and tries to stand on his own and falls back onto the couch.

BRENT

(giggles)

You're right. I think I should stay. But I don't think I should talk.

JACK

No. You have to talk. You have to tell me what happened.

Brent shakes his head drowsily, leans back against the couch.

JACK (CONT'D)

Brent. Stay with me. What happened when you went for a walk with Janine?

BRENT

(out of it, half asleep)
We walked. We walked and we talked and we...

JACK

Did you kill her, Brent?

BRENT

Who?

JACK

Did you shoot Janine?

BRENT

Janine...
(groans)
Janine... I... I didn't mean for it to happen. I didn't... mean... for...

And he slips into the world of the subconscious.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FISCHER HOUSE -- NIGHT -- BLACK & WHITE

The room. The wooden room. The wooden room from Brent's second dream. Only this time it's not empty. Two people kneel by the window, kids, kids staring out at the night sky. One of them is Corey, the other is Brent. Brent is twelve years old.

COREY

(excited)
Do you see him?

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

(playing along)
No. Not yet.

COREY

Well where is he? When does he come?

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

I don't know. It's after midnight, he could come any time.

Corey looks over at him, watches him. Brent looks back.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT (CONT'D)

What?

COREY

Some guys at school... They say he's not real.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

What? What guys?

COREY

Some older guys. Sixth graders.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Well they're nuts. If Santa's not real, who brings us the presents?

COREY

They say it's parents. Parents trying to trick us.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

(laughs)

You know *that's* not true. When has Dad ever given us a present?

COREY

(half-grin)

Yeah...

They turn back to the window, watching for sleighs and reindeer.

INT. JACK'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Jack is standing at his kitchen counter, leaning on his hands. His head is down and his eyes are shut tight. He's trying to decide what the hell he should do. He licks his teeth and takes a deep breath and goes to the fridge for a beer.

He pops the cap and takes a long pull and glances at the door to the living room. The confession, if that's what it was, is still ringing in his ears. He shakes his head and takes another swallow. He looks up at the ceiling and pats his leg nervously with his free hand. Finally he nods and heads for

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

JACK

Nap time's over, man. Time to chat.

No answer.

Jack circles to the front of the sofa and stops, staring.

It's empty. Brent isn't there.

Jack licks his lips and glances around. His eyes land on the table. The cocaine is missing too, replaced with a twenty dollar bill and a note.

He picks it up and reads it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Thanks for the bag. Catch ya later.
Brent.

He drops the note and sighs.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah, like a twenty covers it...

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING -- AERIAL SHOT

Brent is driving normally, or as normally as he can. The music is quiet, tired, reflective.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Emily is sitting on the edge of the coffee table, her back to the door, her gaze locked on some unseen point across the room. The newspaper is in her hands, her eyes are filled with tears. We see her from the waist up, nothing below the hips.

A key works in the door's lock. The camera circles around and moves away, never showing the floor directly in front of her. Brent walks in, but stops when he sees her.

He was feeling a little better about things, his mind relaxed by drugs, his tension released by unloading on Jack. He hadn't meant to say as much as he had, but he's glad he did.

Jack wouldn't tell anybody the truth, that much he knew. Jack could be trusted. Jack was a friend. But now, walking in and seeing Emily sitting there, staring off into space, clearly upset, he realized Jack was all he knew. And the terror came flooding back.

He takes a step forward, absent-mindedly leaving the door open.

BRENT

Emily?

She doesn't answer. He steps slowly up to the table and rests his fists on its surface. He and Emily are separated now by five feet of glass.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Emi-

EMILY

Who is she?

BRENT

Who?

EMILY

(laughs angrily)

You know damn well who!

He looks down at the table and swallows hard.

BRENT

No. I... I don't.

EMILY

(jumps to her feet
and turns)Stop it, Brent. Don't lie to me.
Not now.

BRENT

I...

(looks up at her)

I didn't want you to...

EMILY

Didn't want me to what, Brent?

BRENT

I didn't want you to find out. I
didn't want you to know.

EMILY

Well that's a relief! And here I
thought you kept forgetting to tell
me!

BRENT

Stop yelling!

EMILY

Why? Why should I, Brent? Why should
I listen to anything you say?

BRENT

Because I love you and I deserve a
chance to explain!

