

COMPLETE

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Flattened snow smeared with blood forms a path across an expansive snowy clearing. It leads from the forest to a cottage with a timber exterior. Lights are on inside.

INT. COTTAGE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

A black garbage bag hangs over the side of a bathtub. Something of considerable bulk falls inside it and hits the floor with a dull thud. Someone drags the bag O.S.

A hacksaw lies in a pool of blood at the base of a bathtub. Bits of flesh are stuck between its teeth. More blood is splattered on the sides of the tub, the adjacent wall and a nearby sink.

The tub drain is shredded sinew and tiny bits of bone. Blood drains sluggishly.

A bloody gloved hand reaches into the tub drain and digs out a handful of gore. The hand feels the mess around in its fingers until they produce a diamond engagement ring wrapped around a thick strand of sinew.

The drain's contents hit the base of the tub with a splat. Water runs O.S.

Bloody trembling fingers peel away the sinew from the engagement ring as it rinses in the sink.

A funnel attached to a bloody plastic tube lies in the sink bowl amongst several empty pill bottles.

INT. FREEZER

The door opens to an empty freezer. A gloved hand shoves the garbage bag inside. It's tied up with plastic twine and has an elongated shape.

The freezer door closes.

ROLL TITLES

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

NIKKI (26) sits at a table. She has dark hair, doe eyes and just a tad too much makeup on. She sips a cup of coffee as she looks around nervously.

SYDNEY (33) approaches the café entrance. He is tall with glasses and a receding hairline.

He looks around and spots Nikki.

Nikki looks up and sees him wave. She returns it. He walks over to the table.

SYDNEY

Nicole?

NIKKI

Sydney?

SYDNEY

How are you?

NIKKI

I'm okay. Call me Nikki.

SYDNEY

Nice to meet you, Nikki.

They shake hands. Sydney takes a seat.

SYDNEY

I hope you don't mind me saying you're a lot prettier than I expected. Not that your profile picture wasn't pretty or anything.

NIKKI

You don't look so bad yourself.

Sydney chuckles.

SYDNEY

That's good to know, I suppose.

NIKKI

Sorry. I'm not much for formalities.

I've never been on a blind date before.

SYDNEY

That's okay. It's just like any other date. We just need to find a jumping off point.

NIKKI

Well, we have been matched based on compatibility, haven't we? Or so they say, right?

SYDNEY

What do you do for a living, Nikki? That's one piece of information you've neglected to include on your profile.

NIKKI

You first.

SYDNEY

Okay.

NIKKI

Like I said. Formalities. I'm not always this awkward.

SYDNEY

I'm an engineer. E.M.P. to be specific.

NIKKI

What's that?

SYDNEY

Electrical, mechanical, plumbing. Basically, I keep the lights on, the water running, the warm places cool and the cool places warm.

NIKKI

Sounds like a lot of work.

SYDNEY

It can wear you out. You're right about that. But people need schools and hospitals. I used to work on houses too. It feels good to help people get

what they need.

Nikki nods as she sips her coffee.

SYDNEY

That's me in a nutshell. Your turn.

NIKKI

I'm in the food business.

SYDNEY

That's kind of a broad term. What do you do?

Nikki sighs and looks down at the table.

NIKKI

I'm a waitress. Just like every other college dropout.

Nikki covers her face with her cup as she takes another sip of coffee.

SYDNEY

That's not so bad. Lots of waitresses in Bethesda.

NIKKI

Well, it's not exactly like I can blame the bad economy.

Sydney shrugs, somewhat taken aback.

SYDNEY

College isn't for everyone, right?

Nikki looks up.

NIKKI

You don't think so?

SYDNEY

I don't know. I guess it just doesn't work out for some people. For whatever reason. Nothing wrong with that.

NIKKI

You might be the only person who thinks so. My parents never let me forget what a fuck-up I am.

Nikki returns her attention to her coffee.

Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY

I'm not here to judge you, Nikki.

Nikki sets down her cup.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I can be a real downer sometimes. I guess it doesn't help if I'm nervous. Can we start over?

SYDNEY

Sure. If you want.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY

Nikki knocks on a door. DENISE (late 20s) answers.

DENISE

There she is.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki sits at a table in a small kitchen. Denise takes a seat beside her with two vodka martinis in hand. She gives one to Nikki.

DENISE

Smirnoff for me. Stoli for you.

Denise raises her glass. Nikki does the same.

DENISE

To vodka.

NIKKI

To vodka. A girl's best friend.

Nikki and Denise clink glasses and drink.

DENISE

So how was your big date?

NIKKI

I don't know. He seemed like a nice guy but I probably scared him off with my atrocious social skills.

DENISE

Well, no need to get too attached, right? You can save that for when you actually get the guy.

NIKKI

You know, maybe this online dating isn't for me.

DENISE

Bullshit. Trust me, Nikki. I'm a master matchmaker.

NIKKI

You're not a matchmaker. You just set up my account.

DENISE

True. But I helped you weed out the bad apples, didn't I? That hasn't exactly been your area of expertise thus far.

Nikki's cell phone buzzes in her pocket. She answers it.

NIKKI

Hello.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I know this is sort of breaking the rules but fuck it. I just wanted to say I had a great time today.

NIKKI

Me too.

SYDNEY

Have a good night.

NIKKI

You too.

Nikki flips the cell phone shut. She mouths "wow."

DENISE

What'd I tell you?

EXT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A red brick building on a narrow street.

Nikki and Sydney kiss at the base of a stoop.

NIKKI

It was great to see you again. I'd
invite up but I guess you've got a lot
of work to do tomorrow.

SYDNEY

Not necessarily.

Nikki breaks away from Sydney.

SYDNEY

I'm not trying to cross my boundaries
or anything. Do you want me to come up?

Nikki takes Sydney by the hand.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A minimalist studio apartment. The living room and kitchen
seem to occupy the same space.

The front door opens. Nikki leads Sydney inside then turns
around to face him.

NIKKI

This is it. It's like everyone says.
It's not much but it's home.

Nikki crosses her arms and looks at the floor.

SYDNEY

It's nice. I lived in a place just like
this after I graduated from Georgetown.

Sydney looks back at Nikki.

SYDNEY

You okay?

Nikki shrugs.

Sydney crosses his arms.

SYDNEY

I see what's going on here.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

Come on, Nikki. You can relax.

NIKKI

Well, I don't exactly entertain much.

SYDNEY

Don't worry about it. We've been going out for a while now. You can let your guard down. I've seen you let loose before. I like you. You don't have to act like I'm someone to impress. If anything, that's my job. I mean, I am seven years older.

NIKKI

(jokingly)

You sure are.

Sydney laughs and opens his arms.

SYDNEY

Come here.

Nikki steps forward and receives his embrace.

NIKKI

You know how to make me feel safe, Sydney. Nothing superficial ever seems to matter to you.

SYDNEY

I don't think it should, do you?

NIKKI

It doesn't matter what I think. Everyone else is superficial and sometimes that's enough to make things hard. That's why you really have to find someone special to you. So whatever happens, you never have to feel like it's you against the world.

SYDNEY

Hopeless romantic, huh?

Nikki looks up at Sydney.

NIKKI

You know that Queen song? "You're My Best Friend?" That's the kind of feeling I'm talking about.

SYDNEY

Freddy Mercury. He's the man.

Nikki laughs, surprised. Sydney leans in for a kiss.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Nikki walks down the street toward a picturesque town house. She wears work clothes.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney sits on a cushy couch and watches TV. He also wears work clothes but no shoes or tie. The tie is draped over the side of the couch.

ON THE TV

A wrecked car sits on the side of a cloudy freeway.

PARAMEDICS open the smashed driver's side door and pull out a WOUNDED WOMAN. A gash on her brow trickles blood down the

side of her face. Her left arm is bent completely backward. Tattered flesh dangles from protruding bone.

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney watches transfixed.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nikki stops at the front door and unlocks it.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE TV

The wounded woman lies on an operating table with a breathing mask attached to her face. DOCTORS surround her and cut away her blood-soaked clothes.

BACK TO SCENE

A door opens O.S. The jingle of keys. Sydney changes the channel.

Nikki enters. She lets out a sigh and kicks off her shoes.

NIKKI

Hey baby. What're you watching?

SYDNEY

Whatever's on. I was thinking about watching something on demand a little later. Join me?

Sydney pats the seat beside him.

Nikki lies down beside him. She makes herself comfortable.

SYDNEY

How was work?

NIKKI

Long. When you're just a waitress, you're allowed to air out your dirty laundry a little bit. When you're the manager of the restaurant, it has to be smiles all the way.

SYDNEY

At least you don't work here.
Georgetown harbors its own special
breed of asshole.

NIKKI

Will you rub my feet?

Sydney pats his thigh. Nikki lifts her legs and rests her feet in his lap.

Sydney takes one foot in hand and massages it. Nikki coos appreciatively.

NIKKI

You think I should've quit? I mean years ago. I could've taken some real classes then.

SYDNEY

I thought you liked your online classes.

NIKKI

They're easy, that's for sure. But I feel like I'm checking my email. I don't feel like I'm actually learning anything.

Nikki sighs.

NIKKI

Now I'm stuck.

SYDNEY

You're too hard on yourself, sweetheart. You need to stop worrying about what could've been. That's how I kicked the drugs. Regret doesn't lead anywhere good. Trust me.

NIKKI

I should probably just enjoy my foot massage, shouldn't I?

SYDNEY

Indeed, you should. I'm proud of you,

Nikki. You should be too. You've come a long way.

Nikki coos as she shuts her eyes.

Sydney rubs Nikki's other foot. He works his way up to her calf and kneads her flesh.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney and Nikki lie in bed together. Nikki rolls on top of him and kisses his face and neck aggressively.

NIKKI

Let's make a baby!

Sydney struggles to speak as Nikki locks lips with him.

SYDNEY

You serious?

NIKKI

Yeah. Come on.

Sydney grabs Nikki's hips and attempts to push her off.

SYDNEY

Slow down.

Nikki rolls off him. She pecks him on the cheek and giggles.

NIKKI

I'm just fucking with you. Well, I was trying to anyway.

SYDNEY

It's always babies with you.

NIKKI

What can I say? My biological clock is ticking.

SYDNEY

Let's see. Twenty-seven? Yep. Time's definitely running out.

