

JUGGLING SAND

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FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH-DAY

Beautiful day. Blue waves. White beaches. Nobody around.

A girl, JENNIE TAMBOR, early 20s, looks out to the waves. Her hand perched over her eyes like a visor. A distinctive necklace hangs around her neck.

Someone approaches. A male hand reaches out and touches her shoulder. She turns and shows herself to be pretty, collegiate.

She smiles warmly and hugs the mysterious man. After a moment her body goes limp. She falls backwards in his arms and he sets her down on the sand. As he removes his hand it has a bloody knife in it. The hand drops the knife in shock.

INT. HOUSE-NIGHT

JOHN, 35, awakens sharply in a recliner. Has the same haircut and birthmark. A tie wrapped around a collared shirt but loosened. A TV on but muted. A deep breath taken and he reaches for wire-rimmed glasses.

A nice house but no furniture except for a couch, TV, coffee table and a nearby bureau. No pictures around. John finds the remote and shuts off the TV. The clock on the wall reads 7:12.

INT. BATHROOM

Casual clothes. John closes the medicine cabinet. His reflection catches his attention and he faces himself down for a moment. Eyes drop and he turns.

INT. BEDROOM

John puts on his shoes. From behind:

MOTHER

Johnny? Johnny?

John hesitates. Then his MOTHER appears as he continues to put on his shoes.

MOTHER

There you are.

JOHN

Yes, mother.

MOTHER

Yes, mother? It sounds so formal.
How 'bout "hi, mom".

JOHN

Hi, mom?

MOTHER

Much better. You were always so
dour.

She comes up beside him.

MOTHER

What happened to the house, Johnnie?
There's no furniture. And a lot of
construction stuff.

JOHN

I'm trying to make a change. But I can
never get it right. I've told you this.

MOTHER

Change? What kind of change. I thought
it looked fine the way I had it. But---

She stops herself and realizes she's nagging.

MOTHER

I guess to each their own. And it's
your place now.

JOHN

Mom?

MOTHER

Yes, Johnny.

JOHN

Why are you here?

MOTHER

To see you, of course. Is there something wrong with a mother who wants to see her son?

JOHN

Mom, why are you here?

MOTHER

I just told you, dear.

JOHN

You're here to see me, sure. That part is obvious. But why are you really here? See me for what?

MOTHER

I'm confused, Johnny. What are you trying to say?

JOHN

(agitated)

You show up every time.

MOTHER

Every time? I don't know what that means.

JOHN

Every time I...

John hesitates.

Another angle show John alone.

MOTHER

Every time you what?

Mom concerned and attentive.

MOTHER

What is it?

JOHN

Nothing, mom. Never mind. I was just kidding.

He steps away.

MOTHER

Oh, Johnny. I get so concerned. You've always been a shy boy.

Nothing from her kid. She comes up to him.

MOTHER

You've always been in such conflict. Like there's a storm inside of you. And your windshield wipers aren't working well.

A look at her.

MOTHER

I want you to be able to see clearly, work your way through the storm. Come out on the other side. Don't you, Johnny?

JOHN

Yes.

INT. LIVING ROOM

With a key, John opens the bureau drawer. A pair of leather gloves removed. Into his pocket. An adjacent cigar box catches his attention and reveals several nick-nacks--female nick-nacks: a bracelet, glasses, ring--and Jennie's necklace that he lingers on. The lid closes.

INT. GARAGE

Lights come on. A four door sedan waits for a driver. John removes his keys.

EXT. HOUSE

He pulls out and presses the garage door opener. The house locks itself up. A neatly trimmed neighborhood surrounds the area.

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

The car passes in and out of the streetlight illumination.

INT. CAR

John rides along, expressionless. After a moment, he reaches over and switches on the radio.

NEWSCAST

...with no leads on the series of slayings
of young women...

The radio slowly changes to soft music.

EXT. STREET

The car comes to rest at a stoplight.

EXT. SHOP-NIGHT

A small, hole-in-the-wall shop store near the corner. A few tiny stores mixed with apartment buildings.

The lights on. The street deserted.

A woman, ANNIE, early 30's, appears in the shop. Short blonde hair and an intelligent look in her eyes. A backpack slung around her shoulder.

The lights go off. Annie steps out and locks the door.

With an apprehensive breath, she walks to a nearby bus stop and takes a seat. A car passes on the main thoroughfare half-a-block down.

