

A Deadly Fate

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. OLESON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - 1869

Basic room - stone fireplace off to the side, card table and two chairs in the center, a couple of cabinets. Through an open doorway, a set of stairs leads up to the second story.

At the table, FREDERIC OLESON (30s) a talented magician with an evil look about him, suave, handlebar moustache classic for the time period, plays poker with a fellow MAGICIAN (40s), who has most of the money on the table in front of him.

The deck they play with contains basic cards, only Frederic's likeness, dressed in full cape and top hat, adorns the back of every card.

Frederic takes a moment to examine the five cards in his hand. Seemingly satisfied, he tosses the rest of his cash into the kitty.

With a confident leer, Magician matches the amount.

Frederic lays down his cards to reveal a full house, 5's and 2's. He looks self-assured, like he knows he has won.

But Magician lays his hand on the table. Four Jacks. He claims the kitty, adding it to his already large pile of money.

INT. OLESON DOWNSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

Deck of cards in his hand, Frederic opens the door to Magician, who uses a cane to walk as he stops in the doorway.

MAGICIAN

Let's hope you are a much better
magician than poker player. Wouldn't
want to lose my competition.

In response, Frederic tips his hat. The grin on his face suggests the intended insult fails to bother him.

FREDERIC

Careful driving home, my friend.
The roads can be treacherous at night.

With a lighthearted smirk, Magician leaves. He heads to a horse and buggy parked out front, climbs into the driver's seat and drives off down the dirt road.

Frederic's grin transforms into a wicked smile as he closes the door. His eyes turn to the cards in his hand. A red glow coming from their direction illuminates his face.

EXT. BASE OF HILL - DAY

Very steep with lots of shrubbery along the way. Magician lies at the bottom, amongst the debris from a busted up buggy. He's dead, a broken wheel's spoke protruding through his chest. Blood soaks his shirt.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY - PRESENT DAY

A few students scattered about in-between classes.

INT. COLLEGE HALL - DAY - SAME

Students flood out of a classroom. Amongst them is LINDA PRESCOTT (21), glasses, no make-up, little fuss over her hair. A true "nerdy" look covering a bold interior dying to burst out.

Books in her arms, she goes unnoticed as her peers around her socialize.

TRACY HOWARD (21), preppy, lots of make-up and well done hair, expensive clothes, oozing family wealth, trots up to Linda.

TRACY

Hi, uh...

LINDA

Linda.

TRACY

Right. Want to hang out this weekend?

LINDA

With you?

Tracy laughs, one of those giggling kind that lacks sincerity. It's done for show.

TRACY
Of course with me... and a few others.

LINDA
I don't see why...

TRACY
Do you want to or not? I'd think it
would be good for your image.

Linda considers a moment, then:

LINDA
I guess so...

TRACY
Of course you do. What other plans
could you possibly have?

Linda stares.

TRACY
Be at the Magic House by six.

LINDA
Magic House?

TRACY
You know, that old house over on
Landen. That's where we're spending
the weekend. They're tearing it
down Monday so it's our last chance
to check it out.

She steps away, then turns back.

TRACY
Oh, bring a friend so you'll have
someone to hang out with. And beer,
or whatever it is you drink.

She bounces down the hall.

Linda clutches her books to her chest as she watches Tracy
go.

EXT. BACK STREET - DAY

An overstuffed backpack on her back, Linda walks with MIKE LEONARD (22), similar nerdy appearance and very shy. They carry a cooler between them.

Each glances at the other as they walk, wanting to say something, but too shy to start. Finally:

MIKE

Maybe we should have taken my car.

LINDA

I don't mind walking. Really.

Mike looks at her longingly, an obvious interest that seems to go unnoticed on Linda's part.

EXT. OLESON HOUSE - DAY

Two stories, a couple centuries old, ready to fall down, secluded off of a dirt road.

Chipped paint, rotted wood, broken windows, weeds in place of grass, make this look like it's been abandoned for decades.

RON MORRISON (20), long hair, ear piercing, trouble with a capital T, stands out front. He wears a leather jacket and boots, holds a beer can in his hand.

Tracy is in his arms. They make out, hot and heavy.

A beat-up truck is parked off to the side. A nice car stands next to it.

From the trunk, BRAD WESTLING (22), jock-type, letterman's jacket, and KAREN ANDERS (21), cheerleader, removes a couple cases of beer.

Left inside are a couple of sleeping bags and duffels.

Linda and Mike arrive. They set down their cooler and catch their breath.

Brad eyes them with disapproval.

BRAD

(quietly to Karen)

Who invited the geek squad?

Karen giggles.

Brad and Karen carry their beer inside.

Linda and Mike wait to be acknowledged, but it looks like it could be a long wait.

MIKE

Are you sure we're in the right place?

Linda turns to him with a sigh.

LINDA

Afraid so. Sorry.

MIKE

Well, at least we have each other to talk to.

Ron pauses in the midst of kissing Tracy to sip from his beer.

At that moment, he notices the newest arrivals. His expression shows he doesn't approve. The tone of his voice evident that he couldn't care less if Linda and Mike hear him.

RON

(to Tracy)

What are the geeks doing here?

Linda and Mike share a look.

TRACY

You said to invite a variety of people.

RON

I meant a variety of COOL people.

TRACY

(quietly)

It could be fun. We'll have someone to laugh at.

Beaming with pride, Ron pulls her close.

RON

I like how you think.

They kiss passionately.

Linda and Mike carry their cooler up to them.

MIKE

Where, um... where should we put
this?

Ron breaks out of the kiss to look at him quizzically.

RON

In a tree. Where the fuck do you
think you should put it?

Mike hesitates, then leads Linda through the open doorway.

Ron shakes his head.

RON

Geeks.

He finishes his beer.

INT. OLESON LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Several cases of beer stand against the wall, along with a
few unlit lanterns.

Brad and Karen, an arm around each other, head to the doorway
to exit. Mike and Linda stop on the other side. Brad
illuminates at the sight of their cooler.

BRAD

Hey! More beer.

LINDA

Actually, it's soda, and juice.
Plus we brought some water, since we
figured...

She notices Brad and Karen staring, unable to believe what
they hear.

LINDA

... there wouldn't be any running
water... in... the...

Linda stops short, uncomfortable with how the others look at
her.

BRAD

(to Karen)

I told you they were geeks.

Brad and Karen pass by the new arrivals as they leave the house.

Mike turns to Linda.

MIKE

Why are we here again?

LINDA

I think we're the entertainment.

They laugh, although they really don't find this funny.

INT. OLESON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two burning lanterns illuminate the room. The six occupants are spread out on blankets and sleeping bags, drinking heavily. Beer for most, except Linda and Mike drink soda and juice.

Their open cooler stands near them, full cans of juice and bottles of water scattered around it while many cans of beer take their place in the ice.

Sipping her juice, Linda makes a bitter face.

LINDA

(quietly to Mike)

It's warm.

With a look over to their drinks lying on the floor:

MIKE

Yeah. No wonder.

Ron finishes off a beer and grows restless.

RON

Hey, Brad. Want to take me on?

He holds out his arm in arm wrestling position. Brad rolls up his sleeve.

BRAD

You're on.

Ron and Brad lie on the floor on their stomachs and lock their hands together. Brad's face twists with discomfort as he lifts his elbow.

BRAD

Ow. The floor is too hard.

RON

Call 1-800-who-gives-a-fuck.

BRAD

Got a phone?

Ron pulls a cell phone from his pocket and slides it to Brad.

RON

There.

Brad smirks. He tosses the phone back to Ron.

BRAD

I got my own, thanks.

RON

Then why did ya` ask?

Tracy slips part of a sleeping bag beneath their elbows.

TRACY

Here.

Brad and Ron get back in position and begin their battle. Each holds their own equally well.

KAREN

This is gonna be a long one.

She gets to her feet.

KAREN

Come on, girls. Let's go pick out our bedrooms.

She grabs a lantern and heads to the doorway.

Tracy and Linda, both appearing a little unsure of the plan, stand.

LINDA

I don't think that's a good idea.

Karen stops in the doorway.

KAREN

Then we'll get the best rooms.

Tracy looks to Linda, slightly worried about the situation, but she joins Karen anyway. They wait.

Linda somehow musters the courage and goes to them. The girls leave.

Ron and Brad exert great force into the challenge. Their faces show just how hard each is trying to win. But their hands remain at twelve o'clock.

Mike couldn't care less about the testosterone fest. He watches the doorway where the girls have gone as he chugs a warm soda.

FIRST FLOOR HALL

Karen, lantern in hand, leads the way upstairs. Tracy and Linda follow close behind. Steps CREAK with each step.

SNAP. Tracy's foot goes through a rotted step, all the way to her knee. She cries out in terror and pain.

Karen sets down her lantern and assists Linda in pulling their companion out of the hole. A difficult task. Just as Tracy comes free of the hole--

Mike runs to the steps.

MIKE

Are you girls okay?

Tracy's pantleg is torn, but she's able to put weight on her foot without incident.

KAREN

Yeah. Be careful on these steps.

She grabs her lantern and leads the way. Following her, Tracy hobbles a bit on her injured leg.

Linda passes a look back at Mike as she trails after them.

UPSTAIRS HALL

Four closed or semi-closed doors. Some barely hanging on their hinges.

Karen uses the light to skim each room they come to. Three bedrooms and a bathroom. All in terrible condition and filthy.

Linda sneezes.

LINDA
I'm allergic to dust.

KAREN
Not a good thing to be allergic to
right now.

TRACY
Maybe we should just sleep downstairs.
What if we fall through the floor?

KAREN
Floors are made sturdier than stairs.

Tracy and Linda head for the stairs. Something off to the side catches Linda's eye. Torn wallpaper.

LINDA
Look.

Tracy looks, but doesn't see anything unusual in the limited light.

TRACY
What?

Karen brings the lantern closer. Linda peels back the wallpaper to reveal a door. Karen opens it. A set of stairs leads to an attic.

LINDA
Do you think we should...

TRACY
Uh-uh.

KAREN
Come on, ladies. Maybe there's
valuables up there, and they're all
ours since the boys are so boring.

She carefully treks up the steps.

Tracy and Linda watch. Linda finally goes after her.

The area around Tracy growing darker as the lantern moves further away, she's not left with a choice. She trails the other girls, takes each step with extra caution.

ATTIC

Very dirty with some boxes, broken pieces of wood from the rafters, and a trunk.

Floorboards CREAK as the girls cross them. Karen holds the lantern above a box as she goes through it.

She pulls out a very old, worn picture of Frederic - dressed in classic magician's attire for the 1800s: the dark clothing, cape and top hat.

On stage, he holds a live pigeon in his hand.

KAREN

Would you look at that.

Tracy and Linda come to her sides for a look.

KAREN

It's Frederic Oleson.

TRACY

Wow. He looks really old.

LINDA

The picture's old, not him.

TRACY

No, he looks old, too. Why is he dressed funny?

LINDA

That's what a magician wore in his day.

Karen takes the light over to the old, beaten up wooden trunk. A lock secures the lid. She pulls at it, but the lock remains in tact.

Linda grabs a broken piece of wood and holds it out to Karen.

LINDA

Try this.

Karen sets down the lantern. She uses the wood to pry open the lock with relative ease in its deteriorated condition.

Outside, a clap of THUNDER and flash of lightning captures the girls' attention.

TRACY

It's not supposed to rain, is it?

Linda shakes her head.

Another flash of lightning holds their attention, but then it stops as quickly as it started.

The girls, still worried, turn back to the trunk. Tracy opens the CREAKING lid.

Inside are some ancient magic tricks, as well as a black cape and top hat. Tracy puts on the hat.

TRACY

How do I look?

Karen and Linda giggle at her appearance.

KAREN

Stupid.

TRACY

Well...

She grabs the cape and drapes it around her shoulders, ties a knot in the cord to secure it.

TRACY

... I just need the cape to complete the ensemble.

LINDA

Nice.

Karen rummages through the magic tricks - a bird cage, wand, artificial flower bouquet, package of coins, metal milk container, and a wooden box the size of a card deck.

LIVING ROOM

Mike sits slumped back against a wall, bored.

Ron and Brad continue to arm wrestle, neither having gained any ground on the other. Both look exhausted.

Mike grabs a beer from the cooler.

MIKE

Who wants the last beer?

Ron lets up his guard to whirl in his direction.

RON

It's mine!

Brad takes his arm over to the floor. Victory at last.

BRAD

I win.

RON

Hey.

Brad stands, stretches his legs.

BRAD

You snooze, you lose.

Mike tosses the beer to Ron.

MIKE

There's your consolation prize.

Ron sits up, looks over at the few whole cases of beer off to the side.

RON

You liar.

MIKE

It was the last beer... inside the cooler.

Ron seems okay with this.

RON

Oh.

He pops the top and guzzles.

Mike shakes his head at Ron's lower intelligence.

ATTIC

Karen looks through the various magic items.

KAREN

Wow. It's hard to believe these ancient tricks could fool anyone.