Nikki shoves Sydney playfully.

NIKKI

Come on. I want to make lots of babies with you. You haven't even put a ring on my finger yet.

SYDNEY

What's the rush? Don't you want to enjoy the ride a little longer?

NIKKI

I love you, Sydney. I just want the whole package is all.

SYDNEY

I'm not going anywhere.

NIKKI

(sarcastic)
That's romantic.

SYDNEY

I do have a way with words.

NIKKI

I'm serious, babe. Come on. Isn't it natural to want to be complete?

SYDNEY

You don't feel complete?

NIKKI

If you have to ask...

SYDNEY

Point taken.

Nikki shakes her head.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I'll try to lay off the serious stuff for a while.

Nikki climbs back on top of Sydney.

NIKKI

But you know. Just because we're not making a baby doesn't mean we can't go through the motions.

Sydney grabs Nikki's head and brings her in for a smooch then rolls her onto her back and kisses her passionately.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Sydney sits in boxers on the edge of the bed. He turns and looks at Nikki. She's asleep.

Sydney gets up and proceeds to a closet across the room. He opens it and removes some clothes.

INT. JEWELERS - DAY

Sydney stands in front of a display case for engagement rings. He browses the designs.

A SALES CLERK appears beside him.

CLERK

Can I help you?

Sydney turns to the clerk.

SYDNEY

Hmm...

Sydney turns back to the display case.

SYDNEY

I think I'm alright for now.

CLERK

Well, let me know if you want to take a closer look at anything.

SYDNEY

Will do. Thank you.

The clerk proceeds over to another customer browsing the merchandise. After a moment, Sydney shakes his head and exits the store.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki lies in bed wide awake. A door slams shut somewhere in the apartment.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney pours himself a glass of orange juice at the kitchen counter. He turns around to see Nikki standing in a nightie beside a nearby table.

SYDNEY

I thought you'd be sleeping in.

NIKKI

Where were you?

SYDNEY

Just taking care of some business. I'm afraid we'll have to postpone our plans for this weekend. They want me up at headquarters. There's some very important meetings going down.

Nikki takes a seat at the table and crosses her arms.

SYDNEY

You mad?

NIKKI

Sad.

SYDNEY

You know I hate to disappoint you, sweetheart. I'll blow them off next time. I promise.

NIKKI

You don't have to promise anything like that. It's your job. I understand.

Sydney approaches Nikki. He reaches out and rubs her shoulder in a comforting matter.

SYDNEY

I'm not leaving til the afternoon.
Lunch?

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Sydney munches on a cheeseburger as Nikki shoves a forkful of whipped cream-topped strawberry crepe into her mouth. Sydney looks at her and chuckles.

NIKKI

What? You know you'd still love me if I got fat.

SYDNEY

Nothing wrong with a little chub.

Sydney slaps his belly. Nikki laughs.

NIKKI

You know I can't compete with that.

Sydney laughs.

NIKKI

So when are you coming back?

SYDNEY

Hopefully, Sunday. Unfortunately, the real answer would be whenever we get through all the meetings. In this case, it's sort of unpredictable.

NIKKI

Why? What are you working on?

SYDNEY

They're building a new mall upstate. Needless to say, it's going to take a while to plan. It's not like a house project or a grocery store. Not even a Costco or Wall Mart. But it'll get done sooner or later.

NIKKI

Then next week—

SYDNEY

Of course. But right now, try to enjoy some Nikki time. I know you have to work too but I'd hate for you to get

too antsy while I'm gone.

NIKKI
I'll do my best.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sydney sits in a car in front of the apartment. Nikki stands beside it. She leans in and gives him a kiss.

SYDNEY
I'll see you soon.

NIKKI
Love you.

SYDNEY
Love you too.

Nikki waves as Sydney drives away.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nikki lies on the couch covered in blankets and watches TV. She sighs in dismay.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Sydney drives down a country road. The surrounding fields are covered in snow.

EXT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney's car pulls into a strip mall and parks in front of a home furnishing store. Sydney exits the car and enters the store.

INT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney holds a cell phone to his ear as he browses and casually rolls a plastic shopping cart down an aisle of wine glasses.

SYDNEY
It's about time. I've been trying to reach you all day. Now I know I've been asking a lot of favors from you lately.

I've got one more for you and that'll be the last of them. But brace yourself. It's a doozie.

Sydney removes a box of wine glasses from the shelf and examines it.

SYDNEY

I need you to come out to the cottage next week and help me with the operation.

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

Of course I haven't asked anyone else. I thought better of it. You're the only one I trust. This sort of thing requires a certain finesse. A certain intimacy. This is something very special to her and I. I don't need anyone getting the wrong idea.

Sydney removes another box from the shelf and drops it in his shopping cart.

SYDNEY

Look. I haven't ironed out the details but I want this to happen as soon as possible and I'm dead set on next week. I've been planning this a very long time and I'm tired of waiting. This is it. I need you by my side, Donald.

Sydney exits the aisle and proceeds further into the store.

SYDNEY

Of course the conditions are correct. I'm very good at my job. You're not the only one I've consulted on the subject. I wouldn't be going ahead with this if everything weren't perfect.

Sydney enters an aisle of candlesticks.

SYDNEY

I'm offering you a once in a lifetime

opportunity here. This isn't like what you do everyday at work. Not even one of your special cases. You could change someone's life, Donald. In a way much deeper and more meaningful than you could otherwise. I need you by my side.

He removes a box of candlesticks from the shelf and examines it.

SYDNEY

That can be arranged. Of course.

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

You're a true friend, Donald.

Sydney closes the phone and drops it in his pocket. It vibrates a moment later. Sydney removes it from his pocket.

He looks at the screen. Nikki is the caller. Sydney presses a button on the side of the phone. The vibration stops. Sydney returns the phone to his pocket.

EXT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney emerges from the store with a shopping cart full of home appliances. He pops the trunk of his car electronically and proceeds to load it up with purchases.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki lies on the couch. She ignores the TV as she holds a cell phone to her ear.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

You've reached the cell phone of-

Nikki sighs as she closes the phone.

LATER

Nikki sends the text message I MISS YOU and puts her phone in her pocket. She stares at the TV looking very bored.

After a moment, she turns it off and gets up.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A dimly lit dive bar inhabited by a handful of middle-aged BAR RATS at the far end of the counter. They all look up as Nikki enters and takes a seat. Denise, the bartender, approaches her.

NIKKI
(nervously)
Hey Denise.

DENISE
Long time, no see.

NIKKI
I'm sorry. I should've called. Sydney
and I have gotten pretty serious.
That's no excuse but—

DENISE
It's okay. I've been pretty busy here.

NIKKI
It's good to see you.

DENISE
So you're still with Sydney? That's
good. Is he going to show up later?

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE
What are you doing here all by
yourself then?

NIKKI
Sydney's gone for the weekend.

DENISE
That's not much of a reason. What else
is going on?

NIKKI
Could I have a gin and tonic?

Denise fixes Nikki a gin and tonic. She sips it.

DENISE

You know, Nikki, you can talk to me. I don't hold grudges although I do wish you'd remember who your friends are.

NIKKI

You're right. I'll give you a call next week. We can do something.

DENISE

So what's up? I've seen you come to the bar enough times to know when something's wrong. Maybe not this particular bar but just the same.

NIKKI

I'm worried. Sydney's not answering his phone. I know he's busy but he would've called back by now. He always does.

DENISE

You guys get in a fight or something?

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE

Then don't worry about it. He'll call back. Sydney's a good guy. Even on an off day, he's not the cheating type.

Nikki chokes on her drink.

NIKKI

Why'd you say that?! I never said anything about cheating!

DENISE

Come on, Nikki. I know you. It had to have crossed your mind.

NIKKI

Sydney is a good guy. It's just that last night, we were talking about marriage and kids.

DENISE

Oh boy.

NIKKI

Then this morning, he left. He never said anything about meetings before. I wouldn't think anything of it but—

DENISE

Yes you would.

Nikki shoots Denise a look.

DENISE

I'm sorry. But what?

Nikki takes a drink.

NIKKI

After last night, I don't know what to think. It could be nothing, I guess. But this is what always happens when I get too attached. Everything's okay at first and then they get distant.

DENISE

I can see why you'd be worried. Really, I can. But this doesn't sound like a guy being distant.

NIKKI

It always starts with the small things.

DENISE

Sounds like you're getting ahead of yourself. I'd sleep on it. You'll be able to figure things out when he gets back. Right now, you should probably finish your drink and go home. You don't want to send the wrong message around here. Trust me.

NIKKI

I guess you're right.

Nikki finishes her drink.

NIKKI

Thanks, Denise. We'll talk soon. I

promise. I never wanted us to become strangers.

DENISE

Don't worry about it. Take care of yourself, girl.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Sydney's car drives down a snowy road through the forest.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The same cottage from the opening scene.

Sydney's car illuminates the timber exterior as it pulls in front of the cottage.

Sydney exits the car and pops the trunk. He takes a stack of boxes into his arms and proceeds to the front door.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney unlocks the door. He kicks the snow off his shoes on the doorstep and enters.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A light flicks on inside the cottage. The front door shuts.

INT. SHRINE

The room is pitch black. A door opens. Sydney enters and flips a switch. Fluorescent lights illuminate.

Sydney stands at the end of a narrow corridor. The floor, walls and ceiling consist of the same pale blue tile. A room of the same design is visible at the end of the hallway. Sydney proceeds toward it.

The room is empty and windowless except for three rectangular objects in front of each wall. They each stand four feet high and are draped in black cloth.

Sydney walks amongst the objects. He stops at the third one. He places his hand over the cloth and pulls it away.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki lies asleep in bed. A door slams shut outside the room. Nikki's eyes snap open. Footsteps approach.

After a moment, Sydney enters. Nikki pretends to be asleep.

Sydney walks over and takes a seat on the bed beside her. He gently strokes a lock of hair from her cheek. She opens her eyes.

SYDNEY

Rise and shine.

NIKKI

Hey baby. How was your weekend?

SYDNEY

Exhausting. How was yours?

Nikki shrugs.

SYDNEY

Not too lonely?

NIKKI

Kind of boring, I guess. But I got some me time like you said.

SYDNEY

That's good. Well, if you don't feel like sleeping in and getting a little more of that me time, or rather you time, I can make you some breakfast.

