

"CREEP CATCHER"

by

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EXT. SLUM HOTEL - NIGHT

The ambient SOUNDSCAPE of downtown hustle and bustle.

Twelve storeys of decaying brickwork above a boarded-up shop front. Dying fluorescent tubes on a neon sign tout 'budget rates'

INT. SLUM HOTEL - ROOM 608 - NIGHT

Tacky decor. A broken microwave sits atop a corroded bar fridge.

Fidgeting about is STEFAN, 50's, anxious, naked but for a garish dressing gown.

He arranges a few pillows on a sunken spring double bed, clearly waiting for someone.

His cell phone chimes.

ON PHONE SCREEN

CINDY (ON TEXT)

I'm here.

STEFAN (ON TEXT)

Are u wearing your uniform?

CINDY (ON TEXT)

No, lol, school's out.

STEFAN (ON TEXT)

U promised.

CINDY (ON TEXT)

It's in my bag.

STEFAN (ON TEXT)

(love heart emoji)

BACK TO SCENE

Stefan sets his laptop on a shabby mirrored cabinet.

Points the built-in webcam at the empty bed.

Double-checks his reflection, a swipe of fringe hair doing little to improve his gaunt appearance.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)

Hello?

He unlocks the door, salivating.

SHAWN FAULKNER, 30's, heavily built, bursts inside aiming his cell phone camera at Stefan's face like a weapon of war.

He's a vigilante creep catcher, driven, tormented, damaged by fatherly abuse.

SHAWN
Sit the fuck down.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Stefan backs away, arms raised in a 'don't shoot' gesture.

Shawn zeroes in, livestreaming to his online followers.

BACK TO SCENE

The pervert parks his arse on the bed.

SHAWN
Stefan.

STEFAN
Yes...

Shawn's decoy, HAYLEY, 21, takes a defensive stance inside the door-frame. Sweet, softly spoken, but there's a wrath underneath.

A pink can of key-chain mace hangs on her belt. She glares at the paedophile with disdain, always hoping that one day she'll find the man who molested her mother decades ago.

SHAWN
How do I know your name?

STEFAN
I have no idea...

SHAWN
I'm Cindy.

STEFAN
Are you?

SHAWN
Yeah. I'm the fourteen year old girl
you came here to meet.

Stefan is quivering now, trapped.

SHAWN

Just so you know, you're not in any physical danger. That's not what we're about.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Stefan darts his eyes between the two intruders, unsure of where to focus.

SHAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm filming for my own protection. This is so you can't lie, and tell the Cops I beat the living shit out of you, yeah?

Hayley leers into view, makes a fist.

HAYLEY

Creep catchers for life, we love you for it. Like and subscribe.

SHAWN (O.S.)

Don't look at her, look at me.

BACK TO SCENE

STEFAN

I thought she was older than fourteen--

SHAWN

You've been talking to me, man. I have the chat log.

Stefan shakes his head in denial.

SHAWN

I have pictures of your penis--

STEFAN

It's not mine.

Shawn brings the phone to his eyes.

SHAWN

(reading)

I said I'm fourteen, you said *that's hot*. You then proceeded to ask me if I wanted to come to a hotel.

Hayley equips her phone, swipes to creepcatcher.com.

HAYLEY
Seven thousand and twenty eight
viewing.

SHAWN
(to Hayley)
It'll go up.

She drops a comment in the livestream chat.

HAYLEY
(typing)
Another one...bites...the dust.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Stefan holds his head in his hands.

SHAWN (O.S.)
We just want to know, why you're here
to have sex with a child.

STEFAN
I didn't realize this was gonna go
down--

HAYLEY (O.S.)
No, you thought a fourteen year old
girls pants were gonna go down.
(disgusted)
Fourteen, dude...

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn circles his prey menacingly, still filming.

STEFAN
Ok, I messed up. I just wanted to
have a bit of fun--

SHAWN
Do you understand that it's wrong?

STEFAN
Yes, I'm sorry. I won't do it again,
I--

SHAWN
How do I know you won't do it again?

STEFAN
I'll be watching myself from now on.

SHAWN
 You're not the only one who's going
 to be watching you.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Stefan is aghast.

STEFAN
 This isn't going online...

SHAWN (O.S.)
 Yeah, man. You're getting blasted.
 Say goodbye to your wife, say goodbye
 to your job.
 (pause)
 You're done, bud.

BACK TO SCENE

SHAWN
 (to Hayley)
 Call the Cops.

She nods, steps out into the hallway, phone to her ear.

HAYLEY (O.S.)
 I'll catch 'em downstairs!

Stefan stands.

Paces around the room, very agitated.

SHAWN
 Sit down.

Fumbles his laptop into a backpack. Slings it over his
 shoulder.

Parts the window drapes to reveal a balcony.

SHAWN
 What, you want to jump?

He SQUEAKS open a rickety screen door.

Shawn blocks his exit.

SHAWN
 What's on your computer?!

STEFAN
 Nothing.

The two men tussle.

Shawn's phone drops to the floor.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Lingering on the paint flaked ceiling, more yellow than white. Fan blades on an air conditioner spin lazily.

The CRASHING and SMASHING of a violent scuffle.

SHAWN (O.S.)
 What's on it?!
 (beat)
 No!

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SLUM HOTEL — NIGHT

A Police car SCREECHES to a halt by the curb.

ROOKIE COP (20's) leaps out. Energetic, jittery almost, eager to prove himself.

Equips his radio, flashlight strobing.

ROOKIE COP
 1 4 1 to dispatch.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
 Go ahead, 1 4 1.

ROOKIE COP
 I'm on site at that ah...ten sixteen.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
 Received 1 4 1, complainant is in
 room six oh eight.

Then we see Stefan falling through the sky, his dressing gown billows up like a ruptured parachute.

ROOKIE COP
 (in shock)
 Good lord in heaven...

And falling.

DEAFENING SMASH

BYSTANDERS SCREAM

CUT TO:

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE — BEDROOM — MORNING

A modest suburban dwelling in mid renovation. Partially constructed walls, paint tins, assorted tools.

Shawn awakens with a gasp - sits upright, breathing heavily.

RING-RING

RING-RING

He pivots out of bed, collects a pair of jeans from the floor with quivering fingers.

Hobbles toward the beckoning ring tone while getting dressed.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — MORNING

Yanks his cell phone from a charging cable.

Glances at the screen.

RING-RING

It's ZANETTI, 50's, a Defense Attorney, brash, egotistical, this guy sends out invoices with his name embossed in gold. □

SHAWN

Morning...

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)

Hey pal, how ya holdin' up?

SHAWN

Oh, you know, staying productive.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)

That's the way. Look, there's been a development in relation to your case.

Shawn unhooks a sheet of tarpaulin covering the window, winces from the sunlight.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

The coppers are diggin' through Stefan's hard drive. We're talkin' hundreds of thousands of category one videos and images.

SHAWN

Jesus...

Shawn's gaze catches a T-shirt draped on a step ladder.

He awkwardly slips it on.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
This manslaughter charge could potentially be dropped. That's good news, Shawn.

SHAWN
More traumatized kids isn't good news.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
I know. But it's my job to get you the best possible result. I'll argue you've made a contribution to the community by catching him.

SHAWN
Everything happened so fast...

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Look, this person made the decision to jump out of shame, and, as we now know, out of guilt. What we need to do is mitigate your culpability.

SHAWN
I'm going to jail--

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Don't be presumptuous! We've been over this, first offense, no criminal history, genuine remorse--

SHAWN
I don't know how genuine it is--

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
We don't tell 'em that!
(beat)
I've got a conference in ten. How you doin' for funds, Shawn?

SHAWN
I've been relying on merch sales from my site. But...we shut down, so--

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
How about your property?

SHAWN
What about it?

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Do you own it?

SHAWN
My Dad left it to me. Why?

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
You might have to look at sellin'
your home if you can't pay your legal
costs, Shawn.

SHAWN
I'll think of something.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Please do.
(beat)
Now then, stick to your conditions,
stick to your curfew, and I'll see if
we can get these charges withdrawn,
ok?

SHAWN
Thanks.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Talk soon, keep your nose out of
trouble.

END CALL

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Shawn steps around a timber bench-saw hogging the floor.

Turns a wrench fastened to a handle-less faucet above a
sink. Fills a kettle.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

He slumps on the sofa with a steaming coffee. Fetches the TV
remote from a cluttered table.

Thumbs it on and cycles through the banality of early
morning television.

CLICK

SALESMAN (ON TV)
...with six easy payments of nineteen
ninety nine, and our no questions
asked return policy--

CLICK

WEATHER MAN (ON TV)
 ...once again, residents are being
 asked to brace for tonight's winds,
 which are expected to reach--

CLICK

ON TV SCREEN

EXT. FOREST — DAY

A team of POLICEMEN with cadaver dogs wade through foliage.
 Civilian VOLUNTEERS wearing hi-vis vests mingle among them.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
 ...Police today continue their search
 for Cynthia Lynas, aged ten, still
 missing after more than one month...

A headline scrolls: "Ninth child taken by same man"

REPORTER 1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...snatched from her home at three A
 M, the parents bound, gagged and
 threatened with a gun. The man is
 described as wearing a black hooded
 jumper with a face mask at the time
 of the incident...

A composite sketch fills the screen. A black balaclava,
 white stitching around the eyes and mouth. Terrifying.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn takes a sip, leans forward.

