

"THE WOODSMAN"

Based on the play

by

Steven Fechter

Written

By

Steven Fechter

And

Nicole Kassell

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BEGIN TITLES - OPENING SEQUENCE MONTAGE

Over black we HEAR the rhythmic sound of machinery. This sound will continue throughout the title sequence as other sounds fade in and out. We move forward and back in time.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

A sparrow flutters in birdseed on a window sill. More birds crowd a bird feeder that hangs above.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A lone child swings lazily on a swing. Other children tear about in a wild game of chase.

INT. LUMBERYARD WAREHOUSE - DAY

CLOSE on a piece of wood as it is fed through a wood chipper.

A man finishes feeding the log into the chipper. He pauses to wipe the sweat and grime from his face. He is WALTER, early forties, features handsome but hardened by time.

INT. BUS - EARLY MORNING

Walter is silhouetted by the early morning light. He holds a duffel bag in his lap and watches out the bus window.

The sun is just rising over the horizon, streaks of pink and purple graze the frosted ground. Wilderness gives way to frozen farmland.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Walter stands at a counter, a female officer fingerprints each finger.

EXT. LUMBERYARD - DAY

Walter and some other men drop the side of the flatbed truck and trees crash to the ground.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

The bus pulls away, revealing Walter standing alone on the sidewalk of a dilapidated neighborhood. He holds his duffel bag.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DUSK

The 5 o'clock whistle BLOWS. Workers hustle to get their coats and punch out. Walter stands in line, keeping to himself. As his turn arrives to punch out he receives a rough knock by two guys play-fighting behind him. Walter doesn't react, punches out, and exits the door.

Vicki, a tough-looking but striking woman, stands in line a little further back watching.

EXT./INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A superintendent opens the door to an apartment, then hands Walter the keys. Her gaze is cold.

Walter closes the door and turns around. He stands in the middle of a prefab/pre-furnished kitchen, living room area.

Light works its way through the dilapidated blinds.

INT. LUMBERYARD OFFICE - DAY

Walter shakes the boss's hand – BOB, early thirties, strapping and trim, is the manager of the business.

MARY-KAY, the secretary, looks up from her typing and takes Walter in. Bob introduces them. She is in her early forties.

Walter follows Bob from the office, Mary-Kay watches as they leave.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT

There is a flash as a camera snaps a photo.

Walter is captured in a photograph, standing against a babyblue background.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Walter lifts the blinds. The birds flutter away.

CUT TO:

Walter stands under the shower.

CUT TO:

Walter, hair wet and clean shaven, tosses back some pills.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DUSK

Tires SCREECH as cars tear out of the driveway. Walter stands at a bus stop across the street.

As Vicki walks across the lot, a car pulls up next to her and men catcall and whistle out the window.

Vicki flicks them off. The men burst into hysterics and peal

out of the lot. She gets in her Jeep and leaves, tearing by the bus stop.

Walter looks after her then turns his collar up against the chill. It is late winter. The trees are bare – black silhouettes against the darkening sky.

Walter turns towards the shelter for protection from the wind. Filling the kiosk, a clothing advertisement displays a young girl striking a seductive pose.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

CLOSE on a police file. A mug shot reveals Walter, many years younger. Pages are flipped through giving glimpses of newspaper clippings as well as typed documents. Words stand out – "Convicted, 1st degree –," "3 counts –," "served –"

An plain clothes officer closes the folder and looks out his office window where Walter stands being fingerprinted. This is Sergeant LUCAS, mid-fifties, face creased and greying hair.

INT. BUS - DAY

Walter watches out the window as farmland gives way to city.

Traffic builds, billboards line the highway.

INT. LUMBERYARD WAREHOUSE - DAY

Details of machines cutting the wood.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Walter fills the bird feeder with birdseed.

There is the SOUND of children playing, and Walter looks up.

Walter's POV: Across the way, children play outside of the school.

Walter watches then closes his window.

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Walter exits the police station and crosses the street.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT

CLOSE on fingers typing on a keyboard.

A computer screen shows Walter's image – the photo just taken of him against the blue background. Words appear across the screen as they are typed, creating an Internet notification page:

Released: 02/25/02 Qualifying Offense(s): _____

We MOVE in on the photo of Walter till it fills the frame.

FREEZE FRAME. All sound fades out.

The title "THE WOODSMAN" fades in.

END TITLES

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Walter sits in a small windowless office with his coat still on. He looks at someone off screen.

MAN (O.S.)

So. How are you adjusting?

WALTER

I'm adjusting okay.

MAN (O.S.)

And your new apartment?

WALTER

Apartment's okay.

MAN (O.S.)

Are you taking your medication?

WALTER

It gives me headaches.

MAN (O.S.)
But you are taking it?

WALTER
Yeah.

Across from Walter, sits ROSEN, young, awkward and clearly new to the profession, jotting something down in a notepad.

ROSEN
Good. I'll talk to your physician about the headaches. Maybe he can change the prescription.

Walter doesn't say anything.

ROSEN
And how's your job?

WALTER
The job's okay.

ROSEN
Do I take "okay" to mean you feel good about working there?

WALTER
I said the job is okay.

ROSEN
(smiling)
That's right, you did.
(pause)
Have you made any friends there?

WALTER
I'm not running for Mr. Popularity.

ROSEN
(pause)
You seem a little hostile today.

WALTER
That was a joke.

Rosen jots something on his notepad. Walter reaches over and taps on the notebook.

WALTER
It's called sarcasm, Dr. Rosen.

ROSEN
No need to call me doctor. I'm a therapist, not a psychiatrist.

WALTER
It's all the same.

Rosen looks at Walter for a long moment. Walter avoids his gaze.

ROSEN
Walter, I'd like you to try something for me.

WALTER
What?

ROSEN
I'd like you to keep a journal.

WALTER
A diary?

ROSEN
That's right.

WALTER
No way.

ROSEN
Why not?

WALTER
Diaries have sent too many guys to prison.

ROSEN
I don't understand.

WALTER
Ev-i-dence.

ROSEN
Oh. It never crossed my mind.

WALTER
Of course.

ROSEN
It was just an idea.

WALTER
Bad idea.

ROSEN
I thought a journal would encourage
you to reflect.

WALTER
Reflect.

ROSEN
That's right.

WALTER
You think reflection is good.

ROSEN
It's very good, indeed.

WALTER
How's that?

ROSEN
By reflection we can derive a deeper
meaning from our experience in life.
We gain greater understanding about
ourselves that can lead to making
better choices in our relationships,
our careers, and our goals.

Walter looks at him flatly.

WALTER
You read that in a book.

Rosen blushes.

ROSEN
Try it.

WALTER
No fucking way.

ROSEN
Then think about it.

Walter is silent.

EXT. PHARMACY, STRIP MALL - NIGHT

The sidewalk is crowded with pedestrians. Walter heads towards the pharmacy entrance, but he is abruptly cut off by a group of kids zooming by on their scooters and skateboards.

He pauses for them to pass, watches after them momentarily, then proceeds inside.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

Walter hands a prescription to a MALE PHARMACIST. The pharmacist looks at the prescription. He glances at Walter then goes over to a FEMALE PHARMACIST working in the back area.

She reads the prescription, glances at Walter over her bifocals, then back at the prescription. Walter has not missed any of this.

WALTER
There a problem?

MALE PHARMACIST
A problem?

A middle-aged shopper talking on her cell phone nearby looks over and pauses in her conversation.

WALTER

Can you read the prescription?

MALE PHARMACIST

Yes.

WALTER

Can you fill the prescription?

FEMALE PHARMACIST

Yes.

WALTER

Then I suggest one of you move your
ass, because if I don't get my
medication I get extremely violent.

The male pharmacist scrambles to fill the prescription.

The shopper gasps. Walter looks at her and smiles. The shopper
stuffs her items in her cart and quickly leaves.

Walter stifles his grin.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter opens the door to his apartment, carrying a grocery
bag. As he flips on the lights, a metal object is thrown
across the room. He catches it with one hand. It's a can of
beer. A man laughs.

CARLOS (O.S.)

You still think fast.

Carlos sits at the table with a six-pack. Walter sets the
bag on the table and pops open the can.

WALTER

Don't need to think fast to handle
beer.

CARLOS

Took some talking to convince your
super I was a relative.

WALTER

I told her all my relatives are good-looking.

Carlos laughs.

CARLOS

Jesus Christ, man, it's good to see you!

Carlos stands and they awkwardly embrace.

CARLOS

You look good, damn good, considering you're an old man now!

WALTER

Seems like the whole world's gotten younger.

There is silence. Carlos sits back down at the table and opens another beer.

Walter starts unpacking the groceries.

CARLOS

You doing okay?

WALTER

Got a job at old Frank's place. His son runs it now.

CARLOS

Oh man, that kid takes himself real serious.

WALTER

Yeah, you still with Northland?

CARLOS

(grins)

Foreman now.

WALTER

No shit.

CARLOS

Five years.

WALTER

Beautiful. How's business?

CARLOS

Booming. Lots of building going on.
We can't keep up with all the work.
In fact, I just hired a few new
guys...

Glancing at Walter, he realizes his blunder.

CARLOS

Just until we catch up.

There is a brief silence as both men drink. Carlos looks at Walter.

CARLOS

I'll never forget you got me started
there.

WALTER

I just recommended you. You still
had to prove yourself.

Carlos gets up and walks over to the window. He gazes outside.

CARLOS

Hey, is that a school?

WALTER

K through sixth.

Carlos glances at Walter, then back outside.

CARLOS

Living across the street from a grade
school. Jesus.

WALTER

Something wrong with that?

CARLOS

I was just thinking of... the noise.

WALTER

I like the noise.

Walter walks over to the window.

WALTER

One hundred and twenty feet.

CARLOS

What?

WALTER

Law says I can't come within one hundred feet of where children congregate. I figure the distance from my window to the school is one hundred and twenty. Make a bet?

CARLOS

No way, man, you'd rob me blind!

The two men laugh, but the laughter quickly fades.

CARLOS

But maybe it's not so healthy being so close, you know, to a school.

WALTER

(heated)

You find me a decent place for under three hundred a month in this town, and I'll happily move out of this crap neighborhood.

Carlos shrugs and tosses down the rest of his beer.

CARLOS

I should go. Your sister worries, and when she worries she yells.

WALTER

How is she?

CARLOS

Annette? She's good... tense.

WALTER

When can I see her?

CARLOS

I'm working on it.

WALTER

Is it because of Anna?

CARLOS

I don't know. She won't talk about it.

WALTER

(pause)

You're the only one in the family who still talks to me.

CARLOS

I remember when they all referred to me as "the little spic poor Annette married." Except her brother. You treated me with respect.

(pause)

Look, you paid your dues. Your slate is clean now.

WALTER

How old is Anna?

CARLOS

She'll be twelve next week. We're throwing a big party on Saturday. Wish I could ask you to come...

WALTER

Only if it's no closer than a hundred feet.

Carlos looks away.

WALTER
Sorry, bad joke.

They stiffly embrace. Then Carlos exits leaving Walter alone.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAWN

CLOSE on a man's feet slowly walking heel to toe. The ground is covered in frost. TILT UP to reveal Walter counting his footsteps as he walks towards the school across from his apartment building. The schoolyard is empty.

WALTER
One hundred and ten, one hundred and eleven, one hundred and twelve...