NIKKI

What time is it?

SYDNEY

Let's just say it's past the time for breakfast. That doesn't mean I can't fix you something tasty.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Nikki sits at the table in front of a plate of sausages. Sydney approaches her and scoops scrambled eggs onto the plate from a pan.

He fixes himself a plate of food and takes a seat across from her.

SYDNEY

So I've been thinking. What do you say we take a little vacation next week?

NIKKI

A vacation? Next week? What are you, crazy? We can't.

SYDNEY

I said a little vacation.

NIKKI

Baby, I'm all for being spontaneous but we can't just up and go on vacation. Not out of the blue.

SYDNEY

I'm not talking about going to Hawaii or something. Contrary to what you might think, I'm fully aware of the process of buying plane tickets.

NIKKI

You had me going for a second there.

SYDNEY

Look. The renovations on the cottage are finished. I was thinking we could go down to West Virginia for a couple days or a week and unwind a little.

NIKKI

I thought that was your parents' place.

SYDNEY

They don't have much use for it anymore. So they've left it in my hands. It's very pretty this time of

year. Just the right amount of snow.

NIKKI

I'd love to, Sydney. It sounds great, really. Maybe next month—

SYDNEY

The snow is going to get pretty heavy before too long. You have no idea how cold it can get. It wouldn't make sense to wait. Besides, I already got next week off.

NIKKI

You're kind of putting me on the spot, baby. I'm the manager, remember?

SYDNEY

Managers take vacations. That's what assistant managers are for, right?

NIKKI

But it's such short notice—

SYDNEY

You think I'm the only one who thinks you need a break, Nikki? You think anyone at work would be mad if you took a couple days off? Even a week? It's not like we're going anywhere for Thanksgiving.

NIKKI

This weekend was kind of a downer. I missed you.

SYDNEY

You know I was thinking about you too. It's not like I planned this whole thing on the drive home.

Nikki lays her head in her hands in thought. After a moment, she looks up and smiles.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, DAY

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

The trunk of Sydney's car is packed with luggage. Sydney slams it shut and proceeds to the front of the car.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Sydney enters the driver's seat. Nikki sits beside him.

SYDNEY

You ready?

NIKKI

Yes sir.

SYDNEY

Let's go.

Sydney starts the car.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car drives down the road surrounded by seemingly endless snow.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Nikki gazes out the window at the snowy fields that pass.

SYDNEY

Nice to see the world for what it really is for a change, isn't it? Not for what people think the world is supposed to be.

NIKKI

I guess I really did need a break. I feel better already.

Nikki turns.

NIKKI

So how come it's taken you so long to show me this place?

SYDNEY

This is a special place. I only share it with special people.

NIKKI

You mean I'm not special enough?!

SYDNEY

Of course you are. I'm showing you now, aren't I?

Sydney pinches Nikki's side playfully. She giggles and slaps his shoulder gently.

NIKKI

I mean up until now.

SYDNEY

I figured now was just the right time. I've been wanting to show you for a while but timing is key. Especially with some of the things you've been saying lately. They got me thinking.

NIKKI

What things?

SYDNEY

I'm afraid I can't say.

NIKKI

(playful)
Asshole! Tell me!

Nikki slaps Sydney's shoulder a second time.

SYDNEY

You know, I don't think it's very safe to be hitting the driver.

Nikki pouts melodramatically. After a moment, Sydney gently pats her shoulder.

SYDNEY

Just wait til we get there, huh?

Nikki sighs and relaxes.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car drives through the forest.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Nikki lies across the backseat with a blanket over her. She looks out the window.

NIKKI
Are we almost there?

SYDNEY
Generally speaking, the answer doesn't change just because you ask a couple more times.

Nikki giggles.

NIKKI
Quit it! Are we or what?!

Sydney chuckles.

SYDNEY
This time, you're in luck. We'll be there in just a minute.

NIKKI
Finally. This mountain's got way too many circles around it.

SYDNEY
Indeed, we're a long way from civilization. As we know it, anyway. But it'll be worth the wait. Trust me.

Sydney winks at Nikki.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Sydney's car pulls in front of the cottage. In the daylight, the cottage is a perfectly balanced mix of modern and old-fashioned design. Sydney and Nikki exit the car.

Nikki marvels at the sight of the cottage. Sydney takes notice of her gaze.

SYDNEY

Just wait til you see the inside.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Sydney unlocks the front door. He kicks the snow off his shoes on the doorstep. Nikki does the same.

Sydney enters and bends down to untie his shoes.

SYDNEY

Take off your shoes. I like to keep a clean house.

Nikki giggles.

Sydney takes off his shoes and places them on a small bench beside the door. Nikki does the same.

Sydney turns to Nikki.

SYDNEY

Well. Let me give you the grand tour.
This way to the kitchen.

Sydney leads Nikki into a kitchen straight ahead. She looks around as she follows his lead.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki exit the kitchen into the dining room.

Ornamental candlesticks and a bouquet of flowers sit on top of a table draped in fancy tablecloth and set with brand new plates and silverware.

NIKKI

What is this?

Sydney chuckles as he puts his arm around Nikki.

SYDNEY

Just a little something. But you ain't seen nothing yet.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki enter a bedroom with carpeted floor. A queen size bed with silk sheets lies before them. Nikki gasps at the sight of it. She turns to Sydney.

SYDNEY

What are you waiting for?

Nikki walks to the bed and feels the sheets. She sighs. After a moment, she jumps into the bed. She squeals in surprise as her body rocks back and forth.

NIKKI

It's a water bed!

Nikki giggles as she rolls around in the bed.

NIKKI

Very old school, baby!

SYDNEY

Check the bathroom.

Nikki jumps off the bed and runs to a nearby door.

INT. COTTAGE, BATHROOM - DAY

The same bathroom from the opening scene.

Nikki bursts in. Sparkling white tile abounds. Scented candles adorn the sink under a mirror.

Nikki giggles in delight and she sniffs the candles. Her gaze shifts to the bathtub. She leans over to look inside. It's filled with rose petals.

NIKKI

Baby, you went all out!

Sydney enters behind her. He leans in and kisses her neck. She whirls around and kisses him on the lips.

NIKKI

How'd you find the time to do this?

SYDNEY

You remember those meetings I had last weekend? Never happened.

Nikki gasps and slaps Sydney's chest playfully.

SYDNEY

Tell me. How else was I supposed to pull this off?

NIKKI

So what's the occasion?

SYDNEY

You want special all at once or are you still ready to be surprised?

NIKKI

I'll tell you what I want. I want to know what it feels like to make love on a waterbed.

Nikki pulls Sydney's head toward hers. They kiss passionately and aggressively. Sydney grabs her by the hip and leads her into the bedroom.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The candles are lit to set the mood as Nikki and Sydney eat a fancy pasta dinner. Sydney leans forward and refreshes a glass of wine for Nikki.

NIKKI

Thank you.

SYDNEY

My pleasure.

Nikki sips the wine.

NIKKI

This is beautiful, baby. But I'm still so confused.

SYDNEY

I suppose now's as good a time as any.

NIKKI

For what?

Sydney walks over beside Nikki and takes a knee. She gasps.

SYDNEY

Nikki...

Nikki trembles with anticipation as Sydney produces a ring box. He opens it. An engagement ring sits inside. The same one from the opening scene.

SYDNEY

Will you marry me?

Nikki can only bring herself to nod as her eyes well up.

SYDNEY

Don't leave me hanging. Is that a yes?

NIKKI

Yes.

Sydney removes the ring and sets the box aside. He takes Nikki's hand. She extends her ring finger. Sydney gently slips the ring on.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney and Nikki cuddle under a blanket on a carpeted floor as they watch a fire in the stone fireplace before them.

Nikki wears a nightie. Sydney is shirtless. A bottle of champagne and two flutes sit on a tray nearby.

Nikki takes Sydney's hand in her own and squeezes gently.

SYDNEY

How are you?

NIKKI

Couldn't be better.

Sydney kisses the back of her neck.

NIKKI

Sydney? Do you think we'll always be

this happy?

SYDNEY

I think we can only be happier than we are now.

Nikki coos.

NIKKI

You want to hear something funny? Last week when you wouldn't answer your phone, I was worried I scared you off with all the marriage talk.

SYDNEY

Why would you think that?

Nikki looks at her ring.

NIKKI

This is my dream. I've come so close so many times, I was starting to think it would never come true.

Nikki rolls over and looks into Sydney's eyes.

Sydney takes Nikki's ring hand and lifts it up to her face.

SYDNEY

See this? It means you don't have to worry anymore.

LATER

Nikki lies on her back and moans as Sydney kisses her neck and chest. After a moment, his head disappears under the blanket.

DREAM SEQUENCE

Nikki arches her back and grabs the blanket as she squeals in ecstasy.

NIKKI

No! Lower!

UNDER THE BLANKET

Sydney kisses his way down Nikki's bare thigh until it ends with a fleshy stump just above where her knee should be. Sydney retracts.

NIKKI (O.S.)

Please!

Sydney sticks out his tongue. It grazes the base of the stump. Nikki whimpers. Sydney opens his mouth and presses his lips against the stump.

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney's head moves under the blanket between Nikki's legs. The toes on both of her feet curl as she moans.

LATER

The fire has reduced to embers.

Sydney and Nikki spoon.

NIKKI

Tell me I'm beautiful.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A car pulls up to the cottage beside Sydney's.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

The doorbell rings. Sydney enters and opens the front door. DONALD (40s), a short bald man with glasses, stands on the other side.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney and Donald sit at a table in the kitchen.

DONALD

Let's see it.

Sydney places a briefcase on the table and opens it. It's filled with cash. Donald squirms uncomfortably.

SYDNEY

It's what we agreed.

DONALD

Numbers are one thing. Seeing the cash with your own eyes is something else. Are you sure you want to do this?

Sydney scoffs.

SYDNEY

It's not like I'm giving you everything in my retirement account. Besides, my parents started me off saving as soon as I got out of college. I'll be okay.

DONALD

It's just I can't imagine anyone else who'd be willing to do this. I need to make sure you're positive. One hundred percent. Anything less and I walk out the door. This is your last chance to say no.

SYDNEY

Take the money, Donald.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki sits in bed in her nightie. She rubs her head in disorientation. She glances at a clock on the night table beside her. It's past four.

NIKKI

(groggily)

Shit.

