

SHUT IN

By

Melanie Toast

screenwritingtoast@gmail.com
210-973-1996

FADE IN:

EXT. UNDER AN APPLE TREE - DAY

An APPLE rotting on the ground. A worm wiggles out.

BARE FEET tiptoe around it. A child's.

HEAVY BREATHING from the owner of the feet. Then a small, soft HAND grabs a different apple. A better one.

The little feet run off.

EXT. RURAL FARM HOUSE PROPERTY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rows of battle-scarred apple trees, neglected and gnarled but heavy with fruit in the crisp autumn air.

Peaceful. Like a cemetery is peaceful.

They lead up to an old farmhouse, a thin ridge of Smoky Mountains in the background, ghostly blue and gray. Must be Tennessee or thereabouts.

Paint peeling, a few missing boards on the exterior, a hole through the front porch.

A pile of new 2x4s that never got used.

And likely never will because...

There's a FOR-SALE SIGN out front next to an older Ford Escort weighed down with luggage.

Moving day.

The WIND STIRS the leaves.

An under-dressed GIRL, barely four, with bright pink cheeks in the chilly air, emerges from them, running toward the house and...

Clutches the apple like it was the last damn apple on earth.

She bounds up the porch steps.

And skillfully avoids the hole like she's done a thousand times, just as --

-- the screen door swings open with a SQUEAKY CRASH, a frantic woman's VOICE spilling out over pounding HEAVY METAL MUSIC.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Lainey! Where have you been?!

JESSICA DARCY, 20, broom in hand, appears at the threshold, her Appalachian twang a dead giveaway for the mountainous south.

The too-young mother is slightly underweight and exudes an anxious naiveté, like she was just playing house one day when the dolls suddenly turned into real children with real needs. She's in over her head but her eyes are clear and thoughtful.

Lainey offers the apple to her mother.

JESSICA
I told you I need to see you at all times. Do you understand me?

LAINNEY
Mommy, I got you an apple. It's a good one.

A beat. How can she be mad at that?

JESSICA
Thanks. Come on, get inside.

She takes the apple and we follow them --

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

-- inside to the empty living room of tall windows, scuffed original hardwoods, and a fireplace in the corner missing a few bricks. A fixer-upper's fantasy. The heavy metal music is an odd contrast.

Jessica promptly locks the front door.

JESSICA
I told you not to unlock this, Lainey. Didn't you hear me? And stop getting apples. We don't need them.

Ignoring her mom, the precocious pre-schooler takes a seat on a rusted tricycle sitting on the old hardwoods.

Next to her is a large CRATE brimming with apples, someone's halfhearted attempt at harvest.

Jessica tosses the apple onto the pile.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
He can join his friends in there.

Lainey is utterly devastated.

LAINNEY
No! It's for you! Eat it!

A beat as Jessica decides if an argument is worth it.
She quickly picks an apple from the pile.

LAINNEY (CONT'D)
That's not the one.

A BABY'S CRY echoes down the staircase over the music.
Jessica huffs and plucks another apple from the pile.

LAINNEY (CONT'D)
No!

The baby's CRY GETS LOUDER. Jessica studies the pile of red fruit trying to remember which one it is. They all look exactly the same.

JESSICA
Are you kidding me?

The dire look on Lainey's face says no.

Jessica picks another.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
This one?

Lainey beams and nods in approval. Jessica's incredulous.
Yeah, right, it's the same one.

Satisfied, Lainey pedals down the hallway toward the crying.

LAINNEY
I'll get the baby!

Jessica follows behind, buffing the apple on her faded Metallica t-shirt, readying it for an obligatory taste.

JESSICA
I'll get him, Laine. You know the rules.

Jessica takes a bite of the apple. Then --

-- stops suddenly.

She spits out the bite into her palm. A beam of light from the living room window reveals the problem.

It's rotten.

Unnerved, she stares at the apple for a beat.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A RUSTY SQUEAK as the lid to a metal garbage can swings open, revealing a blurry background of a farmhouse kitchen framing Jessica's pensive face. She watches the rotten apple fall in.

The lid shuts.

Darkness.

INT. PANTRY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Darkness.

A solid wood pantry door swings out revealing Jessica's slight frame.

She pulls a string and the light illuminates her face.

A quick scan of the space -- just large enough to walk in, deeper than wide with rows of shelves on the side and back wall.

We see some boxes, miscellaneous pantry items, dust, mousetrap shoved in the back, a small pile of old bricks on the floor that must have fallen out of the fireplace.

A small CRUCIFIX high on the back wall stares down at the small tomb-like room. Someone was religious enough to hang it in a pantry. Odds are it wasn't Jessica.

A red metal TOOL BOX sits near the door.

Jessica slumps.

More stuff to deal with. Later.

On a sparse shelf among a couple of tin cans missing labels is one solitary container of baby formula.

She eyes it as if calculating how long it will last.

Then she props the door open with one foot and grabs the formula with the other, careful to not allow the door to shut on her, a well-practiced move.

Must be a reason for it.

Light CLICKS OFF.

Door springs SHUT.

Darkness as WE STAY INSIDE THE PANTRY and hear:

Her FOOTFALL on the squeaky hardwoods into the kitchen over sounds of HEAVY METAL.

A baby's CRY from somewhere beyond.

The tricycle WHEELS by.

MUTED VOICES.

LAINY (O.S.)
Mommy, can I make the bottle?

JESSICA (O.S.)
No, I got it, baby.

LAINY (O.S.)
(screaming)
Pleeeeeease?!

JESSICA (O.S.)
Stop it, Laine.

FOOTSTEPS just outside. Rapid SWOOSH of a bottle being shaken.

The TRICYCLE follows.

HEAVY STEPS up a staircase on the other side of the wall.

Then...

NOTHING.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica bounds up the last few steps to an empty second floor hall shaking a bottle, the baby's cry now a SHRILL SCREAM.

Lainey scampers up behind.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Crying has stopped. Just the LIGHT HUM OF MUSIC from downstairs.

Next to an empty wall, a pack-n-play used a crib. A few blankets lay inside. A bottle, half-filled with milk.

Near it, an air mattress in the corner under disheveled blankets, pillows and a scuffed plastic doll. Lainey plops on it causing her doll to fall to the floor.

Somewhere else, Jessica can be heard talking on a phone.

JESSICA (O.S.)

Yes, ma'am, I will. I'm gonna take off tonight so the kids can sleep most of the way.

Lainey picks up her doll by the hair. Swings it on the bed. She's not the most gentle mother.

Jessica steps into sight balancing a 6-MONTH OLD BABY in one arm, a fresh bottle in the other. A cell phone braced between her shoulder and ear.

She lays the baby down onto the mattress and grabs a diaper bag from nearby. Her tone is overly accommodating.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

I'm mostly done. Just have to clean out the pantry, finish packing up the car. Everything else is clean. Yes, ma'am, I did.

Jessica gives the baby the bottle and pulls out a diaper and wipes. She gets to work. Multi-tasking like moms tend to do.

Lainey, watching, follows suit with her doll.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

I understand. Already looking at job postings so it won't be long before we can pay rent. We really appreciate the help.

As Jessica pulls pants up over the freshly changed diaper, her face goes tight.

She stands up and defensively folds her arms across her chest, then glances out the window -- slightly open at the bottom.

LAINNEY

Mommy?

JESSICA
 (into the phone)
 There's no chance of that
 happening.

LAINNEY
 Mommy?

JESSICA
 I'm clean. Since rehab. I told you
 that.

LAINNEY
 Mommy?!

JESSICA
 (to Lainey)
 Hush! I'm on the phone to Auntie
 Claire.

Lainey pulls at Jessica's t-shirt.

LAINNEY
 Mommy, mommy!

JESSICA
 (into the phone)
 You want me to take a test?

LAINNEY
 Mommy, please!

Jessica looks down at her phone, confused. Lainey wriggles in
 the background, like she's about to pee herself.

JESSICA
 (into the phone)
 I just used my last minute. Yeah,
 I'll take a test -- if that's what
 you need.

Jessica hangs up. The window bothers her. It's open three
 inches at the bottom.

She pulls it up and then slams it down. It catches and won't
 close all the way. Proof she's weak.

LAINNEY
 Mom!!!!

JESSICA
 What do you need?

LAINNEY
I have to pee.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - LATER

WATER RUNS into a worn, white porcelain sink. Lainey's voice is in the background, SINGING the alphabet song.

Jessica splashes water over her face. A quick pat with a towel and she looks back into the mirror.

Off to the side, Lainey sits on the toilet SINGING happily.

LAINNEY
L-len-meno-pee...

Eyes on her reflection, Jessica carefully runs her finger over skin feeling for imperfections. It's clear.

JESSICA
(enunciating)
L-M-N-O-P, Laine.

Jessica looks down at her daughter.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Done?

LAINNEY
No.

Jessica grabs a wad of toilet paper and sits on the edge of the cast iron tub, waiting. Seems like an eternity.

JESSICA
Can you hurry up? As fun as it is to wipe your butt, I've got other things to do.

Lainey stops singing, hurt. Jessica regrets it.

Searches for words that don't seem to come easily.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Keep practicing the ABCs. You almost got it perfect.

Lainey smiles. Keeps SINGING.

Jessica pokes at the ancient linoleum floor with her stained Converse shoe. Seems wet. Peeling.

She leans down to see the plumbing running to the tub faucet.

A leak -- water escaping slowly onto the floor boards.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Crap. It's still leaking?
 (anguished)
 Fuuuuuuck!

LAINNEY
 That's a bad word.

Jessica sighs. She just can't win.

JESSICA
 I know. Sorry.

LAINNEY
 Nana says it's the baddest word.

Jessica is irritated. She looks up and catches Lainey's judgmental scowl from the toilet.

JESSICA
 Nana's dead.

Lainey processes this with a blank stare.

LAINNEY
 I'm done.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

HEAVY METAL blares from a small, outdated boombox on the counter next to a bowl of mostly eaten baby food.

Jessica counts out cash in a neat stack. It's a very thin stack. Disproportionate number of ones.

The baby is in a highchair banging a toy on the tray. Lainey sits at a small table chomping on a Pb&J on white.

Jessica shoves the money into a blue denim purse.

JESSICA
 It'll be enough to get us there.

Jessica grabs a sponge and scrubs down the counter.

LAINNEY
 Mommy?

JESSICA
 What, baby?

LAINNEY
Daddy's dead like Nana.

Jarred, Jessica stops scrubbing. Time to be a grown up. She hates this.

She TURNS DOWN THE MUSIC and crouches to Lainey's level.

JESSICA
Daddy didn't die. He's sick.

LAINNEY
Nana said he's bad.

Jessica considers how to respond.

JESSICA
No, no he's not bad. He's sick.
(then)
Like mommy was. Mommy's not bad.

Jessica searches for confirmation that she, in fact, isn't.
Finds none.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
But I got better. Cause I love my
little monkeys too much to stay
sick.

Jessica grabs at Lainey's tummy for a tickle. They giggle.
The baby LAUGHS.

LAINNEY
I'm not a monkey! I'm a girl!

JESSICA
No, you're a laughing monkey from
the Planet Monkopolis!

More giggles as Jessica pulls Lainey in for a tight hug.

And kisses the baby.

In her eyes, doubt, fear. Not sure she can pull this off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Lainey rides her tricycle in a circle.

Jessica balances a brown grocery bag on her knee while struggling to open the front door.

LAINIEY
What's that?

JESSICA
The rest of our food. We'll eat it during the trip. Got fish crackers in there.

LAINIEY
I don't want to leave Nana's house.