ON TV SCREEN

EXT. POLICE STATION — DAY

A crowd of TV REPORTER'S charge toward the entrance,
 wielding cameras and jabbing microphones.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
 ...Police however, remain hopeful and
 appear to be closing in on the
 elusive predator. Yesterday,
 Detective Jacob Pearson, the lead
 investigator on the case, had this to
 say during a rare public appearance.

DETECTIVE PEARSON, 40's, addresses the mob. Hardened,
 resilient, masking any emotion.

PEARSON

This little girl would obviously be in great fear and wanting to be reunited with her mum and dad as soon as possible. I can confirm we've recovered an item of clothing believed to be Cynthia's, and I'll personally be overseeing D N A analysis--

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

Does this mean you'll be making an arrest soon?--

PEARSON

That's all for today.

Pearson departs, visibly uncomfortable at their proximity. The media throng scramble after him.

REPORTER 3 (V.O.)

Why has it taken four years, Detective?

REPORTER 4 is more tenacious than the rest of the pack.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

How can you pretend to know the pain these families are feeling? You don't have kids...

Clamoring, jostling.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...you're not even married, sir.

BACK TO SCENE

Imagery from the TV contorts on Shawn's sullen face.

REPORTER 1 (ON TV)

Cynthia's distraught parents have made a gut wrenching plea for their daughters safe return.

MR. LYNAS (30's) is silent, head bowed in defeat.

MRS. LYNAS (30's) is weeping, begging, clinging to the most minuscule of hope.

MRS. LYNAS (ON TV)

Please come home, dear, I have your favorite jacket...

She WAILS uncontrollably, her every word slurs from accumulated saliva.

MRS. LYNAS (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Come home, so you can wear it--

Shawn turns away, mutes the TV.

Strolls to the window, stares outside.

A neighbor from afar fervently mows his front lawn. The bell on a child's bicycle RINGS out.

He equips his phone.

Calls his ex wife YING, 30's, tough, independent, to the point - small talk a waste of time.

RING-RING

RING-RING

YING (ON PHONE)
I'm busy, Shawn...

SHAWN
You seeing the news? He took another girl--

Shawn's daughter, ANNA, 5, pipes up. A good kid, unselfish, smart for her age.

ANNA (ON PHONE)
(in background)
Hi daddy...

SHAWN
Hi cheeky--

YING (ON PHONE)
Don't ask me for money.

SHAWN
I know. I just...I can take her next weekend, give you a break.

YING (ON PHONE)
Next weekend works for you, does it?

She moves to another room for privacy.

DOOR CLOSES

SHAWN
I want to see her...before I go.

YING (ON PHONE)
How long, did he say?

SHAWN
There are a lot of mitigating
factors, probably twelve months.

YING (ON PHONE)
You still think you're solving some
kind of problem. It's an obsession.
(pause)
You know, I actually used to worry
that you'd be the one to get hurt.
That something would happen to you.
Now someone is dead.

SHAWN
It was an accident--

YING (ON PHONE)
Suicide isn't an accident!
(beat)
Are you going to stop now? Is this an
obvious enough wake-up call?

Anna THUMPS on the door.

ANNA (ON PHONE)
(in background)
Mommy!

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP

YING (ON PHONE)
Wait!

ANNA (ON PHONE)
My iPad's got no power--

YING (ON PHONE)
We'll charge it on the way!!

SHAWN
Can you not shout at her?--

YING (ON PHONE)
I have to look your daughter in the
eye and tell her daddy's going on a
long holiday.

SHAWN
You're good at lying.

YING (ON PHONE)
I'm hanging up--

SHAWN
Wait. Just...one night.

YING (ON PHONE)
She needs her own space, you don't
even have walls.

SHAWN
I put up a nice sheet of canvas.

YING (ON PHONE)
Canvas...

Ying's car keys RATTLE.

YING (ON PHONE)
Take care Shawn.

SHAWN
Think about it--

END CALL

Shawn flicks off the TV.

Tosses the remote.

Exits the room.

FADE TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - HALLWAY - DAY (6 MONTHS EARLIER)

It's a children's facility. White bookshelves, calm blue
wallpaper.

Pristine shoes SQUEAK on polished tile. Detective Pearson
marches briskly, purposeful.

Keeping pace alongside him is DOCTOR CLEMENS, 60's, modest
despite an unblemished reputation. A genuine love for the
wounded youth under his care.

Pearson admires the tranquil surroundings.

PEARSON
These places have come a long way...

CLEMENS
Oh? I had no idea, I--

PEARSON
 Nah, my Mother. Borderline
 personality disorder. After she was
 committed, it was the *nurses* turn to
 get nagged to death.

Clemens looks more concerned than amused.

They round a corner into a high security area.

PEARSON
 Any change?

CLEMENS
 She's writing now.

PEARSON
 Show me.

Clemens hands him a crinkled piece of paper.

PEARSON
 (reading)
 If you speak a word about this to
 anyone, I'll kill your mom, your dad,
 your little brother, then I'll kill
 your dog.
 (pause)
 Poor thing.

Clemens halts.

CLEMENS
 Respectfully, she's not an object.

Pearson arrives at a thick steel door labeled "Ward 105" A
 sign above a keypad lock reads "No sharp objects"

PEARSON
 Authorization, Clemens...

CLEMENS
 Perhaps it might be in her best
 interests if we postpone today--

Pearson turns to face him.

PEARSON
 I respect your devotion, I do. Please
 don't make me cite you for hindering
 an investigation. Do you understand?

Clemens relents.

CLEMENS
Very well...

PEARSON
I'll be out in twenty.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - CELL - DAY

Padded white walls are barely visible behind hundreds of tacked up drawings. One elevated window allows a beam of sunlight to enter.

CARMEN, 12, sits at a table strewn with crayons. We see her from behind only, head down, catatonically sketching. A bandage on one ear peers through her unkempt hair.

The door GRINDS open with a CLANG.

Pearson and Clemens step inside.

Carmen is oblivious, still drawing.

CLEMENS
Carmen, you have a visitor.

She offers no response, scribbling away, back turned.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
Detective Pearson is here to see you again.

No response.

PEARSON
Hello, Carmen.

No response.

CLEMENS
You do remember Mister Pearson, don't you Carmen?

No response.

Clemens apologizes with his eyes. The Detective nods understandingly, ushers him outside.

CLEMENS
Detective...

Pearson turns.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
I'm counting the minutes.

DOOR CLOSES

Pearson nestles into a chair that's too small for his girth.

Looks around at her drawings plastered on the walls.

He selects one and feigns interest to initiate conversation.

PEARSON

That's new...

No response.

PEARSON

So, Carmen, Doctor Clemens tells me
you're writing now.

No response.

PEARSON

Is there anything you can tell me,
about the man that hurt you?

Carmen's sketching hand comes to a stop.

She pushes her page aside, retrieves a fresh sheet of blank
paper and scrawls a note.

Hands it to him, back still turned.

PEARSON

(reading)

Mister nasty lives in a spaceship.

Pearson reclines, deliberating.

Carmen resumes drawing.

PEARSON

Does he, now...

No response.

PEARSON

Thank you for sharing that with me,
Carmen. That's good, that's very
good.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE — BATHROOM — MORNING

The muted PATTERNING of running water.

Shawn's silhouette animates behind a tattered shower curtain. A glass screen lays boxed up against a wall.

RING-RING

RING-RING

Extends a soaking wet arm, retrieves his cell phone.

SHOWER SQUEAKS OFF

RING-RING

SHAWN
Shawn speaking.

GIRL (ON PHONE)
(heavy breathing)

Pats down his torso with a towel.

SHAWN
Hello?

She hangs up.

END CALL

Shawn looks at the screen, no caller ID.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE — ANNA'S BEDROOM — MORNING

Shawn rips away a sheet of canvas hanging over a wall.

Tosses it aside.

Squats before the now exposed timber framework.

Dips a scraper into a tub of stud adhesive and applies a generous dollop to each wooden beam.

Lifts a sheet of pre-cut plasterboard from a nearby stack.

Slots it vertically into place, exerting.

Hammers in some flatbed nails to attach it.

BANG

BANG

RING-RING

Sets his tools down with a CLANG.

Cleans his fingers with a rag, equips his phone.
Again, no caller ID.

RING-RING

SHAWN
Who is this?

GIRL (ON PHONE)
(heavy breathing)

Shawn stands.

SHAWN
You're hilarious. Stop calling this
number.

GIRL (ON PHONE)
(whispering)
Shawn?

It's a child, voice shaking.

SHAWN
Speaking...

GIRL (ON PHONE)
I can't talk for a long time, he let
me use the bathroom.

SHAWN
Who?

GIRL (ON PHONE)
The man in the mask.

SHAWN
Cynthia?

GIRL (ON PHONE)
Cynthia is in the water tank.

SHAWN
What?

GIRL (ON PHONE)
That's where he puts them.
(pause)
He will take me there. Tonight. When
it's dark.

Shawn paces.

SHAWN
What's your name?

GIRL (ON PHONE)
Krista.
(pause)
Krista Hamilton.

SHAWN
How old are you, Krista?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Nearly twelve.

SHAWN
You need to call 9 1 1. The Police
are going to--

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Only you can help me.

SHAWN
Krista, listen to me. Call 9 1 1,
hang up and do it right now.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
(heavy breathing)

SHAWN
There must be someone you can call, I
can't do anything for you!
(pause)
What's your cell?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
It's not mine. Mom won't let me have
a phone.