A bird's cry pierces the sky. Walter looks up to see a hawk circling above. He watches for a moment then continues walking.

WALTER
One hundred and thirteen, one hundred and fourteen, one hundred and fifteen...

He reaches the school entrance and touches it.

WALTER
One hundred and twenty.

Walter looks at the hawk still circling above and hollers –

WALTER
How about that!?

Slowly the SOUND of children fades in and a red ball bounces to Walter's feet. He looks in the direction the ball came from.

Nothing is there.

Walter looks back down at his feet. The ball is gone. The sound of children fades back away and is replaced by a rhythmic squeak. Walter looks towards the playground where

an empty swing sways back and forth in the wind, the chain squeaking in its hinges.

The hawk's cry pierces the silence. Walter looks up to see the hawk being chased by two smaller birds.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

There is a tremendous crash as logs are dropped near the wood chipper. Forklifts move and stack wood.

Walter stands at the end of a wood chipper, pushing a long piece of wood through. Suddenly above the din of machinery there is the sound of raised voices.

Walter looks across the way to see Vicki yelling furiously and smacking a GUY around the head with her work gloves. The man cowers, protecting his head from the blows. Some other men nearby are doubled over in laughter.

VICKI

GOD DAMN IT! PEDRO! WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF SOME FUCKER DID THAT TO YOUR SISTER?! YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT SO FUNNY THEN, WOULD YOU?!

She backs off out of breath. Pedro straightens up, having a very hard time keeping a straight face.

The other guys start to applaud.

Vicki looks around and storms off, kicking a piece of wood into one of the men, hard. She brushes past Walter on her way to the exit. He watches after her.

INT. WAREHOUSE CAFETERIA - DAY

Vicki sits alone at a table eating a sandwich. She takes large bites and eats fast.

Walter approaches carrying a tray of food. He pauses across from where Vicki sits.

Vicki ignores him.

WALTER
You okay?

Vicki looks up.

VICKI
What?

WALTER
Are you okay?

VICKI
(pause)
Yeah, I'm fucking fantastic.

Walter nods and keeps on walking. Vicki returns to her food.

After a moment, she steals a glance up at Walter.

Across the way, Mary-Kay watches Walter as he sits down to the table neighboring Vicki's.

Bob sits down across from Mary-Kay with a tray of food and a newspaper. He opens the paper and starts to read.

MARY-KAY
So, what'd he do?

BOB
What did who do?

MARY-KAY
You know, the new guy.

Bob looks across the room at Walter.

BOB
Mind your own business, Mary-Kay.

MARY-KAY
Come on, just tell me what he did.

Bob ignores her and reads the paper.

MARY-KAY
Drugs, armed robbery, manslaughter,
tax evasion –

Bob picks up his tray and moves away.

Mary-Kay smiles to herself.

INT. BUS - DUSK

Walter sits on the bus. He is squeezed into the window seat, the bus crowded with commuters and teenagers on their way home from school. He focuses out the window.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter sits alone on his couch, watching a baseball game, drinking a beer.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
The winning run on base, and a full
count on Williams, who's been in a
terrible slump. Here's the pitch.
Williams swings and misses! The
Rangers win, ball game over.

Walter switches off the TV.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Walter crosses the street outside of his apartment and heads towards the bus stop.

A white Volvo is parked along the road. A MAN sits inside the car looking out towards the school. The engine is off. He's in his twenties, good build, nice clothes.

Walter looks at the man as he passes by.

The man doesn't notice him, his attention fixed down the street.

Walter looks in the direction of his gaze.

The schoolyard is quiet except for a couple of students

running in.

Walter looks back at the man. The man doesn't notice him.

Walter hurries to his bus stop.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Walter works feeding wood through the chipper.

Vicki drives a forklift past Walter and watches him as she passes. He remains intent upon his work.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DUSK

Walter walks across the parking lot, heading towards the bus stop. Before he reaches the road Vicki's rusty old Jeep pulls up alongside him and stops, honking to grab his attention.

Vicki rolls down the passenger side window.

VICKI
Want a ride?

WALTER
I'm all right.

VICKI
It's fucking freezing out here.

Walter hesitates and looks down the road. There is no bus in sight.

VICKI
Come on, I won't bite.

He gets in.

As they pull away, a beat up grey Chevy pulls into the parking lot. Sergeant Lucas gets out of the car, and pauses watching after Vicki and Walter. He then turns and heads into the office.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Walter and Vicki drive silently. Vicki glances at Walter.

VICKI

There's something wrong with this picture.

WALTER

What picture?

VICKI

I'm talking about you.

WALTER

Me?

VICKI

Yeah, you.

Walter looks out the window.

VICKI

Here's this nice, hard working guy who suddenly appears out of the blue and rides the bus to and from work. I mean, who rides the bus anymore?

WALTER

People without cars.

She gives him a look.

VICKI

Very weird.

WALTER

No weirder than a sharp, young, good-looking woman working in a lumberyard.

VICKI

What's weird about that?

WALTER

Most women wouldn't choose it.

VICKI

Guess I'm not like most women.

Vicki takes out a cigarette and presses the cigarette lighter in, revealing a tattoo on her wrist of a pair of breasts with angel wings.

Walter notices the tattoo. Vicki notices Walter notice. She smiles at him.

VICKI

You're quiet at work.

WALTER

I'm just quiet.

VICKI

You don't hang out with the other guys.

WALTER

Neither do you.

VICKI

They're all assholes.

Walter shrugs.

VICKI

You never spoke to me before.

WALTER

I thought you were a dyke.

Vicki laughs and stops at a red light.

WALTER

(smiling)

Are you?

VICKI

What do you think?

She shoots him a look.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Vicki paces around the apartment.

Walter takes two beers from the fridge then turns and stands holding them, watching her.

VICKI
Southern light.

WALTER
What?

VICKI
Your windows face south. Northern light is the purest. But southern light is very good.

WALTER
I'll buy a plant.

VICKI
You should buy several. I've got shitty light in my place, but my plants don't seem to mind. Light's important, but it's not everything.

She looks at Walter.

VICKI
You plan to drink both those beers?

WALTER
Sorry.

Walter hands her a beer.

VICKI
Thanks.

She takes a swig then gazes back out the window.

VICKI
Is that a school?

WALTER

K through sixth.

VICKI
Doesn't it get noisy?

WALTER
I like the noise.

VICKI
My place faces a truck street. I've
got cracks in every window from the
shaking.

WALTER
You must hate it.

VICKI
I go backpacking a lot. Lose myself
in the wilderness for a week or two.

Vicki wanders through the stark living room space, looking
at what little there is to look at.

WALTER
What about bears?

VICKI
What about them?

WALTER
They could eat you.

VICKI
(laughing)
Yeah, they could.

She looks closely at the bus map taped to the wall, the only
decoration in the place. She looks at Walter.

VICKI
I thought you were just shy, but now
I think it's something else.

WALTER
What?

VICKI
You're damaged.

Walter drinks his beer and sits down on the couch.

VICKI
Something happened to you.

WALTER
Yeah?

Vicki sits next to him.

VICKI
I'm not easily shocked.

WALTER
I get that impression.

VICKI
So... what's your dark secret?

WALTER
Why do you want to know?

VICKI
Don't you think I should know before
we have sex?

Walter looks at her in surprise.

VICKI
I don't like to waste time.

Vicki leans in and kisses him.

VICKI
So?

WALTER
What?

VICKI
Are you going to tell me your deep

dark secret before we have sex?

She kisses him again.

WALTER

No.

Vicki looks at him.

VICKI

Okay.

She kisses him. Hesitantly, he kisses her back.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JUMPING FORWARD AND BACK IN TIME

A) BATHROOM: Walter's hands shake as he splashes water on his face. His shirt is off, and he wears just his jeans. He looks up at himself in the mirror.

B) BEDROOM: Walter lies back on his bed. Vicki runs her hand up his chest, pulling his shirt over his head. Walter looks at Vicki, already topless. He tentatively touches her breast.

C) BEDROOM: Walter kisses Vicki, then more and more rapidly, all over, passionately. They roll so she is underneath him.

D) LIVINGROOM: Vicki walks backwards towards the bedroom door, pulling Walter's hand to follow.

E) BEDROOM: Walter lies next to Vicki, staring up at the ceiling, spent, still breathing hard.

F) BEDROOM: Walter gropes Vicki's body and urgently pulls her underwear off.

G) BEDROOM: Walter and Vicki are completely engrossed in each other, making love.

H) BATHROOM: Walter breaks his gaze from the mirror and turns the faucet off.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vicki lies in bed, relaxed, smoking a cigarette. The sheets

are pulled to her waist.

Walter enters and sits on the side of the bed. He smiles shyly at her.

WALTER

So, you're not a dyke.

VICKI

Not tonight.

Walter looks at her. Vicki laughs and nudges him in the butt with her foot.

VICKI

Hey, that was... intense.

WALTER

You're still here.

VICKI

I didn't say I didn't enjoy it.

WALTER

Of course. Sorry. I'm such a fucking asshole.

VICKI

No you're not.

WALTER

Don't tell me I'm not a fucking asshole when I know I'm a fucking asshole!

Walter gets up and walks over to the window.

VICKI

What's the problem?

WALTER

You think I have a problem?

VICKI

Do you?

WALTER
(pause)
It's been a while since...

VICKI
Since you've had sex?

Walter looks out the window, silent.

VICKI
Tell me about it.

WALTER
Maybe later.

VICKI
How about in the morning.

WALTER
The morning?

VICKI
I thought I'd stay the night.

WALTER
What for?

VICKI
Well, Walter, this is going to sound
off-the-wall, but I like to sleep
with a man after we fuck.

Walter is silent.

VICKI
Did I say something wrong?

WALTER
I suffer from insomnia.

VICKI
Is that all?

WALTER

When I do sleep, I sweat a lot.
Usually I get nightmares and wake up
screaming.

VICKI
(smiling)
I sleep like a dead horse. Anything
else?

Walter has run out of excuses. Vicki drops her cigarette in an empty beer bottle and slides deeper under the covers.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Walter stands by the window watching Vicki walk towards her Jeep. Something brushes his leg. He looks down to see the red ball resting by his foot. He turns to see...

A glimpse of a young girl as she flashes by the door. She is twelve years old and wears a white nightgown.

There is the sound of a car HONK, and Walter looks out the window to see Vicki pull away.

He looks back toward the girl. There is nothing there.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

Walter rummages through a drawer. From underneath a pile of clothes he pulls out a well-worn notebook. Walter leafs through the pages. They are filled with writing but towards the back the pages are blank.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Walter sits next to the window watching birds play at the bird feeder. The notebook sits next to him on the windowsill.

There is the SOUND of children playing outside. Walter opens the notebook, closes it, then opens it again. He looks up and sees his reflection in the window. He starts to write.

WALTER (V.O.)
I watch the kids arrive at school.

INT. ROSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Walter sits in the chair across from Rosen, looking at his hands.

ROSEN
How's the journal?

WALTER
I'm still thinking about it.

ROSEN
I wish you'd give it a try.

Walter is silent.

ROSEN
You don't like coming here, do you?

WALTER
It's okay.

ROSEN
But you don't like coming here. Be honest, Walter.

WALTER
Honest? No.

ROSEN
Good. That's an honest answer. And why don't you like coming here?

