

ACTUS REUS

Written by

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Action Scene

FADE IN:

EXT. BASEMENT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The sound of heavy panting is met with the slow reveal of a woman's silhouette climbing up a ladder. It's dark, dirty and damp. Her deep brown eyes are locked on the light above her. Her panting is laced with exhaustion and fear.

This is DAPHNE STEWART, 24 years old. Thin but not muscular. Beautiful but overlooked. Her tangled curls are drenched with sweat and stick to her shoulders. She wears a loose black tank top that cuts just above the waistline of her ripped dark wash jeans. Climbing up this ladder just may be the only way to escape. This is not how she imagined her first night out in grad school.

She looks down at the dark depth below her. Her un-manicured fingernails desperately dig into the rungs of the ladder, embedded in the soot-sealed rocks of the wall. She makes a struggled attempt to hoist the rest of her body up in pursuit. The further up she goes the harder it gets. Her body nearly buckles from exhaustions. Not yet. She's almost there. She looks up one last time as she extends her right hand to grip the ground above her. She struggles to place the toe of her clunky work boot on the rocky ladder plank, adjusting her weight to make the final stretch upwards.

Just as she manages to hoist herself up, her foot slips and she falls into the darkness below her. We hear a loud thump.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE BAR - NIGHT

The hip-hop beat thumps through the speakers as the technicolor lights strobe to the beat. A crowd of college students drink away the impending stress of the new semester. DAPHNE lets loose to the rhythm of the bass with CANDACE, a 25 year old grad student trying desperately to live up to the fun of her undergrad years. She waves her arm at the bartender.

CANDACE

Two more!

Candace's voice manages to be heard over the music. Daphne shakes her head too late as the bartender hands them two shot glasses filled to the brim with bottom shelf tequila.

DAPHNE

I have to hold office hours in the morning.

Candace steps closer putting her straight-but-frizzing hair behind her ear, revealing gaudy gold hoop earrings.

CANDACE

What?

CANDACE (CONT'D)

I will bet you ten whole dollars that those freshman are just as drunk as you are right now. This is COLLEGE.

DAPHNE

This is grad school.

CANDACE

Potato poTato.

Candace balls her free hand into a fist and pumps it in the air. Daphne laughs. The two take the shots to the head, Candace barely needing the lime to chase the drink down. Daphne purses her lips to offset the strength of the alcohol, simultaneously shaking her head.

DAPHNE

I've gotta go, you coming?

CANDACE

Nah I think I'm going to stick around and feel out the vibes a bit more.

Daphne laughs, hugs her friend and heads towards the door.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

Be safe. And actually remember to text me when you're home this time.

DAPHNE

Got it.

Daphne turns around to wave goodbye to her friend, bumping into a tall STRANGER on her way out, causing him to spill the remainder of his drink on his shirt.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Oh my god I'm so sorry.

STRANGER
(sarcastically)
Yea you're going to be.

Daphne stares at him, wide eyed and slightly scared.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
(laughing)
I'm kidding. Jesus, tough crowd.

He looks down at Daphne intently, a charming smile crossing his face revealing pearly white teeth, framed with full lips and a thick beard. Broad muscular shoulders that show through his alcohol, stained navy blue t-shirt, this STRANGER is a knight and shining armor. His kind and attentive brown eyes make you feel like you're the only person in the room.

Daphne laughs nervously.

CHRISTIAN
But actually, no worries. I'm
Christian.

DAPHNE
Daphne.

The two shake hands.

CHRISTIAN
You're heading out this early?

DAPHNE
Yeah I've gotta be up at 8 tomorrow
morning.

Daphne puts her palm to her face.

CHRISTIAN
Trying to make a good impression on
the professor huh?

Daphne cocks her head to the side in slight affirmation.

DAPHNE
It's my first day as a TA.

CHRISTIAN
Well, I don't doubt you'll blow
them away. You've already made
quite the good impression on me.

Christian points to the large stain on his shirt Daphne made moments ago.

She laughs and feels her cheeks get warm. Perhaps she's blushing from the drinks, the embarrassment, or Christian's charm, or all three?

Christian opens the door to exit the bar, holding the door open for Daphne to leave first.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

After you.

