

SYNDROM(E)

Written by

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Based on the novel SYNDROME E by Franck Thilliez

OPENING CREDITS:

EXT. UNDER A BRIDGE - DAY INTO NIGHT

A crew of YOUNG SKATEBOARDERS (BOYS, ages 12-17) hang out in their graffiti and trash strewn haunt.

They attempt tricks. Fall. Scrape elbows. Bust lips. Crack up laughing. Make jokes. A fight erupts. It's broken up. Bottles are thrown and smashed. More laughter, more shoving.

There's a subtle violence simmering beneath all of it. The sort unique to adolescent boys. Rough housing always a thin line away from actual harm.

The sun sinks lower and lower as the day passes. As night comes, the herd thins.

Leaving only those with no where else to go. Until only THREE are left...Then TWO...Then just ONE.

EXT. UNDER A BRIDGE - NIGHT

A BLONDE-HAIRED KID with a sweet face (12), obsessively trying to nail a difficult maneuver. Over and over. Listening to his IPOD. In a world of his own, surrounded by darkness.

He tries the trick again, nearly lands it, but then loses his balance at the last moment. Lands hard onto the concrete.

He slowly sits up, checks his war wounds.

A LITTLE DOG suddenly runs up to him from out of nowhere, jumps up, hungry for attention.

BLONDE HAIRED KID
Hey...Where did you come from?

The animal licks his face, eliciting a snicker.

A SHADOW falls over them. The kid looks up, just as a SYRINGE is stuck into his arm.

He's stunned at first, then starts to scream. A GLOVE-CLAD HAND clamps over his mouth to silence him.

EXT. LAKE ERIE - DAY

Overcast. The water and sky nearly indistinguishable shades of grey. A rusted DREDGING BARGE floats in the middle of the great lake, barely moving.

A TITLE fades onto screen: LAKE ERIE, NY

The CRANE reaching over the barge's side raises something from the murky depths. A large CLAMSHELL BUCKET slowly emerges and swings over to the collection dock.

The claw-like sides open, dumping dark SLUDGE scooped from the lake bottom.

WORKMEN wait and watch, dressed in overalls and rain coats.

As the sediment cascades down, a few WHITE PLASTIC BUNDLES tumble out of the clamshell with it.

The workmen peer into the sunken dock, to get a better look. A skeletal HUMAN ARM sticks out of one, the slender bone pale against black dirt...

EXT. WATER'S EDGE - DAY

Several Police CARS are parked at the nearest put-in. An unmarked SEDAN pulls up behind them and comes to a stop.

SPECIAL AGENT FRANK SHARKOVSKY (SHARKO for short, mid-40's) steps out of the car, surveying the surroundings with a weary, but sharp set of EYES. In a well-worn sweater, corduroys, and faded Gortex jacket, not what you'd expect in someone who specializes in serial killer cases. More of an intensely focused academic than grizzled investigator.

He's approached by a LOCAL DETECTIVE.

LOCAL DETECTIVE
You Sharkovsky?

He nods.

LOCAL DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
They're over here.

Sharko follows the detective. A group of LOCAL COPS block his view of the shore. They glance at Sharko and open a pathway.

He ducks under the line of POLICE TAPE and sees:

FIVE SMALL SKELETONS laid out on the beach, on top of the white plastic they were found in.

A FORENSIC TEAM mills around, taking pictures and collecting samples. They all wear SURGICAL MASKS.

LOCAL DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Pulled out this morning by a
 dredging crew. Five, guessing kids
 from the size.

Sharko twinges at this disturbing piece of info.

LOCAL DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Must have been down there a while.
 Soft tissue's pretty much all gone.

Sharko bends down to feel the water with his finger. His
 mouth moves, running some quick mental calculations.

He moves closer to the remains. The detective offers Sharko a
 SURGICAL MASK. Sharko declines it.

He kneels and pinches his face at the dank smell. He's good
 at his job not because he doesn't let it get to him, but
 because he *does*.

He scans the skeletons, starting at their feet and working
 his way up. Meticulously takes in every detail.

LOCAL DETECTIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 There's one other thing...

Sharko sees before he says it:

THE TOPS OF ALL THE SKULLS HAVE BEEN SLICED OFF.

EXT. SUBURBAN DRIVEWAY - DAY

Tattered boxes, old clothing, and random shit tells us we're
 at a GARAGE SALE.

A TITLE tells us we're in: ROCHESTER, NY

A good looking, dark haired guy crouches over a cardboard
 box. This is DOMINICK (30's). He wears a worn t-shirt,
 exposing several TATTOOS, including one of HITCHCOCK'S ICONIC
 PROFILE on his lower arm. He reaches inside the box to rifle
 through 16mm FILM CANISTERS.

DOMINICK
 Where'd you say you got all this?

He says this to the SELLER hovering nearby.

SELLER

Dad worked up at Kodak. It's all stuff that never got picked up from the lab. Old man loved nothing more than getting shit for free.

He gestures towards the array of junk around them. Dominick stands, decided.

DOMINICK

I'll give you two bucks for the whole box.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Dominick runs down the stairs, carrying the box of films like a kid on Christmas.

The underground space has been converted into a poor man's screening room. A WHITE SHEET hung along one wall, across from two old film projectors--one for 16mm, one for 35mm--and an old sofa in between for comfortable viewing.

He digs through the box, trying to decide which lost treasure to start with. He stops on one with something written on its safety leader: 50 FRAMES PER SECOND.

DOMINICK

Fifty? That's funky.

He takes the reel and carefully spools it into the projector. He sets the FPS DIAL to 50 as instructed.

And flicks the control switch to FORWARD. The projector rattles to life.

Dominick collapses into his sofa, pops open a beer. His EYES stare expectantly ahead, soaking in the bright light bouncing off the screen...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A different SET OF EYES. Female eyes.

They belong to LUCY BRENNAN (mid-30's), a detective in the Rochester PD, staring at a DOWNCAST TEENAGER (15), handcuffed to the table.

Lucy's attractive, but does her best to scuff up her appearance. No make-up, hair kept short.

Hides her body in a loose-fitting flannel shirt, masculine cut jeans and steeltoe boots. Being a cop is more of a compulsion than a job. Gives her a tightly wound, restless energy.

The teenager keeps his eyes glued to the table, avoiding her penetrating gaze. Lucy takes out a PACK OF CIGARETTES, holds it out. He doesn't move.

LUCY

Then I will. Interrogation room's only place we're allowed.

She light ups and inhales. Blows the smoke in his face. Gets an annoyed look. She smirks, at least that got his attention.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Wanna know what I think? I think it was payback for the Tremont crew taking out your M.D.B. boy JJ couple months back. Over that corner at Clifford and Conkey?

He looks completely blank.

LUCY (CONT'D)

C'mon, Nash. I know you didn't do this for no reason. I just wanna understand what was going on inside there.

She taps her finger against his head. He jerks away.

GANGBANGER

Them Lebron's cost me two fifty.

She stares him down, troubled.

A KNOCK on the door steals her attention. The somewhat dim station chief, DAN (60's), pokes his head in.

DAN

Got a phonecall, Brennan. Sounded urgent.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lucy comes out of the room and joins Dan in the hallway.

DAN

What are you doing in there? He already confessed.

LUCY

You see this kid play in last year's semi?

DAN

Not really up on my high school ball.

LUCY

I played girl's varsity at Marshall. Anyway, team's losing by 4, Nash cuts into the key to make a basket, picks off a pass, then sinks a three-pointer right before the buzzer.

DAN

We'll have to put that on his highlight reel. That, and shooting a kid over some sneakers.

LUCY

Just saying, he had a shot at college ball. Hard to make sense of him throwing it away.

DAN

Only thing that matters is if he did it. We don't need to understand why.

She clearly disagrees. Cuts into the bullpen of desks.

DAN (CONT'D)

Just be happy you cleared it, Brennan.

LUCY

Didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes. Kid still had the gun on him.

DAN

You really want the job any harder?

LUCY

Yeah, might be nice to do some real police work once in a while. You know, so I can feel like what we do fucking means anything.

Lucy hastily grabs her phone, knocking over a stack of FILES in the process.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Shit.

(into phone)

Detective Brennan.

DOMINICK (O.S.)

(panicked)

Lucy? Lucy is that you?

LUCY

Yeah, you called me, Dom. What's up?

DOMINICK (O.S.)

I can't see anything. Someone has to come get me. Someone has to...

LUCY

Are you on something?

DOMINICK (O.S.)

No! I just watched this film...I think it made me go blind.

INT. FBI NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Inside the large, over-lit office of the ADIC (Assistant director in Charge) sits MARTIN PHILLIPS (50's). He runs the New York FBI office, the biggest in the country after DC. Clicks through SUBURBAN REAL ESTATE LISTINGS on his computer, half listening to Sharko give his report.

Another TITLE orients us: FBI HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK CITY.

SHARKO

ME's looking at dentals and taking DNA from the marrow, but unlikely to be a match in any database-

MARTIN

You gotta be kidding me.

Sharko's confused. Martin swivels his screen towards Sharko.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Eight hundred fifty?! And that's the asking price. Probably gonna go for at least nine, nine-fifty.

SHARKO

(understated irony)

Heard it's a bad time to buy.

MARTIN

Coming from the guy who's lived in the same place for, what, fifteen years?

SHARKO

I'm happy where I am.

MARTIN

Yeah, you're the picture of contentment.

SHARKO

Anyway, don't got much to ID the bodies. Only distinguishing feature, the tops of all the skulls were cut off.

This gets Martin's attention.

MARTIN

What do you mean?

SHARKO

Like that. Gone.

Sharko cuts his fingers across his forehead to demonstrate.

MARTIN

Why?

Sharko shrugs. No idea.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

The media's gonna fucking eat this up. Means there's gonna be pressure to solve it. *Fast.*

SHARKO

You know me. I won't sleep til it's done.

MARTIN

I'd prefer you get some sleep. Think we all would.

SHARKO

You really worried about how I do the job?

MARTIN

About the job? No.

Martin stares at him. Clear it's Sharko he's worried about.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
You gonna be okay with this one? I
mean, considering-

SHARKO
(cutting off)
I'm *fine*. If we're done, been a
long day.

Sharko gets up and goes.

INT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Sharko trudges through the front door and takes off his shoes. Places them next to a small collection of women's and children's shoes neatly lined up by the door.

His place feels very homey. Houseplants, matching living room furniture, a child's ELECTRIC TRAIN SET in one corner. Everything covered in a thin layer of dust, like it hasn't been touched in a while. Preserved in amber.

He walks past a neatly organized WALL OF PHOTOS, featuring various combinations of him, looking younger and happier, with his WIFE and SON (as a baby up until he's 9).

He walks into the kitchen, which is spotless, so much so it feels lifeless. He opens the freezer packed with frozen dinners and pulls out the AUTOMATIC ICE BUCKET.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sharko turns on the COLD WATER in his bathtub. He dumps the entire bucket of ice in, to get the water even colder.

He undresses, catching his reflection in the MIRROR. He reacts, definitely seen better days.

He steps into the bathtub. Submerges himself all the way underneath the ICE-COLD WATER.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Unlike the other rooms, this one actually looks lived in. Used dishes and case files spread around on the desk and dresser, as though he eats, sleeps and works in here.

Sharko lies in his disheveled bed, shivering. He unconsciously turns his WEDDING RING around his finger, out of habit. Wanting to make sure it's there.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy sits in the waiting area, looking restless, already been there for hours. She watches the LOCAL NEWS on the TV mounted in the corner to pass the time.

FEMALE REPORTER

I'm standing near the shore of Lake Erie where earlier today investigators first examined the remains.

Cuts to footage of BODY BAGS being loaded into an ambulance during the day. The chyron RECORDED EARLIER on screen.

FEMALE REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

There were five in all. The cause of death still unknown.

They show the Local Detective, surrounded by REPORTERS.

REPORTER 1

Can you confirm the rumor that the skulls of the victims were cut open?

Lucy leans forward at this, morbid curiosity taking over.

LOCAL DETECTIVE

I'm not at liberty to disclose any information at this time. We are working closely with the FBI to make sure whoever's behind this-

Sharko pushes through the throng, interrupting the impromptu press conference. The reporters all turn their attention to him, shouting questions. "Sir, sir, do you have anything to add?" "Any official statement from the FBI?" Etc.

SHARKO

(without stopping)

You want me to socialize, or to do my job?

Lucy smirks to herself, likes that guy.

ER NURSE (O.S.)

You can go see him now.

She turns, sees an ER NURSE standing nearby. Lucy looks back at the TV, conflicted, but gets up and follows.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy slips through a privacy curtain. Finds Dominick lying in the hospital bed, staring up with glazed over eyes. The overworked ER DOCTOR stands bedside filling in his chart.

LUCY
(to the doctor)
You figure out what's going on with him?

ER DOCTOR
Are you his wife?

LUCY
No.

DOMINICK
She's my girlfriend.

LUCY
Sort of.

ER DOCTOR
I try not to talk about patients with sort of girlfriends.

DOMINICK
It's okay.

ER DOCTOR
Well, as I just told him, the cat scan and ophthalmological results came back normal. No tumors or nerve damage, ocular mobility, retinal exam--all good.

LUCY
So what's wrong with him?

ER DOCTOR
Based on the tests, nothing.

Lucy is confused.

DOMINICK
He thinks it's psychosomatic.

ER DOCTOR
And with a little help from our psych department, his vision should hopefully go back to normal.

The ER Doctor leaves them.

LUCY
 Maybe I should take a look at this
 thing myself...

DOMINICK
 You still don't believe me?

LUCY
 I just don't understand how a movie
 could make someone go blind.

He turns to stare at her with his pleading, dilated pupils.

DOMINICK
 What if the same thing happens to
 you?

Lucy looks undeterred, can't help but be curious...

IN DARKNESS

An unsettling WHIRRING and WHIPPING NOISE

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lucy tugs the chain to a HANGING LIGHTBULB, filling the
 basement stairs with light.

Lucy eases herself down the steps. Gets to the bottom and
 sees the source of the sound: Dominick's projector is still
 running, the loose end of film FLAPPING against the metal.

Lucy looks around the room. Looks exactly like Dominick left
 it. Except for a SPILLED BEER BOTTLE near the sofa.

She turns off the projector and grabs the loose end of
 celluloid. Feels the gelatinous strip between her fingers,
 both tempted and scared, like it contains magical properties.

She tucks the end into the empty reel on the other side of
 the projector and flicks the control switch to REVERSE. The
 two reels spin quickly, re-spooling the film.

Once it's done, she takes the START LEADER and winds it
 through the machine.

She's about to turn the control dial to play it, but stops,
 apprehensive. She shakes off the feeling...

LUCY
 It's just a movie.

She turns the dial to FORWARD. The projector comes to life, shooting a bright beam of light. The SHUTTER loud and ominous, like insects beating their wings.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lucy takes her seat on the sofa, in front of the make-shift screen. A SERIES OF WORDS flash by, too quick to read, and an old, dusty and scratched COUNTDOWN LEADER begins.

8...7...6...5...4...3...

There's loud BEEP at the 2 mark. Lucy tenses, preparing.

The screen goes DEEP BLACK...warped MUSIC strikes up. A CIRCUS TUNE, the kind that plays in antique merry-go rounds.

A WOMAN'S FACE appears, shot in black & white, inside an oval occupying the center of the screen. A grayish, almost BLACK FOG surrounds this oval. Like a voyeur peeping through a keyhole.

The woman is beautiful, hypnotic, with large, enigmatic EYES gazing directly at us.

Two fingers, MAN'S FINGERS, enter the frame from the top and spread the lids of her left eye.

Abruptly, a SCALPEL BLADE slits the eye in two.

Lucy looks away, but it's too late. No unseeing what she's just seen. Lucy risks looking back at the screen.

A new image appears: A YOUNG BOY (around 12), rides a playground swing. He has fair skin, and blonde hair, laughing as he goes back and forth. Radiating innocence and vitality.

A series of quick cuts focus more closely on the boy: His HAND playing with ANTS. Close-up of his MOUTH eating. Of his EYELIDS opening and closing.

Then petting a RABBIT. He picks it up and holds it tight against his chest. The FOG ominously closes in around him.

The film cuts again, to another close-up of the boy, but something's changed in his eyes. A deep sadness has set in, his innocence somehow gone.

The camera moves closer and further away, as if taunting him. The boy violently tries to bat it away.

Then a new scene: pasture surrounded by fences, a large CATTLE BARN in the background. The sky black and ominous.

At the far end of the pasture, the same young boy waits, arms hanging down his body.

The camera moves closer to him, and we see that he holds a large BUTCHER'S KNIFE in his small right hand.

The camera zooms in on his eyes, the pupils visibly dilated, nearly covering the irises completely so that all that remains are two circular, BLACK VOIDS.

The camera pans, revealing a FURIOUS BULL standing inside a livestock trailer towed by an OLD TRUCK. Powerful, foaming at the mouth, slamming against the metal barrier.

Lucy senses something very bad about to happen...

The gate is opened and the bull CHARGES out. The camera zooms out, to contain both subjects in the field: the bull on the left, the boy on the right.

