

"LET ME IN"

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by

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FIRST DRAFT

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"LET ME IN"

BLACK SCREEN

We HEAR the DREADFUL MOANING and HOWLING of ARCTIC WIND.

FADE IN very slowly, TO DISCOVER we are HIGH ABOVE:

A SNOWY, RURAL LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

An empty TWO-LANE HIGHWAY snakes through massive pines;
MOUNTAINS loom in the distance. A BLIZZARD rages all around.

HOLD.

HAZY GLOWS of FLASHING RED and BLUE LIGHT suddenly appear,
way down the highway. It's a SMALL MOTORCADE. We make out
two POLICE CRUISERS, an AMBULANCE. The wind is so fierce, we
can't even hear the sirens yet.

Through the swirling VEIL OF SNOW, the image looks surreal;
it could almost be a painting... or a dream...

SMASH CUT TO:

THE MOTORCADE

SIRENS BLARING as they race through the blizzard.

THROUGH THE AMBULANCE WINDSHIELD

We SEE the HEAVY SNOW HURTLING toward us, obscuring the road
ahead. The STROBES from the roof periodically FLASH, and the
SNOWFLAKES suddenly appear to FREEZE in mid-air for a
blinding instant. It is completely disorienting. We HOLD on
this, as we HEAR TWO PARAMEDICS in the front seats (O.S.):

PARAMEDIC ONE (O.S.)

Jesus, I can't see -- I can't see a
fucking thing --

PARAMEDIC TWO (O.S.)

(into radio)

One three one to dispatch, come in!

IN THE BACK - QUICK, TIGHT SHOTS:

THREE MORE PARAMEDICS, wearing long RUBBER GLOVES work
feverishly on a completely naked PATIENT, whose face is
obscured from our view. The Unseen Patient THRASHES
VIOLENTLY as they work, in complete agony --

UNSEEN PATIENT'S POV - HANDHELD:

Twisting and turning, looking straight up at the Paramedics as they struggle fiercely to hold him down --

PARAMEDIC THREE
Hold him down! Get his arms! Get his arms!

The Unseen Patient GASPS and GAGS --

PARAMEDIC THREE
I need an irrigation lens and a 1000cc's of saline -- !

PARAMEDIC FOUR
Got it!

As he reaches for the Patient's eyes -- right at CAMERA -- the GASPING ACCELERATES -- AND --

THE PATIENT'S WRIST

swings up into FRAME, in panic -- it snaps short suddenly with a CLANG! It is HANDCUFFED TO THE GURNEY.

UP FRONT

The RADIO CRACKLES to life as we watch the strobing blizzard:

RADIO (V.O.)
Go ahead one three one!

PARAMEDIC TWO (O.S.)
This is one three one! We have a male, mid-fifties with burns over nine to nine and a half percent of his body! Prior to our arrival on scene, patient apparently doused his head, neck and face with some sort of highly concentrated acid! Patient's airway is severely compromised due to fume inhalation! Vital signs unstable! Please advise! Patient is a criminal suspect! We're coming in with a police escort right now!

IN BACK

The Paramedics wrestle with the Unseen Patient --

PARAMEDIC FOUR
OK -- it's in! The lens is in!

PARAMEDIC THREE

Irrigate!

UNSEEN PATIENT'S POV -- HANDHELD:

MORE EXCRUCIATING GASPING and CHOKING sounds as our view
FLOODS with SALINE -- the IMAGE LITERALLY RIPPLES -- and WE --

CUT TO:

A MOVING SHOT, DOWN A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We're FOLLOWING ON THE BACK of a PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMAN as he
makes his way towards a HOSPITAL ROOM DOORWAY. As he
arrives, a PRIEST is on his way out. The Policeman stops,
allowing the Priest to pass. The Priest nods to him gravely.

We FOLLOW the PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMAN INTO:

THE DARK HOSPITAL ROOM

where a HEAVYSET NURSE attends to a bed on the other side of
the room, her body blocking our view of the Patient's face.
She turns, hearing the Policeman; approaches. HUSHED TONES:

POLICEMAN

Can I talk to him?

NURSE

He can't actually talk...

The Policeman LOOKS OFF SCREEN, past her, sees the Unseen
Patient for the first time; whatever he sees, it knocks the
wind out of him. He nods, utters under his breath, shaken:

POLICEMAN

I see. Jesus...

(then)

Alright, well... can I... just
have a few minutes?

The Nurse nods and leaves the room. The Policeman moves
toward the UNSEEN PATIENT'S BED slowly, apprehensive --

FROM THE UNSEEN PATIENT'S POV:

We finally get a CLOSE LOOK at the Policeman's face as he
steps up. He's mid-40s, with soulful but determined eyes. A
small town sense about him. From his haunted expression, you
get the feeling he's never seen anything quite like this.
MACHINE NOISE surrounds us: A RESPIRATOR HISSES ominously...

The Policeman unzips his jacket, takes a POLICE NOTEBOOK out, opens it, places it in front of the Unseen Patient; he takes out a PEN, carefully places the Patient's FINGERS around it. Then he looks up, RIGHT INTO CAMERA, struggling a bit:

POLICEMAN

We, uh... We wanna know who you are.

Beat. His eyes drift down to THE PATIENT'S HAND, gripping the pen. There is a fresh ACID SCAR across the top of it. The hand remains perfectly still, no intention of writing...

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

We'll find out, you know. Sooner or later. You could save us some legwork by communicating with us now.

(beat)

I just got off the phone with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Guess there's an idea you been involved in a whole lot more than just what's been going on around here. Like maybe this all goes way back. Other states. Other cities.

(stares at him)

Is that true?

(then)

Are you a Satanist? You in some kind of cult? Coz if there are others involved, we'll find them too, believe me.

The PACE of the HEART MONITOR speeds up a bit. The Policeman turns, noticing; he turns back, trying to gauge the reaction:

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

What's the matter? Is that it? Is there someone you wanna tell me about? People you're involved with?

(beat; then)

Look, I'm gonna be honest with you. Your prognosis here... it's not too good. What you did, it's a real... shock to your system. There may not be a lotta time left. So maybe... Maybe you got some things here you wanna tell me. Things that are weighing heavy. On your heart. Maybe you could write 'em down for me. Clear your conscience.

The Nurse appears again in the doorway:

NURSE

I'm sorry. The Nurse at reception downstairs is on the phone. She wants to talk to you. Says it's urgent.

The Policeman turns to her, nods; then turns back, stares INTO CAMERA, cautious, searching, wondering if maybe he is on the verge of something here...

POLICEMAN

I'll be right back... Okay?

He turns to go; and we CUT FOR THE FIRST TIME TO REVEAL:

THE PATIENT

Under bandages is a viciously acid-ravaged face -- almost unrecognizable as human anymore. Haunted eyes stare out from mangled flesh, gazing after the Policeman with a sense of fear. After a beat, he looks down in front of him at:

THE POLICE NOTEBOOK

where his hand rests, holding the pen, motionless. We HOLD FOR A VERY LONG BEAT. Finally, fingers trembling, he lifts the pen, begins to WRITE...

NURSES STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The Policeman is on the phone. BEHIND HIM, RONALD REAGAN silently gives a speech on TV -- the sound is off.

POLICEMAN

His daughter? When was this -- is she still here...?

Suddenly, a BEEPING ALARM sounds from behind the station -- the heavyset Nurse checks the bank of patient monitors -- she quickly starts for the suspect's hospital room -- the Policeman notices, growing concerned; we SLOWLY PUSH IN:

POLICEMAN

(into phone; distracted,
eyes following Nurse)
Well did she leave any information,
a phone number...?

The response on the phone suddenly focuses him again --

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)
What do you mean a little girl?
How little...?

JUST THEN, a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM erupts (O.S.) from the hospital room! The Policeman drops the phone and rushes --

BACK INTO THE HOSPITAL ROOM

WIND SWIRLS. The Nurse is standing next to the OPEN WINDOW, horrified, her head in her hands. THE HOSPITAL BED IS EMPTY.

The Policeman moves over to LOOK --

OUT THE WINDOW:

THE PATIENT'S DEAD BODY LIES TWISTED SICKLY ON THE SNOW-COVERED GROUND, TEN FLOORS BELOW!

POLICEMAN
(utters, breathless)
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph...

IN THE EMPTY BED

The POLICE NOTEBOOK lies open, it's pages fluttering gently in the wind. On top, written in the dead Patient's TORTURED SCRAWL are the words: "Abby... I'm sorry..." HOLD; then --

TIMECUT TO:

A WIDE TABLEAU SHOT OF THE FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL - NIGHT

We are INSIDE THE LOBBY, LOOKING OUT through massive GLASS WINDOWS. POLICE CARS and FORENSIC TEAMS have gathered. CRIMSON SNOW drifts serenely over everything, ILLUMINATED by the SPINNING RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS on the vehicles.

A SMALL CROWD -- the Policeman included -- watches as the Patient's body is zipped into a body bag...

In the FOREGROUND, over this, we see AN OUT OF FOCUS IMAGE OF RONALD REAGAN continuing his speech -- it's a REFLECTION from the LOBBY TV, on the window in front of the body. Down here the sound is on -- it's the "Evil Empire" speech:

RONALD REAGAN ON TV
There is sin and evil in the world,
and we're enjoined by scripture and
the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all
our might. Our nation, too, has a
legacy of evil with which it must
deal. The glory of this land has
been its capacity for transcending
the moral evils of our past...

The Policeman lifts his hand -- there's something in it: it's the POLICE NOTEBOOK; he stares at it... haunted...

SUPER the TITLE CARD: "**LITTLETON, COLORADO. MARCH, 1983.**"

A NURSE steps up behind the Policeman, starts to say something, and just as he turns we:

CUT TO BLACK. THE SOUND WASHES AWAY INTO SILENCE.

HOLD.

After a long beat, we start to HEAR a CHILD'S VOICE, QUIETLY SINGING; there's something mournful about it... EERIE...

CHILD'S SINGING

Eat some now, save some for later...

Eat some now, save some for later...

ANOTHER SUPER TITLE FADES UP: "**TWO MONTHS EARLIER...**"

A DISTANT TRAIN HORN CRIES as we SLOWLY FADE IN TO REVEAL:

A TWELVE YEAR OLD BOY, HIS BACK TO US, SEATED ON A JUNGLE GYM

We're PUSHING IN ON HIM as he sings to himself, completely hidden in a HOODED, METALLIC SILVER WINTER JACKET; BREATH STEAMS around his head in the dim, blue TWILIGHT. SNOW BLANKETS the ground underfoot. No one else is around.

As we CREEP CLOSER, the Boy reaches into his pocket, pulling out candies, unwrapping them, and popping them into his mouth, one by one, in a constant stream. The rhythm of his song is periodically interrupted by the need to chew.

BOY

(singing absently, hushed)

Now and Later... the really tasty
treat... Now and Later... the
flavor can't be beat...

Suddenly, a WOMAN'S VOICE ECHOES distantly:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Owwwwen...?

The Boy keeps on singing:

BOY

Look at all those...

(chews; then:)

...pieces... Flavors that are wow...

Beat.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Owwwwen...?

We STOP in CLOSE UP on the BACK of the BOY'S HEAD -- and he finally TURNS TO US, in the direction of the Woman's Voice:

BOY
 (annoyed, mouth full)
What...?!

This is OWEN.

On the verge of thirteen, his face still has a delicate, pre-adolescent androgyny. He looks innocent, almost fragile.

WOMAN'S VOICE
 Dinner time, honey...!

As Owen gets up to go, he pulls a fistful of candy wrappers from his pocket, dumps them on the ground, buries them in the snow with his foot. CUT WIDE to SEE we are in:

A MASSIVE 1960'S ERA APARTMENT COMPLEX - COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

The jungle gym sits in a meager playground at the center of the deserted courtyard. Tall buildings surround us. As Owen trudges away through the snow toward his building we CUT TO:

LONG LENS CLOSE ON OWEN - AT THE DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Owen sits, head bowed, holding his MOTHER's hand as she says grace in the F.G., SOFT FOCUS. **HOLD on OWEN throughout:**

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts,
 for which we are about to receive,
 from Thy bounty, in the name of Jesus
 Christ, our Lord, Amen.

As they release hands, Owen's mother's ARM reaches over, pours Chablis into a WINE GLASS in the F.G. -- OWEN'S EYES flit a bit anxiously to the glass as it FILLS...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 How was school today?

Owen scrunches his face, shrugs a shoulder. She laughs:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 That good, huh?
 (notices he's not eating)
 Hey, what's this -- you didn't go
 and spoil your dinner on me now,
 did you? Owen? Sweetie, you
promised me...

He guiltily stabs a forkful of his Kraft mac and cheese:

OWEN
 ...No... What? I didn't...

The PHONE RINGS. She stands, and we FLEETINGLY GLIMPSE for the first time she wears a POWDER BLUE NIGHTGOWN and ROBE --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Eat. Please, honey.

She musses his hair affectionately, EXITS FRAME, ANSWERS PHONE:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Hello?
 (she quiets, darkens)
 What. No, what?

Owen turns, watching her OFF-SCREEN with growing anxiety...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Look... Look, I'm not -- I'm not gonna discuss this now, okay? We're eating dinner.

Owen's EYES discreetly FOLLOW as she reaches into FRAME, grabs her WINE, then paces O.S. -- the PHONE CORD stretches TAUT...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Well, we had an agreement, George. Okay? We agreed...
 (then)
 You know what? I think maybe you better call my lawyer, okay...? Yes. Right. Because you know he'd never let you get away with this shit.
 (beat)
Don't talk to me like that -- I will not. Be spoken to. In that way!
 (beat)
 Okay, I'm going now, George, okay? ...What? He'll call you back. We're eating, George.

She SIGHS, re-enters FRAME, holds out the phone:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Your father wants to talk to you...

OWEN
 (into phone, uncomfortable)
 Hello? ...Hi... I'm okay...

Owen steals a final look at the WINE GLASS as his mother sets it down again in the F.G., RE-FILLS it...

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Owen gingerly sets his plate in the sink, which is piled with dirty dishes. He peeks THROUGH THE DOORWAY INTO:

THE DARKENED LIVING ROOM

Where his mother, partially obscured by the door jam, sits with her wine glass, watching ranting televangelist, Dr. Gene Scott on TV. We HEAR the sound of her CRYING.

Owen turns away, hopeless. He is about to go when he SEES:

A LARGE KITCHEN KNIFE

Lying on the counter. His eyes linger on it...

CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

A model of the SPACE SHUTTLE hangs from the ceiling. There's a TELESCOPE by the window. Posters of the planets. STAR WARS toys. "Beth" by KISS plays softly from a cheap RADIO.

OWEN'S BARE FEET stalk slowly through the chaotic, clothes-strewn mess on the floor... We HEAR his BREATHING...

CLOSE ON THE LARGE KITCHEN KNIFE

As it pierces the air, creeping forward threateningly...

OWEN (O.S.)
(very quiet, menacing)
Hey little girl...

REVEAL Owen as he steps up to his dresser MIRROR. He's stripped down to his underwear, holding the knife, and wearing a PLASTIC, SEMI-TRANSPARENT HALLOWEEN MASK which completely obscures his expression. It's a disturbing image.

OWEN
(staring down his "victim")
Are you a little girl...?

Just then a WOMAN'S SHRIEK echoes distantly. Owen turns as LIGHT SPILLS onto his ceiling from outside his window. There's a MAN'S VOICE too. Owen sets down the knife, moves to:

HIS WINDOW

Across the courtyard, framed in one of the other apartment windows, a COUPLE, having just come home, are ARGUING passionately. We can't make out what they're saying.

They are LARRY and VIRGINIA, early 30s.

Owen watches them, motionless. He turns his telescope towards them, cautiously presses his eye to the eyepiece...

THE TELESCOPE

FOCUSES on Virginia as she yells at Larry. She's hot-tempered. Has a somewhat trashy, small town sexiness. Larry tries to calm her to no avail, reaches for her wrist; she pulls away. At their feet, a tiny LAP DOG BARKS incessantly.

Owen just stares from behind the mask. Slowly BREATHING... Finally, he turns the telescope... starts to peep into other windows... He finds:

A FORTY-ISH, SHIRTLESS MAN (JACK)

lying on a BENCH in his cramped living room, lifting weights. His CHEST is OVERLY DEVELOPED.

Owen pulls his eye from the telescope, pushes up his mask. He looks down at his own scrawny chest, ashamed. Then he notices something: the courtyard is QUIET again. He looks up, swings the telescope back toward:

LARRY AND VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT

Virginia has calmed. Larry, contrite, rubs her arm apologetically... He tries to kiss her, but she turns away. He touches her face, tries again; grudgingly, she lets him...

Owen watches with morbid fascination as the KISS builds... turns SEXUAL, as Virginia gives in... Larry starts to grope her, reaches into her shirt, exposing her breast, WHEN -- VIRGINIA'S STARTLED EYES SUDDENLY MEET THE TELESCOPE --

OWEN backs away, terrified -- ducks behind his curtain. He stands there frozen, heart racing. HOLD.

Finally, he PEEKS back: Virginia is closing the drapes.

Humiliated, Owen starts to turn away when he SEES --

A SILHOUETTED U-HAUL MOVING TRUCK

RUMBLE into the driveway between buildings. A FIGURE climbs out, disappears behind the truck. After a moment, he re-emerges, struggling with SEVERAL VERY LARGE SUITCASES along the passenger side.

He stops, looks up into the cab, panting, his breath misting up into the freezing air. He waits. Finally, ANOTHER MUCH SMALLER FIGURE emerges, climbing down. Owen LOOKS:

THROUGH THE TELESCOPE

It is A TWELVE YEAR OLD GIRL. Wrapped in a dark poncho, she has mysterious, somewhat coarse features, like a gypsy. She doesn't even acknowledge the Figure waiting beside her. She just starts into the courtyard.

The Figure -- a BALDING, WEARY MAN IN HIS MID-FIFTIES -- finally follows with the heavy luggage, looking almost like her servant. Or maybe her father.

Owen watches as they make their way toward his building. As they get close, he notices something through the telescope -- despite the snowy ground, THE GIRL IS COMPLETELY BAREFOOT.

Owen cranes to look straight down out his window, as, right below him, the pair disappear into the entrance to his building.

CUT TO:

A NARROW VIEW THROUGH OWEN'S PARTIALLY OPENED FRONT DOOR

We look out at a STAIRWELL at the end of the EMPTY HALL. Approaching FOOTSTEPS ECHO. Just as the TOP of the GIRL'S HEAD starts to appear, climbing up the stairs --

OWEN quickly and quietly SHUTS his front door. He waits, pressed against the front door as the MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS grow LOUDER. Finally, he gets the courage to PEEK --

THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE

Just as the Girl and the Man pass, distorted and obscured by the LENS' FISHEYE EFFECT. We HEAR OWEN BREATHING RAPIDLY...