LINDA

We're talking more than a century ago. Things were different.

TRACY

Yeah. You could run around in a sheet and convince people you were a ghost.

LINDA

That's not true.

TRACY

Yes, it is. People were stupid back then.

LINDA

Some still are.

Tracy points the wand at Linda. She looks like a magician attempting to put a curse on her opponent.

TRACY

Careful or I shall turn you into a toad.

KAREN

I think that would be a big improvement.

Tracy and Karen laugh. Linda stiffens.

Someone closes in on the girls from behind. A hand goes to Karen's shoulder. She nearly jumps out of her skin.

It's Ron. He bursts out laughing. Mike and Brad wait behind him, not nearly as amused with the immature prank.

RON

You should have seen your face.

KAREN

You shit!

She shoves Ron. He continues to laugh.

Brad intercepts Karen before she can attack again.

BRAD

Calm down.

Mike steps forward for a look at the trunk.

MIKE

What did you girls find?

TRACY

Magic shit.

She models the outfit for Mike. He watches, somewhat entranced by her sexiness that even shows through the costume.

TRACY

How do I look?

The green-eyed monster makes an appearance in Ron. He shoves Mike out of the way as he joins Tracy.

RON

You look hot, babe. No matter what you wear... or don't wear.

Tracy gives him a kiss of gratitude.

BRAD

It's getting pretty boring downstairs. Are there any games in there?

TRACY

It's a magician's trunk, not a toy box.

KAREN

Looks like there might be some cards.

RON

I feel a game of strip poker coming on.

He grabs the wooden box and opens it. Inside, Frederic's deck of cards from opening scene, still in very good condition. A note is taped inside the lid.

LINDA

What does the note say?

Ron rips out the note.

RON
(reading)
Beware the hands of fate.
(normal tone)
What the fuck does that mean?

MIKE
Sounds like a warning.

LINDA
Maybe we should leave them alone.

RON
It's a deck of cards for crying out
loud.

He pulls out the cards and shuffles them.

RON
Now, who's ready to play?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group sits in a circle on the floor, Tracy still dressed in the magician's outfit. Ron, Tracy, Brad, and Karen drink beer.

Ron reaches into the cooler of melting ice and pulls out a beer can he tosses to Mike.

RON
If you're gonna play an adult game,
you got to drink an adult brew.

He tosses another to Linda. She exchanges a questioning look with Mike, who shrugs.

Each opens his or her beer and sips from it. Their bitter expressions indicate they don't care much for it.

Ron shuffles the cards. A sudden wind blows through the room, even though the only window is closed. Everyone looks around for the source.

BRAD
What the hell?

Linda hugs herself. You can feel the sudden chill that sweeps down her spine.

LINDA

It's cold.

RON

Just your imagination, but that's why I love hanging out here. It's creepy.

As he deals five cards to each person:

KAREN

So they're tearing it down Monday?

RON

I guess there's too many losers that hang out around here.

Tracy playfully nudges him.

TRACY

You got that right.

RON

And proud of it.

Mike picks up his cards as he receives them.

BRAD

(to Tracy)

Take off the outfit.

TRACY

Why?

BRAD

It gives you an unfair advantage. You girls already have one up on us guys with bras.

KAREN

(giggling)

I don't.

Brad plants a lustful kiss on her lips.

Tracy removed the hat and cape.

Karen waits until she has two cards, picks them up, then accumulates the last three before grabbing them.

Tracy scoops up her cards as soon as all five are dealt to her.

Brad picks up his cards next.

Linda holds back, staring at her cards like she's afraid to touch them.

TRACY

What's wrong?

LINDA

I just don't think we should be doing this.

RON

(teasing)

Scared?

Linda can barely look at him, or anyone else. This makes her very uncomfortable.

RON

Hey, you got a hot bod under there somewhere. Don't be afraid to show it off.

KAREN

Besides, you might win. Then you don't have to worry.

Linda reluctantly picks up her cards.

MONTAGE - THE GAME

-- First round - mostly shoes and some socks go into the pot. Karen wins the hand.

-- Second round - shirts come off, except for Karen. Ron and Mike take off theirs without hesitation. Tracy has no problem removing her top, adding it to the pot.

Karen plays with articles she has won. Linda hesitates. Karen nudges her.

With great reluctance, Linda removes her top and adds it to the pile. Brad and Ron hoot and holler over her doing so. Brad wins the hand.

-- Third round - pants and shorts go into the pot for those without a "win" pile. Tracy wins the hand.

END MONTAGE

INT. OLESON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Each player holds five cards. Linda, Mike, and Ron are down to their underwear. Many empty beer cans litter the floor. Very little of the beer stash is left.

Mike tosses down two cards. Ron, a lit cigarette hanging from his lips, deals him two. Linda wants three. Tracy gets one card. The others hold what they have.

BRAD

I'll bet one pair of underwear.

He slides off his briefs and tosses them to the center.

TRACY

But you have other things to play with.

Ron and Brad laugh.

BRAD

I needed to air things out.

TRACY

(disgusted)
Oooohhh.

Karen leans in to her.

KAREN

Don't "ooooh" him until you see if you should.

Brad gives her a kiss of gratitude for the compliment.

TRACY

I'm in.

She throws in a pair of shorts from her pile. Very inebriated, she giggles.

Karen giggles as well.

KAREN

Me, too.

She adds a shirt from her pile to the pot.

Mike slowly removes his boxers, trying his best to keep "things" hidden from everyone by crossing his legs.

RON

Boxers? What are you trying to hide, man?

Everyone laughs, except for Mike and Linda. They pass each other uneasy glances.

Ron's turn. He slips off his briefs with the coolness of a stripper, twirls them on his finger, then flings them to the pile.

Tracy enjoys the sight.

TRACY

Woo, baby! Dinner and a show.

RON

Except there's no dinner.

KAREN

(joking)
And not much of a show.

All but Mike and Linda laugh.

Everyone's eyes go to Linda. She swallows hard, exhilarated while at the same time, scared to death.

RON

Want some help?

Linda reaches behind her to her bra's hooks. She's on the verge of unhooking it when she suddenly retrieves the clothing she has taken off from various piles.

RON

Hey! We're not done.

LINDA

(standing)
I am.

Clutching her clothing to her, she rushes into the hall and disappears toward the back of the house.

Mike retrieves his boxers and shorts, puts them on.

RON
You're leaving, too?

Mike flees the room in silence, going the same way Linda did.

RON
I knew inviting geeks to a party was
a big mistake.

Those left behind snicker.

KITCHEN

Broken counters and cabinets. Pieces clutter the floor amongst piles of dirt.

Linda puts on the last of her clothes as Mike enters.

MIKE
Are you all right?

Linda battles tears, feigns a smile.

LINDA
I'm fine... although I'm a little
embarrassed now.

MIKE
Not as embarrassed as you would have
been if you hadn't left.

LINDA
True.

MIKE
Hey, do you want to share a room
with me tonight?

Linda glares.

MIKE
(nervous)
I don't mean... I'll be a perfect
gentleman.

Linda smiles shyly.

INT. OLESON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Abandoned. The deck of cards lies on the floor, a perfect stack. The top card glows red.

FIRST BEDROOM

Karen and Brad sleep huddled together on a sleeping bag.

SECOND BEDROOM

Mike and Linda sleep in two separate bags near each other.

THIRD BEDROOM

Empty beer cans strewn about. Moonlight streams inside through a broken window. An unlit flashlight lies off to the side.

Tracy sleeps peacefully. Ron also sleeps, but snores rather loudly. One of the playing cards materializes on top of his chest - 3 of Diamonds.

Ron snorts. The constricted breathing causes him to awaken.

It takes him a few moments to get his bearings. When he sits, the card flutters into his lap, grabbing his attention. He picks it up, then flips it over.

Before our eyes, the illustration of Frederic morphs into one of Ron hanging from a tree by a rope around his neck.

Ron blinks a few times. The image remains. Ron shrugs it off and tosses aside the card.

In dire need to urinate, Ron holds a hand to his crotch as he staggers to his feet. He grabs the flashlight, turns it on, and leaves the room.

BATHROOM

Instinctively, Ron flips the lightswitch as he enters. Nothing happens. He uses the flashlight to locate the toilet and unzips with his free hand.

But he holds back. At the bottom of the broken toilet bowl is an opening in the floor, leading into the kitchen below.

Ron shrugs, then prepares to go anyway. His conscience prevents him from carrying out his plan. Frustrated, he zips up and leaves the room.

EXT. OLESON HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Large and open. Two pieces of rope dangle from a tree branch - remnants of a child's swing. The rotted plank hangs from one rope, broken off from the other.

Ron stumbles outside through the back door. He unzips next to the swing and urinates on the tree. A loud, long STREAM. He nearly dozes while he goes.

Next to him, the free rope lifts on its own. It moves toward his head, just like a snake. Ron is oblivious.

The rope crosses the front of his neck, without touching it, and starts for the back.

At that moment, Ron spots the rope. His eyes widen in preparation to flee. Only the rope quickly wraps his neck a few times and prevents him from moving.

Ron struggles to free the rope. A hopeless cause. He chokes instantly.

On the branch above, the portion of rope secured to the limb rotates like a pulley, wrapping the rope tighter and tighter.

Ron's feet leave the ground. His eyes bulge as life drains from his body.

EXT. OLESON HOUSE - DAY

Karen rummages through the glove compartment of Brad's car.

Linda and Tracy leave the house. Tracy appears worried, her eyes looking around her the whole way.

Karen turns to the girls, a candy bar in her hand.

KAREN

You guys want a bite?

TRACY

Have you seen Ron?

KAREN
Not since last night. Why?

TRACY
He was gone when I woke up.

KAREN
Have you looked out back?

TRACY
Good idea.

Arms folded, she heads to the backyard.

Karen takes a bite of the candy bar.

Brad and Mike join the girls.

BRAD
What's going on?

O.S. Tracy's shocked SCREAM rings out.

The others race to the--

BACKYARD

-- and come to an instant stop behind a hysterical Tracy.

Ron hangs lifeless from the tree, several feet from the ground. His skin is pale.

Karen and Linda scream. Each clings to her male companion. Karen looks away from the horrid sight.

BRAD
Fuck.

LATER

Ron's body lies on the ground. A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures. The CORONER (50s), rubber gloves, finishes his examination.

DETECTIVE DAN BLEVINS (30), a hard-nosed junior cop lacking any sense of humor whatsoever, joins the coroner.

CORONER
Looks like suicide, Detective Blevins. I'll do an autopsy to make sure, of course, but there's nothing suspicious.

DAN
Thanks, Bill.

The coroner removes his gloves as he strides around to the front.

Dan looks over the body as close as he can without touching. Something doesn't set right with him.

A DETECTIVE moves to his side.

DETECTIVE
Suicide?

DAN
It appears that way.

His eyes scan up the free rope to the tree limb it hangs from, the rope's top section wrapped around it too many times. Then he surveys all other limbs in the area.

DAN
How did he get up there?

The detective scans the lower tree limbs as well.

DETECTIVE
Maybe he was a real good climber.

DAN
There would be much easier ways for him to hang himself.

DETECTIVE
No chair or anything to stand on. Doesn't make sense.

Dan tears away his attention from the scene and heads to the--

FRONT

-- where police officers and detectives come and go from the house. A coroner's wagon waits.

Tracy's distraught group stands together off to the side, being questioned by a UNIFORMED OFFICER. Tracy is unable to speak. Karen holds her close.

Dan stops to look over at the victim's friends.

Linda notices and stares in return.

DETECTIVE #2, rubber gloves on his hands, hustles up to Dan with an evidence bag. Inside, the deck of cards.

DETECTIVE #2

Dan, I found these in the living room.

Dan peers through the plastic at the deck.

DAN

And?

DETECTIVE #2

Looks like the kids were playing with them.

Dan waits for more.

DETECTIVE #2

Well, I thought maybe they were some kind of evidence.

DAN

To what, Hansen? The death appears to be suicide. What do you want to prove? That Ron was having a good time before he took his life?

Detective #2 is left speechless.

DAN

Here...

He snatches the bag.

DAN

... I'll drop it off at the station later. Maybe the late shift guys will want something to play with.

He tosses the bag into the back seat of his new car parked nearby.

Detective #2 fails to understand sarcasm.

DETECTIVE #2

G-good idea, Dan.

Dan rolls his eyes.

As the questioning officer leaves the witnesses, Dan takes his spot.

DAN
You guys holding up?

Karen pulls Tracy closer, nods.

DAN
Can you think of any reason why
Morrison would want to kill himself?

BRAD
That's what you think he did?

DAN
Why? Are you saying someone here
killed him?

Realizing the blunder he just made, Brad recoils. His friends, except for Tracy, shoot him warning looks. Tears roll down Tracy's face.

Dan notices.

DAN
Sorry. I would just like to have
something more to tell his parents.
Any thoughts?

MIKE
He was fine last night.

BRAD
Yeah. This whole party was his idea.

