

SCALPS

written by

John McMinn

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

A thick forest in the southern USA.

First light hits a rural dirt road. It is virtually SILENT, save for the occasional CHIRPING of BIRDS and CRICKETS.

A pickup truck pulls off the road and rolls into a small clearing in the woods. The truck stops and the ENGINE SHUTS OFF.

Two middle-aged FISHERMEN emerge from the truck and remove fishing poles, tackle-boxes, and other gear from the bed of the truck.

The fishermen carry their gear into the woods, following a narrow, overgrown trail.

They travel deep into the forest.

EXT. WOODS - BIG CREEK - LATER

Finally, the fishermen reach a small clearing that leads to a creek - Big Creek.

The fishermen put on their chest-high rubber wading gear and attach hooks and lures to their fishing poles.

They step into the water and wade several feet away from the creek bank. They cast their lines into the creek and wait patiently for a bite.

Nothing's biting.

They reel in their lines and cast again.

Still no bites.

One of the fishermen reels in his line and re-casts. The other tries to reel in his line, but it is snagged on something and won't budge.

The fisherman follows the line out to where the hook is snagged. He reaches into the creek and pulls something out. The fisherman is startled.

He WHISTLES and waves for his companion to come over.

The friend wades over to him.

The fisherman shows his friend the DECAYING HUMAN LEG that his hook has latched onto.

INT. SUPERMARKET - EVENING

A supercenter.

Endless rows of canned goods and produce are bathed in harsh fluorescent light. MUZAK plays lightly over the LOUDSPEAKER, occasionally interrupted by an EMPLOYEE ANNOUNCEMENT.

CAL DYER (mid-40s), with thick glasses and thin hair, pushes a shopping cart through the aisles of the supermarket. He references a grocery list as he shops. He counts the items in his cart.

Pushing the cart around the corner, he stops in the next aisle to browse for cereal. After carefully studying the prices on the cereal boxes, Cal opts for the off-brand.

Cal continues on to the next aisle. He buys rice, again comparing the prices and buying the cheapest brand on the shelf.

Proceeding to the produce section, Cal takes squashes to the scale and adds to/subtracts from the total until he gets as close to one pound as possible.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CHECKOUT LANE - LATER

Cal stands in line waiting to check out. The line is short, but the service is slow. He waits patiently. He glances at a rack of newspapers. One of them has photos of two TEENAGE GIRLS and has a headline that reads:

LOCAL GIRLS MISSING

An OLDER WOMAN who carries only a couple of items approaches Cal. He smiles and nods at her, letting her cut in front of him.

Cal's attention drifts as he stares at a cute, but very young female SHOPPER in a nearby lane.

CASHIER (O.S.)

Sir?

Cal doesn't notice the cashier.

The ELDERLY SHOPPER in line behind Cal gently prods him with her shopping cart. He snaps to.

ELDERLY SHOPPER

The register's open.

Cal approaches the checkout counter.

He methodically adds his items to the counter, making it easier for the CASHIER to bag his groceries.

The cashier rings up Cal's items.

Cal takes out his wallet and we get a glimpse of some hairs poking through one of the folds. He pays for the groceries in cash with exact change. Cal always pays in exact change.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Cal sits in his weather-beaten Oldsmobile, leaning into the backseat with his receipt in hand. He goes through every bag, making sure that each item is present.

Satisfied that everything is in order, Cal backs out of the parking lot and heads home.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - LATE EVENING

An attractive and tastefully-decorated house. This is not something Cal could've accomplished. A woman's touch is evident.

The door opens and Cal enters the house carrying bags of groceries. He puts down the groceries on a nearby table and immediately closes and deadbolts the door. He picks up the bags again and heads further inside.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cal puts the groceries on the counter. A hand-written note waits for him on the countertop:

NOTE
*Went to Hailey's softball game,
 you 're on your own for dinner.
 - Linda*

Cal turns back to the bags and meticulously begins putting the groceries in the appropriate cabinet or on the refrigerator shelf.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cal sits on the couch watching the 6 o'clock news.

ONSCREEN:

EXT. WOODS - BIG CREEK - NIGHT

CAROLYN O'NEAL, newscaster, stands near Big Creek. POLICE sift through the creek with nets in the background.

CAROLYN

This is Carolyn O'Neal of Channel Seven News reporting live from Big Creek. Around seven o'clock this morning two fishermen found the remains of a human leg right here in the creek. Investigators believe that the remains of one of the two girls who have recently gone missing from Green-Oak County could be resting at the bottom of the creek. Authorities are testing the remains to determine if they could belong to sixteen-year-old Jessica Buttons or fifteen-year-old Penny Howell. Police will continue to sweep the area for more remains throughout the night. Stay tuned to Channel Seven. We'll keep you posted on any major developments as this story develops.

BACK TO:

Cal's eyes widen.

EXT. CAL'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Cal unlocks his car door, climbs into the driver's seat and quickly backs out.

EXT. WOODS - BIG CREEK - NIGHT

Red and blue lights flash in the distance. Bright search lights illuminate the area.

Cal creeps through the woods, quietly approaching Big Creek. He finds a secluded spot and watches as the police comb the area for the missing girls.

INT. CAL'S CAR - NIGHT (LATER)

Cal pulls into a secluded neighborhood and parks his car in front of Earl's house.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Cal rings Earl's DOORBELL.

EARL, 75, cracks open the door and peeks through, revealing his grizzled, stubbly face. He regards Cal.

EARL

Well, what the hell are you just standing there for?

Earl opens the door all the way and makes room for Cal to enter.

Cal squeezes past Earl and into the house.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Gun racks, stuffed game, and tacky religious paintings adorn the walls. Everything in Earl's dusty house has seen better days.

The TELEVISION can be heard from the living room.

Cal surveys the house, nervously eyeing the religious icons that adorn the house.

Earl creeps into the living room.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark, lit only by the flicker of the TV and the light spilling in from the foyer.

Earl has a seat on the couch. He watches a black-and-white WESTERN on television.

Cal sits down next to him.

Earl ignores Cal and focuses on the excitement on the television screen.

Sweat beads begin to form on Cal's forehead. He pulls his shirt away from his body to keep it from sticking.

CAL

Why's it so hot in here?

Earl motions for him to be quiet.

EARL

Keep it down. Gunsmoke's on.

The sweat continues to pour from Cal's brow. His breathing becomes HEAVIER, his BREATHS more frequent.

CAL
Really, Dad. I'm burning up.

Earl ignores Cal's plea.

CAL
Do you think you can turn it down for a minute, dad? I haven't seen you in a while.

Earl lunges for the remote and turns off the television.

EARL
Oh hell. I already seen that one anyway.

CAL
Thank you.

Cal removes his glasses and wipes sweat from his brow.

CAL
What's with this heat, anyway? It's not even June yet. It shouldn't be sweltering like this.

EARL
Air conditioner's broke again.

CAL
It's not working at all?

EARL
I just said it ain't.

CAL
I mean, does it turn on at all or is it completely dead?

EARL
It turns on, but it don't blow any cold air. Only blows hot air.

CAL
How long has it been like that?

EARL
Since last summer.

CAL
Jesus Christ, Dad.

EARL

Now what'd I always tell you about taking the Son's name in vain?

CAL

Sorry.

EARL

Thirty years ago, I'd have slapped the shit out of you for saying that.

CAL

Do you think the air conditioner can be fixed, or need a new one?

EARL

Do I look like some kind of fucking mechanic? How the hell should I know if it can be fixed?

CAL

I'll have that guy who lives down the street from me come out here and take a look at it. He fixes things like this for a living. He'll be able to tell you if you need a new one.

EARL

What the hell good will that do? I can't afford a new one anyway.

CAL

I can afford to buy you a new air conditioner.

EARL

I'll live.

CAL

Really. They're not that expensive nowadays and I just got that big promotion a couple of months ago. Linda and I can spare the money.

EARL

I guess it is the least you can do.

Cal is a bit taken aback, but quickly brushes it off.

EARL

I haven't seen you in so long.

(MORE)

EARL (CONT'D)
How is that Linda of yours
doing, anyway?

CAL
She's good. Been keeping busy.

EARL
You really did something right
when you landed her. Didn't think
you could do it, but my my you
really picked a looker.

Cal isn't sure how to respond.

CAL
Thanks, Dad.

EARL
Most women like her are nothing
but two-timing whores, but your
Linda, she's something else. I
tell you what, if I was thirty
years younger...

CAL
You're talking about my wife, Dad.

EARL
Hmm.
(pause)
How's my beautiful granddaughter
these days?

CAL
She's great.

EARL
She's going to grow up into a hell
of a woman.

CAL
She's starting pitcher on her
softball team. She's playing her
first ballgame tonight.

EARL
And you're not going?

CAL
Well, I've been real busy with
work these days, what with my
promotion and all.

EARL

Too busy for your little girl's softball game? Hell, I worked sixty hours a week and I still made it to all of your baseball games. Least before you quit playing sports. But I guess you educated men aren't like my generation.

CAL

Do we really need to talk about this?

EARL

What do you want to talk about then?

CAL

Well I don't know, Dad. What do you want to talk about?

Earl's eyes light up.

EARL

I want to show you something.

CAL

What is it?

EARL

Hold your damn horses. I'm getting it.

Earl gets up and turns on the light. He hobbles over to a cabinet and opens it. He removes a large KNIFE.

Earl returns to his seat on the couch next to Cal, a little closer than before. A little too close.

EARL

Look at this. Ain't she a beaut?

CAL

That sure is a nice knife.

EARL

A nice knife? I'd say so. My great-grandfather fought through the War Between the States with this. He killed Yankees with it, then he went on and used it to kill Indians and niggers too.

Cal nods.

EARL

You sure could gut some poor motherfuckers with this here blade, couldn't you? Slice them open and throw their bodies down a mine shaft. Hell, that's probably what happened to those two missing girls. I bet if they went down in the mines they'd find them girls in no time. Hell, I know I've dumped a few bodies down there.

CAL

How come you never showed this to me before?

EARL

I just got it. My cousin Roy in Missouri just died and he willed it to me.

CAL

Roy died? Why didn't you tell me?

EARL

You've only met him a couple of times. I didn't think you'd really care.

CAL

He's still family.

EARL

Anyway, as much as I like this here knife, I'd like you to have it even more.

Earl offers the knife to Cal.

EARL

Go on, take it.

CAL

Really?

EARL

I ain't kidding. It's yours.

Cal takes the knife

EARL

What use does an old man have for a knife? Even if he is a mean old bastard like me.

(MORE)

EARL (CONT'D)
No, knives are a young
man's weapon.

CAL
That's great.

Cal hugs Earl.

EARL
I think we can still catch the end
of my show.

Earl turns on the TV and CRANKS UP THE VOLUME.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cal sits in a recliner eating a microwave dinner on a TV tray. He watches an old MUSICAL on television. The knife sits on the tray next to his meal.

Car headlights shine through the window. Cal turns off the television.

TWO CAR DOORS SLAM SHUT outside, one after the other.

There is a brief struggle to open the locked door. The sound of someone FUMBLING FOR KEYS can be heard from outside.

Moments later the front door opens. LINDA DYER, blonde, early-40s, enters, followed by HAILEY DYER (10), who wears a softball uniform and carries a glove.

CAL
There's my girls.

