

SUBURBAN GOTHIC

written by

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OVER BLACK;

CASEY (V.O.)

I remember New Jersey. I remember the suburbs. I remember the high school I went to and the teacher who became something more. There were those who called our relationship wrong. It's still the only one I've ever known.

Somewhere in the past, a school bell RINGS...

INT. BERINGER FALLS HIGH SCHOOL -- MORNING, 1986

KAT DEMARCO, 51 - a low rent Stevie Nicks in loose flowy clothes and gaudy earrings - breezes down a hallway past springtime decorations. She throws a glance behind her but keeps moving.

KAT DEMARCO

Hurry up, Casey! I don't have time for this!

Her daughter, CASEY, 16, follows after; a morose teenage Goth, fitted with a crooked, sardonic smile. She's pale and skinny with a pony tail, dark raven hair spilling out over even darker eyeliner.

CASEY (V.O.)

I remember girls in jelly bracelets, Calvin Kleins, and shoulder pads and all I wanted to do...

(beat)

Was hit somebody...

When one of these girls passes, bright and peppy, Casey hisses at her like a feral alley cat.

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey and her mother are seated across from ELLIS MCGREGOR, a lean, preternaturally happy teacher only days short of his thirtieth birthday. He is well-dressed, erudite, and has a killer smile.

KAT DEMARCO

Your mother was actually the one that recommended I come and see you. That you're the something or other--

MCGREGOR

The Junior class liaison. Yes, you must be her neighbors on the right with the sycamore.

He grabs a file from off his desk.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

While cutting class and missing assignments is certainly a problem, I have to agree with Principal Hart here - the fights are what we're most concerned about.

KAT DEMARCO

You hear that, Case?

Casey sits there, bored out of her mind, her chapped lips parted like a pissed off fish.

CASEY

I'm not deaf, mother.

MCGREGOR

Then can you tell us why you got into these fights?

Casey smiles at that, remembering them all too well. In quick succession: she gives a line cutter a black eye, kicks a grabby boy in the balls, and stomps a valley girl to the ground. The chick's got spunk.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

What'd the last one do to you?

CASEY

She called me a lezbo.

MCGREGOR

You've got a twisted sense of justice, don't you Casey?

KAT DEMARCO

She's always had impulse control problems.

(off her daughters look)

Well, you have! Case, this could go on your permanent record!

CASEY

Good! Got a pen?!

Kat sighs, fed up.

MCGREGOR  
Principal Hart wants to put her in  
my English 3 class.

KAT DEMARCO  
What's that?

CASEY  
It's remedial English. You know,  
just because I didn't turn in the  
assignments doesn't mean I wasn't  
doing the readings.

MCGREGOR  
Well you've pissed off your other  
teachers why not go a few rounds  
with me?

Ellis levels his gaze at Casey. He doesn't take his eyes off  
her, even when her mother asks:

KAT DEMARCO  
Do you think she could catch up?

MCGREGOR  
The semester's half over. She'd be  
working double shifts on homework  
for weeks.

KAT DEMARCO  
Is it possible, though?

MCGREGOR  
Why don't we ask your daughter?

Casey looks up into the reflective pools of his green eyes.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
How about it, Casey? You willing  
to work for it?

He's her complete opposite. An excited, joy-filled teacher.  
But somewhere in his smile there's the hint of something  
else. CLOSE on his EYES, drawing her in...

CASEY (V.O.)  
When I think back on it... I'm  
almost sure there's something  
there... an eagerness... a look in  
his eyes...  
(beat)  
An invitation.

EXT. BERINGER HIGH -- MORNING

The early bell rings as the public school machine starts to rumble to life. A beat-up Plymouth Valiant pulls into the school parking lot and JON KELLER, 17, gets out looking unshowered.

CASEY (V.O.)

Jon Keller: All-American. Future  
Prom king. Accessory to murder.  
For his entire high school career  
he sported what could only be  
called -- a "rat tail."

With his excess neck hair in full view, Keller yells into the closed passenger window:

KELLER

I need lunch money!

But the car just pulls off. Keller yells after it.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Yeah, fuck you too!

He hitches his disintegrating backpack onto his shoulder and enters the building as a pristine Lincoln Continental glides into one of the reserved teacher spots. Principal BEN HART, 49, and his daughter, REBECCA, 15, both go their separate ways.

BEN HART

Bye, sweetheart!

BECCA

Bye, daddy!

INT. BERINGER HIGH, HALLWAY -- SAME TIME

JANINE CARLISLE, 27, applies a fresh coat of lipstick and puts her cameo away. In the hallway she waits at a corner for someone. When she sees McGregor coming she takes a confident breath and heads down towards him.

She moves swiftly, as if she has somewhere important to be. But when she gets close, she slows down a touch, expectantly. McGregor keeps moving but flashes her a winning smile. It's more than enough for her.

## INT. CARLISLE'S CLASS -- SECOND PERIOD

The class is smack dab in the middle of one of those dated health videos. This one's about venereal diseases and every once in a while a disgusting still photo pops up that makes the kids squeal. A BRITISH NURSE narrates and intermittently appears on-screen.

NURSE (O.S.)

Gonorrhea - not the type of clap you'd like to get, huh? Syphilis? No longer just for sailors on shore leave. As teenagers your bodies are filled with hormones that attract you to the opposite sex. But beware: loving and caring relationships can soon lead to dangerous choices...

The scene shifts to a couple of twenty-somethings dressed as teens, parked at a scenic outlook.

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

Take Tammy, for instance. Her boyfriend Andy just invited her to make-out point. Tammy doesn't know if she's ready to go *all the way* just yet. What should she do?

The video is designed for call-and-response and the kids in class happily oblige. Class clown, KYLE MURPHY, 16, cackles--

KYLE MURPHY

--She should give up that snatch!

The guys in class LAUGH as the Nurse answers for them.

NURSE (O.S.)

Afraid that her boyfriend might stop loving her, Tammy agreed to have sex with him. Too bad for Tammy though, because now she has AIDS--

KYLE MURPHY

*Hah!* Slut!

Casey rolls her eyes and raises her hand. Miss Carlisle waves her up to the front of the class so as not to interrupt the video.

CASEY

Can I go to the bathroom?

Carlisle barely looks up from the *Seventeen* magazine she's reading.

CARLISLE  
Take a pass.

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey's in one of the stalls, sitting on the toilet. She's about to wipe when she looks down into the bowl and sees a few drops of blood.

CASEY  
Shit.

Through the crack in the door, she looks for help. Becca Hart's there fixing her hair at one of the sink mirrors. She's a blonde wearing a jean jacket and denim miniskirt, her eyes permanently on alert for anyone who might wrong her.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Hey, scuse me - can you check and  
see if there are any tampons left?

Becca quits adjusting and looks to see who's talking. All that's visible are a pair of men's cargo pants. She shakes her head pathetically, then walks over to the Tampax dispenser. It appears empty, but she leans over to look up inside it for good measure.

BECCA  
Nope. All out.

CASEY  
Fuck...

BECCA  
That sucks for you.

Casey can hear the smile forming in her voice.

CASEY  
Look, can you be a decent human  
being and just find me one?

BECCA  
Sorry I would, but I'm late for  
class. Good luck, though. I'm sure  
the nurse has some old garter belt  
ones you could use!

Casey hears the door slam.

CASEY  
Fucking bitch!

Nothing left to do, she goes about collecting a wad of toilet paper to pad her underwear with.

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- SOON AFTER

The time before class begins. Becca sits down with the impeccably dressed Asian, VICKI LEE, and DANA GREENBLATT, an overweight girl with an adorably earnest face.

DANA GREENBLATT  
That video was terrible, but at least they didn't make us watch "The Silent Scream" again. I can't stand babies being tortured.

VICKI LEE  
Dana, we've been over this. If you think that baby was really screaming, then we can't be friends anymore.

BECCA  
These tapes are all the same. They're just trying to make us ashamed of sex and I'm sorry, but I am so sick and tired of being called a slut just because I enjoy doin' it. In my opinion, if you haven't had sex by sixteen you should probably kill yourself cause no one will ever sleep with you!

DANA GREENBLATT  
That's from Dynasty.

BECCA  
(caught)  
No, it's not.

VICKI LEE  
No, she's right! It was on last night's show! Oh my God, this makes so much sense - Mike Spallone said that when he went out with you freshmen year that you were a total prude!

BECCA  
Ugh, whatever. I totally rocked his world.



Vicki laughs, cynically. Becca looks around for anything, desperate to change the subject. When the BELL RINGS, she finds it.

Casey enters and grabs a seat in front of the girls. As she does, she grimaces because the toilet paper is beyond uncomfortable. When Becca sees Casey's cargo pants and realizes who she is, she smiles.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Hey! Did you ever get that tampon?

Becca laughs.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Good thing you're wearing dark clothes...

Casey continues ignoring her.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Are you there, God? It's me, Margaret--

CASEY

If you don't shut up I will rub my uterine lining all over your face!

BECCA

*Ewww, lezbo!*

Casey goes to punch her but McGregor quickly grabs her fist.

MCGREGOR

Who would like to start reading in Count of Monte Cristo?

McGregor notices a raised hand from Kyle Murphy in the back.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Kyle Murphy volunteering?!

KYLE MURPHY

Mr. McGregor, why do we need to know this junk?

MCGREGOR

Because Kyle, you might be on Jeopardy one day.

KYLE MURPHY

I'm serious! You can't tell us you read this crap in your spare time.

MCGREGOR

I most certainly do! And don't curse.

KYLE MURPHY

You couldn't name five short stories not on our syllabus!

MCGREGOR

Fine. You're trying to waste time, but I'll bite. My favorites are "The Yellow Wallpaper," "A Rose for Emily," "A&P" by John Updike, oooh my all-time favorite is "Where are you going, where have you been?" It's about a young girl in the fifties who everyone in town tells is beautiful so she's kind of floating through life. Spends her time painting her toenails. This is juxtaposed - vocab word alert! - against the man she meets at the local drive-in. One of his boots is bent as if he has a cloven hoof--

KYLE MURPHY

*She meets the devil?!*

MCGREGOR

She might have met devil. But he's good-looking and well-dressed and she's attracted to him.

McGregor looks around and has to smile a bit. He has their attention.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Now when the girl's family goes off to church on Sunday, she stays home and gets a visit from this guy. He says for her to come down to his car, that if he has to come up to the porch to collect her then he'll be forced to kill her entire family. So now this selfish girl is forced to make the most unselfish decision of her life. She gets in the car and they drive off. And that, is where the story ends...

KYLE MURPHY

Whoa...

It's very still in the room. No one speaks until gangly, bespectacled class spaz, LARRY MURTZ, raises his hand.

LARRY MURTZ

Is this gonna be on the final?

Everyone pelts him with balled-up loose-leaf.

MCGREGOR

Absolutely, Larry - the final of life.

LARRY MURTZ

But, this is English...

McGregor walks over to Becca and places an innocent hand on her shoulder.

MCGREGOR

Murtz, take a lesson from Becca here. She participates but doesn't ask me any annoying questions. She's an ideal student.

LARRY MURTZ

Are you kidding me?! She's not even smart, she's just well-organized--

On 'organized,' his voice cracks and the entire class bursts out laughing.

BECCA

Talk much, fag?!

There's even more howling at this. Larry sits in his seat, mortified. The only one not laughing is Casey. She gets up out of her seat and kisses Larry hard on the lips.

Everyone falls deathly silent. McGregor watches the display, mouth agape. Only Jon Keller seems to smile, looking at Casey in a brand new light...

INT. BERINGER HIGH, CAFETERIA -- LATER THAT DAY

Keller catches up with Casey in the lunch line.

KELLER

That was totally boss what you did in English class.

CASEY  
(trying to ignore him)  
What do you want? It's chicken  
patty day.

KELLER  
Your name's Casey, right? Is it  
spelled K.C. -- like the Sunshine  
Band?

CASEY  
No, just the regular way.

KELLER  
You know, those girls in class?  
Ignore 'em.

CASEY  
I was...

She looks him over and he smiles.

KELLER  
You're new here.

CASEY  
Been here since the start of the  
semester.

KELLER  
Then why haven't I seen you?

CASEY  
I don't know, maybe you should go  
to class more often.

KELLER  
I like you. You're rude.

It's not an insult the way he says it. She begrudgingly  
returns his smile.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
So, you like goth music, huh? How  
can you listen to that stuff? You  
can't dance to it.

CASEY  
Ahhh, but it's great for leaning  
against walls. Who told you I'm a  
goth?

He points to her shirt. It's a Siouxsie and the Banshees tee only moments away from being confiscated. The only thing readable on it is the phrase "conquer more orifices."

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Maybe it's just a t-shirt.

KELLER  
Well, you wear a lot of them.

CASEY  
What do you record what I'm wearing?

He grins and walks off.

KELLER  
Maybe...

INT. GIRL'S LOCKER ROOM -- AFTER SCHOOL

Casey changes for basketball practice with the other girls on the team.

CASEY (V.O.)  
I had played basketball at my old school. When I came to Beringer they seemed happy to have me join their shitty squad. Now we were in the playoffs, the last winter sport still going. The only drawback was the Coach was a bit of a perv...

At the end of the locker room is COACH AL NATHAN'S office. He's got his back turned to the girls, but as the shirts come off he adjusts a TROPHY so that it's nameplate shows their reflection.

EXT. LACROSSE FIELD -- SAME TIME

Becca and Dana find spots in the near-empty stands to watch the boy's lacrosse practice.

DANA GREENBLATT  
I'm sorry about earlier, about the Dynasty thing? I didn't know Vicki would run with it like that...

BECCA  
Yeah well, you know Vicki...

DANA GREENBLATT  
Do you remember back in middle  
school when we'd have sleepovers  
and dance around in our underwear  
to Reo Speedwagon?

Becca laughs, nodding. Then looks around...

BECCA  
You haven't told anybody else about  
that, right?

DANA GREENBLATT  
I would never do that.

BECCA  
Good.

DANA GREENBLATT  
Do you ever miss it?

BECCA  
What, middle school?

DANA GREENBLATT  
I think it was a lot more fun then.  
Everyone just seems so angry now.

VICKI LEE (O.S.)  
What are you boners talkin' about?

Vicki plops herself down next to them.

BECCA  
Nothing.

VICKI LEE  
You're not spying on Jon Keller?

She motions. A couple feet away, Keller leans on a chain  
link fence wordlessly observing his teammates.

DANA GREENBLATT  
Why isn't he in uniform?

VICKI LEE  
Wait, so you didn't hear?

DANA GREENBLATT  
Hear what?

VICKI LEE  
McGregor kicked him off the team.

In the middle of running through a play, McGregor spots Keller at the fence and calls to him.

MCGREGOR

Mr. Keller. Will you be joining us today?

Keller spits on the ground and mumbles to himself.

KELLER

Fuck this...

He walks off as Vicki elbows Becca, playfully.

VICKI LEE

You're not still hopelessly in love with him, are you?

Becca blushes. She replies, a little too quickly.

BECCA

No... I like older men...

VICKI LEE

*Who, McGregor?! In your dreams!*

On the field, McGregor is shirtless, showing his players how to lock up without drawing a penalty. The sun is shining and his golden hair is waving in the wind. In short, he looks like a God.

VICKI LEE (CONT'D)

In my dreams too...

BECCA

I could get him.

VICKI LEE

Yeah, right! And what if he says no?

BECCA

I'll just have my father fire him.

EXT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- DUSK

Casey walks home from school. Their house is one of the smaller ones on the block compared to the split-levels and gablefronts that seem to be popular. Walking up to it, she spots MRS. MCGREGOR, 63, in her garden next door, weeding.

CASEY

Hi, Mrs. McGregor!

The woman raises a hand to block out the setting sun. It looks like she still can't make out who it is, but waves anyway. Casey returns the favor and heads inside.

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- THAT NIGHT

Casey's trying to catch up on homework, but Kat has people over; folks who look like if they don't own a motorcycle themselves, then have at least been on one in the last twenty-four hours. Kat's on a kitchen stool reading a girlfriend's palm.

KAT DEMARCO

You've got some real negative energy. Your chakra's sort of a pulsating brown. You need cheering up -- *how about some dancing?!*

She goes over to the cassettes stacked high atop her dated boombox.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)

Maybe some Country Joe and the Fish? Or a little Bob Seger?!

GROVER, 56, a gruff smoker with bicep tattoos brightens up.

GROVER

Now you're talkin, little lady!

He drains his beer and slides off his chair to dance with Kat. She loves the attention, but as they're gettin' down she notices Casey trying to block them out.

KAT DEMARCO

Come dance with us, Casey!

GROVER

Yeah, come dance with us!

Casey gathers up her books, embarrassed for her mother.

CASEY

No, thanks...

KAT DEMARCO

Booo! You're no fun!

On her way out the door, Casey bumps into her mother's work table which is covered side-to-side with vitamins and supplements.



KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Careful, Case! I've got over forty  
dollars worth of witch hazel there!

But Casey's already out the door.

INT. KAT'S BEDROOM -- LATER

With all of Kat's guests gone for the night, Casey helps her drunken mother to bed. Kat's leaning much of her weight on her daughter, so when they finally get there, Casey let's her flop down onto the mattress. As she lands, Kat mumbles:

KAT DEMARCO  
Fun party...

Casey throws a blanket atop her mother and hits the lights before leaving.

CASEY  
Yeah, right.

INT. BERINGER HIGH, HALLWAY -- THE NEXT MORNING

A time in between periods. Casey grabs a book from her locker and heads to her next class.

After a moment, Keller approaches the locker and, looking around to make sure the coast is clear, slides a LETTER inside the grated bars.

He moves off, satisfied in his stealth. But behind him, McGregor has seen the drop. And as the BELL RINGS, a worried look comes over his face.

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- AFTERNOON

Casey sits across from McGregor listening to her WALKMAN and working on late assignments. McGregor keeps looking up from the papers he's grading, like he wants to say something.

MCGREGOR  
I think you should stay away from  
Jon Keller.

CASEY  
Why's that?

MCGREGOR  
Just... trust me.

CASEY  
Is this something personal between  
you two?

MCGREGOR  
How's that?

CASEY  
Well, the whole school knows you  
benched him. What they don't know  
is why you did it...

MCGREGOR  
He knows what he did.

They sit in silence for a few seconds more.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
You know, normally we don't allow  
students in detention to listen to  
music.

CASEY  
Well, thank you for making an  
exception.

He smiles at her gall and she grins back, boldly.

MCGREGOR  
What are you listening to anyway?

CASEY  
You wouldn't know it.

MCGREGOR  
Try me.

CASEY  
"She's lost control" by Joy  
Division.

MCGREGOR  
I was in college when that came  
out.

CASEY  
Well, you're a dinosaur.

He laughs.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
You kinda look like Ian Curtis...  
but with blonde hair.

MCGREGOR  
Is that a good thing?

CASEY  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
He's hot.

McGregor blushes. It isn't lost on Casey.

MCGREGOR  
What else do you like?

CASEY  
Bauhaus, the Damned, the Violent Femmes, Echo and the Bunnymen--

MCGREGOR  
So you probably like the Cure.

CASEY  
I used to but they're too poppy now.

MCGREGOR  
What's wrong with that? It's like saying I want to hear a song but I don't want it to sound good.

CASEY  
Fine, what's your favorite Cure song?

MCGREGOR  
Love cats.

CASEY  
*Ugh, it would be!*

MCGREGOR  
Well, I have minimal choices! David Lee Roth left Van Halen, the Police are breaking up, Madonna's making albums - it's a bad time for music, man!

CASEY  
More like it's a bad time for "establishment" rock!

MCGREGOR  
This is why I don't talk to teens about music.

(MORE)

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

You guys think that any band who makes a second album is a sell out. Isn't it exhausting hating everything?

CASEY

I don't hate everything, I just hate the things I dislike.

MCGREGOR

You probably don't even know what inspired that music you're so fond of.

CASEY

Why don't you tell me.

MCGREGOR

Gothic literature. Probably gothic art and architecture too...

CASEY

You're telling me there are bubbling lava pits and moody musicians dressed in black in those books?

MCGREGOR

I'm not talking about what it became, but what it started as. The gloominess, the obsession with death... I want you to read something--

CASEY

No way, I have way too much work to do as it is! I don't wanna turn into Missy Franklin, reading Jane Austen while staring out the window and eating my own hair.

McGregor goes to one of the bookshelves and fishes "Jane Eyre" out of it.

MCGREGOR

You read this and I'll take all your past due English assignments and dump them in the trash.

CASEY

You're serious?!

MCGREGOR

Go on, Casey Demarco. What've you got to lose? You might even enjoy it.

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- THAT NIGHT

Casey and fellow basketball player JANE CYMANSKY, 16, are doing a science project together. Casey's sitting on the floor painting her toenails black while Jane's on the couch. They're not so much working as drinking Tab and watching "Alf."

JANE

Is it true you let Larry Murtz finger you in English class?

CASEY

What?! No! What is it with this school?! I just kissed him.

JANE

Ugh, that's even worse.

CASEY

How is that worse?

JANE

I don't know, somehow it is.

Casey holds up the decimated remains of a potato with electrodes in it.

CASEY

You wanna quit for the night?

JANE

You know what else we could do? Marisa Greene said that she overheard Miss Carlisle talkin' to Ms. Barnes about a date she had with Mr. McGregor tonight.

CASEY

So?

JANE

So, doesn't she live like two blocks from here?

They stare at each other for a millisecond before exploding off the couch and running to grab their coats.

EXT. CARLISLE'S HOUSE -- MINUTES LATER

Creeping through the bushes, Casey and Jane try to stay out of the light coming from the house. They whisper to one another.

JANE

You sure this is the place?

CASEY

Yeah, I drove by with my mom once and Carlisle came out for a jog.

They press themselves against the brick-walled side of the house and peer into windows one-by-one. Jane goes first and sticks her entire head above the windowsill.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Be careful!

JANE

There's no one there.

Moving to the next window, they see McGregor and Carlisle sitting on the couch watching T.V.

JANE (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

CASEY

*Keep your voice down!*

JANE

(quieter)

They look so weird... I don't like knowing teachers have real lives.

CASEY

Check out Miss Carlisle. She looks so uncomfortable...

There's considerable space between Carlisle and McGregor. She keeps rubbing her hands together nervously, barely paying attention to what's on T.V.

McGregor seems to realize this. He points out something on the screen as an excuse to put his arm around her and lean in. Suddenly they're kissing and McGregor's got her laid down on the couch.

JANE

Damn! Nice move, McGregor!

CASEY

You don't think they're gonna fuck,  
do you?

The moment she says that, McGregor looks up towards the window. Casey and Jane both dive backwards into the bushes. They take off down the street, the night air whipping their hair; running and laughing, like they'll be sixteen forever.

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

It's late night, early morning. Casey lays in bed under a "Damned" poster with McGregor's copy of Jane Eyre open on her stomach. She's stopped reading only to touch herself. And as she does, she imagines herself somewhere else entirely...

INT. CARLISLE'S LIVING ROOM -- TIMELESS

She's in Carlisle's house, on Carlisle's couch, but the woman herself is not there. Only Casey and McGregor. She smiles when she sees him and kisses him, deeply.

MCGREGOR

Casey, would you do me a favor?

CASEY

Anything...

MCGREGOR

Would you sit on my face?

Her face erupts in happiness as she rips his button-up shirt open with one clawing slash. He runs his tongue down her bare stomach and starts undoing her jeans.

After a while though it becomes clear that the sound of their kissing and heavy breathing isn't the only sound in the room. There's a persistent, annoying clinking sound. It's too much to ignore and soon enough there's no more fantasy--

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Casey is alone again in her boring room with the clickety-clack noise of someone throwing pebbles at her window. She gets out of bed, pissed...

EXT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Casey slides her window open and sticks her head out.

CASEY

What?!

Jon Keller stands there, drunk.

KELLER

It's me. Did I wake you?

CASEY

What's that smell?

KELLER

It's drakkar? You like it?

CASEY

What did you bathe in it?!

KELLER

Come out for a walk, it's a beautiful night.

CASEY

It's three in the morning, Keller.

KELLER

I listened to that album you told me about. The one with the pig on the cover...

CASEY

Yeah? What'd you think?

KELLER

I still can't dance to it.

She laughs.

KELLER (CONT'D)

I was wondering if you felt like going to their concert and standing against a wall the whole time.

CASEY

Let's talk about it tomorrow. I'm going back to bed.

KELLER

Is there someone else?

CASEY

You're my one and only, Keller.



KELLER

You know, a lot of girls would kill  
to be with me.

CASEY

Then go throw rocks at their  
windows.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE -- THE NEXT MORNING

Carlisle's in a huddle with a few of the female staff  
members. She speaks in a hushed, but animated voice.

CARLISLE

We're on the couch and he just goes  
for it.

FELICIA BARNES, 36, an uptight Social Studies teacher seems  
scandalized by this whole conversation.

FELICIA BARNES

Did you... you know?

Carlisle nods, ecstatically.

CARLISLE

Oh my god, you guys - it was so  
hot! I think he's gonna ask me to  
be his girlfriend! We talked and  
talked and he's so well-cultured.  
Did you know he went to Dartmouth?

She's about to say more, but shushes them when McGregor  
enters with Coach Norris in tow. McGregor's either completely  
oblivious to the group of clucking hens to his left or is  
doing a bang-up job of ignoring them. He heads to the coffee  
machine.

COACH NORRIS

I see the chickens have roosted.  
Wasn't the thing last night?

MCGREGOR

What thing? Oh the date, yeah.

COACH NORRIS

Don't play coy - how was it?

MCGREGOR

(shrugs)  
Eh... Seven.

Carlisle turns to make sure she's seen and as McGregor passes the group of ladies on his way out he gives her a charitable wink. They swoon on the spot.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE TEACHER'S LOUNGE -- CONTINUOUS

McGregor's about to make his way to class when he's cornered by Principal Hart.

BEN HART  
(holding up a folder)  
Ellis, I gotta talk to you. This Gothic novel section in your lesson plans--

MCGREGOR  
I know Ben, but I'm facing apathy here. I needed to find something these kids can get excited about.

BEN HART  
And you think it's the Gothic novel?

MCGREGOR  
It's still applicable to the curriculum - still the section on the 'Novel before 1920' - now just more in depth.

BEN HART  
I'm gonna okay it this time, but in the future please get this to me in writing AT LEAST three weeks before term starts.

MCGREGOR  
You got it.

BEN HART  
Now... how's Rebecca doing?

MCGREGOR  
She's fine.

McGregor smiles.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
Very well organized.

BEN HART  
Good cause, you know I worry. What with the ADD and the ADHD--

Kyle Murphy screams by. Principal Hart yells after him.

BEN HART (CONT'D)  
Hey! No running in the halls! You  
could slip and die!

MCGREGOR  
I gotta get to class, but we're  
good?

BEN HART  
All good - have a blessed day!

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- SOON AFTER

Casey wanders into class with the rest of the kids but stops  
at McGregor's desk.

CASEY  
How'd your date go last night?

MCGREGOR  
How did you know about--

He realizes with a grin.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
Do you like peeping through  
windows, Casey?

Casey turns a deep red.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
As I live and breathe, Casey  
Demarco with nothing to say...

CASEY  
I read that book you gave me.

MCGREGOR  
You read it all last night? I'll  
have to test you on your reading  
comprehension sometime. What'd you  
think?

CASEY  
It was stupid.

MCGREGOR  
*Stupid?!*

CASEY

I mean, I liked the castles and the moors, but why were people so fragile back then? You open a window and a stiff breeze gives 'em pneumonia!

MCGREGOR

Well, fine then. Give it back.

McGregor tries to take the book from her, but she pulls it away, quickly.

CASEY

No, I wanna read it again!

He has to smile at that.

MCGREGOR

Can I tell you my favorite part? After Rochester has lost his hand and his sight trying to save his wife from the fire, he's afraid that Jane will be repulsed by him. He asks her, 'Am I hideous, Jane?' And she says--

Casey cuts him off, finishing before he can:

CASEY

Very, sir. You always were, you know.

MCGREGOR

I see we have similar favorite parts...

Casey's about to say something else when the bell rings and the rest of the class enter to find their seats. She sits down as McGregor stands in front of his students.

He's about to start when he sees Casey's newly painted toenails. She's even worn sandals to show them off. He hides a smile as he starts to talk.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

For several reasons, but mostly because I can't read Beowulf again, I thought it right that we start a section on the Gothic novel and its contemporaries--

The class groans, but McGregor talks right through it.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

--we're going to be reading short stories and novels filled with characters both dark and terrible. One drunken character in Charles Dicken's "Bleak House" dies of spontaneous human combustion. Another in "Great Expectations" is an old woman named Miss Havisham who was stood up at the altar and now only wears her wedding dress which is literally rotting on her body. Casey, can you hand these out?

McGregor hands her a stack of books. As she accepts them their fingers touch briefly. Although no one else sees this, it's as if invisible electricity has shot through Casey and she passes the books out with a big smile on her face.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

At the time of its release, "Wuthering Heights" was written about in a national woman's magazine. The journalist said, "How a human being could have attempted such a book without committing suicide before she had finished a dozen chapters is a mystery."

The fun facts and history footnotes aren't getting laughs, but they're getting something more important: the kid's attention.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Now there are two major types of Gothic novels: the Urban Gothic like *Jekyll and Hyde* and Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, which include horrible human creations and creatures like Vampires that had never been seen before. Then there's the Female Gothic where most of the tropes of the Gothic novel were first realized. Stories of men holed up in crumbling castles. Of gloomy forests and dungeons and hidden passageways. There are virginal maidens and scheming tyrants. These are worlds where even your own house could have secrets of its own...

INT. BERINGER HIGH, HALLWAY -- DAY

McGregor walks the halls, a young popular teacher.

CASEY (V.O.)

And it went like that for the next couple weeks. Students who were reluctant to turn in homework now were looking forward to assignments months away on the syllabus. I'm not sure everyone saw what I saw in those books, but for the first time in a long time kids were interested in what they were learning. I kept my promise to McGregor and stopped cutting class.

(beat)

Well, at least his class.

INT. BOY'S BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

McGregor enters to find several FRESHMEN smoking cigarettes. When they see him, they throw their butts out the window--

MCGREGOR

Nuh-uh, give it here!

The only one who hasn't ditched his hands it over to McGregor, who smells it.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

What is this... *tobacco?*!

He shakes his head, almost disappointed.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Go on, get out of here. Go to class. I'm remembering your faces.

After they leave, McGregor takes a drag then flushes the cig down the toilet.

Washing his hands, he notices a rough patch of DISCOLORED SKIN on his arm and turns his wrist over to examine it. It's small, but alarmingly dark. He goes back to washing his hands, looking worried.

INT. TALBOT'S OFFICE -- THE NEXT DAY

McGregor sits in a dressing gown talking to his physician, one DR. TALBOT, 59. They go way back and are laughing about something or other.

MCGREGOR  
Mom thought it was a burglar!

DR. TALBOT  
Oh jeez, you give her my best. So,  
what are we here about?

MCGREGOR  
It's this--

He presents his wrist for inspection.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
--I noticed it yesterday and I  
think it's getting bigger.

The laughter in Dr. Talbot's voice peters out as he sees the rash. He wrinkles his brow, concerned, but trying not to show it.

DR. TALBOT  
I, um... I'm gonna give you a  
referral to a dermatologist friend  
of mine. We went to med school  
together. He's one of the best in  
the state.

MCGREGOR  
But you're my doctor.

DR. TALBOT  
I wouldn't want to venture a guess -  
it's not my field.

MCGREGOR  
But you know what it is, right?  
Don't leave me hanging...

DR. TALBOT  
I don't want you to worry about it,  
okay? Talk to Heather out front,  
she'll give you the details--

He barely gets the sentence out before he's gone from the room. McGregor's left alone -- his mind moving a million miles an hour.

INT. KEPLAR'S OFFICE -- DAYS LATER

DR. AARON KEPLAR, 58, sits at an executive desk across from McGregor. Behind the doctor is a wall filled with ivy league degrees. He picks up where Dr. Talbot's diagnosis ended.

DR. KEPLAR

It's called Lewandowsky-Lutz dysplasia. Also known as Treeman's disease. It's a mutation in the EVER1 or EVER2 genes of chromosome 17. Those who have it display a susceptibility to human papillomaviruses.

McGregor tries to keep his composure.

MCGREGOR

Please, just get to the bad part...

Keplar nods. He knows the gravity of his next words and delivers them neutrally. Sterile.

DR. KEPLAR

You can expect lifelong eruptions of macules, which are flat scaly, wart-like bumps on the face, neck and body along with multiple, skin-borne carcinomas and seborrheic lesions on your hands and extremities. But there are several ways we can if not curb, then control the outbreaks. I want to put you on 1 mg of Acitretin a day for the first 6 months. See how you respond. You can take it orally with...

The Doctor continues explaining the disease, but to McGregor it all sounds like WHITE NOISE as his world quickly and quietly falls to pieces around him.

He stares blindly out the window until one of the Doctor's queries perks his ears:

DR. KEPLAR (CONT'D)

Can you think of any way you might have contracted HPV?

INT. BERINGER HIGH, HALLWAY -- THE NEXT MORNING

McGregor pulls Janine Carlisle out of a conversation she's having with Miss Barnes by giving Felicia a curt--

MCGREGOR

Excuse us.

He walks Janine by the arm several feet away so that they can speak privately.



