

Broken Cowboy

By

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INT. SCHIFFER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

NADINE SCHIFFER hums to herself as she washes dishes in the cozy double wide. Someone peeks over the table at her. They stealthily advance toward the unsuspecting Nadine. POP! POP! Little TOM SCHIFFER, 10, jumps out from behind the dining room table, firing his cap gun at her. Nadine jumps back, startled.

TOM  
Gotcha, Mom! You're dead!

NADINE  
(hand over heart)  
Tom, you little stinker.

TOM  
Scared ya, didn't I?

NADINE  
You sure did, honey. Now go outside  
and play. I gotta finish the  
dishes.

Tom scampers toward the back door shooting his cap gun the whole way.

TOM  
(shouting)  
Run for your lives, you stinking  
injuns! Sherrif Tom is on the  
trail.

Nadine rolls her eyes at her son's rambunctious departure.

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Tom emerges from the house, on the hunt for Indians. He spies the dog digging around in the corner of the yard. He goes into stealth mode.

Tom hides behind a tree. He peeks around the trunk. The dog is unaware of his presence.

The dog perks up her ears. She looks in Tom's direction, then goes bounding up to him, greeting him with doggie kisses.

TOM  
All right, all right, girl. You can  
be my deputy.

(CONTINUED)

Tom scratches the dog behind her ears. She perks up again, then runs to the fence. Tom follows.

As Tom approaches the fence he can hear female VOICES in the alley. He peers through a hole in the fence.

Tom sees RHONDA, 15, and his sister ALICE, 15.

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Alice has always been a good big sister. It does not follow that she's a good girl. For the past year she's struggled more and more with depression.

Rhonda idolizes Alice. It's hard to tell if she has a personality of her own. She adapts who she is to who she spends time with.

The girls are smoking and "playing it cool".

RHONDA

What did Bridges do to you for smoking?

ALICE

(without missing a beat)  
Made me suck his cock.

Tom bites his lip.

RHONDA

Gross! That's bullshit. (pushing Alice) Really, what did he do?

ALICE

After I sucked it, he came on my face.

RHONDA

You're sick.

Rhonda sees a tear on Alice's cheek. Her tone becomes serious.

RHONDA

Are you gonna tell?

ALICE

Who? Nobody'd believe me.

(CONTINUED)

RHONDA

But if you don't, he'll stay at the school. What if he does it again?

Resignation is written on Alice's face. She throws down her cigarette and puts it out with her toe.

ALICE

Promise you won't tell?

Rhonda's expression is uncertain. She sees the pain in her friend's eyes.

RHONDA

Promise.

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Tom watches his sister make for the house. Beads of sweat stand out on his forehead. He's breathing heavily. Confusion and enlightenment gleam behind the boy's eyes.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - ALICE'S ROOM - LATER

Alice throws down her back pack as she enters. She glimpses her reflection in the vanity mirror. She contemplates it a moment.

Disgusted with what she sees, Alice takes off her jacket and puts it over the mirror. She crawls onto her bed and sits in the corner, hugging her knees to her chest.

The door opens a crack. Tom pokes his head in.

TOM

Alice? Can I come in?

Alice says nothing, but forces a little smile.

Tom lays on the bed and looks at his sister with hesitation and curiosity.

ALICE

Didn't you go to school today?

TOM

Miss Maddock was sick, and they couldn't find a sub.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE

Lucky.

Alice's hand goes to her hair, suddenly conscientious of what might be in it.

TOM

Alice, do you have a boyfriend?

Alice looks at her brother intently.

ALICE

No.

Tom seems disappointed by this answer, but is undeterred.

TOM

If you did, would you kiss.

ALICE

What kind of question is that, you little weirdo?

Tom tries to act casual. He shrugs and begins to inspect his cap gun.

NADINE

(o.s.)

Dinner!

Alice scoots off the bed. She stares at the floor for a moment.

ALICE

Stay a kid for as long as you can.  
Okay, Buddy?

Tom furrows his brow. Alice ruffles his hair before leaving the room.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

JOHN, and Nadine sit across from each other, with Tom and Alice on either side of them. Everyone is eating in silence, except Alice who is just pushing her food around her plate.

JOHN

(to Tom) What did you do  
today, Bud?

Tom searches his memory for an appropriate answer. He pulls his cap gun out of its holster and fires it. POP!

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
Killed me some injuns.

NADINE  
Not at the table, sweetie.

Tom pouts a little as he holsters his weapon. His father smiles and winks at him.

John turns to Alice.

JOHN  
How 'bout you, Pumpkin? How was school?

Alice doesn't look up from her plate.

ALICE  
Fine.

John is unsatisfied with the answer.

JOHN  
Do anything special?

Alice shakes her head, eyes glued to her plate. John gives Nadine an accusing glare, which makes her shift uncomfortably.

NADINE  
Alice, sweetie, didn't you say glee club try-outs were today?

ALICE  
I didn't try-out.

John clenches his teeth. Nadine heaves a sigh of disappointment.

NADINE  
What happened, honey?

ALICE  
I didn't want to.

John's frustration grows. Tom's wide-eyed gaze goes from Alice to his mother.

NADINE  
What's this all about?

Alice's fork CLANGS loudly as she throws it down on her plate.

ALICE  
(loudly)  
I don't want to be in the fucking  
glee club, okay!

Alice storms off to her room.

JOHN  
(angrily)  
This is what I'm talking about!  
It's gotta stop.

NADINE  
(helplessly)  
What do you want me to do? She's a  
teenager, John, it's just a phase.

Tom tries to disappear under the table.

NADINE  
(to Tom)  
You're excused, hon.

Tom leaps at the chance to get away from the brewing storm.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - HALL - CONTINUOUS

As he leaves the room, Tom can still hear his parents  
arguing loudly. His sadness tells tales of many a storm  
weathered.

JOHN  
(o.s.)  
I don't want to hear excuses! She's  
outta control.

NADINE  
(o.s.)  
Why don't you just lock her in her  
room then?

JOHN  
(o.s.)  
Don't tempt me!

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom stands outside Alice's door. He puts his hand on the  
knob. He puts his ear to the door, but hears nothing.

(CONTINUED)

Tom slowly turns the knob. He peeks inside the room. It's dark, but he can hear soft sobs coming from the direction of the bed.

Tom's eyes are sad as he closes the door.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tom shifts restlessly in his bed. He turns and lays on his stomach. His hips begin to thrust.

Tom's breathing becomes fast. A loud GRUNT involuntarily comes out as he climaxes.

Tom sits up in bed as he tries to catch his breath. His face is contorted with fear. He begins crying.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom shuffles down the hall in his pajamas. He stops at the end of the hall. He can still hear the VOICES of his parents arguing.

Tom goes to his sister's door. He opens it quietly.

TOM

Alice?

There is no answer. Tom looks down the hall toward his room. His brow furrows.

TOM

(a little louder)

Alice?

ALICE

What?

TOM

I had a -- a bad dream. Can I sleep in here?

ALICE

Come on.

Alice pulls back the covers on her bed. Tom crawls in next to her, and she puts her arm around her little brother.

ALICE

What was your dream?

(CONTINUED)

TOM

I don't want to talk about it.

Alice strokes his hair affectionately. Tom's eyes close and he drifts off to sleep.

EXT. CORNER OF SCHIFFER'S BLOCK - DAY

A school bus stops at the corner. Tom and a friend get off.

FRIEND

(waving) See ya tomorrow, Tom.

TOM

Bye.

Tom runs down the street toward his house. His friend goes the other way.

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Tom sees a car in the driveway. He smiles and runs inside excitedly.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom rushes in and drops his back pack by the door.

UNCLE BILL gets up from the couch where Nadine and John also sit. He greets Tom with a smile and open arms.

Tom runs into his arms.

BILL

Howdy, pardner.

TOM

I didn't know you were coming.

BILL

(ruffling Tom's hair)

I wanted to surprise you.

Bill goes to his luggage by the door. He takes out a little cowboy hat. Tom's eyes light up.

BILL

Found this in my suitcase. (putting it on his head) Doesn't fit me. I wonder who I could give it to.

(CONTINUED)

Tom bounces up and down excitedly.

BILL  
This here looks like a real  
cowboy's hat. Are you cowboy enough  
to wear it?

Tom glares at his uncle's challenge. He runs and jumps up on him. The wrestle playfully before Tom claim his prize.

BILL  
There, fits you perfect.

Nadine looks at Tom and nods her head in Bill's direction.

TOM  
Thank you.

BILL  
No problem, Buddy.

Bill looks around.

BILL  
Is Alice home yet?

NADINE  
She stayed home sick today. I think  
she's sleeping.

Tom runs out of the room.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom runs down the hall to his sister's room. He throws open the door.

TOM  
Look what Uncle Bill --

The bedroom is empty.

Tom runs to the bathroom. The door is closed.

TOM  
(knocking)  
Alice?

Tom puts his ear to the door.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

Alice?

Tom looks down. Water is coming out from under the door. Tom's expression turns to fear. He slowly turns the knob and pushes the door open.

Tom hesitates to look inside.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom steps inside the bathroom. The floor is covered in water. RUNNING WATER can be heard in the tub.

Tom pulls back the shower curtain. He is greeted by Alice's open, lifeless eyes.

Almost out of habit, Tom reaches down and turns the water off. He sits on the edge of the tub. He is expressionless as he takes in the macabre sight.

Tom's eyes move from his sister's blank expression to her pale breasts, surrounded in pink water. He then sees Alice's wrists, each with several slash marks. The open wounds are only releasing the small amount of blood still left in her body.

Tom looks at his sister's naked body up and down. He then reaches out and touches her breast. He swallows hard. He pulls his hand away.

NADINE

(o.s.)

Oh God!

Tom turns to see his mother collapsing at the sight.

John appears, and his face turns white. He immediately tears Tom away from the scene.

As Tom is being removed from the bathroom, he can't tear his eyes away from the sight of his sister's dead body.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - JOHN AND NADINE'S ROOM - DAY

Nadine is sprawled out on the bed in a comatose state. On the bedside table are several prescription bottles.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John is slouched in an easy chair. His eyes are red as they stare at a fixed point on the wall. He limply holds a bottle of whiskey in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bill quietly makes a sandwich as Tom looks on expressionless.

Bill slides a plate with the finished sandwich in front of Tom. The boy just stares at it.

Bill sits across from Tom. He studies his nephew for a moment.

BILL

Do you want to talk about what you saw?

Tom shakes his head.

BILL

It's okay to be upset.

Tom looks away.

BILL

Okay, but if you wanna talk, I'm here.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The sun is shining bright on this spring day, as cars pull up to the little white church.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Tom sits in the front pew beside a hysterical Nadine and catatonic John. Tom stares at the casket nervously.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

John supports Nadine as they approach the casket. Nadine can't stop sobbing.

As she sees the body of her daughter Nadine begins to collapse. John holds her up. He pulls her ear close to his lips.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

You need to say goodbye.

Nadine shakes her head and sobs even harder.

JOHN

Come on Nadine, you need to.

Nadine puts her hand on her chest. She takes a deep breath, and goes to Alice's body. She leans down and hugs the lifeless form.

NADINE

(wailing)

Oh, God. Oh, God. My baby! My baby!

John gently tugs at Nadine. She resists at first but then turns and clings to her husband as they leave the church.

Tom approaches the casket. He peeks over the edge.

Alice is wearing long-sleeved white dress. Her face looks so bright. Her cheeks are rosy. Her lips are pink. Her eyes are closed softly.

Tom smiles a little at his big sister. He reaches in and takes her hand. He lifts the sleeve a little and lightly touches the cuts on her wrists.

A hand rests on Tom's shoulder. The boy looks up into Uncle Bill's face.

TOM

She's so pretty.

Bill squeezes Tom's shoulder.

TOM

Can you lift me up?

Bill looks at the boy doubtfully. Tom peers up at him with pleading eyes. Bill hoists his nephew up.

Tom leans into the casket and kisses his sister on the forehead.

Bill looks down at the boy in wonder. Tom takes his uncle's hand and they leave the church.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

The moon shines into the little bedroom. Tom lies awake in his bed. He shifts restlessly.

Under the covers, his hand moves to his crotch. He begins to massage himself. His breath quickens. The movements become more intense.