WALTER
Honest? Your cheery personality makes my skin itch.

ROSEN
(stung)
Is it just my cheery personality that makes your skin itch?

WALTER
Forget it.

ROSEN

Maybe it's the way I look. Or the sound of my name.

WALTER

Rosen? I don't have a problem with that.

ROSEN

Because if you did, I know a therapist named Ryan. I also know a therapist named Chung.

WALTER

I don't need someone else.

Rosen settles back.

ROSEN

Fine.

Pause. Walter looks at Rosen.

INT/EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Continued from previous journal scene. Walter sits at his windowsill writing in his journal. There is the sound of children arriving to school outside. He looks up.

WALTER (V.O.)

But for the last few weeks I've noticed someone else watching them.

Walter's POV: The man with the white Volvo stands leaning against his car watching a bus load of children arrive. He pops M&Ms in his mouth.

WALTER (V.O.)

I call him Candy.

The boys run and tackle each other. A group walks by Candy.

WALTER (V.O.)

He talks to the boys, fifth and sixth graders. He goes for the pretty ones,

faces like angels.

Walter finishes writing then looks outside.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Walter stands on a crowded bus, staring out the window at the landscape rushing by. The bus pulls to a stop. Passengers get off, then a group of girls come crashing onto the bus. They overflow with energy and giggles.

Walter squeezes back so they can get by, but the bus lurches into motion throwing one of the girls into Walter. He helps her regain her balance, and the girl smiles at him.

GIRL

Sorry!

She and her friends burst into laughter and move on past.

Walter watches her move down the aisle then quickly turns away, scanning the faces surrounding him. No one looks at him.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Walter sweats heavily as he works. Vicki walks by and glances at Walter as she passes. He doesn't notice her.

INT. WAREHOUSE CAFETERIA - DAY

Walter sits at a table eating. Vicki sits down across from him. They eat silently. Walter doesn't look up. Vicki blows a straw wrapper, hitting Walter in the face.

After a moment, without glancing up, Walter retaliates. Vicki smothers a laugh. Walter cracks a smile.

Mary-Kay sits across the room watching the flirtation between Vicki and Walter.

INT. WAREHOUSE BATHROOM - DAY

Vicki exits a stall and goes to the sink to wash her hands.

She's smiling a little smile to herself.

Mary-Kay enters and starts primping in the mirror, fixing her hair, putting on lipstick. She watches Vicki in the reflection of the mirror.

MARY-KAY

I'd keep away from him.

VICKI

What?

MARY-KAY

The new man. I'd keep away from him, if I were you.

VICKI

Why's that?

MARY-KAY

You don't want to know, but he's damaged goods – real damaged goods, if you know what I mean.

VICKI

(cold)

Yeah, Mary-Kay, I think I do. Thanks a bunch for the advice.

Mary-Kay smiles, missing Vicki's ironic tone.

MARY-KAY

Just trying to be helpful.

VICKI

Well, Mary, you're about as helpful as a broken sewer pipe. You do know what runs out of a sewer pipe, don't you?

Mary-Kay's smile withers into a sneer.

MARY-KAY

Suit yourself.

She drops the lipstick into her bag and exits.

Vicki turns and finishes washing her hands, glancing at herself in the mirror.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Walter exits the building amidst a group of men. He walks towards the bus stop. Vicki hollers to him from her Jeep.

VICKI

Hey.

Vicki waves him over.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Vicki sits across from Walter in a booth. She takes a large bite from a burger and washes it down with a milk shake.

Walter folds his napkin over his hand to make a little rabbit hand puppet. The rabbit nods at Vicki.

She busts out laughing.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Walter and Vicki play pool. She knocks two balls into a corner pocket. She is kicking his ass and visibly enjoying it.

Walter hands her a quarter. Vicki kisses him on the cheek and goes to line up the next shot.

INT. WALTER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Walter and Vicki shower together. Walter rinses the suds from Vicki's hair.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vicki and Walter have just finished making love, Vicki on top. She lies down on his chest. He strokes her hair, then leans his head close and takes a deep breath.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Vicki is woken up by Walter who makes the moaning sounds of someone having a nightmare. She turns on her side and watches him.

Walter wakes up with a start, then sees Vicki and cuddles close. She runs her fingers through his hair and kisses his forehead.

VICKI
Hey, there.

WALTER
(sleepy)
Hi.

He closes his eyes again. Vicki looks at him closely.

VICKI
What happened to you?

Walter opens his eyes. Vicki continues to stroke his hair.

VICKI
Walter, what did you do?

Walter pulls away.

WALTER
Why do you want to know?

VICKI
Because I like you.

Walter is silent.

VICKI
I won't run away.

There's a long pause. He rests back down against the pillows.

WALTER
What's the worst thing you ever did?

VICKI

The worst?

WALTER

Yeah.

Vicki looks at him.

VICKI

Fucked my best friend's husband.

Walter listens with no reaction.

VICKI

I mean my best friend since the second grade. Her husband was hot for me and, god, he was cute. She was an international flight attendant, so we would get it on for days, while she was off in some country we couldn't pronounce. Then he told her, the shit. It broke up our friendship, broke up their marriage. Later she had a nervous breakdown, quit her job, then moved in with her sister who she despised.

Vicki lights a cigarette and takes a long drag.

VICKI

I still feel like the lowest piece of shit, when I think about it.

She looks at Walter. He says nothing, his expression blank.

VICKI

So, what did you do?

WALTER

I molested little girls.

VICKI

Molested little girls?

WALTER

Yeah.

Vicki laughs.

WALTER
You don't believe me?

She shakes her head no but the laughter begins to die.

WALTER
I wish the judge had your sense of humor.

Vicki is quiet.

VICKI
You're not joking.

WALTER
Twelve years in prison is no joke.

Walter gets out of bed and pulls on his pants. Vicki doesn't move, the cigarette burns in her hand.

WALTER
(signaling to the door)
Look, you can go now.

VICKI
How many girls did you molest?

Walter walks over to the window.

WALTER
Obviously one too many.
(bitter laugh)

Vicki looks away.

WALTER
Sorry.

VICKI
What did you do to them?

WALTER
(looking back out the
window)
It's not what you think.

VICKI
How young?

WALTER
Between ten and twelve. Once a nine-
year-old told me she was eleven.
Once a fourteen-year-old told me she
was twelve. I always asked how old
they were.

Vicki is visibly shaken. She puts the cigarette out.

VICKI
So it was mostly fondling? Shit like
that?

Walter looks at her.

WALTER
I never hurt them. Never.

VICKI
Twelve years in prison?

WALTER
The judge had a thing about sex
offenders. Later I heard his daughter
had been raped. If I hadn't had a
good lawyer, it would have been twenty-
five to thirty.

Vicki is silent.

WALTER
Why don't you just go now, okay?

VICKI
I told you I'm not easily shocked.

WALTER

You should be shocked. Or do you get off on this shit?

VICKI
What?

WALTER
Get your kicks somewhere else.

VICKI
Hey, I'm not –

WALTER
Depraved? My mistake.

VICKI
Walter.

Advancing towards her.

WALTER
Get the fuck out of here!

Vicki doesn't move. After a long moment, Walter sits down next to her.

VICKI
You don't molest little girls anymore, do you?

WALTER
No. Never again.

Vicki looks away, struggling to digest the news.

WALTER
(quiet)
You should go now.

Vicki gets up and pulls on her clothes. She looks at Walter who sits motionless on the bed. She leaves.

INT. VICKI'S CAR - DAY

Vicki drives fast. Window down. Cigarette gripped between

her fingers. Tears stream down her face. She comes to a stop light and sits completely still, staring ahead without blinking. Suddenly cars HONK. She snaps out of her stupor and keeps on driving.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter sits on the couch writing in his journal. The TV is on, a baseball game in progress, sound on low. Abruptly, Walter throws the journal across the room. Then he lies back and stares at the ceiling.

Suddenly, there is a loud THUMP outside of the apartment.

Walter picks up his journal and puts it in a drawer, then walks quietly to the door and opens it a crack.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT LANDING - NIGHT

A man struggles to bring a large object up the stairs.

Walter opens the door. Carlos turns in surprise.

WALTER
What are you doing?

CARLOS
This little table is one heavy bitch.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Carlos enters the apartment and sets a table down in the middle of the room. Walter looks at it.

WALTER
Cherry.

CARLOS
Huh?

WALTER
It's made from cherry. That's a hard wood.

CARLOS

It's a nice table.

Walter runs his hand along the surface.

WALTER

Notice the grain. See how deep and rich the red runs?

CARLOS

Yeah. It's really nice.

Carlos sits in a chair.

WALTER

It's my own design. You won't find another table like it in the world.

CARLOS

It was a beautiful present.

WALTER

Then why the fuck are you giving it back to me?!

CARLOS

(gesturing to the empty space)

You need a table.

WALTER

She was going to throw it out, wasn't she? Just toss it like a scrap of wood.

CARLOS

It wasn't like that.

WALTER

Then what? What?!

CARLOS

She's got all this new furniture now. She said it didn't fit anymore, so I kept it in the attic. I thought you might like it.

WALTER

I made that table for you and Annette,
for your wedding. I put a lot of
love into it.

CARLOS

I know, man. I love this table too.
(looks at Walter)
But I also love my wife.

Carlos notices the TV.

CARLOS

What's happening?

WALTER

Mariners are pounding the shit out
of the Tigers.

Walter stares at Carlos for a moment, then turns and goes to
the fridge and pulls out two beers. He hands Carlos a beer
and sits down on the couch. Carlos sits down next to him.

CARLOS

Fucking Mariners.

WALTER

Fucking Tigers. They got no pitching
except for a bunch of green kids
straight out of Double A or Southern
Cal.

(pause)

How was the party?

CARLOS

What party?

WALTER

The birthday party.

CARLOS

Oh, Anna's. It was great, man. Anna
was so pretty.
(getting excited)

She looked like a princess, like one of those girls in a fairy tale, you know, like Snow White.

Walter looks at Carlos.

CARLOS
I've got some pictures.
(reaching for his
back pocket)
Want to see?

WALTER
No thanks.

CARLOS
Ah, come on.

WALTER
(snapping)
I don't want to see any goddamn pictures.

Carlos backs off.

CARLOS
They're just photos I took of the party.

Walter is silent and avoids Carlos's gaze. Carlos gives Walter a look, then heads to the door.

WALTER
Carlos.
(Carlos turns)
I want to see my sister and Anna in person. Okay?

Carlos nods.

CARLOS
Yeah, man, I understand.

He exits.

Walter walks over to the table and slowly runs his hand along the surface.

INT. ROSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Walter sits across from Rosen.

ROSEN

How do you feel about that?

WALTER

I don't feel anything.

ROSEN

You have no feelings for your niece?

WALTER

She was born after they put me away.
How can I have feelings?

ROSEN

Then why are you talking about this?

WALTER

Have to talk about something.

ROSEN

What are you afraid will happen?

WALTER

I'm not afraid. I'm just saying that
Carlos has a thing for his daughter,
and if he isn't careful he's going
to suffer.

ROSEN

Have you talked to Carlos about your
concerns?

WALTER

I'm not that crazy.

ROSEN

Do you think you're crazy?

WALTER

If I'm not, then what the hell am I
doing here?

ROSEN

Why do you think you're here?