DAPHNE

(studders)

Thank you.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE OF COLLEGE BAR - NIGHT

The gust of crisp nighttime air makes Daphne realize just how drunk she is. She stumbles out of the door in front of Christian, the kind stranger holding her up to keep her from losing her balance. Daphne stops outside and looks both ways before deciding to walk down the sidewalk on her route home.

CHRISTIAN

So what are you TA-ing.

DAPHNE

(laughing)

Introduction course to Criminal Psychology. Usually they give it to second-year grads but I guess they made an exception because of my experience.

CHRISTIAN

Don't tell me you're some kind of kick ass crime-fighter that weeds out underaged drinkers at lovely bars like these?

DAPHNE

(laughing)

Don't tell me you're one of them.

CHRISTIAN

Ohhh no, my days of getting rejected by bouncers are long behind me. You're making me out to be the bad guy already.

DAPHNE

Well judging on the fact that you've been so nice to me after getting vodka all over your shirt, I'd say you're an upstanding citizen.

CHRISTIAN

(laughing)

Upstanding you say. Well how about I walk you home then. I take it you stay on Campus West with the rest of the grad students.

Daphne pauses, skeptical of CHRISTIAN's intentions, soon realizes that in the state she's in, she's better off walking home with a kind stranger than she is walking alone. She nods and they continue walking.

DAPHNE

So uhhh, are you here for your masters too?

CHRISTIAN

I'm actually here for my PhD.

DAPHNE

Oh yeah? What are you studying?

CHRISTIAN

Neuroscience. The goal is to eventually run my own clinical research lab. But I'll spare you the boring details. Tell me about you're crime-fighting.

DAPHNE

(laughing)

Well, it's not exactly as fun as crime fighting. But it used to be. I was in the academy up until a few months ago.

CHRISTIAN

You don't seem like the type that gives up easy. What made you quit?

DAPHNE

It was nothing like I expected. I mean I love law enforcement, my dad was an officer, but it didn't seem worth sacrificing my own values for. Not with everything that's going on.

(MORE)

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

So I dropped out of the academy and here I am, getting a masters in criminal psych.

CHRISTIAN

So you can go from busting people for crimes to seeing why they do them?

DAPHNE

Exactly. I mean this system is so fucked up. We need more rehabilitation than punishment.

CHRISTIAN

I couldn't agree more.

DAPHNE

Also the insatiable question of why criminals do the horrible things they do. I could never get to the bottom of it? I have to believe it's because of some unavoidably fucked up thing that happened to them at some point in their lives. Murderers, rapists, they have to be pretty messed up in the head to do that.

CHRISTIAN

Or maybe they're just monsters.

DAPHNE

Monsters huh. Don't you think there's a bit more to them? I can't help but think they just need to be

(Beat)

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

understood.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah I feel you on that. I feel the same thing, you know, in my research. I spend all this time trying to understand people, really push the limits of my research to uncover the truths of the human brain. But sometimes I just cant help but wonder if some things aren't meant for understanding.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODSEY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The streets are fairly empty at this time, most people either still at the bar, or sleeping safely in the walls of their own home. The two walk along a quiet sidewalk that borders a cemetery. The branches of the trees stretch over them, lush with dark green leaves that almost look poisonous. Only a few streetlights light the way. Oddly enough, there is no breeze. Everything is completely silent and completely still, with the exception of Daphne and Christian, who seem to be alone in their own little world.

The two stop at the cross-walk that marks the halfway point between the bar and Daphne's home. So lost in their conversation, Daphne hadn't realized how long they'd been walking. Christian takes her by the waist.

CHRISTIAN

My place is actually right around the corner, not too far from yours. What do you say we share a few more drinks?

DAPHNE

I don't know, I really do have to be up in the morning.

CHRISTIAN

It's cool, I figured. The criminal psych program is no joke here.

Beat.

DAPHNE

You know what, it's the first week. I'm not going to have to grade anything just yet. Let's do it.

Christian smiles.

CHRISTIAN

You sure?

DAPHNE

Yeah a few hours won't hurt.

He steps off of the sidewalk and into the unpaved path, holding his hand out towards Daphne with the same charming smile stretched across his face. His bright white teeth contrast the darkness. Daphne catches her breath. Almost without thinking, Daphne follows the charming young man away from the safety of the streetlights and into the cemetery.