CARLISLE  
Ellis, what gives? You don't call--

MCGREGOR  
Why didn't you tell me you had HPV?

Carlisle blanches, embarrassed.

CARLISLE  
I mean... they say like seventy  
percent of people have it. I  
figured, why waste a good time?

She places a calming hand on his chest. He brushes it off  
violently.

MCGREGOR  
You figured? *You figured?! Do you*  
have any idea what you've done to  
me?

CARLISLE  
Ellis honey, keep your voice down.  
It's a harmless disease--

MCGREGOR  
You've fucking ruined me. I'm  
ruined, Janine. My life is over.

CARLISLE  
Don't you think you're being a  
little dramatic?

MCGREGOR  
Burn in hell, you wretched cunt!

He storms away as several nearby students laugh in shock.  
But McGregor doesn't care. Nothing matters anymore.

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

McGregor enters and paces madly. He looks like a pit to hell  
has just opened beneath his feet. It's probably why he  
doesn't hear the door open...

BECCA  
Mr. McGregor?

At first, Ellis just continues to stare at his feet. But  
gradually his brain computes that someone else is there. By  
the time he looks up, Becca has her shirt off.

BECCA (CONT'D)  
I was hoping I could get some extra  
credit.

The line is meant to be sexy, but it comes off nervous and  
rehearsed.

MCGREGOR  
*What the fuck?!*

Becca stammers, but just for a second.

BECCA  
You can do whatever you want to me.

MCGREGOR  
Becca, put your shirt on and get  
out.

She takes a couple steps towards him.

BECCA  
I see the way you look at me...

MCGREGOR  
Becca, I said leave--

He hurries over and scoops up her shirt and bra. He forces  
them into her hands.

BECCA  
No, I'm not wrong. You... you want  
me too.

MCGREGOR  
Would you just get dressed?!

He shoves her to the ground and the situation comes  
soberingly into focus. A topless, crying girl on his  
classroom floor...

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
Becca, I'm sorry, I...

She's sobbing by now, dressing as fast as she can.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
Do you need--

BECCA  
Fuck you!

She runs out of the room and slams the door behind her as  
McGregor sinks to the floor, his head in his hands.

INT. HART HOUSE -- SOON AFTER

Becca enters, out of control. The crying hasn't stopped. In fact it's become manic and hysterical. She paces around much like McGregor, unsure of what to do.

Her mother can be faintly heard on a phone call in the next room. She's left soap operas running on the television...

In her distraught state, Becca looks over into the trash can. Focusing on several of her father's empty beer bottles, something seems to fall into place.

INT. MCGREGOR'S CLASSROOM -- THE NEXT AFTERNOON

McGregor gives one of the darker lessons he's ever delivered. He doesn't seem to be all there...

MCGREGOR

...this is never more evident than in "The Masque of the Red Death." Prince Prospero is riding out the Red Death plague safely behind his castle walls, indifferent to those dying outside. During the night he has a masquerade ball which is crashed by a figure disguised as a victim of the plague. Prospero confronts the stranger and dies instantly. When the rest of the court forcibly remove the stranger's mask and robe, they find that there is no solid form underneath. That the figure is the Red Death itself. There was nothing there... just death... and darkness and decay... and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

McGregor finishes talking and stands there silently. The kids are beyond weirded out. It takes a minute, but McGregor finally realizes this.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

You're all dismissed early.

There's a couple "bitchin's!" and "awesome's" as the class files out. Soon all that is left is McGregor and Casey.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I dismissed everybody.

CASEY  
I know. You okay?

He doesn't answer, so she ventures a guess.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Is this about Miss Carlisle?

MCGREGOR  
What makes you say that?

CASEY  
Some of the students heard you  
yelling at her yesterday.

MCGREGOR  
Well, some of the students need to  
mind their fucking business.

CASEY  
Do you want to talk about it?

MCGREGOR  
I doubt I taught these kids  
anything. No one cares...

CASEY  
I care. I don't know if you  
noticed, but I don't like many  
things. And I look forward to your  
class.

She takes a step towards him.

MCGREGOR  
I graded your test. You're not a  
bad student, Casey.

He's on the verge of tears.

CASEY  
You're not a bad teacher, Mr.  
Mcgregor.

Not sure if she's allowed, Casey places a hand on his  
shoulder. He does nothing to stop her. He begins to weep  
and Casey takes him into her arms. He pulls her in close.

When he looks up into her face, they move to kiss one  
another. The only thing that stops them is the end of school  
bell.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
I've got the basketball game. Are  
you going to be alright?

He nods, pulling himself together. They separate. She's about to leave when he speaks.

MCGREGOR  
Casey?

She turns around.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
No matter what happens, don't...

CASEY  
What?

MCGREGOR  
Nevermind.

CASEY  
What's gonna happen?

He just smiles at her.

MCGREGOR  
Good luck.

INT. BERINGER HIGH GYMNASIUM -- AFTERNOON

The Beringer Knights are facing off against the Scotch Plains Raiders. The Knights are down three with a minute left to play. On the court, Jane is dragging so Coach Norris subs her out.

COACH NORRIS  
Casey, you're in.

Casey's distracted from her talk with McGregor, but takes her warm-up pants off and heads in to replace Jane.

Play resumes as Coach Norris yells instructions. Casey passes to an open teammate and sets a block on the girl defending her. Wide open, the Knights score a lay-up.

The crowd's into it now, including the boy's team who are waiting for their game to start. The Raiders start with the ball and with twenty-four seconds left look to run out the clock.

Coach Norris calls for a steal and that's exactly what Casey does.

She feints going one way and slaps the ball free, mid-dribble. Catching up with it, she regains control and fires off a quick two-point jumper. It's not a clean shot, but it finally settles into the net.

It's enough drama to send the Beringer fans flooding onto the court to lift Casey onto their shoulders. She hates every second of it, but there's really nothing she can do about it.

As she's lifted high atop the crowd, she's privy to something no one else is: the gym doors are open and she can see down the hallway. Two POLICE OFFICERS are escorting McGregor out of the building. He's handcuffed and fighting it.

Casey taps to be let down and pushes through the crowd, who go on celebrating the win without her.

INT. BERINGER HIGH, HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Casey exits just in time to see the cops wrench Ellis out the front door. She stares at the spot where he just stood as the doors slam shut, firmly ending a chapter in her life.

CASEY (V.O.)

And just like that, he was gone.  
It would become clear in the coming weeks what at the time we were in the dark about. Becca Hart's lies about Mr. McGregor would set the entire town against him. Most people never saw him again.

INT. BERINGER HIGH, CLASSROOM -- WEEKS LATER

Casey sits bored in class with a new English teacher. The spark is gone...

CASEY (V.O.)

For a long time, McGregor and what he became was all anybody could talk about. But eventually, other scandals took their place and there was nothing left to do... but move on.

FADE TO BLACK.

FIVE YEARS LATER

FADE IN:

INT. FOODTOWN GROCERY STORE -- DAY, 1991

Casey sits on a milk crate, wearing a hairnet and an apron and smoking a cigarette. She no longer wears eye make-up and she's let her hair grow wild and long, giving way to dozens of curls.

She's reading from a paperback copy of "The Picture of Dorian Gray," quite absorbed, when EDUARDO RUIS, her manager, leans out the refrigerated plastic flaps to tell her:

MR. RUIS

Breaks over, get out here.

Casey rubs her cig out on the bottom of her shoe and pockets it for later. She lays her book down where she was sitting and goes to take a customer.

INT. FOODTOWN, DELI COUNTER -- CONTINUOUS

Pulling on plastic gloves, she looks up only to be surprised at who's in front of her.

KELLER

Casey Demarco.

CASEY

Jon Keller! Holy shit!

Keller's grown up a bit. He no longer has the rat tail. In it's place is a thick mullet.

KELLER

Long time.

CASEY

How you been? You finished up over in Newark, right?

KELLER

For a while, yeah. I actually got into a little trouble...

He rubs his neck, embarrassed.

CASEY

The D.U.I. I heard...

KELLER  
Not fun. But I finally graduated  
at County. You?

CASEY  
Oh, college wasn't for me.

KELLER  
Then what do you do with yourself  
these days?

She adjusts her hairnet.

CASEY  
You're lookin' at it. Glamorous,  
huh?

KELLER  
Totally.

CASEY  
So, what can I get for you?

KELLER  
My mom's got me shopping for her.  
Do you know where I can get this?

He shows her his shopping list.

CASEY  
That's pre-sliced. You can find it  
near the ground beef. Aisle nine.

KELLER  
Thanks...

He walks away, shaking his head and smiling.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
Wow, small world...

INT. THE SCULLERY TAVERN -- AFTERNOON

Ben Hart sits in the town's official dive bar, quite drunk. He's thirty pounds heavier than when we last saw him and balder than ever. As Keller returns with groceries for his mother (who owns the place), Ben Hart lights up.

BEN HART  
There he is! Best mid-forward this  
state's ever seen!



KELLER  
Thank you, sir.

BEN HART  
What're you doing now?

KELLER  
I'm over at the academy training to  
be a firefighter.

BEN HART  
Pit-stop, huh?

He LAUGHS and claps the kid on the back, maybe a little too  
hard. The bartender places Ben's drink on the bar.

BARTENDER  
Here's your beer.

Ben looks at the long-neck beer in front of him and all humor  
leaves his face. There's a simmering rage under the surface.

BEN HART  
I didn't order this.

BARTENDER  
You asked for a Coors.

BEN HART  
I asked for it in a glass.

BARTENDER  
I'm sorry we're out of glasses,  
we're doing a load but it's kind of  
busy right now.

BEN HART  
Then I'll wait.

He hurls the bottle to the ground. It shatters.

GLORIA (O.S.)  
*Hey!*

A violent, five-foot nothing Spanish woman rounds the bar and  
hurries to Ben's side. This is GLORIA KELLER-MUNOZ. She is  
single, fifty-one years old, and Jon's mother.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
You got a problem with the service,  
Ben?

BEN HART  
(indignant)  
I didn't order that.

GLORIA  
(to Bartender)  
What'd you give him.

BARTENDER  
A Coors.

BEN HART  
In a bottle...

Gloria sighs.

GLORIA  
Jesus. I'm Sorry, Ben. Next  
rounds on me. In a glass.

Ben smiles victoriously as the Bartender goes off to clean a glass. But the joy is short-lived as Gloria leans in.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
If you ever break anything in my  
bar again I will break your fucking  
legs. You hear me?

He nods, terrified of the woman. Gloria heads into the back and runs into Jon who's just finished putting the groceries away.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
Where have you been the past couple  
nights?

KELLER  
I been around.

GLORIA  
You've been around - I know where  
you've been. You've been fuckin'  
around up in Newark with that  
asshole cousin of yours.

KELLER  
I've been down at the local. If I  
can get on the union, that's  
medical and dental.

GLORIA

Listen to you talkin' about unions.  
I sent you to live with my sister  
so that you'd have a second shot at  
a sports scholarship. Not so you'd  
turn into your father. Do I have to  
tell you where you were a couple  
years ago?

KELLER

You don't have to remind me of  
anything.

GLORIA

Johnny, you're a spic in a  
lilywhite town. You can play  
pretend if you want, but I didn't  
fight to stay here so that you  
could fuck around with that  
garbage. Get that boy, that Murphy,  
to get you a job.

KELLER

I don't fit in with them.

GLORIA

Oh, because you fit in so well in  
Newark?!

EXT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- THAT NIGHT

Casey walks home alone, carrying a grocery bag. As she  
fumbles for her house keys, she doesn't know she's being  
watched.

Across the way in a second floor window of Mrs. McGregor's  
house, a deformed hand parts the blinds and an unseen face  
peers out.

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Casey crosses from the front door to the kitchen and puts her  
bags down. She calls out:

CASEY

Ma?! You home? I got cold cuts.

Kat Demarco enters the room. She's still the same burned-out  
hippie, just now with a mop of graying hair atop her head.

KAT DEMARCO

Oh, great! How was work?

CASEY

Eh. You?

KAT DEMARCO

Good! Doreen's gone, so they say I can take over her territories. It's a big step up for me.

CASEY

That's great, mom...

KAT DEMARCO

Oh my god, you'll never believe what I just heard! Mrs. McGregor from next door?

CASEY

Yeah?

KAT DEMARCO

She died.

CASEY

*Jesus* - how?!

KAT DEMARCO

Heart attack, I think. She was old. That son of hers couldn't have helped.

Kat walks over to the fridge, already forgetting what they were talking about.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)

What do you want for dinner?

But Casey's too lost in thought to answer.

INT. FLORIO HOUSE, BATHROOM -- LATER

Casey is babysitting. She's giving a bath to ANDY and RONNIE, two five year olds who won't sit still.

RONNIE

Casey, do you know the Treeman? He lives down the street!

Casey nods. She's trying to shampoo both their heads at once and they're not making it easy.

CASEY

I do. Believe it or not, he used to be my teacher.

ANDY

*What?! No!*

The boys slap the water. This is the funniest thing they've ever heard.

CASEY

I'm serious! He was!

RONNIE

Michael Blotkin says that if you lose your bouncy ball in his yard you can't get it back.

CASEY

Why not?

RONNIE

Because if he catches you he puts you in a sack then puts you in a pie and eats you.

CASEY

That's baloney! Lean your heads back...

She takes a bucket and washes the shampoo out of their hair. They shake like dogs as Casey screams:

CASEY (CONT'D)

*No!!!*

INT. ANDY AND RONNIE'S ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey tucks the boys into their twin beds. Pulling the sheets up to Andy's neck, he whispers to her:

ANDY

Can I tell you a secret?

CASEY

What is it?

She gives him her ear.

ANDY

The Treeman eats boys penises and girls 'jinas!

A look of mock shock crosses Casey's face.

CASEY

No, not jinas!

She walks to the door.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
You guys sleep tight.

She's about to shut out the lights when they both yell:

ANDY AND RONNIE  
*Night light!*

CASEY  
Okay, okay!

Kneeling down, she plugs in a FLUORESCENT CLOWN and closes the door.

EXT. FLORIO HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Andy and Ronnie's mother pays Casey at the door, then waves from the doorway as she walks down the driveway.

Alone now, Casey ambles along the dark, uninviting street. Soon her house comes into view, followed by Mrs. McGregor's.

CASEY (V.O.)  
When I think of him, it's always  
locked up in that mansion, hidden  
away from the world...

She takes in the Gothic architecture of the house. The aged crown molding and the dirty lancet windows like those of some long forgotten church. The roof runs off into spires that seem to go nowhere...

The apex of a dome tapers off into a finial of a crow that creaks and moans in the night air. Casey shudders and hurries up her front walk.

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Casey enters to hear her phone ringing. She drops her babysitting money on the dresser and picks up the receiver.

CASEY  
Hello?

KELLER  
Casey? This is Jon... Keller.

CASEY  
Oh... hey.

KELLER

I hope you don't mind, I got your  
number from Beth Davies.

CASEY

I haven't heard that name in  
forever. How's she doing?

KELLER

Not good. She's got shingles.

CASEY

That sucks...

Casey grabs the phone base and walks over to her window to  
peer out into the darkness. She looks at nothing at first,  
then notices a person standing in her neighbor's backyard  
throwing things into a trash can fire.

CASEY (CONT'D)

There's someone in Mrs. McGregor's  
backyard...

KELLER

So?

CASEY

So, she died last week.

Casey tries to get a closer look but all she can see is a man  
in a hoodie with his back to her. Every couple of seconds he  
drops something new into the fire. Gradually, she notices  
that Keller is still speaking.

KELLER

So, do you want to?

CASEY

Do I want to what?

KELLER

Go out sometime.

Casey's distracted.

CASEY

Fine... Keller lemme call you back.

She hangs up on him and heads downstairs.

EXT. DEMARCO HOUSE, BACKYARD -- MOMENTS LATER

Casey exits as quietly as can be, but the groan of her screen door is too loud and sends whoever was burning things in Mrs. McGregor's yard hurrying back towards her house. Casey calls over the hedgerow:

CASEY  
Wait! Please!

The figure stops in the shadows of Mrs. McGregor's back porch; only it's vague shape visible, no features.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Mr. McGregor?

The figure turns ever so slightly, as if in acknowledgement.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
You probably don't remember me...  
Casey Demarco?

The shadowy form says nothing and after a moment, Casey continues.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
I was sorry to hear about your  
mother.

He lets his head hang as if he no longer has the strength to hold it up.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
It's a shitty thing that happened  
to you.

Unable to listen anymore, the man begins to enter the house through the back door.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset  
you--

But he's already inside by then and closing the door. Casey curses herself.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Shit.

She turns back to her own house and says to no one but herself:

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Goodnight, Mr. McGregor.



And just before McGregor's door closes, he whispers back:

MCGREGOR  
Goodnight, Casey.

Casey turns, but McGregor's door is already shut. She smiles a little, then heads inside.