Tom moans then his body tenses. He sighs heavily. In the moonlight the boy's expression is that of guilt and shame.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

SUPER - TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

The snow begins to fly as an old beater pulls up to the building.

Tom emerges from the car, and zips up his jacket. His walk is confident as he makes for the building, but something in his eyes speaks of secrets.

Some women like the mystery of the "strong silent type". Though most would not describe him as shy. He is considered a likable guy.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

The room is full of teenage girls in spandex and tee shirts playing volleyball. Tom, the coach, gives his whistle two quick TWEETS.

TOM  
Serving line!

The girls line up at the back line of either side of the court, and begin serving.

Tom makes sure the girls have balls. He inspects their form. He goes to HEATHER.

TOM  
Look, Heather, wait just a little  
bit longer to strike the ball. Make  
sure you make solid contact.

Tom watches her serve again.

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
Better. Keep working on it. (to  
all) Okay, laps!

The girls GROAN, but comply.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALL - LATER

Tom looks over some statistics as he walks.

KAYLA  
(o.s.) Coach!

Tom turns to look for the voice. He spots KAYLA, the  
quint-essential girl jock, flagging him down. He joins her.

TOM  
What's up?

KAYLA  
I was just wondering if you were  
planning on starting Kim on Friday.

Tom rolls his eyes a little. They'd been down this road  
before.

TOM  
What it is now?

KAYLA  
C'mon, Coach, she hasn't been to  
practice all week.

TOM  
She has an excuse.

KAYLA  
So? She didn't practice. And it's  
not like she can afford to miss it.

TOM  
Whether or not I start her, is  
entirely up to me. Now, did you  
work on your spikes?

KAYLA  
(stoked)  
Yep. We're gonna kill on Friday.

TOM  
Go, Cougars.

Kayla runs toward the exit.

KAYLA  
(over shoulder)  
Go, Cougars!

Tom smiles at her spirit.

PRINCIPAL SARAH STEPHENS approaches. She is petite, but still intimidating.

STEPHENS  
Tom.

TOM  
Sarah.

STEPHENS  
Ready for the game?

TOM  
Ready as we'll ever be.

STEPHENS  
I'd like to talk to you about Kim Mullins.

TOM  
She has a written excuse --

STEPHENS  
It's not about that. She's been seeing the school therapist. Obviously her sessions are confidential. However, Mr. Peters is concerned that she may be a risk to herself. Have you noticed any odd behavior.

Tom takes a moment to digest the revelation.

TOM  
Not really. She's not as (searching for the word) as bubbly as the other girls, but I don't think that means there's something wrong with her.

STEPHENS  
Of course not, and if this were just about her not being "bubbly" the conversation would be over, but Tom, she's in therapy for a reason.

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
What does that mean?

STEPHENS  
There has already been an incident.

TOM  
An incident?

STEPHENS  
I can't discuss the details. Please  
just be on the look out for any  
indication of suicidal tendencies.

TOM  
Has anyone looked into her home  
life?

STEPHENS  
(ignoring the question)  
Just let me know if anything stands  
out to you.

TOM  
Sure.

Stephens goes on her way.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

At first sight no one would ever guess that KIM, 16,  
struggles with depression. She's popular, she's involved in  
school activities, and is friends with everyone, regardless  
of their social status.

She emerges from the school and frowns a little at the  
falling snow.

Kim zips up her jacket and starts to walk. Tom drives up  
beside her and rolls down the window.

TOM  
Hey, you headed home?

Kim just nods.

TOM  
Want a lift?

Kim looks around, unsure.

(CONTINUED)

KIM  
What the hell.

She gets in the car.

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

Kim puts her hands in her pockets. Tom sees this and turns the heat up.

KIM  
Can't you get in trouble for this?

TOM  
Don't worry about it.

Kim inspects the car. She looks in the back seat, there's a roll of duct tape.

KIM  
(half teasing)  
Is that to tie me up?

TOM  
Huh? (looking back) Oh, turns out duct tape is really good for reattaching mufflers.

Kim laughs.

KIM  
God, get a new car already.

TOM  
I'd love to, but I make even less than a teacher.

Kim smiles.

TOM  
So are you up for playing Friday?

Kim's smile disappears.

KIM  
I don't know if that's a good idea.

TOM  
Why?

KIM  
You know the girls aren't going to  
be happy about that.

TOM  
Don't worry about them.

KIM  
I don't think so.

TOM  
C'mon.

Kim doesn't say anything, but she's clearly upset.

TOM  
You wanna tell me what's going on?

Kim shakes her head. Tom pulls up to her house.

TOM  
Okay, but you can talk to me, if  
you want.

Kim opens the door.

KIM  
(angrily)  
It's personal. She slams the door.

Tom heaves a sigh as he watches her go into the broken down  
house.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - LATER

Tom's beater pulls into the garage.

INT. TOM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tom sits in the car for a moment. He looks troubled. He  
looks in the back seat. He stares at the duct tape for a  
moment before grabbing it and stuffing it under his seat.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

EMMA is a modern woman. She holds down a job, keeps house,  
takes care of her husband, and even hopes to add kids to the  
mix, as soon as Tom is ready. Still in her work clothes, she  
chops vegetables for the stir-fry.

(CONTINUED)

Tom comes in and wraps his arms around her waist. She turns her head to greet him with a kiss.

TOM  
Smells good.

EMMA  
I'm trying a new recipe. I went to say "hi" to the new neighbor down the block, Abigail. She gave me the recipe.

TOM  
Can I help?

EMMA  
Yeah. You wanna make the rice?

TOM  
Sure. Tom goes to the cupboard and takes out a pot and puts it on the stove.

TOM  
So what's she like, the neighbor?

EMMA  
She's actually really interesting. We had a nice talk. She's recently divorced. You probably have more in common with her than me. She's a sports journalist.

Tom measures water into the pot.

TOM  
Really. Who does she write for?

As he waits for the water to boil, he puts dishes from the dishwasher away.

EMMA  
The Herald. You should see if she'll do a piece on the team.

TOM  
(shaking his head)  
Too weird. We barely know her.

Emma begins frying the vegetables.

EMMA

Well, you're gonna get to know her.  
(smiling sheepishly) I volunteered  
you to help her get her furniture  
situated.

TOM

That's fine. I'll be happy to help.  
When did you tell her I'd come?

EMMA

Tomorrow at two.

Tom nods. He measures rice into the boiling water.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Tom and Emma are at the dinner table, they've just finished  
eating. Tom pours Emma and himself some wine. Emma cradles  
her glass as she leans back in her chair.

EMMA

So you think someone might be  
abusing her?

TOM

I don't know, but I don't think  
people, especially young people,  
are just depressed for no reason.

EMMA

You should look into it.

TOM

I dunno. I'm just the volleyball  
coach. I'm sure her therapist is  
more qualified.

Emma leans forward and puts a reassuring hand on Tom's.

18. EMMA

Don't sell yourself short, hon.  
I've always thought you had a gift  
for reading people.

Tom looks doubtful.

EMMA

In any case, better safe than  
sorry. Just check it out.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

I might.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom breathes heavily atop Emma. He has a look of deep concentration as he thrusts. Emma tries to stifle a look of frustration.

EMMA

Do yo want to try a different position?

Tom continues to thrust for a moment before rolling off of her in defeat. Emma turns and puts her head on his shoulder.

EMMA

It's okay, Babe. You're just stressed.

Tom turns his back to her. Emma looks hurt, but quickly recovers. She gives him a quick back scratch to comfort him.

Tom gets up avoiding eye contact with Emma. He pulls on some boxers. Emma sits up and looks at him inquisitively.

Tom puts his hands on his head and rubs his hair in frustration.

TOM

(mumbling)

Just gonna go watch some TV.

EMMA

(barely audible)

Okay.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Amidst books and sports trophies, Tom sits on the couch with his head in his hands. He turns and looks at an old photo hanging on the wall.

In the photo Alice holds on to a young Tom as they ride a horse. Alice is smiling, her cheek pressed against her little brother's.

Tom leans back and sighs heavily. He goes to the computer.

(CONTINUED)

The blue light shines on his face as he types. He leans back in the computer chair. His hand moves to his crotch. He strokes himself. He doesn't take his eyes off of the screen as he masturbates.

Finally, Tom climaxes. He rests his head on the desk for a moment. He composes himself then leaves.

INSERT - THE COMPUTER SCREEN  
 -- A naked woman is tied to a bed.  
 A man has his hand on her throat as  
 he violently pumps his pelvis into  
 hers.

TOM  
 (o.s.)  
 Jesus Christ!

Tom rushes back into the room and closes the window, then turns the computer off. The screen goes black.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Tom and ABIGAIL, 30, bearing a striking resemblance to Alice, lift a dresser and carry it across the room.

ABIGAIL  
 (strained)  
 Just here. They put the dresser in  
 place.

Both are sweating profusely. Tom wipes perspiration from his brow.

ABIGAIL  
 Thanks for helping out.

TOM  
 No problem.

ABIGAIL  
 There's just one more thing I'd  
 like moved. (turning her head and  
 pointing) The desk in the office is  
 too close to the door.

As she speaks Tom's eyes travel down to her chest. He bites his lip as beads of sweat glisten on her soft skin.

QUICK FLASH -  
 -- Tom's hand on her throat.

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL

Coming?

Tom realizes he's been busted. His face glows red. Abigail just smiles coyly. She motions toward the door. They leave the room.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - OFFICE -LATER

Abigail and Tom enter.

ABIGAIL

I just want to scoot it over just a tad.

Tom goes behind the desk to find a hand-hold.

ABIGAIL

Oh, just let me move some of my shit out of the way.

Abigail joins him behind the desk. As she bends over to pick up some boxes her ass grazes Tom's crotch. He swallows hard.

QUICK FLASH -

-- Tom holds Abigail down by the back of the neck as he thrusts from behind.

ABIGAIL

There we go. Grab that end.

They move the desk together.

ABIGAIL

That should do it. Wanna beer?

TOM

Sure. Just quick though. I gotta get to practice.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Tom and Abigail stand in the kitchen holding beers.

ABIGAIL

Thanks again for coming over.

TOM

Sure thing.

(CONTINUED)

Abigail crosses the kitchen until she's directly in front of Tom.

ABIGAIL  
(suggestively)  
If you ever just wanna come hang  
out, I'm home most of the day.

Tom hesitates.

QUICK FLASH -  
-- Abigail screams as Tom slashes  
at her naked body with a kitchen  
knife.

TOM  
Yeah. Maybe. Thanks. (glancing  
around) Well I better get going.

ABIGAIL  
(disappointed)  
Okay. See ya later.

TOM  
Yeah. Bye.

Tom leaves a dissatisfied Abigail.

INT. TOM'S CAR - OUTSIDE ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - LATER

Tom grips the steering wheel. Perspiration stands out on his forehead. He looks over at Abigail's house. His breathing quickens. He slams his hand on the steering wheel, and drives off.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

The volleyball team scrimmages as Tom watches from the side lines. He's distant and gives no instruction as the girls play on.

TOM  
Okay, laps! The girls start  
running. Tom remains focused on his  
internal struggles.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom comes in and sets his gym bag down.

TOM

Emma?

Tom takes a quick gander at the adjacent rooms. He goes the phone and plays the messages.

EMMA(V.O.)

Hey, Hon. Still at work. Richards is being a jackass about the museum project. So, I have no idea when I'll be home. Have dinner without me. See ya later. Love ya.

Tom opens the fridge and stares at the contents for a while. Unimpressed, he closes it and grabs his keys.

INT. CHINA PALACE - NIGHT

Tom inspects some Chinese decor as he waits for carry-out. He is distracted by KRISTINE, 25, an Alice look-alike, entering the restaurant. She's wearing skinny jeans and her boots are covered in snow. He tries to remain subtle as he watches her order.

KRISTINE

Hey, just a Schechuan shrimp. To go.

CASHIER

For one?

KRISTINE

Yeah.

CASHIER

Nine ninety-six. It'll just be ten minutes.

Kristine pays then takes a seat in the lobby. Tom leans on the wall across from her. All subtlety is gone. He stares at her mercilessly. He studies her features, so similar to Alice's.

Kristine picks up a magazine conscientiously. Tom's stare doesn't let up. She tries to focus on the content, but is painfully aware of the eyes pouring over her.