We hear the sound of their footsteps crunching away at the late summer leaves in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY - FLASHBACK

TIGHT SHOT of a 5 year old Daphne's boots crushing the leaves. Zoom out to show her wandering alone. She's wearing a tan backpack that's looks gigantic in comparison to her small body. Her thumbs are hooked on the straps as she gazes up at the tall trees, lost in her own thoughts.

DEREK
(OFF SCREEN, loud whisper)
Daphne! Over here.

Daphne runs in the direction of the voices, revealing that she's catching up with the rest of her family. The voice was her brother, DEREK, an ten-year-old boy with the confidence of someone twice his age.

DEREK (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Dad's tracking a deer that way.
See?

Derek points to the distance. Daphne timidly shakes her head. He bends down to meet her height and takes her hand to point.

DEREK (CONT'D)
(loud whisper)
See?

Daphne smiles triumphantly pointing her finger like her brother.

DAPHNE
(whisper)
Yea, it's right there.

The two catch up with their DAD who's already began positioning his rifle to shoot.

DAD
Right here son

He ushers for Derek to take his position and help him shoot the deer.

DEREK
Dad, I think we ought to let Daphne get a try.

Dad looks at Daphne skeptically, wondering if she's ready for the milestone. The little girl is giddy with excitement and he can't resist. He nods his head and waves his hand for Daphne to take her place. He wraps arms around her and guides her gaze with the point of his finger.

DEREK (CONT'D)

(whisper)

You've gotta put your finger right there.

Derek points to the trigger. Daphne nods and proceeds, glancing at her brother nervously. He nods approvingly. Daphne zeroes in and for a moment, everything is still. The shot fires as she pulls the trigger and the entire family embraces as they break out in a celebratory scream.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN IN OLDER HOME - DAWN - PRESENT

Tight shot of the teapot WHISTLING LOUDLY atop the stove. Christian grabs it and pours an equal amount into two tea cups atop two small plates. The toaster chimes and up come two perfectly browned pieces of wheat toast. He uses a napkin to grab the two pieces of toast and places them on two separate plates, intently using the butter knife to evenly spread jam atop them.

He wipes his hands off on his apron and proceeds to put the tea and toast on two separate, intricately set serving trays. He picks both trays up smoothly and brings them to the dining room to place them on the table with a soft CLINK.

CUT TO:

Daphne jolts up from her slumber. Realizing it's morning already, looks at the digital clock on the night stand. It's 6:37.

DAPHNE

Fuck.

She brushes the quilt off of her and looks around the room scratching her head. The room is plain and empty sort of like a prison cell. There's no window, only a bed desk and chair. She spots her shoes placed in the corner of the room and scrambles to put them on, grab her bag and open the door.

She runs down the steps and is surprised to find see the dining room table set for breakfast.

CHRISTIAN
Good morning Daphne.

DAPHNE
Morning. I uhhh, sorry. I didn't
mean to spend the night.

CHRISTIAN
Don't worry about it. Breakfast?

DAPHNE
I really should go, I have to be on
campus in a few hours.

CHRISTIAN
Non-sense. You've got time. Come
eat.

INT. DINING ROOM IN OLDER HOME - CONTINUOUS

Daphne reluctantly makes her way to the dining room table and sits down, digging into her toast and tea. She was hungrier than she thought.

CHRISTIAN
(laughing)
You've got quite the snore.

DAPHNE
(laughing)
So I've been told.

The smile fades to confusion.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)
We didn't... we didn't uhh...

CHRISTIAN
Oh god no. We were talking on the
couch and you passed out. I
couldn't wake you up for the life
of me so I figured you could stay
in the spare room.

Daphne looks around and is surprised at how nice the place is. She's never seen a guys house that looks this put together, especially not a college guy. I guess he is a PhD student.

DAPHNE
(taking a bite of toast)
You stay here by yourself?

Christian finishes chewing and wipes the crumbs of the side of his mouth.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, I'm not really into the whole roommate thing. Plus my professor owns the building, so he gave me the place for a good rate.

DAPHNE

See I love having a roommate. It's torture being in the house alone. I mean, for a little while it's cool of course. But all the time I feel I'd start to go crazy.