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey enters and shuts the door behind her. She leans against it for a moment to gather her thoughts, then crosses to her closet.

Opening the doors, she balances on her toes to reach for a SHOEBOX on the highest shelf. Pulling it down, she sits on the carpet and goes through the contents. It's filled with newspaper CLIPPINGS all about Mr. McGregor.

INT. BERINGER POLICE STATION -- THE NEXT AFTERNOON

Ben Hart walks through the station house like he's been there before. Passing the complainants desk, he winds his way through the clitter-clank of typewritten police reports towards the desk of SGT. MAX DAROTA's.

BEN HART  
You wanted to see me?

SGT. DAROTA  
Look, I know you have a lot of time  
on your hands now that you're  
retired, but this--

He holds up a FLYER with McGregor's address on it, alerting people to the fact that he's a pedophile.

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)  
You can't do this.

BEN HART  
The hell I can't.

SGT. DAROTA  
I'm serious. He was never  
convicted. And as much as you and  
I might not like it, he's still  
entitled to his privacy.

BEN HART  
He was seen in town, did you know  
that?

SGT. DAROTA  
It's not against the law.

BEN HART  
Just whose side are you on?

SGT. DAROTA  
Becca's.

BEN HART  
Doesn't feel that way. Ever since she came home from college I can't go anywhere for more than a couple hours at a time. She gets separation anxiety. This man has ruined her life. Our life.

SGT. DAROTA  
You blame him for Karen's leaving?

BEN HART  
I do.

SGT. DAROTA  
What do you want me to do, Ben?

BEN HART  
All I ask is that if you get a call where someone's putting him through the ringer, then you just take your time getting there.

INT. BEN'S CAR -- SOON AFTER

Ben Hart drives Becca home from therapy.

BEN HART  
How was it today?

BECCA  
The same. She gave me a new prescription.

BEN HART  
You're not, I don't know... getting something out of it?

BECCA  
I guess...

BEN HART

I just want to see you happy. Come on, it's Friday - there has to be a party or something you want to go to.

She shrugs.

BEN HART (CONT'D)

You don't want to hang out with your boring old dad, do you?

He smiles, but she doesn't return it.

BECCA

You haven't exactly been going out yourself much either.

Ben bristles, the spotlight turned back onto him.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You don't even go to church anymore...

Ben sighs. He stares straight ahead and keeps driving.

BEN HART

Church doesn't hold anything for me anymore, sweetheart.

BECCA

What does Uncle Max say?

Ben grips the wheel tighter.

BEN HART

He says I should find a hobby.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD TERRACE -- EVENING

Casey and Keller walk in no particular hurry down a suburban street.

KELLER

Your mom likes taking pictures.

CASEY

Please ignore her. She thinks every time I leave the house with a boy that it's prom or something.

KELLER

I wish my mom was like that.

CASEY

No you don't. Mine only takes an interest in me when she's single. I wouldn't worry about her though, she's never alone for long...

They've arrived at a house party and enter without knocking.

INT. SOMEBODY'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Casey takes one step into the party when her view is suddenly blocked by a head of bushy, brown hair. Jane is standing in front of her.

They scream at the same time, so incredibly joyous to see one another. They hug and hop around because in the five years since we've seen them together they've become best friends.

CASEY

*What are you doing here?! You didn't tell me you were back!*

JANE

I just got in!

She pulls Casey closer and whispers:

JANE (CONT'D)

What didn't you tell me you were fucking Jon Keller?

CASEY

Shush, don't encourage him!

INT. HOUSE PARTY -- SOON AFTER

Casey and Jane find themselves in a circle of yuppies, updating each other on their lives since college ended. MATT MONROE, a blue blood, recites almost by rote:

MATT MONROE

Graduated early from Northwestern in the fall. B.A. in finance. Not too shabby. Goldman took one look at my letter of recommendation and started me at 95k a year. Casey, what do you do?

Casey smiles warmly, so happy to answer this.

CASEY  
I work at Foodtown. The deli  
counter.  
(beat)  
If you'll excuse me...

She leaves the group to go find Keller. He's over by the stereo talking to a short, Mexican kid with a permanently angry face. Just as Casey arrives at their side, Keller accepts a rolled up baggie from him in a hand-off.

KELLER  
Casey! Didn't see you there...

Keller slips the bag into his jean pocket.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
This is my cousin, Vivo.

VIVO REAL, 23, looks Casey over lustfully, ribbing his cousin.

VIVO REAL  
*Yo diría su mierda en el culo...*

Keller swats him and they laugh at their private joke.

VIVO REAL (CONT'D)  
Hey Casey, you want a beer?

CASEY  
Two please.

KELLER  
Look how thoughtful she is...

CASEY  
Oh, did you want one too?

Keller laughs as Kyle Murphy hurries up to him.

KYLE MURPHY  
Did you get the thing?

KELLER  
*Dude, shut up!*

Keller hits him in the arm.

KYLE MURPHY  
Owww!

As he rubs what's sure to be a terrible bruise, Kyle trails off.

KYLE MURPHY (CONT'D)  
Is that... Becca Hart?!

Casey turns to see that Becca Hart has indeed just walked into the party. She stands awkwardly by the open back door as dozens of eyes take her in.

KYLE MURPHY (CONT'D)  
This has to be the first one of  
these she's come to since--

KELLER  
--what McGregor did to her with  
that beer bottle--

As they watch her, Becca spots salvation in a familiar face and hurries over to talk to Vicki Lee.

VICKI LEE  
Oh my god, Becca?! I haven't seen  
you in forever...

They hug but there's nothing there. In fact, Vicki looks quite put upon just talking to Becca.

VICKI LEE (CONT'D)  
So, you graduated?

BECCA  
Yeah, in the spring.

VICKI LEE  
But I ran into your dad, he said  
you took some time off--

BECCA  
No, no, shhhhh--

Becca looks around, embarrassed, and quiets her.

BECCA (CONT'D)  
He was being stupid.

VICKI LEE  
I don't understand. Did you  
graduate or not?

BECCA  
Can we please just talk about  
something else.

VICKI LEE  
Okay...

Vicki frowns, hating this. She tries to smile and share her good news.

VICKI LEE (CONT'D)  
Well, I guess it's obvious what  
I've been up to.

BECCA  
Not really.

VICKI LEE  
You kidding? I thought it was  
obvious. I'm like four months  
pregnant.

BECCA  
What?! *Who's the father?!*

VICKI LEE  
No Becca, calm down - it's a good  
thing! It's Kyle Murphy.

BECCA  
You and Kyle? Wow... congrats.

VICKI LEE  
Yeah...

Vicki stares at her. Neither of them can think of anything more to say, so Becca mumbles:

BECCA  
I'm gonna go get something to  
drink...

She moves off. The party was a bad idea. She looks for something, anything to get her confidence back. That's when she sees Casey across the room talking with Jane. She hurries over to them, arms crossed, as Keller and Vivo walk off to join the line at the keg.

BECCA (CONT'D)  
Who invited you?

CASEY  
I invited myself.

BECCA  
You should probably leave then,  
don't you think?

CASEY  
I have as much right to be here as  
you do.

BECCA

Let's just see about that - how  
bout we ask our host?

She grabs the person whose house this is. Larry Murtz, the nerdy, squeaky voiced kid from high school that Casey kissed stops to talk. He's aged quite a bit and is now tall and handsome with a smooth jazz voice.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Larry sweetheart, Casey here wasn't  
invited to the party. What would  
you like me to do?

He looks Casey up and down and arches an eyebrow, liking what he sees.

LARRY MURTZ

She stays.

He winks at her and walks on. A big, blooming smile spreads across Casey's face.

CASEY

I think I just came a little.

She and Jane laugh uproariously as Becca stalks away, pissed.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD TERRACE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Keller walks Casey home from the party.

KELLER

So that was fun.

CASEY

No, it wasn't!

He laughs.

KELLER

You're right. Who were those people  
we went to high school with?!

CASEY

Hey, Jane's alright.

KELLER

She seemed very concerned with us  
making out...

CASEY

Yeah, she's not exactly subtle.



KELLER  
I'd be lying if I said I wasn't  
thinking about it. You?

CASEY  
No, I don't make out with boring  
people.

KELLER  
Oh, I'm boring?

CASEY  
Well, I suppose you're attractive  
in a maybe I'll make out with him  
if I have a spare fifteen minutes  
to kill sort of way.

KELLER  
Your mom home?

CASEY  
She might be...

Casey shrugs her shoulders and heads up her driveway.

KELLER  
I thought you said she works  
nights?

She gives him a tiny smirk over her shoulder. Keller grins  
and hurries after her.

EXT. DEMARCO HOUSE, BACK PORCH -- MINUTES LATER

Casey and Keller are making out on her porch swing. He's  
being aggressive about it, sucking on her neck and trying to  
lay her down.

CASEY  
--Keller.

He doesn't answer, just climbs on top of her.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
--Keller, ease up...

He reaches down her jeans.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Hey, cool it--

KELLER

Come on Casey, you knew what this was--

CASEY

Stop it! Get off me! What are you on?!

KELLER

Why does your type always play so goddamn hard to get?!

He starts to push up her t-shirt when he's yanked violently off of her.

KELLER (CONT'D)

What the--

Keller's pulled upright to his feet and comes face-to-face with a terrible sight. McGregor pushes him down the porch steps.

Keller crawls backwards until he can get up to run. He books it down the driveway and up the street.

Casey watches him go, then turns back to McGregor, but he's already crossed into his own yard and made his way into the house.

Casey stands up, breathing heavily, unsure of what to do. She puts herself back together, then walks down the porch stairs.

She knows she probably shouldn't, but she goes into McGregor's yard and walks up the back steps to his door. She knocks and when there's no answer, she enters.

INT. MCGREGOR'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Casey peeks her head inside.

CASEY

Hello? Mr. McGregor?

There's no answer and her voice echoes horribly throughout the house. She steps inside and shuts the door behind her. She tries again.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Hello?!

Still nothing. As she walks down a long corridor into the dining room, she notices that every mirror and reflective surface in the house has been shattered, the glass left on the ground to collect dust.

No one has remodeled here for a very long time. The molting wallpaper is from the fifties and the crumbling crown molding illustrates a lack of care.

As she walks nervously down the hallway, she stares at the intricate ceiling bosses, carved with wild animals and grotesque human faces.

The architecture standard, the Green Man, is there. Branches and vines flow from his open mouth into the surrounding ceiling panels.

Casey runs her hands over the cast-iron gothic tracery of the staircase railing and is startled when McGregor finally appears. He steps into the light and as Casey sees him for the first time, she can't help but gasp.

CASEY (CONT'D)

*My God...*

McGregor stands there, staring at her. He wears a sweatshirt torn at the neck and wrists to make way for his disease...

MCGREGOR

Well Casey...

(beat)

Am I hideous?

She knows what she's supposed to say. Still, it's hard...

CASEY

Very, sir. You always were you know.

They stand in silence for a tense moment.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I should go...

MCGREGOR

Please don't. You have no idea how lonely it is having no one to talk to.

CASEY

Okay... I'll stay...

MCGREGOR

It's strange. I haven't been back here in years. Now it's all that I know. My mother went broke paying for lawyers. Doesn't really leave much in the way of renovations.

When Casey doesn't speak he takes a tentative step towards her.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

And you? What happened to the dark horse of Beringer High? I'd have thought you'd be halfway to Oxford by now.

CASEY

Maybe I lost my way without my favorite teacher.

MCGREGOR

Yeah, you need a man like I need a hole in the head.

He laughs.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Maybe a hole would be an improvement.

CASEY

You're not used to being ugly. Some of us are more used to it than others...

MCGREGOR

You were never ugly.

The words mean more than he'll ever know...

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I hope you come again. That I haven't scared you off. I leave the back door open.

CASEY

Aren't you afraid of burglars?

MCGREGOR

Please. I'd welcome the company.

She smiles a little at that, unsure if she's willing to laugh just yet.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

When you see me, don't be  
frightened. I don't think I could  
handle that.

CASEY

Okay, Mr. McGregor.

MCGREGOR

Casey?

CASEY

Yeah?

MCGREGOR

Call me Ellis.

INT. FOODTOWN -- THE NEXT MORNING

Casey's stocking shelves as Keller approaches. When she sees  
him she takes a step backwards.

CASEY

What do you want?!

He holds his hands up.

KELLER

I just want to apologize.

CASEY

Well, you've done that. You can go  
now.

KELLER

I'm just glad you're okay.

CASEY

And I'm just glad that someone was  
there to pull you off me.

KELLER

Casey, that was McGregor.

CASEY

So?

KELLER

So, what happened after I left?

CASEY

Don't tell me you believe those  
stupid rumors!

KELLER

No one would make something like  
that up!

CASEY

Would you just leave, Keller?!

She realizes she's yelling and continues, quieter:

CASEY (CONT'D)

I'm working.

KELLER

Last night, I wasn't trying to--

CASEY

--To what? Go ahead. Tell me last  
night didn't really happen--

KELLER

--It just... it got away from me.

CASEY

Yeah, a lot of things got away from  
you last night.

She stands there, arms crossed, saying no more.

KELLER

Fine. I'll go.

He shoves his hands into his pockets and leaves.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD TERRACE -- AFTERNOON

Casey walks home alone with groceries. As McGregor's house  
comes into view she can't help but stare at it. An afternoon  
mist has settled around the property...

CASEY (V.O.)

I don't know what I was expecting  
going over there. But in all those  
years, no boy had held his spot in  
my heart. And now, here he was  
back in my life - an animal, a wild  
man - and fuck if it didn't excite  
me. I told myself I should cringe,  
should pull away... but every time  
I thought of him, I just wanted to  
look closer...

Approaching her house, she makes a decision -- placing the grocery bags on the front porch, she heads over to McGregor's.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Casey knocks, but there's no answer. She enters without an invitation and walks through rooms until she gets to the foyer, where the front door and grand staircase are.

CASEY

Hello? Mr. McGregor... Ellis?

She takes the stairs two at a time until she's on the second floor.

CASEY (CONT'D)

It's Casey...

But she's too quiet, almost like she's banking on no one hearing her. Most of the doors there are open. She gives them short shrift, peaking quickly inside each of them, then goes to the only closed door.

She opens it quietly and leans inside. It's McGregor's bedroom and across the room is his bathroom door, barely open. She's about to leave when she sees him. He's just gotten out of the shower and is toweling off. His back is to her and Casey watches breathlessly as she sees the extent of his disease.

The bark-like lesions cover most of his back and buttocks, tapering off as they run down his legs. He's still in the same shape he was five years ago and despite all of the physical short-comings there's something not altogether unpleasant about him.

Casey lets her eyes travel over his naked form until she realizes he's coming back into the bedroom. She quietly shuts the door and tiptoes back downstairs to the kitchen.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

She's about to head back to her house when something gives her pause. There's a table filled with McGregor's meds, dozens of prescription pill bottles. She picks one up trying to decipher the name.

MCGREGOR

That ones Cimetidine.

Casey whirls around, frightened. McGregor stands there, dressed in sweats, a towel around his neck for drying his hair.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

They designed it for people with ulcers, but found it had dermatological benefits. Doesn't seem to work on me though...

CASEY

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to--

MCGREGOR

The one next to it is Soriatane. It's approved for psoriasis. You know what it's side effects are?

Casey answers, unsure if he's mad or not.

CASEY

No?

MCGREGOR

Red, flaky skin, chapped lips, and cystic acne. I don't know how a man could get any luckier.

CASEY

I knocked. There was no answer.

MCGREGOR

You're the first person I've seen since she died. You don't have to apologize.

She nods.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I wasn't a good man before this. But this...

He points to his face.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

All this... it's poisoning everything about me. I seem to be guilty of some crime I don't remember committing. When it first started happening and the allegations were coming out, I knew there'd be some trepidation, but I had hoped that some of my friends would have stuck around.



CASEY

What about Coach Norris?

MCGREGOR

Alan, like everybody else... just sort of fell off... When things got really bad all I wanted was to be left alone. Now? I'd give anything to have someone yell at me just as long as it meant they were in the same room.

Casey has tears in her eyes. She takes his face in her hands, but McGregor stops her.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CASEY

I feel bad.

MCGREGOR

Normal girls shouldn't...

CASEY

Well, I never was a normal girl.

She tries to kiss him. He grabs her by the wrist, harder than expected.

MCGREGOR

Why are you here?!

CASEY

I'm your friend--

MCGREGOR

Is this a trap?!

CASEY

What?! Ellis, no--

MCGREGOR

What more do you people want?!  
Get out of my house! Leave me alone!

CASEY

Don't be like that--

MCGREGOR

*Get out! Get out! Get out!*

He's screaming by now and to get away from it, Casey is forced to flee out the back door towards her own house.

INT. THE SCULLERY TAVERN -- NIGHT

Ben Hart stumbles up to a pay phone and reaches into his pocket for change. He finally digs out a stray quarter and dials a familiar number.

