

THE FOURTH WOMAN

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OVER BLACK

We hear echoes of a woman yelling. They're distant, almost like they're at the end of a tunnel.

BLACK FRAME:

TEXT APPEARS - it will act as a trigger warning

The themes shown in this film may be disturbing for some, viewer discretion is advised.

TEXT WILL FADE

STAY ON

BLACK

Echoing yells rise in volume. A Film Title fades into view:

"The Fourth Woman"

CUT TO:

ECU OF WOMAN'S EYES, OPENING WITH URGENCY AND SPEED

INT - A PLAIN BEDROOM - MORNING

The woman bolts upright, a strong but silent gasp shakes her frame. She grabs her throat in pain. This woman is our heroine, and will forwardly be referred to as "THE WOMAN."

Her fingers shakily feel the excessive bandaging round her throat, all bloodstained and hiding the slit flesh beneath.

She tries to speak but her face scrunches in pain. A raspy whine leaving her lips.

She clutches her throat again.

It's clear. She cannot speak.

With bloodshot eyes, she surveys the dimly lit room. The curtains are closed, everything placed perfectly, the bedding is pristine.

THE WOMAN swallows, removing herself from the bed.

Her feet feebly plant themselves on the floor, flinching at the cold ground. They hobble across the room to a table, a pile on clothes on its surface.

A post-it is stuck on the pile:

"PUT THESE ON."

THE WOMAN looks briefly down, but the door holds her attention. She investigates. It's unlocked.

Hobbling back to the clothes, she passes a mirror covered in post-it notes. It's shattered with a shard missing.

The post-it notes read:

"DON'T YOU LOOK PRETTY."

"REMEMBER, RED IS DEFINITELY YOUR COLOUR."

"I'VE BOUGHT YOU A NEW DRESS x"

THE WOMAN faces a shattered reflection. Out of all the emotions that cross her face, recognition isn't one.

CUT TO:

The WOMAN shakily puts on the shirt from the clothes pile. It is bright yellow, oddly-cut, revealing.

In fact, the whole outfit is revealing. Thin stockings, heels, short skirt, yellow shirt and an oversized jacket - that of a man's.

THE WOMAN steps closer the mirror, her touch tracing bruises, eye bags, wrinkles. She lifts her head, revealing her neck, eyes widening in fear and disgust.

She walks towards the door, the heels echoing loudly. *Too* loudly.

THE WOMAN stops as a wave of awareness washes over her. She looks at herself, then at the mirror before stripping the heels and skirt from her body. The bloody tracksuit bottoms go back on.

She starts walking to the door again, a bin to her right. She throws the heels away.

INT. A LONG, EMPTY CORRIDOR - DAY

A door slowly opens, THE WOMAN's head popping out. Her body follows, then her feet.

Quietly, she closes the door and tiptoes to a nearby window. It's locked.

THE WOMAN sighs to herself, and walks out of frame

CUT TO:

INT. AROUND HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE - AROUND HOUSE

- THE WOMAN tries multiple windows, a shot of each handle being tried.
- THE WOMAN tries several doors, handles being tried again.
- She opens all the drawn curtains

END MONTAGE

The last pair of curtains are prized open, THE WOMAN squinting from the light.

INT.CORRIDOR - DAY

THE WOMAN nonchalantly walks next to a wall, a corridor coming into frame.

Boom. Standing further down in the corridor's middle, a man dressed in all black with a mask on his face. He has just looked into THE WOMAN's bedroom and from here on, he is known as "THE MAN."

Catching sight of THE MAN, THE WOMAN darts back - out of sight - flat-backed against the wall.

A few beats pass before she gingerly peers round. He's gone, but she still goes back the way she came.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

THE WOMAN stands in a room.

People on the street occasionally walk past the window.

So, as one would, THE WOMAN runs for a nearby object and goes to throw it at the glass.

She stops, looks round her shoulder and realises.

Oops - too much noise.

Quietly, she places it back down.

THE WOMAN approaches the window, more people walking by. Timidly, she knocks on it.

TWO knocks follow but with more force.

THREE knocks, now open palmed.

The people on the street don't take any notice, oblivious to the noise.

Suddenly, the clock in the room chimes the hour, startling THE WOMAN.

She steps into an empty corridor, but before she can take her first step, is startled again. THE MAN turns the corner, out of nowhere, looking at his phone. She jumps back into the room.

Halfway down the corridor, THE MAN'S phone sounds prompting him to stop and text back.

Meanwhile, back in the room, THE WOMAN's face has a frozen look of terror. Slowly however, it morphs from wide-eyed fear to determination, an idea sparking to life.

THE WOMAN runs while THE MAN is distracted.