CHRISTIAN

Interesting take. I'm actually doing my thesis on the psychological effects of isolation. Would you like to be a part of it?

Halfway listening, Daphne nods and quickly finishes her toast and tea and wipes her hand and mouth on the napkin.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Should I get you another plate?

DAPHNE

Usually I would be a sucker for more tea, but I should really go. Thank you so much for everything Christian, it's been great.

CHRISTIAN

Anytime. You sure you want to leave so soon? I've got another round of toast cooking.

Christian pauses eating his meal and stands, brushing his hands off on his apron.

DAPHNE

You're too nice, but I can't be late. Where's my coat?

Daphne cocks her head to the side in confusion for a second, until she sees her coat hanging on the hooks in the wall by the door. She grabs it and heads towards the door as Christian follows.

CHRISTIAN

You should really eat more before
your first day.

As she turns the knob to open the door she realizes its
locked. She fumbles with the locks a few times and tries at
it again and again and again with no success.

DAPHNE

Can you help me with the door?

CHRISTIAN

You sure you don't want anything
else? I have OJ, cereal, anything
you could want.

DAPHNE

I told you I really have to go to
class. I can't be late.

She continues to toggle with the door knob with no luck.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

(raising voice nervously)
How the hell do you get this open?

Beat.

CHRISTIAN

You see, that's the thing Daphne.
You don't.

In one swift movement, Christian grabs a handkerchief from
his shirt pocket and puts it over Daphnes mouth. Her MUFFLED
SCREAMS are absorbed by the napkin until she passes out.

INT. BEDROOM IN OLDER HOME - CONTINUOUS

Christian drags her limp body up the stairs and back into the
bed that she woke up in. He takes her shoes off and places
them in the exact same spot, closes the door, and locks it
from the outside, brushing his hands off on his apron once
more.

INT. DINING ROOM IN ODER HOME - CONTINUOUS

He heads back downstairs and take his seat at the dining room
table to finish his breakfast with a mostly emotionless,
slightly smug face.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - FLASHBACK

DAPHNE (V.O.)

When I was little we had a dog named Chico, and it was great because, you know, every day we would come home from school and walk through the front door and there he was. Galloping full-speed, tail-wagging, right to the door to greet us. But you know what always got to me? Chico would run right past me into my brothers arms. I'd get a few kisses in after of course, but my brother always came first.

Chico runs towards Derek and passes Daphne, then goes back to give Daphne licks.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

Chico, and every other person in my life, adored Derek. Derek was the star player of the high school football team, won two state championships. He was the runner up to prom king but with the sportsmanship he showed, he might as well have been first. And aside from glory of high school accolades, he was best brother I could ask for.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Montage showing Derek getting a touch down while the crowd cheers.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM PROM - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Derek stands in the crowd smiling and clapping for the prom king at prom.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

I never really did fit in but it didn't matter to him. Every time those high school assholes that would call me "Dirty Daphne" or whatever fucked up nickname they could think of he stood up for me. He always stood up for me. He didn't care about his reputation.

(MORE)

DAPHNE (V.O) (CONT'D)

He didn't care about what anyone would say about him. And when we got older Derek went from standing up to bullies, to standing up for me any and every time I needed him. When it came to his little sister, it would always be me and Derek against the world.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Continue montage showing Chris standing up to a group of kids making fun of Daphne, nearly getting in a fight. The two walk away as Derek puts his arm around Daphne to cheer her up.

DAPHNE (V.O)

So I never questioned Chico's affinity for my brother. It made perfect sense. Because Derek was, in every way, my knight and shining armor. And that's exactly what he was for Chico too.

That's why when I got a call, saying my brother had been arrested for killing a man, I didn't believe it. It couldn't have been more untrue. My brother, my protector, doing something, doing anything to hurt another human being? No, not my brother. Not Derek.

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Continue montage of Daphne answering the phone and running out the door.

INT. JAIL PRECINCT - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Her and her family at the visiting center in the precinct, talking to her brother through glass, on the phone. Both her and Derek put their hands on the glass.

DAPHNE (V.O)

They say dogs are the best judges of character. With one sniff they can distinguish between the good and the evil. It was ingrained in their very nature. Instinctual.

