

A BAD COLD

Screenplay by Gen Vardo

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TITLE CARD:

"I crept in undetected. Piece by piece I grew inside your every cell. You will not find a humane way to remove me."

-Demon

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

An old large house, its décor and furnishings dating back to the mid-sixties, situated on an all-too quiet street, in an all-too quiet suburb some distance from the local TOWN.

CHRISTOPHER (mid-thirties) is stood in silhouette outside his mother's bedroom. In turn red and blue lights slide around the hallway, only they illuminate the house.

A dark FIGURE approaches him from behind and hands him some paperwork on a clipboard. He signs it before it slips from his hand. The Figure picks it up then disappears.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christopher stands inside the doorway, the red and blue lights pouring through the windows.

The bed is empty and the blankets drape to the floor. There's a small bookcase on one side of the bed filled with neatly organised medications, its books making the opposite bedside table next to a comfortable chair.

The books, pictures, posters, and memorabilia scattered around make this the former room of a left wing social radical.

Christopher tries building up to scream the entire house down, but nothing escapes his mouth, and his eyes remain dry.

The red and blue lights begin to fade and give way to the pale blue moonlight.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Christopher wakes early in an uncomfortable position at the end of the bed. Turning away from his reflection in the TV he takes a moment looking around the room.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

Christopher enters the well-used study on the open third floor.

He heads over to the desk navigating stack after stack of medical research materials, each stacked so high to accept one more printout, book, magazine or journal, would bring any stack thumping down, felling the rest.

He grabs a FOLDER off the desk and checks its contents, then heads back downstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

He stands outside his mother's bedroom at the top of the stairs gripping the FOLDER tightly in his hands.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FRONT BEDROOM - DAY

JENNIFER (eighteen) is staring out the window of the front bedroom where she sleeps; in a home, her bedroom.

The door is missing, buckled hinges hanging off. The inside is plain with no posters on the walls, just a rickety single bed and closet.

Jennifer's knuckles are white from gripping the windowsill as she stares, eyes bloodshot, to the top of the street.

She sees Christopher in the distance, FOLDER in hand, leave his house and drive off.

As a MAIL VAN approaches Jennifer closes her eyes.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Jennifer's MOTHER is sifting through the mail. Dropping a LETTER behind her she disappears into the kitchen.

Jennifer grabs the LETTER from the floor and tears it open defiantly. Her body contorts with the news.

She looks over at the kitchen doorway seeing her Mother's BOYFRIEND'S loosened WORK BOOTS sticking out.

The LETTER slips from Jennifer's hand.

INT. MOTHER'S OLD CAR - MOVING - DAY

Christopher slows the car intending to stop outside an INSURANCE OFFICES building in Town.

Looking out the window he's struck by the freshly boarded up door and white washed windows covered with signs of solvency.

EXT. TOWN - INSURANCE OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Christopher opens the car door and steps out into the road. The car continues to roll down the road as he walks up to the front of the building with the FOLDER in his hand.

The car comes to a stop with the help of a parked car. As he stands on the sidewalk staring at the building, the FOLDER slips from his hand, spilling the paperwork.

EXT. TOWN - BANK ONE - DAY

Christopher stands facing BANK ONE before walking in.

INT. BANK ONE - DAY

Christopher stares at the ceiling, hearing nothing while the BANK MANAGER, with BANK GUARD ONE and BANK GUARD TWO either side of him, is pointing at the screen he's turned around showing Christopher he has until the end of the month to vacate his house.

Giving them no attention Christopher gets up and walks out followed by both guards.

EXT. TOWN - BANK ONE - DAY

Christopher gets back in the car, parked diagonally on the sidewalk, and drives off on auto pilot.

EXT. ABANDONED GROUND - DAY

Behind the opposite row of houses to Christopher's is a large unused and overgrown field.

Jennifer is walking along the fencing at the top of the field when she notices something metallic wedged in a hole in the fence.

She looks closer and sees that it's a fairly well hidden digital camera, aiming between two houses over at Christopher's home.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - DAY

Jennifer walks around to the back door and enters without knocking or calling out.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - DAY

She finds Christopher sat in an old chair, facing a fireplace that looks like it stopped being overused several years ago, the rest of the room not far behind. He barely acknowledges an uninvited person walking in.

JENNIFER

I need your help.

Christopher responds in a dry emotionless manner, his voice sounding as though it hasn't been used in a long time.

CHRISTOPHER

You're in my house.

Jennifer sits on the edge of the opposite chair looking for Christopher's attention.

JENNIFER

Do you remember me? From down the street. You helped me learn how to ride a bike when I was young.

CHRISTOPHER

Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Yeah, Jennifer... Are you ok?

CHRISTOPHER

You're in my house.

JENNIFER

I need your help. I was wondering if I could stay here for a few days, a week at the most. Please, I won't get in the way.

CHRISTOPHER

No.

JENNIFER

I could just stay down here, on the couch, please I really need-

CHRISTOPHER

--Stop.

After dropping her head for a moment, Jennifer changes tack.

JENNIFER

Have you heard about The Thief? They're really famous, infamous. They have a particular method of robbery. They set up a camera facing the property they intend to rob, then days later, pick it up and go through the footage. Knowing the comings and goings of the house they slide in and take whatever they want. ...You have a camera pointed right at your house.

Christopher tries to laugh but fails.

CHRISTOPHER
(softly)

Why not?

JENNIFER
I can help you.

CHRISTOPHER
You should lead with that, entering a stranger's house.

JENNIFER
You're not a complete stranger. I want to meet The Thief. I am desperate to leave this place and my last reasonable hope of doing that, disappeared this morning.

CHRISTOPHER
You want to be a thief?

JENNIFER
Yes.

CHRISTOPHER
You want my advice?

JENNIFER
Yes.

CHRISTOPHER
Steal the camera.

JENNIFER

It's not that easy. I don't have transport. I don't know where to sell stolen property, without being caught or ripped off. I don't know how to not be caught full stop. This guy is the best. I need professional help.

CHRISTOPHER

You think that this guy, who's preparing to rob my house, will take you under his wing and teach you everything you need to know?

JENNIFER

Just stay upstairs and let me have a conversation with them. What do you have to lose? I'm stopping them robbing you. I'm helping you. Just lock every door and window except for the laundry room. I'll wait in there for them... out of your way.

CHRISTOPHER

You're in my house.

Christopher gets up and begins to head upstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer follows and calls after him from the bottom of the stairs.

JENNIFER

Just think about it. I'll leave out the back. All you have to do is leave the house at the same time each day for a couple of hours. I can check the camera each morning and let you know when it's gone.

Jennifer leaves using the back door.

Christopher IDLES at the top the stairs before heading back down and locking the back door.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

After piling all the research materials against the far wall Christopher checks his email.

There's a mass of emails from various medical professionals and establishments, as well as old emails from friends and work colleagues inquiring where he is and what he's doing. Only the medical emails are marked as read.

He opens an email at the top from BRAD (mid-thirties):

BRAD (email)

Broooooo!!!! Where you been???

Friday bro, the boys are free,
been t-o-o long, u in?

C'mon bro, like we did in
college ;)

Christopher makes an internet search for Brad and finds that he's now the joint CEO of a successful looking investment company.

Christopher shoots up out of the chair with an exited fear in his eyes. He sits back down, pushes the laptop away and stares at his hands becoming fists.

He pulls the laptop back and replies to Brad:

CHRISTOPHER (email)

Sounds great. Let's do it at my
mother's house.

As Christopher sits back and stares at the laptop his eyes begin to smile.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - EVENING

Christopher, now with more life to his steps, walks into the lounge and slyly looks out over the road between the two houses to the fence where the camera is hidden, then walks to the back door and unlocks it before heading into the kitchen.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Christopher is collecting some cleaning equipment from under the sink as Jennifer walks in through the back door, this time with even more purpose.

JENNIFER

Listen...

Christopher's voice now has some life to it.

CHRISTOPHER
You're in my home.

JENNIFER
...it's still there.

CHRISTOPHER
Good.

JENNIFER
Good how? You'll help?

Jennifer follows Christopher as he walks through to the lounge with the cleaning equipment.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Christopher begins cleaning.

CHRISTOPHER
I'll help. You keep an eye on the camera, and I'll make my comings and goings very obvious. Then Friday I'll be ready.

JENNIFER
I'll be ready.

CHRISTOPHER
No.

JENNIFER
Just wait upstairs.

CHRISTOPHER
(stumbling)
I'll talk to him, make sure he's safe.

Jennifer looks suspiciously toward Christopher before forcing herself to go along with him.

JENNIFER
Wait, we don't know what day he'll come back for the camera. You said Friday. It's only Tuesday.

CHRISTOPHER

The two houses either side of the camera are empty, but they still have power, so their security systems are still on. All I need to do is angle the motion sensors on the sides of each house down toward the camera. Should scare him off if he comes for it before Friday. Then Friday morning, I turn them back around.

JENNIFER

Yeah, that's pretty good. I can do that. What are you cleaning for?

Christopher takes a moment looking over at Jennifer.

CHRISTOPHER

There are some tools in the draw beside the kitchen sink if you wanna do it.

Jennifer walks through to the kitchen leaving Christopher staring out toward her with suspicion.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Jennifer finds the draw filled with miscellaneous items including a few screwdrivers, and a destructive looking HAMMER. She crams her pockets with all the screwdrivers.

EXT. ABANDONED GROUND - EVENING

Jennifer climbs up the small gap between the fencing and the back of the first house, being very careful not to rock the fencing.

Perched on the top of the fence she's able to reach around the side of the house to the sensor which is aimed down the open alley toward the side door, mirrored on the neighbouring house.

After searching through her pockets for the right screwdriver she removes one screw. Then hiding her head behind the house and with her hand flat against the wall she carefully turns the sensor around.

Satisfied it's aiming over the fence covering one side of the camera she looks over to the other and very carefully gets down.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

Christopher walks into a clean lounge and neatly places a NOTEPAD and PENCIL on the table he's re-placed central to the fireplace, with two armchairs on one side facing a couch on the other.

