

Cyber Stalking: By Chris Lieber

FADE IN:

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MIDNIGHT

Cars line the street outside the rundown building.

In the distance, college campus lights shine. The rain falls while a woman turns her coat up against the weather.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

MARTY CALLAHAN, a college freshman, types at his computer. The modem BUZZING begins then subsides.

He clicks on an E-mail.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

DEAR MARTY, I ENJOYED GOING TO DINNER WITH YOU THE OTHER NIGHT. THANKS FOR THE FLOWERS. I'M SO GLAD STEPHANIE INTRODUCED US. THIS WEEK HAS BEEN UNFORGETTABLE. GOTTA RUN. LOVE JO.

Marty clicks on the IN basket icon. He highlights some E-mail and clicks on the wastebasket icon. A FLUSHING sound emits from the speakers.

Marty reaches down and turns off the computer.

The cordless phone rings suddenly and surprises Marty. He picks it up.

MARTY

Hello?

The VOICE sounds muffled.

VOICE (V.O.)

Guess who?

Marty scans the room, rushes to the windows, and checks the locks. He draws the shades with some difficulty.

VOICE (V.O.)

What are you doing? Checking the windows?

MARTY

What do you want?

VOICE (V.O.)

Aw, don't be silly. You know what I want honey. Give in to your true feelings.

(MORE)

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Why don't you return my E-mails?

MARTY

Go away!

VOICE (V.O.)

After all we've been through together?

MARTY

Look! It's over! Just leave me alone. It's over.

VOICE (V.O.)

What was it for you? Just a joy ride? You men are all alike. Once you get what you want, you're out the door quicker than a fox in a henhouse. If I knew you were going to be like this...

MARTY

What do you mean?

VOICE (V.O.)

It's too late to turn back. It'll never be the same again.

The phone line goes dead.

MARTY

Shit!

Marty panics and sprints to the front door. He checks the lock then looks around. Marty runs back to his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

A slight breeze swirls into his face.

A FIGURE's silhouette suddenly looms in front of him. Rain pours through the open window.

He runs away, but slips on the wet hardwood floor. His face slams with a THUD.

FIGURE

Where are you going darling?

Marty gets up, but slips and falls. Blood drips out of his nose. The Figure steps on his back with one foot, which plasters him to the floor.

MARTY

What do you want?

FIGURE

C'mon, honey. All's I ever wanted  
was your undying love and attention.

Marty grabs the Figure's foot, but the Figure takes a large book off a nearby bookshelf and hits him in the head several times.

MARTY

Argh!

The Figure drops the book. Marty struggles and crawls some more, but the Figure stops him again.

The Figure takes a phone cord and wraps it around Marty's throat.

FIGURE

Honey, I'll always treasure the  
precious times we had.

MARTY

What times--

The Figure strangles Marty who groans violently.

FIGURE

I'll never forget you.

Marty pulls at the cord.

The Figure tugs harder, which lifts and suspends Marty's body by the garrote.

Marty kicks one last time then his body goes limp.

LATER

The Figure gently runs its fingers through Marty's hair and strokes his face. The Figure kisses him on the lips.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX

An overweight SUPER patrols the halls. He knocks on a partially opened door.

SUPER

Yo' Marty! You there?

The Super pushes the door open and peers inside.

SUPER

Marty?

The Super creeps into the living room and sees Marty in the computer chair slumped over the desk face down.

He moves toward Marty with caution then checks his pulse. He sees the phone cord tied around Marty's neck and a valentine taped to his back.

SUPER  
(sotto)  
Good-bye my love?

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY MORNING

A sleek jet-black Mercedes Benz 500 SEL rolls out of a small mountain town.

The Benz moves into the outskirts where the rundown shacks become increasingly sparse.

The Mercedes approaches a pristine plot of land then drives down a long driveway to an expansive home. The surrounding acreage of trees and shrubs dwarfs the house.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

JEREMY MARSHALL, a lonely, naive, ninth grader sleeps soundly. He has short hair that stands up on his head in disarray.

The digital clock next to his bed shows 5:50. The alarm goes off and, in a daze, he hits the snooze button.

A desk sits against the far wall while clothes lay strewn all over the floor.

An old and weathered fireman's helmet rests on an oak dresser. A used candle sits in front of the helmet along with a picture of a fireman in full gear. The fireman holds a small child.

MILTON TOWNSEND, Jeremy's evil stepfather POUNDS on the bedroom door and barges in. Milton stands about six feet tall and has broad shoulders. He shakes Jeremy and wakes him up.

MILTON  
Time to get up! Get ready for school!

Startled, Jeremy squints at the clock.

JEREMY  
It's only--

MILTON  
Time to get dressed! That's what  
time it is.

JEREMY  
Six in the morning.

MILTON

And you'd better get that wood chopped before I get home or you're in some serious trouble. And clean up this damn room.

DIANE TOWNSEND, Jeremy's mother, stands in the doorway, then shies away from Milton. He storms out of the bedroom.

DIANE

Honey. Please hurry up. You know how he can get when he's worked all night.

Diane leaves.

Jeremy cleans the clothes off of the floor and puts them in the hamper.

INT. KITCHEN

Jeremy takes the bag of trash from the kitchen and goes into the garage. He re-enters the kitchen and washes his hands.

Jeremy grabs a plate of food, goes into the dining room, and eats.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Milton sits on the couch and watches the morning news.

NEWSCASTER

There has been another victim at the hands of the East Side Strangler. Marty Callahan, a university freshman, was found strangled to death in his off-campus apartment. We will keep you up to date as we learn more. In other news--

Milton changes the channel then switches the television off.

INT. SCHOOL BUS

Jeremy gets into the traveling zoo and sits down by himself. AARON SCRAPNECK, a pathetic excuse for a human being, horses around in the back.

SAVANNAH HAWKINS, who sits in the bench across from Aaron, appears annoyed at his shenanigans. She has a ponytail and wears a pair of old overalls and scuffed hiking boots.

Jeremy sits quietly and ignores the chaos and mayhem behind him.

GLADYS O'SHEA, Silver Creek School District's most savvy bus driver, slows the bus down and opens the door for three more children.

The bus door closes and the air compression SWOOSH signals Gladys to drive onward. She glances in the mirror and sees the disruptive children.

GLADYS

All right back there, knock it off!  
I don't want to have to keep telling  
you!

Aaron smacks SKEETER TENKLE, his scrawny sidekick and partner in crime, in the back of the head. Skeeter sports worn Wrangler jeans and a NASCAR tee shirt.

AARON

Yeah, Skeet! Knock it off! You  
heard the old bat!

Aaron glares at Skeeter then laughs to himself.

Aaron grabs a straw out of his threadbare red and black checkered flannel shirt.

He reaches into the backpack on the seat in front of him, rips off a piece of paper from the corner of the owner's homework assignment, and puts it into his mouth.

With the efficiency of a veteran Civil War rifleman, Aaron takes the chewed paper from his mouth, loads it in the straw, and fires off a shot that hits Jeremy in the back of the head.

Aaron hides the straw out of view.

Jeremy spins around and looks at Aaron.

JEREMY

Knock it off!

AARON

Knock what off?

JEREMY

You know what I'm talking about.  
Grow up!

AARON

What are you gonna' do you little  
pussy? Huh?

SKEETER

Yeah. Yeah. Watcha' gonna' do,  
watcha' gonna do? Huh? Huh?

Jeremy turns around and looks forward while Aaron and Skeeter laugh to themselves.

Savannah scowls at Aaron then gets up and moves toward Jeremy.

AARON (O.S.)

You see that?

GLADYS

No standing up while the bus is moving, got that Savannah?

SAVANNAH

Yes ma'am.

Savannah scoots forward and holds onto the backs of seats for balance until she reaches Jeremy.

Aaron continues his assault on other students. Savannah sits down.

SAVANNAH

Hey, did you get your paper done on African wildlife?

JEREMY

Nah. I don't know much about predators.

SAVANNAH

I know what you mean.

The two sit in silence. The bus picks up some more students.

JEREMY

Hey, you like bike riding?

SAVANNAH

Yeah.

JEREMY

Well, I was wondering. Do you want to go riding after school? There are some cool hills up above my house.

SAVANNAH

Okay. I'll meet you after school.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS

Savannah and Jeremy exit, but Aaron and Skeeter close in on them. Aaron grabs Jeremy's shoulder and spins him around.

Savannah doesn't notice the confrontation and walks toward school.

AARON  
You're dead meat! I'm not playing  
games.

JEREMY  
Shut up asshole!

Savannah turns around and sees the two boys argue.

SKEETER  
You hear that? You hear that?

AARON  
What did you say to me you little  
pusbag?

Savannah moves back toward the boys.

JEREMY  
You heard me!

Aaron swings, but Jeremy steps back before contact.

Aaron fans air, stumbles, and falls flat on his face.

JEREMY  
Aaron, yer such a bunghole!

The school bell rings and Savannah and Jeremy trot off to  
class.

AARON  
You're dead buddy! You hear me?  
Not even your tough, hot shit, lawyer  
dad will be able to save you.

SKEETER  
Yeah. Yeah. Dead! That's what you  
said, huh Aaron?

AARON  
Shut your hole and help me up!

Aaron scowls as Skeeter helps him up.

SKEETER  
Yeah. Okay. I got it all right.  
Shut up. That's it! I'll shut up  
right now!

Skeeter helps Aaron up then he pushes Skeeter down in disgust.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Jeremy steps onto the front porch and walks past the empty firewood bin. He opens the security screen door and enters.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Diane cooks and straightens up. She wears a sundress underneath a spotless apron bearing butterflies and sunflowers.

DIANE

Your science teacher called again today. She said if you don't get at least a "B" on your final test, you'll have to attend summer school. You know how your father feels about your education--

JEREMY

Father?

DIANE

He's my husband now, so you need to respect him.

Jeremy leaves.

INT. HALLWAY

Jeremy walks down the hall and pauses in front of some framed photos.

CLOSE ON WALL

One shows a younger Jeremy, Milton, and Diane river rafting with several other people.

In another photo, Jeremy and Diane fish on the edge of an expansive lake.

He pauses and stares at a picture of him and his mother at the wharf. Alcatraz Island and The Golden Gate Bridge span the background.

INT. BEDROOM

Jeremy enters and changes out of his school clothes. He throws them on the floor in the corner of the room.

He puts on some jeans, a tee shirt, and some tennis shoes then walks over to his oak dresser.

He picks up the picture of the fireman, looks at it for a minute, then sets it down. He examines the fireman's helmet and rubs a large black scratch in it.

He leaves.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jeremy stands outside the garage when Savannah rides up on her old and rusted bicycle.

She skids to a stop, which creates a small dust cloud.

SAVANNAH

Hi Jeremy.

JEREMY

Hello.

Jeremy grabs his new BMX bike from the garage and closes the door.

The two new friends ride around the woods and create trails through the grass and shrubs.

Savannah passes Jeremy and rides up a hill. She cuts hard around a corner, wipes out, and rolls into some bushes.

Jeremy barely dodges the overturned bike.

He skids to a stop.

JEREMY

Are you all right?

Savannah lay on the ground as the dust settles around her.

SAVANNAH

Yeah. I think so.

Jeremy helps her up. He stares at some bruises on her arm.

JEREMY

What happened?

SAVANNAH

I guess it's from the fall. I bruise easily.

JEREMY

Does it hurt?

SAVANNAH

I'm fine. It's no big deal.

Savannah brushes the dust off of her pants.

Jeremy looks up and notices an abandoned shed in a thicket of trees.

JEREMY  
Hey. Check it out.

Jeremy points at the shed. Savannah turns around and peers into the trees.

SAVANNAH  
What do you think it is?

JEREMY  
I don't know.

The two friends creep up to the entrance. Jeremy turns the rusted door handle. It opens with a whining CREAK.

INT. SHED

Jeremy and Savannah enter and see some old tools, a lantern, a broken down moonshine still, and assorted junk.

JEREMY  
What do you think they used this thing for?

Savannah shakes her head. The two walk inside and examine their new fort.

The two find some chairs and sit down.

SAVANNAH  
So how do you and your parents like it here in Silver Creek?

JEREMY  
Well, me and my mom think it's all right, but my step-dad is beginning to be a real jerk.

The two glance around the shed.

SAVANNAH  
You don't have to answer if you don't want to but, if you don't like him, how come you don't just go to live with your real father?

JEREMY  
He's dead.

SAVANNAH  
I'm so sorry. I didn't know.

Jeremy digs a photo out of his pocket and hands it to Savannah.

JEREMY

He was a fireman. He was trying to save a family in the Mission District. San Francisco.

SAVANNAH

That's so sad.