SHAWN
How did you get my number?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Your website.

SHAWN
Who's phone is...turn on caller I D,
the Cops can trace it.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
It won't let me.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Shawn rummages through mess on the bench-top.

He finds a pen. No ink.

Opts for a carpenter's pencil hiding under a floor-plan schematic.

Flips it over. Writes down "Crista\Krista Hamilton" on the back.

SHAWN

Do you know where you are?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

In a big house.

Shawn jots notes, listening intently.

SHAWN

Do you know what street you're on?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

No?

SHAWN

What's the house look like, describe it for me.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

I didn't see much.

A rumbling noise swells, then dissipates.

DEEP RUMBLING

Shawn scribbles down "Background noise? Train tracks? Something else?"

SHAWN

What color is the house?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

White.

SHAWN

Keep going, tell me everything you remember.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

I don't know, it's got a garage.

SHAWN

Which side? Left or right?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

Right.

SHAWN
What else?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Nothing. I went up the steps then
there was the front door.

SHAWN
How many steps?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ummm, two.

SHAWN
Good girl. Is there any way you can
get out of the building?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
I don't know.

SHAWN
Are you injured?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Huh?

SHAWN
Are you hurt?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
A bit. My arms hurt.

Shawn tenses up, clenches a fist.

SHAWN
Does he have a weapon?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
He's got a gun.

SHAWN
Krista, I need that caller I D.
Without it, there's nothing I can--

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Why did you quit?

SHAWN
What?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Your page isn't online anymore.

SHAWN
Don't worry about me.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 You said you would catch them all--

Abruptly, a booming, ferocious voice.

MASKED MAN (ON PHONE)
 (in background)
 KRISTAAAAA!!

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 I have to go.

SHAWN
 Wait--

END CALL

Shawn paces, frantic.

Dials 911.

RING-RING

RING-RING

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
 9 1 1 emergency--

SHAWN
 I need to report a kidnapping, the
 girls name is Krista...Hamilton.

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
 A kidnapping?

SHAWN
 Yes, she called from a mobile, she--

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
 What is your location, sir?

SHAWN
 Not me!!

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
 Sir, I need an address so I can--

Shawn hangs up, realizing the futility of the call.

END CALL

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - MORNING

A sprawling computer workstation. Steel filing cabinets,
 food wrappers, empty soda cans.

Affixed to one wall, a collage of printed A4 paper depicts a Google map of the city. Some locations are annotated with scrawled post-it notes.

Shawn flumps into a luxurious leather armchair.

Leans into his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

The mouse cursor opens a web browser.

Shawn Googles: "Detective Pearson, child abductions"

The first result: "Los Angeles Police Department"

He clicks open their website, scrolls to a 24 hour hotline.

BACK TO SCENE

Equips his phone, dials it.

RING-RING

RING-RING

OFFICER BRADSHAW (40's) answers. Overworked and under pressure, resentful at being relegated to desk duty.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
L A P D, this is Bradshaw.

SHAWN
I was actually after Pearson--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Unavailable. How can I help?

SHAWN
A girl just phoned me, she's been abducted, I think it's the same--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Did she call 9 1 1?

SHAWN
I don't know, she's a kid, she's scared.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Got a name?

SHAWN
Krista.

Bradshaw lets out a sigh.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Surname?

SHAWN
Am I interrupting your day, Officer
Bradshaw?

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Sir, did she provide a surname?

SHAWN
Hamilton.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Krista with a K or a C?

SHAWN
I don't know, man!

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
How old is the person?

SHAWN
Twelve. No, eleven, she's eleven.

Beat.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
I'm not seeing anything under missing
persons. Did you get a phone number?

SHAWN
No, it showed as private--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
And who are you, what's your name?

SHAWN
My name? Who gives a shit about me?

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
What's your relationship to the
person?

SHAWN
I'm Shawn, I run a website--

Bradshaw scoffs.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
It seems very odd that she'd contact
you and not Police--

SHAWN

Maybe she thinks your inept, like I do!

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Unfortunately, without more information, there isn't much we can really do--

SHAWN

She mentioned Cynthia Lynas, said she's buried in a water tank or something.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

That's vague.

SHAWN

Is it? The child molester in the next room stifled the conversation a bit.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Ok, Shawn. What else did she say?

SHAWN

That she's going to be dead before the fucking day is out!

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Take it easy. It's really the responsibility of the parents to get in contact with Police if they believe their daughter is missing--

SHAWN

Why don't you get off your arse and start looking at water utility companies in the area--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Hey, I get a hundred calls a day to this line. I gotta sift through the nutcases to find credible leads. If you want to play detective--

Shawn hangs up.

END CALL

Leans into his computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He clicks open the second Google search result, a news article honoring the murdered children entitled: "Gone too soon"

A page loads showing their portrait photos. Happy, innocent and pure.

Shawn exhales, skims through the bio's.

Victim 9: "Cynthia Lynas, abducted March 27, 2022, status: missing"

"...my favorite memory, overcoming the fear of singing in the school musical and my smile getting bigger and bigger from the joy of the audience..."

Victim 8: "Sharon Willis, abducted September 3, 2021, status: missing"

"...I spend way too much time on TV, phone and Xbox...math is hard and school is boring..."

Victim 7: "Emily Xu, abducted July 13, 2021, status: missing"

"...attend college then travel the world....I love to swim, dance and play with friends..."

Shawn scrolls to the first victim, the only girl to survive.

Her photo, a blank square. No name, only an alias to protect her identity.

Victim 1: "C C, abducted April 22, 2018, status: found"

"...and I love my bestie, you are the light in my world, hanging out is so much fun and time flies by with you..."

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn reclines, anger swelling.

Zanetti's parting advice echoes in his conscience.

Bites his lower lip, hesitant.

SHAWN

Fuck it...

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He browses to: creepcatcher.com

The mouse cursor clicks on "Administrator login"

Types in his password: *****

Navigates to the "Membership" page.

Clicks on "Search" and sets the parameters to local.

Types: "Crista Hamilton"

The results load.

Shawn scrolls through subscriber accounts: "Crista Schmidt",
"Cris Faisil", "Crista Hickson"

End results.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn runs his hands through his hair, stressed.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Re-types the search as: "Krista Hamilton"

Another page of results load.

Shawn scrolls again.

"Kris Bennet", "Kristan Blake", "Krista Vasko", "Krista
Hamilton"

SHAWN (O.S.)

Gotcha.

Shawn opens her profile page: "Krista Hamilton, Hansen
Hills, CA, 91331"

Opens another browser window and navigates to: Intelius.com

With his email and password already in the login field, he
clicks "Sign in"

Clicks on "People search"

He types: "Krista Hamilton, Hansen Hills, CA, 91331" and
presses Enter.

A verification message appears: "The current credit card on
file will be billed, proceed?"

SHAWN (O.S.)

Yes!

Shawn clicks "Yes"

An hourglass icon appears, spinning seemingly forever.

A message reads: "Intelius is searching billions of public records for Krista Hamilton in CA 91331"

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn swivels impatiently.

His computer chimes.

Leans into his screen.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

One result: "We found Krista Hamilton, 13206 Bryson Street, CA, 91331"

A mini Google map shows a top-down view of her house. Corrugated iron, trash, more dirt than grass.

He scrolls to "Linked social media accounts"

Clicks open a Facebook link.

Scrolls through her profile page: "Date of birth, 9th December, 2010. Studies at Northridge Middle School"

Enlarges her photo to full screen with another mouse click.

Photo 1: Krista wears a Metallica T-shirt, she looks lonely, disconnected from the world.

The caption reads: "Music is my sanity"

Shawn hovers the mouse cursor over her, a name-tag bubble appears: "Krista Hamilton"

Scrolling.

Photo 2: Krista and a friend wearing covid masks in a lush green park. A graphic overlay gives them cat ears and whiskers.

Caption: "When you don't believe in yourself, your best friend believes in you"

Scrolling.

Photo 3: Krista in a school classroom, she makes a face.

Caption: "I'm not weird, just limited edition"

He reverts back to the intelius search result.

Scrolls to the "Relatives" tab: Sara Hamilton, age 31.

Scrolls to a landline phone number": 555-213-6349

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn dials it.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

SARA, 30's, answers. A single mother, struggling to make ends meet as a fast-food cashier. A bit rough around the edges, numbing the stress of parenthood with weed.

SARA (ON PHONE)

Hello...

A TV BLARES in the background.

SHAWN

Sara Hamilton? You're Krista's mom?

SARA (ON PHONE)

Who's askin'?

SHAWN

My names Shawn, I'm a, uh...online friend.

SARA (ON PHONE)

Where'd you get my number?

SHAWN

Sara, your daughter just phoned me, someone has taken her. You need to contact Police and--

SARA (ON PHONE)

Well that ain't possible.

SHAWN

Why's that?

SARA (ON PHONE)

She doesn't have a phone, genius.

SHAWN

She's using someone else's--

Sara groans.

SARA (ON PHONE)
 I'm sorry that she pranked you. The
 time I get to myself, I wanna enjoy.
 I'll see you later--

SHAWN
 There was someone with her, a man.
 Has she tried to call you?

SARA (ON PHONE)
 She's with McGee...

SHAWN
 Who's McGee?