EXT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The DOOR SLOWLY OPENS a crack, and OWEN peers cautiously out to SEE the BALDING MAN, setting down the luggage, starting to open the door to the apartment RIGHT NEXT DOOR.

Owen stares down again at the Girl's bare feet as she waits, her face turned away. Finally, she steps inside. The Balding Man picks up the luggage, steps in after her.

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Owen lies on his bed, eating Now and Later's, LISTENING to the SOUNDS of his new neighbors coming through the wall. There's a STRANGE, EERIE GROANING... a RHYTHMIC SCRAPING...

We MOVE IN ON OWEN as he leans close to the wall, trying to make out the INTENSE SOUNDS with a building sense of dread...

We're CLOSE on HIS WIDE OPEN EYES when we hear a SUDDEN LOUD BANG FROM THE WALL -- and we FLASHCUT TO **A HAUNTING VISION:**

AN AQUA BLUE FIELD -- VERY SHALLOW FOCUS

CRIMSON-COLORED CLOUDS BILLOW and GROW disturbingly -- it looks like BLOOD POURING into PURE, CLEAR BLUE WATER...

We HOLD -- THEN SEE THREE LIGHTENING FAST CUTS OF TIGHT SHOTS:

-- FLESH TEARS -- !
 -- VICIOUS DEMONIC EYES STARE -- !
 -- BLOOD SPRAYS -- !

OWEN GASPS, sits up with a START! CUT WIDE to REVEAL we are:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Owen sits in bed, in exactly the spot we left him last night, having just awakened from a nightmare. He starts to get his bearings, looks around him at the room in the morning light. Finally, he stares at the wall. Everything is quiet now.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - MORNING

Owen steps out of his building wearing his heavy jacket and a BACKPACK. He starts across the courtyard when he SPOTS: A BARE FOOTPRINT in the snow. He turns back, looks up... in the apartment next to his, the WINDOWS have been COMPLETELY BOARDED UP from the inside with NEWSPAPER AND CARDBOARD.

As he stares, we start to hear:

CHILDREN'S VOICES
 I pledge allegiance... to the flag...
 of the United States of America...

INT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL HOMEROOM - MORNING

We're MOVING PAST about 30 STUDENTS, giving the pledge:

STUDENTS (CONT'D)
 And to the Republic... for which it
 stands...

FIND OWEN, hand over his heart, reciting with the others --

STUDENTS (CONT'D)
 One Nation... under God...

SPLAT! A huge SPITBALL slaps onto Owen's jacket. He turns to see one of the students smiling cruelly. This is KENNY. Resigned, Owen starts to scrape the mess off, and we CUT TO:

INT. INDOOR MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL - MORNING

Pre-class chaos. KIDS IN BATHING SUITS scream, splash, push each other into the pool. Still fully dressed, Owen walks up behind his Serbian P.E. teacher, MR. ZORIC, says meekly:

OWEN
Mr. Zoric...?

Mr. Zoric turns, sees Owen is not in his bathing suit:

MR. ZORIC
Owen -- c'mon, serious... again?

OWEN
I have a cold. My mom wrote me a note.

He holds out THE NOTE: clearly in Owen's own handwriting, misspellings and all, it reads: "PLEASE EXSCUSE OWEN FROM SWIMING. HE HAS A COLD."

Mr. Zoric stares at Owen for a long beat; takes pity on him:

MR. ZORIC
Okay. Go sit in bleacher.

Owen sits, looks out at THE POOL, a bit miserably, SEEING:

KENNY

who, along with TWO COHORTS, circles and accosts a GIRL WITH VERY DEVELOPED BREASTS; the boys keep disappearing under the water, grabbing at her. She backs away, shriek/laughing uncomfortably, when Kenny appears behind her and undoes the strap on her bikini with a tug -- she grabs it before it can fall, SCREAMS for Mr. Zoric at the top of her lungs -- Mr. Zoric turns, sees Kenny laughing hysterically --

MR. ZORIC
Okay, Kenny! Ten laps! Now!

KENNY
I didn't do anything...!

MR. ZORIC
Now! Or I make it twenty!

Kenny pounds the water with his fist, and, as Zoric turns away, the Girl SOCKS him INCREDIBLY HARD in the arm. Owen can't help but smile -- but it's unfortunate timing, because at just that moment, Kenny feels Owen's stare, turns -- Owen stops smiling abruptly, averts his eyes, wishing he were invisible; but sadly, he's not. Kenny glares, and we CUT TO:

INT. POOL LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Owen spins the tumbler on his locker as fast as he can -- he pops it open, quickly grabs his backpack when he HEARS --

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey little girl...

Owen turns to see Kenny and his friends (DONALD and MARK) surrounding him, still dripping in their suits. Kenny is twirling a wet towel into a whip -- he SNAPS it suddenly into Owen's face --

OWEN
(recoiling in pain)
Ow! Don't...!

KENNY
Are you a little girl...?

He SNAPS it viciously again -- Owen bends over, covering his face, trying to protect himself -- as Kenny moves in closer --

KENNY
That's why he won't go swimming --
he doesn't want everyone to see what
a little fucking girl he is --

Desperate, Owen tries to make a break for it -- but they grab him, wrestle him violently to the ground -- he starts to scream, but Kenny covers his mouth -- Owen GASPS for air --

OWEN'S POV - HANDHELD:

As he flails in panic -- Kenny giggles sadistically --

KENNY
Hold him down! Get his arms! Get
his arms!

As they do, Kenny reaches under the waistband of Owen's pants, seizes his UNDERWEAR, YANKS it upwards, slowly STRETCHING it into a brutal WEDGIE --

Owen SQUIRMS FRANTICALLY for an excruciating moment, until suddenly a PUDDLE starts to GROW on the ground by his legs -- DONALD realizes, repulsed -- backs off --

DONALD
Dude, shit! I think he pissed
himself!

KENNY
 (laughing out of control)
 Oh...! Shit...!

DONALD
 (wiping himself with his
 towel, horrified)
 He fucking pissed himself!

The three of them scramble up -- Mark checks to see if he is soiled too -- he kicks Owen's side in disgust --

MARK
 Jesus! Fucking freak!

Owen just lies there, as they head off -- Kenny's uncontrollable LAUGHTER ECHOES. A few CLASSMATES stare down at Owen, askance, changing at their lockers.

Owen gets up slowly, picks his backpack off the ground...

CUT TO:

OWEN'S HAND GRABBING FIVE PACKS OF NOW AND LATER CANDIES

from a huge candy display -- WE ARE:

INT. LITTLETON VIDEO ARCADE - LATE AFTERNOON

Owen waits in line at the pay counter. The after school crowd is here, and the DIN from the games is DEAFENING.

Owen looks over at a TENTH GRADE COUPLE making out by the MS. PAC-MAN machine, their tongues deep in each other's mouths. Owen stares, when suddenly he BARELY HEARS the VOICE of the SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD COUNTERMAN calling him over the cacophony.

Embarrassed, Owen places his candy and a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL on the glass counter. As the Counterman grabs the money, Owen NOTICES something in the COUNTER DISPLAY CASE below it -- an OPEN PEN KNIFE among some knickknacks; HIS EYES FIX ON IT.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

Owen sits on the jungle gym with his new PEN KNIFE. He unwraps a candy, STABS it with the knife, puts it in his mouth --

OWEN
 (singing, mouth full)
 Eat some now, save some for later...

A metal DOOR THUDS shut -- Owen quiets, turns to see:

THE BALDING MAN

having just exited his building. Owen watches as the Man sets down a DUFFLE, vainly attempting to light a cigarette in the wind with his BIC LIGHTER -- "**FLIT--FLIT--FLIT...**" The Man's eyes drift up, suddenly feeling Owen's gaze --

The two STARE at each other for an eerie, suspended moment.

Owen attempts a smile; but the Balding Man just picks up the duffle, starts out toward the street -- we WATCH FROM:

A VERY HIGH SHOT, LOOKING STRAIGHT DOWN OVER THE COURTYARD

Owen remains motionless on the jungle gym, watching him go...

HOLD.

Then, just as Owen finally starts to quietly resume singing --

OWEN

Eat some now, save some for --

WE SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WAL-MART PARKING LOT - LONG LENS SHOT - NIGHT

HOLD on the quiet, mostly deserted lot, bathed in sodium vapor light... AFTER A BEAT, we SEE some BLURRY MOVEMENT in the F.G. -- we HEAR the familiar "**FLIT-FLIT-FLIT**" of the BIC LIGHTER again; SMOKE rises INTO FRAME, and we realize we are now WATCHING from the BALDING MAN'S POV, over his shoulder...

A BEATEN-UP DATSUN B-210 pulls into the lot, parks. A BARELY SIXTEEN YEAR OLD KID gets out, heads toward the store...

HEAR a LONG EXHALE; a STREAM OF SMOKE blows into F.G. view...

CUT TO:

THE DATSUN'S DRIVER DOOR

Seen from the shoulders down, the Balding Man's GLOVED HANDS slide a tow truck driver's "SLIM JIM" down the car's window and into the door, DIGGING... until... the DOOR LOCK POPS UP.

CUT TO:

INT. DATSUN - MOMENTS LATER

Total STILLNESS, QUIET. We're in back, looking toward the empty parking lot through the windshield.

The SIXTEEN YEAR OLD approaches. We HEAR the VERY FAINT sound of BREATHING... from somewhere in the car...

HOLD as the Kid gets in, starts the engine, drives out...

After a few moments, we NOTICE something BLURRY moving very subtly in the F.G.; the Kid does not... CUT AROUND TO:

THE REVERSE ANGLE

past the Kid as he drives. Right behind him, just visible in shadow, is a FIGURE (the Balding Man) in a primitive looking CLOTH MASK with the eyes cut out. The Figure WAITS, motionless, poised, for a very long, disturbing beat... We HEAR a PASSING TRAIN getting CLOSER... LOUDER...

Then, as the Kid brakes -- a TRAIN HORN BLARES -- and the Figure LUNGES forward, JAMS the gear shaft into park with one gloved hand -- uses the other to MASH a WET COTTON PAD over the startled Kid's nose and mouth! It's messy, brutal --

CLOSE ON the FIGURE'S IMMOBILE, MASKED HEAD as the KID FLAILS MADLY (O.S.)! The utter terror in the Kid's muffled SCREAMS is excruciating -- like the primal squeal of an animal experiencing the sudden, incomprehensible realization it is being slaughtered. It goes on way too long. Finally, he QUIETS; from behind the mask we hear HEAVY, RAPID BREATHING -- as the breathing starts to slow, we CUT TO:

HIGH ANGLE - OUTSIDE THE CAR - AT A TRAIN CROSSING

AN AMTRAK TRAIN finishes passing in front of the Datsun, stopped on a sleepy, two lane road; no other cars are around. The CROSSING GATES LIFT, but the car doesn't move... CUT TO:

THE ABANDONED DATSUN - LATER

On a SECLUDED, MOUNTAIN ROAD; the driver door is ajar. PAN SLOWLY to a SNOWY HILLSIDE WOOD beside the road. We HEAR RUSTLING SOUNDS from within the TREES up the steep incline...

IN THE WOOD

Partially OBSCURED BY TREES, we SEE the SIXTEEN YEAR OLD KID SUSPENDED BY HIS FEET on a ROPE, SLUNG over a TREE BRANCH. Now in a CLEAR, PLASTIC RAIN SLICKER, still wearing his mask, the Balding Man finishes hoisting the boy's body, pulling the rope with all his strength, grunting, panting hard --

CLOSE ON the DUFFLE: The Man reaches in, pulls out a FOLDING HUNTING KNIFE(looking a lot like a much scarier version of Owen's pen knife), a LARGE, PLASTIC JUG, and a FUNNEL...

CLOSE PROFILE ON the UP-SIDE-DOWN, SILHOUETTED HEAD of the BOY: BREATH steams gently from his nostrils; he is still alive, but heavily sedated. The Man ENTERS FRAME, crouched on his knees, moves in close to the Boy's face. He opens the knife, presses it delicately against the Boy's neck -- then, all at once, THRUSTS the knife upward, PUNCTURING an artery! We watch in SILHOUETTE as BLOOD DRAINS in a THICK, THROBBING STREAM... TIP DOWN to see it FILLING the PLASTIC JUG below.

Nearby FOOTSTEPS CRUNCH in the snow -- startled, the Man turns to see A DEER, watching him. They stare at each other.

TIMECUT TO:

THE WOOD - MINUTES LATER

The Man is carefully re-packing his duffle. He has removed the cloth mask; his face is red, sweaty, his eyes have a far away look. He looks numb. Bitter.

He reaches down, picks up the plastic jug, now filled with blood. Walking back toward the duffle, he gently pulls the funnel out of the jug, just starts to screw on a lid WHEN -- HIS LEG SINKS SHARPLY through the snow into a hole hidden below -- he loses balance, DROPS the JUG -- it goes TUMBLING DOWN the HILLSIDE -- ! He scrambles up, and runs lamely down the hill after it; he EMERGES ONTO --

THE SNOWY MOUNTAIN ROAD

near the Boy's abandoned car. The mostly EMPTY JUG sits on its side in the street, BLOOD POOLING around it. The Man stares at it, devastated, out of breath, in pain, AS --

DISTANT HEADLIGHTS

appear way down the road -- the Man turns to see A SNOW PLOW heading this way. Panicked, he hobbles over, grabs the jug, and clambers back up the hill, DISAPPEARING into the woods

OVER THIS we HEAR as HUSHED, MENACING VOICE:

VOICE (OWEN)

What's the matter? Are you scared?

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT

Owen stands, holding his OPEN PEN KNIFE threateningly, staring at something OFF-SCREEN:

OWEN

Are you scared, little girl? Huh?

As he lunges forward with the knife, we PAN with him to reveal his "victim" -- A TREE. He THRUSTS his knife into the bark with all of his might. Again. And again. Finally, he stops. As he catches his breath, he suddenly feels a chill, as if someone is there -- he turns to see:

THE NEW NEIGHBOR GIRL, standing on the jungle gym, watching him, expressionless. Up close, her face looks tired, a bit... malnourished. Her hair looks like it hasn't been washed in a very long time. Her clothes look old, ill-fitting, like they could have come from the Good Will.

GIRL

What are you doing?

OWEN

(suddenly embarrassed)

Nothing.

(then)

What are you doing?

GIRL

Nothing.

Beat. Owen tries to make conversation:

OWEN

You guys just moved in, didn't you?
Upstairs.

She looks at him.

GIRL

How do you know?

OWEN

I live next door.
(points)
Right there.

Pause. Finally, she nods. Jumps down from the jungle gym.

GIRL

Just so you know, I can't be your
friend.

OWEN

...Why? What do you mean?

GIRL

Does there have to be a reason?
That's just the way it is.

And she goes. He watches her, for a stunned beat. Then:

OWEN

Well who said I wanted to be your
friend...?!

But she's already gone into the building.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OWEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Owen sticks his key in the front door lock when he hears FOOTSTEPS coming up the stairwell; they have an ODD CADENCE. Owen turns as the Balding Man appears, LIMPING up the steps with his duffle. Their eyes meet briefly. Then Owen opens his door, disappears inside.

The Man continues towards us; as he passes Owen's door, he STOPS for a moment, stares at it... then moves on; CUT TO:

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

Owen has his eye pressed to the peephole, breathing through his mouth, trying to be very quiet. He slowly backs away, LISTENING to the Man's IRREGULAR FOOTSTEPS... the door next door CREAKS OPEN... then THUDS SHUT.

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Owen is taking off his jacket, when he starts to hear MUFFLED, INDECIPHERABLE YELLING coming through the wall from the neighbors' apartment. He jumps slightly as he hears a SUDDEN, STIFLED CRASH, and a THUD. The YELLING CONTINUES.

Concerned, Owen moves apprehensively toward the wall, PRESSES HIS EAR TO IT... The yelling becomes a bit more intelligible -- but it is not clear whose voice it is -- there's something unsettling, almost FEROCIOUSLY INHUMAN about it -- maybe it's just acoustics, or the way it distorts through Owen's wall:

VOICE (THROUGH WALL)

(near-hyperventilation)

...SUPPOSED TO DO? AM I SUPPOSED
TO GO OUT AND DO IT MYSELF?! HUH?!
(long pause; then:)

SAY SOMETHING!!!

Owen listens, on pins and needles, as the argument goes SILENT for a LONG MOMENT... we can just barely make out someone HYPERVENTILATING...

HOLD.

Then, finally, we CUT TO:

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

We are CLOSE on the Balding Man, who sits at a table, looking down, quietly despondent; all of the gear from his duffle -- including the empty, blood-stained jug -- is scattered across the floor behind him like it has been hurled there. We are shooting PAST THE ARM of an OUT OF FOCUS FIGURE (could it be the GIRL???), standing in FOREGROUND -- the Figure is HYPERVENTILATING, waiting for a response.

The Balding Man glances up at the Figure, then looks down again, bitterly ashamed. Finally, almost inaudibly, he says:

BALDING MAN
...Forgive me.

Exasperated, the Figure STORMS OFF, WIPING THROUGH FRAME...
We CUT BACK TO:

OWEN

his ear still against the wall, anxiously waiting for more. But nothing more comes. As he edges away from the wall, we --

CUT TO:

A MOVING SHOT, DOWN A CROWDED MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

We're WITH OWEN as he passes through THROGS of ARRIVING STUDENTS -- there's a HUSHED EXCITEMENT coursing through the crowd, something is going on... Up ahead, Owen sees kids gathering in CLUSTERS outside the ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, whispering to each other, spying into the windows --

As Owen reaches them, he PEERS, with the others, INTO THE OFFICE WINDOWS: in the waiting area are several UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS. Their expressions are grave. One talks to a woman who looks like she could be the PRINCIPAL. Behind the counter, SECRETARIES are crying.

A MAN'S VOICE interrupts, from behind the kids:

MAN'S VOICE
'Scuse me, fellas -- can I get
through here?

Owen turns -- IT'S THE SMALL TOWN PLAINCLOTHES COP FROM THE OPENING OF THE FILM. The group parts to let him into the office -- as he passes, we HEAR:

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)
As some of you may have heard, there
was an incident last night, and one
of our recent graduates was killed...