WALTER

You know why. It's part of the parole
deal.

ROSEN

Is that what you are angry about?

WALTER

Talking to you is like riding on a
merry-go-round.

ROSEN

That is a marvelous image, Walter.
Because by going in circles we find
the things we missed the first time
around.

Walter looks at Rosen.

WALTER

How long is this going to take?

ROSEN

(checking the clock)

We have a few more minutes.

WALTER

I mean, when will I be normal.

ROSEN

(pause)

We have a lot of work to do.

WALTER

(speaking slowly)

Will I ever be normal?

ROSEN

I couldn't say.

WALTER
You couldn't say.

ROSEN
I'm afraid not.

WALTER
Do you know what "normal" is?

ROSEN
I suppose it's however society defines it.

WALTER
How do you define it?

ROSEN
I don't.

WALTER
Then how do you know if your patients are getting better?

ROSEN
They usually tell me.

WALTER
How do they know?

ROSEN
What is your idea of being normal?

WALTER
(mimicking Rosen)
What is your idea of being a Jew?

ROSEN
(controlled)
Whatever my ideas are of being a Jew is not going to help you.
(looks at the clock)
Why don't we continue this on Thursday.

WALTER
(exploding)
I want to be normal!

ROSEN
Then go see a therapist who will
tell you you're normal!

WALTER
Fuck you, Rosen!

ROSEN
I know –

WALTER
You don't know!

ROSEN
I know you're frustrated, Walter,
but –

Walter gets up and slams out the door.

Rosen looks at the empty chair.

ROSEN
– you really are making progress.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Walter sits at his window with his journal, watching outside.

Walter's POV: Candy leans against his car, patiently waiting.

Something grabs Candy's attention, and Walter follows his
gaze.

Kids pour off a school bus. Candy waves to one ANGEL-FACED
BOY of ten or eleven.

WALTER (V.O.)
So what should I do? Call the cops?
(he laughs)
Yeah, that's pretty funny.

The boy and a buddy run over to Candy.

WALTER

But what if Candy seduces one to go
for a ride?

Candy smiles and offers Angel-face a candy bar, which the
boy accepts.

WALTER (V.O.)

Yeah, that's right. If the boy goes
for a ride it's because he wants to
go for a ride.

The BELL rings. The other boy grabs Angel-face, and they run
off to school.

Walter rests his chin on his hands, watching.

INT. WAREHOUSE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Vicki closes her locker to see Walter standing at the end of
the room in front of his locker. She looks away.

Walter looks at her, closes his locker loudly, and walks
brusquely past.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Vicki stands near a pile of wood chips, taking a cigarette
break.

Walter approaches, pushing a cart full of wood chips. Vicki
looks at him as if to say something, but Walter continues
past, dumps the chips, and returns back inside.

INT. WAREHOUSE CAFETERIA - DAY

Walter sits at a table across the room from Vicki.

Mary-Kay enters and sits down with Walter

MARY-KAY

Hi, Walter. How are you doing?

WALTER
Fine thanks.

MARY-KAY
You know, it's really a beautiful
day out there, and I was thinking –

Walter wipes his mouth and gets up.

WALTER
Excuse me. Got another load coming
in.

Walter exits. The smile fades from Mary-Kay's face.

Vicki watches Walter leave.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DUSK

Walter stands alone at the bus stop.

Vicki gets in her Jeep and pauses before turning on the
engine, watching Walter.

He turns his back to the cold wind and her.

Vicki turns on the car and pulls out of the lot, roaring by
Walter without looking at him.

INT. VICKI'S APT. - MORNING

Vicki moves around her apartment, cigarette in one hand,
spray bottle in the other, squirting her plants.

She prunes dead leaves from one of them, then pauses looking
at the leaves in her hands.

VICKI
Don't die on me, you little shit.

She aggressively squirts the little plant with water, then
pauses, noticing her reflection in the window. She looks at
herself long and hard.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - MORNING

There is a knock on the door. Walter walks through the room to the door, tucking in his shirt as he walks. He cracks the door.

Vicki stands outside. Walter opens the door.

VICKI

You want to go for a ride?

Walter looks at her.

INT. VICKI'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Walter and Vicki drive without saying anything. Slowly the city-scape gives way to countryside. Walter looks over at Vicki. She stares ahead.

EXT. RESERVOIR - DAY

Walter and Vicki get out of the car which is parked on the edge of a reservoir surrounded by a thick pine forest. Vicki works her way down to the water's edge. A Great Blue Heron skims across the water's surface.

Walter watches her for a moment then follows. He sits down near her.

Vicki lights a cigarette and stares out over the water. After a long pause.

VICKI

What was prison like?

WALTER

(pause)

You don't really –

VICKI

Yes! I want to know.

Walter is quiet for a moment.

WALTER

Prison is... time.

Vicki looks at him.

VICKI

You mean the time you're locked away?

WALTER

No. Prison is time. That's it. You think time, you feel time, you hear time. Your heart doesn't beat to live, it just beats... time.

VICKI

I'm sorry, Walter.

WALTER

(shrugs)

Don't be sorry for me. I did those things. No one else did. I'm dealing with that.

Vicki looks out at the water.

VICKI

My father took me fishing here when I was a kid. He could name every fish in the lake. And for every fish he named, he had a fishing story. I hated fishing, but I loved his stories.

WALTER

Sounds like a special guy.

VICKI

My father was an alcoholic who drank himself right into the grave.

Walter looks at her.

VICKI

He said he couldn't help it. Said he hated himself for doing it. But, boy, did that man love to drink.

There is a long pause.

WALTER
I've changed.

VICKI
Why young girls, Walter?

Walter is silent.

VICKI
Is it their innocence? Their
beauty?...

WALTER
(pause)
Their power. They seduce me.

VICKI
They seduce you?

WALTER
I was always the one seduced.

VICKI
You really believe that?

WALTER
(long pause)
No. That's what I used to tell myself.

VICKI
And what do you tell yourself now?

WALTER
Nothing. It's over.

VICKI
Bullshit.

Walter looks at Vicki for a moment then stands up.

WALTER
Okay. Then take me home.

Vicki doesn't move.

WALTER

What do you want from me?

Vicki stands.

VICKI

I want you to change my mind!

Walter is silent. Vicki shoves Walter hard.

VICKI

Try, goddamnit!

Walter stumbles back a few steps but regains himself. He stares at Vicki. His anger wells and he snaps.

WALTER

I had this plan once... or maybe it was a dream. I was going to quit the building business... open my own shop. Make and design fine country furniture. I had saved enough money. I found the perfect place. Cheap five-year-lease. The loan was in the bag. My wife was a hundred percent behind it. Everything was set... Then I got in trouble.

(pause)

Do you know what the worst kind of trouble is?

Vicki watches Walter, silent.

WALTER

It's trouble you bring on yourself... and the people you love the most. I lost a wife and a daughter. It hurt to lose my wife. It killed me to lose my daughter.

Walter stops, looks at Vicki.

Vicki stares back at him. After a long pause, she approaches and tentatively pulls him into an embrace.

INT. OFFICE SPACE

Close up on computer screen displaying a web page for registered felons. The heading reads - "Sex Offenders: the more we know, the better!" "Stay informed!" Mock Police sirens and lights frame the heading.

The listing of sex offenders scrolls down revealing photos, name, address, and crime details of man after man, in alphabetical order, page after page.

The scrolling slows down, past "Mason," past all of the Mc's..., and stops on "Miles, Walter." Convicted 1988 for sexual abuse of minors, five counts, released... It is the notification page that we saw created in the opening montage.

Walter's photo stares back at us.

We slowly pull back to reveal Mary-Kay at the computer. She clucks her tongue and shakes her head.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Vicki and Walter lie in bed, spooning, fully clothed. Vicki's back to Walter, he holds her close.

WALTER

(gently)

You know, this is crazy.

VICKI

What?

WALTER

Being here, with me.

VICKI

I know.

WALTER

(pause)

Most people say the odds are against

me.

VICKI
What odds?

WALTER
The percentages –

Vicki looks at him blankly.

WALTER
For men like me. They say most of us
end up back... there. I'm saying
there are risks... seeing me.

VICKI
Well, most people are stupid.
(pause)
You want to talk about odds? One day
I'll tell you how I survived as the
youngest in a family of three sons.
You wanna talk about odds?

WALTER
Why not tell me now?

Long pause. Vicki lights a cigarette.

VICKI
I got poked around... here and there.

WALTER
Which brother did this?

VICKI
All three – in chronological order.

WALTER
You must hate your brothers.

VICKI
I love my brothers.

WALTER
No you don't.

VICKI

I love all of them. They're strong, gentle men with families of their own. And if you asked them about what they did to me, they'd call you a fucking liar and then beat the shit out of you.

WALTER

You never asked them about it?

VICKI

(laughs)

Are you serious?

WALTER

Not ever?

VICKI

Not ever.

Vicki drinks from her beer. Walter watches her.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - NIGHT

Walter sits at his table, a scrap of wood in his hand. He whittles away at the wood. It is the rough outline of a heart with wings.

There is a loud KNOCK on the door. Walter gets up. The KNOCK comes again, even harder.

Walter goes to the door and opens it. The smiles fades from his face.

Sergeant Lucas pushes the door open further and walks right in. He wears a well-tailored suit.

LUCAS

Hiya, Walter.

WALTER

Cop.

MAN
Sergeant Lucas.
(flashes his badge)
May I come in?

WALTER
You are in.

LUCAS
So I am. But I always like to ask.

Walter closes the door behind him. Lucas walks around the apartment. Walter watches him, uneasy.

WALTER
What's up?

LUCAS
Have a seat.

Walter hesitates, then obeys.

LUCAS
You don't know?

WALTER
I have no idea.

LUCAS
I think you do.

WALTER
Why don't you just tell me?

Lucas walks over to the window.

WALTER
(pause)
I haven't broken any laws.

LUCAS
Then you won't mind if I look around.

WALTER
I would.

LUCAS

Got something to hide?

WALTER

Doesn't everybody?

LUCAS

I could get a search warrant.

WALTER

If you could, you would have brought one today.

Lucas looks at Walter. He looks at the table.

LUCAS

Cherry?

WALTER

Yeah.

LUCAS

Unusual design for a contemporary piece.

Lucas runs his hand along the surface.

WALTER

It's not for sale.

LUCAS

Who said I wanted to buy it?

Lucas walks back to the window.

LUCAS

Two nights ago, a ten-year-old girl was attacked not too far from here. Seems there's been a number of attacks on young girls in the vicinity. Kind of a coincidence, wouldn't you say?

Walter stands up.

WALTER

If you tell me when this happened –

Walter places his hands in his pockets. Lucas whirls around.

LUCAS

Move your fucking hands away from your pockets!

Walter does.

LUCAS

Sit down!

Walter sits.

LUCAS

We know every step you make, every goddamn step! We know when you sleep, when you eat, when you shit, and when you jack off.

Lucas leans over the table, nose to nose with Walter.

LUCAS

And when you sit by the window, watching the girls in the little cotton skirts parade by, do you wave your wanger at the girls? Is that when you jerk off?

WALTER

You can't talk to me like –

LUCAS

(interrupting)

Like a piece of shit? In my eyes, you are a piece of shit. Think anyone would miss you if I threw you out the window right now? I could say you jumped when I came in. Who are they going to believe? Not you, because you'd be a dead piece of shit.

