

12-19-2008

## **44-Across**

Joshua Alan Lane  
*University of New Orleans*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Lane, Joshua Alan, "44-Across" (2008). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 897.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/897>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).

44-Across

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts  
Creative Writing

by

Joshua Lane

B.A. University of Georgia, 2004

December, 2008

## Acknowledgments

Foremost, I would like to thank the members of my committee -- Joanna Leake, Henry Griffin and Erik Hansen. Very special thanks to my thesis chair Joanna Leake for her persistent and valuable advice during this long process.

Special thanks also go to Michelle Benoit, Jessica Martin, Marlena Smith, Brandon Ley, Ashley Foster, Chris Mahoney and Lauren Bright for their assistance in the development of this thesis.

I am eternally grateful for the help and support of my parents -- Ellen and, the late, Billy Lane.

FADE IN:

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The walls of the run-down apartment are covered with crossword puzzles in picture frames.

A large stack of newspapers rests against a torn leather sofa. A hand reaches down and grabs a newspaper.

GEORGE THOMSON, mid twenties, curly brown hair, glasses, geeky, flips the newspaper to the crossword puzzle. He grabs a pair of scissors from the coffee table.

A legal pad, criminal justice textbook, and a research paper with a big D+ circled in red sit on the coffee table.

The top sheet of the legal pad is a grid of words that resemble a Scrabble board. AUTHENTICATE is scrawled across the top of the sheet. ASSESS built down from the first A in AUTHENTICATE. SURVEILLANCE built across the last S in ASSESS.

He folds out the newspaper over the legal pad and slices the crossword puzzle out of the paper.

George opens a drawer in the coffee table full of unsolved crossword puzzles. He slides the crossword puzzle in the drawer.

In the corner of the room, a fire alarm hangs on the wall. A small surveillance camera inside of it.

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

Moonlight flickers off skyscrapers that line the road.

A pair of red heels splash and click against the rainy sidewalk. STEPHANIE TERRIOTES, mid twenties, stunning, roams down the street in the heels and a black trenchcoat.

She passes a building where BANJO MAN, homeless, middle-aged, plays a banjo for money. His torn banjo case is empty.

BANJO MAN

Got spare change? Family to feed.

Stephanie continues walking. The Banjo Man leaves his banjo and follows her.

SIRENS blare. A police car turns the corner of the intersection and whizzes down the street. A fire truck follows closely behind.

Stephanie turns and watches the cars fly by her. Banjo Man taps her on the shoulder.

BANJO MAN (CONT'D)  
Anything, miss. Anything at all?

Stephanie pulls out her cell phone and walks away.

Banjo Man returns to his wall and slides his banjo into its case.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

BZZ! BZZ! George's phone rings with the name STEPH flashing. He picks up the phone.

GEORGE  
Hey...Yeah. I'll help...No, I don't  
care how late it is.

George props his feet on the coffee table and leans back.

INT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Banjo Man carries his case through the dark, wet corridor. His feet splash in dirty puddles of water.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
To watch obsessively. Five letters.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Stalk.

Banjo Man stops at a dumpster. He surveys it, then lifts the lid. He glances down the alley to make sure the coast is clear. He climbs up the dumpster.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Building down from the A. Five  
letters. Fruit of the oak.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Easy. Acorn.

INSIDE THE DUMPSTER, Banjo Man rips open a garbage bag and sorts through rotten food.

He sniffs a piece of bread, breaks it open. Moldy on the inside. Banjo Man tears the bread away from the mold and shoves it into his pocket.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Almost done. 11 letters. C starts  
it. Chalk art.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Oh, I've had this one before.

Banjo Man finds a bottle of wine. He pries out the cork and pours a drop on his finger, then tastes the drop. Banjo Man downs the rest of the bottle.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
What clue have you not had?

AT THE END OF THE ALLEY, A SHADOWY SOLDIER, in fatigues, watches Banjo Man dig through the trash.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Calcography.

Banjo Man jumps out of the dumpster and grabs his banjo. He strolls deeper into the alley.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Where are you?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Does it matter? You stalking me?

The Shadowy Soldier follows Banjo Man.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George sits on the couch. His laptop in front of him on the table.

ON THE SCREEN, George on the couch in front of his laptop.

GEORGE  
No. No. Just wondering.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
What are you doing?

GEORGE  
Working on my surveillance assignment.  
It's boring watching myself.

George closes the laptop and walks to a wall of crossword puzzles.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Are you going to pass this assignment?

GEORGE  
Probably not. Is the bank hiring?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
You want to use your criminal justice training to catch check fraud?

GEORGE  
Check fraud is a serious crime.

George grabs a bottle of glass cleaner and a rag. He sprays cleaner on the picture frames on the wall and wipes them down thoroughly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
So, where are you?

A cold, freezer-like air blasts through the room. Frost develops on the glass of the picture frames. George looks around and puts down his cleaning supplies.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Laundry night.

GEORGE  
At this time?

George scratches at the frost.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)  
Got to go. Bye.

GEORGE  
Bye.

CLICK. George closes his phone. The frost on the frame has formed ice.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
What the fuck?

Behind him on the wall, a SHADOW forms. It races across the wall toward George.

WHAM! George's body jolts and slams into the wall. His breath produces condensation as he crumbles to the floor.

Picture frames fall over his unconscious body.

DARKNESS.

EXT. BRIDGE OVERPASS -- NIGHT

FLASH - Cars speed over the bridge.

Darkness.

FLASH - Under the overpass, A GLOVED HAND holds a sheet of newspaper. The paper is folded with a crossword puzzle face out. It rips the crossword puzzle out and rolls it up.

Darkness.

FLASH - A HOMELESS FAMILY sleeps huddled together under dirty blankets and sheets. Among the family, Banjo Man wrapped in a thin blanket, holding a small GIRL in his arms.

Darkness.

FLASH - Liquid douses the family from a gas can.

Darkness.

FLASH - The gloved hand sets a newspaper on fire, then drops it.

Darkness.

FLASH - Above the overpass, cars speed by as SCREAMS and WAILS begin. BANG! BANG! BANG! Gunshots ring through the area.

Darkness.

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Moonlight pours into the room through the open front door.

Couch cushions scatter across the floor. The coffee table is toppled over. The room looks like a crime scene.

A crossword puzzle flaps in the wind. One corner pinned to the floor by a red high heel shoe.

A faint DRIP! DRIP! Rings through the room.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

DRIP! DRIP! DRIP!

A night light flashes an orange haze around the dark room.

Cosmetics scatter around and in the sink. The faucet drips water over a couple sticks of lipstick. A toilet paper trail runs between the sink and toilet.

George stands over the bathtub with a gun aimed right over the water, his finger wrapped around the trigger. CONDENSATION billows out of George's mouth.

An arm and leg hang off the side of the bathtub. A red high heel shoe drops off the foot.

In the bathtub, Stephanie, in her trenchcoat and heels, lies completely submerged under water. Her eyes are closed and hair floats wildly about. George's gun aimed at her head.



As George cocks back the hammer, WHOOSH! A shadow flies out of his body and out of the room. George's body jolts, but he catches his balance on the wall.

As he collects himself, he examines the gun as if it's his first time seeing it.

GEORGE

What?

George glances down in shock as he sees Stephanie under the water. He drops the gun on the floor.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Steph!

WHOOSH! Stephanie sits up. Gasps for air. Her eyes wild. She looks around as she wipes her hair out of her face.

George and the gun are gone.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George paces in the dark room. On the coffee table, the gun and his laptop sit next to each other.

He kneels in front of the laptop and stares at the nanny cam on the wall.

GEORGE

Finally good for something.

ON THE SCREEN, George cleans the picture frames on the wall. The SHADOW races into George. FREEZE FRAME.

The picture reverses frame by frame. The shadow creeps out of George's body. FAST FORWARD. The shadow races into George, forcing him to slam into the wall and crumple to the ground.

After the picture frames fall on top of him, George rises and rushes out of the living room, condensation pouring out of his mouth as he moves.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, George closes the laptop. He picks up the gun and paces with it in hand. His shadow paces against the wall.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where did you come from?

Another SHADOW forms on the wall. It stays still as George's shadow moves across it.

He stops. The two shadows stand next to each other on the wall. George senses something.

George spins and aims the gun at the wall. Only his shadow remains on the wall.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Fuck this.

George opens the coffee table drawer and buries the gun under the blank puzzles.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Wax plants line the window overlooking the rows of desks in the precinct. A rundown metal desk encompasses most of the small room.

At the desk, DET. HANK HORN, middle-aged, muscular, unwraps the plastic from a new bulletin board. The board knocks over a wedding photo of Det. Horn and a YOUNG WOMAN.

As he leans the board against the side of the desk, he reaches for the picture, then stops. He leaves it facing down.

Det. Horn digs in his pocket and pulls out his cell phone. He types a text message to CHINESE FOOD that reads I'M MISSING YOUR TASTE. He sends the message

BZZ! BZZ! A text reply from Chinese Food says I'M CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT.

BZZ! BZZ! Det. Horn picks up the phone on his desk and answers it.

DET. HORN

Detective Horn...What?...Where?

Det. Horn scribbles into a notepad.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)

I'll be right there.

He grabs his coat and rushes out of the room.

EXT. BRIDGE OVERPASS -- NIGHT

An unmarked police car pulls up beneath the overpass. It parks amongst ambulances, police cars and fire trucks.

Crime scene tape ropes off the scene of the fire.

Det. Horn ducks under the tape and looks around the scene. INVESTIGATORS and MEDICS swarm the area. Bodies are being wheeled off in bags. Pictures taken.

An overturned shopping cart rests next to the scorched column. Det. Horn sees the wine bottle and bread under it.

He picks up the bottle and tips it over. The piece of paper falls out of it.

It's a crossword puzzle. EXACT is scribbled across the board with EVIL sharing the E.

As Det. Horn surveys the area, he sees the silhouette of the Shadowy Soldier staring down at them from the bridge.

DET. HORN

Hello.

Det. Horn flashes a light. The Figure runs into traffic. A CAR HORN blares.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)

Get him.

Det. Horn grabs a few officers, and they rush up toward the road.

ON THE BRIDGE, Det. Horn watches the traffic pass. Nobody in sight.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Det. Horn tacks copies of several crossword puzzles onto the bulletin board on his wall.

One says GAINING with GROUND connected at the G. RESTING with RACE built down from the R and EXACT crossed with EVIL.

In the desk chair, DETECTIVE MIKE CHANCE, youngish, slightly geeky, puts Det. Horn's wedding picture upright.

DET. HORN

Leave it down.

Det. Chance lays it face down.

DET. CHANCE

Trouble in paradise?

DET. HORN

Three separate incidents. Ten victims.

DET. CHANCE

No leads. Sounds like you need a profiler to take a look at the scene.

DET. HORN  
You're not one yet.

Det. Horn grabs several crime scene photographs of burnt corpses from his desk. He shuffles through them, arranges them, then tacks them on the board.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
I'm leaning drug related.

DET. CHANCE  
It's always about the drugs with you. I don't think so.

DET. HORN  
The last victims were shot in the head assassin-style.

DET. CHANCE  
None of the others were. Somebody unexpected showed up.

DET. HORN  
All of the shots were dead on. How many marksmen happen to be under an overpass at night?

Det. Chance spins in the chair.

DET. CHANCE  
Willing to wager ten on the next victim not being shot?

DET. HORN  
If we do our job, there won't be a next victim.

DET. CHANCE  
Just in case.

DET. HORN  
Fine.

Det. Horn shoos Det. Chance out of the chair. Det. Chance makes his way to the door, then stops.

DET. CHANCE  
What happened to the chick that found the first victim? The jogger?

DET. HORN  
Alibi for the night before. Her story checked out.

DET. CHANCE

Arsonists tend to like to return to the crime. They love to see the chaos they caused.

DET. HORN

You think the jogger is our firestarter.

DET. CHANCE

Wouldn't mind digging deeper with her on more than one level. If you know what I mean.

DET. HORN

She's cleared. Go do some work.

Det. Chance closes the door. Det. Horn pulls out his cell phone. He texts MISSING YOU to Chinese Food in his phone.

INT. BANK LOBBY -- DAY

Marble floors, vaulted ceilings. Everything has a fresh shine to it.

Behind the teller line, AMANDA BLACK, early twenties, attractive, and Stephanie occupy teller windows. Both have customers.

SEVERAL PATRONS line up behind the ropes. GRETTA HAWTHORNE, elderly, shrewd-looking, yet fragile in a wheel chair, and THOMAS GRAND, mid-twenties sharply attractive in scrubs, stand at the front of the line. George stands behind them.

GRETTA

How long do these people take?

THOMAS

We've only been here a couple of minutes.

GRETTA

Incompetent. The whole lot of them.

George pulls out a crossword puzzle and pencils in a few solutions.

Stephanie's window opens up. Thomas rolls Gretta to the counter. Stephanie smiles at the two.

STEPHANIE

Hello, Mrs. Hawthorne.

Gretta huffs as she pulls out a check. She slides it to Stephanie. Stephanie barely glances at it.

She pulls an envelope out of her drawer.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Already have it ready for you.

GRETTA  
Probably pawning off dirty bills on  
me.

Amanda glances over from her window and smiles at Thomas.  
He looks at the floor.

Stephanie opens the envelope and takes out the money. She  
shows it to Gretta as she counts it.

STEPHANIE  
Twenty, thirty, forty, forty-five,  
six, seven, eight, nine and fifty.

Stephanie shoves it in the envelope and hands it to Gretta.  
Gretta doesn't take it. George glances over at them.

GRETTA  
Count it again. This time not like  
you're stealing from me.

Stephanie flashes a fake smile and opens the envelope.

STEPHANIE  
Twenty...

Stephanie shows her the twenty, waves it in the air in front  
of Gretta.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Thirty.