Nikki climbs out of bed and stumbles forward as her feet touch the floor. She takes a moment to find her balance then goes into the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The briefcase sits on the floor beside Donald's chair.

DONALD

What was the dose?

SYDNEY

It's safe. I checked. I've followed all your rules.

Donald's gaze shifts past Sydney. Sydney turns around.

Nikki stands in the doorway between the kitchen and dining room. She looks groggy as she leans on the doorframe for support.

SYDNEY

Hey sweetheart.

NIKKI

What's going on?

SYDNEY

Nikki, this is Donald. He's my friend from town. Donald, this is my fiancé, Nicole.

DONALD

How are you feeling about today?

NIKKI

Okay, I guess—

SYDNEY

Will you excuse us, Donald.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki stand beside the kitchen entrance hidden by the wall from Donald's view.

SYDNEY

He won't be here long. How are you feeling?

NIKKI

Why? What's wrong?

Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY

You had a lot to drink last night.

NIKKI

Really? I don't remember...

Nikki glances into the kitchen. Her eyes fall on three empty wine bottles on the kitchen counter. She grimaces.

NIKKI

I guess I wouldn't. I'm going to go lie on the couch for an hour or so. I don't feel all that awake just yet.

SYDNEY

Sounds good. Feel better, sweetheart.

Sydney kisses her on the cheek. She disappears O.S.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nikki lays down on a couch and covers herself with a blanket. She shuts her eyes and makes herself comfortable.

LATER

A hand gently shoves Nikki's shoulder.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Nikki awakens. Sydney and Donald stand in front of her.

SYDNEY

It's time to go downstairs.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

Downstairs. You remember?

Sydney extends Nikki a hand. She looks into his eyes.

NIKKI

I remember.

Nikki takes his hand.

FADE OUT.

DONALD (V.O.)
Count backwards from ten.

NIKKI (V.O.)
Ten, nine, eight, seven...

Nikki's voice trails off.

DONALD (V.O.)
You ready? I need you focused, Sydney.

SYDNEY (V.O.)
Just a second.

DONALD (V.O.)
Take your time.

SYDNEY
I'm ready.

FADE IN:

INT. COTTAGE, BASEMENT

A basement renovated as an operating theater.

Nikki opens her eyes.

She lies on an operating table draped in surgical cloth under a low fixture of bright lights. A breathing mask feeds her anesthesia from a tank on the floor.

Sydney and Donald stand next to her clad in scrubs, gloves and surgical masks. A tray table sits between them laden with surgical instruments including an oscillating saw.

A white sleeve hugs her right thigh. Donald wraps a thick black band tightly around it and secures it in place. He checks it then turns to Sydney.

DONALD
Tourniquet's secure. Saw.

Sydney hands Donald the saw. Donald turns it on and prepares to saw through Nikki's leg.

Nikki's gaze catches his own. He turns and makes direct eye contact with her. He stops the saw.

SYDNEY

What's wrong?

DONALD

This isn't the right saw for a transfemoral amputation.

SYDNEY

It's what you asked for—

DONALD

It's not! Go to the trunk of my car and get it. It looks just like this one only larger.

SYDNEY

Shouldn't you?

DONALD

You won't know what to do if anything goes wrong with the anesthesia. Go!

SYDNEY

Jesus Christ, Donald!

Sydney pulls down his mask. It dangles around his neck.

SYDNEY

This is my fiancé!

Sydney runs up a nearby staircase. Donald waits until a door slams upstairs to turn off the anesthesia and remove Nikki's mask.

DONALD

It's alright. He won't find it.

Donald removes the surgical tourniquet and sleeve from Nikki's leg. He pulls off his mask and tosses it aside.

DONALD

I'm shutting this down.

Donald produces a syringe and injects its contents into Nikki's arm.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney rummages through countless briefcases and duffel bags full of surgical equipment in the trunk of Donald's car. After a moment, he runs back to the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki sits in her nightie on the edge of the cloth-laden operating table with her head hung low.

Donald collects the surgical instruments and transports them one by one into a briefcase.

DONALD

Sydney's way too eager for this and
frankly, you were out of your head when
we put you under.

Nikki turns and looks over her shoulder.

A cot sits in the far corner over the room laden in plain white sheets. A pair of crutches and a hinged prosthetic leg are propped against the foot of the cot.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney approaches an ajar basement door.

SYDNEY

Donald, I couldn't find-

DONALD (V.O.)

It's in a maroon briefcase!

Sydney turns around and heads back through the living room.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki turns back toward Donald. Her eyes are full of tears. Donald stops what he's doing and looks at her.

DONALD
Are you alright—

Nikki lunges at Donald and knocks him over the tray table.

She takes off toward the stairs. Donald gets to his feet and runs after her as she scrambles clumsily up the steps. He snatches at her ankles.

DONALD
Wait! It's not—

Nikki whirls around and shoves Donald down the stairs. He strikes the wooden steps hard as he tumbles down. His glasses fly off as he hits the concrete floor.

Nikki takes off down the hallway.

Donald stirs at the bottom of the stairs. Blood trickles down his forehead. He touches it and brings back red on his fingertips.

He looks up and sees his glasses. He reaches for them.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki opens a drawer of silverware and reaches inside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney produces a maroon briefcase from Donald's trunk. He opens it. Surgical equipment. No saw.

SYDNEY
Son of a bitch!

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney enters.

NIKKI (O.S.)
What the fuck is going on here?

SYDNEY
Nikki?

KITCHEN

Nikki stands near the edge of the kitchen. She holds a massive butcher knife in her hand. Her face is puffy and wet with tears.

NIKKI

What are you trying to do to me?! You want to hurt me?! I'll hurt you first!

Nikki brandishes the knife. Sydney recoils and throws his hands in the air.

SYDNEY

I'm not trying to hurt you, Nikki. I would never—

NIKKI

Then what just happened downstairs?! What is this place?! A lab?!

SYDNEY

No. Nothing like...

NIKKI

What was the saw for?!

SYDNEY

I don't—

NIKKI

I saw everything! Don't lie to me!

SYDNEY

I'm not... I thought you understood.

NIKKI

What?!

DONALD (O.S.)

She doesn't know, Sydney.

Nikki turns as Donald appears behind her. One of the frames of his glasses is cracked. Nikki turns back to Sydney.

DONALD

Does she?

Nikki takes steps back and presses her back against the kitchen counter to keep both men in sight.

DONALD

It was the drugs you gave her, wasn't it? I knew she wasn't in the right state of mind. How can you expect her to remember?

NIKKI

What's he talking about?

Sydney stammers.

DONALD

Tell her, Sydney.

Sydney gulps.

SYDNEY

(to Nikki)

I couldn't expect you to cooperate. It's not something you could understand until after the operation. Now it looks like I have no choice but to make you understand. I'm trying to help you.

NIKKI

Help me what?

SYDNEY

Be complete.

NIKKI

I don't understand.

Sydney steps forward. Nikki raises the knife defensively.

NIKKI

Stay back!

Sydney reaches forward gently.

SYDNEY

Give me the knife, Nikki.

Nikki shakes her head.

SYDNEY

No one has to get hurt.

Sydney grabs for the knife. Nikki lunges forward and stabs Sydney in the shoulder. He screams.

Donald runs up behind Nikki and pulls her away from Sydney. The knife falls from her hand.

Nikki squirms violently in Donald's grip. He releases her. She falls to the floor but quickly scrambles to her feet.

SYDNEY

Nikki, wait!

ENTRANCE HALL

Nikki dives for the front door. Sydney blocks her path. She turns and runs down the hall. Sydney gives chase.

LIVING ROOM

Nikki races through the living room.

HALLWAY

Nikki dives for a metal door across from the basement. Sydney appears in the living room behind her.

SYDNEY

No! Not in there!

Nikki disappears behind the metal door and slams it shut. Sydney grabs the doorknob. She's locked it.

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney falls to his knees and pounds on the door.

SYDNEY

Get out of there, Nikki!

NIKKI

No!

SYDNEY

There's something terrible in there—

NIKKI

I don't believe you!

INT. SHRINE

The only light spills in through the crack at the base of the door.

Nikki sits on a tile floor and sobs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald appears behind Sydney.

SYDNEY

Wait downstairs.

Donald proceeds downstairs.

Sydney leans his back against the door.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, are you listening to me?

NIKKI

I thought you loved me.

SYDNEY

I do love you, Nikki. More than you know. That's why I have to do this.

NIKKI

Do what?

SYDNEY

It's your leg. It's a threat. An intrusive element in our relationship. I can't really put the feeling into words. But it's strong and I've felt it for a very long time.

NIKKI

You want my...

Nikki trails off into sobs as she brings both of her legs in toward her.

SYDNEY

This wasn't the way things were supposed to happen. But amputation will fix everything. For both of us.

NIKKI

No!

Nikki sniffles as she takes a moment to calm herself.

NIKKI

What happened to you, Sydney?

SYDNEY

Nothing happened. This is me.

NIKKI

This can't be you.

SYDNEY

I tried therapy. Needless to say, it didn't work. Therapists don't really care how you feel. They only care about what's normal. Or what normal's supposed to be. Drugs didn't help either. So I turned to the Internet. I went online and found a site for people... into amputees. I met some girls who'd had their legs removed.

Nikki reacts.

SYDNEY

After that, everything changed. At first, I thought it was for the better. But in the end, no matter how much I opened my heart to them or they opened theirs, I never felt connected to them. I came to believe it was because I wasn't there to experience their transformation.

Nikki breaks down. She brings her right leg to her chest and locks her arms around it.

SYDNEY

I know you can only see this as insane. For a long time, I felt the same way. But take it all away, we need each other, Nikki. We're one in the same. Our parents never understood us. They turned their backs on us. But we've always understood each other.

NIKKI

I don't understand. Why can't you just love me the way I am?

SYDNEY

Believe me, Nikki, I do. But as long as that intrusive element remains, we'll always be in flux.

Sydney steps away from the door and turns around.

SYDNEY

I can't force you out, Nikki. But I can wait for you. I've been waiting.

Sydney walks O.S.

END INTERCUT

INT. SHRINE

Nikki waits for Sydney's footsteps to fade in the distance. After a moment, she stands and flips on the lights.

Nikki looks around and sees the main room at the end of the corridor. She proceeds toward it.

