

An anatomical illustration of a human face, rendered in a style reminiscent of a medical textbook or scientific drawing. The face is shown from a frontal perspective, with the eyes closed. The skin is depicted with a dense network of red and blue lines, representing the circulatory system (arteries and veins). The background is a textured, mottled green and purple. The text "FRESH BLOOD" is overlaid in the center of the face in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. The overall image has a vintage, slightly worn appearance with some fraying at the edges.

FRESH BLOOD

THE APOLOGY

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EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - CHRISTMAS EVE - NIGHT

In the middle of a small, snowy town, in the middle of a cul-de-sac, sits a humble two-story house. The winter wind WHIPS around it. A string of Christmas lights frame the front door.

It's all very fairy tale/snow globe.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Inside is cozy, like something from the beginning of a more peaceful Christmas movie than the one you're about to read.

DARLENE HAGEN, 66 but older than her age, uses a pastry bag to make a detailed pattern on a homemade Christmas cake.

Her best friend, GRACE SULLIVAN, 67, a tough, funny retired nurse, assists by spinning the cake to keep up with her.

GRACE

I don't trust 'em. I never once had a gun shot wound come through the ER that was from somebody successfully defending their home. It was always someone shooting themselves by accident or having their gun turned on them.

DARLENE

I just know if I'd had a gun, I'd have killed myself by now.

GRACE

Oh Jeez. Wish I could disagree but that's the one I've seen plenty of.

A timer BEEPS. Grace turns it off.

We move through the kitchen, through the living room and then hold wide on the front windows. There we see a SHADOW behind the curtains. It moves along to the next window.

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A MAN stands there, peering between the cracks in the curtains. He's older but in good shape. He watches Darlene and Grace bake in the kitchen a moment.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Finishing the cake solo, Darlene watches as Grace pulls a pie from the oven.

DARLENE

...I'd hit the guy with the hammer and run to my bathroom, lock myself in, go out the window. It's big enough.

GRACE

Solid.

Grace pulls off the potholders and rubs her achy hands. Darlene sees this but says nothing.

They're both slower at this than they used to be.

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Seeing Darlene has a guest, the man decides it's not the right time, walks away.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

DARLENE

What about you?

GRACE

I have a panic room. Just go in there.

(plays at really old lady)
Watch my stories.

DARLENE

You do not have a panic room.

GRACE

Well, tomorrow's Christmas. You still have time to make that happen. Can you make sure it has that blue velvet chair from Target?

DARLENE

Don't worry. I'm detail oriented.

They laugh and work away at decorating the last cookies.

Darlene fights back sudden tears.

Grace offers her a Christmas cookie to eat.

GRACE

Sorry it's not booze. But I figure I better keep being a good influence, in case you've got some liquor hidden in your cabinet.

DARLENE

Oh no, it's upstairs in my bedroom.

GRACE

(laughs)

Well, sure, 'cause if you're gonna start drinking again, you wanna do it in comfort.

DARLENE

Of course. I figured I'd sit in my cozy chair and start strong, just a whole bottle of vodka before the morning.

GRACE

(cracking up)

Oh sure, no need to ease in or hide it. I recommend that approach. I never hid it. I went straight to real bad off. That way you get the full effect.

Darlene decorates her last cookie with precision, while Grace does much more of a rushed, slathering job of it.

DARLENE

Do you think anybody would've given a shit if we'd just bought all this instead?

GRACE

You mean besides us?

Darlene smiles wryly.

GRACE

It's Christmas dinner. We're the old ladies. We bake too much. It makes everyone feel better.

DARLENE

Like there's order in the universe.

They start to pack it all up.

DARLENE

(smiling)

Supposed to snow hard tonight... I mean, we could have a blackout.

GRACE

My house is just around the corner. You ain't that infirm.

(beat)

I get it but no way you're sitting here alone on Christmas.

DARLENE

I'm fine. I'll be there. Gonna bring a new hot dish.

GRACE

If you don't show up, I'll have to explain it to Julie and my kids and her kids and --

The power goes out.

And comes right back on - just a flicker.

They both laugh.

GRACE

Okay, maybe...

DARLENE

(remembering)

Oh damn.

She rushes to her laptop on the counter.

Sees the notice on her website "Upload Complete." Exhales.

GRACE

It finally work?

DARLENE

Must've done it just in time.

She clicks on the Videos page of her website: www.bringsallyhagenhome.com. More are already uploaded.

On the VIDEO, we see Darlene in her Sunday best, being interviewed by a REPORTER. It's autumn outside.

A school photo of SALLY flashes on the screen. A beautiful, blonde-haired, blue-eyed 16-year-old in '80s clothes.

REPORTER

(a bit much)

So what has it been like for you, looking and worrying and fighting to find Sally, your daughter, for 30 years now? I can only imagine your pain.

DARLENE

Well, yeah, you know, she is always going to be alive to me until I know different. I am never going to stop looking for her. Ya know, I've worked with so many searching families over the years and the not knowing is torture, living in this limbo. I just want to know what's happened to my girl. I can't move on without those answers. Somebody knows something.

REPORTER

And what should people do if they have any information?

DARLENE

Please --

Darlene hits the space bar. Video seems to work fine.

Grace has been watching while she covers the pies.

GRACE

Why do they call it an anniversary? Like it's something to celebrate?

DARLENE

Gets people interested again. I can use that.

Grace pats Darlene's back - in that quick, I-got-you-but-I-don't-wanna-make-you-cry way.

DARLENE

(a touch annoyed)

I'm okay, really.

GRACE

"Stop worrying." I know. I will.

DARLENE

Let's get these in your car.

GRACE

Yeah, we're old as fuck; we need our sleep.

They put on their coats, gathering the goodies.

DARLENE

Oh, you sleep, do you?

GRACE

(laughs)

Yeah, you probably should expect my 3 in the morning call. But anytime you need. And I can always come over, too.

Darlene grabs some egg nog out of the fridge.

DARLENE

We forgot about this, so just take it for tomorrow.

GRACE

You sure?

Darlene opens it, smells it.

DARLENE

Yeah, no brandy in here.

GRACE

(laughs)

Oh true. Useless.

She stops, looks at Darlene full-on.

GRACE

You okay? This place was too clean when I got here.

(off Darlene's laugh)

Want me to stay up with you?

DARLENE

You're the sweetest. But I'm all set. I promise.

She reaches out her hand. They do their dorky secret handshake.

Grace grandly dances over and opens the door for them.

DARLENE

It's not fair. You're still so
sprightly and I'm just this
lumbering old lady.

They go outside, letting the door close behind them.

We stay here a beat.

EXT. GRACE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Another postcard-perfect cozy home covered in snow.

INT. GRACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace gets ready for bed, her TV blaring a Christmas movie.

She brushes her teeth, distracted by the terrible movie.

GRACE

I don't mind cheesy but boring I do
not forgive.

She channel surfs, wiping toothpaste foam from her mouth.

Brushes her teeth some more. Now she's been doing it too long
and it starts to burn. She rushes over and spits it out,
rinses.

MOMENTS LATER

Grace gets into bed, under her Christmas quilt.

She turns out her lamp, leaves the TV on, tries to sleep.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Darlene's kitchen is spotless now. Darlene surveys it, takes
out a clean kitchen towel and hangs it on her fridge handle.

Finished, she turns out the light.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Darlene shuffles through to her LIVING ROOM, puts a single,
wrapped gift under a tiny, tabletop Christmas tree. The
wrapping paper is faded and a bit beaten up. Otherwise, there
is a conspicuous lack of Christmas.

Grace wasn't joking; this place is spotless.

She heads to the front door, flips on the porch light switch. The light shines through the windows at the top of her door.

Relying heavily on the handrail, Darlene heads UPSTAIRS, passing framed family photos.

DARLENE'S BEDROOM

She goes to her dresser, to the framed picture of her Sally. It's the same one from the news interview we just saw.

Like she does every night, she kisses her fingertips and plants the kiss on her baby's face.

She just stands there a moment in her large bedroom. The only sound in this whole big house is the MUFFLED WIND from outside.

Engulfed in that loneliness she's never really gotten used to and with her bedtime routine finished, she turns to her sitting chair and its side table.

On it sits a bottle of really good VODKA and a glass.

She looks at them.

She pours the drink.

Puts the glass down, readying herself.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

We hear the WIND and SNOW have gotten fierce outside.

We take a look around. Family photos and knickknacks are everywhere. Porcelain dolls in a china cabinet.

Her furniture and decor were never cool but they are comfortable.

A worn tea kettle sits on the stove.

The door to the basement is ajar. We see a bit of stairs going down.

FRONT FOYER

It's dark in here. We hold on the front door.

Then we hear it: a quiet KNOCK.

And a pause.

The next KNOCK is a little louder.

And then louder.

Then another pause.

DING-DONG! The doorbell sounds.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - DARLENE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Startled, Darlene jumps back from her side table. She hasn't touched the drink yet.

She throws a robe on over her nightgown.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - FRONT FOYER - NIGHT

The unseen visitor waits now.

We stay here while we hear Darlene coming down.

Finally, we see her, tying the belt of her robe, holding her cell phone, spooked.

She looks through the peephole.

Her VISITOR is an old man. She immediately recognizes him.

DARLENE

Jack?

VISITOR

Yep, it's me, Darlene.

(looks right into the
peephole/camera)

I'm sorry if I scared you.

He's thirty years older but there he is - her old friend, JACK, 70. He's still tall and charismatic, but he wears glasses now and has definitely aged.

(He's the man we saw outside, watching her earlier.)

DARLENE

Jack. Wow. It's late.

JACK

I know, I'm sorry. I was on my way to see the kids. Hit a patch of black ice, crashed into the side of the street. I got out and realized it was your street.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
I know better than to try to drive
in these conditions.

She says nothing, still hesitating.

JACK
Cold out here.

Darlene opens the door.

JACK
I'm sorry to bother you. I know
it's been a long time.

DARLENE
Oh for Pete's sake. What's a couple
decades between friends?

He laughs. She hugs him, lets him in.

Instant regret flashes across her face. She dips her foot
just past the doorway. It's so cold out here.

She brushes the bad feeling off, closes the door against the
wind. The warmth inside is suddenly stifling.

She and Jack just stand there in the foyer.

They take each other in for a moment.

JACK
Good to see ya, Kid.

He smiles, all charm.

Her nervous feeling runs away.

DARLENE
(genuine)
Jack.

There's some real history and chemistry there.

Now they don't quite know what to do.

DARLENE
Lemme take your coat.

JACK
That's okay. Still cold.

DARLENE
Oh, of course. Um, well, let's get
you something to warm you up.

She leads the way into the KITCHEN.

She gestures at the kitchen table and its two chairs, sets her cell phone down on the counter.

Jack looks around, sits in the chair facing her.

DARLENE

Chamomile okay? I'm strictly a tea drinker now.

JACK

Sure.

DARLENE

Why didn't you call Shane? Not that you're not welcome.

JACK

Phone died. I'm 0-2. So how've you been?

DARLENE

Oh can't complain.

She opens a cabinet, gets out the tea bags, honey, sugar.

DARLENE

What were you doing, driving so late?

JACK

It just took forever. I should've just stopped somewhere, got a motel room. Dumb move.

DARLENE

Yeah, well, we've all done that. You live in this weather all your life. You think you know it. But you don't. It can turn on ya so quick.

JACK

You're so right.

She smiles.

JACK

(noticing her ringless finger)

Surprised you didn't remarry. You were only, what, 40, when you got divorced?

