

DON'T WORRY DARLING

By

The Van Dyke Brothers

FADE IN

SCISSORS cut through a piece of newspaper--

A 1950s ADVERTISEMENT showing a cartoonish, 1950s housewife in a housedress.

SCISSORS CUTTING around the advertisement. Carefully.

THE HOUSEWIFE bent over the oven. Taking a pie out. Grinning.

HER CARTOON HUSBAND standing crudely behind her. Grinning bigger.

THE AD'S HEADLINE scrawled big and bold across the bottom of the ad--

Successful marriages start in the kitchen!

THE AD is cut free from the newspaper.

A MAN'S HANDS handling it with painstaking care.

THE AD is placed onto a worktable alongside a dozen other 1950s ADVERTISEMENTS. Each more sexist and vile than the last. Women slaving away for their husbands. Suggestive. Cooking. Cleaning.

THE HEADLINES just as sickening as the pictures--

"Slip down her chimney this Christmas with a Hoover!"

"How to make her do what you want!"

"So easy even a woman can do it!"

All of them sick and twisted and ridiculous.

But to the man collecting them, whose face we never see--

IT'S LIKE A DEPRAVED FANTASY.

Off his hands, running his fingers over the ads, over the women depicted in them, we--

JUMP TO BLACK.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAWN 1954

A PAPERBOY rides his Schwinn bicycle down the street delivering today's paper. We're in the heart of the burgeoning, 1950s suburbs. It's lovely here.

He picks each folded newspaper from his shoulder bag and slings them into every driveway with ease and enthusiasm. He's greeted by all the early risers. Everybody knows him.

He comes to the end of the block and finishes his route with the house on the corner--a beautiful "Cape Cod" with a perfect lawn and white-picket fence. A spit-shine clean, lido green 1954 Buick Skylark convertible in the driveway. The kid moves on as we stay with the house...there's a story behind this door.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

EVELYN PETERSON makes love to her husband CLIFFORD at a fever pitch. Both 30. Ken and Barbie before there was Ken and Barbie. Him behind her on the bed. He's getting close. She looks back at him.

EVELYN

I want on top of you.

It excites him even more. They switch. Her on top now. In control as she intended. He can't hold out anymore. He climaxes. Inside. Both of them sweating and panting and out of breath.

CLIFFORD

Fuck me.

That was intense. She smiles.

EVELYN

I thought I just did.

He smiles back. They kiss. Time to start the day. She starts off the bed, when he grabs her by the hand.

CLIFFORD

Wait, what about you?

He's thoughtful like that. She smiles.

EVELYN

I need time to get ready for your big day. Don't you want me to look perfect?

CLIFFORD
You always look perfect.

She climbs out of bed.

EVELYN
And you need to jump in the shower.

She heads for the bathroom.

CLIFFORD
(calling after her)
Last chance!

She winks at him from the doorway.

EVELYN
A cold shower.

And then she's gone. We stay with Clifford, who puts his hands behind his head. Staring at the ceiling. In no hurry to get the day started.

CLIFFORD
It is a big day. Could mean great things for our future.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Evelyn sits on the toilet, secretly doing something...down there. We can't see what. Until we see the bottle of LYSOL on the vanity next to her. "Brand Disinfectant for Complete Feminine Hygiene" scrawled on the label. We PUSH IN on it, closer and closer until we can read the fine print. "May Prevent Pregnancy" written at the bottom. She finishes applying it, screws the cap back onto the bottle and rises from the toilet.

A NOISE from next door makes her turn to the window.

HER POV: Of the house next door. Through the window, we see Evelyn's neighbor BETSY serving breakfast to her husband JOE and two YOUNG BOYS. One of the boys reaches for a cereal box and spills the milk. Joe scolds him. Betsy to the rescue in a flash, the peacemaker, wiping the milk off the table and floor. She kisses the boy on the head.

Evelyn watching with a look of...shame? Guilt? Trepidation? As she continues to stare--

Clifford KNOCKS on the door, startling Evelyn.

CLIFFORD (O.S.)
Will you be much longer, darling?

Shit. She quickly fetches the bottle of Lysol off the vanity--

EVELYN
Just a sec!

--and hides it under the sink. She quickly composes herself, then she opens the door for Clifford with a smile.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Shower's all yours.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Clifford sits at the kitchen table in his pressed white shirt and black tie. Perusing the newspaper.

Evelyn, in a fancy dress and wearing an apron, stands at the stove cooking Clifford's breakfast.

EVELYN
I had the strangest dream.

Clifford barely looking up from the paper.

CLIFFORD
Hmm? That right?

She piles his plate high with bacon and eggs sunny side up.

EVELYN
I was back in nursing school...only
I wasn't a nurse. I was...operating
on somebody...

She brings him his breakfast.

CLIFFORD
(still reading)
Oh?

Evelyn stops to think.

EVELYN
It was my dad. But he was still
healthy.

She's lost in thought as Clifford lowers the paper and casts a glare at his breakfast.

CLIFFORD

Darling?

She snaps out of it, looks at him.

EVELYN

What is it?

He half smiles.

CLIFFORD

I don't like runny eggs.

Brain fart. She stares at the eggs. Puzzled.

EVELYN

Right of course you don't.

CLIFFORD

Can't stand them actually.

Be a prick about it.

EVELYN

Sorry about that.

Clifford waves his cup in front of her.

CLIFFORD

(teasing)

You need some coffee?

A flash of anger in her eyes. She takes the plate and dumps it in the sink.

EVELYN

(biting her lip)

I don't know what I was thinking.

He gets up from the table and approaches her.

CLIFFORD

Well, apparently you're still in dreamland.

EVELYN

(passive aggressive)

Go sit and I'll whip up some scrambled.

He wraps his arms around her waist.

CLIFFORD
Honey, please. It's quite all
right.

She opens the carton and fumbles for new eggs.

EVELYN
They'll be done in a jiffy.

CLIFFORD
Hey...

He gently moves the carton away and twirls her around to face
him.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Why are you getting so upset?

EVELYN
I'm not.

He tilts his head. Smiling.

CLIFFORD
You can't lie to me. I always know
if you're lying.

Okay maybe she is upset. On his big day too. She deflates a
little.

EVELYN
I'm sorry. I know how important
today is for you.

He smiles.

CLIFFORD
For us.

He kisses her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
My little dreamer.

She smiles. Why does he have to be so damn charming?! And we
are--

EXT./INT. BUICK SKYLARK - DAY

--with Clifford and Evelyn, cruising the neighborhood with
the top down. Chuck Berry on the radio.

Clifford, in his element behind the wheel, waves to the locals as he passes--the MAN tuning his Chevy...the KIDS playing in the sprinklers...the WOMAN hosing her lawn...they all know him.

MAYOR (V.O.)

Less than seven years ago, the founders of this beautiful community dreamt of a new way of life...

And we are--

EXT. GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY - DAY

--where Clifford stands alongside the MAYOR and half a dozen other CITY OFFICIALS in front of a large crowd for the start of a new construction project. The Mayor continues at the mic.

MAYOR

...a simple way of life. A place built on American family values, where husbands could go to work knowing that their wives and children were living in a safe neighborhood. Away from the cities and the crime.

Evelyn watching from the crowd. She makes eye contact with Clifford, who winks at her.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Today...thanks in large part to the men standing beside me, including investors like IBM's own Mr. Clifford Peterson...that dream has not only come true...but continues to expand here today as we celebrate the start of construction on 150 new family homes!

The crowd erupts in applause. As does Evelyn. Smiling proudly at her husband.

EXT. BACKYARD BBQ - DAY

A rowdy celebration BBQ at Betsy and Joe's. The whole neighborhood's here. Betsy and her GIRLFRIENDS. Joe and his GUY FRIENDS. KIDS swimming in the pool. Everyone laughing and drinking and listening to music.

Clifford and Evelyn come in through the back gate...and are instantly greeted with a wave of cheers. Everyone jumping for a chance to shake Clifford's hand.

Joe approaches Clifford with a beer in each hand--

JOE

There he is, man of the hour!

--and bear hugs him right off his feet, nearly knocking Evelyn off hers.

BETSY

(approaching)

For pete's sake, Joe, would you watch what you're doing?!

(to Evelyn)

Twelve o' clock and he's already double-fisting.

JOE

Hey, I plan ahead.

He smacks Betsy on the butt. Evelyn laughs. She holds out a heaping platter to Betsy.

EVELYN

Ambrosia salad. I don't know if it's any good but...

CLIFFORD

Don't listen to her, it's delicious.

BETSY

I'm sure it's to die for. C'mon, honey...

(pulling her away)

Joe, be a good host and get Clifford a drink.

Evelyn looks back to Clifford as she's dragged away. He blows her a kiss. She smiles at him. Goddamned he's a tall glass of water.

LATER

Clifford and Joe and the other MEN shoot the shit around the BBQ, cooking burgers and drinking beers.

Betsy, carrying a fresh pitcher of margaritas, comes out of the house to find her two boys, TOMMY and JACK, roughhousing in the pool.

TOMMY
Mom, Jack keeps holding me under!

JACK
I do not!

BETSY
I don't care who's holding who
under, knock it off or you're both
out of the pool!

She continues on to Evelyn, sitting in the shade.

BETSY (CONT'D)
(re: the boys)
I swear to god I'm gonna bottle the
both of 'em and sell 'em as birth
control.

Evelyn laughs, holds out her margarita glass for a refill.

EVELYN
They're getting so big.

Betsy fills her glass.

BETSY
You're telling me. Goes by so fast.
They won't even let me kiss them on
the cheek anymore, they think I
have cooties or something.

Evelyn continues watching the kids. Betsy notices.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Speaking of which...
(time to pry)
I heard you and Clifford are
trying.

Evelyn forces a smile.

EVELYN
Mm-hmm.

Betsy frowns.

BETSY
You don't seem too excited about
it.

She glances at Clifford across the yard, making all the guys
laugh. He's certainly the alpha of the group.

EVELYN

No, I am, it's just...a lot to think about I guess.

A lot to think about??

BETSY

Honey, if I was married to your husband, I'd be spitting them out like a damn pez dispenser.

Evelyn shakes her head. She's used to Betsy's humor after the woman's had a few.

EVELYN

I don't know.

Betsy smiles.

BESTY

Trust me...I wasn't sure at first either.

(looks over at her kids)

Now I wouldn't trade 'em for the world.

Evelyn smiles. Watches the kids some more. Something gnawing at her on the inside.

CLIFFORD

Excuse me everyone! Could I have your attention for a second?

Everyone quiets down. All eyes on Clifford. Including Evelyn's.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I just wanted to say a few quick words.

He has his audience now.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

First of all, I want to thank Joe and Betsy for another successful soiree. You make it look easy. You make it all look easy. Marriage. Kids.

He gestures to the cocktail in his hand.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Margaritas.

Everyone laughs.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
And lets not forget Betsy's garden.
A work of art, really.

Betsy gushes proudly.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
But this is what it's all about,
isn't it? Family. Friends.
Community. That's why today is such
an important day for me. But I
shouldn't get all the attention.

He looks at Evelyn.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Because the truth is none of this
would be possible without my
beautiful wife.

Evelyn wasn't prepared for this. She's a sudden mixed bag of emotions here. Betsy reads her modesty and giddily throws her arm around her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Fellas, I don't know about you, but
I'm nothing without the woman on my
arm. And this one? She's all heart.
I remember on our first date she
told me she had dreams of saving
the world. She'd take care of every
last one of you if she could. But
I'm a handful as it is, right
Honey?

The guests laugh again.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
And I know without a doubt, one day
soon...she'll be an amazing mother
too.

Evelyn wants to recoil in her chair. Clifford smiles at her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Stand up sweetheart. Go ahead.

Betsy practically pushes her up out of her chair. Evelyn stands up briefly, blushing. Smiles for the crowd. Meets eyes with Clifford. He mouths "I love you." She smiles, mouths it right back at him.

The guests erupt into drunken whistles and clapping and cheering. Let the party resume.

INT. EVELYN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Evelyn stands at an ironing board ironing Clifford's shirt for tomorrow. Clifford sitting on the edge of the bed on the telephone, sipping a scotch, his routine nightcap.

CLIFFORD (INTO PHONE)
Okay...no, no, sounds great, I'll be at the lab first thing in the morning and we can pound out the details. Okay. See you then. Bye.

He hangs up and downs the rest of his scotch in one smooth gulp. Evelyn notices. The man sure can drink. He sets his glass down and breezes into the bathroom.

EVELYN
Busy day tomorrow?

CLIFFORD (O.S.)
Oh you bet.

IN THE BATHROOM

Clifford opens up the medicine cabinet and pulls out his razor and a can of shaving cream.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
We're developing a series of games that explore the interaction between humans and computers.

