

Dead Line
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BEGIN TITLES

EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT

In a stark black-and-white nightmare landscape, TOM BARRETT, thirties, runs pell-mell through tangled underbrush. His dog, a large mutt, gallops at his side. The momentum of the chase builds as pursuers draw ever closer. In his panic, Tom stumbles brutally, rises and runs again, limping. He dashes up a slope, loses his footing and tumbles into a gully, where he lies helpless, panting with terror.

The Unseen Predators crash closer, grunting. Tom tries desperately to rise, but his leg collapses. The dog sits quietly by his master's side.

Crashing out of the forest come yells and lights...

Two pursuers in sheriff's uniforms appear with flashlights, barely restraining their lunging German Shepherds. They gaze down from the top of the gully. Both officers set down the lights and draw their guns.

SHERIFF #1
(out of breath)
Goddammit, Tom!

Like a cornered animal, Tom glares defiantly at the sheriffs, his sides heaving. His hand seeks the gun in his waistband.

SHERIFF #2
(shouts)
Don't do it, Tom. Give it up now!

The sheriffs crouch and aim. Tom hesitates, then his hand goes for the gun. He barely gets it out before he is writhing under a hail of bullets.

The sheriffs descend quickly into the gully. They kick the gun away from Tom's lifeless hand. Sheriff #2 stoops and opens it as Sheriff #1 inspects the body. Sheriff #2 shows Sheriff #1 the unloaded gun.

SHERIFF #1
What the hell?

Sheriff #1 shakes his head, studying Tom's dead face.

SHERIFF #2
It's still a good shoot, though. I
mean how were we supposed to...

SHERIFF #1
That's probably what he figured.
Better get the D.A. out here
though.

Tom's dog whimpers, licks Tom's dead face.

SHERIFF #2
What about him?

Sheriff #2 tries to pat the dog, who growls protectively over
the corpse.

SHERIFF #2
(to dog)
Easy fella.

SHERIFF #1
(turning away)
I'll call Animal Services.

Sirens up in the dark distance. A mournful howl echoes and
fades away.

TITLES END

CUT TO

EXT. HOT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A large awning and marquee above the upscale, classy
nightclub. A line of young people dressed for partying waits
impatiently as bouncers check IDs, wave a couple of VIPs
through, etc. In the line is a strikingly beautiful young
girl, MEGHAN MANNING with a couple of her pretty friends.
they laugh and chatter, eager to get inside and begin
partyng.

A car drives by slowly. The CREEPY MAN at the steering wheel
slows to check out the girls in line. His eye falls on
Meghan. As he pauses in his car, one of the bouncers catches
sight of him and scowls: this guy is all wrong. The creepy
man quickly drives away. The bouncer looks at Meghan who is
unaware of the creep checking her out.

BOUNCER
(to Meghan and her
friends)
Hey you three girls! C'mon inside.

Meghan and her friends can't believe their luck.

MEGHAN
Us???

BOUNCER
Now! Go ahead in.

Meghan and her friends quickly come to the front of the line and start fishing around for the cover charge.

BOUNCER
Just get inside. No charge.

MEGHAN
Wow!!!

BOUNCER
You all three look out for each other, you hear?

MEGHAN
Oh we've been friends since preschool. We always do.

Giggling and high-fiving, the girls disappear inside.

INT. HOT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Meghan and her friends are instantly caught up in the dance. Laughing; they greet people they know, laugh, drink etc.

LATER

Meghan, hot and flushed, makes her way from the dance floor toward the back door of the club, which opens into an alley. Meghan's friend sees her and calls to her.

MEGHAN'S FRIEND
Where you going, girl?

MEGHAN
I gotta get some air.

EXT. HOT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

At the back door, people are clustered around smoking. Meghan opens her dressy purse and takes out a slender cigarette. As she puts it into her mouth, a HAND reaches up with a lighter.

CLOSE ON THE CREEPY GUY

Meghan laughs, hardly looking.

MEGHAN
Thank you.

The creepy guy edges closer.

MEGHAN

Well, I now owe my friends a week's pay.

CREEPY GUY

Yeah? why's that?

MEGHAN

Oh, we all quit together last week. And I just fell off the wagon.

CREEPY GUY

Well, there's always tomorrow...

MEGHAN

Exactly. I'll just quit again.

He guides Meghan toward some bushes that separate the parking lot from the nearby neighborhood.

Suddenly, he pulls Meghan behind a row of bushes and clamps a rag across her nose and mouth. She sags, unconscious. He "walks" her away, leaning against him. A few paces from the alley is his car. Quickly, he puts the unconscious Meghan into the passenger seat. He runs around to the driver's side and gets in, starts up the car.

SCREEN TEXT:

FIVE YEARS LATER

INT. BAR - DAY

News program on the TV:

ANNOUNCER

A last-minute appeal for a stay of execution was denied Thursday by the Supreme Court, and the lethal injection of serial murderer Alfred Probst will take place as planned.

QUICK SHOT of 'CREEPY GUY' ALFRED PROBST

ANNOUNCER

Probst, who was convicted of strangling at least four young women across the state continues to claim his...

(dialogue fades out)

CUT TO

EXT. NICE MIDDLE CLASS HOME - NIGHT

College kids hanging around the porch of an upscale home.

INT. NICE MIDDLE CLASS HOME - NIGHT

A party is going on. Handsome young NICK BARRETT about 19, and his girlfriend, DARBY HUDSON, dance by the beer kegs. A young college guy, REED WILKERSON, with more looks than brains, shouts over to Nick.

REED

Hey Nick, How'd you do on the chem final?

NICK

No idea. How'd you do?

REED

Ate big steaming chunks. At this rate I'll never be a surgeon.

DARBY

(dryly)

For which the world should give eternal thanks.

REED

Hey! See if I write you any vicodin prescriptions.

DARBY

You're terrible!

They all laugh. Nick points to Darby.

NICK

She aced it last year.

REED

(to Darby)

Oh. Well then, you can write me up for vicodin.

They all laugh. Nick picks up Darby and spins her around.

Suddenly Reed looks down the block at a figure he sees coming toward them.

REED

Who all's that?

They look in the direction he is pointing. As the figure gets closer, we see that it is MEGHAN, wearing the same dress she wore at the nightclub. She is very beautiful, but looks a little "off," -- not the same lighthearted girl. She pauses at the steps to the porch.

Reed leaps down and gets on one knee at her feet. Meghan stops, and acknowledges Reed with a smile.

REED
(theatrical)
Allow me to welcome you, my
beautiful wanderer. You have
reached your destination.

Meghan looks at him quizzically.

NICK
Don't mind him. His brain is
scrambled.

REED
(sotto voce to Nick)
Hey! No cock blocking!

NICK
(sotto voce)
Don't worry. I got all the woman I
want.

Nick puts his arm around Darby and hugs her.

DARBY
(to Meghan)
Come on in. You go to State?

Meghan hesitates.

MEGHAN
Uh...I... we just moved here. I'm
planning to register.

Reed escorts Meghan up the steps and inside. He gives one triumphant look back at Nick and Darby, who laugh.

DARBY
Looks like Reed's staked his claim.

NICK
Yeah, like gum on her shoe. She'll
never get rid of him now.

Although Darby is pretty and sharply intelligent. She senses Nick's preoccupation and holds him close.

DARBY
Everything okay, baby?

NICK
Yeah.... sure.

Darby knows it's not, but gets even closer.

DARBY
What's up?

NICK
I just remembered --- it's ten years to the day since my dad got killed.

DARBY
Wow, I'm sorry.

She hugs him. Nick studies Darby's face, which is sympathetic and concerned.

NICK
Last night, it's really weird, but I dreamed about him. About dad. He and I were playing cards. I was just a little kid. And he was showing me all the face cards. And he made the king kiss the queen. And I was laughing so hard...

Nick smiles, lost in memory.

DARBY
Then what?

NICK
(shrugs)
I woke up. And then it all came back, how he died. Suicide by cop.

DARBY
Why were the cops chasing him?

NICK
(shrugs)
Oh.... he and mom had split up. He was living in the woods, dealing a little weed. Somebody snitched him off and the cops came to bust him. It wasn't any big deal. But he took off running, with his dog.
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

And when they caught up with him,
he drew on them. That's what the
cops said, anyhow.

DARBY

But why?

NICK

Mom says he was depressed. He
couldn't find a job. He used to say
we'd be better off without him.

Darby takes Nick's hand.

DARBY

I'm so sorry, baby.

NICK

His dog, the cops said it kept
trying to wake him up. It wouldn't
leave his side.

DARBY

What became of it?

NICK

Nothing good, I'm sure.

DARBY

(gently)

Baby, it's been a long time
since... Maybe you should talk to
somebody?

NICK

Oh I've been shrunk.

DARBY

Really? What did the shrink... say?

NICK

That I'm dangerous...

(mugging)

Especially under a full moon.

They look up and the moon is full. Nick grabs Darby and
pretends to "devour" her, while she laughs. They kiss and go
inside.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Kids are dancing, drinking, talking.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Nick and Darby dance, drink, socialize. Nick turns once and sees Meghan, dancing sexily under the admiring gazes of several guys. Reed moves in to protect her, but she shoots a look at Nick, and there is no mistaking its message. Nick glances quickly at Darby, who hasn't noticed. He waves and smiles at Meghan, but as a "friend."

As Nick and Darby dance, Nick's POV morphs into slo-mo. The music sounds distorted. Nick stops dancing.

DARBY

Baby, let's just get out of here.

NICK

Sounds good.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Darby start walking down the darkened block.

DARBY'S

Wish you hadn't parked so far away.

Darby cocks her head to listen.

DARBY

What was that?

NICK

What?

The both stop. Sounds of panting close on.

DARBY

Don't tell me you didn't hear that!

NICK

Well let's just stand here so it can catch up with us.

DARBY

(panics)

Run!

Holding hands, they take to their heels. The panting gets louder and closer. Darby stumbles, and Nick almost drags her after him.

Darby screams.

NICK

(shouts aggressively)

Hey!

Meghan and Reed leap out of the dark and practically knock him down.

REED

(out of breath)

What the hell? We've been trying to catch up with you guys.

DARBY

(relieved)

Oh for God's sake.

(to Reed)

Were you making all those noises?

