

THE DARK'NING  
an original screenplay  
by  
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THE DARK 'NING

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

The room is small. The walls are painted a ghastly mix of salmon and teal, clashing with the gray linoleum.

In the center of the room is a table with two chairs. On the table, in front of one of the chairs, are "U"-shaped brackets welded to the metal table top.

This chair faces a huge mirror that takes up most of the wall, leaving only enough room for a heavy metal door to the side.

There is a thin window near where the wall meets the ceiling to the left of the mirror, covered in narrow mesh, painted the same noxious color.

LIGHTNING FLASHES, illuminating the room, barely.

THE DOOR bursts open and RATTLES off the cement wall.

A young girl falls into the room, catching herself on the backswing of the door. Her dark hair is matted and clumpy and her dark flannel shirt is torn and caked with mud; the silver handcuffs gleam off the dim light...

This is LINDSAY TOBIAS--or what's left of her.

Following her is DETECTIVE KENT MURPHY, stocky, with his marine corps hair cut and close cut goatee. He has a dark green folder tucked under his arm

He is followed by an OFFICER carrying zip-ties.

Lindsay stumbles again, barely able to keep herself upright.

Murphy reaches out to steady her.

MURPHY

Easy. Just take a seat right there.

She moves with rubbery legs to the chair he indicates.

When she sits, he removes her hand cuffs.

The Officer moves in and places the zip-ties through the brackets on the table, making a ring. When he reaches for Lindsay's hand she jerks it back.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Relax. It's just a precaution.

2.  
Lindsay hesitantly lets the Officer snake the piece of plastic through the ring and around her wrist, fastening it snugly with a ZIP.

She begins sob very lightly.

Murphy pats the Officer on the back as he passes out the door.

Murphy shuts the door and sets the folder on the table. He walks over to the mirror and admires his reflection, scratching his goatee.

He turns and moves the second chair around so that he is sitting perpendicular to Lindsay, his back to the window.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

I know you're tired. I am too. But this is just a formality. Do you want something to drink? Water? Coffee?

Lindsay shakes her head. Bits of dried mud sprinkle the table.

Murphy wipes the clumps away.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Okay, just let me know if you do.

He slides the folder over to himself and opens it. He leafs silently through several pages, glancing up at Lindsay every so often, checking on her.

LIGHTNING FLASHES again causing her to jump.

LINDSAY

(weakly)

I wanna go home.

Murphy raises one eyebrow as if she's said something interesting.

MURPHY

Me too. I've been on the clock since nine this morning. Ain't that a bitch?

Lindsay draws her legs up on the chair and wraps her free arm around them. Her jeans are also torn and muddy.

LINDSAY

(weakly)

Please. I didn't do anything. I just wanna go home.

(louder)

Where's my mom? My mom should be here?

MURPHY

She's on her way. But you're a big girl now.

(reaches out; pats her knee)

You don't need her here when we question you.

LINDSAY

What about a lawyer?

MURPHY

Do you need one?

LINDSAY

I don't know. Do I?

MURPHY

If you want one.

Lindsay looks at the zip-tie and flexes her hand.

LINDSAY

No, I think I'll be safe here.

Murphy chuckles.

He closes the folder and steeples his hands under his chin.

MURPHY

So are you refusing your right to have an attorney present?

Lindsay nods.

Murphy smiles and points to a small black box under the light switch.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

They need to hear you say it.

LINDSAY

I, Lindsay Tobias, do hereby decline my legal rights to have an attorney present during my questioning.

MURPHY

That'll work, I think.

He leans back and rest his hands on his chest.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

So what's going on, Lindsay?

Lindsay hugs her knees and begins rocking.

LINDSAY

I told you.

Murphy points to the box again.

MURPHY  
For the record.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small balding man stands looking through the one-way glass. He is in a ratty gray suit with a coffee stain on a red tie that arcs over a pot bell. This is DETECTIVE SID ABERNATHY, senior member of the partnership.

Abernathy just watches.

LINDSAY  
(on intercom; sighs)  
My boyfriend, Shawn Douglas, vanished.  
All that is left of him is a pool of  
blood and a dead rose.

MURPHY  
(on intercom)  
And that's the story you want to  
tell the D.A.?

Lindsay glares at him.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LINDSAY  
Should I lie?

Murphy stands, and goes over to the mirror again and rubs the bridge of his nose.

MURPHY  
Not at all. But I think if you're  
going to go on public record, in  
front of God and everybody, you should  
at least come up with something less  
fictional.

Lindsay SLAMS her free hand on the table, standing and knocking her chair back.

LINDSAY  
I've already told you! That's what  
happened! And if you were actually  
doing some detecting, you might really  
find out what's going on.

Murphy POUNDS his fist into the table and gets right in Lindsay's face.

MURPHY  
And if you told me something other  
than this bullshit about your  
(MORE)

3.

MURPHY (CONT'D)  
boyfriend disappearing in a flash of lightning, I might be able to do some detecting and find out what is going on.