(MORE)

DAPHNE (V.O) (CONT'D)

So when I was sitting front row at his court hearing, watching him plead guilty to second degree manslaughter, watching as they guided my brother to his cell in chains, I knew I had to do what he did for me my entire life.

I knew I had to protect him from a system that only sees half of the picture.

INT. COURTROOM - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Daphne and her family are front row at the court hearing as her brother stands up to hear sentence.

DAPHNE (V.O)

Chico adored Derek. I adored Derek. But the way the people in the court room looked at my brother the day of his final hearing, is a look that I will never forget. They looked at my brother like he was a monster.

Her family sobs at the verdict as the court marshals escort Derek out of the courtroom in handcuffs. The rest of the crowd looks at Derek in disgust.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE - PRESENT

Daphne wakes up to her stomach growling. She looks at the clock. 9:40am. She attempts to grab the clock and realizes its glued to the desk. The numbers telling the time blink a bit as she attempts to move it. Weird.

She gets up from the bed and tries the bedroom door. It opens. She walks down the stairs nervously.

DAPHNE

Christian?

Beat.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

No answer

She peers around into the dining room area, into the kitchen, then into the living room. All are empty.

DAPHNE
 (screaming)
 Christian!

She tries the front door, and its bolted shut as it was yesterday morning. She keeps trying the knob, and giving into her desperation she bangs at the door screaming and sobbing.

 DAPHNE (CONT'D)
 (desperately)
 Help! Somebody help me please.

 DAPHNE (CONT'D)
 Help! Please!

After an hour of no answer, she puts her back to the door and slides to her knees, sobbing herself to sleep.

 FADE TO:

Daphne is in the same position when she wakes up. Not knowing how much time passed she goes to check the clock in her bedroom. 11:53am. She goes back downstairs and stops at the vanity in the entryway and looks at herself in the mirror.

 DAPHNE (V.O.)
 Fuck. I look a mess.

Just as she's fixing her hair, she hears a noise by the door. A plate of food on a tray, fashioned just like the toast and tea was in the doorway. Tuna sandwich, chips, and a caesar salad.

She reluctantly takes the plate to the dining room to eat, giving into her hunger and wiping the plate clean in a matter of minutes. She unfolds the napkin to wipe her mouth and a note falls out:

PLACE DISHES IN THE DOORWAY WHEN FINISHED.

Perplexed at first, she does as the note says and places the plate in the doorway. Then she heads to the living room to check out the bookshelf. It's full from floor to ceiling with books thick and thin, with the exception of one shelf.

 DAPHNE
 Jane Austen, Mark Twain, this guy's
 into his literature.

Beat.

 DAPHNE (CONT'D)
 And himself.

Daphne eyes the shelf that has his undergraduate and masters degree, and an ensemble of awards he's won for his research. She goes for the Crime and Punishment.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)
Unread. Seems fitting.

She sits on the couch and begins to flip through the pages when she hears dishes CLINKING in the foyer. She gets up to go check and unsurprisingly, the dirty leftovers from her lunch are gone.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She goes upstairs and checks the time. 12:28.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
How did he know?

She looks at her surroundings and checks for some kind of surveillance but the only thing in the bedroom is the bed, alarm clock, desk and chair.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She goes back down in the living room and continues to read. Time speeds up as the window behind her shows the light fade from day to dusk.

She hears a familiar CLINK coming from the foyer.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
Food.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She runs into the foyer past the food and up the stair to look at the time again. 6:45pm. She searches the drawer in the desk and pull out a pen, then goes downstairs to eat her food.

INT. DINING ROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She picks up the plate in the foyer and brings it the dining room table. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes and sting beans. She eats it slowly this time, trying to savor every bit. And when she's done, she takes the familiar napkin that's now noteless, and instead of wiping her face, she writes down the following times in a list:

12:00pm, 12:28pm, 6:45pm

She gently folds the napkin and puts it into her pocket. She places the tray and dishes in the doorway and heads to the couch to read further.

Some time goes by and she hears another familiar CLING of her dishes being picked up in the doorway. She runs upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

7:31pm.

DAPHNE

Hmmm, busy?

