

THE CROWD

Written by

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A PINPRICK OF LIGHT

Approaches and expands, growing brighter and brighter, accompanied by an agonizing symphony of RATTLES and CLANKS.

Realizing what it is, A TRAIN, we place ourselves in a --

SUBWAY TUNNEL

Rats scurry for shelter. Light glints off tracks. The train is coming fast, but we aren't moving out of its way. Rather, we invite the impact --

WHAM!

We should have been obliterated. Instead, we're engulfed and sent hurtling --

THWIP, THWIP, THWIP,

At a dizzying speed through car after car until we come to an abrupt halt, on --

A WOMAN'S PANICKED FACE

This is TABITHA PIERCE, early 40s, gripped by terror, pale with fear, stuck on a SMALL PLATFORM between TWO SUBWAY CARS.

Her heavy breath fogs the glass of the DOOR between us as she tries to open it with all she's got.

We don't see what she sees as she WHIPSAWS glances over her shoulder. But, whatever it is, it's worth ignoring the red-lettered "Do not cross between cars" sign in her peripheral.

With a piercing SCREECH, the train takes a sharp curve.

Tabitha HANGS ON, her foothold precarious on the tilting platform. She SLIPS --

Her legs DANGLE. Her knuckles whiten. She grips for dear life over the blurred tracks below. She can't hold on for long...

Luckily, as her fingers give, the train cars right themselves, and she's able to lift herself back up.

Established again, she SLAMS the door latch. She's got to get it open, she won't survive another curve, and up ahead, another is coming...

Car by car, like a domino effect, the curve approaches. Only seconds remain as she pounds and pounds on the latch. Her hand throbs, but she can't stop because --

The platform beneath her is already shifting. Tilting. Compensating for the curve.

And as the apex comes and she loses balance, the door miraculously OPENS, collapsing her inside --

INT. SUBWAY CAR - CONTINUOUS

Stumbling into the car, the door closes behind her.

Tabitha peers back through its window and --

WE TILT with the train and her perspective, waiting for the cars to re-align and reveal what she has been running from.

Through the small window and the dim lighting, it's hard to make out much detail, but it appears to be --

A CROWD

Faceless and dark.

PUSHING, CLAWING, CLAMORING forward, filling the entire car with rage and determination.

A sight that wouldn't be out of place in a zombie movie, but they aren't the undead, and this isn't one of those stories.

Tabitha's eyes widen. She needs to keep moving. She sprints for the door at the other end.

It's so close. Its handle inches from her grasp when she STOPS SHORT --

AHEAD, through the door's glass, there's ANOTHER CROWD.

The train BOUNCES on the rails. The lights FLICKER. Tabitha staggers.

At both ends, the faceless Crowds BANG on the doors. It's only a matter of time before they come through.

With nowhere to go, she grabs the support poles, clinging her way to the middle of the aisle.

The lights FLICKER OFF.

With Tabitha, we hold our breath in the darkness...

Finally, they ILLUMINATE, and the train breaks, SHRIEKING into a STATION.

Tabitha strolls her eyes to a confusing sight.

Now, through each doorway, there is NO SIGN of the clamoring Crowds, only a handful of commuters minding their business.

Jolting her, the SUBWAY DOORS open to the PLATFORM.

With care and self-preservation, she steps out...

INT. SUBWAY STATION - PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

It's empty. Dark, save for a handful of working lights.

All the train doors are OPEN. Tabitha stares. Grim anticipation and fear build, but nobody else is coming out. She's alone on the platform.

Finally, the doors SLAM SHUT, and the train lurches forward.

Tabitha's gaze fixates on the windows of the cars. They're maybe thirty percent full of peaceful commuters that blur by as the train accelerates out of the station.

Nothing is wrong here... Did she imagine it? She brushes off her worries, needs to pull herself together.

She steps to a STAIRCASE with an "Exit" sign above --

SNAP! She falls forward.

Her right heel has collapsed, and with no other options, she reluctantly takes off her shoes, grimacing barefoot towards the stairs --

INT. SUBWAY STATION - MOMENTS LATER

TABITHA'S BARE FEET avoid grime as they navigate up the stairs.

AT THE TOP, there's A SUBWAY BOOTH.

Inside, an MTA WORKER engrossed in a crossword puzzle. He isn't being derelict of duty. The place is empty.

He notices Tabitha's bare feet. Rolls his eyes, *another day underground.*

Tabitha continues, now facing another STAIRCASE -- An EXIT to the street level.

She cautiously approaches. Stops to strain her ears.

The sound of ECHOING footsteps breaks the silence.

A CROWD IS COMING...

Tabitha nervously runs back to the subway booth.

TABITHA
Help me. Please, I need help.

The MTA Worker is rattled from his puzzle. He engages A
COMMUNICATION MICROPHONE/SPEAKER --

MTA WORKER
Hey, stop that.

Tabitha SLAMS her balled fists against the protective glass.

MTA WORKER (CONT'D)
Lady, what the fuck. Calm down.

TABITHA
Please, they are coming. Please
help me.

MTA WORKER
Get back. Get back, or I am calling
the cops.

From THE EXIT STAIRS, pounding feet cycle LOUDER and LOUDER.
Tabitha can't stay here. The only way to go is the way she
came, BACK DOWN --

INT. SUBWAY STATION - PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER

We pick Tabitha up, descending multiple stairs at a time as
she returns to the platform.

She frantically searches for an escape. There's no way out,
or...? Could she make it across the tracks to the other side
of the station? It's a risk but also her only chance.

She builds confidence, preparing to make a break when the
platform LIGHTS GO OUT --

She FALTERS. FUMBLES. Tries to run in the pitch-black
darkness.

There's nowhere to go. She's BOXED IN by an unseen force.

The light from an approaching train cuts through. Instead of
finding safety, she is met with a terrifying sight --

A CROWD

Filling the platform, silhouetted by the light from the coming train.

Tabitha tries to move away. She's trapped. Surrounded in every direction.

IN UNISON, The Crowd SURGES FORWARD --

The sheer force of the mass CRUSHES her. The trauma on her chest is immense.

She convulses. COUGHS BLOOD. Gasps for air.

She wants to scream but CHOKES on her own blood. She has no voice, only tears.

In the sea of bodies, something moves toward her. She's got to get away from whatever is coming.

Tabitha summons strength. Pushes through the ever-tightening organ-crushing space.

It's a gauntlet --

Hands GRAB. Fingers sink into her flesh. Every inch gained a battle, every gasp for air a triumph.

Her muscles cry out, *KEEP FIGHTING*. She repeats it over and over in her head.

Drowning out her panicked thoughts, the RUMBLE of the oncoming train builds.

No time to look back. She can feel the entity within The Crowd gaining ground as...

Finally, her upper body EXPLODES FREE --

Flailing out the side of The Crowd, arms and head first.

Her fingers splayed, desperate to reach for anything to help her pull herself out.

Tabitha kicks, trying to squirm the rest of her body free.

The Crowd is relentless, grabbing hold of her lower body and arms, BREAKING HER BONES as they drag her back into their mass --

Leaving only HER HEAD free.

Her eyes bulge with terror as she realizes her head is DANGLING off the platform above the tracks.

The RUMBLE of the train crescendos. A bright light consumes. Tabitha turns to its nuclear eruption as --

The oncoming train SLAMS HER SKULL --

CRUSHING it in an EXPLOSION of blood and bone --

SMASHING US TO:

LOUISA "LOU" LANGMORE, 29, seated in a classroom, eyes hidden behind a curtain of bangs.

She brushes them back, revealing confidence, the kind one obtains from overcoming obstacles.

INT. LEARNING ANNEX CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Around Lou, desks are filled with an all walks of life collection of STUDENTS eager to better their futures.

Inviting them to the challenge, the blackboard reads: "Public Speaking."

The Teacher, MR. PATEL, late 50s, scans the room. The students squirm, but not Lou, who welcomes the challenge.

MR. PATEL
Lou...? How about it?

Accompanied by intermittent claps of encouragement, she takes a deep breath and journeys to the front.

Mr. Patel gives a tender smile, *you got this*. She grins back, *yeah, I do...*

LOU
Hi... I'm Lou, Lou Langmore, and
today I am here to talk to you
about --

A reverberating COUGH calls her attention to the eyes of her classmates burning through her. She shifts her position, losing her train of thought.

LOU (CONT'D)
(Tripping up)
Um... Setting... Goals --

She reminds herself of the skills she has been taught. *Take a breath, take your time, imagine everyone naked...*

The tools work, and she continues, no, SHE EXCELS --

LOU (CONT'D)

We all have goals, whether a career ambition, a personal achievement, or a financial target. But how do we ensure we reach our goals? It all starts with goal setting.

The speech is more than an assignment. Rather an inflection point in a lengthy path. Whatever troubles she's had are in the rearview.

INT. LEARNING ANNEX CLASSROOM - LATER

In an *I'm one of you*, demeanor, Mr. Patel slides onto the edge of his desk.

MR. PATEL

Next week will be our final presentation. I want to thank Velma and Cecile, who have offered to provide refreshments.

Two middle-aged housewives, VELMA and CECILE, smirk proudly.

MR. PATEL (CONT'D)

As a reminder, an integral part of passing and getting your certificate is bringing someone to the presentation.

He looks at Lou. Clears his throat.

MR. PATEL (CONT'D)

Thank you all. Excellent work today, and see you next week.

Class dismissed, the students gather their things and say farewells. Already at the door, Lou is ahead of them when Mr. Patel catches up.

MR. PATEL (CONT'D)

Lou, wait a moment. Can we talk?

She nods and lets the other students pass until the room empties.

MR. PATEL (CONT'D)

You did so well today. Stuck with it. You've made incredible progress.

LOU

That means a lot...

MR. PATEL

Look, I know you are here because your conservator thought it would be a good way to --

LOU

Reintegrate with society.

He wasn't going to be so frank, but since she was --

MR. PATEL

Yes, you've found your voice and a community here. I was wondering if you would be interested in an advanced class. A few other students requested it, and the Annex approved it.

She shifts her body away.

LOU

The deal was I do this class, and Anderson tells the court to lift the conservatorship. Now you're moving the goalpost?

MR. PATEL

No one is moving anything. Give the final assignment your all, and I will pass you with flying colors. Since you were doing so well, I only thought that keeping up with this would be good for you.