The can of shaving cream is empty. He tosses it in the trash and starts to look under the sink for a new one. The BOTTLE OF LYSOL standing right there in the back of the cabinet.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I mean can you imagine a computer that can simulate a real world board game?

He keeps searching. His hand brushes up against the Lysol and knocks it over.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Someday you won't have to! If we can simulate a board game, imagine what else we could simulate from the real world.

IN THE BEDROOM

Evelyn continuing to iron.

EVELYN

Sounds fascinating. Actually, it gets me thinking. Remember the dream I was telling you about?

CLIFFORD (O.S.)

Huh? What dream?

EVELYN

The one where I was back in nursing school...

CLIFFORD (O.S.)

(chuckles)

Oh right and operating on your father. Sure. What about it?

How to broach the idea?

EVELYN

Maybe it meant something. Maybe it means I should think about--

CLIFFORD

What's this?

She turns to him. He's standing in the doorway of the bathroom holding the Lysol bottle.

EVELYN

(busted)

Nothing. Soap.

She starts past him, when he grabs her by the arm. Hard.

CLIFFORD

I've seen the ads for this in the paper.

EVELYN

Let me go.

CLIFFORD

Women use it as a contraceptive.

EVELYN

I said let me go.

And when he doesn't, Evelyn jerks it away herself. Glaring back at him.

CLIFFORD

You're trying not to get pregnant.

She's cornered here. An icy beat.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I thought we were trying to start a family.

Yeah. About that.

EVELYN

Maybe I'm not ready.

Clifford's fury on the rise.

CLIFFORD

Since when?

EVELYN

Since...now...I don't know...

(finally venting)

All I do around here is cook and clean and tag along with you to your events and your barbecues...it's enough to drive someone insane. I don't know, maybe...

(dare she go further?)

Maybe I want to go to medical school after all.

There. She said it. He tries to keep his cool.

CLIFFORD

We agreed when we got married that you were gonna stay home and take care of the kids and I would work. That was the deal. We went over this a million times.

She's on thin ice here. Bite her lip? Or--

EVELYN

You went over it. You hardly ever listen to a word I say.

His face tightens.

CLIFFORD

What'd you say?

She already regrets it.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU SAY?

He takes the bottle of Lysol and throws it at her. It misses her by an inch and shatters the mirror behind her. Evelyn screams, ducking. He comes at her--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
After all I do for you!

--and grabs her by the shoulder. She whips around towards him, fury in her eyes...and only now do they both realize she's pointing a shard of the mirror at his stomach. Her hand bleeding where she's holding it. Frightened of her own response, she drops the shard.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Jesus, your hand...

He frantically takes her hand--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry.

--and starts to run it under the faucet. Evelyn starting to cry. He fumbles for some gauze out of the medicine cabinet and quickly wraps her hand in it.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Come here...
(pulls her into him)
I didn't mean it.

ON EVELYN, crying.

EVELYN
You never do.

He hugs her tighter.

CLIFFORD
I love you. I'm sorry.

He always is. And off Evelyn, trapped...confused...ashamed--

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Evelyn, in a housedress, makes eggs at the stove. Scrambled. On autopilot. Clifford comes into the room behind her with the paper.

CLIFFORD
Smells great.

Like nothing ever happened. He sits at the table.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
You look beautiful.

She half smiles. Briefly. Brings him his eggs and dumps them on his plate.

EVELYN
Thank you.

Then, as she starts back for the stove--

CLIFFORD
You still mad at me?

She stops. Turns to him. There's that look from him. The soft eyes. Vulnerable posture. Like he's the victim.

EVELYN
I'm not mad. Let's just forget it and move on.

And she lets it work every time.

CLIFFORD
It kills me if I've done anything to hurt you. You know that right?

She's not so sure she knows him at all.

EVELYN
We both got out of hand. It's okay.

CLIFFORD
Look, I get it. You're bored. You spend all your time cooped up in this house taking care of me and you're going out of your mind. Hell, I'd want a reprieve too.

Wait...what?

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
So I've got an idea.

He unfolds the newspaper and shows her an ADVERTISEMENT for a BABY CRIB showing TWO SMILING PARENTS hovering over a TODDLER in the crib. It reads:

"For a Very Special Baby...and a lucky mother too!"

She looks at him. What the hell is she supposed to say to that?

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I thought you could start work on the spare bedroom. Make it that dream nursery we always talked about.

It's like a slap in the face.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I figure it'll keep you busy...give you something to do until you get pregnant. And look it even comes with the matching dresser.

Evelyn screaming on the inside. She holds it in. Too tired to go at it again. She forces a smile.

EVELYN

It's beautiful.

He smiles back.

CLIFFORD

I thought you'd like it.

He kisses her on the cheek and leaves her with the paper. She looks down at the ad and the two smiling parents pictured-- the perfect snapshot of the life to come.

INT./EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Evelyn sees Clifford off to work as she has every day for the past year. He kisses her good-bye--

CLIFFORD

Love you.

--and heads for the Skylark. Evelyn watches him get into the car and drive away, then she retreats inside and closes the door.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn doing her daily chores--

--sweeping with a well-worn, yellow-handled broom.

--dusting the furniture.

--doing the laundry.

Each task more boring and repetitious and tedious than the last.

IN THE KITCHEN

Evelyn cleans up after Clifford. Taking his plate from the table, she knocks over the carton of orange juice, spilling it everywhere.

EVELYN

Perfect.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Evelyn stocking up on more orange juice.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Evelyn carries the orange juice home. Always keeping face while in public. She stops near a BUS STOP. Waiting to cross the street.

A GENTLEMAN in a black suit and hat sidles up next to her and waits. She glances over at him and catches him staring at her. Uncomfortable, she angles away from him--

And that's when she sees it--

A GREEN 1954 BUICK SKYLAR parked outside a MOTEL.

She freezes. Is that...*Clifford's car?*

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK

You okay, Miss?

She looks at the man. What business is it of his?

EVELYN

I'm fine.

And she starts across the street towards the Buick. She reaches the car and looks in the window. There's no mistaking. It's Clifford's car. She looks up at the motel itself--a cheap, sleazy--

CLIFFORD ROUNDS THE CORNER OF THE MOTEL.

Evelyn rears back behind a tree. Spying from behind it.

Clifford walks along the rooms of the motel. A childish bounce in his step. He takes a key out of his pocket and enters ROOM 1.

After the door closes, Evelyn bends forward, bracing one hand against the tree. She looks like she's about to cry. Or vomit. Whichever comes first. She takes a breath, finds the strength to straighten up. She looks at the door of the motel-

ROOM 1.

Turn away? No. Not this time. Her eyes fill with resolve...and she starts towards the door. Her eyes locked on it. And the number. She reaches the door. It's cracked open a tad. She stands in front of it for a beat. Listening. She doesn't hear anything. Does she knock? No...why give him the chance? She takes one step closer--

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Bastard.

--and she pushes it open and barges in.

A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT. And we are--

INT. MACHINE

--where Evelyn SNAPS AWAKE with an extended gasp. Like waking from a horrible nightmare. Bathed in dull blue light. Still lost somewhere between the dreamworld and this one.

She takes a moment, only now realizing she's entombed inside what looks like a modern-day MRI SCANNER. Some type of machine. WIRED ELECTRODES fastened to her head. She looks down at her body--dressed in some type of gown, an INTRAVENOUS FEEDING TUBE stuck in her arm that extends into the wall of the machine.

Terror and confusion strike at once.

EVELYN

Hello??? Somebody???!

Silence.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I don't know where I am!

And it's horrifying. She raises her hands, her arms weak and brittle, and tries to wiggle her fingers. She barely succeeds. She gets one hand on the machine's ceiling...and starts to tap on it as hard as her weakened arm will allow.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Somebody help me!!!

Tapping again and again.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Please!!!! I don't know what's
happening!

But there's no one listening. Panic surging, she feels along the electrodes on her head, the wires of each feeding into an ELECTRIC CORD that's plugged into some type of DATA PORT at the head of the machine.

She grips the cord, and with all her strength, yanks it free and unplugs it from the port. In the same instant, the bed portion she's lying on is slowly EJECTED feet-first from the unit with a mechanical whine, reeling her out of the machine into--

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - SAME

--where she finds herself inside an enclosed, dimly-lit space that looks like an MRI room. No windows. To one side of her stands a second MRI-LIKE MACHINE--this one empty. The room beyond it cold and bare. A single staircase ascending upward along one wall to a DOOR.

Baffled, she tries to push herself off the bed with her twig arms. It's like moving bricks. Straining, she scoots herself off the side--

AND SHE CRASHES TO THE FLOOR WITH A THUD.

She reels from the pain, then looks down at her EMACIATED LEGS. They barely work. Too weak to hold up her weight.

What the fuck is happening??? She looks around the room in a panic. And then she sees it--

A bizarre CAMERA of some kind perched in the corner of the room. Looking down on her. She stares at it, perplexed, when a NOISE behind her makes her turn--

JUST AS CLIFFORD, HALF-NAKED, COMES RACING AT HER, COVERS HER MOUTH, AND STICKS HER WITH A SYRINGE.

She grabs onto him, trying to fight, then quickly goes slack in his arms from the shot. Unconscious.

MINUTES LATER

Evelyn forces her eyes open. Eyelids like weights. She tries to lift her head, realizing she's back in the MRI-like machine. Clifford hovering over her, composed, looking down on her. He speaks softly. Gentle.

CLIFFORD
 You followed me to the motel,
 didn't you?
 (smiles)
 You found my exit portal.

Evelyn too drugged to make sense of anything he's saying.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 It's okay. I'll just program a new
 one.

She finds the strength and wit to speak.

EVELYN
 Cliffford...whhhat...issss thiss?

He smiles, brushing the hair from her eyes.

CLIFFORD
 Shhhhhh. This is just a dream,
 sweetheart.

He calmly starts to hook the electrodes back into the data port.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 And it'll all be over in a second.

HER POV: Looking up at him, blurred vision fading. He smiles--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 Don't worry, darling. I'll see you
 real soon.

--as her POV is slowly engulfed in BLACKNESS. SMASH TO--

INT. EVELYN'S ROOM - DAY 1954

Evelyn snaps awake, lying in bed. She looks around the room. Back from OZ. She feels her head--no electrodes. Throws back the covers and inspects her legs. They work just fine. She turns to the window. Climbs from the bed and hurries to it--

A perfectly sunny morning outside. Betsy there tending to her garden.

Evelyn backs away, head spinning, when the sound of a toilet flushing makes her turn to the doorway. A moment later, Clifford comes into the room.

CLIFFORD
Jesus, you're finally up.
(starts towards her)
I've been worried sick.

She lurches back into the corner.

EVELYN
Stay away from me.

CLIFFORD
(reaching for her)
Darling, what is it?

She swats his hand away--

EVELYN
I said stay away!

--and grabs a LETTER OPENER off the night stand.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
I'll cut you, I swear it!

CLIFFORD
Darling, calm down. You had an
accident.

What?

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
They found you lying in the parking
lot of some motel.
(gentle)
You fainted, sweetheart. Bumped
your head but good by the looks of
it.

She feels her head. A bump on her hairline. Nothing making sense.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Did you have a bad dream?

She can't say. Staring at him in terror.

EVELYN
It wasn't a dream...

Or was it?

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I was somewhere else. Some kind of room...and...you were keeping me prisoner.

Clifford can't help but chuckle.

CLIFFORD

Sweetheart...you poor thing, you were having a nightmare is all.

Evelyn looks around the room...starting to come around. Maybe it was a dream. But wait...

EVELYN

I saw you at the motel.

CLIFFORD

What?

Now Clifford's confused.

EVELYN

I watched you go into a room. Room 1.

He looks at her as if she's gone mad.

CLIFFORD

Honey, I've never been to that motel in my life.

Her world spinning.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Come on now...put down the letter opener before you hurt yourself.

He reaches for her, gently laying a hand on her shoulder, when Evelyn suddenly pushes him aside and lunges past him for the doorway.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Evelyn!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY (SECONDS LATER)

Evelyn tears out of the house and runs across the lawn to the street. Clifford comes out the door after her--

CLIFFORD

Evelyn, wait!

--and runs out in pursuit.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Evelyn runs down the street like a crazy woman and rounds a corner to--

THE BUS STOP.

The Gentleman in Black there once again.

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK

Ma'am.

She pauses, warily looks him up and down, then continues briskly past him towards--

THE MOTEL

She runs straight for ROOM 1. Barges through the door into--

INT. ROOM 1 - SAME

--where she finds only an ordinary motel room. A MAID there straightening the bed.

MAID

Can I help you, Miss?

Evelyn stands there, dumbfounded, just as Clifford hurries into the doorway behind her.

CLIFFORD

Evelyn! What in god's name has gotten into you?