Behind the couch in the other half of the room is a stand up piano resting against the wall, a large library style bookcase almost filling the opposite wall. In the centre sits a rug and a dozen well used sixties floor pillows.

He adjusts everything with care stepping back now and then to take in the whole room. Once he's satisfied he heads upstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - EVENING

Christopher reads an email reply from Brad:

BRAD (email)

He's alive! alive!!

Great to hear back from you bro,
sounds great, friday at your
mums, I'll let the boys know.

Christopher closes the laptop and breathes a sigh of relief.

FADE OUT

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Jennifer stands in front of the washing machine as it runs, glaring at the top of the machine, the door to the laundry room wedged open with the laundry basket.

She hears heavy WORK BOOTS enter the kitchen and steps back, hidden behind the door.

After an uncomfortable amount of time for Jennifer, the silence finally ends with the WORK BOOTS leaving the house.

Exhaling, a shaking Jennifer tries building up to scream the entire house down, but nothing escapes her mouth, and her eyes remain dry.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

The house now empty, Jennifer searches the room with little regard for how she leaves things.

She tears the backs off speakers and looks to the back of every draw and behind each sleazy eighties movie poster.

In the closet, she looks up to a pair of old work boots on the shelf. Hitting them aside to look behind them she hears one rattle.

She takes it down and finds a bottle of CHLOROFORM and a half full bottle of ROHYPNOL wrapped in a rag, shoved into the toe. She takes both and places the boot back, then tidies the room just enough.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FRONT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She walks up to the window and stares off toward Christopher's home, holding the drugs tightly in her hands.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jennifer enters by the back door and walks through to Christopher who's standing, staring at the closed fridge.

She's a little surprised by how his appearance has changed, he now looks like a productive member of society, clean shaven, conditioned hair, and smartly dressed.

JENNIFER

It's still there. I managed to turn the motion sensors around.

Christopher turns and smiles apologetically.

CHRISTOPHER

I kind of expected to hear an alarm go off. Sorry.

JENNIFER

That's ok. I guess I should have messed it up, lack of experience 'n all. Yeah don't go anywhere near the camera. Do you have a routine planned out?

CHRISTOPHER

Starts today. I'll get him here late Friday night.

JENNIFER

So you're going to make it obvious that you're in all the time except for late at night?

Christopher raises his eyebrows.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

Good, you know what you're doing. We didn't properly discuss me being here.

CHRISTOPHER

Come on, I won't go through with this if you insist on being here.

JENNIFER

I guess it's your house.

CHRISTOPHER

--Home. I'll see you Saturday.

JENNIFER

Saturday morning?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah... Are you ok?

JENNIFER

Yes.

CHRISTOPHER

Nothing else you wanna talk about?

Jennifer shrugs like she doesn't know where that question came from.

JENNIFER

You?

Christopher reciprocates the shrug.

Jennifer leaves out the back and Christopher goes about his; at home staging.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

He places the TV flat against the wall so that it illuminates the entire room.

He looks out to the unkempt front garden, paying no attention to NEWS CHANNEL ONE.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

...One, with a dime on top.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
Spooky. In recent news; The
Thief has killed for the second
time now.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
We used to like The Thief.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
No more selfies next to empty
shelves.

Christopher heads downstairs.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
More details to follow on the
continued hunt for The Thief,
here on News Channel One.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Christopher heads into the shed in the rear garden and takes out the lawnmower and some other garden maintenance equipment, then in turn drags it all around to the front garden and begins to mow the lawn.

With no real idea of what to do with the plants and small bushes, Christopher uses the rest of the gardening equipment almost as though they were movie props.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Christopher pauses, checking the CLOCK reading 11:00pm, before closing the last curtain on the front of the house.

EXT. MOTHER'S OLD CAR - NIGHT

Christopher arrives at a lonely spot overlooking the main Town.

He turns up the melancholic TRACK on the stereo then climbs onto the bonnet of the car, the cold night air curling him up as he looks over the Town.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - DAY

It's the next morning and Christopher hears Jennifer storm through the back door and stomp towards him as he's sat comfortably in the lounge, having already opened the curtains on the first floor.

JENNIFER

What were you doing yesterday? I saw you while I was checking on the camera. You were being so obvious. Just open the curtains in the morning, stay home, watch some TV then go to a fucking bar.

CHRISTOPHER
(in complete
agreement)

Yeah.

JENNIFER

Are you not going to ask about the camera?

CHRISTOPHER

I didn't hear anything.

JENNIFER

It's still there.

CHRISTOPHER

Why are you so desperate?

JENNIFER

Should I be worried about you?

CHRISTOPHER

Me? I need to open the upstairs curtains.

Jennifer follows Christopher upstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Other than the front of the house, all the curtains and blinds stay fixed open.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Don't take this the wrong way
but how come you don't just get
a job, save up that way?

JENNIFER
(phasing out)

I'm not interested in money.

Jennifer snaps back not wanting to have said that.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

--I've tried, really, they just never work out. Apparently I'm not a nine to five. I never last more than two or three months. I'm just not suited.

As Christopher walks into his bedroom Jennifer stands in the doorway looking around the room, struck by the homeless person scent attacking her.

Only the open suitcase that sits beside the bed with clothes pouring out onto the dust filled floor points to someone using it.

After opening the curtains he walks back out ushering Jennifer out, closing the door behind him.

CHRISTOPHER
(embarrassed)

It's a spare room. I just keep my things in there.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer sits on the bed as Christopher opens the curtains.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

My mother was never for working. Guess I rebelled getting into sales. She told me that I'd joined the masses. I get that you don't like the nine to five thing.

JENNIFER
I'm not against it. And I don't quit these jobs. I'm not a quitter. It's hard to explain.

CHRISTOPHER
Is it other people?

JENNIFER
I'm fine with other people, happy, it's not me. They feel uncomfortable.

CHRISTOPHER
Unless you find something you're interested in you'll struggle with any nine to five.

JENNIFER

I know it isn't me. And struggle isn't something I struggle with. The last job I had was in this restaurant in Town, on a little up-market street, shops, and restaurants. One day an alarm sounded from a building across from us, people in the restaurant barely took notice until another alarm began to sound just up the street.

(more)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

They're now fidgeting, looking over each other, almost completely silent. The manager is looking over at me concerned, like I should be doing something other than waitressing. Suddenly a third alarm goes off down the street. The restaurant is not just silent now, it's frozen still. I'm just stood trying to wait on table six in the centre of the room, waiting for everyone to wake up.

Christopher sits on the bed facing away from Jennifer.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

They all just sit there in silence for such a long time, until bang, our alarm sounds. Like alien ships had just rested above the buildings, everyone sprung up and scrambled out into the street, pushing each other out the way, calling out. I just stood there looking out of the windows. People from all the other buildings joined them in the street. They all just stood there congregating in the centre of the street, leaving all their valuables, all their things inside. I didn't get it. I didn't get their motivation. Where they afraid? What was it that they were afraid of? I know it's not me.

CHRISTOPHER

You know it isn't usually advised to make people feel different. You didn't go along with them. They saw you didn't feel the way that they did. You insulted them. Different will always make people feel uncomfortable. You gave them a reason to feel they could be wrong in the way they feel. So they pushed you away.

(phasing out)

I've never felt different. Always wanted to. Mum always wanted me to. But you see everyone like that, thinking that they're different, special. Strange to then get freaked out by different. We want to be different, not better, to not get well. We need to get well. We need that idea.

JENNIFER

(slightly
suspicious)

Idea?

CHRISTOPHER

Something that makes you believe, know, that you can be well again.

JENNIFER

(sympathetic)

I saw them carry your...

Jennifer senses an urgency to stop talking.

CHRISTOPHER

(phasing back)

What? Yeah, I trust you. Turn the sensors back Friday morning. Don't let those people affect you.

JENNIFER

How come we're just talking now?

CHRISTOPHER

Because I've been back three years? We don't really... I've been kinda busy. And you're a lot younger than me. It makes a big difference. I was in my early twenties when I was helping you to ride your bike. It was really cute that you kept walking it up here to wobble back down to your house, scraping your feet along. My hands were tied.

JENNIFER

No one else was gonna offer.

After getting up Jennifer hovers for a moment in the doorway.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

Yeah, fuck the masses. They're only afraid of not being the same as everyone else. I should only be afraid of getting hit on the head and joining them. I should leave you to it.

She heads downstairs calling out behind her.

JENNIFER (O.S) (cont'd)

Keep it simple.

Christopher turns on the TV and rests back on the bed with a book. After staring at the pillow next him he looks to the comfortable chair and jumps in it, continuing the book, again paying no attention to News Channel One.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

...In further news; an Arizona doctor was struck in the head by a meteor.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

Can he sue E.T?

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

More on that and the movie that maybe coming to Town in a short while.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Before she leaves, Jennifer creeps around the first floor. She's also paying no attention to News Channel One.

Beginning at the basement door she slowly reaches her hand out for the handle, daring herself to open it.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

We pick up from earlier with the latest on The Thief.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

It's estimated now, that even with street prices their earnings are reaching seven figures. Though nothing has been recovered --Am I the only one getting a serial killer vibe?

Jennifer whips her hand back, turns and enters the laundry room.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

You're a sensitive soul aren't you?

Jennifer walks over to the washer and dryer sat under the window and climbs up, taking the window off the latch.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O) (cont'd)

Again you can log onto the website to see if you've purchased or seen any of the items; the link shown below.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

Just over two years since we first reported --We were of course the first to report on The Thief, courtesy of Video Production News, a professional news gathering service. They brought us the first walkthrough of the Nostrum building.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

I would like to go back to when we were discussing how they got into some of those buildings. Until the murders the trial by media was well in their favour.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

Well apparently people are posting fake pictures of themselves, posing as though The Thief has killed them in their homes. Both men and women.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer sneaks into the kitchen and searches through the cabinets, alarmed at finding they're empty except for one half full of 'Wolf's Tooth, The Ideal Flavoured, Good Boy', dog food tins (All the l's in 'Ideal' obscured by the next can, 'Good' right underneath).