MEGHAN

(dimples)

Sorry. We were playing werewolf.

REED

(indicates Meghan)

This one's kinky.

Meghan looks at Nick and smiles. Nick catches her eye and tries to look bland. Darby takes Nick's arm.

REED

How come you guys are leaving? It's still early!

DARBY

Can you think of something else to do?

NICK

My mom and stepfather are out tonight. You wanna come over and shoot some pool?

REED

I'm down.

(looks at Meghan)

That okay, baby?

MEGHAN

Sure!

NICK

Okay then.

REED

I'll follow you.

The four have reached the cars, Darby and Nick get in and Nick drives away, Reed following him.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Darby snuggles against Nick as he drives,

Suddenly Reed's car peels out and gets even with them as Nick drives. Meghan is driving, laughing, Reed howling out the window.

REED
(howling, growling)
RrrrrrrOooooowwooooo! Oooooowwooooo!

NICK
I've about had it with those two.

Nick leans out and shouts at Reed.

NICK
Cool it. We're gonna get pulled over.

REED
Owwwwooooooooooo!

Nick rolls his eyes and shakes his head. Darby shrugs.

LATER

INT. NICK'S HOUSE, REC ROOM - NIGHT

The room is the definition of blue collar, from the fake wood paneling to the cheesy bowling trophies, plastic ashtrays, and beer posters on the walls.

The four are shooting pool. All are drinking beer. Meghan leans way over the table to shoot, displaying her ample cleavage to Nick. When she catches him looking, she meets his eyes and smacks the ball, smiling. Darby wraps herself around Nick, showing off her own cleavage.

MEGHAN
Hey, you guys wanna play a different kind of game?

REED
(drunk)
How about a little strip poker?

MEGHAN
(looks at Nick)
This is better. I found it on the Internet.

REED
Bring it on!

MEGHAN
(to Nick)
It's called "Dead Line." When
somebody answers, they'll ask you
to tell them one secret.

NICK
Okay. And what then?

MEGHAN
They'll let you talk to dead
people!

They all three groan skeptically.

REED
Is that before or after you give
them your credit card?

MEGHAN
...even people you knew. Like
friends who died. Or parents, I
mean, if they're dead, you know.

Darby and Nick look at each other quickly. Darby looks
disapproving.

DARBY
Bad timing, Meghan. Let's do
something else, okay?

MEGHAN
Oh come on you guys.

MEGHAN
The call is free!

Meghan offers her phone.

MEGHAN
The call goes direct to the
underworld.

Nick, Darby and Reed roll their eyes and laugh at Meghan.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK CAVERNOUS SPACE - NIGHT

Weird faces in the floor, half-glimpsed, milling around. A
hand reaches upward, then others.

We hear the voices of the young people talking above.

REED

Oh, so all these dead people are
just hangin' out down there.

MEGHAN

(laughs)
I guess. How would I know?

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S HOUSE, REC ROOM - NIGHT

Meghan extends her phone. She puts in a number.

REED

(takes the phone)
Area code 666.
(laughs)

MEGHAN

It is NOT.

Meghan looks directly at Nick. His attention is arrested.

DARBY

So how much do the 'spirits' charge
per minute while you wait on hold?

MEGHAN

It's free!

DARBY

Meghan, it's just a scam to take
advantage of people who lost
somebody.

She looks warningly at Nick.

MEGHAN

(to Darby)
It's no big deal.
(to Nick)
Try it.

NICK

Okay, I can see you're not gonna
give up.

Grinning, Nick takes the phone.

INT. DARK SPACE - NIGHT

The phone rings below and the cries and howls of the dead souls get louder as they become excited.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE, REC ROOM - NIGHT

The four gather around the phone, all trying to listen in. A businesslike voice comes on.

VOICE ON THE PHONE

Good evening. To whom do you wish to speak?

The kids look at each other, giggling, thinking. Suddenly, they hear a man's and woman's voice outside.

NICK

Oh shit. It's Mom and Ken! He's gonna be so pissed.

DARBY

Why? You'll replace the beer tomorrow.

NICK

He's just a crabby so and so.

Nick slams the phone down, and the kids spring into action, trying to hide the beer bottles, but they aren't fast enough. Nick grabs the note Meghan has dropped on the floor, tucks it in his pocket, and gathers up bottles just as the door opens to reveal Nick's mother, TERRI TATUM and stepfather, KEN TATUM.

Ken's dull, surly features reflect his personality: heavy on attitude, light on brains. Terri has the long-suffering look of a person who always tries to find common ground where none exists. Ken surveys the beer bottles, pool cues.

KEN

(to Nick)

You drinkin' my beer again?

When Ken spots sexy Meghan, he looks her up and down. She smiles back at him boldly.

NICK

We were just playin' a little...

KEN

(to Nick)

I told you I don't want you kids drinkin' in my house.

NICK
This is not 'your' house.

TERRI
Nick... Please....

KEN
You wanna get your mom in trouble?
Them friends of yours drinkin' and
driving' they'll hold her
responsible if something happens.
(to kids)
Bein' as how you're three sheets to
the wind now I gotta take you home
and screw up my night. You can come
by and get your car in the morning.
(to Reed)
Come on.

Terri walks apart with Nick.

NICK
Mom, why do you let this jerk run
your life?

KEN
(overhears)
A chip off the old block, all
right. Just like his father.

NICK
You shut up about my dad.

KEN
Without me, your mom would have
lost this house --- bought with
'your dad's' drug money by the way.

Nick glares as Terri leads Ken out of the room.

TERRI
(to Ken)
What's the point of all this? It's
in the past.

TERRI
(to the kids)
Kids, just get in the car and
Ken'll take you home.

Darby smiles sympathetically at Terri, who smiles back.

EXT. DARBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Darby and Nick get out, Nick kisses Darby and she runs up to the front door of her house and disappears inside.

INT. KEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick gets back into the car next to Ken and they ride home alone, in angry silence.

KEN
Listen, Nick...

Nick makes a dismissive motion, staring stubbornly out the window.

KEN
I'm not the enemy.

NICK
Then stop actin' like one.

KEN
I'm only gonna say this once. Your mom's been through a lot. And I won't stand for her being put through even more. By you.

NICK
If you care so much, why do you keep guilt-tripping her about my dad?

KEN
What's between Terri and me is none of your business.

NICK
The hell it's not.

Beat.

NICK
I dunno know why Mom even took a second look at you.

Ken yanks the car to a stop in from of the house.

KEN
You wanna settle this man to man? Get your ass out and fight, you snotty little jerk.

EXT. NICK'S HOME - NIGHT

Both exit the car and grapple. After a few punches, Nick swings and connects, knocking Ken down. Ken gets up and comes at Nick. He catches Nick and pounds him. Terri appears at the door, shocked. She dashes out to separate the men.

TERRI
(screams)
Stop it! Stop it right now!

Ken stops choking Nick and rises. Terri runs to Nick and examines him.

TERRI
(to Ken)
You've hurt him!

She helps Nick, who woozily gets to his feet.

TERRI
I can't take any more of this!

Nick brushes past his mother and stumbles into the house.

TERRI
(to Ken)
Very mature. What's wrong with you?

KEN
What's wrong is that your son is an inconsiderate little... he's got no job, he's screwing up in school. And you aren't helping him none. Somebody's got to whip that boy into line, or he'll end up like his father. He's probably dealing drugs right now! I wouldn't be surprised.

TERRI
And fighting like an animal is just what he needs, eh?

KEN
I'm only human, Terri. I can take just so much of his lip.

She glares at him exasperated. Terri slams the door.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick opens the door to his bedroom and enters.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick closes the door behind him. He looks in the mirror, shakes his head, probes his blackening eye.

NICK
(to himself)
He'd better have one too.

He tumbles onto his bed, staring at the ceiling, fists clenched. One fist brushes Meghan's slip of paper, sticking out of his pocket. He takes it out and studies it, shrugs and picks up the phone beside his bed, punches in numbers.

Ring.

Ring.

Suddenly the ringing stops. A beat of silence.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
To whom will you speak?

Nick looks at the phone, nonplussed but a little intrigued. He thinks for a moment.

NICK
Make it easy. My dad's dog.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
His name?

NICK
I don't know. Hey, that's your job.

Silence. Nick waits, playing with his keychain, then suddenly gets alarmed.

NICK
Hey, how much is this costing per
minute?

Nothing.

As Nick is about to hang up, he hears the voice again.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
What is your secret?

Nick thinks, grins sheepishly.

NICK
What kinda secret?

Silence. Nick's thinks, then speaks embarrassed, as if he is only realizing this himself by hearing it.

NICK

I... I like this girl Meghan. I mean I love my girlfriend. I'm just... curious.

Nick searches for words, but before he can say any more, he hears barking on the phone. He drops it in surprise, then listens and laughs.

NICK

You got a dog to bark. Very impressive. Hey boy, how is it there in heaven?

The dog barks, then whines.

NICK

You miss Dad?

The dog whimpers.

NICK

Hey, Fido, you wanna do me a favor?

The dog barks eagerly.

NICK

Take out a big chunk out of my stepfather's ass, will ya? His name's Ken.

The dog growls, then barks sharply. Nick turns off the phone, turns over and sleeps.

EXT. NICK'S HOME - DAWN

Silent, foreboding. Ken's battered pickup truck sits in the driveway.

In work clothes, Ken exits the house, gets his toolbox from the garage and secures it across the bed of the truck.

Suddenly --- vicious growling. Before Ken can turn, something vicious flies at him and hurls him to the ground. Bleeding and stunned, Ken tries to rise, but can't, He is under attack. He stumbles to all fours and tries to get up and run, but the thing catches him in a gruesome struggle.

KEN

Help! Somebody help me!

Terri appears at the door and screams. Nick bursts out of the house holding a shotgun. He looks wildly around for something to shoot, but sees only Ken, moaning and bleeding. Nick stoops beside Ken.

NICK
What happened?

KEN
I... I don't know. Something
attacked me. A wolf.

Nick's face freezes.

NICK
There are no wolves around here.

KEN
(grimacing)
I don't know what the fuck it was.
Call 911.

TERRI
(screaming)
Oh my God. Somebody help him!