LINDA
How many times have I told you
stop dead-bolting the door?

Cal rises to greet them. He kisses Linda on the cheek.

LINDA
I have to go to the bathroom.

She walks past him and enters the bathroom.

Cal turns to Hailey.

CAL
Hey sweetie!

Cal hugs her and kisses her on the cheek. Hailey cringes.

HAILEY
Hi, Daddy.

CAL
How was your game?

HAILEY
Okay.

CAL
Did you throw a lot of strikeouts?

HAILEY
A few.

Hailey walks past him toward her bedroom. Cal watches her as she goes, until he sees her door close.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - LATER

A typical ten-year-old girl's room. A book shelf, a few dolls, and some stuffed animals.

Hailey lies in bed. Cal tucks her in and then sits on the bed next to her.

CAL
Hailey, I'm real sorry I wasn't at your game tonight. I've just been real busy at work and all and I've been too tired afterwards to do much of anything.

HAILEY
It's okay.

CAL
No, it isn't, sweetie. All of the other parents are there, and I should be there too.

HAILEY
Sarah's parents are never there either.

CAL
Well they should be. And I should be. I should've been there tonight. And I won't make that mistake again. When's your next game?

HAILEY

Monday.

CAL

Monday. I'll be there. I promise.

(pause)

I love you, sweetie.

HAILEY

I love you too, Daddy.

Cal turns off her lamp. Only a nightlight and the light spilling in from the hallway illuminate the room.

CAL

Good night. Sweet dreams.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Cal and Linda lie in bed. They seem to be on extreme opposite ends of the bed, with as much empty space in between them as possible.

Linda reads a magazine. Cal reads the Bible. They are in complete silence.

Cal frequently glances over at Linda. Finally, her eye catches him.

LINDA

What?

Cal puts down his Bible.

CAL

Well, I was just thinking about something I saw on the news tonight.

Cal pauses, waiting for Linda to ask him what he saw. When it's clear she isn't going to ask, Cal continues.

CAL

These two guys found a leg out in Big Creek. A human leg. The police think it might belong to one of those missing girls. I've been telling you all along the authorities would find those girls dead.

LINDA

It seems like you spend more time worrying about those missing girls than you do your own daughter.

CAL

That's not true and you know it.

LINDA

Well that's how it seems sometimes. You can't even make it to her softball games. She's starting pitcher. You know how important it is to her. She did so great tonight and she couldn't even feel proud because her daddy wasn't there to see it.

CAL

It's not that I don't want to go, it's just that I've been too tired to do anything after work. I promised that I'd be at her next ballgame.

LINDA

I don't know how many times we've heard that, Cal. That girl doesn't deserve any more broken promises from you.

CAL

And she won't get any.

LINDA

I'd like to believe that.

CAL

I'll be there. Wait and see.

There is a long, silent pause.

Cal reaches over and touches Linda's breast. She brushes him off.

LINDA

If you're too tired for your daughter's softball game then you're too tired for sex.

She puts her magazine on the nightstand and turns away from him.

Cal takes off his glasses and turns off the light. He turns away from Linda.

He cannot fall asleep.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Coffee DRIPS into the pot. Bacon SIZZLES in the pan.

Cal takes four eggs out of the fridge and CRACKS them into a skillet. He scrambles the eggs.

When the eggs are finished, Cal puts on a pot of tea.

Linda and Hailey enter.

CAL
Breakfast is on. I made bacon and
eggs. Coffee for Linda. Tea for
Hailey.

Cal begins to get plates for the two women.

LINDA
There's no time, Cal. We're gonna
be late.

Hailey grabs a piece of bacon on her way out.

HAILEY
Bye, Daddy.

The women leave. Cal puts the breakfast in Tupperware containers.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

A small, square office, one window, sparsely decorated and impersonal. Papers are strewn about Cal's desk.

Cal sits behind a computer. His eyes scan a pornographic image.

A middle-aged, reasonably attractive secretary, MARGARET, enters.

Cal quickly closes his internet browser.

MARGARET
Mr. Shockley wants to see you.

Margaret looks over her shoulder.

MARGARET
Heads up, here he comes.

Margaret exits.

MR. SHOCKLEY (60s), Cal's boss, enters.

SHOCKLEY

You were supposed to have those reports on my desk fifteen minutes ago.

CAL

Sorry, sir. I'll have them for you in ten.

SHOCKLEY

Make it five.

(pause)

Sometimes I just don't know what you do around here all day, Dyer.

The boss leaves, but immediately returns.

SHOCKLEY

Oh yeah, Cal. Think you can put in some overtime this weekend?

CAL

Uh, sure. Yeah, I can do that.

The boss leaves. Cal begins shuffling through his papers, looking for the reports.

EXT. HAILEY'S SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Cal's car is parked in front of the school. He waits outside the car, leaning against it, nervously eyeing the young girls who are hanging around.

Hailey and SUSAN exit the school.

SUSAN

Isn't that your dad?

HAILEY

Yeah.

SUSAN

What's he doing here?

Cal waves to her.

HAILEY

I don't know. I better go see what he wants.

She walks over to him.

CAL
Hey, sweetie.

Hailey looks around anxiously.

HAILEY
What are you doing here?

CAL
Thought I'd surprise you, give you
a ride home.

HAILEY
Aren't you supposed to be at work?

CAL
Yeah. I cut out.

HAILEY
Okay...

CAL
Now, how about we go get some
ice cream?

Hailey shrugs and waves goodbye to Susan. She hops in the car.
Cal follows.

Cal starts up the car and they leave together.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Cal washes dishes. The PHONE RINGS.

Cal turns off the water, wipes his hands dry and answers
the phone.

CAL
Hello?

LINDA
Have you heard from Hailey?

CAL
What?

LINDA
(a bit frantic)
I just got off the phone with
Phyllis. Janie told her that she
wasn't on the bus this afternoon.
Have you heard from her?

CAL

Calm down, Linda. She's over at Susan's right now. I left work early and picked her up from school. I took her out for ice cream. Thought maybe I could make up for missing her game last night.

LINDA

Dammit, Cal. You need to let me know next time you do something like that.

Linda hangs up the phone. DIAL TONE.

CAL

Bye.

Cal goes back to washing dishes.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

The family sits around the dinner table. No one speaks. They focus on their food.

Finally Cal breaks the silence.

CAL

I thought maybe this weekend we could all go out and do something fun. A family outing. Maybe we could go to -

LINDA

Not this weekend. I'm going shopping with my friends in Cherry Grove and Hailey's spending the day with Janie.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Cal is left by himself reading the newspaper at the cluttered dinner table. He lowers the paper and looks at the mess, then goes back to reading the paper.

He puts the paper down and starts taking the dishes to the sink.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cal dries the last dish. He removes the washed dishes from the dish rack and begins to methodically place them in the proper cabinets and drawers.

He straightens the dishes and makes sure they are well organized.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - AFTERNOON

Cal sits in his car watching a high school girls' soccer practice from a distance.

Practice ends and the girls start to leave. Most either drive away in their own cars or carpool with others.

One girl, MARA (15), starts walking.

Cal drives away inconspicuously and pulls his car beside Mara. Cal rolls down his window.

CAL
Need a ride?

Mara eyes him suspiciously.

MARA
Do I know you?

CAL
Cal Dyer.

She thinks for a moment.

MARA
Oh. Yeah. My mom is friends with
your wife.

Mara hesitates for a moment, but then decides to get into the car.

INT. CAL'S CAR - LATER

Cal drives with Mara in the front passenger seat.

CAL
Where am I taking you?

MARA
Riverside and H Street.

CAL
That far, huh? That's the whole
other end of town.

MARA
Don't blame me. You offered me
the ride.

CAL
That I did. I'm just giving you a
hard time.
(pause)
Say, didn't your mother ever warn
you about taking rides with
strangers?

MARA
You're not really a stranger.
You've been to our house a bunch
of times.

CAL
I'm just teasing.
(pause)
Your name's Nelson, right? Your
mom's Tabitha and you're Mary.

MARA
I'm Mara.

CAL
Mara Nelson, Mary Nelson. Close.
(pause)
So, what grade are you in now?

MARA
Tenth.

CAL
Sophomore, huh?

MARA
(sarcastically)
Yup. That's tenth grade.

CAL
How do you like it?

MARA
It's okay.

Cal LAUGHS.

CAL
Sophomore year was hell for me. I
got picked on all the time. Hard
to imagine, huh?

Cal LAUGHS again. Mara CHUCKLES politely.

CAL
I think my friend's son is a
sophomore. Do you know Owen
Fields?

MARA
Yeah.

CAL
What do you think of him?

MARA
He's alright I guess. We're not
really friends or anything.

CAL
He's a good kid.

Awkward pause.

CAL
So, soccer, huh?

Mara nods.

CAL
I'm a pretty big soccer fan. I go
to the games quite a bit. Maybe
you've seen me there?

MARA
I don't think so.

CAL
What position do you play?

MARA
Forward.

CAL
Very important position.
(pause)
So, do you have a boyfriend?

Mara is starting to become uncomfortable.

MARA

Yeah.

CAL

What's his name?

MARA

Mike.

CAL

Michael or just Mike?

MARA

Michael.

Mara grows increasingly uncomfortable.

CAL

Is he a sophomore too?

MARA

Junior.

CAL

How long have you been going out?

MARA

A couple of months.

CAL

Do you like him?

Mara casts an uncomfortable glance at Cal. Cal catches her glance and smiles at her.

CAL

I guess you wouldn't be going out with him if you didn't like him.

Cal glances at her crotch, at her short-shorts. Mara notices and closes her legs tighter.

Cal begins to sweat.

CAL

Have you fucked him?

Mara starts to CRY a little. She glances all over the car and notices a rope in the backseat.

MARA

Pull over! Pull this fucking car over! I just want out of here!

Mara CRIES.

CAL
I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked
that. You're almost home.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Cal's car passes H Street.

INT. CAL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MARA
You just missed my turn.

Cal keeps driving.

MARA
You can turn here and go
back around.

Cal continues driving, crossing a bridge going out of town.

MARA
Turn around! Turn the car around!
If you don't turn it around I'm
going to jump out!

She grabs the door handle: she's serious.

Cal pulls the knife Earl gave him from under his seat.

CAL
I wouldn't do that.

MARA
Please let me go, please!

CAL
Shut up!

MARA
Please don't do this, let me go!
I'll do anything!

Mara starts to hyperventilate. Cal thrusts the knife to her
throat. She SCREAMS

CAL
I said shut the fuck up!

Mara SOBS.

MARA

Oh my God! You're the guy who
killed those girls in Green-Oak!

She continues SOBBING.

CAL

I may have killed a few girls in
my day.

MARA

(between sobs)
Where are you taking me?

CAL

A nice, tranquil spot in
the woods.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

Cal pulls off the road and down a side road toward the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal's car pulls into the edge of the woods, just deep enough for his car not to be visible from the road. He shuts off the engine and grabs the rope from the back seat.

Cal exits the car and walks around to Mara's door. He starts to open her door. As he opens it, she pushes the door, knocking Cal aside.

She makes a run for it. Cal chases her.

He picks up a large rock and throws it at Mara, hitting her in the head. She hits the ground. She tries to get up but Cal is already behind her.