She enters and scans her surroundings. Black cloth covers all three objects.

She approaches one of the objects and reaches out to it. Her fingers brush the cloth. It falls away to reveal a plastic display case containing a female human leg severed above the knee.

The leg is freeze-dried. It looks plastic with unnaturally shimmering skin. Its stump is sewn up with thick black sutures.

Nikki gasps and recoils in horror. Her elbow bumps another display case. The black cloth falls away to reveal another leg. Nikki screams and falls down. The black cloth falls off the third case and onto her face.

Nikki grabs the cloth and casts it aside. She looks up and sees the third leg through the clear bottom of the case.

Nikki bursts into tears and curls into a fetal position.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney rinses his wound at the sink and walks away.

INT. BASEMENT

Donald collects surgical instruments off the floor and places them on the restored tray table.

When they are all accounted for, he proceeds to transport them into his briefcase on the now bare operating table. Stainless steel reflects the light from above.

Sydney enters.

SYDNEY

What are you doing?

DONALD

I'm leaving.

SYDNEY

You can't leave. You have to help me. I already gave you my-

DONALD

You can have your money. I plan on distancing myself as far from this situation as possible. I'm going to the police.

SYDNEY

You can't go to the police. You'll lose

your medical license or worse—

DONALD

(defensively)

I don't think so. You told me repeatedly that this is what she wanted. I was brought here under false pretenses. Not to mention I never actually went through with anything.

SYDNEY

Doesn't matter. You knew exactly what you were getting into—

DONALD

You never told her about the operation!

SYDNEY

It wouldn't matter if I did. No other surgeon would've agreed to this. It'd be in violation of your bullshit, politically correct Hippocratic Oath. That would make you negligent.

Sydney proceeds to the cot and grabs the prosthetic leg.

SYDNEY

You want to leave?

Sydney returns to the operating table.

SYDNEY

Go ahead.

Sydney swings the prosthetic across the table. Donald's briefcase sails through the air. Surgical instruments clatter on the floor.

Donald lunges forward. He snatches the prosthetic from Sydney's hands and swings it through the air. Sydney blocks the first blow with his arms. He drops them in pain.

The second strikes him in the side of the head. Blood spews out of his mouth as he falls to the floor.

Donald brings the prosthetic down on Sydney's back and tosses it aside. He reaches down and picks up the saw.

Sydney regains himself.

SYDNEY
You ruined everything!

Sydney lunges at Donald. Donald raises the saw. Sydney stops dead in his tracks.

DONALD
I wouldn't.

SYDNEY
Donald. Drop the saw—

DONALD
Shut up, you pervert!

Donald starts the saw. Sydney throws up his hands.

DONALD
Acrotomophilia's not love, Sydney. It's a fetish.

Donald spits on the floor.

DONALD
Get out of my way.

SYDNEY
Just because I'm not like you—

DONALD
I said get out of my way!

Donald lunges at Sydney with the saw. Sydney catches it by the handle. Donald puts his other hand around it. Sydney does the same. A struggle breaks out.

DONALD
Let it go or I cut your throat out!

SYDNEY
No!

Donald tugs hard at the saw. Sydney releases it. The revolving blade slices into the side of Donald's head.

Donald screams and falls onto his back. The saw carves through the side of his face. The severed half falls away and exposes clean-cut layers of brain and skull as they well up with blood.

Sydney stumbles backward in shock and falls to the floor.

The saw blade grinds against the concrete as Donald crawls toward Sydney. Sydney scrambles backward on his hands and knees. His back strikes the wall.

Donald whimpers as he reaches out to Sydney. His fingers graze the toe of Sydney's shoe. Sydney retracts it.

Donald climbs on top of Sydney with intensity in his eyes. His head bleeds onto Sydney's scrubs. Sydney tries to push him off but to no avail.

Donald puts his hands around Sydney's throat and squeezes but is too weak to cause any harm.

He bleeds onto Sydney's face. The blood trickles into Sydney's mouth. Sydney sputters and coughs in disgust.

Donald leans forward and sinks his teeth into Sydney's cheek. Sydney cries out and shoves him to the side. His wounded head hits the concrete. He goes still.

Sydney takes a moment to catch his breath and wipe the blood off his face.

After a moment, he turns and slowly reaches out toward Donald. His fingers stop in front of Donald's nose and mouth. He recoils as Donald exhales onto his skin.

Sydney gets to his feet and proceeds across the room.

The saw spins aimlessly in the crevice it's created in the concrete. He picks it up and examines it. After a moment, he turns it off and sets it on the operating table.

Sydney reaches down and grabs a roll of gauze off the floor. He turns to Donald.

LATER

Donald is propped against the wall. Sydney wraps gauze tightly around his wounded head.

LATER

Donald's head is wrapped completely in gauze. Sydney sits beside Donald. He takes off his gloves and tosses them aside.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney emerges from the basement and approaches the door to the shrine.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney waits for a response. Nothing.

He reaches down and grabs the doorknob. It's still locked.

Sydney releases the doorknob.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney enters. He proceeds across the room and takes a seat on the cot. He buries his head in his hands and whimpers.

After a long moment, he looks up. His eyes are damp. He spots the anesthesia tank next to the operating table.

Sydney gets up and proceeds toward the tank. He takes a seat in front of it.

He reaches down, picks up the breathing mask and places it over his nose and mouth.

He reaches forward and turns on the gas. The tank hisses gently. Sydney takes a deep breath of anesthesia. He blinks and takes a second breath.

After a third breath, Sydney's wide eyes relax. He reaches forward and turns up the gas. He takes a deeper breath.

After a moment, he removes the mask and lays down on the floor. The lights over the operating table reflect in his vacant stare.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki lies in a fetal position on the floor. Her red eyes are distant.

Someone bangs at the door. Nikki shrieks and bolts upright.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Nikki?!

Nikki screams.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney kneels in front of the shrine door.

SYDNEY

I know it wasn't right to do this to you. To deceive you. But what choice did I have? How could I have told you everything before now?

INT. SHRINE

Nikki gets to her feet.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney lays his hand on the door.

SYDNEY

I wasn't about to repeat the mistakes of the past. I couldn't risk losing you. Not when I've come so close.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki stops beside the door at the end of the corridor.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

NIKKI

Are they dead?

SYDNEY

What?

NIKKI

The other girls. Are they dead?

Sydney hangs his head.

SYDNEY

Yes.

Nikki whimpers.

NIKKI

All of them?

Sydney chokes up.

Nikki throws both hands over her face and slumps against the wall.

SYDNEY

I didn't want them to die. I just wasn't prepared. I didn't know what I was doing back then. Not like with you. This time, I was going to do it right.

NIKKI

Are there more?

SYDNEY

No. Just three.

Nikki breaks down.

Sydney reacts to her cries.

SYDNEY

I'm not a killer, Nikki. You have to believe me. They were all accidents. And not all of them resisted the operation.

Sydney sighs.

SYDNEY

But we weren't right for each other.

Not like you and me. I loved them.
That's why they're still here. I just
needed something to remember them by.

NIKKI

Why do I have to be the one? I'm not
special. I'm nothing. I've always been
nothing.

SYDNEY

You've always underestimated yourself,
Nikki. You're a wonderful person. You
have so much love to give.

NIKKI

Then why this?

Nikki caresses her right leg.

NIKKI

It's just my body.

END INTERCUT

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald moans O.S. Sydney gets up.

INT. BASEMENT

Donald lies on his side. The whites of his eyes are visible
as his eyelids flicker. Blood seeps sluggishly through the
gauze around his head and trickles on the floor.

Sydney descends the stairs. He stops midway at the sight of
Donald.

SYDNEY

Shit!

Sydney runs up the stairs.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki listens to Sydney's footsteps from the other side of
the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney grabs a towel off a rack and races out.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney's footsteps approach. Nikki locks the door again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney proceeds down the hallway and turns into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney walks over to Donald and takes a seat. He takes Donald's head in his lap. It bleeds onto his scrubs as he wraps the towel tightly around it.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki presses her ear against the door. Silence.

She unlocks the door.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney removes his belt and wraps it around Donald's head to hold the towel in place. He reaches under Donald's shoulders and drags him to the side.

After a moment, he turns and looks across the room. His eyes lock on the anesthesia tank.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki opens the door a crack and peers into the hallway.

Footsteps O.S. Nikki shuts the door.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney traverses the room. He hears the shrine door shut.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney bursts out of the basement and tries the shrine door. It's locked.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki stands frozen in front of the door as the doorknob shudders.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney returns to the basement.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki gets on her hands and knees and attempts to peak under the door.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney takes a seat beside the anesthesia tank and places the breathing mask over his face. He turns on the gas.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door once again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The shrine door opens slightly. Nikki peaks out. She creeps slowly into the hallway. She holds the doorknob like it was life support.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney inhales the gas deeply. His eyes close.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nikki shuts the door behind her, careful not to make a sound. It clicks shut.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney's eyes snap open.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki enters the bedroom and locks the door behind her.

Two cell phones charge on the floor next to the bed. Nikki grabs one, dials a number and brings it to her ear.

911 (V.O.)

911, please state your emergency.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney emerges from the basement and approaches the shrine door. He raps gently upon it.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney presses his face against the door. His drugged-out eyes stare into space.

SYDNEY

I know what you're thinking. It's all coming apart. All your hopes and dreams. A harsh reality is taking over. But I promise. I won't let that happen.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds the cell phone to her ear.

911 (V.O.)
Are you safe?

NIKKI
I think so. Unless they find out where I am. The door's locked but they might still try to get in.

911 (V.O.)
Is there any way you can get out of the house without alerting them?

Nikki looks at the window behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney takes a seat with his back to the shrine door.

SYDNEY
You've been in there quite a while. Alone with your thoughts. Haven't you given me the benefit of the doubt yet? Don't you think there's a reason you've always felt unsure of yourself? A reason your life has never taken the path you've hoped it would? Something external holding you back?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds the cell phone to her ear.

911 (V.O.)
We'll send a unit to your location immediately.

NIKKI
Thank you.

Nikki flips the cell phone shut.

She stands and turns to the window. She grabs the bottom of it and pulls upward. It doesn't budge. Nikki pulls harder.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney turns toward the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, are you listening to me?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki tugs hard at the window. After some effort, it comes open. Cold wind blows through it.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney stands up.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney tries the doorknob. The door opens.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki shoves the window further open and climbs into it.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney enters the main room. He drops to his knees.