A pool of blood is widening from Ken's rear. Stunned, Nick runs to the nearby woods and peers into the gloom. Neighbor GLADYS GLASCOK, sixtyish, comes outside in her ratty bathrobe.

GLADYS
What in God's name?

TERI
(desperate)
Something attacked Ken.

GLADYS
I knowed it. I heerd barking.

TERRI
A wolf!

Gladys looks sharply at Nick.

GLADYS
Wolves don't bark. It had to be a
dog.

Nick stares. Sirens in the background.

EXT. NICK'S HOME - DAY

Driving Terri's car, Nick pulls into the driveway. Beside him is Terri. Ken lies on his stomach across the back seat. Nick stops the car and gets out to help Terri with Ken, whose lower half is bandaged. He is in great pain. They half walk/half carry Ken groaning toward the house.

GLADYS immediately exits and helps Terri carry supplies and crutches.

GLADYS

(to Ken)

How you doing, Ken?

KEN

(mumbles)

How does it look like I'm doin'?

TERRI

The police said it was probably a feral dog, but it coulda been a coyote. It might have been rabid, so poor Ken has to get rabies...

GLADYS

What kind of a world is this, you're not even safe in your own back yard anymore....

They resume bringing Ken into the house. Gladys looks sharply at Nick.

GLADYS

Who gave you that shiner, Nick?

Nick shakes his head. They are at the back door of the house. Gladys hands Nick the items she was carrying.

GLADYS

(to Terri)

Angel, I'm gonna make a nice chicken soup right now. So you can count on that for dinner.

Gladys bustles back to her house. Nick helps Terri with Ken, who is almost swooning with pain. Before she gets into her house, Gladys turns and looks searchingly at Nick.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits at his desk, trying to study. His phone rings, and he answers.

NICK
Hey baby. Wuzzup.

INT. DARBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darby is lolling on her bed in a sexy nightie.

DARBY
Not much, darlin'. How's your dad?

NICK
Please don't call him my dad.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As he talks, Nick looks over and notices the piece of paper with the phone number on it. He picks it up and studies it as he talks to Darby.

NICK
How about I come over and pick you up, baby?

DARBY
I thought you had homework.

NICK
Got it done.

INT. DARBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darby smiles a little.

DARBY
Sure you did. Look, hon, I've just got to study more if I'm going to transfer to the university this fall.

NICK
I know. You've got your priorities.

DARBY
I'm going to get my degree, Nick. And so should you.

NICK
I know. I just.... I need to talk.

DARBY
So talk.

NICK
Not over the phone.

INT. DARBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darby grins, resigned.

DARBY

Okay. I'll come over there. See how easy I am?

NICK

Come in the back door. They put Ken in the living room 'cause he can't get up the stairs, and it's easier for mom to care for him.

DARBY

Okay.

Darby hangs up, rises smiling and starts to primp.

INT. NICK'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the living room, Ken is on a bed. Terri sits beside him as they watch a cheesy game show. In the weird light from the TV, they look strange and zombie-like.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darby drops her schoolbooks on Nick's desk, and they hug and kiss. Darby plays with his hair.

DARBY

Now what was so important that you had to tell me in person?

NICK

This is really stupid but...

He reaches across Darby to his bedside table and grabs the paper with the phone number.

DARBY

What's that?

NICK

Remember that game "Dead Line" that Meghan told us about?

DARBY

I guess.

NICK

Well, last night I got bored, and I called the number.

DARBY

And?

NICK

I.... I think I talked to my dad's dog.

Darby looks at Nick in disbelief. Then she bursts out laughing.

DARBY

I'm sorry. Well, how was old Rover?

NICK

Listen to me! I dialed the number and I told them a secret, just like Meghan said to, and then.... I heard a dog.

DARBY

What was your secret?

NICK

(guilty)
Never mind that.

DARBY

(tussling playfully)
But I wanna know!

She laughs, but is pryingly curious.

DARBY

That must have been some secret....

NICK

It's not important. Do you want to hear the rest of this or not?

DARBY

Okay, okay. So what did the dog say to you?

NICK

(shrugs)
Woof.

They laugh.

NICK

(sobers)
But when I talked about my dad, the dog whined. Like it knew.

DARBY

O-kay.

NICK

There's more.

Darby watches expectantly.

NICK

I.... told the dog to take a chunk
out of Ken's ass.

Darby stares.

DARBY

You're kidding, right?

NICK

I didn't mean for him to get hurt.

DARBY

Nick, do you know what you're
saying?

Nick shrugs.

DARBY

That's insane. Tell me you don't
really believe your little phone
call had anything to do with...

Nick stares past her.

DARBY

Nick, you're scaring me.

NICK

Okay okay, I'll stop.

They hug.

NICK

So where is Meghan from?

DARBY

(thinks)

I don't know. Up north somewhere, I
think.

Darby shakes her head, shrugging.

DARBY
Why all these questions about
Meghan? You hot for her or
something?

NICK
(uncomfortable)
No way.

Beat.

NICK
I'm just curious how she got this
phone number.

DARBY
Off the Internet, like she said.

Nick reaches for the phone.

NICK
You gotta hear this dog.

DARBY
Wait! I've got a better idea.

NICK
What?

DARBY
Ask for somebody they can't
possibly find. I mean, it's easy to
record a dog. People probably call
all the time wanting to hear their
dead dog bark.

NICK
Okay, who should we ask for?

Darby ponders.

DARBY
My great-grandmother from Hungary.

NICK
Huh?

DARBY
She died in World War II. Then her
daughter, my grandma married an
American soldier and came over
here. That's how my family got to
America.

NICK
I never knew that.

DARBY
Lots you don't know about me.

Nick thinks.

NICK
All we ever talk about is my never-
ending family drama. We should talk
more about you.

Darby smiles.

DARBY
Deal.

She briskly picks up the phone, looks at the paper and dials.

DARBY
(whispers)
This is such B.S.

Nick makes an impatient move. Darby sighs.

DARBY
(whispers)
It's ringing.

Nick puts his ear to the phone too.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
To whom do you wish to speak?

Nick nods -- that's it!

DARBY
Who's this?

VOICE ON THE PHONE
To whom do you wish to speak?

DARBY
How much is this going to cost me?

Silence.

NICK
(sotto voce)
Talk!

DARBY
 Uh, okay. I wish to talk to
 ANASZTAZIA SEGESVARY.

Nick looks quizzical. Darby listens.

DARBY
 She wants to know a secret. Do you
 mind? It's MY secret.

Nick plugs his ears. Darby whispers into the phone.

Beat.

Darby listens. Suddenly her face changes to shock. Pain and
 anguish cross her face.

DARBY
 Auschwitz!

NICK
 What?

DARBY
 She said Auschwitz!
 (beat)
 She's speaking Hungarian!

NICK
 Who?

DARBY
 It's impossible!

Nick stares. Darby shakes her head, listening. Suddenly, she
 throws down the phone, freaked. They stare in silence.

NICK
 That's not very nice, hanging up on
 your great-grandmother.

DARBY
 It wasn't her!

NICK
 of course not. I'm joking.

DARBY
 It's not a joke. My great grandma
 was a Jewish doctor. A
 pediatrician. The Nazis deported
 her to Auschwitz, and she died in
 1944.

Nick is aghast.

NICK
She died in the Holocaust?

Darby begins to sob.

NICK
Come on, it's just some kind of
scam. What did this woman say?

DARBY
I don't know much Hungarian. I know
I heard that word Auschwitz. And
hell. I heard the word for hell!

Darby is agitated.

DARBY
Nick, there's something evil here.
Delete that number.

NICK
I will, baby.

Darby begins to dress.

NICK
Where are you going?

DARBY
I want to be with my family.

NICK
I'm sorry. C'mon.

DARBY
I don't know what I'm even doing
here. I was going to study tonight.
Now I'm scared.

Nick hugs and kisses Darby.

NICK
I'll walk you to your car.

Nick opens his closet and takes out his rifle, checks the
chamber. Darby's eyes get wide.

DARBY
What's that for?

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Darby emerge from the back door and stand alone in the moonlight. Ken's truck sits broodingly much as in the scene where Ken was attacked. The woods around the house are dark. Darby suddenly grabs Nick's arm.

DARBY
I heard something!

NICK
Not that again.

But Nick listens. Quickly, they move toward Darby's car.

DARBY
Next time you come to my house,
okay?

NICK
(gazing around warily)
You got it.

They reach Darby's car and she gets in as Nick stands guard. She waves and drives away. Alone, Nick suddenly hears the bushes rattling.

NICK
Hey!

He aims the gun at the woods, but all falls silent. Nick backs up toward the door. Suddenly, he freezes at the whimpering of a dog. He aims the gun all around, but the sounds die away.

The face of his father, TOM BARRETT, is watching him from the woods.

INT. NICK'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Nick enters, dressed for school. Through the open door to the living room, Ken sits in his bed watching TV. Nick sits at the table while Terri fixes breakfast.

TERRI
(to Nick)
You're up early.

NICK
I've gotta write my history paper.
I'm going to the library.

Nick stuffs a muffin into his mouth as he walks toward the door.

NICK
Aren't you going to work, Mom?

TERRI
I took vacation time to look after
Ken.

NICK
(mutters)
Some vacation.

KEN
(shouts in)
Thanks, buddy.

Nick leaves.

EXT. STREET NEAR COLLEGE - DAY

As Nick walks, Meghan runs up and joins him. Nick looks
guilty at the sight of her.

MEGHAN
Hey, Nick!

NICK
Meghan. What's up?

MEGHAN
Where's Darby? I never see you
without her.

NICK
I had to get out of my house. What
are you doing here?

MEGHAN
I'm going to get registered. I like
it here.

Meghan looks seductively at Nick. Nick grins, surprised at
her boldness.

NICK
Well that's great. Where are you
from? I didn't get a chance to ask
you.

MEGHAN
(evasive)
Oh, I've moved around a lot.

NICK
But where were you born?

MEGHAN
(seems confused)
I... don't like to talk about it.

NICK
That's okay. Sorry for
being nosy.

Meghan falls into step with him.

MEGHAN
Do you ever get the urge for a
little... variety once in a while?

Nick looks at Meghan with interest, but stops himself.

NICK
I... uh, got a good thing going
with Darby. Thanks anyway.

MEGHAN
Sure. Fine.

She starts to flounce away.