He ties her wrists together with the rope and duct tapes her mouth. She tries to scream, but the duct tape muffles her cries.

Cal leads her over to a tree and ties her hands to a branch that is slightly higher than her reach. She dangles from the tree, her toes barely touching the ground.

Mara struggles to free herself.

Cal walks back to the car. He rifles through the trunk. He puts on coveralls, boots, and gloves. He puts a camouflage tarp over the car.

Mara continues to dangle from the branch, wiggling, struggling. Her head bleeds from being hit with the rock.

Cal walks over to her. He cuts the rope. She falls to the ground with a THUD. He uses the remaining piece of rope to lead her into the woods.

EXT. DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal leads Mara through the woods, through thick underbrush, knocking away dangling dead branches. She stumbles as she goes, barely keeping up with Cal who leads her swiftly through the forest.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal leads Mara to a small shack. The shack is weather-worn with holes in the roof and boarded windows.

He opens the door and tries to lead her in. When she resists, he pulls the rope harder and she follows.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal closes the door and throws Mara aside. She falls to the floor.

He lights a lamp, which illuminates only about half of the room. Cal unties her wrists and walks to the darker half of the room. He drops his coveralls and sits down.

Suddenly he throws a knife at Mara and it sticks in the wall next to her head.

CAL

Don't try anything stupid.

Cal sits in the darkness. Mara stands SOBBING in the light.

CAL

Take off your clothes.

MARA

I - I can't.

CAL

Choose wisely.

In the light that trickles in through the boarded-up windows, Mara sees the glint of a knife Cal holds.

Mara slowly undresses down to her underwear.

The UNZIPPING of Cal's pants can be heard.

CAL
Take off everything.

Mara slowly, reluctantly removes her underwear.

Cal can be heard MASTURBATING.

CAL
Spread your legs.

Mara hesitates. She wipes the tears and snot from her face.

She spreads her legs.

Cal's MASTURBATION becomes LOUDER and LOUDER.

CAL
I want to see your ass.

Mara slowly gets up and turns around. She eyes the knife stuck in the wall next to her.

The MASTURBATION is LOUDER still.

Suddenly, Mara grabs the knife in the wall and throws it at Cal. She runs out the door.

Cal pulls up his pants and follows after her.

EXT. DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Naked, barefoot, and terrified, Mara runs through the woods.

Cal struggles to run while still pulling up his pants and buttoning them.

Mara's flight is desperate and swift, but she is not swift enough to escape the knife that Cal throws. The knife lands right in the middle of her back, piercing her spine. Her legs go limp and she tumbles to the ground.

Cal stops running, zips up his pants, and buckles his belt. He walks over to Mara's twitching body.

She still breathes, barely. After removing the knife from her back, Cal stabs her in the throat. Mara lets out one final, weak SCREAM, which turns to a bloody GURGLE, and then dies.

Cal starts to carve into her scalp.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - LATER

Cal comes out of the shack carrying a shovel and a Polaroid camera.

He walks over to where Mara lies and snaps a photo of her lifeless body.

He drags her body for what seems like a great distance and begins digging a grave for her.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - LATER

Cal enters the shack and goes over to the dark side of the room.

His actions are obscured by darkness, but LOUD HAMMERING is heard.

Cal drags a metal trashcan outside.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal continues dragging the trashcan outside. He plants it a few yards from the shack. Cal throws Mara's clothes and personal belongings in the trashcan.

Cal goes back into the shack.

He emerges moments later with lighter fluid and a box of matches.

He douses the clothes in lighter fluid. Cal's hands nervously strike a match. He tosses it into the trashcan and the clothes are set ablaze.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - LATER

Cal uses a rag to clean his bloody boots.

He goes outside.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal tosses the rag into the fire.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - LATER

Cal grabs the lamp and shines it on the darkened wall.

Now illuminated, the wall is revealed to be covered with female scalps with photos next to them - including the scalp and photo of Mara.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - SUNSET

Cal locks up the shack and treks back to his car.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal un-tarps the vehicle. He takes off his gloves, boots, overalls and puts them in a duffel bag in the trunk.

He gets in the car and backs out.

The car pulls back onto the highway and drives out toward the setting sun.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cal tucks Hailey into bed.

CAL

How was your day, sweetie? Did you have fun with Janie?

HAILEY

It was pretty fun.

CAL

What'd you do?

HAILEY

We went rollerblading.

CAL

That's it?

HAILEY

Well, that's the only fun thing we did.

CAL

I see.

HAILEY

What are we going to do tomorrow?

CAL

Well, after church we're going to have lunch with Grandpa.

HAILEY

How come you don't go to church
with me and mom?

Cal takes his time, thinking about the answer.

CAL

There's a reason I can't go,
sweetie. A very complicated reason
that you wouldn't understand.

HAILEY

I might understand. I'm smarter
than you think.

CAL

I know you're smart, sweetie.

HAILEY

Do you believe in God?

CAL

Oh yes. I do believe in God.
Grandpa always raised me in
church. We went every Sunday.
Grandpa wanted me to be a Baptist
preacher.

HAILEY

Then why don't you go to
church, Daddy?

CAL

I told you it's something I can't
talk about. I don't feel
comfortable in church. Let's leave
it at that.

HAILEY

If you're not going to go then I
don't want to go.

CAL

You need to go and get God in you
while you're good and young,
before the world is able to
corrupt you.

HAILEY

Is that what happened to those
girls who were killed?

Cal nods.

HAILEY

But if God is good, why do those things happen?

CAL

I don't know.

HAILEY

Could that happen to me?

CAL

I promise I'll never let it happen to you.

HAILEY

Why does God let those bad things to happen?

CAL

Sometimes the things we think are bad aren't so bad after all, and God's just allowing things to happen to people who deserve them. But who are we to be the judge of that? Enough of this talk. You should get some sleep, sweetie. Just know you're always safe and sound with Mommy and Daddy.

Cal kisses her forehead.

CAL

Sweet dreams.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cal, alone, kneels on the floor. His elbows are on the bed and his hands are clasped in prayer, his gaze is vaguely fixed on a tacky portrait of Christ on the opposite wall.

CAL

Lord, thank you for all the things you've blessed me with. Thank you for my family: my beautiful wife Linda and my wonderful daughter Hailey. Protect them from the evils of the world and keep them safe through the night and as they go about their day tomorrow. Protect me, Lord. Protect me from those who wish to do me harm as I do your will.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

Deliver me from the iniquitous
hands that wish to hurt me. Lord,
protect me from myself. Amen.

Cal stands up and starts to untuck the bed.

Linda enters wearing her nightgown.

They both get in bed.

LINDA

Are you going to church tomorrow?

CAL

All this overtime is really
catching up with me. I think I'm
going to sleep in tomorrow. That
is, if you don't need a ride.

LINDA

Phyllis can give us a ride. You
don't have to worry about your
precious sleep.

CAL

All right. Well, I'll be there at
twelve-thirty to pick you up so we
can all go to Dad's.

Linda doesn't respond.

Cal reaches over and tries to make his move.

LINDA

Not tonight.

She rolls away from him.

Cal rolls the other way. He stares at the wall.

Cal closes his eyes and touches himself.

EXT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

A fairly large Southern Baptist church. Blandly designed and
decorated, no stained-glass or classy architecture. CONGREGANTS
exit the church.

Cal waits in the car for Linda and Hailey.

They finally come out of the church and get in the car.

INT. CAL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Post-church. The family rides in the car toward Earl's house, Cal driving, Linda up front, Hailey in the back.

CAL
How was church?

LINDA
It was good.

CAL
What did Pastor Thornton
preach about?

LINDA
He read from First Corinthians
about sexual immorality and how
sexual sins are more harmful
because you're sinning against
your own body.

Cal looks back at Hailey, slightly disgusted.

CAL
Did Hailey hear all that or was
she in Sunday school?

LINDA
She was sitting next to me the
whole time.

CAL
Don't you think she's a little
young to be hearing about all that
sexual stuff, even if it is about
morality?

LINDA
No, Cal. I don't think so at all.
Hailey needs to learn about sex
while she's young, so that she's
informed and doesn't make stupid
decisions out of ignorance.

CAL
Yeah, Linda. I guess you're right.
It's better than learning about
sex the way we used to learn about
it.

Cal sweats. He looks nervous.

HAILEY
 Will you two stop talking about
 all that gross sex stuff and turn
 up the radio?

Cal complies.

A NEWS BROADCAST comes on the RADIO.

NEWSCASTER
 (on radio)
 At the top of the hour, we have
 the latest information on Mara
 Nelson -

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The Dyer family stands on the porch, Linda holding a plate covered in aluminum foil and a newspaper.

Cal RINGS the doorbell.

There is a long pause.

Finally, the door opens partially, and Earl peeks through, scowling. He looks at the adults, then at Hailey and smiles.

Earl opens the door further and stoops down to hug Hailey.

HAILEY
 Grandpa, we brought you chocolate
 chip cookies.

EARL
 Thanks, butterfly. Come on in!

Hailey and Linda enter the house.

EARL
 (to Cal)
 You know I prefer peanut
 butter cookies.

Cal shrugs. He enters the house, followed by Earl.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Earl sits in a rocking chair quietly rocking back and forth.

Cal sits uncomfortably, staring at a painting of Christ.

Earl pats his thigh.

EARL
Come over here, darling, and sit
on Grandpa's lap.

Hailey runs over and sits on his lap. Earl smiles and fondles her hair and straightens her clothes.

CAL
So, Dad. How've you been?

EARL
It hurts to take a piss, but I've
been worse.

Linda and Cal look at each other uncomfortably.

Earl leers at Hailey for a moment.

EARL
You look just like your
Grandmother, butterfly.

HAILEY
Really?

EARL
Oh yeah. You're the spitting image
of Beth.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Earl reads the newspaper. Hailey still sits on his lap.

EARL
Did you hear about that girl from
Green-Oak?

CAL
Yeah, they finally found her body.
Or what's left of it.

EARL
No shit they found her body. But
now it's out that those girls were
involved in drugs, meth. They
probably owed money to some
dealers, so the dealers had them
killed. That's what the
authorities think, at least.
Serves them right for getting
mixed up in all that immorality.

LINDA

Just because the girls were involved in drugs doesn't mean they deserve to die. You don't really believe that, do you?

EARL

Hell yes I believe it. Dumb bitches shouldn't have got mixed up in that stuff in the first place.

LINDA

I can't believe you'd say that, Earl.

Linda looks to Cal for some support. Cal hesitates, can't decide whom to side with.

CAL

He has a point, Linda. I'm not saying those girls deserved to die, but they shouldn't have been involved with all that in the first place.

Linda looks betrayed. She can't believe her husband sided with his crazy father.

Linda looks away from them, rests her head on her hand. Cal gets a sense of her ire.

CAL

So, uh, what'd you make for lunch, Dad?

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The family sits around the table. A pot of chili rests in the middle of the table. Everyone dips a bowl.

Hailey takes a bite and makes a bitter face. Linda nudges her. She takes another bite and chokes it down.

CAL

No cornbread, Dad?

EARL

I told you before to bring your own damn cornbread if you want bread.

CAL
I just thought maybe you'd get the
idea by now.

EARL
Idea? I make you all this chili,
the least you can do is bring some
damn bread.

CAL
We brought you a tub of cookies.

EARL
Chocolate chip.