The pack opened and a biology textbook removed. She starts where the bookmark left her last. After a moment, she glances around and then slowly relaxes.

The sound of a page crinkles in the air. The only sound. A flash of confusion crosses her eyes. She casually glances back and--John right there!

A gasp begins to escape her lips but not before a folded hand towel clamps over her mouth. She struggles for a moment and then quickly passes out.

John muscles her into a sitting position and glances at the street. Nothing. The towel disappears into his pocket. He slowly circles the bench as a pair of handcuffs appear in his hands.

The 'cuffs clamp on and John calmly sits beside her. He studies her features and leans in. Takes in her smell. Then a subtle expression crosses his face.

Then snaps out of the moment and hoists Annie across his shoulders. The sedan across the street. Keys appear in his hands and he pushes a button on the little alarm box. The trunk pops open.

A hook bolted to the bottom of the trunk with another pair of 'cuffs. Sets her inside and attaches her to the hook, behind her back. A piece of electrical tape plastered over her mouth.

He hesitates again and casually glances over the block. The trunk then gently shut with a "click".

INT. HOUSE-GARAGE-NIGHT

The lights come on. The sedan drives in. The door closes with a pronounced "clank".

INT. HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

No sound except for John's breaths as he carries Annie into the house and sets her on the couch. The woman out cold. Her arms behind her back. The tape still over her mouth. Just a sack of clothes.

INT. BATHROOM

John turns and enters the bathroom. Still no sound except for the breathing. He turns the water on and splashes his face. He catches his reflection and lingers for a moment. The medicine cabinet opens and John wrestles open a bottle of aspirin. He exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Terror criss-crosses John's face as he lays eyes on--the empty couch! Sound returns, what little of it exists. A car passes by outside. The wind bumps a tree branch against the house.

John motionless.

"Pop" goes a soda can, from somewhere.

John rushes into the kitchen and sees a dazed Annie at the 'fridge and a soda can in her hand. The 'cuffs hang off one of her wrists.

Disoriented, she blankly looks up and stares at the stunned man for a moment. The 'fridge door closed as she shuffles over to the table and sits. She looks at him again and then pulls the tab of the can.

ANNIE

It's you, isn't it.

She takes a sip. With that, John breaks out of his daze, rushes over, and wrestles her back into the 'cuffs. No scream, no struggle. John yanks her to her feet and gets into her face.

JOHN

How did you get free?

ANNIE

Double jointed?

He drags her out of the kitchen, into a hall, and through a thick bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM

A bare room with window boarded over.

He drags Annie over to a bed with a chain attached to another set of handcuffs. In a moment, he locks her up.

John rises like the conquering king. Annie unfazed.

ANNIE

What now?

Her gaze now solid. John has a flash of confusion.

ANNIE

Can I have something to eat in the meantime? I haven't had any dinner.

Uncertainly washes out of the weirdo's expression. Annie counters with a matter-of-fact raised eyebrow.

After a moment, a stone cold stare returns to his eyes.

JOHN

I am who you think I am.

ANNIE

Then do what you do, bad man.

Another flash of confusion crosses John's face. He turns and starts up the stairs.

ANNIE

Just a sandwich! That's all I ask!

INT. HALLWAY

"Slam!" goes the heavy door. Then the latch. John confused.

INT. LIVING ROOM

John finds her bag and rips it open. The wallet appears. He hesitates and studies the pocketbook. Then he opens it.

Twelve dollars in cash. A single Visa. Two receipts. No photos. Then a drivers' license. Annie Abrams, then an address.

INT. BEDROOM

John rushes in and then hesitates. He cautiously eyes an exhausted but calm Annie.

ANNIE

Is it time?

JOHN

For what?

ANNIE

For--whatever.

She sighs.

JOHN

Why aren't you afraid?

ANNIE

Would it make a difference?

JOHN

No.

ANNIE

Then why should I?

JOHN

Don't you want to live?

Annie thinks.

ANNIE

Never really thought about it.

John's eyes flicker in confusion.

ANNIE

I don't want to die, but I don't know why. I just know that the thought of dying is bad. Like pulling my hand away from a flame, or scratching an itch. I just don't know if I really want to live.

No reaction from the kidnapper. Then he becomes progressively uncomfortable in his posture. Then he hurries out.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Flustered, John paces for a moment and then goes to the kitchen. He pulls out a soda and returns to the chair. The remote snatched up and the TV turned on.