Savannah comforts Jeremy. He gazes blankly at the floor.

JEREMY

He was doing his duty. It's what he enjoyed most when he wasn't with me.

SAVANNAH

Isn't that the way it works? The ones who aren't worth a damn end up living and tormenting us the whole time. The nice ones die young and we're tormented because they aren't here to be with us.

JEREMY

It was a few years later when my mother married Milton.

The two enjoy the solitude.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Milton exits and walks onto the front porch. He looks at the wood trough and sees two pieces of split wood.

MILTON

That damn kid!

Milton moves around the side of the house. He stands in front of the garage and hears voices approach.

Jeremy and Savannah ride down the hill and laugh.

SAVANNAH

Well. I'll see you tomorrow.

JEREMY

Okay.

SAVANNAH

Bye.

Milton sees the two happy teenagers and shakes his head in disgust. Savannah passes the house while Jeremy stops near the back door.

Milton walks around the garage and surprises Jeremy.

MILTON

Didn't I tell you to have that wood cut by the time I got home?

JEREMY

Uh--

MILTON

Don't plan on doing anything this weekend until your chores are done!

Milton disappears into the garage.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Jeremy cuts pieces of wood. Diane walks out to him with a glass of lemonade and sets it down on a tree stump.

DIANE

How's it going partner?

JEREMY

Could be better.

DIANE

I know.

(a beat)

Hey! Want to go to a movie after you finish with your chores? I know you've been talking about that *Cyborg Man*--

JEREMY

It's *Cyber Man*.

DIANE

Yeah, *Cyber Man*.

Jeremy puts down the ax, wipes the dirty sweat from his brow, and guzzles his lemonade.

JEREMY

Yeah. That would be pretty cool.

DIANE

Great! I'll go tell Milton to call up the theater and check the times.

Diane leaves with a hop in her step.

JEREMY

(sotto)

Great. Now he's going. What a joke!

Jeremy shakes his head, picks up the ax, and works on the logs.

INT. MILTON'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Jeremy sits frowning in the back seat while it speeds to town.

The car passes a large wooden sign that shows:

WELCOME TO SILVER CREEK, OREGON: HOME OF THE ROOSTER CROW.  
POP. 1,500

DIANE

So. What's *Cyber Man* about?

Jeremy's eyes light up like a Christmas tree.

JEREMY

It's based on a comic book. It's about a video game character that comes to life through the interaction between two kids on the Internet.

MILTON

You've got one wild imagination.

JEREMY

I'm not the one that wrote it.

Milton stares at Jeremy through the rearview mirror.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER - THEATER

Milton drives into the parking lot. The theater, grocery store, and pizza parlor surround the neighboring mom-and-pop shops.

Milton sees a spot next to a patrol car in front of the movie theater, then parks. The three exit the Mercedes.

BERNIE FELLOWS, the clumsy looking local sheriff in his early 40's, stands next to his patrol car and munches on a granola bar. He stares at the pine trees on a neighboring hilltop.

BERNIE

Oh, hello Jeremy and Diane. Milton.

Bernie gawks at Diane.

BERNIE

And I must say Diane, you look beautiful as always.

DIANE

Why thank you Bernie.

Diane stops and stands next to Bernie.

MILTON

Hey, let's go! We gotta get the tickets.

DIANE

We'll wait here for you.

Diane turns away from Milton.

DIANE

So. How are you Bernie?

Milton ignores Bernie and gets in the ticket line. Jeremy stands at ease next to his mother.

BERNIE

Fine, thank you ma'am.

DIANE

Oh stop it Bernie. We've known each other too long.

BERNIE

Well, I am on duty.

(a beat)

So Jeremy. What movie are you two going to see?

Jeremy stares up at Bernie with a gleam in his eye.

Milton approaches Diane, Bernie, and Jeremy then stops. Diane turns and looks at Milton, then signals him to join them. Milton waves Diane and Jeremy toward the theater.

MILTON

Come on you two, let's get moving!

Diane glances down at her Rolex.

DIANE

But it doesn't start for another ten minutes!

MILTON

I said let's go!

DIANE

Quit making a scene in front of everyone. We'll be there in a minute.

Milton walks toward Diane then stops again. He waits.

MILTON

I said hurry up!

Diane turns away from Bernie.

DIANE

Please excuse me for a second.

BERNIE

No problem ma'am.

Diane hurries over to Milton and scolds him.

DIANE

What the hell is your problem? You're embarrassing me in front of the entire town, including Bernie and Jeremy!

MILTON

This town can kiss my ass. Besides, the movie is going to start any minute and you know how I hate to miss the previews.

DIANE

Give me a break. You're just mad because I'm talking to Bernie!

MILTON

Oh bull--

DIANE

Yeah you are. Well he happens to be a good friend of mine. I wish you could respect that.

Bernie watches on with anticipation.

MILTON

I can't believe we're talking about this and I'm missing the previews. Here's your damn tickets. I'll be inside if you want to join me!

Milton slams the two tickets into her hand and storms off to the theater entrance.

Diane watches him leave and grabs Jeremy by the arm.

Milton approaches the theater entrance. He makes his way for the door and cuts off some patrons.

INT. THEATER

Milton gives the usher his ticket and doesn't wait for his stub.

EXT. THEATER

Diane and Jeremy walk back and join Bernie.

DIANE

I'm so sorry you had to hear that Bernie. He can be so rude sometimes.

BERNIE

Don't worry about it Diane. I know he didn't mean it.

DIANE

Well, anyway. We'd better get going. Talk to you soon.

BERNIE

Yeah. See you two later. Oh. And enjoy the movie.

Diane looks back and smiles at Bernie. She turns away and grabs Jeremy by his shoulders.

Bernie returns her smile and moves toward his patrol car.

Jeremy and his mother enter the theater arm and arm while Bernie gets in his car.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Milton reads a newspaper.

CLOSE ON PAPER

THE EAST SIDE STRANGLER KILLS AGAIN. MURDER TOLL REACHES SIX.

Jeremy enters the dining room and sits down. Diane enters with some plates and joins Milton and Jeremy. Milton puts the paper away.

Jeremy eats, but Milton stops him.

MILTON

Aren't you forgetting something young man?

Jeremy looks dumbfounded.

MILTON

It's time to say grace.

Jeremy remains quiet.

MILTON

Well?

DIANE

Okay. I'll say grace this time.

MILTON

No! Jeremy's going to say grace.

DIANE

No, I don't mind.

MILTON

I said that he's gonna say it and I'm serious. Besides, I never hear him say thank you for a Goddamn thing!

Jeremy looks confused.

MILTON

Well. Get on with it.

JEREMY

I don't know anything to say.

MILTON

Say it!

Jeremy shrugs.

JEREMY

Rub a dub, dub. Thanks for the grub. Amen.

Milton pounds his fist on the table, which causes some of the plates to jump, along with Jeremy and Diane.

MILTON

Boy you are really beginning to piss me off. Say it, and say it right!

JEREMY

I did.

MILTON

No you didn't. You say it right or there's going to be hell to pay.

JEREMY

I don't know what you want me to say.

MILTON

You say something now or you're going to your room and I'll deal with you later.

JEREMY

I already said I don't know anything.

Diane begins grace.

DIANE

Dear Father. Thank You for this meal You have brought before us.

MILTON

I'm waiting.

DIANE

We are thankful that You have blessed us with this lovely home and financial security in a turbulent world.

Jeremy shrugs and shakes his head in disbelief.

DIANE

We realize that we are lucky to be where we are and we want You to know that we are thankful.

MILTON

Buddy you're really burning my ass.

JEREMY

What?

DIANE

Lord please bless this food. Amen.

Milton and Jeremy both look at each other.

MILTON

Amen.

JEREMY

Amen.

The family members eat their dinner in silence. Jeremy eats all of his food except his Brussels sprouts.

DIANE

Jeremy, I made your favorite dessert. German Chocolate Cake.

JEREMY

Thanks mom.

He gets up from the table, but Milton stops him.

JEREMY

Oh. Can I please be excused?

MILTON

Where do you think you're going?

JEREMY

To the kitchen.

MILTON

Not before you finish all of your food.

JEREMY

I don't like Brussels sprouts.

DIANE

Honey. It's no big deal.

Diane gets up from the table and clears Jeremy's plate.

MILTON

Stop! He's going to clean everything off of that plate and I'm going to watch him do it.

Jeremy eats the vegetables at a snails pace.

MILTON

Well. While I've got you here, we might as well discuss why you were hanging around with that street trash neighbor kid instead of doing your chores like you were supposed to.

Diane sighs, closes her eyes briefly, then shakes her head.

Jeremy sits back down. His plate still has the round vegetables on it.

MILTON

Well. Quit avoiding the question. What do you have to say for yourself?

JEREMY

What are you talking about?  
Savannah's not street trash.

Milton slams his fist down on the table in a furious rage. His plate bangs around the table and his food spills on the white table cloth.

Diane jumps out of her seat.

MILTON

If I ever see her near this house again, you are dead meat, and I mean dead meat. You got that?!?

DIANE

Milton please.

MILTON

Shut up Diane. This is between me and the boy.

Jeremy shoves the vegetables in his mouth, gets up from the table, then rushes upstairs.

Milton eats his food and stares into the living room. Diane clears Jeremy's plate, along with her own, then leaves Milton by himself.

INT. BEDROOM

Jeremy spits out the vegetables into the trash, then dials up the network on his computer. He clicks on the dating room icon.

The digital clock shows 7:15.

He types at the computer when he hears a noise. He stops and listens.

He hears the noise again.

He gets up and walks over to his bedroom window. He sees a pebble hit the window, which is followed by the noise.

Jeremy opens the window and sees Savannah outside.

JEREMY

Savannah, is everything okay?

SAVANNAH

Can I please come up?

JEREMY

Sure, but be quiet. If we get caught, I'm dead meat.

Savannah climbs up a tree near the house. She moves out along the tree branch and drops onto the roof near Jeremy's window.

JEREMY

Nice climbing there.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The two friends cuddle on the bed.

JEREMY  
How are you feeling?

SAVANNAH  
Fine I guess.

The computer BEEPS.

JEREMY  
Come over here.

The two get up and sit down in front of the computer.

JEREMY  
Check this out. It's a dating chat  
room.

SAVANNAH  
What?

JEREMY  
You talk to people about sex and  
stuff like that.

SAVANNAH  
Wow.

JEREMY  
Let's try and pick up on someone.

SAVANNAH  
No way.

JEREMY  
Way.

Savannah blushes then laughs. Jeremy smiles at her. He types while Savannah watches.

SAVANNAH  
You can't say that.

JEREMY  
Message sent.

SAVANNAH  
Holy cow.

A minute later, a welcome message arrives.

JEREMY  
Check it out. I've got someone on  
the line.

SAVANNAH  
What are you gonna do now?

JEREMY  
Play it like a fish.

Jeremy types.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

I'M SIX FEET TALL, ALL MUSCLE, BIG, AND LOVE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

MILTON

Savannah giggles and Jeremy gazes at her.

Jeremy's cyber partner responds.

SAVANNAH  
Oh my God.

JEREMY  
Well I am quite a catch, don't you think? Time to set the hook.

Jeremy hacks at the computer.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

MILTON'S THE NAME AND BONDAGE IS THE GAME.

I KNOW YOU WANT TO GO DOWN ON ME, SO DON'T BE SHY. THEN WE'LL GET BUSY WITH SOME S & M, IF YOU'RE TOUGH ENOUGH.

BY THE WAY, I'M INTO MAKING HOME MOVIES, SO BE READY FOR A REAL MAN, MY SEX SLAVE.

Jeremy laughs then pushes send.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM

The clock shows 10:25. The two kids panic when they hear a KNOCK at the door.

DIANE (O.S.)  
Hello? Honey are you done with your homework?

JEREMY  
Quick! Under the bed!

Savannah moves while Jeremy shuts off the monitor.

Diane knocks one more time then enters the room.

JEREMY

Yeah I just finished up.

DIANE

That's good. Time to hit the hay.  
It's past your bedtime.

JEREMY

Okay.

Diane peers over at the open window.

DIANE

Why is the window open?

JEREMY

Uh. It was a little stuffy in here,  
that's all.

DIANE

You don't want to catch a horrible  
death.

JEREMY

I'll be all right. I'll close it if  
I get cold.

Jeremy strips down to his boxer shorts, puts on some sweats,  
then jumps into bed. Diane kisses him on the forehead, then  
leaves. She turns off the light behind her.

SAVANNAH

Is it safe yet?

JEREMY

Not yet.

Jeremy gets out of bed, walks over to the door, then puts  
his ear to it.

JEREMY

I think it's safe now.

Jeremy walks over to the bed and helps Savannah up.