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

Manson style; fan base.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

People's fascination with the macabre, I just don't get it. It really bothers me.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

You moved to the wrong town.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

(cheerier)

Let's look forward to the movie coming to Town. One of Lou's guys informs us they've applied to take over an entire street; indefinitely.

She checks the fridge and finds it filled with nothing but prescribed specialist protein drinks and sealed medical packets, some obvious, used in reviving terminally ill patients, others more obscure looking.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

Sounds like a big production.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

They're holding open auditions sometime toward the end of the year. Are you going along?

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 Me? I did some stage work in
 college.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 Really?

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 I hit the boards.

EXT. ABANDONED GROUND - DAY

Jennifer sits at the opposite end of the field to the camera, drinking a protein drink she took from Christopher's fridge.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - EVENING

Jennifer walks down the side of the house and approaches Christopher who's sitting in an old tree house at the bottom of the rear garden, illuminated by the lights in the alleyway running behind.

It's an old, simple tree house resting up against a large tree in the corner. It consists of four large wooden uprights supporting a platform with a zip line above. There's a wooden pallet nailed to the branches high above.

JENNIFER
 Is there a password?

Christopher is sat with his back against the tree wrapped in a blanket, Jennifer climbs up.

JENNIFER (cont'd)
 Hey, pretty sweet setup you have here.

Christopher takes off the blanket and passes it to Jennifer who sits with it balled up on her lap.

CHRISTOPHER
 Yeah my uncle built this when I was really young. His first attempt was way up there. But I was too scared to keep climbing up so he built this one on the ground.

JENNIFER
 Is that why you're out here? To reminisce about family?

CHRISTOPHER

What are you really trying to do?

JENNIFER

What do you mean?

CHRISTOPHER

I mean your plan with The Thief.

JENNIFER

(holding back)

I shared that with you.

CHRISTOPHER

I remember what you said. I just get the sense that there's something else.

JENNIFER

You're not the only one.

CHRISTOPHER

Really?

JENNIFER

You were against this. Then all of a sudden you're enthusiastic, and well groomed.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm trying to help you. If you're suspicious of me for that... What about school? College?

JENNIFER

I didn't get in.

CHRISTOPHER

Grades?

JENNIFER

No, I got good grades. Despite all the time hanging out with cheerleaders.

CHRISTOPHER

You were one of the cool kids?

JENNIFER

Not really. Strange, those girls, they always talked so casually about being drugged and raped at parties.

CHRISTOPHER

What are you running away from?
Is it something to do with that
creepy guy? Your mother's
boyfriend right?

Jennifer closes off, Christopher has hit a nerve.

JENNIFER

I'm just leaving this place.

CHRISTOPHER

What place are you in?

JENNIFER

Yeah because you helped me learn
to ride my bike, so this is a
natural progression.

CHRISTOPHER

We were talking earlier. You
brought this to me.

JENNIFER

I asked you to stay upstairs,
out of it.

CHRISTOPHER

Why?

JENNIFER

To keep you out of it. To be
kind.

CHRISTOPHER

Somehow kindness seems to be the
furthest thing from your mind.

Jennifer moves to the edge of the platform.

JENNIFER

Because of all the years we've
spent together, getting to know
each other, learning each
other's finer characteristics,
you know what's on my mind.

CHRISTOPHER

I can see you. The grass is
always greener--

JENNIFER

--A common quote? Thank you for
making the effort.

Jennifer flicks the blanket off her lap, climbs down,
and heads away.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

I can see you too.

Christopher watches her leave as he pulls the blanket over him.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Christopher springs up having fallen asleep. Checking his watch he sees that it's 11:00pm.

Exiting the front of the house, still acting uncomfortable in front of the camera he gets into the passenger side of his mother's old car and slides over before driving off.

INT. MOTHER'S OLD CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Christopher pulls up to the same spot overlooking Town as the night before.

EXT. TOWN - OUTER - CONTINUOUS

After parking he turns up another melancholic TRACK then sits on the roof of the car wrapped in the blanket.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Christopher wakes early on top of his mother's bed with the blanket from the previous night wrapped tight around his neck.

He unravels it and throws it to the floor as though he's throwing a poisonous snake off him, then clears his throat.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

He turns on the TV then opens the curtains at the front of the house, again paying no attention to News Channel One.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
...T.F.I Friday. This just in...

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
(bemused)

How long have you been waiting
to say that on air?

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 --Too long.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 This is so dark. We could--

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 --Welcome to Town. Three houses
 dotted along the same street are
 currently being put out by Fire
 Team One.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Christopher opens the curtains at the front of the house.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 ...Video Production News on the
 scene.

The sounds of Fire Team One yelling and bumping past VPN REPORTER ONE, a young, overly dramatic for the job, male, are heard in the background.

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O)
 Yes, Video Production News first
 on the scene. And it's Panacea
 Street. So I'm down here on
 Panacea Street, and it is as we
 reported to you. There are three
 homes up in flames. Fire Team
 One really have their work cut
 out for them.

Christopher heads toward the basement door. On his way he reaches out and slides the basement key off the top of a picture frame without looking.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 We're not getting the video
 here.

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O)
 Unfortunately we are
 experiencing some technical
 difficulties down here at the
 moment. But we hope to bring
 live video to you as soon as
 possible.

Christopher rests his back against the wall facing the basement door while staring down, brushing the dust off the key.

MALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
 Sooo...

Christopher jolts forward and opens the door in one second flat.

The door creaks open in a metronomic, laboured way. Christopher stands still, staring down into the dark, his eyes refusing to adjust.

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O)
(overacting)

--O my god this is, this is incredible. You wouldn't believe the sights we're seeing down here. The flames are reaching far into the sky, the thick smoke casting a shadow over the entire street. It almost seems like night time. The fire has turned the day into night here on Panacea Street.

Years of wooden furniture and household items have been dropped down by the side of the steps, some covered by a large sheet. They rest piled up against the near wall.

The far wall is bare except for two small windows at ground level. An old radio sits on a desk up against the right wall. The left wall holds a few shelves with a random assortment of loose tools.

Everything past the second step from the top is covered in a great deal of dust.

From the top of the steps Christopher reaches down and grabs some of the old wooden furniture and throws it behind him into the hallway.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)
Can we attribute this to The Thief?

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O)
Well absolutely we look at the pattern that is recently emerging from The Thief's operando.

As Christopher is reaching down to grab a chair he stops and stares over at the basements central beam. There is a worn vertical stripe in the middle.

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O) (cont'd)

I certainly don't want to hang around here for long.

FEMALE NEWSREADER (V.O)

You've been on the ground from day one for us, covering every angle of this story. You must know The Thief better than anyone. Would you want to meet them down a dark alley?

Christopher pulls up another chair then closes the door. He rests for a moment holding onto the door handle.

VPN REPORTER ONE (V.O)
(dropping the act)

...No. This progression of violent and destructive behaviour leads to... Whether they have become afraid of an evidence trail that could be picked up by a skilled detective, or simply they're... I believe that they are on a downward spiral that leads to one place and one place only; the destruction of Town, or themselves.

Christopher flinches as both house alarms suddenly SOUND from across the road.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STREET - DAY

Christopher strides across the street and between the houses, the alarms still SOUNDING out as he reaches the fence.

Not knowing exactly where the camera is he scans around and sees a hole about the size of a golf ball. He looks through to the abandoned ground just as Jennifer's smiling eye pops up from the other side.

JENNIFER

Didn't work as a deterrent.

CHRISTOPHER

The camera's gone?

Jennifer pokes a screwdriver through the hole.

JENNIFER

Was aimed through here. I was coming over to turn the sensors back around.

CHRISTOPHER

Did he see you?

JENNIFER

No. And you're lucky they took it. You just walked right up.

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, ok, I'm ready now. I need to get ready. Jennifer, stay home.

Jennifer stares through the hole at Christopher walking away, her eye darkening as she pulls back.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - DAY

Christopher sits at the desk holding the key to the basement while staring at his laptop, before emailing Brad:

CHRISTOPHER (email)

Can you get everyone here early evening? Also I need you all to park up the road.

A moment later Christopher receives a reply:

BRAD (email)

Intriguing bro, see you soon. ;p

Christopher closes the laptop and shoves the basement key in his pocket.

FADE OUT

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FRONT BEDROOM - EVENING

Jennifer opens her closet and pulls a military kitbag from the back and empties it on the bed. Inside the bag is a mixed collection of items she's collected over the years to run away with; clothes, canteen, a little money, toiletries, etc.

She is temporarily overcome in seeing the older items from the bottom of the kitbag, particularly the photo of a man in military dress, his face scratched out.

She places some of the items back and fills it with newer clothes, the Chloroform and Rohypnol.

A content decided look now rests on her face.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

Christopher is pushing the piano back against the wall. He leaves a pair of wire cutters on top and walks over to the fireplace with a length of PIANO WIRE in his hand.

He lights the twisted pieces of newspaper at the base of the fire, having prepared it meticulously by breaking up the wooden furniture from the basement, then takes a step back.

He wraps the PIANO WIRE around each hand with effort, and stares through at the flames beginning to reach around the smaller pieces of wood.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FRONT BEDROOM - EVENING

Jennifer pulls the bedroom door from under her mattress and rests it in the doorway then heads downstairs, her kitbag slung over her shoulder.

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Her mother's boyfriend's workbag sits at the bottom of the stairs. Jennifer reaches in and takes out a LEAD PIPE.

Her mother and her boyfriend are sat in the lounge laughing along with the advertisements on TV.

Jennifer pauses at the front door turning to look into the lounge, squeezing the LEAD PIPE so tight no blood remains in her hand.

As the laughter continues to ring out she manages to force herself out of the house.

EXT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - STREET - EVENING

Jennifer is walking up the middle of the road when she sees a car pull up outside Christopher's home. The car pauses for a moment before turning around and heading away, parking up the street.