(CONTINUED)

Finally, Kristine raises her chin and meets Tom's gaze. She challenges him with her eyes. He answers defiantly by scanning her body shamelessly. She gives him a scowl of disdain. Tom's lips curl into a grin.

CASHIER

Lo mein?

Tom pushes off of the wall and takes his order. Kristine breathes a sigh of relief as he heads for the door.

Tom licks his lips as he takes one last look on the way out. As Tom exits a tear glistens in the corners of Kristine's eye.

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

Tom watches Kristine from the car as she walks down a residential street. When she's about halfway down the block, Tom starts the car and drives down the street. He pulls to the side of the road behind her.

Kristine walks a little further. Tom continues to follow her. She takes out her keys and goes into a town house. Tom parks in front of the building. He sits in the car for a moment, debating his next move.

Tom's breathing becomes faster. He reaches under the seat.

INSERT - UNDER THE SEAT

-- The duct tape.

Tom's hand feels around before finally grabbing it.

EXT. KRISTINE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom walks quickly to the door. He looks around nervously. He stands back prepared to kick the door in, then he thinks better of it. He tries the knob, it turns.

INT. KRISTINE'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

He looks in the kitchen dining area. No one there. He goes further into the house.

INT. KRISTINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kristine has a soda in one hand and the remote in the other as she plops down on the couch. Tom stealthily comes up behind her. He puts his hand over her mouth and drags her off the couch.

Kristine kicks and scratches at Tom's arms, but his grip only tightens. Her muffled screams are the only sound in the room.

TOM

Don't scream. I don't want to hurt you.

The screams stop. Tom smells her hair. He swallows nervously.

TOM

You're so beautiful. (putting his lips to her ear) What's your name? The answer is muffled by his hand.

He lifts it slightly.

KRISTINE

(voice quivering)  
Kristine.

Tom tightens his grip over her mouth once more.

TOM

I'm not going to hurt you,  
Kristine. Just please don't scream.

Kristine closes her eyes, sobbing quietly.

Tom puts her on the floor and puts his knee on her back. He takes out the duct tape and puts a piece over her mouth. He then puts a piece over her eyes. He takes her hands and starts to tape them together behind her back.

Kristine renews her struggling, but it's no use, Tom's too strong.

Tom stands over the bound woman. Her body is wracked by sobs. Tom's expression betrays empathy for her. He looks to the exit then back to the woman.

Tom goes to remove the tape from her hands, but he notices a tattoo peeking out from under her jeans on the small of her back. He traces the visible portion with his finger. The ink disappears under her pants.

(CONTINUED)

Tom hesitates a fraction of a second before pulling her pants and underwear off, revealing a swan with outspread wings.

Kristine's muffled pleas intensify. Tom puts his hands on her hips and grips them tightly. Beads of sweat stand out on Tom's forehead. His breathing is heavy.

He looks at Kristine's tussled hair. He then notices tears starting to leak out from under the duct tape. He leaps back as though he's been burned.

Tom goes into a fetal position as he inspects the scene he's created. He puts his hand to his forehead and cries silently.

Tom gets up to leave. As he heads for the door he looks back at Kristine, still bound. He's suddenly reluctant to walk away from his fantasy.

Tom takes out his cellphone. He licks his lips while snapping a few pictures. He then rushes out of the room.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tom's car pulls in to the garage, along side Emma's.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

The door opens a crack. Tom peeks in. Emma is sleeping peacefully. He closes the door softly.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom deftly connects his cellphone to the computer. He transfers the pictures of Kristine to the computer.

As the pictures begin flashing before his eyes, Tom bites his lip. He quickly unzips his pants. He begins pumping frantically. His other fist tightens and his knuckles turn white.

Tom stifles an outburst as he climaxes. He takes a moment to catch his breath. He contemplates the images on the screen, and puts his fist to his lips. His jaw twitches.

Tom takes hold of the mouse and begins clicking. He hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN  
-- Prompt reads, "Are you sure you want to delete these files?" The arrow hovers over OK, but then darts to Cancel and clicks.

Tom sits back in the computer chair a cloud of disappointment hovering over him. He takes the mouse again and begins clicking. The printer WHIRS.

Tom takes the pictures from the printer tray and inspects them. He takes out his keys and unlocks the desk drawer.

Tom stows the pictures under some files, and locks the drawer. He then goes back to the computer.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN  
-- prompt reads, "Are you sure you want to delete these files?" The arrow goes to OK and clicks.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Tom stands at the foot of the bed watching Emma sleep. Her face is so sweet. Tom looks away from her, pained. He looks around the room restlessly and rubs his arm.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom plops a pillow onto the couch and then tries to get comfortable with a small throw.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom, still in boxers and tee, prepares coffee. Emma comes in, dressed for work. She plants a quick kiss on his cheek. Tom tries to mask his expression of guilt with a yawn.

EMMA  
You get in really late?

TOM  
Yeah, went to Brett's and played some X-box. Guess I lost track of time.

EMMA  
You still could've come to bed, ya know.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

Didn't want to wake you.

Emma smiles at her husband's thoughtfulness. She takes his chin in her hand and kisses him.

EMMA

So sweet. (grabbing a cereal bar) Gotta go. Good luck with the game.

TOM

(mumbling)

Thanks.

Emma bustles out the door, leaving Tom to his thoughts. He opts for TV instead. He sits at the kitchen table, remote in hand.

ON TV - ANCHORWOMAN

Police are on the look out for a sex offender in the Fort Collins area. Last night a man entered the home of a college student and assaulted her. Neighbors heard her screams around midnight. They found the front door open and the young woman bound inside. If anyone has information regarding a prowler around Lake Drive please call 1-800-555-8355.

BACK TO SCENE

Tom turns the TV off. He stares at the floor brow furrowed.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Tom gets out of the shower. He dries himself with a towel then wipes some vapor off the mirror. He contemplates his reflection then turns away disgusted.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

Tom sets down his gym bag. He goes to put his keys in his pocket. There's something in the pocket. He removes it. Duct tape. Tom quickly shoves it back in his pocket and looks around nervously.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

The volleyball team are sitting on the bleachers. Tom stands in front of them.

TOM

Tonight's starters: Kayla, Heather,  
Rachelle, Tara, Janelle, and Kim.

The starters congratulate each other. The other girls try to stifle looks of disappointment.

Kim receives no congratulations or attention of any kind. She smiles at the other spitefully.

TOM

We're just going to have a light  
practice. I want everybody here by  
five. Okay, Heather serve. The rest  
of you line up to dig.

The girls hurry to comply. Tom supervises the drill. He walks around until he's standing behind the line of diggers.

Rachelle goes up for a dig. She squats down. Her fit young body is perfectly outlined in her spandex.

Tom is standing directly behind her. He catches himself ogling her. He moves to the other side of the court. Heather tosses the ball up, and serves. The ball goes in the net.

TOM

Heather! Remember what I told you.

Heather serves again. Another net. Tom goes to her. He puts the ball in her hand, then puts his left hand under hers.

TOM

Don't toss it so high.

Tom reaches around and takes her other hand.

TOM

Keep your elbow straight. Make  
contact with the ball with your arm  
fully extended. Give it some torque  
by flicking your wrist.

As he guides her, Tom suddenly realizes how close to her he is. He looks at her neck. He can see the carotid. The girl is tense. Tom releases her.

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
You get it down and you'll be a top  
server.

Heather nods a little bashfully. He looks back and sees the other girls looking on intently.

He goes to the bleachers and takes a seat. The drill resumes.

Heather glances back at her coach nervously before each serve.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Tom unlocks his car in the bitter cold.

KIM  
(o.s.)  
Coach!

TOM  
(turning)  
Hey, you headed to your Mom's?

KIM  
Actually, my Dad was supposed to  
pick me up. Our house just got  
fumigated.

TOM  
Fumigated?

KIM  
Don't ask.

TOM  
God, it's cold. Get in.

Tom motions to the car.

TOM  
So, your Dad's not coming I gather.

KIM  
(disappointed) No.

TOM  
Can I drop you at his place?

Kim tugs at her fingers nervously.

(CONTINUED)

KIM  
Would it be okay (gathering  
courage) if I came to your place  
until the game?

Tom is caught off guard. His eyes dart back and forth  
looking for a tactful response. Words elude him.

KIM  
Just this once? It's only for like  
an hour.

TOM  
Why can't you go to your Dad's?

KIM  
(pained)  
My Dad's girlfriend said she didn't  
want me there anymore.

TOM  
She said that?

KIM  
Not to my face. I overheard them.

TOM  
Why?

KIM  
She said I have an attitude problem  
and she doesn't want me around her  
kids.

Tom looks at her compassionately. Kim tries to play it cool.

TOM  
That sucks. (sighing) I guess you  
can come over. Just this once.

Kim smiles appreciatively.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Kim sits at the breakfast bar, hunched over. She steals  
glances at Tom as he warms some dinner.

KIM  
So where's Mrs. Coach?

Tom seems weary of this line of questioning.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

Emma takes a Zumba class on  
Fridays.

KIM

Will she come to the game?

TOM

No. It's her sister's birthday.  
They're going out for drinks.

Kim raises an eyebrow at this. Tom puts some veggie pizza in front of her. She scrunches up her nose at it.

TOM

Emma likes to eat healthy.

Kim furrows her brow, but takes a hesitant bite.

KIM

I guess it's not that bad.

Tom grins. He takes his own pizza and sits next to her.

TOM

So how are things at home?

Kim shoots him a look of contempt.

TOM

You know my parents got divorced  
when I was your age. I know it's  
tough.

Kim softens at this revelation.

KIM

It wouldn't be so bad if my dad  
hadn't started dating right away.  
That really got to my mom.

TOM

(probing)

Do you still get to spend a lot of  
time with your dad?

KIM

(shaking her head)

Not that I'd want to. His  
girlfriend's a bitch.

TOM  
Is she a bitch to everybody or just  
to you?

Kim's brow furrows. He's hit a nerve.

TOM  
No matter what anyone else says, I  
know you're a good kid.

KIM  
You should listen to them.

TOM  
You're not a good kid?

KIM  
I lost my virginity.

Tom swallows hard.

TOM  
That doesn't make you a bad person.

KIM  
(voice quivering)  
I fucked my sister's husband.

TOM  
That makes him a bad person, not  
you.

KIM  
I flirted with him.

TOM  
He's an adult.

KIM  
He's only twenty-five.

TOM  
Have you told anyone?

Kim shakes her head. She tries to choke back tears.

TOM  
Not even Mr. Peters?

KIM  
Who told you I was seeing Mr.  
Peters?

TOM  
Stephens. (measuring his words) She  
said you might be a risk to  
yourself.

Kim scowls fiercely.

TOM  
Are you?

Kim crosses her arms.

KIM  
(angrily)  
What the fuck do you care?

TOM  
Hey, I'm your friend --

KIM  
You're my coach. And you're just  
like every other prying adult. You  
don't care about me. You just don't  
want my blood on your hands.

Kim heads for the door. Tom goes after her. He gently grabs  
her by the wrist.

TOM  
Kim. Kim!

Kim turns toward him but doesn't look up.

TOM  
I'm not like them. I want to help.  
No one helped my sister. I -- I  
just want to help.

KIM  
She killed herself?

TOM  
When she was fifteen.

KIM  
Did you see her?

TOM  
(wincing at the memory)  
I found her. Kim looks him in the  
eye.

(CONTINUED)

KIM  
Was she beautiful?

Tom scowls. His teeth clench. Kim's eye's beg a response.

TOM  
She (reluctantly) was.

Kim becomes introspective.

KIM  
Death is so beautiful, so peaceful.

Tom's defeat is written on his face. Kim is calm and pensive.

TOM  
She was alone, Kim. She didn't have anyone to talk to, and she died alone. If you need to talk, about anything, please come to me.

Kim looks away. She gives a half-hearted nod. Tom looks helpless.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom watches Emma's car pull out of the garage. He sips some coffee, then grabs the phone.

TOM  
Hello, Ms. Mullins. It's Coach Schiffer. -- Yeah, is Kim there? -- Oh, okay. -- No, no, just wanted to remind her there's no practice Monday. -- Okay. Thanks.

Tom hangs up, disappointed. The doorbell RINGS.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

An irritated Tom opens the door. Abigail greets him with a sexy smile. Tom's greeting is less than warm. He opens the door further. She rubs her gloved hands together as she enters.