Owen watches as our POLICEMAN steps up to the Principal -- the other Cop turns, introduces them; he shakes her hand, CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - MORNING

The ENTIRE STUDENT BODY listens to the PRINCIPAL as she speaks at a podium. The PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMAN stands behind her with the other UNIFORMED COPS and VARIOUS FACULTY on stage.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I know many of you knew Scottie. He was a bright, funny student, and a real group leader who many of you knew from his continuing involvement with our Young Life Christian association...

ON OWEN, in the crowd, his backpack cradled in his lap:

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

The police assure me that everything possible is being done to find those responsible for this tragedy, but in the mean time, we should all be on the lookout for any suspicious activity...

Owen HEARS a STRANGLED LAUGH -- he peeks behind him to see KENNY, MARK and DONALD, a couple rows back; they're quietly joking around, unmoved by the proceedings. Donald suddenly glances in Owen's direction -- Owen quickly turns away, SLINKS DOWN in his seat, hiding from their view --

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Your safety is our number one concern.

CUT TO:

A FRONT PAGE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT THE MURDER

The HEADLINE: "LOCAL TEEN BRUTALLY SLAIN IN WOODS". There's a yearbook PHOTO of Scottie Tate; a SUB-HEADLINE: "Victim drained of blood, Police suspect ritual killing". SCISSORS lay by the article; it's been cut out. WE ARE:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Owen sits on the floor, by the newspaper, opening a NOTEBOOK, packed with clippings, scraps of paper... We HEAR OWEN'S MOM'S MUFFLED VOICE from the other room; she's very upset:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

I want you to come straight home after school, okay...?!

Owen ignores her, turning the pages of his notebook. INSIDE are OTHER ARTICLES he's collected -- GRISLY NEWS STORIES... MURDERS... ASSASSINATIONS... SERIAL KILLINGS...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

And I don't want you going outside the complex when you get home either -- not until they catch this guy! Stay in the courtyard...! Do you hear me...?!

In the book, Owen's eyes linger on his own CRUDE SKETCH of a PLAN TO BLOW UP THE SCHOOL -- and a few CHILD-LIKE DRAWINGS OF BLOODY, SEVERED HEADS, with names scrawled underneath: "KENNY", "MARK", "DONALD"; he smiles.

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Owen...?!

Finally, Owen finds an empty page -- he slips the new article into it, closes the book, satisfied. He gets up, goes to his desk, is about to put the notebook in an open drawer when he glances OUT THE WINDOW AT:

THE COURTYARD

He stares at the EMPTY JUNGLE GYM for a beat, WHEN SUDDENLY -- Owen's Mother's voice grows LOUDER, like she's approaching --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

I want you to promise me, honey --

We HEAR the sound of her trying to open Owen's locked door --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Hey... what's --
(KNOCKS on door, HARD)
Owen?!

Owen quickly buries the notebook deep in the drawer, grabs the cut up newspaper on the floor, hides it under his bed --

INT. HALL OUTSIDE OWEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE DOOR OPENS -- we're shooting LONG LENS past OWEN'S MOTHER, SOFT FOCUS in the F.G. She's in her blue robe, a half-full WINE GLASS dangles from her hand -- OWEN SEES IT.

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

What are you doing...?

OWEN

Nothing.

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Well, did you hear me -- ?

OWEN
Yes!

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Okay...
(quiets, softening)
I just... I don't want anything to
happen... To my baby...

She starts to CRY. Owen immediately feels bad. He moves to her slowly, hugs her... We CONTINUE TO STAY ONLY ON HIM, as he speaks softly, trying to comfort her as she begins to SOB:

OWEN
It's okay, Mom... Don't worry...
(then, even quieter:)
I'll just stay in the courtyard...
I always stay in the courtyard...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
(squeezing him, emotional)
Okay, sweetie... Thank you...

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

Owen exits his building. Across the way he SEES JACK (the weight-lifter we saw through the telescope earlier); he wears an INSULATED RUNNER'S OUTFIT, stretching his legs against the wall. He looks over at Owen, nods hello, JOGS OFF.

Owen starts for the jungle gym; he looks up at the BOARDED UP WINDOWS of the apartment next to his... no signs of life...

JUNGLE GYM - LATER

Owen sits by himself, playing with a RUBIK'S CUBE, struggling with it. After a long beat, A FIGURE comes up quietly behind him, sits on the jungle gym. It's the GIRL. Owen can tell she's there, but doesn't turn. Finally, she speaks:

GIRL
Oh, it's you again, huh?

Owen doesn't respond, pretending to be occupied by the Cube.

GIRL
You know, I really wanna be left
alone...

OWEN
Me too.

GIRL

So leave.

Owen doesn't turn, but decides to take a stand, fires back:

OWEN

You leave.

(then, a bit weaker)

I've lived here way longer than
you...

Beat. She just accepts that. Sits there. She looks at the Rubik's Cube, tremendously curious, despite herself:

GIRL

What is that?

OWEN

...This?

She nods, defensive. He looks at her like it's so obvious:

OWEN

It's a Rubik's Cube.

(then, is she nuts?)

You don't know Rubik's Cube?

GIRL

Is it a puzzle?

OWEN

Yeah... Wanna try?

(beat, holds it out)

Try it. You can give it back
tomorrow.

GIRL

That's okay. I might not be here
tomorrow.

OWEN

Day after tomorrow then. But I'm
gonna need it back.

GIRL

...How do you do it?

OWEN

You gotta make each side all one
color.

(he does a side)

See?

Finally, she takes it. Gets to work. Beat. Owen notices:

OWEN
 ...You smell kinda funny.

And she looks quite ill. So pale. Frail. She glances up, self-conscious; returns to the puzzle. Owen sees her clothes are thin, worn out, like a street urchin's:

OWEN
 Aren't you cold?

GIRL
 (eyes on the puzzle)
 No.

OWEN
 Why not?

GIRL
 I dunno. I don't really get cold.

Beat. He watches her, so absorbed in the Cube. After a while, he gets up. Waits for her to look up; she doesn't. So he starts to walk away... watching her... tentative...

OWEN
 ...See you tomorrow then...

And as Owen heads off, WE STAY WITH THE GIRL, totally focused on the puzzle. The door to the building CREAKS open and SLAMS shut; and she looks up, turns to see Owen is gone.

Just then, we HEAR an INHUMAN GROWL and GURGLE. The Girl doubles over, in excruciating pain... We HOLD on her, as she struggles, BREATHING SLOWLY... Finally, she looks up, glancing around the courtyard, warily. She gets to her feet, weary, stumbles toward the street...

EXT. BRIDGE UNDERPASS NEAR ENTRANCE TO THE COMPLEX - NIGHT

A FIGURE JOGS towards us, slowing as he approaches the underpass. It's JACK, out of breath, on his way back to the complex. As he enters the dark underpass, he hears a quiet, FRAGILE VOICE -- it's EERIE:

FRAGILE VOICE
 Help me...

It startles him, he looks around; but it's dark under here:

JACK
 ...Hello?

FRAGILE VOICE
 Please... Help me...

Finally, just barely, he SEES something against the wall in a dark heap -- it's the little Girl... She looks terrible...

JACK

Hey there... Are you okay? What happened?

GIRL

I fell down...

JACK

Yeah...? Can't you get up...?

GIRL

No...

JACK

How old are you, sweetheart? Do you live around here...?

GIRL

I live right here... Can you carry me...?

JACK

Okay, sweetheart... sure... Why don't you -- here...
(bends down to lift her)
Grab onto me... Okay...?

We WATCH the two of them, their FIGURES in SILHOUETTE: she reaches out her TREMBLING ARMS, tries to grab on to him --

GIRL

Thank you...

JACK

(lifting her gingerly)
You got it...?

GIRL

(struggling to hold on)
...yeah...

JACK

(feels her slipping)
You got it -- ?

THEN -- ALL AT ONCE -- THE GIRL'S BODY CONVULSES VIOLENTLY AROUND JACK WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED AND STRENGTH! SHE BITES VICIOUSLY INTO HIS NECK, EASILY OVERPOWERING HIM, EVEN THOUGH HE'S THREE TIMES HER SIZE -- HE **SCREAMS**, STAGGERING TERRIBLY IN UTTER SHOCK AND HORROR --

JACK
 JESUS CHRIST!!! JESUS CHRIST!!!

And he COLLAPSES, the Girl on him like a vice! HOLD as she takes a LONG, THIRSTY DRINK from JACK'S MOTIONLESS BODY...

Finally, she lifts her head. BLOOD STREAMS DOWN HER FACE. She looks haunted, disturbed. Then, in one swift move, she reaches down, and TWISTS HIS HEAD SHARPLY, SNAPPING HIS NECK.

She gets up, looks around to see if anyone has seen. No one is around. And she runs off, her body again moving just like a little girl's -- seeming frightened, vulnerable, fragile...

CUT TO:

JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We're LOOKING THROUGH OWEN'S TELESCOPE, PANNING THROUGH the empty living room, lights still on... The TELESCOPE SWINGS OVER and REFOCUSES on ANOTHER WINDOW where LARRY AND VIRGINIA sit in the dark in their pajamas, watching DYNASTY on TV. Larry has a hand on Virginia's BARE THIGH... The TELESCOPE HOLDS in anticipation of any exciting developments -- WHEN -- we start to HEAR MUFFLED ARGUING -- REVEAL:

OWEN

He takes his eye away from the telescope, and turns toward his BEDROOM WALL. The new neighbors are fighting again. He moves closer, climbing onto his bed to listen, concerned. This time it definitely sounds like THE FATHER is the one YELLING... the words are INDECIPHERABLE. As Owen presses his ear to the wall, he can BARELY make out a FEW FRAGMENTS:

BALDING MAN (THROUGH WALL)
 ...EXPECT ME TO CLEAN IT UP NOW,
DON'T YOU...!
 (more INDECIPHERABLE
 WORDS; then:)
 ...BITCH!

There's a SUDDEN LOUD BANG! Owen jerks away from the wall, startled. He LISTENS, catching his breath... but the neighbors have GONE SILENT again. A thought occurs... Owen gets up slowly, moves to THE WINDOW, PEERS DOWN AT:

THE COURTYARD

After a moment, there is ANOTHER BANG (a DOOR SLAM) at the BUILDING ENTRANCE below, and the BALDING MAN STORMS OUT into the courtyard. He LIMPS with his DUFFLE toward THE STREET... HOLD, as OWEN WATCHES; then, as it STARTS TO SNOW, CUT TO:

A FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Large, expansive, still... We HEAR WATER TRICKLING; PAN TO:

THE SHORELINE. Where fresh water from a SMALL AQUEDUCT PIPE flows into an opening in the ice... The Balding Man DRAGS JACK'S BODY through the snow toward the opening... it's tough work with his bad leg, and Jack was a big man. Finally, the Balding Man HEAVES THE BODY into the water. It FLOATS.

Winded, angry, the Balding Man finds a LONG STICK, and presses it into Jack's chest. He limps precariously along the edge of the shore, GUIDING the FLOATING BODY with the stick toward the SOLID ICE...

As it reaches the perimeter, the Balding Man THRUSTS the stick against the body, attempting to submerge it under the ice -- but it SLIPS, and the Man stumbles, almost tumbling in. He recovers... carefully repositions the stick --

DEAD BODY'S POV - FLOATING ON WATER

looking up at the Man as he gets the stick in place. He is seething. Using all his might, his face contorting in a brutal grimace, he lets out a VICIOUS, ENRAGED GRUNT, and we PLUNGE UNDER THE WATER -- the SOUND GOES SILENT -- we CUT TO:

THE HAUNTING VISION

BLOODY CLOUDS billowing in CLEAR BLUE WATER -- as we HOLD on the horrifically beautiful image, we HEAR QUIET BREATHING... Something OUT OF FOCUS DRIFTS DOWN into view -- just as we GLIMPSE it is a SEVERED HEAD -- we HEAR A GASP, and CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Owen AWAKES with a start. Another nightmare. HOLD.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - MORNING

Owen emerges from his building in his jacket and backpack, he starts across the courtyard when he NOTICES something...

CLOSE ON THE RUBIK'S CUBE. It rests on the jungle gym, covered in fresh snow. Owen picks it up, brushes it off to see, IT IS COMPLETELY SOLVED. Owen is stunned. He looks up at the BOARDED UP WINDOWS. Turns back to the Cube, OVERJOYED.

EXT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

We TRACK with OWEN as he walks along the CHAIN LINK FENCE toward the entrance -- he stares at the Cube in disbelief, oblivious to all else. As he EXITS FRAME, we come to REST ON a MAKESHIFT SHRINE on the FENCE: pictures, letters, candles.

It's a MEMORIAL to Scottie Tate. We PULL FOCUS to OWEN as he reappears behind the fence, walking up to the school, still gazing at the Cube. The BELL RINGS, Owen starts to run...

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

Owen, still holding the Cube, arrives to find the Girl already waiting on the jungle gym. She looks CLEAN, HEALTHY, she's dressed better. She smiles at him.

OWEN
How did you do it?!

GIRL
I just... twisted it.
(smiles)
Do I smell better now?

He smiles, embarrassed... she does. He shrugs, awkward.

OWEN
...What's your name?

GIRL
Abby. What's yours...?

OWEN
I'm Owen.
(then)
How old are you?

GIRL(ABBY)
Twelve. More or less. What about you?

He looks at her queerly:

OWEN
Twelve years, eight months, and nine days -- what do you mean, "more or less"...? When's your birthday?

ABBY
I don't know.

OWEN
You don't know? Don't you celebrate your birthday?
(she doesn't respond; then)
What about your parents? They must know...

Still no response.

OWEN
Don't you get birthday presents?

ABBY
(simply)
No.

He looks at her, taking awfulness of that in. Beat. Then:

OWEN
Well... you can... have this. If
you want.

ABBY
(smiles, touched)
That's okay. It's yours.

He looks at the solved cube, in disbelief. Still excited.

OWEN
I really don't get how you did
this...

Beat. She looks at him.

ABBY
...Want me to show you?

He smiles. Mixes up the colored squares. Says quietly:

OWEN
Yeah...

ABBY
You have to start with the
corners...

He watches her as she starts to twist... stares at her hair,
her face... she's actually quite beautiful. We CUT WIDER ON:

THE TWO OF THEM ON THE JUNGLE GYM; MUSIC fades up, we HEAR:

A GIRL'S VOICE (JULIET)
Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet
near day...

INT. OWEN'S ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

ZEFFERILLI'S "ROMEO AND JULIET" plays on a 16 MM PROJECTOR in
the darkened class -- JULIET lies naked in the sheets staring
at ROMEO in the early morning light as he dresses, preparing
to leave. There is quiet GIGGLING among the class at the
romantic/sexual content on the screen. The TEACHER glances
up from a book at her desk, then back down, oblivious.

Paying no attention to the movie, Owen sits, copying something out of a BOOK: it's the MORSE CODE ALPHABET. He writes out the dots and dashes for each corresponding letter with a certain intensity, an urgency...

Across the room, Kenny sits with a long, broken-off RETRACTABLE CAR ANTENNA in his hand -- smiling slyly, he stretches the antenna out to its full length, reaches over, taps the shoulder of A CHUBBY GIRL WITH GLASSES in the next aisle, then quickly pulls it away, retracts it again. The Girl turns, annoyed, can't figure out who's tapping her...

Pleased, Kenny turns, looking for his next victim, when he spots Owen, on the other side of the room, copying... The sight of Owen so deeply immersed in something somehow irks Kenny; he stares at him darkly, wondering what he's up to...

HOLD on Owen as he writes... He starts to bounce his leg, anxious, excited... He pinches his crotch reflexively... Has to pee... But keeps right on working... On a mission...

ON THE SCREEN, Romeo kisses Juliet farewell --

ROMEO

I must be gone and live, or stay
and die...

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY

CLOSE ON OWEN as he finishes peeing. He zips his fly, and reaches out his leg, about to flush the toilet with his shoe when he hears a group of FOOTSTEPS in the bathroom -- the sound of METAL SCRAPING echoes... Owen freezes...

There is a KNOCK at the stall door... Owen remains perfectly still... Then, a loud BANGING... Finally, Owen flushes, unlocks the door, opens it, steps slowly --

OUTSIDE THE STALL

Kenny, Donald and Mark wait for him. Mark sits on a metal trash can propped against the bathroom door, blocking it.

KENNY

What were you writing back
there...?

OWEN

...What do you mean?

KENNY

In Cook's class.
(beat)
Let's see it...

Beat. Owen looks at him, decides to take a quiet stand...

OWEN

...No.

KENNY

...No?

Kenny approaches, extends the old car antenna in his hand...

KENNY

Where is it...?

SLAM -- he lashes the antenna viciously against Owen's leg!

KENNY

Where is it...?

SLAM -- even HARDER! But Owen, in pain, remains silent...

KENNY

Show me!

Frustrated, Kenny swings higher, SLASHES OWEN'S FACE! Owen, stiff as a board, clenches his eyes shut, his cheek BLEEDING.

DONALD

...Jesus Christ, dude...!

KENNY

...What...?

DONALD

You explain that to his mom...

KENNY

That's okay...

He walks up close to Owen, grabs him hard by the hair -- Owen keeps his eyes shut..

KENNY

She's not going to tell her mom on us, is she...? She fell down on the playground, that's all... Right? Right...?

Owen slowly opens his eyes, squints, preparing for more --

KENNY

Say it, little girl... Say it...

The SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

DONALD

C'mon, dude... Let's go...

Kenny just stands there for a moment, staring Owen down. Finally, they start to go. Owen watches, terrified... HOLD on his frightened face, as we HEAR:

OWEN (V.O.)

(whispering, miserable)

I fell down...

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

ON OWEN as he sits there, head hung low, a BAND-AID on his face; his mom, seen from shoulders down, sets food in front of him, as he finishes telling her about his "accident":

OWEN

...On the playground.

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

(takes his face in her hands)

Well you have to be more careful, honey... Okay? I don't like to see my baby hurt...

She kisses the top of his head. Owen nods, ashamed. Then:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Eat, sweetie. Please.

As she heads OFF-SCREEN, Owen STABS his mac and cheese, but doesn't eat; he just sits holding the fork, anger building...

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - JUNGLE GYM - NIGHT

Abby watches as Owen digs folded pieces of paper out of his backpack -- the MORSE CODE keys he copied down. His mood is so much brighter now that he is at Abby's side again --

OWEN

Here, look -- I made one for you, and one for me --

Abby sees a copy of ROMEO AND JULIET in the backpack -- picks it up, recognizing it with a tiny smile:

ABBY

Are you reading this?

OWEN

It's for school, it's boring -- c'mon, look...! It's so cool...!

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

We can talk to each other...!
Through the wall...!