Jennifer moves to the sidewalk continuing up the street.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

As she gets closer Jennifer slides behind Christopher's fence seeing two people, Brad, and QUENTIN (early-thirties), walking down from the parked car.

QUENTIN (O.S)
So why did we have to park up
the street?

BRAD (O.S)
Behave, we're about to find out.

Jennifer slumps down on the ground as she hears them
knock on the door.

After taking out the LEAD PIPE and Chloroform she pushes
her kitbag under a bush, then sneaks around the right
side of Christopher's home after Brad and Quentin have
entered.

Jennifer places the LEAD PIPE on the window sill, then
runs around to the front door and listens in.

BRAD (O.S)
Yeah just up the street. Bro,
the place looks exactly the
same. Whoa you lost weight
though.

CHRISTOPHER (O.S)
Staying lean.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - EVENING

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah nothing's changed. How are
you doing?

BRAD
You know me, I'm always good.

QUENTIN
Hi, I'm Quentin. I'm Brad's
partner.

BRAD
--Business partner. Don't
confuse people like that. I've
told you.

Quentin smiles to himself.

CHRISTOPHER
Cool. Drinks are in the kitchen.

BRAD
Yes. You know the best thing
about having your license taken
away? You can drink as much as
you want.

Brad leads them to the kitchen.

QUENTIN

As long as you have a personal
slave.

BRAD

He'd never get out the house if
it wasn't for me.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Christopher has arranged all the alcohol he could find
around the house.

CHRISTOPHER

Help yourselves. I raided the
old ladies liquor cabinet.

BRAD

Damn, how old is this stuff?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, mums stuff. I haven't been
booze shopping since I moved
back.

BRAD

You?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, no I've been boring for a
while.

Quentin finds an old bottle of gin and some Triple Sec.

QUENTIN

Do you have any eggs and lemons?
Could make a White Lady.

Embarrassed, Brad shakes his head at Quentin.

CHRISTOPHER

No, sorry.

QUENTIN

It was Alfred Hitchcock's
favourite.

CHRISTOPHER

Sorry all out--Are the others
coming?

QUENTIN

Only Jim and Matt.

BRAD

James and Matthew. Yeah, they're on their way.

CHRISTOPHER

No one else?

QUENTIN

I didn't get a reply from anyone else.

Christopher sighs at Brad as he points over at Quentin.

CHRISTOPHER

Was I emailing...?

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

Christopher and Brad take a seat by the fire as Quentin walks up to the piano, Christopher looking over at him with a comical suspicion.

BRAD

Remember when we ended up crashed out here after stealing that bus?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, mum woke up to twenty half naked drunk idiots.

BRAD

Idiots? Pioneers. Your mum was cool as hell though. I was always jealous. I take it...

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, Monday.

BRAD

Shit. I'm really sorry man. I know you were close.

(to Quentin)

Quit staring at it and play something.

Quentin begins to play a slow, tough, melancholy tune on the piano.

CHRISTOPHER

How could you live with yourself if you didn't do everything you could for your mother? I wasn't prepared.

BRAD

Bro come on, you handled all kinds of shit back in college. Plus you were top-ish of the class.

CHRISTOPHER
(phasing out)

Maybe I lost something. I didn't expect... Been back three years. Doctors gave her six months, max.

BRAD
She was a fighter.

CHRISTOPHER
Yeah I fought really fucking hard.

(phases back)

Yeah, she was always a fighter. You have no idea. Remember that story I told you about that guy who stole a helicopter from off the top of the News Channel One building?

BRAD
Yeah.

CHRISTOPHER
That was mum. She was trying to rescue her friend's daughter from being abducted by her abusive husband. Left the chopper in the desert and hitched back. Fuck, feels weird. I can say all this now. Actually feel a bit sick.

BRAD
You'll be good.

CHRISTOPHER
She never told me to not say anything. She never really told me to do anything. Why...

(phasing out)

No matter what the cost, you look after yourself.

BRAD
Family first.

CHRISTOPHER
(phases back)

Yeah, yeah you look after your family. I researched everything out there. I found specialists, who happened to be the most expensive fucking people who ever lived. I had to lie about her condition to get them to take her on as a patient. Fuckers all want a perfect record. Strangely easy forging medical records.

(more)

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

I sold my apartment. Took out three separate loans. Re-mortgaged this place. The banks taking the house, and I have more debt than I could ever... Yeah, fuck.

BRAD

If I can help with any--Holly shit, this is why you wanted us to meet up here. You're gonna burn your house down for the insurance.

Quentin pauses on the piano.

CHRISTOPHER

I could burn my *home* down perfectly fine on my own.

Quentin resumes the piano.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

My mother had everything under one insurance company and they're gone, disappeared, so that wouldn't work anyway. I was supposed to get everything back. Everything was supposed to go back to how it was with the life insurance settlement. No settlement, no going back.

BRAD

So why are we here?

CHRISTOPHER
(to Quentin)

I know I recognise you.

BRAD
Quentin. He tried out for the
frat. Only lasted three days.

QUENTIN
(proudly to
self)

Two.

Quentin continues playing, a little more uplifting this time.

BRAD
We met up again about two years
after I took over the company.
He grew on me. The company was
handed down to me; great uncle,
I think that's a thing, my dad's
uncle?

CHRISTOPHER
So you're doing good?

BRAD
If you know what you're doing,
listen, people always want to
invest. Greed is a commodity.

Quentin looks over at Brad and rolls his eyes.

BRAD (cont'd)

(attempting
sincerity)

Was she on any medication?

CHRISTOPHER
(plainly)

Stay out of her room.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - EVENING

Jennifer is standing by the front window listening intently as Quentin begins playing Ennio Morricone's: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.

She suddenly hears voices approaching from up the street and runs back around the side of the house, watching as JIM and MATT, both mid-thirties, approach. The guys all

see each other through the window so Jim and Matt both walk straight in.

Jennifer walks back toward the front of the house. Hearing mumbled greetings she turns before reaching the front door and heads back over to her kitbag.

She slings it over her shoulder, a beaten look on her face. Looking back toward her mother's house the bag slips off her shoulder.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

Christopher stands in front of the fast growing fire preparing for what he has to say.

Brad, Jim, and Matt are sat on the couch with their drinks, Quentin at the piano.

BRAD

Come on bro, the suspense is killing us.

JIM

Yeah Quentin made it seem like you have some kind of surprise for us.

Christopher hearing the room go quiet, takes his time turning to face everyone.

CHRISTOPHER

I have something to sell. Life is not as tough as it could be. We're able fight back against... past surprises. Our darkest memories sink deep in and we believe we'll never be free of them. There's a way to replace those memories, those demons. That's what I'm selling.

Brad, Jim, and Matt relax back into the couch with bright anticipation. Quentin continues to play the piano, only now a little less precise due to his intrigue.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

We shouldn't believe that our past is out of our control, that we simply have to live with the pain. We don't. We don't invite pain into our lives, none of us do. Sometimes it invites itself and we're expected to live with it, and we do. We live with it. We don't have to. Dark memories are not set in stone. They are simply memories like any other. And they can be replaced. Unfortunately no amount of regular therapy will erase our darkest demons. Standard therapy just tells us to live with pain, teaches us to just cope. What if you don't want to just cope? What if you want to completely eliminate a part of your past?

(more)

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

That's what I'm selling; the opportunity to replace a past demon with a new, more manageable one. Tonight, sometime after eleven, a thief will enter this house and try to rob it.

The room is dead silent. No one looks at each other as they contemplate Christopher's words. Quentin stops playing and walks over to them.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

If you were drunk, hit an innocent with your car, killed them. Paint a car on the end of a baseball bat and plant it in The Thief's head. Then whenever you see a car you'll think of that. Not what you did before. It goes a lot deeper but this is the face of it. You replace the demon. The Thief's life means nothing. You buy a new jacket and suddenly it's the only jacket people are wearing. Association, whatever is at the front of our minds covers everything else.

MATT

Who gets to...?

CHRISTOPHER

You can bid.

QUENTIN

How do you know someone's going to break into your house?

BRAD

(to Quentin)

Behave.

Christopher looks over at the CLOCK in the room. It's almost 9:00pm.

QUENTIN

Have you set someone up?

CHRISTOPHER

The Thief is working these outer-suburbs. He had a camera set up facing my home all week. The camera isn't there today. I've been out every night from eleven.

JIM

I know about The Thief.

QUENTIN

You can't actually be considering... Wait. The one from... Have you been listening to the--

BRAD

--Shut up.

CHRISTOPHER

(to Quentin)

You can leave.

Quentin walks back over near the piano with his head in his hands.

MATT

How much?

CHRISTOPHER

Make a bid.

BRAD

I need another drink.

JIM, MATT

Yeah.

They all head into the kitchen leaving Quentin by the piano.

Standing up he continues playing The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly, with three notes of the famous part left to play he hits them hard out of protest.

As he hits the last key it CLUNKS producing no note just as he hears a floorboard CREAK above.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

After looking through to the kitchen and seeing them all stood staring at their drinks Quentin heads upstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Quentin tiptoes around the second floor. Finding no one he heads up to the study. As he reaches the top of the stairs he stops and leans right up to the closed door.

QUENTIN
(quietly)

I'm pretty sure that you just
heard what was said downstairs.
I can help you get out. I can
help you escape.

Jennifer rips the door open and pulls Quentin into the room, then quietly closes the door after making sure no one followed him up.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Quentin stumbles into the centre of the room. His fear quickly evaporates as he stares at the back of Jennifer, standing with her hands pressed on the door.

JENNIFER
I'm not The Thief. You're the
one who was objecting?

A deflated Jennifer walks slowly backward into the room toward Quentin, building in defiance each step.

QUENTIN
Yes... If you're not The Thief--

JENNIFER

--It's my idea. He's trying to sell my idea. My way out of this place.

Jennifer slyly takes out the bottle of Chloroform, continuing to move slowly backwards toward Quentin.

QUENTIN

Why are you hiding up--Your idea?

JENNIFER

You need to keep quiet.

QUENTIN

You're hiding out in a house where a bunch of guys are planning on...