She gives the smallest of smiles. She knows he means well.

LOU

I don't mean for this to sound curt, I genuinely appreciate all you've done, but I'm tired of everyone deciding what's best for me.

Her phone BUZZES.

Pulling it from her pocket, she notices Mr. Patel has been wounded by her response. She softens.

LOU (CONT'D)

I'll think about the class.

MR. PATEL

I hope you do.

The phone BUZZES again, and before she can take the call, it's gone to voicemail.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - LATER

We DRIFT ABOVE the space. It's larger than your average New York City studio apartment, yet not quite as grand as a loft.

It's noticeably sparse. A bed, a small table. The basics. In contrast to the simplicity of the space, there is --

AN ARRAY OF MONITORS, SERVERS, AND HIGH-END VIDEO EQUIPMENT.

The screens cast a harsh, unnatural light. Fashioning a sense of unease, the servers hum steadily.

WE DESCEND cautiously to find...

Lou in an ergonomic chair at the keyboard.

ON HER MAIN SCREEN, she logs into a SECURE EMAIL PORTAL. Her attention zeroes in on a recent message, indicated by its BOLD FONT.

She CLICKS IT OPEN to reveal an attachment package of IMAGES, VIDEOS, and other MEDIA FILES. But what catches her attention is A POLICE REPORT.

Lou may not recognize the victim, but we do -- Tabitha Pierce, the woman from the subway.

Lou reaches for her phone. The voicemail from earlier awaits. she presses play --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Lou, hey, I'm sending over another
case I need your eyes on...

ON HER SCREENS, she reviews the attachments as the message plays -- Images of Tabitha smiling, laughing, and enjoying time with family and friends.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The woman, Tabitha Pierce, dove in front of a six train. Her family doesn't want to believe it's that simple. They're coming after the insurance company to honor their policy, so I was hoping you could confirm our theory. The city is dragging its feet on getting us the CCTV footage from the station. I am sure you can expedite that...
(MORE)

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

There were no witnesses, but she had a run-in with an MTA Worker right before. He said she was hysterical. He may be worth talking to...

The man pauses. His breath is heavy. He isn't done.

Lou hangs. Waits for more. It's not much when it comes.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Alright... Thanks.

Lou bites a fingernail. Considers for a moment. Then shrugs it off, *time to get to work* --

She brings up a city website and quickly bypasses security protocols. This makes sense to her in a way that most of us wouldn't understand.

And, with a final stroke of the return button, she's in. The city's CCTV SUBWAY STATION ARCHIVES are at her disposal.

LATER

Lou studies the materials. She's been at this for a while.

ON HER SCREENS

MULTIPLE CAMERA ANGLES of the subway platform show Tabitha Pierce rapidly exiting the staircase and scanning her surroundings.

She is alone, desperately searching for help. Nervously, throwing glances over her shoulder.

Lou's eyes sharpen, questioning, *what is scaring her so much?*

And even though we've seen this play out, we wonder the same because watching this footage, we no longer trust what we saw. Did it happen? Was it a false narrative, a delusion?

What began as a CRISP FEED deteriorates as Tabitha devolves into hysterics.

Lou starts the video over, CLICKING through MULTIPLE ANGLES.

From each, Tabitha is alone on the platform. The footage plays as before and degrades at the same point.

And then... Something grabs Lou's eye.

She navigates to THE WIDEST ANGLE --

Tabitha stands motionless on the Subway platform, her gaze fixed on something unseen.

Lou's lips part, curious. She presses play --

THE FOOTAGE GLITCHES HARD, and amid the chaos, a **DARK BLUR** flickers past --

What was that? Lou STOPS the video.

Peering intently at the screen, she TRACKS the footage BACK, then hits PLAY.

Lou rubs her eyes. She needs to focus. She turns off all the monitors except for the center one.

She TRACKS BACK AGAIN, then STEPS FORWARD, FRAME BY FRAME...

Lou fights blinks as the blur FLASHES through for a single frame.

She's never going to solve this with the naked eye.

She opens a VIDEO EDITING TOOL and puts it to work, cleaning up the footage.

This isn't a fast process. It needs to render.

OFF her YAWN --

WE CUT TO:

Lou SPLASHING cool water on her face.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

In the MIRROR, Lou closes her eyes, relishing the calming effect and appreciating the moment's stillness.

As she opens them, she's horrified to see --

Her face is STREAKED IN BLOOD.

Panicking, she looks at the running faucet --

THICK BLOOD gurgles out.

Her hands, beneath the flow, are covered in it.

She frantically SCRUBS at her face.

The blood clings like a second skin. She can't get it off, no matter how hard she tries --

SLAM TO:

LOU HEAVING AWAKE

At her desk, she struggles for breath. Though it was only a nightmare, it triggered a full-blown panic attack.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - SAME

Lou pulls a LAMINATED PAPER CARD from her pocket. Runs her fingers over its heavily worn surface.

It reads: "WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A PANIC ATTACK."

"Step 1 -- Breathe slowly, deeply, and gently through your nose."

She complies. And then moves on to...

"Step 2 -- Count steadily back from five to one."

LOU
Five... Four... Three...

Tension drains. It's working as it has many times before. Only one step left...

"Step 3 -- Close your eyes and continue to count. Focus on your breathing."

LOU (CONT'D)
Two... One...

Lou lets out a DEEP EXHALE. Opens her eyes, catching --

A PROMPT ON HER SCREEN

The render is complete, and the footage is ready.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - LATER

Lou holds her breath, watching the cleaned-up feeds. They still glitch and suffer poor quality, but the shapes are more apparent.

She PAUSES the video, capturing THE DARK BLUR as it streaks across the screen.

She FLICKS between camera angles before settling on the most direct one.

It's now clear -- Tabitha is looking toward the DARK BLUR.

Lou backs up the footage, then advances one frame at a time until the BLUR APPEARS for a single frame, then it's gone.

She tracks back and FREEZES on the frame for inspection.

A closer look with a slight TILT of her head reveals that post render, the blur has MORE SHAPE. It almost looks like A PERSON standing a dozen yards from Tabitha.

LOU
It can't be...

Lou toggles, one frame forward, one frame back. Each time, the blur appears and disappears as she ponders the puzzling occurrence -- *Could the footage be corrupted? How can this be? It doesn't seem right.*

She thinks it over as we DRIFT BACK from her, silhouetted by the glow of her monitor and --

CUT TO:

A CANYON OF OFFICE BUILDINGS

The camera seamlessly continues the movement from Lou's apartment, pulling back further and further as the clamoring sounds of the city thicken the air...

Eventually, PULLING US into a HIGH-RISE OFFICE BUILDING...

INT. HIGH-RISE OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The city sounds mute behind WINDOW GLASS as we land in a serene setting. It's the kind of space expensively designed to take all the chaos out of the air.

Sitting cross-legged, glasses hanging off the edge of her face, we find a lawyer, MS. ANDERSON, 50s.

She doesn't present like she has the time or interest for a case like Lou's, yet, the awards and framed photos on her wall tell the story of her commitment to justice and a penchant for taking court assignments pro-bono.

MS. ANDERSON
Mr. Patel says you've been doing
solid work in class.

WE SPIN AROUND to find Lou. Guarded, arms crossed, slumped in a chair. Her mind was elsewhere, on the case.

LOU
(re-focusing)
That's kind.

MS. ANDERSON
He says you've come out of your shell.

Lou unfurls and repositions, ensuring she meets that statement's confidence.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Getting up and speaking in front of people is a great way to reintegrate with social norms.

Lou's attention drifts again.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Lou? Are you here with me?

LOU
I am sorry. Just a case I'm working on. It's got my attention.

MS. ANDERSON
That's good. Your job, sticking with it, is an essential piece of all this. Do you want to tell me about it?

LOU
No, it's over now. I am letting it go.

Lou isn't very convincing, but Ms. Anderson accepts it with a caveat.

MS. ANDERSON
As a conservator, I'm obligated to look out for your interests, which is not separate from my genuine care. If you ever need to talk, I am here for you.

Lou takes comfort in that.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
I'm proud of your work to get back on your feet and to have been a small part of it.

LOU

Speaking of, as part of passing the public speaking class, I have to invite people from my life to the final presentation. It would mean a lot if you could --

MS. ANDERSON

(with a sweetness)

Mr. Patel already invited me, but I am happy you asked.

(back to business)

If all goes well, I will give the state my recommendation to terminate the conservatorship.

Lou smiles. She never thought this day would come.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - LATER

A warm glow from her monitors dances across Lou's face. Between her fingers, she twirls a marker as she toggles frames back and forth.

Leaning closer to the main screen, she bites the cap off and uses the marker to trace over the blur --

Legs, torso, arms, a head...

Her brow clenches with recognition, unable to let it go.

MAN'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)

There were no witnesses...

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...but she had a run-in with an MTA Worker right before. He said she was hysterical. He may be worth talking to...

TILTING DOWN from a buzzing city issue fluorescent, we find Lou gazing at a SUBWAY BOOTH.

Behind the enforced glass, an MTA worker taps his pen against a worn-down New York Times crossword puzzle. We instantly recognize him from the opening of our story.

Lou doesn't call for his attention. She stares at him momentarily, then at his name tag -- "GARZA."

He looks up from his puzzle. He's seen some weird shit down here. A woman staring him down is not the least bit concerning.

GARZA

Hey, lady, can I help you?

He taps the glass as his voice comes through the scratchy microphone/speaker system.

GARZA (CONT'D)

Yo, lady?

Lou snaps to his eyes. Remembers her purpose here.

LOU

I have a question.

GARZA

That's what they pay me the big bucks for. Let me guess. Single or unlimited?

He points at two versions of metro cards taped to the glass.

LOU

I don't need one. I wanted to talk to you about Tabitha Pierce.

GARZA

(labored)

Oh, shit.

He puts his puzzle down.

GARZA (CONT'D)

I already told the papers what I saw.

LOU

I'm not from the papers.

GARZA

I told the cops too.

LOU

I'm from an insurance company.

GARZA

Look, you want a metro card, great. Otherwise, I already told this story.

He turns off the communication microphone/speaker and returns to his puzzle.

Not so fast, Lou KNOCKS on the glass.

GARZA (CONT'D)
(muffled)
Jesus Christ, lady!

He motions her to stop. She POUNDS HARDER. Finally, he turns the microphone/speaker back on.