INT. CAR-NIGHT

John drives.

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

A residential street chock full of apartment buildings.

INT. CAR

John studies the license. 1010 Pico Boulevard. One of the apartment buildings 1010.

EXT. APARTMENT BLDG.

A small, two-story structure.

John walks up as he eyes the street. The faint sound of TVs. Someone talks on the phone. His eyes find number 9.

Gloves quickly slipped on and keys appear. John fumbles as he tries a couple. A door opens behind. The next key works. He ducks inside.

INT. APARTMENT

He quickly shuts the door and waits in the dark. Two people talk. Their voices, along with their footsteps, fade.

The drapes are already drawn. John's hand gently searches the wall for the light.

He finds it.

A single, one room area. A tattered couch, a hot plate and toaster oven, a TV, a 'fridge. He steps in. A small desk with a cup full of various knickknacks: a Disneyland keychain, a tiny pencil sharpener, a movie ticket stub, a coupon for a free cup of coffee.

A few CDs sit by a player. A couple video tapes by the machine. A newspaper's front page has the headline KILLER TERRORIZES CITY. A flicker of confusion passes John's eyebrow.

The closet light comes on. Some clothes hung up. A hamper. After a moment, he finds a scrapbook.

The book rests in both hands. Cradled in one as a hand reaches over to the cover. Fingers stiffen up and then retreat into a fist.

INT. CAR-NIGHT

John drives. The scrapbook lies in the front seat.

INT. HOUSE-NIGHT

The door opens and John enters. He picks up the same newspaper as in Annie's apartment and enters. The door closed and bolted shut. The paper set on the living room desk. He puts the book down, too, without opening it.

John turns and sits. He finds the remote control and turns on the TV.

LATER:

The TV shut off.

John crosses to a bureau as keys come out of his pocket. A drawer opens which reveals an impressive box. He lifts the cover and reveals a handgun nestled inside.

INT. BEDROOM

Annie lays on the bed and stares calmly at the ceiling. The heavy door open and John appears. Eyes meet briefly before he looks away. The gun to his side and shielded from her view. Silence.

ANNIE

Have you ever asked yourself why you do this?

He sighs and then sets the gun on the chair. She then sees the weapon.

ANNIE

Well, I guess I hit a nerve.

JOHN

Please don't.

ANNIE

Should I say that? Is that part of this? "Please. Please, Mister Psycho. Don't kill me."

JOHN

No.

ANNIE

Oh. Okay. Are you going to have sex with me before or after you kill me?

John glares at her.

JOHN

No.

Annie sighs.

ANNIE

The news says that the victims were sexually assaulted.

Silence. He sighs.

JOHN

What do you want me to tell you? That I'm a monster? I am. Sometimes what we want is different than what we are. Sometimes need is greater than right.

His hand finds the gun.

JOHN

I can't deny anything. But I can't face it.

He turns and stands over her.

JOHN

I want you to leave with little pain. Help me to do that.

A look at each other for a moment.

ANNIE

What's going to make it easy for you?

Confusion overtakes John. He turns away.

JOHN

I can't let you go. You'll just hurt me.

John grabs a nearby pillow. The gun comes back around to Annie, the pillow placed between the two.

The doorbell rings.

John taken off-guard. He retreats out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

John closes the door and, confused, looks around. The latch forgotten. He approaches the living room but hides the gun in the drawer of a tiny bureau.

He takes a look into the peephole.

JOHN

Yes?

VOICE

Police department, sir. Detectives.

Worry crosses John's expression. After a moment, he unlocks the door.

On the other side DETECTIVE RICHARDS, 60, and DETECTIVE ANDREWS, 35.

JOHN

Can I help you?

RICHARDS

John Smalls?

JOHN

Yes?

RICHARDS

My name is Anthony Richards. This is my partner Michael Andrew. Homicide detectives.

John wide-eyed.

JOHN

Uh. Something wrong?

RICHARDS

No, sir. We're not here to deliver bad news. Can we come in?

JOHN

Uh. I guess.

Andrews starts to enter but gets an overbearing eye from Ricahrds. Then Richards enters first. They invite themselves to peruse the contents and are taken aback by the bare surroundings.

RICHARDS

Just moved in?

JOHN

No. I like the---space. What is this about?

ANDREWS

Do you own a Honda Accord, Mr. Smalls?

JOHN

Yes? Why?