JENNIFER

Yeah.

QUENTIN

You know there will be a reward for turning in The Thief. All we have to do is call the police as they arrive.

JENNIFER

Yeah, sounds good.

In front of Quentin, her back still to him, Jennifer pours some Chloroform into her palm.

QUENTIN

I mean those guys are crazy to even consider what Chris is talking about right?

JENNIFER

(defiant)

Christopher.

Jennifer turns and slaps her hand to Quentin's face. He reacts trying to push her off him but quickly begins slumping to the ground, trying to spit out the Chloroform.

Jennifer guides him to the ground, unavoidably inhaling some of the fumes and dropping the bottle.

Dazed she crawls away from Quentin.

BRAD (O.S)

Nerd, you up here?

Jennifer curls up on the floor.

BRAD (O.S) (cont'd)

Yeah, the nerd left.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - EVENING

Brad walks downstairs as the others are heading into the lounge.

BRAD

Fucker was my ride.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Brad follows them in and takes a seat with Jim and Matt as Christopher prepares by the now roaring fire.

MATT

So we just bid openly?

CHRISTOPHER

If that's cool with everyone?

They all nod tentatively, looking over each other. Suddenly hesitant, Christopher takes a moment staring into the fire before turning and jumping into the auction.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Ok, I'll start the bidding, at one thousand dollars.

They all raise their hands then decide to just call out.

BRAD

Ok.

MATT

One five.

JIM

One eight.

MATT

Two.

JIM

Two five.

BRAD

Four.

JIM
Fuck you.

MATT
Four five.

JIM
Five.

BRAD
Five and a half.

MATT
Six.

BRAD
Dude, c'mon.

MATT
One punch, I know I can do it.

JIM
Seven.

BRAD
You think you can afford to beat me?

MATT
What the fuck?

Christopher tries to quell the building tension.

CHRISTOPHER
There's no judging on amount.
The size of your wallet could
never equal the size of your
motivation to replace the worst
part of your past.

Matt walks over to the window.

BRAD
Ten.

JIM
Fifteen.

MATT
Twenty.

BRAD
Twenty five.

JIM
Thirty.

Jim and Brad stand and take a step away from each other, their eyes locked.

CHRISTOPHER

Wait, wait... Just write down your limit.

(calming)

There's more than one way into this home. You each hide inside one and whoever gets him pays the average.

Tearing a page each from the NOTEPAD they write down their limit and hand them to Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

All the same. Are you all sure?

They all give Christopher a look that says 'fuck yeah', so he puts the bids in his pocket.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Guess I work out a payment plan with the winner. I'll wait in the basement.

JIM

Christopher, are you sure?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, I'll be fine. And the windows don't open down there anymore so it's the only place The Thief can't get in.

BRAD

I've climbed out of the study before, would be easy to get up. I'll take the study.

MATT

I'll take the first floor.

JIM

Second floor's fine.

CHRISTOPHER

Apart from the basement he could come in from anywhere.

JIM

I'm going to get my gun from the car.

Matt stands outside the lounge looking over his arena as Jim exits the house. Brad begins searching for some kind of weapon.

BRAD

Where are all the things for the fire?

CHRISTOPHER

We never had a set. You might find something in the shed. Or try the kitchen.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Brad heads out the back door slipping by Matt who's now stretching and shadow boxing up and down the hallway.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - EVENING

Jennifer is getting to her feet. Waking herself she takes Quentin's phone from his pocket as he lays unconscious on the floor.

JENNIFER

Stay here, and be quiet.

She opens the study door and stares down at the steps. It's dead silent in the house now. She tries to be as stealthy as possible heading down, avoiding the middle of the wooden steps.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Reaching the second floor she looks over the floorboards then to a rug draped over the bannisters at the top of the stairs.

Lightly testing the old creaky floorboards she pulls her foot quickly back on hearing a creak.

She takes a practice step on the skirting board and slips off. Undeterred she tries again, wasting no time.

She slides her foot along, her hand gripping onto the corner behind her.

She reaches out to Christopher's bedroom door, precariously balanced and overreaching.

Suddenly she hears someone burst through the back door bringing a lot of noise with them. Wasting no time taking advantage of the noise cover, Jennifer jolts over to hide behind the rug.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Below Jennifer, Matt is stood staring at Brad who's standing inside the back door brandishing a chainsaw, looking it over to start it up.

MATT

You're not taking this seriously.

BRAD

Fuck you punchy.

Jim walks in through the front door as Christopher is leaving the lounge.

Christopher stares down at the PISTOL in Jim's hand, and without looking over addresses Brad.

CHRISTOPHER

I don't have any fuel for that.

Christopher walks back into the lounge followed by Jim.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Brad rests the chainsaw on the counter and begins to look around for something else to use.

He pulls out a few knives first but quickly refuses them. Then a small can of lighter fluid, a bottle of bleach, and then a box of rat poison which has been chewed into, causing the pellets to fall out onto the counter.

He considers removing a cabinet door, gesturing smashing it over The Thief's head.

He grabs a dishcloth and a bottle of liquor. Refusing that too, he leaves it on the side, the dishcloth hanging out of the bottle.

He continues scouring the kitchen, now flush with odd weapons scattered around its counters.

Having gone right to left he opens the last draw and smiles with relief.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

Jim is slumped back in the couch staring at his PISTOL sat on the coffee table, Christopher staring at the CLOCK reading 10:00pm.

JIM

What time is it?

CHRISTOPHER
You have at least an hour.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - EVENING

Jennifer is peering around the rug watching Brad walk into the lounge, a destructive looking HAMMER in his hand, when she suddenly flinches hearing a thud come from the study.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - EVENING

A loud clinking sound is heard.

CHRISTOPHER
That was the study window.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

All but Christopher race to the bottom of the stairs brandishing their weapons: Jim with his PISTOL, Brad with his HAMMER, Matt with his FISTS up.

As soon as they reach the bottom of the stairs Jennifer jumps down past them, shoving them out the way as she races out the front door.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer sprints across the front lawn just as Quentin is running from the side of the house. She slams into his side knocking him to the ground with ease, Quentin unsure on his feet.

Jennifer walks over and picks him up by his arm, gripping it tight behind his back, everyone watching from outside the front door.

JENNIFER
I told you to stay there and be quiet.

Jennifer walks him indoors past the others.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer lets go of Quentin and backs up as the others gather around him.

JENNIFER (cont'd)
He was gonna call the cops.

BRAD
(to Jennifer)

You're The Thief?

Jennifer looks over at Christopher keeping the eye contact to half a second.

MATT
What the fuck is going on?

Christopher takes a moment looking over at Jennifer.

CHRISTOPHER
Meet Jennifer.

As Christopher walks back into the lounge Jennifer lets out a breath of relief.

CHRISTOPHER (O.S) (cont'd)

Don't let him leave.

MATT
Why were you running? Are we done? He's just gonna alert The Thief right?

JENNIFER
That's not why he was running. We met upstairs. He was talking about claiming some reward for catching The Thief.

As Jennifer walks into the lounge, Matt, Jim, and Brad close up around Quentin.

QUENTIN
Look, there has to be a pretty decent reward for helping to apprehend him. Let's just find out how much.

JIM
Let's forget the fact that you decided to hide upstairs. Let's ignore the fact the girl here, Jennifer, was also upstairs hiding--

QUENTIN
--I wasn't hiding, I thought she was The Thief then she drugged me. I think I drank Chloroform. I should see a doctor.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Jim walk into the lounge. Brad pushes Quentin in after them.

BRAD

You're a fuckin' embarrassment.
What's Chloroform like?

Christopher is back near the fire staring at the flames, deep in thought.

CHRISTOPHER

You drugged him?

Jennifer keeps her distance from Christopher.

MATT

How can we trust this fucking guy now? How do we know he's not gonna go straight to the cops when this is over and tell them everything? He already tried to run.

CHRISTOPHER

You brought Chloroform with you.
Why are you here?

JENNIFER

You know why.

MATT

Yeah and who is this fucking girl, and why was she hiding in your house?

JIM

Yeah, I mean we appreciate you running after this dick but--

Christopher turns to Jennifer.

CHRISTOPHER

--You were going to drug me.

Brad, taking it as his job to guard Quentin, is standing arms crossed working a less than average thousand yard stare.

QUENTIN

Seriously, does no one want to know how much the reward is?

Matt walks over to Quentin and knocks him out then drags him up near the piano.

Christopher checks the CLOCK reading 10:30pm, then looks back to Jennifer.

CHRISTOPHER

You never wanted to just meet
The Thief.

JENNIFER

I heard your little sales pitch.
Then I remembered what happened
to your dad. I understand.
You're not the only one with a
past you want to work out.

JIM

I guess the windows do open down
there.

CHRISTOPHER

Do you still have the
Chloroform?

JENNIFER

I spilt the bottle.

Christopher runs up to his mother's bedroom.

BRAD

So your name's Jennifer?

Christopher returns with a prescription bottle that he tosses to Brad.

CHRISTOPHER

Give him these, should keep him
knocked out.

(to Matt)

He won't tell the cops anything.
He'll be an accessory, before
and after the fact.

BRAD

Yeah, let him sleep through it.
Wait how am I supposed to...?
Fine.

As the others get comfortable, Brad crouches beside Quentin and begins trying to flick some of the tablets into his mouth. Unsuccessful he decides to grind a few up in his hands and blow the powder into Quentin's mouth.

JIM

If people did ever find out,
would they say any one of us had
the right?

Brad licks his hands clean as he joins the others.
Jennifer moves close to Christopher by the fire.

MATT

I did everything right. I waited until after college to take my boxing seriously. Then I trained like I couldn't live without pain. I was good, I had to be paired with sparring partners a weight class above me, right from the beginning. But family is family. And you only get one dad. He needed the money to pay off some guys or they were gonna kill him. So I threw my first professional fight. All the bookies had me at 'impossible to beat' odds. I didn't know how to throw a fight authentically. For the record I was Pulp Fiction, Travolta in that ring. I still got banned for life. They still killed my dad. I've never thought of spending my cut until tonight.