The distance between them grows shorter...and shorter. The bull charging faster and faster...

Lucy grips the edge of the couch with her fingers.

Just as the bull is about to gore the boy, it comes to a sudden halt, its muscles twitching, its mouth foaming.

The camera focuses in on the boy, staring the beast down, without an ounce of emotion. Completely UNAFRAID.

He raises the knife, and SLITS the BULL'S THROAT. Blood gushes out. The beast collapses.

The film goes BLACK. There are a few more flickers and then the end of the film is pulled through the projector.

Lucy stares ahead. All she can see is blinding WHITE LIGHT.

Spooked, she turns her gaze away from the screen...

She sees the couch she sits on, her hands, the projector spinning the reel. The film DID NOT make her go blind.

She exhales, feeling silly for even thinking it...She stands and turns off the projector. The room goes silent.

Until she hears a slight CREAKING along the floor right above her...almost like footsteps.

INT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lucy eases up the basement stairs.

LUCY
Someone here?

She turns the corner into the MAIN ROOM. The house looks and feels COMPLETELY EMPTY.

EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lucy exits the front door and heads towards her CAR, parked by the curb. The CLICKING of her heavy boots reverberating in the otherwise sleepy street. Her KEYS tremble a little as she opens her car. She gets in and drives away.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lucy enters her own home and locks the DEADBOLT.

She turns on all the lights. Her place is filled with a mish-mash of things she picked up at thrift shops and off Craigslist. Nothing matches, nothing in particularly good condition. More bachelor pad than a home, in need of a woman's touch, or a man's touch, or *anyone's* touch really.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy changes out of her street clothes and throws on an oversized man's t-shirt, getting ready for bed.

She takes her SIDEARM out of its holster. Places it on her bedstand. All a part of the nightly ritual.

She turns off the light and lies down. The headlights of a passing car cast shadows against the ceiling. The engine fades and then all is still and very quiet.

She closes her eyes. A long moment passes. She starts to drift to sleep...

A MAN'S HAND suddenly clamps down over her mouth.

Her eyes OPEN. She sees a LARGE SWEATY MAN straddling her. Pinning her down.

Lucy struggles, reaches for her gun and FIRES IT up at him. The muzzle FLASHES light up the dark room.

She stops shooting, realizing NO ONE is on top of her.

She sits up, breathing hard. The room is empty. The man nowhere to be seen.

Lucy looks up, sees the shattered LIGHT FIXTURE where her bullets must have struck. She drops the GUN in her hand and covers her mouth, freaked the fuck out...

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER MORGUE - DAY

The FIVE SKELETONS are laid out on silver tables. The MEDICAL EXAMINER uses his SCALPEL to point out salient details to Sharko. Right now, pointing to a pelvis.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

The subjects are all boys, all between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Water makes time of death difficult, since it accelerates decomposition, but I would put it around six months to a year. Now about the skulls...

The medical examiner points to the cut edge of bone.

MEDICAL EXAMINER (CONT'D)

They were sawed with extreme precision. Based on the striations, looks like a Stryker, or something like it, the kind they use in forensics or surgery.

SHARKO

So, the killer has some kind of medical training?

INT. DOMINICK'S GARAGE - DAY

A GUILLOTINE SPLICER cuts through a 16mm strip of film. A PAIR OF HANDS, wearing white, cotton gloves uses splicing tape to join the cut edge to another strip of film.

The hands belong to Dominick, sitting at his Steinbeck editing bay. Apparently recovered.

DOMINICK

Can't believe you watched it after I specifically told you not to.

LUCY

It's not like I went blind.
'Course, neither did you.

DOMINICK

Still the worst 24 hours of my
life, and you're drawn straight to
the flame.

LUCY

I just wondered if you could figure
out when it was made, or where
even?

DOMINICK

Why?

LUCY

Because I wanna know, that's why.

He's unconvinced.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Aren't you always telling people
you're not just a bartender, you're
a "scholar of the moving image."

DOMINICK

And you're always rolling your eyes
when I do.

LUCY

Now's your chance to prove me
wrong. Show me what you got.

Dominick looks at her, giving in. He stands and takes off his
WHITE COTTON GLOVES.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER MORGUE - DAY

The medical examiner snaps off his BLUE LATEX GLOVES, dumps
them in the trash.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

I believe the subjects' brains were
removed before their bodies were
disposed.

SHARKO

How do you know?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Otherwise we would have found
traces of the dura, which is made
of very dense collagen fibers that
could have withstood a year in
fresh water.

The medical examiner pours himself a cup of coffee from the COFFEEPOT brewing nearby.

SHARKO

Could you pour me some of that?
Didn't have any breakfast, and I'm
starting to regret it.

While the examiner prepares another cup, Sharko takes a LOUPE off the counter. Uses it to get a closer look at the skulls.

INT. FILM RESTORATION OFFICE - DAY

Lucy uses a LOUPE to look closely at a single frame of the film, laid on top of a LIGHTBOX.

DOMINICK (O.S.)

See that black dot just above the A
in the safety leader? Means the
stock was manufactured in Canada.

LUCY

You can tell that from a dot?

DOMINICK

It's the international symbol used
by Kodak...And if you look at the
start of the film, there's some
kind of a slate. Only a few frames
so we didn't see it.

She slides the loupe down the film. Through it, she can see a chalk board with some kind of CRYPTIC CODE written out.

LUCY

(reading)

"DRPJ...100761...3EXP."

DOMINICK

Whatever that means. But look above
the sprocket holes. At those two
triangles?

LUCY

Yeah, what about them?

DOMINICK

Kodak used a code composed of
geometric figures to date its film
strips. They reused the same code
every twenty years.

He digs through the clutter on his work station, finds a LAMINATED SHEET with a grid of dates and geometric coding.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

The double triangle means this positive was printed either in 1941, 1961, or 1981.

LUCY

Gotta be '61.

He looks at her questioning.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Just my instinct. Plus, the truck towing the bull looks like a late fifties Chevy.

She hands him the loupe so he can see for himself.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER MORGUE - DAY

Sharko trades the loupe in exchange for his coffee mug the Examiner's brought him.

SHARKO

Think they also removed the eyes.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

How can you tell?

SHARKO

The deterioration in the sockets looks more advanced. Must've come in contact with water earlier than other parts of the skeleton.

Sharko sips his coffee as the Medical examiner takes a look, sheepish Sharko caught something he missed.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Any idea how they were killed?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Well, the bones show no signs of trauma, so they weren't shot, bludgeoned, or stabbed. However, I did find one of these implanted in the left temporal bone of each.

He picks up a SMALL PLASTIC TUBE from a silver tray.

MEDICAL EXAMINER (CONT'D)
It's a neurological stent. Often
used to link electrodes implanted
in the brain to a subcutaneous
stimulator.

SHARKO
English, Charlie.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Technique's called deep brain
stimulation. Used to treat
disorders like Parkinson's or
Tourette's, but can be used to
stimulate any area of the brain.

SHARKO
So however they died, they went
through some kind of shock therapy
beforehand?

The examiner shrugs. Bothered, Sharko looks back down at the
skull. Staring at the DARK HOLE drilled into its LEFT TEMPLE.

INT. DOMINICK'S GARAGE - DAY

Dominick puts the DARK FILM REEL back in its cannister.

DOMINICK
If you want, I can post on a rare
film message board. See if anyone
else has ever come across it.

LUCY
Mind transferring it to DVD for me
while you're at it?

DOMINICK
Why?

LUCY
To make it easier to watch.

DOMINICK
You're really gonna watch it *again*?

She shrugs. She might.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
Okay. Anything else?

LUCY
No, that should do it.

DOMINICK

What about, "thank you, Dominick,"
followed by some show of gratitude?

LUCY

Thanks. Really appreciate it.
(checks watch)
Shoot. I need to go.

She turns to leave, he reaches out to grab her arm. She whips around, still on edge from watching the film.

DOMINICK

Whoa, easy there.

LUCY

Just don't like being grabbed like
that.

DOMINICK

Sorry. Thought the point of being
fuck buddies is that you get to
maybe fuck once in a while.

LUCY

I'll come by later. Maybe.

She pulls free. Ducks under the half-opened garage door. He shakes his head, a bit mystified by her behavior.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - DAY

Sharko sits at his desk, searching the FBI's violent crime database on his computer, aka ViCAP Web. He plugs in search terms related to the case: BOYS, AGES 11-14, BRAINS REMOVED...

He hits enter. Gets back: 0 MATCHES.

He tries another route. Loads up the ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE violent crime database (aka ViCLAS). Conducts the same search and gets the same result: 0 MATCHES.

An underling of Sharko's knocks on his door, AGENT GUTIERREZ (20's). Clean cut and fresh out of the academy. The "before picture" to Sharko's "after."

AGENT GUTIERREZ

Agent Sharkovsky? Here's the
results of that search you asked me
to do.

Agent Gutierrez hands Sharko a stack of papers. Sharko starts flipping through them. Sees MISSING CHILDREN REPORTS with accompanying blurry photos.

AGENT GUTIERREZ (CONT'D)
Those are the only open cases that
fit the profile. But they're all
foster kids or runaways...

SHARKO
They go missing all the time.

AGENT GUTIERREZ
Yeah, right. Plus, local guys don't
use a ton of resources to look for
them. Most are probably living on
the street somewhere.

SHARKO
Follow up and let me know if you
find anything that suggests
otherwise.

Agent Gutierrez nods, hops off to do as instructed.

Dismayed, Sharko rotates his head, cracking his neck. He notices the GLOBE that sits on his bookshelf.

Gives him an idea. He loads up INTERPOL'S DATABASE on his computer. Worth a shot.

Conducts the same search and hits enter, not really expecting anything. Surprised when his computer DINGS with a result:

1 MATCHING FILE

Intrigued, Sharko clicks it open. Starts to read...

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Sharko lifts his phone and dials an extension.

SHARKO
I need to be connected to the Legat
in Cairo.

INT. ADIC'S OFFICE - DAY

Sharko bursts in, wound up about something. Not noticing, or caring, that Martin is in the middle of a phone call.

SHARKO

Martin-

Martin puts up his finger, signaling him to wait.

MARTIN

Understood. Soon as I get the
affidavit, I'll kick it over-

Sharko presses down the receiver, hanging up the call.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Fuck, Sharko.

Sharko holds up a SHEET OF PAPER.

SHARKO

Found a case that matches ours.

MARTIN

From where?

SHARKO

Egypt. Cairo to be exact.

Martin gives him a "you can't be serious" look.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Just listen. It's from 2010. Four
Egyptian boys were found dead,
between the ages of twelve and
fourteen. Their skulls sawed off
"with a medical saw," brains
removed, eyes gone!

MARTIN

Take a breath.

SHARKO

I'm telling you, it's the exact
same profile, on the other side of
the planet!

MARTIN

Did you look anywhere closer?

SHARKO

What do you think? Searched on
ViCAP and on ViCLAS. Nothing. Then
I check Interpol for the hell of
it, and this pops up.

Martin holds out his hand, gesturing for Sharko to hand the
telegram over. He reads it for himself.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

The local guy working the case was requesting Interpol assistance. He suspected the killer had left the country and get this, *the case was never solved.*

MARTIN

So we're looking for some kind of Egyptian immigrant?

SHARKO

I wanna go over there, see if I can figure that out.

MARTIN

To Egypt?

SHARKO

I called the attache, but Egyptian police don't send records abroad.

MARTIN

You're gonna go all the way there to look at a cold case file?

SHARKO

And talk to this local detective, "Mahmoud Abd el-Aal." They found the bodies shortly after their deaths. They're bound to have more forensics to work with than we do. Maybe a scrap of DNA, or hair fiber. Something we can connect to the killer.

Martin studies Sharko, unsure.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

You said we need to put this case down fast. Well this is the only lead we got so far, and the clock's ticking.

EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy approaches her front door, but when she puts her key into the lock, she notices that it STICKS a little.

Suspicious, she slowly turns the DOOR KNOB. The door OPENS, already unlocked. Lucy's mind races. Wondering who the fuck would be inside.

She peers through the crack in the door...A BLURRED FIGURE moves past and disappears into the hallway.

Lucy pulls out her SIDE ARM and gently eases the door open, trying not to make a sound.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy keeps close to the wall to remain unseen, gun held with two hands. Following proper procedure to a T.

She slowly makes her way down the hall. Hears the sound of DRAWERS BEING OPENED inside her bedroom.

She reaches the doorway, just out of view. Sees someone's SHADOW moving along the wall.

Lucy prepares herself...Then whips around, GUN POINTED.

LUCY

Freeze!

An OLDER WOMAN screams! Drops the laundry she's holding.

Lucy exhales, lowers her gun. Recognizing her MOTHER, wearing a Buffalo Bills sweatshirt, grey hair held up by a bandana.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Jesus, ma. What are you doing in my house?

MOTHER

I have a key.

LUCY

Yeah, for emergencies.

MOTHER

This place is a disaster zone. It was an emergency.

Lucy shakes her head, puts her gun away.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What the hell's gotten into you? Ready to shoot your own mother.

LUCY

I wasn't gonna-

Before Lucy can finish, her cell phone RINGS.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Next time, just tell me you're
coming over.

She walks out of the room.

EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy exits out the back door to the patio. Answers her phone
while lighting a cigarette.

LUCY
Detective Brennan here.

A MUFFLED VOICE responds, as though some kind of fabric has
been placed over the receiver to disguise it.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
You're a cop?

LUCY
Yeah, who's this?

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
I saw a post online. About a film.

LUCY
Oh, right. Dominick put that up.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
Who?

LUCY
Just an idiot who thought it'd be
cute to give out my number. You
know something about it?

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
If you're really a cop, you have to
promise you'll follow up on the
information I'm about to give you.

LUCY
Uh, yeah, sure.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
That wasn't very convincing...

LUCY
No, hold on. I will. I promise.

Silence.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You still there-

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
The people who made that film were
trying to corrupt minds. Turn them
violent.

LUCY
Whose minds?

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
Adolescent boys. They started with
them. Then branched out. Cutting
open skulls. Collecting "samples."

Lucy's silent, not at all sure what to make of this.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's all part of the same project.
It's all connected to Syndrome E.

LUCY
What's that?

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
I don't have time to explain.
They've probably traced this call
and are on their way.

LUCY
Who is-

CLICK, the line goes dead.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Hello?

He's gone.

EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy squeals her car to a stop in front, and runs up to the
porch. POUNDS on Dominick's door.

LUCY
Dominick. Open up.

No one answers.

LUCY (CONT'D)
C'mon, I know your shift doesn't
start til 5...I need the copy of
that film.

Still no response. Nothing stirs.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Alright, I'm coming in. Now'd be a
good time to zip up.

She goes to one of the many PLANTERS sitting on the porch,
tilts it up to find the SPARE KEY hidden underneath.

INT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - DAY

She enters. The house is silent and still.

LUCY
Dom?

No one answers her. He doesn't appear to be home. She opens
the door leading to the basement and yells...

LUCY (CONT'D)
You down there?

He doesn't seem to be. She continues towards the back of the
house, through the living room and into

INT. DOMINICK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Filled with old photography and film equipment. The walls
covered with obscure Korean Horror Movie posters.

She goes to a shelf filled with FILM CANISTERS. She scans
them all, but doesn't find the one she wants.

She goes to his DESK by the window, where his large computer
monitor and tower reside.

She hits the EJECT button on the keyboard...

JANET LEIGH SCREAMING pops up on the monitor, from the shower
scene in PSYCHO. Lucy's heart jumps into her throat.

A LOG-IN WINDOW appears on screen, asking for the PASSWORD.
Lucy types the first thing that comes to mind and hits ENTER.

The log-in window SHAKES. Incorrect.

Lucy thinks harder. Going through the various possibilities. Then it hits her.

She types something in (LEYTONSTONE1899 for those paying attention). Hits ENTER.

This time she's right. Dominick's DESKTOP APPEARS, covered in a disorganized array of folders and files.

Lucy hits the EJECT BUTTON again. The computer tray opens, bearing a shiny, SILVER DVD.

INT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy walks out of the bedroom, tucking the DVD into her jacket pocket. She notices that the door leading out to the garage is slightly ajar. She rolls her eyes. That's where Dominick's been this whole time.

INT. DOMINICK'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Lucy comes through the door.

LUCY
Hey, didn't you hear me-

She stops, smelling something AWFUL. Places one hand over her nose and mouth, uses the other one to flip the light switch.

Dominick lies DEAD on the floor, a GUN IN HIS HAND. The back of his skull blown out.

EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy leans against her car, completely rattled. Watching as PARAMEDICS wheel a body bag out of the front door and towards a waiting ambulance. Dan trails out after them, approaches Lucy with a sympathetic look.

DAN
How you holding up?

LUCY
Doesn't make any sense. He seemed totally fine when I saw him.

Dan nods, at a loss for what to say.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I asked him to transfer that film.
What if watching it again drove him
to do it?

DAN
This is a film we're talking about?

She knows how it sounds.

DAN (CONT'D)
My wife made me sit through Sex and
the City 2. Mighta felt like
killing myself, but didn't actually
go through with it.

His attempt at levity goes over like a lead balloon.