NICK
Uh... Meghan.....

MEGHAN
Yes?

She comes back.

NICK
Where'd you get that phone number?

MEGHAN
What phone number?

NICK
You know, for that game 'Dead
Line.'

MEGHAN
(shrugs)
I told you. The Internet.

NICK
Yeah, but where?

Meghan shrugs. She takes out another piece of paper from her
purse.

MEGHAN

Here's another number for you.

Nick looks curious.

MEGHAN

It's mine.

Meghan gives him a meaningful look, then walks off. Nick watches her. Meghan's eyes GLOW, although Nick cannot see this.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick comes downstairs and Terri encounters him.

TERRI

Nick, I don't like the way Ken is looking. Can you come help me with him?

NICK

Sure, Mom.

They enter the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ken has deteriorated. Nick and Terri reach under and try to move him. He groans.

KEN

(to Terri)

Gimme me one of them pain pills.

TERRI

Ken, I just gave you one a couple of minutes ago.

KEN

Well it ain't workin'.

TERRI

Give it some time.

KEN

Nick probably stole 'em and put some aspirin in there instead.

Nick bristles and shakes his head.

NICK

I didn't steal your pain pills, Ken.

TERRI

(to Ken)

Honey, don't take it out on Nick.
It's not his fault.

Nick looks away guiltily.

KEN

(to Nick)

Guess you get a real charge out of
this, don't you?

Nick turns away, shaking his head.

TERRI

Now Ken, just lay back and let the
medicine do its job. Get some rest.

She and Nick leave. Terri turns off the light.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Terri hugs Nick.

KEN

(shouts out)

Terri, bring me some water. What
does a man gotta do?

NICK

I'll get it for you, Ken.

KEN

I asked my wife.

Terri puts her hand on Nick's arm.

TERRI

(to Ken)

Be right there, honey.

She looks at Nick and shrugs. Nick shakes his head.

TERRI

(softly)

He's in pain, Nick!

NICK

(sotto voce)

He IS a pain.

Nick rises.

NICK
I might as well go study.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits at his desk and tries to study, but he can't concentrate. He turns on his phone and surfs through a bunch of pictures. The pictures are of himself as a boy and his dad TOM BARRETT --- throwing a ball, cooking barbecue, Tom on his motorcycle.

NICK
Aw, dad. What'd you have to go and do it for?

Suddenly Nick remembers something and pulls Meghan's phone number out. He looks at them as if deciding. He almost starts dialing Meghan's number, then stops himself. He dials again.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
To whom do you wish to speak?

Nick steels up his nerve.

NICK
To T...Tom...Tom Barrett.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
What is your secret?

NICK
Hey, I told you a secret already.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
What is your secret?

NICK
What happens if people run out of secrets?

Silence.

Nick looks around shamefacedly, then grins in remembrance.

NICK
Okay, okay, when I was fourteen, I did it with my mom's best friend, Jennifer.

Nick grins, thinking back. Suddenly he straightens up at the sound of a man's voice.

"TOM'S" VOICE
How are you, son?

Nick throws the phone onto the bed, totally freaked out. Then he plunges across the bed to retrieve the phone and shouts into it.

NICK
Who the hell is this?

"TOM'S" VOICE
Who did you ask for?

NICK
This is a fucking scam. And you'll go to prison for this.

"TOM'S" VOICE
I'd gladly go, if I could just be your dad again, Nick. I made a terrible choice.

Nick stares at the phone.

NICK
Where are you?

"TOM'S" VOICE
I'm where I put myself.

Nick is stunned, turns off the phone with shaking hands. He gets up and paces around the room. His mother calls from downstairs.

TERRI (O.S.)
(calls)
Nick?

Nick can barely bring himself to answer.

NICK
Yeah, Mom.

TERRI
Nick.... c..come here, will you?
Ken's had some kind of seizure.

BLACK SCREEN

PREACHER'S VOICE
Numbered are our days, and we must live each day as if it were our last. For the ways of the Lord are hidden from us.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVESIDE - DAY

Ken's funeral service. Nick, looking tired, sits beside Terri, who is sobbing. Darby sits on Nick's other side. Meghan and Reed sit nearby. Meghan tries to catch Nick's eye. He looks straight ahead.

MINISTER

Brother Ken was a loving husband, a kind and concerned father, a brother. A son.

Nick moves closer to his mother. He puts his arm around her and Darby.

MINISTER

Ken didn't have a fancy job title, he was an honest working man who wanted only to share his life and the fruits of his labor with his family and community.

As the minister drones on, Nick's eyes close.

BEGIN NICK'S DREAM

People are filing past the grave. Among them is TOM BARRETT, looking disheveled. He turns to look at Nick and opens his jacket, revealing bullet wounds.

Meghan passes and waves slowly to Nick. She looks disheveled and bruised around her neck.

Nick hears scratching sounds from the coffin. He looks around for Darby, but she is not there. In slo-mo, Meghan blows Nick a kiss. Now all the mourners are zombies. Terri turns to Nick, and she is a zombie.

NICK

What the...

The minister, a zombie, comes over. Nick shakes his head.

NICK

No!

END NICK'S DREAM

Nick startles awake. Terri looks at him. The minister comes up, perfectly normal. He embraces Terri and shakes Nick's hand.

MINISTER

(to Terri)

I'm so sorry for your loss, Terri.

DARBY

Nick, are you all right?

NICK

Uh.. yeah. Sure.

MINISTER

Give your grief to the Lord,
Terri.

(to Nick)

Nick, your mom is going to need all
your help and understanding. You
take care of each other now.

Nick nods. The minister moves away. In the distance, Nick
sees a dog pause by the edge of the graveyard.

DARBY

Nick, we'd better go. Everybody's
on their way to your place.

Darby puts her arm around Nick, and they rise. Meghan looks
over and meets Nick's eyes. He holds her gaze.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CAMPUS - DAY

Time has passed. Nick meets up with Darby, holding her
laptop.

DARBY

Hi, honey.

They kiss and start to walk together.

NICK

So, big news, mom's actually going
out tonight.

Darby looks at him quickly.

NICK

Just with her girlfriends.

Darby smiles.

NICK

She hasn't left the house except to
go to work since they planted Ken.

DARBY
She needs to let off a little
steam.

NICK
Those friend of hers have got
enough steam to run a locomotive.

They laugh.

NICK
So come over tonight?

Beat.

DARBY
Oh Nick, I've got a midterm
tomorrow morning.

NICK
That's okay. We'll study together.

Darby gives him a skeptical grin. They stop at Darby's car,
and Nick helps her into the driver's side.

NICK
So it's no?

DARBY
Baby, I want to. But I've got to
keep my grades up if I'm going to
get into the "Big U."

NICK
(hurt)
Sure. Stick to your plans.

DARBY
But you're in my plans too.

NICK
When you've got time for me.

DARBY
Come on. Don't be mad. I'll see you
after my midterm.

Nick is grim. Darby loses patience.

DARBY
It's not always about you, Nick.
Other people have needs too.

NICK
Yup. I'll buy that.

Darby tries to kiss him, but he turns and walks away. She shakes her head and drives off.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick lies on his back, staring at the ceiling. His cell phone rings. Nick grins.

NICK
(talking to himself)
Couldn't stay away, huh?

He answers it, without looking.

NICK
(joking)
Okay, all is forgiven.

His face changes in surprise.

NICK
Uh... Hi, Meghan. No...I....

Nick composes himself.

NICK
Nope, I'm all alone.
(thinks)
Why not? Just a friendly visit.

Nick ends the call, shrugs. He gets out of bed, looks at himself in the mirror.

NICK
(to his reflection)
You asshole.

INT. NICK'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick goes to the door and greets Meghan, wearing a backpack. She steps forward past him.

MEGHAN
Don't worry. I'm not moving in.

Nick stares in wonder as Meghan walks into his room.

NICK
You and Reed split up?

MEGHAN

We have an 'understanding.'

NICK

I hope he knows about it.

Nick watches Meghan as she takes off her coat. She is wearing a sexy dress.

MEGHAN

How about you and Darby? Do you have an "understanding" too?

NICK

(shamed)

Let's not talk about her.

Nick puts his arms around her. They kiss recklessly.

NICK

You okay? You're shivering.

Meghan clings to him, stumbling.

MEGHAN

I'm cold, Nick. I'm so cold.

NICK

That's okay. I'll warm you up.

MEGHAN

Yes... make me warm again. I know you can.

They kiss recklessly. When Meghan turns away from him, her eyes look strange.

INT. BLUE COLLAR BAR - NIGHT

A riotous neighborhood bar where locals drown their sorrows: Terri and a few girlfriends are drinking away the night. LIZ is a hefty extrovert; KARLA is a skinny lizard type with a beige cloud of teased hair. JENNIFER is a creamy blonde with a mischievous look. Terri hoists a shot.

TERRI

Well girls, here's to hubby number two, may he rest in peace.

She downs the shot and lifts the beer "back" as the others do the same. Terri winces.

TERRI

Whooooo! A little more of that and
I won't care what train hits me.

The others clank their beer steins.

LIZ

Here's to husbands in the great
beyond. God bless mine, ol' Hank
Shelton.

They clink again. The waitress sets down another round for
the four women.

JENNIFER

Uh...did we order these? Not that
they'll go to waste.

The women look around.

LIZ

Who do we gotta thank?

The waitress points to the bar, where a handsome younger man,
BRETT, sits dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.

KARLA

Woo-hoo! Ain't he a cutie?

She points to herself. The young man "salutes" with a wave,
then turns back to the bar.

LIZ

Hey, good-lookin', come on and take
advantage of our helpless
condition.

Terri shushes her, embarrassed. Brett grins and nods. The
girls are drunk and bold.

JENNIFER

(shouts to Brett)
You from around here?

TERRI

Jennifer, when will you stop
hittin' on boys!

JENNIFER

When they stop hittin' on me!

The "girls" giggle, but Brett has eyes for Terri. When she
meets his gaze, he points to her and to himself
questioningly. Terri tries to avoid his eyes, but giggles.

LIZ
 (to Terri)
 Go on. Have a little fun, honey.
 That's what men like him are put on
 this earth for.

Terri laughs, embarrassed, but when she looks up, Brett is still watching her.