To this she has no explanation. Except to say--

EVELYN

I saw your car in the lot and you came into this room!

CLIFFORD

Sweetheart, you're not thinking straight. Why don't we call Dr. Anderson and have him take a look at you.

EVELYN

No...

She rushes out past him.

EXT. MOTEL - SAME

Evelyn hurries out of the room and runs to the FRONT OFFICE with Clifford in pursuit.

INT. FRONT OFFICE - SAME

Evelyn storms in and approaches the MOTEL CLERK, a young man in his 20s.

EVELYN
I want to see your register.

CLERK
I'm sorry?

Clifford comes in after her.

EVELYN
You keep a list of names for people that stay here, right?

CLERK
Of course.

EVELYN
I want to see it.

CLIFFORD
Evelyn, this is ridiculous.

EVELYN
(to the Clerk)
Now, please!

Clifford looks at the man as if to say "go ahead."

CLERK
Suit yourself.

He takes out the register and slides it over to her. She opens it and looks through the names. NO SIGNATURES FOR ROOM 1 going back at least ten days.

CLERK (CONT'D)
We don't get many out-of-towners this time of year.

Evelyn pushes the register back over, dumbfounded.

CLIFFORD
Perhaps you imagined it, darling.

She looks at him. Perhaps she did. A look of utter terror and confusion on her face. Has she lost her mind???

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Evelyn sits on an examining table--a doctor shining a flashlight into her eyes. This is DR. ANDERSON. Clifford there in the room with her.

DR. ANDERSON
No signs of concussion. Ask me...
(turns off the flashlight)
You had yourself a nervous
breakdown, Mrs. Peterson.

Evelyn trying to make sense of it all.

EVELYN
A nervous breakdown?

DR. ANDERSON
It's a temporary psychotic
disorder, sometimes triggered by
anxiety or stress.

Evelyn horrified by the thought. "Psychotic disorder???"

EVELYN
Like a crazy person?

The stigma.

CLIFFORD
That's not what he said, honey.

DR. ANDERSON
Actually, it's more common than you
think. Typically with women around
your age. Have you by any chance
been under a lot of stress lately?

Evelyn thinks, lowers an ashamed gaze to her bandaged hand.
After a beat--

EVELYN
We had an argument last night.
Clifford and I.

Anderson sees the bandage, throws an all-knowing,
disapproving glance at Clifford.

ANDERSON
That could've done it.

Clifford sighs. Equally ashamed.

DR. ANDERSON

The good news is it's temporary.
Nothing a little rest can't cure.
In the meantime, I'm going to
recommend a prescription for
Equanil.

As he starts to write--

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

It's a mild tranquilizer to set you
at ease. I call it the "happy
pill."

(to Evelyn)

Now, they might make you a little
sleepy at first but that's a good
thing. You need rest.

But Evelyn isn't quite listening, still trying to grasp it
all. Anderson notices.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Why don't I give you folks a
minute.

And he steps out of the room. Just Clifford and Evelyn now.

EVELYN

It seemed so real. You at the
motel...that machine...

CLIFFORD

Evelyn...

He sits down, puts his arm around her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

What the hell would I be doing at a
motel?

She looks up at him. He looks like a stranger to her now.

EVELYN

I wonder.

Clifford frowns.

CLIFFORD

You think I was with another woman?

She buries her face in her hands.

EVELYN
I don't know what to think.

He rubs her shoulders.

CLIFFORD
You need rest.

She looks him in the eyes.

EVELYN
Is there?

CLIFFORD
What?

EVELYN
Another woman.

CLIFFORD
Jesus, Evelyn, no!
(genuine)
We may have our problems...what
marriage doesn't? But I would never
betray you like that.

And by the look in his eyes...the tone in his voice...he truly means that.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
There is no woman. And no motel. At
least none that I've ever been to.

Which only scares her more.

INT. EVELYN'S ROOM - DAY

Clifford tucks Evelyn into bed, propping the pillows up behind her.

EVELYN
I'm not a child, I can do that
myself.

Clifford stops.

CLIFFORD
Alright, sorry. I'm just trying to
help.

But he's clearly just making matters worse.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Can I get you anything?

Evelyn shakes her head no. Clifford sighs.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Alright...

Best leave it alone.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'll come back and check on you in
a bit.

He kisses her on the forehead and heads out of the room,
turning back from the doorway.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
You want the door closed or open?

EVELYN
Closed, please.

CLIFFORD
Okay.
(closing the door)
I'll see you real soon.

Evelyn reacts. The same thing Clifford said in her...*dream*???
Paranoia creeping in on her again.

She stares at the door. Suddenly feeling unsafe. She slowly
climbs from the bed and walks over to the door. Then, after a
few seconds of mulling, she turns the lock as quietly as
possible. Listens to make sure all is silent, then moves back
to the bed. She gets under the covers and lies on her side.
Her eyes trained on the DOORKNOB.

EVELYN'S POV: MOVING TOWARDS THE DOOR, closer and closer
until we're all the way up to the DOORKNOB. IT STARTS TO
TURN. Once, softly, then twice. Now faster. Then--KNOCKING.

CLIFFORD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Evelyn?

MORE KNOCKING.

CLIFFORD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Evelyn, why is the door locked?

CLOSE ON EVELYN, as her eyes pop open. She's confused. Wasn't
she just awake and staring at the door?

CLIFFORD (O.S.)(CONT'D)
(louder)
Open it please.

Evelyn turns her head and looks out the window. IT'S DARK.
What?? The doorknob twists back and forth.

CLIFFORD (O.S.)(CONT'D)
You're scaring me, sweetheart.

She slowly gets up and goes to the door. Unlocks it. Clifford opens it right away.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Why would you lock the door?

He's holding a plate with a sandwich on it and a glass of milk. She's at a loss, looking at the sandwich like it's an insect.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I made you dinner.

She turns back to the window once more.

EVELYN
What time is it?

CLIFFORD
Just after 7:30. Come on, let's get you back to bed.

He guides her to the bed, helps her under the covers. He puts the plate in her lap and sets the milk on her night stand.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
You need to eat something. I made you a sandwich.
(proud of himself)
It's not like one of your fancy meals of course. But I did put mayonnaise on each slice of bread.

He smiles. Waiting for her to try it.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
There's nothing worse than a dry sandwich in my opinion.

She watches him carefully. Not some monster in a basement. Just her husband with a sandwich. She eases up a little.

EVELYN
Thank you.

She starts to take a bite.

CLIFFORD
Oh...I almost forgot.

He takes her MEDICATION out of his pocket.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
It's best if you take this with
food.

She eyes the bottle with caution.

EVELYN
Maybe I don't want to go back to
sleep.

CLIFFORD
But it's for your own good.

EVELYN
Says who?

He frowns.

CLIFFORD
Says me, Evelyn. Jesus christ, do
you have any idea what it was like
seeing you like that today? It
scared the hell out of me. I don't
want you to go through that again.

She stares at him.

EVELYN
You were so angry with me last
night.

He grabs her hand and kisses it.

CLIFFORD
I told you I was sorry. It was a
long day and I shouldn't have taken
it out on you. And if you want, you
can blame me for having to swallow
these stupid pills.

He empties a pill into his hand and holds it out to her. She considers. Maybe rest is what she needs. She accepts the pill and puts it in her mouth. He hands her the milk and she downs it.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
That a girl. You'll be back to
yourself in no time.

He leans forward and kisses her cheek.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'll leave the sandwich here. You
should eat.

EVELYN
Maybe later.

Good enough for him.

CLIFFORD
Okay.

He goes to leave, turns back from the doorway and snickers.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Locking the door...

How silly of her. And he leaves. Once again she's alone.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn back to doing house chores.

- Sweeping with her yellow-handled broom.
- Dusting the furniture.
- Doing the laundry.

She goes to the window and peers next door.

Outside, Betsy tends to her beautiful garden. This time however, she stops and looks up at Evelyn. HER SCALP IS MISSING. HER BRAIN EXPOSED. She waves hello and here comes that big smile. That hideous grin stretched impossibly wide today beneath her pinkish brain. And off Evelyn, stricken in terror, SMASH TO--

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

--where Evelyn awakens from her nightmare. Tense. Disoriented. She looks outside. It's light out. She looks at Clifford's side of the bed. Empty. She turns to the hallway.

EVELYN

Clifford?

No response. The house dead quiet. Puzzled, she climbs from the bed and wanders out of the room.

THE LIVING ROOM

Evelyn creeps into the living room. No sign of Clifford. *Where the hell is he?* She turns to a DOOR to the basement that's cracked ajar.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Evelyn comes down into the darkened basement.

EVELYN

Clifford?

She pulls the light switch. Nothing down here but a work bench and an old, standing TOOL SHED. She starts back upstairs, when the sound of CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER makes her turn to the basement window. She moves closer and peers out.

HER POV OUT WINDOW: Betsy's kids Jack and Tommy playing catch with a baseball on their lawn. Jack misses a catch, runs to get the ball and stumbles on his own shoelace.

Evelyn backs away from the window. Nothing out of the ordinary there. She turns--

AND COMES FACE TO FACE WITH CLIFFORD.

She yelps.

CLIFFORD

Whoa, hey...it's just me.

She takes a breath.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

What are you doing down here?
(she's not sure)
Come on, let's get you back upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Evelyn back in bed, watching Clifford tie his tie in front of the mirror.

CLIFFORD
So how do you feel?

She looks hungover.

EVELYN
Better I guess.

CLIFFORD
That's good. I suppose the happy
pills are working, huh?

She glances out the window, sees Jack and Tommy playing catch...just as Jack misses a catch, runs to get the ball and stumbles on his own shoelace.

EXACTLY AS HE DID MOMENTS EARLIER. As if on a loop.

Evelyn frowns. Deja Vu?

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Honey?

She snaps out of it, turns to Clifford at the mirror.

EVELYN
(masking suspicion)
Yes, they seem to be working quite
well.

He smiles.

CLIFFORD
I figured they would.

She watches him closely. Decides to try something--

EVELYN
What's an exit portal?

He freezes, briefly, then resumes messing with his tie.

CLIFFORD
A what?

Evelyn studying him for any kind of reaction.

EVELYN
An exit portal.

He shrugs.

CLIFFORD
Never heard of it.

Is he lying?

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
(comes over to her)
Honey, fix my tie, would you?

Suspicious, she starts to straighten his tie.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Why do you ask?

She looks over his shoulder and spots HIS CAR KEYS ON THE DRESSER behind him.

EVELYN
Oh...nevermind.

Now he's studying her.

CLIFFORD
You'll be okay while I'm at work,
won't you?

She puts on a smile.

EVELYN
I can manage.

CLIFFORD
I know you can.

She finishes fixing his tie.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
You're a doll.

She eyes the keys again.

EVELYN
Oh Clifford, will you bring me a
glass of milk? So I can take my
pill?

CLIFFORD
I sure will.

He happily leaves the room to fetch the milk.

The second he's gone, she springs from the bed and hurries across the room to the dresser. She grabs the keys and goes to the window. We hear the refrigerator open and close. He's coming back.

She opens the window gently and throws the keys in the bushes. She closes the window and rushes back into the bed. She yanks the covers up just as he walks in.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
One happy pill coming up.

She tries to relax. Continuing the act. He hands her a pill and a glass of milk.

EVELYN
Thank you, dear.

She puts the pill in her mouth and drinks the milk.

CLIFFORD
You sure you're okay?

EVELYN
Yes. I'm sure.

He watches her a beat.

CLIFFORD
Okay then. I guess that's it. Just need my keys.

He turns around--she quickly removes the pill from her mouth and hides it in the sheets. He spins back around, feeling in his pockets.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Hmm. Thought I left them on the dresser.

EVELYN
Did you check your coat?

He snaps his fingers.

CLIFFORD
That must be where they are.

He walks out of the room again. She grabs the pill from under the sheets--it drops and rolls across the floor. She starts to lean over and reach for it--his footsteps trailing towards the room. She sits up fast.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Nope. Not there either. You didn't see them anywhere did you?

EVELYN
I haven't seen much from here.

CLIFFORD
Right, of course.

He checks his watch.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'm going to be late. Looks like
I'm taking the bus.

He walks over to her. She tenses. He goes to the side of the bed, stepping right on the pill.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Have a great day.

He leans over and kisses her.

EVELYN
Nothing but rest.

He winks at her and goes to the door. She glances at the floor--the pill is still there. Still whole.

CLIFFORD
I miss you already.

She blows him a kiss.

EVELYN
Me too.

He turns and leaves.

She waits a beat...listening...hears him go out the front door. She gets out of bed and moves to the window--watching him walk down the driveway and onto the sidewalk.