BEN HART

Karen... no... would you just listen? Because I think you owe me at least that... Who's coming over?... *What d'you mean 'none of my business?!' Hello? Hello?!*

He stares at the receiver, drunkenly stupefied, then slams it into it's cradle. He stumbles back to the bar, leaning on it for support. When he gets there, the bartender announces last call and Ben groans.

Turning his head, he sees a BLONDE thirty-something with too much make-up on. He gets up and stumbles a bit, realizing he's drunker than he thought. He sidles up to her.

BEN HART (CONT'D)

What's your name?

BLONDE

Not interested.

BEN HART

Is that dutch?

She rolls her eyes, finishes her drink and leaves. As she does, Kat Demarco, sitting several seats down the bar, comes into focus. She laughs, softly.

KAT DEMARCO

Too young for you?

BEN HART

No, she's just bringing the car around.

He smiles. Maybe the night's not over after all...

INT. BEN'S CAR -- MINUTES LATER

In the near empty parking lot, Ben and Kat screw loudly in the driver's seat.

There's nothing romantic about it, just two old people mashing their sweaty fat together. They're going at it so hard it's a wonder they don't stroke out.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD TERRACE -- SOON AFTER

Ben turns down Kat's street and slows as he nears McGregor's.

BEN HART  
You live here?

She's nestled up in the passenger seat, practically purring.

KAT DEMARCO  
Yes, indeed-y...

Ben pulls over and looks through the dark of the windshield at the Gothic revival. Kat stares at him expectantly, like they're on a real date.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Well, I had fun tonight...

BEN HART  
What?

Hart's distracted by the view.

BEN HART (CONT'D)  
Oh yeah... we should do it again sometime.

He says the words but there's nothing behind them.

KAT DEMARCO  
You in the book?

BEN HART  
Yeah, sure...

But he's not even listening to her anymore.

INT. KAT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Casey sits on the bed as her mother tries on clothes. There's a bounce in Kat's step as she picks out a drape-like dress and shawl.

KAT DEMARCO  
Oooh Case, it was amazing! He's taking me to dinner Friday before work.

(MORE)

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)

I told him I could wait until my day off, but he wouldn't hear of it. He's insatiable!

CASEY

Ugh, barf! Do you hear yourself when you talk?

KAT DEMARCO

Casey please, can I have this one little crumb of happiness?!

CASEY

Whatever...

She flips aimlessly through one of her mother's PEOPLE MAGAZINES, not liking what she sees.

CASEY (CONT'D)

What are you and Mr. Fantastic doing for your date?

KAT DEMARCO

Bar-b-q!

CASEY

You're vegetarian!

KAT DEMARCO

Yeah, but he doesn't know that. When you're in a relationship their interests have to become your interests.

CASEY

But isn't that a lie?

KAT DEMARCO

When you're deep into a relationship it just becomes sitting on the couch watching T.V. anyway. They never notice.

CASEY

That's pathetic.

KAT DEMARCO

No sweetheart, that's called being an adult.

She goes over to her daughter and fixes her hair. She notices Casey's staring out the window toward McGregor's.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
You know to stay away from that  
house, right? And to lock the  
doors when I'm out?

Casey answers without really listening.

CASEY  
Yes, mother.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

McGregor sifts through boxes of his mother's old belongings.  
He comes upon a stack of unopened mail; manila envelopes that  
read third warning and final warning...

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, STUDY -- MINUTES LATER

Ellis is mid-conversation on the phone with the bank.

MCGREGOR  
I understand that, but there are  
extenuating circumstances here.  
You have to be able to give me an  
extension or something--

TELLER (O.S.)  
Mr. McGregor, your mother was seven  
months behind on her second  
mortgage. She's exhausted any kind  
of payment deferral she might have  
gotten from us. Without payment I'm  
afraid that foreclosure is almost  
all but certain.

McGregor paces frantically.

MCGREGOR  
What if I came down there and  
turned in a check personally?

TELLER (O.S.)  
Your mother has a long history of  
bouncing checks and frankly with an  
amount this large--

MCGREGOR  
Cash then.

There's a long pause on the other end of the line. Finally,  
the TELLER concedes:

TELLER (O.S.)  
Alright, cash. We're open until  
six.

Keller looks at himself in the only reflective surface left --  
the windowpane. It's broad daylight out.

MCGREGOR  
I'll be there.

TELLER (O.S.)  
Wait a second... McGregor? You're  
not that teacher who--

But Ellis has already hung up the phone.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

McGregor puts a hoodie on, pulling the hood up and over his  
head. He grabs his car keys and shoves his hands deep in his  
pockets.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Exiting the house, McGregor winces at the sunlight and  
hurries over to his car. He gets in, but can't escape the  
rearview mirror. He backs out of the driveway with a scowl  
on his face.

EXT. CHASE MANHATTAN BANK -- SOON AFTER

McGregor pulls into the bank lot and parks. He steels  
himself, then pulls his hoodie drawstrings tight. He gets  
out of the car and buries his hands once more in his pockets.

At the ATM, he waits behind a MOTHER OF THREE who's finishing  
her transaction. He shields his face as she turns and passes  
him.

Stepping up, he tries to withdraw \$7,800. The machine BEEPS  
and spits his card back out. The screen reads: AMOUNT  
EXCEEDS DAILY WITHDRAWAL LIMIT -- PLEASE SEE CASHIER

MCGREGOR  
Fuck!

He kicks the wall violently and wrenches his hands, silently  
seething. When he gathers himself together, he takes a  
breath and enters the bank.

INT. CHASE MANHATTAN BANK -- CONTINUOUS

There are several people in line in front of Ellis. He quietly waits behind them.

Nothing happens at first, then the OLD MAN in front of him looks absently over his shoulder. He spots McGregor, seems to recognize him.

Tapping his wife on the shoulder, he whispers to her. She holds her purse defensively against her chest and the two of them step to the side.

MCGREGOR

Are you guys still on line?

They just stare at him, disgusted, so McGregor moves up a spot. By now there's only a young, pretty COLLEGE GIRL in front of him. She's got her headphones on, listening to Madonna's "Cherish," completely oblivious to the CASHIER waving at her to step forward.

McGregor is forced to tap her on the shoulder. She begins to pull her headphones off when she catches sight of him. She jumps back, screaming.

McGregor points to the cashier, but the girl is too revolted to look away. McGregor lets his hand drop and stares at her.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

One day you'll look like this too.

The girl's mouth falls open as if she's just been cursed. McGregor cuts in front of her.

The CASHIER is a middle-aged, fat woman, utterly horrified at the thing standing before her. By now, McGregor's quite flustered. He points to his face, as if to explain it away.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I have a disease.

She cringes away and calls for the BRANCH MANAGER.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

No, it's not contagious!

The Manager arrives at the window.

BRANCH MANAGER

Sir, you need to leave. You are scaring the other customers.

MCGREGOR

Please, I need to withdraw and your  
ATM is being--

BRANCH MANAGER

Sir. We know who you are. Don't  
make us call the police.

McGregor grits his teeth, about to say something, but instead just slides his card back into his wallet. He turns to leave and as he passes the old couple, the man finally gets up the courage to say something.

OLD MAN

You should be ashamed of yourself!  
What you did to that girl!

MCGREGOR

I didn't do anything!

OLD MAN

God knows the truth! He covered  
you in your sins!

McGregor hurries out the door. He's followed by several bank customers and an overzealous SECURITY GUARD. The college girl from inside whispers to her boyfriend waiting for her in the car. She points McGregor's way. To Ellis, the world appears to be falling down all around him.

By now a small crowd has formed outside the bank. He fumbles for his keys, but the horns on his hands and wrists make it difficult. He drops them to the ground and as he bends down to pick them up someone from the crowd steps towards him.

The sun's in his eyes, he can't see. He throws his hands up in defense, screaming:

MCGREGOR

*No! Get away from me! Go!*

He cowers on the asphalt as a soft voice speaks.

GIRL

You dropped these.

McGregor looks up, blocking out the sun. There's a YOUNG GIRL around the age of six holding his keys out to him. Ellis takes them as the girl's mother drags her daughter away, appalled.

Picking himself up off the ground, he gets into his car and drives away. Fast.



EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- EVENING

It's night time. The quiet of the streets marred only by the revving of car engines. Volvo station wagons and Chevy Suburbans are rolled up over the sidewalk and onto the grass, their tires spinning, tearing up mud.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

McGregor parts his blinds to look out at the mob that has formed on his front lawn. Tentatively, he opens his front door. There are over a dozen cars. The drivers have gotten out to join the growing crowd, their headlights in lieu of torches.

BEN HART (O.S.)  
He's coming out!

McGregor holds a hand up, blocking their harsh brights.

MCGREGOR  
What do you people want?!

No one says a word. McGregor sees Ben Hart. He stands by his open car door, slugging straight from a bottle of off-brand whiskey.

BEN HART  
Heard you went into town today,  
Ellis.

MCGREGOR  
Did you bring these people here?

BEN HART  
These people? They look like  
concerned citizens to me...

The crowd begins to yell and McGregor notices for the first time that most of them are drinking beer. When they finish they throw their empties at him. Some get close, but most shatter behind him on the porch.

When they're done with that, they set out to destroy his lawn, tearing the mailbox out and upending the sidewalk stones.

They continue on this path until a SIREN cuts through their mania. Sgt. Darota pulls up with a couple of black and whites in tow. He steps out of his car with his baton free.

SGT. DAROTA  
Everybody get back to your homes or  
I'm writing you up for open  
container violations!

BEN HART  
Oh come on, Max... we're exercising  
our right to free assembly.

Darota takes a few quick steps to Ben Hart and leans in  
serious as a heart attack.

SGT. DAROTA  
Tell me you didn't organize this.

BEN HART  
I don't know what you're talking  
about.

SGT. DAROTA  
Get out of here, Ben. You may not  
care about what happens to  
yourself, but you should start  
caring about that girl at home.

BEN HART  
That's all I care about!

Mcgregor steps off the porch as people begin to disperse.

MCGREGOR  
Thank you, Officer.

SGT. DAROTA  
I didn't do this for you, son. I'd  
get back inside your house if you  
knew what was good for you.

Ellis sees the anger in the man's eyes. Darota turns back to  
Ben, but McGregor can't help himself.

MCGREGOR  
You didn't ask if I wanted to press  
charges.

Darota slowly turns to face him.

SGT. DAROTA  
Is that really something you want  
to do?

McGregor takes a long, hard look at Ben Hart, then shakes his  
head "no."

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)  
I thought not.

MCGREGOR  
But I don't want this happening  
again--

Ellis flinches. Someone's thrown another bottle. Darota runs off to catch the person as McGregor begins to retreat back into his house.

BEN HART  
I'm going to find a way to destroy  
you. I want you to know that.

Ellis just shakes his head.

MCGREGOR  
Go home, Ben.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- LATER

The crowd is long gone by now as the last POLICE CAR pulls out. McGregor kneels down to pick up the broken glass on his porch. Casey steps up to help. She crouches down across from him.

MCGREGOR  
No, I've got it.

CASEY  
Let me help...

He does, reluctantly. Nothing left to give. He drops his head onto his chest and begins to sob as the day catches up with him.

Putting aside the glass, Casey pulls him into her arms and they begin to kiss. He's no longer willing to fight it.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Come on. Let's go inside.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

In his room, she puts him to bed like a child. She removes his hoodie and shirt and lays him down. She pauses just long enough to remove her own clothes, then slides his sweatpants off.

She stares at him. Naked. Vulnerable. He moves to cover himself up, but she doesn't let him.

MCGREGOR

I haven't done this in five years.

CASEY

It's okay. I'll teach you.

She climbs on top of him, sliding him inside. She's there for a few moments before he takes over. He rolls her onto her back and grips the headboard for leverage.

That's when it happens. He catches his reflection in the glass runner that surrounds the headboard. It throws him off; but he continues on, harder than before, determined not to quit.

Casey's into it, her hips bucking with his. But it's becoming more and more difficult for McGregor to ignore his face in the runner. Finally, he collapses shamefully beside Casey on the bed.

MCGREGOR

I'm sorry.

CASEY

It's fine...

Ellis stares up at the ceiling, unsure of what to say, so he just says what he's thinking.

MCGREGOR

I'm going in for surgery next week.

CASEY

Surgery?

MCGREGOR

They put it off for a long time. When the trial was going on there were a lot of people who said, "You're going to help a predator get his looks back?" But I've found a doctor in the city willing to do it. He's the best dermatologist in the area. So can we pick this up when I get back?

CASEY

How long's it supposed to take?

MCGREGOR

The surgery's done in a couple steps, so a few days. Recovery should be three to four weeks.

CASEY  
Three to four weeks?!

MCGREGOR  
I wanna be the best I can be for  
you. I wanna get back to who I was.

CASEY  
Who you were didn't like me.

MCGREGOR  
Yes, he did.

Casey begrudgingly concedes.

CASEY  
Okay...

MCGREGOR  
In the meantime, you can never tell  
anyone that we're together.

CASEY  
Why? What're you ashamed of me?

MCGREGOR  
No. I'm ashamed of what people  
might do to you if they found out.  
So promise me...

CASEY  
I promise.

INT. JANE'S ROOM -- THE NEXT DAY

Casey leans forward on Jane's bed.

CASEY  
I have to tell you something.

JANE  
Gossip - my favorite!

CASEY  
I'm seeing somebody.

JANE  
Don't tell me you're dating Jon  
Keller after what he did--

CASEY  
No, no - it's McGregor.

The look on Jane's face turns to one of horror.

JANE  
You can't be serious!

CASEY  
I am though.

JANE  
You haven't...

CASEY  
Mm-hmm. Well... almost.

JANE  
Casey, are you crazy?! You don't want to turn into a tree!

CASEY  
It's genetic. You can't catch it. I looked it up in the world book. His body can't fight HPV's so the skin breaks out in those warts.

JANE  
Well, you don't want to get HPV!

CASEY  
I got HPV Senior year from Mike Thompson.

JANE  
*Ew, Casey!*

CASEY  
What? He had a van!

They crack up, laughing.

JANE  
You know he's not the same person he was...

CASEY  
Well, neither am I.

Jane shakes her head.

JANE  
I don't know why I'm surprised. Just please be careful, okay?

EXT. HART HOUSE -- THAT NIGHT

Casey and Kat walk up the front walk of a beautiful house with a white picket fence.

CASEY

This is stupid, I don't want to meet your boyfriend. I'll meet the next one.

KAT DEMARCO

Sweetheart, if I play my cards right, this could be my *last* boyfriend.

CASEY

You said the same thing about Ron.

KAT DEMARCO

This is different. Benjamin is the kind of man who--

CASEY

Wait, Benjamin? What'd you say this guy did for a living?

They've reached the front door. Kat rings the bell.

KAT DEMARCO

Used to be a teacher, I think.

Casey's face drops--

CASEY

No...

The door opens and Casey comes face-to-face with Becca Hart. They express their distaste one after another.

BECCA

You!

Casey's eyes go wide with hate--

CASEY

YOU!!!

INT. HART HOUSE, DINING ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Casey and Becca sit across from each other in a silent stare off. Kat sips from a tall glass of red wine, already a few in. She's smiling, her hand on Ben's, who's sitting next to her.

KAT DEMARCO

I can't believe I didn't know you used to be the Principal at Beringer High. I feel like such a bad mom!

BEN HART

Hey now, your daughter was so well-behaved we never had cause to meet.

Casey looks at him like he's crazy. Kat ignores this and motions to Casey and Becca.

KAT DEMARCO

And you two clearly know each other...

BEN HART

Probably squared off in the heartbreaker department!

The two parents smile warmly together.

CASEY

Mom, Becca here is the one who pretended she was molested to ruin a man's life.

You could hear a pin drop.

BEN HART

*Excuse me?!*

CASEY

No.

KAT DEMARCO

Casey!

BECCA

*What is wrong with you?!*

CASEY

Tell me how it happened, I'm dying to know.

Kat turns to Ben, truly mortified.

KAT DEMARCO

Ben, I'm so sorry. She's not normally like this--

CASEY

--Yes, I am!



Casey sets her sights back on Becca.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Go ahead. I'm waiting.

Becca sputters for a just a second, but manages to eek out--

BECCA  
I-I don't have to tell you  
anything. I already went through  
this at the trial.

CASEY  
Then answer one question -- why did  
you recant?

Ben looks like he wants to jump to his daughter's defense,  
but says nothing. He wants the answer to that question as  
much as Casey does. After a moment, Becca mumbles:

BECCA  
I just wanted it to be over.

Ben sees his daughter on the verge of tears and turns to  
Casey.

BEN HART  
I think you should leave, young  
lady.

Casey throws her napkin on the table.

CASEY  
Me too.

She storms out to Kat's dismay.