DAN (CONT'D)
Anywho, this film of yours is
nowhere to be found.

LUCY
What?

DAN
Had officers search the entire
house, top to bottom. So far, no
one's spotted the reel...
(checking notes)
With "fifty fps" written on it.

LUCY
Then have them keep looking! Only
way it'd be gone is if he got rid
of it or...

DAN
Or what?

She meets his eyes, alarmed by another possibility.

INT. SHARKO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sharko finishes packing a small duffel bag sitting on top of
his bed. Jamming in some light weight clothing without
bothering to fold anything.

He's about to zip up when his cell phone RINGS.

SHARKO
(answering)
Yeah?

He pinches his brow at what he's hearing.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Sharko's sidled up to the bar. He checks his watch, jittery. Wanting to get this over with.

LUCY (O.S.)
Agent Sharkovsky?

He turns, sees Lucy approaching. Harried from the drive, but still more attractive than he was expecting.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I'm Detective Brennan. Drove down
from Rochester fast as I could.

SHARKO
Let's cut to the chase detective. I
have to get to the airport soon.

She's thrown by his directness.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
You said on the phone you had
something for me?

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

They've moved to a BACK BOOTH. Lucy leans forward, speaking in hushed tones.

LUCY
I tried to find out more about it
online, ended up getting a call
from a guy claiming it's connected
to something called Syndrome E...

SHARKO
What's that mean?

LUCY
Hell if I know-

SHARKO
No, that.

He points to a small CHINESE CHARACTER tattooed on her wrist.

LUCY
It's Chinese for stupid idea. Are
you even listening to me?

SHARKO

(not missing a beat)

The film was made in Canada, in 1961. Someone sent it into Kodak for processing, never picked it up. You received a call from a man claiming it's connected to something called "Syndrome E."

LUCY

Well, he also said the people who made the film wanted to "corrupt the minds of young boys." Then started talking about *cutting open skulls* to collect samples.

Sharko meets her eyes directly. Feels a slight pull; only makes him want to push her away.

LUCY (CONT'D)

That's why I reached out...

SHARKO

I hope you're not *that* stupid detective.

LUCY

Excuse me.

SHARKO

The part about the skulls being cut open was leaked to the press.

LUCY

Yeah, that's how I knew about it.

SHARKO

That's probably where this caller got it from too.

LUCY

Thought about that. So I looked into the number he called from. Belongs to a pay phone *in Canada*, just six hours from Lake Erie...

She slides him a map. The location he was calling from CIRCLED IN RED. Sharko picks it up and considers it.

SHARKO

It's called a great lake for a reason. A lot of people live within six hours of it. Even you.

LUCY

Look, I thought he was a prank caller too, til my friend turned up dead!

Sharko looks confused, wasn't expecting that.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Shot through the head, like he did it himself.

SHARKO

"Like" he did it himself?

LUCY

I don't think that's what happened. I think someone killed him to get their hands on the film, which is missing by the way.

SHARKO

Quite a theory.

Sharko downs his drink. Abruptly gets up.

EXT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Sharko heads out the door, Lucy on his heels.

LUCY

Hey! What the fuck's your problem? I came all the way down here to help you.

SHARKO

Is that what you're doing? Helping?

LUCY

I'm telling you, this film has something to do with those murders.

SHARKO

Okay, I'm listening. How's it connected?

She doesn't have a ready answer.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

I have five dead kids on my hand and you're going on about some home movie made fifty years ago. How could that possibly be relevant?

LUCY

This is no normal film I'm talking about! It does things to you.

SHARKO

What kind of things.

LUCY

It's like, it makes you come face to face with your worst fear.

SHARKO

So it gave you nightmares?

LUCY

No! It was more real than that! You need to watch it to understand what I mean.

SHARKO

Too bad it's been stolen.

She digs into her pocket, pulls out a DVD.

LUCY

Whoever took it didn't know my friend made me a copy.

SHARKO

(resistent)

I told you, I'm about to leave town. To follow up an *actual lead*.

He turns and walks away.

LUCY

Maybe this doesn't have anything to do with happened to those kids. But what if it does? You really willing to risk not knowing for sure?

He stops in his tracks. She's got him there.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sharko hits EJECT on a computer's CD-Rom drive. Drops the disk into the tray. Looks at Lucy hovering by the door.

LUCY

I'll wait outside.

She slips out and closes the door behind her.

Sharko shows the slightest hint of trepidation. Not sure what he's in for.

He takes a breath, and clicks PLAY. After a moment of blackness, the COUNTDOWN LEADER begins...

Sharko stares at the screen as the CIRCUS MUSIC starts up.

We stay on his face as he watches. His expression's stony, but there are slight twitches as the film progresses. As though some images are slipping past his defenses. We move closer and closer, zeroing in on HIS EYES, until they fill the screen. The last moment of the film--the bull charging the boy--can be seen reflected in his pupils...

Sharko BLINKS. Then sits there, still for a long moment. Processing in the dark, quiet office...

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Lucy waits outside, drawing curious stares from the few employees working after hours.

The door to Sharko's office finally opens. Sharko steps out.

LUCY

So?

He shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)

It didn't do anything to you?

SHARKO

Yeah. It stole five minutes from my life I wish I had back.

She can't believe it.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Now if you don't mind, I have a flight to catch.

She takes DVD back from him, a little humiliated.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Sharko sits on the large, international jet, crammed into a coach seat. The only sound the HUM of the engine. Sharko pours over the case file on his tray table, re-reading the examiner's report. Obsessively going over every detail.

As he reads, a WIND-UP TOY rolls up the aisle...past a few PASSENGERS' FEET, until it gently bumps into Sharko's shoe.

Sharko glances down. The toy unsettles him for some reason.

He picks it up. Looks over his shoulder for its owner-

Glimpses a DEAD BOY covered in blood, standing in the aisle.

Sharko leaps out of his seat, startled. Sees that it's actually just a NORMAL LITTLE BOY. He starts crying, alarmed by Sharko's reaction.

The boy's MOTHER retrieves him, trying to comfort him.

MOTHER

What happened?

SHARKO

I'm sorry. I thought...

He doesn't know how to explain. He holds out the toy. She takes it back, suspicious.

Sharko sits back down, shaken by what he "saw." Perhaps that film had an effect on him after all...

EXT. EGYPTIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Sharko steps out of a A320 PLANE and reacts to the hot air like he's been slapped in the face.

A TITLE tells us he's in: CAIRO, EGYPT

Sharko shields his eyes from the intense sun. Feels like he just landed at the gates of hell.

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Sharko walks past the security checkpoint, shiny with sweat. EGYPTIAN MILITARY stand post with overlarge assault weapons. A crowd of LOCALS anxiously await the new arrivals, held back by a banister. Squeezed in among the throng, an EGYPTIAN DRIVER holds a sign with SHARKOVSKY written in black marker.

INT/EXT MERCEDES - DAY

Sharko is let into the vehicle by the driver and ducks into the backseat. He finds two people waiting inside, an IMPOSING MAN wearing a colonial style shirt riding shotgun, and a BEAUTIFUL EGYPTIAN WOMAN across from him in the back.

IMPOSING MAN

I'm Michael Bruin, from the embassy.

Sharko shakes his hand. Looks over at the woman.

BRUIN

And this is Nahed Sayyed, one of our interpreters. She'll accompany you around the city and help facilitate your dealings with the police.

NAHED offers her hand with a Mona Lisa smile, long black hair framing an enchanting pair of eyes.

NAHED

A pleasure.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The sedan merges onto the Salah-Salem highway, which leads straight into the guts of Cairo.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Sharko stares out his window at the chaotic city swarming around them.

Minarets and gold-roofed mosques gleam in the dust. Fruit stalls and hawkers of automobile parts jut into the crowded lanes of the street. Men push wheelbarrows full of bricks, others lead worn-out mules. Veiled women dart through traffic in all directions.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The chief of police, HASSAN NOURREDINE (50s), sits behind his large desk, looking both intimidating and jittery. A lit cigarillo sticks out beneath his thin mustache, his eyes darting between Sharko and Nahed, seated across from him.

He holds up a MANILLA FOLDER and says something in EGYPTIAN ARABIC (note: none of his dialogue will be subtitled).

NAHED

(translating)

He says everything is in the file.
He says you're lucky he was able to find it.

SHARKO

After I take a look, I'd like to visit the places where the abductions occurred.

Nourredine shows annoyance. Says something in an angry tone.

NAHED

He says America got to poke their noses wherever they wanted with Muburak, but times have changed.

SHARKO

I'd just like to understand how these boys found themselves in the hands of this killer. He left a scent, they all do, even years later. I want to get a whiff.

Nourredine stands, signaling an end to the conversation. Says something as he snuffs out his cigar in the ashtray.

NAHED

He says there's an office next door. You're welcome to go use it to look at the file. But that's the extent of the help he can offer.

SHARKO

Could I at least talk to the detective that worked the case?

Nahed asks. Nourredine gives a grave response.

NAHED

Unfortunately, Detective Abd el-Aal is dead.

SHARKO

(thrown)
How did that happen?

Nourredine gives the explanation.

NAHED

In an accident...He says, in this country, one has to be very careful to watch where you are going.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A GUARD leads Sharko and Nahed into a room only containing a desk and two chairs. No window. The door shuts behind them.

Liking this less and less, Sharko opens the thin file and lays the contents out on the desk. A sheet of paper and a few forensic PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE VICTIMS. We only glimpse the graphic images, but it's enough to turn your stomach.

Sharko picks up a single-page report, filled out in Arabic, and hands it to her. She scans the document.

NAHED

It's the autopsy report. Some of the language is a bit technical.

SHARKO

Do your best.

NAHED

It says they found traces of some kind of powerful narcotic in the bodies.

(sounding it out)

Sux-a-meth-onium.

SHARKO

What's that? A sedative? Or tranquilizer?

NAHED

It doesn't say. But the examiner believed the skulls were cut open while the victims were still alive-

Sharko slams his fist down onto the desk, making Nahed jump.

SHARKO

Fuck, it's hot in here.

He takes the single-sheet report, lets it drop to the table.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

They expect me to believe there's no more than this? Just a few photos and a single report? No notes about the investigation? Not a scrap of physical evidence?

NAHED

Don't be too shocked. Here, they go for action over paperwork.

SHARKO

Interpol received a very thorough telegram more than three months after the bodies were discovered.

(MORE)

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Only a persistent and committed cop would have sent it. And then not long after, he ends up dead...

NAHED

I'm not sure what to tell you. I'm here simply to translate.

SHARKO

I need you to find me Abd el-Aal's address. He must have a widow, maybe children or brothers.

She doesn't understand.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Maybe he told them something that didn't make it into the file, or got taken out. Maybe they can tell me more about how he died.

NAHED

We're not permitted to do anything without Chief Nourredine's consent.

SHARKO

He's stonewalling me!

He points down to the table.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Look at them. You were once the same age. Don't you want to help find the monster that did this?

Her eyes drift to the horrific images.

INT. COPTIC CHURCH - AFTERNOON

A CARVED JESUS on the cross faces us, his head bleeding from the crown of thorns.

Sharko sits on a bench, pondering the martyred messiah. Nahed slips into the pew and sits down next to him.

NAHED

I trust you found the church okay. We'll be unlikely to run into anyone familiar here.

SHARKO

What about you? You find what we were looking for?

Nahed looks over her shoulders, to make sure the PRAYING COPTICS aren't watching them. She pulls out a folded piece of paper and hands it to him.

NAHED

The address of our detective's brother. Atef Abd el-Aal.

Sharko looks at her, immensely pleased.

EXT. TALAAT HARB STREET - EVENING

A European styled street that runs through the center of Cairo, lined with old buildings bearing Haussmannian facades.

Nahed wedges her FIAT into a tight parking space. She and Sharko emerge from the compact vehicle.

INT. ANTIQUE ELEVATOR - EVENING

As they ascend, Nahed pulls a hijab from her purse and covers her head and her face. Sharko glances at her, curious.

NAHED

It would be silly if he refused to talk because of some religious scruple.

SHARKO

What else did you find out about him?

NAHED

He was a vendor, raised in a slum, but today he owns a factory that makes shirts, a successful business that started taking off after his brother's death.

DING. The elevator's arrived at their floor.

EXT. ROOF - EVENING

Multicolored lamps hanging from cables bob in the wind. On all sides, TENANTS sit in armchairs and lie on mattresses, watching lit televisions that pierce the approaching night.

Nahed and Sharko make their way through, receiving suspicious glances from all they pass.

They approach a FEW RECLINING MEN, smoking a hookah with blood-shot eyes. As soon as they see Nahed, they shout out at her, in an accusatory tone. She answers them, keeping her voice calm and polite. They give her a curt answer and point.

SHARKO
What were they saying?

NAHED
(to Sharko)
He's over there.

Sharko senses that's not all, but doesn't pry.

EXT. TERRACE - EVENING

A man with slicked-down hair, wearing a nicely cut suit and shined shoes, sits near the edge of the roof, filling out a puzzle in the newspaper. This is ATEF (40s).

NAHED (O.S.)
Salamu Alaykum.

Atef looks up at her, but doesn't respond. Gives her and the very out of place Sharko a wary once over.

Nahed explains in ARABIC who they are and what they're doing there. Sharko pulls out his FBI ID, and shows it to him.

SHARKO
Ask him if he knows anything about
the case his brother was working on
before he died.

She does. Atef answers, and turns his attention back to his newspaper puzzle, scrawling in an answer.

NAHED
He says his brother was very
secretive. Never talked about his
investigations.

Sharko removes a PHOTO of one of the victims he stashed in his pocket. Atef reacts to the grisly image.

SHARKO
What about him?

Nahed gives Sharko an angry look, realizing he stole it.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
Your brother never showed you his
face?

Sharko puts the image right in front of him. Atef ERUPTS.

ATEF

Izhab mine houna! Izhab mine houna!
Sawf attacilous bil chourta!

NAHED

He's ordering us to leave or he'll
 call the police.

Atef comes forward and shoves Sharko aggressively. Sharko stands his ground. People on the roof get to their feet and begin approaching. Situation feels increasingly dangerous.

NAHED (CONT'D)

I think we should go.

SHARKO

He's hiding something.

Atef attacks with more shoving and slaps. Sharko catches his hands to stop the onslaught.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Do that again, I'll break this.

As Atef pulls his fist free, he SLIPS SOMETHING into Sharko's hand. Sharko meets his eyes, questioning...

ATEF

(leading)

Izhab mine houna.

Sharko backs away, taking Nahed by the elbow.

SHARKO

(to Nahed)

Come on, let's get out of here
 before we start a riot.

They push through the crowd that has formed behind them. The onlookers hissing *TSSS, TSSS* from all sides.

EXT. TALAAT HARB DISTRICT - EVENING

Sharko and Nahed exit out of the building.

NAHED

You shouldn't have stolen that
 photo!

SHARKO

What do you care?

NAHED

You can be sure Nouredine will
spot it and notify the embassy!

She heads for her car, upset. He lets her get in front of him...and opens his hand, revealing a torn piece of NEWSPRINT with the hastily scrawled words:

TEWFIKIEH BAR, ONE HOUR. SHE'S WATCHING YOU.

Sharko looks up at Nahed, taking off her Hajib. She glances at him as she prepares to unlock the driver's side door.

NAHED (CONT'D)

Are you coming?

He crumples the note in his fist.

SHARKO

Funny. With the veil off, you have
a completely different face.

NAHED

I'm not sure what you mean.

She turns her key and all the cars doors UNLOCK. Sharko makes no move to get inside.

SHARKO

I'm going to head back to the
hotel. It's been a very long day.

NAHED

Fine. I'll drive you.

SHARKO

Got a map when I checked in. I can
find my way, it's not that far.

He starts going before she can protest. She watches him, anxious. Like an owner whose dog has slipped its leash.

INT. TEWFIKIEH BAR - NIGHT

Sharko steps into a dimly lit bar, air clogged with smoke.

The PATRONS check out the latest arrival, sticking out like a sore thumb. Sharko's surprised at how attractive the clientele is. Young and flamboyantly dressed...and ALL MEN.

Sharko makes a beeline for the bar. The TWINK BARTENDER, wearing a cut-off shirt looks at Sharko questioningly.

SHARKO
Auld Stag. Lots of ice.

An ANDROGENOUS TWENTY SOMETHING sidles up to Sharko.

ADROGENOUS TWENTY SOMETHING
Koudiana or barghal, "please?"

SHARKO
No thanks. And fuck off, "please."

Sharko snatches his drink. Leaving enough Egyptian Pounds to cover it.

INT. TEWFIKIEH BAR - NIGHT

Sharko takes refuge in a dark corner. He pulls one of the ice cubes from the drink and rubs it against the back of his neck. He brings the full glass of whisky towards his lips...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I wouldn't drink that.

Sharko looks, finds Atef approaching.

ATEF
They say a young painter went blind after drinking whisky here. The owner makes his own liquor to double his profits.

SHARKO
You speak damn good English.

ATEF
I've long held a fascination with your country. Dreamed of moving there some day. A place that truly embraces freedom.

Atef claps his hand to get a WAITER'S attention and holds up two fingers. Looks back at Sharko.