EMILY

You think you can explain why you
slept with another woman? You think
you can explain why I wasn't good
enough for you?

BRENT

Stop it! Don't say that! You don't know, you don't understand! I never loved her! I love you! Only you!

EMILY

Oh, you don't love her! Then that's okay!

(beat)

Think back a minute, Brent. Think back to the first time we made love. You remember that? It was sweet... and passionate... and unlike anything that happened before. It was real. It was true. And I told you that night that you were the first man I ever truly loved. That you were a savior to me, a hero, because I'd been spending my life bouncing from one man to the next, trying to prove to myself...

(tosses the newspaper down)

Who is she? A hooker? Like the one in there?

She points at the story. Brent blinks, looks at it, looks back at her.

BRENT

What?

EMILY

Did you know that one too? The one who died?

BRENT

What?

EMILY

Where'd you meet her, huh? On a curb? In a hotel? At some seedy strip club?

BRENT

Emily, who are you ta-

EMILY

Brent, for Christ's sake! It's over! I know! I know all about Janine!

His eyes go wide. He stares at her.

BRENT

Her name wasn't in the...

EMILY

In the what? No, don't answer. I don't care. She left this for you.

She tosses a small slip of paper onto the table. Brent glares at it like it's Satan himself.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Aren't you gonna read it? Don't you wanna know what it says? Don't bother. I'll tell you. 'With love, Janine.' That's what it says. That's all. How sweet. How passionate. How real. How true. I'm sure it's so much better than us.

BRENT

Did... you...

EMILY

Meet her? No. No, the note was here when I got back from the store. Here, attached to this.

She steps to the side and motions to a trash can. Motions to *the* trash can. The one with the gloves that had vanished from his bedroom. His mouth gapes open.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I think she may be mad about something. Thing's full of ashes. Maybe you should go talk to her.

He stares at the can.

EMILY (CONT'D)

See your line is, 'No, Em. I'm here with you.'

(beat)

But maybe that's not what you wanna say at all... Maybe what you wanna say is, 'Yeah. Yeah, I probably should.'

He stares at the can.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Are you paying attention, Brent? I'm giving you a choice right now. Me or her. Who's it gonna be?

He stares at the can.

Then he suddenly blinks and looks up at her.

BRENT

You. You. Of course it's you.

EMILY
Because you love me...

BRENT
Yes!

EMILY
Only me...

BRENT
It's always been you!

EMILY
Yeah. Always been me.
(beat)
If it's always been me, how come you
ended up in bed with her?

He looks down and bites his lip.

EMILY (CONT'D)
That's kinda what I thought you'd
say.
(glances at her watch)
Time for me to go.

BRENT
What?

EMILY
Got a plane to catch. I'm going to
New York...

BRENT
Why?

EMILY
Why? God you're dense! Almost makes
me glad we're over...

And she walks out, not bothering to shut the door. The elevator *ping!*s and he sinks to the couch with a quiet sob. The doors slide open, he looks up. He watches as they slowly shut, taking half his life away from him. All he has left is his job. He leans back and cries quietly.

His hand finds its way to his pocket, to the half-empty bag of cocaine. He pulls it out and holds it in his palm and stares at it through salty eyes. Drugs are comfort. Drugs are relief. Drugs will make you forget. He opens the bag and dips in a finger. The elevator *ping!*s again, but he doesn't hear it. He brings the finger to his mouth, tastes the snowy escape.

TONY (O.S.)
Brent?

His eyes close, he sighs. He knows the voice, knows who it is. And who else would it possibly be?

TONY (CONT'D)

Tell me that's sugar...

He laughs softly, tosses the bag to the table, stands up and faces his boss.

BRENT

Would you believe me if I did?

TONY

Jesus, Brent. What's the matter with you? You've been clean for-

BRENT

God, you are so gullible! You know how long I stayed clean, Krish? You know how long I waited? Five days! Five days after rehab! And why? Cause that's how long before you paid me! That's how long before I had the cash!

Tony just stands there, stunned, staring at the stranger before him and wondering what happened to his friend.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You're waiting for me to say I'm sorry, aren't you? You're waiting for me to say I'm wrong. Well not this time! Not anymore! I've done sorry! I've done sad and lonely and afraid! Where did that get me? Nowhere! Where did you get me? Nowhere! I'm done being your project, Tony! I'm done doing everything you say! Take a hike...

