

"THE DEVIL'S LARCENY"

By

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FADE IN:

INT. DARK BASEMENT - DAY (1949)

A LITTLE GIRL's tear-filled eyes, wide and terrified, are lit by the glowing candles set before her.

A strip of duct tape seals her mouth. As she cries excessively in silence her tears soak and peel away the tape's adhesive.

Frantic, she works the loosened tape from her mouth just enough to get out a high-pitched SCREAM.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS ESTATE - BACKYARD - DAY

A beautiful PREGNANT WOMAN, 30s, in a flowery sundress, is on her knees tending to her lush petunia garden in front of a guest house.

A muffled SCREAM shrieks from somewhere inside the guest house. The woman perks and raises her head, curious.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - DAY

The pregnant woman enters. The room is set up as a doctor's office with medical degrees and certificates made out to "Zachary Ambrose" that hang on the wall behind the desk.

INT. DARK BASEMENT - DAY

The door at the top of the staircase breaks open. The woman holds a crowbar. The SCREAMS of the little girl are loud and clear.

The woman switches on a light and journeys down the steps to find herself standing before a satanic altar.

What she sees are jars of blood, an ancient black magic book, a horned goat skull, ritual tools and black candles burning atop the altar.

Hideous demonic statues loom, wrought-iron pentagrams hang and a porcelain bathtub, stained with blood around the rim, rests in the middle of the room.

The struggling little girl is chained to a post by the altar.

The woman stands stupefied.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS ESTATE - DAY

The neighborhood basks in silence, which is suddenly shattered by the shrill of police sirens.

A swarm of black-and-white Packard police cars converge on the stately mansion.

The monstrous front grille of an oncoming cop car brakes fast. Its license plate reads "CALIFORNIA 1949."

Cops dash out before their vehicles come to a complete stop, Colt .38 long-barreled service pistols drawn.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS ESTATE - BACKYARD - DAY

Poolside, the woman lies dead and waterlogged. Her wet, clinging sundress outlines her stout pregnant tummy.

An older man, as gentle looking as a pastor, kneels before her. He raises a large kitchen knife, ready to impale its shimmering blade into her engorged belly.

Cops spread into the backyard, surrounding the swimming pool with their revolvers aimed at the man, shouting:

COPS

MR. AMBROSE, PUT THE KNIFE DOWN!

MR. AMBROSE, GET AWAY FROM HER!

AMBROSE, STAND BACK! GET DOWN ON THE GROUND! GET DOWN!

A gunshot fires in the chaos -- AMBROSE is hit in the chest; blood spurts from the wound as he splashes backwards into the swimming pool.

A cluster of cops gather around the woman.

A smaller group of officers fish Ambrose out of the pool and onto the decking.

COP #1 checks the woman's carotid artery for a pulse.

COP #1

She's dead.

COP #2

She's pregnant!

COP #3

Maybe the baby is still alive. We gotta try and save it!

(to officers)

WHO CAN DO A CESAREAN?

One eager cop pushes his way through the throng of officers. He kneels beside the woman and rips her dress off, leaving her dead body naked and her rotund belly completely exposed.

The cop flips open a switchblade and slices a long incision into her lower abdomen; blood gushes out causing most of the policemen gawking at the sight to turn their heads.

The cop cuts the umbilical cord and stands up holding the woman's baby covered with blood in his arms.

The rest of the policemen are dead silent as they look on with one anxious question on their faces, newborn or stillborn?

The delivery cop pinches the infant's nose and blows air into its mouth repeatedly.

The baby's life lies in limbo.

The smaller group of officers is huddled around the fatally wounded Ambrose, who labors in breath as he tries his hardest to get out his last words.

AMBROSE

Did...did...I...save the baby?

He coughs up blood.

The cops stare down at him and say nothing.

Ambrose anguishes for a few seconds, choking on his own blood. His head rolls aside, dead.

Suddenly, the sound of a baby choking out a few cries is followed by steady, healthy ones.

The smaller group of officers turn their joyous attention on the live baby being coddled in the cop's arms.

INT. HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 1989

A child's hand grips a piece of chalk and writes "MY NAME IS SAMANTHA AND I MISS MOMMY" on a hard, dark surface.

Backing away reveals a small, easel-style blackboard with the same phrase written 50 times.

Eight-year-old SAMANTHA with tears in her eyes continues writing the phrase as if being punished.

Standing behind her is a youthful, clean-cut, 40-year-old MAN neatly dressed in a vest sweater and thin tie, holding a kitchen knife down at his side.

MAN IN VEST SWEATER

You did a wonderful job,
sweetheart...I miss my mommy, too.
She drowned...and then they cut her
open to save me.

(smiles)

Now give me the chalk.

Samantha hands the chalk to the man.

MAN IN VEST SWEATER

Look away.

Samantha turns her back.

The man pulls up his sweater and shirt. His slender, hairless stomach is scored with knife scars. He adds to them by making another slit into his skin with the blade.

As he bleeds from the wound, he takes the piece of chalk and smears his blood all over it.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

A light snowfall has started.

Portable lights illuminate the area. Yellow CRIME SCENE tape is wrapped around an old abandoned camper-trailer where a bunch of cops stand guard.

Two officers exit the rear of the trailer, removing a small covered body on a gurney. They wheel it to the back of the morgue van, the CORONER following closely behind.

Police DETECTIVE RICHARD PORT, late 40s, rushes onto the scene with such commanding personage that he could easily step into his own gritty crime series without an audition.

He sprints to the coroner, out of breath.

DET. PORT

Wait!

The officers stop loading the gurney into the van and set the wheels back on the ground.

CORONER

Lieutenant Port?

DET. PORT

Yes.

CORONER

Took you awhile.

DET. PORT

I don't work this end of the map...nor could I find this place on one.

Det. Port looks down at the covered victim.

DET. PORT

Let me see her.

The coroner uncovers the victim's face -- it's Samantha.

Det. Port slips on a pair of exam gloves and opens the dead girl's mouth. He extracts a piece of chalk with blood on it.

DET. PORT
It's his work.

CORONER
You guys any closer to catching that walking sack of vomit?

DET. PORT
All we have to go on is that he drugged his last victim with Nembutal. We're combing through every pharmacy out there to find the ones dispensing it.

INT. UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

JUNE PEARL, 44, could stand a makeover to sharpen a beauty that's been dulled by the normal wear and tear of being a mom and housewife.

She vigorously shakes a Jiffy Pop popcorn tin over a stove top burner. The foil head balloons.

JUNE
You know, Hilary, we could use that eighty-dollar popcorn machine I bought last week.

Seven-year-old HILARY PEARL shows nothing but smiles as she watches the snack product in action.

HILARY
I know, Mommy, but this is more fun.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hilary and her mom nestle together on the couch, sharing the popcorn treat.

A still promo shot of NBC's "ALF" freezes on the TV tube.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Alf will begin after this important news update.

The TV cuts to news reporter SARAH HOLLANDER on location at Samantha's crime scene. Behind her is the cordoned-off camper-trailer with police everywhere.

SARAH HOLLANDER

(into mic)

This is Sarah Hollander reporting live in the San Bernardino Mountains near Lake Arrowhead. As you can see, it has started to snow here which adds to the cold, pitiful end for eight-year-old Samantha Lester whose frail body was taken from this old junk heap by the coroner just minutes ago. Samantha, who disappeared from Barrington Place Elementary School last Friday, now appears to be victim twelve of the Schoolyard Killer.

June's breath is stolen away as if Hilary's name was said.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

School is out and a mob of children dash off for home.

A four-door black sedan rolls up to the curb and parks. The driver's door opens and out steps a fairly ATTRACTIVE WOMAN.

She's conservatively dressed in a blouse, dark skirt, black stockings and black low-heel dress pumps.

The woman moves briskly up the school walkway. She becomes an obstacle to a herd of children coming her way, but they go around her.

Hilary Pearl stops dead in her tracks as the woman blocks her from passing.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

Hello.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The clock on the wall: "9:00"

The children sit at their desks with faces forward.

The same woman, who stopped Hilary previously, comes through the door. She's dressed matronly and strides directly over to the ever-pleasant teacher, MISS HELEN JACOBSON, late 30s.

The woman takes a few moments to inaudibly speak to Miss Jacobson.

MISS JACOBSON

Hilary, sweetheart, can you come up here?

Hilary looks up from her desk and smiles.

INT. LAPD HQ - DAY

An office door stenciled "REGINALD BREWER, CHIEF OF DETECTIVES" opens with the CHIEF reluctantly stepping out.

He's a 55-year-old African-American, a man who normally fears nothing -- except for what he must do now.

He gathers a quick burst of fortitude and hastily walks over to Det. Port in his cubicle.

CHIEF BREWER

Richard, I just got a call. Hilary Pearl was abducted from school by a woman posing as a substitute teacher.

Det. Port looks absolutely stricken.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hilary Pearl sleeps soundly on top of the bed covers, wearing a little robe. Her hands are bound together and her mouth taped.

On the nightstand is a prescription bottle and a glass of water. The label on the bottle reads "RALPH BAIZER, NEMBUTAL."

A shower is heard running in the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower continues running.

A pair of black stockings drape over a towel rod on the wall.

The water shuts off.

The shower door slides open and a woman's hand, fingernails manicured in red, pulls a towel in from the outside door rod.

She then sets her shapely feet, toenails also polished in red, down on a throw rug, but her legs bear a light stubble of hair. She uses the towel to dab them dry.

The woman places her foot on the toilet seat, then lathers her leg with shaving cream. She smoothly strokes her skin with a razor.

INT. ECHO PARK DRUGS - NIGHT

Det. Port marches up to the pharmacy counter. He yanks out his identification and shows it to the PHARMACIST.

DET. PORT

I'm Detective Port.

PHARMACIST

Oh, yes, of course. After you called I pulled his file card.

The pharmacist takes an index card from under the counter and hands it to Det. Port.

DET. PORT

How many times has he filled this prescription?

PHARMACIST

First time. It's a new one.

DET. PORT

Did you check with his doctor?

PHARMACIST

I did. It wasn't a phony prescription. His doctor's actually a psychiatrist.

Det. Port's expression is hit with a bombshell.

PHARMACIST

Does that help you at all?

DET. PORT

If it does, you'll be in all the papers tomorrow.

The detective dashes off.

EXT. ECHO PARK DRUGS - NIGHT

Det. Port rushes out of the pharmacy.

He sprints to his car parked nearby, rips open the driver's door and jumps behind the wheel.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

His younger protege, DETECTIVE LADDWICK, is in the passenger's seat.

DET. LADDWICK

Got something?

DET. PORT

This ain't no false alarm. I smell smoke!

Det. Port guns the engine and pulls out, burning rubber.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hilary sits up in bed wearing a nightie. Her hands are tied behind her and her mouth taped.

The attractive woman from Hilary's classroom stands next to a nightstand, hovering over Hilary. The woman is in a silk robe wearing full make-up.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

Mother's going to take care of her baby now.

The woman opens a small zippered black pouch on the nightstand. She removes an injection bottle and thin syringe.

She holds the bottle up and draws serum into the needle, then thumps it to pop the air bubbles.

The woman gazes down at Hilary who fears she's going to be poked, but the woman loosens the belt of her silk robe and lets it drop.

Hilary is surprised to see the slender, bare body of a male in white briefs with a series of knife scars on his stomach -- it's RALPH BAIZER.

He's a strikingly passable cross-dresser, whose voice matches the femininity of his pseudo-personality.

He injects himself in the stomach.

Baizer sets down the syringe and serum bottle that reads "INSULIN."

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathtub nozzle jets water.

Hilary, still in her nightie and zonked from sedation, is perched on the toilet seat cover, staring uselessly ahead.

Baizer, back in his silk robe, gently peels the tape from her mouth.

BAIZER

Now, that feels much better, doesn't it, baby?

Hilary nods feebly.

An open bottle of Nembutal sits beside a glass of water on the sink. Baizer picks up the prescription bottle.

BAIZER

Now, open wide.

Hilary's mouth opens and Baizer drops a pill in it. He brings the glass of water to her lips so she can take a sip.

BAIZER
That's a good girl.

Baizer reaches behind Hilary, unties her wrists. On the back of her neck is a small birthmark in the shape of a half-moon.

The bathtub fills higher with water.

EXT. BAIZER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An unmarked police car turns sharply into the driveway, stopping short.

Detectives Port and Laddwick swing their doors open and launch their asses out with guns drawn.

DET. PORT
I got the front, you take the back!

INT. BAIZER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Baizer turns the tub's faucet off. He returns to Hilary and reaches out for her hand.

BAIZER
Take Mommy's hand.

He leads the frightened but subdued child over to the tub.

Through a hazy layer of steam build-up on the sink mirror, Baizer's reflection shows him slipping out of his silk robe with his white briefs on.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Det. Port treads lightly across the carpeted floor, his 9mm Glock welded into his grip.

He opens the first bedroom door he comes across and presses the light switch.

The detective immediately sees the easel blackboard with the phrase "MY NAME IS HILARY AND I MISS MOMMY" scrawled all over it -- his face is flush with panic!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Slowly stepping toward the closed bathroom door.

Baizer and Hilary are heard in the bathtub, splashing water around. Baizer giggles.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hilary's nightie lies with Baizer's white briefs on the throw rug. The activity in the tub splashes water on the intimate apparel.

The door bursts open, almost flying off its hinges -- detectives Port and Laddwick level their guns, ready to fire.

DET. PORT

Oh, my God -- freeze, you sonuvabitch!

(to Laddwick)

Save Hilary!

EXT. BAIZER'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The street is jammed with police cars, their warning lights whirling wildly, giving a hellishly crimson glow to this dreadful night.

All the neighbors are out of their homes, gawking at the crime scene.

Detectives Port and Laddwick stand at the rear doors of a paramedic truck in front of Baizer's house, Det. Port looking much more anxious than his partner.

Det. Port pulls out a pack of Winstons from inside his suit jacket and lights one up.

DET. PORT

I should've blasted that piece of shit.

DET. LADDWICK

You couldn't have taken that chance. You might have hit Hilary.

DET. PORT

It probably doesn't matter anyhow.

DET. LADDWICK

Don't say that...just hope to God for the next few minutes that she'll be alright.

Chief Brewer makes his way over to the two detectives.

CHIEF BREWER

(to Det. Port)

We just finished I.D.'ing the killer. Does the name Zachary Ambrose bring back any memories?

DET. PORT
 (thinks)
 Has a bad ring to it.

CHIEF BREWER
 It should. The man you caught is
 Zachary Ambrose's son, Ralph
 Baizer. That's his foster name. He
 was raised in an orphanage.

DET. PORT
 (still thinking)
 Zachary Ambrose...the Witch Doctor
 killer back in the forties?

CHIEF BREWER
 The wormy apple doesn't fall far
 from the tree.

Just then a set of bright headlights turn up the street. It's
 a van that pulls up in front of Baizer's house.

Written on the side of the vehicle are the last words Det.
 Port would ever want to see: "LOS ANGELES COUNTY CORONER."

The life goes out of Det. Port's eyes as his cigarette
 despairingly hangs off his lip.

DET. LADDWICK
 Shit.

A PARAMEDIC, coming from Baizer's house, approaches Det. Port
 from behind with dread. He places a firm grip on the
 detective's shoulder.

PARAMEDIC
 Detective Port...I'm so sorry. We
 did all we could to save her. He
 kept her underwater too long.

Det. Port's face looks as though it's going to blow with
 volcanic anger.

The driver's door of the coroner's van cracks open as the
 coroner is about to exit -- Det. Port suddenly appears and
 slams the door on the coroner to keep him inside.

DET. PORT
 If you get out of that fucking
 truck I swear to God I'll kill you!

The coroner freezes.

INT. THE PEARL HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hilary's 10x13 framed school picture rests on the fireplace
 mantel.

Next to it is a headshot of a handsome police officer in his uniform and cap.

An engraved gold label is attached to the bottom of the frame: "HANK PEARL. SERVED WITH HONOR AND EXCELLENCE. DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY."