SAVANNAH

Thanks.

They stand close to each other.

JEREMY

Holy crap. I've got to log off the  
Internet.

Jeremy takes his bath towel out of the closet, walks over to  
the door, and puts it along the bottom edge.

He goes over to the computer and turns on the monitor.

He sees E-mail from his cyber lover.

JEREMY  
She sent me E-mail.

SAVANNAH  
Who?

JEREMY  
My new hottie.

Savannah joins him. The monitor glows, which lights their faces.

SAVANNAH  
See what it says.

Jeremy opens the files and sees different types of hardcore pornographic pictures.

JEREMY  
Holy cow!

SAVANNAH  
This is getting a little too raunchy  
for me.

JEREMY  
What do you mean? It's getting good.

Jeremy types, but Savannah stops smiling.

JEREMY  
I'm gonna reply.

SAVANNAH  
Don't. You can't be sure who's there.

JEREMY  
They'll never find me. Take it easy.

Jeremy sends the E-mail.

He hears a bell RING on his computer and checks his E-mail.

JEREMY  
Oh my God. They're still on-line.  
They want to meet me at the Rod and  
Reel Motel at eight tomorrow. Room  
1313. Cool. They must be local.

SAVANNAH

You're not going to go meet this  
psycho are you?

Jeremy types at the computer.

SAVANNAH

Are you?

JEREMY

Of course I'm not going to.

Her smile finally returns.

SAVANNAH

What did you just tell her then?

JEREMY

That eight was good for me if it was  
good for her.

Savannah pushes him in disgust.

SAVANNAH

You didn't.

JEREMY

Like I said. It's no big deal.  
They'll never show up.

SAVANNAH

You don't want to be doing things  
like that. You never know who you're  
dealing with.

JEREMY

Relax. Everyone does this stuff.

The two teens don't hear the footsteps at the door.

Milton enters the room and turns on the light.

MILTON

I thought I heard something going on  
in here. Hey! What's she doing  
here?

JEREMY

What ever happened to knocking?

Milton walks over to the computer and sees the pornographic  
material.

MILTON

Oh my God! This just keeps getting  
better and better!

Milton stands by the computer, with his mouth wide open, and glares at the nude pictures.

MILTON

You've got a lot of explaining to do buddy boy!!

JEREMY

It's nothing. I don't even know who sent them.

MILTON

You're only making it worse on yourself. You wouldn't happen to know anything about this chat room or these X-rated E-mails from Evlin would you?

He looks at Jeremy a beat with his crazed eyes.

MILTON

This is appalling.

JEREMY

I don't even know where they came from.

MILTON

You're going to get it this time young man. And you little missy will be getting the hell outta here right now!

Savannah walks toward the door, but Milton stops her. He eyes the open the window.

MILTON

No. I think you can leave the way you came in.

Milton points toward the window.

Savannah glares at him then heads for the window.

MILTON

You're going to go outside and get a branch.

JEREMY

What for?

MILTON

And if the branch is too small, I'll go down and get one myself. I don't think you want that. Now hurry up.

Puzzled, Jeremy puts on his shoes and a jacket, then leaves the room.

Diane enters the room and stands next to Milton. She sees Savannah climb through the window and panics. Diane covers her mouth with both of her hands momentarily.

DIANE

What's going on? Where did Jeremy go?

MILTON

Besides you know who being here after what I said, feast your eyes on this.

Diane looks at the pictures and turns away in shock.

Milton grins and laughs.

DIANE

Oh my God!

MILTON

And that's just the beginning. It seems as though he's been having computer sex with someone named Evlin.

DIANE

Computer sex?

MILTON

Look at all these E-mails. He's a regular Casanova. Not the type of thing you'd expect from a ninth grader. Or would you? This world's going to shit if you ask me! I can't believe this smut.

DIANE

This is horrible.

MILTON

Exactly. This porn stuff is serious business.

DIANE

Why did he go outside?

MILTON

I have a way of assuring that this won't happen again, that's all.

Milton walks over to the window and watches Savannah climb down the tree.

MILTON

Good thing I caught him before this got any worse. If word got out, this could ruin my practice.

DIANE

Your practice? Is that all you care about? We have more important family issues to deal with here.

Milton ignores her.

MILTON

Besides, my pa' would've kicked my ass for something like this. He taught us boys the meaning of the word discipline. That boy of yours could do to learn the same thing.

Drowsy, Diane stares at Milton. She trudges over to the window, observes Jeremy near a tree by the barn, then leaves.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Savannah hides by the tree. She watches Jeremy grab a branch then joins him near the back door.

SAVANNAH

What are you doing?

JEREMY

Don't ask. I gotta go and you should get outta here. You need to get home.

SAVANNAH

What's going on?

JEREMY

I don't know. Just please, go home.

Savannah hugs Jeremy for a moment.

INT. KITCHEN

Diane grabs a box of hot chocolate then puts a cup of water in the microwave.

INT. BEDROOM

Milton sits in front of the computer.

MILTON

Rod and Reel Motel room 1313, eh?  
Well. The Miltster will have a little  
surprise for you. Slut. I'll teach  
you to mess around with my family.

INT. KITCHEN

Jeremy quietly enters through the back door and sneers at Diane who washes her hands in the sink with her back to him.

He leaves and she turns around when she hears the kitchen door close.

INT. HALLWAY

Jeremy plods up the stairs and walks past the family photos.

INT. BEDROOM

Jeremy enters.

Milton looks anxious. He paces like a mountain lion.

Jeremy has a three-foot switch in his hand.

Milton grabs the branch, taps his foot, and waits.

MILTON

Well. We haven't got all night.  
Don't make it any harder on yourself  
than it already is. Drop 'em! Now!

JEREMY

What?

MILTON

Drop your drawers, now!

Milton goes over to the bedroom door and closes it. Jeremy drops his sweats and assumes the position.

Milton takes the switch and cuts the air with a couple of practice swings.

Jeremy winces at the sound as it passes his rear-end.

Milton takes a few more practice swings then connects with Jeremy's butt unexpectedly.

The stick creates a WHIZZING sound before it HIT'S Jeremy's flesh.

## SERIES OF SHOTS

Diane mixes a cup of hot chocolate, then makes her way into the dining room.

She hears the sound of wood HITTING flesh and becomes alarmed.

She increases her pace through the living room and rushes up the stairs. She spills some hot cocoa and stops. She licks her hand then continues up the stairs.

Milton continues the assault on Jeremy's ass with the branch.

Diane flinches with each successive blow.

Savannah watches from the ground below. She sees Milton's wrath and cries.

Milton hits Jeremy one last time, then shoves him onto the bed.

Savannah runs into the woods in front of the house.

Jeremy strains to hold back his tears.

MILTON

Boy, you're lucky your mom's here,  
or else I'd really give you a whupin'.  
You think this is bad? This is  
nothing compared to what my father  
would've done to me if I had pulled  
a crazy stunt like you just did.  
He'd have kicked my ass and good.

Milton laughs at Jeremy.

MILTON

I know you want to cry, you wimp!  
You afraid of a little discipline  
are you? Go to bed! You've got  
school tomorrow. And you'd better  
not be late or else.

## BACK TO SCENE

Jeremy puts his sweats back on, but can only get them halfway up.

Milton leaves the room and Diane bumps into him near the doorway.

MILTON

Hot chocolate? What the hell is  
that all about? He's supposed to be  
punished not pampered!

DIANE  
Get out of the way Milton!

MILTON  
Easy there. You could be next!

DIANE  
I don't think so. You went a little too far this time. I don't want you to ever touch him again.

MILTON  
I think you're forgetting who's boss around here.

DIANE  
You should be ashamed of yourself.

MILTON  
Trying to show me up in front of the kid? No one tells me what to do. Ever! Are you listening to me or do I need to repeat myself to you like I do to your autistic son.

Milton pushes by her and double times it down the stairs. He whistles as he goes.

Diane enters the bedroom and sees Jeremy on the bed with his boxer shorts on. He cries into the pillow.

DIANE  
I brought you some hot cocoa.

JEREMY  
I don't want any.

DIANE  
C'mon. It might help you feel a little better.

Jeremy lies in silence.

DIANE  
How you feeling?

Jeremy rolls over.

DIANE  
Want me to look at that?

JEREMY  
No.

Diane sets the mug down on the bedside table next to the clock. It shows 11:05.

DIANE

Well, there it is if you want any.

Diane moves toward the door.

Jeremy lies on the bed with his eyes closed.

She pulls the door shut, pauses, and looks back at Jeremy who lay on the bed in obvious pain. Tears well up in her eyes.

JEREMY

I wish someone would kill that asshole!

Diane closes the door behind her.

INT. HALLWAY

Diane stands staring, holding the doorknob.

INT. BEDROOM

Jeremy picks up the mug and sips the hot cocoa. He pulls his mouth away.

Jeremy sets down the mug and sobs himself to sleep.

INT. BILL'S TRUCK - AFTERNOON

Diane and Jeremy ride in the gray King Cab pickup truck with BILL DUNBAR, Diane's brother. Bill, has a full beard, broad shoulders, and looks like a modern day Paul Bunyon.

EXT. DAM

The three approach the fish ladder near the side of the river. Fish swim up the ladder.

Water flows over the top of the dam and continues it's course a few hundred feet below.

Diane nods at Bill who walks down toward the ladder, away from Diane and Jeremy.

DIANE

See the fish?

JEREMY

Yeah. What are they doing?

DIANE

They're going up the ladder so that they can lay their eggs up stream.

Jeremy looks at his mother with confusion.

DIANE

They return to their place of birth and lay their eggs there. The ladder was built to help them. Otherwise they'd become extinct.

JEREMY

They can't just lay them down stream?

DIANE

Their instinct tells them they have to go up stream. It's rather remarkable. If they didn't have the ladder they'd die.

The mother and son watch the ladder. Some salmon at the top of the ladder disappear into the river.

JEREMY

Mom?

DIANE

What is it honey?

JEREMY

I was wondering. Why do you let Milton treat us so badly? Why can't we just leave?

DIANE

It's not that simple. There are a lot of things to consider.

JEREMY

Like what?

DIANE

Just grown up type things. But don't worry. Everything will be all right.

Diane hugs Jeremy. They stare at the fish that continue their journey.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Milton drives his Benz up to the entrance then parks at the back of the darkened parking lot.

Milton takes a deep breath and exits.

He walks carefully over to room number 1313. He notices the partially opened door, so he knocks on it.

The door opens.

The steady glow of a cigarette in EVLIN'S mouth contrasts the pitch-black room.

Evlin sets the cigarette down in an ashtray where it smolders.

EVLIN

I'm glad you're here. I thought maybe you'd changed your mind.

MILTON

You want to go out and get a bite to eat? We can get to know each other?

EVLIN

I feel like I know you already. It seems as though we hit it off right away. I hope you enjoyed those photos of my friends and me.

MILTON

Uh. Yeah. Well, maybe we should go out and talk a little. Hello?

The door behind him slams shut and locks.

Startled, Milton turns around.

Evlin disrobes, which catches him off guard. He sees the silhouette of Evlin's naked, voluptuous body stand before him.

EVLIN

Go down on you?

Evlin zips down Milton's pants.

EVLIN

You like it rough? Huh? I'll show you who's boss.

Evlin drops down in front of Milton's crotch. Milton hesitates for a moment, then relaxes and puts his head back with pleasure.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Diane holds the telephone to her ear while Jeremy eats some brownies.

DIANE

Why isn't he answering?

The clock on the wall shows 9:40.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Diane takes a wedding album off of a nearby shelf, sits on the couch, and opens it up.

CLOSE ON ALBUM

Milton and Diane wear traditional wedding garb. Diane in a beautiful white gown and Milton in a black tuxedo with white tie and cummerbund.

In one photo, Diane and Milton partake in the first dance. In another, Milton kneels in front of Diane.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Milton's car awakens Diane, who sleeps on the couch. The album sits on her lap. It shows a large photo of Milton and Diane.

She looks at her watch. It shows 12:48.

INT. KITCHEN

Milton creeps inside and looks like he spent the better half of the night in a Mexican jail cell. With his hand, he wipes at the white crust on the crotch of his wrinkled slacks.

DIANE

Where have you been? I was worried to death.

He quickly buttons up his coat and hides the bloody stain in his white dress shirt.

MILTON

Uh. I got a flat tire on the way home from a client's house.

DIANE

You couldn't call?

He avoids her glance and moves over to the refrigerator.

MILTON

Cell battery's dead.

He grabs a bottle of water, closes the door, then walks over to the kitchen sink.

MILTON

I didn't mean to worry you.

DIANE

Next time just try and give me a call. I thought something bad had happened.

Diane joins him. She gives him a hug, but he moves out of the way.