DARLENE

Oh. No.

She sits.

JACK

Not even a boyfriend? I can't believe you don't have someone sleeping upstairs.

He smiles at her - all charm.

DARLENE

Here we go.

He grabs her hand, holds it.

JACK

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left like that.

She's surprised he went there. Decides to meet him there.

DARLENE

You did sort of leave when I needed you most.

JACK

You needed me?

DARLENE

Don't be stupid.

She takes her hand away.

JACK

I'd made enough of a mess. Figured it was best to give you and Ed room. Things with Julie were over years before we actually divorced. But you know that. Hear much from Julie?

DARLENE

Oh sure, we're still good friends. We'll all go to Applebee's, that kind of thing. I hate Applebee's but, ya know. She helps me out with this searching families group I work with. We help them find resources, coach 'em. Helps me feel like I have something to offer at least. Like it wasn't all a waste.

(beat)

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

But I still feel guilty as hell
sometimes about you and me and not
just that night in the car.

JACK

Yeah. I guess now they call it an
emotional affair. I should have
called after you and Ed split and
some time had passed but then I
thought too much time had passed
and I'd mucked it up.

This means a lot to her.

JACK

You see the kids at all?

DARLENE

Oh, sure. They've always been like
my babies, too.

JACK

I kept thinking I would run into
you at some graduation or
something.

DARLENE

Me, too. You did send me that
Christmas card.

JACK

I'd heard you and Ed got divorced.
I hoped that wasn't because of me.

DARLENE

No. We just like to be predictable.
The kids tell me work's going well.

JACK

Thinking about retiring.

DARLENE

I retired, year ago June.

JACK

Really? Were you still teaching?

DARLENE

So Julie told you?

JACK

(laughs)
No. Google.

She is very flattered.

DARLENE

You stalker.

JACK

I was impressed. From Office Manager college drop out to a Special Ed teacher with an award from the governor. Wow, Kid.

DARLENE

Thanks, yeah. Broke my heart to retire but I couldn't stand that long anymore, my back.

JACK

The time comes for us all, I guess.

He rubs his sore knee for her to see.

JACK

What got you back to school?

DARLENE

Oh, well, I got sober.

Catches his look --

DARLENE

Yeah, I don't think I was really fooling anybody even before Sally went missing, but you remember after...

He nods.

DARLENE

Anyway, wanted to stay sober but I was divorced, still no breaks about Sally. I was scared every day I would drink.

JACK

I saw this October was the 30th anniversary. I saw that interview you gave.

DARLENE

Yeah.

(beat)

Hey, feel free to use the landline.

JACK
Right, yes, thank you.

He picks up the phone from the wall, PUNCHES in a number.

JACK
Shane, it's me. Guess my surprise
is outta the bag. I'm in town but I
hit some black ice. I'm okay but
the car, not so much. I'm at
Darlene Hagen's, if you can believe
it. I crashed right down the street
from her. If you get this, can you
give her a call? My phone died and
I forgot my charger. OK, so call
me, we can just come back for my
car tomorrow.

He hangs up, takes a seat again.

JACK
Thanks.

DARLENE
Oh yeah, you're so welcome. But if
it's that bad out there, maybe he
shouldn't try to come.

JACK
That's really sweet but I'd hate to
put you out.

DARLENE
Not at all. I converted Sally's
room into a guest room.

Just then, the power GOES OUT. We hear THUNDER outside.

JACK
What the hell? It's snowing.

DARLENE
It's thundersnow.

Jack looks at her.

DARLENE
It never did that when you lived
here?
(off his head shake)
That's what they call it when it
snows during a thunder and
lightning storm.
(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

We're one of the only places in the world where it happens. You'd never think those two would come together, so it just makes the most beautiful, dangerous sight.

The power comes right BACK ON.

They laugh, relieved.

But the THUNDER and RAIN continue.

DARLENE

That's a kick, at least as long as the power stays on.

JACK

Guess I should take that as a sign and stay. Thank you.

She smiles.

JACK

So how are you, about Sally? Any new leads?

DARLENE

No. Reddit doesn't even have any.

JACK

So they're still thinking stranger abduction?

DARLENE

Yeah. I've re-interviewed everyone in town myself, all of our family, her friends. All signs seem to point to it was a stranger who either took her or --

JACK

She left with them on purpose.

DARLENE

Yep.

JACK

Just vanished. How are you?

DARLENE

(laughs, bitter)
It's dulled some but devastated.

JACK
Still devastated?

DARLENE
Of course.

She's a little annoyed at this line of questioning.

He backs off.

JACK
Sorry. I --

DARLENE
It's okay. There's no right way to
check in on this, I get it.

Beat. He stands up, wanders around.

JACK
It's so crazy to be back here. Bet
I still know where everything is.

She laughs.

JACK
Let's check. Let's play a game.

DARLENE
Okay.

JACK
You tell me what to get from
anywhere in here and I bet I know
where it is.

DARLENE
I'm not that boring, am I?

JACK
You're not boring. You're settled.

DARLENE
Okay, um... coffee cups.

JACK
Trick question - matching set or
the mismatched ones you actually
use?

DARLENE
(laughs)
Matching.

Jack glides over to the china cabinet, opens the cupboard underneath, points out matching cups with flourish.

Darlene claps.

DARLENE
Baking sheets.

JACK
(pulls them out of the
drawer under the oven)
Come on, challenge me!

She laughs.

DARLENE
Okay, ice cream scooper.

Jack thinks hard. Whips open a bottom drawer, pulls it out.

JACK
Just kidding - knew that one.
You're a freak who doesn't like ice
cream so it's down low.

Darlene claps, laughing.

DARLENE
How do you remember that?

He sits back down, beaming at her.

JACK
I remember everything.

He holds her gaze.

She blinks, looks away.

Suddenly, he's fighting back tears.

JACK
Sorry.
(cries)
Christmas. It's supposed to be
simpler.

She pulls herself up, with a little difficulty, comes over and hugs him, which makes him cry harder.

His tears subside but he holds on.

She hugs him back.

Finally, he pulls away, looks at her.

She looks back, touches his cheek.

They're tempted to kiss.

He pulls her into another hug. He knows that after this, she's never going to let him hug her again.

JACK

Damn it. Okay...

He lets her go, struggling with what he's about to say.

JACK

I need to ask you for a big favor.
It's a lot to ask. It might be the
most anyone has ever asked of you.

DARLENE

Okay.

She gets up, fills the tea kettle, turns on the stove.

JACK

But first, I have to tell you about
Sally.

Darlene pauses.

There's a crack in the world.

She doesn't look at him, keeps moving around the kitchen,
getting tea cups, eying her phone, pulling out spoons.

Trying to look casual, Darlene picks up her cell phone, eying
the way out.

He shoots his hand out, releases her fingers from the phone
and puts it in his pocket.

JACK

We can't talk about this with other
people. This is just for you.
You're the first person I've told.

Now she's scared.

She picks up the landline phone.

He watches her face as she hears that it's dead.

DARLENE

How did you call out?

Now it dawns on her.

He only pretended to make that call. He must've cut the line.

He gives her a moment as she hangs it back up.

DARLENE

Why did you pretend all that stuff
about your feelings?

JACK

I didn't pretend. But you're gonna
want to sit down.

DARLENE

No thanks.

Jack takes a deep breath.

JACK

I killed Sally. It was me.

She's immediately fighting back tears but she sucks in her
breath, determined to gather herself.

DARLENE

That's...

She pulls a big knife from the block --

But just uses it to cut him a slice of pie.

DARLENE

(re: the pie)
Fresh baked tonight.

JACK

It's true, Kid. I'm sorry. I came
here to apologize.

DARLENE

Stop it.

He watches the knife still in her hand.

JACK

I rolled up her body in a blanket
and put it in a dumpster near one
of the lake campsites.

He's so steadfast about this, she doesn't know what to think.

JACK

I hadn't meant for her body to never be found. Really. I don't understand why it wasn't. It must have gotten crushed in the garbage and nobody saw. Miracle really. I didn't mean for you and Ed to never know. But by then, it's not like I could go and confess. You understand.

DARLENE

(pathetic)

I should go to bed.

She starts to walk out.

DARLENE

The guest bed has clean sheets. The linen closet has towels and whatever else you might... need.

JACK

She was wearing the best friend locket Lisa gave her. Almost gave me pause but by then --

DARLENE

I need you to leave.

JACK

When I saw that interview, I just knew what I had to do. It was like you were speaking directly to me, even though I knew you weren't. I'm not crazy. But I thought, if I'm getting out, I owe you the truth first.

She's freaked that he just breezed right past her request.

DARLENE

When?

JACK

Soon as you have the answers you want.

DARLENE

No, when -- Sally?

JACK

Oh. Right away. Before you even knew she was missing, it was over.

Darlene loses her breath.

Everything SLOWS DOWN, blood rushing to her ears. His voice is so DISTANT now.

Jack watches this heartbreak.

Darlene wanders the kitchen, inhales and exhales, tears come and she's not even actively crying.

JACK
 (sounds like he's under
 water)
 Darlene. Can you hear me? Try to
 breathe.

The world is slowly coming back into a tiny bit of focus.

She sees him remove the knife from her hand and place it in the sink.

And then her gaze lands on the front door.

The front door. The exit.

But he sees this.

Despite her efforts, Darlene continues to have an out-of-body experience.

She listens to the WIND outside.

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BACKYARD (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: From the kitchen window, we see a windy day. SALLY AT 6 stands in the yard, a blissful look on her face as she watches the weather whip through the trees.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Buying herself time, Darlene opens a container of the Christmas cookies, puts them on a plate.

She sweeps some crumbs from the cookies off the counter and into the sink.

Places the plate of cookies on the table.

Jack looks at the plate of cookies and the piece of pie - always the hostess.

She looks past him, at a lamp across the room, staring at it.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN (FLASHBACK) - ANOTHER DAY

From Darlene's POV: SALLY AT 8 stands just in front of her. Her earnest face looks up at us.

The sun gets in our eyes --

Takes over everything.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

She smiles a bit.

DARLENE

It's not true. She's still here. I
can feel it. I wasn't sure until
just now.

JACK

(sympathetic)
Darlene...

She glances at the knife in the sink, knife block on the counter.

Jack says nothing, just gets up and moves the knife block under the sink.

Darlene notes it - smart move there, Jack.

Jack sits down, watches her.

The tea kettle WHISTLES!

She pours hot water into two cups, watching the steam.

She puts them on the table. He sees that his is hand-painted with a small handprint and "I Love You Mom."

He says nothing, adds his tea bag, takes no sugar or honey.

She fixes hers.

JACK

I'm not sure how much you want to
know.

DARLENE

Whatever you want to tell me.

JACK

All right...

He stops to blow on his tea, takes a tentative drink.

She pushes the mug at him, spilling hot liquid all over his face and neck.

JACK
Ahhhhhhhhh!!!!

Darlene goes for the front door as fast as she can manage.

Jack zips through the living room and cuts her off in the foyer, blocking the front door, his face demonic with fresh burns.

She races toward the garage door but looks at her empty hands. No keys.

And Jack is just behind her.

Remembering her plan, she slips into the BATHROOM, locks the door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jack throws on the cold water, pulls out the faucet hose and hoses down his face and chest with cold water.

The relief is instant.

He's still pretty badly burned. But it ain't like he's going to the hospital.

So he grabs a dish towel and covers it in cold water, soothes his face with it, holding it there.

JACK
(to himself)
Damn it. Idiot, rookie move.

