<u>UMBILICAL</u>

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SQUAD CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Officer DALIYA grips the wheel at ten and two. New to the beat, 22 and sweet. Easier to imagine her serving lattes, than wearing a badge.

The radio dispatcher breaks the silence with static and random police business.

DALIYA

Stupid radio gives me a headache. How can you understand anything they say? I'll never get it. It's gibberish.

OFFICER RUDY, 30s, Bronx flair, reads the paper in the passenger seat.

OFFICER RUDY

You get used to it. Listen to this apprehended some nine-year-old kid peeping into windows. Said he was practicing to 'join the Brotherhood.'

He glances at Daliya, face cork-screwed with disbelief. Slaps the paper as he talks with his hands.

OFFICER RUDY (CONT'D) Can you believe that? When I was a kid I always wanted to be the good guy, you know? Now they dream about being the punk-ass terrorists.

DALIYA

Nine? You mean nineteen? Nine is impossible.

Rudy holds the paper at varying distances from his eyes, squints.

OFFICER RUDY

Nah, unless it's a typo, looks like a nine to me. Getting your fill of some gals in their undies must look good on a Brotherhood resume.

DALIYA

When I was nine I wanted to be a New Kid on the Block.

OFFICER RUDY New Kid? ... They're all guys.

DALIYA

And I would have had them all to myself.

OFFICER RUDY Ho ho! Dare to dream!

(chuckles) Fuck'n New Kids...

She pulls in to a corner store parking lot. Ignition off.

OFFICER RUDY (CONT'D) What's this?

DALIYA

What's what?

OFFICER RUDY You kidding me? Tell me this is some kinda joke. This is the third stop tonight.

DALIYA

What can I say? In the next life, when you're a woman, you'll understand.

OFFICER RUDY

I wouldn't be downing corner store sludge all night. That black ooze unclogs the plumbing. Eats your insides. Nah, I'd be home alone with a bottle of wine, a candle and lots of me time. Know what I'm sayin'?

DALIYA I didn't just hear that.

Daliya exits the car and leans in the window.

OFFICER RUDY Yeah you did. And you can't un-hear it.

DALIYA You are one sick puppy.

Rudy howls like a wolf and chuckles.

OFFICER RUDY A little John Mayer in the background...

DALIYA

Okay, just stop. You're making me sick. You want something?

OFFICER RUDY

Nah. And no more joe for you either, hear me?

DALIYA

No deal. I'm weak.

OFFICER RUDY

Fine. Hurry your ass back so I can show you how to fudge the time logs.

INT. CORNER STORE - NIGHT

Daliya enters. Scans the scant medicine section - Ibuprofen, cotton balls and condoms. There are two pregnancy tests.

DALIYA Eenie Meenie... Which one of you suckers is gonna work with me?

She grabs one, moves to the counter and pays the fanboy clerk who is nose-deep in a Nightmare on Elm Street Comic.

DALIYA (CONT'D) You have washrooms?

CLERK Round the corner, down the hall. Latch is broken.

Daliya fishes her pockets for money.

DALIYA Say, how fresh is the coffee?

His eyes never leave the comic.

CLERK

I dunno, yesterday? Maybe Friday.

DALIYA

Right. Maybe next time.

She throws some cash on the counter and takes the test toward the washrooms.

CLERK

Yeah, miss, someone is...

He trails off as Daliya disappears around the corner.

CLERK (CONT'D) ... in there. Whatever. Should be interesting.

CORNER STORE CORRIDOR

Daliya finds the washroom. She turns the limp knob to see if it's locked. Nope. She heads in.

The toilet is in use, the patron, pants around his ankles. She averts her gaze.

DALIYA

Oh, oh, God, I'm so sorry.

Something's not right, she looks back at the guy.

He has a brick of c-4 in his hands, wires poking in and out of it. JOHN WILTZ, 30, hoodie up. Severe. A viper.

Daliya catches a glimpse of a skull tattoo peeking out from his hood and fumbles for her gun. She aims it shakily.

A long moment passes where the only communication is his sneer and her shock.

JOHN

You're dead.

He launches the explosive right at her. It hits, it falls, it does nothing. But they both gawk at it expectantly.

Daliya drops her pregnancy test, reaches for her radio with her free hand and puts it to her mouth.

DALIYA

(nervous)
Rudy. Can you maybe come in here...
(swallows)
... please?

John roars and leaps at her. She shrieks. Reflex.

BANG!

Daliya watches him drop, her face frozen horror, her gun hand shakes violently.

INT. PRISON INFIRMARY - NIGHT

John Wiltz lays on his cot. Vitals monitors beep steadily. His arms and legs are securely shackled.

A man in a suit emerges to the edge of shadow, SHADOW MAN, ageless, peers through cell bars at the comatose John.

John's eyeballs dance wildly under closed lids.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SCUMMY BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

DRUGGIE JOHN, identical to John Wiltz (without skull tattoo), slides to a sitting position behind a dumpster. His pupils are unnatural pinpoints of light.

He trembles. Cries so hard that sound has trouble escaping his lips.

Filthy. He's got a needle in one hand and blood on both.

Rolls up his sleeve to reveal a pocked arm.

Jams the needle in. Momentary relief.

He cries again.

INT. JUMBO AIRLINER - COCKPIT - DAY

PILOT JOHN (identical to John Wiltz without tattoo) and CO-PILOT go through routine button pushing. They both have glowing pupils.

Pilot John speaks into the mic of his headphones.

PILOT JOHN Good afternoon, this is your Captain speaking. We are experiencing a slight delay. Seems a deer has wandered onto the runway. (MORE)

PILOT JOHN (CONT'D) We'll scoot Bambi on out of here and proceed for takeoff shortly.

PASSENGER CABIN

Some folks moan, the rest frown and settle in for the wait. They all have glowing pupils.

COCKPIT

CO-PILOT You think Bambi passed through security?

PILOT JOHN

I want to be there for that pat down.

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

A bustle as Drag Queen Showgirls prepare to go on stage.

DRAG JOHN (identical to other Johns), touches up his lipstick in the mirror. Everyone's eyes glow.

PASSING DRAG QUEEN Girls are tilted, Johnny.

Drag John cups his breasts and levels them out.

Nods satisfied, blows a kiss to his reflection.

INT. GAS STATION - TWILIGHT

John (the original, with the tattoo and normal eyes), is a sweaty, jittery mess. He stands at the door peering out at the dwindling light of day.

He glances at the CASHIER who has glowing eyes.

You s-said one block, th-then left?

The lights flicker.

John freaks out and brushes something off his sleeve. Then hops and scrambles several feet away.

CASHIER

Who the hell is in here?

The cashier doesn't seem to be able to see John, but can hear him fine.

JOHN Left? The School of Applied Physics? Left?

CASHIER

Yeah, man... left.

John circles around some invisible threat and bolts from the store.

The Cashier sees the door fly open by itself.

CASHIER (CONT'D) What the...?

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

John hugs the wall under the bright gas station sign. He spots a street lamp, works up his courage and sprints.

EXT. CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Hugs the pole, eyes closed, breathing hard.

He looks for the next street light. It seems the street lights are spaced a little too far apart with dim patches between them. Thunder booms and rain comes down in sheets.

He pulls a flashlight from his jacket, flicks it on and holds it over his head so the light showers him.

Races toward the next streetlight. Trips. Sprawls on the ground. He sits and presses his knee, winces.

The flashlight skids off the street curb and teeters on an open storm drain.

JOHN

No no no!

Snags it before it falls in. Taps it until it comes back on. He smiles, overjoyed, crazed.

He points the light on himself and makes his way streetlight to streetlight.

EXT. PHYSICS SCHOOL - TWILIGHT

Over the door: SCHOOL OF APPLIED PHYSICS. John stands looking at the sign.

He lifts the front of his shirt. Shines the light on his stomach. An odd-looking red cord materializes and dangles from his navel. It extends from him down the sidewalk, past the school.

> JOHN Not this time, you son of a bitch. I'll find my own way.

He opens the door and ventures inside.

INT. PHYSICS SCHOOL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Faculty and students (glowing eyes) go about their business. They don't even know John is there.

John scans a bulletin board of professors and room numbers.

JOHN A god damned scientist... Well, let's rock, brainiac.

He reads: PROFESSOR JOHN WILTZ, ROOM 210.

Takes stairs two at a time.

SECOND FLOOR

The corridors are labyrinthine. He starts one way then doubles back.

He shines the flashlight at his abdomen. The slender red cord protrudes from his skin and leads down a hallway.

JOHN

Fine.

John stops at a water fountain. He sets his flashlight on it. Withdraws a handgun. Checks to see if it's loaded. Snaps it shut.

He half-runs down the corridor where his cord lead - forgets his flashlight.

Thunder rumbles outside.

SECOND FLOOR - OUTSIDE ROOM 210

He looks through the door's window. At the front of an auditorium PROFESSOR JOHN (identical to him) teaches a class. Glowing eyes everywhere.

JOHN There you are. You're dead, asshole.

John leans his head against the door and takes a breath to calm his frazzled nerves.

BOOM! Thunder shakes the building. The lights flicker.

JOHN (CONT'D)

As if!

He searches his pockets.

JOHN (CONT'D) C'mon, flashlight, flashlight, where the Hell are you?! Damn it!

He comes up empty.

The power goes out. The hall is gray, not dark.

He looks left, frantic, then right. His breathing is shallow and sputtering, like he is trying for quiet but just can't manage it.

He cocks the gun and grasps the door handle.

A darkness forms behind him. Plumes of black smoke engulf his feet. He freezes then hesitantly turns around.

Terror.

Screams a scream that comes not from the gut, but from the soul.

SECOND FLOOR - AROUND THE CORNER

A TEACHER, glowing eyes, hears screams and snarls. An ethereal wail.

He runs to get a look.