MILTON

Sorry. I don't want to get any grease on you.

Milton shows her his greasy hands.

DIANE

Okay. I'm going back to sleep.

She pats him on the back.

MILTON

I'll be there in a few.

Diane leaves Milton by the sink.

Milton takes off his soiled jacket, rolls up his sleeves, and runs his hands and forearms underneath the faucet.

Milton flinches in pain.

CLOSE ON DRAIN

Blood slowly flows into the water and swirls down the sink in a red whirlpool.

Milton grabs a paper towel and dabs at the rope-burned section of his wrists.

INT. DINING ROOM

Milton sits down at the table and stares at the small plastic bottle. He takes an occasional sip and soothes his aching wrists.

INT. MILTON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Milton sits at his large cherrywood desk.

ANGLE ON WALL

A framed front-page newspaper article hangs above the credenza. The headline dominates the page

THE TOWNSEND DUO CRUSH THE LOGGER'S UNION PUTTING AN END TO LOCAL DEFORESTATION.

A picture of Milton and Diane during happier times accompanies the article. They look like a match made in heaven. They have their arms around each other and smile from ear to ear.

Milton glances at some paperwork when his phone rings. Startled, he slowly reaches down and picks it up.

MILTON

Hello?

Evlin breathes heavily.

EVLIN (V.O.)

Guess who?

MILTON

Who's this?

EVLIN (V.O.)

Come on lovemuffin. Don't be silly.

MILTON

How did you know where to call me?

EVLIN (V.O.)

Lovemuffin, are you trying to hurt my feelings?

MILTON

Quit calling me lovemuffin!

EVLIN (V.O.)

What's wrong with you Milly Willy? We just have to meet again my precious darling. I know you like it rough, tough guy. Wait 'til tonight. I've got a few little surprises up my sleeve. I mean under my camisole.

MILTON

Surprises? What do you mean by surprises?

EVLIN (V.O.)

You'll just have to wait and see.

MILTON

I don't think going back there is such a good idea.

EVLIN (V.O.)

I know you want it. Don't you realize that? I'm your sex goddess.

Milton takes a deep breath.

EVLIN (V.O.)

I can tell you're getting hot and horny. I want you.

Milton's lover makes a sucking sound with her mouth.

EVLIN (V.O.)

It will be so great my love. I love you, you know that don't you? You're not like all of the other men in the world who just want one thing then they're gone like a fox in a henhouse. Those assholes!

MILTON

What?

EVLIN (V.O.)

Be there at seven. You're going to enjoy being my sex slave again. I've got something new in store for you!

MILTON

Really?

EVLIN (V.O.)

See you there.

The phone goes dead and Milton hangs up. A sinister smile crosses his face.

INT. PORTLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bernie enters and checks in with the POLICE CLERK.

BERNIE

Yeah. I'm Sheriff Fellows. Detective Moe Johnson please.

POLICE CLERK

One moment please.

The Police Clerk gets on the phone and a minute later MOE JOHNSON approaches Bernie. Moe, a homicide detective in his early 50's, wears a suit from the 1970's.

BERNIE

Hey Moe. How's the case coming along?

MOE

We're still following up some leads. Come on back to my office and I'll fill you in.

BERNIE

By the way. How's the new fishing pole working?

MOE

Like a charm. Last week I caught a forty-pound steelhead with it.

BERNIE

That's great.

MOE

You've been out much?

BERNIE

Not as much as I'd like to.

MOE

Isn't that always the case?

INT. MOE'S OFFICE

The two enter and Bernie closes the door behind him.

ANGLE ON WALL

Police awards hang along with photos of Moe with his friends and fellow officers, including Bernie.

Moe sits down at his desk then gets on the phone.

MOE

Carlton. Come in here for a minute.

Moe hangs up.

MOE

Detective Sergeant Reeves is our resident expert on computers.

CARLTON REEVES, a clean cut looking computer guru in his late 30's, enters. He wears a stylish silk suit and tie.

MOE

Carlton. This is Sheriff Bernie Fellows from the Silver Creek Sheriff's Department.

Carlton and Bernie exchange pleasantries then sit down.

MOE

Carlton. Can you explain to Bernie what we've learned so far?

CARLTON

Well, we looked at the kid's hard drive and found some interesting things. There were a number of computer programs he had written, some interesting pornographic picture files, and miscellaneous E-mail messages. There was also an obnoxious stealth virus in his E-mail download directory. There might be some possibilities for Internet sex crimes, but then again who knows.

BERNIE

Okay. So what's a stealth virus?

Moe nods at Carlton.

CARLTON

It's a malicious computer program that infects a computer by overriding the system and telling it to perform certain functions. Hackers like to test their programming knowledge by writing these virus programs.

BERNIE

Why the hell would someone do that?

CARLTON

Why do people lie, cheat, steal, or even commit murder? They just do. Some do it to get back at the establishment or at computer companies. Some do it for kicks. They don't see it as anything harmful. They figure that if you were careful, you wouldn't be infected.

BERNIE

This killer must really know what he's doing if he was able to penetrate Marty's system.

CARLTON

Well, my initial check of his system does show some pretty amazing things. He definitely had some high-tech programs on his computer. Not your average Joe, that's for sure.

BERNIE

So where does this leave us?

CARLTON

I'll need to look at his system a little more. I'm not sure where we need to go with this yet.

Carlton gets up from his chair.

MOE

Thanks a lot Carlton.

CARLTON

No problem.

Bernie stands up and approaches Carlton.

BERNIE

It was nice to meet you.

CARLTON

Same here. I'll let you both know when I come up with something.

MOE

Thanks.

Carlton leaves.

BERNIE

So what do you want me to do?

MOE

We're going to work a little more on this virus stuff, among other things, and I'll let you know what our next move is going to be.

BERNIE

Okay. I guess I'll have to wait and see.

INT. SHED

Jeremy and Savannah hang out in their much cleaner fort. Most of the junk sits off to one side of the room.

SAVANNAH

Jeremy?

JEREMY

Yeah.

SAVANNAH

Uh. Nothing.

Jeremy looks at her, then stares down at his feet. He looks up at Savannah.

JEREMY

Man that Milton really pisses me off.

SAVANNAH

Why doesn't your mom do anything about it?

JEREMY

I don't know. We talked about it, but I just don't know.

Jeremy gets up and stares out of the window.

SAVANNAH

My dad beats me.

Jeremy turns around. Savannah holds her face in her hands and cries. Jeremy rushes over and comforts her.

JEREMY

You gotta do something about it.

SAVANNAH

I couldn't. He'd kill me.

JEREMY

You have to.

Savannah shakes her head and looks away. Jeremy hugs her.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Milton lay on the bed with his arms tied to the bedpost. Evlin, in a leather outfit with a matching hood, lies next to him and smokes a clove cigarette.

Smoke fills the musty, dimly lit motel room. Evlin inhales then exhales.

Milton breathes in the nicotine and fiberglass filled smoke and coughs.

EVLIN

You need to loosen up a little. Why can't you just relax?

MILTON

These ropes are cutting into my skin again. Don't you think it would be a good idea to untie me now?

EVLIN

I don't think so! I'm not done with you yet my sex slave! Not by a long fuckin' shot!

The two lay in silence for awhile.

Evlin gets up and walks over to the dresser that holds the television. She has long slender legs and a shapely body. She fiddles around with something then returns.

EVLIN

You were off to a shaky start tonight, but I'll try and make up for lost time. I'm an optimist, so I'll look on the bright side. There's always tomorrow.

MILTON

Tomorrow? No way--

Evlin reaches out and clamps her hand over his mouth.

EVLIN

No! You love it so why don't you admit it?

MILTON

Wha--

EVLIN

It's only begun my sweet. It's only begun. We'll be together forever. That's what you fail to understand. When I find something I want, I don't ever let go! I'll never let you go, you hear me?

EXT. MOTEL ROOM

The SNAP of whips and the BUZZ of battery powered sex toys resonates from room number 1313.

A small child with an ice bucket in his hand walks by the room.

Milton screams.

The child stops, drops the bucket in shock, then runs back to his room.

INT. PORTLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT - MOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Carlton sits opposite Moe and holds some notes.

CARLTON

It appears that the virus was sent as an E-mail attachment. When the victim opens the attachment, the virus is activated. This virus is very unique indeed.

MOE

How so?

CARLTON

This virus tells the victim's modem to dial a specific number.

MOE

What?

CARLTON

I can only speculate since there was a self-destruct mechanism in the program.

Moe looks confused.

CARLTON

Let me give you some background on this first. Then maybe you can come up with the reason why our sick friend wrote this virus.

MOE

Shoot!

CARLTON

You're probably familiar with gentlemen's magazines and phone sex, right?

MOE

Yeah.

CARLTON

Well, on the Internet, there's something called cyber sex. People go to Internet sites to look at computer pictures of nude women and men having sex.

Moe rises in his chair.

MOE

Yeah, so?

CARLTON

What these companies do is charge money per minute, just like phone sex. Others allow access to their website for a monthly fee.

MOE

But what does that have to do with our killer?

CARLTON

That's what I'm getting to. Some of these websites have been known to be on the shady side. They claim to have browser packages to help you enjoy the interactive cyber sex experience better. These illegal outfits get you to download their free browser. Only it's not a browser, but a very sophisticated virus.

MOE

Don't people figure out what's going on?

CARLTON

Yeah, but by the time they do, the scam is over and the crooks have everyone's money.

MOE

How do they get people's money?

CARLTON

Here's what happens. The virus tells the computer to mute the modem volume so that you can't hear it. Then it tells the modem to hang up and redial a 900 Internet number in Siberia or Timbuktu. The company collects on your phone bill and you're screwed!

MOE

So they get a few bucks. What's the big deal?

CARLTON

Times that by the thousands of unsuspecting saps and you're talking some serious dough.

MOE

Holy crap!

Carlton nods his head in agreement.

CARLTON

Holy crap's right.

MOE

What's the connection?

CARLTON

Well, we feel that the killer sent an E-mail with an attachment that was infected with this virus. The virus most likely told the computer to dial a specific number. The one thing I don't understand is why someone would go through all of this trouble just to have a computer call a number.

MOE

Maybe he traced the number. Then he could get a location of the victim before killing them.

CARLTON

I didn't think of that. This killer really is sick. And clever.

MOE

I know. I've seen the pictures. Does it say in the virus program what number it called?

CARLTON

That's the problem. The self-destruct mechanism deleted the phone number, along with part of the program code.

MOE

Okay. So what next?

CARLTON

Research all calls to and originally from the victims' homes?

MOE

Exactly. I'm going to get this kid's phone records and examine every number on it for the past three months.

CARLTON

That sounds good. If there's anything else you need, just let me know.

MOE

Thanks Carlton.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - AFTERNOON

Bernie sits down at his desk. Three such desks occupy the station outside the two holding cells.

The phone rings.

BERNIE

Sheriff Fellows here, may I help you?

INT. PORTLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT - MOE'S OFFICE

Moe looks through some phone records.

MOE

Bernie, Moe here. I have some info on the case and I need some help.

BERNIE (V.O.)

No problem. What do you need?

MOE

We've got a theory on the intent of that computer virus. We believe it's used to find out the victim's address via their phone number using some type of tracing equipment.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Okay. Where do I come in?

MOE

I need you to check one of the phone numbers out for me. It was called from the victim's phone.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Where is it?

MOE

It's near you. The phone number is 555-1492 and the name's Sam Taylor. 35 Oak Road, in a town called Eagle Junction.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Eagle Junction, huh? That's in the boonies.

MOE

Can you make it out there?

BERNIE (V.O.)

Yeah. I'll head over right now.

MOE

Thanks. And be careful. We don't know who this person is.

EXT. HOUSE

Bernie pulls up the empty gravel driveway and parks his patrol car. He gets out and approaches the worn down looking house. Bernie knocks on the door and waits.

SAM TAYLOR, a small, frail woman in her early 50's, opens the door.

Her fragile nature surprises Bernie.

SAM

Hello?

BERNIE

May I speak with Sam Taylor?

SAM

I'm Sam Taylor.

Bernie pauses for a moment and stares intently at her.

BERNIE

Good afternoon ma'am. I'm Sheriff Bernie Fellows from the Silver Creek Sheriff's Department.

SAM

Yes. Can I help you?

BERNIE

As a matter of fact you can. We're conducting a murder investigation.

SAM

Really?

BERNIE  
I need to ask you a few questions.

SAM  
Okay.

BERNIE  
May I come in?

SAM  
Oh, sure.

Bernie enters and Sam shuts and locks the door.

BERNIE  
Quaint place you have here.

SAM  
Thank you. Would you like a cup of  
tea or some lemonade?