Detective Port steps in and picks up the photo of Hilary to gaze at her smile.

DET. PORT

...This time it's different. This time it feels like it's my daughter.

June sits on the edge of a chair, inconsolable.

JUNE

Why?

Det. Port puts Hilary's photo back and turns to June.

DET. PORT

Because all Hank talked about those last few months before he died was how happy he was knowing he had a little girl on the way.

He walks closer to June.

DET. PORT

I can't bring Hilary back. I'd give my life if I could.

JUNE

If Hank were here, she'd still be alive.

DET. PORT

June, there's no way anyone could've guessed this sick bastard was a cross-dresser. He fooled Miss Jacobson --

JUNE

And now my daughter's dead!

DET. PORT

Miss Jacobson pleaded with me for hours, asking if she could come here and tell you how sorry she is. Hank would want you to have the kind of courage to forgive her.

JUNE

Never! All I want is to be with my husband and daughter!

EXT. UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A gloomy, windy day.

"PEARL" is printed on a curbside mailbox. The single-story family home sits in the middle of the block.

A rooftop view of the Pearl home -- a woman exits the front door, wearing a head scarf and carrying a purse.

Ground level view of the woman from behind. She listlessly moves down the walkway to the main sidewalk and continues her wavering stride to the corner bus stop.

A municipal bus rolls down the street and brakes at the curb for her. The doors open and the woman steps aboard.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF WILSHIRE AND FAIRFAX - DAY

The bus stops on the corner where the May Company Department Store (recognizable for its imposing golden Art Deco facade) is located. The bus doors fling open.

The woman, looking down, steps off the bus. She proceeds with just enough determination to move along and steps past a newspaper rack on the corner.

The headlines read "NIGHTMARE ENDS WITH VICTIM 13 HILARY PEARL DEAD."

The woman enters the main doors of the May Company.

INT. MAY COMPANY - DAY

The door to an elevator opens immediately. The woman shuffles into the car, joined by other patrons. As she slowly turns around, the door quickly closes and obstructs her face.

EXT. MAY COMPANY - ROOFTOP - DAY

The roof access door opens. The woman, who remains anonymous, steps out into daylight. Her hand involuntarily slackens and the strap from her purse is set free. The bag drops.

The woman walks toward the edge of the building as if beckoned by someone or some force awaiting her.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF WILSHIRE AND FAIRFAX - DAY

On the May Company corner, a man stops at the newspaper rack, slips a quarter into the slot and removes a paper.

The man turns and strolls away.

In a blur, the woman's body crashes down on the newspaper rack, toppling it over in an explosion of blood.

The man with the newspaper whips around and freezes in shock at what he sees. The paper drops from his hands.

Horrorified pedestrians stop, stricken at the gruesome sight. Traffic screeches to a halt and SCREAMS reverberate across the boulevard.

The woman's body lies broken on top of the crushed newspaper rack, her blood pooling on the sidewalk.

Despite her grisly, contorted body, the woman is now at peace.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Ralph Baizer stands with doleful eyes staring in a void-like state. He blinks three times in fright with each explosion of the JUDGE's gavel.

JUDGE

Ralph Patrick Baizer, the jury has found you guilty by reason of insanity, and it is the sentence of this court that you be committed to the state mental institution at Atascadero for the criminally insane where you will spend the rest of your natural life.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS - DAY

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

A light wintry fog circulates through the air as students make their way into the law school building.

INT. UCLA - LAW CLASS - DAY

The name "RALPH BAIZER" is chalked on a giant blackboard.

PROF. ROTHBINE (O.S.)

Ralph Baizer, the Schoolyard
Killer...

Pull back from the blackboard to reveal Baizer's name joined by others written in columns:

"ZACHARY AMBROSE" (listed directly under Baizer's name),
"RICHARD SPECK, WAYNE WILLIAMS, ALBERT DeSALVO, JEFFREY
DAHMER, JOACHIM KROLL, EDWARD GEIN, TED BUNDY --

Standing at the dais is PROFESSOR LARRY ROTHBINE, 50, a charismatic, rakish sort whose eloquence could spellbind anyone, even by the mere reading of a telephone book.

The rest of names on the blackboard can be seen behind him:

DAVID BERKOWITZ, JOHN WAYNE GACY, DEAN CORLL, GERALD STANO, HENRY LEE LUCAS, ALBERT FISH, JOSEPH BALL, KENNETH BIANCHI, ANGELO BUONO, RICHARD TRENTON CHASE."

PROF. ROTHBINE

Ambrose was a zealot devil worshipper, emphatically believing in the teachings of Luciferian lore that immortality through reincarnation was attainable by baptizing oneself in the blood of children and repeated on the eve of every waxing crescent moon, which was the phase it was in when Satan was created by God, hence, the Devil's Moon.

The auditorium is filled to capacity with highly intrigued students.

PROF. ROTHBINE

When Mrs. Ambrose found out her husband was the infamous Witch Doctor, she went nuts. She called the police on him and then jumped into their swimming pool and drowned herself, rather than face an almost certain persecuted life.

Back on the students.

In one particular row, STEVEN RAINBERRY and KATIE MORROW, mid 20s, sit together. Their vibrant youth and good looks immediately stand out from the rest of the crowd.

PROF. ROTHBINE

The rest of the listed serial killers, rapists and human cannibals share something in common with all of you...they're going to be responsible for thirty percent of your grade. Since justice and injustice swing both ways, case in point, O.J. Simpson's murder trial, I want you to choose a partner for this assignment. Then pick a name from the blackboard to represent as your client and prepare a defense so persuasive that Bin Laden would hire you to get him out of hell.

The class enjoys a laugh, including Steven and Katie.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

A panoramic view of the tourist trap captures the overflowing Sunday crowds from one end of the pier to the other.

The giant Ferris wheel is in motion while, nearby, kids scream to the swift drops and turns on the oceanfront rollercoaster.

The midway is thriving with patrons spending quick bucks on a variety of carnival games.

A single-prop airplane buzzes overhead, tugging a giant aerial banner that reads "DON'T BE FOOLED BY IMPOSTERS, JOIN RELATIONSHIPCHECK.COM"

Steven and Katie happily promenade down the busy boardwalk hand in hand. The three-carat diamond solitaire engagement ring Katie's wearing flickers in the sunlight.

Steven and Katie are accompanied by their friend DARRYL and his girlfriend CANDICE, both around their same age.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

Katie and Candice, eating corn dogs and drinking fresh lemonade, stroll ahead of Steven and Darryl who are eating and drinking the same.

CANDICE

You're lucky, Steven must be a true romantic. I love your engagement ring -- that stone rocks.

KATIE

Unfortunately, there are other flaws not found in an ideal cut, D color diamond...he admitted to a one-night stand way after it was placed on my finger.

CANDICE

That douche bag.

KATIE

No worries -- don't you know, a woman scorned makes the best pastry chef?

Candice shoots Katie a curious look.

KATIE

(cracks a sly smile)

Now it's my turn to pick that special occasion and serve Steven his just desserts.

(beat)

Meantime, he's still trying to get back into my good graces. He even insisted on helping me pay for my tuition.

CANDICE

Well, that's gotta be worth something.

KATIE

Not anymore. He's going to have to win the lottery to keep us both in school, 'cause he's running out of cash.

CANDICE

If you win the lottery, you won't have to go to school.

KATIE

No, not me. I'm not the greedy type. I don't need that. I wanna pass the bar and make my own way. That's why I hate people who win the lotto. They don't deserve it.

Darryl notices that he and Steven are passing a fortune teller's shop. The front window reads "MADAM YOLANDA, PSYCHIC READER AND ADVISOR."

Darryl stops, causing Steven to do the same.

DARRYL

Your future may hold marriage, but let's check and see if you're going to be a lawyer.

He points to Madam Yolanda's shop.

STEVEN

I don't have to spend money on a fortune teller to know the answer to that. Unless I can put the squeeze on some rich uncle, I'm gonna have to bail out of law school without a parachute.

DARRYL

You're not the only one. You know my bud, George Alvarez? He's in your class.

STEVEN

Yeah.

DARRYL

He has to work the graveyard shift at a hospital laundry service to help pay for his tuition.

STEVEN

Well, shaking farts out of bed sheets ain't gonna pay for mine.

DARRYL

Talk to Professor Rothbine. I had him for two years, and I should have talked to him long before that. He knew I didn't have the judicial jujitsu to become a lawyer, but he also knew my real passion was playing poker. He used to back me in some high-stakes games. We split some good money for a while. When I told him I was dropping out, he pulled some strings and that's how I got set up at the Stratosphere as a dealer.

STEVEN

Just like that?

DARRYL

Just like that. Trust me, this guy's got an angle for everything.

STEVEN

I'm still bummed that we can't hang out like in the old day. I miss the beers and the sports bars.

Katie and Candice double-back to the boys.

KATIE

What are you guys waiting for?

MADAM YOLANDA, early 40s but aging leathery, as much a fixture on the pier as barnacles on a piling, steps out from her shop.

There's something hypnotic about her cryptic eyes that set her apart from typical charlatans.

MADAM YOLANDA

(to Darryl)

Come in...if you really value your future.

DARRYL

No thanks. It ain't Halloween yet.

Darryl takes Candice by the arm.

DARRYL

Come on, let's go.

They walk on.

Madam Yolanda turns to Katie with interest.

MADAM YOLANDA

How about you, my dear? Need to know...certain things?

KATIE

Come on, Steven, let's go in. It'll be fun.

Steven critically eyes Madam Yolanda and receives, in return, an all-knowing stare from the creepy fortune teller.

STEVEN

(to Katie)

Darryl's right. Let's go.

Steven walks away, not waiting for Katie.

Madam Yolanda quickly moves in closer to Katie.

MADAM YOLANDA

(lowers her voice)

I make my own fortune charging people to hear what they want to hear...but I'll give you this advice for free -- stay the fuck away from him.

Shock turns Katie to stone.

The fortune teller steps back.

MADAM YOLANDA

I just gave you back your future.

Steven returns to collect Katie.

Madam Yolanda quickly weaves her way back to her door.

STEVEN

Katie, c'mon...don't forget, it's your mom's birthday. We have to stop and get flowers.

KATIE

Okay, I know.

Steven takes Katie by the arm and pulls her along as she stares back at the fortune teller, but she is gone from sight.

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Prof. Rothbine's behind his desk. Steven sits before him.

There's an awkward silence between the two as the professor keeps his eyes lingering on his student.

STEVEN

Should I leave? Maybe there's no way of cleaning up my financial stew.

PROF. ROTHBINE

You mean Katie's financial goulash as well. However, if I can get you to trust my intuition, I just may have the answer to your problems of tuition.

Prof. Rothbine picks up his coffee cup and sips.

PROF. ROTHBINE

You and Katie meet in college?

STEVEN

No. It was ridiculously weird, but we met when we were six years old at the same therapist's office. We kinda had the same...scary problems...nightmares or something. We went to the same schools and been together ever since.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Wow...that's some love story... very interesting.

STEVEN

Why, does that help our cause at all?

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Just brainstorming...Confucius say,
 "One who has passion for asking
 questions, will soon fall in love
 with the right answer."

(beat)
 Who did you pick on the blackboard
 for the assignment?

STEVEN
 John Wayne Gacy.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 (shakes his head)
 He's not for you.

STEVEN
 Huh?

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Ralph Baizer...make him your
 project. Who did you pick for your
 partner?

STEVEN
 Mike Orensztein.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 (shakes his head)
 No. You won't get what you need
 from him.

STEVEN
 Huh?

PROF. ROTHBINE
 You and Katie are engaged, aren't
 you?

STEVEN
 Yes.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Then stay together. Why break up a
 winning team?

STEVEN
 How is this going to help keep us
 in school?

PROF. ROTHBINE
 I'm glad you asked. There's a
 rather...unusual new grant I was
 reading about last week.

Prof. Rothbine opens a top desk drawer, pulls out a large newspaper clipping and hands it to Steven.

PROF. ROTHBINE
I kept it for this sort of
emergency.

Steven looks over the clipping, bewildered.

PROF. ROTHBINE
You don't think you and Katie could
finish law school on that amount?
You just have to be committed and
study your asses off if both of you
want to sign on.

Steven remains clueless. He offers the clipping back to Prof.
Rothbine.

PROF. ROTHBINE
No, you keep it. You and Katie read
it over ad nauseam if you're
interested. No games. This
opportunity is strictly not for
quitters.

EXT. UCLA - PARKING LOT - DAY

Prof. Rothbine approaches the driver's door to his Hummer H2
and notices something sticking between a wiper blade and the
windshield.

He stretches over the hood and snatches up an envelope with
his name on it.

He's then taken by surprise when he sees a sexy black chick,
CARLA, mid 20s, standing at the driver's side tail light. She
has a petite body -- and very, very pregnant.

PROF. ROTHBINE
Carla!

She remains silent but with beady eyes.

He holds up the envelope.

PROF. ROTHBINE
This is yours.

CARLA
No. It's yours!

He deflects a look of revulsion back at Carla who stands
waiting for him to open the envelope, and feeling the tension
from her, he removes a note from inside:

"YOU'RE BEHIND \$10,000.00. PAY BY FRIDAY OR TELL YOUR WIFE
YOU HAVE A BABY ON THE WAY."

CARLA

I hope your wife isn't making out the household checks now. I'd hate to remind her that one is overdue. I can just see it now, she's sitting at the breakfast table with your son and saying to him, "Just where does your busy daddy find the time to bang his students over his desk and get them pregnant?"

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

The professor is busy at his desk grading papers.

The phone buzzes. He puts down his red marker and punches the intercom button.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Yes?

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Steven and Katie are here to see you.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Send them in. Thank you.

In moments, the door opens. Steven and Katie step inside.

STEVEN

We're committed. We'll go for it.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Good! I'm excited for the both of you.

(beat)

You'll be needing this then.

The professor removes a thin layer of business cards from his desk, sifts through them and pulls one out, giving it to Steven.

PROF. ROTHBINE

I want both of you to go there sometime today...

EXT. OLD BOOKSTORE - DAY

The business is sandwiched between a vintage furniture store and an antique shop. The bookstore window reads "UNCLE LOUIE'S RARE AND USED BOOKS."

INT. OLD BOOKSTORE - DAY

A hoarder's paradise of vintage literature.

Steven and Katie amble up the middle aisle to the main counter at the back of the store where an old Chinese man sits behind the cash register.

PROF. ROTHBINE (V.O.)
 ...You'll meet Uncle Louie.

INT. BOOKSTORE - BACKROOM - DAY

The elderly Asian man fits a key into a lock and leads Steven and Katie inside.

The place is equipped with printing presses, photocopiers, lamination machines, a stockpile of stationery supplies and an area for taking passport photos.

PROF. ROTHBINE (V.O.)
 He'll take care of one of the most important details so you have a chance at passing the Baizer assignment.

The camera FLASHES taking a photo of Steven who sits in front of a white screen. Another FLASH snaps a photo of Katie.

INT. LAPD HQ - CASE FILE ROOM - DAY

A POLICE SERGEANT unlocks a chain-link door that gives entrance to rows and rows of storage shelves marked "A-Z," all crammed with boxes of case files.

He turns around and faces a class of fourth graders who are accompanied by their teacher.

Standing in the back of the children is Prof. Rothbine. His hand rests on the shoulder of his 9-year-old son DANIEL.

The teacher leads the kids inside the caged file room.

As Daniel follows his class in, the professor takes his son out of line and steps up to the police sergeant.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Daniel, this is Sergeant Hutton.

The sergeant sticks his hand out to shake Daniel's.

POLICE SERGEANT
 Hi, Daniel. Pleasure to meet you.

DANIEL
 Thank you.

POLICE SERGEANT
 You have a special dad here. It
 isn't everyone who could get a
 field trip like this arranged.

DANIEL
 Thank you.

POLICE SERGEANT
 Well, you're entirely welcome.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Go ahead, Daniel, get with your
 class.