ATEF (CONT'D)
Give me back the note. I don't want to leave any trace of our meeting.

Sharko complies, digs out the note from his pocket.

SHARKO
You think you're being watched?

ATEF
I don't "think" it.

Atef burns the note in the candle sitting on the table.

SHARKO
What about the people around us?
They've seen us together.

ATEF
We'll always deny having seen one
of our own here, no matter what.
That's why I chose it.

The waiter drops two IMPORTED BEERS on the table.

INT. TEWFIKIEH BAR - LATER

Their beers are partially emptied. Atef is in the middle of answering Sharko's last question.

ATEF
Mahmoud was a brilliant and
dedicated detective. Falling in
front of the metro was no accident.
Someone wanted him to disappear.

SHARKO
Why?

ATEF
Because of that case you're so
curious about. Some powerful force
wanted to keep it quiet.

SHARKO
Who'd want to cover up the murder
of young boys?

ATEF
I was hoping you could tell me.

Sharko's stumped.

SHARKO
Did your brother tell you anything?
Details? Any points in common among
the victims?

ATEF
Only that they were all from the
slums. That, and the trash heap
where their bodies were found.

SHARKO
(perks up)
Do you know where that is?

ATEF
Of course.

SHARKO
Could you take me there?

Atef thinks it over.

ATEF
If it might help shed light on my
brother's death, I suppose it's my
obligation.

EXT. TEWFIKIEH BAR - NIGHT

Atef exits the dark alley that leads to the bar, followed a short beat later by Sharko. They go opposite ways without any goodbye or acknowledgement.

EXT. NIGHT MARKET - NIGHT

Tipsy and jet-lagged, Sharko stumbles in the direction of his hotel. Surrounded by a dizzying swirl of sights and sounds. VENDORS hocking goods, and CLIENTELE negotiating prices.

He comes across a group of BUTCHERS, hacking up a COW.

A swarm of VEILED WOMEN push forward to buy the fresh meat. Sharko pushes out the opposite way, to get free of the crowd.

As he does, he sees a familiar figure, watching him from a slight distance. HASSAN NOURREDINE, the chief of police, changed into civilian clothes.

Sensing he's been spotted, Nourredine turns and heads down a side street.

Sharko shoves people out of the way to open a path, but the human flow of traffic jostles him and slows his progress.

By the time he arrives at the side street, Nourredine has vanished. Sharko blinks, not entirely sure he was ever there.

INT. CAIRO HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sharko comes in from the hallway, drenched with SWEAT, clutching a BUCKET OF ICE.

He walks past the door leading to the balcony...where the DARK FIGURE OF A BOY stands just outside.

Sharko whips towards the figure, spooked. But there's no one there. Sharko stares, feeling like he's starting to lose it.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sharko dumps the ice into the filling claw-foot tub.

Undressed, he plunges into the bath. Hoping to cool his overheated mind and body.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DAY

Agent Gutierrez is led inside by a female SOCIAL WORKER, following up on a missing foster kid, per Sharko's orders.

Loud sounds of a VIDEO GAME being played fill the house. Gunfire and explosions. A few FOSTER KIDS sit on the stairs, eyeing him suspiciously. A few others run through the house at full speed. Agent Gutierrez just misses a collision.

SOCIAL WORKER

Sorry. It's always a bit of controlled chaos in here.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

Kids seem happy at least.

SOCIAL WORKER

Yeah, one moment. The next it's get the fuck out of my face you stupid bitch. But hey, that's the job.

She cuts into her OFFICE. Agent Gutierrez follows.

INT. SOCIAL WORKER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A mess of files, paper work, and children's drawings tacked to the wall.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

What about Jason Miller? Ever have any problems with him?

SOCIAL WORKER

He certainly had his moments. Have to say, I'm surprised him going missing got the FBI's attention.

Agent Gutierrez doesn't fill her in as to why.

SOCIAL WORKER (CONT'D)

You think something mighta happened to him?

AGENT GUTIERREZ

Not necessarily. But just to be safe, could you give me a list of people Jason was in regular contact with? Teachers, parents.

SOCIAL WORKER

Sure.

She sits down, begins writing it out on a yellow pad.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

And any people he mighta met right before going missing...

SOCIAL WORKER

Like I told the cops, couldn't really think of anyone, other than the representative from social services.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

What representative?

SOCIAL WORKER

Just this older guy. Was working on some government funded study, about violent behavior among wards of the state, or something like that. Asked to meet some of my "worst offenders."

AGENT GUTIERREZ

Might as well give me his name too.

SOCIAL WORKER

Assuming I still got his card...

She searches through her desk. Finds a BUSINESS CARD.

SOCIAL WORKER (CONT'D)

Here you go.

INT/EXT ATEF'S CAR - NEXT DAY

Sharko sits in the passenger seat of the Peugeot as Atef drives through the outskirts of the city. Sharko looks completely exhausted, frayed.

Outside, BAREFOOT YOUNG BOYS notice the Westerner and rush at the car, begging for change with loud voices and dirty faces.

ATEF (O.S.)
Like the poor souls whose lives
were taken. No one cared except my
brother.

Sharko thinks about that. Rolls down his window and drops his wad of EGYPTIAN POUNDS. The young boys excitedly collect it.

ATEF (CONT'D)
Won't make much of a difference I'm
afraid.

SHARKO
I'm leaving today. Do them more
good than me.

EXT. GARBAGE DUMP - DAY

Atef's car pulls over at the end of the road. Literally, the pavement just stops. Sharko gets out. Winces at the powerful stench.

ATEF
Welcome to Cairo's splendid trash
city.

Sharko goes to the edge and sees blue and black garbage bags, swollen with heat and rot, far as the eye can see.

SHARKO
How were the bodies found in all
this?

ATEF
One of the Zabbaleen came across
them. Reported it hoping for a
reward no doubt.

SHARKO
The Zabba what?

ATEF
The garbage people.

Atef points and Sharko follows his finger. Sees heaps of rusted tins and metal drums combined into a shanty town. Pigs and goats roaming. And beyond, Sharko notices SHIMMYING FIGURES climbing down an unstable mountain of refuse.

Sharko hears an unnerving COCKING sound behind him. He spins.

Finds Atef aiming a HAND GUN at him.

Thrown, Sharko instinctively makes a move--Atef PISTOL WHIPS him. Sharko goes down to a knee, dazed. He fumbles for his gun, but Atef pistol whips him again.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucy sits at her kitchen table. Every light in the apartment turned on, along with the television and loud music.

She stares at her laptop, re-watching the film, hoping to cushion its impact with other stimuli.

She sees the boy on the swing, then playing, then his face close-up. The boy turns to speak to someone off camera.

Lucy suddenly notices something she hadn't seen before. Quickly hits a key to pause it.

She ZOOMS IN.

Zeroing in on the side of the boy's head. She can see a small, centipede shaped SURGICAL SCAR on his temple. Mostly healed over, but unmistakable.

INT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

The cell phone in Sharko's pant pocket BUZZES.

Sharko's eyes slowly open at the noise...bound and gagged with duct-tape inside the trunk of Atef's car. His nostrils start flaring, struggling to breathe in the intense heat.

The car comes to a stop. Sharko waits and listens. Hears the driver's door open, then FOOTSTEPS crunching the sand outside the car as Atef makes his way to the back.

There's a CLINK of the key coming into the lock and the trunk hood is flung open, blinding Sharko in searing sunlight. Atef reaches in and yanks Sharko out.

EXT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Sharko gets his feet on the ground, but nearly falls. Atef has to help hold him up and keep him steady. He pulls out his gun and keeps it at Sharko's head.

ATEF
Walk, and don't try anything
foolish.

He drags Sharko towards a half-built structure far out in the desert. Roof barely held up by crumbling cinder-block walls.

INT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Atef shoves Sharko down into a metal chair. He rips open his shirt and wraps more duct tape around his chest, attaching his torso to the back of the chair.

Atef pats down Sharko, finds the bulge of his cell phone. He reaches in and removes the cell phone and looks at it.

ATEF
You have a message.
(he listens to it)
A woman from your country...you
getting off with her? She has
something she wanted to tell you.

Atef puts the phone in his pocket.

ATEF (CONT'D)
Too bad you won't be able to call
her back.

Atef disappears into an adjoining room.

Sharko furiously tries to break free of his restraints, to no avail. His eyes dart around, looking for some escape.

He spots some loose SHARDS of glass on the floor...

Atef returns, carrying a CAR BATTERY with alligator clamps and a CAN OF GASOLINE. Atef sets them down and rips off the duct tape over Sharko's mouth. Sharko coughs violently, spitting up a thread of bile.

SHARKO
Your brother. It was you...

ATEF

He could never accept my sexuality. Thanks to him, I spent thirty days in Qasr el-Nil, where the guards were fond of shoving nightsticks up my ass.

SHARKO

Who are you working for?

ATEF

Would you believe me if I said I have no idea. All I know is they wanted Mahmoud stopped from looking into that affair and they pay me like a sultan. Allowed me to become a person of respect.

Atef attaches the alligator clamps to the battery, and touches the loose ones together, sending sparks flying.

ATEF (CONT'D)

Tell me about your murders. What evidence have you collected?

Sharko hardens his face, preparing. Atef jabs the alligator clamps into Sharko's bare chest, electrocuting him. Sharko clenches his teeth.

ATEF (CONT'D)

(removing clamps)

Do you have any suspects?

Sharko just stares him down, defiant.

Atef picks up the GASOLINE CAN. He sprinkles a little on Sharko's head, Sharko clenches his eyelids.

ATEF (CONT'D)

If you don't start answering, I'm going to burn you a little, then leave you here. The hyenas and vultures will make a meal of you within hours.

SHARKO

Fuck...you.

Atef slams him in the face with the can. Sharko looks woozy, like he might pass out. Atef slaps him to keep him awake.

ATEF

Not yet, my employers wanted to make sure I ask about "Syndrome E?"

Sharko reacts to the familiar term.

ATEF (CONT'D)

Ah, you know what that is? I have
no idea, but they were insistent I
find out what you know about it.

SHARKO

(bluffing)

I know...everything.

Sharko lunges, still bound to the chair. He rams into Atef
and drives him backwards...

FLASH TO:

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucy watching the film. The BULL CHARGES OUT OF THE GATE...

INT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Sharko slams Atef into the wall, a piece of REBAR pierces
through his chest.

Sharko falls to his side, on the debris covered floor.

He uses his legs to drag himself to the SHARDS OF GLASS. He
struggles to get a large piece in his hands, difficult with
wrists bound and without being able to see.

Finally, he grips one and maneuvers the pointed end through
the duct tape binding his hands. Once there's a tear, he
pulls his wrists apart with all his remaining strength.

Sharko unwraps the tape attaching him to the chair and gets
to his feet. He looks towards Atef...

But Atef has transformed into someone else: a bone-skinny
WHITE MAN WITH NECK TATTOOS.

Sharko's face clenches with recognition.

SHARKO

It was you! You killed them!

Sharko picks up the GASOLINE CAN. Heads towards the man...

FLASH TO:

THE BULL RUSHES TOWARDS THE BOY...FASTER AND FASTER.

INT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Sharko stomps forward. Hellbent on inflicting as much damage as possible.

The tattooed man looks back scared, coughing up blood. Unable to speak because of a punctured lung.

Sharko dumps the GASOLINE all over him.

He frisks his pant pockets. Removes his cell phone, a wallet, car keys and, finally, a CIGARETTE LIGHTER.

Sharko flicks it and sets the man ABLAZE.

FLASH TO:

THE BOY SLICES THE NECK OF THE BULL OPEN. BLOOD SPILLS OUT.

INT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Sharko steps away from the hot flames, looks up to the man's face...

He has turned back into ATEF!

Writhing in terrible agony...

Sharko's expression changes. Horrified. Realizing he's had another hallucination. Realizing what he's done...

EXT. ABANDONED STRUCTURE - DAY

Sharko flees the structure, the wooden roof sending flames into the sky, fueled by the strong desert wind.

He gets into Atef's car and zooms away, kicking up a cloud of dust in his wake.

INT. ATEF'S CAR - DAY

Sharko keeps his eyes locked on the shimmering city of Cairo in the far distance, never once looking in the rearview.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

An EGYPT AIR plane lands on the runway.

INT. JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Sharko approaches CUSTOMS, looking like he's been to hell and back. The AGENT gives him a serious once over.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Anything to declare?

Sharko just shakes his head. The customs agent looks at his ID, sees he's with the FBI and sends him through.

INT. TOWNCAR - NIGHT

Sharko finds Martin waiting for him in the back seat.

MARTIN
State department's been up my ass
all day on account of you.

Sharko says nothing, worried they somehow found out.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
What were you thinking...slipping
your escort?

SHARKO
(breathes)
I had to.

MARTIN
You *had* to?

SHARKO
I was being watched.

MARTIN
By who?

SHARKO
The police chief. Translator too.

MARTIN
Why would they be watching you?

SHARKO
Because...This case is about
something more than just a serial
killer.

MARTIN
What's it about?

SHARKO
(hesitant)
Something called Syndrome E.

Martin just gives him raised eyebrows.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
I don't know what that is yet, but
someone is trying very hard to make
sure I don't find out. They killed
the detective over there just for
sniffing around.

MARTIN
Do you realize how all this sounds?
Especially when you factor in you
looking the way you do.

SHARKO
I don't care. I know it's got
something to do with the murders in
Egypt, so good chance it's
connected to ours too.

MARTIN
And what makes you *know* all that?

Sharko doesn't know how to explain without telling him
everything.

SHARKO
I just do.

MARTIN
You know that's not gonna fly-

SHARKO
They stopped me from finding
anything concrete. I hit a dead
end.

Sharko looks out his window. Ending the conversation. Martin
eyes him, concerned.

INT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Sharko stumbles into his bedroom, exhausted and wired at
once. He kneels and pulls out something that's hidden
underneath his mattress: a MANILA FOLDER.

He sits on the edge of the bed and opens it, revealing
several old NEWSPAPER ARTICLES.

He rifles through, and finds the article he's looking for:
INTOXICATED DRIVER KILLS TWO.

Next to it, a black and white picture of the WHITE GUY WITH
NECK TATTOOS (the one he imagined burning alive).

Sharko stares at the picture.

FLASHES TO:

Atef's burning face, contorted in pain.

A BUZZING interrupts the nightmarish vision...

INT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Sharko snaps out of the memory. He retrieves his VIBRATING
CELL PHONE from his pocket.

SHARKO

Hey.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lucy perks up, surprised to get him.

LUCY

You don't call people back or what?

EXT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - NIGHT (INTERCUT AS NECESSARY)

Sharko recognizes her voice, not quite sure he's in the mood.

SHARKO

Isn't it a little late to be
calling?

LUCY

I found out your plane landed at
ten. Figured you wouldn't be asleep
yet.

SHARKO

Don't think I'll be sleeping
anytime soon.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT (INTERCUT AS NECESSARY)

Lucy's not sure what elicited this confession.

LUCY
You alright?

He doesn't answer. Not alright.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Something happen on your trip?

SHARKO
You were right about that film.

LUCY
Right how?

SHARKO
After I watched it, I started
seeing things.

LUCY
What kind of things?

SHARKO
Things I never wanted to see again.

LUCY
I know what you mean.

SHARKO
Come to my office tomorrow, bring
the dvd with you. I'd like to have
it analyzed.

LUCY
Did you get my message? I noticed
something-

SHARKO
We can talk about it in person.
Don't want to do it over the phone.

LUCY
Why? You think someone could be
listening in?

SHARKO
I don't know what I think.
Goodnight detective.

He hangs up. He looks back at the article in his hand.

His eyes lock onto the text: MOTHER AND HER CHILD.

He looks up, something in his head clicking.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sharko rifles through that stack of MISSING CHILDREN PHOTOS he'd looked at earlier--all boys aged 11-15--and tacks them to his bulletin board.

He mumbles, working at a feverish pace. Picture after picture goes up on the board. Hard to tell if this is a breakthrough or more madness.

He finishes and takes a step back. The bulletin board covered with the faces of the missing, 15-20 in all.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Lucy is led through the bull pen by Agent Gutierrez.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

You here about those missing kids?
I'm the one handling that side of
the investigation.

LUCY

No, it's about something else.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

What?

LUCY

Sorry. Think he wanted it for his
eyes only.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

Okay, well, Agent Sharkovksy's
office is right over there.

Lucy heads there. Agent Gutierrez eyes her, curious, before heading back to his

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Picks up the BUSINESS CARD the social worker gave him. He dials the NUMBER on it. Gets an AUTOMATED RECORDING.

AUTOMATED RECORDING

The number you're trying to reach
has been disconnected, or is no
longer in service.

Agent Gutierrez hangs up, frustrated. His part of the investigation seems to be leading nowhere.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - DAY

Lucy eases open the door. Finds Sharko staring at a MOUNTED TV displaying CNN. The news ticker reads: NO SUSPECTS IN SERIAL KILLER CASE.

LUCY
Knock knock.

He turns, as though snapping out of the trance.

SHARKO
Come in and close the door.

She does. Then notices the bulletin board. Sharko has drawn multiple arrows leading from the missing children pictures to the words SYNDROME E??? Looks a little unhinged.