DAN
Doesn't sound like someone planning
to take his life, unless he wanted
an audience for it.

The group exchanges looks.

DAN
You're free to go. We have your
numbers in case there are any further
questions.

The five civilians climb into Brad's car. It backs out and drives down the road.

Dan climbs behind the wheel of his vehicle and drives away from the scene.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A small crowd stands before a casket over an open grave. Ron's PARENTS cry. Ron's friends huddle together in the back.

A PRIEST stands by the casket, closes the Bible in his hands.

PRIEST

That concludes our service today.
Ron's family wishes to thank all of
you for attending. It's comforting
for them to know he had such caring
friends.

The group disperses. The friends step off to the side to speak alone.

MIKE

I can't believe he's gone.

LINDA

How are you holding up, Tracy?

Even though it's obvious Tracy is devastated and could faint any moment, she somehow manages a grin.

TRACY

I'll be okay.

BRAD

(to Linda)
We'll drive her home.

Tracy, Karen, and Brad head to the cars parked on the road.

LINDA

See you in class tomorrow.

Mike slides an arm around Linda and leads her toward the cars.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Busy with students leaving late classes.

Mike leaves one of the buildings, books in hand. He spots Linda sitting on a bench, reading a book. He takes a moment to compose himself, then approaches.

Linda is so caught up in the book that she fails to notice.

MIKE

Must be some book.

Linda looks up. With a chuckle, she places a bookmark between the pages of her book and closes it.

LINDA

Not really, but I have a 20 page report due next week. I got behind, with Ron's funeral and all. So, what are you up to this weekend?

MIKE

I'm getting ready to leave. It's my parents' twentieth anniversary. Everyone will be there.

LINDA

Be careful.

MIKE

I will.

There's something more he wants to say, but has trouble finding the right words. Linda waits with anticipation. Finally:

MIKE

I was thinking, well, that maybe next weekend, we could go to a movie or something.

LINDA

Sure. I've been in the market for a best friend. You're perfect for the job.

Mike stares. He wants to be so much more than a best friend to her, but Linda doesn't notice.

Linda opens her book and starts to read. She senses Mike's staring and looks his way.

LINDA

Is there something else...

MIKE

(hesitating)

No. I'll, uh, see you when I get
back Sunday night.

LINDA

Okay. Have fun.

She returns to reading.

Mike watches her just a little longer before he tears himself
away to head to the dorms.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

A one-story with two car attached garage, nestled in a middle-
class neighborhood. Cars fill the driveway and line the
street on both sides in front of the house.

Mike parks in front of a neighbor's house. He grabs a large
duffel from the trunk and walks up the sidewalk.

MIKE'S MOM (40s), dressed nicely, opens the door just before
Mike arrives. She illuminates over seeing Mike and embraces
him tightly. They step into the house and close the door.

INT. DAN'S CAR - PARKED - NIGHT

In the police precinct parking lot. The bag of magic cards
still lies on the back seat, number side down.

The top card glows red.

INT. MIKE'S ENTRY - NIGHT

MIKE'S DAD (40s), dressed in a suit, sees many guests out as
they leave. His wife stays by his side. Mike watches from
the b.g.

When all guests are gone:

MIKE'S MOM

(to Mike)

Are you sure you don't mind us going
out for a drink?

Mike places his hands on her shoulders.

MIKE

It's your anniversary. Have a good time and don't worry about me. I'll just watch a little TV and turn in.

MIKE'S MOM

We shouldn't be too late.

She leaves with her husband.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Most cars are gone or in the process of leaving.

Inside the open garage, Mike's parents climb into one of two cars. The vehicle backs out and drives down the street. The large door closes behind it.

INT. MIKE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Open to a large family room with a breakfast bar between the two rooms. A TV remote lies on the bar. Next to it is one of Frederic's cards, the Jack of Clubs.

Mike trudges inside. He goes for the remote, stops with his hand around it when he spots the card. He picks it up instead.

He turns over the card. The image of Frederic morphs into one of Mike, clutching his throat as he appears to be dying. A skull and crossbones stands off to the side.

Mike blinks purposely a few times. Is this real? He pitches the card into the trashcan.

But as he walks away, his eyes fail to move from the receptacle. He's more than a little concerned.

He opens the refrigerator, removes a soda and pops the top as he turns to the nearest counter.

On it lies the same card, image side up. Mike stops in his tracks. He takes a look around him. No one there.

Mike sets down the soda and shoves the card into the bottom of the trash where it's no longer seen.

Satisfied, he grabs the soda and prepares to drink, but something causes him to stop. His eyes turn to the trashcan, then back to the can he holds.

He dumps out the liquid contents into the sink.

INT. MIKE'S FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

The inner garage door is to the back.

Mike sits on the sofa, remote in hand. He flips through channels on the TV and stops on a music video. He bounces to the beat and turns up the sound so it's almost deafening.

Unnoticed by Mike, his card materializes next to him.

IN THE GARAGE

Although the remaining car's ignition is void of keys, it somehow turns on its own. The car RUMBLES to life.

Fumes from the exhaust already start to fill the air inside the confined area.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Still watching music videos, Mike grows drowsy. He nods off, then startles awake. This happens a couple of times before he turns off the volume and stands.

Just now does he notice the card lying next to him.

Growing more and more frustrated over this apparent prank, he grabs the card and attempts to rip it. The card seems impervious. Mike wads it up and flings it across the room.

On his way to the kitchen, he hears the faint RUMBLE of the car running.

Curious, he opens the inner garage door and looks out. The car is barely visible in the midst of thick exhaust flumes.

Mike instantly coughs. Arm across his nose and mouth, he braves the fumes to charge inside.

Before our eyes, the card mysteriously unfolds. No creases left visible, it looks like brand new.

GARAGE

Mike attempts to open the driver's door of the car, but it's locked, even though the inner lock is up. He races around to the passenger side and tries that door. Locked as well.

FAMILY ROOM

Mike staggers inside from the garage, choking on the carbon monoxide. His breathing, when he manages a breath, is raspy.

Only the inner door stands open, allowing more of the gas to drift inside. Mike grabs the knob and pulls on the door, but it refuses to budge.

KITCHEN

Mike grips objects he comes to just to remain standing as he moves to the rear patio doors.

He unlocks them and attempts to slide one open, but it remains closed. No amount of effort Mike puts into opening it makes any difference.

He grabs a chair and smashes it against the glass. Nothing happens. Another feeble effort in his weakening condition results in a broken chair instead of shattered glass.

ENTRY

Mike somehow makes it to the door. The fumes are now evident all around him. He tries his hardest to open the door. It remains sealed closed by some invisible force.

The gas overcomes Mike. He slides down the wall to the floor, where he fights just to breathe. The breaths grow more desperate, and slower.

The card materializes on his chest, picture side up. Mike's weary eyes go to his image on the object, then close for good. He takes in his last breath.

Once he's dead, the card fades from sight.

GARAGE

The car's ignition mysteriously shuts off.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The same police drill as with Ron's death. Officers, detectives, coroner, and photographer.

Several neighbors watch the proceedings from a safe distance. The garage door stands open, the single car still inside.

A covered body lies on the lawn.

Dan waits impatiently, takes a glance at his watch.

A team of EPA MEN are on the scene, in official uniform. Two wait outside.

Two others leave the house, gas masks lowered around their necks. They hold handheld carbon monoxide detectors.

EPA MAN

(to Dan)

It's safe now.

Dan nods. He enters the house with several officers and detectives in tow.

INT. MIKE'S ENTRY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Dan puts on a pair of gloves as he wanders down the hall, into the--

KITCHEN

A look around him fails to reveal anything unusual, except the empty soda can on the sink. He picks it up and shakes it for a moment.

Dan sets down the can and opens a few drawers. In one, he finds a car key on a ring and holds it before his face.

INT. MIKE'S FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Dan enters. Nothing unusual there, either. He opens the inner garage door and steps into the--

GARAGE

He inspects the car. Now the driver's door opens easily. No key in the ignition.

Detective #2 spots Dan from outside the garage and enters.

DETECTIVE #2

The parents are doing all right at the hospital.

DAN

How could they be, after finding their son like this?

Detective #2 looks away, swallows nervously. He forces his attention back to Dan.

DETECTIVE #2

You think it's suicide?

DAN

Could be. Things just don't add up, though.

He searches around the car's driver's seat, beside it, underneath.

DETECTIVE #2

What are you looking for?

DAN

The key. His parents had one on them and the spare was in the kitchen drawer, like they said. Yet someone started this car.

DETECTIVE #2

Maybe Leonard returned the key before dropping over.

DAN

And why would he go to the trouble?

Satisfied over his failed search, Dan closes the door and goes to the driver's side. He performs the same search around that seat.

INT. LINDA'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Two of everything - beds, desks, dressers, closets. Only one TV, though.

Linda works at a computer on her desk. A book open next to her, she types a report. She sits back, removes her glasses and rubs her tired eyes.

The door flies open. FEMALE STUDENT appears panicked.

FEMALE STUDENT
Linda, have you heard?

Linda puts on her glasses.

LINDA
Heard what?

Female Student steps further inside. She hesitates, as she doesn't know how to deliver the horrible news.

FEMALE STUDENT
It's Mike.

Linda's eyes widen with worry.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Another funeral takes place. Mike's mom sobs uncontrollably. Her husband does his best to console her in his own shaken state of mind. Many others cry.

Linda, Tracy, Brad, and Karen sit together in the back row.

The same priest concludes the ceremony. People disperse.

Dan approaches. He slows upon seeing the four students heading his way.

DAN
I know this is a bad time, but I
have some questions I need answered.
(to Linda)
You knew Mike well, didn't you?

LINDA
Sort of, I guess.

DAN
Are you returning to campus?

LINDA
Yeah.

DAN

I can drive you back, if you don't mind. We can talk on the way.

LINDA

(to companions)

I'll see you guys later.

Brad, Karen, and Tracy head to Brad's car parked on the road.

Dan leads Linda toward his car down from theirs. He opens the passenger door and Linda slides into the seat. Dan gets in behind the wheel and drives away.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dan and Linda sit in silence. Finally:

DAN

So, how long did you know him?

LINDA

A few months. He was in a couple of my classes.

DAN

Were you dating?

Linda smiles.

LINDA

No, but I think he always wanted to ask me out. He was just on the shy side.

DAN

Was there anything going on with him recently, anything that would make him take his life?

LINDA

Maybe you should ask his parents.

DAN

I already did. They hadn't seen him for a few months so they couldn't help much there.

LINDA

Mike seemed perfectly fine, well,
for him.

She looks off, deep in thought.

LINDA

Two suicides in barely a week. And
I knew both. I just can't believe
this is happening.

DAN

Did something happen at that house?
That's when it all seems to have
started.

LINDA

No, nothing I can think of that would
depress two people enough to make
them suicidal.

DAN

So something DID happen though.

Linda looks away, too embarrassed to make eye contact with
him. Eyes straight ahead:

LINDA

They wanted to play strip poker. I
thought maybe if I played...

DAN

They might accept you into their
little clique.

Linda passes him a quick glance.

LINDA

Yeah.

DAN

But...

LINDA

I couldn't go through with it, not
all the way. I'm sure they were
having a good laugh after I ran out.
Except for Mike. He came to check
on me.

DAN
What else happened?

LINDA
Nothing. We found the attic, and
some old magic stuff stored in a
trunk. That's where we got the cards
to play poker.

Dan glances to his back seat, where the baggie of cards lies.

DAN
I forgot all about those.

Linda stares at the cards, a glimmer of fear in her eyes.

LINDA
I don't know why, but they give me
the creeps.

DAN
Probably because of the strip poker.

Linda turns forward.

LINDA
I guess.

Dan glimpses back at the cards, a touch of suspicion showing
through his expression.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Dan parks in front of Linda's dorm building.

INT./EXT. DAN'S CAR - PARKED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda exhales a deep breath, then turns to Dan with a grin.

LINDA
Thank you for the ride, Detective.

DAN
It's Dan.

Linda smiles. A possible attraction brewing between the
two?

Dan pulls a business card from his pocket and hands it to her.

DAN

If you think of anything, give me a call.

LINDA

I will.

She steps out of the car. On her way to the building, she turns to look back.

Dan watches her with obvious interest.

Linda grows shy and picks up her pace to the building. She disappears inside.

Dan drives away.

INT. DORM HALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda leans back against the wall just inside and bites her bottom lip. Her thoughts go with Dan.

She trots up the steps nearby.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan is focused straight ahead on the road, although there's a slight lost look in his eyes. He thinks about Linda.

In the back seat, the top card on the deck glows red.

EXT. SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

After Mike's funeral. Brad drives, Karen seated next to him. Tracy in the back. The car parks on the street out front.

INT./EXT. BRAD'S CAR - PARKED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Tracy climbs out and waits.

Karen appears very sad. Brad strokes her hair.

BRAD

Do you want me to stay?

KAREN

Nah. You'd better get to practice
or you'll be benched.

BRAD

I'll call you when I get back home.