RICHARDS

License number 5TT793?

JOHN

I think so. Yes. That's right.

John eyes Andrews perusing the area.

RICHARDS

I'm sure you're aware of the series of murders that have been in the news?

JOHN

Yes. I have. It's very--terrible. What does this have to do with me?

John's eyes find Annie's purse by the couch leg in the corner. Then the scrapbook on the coffee table.

RICHARDS

Well, the last victim, Karen Henning, was killed in West Hills. On the evening of May 10th she was abducted near the corner of Brady and 5th. On that night, you received a parking ticket. You were in a red zone.

JOHN

Uh. Yes. I do remember that. I think I just didn't see that at night. I didn't even know that you gave tickets out at that time.

ANDREWS

What were you doing there, Mr. Smalls?

JOHN

Let's see. May 10th you said?

RICHARDS

Yes. A Thursday.

JOHN

Uh. Sometimes I just go driving. Just to clear my head.

RICHARDS

West Hills is at least thirty minutes away, though. And that's without traffic.

JOHN

Yes.

Andrews notices the purse. John's eyes go to the bureau that holds the gun.

ANNIE (O.C.)

Hello.

John's eyes widen. He slowly turns and faces a smiling Annie. She steps forward and offers her 'cuff-free hand to Richards' as she touches John's shoulder. Andrews joins them.

ANNIE

My name is Annie. Annie Abrams.

They shake.

ANNIE

I overheard from the other room. You two are detectives?

ANDREWS

Yes, ma'am.

ANNIE

God. I can't believe we were there when that woman was abducted.

Annie leans into John.

RICHARDS

Why were you there?

ANNIE

Oh. I don't have a car and had a friend in town for the night. My volunteer chauffeur here took me out there and went to a movie. What did you see?

Annie looks at John.

JOHN

Uh. I--don't remember.

She smiles.

ANNIE

I remember. The new Star Wars.

She rolls her eyes.

ANNIE

How many times is that? Four?

JOHN

Yes. Four.

ANNIE

He even collects those stupid toys. It's like dating a twelve year-old. That's metaphorically, of course. Don't want to break any laws.

The two detectives smile.

ANDREWS

You don't drive?

John puts his hand in his pant pocket.

ANNIE

No. Haven't had a car for so long that I let my license expire. I didn't want to get in trouble, though. I can show you. My purse is...

She looks around.

JOHN

Oh. Right over here.

John nervously crosses to the purse. He palms her license, bends over, and drops the ID into the bag.

RICHARDS

That's okay.

John hesitates. A pregnant pause.

RICHARDS

I don't think we need anything else.

He reaches into his pocket and produces a business card. He offers it to Annie.

RICHARDS

If you think of anything that may be relevant, please let us know. Anything at all.

ANNIE

Certainly.

Richards gives Andrews the eye to go.

RICHARDS

Oh. What is your friend's name?

ANNIE

Her name?

MURCZEK

Yes.

Annie smiles confidently.

ANNIE

Beth. Beth Gallow. From Phoenix.

Richards smiles.

RICHARDS

Thank you.

The two leave. John hesitates as Annie grips the door handle. And then she closes it.

Annie and John look at each other. He sets the purse on the desk.

JOHN

Didn't you think I would shoot them?

ANNIE

I don't know. Would you have?

Silence.

JOHN

The gun is in the drawer. In the table
right there.

Annie's eyes find the bureau. She pulls open the drawer,
lifts out the gun, and slowly swings it toward John, who
stands unfazed.

Pause. She sets it on the bureau.

ANNIE

So. I'm not the only one who has an
ambivalence to life.

John slumps into the nearby couch.

JOHN

Go. Tell the world. Tell them where the
monster lives.

Annie crosses to him. For a moment she stands over him,
expressionless. Then she crouches over.

ANNIE

Maybe you're not the monster you
think you are.

Their hands find each other. Then she slips beside him and
gently cradles his head. He takes a deep breath, absently
shutters, and then closes his eyes.

EXT. STREET-DAY

John, present age, twists around and now in a suit. In awe,
he looks up to...

...a quaint church. The door opens from inside with a squeak
of the hinges. After a moment Annie, in a simple wedding
dress and bouquet, appears from the interior. John
awestruck. She smiles warmly at him.

ANNIE

Are we going to do this, or what?

John smiles. He runs up to her and they disappear into the church. The door slowly closes and latches with an overt "clang!"