FLASH TO:

EXT. SCUMMY BACK ALLEY - NIGHT Druggie John jerks and crumples over into alley filth - dead. INT. JUMBO AIRLINER - COCKPIT - DAY

Pilot John, in mid-chuckle, slumps forward against the controls. Warning sounds beep. The copilot freaks out, wrests control of the jetliner.

CO-PILOT Help! Get in here! John's down! John's down!

INT. THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Drag Queens, dressed Vegas Showgirl style, perform in front of a packed house. They kick in a line.

Drag John steps out from the line, inhales to start singing, and promptly falls face-first onto the stage.

The audience gasps as the performers rush to attend to him.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. PHYSICS SCHOOL - OUTSIDE ROOM 210

The Teacher comes around the corner.

The lights flicker back on.

There is no sign that anything has occurred.

A STUDENT pops out of the room.

STUDENT

Help! Somebody!

The Teacher runs into

ROOM 210

Concerned students gather around the front.

The Teacher breaks through the crowd and stops, shocked. A student performs CPR on an unresponsive Professor John.

INT. PRISON INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Shadow Man smiles as the vitals monitor connected to John Wiltz drones its flatline death tone.

SHADOW MAN

Pity.

He steps back into the darkness.

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bed's a mess. A fertility totem sits on the side table overlooking the book: CONCEPTION FOR IDIOTS.

BATHROOM

Two opened pregnancy test boxes on the counter.

ENTRANCE WAY

Daliya enters the house. Bright disposition, made brighter by the excitement she's trying to conceal.

DALIYA Luke? Sweets, you home?

LUCAS (O.S. FROM BASEMENT) Hey, ya, be right up. You should see the size of the spider down here. It has biceps!

She hangs her jacket. Disappears into the bedroom. LUCAS, husband, 25, comes up from the basement into the:

DINING ROOM

carrying an easel. Sets it down. The painting is of an ancient warrior with a chain whip.

LUCAS What happened? I was starting to worry. Your shift ended two hours ago.

Daliya emerges with the Conception book.

DALIYA Did you think the bad guys got me?

LUCAS

Now that I know you tangle with terrorist kingpins I tend to fret a little, yeah.

DALIYA

What's that? New?

He angles the painting to her.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Whoa! Intense. Get him to kill the spider.

LUCAS

It's taken care of, I manned up. Listen, your mom called. She thinks you might need to talk. Might have trouble dealing, you know?

DALIYA

I have to visit this psych guy at the station for a while. Listen, it was a shocker, but we got him, Luke. We got him.

LUCAS

Wait, what's going on? You're... different. She flashes the Conception for Idiots book at him, then drops it. Maintaining eye contact, she lifts the edge of the table and uses her foot to slide the book under the leg.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Get out...

Her face lights up and she leaps onto him, legs wrapped around his waist, barrage of kisses.

She gazes full on into his eyes, beaming. She nods.

LUCAS (CONT'D) You're kidding...

Eyes clenched shut, huge smile, glee barely contained, she shakes no.

They spin and laugh.

Lucas sets her down, grabs two wine glasses and fills them with a can of soda.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

So what does this mean? You just started the force, do you get maternity leave?

DALIYA

Sure do. Anyway, I was thinking, I don't know if...

LUCAS

Babe, you're going to be a great cop.

DALIYA I just don't fit in, you know? I don't have it in me. I'm small and-And you just took down America's most wanted. Not number five or six. The big fish. You! You did that!

Daliya smiles.

DALIYA

Oh come on, I didn't do anything. His pants were around his ankles and I had a gun.

LUCAS

How's dad going to take it? He finally guilted you into becoming a cop, now you want out.

Daliya's mood dies.

DALIYA

He's on cloud nine. Crap! I hate to break his heart.

LUCAS

Just think on it. The baby and I might feel a little safer with a hero cop in the house watching over us.

Daliya jabs his shoulder.

DALIYA

I can't wait, Luke. I want her here, now. This second, like, right now.

Lucas kisses her forehead.

LUCAS

I hear third time is the charm, or something like that. (MORE)

LUCAS (CONT'D) We'll be filling diaper bags before you know it.

DALIYA

Promise me. Promise me this time everything will be all right.

LUCAS

I can promise I'd give my own life to see our baby happy and healthy.

MONTAGE

Lucas rolls Daliya in a wheelchair at breakneck speed through the hospital.

Daliya in labor.

The first cry of their newborn. Emotion chokes the new parents.

Lucas films Daliya holding their newborn (SARAH) in the delivery room.

Feeding.

Lucas blowing bubbles for baby.

Baby sleeping on mommy.

Halloween baby costume, a black spider.

Park strolls in autumn.

The images start slow but build up to a frantic pace, until...

END MONTAGE

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - BABY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A crib. A mobile hovers over a sleeping Sarah.

Pull back. Someone standing facing the crib. An arm, a woman's hand, a gun down at her side.

Pull back. From behind we see Daliya just standing there staring at the baby. She's dressed in dark clothes, shirt not tucked.

Camera POV. Someone moves through the house, down the hall, approaches her from behind.

DALIYA

I can't do it.

LUCAS (O.C.) I think it's time.

Lucas touches her shoulder, gently.

Daliya puts her free hand on his and smiles sadly.

Lucas holds up her belt, waits while she tucks in her police officer's shirt. She straps on the belt and holsters her weapon.

DALIYA

Maybe I should just quit. Stay home with her.

Lucas smirks.

LUCAS

Sure, ok. Anyway, I know this place that serves the best food stamps in town.

DALIYA

Fine, I know. How did I get stuck being the bread winner while you get to be stay-at-home dad? First, I played my cards right. Second, that's what you get for marrying an artist. It's really all your fault.

She jabs his shoulder and he scoops her into a hug.

LUCAS (CONT'D) You've had, like, six months off with her and how many months before hand? You're ready, honey. I'm not sure the guys at the precinct are going to recognize you anymore.

DALIYA

My baby needs me. There's the doctor's appointment and-

LUCAS

-and I've got it all under control. Three o'clock at Saint Joseph's General. Doctor Foreskin-

DALIYA

Two o'clock with Doctor Forsythe.

LUCAS

Really? Are you sure?

DALIYA You're going to forget.

LUCAS

Probably.

DALIYA

Say it with me. Two. Oh. Clock.

LUCAS

I got it, I got it. That's today, right?

Daliya sighs, kisses the baby's forehead, grabs her police cap from a dresser, kisses her husband.

DALIYA

It kills me to leave her.

LUCAS

Time to cut the cord, babe.

DALIYA

Over my dead body.

LUCAS

Cut it.

DALIYA How 'bout I cut your cord?

She leaves the room.

LUCAS

Snip snip.

DALIYA (O.S.)

Bite me!

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

Daliya enters to applause by her peers. Fellow officers slap her on the back and squeeze her shoulder.

OFFICER RUDY She's here! Did someone forget to turn off the bat signal?

DALIYA Shut it, Rudy, or I'll shut it for you.

OFFICER RUDY

Little girl all grown up? Finally talking like a cop. Sweetheart, some suds on me. Everybody! Listen up, tonight, I've got first round.

OFFICER PATRICK

Really?

OFFICER RUDY No, you kidding? I've got two bucks and lint until next Thursday.

OFFICER PATRICK Look at that, I almost thought you were cool.

Patrick leans back and opens the paper.

OFFICER PATRICK (CONT'D) Hey, check this out.

Officer Patrick hands Daliya a broad sheet.

INSERT HEADLINE: CULT TERRORIST DIES IN PRISON.

DALIYA (O.S.) Wiltz? What happened?

OFFICER PATRICK Maybe he refused to pick up the soap.

Laughter.

OFFICER PATRICK (CONT'D) Holy crap! Says he died just a couple of days after we took him in. Feds kept it quiet for security reasons. God damn cover up.

OFFICER RUDY Aw, this ain't good. You don't think his posse is gonna wanna express their opinion about this?

DALIYA

I just want to forget about him.

OFFICER RUDY

Tell that to the Chief. He's got you and the press scheduled outside at One Thirty.

DALIYA

Me? Come on. It's my first day back. Can't we just drive around and drink coffee?

POLICE CHIEF steps in and hands her a coffee.

CHIEF

Not today, darlin'. Jack's got your beat. Your only gig is to shine for the S.O.B's holding the cameras.

The Chief pulls her in and kisses her forehead.

Daliya blushes under the mocking glares of her peers.

As the chief leaves:

CHIEF (CONT'D)

And Princess, take that flower out of your hair. You're a cop not a goddam hula dancer.

She frowns and leaves it in.

DALIYA Thanks for the coffee, dad.

CHIEF

Chief.

DALIYA Right. Thanks, Chief.

She adjusts her flower.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

If I'm going to be paraded like a mascot, I'm going to look pretty doing it.

Officer Patrick leans in close, smiles.

OFFICER PATRICK Baby, you've got yummy mommy written all over you.

Daliya frowns.

DALIYA You've got Doritos breath all over you.

Daliya pushes him away. Gets an eyefull of flowers on her desk.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Thanks guys. They're lovely.

OFFICER RUDY Yeah right. We're cops. We can't afford flowers.

Daliya opens the card attached to the vase.

DALIYA

Who then?

INSERT CARD: YOU TAKE MINE, I TAKE YOURS.

Daliya frowns, ponders its meaning, then drops the card in the trash and smells the flowers.

EXT. PRECINCT - LATER

The Chief stands at a podium with Daliya at his side and a handful of officers as entourage.

The swarming press snap shots and call out questions.

CHIEF

John Wiltz is apparently long gone but pieces of the Brotherhood still remain. However, that does not mean we shouldn't celebrate our victories. Anyway, I know you've been itching to get to her so...

The Chief beams and steps aside. The press gets louder as Daliya shyly steps behind the podium.

REPORTER

Betty Star, National News. You are a city hero but you left before we could get your story. So, what's it like? Has your life changed at all?

DALIYA

I'm no more a hero than any of the other men and women brave enough to wear a badge.

REPORTER#2

What was it like to put a bullet in America's most wanted? To kill the most dangerous man on the planet?