She takes the napkin out of her pocket and writes the time down. She gets undressed and heads down the hall to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

To her surprise she finds fresh PJs for her to wear in the closet of the bathroom. In fact, there are enough clean clothes to last her weeks. Her jaw drops.

She frantically checks the drawers. Soap, toothpaste, deodorant, towels, toothbrushes. It dawns on her that she could be trapped here for a long time.

Tears well up in her eyes as she enters the hot shower. The water falls on her bowed head as she sobs profusely. Some time goes by and she turns off the shower and heads into her room.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

The darkness in her windowless room makes going to bed easy. She looks at the clock. 9:43pm.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Montage of her daily routine over multiple days. She wakes up to check the time. 10:35am.

Looks in the mirror in foyer. 12:00pm. Eats lunch. Tuna sandwich, chips, and caesar salad. Checks time. 12:35pm. Writes down on napkin.

Reads Crime and Punishment on the couch laying down. Paces the room. Hears CLINK. 6:45pm. Eats dinner. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes and string beans. Reads more Crime and Punishment. Hears CLINK. Checks time. 7:02pm. Writes down. Reads. Showers. Bed. Checks time. 11:14pm.

Repeat.

Wake up. Checks time. 11:06pm. Looks in the mirror in foyer. 12:00pm. Eats lunch. Tuna sandwich, chips, and caesar salad. Checks time. 12:35pm. Writes down on napkin. Reads Crime and Punishment on the floor. Paces the room. 6:45pm. Eats dinner. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes and string beans. Reads more Crime and Punishment in bedroom. Hears CLINK. Checks time. 7:02pm. Writes down. Reads. Showers. Bed. Checks time. 11:14pm.

Repeat.

Wake up. Checks time. 10:40pm. Looks in the mirror in foyer. 12:00pm. Eats lunch. Tuna sandwich, chips, and caesar salad. Checks time. 12:35pm. Writes down on napkin. Reads Crime and Punishment on the floor. Paces the room. 6:45pm. Eats dinner. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes and string beans. Reads more Crime and Punishment in bedroom. Hears CLINK. Checks time. 7:02pm. Writes down. Reads. Showers. Bed. Checks time. 11:14pm.

Repeat.

Wake up. Checks time. 12:53pm. Frantically, she runs down the stairs realizing her food is probably cold. Same thing. Tuna, chips, and Caesar salad. She scarfs her food down her throat, and places her dishes in the doorway as usual, and waits on the couch for the usual pickup impatiently tapping her foot.

The dish gets picked up almost immediately and she goes upstairs to check the time. 1:09pm.

She then goes downstairs and takes a long look at herself in the mirror. She runs her fingers through her hair. She takes a closer look at herself, running her fingers over the circles under her eyes, when suddenly she notices a small indent on the left side of the bookshelf in the living room. It looks like it could be a handle.

She walks to it tries to pull it towards her and it doesn't budge. She tries again with no luck.

Almost about to walk away, she tries pushing the door to her right, and opens, revealing a dark staircase leading to the a basement. She turns on the light and heads down.

INT. BASEMENT IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

The room is mostly empty. Just roughly textured brick walls on all four sides, the one adjacent to her with ladder like indents leading. Daphne walks towards it as her eyes follow the rungs of the ladder upwards until she catches a dim glimpse of daylight. She then realizes that this basement is no basement at all, but the remnants of a chimney. This may be her way out.

Almost impulsively, she starts climbing up the ladder. Her deep brown eyes are locked on the light above her. Her panting is laced with exhaustion and fear.

She looks down at the dark depth below her. Her un-manicured fingernails desperately dig into the rungs of the ladder, embedded in the soot-sealed rocks of the wall. She makes a struggled attempt to hoist the rest of her body up in pursuit. The further up she goes the harder it gets. Her body nearly buckles from exhaustions. Not yet. She's almost there. She looks up one last time as she extends her right hand to grip the ground above her. She struggles to place the toe of her clunky work boot on the rocky ladder plank, adjusting her weight to make the final stretch upwards.

Just as she manages to hoist herself up, her foot slips and she falls into the darkness below her. We hear a loud thump.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE - TIME UNKNOWN

Waking up, Daphne groans and props herself up on her elbows. She looks up to see that small patch of light padded up with cinder blocks.

DAPHNE

Fuck. He must have some kind of surveillance in here.