Karen nods. Brad gives her a gentle, loving kiss.

BRAD

Love you.

KAREN

Love you.

Karen leaves the car. She watches with Tracy as Brad's car
disappears down the road.

TRACY

You're lucky.

Karen places an arm around Tracy's shoulders.

KAREN

I know it hurts, but it'll get better
with time.

TRACY

I can't even think about that right
now.

(beat)

Want to hang out? I don't feel like
being alone.

KAREN

The girls are gone to this chapter
meeting. I think I'll soak for a
while and enjoy the quiet. But I'll
give you a call later. We can do
dinner and a movie.

TRACY

Okay.

As she walks away:

TRACY

See ya`.

Head hung low, Tracy continues down the sidewalk, a broken mess inside.

Karen isn't doing much better. With a solemn appearance, she rummages through her purse as she steps up to the door.

Unable to find what she's looking for right away, she opens her purse wide and looks inside.

She pulls out a house key, but something else inside demands her attention.

One of the magic cards. Karen pulls it out. 8 of Hearts. She turns it over to look at the back.

The image of Frederic morphs before her eyes - into an image of Karen lying on the floor. The handle of a knife sticks out of her chest with blood everywhere.

Karen's troubled eyes look up.

INT. SORORITY HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Karen paces with a cordless phone to her ear. It RINGS and RINGS on the other end.

The magic card lies number side up on the table.

EXT. COLLEGE FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY - SAME

Football players, including Brad, practice under the guidance of several coaches.

On the sideline, scattered belongings of the players' lie on the benches and ground. A cell phone within Brad's belongings RINGS and RINGS.

INT. SORORITY HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Karen grows more agitated at the ringing. Finally:

BRAD (O.S.)
(filtered)
Hello...

KAREN
(into phone)
Brad, thank God...

BRAD (O.S.)

(filtered)

... this is Brad. I am unable to take your call, but if you leave a message, I'll get back to you.

BEEP.

Karen sighs. She lowers the phone, ready to hang up, but suddenly places it back to her ear.

KAREN

Brad, it's me. Something really weird's going on. I found one of those cards from the magic house in my purse... I'm on it. There's a knife...

She stops short, unable to say any more about it.

KAREN

Please call me as soon as you get this.

She clicks off the phone. Its base hangs on the wall, above a wood block full of knives and a bottle of dish-washing soap.

Karen goes to hang up the phone. The base falls from the wall and knocks over the bottle of soap so the spout hangs off the edge of the counter.

It drips soap to the floor at Karen's feet.

The phone itself topples into the wood block and tips it. Knives spill from the block, scattered around the counter.

Karen steps back, startled. Her eyes lock on the knives. She holds a hand over her throbbing heart.

After a moment to compose herself, Karen chuckles over the situation. She boldly stands up the soap bottle and wood block, starts to return the knives to their correct spots.

Her shoes slip on the soap. She grabs at the counter as she goes down, an attempt to save herself from a nasty fall.

Instead, her fingers pull at the knives still lying on the counter.

Karen crashes to the floor on her back, her head taking a nasty bump against the tile. Her eyes looking straight up, she sees something that terrifies her.

A large knife teeters on the edge of the counter. It plunges downward--

Karen's mouth opens to scream. Too late. The knife pierces her chest, the entire blade entering. Blood pours from the wound instantly.

She attempts to pull herself up, but the blood/soap mixture around her causes Karen to lose any progress she makes.

Her attempts to yell out are gurgled. Blood runs from the corner of her mouth. Movements slow until they stop altogether.

Her head bumps against the floor as she dies, her eyes wide open in terror.

On the table, the card fades from sight.

EXT. COLLEGE FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

After practice, sweaty players gather their belongings.

Brad picks up his phone, checks for messages. He presses a button and listens.

KAREN (O.S.)

(filtered)

Brad, it's me. Something really weird's going on. I found one of those cards from the magic house in my purse... I'm on it. There's a knife...

(beat)

Please call me as soon as you get this.

Not even waiting for the option to erase the message, Brad quickly dials Karen's number. He's very worried.

The phone on the other end RINGS and RINGS. No answer.

Brad shuts off the phone and gathers the rest of his belongings. His COACH watches from nearby as Brad races toward the parking lot.

COACH

Westling! Take a shower before you
go!

But Brad is already at his car, throwing his things inside before climbing in. Tires SQUEAL as he speeds out of the lot.

The coach shakes his head with discontent.

EXT. SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

Brad parks in front. He jumps out and strides for the front door. He rings the bell over and over, bouncing with the jitters. He tries the knob. It's locked.

Brad jumps over the side rail and walks for the--

BACKYARD

Brad stops at the door, which leads to the kitchen. He attempts to open it. Locked. He pounds on it with his fist.

BRAD

Karen!

Through a slight part in the window's curtains, Brad is able to see blood on the floor.

In full panic mode now, Brad removes his jacket, wraps his arm with it, and smashes the door's glass with his elbow.

He reaches inside through the newly made opening and opens the door.

INT. SORORITY HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Brad steps inside. His eyes follow the blood to its source - Karen. Her clothing is drenched from head to toe.

Tears well in Brad's eyes. He staggers back into a counter and slides down it.

LATER

Officers and detectives come and go from the room. Same scenario as with the previous deaths. The crime lab photographer snaps pictures of Karen's body.

Dan stoops next to the body and examines it with his eyes. Although he tries to put up a tough front, some genuine sadness seeps through his hardened exterior at the sight.

An OFFICER steps up to him.

OFFICER

That's one hell of an accident. She must have walked under a few too many ladders.

Dan stands.

DAN

You think this is funny?

OFFICER

No, Detective.

DAN

Show some respect, will ya`?

He leaves through the back door.

Puzzled, the officer stares after him.

EXT. SORORITY HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Brad sits on the steps, head in his hands. It's taking everything he's got just to hold it together.

Dan stops off to the side.

DAN

How are you holding up?

Brad shakes his head, unable to verbalize his feelings.

DAN

So she called you right before it happened?

BRAD

Cell phone's in the car. I didn't delete her message.

DAN

I'll have to take your phone. Maybe the message will give us some idea what might have been going on at the time she called you.

BRAD

Fine. I don't want it now anyway.

DAN

Do you have any idea why she sounded so urgent?

Brad snaps to attention.

BRAD

No, Detective. I don't. She was fine when I dropped her off here before practice. Well, she wasn't fine, seeing that we just got back from Mike's funeral, but I didn't see anything suspicious.

DAN

Did you go straight to practice after leaving here?

BRAD

What? Am I a suspect? I thought it was ruled an accident.

DAN

It LOOKS like an accident. I still have to examine all the angles, especially with this being the third local death in barely a week.

BRAD

I stopped by my fraternity house to change clothes. Then I went to practice.

(stands)

Can I go now?

Dan stares him down, unsure of his next move. Then:

DAN

Go on. I'll call you or stop by if I have more questions.

Brad frowns. He disappears around the side of the house.

Dan leans against the porch post and thinks things through.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

A vigil takes place. Dozens of students hold candles in the darkness. On a table are pictures of Mike and Karen. The students hum a low church hymn.

Tracy adds a picture of Ron to the table. Linda and Brad watch from behind. A tear runs down Tracy's cheek.

TRACY

He wasn't a student, but he deserves
to be remembered.

Linda rests a comforting hand on her shoulder.

LINDA

Of course he does.

Brad leads the girls away from the group. He pulls a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and lights one, puffing heavily on it. There's great unease to his manner.

LINDA

Since when do you smoke?

BRAD

Since yesterday.

LINDA

But you play football.

BRAD

(snappy)
You think I don't know that?

Linda can only stare.

Brad tries his best to calm down.

BRAD

Sorry.

Tracy holds out her hand to him.

TRACY

Give me one of those.

Brad passes a cigarette to her and lights it. Tracy coughs with the first puff, but quickly gets the hang of it.

Brad offers his pack to Linda. She considers for a very brief moment, then waves him off.

TRACY

What are we going to do?

LINDA

About what?

BRAD

Don't you get it? Three of us who stayed at that house overnight are now dead, either by suicide or accident. It can't be a coincidence.

LINDA

What are you saying?

BRAD

I... I don't know. Karen said one of those cards showed up, right before she died.

LINDA

That's impossible. They're in the back of Dan's car.

TRACY

Dan?

Linda grins nervously.

LINDA

Detective Blevins

BRAD

Just what's going on with you two?

LINDA

Nothing.

In an attempt to avoid the subject, she leaves to rejoin the crowd.

Brad and Tracy share a disbelieving look.

INT. CRIME LAB - NIGHT

JOHN MARX (30s) sits before a microscope, examining a slide underneath.

Dan enters, the bag of cards in his hand.

John takes a quick glance back.

JOHN

Dan, what can I do for you?

Dan holds up the bag.

DAN

I need you to check these for me.

John raises a questioning eyebrow at the sight of the cards.

JOHN

Playing cards?

Dan tosses the bag to the table.

DAN

These were at the scene of Ron Morrison's suicide.

JOHN

Which you don't believe was suicide.

DAN

There's some strange shit going on possibly connected to these cards.

JOHN

When did you start snorting coke?

DAN

Funny. I just need to hear from you that these are basic playing cards.

JOHN

What else could they be?

DAN

You tell me.

He leaves.

John picks up the baggie, studies the cards inside.
Frederic's image draws him in, causing John to stare.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Tracy rakes newly cut grass in the side yard of a professor's house. Several mounds of grass are scattered around the entire yard. Lots of pretty landscaping in the area.

The PROFESSOR (50s), male, leaves the house with a briefcase. He stops by Tracy.

PROFESSOR

You don't have to work today, Ms.
Howard. Take some time off.

TRACY

That's all right, Professor Northrop.
I want to keep busy so I can't think
about things too much.

PROFESSOR

That's very commendable of you. If
you do hang around a while, would
you water the flowers for me?

TRACY

Sure.

PROFESSOR

I'll pay you when I get back.

TRACY

Thanks.

The professor walks down the sidewalk toward the main campus buildings.

INT. CRIME LAB - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A few technicians now work at different stations around the room.

Lying next to John's vacated microscope, still inside their bag, the top card on the deck glows red.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Tracy lays down the rake and disappears around back. She returns with an open garbage can and stuffs piles of grass into it with her hands.

A magic card appears on the rake's fan. 4 of Spades.

Tracy reaches down to the rake without looking and pulls it up by the handle.

The card goes unnoticed, fluttering to the ground as she moves the rake and garbage can to the side of the house.

The card lands backside up. Frederic's image morphs into Tracy's. She lies on the ground on her back. Welts are visible on her skin. A swarm of bees flies around her.

Tracy stands the trashcan against the house, along with the rake. The water hose spigot is close-by, only the connected hose lies mostly under the house, underneath the lattice.

It appears someone would have had to shove the hose underneath the lattice on purpose. A tight fit.

Tracy scratches her head at the sight.

TRACY

Shit.

She pulls on the hose. It fails to budge, like it's caught on something back in the darkness. She pulls harder. Still stuck.

Tracy pries on the section of lattice, uses all her might to break it free on one end. The hose should now move freely. But it doesn't.

With great reluctance, Tracy reaches underneath the house, gets a firm grip on the hose, and pulls hard. No success. One more attempt. Nothing.

Tracy sighs. She musters the nerve, then slowly crawls underneath.

UNDERNEATH HOUSE

Dark and creepy. Tracy crawls into a spider web and frantically swipes it from her hair.

TRACY

Yuck.

She finds the coiled hose in the back.

When she pulls on it, fully expecting it to move with her, she discovers it's still stuck. But there's nothing evident that it's stuck on.

Tracy braces her feet against a wall and pulls on the coiled hose. She fails to notice a beehive just above her feet, built against the wall.

In her tense tugging, she finally manages to free the hose from its invisible constraints.

In the process, she knocks down the beehive next to her. An enraged bee crawls out, causing Tracy to take notice.

TRACY

Fuck.

She grabs the hose and sprints for the opening, as fast as she can in confined space, on her hands and knees.

Back at the hive, another bee and another leave it. Dozens altogether. They fly at Tracy.

SIDE YARD

Tracy screams from underneath the house.

She appears at the opening, leaves behind the hose as she's battling a swarm of angry bees. A few welts are already visible on her skin. The bees deliver more.

By the time she makes it to her feet in the yard, she has suffered a couple dozen stings.

Her breathing grows raspy to the point it sounds like severe asthma. Her attempts to scream are greatly muffled by her throat swelling shut inside.

Tracy grips her neck as she attempts to make it to the front. Her feet drag. The bees continue their assault. She spots the card on the ground as she passes by.

TRACY

(choked)

Help... me.

She barely makes it to the--

FRONT YARD

-- where she collapses.

Scattered STUDENTS in the area notice and rush to her. The bees continue their assault on Tracy, causing her fellow students to stop short from approaching.

FEMALE STUDENT

Oh, my God! Someone help her!

One of the male students spots the water hose partially sticking out from under the house and hurries to it.

