

OLDBOY

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Based on the Movie
By Chak Woon Park

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FADE IN:

CLOSE ON:

A DOLL face. Beautiful and delicate, yet frozen in a perpetual expression of melancholy.

REVEAL:

INT. THE LADYBUG SHOPPE - NIGHT

A trendy store catering to young girls. An attractive clerk, CHLOE (19), closes up, flipping the 'Open' sign to 'Closed'.

OUTSIDE, the sound of a MAN, half-humming, half-singing, can be heard getting closer. A barely recognizable version of "Climb Every Mountain" from "The Sound of Music."

MAN (O.S.)

...ford every stream, follow every
rainbow, till you find your dream.

Chloe wipes down the display cases with windex. The singing abruptly stops.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK! Startled, Chloe looks over to see someone banging on the glass. A MAN in his twenties wearing a wrinkled suit. This is GUS.

CHLOE

Sorry we're closed.

GUS

Wait, it's my daughter's birthday. I
need a gift.

Chloe ignores him, keeps cleaning. Gus digs in his wallet, takes out a photo of a cute BABY, pressing it up against the glass.

GUS (CONT'D)

C'mon look at that face. Who smiles like
that anymore?

Chloe looks, warming slightly.

GUS (CONT'D)

I just worked an eighty hour week for
that smile. Now I don't even have a
birthday present.

He's starting to win her over.

GUS

Five minutes, I promise.

She unlocks, lets him in. BELLS ring on the door.

CHLOE

Five minutes.

As he enters the store, Chloe gets a whiff of alcohol. Gus wanders the aisles, swimming in choices. He looks confused, and a little tipsy, no idea where to even begin.

GUS

What do girls want at this age?

CHLOE

How old is she?

GUS

One.

CHLOE

I see. Well for that age...

She steps towards him searching the merchandise. He lets her take over, relying on her expertise.

CHLOE

It's not so much what she wants, but what she'll have to remember.

Gus follows closely as she continues the search-

GUS

I tried to come earlier, but work was a killer. Closed the biggest account of my life today. Ever heard of the Buick Le Sabre?

CHLOE

No.

GUS

You will.

(singing)

"Le Beauty. Le Power. Le Sabre!"

CHLOE

My dad drives a Buick.

GUS

Well, this isn't your dad's Buick.
Everyone's gonna want one.

CHLOE

So you came up with their slogan?

GUS

Slogan, song, the whole campaign. All
me. And I fucking closed it. They
bought it in the room. In the ROOM!

His enthusiasm is infectious. Chloe vibes off his
energy.

GUS

Greatest day of my life!

CHLOE

Wow! You should be celebrating.

GUS

I am. Everyone's next door at
Franklin's.

(mood darkens)

But, you know, my wife... She hates the
hours. Hates what I do. Makes it kinda
hard sometimes, keeping the two worlds
separated.

His infectious smile has faded and Chloe catches herself
gazing into Gus's melancholy eyes. She blushes once
again before looking off, CLEARS her throat-

CHLOE

I think I know just what you want.

Chloe walks around to a display case and produces a pair
of delicate ANGEL WINGS. Chloe takes off her sweater,
reveals her curvaceous body, and models the wings for
Gus. His face lights up and for a moment it's as if
these two people were no longer strangers.

CHLOE

I knew you'd like them.

GUS

How much?

(as she looks for the tag)

Never mind, I'll take them.

Chloe takes off the wings.

GUS

Thank you very much. Most people
wouldn't have opened that door.

CHLOE

Sure they would've.

GUS

Not these days, with the 'Me Generation'
and all. You know you can tell more
about a person from how they interact
with total strangers than with their
closest friends. Means you have a good
heart. That's rare, hold onto it.

Chloe blushes, barely concealing a flattered smile.

He holds her in his gaze and for some reason she can't
look away, unable to move. Gus takes a step closer, a
confident look on his face. She yields to him. Is this
a kiss?

KNOCK-KNOCK! Chloe and Gus look over to see a man and
woman. This is MIKE and GRETCHEN. They're both
stumbling drunk.

MIKE

There you are! Come on, Gretchen found a
girl for you.

GRETCHEN

She doesn't speak a word of English. You
can talk about the Buick deal all night.

Mike and Gretchen both CRACK UP like it's The Chappelle
Show.

MIKE

(rattling the door)
What are you buying? Let me in!

GUS

I'll be right out.

MIKE

Fine.

Mike and Gretchen disappear, CRACKING UP again as they
go.

GUS

Sorry, they get a little crazy when
they're drunk.

Chloe has cooled noticeably, now RINGING up the wings. Gus puts it on his credit card. She hands him the bag.

CHLOE

I hope your daughter enjoys it.

Gus takes the bag, looks at Chloe with a serious expression.

GUS

Listen...can I buy you a drink?

She shakes her head 'no', a gracious smile on her lips.

CHLOE

Good night.

GUS

Night.

Gus exits the store. Through the window we see him get tackled by drunken Mike as Gretchen CACKLES like a hyena.

Off Chloe, shutting down the shop, pondering her decision,

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

It has started to RAIN. Gus is in a phone booth across the street from Chloe's toy store and a bar, FRANKLIN'S. As he talks, he watches Mike and Gretchen fooling around in front of Franklin's, slipping on the wet ground.

GUS

(into phone)

You knew what my day was like so what do you want from me? Then don't wait up.

Gus rubs his head, trying to mask his guilt.

GUS

I know it's late. Just...just put her on.

Across the street, Gretchen fights Mike off playfully. Gus adopts a sweet voice when talking to his daughter.

GUS

(into phone)

Hi sweetie! It's Daddy. Da-Dee!

(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

Happy birthday my angel. I bought you something and I can't wait to give it to you. Can you wait up for me? Hello? Angel?

A public BUS stops at a red light, blocks Gus's view of Mike and Grethcen. Gus covers his ear to listen on the receiver.

REVERSE:

The light turns GREEN and the Bus pulls away, revealing the phone booth now to be EMPTY. Gus is gone without a trace.

CLOSE ON BOOTH: the phone hangs limply by its cord.

We follow a pristine white ANGEL FEATHER as it flutters in the air, gently falling onto the dirty ground.

OFFSCREEN we hear Mike's bewildered voice-

MIKE (O.S.)

GUS!? Where'd you go, you fucker?!

CUT TO:

TITLES

OLDBOY

INT. HALLWAY

A dark, dirty hallway lit by flickering fluorescent lights. We follow a pair of feet - gray dress pants and black dress shoes - plodding down worn carpeting.

In the distance we hear a muffled sound. As the feet nears a door, the sound of a man speaking incoherently becomes clearer.

At the bottom of the door is latched opening. One of the feet reaches over and unlatches the opening and Gus's head suddenly pops out as if trying to squeeze out.

Gus tries to fit one of his hands out, desperately grabbing at the feet, who shake him off effortlessly. Gus speaks, rambling - shifting from desperation, frustration and anger.

GUS

Come talk to me. Tell me why I'm here, okay? I should know the reason why. You want money? Tell me how much.

The feet shift. A tray of food, TAQUITOS, is placed on the floor and the foot slides it towards the opening. Gus pulls it inside but only to clear his view. He sticks his head back out. The feet begin to leave and Gus grabs at them, manages to hang on to one foot.

GUS (CONT'D)

What is this place? Just tell me how long I have to stay in here. Just tell me that, huh.

The foot shakes him off.

GUS (CONT'D)

Come here you sonuvabitch! I'll fucking kill you, motherfucker!!!

Gus, desperate now tries to violently grab at the legs, anger mounting.

GUS (CONT'D)

I saw your face you chicken shit!

The feet easily repel his grappling hands, seemingly toying with him and pushing him back into the opening. Fearing being closed in, Gus changes his tune.

GUS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. Just tell me, two weeks? Or...?

The feet manage to push Gus back behind the door and latches the door shut.

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

...a month? C'mon, you cocksucking piece of shit!

Gus begins to bang from behind the door.

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

Just tell me how long, goddammit!

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small sparse room. A bed, an open bathroom, ugly 70's style Southwestern wallpaper, dirty brown carpet, a big screen television.

A security camera is mounted on the wall, encased in a clear PLASTIC DOME.

Gus, emaciated, unshaved with scraggly hair, kneels in front of the door banging at the door, with his food tray strewn behind him. He screams like a madman.

GUS

You fucking cunt! You think this is funny? I'll break your skull open and piss on it!!!

He whirls around and grabs the food tray and bangs it on the door with all his might.

GUS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna cut of your balls and shove it in your eye socket you fuckin' faggot!
You hear me?

He keeps beating at the door frantically. He gropes the floor, takes the plate and throws it at the door, then returns to banging with his hands.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If they told me it would be twenty years...would it have been any easier to endure?

CUT TO:

THE ROOM - MONTHS LATER

Instead of a window, there's a small PROJECTION SCREEN on the wall displaying a slide show. In rapid succession we see:

-Gus on his wedding day

-A relaxing beachscape (like a Corona ad)

-The Advantage Inc. Logo.

-A Buick ad with a young woman sexy woman next to the car. Below, the tag line: "This is not your Dad's Buick."

GUS (V.O.)

In advertising they say a picture's worth a thousand sales. But people only see what they want to see.

-Gus at his college graduation

-Charles Bronson from 'Death Wish'

GUS (V.O.)

My slide show reminded me of print ads, the captions missing for me to fill in.

-Gus on a highschool tennis team

-A pristine mountain lake

-Group photo with Gus, Mike and other colleagues, under a banner reading, "Ad Vantage, Inc."

-A cobra ready to strike

GUS (V.O.)

I look around me and it makes me wonder if this prison is endorsed.

Gus ignores the slides, kneels on his bed opposite a mirror, unmoving, staring at it.

CLOSE on mirror: Gus smiles maniacally, exposing large white teeth. It's a contorted expression, something like demented glee. His hair, long and wild falls past his shoulders. His unkempt beard flows from his chin.

Suddenly, MUSIC is heard. An instrumental version of "Climb Every Mountain." It's accompanied by a hissing sound as gas emanates from exposed pipes on the corners.

He looks at the projection screen on the wall: a photo of Gus at eighteen, standing next to a new car. It's followed by a slide of a brutal car accident (think "Red Asphalt").

GUS (V.O.)

When they play 'Climb Every Mountain', the gas comes. When the gas comes I fall asleep.

The lights in the room dim and Gus falls off the bed and onto the carpet. With his face on the carpet, he notices a trail of ants crawling away and into a small crack on the wall.

As Gus lays on the floor sleeping, the lights go on and two MEN enter, putting on latex gloves. One of the men takes out leather case and opens it to reveal a hair-cutting kit. He takes out scissors.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I wake, my hair's always cut.
Shorter, than what I'd like. They change
my clothes and clean up the place.

The other man begins to tidy the room. The man takes an EMPTY GLASS and places it in a plastic zip-loc bag.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I guess I should be grateful to the
fucking bastards.

One of the men injects a syringe into Gus and draws BLOOD.

ROOM - MONTHS LATER

The SLIDE SHOW displays a photo of Gus as a little boy, riding a big wheel. It's closely followed by a National Geographic shot of a lion taking out a gazelle.

Gus wakes up on the small bed, blinking up at the slide show images. Gus watches them, emotionless. His hair is neatly trimmed, face shaved. The TV blares in the BG.

Suddenly, something on the television grabs his attention. He watches a police report:

TELEVISION

A shot of a typical suburban home.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Kayla Harris's body was found stabbed in
the neck, late Monday morning...

GUS goes over to the TV, focusing on the story. Behind him the slide film BREAKS, throwing only WHITE LIGHT against the small screen.

TELEVISION

Police comb through the home. A body lies underneath a sheet.

REPORTER (V.O.)

In their suburban home. Neighbors are outraged and the police are requesting that anyone with further information to please call the hot-line. Her husband, who disappeared a year ago, is wanted for questioning...

Gus looks away from the television, feeling something on his forearm...

He turns to look at his arm and notices something twitch under his skin. A small bump begins to move. Suddenly, it burrows out of his skin. It's an ANT. Gus focuses on the ant as it crawls along his skin.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Blood found at the crime scene and a glass with fingerprints matched that of Gus Harris...

TELEVISION

They flash a picture of Gus and his wife, a honeymoon picture, on the screen: trim, handsome, a far cry from what he looks like now.

Gus looks at the picture, and cries hysterically as ants crawl all over his face.

The lights in the room dim and we are swallowed in darkness.

We hear the sound of GLASS BREAKING.

INT. ROOM - LATER

The lights are on.

A mirror in the room shattered. Shards lay on the carpet. We see the reflection of someone moving inside the room which is turned upside down.

Gus is dragged by his feet along the carpet. We see the slashes on his wrists. A large pool of blood stains the dirty carpet.

INT. ROOM - YEARS LATER

The mirror on the wall reflects a deteriorating image of Gus. He's getting fat and run-down, reciting lines of dialogue as he's turned away from the big screen TV.

GUS

How much for the knife? Ah that is around 8 million dollars. Eight million dollars for a knife? That's preposterous. Any other knife yes, but not this knife. It belonged to a king. A king?

Gus notices something WHITE scurry across the floor in his peripheral vision. He forces a bite of a taquito, systematically chewing and swallowing it. We notice that the slashes on his wrists have healed. He intentionally drops a crumb on the floor.

The little white something scurries again, but this time Gus reaches down and scoops it up:

A little WHITE MOUSE. It squirms desperately, but Gus isn't letting it go, admiring it for a long beat. It's been a long time since he's felt *life*. He relishes it, absorbing it's warmth, listening to it's heartbeat, making him more alive and more human in turn. Suddenly, he stuffs it in his mouth. The mouse pushes at his cheeks, making them stretch in unnatural directions.

He calmly turns to watch the TELEVISION, the mouse still in his closed mouth. We see:

Changing technology. The clapper. Reality television. Violent crime. Chia pets. Church programming. Home shopping network. Gulf war. Jesse Ventura running for Governor. Images mapping out the years that pass by.

GUS (V.O.)

The television is my only link to the outside world. A world that's clean, wholesome. Untouched. It only lets you see what it wants you to...leaving you to always want more. It makes you wait again and again, but never satisfies...just reminds you that life is only real if you believe it.