Flashes the ten.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Forty.

Another ten.

Gretta coughs and holds up her hand. Thomas hides a smirk.

GRETTA  
I'll slap the sass right out of you.

Stephanie takes a deep breath and shuffles the rest of the  
money on the counter.

STEPHANIE  
Forty-five, six, seven, eight, nine  
and fifty.

Stephanie stacks the money and slides it in the envelope.  
Gretta snatches the envelope away from her.

GRETTA

Let's go, Thomas. I've been banking  
here for fifty years. You'd think  
they'd have some respect.

Thomas rolls Gretta around and winks at Stephanie. Stephanie  
blushes.

Amanda leans into Stephanie's station. Her CUSTOMER rolls  
her eyes.

AMANDA

Didn't see a ring.

George stands at Stephanie's station.

GEORGE

He's gay. My detective skills are  
mad sharp.

STEPHANIE

And that's why I had to help you  
pass our class last semester.

George hands Stephanie a crossword puzzle and pencil. Amanda  
returns to her customer.

GEORGE

I need to apologize for what I did.

STEPHANIE

Apologize for what?

The Customers in line get huffy. George pulls out a deposit  
slip and a dime. He hands it to Stephanie.

GEORGE

About last night.

STEPHANIE

Is calcography not chalk art? It  
fit fine.

GEORGE

I was...

Stephanie hands George a receipt.

STEPHANIE

There's a new bar I've wanted to  
check out. We can talk then. Game?

George bewilderedly nods and walks away.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A large oak bed anchors a room with antique furniture. The room seems like it hasn't been changed for fifty years. A HACKING COUGH thunders through the room.

A gust of COLD AIR circles throughout the room. The mirror on the dresser frosts over.

In the corner of the room, a rocking chair sits facing the open window. The drapes dance in the night.

A glass of water sits on a nightstand. A dainty, but shriveled hand reaches out for it. The fingers stretch, but cannot grasp the glass.

In the bed, Gretta clutches at her throat as she coughs. Hunched on her side, she reaches out for the glass again. Still short.

A frosted handprint appears on the glass as it slides it into her outstretched hands. She grabs and pulls the glass to her lips and drinks. Her cough subsides.

INT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

George pulls out a stool for Stephanie at the bar. She sits and George takes the stool next to her. George puts down a folded newspaper on the next stool.

At the end of the bar, YULEE JONES, late twenties, attractive in an edgy way, waits on the only other PATRON in the bar. She glances over, notices Stephanie.

YULEE

Shit.

George pulls out some cash. He waves at Yulee with his money. Stephanie picks up a matchbook and shows it to George.

On the matchbook, the moon sits in a litter box. Under it, the slogan reads "Piss away the night at Moonlitter." George smiles.

Yulee slides a beer to the patron and strolls over to George and Stephanie.

YULEE (CONT'D)

What will it be?

GEORGE

Martini for me and a...



STEPHANIE

Same.

Yulee nods and pulls out two martini glasses. She glares hard at Stephanie. George notices.

GEORGE

Got a problem?

YULEE

Not if she behaves herself.

Stephanie and George look at each other, bewildered.

STEPHANIE

Why wouldn't I behave myself?

Yulee pours the liquor in a shaker and shakes it.

YULEE

Listen, as long as you don't fuck on the bar, we'll be cool. I'm all for supporting our troops, but wear a ribbon or something.

STEPHANIE

Troops?

George begins to stand up, defiantly. Stephanie grabs George by the arm and pulls him back on the stool.

GEORGE

Look, if this is the attitude, you're going to have...

YULEE

Hey, she and her friend went a little overboard last night. We're all about fun here, but there's a line between fun and debauchery.

George leans into Stephanie.

GEORGE

I thought you've never been here.

STEPHANIE

I haven't.

Stephanie eyes well up. Yulee slides the drinks in front of them.

Yulee notices Stephanie fighting back tears.

YULEE

(backtracking)

Actually, you looked like her from a distance. I'm sorry. Mistaken identity. I didn't mean to rattle your date.

GEORGE

Thanks. What do I owe you?

YULEE

On the house.

George surveys the almost empty bar.

GEORGE

Sure you can afford to do that?

YULEE

Want to pay double?

Yulee marches back to the Patron.

George takes a sip of his martini. Stephanie stares at hers.

STEPHANIE

Can we just go?

GEORGE

It's okay. Mistaken identity, that's all.

Stephanie takes a sip of her drink. George grabs the newspaper.

He passes by an article with the headline "Tragic Fire in Slum" and flips to the crossword puzzle. He tears it out of the paper and puts it between them.

STEPHANIE

What did you want to talk about?

GEORGE

Last night.

STEPHANIE

I told you I was doing laundry.

GEORGE

You don't remember, do you?

STEPHANIE

Apparently, I had a wild night if two people are telling me I didn't do laundry. What did I do?

Stephanie sips her drink and takes the crossword puzzle from George.

GEORGE  
It's what I did.

STEPHANIE  
What did you do?

She pencils in a solution.

GEORGE  
I don't really know.

STEPHANIE  
So you're apologizing for something  
we both don't remember?

GEORGE  
I guess I am.

Stephanie flashes a smile at him.

STEPHANIE  
Apology accepted. No harm. No foul.

Stephanie turns her attention to the crossword puzzle.

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

Stephanie holds the crossword to her face as she stumbles down the street.

STEPHANIE  
Trusted friend. Three letters.

GEORGE  
Pal.

George wraps his arms around her waist and guides her away from the street.

STEPHANIE  
Type of turn. Seven letters. I got  
it.

She pencils in the solution, then shows it to George.

GEORGE  
Somehow, I doubt that yomamma is an  
acceptable solution.

George takes the crossword and slides it in his pocket.

STEPHANIE

Worth a try. Going to frame that one?

GEORGE

Sure. Just bought a new frame yesterday.

Stephanie rests her head on George's shoulder. He stares longingly at her hair.

STEPHANIE

You're a good pal, George.

As George and Stephanie turn the corner at an intersection, the Shadowy Soldier steps out of an alley and follows them.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The light flicks on to a dirty room. A desk with a computer sits in the corner. Clothing and other personal items litter the floor.

George guides Stephanie to her bed. He lowers her on the bed and slides off her shoes.

STEPHANIE

Crawl into bed with me. We'll have a sleepover.

George considers. He looks into her eyes.

GEORGE

No. I should leave.

STEPHANIE

Sometimes, I wish you weren't such a gentleman.

Stephanie curls into a pillow and clings close to it. George looks at the messy floor. He begins sorting the laundry on the floor.

George separates the clothes into piles.

As he looks up, Stephanie stands in front of him in her underwear.

GEORGE

What's going on?

Stephanie slides her hands under George's shirt. George freezes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Stephanie?

Stephanie grabs George's hand and puts it around her back. She guides it to her bra and unhooks it.

As George backs away, she lowers her straps one at a time. The bra falls to the floor.

George backs into the wall. Stephanie puts her hand around George's neck. She slides her other hand up his shirt, lifts it over his chest.

George stands frozen.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I can't do this. You're drunk.

Stephanie squeezes tighter around George's neck, then releases as she lowers to her knees.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Don't touch me. Don't touch me.

George hyperventilates. His eyes dart around the room.

She stops, looks at him, smiles seductively. She tugs at George's pants.

STEPHANIE

This is what you want. It's okay.

George pushes her away. She falls backwards onto the floor.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Why did you do that?

Stephanie grabs a shirt off the floor and covers herself. George watches her, unsure how to proceed.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'm not crazy. You want me, right?

GEORGE

I do.

Stephanie curls into bed. She pulls the sheets over her.

STEPHANIE

Get out.

Upset, George finishes sorting the clothing quietly.

He sees the trenchcoat and red heels in the corner of the room.

George picks them up. The trenchcoat is wet. George wipes his hands on his pants, then he folds it, something falls to the ground.

He bends down and picks it up. It's a drenched matchbook from Moonlitter.

He shoves the matchbook into his pocket, then leaves the room.

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

George sits on a car hood. He stares up at a bedroom window.

The bedroom light shines. Stephanie's shadow paces across the blinds.

George pulls out his cell phone. He texts I'M SORRY. STILL OUTSIDE. ARE YOU OKAY? To Stephanie.

Behind him, the Shadowy Soldier sneaks behind his car.

Stephanie stops pacing. She opens her blinds and looks out the window.

As George waves up to her, Stephanie closes the blinds. Her bedroom light turns off.

BZZ. BZZ. George opens his phone. GO AWAY. From Stephanie.

George slides off the hood of his car and pulls out his keys.

As he unlocks his car, ZAP! ZAP! Tazer wires strike George on the neck. George collapses.

As he turns over, a military boot kicks him in the face, then in the stomach. A gloved hand punches him in the face repeatedly.

George feebly protects himself. Blood pours down his face.

The Shadowy Soldier runs off quickly. As George loses consciousness, he sees another SHADOW over him. Condensation forms at George's mouth. The Shadow rushes into him.

DARKNESS.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

George faces a white marble monument in a sea of matchbooks and burnt-out matches collecting at his feet. Condensation leaks out of George's mouth. His face bruised, cut and dirty.

In his hand, George has a Moonlitter matchbook. He rips out a match and strikes the monument.

The flame flickers then dies out. He drops the match.

He strikes another match on the same place in the monument. The match flames and dies. George drops both the matchbook and match.

WHAM! His body slams into the monument. He falls to the ground.

A shadow races away from him across the monument. George picks himself off the ground and looks around him.

He sniffs the air and rubs a wound. He smells his fingers.

GEORGE

Booze.

George kicks at the matches and matchbooks. He picks up a matchbook and sees it's from Moonlitter.

He digs in his pockets and pulls out a crossword puzzle wrapped around a mini flashlight.

George flashes the light on the monument. Underlined in a black line from where the matches struck is the name CHADWICK HAWTHORNE III. He touches the line and rips his hand away from it, blowing on his finger tip.

As he investigates the monument further, he sees no other black line. The light comes across a plaque that reads DEDICATED TO OUR FALLEN CHILDREN IN VIETNAM.

George pulls out a notepad. He scribbles CHADWICK with HAWTHORNE built down from the H in CHADWICK. He writes VIETNAM across the paper using the E in HAWTHORNE.

He slides the notepad into his pocket and picks up a Moonlitter matchbook from the ground.

EXT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

George looks through the window into the dark, empty bar.

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! He pounds on the glass as he checks inside. WHAM! WHAM! The window vibrates from the force of his fists.

A light flashes on. Yulee rushes to the door in her pajamas. She sees George and stops.

George waves at her frantically.

George tries the doorknob. TAP! TAP! He waits at the window.

Yulee marches to the door and opens it.

YULEE  
Bar's closed.

GEORGE  
I need to talk to you.

Yulee slams the door. WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! George pounds on the window.

The door opens and George marches into the bar.

INT. GRETТА'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Gretta lies in bed. She stares at the empty rocking chair in the corner of the room.

FOOTSTEPS approach the open door.

THOMAS (O.S.)  
Time for your medicine.

Gretta shakes her head and points at the rocking chair. She can barely keep her hand raised.

CREAK! CREAK! The empty rocking chair moves back and forth.

SLAM! The door shuts.

The doorknob twists and KNOCKS ring through the room.

THOMAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Let me in! Now! Who's in there?  
I'll call the cops.

Gretta stares at the rocking chair and smiles warmly.

GRETТА  
Thank you.

The KNOCKS stop as the CREAKS stop.

THOMAS (O.S.)  
Fine. You'll get it in the morning.

FOOTSTEPS march away from the door and cease.

Gretta closes her eyes and falls asleep.

INT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

Yulee keeps her distance from George.



YULEE

I told you not to come back.

GEORGE

What are you talking about?

Yulee pulls a gun tucked in the back of her pajamas. She aims it at George. George backs away and raises his hands.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I'm not here to hurt you.

YULEE

I told you I'd shoot you if you came back.

GEORGE

Why do you want to shoot me?

Yulee cocks the hammer.

YULEE

After what you did...

GEORGE

I had drinks with a friend. That's all. I'm sorry I suggested your bar was crappy.

YULEE

That's not what happened when you came back.

George slowly pulls out a matchbook from his pocket and shows it to her.

GEORGE

Did I come back and get these?

YULEE

You could say that.

GEORGE

I don't remember coming back. Look. If I did anything stupid, I'm sorry.

Yulee takes a step closer to George.

YULEE

Leave.

George looks around the room nervously. He spots a surveillance camera in the corner of the room.

GEORGE  
I honestly don't remember anything.  
You have a surveillance camera. Can  
I see what I did? I'll pay you.

Yulee lowers the gun.

YULEE  
You really don't remember.

George pulls out his wallet. He takes out a wad of cash and hands it to her.

GEORGE  
I just want to watch the tape. I  
got assaulted, then I blacked out.

Yulee counts the money.

YULEE  
It's a start.

Yulee waves George around her with the gun.

INT. BACKROOM -- NIGHT

George sits on a stool in front of a small television. On the stool behind him, Yulee aims the gun into his back.

ON THE SCREEN, George, bloody and demonic-looking, rushes into the bar. Yulee smiles at him, then grabs a rag and offers it to him.

YULEE (V.O.)  
I remembered you. I was being nice.  
Even though you were bleeding over  
everything.

George grabs a fishbowl of matchbooks and empties the matchbooks into his pockets. Yulee snatches at the bowl.

YULEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Two per customer. That's a rule.  
Any more than that is bad for business.

George rips the bowl away, empties it and tosses it against the wall. It shatters.

YULEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You think they give those out for  
free.

Yulee slaps at George. He grabs her hand and shoves her back into the bar.

YULEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Still bruised.

George reaches over the bar and grabs a bottle of whiskey. He pours the whiskey over his wounds, then he drops the bottle onto the ground. It shatters.

YULEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Again. Bad for business.

George storms out of the bar as Yulee waves a gun at him and shouts.

IN THE BACKROOM, George turns around and looks at Yulee. She points the gun into his stomach.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Jog your memory. A very bad night  
for business.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry. I'll bring more money  
next time. If you'll...

YULEE  
Shit, man. You don't remember.

Yulee lowers the gun and slides it back into her pants.

GEORGE  
One more favor?

YULEE  
Now, I'm doing you favors.

GEORGE  
Can I see the tape of the night  
before?

Yulee slides off her stool and turns off the television.

YULEE  
I recycle the same tape every night.  
Unless I get robbed or something.

GEORGE  
Did my friend really come here?

YULEE  
I'm not one for baby mama drama.

GEORGE  
No. Not like that at all.

YULEE  
Is she your girlfriend?

GEORGE  
No.

YULEE  
Yeah. I remember people fairly well.  
Especially ones that act like fools.

George stands up and heads toward the doors.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry to wake you and for the  
shit I did. You've been a great  
help. Thanks.

Yulee grabs his arm.

YULEE  
Are you okay?

GEORGE  
That's a complicated question.

YULEE  
If you want, maybe we could get coffee  
some time. You could make it up to  
me for calling my bar crappy.

GEORGE  
I guess. Are you going to bring the  
gun?

YULEE  
Maybe. Maybe not.

George walks out of the room. Yulee stacks the stools against  
the wall. She opens a desk drawer and pulls out an envelope  
full of money. She puts George's money in it.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

Blue and red lights reflect off the waters of a lake. Smoke  
wafts into the sky from a smoldering park bench. In the  
distance, the monument can be seen.

POLICE OFFICERS and FIREFIGHTERS roam the little taped off  
area around the bench.

Det. Horn crosses the tape followed by Det. Chance.

DET. HORN  
Guys, can we clear the area for a  
second?

DET. CHANCE  
You finally let a profiler get in  
the scene of a crime.

DET. HORN  
You're not one yet.

The officers and firefighters step outside of the tape.  
Det. Chance stares at the bench. The bench is solid black,  
except for a ragged outline of a body, within it the bench  
unburned.

Det. Horn watches Det. Chance investigate. Det. Chance puts  
on a pair of gloves and wipes the bench with his finger.

DET. CHANCE  
No gasoline around the circumference  
of the body. It was applied on the  
actual victim. Just like the others.  
Any gun shot wounds?

DET. HORN  
I owe you ten dollars.

Det. Chance smiles.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
Eye witness this time. Got a sketch  
of a kid defacing the Vietnam  
monument. The kid had a ton of  
matches.

DET. CHANCE  
Didn't see the fire on the bench  
though?

DET. HORN  
No. The guy was homeless and very  
scared.

DET. CHANCE  
Think you can trust the sketch.

DET. HORN  
Best lead we've had so far.

Det. Horn circles the bench and notices something under a  
half-burnt leaf. He bends down and picks it up. It's a  
Moonlitter matchbook.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
You got to study the scene. Can you  
tell me anything about the perp now?

DET. CHANCE  
Sadistic. Control freak. Extremely  
intelligent with a perceived anger  
toward the helpless.

DET. HORN  
What would be the likelihood of a  
connection between the victim and  
murderer? Like dealer/junkie maybe?

Det. Chance takes off his gloves.

DET. CHANCE  
I would say we're in pursuit of a  
pathological killer. It's a game to  
him. Not personal.

Det. Horn nods and picks up a crossword puzzle from beside a  
trashcan. On it, THORNED with TRUTH connected by the R. He  
slips it into an evidence bag.

BZZ! BZZ! Det. Horn picks up his cell phone. The text  
message from Chinese Food reads I WANT YOU NOW!

INT. MOONLITTER BAR -- DAY

Det. Horn waits at the bar. He holds an evidence bag with  
the Moonlitter matchbook in it.

Yulee enters with a box full of beer. She spots Det. Horn.

YULEE  
We won't be open for another hour.

Yulee slides the box behind the bar and opens it. She stocks  
the cooler.

DET. HORN  
I'm here to ask you some questions.

YULEE  
Questions about what?

Det. Horn flashes his badge.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Those kind of questions.

Yulee stops stocking the cooler and stands.

Det. Horn lifts the evidence bag.

DET. HORN  
Do these look familiar?

Yulee smirks and slides a glued-together fishbowl full of them.

YULEE

I've seen one or two around here.

DET. HORN

Have you seen anybody odd around here lately?

Yulee grabs a rag and wipes down the bar.

YULEE

You mean, weird among the drunks almost paying my bills every night. No. Nobody sticks out as odd.

Det. Horn holds the police sketch of George in front of Yulee. Yulee drops her rag on the bar.

DET. HORN

Have you seen this person?

Yulee examines the sketch closely.

YULEE

Looks familiar, I guess. Actually, looks like every other kid that comes through here.

DET. HORN

So, you have seen him?

YULEE

Don't think I have actually. Got a name? I'm better with names than faces.

Det. Horn closes the file and returns it to his briefcase.

DET. HORN

No name.

Yulee nods and grabs her rag. Det. Horn pulls out a business card. He leaves it on the bar.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)

If you see anything odd or this guy comes in, call me.

YULEE

Sure thing.

Det. Horn gathers his things and leaves. Yulee grabs the card and slides it into her pocket.

She exhales slowly and tosses the rag in the sink.

EXT. LIBRARY / COLLEGE CAMPUS -- DAY

George sits on the steps of the library. He flips the matchbook around in his hand.

George has a paper with a grade of D minus in red. He lights a match and holds the paper close to it. He blows out the match.

STUDENTS walk across campus. Among them, Stephanie appears. She heads straight for George.

George slides the matchbook in his pocket and stands. Stephanie flashes a smile at him.

STEPHANIE

Sit down.

George sits. Stephanie joins him.

GEORGE

What are you doing here?

STEPHANIE

Took the day off. Wanted to talk to you.

GEORGE

About last night?

Stephanie reaches into George's pocket where he slid the matchbook. She pulls out a crossword puzzle from his pocket.

STEPHANIE

Why don't you want me? Blank and switch. Four letters. Starts with B.

GEORGE

Bait. I do want you. There's something you don't know about me.

STEPHANIE

There are a lot of things I don't know about you.

GEORGE

You were drunk. I didn't want to take advantage of you.

Stephanie pencils in a solution.



STEPHANIE

If I tell you something, you promise  
not to laugh.

GEORGE

You can tell me anything.

STEPHANIE

Pretended. Five letters. Using the  
A in bait.

GEORGE

Acted.

Stephanie pencils it in.

STEPHANIE

I'm afraid of baths. My mom left me  
in the tub when I was young, and I  
nearly drowned.

George's face drops.

GEORGE

I would be too.

STEPHANIE

Sometimes, I do things I don't want  
to do, but I have to do them. Trying  
to be with you was one of those  
things.

Stephanie hands George the puzzle. He pencils in a few  
solutions.

GEORGE

What does this have to do with baths?

STEPHANIE

If I have to take a bath, I do.  
Even if I'm afraid of it. You're  
afraid of me. I know it.

GEORGE

I see.

George passes her the puzzle.

STEPHANIE

I think we should go our separate  
ways for some time.

GEORGE

If this is about the gun, I had no  
idea what I was doing?

STEPHANIE  
Gun? What are you talking about?

GEORGE  
A few nights ago. I broke into your  
apartment and forced you under bath  
water. I had a gun in my hand. I  
don't know how it happened.

Stephanie shoots him a confused look.

STEPHANIE  
What?

GEORGE  
I'll be doing one thing. Blackout.  
And come to in a strange place doing  
something that makes no sense.

STEPHANIE  
George, are you sure you weren't  
dreaming?

George considers.

GEORGE  
I'm sure.

STEPHANIE  
If you pointed a gun at me, I would  
remember. I think I should go.  
Stay your distance.

She tosses the puzzle on the ground beside him.

GEORGE  
You don't mean that.

STEPHANIE  
You didn't test the waters.

Stephanie stands up and scurries away across campus. George  
watches her.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Framed crossword puzzles stack on the floor. The wall facing  
the couch is empty.

George sits on the floor in front of a white posterboard.  
He takes off the top of a marker and writes INVESTIGATION  
across the board and NO FUCK UPS! Crossing down using a N  
in INVESTIGATION. He writes STEPH? With GEORGE connected  
by the E.

George tapes this poster in the middle of the wall and returns to the floor.

Behind him, a SHADOW lingers on the wall. It seems to watch and wait. The air chills. Frost forms on the picture frames.

George takes out his notepad and flips to a page in it. He transcribes CHADWICK with HAWTHORNE built down from the H in CHADWICK. He writes VIETNAM across the board using the E in HAWTHORNE.

The shadow closes in on him.

George pauses, pulls a blanket around him and stares at the frost on the picture frames. The shadow races across the wall.

George writes DECEASED across the board using the N in HAWTHORNE.

As he writes the last D, the shadow rushes into his body. George jolts and twists as condensation pours from his mouth. The marker flies across the room as he claws at the floor.

DARKNESS.

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

DARKNESS slowly fades. George sits in the dark against a wall with a trunk full of military uniforms. Some folded inside, and some strewn over the floor.

George takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

GEORGE

Not here. Not here.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his mini flashlight, turns it on and surveys the room.

In the corner of the room, an antique bed, end table and dresser set up like a bedroom. All of the furniture is caked with dust.

George flashes the light on the uniforms next to him. He reads HAWTHORNE on the pocket.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Hawthorne again.

He pulls out his notepad and writes BASEMENT and HAWTHORNE crossed down at the A.

From the base of the steps, the Shadowy Soldier watches George.

George grabs a shirt and stands up. He stops.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Who's here?

The Shadowy Soldier charges toward George and tackles him. The flashlight flies out of George's hand. The room darkens.

They struggle and fight on the floor. The Shadowy Soldier pins George to the floor. He chokes George.

George punches the Soldier, who falls backwards.

As George climbs to his feet, the Soldier kicks him in the leg. George falls on his stomach and grabs the flashlight.

As he spins with the light, the Soldier's gone. George searches the room as he walks toward the steps.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

George searches the room with the flashlight. All of the appliances scream of a forgotten time with their vintage look. He sees a door beside the fridge.

Flies hover around the sink full of dirty dishes. Maggots crawl out of the trashcan.

George studies the counter as he approaches the door. He sees a pill bottle on it. As he picks it up and turns it to read the label, BANG! A bullet flies by his head and hits the fridge.

He drops the bottle and races out the door.

EXT. MOONLITTER BAR -- DAY

George waits outside the door. He holds two styrofoam cups of coffee. One has GEORGE'S with DRINK built down from the R in GEORGE.

Yulee steps out with a trashbag. She looks over at George.

YULEE

What are you doing here?

George hands her a coffee.

YULEE (CONT'D)

About time.

Yulee grabs the trashbag and walks down the sidewalk. George follows.

GEORGE  
I've been busy.

YULEE  
Any more wild nights?

GEORGE  
A few.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE SIDEWALK, Det. Horn marches toward them. He studies his notepad.

Yulee spots him headed toward them. She drops her trashbag and coffee, grabs George and pulls him into an...

ALLEY

Yulee grabs George and pushes him against a building. George shoots a questioning glance. Yulee looks behind her, then kisses him, covering their faces with her hand.

ON THE SIDEWALK, Det. Horn passes them. He steps over the trashbag.

IN THE ALLEY, George spills his coffee on him as he pushes Yulee away.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Why did you do that?

Yulee stares at him.

YULEE  
You had a bug on your lip? Didn't want to slap you.

Yulee rushes deeper into the alley. George behind her.

GEORGE  
What about the trash?

YULEE  
It'll be fine.

George stops.

GEORGE  
Did you just kiss me?

YULEE  
It's a date, isn't it?

George catches up.

EXT. PARK -- DAY

George and Yulee walk through a park with a big lake and trees. They have new styrofoam cups of coffee.

YULEE

Beautiful place. Been here before?

GEORGE

No. Maybe.

George spots the Vietnam monument in the distance.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Not during the day.

Yulee bends down and picks up a plastic bag from the ground. She balloons the bag and POPS it.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Why'd you do that?

YULEE

Nervous habit. Well, not that I'm nervous or anything. So, habit.

GEORGE

I don't have another bug on my lips, do I?

YULEE

I guess you didn't enjoy that.

Yulee winces and sips her coffee. George and Yulee walk up a bridge over the lake. They stop and stare at the water.

GEORGE

Just surprised me.

YULEE

Shouldn't be that surprised.

GEORGE

Hypothetically theoretical, do you think a ghost can take over somebody's body and make that person do things?

YULEE

Hypothetically theoretical, what kind of shit is that?

George walks away. Yulee grabs him by the arm. He stays.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Honestly, I don't know.

GEORGE

I'm creepy.

Yulee nods.

YULEE

Do you think that's what's happening to you?

GEORGE

It was hypothetically theoretical.

YULEE

What makes you think it's a ghost?

GEORGE

Whenever it happens, it just feels like something more powerful than me takes over. It's like my soul's pushed to the side.

YULEE

Where does it go?

GEORGE

Hell, probably.

YULEE

There's no way to prove it, is there?

They walk toward the other side of the bridge.

GEORGE

Guess not. Well, the video.

YULEE

Video?

George sips his coffee.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Yulee roams the space, taking in the atmosphere. She's drawn to the posterboards on the wall.

YULEE

What's with the writing?

GEORGE

Helps me make connections by seeing them. I'm a little weird, I guess.

YULEE

You guess?

Yulee reads the posters.

YULEE (CONT'D)

You've opened an investigation?

GEORGE

I have to figure out what's happening to me.

She laughs when she reads NO FUCK UPS.

YULEE

Are you going to fuck up?