LUCY
Guess you're finally taking me seriously...

SHARKO
Syndrome E came up in another context.

LUCY
So you took someone else's word for it but not mine?

SHARKO
They gave me reason to believe.

She scoffs, offended.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
What was it you wanted to tell me on the phone?

LUCY
I took another look at the film. Noticed that the boy in it has some kind of scar-

SHARKO
Where?

LUCY
Here.

She touches his temple. Sharko pulls back, alarmed. By her touch, but also by the revelation.

LUCY (CONT'D)
That mean something to you?

SHARKO
The five skeletons we found had
holes drilled in the exact same
spot.

LUCY
(re: bulletin board)
You think all these could be more
victims?

SHARKO
Don't know. All. Some. They're all
foster kids.

LUCY
Yeah...

SHARKO
Which also makes them perfect
targets. Just like the slum kids in
Egypt. No mothers. No fathers. No
one caring, so no real alarms would
be set off. Wouldn't even make the
papers.

He steps closer to the board to point a few out.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
Six disappeared in just the last
couple months. 12 year old Jason
Miller the most recent.

He points out a picture of JASON MILLER (12) on the board.
The blonde, skateboarding kid we saw in the opening.

LUCY
If you're right, then they could
still be alive.

Sharko meets her eyes. Equally disturbed by the added gravity
of the situation.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What the hell are we dealing with
here?

SHARKO
Wish I knew. Just hoping that film
can shed a little light.

Lucy digs the DVD out of her coat pocket. Sharko goes to take it from her, but she holds on. He looks at her, questioning.

LUCY

This leads anywhere, I go with it.

He thinks, gives her a small nod.

INT. NEUROSCIENCE LAB - DAY

Sharko and Lucy are escorted into the state of the art neurology lab by a RESEARCH ASSISTANT.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Dr. Thompson will be right with you.

Lucy takes in the facility, with several high-tech computers facing a glass partition that looks in on an fMRI machine.

SHARKO

Let me do the talking, okay?

LUCY

Whatever you say.

DR. THOMPSON, a highly regarded neurologist, comes out of his office, looking a little ashen.

DR. THOMPSON

I had my doubts, but I see what you mean. A truly disturbing film on many levels.

Dr. Thompson hands him back the DVD.

SHARKO

Did it do something to you?

DR. THOMPSON

Gave me terrible vertigo, which isn't fun for someone with a fear of heights. And inside here...

(points to his head)

Was like the Fourth of July.

INT. NEUROSCIENCE LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Thompson goes to a computer. Loads up a fMRI scan, showing an image of a brain with differently colored areas.

DR. THOMPSON

I watched it while in the scanner.
If the film affects the viewer on
an unconscious level, as you
suggested, it would allow us to see
the process in action.

Dr. Thompson hits a key, and the image comes to life, the
colored areas shifting and lighting up.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Towards the beginning, the area
being activated was in my brain's
pleasure center. But as the film
progressed, the median prefrontal
and orbitofrontal cortex, as well
as the temporoparietal junction
began firing.

Dr. Thomson points at each area he mentions. Then two almond
shaped areas begin flashing white every couple seconds.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)

What you're seeing now is the
brain's fear center, the amygdala.
Towards the end, it goes into
overdrive. You must have felt a
certain dread after you watched it.

SHARKO

Something like that.

DR. THOMPSON

The strangest part is, these bursts
of activity happen at odd
intervals, and not in accordance
with the visible imagery on screen.

LUCY

You mean, there's subliminal shit
hidden inside the film?

Sharko shoots her a chastising look.

DR. THOMPSON

Exactly right.

Lucy looks back, smug.

INT. NEUROSCIENCE LAB - DAY

The three of them now hunch over a different computer, as Dr. Thompson goes through the film frame by frame. Right now, looking at the boy on the swing.

DR. THOMPSON
Roughly every two hundred frames,
it appears...

A still frame of a COMPLETELY NAKED WOMAN appears on screen. Well-endowed bust, provocative pose.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)
And as we keep going, the images
get more graphic.

He quickly advances frame by frame, showing images of the actress being groped by several MALE HANDS. Then the boy reappears.

Dr. Thompson advances beyond that scene, and then the naked actress appears again, this time HAVING EXPLICIT SEX.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)
The images play so quickly, we
don't even register that we saw it.

The image disappears, showing the boy playing with the rabbit. The contrast disconcerting.

SHARKO
Explains the pleasure center being
activated. But what about the rest
of it?

DR. THOMPSON
I wondered the same thing. Then I
discovered a third, even more
disturbing film, masked by the fog.

Dr. Thompson adjusts the brightness and contrast settings. The center oval goes completely white, but a new image emerges out of the surrounding fog...

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)
It's as if the sexual imagery was
used to lower the mind's defenses,
making sure we won't look away.

A ROW OF ADOLESCENT BOYS, strapped to chairs, with SPECULUMS keeping their eyelids open.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Much like those speculums...

The boys silently shout and writhe. Whatever they're being forced to watch is horrifying.

The film cuts to TWO BOYS sitting at a table across from each other, ELECTRODES connected to their shaved heads. A RESEARCHER hovers behind them, his head out of frame. One of the boys flips a switch on a control box, which sends an ELECTRONIC CURRENT to the other boy, causing convulsions.

The film cuts again to about a large group of BOYS ranging in age from 11-14 lined up on one edge of frame. Dressed in hospital pajamas, crammed into a concrete room.

The boys clutch hands to their chests, pulling at their clothes. Their eyes roll in their sockets, bulging with terror. All of them but the one at the front of the line, whose face is frozen in a cold expression.

LUCY
That's the same boy from the other
part of the film! See?

Lucy points to the screen, where a SURGICAL INCISION can be seen on the boy's temple.

LUCY (CONT'D)
This part must have been shot
earlier. The wound hasn't healed
over yet.

DR. THOMPSON
Hm, looks like he's had some kind
of procedure done.

SHARKO
Implanting a stent for deep brain
stimulation?

DR. THOMPSON
Could be. That area is where you'd
tap into the amygdala...

Sharko and Lucy meet eyes, connecting dots.

In the film, a door slides open on the opposite wall from the boys. A FEW DOZEN RABBITS scurry into the room.

The boy in the front of line looks towards camera, as though receiving instructions from some unseen source.

His lips pull back, uncovering his teeth in a snarl. His features creased, as though possessed by some deep anger. Then the boy springs after one of the rabbits.

He grabs it by the scruff, wraps his other hand around its small body, and BITES into its neck, using his teeth to tear his way through the struggling animal.

Sharko and Lucy react to the extreme act of violence.

The boy, mouth ringed with blood, drops the creature, and grabs another. Tears into it just like the one before.

The other boys back away from him at first...but then one of the boys breaks away from the group, grabs a rabbit and slams it into the wall.

This sets off a riot. One by one, the boys scatter, grabbing the animals and slaughtering them.

Before long, the forty or so rabbits have been massacred. Dark spots stain the boys' hospital gowns. They pant, some on their feet, some on all fours, some squatting.

The film ends and goes to WHITE.

INT. PRINCETON NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE - NIGHT

Sharko, Lucy and Dr. Thompson come out of his lab, digesting what they just saw.

DR. THOMPSON

The film clearly documents a sadistic psychological experiment. But based on the subliminal imagery and brain activity we observed, I believe it was created to provoke some kind of fear-based reaction in the viewer as well...

LUCY

But our reactions to it have been so different.

DR. THOMPSON

Everyone handles fear in their own way. Some people run, some hide, some lash out-

SHARKO

What about hallucinations?

Dr. Thompson looks at him, questioning.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Could that film make you see things
that aren't there?

DR. THOMPSON

Well, fear can certainly play
tricks on our perceptions...
Imagine creaking floorboards as
footsteps, or a shadow as an
intruder. I imagine the more
unstable the viewer is to begin
with, the more extreme the reaction
to watching the film.

Sharko exchanges a glance with Lucy, not exactly comforted.

SHARKO

Any of this connected to something
called "Syndrome E?"

DR. THOMPSON

Yes, actually. Where did you hear
that term?

SHARKO

Doesn't matter. What is it?

DR. THOMPSON

Syndrome E is what basically I'm
describing, in the extreme. That
is, what causes people who witness
violence to become violent
themselves.

LUCY

Like those boys with the rabbits.

DR. THOMPSON

Yes, though Syndrome E is a
permanent condition. The thinking
goes that, in certain high stress
environments, merely observing acts
of brutality may in fact cause a
neurological change over time.

SHARKO

(interest piqued)
What kind of change?

DR. THOMPSON

The atrophying of the amygdala. You
see, everyone's equipped with a
fight or flight response.

(MORE)

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)

But when living in constant fear,
the flight response eventually goes
numb, until all that's left is the
fight. The subject becomes prone to
violence, with no self control.

SHARKO

In other words, people see
depravity enough times, they start
doing it themselves...

DR. THOMPSON

That's right. Syndrome E is the
scientific term given to that
phenomenon.

SHARKO

(personally interested)
And let's say somebody gets this
disease, is there a cure?

DR. THOMPSON

Oh, Syndrome E is still just a
theory. No one's conclusively
proven it exists, let alone found a
remedy.

Sharko almost seems disappointed.

EXT. PRINCETON - NIGHT

Sharko and Lucy exit the Neuroscience building and begin
walking through the picturesque campus. Feels desolate this
time of night.

SHARKO

What happened to letting me do the
talking?

LUCY

I never agreed to that. Besides,
I'm looking less and less wrong
about this by the second.

SHARKO

All we know is that the ages match.
The boys in the film were part of
some kind of psychological
experiment, possibly involving deep
brain stimulation, and so were the
ones found in Lake Erie.

LUCY

Meaning, there's a good chance that whoever made that film and killed those boys are somehow connected.

He looks at her, has to concede as much.

INT. NJ TRANSIT TRAIN - NIGHT

Sharko and Lucy take the train back to the city, riding the rusted, industrial landscape of Jersey. Lucy ponders her reflection in the window.

LUCY

You think if you watch that film enough times, it gives you this Syndrome E shit? I mean, maybe that's why they made it...

SHARKO

Yeah, maybe. Or maybe they're still trying to crack the code, which is why more bodies are turning up.

LUCY

Well, if triggering violence is what you're after, messing with pubescent boys is a good place to start.

He nods. She's right.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You still haven't told me you know?

SHARKO

Told you what?

LUCY

What that film made you see?

SHARKO

You haven't told me either.

LUCY

I asked first.

He stares her down, not gonna budge.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Fine. There was a guy, in my house.

SHARKO
That something that really
happened, or just paranoia.

LUCY
I'm a little old to be scared of
the boogie man.

SHARKO
What he do?

She doesn't want to say. Sharko can tell by her expression.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

LUCY
It's okay. You can't let yourself
be ruled by that shit, you know?

Sharko nods, definitely ruled by "that shit."

LUCY (CONT'D)
Your turn.

Sharko faces front, hesitant. Glimpses the DEAD BOY sitting
in the seat across the aisle from him.

LUCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What it do to you?

Sharko shoots out of his seat, heads to the bathroom.

INT. TRAIN BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sharko locks the door. Clenches his eyes tight.

BOY'S VOICE
Daddy...

He shakes his head, knows no one's there. Knows it's just a
voice in his head.

Sharko tries to get some water from the faucet, but only a
little dribbles out. He rubs it against his face then grips
the edge of the counter, propping himself up.

A long silence passes...

A KNOCK on the door startles him.

SHARKO
Leave me alone!

Beat.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
C'mon. I really need to go.

Sharko rights himself, trying to pull it together.

INT. NJ TRANSIT TRAIN - NIGHT

Sharko comes out, face to face with a RANDOM PASSENGER who scoots right past him, desperate.

Sharko looks down the train car. Other PASSENGERS eye him, having heard his shouting. Sees Lucy looking at him from her seat, all the way at the other end. Concerned.

He makes his way towards her, catching the eye of a MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER, watching him. The man quickly glances away, back towards his book.

Sharko's gaze lingers for a moment. Notices the man's reading a brand new mass market paperback. The kind you'd buy at a train station newsstand. Sharko scans up from it to the man's clean shaven face...

Then Sharko sees it. A small EARBUD inside the man's ear.

INT. PENN STATION - NIGHT

Sharko leads Lucy out of the track entrance by the arm. Rushes her through the crowded station, taking quick, paranoid glances behind them as they go.

LUCY
What the hell, Sharko?!

SHARKO
There was a guy on the train. I think he was following us.

LUCY
(skeptical)
Who-

She turns to look for herself, he pulls her before she sees.

SHARKO
Don't! We have to get out of here.

They race up the escalators, navigating around other people fast as they can.

INT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Sharko enters and takes off his shoes. Lucy trails him inside, little uncomfortable to be in his private space. She sees him taking off his shoes, and starts to follow suit.

SHARKO

You don't have to. Just an old habit of mine.

She takes in the neat, domestic surroundings. Not at all what she expected.

LUCY

Didn't realize you had a family.

SHARKO

Guest room's over there. Try not to touch anything.

Sharko heads towards his bedroom.

LUCY

Aren't you at least going to offer me a drink?

SHARKO

That isn't what this was about.

LUCY

What what isn't about?

SHARKO

I only brought you here because I thought it would be safer.

LUCY

I'm only asking for a drink.

She goes into the kitchen. He watches her, nervous. Been a long time since he's brought a woman back to his place.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She opens his fridge. Glad to find a few BEERS. Grabs one.

SHARKO

What are you doing?

LUCY

What's it look like?

She pops it open and drinks. Grabs another CAN and tosses it towards Sharko. He catches it.

She finishes chugging her first beer. Grabs another.

SHARKO

You okay?

LUCY

I'm fine. Why?

SHARKO

Your hands are shaking.

She looks down, sees that he's right.

LUCY

Just amped up. You really think that guy was following us?

SHARKO

Whoever's behind this has enough reach to take out a guy in Cairo and another in Rochester just to try and cover it up. Makes sense they'd come after us next.

LUCY

We're onto something really big, aren't we?

SHARKO

(flat)

Looks like it.

LUCY

C'mon, don't pretend like you don't get off on it.

SHARKO

There was a time I would have.

LUCY

What happened?

SHARKO

You do this work long enough, guess the shine wears off.

LUCY

But the kind of cases you've been involved with? Some of the killers you've put away.

SHARKO
You ever think...Nevermind.

LUCY
What?

SHARKO
I don't know. That the line between
them and us isn't as thick as you'd
like it to be?

LUCY
Uh, not really.

SHARKO
Seems like all of us carry around
that sickness. Some people just
stop being able to control it.

She comes closer, studying him.

LUCY
What is your deal man?

SHARKO
My deal?

LUCY
You were so sure of yourself first
time we met. Now you don't even
think you're one of the good guys?

She looks deep into his eyes.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What did that film do to you?

He shakes his head, not saying. She slips past him into the
other room, close enough that their bodies graze.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy takes in the space. Then spots the FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS
hung on the wall.

She looks at his BEAUTIFUL WIFE and his NINE YEAR OLD SON
(who we recognize as the DEAD BOY Sharko keeps seeing).

LUCY
I get it.

SHARKO
What do you "get?"

LUCY

(re: pictures)

Well, the first thing that's interesting is their location. They're on full display in your living room. Clearly, your family is very important to you.

SHARKO

They are.

LUCY

That being said, they're obviously not around and there are no recent photos of you all together.

SHARKO

No...

LUCY

If I had to guess, I think she couldn't compete with the job. Ended up leaving you for some reliable guy, a lawyer or accountant. She got full custody and moved away from the city. Somewhere far, like California. You hardly ever see her or your son. I'm guessing what you saw had something to do with him...

SHARKO

You have a gift.

LUCY

Am I close?

He nods, but she can see torment in his expression, then sees his WEDDING RING...

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh shit. I'm sorry.

SHARKO

What?

LUCY

(pointing at ring)

If she'd left you, you probably would have taken that off by now.

He looks down at his ring, she's right.

LUCY (CONT'D)
How did they die?

He pales a little, hearing her say it.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You know what, ignore me, you don't
have to say.

SHARKO
They were crossing the street. This
driver shot through the
intersection...

He takes down one of the photos and looks at it, struggling
to keep his emotions at bay.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
You were right about one thing
though. I was working a case that
night. If I'd been with them...

LUCY
Then all three of you'd be dead.

SHARKO
I could have got them out of the
way.

LUCY
You don't really believe that?

He clearly does.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Is that what the film made you see?

SHARKO
In a way.

LUCY
Can't imagine what it'd be like to
go through that, let alone relive
it.

SHARKO
No. You can't.

She looks back at the pictures, with deep sympathy.

LUCY
You ever think about taking these
down?

SHARKO

What do you mean?

LUCY

I mean, it must be torture, to have to look at their faces every day.

SHARKO

I don't wanna forget them.

LUCY

Yeah, but it can't help-

SHARKO

What the fuck would you know about it?!

She's silenced by the outburst.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

I'm not some fucking case you're working!

LUCY

Okay, I'm sorry.

SHARKO

Know what, I'm beat.

He heads towards his bedroom. She starts to follow.