TONY

I've only tried to help you, Brent...

BRENT

Damn it, I don't need your help! I don't need your help, I don't need Dr. *Grissom's* help, and I don't need Emily's help either! I don't need people who care about me as long as I behave! As long as I do what they want me to, act how they want me to, say what they want me to! I don't need any of you, so just go to fucking hell!

TONY
 (nods, clears his
 throat)
 Give me the keys to my beach house...

Brent stares at him, then reaches into his pocket, tears a key off the ring and chucks it across the room. Tony stares at it laying on the floor, then turns back to Brent.

TONY (CONT'D)
 I gave you that so you and Emily could use it, so you could have a place to go and relax and get away from it all. I gave you a place to be happy and relax, and you turned it into a place to die. To slowly kill yourself with alcohol and drugs, to slowly kill your spirit. To betray your friends and your fiance and yourself, just to have a little fun.

Brent stares at him coldly.

TONY (CONT'D)
 I don't want the damn house. It would only remind me of what you are. A druggie and a deadbeat, a man who'll be found naked on a carpet in a pool of his own piss and vomit, killed by an overdose of fun. I don't want any part of it, Brent. Not anymore. Don't bother coming in tomorrow...

BRENT
 You couldn't pay me enough.

Tony nods again and turns away. He glances at the key on the floor by the door, shakes his head and leaves without taking it. He slams the door on the way out.

Brent steps back and runs his hands through his hair and groans. He kicks out, sending the trash can rolling across the room, spilling ash all over the carpet. He drops back onto the couch and looks over at the blackened floor.

There's something there, in the mess, sticking out from the pile of ashes. He squints, leans forward, then drops to a knee and sifts it out.

A PICTURE

A picture of him. A picture of him dragging Janine across the beach. He chokes, glances around, flips the picture over. There's writing on the back.

ASK DETECTIVE RITCHIE FOR THE REST

Scrawled in ink, handwritten, the same hand as the notes.
He grits his teeth and flips the picture across the room.

BRENT (CONT'D)
(almost a growl)
God damn it!

There's a knock at the door. He gets up slowly and walks over, looks through the peephole.

BRENT (CONT'D)
(whispered)
Christ...

He snatches the bag from the table and jogs toward the bedroom.

A second later the door bursts open and Ritchie stumbles in, gun in hand. He looks around, runs over and glances into the kitchen, then heads for the back.

The elevator *ping!*s and Jack walks in.

JACK
All right, Brent...

He stops, staring at the ashes on the floor, at the picture, at the key. He goes for the picture, looks at it, flips it over and reads the back.

JACK (CONT'D)
Holy shit...

RITCHIE (O.S.)
Freeze!

Jack looks up.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Where is he?

JACK
You tell me...

RITCHIE
Don't play coy, Tillis, we've got him. He's going down. Don't go down with him.

Jack stands, glances at the table on his way, notices the newspaper and the note on top of it. He steps over and looks at the note.

JACK
 (like he knew it all
 along)
 He didn't do a damn thing, Ritchie!
 (tosses the note at
 him)
 Think *he* wrote that? Christ, man,
 someone's stringing him up by his
 balls!

Ritchie looks at the note, at the ashes, at the picture on
 the floor.

RITCHIE
 Where is he then? Let him tell me
 what happened himself...

JACK
 I don't know. I don't know where he
 is.
 (looks at the key on
 the floor)
 But I have an idea...

He jogs out the door, snatching the key on the way.

Ritchie follows him out.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING -- AERIAL SHOT

Brent drives toward the beach. Fast. The music is angry
 and desperate and about to explode.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- EVENING -- AERIAL SHOT

He pulls into the driveway and jumps out of the car and runs
 inside, stopping by the door to lift up a false rock and
 retrieve a spare key. As we

DISSOLVE TO:

we hear a cell phone ring, then voices in the background.

TONY (V.O.)
 Jack?

JACK (V.O.)
 Kri... Mr. Krishton?

TONY (V.O.)
 I was wondering... Could you check
 on Brent? I'm worried about him...

