

SERENITY LANE

by

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1 OVER BLACK 1

An alarm BLARES...

2 INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING 2

CLOSE UP on an alarm clock. A hand comes down, hitting the snooze button.

We PULL BACK to see PETER BLISS (58), a Mr. Rogers type, sit up and stretch.

His room is very bare bones, only a few family pictures, including a YOUNG GIRL, with a light green plastered around the room.

MUSIC CUE: MISTER SANDMAN by THE CHORDETTES

He throws his sheets off, and steps out of bed, almost like a rehearsed routine...

MONTAGE:

Peter:

*

- Showers, humming the tune of Mister Sandman
- Brushes his teeth/his hair
- Opening his closet/pulling out a shirt, tie and pants
- Getting dressed, still humming the tune

END MONTAGE:

3 INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING 3

The SIZZLING of bacon fills the room, as Peter cooks. He continues to hum, even dancing to it a little.

MORGAN BLISS (30), Peter's youthful, attractive daughter, enters the kitchen.

MORGAN
Morning, dad.

Peter glances over at Morgan, and cracks a smile.

PETER
Morning, honey. Breakfast will be ready shortly.

MOMENTS LATER...

Peter and Morgan sit at a small round table, both eating a plate bacon and toast, with a cup of coffee.

Peter glances over at an open book on the table. He eats, and reads--

A POPPING noise can be heard coming from outside. Barely audible. *

Morgan reacts to the noise. Peter pays no attention to it. He continues with his breakfast. *

MORGAN

What was that?

PETER

Probably just a balloon popping.
Nothing to worry about, sweetie.

4 EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

4

Peter opens the door, and steps out into the morning. His house looks newly built, very appealing to the eye. He looks back inside.

PETER

I'll see you in a little bit.

MORGAN (O.S.)

Love you, dad!

PETER

I love you too!

Peter walks down his front steps onto his lawn. He glances out at the neighborhood. All the house look exactly like his, just with different colors.

Peter walks briskly across his yard, when--

END MUSIC CUE:

SQUISH. He steps onto something on the curve.

Peter pauses and looks down. He brings his foot up to reveal a PIECE OF BRAIN MATTER, stuck on his shoe.

Peter, unfazed, notices a pool of blood, running along the curve like a river. He looks up and sees the source of the blood:

A corpse, lying in the street. It's head is GONE. Blood spills out of the neck hole. Blood splatters are all over the street and grass, along with skin, hair and brain matter.

Peter, still staring at the corpse, scrapes the brain matter off his shoe on the curb. He chuckles, seemingly not horrified by the sight.

PETER (CONT'D)
(jokingly)
Those kids. Those little rascals.

Peter walks calmly toward the body, WHISTLING. He walks past it, still smiling.

Behind him, TWO PEOPLE approach the body, and drag it away. But Peter doesn't pay attention to this. He just...keeps walking toward town.

TITLE CARD: SERENITY LANE

5 INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - DAY 5

The apartment is very tidy. Everything is organized meticulously. The sound of a door UNLOCKING & OPENING can be heard.

SASHA
Jess?

SASHA (32), a strong bodybuilder type, walks into the apartment, gazing around. She has a knapsack around her shoulder, as she tugs on its strap.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Hello? You here, Jess?

Sasha pulls out her phone, and calls--

INTERCUT WITH:

6 EXT. REPAIR SHOP - SAME TIME 6

MAX (29), a cyberpunk goth, leans against a FORD FOCUS. JOHN (33), tall and strong, is busy working under the hood.

MAX
Sash, we're a little tied up at the moment.

SASHA (V.O.)
I thought you were going to pick them up.

MAX
We were, until John had a last minute roll up.

John shrugs. He comes out from under the hood, wiping grease off his arms.

JOHN
(to Max)
Well, they haven't changed their oil, their tires weren't rotated, and a blinker is out. It's amazing how much they don't care.

MAX
Yeah, man, to you. You could put a lecture hall to sleep with how boring you make it sounds. 'Specially when all I can think about is that yee-hee ass haircut you got up top.

JOHN
(scoffs)
Whatever. You're just mad I'm still on the clock.

John goes back to work on the car.

MAX
You know, this place is dees-gustin'! You sure they're not there?

SASHA
Nope.

JOHN
Well that's Jesse. Don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

MAX
Probably a good thing you don't live there.

JOHN
Hey! That possum was in there when I got the place--

MAX

And you made no effort to get rid of it. Just keep doin' what you're doin'! I don't want to be here any longer than I need to be, man.

JOHN

Well, my feeling aren't hurt--

SASHA

(to both)

Shush!

(to herself)

Look, I'll try their cell again.

JOHN

Alright, we'll be over in a little.

MAX

Yeah, hopefully once 'mechaninc of the year' gets their shit together.

JOHN

Hey, fuck you, M--

Sasha hangs up. She dials Jesse's contact.

CUT TO:

7

INT. DR. FRIEDKIN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

7

A phone is vibrating inside a bag. Next to the bag is JESSE KNOX (35, they/them), athletic build of a sprinter. They have a SCAR on their forehead, running into their hairline. They sit on a couch, arms in their hoodie's pockets.

Across the room, DR. FRIEDKIN (62), an old but young looking man, sits looking at Jesse, with a clipboard in his hands.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Jesse, answer the question, please.
Have you had any more episodes?

Beat.

JESSE

No.

Friedkin sighs.

DR. FRIEDKIN

We've been at this for a while now,
so I can tell when you're lying.

(MORE)

DR. FRIEDKIN (CONT'D)
Did you have another episode
recently?

Beat.

JESSE
No. Things have been...pretty good.

DR. FRIEDKIN
Okay, how do you define 'pretty
good?' Tell me more about that.

Jesse fidgets in their seat. They glance over at the phone in
their bag.

DR. FRIEDKIN (CONT'D)
Jesse, the phone can wait. We
talked about this. Tell me, what
your definition of 'pretty good'
is.

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE
Pretty good means...pretty good, I
guess. Yeah, I mean things are
going good for now. I've been
making myself pretty busy around
the house.

DR. FRIEDKIN
Busy doing what?

JESSE
Well, I got into simple magic
tricks. It's been helpful to pass
the time.

DR. FRIEDKIN
(interested)
Magic.

JESSE
Yep. Been pretty cool so far. Card
tricks and getting out of handcuffs-

CLICK. Dr. Friedkin scribbles some notes on his clipboard.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Okay, I guess that's worth a write
down.

Dr. Friedkin looks up, stern faced.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Yes it is. Tell me, how's the job hunt going? Any updates from our last session.

Beat.

JESSE

Still looking. I applied for a teaching position at Carnegie Mellon in their engineering program.

Friedkin nods, in approval.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Well, progress is still progress. Let me know how that goes. Anything else worth mentioning?

JESSE

Well, me and my friends are heading out today for a small road trip. They thought it could be "helpful" to me. I don't know why they think it's a good idea.

DR. FRIEDKIN

But, that does seem helpful. From an objective point of view...it shows their support.

JESSE

Yeah, I guess.

Friedkin sighs.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Jesse, how are you doing?

JESSE

Did you just forget the entire convo, doc? I just said--

DR. FRIEDKIN

I'm not talking about what's going on in your life. How're you feeling? Happy? Sad? Angry?...Anything?

Silence.

JESSE

What do you want me to say? Cause I got nothing to say.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Jesse, your superiors ordered you to come to me so we can figure out your mental state. And based on how you tend to deflect every question, I can tell you need more than the prescribed sessions we were given.

JESSE

Doc, I don't need some approval that my mind is in the right place. I'm good.

DR. FRIEDKIN

You can lie to your friends, to your family, and to yourself, but you can't lie to me.

(compassionate)

I want to help you, Jesse. I really do. But I can't do that, not really, if you refuse to talk to me.

Jesse glances up at Dr. Friedkin. They open their mouth, when-

Dr. Friedkin's phone alarm BLARES. Jesse jolts back, startled. Friedkin silences his phone.

DR. FRIEDKIN (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Forgot you have sensitivity to sound.

JESSE

Thanks.

DR. FRIEDKIN

Now, I know, our session's up, but I'd really like to continue--

JESSE

No, we're done here.

DR. FRIEDKIN

I really suggest that we set up a few more sessions, to help.

JESSE

No, that's a wrap.
(smiles)
Okay? Cool.

Jesse stands up, and grabs their bag from the couch. They walk toward the door.

JESSE (CONT'D)

See you in two weeks.

DR. FRIEDKIN

You as well.

Jesse opens the door, and walks out, letting it close behind them. Dr. Friedkin writes some more notes on his clipboard.

8 EXT. DR. FRIEDKIN'S OFFICE - DAY

8

It's pouring rain outside. Jesse opens the door to the building, and puts their hood up. They walk outside, glancing down at the sidewalk. They watch the rain come down, flooding the walkway.

They close their eyes as they walk, and take some deep breaths.

9 INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - DAY

9

A lonely picture of Jesse in an Army uniform sits upon a cabinet. Sasha picks it up. She gazes at it, longingly...like something is missing. *

John paces back and forth through the apartment.

JOHN

What the fuck is taking him so long?

SASHA

Them.

John pauses, and slaps his face in realization.

JOHN

(apologetic)

Right, sorry. Slipped my mind for a sec.

MAX

Shit, man. You're always slippin' up and shit.

The door opens, and Jesse enters. Everyone turns around, and notices them enter.

JESSE
I'm back, baby!

John and Sasha chuckle. Max walks up to Jesse, who sets their bag down on the kitchen counter.

MAX
Was wondering when you'd show up,
J.

Some tension between the two emerges. Before it's cut through by laughter.

MAX (CONT'D)
You really got to check your
calendar.

Max pulls Jesse in for a hug, which they accept.

JESSE
(chuckles)
It's good to see you too, Max.

John approaches Jesse, who leaves Max's hug.

JOHN
So, what happened.

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE
Shrink. Not like I wanted to be
there.

JOHN
Can't believe people actually spend
money on those people--

SASHA
(to John)
Or maybe it's healthy way to cope.

John turns to receive a drive-by punch in the nuts from Sasha. John falls to his knees.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Hey, can I speak with you quickly,
bae?

JESSE
Sure.

*

Sasha grabs Jesse's hand and leads them away.

JOHN
(joking; to Sasha)
Oh, you bitch.

JESSE
Yeah, takes one to know one.

10

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

10

Jesse and Sasha walk into the dark hallway. They come to an abrupt stop. Sasha looks up at Jesse with warmth.

SASHA
Are you all packed?

JESSE
Yeah.

SASHA
Toothbrush, toothpaste, cause you sometimes forget--

JESSE
It's all good, Sash. I packed it this morning.

SASHA
Awesome. Then let's not keep them waiting.

Sasha walks back down the hallway.

JESSE
Are you sure this is a good idea?

Sasha pauses, and turns to face Jesse.

SASHA
Of course.

JESSE
Do they?

Beat. Sasha walks back up to Jesse, grabbing their hands.

SASHA
Don't worry about them. I think all you need, right now, is some rest and relaxation.

Jesse looks at Sasha, and kisses her hand.

*

JESSE
Maybe you're right.

SASHA
Course I am.

The two share a kiss. John pokes his head into the hallway.

JOHN
Oh, damn.

Jesse and Sasha, snapped out of their kiss, turn to face John with an evil glare in their eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Uh, just thought you guys should know traffic on I-79 is starting to back up. We gotta go, now!

John quickly exits the hallway, fearing for his life. Jesse and Sasha share a look, and then giggle. Grabbing her hand, Jesse smiles.

JESSE
You heard the man.

Sasha laughs.

11 EXT. CAR - DUSK 11

A RED AUDI Q4 e-tron drives down the quiet backroad. Deep woods fill out both sides.

12 INT. CAR - DUSK 12

Jesse taps their fingers on the wheel, as they look at all the trees around them. There're so many trees.

Sasha looks at her phone, scrolling through Instagram. Max is asleep in the back seat, whilst John looks through the Q4's manual. Jesse gazes at him through the rearview mirror.

JESSE
Learn anything "special?"

JOHN
What?

JESSE
Well you seem so invested in that--

JOHN
I'm not invested in the car.

SASHA
Oh please, you once lectured your
garage on how to repair a moped
engine for 3 hours.

John stares at the two.

JOHN
Yeah, I got nothing.

The three burst into laughter. Max, woozy, jolts awake.

MAX
What's happening? You guys making
fun of John without me?

JOHN
Maybe you shouldn't have stayed up
so late last night.

MAX
I was streaming Minecraft until 2
AM.

JESSE
Well that's your fault.

MAX
(chuckle)
Yeah, I know. I was gettin' my
views up and all that.

Max looks out the window and takes notice of the trees.

MAX (CONT'D)
Hey, where are we?

Sasha looks down at her phone, scrolling through Maps.

SASHA
Uh...gimme a sec. It says we just
crossed in Illinois.

MAX
Cool.

JESSE
(to Sasha)
Hey, you got the hotel reservations
for tonight, right?

SASHA

Yeah. Seems like we're a couple hours away.

Jesse turns on the car lights, illuminating the road.

JESSE

Hey, anyone got any good songs?

SASHA

Sure, I can look something up--

JOHN

Already got you covered.

John climbs up, and scrolls through the dashboard. He hits plays. Reveal that he chooses NOTHING ELSE MATTERS by METALLICA.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This right here, is a classic.