CUT TO:

INT. AROUND THE HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE:

- Landline phone found
- "999" rung
- Phone to THE WOMAN's ear
- A cut wire is held up. We can hear the long beep in the background. The line's dead.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE PLAIN BEDROOM

Draws have been pulled open, THE WOMAN rummaging through them all desperately. We hear the flurry of her hands before she pauses, sitting back swiftly with a pen in hand.

Next, she rips a post-it off the mirror and stuffs it in her jacket pocket.

As she does, we pan around.

THE MAN stands behind her.

She turns, sees, and freezes.

It's her bare, dirty feet contrasting his combat boots.

Her shaking hands, his clenched fists.

Her tearful eyes taking the unfeeling stare of his mask.

THE MAN goes in to strike and THE WOMAN drops the pen, bracing --

But he hesitates, dropping his arm gradually.

We see his gloved finger place itself under THE WOMAN's chin, lifting her eyes to meet his.

Desperately, THE WOMAN smiles. A pained, scared smile.

THE MAN caresses her face, then places his two fingers on the mask's lips. He transfers the kiss to THE WOMAN's forehead.

He keeps it there until she takes it. Guiding it her heart, she gives another shy smile.

Then, he simply leaves, leaving the door open behind him.

As we hear his footsteps grow quieter, THE WOMAN drops the facade. Her shoulders drop, her body sags and her lip quivers. She falls to her knees, silently crying.

INT. THE ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

A post-it is held to the window:

"HELP ME."

THE WOMAN knocks on the glass, but people just walk past.

Baring her teeth in frustration, THE WOMAN crumples up the paper, stuffing it in her pocket. Her saddened gaze surveys the room to suddenly land on a charging mobile phone.

She jolts up, flinching for it before hearing footsteps. Bewildered, she darts under the desk.

THE MAN enters, unplugs the phone and leaves.

The clock chimes the hour.

INT. THE PLAIN BEDROOM

THE WOMAN enters the room and notices a box of chocolates left on the bed with a post-it:

"I'M SO SORRY FOR EARLIER, I GOT YOU THESE X"

Heavily, she collapses onto the bed and roughly opens box. The lid is carelessly tossed and the first chocolate stuffed in her mouth. She's mid-chew when her face scrunches up.

She checks the box, rolls her eyes and proceeds to eat the chocolates anyway.

INT. THE ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

Back at the window, still banging on pane.

THE WOMAN has almost given up, half-focused on knocking while staring absently round the room.

Her gaze lands on a calendar. A date is marked.

KNOCK KNOCK

THE WOMAN jumps! Spinning to the window!

There's a face pressed up against the glass, its expression intense. It's A LADY. A waving LADY. She's checking to see if she has THE WOMAN's attention.

THE LADY
(*mouth*)
Are you okay?

THE WOMAN
(*mouth* back)
What?

We cannot hear THE LADY through the glass.

THE LADY
Are you okay?

THE WOMAN is too stunned to answer as THE LADY digs through her handbag for a phone.

The clock chimes the hour and THE WOMAN snaps out of it. She knocks on the glass and mimes a watch.

THE WOMAN:
(*mouth*)
Quick! Quick!

THE LADY understands, holding up her fingers to match her mouthing.

THE WOMAN pulls the crumpled post-it and a pen from her pocket, scribbling down what she can.

THE LADY:
0 8 0 8 2--

Footsteps. THE WOMAN stops.

THE WOMAN
Go! Go!

THE WOMAN ushers THE LADY away who merely tilts her head in confusion.

Tick, Tick - it clicks! And she nods.

THE LADY places her hand on the glass, eyeing THE WOMAN before leaving.

The footsteps are coming closer.

THE WOMAN, like before, dives under the desk.

Combat boots enter the room, patrolling. THE WOMAN breathes heavily as they still momentarily before turning to leave.

THE WOMAN moves, hitting the desk.

The boots still again, this time with a halt.

THE WOMAN realises - time to run!

Attempting to sprint around THE MAN, he grabs her arm while she dives for the doorway.

They scramble, THE WOMAN making a load of hoarse, silent sounds of panic. THE MAN has her in a bear hug so she bites down on his hand. He yelps and she struggles free.

As she runs, THE MAN pushes her into the door, THE WOMAN trips and falls into the outside corridor.

She scrambles to get away, but THE MAN grabs her foot and starts yanking her back.

With her free foot, she kicks him.

She kicks him again.

She kicks him till he releases her and she sprints with all her might.

This sprint takes her to a bathroom. She locks the door and places all her body weight against it.