INT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL -- DAY

McGregor's in a hospital gown as DR. ALAN GARDINER, 46, shows  
him on a print out of a human body what he's going to do. As  
he speaks, we see the surgeries as they'll be performed.

DR. GARDINER  
The surgeries themselves will be  
spaced out over several days, so  
that your body will have time to  
recover. Now there are three major  
steps...

## INT. OPERATING ROOM ONE -- AFTERNOON

Along with a crack surgical team, Dr. Gardiner slices and sutures each wart one by one, working his way down the arm towards McGregor's hands.

DR. GARDINER (V.O.)

The first is removing the carpet of warts and the cutaneous horns from your hands. For the horns, we'll use a bone saw. If that doesn't work we might have to get creative.

When the bone saw snags on the massive horns, Gardiner removes it and comes back with a SAWS-ALL, a piece of heavy machinery used in everyday construction work. The jagged bit cuts easily through the horn.

## INT. OPERATING ROOM TWO -- EVENING

The nurses roll an anesthetized McGregor onto his side and strap him down to work on his back.

DR. GARDINER (V.O.)

Next, we turn to your torso, head and feet. You have warts all over so recovery from this surgery might take longer than the others. Of course, operating might not be the preferred course for removing all of them. I want to try salicylic acid on the smaller ones to soften them up.

## INT. OPERATING ROOM THREE -- MORNING

McGregor is stretched out like Jesus on the cross as Dr. Gardiner operates on his newly mended hands.

DR. GARDINER (V.O.)

Finally, when your hands have healed a suitable amount, we'll take skin from your back and graft it onto your hands. The part that worries me is your fingers...

## INT. DR. GARDINER'S OFFICE -- EARLIER

Gardiner finds McGregor's X-RAY and shows him what he's talking about.

DR. GARDINER

You have osteoporosis in the bones.  
They're literally disintegrating.  
I won't know until I get in there  
how many suitable fingers I can  
salvage.

MCGREGOR

Salvage?

DR. GARDINER

Exactly. Now...

(beat)

Any questions?

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE, KITCHEN -- MORNING

Casey's in the kitchen eating a bowl of cereal.

CASEY (V.O.)

Five weeks had passed since I'd  
seen McGregor. I had begun to  
think I would never see him again.  
And then one day out of the blue...  
he just called.

The PHONE RINGS and Casey picks it up.

CASEY

Hello?

MCGREGOR

Casey?

She swallows her Count Chocula without chewing.

CASEY

Yes?

MCGREGOR

It's Ellis. I want you to come  
over right now.

She throws her cereal bowl into the sink.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

Go to the front door this time. Oh  
and Casey?

CASEY

Yeah?

MCGREGOR  
Wear a skirt.

He hangs up and Casey's left holding a useless receiver.

CASEY  
*A skirt?!*

INT. KAT'S BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey digs through her mother's closet, hopelessly looking for clothes to borrow. Everything is for old people though.

Finally she comes across a plain-looking PLAID SKIRT that can't possibly fit Kat anymore. Satisfied, she unbuttons her jeans to put it on.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- SOON AFTER

Casey walks up the front steps of the porch. On the door, McGregor has tacked a NOTE just for her. It reads:

*Leave your panties at the door.*

She blushes instantly and crumples the note. She looks around. No one's nearby. Quickly, she pulls down and steps out of her underwear and hurries inside.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

Ellis is waiting for her by the grand staircase. His face has tiny healed cuts over most of it and his hands still appear a little stiff, but overall it's a big improvement.

CASEY  
You look great!

He shushes her, but Casey ignores him and holds the note out.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Are you crazy? Anyone could have seen this!

MCGREGOR  
Oh, because I get so many visitors.

CASEY  
You're insane.

MCGREGOR

Well...

(beat)

Did you do it?

She looks away.

CASEY

Maybe...

MCGREGOR

Show me.

She rolls her eyes and lifts her skirt up. He smiles. Suddenly they're all over each other. He scoops her up and she wraps herself around him. He carries her up the stairs, taking them three at a time. No time for safety.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Casey's got a big smile on her face as McGregor throws her onto the bed. She pulls her t-shirt off and hikes up her mother's skirt. McGregor's out of his clothes in a heartbeat.

He slides between her legs and buries his face under the skirt. As he does, Casey's head rocks back against the bedspread.

CASEY

Oh, fuck yes! A-plus!

He looks up, grinning from ear-to-ear, glad to get a bit of himself back.

INT. MURPHY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Keller and his cousin, Vivo, are over at Kyle's parent's house doing coke off his living room table. But Vivo just won't leave Kyle alone...

VIVO REAL

Here, do these.

Kyle rubs his temple.

KYLE MURPHY

No, I'm so fucking high already.

VIVO REAL

Alright man, if you can't do it more for me I guess...

KYLE MURPHY

Yo Keller, you want to tell your  
cousin to fuckin' chill?

KELLER

What do you want me to say? You're  
being a pussy.

Kyle's hurt that his friend didn't defend him, but not at all  
surprised. Keller's got his own lines and he's doing more  
than Vivo and Kyle combined.

VIVO REAL

You look angry.

KELLER

Do I?

VIVO REAL

Whatchu thinkin' about?

KELLER

The fucking treeman. I'm tellin'  
you - if the cops hadn't come, I  
woulda done something!

VIVO REAL

Man, fuck that dude.

KYLE MURPHY

What do you know about it? You  
didn't even go to school in our  
district!

VIVO REAL

I read the papers, bitch.

KELLER

Someone oughta teach him a lesson  
about leaving the house during the  
day.

VIVO REAL

What you got in mind?

KYLE MURPHY

Guys, I think this is the coke  
talking...

KELLER

Didn't he flunk you?

KYLE MURPHY

Yeah he did, but so did every other teacher.

KELLER

How about some payback, then? All we need is your car.

KYLE MURPHY

No way you're borrowing the 560 SL!

Vivo puts his hand on Murphy's shoulder.

VIVO REAL

We could just fuck you up and steal it...

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- EARLY EVENING

The sun is setting outside as Casey and McGregor lay in bed together after having sex. She softly strokes the scars on his face.

CASEY

You must hate her...

MCGREGOR

Not really...

CASEY

Why not?

MCGREGOR

She's just a troubled girl with emotional problems who didn't know the power of her words. That day I was so upset and I lashed out at her. I shouldn't have reacted the way I did.

CASEY

Well, I'll hate her for the both of us.

Casey climbs out of bed and fishes her t-shirt from the mess of clothes on the ground. She throws it on before exiting.

MCGREGOR

Hey, where you going?

CASEY

To look for food.

He calls after her.

MCGREGOR  
What about round two?

She smiles at him over her shoulder.

CASEY  
I'm hungry.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Casey shivers as she looks through the bare cupboards for food. Unsatisfied, she leans into the fridge.

She doesn't see it at first, but when she does it's like a beacon. On the top shelf, there's a sixer of Bud.

Not cans. Bottles.

She stares at it for a moment, then grabs one and drains it before she returns back upstairs.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

When Casey enters, McGregor notices her t-shirt for the first time. Written on it is:

*Beringer High Basketball - N.J. Central Division Champs, 1987*

MCGREGOR  
Take that off.

CASEY  
Yes, sir.

MCGREGOR  
You know what I mean. Why are you wearing that?

CASEY  
Slipped my mind.

MCGREGOR  
I'm just realizing something... you haven't asked me yet if it's true.

CASEY  
I don't care about that.



MCGREGOR

Well, I care! If you think for a second that I would have slept with my students then why would you be with a person like that? Do you know what people will say? They'll say I started in on you back at school.

She steps towards him.

CASEY

And did you?

MCGREGOR

Is that what you think?!

CASEY

What does it matter?

MCGREGOR

It matters to me--

A CRASH from downstairs cuts him off.

CASEY

*What was that?!*

McGregor jumps out of bed and pulls a pair of sweats on.

MCGREGOR

Stay here.

He grabs a baseball bat from the closet and hurries out into the hall.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, 2ND FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS

McGregor peers down the staircase as a second CRASH happens; the sound of a window breaking. He runs down the stairs quickly and disappears into the darkness.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, BACK DOOR -- SAME TIME

Keller reaches his arm through the broken window to open the back door. He enters, followed by Vivo and Kyle. Keller's got a TIRE IRON in his hand, Vivo a switchblade. Kyle is conspicuously empty-handed. He whispers:

KYLE MURPHY

I don't wanna do this--

VIVO REAL  
*Shut the fuck up!*

Keller walks slowly through the house, tire iron raised.

KELLER  
Oh, Mr. McGregor... you have  
company... you tree fuck!

Vivo laughs, but Keller shushes him.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
Do you hear that?

A rustling sound can barely be heard. Keller turns his head to investigate when a baseball bat hits him in the elbow.

The tire iron goes clattering across the kitchen floor as McGregor swings on Vivo, who lashes out blindly with his knife. Vivo slices through air as the bat knocks the wind out of him.

Kyle remains frozen as Keller lunges for the tire iron. But McGregor holds the bat out so that it's poking against Keller's throat.

MCGREGOR  
Get out of my house, Keller.

KELLER  
(smiles)  
You got it, teach...

He looks warily at the weapon he was reaching for.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
I need that for my car.

MCGREGOR  
It stays here.

KELLER  
The fuck it does!

McGregor pushes harder against Keller's wind pipe.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
Let's go, Vivo.

The second McGregor pulls the bat away, they run out the front door.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

On their way to Kyle's car, Keller trips. He lands hard on all fours and looks up at one of the bedroom windows.

Standing there, looking out, is Casey in her bra. Keller stares up at her, unable to believe what he's seeing.

KELLER  
*What the fuck?!*

Casey slams the curtains closed as Vivo catches up with Keller.

VIVO REAL  
Let's get the hell out of here!

He helps his cousin to his feet and they book it for the car.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

McGregor returns to the room and puts his bat back in the closet.

MCGREGOR  
It's okay, I think they're gone.

He notices Casey sitting on the bed, looking worried.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

CASEY  
Keller. He saw me. In your window.

McGregor sits next to Casey on the bed, looking just as worried.

MCGREGOR  
Do you think he'd tell anybody?

INT. BECCA'S BEDROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Out of pure spite, Jon Keller has slept with Becca Hart. She lies next to him, still nervous after what they just did. She's talking too much, excited for the new possibilities this could lead to.

BECCA

I'm glad it happened after all this time. You know, cause no one "got me." Not like you did...

Keller gets up out of bed to throw the condom out, anything to get away from this clingy mess. As he takes a Kleenex to slide the condom off, he sees it's covered with blood. He turns back to Becca.

KELLER

You're a virgin?

She takes one look at his bloody fingers and starts talking fast--

BECCA

No stupid, a girl can bleed for any number of reasons during sex!

KELLER

Did you get your period or something?

BECCA

Ewww, no!

KELLER

Well, look... either way, we shouldn't do this again.

Becca's hurt by this, but pretends she's anything but.

BECCA

Whatever. It's not like you were good or anything...

KELLER

I gotta go, Becca.

And like that, he's out the door.

INT. FOODTOWN -- THE NEXT MORNING

As Casey stocks shelves, her supervisor, Eduardo Ruis, stands behind her wondering how to approach. When a BOTTLE of MAYO topples over onto its side, Ruis finds his reason.

MR. RUIS

Be careful! You can't throw stuff onto the shelves!

CASEY  
It was an accident, Eduardo.

MR. RUIS  
It's a pattern. Of bad work.  
You've been coming in late--

CASEY  
That's not true!

MR. RUIS  
You don't smile at the customers...

CASEY  
Okay...

MR. RUIS  
A lot of meat goes missing on your  
shift.

CASEY  
Are you accusing me of stealing?

MR. RUIS  
This is disturbing behavior, no?

CASEY  
What are you talking about?!

MR. RUIS  
It certainly explains the company  
you keep...

CASEY  
What company would that be?

MR. RUIS  
Come on, Casey...

CASEY  
I don't know what you're talking  
about!

MR. RUIS  
The Treeman who lives on your  
street.

Casey's mouth opens, unintentionally. She stammers--

CASEY  
You don't even know him. He wasn't  
convicted--

MR. RUIS  
--Ahhh, because the girl was  
intimidated.

CASEY  
The girl is a liar!

MR. RUIS  
I'm sorry. We can't have that type  
of person working here. This is a  
family store--

CASEY  
It's a national chain!

MR. RUIS  
People know you work here.

CASEY  
You can't do this - I'm a good  
employee! You can't fire me for no  
reason!

MR. RUIS  
I'm the manager, I can do what I  
want.

CASEY  
Fine!

Casey rips her apron off and whips it at him.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
But if anyone asks why I don't work  
here anymore I'm telling them that  
you sexually assaulted me.

MR. RUIS  
That's not true!

CASEY  
But I'm still gonna say it! *Because  
that's how America works!*

She storms out in a huff.

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

Casey throws her car keys down on the kitchen counter and is  
startled as her mother rounds the corner, angrily.

CASEY  
Aren't you supposed to be at work?

KAT DEMARCO  
Is it true?

CASEY  
Is what true?

KAT DEMARCO  
You and Mr. McGregor?

CASEY  
Me and Mr. McGregor what?

KAT DEMARCO  
Don't be thick. You're dating him.

Casey crosses her arms. There's no point in lying now.

CASEY  
Yeah, I am. So what?

KAT DEMARCO  
He abused his students, Casey.

CASEY  
No, he didn't! You don't know  
anything about it!

KAT DEMARCO  
I know what I've read in the  
papers. People don't just make this  
stuff up! Why didn't you tell me  
about this? I walked in to book  
club looking like an incompetent  
mother, not knowing her daughter's  
sleeping with her old English  
teacher.

CASEY  
Is that what you're worried about?  
Looking bad in front of those waspy  
housewives?

KAT DEMARCO  
Don't be stupid. I want to see  
him! You tell him to come over  
tonight.

CASEY  
He barely leaves the house--

KAT DEMARCO  
*Well if you know what's good for  
you you'll get him the hell over  
here!*

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE, DINING ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

McGregor, Casey, and Kat sit at the dining room table; Casey and Ellis on one side, Kat on the other. She sits there saying nothing, just staring at McGregor and letting him speak.

MCGREGOR

...and I can assure you nothing  
happened back at Beringer.

He takes Casey's hand.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

We only started up a couple weeks  
ago.

He looks Casey in the eyes.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

You've got a wonderful daughter  
here, Ms. Demarco.

When Kat doesn't respond, McGregor lets go of Casey's hand.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I feel like I'm monopolizing the  
conversation, why don't we--

KAT DEMARCO

I remember you from the high  
school. I do. You sure were  
something to look at...

(beat)

But you're not so pretty anymore.

CASEY

Mom, you promised to be civil.

KAT DEMARCO

I made no such promise. How can  
you be so blind, Casey? I've known  
men like him my entire life. Men  
who take advantage, whose only aim  
is ruining things. Taking a  
beautiful young girl and--

MCGREGOR

Ms. Demarco, I never--

KAT DEMARCO

I'd like you to leave my house now,  
Even with the surgery you're still  
disgusting to me.



CASEY

*You bitch.*

MCGREGOR

Casey, it's okay. I'm gonna leave.

CASEY

Don't let her win!

MCGREGOR

It's her house. And she'd be more comfortable if I left.

He gives Casey a kiss on the head and leaves. Casey stares daggers at her mother.

CASEY

*What is wrong with you?!*

KAT DEMARCO

I know you don't see this now, but I am protecting you.

CASEY

He's not like the drunken Barney Fife's you bring home and let sweat and grunt on top of you. All of them know what they're getting when they go home with you.

KAT DEMARCO

And what's that?

CASEY

A sad, old, pathetic *sure thing*.

Tears spring to Kat's eyes.

KAT DEMARCO

You can be a real cunt when you want to be.

CASEY

I learned from the best.

KAT DEMARCO

Go to your room.

CASEY

I'm not a child anymore.

KAT DEMARCO

But you live in my house, so when I say--

CASEY  
Let's fix that.

Casey storms out of the room.

KAT DEMARCO  
Where are you going?

Kat follows Casey to her room where Casey begins to pack her things.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Don't be stupid, you have nowhere  
to go--

Casey upends her drawer of t-shirts into a suitcase.

CASEY  
--That's not true! I could go to  
Jane's or maybe to--

KAT DEMARCO  
What, to him? Move in with your  
old teacher? Casey, he will use  
you up and when you start to become  
too familiar he will drop you for  
the next underage girl stupid  
enough to wind up in his bed. Tell  
me, has he forced himself on you?

CASEY  
No, but I've forced myself on him.  
Many, many times.

She closes and locks her suitcase and carries it down the  
hall to the back door.

KAT DEMARCO  
Fine. Go then. But when he breaks  
your heart, don't come crying to  
me!

Casey looks back only once.

CASEY  
I will never set foot in this house  
again.