ABIGAIL  
Hey. Emma home?

(CONTINUED)

33. TOM  
She's shopping in Denver.

ABIGAIL  
(feigning disappointment)  
Oh, well, I guess you'll have to do.

Tom is less than thrilled.

ABIGAIL  
I've got the mount for my TV hung up, but I need someone to help me lift the TV onto it. Do you mind?

Tom's expression says he does.

TOM  
Sure. Let me get my coat.

Abigail smiles slyly.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tom and Abigail lift the large flat screen onto the mount.

ABIGAIL  
There. Easy as pie. Thanks.

TOM  
No problem. Well, see ya later.

ABIGAIL  
What's the rush? Will you help me hook it up. Maybe we can watch a movie after.

Tom scratches the back of his head nervously. He looks around for an out. Abigail raises her eyebrows suggestively.

TOM  
Why not.

Abigail raises her chin triumphantly.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tom leans on the wall looking at the back of the TV, input cables in hand.

TOM  
That should've worked.

Abigail presses her body against his pretending to check the TV jacks. Tom can't resist the urge to smell her neck. Abigail bites her lip.

ABIGAIL  
You know, forget the movie.  
(putting her lips close to his) I'm  
sure we can find something better  
to do.

Tom's eyes travel to his jacket hanging by the door. He can see the outline of the duct tape in the pocket.

Abigail plants a kiss on him. He doesn't resist her, but doesn't return the kiss either.

Tom's hand moves up to her neck. He puts his fingers around her throat, but then in a push for self control he shoves her back.

Words escape Tom. He can only stare at her pathetically.

ABIGAIL  
(angrily)  
I'll figure this out myself.

Tom heads for the door. As he grabs his jacket he takes one look back at Abigail. She deftly puts each cable in its place. Tom leaves slamming the door violently.

INT. GYM - DAY

Tom stares ahead angrily as he runs on a treadmill. His scowl seems to deepen with every step. Beads of sweat drip from his body. He begins to grunt with every exhale, as he pushes his limits. Finally, he slams the stop. He grips the handles of the treadmill, jaw clenched.

INT. GYM - LATER

Tom is pensive as he hydrates by the showers. JACKIE, a fit young woman, emerges from the women's showers. She waves at the attendant behind the desk.

JACKIE  
Bye, Dana.

(CONTINUED)

DANA

See ya, Jackie. Have a great time  
in Florida.

JACKIE

I will.

Tom tries to act casual as he quickly gathers his things and follows Jackie.

EXT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

Tom glances over at Jackie getting into her car as he unlocks his own.

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

Tom stares ahead intently. He tries keep a little distance between his and Jackie's car.

Tom watches as Jackie's car pulls into a garage. He notices hers is the only car. He drives past the house. He drives around the block, then parks across the street from Jackie's house.

He reaches in the back seat and grabs a ski mask and stuffs it in his jacket pocket. Tom steadies himself. He gets out of the car.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom looks around before trying the door knob. Locked. His brows knit together. He rings the doorbell then steps to the side and hides behind a shrub. The door opens a crack.

JACKIE

Yeah?

Jackie opens the door further. Not seeing anyone she comes out. She looks around then heads back inside.

Tom quickly pulls the ski mask on, then comes up behind her and pushes her into the house.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tom slams the door shut. Jackie scrambles to try to get up, but Tom's on top of her before she can get her feet under her.

TOM

Shh. Shh. I don't want to hurt you.

Jackie backhands him and sends him reeling. She sprints to the phone. She grabs it frantically.

Tom comes up behind her and snatches it away. He smashes it against the wall.

Tom grabs Jackie by the throat and presses her to the wall. She tries to pry his hands from her throat, but can't. She raises her knee, but Tom manages to evade the groin shot. He pulls her ear close to his mouth.

TOM

(begging)

Please don't make me hurt you.

Jackie raises her chin defiantly.

TOM

Mmm.

Tom savors her spirit. He throws her down on the floor, and puts his knee on her back. He tapes her hands together then tapes her mouth. He puts tape on her eyes.

Tom pulls the ski mask off. He takes in the sight of his helpless prey. He reaches down and pulls her pants and underwear off.

JACKIE

(muffled and sobbing) No, no,  
no.

Tom surveys her the flawless skin of her backside. He puts his hands on her hips. His fingers contemplate her softness.

Jackie's muted screams can be heard as Tom sinks his teeth into her skin. Tom's hand goes quickly to his zipper. The sound of the zipper sparks a renewed struggle in Jackie.

Tom stays the opposition with a strong hand on the back of her neck. He presses her chest into the floor, and takes a firmer grip of her pelvis with his other hand.

(CONTINUED)

Tom groans as he presses himself into her. Jackie's muffled pleas intensify. Her cheek pressed against the floor starts to bleed, rubbed raw by the movement.

As Tom climaxes he rests his head on her back.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Tom sits on the floor, looking at the now silent Jackie with a mixture of awe and shame. His eyes wander the room. They rest on a large kitchen knife on the counter.

INSERT - THE KNIFE

-- Tom's hand grips the handle.

Tom is clearly conflicted as he approaches Jackie, knife in hand. His hand shakes as he wipes sweat from his upper lip. He crouches beside her. He licks his lips, savoring the thought of blood.

Tom takes Jackie by the hair and lifts her head exposing the jugular. He places the knife against her skin. She tenses, aware of the danger.

JACKIE

(through the tape)

Please. Please. No.

Tom swallows hard. A sob escapes him. He closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

In his garage, Tom stares blankly at the steering wheel. In a sudden outburst he begins pummeling it. Then breaks down sobbing.

He turns and reluctantly looks at the passenger seat. Almost as though alive, the kitchen knife, covered in blood, stares back at him. Fear is etched on Tom's face.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom works deftly at the computer. The door opens. Emma pokes her head in.

EMMA

Hey, wanna go out for dinner?

Tom looks up and quickly masks a look of terror.

(CONTINUED)

OVER TOM'S SHOULDER - COMPUTER SCREEN

-- As he speaks, images of Jackie's half-naked body lying in a pool of blood flash on the screen.

TOM

Sure. Just let me finish up here.

Emma hesitates as though about to say something, but then changes her mind.

EMMA

Should I warm up the car?

TOM

Yeah. I'll just be a minute.

Emma nods slightly and closes the door as she leaves.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom frantically collects the printed photos and shoves them in the desk drawer. He reaches into his sweatshirt and pulls out the knife.

He ponders it for a moment before putting it in the drawer with the photos.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Emma sits at the breakfast bar reading a magazine. Tom comes in slipping his jacket on.

TOM

Ready.

EMMA

Yep.

Emma puts her jacket on. Tom holds the door open for her, and they both leave.

INT. CANTINA - NIGHT

A HOSTESS seats Tom and Emma. Behind them, COUPLES dance to salsa MUSIC. Emma smiles as the hostess hands her the menu, but Tom avoids all eye contact.

Tom is distant as they look over the menu. This seems to irritate Emma. She glances at him continuously, she's expecting something.

(CONTINUED)

Tom looks up and sees her observing him. He becomes self-conscious.

TOM  
What?

EMMA  
(shrugging)  
Nothing.

Tom squints at her doubtfully.

EMMA  
It's just -- You seem like your  
mind is always somewhere else  
lately.

Tom suddenly seems very interested in the dancers.

EMMA  
(pressing)  
Is something bothering you?

TOM  
I'm just stressed.

Emma frowns at the cop out.

EMMA  
Is it something at work?

TOM  
(angrily)  
What do you want from me, Emma?

Tears well up in Emma's eyes. Tom regrets his outburst. He puts a hand on Emma's. She withdraws it.

EMMA  
Maybe we should go to therapy.

TOM  
(scornfully)  
Therapy.

EMMA  
I feel like we've been growing  
apart.

TOM  
You're never home!

EMMA

That's not fair. Someone has to work a nine to five.

TOM

That's bullshit. You spend every spare minute anywhere but home.

EMMA

You seem to prefer it that way.

TOM

So you being gone all the time is my fault? You can be a real bitch sometimes, Emma.

EMMA

Oh, that's just great --

TOM

If I didn't know any better I'd think you were having an affair.

Tom's accusation cuts Emma to the quick. Tears roll down her cheeks, but Tom does not soften.

Emma gets up and grabs her purse angrily. As she goes to leave Tom grabs her wrist. She jerks it free.

EMMA

Asshole!

Tom shakes his head at his behavior. He rubs the back of his head, then gets up to go after her.

EXT. CANTINA - CONTINUOUS

Tom emerges just in time to see Emma pulling away in her car. Tom looks around helplessly.

TOM

Fuck!

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up to the house. Tom gets out. He looks at the house, it's dark.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

There's a KNOCK at the door. The door opens slowly. Tom peers in. The bed is still made. The room is empty.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom tries to get comfortable on the couch. He shifts restlessly. He lies on his back and stares at the ceiling.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

The volleyball team gather their things as practice ends. Tom taps Janelle on the shoulder.

TOM

Do you know where Kim is?

JANELLE

(shaking her head)

She didn't come to school today.

TOM

Thanks.

INT. STEPHEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Tom leans in the open door way. He knocks to get Stephen's attention.

STEPHENS

What's up?

TOM

Did Kim have an excuse for today?

STEPHENS

No, I don't think so. She wasn't here?

Tom shakes his head. His eyes betray his concern.

STEPHENS

You think something's wrong?

Tom shrugs trying to appear ambivalent.

STEPHENS

I can give her mom a call if you're worried.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

Nah, she probably just skipped.

Stephens expression says that's what she believes.

INT. TOM'S CAR - DAY

Tom grips the steering wheel and stares out the window at Kim's house through a curtain of snow.

EXT. KIM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom knocks on the front door. No answer. He knocks again. Nothing. He tries the door. It's unlocked. He goes in.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOM

Hello?

Tom goes in further. KIM'S MOTHER is passed out on the couch surrounded by empty alcohol bottles. Tom pushes down painful memories. He goes down the hall.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - HALL - CONTINUOUS

He finds a door that's covered in posters. He knocks then enters.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - KIM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom surveys the hall. He goes to a door that is open a crack. As he pushes it lightly he braces himself for a gruesome sight.

There is nothing in the bathroom. Tom is relieved. A THUD sounds in another room.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door creaks open. Tom enters. He is greeted by the sight of Kim sprawled out on the bed. Whiskey bottle on the floor under her limp hand. Pill bottles all over the bed.

Tom rushes in and turns Kim over. All of the pain connected with Alice's death comes to the surface. He stifles his emotions and tries to revive her.

Tom slaps her face and shakes her violently.

TOM

Kim!

Tom takes out his cell and dials 911.

TOM

I need an ambulance. -- Oh, God. I don't even know. It's Ash Street.  
-- Just send someone!

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tom looks on as PARAMEDICS wheel Kim out. Behind him an OFFICER questions Kim's distraught mother.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Tom peers into the bedroom. It's dark and the bed is still made. He sighs and heads in the opposite direction.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tom hovers just inside the door of Kim's room. She's just waking up. She sees him and turns her head away.

TOM

Can I come in?

She doesn't answer. He comes in anyway. Tom sits by the bed.

TOM

How ya feeling?

KIM

Like shit.

Tom leans forward intently.

(CONTINUED)

KIM

I would've been so much better if you could've just minded your own fucking business.

TOM

You don't mean that.

You're just in a bad place.

KIM

Yeah, I'm in a bad place! Do you honestly think it will get better? I'll graduate, get a shitty job, a lousy husband, and pop out a few kids. And that's gonna make me happy?

TOM

Things will --

KIM

Are you happy?

Tom has no answer.

KIM

(shouting)

Is anyone in this god damn world happy?

The nurse appears.

TOM

We're okay.

She gives him a warning look.

KIM

Is it so hard for you to understand? I don't want to wake up every morning and convince myself that life is worth living.

TOM

How would you feel if your mother or sister chose to take their own life? Kim turns and looks directly in Tom's eyes.

KIM

Don't you see? They'd finally be happy. Happy like they can never be in this world.

(CONTINUED)

Tom is clearly struggling with his past, and Kim knows it.

KIM

Your sister wanted to die. She's  
happy.

Tom jumps up he pins Kim to the bed.