Daniel speeds on ahead.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 I really appreciate this. Thanks
 for helping out.
 (lowers his voice)
 I know it's a pain in the ass, but
 the kids love this stuff.

The police sergeant smiles and nods. The officer then steps
 away and leads the teacher and her class down the rows of
 storage shelves.

They all disappear into a center aisle, except for Prof.
 Rothbine who lags behind.

The kids are enthralled by the immense inventory of file
 boxes.

POLICE SERGEANT
 If all these bad guys were loose,
 not even Superman, Batman, Spider-
 Man or Wonder Woman could clean up
 the streets better than the Los
 Angeles Police Department.

Prof. Rothbine detours into aisle "B." He swiftly eyes
 numerous criminal names on file boxes, then halts on the one
 labeled: "BAIZER, RALPH PATRICK."

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steven sits with Katie at a small desk.

Katie punches away on a laptop.

She views L.A. Times archival headlines: "CATHY CARLTON
 VICTIM 7 FOUND DEAD." "SAMANTHA LESTER VICTIM 12." "HILARY
 PEARL VICTIM 13 TAKEN FROM CLASSROOM BY SCHOOLYARD KILLER."

Steven holds a felt-tip pen; the edge of his palm rests on a newspaper clipping. The article is blocked by his hand, but the headline is clear: "HILARY PEARL VICTIM 13 REMEMBERED."

While Katie still hunts for headlines on the laptop, Steven passes the time doodling a few words across the top of the clipping -- "THINK OF THE PERFECT..."

More headlines scroll up the laptop screen: "NIGHTMARE ENDS WITH VICTIM 13 HILARY PEARL DEAD." "SCHOOLYARD KILLER GETS LIFE."

Katie stops on the headline: "SCHOOLYARD KILLER DIES IN PRISON ASYLUM."

KATIE

Here it is, I found it.

She anxiously reads the article below the headline as Steven's eyes lock on the face of Baizer whose photo is posted on the side of the article.

KATIE

"Ralph Patrick Baizer, the notorious Schoolyard Killer..."

Steven's eyes become more mesmerized by the leering look he gets back from Baizer with every word Katie utters about the killer.

KATIE

...who was convicted one month ago on thirteen counts of murder, and who was serving a life sentence at the Atascadero State Mental Institution, was found dead yesterday morning. The director of the prison hospital stated that Baizer suffered a diabetic seizure while showering. Doctors at the facility tried to revive him, but Baizer was discovered too late for medical treatment."

Steven's eyes slowly droop from the strain and close.

INT. PRISON ASYLUM - SHOWER ROOM - DAY (1989)

A restraining harness drapes over a chair. A guard stands waiting behind it.

INT. SHOWER STALL - DAY

A strong stream of water shoots down from a showerhead. Baizer showers and suds his face with a bar of soap.

The showerhead stops abruptly. Baizer, blinded by the suds, quickly works his fingers to wipe the soap away. His eyes widen in fright.

He backs up against the tile wall with no escape.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (O.S.)
Hi, Ralph --

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Steven jolts up out of his nightmare, screaming.

Katie sleeps next to him and is startled awake. She quickly turns on her bedside lamp.

KATIE
Steven, what is it? What's wrong?

Steven takes Katie and holds her tight.

STEVEN
A nightmare...a goddamn nightmare.

KATIE
You're soaking wet. What was it about?

STEVEN
When I was a kid, I had these horrible nightmares. I had forgotten all about them...but one just fuckin' hit me out of nowhere.

Katie breaks away and pulls a wad of tissues from a box on the nightstand. She wipes Steven's forehead of perspiration.

KATIE
(half-hearted smile)
You should have seen the ones I had when I was a kid.

STEVEN
Do you believe in miracles?

KATIE
I don't know.

STEVEN
Miracles come in handy with nightmares. It's a miracle if I don't wake up insane from mine.

KATIE
Lie down and I'll get you some water.

Katie gets up from the bed and leaves.

Steven rests his head back down on the pillow. He can't stop shivering, afraid to go back to sleep, he stares up at the blank white ceiling.

INT. SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY (1989)

Blank white ceiling. A few feet down the wall hangs the large-faced clock: "9:00"

The bell rings.

The children settle in their seats.

Miss Jacobson sits at her desk. She opens her attendance book and picks up a red pen to mark the children's names.

MISS JACOBSON
Alright, children. Settle down.

The children quiet themselves.

MISS JACOBSON
Becky.

Becky raises her hand.

BECKY
Here.

MISS JACOBSON
Anthony.

ANTHONY
Here.

MISS JACOBSON
Alexander.

The door opens.

Ralph Baizer steps in, dressed as his convincing female alter-ego, wearing a professional salon wig, dark blue blouse, a long wool skirt and low-heel dress pumps.

Hilary looks up from her desk. She and Baizer immediately acknowledge each other with a smile.

Baizer approaches Miss Jacobson.

BAIZER
(female voice)
Hi, I'm Miss Marx. I'm substituting
for Mrs. Perkins.

MISS JACOBSON

Nice to meet you. I'm Helen Jacobson.

BAIZER

Thank you. Actually, I met Hilary yesterday when I was here, and she was such a big help showing me to the office...could I quickly borrow her for just a few minutes? I baked so many cookies for my class and I have several big boxes I'd like to give your kids. Can she help me get them?

MISS JACOBSON

Of course.

(to Hilary)

Hilary, sweetheart, can you come up here?

Hilary looks up from her desk and smiles. She leaves her seat and walks up to her teacher.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The second grade classroom door opens with Baizer and Hilary strolling out hand in hand. They move down the hallway, heading for the front doors.

INT. SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The wall clock: "9:25"

Miss Jacobson stares at the clock, a bit worried. Anxious, she stands up from her desk.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The second grade classroom door opens quickly.

Miss Jacobson steps out, hurries to the third grade classroom and opens the door -- she immediately spots the teacher, AMY PERKINS, sitting at her desk.

INT. THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Jacobson rushes over to Amy.

MISS JACOBSON

Amy...you didn't call in sick today?

AMY

No, but I was late. When I went to my car this morning, someone had slashed my tires.

MISS JACOBSON
Is Hilary Pearl in here?

AMY
No.

MISS JACOBSON
My God!

Miss Jacobson flies out.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Miss Jacobson runs down the hallway in a panic.

MISS JACOBSON
Hilary! Hilary! Hilary!

Other classroom doors spring open with teachers poking their heads out.

Overtaken by frenzy, Miss Jacobson dashes out the front doors.

MISS JACOBSON
HILARY!

INT. BAIZER'S HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Submerged in a filled bathtub, looking up -- Baizer's grinning face peers down in the rippling surface with his hands wrestling in the water. He's drowning Katie --

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Katie jolts up from her nightmare, drawing a big gasp of air.

There's a blast of thunder from an approaching storm.

A flash of lightning creeps in through a window shade and illuminates Steven's face. He's standing in a corner, staring at Katie.

She spots Steven, just as she gets her breath back, and the sight of him chokes her with fright again.

KATIE
Steven! What are you doing?

STEVEN
You kept screaming the name Hilary
in your sleep.

KATIE
What does that mean to you?

Steven is locked in thought, but breaks his silence.

STEVEN
I killed her.

Steven loses his frightened face and cracks up laughing.

INT. LAW CLASS - DAY

The session ends and the students disperse.

Prof. Rothbine hurries to catch Katie.

PROF. ROTHBINE
Katie!

Katie, irritable, stops and turns.

PROF. ROTHBINE
How are things going?

KATIE
It's getting tough to cope with.

PROF. ROTHBINE
I'm glad you trust me, Katie, with everything that's going on with you and Steven -- especially how suddenly it all happened.

KATIE
It's hard to feel normal when you're forced to live an abnormal life.

PROF. ROTHBINE
I know the stress is an uphill battle for now. But no one else must know. However, I do think it's time for Steven to see that doctor of his.

KATIE
Sometimes we feel so fucking foolish.

PROF. ROTHBINE
(smiles)
The world is full of fools, but the ones who know what they're doing, they're called geniuses.

KATIE
What about my friends? They keep asking me why Steven's missing so much class.

PROF. ROTHBINE
Stick with the same story, Epstein-
Barr Syndrome.

KATIE
Yeah, or tell them Max Von Sydow
doesn't make house calls anymore.

Katie rudely turns her back on the professor and makes for the door.

By now the rest of the students have all cleared out.

PROF. ROTHBINE
Don't forget your homework tonight.
It's important -- there's a lot to
cover!

Still fuming, Katie detours to the blackboard, picks up a piece of chalk and slashes on the board "I MISS MOMMY."

Katie, in anger, turns back to Prof. Rothbine.

KATIE
Do I have to write it a hundred
times?

She storms out.

The professor hurries over to the blackboard and swiftly erases away "I MISS MOMMY" with a strong look of contempt.

INT. MGB CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Steven sits behind the wheel of the 1976 classic sports car with the top up. His head rests back and his eyes are open as if in a daze.

His once fresh good looks have withered from mental stress.

A loud bell rings -- the sound frees Steven from his daydreaming. He looks out his window, directly across the street, where an elementary school is located.

The schoolyard bell stops ringing. Children file out of the building and bungalows, happy to have reached the end of the school day.

Steven studies a group of third grade girls who cross the street and skip past him on their way home. His deviant eyes track the young girls.

He pulls up his shirt, revealing a cluster of knife scars carved into his stomach.

His right hand picks up a kitchen knife from under his seat, cuts a fresh slit next to the others and watches the blood seep from the wound. He hides the knife under his seat again.

Steven quickly digs into his shirt pocket, removes a piece of chalk and smears his blood all over it.

On the passenger's seat lies a prescription bottle. Its label reads "NEMBUTAL."

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

Speeding northbound on PCH with the shimmering ocean on the left side and a landscape of mountains to the right.

INT. MGB CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Steven drives with the top down toward Pacific Palisades. He's immersed in deep thought.

EXT. PACIFIC PALISADES - HILLTOP HOME - DAY

Steven hurriedly jogs up the walkway to the front door of the stunning home. He collects himself, takes a bolstering breath and knocks.

DR. CHARLES BURMAN, early 70s, answers. His refined deportment and distinguished features offer a welcoming smile.

STEVEN

Dr. Burman?

DR. BURMAN

Come in, Steven.

STEVEN

Thanks.

He enters.

INT. STUDY - DAY

The large room is rich in redwood decor and flourishing with hundreds of books impressively displayed on the surrounding library shelves.

Dr. Burman and Steven enter.

DR. BURMAN

Please, sit down, Steven.

Steven settles into a thick, cushioned leather chair.

DR. BURMAN

Can I offer you a cup of coffee? I always keep a fresh pot here.

STEVEN

No, I'd prefer something a bit stronger, if you don't mind.

Dr. Burman moves to a liquor cart with a nice variety of brand-name alcohol bottles and a coffee pot. He pours a glass of scotch.

STEVEN

When I found out that you retired, I panicked. Getting ahold of you was a matter of life and death. I was seeing a psychiatrist who was giving me something to sleep, but it didn't help.

Dr. Burman returns to Steven and hands him his drink.

DR. BURMAN

Over the phone you said your nightmares were back. It's been a long time and many cases ago for me, Steven. I can't really fathom to what degree you're referring.

Steven swallows the stiff drink in one gulp.

DR. BURMAN

I see. Are you an alcoholic as well?

Dr. Burman takes a seat close to Steven.

STEVEN

I wish to God I was. That would be a helluva lot easier to cure.

DR. BURMAN

How can I help?

STEVEN

I need to know what was wrong with me when I was a kid...why you saw me and what you found. Please.

DR. BURMAN

Steven, all that's been buried. You traveled way beyond those nightmares you had as a child. Whatever I penned as your original problem might have a completely different diagnosis based on today's new psychiatric analyses.

(MORE)

DR. BURMAN (CONT'D)
 You know, thirty years ago there
 was no technical term for "I feel
 like shit." Today it's called
 fibromyalgia.

STEVEN
 I'm running out of time. I'm really
 running out of time...you have no
 idea.

Steven springs to his feet.

STEVEN
 I'll let you in on a little secret.
 My life isn't my own. It never has
 been. I'm dreaming the nightmares
 that once belonged to one horrible
 sonuvabitch!

Steven storms out.

Dr. Burman stands.

DR. BURMAN
 Steven, wait a minute!

EXT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - DAY

Steven whisks out of the house and runs down the walkway.

Dr. Burman steps quickly out the door.

DR. BURMAN
 Steven, please wait!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steven makes it to the driver's side of his MGB.

Dr. Burman is still standing outside the door of his home.

DR. BURMAN
 Steven, I'll help you!

Steven pauses, his eyes closing with relief as he wearily
 rests his hands on top of the driver's door.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

Steven sits before Dr. Burman at his desk.

DR. BURMAN

Turns out, spring cleaning for old files is every ten years, yours and Katie's included, unfortunately. However, the only thing I can recall is that both your cases were similar, and I do believe the two of you underwent hypnotherapy sessions as well. But you and Katie will have to drudge up all those unpleasant dreams, if you're really prepared to do that.

STEVEN

They're still so clear to me.

DR. BURMAN

What's your earliest remembrance of things back then?

Steven's eyes search deeply for the answer.

FLASHBACKS:

INT. PRISON ASYLUM - DAY

A murky, nightmarish realm -- a prisoner wears plain white hospital pajamas and a restraining harness. Two guards escort him down the hallway of a ward.

They appear to be rushing but in slow motion as other condemned inmates crowd around the prisoner, giving him malicious looks.

The guards continue to drag the prisoner along, pushing through the flock of crazies.

INT. HOUSE - STEVEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A 6-year-old Steven frenetically awakens out of his nightmare.

An UNIDENTIFIED MALE voice hauntingly carries over from Steven's dream into the youngster's conscious state --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (O.S.)

Hi, Ralph!

Steven screams in terror.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steven's DAD and MOM, both in their early 40s, jar awake. Dad turns on the nightstand lamp and flings the covers off.

STEVEN'S DAD

Stay here, I'll go this time.

He hurries out of bed.

INT. STEVEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dad flicks on the lights.

Steven is on the floor, curled up in a corner and shivers in fright.

STEVEN'S DAD

Stevie!

He rushes to his son.

STEVEN'S DAD

It's okay, Stevie!

He joins his son on the floor to hold and comfort him.

STEVEN'S DAD

Stevie, it's all over, it's just one of those dreams again...you're safe, no one's going to hurt you.

Steven holds onto his dad as if clinging to life.

Dad looks up to find his wife standing over them.

Both dad and mom's expressions show grave concern and great puzzlement.

END FLASHBACKS.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

Dr. Burman stands close to Steven who's perspiring in his chair. The doctor hands him a glass of scotch. Steven takes the glass and calms his nerves with it.

DR. BURMAN

Steven, you say you're dreaming someone else's nightmares. Just who do you think they belong to?

Steven leans forward and puts his empty scotch glass on the desk, then reaches inside his jacket pocket, pulls out a folded sheet of paper and hands it to the doctor.

Dr. Burman unfolds the paper -- it's a photocopy of a newspaper's front page:

"SCHOOLYARD KILLER DIES IN PRISON ASYLUM."

DR. BURMAN

I can't subscribe to something as outrageous as this.

(MORE)

DR. BURMAN (CONT'D)

How do you support that kind of claim without proof -- absolute proof that would at least raise the brows of other experts?

STEVEN

The proof is easy. It's believing it that's going to be hard.

DR. BURMAN

You can't use terms like reincarnation or possession in our field of medicine.

STEVEN

It's funny, the Bible doesn't believe in reincarnation, and psychiatrists don't believe in possession, yet any dictionary explains both as if they've been derived from the truth.

Dr. Burman holds up the clipping.

DR. BURMAN

Steven, how is this proof?

STEVEN

I'm in law school now. I began researching the crimes of Ralph Baizer for a big assignment. After that, all the nightmares I had as a kid came back in a flash. It's me in that prison asylum. I can describe every face, the foul stench circulating in that hellhole, and how it's me trembling inside, knowing I'm going to die there...but not from a medical condition.