Lindsay retreats from the confrontation.

LINDSAY  
It wasn't lightning.

MURPHY  
What?

LINDSAY  
He didn't vanish in a flash of lightning.

MURPHY  
Then what was it? A puff of smoke? The sound of a gong? Maybe America called in and voted him off the planet?

LINDSAY  
No, it was the opposite of lightning.

Murphy leans his back against the mirror, folding his arms across his barrel chest.

MURPHY  
Oh, that clears it right up.

LINDSAY  
I don't know how else to explain it.

Lindsay picks up her chair and resumes her protective pose, hugging her knees.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)  
He was there, it went dark, then he wasn't.

MURPHY  
So it was a blackout.

LINDSAY  
No.

MURPHY  
But you just said...

LINDSAY  
I told you it was the opposite of lightning--I don't know, dark-ning, I guess.

MURPHY

Dark-ning?

LINDSAY

Look, that's the best way to describe it.

Murphy holds his hands up in surrender.

MURPHY

Fine. I'll write that down in my report.

He takes a pen from his shirt pocket and sits down, opening the folder. He speaks to her while he's writing.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

When you first came in, you mentioned you'd be safe here. Safe from what?

LINDSAY

Whatever got Shawn.

MURPHY

And you think it was this--dark-ning?

LINDSAY

Yeah.

MURPHY

And how do you know it's coming after you?

He stops writing and waits for her response.

Their eyes meet.

LINDSAY

Because it was after me to begin with. Shawn just got in its way.

MURPHY

Okay, good. Tell me about that.

BEGIN LINDSAY'S FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lindsay sits in a darkened room with three other girls in their pajamas: ERICA, RENEE, and STEPHANIE.

The four girls are in a circle, a small votive candle flickering in front of each girl.

ERICA

You guys wanna try something weird?

The girls all eagerly agree.

Erica turns and lifts up one of the couch cushions and pulls out a black, leather-bound book with yellowed pages.

STEPHANIE

What's that? A diary?

ERICA

Nope. It's one of my mom's spellbooks.

RENEE

Spells? Your mom was a witch?

ERICA

I don't think so. Dad doesn't talk about her much--since she ran off.

Lindsay reaches out quickly and takes the book.

The girls all squeal excitedly as she opens the book to a page that was marked by a slip of paper.

The slip of paper flutters to the floor. Erica picks it up and reads it, silently.

STEPHANIE

What's it say?

ERICA

It says "for Tom."

LINDSAY

Tom?

ERICA

My dad.

RENEE

What spell did she have marked?

STEPHANIE

Was it a love spell?

The girls giggle.

Lindsay flicks her hair and clears her throat.

LINDSAY

(reading)

"Out of darkness, darkness come.  
Out of sorrow, darkness come. Come  
to me in the name and honor of...

(struggling to  
pronounce)

Yog? Yog-So-thoth?"

SUDDENLY, the candles go out, without wind, plunging the room into complete darkness and silence.

A cell phone RINGS; the girls all SCREAM and then GIGGLE.

Lindsay picks up here phone causing a soft blue glow to fill the room.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Hey, Shawn.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Lindsay, now dressed in jeans and flannel shirt, is walking with SHAWN, a handsome, preppy-kind-of-guy.

LINDSAY  
So what brings you by?

SHAWN  
What? Can't a guy just wanna see his girl?

LINDSAY  
Aw.

SHAWN  
I've got something for you.

They stop and Shawn reaches into his coat and pulls out a fresh-cut rose. As he hands it to Lindsay, the street light behind them goes out.

Lindsay, startled/concerned, looks back without taking the flower.

The streetlight in front of them goes out just as suddenly, leaving them in near darkness.

SHAWN (CONT'D)  
Must be on a timer.

Shawn tries to hand her the flower again, just as...

Everything goes BLACK and SILENT--only for a second.

The streetlights come back on and Lindsay is standing alone, shaking with fright.

LINDSAY  
Shawn?  
(a beat; desperate)  
Shawn?!

She takes a step back and, hearing a SQUISH, looks down.

She lifts her shoe and sees a DEAD rose that she has stepped on sitting in a pool of blood.

Lindsay screams and turns, running.

9.  
She runs through a neighbor's yard. She falls in the slick grass getting covered with mud and yard debris.

Regaining her footing, she bolts for the street. She takes a few steps in the street when she is bathed in light as tires SCREECH and a horn BLARES.

Lindsay stands, frozen.

END LINDSAY'S FLASHBACK

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Murphy shakes his head ever so slightly as he writes in the folder.

When he is finished, he puts the pen away, closes the folder and stands up.

MURPHY

You sure you don't want anything?  
This may take a while.

Lindsay shakes her head.

Murphy shrugs.

He opens the door.

LINDSAY

Detective?

Murphy stops and turns, looking at this battered, frightened girl.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

I'm not crazy. I didn't kill Shawn.