Earl makes a DISMISSIVE SOUND.

The family continues to eat their food.

EARL
You all go to church today?

LINDA
Yes we did.

EARL
What'd the old boy preach about
today? Adam and Eve?

LINDA
No.

EARL
I tell you, lots of people blame
everything in this world on Eve.
Everything that's bad is her fault
because she ate the apple and
caused Adam to eat it too. But if
Adam didn't eat it, who's to say
that some other boy wouldn't come
along down the line and eat the
apple for hisself? The problems
with this world ain't just because
of Eve, they're because of people
in general. That's just how they
are. They do everything that they
shouldn't be doing and nothing
they should. And all it takes is
one bad apple to spoil the whole
bunch, if you pardon the figure.

CAL
Well, he didn't preach about that.

EARL
Then what'd he preach about,
smart guy?

CAL
I don't know. I wasn't there.

EARL
Linda just said you all went
to church.

CAL
The girls did, but I didn't.

EARL
Why the hell not?

CAL
I was too tired.

EARL
Too tired?

CAL
I've been working a lot lately and
I needed to get some sleep.

EARL
God damned excuses. I tell you
what, I would've busted your ass
if you tried to pull some kind of
excuse like that growing up.

CAL
There are very few things you
wouldn't have busted my ass for
back then. And if you're so pious,
where were you this morning? Not
in church, that's for sure.

EARL
The hell did you say to me?

CAL
Nothing, dad. Forget it.

The family eats in silence.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The family sits around in the living room. Earl reads the newspaper again. Hailey sits on his lap.

EARL

Hmm. Looks like a man in Fairfield just got nabbed for child molestation and pornography. Says here he's accused of molesting upwards a dozen kids. Crazy fucker. I always said this world wouldn't be too bad a place if there wasn't people in it to fuck it up.

CAL

Dad, do you really have to talk about this?

EARL

It's my house. I'll talk about what I want.

CAL

But child molestation? No one wants to hear about any of that. It's disgusting.

EARL

Don't tell me what I can't talk about in my own house. You don't like it? You can get the hell out.

CAL

Fine! That's just what I'll do. We're not going to sit here and listen to that shit!

Cal gets up and pulls Hailey off Earl's lap.

CAL

C'mon, sweetie.

Cal storms out of Earl's house. Linda and Hailey follow close behind.

INT. CAL'S CAR - LATER

Cal looks disgusted and upset.

HAILEY

What's wrong with Grandpa?

CAL

Nothing! Nothing's wrong with Grandpa.

HAILEY
Then why did we have to leave?

CAL
It doesn't matter, Hailey.

HAILEY
I want to know!

CAL
It doesn't matter, Hailey!

LINDA
Your grandfather is a sick man.

HAILEY
What do you mean?

CAL
God damn it, Hailey, it doesn't matter! Now can you just be quiet? I don't want to talk about this anymore. Let's just go home and forget all about it.

Cal cranks up the RADIO.

The Dyers drive home in uncomfortable silence.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hailey lies in bed with her door open. Cal walks by.

HAILEY
Daddy?

Cal enters her room and sits at the foot of her bed.

CAL
Yes, Hailey?

HAILEY
What's wrong with Grandpa?

CAL
What do you mean?

HAILEY
What happened today? Why did Mom call him a sick man? Is there something wrong with him?

Cal hesitates.

CAL

Your mom just meant Grandpa's kidney problems. He's been in a lot of pain and he can be crabby sometimes. It wasn't right of me to snap at him like I did. And it sure wasn't right of my to snap at you. I'm so sorry I did that.

HAILEY

I don't think Mommy was talking about his kidneys. Are you sure that's all that's wrong with him?

CAL

I'm sure. He's just grumpy. But he's going to be okay. You shouldn't worry about him.

HAILEY

You didn't forget about my game on Monday, did you?

CAL

Your softball game? Of course not. I'll be there, seven o'clock sharp.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cal sits in a recliner, watching the news in his pajamas.

ON SCREEN:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The BUTTONS, a middle-aged, lower-class couple, sit on the couch in their living room.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Jessica's family are left grief-stricken with today's news.

MR. BUTTON

You hear of these things happening, but it's always to other people. You just never imagine something like this hitting your own family.

MRS. BUTTON

We were holding out hope that somehow she'd pull through all this. I prayed to Jesus every night that the police would find Jessica, but I didn't want them to find her like this. She was my pride and joy. She meant the world to me.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Carolyn O'Neal stands in front of the house holding a microphone.

CAROLYN

It's a heartbreaking scene here at the Buttons home, but with Dani Wheeler still missing, investigators say this case is far from closed. As always, we ask you at home to please call authorities immediately if you have any information regarding either case. Rick, back to you.

BACK TO:

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Icy beams of moonlight filter into the room through the curtains. Linda is sound asleep.

Cal masturbates in bed next to her.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - AFTERNOON [FLASHBACK]

Mara is completely naked in Cal's shack. She CRIES. Cal's MASTURBATION can be heard over her SOBS.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Earl and a young Cal (8) sit on the couch. Earl is under a blanket. He pulls Cal under the covers with him and leans over to give him a kiss on the forehead.

BACK TO:

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

His eyes pop open. Cal is horrified. He stops masturbating for a moment, then closes his eyes and begins again.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - EVENING [FLASHBACK]

Cal sits in his shack, holding Mara's bloody scalp. His hands are covered in blood and gore. He holds the scalp close to his face and smells the hair, smiling as its aroma wafts into his nose.

BACK TO:

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cal licks his lips.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Cal sits on the couch dressed for work. He drinks coffee. Linda comes in wearing a robe. She is clearly surprised to see him.

LINDA
You're up early.

CAL
I couldn't sleep.

LINDA
Is anything wrong?

CAL
No. I'm gonna clock in a little early, try to get some work done. Hopefully, I won't have to stay late tonight.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - MORNING

Early morning. Few cars are on the street, but some kids wait on the corner for school buses. A few older kids ride bikes or walk to school.

Cal spots a lone TEENAGE GIRL walking down the street carrying a book bag. He follows her at a safe distance. He stares at her legs. Stares at her ass. Stares at her breasts.

He pulls up beside her.

She looks at him. He rolls down the window.

Before Cal can say anything to her, a TEENAGE BOY joins her, coming seemingly out of nowhere.

Cal speeds away.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Cal does work on a computer. He hunts and pecks to type up a report.

Cal notices Margaret enter the building.

He leaves his office.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal enters the room and pours a cup of coffee.

Margaret enters behind him. She sizes him up.

MARGARET

Hey there, Cally. You're here early.

Cal stops filling his cup.

CAL

Hi, Margaret. Just trying to get some work done.

Cal turns back to his coffee, hoping she'll leave him alone.

MARGARET

I like to show up early sometimes, too. Grab a cup of coffee, relax, meditate. Do you ever meditate?

CAL

Can't say that I do.

MARGARET

You should. It really helps me focus on my work. On life. On lots of things.

She LAUGHS.

MARGARET

It doesn't hurt my sex life either. But you have to do it when you have the place to yourself.

Beat.

MARGARET
Like we do now.

Cal smiles at her nervously.

MARGARET
No one will be here for a good
half hour.

CAL
Really? What time is it, anyway?

MARGARET
Think of all the things we could
do, all the things no one would
ever know about.

Cal's hand trembles. He almost spills his coffee.

CAL
That sounds real nice, but I have
a lot of work to do.

MARGARET
Suit yourself.

Cal takes off his glasses and wipes sweat from his brow. He starts to put his glasses back on.

MARGARET
Have you ever considered
wearing contacts?

CAL
Uh-uh, no.

MARGARET
You should. You look much better
without your glasses.

CAL
Thanks.
(pause)
I'm gonna go back to work now.

Cal walks away. Margaret watches him as he exits.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - LATER

Cal sits at his desk, his eyes closed, beads of sweat pouring from his face.

Cal's hand is between his legs, in his crotch.

Margaret can be seen through the window of Cal's office. Cal stares at her. He fixates on her hair.

He rubs himself through his pants.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - EVENING

The clock reads "6:30." Cal packs up his briefcase.

He walks out of the office and into the lobby.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Cal walks through the lobby. No one seems to notice him.

As he approaches the door, he passes Margaret's desk. She is on the phone, but looks up when he passes.

MARGARET
Good night, Cally.

Cal waves and rushes out the door.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - EVENING

A McDonald's-style restaurant. Napkins, ketchup packets, and straw wrappers litter the floor.

Cal carries a tray to a booth. He puts the tray on the table and wipes loose grains of salt from the seat. He cautiously sits down.

Cal stares at his food.

Finally, he eats a couple of fries. He takes a small bite out of his hamburger.

Cal's face is pale. He gets out of the booth and runs into the bathroom.

Cal VOMITS and everyone in the restaurant hears it.

Cal emerges from the bathroom wiping sweat from his forehead with a paper towel.

He goes back to his booth but does not sit down. Cal picks up his tray and takes it to the garbage.

He throws away the food, but finishes the small soda. He tosses the soda cup into the garbage and leaves the restaurant.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Cal sits in his car parked on the side of the street opposite to Earl's house. He is visibly upset - sweaty and teary-eyed.

Finally, he gets out of the car and heads to the porch. Cal RINGS the doorbell.

Earl opens the door as far as the chain will let him.

EARL
The hell do you want?

CAL
Dad, I'm so sorry.

The door closes. Earl undoes the chain and lets Cal inside.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cal enters and immediately hugs his Dad. Earl holds him tight. Cal CRIES.

CAL
Dad, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you like that. Forgive me. Please forgive me.

Earl pats his back.

EARL
It's okay, son. Everything's okay.

Earl rubs his back, then leans in and kisses him on the lips.

Earl continues to hold Cal, and Cal continues to SOB.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - SIMULTANEOUS

Hailey's team is in the field.

Linda looks around for Cal. She looks worried.

Hailey, on the pitcher's mound, looks for him too.

A batter steps up to the plate.

With no sign of Cal, Hailey throws the game's first pitch.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

They hug and sway, as if dancing to their own music.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - SIMULTANEOUS

Hailey throws a strike.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Cal and Earl continue to hug.

CAL

Dad, I love you so much.

EARL

I love you too, son.

Cal kisses him on the lips.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - SIMULTANEOUS

Hailey strikes out the batter.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Cal backs away.

CAL

I'm sorry, Dad.

Cal covers Earl's mouth with his hand. He pushes him into the living room.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal forces Earl to the ground. He grabs a pillow from the couch and uses it to smother Earl.

Earl puts up a struggle, but his efforts are in vain.

He dies.

Cal jumps up. He breathes heavily. Cal gets his bearings for a moment. He grabs the pillow and returns it to the couch. He straightens all of the pillows on the couch.

Cal drags Earl's body into the bedroom.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Earl's body lies on the bed.

Cal rifles through the closet. He closes the closet door.

Cal goes through his Dad's dresser drawers. He pulls out a set of pajamas. Cal undresses his Dad and puts the pajamas on him.

Cal folds his Dad's clothes and puts them away.

He glances at his watch. It's late.

CAL

Dammit.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cal's car pulls into the parking lot. He gets out of the car and glances at the scoreboard. It is the seventh inning.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Hailey's team is at bat. Cal squints to try to spot Hailey. He walks over to the bleachers.