JESSICA
No jobs around here and I don't have money for taxes... or anything else.

LAINIEY
I can sell the apples for money!

Jessica steps out the door.

JESSICA
The apples are rotten, Laine.

EXT. FRONT PORCH/YARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

LAINIEY (O.S.)
(shouting)
No they're not! What's taxes!?

Jessica pretends she didn't hear. Lugs the food to the car.

She places it on the passenger seat.

Shuts the door.

A beat as she assesses the car that now contains nearly everything she owns in the world.

She presses the lock on the key chain. CLICK CLICK

Locked up tight.

INT. PANTRY - DAY - LATER

MUSIC BLASTING, armed with an empty box and a trash bag, Jessica pulls open the door. She grabs a brick from the pile inside and shoves it in front of the door to hold it open.

Jessica lugs the red toolbox out.

Her foot kicks the brick a few inches. She doesn't notice.

That's unfortunate.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica sets the red toolbox on the top step. Belongs to someone else.

Dumps the crate of Lainey's apples. Can't pack them.

She looks at the apples on the dirt. A pang of guilt.

INT. PANTRY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The brick holding the door has shifted. Close to the edge.

Jessica's feet march by into the pantry. She shoves cans into the trash bag.

DOOR MOVES. Starts to overcome the weight of the brick.

Jessica doesn't notice because she's contemplating the crucifix on the back wall. Under it, a LARGE DUSTY BIBLE. She throws it into the trash bag without a thought.

But the crucifix. Take or trash?

Her fingers curiously trace over the image of the tortured Christ when --

-- **THE PANTRY DOOR SLAMS SHUT.**

Jessica whips around.

JESSICA

Oh shit.

She POUNDS on the door where a handle should be, but is not.

Now we see why she propped it open. It's old-fashioned one-sided hardware and can't open from the inside.

Jessica's trapped.

She BEATS on the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey! Lainey! Come here!

The TRICYCLE SQUEAKING, gets LOUDER. Lainey is coming.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

Where are my apples, mommy?

JESSICA

Laine, listen to me, I need you to try and open the door. Just turn that latch real hard. It's rusted a little, so you have to use your muscles.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

Did you throw them outside?

Jessica sighs, impatient.

JESSICA

They're bad, Laine. Please open the door.

Lainey CRIES softly from the other side.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

We can pick more, okay? Mommy needs your help. Can you help me?

The door JIGGLES. Lainey's trying.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's hard to turn. Make sure it's going the right way.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

Are my apples sick?

JESSICA

Crap. No, they're not. Just bad. Not worth saving.

Jessica grabs a brick.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Okay, stand back.

She POUNDS the door at the spot where the handle should be.

Nothing.

She pulls up her leg and KICKS.

Nothing.

She THROWS HER BODY against it.

Nothing.

It's a solid ass door. Don't make 'em like that anymore.

Jessica spots the old brass hinges and runs her fingers over the exposed screws covered in 50 years of sloppy paint jobs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey? You there?

A tricycle SQUEAKS in reply.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Unlock the front door and go to the red box on the porch. Open it and bring me a long metal tool. One that has kind of an X on the end.

LAINY (O.S.)
A tool?

JESSICA
Yes. Bring me what you can. The red box on the porch. Bring anything from inside it. Hurry up.

The tricycle SQUEAKS away. The HEAVY METAL MUSIC still plays in the kitchen, a manic soundtrack to her current state.

LATER

A large FLAT HEAD SCREWDRIVER appears under the pantry door. Jessica grabs it.

JESSICA
That'll work! Good job! Try and get one just like this one but with an X, okay?

LAINY (O.S.)
Okay.

Lainey SQUEAKS AWAY.

Jessica sets to work and positions the screwdriver in the old screw head holding the hinges onto the frame.

The screwdriver is too big and not the right fit.

She keeps at it, scraping and pushing into the old metal.

LATER

Jessica sits on the floor, catching her breath. She's got her cell phone in her hand.

On the screen, a Tracfone message states she's out of minutes, but she can still make an emergency call to 911.

She presses a 9. BEEP. Then stops.

She leans her cheek against the door.

JESSICA
Lainey? Did you find the tool?

This time, the SOFT PADDING OF BARE FEET toddle to the door.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Someone's here.

JESSICA
Who's here?

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Daddy. He took the red box.

On Jessica's face a mixture of panic, hope, indecision.

She looks back down at her phone. She could still call 911.

She examines the flat head screwdriver and glances at the stripped Phillips-head screws. It's a mangled mess.

JESSICA
Is the door locked like I told you?

The baby STARTS CRYING from upstairs.

Jessica winces.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Dammit.

She stands up and tries at the hinges again. Useless.

She KICKS the door in anger.

She doesn't want to do this.

Lainey's voice is distant now, like she's shouting from the living room.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Daddy's leaving!

Jessica squeezes her eyes shut, like she's afraid of the words coming out of her mouth.

JESSICA
Lainey, go outside and get him.
Hurry! Run!

LATER

The pantry door swings open and a young man, ROB TILLER, 22, stands there grinning like he just won a ten dollar scratch-off.

ROB
Got yourself locked in here again,
Jess? Why am I not surprised?

Dressed in jeans and a plaid button-down shirt, he would be handsome if he gained 20 pounds and shaved two weeks of patchy stubble poorly hiding red welts and pocks on his face.

Jessica tries not to look shocked at his appearance.

It's been a while.

She hands him the screwdriver.

JESSICA
Thanks. This is yours.

Just before she takes a step out, he --

SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT ON HER.

She YELLS.

He opens it, laughing.

ROB
Just kidding. Calm down.

Jessica nearly knocks him over to get out of the pantry.

Another man's LAUGHING catches her by surprise. She marches into the --

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

And sets eyes on SAMMY, 45, who lurks close by, skeletal under mottled skin and greasy hair.

Some druggies you feel sorry for. Others scare you to death like they would slit their grandmother's neck for a hit. Sammy is the latter.

Dingy hoodie over jeans two-sizes too big, any semblance of humanity rotted away a long time ago leaving behind a man-shaped husk. Even the other meth-heads in town cross the street when they see Sammy coming.

And here he is. In Jessica's house. With her kids.

She's stunned at the sight.

He waves a hello, meanwhile assessing the place like he's figuring out if his furniture will fit.

She turns to Rob, horrified, but tries to be discreet.

JESSICA

You're hanging out with *Sammy*?

ROB

(accusingly)

I needed a place to stay.

JESSICA

You could've stayed here if you passed a drug test. You know that.

Rob's head hangs a bit. Avoids eye contact. Not gonna talk about it. Again.

An awkward beat.

Jessica looks away, notices Lainey on her tricycle mere feet from Sammy near the front door.

SAMMY

(to Lainey)

Hey small fry. You're so pretty.
How old are you?

LAINHEY

I'm not a fry. I'm a girl.

Jessica makes a beeline for them.

Puts her hands protectively around Lainey's shoulders. Pushes her in the opposite direction.

JESSICA

Lainey, go to the kitchen. Finish your sandwich.

Lainey wheels past her parents to the kitchen.

Rob ruffles her hair and smiles as she goes by.

ROB
Where's the little guy?

JESSICA
He's taking a nap before we leave.
(then)
I don't want to wake him.

An odd pause. She doesn't want him to see the baby. He can tell. Changes the subject.

ROB
So Texas, huh?

JESSICA
Can't afford to stay here.

A beat between them. There's double meaning to that.

Rob gets it. Suddenly seems irritated by everything.

Rubs the back of his head like something's crawling on it. Something else is on his mind now.

ROB
Your grandma didn't leave you anything? Like, money?

He sounds like a starving man trying to act casual as he asks what's for dinner.

JESSICA
No. Just the house.

Jessica's eyes dart to Sammy who has sauntered to the front porch, door left open, and now pretends to tap dance on the wood planks to the METALLICA SONG PLAYING FROM THE KITCHEN, an unnatural shift in mood.

She turns around to Rob, folds her arms.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
You're both high. You should go.

Rob rubs his hands over his face hard. Puts his hand on his hips and leans in like he just had a profound thought.

ROB
No, I think this is good for us.
Glad you asked me in. It's a chance to talk.

JESSICA
Talk about what?

ROB
I figured out our problem, Jess.
You think you're too good for me.

A beat as Jessica considers it.

JESSICA
No, I don't. I just got help. You
can get help too. We have kids.

He's studying her, seems thoughtful. Maybe finally listening
to reason? She leans in and lowers her voice.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
You brought Sammy here? You know
what he did to that little girl.

ROB
You're always paranoid about that
stuff. It's called projection.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Oh yeah? What did I do, Jessica?

Jessica jumps.

Sammy, having returned from the porch unnoticed, closes in on
her from behind, Rob at her front. He's irritated.

She looks like a lamb between two hungry wolves.

JESSICA
Nothing. I was just talking to Rob.

A tense beat. She moves toward the door, grabs the handle, a
subtle suggestion. Time for them to go.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Listen, I have a lot to do... so
thanks for getting me out. I'll
call you when I get there.

SAMMY
Rob, I believe you just got dis-
missed.

Rob scratches his beard, agitated, embarrassed.

ROB
I'm tired of getting dismissed by
you. You know that? These are my
kids too.

He ambles over. Maybe to leave? Jessica's hand tightens around the cell phone.

Without warning, he SLAPS JESSICA'S FACE.

Her phone falls.

She's shocked.

This is new?

She glances at her cell phone a few feet away on the floor, her hand covering her cheek.

But she dare not move.

ROB (CONT'D)

You haven't changed. Still weak and needy. What would've happened if I hadn't let you out of that pantry? Out here in a boondocks, miles from the nearest neighbor?

JESSICA

You're right. I'm sorry.

A heavy beat as Jessica stays pinned to her spot.

Sammy saunters up behind Rob, angling his mouth into his ear, while Rob stares down his prey.

SAMMY

She's lying. She's not sorry. You just saved her ass and she told you to leave.

Rob nods enthusiastically, comically.

Then, out of nowhere, his energy changes.

ROB

Come on, let's go.

Rob moves toward the door. He's leaving. Jessica exhales. She's just dodged a bullet.

Her hand rests on the deadbolt, ready to turn it.

ROB (CONT'D)

Just pretend I wasn't here, Jess.

At the threshold, he stops. Turns around, struck with a thought.

ROB (CONT'D)
 Tell you what, you don't have to pretend. I'll put things back to the way they were. Before I got here.

Jessica processes the meaning and backs away.

JESSICA
 Rob, no. Don't.

But Rob is on her before she can break into a run.
 He lifts her off the ground, arms pinned to her side.
 She fights like a wild cat, but she's no match.

ROB
 (between labored breaths)
 This... is you... without me...

He drags her across the living room, down the hall.

ROB (CONT'D)
 ...always saving... your sorry ass.

He lugs her back inside the...

INT. PANTRY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

JESSICA
 This isn't funny. Let me go!
 Please!

The DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

We stay inside with Jessica.

It's dark except for the stream of light under the door and around the sides.

Jessica is barely visible, just a thin beam of light exposes her eye and parts of her face, the rest of the space shadowy and dark.

Jessica's BREATHING, ragged and heavy.

POUNDING on the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 Rob! Let me out! What are you doing?

Sammy's distant LAUGH.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Thought you were a pussy, but I
stand corrected.

The MUSIC still playing in the kitchen.

The baby CRYING from upstairs, awakened from his nap.

Lainey's tricycle SQUEAKING up to the door.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Mommy, are you in there?

JESSICA
Baby, go upstairs in the bedroom
and lock the door. It's the little
button on the door. You turn it.
You understand?