The song plays, as Jesse's face becomes...haunted.

MAX

Well, I wouldn't call it "classical."

JOHN

Well, this is quite different compared to your piano playing.

SASHA

Come on, John. She's got the gift of an angel.

MAX

Damn straight.

Jesse's grip tightens on the wheel. Their breathing gets quicker. Their vision blurs.

Sasha hears Jesse, and looks toward them.

SASHA

Jesse?

Max and John look at Jesse, seeing them breathing heavily.

MAX

Jess, you okay?

SASHA

Babe, what's wrong. Talk to me!

JOHN

They were fine just a second ago--

SASHA

Yeah, we get that!

(to Jesse)

Baby! Baby look at me!

13 JESSE POV:

13

Jesse's blurry vision flashes from the dark road to...

Sand covered dirt roads, with a military convoy in front of them. An RPG strikes the Humvee in front of them. BOOM, POP! *

The Humvee SCREECHES to a stop. Heavy BREATHING can be heard as more rockets fly over the horizon--toward them.

Flames. BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAMS. Blood everywhere. Jesse panics. Their vision blurs, as--

END POV:

Jesse darts their eyes, to see...their car is flipping in mid air. They look to Sasha, who SCREAMS, but something catches Jesse's eye--

The road, or a tree, that is heading straight for the car.

SASHA (DISTORTED)

Jesse!!

Jesse SCREAMS, before the car SLAMS into a large tree--

CUT TO BLACK:

14 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

14

The room is shrouded in darkness, with the only light coming from the x-rays on the wall.

Jesse, in a hospital gown, lies on an exam table. They have cuts and scrapes along their arms and legs, with some bandages wrapped around their arms.

Jesse opens their eyes, slowly. They prop themselves up on the table, but they struggle to see anything.

JESSE

What the...fuck?

Jesse notices the x-rays. The x-ray of Jesse's skull reveals a METAL PLATE on the front of their head.

Jesse can't help but stare at them, with horror. Like it's digging up old wounds.

Jesse, with some effort, hops off the table, and tries to make out the surroundings. Very creepy and ominous. Something dangles on the ceiling, but Jesse can't make it out.

The x-rays shine a light on a table, filled with medical equipment. Needles, scalpels, forceps, the works.

THUMP, THUMP. The sound of FOOTSTEPS can be heard outside, getting louder.

Jesse scrambles over to the counter, and picks up the scalpel. They hold it fiercely as the footsteps get louder. And louder. And then--

Silence.

Jesse slowly eases their way toward the door, as they hear the sound of the doorknob TURNING. The door opens--

PETER

So far, he's yet to wake--

And the lights come on, revealing PETER, from the opening, now wearing a lab coat. He absentmindedly enters the room looking down at a clipboard.

Peter looks up to see Jesse, armed with a scalpel, ready to strike. He jumps back, surprised.

PETER (CONT'D)

Jesus, wept! So, you're finally awake. I was afraid I was going to have to tell your friends you weren't waking up.

MORGAN (O.S.)

Dad, is everything alright?

Behind Peter, enters MORGAN, also from the opening. She notices Jesse, and SCREAMS.

PETER

Okay, let's just, take it easy--

JESSE

Where am I?! Who the Hell are you?!

Peter straightens up, and inhales and exhales deeply.

PETER

It's okay. I just need you to--

JESSE

Answer the fucking question! Who are you?! Where're my friends?! Answer me, NOW!!

PETER

You and your friends were in a very bad accident. Don't worry, they're fine. They're in the waiting room.

Jesse pauses, as if they're...remembering. They harden again, still on edge.

JESSE

Take me to them.

PETER

Sir--

JESSE

Take me to them, NOW!

PETER

I'll take you to them, but first, could you please put down the scalpel?

Jesse glances at Peter, then at a frightened Morgan. Turmoil builds, as their grip on the scalpel gets shaky. They close their eyes.

Slowly, Jesse returns the scalpel to the counter. Morgan breathes a sigh of relief.

PETER (CONT'D)

Thank you. Truly.

JESSE

(calmly)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Peter smiles, and walks up to Jesse.

PETER

It's okay. Get changed, and we can talk.

(to Morgan)

Morgan, would you be kind enough to get our patient his clothes--

JESSE

Their.

PETER

My apologies. Their clothes.

Peter walks back out the room. An awkward silence fills the room as Jesse and Morgan stare at each other.

15 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - WAITING AREA - DAY

15

Morgan leads Jesse, back in their clothes, out into the waiting room. Very spacious, with a few chairs and some magazines on some small tables.

In the room, Peter sits parallel to Sasha, Max and John. Sasha instantly rushes over to Jesse and hugs them.

SASHA

Oh, thank god!

JESSE

(joking)
I'm not dead yet.

SASHA

Are you okay?

JESSE

I'm fine.

SASHA

No, really, because you weren't
fine be--

Jesse lovingly smooches Sasha's cheek.

JESSE

Sasha, trust me. It's alright. I'm
alright.

John and Max walk over and join in on the hug. Peter coughs, attracting everyone's attention. Jesse looks at Peter, admirably.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Okay, doc, we got some questions--

PETER

Please, call me Peter.

Peter points to Morgan.

PETER (CONT'D)

That right there is Morgan. My
sweet little girl.

Everyone glances at Morgan, who gives a little wave. Jesse
waves back.

JESSE

So, doc--Peter-- where exactly is
here?

Peter smiles, as if he was waiting for someone to ask him
that.

PETER

You're in Serenity Lane. We're a
small community, but things are
nice here.

Max looks at her phone. No bars, no reception.

MAX

Ayo, I'm sorry, do you have Wi-fi
here? Cause I'm not getting any
bars.

PETER

Unfortunately not. Too much hassle
to set up power lines here.

Jesse, confused, points to the lights.

JESSE

Then how...?

PETER

Generators. It can get a little
chill at night, but that's how we
like it.

JESSE

Okay, but how did we get here?

PETER

Morgan. She heard the crash and we
brought you here for medical
attention.

Morgan steps forward.

MORGAN

The car looked pretty mangled. We
just want to get the full story.
Who was driving at the time?

Silence.

JESSE

I was. I, uh--I blacked out.

Sasha, Max and John look at Jesse, bewildered.

MAX

What?--

JOHN

Jesus.

SASHA

You blacked out?!

Jesse fidgets with their sleeves.

JESSE

I-I guess. I don't remember much.
I'm sorry. I'm so, so, sorry, guys.

Sasha gives Jesse a hug. Peter steps forward, with a sense of urgency. *

PETER *

Okay, is this an isolated incident, *
or has this happened before? *

Jesse pauses. Though they try and hide it, the look on their face says it all. *

JESSE *

Multiple times. *

Jesse's friends look at them with shock. Sasha cups Jesse's face. She looks like she wants to examine their brain. *

Jesse looks at their friends, then at Peter. They gulp.

PETER

Well, I think it would be in your best interest to stay here, under a 48 to 72 hour observation period. Just so we may be able to help you. We have a nice little motel a couple houses down that you can stay in while you're here and we can check up on you. *

Peter fixes his glasses.

JESSE

I'm--I'm not sure.

PETER

Jesse, if this is a recurring issue, we need to figure out what's going on. Do you understand.

All eyes on Jesse.

JESSE

Yes.

PETER

Okay, splendid. I'll reach out to Lily, and she'll hook you four up with a couple of rooms at the motel, free of charge.

MAX

(skeptical)
Free room?

JOHN

I like the sound of that.

JESSE

Wait, wait. What about the car?

PETER

We had it towed to the garage. You can speak with Brian about it, but it was pretty mangled last I saw it.

Jesse groans.

JOHN

Jess, don't worry about it.

PETER

Well, it should be fixed in the next couple of days. Until then, just relax, and try not to engage in any strenuous activities.

SASHA

I second that.

MAX

Ditto.

Jesse gazes around the room, looking at the pleading face of John, then to Max who seems...offput, and then to Sasha, wearing a warm smile. They sigh.

JESSE

Okay, but could we get something to eat? I'm starving.

MORGAN

There's a diner just down the street, if you're up for it.

JESSE

Yeah, I think, uh...I think that'd be nice.

PETER

Splendid. Well, I hope you enjoy yourselves.

Peter walks toward the door. Jesse, looks at him, their admiration wavered by uncertainty.

16

EXT. SERENITY LANE - DAY

16

John and Max exit the doctor's office, which is just a large house. Sasha follows, with Jesse in the rear. John and Max stare in awe.

A small, one street town, with small shops, medium houses, and lots of people. Barbers, people walking dogs, policemen. People walk by, happily waving to the quartet. John and Max wave back.

All the buildings look new, relatively, each with a fresh coat of paint on them.

Sasha, in awe, turns to Jesse, who doesn't seem as excited.

SASHA

Wow, would you look at this place?

JESSE

Yeah, it's...it's alright. It's cool.

JOHN

Cool? This place looks dope!
Definitely better than the 3-star
shit we booked.

*

Jesse smirks. They look over at a little deli, and they see a BUTCHER handing meats to a CUSTOMER. Jesse squints, as if something is off.

The butcher gives the customer their meats, and she heads out the door.

CUSTOMER

(to butcher)

Thank you!

Jesse shakes their head, and turns to see Max, John, and Sasha walking away.

JESSE

Wait up!

Jesse sprints after their friends, limping with their left leg. Still hurts pretty bad.

As they walk, a SILVER PORSCHE 911 slowly drives by. In the car, MAYOR PYKE, (60s), plump yet joyful, waves to the town as he drives by.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Guys, wait for a sec. I think my leg's a little banged up.

MAX

You good, J?

Max walks over and inspects Jesse's leg.

SASHA

(ignorant)

O..M..G! Look at this place!

Jesse sees where Sasha is looking: A cute, retro-like diner (50s vibe), with a giant milkshake on top.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Man, this is like the diner in my hometown. Let's grab a bite to eat.

JOHN

I'm game. You guys?

Sasha turns to Jesse, whose looking down the road.

SASHA

Save us a table.

JOHN

Copy that.

MAX

(to Jesse)

Okay, you good?

Jesse nods. Max joins John, and both walk toward the diner. Sasha waltzes up to Jesse, and looks where they're looking. The road, leading into the thicket of the woods. No end in sight.

JESSE *
(mutters) *
I could've killed you. *

SASHA *
What? *

JESSE *
I almost killed you. I almost *
killed them. Why aren't you guys *
mad at me? *

Sasha lovingly grabs Jesse's hand. Jesse glances back at her. *

SASHA *
Because I know you. Max and John *
know you. And we all know that this *
wasn't your fault. *

Jesse hangs their head. *

JESSE *
I'm sorry. *

SASHA *
Don't be. But from now on, you *
gotta loop us in on what's going on *
with you. Deal? *

Jesse pauses and looks at Sasha. Their love burns through the *
pain. Jesse cracks a smile, first time all movie. They glance *
at the garage. *

JESSE *
Deal. *
(beat)
You know, why don't you guys go *
ahead? You can order my favorite. *

SASHA *
Where are you going? *

JESSE *
I wanna check out the damage on the *
car. I pray I don't have to pay out- *
of-pocket. *

Jesse kisses Sasha, letting go of her hand.

SASHA *
Do you want anything else? *

JESSE *
See if they got some JD. *

Sasha nods, with concern. She kisses Jesse's hand, then turns and walks toward the diner.

Jesse watches as she enters. They set their sights on the garage, just a couple buildings down. They slowly walk over, passing by the townspeople.

CLOSE UP on Jesse's hands, fiddling with their NON-BINARY PRIDE FLAG PIN.

*
*

17 EXT. SERENITY LANE - GARAGE - DAY 17

Jesse strolls up to *BRIAN'S AUTO BODY*, gazing up at the large sign. The figure is smiling, a bit too hard, with a quote: "*We got our eye on your car.*"

JESSE
(chuckling)
The hell kind of quote is that?
Really?

Jesse squints, and walks into the shop.

18 INT. GARAGE - RECEPTION - DAY 18

Jesse walks in. The look around the place. The area is quite empty, save for a counter with a register and some air fresheners in front of the counter. There's a door leading to the garage on the right.

BRIAN (43), a mechanic with a potbelly and a gruff look, stands still as he watches Jesse approach him.

BRIAN
Welcome to Brian's Auto Body, where we keep an eye on you and your car. What can I help you with?

JESSE
Hi, yeah, um. So me and my friends were in a car crash a couple days ago. The doctor said you have our car, and I was just wondering if the car is drivable or totaled.

Brian, with a faint smile, looks down at a sheet.

BRIAN
Okay, let me see...what's the model?

JESSE
It's a 2024 Audi Q4 e-tron. Uh,
red, also.

Brian scrolls through the sheet with his finger. Jesse watches, peering over the counter as they wait. Brian shakes his head in dismay.

BRIAN
Sorry, pal. It's not here.

Jesse's taken aback. Now there's confusion.

JESSE
What do you mean? I was told the
car was here.

BRIAN
Well, it's not on the repair log.
Who said we had the car?

JESSE
Peter, the doctor?

BRIAN
Well, he could have misspoken.

JESSE
Well, is there another auto shop it
could've been taken to?

BRIAN
Nope. Only garage for miles.

Jesse stares at Brian, tilting their head, as Brian follows their movement's. A little creepy.