LUCY

Sharko, wait-

He goes inside and slams the door in her face.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy sits on top of the neatly made bed, LAPTOP glowing in front of her. Wound up from her encounter with Sharko.

Conducts a frenzied internet search. Searching for terms like CANADA, FOSTER KIDS, 1960s, SECRET EXPERIMENTS, SYNDROME E...

She scans through pages and pages of links. Images of CHILDREN, EXPERIMENTS ON LAB ANIMALS, 1960s PROTESTS, and other random detritus of the internet. None of it seems relevant, but Lucy's eyes soak it all in, going deeper and deeper down the rabbit hole.

Lucy stumbles across a link about the "DUPLESSIS ORPHANS." She clicks on it, curious.

She begins reading...and her features tighten...mental gears turning...

INT. SHARKO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Early morning light leaks through the venetian blinds, landing on Sharko lying in bed, dressed in the clothes he was wearing the night before.

The faint sound of an old-fashioned TRAIN ENGINE WHISTLE, leaks through the walls. Sharko's eyes open. Jolted awake by the sound.

INT. QUEENS ROW HOUSE - MORNING

Sharko comes out of his room. Sees the door to the guest bedroom WIDE OPEN. Pissed, he marches into the living room.

SHARKO

I told you not to touch anything-

But instead of Lucy, he finds the MAN IN A DARK WINDBREAKER, playing with his son's railroad set.

MAN IN A DARK WINDBREAKER

(faced away)

Detective Brennan's gone I'm afraid.

Sharko unholsters his GUN. The man looks at him, nonplussed. He's the same man who was reading a book on the train. He speaks with a vague European or even Australian ACCENT, difficult to place.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER

Took off in the middle of the night. Was in a quite a hurry...

SHARKO

Who the fuck are you?

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER

(re: train set)

Neat toy. I'm guessing it belonged to your son?

Sharko doesn't answer.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER (CONT'D)

Mine's obsessed with video games. Gotten so violent, you know.

(MORE)

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER (CONT'D)
I tell my ex-wife it won't affect
him, but who knows. Mind's a tricky
thing.

The man winks, starts perusing Sharko's family photos.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER (CONT'D)
Special Agent Frank Sharkovsky.
Been with the bureau for 18 years.
Very impressive track record. Maybe
because you have no family to
distract you from the job.

SHARKO
Fuck you.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER
Let's try to keep this civil?
Wouldn't want to end up like your
friend in Egypt. I'm guessing you
like your steaks well done, *Sharko*?

Sharko tenses, feeling the walls closing in.

SHARKO
How do you know about that?

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER
That's not important. All that
matters is you have a job to do,
and so do I.

SHARKO
To break into my house and threaten
me!

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER
Not at all! We appreciate
everything you're trying to do. We
just want to make sure you stay in
your lane.

SHARKO
What lane is that?

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER
The one that leads to your killer.
Have a sneaking suspicion they're
working alone. I'd focus on finding
them.

SHARKO
Maybe you can make my job easier
and tell me who to look for.

The man smiles, doesn't take the bait.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

While you're at it, tell me about
your secret experiments with
Syndrome E? About all the bodies
that have piled up while you all
try and cover your tracks?

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER

C'mon, Sharko! You need to drop
these ridiculous theories, which no
one is going to believe anyway.

SHARKO

They will if I have proof.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER

What kind of proof?

Sharko says nothing, instantly recognizing his mistake. The
man smiles, wags his finger at him.

MAN IN A DARK WIND BREAKER (CONT'D)

I hope what's been lost stays lost.
Otherwise, we really will have a
problem.

The man heads out the front door. Sharko waits for a second,
then takes out his phone and immediately tries Lucy.

The call goes straight to her VOICEMAIL.

SHARKO

(leaving message)

Where the hell are you?! Call me
back.

Sharko ends the call, uneasy.

INT. CANADIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES - DAY

Under a vaulted ceiling, rows and rows of tall file cabinets.
Somewhere in the middle of the maze, Lucy rifles through an
open drawer labeled DUPLESSIS ORPHANS, 1950.

Lucy flips through RECORDS. Each a type-written sheet with
the orphan's NAME, AGE, DATE OF ADMISSION, etc, along with a
small, BLACK & WHITE photo to ID them. The photos are faded
with age, the children's faces pale and ghost-like.

In one hand, she holds a STILL printed from the film, of the
boy standing in the field.

Lucy's trying to find a match, but having no luck. She gets to the back of the drawer. SLAMS it shut in frustration.

An ARCHIVIST (50's) with a tightly fastened pony-tail and small round glasses comes into the row, alerted by the noise.

ARCHIVIST

(French Canadian accent)

If you had his name, would be much easier.

LUCY

I've been through every single file. Any chance his could've been removed or something?

ARCHIVIST

Who would want to remove it?

Lucy doesn't want to say. The archivist begins tidying up.

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

I'm the one in charge of their organization and upkeep.

LUCY

Didn't mean to imply anything.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sure.

LUCY

So you've personally been through all these?

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Every document ever written about the Duplessis Orphans.

LUCY

Could you tell me what you know about them?

ARCHIVIST

That would take a very long time.

LUCY

Well I already know the basics from what I read online.

(checking notes)

From the nineteen forties all the way to the sixties, *thousands* of orphans in Quebec were misclassified as mentally ill?

ARCHIVIST

Yes, for funding purposes. At the time, the federal government paid a per diem for a mental patient, but paid nothing for an orphan. So the Quebec premiere, Maurice Duplessis, cooked a scheme with the Church, who ran the orphanages.

LUCY

To bribe doctors to falsify their medical records?

ARCHIVIST

I know, it's terrible. Perfectly healthy children found themselves institutionalized with real mental patients, for years on end.

LUCY

Do you remember seeing anything about experiments done on them?

ARCHIVIST

Experiments?

LUCY

Yeah, I'm thinking, who better to run secret experiments on than some orphans locked up in an asylum?

The archivist studies Lucy, suddenly suspicious.

ARCHIVIST

What did you say brings you here?

LUCY

I didn't.

ARCHIVIST

Can I see some credentials?

LUCY

This is a public archive. Why should I need credentials?

The archivist just looks at her, firm. Lucy digs out her POLICE ID and BADGE. The archivist scrutinizes them.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Good enough for you?

ARCHIVIST

(low voiced)

There were never any "official" reports of experiments per se. But several of the doctors were accused of using harsh methods.

The archivist opens up a drawer and pulls out an old group photograph of WHITE MALE DOCTORS. About two dozen or so altogether. Smiling, in lab coats many in thick glasses.

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

It is rumored that some of their "therapy sessions" were even *filmed* apparently.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATIONAL ARCHIVES - DAY

Lucy hastily dials a number on a public pay phone stationed outside the archives. The line barely RINGS and Sharko immediately answers.

SHARKO

(paranoid)

Who is this?

LUCY

Hey, it's Brennan.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - DAY (INTERCUT AS NECESSARY)

Sharko shows some relief.

SHARKO

Where are you? I've been trying to call.

LUCY

Went up to Montreal. My cell doesn't have service up here.

SHARKO

Montreal?

LUCY

Yeah, to the Canadian National Archives. Think I figured out who the boys in the film are.

SHARKO
Get out of there. Now.

EXT. NATIONAL ARCHIVES - SAME (INTERCUT AS NECESSARY)

She sours at his commanding tone.

LUCY
I found something-

SHARKO
You don't understand! They came to
my house! They made a threat.

LUCY
Who did?

SHARKO
The guy who was following us! If
you keep digging into that film,
they're gonna come after you.

LUCY
(getting scared)
Okay, I'll head back-

She feels SOMETHING METAL pressed into her back.

She looks over her shoulder. Sees a BEARDED MAN (60s),
wearing a wool cap and thick winter coat. Shoving an old
MAUSER HANDGUN into her back.

SHARKO (O.S.)
(through receiver)
You still there?

She drops the receiver, goes for her gun. He presses the
Mauser up against her head.

BEARDED MAN
Nuh uh uh.

He relieves her of the sidearm. Puts it in his waist band.

SHARKO (O.S.)
Lucy-

The bearded man grabs the receiver and hangs up on him.

INT. SHARKO'S OFFICE - DAY

Sharko lowers his phone, worried. Starts to head out of his office, but his way is blocked by Martin.

MARTIN

I just got off the phone with the assistant director. He's requesting a status report ASAP.

SHARKO

It'll have to wait. I have to get up to Canada.

MARTIN

What?

SHARKO

There's people after us. People who are trying to keep all this buried.

He gestures to the BULLETIN BOARD, which has started to resemble the work of a madman.

MARTIN

What's going on with you?

SHARKO

I told you, the murders are connected to experiments involving Syndrom-

MARTIN

I swear to god, if you mention that Syndrome E thing again.

SHARKO

It's the only thing that makes all the pieces fit!

MARTIN

Because it's conspiracy theory! You know what kind of people believe in those?

Sharko clams up, little hard to argue.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You haven't been yourself for a long time, but this is different.

SHARKO

Did they get to you too? Is that why you're trying to stop me?

MARTIN

For fuck's sake! Listen to yourself!

SHARKO

This is real, Martin! We don't stop them, more of these kids will die.

MARTIN

I'm not authorizing you to go on another wild goose chase up north.

Martin stares him down, daring him to defy him. Sharko moves past him anyway. Martin can't believe it.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - EVENING

Sharko races through the grid of cubicles towards the elevators, flying by Agent Gutierrez. His eyes follow him, then look back towards Jason Miller's Social Worker, who sits at his computer.

In the middle of using a program to create a COMPOSITE SKETCH. She clicks through different options for facial features to recreate some UNKNOWN MAN'S FACE.

INT. STATION WAGON - EVENING

Lucy is shoved into the passenger seat of an old VOLVO STATION WAGON.

BEARDED MAN

Put your hands together.

She hesitates. He puts the gun to her head

BEARDED MAN (CONT'D)

Do it!

She does. He binds her wrists together with a PLASTIC CINCH.

LUCY

Where are you taking me?

He answers by throwing a CANVAS BAG over her head.

EXT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Making its way into a dense FOREST. Its headlights the only thing illuminating the otherwise dark surroundings.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Inside the canvas bag, Lucy's eyes dart around. Trying to keep her cool. Failing.

She feels the car come to a stop and the engine cut out. Things go painfully silent.

LUCY

If you're going to kill me, just do it.

The bag is RIPPED off her head. She blinks, her vision coming into focus. Through the windshield, she sees a WOOD CABIN.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The man opens the door and leads Lucy inside. It's filled to the brim with books and newspapers, swirling around a chair facing an old DESKTOP COMPUTER. A wood stove squats at the back of the room, near an unmade cot and a LARGE BAY WINDOW.

The man closes the door behind her. Locks an impressive set of DEADBOLTS, five in all. Definitely excessive for a place so removed from civilization.

The man finds a large POCKET KNIFE and unfolds the blade. Lucy instinctively backs away. He grabs her hands and swiftly cuts the plastic tie around her wrist.

She rubs the raw skin, confused.

BEARDED MAN

We'll be able to talk freely and safely here.

She's at a total loss.

BEARDED MAN (CONT'D)

We spoke on the phone about the film.

LUCY

That was you...

BEARDED MAN

You can call me Ginsberg. Though don't bother looking it up.

GINSBURG holds out his hand. Lucy doesn't take it.

GINSBURG

Forgive me scaring you. I had to take the proper precautions. No one can know where we are, not even you.

LUCY

How...

GINSBURG

Did I find you? I have an extremely reliable source at the archives. She got in touch the moment a female detective from Rochester started poking around, interested in the forgotten ones. Figured it must be the woman I'd spoken to, following up as promised.

Lucy nods, things starting to fall into place.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Ginsberg rummages through old newspapers and clippings, speaking with great urgency.

GINSBURG

I used to work in a well-known law firm specializing in the defense of civil liberties. One day, an old man and his son came into our offices. He seemed very absent, as if suffering from Alzheimer's or some other mental deterioration. His son was holding an article from the New York Times...Where the hell is it...Ah here.

Ginsberg lifts a yellowed New York Times' article. Names and passages are obsessively underlined, circled and highlighted.

GINSBURG (CONT'D)

It revealed that in the fifties and sixties, the CIA conducted mind-control experiments on *American citizens*, without their consent. The project was called MKUltra.

He points to that phrase in the article.

GINSBURG (CONT'D)

See?! This has long been a matter of public record!

(MORE)

GINSBURG (CONT'D)

(beat)

What was I just saying?

LUCY

The father and son?

GINSBURG

Right. The son comes in and says
'We want to sue the CIA.' Can you
believe it? The CIA! 'Why?' I
asked. He points to his father,
'For the mental destruction and
brainwashing of hundreds of
children at the Mont Providence
Hospital in Montreal.'

LUCY

His father had been one of the
Duplessis orphans?

GINSBURG

Very sharp. There's the things we
know we know about the CIA and the
things we don't even know we don't
know.

Lucy looks at him. Still not sure if this guy can be
believed.

GINSBURG (CONT'D)

MKUltra happened to be the project
that got found out, but there have
to be ones they managed to keep
hidden. Ones done outside their own
country. Even ones using *children*.

LUCY

You think they kept pursuing this
shit?

GINSBURG

Even if the CIA cleaned up its act,
who's to say there aren't other
rogue organizations, carrying on
their dark work.

LUCY

So, did you take the case?

GINSBURG

How could I *not*?! I started by interviewing what surviving orphans I could, trying to uncover any evidence that would hold up in court. Apparently there had been films made, some even used in the experiments themselves. But before I could find anything, my life was ruined.

LUCY

Ruined how?

GINSBURG

I was found guilty of ethical misconduct. It was a crock of shit, but that didn't matter. I was disbarred and discredited. Soon after, the threats to my life started and I was forced into hiding.

He gestures around the cabin, getting emotional.

GINSBURG (CONT'D)

My wife left me. My children think I've gone crazy. But I haven't given up. Only way I can get my life back is to prove to everyone that I'm *right*. I've spent the last few years gathering circumstantial evidence, but I haven't uncovered any irrefutable *proof*. I believe the film you found could blow the whole thing wide open.

Lucy reaches inside her coat and removes the DVD.

LUCY

I hope you're right.

He eyes the GLEAMING DISC, tantalized.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Ginsberg stares at his monitor, watching the film. Lucy warms herself by the stove.

The cabin goes dark as the film finishes. Lucy turns towards Ginsberg, sitting motionless in his chair.

LUCY
Ginsberg? Are you okay?

GINSBURG
I don't understand. Where's the
proof of an experiment?

LUCY
It's hidden. I'll show you.

She starts towards him. Ginsberg shoots to his feet.

GINSBURG
Did you hear that?

LUCY
What?

GINSBURG
A cracking noise.

LUCY
You mean the fire?

GINSBURG
No, no. It came from outside.

He turns off the lights and goes to the BAY WINDOW.

GINSBURG (CONT'D)
There's someone out there.

LUCY
It's just the film-

GINSBURG
Shhh!

He signals for her to be quiet. They wait, hear only silence.

LUCY
Watching it makes your worst fears
seem real.

Ginsberg looks at her, not quite understanding.

A BULLET suddenly rips through the window, straight into his chest. Lucy GASPS. He wasn't just imagining things after all. Ginsberg looks at her, almost betrayed, before collapsing.

Lucy gets down just as another BULLET tears through the glass, this one shattering the window. She drags herself along the floor, over the broken glass, until she gets to Ginsberg's fallen body.

GINSBURG

(weak)

Followed...you

Before she can respond, a CANNISTER is hurled through the open window. It rolls across the cabin floor.

Lucy watches it, worried...It ERUPTS, shooting out a halo of LIQUID FIRE, the intense heat of the incendiary grenade setting the cabin ABLAZE.

LUCY

We have to get out of here!

Life fading, he reaches towards his neck, his finger trying to loop under a NECKLACE CORD. Pulls out a FLASHDRIVE that's hanging around his neck for safe keeping.

She looks up at him. He just nods. She breaks the necklace and pockets the FLASHDRIVE.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Now come on!

She tries to lift him, but he goes completely limp.

Seeing he's gone, Lucy lets go. FLAMES engulf the interior around her, the wood twisting and blackening in its heat.

Lucy guiltily searches Ginsberg's pocket, until she finds his CAR KEYS.

Lucy puts the crook of her arm over her nose and mouth. She makes a run for the front door, darting through the fire.

She grabs the first DEADBOLT. Her hand SINGES against the hot metal. She lets go, in pain. She uses her shirt sleeve to get the remaining locks undone. She whips the door open...

Only to see a MAN IN SHADOWS standing outside. He raises a GUN to shoot...

Lucy dives back into the burning structure, just barely avoids the bullet, which splinters off the wall behind her.

Lucy shuffles away from the open door on her hands and knees. Discovers a TRAP DOOR on the floor. She lifts it. Sees a ladder descending into darkness beyond.

With no other choice, she hurries down and shuts the trap door behind her.

INT. BUNKER - NIGHT

Lucy fumbles around the pitch black space, until her hands find a FLASHLIGHT, mounted on the wall.