A brief pause.

DALIYA

Wiltz was a dangerous man, but I would have preferred he lived to face justice.

SIRENS.

Three squad cars race past with lights going wild.

Officer Rudy's walkie-talkie gets a call from dispatch. He listens and leans in to tell the Chief something.

The Chief grabs the podium mic.

CHIEF

That'll be all.

There's confusion about the abrupt halt to the proceedings.

All the officers start heading back into the precinct.

DALIYA

(to Rudy) What's up?

OFFICER RUDY Something big going down at the Hospital on Clyde.

DALIYA Whoa, what hospital?

OFFICER RUDY Saint Joseph's.

Daliya's eyes go wide. She pulls her cell out and checks the time.

One fifty-nine turns to two o'clock.

She goes into a stupor. Sirens, the press, the chief calling out to officers, it's all a swirling blur.

OFFICER RUDY (CONT'D) Hey, you ok?

DALIYA (to nobody) My baby...

She bolts around the building to a

PARKING LOT

She hops in a squad car and peels out of the lot.

INT. SQUAD CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

She weaves in and out of traffic. Hops a curb.

She tries to dial her cell but drops it on the floor.

DALIYA

Damn it!

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Daliya's car squeals into the lot, hops a curb, drives over grass, and careens into a picnic table.

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sudden stop. Head smashes into steering wheel. She groans, woozy.

Her door opens. SHADOW MAN gently extends his hand to help her out.

SHADOW MAN That was quite an entrance.

Daliya ignores his hand and exits the car, one hand pressed against a sore head.

She emerges into a scene of chaos. Police have erected barricades and are setting up behind a wall of squad cars.

People run screaming from the hospital. Machine gun fire comes from inside.

Several hospital windows shatter outward.

DALIYA

What's happening in there? Are you a doctor?

He flashes her an unreadable smile, seems way too calm.

SHADOW MAN

I delight in helping the fallen.

DALIYA What? What's going on?

SHADOW MAN

A lot of shooting, it seems.

A woman flies out of the hospital but gunfire from inside takes her down.

Daliya draws her gun, takes a step. Shadow Man gently puts his hand on her arm.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Catch you later?

Daliya shrugs off his touch, pushes past the barricades and darts toward the hospital entrance.

Shadow Man watches her go. Smells the hand that touched her. The scent is sublime.

Daliya puts her shoulder to the wall right around the corner from the entrance.

The gunfire stops.

The revolving hospital door starts to turn. She trains her gun on the door, and waits.

It turns, turns and... a S.W.A.T. team member emerges, waving his arms to signal a vehicle.

More S.W.A.T. team members exit the hospital escorting TOMMY WILTZ, bald head with a skull tattoo. He doesn't seem to mind being caught.

Tommy catches sight of Daliya. He perks up, smiles, exuberant. Something between his teeth - a remote.

He bites down on it.

BEEP.

Daliya gazes horrified at the entrance. She takes one step. BOOM!

The hospital explodes.

She's thrown back.

Tommy is mashed head first into the asphalt.

Fire and smoke. Sound collapses into a droning hum. Daliya is stunned and can't stand up despite her best effort.

Her hand comes away from her stomach covered in bloody gore. A crater where her navel used to be.

She's blacking out, but before she does she catches a glimpse of Shadow Man standing nearby, smiling at her.

Her eyes close.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The trees in the front yard squeak under heavy gusts. A squirrel's bright pupils cut through the pitch.

Clouds race by unnaturally fast. The world seems like an overexposed photo.

The house is dark save for a tiny glow in the bedroom.

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daliya, on her side of the bed, stares at the ceiling. A framed photo of Lucas is on the unused pillow beside her.

The clock shows 10:30.

She shifts restlessly.

Frustration. Her face contorts in sad agony. She gasps and collects herself.

LATER

The clock turns from 1:59 to 2:00. She stares dumbly at it.

She whips open the bedside table and with trembling hands gobbles some pills.

EXT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Cold. Gray. Overexposed.

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - BABY'S ROOM - DAY

Daliya stands stone-faced looking at an empty crib. She holds her pistol at her side.

Bam Bam Bam...

Pounding at the front door startles her.

OFFICER RUDY (O.S.) Dal, you in there?

OFFICER PATRICK (O.S.) Where else could she be? We gotta find her. 29.

OFFICER RUDY (O.S.) Open up, sweetheart. Let's talk. We're worried.

OFFICER PATRICK (O.S.) Should we break in?

OFFICER RUDY (O.S.) Nah. Maybe she went up state to her mom's, or something. I'll get the number. (hollers)

All right, if you're in there we'll be back tomorrow. Hang in there, will ya.

Outside TWO CAR DOORS CLOSE and the vehicle drives off.

The clock reads 1:50.

She brings the gun up and under her chin. She closes her eyes, exhales.

Her trigger finger tightens.

Creeeeak...

Her eyes pop open. She aims her gun across the room.

Shadow Man sits in a rocking chair, stares at her, waits without a word.

DALIYA

Who... how did you get in here?

He doesn't answer, he simply watches her, mute amusement on his face. He rocks, back and forth... back... forth... creak... creak...

> DALIYA (CONT'D) You've got ten seconds before I blow your face off.

The chair manages one last creak and stops. His voice is smooth, sinuous.

SHADOW MAN

Don't mind me. Please, continue. I didn't mean to interrupt.

DALIYA

Five seconds.

SHADOW MAN

Your friends miss you.

He flips the curtain open just enough so that a muted scar of light slices the gloom and draws a line down Daliya's face. He releases the curtain.

> SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Losing one's family can drive anyone over the edge. Have you... driven over the edge?

Daliya's mouth twitches as she tries to contain her misery. Shadow Man smirks.

Click. Daliya thumbs the hammer on the gun.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) I can help you.

DALIYA

Can you bring my family back?

SHADOW MAN

No, of course not. They mean nothing to me. I'm more interested in you, my dear.

DALIYA

Time's up.

She readies to shoot.

He stands calmly with his hands clasped respectfully in front of him.

SHADOW MAN

I can perhaps help <u>you</u> bring them back.

Daliya pauses, tries to work out what he just said.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Would you like to see your husband again?

Daliya lowers the gun a bit, and nods slightly. Her lip trembles.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Sorry, what was that?

DALIYA

(weakly)

Yes.

SHADOW MAN

Good, good. And would you like to see your baby again?

Daliya's hand covers her face as she bursts into tears. She drops to her knees and sobs.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Of course you would. Your agony is palpable. It's not fair, not fair at all.

He caresses her cheek. She calms.

DALIYA How? I'll do anything. Help me get my baby back. He smiles and sits back down in the rocking chair. Creak... creak...

SHADOW MAN

I'll tell you how, but first you know what you must do.

Creak... creak. The sound of the chair seems amplified, dizzying.

DALIYA What? What do you mean?

Creak... creak...

Shadow Man doesn't say another word. His intense eyes burrow into her soul.

Creak... creak... She's dizzy, disoriented.

Daliya stands, unsure. It's all too much and she gives in to her hopelessness. She glances at the clock.

1:59 turns to 2:00.

She brings the gun to her head.

DALIYA (CONT'D) I'm coming baby.

Shadow Man smiles.

She closes her eyes.

BANG.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - BABY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The gun is still pointed at Daliya's head. Her eyes open. Everything is blurry, then sharpens. Things are the same, but different. The clock flashes 12:00. The cute stuffed toys from the mobile are gone leaving the strings dangling pointlessly.

Creak... creak...

Shadow Man still rocks back and forth. He stops. Grins.

SHADOW MAN

Splendid.

Daliya stares at the gun and feels her head.

DALIYA

But...

Shadow Man stands, steps toward her. Takes her hand and places something in it.

SHADOW MAN

A keepsake.

She opens her hand. A bullet smeared with blood.

DALIYA

I want my baby. You said-

SHADOW MAN

-well that's up to you now. I have brought you to the forest, now you must search the bushes.

DALIYA

I don't understand.

SHADOW MAN

I've done my part. The game begins.

DALIYA

You haven't done anything! Where's my-

SHADOW MAN

-Games are the only things that can amuse a man of my... stature. Would you like to play? Because if not, I fear you don't get a do over.

Daliya nods.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Look down.

Daliya looks down but doesn't see anything.

Shadow Man smiles, turns on a small flashlight and points it at her abdomen. A translucent "umbilical" cord hangs from her and leads out of the bedroom.

> SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Find her, and return to your happy home. Lose her, and both of you will die in all worlds. Endlessly, until the very universe itself cannot remember the existence of your DNA.

DALIYA

All worlds? What does that mean?

SHADOW MAN

As long as there is man-made light, you are invisible to the residents of this place. You'll want to avoid them.

DALIYA

At the end of this cord...

Shadow Man smiles and nods once, slowly.

SHADOW MAN

Good luck.
Daliya snatches the flashlight from him and frantically illuminates the cord spilling from her. She follows it to the door.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Oh, my dear, one more thing.

Daliya turns back.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) You remember Tommy, the mean man who bombed the hospital? He also has a cord that leads to your baby. To live again, he must kill her.

Daliya gasps.

DALIYA

You're helping a madman? You want him to kill my baby!?

SHADOW MAN

I choose those who work for justice but suffer injustice.

DALIYA

He's a monster!

SHADOW MAN

He's got a different perspective.

They stand, eyes locked.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D)

Tick tock.

Daliya bolts from the bedroom.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) (hollers) Careful you don't cut the cord.

HALLWAY

She runs, small flashlight illuminating almost nothing in the dark corridor which stretches abnormally long.

Shadow Man stands in the Baby's bedroom doorway watching her leave.

Down the stairs, out the front door and suddenly she's at the...

EXT. CEMETERY - TWILIGHT

Daliya stops, stunned, breathing heavily. She spins. Her house is nowhere to be seen. She is too scared to move.

Her hand drifts to her head, she feels a bullet hole in her skull. She's able to put her finger inside. She gags.