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Why are you in there?

JESSICA
Just go now. Now!

The tricycle SQUEAKS away.

Little FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Good girl.

A man's hurried FOOTFALL headed her way.

The sound of a METAL BOX HITTING THE FLOOR, metal items
jangling inside.

The toolbox.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Rob? Please let me out. Please.

SCRAPING and BANGING of wood on wood.

Then...

HAMMERING.

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG.

A thin crack of light around the door goes black, covered.

JESSICA
What are you doing?

BANG.

Jessica SCREAMS LIKE SHE'S BEEN STABBED. What the hell just happened?!

She FUMBLES for the chain of the overhead light.

Pulls on it.

CHITCH-CHITCH.

Light.

Now we see everything clearly.

Jessica peels her right hand from the door with a tortured GROAN.

It's bleeding from the palm after being IMPALED, a blood-covered nail left behind in the door.

JESSICA
Oh my god, oh my god. Don't do this. You put a fucking nail through my hand you fucking asshole!

She sobs.

Rob finally speaks, his voice close to the door.

ROB (O.S.)
Here's the deal, Jess. You're gonna have lots of time in there to think.

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG.

ROB (O.S.)
I'll come back...

BANG. BANG. BANG.

ROB (O.S.)
 ...when you're back to your old
 self.

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Jessica pleads through tears.

JESSICA
 You're high. Not thinking straight.
 Don't do this.

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG.

Another nail misses a stud and punches through the door.

She jumps back.

SAMMY (O.S.)
 (to Rob)
 Want me to grab your kids? We can
 bring them to my place.

Jessica goes ballistic.

JESSICA
 Don't fucking touch my kids, you
 asshole! Rob, he's a child
 molester!
 (screaming to the ceiling)
 Lainey, lock the door! Turn the
 button!

In between nails being pounded into the door-frame --

-- HEAVY FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

Someone's going up. Sammy?

The baby's faint CRY.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 Rob, don't let him touch our kids!
 Please! Leave them!

The hammering STOPS.

Jessica listens carefully. What's happening?

A tiny plastic bag filled with small white powder slides under the door stopping at her shoe.

Jessica stares at it.

ROB (O.S.)
Be careful with this. It's
pharmaceutical grade.

FOOTSTEPS to the kitchen.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

FOOTSTEPS down the stairs.

Just one set?

She listens hard.

JESSICA
Rob? Don't take the kids. Please.
Lainey, are you there? Mommy loves
you. Lainey?

The JINGLE OF KEYS.

Hers?

MUFFLED VOICES.

Can't hear what they're saying.

The front door SLAMS SHUT in the distance.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Rooooob?!!!

The faint sound of an ENGINE IGNITING OUTSIDE. Then...

NOTHING.

Not a sound.

An empty house?

Her children are gone?

The reality of the situation hits Jessica like a punch to the gut.

She doubles over from the impact.

Then slides down the wall of the pantry onto the floor in anguish, her injured hand cradled in the other.

And sobs.

LATER

Jessica's DEEP MEASURED BREATHS are the only sound.

Her injured right hand, loosely bandaged with a torn piece of table linen, moves shakily across the battered linoleum floor and delicately...

...picks up the small bag of meth.

She holds it up to her puffy, tear-stained face, examining it in the light.

Dark thoughts, desires.

But she's stronger. At least, now she is.

She tosses the bag on a shelf, behind some cans of food in the corner.

Under the crucifix.

Out of sight.

A moment passes.

Then...

SOUND.

Jessica hears it. She presses her ear to the wall.

SMALL FOOTSTEPS padding down the stairs.

JESSICA

Lainey?

Jessica scrambles to her feet. Directs her voice to stairs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey! Is that you? Are you here?

Silence.

Then...

LAINHEY (O.S.)

Mommy? Why are you in there?

Jessica chokes back tears of relief.

JESSICA
I'm stuck. Again.
(then)
Where's Mason? Is he okay?

LAINY (O.S.)
He's sleeping. I turned the button
on the door and I sanged him the
alphabets until he falled asleep.

JESSICA
You did a good job.

A moment of reflection. She's been given a second chance.
What to do now?

She wipes her face. Sniffs.

Glances at her injured right hand and stretches her fingers.
She winces, but it's usable.

She mentally compiles a to-do list, energy returning.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey, I need you to listen to me
very carefully.

She rearranges the order of her list in her mind. Exhales
loudly. What's the most important thing?

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Go lock the front door. You already
know how to unlock it. Just turn
that metal thing the other way.

Jessica hears Lainey SCAMPER AWAY.

She takes a moment to inspect the door.

A few nails protrude. Much of the light around the sides have
been blocked out with wood.

She assesses the contents of the pantry again. Same useless
jars of old food, boxes of knickknacks. Pile of bricks. Her
plastic garbage bag, half-filled.

SMALL FOOTSTEPS return.

LAINY (O.S.)
(catching her breath)
I turned the lock.

JESSICA
 You're a smart girl, Laine.
 (then)
 Okay, what did daddy do to the
 door? Can you tell me what you see?

LAINY (O.S.)
 Daddy messed it up. It's broken.

JESSICA
 I know, but what did he nail over
 it?

A beat.

LAINY (O.S.)
 All Nana's wood.

JESSICA
 The two-by-fours? Crap.
 (then)
 Okay, Laine, listen. Go get my
 purse -- no, not my purse. My cell
 phone is on the floor in the living
 room. Go get it and bring it here.

LAINY (O.S.)
 Mommy, why are you in there again?
 Please come out!

JESSICA
 I need to call 9-1-1. Just go get
 the phone.

LAINY (O.S.)
 What's 9-1-1?

JESSICA
 Get the phone!
 (then, calmly)
 Please.

Silence.

Lainey's SOFT FOOTSTEPS down the hall.

MOMENTS LATER

Jessica's cheek is against the door.

JESSICA
 Are you sure you looked everywhere?
 It was on the floor.

LAINY (O.S.)
I can't find it.

JESSICA
And my purse is gone? Are you sure?
(to herself)
Rob, you bastard! You fucking took
it. Dammit.

SOFT CRYING. Lainey's losing it.

LAINY (O.S.)
Mommy, come out. I have to pee. You
need to come with me.

The baby CRIES, awake again.

Jessica stares hard at the plastered ceiling, compelled to
punch through it.

She tries to sound composed.

She fails.

JESSICA
Lainey, listen to me. It's time for
Mason's bottle -- there's one in
the fridge. And he needs his diaper
changed. Mommy can't help him --

LAINY (O.S.)
I have to pee!

JESSICA
Then go pee! I. Can't. Go. With.
You. I'm stuck in the fucking
pantry!

Lainey CRIES LOUDLY.

LAINY (O.S.)
I miss Nana! I want Nana!

Jessica rubs her eyes, ashamed, pained, confused.

The baby's CRY chimes in, a scream this time.

Jessica pulls herself together, crouches down, presses her
cheek against the door.

JESSICA
I'm sorry, baby. I'm sorry. Mommy
wasn't nice.

Lainey stops crying. SNIFFS.

Encouraged, Jessica keeps at her speech.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I miss Nana, too. But we have to
take care of each other now. Okay?

Silence.

Then...

WATER DRIPPING

Startled by something, Jessica looks down.

A pool of urine slowly flows from under the door.

Lainey CRIES again loudly.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Sorry, mommy. Please don't get mad.

Jessica leans her forehead against the door.

Squeezes her eyes shut. A temporary escape.

LATER

The hanging light in the pantry swings casting eerie shadows.

A bandaged hand stops it.

Jessica is balanced on a box investigating the top shelf.
It's littered with a few dead bugs and more jars filled with
homemade concoctions.

She examines one.

A label written in neat cursive reads "Apple Butter."

She runs her finger over the writing as if invoking the
spirit of the woman who last touched it. Nana.

LITTLE FOOTSTEPS outside.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Mason pooped.

JESSICA
(to herself)
Oh crap. He waited until now?

Jessica crawls down from the box.

Leans against the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey, you remember how mommy does it. Get some wipes from the diaper bag. Use those to clean him. Then throw them away with the diaper and wash your hands. Got it?

Little feet already bound up the stairs.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

I know what to do!

The look on Jessica's face says she doubts that.

JESSICA

He's not a doll. He's heavy.

Nothing. She's gone.

Jessica goes back to the jar of apple butter.

She unscrews the top, then jams a fingernail under the suctioned lid.

A POP, and it releases.

It's this lid she's interested in.

She bends it in half.

And digs at the wall with her uninjured left hand.

LATER

The bent lid falls to the floor with a light metallic clank.

We trace it's path up the door: lots of scratches, a few minor dents, but it's no match for the 100-year-old wood.

Jessica stands staring at the door disappointed.

She's distracted by a voice at the door.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

Mommy, I'm hungry.

Her eyes go to the opened jar of apple butter on the shelf.

LATER

A paper plate passes under the door. It's already stained with spicy, brown apple butter.

Jessica dumps a nice helping onto it from the half-empty jar and sends it back.

She licks a heap off of her finger. She nearly moans in ecstasy -- it's that good.

JESSICA

There's a plastic spoon in the diaper bag. Use it to feed the baby. Make sure to sit him up. Okay?

LAINY (O.S.)

Mommy, I'm still hungry. And I'm thirsty.

JESSICA

You can drink water from the sink. Use the cup there.

LAINY (O.S.)

I don't like water. I want juice.

A beat. Is she kidding?

JESSICA

I packed up all our food and juice boxes in the car. We need the keys. And the keys are in my purse.

Then, like an afterthought.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You shouldn't be drinking juice all the time anyway. It's bad for you.

LAINY (O.S.)

I'm thirsty for juice!

JESSICA

Drink water!

Beat.

Little FOOTSTEPS up the stairs.

Jessica stands up and directs her voice to the wall.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Don't let him choke! Sit him up!
You hear me?!

INT. PANTRY - NIGHT

Jessica lies on her side, fetal position, facing the small crack under the door. The only strong light comes from the hanging bulb above.

Must be dusk outside.

From her viewpoint under the door, a SLIVER OF LAINEY'S FACE stares back. She's lying the same way on the other side, face-to-face.

JESSICA
It's time for bed, Laine.

Her little eyes widen, panicked.

LAINEY
No, no! Please come out! I'm
scared.

Jessica reaches her left hand under the door and finds Laine's. She squeezes it.

JESSICA
I can't get out. You know that. Or
else I'd tuck you in.

LAINEY
You can get out. You just need to
try harder.

Something about these words poke at Jessica.

JESSICA
I'm trying my best.

LAINEY
A monster's gonna grab me.

JESSICA
There's no monsters, Laine.

LAINEY
He's in the dark.

JESSICA
Then keep the lights on, baby.
Okay? It's alright for tonight.

LAINNEY
I don't wanna go.

JESSICA
Mason needs you. He's all alone.

LAINNEY
I want to stay here with you.

JESSICA
It's cold down here. Heat's on
upstairs. Shove a towel in the
window, where it won't close. And
put on socks.

Lainney teeth nearly chatter from cold as she speaks.

LAINNEY
I'm not cold.

JESSICA
It's just one night. I'll be out
tomorrow. Daddy will come back.
Okay?

Silence. Lainney's not buying it.

LAINNEY
Daddy's bad.

Jessica doesn't have a reply this time.

JESSICA
Go on, baby. Get to bed.

INT. PANTRY - DAY - SECOND DAY INSIDE

A row of three emptied jars of apple butter sit on the shelf.

Silence.

The suctioned POP of a jar lid releasing.