INT. HOUSE-NIGHT

John wakes suddenly, alone on the couch. His face wet with sweat. No sound.

He stands and takes a long look over the living room. Slowly, the sound of a running shower heard. He walks over to the hallway and hesitates as he sees the open bathroom door. Annie's silhouette can be seen through the shower partition.

He turns away--and the scrapbook catches his eye.

The book tattered and old but very thick. John wary of it and glances back towards Annie.

Then he reaches out and turns the cover back. Old and grainy pictures of a family: mom, dad, little girl with long brown hair. At a barbecue. The beach. Climbing a tree. A child's play features the girl.

One photo shows the little girl hug her mother, who wears an obscured locket.

John smiles weakly. Then the pictures of a girl about ten years with the same long brown hair.

Then a confused expression paints John's face. He centers in one photo with the little girl with her mother's locket from the previous photo. But very clear in this.

Another page turned and John's eyes widen in shock.

Now the photos show--Jennie Tambor! In them, she rehearses for the play, her last role before John took her life.

Suddenly, Annie leans in...

ANNIE

She was your first, huh?

...and startles John. Dressed but has wet hair and a towel around her neck. He stumbles back and tries to compose himself as she casually dries her hair.

JOHN

Where did you get that?

ANNIE

Painful memories? Probably not as painful as it was to her.

JOHN

What's going on? What are you doing?

ANNIE

What am I doing? You're the psycho killer, Johnny. I think that's a question you have to ask yourself.

He backs up more and becomes increasingly confused.

ANNIE

Did you ever ask or are you that sick? Do you have a purpose? Are you reaping revenge for the rejection of a 20 year-old girl in college? Is that it? Or is there just a wire loose in that brain of yours that makes you do things without any sort of rhyme or reason? What is it, Johnny?

Pause. John terrified.

JOHN

I just want them to stay. But they never do.

She studies him.

ANNIE

You have hope? Someday you think the world will turn on its head and give you something that you've never had. Why would it do that, John? Is it that hard to admit that you're evil? That you are a nothing? Someone has to be. Why not you? The sky is blue, the grass is green, and I, Johnny boy, am garbage to the world. And it is all my doing.

John almost in a fetal position.

JOHN

Why are you saying this? Who are you?

Annie stands in front of the sofa.

ANNIE

Come on, John. You haven't figured it out yet?

Then a transparent figure pushes out of Annie's frame--and it's Jennie Tambor! 20 with her long brown hair. Asleep, Annie slumps into the couch like a rag doll. After a moment, Jennie solidifies.

JENNIE

I really thought you'd figure it out by now.

John screams. The scrapbook evaporates.

JENNIE

What was it? I wasn't mean to you. Sure, I knew you liked me. Lots of guys did. But I was never mean to them, either.

As she speaks, Jennie goes to the bureau. She tries several of the drawers.

JENNIE

I thought it was sweet. A lot of girls would be a bitch to guys like you.

She finds the locked drawer, the one with all the "momentos".

JENNIE

I didn't want to go out with them but I didn't want to be mean, either. Most would keep quiet. You did, too. Until you killed me, of course.

JOHN

No. I didn't want to. You were going to get away. I didn't want to.

Jennie finds an envelope opener and gives him a raised eyebrow. She jabs it into the locked drawer and pries it open.

JENNIE

But you did, John. Dead. D-E-A-D.

Pulls out the box and opens it up. Her hand finds the locket.

JENNIE

My mother gave me this.

Puts on the locket and then steps around and in front of Annie. Her body goes transparent again just before she sits into Annie and disappears into her body. The locket appears around her neck and solidifies as she awakens.

JOHN

What are you going to do with me?

ANNIE

Do with you? Nothing. I just came for this.

She gestures to the locket.

ANNIE

I gotta return this body and be on my way. She's going to be really confused when she wakes up. You're a matter for someone else. You have two guesses who that might be.

She leans in and winks.

ANNIE

Maybe one of the other girls will be more pissed than I am that you took her stuff.

She nods to the box on the bureau. John terrified.

ANNIE

And it's a lot more than just that box. Right, John? I gotta go.

Annie turns to the door as she notices his catatonia.

ANNIE

Oh, don't be like that, Johnny. You know what they say. "It's better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."

With a sarcastic wink, she turns the handle and disappears out the door as she begins to giggle. Her laugh fades for a moment.