GEORGE

I always seem to.

YULEE

You seem smart to me.

Yulee notices a stack of research papers on the coffee table. The top one has an F circled in red.

YULEE (CONT'D)

At least I think.

GEORGE

My professor says I stretch for theories that are interesting but not really supported by the evidence.

YULEE

Like a ghost possession?

GEORGE

I guess that would count.

She makes her way to the stacks of newspapers and stares at them.

YULEE

You must be an expert on current events.

George glances up from the computer.

GEORGE

What?

Yulee bends down and opens a newspaper. She unfolds it and flips through it. George glances at her, then back at the computer screen.

YULEE

All these newspapers.



GEORGE  
No. Don't read them.

Yulee turns the page and sticks her hand through a hole in the paper.

YULEE  
So, you cut out articles and don't read them. Are you holding somebody hostage and mailing ransom notes?

GEORGE  
Does that turn you on?

YULEE  
Sort of.

Yulee folds the paper and tosses it on the stack.

GEORGE  
Then, it won't be as sexy when you find out I this is where I get my Armageddon stash of crosswords.

YULEE  
I've seen you do a few crosswords here and there. Expecting the end of the world soon?

GEORGE  
Just in case.

George spins the computer to her. Yulee sits close to him.

ON THE SCREEN, George cleans the picture frames on the wall. The SHADOW races into George. FREEZE FRAME.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
From a few nights ago.

The picture reverses frame by frame. The shadow creeps out of George's body. FAST FORWARD. The shadow races into George, forcing him to slam into the wall and crumple to the ground.

YULEE (V.O.)  
Did that hurt?

After the picture frames fall on top of him, George rises and rushes out of the living room. Condensation pouring out of his mouth as he moves.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Didn't feel a thing. I woke up somewhere else with a gun in my hand.

The screen goes black, then an old black & white picture of a MAN IN UNIFORM with eyes burnt out flashes on it.

YULEE

Is that a screensaver or something?

George and Yulee stare at it.

GEORGE

I've never seen it before in my life.

The picture flashes, distorts and disappears. The screen goes black.

YULEE

What's going on?

GEORGE

I'll just close it now.

George closes the laptop. Yulee searches his living room.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

YULEE

Where do you keep it?

GEORGE

Keep what?

Yulee opens a drawer in the end table. She pauses and pulls something out.

YULEE

Found it.

GEORGE

Found what?

A phone book lands on the seat next to him. George looks at it.

YULEE

Seek professional help.

GEORGE

You think I'm crazy.

YULEE

I think you're right. As crazy as that sounds.

George smiles at Yulee and flips through the pages.

INT. SPIRITUALIST OFFICE -- DAY

Old photographs cover the walls. Most in black and white. All of them have distorted faces or spirits lingering in the frame.

A large desk sits in the middle of the room. Very little light and no windows. A space heater sits propped on a stool in the corner.

At the desk, GRACE KENT, middle-aged in dark clothing, sits. George takes in the room as he sits across from her.

GEORGE

Thanks for seeing me.

Grace sits as she smiles. George takes out his notepad. He writes SPIRITUALIST at the top of the page.

GRACE

Tell me about your friend.

GEORGE

Well, this might sound crazy, but I think he's possessed.

GRACE

I don't do demons. Call a priest.

George jots PRIEST? Off the P in spiritualist.

GEORGE

By a spirit. A ghost.

Grace leans forward.

GRACE

A ghost? A spirit possession?

George writes SPRIT POSSESSION? Off the S in PRIEST?.

GEORGE

Does that even exist?

Grace laughs.

GRACE

Don't question your instincts.

GEORGE

Well, does it?

GRACE

More than you know.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Energy is all around us, and a lot  
of that energy comes from the other  
world.

As George listens, he writes ENERGY off of the E in  
POSSESSION.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Spirits that are confused, angry, or  
want something can infuse their energy  
with ours.

GEORGE  
Infuse?

He uses the I in POSSESSION to write INFUSE.

GRACE  
How many people walk down the street  
with a sour look on their faces?  
Are they unhappy or is something  
inside them unhappy?

George closes his notepad. He stirs in his seat. The air  
in the room chills. The space heater ices over. Grace wraps  
a sweater around her.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
This is not just about your friend.

Frost covers the pictures on the wall. George looks around  
frightened. He stands up.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Sit down. Nothing to fear.

A couple of pictures fall off the wall. George panics.

GEORGE  
Not again.

GRACE  
He's right behind you.

GEORGE  
Who?

George turns and sees nothing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Nobody is there.

GRACE  
He's not angry with you.

The lights in the room flicker. A light bulb POPS and explodes.

GEORGE  
Ask him what he wants.

GRACE  
My conversations with spirits are usually one-sided.

GEORGE  
Then tell him to leave me alone.

GRACE  
Not every spirit has malicious intent.

The air warms. The frames return to normal. Grace takes off her sweater. Water drips down the heater.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
He was making sure you were okay.

GEORGE  
Can you help me?

GRACE  
All you need to know is don't fear the soldier.

GEORGE  
What soldier?

GRACE  
The real soldier.

Grace smiles and leans back in her chair.

INT. GRETТА'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A pair of reading glasses lies on the nightstand. Gretta sleeps peacefully as the moon beams night over her frail body.

A hand reaches out and grabs the eye glasses. It drops them on the floor and a military boot crushes them into the floor.

Gretta wakes up and looks around the room. She sees the blurry outline of a SOLDIER in fatigues. Gretta grabs for her glasses on the nightstand.

GRETТА  
Who's there?

Gretta gives up her search for her glasses. She pulls the covers to her neck.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Please, leave me alone.

The Blurry Soldier grabs her right arm and stretches it out. He pins the arm to the bed.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Leave me alone! What are you doing?

Gretta fights the grip. The Blurry Soldier sticks a needle into her vein and injects her.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Help! Help! Thomas! Help!

The hand clasps over Gretta's mouth. Gretta cries as she looks wildly around the dark, unfocused room.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Det. Horn sits at his desk with a tape recorder in hand. He presses record and puts it on the desk.

Yulee sits across the desk from him.

YULEE  
Is that necessary?

DET. HORN  
I have a bad memory.

YULEE  
Maybe you shouldn't be a detective.

Det. Horn smiles. He reaches into his desk and offers Yulee a piece of gum.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
I don't have all night.

Det. Horn tosses the puzzles in front of Yulee. She stares at them.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
You brought me here for crossword puzzles?

DET. HORN  
Anyone you know like them?

YULEE  
My grandmother. You think she's a criminal? Me too. Very sketchy. Cheats at bingo.

DET. HORN

This isn't some joke. People are being killed and leaving behind your matchbooks at the scene. I don't have time for jokes.

Yulee stirs in her chair.

YULEE

This is a homicide investigation?

DET. HORN

Do you know anybody with an unhealthy obsession with fire or with crossword puzzles or both?

Yulee studies the crossword puzzles.

YULEE

These make no sense.

DET. HORN

Answer the question.

Yulee considers. She picks up the recorder and lifts it to her mouth.

YULEE

I don't know anybody like that. Nor have I seen anybody like that.

Det. Horn collects the puzzles.

INT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

Yulee dries a few glasses with a towel behind the bar. She looks distant.

At the bar, Stephanie, in trench and heels, stands with money in her hand.

STEPHANIE

Hey, tits, can you get me something to drink?

Yulee glares at her as she finishes drying the glass.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You need all the business you can get.

George walks in and spots Stephanie. He marches to her.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Are you retarded or something?

George joins Stephanie at the bar. He taps her on her shoulder.

GEORGE

Steph.

She ignores him. George taps again. Yulee watches with disbelief.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Steph.

Stephanie turns around.

STEPHANIE

Got the wrong chick. Though I could be the one you're looking for. For the right money.

Stephanie slides her hands in George's pocket. He steps back.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You kind of look like a kicked puppy. I should call you Fido.

Stephanie musses George's hair and scratches behind his ear.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Good boy, Fido.

He breaks away from the embrace, then slides onto a nearby stool.

Yulee makes two drinks and hands them to Stephanie. She drops one in George's lap. He stands and wipes.

YULEE

If you can't behave, you'll have to leave.

STEPHANIE

Only if you join us.

Stephanie reaches for George's wet spot several times.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Why don't you do something, Fido?

She slides the money to Yulee and walks off with the remaining drink.

George watches her slide in the booth and hand a drink to Thomas, who wears a military-issued hat.



She climbs on Thomas's lap, straddles him. As they make out, Stephanie glances at George at the bar.

George hands money to Yulee. She hands it back.

GEORGE  
Comp drinks aren't good for business.

Yulee smirks.

YULEE  
I charged them double.

GEORGE  
Maybe that's why we're the only ones here.

George glances back at Stephanie and Thomas getting it on in the booth.

Yulee grabs George's arm as he stands up to leave.

YULEE  
Don't let her get to you.

GEORGE  
I don't even know who that is.

George walks away.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Empty cardboard boxes stack against an overflowing dumpster. Several shopping carts with trash bags in them rest at the corner of the dumpsters.

George stands beside the dumpster, hidden by the darkness. As he waits, he pulls out a crossword puzzle and his miniature flashlight.

George clicks on the flashlight and reads the crossword puzzle. It's 44 Across "Look to the end. Two words."

GEORGE  
12 letters.

A SHADOWY FIGURE looms in the back of the alley with a steel pipe in hand. He steps in a puddle, making a small SPLASH sound.

George surveys the area with his small flashlight. Nothing. He takes a deep breath and watches people walk down the sidewalk between glances down at crossword puzzle.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Respice. Respice what?

The Shadowy Figure approaches.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Finem.

George looks at the puzzle. He pencils in the answer.

SMACK! He falls face first onto the ground. The flashlight rolls out of George's hand toward the sidewalk.

Liquid splashes against George's body as the Shadowy Figure dumps it from a gas can.

As George lies on the ground, he breathes condensation into the air.

George sees a pair of military boots splash away.

DARKNESS.

INT. DERELICT TOY FACTORY -- NIGHT

George holds a gun as he stands in the middle of the factory. Dried blood clings to his hair and face. Gasoline drips off his body.

WHOOSH! A shadow rushes out of him as George keels over in pain.

George looks around at the busted out windows, trash can fire pits, a dusty assembly line and several doll parts stacked in the corner of the room.

Several matchbooks and an empty gas can sit next to him. Black ash cloaks the wall closest to him.

George steps away from the wall, confused.

CREAK! George turns and sees a shadow in the darkness. He raises the gun.

GEORGE  
Leave me alone.

FOOTSTEPS approach. George cocks the hammer.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I'll shoot. Stay where you are.

George wraps his finger around the trigger. The gun shakes in his hand.

He eyes the shadow. Yulee steps out of the darkness with her hands raised in the air.

YULEE

It's me.

George lowers the gun.

GEORGE

Why didn't you say anything?

YULEE

Wasn't sure it was you.

Yulee examines George's wounds. She wipes her finger on his shirt and smells the gasoline on them.

YULEE (CONT'D)

What happened?

GEORGE

Got jumped in the alley. What are you doing here?

YULEE

I saw you pass by the bar bleeding. I had to follow you.

Yulee takes the gun from George.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

GEORGE

Don't know.

YULEE

Ever fired it?

She aims the gun at the pile of dismembered doll parts.

GEORGE

Not to my knowledge.

BANG! The shot splits open a doll's head on the floor. Yulee aims again. George stops her.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We might not be alone.

Yulee searches the factory.

YULEE

Relax.

VROOM! VROOM! The assembly line cranks up. George and Yulee step back. She aims the gun at the line.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
What the fuck?

George grabs Yulee's arm.

GEORGE  
Let's get the fuck out of here.

A lump covered in tarp rolls down the line toward George and Yulee. She points at it with the gun.

The assembly line switches off. George approaches the bundle slowly. Yulee follows with gun.

YULEE  
Maybe you shouldn't look at that.

George reaches out to grab the tarp.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Wait!

George's hand snaps back.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Fingerprints.

He pulls out a crossword puzzle and grabs the corner of the tarp with it.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Are you sure you want to do this?

George rips the tarp off. A BURNT CORPSE stares back at them.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Holy shit.

Yulee steps closer and swings the gun around the factory as George backs away and vomits on the floor.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
I think we should leave now.

George stares at the corpse and covers it with the tarp.

GEORGE  
Did I do this?

YULEE  
You didn't do it.

Yulee aims the gun at George's temple. George freezes.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
I'll tell you this once. Are you  
listening?

George nods.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
You're not capable of this. It's  
not in your nature.

GEORGE  
If I'm not in control, my nature  
isn't the issue.

YULEE  
You did nothing wrong. I don't trust  
people, but I trust you.

Yulee lowers the gun. She hands it to George.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
Let's get you patched up.

George and Yulee rush to the exit.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

George in bandages stands in the middle of the room.

On the couch, Grace sits with a coconut in her lap. She  
lights a stick of incense and blows it out.

GEORGE  
Nothing's happening.

GRACE  
We have to be patient. Focus on  
something that you care about deeply.

GEORGE  
Why?

GRACE  
Spirits respond to intense emotions.

George paces.

GEORGE  
I can't do this. I don't want to be  
possessed.

GRACE

Did something happen to you when you were younger? Something traumatic.

GEORGE

Fell off a bike once or twice.

GRACE

It takes a certain type of person to host a spirit.

GEORGE

I don't want to host a spirit.

GRACE

Relax. Think about someone you care about. If I can experience you in the other state, I can help you.

George looks at Grace.

GEORGE

Hand me a crossword puzzle.

Grace finds one on the coffee table. George grabs it and a pencil.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Why do spirits possess people?

George pencils in solutions.

GRACE

They need help. Do they have powers outside a human body? Yes. But they're strongest when they have a host and his abilities. They're abilities enhance as well.