Gus watches a show edited for television. The curse words are edited out. He flips to 'Three's Company', then 'Beverly Hills, 90291' then 'Seinfeld'.

GUS (V.O.)

Everything makes sense. Everyone's beautiful. Perfect. I can sit around the coffee shop all day with all my beautiful friends and my problems will go away in about half an hour or so.

Gus smiles to himself - a plastered hazy smile.

GUS (V.O.)

My teacher, church, friend, and lover...

On the television, we see a news show. An Asian-American anchorwoman shares the screen with her co-anchor, an old man with white hair. Gus kneels in front of the screen, takes the mouse out of his mouth and puts it on his shoulder.

LEE ANN KIM

...and I'm Lee Ann Kim with tonight's headlines...

Gus touches the screen with his hand, starts to masturbate. His strokes intensify but the image changes from that of Lee Ann to the older co-anchor. He stops, waits patiently. When Lee Ann is back on screen, he immediately starts masturbating again. The mouse gets up on its hind legs.

LEE ANN KIM

...barricaded for four hours while police cleared the area...

Gus is about to reach climax, but the shot changes to a wide shot to include the older co-anchor. Gus moves his hand to block his sight of the old man. He finishes just in time-

LEE ANN KIM

Back to you Phil.

-and slowly lets his hand fall from the screen.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ROOM

Gus flips channels. It's not cable, so Gus only has a few stations to choose from. As he flips, his pet mouse, RALPH, runs up his arm. Gus opens his mouth and the mouse runs inside, and takes a seat on his tongue. He stops at a new channel, one he's never seen before:

A black and white image from a security camera. It's GUS, from the back view sitting watching the television. He closes it and looks over at the security camera behind him - inside the plastic bubble. We see his face on TV as well. He looks back to television and sees his back. It's disorienting for a second. He wants to see his face on television but can't. He repeats this action a few more times, then settles in watching himself watch the television.

He opens his mouth as Ralph runs out of his mouth onto the floor.

GUS (V.O.)
Are we being televised?

He raises the remote and presses a button. FLIP! The screen changes to a baseball game.

LATER

Sound of crashing glass.

Glass shards lay on the carpet.

Again, we see Gus passed out on the floor next to a pool of blood, by to the dried blood from his previous attempt. His wrists slashed once again. His body lays on top of plastic as he is being dragged along the carpet.

LATER

CLOSE ON: a journal on the table. There's a stack of them there. The mouse runs down his arm, onto the journals. Gus picks up a pen and taps it on the table. Then puts it down.

He stares up at the changing slide show: A photo of him at Halloween in a Freddy Kruger outfit; followed by a news still of starving kids in Africa; followed by Gus on his honeymoon with Kayla; followed by a movie still of Jack Nicholson wielding an axe from 'The Shining'; followed by Gus in a sharp suit holding a glass of wine on a balcony. And so on.

LATER

With his wounds healing, Gus sits at the table staring at the empty pages of the journal.

He glances over passed the dried blood on the carpet to the television and sees the news report about Princess Diana dying as she was chased by the paparazzi. Gus looks away and back to the journal. He picks up Ralph and puts it in his mouth. Ralph runs in and out of his open mouth as he picks up the pen and begins to write down names.

GUS (V.O.)

I wrote down all the people whom I fought with, bothered, and hurt.

Pages and pages of names.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This was both my prison journal and an autobiography of my evil deeds.

Time passes. He finishes one journal, writing cover to cover and starts on another.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I fooled myself, thinking I was getting somewhere. My complacency solidified.

INT. ROOM

Gus stares at a plate of taquitos.

GUS (V.O.)

God I hate taquitos.

Ralph runs up to his plate and starts nibbling on the taquitos. Gus strokes him gently.

INT. ROOM

Gus's hair is getting long again. He lies on his back asleep, SNORING loudly with his mouth wide open.

GUS (V.O.)

I had slipped into a dream world, while the world around me lived on.

Suddenly he stops breathing. He starts to choke and COUGH. He grabs at his throat, something lodged in there. Then with one violent heave. he COUGHS something out. The object THUMPS onto the floor.

Gus looks down to see the Ralph, stiff from rigormortis. He gently scoops him up, tries to revive him.

GUS (V.O.)

I had died. And in my death, something
was born. Something hungry and vital...

But as he realizes that Ralph is dead, Gus starts to
break down. His eyes moisten, lips tremble. Then SOBS.
WAILS. It might as well be his mother lying dead before
him.

INT. HALLWAY

A deep thumping sound echoes down the hallway.

GUS (V.O.)

Something I could no longer control.

Sounds like someone's hammering in one of the rooms.

INT. ROOM

It's not hammering...

Gus with his shirt off has an intense look on his face.
He has drawn a SILHOUETTE of a man on the wall. The
plastic bubble serves as the head. He punches the bubble
HARD. Hard enough to leave bloody marks from his bruised
knuckles. He jumps around, restless enjoying the
physical activity.

GUS (V.O.)

Who would have done this to me? Was it
Mike? Harrison Bloom? Jon Donson?
Terry Eckhouse...?

Gus reads a litany of names, punches harder with every
one.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Whoever you are, I've only just started.
I'm new and I'm hungry. I thirst for
your blood. I crave your destruction.
I'll rape your women, eat your babies,
make them bleed thru their eyes. The
last thing you'll see alive is me
laughing.

The focus on Gus's face is intensifies as he hits harder.

GUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If you think this is your revenge, wait for me. I'll show you what revenge really means.

Gus gives one final punch to the wall. CRACK! He screams in pain and folds to the ground holding his bruised hand.

CUT TO:

TRANSFORMATION MONTAGE:

-Gus does sit-ups, gets winded collapses. He grabs at his gut, SIGHS.

-Close on SILHOUETTE. Gus PUNCHES the wall, blood trickling from his knuckles. He ignores the pain, stonefaced, focusing on the hand-drawn face he's scribbled onto the bubble.

-Gus does push-ups shirtless. His knuckles are scabbed and cracked. He tires quickly, but forces himself to do more.

-Gus wolfs down a plate of taquitos, tosses the plate at the door. Drops and does push-ups.

-Gus dances in front of the silhouette, talking shit like Ali, taunts the silhouette. Then BAM-BAM-BAM: the punches fly once more.

-“Climb Every Mountain” plays as Gus punches the silhouette. There are noticeable indentations in the wall now. His hits intensify until he finally CRACKS plexiglas bubble. Gus keeps punching as the gas seeps in the room, a twisted smile on his face. He SCREAMS along-

GUS

Climb every mountain, search high and low, follow every byway, every path you know. Climb every mountain, ford every stream...

-until he finally succumbs to the gas, falls unconscious.

END TRANSFORMATION MONTAGE:

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

Gus does hundreds of sit-ups. Years have passed. Gus's body has changed. Body and mind have hardened. He's ripped now. His knuckles are knobby and calloused.

He pops up quickly from his sit-ups and unleashes a volley of punches at the wall. His movements are economized, lethal. He has the air and physique of a trained fighter.

He drops quickly and does push-ups, then pops back up and - BAM-BAM-BAM - more lightning fast punches.

LATER

He straightens a piece of wire from the journal and scratches a mark on his skin. He stares at the wire, as a thought runs thru his mind.

LATER

CLOSE ON GUS'S EYE pressed up against the tinted plexiglass dome. He stares inside at the security camera, trying to find its blind spot.

He looks off to the wall with the projection screen and smiles. The image is Mel Gibson from "Mad Max".

Gus LAUGHS at Mel - a crazy detached laugh - before the slide CHANGES again:

-A shot of scrawny teenage Gus wearing a Karate uniform.

CUT TO:

Gus reaches into his bed and secretly pulls out the wire.

CUT TO:

Unseen by the camera, Gus uses the wire to scrape at the wall under the projection screen. He's cleared the wallpaper and drywall and starts to scrape mortar between exposed bricks.

CUT TO:

A solid brick wall.

Scraping sounds.

Suddenly, a brick is loosened and light illuminates through crack. The brick is pushed out and we see Gus's eyes peering out. He smiles at his handiwork.

CUT TO:

Gus watches a boxing match on television, concentrates on the footwork and punching. His eyes dart around calculating every movement.

He gets up, mimics the moves of the winning boxer.

CUT TO:

More bricks are disappear from the wall.

CUT TO:

We catch glimpses of images and story that spans the time of Gus's captivity. From new innovations and technology, deaths, the Berlin Wall, the Israeli Palestinian conflict. the Gulf War, court room trials, cultural phenomena, idols, television milestones, game shows, reality television, 9/11, the presidential election, the Russian school attack, invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, North Korea, the Indian Ocean tsunami. Life and death.

CUT TO:

Gus pushes his body out of the brick wall only to encounter another wall of bricks. He feels the bricks but doesn't get discouraged and starts on the second wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE OF BUILDING

It's raining. We see street signs and a glimpse of the city scape beyond the brick facade of a building.

Suddenly, a brick pops out and falls to the ground below. Fingers stretch out through the hole feeling the rain.

INT. ROOM

Gus has broken through the second wall. He takes his hand and licks the traces of water. Nothing has tasted this good.

GUS (V.O.)

I'll be out in a month. Just one more month, I'll be out. One month. Just one more month. Just one more month...

"Climb Every Mountain" comes on and once again gas begins to fill the room.

Gus rushes to cover his wall, replacing the bed in its place. Gus flops on top of the bed with a big smile on his face as he stares at the traces of rain on his hand. The slide show continues in the BG.

GUS (V.O.)

I'll need money when I get out. Should I rob or steal? No I'm just going to find that motherfucker.

Gus looks to the slide show: Sly Stallone from "Rocky". Then a Jamaican waterfall. Then a scorpion killing a frog.

GUS (V.O.)

I should eat something first. But what? Anything but fucking taquitos. No, I'll eat when he's dead. I'll eat over his rotting body. Where am I anyway? Sounds like the city. Doesn't matter where I am, I'll find him. I'll know when it's him and I'll rip out his tongue. I'll break his neck and watch him beg for death.

More slides: Gus reciving his First Communion in church. Then a horrific snarling werewolf. Then a happy face.

GUS (V.O.)

What if I get out and it's the 52nd floor? Even if I fall and die I'm still going to find him.

He turns his hand and sees the callouses on his knuckles.

GUS (V.O.)

In just one month I'm getting out. I'm getting out...

His eyes flutter and he drifts off to sleep.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS

We hear shuffling and labored breathing, which increases. Hands feeling around the space.

A lighter is ignited. The weak flame illuminates a tight space that resembles a coffin. Gus lies crammed inside. He burns his hand and the light goes out. He fires up the lighter again. He whimpers as claustrophobia sets in. Is he being buried alive? He struggles banging his hands on the structure facing him. The light goes out and his hits become stronger and stronger.

Wood splinters, LIGHT begins to shine through freshly made cracks. Gus breaks out of his confinement, shielding his eyes from the blinding sun.

Images BLUR and distort. The dawning SUN seems all too bright, like it's burning his skin.

Gus starts to freak out. Thoughts rush in and out of his mind - is he dreaming? Eyes closed, he thrusts his hands out, groping blindly for the safety of the walls - but they've disappeared.

WE PULL OUT to reveal that Gus is not out in a field at all but actually in a garden situated on top of a roof in the middle of the city.

White birds fly above Gus who sits up. He squints pass the landscape and sees the figure of:

A MAN standing on the ledge of the building. The figure, backlit, with birds flying around him resembles an angel. The figure holds his hands out feeling the slight breeze around him.

Gus feels his body when a LOUD BOOMING SOUND fills the air. He grabs his ears protecting them from the deafening din.

WE PULL OUT FURTHER to reveal that Gus is on top of a church, with its bells ringing. Gus screams at the top of his lungs - sensory overload.

GUS

Aaaagh!!!

When the sound ceases Gus moves towards the man, squinting against the light.

The man looks at Gus, nonchalant, savors a cigarette. Gus approaches him, carefully reaching out with his hands like a blind man.

Gus reaches the ledge begins to feel the man, his dark suit, his skin. He reaches over and smells his scent like a dog. Gus takes his free hand and runs it over his face. Slowly, his vision returns to him.

The man inhales his cigarette deeply.

MAN

Would this taste this good if I didn't know it was going to be my last?

The man takes one deep drag and throws the cigarette over the building. Gus watches it fall to the street below.

The man closes his eyes and falls, stretches his arms and freefalls by lying backwards -

He falls a bit then stops.

The man opens his eyes and realizes that he's virtually suspended in air. Gus has the man's tie in his hands and keeps him from falling.

Gus looks at the resigned man but keeps his grip on the tie. They stand there for a few seconds just looking at each other, precariously near the ledge.

GUS (V.O.)

Maybe this was a test. A second chance to undo what I've done. Or maybe it's fate laughing at me.

Gus reaches for the man's coat, takes out a cigarette and calmly lights it.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Gus and the man sit down by the ledge staring at each other. Gus smokes another cigarette as the man lights it.

MAN

Do you know why you were kept in there for twenty years?

GUS

He'll tell me when I find him.

Gus stares straight ahead, emotionless. No answer.

MAN

But you're free now.

Gus is starting to tire of this.

Gus stands up abruptly. He's wasting his time here.

MAN

Where you going?

Gus walk towards the rooftop door, disappears.

INT. CHURCH STAIRWAY

Gus emerges from a darkened stairwell. Ahead of him is a long corridor, peppered with sporadic colored light from a pair of STAINED GLASS windows. At the end of the hall, another MAN walks through some doors. The MAN looks back towards Gus and motions for him to follow him.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN

Gus passes through double doors into a room filled with people lining up to be served food. The man he's been following, a VOLUNTEER, pushes something at Gus. Gus CLASPS his wrist forcefully, looks down to see an empty tray. The volunteer quakes with fear-

VOLUNTEER

It's OK. Take it. There's plenty for everyone.

CUT TO:

TABLES

Around the room we focus on faces of HOMELESS PEOPLE looking up from their meals, staring at:

Gus, shovelling food into his mouth. Relishing it like it's the best thing he's ever eaten. He could care less about the eyes focused on him. He eats like a madman, eating everything in sight, except for: TAQUITOS. He carefully avoids these, reaching over at other trays and picks off food.

Soon people are moving away, protecting their turkey pot pies, frightened by his brutish behavior.

He continues to eat, sitting alone.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Burly volunteers BURST thru the doors, make a wide arc on the street in front of the soup kitchen as Gus exits, food clenched in his fists. Several more volunteers exit behind Gus, giving him a wide berth, moving cautiously as though cornering a wild animal.

Gus makes a show of intimidating them, runs at a volunteer who cowers in self-defense. The volunteers rush back inside and slam the door shut behind them. Gus LAUGHS, taking a huge bite from the food in his fist, stalks down the street.

CUT TO:

LATER

Gus walks the sidewalks, taking in the city. People, noises, smells. He's on the fringes of a business district, filled with empty, rundown buildings and boarded up shops.

EXT. BUSINESS PLAZA

He crosses into a busy area. Multiple corporations sharing a common space. Gus sees the name 'AD VANTAGE, INC.' on one of the corporate towers, keeps walking.

GUS (V.O.)

I remember this place. I used to come here all the time.

Gus stops by a tinted office window, notices his reflection. He feels his face, now aged.

GUS (V.O.)

Now it's nothing I recognize.

EXT. STREET

Gus walks along the streets gazing at the sights of newly erected buildings. He doesn't see ahead as a bike messenger steers towards him. He dodges the messenger, and inadvertently hits a parked car.

The car's alarms go on, making Gus jump back. He stares at the car as it BEEPS.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER STREET - LATER

Gus runs down the street hitting a row of parked cars and tripping their alarms. Pedestrians scatter out of his way.

He looks back smiling at the chaotic symphony he's created like some kind of mad conductor. People stare, point.

Gus turns the corner, feels something hit his leg. He looks to see a white cane and a BLIND MAN, groping the air.

BLIND MAN

Excuse me. Can you help me cross the street?

Gus pauses for a bit as the Blind Man reaches out for him. He focuses on the Blind Man's sunglasses. Instead of taking his hand, he takes the sunglasses, puts them on and walks away.

EXT. STREET

Gus sees an entrance to the subway. He runs across the street barely missing oncoming traffic. A car swerves, CRASHES into another. Another car screeches, inches from hitting him. Gus doesn't even look back before running down the stairs.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

It's rush hour.

In the back of a car, Gus hangs on to the straps as more people push their way inside. The car moves jerkily, pushing the people from one side to the other.

Bodies rub against each other. Every touch a sensual spark.

Gus's hand trembles as he looks on with a maniacal expression. Everywhere he looks - a woman's hair, nape of the neck, curve of a breast, an exposed arm. It's intoxicating. It's everywhere.

He's doing his best to resist but it's sensory overload, and it looks like he might pass out.

A woman catches a glimpse of him with this perverse smile on his face. She grimaces and moves away, but not before her hair brushes against his arm. Gus reaches ecstasy.

EXT. BRIDGE

Gus stands at the bridge, still, as hours pass by - traffic flowing behind him. He watches the sun sink. Tears well in his eyes.

EXT. PARK

Gus lays on the grass staring at the stars. His eyelids are heavy and begin to close.

GUS (V.O.)

What if this is a dream? What if I wake up back in the room and all this was just a dream? A hypothesis in my mind.

He resists...but ultimately gives in to sleep.

EXT. BUSINESS PLAZA - MORNING

Gus washes himself off using a decorative fountain in front of AD VANTAGE, INC's offices. People in suits stare at him.

An old homeless looking man approaches him. Gus looks at the man unsure if he's looking at him or not. The old man reaches into his pockets and pulls out a cell phone in one hand and a taquito in the other. Offers both to Gus.

OLD MAN

I don't know anything.

The old man walks away.

Gus is about to go after him when the phone rings. Gus stares at the phone for a few beats, unsure. Finally he puts it up to his ear.

GUS

Who is this?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

How's life in a bigger box?

Gus looks around frantic.

GUS

Show your face. Where are you?

People around him are startled.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Whether it's a pebble or a grain of sand,
in water they both sink alike.

(beat)

And eat something will ya. You're skin
and bones.

Click. The caller is gone.

Gus keeps looking around, he runs in the direction of the old man but he's disappeared.

Half-smiling and half-crying he stares at the remains of the taquito. He's crushed it in anger. This is one sick joke. Suddenly, a thought hits him.

He smells the remains of the taquito in his hand, licks it.

GUS (V.O.)

More cilantro. Not enough cilantro.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH

Gus runs into a phone booth and grabs a phone book. He flips through it and rips out pages.

EXT. CITY STREETS

Gus double checks the information on the yellow pages and looks across the street at small restaurant called BURRITO KING.

INT. BURRITO KING

Gus stares at the menu. He reaches into his pockets. No money.

CUT TO:

LATER

A CUSTOMER sits with his taquito. He eats a couple of chips then eyes the salsa bar. He gets up and leaves his plate behind.

A HAND stealthily grabs the taquito.

CUT TO:

EXT. BURRITO KING / ALLEY

Gus bites into a taquito. He swishes it in his mouth.

GUS (V.O.)
Not crunchy enough.

He spits it out and throws the taquito away.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Gus approaches a Taco stand. He spies a small table where the customers stand to leave. When they're gone, Gus goes to the table and sorts through the leftovers. Bingo! A half-eaten taquito.

He sniffs it then takes a bite. He takes a second, moves the food inside his mouth.

GUS (V.O.)
The seasoning...tastes different.

He spits it out onto the sidewalk and moves on.

EXT. ALLEY

We pan from another restaurant to the alleyway beside it. Gus is diving headfirst into a dumpster.

He comes up for air with a mouthful of food.

GUS (V.O.)
Too much onions.

EXT. STREET

Gus walks aimlessly towards another restaurant. He enters without giving a second look to the place.

CUT TO:

INT. TACO JOE'S

Gus walks in and immediately notices the dirty brown carpet. An old taco sauce stain on the floor looks vaguely like dried blood. He smells the air. His face crinkles at a familiar scent. Gus covers his nose with his hand, looks around. What he sees makes his jaw drop:

The same 70s-style wallpaper, dirty brown floors, even the plastic bubble in the corner with a surveillance camera. A projection screen displays a slide show of nature shots. It's all there! Everywhere he looks, Gus is reminded of his prison cell. The resemblance is clearly not coincidental.

GUS (V.O.)

The nostalgia is too much. I can't want it, but I do. They've twisted me into loving my cell...

Gus grows weak, slinking to the floor, dry-heaving. Patrons look at him strangely, while others simply ignore, stepping over him to get in line. For Gus it's like a twisting, inescapable nightmare. He crawls for the exit, but each movement is weak and labored. Someone holds the door open for him, a YOUNG WOMAN in a Taco Joe's T-shirt.

Gus slinks past her and out onto the sidewalk, where he collapses. The MANAGER hollers at the Young Woman.

MANAGER

Anna! Come on, we're busy.

She takes one last look at Gus, splayed out on the sidewalk, before heading inside. The door shuts closed behind her.

EXT. TACO JOE'S

With the sights and sounds blocked out, Gus can finally breathe again. He sits up on the concrete, facing away from the restaurant, refusing to look.

GUS (V.O.)

I want to burn it to the ground. Watch the people run from it screaming, their flesh on fire. But I won't. Not yet.

He scrutinizes the street he's on, the neighborhood, every person passing him on the street. His mind races to find another clue, another piece of the puzzle...

The door opens behind him once more, and black Army boots CLOMP past him, arriving at a moped parked on the sidewalk next to Gus. It's the young woman from a minute ago, Anna. She loads several delivery orders into the basket on the back of the scooter, and mounts the little bike. A magnetized placard on the moped announces its purpose:

"Taco Joe's Delivery"

Anna REVS the motor and the bike takes off down the street.

In a flash, Gus is up on his feet, sprinting down the street after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS

A steep incline. The moped PUTT-PUTTs its way up the street, fighting the pull of gravity.

After a long beat, Gus runs up the same street, struggling to keep up.

ANGLE ON HILLCREST

Gus reaches the top of the hill, panting and out of breath. Ahead of him, at the bottom of the hill, the moped picks up speed, BOTTOMS OUT, and keeps on going down the street.

GUS takes a deep breath, trudges onward.

CUT TO:

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE

Anna stands at the door while an office CLERK takes the receipt for a food order, looks for a pen.

ANNA

Here...

She removes a pen from her back pocket and turns around, offers her bare shoulder for him to write on, a mischievous look on her face. The Clerk gets an eyeful.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I've got to get a clear copy, so don't forget to press *hard*.

As he signs the receipt, the Clerk's hand shakes. When he's done, she hands him the bag, looks at the tip amount, smiles.

Anna looks around pulls out to reveal a small bag of dope between her fingers.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Dessert?

The Clerk looks around and fishes for some bills. He hands it to her and quickly pockets the drugs.

The Clerk looks past Anna to see:

GUS just arriving. He looks like he's about to pass out from the exertion. Yet he scrutinizes the Clerk like a criminal, peeking into the office behind him.

Anna just shrugs at the Clerk and leaves.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Anna gets back on her moped, casts a sidelong glance at Gus who watches her like a hawk.

ANNA

What do you want, man? You've been following me all night.

GUS

(out of breath)

An address. Somewhere you deliver.

ANNA

I don't have time for this.

GUS

Wait...

He's still catching his breath.

GUS

They order everyday. You've delivered there. Just hear me out.

ANNA

What's it worth to you?

GUS

I don't have any money. It's just the address.

She dons her helmet, starts up the bike.

ANNA

Fuck off.

She takes off down the street.

CUT TO:

INT. GAS STATION

GREASE MONKEYS ogle Anna as she approaches with their food.

GREASE MONKEY

Heya sweetness.

They line up as she hands out bags. Some search through their food until they find what they real want - dime bags.

The mechanic takes a single dollar bill and tucks it into her blouse. She pretends to be flattered.

ANNA

Ooh, a whole dollar. Are you sure?

GREASE MONKEY

Haven't had a chance to cash my check.

ANNA

Guess you'll just owe me, bitch-ass.

As she turns around to head back to the moped, she sees Gus watching from the corner.

CUT TO:

EXT. TACO JOE'S

The sun is setting in the sky as Gus walks towards the restaurant. He looks like hell, one of his pant legs is torn from a nasty fall and he's bleeding on his shins.

He walks up to the moped and feels the engine, still warm.

ANNA (O.S.)

That's him.

Gus looks up to see Anna standing beside the alley with three burly Grease Monkeys. One of them holds a crowbar.

ANNA

Meet my friends, weirdo.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEY BEHIND TACO JOE'S

Gus and the Grease Monkeys circle each other.

GUS (V.O.)

All those days boxing a fake opponent.
Can years of theory actually work in the
real world? For a moment I question if
any of this is real.

Finally, one steps up and swings the crowbar, but Gus ducks it and belts the guy twice in the ribs. Another one tries to KICK, but Gus catches his foot and yanks him off balance. He tumbles to the ground as Gus scrambles to his feet. Gus circles them, hands awkwardly at his sides.

The third Grease Monkey attacks Gus, punches him in the mouth. Gus starts to bleed and a smile spreads across his lips - he's never felt so alive.

GUS (V.O.)

Nothing is more real than blood.

Now wide awake, Gus puts his dukes up, dodges a punch, then another. Dances. The men LAUGH at him. Gus advances on them, goes to work:

Anna watches from around the corner as BAM-BAM-BAM!
Three men fall to the ground.

The Monkeys get up and two of them rush Gus. The one that stays behind unsheathes a KNIFE. Sunlight glints off the blade as he jams it into Gus' stomach. Gus still tries to fight, but he's losing too much blood.

The three attackers SPLIT the scene without a single word to Anna who stands there horrified. It's a cowardly victory.

She wants to leave, but Gus's quiet GASPS of pain echo thru the alleyway, making her pause.

As he collapses onto the dirty ground, she walks to him. Gus passes out with Anna standing over him like a priest at a funeral.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gus's eyes flutter open and look around. Is he back in the room? For a moment it seems so, until he focuses and realizes it's just a small studio apartment. The walls are decorated with an eclectic mix of found objects displayed as art. The windows are draped with a string of lights.

He realizes that he's laying on a ratty mattress on the floor.

Gus tries to move but can't. His hand is tied to the radiator. He pulls with the bit of energy he has but can't pry himself loose.

He shuts his eyes as dizziness overcomes him. He looks over to the kitchen. In the dark, he sees Anna standing over the oven, stirring something in a small pot. She looks over to him. Her mouth moves but Gus can only catch phrases.

ANNA

...it's getting infected...

Gus turns his attention to his abdomen and sees a bandage poorly applied to his side. The realization of the wound makes the pain real for Gus. He screams before passing out.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER NIGHT

Gus, now looking pale and sickly, opens his eyes. He sees Anna sitting along a wall reading his journal. She looks up at him, an angry look on her face.

ANNA

Good, you're alive. I thought I was going to have to stash you in a roll of old carpet or something.

Gus opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. He blacks out.

CUT TO:

LATER

He opens his eyes to see Anna typing on the computer, surfing the internet. The glow of the computer screen illuminates the apartment. He looks at the screen, as she scrolls thru photos of MEN. They look almost like mugshots, but they aren't. Each photo is accompanied by an address and a map.

LATER

Gus wakes up soaked in sweat. It drains his energy just to turn his head. He looks over to see Anna doing a line of coke in the bathroom.

She looks up in the mirror and sees him, kicks the door shut.

CUT TO:

LATER

The days blur. Gus opens his eyes again. Anna is going through his journals. Her face is streaked with tears.

CUT TO:

DAYS LATER

From the look of him, Gus's fever has passed. He feels something that compels his eyes to open slightly. She sees Anna carefully crawling towards him.

He closes his eyes, pretending to be out.

Anna comes close enough to poke at the bandage on his side. His face twinges in pain, but his eyes remain closed. Thinking that he's fast asleep, Anna carefully removes the old bandage and washes his wound with antiseptic. Hearing his heavy breathing, she inspects him, curious. Her eyes wander down his chest onto his abdomen. Her hand trembles as she touches the skin around the wound, which is beginning to heal nicely.

Her touch electrifies Gus. The hairs on his body stand up, electrically charged. His instincts take over and he grabs her with his free hand, pins her onto the mattress. She fights him but can't overpower his weight.

That's when he sees the fear in her eyes.

His lust quickly turns to guilt and disgust and for a moment, he hesitates. This is all the time she needs and Anna breaks free, scampering away. She gets to her feet and grabs a knife, SCREAMS at him-

ANNA

Don't ever touch me! I'll fucking kill you!

She kicks him over and over again, mercilessly. Gus takes it, so disgusted with himself he can't even look at her.

She does a line of coke off the computer table and grabs her keys. As she heads out the door she stops under the light of the hallway to glower once more at Gus-

ANNA

Shoulda let you bleed to death.

The door SLAMS shut and her army boots CLOMP down the hall.

Gus sits up. He looks over at the computer screen. The same website from before is on her screen:

A picture of some grim-faced, anonymous man stares back, accompanied by a map and an address.

CUT TO:

LATER

The clock on the wall reads 3:AM. Anna comes home, stumbling drunk and crying. Gus immediately sits up, watches her as she goes to the closet and unceremoniously strips to her bra and panties, wiping away tears. She clumsily puts on sweats and a T-shirt.

GUS

What's wrong?

She ignores him, and heads over to the computer table. She does a line of coke before heading towards the bathroom. He pulls at his restraints.

GUS

How long you going to keep me here?

The bathroom door SLAMS shut. Gus is alone again.

CUT TO:

NEXT MORNING

Gus wakes to Anna WHISTLING as she flips over some bacon on the griddle. She looks over to see Gus.

ANNA

Looks like you're pretty much healed.

Gus sits up. She grabs a knife.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Getting pretty strong too.

Gus doesn't answer. She walks over and puts a plate of bacon and eggs on the mattress in front of him. He stares at it.

A moment later she returns with a duffel bag, drops it on the ground. Inside are Gus's journals and a change of clothes. She places black pants and a black dress shirt on the bed.

ANNA

That's the good thing about men: when they leave, they leave.

She sits down to eat. Gus wolfs down the bacon and eggs, ravenous, sopping up the remnants with a piece of toast.

ANNA

After this you're free to go.

He stops eating, looks up at her.

GUS

What about the address?

ANNA

What address?

GUS

I'm not leaving till I get it.

She throws her fork at him. Then the whole plate of food.

ANNA

The hell you are motherfucker! You leave and you stay the fuck away!

As Gus wipes scrambled eggs of his head, Anna uncaps a can of pepper spray. Gus watches as she goes over to the radiator and unties him. He rubs his wrists, red from the restraints.

ANNA

Get out.

She goes over to the phone, taking it off the receiver.

Gus sits there, motionless.

ANNA

Get OUT!

Gus gets up and walks out the door. She looks over at his journals.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNA'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Gus exits the building to see one of his journals on the ground. He looks up in time to see another journal hurtling at him, ducks out of the way.

ANNA is at her window, chucking all of Gus' things out. He just watches her calmly until she's done, slamming her window shut. Then he goes about gathering up all his stuff.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL HOME

Anna stands at the door of a suburban house as a TEENAGE GIRL counts quarters from a piggy bank.

TEENAGE GIRL

Elevvvvvv-en... twelvvvvve. There you go! Keep the change.

She gives Anna a handful of coins. The girl takes her food and closes the door.

Anna SIGHS, heads back to her scooter. Gus emerges from behind a tree, catching her off guard. She tries to get on her scooter, but he takes the key from the ignition.

ANNA

I'll scream.

GUS

I will leave you alone if you give me what I want.

She looks at him defiantly.

ANNA

Is it true? Those things you wrote in the books?

GUS

Yes.

ANNA

Your daughter's still alive. Have you even tried looking for her?

He looks away, takes a step back.

ANNA

You're so consumed by revenge you ignored the most important part.

(beat)

Look, I'll make you a deal. You go find your dau-

Gus violently clutches her throat, shaking her.

GUS

You don't know anything about me you fucking little cunt! You give me that address or I swear to fucking God I'll snap your neck like a twig.

Anna GAGS, eyes watering. He lets up enough for her to COUGH in his face, smile weakly-

ANNA
Fuggcck... Youuu..

Gus releases her and she collapses to the ground.

GUS
Fuck me?! Fuck YOU!

He KICKS a soda can, TOPPLES a trash can, paces back and forth in front of the scooter. An elderly woman across the street watches from her window. Seeing this, Gus walks back to Anna, helping her up.

GUS
Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS

Anna and Gus walk along the street. Gus looks at her, unsure.

EXT. BUILDING

Anna turns into a building entrance.

Gus looks up and reads the sign: CHILD WELFARE SERVICES. He stops.

Anna turns back to him.

Gus backs up and walks away. He goes over to concrete steps nearby and takes a seat, just staring at the building entrance. Suddenly, he begins to WEEP. It's heartbreaking, the culmination of all the loss, all the pain.

GUS
(thru tears)
She's happy somewhere. Somewhere I don't fit.

He gets up and walks away. Anna watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Anna's studio is empty. Keys jangle as she opens the door, still in her work clothes.

She looks around for Gus, drops her grocery bag into the small dining table and walks around. She looks out the window but sees nothing. Lights a cigarette. Out of the corner of her eye, she spies the journals neatly stacked.

She then hears the sound of the shower running. She goes up to the bathroom door and touches it, slightly smiling to herself.

INT. BATHROOM

Gus stands underneath the shower as steam envelopes him. He carefully soaps himself, avoiding his wound. Layers of dirt wash away from his body, onto the tub, and down the drain. He takes out his bandage and cleans his wound, cringing.

LATER

Gus stands in front of the bathroom mirror and wipes the steam off the surface. We see Gus's reflection. He touches his face, the deep wrinkles now embedded. He moves to the scraggly beard covering his chin.

Gus glances over the bathroom sink. He opens a drawer and carefully inspects it, then another. In the second drawer, he finds a box of miscellaneous toiletries for men. He picks up a disposable shaver and turns it over in between his fingers.

INT. APARTMENT

Gus walks out of the bathroom, now cleaned and groomed. His hair, still long is now combed through and his beard has been shaved off. He's cleaned up rather nicely.

Anna looks at him, taken aback.

CUT TO:

LATER

Gus sits at the small kitchen table opposite Anna. Take out containers litter the table.

They sit there waiting for the other to eat. They catch each others' eyes but quickly look away.

Gus takes his chopsticks and carefully moves his food with it and takes a small bite, consciously controlling himself.

Anna looks on, amused. Suddenly, she takes a huge chunk of broccoli and shoves it in her mouth. Gus watches her as she puts more in her mouth. She begins to laugh, spitting broccoli out, breaking the ice. Gus looks at her and smiles. He begins to feel more at ease and begins to dig in.

CUT TO:

LATER

Anna clears her plate as Gus finishes his food.

ANNA

Not the best orange chicken in the world,
but it's cheap.

Gus finishes chewing, tries to come up with conversation.

GUS

It was good.

Anna takes the plates to the sink nearby and deposits them.

ANNA

Guess anything's a step up for you.

Gus flinches at the statement. Anna catches herself.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I mean, in a good way. Talk about rock
bottom, right? From this point forward,
nothing can be worse than what you've
already been thru. You know how many
people wish they could say that? That
they moved on.

He stares ahead blankly. He isn't moving on from anything.

LATER

Bedtime. Gus takes a seat on top of the mattress. He watches Anna on her computer, once again scrolling thru faces of men and maps.

GUS

What's that?

ANNA

Found it by accident and now I'm hooked.

(beat)

It's a list of registered sex offenders. You can look up any address in the Unites States and it'll tell you how many of them are in your area. I memorized my delivery area, so I know what houses to stay away from.

Gus nods, mildly interested.

She clicks off the computer and walks over to him. She turns his wrist over and sees the scars from self inflicted wounds, running her fingers over them. She looks at him, curious.

ANNA

Does it still hurt?

Gus takes her own hand and lifts her sleeve. She protests a bit but he holds her hand in place with some force.

REVEAL: She too has scars on her wrists, albeit much older.

He touches them the same way she touched his. Anna pulls her hand away, places her head on his shoulder. He lets her.

CUT TO:

NEXT MORNING

Gus stirs awake. He sits up and sees Anna fully dressed, getting ready for work.

She walks over to the door, holds it open.

ANNA

Come on, let's go.

Gus stares at her a BEAT before springing to his feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - DAY

Gus rides on the back of Anna's scooter as she pilots it down grimy streets, past factories and warehouses. An industrial wasteland that seems worlds away from the urban sprawl.

She finds the address and stops the bike. As Gus gets off the scooter, we see that he holds a HAMMER. He looks at the building:

It's a nondescript storage facility called, "STOR-4-U."

EXT. STOR-4-U

Gus approaches the front door. It's locked. Anna walks up behind him to a keypad on the door, enters three digits.

The door CLICKS.

ANNA

Hope you find what you're looking for.

She gets back on the scooter and leaves. Gus opens the door.

INT. STOR-4-U - MOMENTS LATER

A GUARD watches a re-run on a shitty TV. FOOTSTEPS behind him. He waves dismissively, not looking up.

GUARD

Leave it by the door.

The FOOTSTEPS continue. By the time the Guard looks up, it's too late-

WHAM! A hammer smashes him across the nose. Gus stands above him, glowering.

INT. STOR-4-U - OFFICE

A small and cluttered office. A bank of MONITORS fills the entire wall.

Each monitor is a window into a different cell, similar to the one inhabited by Gus. Various PRISONERS are seen in utter seclusion.

The Office Manager, TOPH HARPER, is a slick-dressed man in his late forties. He paces the room talking on a headset.

TOPH
(on phone)
We don't do celebrities or people with
bodyguards. No mafiosi either. Just the
small fries. If it's over six weeks
we'll waive the transportation fee.

A COMMOTION outside gets Toph's attention. He stops pacing, looks up at the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Toph sits strapped to his chair with duct tape. Gus now stands in front of the monitors, watching the prisoners.

GUS
All your fucking little windows...
Reminds me of an ant farm. Do you like
ants, Toph?

Toph doesn't answer.

GUS
Somebody does. Who likes ants this much,
Toph?

TOPH
I wouldn't know. Stor-4-U is a
completely confidential business.

Gus reaches over, grabbing Toph by the balls, twisting. Toph YOWLS in pain and Gus shoves a rag in his mouth.

Gus grabs the roll of duct tape.

TIME CUT:

Toph has been duct taped so that his mouth is propped open. Gus brings the hammer into his line of sight.

GUS
I'm taking one for every year.

Toph PROTESTS nonsensically, tries to talk, but his mouth won't move. Gus puts the claw-end of the hammer into Toph's mouth, finds a tooth. Toph breathes frantically, SCREAMS. His tongue touches the cold metal of the hammer as a trickle of blood falls from his gums.

Gus cranks the hammer as though removing a stubborn nail.

ANGLE ON KEYBOARD

As Toph WAILS, we see a bloody tooth drop to the keyboard. It joins several other bloody teeth.

ANGLE ON TOPH

The rag is back in his mouth, though now it's a bright crimson from soaking up blood.

GUS

You feel like talking now?

Toph GARGLES in the affirmative, his voice broken and shaky.

Gus removes the rag, cuts Toph' mouth free.

TOPH

I don't know his name. I never even saw his face.

Gus isn't happy about this. He stretches out another piece of duct tape, ready to pull more teeth-

TOPH

But I recorded it!

CUT TO:

INT. STOR-4-U - FILE ROOM

Gus finds a box with his name on it. He opens it to find an envelope and an AUDIO TAPE.

He stuffs it all into his pockets.

CUT TO:

INT. STOR-4-U - CORRIDOR

Gus holds a hammer to Toph's throat, the rag in his mouth dripping with blood.

In front of him is a hallway filled with MEN, each holding a weapon of some kind. There must be at least twenty.

GUS

AB blood types raise your hand.

After a few awkward moments, someone in the middle raises his hand. Gus pushes Toph toward him.

GUS

Hurry up. He's lost a lot already.

The man in the middle takes Toph, carries him out. The rest of the men glare at Gus, who charges into them with the hammer blazing.

The men attack Gus from all sides. He's hit many times, but he never goes down. He is a whirling dervish, swinging the hammer with exactitude and ferocity. For every blow that Gus receives, he dishes out five. Knee caps, elbows, jaws - all SHATTER from Gus' blows.

When they gang up on him, stomping and kicking him on the ground, Gus fights back, smashing toes and shins. He picks men up and topples them over. It's a ballet of knuckles, blood, and pain.

One by one, the men drop like flies. He fights his way through the men, all the way down the hall.

DING! The elevator has arrived. Gus looks as the door opens, twelve more THUGS cram the elevator ready to fight.

Gus smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOR-4-U - DAY

Gus exits to the street. In the doorway behind him, a sea of limping, GROANING thugs. Gus is the only one that walks away, hands and face covered in blood. He looks a mess.

A Man on the street runs up to him. Gus is weakened, teetering on the brink of unconsciousness.

MAN

Sir, are you alright?

The Man hails a cab, puts Gus into it. Gus looks up and is shocked at what he sees: it's the same suicidal Man he met on the roof of the building. Coincidence?

MAN

I have to thank you. You've given me something to live for.

The Man PUNCHES Gus in the nose, blood gushes.

As Gus blacks out, the Man SMILES.

MAN

Pleasant dreams, Gus.

He closes the door, slaps the taxi as it speeds off.

CUT TO:

EXT. AD VANTAGE, INC. - CORPORATE TOWER

Gus awakens next to a couple HOMELESS GUYS, blinking up at the Ad Vantage Inc. corporate tower. He gets up weakly, goes to a fountain, washes off the blood.

Suddenly, doors swing open and a multitude of suit-wearing corporate employees trickle out of the building.

Gus scans everyone until his eyes rest on one man:

It's MIKE.

Gus stares at his old friend as he walks with colleagues down the courtyard and past the fountain. Though Mike passes within a few feet of Gus he doesn't see him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRIP MALL - LATER

Gus follows from a respectful distance as Mike and his work buddies walk to a familiar run-down strip mall. It's Franklin's Bar.

INT. FRANKLIN'S BAR

A mellow neighborhood staple. Mostly locals and businessmen.

Gus is seated at a stool. He watches Mike thru the mirror behind the bar, sips a beer poured from the tap.

ANGLE ON MIKE flirting with a couple of WOMEN half his age. They younger women aren't impressed by Mike, but accept the free drinks. When Mike's back is turned one of the girls makes a face to her friend.

Gus laughs, forgetting himself. A fly on the wall of bygone days. Then, catching his own reflection in the mirror, it all comes back to him. He suddenly gets a look of revulsion, storms out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANKLIN'S BAR

Gus pushes his way out of the door, and almost vomits on the sidewalk. The fresh air makes him feel better.

EXT. STRIP MALL

Gus walks slowly down the strip mall, looking in at all the stores.

INT. LIQUOR STORE

We see Gus walk by the window, then stop. He recognizes this place. It used to be the children's store.

The door opens and a BELL rings.

The young CLERK scrutinizes Gus as he walks in, looking around. When it's clear he's not going to buy anything-

CLERK

You lost man?

GUS

This place. It used to be a kid's store, right?

The Clerk shrugs, gives him a menacing look. Gus pays no mind, walks thru the aisles, remembering.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANKLIN'S BAR

Mike exits the bar drunk, SINGING old Billy Joel. He sloppily lights a cigarette, when he hears his name. Turns around to see Gus standing there.

TOPH (V.O.)
(on tape)
Anyone, anywhere, anyhow...

Mike stares at Gus for several moments before a look of recognition comes over him. He lunges at his old friend, hugging him. Tears gush down his red cheeks. A mess.

TOPH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We'll make them suffer...you can watch
for a little extra.

By contrast, Gus' face is a mask of cold indifference.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bachelor's apartment to a fault. Mike and Gus sit on his black leather couch, listen to the audio cassette. Mike smokes once again.

VOICE (V.O.)
I want him gone a long time, but I don't
want him crazy. Angry, desperate,
vengeful, yes. Crazy, no.

TOPH (V.O.)
You're in good hands. We have
medication. Anti-psychotics. Quite
effective in most cases. We've seen it
work well up to five years. No doubt
longer. But I guess it all depends on
the duration. So how long is he...

VOICE (V.O.)
Twenty years.

Long silence.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought the length was up to me.

TOPH (V.O.)
What did he do?

VOICE (V.O.)

Gus, you see... he talks too much.

CLICK. Gus stops the tape. He looks up at Mike.

GUS

Who hates me this much?

Mike thinks about it, takes a long drag.

MIKE

Whoever he is, I hope I don't know him.

Gus stands, walks to the window looking out at the city. Mike's apartment has an impressive view.

GUS

Mike... Was I a good friend?

Mike picks up his glass of whiskey and walks over to Gus.

MIKE

Have a drink Gus. Like old times.

Gus shakes his head. Mike walks back to the table, sees the ENVELOPE on the floor, opens it. Gus looks at the envelope then over to Mike.

MIKE (CONT'D)

An invoice...

(scanning the page)

Dated a few days ago.

CLOSE ON PAPER:

"Thank you for your business! Final amount due:
\$7,000.00"

And an address, "1616 Whitley Terrace, Unit D"

CUT TO:

EXT. 1616 WHITLEY TERRACE - NIGHT

Gus stands outside for several moments before entering the building.

INT. 1616 WHITLEY TERRACE

Gus takes the stairs two at a time until he's standing outside Unit D. The door is open a crack. Gus pushes it open. He tries the lights, but the electricity is out.

INT. UNIT D

The apartment is barren. If anyone lived here before they're long gone now. Still, Gus moves cautiously in the dark apartment.

LIVING ROOM

Gus rounds the corner to see a light on. Two men stand there. One is dressed casually, a genial smile on his face. This is STEVEN. The other is large and muscled, dressed in a suit and tie. Steven's bodyguard, LARRY.

We recognize Steven as the same man who put him in the taxi. The suicidal man on the roof. Gus stops dead in his tracks.

STEVEN

You should've stuck around to hear my story.

In a rage, Gus charges and SLAMS him against the wall. Larry springs into action, bringing a knife against Gus's throat.

Steven holds his hand up, signalling Larry to back off.

GUS

Who are you?

Steven smiles. Gus SHAKES him.

GUS (CONT'D)

Tell me!

STEVEN

(cold as steel, with a smile)
You'll have to earn it.

His smug reaction confuses Gus a bit, but escalates his rage.

GUS

(gritting through his teeth)
I'm gonna fucking rip your heart out.

STEVEN
 (shrugging)
 Then you'll never know why I locked you
 up.

Gus's mind races at the implication of Steven's words.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
 Can you really live with that?

GUS
 Fuck you!

STEVEN
 You have five days to find out...

GUS
 FUCK YOU!!!

STEVEN
 After that, I'll kill *everything* you ever
 loved.

Gus's hand wraps around Steven's throat and he begins to
 squeeze.

Steven SNAPS his fingers and Larry drops a needle on a
 turntable. A record plays "Climb Every Mountain." Gus
 falls to the floor, crumbling limply in a heap. Steven
 steps over him.

As Gus writhes on the floor, paralyzed by the song,
 Steven looks outside the wall of glass, across to another
 building.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
 You're really horrible at protecting your
 women.

Gus eyes struggle to look at Steven.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
 Like I said: be it a pebble or grain of
 sand, in water they both sink alike.
 (singing)
 Follow every byway, every path you know.
 Climb every mountain...

He nods to Larry the bodyguard and they head out.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
 You have five days.

Gus strains to look out the window.

He sees straight into Anna's apartment. She walks towards the door as MEN force their way into the apartment. They grab onto her. She struggles as they violently force themselves upon her...

We PAN back towards Gus's face as he watches on. The rage and pain he feels at what he sees sends tears down his cheek. He can't turn away, forces himself not to close his eyes and watch the horror unfold.

Suddenly, the song ends and the needle returns to its cradle.

The effects of the song ends and Gus retains power over his body and is able to move once again. Without missing a beat, Gus rushes out of the apartment.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNA'S APARTMENT

As Gus approaches the apartment, he sees it's open. He rushes in to find-

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT

The place is in shambles. Several THUGS from the Stor-4-U fight are crowded in, waiting for Gus. Many of them wear bandages and walk with limps.

ANNA SOBS when Gus enters, still tied up. Face bloody.

A KNIFE is pressed against Gus' throat and he's forced into a seat. TOPH pulls up a chair across from him, smiles. His front teeth have been replaced by PLATINUM FILLERS.

TOPH

Like 'em? Teeth are replaceable.

Toph walks over to Anna.

TOPH (CONT'D)

I'm going to take something you can't replace.

Toph runs his hands over her body - a show especially for Gus, who struggles futilely.

Two men force Gus to face Toph, who walks over towards them. One of his goons hands Gus a serrated hunting knife, which he points at Gus's heart. Slowly her runs the knife towards Gus's groin.

Gus squirms as the knife brushes his pelvis. Toph makes a lunging motion -

Gus eyes closes as he screams with the hand muffling his cry -

But nothing happens. Gus was toying with him. The thugs LAUGH as Toph leans in close to Gus.

TOPH (CONT'D)

We always imagine it worse than it really is.

(beat)

Now get ready for the real thing...

Toph puts the claw in Gus' mouth again, only this time finding a tooth.

KNOCK-KNOCK!

Toph and company stop. At the door is Larry, Steven's henchman. He holds a briefcase.

TOPH (CONT'D)

What's this?

Larry FLIPS open the briefcase to reveal row after row of neatly stacked hundreds. Toph smiles that platinum smile, takes the briefcase.

TOPH (CONT'D)

(to Gus)

Lucky sonuva...

(to his men)

Let's go.

They all start to head out, but Toph gets a change of heart. Taking a bat from one of his men, he rushes back over to Gus and STRIKES him. Then, straightening himself, Toph and the thugs head out.

GUS

Stay.

Toph stops at the door.

TOPH

What?

Gus weakly crawls on the floor behind him.

GUS
Stay... and fight.

A few of them SNICKER.

GUS (CONT'D)
I'm gonna cut your hands off.

Toph sneers, exits the apartment.

GUS (CONT'D)
You hear me?

INT. HALLWAY

As Toph and his men exit, Gus's voice echoes behind them-

TOPH
(to his men)
What about my tongue?

They all LAUGH, continue down the hall.

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT

Gus shuts the door. He turns his attention to Anna who quietly whimpers. He crawls partway then struggles to stand. Gaining his balance, he walks over to her and undoes the gag in her mouth.

With the gag gone, she gasps for air, sobbing. She tries to scream but her dry throat won't allow it.

Gus works her hands free from the binds. First one hand then the other. Exhausted, she falls into his arms. He barely has any energy left to catch her. She finally stands on her own and pushes away from him.

She looks into his eyes. His apologetic. Hers seething with anger.

With blinding speed, she cocks her hand back and SLAPS him. Hard.

He doesn't react to the slap. Her anger mounts and she slaps him AGAIN.

Soon her anger turns to despair and she begins to cry.

Gus tries to comfort her trying to wrap his arms around her. She tries to get away from him pushing back but he overpowers her. With closed fists, she beats at his chest, but her energy's waning.

ANNA

You did this!!!

She finally falls into his arms, sobbing into his chest.

Without a word, Gus lets Anna take her anger out until she's spent.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Fuck you!!!

With a delicate touch we've never seen from Gus, he holds her face into his hands. He wipes the smeared mascara running from her eyes.

GUS

(in a whisper)

I won't let anything happen to you again.

She looks up at him.

GUS (CONT'D)

I promise.

Her anger subsides. Anna falls into his arms, exhausted.

CUT TO:

LATER

Gus lays on the mattress, awake. He strokes her hair. Anna is curled up next to him grabbing onto him like a security blanket, sleeping.

She stirs in her sleep. She gasps and sits up, breathing hard. She wakes from a nightmare, looks around the room.

Gus sits up behind her.

GUS

I'm right here. You were having a nightmare.

She looks over to him, touches his face to reassure herself. Satisfied, she shifts and lies on his lap. He strokes her hair.

GUS (CONT'D)

Go back to sleep.

Gus keeps stroking her hair to try and soothe her. She pushes his hand away, roughly.

ANNA

Don't.

Gus puts his hand back on her hair. She tries to push him away again.

Gus catches her hands and holds them like a vice. Then he releases them gently and puts his hand back on her hair and strokes it again.

Anna looks away and lies down facing away from him. Tears stream down from her face.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I can't make it stop.

There's a brief silence except for Anna's sniffing. She wipes her eyes.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I was fourteen. My grandpa was a preacher. I was his perfect granddaughter. Always attended Sunday School at the church...

She struggles to continue - she needs to let this out.

ANNA (CONT'D)

One Sunday after class, the teacher asked me to stay late to help him clean up.

She gets choked up in tears.

ANNA (CONT'D)

His hands were so strong. I couldn't stop him. I tried...

Gus closes his eyes pained for her.

ANNA (CONT'D)

When I told my grandpa, he just looked at me in this way. Like I did something wrong. Like it was my fault. He said he would take care of it, but he did nothing.

(beat)

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

So every Sunday I had to face this monster and I couldn't say a word. He'd just smile and act like nothing happened. I'd see him places, around town, always with that same, sick smile.

GUS

You're safe here.

She breaks down, sobbing. As Gus holds her, he can't see the concern that slowly washes over her face. It's clear she doesn't believe him.

CUT TO:

MORNING

Gus wakes still in his bloodied clothes. He rubs his eyes and sees that Anna is already gone.

LATER

Gus is wiping down her table. He gathers some loose change, Everything is in its place and organized. After wiping the table, Gus inspects his work.

CUT TO:

LATER

Gus opens the small refrigerator and peers in. He takes a survey of what's in there, but there's not much.

He closes the door and thinks for a second before walking back to the table. He looks into the bowl and dips his finger inside, pushing the money around, counting it in his head. He pauses for a beat and thinks for a second.

CUT TO:

EXT. BODEGA

Gus walks out of the bodega with a bag full of groceries. He pauses outside as he walks by the fresh flower stand. He stares at the flower and at the woman cutting the stems off the flowers.

He reaches into his pocket and counts what money he has left. He looks over the flowers and spots a pretty but inexpensive bouquet.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Gus stares at her small dining table. The table is set for a dinner he's cooked. The flowers have been placed into a makeshift vase in the middle of the setting.

He goes over to a basket near the entry way and grabs some matchbooks. He takes one and lights candles, tosses the matchbooks aside. He looks at everything, pleased.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT - LATER

The candles have burned down. One has blown out completely.

Gus sits in one of the chairs staring at the clock on the wall. Anna's late. Frustrated, he walks towards the window and looks outside.

After a few moments, he comes back to the table. He notices the blown out candle and goes for the matchbooks. He lights the candle and takes a look at the matchbook cover. It's a picture of a cue ball with the number 13. On the opposite end, the words: CLUB 13. He looks over to the other matchbooks and they are all the same.

EXT. CLUB THIRTEEN

Gus walks up to small unassuming doors and a large glass window. It's more a neighborhood bar than an actual club, but it's got music blasting inside and it's packed.

Gus peers in through the window and sees Anna inside. She has a drink in hand and flirtatiously leans against a wall as a YOUNG MAN stands over her, his hand bracing the wall. The young man leans in and kisses her neck. She turns away, sees Gus staring at her through the window. She looks away from Gus and pulls the Young Man closer to her, giving him a deep long kiss.

He's seen enough. Gus charges through the doors.

INT. CLUB THIRTEEN

Gus plows through the mostly young crowd. He sticks out like a sore thumb.

He pushes people aside brusquely until he finds Anna in the back corner with the young man. She looks briefly at Gus then tries to ignore him.

Gus moves the Young Man aside and takes Anna by her hand.

ANNA

I needed a drink.

The Young Man has spilled his drink on himself, looks at Gus perturbed.

YOUNG MAN

This guy bothering you?

Gus whirls around and looks at the Young Man with an angry but focused expression.

GUS

Leave.

He turns from him, in condescending fashion, trains his attention back to Anna.

GUS (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Anna rips her hand from his.

ANNA

I'm not going anywhere. Leave me alone.

She moves towards the young man and wraps her arm around him. She looks straight into Gus' eyes and then kisses the Young Man in front of him, her hand trailing down to his crotch.

YOUNG MAN

(shit-eating grin)

I think she likes me.

Gus grabs onto Anna once again and drags her with him. She tries to fight but can't free herself.

The Young Man grabs onto Gus' shoulder and turns him around.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Listen, you old fuck...

BIG MISTAKE.

Without letting go of Anna's hand. Gus swings at the Young Man. CRUNCH!!! Gus connects with the Young Man's nose and blood flies everywhere. The Young Man staggers back and falls to the ground.

He grabs Anna, but she fights him tooth and nail, makes a scene. SECURITY shows up. A BOUNCER pushes up on Gus, but - BAM! - he gets a face full of fist. She SCREAMS.

Gus drags Anna out, almost carrying her out the door.

The crowd keeps away from Gus, not wanting to receive his wrath, while others go in the aid of the Young Man, whose face is covered in his own blood.

EXT. CLUB THIRTEEN

Gus carries Anna out the door in a giant bear hug. She kicks and screams.

ANNA

Let me go, you asshole!

Gus puts her down.

GUS

Stop screaming.

ANNA

Fuck you.

GUS

You want to act like a little girl, I'm going to treat you like one.

Anna struggles a bit more then realizes it's no use.

ANNA

You're hurting me.

Gus puts her down and but keeps hold of her hand. He walks down the street pulling her behind him.

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT

Gus drags Anna inside and pushes her into the apartment roughly. Anna almost falls by the force. She comes inside the apartment and looks around. She stares at the set-up in the dining table. Gus stands there embarrassed by everything. She looks over to him.

He doesn't answer.

She walks over to the table, then suddenly swipes the setting off with her hand sending dishes to the floor.

Gus looks at her stunned and hurt - it's not the reaction he was hoping for.

ANNA

I didn't ask for this.

She takes a snort of cocaine. Gus walks over to her.

GUS

How long you been doing that shit?

Anna takes a swing at him but he catches her hand.

ANNA

Get the fuck out. I want you to leave.

She tries to push him towards the door.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Just like everyone else. You get your fix then your gone!

She hits him with her fists. One lands cutting Gus on the lip. He tries to catch her flailing arms as she begins to attack. Tears are streaming from her face. Gus finally grabs hold of her hands.

GUS

That was the past. That's not me.

ANNA

It never changes.

She struggles again but Gus restrains her. In the heat of the struggle, Gus grabs her face and kisses her. She resists. For a moment.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Leave me alone.

Then the passion takes over. Soon they are grasping at each others' bodies. Taking off clothes while their lips devour each other. This release is heated and just about as violent as their struggle.

They tumble towards the mattress. Their bodies cling to each other in desperation.

Undressed, Gus lays on top of Anna kissing her breasts and moving up her neck until finding her lips.

Anna moans in ecstasy. She grabs his head forcefully and feeds him with a kiss.

They begin to make love.

CLOSE on Anna's face - a cross between pain and pleasure. She bites her lip to keep from screaming, as Gus enters her. They make passionate love, that's mixed with fear, violence and love.

TIME CUT:

Gus and Anna lie naked in each other's arms. He strokes her arm gently. She closes her eyes. Bliss.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM

Gus and Anna take a bath together, take turns soaping each other up. She splashes him, LAUGHS.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM

The drone of a hairdryer. Anna sits on the floor, head bowed as Gus kneels behind her blow-drying her hair with one hand, brushing it out with the other.

Finally, he turns the machine off. As he continues brushing, she lets off a satisfied sigh.

LATER

Anna leans back against Gus. Suddenly, she looks at him. Her face grows serious. Anna gets up, goes to the closet. She pulls out a shoebox, brings it over to the bed.

GUS

What are you doing?

ANNA

Something I should've done a long time ago.

She opens the box and we see that it's filled with mementos. Pictures of old boyfriends, love letters, poems.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I don't know why I held on to these for so long.

She grabs a pair of scissors, starts cutting pictures in half, throws them in the trash.

Gus looks at a poem, but she snaps it out of his hand, tosses it in the trash.

She cuts and cuts and cuts. Picture after picture falls into the trash, ex-boyfriend after ex-boyfriend.

She takes the whole box and turns it over, dumping everything into the trash. A total purging. Anna finds this somewhat exhilarating.

Gus looks down at a picture. Something about the face pulls him closer. The color begins to drain from his face.

CLOSE ON PHOTO:

One that Anna didn't cut yet. A familiar face. He has his arms around Anna, their hair mussed.

GUS staggers back in shock. He looks at Anna as though she just plunged a knife into his belly.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What?

She goes to him, takes a look at the picture. Gus can't look at her. He shoves the picture back.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(with growing alarm)

That's Steven. We just went on a few dates.

GUS

It's HIM.

ANNA

Who?

Anna is starting to panic.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What do you mean?

Now he looks at her full on. His gaze overpowering, condemning.

GUS

How did you meet?

ANNA

Online.

BEAT. Then the inevitable moment of dread-

GUS

Did you FUCK him?

She looks away, eyes averted. He takes a deep breath.

GUS (CONT'D)

Do you still talk?

ANNA

Sometimes.

GUS

Online or-

ANNA

Yes fucking online!

GUS

Log on. See if he's there.

CUT TO:

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Anna sits in front of the computer screen. Gus paces behind.

ON SCREEN: Her buddy list displays the name "Evergreen".

ANNA

He's on.

GUS

Talk to him.

ANNA

Gus...

GUS

Talk to him goddammit!

She clicks on "Evergreen" and an Instant Messenger window pops open. Immediately, Evergreen types:

"Hello Gus. Was she good?"

Gus PUNCHES the wall, losing his mind.

GUS (CONT'D)

He watches my every move.

ANNA

I can't do this right now.

Gus stares at the screen name, pacing.

Another message follows:

"You have three days."

Evergreen disappears from her buddy list. On screen it says:

"Evergreen has logged off."

Gus paces once again. Anna feels terrible, starts to cry.

GUS

Can't fucking believe this!

But his words only make it worse. She can't stop now. He grabs her up in a tight embrace, almost too tight.

Anna sobs into his strong arms. She feels both comfort and uncertainty. Security mixed with abject fear.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mike sits behind a big desk. In his hand he holds the picture of Steven. Only now, Anna has been cut out.

Gus and Anna sit opposite, studying Mike's face.

MIKE

Someone's been cut out.

GUS

Nevermind that. Look at the face.

Mike stares hard.

MIKE

And you say his name is Steve?

GUS

Steven. Last name, Riordan.

MIKE

Riordan, Riordan...

(beat)

I don't know this guy.

(beat)

Hey wait, remember Telly from high school? He runs a software company that finds people online. Maybe we could-

Gus stops in his tracks - a moment of realization.

ANNA

His screen name's Evergreen if that helps?

MIKE

Evergreen..?

Gus slowly turns to Mike.

GUS

Mike...high school.

Gus and Mike look at each other, a sudden realization.

MIKE

Are you shitting me?

ANNA

What?

GUS

Mike and I went to a school called the Evergreen Academy. I transferred to St. Joe's my sophomore year. It can't be a coincidence.

They sit in stunned silence. A connection has been made.

MIKE

I don't remember any Steven Riordan.
Then again, I can barely remember
college.

ANNA

We need a yearbook.

MIKE

Don't look at me. I lost mine years ago.

Gus gets up-

GUS

I'm going down there.

MIKE

It's two hours away.

GUS

Give me your keys. I'm borrowing your
car.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gus drives. Leather seats, moon roof, the whole nine.

EXT. EVERGREEN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Gus drives up to the high school, parks in front. Anna gets out, stretches her legs looking around. The school is a cluster of old brick buildings surrounded by trees and greenery. Old school - old money.

Gus looks around at the campus, the wheels of memory turning.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Anna sits with Gus, flipping through a yearbook. A LIBRARIAN scrutinizes them.

He gets to the 'R's. But there is no Steven.

GUS

No Steven Riordan in any grade.

ANNA

Maybe it's not his real name. We should just look at the faces.

He slides the book aside, frustrated. He looks out the window. Meanwhile, Anna opens the book again, flips to thru the women's section.

GUS (V.O.)

High school was a prison I left and never looked back. Now I'm forced to look, but I can't see a thing. What crime committed here could deserve such a punishment?

An envelope falls out, Gus picks it up. It's a coupon for a hair salon called Susan's Hair Creations. He looks at it for a beat before pocketing it.

GUS (CONT'D)

That's the girls' section.

ANNA

I know. I saw something...

She stops at a name: Caroline Riordan.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Caroline Riordan.

The name strikes a chord with Gus. His mind races, he looks around as if the walls are closing in on him.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Do you remember her?

He looks out the window to a kiosk in front of the school. A GIRL stands there, holding her book bag, waiting to be picked up. Gus stares at her, something about the visual brings him back to...

CUT TO:

EXT. EVERGREEN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A strikingly beautiful girl with long brunette hair and piercing blue eyes stands by the same kiosk, years earlier. This is CAROLINE RIORDAN, 17. She looks around the empty parking lot waiting for someone.

YOUNG GUS stands nearby on his bike, smoking a cigarette. He looks at his watch, then glances up at Caroline. She flashes a quick smile then turns away, coyly.

Gus stares at her, awestruck. Slowly, he approaches.

She senses him coming, tries to look busy by looking at the kiosk, full of flyers and announcements.

Gus clears his throat. She is looking at a flyer.

CLOSE ON the flyer - an audition for a play: MEDEA.

GUS (cont'd)

You thinking about auditioning?

Awkward silence.

GUS (CONT'D)

You should. I bet you'll get it.

Caroline smiles.

CAROLINE

Oh yeah? How about you?

Gus scoffs.

GUS

Me? I was in the sixth grade production of 'The Sound of Music' and I forgot all the songs except one: 'Climb Every Mountain.'

CAROLINE

That's my favorite song from my favorite musical.

(beat)

I think actors are really cool.

GUS

Why would I wanna be cool?

Caroline looks at the cigarette. Gus looks at it too, which he flicks to the floor and stamps with his feet.

GUS (CONT'D)

You're new here, right? My name's Gus.

In the distance, a teenager stands looking at them. STEVEN RIORDAN, 16, quiet and unassuming, with a camera strapped around his neck.

CAROLINE

There's my brother. I gotta go.

She heads towards her brother. Then pauses and turns to him.

CAROLINE (cont'd) (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Caroline. My name's Caroline Riordan.

She flashes him a devastating smile before joining her brother and walking away.

Gus watches her go. He catches Steven looking back, glaring at him.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Gus drives along the streets towards the quiet town of Evergreen. His mind races.

Anna sits next to him staring at the sights outside.

ANNA

So what was she like?

Gus ponders the question but doesn't answer.

Outside, a school bus drives down on the opposite side of the street. Gus looks at it briefly. A boy on a bike follows behind the slow moving bus, struggling to keep up. It's Young Gus. Gus looks at Young Gus pedalling away through his rear view mirror.

EXT. STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Gus pedals furiously as the school bus makes several stops. Young Gus cuts through a small park area - a short cut.

The bus stops and Caroline gets off the bus. She walks across the street to a PUBLIC BUS stop where she meets up with her brother Steven.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The public bus makes a stop and Caroline and Steven get off the bus. In the distance, Young Gus watches from his bike.

Caroline and Steven walk towards their home. Steven reaches for his sister's hand to hold it. Caroline shakes free from his grasp.

Gus watches this interaction. That was odd.

He starts pedalling slowly, making sure he's undetected.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A low income neighborhood. The street is lined with small homes that have not been maintained.

Caroline and Steven walk into their house - paint peeling, grass overgrown, junk piled everywhere.

Young Gus rides his bike up and stand behind a tree watching the house, hoping to get a glimpse of Caroline.

Suddenly, from inside the house, through a window he sees a figure of an older man, their FATHER. He looks unkempt and scraggly, his shirt unbuttoned. He's screaming at -

Caroline enters the window, fear in her eyes.

FATHER

Don't you walk away from me.

Her father grabs her hand and pushes her close to him. She pushes him back, struggling to get away. He slaps her hard. Caroline manages to get free and runs out of the house. She runs to the side of the house away and leans up against the wall crying, her hand feeling her stinging face.

Steven runs out looking for her. He approaches slowly. He goes up to her and hugs her. She cries into his shoulder. He holds her face in his hands. He leans in...for a kiss. He's about to kiss her on the lips, but she turns the last minute and he gives her a tender kiss on the cheek.

Gus watches on. There's something unnerving about their interaction - something wrong. He feels like he's witnessed something taboo, presses against a tree to keep from being seen.

EXT. DOWNTOWN EVERGREEN - DAY (PRESENT)

The image of Young Gus appears as a reflection on a store front window that disappears as Present Day Gus stares at it. He takes out the flyer for the hair salon and walks down the street filled with quaint stores and boutiques.

He looks back towards his car, sees Anna sitting there looking out the window at him.

He looks back down the street. Across from where he stands he spots a small hair salon with a sign reading: SUSAN'S HAIR CREATIONS.

From a nearby coffee shop, SUSAN ANDRUCKI, 40s, exits with coffee in her hand. She saunters through the shop looking at her hair through a store window's reflection. She waves at other store owners and passerby's before entering the shop.

Gus crosses the street heading for the salon.

INT. SALON - DAY

Susan sits in a salon chair sipping her coffee talking on the phone. Gus enters.

Susan swivels towards him not looking up, still talking.

SUSAN (cont'd)
(to Gus)
I'll be just a sec.

Gus clears his throat.

SUSAN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
(on the phone)
Uh huh, uh huh. You said it.

GUS
Susan Andrucki.

She looks up, doesn't recognize him...but familiarity begins to creep up on her.

SUSAN (cont'd)
 (on the phone)
 Dana, I gotta call you back.

She hangs up the phone.

SUSAN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
 I haven't been Susan Andrucki for a long
 time...

CUT TO:

LATER

Gus sits in the salon chair staring at his reflection as
 Susan cuts his hair.

He focuses on her mouth, seemingly moving a mile a
 minute. We catch phrases here and there.

SUSAN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
 Susan Barker. That's my married name.
 (another)
 You were always such a troublemaker back
 then. But look at you now. Time's been
 good to you.
 (another)
 You better tell that jerk to call me
 back. I spent good money to find him on
 the internet.

Susan runs her fingers flirtatiously through his hair.
 She walks behind him and unbuttons her top button on her
 blouse. She circles him and leans over, letting him get
 an eyeful of her full breasts. Gus just stares at her
 expressionless, looks beyond her to the mirror.

Gus watches his reflection as he gets groomed, looking
 better and cleaner.

GUS
 Do you remember Caroline Riordan?

Susan sighs, realizing his disinterest.

SUSAN
 Caroline Riordan..?

GUS
 Drama club.

SUSAN
 God that name takes me back.

GUS

You remember?

She nods solemnly, affected by the name. Gus looks at himself in the mirror, the haircut making him look younger.

CUT TO:

INT. EVERGREEN SCHOOL - LOCKERS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CLOSE ON Young Gus, staring at his reflection in a mirror mounted on his locker door. Kids stream through the corridor all around him. Something in the mirror catches his eye:

CAROLINE, approaching from the end of the hall behind Gus. He shuts the locker and turns around, looking at Caroline. He's taken with her simple beauty, her modesty.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Transfer student. Got in on a scholarship, which basically meant she was White Trash with a brain. Pretty girl, but everybody knew where she was from. What she really was.

GUS (V.O.)

What?

SUSAN (V.O.)

What else? A slut...

But he notices something else, too. Other kids are gawking at her, leering. She's being ridiculed. Caroline pretends not to notice, acts as though it doesn't get to her. Yet still, a hint of pain and embarrassment is evident.

CUT TO:

INT. SALON - DAY

Susan stares at Gus via the mirror.

SUSAN

Everyone tried to forget after what happened. It's funny how we remember what we only want to remember. What happened to her was awful.

She stops.

GUS
I don't remember much.

SUSAN
That's right, you transferred.
(beat)
They found her body washed up on the
river. Drowned herself. Jumped maybe...

GUS
Why?

SUSAN
(shrugs)
Who really knew? There were so many
rumors around. She was pregnant, she
didn't know who the father was...
(pauses)
There was one rumor...

Gus looks at her. She makes a face.

SUSAN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Look, it was high school we were all
cruel. Out to save our own skins.

GUS
Do you remember anything else about
her...or her brother?

His tone becomes more urgent. Susan's starting to tire
with this trip down memory lane. Her expression goes
cold.

SUSAN
Why don't you go ask the person that
started all the rumors.

GUS
Who?

SUSAN
Your old buddy. Mike.

Gus's eyes widen, surprised.

EXT. SALON - DAY

Gus paces in front of the hair salon, dialing a number on
his cell phone.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Mike is in the middle of a party, doing a line of coke. Pretty, scantily clad women are everywhere. He pulls one onto his lap, wraps his arms around her waist.

Mike's phone rings.

He looks at his phone, ignores the call.

EXT. SALON - DAY

Gus hits 'end' on the cell phone, frustrated.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVERGREEN SCHOOL - DAY

Gus and Anna's car returns to the school.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gus parks the car and takes out the keys. He turns to towards Anna and sees her curled up on the seat sleeping. She looks so peaceful that he decides not to wake her. He quietly slips out of the car.

EXT. EVERGREEN SCHOOL - DAY

Gus walks through campus looking at the empty buildings, trying to gain some clarity.

He stops and looks at a building in the distance and is drawn to it. He makes his way towards the building.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Gus pushes the doors open and enters the dark building. He goes to the back wall to turn on the lights.

The theater comes to life as the lights flicker on.

Gus walks down the aisles and takes a seat in the middle of the empty theater. Frustrated he buries his head in his hands. He closes his eyes, and lets the memories take over. When he looks at the stage again he sees...

Two young boys. A young Mike and a young Gus smoke cigarettes on stage carrying paint and brushes.

It's a flashback but the present Gus exists in the same space.

Gus quietly looks on remembering.

THE STAGE

Mike and Gus paint a backdrop, surrounded by cans and brushes. As Gus works he smokes a lit cigarette half-dangling out of his mouth.

YOUNG MIKE

Can you fucking believe this? Drama Club sucks. It's like being in Special Ed.

YOUNG GUS

You should feel at home then.

Mike gives Gus the finger, steps back to admire his paint job. Gus flicks his cigarette on the ground, stamps it out with his foot.

YOUNG MIKE

I don't know how I let you talk me into this. All for some stupid chick.

YOUNG GUS

Oh you should talk. At least I don't do someone else's homework to get to second base.

YOUNG MIKE

It was third base. And believe me, it was worth it.

Gus picks up his brush again and starts painting.

YOUNG MIKE (CONT'D)

(looks at watch)

Shit. I told Susan I'd meet her after band practice.

He drops his brush in a bucket, wiping his hands off.

YOUNG GUS

We got work to do.

YOUNG MIKE

Just this once, man. I think we're going all the way soon.

YOUNG GUS

You wish.

Present day Gus watches young Mike exit. He then returns his gaze on the young Gus on stage.

YOUNG GUS (cont'd)
(CONT'D)

Asshole.

Young Gus looks around the empty theater then looks up at the lights. He sighs and disappears behind the stage.

Gus watches his young self disappear behind the stage. Curious, he gets up and follows. He runs up on stage and looks up at the catwalk overlooking the theater, sees Young Gus's shadows. He follows.

THE CATWALK

Present day Gus carefully walks up the creaking structure, careful not to disturb his memory. He sees young Gus perched above looking over the stage.

Young Gus rests his elbows over the catwalk ledge and looks around. He makes sure he's alone and pulls out a joint from his pocket.

YOUNG GUS (cont'd)
(CONT'D)

(humming)

I think we're alone now...

He puts the joint to his lips and is about to light it when...

A figure walks onto the stage.

Both Young Gus and Present Day Gus retract into the darkness careful not to be seen.

THE STAGE

Caroline walks onto the stage. Both Young and Present Day Gus peek over the catwalk, catching a glimpse of her.

She walks in the middle of the stage and looks out to the audience. She likes it up here.

She begins to recite lines.

CAROLINE
Come flame of the sky...

She stops, not liking the delivery. She closes her eyes to get into the moment.

THE CATWALK

Young Gus looks at her and smiles, enchanted. He's falling for her.

Present Day Gus looks at himself, empathetic.

THE STAGE

Caroline takes a deep breath, starts over.

CAROLINE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Come, flame by sky, Pierce through my
 head! What do I gain from living any
 longer? Oh how I hate living! I want to
 end my life, leave it behind, and die.

She's good.

THE CATWALK

Young Gus is drawn to her, emerges from the shadows. He wants to go down, but suddenly...

THE STAGE

Another figure emerges from the side of the stage.

THE CATWALK

Young Gus withdraws back into the shadows.

THE STAGE

Steven Riordan joins his sister. A camera slung around his neck. He takes a picture of her.

CAROLINE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 C'mon, Steven. I'm trying to practice.

He takes another shot.

She's annoyed but loves the attention of the camera.

CAROLINE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Go away! I need to learn my lines.

He takes another shot, then places the camera down.

STEVEN

What madness is this? The bed you long
for - Is it what others shrink from? Is
it death that you demand?

While reciting lines, Steven circles her taking pictures.

She laughs at him.

CAROLINE

You missed a few lines.

STEVEN

See? You know it. You don't need to
practice.

He keeps taking shots, getting closer to her. She's
getting into it, posing and acting coy.

CAROLINE

Stop...

He is only a few inches from her. He stops taking shots
and places the camera down. He looks at his beautiful
sister. She gazes back at him.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - DAY

ANGLE ON CATWALK

Young Gus watches the interaction between Caroline and
her brother with morbid fascination.

Steven leans into his sister for a kiss. It looks like
their lips will meet but she pushes him away. She laughs
and runs behind the stage.

BACKSTAGE

Caroline and Steven play a flirtatious game, running
after each other. Steven traps her against a wall, holds
his arms out pinning her in between.

CAROLINE

What are you doing?

STEVEN

No one's here.

She ducks under his arms and runs to a corner and sits on a desk.

Steven approaches her slowly. He takes the camera and begins to take pictures again, the flash explodes with each shot.

She loves the attention of the camera. She leans back on her hands, and lets him take pictures of her. It's as if the camera is making love to her.

Steven finally let's go of the camera. He's directly in front of her, between her legs. He touches her thigh.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

But I'm here. I'm always going to be,
Caroline. I'm going to take care of you.

She protests but her passion is clearly overwhelming. His hand travels up her thigh, disappearing between her skirt. She moans.

He leans in and tenderly kisses her neck then travels up to her lips. They kiss passionately.

THE CATWALK

Young Gus, is horrified. He takes a step back and the catwalk CREAKS.

THE STAGE

Caroline and Steven jump, surprised. Caroline gathers herself.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Who's there?

Caroline runs out.

Steven looks around and stares straight at Present Day Gus before running out after his sister.

THE CATWALK

Present Day Gus looks around at the empty theater. The set disappears as the memory fades. He stands alone.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Gus stands out of breath still reeling from the memory. He scrambles for his phone and dials.

An uneasy feeling begins to fall on Gus.

GUS

Mike?!!

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Mike is walking thru the party, cell phone pressed to his ear. He's opening doors, looking for something.

MIKE

Hang on. Let me find someplace quiet.

He opens one last door, seeing an office, walks in.

OFFICE

Mike closes the door behind him, the THUMPING music fading into background noise.

It's dark, he switches a desk lamp on.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm about to close a massive deal. It's gonna put me back on top. Can we make this quick?

GUS (V.O.)

Listen to me. I need you to remember Caroline Riordan. From Evergreen.

Mike closes his eyes and thinks.

MIKE

Doesn't ring a bell.

GUS

(angry)

C'mon, this is important. Think! She killed herself.

The door to the office opens, and the music SWELLS.

Mike holds a finger up, not looking back -

SOMEBODY'S entered the room.

MIKE

(to visitor)

I'll be with you in a second.

The door closes, and the music is muffled into background noise once more. Mike plays with a pendulum.

Behind him a FIGURE stands waiting in the dark...

CUT TO:

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Gus looks on at the car, impatiently. Anna still sleeps.

GUS
Is someone there with you?

MIKE
Yeah I gotta go...

GUS
Wait! She had long dark hair. She was
in theater. The same year as we were.

INT. PENTHOUSE OFFICE

Mike begins to remember.

MIKE
Wait, I do remember that chick. That
crazy girl.
(beat)
She drowned herself in the river. It was
fucked up.

GUS
Why?

MIKE
Man, she was a total slut. Slept with
everyone.
(beat)

Oh shit. She was fucking her brother!

The FIGURE IN SHADOW shuffles, moves forward towards Mike.

GUS
How could you forget something like that?

MIKE

It was so long ago. Who knows what's true. Anyway, she died, end of story. No one cared.

The FIGURE MOVES in CLOSER...

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Gus comes to a realization.

GUS

You told everyone!
(beat)
It was you...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

We see Mike as Young Mike, on the phone.

The FIGURE is just behind Mike.

MIKE

Fuck you man. That's a shitty thing to say...

GUS

But you did.

MIKE

Maybe I told a few people. But I wasn't the one that started it.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Gus talks on the phone, agitated.

GUS

Then who did?

EXT. STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mike and Gus walk their bikes, backpacks slung behind them. Gus has a pre-occupied look. He glances over to Mike.

GUS
(serious, subdued)
I gotta tell you something, but you gotta
swear not to tell anyone.

Mike nods.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Young Mike on the phone, the DARK FIGURE towering above him.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Mike's silence cuts Gus like a cruel accusation. He nearly doubles over at the realization.

INT. PENTHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Present day Mike holds the phone impatiently.

The FIGURE behind Mike has his tie off, wrapped around his hands like piano wire.

REVEAL: Steven lowers the tie around Mike's neck, strangles him. Mike drops his cell phone and grabs at the tie around his neck. Steven looks on focused, empowered by his passion and anger. Mike can only make choking noises as he struggles.

EXT. THEATER

Gus can hear the struggle on the other end.

GUS
Mike? Hello? Mike!!!

INT. PENTHOUSE OFFICE

Mike slumps over the desk, dead. Gus' voice can be heard thru the cell phone, calling out for him.

Steven grabs the cell phone, in tears.

STEVEN
My sister was not a slut. You hear me?!

GUS (V.O.)
You sick son of a bitch!

STEVEN
Don't feel too bad. Mike got what he
deserved.

Steven hangs up the phone.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Gus drives numb and emotionless.

Ann awakens. She looks at him tenderly.

ANNA
How long have I been asleep?

Anna reaches out for him and touches his hand.

Her touch pushes him over. He lets out a blood-curdling
SCREAM. Anna just stares as he screams and screams,
pounding the steering wheel, crying in anguish.

CAMERA PULLS BACK thru the windshield, out of the car.
We can still see Gus screaming, but we can no longer hear
him:

EXT. CAR - EVENING

We view his violent outburst from outside the car but can
only hear the incredible silence of the desolate road.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gus and Anna's car drive up to motel.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gus and Anna sit on the bed. She faces him, he faces the
wall.

ANNA
You got locked up for twenty years for
saying that?

GUS
Whether it's a pebble or a grain of sand
in water they both sink alike.

ANNA

We beat the deadline.

GUS

Tomorrow is the anniversary of her death.

ANNA

But that doesn't matter. You wanted to know why. You have your answer. Now it's over. Let's just keep going.

They stare into each others' eyes, and it clearly affects Gus. Her earnestness grows. She senses that she may finally be reaching him - pushes further.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Someplace he can't find us. We can start over. You can walk away.

He struggles to answer her, but instead turns away and steels himself.

Anna waits for any sign from him for a beat, then resigns herself to his silence. After a few moments, she takes his arm, rests her head against his shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gus and Anna lie naked together in bed, post-coital deep sleep, her leg draped over his.

ANGLE ON DOOR, as GAS seeps into the room through a crack at the bottom.

TIME CUT TO:

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

ECU on GAS MASK, a man's face barely visible behind. It's Steven and it looks like he's smiling.

He walks across the gas-filled room, to the bed where Anna and Gus sleep oblivious to his presence. He kneels down next to her, runs a finger along her exposed hip, slowly sliding off what's left of the covers, leaving her completely naked.

Thru his gas mask, Steven's breathing is loud and slow, like an astronaut exploring a new world.

He turns to look up at:

LARRY standing by the door. He too wears a gas mask. In his hands he holds an elegantly wrapped gift box.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The sun has risen. It's a new day.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Anna and Gus hover over the strange gift box, bewildered by its presence. Gus cautiously opens it.

CLOSE ON BOX: Sitting there on a velvet cushion, is a man's severed HAND. We'll recognize the ostentatious ring as belonging to Toph.

She stares at it a long beat, before collapsing on the ground unconscious.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Gus drives Mike's jaguar back to the city.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - DAY

Gus is stonefaced. Anna looks out the window.

ANNA

We don't have to do this.

GUS

We have no choice. There's no where safe for us. Until I end it.

INT. PUBLIC STORAGE - DAY

Gus and Anna walk through the hallway of Toph's public storage building. Toph's lackeys watch him pass by suspiciously.

ANNA

What are we doing here?

Gus doesn't answer, focused. Anna looks at him unsure. Gus walks on as Anna scurries after him.

INT. PUBLIC STORAGE / TOPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Gus and Anna enter the room followed by Toph's thugs.

Toph sits with his back to them. Slowly, he swivels around to reveal that his hand has been replaced by a prosthetic. He looks at them, then subconsciously rubs his fake hand.

GUS

We need to talk. Alone.

After staring into his eyes, Toph waves his prosthetic at his thugs, who grab onto Anna and lead her away.

ANNA

Gus.

(to the thugs)

Let go of me you assholes.

Gus looks at her.

GUS

Go with them.

The thugs lead her away, as she makes it difficult. When they're out of sight, Gus approaches Toph and takes a seat opposite him.

GUS

It looks like we've both got a score to settle.

Gus gives him the ostentatious ring. Toph takes it, strokes it nostalgically.

TOPH

It appears that way.

GUS

Tell me where he is.

Toph looks at him contemplating the request.

CUT TO:

INT. STOR-4-U - CORRIDOR

Gus walks towards the exit alone. In the background, we hear Anna screaming and pleading.

ANNA (O.S.)
Don't leave me here! Gus!

Gus keeps walking, knows it's for the best.

TOPH (V.O.)
An enemy's enemy is a friend, right.
(beat)
It's in the theater district.

GUS (V.O.)
If I don't come back by tomorrow, let her go.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW - THEATER DISTRICT - NIGHT

Marquee lights and neon signs switch off one by one. The theater district is sleeping.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Gus heads towards a warehouse space transformed into a theater. The marquee on the building reads: MEDEA.

Gus tries the door. It's open.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Gus carefully enters the dimly lit theater lobby. He walks through the lobby passing stills from past productions. He hears voices inside the theater.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Gus enters the darkened theater. Spotlights are positioned on stage as a young woman stands there.

He takes a closer look, focusing on the woman's face. All he can see is the young and beautiful Caroline reciting lines.

CAROLINE

Come, flame by sky, Pierce through my head! What do I gain from living any longer? Oh how I hate living! I want to end my life, leave it behind, and die.

She looks straight at him, piercing him with her dark eyes as though looking straight into his soul.

He closes his eyes and looks again:

The young woman is not Caroline at all just an actress rehearsing.

Gus shakes his head trying to shake the image from his mind.

STAGE MANAGER'S VOICE

(V.O.)

(thru P.A. system)

That's it for today folks, see you for dress rehearsal tomorrow.

Actors disperse. Gus looks around trying to spot Steven.

Suddenly, we hear a pair of hands CLAPPING. The sound echoing in the empty theater. Gus looks around trying to spot the source.

The lights go out. All that remains is the spotlight focused on the stage.

THE STAGE

From the darkness a dark figure emerges into the spotlight. Steven stands on stage CLAPPING.

STEVEN

Congratulations. You made it just in time.

Furious, Gus runs up to the stage, bum-rushing Steven. He tackles him to the ground and starts pummeling him mercilessly.

Steven doesn't make a move, not even to avoid being hit.

Gus continues the onslaught of punches to Steve's face.

Steven's head whips back as he spits out blood.

Gus pauses trying to catch his breath. He seems animal-like.

Steve looks at him, bruised and bloody, works a smile on his lips. It looks like he may be enjoying this.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Go ahead, kill me. Then you'll miss the best part.

Gus gets up off him. Steven smiles through the blood.

STEVEN

There's so much more for you to learn.

GUS

Fuck you! I don't want to know anymore.

STEVEN

Then why are you here?

Steven disappears behind the curtains of the stage.

Gus watches him go, cautious. Is this a trap?

BACKSTAGE

Gus walks through the backstage and sees a stairway. He looks up to see Steven at the top of the stairs.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Up here.

Gus hesitates for a beat then follows up the stairs cautiously. Steven disappears into a door.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus walks into a spacious penthouse apartment above the theater. We hear the somber tune of Mozart's Requiem.

Gus looks around. The walls are adorned with framed pictures. On closer inspection, we see that the pictures are mostly of Caroline Riordan. At the center is a large striking picture of Caroline, trying to look happy. Behind her is a blurred picture of a river. Gus looks stares at the haunting picture.

Steven gathers himself looking at a mirror, wiping the blood from his face.

STEVEN

I took that picture before she died.

GUS

You took my life from me. Killed the people I loved and for what? Because I started a stupid rumor?

Steven laughs at the irony.

STEVEN

A stupid rumor...

(beat)

The rumor you started spread and spread, like a disease.

GUS

I didn't mean...

STEVEN

You weren't even around to see what you created.

GUS

It was a mistake.

STEVEN

That mistake cost me everything.

Steven looks at the framed picture of Caroline at the river. He touches it.

STEVEN

I wasn't strong enough to hold on to her.

We zoom in on the picture as if comes to life.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Close on Caroline's smiling face as the picture comes alive.

As widen out to reveal that Caroline is leaning of the bridge ready to plunge in the river. Steven is holding on to her right hand, crying, trying to keep her from her falling. She dangles precariously over a shallow river, spotted with jagged rocks. A camera, dangles around his neck.

She looks up at him.

CAROLINE

Don't cry.

(beat)

Let me go.

Steven hangs on tighter.

STEVEN

Nooooo!

She gathers a smile. With a her left hand she reaches over to the camera and clicks a picture of herself. The same picture now hanging on the loft.

CAROLINE

Remember me.

With that she unclasps her right hand, which begins to slip from Steven's grasp. He tries desperately to hold on but isn't strong enough. He loses his grip and she falls.

Steven's POV of Caroline falling to the river below on her back, as if she's floating peacefully.

He screams after her.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Steven looks at his hands. Gus looks on guiltily.

GUS

I'm sorry. Is that what you want?

Steven looks at him furious.

STEVEN

The time for apologies is long over.

Steven walks to his laptop and whirls it around towards Gus.

Gus approaches the laptop and sees a window with an image. A surveillance video pointed into the storage room. In the room sits Anna

FADE TO:

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits on the bed staring at the clock. She looks over to her suitcase and pulls it towards her.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus looks at the image on the screen, horrified.

STEVEN
You underestimated me.

INT. TOPH'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Toph's strapped to a chair, with his right arm exposed.
One of his thugs let him drink from a bottle of whiskey.

Steven looks on in a corner, stoic.

Toph takes a deep breath and nods to Steven.

TOPH
(gritting it)
Get it fucking over with.

Steven nods to another thug next to him who takes out a
hack saw. The thug approaches Toph and begins to saw off
his arm. Toph screams in pain.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I worked my whole life to make money that
means nothing to me.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

STEVEN
But it shouldn't surprise me how far
people will go to get what they really
want.

These words ring in Gus's head. He doesn't know what to
do.

GUS
She has nothing to do with this. Let her
go.

Steven spins around, furious. He slams his fist on a
table, cracking the glass facade.

STEVEN
She has everything to do with this.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Anna searches through her suitcase.

Suddenly, the door opens and Toph walks in carrying a large gift box.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus watches from the laptop.

GUS

I swear to god if you hurt her...

STEVEN

That's all up to you.

Steven's bodyguard LARRY enters holding an ornate photo album. He hands it to Steven. Steven leafs through it.

STEVEN (cont'd)

You care about her don't you?

Gus doesn't answer.

STEVEN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

It was so perfect. I spent so much time thinking about how I would do it. Make you feel the pain that I did. Then it hit. It was so perfect.

GUS

What are you talking about?

Steven hands Gus the photo album. Gus looks at it, but doesn't take it.

STEVEN

Take it!

Larry stands nearby, arms folded across his chest. Slowly, Gus's hand reaches out for the album.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Toph now sits on a chair by the bed. We see that he wears a holster with a gun.

Anna eyes the gun she gazes at the gift box he's placed by him. She continues to rummage through her suitcase finds what she's looking for.

She takes out a wrinkled brown paper bag from her suitcase.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus takes the album and opens the first page. A newborn baby. Gus turns the page, pictures of Gus's wife Kayla and Gus holding the baby.

Gus begins to cry, seeing these images, revisiting old pain.

He flips the page: more pictures of the baby, now wearing ANGEL WINGS. Then as a toddler on Christmas morning. Then as a little girl learning to ride a bike.

STEVEN

There's something about her. You must have felt it right away...

Gus turns another page. Pictures of the girl as a teen.

STEVEN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

As if you've known her all your life.

Gus's face becomes grim. A slow realization.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Anna pulls the contents of the brown paper bag. Something discernible...something white.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus, scared, turns to the final pages. A prom picture. Gus's face goes ashen. The girl in the photos is ANNA.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits on the bed. The angel's wings strapped to her back like a security blanket.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus crumbles to the ground in tears, broken. The room is spinning and he dry heaves.

GUS

What have you done?

STEVEN

I've made you fall in love.

Gus clutches at his stomach, reeling in the fact that he's slept with his own daughter.

STEVEN

Now you know how I feel.

Steven gets up and takes out a gun. Gus stares at it with a look of dread and longing. Steven smiles.

STEVEN

I'm not going to kill you.

He sets the gun down next to Gus and walks away. He heads for his picture.

STEVEN (cont'd)

In the box next to Anna is that same album.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Anna, wearing the angel's wings, looks at the gift by her side. She puts a hand to it. She looks at Toph.

Toph looks at the clock and shakes his head 'no.'

She lifts her hands off the box and waits. Anna returns her gaze to the box.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gus gets a look of rage. He curls his fingers into fists as he storms behind Steven. That's when Larry steps in, blocking his path.

Gus throws several punches, but Larry is a seasoned fighter. They crash into each other like fierce animals. Larry brings Gus to the ground, trying to choke him out. But Gus outmaneuvers him, and gains leverage.

He jabs Larry in the throat, wrenches his arm too far to the left - SNAP! Larry isn't giving up, grabs a clump of Gus' hair. Gus head-butts him, causing blood to gush from Larry's nose.

He leaves Larry on the ground squirming scrambles to pick up the gun but Steven has it in his hands. He points it at Gus's head. He motions for Gus to get up on his feet.

GUS

Please, I'm begging you. Don't show it to her. This is all my fault. Don't punish her.

Gus gets up, defeated...blubbering.

GUS (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'll do anything. Anything you want.

Steven looks away from him and back to the picture.

Steven stares into Caroline's eyes - a flash of anger that subsides as quickly as it came.

Steven wraps his arm around Gus as they stand side by side facing opposite directions. Steven points the gun to Gus's temple. One bullet and they both die.

STEVEN

The only thing I did wrong was to love her, Gus.

Gus opens his eyes, stops trembling.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

We loved each other and we were willing to live with that fact.

(beat)

Now the question is, can you?

Steven picks up the phone with his free hand and dials. He waits a beat until someone on the other line picks up.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Let her go...

Hearing these words sparks Gus into action. He grabs the gun from Steven - and in the blink of an eye - spins around and pulls the trigger.

The bullet flies through the air and lands in Steven's head - flies out the other end.

For a moment, there is nothing but silence.

Gus and Steven stare at each other, a moment of unity and understanding. Steven's face looks serene as if he's finally reached some inner peace. He falls back, dead.

Gus stands there with the gun still smoking in his hand.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Toph hears nothing but silence over the phone.

He reaches for the gift box, hesitates.

Then he lifts the cover. She takes out the album.

Toph gets up off the chair and pulls out a train ticket from his pocket.

TOPH

If I were you, I'd go as far away from
here as possible.

He throws the ticket on the bed and exits leaving the door wide open.

Anna flips through the pages of the book.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD - YEARS LATER

Gus drives alone in a jeep down a rural country road. Trees, mountains, peace.

GUS (V.O.)

Too many questions to answer, so I left
them all behind.

INT. GUS' JEEP

Gus' hair has gone completely grey. His eyes have lost a bit of their former ferocity. His face is wrinkled, world-weary.

GUS (V.O.)

But wherever I went the questions
followed. What is happiness? What is
love? Where do we lay our hearts to rest
and move on with our lives?

He turns up a small side road.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - YEARS LATER

A small town diner.

Anna, again working as a waitress, takes an order.

There's something different about her. She looks older, more mature, a bit distant - sadness lingers in her eyes.

The BELLS of the door ring, signalling a new customer entering. She turns towards the door and sees...

Gus, who also looks older and a bit worn down. They regard each other for a bit, not moving, not saying anything.

He looks at her, longingly. He's torn by his decision but knows he can't stay away.

FADE TO BLACK.

WE FADE UP ON THE HAUNTING SOUND OF:

THE ZOMBIES "TIME OF THE SEASON" AS CREDITS ROLL