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney races for the exit.

EXT. COTTAGE, DECK - NIGHT

Nikki climbs out the window onto a snow-covered deck. She turns around and closes the window.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door shudders as loud banging fills the room.

SYDNEY (O.S.)
Don't do this to me, Nikki!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney kicks the door violently. It starts to crack around the lock.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs half-naked and vulnerable through the snow along the side of the cottage.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A loud crack as the door flies open. Sydney bursts in.

He runs quickly in and out of the bathroom then casts aside a closet door. He dives for the bed and snatches up a handful of sheets to look underneath.

SYDNEY
Where are you?!

Sydney looks up from beside the bed. His eyes fall on the window. He walks up to it for a closer look. Nikki's handprint is fresh on the glass.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki arrives at the front of the cottage. She runs for Sydney's car. She tries the backseat door. It's locked.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs over to Donald's car. She tries the backseat door. It opens. Nikki climbs in.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Sydney emerges onto the deck from a backdoor. He shuts it behind him.

His eyes fall on a trail of footprints in the snow leading from the bedroom window around the side of the cottage. He follows them.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki climbs into the backseat and shuts the door behind her. She locks both of the back doors, climbs into the front seat and locks the driver and passenger side doors.

She climbs back into the backseat, lies down on the floor and does her best to stay out of sight.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

A police car drives down the forest road.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

OFFICER BELL and OFFICER SIMPSON (both 40s) sit in the car. Their names are embroidered on their uniforms. Bell drives.

BELL

So do you believe it?

SIMPSON

What? The story about the leg? Hell no!

BELL

Me neither. Sounds like a couple of yuppies getting drugged up. They start messing around, things get a little out of hand, paranoia kicks in... The next thing you know, you've got a domestic disturbance.

SIMPSON

I hear you. Time to shut this bastard's party down.

BELL

Oh come on! You know it was the girl

who lost her shit.

SIMPSON

Bah! What do you know?

BELL

Care to make this interesting?

SIMPSON

I'll bet you a Coors Light. We'll hit the bar after our shift.

BELL

I said interesting.

SIMPSON

Fine! If I'm wrong, drinks are on me tonight.

BELL

There you go.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The police car speeds ahead.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney follows Nikki's footprints through the snow. He turns the corner to see them lead to Donald's car.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki pulls her legs toward her as she listens to Sydney's footsteps approach.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney approaches the car. Nikki's footprints lead straight to the backseat. Sydney grabs the door handle.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki holds her breath as Sydney tries the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney crouches and looks under the car.

Sydney looks back up and peers inside the car. He spots Nikki's foot.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Sydney slams his hand against the backseat window. Nikki shudders.

SYDNEY

You were better off inside, Nikki. I
can't wait for you if you're in there.
Why don't you just come out?

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The sound of an approaching car in the distance. Sydney looks toward the road. He sees the flicker of red and blue lights cast on the trees.

SYDNEY

Shit!

Sydney runs to the end of the cottage and disappears around the corner.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Police lights reflect off the rear window. Nikki looks up.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The police car parks behind Donald's car. Bell and Simpson emerge and proceed to the front door.

INT. DECK - NIGHT

Sydney creeps onto the deck and enters the cottage through the backdoor.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney shuts the backdoor behind him. He reaches down and pats the snow off his pant legs. He takes off his shoes, leaves them at the door and proceeds ahead.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell rings the doorbell.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki hears the doorbell. She looks up to see the officers.

She bangs loudly on the window. The officers turn and see her. They run to the car.

Simpson tries the door. It's locked. Nikki rolls down the window with an old-fashioned crank.

SIMPSON

Are you alright?

NIKKI

Yeah. I made it out of the house.

SIMPSON

Are they both still inside?

NIKKI

One of them was just here. I don't know where he went.

SIMPSON

What about the other one?

NIKKI

I don't know. I haven't seen him.

Simpson turns to Bell.

SIMPSON

I'll check it out. You stay with her.

Bell nods and turns to Nikki.

BELL

Whatever happens, stay out of sight.
We'll let you know when it's safe.

Nikki nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney stares out the window at Nikki and the police. Nikki rolls up the window and ducks out of sight.

Bell relates some directions to Simpson with hand gestures. Simpson walks toward the end of the cottage.

Sydney disappears O.S.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Simpson follows Sydney's footprints around the side of the cottage.

He grabs a radio from his side and brings it to his lips.

DONALD'S CAR

Bell leans against the side of the car.

His radio crackles at his side.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

By the way, I think drinks are on you tonight. I might just make those Coors European seeing as you're buying.

Bell grabs the radio and brings it to his lips.

BELL

Is that how it works now?

SIMPSON (V.O.)

That's how it always works. You don't make a bet unless you've got something to wager.

BELL

Alright, you cheap bastard. Let's get this over with.

AROUND THE BEND

Simpson returns his radio to his side. He stops dead in his tracks as the cottage goes black.

He grabs his radio again.

DONALD'S CAR

The front of the cottage is also black.
Bell's radio crackles as he brings it to his lips.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

Is it just my side or did the whole
place just go black?

BELL

Someone cut the lights.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

I'm going in. Radio silence from here
on out.

BELL

Copy that.

Bell returns the radio to his side and rests his fingers on the handle of a holstered pistol.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A hand grabs the discarded butcher knife off the floor.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Simpson creeps onto the deck with a pistol in hand.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simpson enters and shuts the door quietly behind him. He produces a flashlight.

Sydney's shoes lie at his feet. He takes a moment to examine them with his flashlight then proceeds ahead.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson turns into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Simpson enters the bedroom and takes several steps forward.

Sydney stands behind him with his back against the wall. He sneaks quietly out of the room.

Simpson whirls around and shines his flashlight at the doorway. Sydney is gone.

Simpson checks the bathroom and the closet before he exits.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson emerges from the bedroom and proceeds down the hallway. Sydney stands behind him on the other side of the bedroom entrance.

He creeps up behind Simpson. Simpson freezes. Sydney does the same. Simpson senses his presence. After a moment, he proceeds forward.

Sydney grabs Simpson and attempts to put the knife to his throat.

SYDNEY

Don't move—

Simpson anticipates the attack and slams the butt of his pistol into Sydney's nose. Sydney falls to the floor.

Simpson whirls around and shines the flashlight in Sydney's face. There's blood on Sydney's face but no wounds. He wipes some off his forehead and looks at his hand in confusion.

Simpson shines the flashlight on the floor. A bloody knife lies beside Sydney. Blood drips on the floor between both of their feet.

Simpson gurgles. Blood gushes from his throat in rhythmic fashion. He drops his flashlight. It turns off as it strikes the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell's radio crackles. A static-laden gurgling issues.

Bell brings the radio to his lips.

BELL

Simpson?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson's radio slips from his fingers. He grabs his pulsating jugular. Blood spurts between his fingers.

Sydney stands in a defensive stance several feet away. Simpson holds his pistol on Sydney. His arm sways from side to side.

Simpson's radio crackles on the floor.

BELL (V.O.)

Simpson, do you copy?

Simpson attempts to steady his hand and fires a misplaced shot. Sydney dives out of the way and onto the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A gunshot.

BELL

Shit!

Bell stows his radio and arms his pistol.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Bell knocks on the window. Nikki rolls it down.

BELL

I'm going in. If anything happens, just

honk. I'll be back.

NIKKI

Okay.

Nikki rolls up the window and ducks back down.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell produces a flashlight and runs toward the cottage.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson drops his pistol and falls to the floor. His life force slowly drains.

Sydney gets to his feet and cautiously approaches Simpson. His eyes fall on the pistol. Simpson catches Sydney's gaze and shakes his head.

SYDNEY

(quiet)

I'm sorry.

Sydney grabs the pistol.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Bell bursts into the entrance hall with flashlight in hand. He aims his pistol as someone scuttles in the darkness O.S.

KITCHEN

Bell enters and looks around. His flashlight illuminates several drops of blood on the floor. He crouches down to examine them.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney peers around the corner of the doorway at Bell. He slowly aims his pistol.

Bell looks up. Sydney retracts the pistol and disappears O.S.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bell stands up and scans the rest of the kitchen.

Someone moans in the distance. He whirls around.

ENTRANCE HALL

Bell emerges from the kitchen and heads down the hallway.

LIVING ROOM

Bell enters and briefly scans his surroundings before he proceeds ahead.

HALLWAY

Bell proceeds down the hallway.

Someone reaches out from the darkness, grabs his leg and jerks him down. Bell cries out in surprise.

A hand jabs sharp forceps into Bell's thigh. He yelps and drops his flashlight.

DONALD (O.S)

Sick fuck!

Donald emerges from the basement on his hands and knees. His squints through the darkness.

He stabs Bell in the crotch and twists the forceps in a sloppy fashion. Bell screams and shoots Donald in the face.

DOWN THE HALL

Sydney reacts to the gunshot.

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Donald tumbles down the basement stairs. He lands on the concrete below with a dull thud.

BELL

Shit!

Bell grabs the forceps protruding from his crotch and yanks them out. A gush of blood spouts across the floor.

Bell tosses the forceps aside. He squeezes his bleeding groin as he strains to regain himself. He picks up his flashlight and proceeds down the stairs.

BASEMENT

Bell's flashlight illuminates blood, brain and bits of teeth on the steps as he descends the staircase.

He arrives at the bottom and shines his flashlight in front of him. Donald lies face-up on the floor. A chasm of gore and tooth enamel lies between his upper lip and what's left of his nose. Smoke rises from inside it.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney approaches the basement. He stops at the top of the stairs and looks down at Bell.

INT. BASEMENT

Bell shines his light further. He illuminates the scattered instruments. The prosthetic leg smeared with Sydney's blood. The operating table. The saw on top of the table.

BELL

What the fuck?

Sydney descends the staircase behind him. He stops midway and raises Simpson's pistol.

SYDNEY

Stop right-

Bell whirls around and fires furiously at Sydney. Sydney scrambles up the stairs.

HALLWAY

Sydney bursts out of the basement and races down the hallway.