She quickly picks up the pill and shoves it under the mattress. She runs to the closet and starts getting dressed as fast as she can.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn leaves the house. She glances over her shoulder at Betsy's beautiful green hedges. Nobody there. The last thing she wants is to be seen. By anybody. Time to move.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Evelyn walks towards the bus stop, FOLLOWING CLIFFORD. He's some fifty yards ahead of her. Good. Can't afford to be caught here.

She trails him slowly, noting the casual gait in his step. He doesn't seem to be in any hurry.

He stops to light a cigarette. Turns towards her.

She quickly ducks behind a CAR.

Waiting, he lights his smoke and continues on. She cautiously moves out from behind the car and keeps following him. It's a struggle. She's nervous. Anxious. Terrified. But she keeps moving.

Clifford rounds the corner. She jogs to catch up. Can't lose him. She slows at the intersection and turns right. Now she's moving towards--

THE BUS STOP

She stops and hides behind a bush. Prying branches apart to get a better look.

Clifford stands at the bus stop and waits. And he's not alone. The Gentleman in Black stands next to him. They exchange some words. Both of them smiling. The bus pulls up to the curb. Her view is obstructed. She can't see them.

She steps back onto the sidewalk and waits as people get on and off the bus. It finally pulls away--CLIFFORD IS STILL THERE. Standing by himself. He turns his head in her direction. She dives back behind the bush and watches him through the twisted branches.

Clifford checks his watch. Looks over his shoulder like he's making sure he's not being followed. He turns and keeps walking down the street.

Evelyn scared to pursue, but she forces herself to keep going. She follows him all the way to another intersection. Clifford disappears around the corner. She hurries to catch up.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Now she's following him in an unfamiliar part of the neighborhood. Out of her element and her comfort zone. He stops. She freezes. He turns and walks up the driveway of a STRANGE HOUSE. There's a "FOR SALE" SIGN on the front lawn.

She moves out into the street for a better view, hiding behind a car. Clifford walks up to the front door...turns to make sure no one's watching...and he goes inside, shutting the door behind him.

Evelyn utterly confused. What is this place? This house? And what the hell is her husband doing in it?

She intends to find out. Grimly determined, she creeps towards the house. Stops to look at the sign, which reads ALT-LIFE REALTY. She keeps going. Sneaks across the lawn to the front windows. She peers inside.

HER POV: The house nearly empty. Nothing inside but a few random pieces of furniture. A wooden chair. An old, standing coat rack. And no sign of Clifford.

She pulls away from the window. Continues to the front door. She stops. Suddenly terrified of what might wait her on the other side of it. Her husband with another woman? Or herself, entombed in some type of machine?

She slowly reaches for the doorknob, when from behind her--

DOG WALKER (O.S.)
Everything okay, Miss?

She spins around--

A MAN walking his DOG stands on the sidewalk. He gestures to the real estate sign.

DOG WALKER (CONT'D)
I believe showings are by
appointment only.

Evelyn stares at him, suspicious. Was that a warning?

EVELYN
I'm fine.

She hurries away from the house, going back the way she came. The Dog Walker watching curiously as she goes.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn returns to her house. Heads straight to the bushes in front of the bedroom window. She drops to her knees, sifting through the dirt. Seconds later she has Clifford's keys in her hands.

And then she's in the car. Starting it up. Revving the engine.

INT. BUICK - SAME

She checks the rearview. Gets it in reverse and backs into the street. Then she puts it in drive...and she gases it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The green Buick driving through town.

INT. BUICK - SAME

Evelyn driving. Analyzing the world around her. Searching. For proof? A way out? She scans the buildings on either side of the road. The houses. The businesses. She looks in the rearview--

A POLICE CRUISER behind her now. Is he following her? She turns and merges onto the highway. Checks her mirror. The cruiser follows.

She lays on the gas. The cruiser still behind her.

EVELYN

What do you want?

As she stares in the rearview, ANOTHER CAR SWERVES INTO HER LANE, CUTTING HER OFF.

She sees it just in time, jerks the wheel and veers wildly onto the shoulder of the road. We catch a quick glimpse of the driver--a MAN--glaring back at her as he zooms away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

The Buick skids to a halt in the dirt, throwing a giant plume of dust in the air. The police cruiser pulls up behind her.

INT. BUICK - SAME

Evelyn hunched over the wheel, rattled.

Before she can put the car in drive, THE POLICEMAN is at her window. A mountain of a man. Tall, wide shoulders. Long jaw. Sunglasses. This is OFFICER RHODES.

RHODES

You okay, Miss?

She forces herself to look at him and nod. He leans in close.

RHODES (CONT'D)
Mrs. Peterson?

Oh no.

OFFICER RHODES
Mrs. Peterson, it's Officer Rhodes.
I know your husband Clifford.

She freezes. How to get out of this one?

RHODES
Could you roll down the window?

Shit. She reaches over and follows his instructions.

EVELYN
I'm fine. Really. That man...he
just...cut me off.

Rhodes frowns. Glances towards the highway.

RHODES
What man?

Evelyn frowns back. Is he blind?

EVELYN
Well he nearly ran right into me.

Rhodes confused.

RHODES
That's not what I saw, Mrs.
Peterson. Ask me, you almost got
yourself killed.

Now Evelyn's confused. At a loss for words.

RHODES (CONT'D)
Mrs. Peterson, I think you should
leave the vehicle here so I can
drive you home.

EVELYN
(sharp)
No! I mean...thank you. It's not
necessary. I'm not hurt. Just a
little upset is all. Probably
shouldn't be driving.

RHODES
Where you off to? Does Clifford
know where you are?

She's flustered now.

EVELYN

I was going to the city to bring him the car. He couldn't find his keys so--

RHODES

Well, then you got on the highway going in the wrong direction. City's back the other way.

Busted.

EVELYN

Oh that's right, isn't it? All these roads look the same, don't they?

He leans in even closer. In her space now.

RHODES

I think you're right. You shouldn't be driving. Certainly not into the city.

She nods in agreement. No choice but to comply.

EVELYN

Absolutely. I'll just turn around and go straight home.

Rhodes considers. Looks her over.

RHODES

Straight home. No detours.

EVELYN

You have my word.

He finally backs away from the car. She can breathe.

RHODES

Clifford would be worried sick if he knew you were out here on the side of the road.

EVELYN

You're right, he would. I don't know what I was thinking.

She fumbles for the keys. For the ignition. For the gear shift. All while he watches.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Thank you for your concern.

He tips his hat to her. She slowly drives onto the highway and starts towards the off ramp. She looks in the rearview-- Rhodes gets back in his cruiser and turns around, once again following her.

Evelyn comes to a stop as she exits the highway and notices CLIFFORD'S BRIEFCASE on the floor under the passenger seat. She glances up at Rhodes, still tailing her. Then back down at the briefcase. IT'S OPEN.

She starts driving back into town. Rhodes following closely. She reaches down and grabs the handle of the briefcase and dozens of PAPERS COME SPILLING OUT.

She stops at a traffic light. Rhodes still in the rearview. She picks up Clifford's work papers and dumps them onto the passenger seat. But they're not work papers. What we're looking at is--

SCORES OF MAGAZINE ADS. [As seen in our opening.]

Dozens and dozens of them. The most sexist ones you can imagine. Their edges jagged from being torn out of the magazines. And they're hideous. Evelyn rifles through them with horror and revulsion and disgust...

- A woman on her knees serving her husband breakfast in bed.

- A woman letting her husband spray her down with a hose...and liking it.

- A man in a chair with his wife splayed across his lap as he's about to spank her.

The worst you can imagine. Evelyn looks at the various captions under the pictures...

Successful marriages start in the kitchen!

BLOW IN HER FACE AND SHE'LL FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE.

TRAIN YOUR WIFE

Show her it's a Man's World!

DON'T WORRY DARLING, YOU DIDN'T BURN THE BEER.

On and on it goes. And it gets worse. Clifford has drawn pictures of penises going into the women's mouths...into their behinds. Hands wrapped around their necks.

Evelyn stares in horror. Suspicions confirmed. Her husband is a fucking monster.

A CAR HORN BLARES.

Evelyn jolts up. The light is green. She drives forward. Tears in her eyes. She checks the rearview mirror. Rhodes still behind her.

She comes to another intersection. She watches Rhodes in the police cruiser. At last, he turns down another street.

Good. Her eyes narrow. She wipes the tears away and jerks the wheel in a one-eighty. Cars honking. She pays them no attention. She knows where she's going now...what she has to do...

EXT. FOR SALE HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn speeds up and parks the car in front of the house with the ALT-LIFE REALTY SIGN staked in the grass. She gets out and storms towards the front door.

She braces herself. No idea what to expect. She reaches for the knob and turns it. It's locked.

Undeterred, she goes to the windows. Tries to peer inside. Can't see anything. Fuck it. She tries a window. It opens. She hoists herself up and crawls inside.

A BLINDING FLASH--

INT. MACHINE

Evelyn jolts awake, once again entombed inside the MRI-like machine. A sudden gasp for air as before, the world around her slowly coming into focus. Her eyes darting wildly. As suspected...she's back.

She takes a moment, then feels the electrodes on her head, arms like jell-o. She manages to grip the main cord...and she pulls it loose from the data port. As before, she's ejected from the machine with that same mechanical whine.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Straining, she pushes up on her elbows.

The same room she was in before...the stairs out of the room...the door at the top of the stairs...the same empty machine standing next to her. She takes it all in, locked in a state of terrified awe.

Then she remembers--the eye in the sky--the camera looking down on her. It's enough to make her move in a hurry.

She plucks the IV from her arm and pushes from the bed with all her strength.

CRASH. Fuck. Her legs. This isn't going to be easy.

She does a quick survey of the room, then starts for the stairs. Dragging herself forward across the floor with her weakened arms. Every movement a task. She reaches the first step, gets her elbows up on it and works her way to the second step. Only twelve more to go.

She continues to climb. One strenuous step at a time. Sweat pouring into her eyes. Bare knees scraping on the stairs.

She reaches the eighth step...the tenth...only two more to go. Veins popping, she forges ahead and reaches the top of the stairs. Panting in exertion. She pivots to the door, only now realizing there's no doorknob. Just a small TOUCHSCREEN beside it. Alien to her. She touches it. It comes to life--

ENTER 4 DIGIT CODE.

Evelyn thinks. 4 digits.

EVELYN
His birthday...

She types in four digits.

INVALID PASSWORD.

Damn. She thinks again.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Our address...

She punches it in.

With a sudden HISS, the DOOR SLIDES OPEN.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

She crawls out into a narrow, darkened hallway. Terrified. What is this??

She chooses a direction and starts to drag herself down the hallway. Soft light up ahead. She finally rounds the corner...and she stops.

She's on the floor of a cramped and cluttered, futuristic dwelling that looks like a man cave for a computer nerd. Dark, dingy and overgrown with technology. A stark contrast to the brightly colored world Evelyn's used to. Packed to the hilt with gadgets and machines and dissected computer parts-- lit only by the soft, luminescent glow of a HOLOGRAPHIC COMPUTER SCREEN that floats miraculously over a work station.

To Evelyn, it may as well be a spaceship.

She turns--the windows covered in thick, black curtains. She crawls towards one of them, navigating through this technological pig sty, and climbs an old, stained sofa to reach the curtain. She pulls it back. Mouth agape from what she sees--

A RUNDOWN, SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD. And in the distance, the NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE. Like we've never seen it. Skyscrapers converted into towering VERTICAL FARMS. The sky around them littered with FLYING MACHINES of every shape and size.

Evelyn stares, jaw dropped, when a MECHANICAL ROBOT that looks like a Transformer hovers down onto the street in front of her, empties the overfilled garbage cans, and continues onward over the street.

Evelyn overwhelmed. *Where is she? When is she?*

She turns, notices a crumpled up PAPER amongst a slew of empty BEER CANS. She pushes the cans aside and looks at the paper--

"CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE" printed on top.

She looks at the names below. "CLIFFORD WAYNE PETERSON" and "EVELYN JANE GRACE."

What???

And then she sees it--

A FRAMED PICTURE OF CLIFFORD IN A SHIRT AND TIE on a table beside the sofa. "Frye's Electronics Employee of the Month" engraved into the frame. What. The. Fuck. She looks at the date on the frame--

"MAY 2050."

Impossible.

Then, she sees an ELECTRONIC MAGAZINE at her feet. "TIME" emblazoned across the top of a digitized cover featuring an AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN IN FRONT OF AN AMERICAN FLAG and a headline that reads "FOUR MORE YEARS MADAAM PRESIDENT!"

EVELYN

I have to be dreaming.