Silence.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Well, let me check in the back.
Maybe I misplaced some paperwork.
Give me a couple minutes.

JESSE
Thank you.

Brian walks, irregularly and somewhat robotically, away from the counter and around the corner. Jesse watches in confusion.

Jesse looks around the room, then at the entrance. They twiddle with an air freshener in their hand, before putting it back.

Jesse notices the sheet of paper on the counter. Curious, they flip the sheet over, and gaze at it.

It's almost empty. No other car's in the shop except for:
2024 Audi Q4 e-tron, Red. *What the fuck is going on?*

Jesse, confused, steps back, and looks at the garage door. They walk quickly to the door, and open it.

19

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

19

Jesse quickly enters, and quietly closes the door. They turn around and--

JESSE
(quietly)
Are you fucking shitting me?

In front of them, is the banged up Audi Q4. The side door is caved in, with the windows gone. Scrapes run along the side of the car, up to the head lights.

Jesse walks around the car, observing the damage done. *Did I really do this?*

Jesse glances inside the car, seeing the interior, and all the damage.

Jesse backs up, unaware that Brian is RIGHT BEHIND HIM.

BRIAN
What are you doing in here?

Jesse SCREAMS, jumping back.

JESSE
Jesus chr--don't do that!

BRIAN
My apologies. I didn't mean to frighten you. I was just curious as to why you came in here.

Jesse looks at Brian. His creepy smile, direct eye contact. Just unnerving.

JESSE
Oh, um, my bad. I noticed my car through the door window, and wanted to check it out.

Brian looks at the car, and faces Jesse again, his expression unchanged.

BRIAN
That's your car?

JESSE
Yes. I didn't mean to intrude.

BRIAN
(politely)
Oh no. No, no, no, no, no. It was
my mistake. I misread the
information on the sheet.

JESSE
How? It was the only car on the
sheet.

Brian nods.

BRIAN
I may have had some drinks last
night. I take full responsibility.
I simply forgot we had your car
here.

Jesse, a little nervous, notices tears coming out of Brian's
eyes.

JESSE
Hey,...you good?

Brian, wipes away the tears, and drops the smile down a peg.

BRIAN
Ah, yes. My apologies, again.

JESSE
So about the car--

BRIAN
Yes, the parts should be coming in
today. I assure you, we'll have it
fixed within two days.

*

Brian gives a wide smile. Jesse smiles back, albeit falsely.

JESSE
Thank you. I-I'll show myself out.

Jesse walks toward the door to the reception, moving swiftly.

BRIAN
Alright, I'll keep in touch.

Jesse turns around, and looks Brian in the eye.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 (somewhat ominous)
 See you soon.

Jesse turns and opens the door.

JESSE
 (under their breath)
 Okay. Creepy stuff, dude.

20 EXT. SERENITY LANE - GARAGE - DAY 20

Jesse exits the garage swiftly. They glance down the road leading into the woods.

Nervous, they switch their gaze to the diner. Steadfast, Jesse slowly walks toward the diner. *

21 INT. DINER - DAY 21

Jesse enters the diner, but stops and readjusts. Breathing deeply, they slowly open the second set of doors and walk inside. *

The diner is very retro-50s. Jukeboxes, black and white tile floors, neon lights.

MARCY
 Welcome to the Bene-Volant.

Jesse turns to see MARCY (40s), slim-trimmed in a waitress outfit, standing right beside them. She has a lovely smile across her face.

Jesse slightly jumps from the suddenness.

MARCY (CONT'D)
 Sorry, didn't mean to startle you.
 Table for...?

JESSE
 Oh, um, my friends are already here. They probably ordered without me.

Jesse glances around the diner, before seeing Sasha waving to Jesse.

MARCY
 Well, may I recommend you try the Double Fudge Sundae with sprinkles of cosmic brownies--

JESSE

Yeah, I think I'll pass. But thank you.

Jesse scoots off to Sasha. As they approach, Max and John look up from their lunch. In the empty seat, there's a plate with waffles.

SASHA

So, how was it?

JESSE

It was--

JOHN

Yo, Jess, these pancakes are killer!

JESSE

--That's great, John.

Marcy and KALE (40s), Marcy's husband approach the table.

KALE

How's lunch going for everyone?

SASHA

Oh, it's delicious! Best food I'd ever had.

MARCY

Thank you. I worked hard to get that recipe down just right.

MAX

Yeah, this is probably the best diner I've ever been to.

KALE

Well that's what we strive to do. Give the customer the best experience possible. I'm Kale, and this is my lovely wife, Marcy.

Jesse, with a fake smile, glances around the diner. They notice a framed picture of Marcy, Kale, and TWO GIRLS.

JESSE

Are those girls yours?

Jesse points to the picture. Kale takes notice of this.

KALE

Yep. Me, Mar Mar, and my rays of sunshine helped to make this place shine.

*

MARCY

Lonnie and Helen are at college at the moment. I'm sorry you can't meet them.

*

SASHA

What college?

Kale and Marcy's faces freeze, as if they were paused...

*

MARCY

University of Indiana. I'm so proud of our little angels.

Jesse looks at Marcy and Kale with...concern. *Something's really off.*

KALE

Well, we'll leave you four be. If you need anything, just holler.

JOHN

Will do.

Kale and Marcy grab each other's hand and walk back toward the kitchen. Jesse watches as they walk out of view.

SASHA

Hey, J, something wrong?

JESSE

Hm? No, it's fine. It's just the mechanic seemed...off.

MAX

How so?

Jesse looks around the diner. All the diner patrons enjoy their lunch. Jesse turns back to face their friends.

Now, all diner customers are looking at Jesse, as if they're cameras.

JESSE

I don't know. Just the way he spoke to me, was just...creepy.

MAX

Well I can vouch for mechanics being creepy. Just look at this guy.

Max elbows John. John takes offense to this.

JOHN

Hey, just because I get in the groove whilst fixing a car that means--

JESSE

I didn't mean creepy like that. The guy said the car wasn't there, even though it was.

SASHA

He probably just hadn't logged it yet.

JESSE

Maybe. But he was acting super weird. Like *Body Snatchers* kind of weird.

Sasha scoffs.

SASHA

C'mon, Jess. You sure?

JESSE

I mean, he was just smiling all the time. It kind of creeped me out.

SASHA

Well, if you want we can go check it out with you again, get a fresh pair of eyes on it. Would that make you more comfy?

Jesse nods. They take a bite of their meal, enjoying it.

JESSE

Wow! These are great!

SASHA

I knew you would like them. Why don't you finish up, and I'll go pay.

JOHN

I'll come with. I really gotta take a shit--

MAX

TMI, dude.

SASHA

Yeah, seriously. Keep that to yourself next time.

(to Jesse)

Is that alright, babe?

JESSE

(mouth full)

Cool.

All the patrons look back at their meals. Sasha stands up, and grabs her purse. John also stands up, and walks towards the register.

Max's smile drops. She scooches over to Jesse, who is finishing the food in their mouth.

*

MAX

You're right.

Jesse swallows, then looks at Max, confused.

JESSE

What?

MAX

This place is janky, for real. Everyone was looking over at us, like we don't belong here.

JESSE

Okay, what are you getting at?

Max looks around, before leaning in.

MAX

Did you notice that we seem to be the only two black people in this place?

Jesse pulls back, a little puzzled.

JESSE

No, no. Absolutely not--

MAX

It makes sense, don't it? Maybe that's why the guy was acting weird. I've heard stories about place like these. A nice town that's full of racist shitheads.

Jesse gives Max a look. *Really? I mean... maybe it's possible, but--NO!*

JESSE

You really gotta stay off Reddit, people will say anything to make a stir.

MAX

Okay, but when they cut open our heads and put their brains inside, then talk to me.

Jesse shakes their head. *Get Out? Really?*

JESSE

You really pulled the Get Out card?

MAX

Sorry. Got lost in the moment.

Jesse throws their napkin on the table.

JESSE

Let's just go back to the auto shop.

MAX

Cool.

22

EXT. SERENITY LANE - GARAGE - DAY

22

Brian rolls up the garage doors, and...the car is GONE. Jesse stares in shock, whilst everyone else just...stare.

BRIAN

Sorry, I forgot to mention this. I sent the car up to the next town over.

Jesse glares at Brian, livid.

JESSE

You said you'd have it fixed in two days.

*
*

BRIAN

No, I said I'd have the parts in two days.

*
*

Jesse rubs their temples, in frustration.

JESSE
No, you didn't.

John sees the tension, and quickly walk up to Jesse and Brian.

JOHN
Hey, hey, hey. Let's just take a
chill pill, alright.
(to Jesse)
Jess, I think he probably misspoke.
Most car wrecks that come into my
shop take at least 10 days to get
functional. It's a little weird to
have it fixed in two days.

Jesse sharply exhales. They've had it up to here.

JESSE
(to Brian)
Just tell me, will the car be here
tomorrow?

JOHN
Dude, lay off the guy. He's doing
his best.

Jesse looks at John, who steps forward.

JESSE
Well, I just want some assurance
that we can get the car back. I
just wanna know how much my mistake
will cost.

JOHN
Well, just put a little faith in
him. You shouldn't blame him,
neither yourself.

Jesse, surprised, curls their hand into a fist.

JESSE
You wanna run that by me again?

JOHN
It's not your fault, Jess. I think
you're trying to jump through some
hoops in your mind to blame
yourself, just like you did for
what happened in Iraq--

Jesse SLUGS John across the face, sending him to the ground.

SASHA
Oh my god, Jesse!

MAX
What the hell?!

Jesse shakes their hand, as they take deep breaths. They look down on John with anger and regret.

JESSE
I'm sorry. But don't push my buttons.

John looks up at Jesse...SMILING. He stands up, and pats the dust off his clothes. Jesse, a little confused, looks at him.

JOHN
No, I'm sorry, man. I touched a nerve. It was my mistake. I won't make it again.

John extends his hand out. Jesse, reluctant, accepts it. *What is going on here?*

JESSE
Th-Thanks?

Jesse looks at Max, clearly unnerved, and Sasha, who doesn't seem phased by the scuffle.

Creeped out, Jesse glances back at Brian, with his creepy-ass smile.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Do you know when the car will be back?

Brian looks down at his watch.

BRIAN
Uh, probably should be here tomorrow afternoon.

JESSE
(to themselves)
Okay. Okay...

Jesse realizes they're still shaking John's hand, and quickly lets go. They look at their friends, with Sasha stepping forward.

SASHA
Maybe we just check into the B&B. Clock out for the day.

Jesse, exhausted, shrugs.

JESSE
Okay, fine, whatever.
(to Brian)
I'm coming back for the car
tomorrow. Have it here.

BRIAN
Can do.

Brian heads back into the garage. Sasha and John walk away.
Jesse turns, but stops--

They notice something out of the corner of their eye.
Something...metallic.

MAX
Jesse, you good?

Jesse ignores Max, and walks back into the garage. Max
follows behind them.

MAX (CONT'D)
Is something wrong?

Jesse approaches what they saw-- a SPIKESTRIP. Laid out in
the corner of the garage.

Max peers over Jesse's shoulder. Their eyes go wide.

MAX (CONT'D)
Is that what I think it is?

JESSE
Yeah. Spikestrip.

MAX
Yeah, but why would an auto body
shop be housing that?

Jesse's eyes widen with horror. *They spiked our car? What the
flying fuck is goin--*

JESSE
I don't know. L-let's catch up with
the others.

Jesse walks toward the garage door.

MAX
Are we seriously not going to talk
about this, yo?

23

INT. LILY GARDEN INN - DAY

23

LILY (60s), the receptionist, grabs two keys off a rack behind her, and places them on the counter.

LILY

Okay, we've got two doubles available. There's complimentary coffee, and breakfast after 7.

JESSE

Okay, how much is it?

Jesse takes out their wallet, but Lily stops them.

LILY

Don't worry, we'll get that sorted out when you leave. Your bags are already in your rooms.

SASHA

Awesome! Thank you.

Sasha snatches the keys from the counter, and hands one off to Max. Jesse looks at Lily. *How are our bags here?*

LILY

You're very welcome, dear. Enjoy your stay.

JOHN

Hey, do you know of anything fun to do here?

LILY

Of course. There's actually going to be a party tomorrow for Morgan. You should check it out. Anyone's invited.

JESSE

We'll think about it. Thank you.

The group runs up the quaint steps, with Jesse following behind, looking around the place.

Very white, and Victorian. Cutesy, and homey, in a loving kind of way.

24 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - BEDROOM - DAY 24

Jesse walks into the room. One king size bed, with an outlook of the street. Beautiful paintings adorn the walls.

Jesse sees Sasha placing the bags down on the floor.

SASHA

This place is nice. Don't you think?

JESSE

Yeah...it--it's alright. I guess.

Jesse walks toward the window. They look out and see kids playing on the street. Just having some fun. Something...they long for.

25 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - BEDROOM - NIGHT 25

Jesse is asleep, in bed, next to Sasha. Jesse holds a plushie monkey in their arms. They aimlessly wrestle in bed, as if no position is working--

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. The sound of knocking at the door wakes Jesse up.

The floor creaks, as Jesse hops out of bed. They step, uneasy toward the door.

With the turn of the knob, Jesse swings the door open to find...no one. Nothing, but a note.

Jesse picks up the note with haste. They glance it over.
"Help us!"