There are skittering noises. Whispers. Distant screams. She considers the flashlight and deliberately shines the light on herself.

She continues forward, past trees and grave plots. She crests a hill and looks down a slope to a funeral in progress. Their backs are to her.

She moves closer, one timid step at a time.

SNAP.

She steps on a twig. One of the attendees checks behind him. His eyes are bright pinpricks of light.

She freezes. Seconds pass as it seems the man is staring at her, but he turns back as though he hadn't seen her at all.

She swallows and creeps closer. She looks inside the open casket.

It's her.

All the attendees have glowing eyes. Rudy is there with a bunch of officers including the Chief.

The priest finishes. The casket closes. As it shuts, thunder rumbles. Everyone begins to leave.

She spots Lucas, but he doesn't have baby Sarah. She checks her cord, it doesn't lead to him.

DALIYA

Luke?

He doesn't seem to hear her. She speaks louder.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Luke, it's me. Luke, baby, where's Sarah?

Lucas stops and looks behind him but can't see anything.

She waves the flashlight in his face. He still doesn't see her. She flicks off the flashlight, distraught.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

You promised!

Lucas perks up. He still can't see her.

LUCAS

Hello?

Daliya's eyes go wide with hope.

DALIYA

Lucas, it's me. Can you hear me?

LUCAS

Dal? Jesus! Dal?

He returns to the grave site. Drops to his knees.

DALIYA

Ya, ya, yes. Babe, it's me. I don't have much time.

Snarls and slavering sounds from somewhere nearby.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Where is Sarah? I need your help to find Sarah.

LUCAS What? Sarah's gone. She was lost in the hospital explosion.

DALIYA No, no. I have to find her quick. I need your help.

Something malevolent is getting closer... closer. A grisly wail. She remembers to flick on the flashlight at the last second. Terrified.

Something invisible disturbs the grass nearby. She waits, unable to utter a sound.

LUCAS

Daliya?

Daliya trembles, breath caught.

DALIYA

Shhhhh...

Lucas frowns, shakes his head like he's crazy, then leaves. Daliya wants to call out to him but is afraid whatever is beside her might hear her.

Moments later the sounds vanish, but so has Lucas.

She's alone.

She takes the cord in her hand and breathes out long and slow to collect herself. She takes a step right into Shadow Man. The startle is severe, she shrieks.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

Why was I in that casket? How come Lucas is alive? He says Sarah is dead, that she's gone.

SHADOW MAN

This is not the world you came from. It is the world you remember. Same, but different. Alternate worlds have alternate realities. Your Lucas is an echo, of sorts.

DALIYA

Can you help me?

SHADOW MAN

There is no fun in that. I do, however, want to enjoy this, so try not to die so fast. You came quite close.

DALIYA

Death might have been better than this.

SHADOW MAN

If you don't care for your child, simply cut your cord.

DALIYA

Never.

SHADOW MAN

You remember John? The big, bad terrorist you arrested? Leader of the Brotherhood? He played this game. All he had to do was kill the version of himself he found in this world.

DALIYA What happened?

SHADOW MAN John lost his flashlight.

Daliya swallows.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) A most horrible death, here and in all worlds. Would you like baby Sarah to perish an infinite number of times?

DALIYA

No.

Shadow Man gently angles her flashlight directly at her.

SHADOW MAN

Then be careful.

She nods.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D)

Tick tock.

Daliya quickly follows her cord. Shadow Man remains in the darkness watching her go.

The arching cemetery gate is ahead, and so are the funeral attendees who are leaving. She walks through the crowd, seriously freaked out at their glowing eyes.

Lucas leans against an entrance pillar. He's shaky with emotion. He lights a cigarette, takes a trembling drag and angrily whips the butt away. He passes under the arch.

> DALIYA (under her breath) Lucas...

She trots to catch up to him, comes to the arching cemetery gate, goes through and emerges in the:

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Daliya is once again not prepared for the sudden shift of location.

The half-collapsed hospital in the distance still has sections on fire. Police barricades are still erected but there is nobody around.

DALIYA No! Lucas? Honey?

She covers her face, half-mad with frustration and grief.

Daliya spots her squad car still embedded in the picnic table.

She shines her light in the window and opens the door. It squeaks.

She pops the trunk. It's filled with standard police equipment: weapons, cones, etc.

She finds a big police flashlight, tests it and tosses the small one away. Next comes a rifle which she slings over her shoulder.

She peers across the parking lot. The hospital's husk resembles the gaping fiery maw of a monster.

Oddly, some of the trees on hospital grounds are still in flame.

She approaches the building warily. It's quiet. Deserted?

She stops at the corner where she had earlier aimed her gun at the revolving doors. The revolving door, with shattered glass and warped metal frame, rotates slowly, by itself.

> DALIYA (CONT'D) Hello? I'm looking for my daughter. Is somebody in there?

No answer.

INT. HOSPITAL - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Daliya weaves through hanging rubble and steps around burning debris.

She freezes when out of nowhere a MAINTENANCE MAN with glowing eyes pushes a mop and bucket in front of her and out of sight.

She works up some courage, makes sure the flashlight is pointed straight at her.

DALIYA

Hello? Can you help me?

She listens and hears only her own echo.

She finds a light switch, tries it. Lights come on momentarily but then go out again with a shower of sparks.

She sets her flashlight down on a table, standing so that the handle is up and the lens is flat against the surface. The light is choked. She takes her rifle and checks its ammunition.

> DALIYA (CONT'D) Hello? Somebody answer me!

She swoons dizzily. Grasps her face. She remembers:

OFFICER RUDY (V.O.)(FLASHBACK) I wouldn't be downing corner store sludge all night. That black ooze unclogs the plumbing.

She inhales to clear her head.

The shadow behind her moves, flows thickly down the wall like black ooze. Eyes open. It takes the shape of a head with a gaping-wide mouth ready to swallow her. A heartbeat before it strikes she slings the rifle back over her shoulder and picks up the flashlight. When she does, the ooze vanishes.

She has no idea it was there.

CORRIDOR

A maze. Some passages lead into murky darkness, others are half collapsed from the explosion. But everywhere there are flaming spouts, even in places that don't seem to make sense. Flaming, but not burning.

She stops, wonders where to go. She remembers her cord. She follows it. It leads around a corner. When she is about to turn the corner:

BING.

A quick peek around, it's an elevator. She nervously waits for the doors to open. When they do, extreme light spills out.

She ducks back around the corner.

There is strange clicking and rattling. She hears the elevator close.

The sounds come closer. She grips her rifle.

Closer, closer, the hallway becoming brighter with shuffling rattles.

Daliya leaps out, aims her gun and shoots, blinded by lights.

Sparks and shattering glass.

When her eyes adjust she sees MORT, 30ish (normal eyes), draped in LEDs, flashlights, glowsticks and basically anything else that can create light. Mort is stunned.

MORT Christ, Lady! You took out my shoulder light. Damn! And a piece of my shoulder!

DALIYA

You... you can see me. Your eyes...

MORT Yeah, my eyes. Put that thing away, will you?

Daliya lowers the gun.

DALIYA

Oh god, I almost killed you.

MORT

Ha ha. Good one. Ohhh, wait. You're new here aren't you. Bet you don't even know yet.

DALIYA I, no, I don't have a clue what the heck is going on.

MORT

Heck? Well, the first thing you have to realize is that we're dead. You and me, heck, we're gonners.

DALIYA

Listen, I'm sorry about the gun shot, but I just need to find my baby. So if you'll excuse me.

MORT

Ah. Still playing along, are you?

DALIYA

Well, yeah. That's why I'm here. What are you doing here?

Mort presses his stomach.

MORT

C'mon. I'm starving.

DALIYA

I've got to-

MORT

What? Find your kid at the end of the cord? That cord will wind its way through every corner of this place before that happens. More...

He does air quotes.

MORT (CONT'D)

... entertainment value.

CAFETERIA

Inches of water on the floor. Showers of sparks. Electrical cords flashing in the pools.

DALIYA Are you insane? We can't go in there. We'll fry!

Mort frowns.

MORT

Are you hard of hearing?

Mort splashes to a frazzled electrical cord. He slowly reaches for it while watching Daliya's reaction. He smiles and grabs it. He shakes and rattles wildly with a gut wrenching scream. Daliya screams along.

He drops the cord and chuckles.

MORT (CONT'D) I told you, we're already dead. Accept it and move on.

DALIYA You're an idiot. You didn't feel anything?

MORT

Oh, I felt it, all right. Fucking sucked. But whatever, it gives a cool rush.

He examines his flashlight outfit. Disappointed. Most of the bulbs have exploded.

MORT (CONT'D) Crap! I didn't really think that through, did I? Let's get a move on. After lunch I need to shop for more bulbs.

Mort heads into the:

KITCHEN

Broken faucets spray water across the room. He opens a dark fridge and grabs some sandwich meat. Smells it. Flinches. Shrugs. Shoves it in his mouth.

> DALIYA Why are you eating if you're dead?

MORT I like to eat. So, what you in for?

DALIYA

You first.

MORT I killed a few guys.

DALIYA

A few?

MORT

Ten. They fired my Pa for taking a day off work when my ma died.

DALIYA

They can't do that.

MORT

They could in 1869. Yeah, I've been here a while.

DALIYA

Can't you just, I don't know, play the game? What's at the end of your cord?

MORT

Doesn't matter. I stopped playing the game a long time ago. I yanked the cord out and started (air quotes) living here. It's not so bad once

you get used to it. What about you?

DALIYA

A nut case blew up this hospital to kill my family.

MORT And who put that hole in your head?

Her hand drifts to the wound.

DALIYA

I...

Mort nods.

MORT

No worries, I get it. But why are you here? The players are always folks who seek justice. What was your thing?

DALIYA

I was a cop.

MORT

Hmm. You aren't very cop-like. Got some nice firepower there, though. Might as well chuck it, ain't no use.