En route, he steps on the card without noticing. A dirty shoe mark is left behind on the bent card.

When he tugs on the hose, it easily comes free from its hold. He twists the knob to turn on the water. With nozzle in hand, he moves closer to Tracy and opens fire.

Some of the bees fly off instantly. Others refuse to leave and are soaked by the water, dropping to the ground and flopping around.

Tracy, eyes open, barely moves. Her air intake is almost null. She just stares upward at the beautiful sky as life drains from her body.

Students crowd around her.

FEMALE STUDENT #2

(panicked)

What should we do?

Linda, oblivious to what takes place, walks by the area with books in her arms. She spots the crowd gathered around something on the ground and closes in with curiosity.

MALE STUDENT

I'll get help!

As fast as his legs will go, he races off toward the nearest building.

FEMALE STUDENT

I'll call 9-1-1.

She steps away from the group, pulls a cell phone from her purse, and dials.

Linda arrives, now able to see what the crowd is panicked over.

LINDA

Tracy!

She drops the books to kneel by Tracy's side.

LINDA

What happened?

FEMALE STUDENT #2

(crying)

There were bees... all over.

MALE STUDENT #2

Isn't she allergic to bees?

Linda stares at him for a long moment. She looks down into Tracy's face and strokes her hair.

LINDA

Hang on, Tracy. Help's coming.

Tracy no longer breathes. Her eyes remain locked on the clear, blue sky.

Male Student #2 holds a hand just above her nose and mouth.

MALE STUDENT #2

She's not breathing.

He feels Tracy's neck for a pulse.

MALE STUDENT #2

Pulse is fading.

He performs CPR on Tracy in a desperate attempt to revive her.

Linda watches calmly, but in shock. She knows nothing can save Tracy now.

Slowly, she stands and backs away from the scene, in the card's direction. Something catches her eye. It's the card.

Before her very eyes, the dent straightens and the dirt marks fade, leaving behind a very new looking card.

The horrid image of Tracy as she's attacked by bees on the card captures Linda's full attention.

MALE STUDENT #2 (O.S.)
There's no pulse!

Linda watches as the card fades from sight.

LATER

Tracy's covered body is loaded into the coroner's wagon. More officers and detectives look around. Some have unheard conversations. Student onlookers disperse.

Linda sits on the front steps, elbows leaning against her bent knees. On the verge of losing it, her head drops into her hands.

Dan arrives on the scene. He speaks MOS to a fellow detective for a few moments, then joins Linda on the steps.

DAN
You doing okay?

Tears in her eyes, Linda shakes her head.

Dan slips an arm around her shoulders, but maintains a little distance.

LINDA
It's the cards.

DAN
What?

LINDA
I saw one... on the ground as she was dying.

Dan withdraws his arm so there's more room for him to pull back with a puzzled look.

DAN
Linda, that isn't possible. I gave the cards to a buddy at the crime lab last night.

Ignoring what he said:

LINDA

It was dirty and bent. I watched it repair itself. There was this image of Tracy... being attacked by bees, lying on the ground dying.

Dan listens in a shocked silence.

LINDA

The moment she died, the card disappeared.

DAN

Linda, you're just in shock. You don't know what you saw.

Linda jumps up, ready to explode.

LINDA

Don't tell me what I saw!

Everyone still on the scene grows quiet to look her way.

Dan rises, ready to offer comfort to Linda, but not quite sure how. Linda sobs. Dan takes her into his arms.

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - DAY

Dan and Linda wait outside the closed door. It opens, Brad peering out at them curiously.

BRAD

Hey.

He arrives on the porch and closes the door.

BRAD

What's up?

Dan and Linda exchange a look.

MOMENTS LATER

Linda and Brad sit on the steps while Dan stands next to them. Brad appears severely troubled.

BRAD

Shit.

DAN

I don't believe this nonsense for a moment, but I have four dead people who were at that house just before all this started. There has to be a connection somehow.

LINDA

Yeah. The cards.

DAN

No. There's something we're missing.

Linda's eyes suddenly widen in revelation.

LINDA

A pecking order.

BRAD

What?

LINDA

Remember the poker game. Ron held the cards first. When he passed them out, Mike picked up some of his first...

BRAD

Then Karen and Tracy.

He looks away with a terrible realization.

BRAD

I think I was next.

LINDA

I didn't want to play, but I didn't want to be the one who ruined everyone else's fun. So I finally picked up my cards.

BRAD

I'm next.

DAN

Just cut the shit, here. Cards can't kill people. Maybe this is just a series of unlucky events, but nothing's gonna happen to you two as long as you don't want something to happen.

LINDA

Dan, I'm telling you...

DAN

Look, for your peace of mind, I'll stop by the lab to see if my pal found out anything about the cards. I'll even check out that house. But don't expect me to believe that these cards had anything to do with your friends' deaths. I don't believe in fairy tales.

BRAD

(mumbling)

It's more like a nightmare.

LINDA

Wasn't that house demolished?

DAN

It was held off due to Morrison's death. We have to be sure there wasn't foul play involved before destroying potential evidence.

Officers and detectives leave.

Dan heads to his car. Yelling back:

DAN

You two stay put! I'll be in touch.

He climbs in behind the wheel and drives away.

Linda's and Brad's gazes trail after his car as it disappears from sight. Linda stands, walking in silence toward her dropped books in the distance.

Brad runs fingers through his hair.

INT. CRIME LAB - DAY

John, wearing rubber gloves, examines a card under his microscope. The rest of the deck lies out of the bag, next to the scope.

Dan enters and goes straight to his side.

JOHN

Dan.

DAN

Did you find out anything?

JOHN

Yes and no.

DAN

What the hell does that mean?

John picks up the top card in his gloved hand.

JOHN

Observe.

He crumples the card into a wad and lays it on the table. Both watch the card intently.

Before their eyes, the card unfolds, straightening every crease to perfection. John appears unaffected by the occurrence while Dan stares at the phenomenon.

John removes a lighter from his pocket, picks up the card and attempts to set it on fire. The card doesn't even singe. He puts away the lighter.

JOHN

It seems to be impervious to all destructive forces. I checked its composition, what might be different about it, but it seems to be made of normal paper... normal for a century and a half ago.

DAN

Then how do you explain it?

JOHN

I can't.

DAN

Are there any cards missing?

JOHN

There's 54, counting two Jokers. Why?

DAN
(hesitating)
No reason.

JOHN
Look, I could run more tests if you
want, but I don't expect to uncover
anything new.

Dan considers this for a moment.

DAN
I've wasted enough of your time.

John returns all of the cards to their bag and seals it
closed. He passes the bag to Dan.

JOHN
I wish there was more I could tell
you.

Dan walks toward the exit. On his way:

DAN
I owe you dinner.

JOHN
Movelli's?

Dan holds up a hand to signal his agreement.

John grabs a slide with a hair sample on it and places it
under his scope.

HALL

Dan stops just outside the lab. He holds the bag of cards
before his awed eyes.

DAN
Just what IS your story?

EXT. OLESON HOUSE - DAY

Completely quiet, except for a gentle breeze that rustles
through the treetops.

Dan parks out front. He enters through the main door.

INT. OLESON ENTRY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan stops to look around him. Not much to see. He steps to the living room doorway for a scan. The students' cooler and some beer remains where they left it.

ATTIC

Dan treks up the steps. He pauses at the top to take a look around, then starts a search beginning with the trunk.

He rummages through the contents, fails to find anything that intrigues him.

Next, Dan moves to the boxes. Nothing of interest in the first few - some 18th century men's clothing, a pipe, several old books.

Then he moves to another box off to its own. Inside he finds some belongings for a girl/woman, 20th century. A doll, antique jewelry box, some pictures.

Dan plucks one of those out of several. The picture is of a young woman (20s). He turns it over to find "Mary Oleson" written on the back.

A CRASH from somewhere behind Dan startles him. The trunk of magic tricks has somehow tipped over on its own, scattering the contents.

Dan rights the trunk and puts back the magic tricks.

A breeze suddenly whips through his hair, although the only window is closed. Dan pauses to search for the source. Nothing evident.

He finishes picking up the items and trudges down the steps.

ENTRY

Dan leaves.

A red glow illuminates in the upper hall, followed by a man's eerie LAUGH.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Several stories tall in a nice area.

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Neat and organized. Dan sits at his computer. A pad of paper and pen lies off to the side.

He studies information on Frederic Oleson, articles that look very old, detailing his career as a magician.

Included are articles on his rival magicians of the period - death notices with headings like "Another rival succumbs to suicide" and "Matt Harrison, budding magician, dies in tragic accident."

Dan makes notes while skimming the articles.

He does a search, this time for "Mary Oleson". Only a few articles appear on her. One reads "Oleson's great-granddaughter opens museum."

Dan makes more notes.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Quaint family-type. Dan's car is parked in the lot among many.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY - SAME

Dan has lunch with Linda and Brad, who sit together across from him. An open folder with printed pages on Frederic lies next to him. They eat while they talk.

DAN

Oleson was a well known magician in this area back in the mid 1800s. He owned that house you kids spent the night in.

BRAD

Everyone knows that. It's supposed to be haunted or something.

DAN

But did you know that his competition dropped like flies over a few month period?

LINDA

What?

DAN

Oleson started out as a nobody...

LINDA

(sarcastic)

Doesn't everyone?

DAN

Hey, I'm just trying to help here.
Don't bust my chops over it.

Linda eases up.

LINDA

I'm sorry.

DAN

No need to be sorry. Just be a good
listener. Your life may depend on
it.

Linda glances at Brad, then takes a big bite of her burger.

DAN

He could barely support his wife and
daughter. Several rival magicians
were better. They had bigger tricks,
more money to put into their acts.

BRAD

And?

DAN

All five of these guys died within a
six month period, either by accidents
or suicides.

Linda turns to Brad with a scared look. He returns it.

DAN

Some thought Oleson was behind it,
but it could never be proven. No
evidence of foul play. Just a series
of bad luck... for his rivals.

LINDA

This sounds strangely familiar.

BRAD

Duh.

LINDA

So what happened to Oleson?

DAN

He became a famous magician with more money than he knew what to do with. He died in 1893 from pneumonia. His only child, a daughter, didn't want anything to do with magic so his legacy died with him.

BRAD

This doesn't explain the cards, how they do what they do.

DAN

There might be someone who can shed some light on the matter.

LINDA

Who?

DAN

His ancestors kept the house over the years. His great granddaughter was the last to live there, opened a museum tribute to her great grandfather. She left a few years ago because she was unable to care for the deteriorating property any longer.

LINDA

So why didn't she take his stuff with her?

DAN

You can ask her yourself.

Linda raises a questioning eyebrow.

EXT. RETIREMENT VILLAGE - DAY

Dan's car is parked in front of an end unit.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - SAME

Extremely clean with an "old people" look about the decor. A canary climbs around inside a cage in the corner.

Linda, Brad and Dan are seated on the sofa. They twiddle thumbs, bite nails, yawn, anything associated with severe boredom. A potted plant stands on the end table by Dan.

MARY CONNORS, a frail-looking 85-year-old lady, cursed with massive wrinkles and snow white hair, carries a tray with a teapot, napkins and tea cups on it into the room.

She takes slow little steps. This could take a while.

Dan jumps up.

DAN

Here...

He takes the tray from Mary.

DAN

... let me help you with that.

He sets the tray on the coffee table.

MARY

What a dear young man. If only I was thirty years younger...

BRAD

(quietly)

You'd still be old enough to be his mom.

Linda elbows him. Brad grimaces in pain.

MARY

What was that, dear?

BRAD

(pained)

Nothing.

Dan helps Mary into a chair across from the couch, then takes his seat next to Brad.

Mary's hand quivers uncontrollably as she attempts to pour a cup of tea. A good deal of it misses its target.

Linda takes the pot from her.

LINDA
I'll pour it for you, ma'am.

She cleans up the dribbled tea with napkins and pours a full cup.

MARY
Don't call me "ma'am", dear. It's
"Mary."

Linda hands the filled cup to Dan. She pours another for Brad and one for herself. The fourth, she only fills halfway and hands it to Mary.

MARY
Thank you...

LINDA
Linda.

MARY
Linda. What a pretty name.

She looks into her partially filled cup with a scrunched brow.

MARY
I usually like a little more tea in
my cup.

LINDA
I'll pour you more when you're ready.
It might be safer that way.

MARY
Safer?

LINDA
Less to spill.

MARY
Well, aren't you thoughtful.

Brad tastes his tea. The bitter face he makes says it all. It's terrible.

Linda shifts him a warning look. Then she tastes her own tea and can barely hold back the same type of reaction.

Dan thinks better of tasting his. When Mary isn't looking, he tosses the contents of his cup into the potted plant.

Brad's mouth drops open. Why didn't he think of that?

DAN

Mary, what can you tell us about your great-grandfather?

MARY

Oh, he loved magic with all his heart. The only thing that meant more to him was family.

LINDA

Did you know him?

MARY

No, but my daddy told me all the stories. I felt like I had known great-grandpa Frederic my whole life. It was so hard for me to abandon that house. He built it himself, you know.