TERRI
 (to Liz)
 Get away! He's young enough to be
 my son.

KARLA
 You better keep on eye on that son
 of yours around me, honey.

The girls roar. Terri looks at Brett and smiles.

LATER

INT. TERRI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Terri and Brett are in bed together. Terri looks at the clock, 5:30 a.m.

TERRI
 Brett, you'd better head out. I
 don't want my son catching you here

She buries her face in the pillow. He embraces her.

BRETT
 Whatever you want. I'm your slave.

He rises and starts to put on his T-shirt and jeans. Terri embraces his strong back.

TERRI
 Ohhh, it's so hard to let you go.

Brett grins and falls back into bed, but Terri throw on a bathrobe and ushers him stealthily into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

As they steal toward the staircase, Terri and Brett nearly collide with Nick, who is trying to sneak Meghan down the stairs. At first, all four stare at each other. Then they all burst out in a nervous laugh.

INT. NICK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

They cluster in confusion at the bottom of the stairs.

TERRI
Nick!

NICK
Mom!

BRETT
Uh, sorry everyone, I'll be on my
way. Exit stage left!

He heads for the front door. Terri turns to Meghan.

TERRI
(to Meghan)
I thought you were Darby's *friend*!

Terri gives Nick a shocked, puzzled look. Meghan looks back defiantly.

Brett departs, and Terri runs upstairs, leaving Nick and Meghan alone. Nick sits on the stairs and puts his head in his hands.

MEGHAN
It's no fair, your mom judging you
when she...

NICK
Don't do this, Meghan, okay?

MEGHAN
I suppose now you'll go back to
Darby like nothing ever happened
between us.

NICK
I need to do some thinking, that's
for sure.

Meghan sits beside him and snuggles close.

MEGHAN
Well think about this: I like you,
Nick. In fact, I more than like
you. And I think you more than like
me.

NICK
I... I'm confused.

MEGHAN

I understand. This is new for me too. Oh Nick... there's so much I want to tell you. But I'm afraid.

Nick sits glumly looking into space.

NICK

Let's give it a little time, okay, Meghan?

MEGHAN

What does that mean?

NICK

I wish I knew.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL DUMP - DAY

Meghan picks her way among pieces of junk, car parts, old computer monitors etc. She enters a hole in the side of a dilapidated building with all its windows busted out.

INT. DILAPIDATED BUILDING - DAY

Meghan continues through broken glass, empty rooms, graffiti and old newspapers, wine bottles etc. She goes down some CREEPY DARK STAIRS into a sub-basement.

INT. MEGHAN'S ROOM - DAY

The room, more of a cavern, is furnished with junk. In the semi-darkness, Meghan's eyes glow.

Meghan curls up on a filthy stained mattress. She huddles up and begins to cry. She sobs and wails and screams. Throws things.

MEGHAN

Why me? Why? Why? Why?

EXT. STREET NEAR THE CAMPUS - DAY

Nick meets up with Darby.

DARBY

Hi, sweetie. Are we good?

NICK

Darby.... I really love you.

DARBY

I know. Don't worry, hon. We're just stressed out. Midterms...

NICK

No...I mean... I really do. Love you.

They start to walk.

NICK

I've been thinking about you a lot. About us.

Darby smiles happily.

NICK

What we've got, it's real. I didn't understand that till now.

DARBY

Oh Nick, I hope so. Because you're my world.

They kiss --- just as Meghan and Reed stroll by. Meghan watches them in shock. Reed innocently stops to chat with Nick and Darby.

REED

Hey, none of that, you two. You're in public now.

Nick and Darby greet Reed. Nick avoids Meghan's eyes. She bristles at the snub.

MEGHAN

(sarcastic)
Feeling better, Nick?

NICK

S... Sure.

MEGHAN

Really? You look kind of pale.

Nick does not reply. Darby smiles a little, but doesn't suspect Meghan.

DARBY

Nick has lots of responsibilities now that Ken's gone.

MEGHAN

Oh, I think Nick is UP for just about anything life can throw at him, aren't you, Nick?

Nick endures this stoically. Darby hugs Nick while Meghan smiles. Reed is clueless.

REED
Come on, Meg.

Meghan shrugs off Reed's arm around her and casts one last vitriolic glance at Nick as they walk away.

DARBY
(to Reed and Meghan)
Bye, you two.
(to Nick)
Jeez, what's up with Meghan?

Nick shakes his head.

DARBY
I suspect she's getting a little
tired of Reed.

Nick grunts.

DARBY
She's probably like to get her
hooks into you.

Nick shakes his head.

DARBY
No way Reed comes up to MY guy. Too
bad for her.

They walk on. Nick puts an arm around her, visibly guilty.

EXT. COLLEGE QUAD - DAY

From a distance, Meghan watches Nick and Darby. A look of despair and anger crosses her face.

Nick and Darby separate. Meghan runs to Nick.

MEGHAN
Nick, wait!

Nick flinches and turns slowly, as if she is the last person he wants to see.

NICK
Hey, Meghan. I... I'm sorry. I'm
the world's biggest jerk. I gave in
to temptation that one time.

MEGHAN

So that's all I mean to you?
Temptation?

NICK

No... I mean of course I...

MEGHAN

Come on Nick. We're awesome
together and you know it.

She looks closely at Nick, who looks away, ashamed.

NICK

I do.

MEGHAN

It was great, wasn't it? Wasn't it,
Nick?

Nick looks away.

MEGHAN

Think about us, Nick. Just keep
thinking about us.

She turns and walks away. Her face is deeply pained.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE QUAD - DAY

As she walks, Meghan suddenly stops and leans against a tree. Suddenly, her cell rings. Meghan answers eagerly. Her face falls.

MEGHAN

Oh, hi Reed.
(listens)
Sorry, I've got lots of homework
tonight.
(pause)
Because I can't, okay? I... just
can't.

EXT. MEGHAN'S "HOVEL" - NIGHT

Meghan paces among her miserable surroundings. Bitter tears run down her cheeks. Finally, she picks up her phone and dials.

CUT TO

INT. LIMBO/PURGATORY - NIGHT

Darkness punctuated by sounds of moaning, cursing, sighing.

At the ring of the phone, the noise stops and the DEAD SOULS gather, eagerly shifting and shoving.

INT. MEGHAN'S HOVEL - NIGHT

VOICE ON THE PHONE

To whom do you wish to speak?

MEGHAN

A new arrival. Ken Tatum.

(beat, listens)

Secret? Tell YOU a secret?

(mimics movie phrase)

I've got no secrets. I don't have to tell you no stinkin' secrets!

Meghan laughs bitterly.

MEGHAN

Ken?! How do you like your new quarters?

(listens, laughs)

Oh, you'll get used to it. It could have turned out a lot worse, you know. You weren't exactly a saint, either, were you?

(gets serious)

I have a little piece of news I think you'll be very interested in. You know, your Terri has been... well, a merry little widow lately, you know? I mean she's still young-ish and pretty. And she has her needs and desires, after all.

(listens)

Wo!

Meghan holds the phone away from her ear, smiling.

MEGHAN

Okay, I am getting to the point. You've got lots of time, you know. No need to be impatient.

So... the other night Terri went out partying with Karla and Jennifer...

(listens)

Yeah, *that* crew.

(MORE)

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

And Terri, she met this guy.... I mean, he was not a whole lot older than Nick.

Meghan's eyes dance with mischief.

MEGHAN

So anyway, one thing led to another...

She pauses, listening.

MEGHAN

How do I know? Because I was there with Nick. We were right across the hall. Terri was having herself a grand old time. Hey!

Meghan holds the phone away from her ear again.

MEGHAN

I know. And you barely cold in the ground. Just goes to show --- you can't trust a *breather*. They've only got one thing on their devious little minds....

She listens.

MEGHAN

His name's Brett and he's an auto mechanic. Not too big in the brains department, but he makes up for it with..... oops!

Meghan smiles slyly as Ken curses. Then she slowly turns off the call. She begins to laugh maniacally. As she laughs, her face morphs into a tortured ZOMBIE FACE.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Lonely, rainy. An auto shop still has a dim light on.

INT. AUTO SHOP - NIGHT

A single naked bulb blazes. Brett, who is working cheerfully under a car on a wheeled dolly. Amid the clunking of his wrenches and pliers, he hears a strange sound between a growl and a moan. He pauses.

BRETT

Hey, Manuel, that you, bro?

He resumes working. The sound comes again, but closer. Now he stops immediately at the sound of footsteps. He wheels himself out from under the car, a few grease stains on his face.

Nothing. Brett shrugs, but now he is nervous.

BRETT
(to himself)
Enough! I'm takin' off.

He throws his wrench into a toolbox and rises. He looks around the garage but cannot see into the dark corners. When he shuts off the lights, the entire garage goes dark.

In the silence, Brett suddenly stumbles over something, which rattles loudly on the concrete.

BRETT
Shit!

Brett turns on his industrial strength flashlight. He shines it all around into the corners of the shop.

Nothing. Brett exits the repair shop.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The quiet is creepy. Small sounds in the distance like a cat yowling and knocking over a garbage can lid. Brett fumbles to lock the door behind him and drops the large key in the dark.

BRETT
Dammit!

He shines his flashlight around. Suddenly the flashlight goes out, leaving Brett in the dark.

BRETT
What now?

Brett knocks the flash light, which comes back on, but weakly and intermittently. He finally spots the key. But the flashlight goes completely out. Brett shakes it and a weak light lets him see to lock the garage door.

In this weak light, we see ZOMBIE KEN standing incredibly close to Brett. His face and body are horrible as only the grave can make them, but Brett is unaware of the ghastly ghoul watching him, although Ken could almost reach out and touch him, Ken is so close.

Brett sniffs the air.

BRETT

What the hell's rotting out here...

All of a sudden, Ken slams Brett up against the door and puts his foul face close to Brett's. Brett lets out a cry of terror.

KEN

Thaaaat's right, I'm rotten. Just like you're gonna be.

Zombie Ken attacks the young man, and a ghastly fight takes place as Brett battles for his life.

Brett is strong, and he gets in a few good punches. For a minute, he almost seems to be getting away, but Zombie Ken catches him before he can open his car door and drags him back. Ken pins Brett down and savages him, biting and choking him. As Brett dies, Zombie Ken lets out a howl of triumph in the night.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

The beauty of the waves washing onto a pristine beach among swooping seagulls. Out on the bright water, carefree surfers ride waves and cavort.