A full jar, just opened, placed next to them.

Jessica stands at the door, staring at the space under it,
waiting. The lack of sleep shows on her face and her slumped
shoulders.

A stained paper plate slides under the door. Jessica grabs it
and dumps the thick, brown, spice-studded apple mixture onto
the plate.

Breakfast.

Slides it back under.

The SOFT THUMP of little feet scampering away and up the stairs.

Jessica follows the sound with her eyes on the wall. She knocks her fist on the plaster.

JESSICA

Sit him up, Laine! Be careful!

Mistake. She winces in pain at her wounded right hand.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Dammit.

Time to assess.

In the morning light streaming through the cracks and holes around the door, she unwraps the homemade bandage, caked with dried blood.

The wound is puffy and red. She runs a finger lightly over her palm. Tender.

Infection?

She wraps it up again.

Jessica turns around to her night project, a careful and thorough inventory of the contents in the pantry, the important items laid out like a surgeon's tools on the shelves.

- Candles.

- Matches.

- Small sparse pile of knitting yarn.

- Collection of gaudy salt and pepper shakers from different states.

- Stack of Knitting USA Magazines.

- Tangle of plastic Catholic rosaries.

- Very old, dingy bottle of Amaretto liquor.

- The old cans of food from the trash bag. Most of the labels fallen off.

- The dusty over-sized Bible she trashed the day before.
- The bag of meth laid out next to the Bible.

She eyes it for a brief moment as if asking herself why the hell she put it there.

She knows why.

Her eyes glance up at the crucifix still hanging on the wall. She quickly looks away.

She yells.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey, when the baby falls asleep,
I need your help!

LATER

A small branch from a tree slides under the door. Jessica plucks it up, irritated.

JESSICA
No, Laine, that won't work. I need
something metal. A tool. So I can
chip away at the wood.

LAINY (O.S.)
It's a strong stick.

JESSICA
Keep looking.

LATER - MONTAGE

- A pebble slides under the door.
- A toy car zooms under.
- A plastic fork.
- A green crayon.

Jessica picks up the crayon and throws it at the door. Her voice is low and impatient.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Mommy cannot break through a wall
with a green crayon, Laine. You
know that. Find something hard!
Something metal! I told you
already!

Lainey CRIES LOUDLY, fear in her voice.

Jessica cries, too. She's a sucky mother.

They cry together, their sobbing becoming one child-like chorus of hopelessness.

Somewhere in the distance, the baby has awakened.

And CRIES too.

There's no parent here. Just three kids alone.

Lainey whimpers out some words.

LAINNEY (O.S.)

I miss Nana. She took care of us.

It's a do-or-die moment for Jessica. Time to put on her big-girl pants.

She wipes her eyes, takes a deep breath.

JESSICA

I'm sorry, Laine. I'm sorry for yelling at you. You're doing the best job. You are.

Silence. Apology not accepted.

A beat. Jessica looks miserable. She needs to say more.

And this will hurt.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm a bad mom. Okay? I didn't know how to do it... I never learned. And you don't know this, but I'm real young, Laine. Too young. And then I left you alone for a long time when I... got sick. I messed up. Real bad. But I'm trying. Please don't hate me, Laine. I'll do better.

(then)

I promise. Just gotta get out of here and we'll figure it out. Together.

She sniffs at the tears running down her face.

A beat. No response to her big confession.

Where did Lainey go?

Jessica presses her ear to the door and listens.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey? You there? Lainey?

Front door SLAMS SHUT in the distance.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Who's there? Lainey, answer me!

The SQUEAK of the tricycle across the floor.

Getting LOUDER.

The sound of something hard SLIDING across the floor.

It appears from under the door.

THE SCREWDRIVER!

Jessica stares dumbfounded.

LAINY (O.S.)
(catching her breath)
I found it under the leaves. It's
daddy's tool. He losted it.

Jessica picks up the beefy, oversized, flat-head screwdriver with reverence.

JESSICA
Good job, baby! You did it! Exactly
what I needed.

You can practically feel Lainey beaming with pride from the other side of the door.

LAINY (O.S.)
I did it!

Jessica wipes away tears with her shirt, a smile breaking on her face.

JESSICA
You're a good girl, baby. I love
you.

No answer. The tricycle SQUEAKS.

Little FOOTSTEPS.

LAINY (O.S.)
I'll go take care of Mason!

Jessica grabs the screwdriver tightly in her left hand, ready to get to work.

Yells up at the ceiling towards the kids.

JESSICA
I'm gonna get out of here! Sit
tight!

She chooses a spot on the wall and stabs at it.

LATER

TAP, TAP, TAP.

A screwdriver hitting wood.

The pantry wall is a series of shallow holes.

Plaster piled on the floor, wood lath behind, some of it chipped away.

Hard stuff. Not easy.

The door's been attacked, too. Holes and gouges around the hinges. Not much progress. Besides, there's 20 or so nails holding that door back now.

Jessica crouches over the floor concentrating on a spot near her feet, the linoleum gone, thick wood planks underneath.

She's made a small hole. There's crawlspace below.

Progress.

This could work.

She grabs a brick from nearby and uses it to pound the screwdriver deeper.

The screwdriver gets embedded.

She can't get it out. She's weak, worn out. Needs a break.

Sits back against the wall.

Listens for her children.

JESSICA
Laine, ya there? I'm almost done.
Maybe a few more hours. I can crawl
out under the house.

A distant THUMP.

Jessica sits up straighter.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What's going on up there?

A high pitched SCREAM from the baby.

Jessica stands up.

Listens hard.

QUICK STEPS down the stairs.

Laine is back.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey? What happened?

SOFT SOBS.

LAINY (O.S.)
I dropped the baby.

Jessica covers her mouth with her hand.

Tries to remain calm.

JESSICA
Is he okay? Oh god.

LAINY (O.S.)
He was trying to crawl down the stairs.

JESSICA
It's okay, it's okay.

LOUD UGLY CRYING from Lainey.

LAINY (O.S.)
Mommy, I'm sorry!

Jessica wants to yell.

She doesn't.

JESSICA
Lainey, listen, you need to go pick him up and hold him until he stops crying. He's alone and scared right now.

LAINY (O.S.)
He wants milk but it's all gone.

Jessica rubs her eyes.

Thinks.

JESSICA
You need to make him a bottle. You remember how mommy does it? Three scoops of formula -- the powder in the can -- and fill it with water. Put the nipple on tight and shake it.

LAINY (O.S.)
Okay.

JESSICA
You can do it.

Little STEPS up the stairs.

Jessica grabs the screwdriver and --

-- VIOLENTLY STABS at the tiny hole like she's attacking every bad decision she ever made.

LATER

A small ROACH scurries across the pantry shelf up over the screwdriver.

A rolled up copy of Knitting World WHACKS it.

Dead.

Jessica tosses the magazine to the floor, wipes her brow, and grabs the tool.

She stares at the hole approvingly, now big enough to squeeze a leg through.

Her lips are noticeably parched, and she keeps her right hand close to her body.

It's painful.

JESSICA
Lainey, I'm almost there. I can do this. It's gonna be fine.

No answer.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Laine?

The SQUEAK of the tricycle coming closer.

LAINY (O.S.)

Mommy, someone's here.

Jessica stares a hole through the door, frozen, her face vacillating between panic and hope.

JESSICA

Who is it? Is it daddy?

LAINY (O.S.)

It's that man. He called me a fry.

Panic wins.

Jessica leans into the door.

JESSICA

Please tell me you locked the door.

LAINY (O.S.)

He's coming in.

From a distance, Jessica can make out the sound of the FRONT DOOR SQUEAKING OPEN slowly.

Then --

-- BOOTS ON THE HARDWOODS.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Hello? Anyone home?

(then)

Little girl?

Jessica whispers through the door.

JESSICA

Lainey, run upstairs and lock the bedroom door.

LAINY (O.S.)

Maybe the man can get you out.

JESSICA

He's bad, Laine. Run!

Laine seems to understand quickly.

Light FOOTSTEPS scamper up the stairs.

Jessica presses her ear to the door listening for Sammy's movements.

There's none.

Where is he?

Jessica breathes heavily.

She tries to slow it down.

Nearly holds her breath. Maybe he'll leave.

And then...

SAMMY (O.S.)

Jessica?

Sammy's voice jumps through the door.

He's right there.

Jessica flinches.

JESSICA

Where's Rob? Is he with you?

SAMMY (O.S.)

Rob's busy so I thought I'd come over and babysit for you.

A beat as Jessica decides if she should use threats or reason.

JESSICA

I don't need a babysitter. We're fine.

(then)

Please leave my house.

SAMMY (O.S.)

You sure like to dismiss people, don't ya?

An anxious beat. What can she do?

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

Your daughter is very pretty. She upstairs? Thought I saw her go up there.

Jessica clenches the screwdriver tighter.

She's panicking. Time to use threats.

JESSICA

Rob will be pretty pissed if you mess with his kids. Stay the fuck away from them.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Rob owes me money. I'm here to collect payment. He'll understand.

Floor CREAKS.

FOOTSTEPS.

He's headed for the stairs.

JESSICA

No! Stop! Wait!

BOOTS UP THE STAIRS.

STEP.

STEP.

STEP.

The old wood GROANS under his weight.

Jessica frantically searches the small pantry for something to spark an idea.

She finds it next to the dusty Bible.

The bag of drugs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I have Rob's meth here! It's yours!
I haven't used it. Please!

The FOOTSTEPS FALL SILENT.

He's listening.

She aims her words at the spot she last heard him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Got probably three grams down here!
Come on, don't let it go to waste.
Rob will just take it back.

Sammy's footfall REVERSES.

He's coming down the steps.

Jessica listens intently.

STEP.

STEP.

STEP.

His voice appears outside the door.

SAMMY (O.S.)

He gave you three grams and he owes
me money?

It worked.

She moves closer to the door. Tries to sound amiable.

JESSICA

Yeah. It's yours if you want it.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Send it over then.

Beat.

JESSICA

Let me out and it's yours.

SAMMY (O.S.)

No can do. I don't get involved in
domestic disputes.

JESSICA

Call the police. Or let me use your
phone. Please.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Not calling the police. Not getting
you out.

Beat.

JESSICA

If I give the meth to you, will you
leave us alone? You have to leave
the house. You can't come back.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Of course I will. I'll go. You have
my word.

He's lying. Jessica knows it. He knows it. We know it.

But she has no choice.

She reaches for the bag of meth with her injured right hand, but pulls back, wincing.

JESSICA
Oh shit. Ouch.

SAMMY (O.S.)
What's taking so long? You busy
organizing cans of soup?

He LAUGHS at his dumb joke.

Jessica unwraps the bandage.

The mark in her palm is worse.

She glances up at the crucifix, just now making the connection.

Both impaled in the hand.

A glance at the screwdriver.

A beat.

JESSICA
Sorry, I just, I'm injured. I'm too
weak to get close enough.
(then)
Reach under the door and I'll drop
it in your hand.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Huh? You sound fine. Just slide it
under.

JESSICA
I can't reach that far! I told you
I'm stuck over here at the other
end. I can't move much.

Silence. He's thinking about it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Rob says it's good stuff. You tried
it yet?

Silence.

It's too much silence.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

If you can't decide, I'm gonna dump
it out.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Wait! Hold on.

A RUSTLE and THUMP.

He's getting on the floor.

Jessica steadies her breathing. Hand tight around the
screwdriver.

She crouches down near the door.

A GRIMY MALE HAND appears, palm up, outstretched.

An ever-so-slight tremor in the skeletal fingers crowned with
dirty fingernails.

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

Where is it? Can you reach me?

Jessica is paralyzed with self-doubt.

Her voice is small.

JESSICA

Almost. Can you stretch a little
more?

The hand inches farther inside under the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I can just reach you.

(then)

Here it comes.

She shuts her eyes for a beat, a silent prayer. The
screwdriver raises in the air. Primal fury on Jessica's face
as her eyes spring open wide.

The long, metal tool plunges into Sammy's hand.

He SCREAMS!

The hand jerks back but Jessica's foot SLAMS DOWN on it.
She's all-in now.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Get it out! Get it out!

As he writhes in agony, blood pooling in his palm and spilling over, Jessica grabs a brick and --

-- POUNDS THE SCREWDRIVER DEEPER into his hand and deeper into the wood floor beneath it.

Sammy's unable to pull his hand out, pinned.

His GROANS and SCREAMS fill the air, maybe for miles.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You bitch! What did you do?

She keeps pounding. With each hit, a new, louder scream.

BANG

AAAH!

BANG

AAAH!

BANG

AAAH!

The screwdriver is buried into the floor. She raises the brick above her head, one last adrenaline-fueled blow.

She pounds it down so hard the brick BREAKS IN TWO.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh my god I'm going to kill you
bitch you whore!

Jessica sits back against the wall, spent, and cradles her injured hand.

It's bleeding through the bandage now.

The sound of her BREATHING.

Sammy's BREATHING in between agonized GROANS.

They sit in silence.

He MOANS.

And then...

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. Please take it out. I
 won't hurt you or your kids. I'll
 leave. I'm not lying. Please.

Jessica watches his hand, the fingers splayed out, blood
 seeping. It's disturbing.

But necessary.

Beat.

JESSICA
 You'll get out when I get out.

She jumps as he SCREAMS out the next words.

SAMMY (O.S.)
 I'm gonna gut your kids while you
 watch you stupid bitch! TAKE IT OUT
 NOW!

She scoots away from his hand, her eyes never leaving it.

Urgency in her eyes. Need to escape. Now.

Close by, her hole.

She was making progress.

She examines it.

Her eyes shoot to the screwdriver, embedded in The Hand.

Useless now.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I'll kill you all.

LATER

The bottle of amaretto.

The screw top lid placed carefully beside it on the shelf,
 next to the matches.

Jessica takes a swig.

She doesn't like it. Examines the label. What is this stuff?

SAMMY (O.S.)
 Whatcha doin' in there, Jessica?
 Smells like liquor.
 (MORE)

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You gettin' liquored up you bitch
whore? TAKE IT OUT!

She ignores his HEAVY PANTING and MOANS. Screws the top back on.

An apple butter jar lid next to it.

She picks it up.

Eyes the hole in the floor.

Jessica squats over the hole, a few inches from The Hand, and scrapes at the wood with her left hand, the right too painful to use.

A few splinters fall away. Better than nothing.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey, Jessica.

She ignores him.

The DISTANT CREAK of the front door swinging in the wind.

Left open.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's fuckin' freezin' out here.

Jessica stops working.

She rubs her arms as if finally noticing. Yeah, it's cold.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ice storm coming -- early freeze.
It's on the news. Let me go,
please. I get cold real easy.

She looks up to the ceiling to the place where her children are. A new worry.

JESSICA
You left my front door open. I hope
you freeze to death.

Sammy CACKLES out a HOARSE LAUGH.

SAMMY (O.S.)
You hope I freeze to death? People
who use the word hope are usually
fucking desperate or weak as shit.

JESSICA

Shut up.

SAMMY (O.S.)

Rob said you went through rehab.
Did they teach you to hope there --
after they took all your money?

Sammy CHUCKLES.

Then COUGHS.

Then MOANS in pain.

Jessica scrapes at the wood.

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

I went to rehab.

Jessica stops scraping.

Looks at The Hand.

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

I was clean for three hundred and
five days. Took some college
classes. Got a good job. Filed my
tax returns.

There is nothing more interesting to her than what Sammy is
saying right now.

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

Then my mom died and there were
medical bills and I realized no one
in the whole fucking world cared
two shits about me.

Jessica almost looks sympathetic.

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

That's what they don't tell you in
rehab. You sober up only to go back
to the miserable fucking life you
used drugs to escape from in the
first fucking place.

(then)

You still got the three grams in
there?

JESSICA

Yes.

SAMMY (O.S.)
 You won't last much longer. I can
 smell the weakness from here.
 (then)
 You don't wanna be here -- just
 like the rest of us don't.

Jessica punches at the hole again, suddenly furious.

JESSICA
 I don't molest little girls,
 (screaming)
 You sick fuck! I hate you and
 everyone like you!

She slams into the wood in a fury.

This seems personal.

Sammy has picked up on it.

SAMMY (O.S.)
 How many people you know like me?

She stops hacking at the wood.

No, not going there.

JESSICA
 Stop talking to me.

SAMMY (O.S.)
 Did someone touch you when you were
 little, Jessica?

Jessica freezes. Bingo.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Did you like it?

JESSICA
 Fuck you. Stop talking to me.

She digs at the hole.

LATER

Jessica pulls the black garbage bag around her like a shawl,
 her teeth chattering.

The WIND HOWLS outside the door.

She squats down over the hole again, jar lid for her tool.

A quick glance at The Hand. It's violently shaking from the cold or withdrawals. Or both.

She HACKS at the wood.

CHIP.

CHIP.

CHIP.

The LIGHT FLICKERS.

She stops.

Listens.

It's nothing.

CHIP.

CHIP.

CHIP.

Hail or rain BEAT AT THE HOUSE. It's a big storm.

CHIP.

CHIP.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Gonna scratch through the wood?
Like a mouse or something?

Jessica glances at his hand.

Keeps chipping away.

JESSICA
I'm getting out.

CHIP.

CHIP.

SAMMY (O.S.)
I wasn't gonna hurt your kid.

JESSICA
Yeah. Right.

SAMMY (O.S.)
I like kids. I'm not a bad guy.

JESSICA
You're a fuckin' monster.

And then...

BOOM! Lightning strikes somewhere close.

CHIP.

LIGHTS GO OUT.

Darkness.

WE ARE IN THE DARK WITH JESSICA.

Jessica's BREATHING.

The sound of the chain for the light being pulled over and over.

CLICK-CLICK.

CLICK-CLICK.

Nothing.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Power's out, you dumb bitch.

JESSICA
(to herself)
No, no.

Small FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

Little CREAKS.

Lainey.

A GASP as Jessica realizes.

The sound of her moving closer to the wall, RUSTLE of the trash bag around her.

STEP.

STEP.

STEP.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Lainey, no.

STEP.

STEP.

Jessica yells.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey, stay upstairs! Don't come
down!

STEP.

Lainey's small voice, muffled.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Mommy? The lights are broken. I'm
scared. Where are you, mommy?

We hear Jessica POUND on the wall.

JESSICA
Go back! Go upstairs, Laine!

Quiet.

Jessica's quick BREATHS. She's listening to hear something
but hoping she doesn't.

Beat.

And then...

Lainey's VOICE...

RIGHT OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Mommy? Are you in there?

JESSICA
Lainey, run!

A THUMP and RUSTLE outside the door.

Lainey SCREAMS.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Got you, girlie!

JESSICA
Let her go!

LAINNEY (O.S.)
Mommy, help me! Help!

BANGING on the door.

JESSICA
Don't hurt her!

Lainey's CRYING.

LAINNEY (O.S.)
He got me! Mommy!

SAMMY (O.S.)
Pull it out, you bitch! Pull the
thing out of my hand right now! I
got your little girl right here and
I ain't lettin' go.

Jessica screams back her answer.

JESSICA
I'll pull it out! Don't hurt her!

We are still in darkness as Jessica moves around doing something.

A SCUFFLE across the floor.

Dark shadows against darkness.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Hurry up!

JESSICA
Hold on. I need to find a way to
get it out.

The CLINK OF GLASS.

More SHUFFLING.

SAMMY (O.S.)
Pull it fast. If you do it slowly,
I'll squeeze her neck.

JESSICA
Okay, okay. Hold on. I can't see.

SPLASH. Something wet hitting the floor.

SAMMY (O.S.)
What's that? What are you doing?

The STRIKE of a match.

ONCE.

TWICE.

The SIZZLE of a match lighting.

NOW WE CAN SEE...

Jessica squatting over The Hand, the bottle of amaretto next to her.

Empty, on its side.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm gonna snap her neck if you mess
around with me!

Jessica holds the flame above his hand.

She drops it.

His sleeve IGNITES in a flambé.

SAMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
AAAHHHH!!!! Put it out!

LAINIEY (O.S.)
Mommy! Help!

Jessica POUNDS on the door.

JESSICA
Run, Lainey! Get away from him! Go!

The flames are strong and --

-- creep up the door, making eerie shadows on the wall, the light warm and orange, like a campfire.

Jessica panics as the tiny space fills with smoke.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Lainey? Are you there?

Sammy MOANS and CURSES.

And then...

She hears them.

LITTLE STEPS up the stairs.

Jessica puts her ear to the wall.

A TINY CREAK under Lainey's weight.

Yes, they're footsteps.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Good girl.

She turns back to the fire. It grows quickly, lapping up the wall and door. The small PILE OF YARN catches on fire.

It threatens to overtake the pantry.

Jessica grabs the garbage bag and attacks the flames, coughing, the smoke thick.

Sammy is eerily quiet now. Screaming's stopped.

Jessica BEATS on the flames.

The flames recede.

COUGH.

WHACK. WHACK.

COUGH.

And then...

Darkness.

INT. PANTRY - NIGHT - LATER

Darkness.

Quiet.

Jessica COUGHS in the black void.

Match STRIKES.

ONCE.

TWICE.

The SIZZLE of the match igniting.

Jessica's face appears, gaunt, shadowy, grimy, ash on her cheek.

The small flame moves to a religious candle, the Virgin Mary on the peeling plastic sticker over tall glass.

The wick catches fire.

In the flickering light of the candle, the pantry is in disarray, items thrown about from her fight against the fire.

Jessica moves the candle over to the floor in front of the door, the black plastic garbage bag in melted shreds.

Sammy's hand is covered in angry blisters, openly bleeding, his forearm charred, the shirt sleeve ragged black ash.

The Hand doesn't move.

She ponders it, her eyes narrow.

Dead?

His little pinkie finger twitches slightly.

Nope. Still alive.

The hole next to The Hand, her one chance at escape.

A hard stare.

Hopeless.

Jessica looks over the shelf. Something's missing.

She moves the candle to search the floor.

Not in this corner.

Not over there.

Wait.

There it is.

The baggie of meth.

On the floor near her feet.

She sets the candle down next to it, its tiny form casting a much bigger shadow on the wall, like a giant looming over her.

Jessica, tired, spent, curls up on her side, trying to keep warm, and faces the meth, like a new mom would with a newborn, fresh and full of promise, and she --

-- strokes it lightly like it was a baby's cheek.

Her finger shakes.

INT. PANTRY - MORNING - THIRD DAY INSIDE

A stream of sunlight hits Jessica's face, the rest of the pantry is dark shadows.

Her eyes spring open to her current hell.

She blinks. Nope, not a dream.

In the thin streaks of morning light squeezing in around the door, her BREATH IS VISIBLE.

It's freezing.

She angles her face toward the ceiling and yells, her voice weak, cracked.

JESSICA

Lainey! Let me know you're okay!
Put a blanket on the baby!

Silence.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey!

Nothing.

Her eyes well with tears. She shuts them releasing the tears down her cheek.

Defeated, discouraged, she weeps.

MOMENTS LATER

The candle is lit, burned almost down to the bottom, giving light to Jessica's next project taking place on the shelf.

It's another escape. This one, a sure bet.

She stands over a small clearing on the shelf serving as a surface for the white meth powder to be snorted.

Next to her is the Bible, an odd neighbor for her current task. But she's not distracted.

Jessica's eyes are dead, singular in dark purpose.

She gingerly spills a tiny pile onto the shelf.

Then rips the cover of Knitting World Magazine off.

Then a smaller piece two inches wide.

She uses the magazine cover to form a line.

SCRAPE.

SCRAPE.

SCRAPE.

She tears another piece of magazine cover and --

-- rolls it into a tight straw. She's noticeable good at this, despite having one working hand.

Jessica leans over, ready to snort, and turns her head to the side slightly.

Her eyes are level with the outer pages of the Bible, each new chapter marked with a gold plastic tab.

She notices something odd about it.

Something green edges out of the pages. Doesn't belong. She recognizes that shade of green.

Jessica drops the rolled paper and pulls at the green edge.

An old ONE-HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL slides out.

This has her attention.

Jessica holds the bill by the light of the candle, curious and confused.

She looks back at the old Bible.

What?

She flips it open to a random page. Another one-hundred-dollar bill is Scotch-taped to the page.

JESSICA

Oh my god.

She pulls out more, all taped to the pages.

Soon, she realizes there's purpose on how they're placed. All carefully affixed under verses of some import.

She shuffles through the pages, barely glancing at the words.

Then stops.

Something about this verse catches her attention.

Her finger traces the words.

Matthew 7:16-20

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

She thinks on this for a moment. Means something to her.

She turns the page.

Nothing.

Another page.

More money.

She flips through the pages quickly. The flashes of green tell her there's thousands inside.

She shuts the Bible, then opens it to the front.

There, a family record is written in the same neat cursive as the apple butter labels.

A long list of dates and name, baptisms and marriages.

Her finger stops at her name and birth date.

Jessica Rose Darcy

Born August 2, 1998

She turns the page where an OLD PHOTO has been placed.

Jessica picks it up and squints at it.

It's the farmhouse kitchen, a little girl sitting at the table with a pile of apples, an older woman smiling in an apron.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Nana.

Jessica CRIES. Not a nostalgic cry over a treasured memory, but a deep, painful weeping over lost time and lost things.

But...

Something is paper-clipped to the back of the photo. She turns it over, still crying.

In her Nana's handwriting, a RECIPE CARD FOR APPLE BUTTER.

She's quiet now, focused.

Jessica's eyes dart down the ingredient list and instructions.

Her eyes linger on it.

This means something to her. Something more than just a recipe for a fruity spread.

A sticky note drifts down to the floor, jostled from somewhere inside the Bible.

Jessica plucks it up.

Her Nana's handwriting. "For Jessica."

She SOBS now.

HEAVES.

She SCREAMS in frustration.

The crucified Christ looks down on her.

She feels the weight of His stare.

She looks up at it.

Grabs the Bible and THROWS IT at the crucifix. Screams.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

What good is all this now you
bastard!?

It FALLS.

BOUNCES off a shelf.

BREAKS in two on the floor.

She stares, frozen. Regret.

What did she do?

Jessica kneels down and retrieves the cross, now empty, Christ's tortured body separated from it.

Must have slid under the bottom shelf in the corner.

She reaches for it.

Pulls it out.

Looks down on the face of Christ, freed from His cross.

She seems to say a silent prayer or make a wish. Maybe it's the Serenity Prayer used at AA meetings. But something in her seems to find peace.

A beat.

Then she notices something.

A drop of water on his face

Her tears?

She wipes it away.

A new drop falls.

DRIP.

She looks up.

Tries to see the source.

Up in the far corner of the ceiling, nothing but blackness.

Jessica grabs the candle, edges into the corner, and holds it up to illuminate the area.

Another DRIP from the ceiling...

Onto her forehead.

She wipes it away.

MOMENTS LATER

The cardboard box on its side, swaying, slowly collapsing under her weight.

Jessica balances on top, her foot stepping up to a pantry shelf.

She angles up to the next shelf and positions herself closer to the corner ceiling.

She grabs the candle and holds it up to the ceiling.

Now we see it:

A large WATER STAIN on the white plaster.

A drip falls again from the center.

DRIP.

DRIP.

Jessica sets the candle down nearby and scratches at the spot with her finger.

Plaster falls away easily.

A small hole appears.

A ROACH crawls out.

She jumps, then swats it away.

She looks back at the hole inside the rotting plaster and wood as if making a connection.

Something about it makes sense.

Frantically now, she SCRATCHES...

And TEARS at the wood.

It comes apart, years of rot from a leak having done its damage.

But she only has her left hand with work with, her right too painful.

She WHACKS at the wood, pulling and tearing.

She yanks her hand back.

OUCH!

By the light of the candle, a large SPLINTER in her palm.

She pulls it out with GROAN.

Her right hand shakes from the effort.

She pulls off the bandage.

The puncture is angry red and puss-filled.

She looks at both her hands outstretched in front of her.
Both marked like Christ.

A beat.

Christ-like or not, she's not getting through the ceiling
with bare hands.

She grabs the candle and holds it to the center of the
pantry, looking for something.

She sees it.

It's sitting in Sammy's palm.

The screwdriver.

MOMENTS LATER

Two fingers placed delicately on a burnt, red, blistered
wrist.

Jessica's face looms over it, trying to find Sammy's pulse.

JESSICA
Sammy? You there? Sammy?

Silence.

Not satisfied, Jessica lays her cheek to the floor and
squints.

Sammy's silhouette in the morning light.

Unmoving.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Sammy! Wake up you stupid asshole!

She sits up and pushes at his hand. Should be painful enough
to incite a reaction.

Nothing.

Conflicted, Jessica peers up at the hole in the ceiling as if
calculating how long it might take to punch through.

It's decided.

She wraps her hands around the handle of the screwdriver and
yanks.

Doesn't budge.

She grabs a brick and bangs the handle from the side to loosen it.

Seems to work.

She wriggles it out of the floor and Sammy's hand.

A GRUNT and a big yank.

It's hers.

One last glance at The Hand.

Hasn't moved at all.

LATER

The long end of the screwdriver POUNDS into wet, rotting wood.

It pulls back to reveal a small hole.

LIGHT streams in onto Jessica's face.

She's broken through.

A boost of motivation. She hacks at it with fury.

A big chunk of wood falls away, enough for her to poke her head through.

This is gonna work.

It's time to leave the pantry.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Next to the bathtub -- close to the spot where Jessica complained about the leak two days ago -- there's a HOLE in the linoleum.

FINGERS reach up and pull at the sides.

They give way, collapsing in.

A beat.

JESSICA'S HEAD edges through the floor, reborn out of the darkness.

A moment to look around the bathroom.

Almost out.

JESSICA

Lainey? I'm in the bathroom! I'm coming!

She groans as she pushes her arms against the floor for leverage to pull her body out. She wriggles up, much like that worm outta the apple.

It's tight.

Her hip wedges against the floor.

Stuck.

She leans onto one side and hacks at the floor with the screwdriver.

Another chunk loosens. She pulls it away.

And then...

Jessica emerges from the pantry below.

Free.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The bathroom door.

MUFFLED THUMPS. Jessica behind it, making her way from the hole to the door.

The door handle shakes and turns, likes she's having trouble making it work.

The door swings open.

Jessica shuffles through into the direct morning light, her eyes squinting -- not used to it -- and her right hand immediately embraced by her left, still in pain.

She's battered, bruised, exhausted and dehydrated.

It's frigid upstairs. Her ragged exhale, icy clouds. Teeth chatter.

JESSICA

Laine? Mason? I'm coming.

Even still, she moves quickly to the door at the end of the hall.

Where her babies are.

She STUMBLES on something, nearly trips.

Looks down at the floor.

It's a half-eaten apple.

Lainey's.

She keeps walking through a MINEFIELD OF BITTEN APPLES discarded on the floor of the hallway.

Some rotten.

She kicks one out of her way.

At the door, she stops for a beat.

Afraid of what she might find behind it.

Then she tries the doorknob.

Locked.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Laine?! Open the door. It's mommy.

Silence.

Nothing.

Not a sound.

She knocks on the door. Wiggles the doorknob aggressively.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey? The door is locked, baby.
Please come unlock it. I'm out of
the pantry now.

Nothing.

She puts her ear to the door and listens.

The HUM of the WIND outside. Branches BREAKING. RAIN.

She yells.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's mommy! Open the door!

Bangs on the door.

BANG.

BANG.

BANG.

Then pounds with her shoulder.

POUND.

POUND.

Nothing.

It's clear they're dead. It's the only explanation.

She MOANS. SCREAMS. The idea they're gone stops her breathing. She almost chokes on grief.

And then...

She gathers herself. No, can't give up now.

And...

THROWS HER BODY AGAINST THE DAMN DOOR.

She KICKS it.

BEATS it.

Determined like hell.

Not getting locked away from them again.

Jessica steps back and barrels into it.

BANG!

Again.

BANG!

Again.

BANG!

IT OPENS.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As if afraid of seeing a ghost, Jessica delicately steps into the room and takes in the scene.

More partially eaten APPLES litter the floor.

Dirty DIAPER in the corner. Heap of baby WIPES next to it.

Spilled FORMULA. The can left open.

Empty.

The baby's play-pen.

Empty.

The window, still open at the bottom where she was too weak to close it earlier, a frigid wind whips through the curtains.

THUNDER echoes through the space.

And on the mattress...

A mound of blankets.

They have to be under there.

Her feet pad softly to the mattress, abject fear in her eyes.

Jessica's voice is soft and unsure, like she might be talking to two corpses.

JESSICA

Mommy's here. You're safe now.

Her shaky hand reaches for the blankets.

She pulls one back to reveal another.

She pulls it back.

Another blanket.

And then, the last one, draped over two small figures, motionless.

She pulls it back.

Lainey lies on her side, turned toward the baby, her arms draped around him.

The baby clutches an empty bottle.

Their eyes are closed. They're pale.

Dead?

No.

Lainey stirs.

Looks up at Jessica.

LAINNEY

Mommy. Mommy!

Jessica kneels on the mattress.

Lainey bolts into her arms.

An intense hug.

JESSICA

I got out, baby. I'm here.

LAINNEY

I had a dream you were breaking the door.

Jessica kisses her daughter.

JESSICA

I did, baby. I broke it down.

Then examines her quickly, like a nurse. Checks her eyes, feels her hands.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hands are cold.

She rubs them, breathes warm air on them. Then turns to the baby.

A beat. He's so still.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Momma's here, Mason.

She reaches for the baby, pulls him up.

He stirs.

Wakes from his deep sleep.

LAINNEY

Mommy, I'm hungry.

Jessica envelopes the baby with her arms, kisses his chubby cheeks.

He COOS. He's intact. Alive. Gonna be fine.

She pulls in Lainey, hugs them both tight.

JESSICA
You did a good job, Laine.

Lainey is single-minded.

LAINNEY
Can I have fish crackers? They're
in the car, remember?

A beat.

Jessica glances at the window into the icy abyss outside.

What now?

INT. STAIRS - DAY - LATER

Jessica warily tiptoes down the stairs. In her arms, the baby wrapped up in the blanket. Lainey clings to her side, a blanket draped over her shoulders.

At the bottom, Jessica's eyes dart to the feet lying motionless around the corner.

Lainey's terrified, eyes on Sammy's feet.

Jessica stops.

JESSICA
Stay here.

Jessica hands Lainey the baby and they sit on the bottom step.

She pads softly to the pantry door.

Now we see the horrific mess from the other side. A dozen or so boards nailed over the door. Sammy twisted on his side, eyes closed, his arm pinned under the door.

He hasn't moved since she pulled the screwdriver out.

Jessica NUDGES him with her foot.

Nothing.

Satisfied, she kneels down over his body. A chain peeks out of the front pocket of his jeans.

She pulls it out.

Keys!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica and her kids stare out the open front door at a DIRT BIKE. Sammy's ride.

The wind and rain is so extreme, it shakes.

A BICYCLE HELMET BLOWS OFF and rolls down the icy driveway.

Not happening. Jessica's head drops, defeated.

LAINY
Mommy, I'm hungry.

The baby starts to WHINE. Likely hungry, too.

JESSICA
Laine, you stay here with Mason.
I'm gonna get the food from the
car.

A quick glance back toward Sammy -- not visible from where she stands.

Not a sound.

LAINY
Don't leave, mommy!

A beat. She's right. Not leaving the kids now.

JESSICA
Okay, come with me. Stay close.

The three of them head out of the front door into the --

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The frigid wind whips around them as they awkwardly move to the car as one mass, huddled together.

BAM!

A TREE BRANCH FALLS close by.

Too close.

Lainey SCREAMS. Jessica guides her away, closer to her side.

Maybe this wasn't a good idea.

AT THE CAR

Jessica checks the door. The brown paper grocery bag filled with food sits on the passenger seat.

She tries the door. It's locked. But she knew that.

She scans the ground for something.

Sees it.

Grabs a loose paving brick from a landscaping border, the shrubs and flowers inside withered and dead.

Bashes in the driver's side window. The baby CRIES in her arms.

BANG.

BANG.

CRASH.

She's in.

A quick glance to the front window of the house. Looks fine still.

Grabs the bag.

A TALL SHADOW PASSES ACROSS THE FRONT WINDOW

But she doesn't see this.

Tries to situate the baby and the bag with an injured hand.

Doesn't look good.

Heads up to the house with the kids. But it's hard to balance the baby AND the bag AND hold Lainey's hand. Everything's slipping.

Another BRANCH FALLS.

Jessica stumbles.

DROPS THE BAG OF FOOD.

A beat as she looks at it on the ground ripped open, food spilling out, her kids clinging to her, frightened.

Frozen rain pelting everything and everyone.

Can't manage both.

Holding the baby with her injured right arm, she grabs a PACKAGE OF COOKIES and JUICE BOXES with her left, WINCING.

And heads back inside.

Leaves the rest.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Lainey sits in the corner closest to the front door sucking up a juice box, wrapped in a blanket, cookie in her hand.

Jessica stands over her, baby in her arms with a bottle of apple juice.

Jessica's unsettled, eyes darting around, trying to figure out her next move, wrapping the baby up tighter in the blanket.

LAINEY

Can I have fish crackers now?

Jessica glances out the window. The food is mere steps away. But the rain is still beating down.

Lainey shivers from the cold.

JESSICA

Let me go get them. Here, keep Mason next to you. Stay warm.

Jessica sits the baby down next to Lainey.

A quick glance down the hall, toward the pantry, but it's not visible from there.

Still, nothing seems amiss. And this will just take a minute.

Jessica leaves out the front door.

Closes it behind her.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A mess of packaged convenience food on the wet ground.

Jessica's good left hand grabs at individual bags of fish crackers and piles them into the crook of her right arm.

A quick glance up at the front window over the porch.

Nothing unusual.

A few baggies of fish crackers fall from her arm onto the ground.

JESSICA

Dammit.

She starts over, piling more into her arm.

Sees an insulated bag, like you would take for lunch, and grabs that, too.

Stands up, ready to go, wet, cold, muddy now.

Looks at the window over the porch again.

SAMMY STARES OUT AT HER!

She drops everything, and RUNS FOR THE PORCH.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No!

He disappears. Gone.

She blinks her eyes. Wipes rain from them. Did she imagine it?

As she gets up the stairs to the porch, her eyes target the front window, where her kids should be visible.

But aren't.

Panic.

But she forgets about the damn HOLE IN THE PORCH.

And STEPS INTO IT.

She lets out a strangled YELL.

Wrenches her foot free.

Bolts for the door.

Her hand finds the doorknob.

LOCKED!

She's fucking locked outside.

A beat. Her mind running wild with every scenario possible but settles on the worst one.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Let me in!

She POUNDS on the door.

BEATS on it.

Then...

Runs back to the car.

Her foot smashing a bag of fish crackers into the frozen mud.

Grabs the brick.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brick meets glass in the front window.

CRASH!

Jessica climbs through the jagged glass.

A piece of glass embeds in her thigh.

JESSICA

Ahhh!

She pulls it out.

Pushes shards out of her way.

Gets through.

Eyes go to the corner where her kids were.

A juice box is left.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Lainey?! Where are you?!

She runs down the hallway, toward the pantry...

Stops dead, wind knocked out of her.

SAMMY.

IS.

GONE.

He's not on the floor dead.

Because he's not dead. Because he was at the window.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No. No!

Just then...

She hears the BABY CRYING.

From UPSTAIRS.

NO!

She bolts.

Up the steps.

Into the --

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The CRYING is louder.

Coming from the end of the hall.

In the bedroom.

Jessica runs to the door, which is slightly ajar.

Barges through, into the --

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica stops on a dime, shocked at the sight before her.

In the far corner, Sammy sits on the floor, his back against the wall.

In his lap, THE BABY.

A knife in his hand.

Lainey sits next to him, paralyzed, confused.

But she jumps up when she sees her mom.

LAINY

Mommy! He took the baby! He won't
give him back!

Sammy, with his one good hand and clutching the pocket knife, pulls Lainey back down. His injured hand is a bloody, charred mess. He seems to be impervious to the pain.

SAMMY

No, no, sit down, little girl. What
did I tell you?

JESSICA

Let them go.

Sammy angles the knife dangerously close to the baby.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Please.

A creepy grin breaks out on Sammy's face.

SAMMY

Please? I said please let me go a
dozen fucking times, Jessica. Don't
you remember?

JESSICA

I'm sorry.

LAINY

Mommy, I want to go.

JESSICA

Just sit tight, baby.

Jessica edges closer.

SAMMY

Stop, little momma, right there.

JESSICA

The meth is still in the pantry. Go
get it. It's all yours.

A beat.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

There's money in there too. Lots of
it. Thousands. My grandma's money.
Just give me the baby.

Sammy's listening. Seems interested. Looks down at his injured hand. It's shaking pretty fiercely.

SAMMY

Thanks for letting me know about that.

His hand tightens around the knife. Aims it at the baby's neck. But he's shaking like a leaf. Weak.

Jessica leaps at him. Grabs his arm.

JESSICA

Stop! Let him go!

ROB (O.S.)

Drop the fucking knife, Sammy!

The sound of ROB'S VOICE stuns them both.

Sammy sees him first.

Whatever he sees makes him drop the knife.

Jessica grabs the baby and grabs Lainey's hand and moves away.

Now she finally sees Rob. He's at the doorway with a large HANDGUN pointed at Sammy.

ROB (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing here with my kids?

Sammy puts his hands up, submissive.

SAMMY

That bitch hammered my hand to the fucking floor! Look at it!

He shows his bloody raw palm to Rob.

Meanwhile, Jessica edges out of the door with the kids into the --

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As she softly pads down the hall, she can hear the rest of the conversation.

ROB (O.S.)

You didn't answer my question. What are you, some kind of pedophile?

SAMMY (O.S.)
 You owe me money!
 (then, weakly)
 You owe me money, man.

Jessica, clutching her baby and Lainey's hand, storms down the --

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BANG!

She stops. Freezes. Baby SCREAMS at the sound. Lainey's shaking.

LAINNEY
 What's that, mommy?

It's a gunshot.

Jessica gathers herself. Keeps descending the staircase.

JESSICA
 Tree branch fell.

Hits the last step.

Then, over her shoulder, from above.

ROB (O.S.)
 Jessica, where ya running off to?

She whips her head up.

Rob stares down at her, casually leaning over the railing, gun visible in his hand, most likely just killed a man. Capable of anything.

But she tries to reason anyway.

JESSICA
 Thanks for coming back. I need to get the kids safe now. I just need my car keys.

ROB
 Kids are safe. Sammy won't hurt them now. I took care of it.

Jessica is terrified. She tries not to show it.

ROB (CONT'D)
So, what's this about your Nana's
money?

A beat as Jessica realizes she's not going anywhere.

INT. OUTSIDE THE PANTRY - DAY - LATER

A CROWBAR wrenches a 2x4 free.

It's the last one covering the pantry.

Rob, pistol tucked into the waist of his jeans, steps back to
admire his work.

Done.

Jessica stands near, baby in her arms. Lainey holds her hand
tightly. They look like a family of scared field mice staring
down a plow.

ROB
I think that was easier to put up
than take down.

He looks at Jessica for a response. Like, a laugh or
something.

Her face is stone.

JESSICA
I need to get the kids to a doctor.

Rob looks them over.

ROB
They look fine to me. Don't be such
a helicopter parent.

Jessica responds carefully. Doesn't want to ruffle his
feathers.

JESSICA
They're hungry. We need to eat.
It's freezing and my hand is
infected.

Rob ignores her. Pushes inside the pantry. Jessica watches
him.

He finds the baggie of meth. Sees the remnants of her attempt
to snort it.

ROB

Looks like you had a little fun in here.

Gives her a wide grin.

JESSICA

I didn't. I'm still clean.

His grin fades. This bothers him.

Her eyes move to the floor under his feet. A hundred dollar bill.

Rob follow her gaze, sees it, too.

ROB

Holy shit. You weren't lying.

Jessica just watches.

Rob sees another one.

Traces it back to the Bible on the floor. Hunches over it, ripping pages out.

Extracting the money.

ROB (CONT'D)

Holy shitballs! Fuckin' awesome!

He looks over to her, ecstatic.

ROB (CONT'D)

You know what this will buy us?

JESSICA

You can have it. Take it all. Just go and leave us alone.

Rob leans out the pantry, hand stuffed with hundreds.

ROB

You never shot it? Wanna try?

Jessica has no answer. Her eyes stayed trained on his handgun now tucked in the waistband of his jeans.

ROB (CONT'D)

We'll do it together.

It's a command, not a question this time.

Her eyes move to the floor of the pantry. Under his boot, the image of Christ. Asshole doesn't even notice.

Above it, the shelf.

One last jar of apple butter.

Next to it, the powdery meth.

Some kind of resolve comes over her.

JESSICA

Okay.

ROB

Okay?

JESSICA

Yeah, let's do it. I'm ready.

Jessica feels the confused eyes of Lainey on her. A quick glance down.

Lainey lets go of her hand.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

There's a bag of food outside. I
wanna feed the kids first.

(then)

We should eat, too. It's important
to eat or you'll get... sick. You
know that.

Rob rubs his gaunt face, thinking.

ROB

Yeah, alright. Let's eat first.
I'll get the food. You stay here.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

A plastic bowl, like you would use for baby food, full of
apple butter. A spoon stirs and stirs.

And stirs.

Jessica's face, concentrating on the task, as she leans over
the counter-top.

Behind her, Lainey sits at the table. The baby is in the high
chair waiting on something to eat.

LAINNEY
Can I have some?

Jessica looks up, tense. Thoughtful.

JESSICA
No, baby, this is for daddy. He's
bringing in our food from outside.

Beat.

LAINNEY
Daddy's bad.

Jessica spots a tiny speck of something white in the apple
butter. She stirs it in with purpose.

JESSICA
Yeah. He is.

LATER

At the table, Lainey munches on white bread, maybe peanut
butter inside, a pile of bright orange fish crackers at her
elbow.

The baby sucks down a milk bottle at the high chair. They're
both wrapped in blankets.

Rob carefully lays out some items on the table.

A bent spoon.

Lighter.

Syringe.

Stack of hundreds from Nana's Bible. Jessica's inheritance.

The handgun next to it.

ROB
Jess, you ready? I got some better
stuff here. Just picked it up on my
way over.

He pulls out a baggie of meth crystals from his shirt pocket.

Jessica sets a plate down in front of him. Two slices of
white bread spread thick with apple butter.

JESSICA

Better than what you gave me? You said it was pharma grade.

Rob looks up at her and smiles like he just got caught playing a harmless joke on her.

ROB

I was wrong. That shit's cut heavy. I had one hit and lost it pretty bad. That's why I got here so late. Wasn't my fault.

(then)

Glad you didn't take it. Stickin' to crystals from now on.

She looks at him with even more hate if possible.

Rob notices the plate of food before him. He doesn't look impressed or hungry.

Pushes it away.

ROB (CONT'D)

Not hungry.

She pushes it back to him. Rubs his shoulder.

JESSICA

You need to eat first. Look at how Sammy -- was. Wasted away. You have to make yourself eat -- even when you don't feel like it.

She sounds nurturing, motherly. He's oddly touched by it. Doesn't notice how forced her tone is.

He puts his hand over hers.

ROB

Yeah, yeah, you're right.

(then)

Thanks.

Jessica stays standing. Watching for a beat.

JESSICA

You're welcome.

Rob, eyes staying on Jessica, takes a large bite.

She watches his face.

He chews, swallows.

Nods his head in appreciation.

ROB

It's good. What is this crap? Looks like literal crap, ya know?

Jessica seems to exhale a little.

JESSICA

Nana's apple butter. Won first place at the county fair when I was a kid.

A beat.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Eat up.

LATER

Jessica runs water over an empty plate, a smear of brown left from the apple butter.

Looks like he ate it all.

She scrubs that smear off with a vengeance.

But her hand stings. Still infected. She pulls it up. Winces. Nearly swoons from her current state.

Steadies herself against the counter.

Shakes off the pain. Deep breaths.

Behind her, Rob sits at the table, holds a lighter under a bent spoon, concentrating on it.

JESSICA

Can we do that in the living room?
I don't want the kids to see.

Rob looks up at her. Then at the kids, still eating, innocent eyes trying to ascertain what's going on.

A beat.

A twinge of something on his face. Guilt? Parental responsibility?

ROB

Sure, sure. Come on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Rob's face, in ecstasy.

A deep exhale, like all his worries just dissipated from his body.

He sits on the hardwood floor of the living room, leaning against the wall, arm outstretched, and unties the tourniquet around it.

Turns his head to Jessica.

ROB
Your turn. Here.

Hands Jessica the tourniquet. She sits across from him.

JESSICA
I'm not ready. I'll do it later.

ROB
Nah.
(then)
We're doing this together.

Jessica glances down at his free hand on the floor. It rests on the handgun.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hurry up. I got one more hit in this needle.

JESSICA
Well, I want a clean needle.

Rob senses she's stalling.

Cause she is.

He points the gun at her, loaded syringe in the other hand.

ROB
Tie yourself off. This is for your own good. I don't want to hurt you, Jess. I never did.

A beat.

Jessica rolls up her sleeve.

Ties the tourniquet, using her mouth and good hand.

It takes her a bit. He's losing patience.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hurry the fuck up!

JESSICA
My hand is hurt. I'm not good at
this.

She looks over to him, sincere.

Rob puts down the gun. She notes this.

He reaches over to help.

Jessica WHACKS him in the face.

Goes for the gun.

ROB
You bitch!

Rob pushes her easily aside.

She hits the floor.

From her vantage point on the floor, Rob is now standing over her.

She looks up at the barrel of his gun.

ROB (CONT'D)
Get up and tie yourself off or I'll
shoot you in your fucking eye.

Jessica pushes herself up, standing.

A beat as they stare at each other.

JESSICA
Go ahead and kill me. I might as
well be dead.

BAM!

Rob pistol whips her.

She grabs her cheek, blood appearing at her nose.

Beat. She's unsure of her next move.

They stand facing each other.

Suddenly, Rob seems overly agitated. Rubs his eyes hard.
Something's not right.

Jessica watches. Takes the chance and...

RUNS LIKE HELL!

Towards the stairs.

Heavy boots follow behind her.

ROB (O.S.)
Where you goin', Jess?!

JESSICA
I'm not doing it!

INT. TOP OF STAIRS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica leaps up to the top of the stairs and looks back.
Rob's head bounces up towards her.

She runs down the hallway.

To the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica whips inside and tried to lock the door behind her.

But it's broken from earlier.

Through the crack, she sees Rob rushing toward her.

She scans the room.

Sammy slumps in the corner, dead, a pool of blood under him.

Nearby, the window.

The window!

Jessica bolts to it.

Pulls it open.

Looks out.

JESSICA
Shit.

It's too far down. Nothing to hold onto. Dumb idea.

Besides, it's too late anyway.

Rob's stumbles in. Gun pointed at her.

ROB
Why you gotta make this so hard on
yourself?

He slowly moves toward her. Gun in one hand, syringe in the other.

Jessica swallows. Prepares for what's coming.

ROB (CONT'D)
You go to rehab one time, think
you're better than everyone and cut
me out like I'm nothing.

He's a few inches away. So close she could smell the apple butter on his breath.

Jessica squeezes back against the window frame. Her hand searches from something, but there's nothing.

Rob puts the gun to her temple. Leans in. Cocks it.

CLICK-CLICK.

ROB (CONT'D)
Like I said, the problem between us
is you think you're better than me.
Always have.

His hand starts to shake.

Something's not right.

Rob wipes his brow, drops the syringe.

ROB (CONT'D)
God dammit.

Breathes hard.

And then...

His hand goes to his chest, like something's wrong with his heart.

The gun stays trained on her head, but shakes, too.

ROB (CONT'D)
Something's wrong.

A glance between them. He reads her eyes.

Guilty eyes.

ROB (CONT'D)
What did you give me, Jessica?!

JESSICA
I gave you three grams of your
shitty cut meth... the stuff you
locked me up with while my babies
were alone and cold and in
danger... while I rotted away
inside a pantry, you asshole.
(then)
You're OD'ing.

Rob's breathing comes in ragged staccato.

Gun drops from his hand.

But he leans into Jessica, slaps his hands around her neck
like a zombie, disabled but intent on harm.

ROB
You're nothing.

She fights him, pushing back, slapping at his face. He's weak
and erratic. She has a shot.

JESSICA
I'm not nothing.

They fight against the window --

-- flipping positions, with Rob's back to the open air.

Then, as if having a heart attack, he slumps down, the window
pane catching him.

He sits there, clutching his chest.

He looks up her, as if realizing he's going to Hell anyway
and wants to get in one last jab.

ROB
You're not better than me. You'll
see.

Jessica answers with a --

-- KICK TO THE GUT.

He springs back through the window. Too weak to even grab for
anything.

And plummets down.

A SOFT THUD on the wet earth below.

Jessica exhales.

Looks out of the window.

Rob's lifeless body on the cold ground.

She grabs the window and pulls it closed with a GUTTURAL GROAN.

And unlike before, the old, sticky window shuts all the way to the bottom, even with her injured hand which springs back in pain, close to her chest.

Oddly, she seems stronger now.

Then Jessica finally gives Rob a response, but he won't hear it. He's not the one who needs to hear it anyway.

JESSICA
(to herself)
I am better than you.

EXT. UNDER AN APPLE TREE - DAY

A repeat of the first scene, but a little different.

LITTLE BOOTS stomp the icy ground, apple tree leaves in various stages of rot.

It's deeper into fall.

A little leftover snow confirms it.

A small GLOVED HAND reaches under some leaves. Pulls out a hiding APPLE.

Little boots scamper away.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lainey emerges from the apple orchard, headed for the house.

We move on ahead of her.

The for-sale sign is gone. But the Ford Escort is still there, broken window fixed.

Neat pile of leaves raked in the yard.

Hole in the front porch is patched.

Two pumpkins frame the door. Halloween must be close.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Inside, a cheery fire CRACKLES in the fireplace.

There's furniture, not brand new, but comfortable.

DOWN THE HALL

MUSIC.

Not Metallica. Sounds like pre-schooler top hits. Barney or The Wiggles. What a good mom would reluctantly play for her kids and then complain about later at a mom's night-out.

We get to the pantry, just before the kitchen.

Door is permanently removed.

But looks fully stocked in there. Lots of food. Tall stack of baby formula. Crucifix has been glued back together and put back up in its spot.

We head into the --

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

On the floor, barrels of apples. Apples in every corner, on the kitchen table, counter-top.

A serious harvest.

On the stove, a massive pot. Apple butter simmering away.

Jessica assertively stirs it. Shakes off the wooden spoon. Replaces the lid.

Quick stretch of her fingers and assessment of her right palm. All healed now. Just a small scar left.

She's got an apron on, like something her Nana would wear, over jeans and a sweater. Her hair is tied back in a low bun. She glows with some newfound quiet confidence.

The baby sits at the high chair, banging a toy around. Happy.

Jessica kisses his cheek, but gets distracted when --

-- Lainey rushes in with the apple.

LAINY

I found another one! It was hiding!

Jessica smiles, her eyes sparkle with affection.

JESSICA

Let's take a look at it.

Lainey hands the apple over.

Jessica carries it to a spot on the counter, next to the sink. There, a cutting board covered in apple peels. A bowl of sliced apples next to it.

She grabs a paring knife and starts peeling.

Lainey props herself up on a chair next to her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hey, I got news. The cafe in town wants to order another twenty jars of Nana's butter. They're servin' it on their pecan waffles. Isn't that cool?

Jessica explodes with pride as she relays the news, but Lainey's focused on that one apple.

LAINY

Is it good? Is it good?

Jessica isn't sure what she means.

JESSICA

Hmm?

LAINY

Is the apple good?

Jessica examines the peeled side of the apple. She spots some dark brown.

Rot.

No biggie. She slices it away.

JESSICA

Just a little brown here. We'll cut it out. Use the good parts, remember?

Lainey smiles, like salvaging this one apple meant everything to her.

As they sing along to the dumb kiddie song and slice more apples...

We move across the counter-top...

Past the BOWL of apple chunks awaiting transformation...

To a BUCKET mounded with discarded brown apples and rotting chunks taken out of the others...

And then to the big pot, simmering the apples down and changing them into something completely new.

Next to it, a stack of JARS FILLED WITH APPLE BUTTER featuring new labels: "Nana's Award-Winning Apple Butter."

And then...

On the old yellow refrigerator, Nana's RECIPE CARD affixed with a plain magnet.

We scan down the list of ingredients written in her neat cursive: apples, sugar, brandy, cinnamon, cloves, etc. and simple cooking instructions...

And then down to a special note at the bottom, marked with an asterisk.

****If the apples have turned, don't throw them out unless they're completely rotten. Otherwise, cut out the bad spots and keep the good parts. Not many people know this secret, but these apples make the best apple butter.***

FADE OUT.