A sense of dread passes through. Jesse looks down the hallway. They close the door, and see--

Sasha, standing by the window. Very robotically.

JESSE

(whispers)

Oh, Jesus Christ!

SASHA

Who was that?

Sasha speaks sharply, like she's reading off a script.

JESSE

I dunno. I guess it was nothing.
Why are you out of bed?

SASHA
Couldn't sleep.

Jesse makes their way back to the bed. The floor continues to creak. Sasha doesn't move an inch.

JESSE
Okay, well, maybe just come back to bed.

SASHA
I will.

Concern washes across Jesse's face.

JESSE
Are you okay, Sash?

Sasha finally turns to face Jesse.

SASHA
Of course. Why do you ask?

Jesse opens their mouth, but nothing comes out. They don't know what to say.

JESSE
Never mind. Just...try and get some sleep.

SASHA
No worries. I am.

I am? Jesse can't look away from Sasha, standing methodically. They lie back down in bed, and slowly they drift off.

26 EXT. SERENITY LANE - GARAGE - DAY

26

SUPER: 2 DAYS LATER...

*

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Jesse bangs on the door, with zero composure. They're at their wits' end. Max leans against the wall next to them, as if she's a watchful eye.

Brain opens the door, and answers politely.

BRIAN
Welcome to Brian's Auto Body, where we keep an eye on you and--oh, it's you again.

Jesse is unamused.

JESSE
Is it back yet?

BRIAN
Is what back?

Jesse rubs their temples together, in annoyance.

JESSE
My car? The car you said would be
back here, TODAY.

BRIAN
Oh, right. Unfortunately, the shop
called and said it's going to take
a few more days for work to be
completed.

*

Jesse scrunches up their face, trying their best to control
their temper.

JESSE
Well, is there a bus stop I can
take? Or, Hell, can someone give me
a lift to the town?

Brian simply smiles, throwing Jesse off, yet again.

BRIAN
Well, maybe you can ask someone at
Morgan's party. Maybe they can
help. Now, I have some business to
attend to.

Brian swiftly closes the door in Jesse's face, as if they
didn't exist.

Jesse groans in frustration, unable to contain the flood of
anger inside.

JESSE
Can I have just one day, where
something fucking goes right?

They look up at the sky, as if to God.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Come on, give me just one. Just the
one?

Max walks over to Jesse.

MAX

Okay, this guy is starting to sound more S-U-S the more I see him.

Jesse struggles, but feels serenity overtaking them.

JESSE

I just don't get it? I mean, what in the actual fuck is going on?

MAX

I'm tellin' you, J. There's some devil shit behind that fake-ass smile he keeps shinnin' at us.

JESSE

Okay, I think you need to pull it back on your theory.

MAX

Okay, alright. Sorry. But it can still be a possibility.

Jesse looks at Max. They shrug their shoulders.

JESSE

We should probably get going.

MAX

Ah, hell nah. I'm not going to that party. I'm gonna see if I can hitchhike.

*
*

JESSE

Won't that look suspicious?

*

MAX

Alright, then can't we call someone?

*
*
*

JESSE

Nah, Peter said the reception here is pretty much shit.

*
*
*

MAX

I thought you'd be down for getting out of here.

*
*
*

JESSE

Oh, hell yeah. But how're we gonna run this by Sasha and John? They seem to be having the time of their lives.

*
*
*
*
*

Jesse walks down the street. Max stands still, pissed off.
They throw their hands up, in defeat.

MAX

Jesus H. Christ! Well, when they
send a lynchin' mob after you,
don't say I didn't warn you.

JESSE

I think you need to calm your shit!

MAX

And how do you suppose I do that?!

Jesse turns to talk to Max, while they continue to walk.

JESSE

I got some kush in my bag. Maybe
that'll take the edge off.

Jesse walks off.

MAX

(to herself)

'Take the edge off.' Man I'll take
the edge off myself, motherfucker.

Max turns and SPRINTS for the woods, as fast as they can go.

27

EXT. SERENITY LANE - POOL - DAY

27

A very modern recreational area. Many banners, and party
streamers are hung up. A sand pit, and tennis court are just
off to the side.

The townspeople are enjoying themselves. Getting food.
Playing in the pool. Starting a badminton game. It's nothing
but fun vibes.

Mayor Pyke welcomes the neighborhood in. He shakes their
hands and waves.

MAYOR PYKE

Enjoy the festivities, everyone!

Jesse and Sasha walk in, still holding hands. Pyke notices
this.

MAYOR PYKE (CONT'D)

Ah, well, how do you do, you two
lovebirds? Sorry, I never got a
chance to welcome you to our little
slice of paradise.

SASHA
It's quite alright.

Jesse looks around. The pool is packed. REALLY packed.

JESSE
Wow, this is a big turnout for a birthday.

MAYOR PYKE
Well, we're tight-knit. Everyone here is special. That's been the motto since the inception of this place.

SASHA
And how long ago was that?

Pyke ponders.

MAYOR PYKE
Oh, I'd have to say...10 years or so. And since then we've sprouted like a flower in a garden.

Jesse is surprised...and not in a good way.

JESSE
So, what's your secret? Because this seems like a big population for a relatively new town.

MAYOR PYKE
I guess, people can be attracted or persuaded to something beautiful.

Sasha gasps in awe at the quote. Jesse, however, is stumped.
What the fuck does that even mean?

MAYOR PYKE (CONT'D)
Well, enjoy the festivities! I think your friends are over in the lounging area.

SASHA
Cool. Well, it was nice to meet ya.

MAYOR PYKE
And you too, my dear. And you as well, sir.

JESSE
Oh, I'm not a guy.

MAYOR PYKE
My apologies, ma'am.

JESSE
Nope. Not that either.

MAYOR PYKE
(playful)
What is that supposed to mean?

Jesse tenses up, but Sasha takes them by the arm.

SASHA
I think we'll just head on in.

Mayor Pyke smiles, with a nodding gesture to seal the deal.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Sasha pulls Jesse into the party, as if she was holding them on a leash.

JESSE
Okay, okay, easy!

Sasha lets go, and Jesse rubs their arm.

JESSE (CONT'D)
You really gotta cut back on your workouts.

SASHA
Hm? Maybe. Come on, we're at a pool, let's just enjoy it.

Jesse spots John, talking with some of the locals. He seems happy. Jesse softens.

JESSE
I could use a new tan.

SASHA
Yeah, it probably nothing like when you were on tour though.

Jesse freezes, as if a nerve were touched.

JESSE
Y-yeah. It was really hot over there.

Jesse and Sasha walk along the pool perimeter. Kids splash in the water. Adults lounge around on floats. Some people are drinking and sunbathing.

Sasha takes off her clothes, and places them on a chair, revealing her bikini. She touches the water with her toe.

Jesse looks at Sasha with awe. *Goddamn, she looks good!*

Sasha turns to face Jesse, who's blushing red.

SASHA

You gonna come in? The temp's perfect!

Jesse snaps back to reality.

JESSE

Um, I think I'll join you in a little bit. Don't wait up for me.

Sasha smiles, and kisses Jesse. Jesse watches as she dives into the pool.

Jesse plops himself down on a chair, gazing out at the pool. Lots of fun. Happiness. Relaxation. Things they should be feeling...yet aren't.

PETER (O.S.)

How's the leg?

Jesse sees Peter and Morgan approach. Both are dressed like they just came from Hawaii.

JESSE

Oh, yeah. It's uh...it's doing good.

(to Morgan)

Happy birthday.

Jesse extends their hand out. Morgan politely returns the favor.

MORGAN

Thank you. I'm glad you could come.

Jesse sighs.

JESSE

Well, you know. I gotta get some fresh air every now and again.

Peter laughs.

PETER

Ah, that's a good one. Anyway, you heard anything about the car?

JESSE

Nah, they just keep saying something else. Feels kind of fishy.

PETER

Yeah, that's Brian. Can't keep a single thing straight. Well, I'm gonna talk with the mayor. I can see if he can spread the word, if you want.

Jesse, their face ecstatic, nods.

JESSE

Yes, definitely.

PETER

Honey, do you wanna come help?

Morgan looks at Jesse.

MORGAN

Actually, I think I'm okay. Go have a nice little chat.

PETER

You sure?

MORGAN

Dad, I'm not 8. I'll be fine.

Peter chuckles, and kisses Morgan on the forehead.

PETER

Alright, jelly bean. Enjoy the party! After all, it's yours.

Morgan snickers, as Peter walks off. Morgan takes a seat next to Jesse. Jesse gazes at her.

MORGAN

So, how's it been so far? Haven't really seen you out that much.

JESSE

I mean it's only been a day, right?

MORGAN

Fair, fair... Well, you seem to be
in a rush to leave. What's the
matter? Paradise a bit too much?

*
*

Jesse slouches in the chair, gazing at the pool. They half-smile.

*
*

JESSE

Nah. It's just...I don't know. You
know, for the longest time, I've
always wanted something like this,
but now it feels--
(shrugs)
--empty, I guess.

MORGAN

Yeah. I get that feeling sometimes.

Jesse sits up, now intrigued.

JESSE

You ever thought about leaving this
place?

*

Morgan chuckles.

MORGAN

Yeah, again, sometimes. I don't
know. I mean, I've got everything I
need here, but...there's a whole
world out there that I haven't
seen.

JESSE

Got a place you'd like to see.

Morgan ponders, before her eyes light up.

MORGAN

I guess, California. I've always
wanted to see the ocean. Waves
crashing over waves, the golden
sand, and gaze out onto an infinite
horizon.

JESSE

Wow. That's deep.

MORGAN

Mhm.

Morgan contemplates, then looks at Jesse. Like something's bugging her.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Hey, can I ask you something?

JESSE
Yeah, go ahead, shoot.

Morgan gulps, as if she's afraid to ask.

MORGAN
Your scans showed that you had massive amounts of scar tissue across your body. That plus a metal plate at the front of your skull. If you don't mind me asking, but where did you get all those?

Jesse pauses, glancing over at Morgan. She looks concerned. They sigh.

JESSE
Okay, I guess it's story time.
(beat)
I was part of a Black Ops squad. Got a lot of missions under my belt. Not a single hiccup in the plan.

*

INTERCUT WITH:

28 I/E. CAR - OUTSKIRTS OF RASHEED - NIGHT

28

A convoy of Humvees drives along a sandy road.

Inside, Jesse looks at their fellow comrades, smirking, as they all listen to "Nothing Else Matters" by Metallica.

JESSE
About two years ago, I was stationed in Rasheed, just outside of Baghdad. Wasn't too special. Got your shops, your people, some crazy radicals.

A rocket flies over the dunes.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Then, one night--

BOOM! One of the Humvees, is destroyed. Jesse's Humvee slams the breaks.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Our convoy was treated to an ambush
by some ISIS guerillas.

Jesse gazes outside to see men coming over the horizon, with
guns, and more RPG's. BOOM! Another Humvee explodes.

SCREAMS can be heard, as Jesse exits the car, before--BOOM!

END INTERCUT:

Jesse stares at the pool, their eyes empty.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I got hit with shrapnel.
Thankfully, I was pulled to safety.
I spent the next month in a coma
before I was flown back stateside
for treatment.

*

Jesse turns their attention back to Morgan. The look on her
face, Jesse could describe as haunted.

MORGAN

And the other scars?

Jesse tugs at their long sleeves. Morgan quietly gasps. She
gets it.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Oh.

JESSE

Don't worry about it. We all have
our scars.

MORGAN

I guess we do. My mother died years
back. Me and my dad were
distracted. But my dad, he
disappeared for days sometimes, but
one day, we went for a drive, and
stumbled across this place. And
since then, my dad has never felt
happier.

Jesse ponders and gazes at Morgan.

JESSE

Have you ever thought about
leaving?

MORGAN

Why would I? I got everything I need right here.

JESSE

Yeah, but there's so much out there to explore. You never once thought to go see what out there for yourself?

MORGAN

This is all I need. This place is everything. To me and to my father.

Jesse sighs.

JESSE

Well, if that's how you see it, then--

Jesse looks up, to see everyone, looking around. Sort of dazed and confused.

Jesse stands up, and Morgan follows suit.

Panic ensues among the crowd. Murmurs of confusion arise. The CONFUSION turns to FEAR.

Jesse darts their eyes all over the place. *What is going on?*

JESSE (CONT'D)

Does this happen often?

MORGAN

Never. Do you know what's--

BAM. A man KNOCKS Morgan into the pool. Chaos ensues around Jesse.

Jesse ignores the carnage and sees Morgan sinking to the bottom. Without hesitation, Jesse dives into the pool.

29

EXT. BLACK VOID

29

The water is replaced by an ENDLESS void. Morgan floats in this void, holding her breath.

Jesse swims as fast as they can, down to Morgan, who's desperately trying to swim, but can't.

Jesse quickly grabs Morgan, and hugs her tight. They look at Morgan, who seems mortified. With all their strength, Jesse swims back up to the surface.

BACK OUT

Jesse and Morgan resurface, and Jesse swims them to the poolside. They pull Morgan out, as she gasps for air.

Jesse takes off their wet shirt, revealing, their numerous SCARS across their arms, and chest. CLOSE UP on Jesse's wrists, covered in CUTS.

JESSE

Are you okay?

Morgan coughs.

MORGAN

I'm sorry. I can't swim.

Sasha, Peter and Marcy all converge on the pair.