DALIYA

Are there more people here? Real people, like us?

MORT

Sure. Some of them come from real wacky places, too. One guy said his whole world is owned by robots. Another one said the president was a black guy.

DALIYA

What? That one, what did he look like?

MORT

I dunno, bald. Picture of a skeleton head right here.

Mort points to his forehead, stuffs more meat in his mouth and speaks while chewing.

MORT (CONT'D)

He didn't say too much. Following his cord like...

DALIYA His name. What was his name?

MORT Aw man. Um, Jimmy? Toby?

DALIYA

Tommy?

MORT

Bingo.

Frantic, Daliya splashes toward the cafeteria exit.

MORT (CONT'D) Ok, see ya. Take the elevator to the fourth floor. That's the kids' ward.

He watches Daliya leave. Shakes his head and chuckles.

MORT (CONT'D) Whatever. Screw the games. Screw the cord. Grip it and rip it.

SHADOW MAN (O.S.) But then, you were always a huge disappointment.

Shadow Man is suddenly standing next to Mort watching Daliya go. Mort stuffs more meat in his mouth. Talks with his mouth full.

> MORT I like her. I think she might get her kid back.

SHADOW MAN

That would be... boring. Perhaps it's time to spice things up.

MORT

You rig your games? Lame. And evil. Be honest, you the devil?

Shadow Man walks to the exit, and turns.

SHADOW MAN He wouldn't give either of them a chance. (grins) I'm a softy.

NEAR ELEVATOR

Daliya waits as the doors open, but she hesitates to enter. Her cord leads elsewhere.

She lets the doors close and follows the cord around the corner, through some other doors.

GROUND LEVEL - STAIRS TO SECOND LEVEL

Daliya gazes upward at the crumbly stairs. She ascends while tucking her flashlight into her belt and grasping her rifle.

Pieces of the stairs crack away. Near the top she has to leap over a gap. She thinks she lands safely on the other side, but one more step and she drops with a shriek.

She hangs by her fingertips.

DALIYA

Mort! Mort, can you hear me?

She manages a peek down, it's a long drop.

She looks back up. Tommy looms above her.

TOMMY We meet again, Peaches. Hang out here much?

Daliya doesn't respond.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Well, listen. I had all this stuff I wanted to say to you about how you killed my brother, and all. But, I've got a little bundle of joy I've gotta play with. So, I don't know... take care.

Tommy smirks and stomps on Daliya's fingers. She yelps.

DALIYA

He would have killed me!

TOMMY

Well, what kind of brother would I be if I didn't lend him a hand with that?

Tommy is briefly overcome with grief.

TOMMY (CONT'D) You get my drift.

He stomps her fingers again and again.

She lets go and falls to

GROUND LEVEL

impaling herself on a long metal spear of debris. She lays there, still. Tommy spits on her. He illuminates his cord with a flashlight and walks off.

Daliya finally chokes and gasps. Staring straight up at the many levels of mezzanine above her.

Shadow Man comes into her field of vision.

SHADOW MAN

Is that it then? Is the game over?

Mort comes into her field of vision.

MORT

Give her a break, will ya? Officer down, not officer dead. Well, you are dead but, nevermind, just get up.

Daliya grasps the spear but the pain is too much.

SHADOW MAN

(to Mort) Give me your knife.

MORT

It's a machete.

Mort hands it over.

Shadow Man slices off one of Mort's arms. Mort wails.

MORT (CONT'D) What the fuck!

SHADOW MAN

(to Daliya)

He's dead, he cannot die. You are dead, you cannot die. Watching you lay here is boring. Perhaps I shall give Tommy's cord a direct route to baby Sarah so I can start a new, more interesting contest.

DALIYA

No, please don't. Please don't do this to me.

SHADOW MAN

Tick tock.

Daliya digs deep and stands, screaming. She cannot pull the spear out so she runs straight at the wall, pushing the spear out her back.

Mort forgets about his own pain and stands there, one-armed, wincing at the sight of Daliya.

Daliya catches her breath on one knee. Mort helps her stand.

She winces, puts her hand in her stomach wound all the way up to the wrist, pulls out metal shards.

MORT

Lady, that was bad ass.

She gestures to Mort's missing arm.

DALIYA

You okay?

MORT My Macarena days are over.

DALIYA Come with me. I need your help. I can't-

SHADOW MAN

Tut tut tut. This time you have no back up. No Officer Rudy to make the arrest. It's all up to you.

MORT

Sorry, Missy. Take this.

He snatches the machete from Shadow Man and holds it out to her.

Daliya ignores it and grabs her gun. She picks up her flashlight but it busted in the fall. She yanks a glowstick off of Mort and wraps it around her wrist like a bracelet.

DALIYA

Fourth floor?

Mort nods.

Daliya glares at Shadow Man then hobbles back up the stairs.

Mort casts a hateful glance at Shadow man, who watches Daliya go.

MORT Oh, snap. You're getting sweet on her, aren't you? That's just wrong, man. Wrong.

Shadow Man doesn't take his eyes off of her.

SHADOW MAN I think I... that she...

MORT You are messed up, buddy.

Mort rattles as he leaves, shaking his head in disbelief.

SECOND LEVEL

Daliya makes to continue up to level three but her cord tightens, wanting to lead her deeper into the second level. She stays on the level and creeps down the

SECOND LEVEL CORRIDOR

DALIYA Tommy! Don't you dare touch my daughter!

She swoons dizzily. Hand to head. Squints.

INT. DALIYA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Daliya sees the painting of a warrior on Lucas' easel.

DALIYA Whoa! Intense. Get him to kill the spider.

BACK TO SCENE

Daliya shrugs it off. She follows her cord more quickly now, down halls, around corners, more halls.

She notices her glowstick go dim, and then out. She shakes it, then tosses it away. Another corner then:

BAM!

She smashes into something big and tumbles backward onto the floor.

Before her stands a massive, muscled semi-masked WARRIOR, like in Lucas' painting. Chains slither around his torso like serpents. They randomly surge outward and smash the walls and ceiling.

Daliya scrambles to her feet to flee.

Warrior grasps a slithering chain and flicks it like a whip, snaring her ankle.

Daliya face-plants on the floor. Warrior pulls her closer.

Daliya fires her rifle at the chain. It shatters, releases her.

Warrior roars. The serpent chains spiral madly, smash the corridor to bits.

Daliya runs, crying. The sounds of the Warrior follow but fade away.

She slows and stops to catch her breath.

Dizzy. Swoons.

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

DALIYA You are one sick puppy.

Rudy howls like a wolf and chuckles.

BACK TO SCENE

DALIYA (CONT'D)

No...

Growls are far off but getting closer.

Daliya jumps up and runs, panicked, looking for light switches or anything that lights up.

The ceiling morphs into black veins, skeletal bits, spider webs which slowly replace the walls and floor. Soon she squishes with each foot step.

She turns the corner. At the end of the hall is a crib.

Behind her a grotesque SLIME WOLF steps into view. They lock eyes.

Daliya makes a break for the crib, the wolf chases.

She trips and slides several yards on the floor coated in what seems like black, clotted blood.

The wolf leaps.

Daliya notices her watch and presses the LIGHT BUTTON close to her face. The wolf vanishes.

Trembling, she half crawls and half slides to the crib. She takes the CHILD and hugs her as best she can. Wraps her in a blanket. She cries her relief.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Baby, I'm so sorry. Mommy's here, Sweetie. Everything's going to be all right. We have to go. Daliya, carries the child down an adjacent corridor.

Dizzy. Swoons.

LUCAS (V.O.) (FLASHBACK) Hey, ya, be right up. You should see the size of the spider down here. It has biceps!

BACK TO SCENE

DALIYA No! No more! I have her. I want to go home. Hello?

SHADOW MAN (O.S.) Find your child.

Daliya can hear him, but not see him.

DALIYA I have her, I'm ready to go.

No response.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Dammit! You promised!

Growling behind her.

She shifts her child to press her watch, but it's covered in black ooze. She tries to wipe it off but it just smears.

Down the hall she sees an elevator. Behind her, not just one Slime Wolf, three of them.

She runs, they chase. She skids at the last second and presses the button to call the elevator, it lights up and she cozies her face next to it. The beasts vanish.

Something's not right. She examines Sarah. The clothes are there, but Sarah is invisible.

DALIYA (CONT'D) Sarah? Baby?

The elevator dings its arrival. The button's light goes dark. Sarah's body materializes. The child's head spins 180 degrees and her hair opens to reveal a giant eyeball.

Daliya screams and chucks the beast away from her. The eyeball extends hairy spider legs and leaps at her. Daliya whips the rifle off her shoulder and

Kablaam!

The SPIDER BABY hobbles around, shrieks, spurts gunk.

The elevator doors open and Daliya rolls in. She presses Ground.

GROUND FLOOR - LOBBY

The doors open. She bolts for the exit.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Things leap from everywhere to chase her. Spidery things, slime wolves, snakes, etc.

The squad car is ahead. An army of loping, snarling, sliding monstrosities gain on her.

She gets in and slams the door.

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

She fumbles with keys as things smash into the vehicle.

DALIYA

Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my God!

The car starts. She flicks on the reds and blues, the interior lights and the head lights. The creatures vanish.

A slime wolf on the hood peers at her and slowly fades, grinning wickedly as it goes.

She waits in the silence, her breaths shaky. Terrified to move.

Clap clap clap.

Daliya nearly jumps out of her skin.

Shadow Man does a slow clap from the passenger seat.

SHADOW MAN

That was... wow. You really messed up there, and yet still somehow survived. Intoxicating.

DALIYA

You bastard! Where's my baby? That wasn't Sarah! Where is she?

SHADOW MAN

I did nothing wrong. I told you she'd be at the end of your cord.

DALIYA

But-

SHADOW MAN

Listen, I like you. Quite a lot, actually. That last bit was really quite fun. It seems you're much more interesting when under a little pressure.

DALIYA

(exasperated) A little pressure?