Terri finishes eating a small container of yogurt, takes off her shoes, and begins running along the beach. As she jogs in the surf, she smiles a little, enjoying the fresh clean air. She gives a little skip of elation.

As she runs, Zombie Ken watches her from the bushes. She does not notice him.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Terri drives up and parks in the driveway. She gets out, shakes sand from her clothes and enters the house.

INT. NICK'S KITCHEN - DAY

Terri bustles around the kitchen getting out lunch fixings.

Suddenly, she hears something.

TERRI

Nick? Is that you?

She resumes making her sandwich. Another sound stops her. She frowns and freezes.

TERRI
Hello? Who's there?
(sniffs the air)
And what's that smell?

Terri picks up the bread knife and leaves the kitchen.

INT. NICK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

As Terri looks around the living room, she hears a sound upstairs. A heavy tread of footsteps.

TERRI
(scared)
Who's that?

She bolts for the front door. Locked. She fumbles out her cell phone with shaking hands. She drops it and it goes skidding under the living room coffee table. Terri reaches under to grope for it, and suddenly a big filthy hand grabs her by the wrist.

TERRI
(screams)
Let go!

She is knocked down and the hand drags her into the middle of the floor, struggling and grabbing for the legs of the coffee table. She looks up to see the face of Zombie Ken, distorted with rage.

Her scream is cut off by a heavy fist. Ken picks up the knife she has dropped and drags Terri upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS - DAY

Zombie Ken drags Terri into her own bedroom and flings her onto the bed. She raises her head and screams.

ZOMBIE KEN
Uh uh uh. Those weren't the kind of sounds you were making in here the other night with your boy toy.

Terri is speechless with terror. She can't believe her eyes.

ZOMBIE KEN
You might at least have waited till I rotted away.

Terri shakes her head.

ZOMBIE KEN

Now you can give me, your lawful husband, a little of that.

He holds his rotted face close to hers.

ZOMBIE KEN

I almost forgot how pretty you are.

He climbs on top of her. As she struggles, he chokes her. She tries to get away, but his grasp is impossible to break. Her eyes show terror as she struggles.

TERRI

(whispers)

Please....

KEN

Did you have a good time? You want to tell me all about it?

He releases Terri, but when she tries to run, he blocks her.

TERRI

Wh.. What do you want, Ken?

KEN

Only what's mine.

He closes with her; her legs flail, then go limp.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The waves crash gently against the shore under a starry sky.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Darby dozes beside him. He looks at her tenderly, then at the clock.

NICK

Hey...

Darby stirs.

NICK

I'd better get you home.

Darby yawns, snuggles up to him.

DARBY

I can't wait till we have our own place. I feel like a high school kid, sneaking around.

NICK
It's fun sneaking around.

He suddenly catches himself and looks very guilty.

NICK
I mean...

DARBY
(smiles)
I know what you mean.

NICK
You ...do?

DARBY
Yeah, you like a little variety.

He shakes his head emphatically.

NICK
But I...don't.

DARBY
(teasing)
...like the risk of getting caught.

NICK
(relieved smiles)
Oh. Heh. That.

Darby grins, unsuspecting. Nick is extremely uncomfortable.

He starts the car and they drive away. Darby is smiling, but Nick is troubled.

EXT. DARBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick walks Darby to her door. He is preoccupied.

NICK
My poor mom. She's so alone.

DARBY
Oh, she won't be for long. Terri's very pretty. And in the meantime, she's got you.

NICK
That's what I mean. Some son I am.

DARBY
Stop it, Nick.

NICK

It's just....I feel like there's something...invading our lives. Ever since Ken died... and even before that.

DARBY

A thirsty evil.

Nick looks at her questioningly.

NICK

What does that mean?

DARBY

It's the title of a book I read.... it seems to fit.
(she shakes her head)
See? It's getting to me too. Let's stop being morbid.

Nick tries to smile and they quickly embrace. Darby enters the house as Nick gets into his car.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick drives home, pensive.

NICK

(mutters)
'A thirsty evil'.

He shakes his head. At a stoplight, he looks at people crossing in front of his car. Suddenly a face turns to look at him. A FEMALE ZOMBIE. Nick gasps. All the faces passing in front of his car are zombies. He closes his eyes and shakes his head. When he looks again, the people are perfectly normal men and women.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick parks on the street and gets out. It is very quiet. Suddenly, a dog runs up and almost knocks him over.

NICK

Hey!

The dog is friendly, trying to lick his face. A man, concealed in shadow, calls the dog.

MAN

Here fella!

The dog leaves Nick and runs back to its master.

MAN

Sorry. He doesn't know his own strength.

Shaken, Nick strains to see into the darkness.

Nick hurriedly goes into his house. The MAN and the dog watch him. The man pats the dog, who licks his hand.

INT. NICK'S HOME LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick enters to see Terri sitting on the sofa, looking disheveled. She is drinking from a bottle of booze. A scarf is around her throat.

NICK

Mom! Are...you okay?

Terri says nothing. Nick approaches and sits beside her. He notices the scarf and reaches toward it, but Terri slaps his hand away.

NICK

Mom, did somebody hurt you.... Did Brett.....

Terri looks at Nick with a strange smile.

TERRI

Brett? Why he couldn't hurt a fly.

She laughs sadly, bitterly.

NICK

You wanna... talk?

TERRI

No. As you can see, I want to drink. In my own home. Without my kid lecturing me. All right?

NICK

Fine. Knock yourself out.

Nick goes upstairs, pensive and troubled.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

As Nick exits, he notices the dog again on the front lawn. The dog greets him and licks his hands.

NICK

Where's your owner?

Darby pulls up in her car.

DARBY
Hi baby! Long time no see.

NICK
(grinning)
Hey!

DARBY
C'mon. I'll take us to class.

ZOMBIE TOM watches the two drive away.

INT. DARBY'S CAR - DAY

Nick and Darby kiss. Nick is troubled.

NICK
I think mom's having a nervous
breakdown or something.

DARBY
Why?

NICK
She was up last night drinking.
Alone.

DARBY
Who can blame her? She's been
through so much.

NICK
I guess.

They drive in silence.

DARBY
Nick?

NICK
Yeah?

Darby pulls over and stops the car. She puts her arms around him and looks deep into his eyes.

DARBY
I know sometimes people make
mistakes. I know your heart is
true.

Nick is uncomfortable.

DARBY
Nick, I'm very strong.

NICK
(laughs a little)
I know *that*.

DARBY
My family ...we're all strong,
maybe because of what happened back
in Hungary.

Nick nods.

DARBY
Sometimes, you run into things in
this world. People who manipulate
you or try to make you betray who
you really are.

Nick looks away, uncomfortable.

DARBY
I know you, Nick. And I'll be there
for you. I don't care about the
past or your father's mistakes...
Or.. Or yours. I love you.

They embrace. Darby starts the car again.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick grabs the phone and dials.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
To whom do you wish to speak?

NICK
Cut the crap and gimme that jerk
who's posing as my father.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
What is your secret?

Nick shakes his head at himself.

NICK
My 'secret' is that I'm gonna shove
this phone down your fucking throat
the minute I get my hands on you.
How's that?

Silence.

TOM BARRETT
Hello, Nick.

NICK
Who the hell are you, and what do
you think you're doing?

TOM BARRETT
You know who I am, Nick. And as for
the other part of your question, I
don't understand any more than you,
but I think I am here to protect
you.

NICK
The hell.

TOM
I'll tell you something I do
understand: Love doesn't fade with
time. And death does not destroy
it.

Nick says nothing.

TOM
The love of a father for his son.

NICK
Okay, I'm hangin' up.

But he doesn't.

NICK
My... old man... not some scam like
you. My real father, he made a
lotta mistakes.

TOM
But you loved him anyway.

Nick pauses.

NICK
Yeah. I did. Of course I did.

TOM
I did wrong, Nick. To your mother.
To you. And the worst thing was to
leave you the way I did.

Nick looks at the phone in disbelief.

TOM
I can't undo that now. But I am
still your father.

Beat.

TOM
And you are in danger.

NICK
O-kay. This is too weird. This is
where I get off.

He pauses.

NICK
That okay with you?

TOM
Whatever you do is okay with me.

Nick shakes his head and hangs up. He opens a drawer of his dresser, takes out a bottle and takes a swig. He picks up the phone and dials.

NICK
Hey... you about ready? Yeah, I
need to hear major jams tonight.
Get this out of my head. Yeah. Ten
minutes.

Nick hangs up and drinks again.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Nick and Darby walk hand-in-hand; Darby is dressed up to show off her eye-catching figure. Nick is a little drunk.

NICK
Thanks for driving.

DARBY
Sure.

NICK
Darb, I gotta tell you something.

DARBY
Okay.

NICK
If you had any sense you'd forget
about me.

DARBY

Let's not start that again, Nick.
Let's just have a little fun. Come
on. We deserve it.

NICK

I'm burnt. To a crisp.

Darby stops and faces him.

DARBY

Well I love you. Burnt, boiled,
fried, toasted. Or raw.

Nick laughs but sobers.

NICK

I'm not who you think I am, Darby.
I'm not a good person.

DARBY

Nick, if I wanted a saint, I'd go
looking for one. I want you.

As they walk, a couple of ROUGH YOUNG MEN move on Darby,
hooting and whistling. Nick overreacts because he is a little
drunk and gets into a shoving match with one of the men.

ROUGH MAN #2 turns Nick around and slugs him. Darby screams.

ROUGH MAN #1

(to #2)

No fair you havin' all the fun.

They pummel Nick, but he gets a lot of punches in too. Darby
grabs a beer bottle from a trash can and tries to hit Rough
Man #2. He grabs her and shoves her into a wall.

From between two buildings, ZOMBIE TOM appears. He grabs
Rough Man #1 and beats him while Nick beats on Rough Man #2.
In seconds both Rough Men are unconscious on the sidewalk.
Zombie Tom and Nick stare at one another, Nick is amazed. Tom
turns and disappears down the street. Nick shouts after him.

NICK

Hey mister! Hold up!