Turns off the faucet, WHIPS the hose back into place.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Darlene looks up at the window, stands up on the sides of the bathtub, very tricky for her but she pulls it off.

She unlocks the window and pushes to slide it open.

But it won't give. It's frozen shut.

She gets down and grabs her hand towel, wraps it around her hand and beats at the window.

But that doesn't work either.

She scans the bathroom for a weapon. Tries prying the shower curtain rod down but it won't give.

Next best she sees is a breakable soap dispenser.

She grabs it, futilely. Shit.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Her keys sit in a decorative plate.

Her still-damp rolling pin stands in her utensil holder.

A heavy vase sits on her counter.

Then there's the back door.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

DARLENE

Fuck!

She catches her breath.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM

The wet towel still on his neck, Jack listens to her efforts.

BATHROOM

Darlene hears that he's STOPPED outside the bathroom.

JACK (O.S.)

Darlene?

Darlene says nothing.

JACK (O.S.)

You don't understand.

Darlene drops the towel.

Her terror giving way to fury, she just BEATS at the window with her bare fists. But it's fruitless.

She screams at him through the door.

DARLENE

How could you?! You knew her! You were my friend. And oh God...

Darlene is suddenly sickened with a memory.

INT. JACK'S CAR - 1989 (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

From Darlene's POV: Jack is above her. They're having sex.

It has such a sudden, desperate feeling that you don't even see his face, more like his hair, his shoulder...

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BATHROOM/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

DARLENE

You killed my daughter and then you fucked me?

JACK

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way.

DARLENE

Oh God.

She paces around.

JACK

It was one time.

DARLENE

Sure, the sex was one time.

(beat)

And then our friendship was dead. You got divorced, left town. And here I thought you just felt guilty about Julie...

JACK

You really burned the shit out of my neck here.

Jack adjusts his wet towel. His pain has only eased slightly.

Darlene looks at the bathroom door. She's going to have to go back out there.

She stands before it, willing herself to get calmer, smarter.

DARLENE

So what? You want to kill me?

JACK

I remember you crying and saying
you wanted to be with Sally except
you didn't know if she was dead.

Darlene catches her breath.

DARLENE

You were the only one who didn't
keep talking about hope.

JACK

(sincere)

I could only risk that much, you
understand.

DARLENE

Julie made excuses, "He can just be
too blunt sometimes. You know Jack,
that's just the way he is. That's
how he loves." Was it?

JACK

I think so.

DARLENE

Why tell me now?

JACK

I saw that report. You needed to
know. It seemed like what people
mean when they say cruel.

DARLENE

Sally wasn't the only one. Was she?

JACK

It's a... habit. I've tried to
resist it. It's like if someone
tried to quit biting their nails or
drinking coffee.

Off Darlene's mystified silence -

JACK

Forgive the analogy. Sometimes I
can go a few years without it, but
then...

DARLENE

(beat)

So what now?

JACK
Doesn't seem a proper apology
without a confession.

She opens the door, terrified but defiant.

He's careful to keep his distance and not spook her.

DARLENE
I've read about psychopathic
killers. You love to confess.

JACK
I'm not a psychopath.

DARLENE
It's like bragging about what
you pulled off.

She looks at him - amazed.

JACK
I've read about those guys. I
haven't found anyone else like me
and I've read everything I can get
my hands on. I'm a special case. I
do have this need, but I feel bad.
I feel remorse, but later. So I'm
not a psychopath. It just feels too
terrific to stop.

DARLENE
Oh God... If there's more, then
there's more parents. They need to
know...

Jack reaches in his coat, pulls out a gun but keeps it to his
side, "friendly."

Darlene has never had a gun pulled on her.

JACK
I'm not talking to anyone but you.
That's it. If I have to, I'll kill
you, and then I'll go to Ed's house
and kill him.

Off her horrified reaction --

JACK
I'm not going to get caught, even
for you. But please don't make me.

Long beat.

DARLENE

Can we sit down?

(gallows humor)

We already have cookies and pie.

He grins, leads her to the kitchen table, keeping the gun on her. He grabs her cup of tea, dumps it in the sink.

They sit down. She looks at the gun, then him.

DARLENE

Please.

He puts the gun down on the table by him.

Darlene looks out the window. The snow is really coming down.

He watches it, too.

They just sit there for a moment.

Finally, Darlene flicks her hand a bit - like "go ahead."

JACK

It wasn't planned. I want you to know that.

DARLENE

Okay.

JACK

I spot them, the girls, and I can't help it. It's instinct. I don't scout or plan.

DARLENE

Okay.

JACK

When I feel it coming on, I just keep my gun and kit in my car. My first time was about a year before Julie and I got married. I did about six more after that. I played it smart, spread them out. But it'd been a while, and it was getting harder all the time to keep from going out and finding another one. I kept using my little reminders, but I knew I couldn't wait much longer. That day, I was driving from a work site. I saw Sally walking down the street. I found myself following her.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
 I didn't drive right up to her and
 just give her a ride home like I
 sometimes did. This felt different.

EXT. TOWN STREET - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Jack's POV: we see Sally walking down the street, happy and lovely, as he tracks behind her.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - PRESENT TIME - CONTINUOUS

JACK
 (desperate, sincere)
 You and Ed were good to us. I
 should have just driven anywhere
 else, picked anyone else.

She doesn't dare say anything.

JACK
 No one else was on the street. I
 pulled up beside her and said hi. I
 startled her.

EXT. TOWN STREET - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Jack's POV: Sally's face changes from wary to comfortable. She smiles.

SALLY AT 16
 Uncle Jack. Sorry. I thought you
 were a creeper.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JACK
 She just got right in the car,
 chatted for a minute, asked me for
 a ride. I said of course.

DARLENE
 (under her breath)
 No no honey...

She sits up straight. Still wary, she's getting more anxious.

JACK
 I drove her out to the lake.

DARLENE
But they dragged the lake.

JACK
I said it was in the dumpster. I
didn't put it in the lake.

DARLENE
Her. Not "it." Her.

This critique irritates him.

DARLENE
Please.

But he pushes on, seems perversely proud of himself.

JACK
I drove toward your house as much
as I could, didn't wanna make her
suspicious right away. I wanted to
see it dawn on her, what was
happening. It was in the middle of
a workday afternoon, not too many
people out. But once we passed that
turn on Franklin I should've taken
and I didn't say anything, she got
real quiet, kept rubbing her
locket. It was that puffy, silver
style that was popular then.

DARLENE
She wore that one a lot.

JACK
You don't believe me?

DARLENE
Go on.

JACK
I go to all this trouble and you
don't believe me?

DARLENE
You were driving.

JACK
I could tell she was thinking about
what to do and I knew I shouldn't
risk it any more. So I hit her with
the gun. She went right out.

DARLENE

Did she know you were gonna hit her? Did she see it coming?

JACK

No.

INT. JACK'S CAR - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Jack's POV: SALLY AT 16 looks out the window and the gun KNOCKS HER OUT - a total surprise.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Darlene closes her eyes, enduring.

INT. JACK'S CAR - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Closer on Sally's face: she sees the gun coming at her.

SALLY AT 16

No...

And she's WHACKED, blood flows down the side of her face and she's out. Messier than Jack's memory of it.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JACK

We got to the lake. I laid her on the grass. She was still out. Jesus, her hair was splayed out. She looked like an angel. I took her clothes off, and I, you know.

DARLENE

(lip quivering)

No. I don't know.

JACK

I had sex with her. She woke up in the middle and tried to kick me, but that was hard because I'd tied her up and was holding her down. I finished. She didn't cry or beg. She went right into --

EXT. LAKE - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Jack's POV: Jack looks down at Sally's SCREAMING face. He watches it.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Darlene HEAVES, about to throw up.

Jack stops. He's trying to be sympathetic but he's annoyed at the interruption.

JACK
Do you need a break?

DARLENE
No. Please keep going.

But nope, she bounces up and VOMITS right into the sink.

Jack pulls his gun, watching her.

She waits, nothing else comes.

She rinses her mouth.

As she turns around, she sees the gun, sits back down.

She tries to look composed but we close in on her feet. She's pushing so hard onto the tips of her toes.

The tips of her fingers are so pressed onto the table, they're turning white.

She has to keep it together. She's terrified he'll stop and she won't know all of it. She needs to know all of it. More and more, this is sounding like the real thing.

DARLENE
Please. It's...

JACK
Water in the desert?

He smiles.

DARLENE
I'd appreciate it if you'd stop smiling.

Her hands start to shake so she brings them into her lap.

JACK

I never met another girl like her,
who tried so hard. I did her again.

Another stab to Darlene's heart.

JACK

More screaming. When I was done, I
looked her in the eyes. She looked
back.

EXT. LAKE - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Jack's POV: CU on Sally at 16's face - dirt and sweat
stained, pleading but defiant.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Darlene is crying again.

Jack looks away from that sight. Despite his better
intentions, he's too excited.

JACK

I told her to get up and walk. She
asked if I was taking her home.

DARLENE

Oh God.

JACK

I wouldn't answer so she wouldn't
get up.

Darlene spreads her shaking hands out on the table.

He sees this, makes himself keep going. This is harder than
he expected.

JACK

I was so far out, I could let loose
and empty the gun into her.
Usually, I have to settle with one
shot, maybe two, so people can
write it off as a firecracker or a
backfiring car. You see, I'm
impulsive but I'm smart.

Crying, furious, she doesn't dare move - he has more to tell
her and she'll take any little bit more, as awful as it is.

JACK

I washed the blood and grass off in the lake, changed into some back up clothes and stuffed her clothes into the blanket. When I sat back in the car, I saw it - her backpack. I wanted to cry. But I didn't feel like crying. I just knew someone should cry when they see something like that. But I felt elated. I felt lucky. I felt brilliant. I looked through her things - I like to keep something, my little reminders. I never take IDs. I took her French book. She'd written on the brown bag cover.

DARLENE

That's --

JACK

Is that what the police told you to keep secret?

DARLENE

What did it say?

JACK

Je T'aime. Oui oui. Je vois la vie en rose. Drawings of robots and flowers and her name inside the cover.

Seeing she's pushing a button here, she takes the chance.

DARLENE

You could've seen that any time and remembered it.

JACK

It's out in my car.
(smiles)
Would you like me to get it?

DARLENE

Yes.

Angry, Jack snatches up his gun, goes outside.

The door closes behind him.

Darlene realizes she's alone.

She gets up. What does she do?

Ignoring her pain, she grabs her keys and runs to the GARAGE.

She gets in her car, pushes the garage door button.

It doesn't work. She stops herself from putting the key in the ignition.

She tries the garage door again.

DARLENE

Shit. Come on.

But nope.

She gets out of the car, pockets her keys, looks around for a weapon.

Finds her shovel leaning by the door.

She grabs it and books it --

Frantically scanning the house as she runs through --

Scared by shadows --

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Darlene runs outside. Her socked feet sink into the fresh snow piles.

She winces at the cold - still just in her robe and nightgown.

She looks around in a panic.

The only door in the fence is to the front yard.

She tries to climb up the back fence --

But it's too icy.

She falls down, slicing her leg. She stifles a scream.

Blood DRIPS onto the snow.

Out of options, she heads towards that gate door. She's much slower than she'd like. It ain't easy to walk in snow anyway and just this much effort has really taken it out of her.

She almost just bursts through it --

But stops herself, makes herself stand there and wait and listen for him --

It's agony.

Finally, she hears his FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING in the front yard and then the opening and closing of the front door.

She opens the gate door as quietly as she can but the gate still CREEEEAKS.