TOM

You stupid, ignorant girl! How can  
you know anything of death? You've  
never been face to face with it.  
You want to see death's true face I  
can --

JESS, 23, very pregnant, and RICK, 25, enter. Jess stares  
Tom down. She looks to Kim.

KIM

(reassuring)

Jess, this is my Coach, Tom.

Jess extends her hand still eyeing him suspiciously.

JESS

Jess. Kim's sister.

Tom takes Jess' hand but his eyes immediately go to Rick,  
standing back indifferently.

TOM

I guess I let my feelings get the  
better of me. Scary thing, finding  
her like that.

JESS

(softening)

You found her?

KIM

(mumbling)

Nosy son-of-a-bitch.

Jess glares at her sister. Tom can't stop staring at Rick,  
who is beginning to squirm under the scrutiny.

Jess goes to Kim. She caresses her cheek then puts her  
forehead to her sister's.

JESS

Why, Kimmy?

Kim pulls away. She glances at Rick, who avoids eye contact.  
Tom is absorbing the scene. Jess looks at her husband.

(CONTINUED)

JESS

Rick, make yourself useful, and get me a coke.

Rick slinks off. Tom's jaw is clenched as watches him go. He turns to Kim.

TOM

I gotta go. Take care of yourself.

JESS

Thank you so much.

Tom nods. Kim's look is less appreciative and more resentful. She says nothing as he leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom picks up the pace. His eyes are locked on Rick a few paces ahead. Rick stops at some vending machines. He digs in his pockets.

Tom strides right up to him and without warning grabs him by the collar and pushes him against the machine. Tom gets right in Rick's face.

TOM

You go right on pretending this doesn't have anything to do with you --

RICK

(ready to deny) Hey, man --

TOM

Shut up, you little prick! You know what I'm talking about.

RICK

Whatever that bitch said --

Tom slams Rick's head against the machine.

TOM

Stay the fuck away from her.

Some nurses approach, poised to call security. Tom takes his hands off of Rick. He makes for the exit.

TOM

(over his shoulder)  
Just stay away.

Rick adjusts his collar and tries to play it cool as he begins digging in his pocket again.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAY

The snow has let up a bit. Tom takes his anger out on the snow piled in his driveway as he shovels. His brow is furrowed, his teeth clenched.

He's startled by a figure standing directly in front of him. It's Abigail. She smiles sweetly. Tom's expression warns her he's not in the mood. She ignores the warning.

ABIGAIL

Hey, I was hoping you could help me figure out my snow blower.

Tom continues shoveling furiously.

ABIGAIL

It'll only take a minute.

TOM

I'll come over when I'm done here.

Abigail smiles at her victory. She leaves with a skip in her step.

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Abigail pours a cup of coffee. Tom stomps in and brushes snow off his head. Abigail hands him the cup.

ABIGAIL

You didn't have to do that. I just needed you to show me how.

TOM

No big deal.

Tom sips the warm coffee. He uses the cup to warm his hands. Abigail sidles up to him.

ABIGAIL

Haven't seen Emma in a while.

Tom frowns into his cup.

ABIGAIL

You guys on the outs?

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
I better get going.

Abigail grabs his hand.

ABIGAIL  
What's the rush?

She puts his hand under her shirt on her breast.

ABIGAIL  
Stay and get warm.

Tom looks at his hand on her body. He's trying desperately to spit out a refusal, but the words won't come.

Abigail leans in to kiss him. He grabs her chin and stops her. She gives him a dirty look. With a firm grip Tom moves her head to the side and kisses her neck hungrily.

She closes her eyes in ecstasy. His hand moves down to her throat and he pushes her to the dining room table. She sits on the table then lays down, her legs sprawled open.

Tom presses his body against hers. He grabs her ankles, then moves his hands up her legs. He squeezes her thighs. Abigail sits up and puts her hands under his shirt.

Tom puts a firm hand on her shoulder and pushes her down on the table. He devours her neck and chest. He rips her shirt open. Buttons fly.

Abigail moans in approval. With one hand still on her shoulder, Tom uses his other to undo her jeans. The hand on her shoulder creeps ever closer to her throat.

Abigail runs her fingers through Tom's hair. His hand ceases the unbuttoning and takes hold of her wrist and pins it down.

His other hand is on her throat and as his desire increases he begins pressing harder and harder.

Abigail's expression morphs from ecstasy to distress. She uses her free hand to try and pry the hand from her throat. His grip tightens.

Abigail tries to push him off of her. She can't scream. She can't breathe. Her fingernails dig into his forearm.

Tom's other hand releases her wrist and goes to his zipper. This no longer thrills Abigail.

(CONTINUED)

Her newly freed hand reaches for the flower vase. She finds it and takes hold of it. The vase smashes across Tom's face, shattering and cutting him.

He stumbles back. Abigail slides off the table and puts her hands to her throat, coughing and gasping. Their eyes meet. An expression of shame comes over Tom's face.

Abigail's eyes ask, "what the fuck?" Tom grabs his shirt and leaves.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tom enters, face bleeding, clothes disheveled. He stops short. Emma is home. Her forced calm quickly turns to shock as she sees his state.

EMMA

Oh my God! Tom, what happened?

Tom's eyes dart back and forth.

TOM

Just a scuffle.

EMMA

(skeptically)

A scuffle?

Tom puts his hand to his aching head.

TOM

What are you doing here, Emma?

EMMA

I shouldn't have left. It wasn't right.

TOM

(sarcastically.)

So now you're home.

Emma looks at the floor, beginning to doubt her decision to return. Tom checks his attitude. He goes to her and takes both of her hands in his.

TOM

Sorry. I don't what my problem is.  
(putting her hand to his lips) I'm glad you're home.

Emma lovingly caresses his face. They embrace. Emma can feel Tom's body heaving with sobs. His emotion scares her, she holds him tighter.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Emma tends to Tom's wounds. Her face is close to his as she puts some butterfly bandages on his cheek. He cups her face in his hands and kisses her tenderly.

Emma moves closer. She puts her hands on his chest. She kisses him passionately. Clothes start coming off. Tom's hand moves from her face down her body. He takes hold of both her thighs and lifts her, pinning her against the wall.

The mood is intimate like none of Tom's other intercourse. They climax together. Tom rests his head on Emma's chest, drinking in the moment of peace.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALL - DAY

Tom roams, eyes down cast, gait reluctant. All around him are teenage girls showing skin.

Tom tries not to notice as a tall blond in a low cut top bends over providing a view all the way down to her navel.

A curvaceous girl's ass is practically spilling out of her jeans.

A girl in a mini crouches as she puts her books in her back pack. Tom glimpses her panties. He winces and picks up the pace.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Tom gets into his car. A tap at the window makes him jump. It's the Spanish teacher. She has the classic Latina curves. That and a bubbly personality make her a favorite of the male staff, including Tom.

Tom rolls down the window.

SPANISH TEACHER

Sorry I scared you. Do you think  
you could give me a ride? My car is  
in the mechanic's.

Tom glances at her full, pouty lips. He needs to say "no".

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
I don't think I'm going your way.

SPANISH TEACHER  
Oh yes, I am going to my mother's.  
She lives only two blocks from you.

TOM  
(reluctantly)  
Get in.

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

As Tom drives he taps the steering wheel nervously with his fingers. He checks the rear view mirror. Beads of sweat are beginning to form on his forehead. He slows as he approaches a secluded area. He grips the steering wheel.

SPANISH TEACHER  
Just go like you would to get home.

The car is almost at a full stop. BEEP BEEP. Tom sees a car in the rear view mirror. He hits the gas just a little too hard.

The Spanish teacher looks at him curiously, but smiles, blissfully ignorant of the danger.

Tom's eyes dart back and forth feverishly, but no other opportunity presents itself.

SPANISH TEACHER  
Just here.

Tom pulls the car to a stop. His jaw is clenched. He stares straight ahead. She becomes uncomfortable.

SPANISH TEACHER  
Well, thank you so much. I hope it  
was not too much trouble.

TOM  
(forced)  
No trouble.

SPANISH TEACHER  
Bye bye.

Tom peels out. He begins slamming the steering wheel with his hand. He drives by his house. Emma is just getting home. Tom keeps driving.

INT. TOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Tom rubs his face as he drives aimlessly through town. He spots a WORKING GIRL across the street. He drives up to her and rolls down the window.

WORKING GIRL  
Hey, handsome. You need some  
lovin'?

TOM  
Get in.

WORKING GIRL  
You wanna know what it'll cost ya?

TOM  
I can cover it.

The girls eyes gleam. She gives him a toothy smile.

WORKING GIRL  
(getting in the car)  
Let's head'm up and move'm out.

Tom's eyes are alive with anticipation as he pulls away slowly.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steam rises from the shower where Tom stands letting the water rush over him. As the water runs over his body streaks of blood can be seen snaking their way to the drain.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Tom slips into bed beside Emma. Emma sidles up to him and puts her arm around him. Guilt washes over him.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tom sits in his car staring at the building. He seethes silently as he watches some pretty juniors bully a homely freshman.

His eyes wander to the nearby students. All are apathetic to the torture ritual.

Tom sits up straight. Kim approaches the school. As if sensing she's being watched, she looks around timidly.

(CONTINUED)

She spots Tom. Her eyes are sad and tired. She starts to walk toward his car.

Tom grits his teeth. He drives away, leaving Kim looking disillusioned.

INT. TOM'S CAR - DAY

Tom's brow is furrowed as he focuses on the highway. His breathing becomes more and more agitated.

TOM  
(shouting at the top of his  
lungs)  
Fuck!

The car swerves as his emotions get the better of him. He clears his tears in time to see a rest stop.

He veers in, barely slowing at all. He pulls into a parking spot and slams on the brakes.

Tom grips the steering wheel and rests his forehead on it. His whole body shakes with silent sobs.

TAP TAP TAP. A knock at the window startles him. A female TRUCK DRIVER stands outside. Tom rolls down the window.

TRUCK DRIVER  
Hey. Pulled in kinda fast. Thought  
maybe you was hav'n a heart attack  
or somethin'. You okay?

Tom ponders his answer. He scans her slim figure.

TOM  
I -- I'm not sure.

TRUCK DRIVER  
Anything I can do?

TOM  
You have a cell phone?

TRUCK DRIVER  
Back in the truck.

The truck driver turns and motions toward a big rig.

EXT. REST STOP - CONTINUOUS

While she's distracted, Tom swiftly gets out of the car and then clubs her over the head with a flashlight.

The woman falls to the asphalt with a THUD. She tries to focus her eyes, as she moves to get up.

She whimpers as Tom takes hold of her hair and drags her away.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The brush shrouds Tom as he has his way with the woman. Her muffled shrieks mingle with the roar of traffic.

EXT. REST STOP - LATER

Tom emerges from the woods, phone in hand, face soaked in blood. He goes to the restrooms.

INT. REST STOP - RESTROOMS - LATER

Tom frantically tries to wash all the blood off of his hands. He looks up into the mirror. His expression turns to horror as he sees his blood-covered face.

Tom puts his face in the sink and practically drowns himself in an effort to wash away the evidence.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma lies asleep in the bed. The sound of a CAR ENGINE. Headlights illuminate the bedroom. Emma's eyes open.

She lies still as she listens to the KITCHEN DOOR open, then Tom RUSTLING around in the kitchen. The door opens a crack then shuts.

Emma hears the DEN DOOR open and close. A heartsick sigh escapes Emma as she pulls the bedcover closer.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom locks the desk drawer resolutely.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Tom lies on the sofa staring at the ceiling, tormented by the images of that night's deed.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom sits at the breakfast bar. If he hid his face any further into his cereal bowl he'd be drowning.

Emma is keeping busy, and busily avoiding Tom. Behind her the TV sounds.

ANCHORWOMAN

(on TV)

After the gruesome discovery of a woman's body at a rest stop outside Fort Collins, speculation has arisen that a serial killer may be on the prowl. This would mark his fourth victim. Third fatality. Police declined to comm -- Emma turns the TV off.

EMMA

I'm off.

Tom only grunts. A twinge of pain flashes across Emma's face, but she swallows it and heads off to work.

Tom is as sullen as ever. The phone RINGS. He makes no move to answer it. The answering machine picks up.

STEPHENS (V.O.)