BERNIE  
I don't want to trouble you.

SAM  
It's no trouble at all.

BERNIE  
Okay. Lemonade would be fine.

Ms. Taylor walks into the kitchen while Bernie walks over to  
the mantle.

Sam returns and hands him the lemonade.

BERNIE  
Thank you.

SAM  
You're welcome.

BERNIE  
I was just admiring your mementos.  
This young lady is beautiful.

SAM  
That's my daughter, Lisa.

BERNIE  
Oh, really? She has your eyes.

SAM  
Why thank you Sheriff.

Bernie looks at the mantle and notices that all of the pictures feature Sam and Lisa.

BERNIE

People used to say the same thing about my sister. She'd get all of the compliments. Where's your daughter now? I'll bet she's off in the big city married to some hot shot doctor or lawyer, huh?

SAM

She still lives around here and takes care of her mother.

BERNIE

That's nice. I think that's what's missing from families these days. Kids grow up and forget their roots. It's sure not the way it used to be.

SAM

I hear you Sheriff. Abandonment is a horrible thing.

BERNIE

Yes it is. You know these are some really great pictures. I always liked it at my folk's house when we would put up all of the family photos for people to look at.

SAM

I sure do love her.

Bernie smiles compassionately at Sam.

BERNIE

Your little Lisa seems like a great gal.

SAM

Yeah. It's hard to believe that such a beautiful, smart, and wonderful girl came from the loins of such a despicable and evil man.

Bernie gives Sam a double take.

BERNIE

Where is her father now, if you don't mind me asking?

Sam can barely keep her composure.

SAM

We all would like to know the answer to that question Sheriff.

Bernie nods his head "yes", grabs a small notebook from his pocket, and writes for a moment.

SAM

No offense Mr. Fellows, but all men are the same you know.

BERNIE

I'm sorry you feel that way.

Bernie puts the notebook back in his pocket.

SAM

That's just how me and my little Lisa feel. There's nothing that anyone can say or do to change our minds.

BERNIE

If you don't mind me asking. What caused such bad feelings?

SAM

He left us when Lisa was only thirteen. She's never been the same.

BERNIE

I'm so sorry. I didn't want to open any old wounds.

SAM

Don't be. He was horrible. I don't know why I even married him. I guess I was young and stupid.

BERNIE

Do you happen to know a Marty Callahan?

SAM

No.

BERNIE

Never hear Lisa mention his name?

SAM  
 Didn't you hear me?

BERNIE  
 Oh, yeah. Okay.

SAM  
 Do you have any more questions?

BERNIE  
 Not right now, but I might later.

SAM  
 I have a busy afternoon. Good day  
 to you Sheriff.

Sam hobbles over to the door and opens it for Bernie. He takes a hint and joins her.

BERNIE  
 Thank you for your time.

Bernie exits and turns back towards Sam.

SAM  
 Good day, Sheriff.

Sam closes the door.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Diane and Jeremy sit at the table and eat. They hear a car pull into the garage.

Jeremy eats most of his dinner, then picks at his vegetables.

Milton joins them with a half-full plate of food.

DIANE  
 Is that all you're going to eat?  
 That won't be enough for you.

MILTON  
 I'm not too hungry tonight.

DIANE  
 Thanks for calling to tell me you  
 were going to be late. I really  
 appreciate it.

Diane kisses Milton on the cheek while he stares at his dinner.

JEREMY  
 Can I please be excused?

DIANE  
 Sure honey.

Jeremy hastily grabs his plate. It slips out of his hand and SHATTERS all over the tile floor.

JEREMY

Oh my God!

Milton stares at his plate.

Jeremy grabs the pieces off the floor while Diane gets up, enters the kitchen, and returns with a broom and dust pan.

She glances over at Milton, but he just stares at his untouched potatoes.

DIANE

Be careful honey. You don't want to get cut by any of the glass.

Diane helps Jeremy with the mess, then sits back down at the dinner table.

DIANE

Is there something wrong?

MILTON

No.

DIANE

I can tell that something's bothering you. You haven't even touched your food.

MILTON

I'm just thinking about how lucky I am to have a wife like you.

DIANE

That's such a thoughtful thing to say.

MILTON

This is difficult for me to say.

DIANE

Take your time. I'm listening.

MILTON

I've just been such a fuck up these past few months. I'm going to make it up to you and Jeremy. I'm going to change, you can count on that.

DIANE

I know you will honey.

The couple hugs each other.

Milton gets up and leaves the dining room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Milton enters the darkened living room and sits on the couch. He turns on the television and stares at it in silence.

JEREMY (O.S.)

I'm so sorry ma'.

DIANE (O.S.)

I know you are kiddo. Don't worry about it.

NEWSCASTER

The killer who the police have dubbed the East Side Strangler is still at large. There is a reward for anyone with information leading to the capture of this killer. Information regarding this case should be forwarded to the Portland Police Department.

Jeremy enters the living room, walks past the television, then runs upstairs.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

Jeremy gets in and sits down next to Savannah.

Gladys puts the bus in gear and drives down the tree-laden highway.

Aaron pulls out a folded piece of paper and a rubber band. He loads the paper with skill and pulls it back. He fires the projectile and hits Jeremy in his neck.

JEREMY

Ow!! What the hell?

GLADYS

Hey Jeremy. No cursing on my bus. You hear me?

Jeremy turns around. Aaron and Skeeter laugh at him.

AARON

Yeah. You heard the woman, preppie boy! No cussing.

SAVANNAH

Knock it off Aaron! You're so immature!

AARON

Why don't you come back here and sit with me? I know how to treat you real good.

Aaron grabs his crotch.

SKEETER

Yeah, get back here.

SAVANNAH

Drop dead. I wouldn't date you in a million years, you ugly toad.

INT. MILTON'S OFFICE

Milton stares at the framed newspaper article above the credenza.

He turns back toward his computer. The steady sound of a computer modem BUZZES. Milton types and sends his message.

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE

Jeremy and Savannah pause outside the school counselor's office.

JEREMY

You gotta do it.

SAVANNAH

I'm afraid he'll do something really bad.

JEREMY

Remember what we talked about. It's the only way.

Jeremy moves over and rubs Savannah's shoulder.

JEREMY

It'll be all right. I'll be there for you. But you have to take the first step.

The school bell rings. Jeremy stares at Savannah with concern. Savannah puts her hand on the doorknob then turns back.

A TEACHER walks down the hall toward the two friends.

TEACHER

Come on you two. Time to get to class.

JEREMY

Okay.

Jeremy and Savannah share a concerned glance.

TEACHER

Come on. Class is going to start in a few minutes.

Savannah moves away from the door and runs down the hall.  
Jeremy follows.

The Teacher moves toward some other students.

INT. MILTON'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Milton works at his desk and pushes stacks of paperwork around listlessly. Milton gets up and paces.

Milton's phone rings. He lets it ring then picks it up.

EVLIN (V.O.)  
Guess who, lovemuffin!

MILTON  
I told you to stop calling me that!

EVLIN (V.O.)  
I got your little note you sent me.  
You're hurting my feelings. Is that  
what you want? Huh?

Evlin bawls uncontrollably.

EVLIN (V.O.)  
I can't believe after all we've been  
through that you would just toss me  
out like an old law journal. Say it  
isn't so! Please!

MILTON  
Don't you get it?

EVLIN (V.O.)  
What do you mean? I love you. Don't  
you love me?

MILTON  
What the hell is wrong with you? Do  
you mean to tell me that you're that  
dense?!? It's over. You do know  
what the word over means don't you?

Milton's lover becomes livid.

EVLIN (V.O.)  
It's not over! You can't breakup  
with me! You do realize that, don't  
you? You can't fly the coop and  
abandon me!! I won't let you!

MILTON  
Watch me!

EVLIN (V.O.)

There's no need to get hostile.  
It's not like you didn't want it.  
(a beat)  
Give in to your true feelings my  
love.

MILTON

I said it's over.

EVLIN (V.O.)

Aww. You're going to be in serious  
trouble there big boy!

Milton remains quiet.

EVLIN (V.O.)

Hello? You still there? I know you  
are. I can hear your heavy breathing.  
It's getting me hot!

MILTON

You don't need breathing to get hot.

EVLIN (V.O.)

Shut up! If you choose to dump me,  
I'll just have to let the local  
authorities in on your illegal  
behavior. You'll go away for a long  
time. I don't want that to happen.  
I love you.

MILTON

I don't know what you're talking  
about? I haven't done anything that's  
against the law.

EVLIN (V.O.)

Are you familiar with statutory rape?

MILTON

Yeah, so?

EVLIN (V.O.)

Having sex with a minor is a criminal  
act.

MILTON

And I should care?

EVLIN (V.O.)

I'm not even 18 years old, but I  
won't say anything if you won't.

MILTON

That's a load of crap.

EVLIN (V.O.)  
Thanks for the compliment.

MILTON  
I told you! It's over! Why can't  
you realize that? You're obsessed!

A bell sounds on Milton's computer.

He opens the attached E-mail file

MILTON  
Oh my God!

EVLIN (V.O.)  
See ya' tonight.

The phone line goes dead.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Diane stands by the front door when Bill walks in.

BILL  
Diane, what's up? Why all the  
secrecy?

DIANE  
I just need to borrow your truck.  
Is that all right?

BILL  
Sure. But why?

Diane gives her brother a concerned stare.

DIANE  
I don't have time to discuss it.  
I'll tell you later.

BILL  
Sure, no problem. When are you going  
to be back?

DIANE  
Tonight. Can you please watch Jeremy?

BILL  
What about Milton?

DIANE  
He's leaving town on business.

BILL  
Oh, okay.

DIANE  
Thanks a million.

Diane gives him a kiss on the cheek. He hands her the keys.

EXT. BUSINESS COMPLEX - EVENING

Diane slouches in Bill's gray truck and stares at the building.

Milton walks out. He peers around like a common criminal, then hustles to his Benz. He gets in, scans the parking lot, then starts the car.

EXT. CITY STREETS

Milton drives out of the parking lot and pulls into traffic. Diane tails him and keeps two cars between her and Milton.

They enter the town square.

Milton stops at a traffic light then turns right down a cross street. She pulls the truck around the car in front of her and follows Milton around the corner.

BUZZ, the town drunk, stumbles off the curb in front of Diane's truck. Diane locks up her brakes and screeches to a halt just missing him.

Buzz gazes around. He stares at Diane for a second or two then takes a long swig off of his bottle of booze.

Diane honks the horn five or six times before Buzz staggers out of her way. He yells at her, pauses in the middle of the street, then takes another drink. Diane hits the gas pedal and peels out around the corner.

Buzz continues across the street and irritates the other drivers, then slips into the liquor store.

Diane follows Milton until he slows down and approaches the Rod and Reel Motel on the outskirts of town.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Milton enters the driveway while Diane slows down and watches him.

He parks near the office entrance and kills the lights.

INT. MILTON'S CAR

Milton reaches into the glove compartment and grabs a Buck knife. He looks at it for a moment and reads the words that are engraved on it. *TO MILTON LOVE DIANE.*

Milton puts the knife in his pocket then gets out of the car.

INT. BILL'S TRUCK

Diane drives carefully into the parking lot without her headlights on.

DIANE

(sotto)

Where are you going there, huh?

She watches Milton from a distance, then parks the truck in a space near the front of the motel.

EXT. MOTEL

Milton stops and takes a deep breath. He approaches room 1313 and enters.

Diane gets out of the truck.

INT. MOTEL

Milton peers into the room. He flips a light switch, but nothing happens.

MILTON

Where are you?

EVLIN (O.S.)

Over here. On the bed.

MILTON

We've got to talk. I want the tapes!

EVLIN (O.S.)

What tapes?

MILTON

You know what I'm talking about.

EVLIN (O.S.)

Come on over here and sit down.

Everything will be all right.

Milton approaches Evlin, but stops suddenly.

EVLIN (O.S.)

Close the door behind you.

Milton closes the door, but leaves it slightly ajar.

MILTON

This can't keep going on like this.

EVLIN (O.S.)

You're the one that wanted it, not me.

MILTON

What?

EVLIN (O.S.)

Besides, we'll always be together, so what's the big deal?

MILTON

Listen. The only reason I approached you is because you were sending porno material to my son who's only in ninth grade.

EVLIN (O.S.)

What are you talking about?  
(a beat)

Nevermind. It doesn't matter. Invite him along and I'll do you both at the same time! We'll get a threesome going!

MILTON

You still don't get it. I can't be getting involved like this. I'm married. If my wife and kid find out about this, I'm dead meat!

EXT. MOTEL

Diane sneaks up to room 1313.

EVLIN (O.S.)