PETER

Is everything alright? Are you okay, sweet pea?

MORGAN

I'm good. I'm good, dad.

Peter kneels down and hugs Morgan. He looks at Jesse, with admiration.

PETER

(mouths)

Thank you.

Jesse nods, and stands up. They gaze around, but something's...off.

The chaos has ceased. Everyone is chipper again, with everyone around them smiling. Now, Jesse is creeped out.

Sasha rushes to Jesse and hugs them.

SASHA

What the hell happened? Are you alright?

JESSE

I'm fine. Don't gotta worry about me. Everything's chill.

Marcy appears, but her eyes dart to Jesse's scars. She looks at them, like it's the only thing that matters.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I think I want to head out. Now.

Jesse and Sasha walks through the crowd. Everyone's eyes are on Peter and Morgan...except for Marcy. She pants heavily, looking at Jesse. *Why is that?*

30 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - BEDROOM - NIGHT 30

Jesse scours through their belongings. They come across a bag of joints. They stuff those into their pockets.

31 EXT. LILY GARDEN INN - NIGHT 31

Jesse sits on the porch of the inn, smoking a joint. They inhale and exhale deeply, relaxing.

Sasha pokes her head out the door.

SASHA

You doing any better?

Jesse glances at Sasha, but says nothing. Sasha slowly walks out, and sits down next to them.

SASHA (CONT'D)

So, me and the others were talking, and...we think we should stay a couple of weeks.

Jesse coughs, in shock at Sasha.

SASHA (CONT'D)

It might be good for you--

JESSE

Sash, this place is creepy-as-shit. How do you not see this? People going mad, acting inhuman? This place feels more like the Stanford Experiment.

Jesse takes another hit from their joint. Sasha just sits there, looking at them. Jesse knows where this is going.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Don't. Please don't give me that look.

SASHA

What look?

Jesse points to Sasha's face.

JESSE

"That" one.

SASHA

Okay. But you promised me that you wouldn't keep anything from me. Something's eating at you. What is it?

Silence. Sasha sighs.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Well, if you want to talk, you know where to find me.

*

Sasha gives Jesse a small kiss on the cheek. She stands up, dejected, and walks back inside.

Jesse watches Sasha leave. A wave a guilt washes over them.

They gaze down at their joint, before stomping on it. They stand up, but--

Jesse notices something. From a house across the way.

Intrigued, Jesse walks toward the house.

32

EXT. SERENITY LANE - NIGHT

32

Jesse hears WE THREE by THE INK SPOTS playing in the house.

*

Jesse crosses the street, looking all around. No one in sight. Steadfast, they approach the house with trepidation.

They look into the window to see--

Brian, sitting in a chair, robotically. It looks like he's drinking something, but...he isn't. His hand moves up and down, continuously. Almost like an animatronic.

Jesse gets up to the window, and spots something on Brian--a tear, streaking down his face. Like he's in pain.

Jesse, unsettled, slowly backs away. The sound of a VACCUM draws their attention to the next house.

Inside, a WOMAN vacuums, in the same pattern, OVER AND OVER.

Jesse, knowing it's wrong, presses on anyway--

33

DOWN THE STREET

33

MUSIC CUE: WE THREE by THE INK SPOTS (ND)

*

Jesse walks through the town, once lively and spry, now feeling like a ghost town: literally.

Jesse looks in the stores, and the houses. Women, men, children, are doing the same tasks on repeat, without any awareness.

As they continue to walk, Jesse gets more and more unnerved. Feeling they're seeing something they're NOT SUPPOSED TO.

JESSE
(whispers)
What the fuck?

Jesse approaches the butcher shop, from the previous day, and sees the butcher, chopping meat in the SAME SPOT. *Jesus Christ, is everyone like this?*

CLANK. Jesse turns around to a DISTANT NOISE. They don't see anything. When they turn back around--

The butcher is AT the window, staring at them. Jesse jumps back, startled.

END MUSIC CUE:

*

BUTCHER
Click. Clack. Click. Clack. Click
Clack.

WTF?! Jesse hears the same noises coming from the other stores and houses. Everyone, IN SYNC, chanting the same sounds, like a cult.

Jesse, panicking, runs into an alleyway--

34

EXT. SERENITY LANE - ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

34

Jesse rushes into the tight space. They whip their head around to look out at the street.

The sound has stopped. They can see no one. Jesse keeps their focus on the street, when--

A hand THRUSTS from the darkness, grabbing Jesse's shoulder.

On reflex, Jesse grabs the arm TIGHTLY, and pulls the person out--revealing MARCY, scared and crying.

Instantly, Jesse relaxes.

JESSE

Jesus Christ, you almost gave me a heart--

MARCY

You need to help me. I-I-I don't know where I am.

Jesse pauses, confused. Marcy sobs uncontrollably. Jesse breathes and looks upon Marcy with sympathy.

JESSE

It's okay, Marcy. Just...try and--

MARCY

That's not my name.

Jesse freezes. *That's not her name? What?*

JESSE

But your husband said, that your name--

MARCY

I don't have a husband. My name is Jennifer.

MARCY changes to JENNIFER.

JESSE

Jennifer?

Jennifer nods, on the verge of crying again.

JENNIFER

Please, please. You need to make him stop.

Jesse stares at Jennifer in confusion. *Him?*

JESSE

Him?

Jennifer stutters, unable to speak.

JENNIFER

He--He t-took me. Trapped me away. My life isn't my own.

JESSE

Jennifer, I don't understand.

JENNIFER
I've been drowning in my mind. You
set me free.

JESSE
(disbelief)
What?

JENNIFER
You need to help us--

Jennifer clutches her head, CRYING OUT IN AGONY. She
collapses to the ground, writhing in pain.

JESSE
Jennifer, what's wrong?!

JENNIFER
It burns! He's...he's in my head!
It hurts so much!

Jesse kneels down beside Jennifer, as the pain seems to
increase.

JESSE
Jennifer, who is he?

JENNIFER
Make him stop, please!

JESSE
Tell me who he is.

JENNIFER
Just MAKE HIM STOP---

POP! Jennifer's head EXPLODES, like a water balloon, covering
Jesse's face in blood.

Jesse stumbles back, horrified, their vision getting BLURRY.
They try to get away from Jennifer's corpse, as they close
their eyes, to try and hide from the horror.

They breathy quickly and shortly. Just like BEFORE THE CAR
CRASH.

They open their eyes to see--

35 EXT. RASHEED - NIGHT

35

A decrepit wasteland of scrap and fire. Numerous Humvee's
destroyed, and on fire. Soldiers SCREAMING as they BURN
ALIVE.

Jesse, on their ass, looks around, half out of it, yet still haunted by what they see. They feel their head.

Blood. Lots of blood, coming out. We ZOOM OUT to see, a piece of shrapnel lodged in their head.

Jesse gazes at their squad mates, burning in the humvee. Horrified, they crawl towards the burning vehicle. They reach out a hand, when--

BOOM! The Humvee in front of her EXPLODES, sending them into--

36 EXT. BLACK VOID

36

Jesse floats in suspension. Like there's nothing where they are.

Jesse gazes through the void, and SCREAMS--but no NOISE IS HEARD.

Their CRIES of anguish intensify. Yet, no SOUND. They're alone in the dark. And they can't do anything. Frozen in space...

37 EXT. SERENITY LANE - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

37

Jesse lies, motionless, on the ground. Crying uncontrollably. A shadow approaches, as Jesse convulses--

MATCH CUT TO:

38 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - BEDROOM - MORNING

38

Jesse rises from the bed in a panic, SCREAMING. They pant and catch their breath.

Jesse wipes their face, and gazes around. A fresh new day.
Was it just a bad dream?

They look around, but they notice something.

Sasha's bags are GONE. And so is she. The room is empty, save for Jesse.

Jesse looks around, unsure.

39 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - HALLWAY - MORNING

39

Jesse opens the door, still putting on their shirt in the process. They quickly walk out and over to the neighboring door.

KNOCK. KNOCK. Jesse knocks on the door.

JESSE

John, Max. You guys in there?

No response. Jesse grabs the doorknob. To their surprise, it OPENS.

The door swings open to reveal...a clean, empty room. No John or Max. Not even their bags are there.

Jesse gazes down the hall, then the other way. They swiftly walk away from the room.

40 INT. LILY GARDEN INN - DAY

40

Jesse descends the stairs quickly. They jump the last step, and speed walk over to Lily at the reception desk.

LILY

Good morning. I hope you slept okay last night.

JESSE

Eh, had some nightmares, but nothing to write home about.

LILY

Oh, I'm terribly sorry to hear that.

Jesse waves their hand.

JESSE

It's fine. But, I wanted to ask if you've seen my friends. I woke up, and their rooms are empty.

Lily stares at Jesse, like she's frozen. She regains her happy composure.

LILY

I'm sorry, but I'm not sure I know who you're talking about.

JESSE

(puzzled)

My friends? They were with me
yesterday. A blonde girl, tall guy,
and a girl with an afro? Ring any
bells?

Lily pauses again, stiff as a plank. She then shakes her
head.

LILY

I'm sorry. Is there anything else I
can help you with?

Jesse backs away from the reception desk. Lily smiles widely,
creeping Jesse out.

Jesse slowly turns around, and walks toward the exit.

41 EXT. LILY GARDEN INN - MOMENTS LATER 41

Jesse opens the door, and walks outside. They gaze out at the
town. Everything seems normal...maybe.

Jesse takes a deep breath, and calmly walks down the steps to--
-

42 EXT. SERENITY LANE - CONTINUOUS 42

MUSIC CUE: MISTER SANDMAN by THE CHORDETTES

Jesse walks down the street, gazing around at the
townspeople...

And they gaze back at them.

All the townspeople, with a smile plastered across their
face, look at Jesse as they walk down the street. And they
notice.

A dogwalker. A barber cutting someone's hair. The mailman.
Everyone. All doing tasks, yet they continue to gaze at
Jesse.

Jesse gulps, and walks faster. *This is some Stepford Wives
shit.*

Jesse strolls down the road, now, not looking at anyone, even
as people continue to glare at them. Like they're locked onto
them.

Jesse looks up, and sees the diner. Their eyes widen with hope. They rush over.

END MUSIC CUE:

43

INT. DINER - DAY

43

Jesse waltzes into the diner, eyes darting all across the place. They carefully walk in, unsure of their surroundings.

Kale walks up, and stands in front of Jesse, surprising them.

KALE

Welcome back! Glad to see that you decided to stay.

JESSE

Well, I mean...

KALE

Booth or counter?

Jesse gazes at Kale, lagging behind.

JESSE

I'm sorry?

KALE

Do you want a booth or a counter seat?

Jesse looks at a booth, then at the counter. Barely anyone's at the counter.

JESSE

Counter.

KALE

Splendid choice.

Kale grabs a menu, and directs Jesse over to the counter. They take a seat, toying with their hands.

They look at a picture of Kale and Marcy, and their children.

KALE (CONT'D)

Now, shall we get started off with some water?

Jesse whips back to Kale. They faintly nod their head. Kale puts a glass up, and pours some water in.

KALE (CONT'D)

Here you go.

Jesse takes a swig on the water, and gently rests the cup back down. *

JESSE

Thanks.

KALE

Now, do you know what you want? Or do you want to try something new?

JESSE

I'll--I'll just have an eggs benedict. With some OJ.

Kale scribbles the order down. Smiling and humming while doing so. He puts the order in through a kitchen window, and a female hand snatches it up.

Jesse tries to pretend like nothing wrong. But Kale sees something is.

KALE

You seem anxious. Is everything alright?

Jesse taps their hand. They don't know what to say.

JESSE

I...I don't know. Hey, by any chance have you seen my friends? They were gone when I woke up this morning.

Kale rubs his head, kind of like...he knows something.

KALE

Well, I can help you later, if you'd like.

Jesse shakes their head.

JESSE

Nah, I can't ask for that--

KALE

No, no, no, please. I insist. Here, we help each other. There's nothing wrong with that.

Jesse bites their lip. Behind them, all the patrons, stare at Jesse, with a smile on their face.

JESSE

Thanks. I guess I could use an extra hand.

KALE

Alright, sweet! In a couple of hours, Marcy and I could meet you here.

Then it dawns on Jesse--Marcy's dead.

JESSE

Marcy?

KALE

Yeah, she's the sweetest person you could ever meet. Always wants to help where help is needed.

JESSE

Wait, you don't know what happened to her?

Kale looks at Jesse, whilst cleaning some cups, seeming confused by the question.

KALE

I'm afraid I don't know what you're getting at.

JESSE

(realizing)
Oh jeez.

Jesse takes a deep breath, composing themselves to break the bad news.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Kale, I don't know how to tell you this...Marcy's dead.

Silence in the diner. A long beat.

Kale snickers, throwing Jesse for a loop. Kale's unphased. *

KALE

(playful)
Have you been drinking? I'll tell you what, you almost got me on that.

JESSE

What no, I saw her die in front of me last night.

KALE

Must've been someone else because
my wife's back there cooking your
brekkie.

Jesse straightens up, and tenses up.

JESSE

What?

SASHA (O.S.)

Eggs benedict, with an OJ.

Jesse hears a FAMILIAR voice. They turn and see--

Sasha, wearing a diner uniform with a nametag, reading
'MARCY.'