DR. BURMAN

And the proof?

STEVEN

I want you to put me under hypnosis again, and I want you to pull those missing details of Baizer's death out of my head. I remember from my research the detective's name who captured Baizer, Richard Port. I can challenge him for the truth. He can't kill me for asking.

DR. BURMAN
If you're going fishing for him,
you better have bait to lure him
in, and not the kind that stinks.

STEVEN
Well...how 'bout this for
starters...

Steven pulls up his shirt -- Dr. Burman immediately notices a half-dozen knife scars on Steven's bare stomach.

DR. BURMAN
What are those?

STEVEN
You better ask Detective Port, he's
the only one who knows.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

A polygraph machine rests on the desk -- the inking needles produce straight lines over a roll of moving graph paper.

Dr. Burman sits close to the unit, making additional markings on the graph with a red pen.

Steven sits across from the doctor, connected to the polygraph.

DR. BURMAN
You're doing fine...nervous?

STEVEN
No.

The needles on the machine slightly jump.

DR. BURMAN
We'll soon be finished.

Dr. Burman puts another red mark on the readout.

DR. BURMAN
Steven, have you ever had to
research psychopathic criminals
before the assignment Professor
Rothbine gave you?

STEVEN
No.

The needles stabilize and fall back to inking smooth running lines.

DR. BURMAN
Have you ever participated in any
kind of sexual acts involving
children?

STEVEN
No.

The needles continue flowing steadily.

DR. BURMAN
Have you ever heard the name Hilary
Pearl, victim thirteen?

STEVEN
Yes.

DR. BURMAN
Where?

STEVEN
Newspaper articles...and my
girlfriend, Katie, yelling "Hilary"
in her sleep.

Dr. Burman glances down at the machine -- the polygraph
needles remain unprovoked. He shuts off the unit and sets
down his red pen.

DR. BURMAN
Round one is over. You want to
stretch? I can take the wires off.

STEVEN
No. I'm okay. I just want to finish
this.

DR. BURMAN
Round two. And remember, Steven,
with these sets of questions, I
want you to deliberately state
false answers as the other person
you claim to be. You can't beat the
machine this way. The experts will
have to at least agree with that.

Dr. Burman flips the switch on the polygraph and picks up his
red pen.

DR. BURMAN
Please state your full name.

STEVEN
Ralph Patrick Baizer.

The needles on the machine track normally.

DR. BURMAN
Have you ever heard the name Hilary
Pearl, victim thirteen?

STEVEN
No.

The needles wave.

DR. BURMAN
Did you kill Hilary Pearl?

STEVEN
No.

The needles slash across the graph paper.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Dr. Burman sits in a booth having coffee, looking directly
across the table at someone.

DR. BURMAN
You're a difficult man to hunt
down. Don't you believe in
Facebook?

A person's hand comes into view from the other side of the
table and picks up a cup of coffee. The rim reaches the
person's lips -- Det. Richard Port, now close to 70.

He takes a sip of coffee.

DET. PORT
I believe in privacy, especially my
own.

Dr. Burman slides over a large manila envelope to Det. Port.

DR. BURMAN
The kid I told you about on the
phone, Steven, those are his
polygraph tests and the audio tape
of his hypnosis session conducted
the same week by Dr. James Clay,
whom you'd have to agree is highly
renowned for what he does.

DET. PORT
And you need my help to do what?

DR. BURMAN
To prove me wrong about something
I'm afraid to believe myself.

DET. PORT
And what's that?

DR. BURMAN

That Ralph Baizer is going to kill again.

DET. PORT

Are you sure you're not the patient?

DR. BURMAN

I'm sure you ran my credentials before agreeing to see me. I'm retired too, just like you. I was enjoying the pleasure of minding my own business, just like you, when Steven Rainberry, after twenty years, decides to pay me a visit and brings my entire boring existence to a screeching halt, just like I've done to you.

DET. PORT

I don't care how many faded degrees you have, doctor, I'm not blowing my pension for you or anybody else.

DR. BURMAN

If you have one single spark left in you as a detective and can use a little excitement in your autumn years, just listen to the tape and look over his polygraphs. I haven't even scratched the surface of any of this yet and I've already found some bizarre coincidences. There are copies of both Steven and Katie's birth certificates and driver's licenses in the envelope. Steven was born the same day Baizer died. Katie was born the same day Baizer's last victim, Hilary Pearl, was murdered -- and I wouldn't be shocked at all if these two occurrences happen within the same second of each other.

DET. PORT

Tell me something, doctor, have you stopped to ask yourself why is this guy so desperate to prove himself a killer?

DR. BURMAN

It's like a ticking clock for him. If Steven is Baizer reincarnated, he knows there's no medication or treatment in the world that could save him, so his resolution is suicide. But if he could get me to disprove his grotesque fantasy, then at least he'd be a candidate for psychotropic drugs that would give him a fighting chance at a functional life.

The detective's patience caves in as his head drops discourteously, wanting this meeting to end.

Dr. Burman stands up.

He removes something from inside his blazer pocket and tosses it down on the table before Det. Port's fallen eyes -- pieces of chalk stained with dried blood inside a Ziploc bag.

Det. Port stares intently at the bag.

DR. BURMAN

I'll be back here tomorrow at three. If you don't show up, then I'll know I just couldn't pull you away from your checkers game at the home.

Det. Port throws the doctor an indignant look.

DR. BURMAN

Steven also has self-inflicted knife scars across his stomach. But don't worry, he hasn't killed anyone...yet.

He drops a \$10 bill to pay for the coffees.

DR. BURMAN

Then again, what does it matter...you can't arrest anyone for "yet" crimes.

He strides away.

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A framed one-sheet movie poster of 1972's "SLEUTH" hangs on the wall.

Its style offers headshots of its two stars, LAURENCE OLIVIER and MICHAEL CAINE, each holding a detective's magnifying glass to their eye.

Katie and Steven meet in front of the poster. She raises up two bottles of Corona beer in one hand and a bottle of Jose Cuervo in the other.

KATIE

Think we can be ourselves for one night?

STEVEN

We'll do better than that...you be Kim Basinger and I'll be Mickey Rourke.

Steven grabs Katie and pulls her away. We hear them landing on the bed, laughing and clanking bottles.

The "SLEUTH" poster remains in full view for an extra moment. The movie's tag line above the stars' heads reads "THINK OF THE PERFECT CRIME...THEN GO ONE STEP FURTHER."

LATER

The two beer bottles, now empty, sit on the nightstand.

Steven, in a T-shirt and briefs, rests up against the headboard with Katie astride. She hands him the bottle of Cuervo, and he takes a healthy swig, then pushes it back to her.

Katie fills her mouth with tequila but does not swallow.

She removes her top to further entice Steven with her even more intoxicating breasts, then locks her mouth over his and shares her swig with him.

The tequila runs down their chins as they kiss intensely.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steven and Katie lie sound asleep.

Suddenly, Steven, in a trance-like state, gets out of bed.

He makes his way into the bathroom and flicks on the light switch as he closes the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven is drawn to the bathtub and turns both handles. The water blasts out of the nozzle and fills the tub.

Steven takes a few steps over to the sink. He stares into the mirror with eyes that reflect a complete loss of awareness and will.

Steven picks up a tube of Katie's lipstick, smears the red tip over his lips and begins crying. He drops the lipstick as he continues to stare at himself in the mirror.

STEVEN

What am I doing...what did I start?

He crazily rubs the lipstick off his mouth, making a red mess of his face.

KATIE (V.O.)

Steven...are you alright in there?
Steven?

Steven stares back into his own eyes in the mirror.

LATER

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven is on his knees, hunched over the bathtub that's still filling with water.

But now Katie is inside the tub!

Steven's hands, coated with red fingernail polish, are clamped around her throat.

Katie SCREAMS and struggles wildly to break free. He fights to keep her head under the jetting nozzle.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A few startled NEIGHBORS pound on Steven's door. They can hear Katie's SCREAMS from inside.

NEIGHBOR #1

Katie! Steven! What's going on in there? Open up!

NEIGHBOR #1 uses his body as a battering ram and tries to break the door in.

NEIGHBOR #1

(to another neighbor)
Quick, call the police!

Neighbor #1 continues ramming his shoulder into the door.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Cop cars surround the area, joined by a few paramedic vans.

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paramedics remove Katie from the adjoining bathroom on a gurney and wheel her out of the bedroom.

Police officers hold Steven facedown on the bed, with hands cuffed and his lipstick still grotesquely smeared.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens instantly. A police officer enters with a cup of water. He walks over to Steven, who sits at a table, handcuffed and scared. Steven's face is now washed clean.

The cop hands him the cup.

STEVEN

Thank you.

The officer exits.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT

Police DETECTIVE WALTER DESMOND, 40, possesses an aura that could easily be deemed threatening but then it could just be his natural powers of intimidation.

He and Dr. Burman stand in front of the two-way mirror. They observe Steven.

DR. BURMAN

What's the procedure for getting Steven out of here?

DET. DESMOND

Well, it's not going to happen tonight. He'll be arraigned tomorrow, and my best guess is that the judge will recommend a month in the psych ward at County General for an evaluation. But if Miss Morrow presses charges, then that's a whole new hard-on Steven's going to have to sit on.

Det. Desmond quickly turns his attention to someone in the back of the room.

DET. DESMOND

Excuse my...emphasis.

Dr. Burman turns to the same person -- Katie is standing against the back wall.

Katie stares at the doctor, trying to figure something out.

KATIE

I know you.

DR. BURMAN

I know you, too. A long time ago.

KATIE

All I can remember really is me and my mom stopping for donuts before coming to see you each time. How did you know to come here?

DR. BURMAN

Steven contacted me some weeks back. I've been trying to help him. He thought I was the only one who could.

Suddenly, a wave a fright hits Katie; she shivers with tears. Her hand trembles as she covers her mouth, afraid to speak her next words.

Dr. Burman quickly steps over to her.

DR. BURMAN

Katie, what is it? What's wrong?

Katie's hand slowly drops from her mouth as she tries being stronger than her fears.

KATIE

Those nightmares I had when I was small...Steven...what he did to me tonight...that was my nightmare.

She goes toe to toe with another bout of panic but loses this time.

KATIE

Who is he?

She flees out the door.

DR. BURMAN

I better go after her.

He rushes along.

DET. DESMOND

Doc.

Dr. Burman stops and looks back at the detective.

DET. DESMOND

What's the story with this guy? Is he nuts?

DR. BURMAN

I hope so.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Dr. Burman sits in a booth, biding his time with a cup of coffee. He peers at the clock over the counter: "3:10"

Dr. Burman drains the last of his brew.

A waitress moseys over to pour him another cup.

DR. BURMAN

No...that's it. Just the check.

DET. PORT (O.S.)

Drink up, I'm paying this time.

Dr. Burman looks over his shoulder and sees Det. Port holding the large manila envelope.

The waitress fills Dr. Burman's cup.

DET. PORT

(to the waitress)

You can bring another.

She walks off.

Det. Port takes a seat opposite the doctor and slides the large manila envelope to him.

DET. PORT

You know, it's nothing new to beat a polygraph test. However, your Steven character wasn't trying to beat it...he wanted to tell the truth. And he did.

The waitress returns with coffee for Det. Port then moves along to another table. As soon as she's out of earshot --

DR. BURMAN

What about Steven's tape? Is that how Baizer died?

DET. PORT

First, were copies made of the polygraph tests or the tape?

DR. BURMAN

No. Those are the only copies.

DET. PORT

They're mine to keep.

DR. BURMAN

Agreed.

Dr. Burman slides the manila envelope back to the detective.

Det. Port eyes the envelope for a second, then focuses back on the doctor.

DET. PORT
Like I said, I could lose my pension if I give out the kind of information you want.

DR. BURMAN
I understand.

DET. PORT
I'm not an advocate of the supernatural, and I've never met a so-called medium who solved a murder case using an Ouija board. It takes painstaking research into police records. Because I caught that sick motherfucker, I'm interested in one thing and one thing only -- to find out if your patient poses the same kind of threat to society as Baizer did.

Det. Port stares at the doctor a few extra seconds, still debating whether to answer his question.

DET. PORT
(nods)
The way Steven describes it on the tape is the way Baizer really died.

DR. BURMAN
Including the dismemberment and the cover-up?

Det. Port reluctantly nods.

DR. BURMAN
Why the cover-up?

DET. PORT
The angle to use the diabetic seizure was to protect the guard so he wouldn't spend the rest of his life in prison for something he should have been honored for.

DR. BURMAN
Thank you. I guess I should tell you this...

DET. PORT
Something happened?

DR. BURMAN
Steven was arrested last night. He
tried to kill Katie...in a bathtub.

DET. PORT
Where is he?

DR. BURMAN
They gave him thirty days in County
General for a mental evaluation.

DET. PORT
Then our business is concluded.
We're both retired men. Let's leave
it at that.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Dr. Burman drives up with Katie to the entrance booth and
hands the attendant some money. The guard arm raises,
allowing them to come through.

Dr. Burman pulls into a nearby parking space.

INT. CAR - DAY

KATIE
I want to thank you again for
coming with me. I know it sounds
silly, but something pulled me back
here. I just don't want to face her
alone. I couldn't say this to
anyone else because I know you
understand me. Even though Steven
is locked up, I feel death all
around me.

Katie's throat swells with fear, choking her words.

KATIE
I can't sleep because every night I
think I won't wake up!

DR. BURMAN
I'm sorry to hear this, Katie, but
I'm relieved that you're not trying
to keep these feelings inside you
where they won't do you any good.

KATIE
That's why I feel so idiotic about
coming here with you.

DR. BURMAN
Don't worry, it'll be an education
for me.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - BOARDWALK - DAY

Katie and Dr. Burman make their way down the boardwalk toward Pacific Amusement Park.

INT. MADAM YOLANDA'S SHOP - DAY

The witchy fortune teller sits at her reading table with her back to the front door. She stares straight ahead, chewing on a piece of food.

The view behind her shows Katie as she steps through the door with Dr. Burman lagging behind.

Madam Yolanda swallows. She remains seated with her back to the door.

MADAM YOLANDA

I predicted you'd be here sooner,
child.

KATIE

How did you know it was me?

Madam Yolanda turns to Katie.

MADAM YOLANDA

I saw you coming this way when I
went across the boardwalk to get a
churro.

She holds up a half-eaten churro.

MADAM YOLANDA

Come sit down.

Katie walks over to Madam Yolanda. Dr. Burman takes his time following her.

KATIE

This is my friend Charles.

MADAM YOLANDA

Welcome. Make yourselves
comfortable.

Katie and Dr. Burman both take a chair at the table.

KATIE

How did you know about my
boyfriend?

MADAM YOLANDA

Are you still with him?

KATIE

No.

MADAM YOLANDA
That's all that matters.

Katie opens her purse, removes a small stack of \$20 bills and puts it on the table.

KATIE
That's three hundred dollars there.
It's all I can afford. It's yours
if you tell me what the hell is
going on...please.

Madam Yolanda scoops up the cash and hands it back to Katie.

MADAM YOLANDA
You've already paid dearly, child.
Put your money away.
(to Dr. Burman, smiling)
This is "an education for me," too.

Dr. Burman is unnerved by this echoed remark.

Katie pauses in bewilderment and drops the money back into her purse.

Madam Yolanda picks up her tarot cards, shuffles them and places the deck back on the table.

MADAM YOLANDA
Cut them.

Katie splits the deck in half.

Madam Yolanda makes one pile out of them and deals the cards face up according to traditional order. She studies over them, then rearranges the cards.

MADAM YOLANDA
There is someone close to you, a
female...but not a relative. There
are signs of death and blood.

She draws and shifts more cards around.

MADAM YOLANDA
She follows you...she has for a
long time. She caused harm to you
many years ago.

She draws and shifts more cards around.

Dr. Burman observes with more interest than he anticipated.

MADAM YOLANDA
She seeks forgiveness so she can
rest in peace.