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT -- AERIAL SHOT

The sky is now totally dark, the stars shining bright, the moon reflecting off the water. The camera moves down and around the house, closing in on a kitchen window. Inside, Brent sits on the floor, leaning back against the counter. The camera continues forward, passing through the window to

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

His eyes are closed, his breathing is slow, there are tears but he makes no noise. The room is dark, a pale grey that seems to match the mood. What light there is comes from the back, the patio, the security lights that automatically come on at night. A noise comes from down the hall, the living room. A voice.

COREY (O.S.)
(excited)
Brent!

His eyes open, turn to the hall in surprise.

COREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Brent, come here! Come look!

He blinks, licks his lips, rolls and pulls himself up.

As he does, as he pulls himself up, his hand slides off the counter above, pulling down a silver mirror. The mirror shatters and the white powder it held spreads across the floor.

Brent leans against the counter and breathes.

COREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you see him?

He swallows and closes his eyes to fight off a dizzy spell.

COREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Well where is he?

INT. FISCHER HOUSE -- NIGHT -- BLACK & WHITE

Corey and Brent kneeling by the window, staring out at the sky.

COREY
Well where is he? When does he come?

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

COREY (O.S.)
When does he come?

He looks over, stares at the hall like it's a portal to Hell. Slowly, cautiously, he staggers toward it. Toward the voice. Toward the voice of his dead brother.

INT. BEACH HOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

COREY (O.S.)

Some guys at school... They say he's not real.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT (O.S.)

What? What guys?

COREY (O.S.)

Some older guys. Sixth graders.

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT (O.S.)

Well they're nuts. If Santa's not real, who brings us the presents?

As the end of the hall approaches, Brent blinks and clears his eyes and stares at what's in front of him. He stumbles forward, into

INT. FISCHER HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

and stares at himself and his brother kneeling by the window.

COREY

They say it's parents. Parents trying to trick us.

BRENT

(stunned, desperate)
Don't... Don't say it...

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Well you *know* that's not true. When has Dad ever given us a present?

COREY

(half-grin)
Yeah...

Brent lets out a long, sad breath and staggers sideways and leans against the wall. His dad walks slowly into the room from the direction of the front door.

DAD

When has Dad ever given us a present?

The boys turn to their father, get to their feet. Corey's face melts with fear. The young Brent just rolls his eyes and sighs.

DAD (CONT'D)

When has *Dad* ever given us a present?

COREY

He didn't mean—

DAD

Let me tell you something about what I give you. I give you food. I give you clothes. I put this God damn roof over your heads, and look! What do I get from you? Crap! Nothing but crap!

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Oh, don't start, Dad. Don't start with your sob story now.

DAD

Sob story?

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

I was just making a point about Santa.

DAD

Sob story?

12-YEAR-OLD BRENT

Not tonight, Dad. It's Christmas E—

DAD

Christmas! It's Christmas!

He's walking forward slowly as he talks, walking toward the boys, his sons, walking toward Corey.

DAD (CONT'D)

You wanna know about Christmas, Core?
You wanna know about Santa Claus?

12-year-old Brent shakes his head and looks away.

DAD (CONT'D)

I'm Santa Claus! Me! I work my ass off all week, all year, to put food on the table and clothes on your back and maybe have a little extra for me! And what I don't spend on that or lose at the *fucking* roulette wheel, I have to save and spend on... guess! You! You and your ungrateful bastard of a brother! So that the two of you can have a Christmas and believe in a big, fat guy with flying deer!

He grabs Corey and throws him across the room.

Leaning against the wall, Brent cringes, staring at the scene from his past but unable to bring himself to stop it.

Helpless. Just like before.

His dad steps across the room and grabs Corey by the shirt.

DAD (CONT'D)

Why can't I just come home and relax?
Why do you always have to piss me
off?

He sends the ten-year-old sprawling with a backhand to the face and immediately pounces, hitting the boy with his elbows and fists and whatever else happens to make contact first.

BRENT

(sobbing, looking
away and staring at
the same time)

Leave it alone. Leave it alone.
You can't stop it. Just leave it
alone.

But the young Brent doesn't leave it alone. Can't leave it alone. Not again. Not anymore. His face is masked with anger, his breathing is fast and labored. He snatches a baseball bat from the wall behind him and charges forward. He plants a foot, swings and connects. Home run! His dad rolls away and hits the floor on his back.