Brad storms off into the kitchen.

JENNIFER

What's his deal?

JIM

Brad? Yeah he doesn't function well without all the attention. He's a narcissist. And his intellect is far behind his ego. Have you read Nietzsche? Brads a Dwarf Man.

(more)

JIM (cont'd)

He spent his whole life telling everyone that he's the greatest. Not living up to the warped view you have of yourself can really screw you up.

JENNIFER

And why are you here?

JIM

I didn't do everything right. My career wouldn't allow it. I have a skillset. I figure people out easily. And I love studying people, any people. I'm like a neutral person, I can blend in anywhere. It's a gift I found right away in my career. I applied for undercover work even before I'd finished at the academy. My first assignment was kept simple; blend in with bad guys. I headed straight to the well-known low life criminal central hangout. A year later after I'd bled my way into their hearts I was finally a high rise low life criminal. And I found out there was a man in charge of all of it. I love the freedom you feel being someone else. I could do whatever I wanted. It feels like you're ruining someone else's life, not your own. I thought I could return to mine as soon as it was over. Then they just brought me back in.

(more)

JIM (cont'd)

I was weeks, maybe days away from finding out who, this guy was. They told me he was making so many mistakes that he's; better off left in charge. They didn't want someone competent taking his place. I was shooting up at a dealer's place, infiltrating this new gang when two local cops broke the door in. I flinched and shot them both. I'm not in jail because witnesses say the cops never identified themselves. I lost my job because I was on leave. I'm left addicted to learning, experiencing other lives. I'm not here to replace something from my past. I'm here for the experience. I'm here to continue learning.

Brad walks back into the lounge drinking from a bottle of whiskey.

JENNIFER
(to Brad)

And why are you here?

BRAD
I'm here because I'm here. I
wanted to get fucked up, and
Christopher was the best
drinking partner ever.

JENNIFER
I meant...

MATT
Apart from the surprise, Quentin
said it was about reminiscing.

JIM
(to Brad)

Over how great you were.

BRAD
Neither of you would be here if
it wasn't for me, show some--

JIM
--What? Why did I think you may
have grown? Maybe you should
call it a night.

MATT
Take sleepy head with you.

BRAD
Fuck you and fuck you. I have
just as much right to be here as
any of you. I don't need to give
a reason for sticking around.
And listen, if I had to explain
myself to every idiot that ever
crossed my path I'd spend the
whole of my life explaining
myself to every idiot that ever
crossed my path. See, none of
you ever reached to where I was
back in college. None of you
ever got there. And you're still
jealous.

JIM
(complete
disbelief)

Fuck me.

BRAD

I always had everything because I deserved it. I was the good guy. Every shy girl got her chance. I tried to make them cool by association. What did I get in return?

JIM

You got to rape them.

Christopher notices Jennifer's eyes burning between the PISTOL and Brad.

BRAD

I never raped anyone. Being persistent and raping are two different things.

JIM

Persistently getting kids drunk and fucking them is rape.

BRAD

They weren't kids. Fuck you, shoot me in the fucking head if you think I'm that bad. I did nothing wrong. Why am I here? I did everything right. I took on this company when I had a lot of other things going, good things.

(more)

BRAD (cont'd)

I even hired that unconscious prick over there as a fuckin' favour. It's not my fault it's going under. It's the economy. It's the way business' work in general. You have to falsify shit. You have to lie. If the system was different I'd follow it. It's not my fault. I try to help people out. I try and do the right thing, what happens? I get fucked over.

JIM

You deluded piece of shit.

Jim stands, holding himself back from lunging at Brad.

JIM (cont'd)

Let's get all the people you think you've helped in this room. We promise you the only ones smiling are the ones fantasising about killing you.

BRAD

We; see you always say we, you don't speak for everyone, it's just you.

Brad laughs arrogantly through Jim's retort.

JIM

Dumb, racist, sexist, selfish, arrogant, egotistical.

Brad grabs the PISTOL of the table and points it at Jim.

JIM (cont'd)

Narcissistic, sociopathic, vile, rapist.

Apart from Jennifer's eyes burning into Brad the room is silent. Brad is aiming the PISTOL right between Jim's eyes, the whiskey bottle still in the other hand. Neither of them is shaking or averting their glare.

Suddenly the power cuts, leaving the room lit by the fire. Brad is first to react heading off with the PISTOL.

BRAD

They cut the power.

Brad jogs feebly upstairs. Jim grabs Brad's HAMMER off the table and races after him as Matt stretches on his way out the room.

Christopher is stood holding onto Jennifer's shoulder.

JENNIFER
(quietly)

What is it?

CHRISTOPHER

The power company said it was going off today.

Christopher lets go of Jennifer and looks at her apologetically.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

I should have been honest from the start. I'm sorry. That thing you're trying to replace tonight... Good luck.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry too. Just didn't know how to explain my idea when I first raced in. Actually I was scared to.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm desperate for the money, but I shouldn't have brought them all here.

JIM (O.S)

Do it.

Christopher and Jennifer look out of the room.

JENNIFER

They can't have him.

CHRISTOPHER

Where will you be?

JENNIFER

Laundry room.

CHRISTOPHER

I'll be in the basement.

They both look at the CLOCK reading 10:45.

Pulling out a flask of water he had stored near the fireplace Christopher extinguishes the fire.

Jennifer and Christopher stand side by side facing away from the fire as the last few reams of smoke disappear above them.

The amber streetlights creep in the front, and the rest of the house adjusts to the bright pale blue moonlight from a full moon, almost cloudless sky.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

JIM (O.S)

Do... it.

Christopher follows Jennifer out of the lounge to address Jim and Brad at the top of the stairs.

Brad is pressing the PISTOL into Jim's forehead as Jim wields the HAMMER above his head as though it were an equal standoff.

JENNIFER

Get a room.

CHRISTOPHER

I haven't been able to pay the bills in a while. They've just cut the power. It's about ten to eleven. I suggest we all get settled in.

Jim takes his Pistol back. Brad then snatches his HAMMER, runs in and out of Christopher's mother's room and RATTLES up to the study.

Christopher and Jennifer walk side by side down the hallway.

Jennifer stands facing the laundry room door listening to Christopher take out the key and unlock the basement door.

Without hesitating, they both stride through each door simultaneously.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Searching around the kitchen Matt finds a first aid kit. He takes out two bandages, leaves the kit on the side and walks back into the hallway after removing his shirt.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Matt sits cross legged in the middle of the hallway and begins to wrap his FISTS with the bandages.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - EVENING

Jennifer unclutters the space around the window, then climbs up on the washing machine and reaches out for the IRON BAR, leaving the window wide open.

She then glides backward to the door, into shadow, staring at the top of the washing machine, the IRON BAR gripped tightly in her hand.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - BASEMENT - EVENING

Christopher is stood at the top of the stairs with the door closed behind him. He forces himself to jog down, stride over to the windows and prop them open.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

With the windows on the second floor open, Jim clears out the closet, sliding its contents under the bed.

He climbs in and practices opening the doors and leaping out, making sure he has a wide angle of fire.

With the closet doors closed he can only see into the room, the open doorway just out of view.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - EVENING

Brad is poorly practicing one and two handed swings with his HAMMER.

The desk is now littered with Christopher's mother's prescriptions. The tubes are all open and the tablets are mixed up and mostly ground down.

He sits back at the desk continuing to crush the tablets with his HAMMER and snort lines, turning the last of the labels away from him.

BRAD
(quietly)

No spoilers. You must have died
of something real painful, cos I
can't feel... a fuckin' thing.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

After opening the back door a third Matt heads into the kitchen and opens the windows before heading into the lounge, his FISTS now wrapped as well as he could on his own with first aid bandages.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Matt freezes seeing Christopher stood staring at the CLOCK reading 10:59pm, following the second's hand with his head.

CHRISTOPHER
No clock down there.

Matt walks over and sees the PIANO WIRE wrapped tightly around each of Christopher's hands, cutting into his skin.

MATT
You're bleeding.

Christopher moves his stare from the CLOCK down to his hands. Saying nothing he walks out of the room.

Matt opens the windows in the lounge after removing the items from the shelves.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - EVENING

Matt opens the front door a third then walks back to the middle of the hallway, sitting back down in the shadows, his FISTS resting over his knees.

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jim disappears into the closet. Standing dead still he peers through the doors watching the open windows, PISTOL in hand.

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

Brad has opened all the windows. He inhales another line then grips his HAMMER with angst as he steps back into the corner of the room, into shadow. The pharmaceutical cocktail has yet to let Brad know its full intentions.

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer is sat on the floor with her back against the door as she checks her watch, her sleeve stuck rolled up. Now seeing that it's finally 11:00pm she stands up, the IRON BAR gripped tightly in her hand, her gaze stretching out the open window.

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Christopher is finishing up placing furniture underneath the open windows.

He then walks backwards under the beam into the shadows beside the staircase, PIANO WIRE pulled tight.

FADE OUT-HOLD-IN

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Headlights cut in the distance. A van rolls down the road with the engine off.

Stopping almost opposite Christopher's home a slender dark figure gets out; The Thief, remaining silent, faceless, and in shadow wherever they go.

They walk into the middle of the road facing Christopher's home, its windows and door open. They stand still for a moment then walk forward.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Matt hears a noise coming from the rear garden and stands in preparation.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Christopher has also heard the noise from the rear garden. He turns and stares up at the basement door as The Thief's feet pass by the open windows behind him.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

The Thief stands at the top of the rear garden, noticing the back door and all the windows are also open at the rear of the house. They look back down the side of the house and see the windows there are also open.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Matt walks into the lounge as The Thief walks in the back door.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Matt walks past where Quentin was laid and looks out over the garden, before leaping out of an open window.

The Thief peers into the lounge before heading upstairs.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Matt walks to the bottom of the rear garden. Peering over the fence he sees Quentin stumbling off. Matt jumps over and runs toward him.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

At the top of the stairs The Thief peers into Christopher's, then Christopher's mother's bedroom.