Hello, this is Principal Stephens. Tom, I'd like to know if everything is okay. If I don't hear from you by Friday I'll have to find a replacement. Call me.

Tom goes to the machine and yanks it away from the cables. He hurls it across the room, and it shatters against the wall.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

A RED HEAD looks over her shoulder and picks up the pace. Her FOOTSTEPS on the cement are the only sound.

Then a second set of FOOTSTEPS can be heard. A dark figure appears. The red head breaks into a run. The figure follows. They both turn the corner.

A shrill SCREAM is suddenly cut off.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tom stands in front of the sink. In a frenzied craze he scrubs his hands and fingers with a fingernail brush. He can't seem to get them clean enough. He scrubs harder and harder.

INTERCUT - MORE VICTIMS

-- The red head fades as she bleeds from a gash in her throat.

Scrubbing.

-- VICTIM 6 clutches Tom's jacket as he plunges a knife into her chest by the lake.

Scrubbing harder.

-- VICTIM 7 breathes her last as Tom chokes the life out of her in her own home.

Scrubbing harder. Tom's hands are starting to bleed.

-- Tom drops a blood-soaked tire iron beside the body of VICTIM 8.

Tom continues to scrub.

EMMA  
(o.s.)  
Tom?

Tom stops scrubbing.

EMMA  
(o.s.)  
Honey, you okay?

Tom looks down at his bleeding hands. He knows he's cracking.

TOM  
(voice wavering)  
Yeah, I'll be right out.

EMMA  
(o.s. skeptical)  
Okay.

Tom slumps to the floor. Silent sobs rack his body. He covers his face with his raw hands.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

In what has come to be their morning routine, Tom stays focused on his breakfast while Emma gets ready to leave. She suddenly plants herself in front of him.

Tom is aware of her presence but does not acknowledge it.

EMMA

I saw Sarah Stephens at the grocery store.

She waits for him to respond. He doesn't.

EMMA

When where you gonna tell me you lost your job?

Tom puts a heaping spoonful of cereal in his mouth.

EMMA

(angrily)

That's just great --

Emma stops herself. She takes a deep breath.

EMMA

(calmly)

Tom, I know something is wrong. Talk to me.

TOM

Nothing is wrong. I just -- I just need some space.

Emma is too frustrated to continue.

EMMA

I'm late for work.

She leaves in a tiff. Tom's spoon CLANGS loudly as he drops it in the bowl, angry with himself more than anything.

INT. GYM - DAY

Tom runs on the treadmill, absorbed in his thoughts.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Emma runs in, cursing under her breath. She snatches her forgotten cell from the counter. As she's leaving she sees Tom's jacket in a heap by the door.

Emma sighs as she picks up the jacket and places it on a hook. Something purple peeking out of the pocket catches her eye.

She pulls it out. Panties. She stares at them for a moment, dumbfounded. Slowly anger creeps into her expression.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Emma tears through Tom's things, checking bits of paper. Her blood boils as she tries to check the computer only to be blocked by a password.

EMMA  
Fucking asshole!

She starts to go through the drawers. She tugs on the locked drawer. She screams in frustration and leaves the room.

A moment later she returns with a crowbar. She jams it into the desk and pries the drawer open.

She's slightly out of breath as she starts look into the file folders. Nothing.

Emma glimpses something underneath. She grabs all of the files and tosses them aside. She reaches into the drawer, and pulls out a handful of panties.

Emma's jaw clenches. She tosses the panties aside, and reaches into the drawer again. She pulls out a pile of photos.

Her expression turns to horror as she distinguishes the form of a woman, lifeless eyes staring into the camera, blood from her slashed neck pooled all around her.

Emma wills herself to look at the other photos. With each new disturbing image she becomes more and more distraught.

She puts the photos aside and reluctantly reaches into the drawer again.

(CONTINUED)

A gasp escapes Emma as she views the kitchen knife caked with dried blood. She throws it down as though it's red hot.

Movement by the door. Emma looks up.

Tom is watching her with an expression of deep guilt and shame. Emma jumps back in fear.

EMMA

I'm sorry I didn't mean to --

TOM

(overlapping)

Let me explain, Emma.

Tom moves toward her, not menacing, but rather imploring her understanding. Emma is in a blind panic.

TOM

I didn't want to hurt them.

EMMA

(overlapping)

Please, don't come any closer.

Tom takes her by the arms, trying to look her in the eye. She starts to struggle.

TOM

I don't know why I did it.

EMMA

Let go!

TOM

I know there's something wrong --

EMMA

(crying)

Please don't hurt me!

The realization of her fear of him hits Tom like a punch in the gut. He stumbles back. His eyes are filled with pain.

TOM

Emma, you know me. I -- I'd never hurt you.

She looks at him with disgust.

EMMA

Know you? This (motioning to the photos strewn everywhere) This is the real you. I don't know you.

Tom looks at the reminders of the lives he's taken. His shoulders slump. He can't but accept that he's a monster. Tom turns and walks out.

Emma sinks to the floor overcome with relief at his departure.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Tom approaches a grave. His hair and clothes are disheveled. His eyes are red from crying. Tom's jaw clenches as he looks at the headstone.

INSERT - HEADSTONE

-- Alice Schiffer, Beloved Daughter and Sister, Died June 27, 1984.

Tom falls to his knees. He puts his forehead to the soft, green grass. His eyes close tightly as he grasps the turf with both hands.

Tom's crouched body heaves with silent sobs.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

In the dark Tom's form can be seen sleeping in a fetal position on Alice's grave. RUSTLING can be heard. Then hushed VOICES. A light shines in Tom's face, waking him.

Tom squints into the light, trying to make out the dark forms behind it. The unmistakable sound of guns COCKING, chases away any remaining sleepiness. Tom becomes rigid.

OFFICER

Hands up!

Resignation washes over Tom. He complies.

OFFICER

Put your hands behind your head!

Shame creeps into Tom's eyes as he locks his fingers behind his head. Another officer takes hold of one of Tom's hands, twists it behind his body, and pushes him to the ground. The sound of the handcuffs CLICKING around his wrists is deafening.

OFFICER

You have the right to remain silent

--

Tom looks up at Alice's headstone. Everything becomes silent as tears trace a path down his dirty face. Tom's head hangs in shame as the officers take him away.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Tom stares at the table. His exploits weigh heavily on him. His eyes betray defeat. The door opens.

DETECTIVE FRANK HARRISON enters and tosses photos on the table in front of Tom.

Tom's eyes dart from image to image. Pictures of the havoc he's wreaked. Pictures similar to the one's he himself took, but all of the "glamor" is gone. The bodies are in various states of decomposition. The eyes are glazed over. The skin is pale, which makes the bruising stand out all the more.

Tom looks away and tries to swallow his emotion. Detective Harrison isn't moved.

DET. HARRISON  
 (slowly and methodically)  
 Jaqueline Moore, Rachel  
 Richardson, Aimee Lancaster,  
 LaShonda Jackson, Brittany  
 Stone, Stacia Ryan, Daniella  
 Lopez, Mara O'Neill --  
 Harrison scrutinizes Tom for a  
 moment, who seems about to  
 wretch.

DET. HARRISON  
 8 lives cut short. Countless others  
 thrown into chaos.

Tears flow freely and snot pours from Tom's nose. He leans forward and looks into Harrison's eyes. The detective raises his eyebrows expectantly. Tom's hands shake as he fidgets compulsively.

TOM  
 I -- I need to talk to Emma. I can  
 answer all of your questions after  
 I talk to her.

Harrison says nothing but his look is reproachful. Tom can't stop shaking as his fist goes to his lips.

TOM  
 I can't -- She needs to hear  
 everything from me first.

(CONTINUED)

(sobbing) She doesn't deserve this.

DET. HARRISON  
Mr. Schiffer, your wife has not stopped crying since the moment she called us yesterday.

TOM  
I just need to make her understand

-- DET. HARRISON  
The only way she will ever be in the same room with you ever again is if we drag her in here kicking and screaming.

Tom shakes his head, murmuring something unintelligible. He looks toward the two way mirror. His eyes plead with it. Begging understanding.

Tom's eyes go back to table. They glaze over.

TOM  
(emotionless)  
I did it.

Harrison puts his knuckles on the table. His eyes boring a whole in Tom.

DET. HARRISON  
Did what?

TOM  
This. (focusing on photos) All of (beat) this.

The detective glances toward the mirror curiously.

DET. HARRISON  
All of this?

TOM  
(emphatically)  
All of it.

Harrison seems confused.

DET. HARRISON  
Emma won't come in here, but why don't you help me understand.

Tom's posture and expression reflect absolute resignation.

(CONTINUED)

DET. HARRISON  
I can talk to her. I can explain.  
If you help me understand.

TOM  
(barely audible)  
It doesn't matter anymore.

DET. HARRISON  
Mr. Schiffer, the charges against  
you are obviously very serious. If  
convicted --

TOM  
Death. Just give me the death  
penalty.

Harrison looks to the mirror, brow furrowed.

INT. POLICE STATION - HARRISON'S DESK - LATER

Harrison is wearily returning. Another detective saunters up  
to him. He plops into a nearby chair.

DET. PRENTISS  
Heard you pried a confession outta  
the bastard.

DET. HARRISON  
I don't know about "fried".

Harrison begins filling out the report on the computer.

DET. PRENTISS  
How'd you get him to fess up?

Harrison stops typing. He seems troubled.

DET. HARRISON  
I didn't. He wanted to talk. He  
didn't even ask for a lawyer.

DET. PRENTISS  
Hmm. You think he's up to  
something?

DET. HARRISON  
Nah. I think remorse caught up with  
him.

(CONTINUED)

DET. PRENTISS  
Remorse? I've seen a lot of fucked  
up things in my time here, but that  
would be a first.

DET. HARRISON  
Mmm. I don't know.

DET. PRENTISS  
Come on. We all saw what he did.  
He's obviously a sociopath.

DET. HARRISON  
Maybe.

DET. PRENTISS  
Take my advice. Call him a lawyer  
before you get into trouble.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Tom sits catatonic at the table. The door opens. Lawyer GARY  
MARTIN steps in. He's young, smartly dressed, and ambition  
seeps from every pore. Tom is visibly irritated.

MARTIN  
(extending hand)  
Gary Martin. I'll be your legal  
representation.

TOM  
(ignoring the extended hand)  
I didn't ask for legal  
representation.

MARTIN  
Well, I'm here nonetheless, and I  
suggest you take advantage of my  
services.

Tom is too broken to continue arguing.

MARTIN  
Now in order to build the best  
defense I'm going to have to ask  
you a few questions. Okay?

Tom only glares at him. Martin clears his throat  
uncomfortably.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

On the morning you were arrested  
did the arresting officer read you  
your rights.

Still no answer. Martin takes a deep breath and continues.

MARTIN

Were you informed of your right to  
have an attorney present before you  
answered any questions?

TOM

I confessed. None of your fancy  
fucking tricks are going to work.  
Just let them give me what I  
deserve!

Martin collects his thoughts.

MARTIN

I'm here to make sure justice is  
served. A jury of your peers will  
decide what you deserve. I won't  
get in the way of that. I'm just  
here to make things fair. You have  
a right to a fair trial.

Tom mulls this over.

TOM

(flippantly)  
Do what ya gotta do.

Martin smiles, but his eyes are conniving.

INT. COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

The courtroom is packed. LUIS RODRIGUEZ, the state attorney,  
has his jaw set as he glances over at Martin.

Tom is brought in by the bailiffs. He keeps his eyes on the  
floor as he approaches his seat. He steals a quick glance at  
the crowd.

Tom's mother sits in the front row. She tries to give him a  
reassuring smile. It's not very convincing.

As Tom is seated the reality of it all begins to close in on  
him. His focus fades until he's pretty much checked out  
mentally. He sits despondent as the judge enters.

(CONTINUED)

BALIFF

All rise --

Martin stands. Tom's expression is blank. Martin essentially pulls his client to his feet.

BALIFF

The honorable judge Henry Putnam presiding.

JUDGE PUTNAM takes his seat. Everyone sits. The judge goes over some papers in front of him, then looks over his glasses at Tom.

MARTIN

Your honor, at this time I would like to make a motion to have the trial dismissed on the basis of the mishandling of evidence.

Rodriguez jumps to his feet.