KATIE

I don't know about any of
this...who is she? And what did she
do to me?

Madam Yolanda continues consulting the tarot cards, flipping
more of them over and arranging them in a particular order.

MADAM YOLANDA

Someone else...a family member
knows the truth...and can tell you
the answer.

KATIE

Who?

By the look on Dr. Burman's face, he's become a fan and
watches and listens intently.

Madam Yolanda flips the last deck card over.

MADAM YOLANDA

(looks at Katie)
It's your mother.

KATIE

My mother's dead.

MADAM YOLANDA

She's not.

Katie gets up in a fluster.

KATIE

You are a phony! My mother's been
dead for two years already!

Katie reaches into her purse, pulls out the twenties and
throws them at the fortune teller. The bills fly all over.

KATIE

You touched it, you keep it! I
don't want anything with your grime
on it!

Katie hastily heads for the door.

Madam Yolanda bolts up and directs her attention to Katie,
but it's too late, she's already fled outside.

MADAM YOLANDA

(to Katie)
A soul is never buried!

Dr. Burman rises from his seat and takes a final, curious
glance at Madam Yolanda.

DR. BURMAN

Well, if anyone asks me, I'll tell them...I was impressed. Good day.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Katie and Dr. Burman stand close to a gravesite. She picks up a bouquet of dried-up flowers and replaces them with a fresh bunch.

KATIE

These have been here for weeks. Steven and I brought them for her birthday.

The headstone reads "EVELYN MORROW, BELOVED WIFE AND MOTHER, A SOUL IS NEVER BURIED."

KATIE

I want to thank you again for taking me here...it really helps.

Dr. Burman stares oddly at the headstone.

DR. BURMAN

Katie, when we left the fortune teller's place, did you hear the last thing she said to you?

KATIE

I don't remember.

The doctor steps in closer to the headstone. He concentrates on the last inscription: "A SOUL IS NEVER BURIED."

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Katie sleeps comfortably -- a hand clamps around her mouth as a large kitchen knife presses against her throat. Her eyes pop open in fright.

STEVEN (O.S.)

Mother missed you so much.

Steven sits on the edge of the bed. His hand releases her mouth but keeps the blade tight against her larynx with the other.

His free hand clicks on a nightstand lamp to reveal his spilled prescription bottle of "NEMBUTAL" next to a bottle of water. He picks up a few scattered pills.

STEVEN

Open up, Hilary, Mommy's got your favorite candy.

Katie's lips part and Steven pushes the pills into her mouth. He grabs the water bottle and forces enough liquid down her throat to make sure the pills are gone.

STEVEN

That's a good girl.

Katie's eyes are filled with terror.

STEVEN

I want you to sleep, baby.

Katie keeps her head still, feeling the blade cutting into her skin.

KATIE

Please, Steven, stop this...it's not a game.

STEVEN

Shhhhh...as soon as you're asleep, it'll be time for your bath.

Katie takes a chance and raises her hand very slowly to caress the side of Steven's cheek.

KATIE

Don't kill me...I can help you. We need each other, you know that.

Suddenly, Katie becomes very placid as the drug takes effect. Her fingers slip away from Steven's face as her arm falls to her side.

Katie's eyes sink into somnolence.

Steven takes to his feet and places the knife down on the nightstand.

STEVEN

I'll run the bath.

Just then, the front door is heard unlocking and opening.

Steven's ears prick up and he quickly comes down with a bad case of panic that keeps him frozen in place.

Katie, strength almost down to zero, attempts to rise up from the bed.

Steven clicks off the lamp, just as the front room lights come alive, throwing a slash of brightness through the open bedroom door.

Steven spares a second, watching Katie fight to get out of bed. She rolls on her side and tries touching the carpet with her feet, but falls flat on the floor.

Steven runs and hides behind the bedroom door.

A MALE FIGURE, seen from the back, enters and moves past the bedroom door. As the figure walks farther in, Steven silently rounds the door and makes his escape.

MALE FIGURE

Katie?

The voice is extremely familiar.

The figure moves all the way around the foot of the bed to where Katie lies unconscious.

MALE FIGURE

Katie!

The figure quickly steps over Katie and flicks on the nightstand lamp -- the bulb lights up Prof. Rothbine's face.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

"MENTAL HEALTH UNIT, WING A" is written on a shatter-proof window built into a large security door.

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A nameplate on the desk reads "DR. ELI LOCKHART."

DR. ELI LOCKHART, a few years into his 60s, appears older than he looks, no thanks to a band of bushy gray hair horseshoed around his shiny dome.

He sits behind his desk, on the telephone.

DR. LOCKHART

(into receiver)

Yes, I'm Steven Rainberry's psychiatrist!

(beat)

That's impossible! He never left -- there's no way he could!

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Dr. Burman is on the telephone with Dr. Lockhart.

DR. BURMAN

(into receiver)

What do you think I'm doing here? She called me this morning, hysterical. She said Steven tried to kill her last night!

INT. DR. LOCKHART'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. LOCKHART
 (into receiver)
 She must have another secret
 admirer because Steven's locked up.

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie sits at the table with a cup of coffee in front of her.
 Dr. Burman stands nearby.

KATIE
 Steven was here! He tried to kill
 me with that kitchen knife...

She glances at the large kitchen knife resting next to her
 cup of coffee.

KATIE
 I showed you the bottle of Nembutal
 he forced me to take. Check my
 bloodstream...check for his
 fingerprints on the knife.

DR. BURMAN
 Katie, this is Steven's apartment,
 too. His fingerprints are all over
 everything.

KATIE
 And the pills?

DR. BURMAN
 You could have taken those pills
 yourself. Steven never left the
 hospital!

KATIE
 So you're saying I made the whole
 thing up?

DR. BURMAN
 No. I'm saying your nightmares are
 back.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

DR. JAMES CLAY, 39, sits in a leather chair close to a coffee
 table that lies in front of a couch. His wholesome
 countenance is as immaculate as a Jesuit priest's.

He stands up to greet Katie as Dr. Burman leads her in.

DR. BURMAN
 Katie, this is Dr. Clay.

Dr. Clay sticks out his hand to shake Katie's.

DR. CLAY

It's a pleasure, Katie. I've heard a lot about you.

KATIE

Thank you. It's been difficult.

DR. BURMAN

Katie, you don't have to worry, he's the best goddamn hypnotherapist on the planet.

DR. CLAY

What he means is, no charge.

Katie smiles.

DR. CLAY

Katie, please make yourself comfortable.

Dr. Clay motions to the couch.

Katie sits and places her purse on the floor below the arm of the couch.

Both doctors take seats in front of the coffee table.

DR. CLAY

(to Katie)

I admire your courage for wanting to explore the metaphysical nature of your terrors. I just want to make sure you want to do this. There may have been certain doors that were opened when hypnotherapy was used on you as a child that have long been forgotten, and for you to enter them again, God only knows what you'll find.

KATIE

It doesn't matter now. I feel so deathly isolated every day. Since I first laid eyes on Steven, my life's been on a collision course and every minute I'm waiting for the final impact that will kill me. I can't take it anymore. I have to find out what's going on with me...I have to. It's the only way I can be free of it. If I don't, I just don't know how much longer I can...go on...

Katie shudders with despair, placing her head in her hands.
Dr. Clay and Dr. Burman shoot each other a look of concern.

DR. CLAY
(quickly)
Then let's begin.
(to Dr. Burman)
Charles, if you can get the drapes?

Dr. Burman nods and stands. He attends to the windows and starts closing the drapes.

The room darkens and visibility diminishes to gray overlays.

DR. CLAY
Katie, I want you to get as
comfortable as possible. Please lie
down.

Katie removes her shoes and stretches out on the couch.

Dr. Clay gets up, walks around the coffee table and takes a seat on the edge of the couch close to Katie.

He pushes the RECORD button on a cassette player with an attached mic that rests on the coffee table.

Dr. Clay removes a penlight from inside his jacket pocket.

Dr. Burman returns to his chair.

Dr. Clay flicks on the penlight, which glows red, and slowly runs it across her eyes with the movement of a pendulum.

DR. CLAY
All I want you to do is follow the
light...just follow the light with
your eyes and don't move your head.
You should start feeling serenity
overtaking your mind as you fall
into a deep sleep.

The red hue on Katie's face shows her eyes closing gradually.
She's out.

Dr. Clay flicks off the penlight. He gets up and carefully steers around the coffee table back to his chair.

DR. CLAY
Katie...can you hear me?

Katie begins squirming as she becomes very unsettled.

KATIE
I miss Mommy.

DR. CLAY
Katie...where are you?

KATIE
(becomes tearful)
I miss Mommy.

DR. CLAY
Katie, can you hear me?

Katie continues her restlessness.

DR. CLAY
Katie, I want you to answer me, do
you hear my voice?

Katie's body slowly calms itself.

KATIE
Yes.

DR. CLAY
Where are you?

KATIE
In a classroom...there's a woman
standing up front looking at me.

DR. CLAY
Who is she? Can you recognize her?

KATIE
No...but she's crying.

DR. CLAY
What does she want, Katie?

KATIE
I think she's hurt...she's
bleeding...I see blood on her
clothes...she's trying to speak.

DR. CLAY
What does she want from you, Katie?
What is she saying? Listen closely.

KATIE
She's calling out to me, but it's
not my name.

DR. CLAY
Whose name is it?

KATIE
Hillary. She keeps saying she's
sorry.

(MORE)

KATIE (CONT'D)
 She's telling me to tell my mother
 she's sorry...there's more
 blood...there's more blood! There's
 blood all over the floor!

Katie's eyes burst open -- she catapults up from the couch
 and takes to her feet, staring in the direction of the door.

KATIE
 (frightened)
 She's here...I see her now!

The doctors curiously cast their eyes to the door, actually
 expecting to see something. But there's no one there in the
 shroud of gray darkness.

Katie reaches her hand out to the apparition, then faints
 between the couch and the coffee table -- her hand slips
 under the couch.

Dr. Clay jumps from his chair and rushes over to Katie as Dr.
 Burman shoots from his seat and flings open the drapes --
 sunlight explodes into the room.

Dr. Clay hovers over Katie. He reaches into his jacket pocket
 and takes out a stick of smelling salts, which he snaps open.
 He waves it under her nose.

Dr. Burman returns to Katie, anxiously watching for results.

Katie's head jerks a few times and she comes to.

Dr. Clay takes Katie's arms out from under the coffee table
 and couch and places her hands over her chest. He rubs them
 quickly.

DR. CLAY
 Katie, sweetheart, you're back with
 us. You're safe...you're going to
 be fine.
 (to Dr. Burman)
 Let's get her back on the couch.

The doctors gently take Katie by the arms and legs and lay
 her back down on the couch.

DR. BURMAN
 I'll go get a cold compress.

DR. CLAY
 Good.

Dr. Burman walks around the coffee table and starts for the
 door, then stops cold -- something's caught his eye.

He slowly steps forward, as if walking on egg shells -- there's a large blotch of fresh blood soaked into the ivory wool carpeting near the closed door.

DR. BURMAN
(under his breath)
My God...

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

An index finger depresses the MESSAGE button on a telephone answering machine atop the counter.

JILL (V.O.)
(over answering machine)
Hi, Katie, it's Jill. Change of plans. It's Carmen's birthday so meet us at the Avalon at ten o'clock...and wear something hot. You need to get laid so your pussy doesn't hate you for the rest of your life. Or, at the very least, we should go to school tomorrow with an awesome fuckin' hangover.

EXT. AVALON NIGHTCLUB (HOLLYWOOD) - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

It's pouring rain.

Clubgoers stream out into the parking lot. Katie and her two girlfriends JILL and CARMEN are among the crowd.

Katie has had one too many, so Jill hangs onto her.

JILL
No way you're driving, girlfriend!
You're going home with me.

KATIE
I have to get to my car.

JILL
Not before noon and two pots of IHOP coffee in you.

KATIE
I just have to get my cell phone.

Jill looks at her wrist watch.

JILL
It's two a.m. If you're not back by five after, I'll call the cops.

Katie breaks away from Jill's hold and wobbles off.

KATIE

I promise if I'm not back in five minutes, I'll testify that Steven is sane.

EXT. CAMRY - NIGHT

Katie approaches the car and hits the remote door opener.

Katie opens the driver's door and leans in to snatch her cell phone off the console.

INT. CAMRY - NIGHT

The passenger's door opens in a flash and Steven lunges in!

STEVEN

Miss Mommy?

Katie pauses in terror -- Steven takes her by the shoulders and pulls her into him. He grabs Katie's throat with one hand and chokes her.

STEVEN

Mommy's got a nice, warm bath waiting for you.

Katie still holds onto her car keys and brings them up to Steven's face. Her finger is on the trigger of a small key-ring-sized mace dispenser -- she blasts him in his eyes.

The burn makes Steven shout in anger -- he releases Katie to clutch his face. She swings her legs around and mule-kicks Steven out of the car.

She quickly jumps into the driver's seat and guns the engine. She puts the car in gear just as Steven leaps back inside.

Katie floors the accelerator, and the car peels out of the gate onto Vine Street with both vehicle doors still open.

Steven's hand goes for Katie's throat again but is met with plenty of resistance from her fighting arm, which whips frantically in every direction, trying to keep him at bay.

Katie cuts the steering wheel all the way to the left.

EXT. VINE STREET - NIGHT

The Camry skids over the rain-slick streets, causing the tires on the driver's side to lift off the pavement. Her door shuts, but the passenger's door is still wide open.

INT. CAMRY - NIGHT

Steven loses his balance as Katie takes her hands off the wheel and shoves Steven out of the car.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steven tumbles out of the vehicle and rolls across the asphalt -- the Camry speeds away.

Steven quickly manages the task of getting back up on his feet -- he slips and slides on the wet ground as he dodges oncoming cars, finally making it safely to the sidewalk.

The Camry disappears down another street off Vine.

INT. CAMRY - NIGHT

Just then, an oncoming car hits a big puddle of water that drenches the Camry.

Katie loses control of the vehicle and slams on the brakes. The Camry hydroplanes across the street, sideswiping a telephone pole that shears the passenger's door clean off.

The car crunches into a retaining wall.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Katie sits at the table, looking completely disheveled. Dr. Burman and Det. Desmond stand over her.

DET. DESMOND

(to Dr. Burman)

Normally, I don't get involved with D.U.I. stunts, but she alleges that her incarcerated boyfriend's trying to kill her.

KATIE

I'm not alleging, goddamn it! He's trying to kill me!

DET. DESMOND

I'm beginning to think we might have the wrong person being evaluated.

Det. Desmond leaves.

KATIE

I'm telling you, Steven was in my car last night!

DR. BURMAN

Katie, consider how this looks. You're partying at one of the most popular nightclubs in L.A., drinking with your girlfriends, you crash your car and make someone who wasn't there responsible, who's locked away in a hospital -- who's there right now!

KATIE

He knows what he's doing...he's going to kill me next time!

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Halloween decorations are plastered all around.

A giant homemade poster of a scary jack-o'-lantern hangs on a wall and reads "HALLOWEEN PARTY TONIGHT, OCTOBER 31ST, IN THE REC ROOM AT 7:00"

Some passing nurses and orderlies wear ballerina, princess and pirate costumes.

A few patients, wearing hospital-issued pajamas and robes, including Steven, wait in line at the meds dispensary window, being given their pills in small plastic cups.

The NURSE handing out the medication is made up as AVATAR'S "Neytiri" (the Na'vi).

OSCAR, a patient, stands at the meds window repeatedly putting on and removing a pair of dark sunglasses as he stares at the blue nurse.

NURSE NEYTIRI

Oscar, what are you doing?

OSCAR

These 3-D glasses are broken.

Oscar snatches a plastic cup with two pills from the nurse and stalks off.

Steven is up next. The nurse gives him a cup with one pill.

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - STEVEN'S ROOM - DAY

Steven lies in bed, his eyes fighting to stay open.

There's a knock on his door. A FLOOR NURSE pushes it open and enters.