Sasha walks over and plates the dish in front of Jesse. Jesse
can't help but stare at her in confusion.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(as Marcy)

Do be warned, it is a little hot,
so you might want to let it simmer
for a minute.

KALE

Not as hot as you, babe.

Sasha cooes at Kale, who smiles. Jesse, bug-eyed, stares at
the two.

JESSE

What is going on here?

SASHA

(as Marcy)

Your breakfast is served. And as an
extra bonus, some strips of bacon.

JESSE

No, what are you doing here, Sasha?

Sasha scoffs, confused.

SASHA

(as Marcy)

I'm sorry, you must have me
confused with someone. My name is
Marcy.

JESSE

No, Marcy's dead. You, are Sasha.

SASHA
 (as Marcy)
 I'm not dead, I'm right here. I'm
 more alive than ever.

KALE
 Yes, you are, babe.

SASHA
 (as Marcy)
 Oh, you.

KALE
 Oh, you.

JESSE
 (to themself)
 Oh, fuck.

Jesse rubs their head. Kale and Sasha toy with each other,
 much to Jesse's dismay.

HONK. HONK.

The HONKING of a car draws Jesse's attention to the window.
 They rush over, and look out the window.

Outside, the mayor's car drives by, with him waving out the
 window.

Jesse observes the car, and the people it passes. They
 freeze, when they see the townspeople stop, like statues, when
 the mayor's car passes them.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 (to themself)
 The mayor.

Jesse backs away from the window, and bumps into Sasha.

SASHA
 (as Marcy)
 Sir, are you okay?

JESSE
 Yeah, I'm fine. And don't call me
 sir.

SASHA
 (as Marcy)
 Well, Kale told me about your
 friends that were missing. We can
 be of help--

JESSE
 (sheepish)
 Actually, I think I'll have no
 trouble finding them. But thank
 you.

Jesse walks toward the door.

SASHA
 (as Marcy)
 What about your breakfast?

JESSE
 Just realized, wasn't hungry. Okay,
 good. See ya!

Jesse opens the door, and sprints out. Sasha gazes at them
 with a hint of...recognition.

44 EXT. SERENITY LANE - DAY

44

Morgan walks down the street. She looks at the townspeople.
 All acting...weird. She hurries along.

As she walks, she notices...everyone is doing the SAME task.
 Over and over again. On loop. Worry crosses her face, to the
 point where--

She SLAMS into Jesse, sending both to the ground.

MORGAN
 Shit, I'm sorry!

JESSE
 Don't worry about it.

Morgan looks over at the barber, snipping a man's SCALP with
 scissors. A bit too much off the top.

Jesse looks at Morgan, and where she's looking at. They
 realize--

JESSE (CONT'D)
 Wait, can you see that?

Morgan, horrified, nods.

MORGAN
 Why is he still cutting?

Jesse stands up, and pulls Morgan to her feet.

JESSE
 Something tells me it's out of his
 hands.

MORGAN
 What?

JESSE
 Come on.

Jesse drags Morgan into--

45 INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

45

A barebone shop, filled with nothing. Not even paint on the wall. A new addition to the neighborhood.

Jesse closes the door, and locks it. Morgan backs away, a little scared.

MORGAN
 What're you doing, Jesse?

Jesse doesn't answer. They just glare at her.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Where's your girlfriend, and your
 other friends?

JESSE
 Ah, so you do remember them.
 Because every, single, person in
 this town has no fucking
 recollection of them.

MORGAN
 What?

JESSE
 Yeah, that's a head-scratcher I
 bet.

Jesse circles Morgan, like a hawk.

MORGAN
 But, that's not possible. Everyone
 met your friends. There's no way
 they could've forgotten. That's not-

-

JESSE

Possible? You know what else isn't possible? Someone's head exploding like a water balloon.

Morgan pauses, taking that information in.

MORGAN

Whose head?

Jesse hesitates.

JESSE

Marcy. O-or, Jennifer. Whoever she was. She dies right in front of me, last night. Just, POP, and she was gone!

MORGAN

Okay, you're scaring me. Please just calm down.

JESSE

NO!

Morgan silently gasps. Jesse snuffles, on the verge of tears.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(crying)

Everybody in this town, has been telling me to relax. That there's nothing wrong. But I saw someone die, with my own two eyes. Everyone acts like a goddamn pizza place animatronic, and now, my girlfriend has become the person whose head exploded in my face.

Morgan stands still, absorbing the info. She looks like her world has been rocked.

JESSE (CONT'D)

And it's the mayor.

Morgan shakes her head.

MORGAN

Wait, what?

JESSE

He's...controlling them somehow. I don't know how. But he's got my girlfriend under his spell.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

God knows he's probably got my friends too.

MORGAN

This--this is a lot to process.

Jesse softens, and calmly grabs both of Morgan's hands.

JESSE

I know this must be difficult to hear, but those people...aren't who you thought they were. You and Peter need to get out of here. Pack some stuff, and go to California. That's where you wanted to go right?

*
*
*
*

Morgan nods.

*

JESSE (CONT'D)

Just head there, maybe L.A., and put as much distance as you can between you and this place.

*
*
*
*

MORGAN

But--

*

Jesse quickly lets go, and goes to the door. They unlock it.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

What are you going to do?

Jesse pauses, but doesn't answer. They open the door, and walk outside.

Morgan gazes around at the stores, the people through the window. She blinks, and--

The MAILMAN is suddenly looking at her through the glass, scaring Morgan.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus Christ!

MAILMAN

My apologies, Marigold.

*

Morgan pauses. As if she's seen a ghost.

MORGAN

Wait, what did you just say?

The mailman doesn't answer. He just runs away. He's said too much. Morgan realizes this.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

46 EXT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - DAY 46

Jesse approaches the house, stealthy. They quietly rush toward the wall, and press up against it.

The double-door entrance opens, and BRIAN plus MANNY (50s) step out. Brian lights a cigarette.

Jesse walks along the houseline and up to the door, without being detected.

MANNY

(to Brian)

I didn't know you smoked.

BRIAN

Yeah, it's a bad habit. I have another session with Peter tomorrow to work on it.

Jesse quietly opens the door, and they slip inside.

47 INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER 47

Very eloquent, posh looking type of house.

Jesse gazes around, slowly walking through the foyer. HUMMING can be heard in another room.

Jesse, one quiet step at a time, proceeds into--

48 INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 48

A clean, well-kept room, filled with extravagant furniture.

Jesse stays vigilant, looking around their surroundings. FOOTSTEPS can be heard walking above Jesse. They react, looking up at the ceiling.

Jesse tip toes a little quicker, still staying silent and light on their feet. They pause at the doorway. They peer around the corner into--

49 INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 49

A fancy looking kitchen. A FIGURE HUMS, whilst cleaning the counter top. Their back is turned away from Jesse.

Jesse squints. *Who is that? She looks...familiar.*

Jesse crouches and sneakily dashes to behind the island. They peer over the counter, barely visible.

The figure turns around, and-- it's MAX, in a full maid get up.

Jesse's eyes widen.

JESSE
(quietly; in shock)
Max...

Max turns and looks in Jesse's direction. Jesse quickly ducks back down. *Shit!*

Max walks toward the island, down the left side. Jesse stays low to the ground, and goes down the right side. A game of cat and mouse.

The sound of a DOOR OPENING and CLOSING can be heard in the background

Jesse maneuvers around the bend, as Max appears around the corner.

MAX POV: No one's there. She turns and looks at the other side of the kitchen.

END POV:

Jesse watches Max walk away from the island. Then something catches their eye...a knife set.

Jesse slowly moves toward the set, keeping their eye on Max. They stand up, and reach their hand toward the top knife. Quietly, they pull the knife out.

Jesse quickly dives, back behind the island, as Max turns around. They pant, knife in hand.

Max glances around the kitchen, but shrugs. She walks out through the doorway Jesse entered.

Jesse gazes around the kitchen. It's empty. They sigh in relief. To their left, Jesse notices a stairwell.

They slowly stand up, and tip toe out of the kitchen.

50 INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS 50

Jesse makes their way up the stairs. Some steps CREAK as Jesse steps on them. They wince, pausing after each creak.

Jesse pauses. They stand still, gripping the knife tightly. *Did anyone hear that?*

They listen for any sounds. Nothing. Just...silence.

Jesse continues climbing the stairs.

51 INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY 51

Jesse sneaks down the corridor, glancing around at the numerous pictures of the Mayor on the wall. A lot of the pictures have Peter in them as well. *Huh. Weird.*

Jesse approaches a corner. They stop at the edge and peer around.

Manny walks back and forth in front of some double doors.

Jesse retreats behind the corner. They regrip the knife, into a defense mode--

MAX

What are you doing here?!

Jesse turns to see Max, standing in front of them. *Shit.*

JESSE

Max--

MAX

I said what are you doing here?

Max looks down, and notices the knife. She SCREAMS, startling Jesse.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hel--!!

Jesse rushes Max, covering her mouth. Her screams are MUFFLED.

JESSE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

A hand grabs Jesse's shoulder, and throws them across the room. They drop the knife in the process.

Jesse crashes into the wall, as Manny punches them in the gut, and puts them into a headlock.

MANNY

You're in the wrong house, bub!

Jesse elbows in the chest, HARD. Manny stumbles back, still holding Jesse in the headlock.

Jesse grabs Manny's arms, and tosses Manny over their shoulder, SLAMMING them to the ground. They turn to walk away, when Manny SWEEP KICKS Jesse, causing the to fall to the ground as well.

Jesse recovers quickly, as Manny comes in with a barrage of punches.

He lands a few good ones, but Jesse blocks most of the attacks. They duck underneath one punch, and hit Manny with a left hook, knocking him to the ground.

As Jesse approaches, Manny tackles Jesse to the ground, hands around their neck.

MANNY (CONT'D)

Why are you making me do this?

Jesse GASPS for air, as they notice the knife...right next to them.

MANNY (CONT'D)

WHY ARE YOU MAKING ME DO THIS?!

Jesse stumbles their hand around, trying to reach for the knife. They're struggling, bad.

MANNY (CONT'D)

He gave you a chance! And you blew it! You stupid, dirty, motherfucking--

Jesse JAMS the knife into Manny's throat, spilling his blood all over them.

As Manny releases his grip, Jesse GASPS and SCREAMS, throwing Manny to the floor, and straddling him.

Jesse brings the knife down. And again. And again. They just keep going, CRYING out as blood splatters across the hallway.

Then they stop.

Jesse's vision blurs, as their breathing speeds up. All they can see is their bloodied hands, trembling from their actions.

Jesse gazes upon Max, standing in terror. They stand up, but Max dashes away. *Wha--What did I do?*

Jesse stands still, as their actions settle in. They turn to the double doors, and that horror shifts to anger.

They limp with fervor toward the doors, when--

52

INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

52

SLAM! Jesse kicks the doors in. Inside, Pyke sit at his desk, looking over paperwork. He looks up to see a bloody Jesse. But he's not scared.

MAYOR PYKE

Ah, good morning. How may I help you today?

JESSE

Cut the bullshit. What did you do to my friends?

Pyke freezes, unsure of himself.

MAYOR PYKE

I'm afraid I don't understand the question.

Pyke smiles.

JESSE

You turned my girlfriend into a waiter at the diner. One of my friends is cleaning your kitchen downstairs. What did you do to them?

MAYOR PYKE

Ah, Lacey. Yes, well we sometimes like to call her 'Lazy Lacey' 'cause she slacks off, but I didn't do anything. She took the--

JESSE

How're you doing this? Hypnosis? Are you promising them something?

Pyke stands up from his desk in a huff.

MAYOR PYKE

I do say, I don't appreciate you
throwing around these wild
accusations.

JESSE

Then answer my question, please.

MAYOR PYKE

Well, I don't know of anything
about your friends, but if you
would like, I'd be happy to help.
Just please, put down the...knife.

Jesse doesn't drop the knife.

JESSE

That's not happening.

MAYOR PYKE

Well, if you're not willing to play
ball, then my security will--

JESSE

Their dead. Your entourage is dead,
so you can save me the spiel. Now,
tell me. What did you do to my
friends?

Pyke stands still, smiling. But frozen in fear. Jesse sighs
and rushes forward.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I don't have time for this.

Jesse jumps over the desk, and tackles Pyke to the ground.
They hold the knife at Pyke's throat. Pyke still smiles.

MAYOR PYKE

Th-this seems quite unnecessary.
Please, please, please.

JESSE

I swear to fuck, if you keep
begging I'll cut your fucking
throat. I swear to God.

Beat.

MAYOR PYKE

Help me.

Jesse pauses. *Help me?*

JESSE

Excuse me?

MAYOR PYKE

I...I just want to go home.

Jesse sees Pyke smile, and shed tears. He seems in pain, and not from the knife.

JESSE

But this is your home.

Pyke tries to shake his head.

MAYOR PYKE

It's not.

Jesse trembles, fear washing over their face.

MAYOR PYKE (CONT'D)

Have you seen my mom? My wife? My little boy?

Jesse drops the knife, and stumbles backward off of Pyke. They went too far. Jesse hyperventilates, looking down at their blood-soaked hands. They stand up and look out in the hallway.

JESSE

(to themselves)

It's not him.

Jesse stares at the corpse in the hallway. The one they killed. *What have I done?*

Jesse panics, and kneels back down.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Oh my God, I am so, so sorry.