RODRIGUEZ

Your honor, Mr. Martin has gained a reputation for manipulating the justice system in order to advance his own career. Tom Schiffer confessed to all eight murders. If you dismiss this trail, you will be knowingly releasing a vicious predator back into society.

JUDGE

Nonetheless, Mr. Rodriguez I am compelled to hear him out.

The judge turns to Martin, his expression belies his disgust for the defense.

JUDGE

What have you got?

MARTIN

Your honor, several photos were taken while collecting evidence in the Schiffer home. In the photo marked state's evidence #12 we see a knife, presumably the murder weapon. However, when I requested to view the evidence against my client the knife was not present. Said knife has still not been produced. Furthermore --

(CONTINUED)

Voices fade. Tom sits with a blank expression. His mother, directly behind him, chokes back her emotions. Tom's gaze wanders to the jury box. It's empty except for one person.

Alice stares sadly at Tom. Tears well up in Tom's eyes and spill over. Alice puts her finger to her lips in a sisterly effort to quiet his tears.

Tom closes his eyes and in a flash of light returns to the good times.

FLASHBACK

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Young Tom, in his customary cowboy get-up, enters sporting a bloody nose. With a sullen expression, he sits at the table and slams his cap gun down in front of him.

Alice comes in and opens the fridge. She takes the orange juice and drinks directly from the carton. Out of the corner of her eye she sees Tom, and stops drinking.

ALICE

Don't tell mom.

Tom's expression is one of indifference. Alice's eyes narrow as she notices Tom's bloody nose. She takes his chin in her hand.

ALICE

That Anderson boy still giving you trouble?

TOM

He says I'm a sissy for still playing cowboys.

Alice smiles lovingly. She grabs a napkin and wipes the blood.

ALICE

You keep playing cowboys for as long as you want. Okay, buddy?

TOM

(doubtful)

None of my friends wanna play with me anymore. They just sit around talking about -- about weird stuff.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE

Fuck 'em.

Tom smiles though still troubled.

ALICE

Hey I'm not too old to play  
cowboys.

Alice makes a gun with her finger and puts it to her hip.

ALICE

This town ain't big enough for the  
two of us.Little Tom smiles from ear to ear. He steps out of his seat  
and holsters his cap gun. He puts on his game face.

TOM

Prepare to meet your maker, you  
yellow-bellied varmin.Tom and Alice circle the dining room table, eyes locked,  
trigger fingers ready. The sound of the front DOOR OPENING  
distracts Alice. POP! POP! POP! Tom fires his cap gun and  
runs to his sister.

TOM

You're dead! You're dead!

ALICE

Ohhh! You got me!

Alice hugs Tom and laughs.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

Tom's eyes dance with the memory.

JUDGE

(irritably)

This is indeed disturbing. I have a  
lot to consider. We will adjourn  
until eight o'clock tomorrow, while  
I go over the defense's  
allegations.The judge bangs his gavel and immediately the courtroom is  
filled with furious murmurs. Tom's mother glances around  
nervously. The victim's families weep and curse  
intermittently.

(CONTINUED)

Tom is still in another universe. He jumps a little as the bailiffs pull him to his feet. Rodriguez shoots Martin darts with his eyes.

Martin smiles malevolently as he packs his briefcase and strides out of the courtroom.

FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Young Tom sits against the house, behind a bush. He hugs his knees to himself and whimpers pathetically. A slingshot hangs loosely in one hand.

Alice opens the back gate and skulks in. She checks for bogeys then heads for the house.

She stops short at the sound of WHIMPERING. She peers around the bush and heaves a sigh of relief at the sight of Tom. She goes and crouches beside him.

ALICE

What's up?

Tom snuffles and wipes his nose with his sleeve.

TOM

I killed a prairie dog.

ALICE

(impressed)

You must be a hell of a shot. What are you crying about?

Tom shakes his head and starts crying again.

ALICE

Hey, hey. It's okay, Bud. It's just an animal.

TOM

Do you think it hurt?

ALICE

Probably never knew what hit him.

TOM

Did he go to Heaven?

Alice's brow furrows. She considers her answer carefully.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE

I don't know, but I do know that all of his worries are over. No more working all summer and surviving all winter. No more being afraid of becoming some predator's meal. That's all over for him.

Tom seems slightly relieved.

TOM

So in a way he's free.

ALICE

Yeah.

TOM

Alice, do you believe in heaven?

Alice hesitates. She's clearly doubtful.

ALICE

That's a complicated question, Buddy. Maybe you should ask mom about that.

TOM

I know what mom believes. I want to know what you think.

Alice bites her cheek.

ALICE

Sometimes I think that it's all made up.

TOM

But why?

ALICE

To keep us under their thumb.

TOM

Whose thumb?

ALICE

(shrugging)  
Grown ups.

Tom lets this information sink in.

TOM

So if you don't believe in heaven  
are you afraid of dying?

Alice shakes her head vigorously.

ALICE

It all be over. All of the pain.  
All of the doubts. Everything that  
makes this world hell will all be  
gone. You are just (slight shrug)  
no more.

TOM

Like the prairie dog.

Alice nods. Tom sighs, his young mind struggling to  
reconcile the conflicting views. Alice puts her arm around  
her little brother. She gives him a gentle nuggie.

ALICE

You're growing up too quick. Stop  
it!

Tom smiles and puts his head on her shoulder. Here he is  
content.

END FLASHBACK

INT. COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

Tom sits lost in his memories. The spell is suddenly broken  
as the judges voice intrudes in his thoughts.

JUDGE

-- It is because of this gross  
mishandling of key evidence in this  
case that I am obligated, by law,  
to dismiss this case.

A roar of murmured outrage momentarily interrupts the judge.  
He bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

I am as disgusted and outraged as  
any of you. These procedural  
guidelines were put in place to  
protect citizens from corrupt  
officials, but today they have  
freed a confessed killer. Make no  
mistake heads will roll for this.  
Mr. Schiffer --

(CONTINUED)

Tom's eyes grow wide.

JUDGE

I am compelled to release you at this time, but you will never be free. Our officers will be watching you. The citizens will be wary of you. I know you'll be back here, next time for good. (to bailiff) Release the defendant. (banging gavel) court is adjourned.

Tom is in a daze as the handcuffs are removed. Martin extends his hand to him. Tom looks at it as though it is a venomous snake. Martin's look shouts "ingrate".

Tom's mother pushes past Martin. She throws her arms around her son's neck. She's speaking to him, but it's all gibberish to Tom.

Tom scans the courtroom. More than one look wishes him dead. Alice is still in the jury box. She sheds silent tears at the lack of justice. Her gaze challenges Tom who can only hang his head in shame. When he looks up again Alice is gone.

INT. POLICE STATION - PRISONER PROCESSING - DAY

Tom is still in shock as the officer hands him his things: the clothes he was wearing when arrested, his phone, his keys and wallet. Tom takes them mechanically.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Tom walks out of the station and looks around. He resembles a lost puppy more than a stone cold killer. A car pulls up. Tom looks in the window. His mother smiles at him.

NADINE

Need a ride, sweetie?

Tom searches for an out to the awkward journey. He finds none. He gets in the car.

INT. NADINE'S CAR - LATER

The tension is palpable as Tom and Nadine make their way to an intersection. Nadine puts on the blinker.

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
Where are you going, mom?

NADINE  
Taking you home.

TOM  
Home?

NADINE  
Home with me.

TOM  
No way, mom. I gotta get back to my house.

Nadine flinches.

NADINE  
Emma's not there.

Tom just stares at the floor for a minute.

NADINE  
Where am I going, Tom?

TOM  
I can't go home, mom. Not after --

Tom can't bring himself to put his action into words.

NADINE  
Honey, you know I love you no matter what.

This only makes Tom feel worse.

TOM  
I can't. Please, mom, just take me to my house.

Nadine angrily turns off the blinker and crosses the intersection.

NADINE  
I don't think you should be alone right now.

TOM  
(abrasively)  
You mean someone needs to keep an eye on me.

Nadine cringes.

NADINE

I meant that you've been through a lot and you shouldn't be left alone feeling sorry for yourself.

TOM

(angrily)

Mom, I'm guilty! Never mind that that asshole got me off on a technicality. I'm a fucking murderer, (whisper) and worse.

Nadine is shaken up by Tom's outburst, but not shocked at the confession. She takes her time building her response.

NADINE

When Alice died I could see you struggling, changing. Every day I'd tell myself that tomorrow I'd do better. I'd put aside my grief and help you get back on your feet, but every morning the thought of going through the day without my little girl seemed impossible. (choking back sobs) Whatever you are. Whatever you've done, It's my fault. I left you alone when you needed me the most. Those girls deaths are on my head.

TOM

(uncomfortably)

Please, mom, I can't talk about this.

The two ride in silence for a while. The car pulls up to Tom's house. Nadine turns to her son with a look of compassion.

NADINE

I -- I just want to help you, sweetie. Tell me how to help you.

TOM

Just stay away from me.

Tom gets out quickly to avoid her reaction. As he walks to the door he can feel her eyes on his back. He swallows his emotion and gets out his keys.

Nadine watches her son disappear into the house. She looks around the neighborhood. Everywhere curious eyes peer through blinds and from behind curtains. Tears stream down Nadine's face as she pulls away.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE - LATER

Tom puts his back to the door as he inspects the home. Belongings are strewn everywhere. The home lacks the warmth of habitation.

Tom goes to put his keys on the hall table. He frowns at the bare table. He checks the walls. Also bare.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tom runs his fingers along the countertop. He looks around sadly. The overflowing garbage catches his eye. He goes to it. The corner of a picture frame pokes out of the garbage.

Tom takes hold of it and lifts the picture out. He bites his lip and caresses the picture of his and Emma's wedding. He sets it aside, then proceeds to rescue picture after picture of he and Emma's life together.

Tom slumps to the floor, sobbing, surrounded by the life he threw away.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tom is still on the floor asleep. Suddenly a Molotov cocktail crashes through the window and lights the floor on fire right in front of him.

Tom wakes with a start but makes no move to put out the flames. He watches the fire get bigger and bigger, with a look of something akin to anticipation.

The sound of a FIRE EXTINGUISHER blasts, and the flames die down. Tom seems disappointed.

Kim emerges from the smoke. Tom shoots her a look of disdain. She smirks. Then she takes a seat on the floor next to him.

KIM  
Just returning the favor.

TOM  
You shouldn't be here.

KIM  
(sarcastically)  
Why? You gonna rape me and chop me  
into little pieces?

Tom is not amused.

(CONTINUED)

KIM  
That would be a little ironic.

TOM  
What are you doing here?

Kim purses her lips.

KIM  
There's a lot of shit on the news.  
I wanna hear the real story.

Tom turns away and puts his hand to his mouth, in an unconscious gesture of refusal.

Kim looks at him. Her penetrating gaze doesn't let up, until Tom is forced to meet her eyes. He silently pleads for her to leave off. She only raises an eyebrow.

Tom suddenly remembers he's the one with all the power. He leaps to his feet.

TOM  
You need to leave.

Kim gets up.

KIM  
Everyday you coached us. You taught us every bit as much as any of our teachers. I even could've believed you cared for us. I need to know the truth. Was it all just a mask?

Tom is becoming increasingly agitated. He's beginning to feel trapped.

KIM  
Please, tell me.

Tom leans heavily on the counter. He's sweating and breathing heavily.

KIM  
Tell me!

Like a cornered animal with no way out, Tom lunges at Kim pinning her against the wall.

TOM  
(low growl)  
Is this what you wanted to see? The monster.

(CONTINUED)

Kim's look is reproachful.

TOM

This is the truth! (putting his face closer) You should've left when you had the chance.

KIM

(boldly)

I'm not afraid to die.

TOM

(sneering)

Dying? (shaking his head at her naivety) There really are some things that are worse than death.

KIM

I don't believe you.

Tom slams her against the wall. He puts his mouth to her ear.

TOM

You don't believe that I stabbed a girl until all of the blood was drained from her body.

Kim closes her eyes as if trying not to see the act.

TOM

One girl had to be identified by DNA. Dental records were no good. I didn't leave her any teeth.

Kim starts to squirm under his grip.

TOM

You wanted the truth? This is it.

Tom puts his hand to her throat. Kim's lip quivers.

TOM

Are you gonna scream?