BRAD

If you cared that much about him, why did you leave his belongings behind?

MARY

That old trunk and a couple of boxes in the attic? Well, a great magician never reveals his secrets. I felt his personal effects were best destroyed with the house. He'd be more of a mystery that way.

LINDA

There was this deck of cards...

Right away, Mary is uncomfortable with the subject. She sets her cup on the tray and toddles over to the bird cage, makes whistling sounds at the bird inside as a distraction.

Those on the sofa pass around a confused look.

DAN

(standing)

Mary, there was this deck of cards these kids found in his trunk.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Since that night, four of their friends have died. It appears that at least a couple found a card with their image on it...

MARY

And how they were to die. "The cards of fate" I hear he used to call them.

LINDA

So you know what they do.

Mary glances back.

MARY

I've heard the stories.

BRAD

How do we stop fate? I'm next on the list, then Linda.

Mary's eyes roll back into her head as an eerie, almost evil smile crosses her face. In a demonic-like tone:

MARY

You cannot cheat fate.

Her visitors stare wide-eyed. Linda's cup drops from her hand, spilling most of the contents. She jumps up immediately.

LINDA

I'm sorry.

She dashes into the kitchen.

Mary's eyes return to normal. She turns to her visitors.

MARY

I don't approve of what my great-grandfather did. To use black magic on his competition. It just ain't right. But he's still my flesh and blood.

Linda returns with a towel and damp rag. She uses the towel to sop up the spilt tea and the rag to clean the stain left behind.

DAN

(to Mary)

We understand how hard this must be for you, but four innocent kids have died because of those cards. Two more could.

Brad and Linda pass each other a solemn look.

DAN

We just want to know how to save them.

Mary makes her way back to the chair and sits, ever so softly.

MARY

My great-grandfather used the cards on one target at a time. It's not the situation you have here. But one thing should be the same. You die within twenty-four hours of the card first appearing.

She looks at Brad with a smile only a grandmother could give.

MARY

Since you will know how you are to die, if you can survive the entire day, then you cheat fate.

(to Dan)

Black magic protects the cards. All you can do is put them somewhere that no one will ever find them, but don't touch them. Once you do, you fall prey to the magic that protects them.

BRAD

No wonder you didn't want to touch any of his stuff.

MARY

I wasn't afraid, young man. I've lived a good life. I just felt his belongings should go down with the house. They would be taken away to a dump somewhere and hopefully never found. See what happens when people interfere?

Dan hesitates, then nods.

EXT. RETIREMENT VILLAGE - DAY

Dan, Brad and Linda leave Mary's unit.

DAN
At least we have a plan now.

BRAD
(sarcastic)
Where?

DAN
We'll wait and see how you're supposed
to die, then we'll make sure to keep
you safe from whatever it is for
twenty-four hours.

BRAD
Well, just in case... I'm living it
up while I can.

He climbs into the back of Dan's car.

Linda watches him, a hand shielding her eyes from the bright
sun.

LINDA
That's not a bad idea. I've got
some living of my own to do.

She slides into Dan's front passenger seat and waits.

Dan, genuinely worried for the two, hangs back for a moment.
He composes himself, gets behind the wheel of his car and
drives away.

MONTAGE - BRAD AND LINDA LIVE IT UP

-- Brad drinks heavily at a party with fellow football players
and cheerleaders.

-- Linda stands before a mall's store window, where mannequins
model the hippest clothing for young women. A smile on her
face, she enters.

-- In a twin dorm bed, Brad makes out heavily with FEMALE
STUDENT #3 (20). Clothes come off.

-- Linda sits in a beauty salon chair, having her hair cut.

-- In his backyard before a large inground pool, Brad finishes a cigarette and lights another one immediately, chain smoking. FEMALE STUDENT #4 clings to him. They kiss.

-- At a cosmetics counter, a WOMAN does Linda's make-up while she instructs her on how to apply each thing properly.

END MONTAGE

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Many PEOPLE are here for Tracy's visitations. Inside the casket, Tracy looks like her beautiful self before the bee attack.

Dan walks the room, a social outcast.

Brad, dressed in a wrinkled suit, the jacket unbuttoned, sits alone in a row of chairs. It's easy to tell he's somewhat drunk.

He looks around him, sees no one watching, and slips an open beer can out of his inner jacket pocket. He takes a sip.

Dan catches a glimpse and charges up to him.

DAN
(quietly)
Hey.

He swipes the can from Brad's hand.

DAN
(quietly)
Show some respect, will you?

Dan turns for the nearest trashcan and nearly bumps into TRACY'S MOM (40s). Dressed in black with a red face from crying a very long time, her eyes drop to the can of beer in Dan's hands.

At a loss for what to say on the spot, Dan's mouth opens to explain, but no words come out.

TRACY'S MOM
Drinking at my daughter's funeral.
Is that what a respected officer
of the law does these days?

She walks away in a tiff.

DAN

No, you have it all...

He stops short. Tracy's mom is already out of earshot.

Dan looks back at Brad.

DAN

Thanks for helping me out there.

Brad shrugs.

Dan ditches the beer can. He pivots to return in Brad's direction, finds Linda standing before him.

Only this isn't the plain, geeky Linda we've seen so far. This is a hot Linda - contacts, colored hair fixed nicely, make-up. She looks like a completely different person.

DAN

Linda?

LINDA

Don't you recognize me?

DAN

Barely.

He looks over Linda.

DAN

Wow. What a difference.

LINDA

Well, I've always held back on appearance. It never meant much to me. But I figured I'd help the poor mortician out by giving him less to fix when I die.

DAN

You're not going to die.

LINDA

Yeah, yeah. I know. You're going to save me.

DAN

So this is how you want to live what you think might be your last few days?

LINDA

It's shallow, I know. But it is fun watching guy's heads turn when I walk by.

DAN

And here Brad cherishes his time left by staying drunk and getting laid.

LINDA

We're birds of a different feather that don't flock together.

DAN

Which is a good thing for you.

Brad swaggers up to them. Linda smiles, waiting for some kind of reaction over her new appearance, but he fails to even notice.

BRAD

I'm out of here. It's time to do some serious partying.

Linda's frown fizzles into disappointment. He doesn't notice her new look.

DAN

(to Brad)

Need a ride home? I can't let you drive in your condition.

BRAD

Nah. I was dropped off here by my dad. The next party is only a few blocks away. I'm walking.

He staggers toward the doorway, stops to look back.

BRAD

Oh, I'll be staying home for a while, in case you need to reach me.

He continues toward the exit.

DAN

Where is that?

But Brad's already gone.

Dan turns, notices the discontent on Linda's face. Realizing:

DAN

I'm sure if he were sober, he would have noticed.

LINDA

For someone using women as sex objects, it seems like he'd notice anyone who looks remotely good.

DAN

You're too pretty for him.

Linda chuckles.

LINDA

Thanks for lying.

She goes to the chairs and sits alone.

Dan runs fingers through his hair.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A service takes place. The chairs before Tracy's casket are filled.

Dan and Linda stand back from the crowd.

DAN

I really expected Brad to show up.

LINDA

I hope he's all right.

DAN

Probably resting at home.

Linda listens for a moment.

PRIEST (O.S.)

This concludes our service. Donations in Tracy's name can be made to Third Financial. They will be divided between her mother's favorite charities.

Dan and Linda head for Dan's car.

DAN

Try calling Brad's house. If he's not there, ask his parents where they think he might be.

Linda removes a cell phone from her purse and gets busy as they climb into Dan's car. It drives down the road.

INT. PARTY HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A huge mess. Empty beer cans thrown all over. Food wrappers, bowls. You name it. A wild time took place here last night.

Brad lies passed out on the sofa. A magic card appears on his chest. The King of Hearts.

NICK (21), obvious jock by his muscular girth, comes to the doorway. His ill appearance suggestive of a bad hangover. He spots Brad on the couch.

NICK

Brad!

He goes to Brad and shakes him.

NICK

Hey, wake up.

Brad stirs. Eyes flutter open, take a few moments to register what they see.

NICK

You should probably be getting home before your old man puts out an APB on you.

He spots the card on Brad's chest.

NICK

We didn't play cards last night.

He reaches out to the card.

NICK

Where did this come from?

Brad looks down to the card. Panicked, he jumps up just before Nick would touch the card. It drifts to the floor, lands picture side up.

Brad watches Frederic's image closely. It morphs into one of Brad, crushed underneath the wheels of a car.

Nick also watches the transformation. He appears much more wowed by it.

NICK

Whoa. How did you do that? Are you a magician or something?

Brad springs to his feet, backs away from the card as if it's an armed intruder.

BRAD

Don't touch the card. Stay away from it!

He runs for the door.

Nick stares at the card, scratches his head. It's just a card.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Brad flees through the front doorway and nearly falls down the steps in his hurry. He stops to look up and down the street. No cars except for the ones parked at the curb.

A glance at his watch reveals it's 2:31. He jogs down the sidewalk.

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Messy bed covers on the twin bed, several football trophies on shelves. A typical college boy's room away from campus.

Brad opens the door, hurries inside and pushes the door closed. He backs away from the door until he falls to the bed.

There he waits for something to happen. Nothing does. He breathes a sigh of relief.

Brad moves his hand in preparation to stand. It touches something. The magic card, which now lies on his bed.

Brad jumps up and slams into the door, his eyes locked on the card. He battles the urge to cry.

BRAD

Oh, God.

BRAD'S DAD (O.S.)

Brad!

The door jiggles. Brad holds it closed.

BRAD

I... I'm getting dressed.

BRAD'S DAD (O.S.)

I know you just snuck in. I'm on a late lunch hour, but we'll talk about this after work.

BRAD

Okay. Fine. Whatever.

BRAD'S DAD (O.S.)

Don't take that tone with me, young man.

BRAD

Sorry.

FOOTSTEPS fade away.

Brad slides down the door to the floor.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - DAY

Brad wanders inside. He looks through the top of the closet and pulls down a shoebox. Inside is a handgun. Brad carefully picks it up and holds it before his terrified eyes.

BRAD'S BEDROOM

Brad enters with the gun in his hand. He sits on the bed, off to the side of the card, which he stares at.

BRAD

You're not getting me.

Moments pass. Brad raises the gun to his head. He inhales deeply. His eyes close. He squeezes the trigger. CLICK. He tries again. CLICK. CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

Brad's eyes snap open. He looks over the gun in puzzlement, opens the chamber. Every slot holds a bullet.

Brad closes the chamber, aims at the door and FIRES. A bullet pierces the wooden door. Brad jumps at the sound.

BRAD

Fuck.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dan drives along. Linda, cell phone in her hand, slumps in her seat next to him.

LINDA

No one knows where he is. There's no one else to try.

Dan's cell phone in his pocket RINGS. He whips it out.

DAN

(into cell phone)

Yeah... I'll take it. Thanks.

He hangs up.

DAN

He's at home... at least I think he is. Neighbors reported what sounded like a gunshot coming from his house.

LINDA

You don't think...

DAN

I don't know what else TO think.

He speeds up.

EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan's car SCREECHES to a stop at the curb. He turns it off and jumps out. Linda joins him.

They dash to the front door, Dan pounding on it while Linda RINGS the doorbell over and over.

LINDA

Brad!

No answer.

Dan rams his shoulder into the door. His face twists in pain. It takes two more efforts to bust in the door. Dan grips his aching shoulder as they proceed inside.

INT. BRAD'S HALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Right away, Dan and Linda split up to search the downstairs. They come together in the hall. Linda shakes her head.

They rush up the steps.

UPSTAIRS HALL

They search each room. Dan discovers the bullet hole through Brad's door. Another hole is in the wall straight across from it. The back end of the bullet sticks out.

Linda arrives by his side. Both glare at the bullet inside the hole.

LINDA

Where is he?

Dan shrugs.

A sudden realization hits Linda.

LINDA

The pool!

She dashes down the steps. Dan races after her.

EXT. BRAD'S BACKYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda races outside through the patio doors, Dan hot on her tail. They stop to look at the inground pool.

In the sparkling clear water, a body is visible upright in the deep end, at the very bottom. No movement. It's Brad.

LINDA

Shit!

Dan removes his jacket and tosses it aside as he charges the pool. He dives in toward the middle and swims to Brad.

Dan surfaces with Brad in his arms. Only Brad isn't dead. And he isn't even hurt. He's perfectly fine, and pissed.

BRAD

What the hell did you do that for?

Linda arrives at the edge. She smiles her relief.

DAN

I was trying to save your ass.

BRAD

Does it look like it needs saving?

DAN

It did at the time.

Brad swims to the side and climbs up. He sits with his feet in the water.

Dan climbs out, his clothes dripping.

LINDA

(to Brad)

We thought you had killed yourself.

BRAD

I tried, but FATE won't let me.
My dad's gun won't fire when I point
it at me. I was underwater forty
minutes and still didn't need air.
It would all be pretty cool if I
wasn't going to die soon.