She looks at him, suddenly uncomfortable... Puts down the book. Stares at the paper for a moment... Says quietly:

ABBY

Can you hear me through the wall?

Owen suddenly realizes he just let something slip, wishes he hadn't... He shrugs a shoulder, awkward, guilty:

OWEN

...Only sometimes...

Beat. She puts down the paper, stares at her shoes...

ABBY

What about the other night...? Did you hear anything the other night...?

OWEN

...A little...
(beat; then, quiet,
tentative)
What was your dad so mad about...?

No response. He looks at her. She still doesn't look up.

OWEN

Where's your mom...? Are you parents divorced?

ABBY

My mom is dead.

Owen looks at her. Takes in the hugeness of that. Then:

OWEN

My mom and dad are getting a divorce.

She looks up. Smiles sadly. Sees the band-aid on his cheek.

ABBY

What happened there...?

She points to his cheek. He looks away.

OWEN

Just some kids. At school.

She looks at him, concerned -- he tries to brush right past:

OWEN
Where do you go to school anyway?
I never see you --

ABBY
Owen, listen.

He stops. She looks at him, deadly serious.

OWEN
...What...?

ABBY
You have to hit back.
(then)
You have to hit back hard.

Beat.

OWEN
...There are three of them...

ABBY
Then you hit back even harder.
(beat)
Hit them harder than you dare. And
then they'll stop.

OWEN
...What if they hit me back?

ABBY
You have a knife.

OWEN
Yeah... But what if they --

ABBY
-- Then I'll help you.

He looks at her...

OWEN
...You? You're a girl...

She touches his hand gently, reassuringly. He looks down at her hand, touching his... Finally, he tentatively rubs his finger against hers. Looks back up at her. She smiles:

ABBY
I'm a lot stronger than you
think...

Finally, he smiles. Somehow more encouraged. He slips the paper back in her hand, grabs his, gets up; looks at her...

OWEN

Come on...

She looks at him, confused. He starts to go...

OWEN

Come on...!

She rises, and he takes off, running toward the building -- we CUT TO --

A HIGH ANGLE

looking down at them, as Abby chases after Owen playfully...

REVEAL

This is the BALDING MAN'S POV from his apartment window... He has peeled back some of the cardboard and newspaper, stands there WATCHING... He looks... JEALOUS...

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Still fully dressed, Owen lies, studying his Morse Code cheat sheet on his bed, close to the wall, listening for Abby... Suddenly, he HEARS a MUFFLED COMMOTION from next door:

ABBY (THROUGH WALL)

...Move...

(then)

...I have to get in there...!

Owen listens, concerned...

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

We WATCH through a DOORWAY as the Balding Man sits on a naked mattress next to the wall, newspaper in hand, a SMALL TRANSISTOR RADIO playing CLASSICAL MUSIC at his side. He stares up at Abby who waits impatiently, for him to move...

Finally, looking almost wounded, he picks up his little radio and gets up, limping away toward the doorway -- he starts to close the door as, BEHIND HIM we SEE Abby climb onto the mattress with her cheat sheet -- she KNOCKS once; a KNOCK comes back --

CLOSE ON the Balding Man's face as he finishes shutting the door in the F.G. He stands there, listening, perturbed...

BACK IN OWEN'S ROOM

Owen starts to TAP out his message on the wall to Abby:

OWEN
(whispering to himself)
S...W...E...E...

CLOSE ON his cheat sheet, as he continues -- on the paper, he has written out the code for the phrase: "SWEET DREAMS"...

INT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - INDOOR POOL - DAY

Quiet. Between classes. Owen makes his way to a little, windowed SIDE OFFICE, where he finds Mr. Zoric on his break, reading the paper, sipping coffee.

OWEN
Mr. Zoric...?

MR. ZORIC
(glances up, then back at
newspaper)
Yes, Owen?

OWEN
I was wondering. About the after
school strength training class?
Can people still... sign up?

Zoric looks up. Lowers his newspaper. He stares at Owen, trying to make out what is going on, senses it's serious:

MR. ZORIC
...You like to get strong?

Owen shrugs, embarrassed; Zoric nods, slow... Then:

MR. ZORIC
Okay. Four o'clock. You come. We
make you strong.

Owen nods. Zoric returns to his paper. Owen starts to go --

MR. ZORIC
Hey...

Owen turns back. Zoric glances up, then back at the paper:

MR. ZORIC
...We teach you swimming too.

Owen smiles sweetly:

OWEN

...Okay...

INT. OWEN'S MOM'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

An unmade bed. Empty wine glasses on the night stand.

Owen sneaks cautiously in, peeks at the partially opened door to the adjoining bathroom; hears THE SHOWER running...

He moves to HIS MOTHER'S PURSE, sitting open on her dresser. He reaches in, carefully pulls out HER WALLET... opens it... takes out a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL... He starts to put the wallet back, when he SEES --

A POSTCARD IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE SACRED HEART

stuck on the dresser mirror above him: Jesus stares down with his look of infinite compassion; Owen stares back, wary...

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENTS - TWILIGHT

Owen quietly exits his apartment, walks next door to Abby's. He KNOCKS on the door, when he hears IRREGULAR FOOTSTEPS -- he turns to see the BALDING MAN approaching from the stairwell, carrying an empty plastic trash can.

As he sees Owen, the Balding Man slows to a stop, stares stone-faced, menacingly... Owen smiles at him, unsure, a little afraid... After a LONG BEAT, the Man sighs slowly; then speaks, very quietly, ominously:

BALDING MAN

You know... I was like you once...

Owen stares at him, uncomfortable. Then, even more quiet:

BALDING MAN

(almost to himself)

I was just... like you.

Beat. Owen is bewildered. Growing anxious, he utters:

OWEN

...Is... Abby home...?

But the Man just keeps staring, lost in thought -- just as, Abby opens the door. She starts to smile, seeing Owen -- but her smiles fades as she sees the Balding Man too. Wonders what exactly is going on out here...

Relieved, Owen turns to her:

OWEN

Hey...

Her smile immediately returns.

ABBY

Hey.

And the two of them head off down the hall together, as the Balding Man watches... Abby steals a look back at him... Glares at him...

INT. LITTLETON VIDEO ARCADE - NIGHT

Owen and Abby stand at the same Ms. Pac-Man machine where Owen saw the Tenth Grade couple French kissing earlier... Abby watches, fascinated as Owen plays with great intensity. As he dies, Owen scrunches his face, laughs; he gestures it's Abby's turn. She takes the joystick, unsure, but smiling...

THE CANDY COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Owen puts down the TWENTY DOLLAR BILL to pay for a bunch of PACKAGES OF NOW AND LATERs; he gestures to the candy, so excited; he has to SHOUT over the BLASTING VIDEO GAME SOUNDS:

OWEN

Want some?! They're really good!
They're my favorite!

Abby looks at the candy, oddly uncomfortable --

ABBY

(shakes her head, waves
her hand)
No, I don't want it...!

Owen is a bit hurt she doesn't want to at least to try some; but he makes the best of it, points to the display:

OWEN

Well...! What do you like...! You
can have anything you want...!

Abby tries to be polite; it comes off colder than she means:

ABBY

I don't... really eat this stuff!

OWEN

(nods, smiles, a letdown)
Oh...! Okay...!

Owen turns to the Seventeen Year Old Counterman:

OWEN

I guess that's it...!

The Counterman takes the cash, gives Owen the change. Abby watches as Owen collects his candy, trying to hide his disappointment. She feels bad.

ABBY

Well... maybe I could try just
one...!

Owen looks up, suddenly excited. He opens a package, gives her a piece. She puts it in her mouth. He watches for her reaction. She smiles for him, nods. He grins, so pleased --

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Abby stands VOMITING VIOLENTLY, bent over against the side of a building. Standing back a bit, Owen watches, feeling just terrible. Finally, she looks up, embarrassed, sad...

ABBY

...Sorry.

Owen looks at her there, seeming so thin, so frail, so broken -- his heart aches... He so wants to comfort her... He moves to her, awkwardly, and, out of nowhere, just puts his arms around her... holds her tight...

Abby stands there stiffly, arms at her side, a bit stunned. Finally, she relaxes her body, gives in to him. She rests her head against his... But her eyes look troubled. Then:

ABBY

(whispers)

Owen... Do you like me?

OWEN

(still holding her)

Yeah...

(then)

A lot.

Beat.

ABBY

Would you still like me... even if
I weren't a girl...?

OWEN

(beat)

...What do you mean...?

But she doesn't respond. Finally, he says:

OWEN
I dunno... I guess so...

As she listens, Abby's EYES DRIFT to OWEN'S BARE NECK -- so tantalizingly close to her mouth... Her PUPILS WIDEN subtly, involuntarily -- she catches herself, has to resist her impulses... She stiffens, pulls away, afraid.

Owen looks at her, confused.

OWEN
...Why?

She smiles sadly, recovering; looks down at her shoes, shakes her head:

ABBY
No reason...

EXT. ENTRANCE TO APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT

Owen and Abby walk side by side, back into the courtyard... Somewhere in the distance, the familiar TRAIN HORN echoes...

OWEN
So where are you from? How come you guys moved here...?

ABBY
We... move around a lot.

OWEN
Yeah, but why would you move here? I hate it here. Someday I'm gonna get out...
(smiles at her)
And I'll never come back...
(beat, looks away)
People here are just... stupid.

Abby looks at Owen. She stops, reaches for his hand -- he sees it, starts to reach back, WHEN --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Owwwwen...!

Startled, Owen pulls away; he's suddenly angry, embarrassed:

OWEN
(muttering)
Oh God... Hang on...

He heads into courtyard -- we CUT TO:

The POV from OWEN'S APARTMENT WINDOW, looking DOWN past Owen's Mother's OUT OF FOCUS HEAD -- Owen LOOKS UP AT US:

OWEN

What...!

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Where were you?! I called you!

OWEN

I'm right here!

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

You promised me you wouldn't leave the courtyard -- !

OWEN

-- I been here the whole time...!!!

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Well, come up! It's time for dinner...!

OWEN

Okay...!!!

We CUT BACK DOWN to Owen, on the ground; he turns. Abby's gone.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENTS - MOMENTS LATER

Owen trudges up the steps -- finds Abby waiting, sitting by her doorway... she stands as Owen approaches; she smiles:

ABBY

Night...

Owen smiles back. Nods... Then, he goes inside his apartment... She watches as he shuts the door...

Then, she starts to open her own door...

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Abby enters to find the Balding Man grimly packing up his duffle -- she watches, unseen by him, as he neatly places the freshly washed plastic jug in the bag. Finally, she speaks:

ABBY

You going out...?

He looks at her. Then gets back to work. Not looking at her as he finally speaks, quietly, bitterly... The air is tense:

BALDING MAN

Is there a choice...?

(then)

I think maybe I'm getting sloppy.
Maybe I want to get caught...
Maybe I'm just... tired of this...

He stares at her. Then:

BALDING MAN

What would you do if they found me?
You don't think they'd come looking
for you...? People have seen my
face. They know we live here.

ABBY

(tentative, a bit afraid)

...You look tired. Maybe you
shouldn't go tonight...

BALDING MAN

What else am I good for?
(then, relents bitterly,
unable to look at her any
longer)
Don't worry... I won't let them
find you. I've already thought of
what to do. If I have to. I just
want you to know what I go through
for you...

She moves over to him slowly. He turns, seeing her there. He softens, lowers himself to her. She touches his face. He closes his eyes. Then opens them, looks down, vulnerable:

BALDING MAN

Please don't see that boy again...
Okay...?

He looks up at her. But she can't hold his gaze. She looks down. He hardens again, knows what that means. He gets up, and resumes packing his equipment. SEES his BIC LIGHTER, and CIGARETTES on the counter... Picks them up...

CUT TO:

EXT. YMCA PARKING LOT - LONG LENS SHOT - NIGHT

OUT OF FOCUS SMOKE rises in the F.G. around the BLURRY, SILHOUETTED HEAD of the Balding Man as he watches the YMCA ENTRANCE in the distance. A few TEENAGERS and YOUNG MEN exit with gym bags, laughing, carousing, unaware of him...

As they get in their cars, PULL FOCUS to back of the Balding Man's head. He takes a last, long drag on his cigarette, then, FLICKS it away; the burning ashes sparkle briefly...

INT. YMCA - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lights go out in the empty corridor; it's closing time. At the far end of the hall, just outside the front door, we can see a COUPLE of HIGH SCHOOLERS waiting in the cold, chatting.

PAN SLOWLY AWAY to a CLOSED LOCKER ROOM DOOR on the side of the hall. From inside, QUIET RUSTLING ECHOES...

INT. YMCA - LOCKER ROOM - SHOWER AREA - NIGHT

In one of the darkened shower stalls, the UNCONSCIOUS BODY of a LANKY TEENAGER hangs up-side-down on a rope from the shower head. Wearing his cloth mask, the Balding Man digs items out of his duffle -- the plastic jug, the funnel, the knife...

He sets the jug and funnel in place, right under the Teenager's head... He gets on his knees, by the Teenager's head, starts to open the folding knife, preparing to cut...

BACK IN THE HALLWAY

The High Schoolers chatting outside look like they are getting impatient -- one of them yanks open the front door -- YELLS:

HIGH SCHOOL KID
What the fuck, Dan?!!!! Let's go!!!

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

The Balding Man freezes, hearing the voice... He waits... Listening... When he starts hearing APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS --

HIGH SCHOOL KID (O.S.)
...Dan...?!!!!

Trying not to panic, the Balding Man stands slowly, moves to the locker room door, hears the footsteps getting closer. He presses himself to the wall, gripping the knife tensely, preparing to ambush anyone that comes through that door, if it comes to that... He tries to control his BREATHING...

The door SHAKES as someone tries to open it from the other side -- it's LOCKED -- there's a sudden BANGING on the door --

HIGH SCHOOL KID (O.S.)
ARE YOU IN THERE, DAN...?!!!

CLOSE ON THE LANKY TEENAGER as he hangs in the shower stall, unconscious, serene...

HIGH SCHOOL KID (O.S.)
 ...DAN?!!!

The Lanky Teenager's eyes barely flutter open, groggily, maybe hearing his name. But he is totally out of it...

IN THE HALL

The High School Kid stands outside the Locker Room door -- the Other Kid calls from the front entrance --

OTHER KID
 What's going on, man...!

The High School Kid starts walking away from the Locker Room, back toward the entrance --

HIGH SCHOOL KID
 I don't know! I don't know where
 he is...!

THE BALDING MAN

Listens as the footsteps start to get quieter... CUT TO --

THE LANKY TEENAGER'S UP-SIDE-DOWN POV

As his eyes FOCUS, seeing the Balding Man in his mask, pressed ominously to the wall by the door with the knife --

The horror of the image, starts to bring him to --

LANKY TEENAGER
 ...Hey...

Startled, the Balding Man turns to the Lanky Teenager -- the Teenager's eyes widen, he SCREAMS SUDDENLY --

LANKY TEENAGER
HELLLLLLLLP...!!! HELLLLL--

The Balding Man panics, doesn't know what to do --

IN THE HALL

The Two High Schoolers hear the SCREAMING, scramble back toward the Locker Room --

LANKY TEENAGER (O.S.)(CONT'D)
 --LLLLP ME...!!!

They spot a JANITOR down another hallway, pushing a cart --

HIGH SCHOOL KID
 (to the Janitor)
 Hey!

JANITOR
 What are you kids doing -- ?!

HIGH SCHOOL KID
 -- Do you have the key...?!

BACK IN THE LOCKER ROOM

More BANGING at the door, as the Lanky Teenager continues SCREAMING! The Balding Man uses all his strength to slide a heavy metal bench in front of the door -- then he turns, rushes toward the Teenager, who starts to SHRIEK even louder!

The Man quickly gathers up his equipment -- the jug, the funnel -- and stuffs it all into his duffle! He turns, looks around for another exit, but there is none...!

A KEY SCRAPES into the Locker Room door -- and the lock turns with a LOUD CLICK -- !

Nowhere to go, the Balding Man heads straight --

INTO THE SHOWERS

retreating into the farthest stall -- he presses himself into the corner, slides down the tile to the floor, cowering in complete terror... He starts digging madly into the duffle, finally pulling out the GLASS JAR OF ACID, just as --

THE LOCKER ROOM DOOR

opens, SLAMMING SHORT into the metal bench! The Men behind the door PUSH, and the bench STARTS TO SLIDE -- SCRAPING SLOWLY AGAINST THE FLOOR -- !

THE BALDING MAN

rips the cloth mask off his face! He reaches down, unscrews the lid from the glass jar -- he lifts it near his head, breathing hard, HESITATING, when -- he HEARS the High Schoolers and Janitor finally entering the Locker Room -- !

In total anguish, the Balding Man braces himself, with not a moment to lose -- he WHISPERS a final, PAINED CRY --

BALDING MAN

...Abby...!

-- then DOUSES HIMSELF WITH THE ACID, pouring it over his head -- and as it STARTS to SIZZLE and SMOKE --

HIS SCREAMS

ECHO HORRIFICALLY throughout the LARGE, TILED SPACE...!

CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - OVERHEAD SHOT - NIGHT

Quiet. Dark. Owen lies in bed, staring up at the ceiling, deep in thought. The faintest smile grows on his face, then fades away. Finally, unconsciously, he reaches out his hand, gently touches the wall, pressing his palm flat, tenderly against it --

INT. ABBY'S ROOM - OVERHEAD SHOT - AT THAT SAME MOMENT

Abby lies on the mattress, her hand already on the wall, as if touching Owen's on the other side. Still fully dressed, she lies there, perfectly still... when a LOW, inhuman GROWL breaks the silence... Abby rolls onto her side, clutching her stomach, looking frail... Hungry... Alone...

INT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - WEIGHT ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Owen lies grunting on a weight bench, struggling hard with some very light chest presses, as Mr. Zoric sits nearby, reading the NEWSPAPER -- the HEADLINE reads: "RITUAL KILLER CAUGHT IN THE ACT -- SUSPECT ATTEMPTS SUICIDE -- HOSPITALIZED, IN CRITICAL CONDITION".

Zoric looks up from the paper, sees Owen awkwardly battling the weight -- puts down the paper, helps him lift the bar safely up... Owen looks at him, a bit embarrassed at how weak he is; but Zoric nods encouragingly:

MR. ZORIC

Don't worry. Is good. Very good for start.

Owen smiles, and we CUT TO:

OWEN'S PANTS, STUFFED IN A URINAL

In the LOCKER ROOM BATHROOM. Disgusted, depressed, Owen stands there staring in his underwear, partially dressed. He carefully fishes the soaked pants out with his hand, dangling them away at arm's length...