Nick is torn between following Zombie Tom and comforting
Darby, but she is so hysterical he soon focuses on her.

NICK

Let's get out of here. C'mon.

He leads Darby sobbing to her car, and they get in.

INT. DARBY'S CAR - NIGHT

At the steering wheel, Darby continues to cry, upset but unhurt. Nick takes out his bottle and swigs. She looks disapproving.

NICK
Let me see you.

He tenderly examines her face and arms.

DARBY
I'm okay.

She starts up the car and they drive in silence. Nick swigs some more.

DARBY
Is this our big night out? You're just gonna sit there and get drunk?

NICK
I know what you're thinking.

Darby is annoyed.

DARBY
What am I 'thinking'?

NICK
That I'm trouble, just like my dad.

DARBY
Not even.

NICK
Oh Darby, will you stop being so damn good? It's not the way to hold on to me. Don't you understand?

DARBY
Why are you trying to hurt me?

She stops the car, cries. Nick gets out, holding his bottle.

NICK
I'm no good for anybody tonight.
Just go on home.

...as she protests....

NICK
Leave me alone!

He slams the car door, stalks off. Darby drives after him, but when he wheels and glares, she has had enough. She sadly drives away.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Nick is drunk, holding his now-empty bottle. He shatters it against a building and stumbles away. Suddenly, Nick spots Meghan standing near a strange door in the alley, in front of a weird-looking "cavern" club. She waves and moves toward him. Nick stands hypnotized, as if he can't believe his eyes. He shakes his head to clear it.

NICK

Meghan?

MEGHAN

It's Nick! My favorite breather!

She embraces him. Nick takes Meghan in his arms willingly, but confused.

NICK

Did you say 'breather'? What's a 'breather'?

MEGHAN

(playful)

It's what you are. Here, breathe on me.

She pulls his head down to her low-cut cleavage. But Nick is not quite into it. He looks around and stares at the cavern.

NICK

What are you doing here? Where'd you come from?

MEGHAN

Oh stop the games, Nick. You know what I am.

She puts her arms around him and gets very close. Then she opens her mouth and blows. Her breath is a stream of frost. Nick's eyes get wide. Meghan puts his hand on her heart.

MEGHAN

What do you feel?

Nick shakes his head.

MEGHAN

(laughs)

Exactly. Nothing. No heartbeat, no heart break. Get it?

NICK

Aw Meghan, everybody wishes they were dead sometimes. Trust me, it's better to be alive.

MEGHAN

Oh is it? You know, death would be a lot less scary if you Breathers didn't fight it so hard.

NICK

And you didn't fight it?

Meghan's eyes fill with tears.

MEGHAN

Of course I did. I fought for my life.

Meghan draws back from Nick.

MEGHAN

Some things are none of your business.

Nick hesitates.

NICK

Maybe I should go.

MEGHAN

Awww, is Darby waiting? Okay, go be with your little breather bitch.

NICK

Meghan, get a grip! Maybe you're not well, but you're not... dead.

He laughs at his joke. But Meghan is grim.

MEGHAN

You breathers treat us like we're not even people! You call us ugly. And repulsive. How do you think that makes us feel?

NICK

(playing along)

Oh, you have feelings?

MEGHAN

Of course I do. I'm a human being!

NICK

You mean you were.

MEGHAN

I'm still a person. I'm not a rabbit or a fish. I'm like everyone else.

She starts to cry.

MEGHAN

If one of you Breathers screws one of us, they call him a necrophiliac! A Ghoul. I have to pretend to be something I'm not. I have to pretend to be alive.

Nick is repulsed but fascinated.

NICK

Okay, so I had sex with a...

MEGHAN

(getting close and sexy)
Don't tell me you didn't love it.

NICK

Meghan, you're weirding me out.

MEGHAN

Don't be afraid, Nick. We're people like you. We're just... in a future state.

She opens a door to the cavern and draws him inside.

MEGHAN

Come on!

INT. ZOMBIE CAVERN - NIGHT

Within, a wild party is going on. Zombies hanging out look at Nick suspiciously.

ZOMBIE GUY #1

(glares at Nick, wrinkles
up his nose)
I smell something alive.

MEGHAN
 (to the group)
 I like Breathers, shoot me.

A zombie with a bullet hole in his head makes a "gun" out of his fingers. Everyone laughs except Nick. Music and noise come at him. Forms contort and dance madly. Gradually, Nick lets himself be drawn in. Somebody hands Nick a weird drink. He sniffs it and wrinkles up his nose.

NICK
 Smells like formaldehyde!

MEGHAN
 The best vintage! Down the hatch.

She takes a glass herself and empties it. Nick sets his glass aside.

MEGHAN
 Ahhhhh..... Just what I needed.

A zombie walks by, shaking a bottle of pills.

ZOMBIE #3
 Always room for one more.

He swallows the whole bottle. One pill bounces out and Nick picks it up. After a moment's hesitation, he swallows it.

LATER

Nick is loaded from the pill. He sees things distorted: zombies are dancing close, talking, or making out.

Curious Zombies stare at Nick as he and Meghan dance slow and caress each other.

NICK
 Where am I? What am I doing here?
 Am I in hell?

All the zombies laugh.

MEGHAN
 Not even close.

MEGHAN
 (laughs)
 We're not into harps and white sheets.

Two very sexy girls in tight skirts laugh. Meghan leads Nick down deeper into the cavern.

At last they are alone in a strange, greenish room. Meghan puts her arms around Nick and kisses him.

MEGHAN

Tell me you love me, Nick. Say it.

Nick looks into her weird, beautiful eyes.

NICK

I l..love you.

(bolder)

I love you. I love you.

He buries his head in her bosom. Meghan laughs, throws her head back.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Nick opens his eyes and sees around him the fresh, green grass, flowers, and trees of a city park. On the horizon, the sun is up. Everything is clean and new, in contrast to the dark chaos of last night. Nick looks at himself, confused. He winces at the sun.

He grabs and quickly dials his cell phone.

NICK

Darby? Did ...you get home okay?
No, I'm fine. I got drunk. I don't
know what happened. I just woke up
in Dasher Park. I had this weird
dream.

Listening, his face falls.

NICK

Hello? Hello?

He dials again. Waits.

NICK

Darby, please. I... need to see
you.

EXT. DARBY'S HOUSE - DAY

As Darby opens the door, Nick enters and embraces her desperately. She draws back, hurt and suspicious.

INT. DARBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick looks into Darby's eyes.

NICK
Baby, please.

Concerned, Darby finally embraces Nick. She scans his face anxiously.

DARBY
I'm worried about you.

He searches for words,

NICK
I never meant to hurt you. I just feel like I'm two people. One of them is an asshole.

DARBY
(skeptical, joking)
And what's the other one?

He looks at her quickly and they both laugh. Nick walks around, thinking out loud.

NICK
It's like, there's nothing to worry about. Today we're breathers. Tomorrow we're Dead. But it's okay.

Darby gawks, really worried. Nick puts his arm around her.

DARBY
Nick, where were you last night?
It's okay to tell me.

NICK
You wouldn't believe me.

DARBY
Yes I would.

NICK
I didn't come here to confess. I came here to tell you I love you.

He reaches out, but she backs away.

DARBY
I don't know who you are anymore.

NICK

That makes two of us.

He turns and slams out. Darby opens the door.

EXT. DARBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Watching them from across the street are Zombie Ken and Meghan.

KEN

What did I tell you? He runs back to her the minute he's out of your sight.

Meghan is shocked and enraged.

MEGHAN

What a liar. He said he loved me. He said it over and over.

KEN

They're all liars.

MEGHAN

I've given him more than he deserves. And her! Little goody two shoes breather. Let's bring her over to our side.

KEN

Love to.

The two glare with conspiratorial glee.

ANGLE ON:

Nick gets into his car and drives away.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

As Nick pulls into his driveway, he sees Zombie Tom, trimming the overgrown bushes in front of his house. Nick gets out of the car.

ZOMBIE TOM

The yard needed a little work.

Nick looks embarrassed.

NICK

Hey, uh, thanks for helping me out last night.

TOM

Why don't we have a talk. Not here.

NICK

You gonna a lecture me on my
screwed up life?

TOM

No, I'm going to listen.

EXT. FAST FOOD OUTLET - DAY

Nick and Zombie Tom sit at an outside table, drinking coffee.

TOM

If it's any comfort, you're not the
only guy who ever did something
that couldn't stand the light of
day.

Nick thinks.

NICK

Why do we... I mean, why are we
like this?

TOM

Some wrong things feel right at the
time.

NICK

Like pulling that empty gun on the
cops, you mean?

TOM

That's kind of the gold standard.
Yes.

NICK

Did you really want to die?

TOM

Maybe for a second. But that was
enough.

He looks into the distance.

TOM

Then I understood...everything I
had to live for. Everything that
was coming. Seeing you grow up...
But it was too late.

Tom puts his head in his hands.

NICK

Dad....

TOM

I haven't heard that word in so long.

Nick rises.

NICK

I gotta get home, Mom needs me.

TOM

You know, Ken blames you for his death. He wants revenge.

NICK

What do you mean?

Nick rises and paces around, distraught.

TOM

I couldn't help Terri. I never could. Nick, I'm sorry.

NICK

What are you talking about?

TOM

Ken is on some kind of vendetta. He won't rest until you've lost everything you love.

NICK

(whispers)
Darby.

INT. DARBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Darby sits at the computer. Her girlfriend Heather watches TV nearby. Makeup and magazines are scattered about.

HEATHER

You've been at that computer for hours. What are you doing?

DARBY

Research.

HEATHER

Darby, look at my eyes. What do you think?

Heather's eyes are brilliantly outlined and shadowed.

DARBY
(barely glances)
Great.

HEATHER
You didn't even look

DARBY
Heather, I'm busy. I'm sorry.

HEATHER
You're no fun to hang out with
anymore.
(slyly)
So....when did you and Nick last do
it?

Darby stops and thinks.

DARBY
I can't remember.

HEATHER
He's been really weird lately. You
don't want to have Rosemary's Baby
or anything.

DARBY
What's that supposed to mean?

HEATHER
Oh, nothing.

She starts to gather her books.

HEATHER
I'm outta here. See you in
Chemistry tomorrow.

DARBY
Bye.