LINDA

You got your card?

BRAD

I tried to ditch it, but it follows
me everywhere.

He looks around him, spots the magic card lying on a chair close-by.

BRAD

See?

Linda goes to the chair.

DAN

Don't touch it.

LINDA

I'm thinking the actual death cards
are harmless since they've already
been assigned.

She picks up the card.

LINDA

If I'm wrong, it doesn't matter anyway
since I already have a mark on my
back.

She takes the card to Dan. Both look over the new image.

BRAD

I thought I'd be safe from cars in
the pool. If I drowned in the
process, it would be a better way to
go.

DAN

I'm not sure about that.

BRAD

You'd rather be crushed by a car?

DAN

No...

BRAD

(standing)

See, those of you without this problem
don't understand.

Dan softens.

DAN

Look, I'll do my best to see you
don't die. We'll stay here in the
house, away from all cars, until the
time is up.

BRAD

My dad's not gonna like having a cop
sleep over.

DAN

We'll just have to explain it all to
him.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brad's PARENTS sit on the sofa, glaring at Dan, who stands before them. Linda and Brad are seated in chairs.

BRAD'S DAD

That is the craziest story I've ever heard.

DAN

I know it sounds insane, but four of their friends have died in barely a week. The one thing they have in common is playing with those cards that night. Linda and your son did as well. Look at the card.

Linda holds the card before the parents' faces. They soften at the sight of their son's image crushed by a car.

Brad's Mom tries to touch it. Linda pulls back the card out of her reach.

LINDA

Don't touch... for your own safety.

DAN

All I want to do is stay here with Brad until his twenty-four hours are up.

BRAD

It can't hurt anything, Dad.

Brad's Dad turns to his wife. She now appears genuinely concerned with the situation.

BRAD'S DAD

(to Dan)

You can sleep on the couch.

Dan nods.

EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dan and Linda stand on the porch.

LINDA

Are you going to be all right?

DAN

It's not me you need to worry about.
I'd give you a ride...

LINDA

That's okay. Do your job, Detective.

A car pulls up at the curb. Linda's mom, KATHY (30s) sits behind the wheel.

LINDA

I'll come by tomorrow, if nothing
Has...

She stops short. Dan nods.

LINDA

Good night.

She heads to the car. Dan's eyes trail after her.

DAN

Good night.

INT. KATHY'S CAR - PARKED - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Linda sits next to her mom, looking out at Dan the whole time. Kathy's face stiffens at the sight.

LINDA

Is something going on between you
two that I should know about?

Linda forces an insincere smile.

LINDA

If there was, it would be MY business.

Kathy's jaw drops. The first time she's ever heard that tone from her sweet daughter. She avoids the fight, for now, and drives away.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan does his best to make himself comfortable on the sofa with a pillow and blanket.

BRAD'S BEDROOM

Brad lies under his covers, ready to fall asleep. An extra pillow is next to his. His eyes shift to the nightstand.

His card now lies on top.

Brad pulls up the covers over his head.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The pendulum clock on the mantle reads 2:27.

Brad paces. Each "tick" of the clock seems to irritate him. He takes frequent glances. His magic card lies on the coffee table.

Dan sits off to the side in a chair, keeps a watchful eye on Brad.

Brad's parents stand by the mantle. They're bored, but also worried sick.

The doorbell RINGS.

Brad whirls to the hall where the front door is in sight.

BRAD

Don't answer it!

DAN

I don't think a car will ring the doorbell.

He strides into the--

HALL

-- and opens the door to Linda.

LINDA

Anything happen yet?

She enters. Dan closes the door.

DAN

No. Only a few minutes left.

LINDA

I wanted to be here earlier, but I had a big History test this morning. I skipped the rest of my classes, though.

DAN

(joking)

I might have to report you.

LINDA

You do and I'll slip one of those cards into your pocket.

They laugh, even though the situation isn't funny at all. Good stress relief.

DAN

So you've accepted that you CAN cheat fate?

LINDA

No, but just in case, I don't want to fail History. Taking it once is enough.

They enter the--

LIVING ROOM

The pendulum clock now reads 2:30.

BRAD

One more minute.

The next minute is torture. Everyone on their last nerve. Nail biting, pacing, frequent glances at the clock. Finally:

The clock reaches 2:31.

Brad exhales a deep breath. He smiles for the first time in a long while.

BRAD

I made it.

His parents happily embrace him, followed by Linda, then Dan.

BRAD'S MOM

Now I can get dinner started.

BRAD'S DAD

I'll give you a hand.

They go to the kitchen.

LINDA

I hate to leave so soon, but my mom
will have a fit if I'm one minute
late. She'll worry about her car.

DAN

I'll see you out.

He pats Brad's back one last time.

DAN

See? Fate can be changed IF you
don't try to go it alone.

Brad nods.

Dan and Linda go into the--

HALL

As Dan opens the door, Linda takes an inadvertent glance at
her watch. It draws her full attention.

LINDA

It's only 2:29.

Dan looks at his watch. It reads 2:29 as well.

DAN

Shit!

They turn for the--

LIVING ROOM

Brad plops down on the couch. He lays back and sighs happily.
He's just cheated death.

His watch reads 2:29.

SLOW MOTION

Wham! A car CRASHES through the wall from the direction of
the street, full force. The couch is plowed, along with
Brad. Wall and ceiling collapse on top of the vehicle.

At the doorway, Dan pulls Linda back out of the way as the destruction occurs.

END SLOW MOTION

Just as quickly as the accident happened, things calm. A cloud of dust fills the air.

The car, an unconscious MAN (20s) slumped behind the wheel, is a mess. Massive dents, broken parts and glass. A hubcap rolls across the room.

The couch is in pieces, as well as much of the furnishings.

Pinned beneath a front tire is Brad. Facedown, his spine is crushed. Blood trickles from his mouth, but he's still alive. He lifts his head to look over at--

Dan and Linda, who cower together in the doorway. Linda cries as she plants her face against Dan's jacket.

Brad's head drops to the floor, eyes closed. He's dead.

His parents rush in from the kitchen, having to halt as soon as they reach the mass debris in their way. They spot their son trapped under the vehicle and freak out.

BRAD'S MOM

Brad!

Her husband holds her back. She cries in his arms as he battles tears of his own.

Brad's magic card floats to the floor next to his body, image side up. An exact duplicate of the scene we see before us. It disappears.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dan and Linda sit in silence. She just stares out the window as all hope for her has disappeared.

Dan looks over at her. His heart breaks at the sad sight, but there's nothing he can do.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan parks in the driveway.

INT. DAN'S CAR - PARKED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Both sit in silence for a long moment.

DAN

Is there anything I can do?

Linda feigns a grin as she turns to him. She shakes her head.

LINDA

No.

DAN

Don't give up, Linda. There has to be a way.

LINDA

Look, I really appreciate all you've tried to do for me and my friends, but this force is just too powerful. I don't have much time so I need to take care of some things before I go.

Dan glares, completely helpless and this bugs the shit out of him.

LINDA

Just let me go, Detective. I'm a lost cause.

She gets out of the car.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda walks to the porch, stops to slowly look back at Dan, his sad eyes glued to her.

Linda opens the front door. Kathy meets her in the doorway.

KATHY

Linda...

She looks past Linda to Dan's car. Then her eyes scan around the driveway and the street.

KATHY

... where's my car?

LINDA
Get off my back.

She brushes past her mom as she enters.

Kathy looks out to Dan, who returns the stare. Lips pursed, Kathy closes the door.

Dan slumps back in his seat. This is killing him. He drives off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A gloomy, rainy day. Looks like it's been raining for days.

A funeral procession moves along, a long line of cars trailing the hearse.

INT. HEARSE - MOVING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Brad's parents, dressed in black, sit together. His mom cries her heart out. It's all her husband can do to keep from breaking down.

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME

Linda sits back on her bed, writing on a pad of paper. A nice breeze flutters the curtains, although it's pouring down rain outside.

A knock at her closed door, right before it opens. Kathy peers inside.

KATHY
Linda...

She enters.

KATHY
... aren't you going to Brad's funeral?

Linda continues to scribble out notes without looking up.

LINDA
Uh-uh. I got to finish up some things around here.

KATHY

"Got" to? That's no way for a
straight A college student to talk.
What's happened to you?

LINDA

I've grown up a lot in the past week.

Kathy moves to her side, brushes back the hair from her face.

KATHY

Are you all right, honey?

LINDA

I'm fine, Mom.

Kathy looks at the pad of paper Linda writes on, her brow
furrowing.

KATHY

What are you working on?

LINDA

A Will.

KATHY

A Will? What on earth for?

LINDA

Just to make sure my stuff goes where
I want it to... in case something
happens. You get most of my things,
of course, but my friends deserve
some mementos to remember me by.

KATHY

Maybe I should call a professional,
someone you can "talk" to.

LINDA

Sure. Whatever.

Kathy hesitates, expecting more than what she got. She moves
to the doorway, looks back for a moment at her broken
daughter, then closes the door as she leaves.

Linda continues her work, not breaking stride for a moment.

LATER

Linda stands at her desk, stuffs her Will into an envelope and seals it. She writes "In the event of my death" on the front and stuffs it into her top drawer.

She turns to the bed.

There lies a magic card on top of the covers. Ace of Spades.

Linda approaches slowly. All of her bravery she has mustered just went out the window at the sight of her card.

She stops at the edge of her bed, eyes locked on the card. She chews on her bottom lip as she contemplates.

Finally, Linda reaches out and picks up the card. She holds her breath, then turns it over.

Frederic's image morphs into Linda. Deep in a body of water, she clutches her throat as mass bubbles rise from her mouth. Drowning.

Linda's eyes close to say a silent prayer. Her watch reads 10:37.

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dan arrives from the kitchen, a beer in his hand. He loosens his tie and plops down on the sofa. Takes a big drink of his beer.

His cell phone RINGS. He pulls it out of his pocket.

DAN
(into phone)
Yeah?

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME

Linda holds a phone to her ear. In her other hand, she studies her image on the card.

LINDA
(into phone)
I got my card.

Dan straightens. His concern for her is apparent.

DAN

How...?

LINDA

Drowning.

She looks to her window, where a heavy rain pelts it.

LINDA

With all of the recent rain, I find myself a little worried.

Dan jumps up, sets aside his beer.

DAN

Don't move. I'll be right there.

He hangs up and rushes out of the house.

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda lowers the phone. She drops back to her bed, her terrified but curious eyes locked on the card.

INT. LINDA'S DOWNSTAIRS HALL - DAY

Linda opens the door to Dan. The rain has stopped. Dan steps inside.

DAN

Are you all right?

LINDA

So far.

DAN

I want you to pack an overnight bag.

LINDA

Where are we going?

DAN

Somewhere away from water.

EXT. BACK ROAD - DAY

Dan's car drives along the windy route in a mountainous area. The sun is out, drying the wet roads.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY - SAME

Linda sits slouched in her seat.

LINDA

Do you really think this is going to work?

Dan passes her a glance.

DAN

How could you drown in the middle of a big city?

Linda takes a look out at the wooded terrain.

LINDA

But I'm sure there's lots of water around here.

DAN

It's the only way into town. Don't worry. My car is new and I checked everything on it before we left.

Linda's card appears on the dashboard. She sighs, picks up the card in her hand.

LINDA

This is really getting old.

Dan reaches over and pats her leg.

DAN

It's almost over.

Linda gazes at him, a romantic interest brewing.

Dan notices her look. He knows it well. He withdraws his hand from her leg and turns forward.

EXT. BACK ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

An ancient dam hovers above a river. Small amounts of water slosh over the top from the swollen rainwater the dam holds back.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Linda notices the dam in the distance as they pass by.

LINDA

A dam.

She turns to Dan

LINDA

You don't think...

DAN

We'll be miles away from it in no time. Besides...

He looks upward through the windshield at the bright sky.

DAN

... the rain has stopped. Looks like it will be a beautiful day.

The car suddenly dies without warning. No sounds associated with it. It coasts to a stop right in the middle of their lane.

LINDA

(worried)

Dan?

Dan tries several times to start the car. It tries to turn over, but fails.

DAN

It's okay. Stay put.

Dan pops the hood release.

INT./EXT. DAN'S CAR - STILL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan opens the hood and fiddles with the cables.

DAN

Give it a try.

Linda turns the ignition. Same old thing.

Dan punches the bottom side of the hood out of frustration.

LATER

A tow truck is hooked up to the rear of Dan's car. The DRIVER (40s) hands Dan a business card. Linda watches from nearby.

DRIVER
Sounds like your timing belt.

DAN
The car's new.

DRIVER
You got a dud. I'll drop it off at the local garage and have them give you a call when they know something... unless of course you'd like to come along and get a room.

DAN
Where's town?

The driver points toward the base of the dam.

DRIVER
Over there.

LINDA
(dryly)
Figures.

DAN
Is there any other places around here to stay?

DRIVER
There's cabins all over the area.

He points down the road in the direction Dan had been heading in.