GARZA (CONT'D)
For fuck's sake. Alright, one question... Deal?

Lou nods.

LOU
Was there someone else on the platform with her?

GARZA
The only person on that platform was someone who did a dumb thing. I see thousands of people through this station every day. They all got their problems -- some more than others. So in my professional opinion, that woman was sick, and that's --

He PAUSES. His gaze FIXES past her.

Lou turns to see what has caught his attention. There's nothing there.

LOU
(turning back to him)
What is it?

Avoiding eye contact, he snaps back to the conversation.

GARZA
Nothing. I thought I saw someone jumping the turnstile. I'm on a double shift. A little tired is all. It's time I took a break.

And with that, he SLAMS DOWN a gate, disappearing behind it.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - PLATFORM

Alone, Lou walks the platform, retracing Tabitha's steps.

The searing video footage replays in her mind as she lands on the spot where Tabitha may have been looking at another person.

Lou takes the same view, then unfolds a PRINTOUT SCREEN GRAB from the video footage.

At the center of the page, SHE'S CIRCLED THE BLUR. She studies the possibilities... WHEN --

A GUST OF WIND, produced by a train WAILING into the station DISLODGES and SENDS the paper flying onto the tracks and underneath the train --

A haunting reminder of Tabitha's fate.

Lou needs to know more, and only Garza can help her...

EXT. STREET - LATER

We pick Lou up, using the cover of pedestrians as she rushes forward. It only takes a moment for us to realize she is in pursuit, and up ahead, we spot her target --

GARZA, stopping at A CROSSWALK.

He's visibly impatient, waiting for the light to change. Scanning his surroundings, avoiding eye contact with the people around him. He looks back towards Lou --

Quick to action, she lands behind a NEWSSTAND. He misses her. But he can't shake the sense that he's being followed.

Screw the signal -- He takes off into traffic. No one bats an eye as he swerves through cars, jaywalking at a clip, it's New York City.

Lou peers around the newsstand, catching the daring moment as she continues after him.

She has to be fast. She's losing him --

EXT. STREET - LATER

Lou turns onto a residential block. She's out of breath and takes a beat to catch it when she spots Garza.

He zigs and zags through neighborhood folks hanging in front of their buildings. It's summer, and the red sky above the city burns as much as the hot air.

Garza stops. Turns and yells --

GARZA
STAY AWAY FROM ME!

But he isn't talking to Lou. He doesn't even know she is following him, and the nearest contingent of neighbors is a dozen or so yards away.

The way he is acting. Backing up. You'd think he was about to be attacked.

He SCREAMS again. This time guttural, laden with fear --

GARZA (CONT'D)
LEAVE ME ALONE!

Now he has the entire block's attention. People snicker, some more curious than others.

Before anyone can fully comprehend the moment, Garza runs off into an APARTMENT BUILDING.

MOMENTS LATER

Lou arrives at the front door. It's locked. She smashes a bunch of buttons on the callbox. Someone eventually lets her in with little care.

INT. GARZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Inside, it's dimly lit. Lou looks for Garza's name in a row of mailboxes but doesn't find it. Checks her phone --

ON THE SCREEN

A government profile of Garza she hacked a server for. She scrolls through, finding his address and apartment number: "18C."

Lou looks at the elevator. *Of course, it's out of order.* She goes for the stairs --

INT. GARZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EIGHTEENTH FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

Exiting the stairwell, Lou finds herself staring down a hallway --

EIGHT APARTMENTS dot the narrow path. Four on each side.

She comes to her destination, 18C... Above, the light bulb is out. Lou KNOCKS.

No response. She does it again. She steps back and notices under the door, LIGHT SLIDES OUT, shadows move through it --

Garza's on the other side, watching her through the peephole.

LOU

Mr. Garza? Are you there?

Lou works up to it, then reaches out to knock again, but before she does --

GARZA (O.S.)

(booming)

GO AWAY!

She pulls her hand from the door as if it was about to be bitten off.

GARZA (CONT'D)

I have nothing to say to you.

Lou can't let this go.

LOU

I know something happened that night. Maybe something you saw. Or, at the very least, you could help me understand --

GARZA

I didn't see shit.

LOU

I feel like you did, and if that's the case... Look, I've had my troubles and --

He interjects --

GARZA

Only you. Tell the others to go!

Lou's vision slides left to right...

LOU

Others?

SHE'S THE ONLY ONE THERE

Pressing palm to palm, she's starting to sweat.

LOU (CONT'D)
I'm not sure what you --

The door WHIPS open --

Garza explodes out, YANKING it shut behind him.

He GRABS HER.

GARZA
You have to help me. Please.

His eyes are seared, bloodshot with fear.

Lou's emergency signals fire off as her brain chemistry shifts.

GARZA (CONT'D)
They're in the apartment. They're coming for me. I need you're hel --

Mid-word, he FREEZES. His head turns down the hall. His eyes widen.

LOU
I made a terrible mistake.

She pushes him off. He reaches for her again.

GARZA
They're here.

Who? No one else is in the hall. Lou isn't sticking around to find out.

LOU
I need to go.

He stands in her way.

GARZA
Help me... please help.

She pushes him to the side. He grabs at her, pulling her close.

GARZA (CONT'D)
You must. I need help, please.
They're after me. They won't stop.

In one swift and aggressive movement, Lou YANKS on his arm, dislodging him to the ground.

She sprints towards the STAIRWELL DOOR and quickly exits as Garza's screams ring out --

GARZA (CONT'D)
My god, please --

As the door closes, he's cut short --

WE SPIN back to his petrified face. He heard something...

He looks around. Nothing's there. A relief.

THEN --

CLANK, CLANK, CLANK,

In succession, DEADBOLTS on the eight apartments SLAM OPEN --

We PUSH IN AND DUTCH, moving towards Garza's fear-riddled face as the apartment doors, in UNISON --

Wretchedly CREAK open...

Before anything comes out, Garza's BLASTING OFF into --

THE STAIRWELL

He doesn't take the way down. He goes up --

A LANDING OR TWO LATER

He looks down. Relieved there is no one in pursuit, UNTIL --

He hears FOOTSTEPS... Echoing up the stairs, growing louder.

OFF HIS PANIC

We DROP DOWN, floor after floor, SPIRALING THROUGH THE STAIRWELL to find --

LOU

DESCENDING the stairs, two, three at a time, instinct and adrenaline firing as she eventually reaches the bottom and the EXIT DOOR --

She pushes against it. It's stuck. Through her screams, she is taken by Garza's --

Her vision shoots up to see him ascending --

She wants no part of this, puts her all into the door. Come on, OPEN THE FUCK UP!

BOOM, BANG, BOOM, her shoulder drives hard, jostling it loose. She crashes out, the door SLAMMING shut behind her.

THEN, THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN

Garza flails out --

IT'S NOT THE SAME DOOR

We've MATCH CUT and pulled back to discover we are on THE BUILDING'S ROOF --

EXT. GARZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Garza circles exhausts and equipment, searching for a way off. There aren't many good options.

A FIRE ESCAPE

Renews his drive with opportunity. He rushes towards it.

Stops. Slowly turns. His blood draining, as he discovers, cast in the darkness of night --

A CROWD

They gather around. Multiplying quickly. He tries to fend them off. It's no use.

He struggles to breathe as they engulf, making it impossible to expand his lungs. His corneas bulge. Blood vessels pop.

With savage force, they push him to the ground.

His RIBS CRACK beneath their feet as he continues to GASP for air. Then, a reprieve --

The figures PART, creating a path toward him...

Something from within is coming for him...

And before it's revealed --

WE CUT TO:

EXT. GARZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

Bathed in hysteria, Lou exits onto the sidewalk.

Several people in the neighborhood take notice. Whisper to each other and point. *What's her deal?*

A YELLOW CAB approaches -- Arms out, Lou runs, trying to hail it down.

Before it passes, it STOPS SHORT. Lou catches up and pulls on the door handle --

KABOOM!

The cab's roof CRATERS, and the windows EXPLODE, tossing her back onto the sidewalk.

A few people are quick to her aide, helping her back to her feet as she makes the realization that --

GARZA IS ENGULFED IN THE CAB'S ROOF

More people gather. Phones record. Some scream for help. Others jump to action, pulling the CAB DRIVER out.

What's happened washes over as Lou notices, around her, all the bodies in motion --

ARE NOW STILL

Focused. Staring at her.

She raises her head to the apartment building where in the windows, PEOPLE LEAN OUT, FOCUSED ON HER, not the tragedy.

It's too much to bear. She turns and sprints away, desperate to escape --

CUT HARD TO:

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Lou pounds on an apartment door. There's no answer. We don't recognize it or the hallway we are in.

She steps back, thinks, and notices a loose BASEBOARD next to the door. She pulls it back to find a KEY. She knew it was there. In her panic, she had forgotten.

She slides it in, turns it, and pushes the door open --

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Rushing in, she slams the door behind her. The apartment is Pottery Barn perfect, likely due to a compromising couple. To Lou, it's familiar and foreign. Whatever life was here, it's not hers anymore.

She looks around but doesn't appear like anyone is there until --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Lou?

She turns to find WES, 30s. We recognize his voice from the phone message.

LOU

Where were you? I was knocking --

WES

Sorry I was in the bathroom. Is everything okay?

Her trembling lip is more than enough to confirm it isn't.

LOU

No, not really.

She paces.

WES

What's going on?

Hesitant, she attempts to answer as she sinks into a chair.

She leans forward, dry heaves, Garza's mangled body flashing through her mind as she rocks back and forth, desperate to rid herself of the image.

Wes slowly approaches and tenderly comes around the back of the chair, placing his hand on her shoulder. She gratefully leans her head into it, allowing herself to grieve.

INT. WES' APARTMENT - LATER

Curled in the chair, eyes red from heavy crying, Lou watches Wes on the phone, framed in a doorway.

We drift towards him, and his conversation grows louder. His voice is full of fear and concern, and without hearing the exact words, it's clear something deeply unsettles him.

He hangs up, his shoulders sagging with worry.

Lou recoils and pulls her sleeves to her fingertips as he comes over.

LOU

What did they say?

WES

I think you've been through enough tonight. How about you take the bedroom? I'll sleep on the couch.

She knows the answer but still asks.

LOU

Is he dead?