FLOOR NURSE

Steven, you didn't come to the window for your five o'clock pill.

She strides up to Steven and hovers over his bed. She shoves a small plastic cup in his face.

FLOOR NURSE
Steven, take the pill.

Steven's condition is lethargic at best.

STEVEN
Those pills make me feel so numb
and dumb, so tired all the time.

FLOOR NURSE
Like Dr. Lockhart told you, you'll
get used to the strength and your
system will regulate itself. Take
the pill.

Steven's hand shakes as it slowly reaches out for the cup.

FLOOR NURSE
Open your mouth.

The floor nurse puts the small cup to Steven's mouth and dumps the pill inside. She picks up a glass of water from the nightstand and forces him to swallow the pill.

FLOOR NURSE
Don't sleep through dinner again.
And don't forget, Dr. Lockhart
wants you to attend the Halloween
party tonight. It'll be good for
you.

She leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Steven exits his room, sapped from the medication. He shuffles down the corridor.

Up ahead, a JANITOR mops the floor in a green jumpsuit uniform and cap.

He's wearing a latex zombie mask with one eye barely intact and the other missing with worms wriggling out of its socket and thick, rotted teeth jutting from its skeletal mouth.

As the zombie janitor sways the mop around, Steven accidentally bumps into him. Steven grabs the janitor's shoulder apologetically.

STEVEN
Hey, man, sorry.

Steven lightly taps his hand on the janitor's name badge:
"LUCAS."

STEVEN
Lucas, I feel the way you look.

Steven wobbles off.

INT. BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

Steven is naked and saunters down a small tile corridor into the large shower room which contains multiple stalls. He has the whole place to himself.

Steven stops short. His eyes are watery and sunken, another sign of being heavily medicated. He stands there apprehensively, looking over the cold, creepy surroundings.

INT. BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

The head of a wet mop flops through the main door and slides across the floor, followed in by a pair of black work boots that belong to Lucas the zombie janitor.

INT. BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

Steven, brain still fogged by the medication, seems spellbound by the foreboding environment.

STEVEN
(softly)
You died in a place like this.
(chuckles)
This is how it must have been. I
know everything. Now I'm here...how
weird is that? Am I watching
you...or are you watching me?

Steven thinks back.

FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON ASYLUM - SHOWER ROOM - DAY

A nude Baizer walks straight into a stall and turns the water on. Its forceful stream catches his face.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

Steven, no longer afraid, marches into a stall and turns the handle. The showerhead blasts water into his face. He grabs a bar of soap from its holder and lathers up.

STEVEN
(chuckles)
You poor sonuvabitch...you never
saw it coming.

FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON ASYLUM - SHOWER ROOM - DAY

Baizer soaps up his face.

A guard stands behind at watch. The guard then turns his head around and signals to someone with a nod.

Baizer continues his leisurely shower. He runs the bar of soap over his body, leaving his face still buried in suds.

Suddenly, the water cuts off from the showerhead.

BAIZER

Hey! What happened to the water?!

Baizer's fingers reach for the push-in/pull-out water handle and come into contact with a massive hand blocking it.

BAIZER

Hey!

He immediately scoops the thick lather out of his eyes and tries focusing on the intruder.

Standing before Baizer is a BURLY GUARD with nothing but fire in his eyes and perspiration on his face.

BURLY GUARD

Hi, Ralph!

Baizer backs up against the tile wall with no escape. He's petrified. He opens his mouth to scream.

The burly guard flashes a straight razor and slits Baizer's throat open -- blood pours from the gaping wound.

Baizer's cry for help is a feeble gasp of air. He loses the strength that keeps him standing and slides down the wall, landing on the wet tile floor.

He tries again to desperately scream, but his mouth only gurgles out more blood.

The burly guard crouches down until he's eye-to-eye with Baizer, holding the sharp blade before the killer's face.

BURLY GUARD

You remember Cathy Carlton, victim seven? I'm her uncle...fate's a killer, ain't it? Your balls are mine, boy.

The burly guard raises the steel razor and the blade slices downward -- Baizer's terror-stricken face shatters in silent pain as he attempts to scream his lungs out.

The cut in his throat opens nearly as wide as his own mouth but only the slightest whimper is heard.

BURLY GUARD

(smiles)

I'm so glad we were able to have this precious moment together, Ralph.

The burly guard stands back to view his handiwork on Baizer, who remains seated up against the wall with his body still twitching with life.

Baizer's neck and crotch are heavily coated in blood, and his severed scrotum lies between his spread legs.

The body goes lifeless.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

Steven is bent over the sink and splashes cold water in his face to snap out of it. He looks at himself in the mirror.

STEVEN

I gotta get out of this place.

Just then the zombie janitor appears in the mirror behind Steven who sees him.

STEVEN

Lucas.

He turns around to face the zombie janitor.

STEVEN

I like you, Lucas, you don't say much, but you have a killer smile.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

A frightened Katie stands gazing out a window that offers a view of Santa Monica Pier's giant Ferris wheel with its multi-colored lights spinning brightly.

KATIE

I didn't know of any other place to go where I could feel safe.

Dr. Burman stands across the room at the liquor cart with his back to Katie as he fixes himself a glass of bourbon on the rocks.

DR. BURMAN
It's okay. I'm glad you're
here...and safe. What time did you
get the call?

Katie makes a quick move and fixes the lock on the window to
the OPEN position.

Katie turns to Dr. Burman.

KATIE
About seven-thirty.

Dr. Burman turns to Katie and approaches her.

DR. BURMAN
Just before you got here, I called
over there. They think Steven used
the Halloween party as a diversion
to escape.

KATIE
What am I going to do if they can't
find him?

DR. BURMAN
Well, you certainly can't live life
looking over your shoulder at every
noise you hear. You can stay here
until further news develops. The
police will be looking out for you.

KATIE
Please, Charles, before anything
happens to me, I have to find out
whether this whole nightmare is a
practical joke or the real thing.
You have to help me!

DR. BURMAN
How?

Katie gazes more intensely at Dr. Burman.

KATIE
There's only one person in the
world who can give me the answer
I'm looking for.

DR. BURMAN
Who is it?

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A portable cassette tape recorder rests on a coffee table.
The unit plays:

KATIE (V.O.)
 ...She's calling out to me, but
 it's not my name.

DR. CLAY (V.O.)
 Whose name is it?

KATIE (V.O.)
 Hilary. She keeps saying she's
 sorry. She's telling me to tell my
 mother she's sorry...there's more
 blood...there's more blood! There's
 blood all over the floor!

The sound of movement is briefly heard on the tape.

KATIE (V.O.)
 (frightened)
 She's here...I see her now!

A finger depresses the STOP button on the tape recorder.

Dr. Burman sits on the edge of a couch close to the cassette
 player. He directs his attention to an UNIDENTIFIED PERSON
 across the room.

DR. BURMAN
 I fought my brains out not to
 believe Steven and Katie's bizarre
 allegations about themselves, but
 after researching Zachary Ambrose's
 background and authenticating
 Katie's story by every piece of
 empirical evidence I could exhume,
 coincidence was no longer an
 explanation. In fact, the last
 detail we had to complete was to
 identify the woman -- the
 apparition Katie saw. We went to
 the microfiche library at U.C.L.A.
 and scanned every newspaper article
 connected with the Baizer case,
 hoping for a lot but expecting
 little. And there it was in one of
 the last headlines before his
 capture.

Dr. Burman picks up a file folder off the coffee table and
 removes two sheets of paper.

DR. BURMAN
 Here's a copy of an old medical
 report showing her blood type was
 A.B. negative, the rarest of them
 all.

(MORE)

DR. BURMAN (CONT'D)

The other is the analysis from the police lab confirming that the blood on the carpet was also A.B. negative.

He slips the reports back into the file folder and removes an 8x10 photo. Dr. Burman holds it up so the unidentified person can see it.

DR. BURMAN

This is who Katie identified.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON/FEMALE (O.S.)

(choked with emotion)

I...know...who...she is...

FLASHBACKS:

EXT. THE PEARL HOME - DAY

A rooftop view of the home -- a woman exits the front door, wearing a head scarf and carrying a purse.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON/FEMALE (V.O.)

...I know who she is. She left here in a daze. And I have never forgotten the look on her face...it was drained of all life. I did that to her.

In a languid pace, the woman moves down the walkway to the main sidewalk.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON/FEMALE (V.O.)

I was so lost in my own pain, I never considered hers...I never imagined she would do such a horrible thing to herself.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - CORNER BUS STOP - DAY

The doors of a municipal bus crack open.

The woman, viewed from the back, steps aboard and the doors close behind her.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF WILSHIRE AND FAIRFAX - DAY

A full view of the May Company department store. Atop its four stories is an American flag rippling in the wind, which gives a reminder of how high the building is.

A man stops at a newspaper rack in front of the May Company. He slips a quarter into the slot, removes a paper and moves off to the side for a quick read.

Suddenly, a horrendous crash deafens the ears of pedestrians close by.

The man glancing over the headlines of his newspaper, whips around and freezes in shock at what he sees. His paper drops from his hands.

The newspaper lands opened on the sidewalk -- the headlines read "NIGHTMARE ENDS WITH VICTIM 13 HILARY PEARL DEAD."

Just below the middle fold of the newspaper is a photo of Helen Jacobson. The caption below her photo reads "SCHOOL BOARD FIRES HELEN JACOBSON OVER HILARY'S DEATH."

The body of the mysterious woman is splayed over a crushed newspaper rack. The pool of blood confirms she's dead -- her face confirms she's Miss Jacobson.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON/FEMALE (V.O.)

I wish to God it had been me
instead of her.

END FLASHBACKS.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Burman listens intently.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON/FEMALE (O.S.)

She came to me to apologize...

June Pearl, now in her late 50s, sits alone in a chair at one end of the coffee table. Tears run down her face.

Health-wise, she looks a bit gaunt and her hairdo is too stiff to be her own.

JUNE

...I refused to listen to her. I
told her to get out of my house.
(breaks down)
I forgive her...I forgive her.

Katie sits in a chair at the opposite end of the coffee table. She's as emotional as June.

KATIE

(to June)
Dr. Burman helped me find you. I
knew the only way I could really
believe it...is if you believed it,
too.

Choked by more tearful emotions, June can only nod.

Katie is drawn to June and kneels close to her. She turns the back of her neck to June and scoops up a bulk of hair, revealing a half-moon-shaped birthmark.

June's eyes are held captive by the sight of the unusual birthmark. She's almost paralyzed by emotion -- speaking is out of the question.

Katie rests her head on June's lap and hugs her. June bends over and cradles her...daughter.

Both Katie and June look up at Dr. Burman. A first impression would present them as no less than mother and daughter, while their elated expressions are one for the family photo album.

Behind them is Hilary Pearl's 10x13 school picture on the fireplace mantel.

DR. BURMAN

(to June)

Watch over her, she's been gone a long time.

Overwhelmed by the miracle, June can only answer with an earnest nod.

EXT. ABOARD THE QUEEN MARY - PROMENADE DECK - DAY

Through a camera's viewfinder -- Katie and June pose close together in front of the ship's grand smokestacks, wrapping their arms around each other's waist. They smile.

CLICK -- FREEZE FRAME.

EXT. DISNEYLAND PARK - DAY

Through a camera's viewfinder -- Katie and June pose with Goofy in front of Sleeping Beauty's castle. The women stand on each side of Goofy, planting a kiss on his cheeks.

CLICK -- FREEZE FRAME.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Through a camera's viewfinder -- Katie and June hop on the running board of an idle cable car. They smile and wave at the camera.

CLICK -- FREEZE FRAME.

EXT. PINK'S HOT DOG STAND - DAY

Through a camera's viewfinder -- Katie and June each hold an overstuffed chili dog in their hands. They both take a big, messy bite and laugh.

CLICK -- FREEZE FRAME.

EXT. BMW DEALERSHIP - DAY

Through a camera's viewfinder -- Katie sits in a brand new red Z4 convertible Roadster. She holds up a "SOLD" sign. June bends down, getting a kiss on the cheek from Katie.

CLICK -- FREEZE FRAME.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

June and Katie have a cart full of groceries as they push it down the cereal aisle.

KATIE

Fruit Loops was my favorite cereal
as a kid. I'd eat a whole box
watching cartoons on Saturday
morning.

June stops pushing the cart because of a few tears that begin falling.

Katie looks back and sees June crying.

KATIE

What is it, Mom?

JUNE

You...Hilary...it was her favorite
cereal.

Katie smiles and hugs June.

KATIE

Then we'll just have to get a few
boxes, won't we?

Katie tosses a couple of boxes of Fruit Loops into the cart.

KATIE

How 'bout some ice cream...Rocky
Road?

June smiles with happy tears and nods.

INT. SUPERMARKET - FREEZER SECTION - DAY

Katie stands at a glass freezer door looking at tubs of ice cream inside. She's about to pull the handle open.

Suddenly, Steven's reflection appears in the glass door, standing behind her. Katie's eyes are impacted by fright.

She quickly turns around about to scream, but no one is there, except a STOCK CLERK.

STOCK CLERK
Miss, you okay? Can I help you find something?

KATIE
(stunned)
No...no, I'm okay. Just forgot what I wanted.

STOCK CLERK
Okay.

He goes back to filling a freezer on the opposite side with frozen dinners from his stocking cart.

Still a bit jumpy, Katie turns back, opens the freezer door and removes a carton of Rocky Road.

She turns around to leave, but this time is physically confronted by Steven who stands directly in front of her holding onto the clerk's stocking cart, aiming it at her.

Terrified, she drops the quart of ice cream.

STEVEN
Thought you were safe?

KATIE
How did you escape?

STEVEN
I leave when I want, I go where I want...and I kill who I want.

Steven rams the heavy stocking cart into Katie with repeated bursts of madness, knocking her into the glass freezer door.

She screams both in terror and in pain but is able to keep on her feet.

Steven pulls the metal cart back to get a running start and mightily bashes it into Katie whose body crashes through the freezer door with glass shattering and blood splattering --

INT. THE PEARL HOME - HILARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Katie rockets up from bed screaming her way out of her nightmare.

The door quickly opens with June rushing in and turning on the lights. She sits down next to Katie, folding her in her arms.

JUNE
Sweetheart, what is it? What happened?

KATIE

(crying)

A nightmare...a nightmare...he
tried to kill me...he tried to kill
me!

June holds her tight.

JUNE

You're not going to die -- not
again!

EXT. DANA POINT - MARINA - DAY

A man walks up from the far end of the dock wearing a fisherman's vest, a sun hat with a turned-down brim and carries a fishing pole and tackle box.

It takes a few moments to recognize who he is -- Det. Port.

He stops at a particular slip where he has his older-model Chris Craft cabin cruiser moored. He climbs aboard and sets his gear down.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Det. Port's cabin cruiser is anchored in the middle of the ocean. He stands at the bow holding a bottle of Jack Daniels.

Det. Port chugs down a few ounces, then reaches into a vest pocket for his Winstons. He lights one up and takes a couple of satisfying drags as he looks out over the calm sea.

After a serene moment, he opens his tackle box and removes a very familiar latex zombie mask with attached worms jiggling from an empty eye socket.

Det. Port intensely stares at the mask as if looking into the eyes of a real person.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOSPITAL - MENTAL WARD - BATHROOM/SHOWER ROOM - DAY

The Halloween masked zombie janitor holds Steven tightly from behind with one work-gloved-hand over his mouth and the other gripping a straight razor that Steven tries fighting away.

The zombie janitor withstands Steven's feeble resistance and cuts open his throat -- blood profusely flows.

Lifelessly, Steven drops on the tile floor as the zombie janitor steps back, looking down at Steven bleeding out.

The zombie janitor quickly unzips his waist-length uniform jacket and reaches around his back, pulling out a hacksaw tucked inside the waist of his pants.

INT. MENTAL WARD - HALLWAY - DAY

The main bathroom/shower room door is shut. A yellow safety cone reads "CAUTION FLOOR CLEANING IN PROGRESS DO NOT ENTER" blocks it.