They sit Pyke back up, and fix his coat up, as a remedy. For the first time, Pyke's smile drops, and his face floods with fright.

MAYOR PYKE

Thank you. Thank you.

Pyke hugs Jesse, who doesn't know how to think of this.

JESSE

Okay, okay. It's gonna be fine. Just relax. Alright?

Pyke breathes, taking a handkerchief out, and wiping the sweat off his brow.

MAYOR PYKE

Sorry. I don't think my heart's raced like that in years.

*

JESSE

Listen, I know people have called you Pyke, but is that your real name?

Pyke shakes his head.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Then what is your name? Your real name?

MAYOR PYKE

Adam Nimbus.

Pyke changes to ADAM.

JESSE

Okay, well, Adam, I know this must be very overwhelming. But can you try and remember stuff about yourself?

ADAM

Y-yeah, yeah. I was a computer salesman in Des Moines.

JESSE

You got the gift of the gap, I'll give you that.

ADAM

I was supposed to be at conference in Chicago. Wait, what day is it?

Jesse stares at him blankly.

JESSE

It's June 13th.

Adam collapses, sadness kicking in.

ADAM

Is...is it still 2015?

Jesse looks at him in horror. This boggles their mind.

JESSE
It's 2023.

ADAM
(realizes)
Oh sweet baby Jesus.

Adam rubs his head feverously, as Jesse pulls themselves together.

JESSE
Hey, hey, look at me. What's your kid's name?

ADAM
Bradley. He should be 10 by now.

JESSE
Bradley, okay. Well, I promise I will help you get back to Bradley and your family.

Adam smiles, but not in a creepy way. He sheds a tear.

ADAM
Thank you.

Jesse helps Adam up, and straightens his jacket again.

JESSE
So, do you remember anything else before you were taken?

Adam pauses as he thinks.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Listen, I don't know if this will help, but I just want a better understanding.

ADAM
Well, I saw this man approach me, then everything went dark.

JESSE
Man? What man? What sort of a man? do you remember what he looked like?

ADAM
It's a little fuzz--

POP! Adam's head explodes, covering Jesse in blood, brain matter and skin.

Jesse panics, and stumbles backward, loosing their footing. They catch themselves on the desk. They breathe heavily.

PETER (O.S.)
(distorted)
Well, then--

Jesse hears a muffled voice coming from the door. They see Peter, standing in the doorway, cleaning his glasses. Peter puts his glasses back on, and smiles, wickedly.

PETER (CONT'D)
That's not very nice.

Peter motions to someone. Jesse notices John, now in new attire, approaching them. Before they can react, John pulls out a TRANQ GUN, and hits Jesse with a dart. *

Jesse, woozy, goes limp and falls to the floor HARD--

CUT TO BLACK:

PETER (CONT'D)
(muffled)
Time to clean up this mess.

CUT TO:

53 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

53

Morgan grabs clothes from her closet and quickly packs them into a suitcase.

Morgan looks over at her nightstand, and sees a framed picture of her and her MOTHER. She walks over and picks it up. She looks at it, longingly.

MORGAN
I wish you were here, mom.

Peter enters the room, knocking on the door. Morgan turns around and looks at him blankly. She continues to pack.

PETER
Hey, sweetie. You missed dinner,
just wanted to check up on you.

MORGAN
I'm fine. I...just wasn't hungry.

PETER
But it's Taco Tuesday. Your
favorite.

MORGAN
I'm--I'm not hungry, dad.

Peter notices Morgan's suitcase.

PETER
What a--whatcha doing?

MORGAN
What does it look like?

Peter steps back, surprised.

PETER
Honey, is there something wrong?

MORGAN
(plays coy)
No, I'm good. Just...thought I
might want a nice change of
scenery. Being cooped up here and
all.

Morgan returns to packing. Peter twitches, a little peeved.

PETER
Why? You've got everything you need
right here.

MORGAN
Dad, I'm not a kid anymore. I can
make my own decisions.

Morgan turns around, slamming the suitcase shut. She zips up
the suitcase quickly, in a hurry.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
And it's why I'm leaving.

Peter, unable to comprehend, shakes his head.

PETER
Okay, and can I ask why?

MORGAN
I just--need to get out of here.
Please move, dad.

Morgan grabs her suitcase, and walks past Peter, grimacing.
He turns and follows her.

54 INT. MORGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

54

Morgan descends the stairs with Peter following close behind her.

PETER

Morgan. I don't know what's going on, but we can fix this. Just tell me what's wrong.

Morgan looks at Peter with dread.

MORGAN

You know, I went to the diner this morning. And a funny thing happened. I saw Sasha there, working. And apparently, she thinks she's Marcy.

PETER

One of Jesse's friends? That doesn't make much sense.

Morgan scoffs.

MORGAN

You wanna know what makes less sense? No one in this town remembers her. Nor her other friends...except you.

PETER

What?! No, that's--

MORGAN

And then some of the neighbors started calling me 'Marigold.' And only one person calls me that. So just drop this shit!

Cat's out of the bag. Peter scowls.

PETER

It's that Jesse, isn't it. They've told you these things about me.

MORGAN

No. You can blame Jesse all you want, but they didn't do this. I just finally opened my eyes.

Morgan turns and goes for the door.

PETER

Morgan, please. This place is safe.
It's better this way for everyone
here.

Morgan shakes her head.

MORGAN

Can you get off your ego horse for
one goddamn minute? If you truly
care about me...let these people
go.

Morgan grabs the doorknob. Peter grabs Morgan's hand
forcefully.

PETER

You're not going anywhere.

MORGAN

Yes I am.

PETER

No, you're not. You're not leaving
because I have sacrificed
everything for this place, and if
you leave, I'll have nothing!

Morgan SHOVES Peter, sending him to the ground. Morgan stands *
over him.

Morgan opens the door and walks out, SLAMMING the door shut.

55 EXT. MORGAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT 55

Morgan exits swiftly, and walks down the street, looking
around.

People start coming out of there shops and houses, all eyes
on Morgan. Morgan halts, startled. She looks around as the
people close in on her. *

Morgan dashes through the crowd, and towards the woods, *
disappearing into the dark. *

56 INT. MORGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 56

Peter, an angry ball on the floor, SCREAMS at the top of his
lungs--

PETER

MORGAN!

Peter repeatedly punches the floor, ECHOING into--

57 INT. DINER - MEAT LOCKER - NIGHT

57

Jesse wakes up, groggy. They are still covered in blood, now dried and frozen.

They try and move, but don't very far. They hear metal JINGLING. They peer behind to see they are handcuffed to a pipe.

Jesse turns and sees--a CORPSE, up on a meat hook. They SCREAM. *

JESSE

Jesus fuck! *

Jesse looks around, and sees numerous corpses, all varying in ages and size. They see one of Marcy's SUPPOSED KIDS, in a plastic bag.

JESSE (CONT'D)

The fuck?!

Jesse looks to the door. It opens, revealing Peter, John and Max. Peter steps in, pissed off. *

PETER *

Where is she?! *

Peter kneels down, looking Jesse dead in the eye. *

JESSE *

Care to elaborate? *

Peter SLAPS Jesse across the face, no remorse shown. *

PETER *

My daughter. Where is she? *

JESSE *

Why do you think I know? I just met her. *

PETER *

Please, she's my baby girl! And the world is a dangerous place out there! *

JESSE

I don't think you're giving her
enough credit.

PETER

I need to find her, Jesse. Please,
it's urgent!

JESSE

Why? So you can blow her head off?

This catches Peter off guard.

PETER

Unbelievable. You actually think I
would do such a thing to my own
daughter?

Jesse, weary, shrugs.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm trying to protect her. That's
all.

JESSE

No, you're just trying save your
own ass.

PETER

Alright, how about this. If you
don't tell me, I will kill you, and
make your friends watch.

Silence.

JESSE

Go ahead. You'll just kill me
regardless.

PETER

Wow. That's hurtful.

Peter grimaces. And Jesse sees it. They sigh.

JESSE

Okay, okay. If I tell you where
she's going? Will you let me go?

Peter furrows, like a nerve was touched. He stands up, and
paces around the room.

PETER

Let you...go?
(fake laughs)
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Wow, that's some logic. Why in my
right mind would I let you leave?
So you can go out there, an-and
tell people about this place? Do
you think I'm gonna let a shell-
shocked whacko leave so they can
destroy EVERYTHING I worked so hard
to build? You think I'm gonna let
you destroy my greatest
achievement?!

JESSE

(sarcastic)

Yeah, there's no deep seated issues
there.

Peter stops.

PETER

You best start taking this more
seriously. You know what I can do.
You've seen what I'm capable of.
You shouldn't trifle with me!

JESSE

Do you hear yourself? You know
what? Morgan was smart to run away.
She doesn't have to deal with your
psycho ass.

Peter SCREAMS, picking up a meat hook and throwing it across
the freezer. He breathes heavily, collecting himself.

PETER

You wanna play hardball? Fine! You
have ten seconds to tell me where
my daughter is going.

Jesse gulps.

JESSE

The rules haven't changed. You're
gonna kill me the second I tell
you.

Peter raises his hand up, and clenches his fists--

POP! John's head explodes, covering Peter and Jesse in blood.
The headless body collapses to the ground.

JESSE (CONT'D)

NO!

Max steps forward, robotically. Peter whisps his hand, and Max's expression changes. To one of FEAR.

MAX
(crying; in pain)
Jess...Help me. Please

JESSE
Max, Max. Just look at me. It's--
it's going to be okay.

Jesse trembles as Peter grabs Max by her hair. *

PETER
Jesse? JESSE! *

Jesse's attention snaps up to Peter. *

PETER (CONT'D) *
The rules can change. *

Jesse STUTTERS uncontrollably. *

PETER (CONT'D) *
I'm gonna kill her in ten seconds. *
10... *

Jesse fidgets against the pole. They look at Max, like it's the last time. *

PETER (CONT'D) *
9...8...7... *

JESSE *
(out of breath) *
I-I can't-- *

PETER *
6...5-- *

JESSE *
(exhausted) *
Okay. Okay....She's going to L.A. *

Peter releases Max from his grip. She still stands, paralyzed. *

PETER *
See, that wasn't so hard, was it? *

JESSE *
(begging) *
Let her go. Please. *

Peter looks at Jesse, then towards Max, seemingly unfulfilled. He clenches his fist, and--

*
*

Max's head EXPLODES. Her body collapses to floor, in front of a horrified Jesse.

PETER

You try anything, you escape, and guess what'll happen to your dear girlfriend.

*
*
*
*

Jesse tries to lunge at Peter, but can't.

*

JESSE

You're a fucking cunt!

Peter shuts the door, and locks it.

58

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

58

Peter exits the diner, wiping the blood off of his arms and face. Kale approaches along with BILLY (57), one of Peter's friends. He's dressed like a redneck.

PETER

Did you find her?

BILLY

Sorry, Pete. She's a slippery little fucker. Just darted away and disappeared into the dark.

Peter rubs his head, frustrated.

PETER

You know, I'm hearing a lot of talking, and not a lot of doing.

BILLY

Pete, please--

Peter grabs Billy by the throat, and squeezes. Billy tries to break free, but fails.

PETER

I let you keep your mind, so now, prove to me that it wasn't a mistake to do so. I will not have my crowning achievement be dismantled by my daughter and some shell-shocked fairy! Do I make myself clear?!

Billy weakly nods. Peter releases him, causing him to crash to the ground. Billy coughs and gasps for air.

BILLY
(weakly)
Thank you.

PETER
Go watch our guest. Or you'll know what it feels like to be a 'true' resident.

Peter walks off, with Kale following him. Billy stands back up, and rubs his neck.

BILLY
(under his breath)
Asshole.

Billy walks into the diner quickly. Unbeknownst to him--

Morgan appears from around the corner. She heard the WHOLE thing. She notices Billy enter the diner. Quietly, she sneaks up to the diner door, and quickly enters.

INT. DINER - MEAT LOCKER - SAME TIME

*

Jesse fiddles with the cuffs. They blink quickly.

*

JESSE POV:

*

Their vision becomes blurry, as blood drips down.

*

END POV:

*

Jesse's breathing slows, as they slump over. They're out cold.

*

*

59

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

59

Morgan crouches, and sneaks across the diner floor. Billy doesn't notice her.

She sneaks along the booths, slowly, and quietly, when--

SQUEAK. Her foot slips on a puddle. She cringes. Billy stops and turns around.

Morgan backs away, as Billy walks over to where she is. He turns the corner and--she's gone. Billy looks under the booth and at the other tables. We PULL BACK to reveal--

Morgan, behind a stand at the front of the diner, covering her mouth. She breathes quietly.

She peers around the corner. Billy's gone. She sighs in relief, she turns back around to see--

Billy. Standing right over her. She SCREAMS, but her puts his hand over her mouth.

BILLY

Shut up! You've caused dad enough of a headache. Don't start givin' it to everyone else.

Billy grabs Morgan by the arm, and drags her.

MORGAN

Let me go! Let me go, you bastard!

60

INT. DINER - MEAT LOCKER - NIGHT

60

Jesse is out cold. The door opens. Morgan is looking at the corpses on John and Max. Billy throws Morgan into the locker, and steps inside.

BILLY

You know, your father is a real piece of work. He gave everybody what they wanted, except me.