Beat. Lucas taps Walter on the forehead and smiles.

LUCAS
(feigning kindness)
We just want to make sure you're
being a good boy, Walter. Okay?

Walter is silent. Lucas taps him again.

LUCAS
Okay?

WALTER
(flatly)
Okay.

Lucas rises, spits his gum in the sink, and leaves.

Walter leans over squeezing his head tight between his hands.

The sound of children fades in and Walter looks up. The girl with the red ball stands across from him in the doorway to his bedroom. She smiles and bounces the ball.

Walter folds over, cradling his head in his arms.

EXT. WALTER'S APT. - DAY

Walter stands alone at his bus stop. As he waits, he sees the white Volvo turn a corner and pull up in front of the school.

The bus pulls up to the stop, obscuring Walter's view. He quickly gets on and moves to the back, looking for Candy's car. It is nowhere in sight, the place where it had parked, empty. Walter sits down and stares ahead, numb.

EXT. MALL - DAY

It's a bright Saturday afternoon. A city bus turns into the parking lot of a large mall. Passengers exit the bus and pour into the mall's entrance. Walter is among them.

WALTER (V.O.)
I followed a girl.

INT. MALL - DAY

Music blares from speakers. Packs of teenagers cruise the mall. It is alive with chatter.

WALTER (V.O.)
I don't know why I did it.

Walter is frequently jostled, as if he has forgotten how to navigate crowds.

WALTER
There were all of these people...

He passes many stores and snack shops then sees a Barnes & Noble and enters.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The bookstore is two floors and vast. Walter looks lost as he moves through the crowds.

CUT TO:

Walter rides an escalator. Three girls stand ahead of him.

The girl closest to him wears a short skirt which flutters above Walter's face. He looks up.

WALTER (V.O.)
She was pretty. Very pretty.

They reach the next level and Walter watches the girl walk away with her friends. Suddenly, the girl looks back. Their eyes lock – briefly. She turns the corner.

WALTER
She gave me a look. If she hadn't given me that look...

Walter pauses, then follows.

The girl separates from her friends and goes down an aisle.

Walter follows her. She goes down another aisle. He follows.

In the middle of the aisle, the girl bends down, looking at titles. From the end of the aisle, Walter pretends to be looking for a book as he edges closer to her. He's now a few feet away. The girl pulls out a book and opens it. Walter gazes at the nape of her neck.

SALESMAN (O.S.)

Can I help you find something?

Walter turns, startled.

Behind the salesman, Walter sees a security guard exit the rest room area.

WALTER

No, I'm –

He turns, the girl is gone. He bolts the other way, through the aisles, down the elevator, through the mall as fast as possible. The faces are a blur, sound becomes distorted. Then we hear –

ROSEN (O.S.)

Did she know that you were following her?

INT. ROSEN'S OFFICE

Walter sits in Rosen's office.

WALTER

I don't know.

ROSEN

What did you think would happen?

WALTER

I don't know.

ROSEN

What did you want to happen?

WALTER

I don't know!

Walter is agitated. Rosen calmly writes.

WALTER

I can't believe I took such a risk.

(looks at Rosen)

Will you stop writing in that fucking pad!

Rosen stops and looks at Walter.

WALTER

You know that if anything happens, I spend the rest of my life in prison.

No parole, no nothing.

ROSEN

Is this the first one?

WALTER

Of course it is! That's why I'm telling you!

ROSEN

I want you to calm down.

With effort Walter settles down.

ROSEN

You followed a girl. One girl. Perhaps you wanted to see what it felt like after so many years. Maybe unconsciously you were testing yourself. You followed her and nothing happened. And here you are talking about it with me. This is positive.

There is a pause. Walter looks down, unconvinced. Rosen checks the time.

ROSEN

Walter, we'll pick up here next time.

WALTER

I want to talk about it now.

ROSEN

We'll talk about it more on Thursday.

WALTER

Remember when you asked me what my idea of "normal" was?

ROSEN

(gently)

Go home, Walter.

WALTER

Now I know. It's when I can see a girl, be near a girl, even talk to a girl... and walk away.

(pause)

That's my idea of being normal.

INT. BUS-STOP - DAY

Walter rides the bus, staring out the window. Sensing something, he looks up.

A GIRL sits across from Walter. She is about twelve years old. She wears glasses and a pair of binoculars hangs around her neck. She casually nibbles on food she produces from her backpack. She glances at Walter briefly then looks back out the window.

Walter turns away.

INT. WALTER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Walter and Vicki sit at his table eating Chinese take-out.

Walter glances at Vicki who is devouring her food.

WALTER

Maybe this isn't a good idea.

VICKI

What?

WALTER
(pause)
Us seeing each other.

She looks up at him.

VICKI
You're scared.

WALTER
I'm not scared.

VICKI
Neither am I.

WALTER
Maybe you should be.

Walter gets up from the table and clears his plate to the sink. Vicki looks at him.

VICKI
Well, Walter, I got an idea of my
own.

He avoids her look.

VICKI
You listening to me?

He doesn't answer.

VICKI
We should live together.

WALTER
(looks at her)
Live together.

VICKI
Move in with me.

He stares at her.

WALTER

It's a bad idea.

VICKI

I think it's a fucking good idea.

Walter goes to the fridge for a beer.

WALTER

I don't even know how to live with myself.

VICKI

Just think about it.

WALTER

I've got problems.

VICKI

Who doesn't?

WALTER

Most people don't have my kind of problems.

VICKI

Guess that makes you pretty special.

WALTER

That's not what I meant.

Vicki looks at him blankly.

WALTER

I say we call it quits.

VICKI

Fine.

Vicki puts her fork down, pulls on her jacket and exits.

Walter looks at the closed door, baffled.

WALTER

She's gone.
(pause)

That was easy.

He takes a swig from his beer.

WALTER

Good. I'm glad. I'm fucking glad!

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUED

Vicki jogs down the stairs and over to her Jeep. She opens the door.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUED

Walter pulls the carving he was working on from a drawer and looks at it. It's finished.

Vicki reenters holding a plant and sets it loudly on the table. Walter looks at her then at the plant.

WALTER

What's this?

VICKI

What's it look like?

She gets herself a beer from the fridge.

WALTER

I don't need a plant.

VICKI

Everyone needs a plant. This ivy is one tough baby. It's a cutting from one of mine.

Walter seems at a loss. Vicki takes a swig from her beer.

VICKI

Here's the deal. Give it a little water. Go easy on the direct sunlight. And notice it every once in a while. They love it when you look at them, or touch their leaves. Can you handle that?

Walter looks unconvinced.

WALTER
Thank you.

VICKI
You're such an asshole.

She kisses him then gives him a teasing look.

VICKI
Don't be scared, Walter.

WALTER
(cracking a smile)
I'm not scared.

VICKI
Prove it.

Vicki walks towards the bedroom.

WALTER
Hey.

Vicki turns. He tosses her the carving.

Vicki catches it and looks at it for a long moment, then at Walter.

WALTER
I made it for you.

She smiles.

WALTER
It's cedar.

INT. WAREHOUSE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

There is the usual morning chaos in the locker room. Walter opens his locker but stops abruptly.

Taped to the inside of his locker is a magazine ad of a young

girl, joyfully swinging on a swing. Scrawled over the image in red marker is a circle with line across it and the words "WE'RE WATCHING YOU" written below.

Walter quickly tears down the picture and looks around. The men are all oblivious.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Walter works at the saw, watching closely every person that walks by him. No one pays him any mind.

Bob, the boss, walks into the space and stops to have a few words with a worker who points in Walter's direction. Bob heads towards Walter.

Walter sees him coming and pauses in his work. Bob walks right by to talk to another man working behind Walter.

Walter watches for a moment then continues working.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Walter exits the mens room and stops to drink from the water fountain. Mary-Kay is walking down the hall and pauses.

MARY-KAY

Hi, Walter. How ya doing?

WALTER

Fine thanks. How are you, Mary-Kay?

She leans up against the wall.

MARY-KAY

Well, I've got this problem. I promised my sister that I'd babysit her little girl tonight while she's on a date. Single mother, right? Her daughter's a cute little thing, about nine or ten. Real entertaining. But once she's asleep, I get soo bored. I'd love to have some company.

She gives Walter a suggestive look.

MARY-KAY

What are you doing tonight, Walter?

WALTER

(cold)

I got plans.

A couple of men walk down the hall interrupting them.

WALTER

Have a nice day, Mary-Kay.

Mary-Kay watches Walter walk away.

INT. BUS - DUSK

Walter rides the bus, staring out the window. The bus is crowded.

Time passes, fewer passengers, dusk has turned to night.

INT. ROSEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Walter and Rosen sit in their usual places.

ROSEN

You're very late.

WALTER

Sorry.

ROSEN

Please don't do it again.

WALTER

I said I was sorry.

ROSEN

I can't move my patients around to accommodate one person.

Walter silently stares at his hands. Rosen looks at him closely.

ROSEN

Walter, I want to ask you a question.
Will you try to answer it?

Walter looks at him.

ROSEN

When did it all start?

WALTER

You mean my problem?

ROSEN

If by "problem" you mean your desire
for prepubescent girls, yes.

WALTER

I don't know.

ROSEN

That's not a helpful answer.

WALTER

That's my answer.

Rosen looks at Walter.

ROSEN

Close your eyes.

WALTER

What?

ROSEN

I'd like you to close your eyes.

WALTER

Why?

ROSEN

To relax.

WALTER

(snaps)

I'm relaxed.

ROSEN

Close your eyes and let your mind be blank.

WALTER

Hey, Rosen, you going to hypnotize me?

Walter laughs.

ROSEN

No, I am not going to –

WALTER

(closing his eyes)

Okay. Eyes closed, mind a blank. I'm all yours. Do it, Rosen.

Rosen gets up so he's positioned directly in front of Walter.

ROSEN

When I say the word "girl" what is the earliest image that you can remember?

WALTER

Nothing. Can I open my eyes?

ROSEN

No. When I say the word "pretty," when I say the word "pleasure," what is the earliest memory you see?

WALTER

I don't see –

ROSEN

In your mind, Walter. Take your time.

After a moment, Walter's expression shifts.

ROSEN

(watching closely)

Who do you see?

WALTER
(long pause)
I see my sister.

Rosen is excited by this "breakthrough."

ROSEN
Where is she? What is she doing? How
old –

WALTER
(interrupting)
Not so fast.

ROSEN
Sorry.
(pause)
Where is she?

WALTER
In my bedroom, sleeping.

ROSEN
Where?

WALTER
In my bed, Rosen. Where do you think?

ROSEN
Where are you?

WALTER
In my bed too.

ROSEN
How old are you and your sister?

WALTER
We're little kids.

ROSEN
But roughly, how old?

WALTER

I'm maybe about six... which would make her four.

Rosen walks around Walter and paces behind him.

ROSEN

And what are you doing?

WALTER

Just lying there.

(pause)

We're taking a nap.

ROSEN

A nap?

WALTER

Yes, a nap. Kids do that. You ever take a nap, Rosen?

Walter opens his eyes.

WALTER

I don't want to talk about it any more.

He sees Rosen behind him.

WALTER

What the hell are you doing there?

ROSEN

Did you and your sister often take naps together?