And with that, she's gone.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- SAME TIME

McGregor stands at his back door, waiting for Casey to return. When he sees her with a suitcase, he wordlessly opens the screen door to let her in.

He looks like a man in the middle of a storm, unable to stop the inevitable from happening. He gives Casey a soft smile and raises a hand to wave to Kat who has watched Casey leave. But Kat's already stepped angrily back inside.

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Kat paces uncontrollably, rubbing her hands together. She's deciding something and when she's finished mulling it over, she picks up her rotary phone and dials a number. After a moment, someone answers.

KAT DEMARCO  
Hello, Ben?

She's quiet while he speaks.

KAT DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Well, I am upset. Look... there's something you should know.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD TERRACE -- THE NEXT DAY

Casey exits McGregor's house. She sets out walking down the street when Ben Hart pulls up beside her in his minivan, all smiles.

CASEY  
(under her breath)  
Jesus fuckin' Christ...

BEN HART  
What's that?

CASEY  
Hi.

BEN HART  
Was that Mr. McGregor's house I saw you coming out of back there? I understand you've been spending some time with him.

CASEY  
So?

BEN HART

Well, this certainly explains the other night. I want you to know, I'm not angry with you. If there's anything you ever want to talk about...

Casey stops walking and turns on him.

CASEY

Look dude, I really don't wanna have sex with you!

It's so out of the blue that Hart becomes incredibly flustered--

BEN HART

*That is not what I meant at all--*

CASEY

Relax. I'm just fucking with you.

He laughs, awkwardly relieved. Casey joins him for a moment before deadpanning:

CASEY (CONT'D)

By the way, your daughter's a fuckin' piece of shit and I hope her and the rest of your family die horrible deaths.

BEN HART

You watch your mouth, Casey!

CASEY

No! You're not my Principal anymore. You really believe Becca?

BEN HART

She's my daughter.

CASEY

You didn't answer the question.

BEN HART

I believe her with every fiber of my being.

CASEY

Then you're as stupid as she is!

She starts to walk off. Ben Hart pulls away but not before leaving her with one last thought.

BEN HART

You might want to ask yourself why  
you believe him.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, KITCHEN -- SAME TIME

McGregor stumbles groggily into the kitchen to take his pills. He dry swallows a few before he catches a bit of his reflection in the kitchen window. Some of the warts have grown back.

MCGREGOR

No...

He drops the pills back onto the counter and runs out of the room.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

McGregor hurries inside. The medicine cabinet mirror has long since been splintered in its place, but he finds a larger shard and leans over the sink to examine the extent of the damage.

INT. MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ellis paces around, his ear to a cordless phone. After a moment, someone answers.

MCGREGOR

Hi, this is Ellis McGregor. I'm a patient of Dr. Gardiner. I need to speak with him immediately. It's urgent... no, now please. Yes, I'll hold.

McGregor sits on his bed staring off biting his nails until Dr. Gardiner comes on the line.

DR. GARDINER

Mr. McGregor?

MCGREGOR

Yeah doc listen, the warts, the lesions, all of it. They're coming back.

DR. GARDINER

Now, we talked about this. Surgery was only a stop gap measure.

(MORE)

DR. GARDINER (CONT'D)

This will continue to happen until we find a cure. You're going to need surgery two to three times a year to keep the recurrence at bay.

All the air has gone out of McGregor.

MCGREGOR

I knew that, but I didn't think it would happen so soon...

DR. GARDINER

If you would come in, we could do a new battery of tests--

Gardiner's voice cuts out as McGregor hangs up and lets the phone crash to the ground. He looks around, hopeless.

INT. BATHROOM -- SOON AFTER

McGregor is once again leaning over the sink examining his face. Opening the medicine cabinet, he pulls a safety razor out and removes the blade from it.

Looking in the narrow slivers of glass, he goes to work deftly cutting the reemerging warts from his face. He grits his teeth in pain, holding his breath and letting it out after he slices one off.

He drops the razor in the sink, already exhausted and in pain. There's blood running down his cheek.

He leaves for a second and comes back with several beers. He drinks one quickly and picks the razor back up, psyching himself up. Finding another growth near his temple, he cuts again. It's deep this time. Lots more blood.

He washes his face and pads it dry with toilet paper. He drinks another beer, determined.

He picks the razor up again. There's a discoloration on his brow. He breathes quickly in and out several times then dives back in and starts cutting. It's a big one and he screams his lungs out.

INT. BATHROOM -- LATER

McGregor has been at this for some time. His shirt is off and his face is covered in blood. So much so that it's stinging his eyes. He squints to even see the mirror.

Taking his pants off, he steps into the shower and grabs the hydrogen peroxide from off the shelf. He tips the bottle over his head to sterilize his cuts.

But the moment the peroxide hits his head, the pain is too intense. A bloodcurdling gasp escapes from his lungs and his body crashes through the sliding glass doors of the shower onto the bathroom rug, where he promptly passes out.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, FOYER -- MINUTES LATER

Casey returns with take-out from town.

CASEY

Ellis?

When he doesn't answer, she puts the bag of food down. Walking to the staircase, she hears running water and calls out again.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Ellis?!

She hurries upstairs.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

With the door open, Casey sees McGregor's naked and bloody body from down the hall. She runs to him.

CASEY

Oh my god!!!

Kneeling down next to him among the broken glass, she shakes his lifeless body.

CASEY (CONT'D)

What happened?! Wake up!

Getting no response, she begins the arduous process of lifting him back into the tub. When she finally gets him there he drops like a ton of bricks to the shower floor. The second she turns the cold water on though, he springs to life.

MCGREGOR

*What the fuck?!*

CASEY

What the fuck?! What happened to you?! Who did this?!

He puts a hand up to block the tide of water hitting his face.

MCGREGOR

I did it.

CASEY

You did it?

He looks away, ashamed.

MCGREGOR

They were starting to come back...

Casey sighs, deeply.

CASEY

Oh, Ellis... *so you thought you'd do some homemade surgery?!*

MCGREGOR

Hindsight's twenty-twenty, Casey.

CASEY

We need to take you to the hospital.

MCGREGOR

No! I don't want anybody to see me like this. We're supposed to have dinner, anyway.

CASEY

Fuck dinner! Look at your face!

MCGREGOR

I'm fine.

CASEY

Ellis--

MCGREGOR

Casey, go. Let me get dressed. I'll be fine.

She groans.

CASEY

You are impossible! Fine. But I'll be right downstairs, okay? You yell if you need me.

She lays a clean towel down atop the broken glass.



CASEY (CONT'D)  
When you're done step on this,  
there's glass everywhere. I still  
think you should--

MCGREGOR  
Out.

CASEY  
*Okay!*

She finally leaves him in peace.

INT. MRS. MCGREGOR'S ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Ellis enters his mother's old bedroom. He hasn't been in here since she passed and it shows. There's dust over everything and he walks in with a kind of timid reverence.

He sits down at her boudoir and turns the light on. Her mirror is the only one in the entire house not broken.

He groans at his reflection, but the toilet paper he used to stanch the wounds is doing its job. He gingerly peels the paper from his cuts and considers his new face. Letting out a low disappointed moan, he drops his head.

His line of sight lands on his mother's make-up bag. He weighs his options for a moment, then digs into it.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, DINING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Casey sits at the dining room table, waiting nervously. Soon McGregor descends the stairs and sits in front of her. She stares at him, but says nothing.

Finally, we see what she sees. Ellis has covered his cuts and blemishes in his mother's concealer. His skin is at least two shades lighter than it normally is. He sits there waiting for Casey to say something.

CASEY  
Something different? You change  
your hair?

MCGREGOR  
I don't think this is funny.

CASEY  
Is this going to be an everyday  
thing?

MCGREGOR

I just wanted to look like myself again.

CASEY

This isn't you!

MCGREGOR

Then I just wanted to look normal again!

CASEY

Well, you're never gonna be normal! What the hell is normal anyway?! This is the hand you were dealt. This is your body now--

MCGREGOR

I'm being punished, don't you see that?! For every terrible thought I've ever had! I'm wearing my curse on my skin! I look out my window and see people that aren't afflicted like I am and still they find something to not like about themselves. I want to shout, 'you're young, your skin is clear! Smile and tell the girl you like that she's all you think about. Be bold because it can be taken away at any moment!' What I wouldn't give for one more day as my old self.

CASEY

Don't you get it? You ran out of those days five years ago. I mean, What do you think I'm here for?

MCGREGOR

I know why you're here. You're here because you like to collect weird tragedies to justify how uneventful your real life is.

CASEY

Okay, are we getting honest? Why did you help me back in high school? I come from a broken home, I had very few friends, and I listened to alternative music - did you pick me out of the crowd because you thought I had a bull's-eye on my ass?

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Or was I not the first? Becca  
Hart, she's an easy target--

MCGREGOR  
--Don't say that, Casey. Anyone can  
say whatever lies they want to  
about me, but not you!

CASEY  
You wanted to fuck her, didn't you?  
I get it. She's blonde, she's got  
big tits. You couldn't help  
yourself...

MCGREGOR  
Just leave.

CASEY  
Happy to.

She grabs her coat and heads for the door.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
And for the last time - go to the  
fucking hospital!

She slams the door behind her on the way out.

INT. BECCA'S BEDROOM -- SAME TIME

Becca is crying alone in her room. She's soothing her wounds  
by drinking a Bartles & James and playing Reo Speedwagon's  
"Keep on Loving You."

When the record ends she puts it on again and picks up her  
fluorescent pink phone. She dials a number, chokes back a  
sob, and waits. After ringing a few times, the Keller's home  
answering machine comes on. Gloria's voice is curt and quick.

GLORIA  
Hello. You've reached the Keller-  
Munoz's. Please leave a message  
after the--

The machine BEEPS and Becca suddenly finds herself on the  
spot.

BECCA  
Hi, Jon--

She sounds pathetic, so she coughs and tries again.

BECCA (CONT'D)

It was fun seeing you the other night and... I'm wondering if you thought so too.

She starts beating the side of her head with her open palm, chastising herself.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Anyway, give me a buzz when you get this. My number is... well, you have my number. Okay... bye.

She hangs up before she can do any more damage. Throwing the phone across the room, she clenches both fists and shakes violently, hating herself.

INT. BECCA'S BATHROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Becca stands in front of her bathroom mirror just like McGregor did.

Out of the medicine cabinet, she pulls a bottle of Lithium that's been prescribed for her.

She uses sink water to choke down as many of the little orange pills as she can stand...

INT. BECCA'S BEDROOM -- SOON AFTER

Becca sits at her desk writing a SUICIDE NOTE. She's put on "Keep on Loving You" for the umpteenth time and her tears stain the pages as she writes.

There are many words, but only a few are visible. Notably:

*I am sorry. Not only for the lies that I've told, but for for the fact that I've never told the truth.*

The pills are kicking in now and her writing becomes erratic. Foamy bits of bile appear in the corners of her mouth as her eyes roll back into her head. She slips to the floor and begins to seize.

And as she does, she kicks the desk, knocking her suicide note down behind it, out of sight...

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, FOYER -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Casey enters the front door, fumbling with her keys. She's very drunk by now and tries to be as quiet as possible, but Ellis rounds the corner, coming in from the kitchen.

They stand there, silent, not moving, just watching each other.

CASEY

I figured I'd use the front door  
since everybody knows about us.

She notices that all the major cuts on McGregor's face have been stitched up. She smiles, grateful.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You went to the hospital.

MCGREGOR

Everyone stared at me. They knew  
who I was.

CASEY

I am so sorry for the things I said  
to you. Because I missed you  
tonight.

McGregor's been trying to be stoic, but it slips out:

MCGREGOR

I missed you too.

They hurry forward and instead of kissing or tearing each other's clothes off, they just hold one another.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)

I don't have anyone else.

She laughs softly and lays her head against his chest.

CASEY

Neither do I.

EXT. CEDAR LAWN CEMETARY -- MORNING, SEVERAL DAYS LATER

All of Beringer is out for Becca's funeral. Her mother, KAREN HART, wails all in black, surrounded by her friends. Ben is off by himself, jaw clenched and silent as the PREACHER speaks.

PREACHER

I find it terribly difficult to write about someone's life when they've died under such tragic circumstances. To take one's life when you're as young as Becca was is a tragedy. She was loved by many here, that is clear. I hope you'll join me in praying for the safe passage of her soul into the arms of Almighty God. Let us pray...

The collected bow their heads as Ben Hart stares straight ahead, determined.

Keller sits in the back row by himself, silently drinking out of a flask. Soon he's joined by his mother, Gloria. She sits next to him and leans in to hiss--

GLORIA

Why are you drinking in public?!

KELLER

Leave me alone.

GLORIA

You want to be left alone? Fine. Just know that there was a message for you on the machine... from the dead girl.

KELLER

I'm aware.

As Gloria walks off, he watches her go. Hating her.

EXT. CEDAR LAWN CEMETARY -- SOON AFTER

With the service over, many people line up to pay their respects to Ben and Karen Hart. Jon Keller mumbles a "sorry" to the ex-Mrs. Hart, then continues on to Ben, who cups his hand gladly.

BEN HART

Jon, thank you so much for coming. Becca would have appreciated it. I know you two were close.

KELLER

Yeah...

BEN HART

She was always talking about you -  
'Jon did this, Jon did that.' She  
really thought the world of you.

KELLER

So did I...

INT. SCULLERY TAVERN -- AFTERNOON

An informal funeral reception is taking place. Several concerned parents are at the bar in the middle of a heated discussion. DALE PAULSON, a short man in wire-rimmed glasses, stands drinking next to FRANK CHAMBERS, a burly, cigar smoker with a stony authority.

FRANK CHAMBERS

Someone oughta go over there and--

DALE PAULSON

And what? Start a lynch mob, Frank?

FRANK CHAMBERS

I'm just saying this guy is far  
from innocent and should be treated  
as such.

DALE PAULSON

You want vigilante justice, go down  
south.

GLORIA

I agree with Frank, this guy didn't  
learn his lesson and now he's  
picked up where he left off with  
yet another student.

DALE PAULSON

The girl is twenty-two--

GLORIA

The girl has mental problems! I  
mean, who could sleep with  
something like that?!

Keller's still in his suit from the funeral, drinking with his cousin. Upon hearing all this, he drains his beer and grabs Vivo by the scruff of his shirt.

KELLER

Come with me--

Vivo stumbles off his chair to follow him.

INT. SCULLERY TAVERN, MEN'S BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Keller throws his cousin inside.

VIVO REAL  
What the fuck man?! You need help  
wiping?!

Keller waits for an elderly man to exit before answering.

KELLER  
We should do something.

VIVO REAL  
About what?

KELLER  
About the fuckin' Treeman!

Vivo's already drunk. He cackles.

VIVO REAL  
Yeah man, let's cut him open, and  
count the rings! See how old he is!  
Listen to you, playin' gangster...

KELLER  
I'm serious, Vivo! You heard them  
out there! They want us to do this!  
Even if we are caught no jury's  
gonna convict us for getting rid of  
that pervert--

A toilet FLUSHES and the two of them get quiet. Ben Hart  
stumbles out. He's horribly drunk. Keller and Vivo stare at  
him as he washes his hands, unsure if he's heard them or not.  
Keller's about to say something when Ben turns to them near  
the exit.

BEN HART  
Don't get caught, boys.

Keller watches him go, then turns back to Vivo.

KELLER  
Permission from the man himself.  
What do you say?

VIVO REAL  
Tell me this isn't about the girl.

KELLER  
It's not.



VIVO REAL  
So you wouldn't mind if I fucked  
her if she's there?

Keller stares at him, blankly.

KELLER  
Don't even think about it.

Vivo laughs grimly.

VIVO REAL  
Okay then, cousin. Let's go cut  
the Treeman down.

INT. BECCA'S BEDROOM -- THAT NIGHT

The door opens softly and Ben Hart enters. He's already terribly drunk, lugging around a bottle of Whiskey and a glass.

He turns the lights on. Becca's room is just how she left it. A perfect teenage girl's room who never grew up. There are Cyndi Lauper and Michael Jackson posters from the mid-eighties and the Reo Speedwagon album still sits on the turntable.

Ben walks over to it and turns the player on. As the music starts, he sits on Becca's bed and downs drink after drink. Eventually, it's too much and he passes out face down on the floor.

Over at the record player, the LP continues to spin, but the needle rests in the middle, no songs left to play.

EXT. MURPHY'S HOUSE -- SOON AFTER

Keller and Vivo walk up to a house in the heart of the suburbs. They move quickly, both of them out of place here. Jon knocks and after a pause, Vicki Lee answers.

KELLER  
Can Kyle come out to play?

Vicki looks at Keller, annoyed, then calls for her fiance. She goes back into the house as Kyle takes her place.

KYLE MURPHY  
Fuck...  
(beat)  
What do you two want?

KELLER  
Calm down, Kyle. We just need to  
borrow your car again.