GEORGE

What if he's using me to do horrible things?

GRACE

He's not a malicious spirit. He's a protective one.

George finishes the crossword puzzle and tosses it on the floor.

Cold air circulates through the room. George's glasses frost over. He takes them off and waits.

GEORGE

He's here.

A SHADOW forms on the wall in front of George. He looks at the silhouette of a soldier.

GRACE  
Approach him.

George walks to the wall. He stops and comes face to face with the shadow. The Shadow reaches out of the wall towards George. George backs away from it.

The shadow races across the wall and through the room.

GEORGE  
What was that?

Grace stands with her coconut and incense. She walks toward the door.

GRACE  
He was seeing if you trusted him.

GEORGE  
I don't.

GRACE  
Then I can't help you.

Grace opens the door and walks out.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Det. Horn sits at his desk and stares out the window. He checks his phone for text messages. Nothing.

MAGGIE HORN, 30's worn-looking, but stunningly beautiful, knocks on the open door. Det. Horn excitedly looks over, then returns to staring out the window.

MAGGIE  
It's good to see you too. The kids  
are missing you.

Maggie grabs a chair and sits down. She notices the picture frame face down on the desk.

DET. HORN  
Did you tell them there's a bad guy  
on the loose?

MAGGIE  
Eventually, they'll be a little too  
old for their-daddy's-a-superhero  
excuse.

DET. HORN

It's my job.

MAGGIE

I can see you're really swamped right now.

Maggie picks up the picture frame and holds it. Det. Horn turns and looks at her.

DET. HORN

Leave my desk alone.

As Maggie flips over the frame, she sees the wedding picture's gone.

MAGGIE

Empty frame.

Det. Horn takes the frame and tosses it into the trash.

DET. HORN

I needed the space.

MAGGIE

Our wedding picture was taking up too much space?

DET. HORN

I shouldn't have had personal pictures here anyway. Anybody could see them and find you.

MAGGIE

It's just a picture. Not a map to your family.

DET. HORN

I needed the space.

BZZ! BZZ! Det. Horn picks up his cell phone and checks the message. There's a text from CHINESE FOOD that reads THREESOME? Maggie gathers her things and stands.

MAGGIE

By all means, free up some space.

Maggie walks out and slams the door. Det. Horn stares at the text message, then out the window.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

On the floor, three posterboards lie with words crossed off each other.



One board has a heading Possession 1, another Possession 2 and another Possession 3. George, with marker in hand, looks down at them.

He picks them up and grabs a roll of tape on the coffee table.

As he tapes, Yulee enters unnoticed and watches him. She has a handful of clipped newspaper articles in her hand.

George tapes the boards to the wall, which is running out of room for the posterboards. A mega-Scrabble wall has been built.

YULEE

How many people know you write like that?

George turns and drops his tape.

GEORGE

You scared me.

YULEE

Who knows?

GEORGE

Everybody who knows me.

George notices the handful of newspaper articles.

YULEE

I caught up on the news. Some whack job is setting homeless people on fire.

GEORGE

Like the guy we found.

YULEE

They keep finding cryptic messages written across crossword puzzles.

George grabs the articles and scans them.

GEORGE

All signs point to me.

YULEE

I've seen the puzzles. The cops look like your handwriting.

George sits on the couch.

GEORGE

How have you seen them?

YULEE

I've been interrogated twice. They are finding my matchbooks at the scene of the crime.

GEORGE

I'm a murderer.

YULEE

We've already been through this. You're not torching people.

GEORGE

Then who is?

Yulee joins him on the couch.

YULEE

Stephanie's acted strange. Acted possessed. She knows everything about you. What do you really know about her?

GEORGE

Stephanie? No way. She's my friend.

YULEE

For how long? Your entire life?

GEORGE

A little less than a year. She just moved here. We had a night class together last semester. Regardless of how strange she's acting, she's not a murderer.

YULEE

They have a sketch of you. I lied. I lied a lot to protect you.

George stands up and marches to the boards. He runs his finger across them.

GEORGE

I should turn myself in.

YULEE

You should investigate Stephanie. Find out what she does when she's not herself. You shouldn't go to jail for something you're not doing.

GEORGE

She's not doing it.

YULEE

Then, you can prove it, if you follow her.

George peels the corner of a posterboard off the wall.

GEORGE

She has been acting weird.

YULEE

Let's go. I'll go with you. They might be at the bar.

Yulee gathers her things.

INT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

Stephanie, in trench, and Thomas, wearing a military cap, make out in the corner booth.

At the bar, Yulee serves George a drink as he stares at the crossword.

GEORGE

Lukewarm. 5 letters.

YULEE

I have no idea.

Yulee grabs her purse and walks out from behind the bar. She sits next to George.

YULEE (CONT'D)

You going to follow them?

George turns back to look at the corner booth.

Thomas and Stephanie slide out of the booth. Thomas leads her by the hand.

They pass Yulee and George at the bar. George stands up.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Coming with.

Yulee follows George out of the bar.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Thomas and Stephanie disappear in the darkness of an alley.

George and Yulee stand at the entrance.

GEORGE

Stay here.

He takes a deep breath and follows them into the darkness.

Thomas and Stephanie dig behind a dumpster.

George seeks shelter in the darkness as he watches them. He backs against the wall of the building and trips on a garbage bag. His head slams against the wall.

Stephanie stops digging.

STEPHANIE

I think we have a stray wanting us  
to take him home. Fido? Where are  
you?

George grabs his head. Blood.

Thomas and Stephanie approach him. George looks at the entrance to the alley, then at them.

THOMAS

Buddy, mind your own damn business.

STEPHANIE

Oh, can we keep Fido, Daddy? I'll  
be sure to take real good care of  
him.

Stephanie grabs for George's package. George shakes his head and sprints away. Stephanie laughs.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I think that's his little tail between  
his legs.

Stephanie grabs a garbage bag and chucks it in George's direction.

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

George joins Yulee.

YULEE

What did you see?

Thomas and Stephanie emerge from the alley.

George grabs Yulee and pulls her behind the steps of a stoop.

GEORGE

Tepid.

YULEE

What?

George takes out the crossword puzzle and hands it to Yulee.

GEORGE

3 down.

Yulee jots in the solution.

Thomas carries a gas can as he and Stephanie march away from Yulee and George.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Gas can.

YULEE

Told you.

GEORGE

You can use gas for more than torching people.

YULEE

What? Are they gas fairies?

Yulee and George follow them down the street.

Thomas hands the gas can to Stephanie. They split up. Thomas heads down the street. Stephanie down another alley.

Yulee points George to the alley as she follows Thomas.

GEORGE

Be careful.

Yulee nods as she walks away.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Gretta wakes up in bed. She looks around the room.

GRETTA

Thomas? Are you here?

Gretta waits for a response. She hears nothing.

She flips the covers off her body and rolls to her side. She stops and looks at the floor.

Gretta braces herself and flings her body off the bed. THUD!

She scratches at the hardwood floor and she pulls herself toward the open door.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

A HOMELESS MAN sleeps under piles of newspapers. His cardboard box shelter seems close to collapse.

SPLASH! SPLASH! Stephanie sprinkles gasoline on the Homeless Man.

STEPHANIE

I know you're watching. Why don't you join me? The more the merrier.

At the end of the alley, George charges toward her.

GEORGE

Get out of here. Now.

The Homeless Man stirs but doesn't wake.

STEPHANIE

Maybe we can fuck later.

Stephanie takes a matchbook out of her coat pocket and lights a newspaper crossword puzzle.

George grabs Stephanie. They struggle. The newspaper falls onto the ground beside the hut.

George pats the fire down with his hand. The hut begins to burn.

The Homeless Man staggers to his feet. Stephanie trips him, grabs another match. Stands over him.

George pushes her off. The Homeless Man runs away. Stephanie turns and pulls a tazer out of her pocket.

George backs away. ZAP! The wires shoot out, hit George's neck. He falls to the ground.

Stephanie pours gas on George.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Asshole. You ruined it. I'll have to settle for putting Fido under.

George tries to crawl away. Stephanie stomps on his leg with her heels.

She lights a match and drops it on George. It doesn't ignite. Stephanie stomps on George's other leg. She does it again. As she continues to stomp, George writhes in pain.

Stephanie looks around and sees a newspaper in a nearby dumpster. She grabs it. Lights a match.

The paper shoots up in flames.

George writhes on the ground. Throws up his hands to protect him.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Too bad.

BANG! BANG! A bullet whizzes by Stephanie's head. She turns and sees Yulee running at her.

Stephanie throws the paper at the hut. It shoots up in flames.

BANG! Yulee misses again. Stephanie races away.

The fire inches closer to George. Yulee reaches him and drags him down the alley and into safety.

EXT. GRETTA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Gretta crawls across her lawn in her nightgown. She scratches at the grass as she inches closer to the road.

Cars fly by on the road. The headlights bother Gretta's eyes, but she fights to reach out to them.

A hand slaps her arm down.

Gretta looks up. She sees the silhouette of a SOLDIER in the moonlight.

GRETTA

Chadwick!

Thomas grabs Gretta by the hair and bends down. Gretta sees Thomas's face. She cries.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

No. Please, no.

Thomas drags her by the hair toward the house. Gretta limply kicks as her body drags against the lawn.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George lies on the couch. He's bloody and sticky with gasoline. Yulee stands over him. She grabs at his shirt. George grabs her hand.

GEORGE

Don't.

A bucket of water and a sponge sit on the coffee table.

YULEE

I need to get you cleaned up. You don't have to be modest.

She lifts the shirt over his head and lays it on the floor. She dips the sponge in the water and wrings out the excess water.

Yulee presses the sponge against his body. George grabs her arm.

GEORGE

I can't do this.

YULEE

Can't do what?

GEORGE

Let you touch me.

Yulee drops the sponge on his chest.

YULEE

Why not? Because I'm not Stephanie? You want me to go outside and torch some neighborhood children?

GEORGE

No. This isn't about her.

YULEE

Everything is about her. She's why you're in pain. She's why the cops are busting my balls.

GEORGE

She's not doing it. You've seen how she acts. It's like two different people.

Yulee grabs the sponge and wipes. George stops her.

YULEE

You think she's possessed too?

GEORGE

You said it, not me.

She pulls the sponge away and drops it in the bucket.

YULEE

How can you blackout and torch people?



GEORGE

How can I blackout and end up in a toy factory? Or the park? If you can believe me, then why not the possibility with her?

YULEE

Maybe I don't know what I believe.

Yulee grabs the sponge and tries again. George, still uncomfortable, lets her clean him.

GEORGE

This isn't the first time I've had blackouts.

YULEE

So?

GEORGE

When I was a kid, I had one long one.

YULEE

How long?

Yulee cleans out the sponge and resumes cleaning.

GEORGE

Two years.

YULEE

Bullshit. How can you blackout for two years?

George grabs the sponge.

GEORGE

I'll clean myself.

YULEE

Keep going. Sorry.

He gives her back the sponge.

GEORGE

One summer I had this babysitter named Jill. Watched me every day. The last day before school started, she asked me if I wanted to go to the beach. She couldn't keep me from that car.

George rolls on his side and curls up.

YULEE

Did you go to the beach?

GEORGE

We drove for days. When we stopped, I had to stay in the car. I pissed myself so many times. We ended up at this house in a neighborhood that looked like mine, but it wasn't.

Yulee stops cleaning him. She leaves the sponge on his side.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I remember seeing this bug-zapper torch thing on the porch. That's the last thing I remember. Two years later I came to in the backseat of a van. Some guy and my mom were in the front seat.

Yulee rests her hand on George's shoulder.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He grabbed this big book of crosswords and handed them to me. I finished the whole book by the time we got back.

YULEE

Who was the guy?

GEORGE

He was a private investigator that my parents hired to find me. He never stopped working to save me. Even after close to two years. Never stopped.

YULEE

That's when you became interested in criminal justice?

GEORGE

Yeah. I'd probably still be in that basement. My parents told me what happened when I got older. She did things sexually...

Yulee resumes cleaning him.

YULEE

I can fill in the blanks.

GEORGE

Crosswords always seemed to keep me calm. When I met Stephanie, it seemed natural to trust her. We shared the same obsession. Maybe I was wrong, but I have to save her.

Yulee takes the sponge and continues cleaning him.

YULEE

She's not in trouble. You need to go to the police. If I could without getting arrested, I would.

GEORGE

Let me try to figure her out. I need to at least attempt it. What do we know?

YULEE

Not a lot.

GEORGE

She's always wearing the trench. That's a sign. We just have to stop her from going out when she has that on.

YULEE

How are you going to stop her?

GEORGE

I know how. Please, just trust me.

Yulee considers.

YULEE

For every person that locks you in the basement, there's another handing you a book of crossword puzzles.

GEORGE

At least I know which one you are.

Yulee stops cleaning him.

YULEE

Let me get you a shirt.

She stands up and leaves the room. George pulls himself to a seated position.

He shivers as the room becomes extremely cold. The sponge freezes over. The shadow races across the wall.

WHOOSH! George stands up. Condensation flows from his mouth.

DARKNESS.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

DARKNESS fades. George, shirtless, sits in a rocking chair by a closed window with a gun in his lap.

As he stands, he sees a small lump under the covers in the over-sized bed.

The lump shifts. George raises the gun and steps closer.

GRETTA

I don't want you to see me like this.

FOOTSTEPS creak up the stairs outside the room.

GEORGE

Who are you?

SPLASH! George looks down at his shoe in a puddle of urine that trails to Gretta's bed. He smells the air around Gretta and gags.

GRETTA

He's coming.

The FOOTSTEPS get louder.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Just promise me. Promise me. You'll do what I say.

George surveys the room. The CREAKS become deafening.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Promise me. Please, promise.

GEORGE

I promise, I guess.

GRETTA

Go now.

The door knob turns slowly. Light pours into the room as the door swings open. George climbs out of the window.

Thomas stands in the doorway.

THOMAS

Who were you talking to?

The drapes dance in the wind from the open window. Gretta watches the rocking chair.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Det. Horn stares at a stack of papers on his desk. His cell phone on top of them.

BZZ. BZZ. Det. Horn opens his phone and stares at a message from CHINESE FOOD that reads LOOK UP.

In the doorway, Stephanie stands seductively in her trench and heels, holding her cell phone.

Det. Horn smiles.

DET. HORN  
Where have you been?

STEPHANIE  
Around.

Stephanie closes the door and locks it. She closes the blinds on the window facing the bullpen, then walks over to Det. Horn and sits on his lap.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You miss me?

She pulls his hair while she kisses him.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You miss me?

Stephanie pulls his hair so hard his head jerks back.

DET. HORN  
Every day.

Stephanie giggles and releases Det. Horn's hair. She glances over at the bulletin board.

STEPHANIE  
What's that?

DET. HORN  
Just work stuff.

She hops off his lap and stares at the crossword puzzles.

Det. Horn follows and wraps his arms around her, kissing her on the back of her neck. Stephanie falls into the embrace.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
You like that?

Det. Horn runs his hands around her body. Stephanie giggles.

STEPHANIE  
I've seen writing like that before.  
This guy always crosses his words  
when he writes. Obsessed with  
crosswords too.

Det. Horn stops.

DET. HORN  
Who is it?

Stephanie slides away and sits on the desk.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
I need his name. This is important.  
I need his name.

As Det. Horn approaches her, Stephanie kicks the chair at him.

STEPHANIE  
Fuck it out of me.

Stephanie unbuttons her trench coat.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
It starts with G.

Det. Horn grabs her and kisses her.

INT. BANK LOBBY -- DAY

Stephanie and Amanda sit at their stations. Thomas rolls Gretta to Stephanie's window.

Gretta has no color in her body, her eyes wild and her body unnaturally limp.

Thomas hands Stephanie a check from his pocket.

George stands in line with a deposit slip and a quarter. He watches the transaction between Thomas and Stephanie.

Stephanie shoves a large sum of money into an envelope. She hands it to Thomas. Gretta helplessly watches the envelope pass beside her.

GRETTA  
Help me.

Gretta emits a high-pitched unnatural SQUEAL. Everybody stares at her.

STEPHANIE

Are you okay?

Thomas shoves the envelope into his pocket. He kneels to Gretta.

THOMAS

Calm down. Calm down.

As Gretta squeals again, she rocks her wheelchair side to side. Thomas restrains her. She lunges at Thomas and bites his arm. He lets go.

Gretta rocks her chair over and falls to the ground. She squeals again.

George rushes to her on the ground. Stephanie and Amanda leave their stations and cross from behind the counter. They stare at her.

Gretta pulls George by the collar. She grabs at his face.

GRETТА

(whisper)

Help me!

Gretta clings to George's arm as she begins to cry.

GRETТА (CONT'D)

Son.

GEORGE

I'm not your son.

Thomas and Stephanie lift her chair back onto its wheels. Thomas grabs for Gretta. George stops him.

THOMAS

I have to get her to the hospital.

George backs off and helps Thomas lift her into her chair.

GRETТА

Don't do this to me. You promised to help me.

Thomas rolls her away from the line. Gretta turns her head and stares at George as she leaves.

George pulls out his notepad and scribbles GRETТА with HELP crossed at the E.

Stephanie stares at him.

STEPHANIE

What's going on, George?

George looks at her.

GEORGE

Just a deposit.

He hands her the quarter and deposit slip.

STEPHANIE

That's not what I'm talking about.

GEORGE

Just a deposit.

Stephanie throws the quarter at him. It falls to the floor.

George picks up the quarter and puts it on the counter. He walks away.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Stephanie walks through the lot in her trench and heels. She pulls her trench tighter around her body.

She passes two cars parked closely together. An arm reaches out and pulls her back in between the cars.

As she waves her arms, starts to scream...a hand covers her mouth.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Two pair of handcuffs dangle off the headboard of the bed. At the opposite end, restraints rest at the foot of the bed.

The light flicks on as George carries a kicking and struggling Stephanie to the bed.

STEPHANIE

You can't do this.

He lays her down and handcuffs one arm to the bed. She swings her free arm at George. George grabs it and attaches the other handcuff.

Stephanie stomps her feet and kicks wildly as George tightens the restraints around them.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Pervert.

George grabs the chair from the desk and pulls it beside Stephanie on the bed.



GEORGE  
We'll wait this one out.

Stephanie glances at George on the chair.

STEPHANIE  
Are you going to fuck me or not?

George pulls out a crossword puzzle and a pencil. He reads the clues.

GEORGE  
Chinese virtue BLANK piety. 6  
letters.

STEPHANIE  
Fuck your crosswords.

Stephanie rolls her eyes.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Could you at least take off my shoes?

George rolls the chair to Stephanie's feet and pulls off the heels.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You know we could.

GEORGE  
Could what?

STEPHANIE  
Oh come on, Fido. I'm everything  
you fantasize about.

George rolls away from the bed.

GEORGE  
I'm not interested.

STEPHANIE  
The way you follow her around like a  
neutered puppy. It's sick. You  
risk your life for her, and she  
doesn't give you anything in return.

Stephanie licks her lips and sighs.

GEORGE  
What are you?

STEPHANIE  
This is your one shot.

George tries to focus on the crossword.

GEORGE  
I'm not letting you go.

STEPHANIE  
I don't want that. I want you.

George folds the crossword puzzle and shoves it in his pockets. Stephanie watches and moans.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
I can tell you what I am.

Stephanie juts her chest out.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
If you kiss me. One little kiss,  
and you'll know all.

GEORGE  
Like I'm going to trust you.

STEPHANIE  
You're not going to know unless you  
try.

George sits on the bed and stares at her body. Stephanie  
twists to him.

GEORGE  
One kiss.

STEPHANIE  
I've known a lot of men. I can be  
gentle.

George spins and lowers down. He kisses Stephanie. The  
kiss becomes more intense.

As George climbs on top of Stephanie, he slides his hands  
under the trenchcoat.

Stephanie moves her head to the side and pulls away from  
George.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?

GEORGE  
Steph?

STEPHANIE  
Yeah. What are you doing?

GEORGE  
Testing the waters.

George kisses her. She pulls away.

STEPHANIE  
Why am I tied up? What are you doing here?

George rolls off Stephanie, sits at the edge of the bed.

GEORGE  
I'm helping you. You're in a lot of trouble.

STEPHANIE  
What kind of trouble?

GEORGE  
You don't remember, do you?

STEPHANIE  
Remember what?

GEORGE  
You're killing people while you're being possessed by a ghost.

Stephanie shoots a questioning look.

STEPHANIE  
Bullshit. Stop making shit up. Let me out of these things.

GEORGE  
I can't do that.

STEPHANIE  
George, you're crazy. You're having bad dreams that's all. If I mean anything to you, you'll trust me enough to untie me. You can't keep me tied up forever.

George considers, then unlocks her handcuffs and unties her feet.

GEORGE  
You're free to do what you want.

Stephanie pulls George into her as they kiss and embrace.

At the door, Yulee watches with two coffees in her hand. She puts them on the floor.

Stephanie glances over at her with a knowing look. Yulee leaves.

INT. / EXT. GEORGE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Yulee climbs in the backseat. She wipes her tears and covers herself in a blanket.

Through the window, she looks up Stephanie's apartment. The bedroom light switches off.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

George and Stephanie lie in bed. George watches Stephanie sleep.

She wakes up and pushes George away from her.

STEPHANIE

Get out.

GEORGE

Why?

STEPHANIE

You got what you wanted. Now leave.

GEORGE

I want more.

Stephanie rolls away from George.

STEPHANIE

You tell me I'm murdering people,  
and I'm supposed to want to be around  
you.

GEORGE

I'm trying to help you.

STEPHANIE

I don't need help. I need you to  
leave.

GEORGE

Don't be like this.

STEPHANIE

I'll never love you, George. Never.

George grabs her hands and handcuffs her. She squirms.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Stop it.

He grabs her feet and pins them against the bed. He buckles in the restraints.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Don't be a baby.

George gathers his things and marches to the door.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
George!!! You asshole.

He slams the door. Stephanie fights her restraints.

INT. / EXT. GEORGE'S CAR -- NIGHT

George climbs into the driver's seat. He stares at Yulee under a blanket in the backseat.

George looks at her.

GEORGE  
I'll take you home.

YULEE  
Casanova.

George cranks up the car. Yulee glances over.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
What happened?

GEORGE  
I don't want to talk about that.

George shakes his head and drives the car.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George and Yulee enter with cups of coffee in their hands.

As George flips on the light, he sees the couch turned over, the cushions shredded and thrown across the room.

The surveillance camera lies in a demolished pile on the couch.

Newspapers, blank crossword puzzles, broken picture frames, and clothes cover the ground.

Yulee grabs George by the shoulder.

YULEE  
What the hell happened here? What's that smell?

George hands his coffee to Yulee and grabs a nearby cushion. He lifts it to his nose and sniffs.

Yulee leans in and sniffs the cushion. She recoils and coughs.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Gasoline? Big surprise. Ready for the cops?

GEORGE

No.

YULEE

This is ridiculous. You know who's doing this. You know what they're doing to people. Why not stop them?

GEORGE

I love her.

Stoic, George turns the couch upright and tosses the remains of the cushions on top of it.

Yulee watches him with concern.

YULEE

Maybe we should get out of here.

George picks up clothing and folds it as he stacks it on the couch.

GEORGE

You should go.

Yulee places the coffees by the door and rolls up her sleeves. She bends and picks up the broken glass, placing the pieces on newspaper.

George flips over a framed crossword puzzle. The puzzle is taken from the frame. He checks another frame. Gone.

YULEE

I'm really good at picking up broken glass. It's what makes me a good bartender. Has nothing to do with making drinks.

George grabs a trashcan and drops the shards of glass into it.

GEORGE

Just leave.

Yulee turns to more newspapers. She picks them up and folds them as she puts them on the coffee table.

YULEE

Why don't you stay at my place tonight?

George sits on the couch and stares at Yulee.

GEORGE

Why would I do a thing like that?

Yulee coughs as she marches to a window and opens it. The air rushes in.

YULEE

George, you're, we're, in danger.

GEORGE

And you're just now catching onto that?

YULEE

I had to watch you two. Do you really think I wanted to see that?

GEORGE

You could have turned it off.

YULEE

You need to take your head out of your ass.

Yulee shakes her head and grabs her coffee by the door. She leaves the room.

George kicks the coffee table over, then crosses his legs. He stares up at the posters untouched on the wall.

He grabs his notepad. He flips to the page with GRETТА and HELP written on it.

George stares at CHADWICK HAWTHORNE, then looks down at GRETТА in his notepad. He holds the notepad next to the posterboard.

GEORGE

Gretta Hawthorne.

George sorts through the mess on the floor and finds the phonebook.

EXT. GRETТА'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Grace knocks on the door. She holds a coconut and a stick of incense.

Thomas opens the door and stares at her. He's in his pajamas.

THOMAS  
Can I help you?

GRACE  
Is this Gretta Hawthorne's house?

Thomas nods. Grace tries to push herself into the house, but Thomas blocks her.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Ms. Hawthorne called me about some supernatural activity.

THOMAS  
At this time?

GRACE  
The dead don't rest.

THOMAS  
She didn't tell me about you.

GRACE  
Why would she? Do you own her?

Grace pushes past Thomas, who closes the door.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Gretta lies in bed.

The door opens. Thomas leads Grace into the room.

THOMAS  
Did you hire a spiritualist?

Gretta stares at the window. Grace examines the room and lights the incense as she glares at Thomas.

GRACE  
You're not needed here.

Thomas glances at Gretta, but Gretta stares at the window.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
I need my space.

Thomas reluctantly leaves and shuts the door. Gretta turns to face Grace.

Grace opens the window. George climbs through it.

Grace quickly shuts the window and closes the curtains.



Gretta manages a smile at George.

GRETTA

You're back.

George kneels at the bed. He raises the sheets and turns his head at the smell.

Grace puts the coconut and incense on the end table. She covers her nose.

GEORGE

He isn't washing or changing her.

GRACE

Dear God.

GEORGE

So much for a caregiver.

George grabs Gretta's hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I have a few questions.

GRETTA

Help me.

GEORGE

I will. Tell me about Chadwick.

Gretta smiles as she closes her eyes. Grace picks up the incense and roams the room.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What does he want?

GRETTA

He always said he'd protect me.

Gretta takes her hand out of George's grasp. She shifts in bed and stares at the rocking chair.

Grace notices Gretta staring at the rocking chair. She sits in it. Her eyes widen as she does.

GEORGE

Are you in danger?

GRETTA

Yes. They take my money. Beat me.

GEORGE

Who? Just Thomas.

GRETTA  
Thomas and the girl from the bank.

GEORGE  
This is important. Does she wear a  
trench when she comes over here?

GRETTA  
No.

George stares at the floor.

GEORGE  
I'll call the police.

GRETTA  
They'll kill me.

Grace stands up and walks away from the chair. She joins  
George beside the bed.

GRACE  
Tons of activity in this room.  
Through the roof. A lot of spirits  
linger here. They're congregating  
for something.

The doorknob twists. George bolts and slides into the closet.

Grace stands upright and roams the room with the incense.  
Thomas enters and stares at her.

THOMAS  
You've had enough time.

Grace flashes a fake smile at Thomas. She sits in the rocking  
chair.

GRACE  
I'll leave once you clean her up.  
If you don't...

Thomas glares at her.

THOMAS  
Listen, bitch. Mind your own  
business.

GRACE  
Are you going to tell the cops that?

Grace pulls out her cell phone.

THOMAS  
I'll get new sheets.

Thomas leaves the room. George sneaks out of the closet and begins to climb out the window.

Gretta stares at him.

GRETTA  
Put out the fire with water.

George looks back in shock. Grace waves him to go. George disappears.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Fire rages in the room. A charred hand is cuffed to the headboard.

The room fills with smoke.

INT. STEPHANIE'S HALLWAY -- DAY

Det. Horn leans against a smoke-blackened wall, takes a deep breath and fights back tears. He stares into Stephanie's bedroom.

Det. Chance walks up to him.

DET. CHANCE  
Ready?

Det. Horn composes himself.

DET. HORN  
Give me a second.

DET. CHANCE  
This was the jogger, right?

DET. HORN  
Yeah.

DET. CHANCE  
Such a shame.

Det. Chance glances at Det. Horn.

DET. CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Ready to come clean.

DET. HORN  
What do you mean?

DET. CHANCE  
You were fucking a witness and now's she's dead. You were fucking the jogger, right?

DET. CHANCE (CONT'D)  
The chick that found the first body.

Det. Horn nods.

DET. HORN  
How did you know?

DET. CHANCE  
I can tell just by looking at you.

Det. Chance enters the bedroom.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A police crew scours the blackened room. CAMERA FLASHES  
light up the room.

Det. Chance walks in and takes in the surroundings. Det.  
Horn follows him in and stares at the bed. On the headboard,  
a pair of melted handcuffs.

DET. CHANCE  
She was handcuffed to the headboard.

DET. HORN  
Handcuffed?

DET. CHANCE  
Her feet were restrained as well.

Det. Chance examines the bed.

DET. CHANCE (CONT'D)  
It's different.

DET. HORN  
Different?

DET. CHANCE  
Yeah. She wasn't homeless. No  
cryptic message left around anywhere.  
This doesn't seem right. There has  
to be some reason.

Det. Horn moves away from Det. Chance. He faces the window  
and looks out of it.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

George stares up at the bedroom window. He sees the blackened  
room and Det. Horn staring out of it.

George breathes deeply. George pulls out a crossword puzzle  
and begins working on it.

Det. Horn spots George and backs away from the window.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Det. Horn draws his weapon and runs toward the door. Det. Chance follows with his weapon.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

Det. Horn and Det. Chance fly out of the building. They race onto the street.

George is gone.

DET. HORN

Shit.

Det. Horn and Det. Chance put their guns back in holsters and walk back into the building.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

George storms into his apartment. He wipes his eyes with his sleeve and sits on the couch.

As George leans back, he notices the framed crossword puzzle with YOMAMMA on it.

He opens the back of the frame and carefully takes out the puzzle.

George throws the frame against the wall. It shatters.

INT. DET. HORN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Det. Horn sits at his desk and stares at his wedding picture.

Maggie enters the office. She waits at the door.

DET. HORN

Sit down.

Maggie sits.

MAGGIE

Why did you call me?

Det. Horn takes a deep breath.

DET. HORN

I think the arsonist has started targeting friends and family of mine.

Maggie clutches her purse.

MAGGIE  
Good thing we don't count as either.

DET. HORN  
This is serious. I need you and the kids to leave town for a week. Take a vacation. All we know about this kid is his name is George.

MAGGIE  
Beware George. Got it.

DET. HORN  
He's dangerous.

Maggie scoffs.

MAGGIE  
Who did he get?

DET. HORN  
What do you mean?

MAGGIE  
Who did he kill? If you think he's targeting your friends and family, who did he get?

Det. Horn shakes his head.

DET. HORN  
Nobody. Just a friend.

MAGGIE  
It's sad when a murderer knows to kill the mistress before the wife.

Maggie stands and walks toward the door.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
He knows how to really devastate you.

Maggie slams the door as she leaves. Det. Horn pulls out his cell phone. He pulls up the name CHINESE FOOD and begins to delete it, but he stops and closes his phone.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George sits on the couch. He reads a newspaper obituary with a picture of Stephanie on it.

The door opens. Yulee enters.

GEORGE

Now's not a good time.

Yulee sits on the sofa next to George. He stands up and paces around the room.

YULEE

You have to trust me. You need to leave town.

George shakes his head and continues pacing. Yulee stands and forces him to stop moving.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Pack your shit and get as far away from here as you can. We're both in a lot of danger.

GEORGE

I can't. School. The funeral. Just can't.

YULEE

The funeral? Jesus.

Yulee grabs George's face and pulls it in for a kiss. George pushes her away. She trips on the coffee table and falls onto the ground.

GEORGE

What was that?

Yulee picks herself off the ground.

YULEE

What did she ever do for you?

GEORGE

Dammnit. Just leave.

YULEE

I'll never understand how somebody can bend over backwards for someone who could care less.

George kicks the coffee table. Yulee backs up.

GEORGE

It doesn't matter now. I fucked up.

CHILLY AIR rushes through the room. Ice forms on the coffee table, window, sofa.

Yulee looks around frightened. CONDENSATION leaks from George's eyes, ears, nose, mouth.

He lunges at Yulee. Yulee backs away into the wall. George pins her and grabs her by the neck.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I know what you did.

YULEE  
Please, let me go.

Yulee pushes and punches at George. The air warms.

George blinks and looks around confused. He release Yulee and bends over out of breath.

GEORGE  
Get the fuck out of here.

Yulee pushes him out of the way and walks to the door. She stops.

YULEE  
The bitch is still alive.

GEORGE  
What?

YULEE  
Don't ask me how I know this. I just do.

GEORGE  
I left her handcuffed to the bed.  
She couldn't escape because of me.  
She's gone.

George grabs the newspaper and shoves it at Yulee.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Read the fucking paper.

YULEE  
She's not dead, but if you don't get out of town...

GEORGE  
Maybe I deserve some jail time.

YULEE  
They'll kill you first.

Yulee tosses an envelope full of money on the coffee table.

YULEE (CONT'D)  
You're not the only one who can love somebody that walks all over you.



Yulee slams the door.

EXT. MOONLITTER BAR -- NIGHT

George strolls down the sidewalk. He sees ambulances and fire trucks outside the Moonlitter.

He darts up the sidewalk. Det. Horn, in plain clothes, stops him.

DET. HORN  
Stay back. Still not safe.

The windows are broken and blackened. Smoke billows up from inside the bar.

George pushes against Det. Horn's arm. Det. Horn holds him back.

GEORGE  
Is everybody okay?

Det. Horn stares at him. He notices George's bandaged hand.

DET. HORN  
What happened to your hand?

GEORGE  
Just a little burn.

Det. Horn grab opens his holster and rests his hand on the handle of his gun. A SHADOW races across the window of the bar.

DET. HORN  
What's your name, kid?

GEORGE  
Is everybody okay?

A cold wind gusts around them.

DET. HORN  
Yeah. Bar was empty.

George relaxes.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

GEORGE  
George Thomson.

Det. Horn whips out his gun and aims it at George.

DET. HORN  
Freeze! On the ground now.

George looks confused. Det. Horn cocks the hammer. The SHADOW lingers on the wall behind them.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
Down now! Let me see your hands.

George nods and lies on the sidewalk.

WHOOSH! The SHADOW jumps out of the wall and passes through Det. Horn.

Det. Horn falls to his knees and grasps for air.

George climbs to his feet and races away. CONDENSATION slinks out of his mouth as he runs.

Det. Horn scrambles to his feet. He begins pursuit.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
Stop him!

A FEW POLICE OFFICERS join him.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

George darts into the alley. His feet splash in puddles as he runs. The puddles become ice.

The Officers close in on him. Det. Horn stops and aims his gun.

BANG! He fires. George drops to the ground. Hit.

Blood oozes out of George's shoulder. The Officers raise their guns and close in.

DET. HORN  
You have the right to remain silent.

CONDENSATION pours out of George's mouth. George stares at the approaching Officers.

A line of FIRE shoots up from the ground between George and the Officers. They back away.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
Don't let him get away.

George climbs to his feet and sprints away.

BANG! BANG! BANG! George turns a corner and avoids the gun shots.

The fire disappears.

INT. STREET -- NIGHT

George races out of the alley. He bleeds as he runs and weaves through the PEDESTRIANS.

Det. Horn and the Officers exit the alley. They stop and look around.

Det. Horn spots a shadow racing against the wall of a building to the left and runs left.

The other Officers follow.

At the other end of the street, George rests against the side of a building, grasping his shoulder. He watches the officers sprint away from him.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A wrapped present with GEORGE written across the top of it sits on the coffee table.

George takes off his shirt. The wound looks bad. George shuffles through a first aid kit, dresses the wound.

He picks up the present and stares at it. He presses his ear against it. Listens.

George rips off the paper to reveal a white box. He opens the box and pulls out a picture.

In the photo, Yulee is tied to a rocking chair beside Gretta in the bed.

EXT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A POLICE SQUAD readies themselves in the parking lot. Det. Horn emerges and draws his weapon, followed by Det. Chance. They motion the squad to move.

They begin to enter the apartment complex.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George stares at a message on the back of the picture. It reads DIDN'T THINK I'D LET HER LIVE, DID YOU? LOVE, STEPHANIE.

He crumples the photograph.

GEORGE

Fuck.

George grabs the gun and opens the chamber. No bullets.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Shit.

George stares at GRETТА HAWTHORNE on the posterboard.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

KNOCK! KNOCK! Echoes into the room.

DET. HORN (O.S.)

Open up! Police business!

A SQUAD breaks into the apartment. Several officers rush toward the bedroom.

Det. Horn picks up a blank crossword puzzle and slides it into an envelope.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)

Fucking freak.

Det. Horn nods.

The Officers meet back up in the living room.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)

Let me guess. Empty?

He picks up the posterboards and shows them to Det. Chance.

DET. CHANCE

A slam dunk. We got our guy. The writing's on the wall, literally.

Det. Horn studies the poster boards. They scour the room further.

EXT. GRETТА'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

George stares up at the old house. It's dark. No lights on. No sign of life.

A gun presses against George's temple. He doesn't react. Stephanie kisses him on the cheek as she aims the gun.

She's in the trench and heels.

He fidgets with something in his pocket, pulls it out. It's a crossword puzzle.

George stares at YOMAMMA penciled in as a solution. He pulls out a lighter from his pocket and sets the puzzle on fire, then watches it burn on the ground in front of him.

STEPHANIE

You didn't have to do that. I thought  
it was a clever solution.

George stares at her.

GEORGE

It fit, but it wasn't right.

STEPHANIE

I could say the same about you.  
Let's go.

Stephanie pulls George toward the house. George doesn't  
resist.

GEORGE

You won't get away with it.

STEPHANIE

That's cute. The neutered puppy  
holding true to his values of justice  
and right and wrong.

They reach the door. George opens it.

INT. GRETТА'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George stares at the old room. Antique furniture make it  
look dated.

He grimaces as he notices the wall of old pictures with creepy  
eyes.

Stephanie shoves the gun in his side and pushes him up the  
stairs.

A gust of wind RATTLES the pictures on the walls.

INT. GRETТА'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Yulee sits in the rocking chair by the bed. Her hands and  
feet tied to it and mouth gagged.

In the bed, Gretta is tied to the headboard. Her eyes are  
glazed over and hair wild.

A bloody arm sticks out from under the bed.

Several gasoline cans, newspapers and wallpaper shreds stack  
by the window.

Stephanie leads George into the room. Yulee looks up at him  
as he enters. George can barely meet the glance.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry. This is all my fault.

STEPHANIE  
Guilt is relative. Right, Yulee? I  
always said to Thomas you smelled  
like a rat.

Stephanie pushes George beside the rocking chair, then  
handcuffs him to the arm of the chair and ties his feet tight.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
At least you two can go out together.

Yulee quietly sobs. George looks up at her.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry I brought you into this.

Thomas enters with a briefcase. He puts it on the bed and  
opens it. It's full of money.

Stephanie pulls him in for a quick makeout session.

Thomas lifts the mattress and checks under the bed. He pauses  
and smiles at Stephanie.

THOMAS  
The old hag.

Thomas pulls out more money and tosses it in the briefcase.  
He and Stephanie search the perimeter of the bed.

As Stephanie pulls out a wad of cash, she also pulls out a  
purple heart medal. George stares at the medal, then at  
Gretta.

Stephanie holds the medal up to Thomas.

STEPHANIE  
Looks like little Chadwick was a  
hero.

THOMAS  
A wounded hero.

STEPHANIE  
A dead hero. You should keep the  
medal for his uniforms. I love you  
in uniform.

Gretta stares blankly ahead.

Stephanie tosses the medal to Thomas. He stares at it, then  
slides it down Gretta's shirt.

He fondles her breast on the way up.

THOMAS

Let her have something. I prefer money.

Stephanie laughs. She pulls out a piece of paper and shows it to George.

STEPHANIE

Read this for me.

George looks at the paper. It's a note made with letters from a crossword puzzle. All in George's handwriting. George glances at THIS IS MY CONFESSION.

He drops the note on the ground in a puddle of gasoline.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

That was just a copy.

George shakes his head.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Det. Horn lays out a paper with THIS IS MY CONFESSION with letters from crossword puzzles used as the alphabet. He takes a picture of it.

Det. Chance shakes his head at the confession.

DET. CHANCE

Almost too perfect.

DET. HORN

No time for another theory.

The SQUAD bags up materials from the apartment. Det. Chance follows them out of the room.

BZZ! BZZ! Det. Horn opens his phone and sits as he reads a text message.

The message, from CHINESE FOOD, says I'M ALIVE. HELP ME!  
111 MAIN ST. COME ALONE OR HE'LL KILL ME.

Det. Horn rushes out of the room.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

George stirs on the floor. He spots the paper and gasoline.

GEORGE

Could you go ahead and do this?

Thomas and Stephanie look at each other.

STEPHANIE

But baby, the fun's just started.

GEORGE

I swear to God that I'll haunt both  
of you until the day you die.

Thomas and Stephanie kneel in front of George. Stephanie  
tries to caress his face, but George moves away.

THOMAS

Meet the last person that threatened  
to haunt me.

Thomas points under the bed. He grabs the bloody arm sticking  
out and pulls out Grace's dead body.

George looks away. He stares at the window, fights emotion.

Yulee stretches out her fingers and barely caresses George's  
hand. George looks up at her.

He closes his eyes as Stephanie drenches him with gasoline.

Thomas drenches the bed.

STEPHANIE

You know, George. You were a lot  
smarter than I thought. You walked  
into my trap before I had even really  
set it.

GEORGE

Why the fires?

STEPHANIE

It's fun. I do those miserable fucks  
a favor.

Stephanie kisses George on the cheek.

GEORGE

You're a bitch.

STEPHANIE

I played the role you wanted me to  
play.

George spits out gasoline from his mouth as he glares at  
Stephanie.

GEORGE

I'm a fool.



STEPHANIE

Don't get too down on yourself.  
This isn't my first time around the  
block. Won't be the last. You do  
qualify as the most pathetic scapegoat  
though.

Stephanie splashes Yulee with gasoline. She runs out and  
grabs another can. She soaks Yulee with more gasoline.

GEORGE

Not as pathetic as you'll be in an  
hour.

Stephanie turns back to George. She notices his wound. His  
shirt is soaked with blood.

STEPHANIE

I was a little frightened when you  
followed me the first night. Made  
me get in the bathtub. I really do  
hate baths. That was the only time  
you really turned me on.

GEORGE

I should have shot you under the  
water.

STEPHANIE

You're too much of a chicken to shoot  
me.

GEORGE

I won't have to.

Stephanie rips George's shirt. She studies the wound.

STEPHANIE

You know a thing or two about being  
shot.

Stephanie takes off her high heel shoe and jams the heel in  
the wound. George SCREAMS.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Did that hurt? Are you  
going to have another blackout? A  
spirit possession?

GEORGE

You'll see.

STEPHANIE

You would come up with anything.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Anything possible not to believe  
that I was doing any wrong.

GEORGE  
Not the first mistake I've made.

Stephanie jams the heel in the wound again. George writhes  
in pain.

The door SLAMS. Stephanie and Thomas stare at it.

THOMAS  
Must be a draft.

George stares at the closed window.

GEORGE  
Is that why the window's closed?  
Old Grace must be back for some  
revenge.

Stephanie leans over George. She smacks him with her gun.

STEPHANIE  
I'm shaking.

Grace's body shoots upright to a sitting position. Stephanie  
and Thomas stare at each other. Grace's body falls back to  
the ground.

THOMAS  
What the fuck?

GEORGE  
You might want to find a coconut.

George breathes heavily. His wound is oozing blood now.

Thomas hops over to George and starts choking him. Stephanie  
laughs as she watches.

The door handle twists and turns. Thomas stops and stares  
at it.

Thomas grabs the gun from Stephanie and aims it at George's  
head. He cocks back the hammer.

The door opens. CRASHES and SCREAMS shriek into the room,  
but nobody is on the other side of the door.

Thomas and Stephanie look at each other.

INT. GRETTA'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Wind gusts into the room through the open door.

Tons of old pictures hang on the walls. One falls and shatters on the ground.

It's a picture of a YOUNG MAN, Chadwick, in a military uniform. The eyes are burnt through.

WHAM! The door slams shut.

CREAK! CREAK! Footsteps climb the stairs. Det. Horn draws his weapon and sneaks up the stairs.

Multiple SHADOWS sweep across the faces in the pictures. The room turns into a freezer.

INT. GRETTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Yulee stares down at George.

Det. Horn busts into the room. He stares at George and Yulee tied to the rocking chair. Then he sees Stephanie at the window. He lowers his weapon.

WHACK! Thomas knocks him out with a lamp and duct tapes him to the bed.

STEPHANIE

Our last guest's arrived.

Thomas and Stephanie look pale. The air becomes cold. All of the glass in the room freezes over.

THOMAS

We need to get out of here. I told you weird shit happens here.

Stephanie grabs a newspaper and a matchbook. She flips to the crossword puzzle.

Stephanie holds up the matchbook to Yulee. Det. Horn wakes and watches Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

It's cute. Really is. Piss your night away.

Yulee glares back at Stephanie. George positions his head on Yulee's lap.

GEORGE

You'll never sleep again.

STEPHANIE  
Here's a clue for you. Inevitable.  
Blank and taxes.

GEORGE  
Careful what you wish for.

George stares at Stephanie, then turns away from her. He looks up at Yulee.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
We'll be fine.

Thomas takes newspapers and spreads them around. He grabs the suitcase.

Stephanie takes a match out of the book. As she strikes the match, the entire matchbook moistens.

STEPHANIE  
What's going on?

Thomas stares at Stephanie.

THOMAS  
Hurry up.

Stephanie grabs another matchbook. It moistens at her touch.

Thomas looks around. George sits up and smiles at them.

GEORGE  
Was that a figment of your  
imagination?

Thomas grabs his gun and aims it at George. George closes his eyes. Yulee shakes against her restraints.

Thomas pulls the trigger.

Nothing.

Again. Nothing.

Stephanie takes the gun from Thomas. She opens the chamber. Bullets are there.

Stephanie takes the gun and strikes George across the head.

A Shadow darts across the room.

STEPHANIE  
We'll set the house on fire from the  
outside. They'll still burn.

WHAM! The door slams shut. Stephanie pushes Thomas to the window.

The dresser slides across the room and cuts them off.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Stop it. Just stop it. What the fuck is this?

Click. Click. George's hands are free. The ropes untie themselves. George lies on the ground, unable to move. His eyes roll back into his head.

Thomas and Stephanie try to light the crossword puzzle. Nothing will light. Damp match after damp match.

WHOOSH! George's body jolts. Condensation pours out of his mouth. He rises to his feet.

Stephanie lunges at George. He grabs her by the face and shoves her into the wall.

Condensation leaks out of George's mouth as he breathes. Thomas rushes George. George throws a punch. Thomas flies backwards.

George unties Yulee. Yulee bends over Det. Horn.

A smile comes across Gretta's face.

GRETTA

You're finally back son.

Thomas and Stephanie stare fearfully at George as they back away.

GEORGE

I brought a few guests to the party.

Behind them, SHADOWS dance across the walls and reach out for them. One of the shadows appears to have a banjo strapped across its shoulder.

The door swings open. Thomas darts out of it before Stephanie can.

The door slams shut. Stephanie stares at George as she cries.

STEPHANIE

George, it's me. He made me do this.

Stephanie rushes George and slaps at him. A hand reaches back and pulls Stephanie's hair.

Yulee shoves Stephanie into the door. She punches her. Stephanie falls onto the ground unconscious.

YULEE

I always wanted to do that.

Det. Horn races to the window and opens it.

Gretta HACKS and COUGHS. George stares at her. She reaches out for George's hand.

GRETТА

Thank you, Chadwick.

Yulee stares at George and Gretta. George leans over and kisses Gretta's forehead.

Gretta holds tight onto George's hand. She gasps for air, then releases.

A smile comes across her face as she lets out one last breath. George puts Gretta's hands across her chest and closes her eyes.

DET. HORN

Let's go.

WHOOSH! George crumbles to the ground. A shadow dances across the wall.

INT. GRETТА'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas yanks at the front door. It won't budge.

The SHADOWS, more prominent, LAUGH and MOAN as they dance against the walls. The pictures RATTLE and CLANK.

Thomas looks down at his hand. It's charred.

Thomas flies away from the door and lands in the middle of the room. His arms darken and sizzle.

INT. GRETТА'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas's SCREAMS resonate in the room. Stephanie lies against the door unconscious.

Yulee and Det. Horn lift George from the side of the bed. They help him to the window.

Det. Horn helps Yulee climbs out of the window.

DET. HORN

I'll help you down.

George shakes his head.

GEORGE

Go, I can do it.

Det. Horn climbs out of the window. George bends to climb out. He struggles.

He's yanked back by Stephanie. She scratches and claws at him. George falls to his knees.

STEPHANIE

Don't leave me, George.

GEORGE

It's over.

Stephanie climbs on top of George, pulls him to a sitting position.

STEPHANIE

You weren't the only kid in Jill's basement. It took me forever to find you.

Stephanie pulls out a knife from her pocket. She flicks it open.

GEORGE

I don't believe you.

STEPHANIE

Too bad.

Stephanie stabs George in the back. He winces.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Inevitable blank and taxes.

George winces in pain and stares behind Stephanie.

GEORGE

Careful what you wish for.

Grace and Gretta stand behind her. Their eyes are white. They grab her by the shoulders and pull her back. She screams.

GRETTA

(in a demonic voice)

Time for a bath.

They pull Stephanie away. George's eyes slowly close. Blood oozes on the floor. He becomes pale.

DARKNESS.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

George lies in a bed, unconscious, hooked to tubes and other machines.

In the recliner next to the bed, Yulee sits with a big book of crossword puzzles and a pen. On the cover, YULEE is crossed with GEORGE using the last E in GEORGE.

YULEE

Let's see. Low voiced ladies. Hmm.

She glances at George and waits for an answer.

YULEE (CONT'D)

I'm thinking tenors.

George's finger twitches.

YULEE (CONT'D)

But I've never been good at these things.

George's hand moves.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Tenors doesn't fit. Too many letters. Tenor? What do you think?

George opens his eyes.

GEORGE

Altos. Not tenors. Definitely not tenors.

Yulee tosses the book on the floor and leans over George.

YULEE

Let me call a nurse.

GEORGE

I'm fine. I want to be alone with you.

George manages a weak smile. Yulee sits down.

YULEE

I need to tell you something first.

Yulee reaches over and grabs George's hand.



YULEE (CONT'D)

They paid me to get close to you and lead you into their trap. I would've never agreed if I'd known they were killing people. By that time, I was in too deep.

George lets go of her hand.

GEORGE

Why?

YULEE

I needed the money. You saw the bar. Maybe you're not the only fuck-up in this room. I know you can't trust me now, and I know you don't want anything to do with me.

Yulee cries as she stands up.

YULEE (CONT'D)

If I had known you first...

George motions her to him. He grabs her hand and pulls her into him.

GEORGE

Was anything you said real?

Yulee nods. George lifts himself up and kisses her.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Didn't want to slap you.

Yulee smiles and rests her head on his chest. The door opens. Det. Horn with briefcase and Det. Chance enter.

DET. HORN

He's awake. Finally.

Det. Chance walks over to Yulee and slaps a pair of handcuffs on her. She doesn't resist.

George shoots her a questioning glance.

YULEE

Turned myself in.

Yulee motions to the book of crosswords with her head.

YULEE (CONT'D)

Finish them for me.

GEORGE  
What's going on?

Det. Chance leads Yulee out of the room. Det. Horn sits on the recliner.

DET. HORN  
Relax. She'll serve six months at the most. Cut a great deal with the DA.

George stares at Det. Horn.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
Wasn't my idea. I would've let her walk.

Det. Horn opens his briefcase and hands George a paper. It has a D circled in red. George looks at the grade.

GEORGE  
Great. Wake up from a coma to find out my friend's going to jail and I failed my class. Not to mention almost dying and that other shit. Wonderful week.

DET. HORN  
I talked to your professor. It seems catching the city's most wanted criminals is considered extra credit. You passed.

GEORGE  
Is that all it takes?

George manages a smile.

DET. HORN  
You saved a lot of people. Myself included. Thanks.

George peeks over the bed at the crossword puzzles on the ground. Det. Horn picks them up and hands them to him.

DET. HORN (CONT'D)  
I'll let you get some rest.

Det. Horn leaves. George flips to the first puzzle.

EXT. SGT. HORN'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Birthday decorations fill the patio of a large suburban home. KIDS run around playing and wreaking havoc.

Sgt. Horn stands at a barbecue. He flips burgers and hot dogs.

Maggie sneaks up behind him and kisses him on the cheek. They smile at each other.

In the corner of the fenced yard, SALLY HORN, 6ish, sits by herself. She appears to be talking to the air.

Sgt. Horn closes the barbecue and walks over to Sally.

SGT. HORN  
Who you talking to honey?

Sally smiles at him.

SALLY  
Her name's Stephanie. She told me  
you like Chinese food.

Sgt. Horn's face drops.

SGT. HORN  
Don't ever talk to her okay?

SALLY  
She's my friend.

SGT. HORN  
Tell her to leave you alone. Okay?

SALLY  
Okay.

He grabs Sally by the hand.

SGT. HORN  
Let's play with the other kids.

Sgt. Horn leads Sally back into the crowd of kids.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George, in a police uniform, scribbles on a crossword puzzle. He glances at an envelope on the coffee table, picks it up.

On the envelope, YULEE JONES and RIVERDALE PENITENTIARY are in the address line.

George opens the envelope. He pulls out a half-finished crossword puzzle.

On the backside of the puzzle, a message reads I'LL BE ALMOST AS GOOD AS YOU IN 7-10 WEEKS. LOVE, YULEE.

George grabs a pencil and begins erasing answers.

GEORGE

To watch obsessively five letters.

A MALE and FEMALE SHADOW linger on the wall behind him.

FADE OUT.

## Vita

Joshua Lane was born and raised in Brunswick, Georgia. In 2004, he received his B.A. in Theatre and English from the University of Georgia. He has seen three of his short screenplays produced -- A Life Together (2004), Circulation (2007) and The Confessional (2008). His screenplay Evicting the Wyatts placed as a semifinalist in the 2008 Writers on the Storm Screenplay Competition.