She looks him right in the eye and shakes her head. Tom realizes he can't scare her off.

KIM

I believe you did those things, but I don't believe you're a monster.

(CONTINUED)

TOM  
You wanted the truth --

KIM  
The truth about who you are, not  
what you've done.

Tom releases her. He turns his back to her. A sad little smirk comes to his face.

TOM  
If only Emma --

KIM  
What does Emma know about  
desperation. (almost to herself)  
What do any of them know.

Weariness is etched on Tom's face.

TOM  
Please leave, Kim. I -- I can't  
give you answers. I don't know who  
I am.

KIM  
Then just answer one thing --

Kim plants herself in front of Tom.

KIM  
Why did you save me?

Tom searches for an answer.

TOM  
I -- I don't know.

Kim is devastated by this answer. She blinks back tears then heads for the door. Tom takes her hand.

TOM  
I'm sorry I can't --

KIM  
(thick with emotion)  
Don't. (steadying her voice) It's  
okay, really.

TOM  
I want to --

KIM  
Stop! I thought I might be special  
-- special to you.

Kim shakes her head at her own stupidity.

TOM  
Kim, you are --

KIM  
(crying)  
Please, don't.

Kim pulls her hand free and runs out. Tom looks after her helplessly.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE - DAY

Tom hangs the pictures of he and Emma back in their places. There is a KNOCK at the door. Tom opens it to find teenage girl scout smiling back at him.

GIRL SCOUT  
Hi, I'm Ramona. I'm selling girl  
scout cookies. When you buy our  
girl scout cookies you not only  
support our troop, but you support  
all the charitable efforts our  
troop is involved in. Would you  
like to hear about some of our  
projects?

Tom is very uncomfortable, but doesn't have the heart to turn the girl away.

TOM  
Um, sure.

The girl produces a small poster with pictures of her troop doing various good deeds.

GIRL SCOUT  
Well, here I am with my troop  
donating food to the community  
pantry. You would be surprised how  
many families in our community  
benefit from these affordable  
groceries.

Tom is distracted by the curtain being opened a crack in the house across the street. He starts to fidget.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL SCOUT

And here we are putting together care packages for the young men in our community who are serving over seas.

The front door of the house across the street flies open. A burly NEIGHBOR MAN storms out with the mousy NEIGHBOR WOMAN trailing behind. Tom braces himself for the confrontation.

GIRL SCOUT

We also sponsor an orphan in Africa. This is her.

The neighbor strides right up to Tom.

NEIGHBOR MAN

Hey! Get away from her!

The girl is startled by the voice. The neighbor lady takes her by the shoulder and directs her away from Tom.

NEIGHBOR WOMAN

You shouldn't be here, sweetheart.  
Let's go call your mom.

The girl, though confused, let's herself be led away. Tom is clearly embarrassed by all of this. The neighbor man gets up in his face.

NEIGHBOR MAN

(menacing)

We all know what you are. So you best keep to yourself, or you'll answer to me.

Tom keeps his eyes on the floor, but his nostrils flare. As the neighbors take the girl into their house, Tom looks around. Doors are cracked and curtains pulled aside.

Tom turns his back to them and slams the door.

EXT. KIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tom pulls up the house. He notices quite a few cars parked on the street. As Tom approaches the house a couple go in ahead of him. The door is open. Tom goes in.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There are people every where conversing in hushed tones. All are dressed in black. The somber faces swirl around Tom. Jess approaches him. Her eyes are red and puffy.

JESS

Thank you so much for coming. Tom chokes back tears.

TOM

(voice husky with emotion)

When --

This is the only word Tom can get out. Jess starts crying.

JESS

Two days ago. (shaking her head) I should have never trusted Mom to watch her.

Tom's brow furrows. His nostrils flare. He fights for control of his emotions.

JESS

I knew she'd do it sooner or later. There was no reasoning with her.

Tom catches a glimpse of Kim's mom sitting despondent in the corner. Rick meets Tom's searching eyes. A grin pulls at Rick's mouth.

As Jess glances over Rick manages to quickly morphs his expression into one of anger and disgust. He strides up to Tom and jabs his chest with his finger.

RICK

What the fuck are you doing here?

JESS

Rick, shut up!

RICK

I won't have a murder here.

Jess's expression turns to shock. She eagerly awaits Tom's rebuttal. There is none.

Tom can only glare at a triumphant Rick. Jess is at a loss for words. She looks around at the other guests. Most are staring. Some are whispering.

Jess silently begs Tom to leave. He pushes past Jess and makes for the door.

EXT. KIM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom stumbles out. His breathing is shallow. Beads of cold sweat stand out on his face.

As he reaches his car Tom clenches chest. He leans on the car heavily. A groan accompanies every inhale. He looks up and sees Jess peering out the door with concern.

Tom gets in his car quickly and drives off. Jess watches him go with a look of disquiet.

INT. TOM'S CAR - LATER

Tom fights the deluge of memories that Kim's suicide has brought on. He drives aimlessly around town.

INT. TOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Tom sobs uncontrollably.

TOM  
(barely discernible through  
tears)  
Why? -- Alice, why did you have to  
go? -- Why did you do this to me?

EXT. SCHIFFER HOME - NIGHT

Tom's car pulls to a stop in front of his childhood home. The car sits idling.

INT. TOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Tom stares at the house with uncertainty. He hugs the steering wheel and rests his head on it.

A KNOCK on the window startles him. His mother closes her robe more tightly. Tom rolls the window down.

NADINE  
You okay, sweetie?

One look at his haggard face answers her question.

NADINE  
You gonna come in?

Tom seems unwilling. Nadine rubs her arms to warm them. He regrets having her out in the chilly night air, and so reluctantly exits the car.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nadine places hot cups of coffee on the coffee table then sits next to her son. She sips and looks at him patiently, unwilling to push him away with questions.

Tom takes the cup in both hands. He moves the cup up to drink but the action is interrupted by a thought. After a couple more false starts he finally shakes off these intrusive thoughts and sips the brew.

This pleases Nadine, who despite everything still looks at Tom as her little boy. She scrutinizes her son and notices his hands, raw from many a compulsive scrubbing.

Tom realizes what she's looking at and puts his cup down so that he can hide his hands between his thighs.

Tom refuses to make eye contact. The dark circles make his shifty eyes quite villainous.

Nadine is saddened by his troubled demeanor. Her hand goes to her mouth as though holding in her motherly concern.

Tom spies movement in the hall. Alice emerges from the shadows. Tom wants to look away, but can't.

Alice's gaze is reproachful. She crosses her arms and leans against the wall. She seems to be waiting for something. Tom begins to crack under the pressure of her ghostly stare.

TOM

(to Alice)

I never wanted to hurt anyone.

Nadine is a little confused at this.

TOM

(looking at his hands)

I mean I did. When I saw them there. When I had them in my power. I did. (faltering) I couldn't help it. But I hate that they suffered.

Tom looks at Alice with tears in his eyes. Alice is unmoved. Nadine searches for words to comfort him, but finds none.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

I'm afraid (hesitating) afraid I'll  
do it again. I don't think I can  
change.

NADINE

(desperately)

We'll get you some help, sweetie.  
And you can come stay with me.

His mother's voice is a jarring reminder of her presence.  
Tom looks at her slightly dazed. Then looks back to the  
hall. Alice is gone.

Tom looks back to his mother blinking back tears. He is  
dumbfounded at her unconditional love.

TOM

(crying)

How can you even stand to look at  
me?

Nadine is overcome with compassion for her broken son. She  
pulls his head to her bosom and gently strokes his hair.  
Tom's body heaves with sobs.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room that was once filled with Tom's childhood toys now  
contains traces of teenage Tom. Rock posters, pictures of  
scantily clad girls, and high school sports paraphernalia  
have replaced the western posters, pictures of famous  
cowboys, old west memorabilia.

Nadine makes the bed while Tom looks around reminiscing. He  
spots a surviving cowboy artifact. The hat Uncle Bill gave  
him. Tom brushes the brim with his finger. Painful memories  
flood him taking his breath away.

NADINE

There you go, Hon. Try to get some  
rest, okay.

Tom gives her a half-hearted nod.

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - TOM'S ROOM - LATER

Tom lies in his bed staring at the ceiling. Out of the corner of his eye he sees a dark figure in the corner. Tom tries to ignore it. The figure moves toward him.

Tom becomes rigid, willing himself not to look. Alice steps out from the shadows. Tom's eyes well up.

Alice's expression is no longer reproachful, but enraged. She goes to Tom and puts her lips close to his ear. Her whisper is distant, barely audible.

ALICE

Monster.

Tom closes his eyes tightly. Tears spill out onto the pillow. He hears an echo of WHISPERS. His eyes fly open. His victims stand over his bed staring down at him.

Alice backs out of the group. Tom sits up and reaches out for her. The murder victims push him back down.

Tom struggles against the host of hands pushing him ever harder into the mattress. Tom begins to struggle for breath.

Jackie holds up the kitchen knife that took her life. She buries it in Tom's chest. Tom groans in pain and fights even harder to escape the hands that hold him down.

Jackie plunges the knife into him again and again. Tom gives up fighting. He turns to Alice, who looks on with a sense of righteous triumph.

Tom wordlessly pleads with her to end his suffering. She raises her chin in refusal.

Tom looks up at his victims, now his torturers. Their faces are bathed in blood. They seem satisfied with their work.

Tom looks down at his body. His torso is barely distinguishable from the thrashing.

Tom closes his eyes to the image and lets out terrified YELL.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tom's eyes fly open. Beads of sweat stand out on his face. Tom sits up and reluctantly lifts his shirt. He's intact.

Tom lays back only slightly relieved. Then jumps out of bed and pulls his pants on. He quickly slips his shoes on and grabs his jacket.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom quietly makes his way down the hall. He stops at Alice's room. He noiselessly opens the door and peers inside.

INT. SCHIFFER HOME - ALICE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door creaks a little as Tom enters. He is instantly thrown back into the late 80's. Posters of New Kids on the Block, Rider Strong, and Chris Wolf bring a nostalgic smile to Tom's face.

Tom goes to the vanity. Everything is dust free. Banana clips, scrunchies, and neon jewelry are all neatly arranged as though Alice would sit here in the morning primp for school.

The bed is neatly made. A Raggedy Ann awaits a long over due cuddle. Tom sits beside her and takes the doll's little hand in his fingers.

He turns to the bedside table where a family photo is accompanied by a walkman. Tom takes the photo and caresses Alice's smiling face. Beside her, young, innocent Tom points his cap gun at the camera. Behind them Nadine has her head on John's shoulder. They are the epitome of a happy family.

A tear rolls down Tom's cheek. He gently returns the photo to it's place.

Tom gets up. Head down, shoulders slumped he heads for the door. Tom pauses for a moment with his hand on the doorknob, before pulling the door shut.

As the door closes, Alice sadly watches him go.

EXT. ALASKAN TUNDRA - DAY

In a vast white wasteland. The wind kicks up the snow and blows it across the plains like a nebula of tiny shards of glass. A single puff of smoke rises in the vast frozen solitude. A warm yellow light glows from a dilapidated cabin. The wind lashes the tiny structure relentlessly.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

A scruffy Tom raises a cleaver and brings it down, severing a salmon head. He sets to work filleting the fish.

Tom is startled by a KNOCK at the door. He waits for a moment to see if he didn't just imagine it. Another KNOCK.

He moves toward the door apprehensively, still gripping the cleaver. He opens the door a crack, and peeks out.

He scowls at the sight of a pretty MAIL PERSON on his doorstep. She smiles as she holds up a package.

Tom takes it quickly and goes to shut the door. She puts her hand on the door.

MAIL PERSON

Hey.

Tom is irritated as he opens the door again.

MAIL PERSON

Sorry, I just need your signature.

She rocks on her heels and rubs her shoulders.

MAIL PERSON

Mind if I come in? It's a cold one today.

Tom dry swallows. His grip on the cleaver tightens. He tries to spit out a refusal, but instead --

TOM

Sure.

He opens the door farther for her, and she shuffles in.

As Tom closes the door behind her, a familiar gleam of anticipation shines in his eyes.

EXT. ALASKAN TUNDRA - CONTINUOUS

The cabin sits solitary as ever with a small aircraft beside it. As the cabin gets farther and farther away, nothing and no one is in sight.

FADE OUT