For a moment, Murphy almost says that he knows, but he bites his lip, lowers his gaze and leaves the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murphy opens the door to the smaller room, closing it quickly so as not to let much light in. He steps up to the glass and watches Lindsay just sitting there for a moment.

He looks to his right at Detective Abernathy.

Abernathy rubs his stomach.

MURPHY

You ever heard of anything like this?

Abernathy only grunts; a distorted sound that could mean yes, no, or that he didn't hear Murphy.

ABERNATHY

What do you think?

MURPHY

Honestly? I think she's psychotic. I also think that she believes what she's telling me.

ABERNATHY

Do you?

MURPHY

Some of it. But it's the holes in the story that bother me.

ABERNATHY

They should. You're a Detective.

They both watch Lindsay as she starts rocking again.

Murphy puts his forearm on the glass and rests his forehead on it. He exhales in a big puff. When he looks up again, he squints into the room.

MURPHY

Did it just get a little darker in there?

ABERNATHY

You're just tired.

LIGHTNING FLASHES again, creating a frame of dark shadows around Lindsay.

MURPHY

I think I need a break.

He opens the door and leaves Sid alone.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Murphy walks through the quiet squad room, a can of soda in his hand. He waves at a chubby woman wearing a phone headset.

She smiles and waves back.

He drains the last bit of liquid from the can and crushes it in his hand. Just as he's about to drop it in the waste basket...

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK for just a second--but it was no power failure.

LIGHT returns and the can CLATTERS to the bottom of the basket.

Murphy is frozen, staring at his open hand. He blinks a few times before turning and running.

11.  
He enters a small alcove and comes upon Abernathy, who is just standing outside the door to the Observation room, looking as flaccid as he did moments before.

Murphy gives him a quizzical look as he reaches for the Interrogation room door.

But Abernathy grasps Murphy's hand inches from the knob.

ABERNATHY

You don't want to do that, son.

He tries to reach again, but is stopped by his partner.

MURPHY

What the hell, Sid?

ABERNATHY

You already know what you're going to find on the other side of that door. Better just let me deal with the clean-up.

MURPHY

What!? Bullshit!

Murphy shoves past his elder counterpart and slams through the heavy door, BANGING it open.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murphy flies in.

THE CHAIR is empty, the zip-tie restraints dangle limply off the end of the table, still interlocked.

Murphy circles around, slowly. He begins to breathe deeply, his face reddening.

He can see all of the chair now. His face contorts into a mask of confusion and repulsion.

THE CHAIR is sitting in a pool of deep red blood. Thin lines of the liquid drip from the chair's cushion into the pool, but there is no other blood anywhere in the room. Not on the walls, and not on the table.

Murphy squats down by the chair and reaches out. He takes something from the seat. It is a DEAD ROSE and the blood seems to be emanating from the flower's petals.

Flower in-hand, Murphy turns to Abernathy.

MURPHY

What happened? Where is she?

ABERNATHY

Don't know.

MURPHY

But you were standing right there.

He points to the mirror.

ABERNATHY

It went black and I couldn't see a damn thing. When the light came back, she was gone.

Murphy looks down at the rose and back at Abernathy. He sets the rose on the corner of the table.

MURPHY

You've heard her story before.

ABERNATHY

Seen it. Long time ago.

MURPHY

And?

ABERNATHY

And what?

Abernathy steps into the room, shutting the door behind him.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

It was fifteen years ago. I was just a beat-cop when I got called to a domestic situation. Some guy was thumpin' on his wife. When I got there, they were screamin' at one another. She had this...book; she was threatening him with it. But not like she was gonna hit him. She opened it and read from it. And then, hell, I don't know. It got real dark and quiet and then...

MURPHY

Poof? She was gone?

ABERNATHY

Just like that. Official report says that the mother just took off with a young lover.

Murphy runs his hands over his face.

MURPHY

Oh, God! What are we gonna do, Sid? What the hell are we gonna do?

ABERNATHY

What do you expect we do?  
(MORE)

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Write this up in a nice report and give it to the Lieutenant? Or better yet, why don't we go to church and confess our sins? Because we're about to commit some.

Murphy looks around the room, trying to rationalize what happened.

MURPHY

Her mom will be here any minute.

Abernathy, takes him firmly by the shoulders and looks deep into his eye.

ABERNATHY

She got away from us. That's all. She slipped out of her restraint while we went to get her some water. When we got back, she was gone.

Murphy casts a glance over his shoulder.

MURPHY

What about the blood?

ABERNATHY

We can clean that up real quick.

MURPHY

And the tape recorder?

ABERNATHY

I forgot to load it. Silly old geezer that I am, happens all the time.

He gently shakes Murphy?

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

You with me?

Murphy's head falls. He nods.

Abernathy slaps him on the shoulder and opens the door.

Before he leaves, Murphy looks back at the DEAD ROSE, still dripping small patters of blood onto the floor.

He and Abernathy leave, closing the door.

THE ROSE continues to drip. Drip. Drip.

FADE OUT:

THE END