It doesn't end there. The boy charges again, his eyes full of rage, and arcs the weapon down, down at his father's head. But the man sees it coming, blocks it, pulls the bat away and kicks, knocking the twelve-year-old into the far wall.

Dad leaps to his feet, and Brent leans forward and comes at him again. He swings with one hand, off-balance and not nearly as hard as he can, and connects with the young boy's cheekbone. The boy falls to the side, lands on his stomach and stays there.

Over by the wall, the adult Brent cries and brings a hand to his cheek.

BRENT (CONT'D)

No! Leave! Leave it alone, you
bastard!

Not likely. His dad grits his teeth and walks forward, forward toward his fallen son, the bat held high over his head. And then Corey charges into his back, hitting his dad as hard as he can but hardly even making him flinch. The ten-year-old's fists swing pathetically against the man's sides. And Brent, his brother, lays there, on the floor, his hands over his head, weeping.

And against the wall, the adult Brent is weeping too. Crying, sobbing, reliving the pain and horror of the worst night of his life.

He watches in torture as his father turns, turns, turns and swings, swings the weapon Brent gave him, swings and connects with his brother's head.

BRENT (CONT'D)

NO! No! Not again... Not again...

He drops to his knees and sobs as he hears the bat come down once, twice, three more times. And then he looks up slowly and sees his brother, his ten-year-old brother, lying in a pool of blood.

His father is gone, his younger self too. Vanished. He groans and crawls forward and cradles Corey in his arms.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Oh God. Oh God, I am so sorry. We were... We were supposed to move in together. To get away from him. We were supposed to get an apartment and move far away and be together forever. Our kids... our kids would grow up together, would play with each other, would teach each other all the things a parent can't. We were supposed... we were supposed to have a life!

A hand touches his shoulder.

He jumps and whirls around and

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Janine is there. Standing in front of him. Frowning.

JANINE

Why did you let him die?

BRENT

I couldn't... I couldn't stop it...

JANINE

You *didn't* stop it.

BRENT

I didn't stop it...

JANINE

You know, right? You know what has to be done...

BRENT

I know...

JANINE

Then go. Do it.

He nods and walks slowly into the hall, turns back.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Do it!

He sobs one more time and goes, walking through the

INT. BEACH HOUSE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

through the

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

out the door, to

EXT. BEACH -- CONTINUOUS

where he turns left. He walks slowly up the hill that's there, staggering, stumbling as he goes. He falls but continues forward on hands and knees and slowly gets to his feet. Then he stops at the top of the hill, at the edge of the embankment, staring out at the ocean below.

He sways slightly, staring at the water as if he's in a trance. Waves crash against the rocks below him. The drop is at least fifty feet.

JANINE (V.O.)

You know, right? You know what has to be done...

He inches forward, the toes of his shoes hang off the edge. He looks down and takes a step back, closing his eyes from dizziness. He rocks but doesn't fall, steps back but doesn't back away. When the vertigo fades he steps forward again, then stays there, staring, trying to decide his fate.

COREY (V.O.)

Well where is he? When will he come?

DAD (V.O.)

You wanna know about Christmas, Core?
You wanna know about Santa Claus?

Brent stares at the water, tears rolling down his face.

BRENT (V.O.)

Let's go for a walk.

JANINE (V.O.)

A walk?

BRENT (V.O.)

Yeah. Out on the beach, by the moonlight, it's romantic.

JANINE (V.O.)
 You know you still pay me, right?

He swallows hard and licks his lips and starts to inch forward again.

JANINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We're by the beach... My hands get cold really fast.

BRENT (V.O.)
 Here, take these.

Feet clap against the rock behind him, footsteps slowly approaching.

JANINE (V.O.)
 Where are we going?

BRENT (V.O.)
 Not far. I know this great little spot down there a ways. Very private.
 (pause)
 We'll have to lay down, but that's okay, right?

A figure appears at his side, largely unseen.

His feet inch forward, his toes are once again off the rock. He stares at the water below, stares at it longingly, almost hungrily.

BAM! BAM! BAM BAM!

The memory of the gunshots rings in his ears. He grits his teeth and takes a deep breath. The figure beside him speaks.

EMILY
 (whispers)
 Go ahead. Jump. I'll tell them I pushed you.

He closes his eyes, opens them, tries to swallow the lump in his throat.

COREY (V.O.)
 Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)
 Why did you let me die?