EXT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - WIDE SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON

TRACK WITH OWEN as he starts for home in the waning light of the day, wearing his jacket, his backpack, and his little gym shorts. His breath mists in the freezing air... In his hand hangs a clear plastic bag containing his wet pants...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE BALDING MAN'S TRANSISTOR RADIO

as the LOCAL NEWS plays through HEAVY, SURGING STATIC from its tinny speaker:

NEWSCASTER

...Police say an unidentified man has been arrested in connection with the recent ritual murder of a local high school honor student...

REVEAL ABBY

who lies in a fetal position on the naked mattress in the dark room, staring at it. Concerned, she picks the radio up, trying to adjust the reception as the Newscaster continues:

NEWSCASTER

...The suspect is hospitalized in critical condition with severe, self-inflicted acid burns over his face and torso, making it impossible so far for authorities to determine his identity...

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT

Owen sits alone on the jungle gym, with his Rubik's Cube. He's got two sides done, and is working on a third... Losing interest, he stops, looks up at the boarded up windows of Abby's apartment, stares for a long time... Waiting... Finally, he SIGHS, disappointed, wondering where she is... It STARTS TO SNOW...

CUT WIDE ON THE COURTYARD -- OVER THIS we HEAR:

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
Ladies and gentlemen, the President
of the United States: Ronald Reagan!

As excited APPLAUSE breaks out, we CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

The APPLAUSE plays over a TELEVISION in the deserted lobby.
Reagan walks up to the podium, shakes the Announcer's hand,
as the crowd continues with its standing ovation:

RONALD REAGAN ON TV
Thank you... Thank you very much...

Oblivious, the ADMITTING NURSE sits reading a magazine.
After a moment, Abby enters, walks slowly to the counter; she
puts on a bit of an act, looking sad, lost... there are
snowflakes in her hair...

ABBY
Excuse me... I'm... looking for my
father...?

ADMITTING NURSE
Is he a patient here...?

ABBY
Yeah... They... brought him in
last night...
(looks down, ashamed)
...The police did.

ADMITTING NURSE
(suddenly realizing who
she means, pained)
...Oh... I see...

Abby looks up, vulnerable, looks like she might cry:

ABBY
Do you know where he is...?

The Nurse looks at her for a beat, feeling terrible for her,
tries to be gentle:

ADMITTING NURSE
He's... he's on the tenth floor,
sweetie... But it's restricted...

Beat; she looks at Abby with a sad smile, picks up the phone:

ADMITTING NURSE

Look -- why don't I call them, tell
them you're here --

But Abby immediately starts to back off --

ABBY

-- Oh, no -- that's okay...

And she heads for the door. Surprised, the Nurse watches her go, still holding the phone. Then, just before Abby exits, she notices something with horror -- Abby is barefoot...

ADMITTING NURSE

(under her breath)

Oh my God -- you poor thing...

She hangs up the phone, and runs after Abby --

ADMITTING NURSE

Hey -- ! Sweetie -- ?!

EXT. FRONT OF HOSPITAL - WIDE SHOT - IMMEDIATELY

The Admitting Nurse comes out to see that Abby is already gone, nowhere to be found. She looks around, confused, concerned. Finally, she turns, heads back...

As she re-enters the building, we HOLD -- a SHADOW on the FACADE, three floors up, suddenly STARTS MOVING -- STARTS CLIMBING -- it's ABBY...!

INT. TENTH FLOOR HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

SNOW SWIRLS outside the window. We HEAR the OMINOUS, RHYTHMIC HISSING of a RESPIRATOR just OFF-SCREEN. After a moment, Abby appears, crouching on the ledge... She STARES at something O.S., pained; then knocks gently on the glass...

HOLD.

We HEAR a RUSTLING of SHEETS... Abby waves sadly, as a BLURRY FIGURE starts to make his way slowly INTO FRAME... It's the Balding Man, his face ravaged by acid; he hobbles weakly to the window, wheeling his IV and HEART MONITOR with him. AN AIR TUBE snakes from his neck. He pulls open the window...

ABBY

...May I come in...?

He gestures to his twisted mouth, his neck: he can't talk. Abby nods. The Man leans his head out the window, close to hers. She looks at him, heartbroken; her eyes start to tear.

She looks down, ashamed, whispers:

ABBY
...I'm sorry...

She looks back up at him, tears streaming down her cheeks...

Struggling, he reaches out, touches her face... Gently wipes away her tears... She takes his hand in both of hers, presses it to her cheek. Closes her eyes. Trembling.

Finally, starting to recover, she looks up at him, vulnerable. At a loss... She smiles sadly:

ABBY
I don't... know what to do...
(then; kindly)
What would you like me to do...?

He looks at her, hesitating. Then he reaches up to the tube in his neck, and YANKS it out -- an ALARM on the MONITOR starts to BEEP. The Balding Man leans down, vulnerably presenting his neck to her, gestures to it...

Abby's expression turns grave, as she stares at him. She touches his head softly... Then, suddenly, she bends down, and BITES into his neck -- BLOOD SPURTS, she DRINKS DEEPLY...

The WIND starts to pick up as the Balding Man goes limp -- the DRAPES are sucked out the window, WHIPPING FURIOUSLY around them as the Man's body slumps -- Abby pulls aside, blood dripping from her mouth -- she watches as the Man starts to FALL -- he DROPS TEN FLOORS to the snow covered ground below -- !

A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM erupts from --

INSIDE THE ROOM

The HEAVYSET NURSE (from the opening of the film) has just entered -- she RUSHES toward the open window where the DRAPES TWIST WILDLY, obscuring the view -- ! Realizing the Balding Man must have just jumped, she puts her head in her hands, horrified --

The POLICEMAN bursts into the room, and we REPEAT THE MOMENT FROM THE OPENING OF THE FILM!

EXT. LEDGE OUTSIDE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The Policeman leans out, staring down at the Balding Man's body -- only now, from this VANTAGE POINT, we are able to REVEAL something we couldn't see before -- unseen by the Policeman --

ABBY

stands pressed to the wall, watching, terrified, just out of sight -- as the Policeman utters breathlessly --

POLICEMAN

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph...

HOLD on ABBY, as the Policeman retreats inside, to GENERAL CHAOS and YELLING... As the OFF-SCREEN PANIC BUILDS, Abby moves to the edge of the ledge, gazing solemnly down... Finally, she LEAPS into the air, and OUT OF FRAME!

CUT TO:

THE WORDS: "**ABBY... I'M SORRY...**"

SCRAWLED in the Balding Man's handwriting in the POLICE NOTEBOOK. RED LIGHT STROBES over the paper -- we ARE:

EXT. FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL - LATER

The Policeman stares at words in his notebook, haunted, as the Balding Man's body is lifted in the coroner's van...

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Excuse me... Officer...?

The Policeman turns --

POLICEMAN

...Yes?

It's the Admitting Nurse who spoke with Abby in the lobby -- She moves up close, visibly shaken by the proceedings...

ADMITTING NURSE

I'm the admitting nurse... I think we spoke on the phone...?

POLICEMAN

(remembering)

Oh. Right. About the little girl...?

She nods. He turns to a fresh page in his notebook... We START TO PUSH SLOWLY IN ON HIM...

POLICEMAN

What can you tell me about her...?

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abby appears outside Owen's partially opened window, on the ledge. The Balding Man's blood still stains her face... She TAPS on the glass...

ABBY

Owen...!

In bed, Owen starts to wake up, completely out of it... Abby whispers:

ABBY

Can I come in...?

He starts to get up -- Abby's alarmed:

ABBY

No -- wait -- don't look at me...

Owen groans... gets back under covers... facing away... drifting...

ABBY

But you have to say it... That I can come in...

OWEN

...You can come in...

ABBY

Close your eyes...

OWEN

They're already closed...

She comes in... She quickly gets out of her bloody clothes, undressing completely... and climb into bed behind Owen...

OWEN

How'd you get up here...?

ABBY

(beat)

I flew.

OWEN

Yeah, right...

(then, feels something behind him, opens eyes)

Hey... you're not wearing anything...!

(then)

And you're freezing...!

ABBY
Sorry... Is that gross...?

Beat.

OWEN
No.
(then)
Where were you today? I waited for
you...

ABBY
...I had to go out.

OWEN
Oh.
(then)
Abby...?

ABBY
Yeah...?

OWEN
Will you go steady with me?

ABBY
(beat)
What do you mean...?

OWEN
Will you be my girlfriend...?

ABBY
Owen... I'm not a girl...

OWEN
You're not a girl...?

ABBY
No.

OWEN
What are you...?

ABBY
I don't know... I'm... I'm
nothing.

OWEN
Oh.
(then)
You know, it's okay if you don't
wanna be my girlfriend. You don't
have to make stuff up...

ABBY
 Can't we just keep things the way
 they are...?

OWEN
 (hurt)
 Yeah.. Of course...

He stops talking, gives her a bit of the silent treatment.
 She can tell she's hurt him. Feels guilty...

ABBY
 Do you... have to... do anything
special when you go steady...?

OWEN
 (pouting slightly)
 No...

ABBY
 So everything's the same?

OWEN
 (obviously)
Yeah...

Beat.

ABBY
 Okay. We can go steady.

OWEN
 ...Really?

ABBY
 Sure.

He smiles. Closes his eyes. Abby stares at Owen's back...
 gently caresses his shoulder, running her fingers down his
 arm... and over his hand. She takes his hand in both of
 hers, and lifts it, puts it against her cheek, closes her
 eyes -- it's a gesture eerily reminiscent of the one she made
with the Balding Man just before he died... And as they both
 drift off into sleep...

TIMECUT TO:

THE VIEW FROM OWEN'S WINDOW - PRE-DAWN

HOLD for a LONG BEAT, until the SUN just peeks over the
 horizon, FLARING CAMERA... It's beautiful, lyrical...

A THIN SLIVER OF GOLDEN LIGHT reaches over the bottom lip of the window, SLICES silently into the room... projecting patterns on the wall...

REVEAL OWEN and ABBY, bathed in SOFT BLUE AMBIENCE, asleep in bed, like Romeo and Juliet. The LIGHT reaches toward them...

CLOSE ON ABBY'S ARM, as the RAY of SUNLIGHT slowly spreads out... finally... TOUCHING her SKIN -- the delicate surface BLISTERS SUDDENLY, starts to SMOKE -- !

ABBY'S EYES SNAP OPEN -- she yanks her arm instinctively out of the light, startled, in pain! She backs quickly away from the light, into the corner, pulling the blanket around her. She looks around the room in horror, stunned that she let her guard down so low as to find herself right here, right now... Beside her, Owen remains blissfully in slumber.

Her back to the wall, Abby reaches over very, very carefully... grabs the cord, gently lowers the blinds...

HOLD on her as she sits there... catches her breath...

CUT TO:

THE WORDS: "I MUST BE GONE AND LIVE, OR STAY AND DIE..."

WRITTEN on a small SCRAP OF PAPER lying on the pages of an OPEN BOOK on Owen's DESK. Below the words, a HEART has been drawn. LIGHT SUDDENLY SPILLS across the paper as we HEAR the sound of metal BLINDS BEING YANKED OPEN. A HAND enters FRAME, picks the paper up --

It's OWEN, having just gotten up; he reads the note, sleepy. He turns the scrap over -- it's a fully ripped open package of Now and Later candies. He lifts the open book the scrap was lying on, looks at the cover -- it's "Romeo and Juliet". Owen looks back at the scrap -- SEES below the heart is written, "**OWEN + ABBY**". Owen smiles.

EXT. OWEN'S WINDOW - MORNING

The window opens, and out pops Owen's head -- he looks around at the great drop below, to the narrow window sills, covered with undisturbed, virgin snow... How did she get up here last night...? It's impossible...

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Owen sits among a rowdy CROWD of MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS, silently reading his copy of "Romeo and Juliet" -- his brow is furrowed, the book is hard to understand...

The crowd starts to get even more excited, looking out the window -- Owen stops reading, looks out the window to see THE FROZEN LAKE, as the bus approaches... It's a school field trip... Along the distant horizon, a PASSENGER TRAIN speeds...

EXT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

The Students file off the bus, carrying ICE SKATES; some have HOCKEY STICKS and HELMETS... Mr. Zoric and a FEW OTHER TEACHERS supervise, directing the student traffic --

MR. ZORIC

If you play hockey, you play this side! Free skate, this side!
Everyone careful for holes in ice!
Stay! Away! From holes! We be watching! So you play safe!

As Owen starts to put on his skates with the others, Kenny, Donald, and Mark step up behind him -- Kenny puts his hand on Owen's shoulder, leans in, speaking to him quietly, smiling:

KENNY

I hope you been learning how to swim... Coz today you're goin' in...

And the three bullies head out to the ice. Owen watches them go, with a growing sense of trepidation... and anger...

CUT TO:

A SMALL, FROZEN AQUEDUCT PIPE

along the shore. It looks like the pipe we saw the night the Balding Man dumped the body of the weight-lifter into the water -- only now the entire SHORELINE IS FROZEN SOLID.

Owen's feet trudge by the pipe in skates... He is scouring the area for something...

A GROUP OF GIRLS skate into the area, laughing, trying out their best (and not particularly impressive) figure skating moves -- one of them is the girl Kenny accosted in the pool.

Ignoring them, Owen keeps searching; he spots something, digs it out of the snow... It's a LONG STICK -- it could be the same stick the Balding Man used to submerge the body under the ice, though there's no way to be sure...

Owen BANGS the stick against his palm, testing its strength...

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE OF THE LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

Kenny, Donald, and Mark make their way across the ice... Finally coming upon Owen, who stands about twenty feet in front of a HOLE IN THE ICE, holding the long stick. He stares at them. Kenny smiles.

KENNY

Is she ready for a swim...?

Owen says nothing, just sets his jaw; but it is clear he is very afraid... He grips the stick harder, raises it slightly, bracing himself for trouble... Kenny notices:

KENNY

Whattaya think you're gonna do with that...?

OWEN

(trying to be brave)

I'm gonna... hit you with it... If you try anything...

Kenny looks at his friends, smiles mockingly:

KENNY

Really...? Wow...

NEAR THE EDGE OF THE LAKE

As he tries to organize a hockey game, Mr. Zoric suddenly sees Owen surrounded by the boys near the hole in the ice... He watches them with growing concern...

BACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE

Kenny's smile fades as he stares Owen down...

KENNY

You know what I think...?

Owen remains silent...

KENNY

I don't think you're gonna do a fucking thing... I think you're just gonna stand there, like the little girl you are... And I'm gonna grab that stick... and ram it right up your ass... And then...?

(beat, hardens)

You're goin' swimming.

Donald sees something, is growing uncomfortable with all this; says quietly to Kenny:

DONALD

Dude -- Zoric is over there
checking us out -- let it go...
We'll beat his little ass later...

But Kenny isn't going to be the one to blink... he just keeps staring... Owen is trembling...

KENNY

Gimme the stick...

Owen doesn't dare move. Kenny, sensing weakness, suddenly lunges forward, and Owen, panicked, SHUTS HIS EYES, and SWINGS THE STICK with ALL HIS MIGHT! IT CONNECTS squarely with the side of Kenny's head, and Kenny DROPS, stunned -- !

MARK

Holy shit! Are you fucking crazy!?

Owen opens his eyes, shocked to see Kenny, crumpled on the ice, gripping his ear in excruciating pain -- BLOOD GUSHES! Kenny starts to SCREAM -- !

MR. ZORIC

turns, hearing Kenny's agonized screams -- one of the other Teachers immediately heads toward the middle of the lake to investigate -- Zoric is about to go too -- when he HEARS MORE SCREAMS from the other direction -- !

He turns to see the GROUP of GIRLS at the shoreline, by the aqueduct -- the girl Kenny accosted in the pool is SCREAMING and CRYING, horrified -- Zoric starts in their direction...!

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE

The Teacher rushes to Kenny's aid, shocked by the amount of blood -- Owen watches, absolutely terrified at what he has done -- ! He stands there, frozen... drops the stick...

MEANWHILE, AT THE SHORELINE

We watch in WIDE SHOT as Zoric arrives -- the girls are huddled together, comforting each other; one of them points to something by the edge of the lake -- Zoric looks, and the blood drains from his face... He recovers, starts to pull the girls away -- then, he turns back, staring, aghast...

CUT TO:

JACK, THE WEIGHT-LIFTER'S BODY

HALF-SUBMERGED under water, and HALF-FROZEN into the ice. A CHAIN SAW CARVES around him...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE - WIDE SHOT - LATER

POLICE CARS. FIRE TRUCKS. A CROWD has gathered, watching along with the Students as a CRANE lifts an ENORMOUS, SOLID BLOCK of ICE CONTAINING JACK'S BODY into the air...

We ZOOM SLOWLY in on MR. ZORIC in the distance as he animatedly describes what happened to a MAN IN A SUIT, who has his back to us, taking notes... A PAIR OF COPS need to squeeze by, and Zoric steps aside, still talking -- as he and the POLICE OFFICER rotate, switching places, we SEE Zoric has been talking to the SMALL TOWN POLICEMAN from the opening of the film; we CONTINUING ZOOMING SLOWLY in, until his HAUNTED, and CONCERNED face fills frame...

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

ON OWEN, profile, his head hung low. His mother sits out of focus in the F.G.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Give me one reason I shouldn't suspend you, Owen...

(beat)

Can you think of one?

Owen keeps his head lowered, miserable.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Look, I know about Kenny and his friends, believe me -- I've had to deal with them many times -- but where would you ever get the idea that this is the way to handle things? This in not. The way. To handle things. Don't you know what could've happened...?

(then)

You seem like a smart kid. I just don't want to see you going down the wrong path...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

(very softly, distraught)

He's a good boy... he really is...

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Owen takes off his jacket; his mom is already ON THE PHONE:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Hello...? Is George there...?
Excuse me...? This is his wife --
who's this...?

The DOOR BELL RINGS. Owen looks at his mom, who is angrily immersed; he trudges for the door, as he continues to hear:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Well, hello, Cindy... Could you
please tell George that I called,
and that I need to talk to him...?
About our son...? It's urgent.
Yes -- if he even gives a shit...

Owen opens the door -- it's the SMALL TOWN POLICEMAN:

POLICEMAN
(grave tone)
Hi there... Your mom or dad home?

Owen looks at him, suddenly worried -- does this have something to do with Kenny...?

OWEN
Um... yeah...
(then)
Mom...!?

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
(still on the phone)
Thank you, Cindy... Goodbye...
(hangs up, then, annoyed)
What...?!