WALTER

(exploding)

I want you back in your chair! Right now!

Rosen stumbles back to his chair.

WALTER

Don't ever do that again.

ROSEN

All right.

WALTER

I don't like nobody behind my back!

ROSEN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have been there.

Walter looks away, quelling his anger.

ROSEN

Walter, what did you do while taking a nap with your sister?

WALTER

Nothing.

ROSEN

Did you touch her? Did you take off her clothes? Did you take off your clothes?

WALTER

This is garbage!

ROSEN

I'm only asking questions.

WALTER

Okay I'll tell you what I did – just to shut you up!

(pause)

I smelled her hair.

ROSEN

What else?

WALTER

That's all. I just liked smelling her hair.

ROSEN

You felt pleasure.

WALTER
(long pause)
Yes.

Rosen writes a few notes.

ROSEN
Did you get an erection?

WALTER
(glaring at Rosen)
I was six years old!

ROSEN
I meant later... when you two took
naps.

Walter is silent.

ROSEN
When the two of you held each other.
When you were ten or eleven and she
was eight or nine. When your parents
were out and the two of you were
alone... completely alone in that
big house.

WALTER
It was a small house.

ROSEN
All right. A small house... with
small rooms.

WALTER
(his eyes well up.)
I smelled her hair. That's it. I
just liked smelling her hair.

Walter presses his face into his hands. Rosen watches him
silently. When Walter lifts his face...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

...Carlos sits before him. They are in a booth, the table covered with drinks and remnants of bar food. The bar bustles in the background.

CARLOS
I've got some good news.

WALTER
What's that?

CARLOS
Annette will see you.

Walter is quiet.

CARLOS
Aren't you glad?

WALTER
When?

CARLOS
Soon.

WALTER
Next week? The week after?

CARLOS
Early July.

Walter looks at Carlos.

CARLOS
It's just a better time.

Carlos avoids Walter's gaze.

CARLOS
Anna will be away at camp. The house will be quiet. It's better when it's quiet.

WALTER
Tell Annette I'm busy in July.

CARLOS
C'mon, Walter.

WALTER
You should see my appointment book.
It got crazy.

CARLOS
It's not what you think.

WALTER
Isn't it?

CARLOS
The important thing is that you and
Annette need to talk. She needs to
see you, and you need to see her.

WALTER
(a long pause)
I'm not a monster.

CARLOS
You're a good man, Walter. Okay, you
did some wrong things, but inside
you're a good, decent man.

WALTER
Maybe I'm not a good man. Maybe inside
I'm bad, and I'll always be bad.

CARLOS
Don't talk like that.

The waitress interrupts to clear the table, leaning over to
grab the empty plates. Carlos checks her out.

CARLOS
(pause)
Next week Annette is going away for
a few days. And the thing is that
when Annette's away...

Carlos watches the waitress depart.

CARLOS

I get horny as hell for other women.

(whispering)

I mean I fantasize about raping some beautiful woman.

WALTER

You don't have to tell me this.

CARLOS

I'm just talking, man.

WALTER

Carlos, I never raped a woman.

CARLOS

I know. I'm just saying I understand.

Walter doesn't look at Carlos.

CARLOS

It's crazy out there.

(signaling to the crowd)

Young girls wearing mini this and mini that. Sometimes when I walk down the street and pass some sexy looking woman, she makes me feel like I'm bothering her. She stares down like she's afraid to look at me. Why she do that? Why can't she look me in the face?

WALTER

Maybe because you're looking her in the face.

Carlos looks at Walter.

CARLOS

I see a pretty woman, I look. That's the price of beauty, my friend. My god, you should see what Anna's friends wear.

Carlos laughs. Walter looks at him.

WALTER

Carlos, can I ask you something?

CARLOS

Sure.

WALTER

(pause)

Nothing.

CARLOS

Ask me. Ask me anything.

WALTER

(pause)

Did you ever... Do you have feelings for Anna?

Carlos looks at Walter.

CARLOS

What do you mean?

WALTER

I mean... feelings.

A look of horror/disgust passes over Carlos's face, and he lurches forward grabbing Walter by the shirt collar. Drinks spill.

CARLOS

Listen, man. I don't got your sick problem, and if you or anybody else ever comes near my daughter, I'll kill you.

Carlos lets go of Walter roughly and gets up and leaves.

Walter looks around embarrassed – onlookers slowly turn away. Walter picks up a napkin and starts to blot the table dry.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vicki stands before Walter who sits on the edge of the bed.

Both are naked. She kisses him. He turns her around and pulls her to his lap.

Walter's hands are on her hips. He moves her body slowly – very slowly – around his lap.

Vicki goes with it, enjoying herself, then tries to turn around. Walter holds her still.

VICKI
Walter...

He leans his face into her hair. He takes deep audible breaths. Vicki tries to turn again, but he won't let her. She is aroused but confused.

VICKI
Walter... let me...

She tries to reach back. Walter catches her hand and holds it to her side.

WALTER
Don't touch me... please.

He holds her tight.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Walter lies in bed, eyes open. There is the SOUND of children playing outside. He carefully sits up in bed revealing Vicki asleep beside him.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - MORNING

In slightly fast motion grainy style of transferred 8 mm, kids parade down the sidewalk heading for school. The camera pans to reveal Candy watching them.

WALTER (V.O.)
(in the ratatat tone
of a sportscaster)

Good morning, fellow sports fans.
The match is about to begin. Candy enters the arena looking sweet and trim. He checks out the scene but plays it cool. He's definitely holding back.

(Pause)

Uh-oh, Candy's eyes have locked onto something. Oh yeah.

Trailing behind the others is the angel-faced boy. Freeze frame.

WALTER (V.O.)

A cherub of a lad has separated from his friends. Candy quickly makes his move. He pats the cherub on his head, ruffles his hair. With his other hand, he offers the boy a bag of M&Ms. Jumbo size.

The boy tears open the bag.

Candy smiles. Freeze frame.

WALTER

Round one to Candy.

Candy points across the street to his white Volvo.

WALTER

A very risky move by Candy. The boy looks at the car but walks away!

Candy follows the boy. Freeze frame.

WALTER

Round two goes to the cherub.

Candy struts around the boy rapping, clapping, snapping his fingers.

WALTER

I have never seen Candy act so cocky.

Candy points to his car again, then dances, seen in slowmotion, toward it.

WALTER

The cherub looks at Candy; the cherub looks at the car; the cherub looks for his friends. But his friends are long gone. The cherub is alone. The cherub crosses the street!

Candy opens the car door.

WALTER

(pause. Normal tone)

The cherub gets in the car.

The boy gets in the car. Instant replay. The boy gets in the car. ZOOM IN. The car door closes.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - DAY

Walter sits staring out the window. The sound of children playing.

Vicki walks into the room and sees Walter sitting by the window. She walks up behind him and puts her hands on his shoulders.

VICKI

What are you doing?

Walter turns around, startled, brushing her off.

WALTER

Don't do that.

VICKI

Do what?

WALTER

Sneak up behind me like that.

VICKI

What's your fucking problem?

WALTER
Why's it always my fucking problem?

Vicki looks at Walter.

VICKI
What's going on?

WALTER
Nothing.

Vicki looks at him.

WALTER
I didn't sleep well.

VICKI
Do you want to talk about it?

WALTER
I need a shower.

He walks back into the bedroom.

A SCHOOL BELL rings and Vicki looks out the window. She sees the children running into school. She looks back in the direction Walter left.

INT. VICKI'S CAR - DAY

Vicki and Walter ride in the car. Vicki glances at Walter. He stares ahead, then leans his head back and closes his eyes...

INT. BUS - DAY

...Walter rides, head back, eyes closed. The bus comes to a stop and a couple of passengers get on. Walter opens his eyes.

The girl with binoculars comes to sit in the seat ahead of Walter.

Walter stares at the girl. The bus pulls up to another stop – it is Walter's. The doors to the bus open. Walter looks at

the doors, he does not move. The doors close. He looks back at the girl. The bus drives on.

EXT. BUS-STOP - DAY

The bus comes to a stop. The girl gets off amongst a couple of passengers. Walter follows.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Walter walks down a path that opens onto a secluded little field surrounded by trees.

The girl stands in the middle of the field looking at the sky through her binoculars. She turns slowly, scanning the trees.

She spots Walter and lowers the binoculars.

GIRL

Hello.

Walter is silent. He looks up at the trees.

GIRL

What are you looking at?

WALTER

Birds.

GIRL

(indifferently)

There's a million birds here.

WALTER

In that birch tree is a nest.

GIRL'S VOICE

(interested)

Where?

WALTER

(pointing)

Up there.

She looks through her binoculars. Walter stares at her.

WALTER
A little higher.

She points her binoculars up. Walter walks towards her.

GIRL
There's little chicks!
(turns to Walter)
You want to see?

WALTER
Sure.

She hands him her binoculars. He looks through them.

GIRL
They're starlings.

WALTER
(continues looking)
Is that right?

GIRL
I don't like starlings.

WALTER
Why not?

GIRL
They're extremely aggressive birds.
Plus, their habits are rather filthy.

WALTER
The mother sure has her hands full.

He hands her back the binoculars.

WALTER
You always carry these?

GIRL
When I go bird-watching. It's why I
like coming here.

WALTER

It's just a city park.

GIRL

You'd be surprised how many kinds of birds you'll see here. Last week I saw a purple martin. And the week before that, I saw a solitary vireo. That's rare.

WALTER

A solitary vireo. I like that one.

GIRL

Their sound is quite musical.

WALTER

How does it sound?

GIRL

It's hard to describe.

WALTER

Try.

GIRL

I can't.

WALTER

I bet you can.

She shakes her head.

WALTER

I'd love to hear it.

GIRL

(pause)

It's a bright sound.

She closes her eyes and pipes a little tune.

GIRL

Cheery! Cheerily! Cheery! Cheerily!

She opens her eyes, shyly.

GIRL
Something like that.

WALTER
That was terrific.

GIRL
You should hear the bird.

WALTER
You live around here?

GIRL
(pause)
Not too far.
(she looks at him)
Are you a bird-watcher too?

WALTER
Me? Nah. I'm more of a people watcher.

GIRL
Were you watching me?

WALTER
(pause)
Not at first. You would stare at the
tops of the trees so intently. Any
second I thought you would take off
and fly.

GIRL
I have to go.

WALTER
Do you come here often?

GIRL
My daddy likes me home before dark.

WALTER
It's good to listen to your daddy.

The girl runs off down the path.

Walter watches after her. He stands alone in the field.

INT. BUS - DAY

Walter rides the bus. Through many different neighborhoods, day passes into night. He stares beyond his reflection. Over the following voice-over we cut between Walter's apartment and Walter riding the bus.

WALTER (V.O.)

I followed a girl.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter sits at his window, writing in his journal, fast.

WALTER (V.O.)

I talked to a girl... I was near a girl... Jesus God! What did I want to happen?

INT. BUS - NIGHT

The bus drives by a number of billboards, children's Gap ads...

WALTER (V.O.)

Maybe it's like Rosen said. Maybe I wanted nothing to happen.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - NIGHT

Walter pauses in the writing.

WALTER

(out loud)

Fucking Rosen! This isn't helping.

There's a loud KNOCK at the door. Walter looks over in surprise. The KNOCK comes again. Walter quickly closes his journal and puts it in a drawer. The KNOCK comes again.