Don't worry about it lovemuffin. Come over here and sit with me on the bed.

MILTON (O.S.)

I don't know.

EVLIN (O.S.)

I'd never do anything to hurt you. I love you. You know that don't you?

MILTON (O.S.)

Yes, but--

EVLIN (O.S.)

Let's talk.

Diane grabs the doorknob, opens the door an inch, then stops.

She turns away from the door, runs back toward the truck, and bumps into a maid.

DIANE

Oh. Sorry.

The maid looks Diane in the face then walks away.

INT. HOTEL

Milton cautiously moves toward the bed. Evlin unzips his pants, goes down on him, then stops.

EVLIN

Now. Now. Good things come to those who you know what.

Evlin grabs Milton and throws him on the bed.

She ties up his arms.

EVLIN

You want to get rough, huh?

She goes down on him again. He moans softly.

She stops then ties his legs to the bed.

MILTON

Oww! Don't stop.

Evlin saunters over to the cabinet, then returns. She kisses Milton passionately, then slaps him in the face.

MILTON

Oooh. Hurt me! I can take anything you got, bitch!

She pulls out a phone cord and wraps it around his neck.

MILTON

Hey. What are you doing?

EVLIN

Just my luck. Falling in love with an adulterer. This fox is gonna die.

Evlin strangles Milton with the cord. He gags and kicks, but the ropes barely budge.

EVLIN

How does this feel? I'm gonna send you to hell along with that sinning family of yours. They're dead! You hear that?!?

(a beat)

We could've had it all together.  
Why are all the good ones married?

Evlin strangles Milton until his body goes limp.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL

Evlin unties Milton's body and rifles through his pockets. She examines the contents of his wallet then puts it back.

She reaches into his front pocket and feels around. She grabs the Buck knife and examines it.

INT. MOTEL - MORNING

Milton lay face first on the bed dead with the knife buried in his back. A photo hangs from the knife.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

Bernie enters. JAKE PHILLIPS, a clean cut, no nonsense, country sheriff in his early 40's, follows his partner inside.

Bernie appears distressed. He goes over to his desk and slumps into the chair. He puts his head down while Jake, who holds a bag, joins him.

BERNIE

Just when I thought people couldn't get any sicker, this happens. We have to tell Diane before she finds out from someone else.

JAKE

She's a prime suspect. We're going to have to question her.

Bernie looks up at Jake.

BERNIE

She didn't kill Milton! That was the work of a brutal killer, not a loving housewife.

JAKE

You've got to stay focused. Don't let your feelings cloud your judgment.

BERNIE

I'm not dammit! She couldn't have done that!

Bernie rubs his eyes and runs his fingers through his hair.

JAKE

What about the photo? That's serious evidence for a crime of passion.

Bernie shakes his head "no" then looks away.

Jake tears open the bag and grabs a sandwich. He walks over to Buzz's cell and gives him the food.

Jake returns and drinks from one of the paper coffee cups while Bernie drinks from the other.

JAKE

When do you think we'll get word on those prints?

BERNIE

Pretty soon.

BUZZ

When are you guys going to let me outta here?

JAKE

When you sober up.

BUZZ

I am sober.

BERNIE

Sleep it off Buzz.

BUZZ

What are you working on?

JAKE

Would you please shut up and eat?

BUZZ

Why don't you try and catch that crazy broad that almost killed me last night. That's a real crime.

Off guard, Jake stares over at Buzz for a moment.

BERNIE

I think you had a little too much to drink.

BUZZ

I may have been drinking, but I know when I'm about to be killed.

BERNIE

Enough!

The two finish up their coffee, then leave.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

A police car approaches the house then stops. Jake and Bernie get out and walk onto the front porch. Jake knocks on the door and moments later Diane greets them.

DIANE

Oh, hello Bernie. Jake. What brings you two all the way out here?

BERNIE

We have some very bad news.

Diane's face becomes very grave.

DIANE

What is it?

BERNIE

It's real bad.

DIANE

That's what you just said! What is it?

BERNIE

You should probably sit down for this.

DIANE

Just tell me dammit!

Diane stares at Bernie. He looks away and avoids eye contact.

JAKE

Milton turned up dead at the Rod and Reel Motel.

Diane, in shock, covers her face with her hands and cries.

DIANE

No. It can't be true.

JAKE

I'm afraid so ma'am.

BERNIE

May we come in?

DIANE

Uh. Sure.

Diane stumbles backward. The two local authorities open the screen door and enter the house.

BERNIE

This is going to come as a shock to you under the circumstances, but it's just standard procedure.

DIANE

What's that?

JAKE

Well ma'am. We need to take you to the station for some questioning.

Diane stares at Bernie.

DIANE

You think I had something to do with it?

BERNIE

If it makes you feel any better, I don't. It's just standard procedure. We need to gather some background information.

Bernie looks away from Diane.

JAKE

And some fingerprints.

DIANE

What did you say? Fingerprints?  
Did you say fingerprints?

BERNIE

It's just standard procedure. Nothing to worry about.

DIANE

I can't believe this. I've just been told that my husband has been murdered, and now I've got to go all the way to town to be questioned like a common criminal? Oh my God, I can't believe this is happening to me!

BERNIE

I don't think it'll take that long. We'll have you back before you know it.

Jake stares at Bernie and shakes his head in disagreement.

JAKE

We also need to speak with Jeremy.

DIANE

What for?

JAKE

It's just standard procedure ma'am.

DIANE

He should be getting home pretty soon.

JAKE

Bernie. It's your call.

BERNIE

We'll let it take its course. I don't want to pull him out of class if we don't have to. I think we need to keep this as tight lipped as possible. At least until we get all of the facts.

Jake nods his head.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Bernie and Jake escort Diane over to a cluttered desk. Bernie sits down.

Jake fingerprints Diane, then takes her blotters into another room. She sits down opposite Bernie.

BERNIE

How has your relationship with Milton been lately?

DIANE

It's been a little strange, I'd have to admit. You know.

BERNIE

And?

DIANE

Well. He was spending a lot of time at work. More than usual.

BERNIE

What do you think he was doing?

DIANE

I have no idea. I just can't put my finger on it.

Jake joins them.

BERNIE

Do you know anyone who would want to kill him? A business deal gone bad? Embezzlement? Extortion? Drugs? Angry union thugs?

DIANE

No way. Some people may have thought Milton was a jerk, but he was straight as an arrow. He hardly ever drank, and he kept all of his business activities by the book. He was kind of nit picky that way. His dad was a real authoritarian--

JAKE

That's quite interesting. I understand he was worth quite a sum of money. How did he acquire it?

DIANE

He inherited a lot of it from his father. But you've got to realize, he was doing well for himself long before his father died.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Diane sits across from Bernie while Jake observes.

DIANE

Is this going to take much longer?  
I need to get home before Jeremy  
gets back from school.

BERNIE

We're almost finished.

Bernie pauses a beat.

BERNIE

Don't be offended by this Diane.  
We've known each other for a long  
time--

DIANE

Since grade school.

Bernie nods in agreement.

BERNIE

Uh. Now that he's dead--

JAKE

You get all of his money now, don't  
you?

DIANE

I didn't marry him for the money.

BERNIE

I know that, but people are still  
going to wonder. After all, it's  
widely rumored around here that you  
two haven't been getting along lately.

DIANE

I know. But we were working on  
changing that.

Diane fights back the tears.

JAKE

Add in the fact that you have a motive  
and that doesn't make things any  
better for you.

DIANE

Listen. I know how this looks, but I didn't kill him. The last time I saw him he was doing fine.

Diane cries and Bernie offers her some tissue.

DIANE

I loved him.

Diane wipes away her tears.

BERNIE

Well. I think that will be all for now. Let me take you home.

The two get up and stretch out. Buzz rolls out of the rack and sees Diane.

BUZZ

That's the bitch that almost ran me down!

Jake looks up with renewed interest.

BERNIE

Shut up over there. I'm so sorry Diane.

JAKE

What are you talking about?

BUZZ

She was driving a truck yesterday evening and almost killed me. I already told you this before.

JAKE

Well Diane. Is that true?

DIANE

Well...

JAKE

Just answer the question Diane.

The fax machine in the other room RINGS.

DIANE

I used my brother's truck yesterday to go to town, but--

JAKE

I'll be right back.

Bernie and Diane look at each other as Jake leaves the room.

Diane looks extremely nervous now.

BERNIE  
It's probably nothing.

DIANE  
Yeah.

Jake re-enters the room.

JAKE  
Uh. We'd like to excuse ourselves  
for a moment. Wait right here.

BERNIE  
No we wouldn't.

JAKE  
Yes we would.

Jake grabs Bernie and they walk outside.

EXT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Bernie and Jake stand outside while cars pass by.

BERNIE  
What the hell is this all about?

Jake stands in front of Bernie, stoically. Silent.

BERNIE  
Well?

JAKE  
I think she did it.

BERNIE  
She couldn't have done it.

JAKE  
What do you mean? She's got a serious  
motive. That dude was filthy rich  
and everyone this side of Beaver  
Creek knew that their marriage has  
been on the rocks these past few  
months.

BERNIE  
Don't jump the gun. We can't do  
anything until we get the information  
back on the prints.

JAKE

I don't know how to say this, but I just got word from Portland. The prints match.

BERNIE

What? They can't match. That doesn't make any sense at all. Are you sure?

JAKE

There's no mistake. If you can't be impartial, I'm going to have to recommend that you get taken off of the case.

Bernie shakes his head in disbelief. Jake moves over and comforts him, but Bernie just stares at the cars as they pass.

BERNIE

I'll be all right. I just need to think for a moment.

JAKE

I'm going to contact the school. We need to make sure that Jeremy's under the proper custody.

EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE

The school bell rings. A minute later, some of the younger kids run out to the loading area and wait in line.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Jake sits at his desk with the phone to his ear and waits for the RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Principal Nelson's office may I help you?

JAKE

Yes. This is Sheriff Jake Phillips. I have an urgent matter for the principal.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

I'm sorry but he's conducting a staff meeting in about twenty minutes.

JAKE

I need to make sure that Jeremy Marshall is brought over to your office right after school. I need to pick him up.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

I'm sorry, but the kids have already been let out of class. You know how kids are. I don't suspect that they will be hanging around much after the bell rings.

JAKE

Shoot. Is there any way to get him before he gets on the bus?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

I don't think so.

JAKE

Let me speak with the principal anyway. This is police business and I don't have time to screw around. It's a matter of life and death.

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE

Aaron and Skeeter exit class and laugh among themselves. Aaron gives a few students an assortment of melvins and noogies. He shakes a kid down and gets some money.

AARON

That city slicker boy's goin' down today.

SKEETER

Down. All the way.

Aaron gooses a cute GIRL.

AARON

Hey baby, what's up?

Aaron gooses her again and the Girl knocks his hand out of the way in disgust.

GIRL

You're such a jerk. Grow up!

AARON

What's wrong? Don't you love me?

The Girl scurries away before Aaron can make any more advances on her.

The other kids see Aaron approach and run for cover.

SKEETER

She wants you!

AARON

What would you know about that?

Aaron shoves some unfortunate kid into a locker and laughs. On a rampage, Aaron exits the school.

EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE

Jeremy walks up to one of the lines and drops his books to the ground in front of him.

Aaron moves near Jeremy and pushes a younger student out of the way.

AARON

Scram punk!

The scared "punk" kid bumps into Skeeter.

SKEETER

Boo!

This startles the kid and he runs away. Skeeter laughs.

AARON

Little shit!

Aaron approaches Jeremy and shoves him.

AARON

You're dead preppie boy!

Savannah sees the altercation begin. She runs over and gets in between the two boys.

SAVANNAH

Aaron why don't you just knock it off?

AARON

Hey Skeet. Check out the bodyguard? What's up honey?

Aaron grabs Savannah and kisses her. Savannah spits in his face.

SAVANNAH

Eww. Why don't you leave us alone?

AARON

You little bitch!

Aaron pushes her out of the way and she falls to the ground. Savannah skins up her hands and elbows.

SAVANNAH

Owww!

AARON

Even your preppie boyfriend can't help you now! Look at him. He's pathetic!

Jeremy lunges at Aaron then tackles and body slams him to the pavement.

Jeremy throws his fists and hits Aaron's face and body.

Savannah gets up. Blood slowly streams from her wounds.

Skeeter rushes at Jeremy, but Savannah sticks out her boot and trips him. Skeeter lands face first on the concrete. She jumps on top of him and pins him to the ground.

A bunch of the younger kids pile on.

Aaron cowers in the fetal position and protects his face.

SKEETER

Get off me damn it!

The younger kids laugh and torture him.

Another crowd of kids forms a circle around the two boys. They cheer on Jeremy who punches Aaron.