He nods, *you know he is...*

LOU (CONT'D)

I need to show you something.

She pulls out a LAPTOP and motions him over. He obliges and watches as video footage from the platform plays.

WES

Is this?

She nods --

LOU

Tabitha Pierce.

She pauses the video on the fleeting frame capturing the DARK BLUR --

LOU (CONT'D)

(pointing)

There.

WES

What am I looking at?

Off his response, we also question what we are seeing. It looks like a low-res blob of black.

LOU

I think someone else was on that platform.

WES

You're the expert, but that looks like a glitch.

LOU

It has a shape to it. Arms, legs...

She outlines extremities with her finger. He isn't seeing it.

WES

I want to believe you, but I don't
see anything.

Promptly, she pleads --

LOU

Look again.

His eyes don't break from hers. After a tense moment --

WES

Honestly, this confirms our theory.
And the only witness --

LOU

Is dead. Isn't that slightly
suspicious?

WES

I see the conspiracies darting
around in your head, and I am
warning you right now to leave this
alone. Let it be what it is,
someone who took their own life and
someone who could have stopped it
not being able to live with the
guilt.

(beat)

There is more than enough proof for
the insurance company to close the
case.

He reaches for her hand. She pulls it away.

LOU

No! You're wrong.

Distraught, she grabs the laptop off the table, frantically
searching the image for any hint of an answer.

WES

Hey, hey... calm down.

Glancing over at Wes, she sees the worry in his eyes. Forcing
herself to stay calm, she averts her gaze, not wanting him to
see her like this.

WES (CONT'D)

Come on, let's get you some rest.

She agrees. She can't argue with the kindness and concern in
his eyes. Besides, she isn't doing her case any good.

INT. WES' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Ready for bed, Lou hesitates at the light switch, staring at the half-ajar bathroom door. It forebodes...

Her eyes play a quick trick in the darkness past the doorway, *is something inside?*

She thinks better of it and CLOSES THE DOOR before returning and flicking the bedroom light off --

In the fresh darkness, her breath catches in her throat at the sight of UNEASY SHADOWS huddled in the corner.

She flicks the light back on and releases at the sight of the dresser. Its surface piled high with neatly folded clothing.

She lets out a soft laugh. *She needs sleep.*

But first, she walks over and runs her hands over the folded shirts and pants.

In the pile, a T-SHIRT grabs her attention. She pulls it out. Leans in for a deep inhale --

Happy memories flood. She puts it back, ensuring Wes hasn't seen what she's done before turning off the lights and sliding into bed with a smile.

The door SQUEALS open. Lou drops the smile as Wes leans in --

WES

I'm gonna go down. Need anything?

LOU

I'm good.

WES

I no longer have the right to, but
I worry about you.

That means a lot, but that's a secret she is keeping for now.

LOU

There's no need. I've been good.
I've done the work.

He nods and starts to close the door --

LOU (CONT'D)

Wes...

WES

Yeah?

LOU
Thank you.

WES
Get some rest.

And he closes the door.

INT. WES' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

TOP DOWN on Lou. It's quiet and dark. She stirs as if a bad dream is raising her.

WE CORKSCREW IN on her left eye, meeting it as IT POPS OPEN --

To a blurred POV of the bedside alarm clock. Her eyes adjust. It's the middle of the night.

She needs sleep and squeezes her eyelids tight.

CREAKS, not one or two, but a half dozen rob her of that.

Goosebumps rise on her skin as she peers around the room, searching for the source of the sound. Nothing is out of place.

Yet, the noise grows louder and closer.

She quickly grabs her phone and turns on the flashlight. The creaking instantly stops.

Her gaze and the phone light dart from corner to corner -- nothing is there.

She drops back to the pillows. After a moment, she turns her phone light off, PULLS the covers up, and closes her eyes.

LATER

Lou sleeps wrapped in twisted covers, a few limbs sticking out from underneath.

The BATHROOM DOOR, GROANS open.

Lou doesn't wake.

DARK FIGURES slowly creep in, one by one, crowding the room with a creaking sound underfoot as they approach the bed.

Lou lies oblivious as The Crowd surrounds her, their shadowy forms casting a dark and eerie presence as they encircle the bed.

They are BLANK, without any discernible details. Yet, like the blur in the subway footage video, their shapes are reminiscent of the human form.

AT THE FOOT OF THE BED

The Crowd parts, creating a path. Through it --

A FORM, distinct from the rest, more alpha, moves forward from within.

It's hard to get a good look. The others obscure our view and close ranks behind as it passes.

AT FLOOR LEVEL, we push out from under the bed to see --

The FORM'S MUDDY FEET, stepping forward.

IN THE BED, Lou remains in her slumber as a BRITTLE HAND, dripping mud, extends towards her --

From the decrepit fingers, WE TURN to Lou --

HER EYES SHOOT OPEN

She FLAILS and SCREAMS, jumping from the bed to hit the light switch.

Now illuminated, she can see... she is alone in the room.

A SPLIT SECOND LATER

A KNOCK on the door has her jumping again.

WES (O.S.)
Lou? Are you okay in there?

Calming to his voice, she opens the door.

LOU
I thought someone was --

She takes stock of the tangled covers, the empty room --

WES
What happened? Was it a night terror?

A charged question for Lou.

LOU
No. I don't have them anymore.

His eyes question her.

LOU (CONT'D)
I mean, rarely.

WES
After yesterday, it's
understandable. Hell of a thing you
had to see.

Lou's body language softens.

WES (CONT'D)
I'm going to go out and get us some
breakfast.

LOU
What time is it?

WES
It's morning.

The alarm clock confirms. Lou wonders where the night went.

WES (CONT'D)
So coffee, muffins...?

She'd like that. She likes all of this. She forgot how much so. People usually don't remember the little things after a relationship runs its course.

It's not lost on us that he hasn't left yet. And for a moment, they appear to lean into each other, about to kiss. Instead, he smiles and goes.

A MOMENT OR TWO LATER

Lou wipes the sleep from her eyes. Sits for a moment before getting up and opening the blinds. She holds on to the chord as if for support. She takes in the morning view --

People go about their day. The sun shining. The world looks happy. And there's Wes...

Jaywalking across the street towards a coffee shop. Lou hangs watching him, bites her lower lip in happy thought as --

Mid-stride, HE STOPS AND TURNS --

Raising his gaze to meet hers. She waves and smiles, but quickly it sours --

Wes is no longer the only person in the busy street standing still.

Around him, others do the same, and as he raises his hand to wave back, seemingly...

THEY ALL DO THE SAME

Lou, let's go of the blind chord, dropping them with a gasp --

After a beat of unease, she sticks her fingers between the blinds to get a hidden look, finding...

A busy street, PEDESTRIANS concerned only with themselves to pay her any mind.

And then there's Wes standing in the same spot, but now with a curious look of concern in her direction.

Lou pulls on the chord, revealing herself with a look that says, *don't be worried, I'm good.*

He accepts it and heads off into the coffee shop, leaving Lou feeling silly at the window.

She takes a step away --

LOU
What the --

Her foot's landed in... *Mud?*

OFF her confusion --

INT. WES' APARTMENT - LATER

Lou sits on a stool at the kitchen counter. Wes pulls pastries from a paper bag. He's got a lot of options.

LOU
Cleaned them out?

WES
I know you like blueberry. They were out.

LOU
So you bought them all?

They both giggle.

LOU (CONT'D)
I'm okay, not that hungry.

WES
Is it because they didn't have
blueberry?

She laughs a little louder, but that's not it.

LOU
His face. I can't get it out of my
head. He was so scared. Like, he
knew something was going to happen.

WES
Nothing happened to him that he
didn't cause.

LOU
He wanted help. He begged for it.
As if he felt I could save him. I
saw it in his eyes.

WES
I deal with tons of claims like
this. When people make this choice,
they tend to show signs before. But
that doesn't mean those who don't
see them should blame themselves.

This resonates.

LOU
Maybe...

Lou's eyes avert, looking to make sense of things.

LOU (CONT'D)
He said something was after him.

WES
Like what?

LOU
People.

WES
He sounds --

LOU
Crazy? It's okay. There are a lot
of things that trigger me. That's
just a word.

A spark --

LOU (CONT'D)

You don't think it's strange that he was the only person to interact with Tabitha Pierce before --

WES

For your sake, I beg you to let it go. Grief can do a number. That feeling that someone reached out to you for help and you couldn't. It burns inside of you.

Is he talking about their relationship?

LOU

You're not responsible for what happened to me.

WES

I'd like to believe that.

LOU

Believe it. And you'll be happy to know Anderson is putting in a petition to remove the conservatorship.

WES

That's great.

LOU

I've been in a public speaking class. Anderson thought it would help me. And it has. The final is like a presentation. I am supposed to invite people from my life --

WES

Are you asking?

Yeah, she is.

WES (CONT'D)

I'd love to.

OFF their mutual smiles --

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

With a sense of joy from her time with Wes, Lou strides down the street with a spring in her step.

Mid-stride, she stops as a CROSSWALK LIGHT turns green to red. Traffic is too heavy, even for the most skilled New York jaywalker.

Car horns blare in the background. The street is busy with people.

From the corner of her eye, she notices A CROWD gathered around a DANCE CREW busking for change.

The PULSING BEAT of their BOOMBOX pounds in rhythm with the city when an eerie silence takes over. All movement stops.

THEY ALL SNAP THEIR GAZE AT LOU

She turns in terror, finding --

The dance crew, holding acrobatically complex positions, their eyes fixated on her, devoid of expression and emotion.

IN UNISON, the dance crew, joined by the spectators, MOVES FORWARD, eerily in sync --

Their malice radiates with each step toward Lou, filling her with a paralyzing fear as they close in around her.

Lou has nowhere to go. She attempts to flee but is bounced back as the circle tightens. The Crowd overwhelms her when --

HONNNNNK!

Lou JOLTS from the moment --

Finding herself NO LONGER AT THE CORNER --

No longer surrounded by The Crowd, she's --

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET

In the path of an ONCOMING CITY BUS SKIDDING to a stop --

Lou braces for impact as the BUS DRIVER is violently thrown forward --

CRASHING through the windshield onto the pavement, SLIDING with a bloody streak toward's her feet.

LOU's horrified --

HONK!!!

She SPINS around, finding the BUS at her back, stopped as short as her breath.