Fast footsteps approach before savage hits shake the door. THE WOMAN shuts her eyes tight, wishing it to end. Wishing, wishing, wishing --

A phone rings, and the hits stop.

(beat)

It rings again and THE MAN grunts in frustration, stomping off in a huff.

Silence.

Behind the door, THE WOMAN is petrified, sweating and gasping. As the adrenaline wears off, the pain comes back - her hand going to her throat.

She turns to look at the wall in her ,pain-filled stupor. There, right in front, a patch of thin paint. She leans in closer, looking past the paint to the writing underneath.

THE WOMAN rummages in her pocket for the post-it with THE LADY's number.

Some more digits hide under the thin paint.

Not looking away, she takes the pen from the other pocket, scribbling down and combining the two numbers.

Put together, they complete a phone number.

"0808 2000 247"

THE WOMAN stares intently at the number, eyes wide and mouth slightly agape. She can't believe she's got it.

She collapses against the wall, lowering the post-it, biting her nails as an idea ignites in her brain.

THE WOMAN's eyes refocus. Time to get out.

CUT TO BLACK:

BLACK FRAME:

The sound of a chiming clock.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

The clock chimes loudly reading 11 o'clock.

CUT TO:

INT. SOMEWHERE IN THE FACILITY - DAY

THE MAN emerges from a his room. He cracks his neck, stretches and inhales deeply.

From a corner, THE WOMAN spies on him before taking off.

INT. THE PLAIN BEDROOM - DAY

THE WOMAN is checking herself in the mirror as THE MAN enters.

She smiles at him as he nods in approval. He spares a glance at the bin.

It's empty.

Happy, he leaves the room.

THE WOMAN's smile drops to a deathly glare.

INT. THE ROOM WITH A WINDOW.

The clock chimes 2 O'clock.

THE MAN plugs his phone in to charge. As he leaves, he trips on his boot's undone laces.

Staring at the boots, he shrugs taking them off to reveal his sweaty feet. THE MAN sighs in relief, crouching to place the boots next to the phone.

Slowly, he peers to see under the desk.

No one there.

As he gets up, he spots the window smudged with handprints. He wipes at it. The smudge remains untouched. It's on the outside.

With a sigh, he opens the window, stretching out, cleaning it away. He promptly closes it and leaves the room.

(Beat)

THE WOMAN emerges from her hiding spot, checking the corridor before beelining to THE MAN'S phone. It reads "dead battery".

She groans. What follows are a tense few moments of pacing, biting nails and tapping her arm.

THE WOMAN presses on the phone screen again - it's charged enough.

As she turns it on, the phone makes noise. She winces.

The phone now asks for a passcode.

Thinking for a moment, THE WOMAN timidly types in the basic "2580"

The phone rejects it.

THE WOMAN starts looking round the desk, going through the draws, on any paper scraps. Finally! A small notebook with a number scribbled in its corner.

Swiftly, she runs to the phone again and types it in.

Denied! One more wrong and it's locked.

The clock chimes half past 2.

Panicked, THE WOMAN runs behind the open door and hides.

THE MAN enters, grabs his phone and checks the calender. He leaves once more .

THE WOMAN, behind the door, realises what the code is but it's too late now.

Emerging from her hiding spot, THE WOMAN notices THE MAN'S boots left by the phone. She takes them.

CUT TO:

Closed eyes slowly open.

INT. PLAIN BEDROOM - DAY

We're in front of the mirror, THE MAN behind THE WOMAN. She has a fresh bruise on her face.

He leaves.

With the slam of the door, THE WOMAN kneels by the draws and opens one. Whatever is inside, she's content with.

INT. ON WAY TO ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

Following THE WOMAN from behind, she is making her way through the corridor.

She stops at the corner, peering round. THE MAN is just leaving the room as she waits.

THE WOMAN checks again, then tiptoes into the room.

INT. ROOM WITH WINDOW - DAY

THE WOMAN enters and checks the clock - 2 0' clock - then goes straight to the calender. She looks at the date marked. It reads:

"19th February"

THE WOMAN goes to the phone, taps its screen, and once again sees its low on charge. She paces the room, frowns at her grubby feet before checking the phone again. It's ready.

Learning from last time, THE WOMAN covers the phone speaker so the wake-up noise doesn't rat her out.

She enters "1902"

Denied.

She visibly steps back, almost winded from the shock of being wrong. Then, before panic takes over, she rapidly types "0219"

The passcode is accepted. She's in.

For the first time, THE WOMAN beams a wide, hopeful smile. Pulling the post-it from her pocket, she types in the phone number.

It rings.

It rings

It rings.

THE WOMAN bites her lip and checks the clock. She has time.

Finally someone picks up.