SHADOW MAN

You are certainly no good to me way out here when the interesting stuff happens way over there. So I've decided that maybe I'd offer you a deal.

DALIYA What kind of deal?

Shadow Man shrugs.

SHADOW MAN

I don't know, maybe I can let you have your baby back. In exchange, you both stay here, with me.

DALIYA

You're mad. I want nothing to do with you.

Shadow Man sighs.

SHADOW MAN

Perhaps you'll come to change your mind. Let me know if you do. My offer stands. But in the meantime, I've decided to raise the stakes just a little.

DALIYA

No, please don't. I can't do it. I just want my baby back. Please help me. I'll do anything.

SHADOW MAN

You're a cop. Of course you can do it. At least you had better. As of this moment, Tommy's cord leads to a room full of explosives. The kind that really make a statement.

DALIYA

You're lying. Hospitals don't just have rooms full of explosives.

SHADOW MAN

If he detonates them, the hospital and Sarah both go boom. You lose, he wins.

Daliya closes her eyes, defeated. Sobs a moment, then takes a deep breath.

Shadow Man studies her.

DALIYA

Get the fuck out of my car.

Surprised, then intrigued, Shadow Man exits the vehicle. He taps on the window. Daliya lowers it. He leans in.

SHADOW MAN

Understand, I am rooting for you. Truly.

Daliya says nothing, just raises the window, catching his fingers. He yanks them out.

Daliya guns the engine and grips the wheel.

She flicks on the police sirens. Shuts them off. Jams a CD into the player and cranks some Adrenaline Rock.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Tires spin and smoke. The car rockets forward and angles directly at the hospital entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The squad car does a General Lee right through the front doors and across the already-wrecked lobby.

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dazed, Daliya's head presses against the steering wheel. She catches a glimpse of her cell phone on the floor and snatches it. She tests its light on her skin, satisfied.

She looks up through the windshield and gasps. Mort's legs are smashed between the car and the wall. His one remaining hand balled into a fist o' pain.

DALIYA

Mort!

She gets out of the car.

LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

DALIYA

Oh my God! Are you-

MORT Yeah, um, your name is Daliya, right?

She nods.

MORT (CONT'D)

Daliya, you suck.

DALIYA

I'm so sorry.

MORT

Well, it's not like I'm going to die, but it hurts like a son of a gun.

Daliya reaches to the ignition to try to start the car. No dice.

DALIYA

It won't-

MORT

-of course it won't. Been here over a hundred years and the minute you show up I lose an arm and two legs.

DALIYA

I'm really sorry, but let's fix this fast because I'm in a hurry.

MORT

Is me being smashed into the wall getting in your way? I'm such an ass. I'm so inconsiderate.

He glances at the machete in his belt. Sighs.

MORT (CONT'D) I can't. You'll have to.

DALIYA

Say what...?

MORT

You kind of owe me.

He hands her the machete.

MORT (CONT'D) Start chopping.

Daliya winces, winds up and swings.

Squelch. Mort screams.

LATER

Mort sits on the ground, one arm and no legs.

Daliya wipes her forehead, smears splatters of Mort's blood. Tosses the machete to the floor beside him.

DALIYA

Sorry. Stay safe.

She makes to depart.

MORT

Hey! You can't just leave me here. I'm basically a foot stool. You're a cop for crying out loud.

Daliya opens her mouth to say something but stops, unsure.

MORT (CONT'D) What? You going to say something, spit it out.

DALIYA

I think... A lot of the things here are... things I remember. The monsters, it's like their springing right out of my head. The Shadow Man, I think he's using my memories against me, I don't think their real.

MORT

What? So this whole place is in your head? The monsters, the hospital, me? That's just the cherry on the cake, isn't it. Now I don't even friggin' exist.

DALIYA

Well, that's the strange part. I've never met you before, so how can he dig you out of my memory?

MORT

Phew, score one for Mort. I exist. Almost makes up for all the craptastic fun I've been having. ELEVATOR - LATER

Daliya's finger presses the button for the fourth floor.

MORT (O.S.) I figure if she had to see a doctor on the fourth floor the day she died, she's gotta be there now. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Daliya grunts as she gets a better grip on Mort, whom she carries like a backpack.

MORT (CONT'D) Right? Hey, you ok down there?

Daliya is focussed on her cord which extends through the crack in the elevator doors.

The floor number turns to three. The cord starts to lower.

DALIYA My cord! It wants me on level three!

MORT Probably another wild goose chase.

DALIYA The elevator will slice it if we keep going up.

She mashes the stop button. The elevator jerks to a stop.

She drops Mort like a sack of potatoes.

MORT C'mon, was that necessary?

DALIYA Help me get the doors open. MORT Ok, just let me get a good grip with my ONE ARM.

Daliya strains to open the doors. They oblige after a good struggle. The elevator is between floors. She slides out and hefts Mort out afterward, settling him on the floor. She breathes heavily.

THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR

DALIYA I can't... I can't carry you any more.

MORT

Fine, leave me here. When my last bulb goes out you'll know by the sound of my soul being devoured.

Daliya sighs at the futility. She undoes her belt. Dangles it in front of Mort.

MORT (CONT'D) I like where this is going.

DALIYA

Grab on.

She tows Mort down the hall. He slides and rolls awkwardly. He has fewer functional lights now, and watches as another pops.

> MORT This is not how I imagined my day would turn out.

> > DALIYA

Ditto.

ANOTHER THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR

Tommy walks past doors numbered 3301, 3302, etc. Flashlight in hand, he follows his cord which suddenly dips beneath a door.

> TOMMY It's about time.

He flings open the door.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Daddy's home!

He looks around, disappointed. No baby Sarah.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Where the hell are you, kid?!

He yanks impatiently on his cord to leave but it's caught under a crate. He goes into the:

PATIENT ROOM

Curiosity gets the better of him. He looks under the lid. They're crammed with sticks of Dynamite.

TOMMY

What the...?

SHADOW MAN (O.S.) You approve?

Tommy whips around. Shadow Man sits casually on an empty patient bed.

TOMMY It's about time you show your face. I've been following this damn cord all over the freaking world. It never ends.

SHADOW MAN

And?

TOMMY And? There's no <u>and</u>. Just stop jerking me around.

Shadow Man's face darkens. He snaps his fingers. The sticks of Dynamite inside the crates morph into bugs and snakes.

SHADOW MAN

I came bearing gifts and you insult me?

TOMMY

Whoa man, I'm sorry. Where the sticks go? Just gimme the sticks and we're square.

Shadow Man seethes at the impudence. He stands and encroaches into Tommy's personal space.

SHADOW MAN

I thought helping you would be entertaining. Perhaps I was wrong. Your lady friend performs well under pressure.

His voice becomes a snarl.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Let's see how well you do.

Tommy closes his eyes as he flinches away from the seething man mere inches from his face. When he opens them, the Shadow Man is gone.

Tommy sneers and spits. Kicks the crates of critters.

TOMMY (mutters) Jerk off. His flashlight flares and shatters. He drops it and sucks blood off his hand.

The flashlight sinks into the box of creepy crawlies. He dips his hand in to save it. Despite frantic attempts to light it up, the flashlight is trash.

Shadow Man's chuckles echo from the outlying halls of the hospital.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Son of a...

He whips the flashlight away and tears out of the room.

CORRIDOR

Tommy runs, always looking back and checking around corners before moving on.

A mop and bucket outside a cleaning closet. He grabs the mop, opens the door to the room and starts grabbing containers, tossing the useless ones aside.

He finds an aerosol and sprays the mop's spongy tendrils. He darts to one of the many fires littering the hospital and hello! - instant torch.

There's a clicking getting closer. Tommy whips his torch around defensively.

At the end of the hall is the Spider Baby. It crawls along the ceiling.

It doesn't see Tommy at first, but then slowly gazes in his direction.

Tommy swallows.

TOMMY

All right. You wanna piece? Come on. This dish is extra spicy. Spider Baby creeps toward him. A little faster, faster. It moves along the wall now, then the floor. It leaps.

Tommy jams the flaming mop in its gaping, toothy maw. Everything stops for a moment. Tommy waits for it to die. Spider Baby snaps the mop with its teeth and swallows the torch unharmed. It sneers pure menace.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Aw hell!

Tommy launches his foot up under its chin with all his might, knocking it back. He races away, turning down one corridor, then the next and the next.

The clicking chases him relentlessly.

He rounds a corner and Daliya hoofs him right between the legs. Tommy crumples, holding his crotch, unable to breathe.

Spider Baby rounds the corner. Leaps. Daliya holds her cell phone light toward the creature and it vanishes.

The flaming mop tendrils plop to the floor.

Daliya draws Mort's machete and steps toward Tommy to finish him off.

DALIYA

Nice to see you again, Tommy.

Tommy moans.

DALIYA (CONT'D) This is going to hurt you more than it hurts me. I don't want to, but it's you or my baby, and I don't give a rat's ass about you.

Mort is propped against the wall nearby.
MORT

Um, Daliya.

DALIYA

Not now.

MORT

You sure?

DALIYA

What!

Mort points behind her.

She sees the burning mop laying on top of her umbilical cord. It sizzles and snaps, curling up like a singed hair.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

No!

She dives and tries to grasp the detached ends. She clutches them but they dissolve into nothingness.

She sits in a quiet stupor. Tears flow.

MORT

Crappy.

Daliya takes the machete and stalks back to Tommy. She grabs his hair and pulls his head back to expose his throat.

TOMMY

Wait! Don't!

DALIYA Give me one reason.

TOMMY

Because you're a cop, man. Lady. You know what I mean.

DALIYA

A better reason.

TOMMY

I'll help you find your kid.

DALIYA You help me? You want to kill her.

TOMMY

Listen. If I don't find a light, those things are gonna rip me apart. I still have the cord. I can lead you to her.

DALIYA You're the reason we're here!

TOMMY I can't fix that now.