SARA (ON PHONE)
 Her coach, from school. Practise.
 She'll be back at two. Bye--

SHAWN
 Why would she call me like this?

SARA (ON PHONE)
 Krista likes to invent fantasies,
 Shawn. Last week she found a U F O. I
 love the little squirt, but she's got
 some issues.

SHAWN
 What about her father? Could he--

SARA (ON PHONE)
 Pfft, she only has me. Why, you gonna
 add him to your search?

SHAWN
 You got McGee's details? I want to
 talk to him.

SARA (ON PHONE)
 Anderson oval...

Shawn writes it down.

SHAWN
 Sara, call him. At least make sure
 that Krista is--

She hangs up.

END CALL

Shawn paces, cursing his naivety.

Unable to shake off the fear in Krista's voice, he returns to his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He opens Google, sets the search parameter to "Maps"

Types in: "Anderson Oval, 91331"

The first result: "Anderson Soccer Field, 11400 Carl Street, phone: 555-765-0284"

Clicks on: "Go to website"

A page loads: "Error 404, page cannot be found or no longer exists"

Shawn backtracks, zooms in on a top-down map of the Oval.

Switches to "Street View"

Tall wire fences surround the complex, manicured grass has given way to mud. Dilapidated, abandoned.

BACK TO SCENE

He dials the listed number - it might still be active.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

AUTOMATED VOICE (ON PHONE)
The number you are calling has been
disconnected.

BEEP

End call.

He eyes his page of notes, circles "Northridge Middle School" in pencil.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Shawn Googles: "Northridge Middle School, CA"

The first result: www.northridgemiddle.org

Clicks open the link, navigates to the "Staff" page.

Scrolls through an A to Z of teachers.

He pauses on: "Pat Brown – Coach"

Scrolling.

Stops on: "Glenn McGee – Head of Security"

SHAWN (O.S.)

Oh yeah?

Shawn clicks on "Contact"

A page loads: "g.mckgee@nms.k12.al.us, phone 555-956-9032"

BACK TO SCENE

He dials the number.

RING-RING

RING-RING

KADY (30's) answers. Assertive, sophisticated, a self made entrepreneur who's risen from poverty to wealth.

KADY (ON PHONE)

Hello?!

She's in the middle of a workout, voice reverberating in a home gym.

SHAWN

Uh, Misses McGee?

Pops out her iPod ear-phones.

KADY (ON PHONE)

(catching her breath)

Yes?

SHAWN

Can I speak to Glenn please?

KADY (ON PHONE)

I'm sorry, he's not here.

SHAWN

Where is he?

KADY (ON PHONE)

May I ask who you are?

SHAWN

I'm Shawn, I need to talk to him
about a student at the school where
he works.

KADY (ON PHONE)

Regarding?

SHAWN

It's really something I need to
discuss with him.

KADY (ON PHONE)

I can have him call you back if...
(pause)
Just a moment.

The low hum of ENGINE NOISE swells.

KADY (ON PHONE)

He's pulling in...

SHAWN

Please tell him it's urgent.

She sets the phone down.

KADY (ON PHONE)

(muted)
Leave them outside you big oaf!

DOOR OPENS

The sound of FOOTSTEPS approach.

KADY (ON PHONE)

(muted)
Someone named Shawn?
(beat)
I don't know.

MCGEE (40's) takes the call. A burly, boisterous man with a
stern temperament - necessary for his vocation.

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

Hello?

SHAWN

I'm looking for Krista Hamilton. She
there?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

You a Cop?

SHAWN

No, my names Shawn, I'm with creep
catchers. You heard of us?--

McGee hangs up.

Shawn redials.

RING-RING

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

What do you want?

SHAWN

She's missing. Where have you been,
man?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

None of your fucken' business.

SHAWN

Tell me what's going on, or I can
bring the Cops in.

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

You threatenin' me?

SHAWN

I know you've been seeing her once a
week.

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

A few months back I caught her
jumpin' a fence on school grounds.
She broke in to use a class computer.
I'm supposed to report it--

SHAWN

But you didn't. Why not?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

She begged me not to. Didn't wanna
create a fuss with her mom.

SHAWN

So you concocted some lame ass story
about weekly practise?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)

It was her idea. We do R O T C on
Saturday's, I was just lettin' her
use the schools internet. That's all.
The poor kids got nothin'. Me and
Kady, we know what that's like--

SHAWN
Did you see her today?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)
Not today, no.

SHAWN
Any idea where she might be?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)
How should I know?
(remembering)
I saw her catch the bus once, when I
was on perimeter control--

SHAWN
Which route did she take?

MCGEE (ON PHONE)
The...it was the 1 5 6.

Shawn writes down "Bus 156"

MCGEE (ON PHONE)
If you've finished your
interrogation, I've got shit to do--

SHAWN
I know who you are now, I'll be
watching you.

MCGEE (ON PHONE)
All scary on the phone, aren't ya?
Come down here. Then we'll see how
big ya mouth is.

SHAWN
(unafraid)
Not today.

END CALL

Shawn calls Hayley.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
Hey, Shawn.

SHAWN

Hayley, I need you to do something
for me--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Can't Shawn. Not by myself. Not after
last time.

SHAWN

This is something else--

Hayley scoffs.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Come on Shawn, there is nothing else.

SHAWN

A girl called me this morning, she's
been abducted--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Why you and not the Police?

SHAWN

He threatened her. She's only eleven,
she's scared, man. She's looking to
us for help--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

You know they interviewed me for
eight hours? Like I'm the criminal?

SHAWN

I'm sorry you went through that--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Eight hours, dude.

SHAWN

Listen, her mom thinks she's at
sports practise. But it's just B S--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

How did you get their info?

SHAWN

Reverse look up.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Isn't that a violation?

SHAWN

I'm banned from social--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
This is worse! You're breaching
someones privacy!

SHAWN
You think I'm doing this for the
likes?!

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
It's the Police's job!

SHAWN
Remember what you said? When you
found out your mom was abused when
she was a teenager?

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
Yeah, I said if I ever caught the
guy, I'd punch him in the fucking
face.

SHAWN
Right. And you can't. But you *can*
catch others--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
It's always just some asshole with a
fantasy, Shawn. There's no victim.

SHAWN
There were victims on Stefan's
laptop.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
What do you mean?

SHAWN
I just want to find this girl, her
names Krista--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
Every time you shove a camera in
someones face, you demand honesty.
Why can't you be honest with me?

SHAWN
She's a victim now, isn't she?

Beat.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
What do you want me to do?

SHAWN

Can you get her mom down to the Cop's
and file a missing persons report?
She sounds flaky. Drunk, or high, or
both.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Why me?

SHAWN

I trust you.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

Text me the address then.

SHAWN

Appreciate it.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

I'm doing it for her.

SHAWN

That's ok, just tell her you're with
me.

END CALL

Shawn sends an SMS.

ON PHONE SCREEN

SHAWN (ON TEXT)

Sara Hamilton, 13206 Bryson Street,
CA.

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)

Thnx.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn leans into his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Opens Google maps.

Types in: "Bus route 156"

The result loads - a blue line winding through suburbia.

He traces it with the mouse cursor, pausing on locations
that pop-up along the journey.

A church.

A library.

A movie theater.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Where are you going, Krista...

A McDonalds.

A museum.

The cursor loops back to the departure point.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE – OFFICE – AFTERNOON

Shawn stands, stretches. Bones quietly crack.

He gazes at his paper map on the wall.

Traces the route again with his eyes.

A semi-circular patch of grass catches his attention.

Takes a step forward, looking closer.

He's seen it somewhere before.

Returns to his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Navigates to the same grass patch on Google maps.

Switches to "Terrain" view.

Hovers the mouse cursor, a notification icon appears:
"Cloverleaf Children's Mental Health, 14445 Olive View Dr,
CA 91342, phone 555-485-0888"

Switches to "Street view"

Lush greenery, red brick facades. A boom gate with various warning signs.

Tabs open Krista's Facebook page.

Scrolling.

Photo 2: Krista and a friend wearing covid masks in a lush green park.

Shawn hovers the mouse cursor on her companion, a name-tag bubble appears: "Carmen Chang"

Shawn's cell phone chimes.

BACK TO SCENE

He equips it.

ON PHONE SCREEN

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)
What if she tells me 2 piss off?

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn leans into his computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Reopens the webpage for: "Northridge Middle School"

On the already open "Staff" page, he right-click's on McGee's bio and selects "Send to your devices"

Chooses "MyPhone" with another mouse click.

BACK TO SCENE

Grabs his cell, just as it chimes.

With the page now on his phone, he forwards it to Hayley.

SHAWN
(typing)
Sports practise...doesn't...exist...
show her this.

ON PHONE SCREEN

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)
Ur fucking up my afternoon.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn reclines.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He browses through Cloverleaf's website, skimming "Mission statement", "Values", "Vision"

Clicks on "Staff"

Scrolls through a list of names.

The mouse cursor stops on: "Doctor Matias Clemens, Head Physician"

BACK TO SCENE

Dials the number.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RECEPTIONIST (30's) answers. Loud, arrogant, gossip amongst co-workers seems to be her prime concern.

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

Haha...

(composing herself)

☐Cloverleaf Mental Health.

SHAWN

You done?

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

Sorry?--

SHAWN

I need to speak to Doctor Clemens please, it's urgent.

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

Doctor Clemens is no longer employed here. Are you a parent?