He spots Linda in the bleachers. She sees him and scowls.

Cal climbs up to her and sits down next to her.

LINDA

Where the hell have you been?

CAL

I, uh, just forgot.

LINDA

Forgot? How could you?

CAL

Do you think she knows I'm here?

LINDA

I don't know, Cal. But she sure as hell knows that you haven't been here the past seven innings.

CAL

Maybe I should go talk to her.

Cal climbs down the bleachers.

He walks over to the dugout. He sees Hailey sitting on the bench at the end opposite him. He RATTLES the fence to get her attention. She doesn't notice.

CAL
Hailey!

She looks over at him. Cal waves her over. She turns away from him and watches the game.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The game is over. Players from the two teams shake hands with each other.

Cal waits by the dugout. Several kids leave.

Finally, Hailey comes out.

CAL
Good game, sweetie.

She ignores him.

CAL
Can I give you a ride home?

HAILEY
No, thanks.

Hailey walks past him and joins Linda. They walk toward the parking lot together.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door is closed, the room is dimly lit. Cal and Linda are on opposite sides of the room. Linda stares him down.

LINDA
How dare you?

Cal wipes sweat from his forehead.

LINDA (CONT'D.)
You promised her, Cal. What kind of father are you?

CAL
I'm a good father.

LINDA
A good father? Really?
(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)
You don't show it.

CAL
I was, uh, uh...I was...

LINDA
What were you doing that was more important than going to your daughter's softball game?

CAL
I forgot.

LINDA
How could you just forget, after all the times we talked about it?

CAL
It slipped my mind!

LINDA
Are you seeing someone else?

CAL
What? No.

LINDA
Is there some other family I don't know about that you're spending time with?

CAL
Don't be ridiculous.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark. Light trickles in from under the door. A night light partially illuminates a wall.

Hailey lies in bed CRYING.

LINDA (O.S.)
I'm being ridiculous? Do you have a better explanation?

CAL (O.S.)
No.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

LINDA
(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

Then why the hell is it so hard
for you to find time for your
family?

Cal sits down on the bed.

CAL

I don't know.

LINDA

Changes need to be made around
here or you won't even have a
family to ignore.

CAL

I know, Linda.

LINDA

That's all you have to say?

CAL

It's getting late. Maybe we should
sleep on it.

LINDA

Maybe we should sleep on it. And
maybe you should go spend the
night at your Dad's.

Linda's arms are crossed, and she towers over Cal who remains seated on the bed.

CAL

Are you serious?

LINDA

Do I look serious?

CAL

You're gonna kick me out? Just
like that?

LINDA

Yeah! I don't want you here until
you can give me some answers. You
don't have to stay at your Dad's,
but you can't stay here.

Linda goes over to the closet and pulls out a duffel bag. She throws the bag at Cal.

LINDA
Now pack your bag and get the hell
out of here.

Cal eyes the bag, then eyes Linda. Her stare is unrelenting.
Cal takes the bag to the dresser and begins packing it.

INT. CAL'S CAR - NIGHT

Cal drives. He passes a YOUNG FEMALE JOGGER in tight shorts. He stares at the jogger as he passes her.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cal's car pulls into the driveway. He gets out of the car. Cal opens the back door and removes his duffel bag. Cal walks to the front porch. He RINGS the doorbell.

Beat.

Cal shakes his head and smiles. He pulls his keys out of his pocket and opens the door.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cal walks through the darkened house and into the bedroom.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal puts his duffel on the bed. He sits down on the bed next to his father's corpse.

Cal undresses and puts on his pajamas.

Cal folds his clothes and puts them in his dad's drawer.

Cal turns out the light.

He fluffs his pillow and climbs into bed. He falls asleep on his side, facing Earl's body.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

The SCRAPING of a razor across skin can be heard as Cal shaves.

Cal washes shaving cream from his face. He browses through the medicine cabinet until he finds aftershave. He opens the bottle, sniffs it, cringes a little, and then applies a splash.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Cal removes his pajamas and puts on the same clothes he wore the day before.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Cal brushes his teeth. He spits.

Cal combs his hair and straightens his tie, meticulous.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Earl's corpse still lies on the bed, still, stiff.

Cal enters. He straightens the blankets on the bed and smooths them out. He fluffs Earl's pillow.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - MORNING

The front door of the house opens and Cal emerges. He locks the door behind him and heads out onto the lawn.

Next door, MR. TOWNSEND waters his flowers in his bathrobe. He watches Cal leave the house.

Cal notices him. He nods at Townsend.

CAL

Morning.

Townsend waves at him half-heartedly. He watches Cal until he gets into his car and drives away.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

The curtains are drawn and most of the lights are still off; Cal is alone.

He reads the newspaper. The headline reads:

ANOTHER LOCAL GIRL MISSING

And next to the headline is a photo of Mara Nelson.

Cal flips through the paper, briefly examining the sports section. He runs his finger down the page, landing on "GIRLS SOCCER."

He finds the score for his local team:

CLINTON 0 - CHERRY GROVE 2

Cal shakes his head in disappointment.

CAL

Looks like they could've used a
good forward.

Cal flips to the comics section. He reads a strip that amuses him. He smirks.

He turns the newspaper back to the cover and reads the article about Mara.

CAL

Local girl Mara Nelson has been missing since Saturday. The fifteen-year-old high school sophomore was last seen at soccer practice Saturday afternoon. The police hesitate to comment on whether this incident is in any way connected to the disappearance of Dani Wheeler and the recent discovery of Jessica Buttons' remains in Big Creek, but authorities have yet to rule out the possibility.

Cal takes a sip of coffee.

CAL

I think I know where she might
be hiding.

Cal smirks.

He hears the sound of a DOOR OPENING. Margaret enters the office. Cal watches her from a distance.

Margaret puts her purse in a desk drawer, turns on her computer, and then heads to the break room. She enters and flicks on the light.

Cal downs the rest of his coffee and heads toward the break room.

INT. OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal enters the break room. He stands in the doorway, watching from behind as Margaret fills her cup of coffee.

Margaret turns around and almost spills her coffee.

MARGARET

Goodness. You startled me. Keep that up and you're liable to give me a heart attack, Cally.

CAL

Sorry. Didn't mean to shock you like that, and I sure don't want to give you a heart attack.

MARGARET

Oh, sure. That's just what you were doing. You're trying to kill me aren't you, killer?

CAL

Killer? Me?

MARGARET

Of course not. Honey, a kitten like you would never hurt a fly.

CAL

That's what they said about Norman Bates.

Margaret LAUGHS.

MARGARET

So. You're early again.

CAL

Yep. What do they say? "The early bird makes the first catch"? Something like that.

MARGARET

Not quite.

CAL

Oh well. I was never much for, for - what are they called?

MARGARET

Aphorisms.

CAL

I guess so.

Cal approaches Margaret. She smiles slightly.

CAL

Mind if I squeeze by?

Margaret looks at him and then behind her at the coffee pot.

MARGARET

Sorry.

Cal pours his cup of coffee. He turns around. Margaret sits at the table.

MARGARET

Join me for a drink?

Cal sits down across from her. He raises his mug.

CAL

Cheers.

MARGARET

Salud.

They toast each other, then each takes a sip from their coffee mug.

MARGARET

You look like hell.

Margaret smiles at Cal. Cal tries to hide his smile behind his coffee mug.

MARGARET

You can't hide that smile from me.

Cal lowers his mug and smiles. He stares at the table and shakes his head.

CAL

I don't think "hell" is an adequate description for what's been happening in my life.

MARGARET

Yeah. I could tell something was wrong.

CAL

How?

MARGARET

You don't normally smile.

Cal doesn't smile. Margaret's demeanor changes and she becomes more serious.

MARGARET

Want to talk about it?

CAL

I don't know. I don't want to, you know, burden you with all of my stupid little problems.

MARGARET

I'm sure they're not stupid. Really. You can tell me.

CAL

I've just been having a lot of family problems lately. I'm not on the best of terms with Dad. And I'm even worse off with my wife. We've been fighting all the time lately. We spend more time fighting than we do talking or making love, which we haven't done in what seems like months.

MARGARET

I know what that's all about.

CAL

You do?

MARGARET

Unfortunately. My husband and I used to fight all the time. But I solved that problem.

CAL

Yeah? What did you do?

MARGARET

I got a divorce.

CAL

I don't really think that will work for me.

MARGARET

Too much in love, huh?

CAL

I don't know. It's not that. I guess more than anything it's my daughter - our daughter. I love her too much to put her through the pain of a separation or a divorce.

MARGARET

I respect that.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Still, I know something that might be good for you. Good for both of us.

CAL

What's that?

MARGARET

Do you have any plans for lunch?

CAL

Not really, no.

MARGARET

Well, now you do.

(pause)

You know, they say that at any given moment in this town five hundred people are making love.

(pause)

In case I haven't made myself clear enough, that's a proposition.

Cal is taken aback. He pauses a moment, taking in the proposition.

CAL

I don't guess it could hurt to make it five hundred and two.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LUNCHTIME

A cheap, one-bed motel room. Small, stuffy, its furnishings are hopelessly out of date.

The door opens. Cal and Margaret enter. Margaret puts her purse on the table.

MARGARET

Get comfortable.

Margaret goes into the bathroom.

Cal sits on the bed. He slowly unties his shoes and takes them off. He places them squarely against the wall. He removes his socks and tucks them inside the shoes.

He returns to the bed. He loosens his tie.

Margaret emerges from the bathroom, fully naked.

Cal is surprised and embarrassed.

MARGARET
You call that comfortable?

CAL
I -

Margaret sits down next to him. She puts her finger to his lips to quiet him.

She removes his glasses and puts them on the nightstand. Margaret brushes Cal's disheveled hair out of his eyes.

MARGARET
You have beautiful eyes.

CAL
Thanks.

MARGARET
It's a shame you hide them behind those glasses like you do.

Margaret removes Cal's tie and throws it aside. She untucks his shirt and then slowly unbuttons it. She removes the shirt, revealing Cal's hairy chest and back, and then tosses it aside.

Margaret pushes Cal onto the bed, so that he's lying flat. She unbuckles his belt. She puts her hand down his pants.

Cal winces.

Margaret rubs him.

Cal becomes even tenser.

After a time, he loosens up.

Margaret unzips and removes his pants. She pulls off his underwear.

Cal moves over on the bed. They lie next to each other.

CAL
I've wanted to do this since the first day I met you.

MARGARET
Then shut up and do it.

Margaret kisses him.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Cal and Margaret lie under the covers.

MARGARET
How was that?

CAL
That was just what I needed.

MARGARET
It usually hits the spot. I don't
think I've seen a man come that
hard in my whole life.

CAL
It's been a while.

Cal glances over at the alarm clock on the nightstand.

CAL
Uh oh. Look at the time.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Cal and Margaret are fully dressed. Margaret fixes her hair in the mirror. Cal puts on his shoes.

CAL
We're going to be late.

MARGARET
Don't worry about it.

CAL
Don't worry about it? Shockley is
going to tear me a new one.

MARGARET
I'll take care of him.

CAL
How are you going to do that?

MARGARET
I have my ways.

Cal watches as she heads to the door. She opens it and then turns back.

MARGARET
Are you coming?

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Cal sits at his computer typing a report, occasionally pausing for a sip of coffee.

Shockley enters.