DALIYA

And when we find her, what happens? When I take her, you'll die anyway.

TOMMY Later is a lot better than now. The jerk off that's playin' us, maybe he's lying, you know?

Daliya checks with Mort. Mort shrugs.

MORT

He might have a point. There's a rule I go by - never trust a guy who chops your arm off. But I do know that our lights won't last forever.

One of Mort's lights goes dim as if on cue.

MORT (CONT'D) And he does have the cord.

Daliya releases Tommy and stands back. She gestures with her machete.

DALIYA Fine. You carry Mort. Do something stupid and I'll end you. Tommy kneels to get a grasp of Mort.

TOMMY (to Mort) Bitch is hardcore.

MORT Tell me about it. She downsized me.

INT. HOSPITAL - THIRD FLOOR MEZZANINE

Tommy carries Mort like a backpack. Daliya follows with the machete in one hand, her cell phone in the other.

TOMMY He's playin' us and I don't like to be played.

DALIYA Maybe you should have thought about that before you killed my baby.

Tommy spins around to face her.

TOMMY You killed my brother!

A momentary silence as they stare each other down.

DALIYA Your brother was a terrorist.

Tommy scoffs and turns back around, continues their trek.

TOMMY

That's what you call us. But we're at war with the man behind the curtain. The secret societies that run the country and keep all us lowlives as ignorant slaves.

DALIYA

And to hurt the man you have to bomb hospitals?

TOMMY Collateral damage.

STAIRWELL TO FOURTH FLOOR

They begin their climb.

TOMMY

Listen, I don't care if you believe in the wizard. I'll wreck anything or anybody who gets in my way.

DALIYA

And here, if you win, what did he promise you?

Tommy climbs the last step to the fourth floor, turns and glares down at Daliya.

TOMMY That I can get my life back. My brother too.

Daliya's stunned.

DALIYA You know I can't let that happen.

TOMMY Honestly, I don't see how you can stop me.

Tommy slams his foot in her chest and she flies backward down the stairs, landing hard.

Mort, who faces the other way and can't see what's going on, squirms to get a look.

MORT Hey, what's up back there? What's going on?

TOMMY

Change of plans, stumpy.

Tommy spins and bolts into the bowels of the fourth floor with Mort and his lights.

BOTTOM OF STAIRS

Daliya lays in a crumpled heap, head smashed into the wall, neck crammed at an awkward angle. Her eyes are closed, slight whimpers slip from her mouth.

SERIES OF SHOTS (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Quick flashes of:

1) Machete at Tommy's throat.

2) Spider baby attacking her.

3) Squad car crashing into hospital

4) Mort being electrocuted in the cafeteria.

5) Daliya holding a gun to her own head.

6) John Wiltz on toilet "You're dead."

Flashes slow down.

7) With Lucas drinking wine,

LUCAS

Just think on it. The baby and I might feel a little safer with a hero cop in the house watching over us.

8) In baby Sarah's room:

DALIYA It kills me to leave her.

LUCAS Time to cut the cord, babe.

DALIYA Over my dead body.

LUCAS

Cut it.

How 'bout I cut your cord?

She leaves the room.

LUCAS

Snip snip.

Close up of Daliya's mouth uttering:

DALIYA

Bite me!

END DREAM SEQUENCE

STAIRWELL

Daliya stirs. Massive jolts of pain wrack her tiny body but she forces herself to her feet.

Behind her, slow clapping.

She turns to see Shadow Man.

DALIYA You can't slow clap twice. It's cheesy.

SHADOW MAN So small, so dainty. You get knocked down how many times? Yet you get back up. Incredible.

Daliya spits blood, swallows her pain.

DALIYA

Bite me.

She moves up the stairs as fast as her tortured body can manage.

Shadow Man watches her go. A wistful stare as she leaves.

SHADOW MAN

Splendid.

FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR

Daliya leans against a wall to catch her breath between jolts of rib pain.

She glances at her cell phone, the battery is flashing its last bar. She exhales her dismay. She chooses a corridor at random.

She holds the light of her cell phone against her cheek and ventures forth but... the cell dies. She shakes it and taps it, but it's done.

She launches it down the hall in anger.

The phone skids to a halt. A slimy wolf leg steps into view beside it. A low, rumbling growl.

Daliya stops in her tracks at the sound that travels the corridor clear as crystal. Without looking back, she runs.

GIFT SHOP

Daliya frantically enters and looks around for things to pile in front of the door. A chair. A display table.

She searches. Picks up a solar calculator, tosses it. Various stuffed toys, tosses them.

She finally sees a display with a toy plasma sphere. The box beside it shows lightning flaring against the inside of the glass. She looks, finds batteries, rips the package open.

Her fingers tremble as she tries to jam them in. She's down to the last battery when she hears a tapping on the outside of the gift shop window. She looks up.

It's the Chief.

DALIYA

Dad?

CHIEF Sweetie, it's not safe here. We have to go.

Daliya takes a few steps toward the window, unsure.

DALIYA What... what are you doing here?

CHIEF Do you think for one second I'd let my baby doll go through all this... alone?

DALIYA

But... how?

CHIEF Does it matter? Now come on. Clear the door and let's go before it's too late.

Daliya moves to the window and presses her hand where the Chief's hand is.

DALIYA

Dad, I'm sorry. I'm, I'm not cut out to be a cop. I'm not like you. Can you forgive me?

The Chief looks annoyed.

CHIEF Yes, yes, that's fine. Whatever you want. Let's just get out of here.

DALIYA

I love you, dad.

With that she backs slowly away from the window. She holds up the final battery.

CHIEF Honey? Where are you going? Don't waste time now! Let's go!

He slams the window with his fists. Daliya flinches but keeps backing away.

He rams his shoulder now. The window flares with fracture lines.

CHIEF (CONT'D) (frantic, irate) Daliya! His words transform into a menacing growl.

Daliya picks up the plasma sphere, her eyes glued to the window.

The chief dissolves into a mess of grime and fur. Before long it's the Slime Wolf crashing through the window in a torrent of glass.

A final click as the battery is inserted and lightning bursts to life inside the glass ball. The wolf vanishes.

DALIYA

I love you, dad.

She takes a moment to gather herself then searches the shelves.

DALIYA (CONT'D) There's nothing? Seriously?

A baby's wail echoes down the hallway.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

Sarah!

She crunches broken glass underfoot. Kicks the stuff away from the door and bolts from the gift shop with the plasma ball.

CORRIDORS

The crying seems to come from every direction at every intersection. Daliya starts one way but doubles back to head another, unsure.

Hearing her daughter brings tears to her eyes.

She rounds the corner and sees a massive writhing mound of beetles and maggots. She almost wretches.

A hand pops out from the insect turmoil.

She holds the plasma ball out and approaches warily. The bugs flinch from the light and scatter away, vanish to reveal a half-eaten Mort.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

Mort!

She kneels down and takes his wheezing head in her lap.

MORT

That...

DALIYA

... Sucked?

MORT

Just a bit.

The baby's crying catches her attention again.

MORT (CONT'D) Go. It sounds like she's really close. I don't want that guy to win.

DALIYA I can't leave you here.

MORT Hurry. If he wins, then I've lost an arm and two legs for nothing.

She is torn. She tucks the plasma ball under his arm.

DALIYA Take care, Mort.

MORT You won't make it without this.

She kisses his forehead.

DALIYA Thanks for everything.

MORT

No problem. I didn't do much. Actually, I didn't really help with anything, did I?

Daliya stands and heads down the hall.

The far end of the next corridor spills into a room engulfed in flame. Tommy stands there, silhouetted against the turbulent light. Daliya's face hardens when she sees him. She walks with purpose. She hears growling, but it doesn't phase her. She only has eyes for Tommy as she withdraws her machete.

In range. She strikes. The long knife goes in Tommy's back and comes out his chest.

He's stunned. Turns to face her with wide eyes. Then shakes it off.

TOMMY

That doesn't tickle.

He returns to glaring ahead.

Daliya grabs the knife, pulls it out and stabs him again. He flinches and steps away.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Dammit, stop that! I get it, you hate me.

DALIYA Stay away from my baby!

TOMMY Do we have a choice? Take a look.

Tommy points. Their corridor leads to a long, broken mezzanine. There is a gap in the floor about twelve feet across. Torrents of flame devour the way. At the far end of it is a crib, a baby inside.

Growls behind them. Daliya turns. The Slime Wolf lopes along the corridor toward them.

Clicking. Tommy looks back. The Spider Baby appears from the dark and skitters along the ceiling above the wolf.

Daliya rips the knife from Tommy's back. Tommy grunts.

DALIYA I'm going to need this.

FOURTH FLOOR MEZZANINE

Daliya boldly tries to step between raging flame, but it's hot. She focuses on the crib and pushes onward, step by searing step.

She comes to the gap in the floor. She winces as her hair ignites. The pain is real, but she maintains her focus.

DALIYA Mommy's coming. Hold on!

Tommy glances back and forth between the deadly creatures behind him and the deadly fire ahead of him. When the Chain Warrior appears, his decision is made.

TOMMY

Yeah, I don't think so.

Tommy bolts away from the oncoming monstrosities and into the flames.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Out of my way!

He takes a running leap over the gap, knocking Daliya to the side.

She falls into the gap, grabs the edge with one hand and hangs on for dear life. She tucks the machete in her belt and reaches up to hold on with both hands.

Tommy lands short. He also grabs the far edge and hangs on.

Shadow Man appears on Tommy's side of the gap. He smiles.

TOMMY (CONT'D) Hey! C'mon, man. Help a brother out.

SHADOW MAN You are both at the finish line. Which of you wants it more, I wonder.

Daliya's attempts to pull herself up fail as she weakens and is burned by the fire.

The creatures have multiplied. Wolves, spiders, snakes, oozes and other grotesque entities arrive at the gap and stare down at Daliya. The wolf smiles and lick its chops.

It lunges at her. Daliya closes her eyes and awaits the inevitable. A mere hair away from her and it vanishes.