COREY
 Why did you let him kill me?

Emily smiles at him.

EMILY

You deserve it, Brent... You deserve for it to end. Not a punishment. An escape. An escape from the horror that is you.

DAD (V.O.)

Running outta time, Fish! Better make a choice!

EMILY

You can't, can you? You aren't strong enough... You weren't strong enough to save them then, and you aren't strong enough to save yourself now. Do it, Brent. Be strong. Show me how strong you can be. Show yourself how strong you can be.

He stares down at the waves, the waves crashing against the rocks. Waves that hit the rocks with a sickening crash that sounds perversely like gunfire.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It was easy you know, driving you to the edge. Because it's exactly where you want to go. You've been here before, standing at the precipice, ready to put an end to it all. It's easy, it's comfortable. And you know it's right. You killed your brother, you killed your whore, and you know you'll kill again if you don't stop yourself.

COREY (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

COREY

Why did you let him kill me?

EMILY

But you didn't go through with it before. You didn't take the plunge. Why? And you aren't doing it now. Why? Why are you waiting? Why are you hesitating? Why aren't you doing what needs to be done?

She leans forward and looks at him, looks at his face, looks at his blank expression.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh my God... You... You still blame him, don't you?

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

Somewhere deep down you still think it wasn't your fault. You think you couldn't have stopped him. You think you couldn't have stopped your brother from dying.

(laughs)

That's it, isn't it? You still want to blame your father. The obsessive gambler who took out his losses on you. He killed Corey, it was his fault. And everything that happened after that was his fault too, because it happened because of the scars.

(getting angry,
passionate)

He hit you. He came home and threw you around and beat you senseless time and time and time again. And one night you fought back. You fought back and he won and Corey died because of it. Because of you. Because of what you did. You. Not him.

COREY (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

COREY

Why did you let him kill me?

EMILY

You say it's his fault because that's what people tell you. Psychiatrists, friends, teachers, family. They tell you he was a bad man. They tell you he was vicious and cruel and didn't deserve to be a dad. They tell you there was nothing you could do to stop him, because he abused you and that's not your fault.

Let me tell you something. He cut you and bruised you and bloodied your lip, but he never abused you. You don't know the first thing about abuse, real abuse. You think you do, but you don't.

Other people... other people suffer a whole lot more than you and they live with it. They didn't let him win. They didn't let him kill.

Other people can suffer abuse, real abuse, and get on with their lives. Other people can work through that and remain functional.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

Other people can do that and still give something to society, to the world.

(beat)

Other people can be like me.

She waits a long time before speaking again, breathing deeply and trying to calm down.

EMILY (CONT'D)

My father... he didn't hit me. And I didn't have any brothers or sisters, so he didn't hit them either. He never cut me or bruised me or bloodied my lip. But he did hurt me. He did ruin my life. He ruined my life by being selfish.

I've told you about him, about how selfish he was, how greedy. How he would buy me gifts for Christmas and my birthday, but only if he could write them off as a business expense. How he would bring things home like chocolate and soda and say they were only for him. How he would dismiss me when he didn't feel like dealing with me and make everyone cater to him. Well I didn't tell you all of it. I didn't tell you the half of it. I didn't tell you how far he went.

The waves against the rocks. The ocean trying to invade.

EMILY (CONT'D)

My mother... she felt his greed worse than me. Worse than anyone. She had to sleep with him, to satisfy him, to... be with him... forever. And he didn't care about her. He didn't care about her needs. So when he was... done... they were done. And he would roll over and go to sleep.

The grunting and panting echoes through her head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I would... hear them... when they were in the bedroom. They wouldn't wait until I was asleep. No... Dad... he had to have her... every night... right after dinner.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

They would go in the bedroom and close the door and stay in there for the rest of the night.

He would never last very long. Never more than ten minutes. The squeaking and the grunting and the whispering would stop and my mother would get up and go to the bathroom.

She swallows hard and closes her eyes. The man once again climaxes in her mind.

EMILY (CONT'D)

She would... take care of herself in there, satisfy her own needs. And then she would tell me to go to bed. And I would. I was eight years old when that all changed.

INT. MOSS HOUSE -- EVENING

A kitchen/living room painted in yellows and whites. A table in the center, cheap, square. A YOUNG GIRL sitting at it, staring off into space. A door in the far wall, which opens now.