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE

PRINCIPAL NELSON exits his office. Nelson, a bald man in his late 50's, wears a three piece suit that looks out of place in this country school environment. He has a scared and concerned look on his face.

Nelson speed walks down the hallway. A KID who was shaken down by Aaron runs up to him.

KID

Principal Nelson! Principal Nelson!

NELSON

Not now. I have an emergency to tend to.

Nelson continues his trip down the hall and ignores the Kid.

KID (O.S.)

But Aaron Scrapneck stole from me again.

EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE

Jeremy sits on Aaron's chest and pounds him in the face and stomach a few times. Aaron takes a desperate swing and connects with the side of Jeremy's face.

The blow knocks Jeremy backward.

The crowd sighs in disappointment.

Aaron regains his composure and jumps onto Jeremy. The two boys roll around on the ground.

Nelson exits the school and moves toward the school bus loading area in the distance.

The fight continues while Gladys pulls up to the school. She jumps out and runs over to the bruised and battered boys.

GLADYS

All right you two, break it up!

Gladys reaches in and breaks up the fight.

GLADYS

Knock it off you two!

The two boys take cheap shots at each other.

GLADYS

I said knock it off!

Gladys separates the two boys and they glare at each other.

GLADYS

You boys are going to the principal's office. Now!

SAVANNAH

But he started it!

Savannah points at Aaron.

GLADYS

I don't care who started it.

SAVANNAH

But Aaron threw me to the ground.

GLADYS

Is that right?

Aaron ignores her. Gladys grabs his arm and shakes it.

GLADYS

I'm talking to you! Aaron. Did you do that to her?

AARON

I would never do something like that. That's mean.

SAVANNAH

Liar! Look here. This is where I got scraped up when he threw me down.

Savannah points to her fresh wounds.

GLADYS

Somehow I think you're responsible for all of this young man. You're coming with me straight to Mr. Nelson's office.

AARON

What about him?

SKEETER

Yeah. What about him?

GLADYS

Shut up Skeeter!

SKEETER

Yeah okay. I'll shut up--

Gladys gives Skeeter another look and he shuts up.

GLADYS

He's coming too. Get over here Jeremy.

Jeremy shuffles reluctantly over to Gladys. Principal Nelson rushes over to her and gasps for air.

NELSON

Oh Gladys. I'm so glad you have Jeremy. I need to speak with him.

GLADYS

You certainly do. I caught these two fighting.

NELSON

Yeah okay. Jeremy, come here for a second.

GLADYS

What about Aaron?

NELSON

In a minute!

Jeremy walks over to Nelson. The two separate from the group.

NELSON

I need you to come with me. Sheriff Phillips needs to see you right away.

JEREMY

What for?

NELSON

Well. I don't know how to say this, but Milton was killed last night and your mother is in town answering some questions.

Dazed, Jeremy scans the parking lot and looks at the other kids.

NELSON

Jeremy? Are you all right?

JEREMY

It can't be.

NELSON

I'm so sorry. Please come with me.

Jeremy bolts for the woods.

NELSON

Jeremy come back here, now!

Concerned, Savannah watches Jeremy run away.

NELSON

Damn!

Gladys walks over to Nelson. She still has Aaron by the arm.

GLADYS

What happened?

NELSON

Aaron, please go stand over there for a moment.

AARON

Yes sir Principal Nelson.

NELSON

I just got off the phone with Sheriff Phillips.

Aaron creeps back toward Nelson.

NELSON

Jeremy's mother has been arrested for the murder of her husband. When I mentioned it, he went crazy and ran for the woods.

Nelson pauses a beat and shakes his head with concern.

NELSON

I can't say I blame him given the circumstances.

A sinister grin crosses Aaron's face.

GLADYS

That poor, poor boy.

Gladys fans her face with her hand.

NELSON

Aaron. I said stand over there.

AARON

Over there? Oh. I'm sorry sir.

Aaron stops in his tracks, then reverses his steps.

NELSON

I need to let the Sheriff know ASAP. If you see Jeremy, pick him up for me.

GLADYS

No problem.

NELSON

Thank you Gladys. Aaron! Get your butt over here. You've got some explaining to do.

AARON

No problem sir. I would be glad to shed some light on the situation for you.

NELSON

Please be quiet.

AARON

Yes sir.

Nelson grabs Aaron by the arm, while Gladys returns to the bus.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - AFTERNOON

Diane paces in one of the jail cells while Buzz stands in the other one.

BUZZ

How do you like jail? It ain't so bad. The food's better than the slop at home. Bed's a little too firm for me. And a little too empty, if you know what I mean.

Diane stops and looks over at Buzz.

DIANE

Funny.

Jake walks inside and makes a beeline for Bernie's desk.

JAKE

I just interviewed some of the motel employees.

BERNIE

And?

JAKE

The maid says she saw someone that matches Diane's description at the motel. She says that she got into a gray truck and left in a hurry. That was around six-thirty or seven.

BERNIE

What about the night clerk?

JAKE

She's on vacation. But I should be able speak with her in a few days.

BERNIE

Oh man. This keeps getting worse by the minute.

JAKE

Tell me about it. The truck matches the one registered to Bill Dunbar.

Bernie and Jake approach Diane's jail cell.

JAKE

You want to tell us what you were doing at the Rod and Reel Motel last night?

DIANE

I followed Milton there, but I'm telling you for the last time, I didn't kill him. There was someone else.

BERNIE

Give me one good reason to believe you.

DIANE

He wasn't going there for his health. There obviously was someone else. The woman he was with. Find her and you have your kill--

BERNIE

This is crazy. You want me to believe that Milton has an affair, you follow him to the motel, you leave, then she kills him?

DIANE

Yeah.

JAKE

Your prints and Bill's truck put you at the scene of the crime.

DIANE

When I got to the room I could hear them talking. That's when I left. I couldn't stand him being with another woman. I was just as shocked as you were when I heard about his death.

Jake stares at Diane, nods his head "no", then looks at Bernie.

DIANE

There has to be something. Some clue you guys could run down.

JAKE

We are running down the clues, but they keep pointing to you, Diane.

DIANE

Who signed for the room?

JAKE

If you must keep asking questions then I'll tell you. The name was fictitious, so we need to speak with the night clerk.

DIANE

And that doesn't make you suspicious?

JAKE

Listen. In these types of situations it happens all of the time. Some people want to be discreet. Okay? Now drop it already.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Jake frees Buzz from his jail cell and Buzz saunters in front of Diane.

JAKE

You better stay outta trouble. I don't want to see you in here again.

BUZZ

I'm not the one you should be worrying about. She's the killer. When you get outta here, let's go out and get a drink. My treat.

Diane shakes her head at Buzz. She looks away from him and sits down on her cot. Buzz laughs at her then leaves the station.

DIANE

You gotta let me outta here.

JAKE

Relax.

DIANE

Did you interview the night clerk at the motel? Huh? She could help you find the real killer.

JAKE

Don't you worry about that. We're in the process of conducting a thorough investigation. You'll get your chance to explain soon enough.

The phone rings and Jake picks it up.

JAKE

Silver Creek Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Phillips here. Yeah, just a second. Bernie, line one.

Jake hangs up.

Bernie talks on the phone and writes down some notes. He hangs up and approaches Jake.

BERNIE

That was Moe.

JAKE

And?

BERNIE

He wanted to know how the case was coming along. I told him we were wrapping up some of the loose ends.

Bernie stares at the ground pensively.

BERNIE

He wanted me to run down the phone numbers called from Milton's office and fax them to him. He thinks that since there were bruise marks on Milton's neck, this might have something to do with the East Side Strangler case. It might even be a copycat killer.

JAKE

Good idea. I'll get right on that.

EXT. WOODS

Aaron and Skeeter bike through the surrounding forest.

Skeeter rides an old bike with a banana seat and rattling fender. Aaron rides a newly painted mongoose style BMX bicycle. It looks stolen.

Aaron leads the way through the shrubs and trees.

SKEETER

We're gonna git that preppie and git him good.

AARON

What do you mean we? I'm gonna kick his ass.

SKEETER

Yeah. Kick his ass.

Aaron pulls away quickly and leaves Skeeter in the dust.

SKEETER

Hey, wait up!

Aaron laughs to himself as he pulls around a corner right past the shed on Jeremy's property.

EXT. DONUT SHOP

Bernie holds the phone number list. He circles a number, 555-1492.

BERNIE

Where did I see this? Why does this one seem so damn familiar?

Bernie sits quietly and sips his lemonade.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Aaron and Skeeter approach the Townsend property with caution. They reach a clearing near the barn, stop, then hop off their bikes.

AARON

We ditch the bikes here, then we sneak in and kick his ass.

SKEETER

What about his folks?

AARON

You're such a dumbass. I overheard principal Nelson say that his mom's in jail for killing his dad. That rich kid's gonna wish he was too when I get through with him.

SKEETER

He's dead meat. That's right. Dead meat.

Aaron leaves his bike and carries a wrist rocket in his right hand. He takes a large pellet from his pocket and fires the weapon at the side of the barn.

The pellet hits with a BANG.

SKEETER

That thing kicks some ass.

AARON

It's gonna kick someone's ass.

EXT. TAYLOR RESIDENCE

Bernie pulls his patrol car up and stops.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Aaron and Skeeter run onto the property.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED

Bernie drives up to the house and parks the car.

Aaron and Skeeter stop when they get to the house and press up against it.

Bernie gets out and walks up to the house.

A colorful stained glass window next to Aaron's head highlights the middle of the back door.

Bernie knocks on the door.

Aaron turns the door handle and opens the back door.

Bernie knocks again.

Aaron turns back around and looks at Skeeter who has not moved.

Bernie cautiously peers into the neighboring woods. He wipes some sweat from his brow then tries the door handle to Sam's house.

It opens. Bernie peers inside.

Skeeter moves toward the door.

AARON

I'm going in.

SKEETER

You're gonna do it, huh?

AARON

Of course I am. What are you, chicken?

SKEETER

Skeeter's no chicken, no siree.

AARON

C'mon, wussie.

Aaron enters the house and closes the door behind him.

Skeeter creeps forward.

Bernie enters the darkened house.

BERNIE

Ms. Taylor? You here? I need to  
speak with you. It's urgent.

Bernie scans the room.

BERNIE

Hello?

Aaron throws the door open and scares the hell out of Skeeter.

AARON

Hah! You're gonna get caught out  
there if anyone sees you. Get in  
here!

Aaron enters the house.

Skeeter rushes forward and kicks a three foot long two-by-four that lay by the side of the house. He picks up the board, holds it with both hands, then enters the house.

Bernie enters the dining room and sees some magazines on the table. He flips through them and reads the titles.

Some include: *Popular Mechanics*, *PC Magazine*, *Modern Engineering*, *Karate*, and *Woman's Day*.

The subscriber's name shows LISA E. TAYLOR, 35 OAK ROAD.

Bernie walks over to a bookcase near the kitchen. He notices several first place judo and karate trophies with Lisa Taylor's name engraved on them.

Near the trophies, Bernie sees a picture of an attractive brunette in a judo uniform. He stares at it and thinks.

Skeeter and Aaron scan the laundry room. Skeeter holds the piece of wood.

AARON

I'm gonna kick his butt.

SKEETER

He's gonna get fucked up like his  
old man.

AARON

Beat him down!

SKEETER

Crack him with the ugly stick!

AARON

Clobber him!

SKEETER

Tear him a new one!

AARON

Shut up! I don't want him to hear me coming.

SKEETER

Surprise him. Yeah. We're gonna surprise his ass.

AARON

I said shut the hell up! Hey. Give me that.

Aaron puts the wrist rocket awkwardly in his back pocket then grabs the piece of wood from Skeeter.

Bernie enters the kitchen and moves over to the refrigerator. He examines some items that hang from magnets.

More pictures of Lisa and Sam. A grocery list. A cellular phone bill.

Aaron approaches the refrigerator and opens it up.

AARON

What is all of this crap? Fuckin' rich kids.

Bernie progresses to a closed door at the back of the kitchen. He pauses, then opens it. A hallway runs off of the living room.

Bernie hears a steady CREAKING noise from one of the rooms in the back. He pauses for a moment and listens.

Beads of sweat roll down Bernie's forehead. He draws his pistol and moves toward the sound.

Aaron grabs a piece of bratwurst, takes a bite, then spits it out on the floor.

AARON

Yuck!

Aaron slams the door shut and peers back at Skeeter.

SKEETER

Hey. Let's call Barbados.

AARON

Barbados? Why Barbados?

SKEETER

Because it's long distance.

Aaron picks up the phone on the counter. There's no dial tone.

AARON

These people think they're such hot shits. They didn't pay their phone bill, so they got cut-off.