INT. BASEMENT

Bell lowers his pistol and heads for the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bell emerges from the basement and proceeds down the hallway.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Bell turns the corner and arrives outside the bedroom. Simpson lies dead in a pool of blood before him.

Bell produces his radio and brings it to his lips.

BELL

I'm going to need backup.

Bell returns the radio to his side.

RADIO (V.O.)

Copy that.

Something creaks inside the bedroom. Bell enters.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bell creeps quietly into the bedroom. He scans his surroundings. The bathroom door is ajar. He peeks inside for a moment.

Bell freezes. Someone breathes nearby. Bell's eyes fall on the bed. He walks over to it.

As soon as he arrives, he realizes the breathing is coming from behind him. He turns around and faces the closet. He turns off his flashlight, stows it at his side and proceeds cautiously toward the closet.

Bell stops in front of the closet. The breathing issues directly behind it. Bell readies his pistol and reaches for the door.

The bedroom lights up with gunfire. Bullets rip through Bell's body. He stumbles backward and collapses on the bed.

Misplaced bullets strike the bed. Water shoots into the air and floods the enclosed bed frame.

The gunfire ceases. Bits of fabric float through the air. Red water splashes off the sides of the bed.

The bullet-ridden closet door slides aside. Sydney steps out. He holds Simpson's smoking pistol.

Bell lies on his belly halfway submerged in his own diluted blood. The water ripples with each labored breath he takes.

Sydney steps forward and raises the pistol.

SYDNEY

I don't want to kill you—

Bell rolls onto his back and fires aimlessly through the air. Wood explodes around Sydney as he stumbles backward and collapses in the closet. Simpson's pistol flies out of his hand.

Bell's arm droops and drops his pistol. He groans and rolls onto his back. Blood dribbles out of his mouth and permeates the water.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Sydney groans as he pats down his body. After a moment, his eyes go wide.

He sits up and looks down. His body is unscathed. He laughs in relief.

Then he glances at his arm. A jagged shard of wood protrudes from his forearm. He touches it and whimpers.

Sydney takes a moment to compose himself and grits his teeth and he pulls the wood out of his arm. Blood dribbles out sluggishly.

He looks at Bell.

SYDNEY

You son of a bitch!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney bursts out of the closet and jumps on top of Bell. He rolls Bell onto his belly and shoves his face in the water. His body convulses as bubbles form around his face.

After a moment, Bell's body goes still. Sydney grabs him by the hair and lifts up his head. Bloody water trickles from the corners of his mouth. Sydney releases him. His face hits the water with a splash.

Sydney grabs the radio at Bell's side. He examines it for a moment then presses a button and brings it to his lips.

SYDNEY

(impersonating Bell)

You can call off that backup.
Everything's under control.

RADIO (V.O.)

What happened?

SYDNEY

Nothing.

Sydney clears his throat and attempts a subtler, convincing impersonation.

SYDNEY

I lost my cool.

A pause. Sydney shudders in anticipation.

RADIO (V.O.)

I'm calling them off. You be careful
out there and keep your wits about.

Sydney tosses the radio into the water. It crackles for a moment then goes silent.

Sydney exits.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney descends the stairs. Brains and tissue squish under his feet.

He arrives at the bottom of the stairs and proceeds around Donald's corpse.

Sydney flips a switch inside a fuse box at the far end of the room.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The entire cottage lights up.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki looks up in surprise as light fills the car.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney turns around and proceeds to the exit. He stops dead in his tracks and gasps at the site of Donald's corpse, its head reduced to carnal mush.

Sydney throws a hand over his mouth in disgust and scrambles up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney races down the hallway. He screams and stumbles to a halt at the site of Simpson's corpse. His blood is bright and crimson in the light.

Sydney gags and shambles into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney makes a point to avoid looking at Bell's bullet-ridden corpse as he enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney flips on the light. He looks in the mirror and gasps. He first notices his own blood-smeared face then the grotesque murder scene in the background.

Sydney whirls around. The carpet is stained burgundy. Bell's body seems to bob in the bed as bloody water splashes against it.

Sydney gags and falls to his knees. He leans over the side of the bathtub and vomits into the pile of rose petals.

LATER

Sydney rinses his hands, splashes water in his face and rubs down his neck and forearms.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom. He's wet and disheveled but less bloody.

He proceeds to the end of the hallway and grabs his shoes.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

The front door opens O.S.

Sydney appears in the window and pounds aggressively on the backseat door. Nikki screams.

SYDNEY

Nikki, this has gone far enough! People are dead!

Sydney pounds on the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, if you don't open this door, I'm going to have to break in and get you!

Sydney tugs at the door. Nikki dives into the front seat and honks the car horn.

SYDNEY

That's it!

Sydney disappears O.S.

Nikki honks several more times then returns to the backseat. She looks out the window. Metal clinking O.S.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney rummages frantically through the contents of Donald's trunk.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

After a moment, Sydney reappears in the window. Nikki recoils and scrambles for the horn again. She honks it frantically.

Sydney leans back and swings a blunt object forward. It strikes the window hard but the glass doesn't break.

Nikki screams and jumps further away from the window as Sydney comes back with a second blow. The glass cracks.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The blunt object in Sydney's hand is a surgical mallet. Sydney strikes the window again. It breaks. Nikki shrieks in horror.

Sydney sticks the mallet handle into one of his belt loops.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Sydney reaches through the broken window and unlocks the door. Nikki unlocks the opposite door and takes off into the snow.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs toward the police car. Sydney runs after her.

Nikki grabs the passenger side door handle and pulls open the door. Sydney catches up to her and grabs her around the waist. She clings tightly to the door handle as Sydney attempts to pull her away. He succeeds.

Nikki kicks, screams, claws and bites as Sydney takes her into his arms and throws her over his shoulder.

He carries her toward the front door. She pounds her fists on his back but to no avail.

NIKKI

Let me go!

Nikki grabs the mallet at Sydney's side. The handle is caught on his belt loop. Sydney slaps her hand away.

She shrieks and sobs as he takes her into the cottage.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney carries Nikki into the shrine. He drops her on the floor and locks the door behind them.

Nikki grabs the doorknob. Sydney slaps her hand away. She gets to her feet and tries to push him out of the way. He shoves her back.

Nikki retreats into the main room. Sydney runs after her and tackles her to the floor.

Nikki kicks and throws fists aimlessly through the air. One of them collides with Sydney's wounded shoulder. He cries out and releases her.

She makes another break for the door. He grabs her and shoves her into the corner. She makes another break. Sydney produces the mallet. Nikki stops dead in her tracks.

Sydney raises the mallet. Nikki retreats into a corner and cowers in fear.

SYDNEY

They're dead, Nikki. Innocent people-

NIKKI

It's not my fault!

SYDNEY

Not directly. But still...

Sydney lowers the mallet.

SYDNEY

How could you call the police? You think I'm sick, I understand. That's all you could think. But how could you think you were actually in danger? Have

I done anything to hurt you yet?

NIKKI

What kind of question is that?

SYDNEY

I know a lot has happened tonight. A lot of those things, I didn't want to happen. But in spite of it all, you wouldn't be afraid if you understood what I've been trying to do.

Sydney crouches in front of Nikki.

SYDNEY

It's like I said before. We're in flux. The only thing that can help us now is trust. But obviously, we're kind of low on that right now. So we'll just have to do this the hard way.

Nikki whimpers and clutches her legs to her chest.

SYDNEY

I'm no monster. You don't want me to do this so I won't. We'll get a professional instead.

Nikki starts to cry.

SYDNEY

If there's enough damage done to the leg, they'll have no choice but to amputate it.

NIKKI

That isn't going to work!

SYDNEY

Believe me, it will—

NIKKI

No! It doesn't change a thing!

SYDNEY

What are you talking about? This changes everything. Whether you believe

it or not.

NIKKI

If you take my leg, you'll just want to take the other one. If you take both, you'll want to take my arms-

SYDNEY

I don't want your flesh!

Nikki turns away from Sydney.

SYDNEY

There're some things that are bigger.

NIKKI

It'll never be enough. No matter what you do to me, you'll still be the same-

SYDNEY

You're wrong-

NIKKI

It's something inside you. You're the one that has to change-

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney raises the mallet in frustration.

Nikki looks at him with tearful eyes.

NIKKI

What are you going to do? You want to smash my leg so they'll take it off? Go ahead! What are you waiting for?

Sydney blinks as if to hold back tears.

SYDNEY

Just because you've lost all faith in me doesn't mean I've lost faith in you.

Sydney lowers the mallet. He flips it around and hands it to Nikki.

SYDNEY

I want you to do it.

Nikki looks at the mallet, confused.

SYDNEY

You know I'd never do anything to you
against your will.

NIKKI

Then why are you making me do this?

SYDNEY

Because deep down, I know you want to.

Nikki hesitates to take the mallet.

SYDNEY

Take it.

After some thought, Nikki takes the mallet. She slides her
right foot in front of her and raises the mallet over it
with a trembling hand.

She looks at Sydney.

Sydney looks anxiously at the mallet.

SYDNEY

What are you waiting for?

Sydney looks at Nikki.

SYDNEY

Do it.

She shakes her head.

NIKKI

I can't.

Nikki lowers the mallet.

Sydney's face contorts. He screams and lunges at Nikki. She
strikes him in his wounded shoulder with the mallet. He
screams and rolls to the side.

Nikki makes a break for the door. Sydney grabs her nightie and pulls her to the floor. He attempts to overpower her. She strikes him hard in the right ankle. He screams and slaps the mallet out of her hand.

Nikki dives for it. Sydney grabs her and shoves her to the side. He grabs the mallet and turns to Nikki. She's already on her feet.

Sydney scrambles to his feet as Nikki runs for the door. He gives chase. He makes it several feet before he cries out as his wounded ankle gives way beneath him.

He struggles to get up as Nikki unlocks the door and disappears into the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki races through the living room. Sydney screams behind her. She catches a glimpse of him as he stumbles out of the shrine.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney hobbles toward the living room.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Nikki runs down the hallway toward the front door. Sydney appears in the living room behind her.

Nikki exits the cottage as Sydney limps quickly toward her. His ankle gives way again as he approaches the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs toward the police car. He limps after her in haste. His wounded ankle leaves bloody tracks in the snow.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki dives into the front seat of the police car and locks the door behind her.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney falls in the snow several feet from the police car.