She grabs it, manages to turn it on. The beam illuminates a small, concrete room. Lined with NONPERISHABLE CANNED FOOD and BOTTLED WATER. An emergency shelter.

Lucy hears HEAVY FOOTSTEPS thumping on the floor above her.

She looks around the room, for some kind of weapon. Discovers a DOUBLE-BARRELED SHOTGUN mounted on the wall. She grabs it. Pops open the barrel, and sees that both chambers are loaded. Ginsberg's prepared for anything.

She positions herself underneath the trap door, waiting with gun pointed. Her finger tenses against the trigger...

Her heart is practically beating outside her chest, the anticipation killing her.

The TRAP DOOR starts to open...Lucy FIRES.

A man GRUNTS in pain and the door comes back down, a BLASTED OUT HOLE from the shot.

She waits for him to make another move. The door stays shut. Lucy cautiously steps onto the ladder and peers through the splintered opening.

Sees the LEG OF A MAN lying on his side. She pokes the barrel of the gun through the hole, and jabs the leg. The man doesn't react. Seems dead.

Lucy opens the trap door and ascends.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lucy gets all the way up and heads towards the open front door, stepping around the fallen ASSASSIN...

He GRABS HER LEG.

Lucy whips around and makes eye-contact with her would-be killer, grimacing with blood-coated teeth.

ASSASSIN

Don't-

Lucy FIRES the gun directly at his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Small and rundown. Way off the beaten path. The sign half-lit and flickering. Dark, uninhabited forest all around.

Sharko's car screeches into the lot, parks in a hurry.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Sharko races down the outdoor corridor. Finds the room he's looking for and KNOCKS.

After a short wait, the peep hole in the door goes dark as someone looks out at him. The DEADBOLT and CHAIN LOCK are disengaged from inside, and the door is opened...

Revealing Lucy, shaken to the core.

SHARKO

Thank god.

She crumbles into him. He awkwardly brings one of his hands up and places it on her back.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

What you'd expect from a Canadian fleabag. Stained, floral comforter, fake wood paneling, faded nature prints.

Lucy lights a CIGARETTE with shaky hands. The ashtray already full of butts.

SHARKO

No one followed you?

LUCY

(shaking head)

I stuck to back roads. Stopped at the first sign of civilization. Figured I'd be as safe here as anywhere.

SHARKO

What about the film?

LUCY

DVD burned in the fire, along with the asshole they sent to kill me.

SHARKO

Couldn't have been the same guy
that was in my house. Wouldn't have
had enough time to get up here.

LUCY

Think the CIA's got plenty of
resources.

SHARKO

You really think he was CIA?

LUCY

If we wanna believe what Ginsberg
told me. All I know for sure is I
showed the film to a guy who could
have exposed their secret
experiments. Now he and the film
are gone.

SHARKO

At least they didn't get you.

LUCY

Not yet anyway.

Lucy takes a drag off her cigarette, overwhelmed.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I keep seeing him.
(picturing it)
He was looking right at me...then
his whole head just...

SHARKO

You had no choice.

LUCY

Maybe, but I pulled the trigger
without even thinking about it. I
hadn't ever...I didn't know if I
was capable.

SHARKO

It's good you're here and he's not.
That's all you need to think about.

She nods, appreciative of his moral certainty.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Of course, if you hadn't taken off
alone like that.

LUCY

You weren't exactly acting like you wanted me around.

She's got him there.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You want to do everything alone.

SHARKO

Maybe because if something happened to *me*, no one would give a shit.

She looks at him, sympathetic.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

You could still go another way...You could still have a life.

LUCY

So could you.

He's not sure what she means. She leans in...and gives him a KISS. He pulls away...

SHARKO

What are you doing?

LUCY

What does it look like?

He's torn...

LUCY (CONT'D)

I just need to feel something other than scared right now.

She KISSES HIM again.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sharko presses Lucy against the fake wood paneling. They pull off each other's clothing, can't get to flesh quick enough.

They tumble onto the bed. Faint light seeps through the drawn curtains, barely revealing their naked forms.

There's something intense, almost feral, about their lovemaking. This side of Sharko dormant for so long, feels like a dam breaking.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sharko splashes his face with cold water from the sink. All sorts of emotions stirred up by the lovemaking. He notices his WEDDING BAND. Considers it, then looks up at his reflection...

Finds his DEAD WIFE staring back at him.

He startles backwards, slamming into the wall. He risks another look. His reflection has returned to normal.

LUCY (O.S.)
Everything okay in there?

He looks towards the door.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Sharko?

SHARKO
(shaky)
You should get some sleep.

A momentary silence. Then a FLASHDRIVE is slid under the door. The one Ginsberg gave Lucy right before he died.

Sharko picks up the plastic device.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
What's this?

LUCY
Open the door and find out.

He does. Finds Lucy dressed. Acting completely unfazed, as if nothing happened between them.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Ready to get back to work?

He nods, relieved.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy looks over Sharko's shoulder as he plugs the FLASHDRIVE into his laptop.

A window pops onto screen, displaying a single folder, labeled SYNDROME E.

Their eyes meet. Promising start. He clicks open the folder. Revealing a long list of JPEG and PDF files.

He opens the first one, revealing a photo of NAZI YOUTH.
Their intense, Aryan EYES circled in RED MARKER.

Sharko opens the next file, revealing a photo of MAO'S RED
GUARDS, chanting something in unison. Around the same age, 10-
15, their eyes likewise circled in red.

The next few photos are of African BOY SOLDIERS, carrying
guns as big as them. Their eyes likewise circled.

LUCY

All around the same age...Always
the eyes.

SHARKO

The site of infection.

Sharko clicks through more photographs--from the Holocaust,
civil wars in Syria and Congo; genocides in Burma, Sudan,
Cambodia; massacres and school shootings--Columbine, Aurora,
New Town; Pictures of the killers, young men and teenage
boys, all of their EYES CIRCLED with red marker.

LUCY

You think he's right? That all this
was caused by Syndrome E?

SHARKO

It's certainly possible. Real
question is, what if you wanted to
create this sort of violence on
purpose? In places like North Korea
or Syria or Egypt...Didn't they
have a revolution, just a year
after those boys turned up dead?

LUCY

If Syndrome E exists, be a way to
destabilize an entire country
without setting foot inside its
borders. Makes sense the CIA, or
someone like them, would be highly
motivated to exploit it.

Sharko clicks through more photographs, faster and faster.
More photographs of murders and genocides, more massacred
bodies, more KILLERS and SOLDIERS with their eyes circled in
red. The disturbing images and headlines flash on screen so
quickly the effect is unsettling, almost subliminal.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Wait! I saw something. Go back....

He goes back to a photograph of a SEVERAL YOUNG SOLDIERS lying dead in a field. The CAPTION reads BOSNIA, 1995.

Sharko zooms in on the image and sees it too. All the bodies are MISSING THEIR EYES, their SKULLS cut in half.

LUCY (CONT'D)
The killer was there too.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sharko goes to room's AC and turns it on full blast. He puts his head directly in front of the vent, overwhelmed by how big this thing is getting.

SHARKO
Who are we looking for? *What* are we looking for?

Lucy takes his place at his computer. Clicks though a couple more files, until she clicks open the final one. A scanned document with a LIST OF NAMES with the header EMPLOYEES OF MONT PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL, 1945-1962. She scans through the very long list...then one catches her attention.

LUCY
DRPJ...

Sharko doesn't understand. She springs out of her chair races to her jacket. Digs out her notebook. Flips through the pages until she finds the one she's looking for.

LUCY (CONT'D)
DRPJ 100761 3EXP!

Sharko still doesn't understand. She points out the name DR. PETER JAMESON in the list on the computer screen.

LUCY (CONT'D)
The slate at the beginning of the film! D R P J, Doctor Peter Jameson! According to this list Ginsberg compiled, he was one of the psychiatrists that worked with the Duplessis orphans. He must have been the one that made the film!

SHARKO
He'd be an old man now, if he's even still alive. No way he could be behind all this.

LUCY

No, but he might know who is.

Lucy starts typing at a furious pace and nods towards the screen, finding something.

LUCY (CONT'D)

According to this title search,
that's his last known address.

Sharko goes to the computer. On screen a the name JAMESON, PETER and an ADDRESS.

Lucy copies and pastes the address into Google. Sees it on a MAP, deep in no man's land Canada.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Little north of here, in bumfuck
Quebec.

Sharko's wheels spin.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Maybe you should call it in...

SHARKO

My supervisor ordered me not to
come up here. We're on our own
until we get solid proof.

LUCY

Then we should just go.

He looks at her, sees a glint in her eye. Bothers him.

Sharko scribbles down the address. Tears off the page and heads out of the room.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Sharko tramps down the corridor, towards the stairs that lead into the parking lot. The sky beginning to lighten with the approaching sunrise.

Lucy comes out of the room, struggling to get on her shoes.

LUCY

Don't pull this shit. I'm a part of
this now.

SHARKO

Yeah, and that nearly got you
killed!

She's momentarily silenced.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

If that address checks out, then they'll be expecting us. I'm not giving them another shot at you.

LUCY

I don't need you to protect me.

SHARKO

Sorry. Got enough on my conscience as it is.

He heads down the stairs.

EXT. STAIRS - DAWN

Sharko races down, Lucy right behind him.

LUCY

You were just a warm body okay?! I'm not your fucking wife, so get over it already.

SHARKO

(stung)

Just tell me why. Why does this case matter so much to you?

She doesn't have a ready answer.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

No matter how many monsters you stop, it'll never make the pain go away. Believe me.

Lucy looks affected by what he's just said. Sharko continues on his way, exits the bottom of the stairs.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAWN

Sharko opens up his car. Lucy approaches, undeterred.

SHARKO

Go back to the room.

LUCY

Fuck you. I'm coming.

SHARKO

Not with me you're not.

LUCY

Fine. I'll take my own car.

Sharko takes out his GUN. Shoots at the Volvo twice, puncturing two of its TIRES. Lucy can hardly believe it.

SHARKO

Stay. Here.

He gets in his car and takes off. Lucy stares after, furious.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHARKO'S CAR - DAY

His black town car slides along a windy country road that cuts through a barren, snowy landscape. Just a speck in the midst of a numbing whiteness.

INT. SHARKO'S CAR - DAY

Sharko keeps his eyes peeled. Looking for some sign of life. Only sees FROZEN TUNDRA in all directions.

He looks back towards the road. Sees his dead son standing right in front of the car.

Sharko yanks the wheel to avoid hitting him. The car swerves, the tires losing traction, ill-equipped for the icy roads.

Sharko barely manages to avoid careening into a snowbank. Gets the car back on the road.

He looks in the REARVIEW MIRROR. The road is completely empty behind him. Sharko takes a breath, and blinks his eyes. Trying to re-focus.

He rounds the next turn, a lone farm house appears in the distance, far removed from the road and from everything else. A thin WISP OF SMOKE rising from its chimney.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - DAY

Lucy sits on the hood of the disabled Volvo, keeping her eyes glued to the empty country road. Simmering.

She hears the faint HUM of a car engine and perks up.

A PICK-UP TRUCK slowly comes around the bend.

Lucy springs into action, running into the middle of the street with her POLICE BADGE held high.

The truck comes to a stop, the CANADIAN FARMER giving her a suspicious once over. Rolls down his window.

LUCY
Sir, I'm going to need to
commandeer your truck.

He takes a closer look at her police ID.

CANADIAN FARMER
Rochester? Isn't this is a little
out of your jurisdiction?

Lucy pulls out her GUN, losing patience.

LUCY
Just get out of the fucking car!
Now!

The farmer puts up his hands, complies. Lucy pulls him out and switches places with him.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Thank you. You'll be rewarded for
your service.

CANADIAN FARMER
How?!

She hits the gas and closes her door as she drives away.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Agent Gutierrez gingerly approaches Martin, who's pouring himself a coffee in the office kitchen.

AGENT GUTIERREZ
Sir? I've been trying to call Agent
Sharkovsky about this, but his
phone seems to be out of the
service area.

MARTIN
For fuck's sake. What is it?

He holds out a PRINTOUT.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

A composite of that guy who met Jason Miller, claiming to be from social services. Not sure if it helps us, but it's a face.

MARTIN

Upload it to LEO and see if any matches come back.

AGENT GUTIERREZ

What about Sharko?

MARTIN

What about him.

Martin walks out. Gutierrez looks back at the printout. We see the finished COMPOSITE IMAGE of a benign seeming OLDER MAN in his sixties. Doesn't look like anyone we've seen.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Sharko pulls his car into the snow-covered driveway, gliding to a stop in front of the garage. Next to an old CHEVY TRUCK with snow-chains and a blacked out camper.

He gets out and surveys the house. It's old, built of grey stone. All the windows shuttered against the cold. Impossible to see what lies inside.

Sharko moves towards the front entrance. He braces against the harsh wind, terribly under-dressed for these conditions.

He makes it to the heavy wooden front door. Before knocking, he looks for some kind of mailbox. Finds none.

He presses the DOORBELL and waits. Nothing seems to stir.

This time he KNOCKS. Still no one comes.

Sharko moves away from the door, to start around back, when finally it opens behind him.

Sharko turns. Sees an OLDER MAN emerge, wearing a heavy, hand-knit sweater. This is COLIN (60s). Looks a lot like the man in the COMPOSITE SKETCH, not that Sharko realizes it.

COLIN

Can I help you?

SHARKO

Sorry to bother you. I was looking for a Dr. Peter Jameson?

COLIN
I'm afraid he isn't here.

SHARKO
When do you expect him back?

COLIN
Not soon. He's been dead for
several years.

SHARKO
I'm very sorry to hear that. You
must be his...

COLIN
An old friend. Peter left his
family's farm in my care. Can I ask
what this is about?

Sharko removes his FBI badge and flashes it.

SHARKO
I just had a few questions for him.
About his work.

COLIN
I thought all this had been put to
bed ages ago.

SHARKO
What had?

COLIN
The business with the orphans.

SHARKO
It had, but we came across a
film...

COLIN
What kind of film?

Sharko sees he has his interest.

SHARKO
I'm sorry, it's freezing. Any
chance we could take this inside?

COLIN
Of course. I'll make us some
coffee.

He stands aside and welcomes Sharko into his home.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Sharko sits on the couch of a well-appointed living room. Sharko scans his surroundings. The house is filled with a strange mix of academic and rural decor. Antiques and old books mix with taxidermied animals.

Colin comes out of the kitchen, carrying a couple coffees.

COLIN

Here. This should help warm you up.

SHARKO

Thanks.

Colin sits down in the chair across from him. Sharko takes an awkward sip from the steaming mug.

COLIN

So, you were saying, you've come across some kind of film...

SHARKO

Uh huh, one that we think Dr. Jameson helped make, during his time with the orphans.

COLIN

He was nothing but a scapegoat, you know. He didn't know they'd been falsely classified. He just did his job.

SHARKO

Which he lost as soon as the scandal broke?

COLIN

Not only that, he was barred from treating patients for the rest of his career.

SHARKO

Well, this film we discovered, we believe it was made as part of a secret project, one attempting to prove the existence of something called Syndrome E.

Colin has no reaction.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Did he ever mention anything about any of this?

(MORE)

SHARKO (CONT'D)
About working for the CIA? Or
taking trips to Egypt, or Bosnia?

Colin laughs. Sharko looks puzzled at the response.

COLIN
Are you being serious?

Sharko looks dismayed, takes another sip of coffee.

A familiar LITTLE DOG scampers into the room. Curious about this stranger, he sniffs Sharko's leg.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Speaking of nosey...come here boy.

The dog dutifully goes to him and jumps into his lap. Sharko watches the way he strokes its fur. Sensing something off...He meets his eyes with a sharp look.

BOY'S VOICE
Daddy?

Sharko turns towards the voice. Just finds an empty doorway.

COLIN
What are you looking at?

As Colin turns to follow his gaze, Sharko notices a pale, CENTIPEDE SHAPED SCAR on his temple.

His stomach clenches. Everything falling into place...Colin is the boy from the film.

SHARKO
That scar...where did you get it?

He touches it, self-conscious.

COLIN
From an operation I had as a child.

SHARKO
That your father performed?

COLIN
I'm sorry?

SHARKO
Well, he wasn't really your dad.
Dr. Jameson adopted you, didn't he,
from the orphanage?

He's silent. Not sure how he knew that.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
They barred him from treating
patients, but couldn't stop him
from treating his own son.

Colin just gives him a bone-chilling smile. Impressed.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
I've only seen what he filmed. Can
only imagine what he did when the
camera wasn't rolling.

COLIN
He loved me. Like no one else
could.

SHARKO
And so you followed in his
footsteps? Recreating the same
nightmare he made you live through.

He stares him down. Unafraid.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
Where are they?

Sharko stands, unholstering his GUN.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
Where are they?!

Sharko lunges, but his feet give up from under him, like
they're made of rubber.

His body falls, smashing down on the coffee table.

Sharko tries to get up but can't, his body not cooperating.
He looks around, disoriented. The room blurs and bends.

He sees the SPILLED COFFEE CUP...realizing he's been
drugged...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharko's eyes flicker open. Turned onto his back. He
struggles to move, but his body is unresponsive. Paralyzed.