Daliya opens her eyes, baffled. The plasma sphere rolls over the edge.

She uses all of her strength to pull herself up to peer at floor level.

Mort has crawled into the area, but now lies motionless. A millipede-like creature creeps toward him, its toothy leech mouth opening and closing.

DALIYA

Mort!

SHADOW MAN Forget about him! Win the game!

DALIYA

Mort!

Mort struggles to look up at Daliya. It takes tremendous effort, but Mort uses his one arm and all he's got to pull himself ahead a few feet.

The millipede has other ideas. It latches on to Mort's leg stump and tugs him back into the darkness of the corridor.

Mort reaches out desperately toward Daliya, screams, and vanishes into the gloom.

SHADOW MAN

One of you is going to have to do something. Why are you here? How much do you want to win? Need to win? Think of the reward. Your brother is waiting, Tommy. Your baby is right here, Daliya!

DALIYA

Prove it!

SHADOW MAN

What?

DALIYA

I don't believe you.

SHADOW MAN You have to believe me. You have no other choice.

TOMMY

What? Are you just jerking us around again? You lying to us?

Shadow Man is momentarily speechless, seethes.

He grabs the crib and rolls it to the edge.

SHADOW MAN Look! Your spawn is right here!

DALIYA

Pick her up, show her to me.

Shadow Man is reticent.

SHADOW MAN

I am master here. If you want the child, win the game! Or accept the deal I've offered. Stay with me.

DALIYA

No.

SHADOW MAN

Excuse me?

DALIYA

Sarah is gone. I know that now. I won't let you ruin her memory anymore. I'm done with this stupid game.

Daliya lets go of the edge and begins to fall.

SHADOW MAN

Wait!

He snaps his fingers and Daliya's umbilical reforms at her navel, jerking her to a stop as it suspends her four floors in the air. SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) You must finish the game. I offer you the gift of resurrection! Nobody quits. You win or lose, those are the only options.

TOMMY You guys made a deal? Where's my deal!

Tommy strains to climb up onto solid ground. He pushes past Shadow Man to the crib. He hesitates before reaching in to pick up the baby.

He notices that his cord flows beyond the crib and around the corner.

He glances at Shadow Man, unsure. Then, bites the bullet and reaches in for the child.

Hundreds of little tendrils emerge from the baby's skin and pierce Tommy's flesh. He can't pull away.

The baby's head rotates 180 degrees. Where the back of the skull should be is a giant leech mouth. A tongue lashes out, wraps around Tommy's neck, pulling his head into the creature's sucking maw.

Tommy screams and spasms as he's eaten.

SERIES OF SHOTS (ALTERNATE TOMMYS)

1. ICE CREAM MAN TOMMY (glowing eyes) collapses into a customer's baby carriage, dead.

2. Back to scene. Tommy is being eaten.

3. OLYMPIC DIVER TOMMY (glowing eyes) readies to dive, bounces once, then tumbles awkwardly back down on the board then into the pool below, dead.

4. Back to scene. Tommy almost completely devoured.

5. U.S. PRESIDENT TOMMY (glowing eyes) waves to cheering citizens as he disembarks Air Force One. He goes limp and slides like a rag doll down the stairs.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

SHADOW MAN

Splendid.

Shadow Man turns cheerfully to Daliya.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Somehow I knew all along that you would triumph, my dear. Now climb up and get on with your search.

DALIYA

Lies! All lies!

SHADOW MAN

Lies? Nooo. Hiccups. Surprises. Plot twists. Entertainment value.

DALIYA

She's not even in this wretched place, is she? It's all a big joke to you.

SHADOW MAN

My love for you has its limits. Stop wasting my time. This is getting tiresome.

DALIYA

Love?

SHADOW MAN I said, climb up and get on with it.

DALIYA

I would rather die than continue your stupid game.

Shadow Man goes red with rage. He snaps his finger and chunks of hospital crumble away. The whole area lights up as the ground, way down on the first floor, falls away into a maelstrom of magma, a sinkhole to Hell.

> SHADOW MAN That can be arranged.

DALIYA

Yes, it can.

Daliya slips the machete from her belt and places it against her umbilical.

SHADOW MAN Stop! What are you doing?

DALIYA Something I should have done long ago. It's time to cut the cord.

SHADOW MAN

You defy me!?

DALIYA

(sotto) Mommy loves you, baby.

Daliya slides the blade across the umbilical.

SHADOW MAN

Stop her!

Monsters coalesce from every shadowy nook and cranny, too numerous to count. They surge after her as she plummets, but they are too late.

She's enveloped by the whirling magma below.

Shadow Man roars his outrage, fists clenched. Even the monstrosities yelp and move away from him.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY (REAL WORLD)

A squad car pulls up to the door. Officer Rudy exits driver side, Lucas exits passenger side with Sarah in his arms.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

OFFICER RUDY Dispatch said they brought her here. LUCAS Dammit! What was she doing? She wasn't supposed to be at Saint Joseph's today.

OFFICER RUDY What do you mean?

LUCAS

Just me. I was supposed to take Sarah to a doctor's appointment, but I forgot. Why did she have to go there?

OFFICER RUDY She's a cop. Anyway, let's just find her and make sure she gets the help she needs.

They get to the info counter.

OFFICER RUDY (CONT'D) The cops from Saint Josephs, where are they?

LUCAS Where's my wife, Daliya?

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Daliya lies comatose in a bed, various tubes and sensors attached to her.

Daliya opens her eyes, weak and bewildered. Everything is blurry but gradually comes into focus.

She glances across the room. There's Mort, three limbs suspended in casts, a VOLUNTEER shoving a sandwich into his mouth.

Mort perks up when he notices that Daliya has awoken. He spits his food out and waves with a big smile.

MORT Hey roomie! Never thought you'd open those peepers.

DALIYA

Mort? What...

MORT You know my name?

Maintenance Man stops his mopping.

MAINTENANCE MAN Hold tight little missy, I'll get the doc.

He exits the room.

NURSE ELAINE and NURSE ROZ come in.

NURSE ROZ

My word, glad to see you, darling. The doctor is here.

NURSE ELAINE

I knew she was a fighter. Good for you, dear.

Shadow Man enters behind the nurses, dressed in a physician's jacket. He smiles at Daliya.

SHADOW MAN

Welcome back, Daliya.

Daliya's eyes widen in desperation when she sees him. The tubes and sensors attached to her flicker back and forth between tubes and tentacles.

Mort appears with casts then with stumps.

The nurses appear normal then as snarling slime wolves.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) (subdued) They say life is short. I don't have that luxury. Thank you for the service you provided. (MORE) SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) It wasn't perfect, of course, but it passed some time. Still, however briefly, you gave me something special that I haven't felt in too long. In the end, I couldn't let you go.

Daliya freaks out and tears off the tubes and sensors as the room changes from sterile to a horrific grime-coated, flamefilled otherworld and back again.

DALIYA

No! Get away from me!

The nurses/abominations descend upon her at once trying to finish her off/restrain her.

NURSE ROZ Doctor, if we sedate her...

SHADOW MAN

No. No sedation. Thank you, Roz, Elaine, you may leave.

The nurses are unsure, but depart with confused shrugs.

Daliya tears every sensor and intravenous tube away except for one significant tube inserted to her heavily bandaged stomach.

She's very weak, and though she grasps the tube, she cannot find the strength to remove it.

Shadow Man moves next to her.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Why don't you take some time to rest. You've been through a lot, haven't you.

DALIYA Where's my baby!

SHADOW MAN

Tell you what, you leave that alone...

He gestures to the stomach tube.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) ... and I'll go get your baby.

Shadow Man moves to exit the room but turns back momentarily.

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SHADOW MAN (CONT'D)
I thinks it's time the game ends.
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He exits the room.

Daliya relaxes a bit, catches sight of a clock. 1:59 turns to two o'clock. Her world changes again. Darkness, flames, Mort's stumps, wires slither, she hears slavering slime wolves and ominous clicking.

She panics. Breathes heavily. Sees nurses with glowing eyes in the hall.

DALIYA

No...

She grabs hold of the stomach tube.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

More...

She yanks that sucker out with a great squelching noise.

DALIYA (CONT'D)

Games!

Daliya seizures. Her vitals monitor goes nuts.

Daliya goes still, her eyes only slits. She sees blurry abominations coming at her, then...

Beeeeeeep. Flatline.

The clock turns from 2 o'clock to 2:01.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING AREA - DAY

Shadow Man enters.

Lucas takes baby Sarah in his arms and stands when he sees the doctor coming.

Nurse Elaine hurries to catch the Doctor and whispers something. Shadow Man nods then continues to meet Lucas.

LUCAS Doctor, any news on my wife? Is she, I mean-

SHADOW MAN Your wife fought her way out of the coma.

Lucas is overcome with relief.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) Sadly, she suffered a psychotic break followed by seizures and cardiac arrest. I'm sorry. She put up a good fight, but in the end I couldn't keep her with me.

Shadow Man cups baby Sarah's cheek gently.

SHADOW MAN (CONT'D) She came so close. I'm sorry.

Shadow Man leaves.

Lucas sits, sobs into his hand. Officer Rudy puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

Elevator doors open. Shadow Man, his trench coat draped over one arm and brief case carried in the other, walks past the nurse's station toward the exit.

NURSE JEN See you tomorrow, Doctor.

Shadow Man nods.

A gurney bursts through the doors with ambulance attendants and others treating a convulsing man.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT Need help here, stat!

A flurry of nurses rush the patient for care.

Shadow Man watches the patient go, speaks to ambulance attendant.

SHADOW MAN It doesn't look good for him.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT

Yeah, poor guy. Tried to help a lady out of a gang rape. It didn't end well. Never had a chance.

SHADOW MAN

Well that doesn't seem fair, does it. Not fair at all. Everybody deserves a chance. Perhaps I can help give him one.

Shadow Man follows the patient.

FADE OUT.

THE END.