The door opens by the zombie janitor, struggling with a large, heavy metal trash can he sets on a nearby handcart.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Det. Port snaps out of his alcohol-induced trance.

DET. PORT
(to the zombie mask)
Goodbye, Lucas.

He pitches the mask into the ocean.

Det. Port steals another deep drag off his cigarette and flicks it off his fingers to follow the mask.

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door is heard unlocking and opens.

The building MANAGER leads Det. Desmond inside.

DET. DESMOND
How long have you been managing
this apartment building?

MANAGER
Over ten years.

DET. DESMOND
How well do you know Steven?

MANAGER
I thought he was a nice kid.

DET. DESMOND
Up until the time he was arrested,
you mean. He committed another
crime, he escaped from his
incarceration. By any incredible
chance, you haven't seen him, have
you?

MANAGER
No, of course not. What exactly are
you looking for, detective?

DET. DESMOND
The umbilical cord.

MANAGER

Huh?

DET. DESMOND

Every crime's like a newborn baby...I just have to follow the umbilical cord to figure out how the crime was born. There might be something here that will tell me where he could be hiding...maybe under the bed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Det. Desmond walks in, followed by the manager.

Det. Desmond takes a quick sweep of the area with his eyes -- he spots the "SLEUTH" movie poster hanging on the wall.

DET. DESMOND

Good movie.

(eyes the manager)

I don't want to hold you up.

The manager hesitates a bit, wanting to stick around.

DET. DESMOND

That means vacate the premises.

The manager takes his offended expression and slinks out.

Det. Desmond takes a swift but observant tour of the room and opens the dresser drawers.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

The door opens and Det. Desmond enters. To his disappointment, everything so far seems to be normal.

He opens a few boxes on the shelf for a quick gander. From one box he pulls out a few pieces of note paper and a newspaper clipping stuck between them.

He catches sight of some handwritten words at the top of the clipping: "THINK OF THE PERFECT CRIME...", then boxes it up with no interest.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Det. Desmond exits the closet and slowly makes his way toward the bedroom door -- his eyes shift back to the "SLEUTH" poster, staring at its tag line at the top.

DET. DESMOND
 (reads softly)
 "Think of the perfect crime...
 (looks back to closet)
 Then go one step further?"

He smiles with satisfaction.

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - DAY

Det. Desmond arrives at an office door marked "DR. LOCKHART"
 and goes inside.

INT. DR. LOCKHART'S OFFICE - DAY

The detective sits across from Dr. Lockhart.

DR. LOCKHART
 I thought about a few things after
 you called me. I fear all this
 started when I told Steven --

FLASHBACK:

INT. DR. LOCKHART'S OFFICE - DAY

Now Steven sits in a chair across from Dr. Lockhart.

DR. LOCKHART
 -- Aside from our normal session
 today, I have some unfortunate
 news. But I must insist that you
 remain calm and maintain rational
 behavior.

STEVEN
 What is it?

DR. LOCKHART
 Your evaluation here is very
 important. You don't want to give
 the authorities any additional
 reasons to keep you here.

STEVEN
 Just tell me.

DR. LOCKHART
 Your girlfriend is pressing
 charges.

Steven remains silent, but stews in anger.

DR. LOCKHART

There are two possibilities here. One, you temporarily took leave of your senses and acted out a crime of passion. Or two, you have major psychiatric problems and pose an extreme danger to anyone outside these walls. Which do you think I can help you with?

STEVEN

There's a third possibility. I'm innocent.

DR. LOCKHART

That's the worst one to be. You'll have to prove that Katie is the one who's crazy then.

Steven clams up and thinks.

STEVEN

Have you ever seen the movie "Sleuth?"

DR. LOCKHART

Yes. Why?

STEVEN

This is the part where Laurence Olivier tries convincing Michael Caine, who's disguised as Detective Doppler, that he's innocent of murder...but in my case, attempted murder.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DR. LOCKHART'S OFFICE - DAY

DET. DESMOND

I'm going to have to talk to everyone on this floor. I'll see the patients in small groups.

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Eight patients sit in chairs in a semicircle.

Det. Desmond sits before them.

DET. DESMOND

Okay, one more time, while Steven was here, did he say or do anything unusual?

Instead of answering, one patient giggles, another patient lifts his leg and farts, while the rest just blankly stare at Det. Desmond.

A frustrated sigh hisses from Det. Desmond's mouth as he stands from his chair.

DET. DESMOND
Thanks for your help.

The detective starts for the door.

VERNON (O.S.)
Detective.

Det. Desmond stops and turns back.

VERNON, a sheepish mental patient, is the only one in his group who bravely stands at his chair.

VERNON
My name is Vernon.

FLASHBACKS:

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - DAY

Steven is on the pay phone.

The eavesdropping Vernon stands close by eating a candy bar and picking his nose.

Steven is repulsed by Vernon and pays the harmless loony no mind as he speaks into phone, trying to keep his voice down.

STEVEN
Darryl, you've got to help me get out of here. Will Alvarez do it for the four G's?
(beat)
Okay. Just front me the money and give it to him. I'll get it back to you once this fuckin' mess is over. I just need to get out for a few hours at a time. Tell him I'm not escaping, I'm coming back.

INT. HOSPITAL MENTAL WARD - STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Steven looks through his window -- he observes a laundry truck marked "PLYMOUTH LINEN AND UNIFORM SERVICE" driving around the back of the hospital.

In seconds, Steven loses sight of the truck as it moves past the range of his window.

Steven rushes out of his room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steven glides quietly down the deserted, darkened hallway. He slips into Vernon's room.

INT. VERNON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Steven treads silently but swiftly to the window where he catches another view of the laundry truck parked in the loading dock area.

VERNON (O.S.)

Is that you, Steven?

Vernon lifts himself up from his bed for a better view of Steven.

STEVEN

(whispers)

Shut the fuck up, Vernon, or I'll shove a scalpel so far up your ass you'll give yourself a lobotomy if you even sneeze!

Steven breezes out.

Vernon curiously gets out of bed, sneaks a peek out the window and sees the Plymouth laundry truck below.

END FLASHBACKS.

INT. COMPANY SNACK LOUNGE - NIGHT

The room is filled with tables and chairs, assorted vending machines and some microwave ovens on the counter space.

A man in his mid 20s drops some change into a vending machine. The back of his uniform shirt reads "PLYMOUTH LINEN AND UNIFORM SERVICE."

DET. DESMOND (O.S.)

George Alvarez?

GEORGE ALVAREZ turns to see Det. Desmond approaching, advertising his badge.

DET. DESMOND

Better hit the return button...you're going to need change for your one phone call down at the station.

FLASHBACKS:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DELIVERY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A "PLYMOUTH LINEN AND UNIFORM SERVICE" truck is parked in one of the loading dock bays.

A rear access door to the hospital opens -- George Alvarez wheels out a big laundry cart stuffed with dirty linen.

At the back of the laundry truck, George opens the doors and pushes in the laundry cart.

INT. LAUNDRY TRUCK/CARGO HOLD - NIGHT

More heavily filled laundry carts are crammed inside.

George remains standing outside the rear of the truck and slams the doors shut -- the piled-high laundry cart that he just shoved in erupts with Steven bursting out.

END FLASHBACKS.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - DAY

The doorbell rings.

Dr. Burman opens the front door -- Det. Desmond stands there, waiting to be invited in.

DET. DESMOND

Dr. Burman, I'm Detective Desmond.
I hope your afternoon is open.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Dr. Burman hands a cup of coffee to Det. Desmond. The detective takes a seat on the couch.

Dr. Burman sits down in a chair across from him.

DET. DESMOND

You knew Steven as a child?

DR. BURMAN

Yes, both Steven and Katie.

INT. UCLA - LAW CLASS - DAY

Droves of students file through the numerous rows of desks, taking their seats.

Katie puts her purse and books down on her desktop and sits.

Det. Desmond nonchalantly takes a seat next to her.

They both stare at each other.

KATIE
You're not in this class.

DET. DESMOND
No. But you're my subject.

He drops the flap down on his ID wallet to shine his shield at Katie.

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Prof. Rothbine sits behind his desk.

PROF. ROTHBINE
May I see your identification again?

Det. Desmond sits directly across from the professor.

The detective tunnels his hand into his suit pocket, pulls out his ID wallet and tosses it to Prof. Rothbine.

The professor opens the ID wallet and focuses on the badge.

DET. DESMOND
You can play with it as long as you want...we're gonna be a while downtown.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Prof. Rothbine sits very patiently, even though his hands rest on top of the table, locked in a pair of cuffs.

Det. Desmond sits across from him.

DET. DESMOND
The judge you're up against for bail is Horace Hamilton, better known as Horrible Hamilton. I suggest you give me your story straightaway and let me put it together with the rest of the puzzle pieces the others have already given me.

PROF. ROTHBINE
And why am I being so cooperative, detective?

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Katie stands before the two-way mirror observing Prof. Rothbine and Det. Desmond.

Det. Desmond picks up a stuffed file folder from the table. He opens it and pulls out a newspaper clipping. He places it down and slides it over to the professor.

Prof. Rothbine stares at the clipping -- the shock is enough to blow the hinges off his jaw.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Prof. Rothbine picks up the clipping as if it were a radioactive isotope.

PROF. ROTHBINE

How did you come by this?

DET. DESMOND

That's what started the dominoes falling. You're facing charges of grand larceny and conspiracy to commit fraud at the very least, let alone the D.A. wanting to indict you and Katie on aiding and abetting an attempted murder suspect --

PROF. ROTHBINE

Aiding and abetting? Now wait just a fucking minute --

DET. DESMOND

That's right, her missing boyfriend. We haven't forgotten about him. His disappearance stinks worse than a jockstrap hamper after a Lakers game. But I promise you, if you're as cooperative as Katie, I'll get the D.A. to play ball which means the judge will grant bail. At least that buys you some breathing room, and I suggest you move fast on this. You don't want to keep Horrible Hamilton after hours, especially on a Friday night. The old bastard will have no sympathy if he misses his smoked salmon, creme fraiche and Beluga caviar potato skins tonight at the Beverly Hills Country Club.

The professor gazes down again at the clipping in his hand.

PROF. ROTHBINE

I needed a powerful aphrodisiac. And there's nothing more powerful than lusting after money.

(MORE)

PROF. ROTHBINE (CONT'D)
 I had to have Steven and Katie
 under the spell of the eighty-two
 million dollars which roughly
 netted down to sixty-one after the
 I.R.S. performed their fucking
 taxectomy.

Prof. Rothbine raises the clipping, referring to it.

FLASHBACKS:

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Prof. Rothbine stands at his desk holding up an overstuffed
 police file labeled "BAIZER, RALPH PATRICK."

Steven and Katie sit close and pay strict attention to their
 teacher.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 This is our Bible. It contains a
 wealth of information for us that
 was purposely kept out of the
 newspapers, such as the police
 keeping Baizer's M.O. a secret from
 the public to prevent copycat
 killers, plus a major cover-up
 surrounding his death. And
 something else that will help
 convince the remaining skeptics, if
 there are any, is the real reason
 behind the suicide of Hilary
 Pearl's grade school teacher.

(beat)

The next step is to prepare to
 bring your former child
 psychologist out of moth balls and
 get him to buy what you're selling.
 When you start up your sessions
 with him, you'll redefine the old
 nightmares you had as children
 which will replicate the terrors
 Baizer and Hilary experienced in
 their real lives -- but the most
 important thing for you two to
 remember, in order to be ultimately
 convincing, is that you must live
 and breathe your roles twenty-four
 hours a day just as vehemently as
 Zachary Ambrose believed in
 reincarnation.

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Steven sits in a chair, wired to a polygraph machine. Prof. Rothbine looms over him.

PROF. ROTHBINE

In five or six sessions, I'll have you controlling your blood pressure and breathing techniques. Open your hand.

Steven sticks his palm out to the professor.

Prof. Rothbine drops a thumb tack into Steven's hand.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Don't laugh, that's a key piece. It'll be placed in the tip of your shoe. The pain you'll generate from it will help impede nervous detection.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - O.R. - DAY

Katie lies facedown on the procedure table.

The surgeon brings the glowing tip of a laser instrument close to the back of Katie's neck where a dime-sized image of a half-moon has been outlined in black marker.

INT. MADAM YOLANDA'S SHOP - DAY

Katie stands facing the fortune teller and hands an envelope to her.

Madam Yolanda opens it and pulls out five \$100 bills.

KATIE

Don't forget this part.

Katie gives a note to Madam Yolanda who eyes a short verse written on it: "A SOUL IS NEVER BURIED."

KATIE

Make sure you mention that before the doctor leaves, it's a quote on my mother's headstone.

Madam Yolanda slips the cash back into the envelope with the note.

KATIE

I have a question for you...if it's not going to cost me anything more.

MADAM YOLANDA

Go ahead. It's on the house.

KATIE

That day I first saw you, what made you stop and warn me about Steven?

MADAM YOLANDA

In my line of work, deary, you can't rely on walk-ins...it's either tempting a customer with a snippet of good fortune or using the danger approach. It amounts to reading their faces to know which one they'll buy.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

Katie and Dr. Burman make their way down the boardwalk toward Pacific Amusement Park.

Katie stops short.

DR. BURMAN

What's the matter?

KATIE

I don't know why, but I'm so nervous I have to use the bathroom.

DR. BURMAN

That's okay.

KATIE

Her place is just up ahead past the arcade, you can't miss it.

DR. BURMAN

I'll wait for you there.

Katie ducks into a nearby ladies room.

INT. LADIES ROOM - BATHROOM STALL - DAY

Katie quickly punches a number on her cell phone.

KATIE

(into cell phone)

It's Katie -- listen quickly! We're on our way in. The doctor just made a comment that I need you to work in and repeat to him before we leave. The comment is "It'll be an education for me."

INT. UCLA - CLINIC LAB - SUPPLY ROOM - NIGHT

Prof. Rothbine meets a TECH in a white lab coat and gives him three \$100 bills. In return, the tech hands over a brown lunch bag.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Are you sure this is A.B. negative?

TECH

No mistakes, check it yourself.

Prof. Rothbine opens the bag and pulls out a plastic pouch of donor blood. He checks the info label: "A.B. negative."

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Katie stands at the desk next to Prof. Rothbine, all ears.

The professor hands a prescription bottle to her.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Don't forget this. Be sure to take one about an hour before your hypnotherapy session. It'll keep you up with no trouble. All you have to do is play it like you're completely under his power.

Katie can't help but notice the pouch of donor blood along with a wad of I.V. tubing and a jumbo-sized syringe on the desk.

PROF. ROTHBINE

Aesthetically, it looks like a crude, cheap trick, but it'll deliver effectively. I'll fill the I.V. line and the syringe with the blood and run it under the carpet.

He picks up the syringe.

PROF. ROTHBINE

This will be under the couch, ready for you. All you have to do is send the blood through.

He depresses the plunger on the syringe with his thumb.

PROF. ROTHBINE

But make sure when you get in there you unlock that window so I can rig everything up.

INT. DR. BURMAN'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

A large blotch of fresh blood soaks into the ivory wool carpeting near the closed door. Dr. Burman and Dr. Clay stand at the edge of the spreading bloodstain completely riveted.

DR. BURMAN

It can't be.

Katie lies unconscious on the couch -- her eyes flash open and take a quick look to make sure the doctors aren't watching.

Katie, fast and nimble, leans over and reaches under the front of the couch, pulling out a jumbo-sized syringe with an attached I.V. line.

She quickly reels it in, shoving everything into her purse, which rests below the arm of the couch, and swiftly returns to her fainted victim role.

Dr. Clay crouches down and reaches to touch the soaking bloodstain.

DR. BURMAN
Don't! We'll call the police.

DR. CLAY
We'll look foolish if somebody
spilled a Bloody Mary.

He dabs two fingers into the stain and rubs his thumb over them, smearing the blood. He sniffs his fingers.