She runs/limps for her life into the front yard --

The houses near her are all dark --

She rushes across the street --

She slips on the ice but stops herself with the shovel, managing not to fall --

Sticking to the snow now, she's approaching the corner.

She hears the front door OPEN and his STEPS behind her but she just keeps going as fast as she can.

DARLENE

Help. HELP!!! HELP!!!!

He smiles - yeah, good luck with that.

Suddenly, Darlene's kicked from behind, shovel yanked away.

DARLENE

Hel--!

He SLAPS his hand over her mouth.

JACK

All done now.

He drags her back across the street --

JACK

You're so cold. Feels good.

She fights him. She's hurt and (muffled) screaming in pain --

He pulls her into the house and shuts the door behind them.

If anyone was paying attention, they'd see the lines of blood droplets from the backyard and up into the front yard and all the way up to the front door.

But no one else is up (or home) and the snow continues to fall and cover it up.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - FRONT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Back inside, Jack drops Darlene on her hard floor.

She falls HARD - the wind knocked out of her.

She grabs for the shovel he's now holding.

DARLENE
...gonna kill you.

Jack lets her grab it, smiling.

She tries to get the strength to pick it back up and hit him with it, but she's too winded and hurt.

He grins bigger.

He opens the basement door and THROWS IT down the stairs. But the sound is so muffled, we barely hear it.

Panting, Darlene lies reduced on the ground.

Jack helps her up. She hits at him but he's not bothered. He guides her over to her couch.

Her back aches where he hit her.

He sits down, too.

They're quiet.

Darlene is shaking - what's he gonna do?

Her wet socks and the edge of her robe DRIP onto the carpet.

JACK
I had to let you try and run away
so you could see for yourself that
you can't. I saw when I got here
that the garage door was iced over.

DARLENE
So you like people to learn the
hard way.

JACK
That's the only way they do. We
have important things to do tonight
and we only have tonight to do
them. I didn't want to keep dealing
with useless escape attempts.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I know what I did to Sally, what I've done all these years, was selfish, self-centered.

DARLENE

Burn in hell.

Her eyes catch something surreal on the coffee table.

Sally's French book.

Darlene freezes.

Jack watches her.

JACK

Be careful going through that until you're ready. My other reminder is in there.

Darlene doesn't ask what that could be.

She reaches for the book slowly, barely touches the cover.

Her hand lingers in place --

She opens the book. "Sally Hagen, Madame Martine French 3" is written on the front inside cover, in Sally's unmistakable handwriting. Her hasty end to the y and the g.

DARLENE

Oh baby... Oh my baby girl.

Suddenly dizzy, Darlene lets out a SOB.

She's heard the details and here is her long lost book.

Sally isn't just gone. She's dead.

Sally really has been dead for 30 years.

DARLENE

(croaks out...)
...she's dead?

He nods.

DARLENE

I knew you weren't lying but...

JACK

It's been a long time. You had to be sure.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

(beat)
I am sorry.

DARLENE
I failed her.

JACK
It's not your fault.

DARLENE
I had one job, to keep her safe,
and I failed.

She's flipping through the book.

DARLENE
Where is it then? Your other
"reminder?"

But he doesn't show her. He thinks he's giving her room.

DARLENE
Oh God, is it her hair?

She sees something and stops. She picks it up but we don't see what she sees.

But it's a Polaroid so you do the math.

She looks for a long minute and then just puts it back.

JACK
Sorry. But I knew with no body,
you'd never really believe me
without it.

Sick again, she rushes off to the bathroom with the book.

He stands but doesn't follow, watching her.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Darlene puts the toilet lid down, sits.

She hugs the book and cries.

DARLENE
(as quiet as she can)
I'm sorry, baby. Mommy's so sorry.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jack sits back down on the couch. He plucks out a Kleenex from the box and dusts the coffee table with it.

JACK
(to himself)
At least that's over. You piece of
shit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

Darlene re-emerges.

Jack has another cold, wet towel to his neck.

She sits back down.

DARLENE
Don't you think the photo was a
little stupid?

JACK
Keeps me from doing it more. Small
risk to avoid bigger risk. And
you'll notice it was a Polaroid.

They sit there, quiet.

JACK
Would you like to change?

She eyes him.

He gestures at her soaked socks and clothes.

Jack stands up. She's scared to follow him.

JACK
I don't want you to catch a cold.

She stands up. It's painful.

She tries to follow him, but he takes his place behind her, still keeping his gun in a "friendly" position.

DARLENE'S BEDROOM

Darlene changes, quick as she can manage. Everything hurts.

He scans the room, his back turned to her.

He sees the bottle of booze.

She sees that he's seen it. Shit.

DARLENE

You sure that's smart, keeping your
back to me?

He notices she's also put on boots but says nothing about
either that or the vodka.

He also notices that she keeps eying the gun. He smiles.

Darlene looks around the room as she keeps him talking.

DARLENE

Why didn't you just let her go?

JACK

Don't ask stupid questions. You're
a smart woman.

Ouch.

She looks right at the liquor bottle and the glass but sees
Jack has positioned himself right in front of it.

Everything else she's seeing is too soft to be useful - her
blanket, pillows, clothes strewn on a chair, paperbacks.

The picture frame that holds Sally's picture looks heavy. We
close in on the pointed corner of the frame.

But it's on the other side of the room.

She paces around and stops, sits on the bed, close to the
picture frame, looks at it.

Boom! The power goes out.

They are thrust into darkness. We hear the STORM outside.

And then the SCRAPE of that frame being grabbed and then the
first BLOW.

JACK

Aaagh...

We hear them POUND TOGETHER, raging into another.

All we see is black, some vague shapes.

We hear a CRASH --

A SCRAMBLE, GRUNTS--

Then a GUN SHOT!

JACK (O.S.)
God!! Fuck!

DARLENE (O.S.)
On your knees or I will shoot you.

A drawer OPENS and then we hear a CLICK.

A flashlight turns on and now we see the room. It's a mess.

Jack sits across the room from her, cross legged. Bloody scratches across his burned neck and face. His glasses are gone.

JACK
My knee - I can't get on my knees.

Neither has been shot. They're both panting.

Darlene has his gun, shines her flashlight at him.

Blood DRIPS from her fingernail but she doesn't even notice.

DARLENE
(deciding quickly)
Downstairs. I know how to use this.

He gets up. She watches him avoiding using his bad knee to get up. Something's off about that. It doesn't seem habitual.

She grabs his broken glasses on the floor, pockets them.

He passes by the side table. By some ironic miracle, the bottle and glass are undisturbed.

He snorts at this.

They start downstairs. She keeps the gun on him but from a distance.

They stop in the front hallway.

DARLENE
Stay there.

She goes over to the kitchen and pulls open a junk drawer, fishes out some zipties.

DARLENE
I'm sure you know how this goes.

He puts his hands behind his back.

She tucks the gun into her pocket, quickly zipties his hands, gets the gun back into her hand.

DARLENE

We're going to the basement.

She grins.

JACK

(smiling back)

What are ya gonna do to me?

She does not like that they're both kind of excited.

She opens the basement door, ushers him in.

Darlene follows behind, gun shaky as she keeps the flashlight shining toward the basement stairs.

She closes the door behind them.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Darlene sits Jack on an old-fashioned, heavy desk chair. It SQUEAKS as she zip ties his ankles to it. Since the chair's arms are solid, there's nowhere to zip tie his arms to the chair. She jams the other zip ties into her pocket.

Darlene digs out a battery powered camping lantern, switches it on, places it on the desk, giving it all an eerie glow.

It's an average, finished basement. Jack squints.

DARLENE

I want you to see all of this.

She puts his broken glasses on his face. He blinks and sees that the desk is covered in flyers and folders for other missing kids.

DARLENE

Knowing I could at least help the other searching families... Without all of this, I'd probably have drunk myself to death by now.

JACK

But it's not exactly "strictly chamomile" around here either, is it?

Trying not to falter, Darlene pulls back a fabric curtain to reveal a wall of boxes, all neatly labelled things like "Sally - Coats" and "Sally - Books." He slumps.

DARLENE

I've had dreams like this. Someone finally tells me what happened. Usually, it's Sally; sometimes, it's the police. This is the first time it's her killer.

JACK

Glad I could be original.

She laughs. He smiles. An odd, genuine moment.

And then her face changes. He made her laugh?

She fights back more tears, so damn pushed and stressed. She takes a few ragged breaths.

DARLENE

(cynical)
How's your knee?

JACK

Not bad.

DARLENE

Julie and my friend Grace helped me take apart Sally's room. I thought, if I kept it all, if she came back, I could put her room back for her.

She pulls back another curtain: a giant corkboard with bits of information about Sally's case, along with file cabinets.

She opens a file drawer, pulls out boxes of microcassettes. She's careful with them at first and then realizes she doesn't have to be anymore.

DARLENE

I recorded every call until the damn thing broke. Ed talked me out of getting another one. We were divorced but he still looked out for me. You made us a cliché. The couple whose child goes missing so of course, they get divorced.

He has to bite his tongue at that.

She keeps pacing, opens a box, pulls out a big ziploc bag with shirts in it.

She breathes in Sally's smell.

DARLENE

I imagined so many things. Maybe she'd been held somewhere. Or maybe she'd been sold into prostitution. Maybe she'd fallen in love and run off with someone. Maybe she'd just fallen somewhere and we'd just never found her body. Maybe she'd forgotten who she was. Maybe she had run away.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

From Darlene's POV: Sally has come in late, holds her shoes. We see Darlene is wearing a robe. They've been fighting.

SALLY AT 16

I'd never do that! I'm not stupid.

Sally rushes off.

DARLENE (O.S.)

Sally... Get back here!

Sally does not.

DARLENE (O.S.)

Well, first off, you're grounded...

SALLY AT 16

Who gives a shit?

DARLENE (O.S.)

And not the laying around, playing music in your room grounded. I'm talking chores. Like all the windows. Every window I got.

SALLY AT 16

What am I, five? You think chores scare me?

DARLENE (O.S.)

Come on, can we not do this? Can't we just talk like people?

SALLY AT 16

Okay. I don't like being here at night. I don't like watching you pass out on the couch.

DARLENE (O.S.)
I don't pass out. I'm exhausted.

SALLY AT 16
Ah-huh.

INT. OUTSIDE SALLY'S BEDROOM (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: She stands in front of Sally's closed bedroom door. From inside, we hear MUSIC playing loudly, something poppy, ala Cyndi Lauper. She knocks.

SALLY AT 16 (O.S.)
Nope!

DARLENE (O.S.)
Honey. Let's talk.

Darlene tries the doorknob - it's locked.
She lingers, then walks away.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Darlene pauses, taking in those harsh memories.

DARLENE
I knew she was probably dead. I'm not dumb. But I've still felt so frantic, worrying that she was trapped somewhere and needed help. 30 years of pain for me, for Ed, for my mom and dad, Ed's dad and our friends, our church. Ed and I blamed each other and ourselves. "Why didn't you let her get a car and then she wouldn't have been walking by herself?" "Why didn't you pick her up or make sure she walked with a friend?" Just awful things to say to your love.

(off Jack's cynical look)
We didn't have a perfect marriage, but he was my love. It isn't just Sally's life you took. It's a ripple. It's a wave. You did that to us for what? Why? Because you couldn't help yourself?

JACK
(quiet)
My kids were hurt, too.

DARLENE

Oh fuck you.

INT. JACK AND JULIE'S BEDROOM - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

From Jack's POV: He sits in a chair across from the bed, where his wife and teenage children sleep together. It's a strange sight - they're way too big. Julie's arm is draped over Shane. He gets up and walks out.

INT. JACK'S GARAGE - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

From Jack's POV: He looks through a box of his "little reminders," lots of girls' belongings, including the French textbook. His hand runs lovingly over it.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

While Jack's mind still lingers over those memories, Darlene continues to pace and lecture.

DARLENE

And the paperwork! I could kill you for the paperwork alone. And the tracking and the calls and the damn, useless flyers. And the waking up, thinking I hear her talking to me, but I can't quite make out what she's trying to say. Or I wake up because the phone is ringing again and it's some stranger who tells me about a dream they had about Sally, with all the gory details.

Off Jack's confused look --

DARLENE

Oh yeah, lots of people did that. They would actually call me up in the middle of the night to tell me about a dream they had about Sally, as if that would magically contain helpful information. Their dream. And I had to thank them for their time and their concern because I never once wanted to turn away someone who was thinking about Sally. I've spent every day wondering if today would be the day I get THAT call.

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)
 But life went on, much as I wished
 it hadn't. I replay that day a lot.

Jack relates to that.

Darlene's face goes decidedly darker --

EXT. LAKE - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Quick flash of her daughter's anguished face.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - SAME TIME

From Darlene's POV: Darlene puts away her groceries, comes upon a box of sugar cereal.

EXT. LAKE - OCTOBER 1988 (FLASHBACK) - CONTINUOUS

Another flash of Sally's sobbing face.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

DARLENE
 In my imagination, I figure it out
 and show up just in time and drive
 her home. But in real life, while
 you were murdering my daughter...

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - SAME DAY

From Darlene's POV: A pot of water is just starting to BOIL.
 Darlene leans against the counter, watches it.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

DARLENE
 I don't think anyone ate any of
 that dinner I made. By then, we
 were looking for Sally.
 (pause)
 So, now you're done talking?

JACK
 I figured you needed this. I've
 been selfish enough. So tell me
 whatever you want to tell me.

DARLENE

This isn't some to-do list item.
You tell me the details and then I
scream at you and then job done?

JACK

I acknowledge I've made choices
that have hurt people.

DARLENE

What the fuck is wrong with you?
You don't get to be so damn matter-
of-fact about this.

JACK

But you don't believe I had
feelings for you either, did you?

DARLENE

Are you seriously confused that I
don't trust you? This is about her.
Not you. Her! Remember her?

She paces, decides. She takes out an old boom box, presses
play. Sally's voice SINGS OUT.

DARLENE

She wrote this song. She recorded
it over and over on this boom box.
She tried to write songs almost
every day after school.

She sits there and listens.

It's a poppy, confident song, definitely written by a teenage
girl.

Darlene looks up at him and sees he still isn't taking this
to heart, locks him in eye contact.

Jack blinks.

Jack tries to look away.

Relentless, Darlene claps her hands, getting his attention.

The song is just Sally's voice and not recorded well, so it
has a time capsule, trying her best kind of quality.

Darlene tears up, wipes it away.

DARLENE

She loved music. You might remember
that about her.

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Since you knew her since she was 9-
years-old. She may have been my
only child but the house was never
quiet.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: Her hands making dinner. We hear Sally singing this song in the next room.

Suddenly, the song cuts out for us.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - 1990'S (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: her hands on the stair railing, heading down to the living room, taking in this empty, quiet place.

Her hand switches on the TV.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The SILENCE is so pronounced now.

DARLENE

Took me years to stop needing the
TV or radio on. I was so lonely for
that noise.

Darlene finally looks away.

She picks up the shovel, TAPS IT with her nails, grips the handle with both hands.

DARLENE

There were a couple years there
where everything I looked at was a
weapon.

Jack winces.

DARLENE

I'd dream of throwing her killer
down here and just going to town,
ripping you up. So I had to do a
lot of work on myself. I would see
a parking meter and I would make
myself think, "This is for paying
for parking. This is to pay for
things like roads and police.

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

This is not for bashing heads into." I'm done trying to be healthy, working on myself. I was done tonight before you got here, and now I'm especially, super, all the way done.

They sit for a beat.

DARLENE

All that. And it was just you.

JACK

I'm so sorry, Darlene.

She PUNCHES him in the stomach.

JACK

Ugh!

(with all his might)

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhh!!!

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - SAME TIME

Outside, the WIND continues to blow.

We close in on the bottom and side of the house, just above the basement. But we still can't hear his screams.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

JACK

Ahhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!

DARLENE

Not fun to scream and scream and not be heard, is it?

Jack stops screaming, pants.

JACK

The cops...

DARLENE

The cops would bring me hot dishes. I killed my daughter's killer who came to my house in the middle of the night. Good for me. You don't understand real feelings, but I do think you understand pain.

She PUNCHES him in the face.

OWWW!!! Her hand is on fire. She's never punched anyone before tonight.

JACK
Wait, wait --

She shifts gears, wild, rips off his glasses and starts up the basement stairs.

JACK
Where are you going?

DARLENE
I don't know. Maybe I'll be right back. Maybe I'll just leave you here to starve. Maybe I'll come back and shoot you in the face.

JACK
I need my glasses!

Darlene exits the basement, taking the lantern, leaving only the sliver of illumination from the flashlight.

JACK
Nononono!!!

We hear the DOOR CLOSE at the top of the stairs.

Jack immediately stops screaming.

RING! An old-fashioned ring tone goes off from inside Jack's pocket. It's Darlene's cell phone.

He BANGS his side into the arm of the chair, over and over again. He's focusing the blows on his coat pocket.

And then we hear a CRACK. That stops the phone from ringing.

EXT. GRACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The weather continues to be insane. It's back to snowing with thunder and lightning.

INT. GRACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Awake in bed, Grace has called Darlene.

DARLENE (O.S.)
(recording)
...Sorry about that! Please leave a message. Thank you!

GRACE

Hey you, guess you actually got some sleep tonight. Lucky bitch. Sorry, you don't like it when I call you that, even if it is just a reappropriated term of endearment... Coulda sworn I heard a gunshot? Or just thunder? Is your power out, too? Okay.

She hangs up, dials another number on the keypad.

But she just gets a weird BUSY SIGNAL, extra fast.

Hanging up, she lingers.

GRACE

(as she selects Darlene's home number on her cell)
Okay, you should know her number, Grace, but you are 67 and one must be realistic.

She waits but again, just gets that fast BUSY SIGNAL.

Her instincts are bugging her.

GRACE

She's just asleep, ya psycho.

She lays down again.

Waits.

Sighs.

GRACE

Me and my shitty imagination.

She gets up again.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - DARLENE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darlene rushes in, looking busy, frantic.

She sees it: the bottle of vodka and the full glass.

Without hesitation, she grabs them.

Whew. Here we go.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jack's having to wait down here in the dark.

He doesn't like the dark.

Despite everything, it still freaks him out.

JACK

I hear the wind outside. I hear my shoes rustle the carpet. I feel the pain in my hands. I feel the pain on my neck and my face. I feel my back against the chair...

This approach may have worked before but it's not working...

JACK (CONT'D)

I acknowledge that I am starting to panic. I feel like I'm having a heart attack, but I'm not. That's just my brain messing with me...

INT. BASEMENT - A BIT LATER

We hear the basement DOOR OPEN.

Jack snaps to. We hear Darlene HEADING DOWN the basement stairs. She's talking before we even see her, unhinged.

Careful, she places the bottle of vodka and her glass on the desk, looking right at him as she does.

DARLENE

I had thought I was just a social drinker, ya know, some drinks with the girls after work. But I was white knuckling the whole time. And then Sally. Of course I fell apart.

JACK

You were always the hardest on yourself. You wanted more in your life so you drank. It's okay to want more.

DARLENE

You turning into a feminist all the sudden?

JACK

I don't think anyone could say that. But I believed in you. I still do.

She pours a drink and downs it.

He recoils.

DARLENE

It's even worse out there.
(looks at where he's tied up)
I always hoped if I ever found out she'd been killed, I could forgive. I'm a Christian woman. I don't need everyone else to be but it means a lot to me. One of the things you learn at church is that forgiveness is a gift to yourself. A way to not get weighed down by all this hate.

JACK

I've almost come here so many times. But everyone has that survival instinct.

Darlene scoffs, wipes her big, bitter tears.

DARLENE

I'm so done. I'll take the hate.

BANG! Darlene shoots him. Clumsy with it, she looks shocked. Drops the gun.

Jack's shocked, too. We see she's only shot his leg but it's still bleeding big-time.

JACK

Awwwww!!!!!!!!

DARLENE

I shot you!

She laughs, shocked.

He seethes. It's so painful.

DARLENE

Your face! Can you believe I did that? I take spiders outside.

JACK

That's the drunk I knew and loved.

DARLENE

Fuck you. I can be done if I want to be. I was already prepared for oblivion. I have no family, no work, I'm just a burden to my friends. And now I'm literally standing in my basement with my old flame who killed my daughter. And on Christmas Eve!

JACK

You're not thinking straight. It only takes one --

DARLENE

Fuck that. I want your head on a fucking stick and I want to parade it up and down Main Street on Christmas morning. I wonder how hard it would be to cut it off.

(beat)

How hard is it?

She picks the gun back up.

JACK

Hold that thought.

She lowers the gun.

DARLENE

(putting it together)

You want me to kill you.

JACK

Yes.

DARLENE

You put me through all of this to make me want to kill you.

JACK

My kids can't know who I really am.

DARLENE

That's why you were so willing to come down here.

JACK

Now, you have to do it right. Nobody can find my body. I don't want you to face prison for murder.

DARLENE
I still need you.

JACK
It's the classic thing, isn't it?
Someone takes your child's life;
you take theirs. You've already
punched me and shot me and burned
me. We're here.

She ties a throw blanket around his leg, a tiny bit of help.

DARLENE
But I'd be like you. Evil.

JACK
Kid, there's no such thing as evil.
People just do things. Normal's a
made up idea.

DARLENE
Says the serial killer.

JACK
I told you the truth. I gave you
what you needed. Now you give me
what I need. That's what friends
do, Darlene. Who else is going to
do it?

She looks at him in disbelief.

DARLENE
Are you whining?!

This hurts him a lot.

He'd really thought this through, risked a lot, and now,
she's not just saying no but making fun of him.

He pulls himself together. Looks her straight in the eye.

JACK
Don't you want to give your
daughter justice?

Darlene scoffs, says nothing. Digs her hands into her
pockets, nervous. Pulls out his glasses.

She's about to put them back on his face --

DARLENE
Why haven't you asked for these?

JACK
I didn't want to interrupt you.

DARLENE
You don't need them, do you?

Darlene puts them on. They're just plain glass.

DARLENE
Wow.

JACK
(don't make me)
If you don't kill me, I'll kill
you.

DARLENE
Good luck with that when I have the
gun and you're tied up.

JACK
You think this is the first time
some woman thinks she has the upper
hand on me?

That freaks her out. He tucks the monster back in, goes for
vulnerable.

JACK
Whatever good I see in myself is in
my kids.

DARLENE
Oh stop it. The only reason I'd
even think about doing this is for
them. But they'd look for you.
They'd worry.

JACK
Would they? I think my going
missing will feel like a logical
conclusion.
(beat)
Better that than they know the
truth.

DARLENE
(fair point)
Won't the kids find any more
"reminders" at your place?

JACK
I threw it all away. I was really
thorough.

Darlene sinks at this, but tries not to let it show.

JACK

My body is betraying me. For a while there, being an old man helped lure them in. No one suspects a nice, old, white man. But one of them just got away. No one ever did before.

DARLENE

If she got away --

JACK

Exactly, and this one wasn't black.
(off her look)
After all the attention about Sally, I switched to mostly black and Hispanic girls - much easier.

Darlene is horrified.

DARLENE

So you were on some fucked-up diet?

He smiles.

JACK

You know you got special treatment because Sally was a perfect blonde girl from a perfect white middle class family. If she'd been black, do you think anybody would've given a shit, especially after 30 years?

DARLENE

Of course not.

The pain from his leg kicks in again. He winces.

DARLENE

The bullet's still in there.

JACK

(ignoring her taunt)
I would just take a trip and find someone I liked, as long as she wasn't white. The experts say we don't work outside our race. "Psychopaths don't operate outside their race." But I do. I'm smarter than that so I'm not a psychopath.

DARLENE

You think I've just been sitting in some small-town fairy tale, don't you? I've run fundraisers for searching families who are people of color --

JACK

People of Color. Well, aren't you woke?

(off her horrified look)

And don't forget, I know what you could be like with Sally.

DARLENE

Oh fuck you for throwing that in my face. I never hurt her.

(beat)

So how would this even work, in your mind, after I kill you?

Jack smiles.

JACK

Reach into my jacket, left inside pocket.

DARLENE

Uh, no.

JACK

It's instructions. I want to make this as easy as I can. I know what I'm asking.

Terrified, she takes another drink.

She eyes his tied up hands and feet. He could still just slam into her.

Like a nervous wild animal, she moves around to try to look at his jacket pocket, to see if there's really something in there. But she can't tell.

She looks him in the eye. He's perfectly calm, which is just more unnerving. She approaches from the side --

Quickly, she snatches at his pocket, RIPPING the paper as she grabs it.

She bounces away, opens up the folded paper. It is just instructions.

DARLENE

Well, you're a planner.

JACK

A guy I used to work with has a construction site about an hour away. They'll pour the foundation just after the holiday. So you just dump my body right into the excavation point, pour in some concrete and you're done.

DARLENE

(astounded)

Pour in some concrete? That all?

JACK

It's easy. Just a push of a button. I already checked it out.

DARLENE

Wouldn't someone catch me?

JACK

You thought I came here tonight of all nights, on Christmas Eve, just to what, be extra dramatic? I did it because no one's working a public site like that tomorrow.

DARLENE

But the snow, the black ice. I'm not going anywhere.

JACK

The black ice wasn't real. My car is fine.

(off her look)

You'll be fine. When have you known us to be snowed in for long?

(gesturing toward the notes in her hands)

As soon as the snow lets up tonight, drive me out there, dump me --

DARLENE

Oh sure, because I could magically lift you, let alone carry you over to some big hole.

JACK

You're a strong woman.

DARLENE

I can barely carry my groceries these days.

JACK

(anyway)

Dump me in, pour the cement, then leave the car at the Fred's at that address. They don't have security cameras in their parking lot and there aren't any across the street. So you shouldn't be seen. But don't get a cab there. There's still a payphone down the street at Locus Avenue and 64th. No cameras there either so call from there. In my coat pocket, you will also find change for the phone booth and \$300 cash for the cab back.

DARLENE

Three hundred --

JACK

I didn't want to risk you spending your own money.

They sit in silence a moment. She's staring over at her files, the recent fliers and cases on her desk.

DARLENE

Nope. You don't get anything you want.

She grabs at his coat pocket, pulls out her cell phone. She finds out what we already knew: it's smashed. Unusable.

JACK

Why'd you leave the room? You never leave the room until they're dead.

He stands up, easily BREAKS his hands out of the zip tie.

Her mouth drops open. She raises the gun.

He snatches it right out of her hand.

She looks at him, stunned.

JACK

No one would question you killing yourself. All alone on Christmas Eve, your daughter missing for thirty years.

He tries to aim the gun to make his point. But his hand won't work. We see now: it's arthritic. He tries to place his fingers in the right place on the gun.

Darlene is stunned for a moment.

DARLENE

A flare up. It wasn't your knee.

He gives up on aiming the gun and grabs a pair of scissors off her little desk --

Darlene is on the move, shovel in hand, up the stairs --

It takes him way too long but he manages to snip off the zip ties at his ankles.

Since this is her house, Darlene ascends those stairs like a champ, deadbolting the door behind her.

BAM! We hear Jack ramming the basement door.

Startled, Darlene freezes.

It's a terrible sound but the door is holding.

The house is still pitch dark and Darlene didn't think to bring her flashlight or the lantern with her.

Darlene gets moving up the stairs, quick as she can anyway.

A BULLET BREAKS THROUGH by the basement doorknob.

She hears Jack BREAKING OUT of the basement - the lantern lighting his way.

Darlene hides just behind her guest room door, gripping the shovel in attack mode.

Jack doesn't see her. He looks around, cautious. It's painful and unsteady for him to stand on his wounded leg, which gives him a creepy limp.

JACK

Why did you have a deadbolt on the outside of your basement door? What were you planning?

(laughs, impressed)

Look Kid, there's no way they'll ever find her body, if that's what you're holding out for. They've looked in smaller landfills for six months and still never found a body. It's just been too long.

Upstairs, Darlene is panicked and trying to keep quiet. It's already getting hard to keep the shovel in this position.

She turns her face away from the crack in the door and sees etchings that say "Sally 2-18-78, then Sally Beth Hagen 3/12/82" and so on, all up the inside door frame.

They give her strength.

The rest of the pristine room shows little sign of its former occupant, only Sally's hot air balloon quilt.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - SALLY'S ROOM - 1978 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: On the floor, she plays ponies with Sally at 6, laughing at Sally's silly pony neighs.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Darlene waits, struggling.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Meanwhile, Grace walks down the road, in her heavy boots and coat, flashlight in hand.

GRACE

(singing, keeping herself
company)

...Oh what joy and what surprise,
when I open up my eyes and see a
hippo hero standing there. I want a
hippopotamus for Christmas. Only a
hippopotamus will do. Don't want a
doll...

The SNOW is intense, but she's a hard weather vet. She sticks to the snow, using a walking stick to avoid the icy patches.

She's worried but in that embarrassed way.

GRACE

No dinky tinker toy. I want a
hippopotamus to play with and
enjoy...

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Using a KITCHEN towel, Jack tourniquets his leg.

He grabs a knife from the block he left under the sink.

Darlene puts one hand on the GUEST ROOM door.

JACK

Darlene! All done hide and seek!

He catches his reflection in the back window. He reaches up to wipe his face but stops.

Stares at himself for a long beat, until he finds the evil.

He smiles at how crazed he looks. Takes a deep breath.

JACK

You and I, Darlene. I think you're the person I've felt closest to, in my whole life. You're definitely the only one who's seen both sides so now you know me the best of anyone. I've certainly seen both sides of you. Hope you're feeling nice and fucked up now. You want more, don't you?

His monster is really showing now. He RAMPAGES, moving furniture, opening cabinets and closets.

JACK

You know, I think she enjoyed it. Sally. I saw the way she looked at me, like she'd been waiting for me to throw her down and fuck her.

Darlene bites her lip - knowing she's being baited.

Jack struggles to get up the stairs.

And stalks toward the guest room.

Darlene stays still, terrified.

He walks through the doorway.

Darlene hurls herself at the door, slamming him in the face.

Darlene hustles around the door, SLAMS the shovel at his hands. Only the knife drops.

He grabs her.

JACK

(re: the gun)

Take it from me! Wrestle it away!

Confused, she still tries.

DARLENE

I knew you were full of shit!

He stops, gives her the gun.

Darlene aims it at his head.

DARLENE

Why didn't you just kill yourself?

He smirks, clumsily grabs the gun back from her.

Showing her, he first aims it at her. Darlene starts shaking, she's so scared.

She scans for the shovel.

JACK

Uh-uh, keep your eyes on me.

Terrified but defiant, Darlene looks back to him.

He eyes his steady hand, looks back to her, then moves his hand back toward his head, his hand shaking now.

He looks at her - "do you see?"

She does.

DARLENE

Just stop acting like you're not going to kill me. It's mean.

He rushes at her, throwing her onto the bed.

He gets right on top of her and CHOKES her.

She kicks her legs toward him but can't make a good impact.

He's locked on her too solidly.

JACK

Every once in a while, I like to do it this way.

She tries to scream but it's not coming out.

Fighting off panic, she looks around for the gun or the knife but doesn't see them.

She reaches up to eye gouge him but only manages to sort of poke at his chin.

She tries to punch him in the balls. But it's not a great angle so it doesn't help.

Now she's making serious CHOKING sounds.

Jack's face suddenly becomes pained.

His arthritic hands have flared up again. He groans.

Hope flashes across Darlene's face.

But his squeezing becomes more of a messy pushing. He's working through it just fine.

JACK
It's almost over.

Darlene PUNCHES her hand out at Jack's leg, DIGS at the bullet hole with her nails.

It's an effective, brutal move.

JACK
Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

He lets go and reels back.

She's shocked at herself.

Keeping at it, she grabs the bedside lamp and SLAMS IT over his head.

He's down. He tries to grab the knife but can't grip it.

Darlene HITS him several more times over the head now.

The lamp BREAKS. Now she sees he's stopped.

Frantic and stumbling, she grabs the knife.

His eyes open and he moans.

She digs in her pockets, only finds one extra zip tie.

She tries to hold down his other arm, so she can zip tie it to a bed post.

But he fights her.

His arm is suddenly smashed with a bookend. There's a terrible CRACK.

JACK
Fuuuuucckk...

Darlene looks up and sees --

GRACE is there.

Darlene is so in the moment, she just takes the help.

He rages in the bed.

JACK
Goddamnit!

DARLENE
Shut up!!!!!!!

Darlene turns and sees Grace is freaked out, looking between this trapped, crazed man and her bloody friend with a knife.

GRACE
Well, I always said I'd help you
hide a body.

Grace eyes her - "you okay?"

Darlene smiles, leveling out.

JACK
Fucking bitches!! Let me go! I'm
gonna fucking kill you.

DARLENE
He seems like he needs restraining,
wouldn't you say?

GRACE
Oh yeah.

Darlene grabs the gun from the floor and hands it to Grace.

Darlene digs in the closet, finds Christmas ribbon.

She ties his wrists and ankles with the Christmas ribbon.

The two friends are still taken aback by each other.

GRACE
You didn't answer your phone.

DARLENE
(manic intro's)
This is Jack, my... Julie's ex.

GRACE
Jesuswhat?!

DARLENE
Jack, this is Grace.

Jack and Grace are both thrown by how casual Darlene is being. But she's a woman on a mission.

DARLENE
This won't hold him.

Darlene starts to leave the room.

GRACE
Waitwaitwait. What is going on?

JACK
She's lost it. She drank all this vodka and tied me up and shot me!

GRACE
What?

DARLENE
Sally is dead.

GRACE
Oh Dar...

DARLENE
Jack did it. He came here to tell me just allllll about it. You know, for the standard reasons ya confess something: clear his conscience, give me closure, motivate me to kill him and hide his body.

GRACE
You're cracking jokes?

DARLENE
(trying not to lose it)
I don't even know!

Darlene searches in HER BEDROOM and HALL closets for something stronger to tie him up with.

DARLENE
Now why would you have rope, Darlene? Do you remember buying rope at any point?

Grace watches Jack.

GRACE

Just because you're scary doesn't mean I won't shoot you.