EMILY (V.O.)

One night she came out and stopped. She looked at me. She got this look on her face like she'd had an epiphany, like she couldn't believe she hadn't thought of it before.

A WOMAN, dressed in a silk robe, comes out and stops. She cocks her head and stares at the girl, gets a strange look on her face, like something she should have known for years has just suddenly occurred to her.

WOMAN

Get to bed... I'll...
see you in the morning.

EMILY (V.O.)

She smiled and shook her
head and told me to go to
bed.

And the woman goes off into a hallway.

And the girl stares after her sadly.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

EMILY

The next night was different. She told me to go to bed before they had... I did, and they went to their bedroom, and ten minutes later she

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

came out. But she didn't go to the bathroom. Not that night. No, she came into my room instead.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The door stands open, the woman, Emily's mom, stands framed in it just as she describes.

EMILY

I'll never forget... she was wearing this lacy pink bathrobe that she'd had probably since I was born. She smiled at me from the doorway, silhouetted in moonlight. And then she walked slowly toward me and... and she slid into my bed.

Her mom does just that, slides smoothly into her bed, and wraps her arm around her daughter. Emily looks confused, but not really worried. Her mother kisses her on the cheek.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

EMILY

From then on... from then on it was my job to... do what my father wouldn't be bothered to. She taught me how... how to satisfy her... how to pleasure her... how to make her moan. She taught me how to drive her to the very edge of consciousness and then send her crashing into the unknown pit of ecstasy. And once in awhile she would show me... how it felt... how it felt to feel such bliss.

She looks down, then back over at him, her eyes glazed over with memory.

EMILY (CONT'D)

And because of that, because of her, I spent the next twenty years trying to prove to myself that I'm not... that I like men. That I can satisfy men. So don't you talk to me about abuse. Don't you blame your faults on him.

(beat)

Do it, Brent. End the suffering. Yours, mine, all the people you've killed. All the people you will kill if you stay in this world. You're a stain. A sore.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

An open wound that festers and gets infected until somebody finally dies. Do the right thing, Brent. Make your next victim your last. Make your next victim... you.

His foot slides forward slowly, forward and off the edge. Rocks crumble away beneath it. He leans forward, with his left foot off the edge up to the heel. A voice comes from behind him.

JACK (O.S.)

Don't, Brent... Don't let her win.

He stops, his foot half over. He stays where he is, but he doesn't step back. Jack walks up behind him slowly, stops a few feet away.

JACK (CONT'D)

What are you doing, Brent? What are you thinking?

EMILY

He's trying to end his reign of terror. He's trying to do what's right.

JACK

What's right? It's right for him to jump off a cliff and leave everyone else to clean up the mess?

EMILY

It's right for him to leave this world before he kills again.

JACK

He didn't kill anyone.

(beat)

You didn't kill anyone, Brent. You didn't kill Janine. You didn't kill your brother either.

EMILY

That's right. You didn't kill them. But you let them die. You let them die, and that's just as bad.

COREY (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

COREY

Why did you let him kill me?

JACK

There was nothing you could do.

EMILY

Because you were too weak. Too afraid.

JACK

Because it was out of your hands.

EMILY

Because you were helpless. Helpless to stop it, helpless to save them. These, the people who you claimed to love.

JACK

(to Emily)

Why are you doing this?

EMILY

Because he needs to be stopped before he kills again!

JACK

No! You're the one who needs to be stopped...

EMILY

Am I? Why don't we ask him?

Pebbles fall from under his foot. Jack reaches forward, but doesn't dare touch him.

JACK

Brent, come on... Why don't you step on back here?

EMILY

He knows. He knows what he has to do. There's nothing left for him here, not anymore. He lost me, he lost his job... If he steps back, if he goes home, he's just gonna go to jail.

JACK

No. That's not true. Brent, Krish said he's willing to talk. He's willing to work something out. And Ritchie's here, he's right inside. I'll tell him what Emily's been doing. I'll tell him... We'll tell him you didn't do it. We'll make him see.

EMILY

See what? See the delusions of a drug addict and a murderer? You think the police will believe you over my pictures?

JACK

I think they'll believe the truth...