Her FIGURE enters the hallway -- she slows, seeing the Policeman. Her tone immediately changes, quiets:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
...Oh... What's this about...?

POLICEMAN
I'm afraid there's been an incident
with one of your neighbors here in
the complex... So we're just going
around, talking to people... see if
anyone knows anything...

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
...What kind of incident...?

The Policeman glances at Owen -- this may not be appropriate for his young ears; Owen's mother immediately picks up on it:

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

(firm)

Owen -- why don't you go to your room...?

Owen hesitates, disappointed. The Policeman smiles apologetically, and Owen heads off -- he steals a final look at them from down the hall --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Would you like to come in, Officer...?

As the Policeman enters... CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dejected, Owen enters, shuts the door... sets down his backpack by his desk when he sees a FLASH from outside his window. He HEARS VOICES. He looks out --

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

There's ACTIVITY inside JACK'S APARTMENT. Owen looks THROUGH HIS TELESCOPE: it's SEVERAL POLICEMAN in LATEX GLOVES... TAKING FLASH PICTURES... SEARCHING FOR EVIDENCE...

Owen watches for a moment, transfixed... when he HEARS BARKING across the courtyard: he swings his TELESCOPE over to FIND VIRGINIA, out on her balcony, also silently craning to try to spy a look at what's going on in Jack's apartment -- her tiny lap dog is cradled in her arms --

She turns, suddenly, SEEING OWEN STARING AT HER THROUGH THE TELESCOPE -- she glares, goes back inside, yanks the drapes shut. Owen sighs. Then he turns, LOOKS AT HIS WALL...

INT. ABBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Looking ill, Abby lies on her mattress when she starts to hear quiet KNOCKING on the wall... Morse Code... It makes her smile sadly. She looks over at the wall where she has taped Owen's cheat sheet, starts to decode his tapping...

She raises her hand, about to knock back when she hears MORE KNOCKING -- FROM THE FRONT DOOR. Abby, turns, frightened...

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Abby creeps toward the front door, on eggshells, trying not to make a sound... MORE KNOCKING on the door...

She reaches the door, steps up on her tip-toes to look --

THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE

The SMALL TOWN POLICEMAN stands outside the door, waiting...

Abby backs away from the door... stares at it for a LONG BEAT, not knowing what to do...

Finally, she hears FOOTSTEPS, as the Policeman starts to walk away... hears him KNOCKING FAINTLY on some other door...

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Owen lies on his bed, next to the wall waiting for response from Abby. He gives up, disappointed. Turns off the light.

INT. OWEN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL - WEIGHT ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON Owen on the bench press -- he pushes hard, huffing and puffing with the barbell; there's a new fire in his little body...

INT. INDOOR MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL - LATE AFTERNOON

Owen trains in the pool, holding the edge, kicking his legs.

VOICE

Hey Owen...

Owen looks up to see Mark, the smallest of the bullies standing there in his bathing suit -- he has a bit of a smile on his face, he's hard to read:

MARK

Look's like you went for a swim after all, huh...?

Owen glares at him, wondering if this is going to be trouble; but seeing Owen's expression, Mark immediately backs off:

MARK

I'm just kidding...

And he moves off, sheepish, to the other side of the pool, jumps in. Owen watches, surprised: is he afraid of Owen now?

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Owen emerges from the building when he overhears VOICES -- he suddenly backs away, frightened, hides behind a column --

OWEN'S POV:

DONALD and KENNY, a HUGE BANDAGE on his ear, have just greeted MARK, who's just come out of the building; as Owen watches, an OLDER, TALLER KID (KENNY'S BROTHER) suddenly runs up behind Kenny, and playfully -- though brutally -- wrestles with his head -- Donald and Mark laugh -- Owen's intrigued:

KENNY'S BROTHER
How's the cripple...!

Kenny, the much weaker of the two, wrestles his big brother off, pissed, protecting his ear:

KENNY
Jesus Christ, dude -- look out...!

KENNY'S BROTHER
(laughing)
Man, that kid wailed on your ass --
(yells in his bad ear)
Can you still hear me, bro -- ?!

KENNY
Stop...!

He SOCKS his older brother hard in the arm; but Kenny's brother only seems to enjoy it, this is his idea of humor. Finally, he eases up, smiles:

KENNY'S BROTHER
You going home?

KENNY
No, we're going over to Mark's...

KENNY'S BROTHER
Well can I borrow your keys...? I
forgot mine... Pleeeeeeease...?

Kenny softens, giving in -- pulls out his keys, hands them over; his older brother musses Kenny's hair:

KENNY'S BROTHER
Thanks... See you at home, little
girl...

Kenny pushes him off, instantly mad again. Kenny's brother heads off. Kenny turns, sees Donald and Mark grinning:

KENNY
Shut up...

DONALD
 (trying to stop smiling)
 We didn't say anything...

KENNY
 Shut up...

As they head off, Kenny glowering, his two friends trying to hide their pleasure, OWEN SMILES... so happy to see the tables turned on his nemesis... OVER THIS WE HEAR:

OWEN (V.O.)
 (quietly excited)
 Abby... I did it...

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - JUNGLE GYM - NIGHT

Owen and Abby on the jungle gym. Abby turns to him:

ABBY
 You did what...?

OWEN
 They were gonna push me in a hole. In the ice. So I got a big stick and I hit Kenny really hard in the head. He had to go to the hospital -- I was almost suspended. But I did it. What you said. I stood up to them.

Abby looks at him, surprised... taking that in...

ABBY
 ...Owen.

OWEN
 ...Yeah?

Abby slowly leans in, kisses him gently on the cheek. She pulls back, smiles at him, proud. Owen beams, embarrassed. Beat. An idea strikes; he asks quietly:

OWEN
 Hey... You wanna go somewhere...?

ABBY
 (quiet, intrigued)
 Where...?

He hops down, reaches out a hand to her, mysteriously; she looks at him, then takes it, easing off the jungle gym --

CLOSE ON HER BARE FOOT as it touches the snow... and CUT TO:

DARKNESS

FOOTSTEPS ECHO... A FLASHLIGHT sweeps through FRAME, illuminating HAND-INKED WORDS ON AN OLD, DUSTY DOOR: "**KEEP OUT**", and "**ENTER UPON PENALTY OF DEATH**". Owen enters FRAME, pushes a shoulder hard into the door, it opens REVEALING:

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

A dim, dingy, concrete space, but a secret world all its own, furnished with mismatched items salvaged from the trash: a SUNKEN ARMCHAIR, an OLD COUCH, a THREADBARE PIECE OF CARPET... BEER and LIQUOR BOTTLES litter the floor. There are PILES of DOG-EARED GIRLY MAGAZINES. At the center of it all is a BATTLE-SCARRED PING PONG TABLE, a hole punched through one side.

Abby takes it all in, walking around with a childlike grin.

OWEN

There was this kid who used to live in the building. Tommy. He used to hang out down here with some of the high school kids, and... they would drink and smoke. Anyway, sometimes when the older kids weren't around, he'd play ping pong with me. He was pretty nice, but... then he moved away.

(beat, looking around)

I kinda like it down here...

ABBY

It's cool...

OWEN

I don't think any of the adults even know about it...

Abby finds an old cassette player, presses play: "The Guns Of Brixton" by THE CLASH begins, as Abby continues her tour...

ABBY

So... what did you want to do down here...?

Beat. Owen smiles, watching her...

OWEN

I have an idea... close your eyes...

Abby stops, looks at him. She smiles. Closes them.

Owen quietly takes his PEN KNIFE out of his pocket. He glances at Abby, then opens it, presses his thumb carefully against the SHARP TIP... He swallows, bracing himself... Then presses hard, suddenly, against the blade, SLICING OPEN HIS THUMB -- he GRIMACES silently in pain, as it starts to BLEED... A LOT... He smiles:

OWEN

Okay... let's... make a pact...

Abby opens her eyes. Owen holds out his BLOODY HAND:

OWEN

...you and me...

Seeing the BLOOD, Abby immediately FREEZES in HORROR and DREAD... Her PUPILS WIDEN, like an animal about to pounce --

Oblivious, Owen steps toward her, hand dripping -- he offers the knife, trying to allay any fears --

OWEN

It's okay -- it only hurts for a second, it's no big deal...

Abby backs away, her stomach GROWLING -- she holds herself rigid, FIGHTING VICIOUS, HUNGRY URGES... when suddenly, she SEES OWEN'S BLOOD PUDDLING on the floor; HER EYES FIX ON IT --

HOLD for a long, suspended beat, as she STARES, MESMERIZED... LOSING HERSELF TO INSTINCT... Owen still doesn't get it, AS --

ALL AT ONCE, Abby DROPS to the ground, HOVERING FEVERISHLY over the PUDDLE on all fours! She SNARLS RAVENOUSLY --

OWEN watches in shock, as ABBY STICKS AN EERILY LONG TONGUE OUT of her mouth, begins LICKING THE BLOOD off the concrete!

OWEN

(breath stolen)

...Abby...?

Abby suddenly LOOKS UP -- her FACE, smeared with dirt from the floor, is TRANSFORMED! She has DEMONIC EYES, her EXPRESSION IS TORTURED, SAVAGE -- she doesn't even look like a child anymore...! QUIVERING PRIMALLY, she HISSES, arching her back, on the VERGE OF ATTACK:

ABBY

Go away...!

But Owen can't move... he is terrified... his eyes start to well with tears... Abby GLARES FURIOUSLY, POSSESSED:

ABBY

GO...!!!

But he can't! Then -- knowing if she were to stay even an instant longer, it would be over -- she turns suddenly, making a break -- and RUNS WILDLY for the door -- !

Owen is completely stunned -- !

INT. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - IMMEDIATELY

FOLLOWING ABBY -- as she SPRINTS MADLY, PANTING, GRUNTING like a wild, panicked beast! HER BARE FEET SLAP concrete, picking up speed -- WE STAY WITH HER AS SHE GOES --

UP METAL STAIRS -- BOUNDING FOR THE EXIT DOORS -- !

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - HIGH ANGLE - NIGHT

Abby bursts into the courtyard and heads STRAIGHT FOR A TREE... like a feral cat, she launches right up the trunk, CLIMBING SWIFTLY, EERILY -- her nails SCRATCHING, CLAWING at the bark as she goes...

AT THE TOP OF THE TREE

We FIND her, settling in the branches, RABID, her SENSES HEIGHTENED, a HUNGER UNLEASHED, NEEDING TO BE SATED... She peers around the courtyard below -- her pupils so wide, her EYES ARE SOLID BLACK... Suddenly, she HEARS a small dog's BARKING -- TURNS --

BELOW

VIRGINIA is entering the courtyard, walking her tiny dog. She's moving fast, angry, like maybe she's just had a fight -- fifty feet behind, LARRY follows, trying to catch up; he calls after her:

LARRY

(out of breath)

Goddammit -- Virginia...!

But she keeps going, towards her building -- and directly into the path of -- ABBY -- who ABRUPTLY LEAPS DOWN, KNOCKING VIRGINIA, FACE DOWN, INTO THE SNOW!

VIRGINIA SCREAMS, THRASHING WILDLY as ABBY SINKS HER TEETH INTO HER NECK, TEARING FLESH -- BLOOD SPURTS out into the snow as Abby begins RUTHLESSLY FEEDING, SLURPING...! Beside them, the little lap dog growls and barks primevally --

Hearing the screams, Larry begins to RUN! He comes upon the scene in utter panic and shock, freaking out -- he LUNGES suddenly at ABBY, KICKING her FIERCELY -- and ABBY is KNOCKED FREE, TUMBLING into the snow -- !

Abby lifts her head, stunned -- her MOUTH OOZES BLOOD, PIECES OF FLESH STILL IN HER TEETH...

Larry sees the BLOOD pouring from Virginia's shredded neck -- he starts for Abby in a blind rage --

LARRY
What the FUCK -- ?!

But before he can reach her, Abby, terrified, snapping back to reality, TAKES OFF! Larry SCRAMBLES after her, SKIDDING around in the snow, but Abby's agility and speed way are too much for him -- and, in an instant, she's gone!

JUST THEN, OWEN emerges into the courtyard, dazed as COMMOTION builds around him -- Larry RANTS desperately, totally out of breath as RESIDENTS APPEAR on their balconies to see what's the matter:

LARRY
 (crying, hysterical)
Somebody call 9-1-1...!!! SOMEBODY
CALL 9-1-1...!!!

He rushes to his girlfriend's side, as BLOOD STILL GUSHES FREELY from her neck -- he's in a complete frenzy --

CLOSE ON OWEN, as LARRY SCREAMS ECHO through the courtyard:

LARRY (O.S.)
 (agonized disbelief)
 Jesus Christ -- she bit her...!!!
 SHE FUCKING BIT HER...!!!

HOLD, as DREAD sets in Owen's eyes... Then, TIMECUT TO:

HIGH ANGLE - OVER COURTYARD - LATER

RED FLASHING LIGHTS. A CROWD OF NEIGHBORS watch, as PARAMEDICS load Virginia into an AMBULANCE, LARRY at her side... CUT TO REVEAL -- THIS IS THE POV FROM OWEN'S WINDOW.

Owen stands there watching, visibly shaken; he looks down, squeezing his thumb, finishes sealing a BAND-AID around it. He stares at it... Then looks up slowly, across the way... at Larry and Virginia's EMPTY APARTMENT... at JACK'S...

CUT TO:

LIGHT SPILLING ACROSS OWEN'S MOTHER'S BODY

as she lies in bed in her BLUE NIGHTGOWN, PASSED OUT, FACE BURIED in the pillow, her HAIR SPLAYED chaotically... we ARE:

INT. OWEN'S MOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

OWEN stands, backlit in the doorway, having just opened the door; he stares in at his mother in the dark room... BEAT.

OWEN
(quiet, vulnerable)
...Mom...?

But she doesn't stir... Owen looks over at the EMPTY WINE BOTTLE and GLASS on the night stand, realizes she's going to be out for quite some time...

HOLD ON OWEN'S STARING EYES, bathed in shadow; they look frightened, helpless... we start to hear a FILTERED PHONE RING... Finally, a WOMAN'S VOICE ANSWERS; she sounds SLEEPY:

WOMAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
...Hello...?

CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Owen sits on the floor clutching the phone, his arms hugging his knees to his chest, his back against the cabinets... He looks scared, on the verge of breaking down... (NOTE: the entire conversation is EXTREMELY INTIMATE, QUIET, INTENSE...)

OWEN
Hi... Is my dad there...?

We hear QUIET, INDISTINGUISHABLE VOICES, then, a MAN gets on:

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
Hello...?

OWEN
Dad...? Can I talk to you...? For a minute...?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
...Sure, pal... What is it...?
What's wrong...?

Owen can't speak... starts to cry...

OWEN
I dunno...

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
What...?

OWEN
...Do you think...? Is there...?
Is there such a thing... As evil?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
...What...?

OWEN
...Can... people be evil? Is that
true? Is that real...?

SILENCE... Then:

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
What are you talking about, pal...?
I don't know what you're talking
about...
(long beat)
Did... something happen...?

Owen doesn't know what to say... His father grows anxious:

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
Where are you getting this...?
From your mother...? All her...
religious crap...?

OWEN
No...

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
Jesus Christ -- don't listen to
that shit, okay...?

OWEN
(heart sinking)
No -- that's not --

But his father isn't listening, some past conflict already
triggered --

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
-- Goddammit...!

Away from the phone, we can just BARELY HEAR the Woman --

WOMAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
What's wrong -- ?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
 (to the Woman)
 She's filling his head with all
 this crap...!
 (then, back into phone)
 You know what? Owen, listen -- put
 your mother on the phone, okay? I
 wanna talk to her...

OWEN
 Um, she's... she's not here...

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
 Well please have her call me when
 she gets back, alright...?
 (beat)
 Okay...?

Owen makes one last desperate attempt:

OWEN
 Dad...?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
 (cutting him off)
 Owen, I want you to get that crap
out of your head, okay? You mother
 just... she has problems... and I'm
 gonna talk to her. So I don't want
 to hear any more about this,
alright?

Owen is crushed...

OWEN
 ...Yeah...

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)
 (softens again)
 Okay. Good. You have a good
 night, pal. I love you. And I'm
 sorry about the last couple months,
 but I'll see you real soon, okay?
 I promise. Maybe next weekend...

OWEN
 (world caving in)
 Okay... I love you too...

Hangs up. Leaving Owen back where he was. Completely alone.

CUT TO:

ABBY'S NOTE: "I MUST BE GONE AND LIVE, OR STAY AND DIE..."

Owen stares at it, curled up on his bed. He looks at the HEART, "OWEN + ABBY" beneath it... Finally, he steels himself, and raises his hand to the wall... He hesitates, then... KNOCKS forcefully. He waits, heart racing... Nothing. He turns away, maybe relieved... until... a KNOCK comes from the other side. Owen turns back to the wall...

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Abby opens the door slowly, looking healthier than she has been. Sees Owen waiting there in his jacket. The air is charged. They stare at each other. Finally, Owen says:

OWEN
Can I come in...?

She smiles, a bit wary, nods. He is about to enter; then:

OWEN
...You have to say it...

She looks at him, surprised by his tone; her smile fades...

ABBY
...You can... come in...

He does... she follows, self-conscious, as he walks down the hall cautiously, seeing her place for the first time... It's desolate, almost no furniture, belongings in piles. Spartan. Owen takes it in silently; then he just stops where he is, hands in his jacket pockets, not looking at her...

OWEN
(quietly)
Are you a vampire...?

She glances down at her bare feet...

ABBY
I... need blood. To live. Yes.

He looks at her...

OWEN
Are you... dead...?

ABBY
No.
(then)
Can't you tell...?

OWEN

But... how old are you? Really.

ABBY

I'm twelve...

(then, still trying to
understand it herself)

But... I been twelve for a very
long time...

Owen glances around, wary...

OWEN

Where's your dad...?

ABBY

(beat, guilty)

...He wasn't... my dad...

Owen looks at her, nods. Owen take a step into the dining room. On an old table is a collection of STRANGE, WORN OUT TOYS from many different eras, some of them looking almost like ANCIENT GAMES or PUZZLES... Owen looks at them...

OWEN

What are all these...?

ABBY

(smiles sadly, shrugs)

...I like puzzles...

He steps over to a series of OPEN BOXES against the wall; inside, sorted into groups are WATCHES, WALLETS, CLOTHING...

OWEN

What about this stuff...?

ABBY

They're just things...

(beat)

You can take whatever you want...