The Bus Driver is still inside. Safe.

The window un-shattered. His only problem, Lou.

He BANGS on the horn. Waving his hands for her to *get out of the street!*

Lou lunges away from the bus' path, back to the sidewalk.

Taking stock, she finds the dance crew is performing for cheers. The spectators glance at her momentarily, but only because of the scene she has caused.

Surrounded by the hustle of the city, Lou's anxiety grows. A deep breath doesn't help.

She isn't sure what caused this terrifying moment, but she takes off, knowing she has to escape before it is too late.

EXT. LOU'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Lou's still moving fast. Nothing can stop her except --

AT HER BUILDING'S DOOR

A *no-time for bullshit*, DETECTIVE LING, 40s, pulls smoke from the last millimeter of a cigarette.

Clocking Lou hurrying towards the entrance, fumbling with keys, she steps in her way.

DETECTIVE LING
Ms. Louisa Langham?

She says it like a question but knows the answer.

LOU
Yeah.

Detective Ling slides her jacket back, flashing a badge on her hip.

DETECTIVE LING
I'm Detective Ling. Homicide.

LOU
I need to get inside.

DETECTIVE LING
Is everything okay?

In Lou's hand, she grasps her "WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A PANIC ATTACK" card. She slides it into her pocket.

LOU

Gonna assume since you're here, you
know it's not.

DETECTIVE LING

Can I come in and talk to you about
last night?

LOU

I don't have anything to say.

DETECTIVE LING

It wasn't a question. Either let me
in for a quick chat, or I can
invite you to the station, which is
more paperwork and inconvenient for
everyone.

LOU

Am I a suspect?

DETECTIVE LING

Hard to throw someone off a roof
when you're down on the sidewalk.

The description penetrates with a horrid reminder of Garza
slamming into the cab.

LOU

Do you think he was murdered?

DETECTIVE LING

The medical examiner thinks there
might have been a struggle. They
are saying the cause of death was
asphyxiation.

LOU

As in, he was dead before he fell?

DETECTIVE LING

I'm not so sure. There's nothing to
indicate he wasn't up there alone,
and the swan dive made a real mess
of him. I only need help to fill in
a few blanks. Five minutes. Tops.

Lou scans the street, still in shock from the terrifying
vision she had just experienced. New Yorkers go about their
day, oblivious to her.

DETECTIVE LING (CONT'D)

Expecting someone?

LOU
What? No. Five minutes, right?

Detective Ling nods and follows a flustered Lou inside.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Detective Ling casts a wary eye around the gloomy atmosphere. She takes special note of Lou's equipment -- the servers and array of monitors.

DETECTIVE LING
You work in tech?

LOU
Used to.

DETECTIVE LING
I can barely order Postmates.

LOU
I've always had a thing for this stuff.

DETECTIVE LING
Did you say used to?

LOU
I now consult. Sometimes for lawyers and private eyes, but primarily for insurance companies. I'm good with finding stuff with a digital footprint.

DETECTIVE LING
Come to think of it. You once helped my old partner. Detective Simmons. Dan Simmons?

LOU
It rings a bell. I stopped working for cops a while ago.

DETECTIVE LING
He died last year. Cancer ate his colon.

LOU
Sorry to hear that.

DETECTIVE LING
So Garza, what were you doing there?

LOU

I was following up on a case.

DETECTIVE LING

I thought you only worked with
computers, do you go in the field
much?

Ling pulls a cigarette out and twirls it in her hand.

LOU

No.

DETECTIVE LING

Why were you doing it on this one?

LOU

I needed context.

DETECTIVE LING

And you went to his home to get it?

LOU

First, I went to the station where
he worked, but he wouldn't speak
with me.

DETECTIVE LING

So you followed him home? What was
your plan?

Ling's line of questioning makes Lou uneasy.

LOU

I thought maybe he would talk to me
in a different setting.

DETECTIVE LING

So you persisted, even after he
refused your first attempt? What
was so important?

LOU

Last week, a woman fell in front of
a train at his station. Mr. Garza
was the last person to see her
alive --

DETECTIVE LING

Tabitha Pierce?

Lou nods.

DETECTIVE LING (CONT'D)
What's so special about her? From
what I've heard, she killed
herself.

Lou takes Ling's gaze. *Could she be an ally?*

LOU
Let me show you something.

Ling stops twirling the cigarette. *Maybe this isn't all so open and shut.* Lou picks up on her sentiment.

MOMENTS LATER

Lou's rig hums to life. The monitors flicker on as the boot sequence completes. Lou clicks open a VIDEO FILE.

DETECTIVE LING
Is this?

LOU
CCTV footage from the subway
platform.

ON THE SCREEN

Tabitha Pierce enters the platform. Fear and dread wash over her face. This is the corrected footage, but it still glitches like the last time we saw it.

Tabitha backs up, heels inching closer to the platform's edge.

WE PUSH IN on the screen. It glitches harder with each step Tabitha takes.

Mid GLITCH, Lou PAUSES the footage.

LOU (CONT'D)
There.

She points to the DARK BLUR.

DETECTIVE LING
Looks like something's wrong with
the footage.

Lou turns to her --

LOU
I think someone else was on the
platform. I don't think she killed
herself.

Ling squints as she watches Lou reverse the footage. Then step it forward --

And there it is. We see what Lou sees, the shape of SOMETHING OTHERWORLDLY appearing in a single frame, then vanishing a frame later. But Ling isn't so sure.

DETECTIVE LING
Do you have another angle?

LOU
This is the best one. The footage, at every angle, was damaged. I ran a bunch of filters and reconstruction programs, and this is the best it's going to get.

Lou extends a finger to the screen.

LOU (CONT'D)
But if you look, there's arms, a head, a torso...

Lou traces her finger over the blur in the shape of a person. Ling still doesn't see it.

DETECTIVE LING
I think I have all I need here.

LOU
You don't believe me?

DETECTIVE LING
That isn't my case, and I don't see shit.

She stops and considers the footage again.

DETECTIVE LING (CONT'D)
The only connection I see is terrible footage.

LOU
What do you mean?

DETECTIVE LING
The CCTV in Garza's apartment building was also pretty useless.

Lou's focus moves into deep thought. She's working out the connection.

DETECTIVE LING (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas. We often get shit from these cameras, a generation of inadequate upkeep of cheap equipment.

(in her professional opinion...)

I think it's pretty clear that Mr. Garza, like Mrs. Pierce, fell victim to his nature -- no good in chasing ghosts. I suggest you leave this all at that.

Lou considers. She is so close to having her life back together. *Maybe Wes and Detective Ling are right...*

But maybe they're not...

EXT. GARZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Striding toward Garza's building, Lou pulls her hood tight around her face.

An overwhelming wave of emotion percolates, but she knows she must continue with her mission. She hesitates momentarily before pressing the call box button, ringing THE SUPER.

THE SUPER (O.S.)

Yeah, who is it?

LOU

I'm from the security company.

She spots a decal on the glass door for --

LOU (CONT'D)

Peterson Protection, I'm a tech here to upgrade the firmware on your CCTV --

THE SUPER (O.S.)

It's in the basement. Show yourself in.

BUZZZ... The door unlocks. *That was easy.*

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

Dim bulbs drop cones of light into a narrow path leading to the MECHANICAL ROOM.

Above, pipes CLAMOR as hot steam charges through.

AHEAD, the hall distorts, further NARROWING.

Lou squints, her perception morphing into a nightmarish reality as --

The WALLS CLOSE IN...

The mechanical room looms further away as the space STRETCHES and CONSTRICTS around her like a vise.

Lou shudders. Paralyzing claustrophobia takes hold.

She turns. She should go back, but BEHIND HER --

SOMETHING IS COMING...

It's GARZA --

Face distorted, head caved in at the top of the skull. Bones bent grotesquely. His footsteps stammer louder as he approaches.

GARZA
He...lllll...p...Meeee...

Lou turns. She has to keep going. It's too tight. She can barely move. It's hard to breathe as the walls close in.

A horrific realization occurs as she discovers it's not the walls closing in. It's --

A CROWD

Faceless, blank, smashing together, creating an impenetrable wall on both sides, suffocating the pathway.

Lou reaches out, the mechanical room DOORKNOB almost within grasp, but --

Garza's getting closer. His twisted limbs stretch towards her. The Crowd doing little to stifle his approach --

If Lou could shimmy a little more, she'd have her hand on the doorknob, only --

The Crowd's CLAMPING, making her efforts futile.

Her fingers strain, the tips brushing off the doorknob's rounded surface.

Before she can grab it, Garza's limbs COIL AND RESTRICT around her. Her bones and organs BRUISE under the pressure --

He YANKS her backward. Lou desperately tries to squirm forward --

GARZA (CONT'D)
Why didn't you help me?!

Finally, she's reached her hand to its limits. The doorknob within reach, she PULLS ON IT --

Driving herself forward and free of Garza's grasp into the MECHANICAL ROOM.

She looks back, double takes --

The hallway is EMPTY and WIDE. Her vision PUSHES INTO IT...

No sign of Garza. No sign of danger. The only hint of what happened is the pain PULSING across her abdomen.

She rubs her temples. Pushes down the residual trauma. She doesn't want to be down here one more second than she has to.

She finds a tangled mess of wires leading to an old computer. Ling was right. It's not the most high-tech or maintained of systems.

She pulls out a USB, inserts it --

MATCH CUT TO:

THE USB BLINKING

Connected to Lou's home system.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - SAME

WE ANGLE UP FROM the USB to find Lou dissecting the footage. ON HER SCREEN

A HIGH ANGLE from the ceiling corner of Garza's floor. We can see the four apartments on each side of the hallway.

Lou fast forwards. Residents come and go. A Postmates takes a few french fries before dropping off a delivery at one of the units.

The comings and goings continue until she spots herself. Her lips un-purse at the sight.

Garza BLASTS OUT of his apartment. His eyes wild with terror. In the footage, Lou recoils.

She winces in pain, clutching her abdomen where the DEEP BRUISES from the basement throb relentlessly -- a piercing reminder the danger is real.

ON SCREEN, Lou runs off, leaving Garza alone in the hallway.

The footage, similar to that from the subway, glitches and statics as it plays from this point.

Menaced, Garza's vision darts along with his body. Then he freezes --

He's looking at something. He gently steps back, waiting for the perfect moment to take off. The footage glitches harder and harder.