The Thief is so naturally silent and light on their feet that the floorboards stay almost silent.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - REAR ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Quentin has stumbled a little further down the alleyway as Matt reaches him. Matt turns him around and knocks him out, then props him up against the wall squashing a garbage bag beside him to rest his head on.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

The Thief heads up to the study.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Matt jumps back over the fence and sees Brad slumped out of the window trying to see what's going on, Matt gestures to Brad to get back inside. The pharmaceutical cocktail has begun to let Brad know its full intentions.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

The Thief peers into the study as a group of thick clouds cover the moon, making it impossible to see Brad. Believing it empty they head back down.

Brad slumps back into the room which is now almost completely dark. From the floor he notices the door to the study is now wide open.

BRAD
(whispering)

Door.

He gets up and holds his hammer outstretched as he walks toward the door, flinching often for no reason.

Brad reaches out for the door and quietly closes it just as the clouds pass by the moon.

Now the room is re-illuminated Brad points at the mound of crushed pharmaceuticals.

BRAD (cont'd)

(whispering)

You're making me paranoid.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Matt walks back into the house and heads into the kitchen just as The Thief is walking into the lounge.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Matt walks out of the house and heads back down the rear garden while unravelling a bandage.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - NIGHT

The Thief is sat at the piano. They stretch their arms and crack their fingers, then play Beethoven's famous first four chords from his 5th Symphony with the loud enthusiasm of a child.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Matt hears the piano just as he reaches the bottom of the rear garden. He quickly looks over the fence, seeing Quentin still propped up, unconscious. He drops the bandage and jogs back to the house.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Matt walks in and is immediately faced with the silhouette of The Thief who's just walked out of the lounge.

Matt reaches back and closes the back door quietly without taking his eyes off The Thief, who reaches out and closes the front door in the same manner.

The Thief mirrors Matt again in raising his FISTS and walking forwards with purpose.

Without flinching, Matt throws a killer blow that skims off The Thief's head as they try to duck it. Matt throws a jab catching the ear of The Thief, again a little too slow to dodge Matt's FIST completely.

The Thief dives under Matt then turns and throws a blow which Matt easily avoids. Matt avoids several more

attempts even easier than the first, every time moving as little as possible while staring straight into the shadowy face of The Thief.

The Thief drops their hands adopting a 'giving up' pose before quickly slamming into Matt, knocking him down before racing to the back door.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

As The Thief is diving out the back door they receive a blow to the back of the head forcing them to stumble out into the garden.

The Thief is quick, but only two steps ahead as they race down the rear garden and leap up onto the fence.

Matt slams into them and they both drop over the fence into the alley.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - REAR ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

They both hit the alley without grace, The Thief stumbling into the opposite fence, falling to the ground.

Matt races to his feet and stands over The Thief just as Quentin crashes a piece of wood over the back of his head.

Matt slams down onto The Thief, unconscious. Quentin drops the piece of wood onto Matt, takes his phone then stumbles away, still very dazed.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Jim, Christopher, and Jennifer congregate in the hallway as Brad walks into the lounge. All but Jennifer are carrying their weapons. They converse quietly, Christopher's eyes remaining fixed out the open back door.

JIM

Matt got them. Where either of you walking around earlier?

CHRISTOPHER, JENNIFER

No.

JIM

I thought I heard--

JENNIFER

--Who was playing the piano?

Brad joins them.

BRAD
 Quentin's gone.

CHRISTOPHER
 It's Quentin, he's running
 again. Matt's gone after him. It
 isn't over.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - REAR ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The Thief looks down the alley at Quentin stumbling away, then at Matt lying unconscious on the ground.

With Quentin nearing the bottom end of the alleyway The Thief leaps effortlessly back over the fence.

Quentin stops and makes a call after he sees The Thief has gone back over.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

The Thief is walking down the side of the house when they stop at the open basement windows. They haven't noticed that the back door is closed as well as all the windows; except for the basements.

They look through and see a small camping lantern partially illuminating a high end TV, stereo, and Christopher's laptop, over by the steps. They look out to the street for a moment before slipping through the window.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Only a spec of moonlight is allowed into the basement through the thin windows, so The Thief creeps carefully forward toward the dim lantern.

Reaching the centre of the room, under the beam, they pause sensing something just as Christopher races the PIANO WIRE over their head, pulling it TIGHT into their neck.

At the same time Jim walks fast up to face The Thief firing ROUND after ROUND into their chest as Brad emerges from the side, SMASHING his HAMMER repeatedly into their head as fast as he can.

Every shot fired by Jim illuminates the basement, the FURY of every hit inflicted by Brad, and the SCREAM of Christopher's eyes pulling the PIANO WIRE through The Thief's neck.

After all the rounds have been fired, an almost decapitated body finds the floor with ease.

Christopher looks at Jim who's staring over at his chest with a horrified look on his face. Christopher looks down and sees that two of the rounds went through The Thief and into his chest.

CHRISTOPHER
(mouthing)

Wow.

Brad catches a falling Christopher.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Jennifer pulls her kitbag from under the bush and throws it over her shoulder.

She's stares back at her mother's house with the LEAD PIPE in her hand. After taking a calming breath she lets it drop from her hand then begins up the street.

As Jennifer is walking past Christopher's home she looks through the lounge window and sees Jim and Brad panicking around the couch.

She walks up to the window and sees them both smeared and streaked with blood trying to take care of Christopher, laid on the couch.

Jennifer throws her kitbag to the ground and races inside.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Christopher lays unconscious on the couch with his shirt ripped open, blood generously dripping from the two visible holes in his chest.

Jim is ripping open a couch cushion collecting gauze. Brad is crouched beside Christopher stroking his head. They haven't noticed Jennifer.

JIM
He's not bleeding that bad.

BRAD
You would say that, you fuckin shot him.

JENNIFER
What did you do?

Brad wipes the blood off Christopher's chest better revealing the two entrance wounds.

BRAD

Twice.

JIM

It was an accident.

Jim applies pressure to the wounds with the cushion gauze.

JIM (cont'd)

I shot The Thief. Two went through the skinny prick.

Brad now feels at home with his enhanced pharmaceutical high.

BRAD

Jennifer, you weren't supposed to come back though.

JENNIFER

What? We need to get him to a hospital, now.

JIM

We can't take him while he's out of it like this. We don't know what he'll say when he comes around. They have to call the cops for gunshot wounds.

BRAD

(to Jim)

Now what do we do with the hammer?

JIM

Be quiet.

JENNIFER

What are you...? If you shot The Thief, only you have to stay here. We'll take him, he could die. We're taking him.

JIM

We all killed The Thief. There's a body lying in the basement with its head smashed in and half cut off with six holes through the chest.

JENNIFER

All of you? When I heard the
shots...

Jennifer crouches beside Christopher. Pushing Brad out
the way she whispers to him.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

Did it work?

JIM

We will all go to jail for life
if we drop him off like this. We
don't get away with it, not the
way we did it.

JENNIFER

I'm not letting him die. Get rid
of the body in the basement.
I'll take Christopher to a
hospital.

BRAD

This wasn't the plan though--

JIM

--Quiet. Apart from what he
might say we don't know anything
about that body. For all we know
they have an apartment filled
with evidence of the houses
they've robbed. Including the
camera with this house as the
last video entry; Christopher
leaving at eleven every day
until the day he went missing.

JENNIFER

I didn't hear you say anything
about this earlier.

BRAD

Because we're helping you--

JIM

--The plan changed after you
left. We can't hide what we've
done.

BRAD

(to
Christopher)

Did Jim shoot you buddy?

(inspired)

Wait here.

Brad runs out the room.

JENNIFER

You're supposed to be an ace detective right? Figure it out.

JIM

Even if I can find the apartment and clean it, and by the way that guy has stole a lot of fuckin stuff, we still have a body and a gunshot victim.

Matt walks in holding the back of his head. Very dazed he looks straight to Christopher.

MATT

Is he dead?

JIM

We're working on it.

MATT

What?

Jim is struggling with sarcasm and calls out louder.

JIM

We're working on it.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

Brad grabs an envelope and scoops in most of what's left of the ground up pharmaceuticals.

BRAD

Wake up juice.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - NIGHT

JENNIFER

We're getting him to a hospital, now.

MATT

Is he shot? What are we waiting for? Who shot him? Why is she back?--

JIM

--I did. It was an accident.

JENNIFER

Where were you, Matt?

MATT

Chasing The Thief, then someone
hit me from behind.

Brad enters the room with two half full glasses of
whiskey and the envelope.

Matt slumps back in a chair, Jennifer and Jim turn to
listen to him as Brad empties the powder into both
glasses behind them.

BRAD

(whispering to
Christopher)

I look after you.

MATT

It must have been Quentin. How
did you shoot Christopher?

JIM

It was in the basement. It was
dark. The body's down there.

MATT

(jealous)

You got The Thief.

(pointing to
Jennifer)

And...

After placing his glass on the table Brad throws the
other down Christopher's throat, then holds his jaw
closed to make him swallow.

Jennifer turns and sees what Brad is doing and dives at
him pinning him to the floor.

JIM

What the fuck, Brad!

They all watch Christopher settle back down after the
initial jolt. Jennifer gets off Brad and tends to
Christopher, wiping away the small amount of Brad's
cocktail that he didn't swallow.

BRAD

He'll come around any minute
now.

JIM

Did you just give him all the shit you've been taking? Fuck Brad, he'll be out of his fucking mind, if he ever comes around at all.

BRAD

Hey, be nice to me.

Jennifer lifts Christopher's body a little revealing a lot of blood pooled underneath him, Brad jumps to his feet in a stumble after seeing the pool of blood.

JENNIFER

Get a car.

BRAD

He made us park up the street.

JENNIFER

Then go up the fucking street.

JIM

Matt, give me your keys.

Matt is still dazed so Jim rummages through his pockets and finds the keys.

JIM (cont'd)

Ok, I'll bring the car down, we put the body in the trunk and after I drop Christopher off, I get rid of the body and the car. Jennifer, grab a screwdriver to take the plates off the car. And find me a mask for when I drop him at the hospital. I'll have to carry him out. You guys stay here and clean everything. With any luck Christopher stays out of it till his head is straight. I better not get pulled over.