She drops the picture of Clifford. This isn't happening. Her eyes settle on the holographic computer screen across the room. Must investigate further. She starts towards it. Dragging her legs. Knees burning. She gets to the DESK CHAIR ON WHEELS. Pulls herself up, straining, then finally collapses into the chair in front of the floating screen. It looks like a HOMESCREEN of some type. ICONS shaped like folders swimming within the projection, each with a label: "Stocks." "Games." "Alt-life." She recognizes that last one.

INSERT FLASHBACK: Of the REALTOR SIGN on the lawn. "Alt-Life Realty" printed on the sign.

BACK ON EVELYN, as she reaches for the holographic screen-- and she touches the Alt-Life icon. A list of SUB FILES pops up...

"Welcome to Alt-Life." "Privacy Agreement." "Instruction Manual." And on and on it goes. Evelyn touches the WELCOME file. A VIDEO IMAGE fills the projection.

ON VIDEO: A MAN in his shirtsleeves and a loosened tie sits in a 1950s living room reading a newspaper. We may recognize him as DR. ANDERSON. He turns to the camera. An overbearing smile.

ANDERSON

Hello. And welcome to Alt-Life. A society of men, by men, and for men. If you're watching this, it means your application for membership has been accepted. Congratulations.

Anderson stands and starts through the room, continuing to talk to the camera.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

It also means you're likely the same as I was years ago. Tired of living in a world controlled by women. Sick of them out-earning you in the workplace. Yearning for a return to simpler times, where a woman's place stretched no further than the kitchen.

Anderson enters the kitchen, where a beautiful *HOUSEWIFE* right out of a 1950s commercial slaves away at the counter in a low-cut housedress.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Well fret no more. With your acceptance into our brotherhood comes a four year subscription to our online simulated reality, shared by our members in cyberspace and designed to resemble the suburban life of 1950s America.

The Housewife comes up with a robotic smile, a steaming cup of coffee for Anderson, and in her best, Marilyn Monroe voice-

HOUSEWIFE

Here, honey. I made it just the way you like it.

Anderson takes the coffee--

ANDERSON

Thank you, sugar.

--and he pats her on the behind. Turns to the camera with a shit-eating grin.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Here, when at home, I don't have to lift a finger.

The video cuts to Anderson and his 1950s guy pals hanging around the TV watching a baseball game. Among the men, we recognize Joe, the Mayor, Officer Rhodes, the Dog Walker, the Motel Clerk--all of them hooting and hollering to the game while their *WIVES* serve them beer and munchies.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

You can kick back, relax, and enjoy the nostalgia of World Series past.

On the TV, Willie Mays makes "The Catch," snaring a long drive near the outfield wall in Game 1 of the '54 Series.

The video cuts to Anderson sitting on his porch with a beer while his wife stands bent over pruning roses across the lawn.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

(to the camera)

So how does it work, you ask. The answer is simple.

(MORE)

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 We've constructed the digital
 layout...
 (referring to the
 neighborhood around him)
 ...and you fill it with the woman
 of your choosing. Perhaps it's an
 ex-wife who belittled you. Made you
 feel small. Inferior.

The video image cuts to:

- A 21st CENTURY WIFE scolding her 21st CENTURY HUSBAND (whom we may recognize as the Gentleman in Black).

ANDERSON (V.O.)
 All you have to do is fake her
 death with the instructions
 provided, then subdue her...

- 21st Century Husband smothering 21st Century Wife to sleep with chloroform.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
 ...swap out her memory for a new
 one...

- 21st Century Husband injecting a syringe into 21st Century Wife's temple.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
 ...then plug her into the neurolink
 unit provided in your acceptance
 package.

- 21st Century Husband plugging the unconscious 21st Century Wife into the MRI-like neurolink unit (the same as Evelyn awoke in).

ANDERSON (V.O.)
 And voila!!! In no time at all...

- 21st Century Wife, now in a 1950s housedress, taking a pie out of a 1950s oven.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
 She'll be back in the kitchen where
 she belongs.

The video cuts back to Anderson in his pajamas, standing in a 1950s bedroom.

ANDERSON

*So don't waste another second
taking orders from a woman. Plug
her in today.*

*He turns to Housewife, already in bed waiting for him in
lingerie, then he turns back to the camera with a smile.*

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Then plug in yourself.

He winks.

AND THE VIDEO ENDS.

Evelyn stares at the holographic screen, horrified.

But that's only the beginning. Her eyes set on another folder, this one labeled "EVELYN." She's afraid to look. She touches the folder. A file of "PICS" pops up. She opens it--

PICTURES OF HER AND CLIFFORD.

But none she remembers ever taking. All from a different time. A different fucking century. The two of them in front of dazzling, futuristic skyscrapers. In strange vehicles. Strange clothes. Then, pictures of Evelyn dressed as a doctor. In front of a hospital. With patients. A picture of her receiving an AWARD for "EXCELLENCE IN NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH." It all rings clear--

EVELYN

My dream...

But this isn't a dream. Is it? She continues to swipe through the pictures, and it only gets worse--

SAVED ARTICLES ABOUT EVELYN'S DEATH...

*- Neurosurgeon Evelyn Peterson Presumably Drowns to Death
After Mysterious Car Accident; Body Still Not Found.*

*- Police Still Searching for Remains of Prominent
Neurosurgeon Evelyn Peterson.*

- Search Called off for Evelyn Peterson; Thousands Mourn.

Evelyn's face a twisted mask of anguish. She stares at the screen, as if she's about to break, when from somewhere outside--

The SOUND OF A CAR ENGINE.

She uses her arms to wheel the chair closer to the window. Peels back the curtain and looks out.

A CAR APPROACHING. What kind she couldn't say. She's never seen anything like it in her life. The driver, on the other hand, she knows all too well.

CLIFFORD.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Oh no.

She quickly spins in the chair. Where to hide? She searches the room. Lost. Looks down at her legs. Useless. Then it hits her--

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I have to get back.

At least in the simulation she can walk. She quickly pushes away from the window and uses her arms to wheel the chair back to the desk. Then she drops down onto the floor and starts to crawl back the way she came.

POV OUT WINDOW: Clifford's car pulling into the driveway and parking in front of the house.

EVELYN, dragging herself out of the living room into the hallway. Moving as fast her atrophied legs will allow.

POV OUT WINDOW: Clifford getting out of the car. Headed for the house now. But this is not the dashing tall glass of water Evelyn knows. This Clifford looks like a run of the mill salesman, wearing glasses and a shirt and tie with coffee stains on it. And now he's headed towards the house.

EVELYN, straining, sweating. Eyes locked on--

THE BASEMENT DOOR. Still so far away.

She puts her head down. Must crawl faster. Elbows pulling her forward.

POV OUT WINDOW: Clifford walking towards the house. Coming up the steps to the porch.

EVELYN, five feet from the basement door. Three feet...

She reaches it. Reaches for the TOUCHSCREEN LOCK.

THE SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR OPENING ELSEWHERE IN THE HOUSE.

EVELYN, dials in the code. The door slides open.

The SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR CLOSING.

EVELYN, drags herself through the doorway into--

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

--and starts to crawl down the stairs. The basement door shutting behind her. She gets two steps down, then TUMBLES.

She falls down the flight of stairs. Lands at the bottom with a sickening thump. She grimaces in agony. Looks up.

THE NEUROLINK UNIT.

She moves. Crawling towards it.

CLIFFORD, making his way down the hallway above towards the basement door.

EVELYN, climbing up onto the neurolink bed. Sweating. Grunting. She gets all the way up. Searches an overhead PANEL of buttons. She presses them at random. Nothing at first, then the machine whines to life...and starts to reel her into its mouth.

IN THE NEUROLINK UNIT

Evelyn retrieves the electrodes cord. Just as--

CLIFFORD comes through the doorway into the basement and starts down the stairs.

EVELYN, hears Clifford coming, turns with the cord to the data port...and she plugs herself back in.

INT. EVELYN'S ROOM - NIGHT 1954

Evelyn snaps awake. Back in la la land. She sits up. Relieved. She made it. And not a second later--

A KNOCK AT THE BEDROOM DOOR.

CLIFFORD (O.S.)
Honey, I'm home.

Clifford comes through the door.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Oh good, you're up.

She puts on a smile.

EVELYN

Mm-hmm.

He comes around to her side of the bed--

CLIFFORD

How are you feeling?

--and takes a seat beside her. Evelyn masking nerves.

EVELYN

Like new, actually.

But Clifford doesn't look like he's buying it.

CLIFFORD

You wouldn't be telling me a story,
would you?

She shakes her head.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Because you know I can always tell
when you're lying, right?

She nods. A fake smile.

He studies her long and hard. Evelyn's facade starting to crumble. Then--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Well, that's great news. Because I
brought you something.

He reaches down--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Your favorite!

--and comes up with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clifford and Evelyn sit on the couch watching a BASEBALL GAME. She can't eat. The chicken bucket sits in Clifford's lap.

We hear the crack of a bat on the TV. Clifford erupts into applause, his mouth full of chicken. Evelyn doesn't pay attention. She's elsewhere. Thinking.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BETSY'S HOUSE - DAY

Betsy stands in her garden, pruning roses as always. We PUSH IN on her, and only now do we see Evelyn--watching Betsy from her bedroom window.

INT. BETSY'S HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn sits at the kitchen table while Betsy prepares some fresh cold lemonade. Her house oddly furnished just like Evelyn's. Shaped the same even.

EVELYN

You're sure I'm not bothering you?

Betsy goes to the table and serves them both.

BETSY

Of course not. It's nice to have company once in a while.

EVELYN

Thank you.

BETSY

With Joe at work and the kids at school, most of the talking I do these days is with the plants.

Evelyn glancing around. Properly paranoid these days is what she is.

BETSY (CONT'D)

They like that, you know?

Evelyn tenses.

EVELYN

Who?

OUR MALE CAPTORS PERHAPS?

BETSY

The plants!

She chuckles and sips her lemonade. Evelyn watches her closely. The housewife facade on full display.

BETSY (CONT'D)

So what did you want to talk to me about? You seem so serious.

Does she? She's trying to act just like Betsy--IN CASE SOMEONE IS WATCHING.

EVELYN
Where's Joe?

BETSY
At work of course.

Evelyn decides to slowly...drop...the act. She leans forward.

EVELYN
(lowering her voice)
Betsy...something very wrong is
going on here.

Betsy overly concerned.

BETSY
Like what?

She's obviously in the dark. Where to begin?

EVELYN
Why do you act...the way you do?

Betsy taken aback.

BETSY
I'm sorry?

EVELYN
What I mean is...why do any of us?
Why are we so obedient? And
compliant? Why do we serve our
husbands' every little need
whenever they need it? And always
with a smile?

Betsy stares at her like she's talking in a foreign dialect.

BETSY
Honey, I'm not following.

Evelyn reaches across the table and puts her hand over Betsy's.

EVELYN
Betsy, I've watched you for a year
now playing housewife. Taking care
of your husband and your kids and
your...fucking garden...
(off Betsy's shocked
expression)
(MORE)

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Don't you ever have needs of your own? Don't you ever wish you could do something for yourself? Don't you have any dreams?

With this, she may have struck a nerve. Betsy doesn't crack, but she seems affected by the notion.

BETSY

I haven't really given it much thought.

Evelyn pushes.

EVELYN

And why is that? Maybe it's because you were too busy doing what's expected of you. "Just the way it is," they'd say. So why question it?

Evelyn leans closer and whispers.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

It's how they keep us trapped here.

Betsy frightened by what she's hearing.

BETSY

Trapped? I'm not trapped, Evelyn.

Evelyn's paranoia on the rise.

EVELYN

That's how it works...so you don't even know you're being held prisoner.

Betsy all flustered and out of sorts now.

BETSY

I don't know what you're carrying on about but Joe will be home soon--

EVELYN

Listen to me. None of this is real. Your house. Your kids. The garden. Your life. It's all a simulation. We're being controlled inside a computer program called Alt-Life.

She's got a tight grip on Betsy's arm.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
It's not 1954 either.

BETSY
Evelyn, let go of my arm, you're scaring me.

EVELYN
The year is 2050. I've seen it. I'm hooked up to this awful machine with wires running everywhere--

BETSY
Evelyn, stop it!

She yanks her arm away and stands up.

EVELYN
Please! You have to listen to me!

BETSY
I won't hear anymore of this.

Evelyn carefully approaches her.

EVELYN
What I need is to get out of here. Come with me.

Betsy almost in tears now.

BETSY
Why would I want to leave? I love my husband. We have a family.

Evelyn sensing Betsy's doubts. Did she get through to her??

EVELYN
Betsy, I can see it in your eyes. You don't believe what you're saying.

Betsy tries to compose herself. Trying to act normal.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
And I'm leaving tonight.

BETSY
How is that possible, Evelyn? You think he'll just let you go?

EVELYN

He won't have a choice...right
around dinner time I'll put
something in his wine to make him
sleep. And then I'm gone.