Realizing one of the loose cinder blocks fell while she was climbing, gets up and approaches the wall. In the empty space she sees a number of papers: pictures of a few girls including her and thick notebook. Knowing she's being watched, Daphne quickly tucks the notebook and papers in the waste line of her pants, puts the loose cinder block back in place, and goes upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She walks up the stairs and discretely tucks the notebook safely away under he bed and continues her day.

Montage of the rest of her day. Reads Crime and Punishment on the floor. Paces the room. Eats dinner. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes and string beans. Reads more Crime and Punishment in bedroom. Hears CLINK. Checks time. 7:19pm. Writes down time. Showers. Checks time. 8:22pm.

She brings the living room lamp to her bedroom along with the crime and punishment book, and tucks herself into bed early.

Under the covers, she grabs the notebook and starts to read.

DAPHNE
(whispering to self)
Psychiatric Clinical Study.
Isolation and Psychosis.

Beat.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)
He's not just kidnapping me. He's
studying me. This is an experiment.

FADE TO:

INT. PRISON VISITOR CENTER - FLASHBACK

Derek, Daphne and their parents are sitting in the visitors center of the prison and conversing normally.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
Every time we visited Derek it
seemed his physical condition took
a turn for the worse. He was beaten
and bruised, could barely stand up
straight. Knowing Derek, he was
probably trying to stick up for
someone who couldn't fight for
themselves. But what does it matter
behind bars anyways? It all took a
turn for the worse when they gave
him solitary. Just like that, Derek
was isolated from the rest of the
inmates, isolated from us. It
didn't help that I went off to
college shortly after.

Derek is shown being escorted into solitary confinement, a small room with no windows and minimal furniture, just like the bedroom in Christian's house.

DAPHNE

I wanted to stay in town, go to community college, somewhere local, but Derek wouldn't let me make that kind of sacrifice for him. Not his little sister. No matter the circumstances he always did stay positive, especially about me. He was the most selfless person I knew.

Derek is looking a lot less together than usual during their visiting hours.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

I remember those next visits like they were yesterday. After they moved him something was off. He started talking less and less during our visits. And when he did it didn't seem to make much sense.

Derek is holding his head down, rubbing his fingers together as if he has something between them.

DEREK

They're watching me.

DAPHNE

What do you mean?

DEREK

(nervously)

They're watching me I know it.

DAPHNE

Derek. Who? The guards?

Derek is silent.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I could see the real him fading as his mind unraveled.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Who Derek?

DEREK

It's all a part of their plan. It's all an experiment Daphne. And they're all in on it.

DAPHNE

They? What do you mean? Who's they?

DEREK

(yelling)

You just don't get it Daphne.
You're never going to get it!

Derek stands up and the visiting center guard runs towards Derek, slams his shoulders on the table and cuffs him. Daphne looks horrified. The guard starts taking him away.

DEREK (CONT'D)

You haven't been in here you don't know what it's like! You will never understand. You will never understand.

DAPHNE

Derek spent five years in prison. Five years. And two months. Two months in solitary is all it took to turn by angel of a brother to unravel into the very monster they thought he was. That's when I knew that the justice, the system, it didn't mean justice at all. They don't care if you're a monster. They don't care about good and evil. It's not about rehabilitation at all. Its about punishment. If you're not a monster by the time they put you behind bars they'll find some way to make you one.

INT. COLLEGE DORM - FLASHBACK

Daphne gets a phone call and immediately starts crying.

EXT. CEMETARY - FLASHBACK

Large image of Derek while Daphne, her mom, and dad, stand among a small crowd wearing all black. A casket is being lowered into the ground.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

Derek was right. I probably would never understand. But I knew in that very moment I would spend the rest of my life trying to. It was too late for me to help my brother.

(MORE)

DAPHNE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But I was going to do everything in
 my power to change the system for
 those to come.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

Daphne wakes up and checks the clock. 9:15am.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
 I knew I had a choice: to stay here
 and go insane or to try my chances
 at an escape. I had to come up with
 a plan. I knew Christian had me on
 a strict eating schedule. He
 delivered the food every day at the
 same time, and came to pick it up.
 This is an experiment, after all.
 So if I'm the dependent variable
 then what's the independent
 variable? I got it.