Lou pauses it. Despite the mangled image, it's clear that Garza is looking at something. Rather than let it play out, she investigates it frame by frame.

A FLASH

Lou retracts from her desk. *It can't be...*

A DARK BLUR, standing before Garza.

It's unmistakable. It's the same as in the Tabitha Pierce footage.

IN ANOTHER WINDOW

Lou brings up the subway footage. She scrolls the timeline until she lands on the frame with the Dark Blur.

Dragging both next to each other, she compares the two initiating a half dozen or so FRAME LOOP, playing them out side by side in a sinister, stroboscopic pattern.

The blurs FLASH by, repeating in quick succession. There is no denying --

LOU
They're the same...

This realization should drive unease through her body, but at this moment, her eyes glow with vindication --

CUTTING US TO:

LOU FLOATING IN A BATH

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Lou relaxes in the warm water. Relishing in the confirmation of her recent discovery.

Submerged except for her mouth and nose, she calmly breathes in and out, settling herself. She nurses her bruised torso, gently moving her fingers over purpling splotches that are sensitive to the touch.

Exhaling softly, she discovers a build-up of CAKED and DRIED, brownish-red liquid protruding from the GROUT around one of the tiles.

Curious, she sits up, PICKS at it like a scab, digging her nail in, eventually freeing the dried build-up.

A SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD

Oozes from the source, ZIGZAGGING the grout between the tiles like it's traversing a maze.

With bated breath, Lou watches as it reaches the tub.

The lone drop lands in the bath and instantly morphs the water into RED BLOOD.

It's thick and hard to move in. Lou FIGHTS -- kicks and thrashes against it. It's useless.

Alive and with a dark purpose, the blood CLIMBS her skin...

She tries to scream, but the blood FILLS her mouth, suffocating her as it violently PULLS HER DOWN into the dark abyss, and we --

SLAM CUT TO:

LOU STRUGGLING ON HER APARTMENT FLOOR

After a moment of exhausting her energy, she realizes she isn't in the bath. She's safe... Until --

IN UNISON, ALL HER SCREENS GLITCH

She scrambles to her feet to find --

The videos of Garza and Tabitha playing in the loop.

Her chest pounds. She can't look anymore and --

PULLS THE PLUG --

CUTTING US TO:

Lou tensely PUSHING THROUGH THE CITY, dodging bystanders.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Her phone rings. It's Wes. She answers.

LOU

Hi.

WES (O.S.)

How are you? It's been a few days.

LOU

Been swamped.

UP AHEAD, within the rush of people going about their day,

Lou doesn't notice A MAN, 40s, standing ominously immobile as if waiting for her.

Fear grips us as we realize he has not moved. He's completely unremarkable, yet the sight of him is incredibly unnerving.

WES (O.S.)

I was thinking maybe after your speaking thing. We could talk...

She doesn't need to think about it but holds a beat not to seem too eager.

LOU

I'd really --

WHAM!

She SLAMS into the man. Her phone drops to the ground.

He takes her hand.

LOU (CONT'D)

Get off me.

She knocks him back.

MAN

We're watching you...

He isn't wrong -- Passersby have stopped, forming A CROWD, looking at her with blank expressions.

MAN (CONT'D)
You will join us soon...

Lou reaches for her phone. He kicks it away.

Slowly like performing a ritual, he steps closer.

She turns to run, but The Crowd forces her closer to him.

Lou's gaze is suddenly drawn to a FIGURE gliding effortlessly through The Crowd with menacing grace, like a shark stalking its prey.

Lou tries to follow it, but her concentration is broken, and back to the man as he GRABS HER ARMS.

Lou tries to fight him off. Struggles to escape his grip.

He's too strong. Her arms are SCRATCHED as she wriggles and twists, trying to break free.

Finally, with a burst of strength, Lou manages to toss the man to the ground.

His fingernails RAKE her forearms as he falls, leaving angry red marks and a JAGGED CUT in their wake.

Lou SLAMS her eyes closed and then OPEN --

SHE ISN'T IN DANGER.

Though the man is standing in her face --

LOU
What do you want from me?

In contrast to a moment ago, the man is timid. He slowly raises his hand. Something clutched tightly in his grasp --

MAN
To join us --

Lou's eyes narrow, and she snarls, pushing him to the ground.

LOU
Get away from me!

On the ground, we see the Man's holding a CLIPBOARD -- The only thing he wanted her to join was whatever organization he was canvassing for.

Though, Lou hasn't stuck around to realize as she's already running from the scene --

INT. MS. ANDERSON'S OFFICE - LATER

Lou is led in by an ASSISTANT. She's still Shaken from the altercation. Ms. Anderson, busy with papers, doesn't look up as they enter.

MS. ANDERSON
Do you want something to drink,
coffee or tea?

Lou doesn't answer. Now, Anderson looks up. Lou's wearing the altercation and its impact on her sleeve.

Literally, as one of her forearms BLEEDS THROUGH her shirt sleeve.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
What's happened?

Anderson motions her assistant to action --

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Get the first aid kit.

With a handful of tissues, she guides Lou to the couch and sits beside her.

LOU
I'm fine. It's nothing, just a
scratch.

It's clearly more than that. Ms. Anderson tends to her injuries, gently pressing the tissues against the wound.

MS. ANDERSON
You needn't be afraid to tell me if
something is going on. You've made
so much progress. We are all
allowed a bad day.

Lou lifts her eyes.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
This isn't a trick.

Lou believes her.

LOU
I was attacked. And all these
people were watching, gathering
around --

She stops. Ms. Anderson may give her a bit of rope, but Lou won't take enough to hang herself with.

MS. ANDERSON

Anxiety brought on by crowds, and
tight spaces, is common. It's
understandable to find it
overwhelming --

LOU

That's not it. The crowd was
watching it happen as if
encouraging him and letting this
man attack me.

MS. ANDERSON

No concern in this city for our
fellow citizens, is there? I should
call someone and report it.

LOU

(diving in)

No, honestly, I am good. Just a
little shaken up, but I'm good.

MS. ANDERSON

Frankly, as horrible as it all
sounds, it shows a lot of progress
that you are handling it so well.

Lou isn't sure she is...

MINUTES LATER

Anderson has finished wrapping Lou's wound with supplies from
the first aid kit.

Lou forces out a smile, projecting.

LOU

Thank you.

Satisfied that the immediate danger is behind them, Anderson
changes the subject --

MS. ANDERSON

So Friday night... Nervous?

Before Lou can answer, Ms. Anderson has traveled to her desk,
grabbed a pen and paper, and taken a seat across from her.

LOU

A little. Nothing nuclear.

MS. ANDERSON

Anyone besides myself you've asked
to come?

Lou hesitates but doesn't reveal she invited Wes.

LOU
I'm working on it.

Anderson shifts her position.

MS. ANDERSON
I noticed paychecks from Wes'
insurance company. Is it wise to --

LOU
It's nothing like that. I've just
been doing a case here and there.
Having oversight over my
financials, you know better than
anyone I can't afford to turn down
work. It's nothing more than
professional.

MS. ANDERSON
Are you sure? I wouldn't want you
to live in the past. I wouldn't
want you to relapse.

Lou's demeanor shifts cold --

LOU
Honestly, I'd rather have this
conversation with someone else.
Like a doctor, not the fucking
lawyer some court ordered to
babysit me. I'm fucking sick and
tired of having to put on this show
for you.

Ms. Anderson can't believe what she's hearing, and neither
can we --

Lou GRABS a decorative ashtray from the coffee table and
SMASHES it upside Ms. Anderson's head.

BLOOD SPLATTERS on the stark white carpet.

MS. ANDERSON (O.S.)
Lou? Are you with me?

She TURNS towards the voice. It's Anderson, still in her
chair. Lou is still on the couch. Never having done the
bloody deed.

Lou drops her head and rubs her eyes. *Get it together...*

MS. ANDERSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Why didn't you help him?

As her voice penetrates, it changes. It's not Anderson's. Rather something dark and unnatural. Lou looks up --

She slams back into the couch, horrified to see --

Before her in a fresh sinister darkness -- A CROWD.

Gradually, they part to reveal a FIGURE in Anderson's place, now recognizable as --

A GIRL CAKED IN MUD

It covers her like a second skin, amplifying her malevolence...

It's THICK, INKY, and FOUL as if dredged up from the depths of hell itself -- a creature born of the very darkness that surrounds her.

As if commanded by The Girl, The Crowd steps forward...

Their hands outstretched, they LUNGE at Lou --

Her arms shoot out in protection as she's grasped --

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Lou? Lou? It's me.

SHOCKED back to reality. Lou finds Anderson, trying to settle her -- No sign of The Crowd.

LOU
I don't know what came over me.

MS. ANDERSON
I'm going to call someone.

LOU
No. Please. It's just today and the speaking final.

Her eyes plead. Anderson gives in to her nature, giving the benefit of the doubt. For now...

MS. ANDERSON
I understand. It's a lot of pressure. But if I am to petition to end the conservatorship, I need to know you can face the things that trouble you.

This sparks something deep inside Lou. She's renewed.

LOU

You're right. I have to face it. I can't let it control me by running from it.

MS. ANDERSON

It?

LOU

My problems.

What those are, she really must handle herself.

MS. ANDERSON

Good. I look forward to seeing you continue to face them.

Lou's eyes make clear she's determined to do so. To save herself from the others' fate.

EXT. RURAL HOME - LATER

Lou meanders across a muddy driveway. No other houses in sight, only trees in all directions.

She rings the doorbell. The name below it: "Pierce." *As in... Tabitha Pierce.*

After another ring, MR. PIERCE, 50s, exhausted by grief, opens the door.

LOU

Mr. Pierce?

He takes one look at her and --

MR. PIERCE

I told all the other reporters this was a family matter.

He closes the door. She stops him.

LOU

I'm from the insurance company. Not a reporter.

This seems to frustrate him more.

MR. PIERCE
I've already spoken to your
colleagues about how you plan to
screw me out of my claim.

LOU
I know it's frustrating.

MR. PIERCE
And more so as this conversation
continues. Now good --

Again, he attempts to close the door when --

LOU
I don't think your wife killed
herself.

It's an admission he didn't expect. He has no words and lets
the door drift open.