SHAWN

No, my names Shawn, I--

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

Unless you're a family member of an existing patient, there's no way--

SHAWN

Can you give me his cell?

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

No, I'm sorry. Have a nice day--

SHAWN

Listen, a little girl is missing, she's friends with one of--

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

Inform the police. This really isn't something we can assist with--

SHAWN

On your website, your mission statement says no case is too complicated. We never give up on a child. Is that just bullshit?

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

I didn't create the website, Sir.

SHAWN

Did you read it?

Beat.

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

One moment.

Jazzy on-hold MUSIC fills his ears.

Shawn swivels impatiently.

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE)

I've been advised Doctor Clemens may be contacted if a matter is deemed urgent.

SHAWN

Thanks.

RECEPTIONIST (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

5 5 5 - 2 7 6 - 6309

END CALL

His phone chimes.

New message from: "Hayley"

ON PHONE SCREEN

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)

On our way.

SHAWN (ON TEXT)

How is she?

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)

Pissed. She went nuts at the security dude.

SHAWN (ON TEXT)

Ask 4 Bradshaw, we spoke this morning.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn calls Clemens.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Good afternoon.

SHAWN
Doctor Clemens?

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
To whom am I speaking?

SHAWN
I'm Shawn, I'm looking for a missing kid, Krista Hamilton. I know she's a friend of Carmen Chang--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
What's your interest in Carmen?

SHAWN
I know what happened to her. It's the same guy, he's taken Krista too--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Naturally you've notified the authorities?

SHAWN
Too slow. Doctor, Carmen knows who he is, she's your patient--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Not anymore--

SHAWN
You can get me access--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Impossible, I'm afraid--

SHAWN
So, you retired, you still have an in--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Made redundant. Too *intimate* with the investigation, I'm told--

SHAWN

Who's looking after now? I'll fucking ask them--

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

Shawn, Carmen is mute.

SHAWN

What?

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

Akinetic catatonia. From the trauma, you see. She was found by a road side, forensics determined that she'd crawled half a mile--

SHAWN

Jesus.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

It would better to be thrown into the ocean with a millstone around your neck than to let any harm come to the little ones.

SHAWN

What?

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

I was affirming your reference to our savior.

SHAWN

Yeah? Where is he now?

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

God honored his creation by granting us free will. When assigning blame for wickedness, one should look to the heart of man, not God--

SHAWN

Time is against us, Doctor.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)

I won't be party to vigilantism. My reputation is--

SHAWN

Fuck your reputation. Your contribution to society is over, hers hasn't even started yet.

Beat.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
I'm assured of your confidentiality?

SHAWN
Yeah.

Muted FOOTSTEPS on carpet.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Six months ago I caught Carmen
stealing Propofol, of all things.

DOOR OPENS

SHAWN
Anesthetic?

CLEMENS (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
She's remained on suicide watch ever
since.

DOOR CLOSES

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
Naturally, she won't talk about the
incident at all. Though she will
write, she will sketch. The key to
finding him is in her drawings.

Venetian blinds SQUEAK shut.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
I've collated everything. Her artwork
is rather cryptic. Fragmented, if you
will.

SHAWN
I'm a fresh pair of eyes, let's take
a look.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
That would be going into unethical
territory.

SHAWN
I know.

A beat.

CLEMENS (ON PHONE)
What's your email, Shawn? I'm sending
you a zoom link.

SHAWN
Shawn F at creep catcher dot org.

END CALL

Shawn leans into his monitor.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Clicks open his inbox.

NEW MAIL

Scrolls through some spam to find: "CMH - Zoom meeting"

Opens the message. "Topic: Clemens chat, Join Zoom Meeting
[https://us05web.zoom.us/c/82646](https://us05web.zoom.us/j/82646)"

He clicks the link.

A Zoom interface appears.

"Incoming call" from M. Clemens.

Shawn answers.

ON WEBCAM

Clemens sits at an immaculate desk. Behind him, an oak cabinet stacked with books, family photos and trinkets.

He pushes aside a half empty bottle of wine, secreting it behind a table lamp.

Shawn clicks on the "Speaker" icon.

CLEMENS
 ...can you hear me?

SHAWN (O.S.)
 I can now.

CLEMENS
 During Krista's last visit, Carmen gave her *this* sketch.

The view switches to Clemens desktop.

His mouse cursor opens a folder titled: "Carmen artwork 02"

A scanned picture fills the screen.

Sketch 1: A circular ornate pattern, intricately detailed.

SHAWN (O.S.)
 What is it?

CLEMENS

Logic tells me it's a piece of furniture she's seen during her captivity. Blindfolded the entire time, but managed to sneak a look.

SHAWN (O.S.)

What, like a painting or something?

CLEMENS

Indeed. But in Carmen's case, I'm afraid that might be too simple an answer.

SHAWN (O.S.)

Simple is always best.

CLEMENS

Perhaps.

RING-RING

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn grabs his phone.

Incoming call from: "Hayley"

RING-RING

He hangs up.

Thumbs the ring volume to zero.

Sends her a text.

ON PHONE SCREEN

SHAWN (ON TEXT)

Call u back, 1 sec.

BACK TO SCENE

Swivels back to his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Shawn scrolls through Carmen's drawings.

Sketch 2: A bathroom.

CLEMENS

He bathed her, brushed her teeth. Even flossed them. No D N A or trace evidence has ever been found.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Have the Cops seen this stuff?

CLEMENS
Of course! Though Detective Pearson is a busy man. I'm continually reminded of the time these matters take to investigate.

SHAWN (O.S.)
(to himself)
There's our bathroom, Krista.

CLEMENS
Pardon?

SHAWN (O.S.)
She called me, from a bathroom--

CLEMENS
Forgive me for asking the obvious, but did the Police not subpoena her cell carrier?

SHAWN (O.S.)
No caller I D, it's someone else's phone.

CLEMENS
Carmen's...

SHAWN (O.S.)
Carmen has a phone?

CLEMENS
I thought it would be a useful tool to encourage her to communicate, we confiscated it when she moved into the secure ward.
(pause)
It's supposed to be in her locker, I submitted an inventory of her possessions--

SHAWN (O.S.)
Whats the number?

Clemens hesitates.

SHAWN (O.S.)
I know you want to catch this scumbag.

Clemens exhales.

CLEMENS

Indeed.

(beat)

5 5 5 - 2 3 4 - 2 2 1 8.

Shawn scribbles it down.

SHAWN (O.S.)

Appreciate your help.

CLEMENS

I pray you find her.

END VIDEO CALL

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn calls the Police.

RING-RING

RING-RING

Waiting, swiveling.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Bradshaw--

SHAWN

It's me, Shawn. We talked this morning--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Shawn--

He paces, anxious.

SHAWN

I found out that Krista is using her friends cell phone. I've got the number, it's--

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Listen to me--

SHAWN

5 5 5 - 2 3

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)

Shawn! We found her.

SHAWN

What?

Shawn freezes, in shock.

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
We got a tip off, Water Services
Corp. You were right, the girls are
there--

SHAWN
Fuck!

BRADSHAW (ON PHONE)
Let us do our job now--

SHAWN
Well that'd be a first!!

Shawn hangs up.

END CALL

Delirious, not sure what to do.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

RING-RING

He answers.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
I've been trying to call you! We're
at the Police station--

SHAWN
I nearly had her...

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
It's the psycho on T V?

SHAWN
I wanted you to focus--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
You're full of shit. And you use
people.

Hayley's phone exchanges hands.

SARA (ON PHONE)
Hello?

SHAWN
Mrs. Hamilton?

SARA (ON PHONE)
Yes...

She's numb, still in disbelief.

SHAWN

It's Shawn...I'm sorry about your daughter--

SARA (ON PHONE)

You tried to...I didn't listen to you...

SHAWN

Wouldn't have made any difference.

SARA (ON PHONE)

I lied to her...I told her she wasn't allowed to have a phone.

Sara sobs.

SARA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

I don't have the money--

SHAWN

She had *you*, Sara. She had a mom who loved her. That's more than enough.

SARA (ON PHONE)

It's my fault, she could've called me, I could have helped her straight away--

Hayley comforts her.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)

I'll stay with her for a bit, get some rest.

END CALL

Shawn collects the TV remote in a daze.

Clicks it on.

ON TV SCREEN

An aerial view of a desert dotted with shrubbery. Police cars, Ambulances, a hastily erected cadaver privacy tent.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

...tonight, an exclusive. An anonymous tip off to K T T V News leads to the discovery of a mass grave. Police have cordoned the area and have retrieved the body of one child, with indications there are several more.

The droning HUM of a hovering helicopter.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Severe winds have hampered the search
which is expected to stretch into the
night.

A zipped-up body bag is carried away on a stretcher.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn listens, bewildered.

REPORTER 1 (ON TV)
While Police are yet to make any
official statement, distraught
parents now have the unenviable task
of identifying their missing
children...

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Shawn stares at his desk, eyes glazed.

Dials Carmen's number.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

BEEP

No answer.

END CALL

He powers down his computer.

The monitor blinks off, shrouding the room in darkness.

His silhouette exits.

DOOR CLOSES

FADE TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - HALLWAY - DAY (3 MONTHS EARLIER)

Detective Pearson walks shoulder to shoulder with Doctor Clemens.

CLEMENS

Krista presented me with a theory.

PEARSON

Her classmate?

CLEMENS

She knows Carmen better than both of us.