Only part he can move is his eyes. He finds Colin staring
down at him, then sees an IV inserted into a vein in his arm.

COLIN

You're on a suxamethonium drip.
It's a potent muscle relaxant,
stops the body while keeping the
brain nice and active.

He begins shaving Sharko's head with a pair of CLIPPERS.

COLIN (CONT'D)

You're right, I have followed in my
father's footsteps. Though we were
hardly working alone. Our
illustrious employers wanted you to
find me.

Sharko shows confusion.

COLIN (CONT'D)

They were not happy with what
happened in Egypt. They sent me
there to run another trial, but I
kept telling them we needed *fresh*
evidence to prove the Syndrome's
existence once and for all. You
see, brain cells die in three to
seven minutes after death. Only way
to preserve the delicate structures
is to harvest from a *living subject*
who'd undergone the treatment.

He taps the scar on his temple with his finger.

COLIN (CONT'D)

My supervisors didn't approve of my
methods. Ironical, given what they
had done to me. Even so, they
removed me from the project. I was
forced to proceed on my own. This
time, creating the syndrome in a
lab, like my father had done many
years ago, before he even knew what
it was he was creating.

Colin leans close, to whisper in Sharko's ear.

COLIN (CONT'D)

And guess what...*I did it.*

He closes his eyes, savoring the triumph.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Now that I know how to cause
Syndrome E, perhaps now I can
reverse course. Find a cure.

That isn't what Sharko was expecting. Colin picks up a SURGICAL SAW. Cuts his finger along the edge.

COLIN (CONT'D)
I have these impulses I can't
control, however much I'd like to.

He meets Sharko's eyes. A shade of torment in his gaze. He turns the SAW on. It whirrs at a piercingly HIGH PITCH.

Sharko watches it, squirming, unable to mount a defense. Colin begins lowering the instrument...

COLIN (CONT'D)
You're my first FBI agent. Very
curious what kind of nooks and
crannies we'll find in there.

The blade makes first contact with skin, drawing blood...

The DOOR BELL RINGS.

Colin lifts up the saw, piqued.

COLIN (CONT'D)
I thought you were alone?

Sharko's eyes show even more fear, realizing who it must be.

Colin goes to investigate, taking Sharko's GUN with him.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Lucy tries to open the door, but finds it locked. She looks back at Sharko's car in the driveway, then back at the door. Sensing something isn't right, she backs away.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Colin stalks through the house, Sharko's gun at the ready. He gets to the front door and peers through the PEEPHOLE...

The porch is EMPTY.

Colin takes a step back from the door, wheels spinning.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - DAY

Lucy comes around the side of the house, her feet sinking into the deep SNOW.

She sees an abandoned looking CATTLE BARN a short distance away. Its roof rusted, its walls faded and crumbling.

Memory stirred, Lucy reaches into her pocket and digs out the FILM STILL of the boy in the pasture. Holds it up.

In the background of the shot looms the SAME CATTLE BARN (minus fifty years of disrepair). She's standing in the exact same field where they shot the end of the film.

Lucy runs towards the barn now, removing her gun as she goes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharko sweats, burning up, his body shaking violently. The adrenaline fighting it out with the muscle relaxant.

Sharko focuses, tries to direct all his mental energy. He manages to KICK the IV stand. The metal pole sways, but doesn't topple.

He rebuilds his energy. Focuses, and kicks the base again, harder this time. The pole falls forward, pulling the IV tube taut...

The IV is secured to his arm with tape, so instead of coming out, the base of the needle is jerked upwards, twisting the sharp tip down, deeper into the muscle tissue below the vein.

Sharko winces. Slowly clenches one of his fists. Feeling some motor control coming back to him.

With every ounce of concentration, he raises his hand up, then over his body. It trembles, barely under his control. He just manages to grasp the plastic tube of the IV.

Then YANKS his arm to the side.

The TUBE comes off the needle, squirting the IV drip outside his body.

But the IV needle itself is still embedded deep in his arm. Blood flows out of the open tube, the incoming pressure no longer there to keep it at bay.

Sharko takes hold of the needle itself. RIPS it out.

EXT. CATTLE BARN - DAY

Lucy gets to the sliding metal doors and tries hard to open them. Then sees a new looking PADLOCK, keeping it shut.

She tries to bust it with the butt of her gun. Doesn't budge. So she takes a step back and FIRES A SHOT.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Colin hears it. Quickly heads towards the back of the house.

INT. CATTLE BARN - DAY

Lucy comes into the vast, dark space, divided into concrete stalls. Rusted tools of the trade hang from the rafters. Old branding irons, cattle prods, bolt guns. Lucy finds a LIGHT SWITCH and tries it. Nothing happens.

She presses on, her eyes slowly adjusting to the darkness.

She passes a couple chicken-wire RABBIT CAGES. One is full, the ALBINO BUNNIES looking at her with their RED EYES. Noses twitching. The other cage is EMPTY...

Lucy comes upon some metal shelves, lined with large MEDICAL JARS. Out of place in this environment. She picks one up. Sees a BRAIN and PAIR OF EYES, floating in formaldehyde. Repulsed, Lucy puts the jar back. Shines her phone along the shelf. All the jars are likewise filled with "samples" collected over the years.

Lucy hears a weird SCURRYING SOUND coming from up ahead.

LUCY
(scared)
Sharko?

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - DAY

Colin comes out the back door. Doesn't see anyone...

Until he sees fresh FOOTPRINTS in the snow, leading towards the cattle barn.

Colin rushes down the steps to go after.

Sharko shoots out of the house behind him. Colin turns to shoot, and Sharko PLOWS right into him.

The gun flies out of his hand, disappearing into the snow.

The two of them slam down hard onto the ground. Colin tries to fight Sharko off, hissing and clawing, but he's no match physically now that the drug has worn off.

Sharko forces Colin onto his back. His lip busted from the fall. Sharko wraps his hands around Colin's neck. A violent impulse kicking in again.

Sharko looks rabid. His face red and tense, his mouth twisted in a snarl. Every molecule in his body wanting to *end him*.

INT. CATTLE BARN - DAY

Lucy approaches a PEN near the end of the structure. It's been covered with metal siding so that no one can see in and no one can see out.

She tries to pull open the swinging gate, but it won't budge. She slams her body shoulder first, trying to knock it open. Just ends up hurting her shoulder.

Then she sees a large metal SLIDING BOLT that's keeping it locked from the outside. Feeling a little stupid, she slides it and pulls the gate open.

She's simultaneously relieved and horrified at what she finds on the other side:

SIX EMACIATED BOYS with shaved heads, roughly 12-14 years old. Huddling in the corner of the dim underground room.

Lucy puts her gun away.

LUCY
(soothing voice)
It's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you.

She slowly approaches. Not noticing that the floor is splotted with blood and loose clumps of RABBIT FUR.

The boys scuttle further away from her. Pressing themselves all the way into the corner.

Lucy scans their faces. Recognizes one of them...

LUCY (CONT'D)
Jason?

JASON MILLER looks almost confused to hear his name. His complexion filthy, more ashen than when we saw him in the opening. The light in his eyes gone.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I thought that was you. Come on.
Let's get you all out of here.

Lucy holds out her hand. Jason stares at it, suspicious. Doesn't come forward. Lucy leans forward, trying to make herself as nonthreatening as possible.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You're all safe now, I promise-

Jason suddenly lunges and ATTACKS HER, like a feral cat. Already "infected."

Lucy screams, tries to fight him off, but the other boys jump in as well. Punching, kicking, and *biting*. Teeth sinking into flesh. She tries to fight them off, but there are too many, and they're too violent. She's soon overwhelmed.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE

Colin struggles to breathe, pinned to the ground, unable to get free from Sharko's iron grip.

He looks up into Sharko's eyes, life fading...and manages a slight SMILE.

COLIN
(strained)
Comme...moi.

Sharko reacts, thrown. Suddenly aware of what he's doing.

He lets go. Colin GASPS air to refill his lungs. Looks at Sharko, almost confounded.

SHARKO
You weren't born like this.

He HANDCUFFS him. Yanks Colin to his feet.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
Lucy?!

INT. ABANDONED CATTLE BARN - DAY

Lucy lies completely still, face down on the floor. Terribly beaten, covered in blood.

SHARKO (O.S.)
(muffled)
Lucy?!!!

Her eyelids barely open, hearing her name. Not dead, just beaten unconscious.

She slowly gets up and looks around. Slowly dawns on her--all the boys are GONE.

She feels for her GUN. It's gone too.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - DAY

The kidnapped boys emerge from the barn, their eyes adjusting to the light. Hands streaked with blood. Jason leads the pack, wielding LUCY'S GUN.

Colin smiles at his creations, like a proud parent. Sharko looks sick. Even he has never seen something this disturbing.

COLIN

That's right. Shoot him. He came here to hurt us. He wants to take you away from me--

Jason raises the gun...

SHARKO

Don't!

Jason FIRES.

Colin looks down, stunned. A red blossom of blood spreads from where the bullet hit his chest. Colin collapses.

Jason keeps coming, faster now, letting out a SCREAM. He unloads more bullets into Colin, the sprays of blood stark against white snow.

Jason gets directly over him, firing several final shots at point blank range. He stops finally, heaving hard breaths. Sharko reaches out towards him...

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Hey...It's okay...

Jason pulls away at his touch. Points the gun at him now. Sharko holds up his hands, nonthreatening.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

It's all over. Put it down.

Jason just stares, his gaze hard and unwavering.

Lucy limps out of the cattle barn. Jason looks towards the her. Sharko seizes the chance, makes a move for the gun.

Jason reacts, pulls the trigger. The gun CLICKS. Out of bullets. Sharko breathes. Jason keeps pulling the trigger anyway. CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK...

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - NIGHT

Jason sits in a private hospital room, staring at the wall. Completely numb and disconnected.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - NIGHT

Sharko looks in on him through the window in the room's door.

PSYCHIATRIST (O.S.)
Still the same, huh?

Sharko looks, sees the hospital's attending PSYCHIATRIST joining him.

SHARKO
Hasn't moved or said a word.

The psychiatrist makes a troubled sound.

SHARKO (CONT'D)
You think he'll be okay?

PSYCHIATRIST
After that kind of trauma? It'll take a lot of time and work.

SHARKO
You mean, if at all?

PSYCHIATRIST
Depends on if he can move past the pain and fear, or if he gives into it.

SHARKO
It's really a choice?

PSYCHIATRIST
One he'll have to make every day.

Sharko looks affected by the doctor's words.

A commotion down the hallway grabs their attention. Jason's SOCIAL WORKER comes into view, looking frantic, escorted by a UNIFORMED POLICEMAN and HOSPITAL ATTENDANT.

SOCIAL WORKER
Where is he? Where is he?

She gets closer and sees Sharko standing there.

SOCIAL WORKER (CONT'D)
It was you that found him? God
bless you...

Sharko barely acknowledges the praise.

PSYCHIATRIST
He's right in here.

The psychiatrist leads her into the room. Through the door, Sharko sees her embrace Jason with tightly wrapped arms. He's completely unresponsive. The boy turns to look at Sharko...suddenly turned into Sharko's deceased son.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sharko rushes out the long, sterile hallway, needing to get out of there.

He passes a room where Lucy is being bandaged and cleaned up by a NURSE. She glances towards the hallway, but Sharko's already gone before she gets a word out.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Sharko comes out the front entrance and sucks in the sharp, night air. Some moisture gathers in the corner of his eyes. He digs the palm of his hands into his sockets to dam it.

MARTIN (O.S.)
Think I owe you an apology.

Sharko looks, sees his boss heading towards him with a few other AGENTS from the bureau.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(to other agents)
Go ahead. I'll meet you inside.

They head in, leaving Martin and Sharko alone.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Where's Detective Brennan?

SHARKO
Being tended to.

MARTIN

Why aren't you with her?

Sharko doesn't have a good answer. Changes the subject.

SHARKO

You get any response?

MARTIN

The CIA is denying any knowledge of Syndrome E or involvement with Colin Jameson.

Sharko's not exactly surprised.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

With Mr. Jameson dead, and the film MIA, will be difficult to prove one way or the other.

SHARKO

They wanted me to find him. Give them a fall guy, while the real people behind this get off.

MARTIN

You don't get it, do you.

Sharko doesn't know what he's supposed to get.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

The police searched the house, found six syringes filled with that same shit he used on you.

SHARKO

He was about to "operate" again.

MARTIN

Going there when you did saved those boys. You're a hero.

Sharko bristles at that word.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for what I said. Not gonna be sidelining you anytime soon, believe me.

Sharko's not quite sure how to feel about that.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Sun shines through thick, green leaves. Sounds of children laughing and playing emanate from a nearby playground.

Sharko looks up at the dappled light, sitting on a bench. He looks healthier, shaven, his hair grown back in a little.

LUCY (O.S.)

Frank?

He looks up, almost surprised to hear his actual name. He finds Lucy approaching. Likewise recovered from the ordeal. Tough and beautiful as ever. Stands to greet her.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Sorry I'm late, got a little lost on the way over.

SHARKO

That's okay.

An awkward pause, taking each other in.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

It's good to see you.

LUCY

Yeah. You too.

EXT. CITY PARK - LATER

The two of them stroll through the park, a slight distance between them. Still bridging the divide.

SHARKO

Congrats again on the transfer.

She pulls out a newly minted detective badge, from the NYPD.

LUCY

Thanks. New York's finest...should finally get to work some real cases.

SHARKO

It's a big city. Plenty of bad guys.

LUCY

Nothing I can't handle, right?

SHARKO

Put it this way, I'm more worried about them than you.

LUCY

What about you? Still on leave?

He shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Couldn't wait to be back in action?

SHARKO

Actually, I asked to be moved to admin.

She's not sure she heard him right.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Used to think working murders was the thing keeping me above water. But think the opposite was true.

LUCY

Have a hard time imagining you humping a desk all day.

SHARKO

Like you said, maybe I could still have a life.

LUCY

Said some other things too.

SHARKO

You did.

LUCY

I didn't mean it, you know.

SHARKO

I know. But maybe you were right. About some of it anyway.

He takes her hand in his. She looks down, notices he's NOT WEARING HIS WEDDING RING.

SHARKO (CONT'D)

Thing is, I'm gonna have a lot more time with this new position.

LUCY

Well...I could use someone to show me around the city.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
You know, help me avoid pot holes,
make sure I don't go left when I
should go right.

SHARKO
I can do that.

LUCY
I'm sure you can.

He touches her cheek with his hand. Leans in and they KISS.

Sharko glimpses a LITTLE BOY watching them from a distance.
Worried, he pulls back.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What is it?

Sharko sees that it's just a NORMAL LITTLE BOY. Not his son.
And not a figment of his imagination.

SHARKO
Nothing. Think I'm fine.

He smiles, actually believing it. Kisses her again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF KARAJ, IRAN - DAY

A young PERSIAN BIKE RIDER pedals as hard as he can, his face dripping with sweat. His rusted chain SQUEAKS and spokes RATTLE. Three story cinder-block apartment buildings with clothes hung out to dry flank both sides of the bumpy road.

Nestled in the foothills of the Alborz mountains, the scenery looks more like Colorado than what you might picture when you imagine Iran.

The rider glances over his shoulder to make sure he's not been followed, holding one hand tightly across his stomach, CARRYING SOMETHING underneath his tattered coat.

EXT. MADRASA - DAY

A single story stone building, old and badly need of repair. An IRANIAN flag flutters on a pole in the courtyard. A man's voice speaking in FARSI can be heard emanating through the crumbling walls.

A HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAKING gets closer and closer. Followed shortly thereafter by the bike rider, rounding the turn.

INT. MADRASA - DAY

Impoverished MALE STUDENTS (early teens) sit cross-legged, watching an old 16mm film of a SHIITE CLERIC delivering a sermon. The image dusty and scratched. His voice warped and warbled. The students repeat the occasional phrase, this school too poor to pay for a cleric.

Behind them, a clanking, RUSTED PROJECTOR shoots its dust-filled light through the dim room, watched over by a gaunt PROJECTIONIST, just a few years older than them.

He hears a soft KNOCKING on the metal door behind him. He looks up, makes sure no one else heard. All the boys are still facing forward.

EXT. MADRASA - DAY

The bike rider waits outside the door. Nearly jumps out of his skin when the door cracks open...

The projectionist peeks out. The bike rider wordlessly hands over a wad of CURRENCY. The projectionist does a cursory count. Nods.

The bike rider pulls out a round METAL CANISTER from under his coat. Passes it through the crack in the door.

INT. MADRASA - DAY

The film projector suddenly shuts off. The boys start shouting at the projectionist. He scrambles with the machinery, yells back to them in Farsi. The equivalent of "Experiencing Technical Difficulties."

The boys get increasingly rowdy, pushing each other and laughing. *Doesn't take much to set this group off.*

The projector turns back on. Not showing the Cleric they were just watching, but a black & white COUNTDOWN LEADER.

The boys mumble in confusion, but their gazes lock onto the new image, eyes wide open and curious.

5...4...3...2...BEEP.

The screen goes DEEP BLACK.

A very familiar CIRCUS TUNE begins playing as we...

ROLL END CREDITS.