EMILY

The truth... The truth is what you make of it, Jack. History can be rewritten. Hell, it already has. They already believe Brent's guilty. Pretty hard to make them change their mind. Especially when there's an eye witness.

JACK

You?

EMILY

Why not? This is my contribution to society. This is how I redeem myself. By getting this killer off the streets.

COREY (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)

Why did you let me die?

COREY

Why did you let him kill me?

JACK

You're not a killer, Brent. We can work this out. We can get you off.

Brent slides his right foot forward, that much closer to going over.

JACK (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Come on, Brent... Come on... If you... who's gonna get wasted with me? Who's gonna cover for me at work? Who's gonna... You can't do this! You can't! We need you, Brent, lots of people do. We need you to get people like Al Pacino to do movies for us. We need you to...

(long pause)

I need you to be a friend.

EMILY

People like Brent don't have friends.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

If you get close to him you'll end up dead. Just like Corey, just like Janine.

COREY (V.O.)
Why did you let me die?

JANINE (V.O.)
Why did you let me die?

COREY
Why did you let him kill me?

EMILY
You'll be dead and where will that leave him? Right back here but with one more body chasing him off the edge.

Brent turns and looks at her, decision in his eyes.

JANINE (V.O.)
You know, right? You know what has to be done...

EMILY
Just do it, Brent. Do it now. You can still save Jack if you just... jump.

JACK
(scared, helpless)
Brent...

JANINE (V.O.)
Then go. Do it.
(pause)
Do it!

He blinks, looks into Emily's eyes, smiles.

BRENT (V.O.)
So I guess I don't get my tie tack...

KATE (V.O.)
Not likely.

BRENT (V.O.)
Damn.

He suddenly reaches forward and grabs Emily's arm, the smile turning into an evil grin.

BRENT (CONT'D)
(whisper)
You told me to...

Her face masks with confusion that quickly turns to fear as he turns back to the water and jumps. Jumps and pulls her with him.

JACK

No!

Jack steps forward, reaching out uselessly, and stares at the bodies falling toward the sea. The sound falls away, the silence is total and deafening.

The camera flies forward on invisible wings, forward and off the cliff. It stops at a CU of Brent's face, he's falling with his back to the water.

His face has a look of contentment as he falls. Everything is moving at snail's pace now. He stares upward, toward the sky, toward the clouds and the stars and the moon. He's done it now, and there's no turning back. He's done it, and it's finally over.

He closes his eyes and rolls his head to the side. When he opens them, Janine is there. Not her body, just her head, floating next to him in apparition. She's smiling at him, victorious. He smiles back. She fades away.

The next apparition to appear is Corey. His face is cut and bruised. His head is grotesquely caved in. He smiles too, if only half-heartedly, and Brent still smiles back.

Corey fades and Emily appears, looking angry and victorious at once. A flicker of anger flashes his eyes, he turns his head to the other side.

There he sees the man he hates. The man he really partially is. His dad, the man who killed his brother. The man who sent him ultimately down a cliff.

His dad is smiling at him now, smiling with an insane happiness. The floating head bobs up and down, nodding its approval of his actions.

Brent looks confused, suddenly scared. His father starts to cackle silently. Realization overcomes him, he begins to look around, frantic.

The sound comes back with a deafening splash, the splash of Emily hitting the water. The foam rises up, surrounds him, envelops him. Covers the screen with white and-

EXT. LOS ANGELES - SUNSET

The people are still there, the cars are still there, rushing around to face the world they try so desperately to control. The camera keeps moving backward, backward and upward, above the heads of all the people oblivious to the world around them. Nothing's changed. Nothing's different.

Nothing except one man's view. One man who saw the truth,
but saw it a moment too late.

BRENT (V.O.)

My whole life... My whole life I've
been running away. Running away
from the memory... the memory of my
father... the memory of brother he
killed. Corey was... way too young.
Way too young. And he shouldn't
have died. But it wasn't my fault,
and I know that now.

(beat)

My father killed him, and there's
nothing that can change that. And
about halfway down that cliff, with
the wind blowing my hair and the
ocean rushing up to meet me, I
realized...

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITYSCAPE - SUNSET

Los Angeles. Sunset. Reds and pinks and yellows paint the
sky with beauty. A perfect picture, a perfect moment, frozen
forever in time.

BRENT (V.O.)

Why would I let him kill me too?

FADE OUT.