Billy lunges onto Morgan, straddling her. Uh oh! Morgan screams.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, now. Don't be scared. What's love without a little fear? That's the part I like the most.

Morgan cries. Jesse rises over Billy with a meat hook in their hands. They're free! They hit Billy with the backside of it, CRACKING their head open, and sending them to the ground.

Jesse drops the meat hook, and fiddles with their PRIDE PIN, unlocking the other handcuff. They throw the cuffs on the ground and put their pin, back on their jacket.

Billy convulses in pain, as Morgan kicks him and crawls away. She snatches the meat hook, and clubs Billy with it. Several times.

JESSE

Morgan. Hey, Morgan! That's enough!

Jesse pulls Morgan away from Billy's body, as she drops the hook and cries. She hugs Jesse, who embraces her.

MORGAN

B-but, but he--he--

JESSE

I know, it's okay. It's okay.

Beat.

MORGAN

I'm think I'm ready to go now.

Jesse soothes Morgan.

JESSE

Then let's go.

Jesse stuffs the handcuffs in their pocket, and they and Morgan leave the locker.

61 INT. DINER - KITCHEN - NIGHT

61

Jesse and Morgan rush into the kitchen. Jesse keeps running, but Morgan stops. She turns on the grills, and the fryers. Jesse stops and turns around.

JESSE

What the hell are you doing?

Morgan grabs a jar of oil, and pours it along the floor.

MORGAN

My dad built this place. Only seems right that I destroy it.

Morgan hurls the jar at the stove. The jar breaks and a wall of fire ERUPTS, spreading to the floor and the other appliances.

The fire alarm BLARES. Jesse and Morgan cover their ears.

JESSE

Come on, let's go!

Jesse grabs Morgan, and pulls her towards the door.

62 EXT. SERENITY LANE - SAME TIME 62

Peter turns his attention to the diner, hearing the fire alarm. He sees smoke coming out. Anger and fear fuel his face.

63 INT. DINER - NIGHT 63

Jesse and Morgan burst out of the kitchen. They cough as smoke fills the room.

Peter, Brian, Kale, and Sasha all enter through the front door, and spot Jesse and Morgan.

PETER
(to Morgan)
What have you done? WHAT HAVE YOU
DONE?!

Jesse walks up, unafraid.

JESSE
Release them.

PETER
What?

MORGAN
You heard them. Let these people
go.

Peter, gritting his teeth, tenses up.

PETER
You, still don't get it, do you?
What's so good about the world that
you want to go back to? A world
full of hate? Of lies?

JESSE
That's not for you to decide. These
people have lives, they deserve to
fight for them, to try. To hope.

Peter scoffs.

PETER
Oh, shut the fuck up!

MORGAN
I can't believe mom ever married
someone like you. You're a monster.

Beat. Jesse gets into a fighting stance.

PETER

No, in this town, I'm God.

JESSE

And-- that's where I draw the line. *

Jesse charges at Peter, only for Kale to grab him. Brian and Sasha follows. Peter closes in on Morgan.

64 ON MORGAN:

64

Morgan backs up against a table. Peter closes in.

PETER

I gave you everything, and this is the thanks I get?! You ungrateful, little bitch!

Morgan feels around, grabbing a fork. She drives it into Peter's cheeks. He CRIES out in pain. Morgan tackles him to the ground.

65 ON JESSE:

65

Kale tosses Jesse over the counter, with Jesse falling to the floor. Bloody and bruised, Jesse stands up. Kale comes in with punches. Jesse blocks them.

Brian stabs Jesses in the arm. They grunt in pain, but press on. They tackle Kale, and put them in a headlock.

JESSE

Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Go to sleep.

Kale struggles until he passes out. Jesse breathes heavily, pulling themselves up--

Brian SMASHES a coffee pot over Jesse's head, slamming them to the counter.

Flames borrough out into the diner. Sasha approaches Jesse with a knife. Jesse dodges the knife, and quickly disarms Sasha.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I don't want to fight you, Sasha.

SASHA
 Buddy, I told you, my name is
 Marcy!

Sasha SLAMS Jesse's head onto the counter. She is about to
 again, when--

Morgan kicks Sasha down. She grabs a mug of hot coffee, and
 tosses it at Brian, scorching his face. Morgan leaps over the
 counter, side-kicking Brian in the head. K.O.! Brian's out
 cold.

Morgan helps Jesse up. They both hop over the counter.

JESSE
 We should take this outside.

SASHA
 You're not going anywhere!

Jesse and Morgan turn around to see Sasha standing up. Jesse
 stands firm, but Morgan, not so much.

MORGAN
 Any plans?

JESSE
 I got one.

Sasha runs at Jesse and Morgan. But Jesse is quick. They pull
 Morgan in, and kisses her on the lips. Sasha pauses. She
 looks at Jesse with a hint of...jealousy.

Sasha walks over, and pushes Morgan aside. She SLAPS Jesse
 across the cheek.

SASHA
 What the hell's wrong with you? You
 double dipping, Jess?!

Jesse smiles.

JESSE
 Welcome back, Sash.

Jesse gives Sasha a smooch on the lips, as Sasha softens. Her
 eyes open in...realization.

SASHA
 (worried)
 Wait, where are John and Max?

JESSE
 They're dead.

SASHA

What?!

JESSE

It's a long story, but we gotta--

Sasha CRIES out in agony, clutching her head. Jesse turns around to see Peter, weak, looking at Sasha with his hand open.

Full of fury, Jesse charges at Peter.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Leave her ALONE!

Jesse tackles Peter into a table, bashing his head on it. Sasha SIGHS in relief. The pain is gone! Morgan helps Sasha stand properly.

The fire continues to spread. It engulfs the roof, and beams begin to fall.

Jesse and Peter tussle, dealing blows to each other. Jesse left-hooks Peter, as the fire surrounds them.

Morgan, helping Sasha, hears CRACKS from the ceiling. Jesse hears them too. They look at Morgan.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Get them out!

MORGAN

But--

JESSE

NOW!!

Morgan hesitates, but nods. She leaps over the counter and grabs Kale and drags him over.

Sasha grabs Brian, and holds him over her shoulder.

SASHA

Oh, shit!

Sasha and Morgan drag and carry the bodies out the door. As they exit, a beam collapses, blocking the door.

Peter gazes around at the blazing inferno. His dream burning down before his eyes. Jesse looks around, only seeing flame.

Peter glances at Jesse, with rage in his eyes.

PETER
I will...make you...suffer!

JESSE
I've been through worse, pansy.

Peter let's out a ROAR and SLUGS Jesse in the chest. Cinders land on both of them, burning their bodies.

The fire gets more and more powerful.

66 EXT. SERENITY LANE - DINER - NIGHT

66

Sasha and Morgan lay Kale and Brian down. Knocked out, not dead. Sasha turns around to go back inside, when--

BAM! An EXPLOSION can be heard inside the diner. Sasha tries to run, but Morgan holds her back.

SASHA
Jesse! Jesse!

MORGAN
No, you can't go in there.

The ground begins to rumble around them as they see the fire burn brighter than before. Morgan pulls Sasha to the ground.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Everybody down!

No one gets down. Fire erupts out of the windows--

And Jesse and Peter come crashing out, with Jesse landing on Peter.

Jesse scrambles and grabs Peter's right arm, breaking it! SNAP! They grab Peter's other arm, and they break it! SNAP! Peter yells out in pain, while Jesse grabs Peter by the throat.

SASHA
Jesse?

JESSE
(to Peter)
Let them go.

Peter gurgles, sounding like RABID DOG. Jesse isn't having any of it. *This. Ends. Now!*

SASHA
Jesse, stop! Please!

MORGAN
Jesse, that's enough!

Jesse ignores them.

JESSE
 (to Peter; coldly)
 I said. Let. Them. Go!

Peter tenses up, as if he's getting a second wind. But he exhales--

And all the townspeople flop to the ground at once. That's enough for Jesse. They release Peter's neck, and breathe heavily.

The townspeople come to, and look around in confusion and fear. Murmurs go throughout the crowd. *"Where am I?" "What day is it?" "Who are you?" Etc.*

Jesse coughs up blood, as they fall to their knees. They hear the sound of LAUGHTER coming from Peter.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 What's so funny?

PETER
 You think I'm monster. But you're no different from me. How many people have you killed? How many, today alone?

Jesse puts their hand on Peter's chest and pushes down on it. Bones creak, but Peter has a smile on his face.

PETER (CONT'D)
 (malicious)
 Come on! You know you want to.

Jesse hesitates, as the town focuses in on the pair.

PETER (CONT'D)
 DO IT!

Jesse takes their hand off Peter's chest, and they stagger to their feet.

JESSE
 (out of breath)
 No.

Peter laughs.

PETER
 You don't have the guts.

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE
 Maybe not,--

Jesse points to the townspeople.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 --but they do.

Peter tilts his head to see the townspeople converge on him, as Jesse backs away.

The mob moves in, kicking, curbstomping, punching Peter as he disappears from view. But his CRIES of anguish ECHO through the town.

Jesse turns away and limps off. Morgan and Sasha both holding each other follow Jesse.

67

EXT. FOREST HILL - DAWN

67

Morgan and Sasha walk behind the burning diner to see Jesse, sitting on a hill, watching the sun rise. They limp over and join them.

Jesse looks at the horizon longingly. The rise of a new day. They notice Sasha and Morgan sitting down next to them.

Jesse searches their pockets and pulls out a joint. They show it to Morgan and Sasha.

JESSE
 Anyone got a light?

Sasha searches her pockets and pulls out a lighter. She holds the lighter close to the joint and lights it. Jesse takes a puff. They breathe out.

Jesse passes the joint to Sasha who takes a big puff. She breathes out a heavy cloud of smoke. She passes the joint to Morgan, who looks at it curiously. She's never done a weed before.

Morgan takes an inhale, and coughs. Sasha chuckles, and Jesse smirks. But the smirk fades, as tears well up.

MORGAN
 Man, that shit is strong.

SASHA
 It's medicinal. Right, babe?

Morgan and Sasha see Jesse sniffing, eyes watering.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 Jess, are you okay?

Jesse looks at Sasha. The dam is ready to burst.

JESSE
 No.

Jesse collapses into Sasha, sobbing uncontrollably. Sasha wraps herself around them and hugs tight. Morgan joins in on the hug.

The three hug as the diner burns behind them. The sound of the angry MOB can be heard, while SIRENS can be heard in the distance.

JESSE (PRELAP) (CONT'D)
 There are some things in life man is not meant to witness. And sometimes it can really fuck someone up. I could barely live with the pain of seeing my friends die in my sleep, every night.

FADE TO:

68 INT. DR. FRIEDKIN'S OFFICE - DAY

68

The day is sunny. Jesse sits across from Dr. Friedkin, looking more attentive. They have bandages across their face and arms.

JESSE
 But, I just kept trying to block it out. But that only made it worse. And I'm glad I finally realized that.

Dr. Friedkin scribbles down some not, looking quite pleased.

DR. FRIEDKIN
 Well, Jesse, I must say, I'm grateful you decide to take this seriously. And you came to this realization during your trip, correct?

JESSE
 Yeah that's right.

DR. FRIEDKIN
 Was there anything specific that made you come to this epiphany?

Jesse ponders for a moment.

JESSE
Yeah, there was this girl.

INTERCUT WITH:

69

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

69

Morgan sits at the kitchen counter, having a bowl of cereal. She smiles as she looks through some of Jesse's magic books.

JESSE (V.O.)
She was also going through something. She needed a place to stay, so she's staying with me and Sasha. We're planning on taking a trip to L.A. in a couple of months. The girl's always wanted to visit it.

*
*
*
*

Morgan hears Sasha come out, and turns around. She checks out Sasha's dress, as Sasha does a small twirl.

END INTERCUT:

DR. FRIEDKIN
Is she alright?

JESSE
Yeah, she's fine. Seeing a normal shrink, but I think she'll pull through.

DR. FRIEDKIN
And what about you?

Jesse pauses. A long beat.

JESSE
I still have some ways to go.

DR. FRIEDKIN
That's all I needed to hear.

Dr. Friedkin's phone alarm BLARES. He shuts it off. Jesse smiles and stands up. Dr. Friedkin stands up as well, and the two shake hands.

DR. FRIEDKIN (CONT'D)
So, when are we thinking? Next week, same time?

JESSE

Yeah, that works. Could we do that for a couple future appointments as well?

70 EXT. DR. FRIEDKIN'S OFFICE - DAY

70

Jesse exits the building, with a pep in their step. They stroll down the street looking forward.

Jesse feels their pants VIBRATE. They reach into their pocket and pull out their phone. Morgan's calling. Jesse answers.

JESSE

Yeah?

MORGAN (V.O.)

Hey, so Sasha wanted to take us out for lunch at that new steakhouse.

Jesse grimaces a little.

JESSE

I'm not sure I'm ready to eat meat for a while.

MORGAN (V.O.)

Me neither. I'll probably just order a salad.

JESSE

Well that sounds nice. Just shoot me the address I'll meet you too there.

MORGAN (V.O.)

Sounds good.

SASHA (V.O.)

Love you, bae!

JESSE

I love you, too. See ya in a few.

Jesse makes a KISSING sound, and hangs up. They stop.

The sun beams down on Jesse. They look up, basking in the sunlight. They smile as they let light pour over them. Finally at peace.

END: