

BRUTAL

By
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FADE IN:

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A FLARING MATCH lighting a cigarette to a glowing red in the dark. Wisps of smoke caught in subtle moonlight.

The smoothly deformed, lip-less mouth of an old man puckers around the filter. A long pull and relieving exhale.

OLD MAN

(raspy)

That's as close to heaven as I'm going to get.

The OLD MAN'S face marred with massive burning. No eyebrows, the skin melted to a pore less veneer. The pupils of his eyes scorched to white globes, penetrating as hell in the dark room. His meek smile hampered by muscle deformity.

Another long puff.

OLD MAN

The almighty knows I'm beyond forgiveness. These eyes are my penance.

He leans forward, as if speaking to someone...

OLD MAN

I know why you've come.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A CELL PHONE VIBRATING IN THE DARK

A hand QUICKLY reaches for it on a nightstand. The LED displays A NUMBER. A MID TWENTIES MAN slides out of bed with the cell, leaving his WIFE asleep.

INT. BACKDOOR - CONTINUOUS

He opens the backdoor to find...

A MID TWENTIES WOMAN, dressed in workout sweats, standing there in A LIGHT DRIZZLE with her cell phone to her ear, shocks of wet hair dripping into her eyes and mouth. She'd be beautiful without mascara running.

The man glances cautiously back towards the bedroom.

EXT/INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

It's every suburban garage with MINI VAN, A TWO-DOOR SEDAN, kid's bikes and garden tools clung to the walls. WE HEAR moaning...

The man has the woman propped on the workbench, his pajamas bunched around his ankles, her legs and arms wrapped around him while he fucks the hell out of her.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LATER

Soaked BY THE DELICATE DRIZZLE, it's desolate in an eerie way. All THE HOUSES dead, not a single light warming a window. It's late and the city is unaware.

But under orange hue streetlight, INSIDE A GLASS BUS SHELTER...

EXT/INT. BUS SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

We see BUS SHELTER ID# 120003 tattooed on the shelter's eve as we PUSH IN ON...

The woman sitting inside, wiping her wet hair out of HER RED EYES, looking with heavy heart at THE DARK BUNGALOW directly across the street. She twists at a SILVER HEART SHAPED LOCKET NECKLESS.

INT. BUNGALOW - FRONT WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The curtains part just enough to see...

POV - THE WOMAN AT THE BUS STOP

Flipping open HER CELL PHONE, dialing and holding the phone to her ear.

EXT/INT. BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

There's no answer. Her face drops, a tear drips down her cheek, something tormenting deep. She flips her phone closed and peers anxiously up the street. Nothing. It's beyond still. Nothing but drizzle drumming the shelter roof.

EXT/INT. CITY BUS - NIGHT

It's just sitting there on a side street, engine idling, INTERIOR LIGHTS off, the ROUTE DISPLAY rolled to "Out of Service." We see BUS MARKER #154.

BLACK LEATHER GLOVES stroke the steering wheel - anticipation. Then...

The bus nudges onto the street, the interior barely lit. The driver hidden in shadow.

EXT/INT. BUS SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

The woman is relieved when the bus rumbles in the distance, headlights bleaching her. Another painful glance at THE BUNGALOW.

INT. BUGALOW - FRONT WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The man sees...

POV - THE BUS

Roll to a stop, air brakes hissing against the drizzle. His hand tightens on the curtains the moment the woman steps aboard - agonizing.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The woman plunks change into the receptacle and smiles like the driver has saved her life. HIS face a shadow masked by the dimmed interior light.

An uneasy feeling coils her again. Without a word she walks a FEW SEATS back and doesn't even get settled before the bus lurches forward.

WOMAN
(underbreath)
Fuck!

She moves to the middle of the bus - eyeing the SIDE DOORS - and slides into the seat.

WOMAN
(to herself)
Loser.

The GLOVED HANDS clamp the STEERING WHEEL tightly. A RUGGED BOOT STOMPS the gas and...

EXT. BUS - MOVING - NIGHT

Running it's route like a rampaged animal loose in the streets...a city unaware.

The bus weaves along the meridian lane, then eventually hits the OPEN FREEWAY.

INT. BUS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The woman wipes shocks of wet hair out of her eyes then freezes when she sees HIS EYES staring at her through the rear view mirror. The eyes cold - harsh. Suddenly being the only passenger unnerves her - instantly uncomfortable. She watches houses pass by and checks her WATCH - 2:00AM - *shit!*

EXT. BUS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Finally off the MAIN FREEWAY and whipping by one old neighborhood house after the other until finally nothing but dense forest, populated with old Oak Trees withered from a by-gone age.

INT. BUS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The woman realizes the route isn't familiar at all - straining to see something recognizable out the window.

EXT. BUS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Another turn down a narrow, muddy road, washed out by the DRIZZLE and FULL MOON, completely off the beaten path with wispy Oak branches overhanging.

INT. BUS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

She can't see the driver beyond his barrier.

POV - HIS EYES IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

She looks away - panic gripping her. Another glance out the window - *to hell with it.*

WOMAN

Excuse me.

No answer.

WOMAN

Driver...

Nothing.

POV - HIS EYES NARROW IN THE MIRROR - ANGER

That's it. She's out of here. She pulls the CORD. No BELL SOUND. She pulls it again. Nothing. Now she's scared.

The bus slowing gradually.

She eyes the door - fear mixing with anger.

POV - HIS EYES LOCKED ON HER IN THE MIRROR - HATRED.

She gasps - *what the hell!*

WOMAN
(feigned anger)
I want to get off now!

Suddenly the bus VEERS dramatically, tumbling the woman off her seat, her head colliding the HAND RAIL, blood trickling down her face.

Then air brakes hiss in her ears and she realizes she has to...

Jump up and run for the exit doors. She heaves with all her might, but the doors won't yield.

WOMAN
Open the fucking door, asshole!!

She lunges a heavy kick at the doors, cracking THE GLASS. Pointless. Then...

THE INTERIOR LIGHTS GO OFF

Her rampage now defeat. She trembles and peers outside. It's foreign neighborhood all around her, a forest dowsed with drizzle and moonlight.

Her breathing quickens. She's trapped.

The driver remains behind his partition - out of view.

WOMAN
This isn't funny, y'know. There's people waiting for me.

She staggers to the very back of the bus, gasping, glancing beyond the windows - hoping for a way out.

POV - HIS EYES STARING AT HER IN THE REAR VIEW - CONDEMNING.

WOMAN
(softer)
I just want to get off the bus.
Okay.

POV - HE TIGHTENS HIS GLOVES BEYOND THE PARTITION.

Her breathing freezes, wide eyes locked - *shit!*

Nothing...

WOMAN
 (lip quivers)
 I just want to go home.

DRIVER
 You are home. Cathy.

What!?

Cathy gasps, panic deepening, and peers out the side window and sees...

POV - A RAGGED STEEPLE JUTTING UP AGAINST THE FULL MOON

She can't believe her eyes. She's crying now.

CATHY
 Oh my God.

The driver steps out from behind the partition and walks slowly for her, still shrouded in shadow.

Slowly moonlight catches his face, a face SHE RECOGNIZES but WE DON'T SEE. She slinks to the floor - utterly defeated. Trapped at the back of the bus. No where to run.

CATHY
 Don't...please don't. I'm so sorry.

He's nearly upon her. Her eyes ripped wide.

Suddenly...

She JUMPS UP and makes her run at him, but it's pointless. His GLOVED HAND seizes her throat as she pushes past, her head reamed into the hand rail, knocking her down with a heavy moan.

Her HEART SHAPED LOCKET NECKLACE SPILLING to the floor.

EXT. IN THE MUD - NIGHT

He drags Cathy effortlessly through the MUD, and past AN ORNATE GATE, his massive GLOVED hand clamped over her mouth, her struggle futile.

Then...

In a SHALLOW HOLE WITH A FOUR FOOT RICKETY, WOODEN CRUCIFIX PROPPED IN THE MUD, he straddles her, the GLOVED HANDS throttle her fragile neck, eyes bulging, blood vessels pulsing. She gasps against THE DRIZZLE, struggles against death.

Her legs kick and thrash...then less...then less...then...

Her leg lands a hard blow to the groin that only tightens his GLOVES around her neck.

A heavy fist draws up and...

EXT. THE SHALLOW HOLE - LATER

He has poised her kneeling, naked body against THE CRUCIFIX lodged in the mud, hands bound out from her sides, neck bound tight, pressing her lips to the wood as if kissing the cross of Jesus. Cathy is barely alive, beaten and bloodied, trembling from commingled fear and wet - whimpering for mercy.

Then...

THE BLACK GLOVED HAND PICKS UP A GAS CAN

And he soaks Cathy in gas.

CATHY
No...don't, please!!

Suddenly...

A BARBECUE LIGHTER flames in his hand behind her.

The flame GLEAMS IN HER EYE and SHE CRIES OUT the moment...

THE FLAME TRAVELS THE FUME LINE AND IGNITES CATHY

WE PULL BACK AS...

Cathy's guttural screams penetrate the woods and she burns like a Roman candle on the crucifix.

PULL BACK MORE...

The glow of the fire licking the area around the shallow hole. We see its...

THE RUINS OF A BURNT DOWN CHURCH - A MONASTERY

PULL BACK EVEN MORE...

The Monastery ruins cut into the forest nestled ALONG THE RIVER in the outer rim of the unaware city, the fire burning like a distant point in the dark as...

OLD MAN (V.O.)
 Oblation.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

The Old Man takes another sinful puff then leans forward again, his white eyes staring right at US..., his deformed smile unnerving.

OLD MAN
 To save the soul, the vessel must
 be pure.

He feebly shoves the oxygen prongs up his nostrils then watches cigarette smoke weave around his knuckles in the moonlight.

OLD MAN
 And what about your soul. Are you
 pure!

He FLICKS the cigarette at US, instant FLAME consuming as...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS OFFICE - DAY

MATT HARLEY exploding awake on a drab office couch, sweating from his NIGHTMARE.

A TEENAGED SKATEBOARDER jumps back - shocked.

SKATEBOARDER
 Whoa, dude!

Matt is a middle twenties dot.com refugee who looks like shit, shirt undone, designer jeans worn through to the knee. He calms slowly, realizing it was a dream. He pushes his Blonde mane back with a long sigh.

MATT
 Sorry, Twitch.

TWITCH tosses his skateboard and drops in a chair. He's fifteen with boundless energy, optimism, and the look and attitude that should put him on the cover of a TONY HAWK game.

TWITCH
 Man, did you do another all
 nighter?

Matt dismisses him. Glances at his watch - 7 AM.

MATT

What are you doing here so early?

TWITCH

The buses are out of sync, dude.
Not good. Not good.

This wakes Matt more.

MATT

What the hell are you talking
about?

TWITCH

The software tumbling, y'all.

Matt frowns with what must be a typical pet peeve to Twitch's ghetto rip-off as he hops off the couch and zips out the door for...

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

A massive assembly plant of transit buses parked in maintenance docks, change receptacles removed and laid out on workbenches in every docking area, with newer, scannable receptacles ready to be installed. It's a refitting factory.

Matt heads for a central, ELEVATED HUB DOCK with multiple computer screens, the brain of the factory, with twitch skating along behind.

MATT

Is he here?

TWITCH

He is on *thee* way. The dude's
buggin'.

Matt hops up into the hub and fires up the console, multiple screens lighting to life. He's looking on the desk for...

MATT

Where's my cell?

He dismisses the search when A MAINTENANCE TRACKING PROGRAM auto executes on the screens.

Twitch skates around the hub, pulling moves as easy as breathing.

TWITCH

The bus numbers are screwed.
 You've got the wrong buses in the
 wrong stalls. Which means the work
 orders are all messed.
 Interpretation...Roland is going to
 turf us, dude.

Matt glances at every BUS MARKER NUMBER in every stall around
 the factory while on his PRIMARY MONITOR the program tasks
 through an ANIMATED AUTO SORTING macro, confirming virtual
 matches to physical buses.

MATT

Everything is fine. We're in sync.
 It's not in here.

He hops off the hub and heads for...

EXT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Where even more buses are lined on a MASSIVE TARMAC COMPOUND,
 waiting their turn in the factory.

In the b.g.

We see THE RIVER flowing by and a dock with a vintage BANSHEE
 SKI BOAT tethered.

Matt scours the buses in the compound - it all looks fine.

MATT

Call him.

Twitch whistles.

TWITCH

(yelling)
 Sabe!

A WIREY DOBERMAN PINCHER bolts from between buses and gallops
 for Twitch. It looks like an attack until the skateboarder
 LOWERS HIS HAND TO THE GROUND and...

TWITCH

Domino.

Suddenly the dog's ears droop back and with tail wagging
 leans to Twitch and gives him a big lick.

TWITCH

(giggling)
 Okay, okay.

Matt winces.

MATT
You know he licks his balls, right.

Twitch ruffles the dog's ears.

TWITCH
He's family, dude.

Matt's eyes comb the tarmac.

MATT
Check the buses at the end of the
lines. Go, now.

Twitch hops on his skateboard

TWITCH
Already did. But I'll do it again.

Matt suddenly grabs Twitch's arm as he sails past.

MATT
Wait...wait a minute. You told
him.

TWITCH
Not me, dude.
(points inside the garage)
One of them greasers came in way
early for some OT and called him.

MATT
How'd you know though?

TWITCH
Roland called me when he couldn't
get a hold of you. I told him you
had a hot date. I got your back.
Guys like us, we have to stick,
right, dude.

MATT
Right.

And twitch is off, leaving Matt to contemplate his predicament. His hand pushing his blonde mane back - stress.

MATT
(to himself)
shit.

EXT. ST.JAMES MONASTERY - DAY

The burnt ruins in the middle of the forest suburb now overrun with fire trucks, police cars, nondescript cruisers, and coroner's wagon.

A team of crime scene investigators probe around THE BURNT CORPSE BOUND TO THE CHARRED CRUCIFIX. It's a ghastly scene.

And then...

THAD GREENE walks through the ORNATE GATE and ducks under the police tape amid camera flashes from a PEEKED MEDIA CAMP. He's a burly guy in his early fifties, with a proper fedora and coat, an old style professional with some real experience and real authority behind him.

He abruptly stops, checks his shoes, noticing the MUD caked already, then gauges the ORNATE GATE.

He points to a patrolman who quickly responds.

THAD
Get that tape on the other side of
that gate...now.

The patrolman waves over a partner and a cacophony of moans erupt from the media gallery when told they're getting pushed back.

Thad walks for the scene slowly, eyes combing the ground like a seasoned tracker. Something catches his eye, something gleaming in the sun. He bends down to...

A SILVER NECKLASS

Ripped at the clasp. He puts it in a baggy as he comes up to...

THE CHARRED GIRL TIED TO THE CRUCIFIX

He stands back a few feet of the burnt corpse, surmising, glancing back at the road then at the team of cops and forensics working around her.

He points out a young, obedient looking DETECTIVE.

THAD
Johnson, see if there's any tire
tracks or shoe prints left worth
looking at by the road.

JOHNSON
Right, Thad.

THAD
(calling after)
And articles of clothing.

Thad kneels down close to the corpse, remorse trickling out of him for the fate she suffered.

THAD
(to himself)
Helluva way to start a day.

A YOUNG, FEMALE FORENSICS OFFICER is cataloging the body, marking and photographing, busy and diligent, a real mid-twenties tour de force.

Thad pushes his fedora up his brow - watching her for a beat.

THAD
Maxime, marriage is overrated you know.

MAXIME
What about honeymoons in Mexico?

THAD
Underrated. How's Keesha taking it?

MAXIME
She'll be fine.
(points at the corpse)
Can we...

THAD
Uh huh.
(glances at the church)
Wonder why our boy faced her towards the church?

MAXIME
So, it's a guy then.

THAD
You think a woman dragged her all that way, stripped her down and bound her - kneeling.
Submission...but why?

Maxime actually looks at the dead woman before her - a professional masking disgust.

MAXIME
 You don't want to know what I
 think.

Thad studies the shallow hole, the cross.

THAD
 And he prepared this.

Thad looks up at the ruins of the gutted church.

THAD
 You know what this place was?

MAXIME
 (examining the corpse)
 I'm not the renown detective.

Thad kneels close to the corpse.

THAD
 (realizes)
 She was supposed to suffer.
 (points at the cross)
 Burned at the stake. Why did they
 burn witches?

Maxime deadpans him - *why?*

THAD
 To curb their own desires. I'll
 need to know if she was raped and
 if she died before burning.

Maxime frowns - curious.

THAD
 She died before she burned, it's a
 statement. She died burning...it's
 a sacrifice. Just not sure what
 should scare me more.

Then from beyond the gate...

JOHNSON (O.S.)
 (calling)
 Thad!

Thad jumps up and heads for...

BEYOND THE GATE

Johnson looking down at...

JOHNSON
(to Thad)
Check this out.

Thad kneels down and looks closely at - DUAL WHEEL TIRE TRACKS in the mud. He mashes a finger in the tread wall - still soft.

THAD
It's recent enough.

JOHNSON
That was one heavy truck.

Thad looks back at the church.

THAD
All the way out here?

The Patrolman who pushed back the tape line is looking himself. He's standing at a single tire track twenty feet from them.

PATROLMAN
It's not a truck.

THAD
What?

PATROLMAN
The wheel base is too long, sir.
This is more like a bus or something.

Thad and Johnson exchange a glance.

JOHNSON
Hardly inconspicuous.

THAD
How many buses pass by your apartment. Bet you barely notice 'em anymore. Call transit authority. See if any went off schedule last night.

JOHNSON
Right.

Thad looks back at the crime scene - the charred corpse bound to the cross. He can't help notice the sign on the ORNATE GATE: ST.JAMES MONASTERY.

THAD
(realizing)
Where are her clothes?

Johnson shrugs as...

A CHANNEL TWO NEWS TRUCK stops just short of them. A camera man and anchorwoman hop out. She smiles a Hollywood smile at Thad like they're ole friends. But for him...

THAD
(sarcastic)
Mandy Forbes.

MANDY
All, c'mon, Detective Greene.
You're crime scenes wouldn't be the
same without me. How 'bout an
inside.

THAD
I don't think so.

Thad ignores her, glancing from the tire tracks to the crime scene then the church - thinking.

Mandy rolls her finger at the cameraman and he immediately hoists his rig on his shoulder, diffused light saturating Mandy and Thad. Thad not impressed.

MANDY
(for camera)
We're here with Detective Thad
Green. Detective, what can you
tell us so far about the victim?

She jams the microphone right to his mouth.

THAD
Not a damned thing.

Mandy's eyes roll, her finger cutting across her throat, the camera stopped.

MANDY
C'mon, Greene, you know how this
works.

THAD
Yes, I do and that's why___.

Suddenly...

They hear something faint - a SYNTHESIZED MUZAK SONG.

Thad raises his hand - *quiet* - listening for it.

Mandy inconspicuously rolls her finger at her cameraman again as they doggedly follow Thad and Johnson RUSHING FOR...

THE DEAD GIRL - THE CHURCH

Listening.

THAD
(yelling to all)
Quiet...

Everyone down to deafening silence - listening - the muzak carrying...

It's a...

JOHNSON
(to Thad)
Cell phone?

More listening...

THAD
Coming from the church.

Thad leads a team inside...

INT. ST. JAMES MONASTERY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

They all hear the cell phone echoing high in the open rotunda.

THAD
Up stairs.

They climb the precarious spiral staircase to the open mezzanine, ignoring caution to get to the source.

They hustle down the WRAP AROUND CORRIDOR OVERLOOKING THE ROTUNDA and finally in A DILAPIDATED ROOM RAVAGED FROM FIRE YEARS BEFORE they find...

THE CELL PHONE ON THE CHARRED REMAINS OF A FOUR POST BED

The muzak ring tone singing at full volume.

Thad scans the room while Johnson and Mandy look over his shoulder.

THAD
Why in here?

MANDY
Aren't you going to answer it?

Thad ignores her, pulling latex gloves from his pocket and putting them on.

Suddenly the ringing muzak stops. Thad picks THE CELL up and hands it to Johnson.

THAD
Everything about the caller.

JOHNSON
I'm on it.

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS GARAGE - DAY

Now the garage is a throng of maintenance activity, every docking stall with a crew pulling receptacles and installing new ones.

PAN TO...

Matt up on the central hub, rapidly punching computer keys, ignoring THE BOSSES gathered by the massive garage door, all shaking their heads while they watch him from afar. Sabe is curled up at his feet.

MATT'S PRIMARY MONITOR SCREEN

Is AN IP PROTOCOL SCANNER PROGRAM WITH A GRAPHIC GPS CITY MAP INTERFACE, a DOT blinking over the southern quadrant. He moves his CURSOR over the DOT, a message box displays: *Hymax Psychiatric Hospital*. He double clicks and...

A COLUMN OF IP'S AND SUBNETS display in a separate window. He's REMOTE hacking into someone else's...DESKTOP

An MSN CHAT WINDOW pops up just as Twitch skates over to the elevated control hub.

The MSN profile picture is a beautiful woman, the kind all men try for but never get. The message reads:

From>>Monique:

Can we meet? Have body ache. Need your cure?

Twitch whistles.

TWITCH
Impressive, dude. MSN hottie. You
need that. We all need that.

Matt minimizes the REMOTE DESKTOP MSN pop up and continues
working - nervously.

MATT
Not now, Twitch.
(glances at the bosses)
I'm trying to save my job.

ON MATT'S PRIMARY MONITOR

THE GRAPHIC SCHEDULE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM automates it's way
through each bus number IN THE COMPOUND but stops at #154.

Matt's brow scrunches. Even Twitch is perplexed.

MATT
(to twitch)
Check it.

Twitch mounts his board as the LEAD BOSS steps up on the
elevated platform, rubs Sabe's head and sits down. This is
ROLAND KNIGHT. A guy whose you're best friend until you cost
him money. He likes big cigars and recognition.

ROLAND
Matt, what the hell happened?

MATT
The rotation is out by one, Roland.

ROLAND
Yeah, but now I don't know what
crew to pay for what bus. And, more
important to us, I'm supposed to
send these buses back on schedule,
in sequential rotation, so we all
get paid.

MATT
I know.

ROLAND
Matt, I know you're some dot com
hotshot, but you're not going to
collapse my company like all you
hacks collapsed the stockmarket,
are ya.

Matt eyeballs Roland - *I'm on it.*

MATT
Faith, Roland.

ROLAND
I had faith...till this morning.

MATT
I've got it under control.
Somebody just moved a bus, or moved
a receptacle after it was GPS
locked, so the numbers went out of
sync.

ROLAND
I'm counting on you.

Roland steps down and heads for the office with his executive
troop.

MATT
(to himself)
No shit.

ON PRIMARY MONITOR

HE MAXIMIZES THE HACKED REMOTE DESKTOP, the MSN pop up
flashing orange. He clicks and we see...

MSN CHAT FEED:

From>>Monique:

How about tonight??? I'll be at pizzazz.

From>>Doc:

Can't wait!!

Matt eyes the CALL NAME ON THE MSN WINDOW he's hacked into.
Doc<>(doc123@hotmail.com).

MATT
(to himself)
Hello Doctor.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

That same street with the same GLASS BUS SHELTER. A UPS
DELIVERY VAN comes up the street and stops at...

EXT. BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

That same bungalow where a LITTLE GIRL'S face is pressed to the FRONT WINDOW, watching THE DRIVER walk a package to the front door.

INT. BUGALOW - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The doorbell chimes and the little girl opens the door, smile as wide as sunshine. The driver smiles back and before he can ask, the WIFE is at the door.

WIFE
I've got it, sweetie.

DRIVER
Package for Doctor Riddell.

WIFE
I'm doctor Riddell.

The driver checks the label.

DRIVER
Doctor Mark Riddell.

WIFE
That's my husband.

She takes the package and signs the driver's digital sign pad. He frowns, a bit annoyed.

DRIVER
Print as well please.

WIFE
Sorry.

The deed done. The door closed. The little girl brimming with curiosity.

GIRL
Open it!

WIFE
It's for Daddy.

The wife eyes the package - curious herself.

EXT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Twitch skates up to bus #154 on the tarmac, noticing the MUD caked on the tires. The route display is rolled to;

Out of Service. The front door wide open. As he steps inside he notices...

THE DRIVER PARTITION LIGHT MISSING

And then...

A CELL PHONE ON THE SEAT

He glances back at the garage, then snaps up the cell, shaking his head - a deduction.

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Matt still up on the central hub, working like hell to debug the program when the desk phone rings.

MATT
(to phone)
Yeah.

CALLER
(over phone)
Hey. It's me.

Matt doesn't have time for this, but he looks out THE MASSIVE GARAGE DOORS and at the far end of the compound, sees...

POV - TWITCH WITH A PHONE TO HIS EAR

TWITCH
(over phone)
I found your cell, dude.

INT. BUS #154 - MOMENTS LATER

Matt walks along the isle looking for something. He notices the SIDE DOOR WINDOW CRACKED. And then on the floor, under a seat, something shiny catches his eye. He bends down and sees...

A SILVER, HEART SHAPED LOCKET.

He eyes it as if unnerved then picks it up and notices...

BLOOD ON THE HANDRAIL

He looks at his cell phone in his hand, the locket, the blood - anxious.

MATT
(to himself)
Fuck!

EXT. BUS #154 - CONTINUOUS

Matt steps off - contemplating the mud caked tires, Twitch looking at him like he's wiggled out.

MATT
Get this into the bay and wash it.
Inside and out.

TWITCH
(huge sigh)
Ah, dude, that'll take hours.

MATT
Do it.

Matt walks back for...

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

And walks directly for his HUB, plunks into his chair and clicks his way through the sorting macros till he highlights BUS #154. Another click - another pop up window filling with that GPS DIGITAL MAP. The BUS'S ROUTE highlights in bright ORANGE, with STOPS FLASHING RED. He ZOOMS IN ON the last flashing stop, A SUBURBAN STREET.

He clicks the LAST RED FLASHING DOT with ID# 120003 and his QUICKTIME PLAYER launches - THE ACTUAL GLASS BUS SHELTER ON VIDEO SURVEILLANCE.

ROLAND (O.S.)
Matt!

POV - ROLAND STANDING AT HIS OFFICE

Waving Matt over.

MATT
(to himself)
Shit.

Reluctantly Matt closes out the PROGRAMS and heads for Roland's office.

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS - WASH BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Twitch eases the MASSIVE BUS into the bay like a pro and...

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS - WASH BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Snaps a WASHING WAND off the wall rack and pulls the trigger. PRESSURED WATER WASHING AWAY THE MUD.

INT. CYBERON POS SYSTEMS - ROLAND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Matt is standing there amidst the troop of bosses, all eyeing him with a distrust that should unsettle him.

ROLAND
 ...Now, Matt, we need to know this program of yours can do what you told us. And we need to know it's bug proof, or whatever the hell you techy guys call it...

Roland's lecture fades as Matt's attention drifts to...

POV (THROUGH OPEN WASHBAY DOORS) - TWITCH WASHING BUS #154

Then...Matt seems almost relieved.

MATT
 (to bosses)
 I guarantee it.

Roland eyes Matt as if looking for a fatal flaw.

ROLAND
 Everything all right?

Matt stiffens - guarded.

MATT
 Yeah, Roland, everything is fine.

Roland glances at his unkept, DRAB COUCH.

ROLAND
 Just asking.

Matt smiles off any doubt they all have.

MATT
 It's under control, guys.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Maxime is pushing a LOADED cart into the checkout, now the single mom with six year old KEESHA dawdling behind. She's cute and feisty, snapping a chocolate bar and tossing it onto the grocery conveyor - sneaky.

But Maxime is too on the ball for that.

MAXIME
 I don't think so.

KEESHA
Please, mommy.

The bar goes back.

MAXIME
How 'bout 'no'.

Rats!

AN OLDER, PORTLY MAN in the next CHECK OUT line is smiling - amused - tickled with Keesha's little antic. He waves at Maxime who returns with a smile and wave of her own.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Maxime loading the groceries into her JEEP CJ while Keesha prattles on.

KEESHA
We need to find you another man.

Maxime opens the door, pointing in the truck.

MAXIME
(quips)
I can't believe you just said that.
I must've picked up the wrong kid
from school today.

KEESHA
(climbing in)
No you didn't!

Maxime closes Keesha's door, her playful smile fading. A parent wounded from a child's honesty.

EXT. THE RIVER - NIGHT

THE BANSHEE SKI BOAT zooms under an overpass bridge and skims the serene river at 60mph, rounding the bend in a beautiful waked arc.

EXT/INT. MAXIME'S CJ - NIGHT

Pulling off onto a quiet street along the river, Maxime and Keesha singing along to a POP SONG - loving.

INT. MAXIME'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maxime and Keesha haul bags in and plunk them on the island counter.

There's an impressive view of the river out her KITCHEN BAY WINDOW.

POV - THE RIVER

The BANSHEE SKI BOAT idles by unnoticed.

KEESHA
Can I stay up to watch TV?

MAXIME
No.

KEESHA
Used to let me.

MAXIME
(firm)
Keesha.

KEESHA
(pouty)
Sorry, mommy.

Maxime points down the hall...

KEESHA
(defeated)
I'll go brush my teeth.

Maxime just shakes her head.

EXT. THE RIVER - BANSHEE SKI BOAT - NIGHT

As Matt trolls back into view of MAXIME'S KITCHEN WINDOW. He watches Maxime put away groceries. There's something there for him - connection. He looks up at A SECOND STORY WINDOW and sees Keesha brushing her teeth. A deep twist stirs in him - he's struggling with something. He wrenches the wheel over and guns the throttle, the outboard roaring the bow into the air.

INT. MAXIME'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Keesha dabs her face with the towel like the little lady she is, we hear THE BOAT ROAR AWAY ON THE RIVER. She gasps excitedly and presses her nose to the window.

INT. MAXIME'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She's heard the roar outside, looks out the window and sees...

DISPLACED WAKE ON THE RIVER

There's a longing - as if she knows and then...

SCOOTS UPSTAIRS

INT. MAXIME'S HOUSE - KEESHA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maxime comes in to find Keesha hiding something under her covers, SOMETHING emitting faint STROBES OF LIGHT.

Maxime stands over the bed, her hand out...

MAXIME

Give it over.

With a pouty mouth Keesha reveals...

A KID'S FIREFLY PHONE - STROBBING - DIALING

Maxime eyes the LED - *Matt*.

MAXIME

I thought we talked about this.

Keesha's pudgy finger hits the strobe button and...pretty lights gone - call incomplete.

KEESHA

If you take it away, Grandpa will be mad.

Another reprimanding stare that retreats Keesha - again.

KEESHA

I'm just saying.
(proud smile)
I'm Grandpa's little firefly.

MAXIME

Uh huh. Down.

She TUCKS Keesha in tight and nuzzles her cute little nose.

MAXIME

Night.

And as Maxime is about to turn off the light...

KEESHA

Mommy...I heard a boat.

Maxime can only smile - not knowing what to say.

MAXIME
There's lots of boats on the river,
Keesha. Get to sleep.

KEESHA
Do you miss him?

MAXIME
Sometimes.

KEESHA
Me too. Love.

MAXIME
Love to.

Maxime hangs there a beat - a mother's concern, then lights off.

INT. MAXIME'S HOUSE - MAXIME'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maxime perched on the edge of her bed, navigating buttons on THE FIREFLY PHONE. She pauses - rueful.

POV - FIREFLY DISPLAY: *MATT*

She deletes the entry then hides the phone UP IN HER CLOSET SHELF.

EXT. THE BOAT - MOVING - NIGHT

As Matt races under a STEEL TRUSSED WALKING BRIDGE and then aims for the nearest dock.

EXT. DOCK - CONTINUOUS

He ties the boat off then climbs the stairs for A MODEST HOUSE on the bank.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house cluttered, dishes from days ago stacked in the sink, the ISLAND COUNTER a mess of newspapers and junk mail, his life barely holding together. Matt seems completely out of sorts.

He clicks on the TV and tosses the remote to the couch.

A bottle of JACK DANIELS is plunked on the island counter, a long shot poured and gulped. Another one.

Suddenly a news theme song sings out of the TV

POV - ON TV

It's the CHANNEL TWO EVENING NEWS.

ANNOUNCER

(on TV)

Tonight's top story...A Mandy Forbes exclusive...A grisly murder at the ruins of St. James Monastery.

Matt's CELL PHONE vibrates on the ISLAND COUNTER. The LED says: *Shasha*. He ignores it, the news report gripping him to the core. He slowly slinks into the couch watching...

ON TV

Mandy Forbes hollywood smile from the NEWS DESK.

MANDY

(on TV)

Good evening. Our top story today...A woman was found at St. James Monastery, burned to death, the apparent victim of a murder. Her identity is being withheld until next of kin are notified. But this crime takes on the bizarre.

Matt's attention piqued, hanging on the report as if something closing in on him.

ON TV

At the scene the cameraman panned his shot from DUAL WHEEL TIRE TRACKS imprinted in the MUDDY GROUND up to...

Mandy framed tight, microphone to her perfect mouth, the RUINS of St. James Monastery haunting the b.g.

MANDY

(on TV)

It's a gruesome scene here at St. James Monastery where the city's finest are faced with one of the city's more brutal murders in recent history. But, as we're about to show you, this case took on a bizarre turn for noted homicide detective Thad Greene.

MATT

Sighing heavily - defeated already.

ON TV

Suddenly...A FAST EDIT CUT TO:

A fiftish detective in proper fedora and coat outside THE ORNATE GATES, his hand raised - quiet.

MATT

watches with unbridled curiosity as...

ON TV

The shot now a shaky hand held as the cameraman runs to keep up to the detective.

THAD
(on TV - yelling)
Quiet!

It sounds like a cell phone muzak song - almost recognizable.

MATT

His face drops - as if knowing...

ON TV

The cameraman pans to get more of the CHARRED GIRL ON THE BLACKENED CRUCIFIX in focus, but someone blocks the shot.

Then the camera swings around, capturing another, young, obedient looking detective as...

YOUNG DETECTIVE
(on TV - to Thad)
Cell phone?

The camera suddenly blocked with a hand, someone telling the operator to turn it off.

MATT

is off the couch in an instant, snapping HIS CELL off the island counter. He navigates to *call history - missed calls*.

He thumbs down through a short list of numbers and then abruptly stops - one particular number *highlighted*. *The same number we saw on Doctor Mark Riddel's cell before.*