INT. KYLE'S MERCEDES -- MINUTES LATER

Keller drives with Vivo sitting shotgun. Kyle's in the back  
seat, leaning forward between the two of them.

KYLE MURPHY  
Guys, Vicki's gonna lose her mind  
if I'm not back soon.

VIVO REAL  
Shut up.

KYLE MURPHY  
At least just tell me what you're  
going to do.

VIVO REAL  
Shut the fuck up!

KELLER  
Friends let their friends borrow  
their cars all the time. Aren't we  
friends?

KYLE MURPHY  
We haven't been friends for years.

KELLER  
Glad you finally realized that.

KYLE MURPHY  
I want you to pull over. I want my  
car back.

Keller doesn't even bat an eye.

KELLER  
Vivo...

Keller's cousin turns around in his seat.

VIVO REAL  
Sit back. Relax. And maybe when  
we're done with the car we won't  
kill you.

Keller takes a quick turn.

VIVO REAL (CONT'D)  
Where we going?

KELLER  
Gotta make a pit stop...

EXT. BERINGER FALLS FIRE DEPARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Keller comes to a stop and gets out.

KELLER  
Vivo, watch him.

Slamming his door, Keller runs around to the back of the building.

INT. FIRE STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Keller enters and hurries past a row of firefighter equipment, coming quickly to the reason he came: a mammoth, door-breaker of an AXE. He yanks it off the wall and leaves the way he came.

INT. BECCA'S BEDROOM -- SAME TIME

Ben Hart wakes up in pain. He rolls over and vomits onto his daughter's unicorn rug. Wiping the remains from his mouth, he climbs to his knees.

That's when he sees it: Becca's suicide note. It takes every ounce of strength he has, but Ben crawls under her desk and fishes it out.

Sitting up, he cries when he sees his daughter's handwriting. He opens the envelope and reads. As he does, everything he knew to be true is turned on its head.

BEN HART  
No...

He breathes the word out. A horrible mistake...

BEN HART (CONT'D)  
Oh, no...

He fights to get to his feet and stumbles through his darkened house.

INT. HART HOUSE, GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Having fetched his keys, Ben opens the garage door, then hurriedly climbs into his car.

He's almost blackout drunk by now and has to slap himself to wake up. He looks at his guilty face in the rearview mirror, then pulls out into the night.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE, DINING ROOM -- SAME TIME

Casey and McGregor are sitting down for dinner. Casey sets the table. There is a sense of terrible anticipation in the air. And as Ellis watches Casey lighting candles, being a perfect portrait of domesticity, he has to say something.

MCGREGOR

If I could let you go to be on your own and be the person you were meant to be, I would. You don't need me. You don't need me weighing you down. The only one who needs here is me. So I'm taking myself out of the equation.

CASEY

Stop talking like that. You're only saying this because of Becca. You didn't put the pills in her mouth.

MCGREGOR

You think it's a test; that you need to stay to prove you're a better person. Well I'm telling you that you don't. You've already given me enough memories for a lifetime. I'll be okay if you leave. So go. Get out.

CASEY

You don't mean that.

MCGREGOR

Get out, Casey.

CASEY

Fuck you, I'm not going anywhere!

He realizes he's going to have to get cruel for this to work.

MCGREGOR

You were just a student I wanted to fuck.

CASEY

Shut up.

MCGREGOR

I fucked Becca Hart too. Right on my desk. Gave her her first beer then fucked her with that too.

CASEY

Don't!

Casey begins to retreat towards the front door. But she can't help but ask one final thing. She points to the returning warts on his face.

CASEY (CONT'D)

All this... if this didn't happen to you, would we have ever gotten together?

It kills him to say it, but he does.

MCGREGOR

No.

CASEY

Then I'm glad this happened to you.

The last few words are choked out through sobs. She turns to run out the door when someone on the other side jiggles the handle. It's locked. Almost immediately something slams into the door from outside. Casey jumps back, surprised.

McGregor hurries to her side as the tip of an axe wedges through the door.

MCGREGOR

Go, Casey! They're here for me, not you. I don't know what they'll do to you if you stay.

CASEY

I told you already, I'm not leaving you.

The axe hits the same spot again and the wood splinters.

MCGREGOR

For fuck sake, Casey - run! You've read the books - this is when they come for the bad man.

CASEY

Not without you!

The axe tears through once more and a hand shoots in reaching for the lock. McGregor grabs Casey by the hand and rushes through the kitchen towards the back door. The second they get there, they see Vivo waving to them from the window.

McGregor turns heel and drags Casey back towards the stairs. As they pass the front door again, it shoots open. Keller sees them running--

KELLER

--Whoa, slow down there!

He grabs Casey by the wrist and pulls her back. McGregor tries to swing on Keller, but Vivo's arrived. He nails Ellis in the back of the head and McGregor falls to one knee.

Undeterred, he dives for Keller. Jon releases Casey to fend him off, but the two of them crash backwards onto the dining room table.

The candles Casey lit roll around until they light the table cloth on fire. As McGregor and Keller struggle, the table cloth falls into a fiery lump on the ground. And soon the carpet takes flame...

Vivo's taken hold of Casey. As she tries to wrench herself free from his grasp, she sees the third member of their party. Kyle is standing by the front door, not participating.

CASEY

Kyle, what are you doing here?!

He shakes his head, wanting to be anywhere else.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Please help us!

KYLE MURPHY

I can't!

CASEY

They're gonna kill us, Kyle!

VIVO REAL

You two -- *shut the fuck up!*

The chipped wallpaper begins to burn. It goes up in seconds. The heavy curtains are next. The heat is so strong that several windows explode out, the fire chasing the oxygen outside along the aluminum siding.

Back inside, the entire room is seared in flame. Casey tries to get Kyle's attention again, imploring him...

CASEY

Please...

KYLE MURPHY

What do you expect me to do?!

CASEY

Something!

Kyle edges forward, tentatively--

VIVO REAL

Don't even think about it.

Vivo pulls a pistol from his back pocket and levels it at Kyle.

VIVO REAL (CONT'D)

Go back to the car.

KYLE MURPHY

Come on Vivo, let's just go!

VIVO REAL

We go when he's dead.

They watch as Keller's hands close around McGregor's neck. Seeing his window to act disappearing, Kyle rushes at Vivo. Letting go of Casey, Vivo takes a step backwards and shoots Kyle in the face. The kid drops instantly to the floor.

The roar of the gun is deafening. It takes Keller and McGregor by surprise. Keller uses it to swing on McGregor's face. In the shock of his stitches reopening, Keller is able to land two more undefended punches.

Vivo recaptures Casey. Trying to get free, she bites down hard on his arm. He screams and drops the gun. Both Casey and Vivo crawl for it.

At the same time, Keller runs for the axe. He gets there only to find McGregor hobbling away to help Casey.

Keller swings to cut him down, but at the last moment, Ellis trips and the axe goes right past him, burying itself deep into soft flesh.

Casey stands there, the axe handle jutting out of her stomach. She stares dumbly at it for a moment before pulling it out. Too much blood comes with it. She laughs suddenly, then stops and falls to her knees.

McGregor screams horrifically as Casey topples over, bleeding profusely. In shock, he tries to go to her, but there's a violent exhausted creak of burnt support beams.

The house is beginning to collapse. A column tears free from the ceiling and cuts the room in half, separating Casey and McGregor.

As it falls, Vivo trips backwards and loses his gun. He tries to reach for it, but he comes back with a burned hand.

McGregor's closer to the gun. He manages to pick it up and fires at the two of them as Vivo gets his cousin to his feet and drags him screaming towards the door.

McGregor tries to get past the burned wreckage, but the fire is only getting worse. He burns himself trying to climb over and watches as Casey passes out, the light leaving her eyes.

He gives in to deep, primal cries of how unfair everything is. Choking on smoke, he looks around. If he doesn't leave now, he'll be dead too. He risks one last look at the love of his life and takes off out the back door into the night.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- SAME TIME

Ben Hart pulls up to the curb of the burning house as Vivo and Jon Keller tear across the lawn towards Kyle's car.

Ben drunkenly struggles out of his own car towards the house, fearing the worst. The front door is open, wreathed in flame. With no help coming, he's forced to run inside.

INT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Ben breathes through his shirt, but it doesn't help. He coughs violently, his eyes filled with stinging tears. The smoke is too thick...

He drops to his hands and knees and crawls along the floor feeling his way. He comes across Kyle's dead body, only realizing the kid is dead when his hands find a hole where his face used to be.

The flames have become unbearable. Ben turns to leave when he sees Casey several feet in front of him in a thick pool of blood. He fights his way to her.

Stepping over burnt scaffolding, his pant leg catches fire. He smothers it out, then leans down next to Casey.



BEN HART

Oh no, please! Please be okay!

He lifts her into his arms and runs from the house, sputtering and coughing.

EXT. MCGREGOR HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Ben carries Casey across the front lawn of the house. As he runs, he talks to her, begging her to hold on--

BEN HART

*--Come on, Casey! I know you can  
hear me! I made it on time! You're  
gonna be alright!*

He's huffing and puffing by the time he gets to his car. He places her gingerly in the front seat, then runs around to the driver's side. Getting in, he speeds off down the road.

INT. BEN'S CAR -- MINUTES LATER

Ben Hart races through traffic, one hand driving, the other holding Casey's wound--

BEN HART

*--Stay with me, Casey! We're almost  
there!*

EXT. OVERLOOK HOSPITAL -- SOON AFTER

Ben's car careens into a handicapped spot as he gets out screaming for help. There's no one outside, so he picks up Casey himself and carries her inside.

INT. OVERLOOK HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Ben is covered in blood by this point and turns all sorts of heads as he and Casey enter. Once inside, he screams at the top of his lungs for anyone to hear--

BEN HART

*--Somebody help!!! I need a doctor  
here!!!*

INT. OVERLOOK HOSPITAL, WAITING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ben Hart sits with his head buried in his hands. Casey's blood is still wet on his clothes and the other people waiting to be seen give him a wide berth.

Just then, Sgt. Darota enters, out of breath. He goes right to Ben. Seeing the blood, his mouth gapes open.

SGT. DAROTA

*Jesus Christ Ben, what happened?!*  
I heard it over the radio - the  
fire at McGregor's. What the hell  
did you do?!

Darota's presence brings Ben crashing back to reality.

BEN HART

Max, this wasn't me. You need to  
track down Jon Keller and that  
cousin of his. When I got there  
they were just leaving.

SGT. DAROTA

Why are you covered in blood?!

BEN HART

They left a girl in there and  
another kid. His face was... he  
was dead... I just barely got Casey  
out. She's in surgery now.

SGT. DAROTA

You're telling me the truth?

BEN HART

Becca lied. The teacher... he's  
innocent...

SGT. DAROTA

*What?!*

BEN HART

You have to find them.

INT. KELLER'S HOUSE -- SAME TIME

Keller and Vivo hurry into Jon's house.

VIVO REAL

Get your shit - we shouldn't even  
be here!

KELLER

I'll be one minute, then we're gone.

He runs up the stairs as fast as he can.

INT. KELLER'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Keller grabs a duffel bag and stuffs it full of clothes. There's no rhyme or reason to what he takes, just the actions of someone who wants to get out of town fast. When the bag is full he heads back downstairs...

INT. KELLER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Keller gets to the landing as Vivo asks:

VIVO REAL

You ready?!

KELLER

Yeah, let's go...

They head towards the front door, the way they came in. They're almost there when the living room light comes on. Vivo and Keller stop in their tracks. McGregor has a gun on them; the one Vivo dropped at his house.

MCGREGOR

Stop where you are.

KELLER

McGregor, we're leaving town.  
We're not coming back.

MCGREGOR

The fuck you are. Put your stuff down. Empty your pockets and stand over here.

They both do what he asks, but Vivo shakes his head.

VIVO REAL

You ain't gonna shoot us, man--

Ellis fires a single shot into Vivo's shin. The young man's legs shoot out from under him--

VIVO REAL (CONT'D)

*You fuckin' bitch!*

As Vivo rocks back and forth on the floor gripping his wound, Keller puts his hands up.

KELLER

I'm sorry.

MCGREGOR

It's not good enough, Jon. You killed the only person who showed me kindness in five years. You took the last thing that made me human. This night doesn't end with you living.

KELLER

Then do it! This wasn't the plan. I came to your house to save her and look what happened!

MCGREGOR

To save her from what?

KELLER

From you. You're an abomination--

Sick of his words, McGregor fires at Keller, narrowly missing his head and exploding a lamp directly behind him.

KELLER (CONT'D)

*Okay, okay!* I said, I'm sorry - what do you want?!

MCGREGOR

Something you can't give me--

SGT. DAROTA (O.S.)

*Police! Put your hands up!*

Darota has silently come in the front door. He holds his service revolver out towards McGregor.

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)

McGregor, put the gun down!

Ellis grips the handle of his gun even tighter.

MCGREGOR

I can't...

Darota's breathing fast--

SGT. DAROTA

--I don't want to shoot you.

KELLER  
Yeah, listen to the man, McGregor--

SGT. DAROTA  
*Shut up, kid!*

Darota steadies himself...

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)  
Come on, Ellis... let's go home.

MCGREGOR  
I don't have a home anymore. He  
took it from me. He took  
everything--

SGT. DAROTA  
The girl is alive.

MCGREGOR  
*What?!*

SGT. DAROTA  
You have to trust me. Ben Hart got  
her out. She's in surgery right  
now.

MCGREGOR  
How the hell can I believe that?!

SGT. DAROTA  
I just came from there...

MCGREGOR  
You're not lying?

SGT. DAROTA  
I know you have no reason to  
believe me, but it's true. I'll  
take you to see her.

McGregor laughs, wanting so much to believe him. He takes one more bitter look at Keller. It takes everything he's got, but he lowers the gun.

Turning his sights onto Keller, Darota steps slowly in to grab McGregor's gun. But as he does, Vivo kicks him with his good leg.

As the Sergeant loses his footing, Keller lurches forward to tackle McGregor. Dropping to the floor, Darota fires off two shots into Vivo's chest. Vivo dies gritting his teeth in pain.

As Keller slams into McGregor, Ellis loses his gun. It scuttles across the floorboards as both McGregor and Keller race after it.

When the pistol comes to a stop several feet away, they fight for ownership. It's a stalemate until Keller brings his fist crashing down onto McGregor's face, once again opening stitches. The blow dazes Ellis, giving Keller enough time to reach for the gun...

And just as he comes up with it and aims straight at McGregor's head, Darota empties his clip into the kid.

As Keller falls slack to the ground, both Darota and McGregor collapse onto their backs, trying desperately to catch their breath.

EXT. KELLER'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

As sirens sound in the distance, McGregor and Darota exit the house, beaten and tired. They wait on the front steps for the inevitable...

SGT. DAROTA

God, what this town did to you...

Darota sighs and shakes his head.

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)

I have a feeling my brother-in-law's deeper in this than he says.

He motions to the police lights. They've only got a few moments left...

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)

We need to have a conversation before they get here. If I tell them exactly what happened in there then you go to jail. You know that, right?

MCGREGOR

If?

SGT. DAROTA

It's been a long night, McGregor. I don't see what sending you to jail would add to it.

MCGREGOR

Then what should I do?

SGT. DAROTA  
You should run.

McGregor looks at him, uncertain.

SGT. DAROTA (CONT'D)  
Now.

Ellis nods, vigorously.

MCGREGOR  
Thank you.

With that, he turns and runs as fast as he can into the nearby woods...

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, HOSPITAL ROOM -- EARLY MORNING

The sun's coming up as McGregor enters the recovery wing. He quickly finds Casey's room and sees her through the glass.

She's pale green with tubes going everywhere. Horrible bags hang below her eyes, her body going through the fight of it's young life.

He enters the room and goes to her bedside. He watches her quietly until she wakes. She smiles softly. McGregor returns it, so damn grateful...

CASEY  
Hey...

MCGREGOR  
You're alive.

CASEY  
I'm alive. What happened?

MCGREGOR  
I'll tell you everything, just not right now. Right now, just let me look at you.

CASEY  
You old softie... look what happens when we try to break up. The universe wants us together--

Casey laughs, then winces. It hurts to laugh. McGregor smiles, but there's more sadness there than anything...

MCGREGOR

This will never stop, Casey.  
People will always look at me and  
see a monster.

CASEY

I know. They don't see what I see--

MCGREGOR

You don't understand.

CASEY

That's where you're wrong. You've  
always thought you were alone in  
this...

She touches his healing face.

CASEY (CONT'D)

...but we've both got scars now.

He nods. They kiss and he holds her close...

CASEY (CONT'D)

Promise me something though.

He looks up at her.

MCGREGOR

Anything...

CASEY

When I'm better...

She smiles, wearily...

CASEY (CONT'D)

Can we please get the fuck out of  
this town?

As they break into laughter, we pull back to give them some  
much needed privacy...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END