Heather leaves. Alone, Darby puts her hand on the computer
and gives it a little shake.

DARBY
I just know the answer is in here.
If only I could find it.

Darby gazes at the monitor with intensity, clicking the
mouse. Suddenly her face glows strangely red in the light
from the monitor. Darby recoils in fear. Then she leans
closer and reads.

DARBY
(reads aloud)
Those who enter this pact may be
seeking the freedom of a loved one.

Darby musters up her courage and moves the cursor.

DARBY
(reads)
Do you want to save those you love?
Then... heed... me.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick bursts angrily through the door. Terri is in the living room.

TERRI
Nick.....

NICK
Mom!

Terri turns away and touches the scarf at her throat.

NICK
I know. About Ken.

Terri covers her face.

NICK
Mom, what did he do to you?

TERRI
Nothing!

NICK
Don't lie to me. He took you,
didn't he? I've lost my mother now
too.

TERRI
You'll never lose me, Nick. I'll
always be with you. It's.. not my
fault, Nick. When they want us...
We can't stop them. You should know
that.

NICK
We can stop them.

TERRI
No one means to hurt you, Nick.
Even Ken.

NICK

Of course he means to hurt me.
What's wrong with you, Mom? He
always meant to hurt me.

Ken enters the room. Nick starts and glares at him.

KEN

I take issue with last statement.
It was you who meant very much to
hurt me. And you succeeded.

Nick lowers his head.

KEN

Don't underestimate the power of
the dead.

TERRI

But that's all past now, Nick. It's
not so bad...We fight when we
should surrender. We all have to go
sometime.

NICK

(shakes head)
Oh mom.

Ken is smiling triumphantly and evilly. Nick stares back with
determination and slams out the door.

EXT. NICK'S HOME - DAY

Nick takes out his cell and punches numbers in.

DARBY'S VOICE

Hi, this is Darby. I can't take you
call right now.....

NICK

Darby, it's Nick. Call me, okay? I
need to see you. Tell me where you
are.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - EVENING

Darby leaves a shop with a small parcel and walks onto the
deserted parking lot. It's late and cars are sparse and far
apart. Under the creepy lights, she hurries, looking around,
and nervously gets into her car.

INT. DARBY'S CAR - NIGHT

Darby locks the doors and takes out her cell phone, which reads CHARGE BATTERY.

With a little move of irritation, she puts the phone on the seat beside her and looks in her glove compartment.

DARBY
(to herself)
Oh forget it.

She tries to start the car --- and it won't turn over. Slowly, she opens the car door and looks up and down the silent roadway. Nothing, just darkness and a wind blowing.

EXT. DARK SILENT ROAD - NIGHT

Fearfully, Darby walks to her trunk, opens it and takes out a flashlight. The dim beam reveals little in the dark.

All up and down the road is nothing, Darby shines the flashlight under the car.

Suddenly, from out of the darkness, Zombie Ken pounces on her.

Darby gasps and screams in terror. Ken smiles, his face a mask of evil. Under his rotten touch, she nearly faints with terror.

After a struggle, Darby frees herself and plunges back into the car. She barely locks it while Ken tries to yank the door open. Then she frantically tries to fit the key in. Her hands are shaking so hard she drops the key. She picks it up and inserts it.

The car won't start. She tries again. No good.

Suddenly, Ken's fist smashes through the driver's side window. Darby screams and covers her face. He reaches in and worthless boyfriend of yours, do I?

Trapped in his grip, Darby tries to break free.

DARBY
Ken...don't ...don't hurt me
please?

KEN
(mocking)
'Don't hurt me' Why not? Nick
killed me!

DARBY
He didn't mean....

KEN
My revenge on him ain't even begun.
Get going!

Ken shoves and pushes her stumbling along the dark road.

KEN
Very pretty moon.

He raises his face to the sky and smiles wickedly. Darby tries to run for it, but he easily catches her and drags her back to the road.

KEN
Don't fight it, Darby. You'll love it once you've crossed over. No more of them migraines you get. No more school. And you'll never have to worry about growing old!

Darby feebly struggles, but Ken holds her in an iron grasp.

DARBY
No...please!

He grins and his rotting teeth and breath overwhelm her. She gags and he lets go. She tumbles to the ground in the dirt. Ken grabs her and drags her down into a shadowed gully.

KEN
Darby, you just make a guy work way too hard.
(laughs)
Don't worry, you ain't gonna die just yet.

Ken turns to her with glowing eyes. He slaps her hard. Ken circles her; something prevents him from attacking. But every time Darby tries to flee, he blocks her.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick frantically dials. Waiting, he grimaces and shakes his head in frustration.

NICK
(grim)
Meghan! Where's Darby?
(grimmer)
Don't give me that!
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

(softer)
No...no I...

Beat.

NICK

Meghan, where are you? Where do you live?

Beat.

NICK

(softly)
Please. If you care about me at all.

He puts a hand to his head, distraught.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL DUMP - NIGHT

Nick drives down a rainy, rutty path and Meghan emerges from a hole in the side of a dilapidated building. She slowly climbs in.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

NICK

You live like this?

Meghan looks at Nick with hurt defiance.

MEGHAN

I don't 'live', remember?

Nick looks at her sadly.

MEGHAN

I'm sorry it's not some monster house in the suburbs. I gotta take what I can get.

NICK

You have... had no family?

Meghan looks away.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE CLASS HOME - DAY

Quick, silent shot of a normal happy home. Young Meghan and her family are watching TV together.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick starts the car and drives. Meghan looks out the window, her eyes filled with tears.

MEGHAN
Why should I help you?

Nick turns to her, but she will not meet his gaze.

NICK
Because I'm betting you're not a
monster.

Meghan stubbornly keeps looking out the car window.

NICK
(watching the road)
You never did tell me how you died.

Meghan closes her eyes in anguish.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET OUTSIDE DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Meghan awakens in the car as her killer is driving her away. She tries to open the door and get out, but she is drugged.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Meghan looks into the rainy dark outside the car window. She shakes her head.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEGHAN'S HOVEL - N

The creepy driver parks the car. can't move.

MEGHAN
Please...please don't hurt me.

CREEPY GUY
Well that depends on you.

He leans over and starts to kiss her. She fights him, but cannot get out of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Meghan looks at Nick.

MEGHAN
I was murdered.

NICK
Murdered?!

MEGHAN
(crying)
I had a life. I had dreams. I was
going to go to be a doctor.

She faces Nick with anguish. Nick reaches out and puts his
arm around her.

MEGHAN
After he was finished with me he
strangled me and threw me in this
old industrial park. They didn't
find me for a month. I just lay
there alone.

She fumbles in her purse and takes out a poster: "Have you
seen this girl?"

NICK
Did they catch him?

MEGHAN
They executed him. He even got
religion at the end, to try to save
himself.
(laughs)
But he went straight to hell
anyway.

NICK
Good.

MEGHAN
Yes. But it didn't help me.

NICK
Meghan, Darby's losing her life
won't give you yours back.

Meghan speaks without looking at Nick.

MEGHAN
I... I think I know where they
might be.
(MORE)

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

(she points)

Turn here. It's faster.

EXT. DARK SILENT ROAD NEAR THE RESERVOIR - NIGHT

Nick and Meghan drive down the darkened path and find Darby's car, empty, the window shattered. They look all around the car. Meghan shakes her head.

MEGHAN

(looking into the
darkness)

They're gone.

Nick opens his trunk and grabs a big industrial flashlight. He runs ahead and scans the darkness with it. Nothing. He and Meghan follow the narrowing path in a tense, agonizing search.

Suddenly, they hear the sounds of struggle ahead. Nick shines the beam into the darkness. They see Ken and Darby a short distance away and run forward.

NICK

(to Ken)

Get away from her!

DARBY

Help me!

Ken turns on Meghan.

KEN

You sold out, eh? Well, now you can
watch them die.

Ken attacks Nick. The fight is similar to their previous fight, but this time Nick really gets the worst of it. Ken throws him around, slams him against a tree. Twists his arm. Nick screams in agony. The arm hangs limp.

KEN

(to Meghan)

It's good to be DEAD! Ha ha ha ha!
We don't feel pain. We can't die.

Meghan recoils.

MEGHAN

Ken, stop!

KEN

You're the one who invited me here.
Don't you want my company any more?

Ken turns on Meghan.

She uncorks a vial of water with her teeth and runs up and throws it full into Ken's face.

Ken lets out a primal howl of pain.

Where the water hits Ken, holes and furrows appear and rapidly widen.

A circle of fire grows around Ken.

Zombie Tom appears with his dog at his side. The dog growls and lunges as Ken tries to escape the fiery circle.

Brett appears as well, his eyes glowing. Ken cowers within the circle. Brett reaches in and picks him up and body-slams him.

Meghan throws more water on Ken.

MEGHAN

Energoumenoi! Domine, etiam
daemonia subiiciuntur nobis in
nomine tuo.

With an unearthly scream, Ken curls into the fetal position.

ALL

(chant)

Energoumenoi! Energoumenoi!
Energoumenoi!

KEN

No! No!

Ken's screams gradually fade away as the earth closes over him. A large patch of black, scorched grass remains, smoking.

Silence.

Meghan drops to her knees, sobbing. ZOMBIE TOM gently comes over and raises her to her feet. Terri is standing beside him. She helps Meghan stand up.

A glow appears in the east as the sun begins to rise.

TOM

Come on, Meghan, it's time for us
to leave. To go home.

Meghan looks up at Tom pleadingly with a tear-stained face.

NICK
(to Terri)
Mom!

TERRI
I love you, Nick. I always will.

ZOMBIE TOM puts his arm around Terri protectively. He reaches out to Meghan, then puts his other arm around her. All three turn away, and vanish into the darkness.

Darby stands beside Nick, tears rolling down her face.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Time has passed. Nick and Darby are sleeping together. In the morning light, Nick opens his eyes and looks around. Darby is peacefully asleep. Watching her affectionately, Nick's eye suddenly falls on his phone. Almost unwillingly, he dials.

Ring. Ring.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
I am sorry, the number you have
reached has been disconnected. If
you feel you have reached this
number in error, please hang up and
dial again

Darby's eyes are open, she stretches and smiles. They snuggle together, thinking their own thoughts.

ROLL CREDITS