JACK

Really? Where's the safety?

Grace doesn't look away from him, TAPS the safety, with her middle finger.

GRACE

Right here, asshole.

HALL CLOSET

Darlene isn't having any luck with her search. She pulls out an extension cord. And then another.

She seems surprised to keep finding them.

Soon, she has four of them on the floor.

DARLENE

Who needs four extension cords?

GUEST ROOM

Jack yanks himself partway free and lunges for Grace.

Grace forces Jack back on the bed, PUNCHES him in the face.

Jack spits blood onto Grace's face.

She wipes at the blood in her eyes.

Making use of the distraction, he frees himself. The ribbons are just, well, ribbons so he rips through them.

Darlene rushes in, grabs the shovel from the floor.

With his hands arthritic and his one arm freshly broken, he uses all he has, kicking Darlene into the hallway wall.

She FALLS to the floor.

Grace PUNCHES at him but misses. He KICKS her down and then over and over down the hallway. Darlene can't get up but she still tries to help, grabbing his legs.

But he kicks her off.

JACK

Never stop until they're dead.

He **SHOVES** Grace down the stairs.

From the top of the stairs, Jack points the gun at Grace.

JACK

I told you it was just for us.

Grace gets into the best defensive position she can manage.

JACK

Aaaaaghhh! Fuck!

Darlene yanks out the knife she just drove through Jack's foot. Blood spurts out.

With his hurting hands, he still tries to shoot but --

Darlene pushes herself up and onto him, **KNOCKS** the gun out of his hands.

They **FALL** onto the stairs together, earning Darlene a bloody rug burn on her face.

They **WRESTLE** together.

It's clumsy and desperate, each showing their age.

But it's Darlene that triumphs. She goes classic and punches him in the balls, really **CRUNCHING** on them.

She grabs him by his hair and **WHACKS** his head against the stair step.

He stops, now a heap on the stairs. Darlene watches him, her fingers still gripping his hair.

Panting, she takes a moment to decide whether to slam his head again.

DARLENE

Grace?! I can't find the gun.

(beat)

Should I slam his head again?

GRACE

Sure. You want to kill him, right?

DARLENE

No! I need him alive.

GRACE

Then don't.

Still watching him, she lets go and pulls herself up.

She scans around for the gun but doesn't see it.

GRACE
He get you?

DARLENE
Nope. You okay?

GRACE
(checking herself for
wounds)
Sunshine and roses.

A little woozy, Grace stands up, leans on the railing as she comes up to Darlene.

GRACE
Finally get to put all those ER
years to some good use.

She checks Darlene over.

DARLENE
So I'm dying then?

GRACE
Yep, super dead.

Darlene smiles. Grace pulls out her phone.

DARLENE
No.

GRACE
This is over.

DARLENE
It wasn't just Sally. This isn't
just our bad guy.

GRACE
Let the police handle it. We both
need to be seen at the hospital.

DARLENE
He won't talk to them. He might
talk to me. You're tough enough for
this and so am I. My baby is dead.
I can't work anymore. This is what
I can do. I can get answers.

GRACE
(thinking it over)
Fucking hell, Dar.

They look at each other. Thelma and Louise moment.

GRACE
Oh jeez, fuck it.

DARLENE
So, bring him back to the bed, tie him up? Found a weird amount of extension cords in the hall closet.

GRACE
Why bother dragging him up there?

DARLENE
How do we control him on the stairs?

Grace looks around - no place to tie him to.

GRACE
Right. But it'd be easier to drag him downstairs.

DARLENE
I... I wanna do this in Sally's room. Maybe that's stupid --

GRACE
A) Quit saying what you want is stupid. And B) I get you. Closure.

Darlene picks him up under his arms and Grace grabs his feet.

GRACE
Okay. Here we go.

They make it a few steps up the stairs.

Darlene suddenly can't move.

DARLENE
Fuck!

GRACE
Your back?

DARLENE
Yep.

Darlene takes deep breaths, giving it a second to pass.

GRACE
And we thought we'd hit rock bottom when we were drinking.

DARLENE

Yeah, this is like I took a jackhammer to rock bottom, tore it up, and then just started digging with my hands like a dog.

Darlene turns slightly, trying to wake up her back.

DARLENE

Okay, this is gonna suck.

The two friends CARRY/DRAG him upstairs, through their sheer need to survive. They are in incredible pain.

DARLENE/GRACE

Aaaaaaagghhhhh!!!

They've gotten him to the GUEST ROOM.

Together they get him onto the bed, quickly tie him down with the extension cords, pull to be sure they're tight.

Grace leads the way as she and Darlene rip up more closet linens, just trying to keep him from bleeding to death.

Grace retrieves the discarded knife, brings it to Darlene.

DARLENE

It was Mrs. Hagen. In her daughter's bedroom. With the knife.

Grace smiles - atta girl.

DARLENE

(shaking Jack)

Wake up!

She slaps his face. Shakes him some more.

He starts to wake up. Darlene holds the knife to his face.

Jack sees her and the knife in her hand.

JACK

Oh.

DARLENE

Yeah, "Oh." Wake up.

Jack feels his restraints now, wiggles his hands and feet.

He starts to pass out again.

DARLENE

Oh save it.

Grace grabs a book off a shelf, uses some gift wrap scotch tape to tape it to Jack's broken arm.

GRACE

We need him to be able to talk.

This is a loud and awkward way to set his arm but he immediately looks better, more with it.

DARLENE

(gathering herself)

Okay, gimme your phone.

Grace hands it to her.

Darlene gets up and shows Jack the call history. All calls have been to Darlene for the last few hours.

DARLENE

She hasn't called anyone. Okay?
Now, if I'm gonna do this thing, I
need to know about the other girls.
I need to give their families
answers.

JACK

Ahh, the drunk finds a mission
after all. That's cute.

DARLENE

I can come up with a way to be sure
they never find out it was you. I'm
a resourceful gal.

He just sits there, full road block.

DARLENE

So you come here, pretending to
apologize but it's all bullshit to
get me to do this thing for you.

JACK

You have to decide if this is the
hill you wanna die on. My love for
you only gets you so far.

DARLENE

These are other mother's children.

JACK

Don't be so melodramatic. If you don't wanna do it, don't do it. But I'll make sure Ed knows about us, that he understands just how truly violated he has been before I choke the life out of him with my bare hands. Just amazing that a man who's lost a child doesn't have any sort of security system.

She goes still.

JACK

One story, smart move at his age. Two bedrooms, one with a nautical theme.

DARLENE

Look at where you are. And doesn't it say something that you keep ending up like this? You're done. Now if you don't talk, I'll call the cops. Or maybe I'll call Julie. Or Shane. Or Lisa.

He seethes. She's found his button.

DARLENE

Hmmmm... Now I get why your daughter never got married.

JACK

Fuck you. I never touched her.

DARLENE

Maybe but she's a smart girl. I bet she had an instinct about you.

JACK

You love her. You wouldn't ruin her life.

DARLENE

Now.

JACK

What if I just don't say anything?

DARLENE

Don't ask me stupid questions. You're a smart man.

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Even if you miraculously avoid
prison, your children will never
trust you again, or themselves.
Part of them will always know
they're half-monster.

That hurts him. But he can't give up any of his power. He
tries division.

JACK

(to Grace)

Drunks can't just have a couple
drinks after 20 years.

GRACE

Oh I know.

She turns to Darlene.

JACK

She's crazy!

DARLENE

I had a couple of drinks.

GRACE

Are you fucking kidding me?

DARLENE

Oh, you gonna make me coffee? You
gonna fix me?

JACK

She knows she's just a burden to
you.

Grace looks slapped.

GRACE

You're not a burden.

DARLENE

Yes, I am.

JACK

(to Grace)

You really think she doesn't notice
all those times you've sat
awkwardly next to her while she
cried because you had other plans
but you never said anything?

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Or all those times you were so careful with how you talked about your family because she lost hers? It really weighs you down.

Grace flinches, says nothing.

DARLENE

(to Jack)

You just can't help yourself. Manipulators gotta manipulate. We're best friends. It's messy!

Darlene stops herself.

They're all just vibrating with nerves and anger.

Darlene takes a moment to calm herself.

DARLENE

I do think that despite all you've done, you genuinely wanted to do good by coming here. I don't think that's bullshit. I'll give the other families the answers they need anonymously. I'll write them letters, drive far away to mail them, claim it was a suicide letter so they won't look for you. I'll buy an old typewriter to type them.

JACK

Guess I'm not the only planner.

Darlene brings out her note pad, gets her pen ready.

She just looks at him, like a patient but tired parent.

But he doesn't budge.

Darlene dials the phone, puts it on speaker.

Jack wants to scream, "No!!!" But he stops himself. She won't really do it.

DARLENE

(on the phone)

Hi, Lisa.

Jack's face is instant desperation.

LISA (O.S.)
(on the phone, startled
awake)
Aunt Darlene?

DARLENE
It's me, honey. Um, how's your
Christmas?

LISA
What's going on? Are you okay?

DARLENE
Well, sure. Now, you know I love
you and your brother, right?

LISA
Of course.
(beat)
Aunt Dar, you're not gonna --

JACK
(whispering)
Jodi Ruiz. Montana. Hang up the
phone.

DARLENE
What? Oh no, I'm sorry I scared
you. I woke up confused. I saw the
clock, thought it was 3pm, not 3 in
the morning. Goodness.

LISA
Do you need help?

DARLENE
No, no, it's okay, go back to
sleep. Merry Christmas. May all
your dreams come true.

LISA
I'll be by in the morning, soon as
it's safe to drive. Okay? I will be
walking into your house tomorrow. I
have a key.

DARLENE
I hear you. I'm fine.

LISA
Love you.

DARLENE
Bye, honey.

She hangs up the phone, puts it back in her own pocket.

DARLENE

Talk now or I call her back and ruin her life.

JACK

Frances Giacomo. Rose Brigand.

Darlene flinches. She's heard of this one.

DARLENE

Rose was 12. She was getting groceries for her mom, who had a cold.

GRACE

Oh God.

JACK

I read that.

Darlene ignores Grace's instant tears, stays focused.

DARLENE

Give me a detail. Something only the cops would know.

JACK

I took her belt and her shoelace.

DARLENE

One shoelace? Okay, sure. Who else?

JACK

Trista Hardstark. Rebekah Jones. Christina Ethridge. Bonnie Sue Shallon. Sally Hagen. Sarah Farag.

We close in on the phone in Darlene's pocket: it's recording.

DARLENE

Slow down. I need more to prove you were the one. It's not closure if I just give them a letter that says, "Hey, I did it, so there ya go."

JACK

I let Bonnie Sue drink a beer. I took her earring, only needed one.

DARLENE

Did you usually only take one of each item?

JACK

No. You can't create a signature.

INT. GUEST ROOM - LATER

Darlene finishes SCRIBBLING all of this down. It's so much.

Darlene's face is pure anguish.

GRACE

I'll go find the gun.

Darlene nods in appreciation.

DARLENE

(to Jack)

So why did you cheat on Julie? I mean with the other women after me.

JACK

I had to give her a reason to kick me out so she'd still be the good guy. "Poor Julie. Jack cheated on her so of course she divorced him."

DARLENE

So you're claiming you were trying to be valiant?

He says nothing. He doesn't want to be made fun of.

JACK

I have my occasional good point.

DARLENE

Or you just needed less eyes on you?

JACK

Oh hell, what do you think?

They wait.

Grace comes back in with the gun.

GRACE

Under your bed, if you can believe it. That went faaaar.