Matt makes a big effort to come around and help. He stands up straightening himself out.

MATT

I'll carry him. Wait, where's my phone?

JENNIFER

I have Quentin's.

The sounds of cars are heard coming down the street.

They all look out of the windows as two police cars pull up outside, no top lights.

JIM

Ok.

MATT

Quentin called the cops...

JENNIFER

It's over.

MATT

...with my phone.

BRAD

Think fast.

Through the window they see four flashlights illuminate small circles on the sidewalk, before stretching over the front lawn as four (early-forties) male police officers begin to spread out, heading toward the house.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

About to walk down the right side of the house COP ONE's flashlight cuts out so he heads back to his squad car.

COP TWO walks down the left side of the house as COP THREE and COP FOUR enter via the front door after hearing a faint murmur inside.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Cop Three looks into the lounge and sees a murmuring Christopher lying on the couch, now with a couple of blankets covering him, and the blood.

Christopher's eyes are flickering open with a pharmaceutically enhanced smile that comes and goes from his face as he begins to look around.

COP THREE

Sir we received a call about The Thief.

Cop Four is stood outside the lounge as Christopher's high engages with Cop Three.

CHRISTOPHER

The Thief. Place your bids.

COP THREE

Sir?

(to Cop Four)

Another hoax?

COP FOUR

I'll go check upstairs. You keep
an eye on blotto.

Christopher only just manages to get words out in his
found, spaced out state as Cop Four heads upstairs.

CHRISTOPHER

Pad's on the table. I do a
unique service, camera ready.

COP THREE

Can I see some ID?

CHRISTOPHER

But not all of it?

COP THREE

Ok, we're just going to check
your house.

CHRISTOPHER

Home, and bad idea.

COP THREE

Is there something you need to
tell me?

CHRISTOPHER

Yes.

COP THREE

Ok.

CHRISTOPHER

I won't get out of debt. I did
it. We all did. What memory
would you like to replace? What
knee did you graze as a boy?

COP THREE

Ok, we were called here to deal
with The Thief.

CHRISTOPHER

We were all called here to deal
with The Thief. What's your
story? My dad hung himself. He
was alive but I was too young to
lift him up. I think Jennifer
was raped in a laundry room.

COP THREE

Is there anyone else here? Is
this your, home?

CHRISTOPHER

You should leave, they may still
be..

Christopher passes back out.

FADE OUT-IN

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Cop Two is at the bottom of the rear garden holding the dis-guarded bandage, when he suddenly hears footsteps sprinting up behind him.

He turns and sees Matt a few steps away winding up a killer blow that lands like a meteor, snapping Cop Two's head around dropping him fast to the floor, Matt stumbling over him slamming into the fence.

Matt takes a moment on the ground before checking Cop Two's pulse. After closing Cop Two's eyes Matt climbs over the fence into the alley.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - REAR ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Matt pulls the tape off the bandages allowing them to unravel from his hands as he walks away.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Cop One, flashlight working, heads over the front lawn, and down the right side of the house. A few meters in front of him he sees the laundry room window slowly being opened.

He turns off his flashlight then carefully presses up against the house while drawing his gun.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Cop Three notices a picture of Christopher on top of the piano, so he sits back in a chair facing Christopher, relaxing with some 'Red Apple' Twinkies.

COP THREE

Why don't, we both take a little
break buddy. Let the others
figure this one out.

Cop Three spots the second whiskey cocktail Brad brought in and downs the lot in one go.

COP THREE (cont'd)

Spicy. Just between you and me
eh buddy?

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

Cop Four enters the study and sees Brad slumped back, passed out in the chair behind the desk, now shirtless, with more pills crushed up, barely anything left.

He walks up to Brad and places his fingers on his neck to check his pulse.

With his fingers on Brad's neck he looks over the study. Once he's scoured the room he looks back to Brad whose eyes are now piercingly open.

Cop Four flinches back and takes a moment before engaging Brad, who is now completely out of it. Brad drinks the last sip from the whiskey bottle in his lap.

COP FOUR
Do you live here?

BRAD
No.

COP FOUR
Ok, I need to see some ID.

BRAD
Step into my office, we need to see some ID, but not all of it.

COP FOUR
ID, please.

BRAD
I only get credit for pretending you care, it's not a same. Have you ever helped an old lady crossing a street?

COP FOUR
Who is the person downstairs?

BRAD
I haven't.

COP FOUR
There's a...

BRAD
--Jaywalking.

COP FOUR
...drunk on the couch downstairs.

BRAD
That's my friend, but Jim shot
him. I don't know what you're
talking to me about it.

COP FOUR
(in disbelief)

Look if I can just verify your
ID we can leave you both, to
whatever it is you're doing.
Your friend is downstairs with
my partner.

BRAD
They let you guys date?
Christopher's fine, we wrapped
blankets around so you can't see
the blood.

Cop Four nervously takes a step back, he notices Brads bloodied shirt on the floor behind the chair. He takes another step back and through the window sees Cop Two lying motionless at the bottom of the garden.

He fumbles out his hand cuffs and binds Brad's hands through the back of the chair.

He looks at Brad puzzled and afraid as Brad slumps back, returning to unconsciousness. Cop Four takes another quick look out the window before heading out of the study.

He doesn't hear a sound coming from anywhere in the house so he slows down and creeps from the study after drawing his gun.

FADE OUT-IN

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - NIGHT

Cop One, looking impatient outside the open laundry room window, decides to climb in. With a flashlight in one hand and gun in the other, he hesitates before shoving his flashlight in the holster and climbing through.

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Cop Four reaches the bottom of the stairs and peers into the lounge.

He sees Cop Three slumped in a chair with his eyes closed, half a 'Red Apple' Twinkie on the floor.

As he's fearfully reaching out for Cop Three's neck he hears a deep short cry coming from the laundry room and panics, racing out the front door.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Cop Four races over the front lawn toward his squad car. He slams into the side of the car and reaches in for the radio.

Stood beside the car with the receiver in his hand he freezes seeing a car, rolling steadily down the road toward him with the engine and lights off.

INT. MATT'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Jim is behind the wheel, rolling silently toward Christopher's home.

He's approaching the front of the house when he and Cop Four lock eyes. They stay locked as Jim rolls toward him, Jim's eyes now glazing over.

Jim slowly and unsurely pulls out his PISTOL and fires a single shot into Cop Four's head as he rolls by.

Jim keeps rolling past the house, frozen, with his PISTOL and gaze still pointed out the window, his eyes now fully glazed over.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Cop Three springs up unsurely. Dazed and confused he heads upstairs.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cop Three draws his gun and nervously creeps around the second floor in a haze.

COP THREE

Partner, you still up here?

FADE OUT-IN

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

Jennifer confidently exits the laundry room and heads to the lounge.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

As Jennifer helps Christopher to his feet he becomes a little sharper in seeing her face.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As they're exiting the house a gunshot sounds from the study. Neither flinches, they just keep moving.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

They head over the front lawn and see Cop Four lying dead beside his squad car. Jennifer helps Christopher into the back of the squad car then drags Cop Four away.

She checks the squad car and sees that the keys are missing so walks back over to Cop Four and checks his pockets.

Finding the keys she stands up and sees Cop Three stood in the doorway of the house.

Cop Three is standing with his gun in his hand looking pale and shaky. Jennifer backs up to the squad car. She gets in and starts it up not taking her eyes off Cop Three, standing in a trance.

Jennifer quickly reverses up the street, spins the car around and heads away at speed.

Jim exits Matt's car and walks onto the front lawn just as Cop Three begins walking out of the house.

They both stand facing each other on opposite ends of the lawn, each holding a gun at their side.

INT. SQUAD CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

A shot rings out as Jennifer speeds without care with Christopher lying, pharmaceutically held together, on the back seat.

CHRISTOPHER

Stay off the main roads. I forgot I had a dog.

JENNIFER

Shut up. You've lost too much blood. You're not fucking dying.

CHRISTOPHER

My way is the same time. Turn right up here, head up the hill.

Jennifer takes the directions.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Keep heading up.

Christopher holds his hand cupped below the seat collecting the blood dripping from him, pouring it out each time his hand is full.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

What will you do now that you're free?

JENNIFER

Free?

CHRISTOPHER

You didn't go through with it. You got free on your own. You didn't need it. And he can take the fall, the creep.

JENNIFER

What...? I don't exactly feel free. We're in a cop car heading to a hospital with a gunshot victim and fuck knows how many dead bodies behind us, cops. Freedom is not ahead of us.

CHRISTOPHER

He did some work for my mother, it's his hammer.

As Jennifer is absorbing the last thing Christopher said, he sits up and sees the side road that leads up to the spot he was using during the week.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Here, turn here.

JENNIFER

Where the hell are we?

CHRISTOPHER

Just a little further. Here, pull up here, on the left.

Jennifer pulls into Christopher's spot.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Let me out.

Jennifer's head drops.

JENNIFER

What are you doing?

CHRISTOPHER

You know.

JENNIFER

No, we're going to a hospital.

CHRISTOPHER

Too late. Too much blood. This is where. Help me out, please.

EXT. TOWN - OUTER - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer jumps out of the car and kicks the rear door violently several times. After taking a moment she opens the door and helps Christopher out.

CHRISTOPHER (cont'd)

Over there, by the tree.

Jennifer struggles as Christopher is unable to take much of his own weight, but manages to help him over to a tree at the edge of the hill, overlooking the Town.

She guides him down resting him against the tree then crouches down beside him.

JENNIFER

Fuck you.

Jennifer holds a kiss on Christopher's lips before walking away and getting back in the squad car.

She looks over to Christopher for a moment before glancing at the dash and flicking the top lights on, and driving off.

Christopher smiles as Jennifer suddenly brakes, spins the car around and speeds back the way they came.

In turn red and blue lights illuminate Christopher's silhouette.

CUT TO BLACK