BETSY

Please, Evelyn, I've heard enough.

EVELYN

But you can find a way out too--

BETSY

Evelyn!

Betsy can't listen to anymore. Or perhaps she just doesn't
want to.

BETSY (CONT'D)

(on the verge of tears)

I'd like you to go now, please.

Evelyn sighs. She's done all she can. She turns and walks out
of the kitchen.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - EVENING

The sun is setting. Almost time for Clifford to get home.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Evelyn reaches under the mattress and takes out FOUR PILLS.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Evelyn has dinner going now. Something in the oven. A bottle
of wine opened on the counter.

She carefully crushes up the pills into a fine powder on a
spoon. She looks around...where to put it?

THE DINING ROOM

She goes to the bar, starts to open the scotch. Hesitates.
Decides against it.

KITCHEN

She sets out two glasses and pours wine into them. Picks up
the spoon. Dump it in his wine? She's too indecisive.

HEADLIGHTS PASS THROUGH THE WINDOWS.

Shit.

She quickly sets out their dinner plates. We hear a car door open and close. He's coming. She serves mashed potatoes and carrots and peas for them both. The front door opens. She dumps the powder into his mashed potatoes and stirs.

CLIFFORD (O.S.)

Hi, honey!

She dumps the spoon in the sink and runs water on it. She turns off the sink just as he enters.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Smells fantastic.

Once again, she's flushed. Smiles brightly.

EVELYN

Dinner's just about ready.

He walks over and kisses her on the cheek.

CLIFFORD

Perfect timing. I could eat a horse.

He hovers in the kitchen.

EVELYN

Why don't you go sit and I'll bring everything out.

The oven starts to smoke.

CLIFFORD

What can I do to help?

Since when has he ever lifted a finger?

EVELYN

Oh nothing.

CLIFFORD

No, really. I should start helping out more.

She sees the oven.

EVELYN

Oh goodness!

She grabs her oven mitts and opens it. Smoke comes billowing out. She takes out a roasting pan with a flaming hot POT ROAST.

CLIFFORD
Just in the nick of time. Looks great.

She sets the hot pan down and turns around--THE PLATES ARE GONE.

She spins towards the dining room--Clifford walks with both plates towards the table. Panic sets in.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Clifford and Evelyn sit at the table. Clifford dives into the pot roast. He closes his eyes.

CLIFFORD
Melts in your mouth.

EVELYN
I'm glad you like it.

She keeps eyeing his mashed potatoes...then hers...then his again--*which is it?*

He swirls his wine around in its glass.

CLIFFORD
I know a red is a perfect pairing for the meat and all but...

He gets up and pours himself a scotch.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Something about a scotch. I suppose it's a guy thing.

He winks at her and sits back down. She has to eat something. She starts on the pot roast. Neither of them have touched the mashed potatoes. She studies him. *Is he onto me?*

EVELYN
How was work?

He shrugs.

CLIFFORD
Work was work.

He follows a bite with a swill of drink.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
How about you? How are we feeling today?

EVELYN
Oh much better now.

He nods.

CLIFFORD
You think the medication is helping?

She's desperate to hide her nerves. Another glance at the potatoes.

EVELYN
Oh you mean the happy pills?

Clifford laughs. He'll drink to that.

CLIFFORD
Right. Those happy little pills!

She pushes her fork through the potatoes. *Which one?*

EVELYN
The truth is I feel so good, I don't think I need them anymore.

CLIFFORD
Really? You sure?

She shrugs.

EVELYN
Don't I look sure?

He wipes his mouth with his napkin.

CLIFFORD
The thing is...I wouldn't want you to backslide.

She has to meet him half way. To try for sincerity.

EVELYN
Come on, Clifford. Those pills aren't for me. I'm your wife. You know me.

He takes another drink.

CLIFFORD

I do know you...I know you better
than you know yourself.

It's a stand off. She's behind in this chess match.

EVELYN

And besides they make me feel all
woozy.

He smiles. Holds her gaze. Is he buying it? She watches him
dig his fork into the potatoes.

CLIFFORD

Well then...I guess you're cured.

She drinks her wine.

EVELYN

I think so.

He pushes his wine to the side. She tries not to react.

CLIFFORD

You haven't stopped taking the
pills already have you?

She looks up at him. Still no bite of the potatoes.

EVELYN

What do you mean?

CLIFFORD

I just don't think it's wise to
stop on your own. Not until you've
consulted with the doctor...and me.
Right?

They stare at each other.

EVELYN

Clifford, why are you toying with
me?

CLIFFORD

I'm toying with you? Is that what
you just asked me?

EVELYN

Well, obviously you're playing some
kind of game and I don't
understand. And frankly I'm not up
to playing along.

CLIFFORD

But I thought you felt better.

Evelyn trembling inside. Drowning in fear.

EVELYN

If this is your idea of making me uncomfortable then fine, you win.

He finishes his meat...and his scotch...and leaves the mound of cooling mashed potatoes untouched.

CLIFFORD

You didn't try the potatoes.

Silence.

EVELYN

I don't have much of an appetite now.

CLIFFORD

Hmm...I see.

EVELYN

Neither have you. You usually clean your whole plate.

CLIFFORD

Usually I do. But tonight's different isn't it, Evelyn?

Tears welling in her eyes. She's breaking.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

In my job I always have to be one step ahead. If I don't stay on top of things, the entire operation could cave in.

He looks at the scotch.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

You know I like to pour my own scotch so that's too obvious.

He takes the wine and tips the glass, looking inside.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

The wine? Possibly. I'm sure your first instinct would be to go for the wine.

(looks at Evelyn)

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

But you're not sure who you can trust now. And that means the wine is no longer the best option.

And finally, we're onto to the food.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

But a heaping pile of your whipped mashed potatoes with extra butter just the way I like it? Well that's a sure bet.

He leans forward.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

So my question to you, darling, is...why haven't you tried the potatoes?

A long beat that stretches on forever.

Evelyn suddenly leaps from her chair and makes a run for the front door. He jumps in front of her and grabs her. She screams for her life.

EVELYN

Let me go!

He's too strong, overpowering her in his arms. She frees one hand and uses those beautifully manicured nails of hers to claw his cheek as hard as she can.

He belts out a scream of his own and lets go. She charges out the front door. He holds his hand to his face, now streaked with four deep and bloody gashes.

CLIFFORD

Goddamnit!!!!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Evelyn tears out of the house, tripping once on the wet grass. She staggers to her feet and keeps running. Clifford stops in the doorway, watching her. She bolts into the middle of the street and takes off, attempting her final escape.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Evelyn rounds the street corner in an all-out sprint. Out of breath. Running towards--

The HOUSE WITH THE ALT-LIFE SIGN.

She's out front now. She tries the door--locked. She bangs on it. She goes to the window. Also locked. She won't let that stop her. She picks up a rock and smashes the window. Then she climbs in.

INT. ALT LIFE HOUSE - SAME

She falls to the floor, her adrenaline surging. She pulls herself up to her feet. Bracing herself against the wall--

It's just a regular house. A big, empty house.

EVELYN

No.

She circles. This can't be. Just then, POLICE LIGHTS FLOOD THE HOUSE.

She hears footsteps coming towards the front door. She spins, searching for something to defend herself with. She finds the STANDING COAT RACK and wields it like a baseball bat just as the door kicks open. OFFICER RHODES in the doorway. He rests one hand on the sidearm in his holster and holds out his other hand.

RHODES

Okay now, Mrs. Peterson...you don't want to hurt anybody.

EVELYN

(angry)
He called the police?

She bursts into a manic laugh. Grips the coat rack tighter.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

How perfect.

She can't stop laughing.

RHODES

Put that down.

Rhodes steps aside so Clifford can enter. A second later, Dr. Anderson follows.

CLIFFORD

Honey?

She keeps laughing. Or is she crying?

EVELYN
You're right, Clifford...I can't
trust anybody.

Dr. Anderson takes a step forward.

DR. ANDERSON
Mrs. Peterson?

She's surrounded now. Surrounded by men of authority. Story
of her life. She holds the coat rack back, ready to strike.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Your husband says you stopped
taking your medication.

EVELYN
Stay back.

Dr. Anderson takes another cautious step. Rhodes and Clifford
slowly flank to either side of her.

DR. ANDERSON
Didn't I instruct you to take your
pills and rest?

EVELYN
I don't have to listen to you.

DR. ANDERSON
Now look what's happened. From what
I can see, you've done just the
opposite. That's not how you get
better.

EVELYN
I said stay back.

She has a crazed look in her eye as she feels Clifford and
Rhodes closing in.

CLIFFORD
Evelyn, come on. What do you think
you're doing?

She shifts her gaze to Clifford.

EVELYN
You're a monster.

CLIFFORD
No. I'm your husband.

She looks at him in disgust--

--just as Rhodes lunges for her. She stumbles backwards. He tackles her to the ground. She screams. Clifford dives on the other side of her and wrestles the coat rack away from her.

She writhes around like a caged animal--Clifford using all his weight to lay on top of her while Rhodes cuffs her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

It's okay. It'll be okay.

Her screams and cries do nothing. Rhodes and Clifford lift her to her feet and drag her out of the house.

EXT. ALT-LIFE HOUSE - SAME

Rhodes and Clifford walk her to the police cruiser. She's given up fighting. Her whole body has gone slack. Parked behind Rhodes is Betsy and Joe. Joe with his arm around her.

Evelyn glares at Betsy. Betsy looks concerned, nothing more.

BETSY

I'm sorry, Evelyn.

JOE

Shh...it's for her own good.

Can't trust a soul. Rhodes puts Evelyn in the back of the cruiser.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Now Evelyn's tied to a gurney with thick black straps, being wheeled down a hallway by two ORDERLIES. She tries to gauge her surroundings. She can hear voices behind her-- Rhodes...Dr. Anderson...and then Clifford. The bastard.

EVELYN

Where are you taking me?

DR. ANDERSON

This will all be over soon.

She's never been more terrified. She tries to move but it's useless.

EVELYN

Why am I tied down?

The gurney turns, and now we're in--

A SMALL BRIGHT ROOM

Evelyn is wheeled in and stopped. Out of the corner of her eye she sees a SMALL MACHINE of some kind with a few buttons. Certainly more familiar than anything she saw in the future.

Is that? Wait...

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Let me out of here!

She screams. The orderlies hold her head still. Everything that happens next is cold and methodical and without emotion. The doctor rubs a gelatinous substance on her temples.

Her screams are stifled when a RUBBER BLOCK is stuffed in her mouth. She's almost to the point of gagging.

Next come the ELECTRODES, pressed against the sides of her temples. The doctor's hands hover over the machine. Evelyn's eyes go wide. She knows what's next. A button is pushed...and ZAP!!! Her brain is hit with an intense current of electricity.

Evelyn's body goes into violent convulsions. Her eyes roll back. Her head bounces rhythmically off the gurney. She's foaming at the mouth. All her extremities continue to twitch for a good twenty seconds while the voltage on the machine runs high...too high.

AND THEN IT'S OVER.

Evelyn's body goes slack.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The green Buick pulls into the driveway.

INT. BUICK - SAME

Clifford puts the car in park. Looks over at Evelyn. We've never seen her like this...plain. No makeup. Her hair loose and frayed at the edges. Her complexion pale. Sick. She's tired.

CLIFFORD

Here we are.

She gazes up at the house. The place they started a life together. Like she's seeing it for the first time.

EVELYN
It's a beautiful home.

He puts his arm around her.

CLIFFORD
It's our home. That's what makes it
beautiful.

He leans in close.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
We have great memories inside that
house...and now it's time to make
new ones. Are you ready?

She holds his hand. Maybe she is.

EVELYN
Let's go inside.

He kisses her hand.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

It's a new day. Clifford and Evelyn in bed together. They both wake up smiling. They kiss. She gets out of bed. Looks out the window. What a wonderful day.

She goes to put her robe on. She's back to Evelyn Peterson. Loving, loyal housewife to her husband Clifford.

EVELYN
I'll go make coffee.

She starts for the door.

CLIFFORD
Oh Evelyn???

She turns to him. He's got wood. She puts her hands on her hips, shaking her head and smiling.

Oh Clifford...

Her duties for the day start right here.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Evelyn pours him coffee while he reads the newspaper. She kisses his cheek.

MINUTES LATER

She's seeing him off at the door. Fixing his tie.

EVELYN

Have a wonderful day.

They kiss. She watches him drive away in his shiny green Buick.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Evelyn puts a record on the record player. "Mr. Sandman."

MONTAGE:

- Evelyn sweeping with her yellow-handled broom.
- Dusting the furniture.
- Doing the laundry.

She puts a clean load in the dryer and starts it up. While she's gathering a dirty load for the washer...she hears a CLANKING SOUND in the dryer. There's something other than clothes in there.