Walter goes to the door and opens it partially.

Sergeant Lucas stands outside.

LUCAS
Hiya, Walter.

Walter opens the door. Lucas enters. Walter slowly closes the door behind him.

WALTER
What can I do for you, Sergeant Lucas?

Lucas signals a chair.

LUCAS
Have a seat.

Walter slowly sits. Lucas walks around the room. He pauses.

LUCAS
Too much sun.

WALTER
What?

Lucas points to the plant on the windowsill.

LUCAS
Your ivy. Too much direct sunlight.
These plants don't like a lot of
sun.

WALTER
They grow outside, don't they?

LUCAS
Sure they do. But outside they've
got trees around them. The trees
shade them from the sun. Of course,
the plants enrich the soil around
the trees. One of nature's symbiotic
relationships.

WALTER

You going to take me on a nature walk?

LUCAS

Don't be witty.

(pause)

Yesterday you took the number twelve bus from work, but instead of getting off at your normal stop, for some reason you stayed on. Why did you stay on the bus, Walter?

WALTER

I fell asleep.

Lucas throws him a look.

WALTER

When I woke up I was confused. I got off at the wrong stop and walked home.

Lucas looks at the bus map on the wall.

LUCAS

You walked home.

WALTER

Yes.

Lucas spits his gum into the garbage can and sits down across from Walter.

LUCAS

Some of these guys... They walk right into a family's home as if they live there. Very fucking ballsy.

Walter is silent.

LUCAS

This one guy on death row, who I'll call Henry, told me about his last victim. Henry says how he's in the bedroom of a seven-year-old cutie

named Adele. Her mother's in the living room watching TV. She's got the volume on so damn high he can hear David Letterman's jokes. Henry puts his hand over Adele's mouth and says, "If you scream, little girl, I'll kill your mother." And of course little Adele doesn't scream, doesn't cry, doesn't make a sound. Then he takes her hand and out they go through the front door.

(pause)

Ten days later they find Adele's body. Or what's left of it.

(looks at Walter)

You believe in fairy tales?

WALTER

Fairy tales?

LUCAS

Do you believe in them?

WALTER

No.

LUCAS

Neither do I. What's the one with the woodsman?

WALTER

Woodsman?

LUCAS

The one with the ax?

WALTER

I don't know.

LUCAS

Sure you do. He cuts open the wolf's stomach, and the girl steps out alive.

WALTER

Little Red Riding Hood.

LUCAS

That's it. Little Red Riding Hood jumps out of the wolf's guts with hardly a scratch.

(pause)

Ever see a seven-year-old girl sodomized almost in half?

Walter shakes his head.

LUCAS

She looked so small and broken. I saw hardened twenty-year veterans cry. They cried like babies. I was there. Ain't no fucking woodsman in this world.

Lucas takes out a fresh piece of gum and pops it in his mouth. Then he rises.

WALTER

You knew her?

LUCAS

What?

WALTER

The girl.

Lucas stares coldly at Walter, his face red. He looks dangerous.

LUCAS

(seething)

I don't know why they keep letting scum like you return to the streets. It just means we've got to catch you all over again.

He slaps Walter on the back of the head...

LUCAS

See ya, Walter.

...and exits.

Walter rushes to the blinds, drawing them down, then scrambles to get his journal from the drawer. He drops to his knees, tearing the pages from his journal, tearing them to bits.

WALTER

You have no right to talk to... to
speak like... I am not!... I am not!

The SOUND of children fades in, and Walter looks up.

In the bedroom doorway is the girl in her white nightgown, sitting on the red ball, rocking back and forth, her chin in her hands.

GIRL

Wallie, what are you doing?

Walter squeezes his eyes shut and clamps his hands over his ears. The sound abruptly stops.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Walter rides the bus. He is unshaven and looks exhausted. He is jostled by the crowds but seems oblivious.

INT. WAREHOUSE - MORNING

As Walter walks into the warehouse, men step out of the way and give him leering looks. Walter walks into –

INT. WAREHOUSE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

– the locker room. A hush suddenly falls over the room.

Walter looks around. No one will meet his eyes. He opens his locker and a piece of paper slides out.

It is a Xerox of the police notification information of Walter printed from the Internet.

Walter stares at the paper. Suddenly something slams next to his head. A piece of metal clangs to the floor. Walter turns around.

Pedro stares at him, surrounded by a number of men.

Vicki stands in front of her locker holding the flyer. She looks scared. She glances at the men then walks over to Walter.

VICKI
(quiet)
Come on, let's get out of here.

Walter doesn't move.

PEDRO
Don't tell me you feel sorry for
this sick fuck.

VICKI
Mind your own business, Pedro!

Vicki looks defiantly at the men.

Bob hurries in, followed by a worker.

BOB
What the hell is going on here?!

He's handed a flyer. He looks it over and turns red. He looks at Walter then the men.

BOB
Who did this?

Mary-Kay stands quietly in the back of the room, a look of satisfaction on her face. Vicki looks at her. Mary-Kay turns and sees Vicki's glare. She quickly looks away.

No one answers. Bob looks at the men for a long moment then at Walter.

BOB
Any man who can't deal with it can
see me in my office. I'll pay you
for a week, and you can clear out.

Bob crumples the paper in his hand.

BOB

We've got a hell of a lot of orders today. Get to work.

Bob turns and walks away.

The men are stunned. Three angrily follow after Bob. As does Mary-Kay.

Walter walks off without saying anything, his expression blank.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Walter works at his station. He pauses, staring at the cutting blade whirling before him. He looks up around him.

After a long moment, he turns the machine off and walks away.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Vicki looks up from where she is working and notices Walter's place is empty. She looks around.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Vicki enters. Mary-Kay sits at her desk, typing.

VICKI

Have you seen Walter?

MARY-KAY

(big fake smile)

Lovers' quarrel?

Vicki picks up Mary-Kay's mug and pours coffee on her lap.

Mary-Kay shrieks and stands up.

Vicki tears through Mary-Kay's drawers throwing contents to the floor.

MARY-KAY

What the hell are you doing?

Bob walks in.

BOB

What the hell is going on?

Vicki pulls out a handful of the notification fliers.

MARY-KAY

People have the right to know.

VICKI

If she's here tomorrow, I'll fucking
kill her.

Vicki throws the papers at Bob and storms out.

Bob looks at Mary-Kay.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Vicki quickly crosses the parking lot to her Jeep, putting
her coat on as she goes.

INT. BUS - DAY

Walter rides the bus, watching the landscape go by, his
expression stony.

EXT. WALTER'S APT. - DAY

Vicki pulls her Jeep into the parking lot and screeches to a
stop.

She races up the stairs and knocks on Walter's door. No
answer. She knocks again. No answer.

VICKI

Shit.

She disappears back down the stairs.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - DAY

The door opens. Vicki enters and turns to the superintendent standing in the doorway.

VICKI

Thanks again. I promised I'd take care of his plants.

The super shrugs and heads back down the stairs. Vicki closes the door and turns around.

The place is a mess, the blinds drawn. She turns on the lights. There is no sign of Walter.

She sees the journal scattered on the floor and leafs through the pieces. The image of the girl with red marker is stuck inside.

VICKI

Shit.

She picks up a couple pieces of paper and scans them, then she puts the pieces together. Walter's words are scrawled across the paper. Her hands start to shake.

INT. BUS - DAY

The bus pulls to a stop. Walter gets off.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Walter walks down park path. A jogger runs by, but otherwise it is quiet.

INT. WALTER'S APT. - DAY

Vicki frantically gathers pieces of the journal and stuffs them in a plastic bag. Her face is flushed.

She stands up and stuffs the bag in the garbage then pauses, staring at the garbage can. She opens the can, grabs the bag, quickly looks around the apartment. There is the sound of the school bell outside. She rushes to the window and raises the blinds. Children pour out of the school. She quickly leaves.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Walter sits on a park bench in the same little field where he had encountered the girl before. He is alone. He sits still.

He looks up at the trees.

INT. VICKI'S CAR - DAY

Vicki drives, the bag on the passenger seat. She comes to a stop light and looks in the rear view mirror.

A cop car pulls up behind her.

Vicki reaches over for the bag and stuffs it under the seat.

The light turns green. Vicki drives slowly. The cop changes lanes and passes her. She lets out her breath.

EXT. STREETS MONTAGE - SAME TIME

Vicki slowly drives by a series of parks, schools, malls – searching.

Children abound, playing, running free, getting off of school buses, running to meet their parents. There is no sign of Walter.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The girl walks into the clearing, wearing her binoculars around her neck. She stops when she sees Walter sitting on the bench.

Walter continues staring at the trees. She walks over to him.

GIRL

See anything interesting?

WALTER

Not yet.

The girl sits on the bench and pulls a small book from her

backpack. She starts writing in it.

Walter watches her.

WALTER

What are you writing in that book?

GIRL

It's my bird book.

She shows it to him.

GIRL

I've identified sixty-seven species
of birds this year alone.

The girl writes in her book. Walter watches.

WALTER

Where are your friends?

She continues writing ignoring his question.

WALTER

Don't you have friends?

GIRL

I have friends.

WALTER

A pretty girl like you should have a
lot of friends.

GIRL

I'm not pretty.

WALTER

Well... not in the common way.

She looks at Walter.

GIRL

What does that mean?

WALTER

It means uncommon beauty is commonly overlooked. Most people only notice birds with the brightest colors.

The girl sits silently.

WALTER
What's your name?

She picks up her binoculars and peers through them.

WALTER
Linda... Susan... Jennifer...
Jackie..

She continues looking, but she smiles.

WALTER
You tell me your name, I'll tell you mine.

GIRL
(pause)
Robin.

Walter laughs.

ROBIN
Yeah, like the bird.

WALTER
(pause)
Can I ask how old you are?

ROBIN
I'm twelve.

WALTER
No you're not.

ROBIN
I will be in three months.
(pause)
I can't wait. I hate being eleven.
It has to be the stupidest age in

the world.

She looks at Walter.

ROBIN
What's your name?

Walter hesitates then shrugs.

WALTER
Walter.

ROBIN
Do you have many friends?

WALTER
No.

ROBIN
How come?

WALTER
A long time ago, I was sent far away.
When they let me come back, all my
friends were gone.

ROBIN
It sounds like you were banished.

WALTER
Banished... yeah.

ROBIN
Birds are my friends. That sounds
egotistical, but they are. Birds
know I watch them, but they don't
mind because they like being
watched... if they know you won't
hurt them.

WALTER
Robin?

ROBIN
Yes?

WALTER
Would you like to sit on my lap?

Robin looks at him.

ROBIN
What?

WALTER
Would you like to sit on my lap?

ROBIN
(pause)
No thank you.

WALTER
Are you sure?

ROBIN
I'm sure. Thank you all the same.

WALTER
That's okay... doesn't matter.

ROBIN
(pause)
Do you want me to sit on your lap?

Walter looks at her.

WALTER
Yes. I would enjoy that.

Robin shivers.

WALTER
Are you cold?

She shakes her head. Walter slides closer and rubs her arms with his hands.

WALTER
You look cold.

Robin is silent.

WALTER

I know a place in the park where only very small birds go. There are no people or dogs or ugly crows and pigeons. It's quiet except for the song of these tiny sparrowlike birds. Would you like me to take you there?