SHOCKLEY
How's it going, Cal?

CAL
All right, sir.

SHOCKLEY
Good.

CAL
Sorry I was late coming back from lunch today, sir.

SHOCKLEY
Don't worry about it. At the rate you've been putting out those reports lately, we can afford to lose a few minutes. Margaret was right about you. Keep up the good work.

CAL
I will, sir.

Cal goes back to work. Shockley waits in the doorway.

SHOCKLEY
Tell you what, Cal. Why don't you knock off after you finish the next one.

Cal looks up.

CAL
Really?

SHOCKLEY
Sure. I've been riding you pretty hard lately. Go on home to your family.

CAL
Thank you, Mr. Shockley.

Shockley leaves. Cal returns to his reports

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - LATER

RAIN PATTERS on the roof above.

The dull murmurings of post-lunch anxiety overtake the office employees. Some struggle to keep their eyes open, others chug coffee.

Cal exits his office, carrying his briefcase, and heads toward the exit and Margaret's desk.

He reaches Margaret's desk.

CAL

Shockley's been treating me like an angel all day. What'd you say to him?

MARGARET

Like I told you, Cal, I have my ways.

CAL

Well whatever you did worked miracles.

MARGARET

I've been known to do that.

CAL

I should say so.

(pause)

Say, are we on for lunch again tomorrow?

MARGARET

Ooh.

Margaret smiles at him.

MARGARET

I'll see what I can do.

CAL

Great. See you tomorrow.

MARGARET

Bye, Cally.

Cal exits.

INT. CAL'S CAR ON HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Cal drives through the heavy rain to Earl's house.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cal enters the front door. He takes off his jacket and hangs it in a closet.

He walks over to the telephone and dials a number. The phone RINGS a few times.

LINDA
(on phone)
Hello.

Cal doesn't respond.

LINDA
(on phone)
Hello?

CAL
It's me.

LINDA
(on phone)
Cal?

CAL
Yeah.

LINDA
(on phone)
What do you want?

CAL
I just wanted to see how things are.

LINDA
(on phone)
What do you think, Cal?

CAL
I was just hoping maybe you'd calmed down a little.

LINDA
(on phone)
Do I sound calm?

CAL

No.

Beat.

CAL

I guess I can't come home then.

LINDA

(on phone)

You've got to be joking.

CAL

When can I come home?

LINDA

(on phone)

Maybe when they find that Wheeler girl. Or maybe when Hell freezes over.

Linda SLAMS the phone.

Cal listens to the dial tone for a while before hanging up. He plays with the phone cord, making a noose out of it.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cal's car pulls into the clearing in the woods. Rain continues to pour, harder than before.

Cal gets out of the car, wearing a rain slicker, galoshes, gloves and carrying a flashlight. He pops open the trunk. He removes a shovel, a few yard-long strips of rope, and grabs some garbage bags.

He enters the tangled woods.

EXT. DEEP IN WOODS - NIGHT

Encumbered by his shovel and rain clothes, Cal makes the muddy trek deep into the woods.

He finally reaches a small clearing with a large oak tree. Cal approaches the oak tree. He puts the garbage bag and rope aside and plunges his shovel into the wet dirt.

Dirt is flung all about as Cal digs maniacally, hoping to get out of the rain, but struggling to hold the flashlight while still digging.

The rain slowly begins to ease.

Cal digs. A few feet down he hits something that makes a SQUISHY SOUND. His eyes light up.

He gets on his knees and finishes digging with his hands.

The rain stops.

Cal uncovers the mostly-preserved but dirt-covered face of DANI WHEELER, 16, scalped.

The clouds part and moonlight shines on Dani. Her face seems radiant with a blue glow.

Cal looks up to the sky and then leans down close to her. He kisses her lips. Caresses her face.

Scurrying, he uncovers the rest of Dani's naked body. He pulls her out of the shallow grave.

Cal puts a garbage bag over the lower half of her body, then another over the upper half of her body. He ties the bags to her body with rope.

Cal picks her up and carries her over his shoulder, his galoshes SQUISHING through the mud.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - LATER

A small kerosene lamp dimly casts its orange glow throughout the shack.

Dani's lifeless nude body rests in Cal's arms. He takes a rag, dips it in a pail of water, and washes the mud off of her body.

Her body now clean, Cal caresses her legs and breasts, and kisses her all over.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Dani's body lies in the backseat of Cal's car. Cal slams the back door and then climbs into the driver's seat.

He pulls the car onto the highway.

EXT. TRAILER HOUSE - NIGHT

A dog barks in the distance. A bug zapper hangs outside, illuminating the front of the trailer house.

A shadowy figure, Cal, carries Dani Wheeler's nude body up to the trailer and puts her in front of the door.

He scurries away.

Dani Wheeler rests, eyes wide open, in front of her parents' trailer house.

FADE TO:

EXT. TRAILER HOUSE - MORNING

Dani's body has fallen closer to the ground. A dog gnaws at her leg.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Cal, fully dressed for work, kneels next to the bed where Earl's corpse lies. His hands are clasped in prayer.

CAL

Dear God, please forgive me for all the things I've done. I know you are a wrathful God, but I know you are a God of forgiveness, too. Please overlook my past sins and misdeeds and please overlook those I am about to commit. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

Cal gets up and straightens his pants. He glances at Earl.

CAL

You don't look so good, Dad. You need to take better care of yourself. Let me help you.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Cal combs Earl's hair, parting it down the middle and ensuring each strand is straight.

He picks up a fingernail file and files Earl's nails.

Cal glances at his watch.

CAL

Don't wanna be late.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Cal hurries into the office building, passing Margaret's desk. She calls after him.

MARGARET
Hey, Cally.

Cal walks over to her.

MARGARET
Remember what we talked about
yesterday? I'm in.

CAL
Forget about lunch. What are you
doing after work?

INT. CAL'S CAR ON HIGHWAY - EVENING

Margaret sits in the passenger seat as Cal drives down the highway out of town.

MARGARET
Where are we going?

CAL
Some place special.

MARGARET
Is it romantic?

CAL
You'll see.

MARGARET
I hope it's romantic.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

Cal's car pulls into the clearing.

INT. CAL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Cal turns off the engine.

MARGARET
Is this it?

CAL
Yep. We're here.

Margaret glances at her surroundings. The sun is beginning to set.

MARGARET
I guess it is kind of romantic.
(pause)
Are we getting out?

CAL
Not yet.

The two sit in awkward silence for a while.

Cal stares at Margaret's breasts.

MARGARET
I guess there's no sense
in waiting.

Margaret unbuckles Cal's belt, then unzips his pants. She performs oral sex.

Cal receives it awkwardly at first, but then begins to get into it. He caresses Margaret's neck, then moves on to her hair. He grabs Margaret's hair in rhythm to her movements. His grip on her hair tightens until his fist clenches.

MARGARET
Ouch. What are you doing?

CAL
Sorry. I'm just tense. Maybe we
should go to the motel.

Cal zips and buttons his pants. He starts the ignition.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal's car backs out of the clearing and onto the street.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Margaret and Cal lie under the covers in bed after sex.

MARGARET
How are things with your wife?

CAL
Not so great. She hung up on me
last night when I tried to talk to
her.

MARGARET
That's rough.

CAL
Yeah. I don't know how much longer
this is going to last.

MARGARET
I'm sorry.

CAL
At least we have each
other, right?

MARGARET
This has been great, Cal.

CAL
What do you mean "has been"? Are
you planning on breaking this off
or something?

MARGARET
Huh? No, I didn't mean anything by
it. I just meant that I'm happy
with how things have been going
with us.

CAL
Me too.

They lie in silence for a moment.

MARGARET
So, why did you take me out to
the woods?

CAL
I don't know. I just feel
comfortable there. I guess it was
kind of a dumb idea.

MARGARET
It wasn't so bad until you started
pulling my hair.

CAL
Sorry about that.

MARGARET
What's so special about
that place?

CAL
I have a place in those woods,
kind of a cabin - if you can call
it that.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

I guess it's a stretch to call it a cabin. Anyway, my place is right near Big Creek, not far from where they found that girl's body. I've been going there since I was a kid. I helped my dad build the place when I was a boy.

MARGARET

Did you take girls out there when you were younger?

CAL

Me? No. What girl would want to go with an ugly weirdo like me?

MARGARET

I would.

CAL

Well, you never saw me in high school. You're the only one who would.

MARGARET

Not even your wife? I mean, before you started fighting.

CAL

Before we started fighting? I can't remember a time when we weren't fighting. But, no I never brought her there. I never brought anyone there.

(pause)

Not really, anyway.

MARGARET

What do you mean?

CAL

Nothing.

MARGARET

You've never taken your daughter to your special place?

CAL

Oh no. I'd never take her there. Never.

MARGARET

But you'd take me there?

CAL
Yes.

MARGARET
Why?

CAL
I have my reasons.

MARGARET
I see. Sounds like it's very important to you.

CAL
It is. I go there often.

MARGARET
Why?

CAL
Hobbies.

MARGARET
What hobbies?

CAL
Just some hobbies.

MARGARET
Like what? Are you a hunter?

CAL
You could say that I'm a hunter of a kind. But that's not quite it. I have a collection.

MARGARET
What do you collect?

CAL
Scalps.

MARGARET
You mean pelts.

CAL
I mean scalps.

MARGARET
Be serious.

CAL
Maybe I'll show you sometime.

Margaret LAUGHS.

MARGARET

You do that. You show me
your scalps.

(pause)

I've gotta pee.

Margaret gets out of bed and heads to the bathroom. After a moment she SCREAMS.

Cal jumps out of bed.

MARGARET (O.S.)

Oh my God!

Cal walks into the bathroom.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal enters.

CAL

What is it?

Margaret's hand is between her legs, in her crotch. She shows him her hand: a maggot wiggles on her palm.

Cal is simultaneously terrified and embarrassed.

MARGARET

What the fuck is going on?

CAL

Have you been sleeping with dead
guys lately?

MARGARET

Shut the fuck up! Don't joke about
that! Jesus Christ!

CAL

Maybe you should go to a doctor.

MARGARET

(tearing up)

And say what? I have a fucking
maggot in my pussy?

Margaret CRIES.

Cal awkwardly moves in and comforts her.

EXT. WOODS - BIG CREEK - NIGHT

The moon glistens on the water. Crickets and other insects CHIRP, and the occasional owl HOOTS.

A light darts about in the distance. It approaches the creek, revealing itself to be the bulb of Cal's flashlight.

Cal reaches into his pocket and removes Earl's Civil War knife. He stares at it for a while, stroking the blade. He kisses it and then throws it into the creek.

Cal stares at the rippling water.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

A small Italian restaurant, modestly decorated with the traditional red-and-white checkered tablecloths, and reproductions of Renaissance paintings and faux ivy on the walls.

Linda and Cal, dressed in a suit and tie, sit at a corner table. A WAITER takes their order.

LINDA

I'll have the pasta primavera.

CAL

And I'll have the veal parmesan.
Oh, and can we get a bottle of
Cabernet? Most expensive one
you've got.

WAITER

Of course, sir. I'll be right out
with that.

LINDA

Thank you.

The waiter takes their menus and heads back to the kitchen.

LINDA

Expensive wine? You must be so
desperate you're trying to bribe
me.

Cal LAUGHS.