SYDNEY

Don't do this to me! Don't let me down
like they did!

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki rummages through the contents of the car.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney pulls up his bloody pant leg. Ragged flesh hangs from his wounded ankle. It bleeds profusely and stains the surrounding snow.

Sydney pounds the ground in physical and emotional torment. He gets up and limps toward the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki screams as Sydney collapses on top of the car. He pounds the windshield with the mallet. The glass breaks in a spiderweb fashion.

Sydney smashes the windshield with increased intensity but the glass doesn't give. Nikki opens the glove box and rummages through its contents with shaking hands.

Sydney climbs off the car and turns his attention to the passenger side window. He swings the mallet into it. It cracks easier than the windshield

Nikki dumps random contents out of the glove box as she looks deeper inside.

Sydney hits the window with the mallet until it breaks. He shoves the mallet handle into his pocket, reaches inside the car and unlocks the door.

Nikki spots a can of mace in the back of the glove box. She reaches for it.

Sydney opens the door and grabs Nikki's legs. She pulls out a handful of items from the glove box including the mace. It falls on the floor.

Nikki kicks violently as Sydney attempts to pull her out of the car.

She reaches for the mace. Sydney gives her a hard tug and pulls her out of reach.

Sydney grabs at her nightie. It tears.

Nikki kicks Sydney in the face. His glasses fly off. He releases her.

Nikki dives for the mace. Sydney grabs her ankle and pulls her halfway out of the car.

Nikki rolls onto her back and sprays the mace at Sydney. He throws his arms in front of his face. The liquid soaks his forearms and drips down in a sickly brownish yellow.

Sydney coughs and gags. He attempts to slap the mace out of Nikki's hand. She sprays in the eye. He howls in agony.

Nikki scrambles back into the car. Sydney slams the door shut on her ankle. Nikki screams.

SYDNEY

You fucking cunt!

Sydney shrieks and curses as he slams Nikki's ankle repeatedly in the door. Her foot bends to the side with each blow.

Sydney releases the door. It swings to the side.

Nikki sits up and sprays both of Sydney's eyes full of mace. He falls to his knees.

SYDNEY

I'm blind! You fuck—

Nikki fills Sydney's mouth with mace. He coughs, sputters and retches. His speech is reduced to guttural grunts and cries.

Nikki reaches forward and slams the door shut.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney grabs several handfuls of snow and rubs it over his face but to no effect. He cries out in frustrated pain.

He scrambles to his feet and stumbles blindly toward the cottage, gasping for air through his constricted throat.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki shudders as shock kicks in. She holds up the mace defensively as if she expects Sydney to return. After a moment, she drops it.

She stares at her broken ankle. It's started to swell. A bloody bone protrudes from the skin.

Nikki breaks down.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney bursts into the entrance hall. His eyes are swollen completely shut.

KITCHEN

Sydney bumps into every object in sight as he stumbles into the kitchen.

He gropes toward the kitchen sink and grabs the faucet. He turns on the water and places his head under it. He laps at it with an engorged tongue as it washes over his face.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki vomits onto the floor of the car. She looks up. Her face is pale.

A police radio connected to the car comes to life. Nikki grabs the receiver and presses a button on it. Her finger slips off the button as she speaks into it.

NIKKI

I...

Nikki trails off. The radio jabbers back at her indistinctly.

Her eyes glaze over. She drops the receiver.

Nikki glances down at her broken ankle. Blood weeps from the open wound down her foot and onto the floor.

She faints.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney kneels fully clothed under a running shower. He moans as the jet hits his face. Blood and mace washes down the drain.

LATER

Sydney sits in the shower with his back to the jet and hangs his head.

LATER

Sydney stands in front of the sink with the knee of his wounded leg propped up by an open drawer. His entire face is red and irritated. He pats it dry with a towel.

Sydney grabs the side of the mirror and pulls it aside to reveal a medicine cabinet. He reaches inside and removes a bottle of saline.

He looks up and squirts it into his eyes. He moans as it hits his eyeballs and trickles down his inflamed cheeks.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney sits on the floor next to the closet. He takes off his shirt and rubs himself down with a towel.

He takes off his shoes next. It takes him some effort to remove the right one. Blood pours out of it as it comes loose.

It takes more effort to remove his pants. He pulls them gently off his right leg and whimpers at the sight of his wounded ankle. The skin is broken and bone is exposed. It's cracked in several places and weeps blood.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney lies on the floor. He's dry and dressed in clean clothes. A handful of fresh gauze lies beside him.

His pant leg is pulled up to reveal his wounded ankle. A sliver of bone falls out. Sydney grabs it and inserts it painfully back into place.

He grabs the gauze and proceeds to wrap his ankle with it.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney limps out into the snow toward the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Sydney opens the passenger side door.

Nikki lies unconscious across the front seat. She's extremely pale. Her swollen ankle is colored a dark purple and caked with coagulated blood.

Sydney looks at Nikki's face. Her faint breath is visible in front of her nose and mouth.

LATER

Sydney pulls Nikki out of the driver side door. He strains as he takes her into his arms.

He stands and turns toward the cottage. He groans through his teeth as he takes the first step. He falls to a knee and nearly drops her but stops himself before he does. Her legs dangle inches above the ground.

Sydney struggles to get back on his feet. He gasps as blood seeps through the gauze around his ankle. His face flushes.

After some effort, Sydney gets back on his feet and carries Nikki toward the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki lies on the operating table. She's covered in several layers of towels with her legs exposed.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAWN

A cloudy sky hangs over the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki lies on the operating table the same as before.

Sydney descends the stairs.

LATER

Sydney plugs the saw into the wall.

LATER

Sydney pulls the medical sleeve onto Nikki's right thigh and fixes the surgical tourniquet tightly over it. He checks it to make sure it's secure.

Sydney produces the saw and turns it on. He looks at Nikki's peaceful face then at her grotesque compound fracture.

Sydney turns on the saw and lowers it slowly toward Nikki's leg. It slices her skin just below the surgical sleeve. Blood sprays on Sydney's shirt. Nikki winces in her unconsciousness.

Sydney retracts the saw. He looks back at Nikki's face. A single tear trickles down her cheek.

Sydney looks at the newly created gash on her leg.

A long moment passes before Sydney turns off the saw and sets it on the tray table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A fire burns in the fireplace.

Nikki lies on the couch covered in thick blankets. Her broken ankle is propped up on a stack of towels. She breathes regularly. She is still pale but much less so.

Sydney kneels beside her. A roll of gauze, a bag of cotton balls and bottle of rubbing alcohol sits beside him. He cleans Nikki's wound with a moist cotton ball.

LATER

Sydney wraps Nikki's ankle with gauze.

LATER

Sydney lies on the floor beside Nikki and stares off into space. He holds her hand in his.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney enters the main room of the shrine and proceeds to the display case on his left.

He looks at the leg inside it nostalgically. After a moment, he proceeds to the next one and does the same.

Sydney proceeds to the third display case. He stares at the third leg for an extended period of time.

He then sticks his fingers into niches on both sides of the plastic top. He pulls upward. The display case releases a hiss from inside as Sydney lifts it open.

Sydney reaches inside and removes the leg. He looks at it thoughtfully as he feels its flesh in his hands.

After a moment, Sydney takes a seat on the floor.

He sets the leg lengthwise beside his right leg and pulls his right pant leg up above his knee. He looks at the two legs thoughtfully.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney kneels beside Nikki and takes her hand.

SYDNEY

I'm so sorry for what I've put you through. I've been wrong this whole time. But you've made me realize something. Something about myself I never knew but was always there.

Sydney removes the ring from Nikki's finger and drops it in his pocket.

SYDNEY

I know what I have to do now.

Sydney kisses Nikki's cheek.

SYDNEY

Thank you.

Sydney disappears O.S.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney lies on the floor in his boxers beside the operating table. The surgical tourniquet is wrapped around his right thigh. His pants lie at his feet. The saw lies on a metal shelf under the operating table.

Sydney pulls the breathing mask over his face and turns on the anesthesia. He breathes deeply.

After a moment, Sydney grabs the saw and turns it on. He lowers it slowly onto his leg. It slices away hairs as it breaks his epidermis. Blood sprays on his shirt.

The saw cuts deep into Sydney's flesh. Sydney's face flinches slightly as he moves the saw back and forth in ungraceful strokes.

The saw shrieks as it buzzes into Sydney's bone. Sydney grits his teeth. Drops of blood fleck his face.

He looks up and feels the pain for the first time. He screams in anguish through the breathing mask.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney's screams and the buzzing of the saw echoes through the hallway.

INT. BASEMENT

The saw cuts Sydney's leg completely in half. Sydney turns it off and tosses it aside. It clangs on the metal shelf.

He inhales anesthesia in deep, exasperated breaths then pulls off the breathing mask and tosses it aside.

Sydney takes a moment to catch his breath then stares at his severed leg.

After a long moment, he reaches for it. He groans as he strains to grab it.

He takes it into his arms, feels it around in his hands, stares at it for a moment then sets it aside.

Sydney struggles to grab his pants. He pulls them toward him and reaches inside one of the pockets. He produces his cell phone, dials a number and brings it to his ear.

911 (V.O.)

What's going on over there? We've been receiving calls from your location all night.

Sydney takes a deep breath.

911 (V.O.)

Hello? Hello!

Sydney shakes uncontrollably as he speaks.

SYDNEY

I'd like to turn myself into the police. I've killed three people tonight including the officers you sent. There's also three more buried in the forest. They've been dead for years. The police will be particularly interested in them. And there's a girl here. She needs medical assistance.

911 (V.O.)

Why didn't you come into the station to do this?

SYDNEY

I'm not in a position to do that right now. My physical state is... compromised.

911 (V.O.)

What do you mean compromised?

SYDNEY

You'll find out soon enough.

Sydney flips the cell phone shut and places it back in his pants pocket.

He stares at the bloody stump where his leg used to be. He reaches down and puts his hand over it.

His lips quiver as he probes the flesh with his fingers, careful to feel every detail. The bone, the muscle, the layers of flesh.

After a moment, Sydney opens the tourniquet. Arterial blood spurts instantly from the stump. Sydney holds his hand in front of it and allows the blood to wash over his fingers.

Sydney blinks. Tears fall from his eyes and roll gracefully down his cheeks.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: COMPLETE

THE END