She stops the dryer. Digs through clothes. Removing pants...socks...shirts...and finally finds the source of the noise...she pulls out--

A MOTEL KEY. ROOM 1.

She stares at it for a long beat...confused...then it all comes back to her. She drops to her knees. The paranoia rearing its ugly head again. She closes the key in her fist.

EXT. BETSY'S HOUSE - DAY

Betsy in her garden. Evelyn approaches with a smile. Betsy gives her a warm embrace. She holds her by the shoulders and takes her in.

BETSY

Look at you. You're glowing.

EVELYN
Thanks, Betsy.

BETSY
It's so good to see you. I knew
you'd be back.

Bitch.

EVELYN
It's very sweet of you.

BETSY
So how are you?

EVELYN
Great, actually, but I was
thinking...I don't know. Maybe you
inspired me or something but I'd
like to try my hand at gardening.

BETSY
Really?

EVELYN
Yeah I want to see if I can get
stuff to bloom the way you do.

Betsy stands back, flattered.

BETSY
Well what do you need to get
started?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Evelyn sets the table. Lights candles. Everything needs to be
perfect. HEADLIGHTS FLOOD THE WINDOWS. He's home.

Seconds later--

CLIFFORD (O.S.)
Hi, honey!

FOYER

She greets Clifford just as he enters.

EVELYN
Now there's a handsome man.

He looks over his shoulder.

CLIFFORD

Who me?

He laughs and they kiss.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Wow. It's never smelled better in this house.

Evelyn is peachy and lovely and full of life.

EVELYN

It's just about ready.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Evelyn serves him. She outdid herself tonight. Whole roasted chicken. Green beans. And yes...mashed potatoes.

She tears off the drumsticks and sets his plate down. She sits and they both dive in.

CLIFFORD

Sweetheart, you've developed skills in the kitchen that rival the finest restaurants in New York.

EVELYN

Oh stop.

CLIFFORD

No, I mean it. This is just perfect. You're perfect.

She puts on a smile.

EVELYN

I'll drink to that.

She sips her wine.

CLIFFORD

Listen, I've been thinking...we've been through a lot the last couple of weeks. And I know it hasn't been easy on you. So I've been thinking about how I can make it up to you.

She tilts her pretty little head at him. All ears.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

What if...after we have a
baby...and he's old enough...I
signed you up for tennis lessons?

Evelyn speechless. Good lord he's being serious.

EVELYN

Really?

CLIFFORD

Yeah! Down at the club. Some of the
other guys are signing up their
wives too so why not take advantage
of all the perks?!

Makes perfect sense to Clifford.

EVELYN

So tennis lessons.

CLIFFORD

What do you say? Suddenly it all
became so clear to me. I know what
the problem is here. You have so
much energy, sweetheart. So much to
give. And with no outlet for that
energy you might just go crazy.

He loves his own sense of humor. He bellows out a sickening
laugh. She nods along.

EVELYN

Then you better watch out, Mr.
Peterson.

She jokingly picks up her knife and points it at him.

CLIFFORD

Be gentle.

He's enjoying the banter. He scoops up a big fork full of
mashed potatoes and inspects it jokingly.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Should I be worried?

She shrugs. Flirting.

EVELYN

If the poison doesn't kill you,
then the sheer amount of butter
will.

They both laugh.

CLIFFORD
Oh Evelyn I missed this.

EVELYN
What?

CLIFFORD
Us. This. Laughing. Being best friends. I hope you understand why I did what I did. It was necessary. I was worried I'd lose you. I can't lose you, sweetheart.

She gives him a loving stare.

EVELYN
You won't lose me.

He looks back at her with love in his eyes. Sick love, but love. He holds up an empty glass.

CLIFFORD
You know what? I'm going to let you pour my scotch.

She holds her hands over her heart in a gracious gesture.

EVELYN
I'd love to.

She gets up and goes to the bar. She pours him a scotch. She walks over to him and hands him a full tumbler.

CLIFFORD
I dreamed of you, Evelyn.

He looks up at her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I dreamed of you and now I have you. Life couldn't be sweeter.

She smiles and hands him his drink. He takes a long, grateful swig. As soon as he sets the glass down, she takes his hand and puts it in her mouth. She starts sucking on his fingers. It renders him useless. A horny, useless, hypnotized man.

He starts to get aroused, closes his eyes. This is her chance. She takes his hand out of her mouth and slams it on the table. He opens his eyes. She has a GARDEN TROWEL in her other hand. She brings it down with tremendous force and stabs him through the top of his hand.

He screams, half in shock. Before he can make a move...she takes a SHOVEL from behind the curtain and wallops him across the back of the head. He falls face first into the mashed potatoes.

JUMP TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON CLIFFORD'S EYES, shut, as they start to flutter. Then they OPEN. Dart back and forth. Pupils adjusting. He lurches up, only now realizing he's TIED TO THE BED in nothing but his boxers. His wrist and ankles shackled to the bed posts with neck ties. A sock stuffed into his mouth beneath a strip of duct tape. His head and hand both bleeding.

He pulls at the neck ties. Yanks. Twists. Tugs. No luck. He lifts his head as much as he can, looking around the bedroom, then he screams in anger beneath the gag. He's trying to say something. Over and over again. But no one's listening. Frustrated, he drops his head back onto the pillow. Huffing and puffing. He looks over at the phone on the night stand-- so close yet so far, when from the doorway--

EVELYN (O.S.)
Well hello, sunshine.

Clifford jerks his head around towards the door. EVELYN there in the doorway.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
I didn't realize you'd awoken.

Furious, Clifford barks at her beneath the gag.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
(moving towards him)
Shhhh...save your breath, darling.

She sits on the edge of the bed beside him.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
You're going to need it.

He grunts something else.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Oh fine. But try screaming and we're back to the shovel.

She reaches for the duct tape and rips it off in one swift swipe.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
You were saying?

CLIFFORD
Untie me.

EVELYN
I'm sorry?

CLIFFORD
I said untie me. Right this goddamn minute.

She frowns.

EVELYN
Oh...
(concerned)
I must've hit your head really hard.

She unveils a KITCHEN KNIFE--

EVELYN (CONT'D)
I don't think you understand.

--and slowly brings it towards his eyeball.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
From this moment on...I'm the one who gives the orders.

CLIFFORD
Sweetheart...
(please don't stab me)
You heard what Dr. Anderson said.
You're having a nervous breakdown.

EVELYN
Am I?

CLIFFORD
(nods)
You're imagining things.

EVELYN
Hmmm. Then tell me, Mr. Smarty Pants...am I imagining this?

She pulls out the MOTEL KEY. ROOM 1.

CLIFFORD
I've never seen that before in my life.

EVELYN

No?

CLIFFORD

I said NO, what do you want from me?!

She cocks her head.

EVELYN

What do I want from you? You know, I think that's the first time you've ever asked me that.

She ponders that.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

So often it's the other way around. What do you want for breakfast, Clifford? What do you want for dessert, Clifford? What do you want in your coffee, Clifford? Oh...speaking of which...do you have any idea what second degree coffee burns feel like?

He glares at her, saying nothing.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

No?

Well then--

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I've got just the thing.

She gets up and leaves the room.

CLIFFORD

Evelyn?

Growing fear in Clifford's eyes.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Evelyn?!!!

She returns to the room with a STEAMING POT OF COFFEE.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She comes towards him with it.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Goddamnit, Evelyn, stop this!

She pauses at his bedside.

EVELYN
What was it you said to me
once...oh yes...
(impersonating him)
"You're coffee can be murder,
Evelyn."

CLIFFORD
Evelyn, please...don't do this!

She holds the pot over his bare chest, about to pour it--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I was with another woman!

She stops. Clifford left with no choice but to come clean.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
At the motel. You didn't imagine
it. I paid the desk clerk five
dollars to erase the names off the
register.

His eyes, shameful, rise to meet hers.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It was just that one
time, I swear. It meant nothing.

She stares at him, saddened. As if she's about to cry. Then--

EVELYN
Liar.

--she dumps the boiling coffee over his chest.

CLIFFORD
Ahhhhhhhhhhh...jesus christ!!!!
(the pain)
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

Evelyn tosses the coffee pot aside. Gets right up in his
face.

EVELYN
I WANT OUT OF HERE.

Clifford crying.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
You changed the exit portal again.
Tell me where it is.

CLIFFORD
Evelyn...listen to yourself. You're
not right in the head, honey.

In a flash, she retrieves the knife off the night stand and holds it to his throat.

EVELYN
Call me honey one more time, and I
swear I'll slit your throat.

Something occurs to her.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Say, if you can feel pain in Alt-
Life...can you die in it too?

CLIFFORD
I don't know anything about Alt-
Life!!!

EVELYN
Oh come now, darling. Don't say you
don't remember your welcome
package.

She breaks into an impersonation of Dr. Anderson on the Alt-
Life video...

EVELYN (CONT'D)
"Are you tired of being controlled
by women. Sick of them out-earning
you in the workplace? Yearning for
a return to simpler times? Then
plug her in today, and she'll be
back in the kitchen in no time!!!"

She loses the impersonation. Dead serious again.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
The exit portal.

Where is it?

CLIFFORD
Evelyn, on my life...I've no idea
what you're talking about. This is
all in your head. You're sick.

Evelyn getting nowhere here. She starts to get up--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
And it's all my fault!

She pauses, taken aback a little.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I pushed you not to go to medical
school so we could start a family.
I was unfaithful. I belittled
you...
(crying)
I drove you to this...and I'm
sorry.

We're not sure if she's buying it or not.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I can't imagine what it's like to
be you. Trapped in this house.
Cooking for me. Cleaning up after
me.

A beat.

EVELYN
No...you can't.
(then suddenly chipper)
But we can change that.

Again she gets up and leaves the room.

CLIFFORD
No, wait...Evelyn, please!!! I'm
sorry!!!

But Evelyn is already gone.

Clifford yanks at his restraints...his wrists...his
feet...trying desperately to get loose to no avail. He's
stuck here good. He thinks. Decides on a new approach--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Evelyn! Listen to me...I have an
idea...why don't we take a
vacation. Just you and me. We can
go anywhere you want. Anywhere in
the--

Evelyn returns to the room with her good-old, cheery yellow-
handled broom.

EVELYN
TA-DAAAA!

CLIFFORD
What are you doing?

She looks at him, puzzled.

EVELYN
Well you can't possibly imagine
what it's like to be me without
having something phallic jammed up
your ass, can you?

Silly him. She moves to his bedside.

CLIFFORD
Evelyn, please--

EVELYN
Shh...shh...shh...

She pulls down his boxers o.s.--

CLIFFORD
I'll do anything you want, okay?

--and gets the broomstick into position.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Goddamnit, Evelyn, this has gone
far enough.

But Evelyn isn't listening.

EVELYN
I admit the splinters may take a
while to get out.
(shows him her hands)
Trust me, I know.

She rises.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Shall we count to three?

CLIFFORD
Goddamnit, Evelyn!

EVELYN
One...
(about to jam it home)
Two...

CLIFFORD
Alright, I'll tell you!

She stops. Did she hear that correctly?

EVELYN
What did you say?

He looks at her. Defeated.

CLIFFORD
I'll tell you where the exit portal
is...just...no more.

Validation at last. And it's heartbreaking. She stares at him. This man she thought she knew.

EVELYN
Why, Clifford? Why did you do this
to me?

He bows his head.

CLIFFORD
I wanted us to be happy again.

Did she really just hear that?

EVELYN
Happy???

To explain...

CLIFFORD
We had a life together. A marriage.

Evelyn connecting the dots.

EVELYN
In 2050...

He nods.

CLIFFORD
Then one day your work became more
important. Your career took off.
(resentful)
But not mine. I made a few small
mistakes and you divorced me for
it.

It's either the truth or an Oscar-worthy charade to keep her from sticking a broom up his ass.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I just...wanted things to be like
they were in the beginning.
(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Before you became consumed by your
work. I wanted to provide for you.
And then one day...I found Alt-
Life.

He looks at her.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

She allows herself only a moment of tears. Then she wipes
them from her eyes. Apology not accepted.

EVELYN
Where is it?

He raises his gaze to hers. No choice here.

CLIFFORD
It's in the basement. My tool shed.

She looks at him. Sickened with him. Then nods--

EVELYN
Good-bye, Clifford.

--and RAMS HIM WITH THE BROOMSTICK. Clifford howls.

She turns and marches out of the room.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Evelyn pushes through the door into the basement and hurries
down the stairs. She stops. Looking into the back of the room--
-

THE TOOL SHED.

A standing cabinet with two doors.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Clifford, still reeling from the broomstick, turns to the
night stand beside him. The KNIFE lying on it. If he could
just get one hand loose to reach it.