Owen sees RUMPLED CASH in one of the boxes. There's a lot. A horrible thought occurs:

OWEN

These are things from the people
you kill, aren't they? You kill
them, and then steal from them,
right...?

She doesn't respond immediately -- it spooks him -- he starts for the door, angry --

OWEN

I'm wanna go home now...

But she BLOCKS HIS WAY, sad, doesn't want him to leave...

OWEN

I wanna go... Are you gonna let
me...?

(then, with an edge)

What are you gonna do to me...?

Stung, she looks up at him, then back down; she steps out of his way, whispering, heartbroken:

ABBY

...I told you we couldn't be
friends...

And Owen heads for the door. She looks up, watches him go...
And as we HEAR the DOOR OPEN and SLAM SHUT, we CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY

Where Owen stands outside Abby's front door, heart-racing,
breathing hard through his nose, trying to calm down...

HOLD.

Then --

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAWN

HOLD as the SUN cracks over the horizon in the distance...

CUT TO:

A MOVING SHOT, DOWN A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAWN

We FOLLOW a POLICEMAN approaching a HOSPITAL ROOM DOORWAY...
As he walks, we ARC in front of him to see it's the SMALL
TOWN POLICEMAN; he slows, looks into:

THE HOSPITAL ROOM

It's DARK, the DRAPES ARE DRAWN. VIRGINIA SLEEPS in bed;
she's STARTLINGLY PALE, ALMOST BLUE... Her neck is heavily
bandaged, an IV tube trails from her arm...

Slumped but awake in a chair by the bed is LARRY; he looks
like he's been up all night. He glances up at the Policeman,
who SPEAKS VERY QUIETLY, not wanting to disturb Virginia...

POLICEMAN
Hi... Are you Larry...?

Larry nods.

POLICEMAN
You mind if I talk to you for a
minute...?

Tilts his head, indicating the hall.

LARRY
...Sure.

Larry gets up, EXITS FRAME -- but we **STAY ON VIRGINIA...** we
PUSH SLOWLY IN on her, sleeping, as we HEAR the two men, just
outside the door, speaking in HUSHED TONES:

POLICEMAN (O.S.)
Sorry to bother you...
(then)
...How's... she doing...?

LARRY (O.S.)
(grim, shaken)
It's been... quite a night... They
had to give her almost six pints of
blood... We're still waiting to
see if her body rejects it.

As Larry speaks, VIRGINIA'S EYES OPEN with a QUIET START, as
if waking from a nightmare -- her PUPILS ARE SOLID BLACK...

She looks around, disoriented, sees the IV DRIP... looks down
at the line STUCK IN HER ARM... A SPOT OF HER OWN BLOOD is
soaked on the bandage; VIRGINIA STARES AT IT, TRANSFIXED...

IN THE HALLWAY

The Policeman nods, sympathetic -- but there's a sense of
quiet urgency as he speaks --

POLICEMAN
Well, I won't keep you too long. I
just, I need to ask you about the
description you gave. Of the
little girl.

BEHIND HIM, OUT OF FOCUS, IN THE DOORWAY, we can just make
out some MOVEMENT in the shadows in VIRGINIA'S BED...

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
 (refers to his notebook)
 You said she had dark hair, was
 around twelve years old, and wasn't
 wearing shoes...

LARRY
 ...That's right.

The Policeman pulls something from his notebook, shows Larry:

POLICEMAN
 Have you ever seen this man? He's a
 suspect in a murder investigation.

Larry looks at it: it's a SKETCH OF THE BALDING MAN...

LARRY
 Yeah... Maybe... Looks like a guy
 in our building. Moved in a couple
 months ago, I think.

POLICEMAN
 Did he have a daughter? Like the
 girl you described?

LARRY
 I don't... I don't know. I've
 only seen him a few times...

As the Policeman listens, the MOVEMENT in the room behind him
 continues, grows more active... And now there are FAINT
 SOUNDS in the darkness... DRIPPING sounds...

LARRY (CONT'D)
 (concerned)
 You think this is related to the
 murder case?

POLICEMAN
 Maybe. We're starting to think the
 two of them may have been part of
 some Satanic cult...

LARRY
 (aghast)
What...?

POLICEMAN
 We found another body few days
 ago... Same M.O. The victim was
 completely drained of blood...

THE DAY NURSE appears silently behind the Policeman, pauses at the open door, checking the patient file, about to enter, unaware of the activity inside...

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

But there were bite marks on the victim's neck. Small ones. Like a child's.

LARRY

(horrified)

Jesus Christ -- what is that girl -- what's going on...?

Over the Policeman's shoulder WE SEE the DAY NURSE step inside, disappearing into the darkened room --

IN THE ROOM

She moves to the window, OPENS THE DRAPES; turns to SEE --

VIRGINIA

HUNCHED OVER, GNAWING and SLURPING over her own arm, like a rabid animal -- suddenly, feeling the light spill over her body, she TURNS --

BLOOD DRIPS FROM HER MOUTH -- and from a FRESH BITE WOUND ON HER ARM -- SHE'S BEEN SUCKING HER OWN BLOOD -- !

Panicked, the Day Nurse suddenly REACHES OUT TO STOP HER --

DAY NURSE

Oh my God -- what are you-- ?!

BUT VIRGINIA'S SKIN IMMEDIATELY BEGINS TO BLISTER AND SMOKE IN THE DAYLIGHT! SHE SCREAMS IN AGONY and -- just as the Day Nurse GRABS HER --

VIRGINIA SUDDENLY ERUPTS INTO FLAMES!!!

THE INFERNO QUICKLY ENGULFS THEM BOTH -- WE HEAR A CHORUS OF THEIR SHRIEKING...! IT'S A PURE VISION OF HELL!

LARRY AND THE POLICEMAN

BURST IN from the hall -- the HEAT is so intense, they are forced to stop dead in their tracks...! They stare helplessly at the scene in complete shock and horror...!

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN/DINING AREA - NIGHT

TIGHT SHOTS: Reaching into the oven, Owen gasps, burning himself trying to grab a tv dinner -- he waves his hand in the air to cool it, reaches for a pot holder in a drawer --

A NOTE on the refrigerator reads: "HI SWEETIE, MEETING WITH THE LAWYER TONIGHT. BE HOME LATER. THERE'S A POT PIE IN THE FREEZER! I LOVE YOU! GOD BLESS! MOM."

The TV is on nearby -- Owen isn't even paying attention:

TV NEWSCASTER

One patient and a nurse died early this morning when a five alarm fire broke out on the tenth floor of Littleton Memorial Hospital. The cause of the fire is still unknown, but authorities believe it may have been electrical...

Owen sits, gets settled with his dinner just as --

There is a KNOCK at the door... MORSE CODE.

Owen stiffens... CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR

It opens, revealing Abby. She smiles hopefully:

ABBY

...Hey.

OWEN

(coolly)

...Hey.

They stand there awkwardly, Abby waiting to be invited in... Finally, Owen opens the door a bit wider for her to enter...

She smiles uncomfortably...

ABBY

You... have to invite me in...
It's your home...

A quiet taunt:

OWEN

What if I don't...?

(then)

Why can't you just come in...?

She looks at him, smile fading...

OWEN

Is there something in the way...?

She stares at him sorrowfully... Finally, she makes the decision... Steels herself... Enters...

Owen shuts the door, and turns, waiting skeptically...

At first, nothing happens. She just stands there, rigid, eyes fiercely locked on Owen's...

But then... slowly... something starts to happen... her breathing becomes labored... and then, she starts to BLEED... from her EYES... her NOSE... her MOUTH... her PORES...! She BEGINS TO SHAKE, GRIMACING in UTTER TORMENT as BLOOD DRENCHES her skin, her clothes -- ! IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S DYING -- !

Horrified, Owen immediately regrets what he's done -- lunges forward, grabbing her shoulders -- !

OWEN

No! Stop! You can come IN!

Abby suddenly relaxes her muscles, relieved. Panicked, Owen looks at her to see if the bleeding has stopped. It has. He immediately hugs her tight. Closes his eyes...

He holds her; then, head on her shoulder, still catching his breath, he ANXIOUSLY UTTERS the unthinkable:

OWEN

What if I didn't say anything...?
Would you have just kept bleeding...?

ABBY

I knew you wouldn't let me...

OWEN

(opens his eyes, afraid of
the thought)
...But... what if I did...?

Abby finally closes her eyes, whispers quietly, simply:

ABBY

...I knew you wouldn't.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Owen sits on the couch, staring up at Abby who stands before him, clothes covered in blood. Owen is still reeling:

OWEN
 ...Who are you...?

Beat. She looks at him, a defiant look in her eye...

ABBY
 ...I'm just like you.

OWEN
 What do you mean?

Abby stares at him, her demeanor changing... she steps slowly forward, hovering menacingly, brandishing an imaginary knife:

ABBY
 What's the matter? Are you scared?
 Are you scared, little girl? Huh?

OWEN
 (suddenly afraid)
 ...What are you doing...?

ABBY
 Those are the first words I ever
 heard you say. Outside.

Beat. Owen grows self-conscious.

OWEN
 Yeah, but... I don't kill
 people...

ABBY
 But you'd like to, if you could...
 To get back at them... Right?

OWEN
 (quiet, grudging)
 ...Yeah...

ABBY
 To get revenge --

OWEN
 Because they hurt me, because I --

ABBY
 Because you want to live. Just
 like me.
 (then)
 I do it because I have to. To
 survive.

She looks at him, becoming serious, quietly pleading:

ABBY
Owen... Be me a little...

She moves very close to Owen, reaches out, touches his face --

CLOSE ON OWEN'S EYES

AS HE SUDDENLY SEES QUICK FLASHES OF A VISION:

We HEAR Owen and Abby QUIETLY BREATHING as we FLEETINGLY SEE --
DEMONIC EYES STARING at us -- !

A TWISTED MOUTH OPENS, BARING ITS TERRIBLE FANGS -- !

ABBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(whispers, emotional)
Please... For a little while...

A CHILD'S SHOULDER IS RAVAGED FIERCELY BY THE TEETH -- !

THE CHILD'S FEET KICK AND THRASH IN TERROR AND PAIN -- !

ABBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Be me...

SUDDENLY, WE SEE THE CHILD'S FACE -- IT'S ABBY -- !

EYES RED, STREAMING WITH TEARS, A LOOK OF UNSPEAKABLE PAIN -- !

IT'S THE MOMENT SHE BECAME A VAMPIRE -- SO MANY YEARS AGO!

BUT AS HER MOUTH OPENS, ABOUT TO SCREAM -- IT'S OWEN'S SCREAM
WE HEAR, AS IF HE'S SCREAMING HER SCREAM, FEELING HER PAIN...!

REVEAL OWEN --

Back in the living room. His eyes red with tears.

WE CATCH A FLEETING GLIMPSE OF ABBY'S EYES, ANCIENT, TIRED --
but before they fully register, they are a child's again...

Owen and Abby stare at each other. Silent. Emotional.

Owen raises his hand, unconsciously rubs his shoulder, in the
same spot where Abby was bitten in the vision...

CUT TO:

A SHOWERHEAD

as STREAMS begin to gently FLOW. We see a CHILD'S FEET -- ABBY'S -- on white porcelain as WATER SWIRLS around them, WASHING BLOOD into the drain...

CUT TO:

OWEN

still in the living room, deep in thought, the experience he just had resonating in his head. We can HEAR the SHOWER RUNNING in the background.

HOLD.

Then --

CUT TO:

A RECORD PLAYER

Owen's hand sets down the needle... The Romantics' "What I Like About You" starts to play -- LOUD -- we are:

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Owen puts his hands in his pockets, listens to the music, bopping his head subtly, walking around the room. He is setting a mood, trying to be nonchalant. He spies a quick look down the hall to see if Abby's out of the shower yet.

A moment later, Abby appears, wrapped in a towel, clutching her bloody clothes. She slows, hearing the music. Glances at Owen. Smiles appreciatively. Bops her head a little too.

Owen sidles up to her, hands still in his pockets. He has to yell over the music -- gestures toward his mom's bedroom --

OWEN

You can borrow one of my mom's old dresses if you want...!

Abby looks at him, nods appreciatively, and disappears into the bedroom. Owen watches her go...

After a moment, Owen approaches the bedroom doorway, drawn -- CLOSE ON HIM as he PEEKS in, curious -- catches a FLEETING GLIMPSE of ABBY dressing -- momentarily transfixed -- but --

Before she can catch him, he ducks out of the doorway again -- walks back into the middle of the room...

Abby emerges in an old, out of date dress, smiling. She spins shyly, modeling it for Owen; the first time we've seen her in a dress, she looks adorable. Owen smiles, blushing at the sight of her -- when --

We HEAR the FRONT DOOR SLAMMING --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Hello...!

Panicked, Owen grabs Abby's wrist, her bloody clothes, and they run into --

OWEN'S ROOM

Abby runs straight for the window, opens it up -- she goes right out on the ledge, without hesitation --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Owen...?! Where are you...?!

Alarmed, Owen turns toward his door --

OWEN

I'm in here...! I'll be right there...!

He turns back to the window -- and Abby is already gone. A bit stunned, he sticks his head --

OUT THE WINDOW

To see Abby, impossibly, already sticking her head out her window, next door. She smiles at him. He smiles back.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Abby sits on the floor in her darkened apartment, playing with her puzzles... bored... lonely... She stops for a moment, stares a bit longingly at the wall that adjoins Owen's apartment...

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Owen stands looking at his mother who lies, out of focus, passed out on the couch. The only light in the room is the blue pulsing from the TV SCREEN. He stares to make sure his mom is completely asleep as he slowly, silently pulls on his jacket... Finally, he tip toes past her, OUT OF FRAME...

As we HEAR the FRONT DOOR QUIETLY OPENING, we CUT CLOSE ON the TELEVISION; it's a local PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT:

TV ANNOUNCER
It's ten o'clock. Do you know
where your children are...?

We hear the DOOR CLICK SHUT as Owen leaves...

CUT TO:

A MOVING POV SHOT - THROUGH A CAR WINDSHIELD

SLOWLY APPROACHING OWEN and ABBY'S BUILDING COMPLEX in the
early morning... The car slows to a stop... Wind howls...

CUT TO:

A LONG ROW OF METAL APARTMENT MAILBOXES

as we MOVE ALONG them, hearing FOOTSTEPS... We STOP on ONE:
there is no name label, just the old glue from names past...
A SHADOW falls over the mailbox as the FOOTSTEPS QUIET. We
can see a distorted reflection in the metal, as a FIGURE
stares at the mailbox; but it's too distorted to recognize...

CUT TO:

A POV SHOT - MOVING INTO THE COURTYARD - EARLY MORNING

More FOOTSTEPS, snow crunching underfoot as the CAMERA CREEPS
forward, looking up at the WINDOWS in the BUILDINGS ABOVE...
The CAMERA FINDS ABBY'S WINDOW, BOARDED UP with CARDBOARD...
The CAMERA STOPS... So do the FOOTSTEPS...

CUT AROUND TO:

THE REVERSE ANGLE - POV LOOKING DOWN FROM ABBY'S WINDOW

THE SMALL TOWN POLICEMAN stares up at us forebodingly as he
stands in the courtyard, beside the empty jungle gym...

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Lying in the middle of the floor, covered in a blanket,
surrounded by puzzles, Owen wakes up. Still fully dressed,
he looks around, disoriented. Abby is not there.

He spots a NOTE on the table: "Hi, Owen. Good morning. I am
in the bathroom. Please do not come in. Want to hang out
with me again tonight? I really like you. Love, Abby."

Suddenly, there's a LOUD KNOCK at the front door. Owen
turns. He gets up, moves very quietly into --

THE HALLWAY

He approaches the door; carefully presses his eye against --

THE PEEPHOLE

The Policeman is right outside. He KNOCKS HARD again.

Owen FREEZES, doesn't know what to do... He takes a step backward, and the floorboard makes a long, sustained CREAK underfoot...!

OUTSIDE

The Policeman turns, hearing the creak... knows someone is inside -- he BANGS even harder on the door --

POLICEMAN

Hello?! This is Littleton P.D.!

(bangs again)

HELLO?! OPEN THE DOOR!

OWEN

stands there, stiff, trying not to make a sound, WHEN --

THE POLICEMAN

suddenly DRAWS HIS GUN, raises his foot -- and SLAMS HIS HEEL into the door near the lock -- !

OWEN

JUMPS as the door STARTS TO CRACK -- ! He spins, and RUNS --

INTO THE KITCHEN

FLATTENS HARD against the wall, HIDING, PANTING -- JUST AS --

THE FRONT DOOR

SLAMS OPEN, and the Policeman enters, gripping his gun --

POLICEMAN

POLICE OFFICER!!!

He looks around, straining to see in the DARK apartment --

OWEN

remains perfectly still against the wall as he hears FOOTSTEPS CREEPING CLOSER...! And CLOSER...!

POLICEMAN (O.S.)
HELLO...?!

The Policeman appears in the doorway to the kitchen, RIGHT NEXT to where Owen's back is pressed -- we can see them both, but they cannot see each other...!

Owen holds his breath, can feel the Policeman standing nearby... The Policeman GAZES in... then... moves on...

Owen listens as he passes... then, he gathers courage, darts his head near the door jam and PEEKS:

INTO THE DINING ROOM

where the Policeman continues his sweep... He spots BOXES on the side of the room, peers in, but it's too dark to see...

Owen watches with just one eye past the door frame as the Policeman takes a hand off his gun, and reaches up to the cardboard and blankets covering the window -- he YANKS a small section away, LETTING SOME LIGHT into the room...

The Policeman looks back in the boxes, sees the WALLETS, WATCHES, and CASH... Then he sees SOMETHING BALLED UP on the floor, nudges it into the light with his foot -- it's ABBY'S BLOOD DRENCHED CLOTHING; the Policeman looks at the blood with growing alarm, imagining the worst -- he puts both hands firmly back on his gun -- fear creeping into his voice:

POLICEMAN
HELLO...?!

Owen watches in horror as --

THE POLICEMAN

turns, spotting Abby's NOTE near the table... He reaches with one hand, picks it up... reads it... LOOKS UP AT --

THE CLOSED BATHROOM DOOR

Owen literally stops breathing for a moment, staring with dread as the Policeman RAISES HIS GUN, and STARTS SLOWLY DOWN THE HALLWAY, TOWARDS IT...

THE POLICEMAN'S POV

MOVING FOR THE DOOR... We can HEAR his MEASURED BREATHING as he CLOSES IN...

OWEN

LEANS his head out into the darkened hallway, watching the Policeman's back as he creeps away, finally ARRIVING --

AT THE DOOR

The Policeman listens for noise from inside, hears nothing... He reaches a hand down to the KNOB, gently grips it... tries to TURN it slowly... it MOVES...