(beat)

Mister Nasty lives in a spaceship. It's an airport. Planes taking off and landing.

PEARSON

That's a bit of a stretch, Clemens--

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

I took the liberty of contacting municipal town planning. There's a radius of seven thousand homes within the airports sound falloff. He resides in one of those houses!

PEARSON

Doctor--

CLEMENS

You could canvass the area, go door to door. It would take some time, obviously--

Pearson halts.

PEARSON

This doesn't all get neatly wrapped up by a nut kid and a geriatric!

Clemens is taken aback.

PEARSON

I'm tired, Clemens...the door. Please.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - CELL - DAY

Carmen sits at her desk, sketching away.

Pearson is seated behind her.

PEARSON
Carmen.

No response.

PEARSON
I'm going to ask you a question. I
want you to think carefully before
you answer, ok?

No response.

PEARSON
Thinking back, you mentioned the bad
man lived in a spaceship. Try to
remember the sounds you heard.

No response.

PEARSON
Could it have been airplanes? Taking
off and landing?

No response.

Pearson reclines, exasperated.

PEARSON
I spoke to your mum and dad today--

Carmen stabs her drawing with a crayon.

BANG

Pearson flinches.

She stabs again, harder.

BANG

He stands, backpedals. Fumbles for the duress button.

Presses it.

PEARSON
Doctor!

BANG-BANG-BANG

The door bursts open with a CLANG.

Clemens rushes inside, followed by a NURSE (30's) quite
butch, disciplinary.

Pearson paces, wiping sweat from his brow.

CLEMENS
What did you say to her?

PEARSON
Nothing, I--

The nurse prepares a syringe.

NURSE
Hold her!

Clemens embraces Carmen in a bear-hug. She writhes with a strength that belies her age.

The Doctor whispers into her ear.

CLEMENS
Don't fret, sweetheart, we're going
to have a little sleep.

The injection takes effect.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
Just a teeny tiny, little sleep...

FADE TO:

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

Darkness.

Silence.

Stefan plummets through the void in slow motion, dressing gown billowing up.

Descending, almost gracefully.

He begs for help with his eyes.

And falling.

DEAFENING SMASH

BYSTANDERS SCREAM

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Shawn awakens with a gasp - sits upright, breathing heavily.

RING-RING

Fetches his cell phone from a taped-up cardboard box he's using as a side table.

RING-RING

RING-RING

SHAWN

Shawn...

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

(whispering)

He's sleeping.

Shawn pivots out of bed.

SHAWN

Krista? You ok?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

Yes.

Shawn stands, ecstatic.

SHAWN

You in the bathroom again?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

Yes.

SHAWN

You tipped off the media, didn't you?
They found the girls.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

I watched all your live-streams.
Everybody you meet hates you.

SHAWN

I enjoy being hated by them.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

Everybody hates me too.

SHAWN

That's not true. What about Carmen?
You're using her phone, yeah?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)

Yes.

SHAWN

Why didn't you tell me? I thought you
trusted me.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
You won't tell me why you quit.

Shawn paces, a renewed vigor.

SHAWN
Let's focus on you. What's inside the bathroom? Tell me what you see.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Um, toilet, shower.

SHAWN
What else, what about windows?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Yes, but there's something on it.

SHAWN
Can you open it? What's on it?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Wood.

SHAWN
Wood? Can you break it?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Why?

SHAWN
I want to see outside. Look for a street sign, a landmark, anything.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok.

CREAKING SOUNDS

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
It's not moving. There's two big screws on it.

SHAWN
Look around, tell me everything that's in the room, ok? Everything.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok um, towels, tooth brush, there's candles in the bath--

SHAWN
Candles? There must be a lighter or something. Have a look.

Beat.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
I found some matches.

SHAWN
Krista, listen to me, do exactly what
I say, ok?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok.

SHAWN
Light a match and burn that
toothbrush handle for me. Melt it. Do
it carefully, don't hurt yourself.

Beat.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok, I'm doing it.

SHAWN
Now press the melted end into one of
those screws and hold it there.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok.

SHAWN
Keep it right there. We're going to
wait for the plastic to dry, ok?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Ok.

INT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - MIDNIGHT

Shawn barges in, flicks the light on.

Powers up his computer.

The monitor flashes to life.

SHAWN
Is it stuck on there now?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Yes.

SHAWN
Ok, put the phone down, use two hands
and unwind that screw for me, ok?
Turn the toothbrush counter
clockwise.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Huh?

SHAWN
Left. Turn it left.

MUTED SQUEAKING

SHAWN
Slowly, don't snap it.

MUTED SQUEAKING

CRACK

SHAWN
You got it?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
It broke.

SHAWN
Hows the screw, is it loose now?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
Yes.

SHAWN
Good girl, unscrew it with your
fingers. Can you do that?

Beat.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
I can see a little bit outside.

SHAWN
What do you see?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
It's all dark.

SHAWN
C'mon, Krista.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
I can see a superhero.

SHAWN
What?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
He's flying and holding a wrench.

Shawn sits.

SHAWN
 Krista, I really need you to
 concentrate and be honest with me.
 Your mom told me that--

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 You think I'm crazy too?!

SHAWN
 No, I don't think you're--

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 I'm not lying! He's on a car. There's
 a superhero and it says a...q...u...
 a...

Shawn writes down "Aqua" in his notes.

Sketches a superhero holding a wrench.

SHAWN
 There must be a phone number too, can
 you read that for me?

A loud SMASH.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 I woke him up--

MASKED MAN (ON PHONE)
 (in background)
 YOU LITTLE BITCH!!--

She hangs up.

END CALL

SHAWN
 Krista, you there?
 (beat)
 Krista?!

Shawn leans into his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

The mouse cursor opens a web browser.

Shawn googles: "A Q U A, Hansen Hills CA 91331"

The results load.

He scrolls.

Result 1: "Hansen Dam Aquatic Centre, CA..."

Result 2: "Aqua North, Apartment Complex..."

Result 3: "Aqua (color)..."

Result 4: "Aqua (band) - Wikipedia"

Shawn changes the search parameters to "Image"

He types: "A Q U A, repair, handyman, mechanic"

The results load.

He scrolls through various .JPG images and cartoonish designs.

Scrolling.

The mouse cursor stops on a photograph of a plumbing van.

Emblazoned across its side: "Aqua Plumbing"

A graphic of a wrench wielding superhero promises: "Beyond great service"

He clicks on the image, gets directed to their website.

Scrolls through the page: "Aqua Plumbing, open 24 hours, 498 Harp Street, CA, 91331, phone 555-747-6990"

BACK TO SCENE

He dials it.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

On a pre-recorded message is KIRK (20's) rugged, not too bright - but masterful at his profession.

KIRK (ON PHONE)

Hi, you've reached Kirk at Aqua Plumbing. I can't take your call right now, but if you leave a message, I'll get straight back to you.

BEEP

SHAWN

Kirk, please call me back on this number. My names Shawn, it's urgent.

END CALL

Shawn calls Hayley.

RING-RING

RING-RING

RING-RING

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
(groggy)
What time is it...

SHAWN
Where are you?

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
Horizontal on a fucking waiting room
bench--

SHAWN
Krista's alive. We just spoke, I
think I've got her location--

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
What?

SHAWN
Can you get to your car?

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
Hold up, what about Sara?

RING-RING

Incoming call from: "Kirk"

SHAWN
Give me one minute.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
One minute for what?!--

Shawn hangs up, swaps to the new call.

RING-RING

SHAWN
Kirk--

KIRK (ON PHONE)
Shawn, sorry I missed your call. I'm
not on tonight, but if you text me
your address I can come out tomorrow.

SHAWN

No, listen--

KIRK (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Though I do bump up the call out fee
on Sundays--

SHAWN

Kirk! I don't need any work done. I
just need to know what street you're
on.

KIRK (ON PHONE)

Whats this about?

MUFFLED SPEECH

SHAWN

Who's that?

KIRK (ON PHONE)

No one.

SHAWN

You're not working, so you're home,
yeah?

KIRK (ON PHONE)

Yep.

SHAWN

You with Krista?

KIRK (ON PHONE)

Who's Krista?

SHAWN

You want the Cops knocking on your
front door?--

KIRK (ON PHONE)

Hold your horses! I...I borrowed the
boss's wheels to hook up with a date.
Ok?

SHAWN

The street, Kirk.

KIRK (ON PHONE)

I'm not telling you that--

SHAWN

Listen, I'm looking for a missing
kid. If you tell me where you are, it
can help me find her.

A beat.

KIRK (ON PHONE)
It's...I'm on Haddon Avenue.

SHAWN
What number?

KIRK (ON PHONE)
Not sure.

SHAWN
You don't know the address of the
girl you're with?

KIRK (ON PHONE)
It's a guy, ok!! I parked a ways up
and walked here. Privacy, geez.

SHAWN
Kirk, listen to me. I don't care
about any of that. Just tell me where
your van is.

KIRK (ON PHONE)
I don't know exactly!

SHAWN
I need you to do something for me.

KIRK (ON PHONE)
Like what?

SHAWN
It's orange, yeah?

KIRK (ON PHONE)
Yep.

SHAWN
Stay there.

KIRK (ON PHONE)
O...k

SHAWN
I'll drop you five stars online, just
stay parked right there, don't leave.

KIRK (ON PHONE)
Fine, can I go now?

SHAWN
Thanks.