CAL

No. I just wanted us to have a
nice dinner for once. That's all.

LINDA

I can't remember the last time we went to a nice place like this.

CAL

Me either.

LINDA

It's nice.

CAL

It is. I'm sorry I didn't take you out on dates more often. I really let our relationship fall apart. I see that now, and I'm sorry. Thanks for coming tonight.

The waiter returns with the bottle of wine and two glasses. He puts the glasses on the table, pops open the bottle of wine, and pours both Linda and Cal a glass.

CAL

Thanks.

LINDA

Thank you.

The waiter leaves.

CAL

I'd really like for us to get everything off our chest before the food comes out so we can have a peaceful dinner.

LINDA

All right.

CAL

All right.

(pause)

Well, I'll go first. This time we've spent apart really got me to thinking, about us, about Hailey, about myself. And I realized that without my girls I'm nothing. Life isn't worth living without the two of you in it. And I'll do anything I can to change, anything to rectify the wrongs I've done to you over the years. I know that list of wrongs is very long, and I apologize for that.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

But I really mean it when I say I'll do anything you want to fix this. I just want to come back to my home, back to my family.

LINDA

I don't know if it's that easy, Cal.

CAL

Why can't it be?

LINDA

I appreciate that you want to change, but unless you tell me what you plan to change I don't know why I should believe you. I need specifics.

CAL

You can't take me at my word?

LINDA

Not this time. Not anymore. I've heard that so many times I don't see why I should believe you. So what are you going to change?

CAL

Well, when I make a promise to go to Hailey's games I'll make sure not to break it.

(pause)

I'll go to all of her games, if work doesn't get in the way.

LINDA

If work doesn't get in the way? Is your work more important to you than your family?

CAL

You know that's not true.

LINDA

It sure seems that way most of the time.

CAL

I work hard so that my family has nice things, so we don't have to live life the way I did.

LINDA
I work hard, too.

CAL
I know you do.

LINDA
But I don't let it get in the way of my relationship with our daughter. I go to her games, I go to all the school events. If I don't have time, I make time anyway.

CAL
I'll make time, too. I'll make time for all of the ball games, all of the school events, even if it means going in to work early or staying late on other days.

LINDA
Okay.

CAL
And I'll make sure that we go out and have some alone time every month. No, twice a month. I'll get a babysitter and everything. And everything else we'll address as it comes up.

LINDA
Okay.

CAL
Does that sound good?

Beat.

LINDA
You know I love you, Cal, but you make it so hard sometimes.

CAL
I know I do. I'm sorry. I'm going to do better, I promise.

The waiter arrives with the food. He places the respective dishes in front of Linda and Cal.

WAITER
Is there anything else I can get you?

Cal shakes his head "no." The waiter leaves.

LINDA
It looks delicious.

Cal puts his napkin in his lap.

CAL
Well, dig in.

Cal and Linda eat.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Empty plates sit on the edge of the table. Cal rubs his stomach. A bus boy walks by and takes the plates.

The waiter approaches the table.

WAITER
Can I get you anything else?

CAL
Just the check.

The waiter leaves.

CAL
I'm stuffed.

LINDA
Me too.

CAL
How was it?

LINDA
Best I've had in a while.

CAL
Me too. I have to say, that may be
the best meal I've ever had.
Besides the meals you cook, of
course.

LINDA
Of course.

They smile at each other. Cal reaches for the wine bottle.

CAL
Last glass?

LINDA
Why not?

Cal empties the bottle in her glass.

The waiter arrives with the check.

Cal takes out his wallet and counts his money. Linda watches him as he counts it.

LINDA
Big tipper. You really
have changed.

CAL
Good service deserves a good tip,
I always say.

LINDA
Is that what you always say, Mr.
Cheapskate?

CAL
Well, this is a special night.

LINDA
Yep. So, where do we go from here?

CAL
I have an idea.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Clearly the same motel Cal went to with Margaret.

Cal and Linda are in bed, kissing in the dark. Light trickles in through the curtains. Cal reaches into Linda's dress and rubs her breasts. He puts his hands under her dress and emerges with her underwear.

Linda and Cal continue to kiss and rub each other's bodies.

Cal takes off his shirt, then his pants. He undresses Linda. He lies in bed next to Linda.

Linda rubs Cal's genitals. Cal cannot become erect.

LINDA
Is it going to work?

CAL
No.

Linda stops. They lie in bed in silence for a while.

LINDA
Why did I think this was a
good idea?

Silence again.

CAL
Let's split, go pick up Hailey
from Janie's house.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hailey's room is lit by a nightlight and a single lamp. Hailey is under the covers. Cal sits on the edge of her bed.

CAL
Sweetie, I'm real sorry I haven't
been around much lately. I've been
missing your softball games and I
have no excuse for that. I
understand that you're mad at me.

They sit in silence for a moment.

CAL
Don't be afraid to admit it,
sweetie. I know you're mad at me,
and that's okay. You have every
right to be. I just wish I could
say I've been neglecting you
because of work or on account of
my being busy, but that's not it.

HAILEY
Then what is it, daddy?

CAL
I can't tell you, sweetheart. But
I will say that it's been all
about my own selfish gains. I've
been thinking only of myself and
not of my darling beautiful
daughter. I feel just awful.

Cal takes her hand.

CAL
I can promise you this, Hailey: it
won't happen again.

Cal leans in and kisses Hailey on the forehead.

HAILEY

Will you lie with me until I
fall asleep?

CAL

You know I will, sweetie.

She scoots over to make room for Cal. He lies in bed with her. Cal strokes her hair with his hand. He reaches over and takes a brush from her nightstand. Cal brushes her hair.

CAL

Sweet dreams.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

A fairly large Baptist church with a lively CONGREGATION. The entire Dyer family sits in a pew near the front.

A choir and musicians take the stage and begin singing GOSPEL MUSIC. The congregation rises to its feet, save for Cal.

Cal is reluctant. Guilt covers his face. As the MUSIC SWELLS, Cal begins to CRY. He rises to his feet.

The SONG ends. Cal runs to the front of the church and falls to his knees. The PASTOR puts his hands on Cal's forehead and prays for him. Cal CRIES and reaches out to God.

INT. CHURCH - FOYER - LATER

CHURCHGOERS shake hands and chat before leaving church.

Linda is caught up in conversation with a member of the congregation.

Cal eyes EVELYN, an attractive, precocious fourteen-year-old.

Cal awkwardly approaches her.

CAL

Hello.

Evelyn hesitates.

EVELYN

Hi.

CAL

I'm Cal.

EVELYN

Hi, Cal.

Cal extends his hand. Evelyn reluctantly shakes it.

CAL

Glad to know you.

Evelyn gives him a half-smile.

CAL (CONT'D.)

How old are you?

Evelyn is visibly uncomfortable.

EVELYN

Fourteen.

CAL

Fourteen? No! I'd have said you're at least seventeen.

EVELYN

Well, I'm not.

CAL

Apparently.

(pause)

You know, I don't think I've seen you around here before. Is this your first time here?

The Pastor approaches them. He puts his arm on Evelyn's shoulder.

PASTOR

I see you've met my daughter.

Relieved, Evelyn leaves.

PASTOR

Cal, it's good to see you.

CAL

Good to see you, Pastor.

Linda and Hailey approach Cal. Linda touches his shoulder.

LINDA

Think we should go, honey?

Cal and the Pastor shake hands.

PASTOR
I hope you'll be back next week.

CAL
You know it. Front and center.

The Pastor smiles.

PASTOR
Glad to hear it.

INT. CAL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Cal drives. GOSPEL MUSIC plays softly on the radio.

CAL
Think we should pay Dad a visit?

LINDA
Oh, Cal. You and your father...

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - LATER

The Dyers wait on the porch.

Cal RINGS the DOORBELL. No answer. He RINGS again. And AGAIN.
No answer.

CAL
Well I don't know where Dad could
be on a Sunday.

LINDA
Not church, that's for sure.

CAL
He probably has the TV on too loud
to hear the doorbell.

Cal reaches into his pocket and pulls out his keys.

CAL
I'll let us in.

He unlocks the door. They enter.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Dyers enter Earl's house.

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Dyers enter the living room. The TV set is off and Earl is nowhere to be found. They continue through the house.

CAL

Dad! Dad! You home?

INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. The Dyers enter.

Earl's body lies in bed, on top of the covers. Aside from the impression of Earl's body, the bed is neatly made. He is still, not breathing.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - LATER

Paramedics exit Earl's house, carrying his body on a stretcher.

Hailey CRIES. Linda holds her and comforts her.

A sly smile crosses Cal's face.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING

Cal and Hailey look at Earl's body in the open casket. They stand several moments, in reverent silence.

HAILEY

Why does he look like that, Daddy?

CAL

Like what, sweetie?

HAILEY

Like he's not real. He looks like some kind of doll. Like rubbery.

CAL

Well, honey. God made Adam out of mud formed from the ground. He made us in his image, but he made us from the dust of the earth. We'll all return to dust when we die. That's what's happening to grandpa. He's not with us anymore, and he's returning to the earth, where we all came from and where we'll all go.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A familiar set-up: Cal sits on the bed, Hailey is tucked in.

HAILEY

Mom is always saying bad things
about Grandpa. Is he really in
Heaven?

CAL

I can't say for sure. I know he
believed in Jesus, but I can't say
much else.

HAILEY

Will we go to Heaven?

CAL

What kind of question is that? Of
course we'll go to Heaven. Now you
better get some sleep.

Hailey rolls over onto her side. Cal kisses her forehead. He turns out her light and walks to the door. He turns back before exiting.

CAL

Don't forget to say your prayers.
And pray for Grandpa.
(pause)
Good night. Sweet dreams.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Cal sits on the couch in his bathrobe, reading the newspaper with the TV on. He sips coffee.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

Cal puts down the paper and opens the door. He ties his robe.

Two men, DETECTIVES JONES and MARKUS stand at the door.

CAL

Can I help you gentlemen?

JONES

Mr. Dyer?

CAL

Yes.

JONES
We weren't sure we'd find you at
home this hour.

CAL
My father just passed.

JONES
We know about your loss.

MARKUS
Sorry to hear about his passing.

JONES
It's good that you're
here, though.

CAL
Who are you?

JONES
I'm sorry. I plumb forgot to
introduce myself. I'm Detective
Jones, of the police department.
This is my partner James Markus.

Markus extends his hand. Cal and Markus shake hands.

CAL
What's this all about?

MARKUS
It's about your father, actually.

CAL
What about him?

JONES
It'd be easier if we could come
inside and talk to you.

Cal is lost in thought for a moment.

CAL
Sorry. Certainly. Come in.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The detectives follow Cal into his house.

Cal turns off the TV and takes his newspaper off the couch and
puts it on the coffee table.

CAL
Can I get you fellows some coffee?

JONES
I'm fine, thanks.

MARKUS
Black.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cal and Markus sip coffee.

MARKUS
Good coffee.

CAL
Thanks. My wife brewed it, actually. She's quite the, uh, I don't know. She's quite something, I guess. You know, I just put Dad in the ground yesterday. The last thing I expected was to find two cops on my doorstep at ten o'clock in the morning the next day. Just what is it that you guys are doing here?

MARKUS
When was the last time you saw your father?

CAL
About a week ago, I suppose.