He pulls at the necktie on his wrist. Leans up and uses his
teeth on it. Yanking at the knot.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Evelyn standing before the tool shed. Hesitant to move forward. Frightened of what awaits her if she opens the doors.

She reaches for the doors...and she opens the shed.

DARKNESS inside.

She takes a breath. No turning back now.

EVELYN
The hell with it.

She steps into the shed...

INT. BASEMENT - DAY 2050

As before, Evelyn comes to with a jolt. Back in the neuro...whatever the fuck it is. Her prison. She reaches for the electrode cord and pulls it from the data port.

The machine opens.

She sits up. And for the first time--

Finds Clifford asleep in the neurolink unit beside her. Likewise entombed in electrodes.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME 1954

Clifford still biting at his restraints. A mad dog. It's loosening. He yanks. Pulls. And he gets his hand free.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME 2050

Evelyn drops from her neurolink unit to the ground. She lifts her head. The staircase. She starts crawling towards it.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME 1954

Clifford has the knife in his free hand. Already cutting away at the necktie on his other hand. Snap. He gets it loose.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME 2050

Evelyn halfway up the stairs. On a mission. Crawling like hell for the top.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME 1954

Clifford cutting away the ties at his foot. It snaps free.
One more foot to go.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME 2050

Evelyn three steps from the door out of the basement. Almost there.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME 1954

Clifford cutting the final restraint on his ankle. Almost free.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME 2050

Evelyn at the door out of the basement. She reaches up for the touchscreen lock and punches in the code.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME 1954

Clifford cuts through the final restraint, kicks free of the neckties and rises from the bed with the knife. His eyes crazed, filled with fury.

INT. HOUSE, HALLWAY - SAME 2050

Back in Clifford's 2050 home.

Evelyn crawls out from the basement doorway into the hall and starts dragging herself out towards the living room...towards freedom.

She rounds the corner into the living room.

THE FRONT DOOR. Across the room. She starts towards it.

Five feet from it...three feet...she reaches up for the knob--

JUST AS CLIFFORD RUNS ROARING UP BEHIND HER WITH A KNIFE.
ELECTRODES DANGLING OFF HIS HEAD.

CLIFFORD
YOU CRAZY FUCKING BITCH, COME
HERE!!!

He grabs her by the electrodes on her head and yanks her onto her back. Evelyn screaming. He presses the blade of the knife to her throat.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I oughta cut your fucking jugular,
you little cunt!!!

In a flash, Evelyn takes her thumb and jabs it into his eyeball.

Clifford screams and lashes out with the knife, slicing through the veins on Evelyn's wrist. She shrieks, reaches with her other hand for his EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH PLAQUE on the floor and smashes it over his head.

He falls back off of her. She turns to the doorway.

EVELYN
Somebody help me!!!!!!

And she starts crawling for the door again. Almost to it, when from behind her--

Clifford picks her up off the ground and flings her across the room like a rag doll. She crashes down through the glass coffee table, exploding through it. She lands, barely conscious, in a heap of shards. Cut bad. Bleeding worse.

He stands over her, enjoying this. Evelyn gasping for air.

CLIFFORD
Don't worry. I'm not going to kill
you.

He picks her up by the electrodes. Looks her up and down.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
That'd be a waste. No, I'm thinking
lobotomy. You know what that is?
(Evelyn gasping)
No? Well allow me to educate you.

He drags her towards the kitchen--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
I must warn you, though...I've
never done this before.

--and throws her over the counter through a wall of cutlery onto the kitchen floor.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
But an ice pick through the brain
is an ice pick through the brain,
am I right?

He starts to rummage through a drawer.

ON EVELYN, fading, as she looks over and sees another KITCHEN
KNIFE on the ground nearby.

Clifford turns back to her--

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Unfortunately we're all out of ice
picks.

--and comes up with a SCREWDRIVER.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
So I suppose this will have to do.

She sees him coming towards her with it.

EVELYN
Please...Clifford...

He climbs on top of her with the screwdriver.

CLIFFORD
Don't worry...in just a couple
seconds...you'll be as good as a
vegetable. Then I can fuck you all
I want and never have to hear you
complain.

He brings the screwdriver to her eye socket.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
As they say...a successful marriage
starts in the kitchen.

About to go up through her orbital bone.

EVELYN
You...fffforgot...one thing...

He pauses.

CLIFFORD
Indulge me.

Her eyes set on his--

EVELYN

The kitchen's where the knives are.

--AND SHE STABS HIM IN THE RIBS WITH THE KNIFE.

Clifford shrieks. Loses the screwdriver. Evelyn gets it...

AND SHE STABS HIM UP THROUGH THE EYEBALL INTO HIS BRAIN.
PULLS THE SCREWDRIVER OUT AND DOES IT AGAIN. AND AGAIN. AND
AGAIN. HIS BLOOD POURING ON HER FACE.

And then it's all over.

He falls down on top of her. Both of them bleeding out here
on the kitchen floor. And off Evelyn's eyes, staring upward,
dying, we--

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK--

A WOMAN'S SCREAM. Bloodcurdling. It belongs to--

BETSY (V.O.)
(screaming)
My god...Evelyn!!!

And we are--

INT. EVELYN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 1954

EVELYN'S POV: Heavily blurred. Looking up at Betsy hovering
over her.

BETSY
Evelyn, can you hear me?!

The POV gradually coming into focus.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Just hang on, you hear? I'm calling
an ambulance.

Betsy exits the POV, leaving us with a view of the ceiling.

BETSY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello, yes, I need an ambulance
right away. Something horrible's
happened...

As Betsy drones on in the b.g., our POV TURNS, revealing--

1950s CLIFFORD on the floor several feet away. A SCREWDRIVER sticking out of his eye socket.

BETSY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please...come quickly!!!

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - DAY

Betsy stands in the street with Joe, the two of them watching as Clifford and Evelyn are carried out of the house by paramedics...her on life support, him in a body bag.

BETSY
(crying)
I should have seen it coming.

Joe puts his arm around her.

JOE
Come on, hon. Let's get you back in the house.

She looks up at him. An odd choice of words. And we--

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK--

DR. ANDERSON (V.O.)
Evelyn...can you hear me? Evelyn?

And we're--

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY **1954**

--where Evelyn's eyes OPEN.

HER POV: A BLURRED FIGURE sitting in front of her. Slowly coming into focus--

Dr. Anderson.

ON EVELYN, as reality comes rushing back in. She jolts up, realizes she's lying in a hospital bed. Hooked up to IVs. Her body stitched up. Her wrists and ankles shackled to the bed in leather straps.

EVELYN
Where am I?

DR. ANDERSON
 You're in the hospital. You lost a
 lot of blood.

She looks around the room, noticing it's still 1954.

EVELYN
 (realizing)
 I'm back in the simulation.

DR. ANDERSON
 Mrs. Peterson--

EVELYN
 How did I get here?

DR. ANDERSON
 Evelyn--

EVELYN
 HOW DID I GET HERE?!!

DR. ANDERSON
 You came in an ambulance two days
 ago. Your neighbor Betsy found you.

Evelyn pauses, taking it in.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 You were bleeding to death on your
 kitchen floor.
 (pauses)
 Next to your husband.

A beat.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 Do you remember what happened?

She looks at him...at the leather straps...

EVELYN
 Why am I strapped down?

Anderson sighs. Reaches into his briefcase and comes up with
 a series of B&W PHOTOGRAPHS--

OF CLIFFORD. LYING IN A POOL OF BLOOD ON THEIR 1950s KITCHEN
 FLOOR. NO ELECTRODES ON HIS HEAD. NO FUTURISTIC FURNITURE.

DR. ANDERSON
 You stabbed him to death with a
 screwdriver.

Evelyn stares at the pictures. It doesn't make sense.

EVELYN

That can't be...I'd escaped...I was out of the simulation.

Anderson sits back. He'd expected this much.

DR. ANDERSON

You mean Alt-Life.

She looks at him sharply. Ah ha!

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Betsy told me all about it. The year 2050...the secret society...all of it.

Anderson pushes one of the photos closer. It shows Clifford's face stabbed to smithereens.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I assure you, this was no simulation, Mrs. Peterson.

Evelyn looks at the picture, then at Anderson.

EVELYN

You're part of this.

DR. ANDERSON

Evelyn--

EVELYN

You plugged me back into the neurolink unit--

DR. ANDERSON

Stop it--

EVELYN

Why kill me when you can continue to play God, is that it?

DR ANDERSON

STOP IT!

(caring)

Evelyn, can't you see what's happened? You've gone insane! You murdered your husband.

No. She won't believe it.

DR. ANDERSON

Think about it, Evelyn. You're bright. Tell me what's reasonable...that you're trapped inside a computer simulation, and that your real body is lying in a machine in the year 2050? Or that you've suffered a psychotic break from reality over the stress of your marriage?

EVELYN

No--

DR. ANDERSON

You felt you were being imprisoned. Forced into the role of a housewife. A mother. Shackled up day and night inside that house...

This fucking bastard!

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

So you dreamed up a world where women were empowered...a fantasy world where women were no longer expected to stay in the kitchen. A world where they can be free. Where you could be free...

He slides over the pictures of her dead husband.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

All you had to do...was kill your captor.

Evelyn's certainty starting to crumble. She shakes her head...

EVELYN

No...Clifford...he admitted to it...he said we had a marriage in 2050--

DR. ANDERSON

A man saying what he had to in order to keep from being sodomized, I imagine.

(off her look)

They found the broomstick.

Evelyn speechless.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 Evelyn...I convinced them to let me
 speak with you first. But if you
 tell them the same story you're
 telling me...they won't just lock
 you away. They'll lobotomize you,
 Evelyn.

Evelyn trying to process it all. And it's terrifying.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 Now tell me...
 (last chance)
 What year is it?

Her eyes finally rise to his. A horrifying realization.

EVELYN
 It's 1954.

Finally.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
 I murdered my husband.

Indeed she did. Her eyes well with tears--

EVELYN (CONT'D)
 I murdered my Clifford.

--and she breaks down crying.

DR. CLIFFORD
 Hey, hey, hey...

He moves closer to her. Lays a hand on her shoulder.

DR. CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 I'm going to help you in any way
 that I can.

She looks in his eyes, appreciative...

EVELYN
 You...

She tilts her head--

EVELYN (CONT'D)
 FUCKING LIAR!!!!

--AND SHE LURCHES FORWARD AND TAKES A BITE OUT OF HIS CHEEK.

Anderson screams, trying to pull loose.

The door comes flying open. Two POLICE OFFICERS and an ORDERLY storm the room and pull Dr. Anderson away from Evelyn.

She comes away with a chunk of his cheek and spits it out.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
LET ME THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!!!

They pin her down as another DOCTOR races in--

DOCTOR
Hold her!

--and injects her with a SYRINGE.

We go CLOSE ON EVELYN, a caged animal, as her eyes eventually roll back into her head. And we--

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - DAY

We're in the beautiful outdoor courtyard of a psychiatric unit, where among the other PATIENTS mulling about, we find--

EVELYN.

Sitting on a bench in patient garbs. A far cry from the vibrant woman we once knew. A vacant, mindless stare.

BETSY (O.S.)
Evelyn?

REVEAL BETSY, her picture-perfect self, in front of Evelyn with a bouquet of flowers. Here to visit.

BETSY (CONT'D)
They're from my garden. Fresh as rain.

But Evelyn doesn't even acknowledge the flowers. Or Betsy. Betsy at a loss here.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Anyhow...I've just been feeling so terrible about...everything that happened.

And the flowers were the best she could come up with. Still nothing from Evelyn.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Alright, then...I'll have the nurse
put them in some water for you.

What else is there to say?

BETSY (CONT'D)
Bye-bye now, Evelyn. I'll come back
and see you real soon, okay?

She leans in like she's going to kiss Evelyn on the cheek,
but instead, WHISPERS INTO HER EAR--

BETSY (CONT'D)
I did what you told me to. You were
right, Evelyn. I'm so sorry.
There's an exit portal through the
doorway behind me.

She pulls away, all smiles again, and for the first time,
Evelyn locks eyes with her.

Betsy winks. Then she moves off, leaving Evelyn a view of--

A DOOR across the courtyard.

Life in Evelyn's eyes again. They flick from the door to a
nearby ORDERLY with his back to her, then back to the door.

And she stands.

She starts towards the door. Slowly. Eyes trained on it.

THE DOOR. Ten feet away. Five feet.

Evelyn glances over at the Orderly--his back to her still.

She continues to the door. Reaches it. Freedom beckoning her
on the other side of it. She stands in front of it a moment.
Then she reaches for the knob...and she turns it.

A BLINDING FLASH. And we--

JUMP TO BLACK.

THE END