SKEETER

They're tight wads, that's what they are.

Aaron hears a noise in the other room and drops the phone.

Bernie converges on the door. The CREAKING sound continues. He throws the door open.

Aaron moves past the open pantry door into the dining room. Skeeter follows.

Bernie jumps when a cat runs by. A rocking chair produces the steady CREAKING sound.

Aaron hears a noise in the living room.

AARON

He's in there. Let's go knock some sense into that preppie scumbag.

Bernie leaves the empty room and walks down the hall. He sees one door at the end of the long hallway.

Bernie holds his gun out in front of him and charges inside.

Aaron enters the living room with the piece of wood. Evlin reaches out, grabs Aaron, and throws him to the floor.

AARON

What the hell? You're dead preppie boy.

SKEETER

Get his ass!

Bernie sees inside the room. It looks like someone's office.

END INTERCUT

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Aaron lay on the floor, but swings the wood. He hits a table lamp, which shatters into a thousand pieces.

AARON

Where are you? You fight like a little girl, you sissy!

Evlin waits for him to swing again. Aaron whiffs on his next swing and Evlin takes advantage.

AARON  
You're dead buddy. You hear--

Evlin grabs Aaron by the neck and strangles him.

EVLIN  
Girl, huh? We'll see about that.  
We can hold our own too you know.  
You'll see.

Aaron swings the ugly stick and hits Evlin in the arm.

EVLIN  
Aww!

AARON  
How'd that feel?

Aaron snickers.

SKEETER  
Aaron! Get his ass!

Evlin falls back then recomposes herself and tackles Aaron.  
The board falls out of his hand.

AARON  
Get him Skeeter!

Evlin strangles Aaron, then reaches for the board. Aaron  
gets up on his knees and shakes his head.

AARON  
What the hell? Skeeter! Help me!

Evlin grabs the board, then tees off on Aaron's head.

EVLIN  
Fore!

Evlin CRACKS Aaron's head open like a walnut.

AARON  
Argh!!

Aaron drops to the floor like a rock.

SKEETER  
Aaron? Are you all right? Aaron?

Evlin moves toward Skeeter.

SKEETER  
What did you do to Aaron?

EVLIN

Aaron?

Evlin moves toward Skeeter, but he retreats into the dining room and slams the door behind him.

He dashes into the kitchen, but slips.

Skeeter slides into the cabinets with a BANG.

SKEETER

Oww! Fucking A!

Dazed, Skeeter gets up, but falls back down.

SKEETER

Shit! Come on!

Skeeter crawls for the back door. He hears Evlin's heavy breathing.

Evlin slams the wooden weapon down at Skeeter's leg, but just misses, which creates a dull THUD.

Splinters fly all over the floor.

Skeeter gets to his feet and stumbles toward the back door. He grabs for the handle and turns it. He looks back and sees Evlin swing the wooden weapon at him.

Skeeter ducks and the wood smashes into the stained glass window. Glass flies everywhere.

Skeeter opens the door and hurls ass into the woods.

Evlin moves outside for a moment, but sees Skeeter's bike in the distance. Evlin slams the door and the rest of the window breaks.

INT. SHED

Jeremy looks at the picture of the fireman when he hears a noise outside. Startled, he puts the picture away and peeks out the door.

He sees a figure sneak up toward the shed, so he creeps outside. He rushes over and surprises the figure.

JEREMY

Hey!

Savannah jumps.

SAVANNAH

Oh Jeremy. It's just you.

JEREMY

Did I scare you?

SAVANNAH

A little.

Savannah joins Jeremy and they enter the shed.

JEREMY

How are you feeling?

SAVANNAH

I'm all right. Thanks for sticking up for me back at school. No one's ever done that for me before. Then again, no one's stood up to Aaron before either.

JEREMY

It was nothing. That jerk had it coming.

The two friends hug each other.

SAVANNAH

I mean it. I'm really glad you did that for me.

The two stare longingly into each other's eyes.

SAVANNAH

Why'd you run off?

INT. TAYLOR RESIDENCE

Bernie sits at an office sized desk. Electronic equipment litters the desk and surrounding file cabinet. It looks like the inside of Radio Shack.

Electronic magazines lie in a pile next to the desk.

Bernie examines the equipment and searches for clues.

Two computers with external modems dominate the workspace. Wiring flows from a camcorder to the back of the second computer. A television with a VCR sits next to it.

Bernie sees a tape in the VCR and pushes it in. The VCR automatically powers up, which surprises him.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Skeeter, who rides his bike, approaches the shed.

Jeremy and Savannah get up and go out onto the vista. They see Skeeter ride into the woods.

JEREMY

What the hell is he doing out here?

SAVANNAH

I don't know, but I'm sure that Aaron isn't far behind.

INT. TAYLOR RESIDENCE

Bernie flips on the television and watches the video.

BERNIE

Holy shit!

The video shows Milton in bed with Evlin. Bernie speeds it up and sees the two engage in S & M and bondage activities.

Bernie can hear Milton's voice scream out as his domineering mistress whips him.

He eyes another tape then stops the VCR. He takes out the first tape, then puts in the second tape. He presses play and lets the tape run a little.

BERNIE

Oh my God!

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION

Diane paces inside her cell while Jake returns to his desk with a cup of coffee.

Jake's radio squawks with static.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Jake, this is Bernie. Come in.  
Over.

Jake grabs his radio from his side and puts it to his mouth.

JAKE

This is Jake. Come in. Over.

BERNIE (V.O.)

I'm over at the Taylor residence and you're not going to believe what I found. There's a ton of evidence in the back room. Computers, phone tracing equipment, videos and other paraphernalia. I'm not an expert on this type of stuff, but there is a video tape of the whole thing. Over.

JAKE

What kind of details do you have?  
Over.

BERNIE (V.O.)

The real killer is Lisa Taylor. Caucasian. Thirty plus years old. To be considered extremely dangerous. She made some death threats to the family that were recorded on the tape. Over.

JAKE

Okay. What do you want me to do?  
Over.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Go to the house and pick up Jeremy. We need to make sure that he's safe. We don't know where she is. Put out an all points bulletin as well. I'm going to contact Moe and have him meet me in Silver Creek. Over.

JAKE

Roger that. Over and out.

Jake puts the radio back on his utility belt.

DIANE

You heard Bernie. I'm not the killer. Let me out!

JAKE

He never said you weren't the killer. He just said there was evidence at the house.

DIANE

You have to let me out. You know I didn't kill Milton.

Jake pauses for a moment.

JAKE

I was just doing my job ma'am. I hope you understand.

DIANE

Let's just get going so you can do your job.

Jake opens the cell door and releases Diane.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Jake drives through town in the patrol car while Diane sits next to him.

The lights in town fade to blackness. The two continue down the unlit country highway.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jake pulls the patrol car into Diane's driveway and stops.

He exits the car. Diane gets out, but Jake grabs her by the shoulder.

JAKE

Get back in the car!

DIANE

No way!

JAKE

Stay here! I'm gonna get Jeremy and be right back!

Diane ignores him and moves toward the house. Jake rushes to catch up with her.

Jake proceeds up to the front door and opens it. He enters the house with caution. Diane lingers near the front door.

Jake hits the light switch, but nothing happens.

JAKE

Power's out.

He motions to Diane to be very quiet and stay put.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jake reaches down to his utility belt and grabs his flashlight.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jeremy and Savannah walk around some shrubbery and arrive next to the barn.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jake examines the dining room with the light.

DIANE

I'm going to check upstairs.

JAKE

Don't you need a light or something?

DIANE

I know my way around. I'll be fine.

The moon cast irregular shadows inside the home.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jeremy and Savannah approach the back of the house.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Diane creeps around the second floor. She approaches Jeremy's door, pushes it open, and looks inside.

DIANE

Jeremy? Honey, are you there?

Diane leaves Jeremy's room and approaches the master bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN

Jake enters and continues his search. He hears a faint noise in the garage.

JAKE

Jeremy? It's Jake.

Jake enters the garage.

INT. GARAGE

Jake shines light around the inside of the garage. The door closes behind him.

JAKE

Huh. That's strange.

Jake turns back toward the kitchen door.

Evlin appears from behind some trash cans and bludgeons Jake in the head with the ugly stick. The flashlight falls to the floor with a BANG. Jake follows suit and lands on top of it.

Evlin wraps the phone cord around his neck and tugs.

INT. HALLWAY

Diane shoves the door open. She looks inside the master bedroom. The reflection of the moonlight casts light onto her bed.

DIANE

Jeremy?

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

Jeremy and Savannah arrive at the back door. They see the broken stained glass window and look at each other with concern.

INT. HALLWAY

Diane cautiously walks back toward the stairs. She stops and peers into the bathroom, then continues.

The ugly stick CRASHES into a wall next to her head, which surprises her. Paint and drywall dust fly into the air around her.

Diane turns and slams her knee into Evlin's stomach. Annoyed, Evlin throws Diane down, drops the wood, and pulls out the phone cord.

Diane stumbles and crawls toward the master bedroom. Evlin looks down at Diane and moves toward her.

EVLIN

You're dead meat lady.

The moonlight gleams through a window. This accentuates the taut phone cord.

INT. KITCHEN

Jeremy walks inside with Savannah close behind. He leads her into the pantry.

JEREMY

Stay in here. I'll be right back.

INT. HALLWAY

Evlin cuts off Diane. She slams a foot onto Diane's back and forces her face into the plush carpeting.

EVLIN

This is what happens to adulterers  
and their families.

Diane turns over and takes a wild swing at Evlin.

EVLIN

If you were a good wife, he never  
would have come to me.

Diane almost wrangles free.

DIANE

You're just a whore!

Evlin laughs crazily.

EVLIN

Shut up! No one ever listens to me.  
I'll bet you're listening now!!

INT. KITCHEN

Jeremy grabs a flashlight and exits the pantry.

He turns it on and sees the phone off the hook. He takes  
the phone and puts it to his ear. Confused, he pushes the  
release button several times, then drops the phone.

INT. DINING ROOM

Jeremy examines the room with the light then moves toward  
the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jeremy creeps forward and quickly scans the room. He moves  
toward the stairway when he sees a body hidden in the corner  
next to the couch. He moves toward the body then stops.

INT. HALLWAY

Diane struggles with Evlin, but can't get free. Evlin winds  
the cord around her neck.

And tugs!

DIANE

Jake, help!

INT. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Jeremy looks away from Aaron's body and listens.

He refocuses and sees the wrist rocket in Aaron's back pocket. He grabs it, then rifles through Aaron's pockets. He grabs a handful of pellets and runs up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY

Jeremy sees Evlin strangle Diane.

JEREMY

Holy shit!

Jeremy loads the slingshot and fires it.

He plunks a picture and glass shatters. Evlin looks up, then concentrates on Diane.

Jeremy fires again, but misses.

JEREMY

Damn!

He fires another shot and connects.

EVLIN

Owww!!

Evlin loosens her grip on the cord. Diane pulls her head out of the death knot and gets free.

DIANE

Jeremy! Run!

Jeremy digs in his pocket for more ammunition.

Diane stumbles toward the master bedroom, but Evlin grabs her by the back of her blouse. She yanks Diane back into the hall and rips her blouse.

Evlin slams Diane's head into the wall.

Evlin assaults Diane some more.

A subdued Diane collapses on the carpeting.

Evlin turns toward Jeremy.

EVLIN

You little fucker. You're next!

Evlin rushes at Jeremy.

JEREMY

I don't think so.

Jeremy fires the wrist rocket at point blank range and tags Evlin in the temple.

Evlin drops like a rock.

Jeremy looks at Evlin and cautiously kicks her.

JEREMY

Mom! Are you all right? Mom?

Jeremy approaches his mother then grabs the ugly stick. He kneels next to Diane.

JEREMY

Mom?

Diane moans softly in obvious pain.

Evlin's hand slowly grips the phone cord.

Diane sits up, shakes her head, then looks into his eyes.

DIANE

Jeremy. I'm so glad you're all right.

JEREMY

Rest easy mom. Everything's going to be fine.

DIANE

Oh. Do I have a headache.

Diane closes her eyes for a moment and rubs her temple. When she opens her eyes, panic crosses her face.

Evlin appears behind Jeremy.

DIANE

Behind you.

Startled, Jeremy takes the ugly stick, springs to his feet, and turns around. He sees Evlin with the phone cord in her hands.

He swings the stick at her head and knocks her to floor one last time.

JEREMY

Yeah. Everything's going to be just fine.

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE

A patrol car races down the dusty driveway to the crime scene.

Bernie's car skids to a stop near the house. Moe arrives minutes later.

The officers draw their guns and move toward the house.

FADE OUT: