

Missy

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EXT. HIGHWAY- DAWN.

Sunrise over a rural landscape in the American South. A beat-up car cruises by.

EXT. CAR- DAWN.

MISSY, mid-twenties, is driving and smoking a cigarette, windows down. Her hair is red from a bottle. Her face is tired and drawn. A cut on her lower lip is just noticeable. There's a purple bruise on her neck.

EXT. HIGHWAY- DAWN.

The car approaches a wide brown river. It stops on the deserted bridge.

The engine idles uneasily and a cacophony of insects and tree frogs rises from the river banks.

The trunk on the car pops open.

INT. CAR- DAWN.

Missy puts out her cigarette and lays it gently in the ashtray. She gets out of the car.

EXT. BRIDGE- DAWN.

Missy slams the door, the window rattling. She wears faded denim cutoffs, a threadbare tank top, and no shoes.

She lifts open the trunk, and begins to lift out a bundle larger than she is. It's wrapped in an old COMFORTER with a loud hotel-style print, and tied with rope. One end of the bundle is stained dark with blood.

She looks around but the highway is empty. Working as quickly as possible, she manages to hoist the bundle onto the rail where it folds in half and hangs limp.

A rope trails from the bundle to the trunk. Missy follows the rope back and lifts out a cinder block that is tied to the other end of the rope.

The sky is getting lighter.

Missy approaches the bundle. The folds of the comforter part, revealing a man's matted hair and blood.

Missy pulls the fabric over the head, tucking it tight. Then she heaves the cinder block over the side of the bridge, and quickly as it falls, gives the body a push.

It tumbles over the side. Missy doesn't wait around to hear the splash. She gets back in the car.

INT. CAR- EARLY MORNING.

Missy re-lights the cigarette and puts the car in gear. She drives with the windows down, her expression blank.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY.

Missy's car blows by overgrown forests and corn fields. Eventually she trades the back roads for the interstate.

She bypasses the signs for Columbia and continues on to Charlotte. She rests her arm on the door, letting her cigarette burn out the window.

Finally she stops in front of a dingy tattoo parlor. She goes in-side.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR. DAY.

Missy straddles a chair while a well-inked TATTOO ARTIST works on her back. She sips Coke from a sweating can.

TATTOO ARTIST
You want leaves?

MISSY
No.

TATTOO ARTIST
Just one dead branch, that's all you want?

MISSY
Yeah.

Missy's back shines with disinfectant and blood. The tattoo is a tree, barren and black, between her shoulder blades. The artist is outlining a new branch.

Also noticeable are scars from old cigarette burns, pock marking her back.

TATTOO ARTIST
Looks like a hangman's tree.

MISSY
Something like that.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

A TATTOOED MAN sleeps, propped up against the headboard. The COMFORTER on the bed has the familiar large floral print.

Missy approaches him quietly. Her face is tear-stained and pale, and her hair is red. Her neck is red and beginning to bruise.

She carries a hand gun with a silencer on the tip.

She lifts the gun to his right temple, but her hands are trembling. She takes a deep breath and flexes her hand and arm, hoping to quell the shaking.

She again places the barrel of the gun to the man's temple, but a tremor causes the gun to tap the side of his head. He wakes up with a jerk. She jumps back, pointing the gun at him.

TATTOOED MAN
Hey, whoa, what the fuck?!

MISSY
Shut up!

She is panicked, improvising.

TATTOOED MAN
You gonna rob me? I was gonna pay you, I swear!

MISSY
I said shut up!

TATTOOED MAN
Okay, okay...

Missy cocks the gun. His eyes widen in realization.

TATTOOED MAN
Nonononono.

She levels it at his head.

TATTOOED MAN

Wait, just wait a minute. Why you
doing this?

She stares him down, her bruises darkening and her lip
bleeding.

MISSY

Guess.

TATTOOED MAN

...Help! HELP!!

Missy grabs the remote and turns on the TV. She pushes the
volume all the way up.

The tattooed man lunges toward her in desperation. Just
before he reaches her she lifts the gun and pulls the
trigger.

He falls to the floor.

She surveys the blood spatter on the wall and the growing
pool beneath the fallen man's head.

MISSY

Fuck.

EXT. TATTOO PARLOR- AFTERNOON.

Missy lights her cigarette and gets in the car. The engine
doesn't turn over at first and she has to crank several
times and pump the gas before it will start up. She drives
away.

INT. MOTEL- AFTERNOON.

Bad COUNTRY MUSIC plays on the radio and a bored clerk sits
behind the counter. Missy enters carrying an old suitcase
and her purse. A young couple is checking in at the desk.
The woman has a toddler slung over her shoulder.

The baby eyes Missy with fascination. She looks back at
him, making eye contact but not smiling. The young mother
turns her head and notices the child's gaze.

YOUNG MOTHER

(Cooing)

What do you see, Jackson? Do you see a pretty girl? Yes, she is a pretty girl.

Missy smiles politely.

YOUNG MOTHER

Can you blow her a kiss? Hmmm, want to blow a kiss?

The baby brings his chubby fingers to his lips and flings them in Missy's general direction. Both the mother and the child are very proud of this gesture.

YOUNG MOTHER

What a sweet boy you are!

Missy smiles a genuine smile now, touching her fingers to her lips and returning the kiss. The mother nuzzles the toddler, who laughs and blows more kisses. The father picks up the bags and they leave for their room.

Missy steps up to the counter.

MISSY

I need a room please.

INT. MOTEL ROOM- EVENING.

Missy stands in her underwear, hair wet from the shower, and opens the suitcase. Along with her clothes, it contains a couple packs of cigarettes, several boxes of hair color, a set of hot rollers, hairdryer, a box of tampons and a cosmetics bag.

Missy chooses a box of hair color and retreats to the bathroom.

INT. MOTEL ROOM BATHROOM- EVENING.

Missy is bent over with her head in the sink, inky black dye swirling down the drain. The tree on her back glistens.

INT. MOTEL ROOM- EVENING.

Missy sits in front of the mirror, her hair set in rollers. She manages to conceal the cut on her lip with make-up, and applies a lot of black eyeliner.

EXT. THE NIGHT LIGHT, PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Missy approaches a small bar called The Night Light. It's an old building lit on the outside with amber-colored flood lights. The gravel parking lot is filled with pick-up trucks and a few cheap compact cars.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The bar is dim and noisy. The room is about half full of working class men and women.

A NASCAR race is on the mounted TV in the corner, the sound muted.

RONNIE, the bartender, is a broad-shouldered man in his thirties, with an easy-going expression. JENNY, a woman in her fifties stands behind the register, ringing up a tab.

Missy enters. A few heads turn. She surveys the room and takes a seat at the bar.

RONNIE
What can I get you?

MISSY
Jack and Coke please.

Jenny studies Missy. She is quietly looking around at her companions in the bar.

JENNY
I'll get it, Ronnie.

She pours the drink and hands it to Missy.

JENNY
Never seen you in here before.

MISSY
No, ma'am.

JENNY
You from around here?

MISSY
No.

JENNY
Where you from?

MISSY

All over.

JENNY

Don't talk much do ya'?

MISSY

No.

JENNY

I like that.

KATIE, a young waitress comes from the back with a tray of clean glasses. A man at the end of the bar shouts at her.

JAY

Katie! Bring me a beer!

KATIE

Shut up, Jay! I told you not to come here no more!

JAY

I'll go where I damn well please!
And I said, beer!

He slams his empty beer mug on the bar. Missy watches it all intently.

JENNY

Get that boy a beer, Katie. What's the hold up?

KATIE

Jenny, I told you already I ain't waitin' on him. We're through.

JENNY

If we refused service to every one of your little boyfriends you got mad at we'd go outta business. Now get him a drink.

Missy watches as Katie begrudgingly pours a beer and takes it over to him. As she places it on the bar he grabs her wrist and pulls her over the bar closer to his face.

JAY

Come on back tonight, Kate. You know I didn't mean nothing by it.

KATIE

Let go of me.

Jay tightens his grip. Katie shrinks away from him in fear.

JAY
I said I'm sorry!

Missy watches.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. YARD. DAY.

A large dog lunges on a chain, teeth bared through white foam. His fur is matted and dusty. He snarls and growls furiously.

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

Jay's grip on Katie's arm is still uncomfortably tight.

KATIE
Let go!

RONNIE
Jay, let her go.

He steps over to them.

RONNIE
Jay you got one chance to quit it or I'm gonna cut you off.

Jay lets go of Katie's arm. She walks away quickly and begins untying her apron.

KATIE
I ain't doin' this no more, Jenny! I told you and told you!

JENNY
What?

KATIE
I fuckin' quit!

JENNY
Well, fine. Fuckin' quit, then.

RONNIE
Mama...

Katie throws down her apron and storms out of the bar. Jay stands up and starts after her. Ronnie speaks up.

RONNIE
Jay, sit your ass down.

Jay sits. Ronnie goes after Katie.

Jenny stands there looking after her, holding the apron. Frustrated, she slams some cups into the sink. Missy watches her for a moment.

MISSY
Hey.

JENNY
Yeah.

MISSY
Looks like you're hiring.

JENNY
Oh yeah? You looking for work?

MISSY
Yeah.

JENNY
Ah, what the hell.

She tosses the apron at Missy, who catches it. She stands up and wraps it around her waist.

JENNY
What's your name, anyway?

MISSY
Missy.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. DAY.

The room looks considerably more lived-in now. A few empty soda cans and some food wrappers are scattered around, and her clothes drape over the chairs.

Missy checks her hair in the mirror, grabs her purse, and heads out the door.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE. DAY.

Missy stands at the office window and slides a small stack of cash to the CLERK.

MISSY
Another night, please.

The clerk counts the money and hands her the change.

CLERK
You know it's actually cheaper if
you pay by the week.

MISSY
I know.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Jay sits at the bar.

Missy watches him for a moment from across the room, noting his slumped shoulders and watery eyes. She swipes a tip from her table and walks up to Jay.

She takes his empty beer glass, brushing his fingertips with hers. Jenny looks up from a stack of receipts and watches.

JAY
A pretty girl like you must make
good tips, huh?

MISSY
(Flirtatious.)
I do alright.

She wipes the counter, leaning closer to him than she needs to. Jenny watches them from her post.

MISSY
You want another beer?

JAY
I don't know.

MISSY
What do you mean, you don't know?

He stares her down. She meets his gaze.

JAY
I think I might need my wits about
me tonight.

EXT. MISSY'S MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay pushes Missy against the door, kissing her hurriedly.
She fumbles in her purse for her keys.

JAY
Hurry...

Missy finally gets the door open and he pushes her inside.
The door slams shut.

INT. MISSY'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

They kiss urgently. She drops her bag and keys on the
floor. Jay tugs the hem of her shirt up.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. YARD. DAY.

The angry dog is still lunging, his chain clanking loudly
as it goes taut. A young Missy, maybe nine years old,
squats in the dirt out of the dog's reach, squinting in the
sun.

Missy's father is leaning under the raised hood of a beat
up truck. His FRIEND looks on, holding a spit cup. Their
features are distorted by shadow and memory.

FRIEND
Fuckin' dog's gonna kill somebody.
Ya' oughta shoot the son' bitch.

MISSY'S FATHER
He ain't done nothin' yet.

FRIEND
Yeah, but he will.

MISSY'S FATHER
Believe I'll wait till he's gone and
done it.

Young Missy draws a line in the dirt.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

They're on the bed. Jay hastily pulls her shirt off and tosses it on the floor. He reaches for his fly and leans over toward Missy. She puts a hand on his chest, keeping some distance between them.

MISSY

Stop.

JAY

You don't want me to stop.

He goes in for a kiss but she turns her head away.

MISSY

I said stop!

He stops but doesn't move away from her. She eyes him expectantly. He looks her over. There's a tense pause.

JAY

Alright. Alright, I'll stop.

He sits up and zips his fly. Missy's eyes widen in surprise.

MISSY

Wait! Don't go! I just-- I just need you to wear one of these.

She reaches to the nightstand and pulls a condom out of a little bag.

MISSY

You don't mind, do you?

Jay snatches the little square from her hand.

JAY

What's the matter, you think I never wore one of these before?

He grabs her and playfully rolls her to the other side of the bed.

INT. MISSY'S MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay snores on the bed. Clothes are strewn about the room.

The toilet FLUSHES behind the bathroom door and in a moment, Missy steps out.

She is in her underwear, make-up smudged, hair mussed. She is brushing her teeth. She looks over at Jay, who's out cold.

She finds his pants on the floor and takes the wallet out of the back pocket. Inside is a little cash, an ATM card, and a North Carolina drivers license. The license reads "Jarvis Wilmont Jr." Missy puts the wallet back in his pants and walks back to the bathroom to spit.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. EVENING.

The bar is busy. Missy pours beers from a tap. She scans the crowd, but finds no familiar faces. The door opens and a man in a baseball cap enters, but when he lifts his face, it's not Jay.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The bar is closed and Missy is lifting chairs onto the tabletops while Ronnie sweeps and Jenny counts the register.

MISSY

I haven't seen Jay in a few days.

Jenny laughs wryly.

JENNY

Count it a blessing.

RONNIE

(sympathetic)

He likes to drink at home sometimes,
that's all.

Missy nods and continues with her work.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy turns on the TV and takes off her shoes. She downs the contents of a half full bottle of water on her nightstand. Then she rifles through her suitcase until she finds a well-worn road map.

She flops onto the bed and unfolds the map. On the TV in the background, ocean waves are crashing on a beach. It's a late night ad for a music compilation, and song titles are scrolling over the picture. But Missy sees only the waves.

She looks back at the map, her gaze tracking a path across the eastern half of the Carolinas and landing on the coast.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. DAY.

Missy has her suitcase open on the floor and she's filling it up with items left scattered around the room.

There's a loud KNOCK at the door. Missy turns off the TV and looks through the peep hole. She opens the door to find Jay standing there. He rushes into the room.

JAY
(jovial, slightly
drunk)
Pack your shit, little girl!

MISSY
What??

JAY
Pack your shit! You're staying with
me.

MISSY
Oh, am I?

JAY
Yeah, now come on!

He grabs her open suitcase and lifts it onto the bed. Missy grabs it from him.

MISSY
Hey, easy.

JAY
Look Missy, I ain't takin' no for an
answer.

MISSY
I think you've been drinking.

JAY
Started celebratin' early.

She stares at him.

JAY
What're you waitin' for? Let's go!

Missy complies but she moves at her own speed. She stuffs her things back into the suitcase and pushes it closed, her face calm and deliberate.

INT. BAR: DAY.

Jenny selects a song on the jukebox. Missy and Ronnie are behind the bar, unpacking crates of beer and unloading glasses from the dishwasher. Jenny dances to the music, but she's not a graceful dancer. Ronnie chuckles.

JENNY

You know what this town needs? A good old fashioned honky tonk!

MISSY

What do you call this place?

JENNY

Aw, this ain't no honky tonk. Got no room for a band stand. These days you can't get nobody on their feet dancin' no how.

Missy looks to Ronnie, half amused.

MISSY

She been drinkin' already?

RONNIE

Nah, that's just how she is.

JENNY

Hey Missy...

Jenny stops dancing and steps up to the bar.

MISSY

Yeah...

JENNY

I seen your car over at Jay Wilmont's last night.

MISSY

So?

JENNY

So. You stayin' over there now?

MISSY

Yeah.

JENNY

Mmm hmm.

Jenny contemplates this for a moment, staring at Missy. After a moment,

MISSY

What?

JENNY

Well, just be careful is all. That boy...

Pause.

RONNIE

Mama, maybe we oughta mind our own business.

Jenny waves him off. He shrugs and returns to his work.

JENNY

He beat the shit out of Katie.

MISSY

Oh. No kidding?

JENNY

Yeah. No kidding.

MISSY

Well, I appreciate the concern. But I can handle myself.

Jenny huffs and goes back to the juke box. Missy continues drying glasses.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The bar is almost full. Laughter, conversation and music fill the room.

A couple dances to a song playing on the jukebox.

Missy carries a tray of drinks to a booth of men.

PREACHER MAUNEY enters, a middle-aged man wearing khakis and a members only jacket, looking very out of place.

Missy watches as he approaches the booth near the door and shakes the hand of every person at the table. She goes behind the bar and refills her pitcher.

MISSY
(To Ronnie)
Who's that?

RONNIE
Preacher Mauney. He comes in every
weekend and witnesses to people.

Missy watches him from across the room. Preacher Mauney is laughing at something one of the men said. In the background a glass breaks.

JENNY
Aww, hell. Missy, go get the mop!

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM: DAY.

Missy sits cross-legged on the floor in front of her open suit-case. She lifts up the lining from the bottom and reveals a hidden compartment.

From the suitcase she pulls a coil of rope, a roll of plastic trash bags, a book of matches, and finally a hand gun.

She turns her attention to the rope, the plastic bags, and the matches. She runs a finger over them thoughtfully.

Then she picks up the gun.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MOTEL ROOM, BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Missy sits on the toilet seat, a bag of ice over her crotch. She stands up, drops the ice into the sink, and flushes the plastic bag. Her hands are trembling.

She looks in the mirror and examines her neck. It's red and raw. She runs some water and drinks a little from the palm of her hand. It hurts to swallow.

Missy pulls the handgun out of her purse and attaches the silencer. She steps into the motel room.

The tattooed man sleeps on the bed. Missy quietly approaches, then kneels next to him and levels the gun with his temple, her hands shaking.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy grips the gun and holds her finger lightly over the trigger. She points it and looks down the barrel.

She kneels by the bed, re-enacting the moment in the hotel room. She lowers the gun smoothly, until it's almost parallel with the pillow. Her hands are steady and calm. She studies her hand for a moment. Perfectly still.

She hears the front door open and JAY'S VOICE shouting hello.

Panicked, she tucks the gun into the back of her shorts. She quickly gathers up the rope, the trash bags, and the matches and stuffs them back into her suitcase.

Jay enters the bedroom and she quickly faces him, tugging her shirt down in the back.

JAY

Fancy meeting you here.

MISSY

What are you doing home?

JAY

Well nice to see you too. Workin' a site just up the road, thought I'd come home for lunch.

Jay crosses the room and puts his hands on Missy's hips.

JAY

You hungry?

MISSY

No.

JAY

I am.

He kisses her cheek, then her throat. She removes his hands from her hips and steps away from him.

MISSY

Stop it, I have to go to work.

JAY

Bullshit, you can stay a little longer. I promise I'll be quick.

MISSY

No, you're gonna make me late. Now quit it.

There's a brief stand off, each one gauging the other's determination.

JAY

Alright, alright, your loss.

MISSY

See you later.

She slings her purse over her shoulder, so it falls just over the small of her back, further concealing the gun. Jay is left sitting on the bed.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The place is nearly empty. Missy and Ronnie are bored behind the bar. OFFICER LAWSON enters.

OFFICER LAWSON

Hey there, Ronnie.

RONNIE

Officer. This is Missy, she's the new girl.

OFFICER LAWSON

Hello, Missy. Ronnie, can I talk to you for a minute?

RONNIE

I'm guessing you're here about my brother.

Officer Lawson glances at Missy, but Ronnie dismisses his concern.

RONNIE

She's alright. What's he done now?

OFFICER LAWSON

Ronnie, you know they already had a warrant out for him. Atlanta PD calls today, wants to know if we've seen him. Says he trashed a motel room down there, they suspect foul play.

Ronnie sighs. Missy watches, alert.

OFFICER LAWSON
You know I gotta ask.

RONNIE
I haven't seen him. I'll let you
know if I do.

OFFICER LAWSON
Alright.

RONNIE
Ya'll don't say nothin' to Mama,
okay? She don't need the worry.

OFFICER LAWSON
That's why I came to you.

Ronnie turns his gaze to Missy. She nods affirmatively.
Jenny enters from the back room.

JENNY
Darryl, good to see you! What are
you doing here?

OFFICER LAWSON
Just came by for some ice water. You
know you're the only one around with
crushed ice.

JENNY
Missy, get the officer a large
water, extra ice!

Missy scoops crushed ice from a bin behind the bar and
hands the cup to Jenny.

JENNY
Thank you sweetie.

INT. JAY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Jay sits in the dark, remote in hand. He drunkenly flips
through the channels. He lands on some sports coverage of a
baseball game.

JAY
Fuckin' baseball.

He angrily changes the channel. More baseball coverage.

JAY
Goddamnit.

Missy lets herself in the front door to find Jay in front of the TV. His back is to her.

JAY
(Drunk.)
Katie?!

MISSY
I'm not Katie.

JAY
Damn it! Why are you out so late?

MISSY
I was at work.

Missy drops her purse by a chair and goes to the kitchen.

INT. JAY'S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Missy opens the fridge and stares at the contents. Jay has followed her into the kitchen.

JAY
Make me a sandwich.

MISSY
Make it yourself.

Jay shoves Missy, knocking her away from the fridge, but she catches herself and stands up straight.

JAY
Bitch.

Missy's hand twitches slightly at her side.

MISSY
Fucking touch me again. I dare you.

Jay laughs at her. He stands unsteadily and walks away, laughing.

JAY
You little shit. Just be glad I got a good buzz going.

EXT. DRIVEWAY: DAY.

Missy tries again and again to start her car but the engine won't turn over. She bangs the steering wheel in frustration.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD: DAY.

Missy walks on the side of the road.

INT. BAR: DAY.

Missy steps inside, flushed and sweaty. She goes behind the bar and pours herself a glass of water. Jenny and Ronnie stare at her.

JENNY
Lordamercy, did you walk here?

Missy finishes her water and nods.

MISSY
My car died.

JENNY
Why the hell didn't you call me?
It's too hot to be walking like
that.

MISSY
I don't have your number.

JENNY
You got a phone book?

MISSY
I don't know.

JENNY
Oh Jesus.

She rips a piece of paper off a pad.

JENNY (CON'T)
Here's the number for the bar. And
my home number. Hell, I'm gonna give
you Ronnie's number too. What's the
matter with you girl, walking all
that way in this heat? You coulda
had a heat stroke.

EXT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Jenny locks the front door while Missy and Ronnie stand nearby.

RONNIE
You need a ride home, Missy?

MISSY
No thanks, Jay's comin' for me.

RONNIE
Alright.

JENNY
(to Missy)
Next time you need a ride, call me.
Understand?

MISSY
I will. There's Jay.

Jay's truck pulls into the parking lot and stops in front of the group. Missy gets in.

MISSY
See you tomorrow.

Jay takes off before she can get her seat belt buckled. The truck spins and fishtails in the gravel before pulling onto the road.

INT. TRUCK. NIGHT.

Missy buckles her seat belt. Jay isn't wearing one.

MISSY
Are you drunk?

JAY
No I ain't drunk!

MISSY
You are! I can smell it.

JAY
Don't mean I'm drunk.

MISSY
You stupid fuck, pull over and let me drive.

JAY

What? What the hell did you just call me?

Something clicks behind Missy's eyes and her voice and manner become slightly more deliberate.

MISSY

I said, pull over and let me drive, you stupid fuck!

Jay speeds up, too fast for the country road. He reaches across the cab and pushes Missy into the window, banging her head on the glass.

Missy straightens up and watches him, a look of tense anticipation on her face.

The truck turns sharply and stops in front of Jay's house. They both get out.

EXT. FRONT YARD. NIGHT.

Jay walks quickly around the truck and grabs Missy's arm, pulling her along.

JAY

Fuckin' bitch, think you can say shit like that and not pay the consequences?

MISSY

Stop it.

He pushes her toward the house. She stumbles and falls to her knees. He grabs her again and drags her toward the house. The door is not locked, and he pulls her inside.

INT. JAY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

JAY

Fuckin' piece of shit. Get over here.

MISSY

I said stop!

Jay pushes her up against the wall and tries to pull down her pants. She elbows him in the face. He curses and pushes her even harder into the wall. He twists her arm behind her back with one hand and unzips his pants with the other.

He rapes her.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. YARD. DAY.

Young Missy stands in the shadows. A few yards away, her brother stands clutching his bleeding hand.

They watch their father's silhouette cross the yard to the dog pen. They hear the sound of the dog's chain dragging across the wood of the dog house, as he comes out to greet his master.

Then the sound of a gun.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay snores on the couch. Missy is still on the floor, curled into a ball, leaning her head on the cool wood paneling. A goose egg has formed on her forehead, and her cheeks are damp with tears and mascara. Blood is smeared beneath her nose.

EXT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay wakes up on the couch. He sits up and rubs his eyes. He stumbles to the bathroom, still a bit drunk. He seems not to notice the light coming from under the door and opens it anyway.

He stops in his tracks.

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Startled, Missy stares up at Jay, one hand holding a bag of ice to her forehead, the other holding a bloody rag. She stands in her shirt and underwear, looking back at him with hollow eyes. Jay turns abruptly and walks away.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Jay stumbles into the kitchen and pulls a bottle of whiskey from a cabinet. A sob escapes from his throat. He heads for the door.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM, LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

With some pain, Missy pulls on a pair of pants.

She holds a plastic bag full of ice to her temple. She rifles through her belongings, finally pulling the pistol from the lining of the suitcase. She loads the chamber with bullets and stands up.

She walks deliberately, gun in hand, out of the bedroom and through the living room. She approaches the front door.

A muffled wail from the porch catches her attention.

Missy goes to the window and places her face near the glass, peering through the dark.

In the amber blanch from the floodlight, she can see Jay on the porch. He sits hunched on the steps, clutching a whiskey bottle. He drinks and cries.

Missy's eyes grow round. She watches for a few moments mystified, but her expression changes to contempt.

EXT. YARD. NIGHT.

Jay drains the bottle and throws it hard at a dilapidated shed. The glass shatters.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy watches Jay from the window. Her thumb idly strokes the metal of the gun.

EXT. YARD. NIGHT.

Jay swings a baseball bat at a long-abandoned lawn mower. He brings it down on an old car bumper.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy turns away from the window and sits down on the couch in the dark.

She holds the pistol up to a shaft of light from the window and double checks the safety. Then she slips it between her back and the sofa cushion, and waits.

INT. LIVING ROOM NIGHT.

Missy's eyes flutter closed for a moment. Then she snaps to attention, trying to rub the sleepiness out of her eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay drags himself in from outside, feeling his way in the dark to his bedroom. Missy is asleep sitting up on the couch.

DREAM:

EXT. RURAL BACK YARD. EVENING.

Missy is a child, her face pressed into the ground. From her point of view, all she can see is the glare of the sun and dust and grass.

Young Missy's brother watches from a distance.

Her father stands up, his features obscured by the sun. She hears the slow click of his belt buckle sliding back into place.

He takes one last drag on the cigarette, then presses the lit end into her back. Her skin sears and she cries out.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Missy's eyes open suddenly. She can hear Jay moving around in the bedroom. Then his footsteps approaching. She closes her eyes again and steadies her breathing.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Jay enters from the bedroom, dressed for work but looking worn out and hungover. He stares at Missy's form under a blanket on the couch. He turns and walks into the kitchen.

When he is gone, Missy opens her eyes. Without moving her body, she reaches into the crack of the sofa cushions and finds the gun she hid the night before. She pulls the blanket over it.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Jay pours a cup of coffee from a brown-stained pot. He rattles through the cabinets and drawers until he finds a couple packets of sugar. He dumps them into the coffee.

He pulls a half-empty gallon of milk from the refrigerator. He takes a whiff. It passes inspection and he adds some to the coffee, giving it a good stir.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Jay carefully approaches Missy on the couch. He quietly clears a spot on the coffee table and rests the mug there. Missy turns over and looks at him.

He stares back. Morning light highlights the bruise on her fore-head. The ice pack from the night before is now a bag of water on the floor.

JAY

I uh...brought you some coffee.

Missy just stares at him. He looks away sheepishly.

JAY

You need anything before I go?

She shakes her head.

JAY

Alright then. See you tonight.

Jay turns to go. Missy watches him leave, listening as he makes his way through the rest of the house. She hears the door close and his truck start up. When the engine sounds die off down the road, she turns her attention to the coffee cup.

She eyes it suspiciously and runs her fingers over the wound on her forehead. She picks it up and stares down into it, letting the steam hit her face. Hesitantly she takes a sip.

INT. JAY'S BATHROOM: DAY.

Missy is tired and pale, and has bruises on her face from the night before. She applies concealer over the bruises, doing her best to disguise them.

INT. BAR: NIGHT.

Missy wipes down the bar. Jenny looks up from a stack of receipts and studies her. She notes the bruises but doesn't say anything.

INT. BAR BATHROOM. DAY.

Missy enters. She stares at herself in the mirror for a moment, then fishes a bottle of Advil out of her purse. She pops a few pills and washes them down with water from the sink.

She lights a cigarette, then cracks the tiny bathroom window for ventilation. With the lit cigarette dangling from her mouth, she pulls the tube of concealer from her purse.

She pulls her hair back from her face, revealing the bruise from the night before. She begins dabbing more make-up over it.

Jenny enters, pausing only briefly when she sees Missy. Missy freezes.

JENNY

Smokin' in the girls' room, huh?

MISSY

Yeah, sorry...

JENNY

Hell, it's too hot to do it outside.

Jenny seats herself on the toilet and pulls a pack of cigarettes out of her own pocket. She laughs at Missy as she lights up.

JENNY

Just don't let Ronnie catch ya'. He hates these things. Though I don't expect he'll be joining us in the ladies room anytime soon.

Missy smiles a little and resumes touching up her make-up. Jenny watches.

JENNY

You run into a door?

MISSY

Hmm?

Jenny gestures to her bruises.

MISSY
Not a door. A wall.

JENNY
Mmm hmm.

There's a smoke-filled pause.

JENNY
You know, you gotta put powder on that stuff to set it. Otherwise it's just going to keep rubbing off. You got some powder in there?

Missy hands her a compact from her purse. Jenny stands, exhales away from Missy, and gently dabs powder over the bruise with the cotton pad from the compact. She hums the tune from "Smokin' in the boys room." by Motley Crüe.

JENNY
Did you ice it?

MISSY
Yeah.

JENNY
When you get home tonight, put a little vinegar on it. It's an old wive's tale, but it works.

MISSY
Okay.

Jenny closes the compact and hands it to Missy. Missy tousles her hair back into place. Jenny flushes her cigarette butt and heads for the door.

She pauses in the doorway, then closes it and faces Missy.

JENNY
Do you know where I live?

MISSY
Yeah, I think so.

JENNY
If you ever need to... if you ever need a place to spend the night, just come on over. Okay?

Missy nods.

JENNY

Okay.

She closes the door.

INT. BAR. EVENING.

Missy pours Coke into a plastic cup of ice, tops it with whiskey, then puts the lid on. She sips it through a straw and gets back to work.

EXT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. EVENING.

The sun is setting and the parking lot is mostly empty.

Missy leans against the building, alternately smoking and sipping from her spiked cup. A few feet away, Ronnie sits on a bench eating a paper-wrapped hamburger.

He holds a brown bag of French fries out to Missy. She shakes her head. Then she holds her pack of cigarettes out to him. He shakes his head.

A car pulls up and Preacher Mauney gets out.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Hello Ronnie!

RONNIE

Hello yourself.

PREACHER MAUNEY

(To Missy.)

I'm not sure we've been formally introduced. My name's Ben Mauney, people call me Preacher.

Missy ignores his outstretched hand and instead lifts the cup in a kind of salute.

MISSY

People call me Missy.

PREACHER MAUNEY

You're Jay's girlfriend aren't you?

MISSY

No.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Oh, I'm sorry. I just thought you were...

MISSY

We are.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Well, allow me to... If you ever need anything, let me know. I'm always available.

MISSY

I won't.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Pardon?

MISSY

Won't need anything from you.

RONNIE

Missy...

PREACHER MAUNEY

It's okay, Ronnie. I'll see you around, Missy.

She loudly drains her cup. Preacher Mauney heads inside the bar.

Ronnie eyes her, troubled.

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

The bar is closed and Ronnie is just finishing up mopping the floor. Jenny counts the register. Missy turns up a shot of whiskey, then picks up a trash bag to carry out. She stumbles a little.

JENNY

Missy, how about you let Ronnie drive you home tonight?

MISSY

My car...

JENNY

I'll follow behind in your car. Not letting you drive like this.

Missy looks displeased but doesn't argue.

EXT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Ronnie's truck pulls out onto the road followed by Jenny driving Missy's car.

INT. RONNIE'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Ronnie drives, occasionally glancing warily at Missy. He leans forward and flips on the radio.

RONNIE
You want some music?

Bad COUNTRY MUSIC blares from the speakers.

MISSY
Not that shit.

Ronnie turns the radio off and they ride in silence for a few moments.

RONNIE
You know, when I was little, my daddy used to hit Mama. One time so hard he knocked her tooth out and now she has a false one.

MISSY
Jenny?

RONNIE
Yes, Jenny. One day she packed us all up, me and Trip, and took us away. We came to this town with nothin'. It was Preacher Mauney that got Mama the job at the bar.

MISSY
The Night Light?

Missy turns in her seat to look back at Jenny behind them in her car. She can't make out Jenny's face but the window is down and Jenny's hand is making waves in the night air.

RONNIE
Wasn't called that back then. Mama bought it about ten years ago and changed the name. If it hadn't been for Preacher Mauney, God knows where we'd be. He helped us bail Trip outta jail twice. Never asked for a dime.

MISSY
She don't owe him nothin'.

RONNIE
He don't want nothin'.

MISSY
Everybody wants something.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

Missy steps out of Ronnie's truck and waves goodbye. She lets herself into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy closes the door behind her and drops her purse on a chair. She watches out the window as Jenny parks her car and gets in the truck with Ronnie. Missy watches until they're gone, then turns back to the darkened house.

It's quiet except for the sound of snoring coming from the bedroom. Missy approaches slowly.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

She peers in the open door. Jay is sleepily watching the small TV on the dresser. When he sees her he sits up and turns down the volume.

JAY
Hey.

MISSY
Hey.

She walks away before the interaction can continue but he gets up and follows her.

INT. LIVING ROOM: NIGHT.

JAY
Hey, I just... I'm sorry about last night.

Missy freezes for a moment.

JAY

I lose it sometimes. When I'm
drinkin'. I'm trying to quit, but...
you know.

Missy snaps out of her surprise.

MISSY

Fuck you.

Jay looks as if he had expected his apology to go over
better.

JAY

Yeah, alright. I deserve that.

He goes back to the bedroom.

Missy settles in on the couch. She pulls the gun from her
purse and tucks it between the cushions.

INT. LIVING ROOM- MORNING.

Missy is asleep on the couch alone. Morning light shines
through the drawn curtains. Jay comes into the room,
dressed for work. He looks around until he finds her purse,
then begins to rifle through it. Missy wakes up.

MISSY

What are you doing??

JAY

I need to move your car. I can't get
out.

MISSY

I'll do it.

She stumbles out of bed, takes the keys and her purse from
him, and exits.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY.

Missy walks out of the house, followed by Jay. She gets in
the car. The engine won't turn over. Jay watches her crank
it again and again until finally it starts and she backs
away from his truck.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The bar is about half full. Jay is drinking at the bar as usual and Missy is waiting tables. She brings a tray of beers to a booth of four men, and as she turns to walk away one of them slaps her ass.

She pauses, then turns slowly to look at him, deliberately altering her expression to one of flirtation.

MISSY
Can I help you?

DRUNK MAN
I don't know, maybe.

She flashes a dead-eyed smile and picks up his beer. He watches, intrigued, as she takes a sip. Then she slowly pours the beer over his head.

The man stands up quickly and wipes beer from his eyes. He shoves Missy.

DRUNK MAN
Crazy bitch!

MISSY
Don't fuckin' touch me again.

Jay saw the man push Missy and has made his way across the bar to them. He slams into him without even slowing down, and the man falls back into another table.

JAY
Where the hell do you get off,
laying a hand on her?

The man gets back on his feet and throws a punch at Jay. He misses. The man's friends get up and join the brawl. Missy slams a drink tray over one of their backs. The bar patrons cheer and shout and some join the fray.

JENNY
Missy, get the hell out of there!
Ronnie, call the cops!

EXT. PARKING LOT, THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

OFFICER LAWSON stands outside with the brawling men, Jay, Missy, and Jenny. The men look a little worse for the wear.

OFFICER LAWSON
 Anybody want to tell me what's going
 on here?

Everyone is silent. Jenny looks pissed.

JAY
 Things just got a little out of
 hand. Ain't nothin' big.

OFFICER LAWSON
 (Motioning to Missy)
 Didn't happen to have nothin' to do
 with this one, now did it?

MISSY
 Jay just thought he was
 disrespectin' me. That's what got it
 started.

OFFICER LAWSON
 Was he?

MISSY
 Yeah, but it wasn't none of Jay's
 business.

JAY
 What the hell Missy, I was standing
 up for you!

MISSY
 I don't recall asking for your help!

OFFICER LAWSON
 Alright, enough. I'm gonna let it
 slide this time. Next time I won't
 be so nice. Jenny, you got a handle
 on this?

JENNY
 Yes, I think so. Sorry to bother you
 Darryl.

(To the men.)
 You boys get outta my sight. I don't
 want to look at you right now.

The men walk nervously back to their trucks. Officer Lawson
 looks suspiciously at Missy.

OFFICER LAWSON
 Take care, Jenny. Call if you need
 me.

JENNY

Thank you. Goodnight.

She takes Missy by the arm and leads her back toward the door.

JENNY

I don't know what you were thinking in there, but you just can't go off on every customer that pats your fanny.

MISSY

He was out of line.

JENNY

Well it wouldn't have killed you to let it slide.

MISSY

Might've.

JENNY

Don't get smart with me.

MISSY

Don't tell me I gotta let some drunk-ass piece of shit slap my ass so you can keep the peace in your bar. My ass is private property and I get to say who slaps it and who don't.

JENNY

Just like you stand up to Jay, right? Lettin' him beat you and God knows what?

MISSY

That's for me to worry about, not you. I'll settle things with Jay myself.

Missy steps inside the bar and Jenny watches her go.

EXT. JAY'S YARD: NIGHT.

Missy gets out of Jenny's car and gives her a quick wave. Jenny drives off and Missy walks toward the house.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Jay reclines in bed, his back against the head board and his head slung back. The nightstand is littered with empty beer cans and the 11:00 PM news plays on the TV.

Missy turns it off and watches Jay for a reaction. He snores on. She turns quickly and silently and makes her way to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Missy goes straight to the drawer with the gun, opens it, and is about to pick up the gun when she stops herself. She lifts her shirt and uses the edge to keep her hands from touching the gun. She carries it to the living room where she dropped her purse.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy sets the gun down on the chair and opens her purse. She pulls out a pair of latex gloves and puts them on. Her hands are shaking almost imperceptibly.

She digs around in the purse and pulls out a handful of bullets. Her hands are shaking more now and she drops one as she loads the gun.

She opens and closes her fist and curses herself under her breath. In desperation she turns to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Missy opens the freezer and pulls out a bottle of whiskey. She wipes the sweat from her brow and takes a swig. It chokes her a little but she takes another and another. Then she replaces the cap and returns the bottle to the freezer.

Missy looks down at the gun. Her hands aren't shaking as much now. She cocks the pistol.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Jay is still snoring. Missy walks calmly up to him, without making a sound. She lifts the gun a little and maneuvers herself closer.

She is just about to touch the gun to his right temple when head lights pass through the blinds on the window, sending shafts of light across the dark room. A car engine is heard outside in the driveway.

In one motion, Missy pulls the gun back and hits the floor. She looks up only to see that Jay is still asleep. She gets out of the room as fast as she can, closing the door behind her.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy looks out the window. She sees Katie getting out of a car and approaching the door.

Missy puts the safety on the gun and tucks it into the waist of her shorts, pulling her shirt over it. She takes the gloves off and tosses them aside. Then she opens the door and steps out.

EXT. PORCH. NIGHT.

Katie stops short, a few feet from the porch, when she sees Missy.

KATIE

Oh.

MISSY

You Katie?

KATIE

Yeah.

MISSY

What are you doing here?

KATIE

I'm sorry, I didn't know he had another girlfriend.

MISSY

I ain't his girlfriend.

KATIE

Oh, well, whatever you are... I'll just get outta here.

MISSY

No, wait. What are you doing here?

KATIE
Nothin'. Really, sorry I bothered
you.

MISSY
Comin' back to him, weren't you?

Katie is silent. She swallows hard.

MISSY
After what he done to you, you still
want him back?

KATIE
You don't know what he done to me.

MISSY
Everybody knows.

KATIE
(choking up a little)
I can't help it. I love him.

MISSY
You need to.

KATIE
...What?

MISSY
Help it. You need to help yourself.
He ain't no good for you.

KATIE
Well what are you doing here, then?
You telling me he don't do the same
to you?

She's said too much.

MISSY
I'm on my way out.

KATIE
Keep tellin' yourself that.

Katie gets back in her car and drives away. Missy watches
her go.

INT. LIVING ROOM. MORNING.

Missy sits on the couch, just waking up. Jay comes through the bedroom door wearing a pair of jeans with no holes or stains and his shirt tucked in. He grabs his keys and wallet and stuffs them into his pocket.

Missy watches curiously. On his way out the door Jay stops and turns to her.

JAY
Hey, I fixed your car.

She stares, giving him nothing.

JAY
You shouldn't have no more trouble starting it. That's just me saying sorry.

She frowns. He heads out the door.

EXT. DRIVEWAY- MORNING.

Missy, carrying her work apron and purse, gets in her car. It starts on the first try. She drives away.

INT. CAR. DAY.

Missy drives down the rural road. She comes upon a small church, its parking lot full. She notices Jay's truck among the other cars as she drives past. Perplexed, she pulls the car to the side of the road and steps out.

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

Jay sits in the back of the church. The rest of the congregation is standing, singing along with the organ and choir director. Jay is hunched forward, an agonized look on his face.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD. DAY.

Missy stares at the truck. It's definitely Jay's. The last few stanzas of a hymn are heard faintly from the church. Missy stares at the door.

After a moment the doors to the church open and Preacher Mauney steps out.

He stops the door and stands on the steps of the church as the congregation begins to file out. Missy takes a cigarette out of her purse and lights it.

Jay is among the first few to exit the church. Missy watches as the preacher shakes hands with one arm and extends the other to embrace Jay. He says something to the preacher and turns to leave. He brushes his face. Missy squints. Did he just wipe away a tear?

Jay descends the church steps and digs his keys out of his pocket. He looks up and sees Missy. Their eyes meet. Jay looks away and hurries to his truck.

He pulls the truck onto the road. He holds her gaze a moment and raises his hand in a solemn and sheepish wave. She lifts her hand in acknowledgment. He drives away.

Church-goers are getting into their cars and trying not to stare at Missy, casually smoking and wearing short shorts and a skimpy top. Some smile politely and wave.

Preacher Mauney spots Missy while greeting a congregant and breaks off his handshake to shout her name and wave.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Oh, Missy! Hello there!

Missy sighs, her breath a puff of smoke. The preacher jogs up to her.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Missy, I'm tickled to death to see you here. You must've been seated way in the back.

MISSY

Oh no, I wasn't in there. Just passing by.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Oh, that's too bad. I hope you'll consider joining us one day. Jay and I have had some good talks lately.

MISSY

Yeah?

PREACHER MAUNEY

Yes, we have. And I'm here for you too, if you ever want someone to talk to.

Missy finishes her cigarette and drops it on the pavement.

MISSY

Was a time, I wanted that. I knew this other preacher, thought he might be able to help me. He took me back to his office, sat me down, told me God loved me. Then he made me get down on my knees. But not to pray.

She turns around and points over her shoulder to the tree tattoo on her back.

MISSY

See that branch, on the left? The one that's all knotty? That's his branch. My way of commemoratin' our time together.

Preacher Mauney swallows hard. Missy smirks.

MISSY

Oh don't worry. I didn't suck his dick. But I saw to it that I was the last person he ever ministered to.

Her foot grinds out the still burning cigarette butt. He stares at her, disturbed. She gets in the car and drives off.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Missy tears a piece of plastic wrap off the roll and stretches it over a container of cut lemons. The bar is about half full and fairly quiet. Jenny surfs channels on the TV.

JENNY

You'll never guess who Ronnie's out with tonight.

MISSY

Won't I?

JENNY

Not in a million years.

MISSY

Who?

JENNY
Katie. You remember her?

MISSY
(Surprised.)
Yes.

JENNY
She called him outta the blue and wanted to go out. He said they were going to Monroe to see a movie. I told him she better not think she's gettin' her job back— well looka here!

Officer Lawson has just entered the bar, in plain clothes. Jenny greets him with a big grin.

JENNY
Well, to what do I owe the pleasure, Officer?

OFFICER LAWSON
Pleasure's mine, Jenny. How you doing?

JENNY
Oh, just fine. You off duty?

OFFICER LAWSON
Yes ma'am. How about a beer?

JENNY
Missy, Darryl's having a beer.

MISSY
Alright.

Officer Lawson takes a seat at the bar.

OFFICER LAWSON
How you doing, Missy?

MISSY
Alright. How are you?

OFFICER LAWSON
Just fine. Noticed you been staying with Jay for awhile.

MISSY
Yeah?

OFFICER LAWSON

Well, look Missy, I don't mean no offense. But I've known Jay a long time, knew his father before that. I just want to make sure you're okay.

Missy stops what she's doing and stares down at the bar. She takes a moment to compose herself.

MISSY

Can nobody in this town mind their own goddamn business?

JENNY

Missy! You better watch your mouth.

OFFICER LAWSON

It's okay, Jenny. Sorry Missy. I just know Jay. I've responded to calls at his house before. There's a pattern. And I know how difficult it can be for victims of domestic violence to leave their abusers.

Jenny's brow furrows. Missy leans over the bar, seething.

MISSY

I ain't a victim.

Her intensity catches him off guard. Jenny breaks the silence.

JENNY

No offense taken, Darryl. Right, Missy?

Missy takes off her apron and slams it down on the bar.

MISSY

I need a smoke.

She exits.

Jenny pulls a jar of mixed nuts out from behind the bar and pours some into a saucer.

JENNY

Never mind her. Have some mixed nuts. I don't put these out for just nobody. These are for my VIPs!

EXT. BACK OF THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Missy takes a long drag on her cigarette. Still angry, she looks inside her purse where the hand gun rests beside her wallet and keys. Then she closes her purse dismissively and puts out her cigarette.

EXT. ABC STORE. NIGHT.

Missy walks into the store.

INT. ABC STORE. NIGHT.

Missy walks down an aisle and stops in front of a bottle of Everclear. She picks it up.

EXT. MISSY'S CAR. NIGHT.

Missy gets into the car and tosses the brown paper bag onto the passenger seat.

INT. DRUGSTORE. NIGHT.

Missy walks with purpose to an aisle of medical supplies. She scans the shelf until she sees a box of syringes.

The CASHIER looks at her curiously but takes note of her scowl and decides not to say anything. Missy pays for the syringes and goes.

EXT. JAY'S DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

Missy pulls up and gets out of her car. She opens the front door quietly.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay is passed out, shirtless in the arm chair, one leg up on the coffee table. As usual, the floor is littered with empty beer cans. Missy stares at him. She closes the door audibly and he doesn't wake up. She goes to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Missy crouches in front of her suitcase. She puts on a pair of latex gloves. She takes the bottle of Everclear and the syringes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Missy pours Everclear into a small glass. Then she fills the syringe.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay is motionless. She kneels down by his foot that's resting on the coffee table. She very carefully removes the sock and finds the vein between his toes.

She inserts the syringe into the vein. Jay doesn't flinch. She pushes the plunger down, forcing the alcohol into Jay's veins.

She puts his sock back on and stands up. Satisfied, she takes a look at him.

The light in the room is dim, but a lamp in the corner highlights his features from the side. Her attention is drawn to a spot on his upper arm. It's a small round scar. An old cigarette burn.

Dumbstruck, she kneels for a closer look. A cigarette burn.

She stands, her breath quickening.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. YARD. DAY.

Missy's father reaches toward her, burning cigarette held between thumb and forefinger. She cries out in pain.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy's hand reaches compulsively to the back of her shoulder and touches the old scar. She stares at Jay, eyes wide and wet. As she watches he begins to cough and gag. He vomits a little and chokes on it.

Panicked, Missy grabs his shoulders and leans him forward. She slaps him on the back. He coughs again but doesn't wake up.

Missy looks around wild-eyed. She finds the phone and dials 911.

MISSY

Medical...

My, my uh, friend. He drank too much. I can't wake him up!

No, he threw up. Just send somebody okay?

Her eyes fall on the syringe and bottle of Everclear she left on the coffee table.

MISSY

Shit.

She drops the phone and grabs the syringe and bottle.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Missy stuffs the bottle and syringe into the secret compartment in her suitcase. She steps back into the living room.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jay is still unconscious and his breathing is shallow. Missy shakes him.

MISSY

Jay! Come on!

EXT. JAY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Missy stands on the porch in the red and blue strobe of ambulance lights while two paramedics wheel Jay out on a stretcher.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy surveys the scene. The coffee table has been shoved aside to access the chair. She eyes the bottle of whiskey. It's half full. She picks it up and carries it to the kitchen.

INT. JAY'S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Missy pours whiskey down the drain until the bottle is nearly empty.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy puts the whiskey bottle back where she got it and grabs her purse and car keys.

INT. MISSY'S CAR. NIGHT.

She drives, occasionally catching sight of the ambulance as it speeds ahead.

INT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

Missy waits in the ER lobby. It's quiet, with only a few patients waiting.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Jay lies in the hospital bed, weak but conscious. Missy leans against the wall, picking her cuticles and not looking at Jay.

There's a knock at the door and Preacher Mauney sticks his head in.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Hey there.

Jay lifts a hand in greeting and looks sheepish. Missy nods in his direction.

Preacher Mauney sits on the edge of the bed.

PREACHER MAUNEY

How you feeling?

JAY
Feel pretty stupid.

PREACHER MAUNEY
Have too much to drink?

JAY
I reckon. Don't really remember.

PREACHER MAUNEY
Jay, I hope this can be a turning point for you.

Missy looks skeptical. Jay nods.

PREACHER MAUNEY
You know, this could be your rock bottom. You can use this moment to turn your life around.

MISSY
Bullshit.

Jay and the preacher look at Missy, startled.

PREACHER
What is it, Missy?

MISSY
This rock bottom bullshit. You don't know what you're talking about.

PREACHER MAUNEY
Explain it to me.

MISSY
(pauses for emphasis)
There is nothing--nothing--we could do to ourselves that compares to what's been done to us. Jay had too much to drink. But he poured his own glass. Lifted the glass to his own mouth. He decides for himself. You want to know about rock bottom? It's having no power, no control, no way out. Yeah, he might be in a bad way. But he got himself here and he'll get himself out.

The preacher shakes his head, but Jay is absorbing this.

PREACHER MAUNEY

A prison you build yourself is still
a prison. And there's no shame in
asking for help.

Preacher Mauney studies her for a moment. She doesn't look
away. He turns to Jay.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Jay, would you like me to pray with
you?

Jay nods. Preacher Mauney takes his hand and bows his head.
As he begins to pray, Missy walks out the door. Jay watches
her go.

INT. JAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Jay walks slowly into the house. Missy follows carrying her
purse and a bag from the hospital.

Missy pulls the covers back on the bed and Jay lies down.

Missy unlaces his shoes and pulls them off his feet. She
pulls the covers over him.

Missy brings a glass of water and makes him drink a few
sips.

Missy finds the remote on the cluttered night stand and
turns to hand it to Jay. He's asleep.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Jay stands over a pan of sizzling Spam. He wears a
threadbare sleeveless undershirt. (AKA a "wife beater.")
There's a band-aid on his wrist where an IV was placed.
Missy sits at the kitchen table. She sips a cup of coffee.

JAY

You want some of this?

MISSY

No... Thank you.

JAY

You want some eggs?

MISSY

No.

JAY
You not eating nothin'?

MISSY
No.

JAY
Well, why not?

MISSY
I'm not hungry.

JAY
Alright.
(Pause.)
You really oughta eat something.

He sits down at the table with a sigh.

JAY
Still feel so damn tired.

MISSY
Yeah, you're gonna feel that way for
a few days.

He nods and tucks into his breakfast. Missy's eyes wander to his shoulder, finding the scar. He notices her staring.

JAY
What?

Missy holds out her arm and points to a similar scar of her own.

JAY
Your daddy was a smoker too?

MISSY
Yep.

She places a cigarette between her lips and lights up.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT- EVENING.

It's early in the evening and the bar is starting to fill up. Missy and Ronnie are behind the bar serving customers. Jenny sits at a round table near the door, enjoying a card game with some of her customers.

Officer Lawson enters, followed by another OFFICER. He scans the bar for Jenny, but she spots him first.

JENNY

Darryl! I swoney, I'm glad to have your business but the Sheriff's gonna think you got a drinkin' problem, spendin' so much time here!

She laughs heartily but Officer Lawson remains serious.

OFFICER LAWSON

Jenny, why don't we talk in your office?

JENNY

(Standing.)

What's the matter? We ain't gamblin' I swear.

She laughs a little but stops as she sees what's coming.

JENNY

Darryl, what is it? It's Trip ain't it?

OFFICER LAWSON

Let's go talk in the back okay?

He leads Jenny to the back of the bar.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Ronnie sees Officer Lawson leading his mother and the look of apprehension on her face. He knows what's coming and crosses the room to meet them.

Missy watches from behind the bar. Some of the patrons are watching, curious. The three of them walk down the little hallway to Jenny's office. Missy follows at a distance.

INT. JENNY'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

From the doorway Missy sees Jenny seated in a chair, Ronnie standing beside her. Officer Lawson kneels in front of Jenny and speaks in low tones. Her face and body crumple silently and Ronnie stoops to embrace her. Jenny raises her voice in a slow wail and the moment becomes so intense and personal that Missy turns away.

She walks back out to the bar.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Missy approaches the other officer who is standing at the back of the bar.

MISSY
What happened?

OFFICER
They found Trip. Her other son.

MISSY
Found him? They arrested him?

OFFICER
No. His body washed up on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River.

MISSY
(Hesitantly.)
He drowned?

OFFICER
Seems he had a bullet hole in his head.

Missy swallows hard and turns away.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Trip lies motionless on the floor. Blood is beginning to seep from his head wound. Missy pulls the comforter off the bed and begins to wrap him in it.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Missy watches in shock as Ronnie leads Jenny out the back door.

INT. JAY'S KITCHEN. DAY.

A can of biscuit dough pops open in Missy's hands. Jay sits at the table watching and splitting a tooth pick with his pocket knife. On the stove a pan of country ham sizzles and pops.

JAY
How come you never cook for me?

MISSY

No reason to.

JAY

Well I gotta eat too, you know?

MISSY

Jenny just lost her son. Why you gotta make everything about you?

JAY

Whatever. He prob'ly ain't even dead. They got some other poor rascal's body and Trip just skipped town. He's probably in Mexico snortin' cocaine off a hooker's belly.

MISSY

No, he's dead.

JAY

How the hell they identify a body that's been in the water God knows how long? Gotta be bloated...

MISSY

Jay...

JAY

I'm just sayin'.

MISSY

Officer Lawson said they identified him by his tattoos.

JAY

Oh, yeah. He was inked up pretty good.

MISSY

You knew him?

JAY

Used to buy my weed from him. Mean sonofabitch.

EXT. JENNY'S FRONT PORCH. DAY.

Jenny and Preacher Mauney sit on the porch in rocking chairs. Jenny looks very tired.

Voices and the clatter of dishes can be heard inside the house, and the yard is full of cars.

JENNY

I'll be glad when I can have my house to myself again.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Want me to ask everyone to leave?

JENNY

No, don't do that. People like to feel useful.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Was there any special music he liked? Any favorite hymns?

JENNY

He liked Guns n Roses.

PREACHER MAUNEY

I don't think the organist knows any Guns n Roses.

Jenny cracks a smile. She wipes her glasses with the hem of her shirt.

JENNY

I want to ask you a favor, Preacher.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Anything.

JENNY

I gotta go pick up his body. I need Ronnie and Missy to run the bar. Just don't want to go by myself.

PREACHER MAUNEY

When do we leave?

He squeezes Jenny's hand and she smiles a little in relief. Jay's truck pulls up and he and Missy get out and walk to the porch. Missy is carrying a Tupperware container full of the ham biscuits. Jenny stands to greet them.

MISSY

Brought you some food.

Jenny hugs her tight, taking Missy by surprise.

JENNY

I'm starved all of a sudden.

She takes the Tupperware from Missy and tears it open. She bites into a biscuit ravenously and gestures to the others to take one. They decline.

JENNY

Missy, I'm gonna need you and Ronnie to run the bar while I'm gone.

MISSY

Where are you going?

JENNY

Gotta go pick up the body. Preacher's gonna ride with me.

MISSY

Whatever you need me to do.

JAY

What are ya'll driving?

JENNY

Shit, hadn't even thought about that. Sorry Preacher.

PREACHER MAUNEY

I guess we could take the seats out of the church van and drive that. Hasn't been started in a while though.

JAY

Want me to take it for an oil change? I got a buddy that'll do it for cheap.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Yeah okay. Why don't we take care of that now?

Missy looks surprised and a little annoyed at Jay's gesture of kindness. He tosses his keys to her and the preacher stands and descends the porch steps.

JENNY

Meet you at the church tomorrow, Preacher.

He waves and they get into his car and drive off. Missy takes out a cigarette and lights it.

Jenny leans in, a cigarette between her lips, and Missy lights hers as well. They sit and rock on the porch.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy winces and struggles to breathe as a tattooed arm pins her to the bed.

EXT. PORCH. DAY.

Jenny's voice breaks Missy's flash back.

JENNY

I know Trip had his problems. But he was still my baby.

Missy can't speak.

JENNY

I should've gotten him out sooner. Away from his daddy.

MISSY

You did the best you could.

JENNY

Sometimes that just ain't enough.

MISSY

Jenny, this ain't your fault. You're not responsible for what Trip done as an adult.

JENNY

Maybe not, but violence breeds violence.

MISSY

Yeah, I reckon.

JENNY

'Cept maybe in your case.

Jenny's eyes fall to the cigarette burns on the back of Missy's arm. She reaches her hand out and touches one of the small round scars. Missy is startled but doesn't move.

JENNY
Your childhood wasn't exactly no
cake-walk was it?

Missy shakes her head.

JENNY
Well you ain't no violent person.

Missy silently absorbs this grossly incorrect statement.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Missy stares at the photos on Jenny's living room wall. Two freckled little boys grinning at the camera, Jenny younger and prettier. An adolescent boy in a JV football uniform, "Trip" spelled out across the front.

The shining young face of the Tattooed Man.

Voices can be heard from the kitchen. Suddenly there's a voice behind her.

KATIE
It's a shame, ain't it.

MISSY
Oh. Hey.

KATIE
Lookin' at pictures like that...
Just reminds you of what could've
been.

MISSY
Yeah.

KATIE
How are you doing, Missy?

MISSY
I'm fine.

KATIE
Is Jay treatin' you good?

MISSY
I said I'm fine. You got nothin' to
worry about.

KATIE

Alright. You want something to eat?
Some tea?

MISSY

I'd like to use the bathroom.

KATIE

Down the hall, past the kitchen.

Missy looks into the kitchen as she passes. Ronnie sits at the table, tracing the moisture on his glass. A handful of neighbors and friends wrap up casseroles and load the ancient dishwasher.

Ronnie is a still island in the energetic bustle of the kitchen.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

Missy and Ronnie stand behind the bar. The place is almost empty. Ronnie is obsessively drying glasses and polishing off water spots. His face is heavy and tight.

Missy slowly counts her tip money. A sharp motion and the sound of shattering glass snap her to attention. Ronnie curses.

Ronnie stands over the broken glass forcing his lips into a straight line, choking back grief. Missy takes it in, helpless.

Ronnie bends to clean up the mess, but Missy stops him and takes the rag from his hands. She kneels and rakes the shards into a pile. Ronnie flees down the hall toward the back door.

Missy sits on the floor behind the bar, miserable.

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

Missy ties up a large bag of trash and lugs it down the hall. Behind her, the bar is empty.

EXT. BACK OF BAR. NIGHT.

The back door swings open and Missy steps out, dragging the trash bag.

She stops abruptly upon seeing Ronnie leaned against the wall, lit by the amber floodlight, smoking a cigarette. Missy recovers and walks over to the dumpster, tossing the trash inside.

MISSY
Thought you didn't smoke.

RONNIE
I don't, normally.

MISSY
Got another one?

RONNIE
(Laughing a little.)
These are Mama's.

He pulls out a skinny white cigarette from a pack. It looks even smaller in his large hands.

Missy takes it and he gives her a light. They stand together for a moment, inhaling and exhaling, watching the smoke rise through the night air.

MISSY
You alright?

RONNIE
I don't know. It's uh...

He struggles for a moment, finding the words. He keeps his voice low, controlling the emotion in it.

RONNIE
I won't miss my brother. He was a
fucking shit stain.

Missy looks surprised.

RONNIE
But he wasn't always that way. When
we were kids... It wasn't all bad. And
I guess I always hoped he'd go back
to that. That he'd straighten out,
dry up..

I don't know. I don't know. That
hope is just gone. He's really not
coming back.

His voice breaks and Missy turns away. Her eyes are haunted.

INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy kneels in front of her suitcase. She digs through it, taking out the syringe, the matchbook, the rope, the latex gloves, and finally the gun. She puts the gun in a bureau drawer. She puts the other items in a plastic bag and drops it into the trash.

She stands over the trash can for a moment hesitating, then walks away.

EXT. GRAVEYARD. DAY.

A handful of people stand in front of an open grave. Trip's death has not inspired many mourners. The casket is waiting to be lowered in.

Missy stands at the back, a few steps away from the rest. Jay stands a few paces away, hands clasps in reverence.

Preacher Mauney is reading scripture from a leather-bound Bible.

PREACHER MAUNEY

"For everything there is a season,
a time for everything under heaven.
A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to
harvest.
A time to kill and a time to
heal..."

She watches Ronnie and Jenny, arms around each other, slightly rocking from side to side. Jenny looks frail and withered.

Missy turns and walks away, taking deep breaths. Jay watches her go, perplexed.

INT. MISSY'S CAR. DAY.

Missy drives fast, forcing herself to take deep breaths and holding back tears.

EXT. JAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Missy slams the car in park and walks deliberately toward the house.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM: DAY.

Missy grabs her suitcase and places it on the bed. She arranges her things inside, folding things and zipping up bags. She grabs a few errant items of clothing that are scattered around the room and hurriedly places them in the suitcase.

Without thinking she grabs the half apron she wears at the bar and starts to pack it too. Then she realizes what she's done and stops and stares at it. She bows her head and holds back a sob, her face contorted.

Jay's voice startles her.

JAY

Hey.

She straightens but doesn't turn to him. She forces her face into a neutral expression.

MISSY

Hey.

JAY

You going somewhere?

She doesn't answer. Jay absorbs this and goes on.

JAY

Listen, my daddy called and needs me to come fix his air conditioner. I thought you might like to come along.

She turns to him.

MISSY

Why?

JAY

You like the beach don't ya?

She nods.

JAY

Well he lives at Myrtle Beach. Maybe we get a room. Stay a couple nights.

MISSY

I don't know.

JAY

I just... I don't want to go by myself.

She picks up the apron from the suitcase.

MISSY

I gotta work tonight.

JAY

Tomorrow then.

EXT. BACK OF THE NIGHT LIGHT. DAY.

Missy sprays out a filthy mop bucket and Jenny smokes a cigarette.

MISSY

Jenny, why don't you go home? Me and Ronnie can handle it tonight.

JENNY

Go home and do what? Feel sorry for myself?

MISSY

Alright, alright.

JENNY

I need the distraction. In fact, why don't we talk about something else.

MISSY

Okay. Well, tomorrow me and Jay are going to see his daddy.

JENNY

His daddy? Why?

MISSY

To fix the A.C.

JENNY

Why can't he fix it himself? Ain't no older than me.

MISSY

He's got emphysema. Can't get out of bed.

JENNY

Well, serves the fucker right.
Pardon my French.

MISSY

What you got against Jay's daddy?

JENNY

Listen, I went to high school with Big Jay, I remember when he married Lisa. He beat the shit out of her until finally she left. Nobody knows where she went, but she left Jay and his brother with him. That oughta tell ya' something about how them boys was raised.

Jenny pauses expecting a reaction from Missy, and when she doesn't get one, continues.

JENNY

Now, I ain't makin' excuses for him, but when you meet Big Jay, you'll understand why Jay is the way he is. That don't mean he should lay a hand on you, that ain't right. In fact, I'd rather you not even hang around Jay. He just had a real rough childhood is all.

MISSY

Well he's all grown up now.

JENNY

He ain't never been sober long enough to grow up.

MISSY

Says the bar owner...

JENNY

(Laughing.)

Yeah, you got me there.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY.

Jay throws a Duffel bag and his tool box into the back of the truck. Missy puts her bag in and gets in the truck.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY.

The truck drives through little towns and miles of tobacco fields. The red clay turns to sand, and eventually they cross the state line into South Carolina.

They pass trailer parks and golf courses. Then Myrtle Beach welcomes them with neon signs and mini-golf, sand and mud and outlet malls.

Finally they drive through a trailer park and stop in front of one that appears abandoned. Vegetation has grown up in front of it, and the little porch leading to the front door is weathered and cracking. They get out of the truck.

EXT. TRAILER. DAY.

Missy stretches her legs. Jay, visibly nervous, gets his tool box from the back of the truck.

JAY

You can't smoke in there. He's on oxygen.

MISSY

Okay.

INT. TRAILER. DAY.

Inside, the trailer is dark and stuffy. The living room is sparsely furnished with an armchair, a hospital bed, and a TV.

JAY

Daddy? You awake?

JAY SR.

What took you so long?

Jay opens the blinds and daylight floods in. Jay Sr. lies in the hospital bed, gray hair thin and mussed, his eyes sunken and dark, his skin pale. He wears tubes in his nose, connected to an oxygen tank by the bed.

JAY

Daddy, we been driving for 3 hours, didn't even stop for lunch.

JAY SR.

Shoulda come yesterday. Couldn't sleep all night, it was so hot.

JAY
Well, you called too late yesterday
for me to come in time.

JAY SR.
Bullshit.

Jay gets out his tools and takes the facing off the air conditioning unit in the window. Missy and Jay Sr. look at each other.

JAY SR.
Who's this?

JAY
That's Missy. Missy, say hello to
Daddy.

MISSY
Hello.

JAY SR.
Missy, Missy... You got a pair of legs
on you, girl.

JAY
Daddy...

JAY SR.
Why don't you come sit by me, Missy?

MISSY
I'm fine right here.

JAY SR.
Alright.

There is a tense pause, filled only by the sounds of Jay's wrench and Jay Sr.'s labored breathing.

JAY SR.
Ya'll shackin' up?

JAY
No.

MISSY
Yeah.

JAY SR.
I knew it. Knew you couldn't get no
woman to marry you.

Missy stares at him, silently. Jay lowers his head a little, embarrassed.

JAY
Where's Bobby?

JAY SR.
Aw, who the hell knows? He ain't no count anyhow. Can't go five minutes without eating some kinda pill. It's gonna put him in the ground.

JAY
Yeah, like you and your cigarettes.

JAY SR.
What'd you say?

JAY
I'm just saying, we all got our vices.

JAY SR.
Come here, boy.

JAY
Why?

JAY SR.
Boy, don't ask me why! Come over here, I want to tell you something.

Jay crosses over to the bed.

JAY
What do you want to tell me?

JAY SR.
(motioning him
closer)
Come here.

JAY
(leaning in)
What?

Jay Sr. slaps him hard across the face.

JAY SR.
Don't you dare try and correct me.
You're my boy and I'm your daddy,
and don't you forget it.
(MORE)

JAY SR. (cont'd)

I might be bound to this bed but
I'll still whip your ass.

(To Missy.)

I may not look it now, but I used to
kick his ass on a regular basis. One
time he smarted off at me, I broke
his nose. Just took a baseball and,
wham! Right in the nose. You'd think
he'd learn after something like
that, but he don't. He don't learn.
He's just stupid, you see? His Mama
knew it, that's why she left.
Couldn't take it. Boy nigh' on drove
me crazy growin' up. 'S why I took
to smokin'. See where it got me.

Jay retreats to the A.C. unit in shame. The tirade seems to
have sucked the air from the room.

Missy stares at the old man in the bed.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy's father sits in bed, cleaning his pistol. His room
is littered with empty beer cans, full ash trays, porn
magazines, and clothes. He finishes the pistol and lays it
on the nightstand next to an ashtray.

FATHER

Missy!... Missy!!

Missy, 16, appears at the door. She has brown hair, her
natural color. She wears a loose fitting flannel shirt and
torn jeans. Her eyes fill up with hate.

MISSY

What.

FATHER

Come here.

MISSY

No.

FATHER

(Harshly.)

Get over here!

Missy walks slowly over to him. He grabs her wrist and
pulls her onto the bed.

FATHER

Fucking whore. How many times I have
to tell you not to say no to me?

She writhes in her father's grip and suddenly grabs the gun
from the table. She pulls back and points the gun at her
father. He lets go of her arm and laughs.

FATHER

You little shit, you ain't gonna
shoot me.

She cocks the pistol. He stops laughing.

MISSY

Say you're sorry.

FATHER

For what?

Missy pulls the trigger. The gunshot is deafening in the
small room, and her father is dead instantly. Missy's
brother runs into the room to see what happened.

BROTHER

Shit! Missy!

MISSY

Shut up!

BROTHER

What the hell is wrong with you?

Missy is silent. Her brother approaches. She points the gun
at him.

MISSY

Don't touch me!

BROTHER

I ain't!

MISSY

Say you're sorry.

BROTHER

I'm sorry!

MISSY

You're not sorry. You're just like
him!

Screaming through tears she walks toward him, holding the gun out in front of her with both hands.

MISSY
I'm your sister!

BROTHER
That's alright Missy. We won't do it
no more, okay? I said we won't do
that again.

She puts the gun against his forehead and pulls the trigger.

INT. TRAILER. DAY.

Missy's eyes focus and she sees Jay Sr. again, still pleased with himself.

MISSY
How old was he?

JAY SR.
When?

MISSY
When you broke his nose?

JAY SR.
Hell if I know.

MISSY
Jay, how old were you?

JAY
Thirteen.

Jay Sr. laughs a little too hard and begins to cough. He is remorseless.

Missy stares for a moment, then steps to the bedside and yanks the oxygen tubes from his nose.

He stops laughing and reaches his hand up to stop her. She brushes it away easily and holds the tubes out of reach.

MISSY
Think that's funny, do you?

Jay has stopped his work and watches, paralyzed. Jay Sr. gasps for air.

JAY SR.

Bitch! What are you doing? Put that back!

Missy stands there, just out of reach, silent.

JAY SR.

Jay, are you gonna let her do this?

Something is happening in Jay.

Suddenly, he lunges and grabs his father's neck with both hands, squeezing hard. Missy looks on in shock. She drops the oxygen tube.

MISSY

Jay.

He doesn't hear her. He's focused on his father's face, which turns red, then purple. His lips are turning blue.

MISSY

JAY!

Jay looks up and for a moment their eyes meet.

Then he looks back to his father and tightens his grip.

Jay Sr. goes limp. Jay lets go and steps back from the bed. He looks up at Missy in shock. She shakes her head. Jay staggers backward and slumps against the wall. He puts his head in his hands.

Missy jumps into action. She takes her t-shirt off and turns it inside out. Using it to cover both hands she wipes the oxygen tube of finger prints. She wipes down the spot she touched on the wall. She wipes down the door knob.

JAY

I'm gonna be sick.

MISSY

Damnit Jay, not in here.

She hustles him out the door. She watches from the doorway while he pukes in the front yard. Her eyes dart to the neighboring trailers' windows.

MISSY

Fuck.

She takes another panicked glance around the trailer. Jay Sr. lies still and pale. She turns and hurries out the door.

EXT. TRAILER. DAY.

Jay is leaning on the truck catching his breath.

MISSY
Get in the truck.

They get in and speed off.

INT. TRUCK. DAY.

Jay drives like a maniac out of the trailer park and onto the street. He doesn't know where he's going, he just drives. Missy clamps on her seat belt and rides it out, tight-lipped.

Eventually they wind up on the oceanfront, and Jay pulls the truck into a space near a boardwalk.

MISSY
Come on.

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

They get out of the truck and walk silently down the boardwalk. Missy leads the way. Finally, the dunes end and a perfect stretch of pale sand lies in front of them. They walk out on the sand and sit down.

They look out at the ocean for a moment. The sun is beginning to set. Missy lies on her back and then so does Jay. His breathing comes faster and his face seems to crumble. He begins to cry.

Missy watches the sunset.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Missy and Jay are asleep on the sand. The beach is lit by moon light. The tide has risen and water is lapping at their feet. Missy's eyes open and for a moment she doesn't know where she is.

She rolls over and wakes Jay. He sits up fast and scared. They stand up, groggy and sand-covered, and make their way back to the truck.

INT. TRUCK. NIGHT.

Jay starts up the truck.

MISSY
We should go back.

JAY
Why?

MISSY
We'll burn it down. Get rid of evidence.

JAY
I don't know.

MISSY
Listen, a strangled body is a homicide. A burned one is an accident. Happens all the time with oxygen tanks.

JAY
...Okay.

EXT. TRAILER PARK. NIGHT.

Jay's truck pulls into the trailer park and slows to a stop. They can see the blue lights of police cars flashing up ahead.

INT. JAY'S TRUCK. DAY.

Jay panics.

JAY
Shit. Shit!

MISSY
Calm down.

Jay inches the truck forward till he sees a SKINNY YOUNG MAN in baggy clothes talking to one of the cops.

MISSY
That your brother?

JAY
Yeah.

MISSY
Does he know your truck?

JAY
...No.

She hands him a baseball cap from the floor board.

MISSY
Put this on. Drive by like
everything's normal.

Jay pulls the cap low on his forehead and eases the truck past the trailer.

Missy looks over and sees Jay Sr.'s body being wheeled out on a stretcher.

INT. TRUCK. DAWN.

The sun is coming up. The mood in the truck is tense. Jay drives. Missy looks out the window, clenching and unclenching her fist.

EXT. JAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Jay's truck pulls up. Missy gets out, carrying her purse. She walks up and lets herself into the house. Jay stops and looks around at all the junk and falling-down sheds. He looks at the house.

INT. JAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Missy drops her things and heads straight for the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM. DAY.

Missy stands in the shower, letting the water wash over her. Streams of dirty water and bits of sand run into the drain.

Suddenly she's overcome with a quick succession of flashbacks.

FLASHBACKS:

Jay strangling his father.

Missy pulling a rope tight around a MAN'S neck.

Missy straddling a BOUND MAN and pressing a plastic bag over his face.

Missy's steady hand holding a gun up to a SLEEPING MAN'S temple.

Missy in the cab of a truck, pressing a gun to the driver's head.

Missy in the motel room, pointing the gun at Trip and pulling the trigger.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy steps out of the bathroom, her hair wet, water seeping through her disheveled clothes.

Jay stares out the window: stares at the barn, sheds, and junk in the yard. He turns when Missy steps into the room.

Her face is dark with rage. She rushes toward him and lands a blow to his face, taking him by surprise.

She lands another before he has time to react.

JAY
Fucking hell!

He puts his arms up in defense. She lunges at him, knocking him off balance. She leaps on him, striking at his face with her fists.

Finally he grabs her by the forearms and wrests her to the floor.

He's enraged now, gripping her arms tight and shaking her.

JAY
What's the matter with you?? What's
the matter with you??

They roll and tumble on the floor, locked together in rage. Missy uses everything: elbows, fingernails, fists. Her voice is raw and unfamiliar, grunts and growls expressing a hatred beyond words.

Then Jay gets his hands around her throat and Missy's expression changes from animal rage to terror. She claws at his hands but it does no good.

He lifts his body for leverage and Missy pulls up both feet and kicks him hard in the gut.

Jay exhales and falls to the floor, just long enough for Missy to get up. She runs to the bureau and flings open the drawer. She pulls out the gun and points it at Jay.

They freeze for a moment. Jay has found his footing, his face and neck are bleeding from scratches, and he stands a little stooped. Missy's lip is split and bleeding and a bruise is forming around one eye.

They stand there staring at each other, breathing hard.

JAY

Go ahead and do it.

Missy's voice is ragged.

MISSY

Shut up!

JAY

Just go ahead. Give me what I deserve.

She cocks the pistol and levels it at this head. Her muscles are clenched and her eyes bright with adrenaline. Jay closes his eyes and his breath catches in his throat.

Then she shakes her head. She begins to back away. Jay opens his eyes. She keeps the gun pointed at him and backs out of the room.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Missy finds her purse, still vigilantly holding the gun. She goes out the front door. Jay stands in the bedroom doorway, watching her go.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Missy stands on Jenny's porch and knocks a couple times. Jenny opens the door. She takes in Missy's bruised face and hollow look. She notes Missy is not wearing shoes. She opens the door wide and Missy steps inside.

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Jenny pours a tall glass of iced tea and tops it with a couple fingers of whiskey. She gives it a stir and hands it to Missy.

JENNY

Here. Drink it, and hold the glass on your lip.

Missy obeys.

Jenny pulls supplies out of the fridge and cabinet and begins making a sandwich. White bread, bologna, American cheese, yellow mustard. She puts the sandwich on a paper plate and un-clips a bag of potato chips. Then she pauses.

JENNY

You want the chips on the side or on the sandwich?

Missy considers for a moment.

MISSY

On the sandwich.

Jenny layers potato chips on the sandwich, replaces the bread, and smashes it with her hand. She sets the plate in front of Missy, who eats dutifully.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Jenny spreads a sheet over the couch and stacks a couple pillows up at one end.

Missy steps out of the bathroom wearing one of Jenny's night shirts. She lies down on the couch. Jenny covers her with a blanket.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Missy wakes up on Jenny's couch. She gingerly touches her bruises. She hears Jenny knocking around in the kitchen.

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Missy and Jenny sit at the kitchen table, nearly finished with breakfast. Missy absentmindedly chews a piece of bacon. Jenny refills their coffee cups.

JENNY
Ah, Missy Missy Missy...

Missy seems not to hear.

JENNY
Is that your real name?

MISSY
It's the only name I ever been called.

JENNY
Yeah, but it ain't no proper name. Missy's what you call a little girl when you can't remember her name, or when she's in trouble, something like that. Any little girl could be Missy.

MISSY
Probably helped him forget I was his daughter.

JENNY
(pause)
What's your real name?

She looks at Jenny. She seems to struggle to remember. When she does, it sticks in her throat.

MISSY
Sarah Beth.

They sit for a moment, considering the name. Then Jenny exclaims,

JENNY
You don't look like no Sarah Beth!

Jenny laughs and Missy even smiles a little.

EXT. JENNY'S PORCH. DAY.

Missy smokes a cigarette, her purse around her shoulders and her feet still barefoot. Jenny comes through the front door carrying a pair of flip flops.

JENNY
These should do the trick.

Missy slips on the flip flops.

MISSY

Thanks.

JENNY

I'm coming with you.

MISSY

The hell you are.

JENNY

Missy, you shouldn't go back over there by yourself. Let me call Ronnie, he can go with you.

MISSY

No, I'll be alright.

Jenny pauses, not convinced.

JENNY

I'm giving you one hour. If you're not back by then I'm kicking the door down.

MISSY

Fine with me.

INT. MISSY'S CAR. DAY.

Missy drives up to Jay's house. She sees two police cars in the driveway and immediately tenses up. She hastily parks the car and gets out.

Two officers are leading Jay out of the house in handcuffs.

Missy runs up to Officer Lawson who stands by the porch, supervising.

MISSY

What's this about?

OFFICER LAWSON

Missy. Whoa now. Are you alright?

MISSY

I'm fine, what's going on??

OFFICER LAWSON

Jay's under arrest. He's been charged with murder.

Missy stares at Jay. He meets her eyes from the back of the police car. She remembers to look surprised.

MISSY
What murder? What are you talking about?

OFFICER LAWSON
They found his daddy yesterday. Strangled.

MISSY
You don't think Jay did it though...

OFFICER LAWSON
Doesn't matter what I think. CSU found his tool box on the scene. They're taking him into custody.

She watches the police car pull away with Jay inside. Then she storms into the house.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy throws her belongings back into the suitcase. She stashes the gun beneath the lining. She exits the house quickly.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. DAY.

Ronnie and Jenny stare at Missy from the customer side of the bar. Missy stands behind the bar pouring beer from a tap.

JENNY
Jay got arrested?

MISSY
Yeah.

RONNIE
What for?

JENNY
You decide to press charges?

MISSY
His daddy's...dead. They're charging Jay with murder.

JENNY

What??

Ronnie stands slack-jawed. Jenny blinks in surprise. Missy stops in the middle of pouring the beer and takes a slow breath. Then she abruptly walks to the bathroom.

INT. LADIES ROOM. DAY.

Missy pukes into the toilet.

She rinses her mouth at the sink and dries her face with a paper towel. In the mirror, her face looks back at her, tired and bruised.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. DAY.

Missy picks up the tray of beers and heads toward her table. Jenny stops her at the end of the bar.

JENNY

Missy. Did he do it?

Missy pauses for moment, then shrugs, at a loss. Jenny's eyes widen.

INT. THE NIGHT LIGHT. NIGHT.

The bar is moderately busy. Missy makes drinks behind the bar and Ronnie takes a tray out to a table. The front door swings open and Preacher Mauney walks in.

He spots Missy behind the bar and makes a bee line to her. She is not happy to see him.

PREACHER MAUNEY

Missy. I just came from the jail. Jay called me. I came as soon as I heard.

MISSY

Okay.

PREACHER MAUNEY

How are you holding up?

MISSY

Just fine.

PREACHER MAUNEY
I figured you'd say that.

MISSY
You gonna drink something?

Preacher Mauney notices her bruises.

PREACHER MAUNEY
Just a Coke, please.

She pours him a Coke and places the glass in front of him.
He doesn't drink it.

MISSY
What'd you say to him?

PREACHER MAUNEY
Just told him to do what's right.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE. DAY.

Missy walks into the sheriff's office.

INT. VISITING ROOM. DAY.

Missy and Jay sit at a table. Jay's hands are cuffed.
Missy's face looks a lot better but he can still see the
marks he left on her.

JAY
I want you to have the house.

MISSY
What are you talking about?

JAY
I'm going away. I want you to have
the house.

MISSY
I don't want it.

JAY
But I want you to have it.

MISSY
I don't want it.

There's an uncomfortable pause.

MISSY
Nobody's come to talk to me.

JAY
Yeah. They know I went down there by
myself.

MISSY
What?

JAY
(glancing around)
I told 'em you didn't come with me.
You had nothin' to do with it.

MISSY
You confessed?

Jay nods.

MISSY
Why not fight it? They don't have
enough evidence—

JAY
They have my tool box.

MISSY
Oh.

JAY
Anyway, I took a deal. I plead
guilty and the prosecutor takes the
death penalty off the table. I get
life with the possibility of parole.

MISSY
Parole...

JAY
This is my second chance, Missy.
Maybe I can fix myself.

MISSY
People don't get fixed in prison.

JAY
Maybe not. But at least I can't hurt
anybody else.

They stare at each other for a long moment. Then Missy
stands.

MISSY
Goodbye, Jay.

Jay swallows hard and nods. She turns and walks away, the heavy door closing behind her.

INT. TATTOO SHOP. DAY.

A different tattoo place, but the same position; Missy straddles a chair while a TATTOO ARTIST works on her back. He carefully shades another branch onto the tree.

TATTOO ARTIST
Looks pretty good. Think you'll want
to add more later?

MISSY
No. This is it.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE. DAY.

It's early morning and the light is still soft around Jenny's house and yard. Officer Lawson stands on the porch knocking on Jenny's door. After a moment Jenny opens the door and stands behind the screen in her housecoat, holding a mug of coffee.

JENNY
Darryl...

OFFICER LAWSON
Mornin' Jenny. Hope I didn't wake
you up.

JENNY
No, I've been awake awhile. What can
I do for you?

She opens the screen door.

JENNY
Can I get you some coffee?

OFFICER LAWSON
No, thank you. I was just on my way
to work, wanted to ask you a
question.

She steps out on the porch, crossing her arms over her housecoat.

JENNY

Alright.

OFFICER LAWSON

Well, I was just wondering. Was Missy at work the day Jay killed his daddy?

JENNY

Surely you don't think Jay killed him...

OFFICER LAWSON

He confessed...

JENNY

Well...

OFFICER LAWSON

Yeah. So, about Missy. Was she at the bar with you that day?

JENNY

(after a pause)

What day was that?

OFFICER LAWSON

Two weeks ago Thursday.

Jenny pauses again. The coffee steams in the mug and the morning birds and tree frogs interrupt the silence.

JENNY

She had the day off... But she did come by to pick up her check.

OFFICER LAWSON

You don't think she was with Jay in Myrtle Beach?

JENNY

Well, no. I don't see how she could've been there and back in time to pick up her check.

OFFICER LAWSON

What time was that?

JENNY

Oh, about four o'clock.

INT. BAR. AFTERNOON.

Missy is going through the bar, pulling chairs down from the table tops. The room is quiet and the sounds of the chairs hitting the floor echo around her.

The back door opens and Jenny steps into the bar. The lights aren't on yet and her face is lit only by sunlight from the windows. She speaks to Missy across the expanse of upturned chair legs.

JENNY

Darryl came to talk to me this morning.

MISSY

What about?

JENNY

About that day you took off work, a couple weeks ago..

MISSY

What?

JENNY

You took a day off. It was the day Jay went to see his daddy.

Missy takes a breath and looks at Jenny, perplexed. Before she can say anything, Jenny speaks again.

JENNY

Remember you came in here, about four o'clock, to pick up your check?

MISSY

What are you talking about?

JENNY

Remember coming here that day to get your check? *I remember...*

Realization washes over Missy's face.

MISSY

Yeah, I do remember. I was here about, four o'clock, was it?

Jenny nods. They stand there a moment and then Jenny turns to take a chair down from the table top.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JENNY'S BATHROOM. DAY.

The bathroom window is open a few inches. Missy finishes a cigarette and blows the smoke out the window. She flushes the cigarette butt.

Missy pulls on a pair of jeans—the first long pants we've seen her wear. She has some difficulty buttoning them.

Outside, Jenny bangs on the door.

JENNY (OFF)

Close that got-dang window, Missy! I got the heat on!

Missy closes the window. She looks at herself in the mirror. Her face is free of bruises and looks fuller and healthier. Her hair is still black, but the roots are coming in a lighter brown.

She opens the door and exits the bathroom.

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Jenny, dressed and carrying her purse, hands Missy a travel mug of coffee. They head out the door.

INT. JENNY'S CAR. DAY.

Jenny drives and Missy rides shotgun. Outside the sky is blue and wind picks up fallen leaves. Missy points at a driveway ahead. A sign on the mailbox reads "For Rent."

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Jenny's car pulls up in front of a tiny country house. The house has seen better days but the grass is cut and the porch and yard are clean. A little OLD LADY waits on the porch.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

The old lady leads them through the small living room and into the kitchen. She points to the stove.

OLD LADY
 Electric stove. Washer and dryer
 hook up on the back porch, but
 you'll have to get your own
 machines.

Missy nods and looks around. Jenny opens some cabinet
 doors.

MISSY
 Mind if I use the bathroom?

OLD LADY
 Go right ahead.

INT. BATHROOM, COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Missy sits on the toilet. The sound of her urine stream
 echoes through the small bathroom. She stares down at the
 thin cotton crotch of her underwear, stretched between her
 knees.

She looks up, stricken.

INT. KITCHEN, COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Jenny and the old lady are standing in front of the open
 back door, looking out over the yard. Missy enters from the
 bathroom and stands in the middle of the room.

JENNY
 Oh, Missy, this is a nice yard. You
 could have cookouts, or a garden...

Missy says nothing but nods absently.

JENNY
 (perplexed)
 You alright?

Missy nods again.

JENNY
 Well, Ms. Hatley this is just a
 precious little house. And thank you
 for giving us a tour today. I think
 Missy just needs a day or two to
 think about it, right Missy?

MISSY
 Yes, thank you.

OLD LADY
Well don't dilly dally, I got other
people interested, you know.

JENNY
Oh yes ma'am. We won't waste no time
at all. Come on Missy.

Missy follows Jenny to the front door.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Missy follows Jenny to the car. Jenny waves goodbye to the
old lady.

INT. JENNY'S CAR. DAY.

Jenny drives. Missy stares ahead, her mind somewhere else.

JENNY
What's the matter, didn't you like
it?

MISSY
Hmm?

JENNY
The house! The house, girl. Didn't
you like it??

MISSY
Yeah, yeah I like it.

Out the window, Missy sees a small shopping center up
ahead.

MISSY
Hey, you mind stopping at the
drugstore?

INT. DRUGSTORE. DAY.

Missy walks with purpose down the drugstore aisle. She
stops, scans the shelf, and picks up a box.

A pregnancy test.

At the register, the cashier rings up the pregnancy test
and puts it in a plastic bag. Missy glances out the glass
doors at Jenny waiting in the idling car.

MISSY

Hang on.

Missy grabs some items at random and sits them on the counter. Some chocolates, a magazine, a bag of cotton balls.

The cashier rings them up and Missy pays. She arranges the items in the bag so the pregnancy test is concealed.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Back at the house, Missy is out of the car and in the house before Jenny is even on the porch.

INT. JENNY'S BATHROOM. DAY.

Missy stands impatiently, staring at a small clock on the bathroom shelf. She glances at the pregnancy test. Nothing yet. She cracks the window again and lights a cigarette.

She grabs the pregnancy test and holds it up to the light from the window.

A pink plus sign fades into view.

Missy closes her eyes, fist closing around the plus sign. She takes a drag on the cigarette but her breath is shaky and her eyes are desperate.

INT. EXAM ROOM. DAY.

Missy sits in a chair in the corner, still clothed and clutching her purse. A NURSE sits at a small desk typing into a laptop.

NURSE

Do you know how far along you are?

MISSY

No.

NURSE

When was your last period?

MISSY

...I don't know.

NURSE

More than seven weeks ago.

MISSY

Yes.

NURSE

Okay. That means it's too late for a medical abortion. But a surgical abortion is still an option. We'll know more once they do the ultrasound.

Missy nods.

MISSY

How long is the waiting period here?

NURSE

In this state, 72 hours.

Missy sighs.

MISSY

So not till next week.

NURSE

That's right, we'll schedule your appointment for Monday.

Missy frowns and nods again, resigned.

INT. EXAM ROOM. DAY.

Missy reclines while an ULTRASOUND TECHNICIAN guides an ultrasound wand over her belly.

ULTRASOUND TECHNICIAN

Do you want to hear the heartbeat?

MISSY

No.

Missy stares up at the fluorescent light on the ceiling.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY.

Missy drives, smoking a cigarette. The sun is beginning to set.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Missy's car pulls up. She gets out and goes into the house.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Missy turns a light on. The house is empty.

INT. GUEST ROOM. NIGHT.

Missy flips on the light and drops her purse. The room has an old single bed and is filled with a combination of Ronnie's boyhood belongings and Jenny's extra things. Missy's suitcase is stashed in a corner.

She goes to a chest of drawers and opens the drawer. Her clothes are inside. She pulls out a zippered bag and sits down on the bed with it.

Inside the bag is a stack of bills, mostly twenties. She counts them, mouthing the number to herself. Five hundred dollars.

She puts the money back in the bag, and the bag back in the drawer.

INT. JENNY'S BATHROOM. DAY.

Missy puts out her cigarette and closes the window. Morning sun lights her face.

Missy steps into her jeans and struggles to button them. She finally succeeds but they're so tight she can't breathe.

She takes a hair elastic from a dish by the sink and threads it through the button hole of her jeans. Then she loops each end of the elastic around the button.

She dons a shirt and tugs the hem down over the elastic-rigged fly.

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

Missy returns an empty tray to its stack and self-consciously tightens the apron around her waist.

She walks down the hall to Jenny's office and pokes her head in.

INT. JENNY'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

Jenny waves her into the dim, cluttered office. She's sitting at an ancient computer and picking her teeth with a tooth pick. Missy sits across from her.

MISSY

I'm sorry...I can't rent that house. Do you mind me staying at your house a little while longer?

JENNY

Missy you can stay with me as long as you need. That house was your idea. I thought you liked it pretty well.

MISSY

I do like it. But I don't have the money right now.

JENNY

How the hell not? Missy, all you do is work and sleep. And smoke. I know how much cigarettes cost.

MISSY

I have some money. But I need it for something else.

Jenny studies her and finally nods.

JENNY

Whatever you need to do, Missy.

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Jenny sits at the kitchen table, her coffee untouched. There's a newspaper in front of her but she doesn't read it.

Missy comes in, wearing the same jeans and a t-shirt. Her hair is still wet from the shower. She pours a cup of coffee. Jenny puts on a smile.

JENNY

Good morning, sunshine.

MISSY

Morning.

JENNY

I had the rest of the cereal, but if you want to make toast there's still some bread left.

Missy reaches on top of the fridge and pulls down a loaf of bread. As she does, the hem of her shirt lifts up, revealing the elastic band holding her fly closed. Jenny sees it.

She stares at it. Then the hem falls over it again. Missy is opening the bag of bread on the counter. Jenny gets up and goes over to Missy.

She lifts Missy's shirt up just enough to see the elastic band. Missy starts.

JENNY

What's this?

MISSY

Nothing. Just, my jeans don't fit. That's all.

JENNY

I can see that.

Missy tries to get back to the toast but she's flustered. Jenny is thinking.

JENNY

Missy...Are you pregnant?

Missy avoids eye contact.

MISSY

What? No. No...

JENNY

Missy, do I look like a fool?

Missy stops and looks at Jenny.

MISSY

Yes. I mean, yes, I'm pregnant.

Jenny beams. Her eyes mist over. But she tries to contain herself.

JENNY

Well, that's just...

She sees Missy's face and adjusts her reaction.

JENNY

That's a shock, isn't it?

Missy nods.

JENNY

Are you going to tell Jay?

Missy doesn't answer. Jenny starts on another thought, then interrupts herself with a question.

JENNY

It is Jay's ain't it?

Missy's eyes open wide. She sees Jenny's face: the kindness, the sadness, the hope. She has a realization.

MISSY

I don't know.

INT. BAR. DAY.

Missy sits at the bar, distracted, her expression dark. Ronnie piddles behind the bar, bored. Suddenly a song starts up on the jukebox, snapping them both out of their separate worlds.

Jenny is at the jukebox, swaying to the music. She turns around and dances through the bar, straightening tabletops and pushing in chairs. She sings bits of the song, not getting all the words right.

Ronnie watches his mother.

RONNIE

What's she so happy about?

Missy doesn't answer. Ronnie smiles. Missy watches the two of them for a few moments. Then she makes up her mind.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Missy walks through the empty house, carrying her suitcase and a cardboard box of assorted household items. She sits them down in the bedroom. Sunset light streams through the windows.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Missy steps out onto the back porch. She sits on the steps and lights a cigarette. The sun is setting behind a large, scraggly tree in a field behind the house. Missy looks at the tree, black against the setting sun.

The cigarette burns in her fingers but she doesn't bring it to her lips.

FLASHBACK:

Missy's father reaches toward her, a smoldering cigarette butt pinched between his fingers.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Missy's hand drops to the ground and puts out the cigarette.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

It's late spring and everything is green.

Ronnie's truck pulls up to the small house and Ronnie and Katie get out. Katie carries a casserole dish and Ronnie carries a yellow gift bag. Jenny meets them at the door.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Jenny takes the casserole dish and sits it on the kitchen counter. Ronnie and Katie sit down while Jenny tidies the kitchen. Jenny glances toward a bedroom door. It's slightly ajar and soft, filtered light shines through.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE, BEDROOM. DAY.

Missy stands in a loose fitting t-shirt, staring down at something in front of her.

INT. BEDROOM, TABLE TOP. DAY.

A pastel-colored blanket is spread out on the dresser. The camera pans down slowly. First we see the round bare head of a newborn. We see the tiny fists balled in baby fury. Then the little round belly appears and the fresh cut knot. The camera pans out, slow, dreamy.

It's a boy.

THE END.