END CALL

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

The mouse cursor clicks open Google "Maps"

Shawn types: "Haddon Avenue, CA, 91331"

The result loads.

A sprawling residential street stretching through several intersections.

Shawn clicks: "Send to phone"

Enters Hayley's number.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn equips his cell.

ON PHONE SCREEN

SHAWN (ON TEXT)
Haddon Avenue. U got it?

HAYLEY (ON TEXT)
That's close.

SHAWN (ON TEXT)
Don't waste time trying 2 explain 2 cops. Get down there.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn slides his page of notes toward him.

Circles Krista's initial description of a white house.

RING-RING

He snatches his phone.

SHAWN
Krista?

ANNA (ON PHONE)
I'm Anna.

SHAWN
Fuck!!

Punches a hole in the wall.

SMASH

ANNA (ON PHONE)
What's wrong, Daddy?

SHAWN
Nothings wrong, how are you? I miss
you so much.

ANNA (ON PHONE)
We can't say bad words.

SHAWN
That's right, cheeky. Don't tell Mom,
ok?

ANNA (ON PHONE)
She's shopping. On the internet.

Shawn stifles a sob.

SHAWN
(sniffling)
How about you? What are you up too?

ANNA (ON PHONE)
Watching youtube.

SHAWN
Oh yeah? Scary videos, huh?

ANNA (ON PHONE)
There's a cartoon cat. He's eating
people!

SHAWN
You better hide, he might get you.

ANNA (ON PHONE)
I know!

Shawn wipes away a tear.

ANNA (ON PHONE)
Mommy said you're going away.

SHAWN
That's right, but I'll be back real
soon.
(pause)
Anna...

ANNA (ON PHONE)
Yes?

SHAWN
Daddy's busy.

ANNA (ON PHONE)

Ok.

SHAWN

There's a little girl, she's just like you. She's in trouble.

ANNA (ON PHONE)

Ok.

SHAWN

I have to help her, or something bad will happen.

ANNA (ON PHONE)

Bye daddy.

SHAWN

I love you, I promise I'll call you when--

She hangs up.

END CALL

Shawn lets loose a flurry of fists into crumbling plasterboard.

BANG

BANG

Rests his forehead against the wall, chest heaving.

Moves back to his desk.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He switches to "Street view" on Google maps.

Explores Haddon Avenue in 3D.

Mouse cursor traveling, pausing to look left and right.

The daylight view of the street is peaceful, serene. Not a hint of the horror that exists somewhere within.

RING-RING

BACK TO SCENE

Incoming call from: "Hayley"

He answers.

The HUM of engine noise.

SARA (ON PHONE)
Where's my baby, Shawn?! Is she ok?

SHAWN
We spoke, she sounds fine, but we need to move. She's using Carmen's cell phone--

SARA (ON PHONE)
I'm calling her--

SHAWN
No! It's better he doesn't know we're coming.

Car tyres SCREECH as Hayley negotiates a turn.

HAYLEY (ON PHONE)
(in background)
What number?

SHAWN
Don't know yet. Sara, look for an orange van, Aqua...Plumbing, you got it?

SARA (ON PHONE)
Yes, yes. Oh thank God--

SHAWN
Call me when you're there. I'm bringing the cops in.

SARA (ON PHONE)
(to Hayley)
He said to look for a--

END CALL

Shawn swipes his screen.

ON PHONE SCREEN

Scrolls to "Settings"

Turns off caller ID.

BACK TO SCENE

He dials 911.

RING-RING

RING-RING

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
9 1 1, what is your emergency...

SHAWN
There's a man with a gun! On Haddon
Avenue!

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
Sir, calm down.

Her fingers TAP across a keyboard.

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
You're on Haddon Avenue, 9 1 3 3 1,
is that correct?

SHAWN
Yes! Please send help!

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
Stay with me. Sir, I need you to be
more specific--

SHAWN
He's gonna kill me!!

DISPATCHER (ON PHONE)
Can you tell me what--

Shawn hangs up.

END CALL

Paces around the room.

RING-RING

Snatches his phone.

Incoming call from: "Zanetti"

RING-RING

SHAWN
I can't talk--

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
What did I say?

SHAWN
Can we do this tomorrow?

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
I've just been advised that a
magistrate has issued a warrant for
your arrest--

SHAWN
Fuck!

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
A one...Sara Hamilton underwent a
record of interview? They've got ya,
pal, you breached your bail--

SHAWN
I'll deal with it later--

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Shawn, you're not hearing me. The
coppers are coming. Now.

SHAWN
Now?

Shawn moves to the window, face to the glass.

It's dark. Quiet.

ZANETTI (ON PHONE)
Don't answer any questions, comply
with their directives...

His computer chimes, he whirls.

RING-RING

Incoming video call from: "Hayley"

ZANETTI (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
...I'll come down first thing
tomorrow morning--

Shawn hangs up.

END CALL

Thumbs the ring volume to zero.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Shawn clicks: "Accept"

EXT. HADDON AVENUE — MIDNIGHT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Punk sneakers, standing on the sidewalk.

HAYLEY

Am I up?

SHAWN (O.S.)

Audios good.

Sara is beside her, frantic.

Hayley mounts her phone on the front of her backpack strap.

Pitch dark suburbia, only the halo from street lights.

Sara steps up to the Aqua Plumbing van parked by the curb.

SARA

Where, Shawn?

SHAWN (O.S.)

We're looking for a white house--

HAYLEY

Every house is white!

Shawn's page of notes CRINKLES.

SHAWN (O.S.)

Garage on the right side. Two steps
up to the front door.

The camera view pans as the two women desperately scan the street.

Number 9601: White house, 2 storeys, no garage.

Number 9607: White house, 1 storey, garage on the right side, 10 steps leading to the front door.

Number 9613: Biege house, 1 storey, garage on the right side, 2 steps leading to the front door.

SARA

Is that it? She might've got
confused--

SHAWN (O.S.)

Keep looking.

Number 9619: White house, 1 storey, no garage.

Number 9625: White house, 1 storey, garage on the right side, 2 steps leading to the front door.

SHAWN (O.S.)
That's it.

Sara rushes toward it.

SARA
Krista?! You here baby? It's Mommy!

Hayley barrels after her.

HAYLEY
Sara!

SARA
I'm here sweetie!!

EXT. HADDON AVENUE — HOUSE — MIDNIGHT (ON WEBCAM)

A nondescript home with a tended garden beyond a rickety gate.

It's dark. A subtle light emanates from a downstairs basement. Then a shadow of movement within.

Sara THUMPS on the front door.

BANG-BANG-BANG

SARA
Let her go!!

Hayley drags her away. They scuffle.

SARA
My baby's in there!!--

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)
Hey!

We pan to an irate NEIGHBOR (70's) standing on his porch armed with a rolling pin. Looks like he could go a few rounds despite his frailty.

HAYLEY
Sorry sir...we're looking for someone.

SHAWN (O.S.)
We don't have time for this, Hayley.

NEIGHBOR
So I heard. Krista?

SARA
Yes! My daughter!

NEIGHBOR
Sweet little thing. Persistent, I'll
give her that.

SARA
You saw her?

NEIGHBOR
Yes, this morning. Used to come by
every day. Knocked on every single
door in the neighborhood, looking for
her dog.

Sara backpedals.

SARA
No...

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)
Benji, if my memory serves.

SARA
We aint got a dog...

HAYLEY
She lost it.

SARA
We've never had one! You think I can
feed three mouths?!

HAYLEY
What's going on, Shawn?

SHAWN (O.S.)
I...I don't know...

Sara yanks the front door ajar with a CLANG - stopped by a
security chain.

She screams into the void beyond it.

SARA
Krista! You here sweety?!

A light blinks on inside a house across the street, alerted
by the commotion.

Then another.

HAYLEY
Sir, I think you'd better call 9 1 1.

NEIGHBOR
Yes, I think I'd better.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Kick it open.

HAYLEY
This asshole's got a gun!

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn is hunched over his desk, face to the monitor.

SHAWN
There's two of you, the neighbors are
right there--

HAYLEY (O.S.)
Where are the cops?!--

SHAWN
Coming!

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

EXT. HADDON AVENUE — HOUSE — MIDNIGHT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Hayley motions for Sara to stand aside.

She kicks the door.

THUMP

It won't budge.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Come on, Hayley...

THUMP-THUMP

HAYLEY
I can't!

SHAWN (O.S.)
There's a little girl in there being
abused.

She tries again, harder.

THUMP

SHAWN (O.S.)
The same way my Dad abused me.

THUMP

SHAWN (O.S.)
The same way that creep abused your
mom--

Hayley SCREAMS, primordial, ear-splitting.

HAYLEY
Aaarrgghh!!

SMASH

The door swings open in a spray of splinters.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Good job.

Sara paces, she wants in - but she's scared.

SARA
Krista?!--

HAYLEY
Stay here!

SHAWN (O.S.)
Tell him to let her go.

INT. HADDON AVENUE - HOUSE - MIDNIGHT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Stepping inside, petrified.

In the darkness, a hallway with a few framed paintings. Half
way down, light beckons through an ajar steel door.

Hayley equips the mace-spray from her key-chain.

Thumbs open the lid.

HAYLEY
Hey freak! There's a shitload of cops
coming!
(pause)
Let her out!

Silence.

Hayley bumps into a tall ceramic vase.