ALL AT ONCE, he FLINGS OPEN THE DOOR, GRIPS HIS GUN IN BOTH HANDS, AND GAZES IN -- !

It's even DARKER inside... He REACHES A HAND IN, feeling around for a light switch -- finds one, FLICKS IT: nothing...

So finally, he STEPS ABRUPTLY --

INSIDE

looks around, trying to see in the darkness... As his eyes adjust slightly, he can just make out --

AN OLD, STAINED BLANKET

spread over the top of the BATHTUB... He leans in closer, still holding the gun... the STAINS look like BLOOD.

He reaches a hand free from his gun, and quickly LIFTS off the blanket... underneath are MORE BLANKETS, wrapped around something in the tub -- something shaped like a BODY...

The Policeman quickly PEELS those back too -- revealing ABBY.

He stares at her, moves his face close, cannot tell if she is dead or alive... He glances above the tub, now able to see that the BATHROOM WINDOW is thoroughly covered with CARDBOARD and BLANKETS, SEALED along the sill with ELECTRICAL TAPE...

He reaches a hand up, feeling for the edge of the tape -- finds it -- and -- JUST AS he STARTS TO TEAR IT BACK -- LETTING A TINY BIT OF LIGHT IN -- A VOICE CRIES OUT -- AT THE VERY SAME INSTANT, ABBY'S EYES OPEN, PAINED BY THE LIGHT AS HER ARM SIZZLES -- !

OWEN (O.S.)

NO! STOP!

Startled, terribly on edge, the Policeman turns, levelling his GUN at OWEN, standing in the HALLWAY behind him -- !

POLICEMAN
 (spooked, breathless)
Christ Almighty, son -- !

-- AND BEFORE HE CAN FINISH, ABBY LEAPS UP FROM THE TUB AND
 ATTACKS HIM FROM BEHIND, SINKING HER TEETH INTO HIS NECK!!!

Owen watches, horrified, as the Policeman FLAILS VIOLENTLY,
 BLOOD SPRAYING as ABBY FEASTS GRUESOMELY, VICIOUSLY --

THE GUN CLATTERS to the linoleum -- !

THE POLICEMAN GRABS A BLOODY HAND on the door frame to keep
 from collapsing -- his TERROR-FILLED EYES LOOK UP, LOCK ON
 OWEN'S as he REACHES HIS OTHER HAND OUT -- PLEADING FOR
 OWEN'S HELP -- !

OWEN stares back, TORTURED...

Unconsciously, Owen's HAND STARTS TO LIFT... REACH OUT...

HE STEPS SLOWLY TOWARD THE BATHROOM...

The Policeman SEES OWEN'S HAND, REACHING in his direction -- !
 His BLOODY HAND LOSES ITS GRIP on the door frame, and he
 stumbles backward -- BUT HE PERSEVERES, STILL REACHING
 DESPERATELY WITH HIS OTHER HAND FOR OWEN'S -- WHEN IT SUDDENLY
 DAWNS ON HIM THAT OWEN IS REACHING FOR --

THE DOORKNOB

OWEN GRABS IT, YANKS -- AS THE POLICEMAN SCREAMS IN HORROR --

POLICEMAN
NOO-- !

AND THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT -- SEALING THE POLICEMAN'S FATE!

Owen backs away from the door in complete terror, listening
 to the HORRIBLE SCREAMING AND BANGING from behind the door...

It's unbearable -- he TURNS AWAY, TREMBLING...

Finally, he has to cover his ears...

We HEAR GURGLING, and then the tell-tale SNAPPING of the
 Policeman's neck -- and all of a sudden, everything goes --

SILENT.

HOLD.

Abby emerges from the bathroom, still wearing Owen's mother's
 old dress from last night; she has blood all over her face.

Owen lowers his hands from his ears, stands there, stunned...

Abby walks up behind him, puts her arms gently around his body. Her expression is mournful, no sense of victory at all... she utters sadly, holding him tight:

ABBY

Thanks...

TIMECUT TO:

THE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Owen and Abby stare at each other, silent... A pained sense of what is coming... Neither sure what to say... Finally, Abby, the more experienced of the two, speaks softly, crushed:

ABBY

Owen... I have to go away...

Owen looks at her, at a loss, vulnerable... knows she's right... but can't even nod...

She stares into his eyes... it's excruciating...

Then, she leans slowly toward him, and for the first time, despite her blood-drenched lips, they KISS... a long, last, tender embrace...

Finally, they part, blood now on Owen's lips too... He stares at his feet, sadly, knowing it is over... she does too...

Michael Andrews and Gary Jules' soulful cover of Tears for Fears' 1982 hit, "MAD WORLD" starts to play as we CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Owen walks in the door and Owen's mother -- in the other room -- immediately rushes over, hysterical, beginning to cry --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Oh my God -- !

She's angry, emotional, relieved, all at the same time; she grabs him by the shoulders, crouches down right in front of him -- but we are ON OWEN'S FACE --

OWEN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Oh my God!

(squeezes him tight)

Don't ever do that again! Where were you?! Where were you?!

Owen stares off as she holds him, his mind so far away:

OWEN
 ...with a friend...

HOLD... "MAD WORLD" CONTINUES -- CUT TO:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Owen sits at his desk with his book of clippings... in front of him is the latest NEWSPAPER ARTICLE to add to the bunch -- the GIANT HEADLINE reads: "**WHO WAS HE?**" The sub-headline continues, "'**RITUAL KILLER**' **SUSPECT STILL UNIDENTIFIED AFTER SUICIDE**"; the POLICE SKETCH OF THE BALDING MAN is pictured...

Owen gazes at his desk, dispirited, no longer interested in his clippings, when he HEARS A CAR DOOR SLAM... Suddenly, he fills with trepidation, stands up, moves to the window to SEE:

A SILHOUETTED TAXI

IDLING in the driveway between buildings. A FIGURE finishes putting a LARGE SUITCASE into the trunk... comes around, opens the passenger door for a SMALLER SILHOUETTED FIGURE who sits in -- Owen sees the outline of a tiny BARE FOOT as it lifts up into the car, just before the door closes...

PUSHING IN, CLOSE ON OWEN

as he watches the TAXI pull away... disappear in the distance... So overwhelmed, he can't even cry yet...

"MAD WORLD" CONTINUES, OVER...

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THE CAMERA MOVES THROUGH the HAUNTINGLY EMPTY SPACE...

She's gone...

INT. BASEMENT CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES PAST the words, "ENTER UPON PENALTY OF DEATH"... into the DESERTED CLUBHOUSE...

PAST the OLD ARMCHAIR and CASSETTE PLAYER...

PAST the PING PONG TABLE...

The CAMERA FINALLY COMES TO REST ON something slumped in a dark corner of the room, hidden behind the sunken couch... It's the POLICEMAN'S BODY...

And, as "MAD WORLD" comes to an end, we CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - MORNING

The JUNGLE GYM sits empty, surrounded by snow.

VERY CLOSE ON OWEN'S FACE

Nose pressed behind the fogging glass of his window, staring down at the courtyard. Now he's crying...

We HOLD in SILENCE as tears stream down his sad, expressionless face...

After a long moment, the PHONE RINGS behind him...

He doesn't move...

It RINGS again...

...and AGAIN...

He turns, shuffles off to go get it...

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Owen picks up the phone. Doesn't even say hello.

MARK (PHONE FILTER)

Hello...? Is Owen there...?

OWEN

Yeah...

MARK (PHONE FILTER)

Hey Owen, it's Mark. Mr. Zoric wanted me to call. He wants to know if you're coming tonight.

OWEN

Why does he want to know...?

MARK (PHONE FILTER)

I dunno. I guess coz you haven't been coming the last few days...

OWEN

Oh. I'm not really sure.

MARK (PHONE FILTER)

Ok. Hey, Owen... By the way... I think what you did to Kenny was good. He deserved it.

OWEN

...You do...?

MARK (PHONE FILTER)
Yeah. Just so you know.

Owen takes this in... a ray of hope that things can change...

EXT. PHONEBOOTH - AT THAT SAME MOMENT

Mark waits on the line, listening to see if Owen is buying this... Outside the glass, Donald, Kenny, and Kenny's Older Brother watch...

MARK
(finally, into phone)
Well... Then maybe I'll see you tonight, huh?

OWEN (PHONE FILTER)
...Yeah.

Mark glances over at the others, nods...

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Warm light emanates through the windows from inside as SNOW drifts down all around...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TWILIGHT

Owen finishes getting into his work out clothes -- a t-shirt and bathing suit -- when a warm voice greets him --

MR. ZORIC (O.S.)
Ah! Speak of devil! There he is!

Owen looks up to see Mr. Zoric smiling at him; Owen smiles:

OWEN
Hi...

MR. ZORIC
(pats Owen's shoulder)
Good to see you. We start in pool today.

And he heads out of the locker room. Owen grabs his towel, and starts out too, when he runs into Mark -- who stands there awkwardly, almost as if he were waiting for Owen:

MARK
(smiles)
Hey, Owen...

Owen regards him warily, nods, and heads out --

Mark watches him go...

Then he walks across, steps over to an EXIT DOOR; he cracks it open, sticks his head out -- WHISPERS to someone out there:

MARK

He's here...

EXT. BACK OF MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL BUILDING - NIGHT

TIGHT SHOTS -- as the wind howls, and snow swirls -- Kenny and Donald douse an overflowing DUMPSTER with KEROSENE... laughing quietly, shushing each other --

KENNY'S BROTHER (O.S.)

(hushed)

Hurry up...!

INT. INDOOR MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL - NIGHT

Owen holds the edge of the pool, treading water as Mr. Zoric stands above him, supervising -- Owen breathes in, lowers his face into the water, breathes out... in... out... in...

MR. ZORIC

That's it... that's good...!

Mark runs up behind Zoric -- out of breath --

MARK

Mr. Zoric -- there's a fire!

MR. ZORIC

(turns, alarmed)

What?!

MARK

Outside! In back!

Zoric nods -- turns back --

MR. ZORIC

Owen, I be right back!

Owen, slows, nodding, as Zoric abruptly heads off... Owen looks up at Mark, who glances at him, then averts his eyes, walking away in the direction Zoric went...

EXT. BACK OF MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL BUILDING - NIGHT

The dumpster is ABLAZE, flames reaching into the sky -- no one in sight --

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Zoric rushes for the exit doors, disappears through them -- we HOLD for a moment... someone steps out from hiding... it's Kenny's Brother. He walks up to the doors... SNAPS the DEADBOLT into place, locking Zoric out...

INT. INDOOR MIDDLE SCHOOL POOL - NIGHT

Owen continues treading water on the side of the pool, when suddenly he HEARS YELLING -- his eyes widen seeing Kenny's Brother, Kenny, Donald and Mark storming into the room -- heading straight for him along the edge of the pool --

KENNY'S BROTHER

Everybody out! Move! Let's GO!

Frightened, KIDS climb out of the pool, scampering away --

Owen panics -- lifts himself out -- and RUNS MADLY -- for the LOCKER ROOM -- !

The bullies FOLLOW -- !

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Owen skids on wet feet in front of his locker -- SPINS the TUMBLER -- he rips open the door, digging frantically into his pants -- he finds his PEN KNIFE -- OPENS IT -- TURNS --

JUST AS -- Kenny's Brother, Kenny, Donald, and Mark all stumble into the room, converge around him...

Owen looks at them, holding his little pen knife, trembling, shivering as he drips in his bathing suit...

Kenny's Brother smiles --

KENNY'S BROTHER

What are you gonna do with that...?

He starts slowly toward Owen, who raises the knife, his hand visibly shaking... As Kenny's Brother closes in, Owen stares at him, suddenly realizes he just can't do it -- and attempts to make a break, ploughing straight into Kenny -- who GRABS him -- they ALL GRAB HIM!

Kenny's Brother easily snatches the pen knife out of Owen's grip! Then, he SEIZES one of Owen's legs, and begins VICIOUSLY DRAGGING HIM out of the locker room -- Owen SQUIRMS in pain and panic -- as the others follow -- !

BACK INTO THE POOL AREA

Kenny's Brother drags him straight toward the pool -- calls out to Kenny and Donald --

KENNY'S BROTHER
Grab his arms! Get his arms!

They do, and the three of them suddenly LIFT OWEN UP, and TOSS HIM INTO THE DEEP END OF THE POOL --

OWEN'S POV

PLUNGING into the water! He FLAILS MADLY, unable to SWIM! He GAGS VIOLENTLY, BOBBING his head in and out of the water, GULPING for air...! Finally, he manages to latch a hand onto the edge of the pool... He pulls his head up, just out of the water, coughing...

Kenny's Brother's feet appear beside him, and he crouches down next to Owen's face, holding Owen's pen knife... He grabs Owen by the hair with his free hand -- Owen WINCES --

KENNY'S BROTHER
(quietly)
Know who I am...?

Owen looks at him, terrified... nods yes...

KENNY'S BROTHER
Good. Then you know why I'm here.

He stares at Owen. Smiles.

KENNY'S BROTHER
We're gonna have a little contest.
Okay? You stay under water for...
three minutes.

He moves the knife closer to Owen's face...

KENNY'S BROTHER
If you can do it, I'll just give you a little nick. On your cheek. But if you can't... I'll poke out one of your eyes. Got it? An eye for an ear.

Owen looks at him, filling with dread...

OWEN
But... that's impossible...

KENNY'S BROTHER

That's your problem...

Kenny, still wearing a big bandage on his ear, steps closer over his brother's shoulder, getting a good look at Owen... He glowers at him, preparing for revenge...

Kenny's Brother grips Owen's hair hard; Owen grimaces --

KENNY'S BROTHER

Three minutes. Better take a deep breath --

Owen starts to SUCK AIR IN -- AS -- WITHOUT WARNING --
Kenny's Brother FORCES OWEN'S HEAD --

UNDER WATER

Owen PLUNGES DOWN, EYES WIDE OPEN, his CHEEKS PUFFED with air...! BUBBLES trickle from his lips...

KENNY

stares on bitterly as his brother holds Owen down...

Seeing Owen's arms flailing slightly under the water, Donald and Mark exchange a look, suddenly worried that this may get out of hand... Mark looks at --

THE LARGE CHRONOMETER

on the wall... as the SECOND HAND slowly sweeps...

UNDER WATER

Owen starts to make WHINING sounds, struggling to hold his breath... Panic fills his eyes -- a STREAM OF BUBBLES flushes from his mouth --

THE BUBBLES

APPEAR on the water's surface, above Owen's head -- seeing them, Kenny finally starts to get nervous too --

KENNY

(quietly)
Okay, Jimmy...

KENNY'S BROTHER

Shut up!

Beat, as they wait a bit longer; then --

DONALD

C'mon, man, this is stupid --

KENNY'S BROTHER

I said shut up!

They all STARE SILENTLY; it's starting to go too far...

UNDER WATER

Owen is turning red... it doesn't look like he can last much longer -- when SUDDENLY -- we hear a MUFFLED CRASH from above water -- UNSEEN BY OWEN -- a SHADOW SWEEPS through the center of the pool behind him -- as if something were flying over the surface of the water -- we MOVE IN CLOSE ON OWEN'S EYES --

OWEN'S POV - SHALLOW FOCUS

staring into the CLEAR BLUE WATER -- we BARELY hear what could be SCREAMS from above the pool -- and we begin to SEE **BLOODY CLOUDS BILLOWING** DOWN from the surface -- this is the same exact image from OWEN'S NIGHTMARES -- THEY HAVE ALL BEEN A PREMONITION OF THIS VERY MOMENT -- !!!

Something OUT OF FOCUS DRIFTS DOWN into view -- it is **KENNY'S BROTHER'S SEVERED HEAD** -- !!!

BACK ON OWEN'S FACE

as he SEES it! Behind him, a PAIR OF WILDLY KICKING LEGS ARE SUDDENLY DRAGGED just below the surface of the water, all the way across the pool, TRAILING CLOUDS OF BLOOD as they go -- !

AT THE SAME TIME -- KENNY'S BROTHER'S HEADLESS BODY SLUMPS into the pool, right in front of Owen -- and the GRIP on OWEN'S HEAD is RELEASED -- !

OWEN

SURGES to the SURFACE, COUGHING FOR AIR, SLAPPING MADLY at the water -- he GRABS the WALL -- !

WE STAY CLOSE ON HIM AS HE GASPS FOR AIR, PANTING HARD, EYES SHUT! All around him we HEAR OFF-SCREEN SCREAMING, MAYHEM, SPLASHING -- ! Then all at once, it finally STOPS.

We hear only the sound of Owen, as his breathing slows...

A FIGURE quietly moves up next to him in the water... He opens his eyes, SEES --

ABBY'S FACE

inches from his, eyes staring lovingly at him to make sure he is okay... Flecks of blood and water spatter her face... She is like a vision.

Owen smiles at the sight of her. She smiles back. Finally, she reaches over, takes his hand in both of hers, presses it to her cheek. Closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

THE POOL - HIGH, WIDE SHOT - MOMENTS LATER

A tableau of the bloody aftermath. The bullies' bodies lie scattered about along the edges, and inside the pool. The water is still settling. Owen and Abby are gone.

HOLD.

Then --

CUT TO:

A MOVING SHOT, DOWN THE AISLE OF A PASSENGER TRAIN

We're FOLLOWING on the back of a TRAIN CONDUCTOR... He stops, FINDING OWEN, alone in his seat, backpack at his side --

CONDUCTOR

Scuse me, son... can I see your ticket?

Owen hands it over. The conductor checks it, then looks down at the floor, seeing a LARGE, CARDBOARD CARTON among a few other items of luggage; the carton stretches into the aisle --

CONDUCTOR

That yours...?

Owen nods. The Conductor looks at it, slightly annoyed, but then just walks off... Owen stares out the window.

Beat.

A QUIET KNOCKING begins... from inside the box. MORSE CODE. Owen looks at the carton, smiles. He begins TAPPING a message back as the TRAIN STARTS TO MOVE...

Then he turns back to the window, looking out as the TRAIN GATHERS SPEED... Outside it is SUNRISE.

He takes out a piece of candy from his backpack, puts it in his mouth, watching as the world moves past, his BACK TO US...

OWEN
(sings quietly)
Eat some now, save some for later...

He's leaving his old life... for another...

We see his FACE REFLECTED in the window: he looks emotional.

OWEN
(sings quieter still)
Eat some now, save some for later...

And, as the TRAIN'S HORN RINGS OUT, BUILDING -- we SUDDENLY --
CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.