LOU (CONT'D)
But I need to follow up with you on
a few things. I am sorry to have
shown up without calling ahead.

MR. PIERCE
No, no. Please come in.

He generously pulls back the door, and she enters.

INT. RURAL HOME - MINUTES LATER

Lou nervously sits with Mr. Pierce at a small dining room
table where stacks of bills reside next to a calculator.

MR. PIERCE
Don't take this the wrong way, but
let's be brief.

LOU
Sure. What can you tell me about
the days leading up to the
accident?

He shifts his position to defend.

MR. PIERCE
Nothing out of the ordinary.
Tabitha was a little stressed about
an upcoming show.

LOU

Show?

MR. PIERCE

My wife is -- was an artist.

LOU

You said she was stressed? Did she mention anything more about that, like seeing things?

MR. PIERCE

Nothing like that. Tab was a pro. She's been showing in galleries for twenty years. If anything, she thrived on the pressure.

(firm)

My wife didn't kill herself.

Through a window, Lou spots another structure on the property. He notices her interest.

MR. PIERCE (CONT'D)

That was her studio. Would you like to see it?

She would. He smiles and seems to trust her.

INT. BARN STUDIO - LATER

PANNING the space, we discover abstract sculptures with vibrant colors and delicate beauty. Sunlight streams in from skylights. It's an inspiring setting.

LOU

They're beautiful.

MR. PIERCE

I sure think so.

Outside, a DOG BARK steals the moment.

MR. PIERCE (CONT'D)

That damn dog. It's been beside itself since. Have a look around. I'll see what the fuss is about.

Mr. Pierce heads out, leaving Lou alone in the space.

Examining the pieces, she recognizes that they lack anguish. These do not appear to be the work of someone troubled.

Confused, Lou contemplates her presence, trying to make sense of the clues that led her here. She discovers --

A SMALL DOOR

Lou searches for Mr. Pierce and spots him out in the backyard, preoccupied with trying to catch his dog.

The small door has no handle. She manages to pry it open with her fingers, as it protests on its old hinges to reveal --

ANOTHER SPACE

She hesitates for a moment, concerned by what she might find, but the pull of her curiosity is too strong.

Lou enters. It's dark. Some light enters through the gaps in the wood slats.

A LARGE KILN

Dominates on the far wall. The oven is massive, with a series of chimneys leading to the roof.

Like the main room, sculptures in various stages are all around, but these starkly contrast the work in the studio.

They are formed into GRUESOME EFFIGIES with swarms of contorted bodies and faces -- Desperate, angry, and violent.

Lou squirms at the sight when her attention is drawn to a faint whisper...

WHISPER (O.S.)
Lou...isssss...aaaa...

Lou locates the source across the room, where a large burlap sheet billows on a wall. She steps towards it. Underfoot the barn planks complain.

She reaches out and pulls on the burlap. One side falls, revealing --

A MASSIVE RELIEF

Made directly onto the barn slats with clay.

A MASS OF FACES, each contorted in agony. They press against one another, so tightly packed that they seem to merge, forming a grotesque, writhing mass of violence.

The overwhelming sense of despair and horror shakes Lou, who is entranced by its darkness.

She whips out her phone to snap a picture.

ON HER SCREEN

The relief moves -- The Crowd parts, revealing a single form pushing forward through it...

Lou looks past her phone. Nothings there...

Lou slowly brings her phone back up. And there it is again, the movement, something coming --

She CLICKS the capture button. Her phone FLASHES, revealing --

The Girl, covered in mud, inches from her phone --

Startled, Lou scurries back.

She looks all around. There's no sign of The Girl. Only the ominous relief.

In the KILN, A SPARK IGNITES into a small fire.

Lou rushes over to find the flames devouring NEWS CLIPPINGS. She reaches in, preserving as many as she can.

Grabbing one, she gasps at the sight of scrawled handwriting that reads: "I didn't save her."

Lou tries to read the article, but the fire is too fast. It creeps closer, burning her fingertips until she has to let go.

The paper falls to the floor, where it consumes itself.

Its burning light revealing...

The ENTIRE FLOOR is covered in the same phrase, SCRATCHED over and over into the planks:

"I DIDN'T SAVE HER"

CUT TO:

EXT. BARN STUDIO - SECONDS LATER

In a frenzy, Lou blows past Mr. Pierce.

MR. PIERCE
Is everything okay?

She doesn't answer. Any millisecond longer she stays here is too long.

MR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
Hey, Ms., wait up. What about my
policy --

She's too far gone. Leaving Mr. Pierce with a confused stare.

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lou unfurls ash-covered clippings she took from the barn.
Reads...

LOU
*Local teacher lost in mysterious
accident.*

Picks up another. And another. All similar headlines of
unexplained, violent deaths --

Suffocations, dismemberment, broken bones, suicides...

Lou starts a wall of information. Tapes clippings to it,
adding photos of Garza and Tabitha pierce.

She affixes a post-it note in the middle of it all that
reads:

"ME?"

A declaration that says her life is now on the line, and
unless she discovers a way to save herself, she will suffer
the same fate as the previous victims.

Lou scans an article with the headline: "Pedestrian dies in
hit and run."

The name of the victim -- "JAMIE CHEN".

Within the article, she spots a familiar name, Tabitha
Pierce. Lou's eyebrows raise.

A MOMENT LATER, ON HER MAIN SCREEN

A news report plays:

LOCAL REPORTER
Today this small suburban setting
has been rocked by the tragic death
of beloved local baker Jamie Chen.
A stable in the community, Ms. Chen
leaves behind a wife and two
children.

(MORE)

LOCAL REPORTER (CONT'D)

We attempted to speak to a, Mrs. Tabitha Pierce, the only witness, but she declined to comment.

Lou accesses the police report. She scans it to find Tabitha Pierce was interviewed, and there's a video file. She plays it:

Tabitha is distraught and agitated in an interrogation room.

TABITHA

She screamed, help me, help me! But she was grabbing at me. I was scared. I couldn't help her. So I just ran to my car. When I got in, I heard a crash and saw she was in the street. Blood was everywhere. It was awful.

Lou stops the video. Leans back in her chair. Then --

Dives into the seemingly average life of Jamie Chen, 29. A social media history of baking and family pics.

One post sticks out like a sore thumb --

A tribute to a friend who passed, RYAN WATKINS, 30s. Its posting date is a week or so before Jamie's death.

Lou goes to the news clippings and finds an article --

"LOCAL MAN DIES. POLICE ASK THE COMMUNITY FOR HELP."

Many have died in tragic, unexplainable accidents... with most of them present at or around the time of the prior victim's death.

It should disturb her, but finding the victims' connection is oddly comforting.

She goes back to her wall and focuses on one headline that sticks out:

"HERO CONSTRUCTION WORKER SAVES WOMAN FROM NEAR FATAL ACCIDENT."

The woman, ANGELA SHANNON, died a few days later in another accident.

Lou finds the construction worker's name. ARNOLD WATTS. She pulls his record. Her lips part. He is still alive, a lead...

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Workers walk steel beams like high wires.

TILTING DOWN FROM THEM, we find Lou entering the site. It's about quitting time, and workers pour out construction elevators, ready for a hot shower and a cold beer.

In an approaching group, Lou spots Arnold Watts.

LOU
Mr. Watts?

ARNOLD
Who's asking?

His construction buddies catcall and laugh. Arnold brushes them off and gives Lou a *don't listen to these idiots* look.

LOU
My name's Lou Langmore. Do you have a minute?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Lady for you, he's got a lifetime.

ARNOLD
Get out of here, ya morons.

The buddies snicker off.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Sorry, did you say what this was about?

LOU
Angela Shannon.

ARNOLD
I want nothing to do with this.

His response feels like a threat. He moves past her.

LOU
It's too late. Whatever happened to her is happening to me.

He stops. Doesn't turn.

ARNOLD
(giving in)
I know... I knew it the moment I saw your face.

LOU
Why is this happening to me?

Now he turns, maintaining a distance.

ARNOLD
I don't know what is or isn't happening... But after I saved her. She told me that someone needed her help. She ignored them, and they died. She felt guilty, like she was cursed for not having helped. Ranted about being followed, seeing things, people watching her and --

LOU
What?

ARNOLD
She said, in these crowds, there was --

Pausing, he hesitates, not wanting to sound ridiculous.

LOU
A girl?

He nods. Lou's breath escapes, and her pulse thickens.

ARNOLD
At first, it was just the crowds, but then she saw more and more of the girl until she was there all the time. She thought that the more of her you see, the closer she gets to you...

Lou builds a theory in her head.

LOU
The closer you are to death?

Arnold isn't sure if he believes any of this. He's gotten by reminding himself --

ARNOLD
She wasn't well.

As Lou processes her fate, CLANKS and CLAMORS guide her to an ominous STEEL BEAM dangling overhead. Glare from the sunlight re-orient her to Arnold.

LOU

She didn't help someone, and then
this all started?

ARNOLD

That's what she said. In the end,
not much good I did. A few days
later, she was dead -- another
accident.

LOU

But you're alive. You didn't die...

ARNOLD

As far as I can tell.

LOU

Did she say anything about trying
to save herself?

He shakes his head as the cable holding the beam reverberates
like a thunderous chord from a haunted violin, finally --

IT SNAPS

Arnold reacts quickly, shoving Lou out of the way and taking
the full force of the beam.

Lou stares in shock at the pile of rubble that had once been
Arnold, a cloud of debris surrounding her.

Her eyes search the wreckage. There's no sign of him --

Lou gets to her feet and takes off --

WE SPIN AROUND

To find ARNOLD IS FINE... And ABOVE --

The beam arrives safely at its destination. It never fell.

With tight eyes, Arnold watches Lou exit. *He's had enough of
this...* Time for that after-work beer.

Behind him, the entire site is frozen in place, from the
workers high above on steel beams to those clocking out.

Their eyes forebode, fixed on Lou as she vanishes from the
site --

CUT TO:

INT. LOU'S APARTMENT - LATER

Lou paces, burning a hole in her floor. On her wall looms the intricate collage of victims and clues. She stops every so often to reorganize them and create patterns.

The patterns all play out the same --

A victim reaches out for help... Their cry is rejected... Days later, they die and...

The trajectory starts again. The curse is passed on to the next innocent bystander who didn't help them.

Again and again, the tragedy repeats itself, a perpetual cycle. The only break in the chain -- Arnold Watts.

