STILL LIFE

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

A rusty 1976 Buick Regal sputters and rolls to a stop on a gravel road. Under the moonlight, plowed fields and thick woods sprawl in all directions. A lone farmhouse stands about a hundred yards off the road, the only structure within sight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

LLOYD, 41, adjusts a large painting on the wall. He steps back, his bright blue eyes squint as he attempts to level the painting. He nudges a corner of the frame, steps back again, takes a sip of white wine.

LLOYD

Perfect.

The front door nearly flies off its hinges as it's kicked in. SHANE, a burly 26, runs at Lloyd. He wears an orange prison jumpsuit. KARL, 43, steps in right behind him. Karl wears a prison guard uniform, but his orange jumpsuit peeks out from under the dark blue shirt.

Shane grabs the petrified Lloyd and throws him to the floor.

SHANE Who else lives here?

Lloyd stammers, too scared to speak. Karl produces a pistol, aims it at Lloyd's head.

KARL

Answer now.

LLOYD J-just me. I live alone.

Shane looks to Karl, who nods his head. Shane runs up the stairs. Karl grabs Lloyd by his collar, tosses him on a couch.

KARL You got a car?

LLOYD Pickup. Broke, though. Been meanin' to fix it. KARL

Keys.

Lloyd points to a set of keys on a nearby table. Karl grabs them. Shane runs back into the room.

SHANE

No one here.

Karl tosses him the keys.

KARL Check his pickup. See if it runs.

Shane runs outside. Karl stares down Lloyd, wipes beads of sweat from his shaved head. He glances at the painting on the wall. An old, white haired woman sits in a chair amid a bucolic scene of rolling meadows. Obviously amateur.

> KARL Who did this?

LLOYD I...I did. It's a hobby.

KARL Fuckin' terrible. Get a new hobby.

Shane runs back in, shakes his head.

SHANE Starter on that thing is shot.

KARL Christ. If only your shit-forbrains cousin could've left us a car with more than a quarter tank.

Karl grimaces, looks to Lloyd.

KARL Where's the nearest gas station?

LLOYD About three miles, but it closes at nine.

SHANE What about a neighbor?

LLOYD Ed Rafferty lives about a mile from here. But, he's not home. SHANE How the fuck would you know?

Lloyd shrugs, looks to the floor.

LLOYD

I--

KARL (to Shane) How much gas in the pickup?

SHANE 'Bout half a tank.

KARL (to Lloyd) You got a siphon?

LLOYD In the basement.

KARL (to Shane) Go with him.

Shane reaches over, hoists up Lloyd by his arm and leads him out of the room.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lloyd leads Shane down a stairwell which descends to an old wooden door. Lloyd opens the creaking door, steps in the basement, moves to his left, flips on a switch. Shane steps right behind him, but freezes in the doorway, absolute horror on his face.

Lloyd's hand darts into view from behind the doorway. It holds a syringe, sticks Shane in the side of his neck.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Karl paces, anxiously wipes his lips.

KARL

Let's go!

No answer. Karl thumbs back the hammer on his pistol.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Karl walks down the stairs, gun at the ready.

KARL

Shane!

The ancient wood of the stairs creaks with each footfall. Karl arrives at the doorway, but the basement is dark.

KARL

Shane!

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Karl walks into the basement. In the pitch blackness, his hand scrapes the wall in search of the switch. The sickening crack of hard wood on skull, followed by the dull thud of a body falling to the floor.

Lloyd turns on the lights. He holds a bat. Karl struggles to his knees. Lloyd calmly bends down, takes the gun.

Karl blinks a few times, as if what he sees must be a terrible hallucination.

The body of ED RAFFERTY, a middle-aged man, lies face down on a table. The skin of his back has been removed, surgically sliced away in a rectangular shape. Next to the body, a blank canvas rests on an easel. But, the material of the canvas...

> LLOYD See? I told you guys Ed Rafferty wasn't home.

Lloyd walks over to the easel, puts down the handgun, picks up a staple gun. He stretches the loose human skin tightly across the wooden backing, staples it in place. He holds the canvas up, inspects it.

> LLOYD Perfect. I like it tight as a snare drum.

Karl attempts to get to his feet, but falls backward. He sees Shane's lifeless body lying face down and shirtless on another table.

Lloyd walks back to Karl, grabs a syringe from a small wooden box that sits just below the light switch. He injects Karl in the side of his neck.

Karl's eyes flutter as he watches Lloyd walk over to Shane. Lloyd picks up a scalpel, places the blade on Shane's back, slices down his side in a clean line. KARL

No.

Lloyd pauses, looks to Karl, smiles.

LLOYD

I'm gonna make you a masterpiece.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lloyd adjusts a painting on the wall. He backs up, nudges a corner of the frame, steps back again. He smiles.

LLOYD

Perfect.

The painting shows Karl, in prison guard uniform, sitting in repose. His mouth betrays the barest hint of a grin.

Lloyd glances to the painting of the old woman on the opposite wall, then back to Karl's. He nods in satisfaction, grabs his glass of white wine, then walks to a nearby door.

INT. GALLERY - DAY

Lloyd enters a large room converted to a gallery. As he walks in, he passes a painting of Shane. Garbed in his orange jumpsuit, Shane sits on an old wooden stairway, his hands folded over his lap.

Ten paintings line the walls, all of various people captured in sundry poses and backgrounds. Lloyd takes a quick stroll around, admires all of his subjects.

He finds a hammer and a plastic box of hanging hooks on a table. He sets down his glass of wine, picks up the hammer and box and walks to a door.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - DAY

Lloyd opens the door, turns on the light. Paintings lie stacked to the ceiling. There must be fifty of them. Lloyd sets the hammer and box on a shelf, turns off the light, shuts the door.

FADE OUT.