Darlene takes up the gun.

JACK

Thank you. I really am sorry.

DARLENE

Okay.

GRACE

By the way, what the hell did you do to his neck?

DARLENE

Hot tea.

GRACE

Nice.

Jack is unnerved.

DARLENE

Should we have some fun with him first?

GRACE

Agreed. This is way too clean a death.

DARLENE

Hey, we did some good work on him already.

GRACE

That's true. We shouldn't sell ourselves short.

DARLENE

What do you think, his knees or his hands?

Now he's even more nervous.

GRACE

Knees? So what, we just push on 'em, punch 'em?

DARLENE

I don't know. Let's see.

Darlene shoves down on his knee with all her might.

He groans in pain.

She stands back up, looks him over.

DARLENE

Eh. I think I'm done. You want?

GRACE

Nah.

Darlene stands before him, aims the gun.

DARLENE

I gave my word so here we go. But this, I don't enjoy this.

JACK

Oh I imagine you'll enjoy it.

Jack swallows hard.

Darlene holds the gun up, trying to enjoy her vengeance.

But her hands are shaking. She starts crying --

GRACE

Nonono, fuck forgiveness and fuck revenge, too! You don't have to forgive him and you don't have to bend over backwards to give him what he wants, just because you said you would. I mean, kill him if you want to or because he could kill us. But fuck your word. He obviously hasn't given a shit about his.

DARLENE

Fair point. Then I want to.

She doesn't just shoot. She EMPTIES the gun.

But she immediately DROPS it, sickened.

Now we see that Jack is still alive. The wall behind him is ripped up with bullet holes. He's just plain confused.

DARLENE

Here's the thing. Your secret's not a secret anymore. I sent it out into the world. It's done.

Jack looks at her --

DARLENE

They probably haven't found out yet since I sent it so late. But it could be any minute really, if Lisa decides to wake up her mom about my phone call.

Grace reacts: Fuck Yes!

JACK

Your phone was smashed. Her call history.

DARLENE

You were so focused on the phones.
Nobody thinks old women know how to
use computers.

Grace smiles, figuring it out now.

DARLENE

I emailed Julie and the police
officer assigned to Sally's case. I
told them everything. I typed my
ass off. It's done. It's out.

Grace is impressed. She did not see this coming.

JACK

No. No.

DARLENE

I did Julie the favor of emailing
her and not the kids. She can at
least tell them herself.

JACK

No.

She and Grace are enjoying this now.

He THRASHES around but he's tied too tightly and is too
fucked up anyway.

GRACE

I can't wait for him to go to
prison.

DARLENE

Oh yeah, a guy who rapes and kills
girls, I imagine you'll get a real,
um, lesson in empathy.

They laugh.

Suddenly, Jack stops.

JACK

The power was out. The wifi on your
computer wouldn't work without
electricity. But nice try.

Darlene walks over to the ceiling fan switch on the wall.

She FLIPS it - the fan WHIRS away, sprinkling some dust
bunnies down on him.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE (FLASHBACK) - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

From Darlene's POV: Jack is tied up in the basement.

JACK

Where are you going?

DARLENE

I don't know. Maybe I'll be right back. Maybe I'll just leave you here to bleed out or starve. Maybe I'll come back and shoot you in the face this time.

Breathing hard, Darlene hustles out of the basement, closing the door behind her.

She sees the lights are on.

She looks around for a moment, in shock.

DARLENE

Think. Think.

She switches off the thermostat.

A series of shots of her frantically turning off electrical items throughout the house.

Her hands opening her laptop, typing.

DARLENE (V.O.)

I took my chance. I had to make you think I was so locked in, so desperate, so out of options. So beat. That I was a drunk again.

She dabs a bit of vodka on her face. Empties the rest of the bottle of vodka and glass in the bathroom upstairs, rinses them out, fills the bottle with water.

Brings them with her.

DARLENE (V.O.)

I shot you in that "I'm so grief stricken and deranged" way to try to move up the timeline. I'd written everybody. They could've come any minute and I needed your confessions.

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DARLENE

I tell ya, I sure didn't see the wanting me to kill you thing coming so I guess you get a point there.

JACK

You still had a bottle of vodka in your house tonight.

Grace looks at her.

DARLENE

I did. But I didn't drink it.

GRACE

That's only a little better.

Darlene bristles.

JACK

Everyone is going to find out you fucked your daughter's killer.

DARLENE

(shrugs)

Worse things.

(to Grace)

I bought the bottle and put it upstairs. I had planned it. The road to oblivion.

GRACE

(damnit)

I knew your house was too clean.

DARLENE

And then he showed up.

JACK

You can't do this to Shane and Lisa.

DARLENE

You don't give a shit about your kids. You only care about being in control.

JACK

You're taking it out on them.

DARLENE

Please stop using "it" so badly. I wish I could spare Lisa and Shane. I love them. You know I do.

Seething, Jack calms himself down.

JACK

I came here to apologize to you.

DARLENE

That wasn't a real apology. You did it to get what you want.

JACK

That's not true.

DARLENE

If you really felt bad, you would've just told me and not made me have to do something awful to survive it.

JACK

I didn't come here to kill you. I didn't. Damn it, I finally tell someone the truth --

DARLENE

Blah blah blah.

(beat)

You know, when I saw you through that peephole, I knew. I didn't know what I knew, but I knew you weren't safe. I knew I should've just said fuck politeness.

GRACE

Everybody does it. Whole world's littered with the bodies of polite women.

JACK

I'm probably the most prolific serial killer in history and you --

GRACE

Now, look, I could've left a shit in every state of the union and that wouldn't have made me impressive either.

Darlene laughs.

DARLENE

So when did your hands start to fail you? See, I think if you can't choke an old lady, I think you haven't been doing this for a while. I don't think a girl just escaped. But I do think the new DNA genealogy stuff means you know you're running out of time. So I think you came here because you're pissed you can't murder people anymore.

JACK

So don't hide my body. But at least kill me.

They check his ties, surveying his wounds.

DARLENE

No. You can just lay here, all messed up, in the dark and await your reckoning.

They walk out, leaving him.

Together, they push a dresser in front of the guest room door.

Darlene grabs a decorative vase of marbles from a nearby bookcase, places it on top.

GRACE

Finally a reason for a vase full of marbles. Gotta admit, I never got that design idea.

DARLENE

You're critiquing my decor right now?

They laugh, delirious.

They head over to Darlene's bedroom, turn on the light.

JACK (O.S.)

Would you rather I hadn't come here? You would have never known!

She looks at the picture of Sally - sitting cracked on the floor from her earlier fight with Jack. She wants to grab it.

GRACE

Evidence.

Darlene stops herself.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: she holds brand-new school pictures of Sally. (This is the famous, framed picture.)

Sally is fixing herself an after-school snack.

SALLY AT 16

Mom, I look dumb. Look at that look
on my face, so happy!

She makes a silly face, imitating the look in the picture.

DARLENE

No, you look beautiful. I shall
treasure it always.

Sally laughs.

SALLY AT 16

As you should. Worship upon me.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GRACE

Make the call.

DARLENE

Right.

She pulls out Grace's phone, DIALS 911.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

(on the phone)

9-1-1, what's your emergency?

Darlene pulls herself together.

DARLENE

Okay, so --

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM - DAWN

Jack lies tied up on the bed. His tear-stained face has grown paler, after having lost so much blood, but he's still alive.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - 1978 (FLASHBACK) - CHRISTMAS MORNING

From Jack's POV: LITTLE SHANE AND LISA look up from their freshly opened Christmas presents, shocked and thrilled.

Even Julie is surprised and impressed.

JULIE

So what, you snuck out of bed and did all this after we went to sleep?

JACK (O.S.)

(laughing)
I couldn't help it.

He lingers in this big group hug.

They pull away and he watches their astonished, happy faces.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - 1978 (FLASHBACK) - CHRISTMAS MORNING

From Jack's POV: Later that same Christmas, we hear Jack shouting. He throws his just opened present across the room.

JACK (O.S.)

Really? Because I don't think so!
Everything I do for this family...

Julie looks used to this, picks it up, throws the present and paper into the trash bag filled with wrapping paper.

He looks over and sees the kids aren't looking at him. Shane is trying not to cry while Lisa goes over to her mother, protective. He paces, enraged, walks away from them.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack starts to cry again. But this just makes him mad. He THRASHES in his ties, but it hurts too much.

JACK

You fucking...

He starts to calm himself down.

EXT. LAKE - DAWN

The lake is frozen and quiet. We hold on a beautiful landscape of it.

EXT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - DAWN

The world around Darlene's house is still sleeping and the snowing has eased up.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - DAWN

The door to Sally's old room is still closed and barricaded. No noise comes from inside it.

In the KITCHEN, the tea cups sit in the sink, a chip taken out of the Mom mug, the piece lying beside it.

In the BASEMENT, Sally's last tape sits in the boombox.

In the MASTER BEDROOM, the damp kitchen towel rests, discarded on the carpet.

In the OFFICE, Darlene's laptop sits closed.

LIVING ROOM

Bloody, beaten, and exhausted, Darlene and Grace are still up, waiting on the police.

The heater hums, still warming up the house. The front curtains are wide open.

The friends watch the sun rise.

GRACE

So... Merry Christmas?

Darlene laughs.

DARLENE

Fuck you.

They crack up together.

So exhausted, they slow down and stop laughing.

GRACE

For the record, I know you can take care of yourself.

DARLENE

Well, if you didn't...

She gestures toward upstairs.

GRACE
 (smiling with her)
 Right? I know now.
 (beat)
 So, do I have to propose it?

DARLENE
 Right... Nothing says Christmas
 like an AA meeting.

Pure tired, Darlene nods, closes her eyes.

INT. DARLENE AND ED'S ROOM - (FLASHBACK) - DAWN

From Darlene's POV: We start on black.

SALLY AT 8 (O.S.)
 Mom. Mom. It's Christmas. Come on,
 you said you'd get up when it's
 light out. That was our deal.
 Mooooom.

We come out of the black and see little Sally's sweet face.
 She kisses us, tugs at us.

We start to move out of bed. Sally runs off.

SALLY AT 8 (O.C.)
 Mom!! Dad! Santa really came! Wow!!
 Look at all this. Come on, come on!

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Darlene turns and looks at the tiny Christmas tree and
 Sally's wrapped gift. She switches on the tree lights.

She puts the gift in her lap.

Sits with it for a bit. Grace watches her.

The paper is old and creased by now after having been taken
 back out every year for all this time.

Grace unleashes one corner of the wrapping paper.

Darlene takes the nudge and finally opens it.

It's a handheld voice recorder.

GRACE
 Oh fuck, honey. For her singing?

DARLENE

Yep.

She PUSHES the record button but says nothing.

She lets the button go.

Darlene and Grace are quiet.

Grace grabs her friend's hand and just holds it.

DARLENE

That girl. Oh man.

Grace tears up first and then Darlene joins her.

EXT. DARLENE'S CAR - 1988 (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: Sally at 16. Messy hair, fresh from school, singing wildly and laughing with her mom.

INT. HAGEN RESIDENCE - MASTER BEDROOM (FLASHBACK) - DAY

From Darlene's POV: BABY SALLY goofing on the bed with her momma, rolling around and laughing. Darlene's hand comes into frame and Baby Sally wraps her whole tiny hand around her momma's finger.

Darlene's POV comes closer and gives her a kiss, lingering in that uber soft, blonde baby hair.

From that moment of bliss, we...

FADE TO WHITE.

THE END.