JONES
Do you know how your father died, Mr. Dyer?

CAL
Natural causes, I guess. He wasn't exactly a spring chicken.

JONES
Well, we got a call from the coroner this morning. Says your father's body was in an unusually well-kept state.

CAL
Doesn't surprise me a bit. He was what I guess these days you'd call O.C.D.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

Used to wail on me when I was a kid because my room was always a mess. But I don't see why any of that's important. The man just kept himself clean.

JONES

I understand what you're saying, but that's not quite it. The coroner says it's as if someone cleaned him up after death. His body was real well taken care of.

CAL

Do you suspect a murder?

JONES

Maybe.

MARKUS

It makes you wonder, what with all those girls missing and the body found up in Big Creek.

Awkward pause.

CAL

Am I a suspect or something?

JONES

No more or less than the next guy. But the next-of-kin is always a suspect. And according to the reports you were the last to see him alive. That counts for something.

(pause)

Well, we'll be in touch with you, Mr. Dyer.

Markus and Jones head for the door.

CAL

Let me show you out.

MARKUS

Thanks again for the coffee, Mr. Dyer.

CAL

Any time.

JONES
Like I said, we'll be in touch.

The detectives exit.

Cal watches them get into their car through the window. He sits down on the couch and stares at the blank TV screen.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cal and Linda lie in bed. Linda is asleep.

Cal masturbates.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Mara removes her clothes.

BACK TO:

INT. CAL'S HOUSE

Cal stops masturbating. He is visibly disgusted.

He rolls over and shakes Linda awake. He goes under the covers and lifts her nightgown.

Cal goes down on Linda.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Cal is in his office, typing quickly and looking over reports.

Shockley walks by.

SHOCKLEY
Working hard, Cal, or
hardly working?

CAL
Working hard, sir.

SHOCKLEY
I can see that.

CAL
I'm almost done with my reports.

SHOCKLEY
Already?

CAL
Yes, sir.

SHOCKLEY
Well, have them on my desk
before lunch.

INT. CAL'S OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - LATER

The break room is empty save for Cal, who stirs sugar into his otherwise black coffee.

Margaret enters.

MARGARET
Have any lunch plans?

She smiles at him. Cal doesn't look up from his coffee.

CAL
I patched things up with my wife.

MARGARET
What are you talking about?

Cal closes the door.

CAL
I thought what we had was just a
temporary thing.

MARGARET
Sure. It's not like I was
expecting us to run away together
or something. But this is abrupt.

CAL
We had some fun. Now that's it.
Let's move on.

MARGARET
Move on?!

Cal puts down his coffee and motions for Margaret to keep her voice down.

CAL
Keep it down, we don't want anyone
to hear.

MARGARET
Maybe your wife would like to hear
about us.

CAL

That's not fair. Let's just calm down. There's no reason to be like this, Margaret. We had a good thing going, but it's all over now. End of story.

MARGARET

Don't be surprised if Linda gets an anonymous message.

CAL

You don't really mean that.

Margaret regards Cal.

MARGARET

No, no I don't really mean it.

She sits down. Cal hesitates, but he sits too.

MARGARET

Cal, something crossed my mind the other day. What's in that shack you were telling me about?

CAL

Nothing.

MARGARET

Tell me, Cal.

CAL

There's nothing!

MARGARET

I have a bad feeling about it. I want to know what's out there.

CAL

Nothing.

MARGARET

Tell me, Cal!

CAL

God damn it! I made it up! There's no shack in the fucking woods, okay? What, do you think I really have a fucking shack in the middle of nowhere? Do you think I take young girls out there and rape and murder them or something ridiculous like that?

MARGARET

If I go out there around Big Creek, near where you took me the other day, there won't be a shack?

CAL

That's what I'm saying.

MARGARET

I don't believe you.

CAL

Then fuck you. Leave me alone.

MARGARET

I think I know some people who might be interested in all this, especially if what I think is out there turns out to be true.

Cal jumps out of his seat.

CAL

You're just like every other woman, every woman since Eve. Can't be trusted with a God damn thing.

MARGARET

I can't be trusted? You're the one who cheated on your wife.

CAL

You're fucking crazy, you know that? No wonder your husband left your sorry ass.

Cal storms out of the break room.

Margaret sits in her chair, staring into the distance.

INT. CAL'S CAR - EVENING

Cal drives at a certain distance behind an older, beaten-up car. He is clearly following the car.

The car pulls into a driveway.

Cal keeps his distance.

Margaret exits the car in the driveway. She looks back in Cal's direction.

EXT. MARGARET'S HOUSE - LATER

Cal sits in his car, spying on Margaret's house.

He collects his nerves.

He combs his hair.

He straightens his tie.

He exits the car.

EXT. MARGARET'S HOUSE - YARD - CONTINUOUS

Cal walks through Margaret's yard toward her front door. He begins to knock, when Markus and Jones appear behind him.

MARKUS

Mr. Dyer - a surprise to find
you here.

Cal turns to face them.

JONES

Ms. Dimmick reported a strange car
waiting across the street from her
house.

CAL

She's a friend of mine from work.

JONES

I see.

MARKUS

It is fortuitous that we found you
here, Mr. Dyer, because we
actually would like to have a word
with you.

JONES

But first we should check on
Ms. Dimmick.

Markus rings the DOORBELL.

Almost immediately, Margaret answers. She stares at Cal.

Cal avoids eye contact.

MARKUS

Ms.

(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)
Dimmick, you called about a
strange car parked across the
street from your house.

MARGARET
Yes.
(pause)
But it's gone now.

MARKUS
We found Mr. Dyer here on your
doorstep. Maybe he scared the guy
away when he pulled up.

MARGARET
Must be.

JONES
He says he works with you.

MARGARET
Yes.

JONES
What did you want to speak to Ms.
Dimmick about, Mr. Dyer?

CAL
It can wait. Wouldn't want to
interrupt a police investigation.

MARKUS
Well, we need to talk to Mr. Dyer
about another matter. Don't
hesitate to call us if this creep
comes back.

MARGARET
I'll keep my eyes open.

JONES
Come on, Mr. Dyer. You can ride
with us down to the station.

Jones and Markus lead Cal away.

CAL
Am I under arrest?

Margaret watches the car pull away.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A white, windowless room with a table in the center, lit by harsh fluorescents.

Cal stares at the table in front of him.

Markus and Jones enter. Jones has a seat. Markus stands by the door.

MARKUS

Can I get you anything?
Water? Coffee?

CAL

No. Thanks.

MARKUS

There's nothing like police
hospitality.

CAL

I'm fine. Thanks.

MARKUS

I'd really like to get you some
coffee, return the hospitality you
so generously offered us at your
home.

CAL

Water, then.

Markus pours Cal a paper cup full of water. He hands it to him.

Cal doesn't drink. He puts the cup on the table in front of him.

CAL

Can you just tell me why I'm here
already? Is it about my father?

JONES

Yes.

CAL

Do you suspect me?

JONES

We didn't say that.

Markus takes a seat next to Jones.

MARKUS

Do you know a Mr. Townsend?

CAL

Mr. Townsend? You mean my
Dad's neighbor?

JONES

That's the one. Mr. Townsend says
he saw you leaving your father's
house on Tuesday morning. You said
you hadn't seen your father in a
week's time.

CAL

Yes. Well. That's not exactly
true. It is true. I didn't see
him.

MARKUS

Are you saying you weren't at your
father's house on Tuesday?

CAL

No. I mean, I was there. I just
didn't see my Dad.

JONES

How do you mean?

CAL

I had a fight with my wife on
Monday night, so I went to stay
with my Dad. When I got there, he
was already asleep. He goes to bed
early.

JONES

The autopsy reveals that Earl Dyer
died on Monday evening. You never
saw your father, alive or dead,
that night?

CAL

No. Maybe he died while we were
both asleep. I didn't check on him
in the morning before I left for
work.

Markus and Jones leave the room and converse.

Cal never looks up from the table.

Markus and Jones return.

JONES

You're free to go, Mr. Dyer. Just inform us if you're leaving town any time soon. We need you around in case anything else comes up that we need to question you about.

INT. CAL'S CAR - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

Cal drives through the outskirts of town to the edge of the woods.

He pulls into the clearing.

Cal notices a car parked in the distance on the dirt road.

He pulls out and goes back home.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - HAILEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cal walks by Hailey's room. He peeks in and sees that she is still awake.

He enters the room.

HAILEY

Daddy, where are you going?

CAL

What do you mean, sweetie? When I die?

HAILEY

No. Where are you going?

Cal hesitates; he doesn't know what to say.

Finally, he breaks his silence.

CAL

I'm only going away for a little while, Hailey. I won't be gone long and it won't be long before you see me again.

HAILEY

But I love you, Daddy.

CAL

I love you too, sweetheart. Now get some sleep.

Cal gives Hailey a lengthy kiss on the forehead.

CAL
Good night. Sweet dreams.

HAILEY
Night, Daddy.

Cal exits the room.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Middle of the night. Linda is sound asleep. Cal stares at the ceiling.

After a time, he gets out of bed and begins to take off his pajamas.

INT. CAL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Cal writes a note:

NOTE
*I forgot to do something at work;.
It can't wait until morning.*

Cal sneaks out the backdoor.

EXT. CAL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Cal takes a bicycle out of the garage, climbs on, and rides off.

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

On his bike, Cal wheels into Earl's front yard. He hops off the bike.

Cal lunges toward Earls car, removes his keys, and hops in.

He backs out of the driveway.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

The sun slowly rises in the distance, casting an orange glow on the wilderness.

Cal treks through the thick brush, in the direction of his shack.

EXT. DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal passes the shack and keeps going deep into the woods. Deeper and deeper - toward his graveyard.

As he nears the graveyard, he sees Markus, Jones, and three other POLICEMEN looking at his shovel and taking prints and looking for more evidence in the area.

Cal freezes. He quietly turns around and retraces his steps back through the woods.

He passes his shack. No sign of the police there!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Trudging through the thick woods, he finally makes it to the clearing where his car is parked.

A police car has pulled into the woods close to Cal's car. One COP inspects his car. Another COP calls in Cal's license plate on the RADIO.

Before he is seen, Cal goes back into the woods.

He hides.

DOGS BARK in the distance.

The sun rises. No more orange glow - the full light of day shines through the trees.

Cal runs into the woods.

EXT. DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Still running, Cal reaches the shack. He opens the door and enters.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cal lights a lantern and the illumination gives us one more look at his grotesque collection of human scalps.

Placing the lantern next to him, Cal opens a trunk and pulls out a rifle. He fumbles through the trunk looking for ammunition.

Outside the DOGS ARE CLOSER. The BARKING IS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

Cal throws the gun to the floor.

He runs across the room and grabs a can of gasoline. He begins hastily throwing the gasoline all over the walls of the shack. Cal takes the lantern and throws it against the wall.

The shack is ablaze.

Cal begins tying a noose.

The DOGS ARE CIRCLING THE SHACK. The BARKING IS DEAFENING to Cal's ears.

EXT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The dogs are outside the blazing shack, BARKING WILDLY.

Markus and Jones run toward them.

The police officers kick in the door.

INT. SHACK DEEP IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The door bursts open and the cops look inside.

Cal's body hangs lifeless from a ceiling beam.

CUT TO BLACK