ROBIN

(pause)

They sound like finches.

WALTER

They could be finches. I don't know. We should go before it gets dark.

He stands up.

WALTER

Ready?

Robin doesn't move.

ROBIN

My daddy lets me sit on his lap.

WALTER

Does he?

ROBIN

Yes.

WALTER

Do you like it when he asks you?

She looks at him.

ROBIN

No.

Her answer has a strange effect on Walter, as if for a moment he has lost his balance. Carefully, he sits down and stares at his hands.

WALTER
Why not?

She is quiet.

WALTER
Are you two alone when he asks you?

Still silent.

WALTER
Does he touch you?

Robin looks through her binoculars.

WALTER
Does he say strange things?

She scans the trees.

WALTER
Does he move his legs in a funny way?

Robin drops her head and quietly sobs. Walter looks at her but makes no effort to comfort her.

WALTER
Have you told your mother?

She shakes her head.

WALTER
Is there anyone at home you can talk to?

She is quiet.

WALTER
Is there a teacher you like at school?

She nods.

WALTER

What's her name?

ROBIN

Ms. Kramer.

WALTER

Tell Ms. Kramer what your daddy does.

ROBIN

I can't.

WALTER

Yes you can, Robin.

Robin is silent.

WALTER

You said you couldn't make the sound
of a solitary vireo. But you did.
Beautifully. I heard you.

ROBIN

What will happen if I do?

WALTER

Someone will talk to your daddy.
And then he'll stop doing those
things... the things you don't like.

Tears come to Robin's eyes again.

ROBIN

But will he... ?

WALTER

Your daddy will always love you.

ROBIN

How do you know?

WALTER

I know because... it's just something
I know.

ROBIN

I don't want to hurt my daddy.

WALTER

Robin, listen to me.

She looks at him. Walter struggles to find the words.

WALTER

At first he'll be upset... very upset.
It's because he'll realize he's been
a bad daddy. Then he'll try... He'll
try very hard to be a good daddy...
People will say stupid, ignorant
things about your daddy. That will
be hard for you... But one thing I
know for sure, he'll always love
you... always.

There is a long moment of silence.

ROBIN

Walter?

WALTER

Yes?

ROBIN

Do you still want me to sit on your
lap?

Walter stares at her.

ROBIN

I will.

Walter slides away from her.

WALTER

No.

ROBIN

I don't mind.

WALTER

You should go home.

ROBIN
Can't I stay a little longer?

WALTER
It's getting dark. Go home.

ROBIN
Will I see you again?

Walter is silent.

WALTER
Go home, Robin.

Robin gets up, goes over to Walter, and hugs him. Walter starts to put his arms around her but refrains.

ROBIN
Bye.

She runs off. Walter looks out, numb.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter approaches his building. The white Volvo sits parked across the street in front of the school. Walter walks a couple of more steps when the door to the Volvo opens. Walter freezes.

Candy gets out of the car. As he turns, Walter no longer sees Candy but himself – many years younger.

Walter watches, fear and emotion coursing through his face.

Young Walter leans back in and pulls the front seat forward, and a young girl emerges.

Flash to the angel-faced boy getting out of the car. Candy pats him on the head.

Walter sees young Walter pat the girl on the head. She runs off down the street.

Walter races towards Candy.

Candy tucks his shirt in, puts the seat back, and is about to get in the car when Walter calls out –

WALTER

Hey!

Candy whirls around. Walter smashes him in the face. Candy reels backwards hitting the car. Walter attacks Candy full force. As he punches flashes of young Walter appear, then Candy, then young Walter again.

He pounds and pounds on Candy then finally pulls away.

Candy sputters on the ground.

Walter, breathing hard, stares at Candy. He looks at the blood on his hands, which shake uncontrollably. He slowly stands up and starts to back away.

Candy rolls over and groans as he tries to raise himself.

Walter turns, tucks his head down, and quickly walks away.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter stands in the living room. He looks down at the floor where the journal was and sees that nothing is there. He goes to his windows and lowers the blinds.

EXT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Through the window we see Vicki sitting on her couch, biting her nail, staring off into space. The phone sits next to her.

INT. WALTER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Walter stands in the shower. He turns the water on and lets it run over him. Slowly, he begins to sob.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter stands at the bureau, cleaned up and dressed in fresh clothes. He looks up and stares at himself in the mirror.

The sound of TRAFFIC fades in.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Walter walks down a city street with boarded up store fronts.

The sidewalks are wet from a steady drizzle. Cars pass by on the wet pavement.

As Walter walks, we intercut with a SERIES OF FLASHBACKS:

A) EXT. SCHOOL - Walter looks at the blood on his hands then at Candy moaning on the ground.

B) EXT. PARK - Robin stands in the middle of the field, binoculars held to her eyes, scanning the trees.

C) EXTREME CLOSE-UP: Robin lowers the binoculars and stares us straight in the eye.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Walter stands at an intersection. The lights play across his face.

FLASHBACK

D) EXT. COP CAR - NIGHT - Walter's face slams against a cop car. His hands are cuffed behind him, and he is roughly frisked. He tries to look back over his shoulder but his face is held down.

E) EXT. PARK - Robin dances in circles in the fields, arms stretched out as if she is ready to fly.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A car races by, and Walter walks along a busy street fast.

The rain falls harder now.

FLASHBACK

F) EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - Walter gets place in the back of the cop car. The cops get in the front seat. Walter looks out

the window at his house as the car pulls away.

Standing on the front steps, his wife turns away, carrying his daughter inside. A cop closes the door behind them.

G) EXT. SCHOOL - Walter pounds and pounds on Candy.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Walter crosses an old brick bridge that spans a river.

FLASHBACK

H) EXT. PARK - Robin twirls and twirls, then slowly dissolves into the girl with the red ball and white nightgown. The girl spins and spins, her dress fluttering in the wind. Slowly the girl fades away so the field is empty, except for a number of small birds fluttering around the ground.

EXT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter stands outside Vicki's door. After a moment he knocks.

The door opens to show Vicki. She stares at Walter.

EXT./INT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Through the window we see Vicki sit down on the couch, and Walter sit on the coffee table, facing her. He starts to talk and takes her hand. She pulls it away. He continues to talk and takes her hand again, not letting her pull away.

Trucks pass by over the wet pavement, rattling the windows.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The school is quiet, the playground empty. Swings sway listlessly in the breeze.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The old Chevy pulls into the parking lot.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Walter brings his duffel bag into his living room and sets it down next to a clothes hamper. Boxes are scattered about the space. There's a KNOCK on the door.

WALTER
It's open.

The door opens and Lucas enters.

Walter pauses.

LUCAS
Hi ya, Walter.

Walter automatically sits down in the chair.

WALTER
What can I do for you, Sergeant Lucas?

Lucas walks over to the window.

LUCAS
You don't know?

WALTER
Know what?

LUCAS
I'll be asking the questions.
(pause)
Last night, you hear anything unusual?
Screams? Shouts?

WALTER
No.

LUCAS
A man was badly beaten across the street. You know anything about that?

WALTER
I was asleep.

LUCAS
(pause)

I didn't say what time the assault occurred.

WALTER

You said last night. I went to bed pretty early.

LUCAS

The assault took place at approximately seven thirty.

WALTER

I went to bed around seven.

Lucas gives him a look.

WALTER

I wasn't feeling well.

LUCAS

I could take you downtown.

WALTER

You could. It'd be a waste of your time, though.

Walter starts folding his clothes and placing them in the duffle bag.

LUCAS

There was a boy there.

Walter is silent. Lucas watches him closely.

LUCAS

He I.D.'d the assailant. The description matches you pretty well.

WALTER

I suppose if you're looking for a male between the ages of thirty and fifty, medium height, medium weight, medium build. Probably not too many men fit that bill.

LUCAS

Just give me a straight answer,
Walter, cause the irony goes right
over my head.

Lucas walks around. Walter folds a shirt.

LUCAS

That's a nasty scratch on your neck.

WALTER

I have a passionate girlfriend.

LUCAS

What's with the boxes?

WALTER

You're a cop. Figure it out.

LUCAS

I'd say you're moving.

WALTER

It's a free country, isn't it?

Lucas throws him a look.

WALTER

Just kidding. I'm moving in with my
girlfriend.

Lucas raises his brows then takes out a piece of gum.

LUCAS

The passionate one?

WALTER

Yes.

LUCAS

Then I'd say you're a lucky fellow.

WALTER

I count my blessings.

LUCAS

Well, I guess I'll be seeing you.

Lucas pops the gum in his mouth and heads towards the door.

Walter pauses in his folding.

WALTER

Think you'll catch this guy?

Lucas turns.

LUCAS

Oh, yeah. We'll catch him.
Unfortunately, the victim can't talk.
In addition to his other injuries,
his jaw is broken.

Walter is silent.

LUCAS

However, we ran an I.D. on the victim.
Turns out he's wanted in Pennsylvania.
He raped a boy there.

Lucas watches Walter who impassively unrolls and rolls the same pair of socks.

LUCAS

You sure you don't know nothing about this?

WALTER

'Fraid not.

Lucas looks at Walter for a moment.

LUCAS

Stay out of trouble, Walter. Cause I'll be watching you.

He exits.

Walter realizes he unrolled the socks. He tosses them in the duffel bag.

INT. VICKI'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Vicki drives. Walter stares out the passenger window. The sun is low on the horizon. Walter wears a pressed button-down shirt. He is clean-shaven and his hair neatly combed. His hand fidgets in his lap.

VICKI
You okay?

WALTER
Yeah.

VICKI
Fucking liar.

Vicki reaches for his hand, then something catches her eye.

VICKI
Hey, look.

Walter follows her gaze.

VICKI
Starlings.

On the horizon, a flock of starlings whirl and turn as if one huge body, a dancing cloud against the sky.

WALTER
I heard they were filthy birds.

VICKI
Not when they fly.

Vicki looks at him and smiles. There is a long beat as they drive.

I/E. VICKI'S CAR, RESERVOIR - DAY

Vicki sits in her car smoking. She stubs out her cigarette.

The ashtray is full. She looks out the window.

Vicki's POV: Walter and a woman stand in the distance near the water. The woman looks a few years younger than Walter.

There is space between them. Walter faces her, but she looks out at the water. After a long moment, he reaches to touch her arm.

The woman pulls away and yells something at him. Walter's head drops.

Vicki lights another cigarette. She flips on the radio to country music, blocking out all sound. She looks back out the window.

The woman yells angrily then falls quiet – staring at Walter. After a long moment, she turns and walks back up the hill to her car where Carlos waits, leaning against the car.

Annette gets in the car, slamming the door. Carlos pauses, looking at Walter, then gets in the car and turns on the engine to leave.

Walter stays standing near the water.

WALTER (V.O.)

I saw my sister.

INT. ROSEN'S OFFICE

Walter sits in his usual seat across from Rosen.

WALTER

It was hard.

Rosen is silent.

WALTER

She's still really hurt... and angry.
I don't know... if she will ever...
forgive me. I understand that. I do.
I just hope... I just want her to...

ROSEN

Accept you?

Walter nods.

ROSEN

It's going to take time, Walter.

WALTER

(to himself)

Time.

ROSEN

How do you feel about that?

WALTER

I feel... okay.

Walter looks at Rosen who nods. There is a moment of silence between them.

THE END