SPEAKER

(over phone)

Hello, you have reached The Refuge
hotline, what assistance do you need?

THE WOMAN is silent, not thinking this far ahead. She tries to speak, but only retracts in pain.

SPEAKER:
Hello? Is anyone there?

THE WOMAN keeps trying till she lets out a yelp, breathing heavily into the phone

SPEAKER: (cont'd)
Hello? Are you okay? Are you injured
or unable to speak?

THE WOMAN presses numbers on the phone's keypad, the device beeping wildly.

SPEAKER: (cont'd)
If you cannot say anything, press "1"

THE WOMAN presses 1.

SPEAKER: (cont'd)
If you are in immediate danger, press
"1"

THE WOMAN presses 1.

SPEAKER: (cont'd)
If you need police, press "1"

THE WOMAN presses 1.

SPEAKER: (cont'd)
We'll be sending police round as soon
as possible. If you are in immediate
danger, find a safe place to lock
yourself in or attempt to leave the
premise. Do not be afraid to yell for
help. If necessary, find a weapon to
defend yourself with. Stay on the
line --

The clock chimes.

THE WOMAN hangs up the phone and takes it with her.

INT. THE PLAIN BEDROOM

With breathes quick and deep, her hands shaking, THE WOMAN prepares herself for the escape.

She spots the cracked mirror.

Opening a cabinet, the bin's content is hidden inside. There's bloody clothes, bandages, chocolate wrappers as she rummages, finally pulling out the bloody shard.

She wraps the base of the shard in the pair of stockings then places it in her pocket.

THE WOMAN puts stray bin items back in the cabinet, before seeing something placed right at the back. She smiles, leaning in to grab it.

CUT TO:

A pair of combat boots step into frame, leather creaking from the flexing toes within. As they head for the door, we can see THE WOMAN is wearing them.

INT. THE MAN'S ROOM - EVENING

We follow THE WOMAN inside as she shuts the door.

Without hesitation, she goes through his stuff; testing objects, looking for a weapon.

She finds a cricket bat. Good.

She goes to open the door.

THE MAN is standing in the door frame, taking it up entirely.

THE WOMAN, after a stunned hesitation, snarls and kicks him in the dick. HARD.

She goes to take a swing with the bat, but he pushes her weakly, knocking her off balance. She clips his head. It stuns him, but not enough to stop him.

Pushing THE MAN out the way, she runs for the window room.

INT. THE ROOM WITH A WINDOW - EVENING.

THE WOMAN sprints in, barricading the door with the chair.

Turning frantically to the window, she checks it's thickness through tapping, eyeing and leaning on --

It budges. In disbelief, THE WOMAN tries the handle. Unlocked.

Without processing, she flies it open and starts climbing through, throwing the cricket bat onto the ground outside.

THE MAN crashes into the room! He rushes and grabs her foot. They struggle, she tries to kick, but THE MAN is *FURIOUS*.

As they fight, the woman starts taking the shard out her pocket. She holds it close to her heart, like THE MAN's kiss, while being pulled back into the room. THE MAN leans over her and she with bared teeth, she thrusts.

THE WOMAN impales the shard through THE MAN's eye.

He screams, writhing in pain. THE WOMAN clambers through the window and out into the street.

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT

Groaning, dazed, THE WOMAN stands - dragging herself onto the street.

It's dead. No police, nothing.

She panics, looking back at the house with a hitched breath. It's frightening how normal it looks from the outside.

Then, in the distance, a siren.

She limps towards it, then jogs, then sprints!

She reaches the end of the street, folded over in exhaustion. As she looks up, red and blue lights flash across her face.

So does a smile - quick. One of adrenaline, sadness, pain but mostly - relief.

FIN

FACTS AND HELPLINES:

Domestic abuse is a largely hidden crime, occurring primarily at home and often unreported by women to police and unnoticed by the public.

For the year ending March 2018, only 18% of women who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months reported the abuse to the police

Domestic Abuse will affect 1 in 4 women (and 1 in 6 men) in their lifetime.

It accounts for 16% of all violent crime in England and Wales and has more repeat victims than any other crime.

Domestic abuse leads to, per average, 2 women being murdered every week.

As of the Covid-19 lock downs, between April and June 2020, there was a 65% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline compared to the first three months of that year.

The numbers are still rising.

(Statistics from House of Commons Library 2021, HMIC 2020, CSEW 2018, Refuge 2020, ONS 2020)

Resources for Domestic Abuse UK:

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (run by Refuge) - 0808 2000 247

The Men's Advice Line (run by Respect) for male domestic abuse survivors - 0808 801 0327

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0800 999 5428

Samaritans (24/7 service) - 116 123