DR. CLAY
It's not a Bloody Mary.

Dr. Clay rises up.

DR. CLAY
Call the police.

INT. STEVEN & KATIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Det. Desmond stands before the "SLEUTH" poster on the wall, staring at the film's tag line: "THINK OF THE PERFECT CRIME...THEN GO ONE STEP FURTHER."

He then cocks his head at the closet door, smiling with perceptive satisfaction.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Det. Desmond grabs a shoe box from the shelf and opens it. He plucks out the newspaper clipping and studies it with ratifying gratification.

The newspaper clipping is finally revealed in full: "THINK OF THE PERFECT CRIME...THEN GO ONE STEP FURTHER" is in Steven's handwriting at the very top.

The headline below reads "HILARY PEARL VICTIM 13 REMEMBERED." Hilary's photo is set beneath with a current photo of her mother beside it.

The caption below the photos reads "JUNE PEARL, MOTHER OF HILARY, HITS 82 MILL LOTTO JACKPOT, BUT DOCTORS SAY SHE HAS YEAR TO LIVE."

END FLASHBACKS.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Prof. Rothbine still holds the incriminating newspaper clipping in his hand offering up the information about June Pearl's lotto winnings. His eyes take it in one more time.

DET. DESMOND

How did you get Katie to hop over to your side of the fence?

PROF. ROTHBINE

That part wasn't a crime at all.

FLASHBACK:

INT. PROF. ROTHBINE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Katie is bent over the desk with her panties and jeans down around her ankles.

Prof. Rothbine stands behind her with his hands clamped tightly on her hips, plowing her hard.

PROF. ROTHBINE

(speaks with each thrust)

Press charges, press charges! That means more money for us to burn, baby!

Katie's head rocks up and down, with her face showing nothing but wild delight.

PROF. ROTHBINE (V.O.)

Katie always had it in for Steven for cheating on her...she wanted to even the score by screwing him, so I decided to screw him instead by screwing Katie.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. POLICE DEPT. - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Det. Desmond leans over the table and snatches the clipping from Prof. Rothbine. He slips it back into the file folder.

DET. DESMOND

You came clean. You'll make bail...now whether or not you can afford it is another story.

Det. Desmond stands and looks to an officer guarding the door.

DET. DESMOND
Officer.

The officer marches over to Prof. Rothbine who stands up. The officer takes him by the arm and escorts him to the door.

DET. DESMOND
Oh, by the way.

The officer stops, allowing Prof. Rothbine to look back.

DET. DESMOND
Have you read any good books lately?

PROF. ROTHBINE
No. Why?

DET. DESMOND
Well, if you plan to, you can't shop at Uncle Louie's anymore. His entire forgery operation has been shut down. But I must say, Steven and Katie's false birth dates on their licenses and birth certificates were a nice touch.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

A police officer is present, standing guard at the door. The door opens. Det. Desmond enters and moves over to Katie.

DET. DESMOND
What I said to Rothbine holds true for you about making bail. The amount may be a hurdle.

KATIE
I used my one call to tell my dad. He's taking care of it. He's going to put up his hardware store.

DET. DESMOND
Well, I hope he doesn't lose his business...it may wind up costing him twenty grand anyway.

KATIE
He's always been the best dad... I'll just have to find a way of paying him back...one way or another.

EXT. UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - DAY

Det. Desmond presses his finger on the doorbell.

He feels a certain dread with this particular call.

The front door opens -- June Pearl is standing there.

DET. DESMOND
June Pearl?

JUNE
Yes.

Det. Desmond grips a large manila envelope in one hand, his other reaches into the breast pocket of his coat and displays his police ID.

DET. DESMOND
Mrs. Pearl, I'm Detective Walter
Desmond.

June tenses up but remains strong.

JUNE
Is it Hilary --
(instantly corrects
herself)
Katie?

DET. DESMOND
If it's her safety you're worried
about, she's fine.

JUNE
Come in, please.

Det. Desmond enters as June closes the door behind him.

INT. THE PEARL HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

June leads Det. Desmond into the living room.

He quickly notices on top of the fireplace mantel a framed 10x13 photo of Katie, all smiles, which has replaced Hilary's school picture. This puts a sour look on his face.

JUNE
The last time a detective came to
my house was to tell me that my
daughter was dead. You can't take
much more from me -- I don't have
any family left.

DET. DESMOND

Mrs. Pearl, I don't want to take anything from you. I'm here to make sure that nothing is ever taken from you again. That's why I brought you this.

He hands June the manila envelope.

JUNE

What is it?

DET. DESMOND

I'll tell you what it's not. It's not proof that the Loch Ness Monster is real...but you'll find a few photos of snakes in there that are.

She pinches the small metal clasps together and opens the flap. She pulls out three 8x10 photos and slides them apart to look at closely.

They are copies of the police arrest photos of Katie, Steven and Prof. Rothbine.

Even though she sees them she can't believe her eyes.

JUNE

Oh, my God -- what's going on here?

DET. DESMOND

Mrs. Pearl, please, you better sit down.

INT. THE PEARL HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The three 8x10 arrest photos rest on the coffee table.

June sits in a chair, her face stricken by anguish.

Det. Desmond stands behind her with his hands holding the sides of her shoulders, offering comfort.

DET. DESMOND

You had to know as soon as possible about this. I'm sorry. I truly am.

JUNE

I wanted so much to believe her. I waited so long for some kind of contact from my daughter...I thought this was it...

Her tears put up an instant roadblock for any more words to come out.

Det. Desmond steps around to the front of the chair and squats to make eye contact with June. He compassionately takes her hand.

DET. DESMOND

Somewhere between the metaphysical and the supernatural lies something much more powerful -- desperation. They knew that, they used that and that's why it worked.

JUNE

I can't believe this is happening to me again...I didn't think I had anything left to lose.

DET. DESMOND

You're going to get through this. You haven't lost anything.

JUNE

This sounds so horrible...but I still miss her.

DET. DESMOND

I hope you mean your real daughter.

EXT. MALIBU PIER - DAY

Walking down the pier from the entrance is Dr. Burman. His expression is severely embittered. He meets up with Katie who's waiting for him midway down.

KATIE

Thank you for coming.

DR. BURMAN

To be honest, I don't know why I did.

KATIE

I know this sounds incredible...but I need one last favor from you.

DR. BURMAN

(almost laughs)

Incredible, yes. Maybe now I know why I came back, to ask you something.

KATIE

What?

DR. BURMAN

Your heartless charade...was it worth destroying that poor woman all over again?

Katie's humiliation keeps her mute.

DR. BURMAN

What is it that you need, Katie --
for the last time?

KATIE

I want to tell her I'm sorry...I
want to apologize to her...
please...please get her to see me.

DR. BURMAN

You know what's truly sad? Even
after Detective Desmond told her
that you were born with the devil's
larceny in your soul, you could
knock on her door right now with
Hilary's school picture taped to
your face and she'd probably still
believe your story. But if you want
to cleanse your conscience, I'll
make one call to her, but nothing
more. Goodbye, Katie.

INT. CLASSY BRENTWOOD HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Prof. Rothbine gazes out the window, giving him a clear view
of the front of the house.

A large Mayflower moving van is taking up the driveway with
workers going up the ramp carrying furniture into the truck.

A letter of "termination" from UCLA lies on Prof. Rothbine's
desk.

The door to his office opens. MRS. ROTHBINE stands there,
rigid, not putting a foot into the room.

If she wasn't a married woman, she could be easily taken for
a stunning 40-year-old cougar.

MRS. ROTHBINE

The movers know what to do. I'm not
staying around here any longer.

(looks into the house)

Daniel!

In a moment, Daniel appears at his mother's side.

MRS. ROTHBINE

Say goodbye to your father.

The boy, without any hesitation, rushes to his dad and hugs
him, getting a big one in return from his father.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 It's going to be okay, son, I
 promise. Mommy's just a little
 angry with Daddy...but we'll be
 together soon.

MRS. ROTHBINE
 That's terrific, Larry. Now tell
 him the one about Maria Shriver and
 Schwarzenegger getting back
 together.

DANIEL
 Dad.

The boy flicks his finger at his father to bring his ear down
 closer.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Yes, son?

DANIEL
 (whispers)
 What does so-do-mize mean?

PROF. ROTHBINE
 Where did you get that word?

DANIEL
 From Mommy.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 When?

DANIEL
 This morning when she was talking
 to Mrs. Matthews next door. She
 told her with the shape of your
 ass, she can't wait 'til you get so-
 do-mized in prison.

Prof. Rothbine has just been robbed of his breath.

MRS. ROTHBINE
 Daniel, I don't have time. Let's
 go.

Prof. Rothbine straightens up.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 You better go.

A teary-eyed Daniel leaves his father behind and returns to
 his mother.

MRS. ROTHBINE
 (to Daniel)
 Wait in the car.

Daniel exits.

MRS. ROTHBINE
 I hope after this place forecloses
 you'll be able to afford the lease
 on my Palos Verdes home, otherwise,
 I'll file for full custody of
 Daniel. But look on the bright
 side, honey, I'm leaving you
 something to remember our wonderful
 sex life by. I'm leaving you the
 Hummer and I'll take the Jag. But
 with the money you're going to need
 to start saving, you'll get better
 gas mileage with Daniel's old
 Schwinn.

Mrs. Rothbine clears out.

PROF. ROTHBINE
 (under his breath)
 Karma's a bitch, only if you marry
 one.

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - DAY

Two Spanish MAYFLOWER MOVERS walk toward the garage. They
 speak in Spanish (subtitled).

MAYFLOWER MOVER #1
 Wonder how much more shit she's got
 in here? I wouldn't mind fucking
 her, I'll tell ya that. I bet those
 collagen lips are as thick as the
 set she's got on her pussy.

MAYFLOWER MOVER #2
 Quiet, the husband's a professor,
 he probably knows Spanish. He could
 still be hanging around.

Mayflower Mover #1 presses the garage door opener. The door
 rolls upward.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

As the door rises, daylight rolls along the floor and washes
 over a beat-up boy's Schwinn bike lying on its side.

The focus pivots up and captures Prof. Rothbine's feet that
 dangle directly over the bicycle seat.

The two Mayflower Movers stand at the opened door.

MAYFLOWER MOVER #1

Holy shit!

MAYFLOWER MOVER #2

Do we pack him in peanuts or bubble wrap?

INT. THE PEARL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

June sits motionless at the table, elbows firmly planted atop with her hands nestling a cup of coffee close to her mouth.

She stares straight ahead as her eyes show that her mind is a million miles away.

The room is dead silent, except for the sound of a clock's second hand ticking nearby.

The front door chimes ring.

June snaps back into the present moment as she looks to the clock on the wall: "1:00"

She sets her cup down and picks up a .38 special snub-nosed revolver with an attached trigger lock. She fits a small key into the lock and removes it from the gun.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The gun is gripped in June's hand. She stuffs the weapon behind the right corner sofa cushion.

INT. FOYER - DAY

June opens the front door -- Katie stands at the archway.

Katie tries to speak, but her throat swells with emotion, leaving her with only one option -- to cry.

Impassive, June takes Katie by the hand and leads her inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

With the detached mood of a death-row guard, June guides Katie along and sits her down on a chair in front of the fireplace, close to the right end of the couch.

Katie sets her purse down on the coffee table.

June takes a seat across from Katie on the loaded sofa cushion.

Katie tries controlling her tears long enough to burble out a few words.

KATIE

It was a stupid, selfish thing to do...

Katie takes up June's hand and holds it for comfort.

KATIE

I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...please forgive me...please.

June's immune heart keeps her expression cold.

KATIE

I'm going out of my mind for what I did to you. Every time I look in the mirror, I want to blow my brains out.

June breaks her pitiless stare and renders a nod of acknowledgment.

KATIE

I know you're ill, and I made it worse. But I needed to tell you something straight from my heart, because I know I'll never get another chance to again...how I really feel about you.

June continues to allow her hand to be cradled by Katie. At the same time, June sneaks her free hand behind her and digs for the gun.

KATIE

You and I have been through a lot together since this awful thing happened. But somehow when we shared those moments as mother and daughter, I honestly felt like I was the daughter you lost...just as I felt that you were the mother I lost...she died two years ago.

Katie's sincerity puts a lock on June's hand as it freezes behind her.

Katie has finally touched a saving nerve as June's face furrows, giving the sudden impression that her heart is caving in.

KATIE

Nothing's changed for me. I feel the same way about you. I can't help that.

June's free hand returns out into the open -- empty. Lucky for Katie that June's now tearful with compassion for her.

KATIE

I can help you, we can help each other...I'll do what I can to make you happy...we'll make each other happy. We'll give each other things we need. You'll have my love just like a real daughter can give you. And you'll have me to always keep you alive in my memories. I know you wouldn't leave Hilary without a future...you wouldn't do that to me, either. That's why your money can help me, too.

June immediately sobers up at the grifter's slimy pitch -- the tortured mother is driven back into her frigid, vigilant demeanor.

KATIE

I just know you understand what I'm saying.

Katie puts the icing on the cake -- she lifts June's hand and kisses it.

June's eyes couldn't be colder looking than if they were hidden behind the holes of an executioner's black hood. June's hand slowly slips back behind her again.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

A 10x13 framed photo of Hank Pearl and his little girl Hilary sits on the dresser. They're captured cheek-to-cheek and smiling.

BANG -- a gunshot rings out from the living room.

A few moments pass -- the .38 is tossed on the dresser with some smoke still curling out from the barrel.

The gun rests next to a regiment of prescription bottles for cancer treatment: "MORPHINE," "CAPECITABINE," "CHLORAMBUCIL," "IDARUBICIN," "ETOPOSIDE" and "BEXAROTENE."

June stands in front of the dresser mirror, staring at herself.

Her head suddenly sinks forward, as if chained to an anchor, but it's her way of dealing with a jolt of severe pain. She regains some of her strength and gazes back into the mirror.

June lifts her hand, grabs hold of the hair on top of her head and pulls off a wig. She's completely bald.

June drops the wig on the dresser and opens a top drawer. She removes a scarf and ties it around her head.

June turns away from the dresser and picks up her purse that's sitting on the bed.

EXT. THE PEARL HOME - DAY

A rooftop view of the home -- June exits the front door.

In a languid pace, she moves down the walkway, her face trapped in an unbreakable trance.

June reaches the main sidewalk and continues her reluctant stride to the corner bus stop. She sits down on the bench.

EXT. CORNER BUS STOP - DAY

A metro bus rolls up to the corner.

June's purse rests on her lap. She unzips it and removes two single-dollar bills, then sets the purse down beside her. She gets up from the bench, leaving her purse behind.

The bus doors open and June steps aboard. The doors close and the bus rolls out of view.

INT. THE PEARL HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Katie's purse still sits on the coffee table. Suddenly, her cell phone rings inside her bag.

On the fireplace mantel, Katie's photo is gone and in its place, Hilary's old school portrait has been put back.

The cell phone continues ringing.

The attention slowly moves from Hilary's picture downward to Katie's face, who remains sitting in her chair in front of the fireplace.

Her head slumped on her shoulder with a bullet hole through her brow.

KATIE (V.O.)
(cell phone greeting
message)
Hi, this is Katie. I'm obviously
gone, so please leave a message.

BEEP.

DET. DESMOND (V.O.)
(over cell phone)
Katie, it's Detective Desmond.
Steven is still at large but we'll
get him.

(MORE)

DET. DESMOND (V.O. CONT'D)

I just wanted to inform you that Officer Griffin, who normally watches the house, is off duty tonight. In his place, Officer Kushner has been assigned, so you don't have to worry yourself to death.

CLICK -- he ends his call.

A trail of blood from the hole in Katie's forehead, travels down her arm to her hand.

Lodged between her fingers is a cashier's check for "SIXTY-ONE MILLION, FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS" made out to "KATIE MORROW" and signed by "JUNE PEARL."

Katie's blood marinates the check with droplets trickling off its corners, turning it into a worthless piece of paper.

FADE OUT.

THE END