CLINK

SHAWN (O.S.)
Stop! Hold there.

HAYLEY
What is it?

SHAWN (O.S.)
The vase.

It has the same ornate pattern he saw during the video call with Clemens.

Hayley squats.

Collects a used syringe from the floor.

Holds it up to the camera.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Closer.

HAYLEY
(reading)
Propofol, dosage 3 M L.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Krista...what have you done...

Hayley whirls.

A few NEIGHBOR'S cluster in the street, jackets and shoes worn hurriedly over sleepwear.

Sara is with them, rambling, pointing at the house.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn holds his head in his hands, elbows on the desk.

SHAWN
Hayley...the basement.

HAYLEY (O.S.)
No way...

SHAWN
Listen to me, the only thing
dangerous down there is Krista.

HAYLEY (O.S.)
What do you mean?--

SHAWN
Just talk to her!

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

INT. HADDON AVENUE — HOUSE (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Creeping toward the basement door, mace at the ready.

INT. HOUSE — BASEMENT STAIRS (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Taking one step down, cautious.

Wood CREAKS under her feet.

HAYLEY

Krista?

KRISTA (O.S.)

Who are you?!

HAYLEY

I'm with Shawn, we've been looking
for you.

Descending deeper, darker.

Outside, the distant WAIL of Police sirens.

INT. HOUSE — BASEMENT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Concrete walls with scribbled messages in pen, a box of
childrens toys, DVD's are strewn on the floor.

A smashed TV plays on mute. On it, Carmen is blindfolded and
gagged, hanging upside down from a chain in the ceiling.

Hayley gasps.

SHAWN (O.S.)

Don't look, keep moving.

On a shelf, plastic bags containing pieces of skin extracted
from earlobes using a paper hole-punch.

Each labeled with a sticker.

"E, Xu"

"C, Chang"

"S, Willits"

The sound of CHAINS RATTLING.

Hayley passes by an open bathroom door. Inside, we catch a glimpse of a boarded up window on the tiled wall.

Directly ahead, there's a silhouette behind a curtain.

KRISTA (O.S.)
I'm not finished!!

Time slows down.

Hayley SQUEAKS it open with a trembling hand, heart rate accelerating.

Krista is standing next to a bed. Masked Man is sprawled on it, all four limbs chained.

Wearing a balaclava, head strapped to a gynecologists neck brace built into the bed-frame. Mouth duct taped, writhing helplessly.

Beside him, a medical trolley with a blowtorch, hammer and pliers.

Krista presses his own gun into his ear.

SHAWN (O.S.)
(expectant)
Hayley...

HAYLEY
Put it down, Krista.

Hayley takes a step toward her.

KRISTA
Don't come over here!!

She halts, raises her arms in surrender.

HAYLEY
Give me the gun, it's alright. The
Police are coming.

CHAINS RATTLING

KRISTA
He hurt my friend.

HAYLEY
We know, Krista. The Police are going
to arrest him--

KRISTA
At school Carmen was the only one who
played with me.

Her eyes glaze over.

KRISTA (CONT'D)

I thought she was just being nice.
Then I saw, no one would play with
her either.

Hayley takes another step.

KRISTA

But we had each other. And he took
away from me!!

HAYLEY

Carmen's still here, Krista. Put it
down and let's go see her. She's
waiting for you. Your mom too.

Krista's finger is on the trigger now.

CHAINS RATTLING

KRISTA

I saw everything he did, I'm her
voice now.

CHAINS RATTLING-CHAINS RATTLING

KRISTA

You know why they're all dead?

She thrusts the gun into his ear.

KRISTA

(to Masked Man)
Tell them!!

Masked Man hyperventilates, unable to speak, nostrils
flaring.

KRISTA (CONT'D)

(referring to him)
Because mommy was my only love. Now
she's gone, I only have hate to give.

RING-RING

RING-RING

Krista equips a cell phone with her free hand.

KRISTA

What?!

SHAWN (O.S.)
 (lying)
 We're live, Krista. The world is
 watching. Don't--

KRISTA
 Good...let everyone see...

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn stands, phone to his ear, hand shaking.

HAYLEY (O.S.)
 No!!--

SHAWN
 I quit because I killed a man!

He freezes, eyes clenched, waiting for a gunshot.
 Beat.
 None comes.

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
 Was he a bad man?

Opens them with a relieved gasp, fixed on the computer
 screen now.

SHAWN
 He was, Krista. We did a sting at a
 hotel, he ran to the balcony, we
 fought, he dropped his laptop.

He backpedals, presses his back to the wall.
 Slides to the floor in a heap, stares at the ceiling.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
 I saw pictures, Krista.

Then the tears come.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
 (sniffling)
 He'd been hurting kids, little kids.
 I lost it, I threw him over the edge.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Krista relaxes her aim.

SHAWN (O.S.)
 Put it down, ok? Can you do that for
 me? I know that noise inside your
 head is telling you to shoot him. I
 can hear it too. But listen to *me*...

Hayley gestures to her that it's ok.

BACK TO SCENE

Car headlights stream through the window.

Shawn picks himself up off the floor, drying his eyes.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
 ...the Police are going to arrest him
 and he's going to jail for a long,
 long time, ok? He's not going to hurt
 any more girls, ever again. I
 promise.

He peers outside.

A Police car is in the driveway.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

INT. HOUSE – BASEMENT (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

Krista relinquishes the gun, embraces Hayley, sobbing.

HAYLEY
 Go see your mom, she's outside.

Krista nods, scampers up the basement steps.

HAYLEY
 Were you lying...when you said we
 were streaming?

SHAWN (O.S.)
 Yeah...thought it was worth a shot.
 (pause)
 About Stefan--

HAYLEY
 I saw what you did, Shawn. I won't
 tell anyone.

She steps up to Masked Man on the bed.

CHAINS RATTLING

SHAWN (O.S.)
Why didn't you--

HAYLEY
Evil can never be dead enough.

Rips his balaclava off.

It's Pearson.

Hayley recoils.

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn's face, anger and disbelief.

SHAWN
(to Pearson)
You're done, bud.

HAYLEY (ON WEBCAM)
Creep catchers for life.

A BANG-BANG-BANG on the front door.

Shawn leans outside his office.

SHAWN
Who is it?

ROOKIE COP (O.S.)
Police, open the door please.

SHAWN
Just a second!

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

EXT. HADDON AVENUE - HOUSE - SUNRISE (ON WEBCAM)

HAYLEY'S POV:

An empty Police car, both doors swung open, blue and red lights oscillating.

Neighbors congregate, observing inquisitively, chattering amongst themselves.

In the street, Krista, Sara and Hayley are in a tight group hug. Crying, ecstatic.

POLICEMAN 1 (ON RADIO)
 Ten twenty six, detaining suspect...
 sir?

(beat)
 I need an Ambulance at nine six two
 five Haddon Avenue, one adult male,
 severe contusions...

BACK TO SCENE

Shawn reclines, exhausted.

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG

ROOKIE COP (O.S.)
 Open up, Shawn.

Shawn stands wearily, exits the room.

SARA (ON WEBCAM)
 I can't thank you enough, Shawn!

Silence.

HAYLEY (ON WEBCAM)
 (to Shawn)
 Get some rest.

Emptiness.

HAYLEY (ON WEBCAM)
 Shawn?!

EXT. SHAWN'S HOUSE — SUNRISE

A modest home in mid renovation, stacks of wood planks,
 scaffolding, a construction waste skip full of junk.

ROOKIE COP (O.S.)
 Turn around.

Beat.

ROOKIE COP (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Give me your hands.

The CLICK of hand-cuffs.

A landscape of suburban rooftops greet the rising sun.

FADE TO:

INT. PRISON - JAIL CELL - DAY (TWO MONTHS LATER)

Concrete and glistening steel. Daylight creeps through a window grille.

Shawn sits on a bunk wearing an orange jumpsuit.

Serving out a one year sentence having admitted his guilt at trial.

A burden lifted, no more sleepless nights.

His newest CELLMATE sits on the floor, flipping through a day old newspaper. Wiry, volatile, waxing lyrical about societal decline.

CELLMATE

...no shit? I got a girl too...unless she changes her mind...damn gender therapists.

SHAWN

Yeah...pushes me around like she's the boss.

CELLMATE

(still reading)

You love it...

A PRISON GUARD (50's) impassive, no-nonsense, appears through barred steel.

PRISON GUARD

Faulkner, stand up.

He complies.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)

Phone call.

The door unlocks with a reverberating CLANG.

CELLMATE

Again, bro?

(beat)

Yo Shawn, tell your tight-arse lawyer to shove his fee!

Shawn almost smiles, exits.

Shuffling slippers SQUEAK on polished tile.

Some PRISONER'S nod respectfully as he passes by.

He's escorted to a wall phone.

PRISON GUARD
Five minutes.

Shawn nods.

SHAWN
Yes, sir.

Lifts the handset, brings it to his ear.

SHAWN
Listen, I can do installments. Once a month--

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
(indistinct whispering)

SHAWN
Hello?

KRISTA (ON PHONE)
(whispering)
Come on.

CARMEN (ON PHONE)
I drew a picture for you...to say
thank you.

Beat.

SHAWN
Carmen?

CARMEN (ON PHONE)
Mm-hmm.

SHAWN
Send it to me, ok?

CARMEN (ON PHONE)
I will.

FADE OUT.

The ECHO of children's laughter, friends reunited.