INT. DINING ROOM IN ODER HOME

DAPHNE (V.O.)
 12:00pm. Lunch. Tuna, chips, and a
 caesar salad.

Daphne is eating lunch at the table.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
 Soon after, he picks it up.

She puts the dirty dishes down at the doorway and proceeds to
 hear a CLINK.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
 6:45pm. Dinner. Meat loaf, mashed
 potatoes and string beans.

Daphne is eating dinner at the table.

DAPHNE (V.O.)
 And like clockwork, he picks it up.

She puts the dirty dishes down at the doorway and proceeds to
 hear a CLINK.

INT. BEDROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

She completes her nightly routine, showers, and goes to bed
 early. The next morning, she wakes up, and checks the time.

8:30am. She lines her pillows up in the center of her bed and covers them with her comforter.

 DAPHNE (V.O.)
 And Christian seems like he needs
 everything going according to plan.

Glimpses of Christian's organized breakfast routine the morning Daphne was kidnapped flicker on screen.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

 DAPHNE (V.O.)
 If there's no consistent food
 delivery, then poof. There goes his
 entire experiment.

Daphne takes down Christian's hanging PhD and picks the nails out the wall. She grabs one of his metal awards and heads to the foyer, using the awards to carefully nail the doggie door shut.

 DAPHNE (V.O.)
 But Christian won't let that
 happen. He'll have to open the
 door. And when he does, I'll be
 waiting for him.

Daphne is waiting besides the doggie door for Christian to come. She then hides in the coat closet and cracks the door, holding one the metal trophy in her hand.

 DAPHNE (V.O.)
 When he comes, I'll be ready.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE - 12:00PM

THUMP. Christian tries the doggie door with no luck. THUMP. It still won't open. The THUMPING grows louder and louder as he tries to kick the doggie door in with no success.

EXT. CHRISTIAN'S FRONT PORCH - 12:03PM

KEYS RING as Christian sets down the plate and struggles to pull out his phone. He checks the surveillance and seems to see Daphne laying in her bed.

He grabs the keys and proceeds to open the door quietly, when Daphne attacks with the trophy, hitting him in the head twice.

Christian takes a few steps back but is still conscious. Daphne tries to make a run for it. Keys in hand, he grabs her by the arm, slamming her against the exterior wood paneling. She hits her head and we hear a FAINT RINGING.

Christian wraps his two arms around her and starts carrying her inside, and before he can close the door Daphne headbutts him and they both fall to the ground. The RINGING grows louder and everything is blurry as the two are on the ground in the foyer. Barely able to see, Daphne grabs the keys and makes a run for it, shutting the door behind her and holding it with all of her might.

Christian is pounding on the door as Daphne scrambles for her keys. Just as she's putting the key in the hole he pulls and the door opens. But Daphne is determined. She pulls back and shuts the door, quickly turning the key.

 DAPHNE (V.O.)

 I made it out with only a few
 scratches on me. And you better
 believe that as soon as I got off
 of that porch, I ran like hell.

Daphne is running for her life towards campus.

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - PRESENT DAY

 CROWD

 Gasps.

Daphne is on the podium presenting her own criminal psychology thesis to a room full of supporters, including Candace and her parents. She has several poster boards of research.

 DAPHNE

 And after it was all over, I felt
 more connected to my brother than
 ever. So much so, that I conducted
 my own research for my Criminal
 Psychology thesis. It proved
 Christian's hypothesis correct:
 extreme isolation is linked to
 psychosis, which is why solitary
 confinement is an unethical form of
 punishment, especially in prisons.
 Christian may very well spend the
 rest of his days in isolation like
 my brother. Not even Christian
 deserves that treatment. Prisoners
 like my brother don't need to be
 isolated, they need to be helped.

 (MORE)

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

If I could go back and time and change thing for Derek I would, but I can't. So I encourage you to remember this. The monsters in our world, they tricky. Often times hide in plain sight. They sit next to us in our classes, they party with us at bars, they even pass legislation that dictates the nature of our criminal justice system. So do not let our prison system tell you who the monsters are, find out for yourself. And when you do, remember the angels behind bars that need saving too. Rest in Peace brother.

CROWD

(Cheers)

FADE TO BLACK.