DRIVER
I think there's a rental office right down there, 'bout half a mile.

DAN
Thanks.

DRIVER
Want a ride? I'll have to charge you an extra 50 bucks.

Dan pulls out his wallet and searches through the few bills inside. Far less than \$50.

DAN

I gave you most of my money for the tow. Linda?

LINDA

I didn't bring any with me.

DAN

(to driver)

Can't you just bill me? Or what about a credit card?

He pulls a credit card from his wallet. Driver waves him off.

DRIVER

Do I look like I have one of those little credit card thingies in my pocket?

Dan returns the card to his wallet and wallet to his pocket.

DAN

You can bill me.

DRIVER

Look, mister. I don't know you from Adam. How do I know you won't skip out?

DAN

(annoyed)

You have my car!

Linda takes him by the arm.

LINDA

It's okay, Dan. We'll just walk.

Dan forces a reassuring smile.

DRIVER

I take it you won't be needin' me anymore.

DAN

Get lost.

Driver hops into his truck and tows Dan's car down the road in the direction of the dam.

Dan turns to Linda, finds her staring at the dam with her arms crossed. He places his hands on her shoulders.

DAN

I won't let anything happen to you.

Linda looks back with a smile. They start their trek down the road toward the cabins.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Back in the woods off of a dirt road.

INT. CABIN LIVING AREA - NIGHT - SAME

Dan sips a cup of coffee as he watches the local news from the couch.

INSERT TV

The weatherman points out a storm system that has moved off to the east. It looks very minor.

WEATHERMAN

This unexpected storm system has dumped several inches of rain in some areas locally. It is losing intensity as it continues to move east.

BACK TO SCENE:

Linda enters from a bedroom, robe over her pajamas. She sits next to Dan and curls her legs under her. Dan turns down the TV's volume.

LINDA

I really wanted to take a nice hot shower, but I didn't think that would be a good idea under the circumstances.

Dan looks to the end table, where Linda's magic card now lies.

DAN

It's worse than a stalker.

Linda becomes depressed with the topic and changes it.

LINDA

I called my mom. She was ready to call in the Marines to look for me, but I talked her out of it. I said I ran off for the night with this new female friend at school and I would be home tomorrow afternoon.

DAN

She didn't believe that, did she?

LINDA

No, but hopefully she won't cause any trouble for you.

Both sit back for a moment and listen to the crickets CHIRPING outside.

LINDA

I keep expecting the rain to start again.

DAN

Nothing but clear skies for days. I'd like to see how fate's going to get you now.

Linda stares, not amused at all.

DAN

I don't mean I'd like to SEE it. I'd just like to know how...

Linda continues to stare. Dan gives up the battle.

DAN

Fate's one thing, but the weather is something else.

LINDA

So is a car crashing through someone's living room.

DAN

The driver was three times legal limit.

LINDA

That doesn't mean it wasn't all just
part of fate's plans for Brad.

The TV picture suddenly goes off, now filled with snow. Dan
flips through different channels with the same result on
each.

DAN

Something must be wrong with the
satellite dish. I'd go check, but
I'm afraid I'd fall off the roof in
the dark and break my neck. I'd
rather stick around with you.

LINDA

And I'd rather have you here with me
than out there with a broken neck.

She lays back her head, very relaxed for the first time in a
while.

LINDA

I don't need the TV anyway. I'm
exhausted.

Dan turns off the TV. He rests his head next to hers. They
turn to face each other. Passion builds. They come together
in a sweet kiss that swells into passion.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Together in a series of passionate kisses, Dan leads Linda
inside. He removes her robe, allowing it to drop to the
floor.

They lie back on the bed, continuing their intense kissing
that spreads to different parts of their bodies.

EXT. DAM - DAY

The swollen river presses against the gates. A crack in one
trickles water under the tremendous strain. Pieces of
concrete wash away in the water, allowing more to pour through
the widening opening.

INT. CABIN LIVING AREA - DAY - SAME

Dressed, Linda leaves a bedroom. She looks around the vacant room.

LINDA

Dan?

EXT. CABIN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A bright, sunny morning.

With the use of a ladder propped against the structure, Dan works on the satellite dish on the roof with a screwdriver.

Linda steps out, spots the ladder and follows it upward with her eyes. A big smile on her face:

LINDA

Good morning.

Dan smiles back as he works.

DAN

Good morning. Did you sleep well?

LINDA

Like a baby. You wore me out.

DAN

I try.

Linda climbs up a couple of rungs, rests her chin against her hand as she looks up at Dan.

LINDA

What are you doing?

DAN

Fixing the dish. Must have been windy before we got here.

LINDA

Where did you get the ladder?

DAN

Shed out back.

Linda takes a quick look at her watch.

LINDA
Know what time it is?

DAN
No. What time is it?

LINDA
Only ten minutes left.

DAN
If we can avoid any complications
over the next few minutes, we've
made it.

LINDA
And I'll owe you a big one.

Dan takes a few moments to stare at her beauty. This is a man falling in love.

INT. DAM'S COMMAND BUILDING - DAY

A lone WORKER monitors different readings on his panels.

WORKER #2 strolls inside.

WORKER #2
What's the problem?

WORKER
We're losing pressure. I can't figure
out why.

Worker #2 looks over some of the readings.

WORKER #2
Could be a leak. I'll take a look.

He leaves the room.

EXT. DAM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

At the base, Worker #2 stands off to the side of the river, binoculars in hand. He scans up the massive walls.

INSERT - BINOCULAR VIEW

A crack spreads across the gate. More and more water runs through the opening.

BACK TO SCENE:

Worker #2 lowers the binoculars, panic on his face.

WORKER #2

Sweet Jesus.

The whole wall suddenly implodes inward. The held back river floods into the valley below with a tremendous force, sweeping away Worker #2 with it.

INT. DAM'S COMMAND BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Worker rushes to a panel and smacks a button that sets off an ALARM. He crosses his heart and prays.

EXT. CABIN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan, beads of sweat covering his forehead under the early sun, finishes making his adjustments on the dish. He wipes his sweaty brow with the back of his arm.

DAN

That should do it.

LINDA

If not?

DAN

Then I'm going to make you come up here and fix it.

LINDA

Fine by me. I won't have to worry about drowning up there.

Dan smiles at her. An inadvertent look past Linda reveals something alarming. He stands with urgency.

DAN

Get up here NOW!

Linda looks back to where he does. The gushing water heads their way, taking out everything in its path.

Linda gasps. She scurries up the ladder as fast as her legs will go, but she's not fast enough.

The water arrives. Its powerful force sweeps away the ladder at impact. Linda screams. Dan barely catches her by the wrist, the strain pulling him down flat to the roof.

Water rushes against Linda. A good deal strikes her face, making it difficult to breathe.

Her wet skin causes Dan to lose his grip. He adds his free hand to the struggle, just to hold on a little longer.

But his efforts are futile. The cabin is severely damaged from the initial impact of the water.

Parts of it cave in, including the roof where Dan lies. He plops into the water with Linda.

RIVER

Dan hangs onto Linda, too stubborn to let go, even if it kills him. Both swallow large amounts of water.

Dan spots a thick tree limb moving along with them off to the side.

Keeping one arm around Linda, he swims with his other arm toward the branch. Finally, he throws an arm around the limb which helps the pair stay afloat--

Until the water takes a dip. The unexpected movement strips Linda from Dan's hold.

DAN

No!

With desperation, he paddles toward Linda. She does her best to swim toward him.

They reach out to each other, their fingers barely touching. Dan pulls Linda to him and catches her in his arms.

Up ahead, a telephone pole to the side of the water topples over toward the center. It's going to strike right where Dan and Linda will be in a few short moments.

Dan notices the falling pole.

DAN

Duck!

He pulls an oblivious Linda with him underneath the water, a split second before the pole hits with a big splash.

Dan pops up several yards ahead of the floating pole. He struggles to pull up Linda, who chokes on water the moment she emerges.

Another dip in the water and Linda is jarred loose from Dan's grasp. This time for good.

The current carries her off toward the bank while Dan remains further out. He paddles his hardest, but fails to make any real progress.

RIVERBANK

Linda is swept over to calmer water only a few feet deep. She stands, finally able to breathe without choking.

She takes the welcomed break to catch her breath and rest her weary muscles.

A large fallen tree lies next to her, its roots still partially embedded into solid ground. It extends many yards out over the water.

Dan crashes against the tree. The current pins his torso to the wood while his legs are pushed underneath.

He slips further into the water, little by little. He already inhales a good deal of it splashing his face.

Linda finally shakes off her own trauma and notices Dan's predicament.

LINDA

Dan!

She steps in his direction.

Dan claws at the tree, but his attempts to hold his ground continue to falter.

DAN

No!

Linda stops.

DAN

Stay back!

Linda wants so badly to do something. Her indecision is apparent.

Dan slips further under the tree. He becomes snared on a small branch, the moving water prevents him from freeing himself.

Soon, he's pulled completely under and held there by the branch.

Linda makes the most important decision of her life. She wades out a little closer, takes a deep breath, and dives underneath.

UNDERWATER

Linda fights against the current as she tries to free Dan from the limb. He shakes his head at her.

Linda ignores his pleas. It's all she can do to hang on and not be swept away herself.

Finally, the limb breaks under the pressure Linda exerts on it and Dan comes free.

SURFACE

Dan pops up and gasps for much needed air. It takes a few breaths just to fill his lungs fully. On the last breath, he dives back under.

UNDERWATER

Dan searches for Linda. Now limp, she floats away from him in the lesser current on the other side.

Dan swims underneath the tree and catches up to her, taking Linda to the surface with him.

SURFACE

Using one arm, Dan swims over to the bank and lays down Linda. No sign of breathing.

Tears try to come to Dan's eyes, but he manages to stand strong for the woman he cares so much about.

DAN

Linda!

He presses on her stomach with his fists, over and over.

DAN
Come on, dammit. Don't leave me
now.

He continues his fierce attempt to revive her.

INSERT - LINDA'S WATCH

The minute hand arrives on "12." It's now 10:37.

BACK TO SCENE:

A good deal of water spurts out of Linda's mouth. She chokes, while at the same time, sucks in lots of air.

Dan happily takes her into his arms like he never wants to let go.

Confused for a moment, Linda suddenly cuddles even closer to her savior.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Lots of rescue workers helping flood victims. Emergency vehicles come and go. Those who have been rescued are given blankets and hot drinks.

An arm around Linda, Dan walks into the area.

Two RESCUE WORKERS hurry to them with blankets and drape one around each. They're led to a table of hot drinks and served some of the refreshing beverages.

EXT. OLESON HOUSE - DAY

A bulldozing crew takes the structure to the ground. A fairly easy task in its weakened condition.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Dan digs a hole, several feet deep, as narrow as he can make it. The evidence bag with the cards inside lies on the ground.

Linda watches, arms crossed.

LINDA

Sure you don't want me to give you a hand?

DAN

I'm going to be the one to end this.

He carefully picks up the bag without touching the cards in any way and drops it into the hole. He shovels dirt on top of it.

LINDA

Are you sure it will be ended?

DAN

No, but it's all we can do.

He finishes and stomps down the dirt on top flat.

DAN

I don't think anyone will be finding it now.

Linda glares at him, a lovestruck look.

LINDA

Dan?

DAN

Yeah?

LINDA

I can't thank you enough for what you did.

DAN

Hey, YOU saved ME, remember?

LINDA

AFTER you saved me.

DAN

So we're even.

They come together in a kiss. Afterward, they gaze into each other's eyes.

LINDA

How can we be sure no one else touched the...

Dan silences her with a kiss. When it ends, Linda has lost her train of thought.

DAN

We can't be sure, not yet. We'll just hope.

He slides an arm around Linda. Shovel in his free hand, he walks with her from the area.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Small, but very fancy. All lights inside are out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME

A beautiful skylight stands over the double bed, where the detective who handed Dan the evidence bag with the cards inside sleeps peacefully.

A magic card, the 3 of Diamonds, appears on his outstretched arm. He shifts position and the card flips over.

The image morphs from Frederic to an image of the detective. He lies on his back with shards of glass sticking out of his torso. Blood pours from the wounds.

The room quivers with a strong earthquake. The detective awakens. He looks around him, puzzled at first. Realization of what takes place hits him.

A CRACKLING sound from above causes him to look up.

The skylight cracks. In a split second, it breaks into several pieces that crash downward.

No time to react. The officer's eyes widen and his mouth drops open to scream.

The shards of glass penetrate his body in several places and silence him instantly. Blood spills from the wounds.

The detective, in horrid pain, looks down at his mangled body in utter shock.

Gurgled pleas for help turn to silence as his head drops back to the bed. His eyes frozen open. He exhales his last breath.

The magic card fades from sight.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

John heads to his car. He opens the door and climbs inside.

INT./EXT. JOHN'S CAR - PARKED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

He adjusts his rearview mirror.

Unnoticed by him, the 4 of Clubs materializes on the passenger seat.

John drives his car out of the lot.

FADE OUT.