Lou gives Garza's photo particular placement, considers...

LOU
(under breath)
I didn't help him...

LATER

Lou's re-arranged her wall of clippings creating a long pattern... with the oldest clipping dating back to THE LATE 90s' --

"After tragedy, Teen's death leaves questions."

The deceased teen CHASE BARNET, 18, was: "Crushed to death in an open field."

The article goes on to say: "Authorities are still trying to determine what happened."

She dives into his life, reviews his autopsy --

His body is TANGLED and CRUSHED in ways the imagination struggles to explain.

Diving deeper, she finds a news report from a few days before his death --

"Teen Missing after Havenwood Fair Thunderstorm"

The news clip produces A PHOTO OF A TEEN GIRL front and center, followed by a REPORTER, 30s, filling the screen.

REPORTER

This is Madison Ellen reporting
live for your local news from the
Havenwood Fair.

(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Authorities are seeking the public's help locating ADELINE HALSEY, a young girl who has gone missing once again. Halsey has a history of running away and has been in and out of multiple foster homes. It is suspected that she may have taken this tragedy as another opportunity. We spoke with Adeline's boyfriend, who expressed deep concern for her safety and well-being.

The clip CUTS TO: Chase being interviewed --

CHASE

It was chaos.

As he speaks, the interview is INTERCUT with CAM CORDER FOOTAGE shot by people at the fair. The scene is a swirl of bodies, flashing lights, screams, and panic.

Lou can't tear her eyes away, even as the footage becomes more and more disturbing --

CHASE (CONT'D)

They were pushing and shoving.
Everyone was screaming.

His voice shakes.

CHASE (CONT'D)

The crowd was too strong. I tried to help Adeline... We got separated, and I couldn't find her. I don't know. I think she ran off, got out.

Fear and frustration consume. Lou realizes --

LOU

He tried to help? And he still died?

Lou sits back in her chair and spins from her desk. Her back to it, her mind reels.

What am I not seeing? Why did Arnold live? Why doesn't Chase fit the pattern...?

Suddenly, behind her, all her MONITORS play the CCTV footage of Tabitha Pierce on the subway platform. She turns to find --

The familiar scene unfolds as we remember, but the footage is clear -- no glitches or blurriness.

Lou leans in closer. Tabitha acts as if she knows Lou is watching her. She is less frenetic, and her expression changes from fear to strength.

She looks up at the camera, at Lou, her gaze lingers before she turns to face --

THE GIRL

LOU'S WORLD SPINS, *is this happening? Is it in her head?*

She goes to pull the plug on her system --

IT'S ALREADY DISCONNECTED

In horror, she looks to the main screen, frozen, watching as...

A train powers into the station. Tabitha steps to the edge of the platform and turns from The Girl to meet Lou's gaze with a *don't fight it* look of inevitability.

We don't see what happens next because Lou has GRABBED her chair and is SMASHING it into her screens --

Shards cascade in a shower of destruction as she breaks down to the floor. Crying. Shaking... When --

A RING ALERT snaps her attention.

It's a CALENDAR REMINDER: "Public Speaking Final."

She wipes away tears. Looks at her destroyed system. It's a battle that will have to wait. Right now, she has another monumental task at hand.

She finds the USB stick in the mess of wires, circuits, and broken screen glass. She swipes it --

CUTTING US TO:

INT. THEATER - LATER

Students and guests filter in. A few gaze around, the space doing its job to haunt them as the final assignment should.

Lou rushes in. Moves through the guests. A voice grabs her.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, you good?

She turns to find Wes.

LOU
Yeah, just nerves.

WES
Honestly, I couldn't get up there.

LOU
Thanks for the encouragement.

Her sarcasm isn't lost, but Ms. Anderson entering has taken Lou's attention before he can address it.

LOU (CONT'D)
Find a seat. After this, can we go somewhere and talk?

WES
Of course. Now, get out there and break a leg. That's what you're supposed to say?

LOU
I don't know, but it sounds violent and yet right for the moment.

Lou walks off. She brushes her hair back, tucking wayward strands behind her ears, doing what she can to project confidence.

MS. ANDERSON
Lou. Are you ready for all this?

LOU
I am.

MS. ANDERSON
It's a lot to be proud of.

This helps. It's comforting for her to know she has allies in the room.

ON THE STAGE, Mr. Patel taps on a microphone, damaging ears with reverb.

MR. PATEL
Good evening everyone. I want to invite our students to the stage and all our guests to take their seats. We are about to begin.

MS. ANDERSON
You're going to do great.

Lou nods and heads to the stage.

INT. THEATER - LATER

Lou sits on the stage with the other students in a half-moon circle of chairs. She clutches her laminated "What to do in case of a Panic" card, keeping it at the ready, just in case.

In front of them, downstage, one of the students orates --

STUDENT

And it is with this in mind that we all must strive to do better. Our world is not only ours but that of future generations. Thank you for your time.

The audience cheers. Mr. Patel smiles at a job well done as he shakes the student's hand.

Lou looks out to the audience. A SPOTLIGHT creates an eye-burning glare. It's hard to see who is out there.

She looks for Wes, Ms. Anderson -- she can't find either of them.

MR. PATEL

We face many challenges in our lives, and who we are is defined by how we address them. Our next student has met her's head-on. Would you please join me in welcoming Louisa Langmore?

Applause usher Lou to the microphone.

She takes a moment to push the chaos of the previous days to the back of her mind. She needs this victory.

As the audience falls silent, she pockets her laminated "Panic" card, takes a deep breath, and begins --

LOU

Thank you all. My name is Lou Langmore, and I am here --

Through the spotlight's glare, she now sees more empty seats than occupied ones.

There's Wes. He can tell she is distracted. He nods -- *You can do this.*

A smile from Ms. Anderson, a few rows back, encourages the same. Lou goes to her comfort zone and begins again --

LOU (CONT'D)
As I was saying, I am here today to talk about facing fears head-on.

...She's got this.

MINUTES LATER

The bright spotlight beats down. Lou can't make out the audience, but that may be part of why she is doing so well.

LOU (CONT'D)
So to be true to ourselves, we must be genuine and honest about our fears. Without that honesty, there is no way we can face --

The spotlight TURNS OFF, revealing the audience.

Lou hangs a moment, then looks to Mr. Patel, who looks to the spotlight's source for an answer. He isn't getting one and looks back to Lou with a *don't let this distract you* nod.

Lou scans the theater. Last we saw it. It seemed sparsely filled. No more --

All the seats ARE TAKEN -- IT'S PACKED.

The lack of light over the seating hides the details of the audience. But one face is clear --

Garza, with cuts riddled across his smashed face, blood dripping from his head. Lou looks away only to find --

Tabitha Pierce, her head slightly tipping off a severing in her neck. Tabitha smiles at Lou as she rights it back into place.

Lou GASPS, her footing shakes as her gaze connects with OTHER VICTIMS we recognize from her research.

She is about to turn and run when --

The spotlight GLARES BACK ON.

She SQUINTS to find comfort in the once again empty seats...

No Garza, no Tabitha, no other victims, just friends and family of the students and curious looks from Wes and Ms. Anderson.

The audience MURMURS waiting for Lou to start again. Mr. Patel begins to approach --

Lou's gaze heat seeks, spotting something moving up on the balcony. Her heart races as a figure emerges from the shadows, revealing itself to be --

THE GIRL

Lou feels a chill down her spine as she watches The Girl move closer to the balcony railing, step by step, with malicious intent.

Mr. Patel reaches Lou, placing a hand on her shoulder --

Lou SCREAMS, pushing him away as she jumps into the audience and out the theater door --

INT. THEATER LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Lou bursts into the lobby, panting for breath.

Behind her, DARK FORMS crowd into the theater aisle, coming her way.

About to reach her, she slams the doors shut --

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The doors HEAVE at her back --

She grabs a velvet rope off its poles and pulls it TAUT between the door handles, forming a barrier against the powerful pressure.

SLAM! SLAM! SLAM!

Lou nervously glances around the lobby, noticing the GLASS EXIT DOORS at the opposite end.

As each SLAM echoes, panic washes over. The space grows smaller and smaller.

SLAM! SLAM! SLAM!

Lou stumbles forward, and the velvet rope unfurls, allowing the doors to open.

Terror grips her as she braces for the worst when --

WES STEPS OUT, ready to be her savior.

WES
What's going on?

She doesn't answer. Wes walks slowly toward her like a trainer approaching a scared animal.

WES (CONT'D)
Everything's okay. Just calm down.

LOU
They're coming for me.

WES
Who?

LOU
They won't leave me alone. They're coming... She's coming...

Wes looks around. Their surroundings are calm. No one is coming.

WES
It's just us here.

LOU
You don't believe me!

WES
Tell me what's going on. Maybe I will.

He extends a hand. Unsteady, she takes it and allows him to pull her up. Instantly, she deflates into his embrace.

LOU
They won't let me be. She won't let me be. I need you to help me.

WES
How?

Tears well. She pulls back a few inches to discover --

IT'S NOT WES

Instead, she's being held by The Girl, covered in mud.

THE GIRL
Join us...

Lou ejects backward.

A SLAM!

Reverberates against and through her body, as she realizes --
SHE IS STILL UP AGAINST THE DOOR, BRACING AGAINST THE IMPACTS
The velvet rope never surrendered, its tight grip still
around the door handles.

The realization crashes -- WES NEVER BROKE THROUGH.

Lou runs across the lobby and out the exit doors to the
street --

EXT. THEATER - CONTINUOUS

At the edge of the sidewalk, Lou freezes -- TRAFFIC fires by.

She looks over her shoulder to the theater. The air thickens
with fear as, THROUGH THE GLASS EXIT DOORS, she can see --

The Girl gliding forward, joined by a Crowd of faceless
figures filling all available space in the lobby --

Lou SHRIEKS

LOU
Leave me alone!

She steps back --

WHAM!

She's clipped by a car --

AND WE HARD CUT
TO BLACK:

UNTIL A SUDDEN BURST OF BRIGHT, WHITE LIGHTNING SHATTERS

The camera shakes as we squint into the blinding light, our
POV slowly coming into focus --

We're in the middle of THE FAIRGROUND from the news report.
It's different. Long since abandoned, left to decay. *How did
we get here?*

That's not important as our attention is quickly drawn to --

A CROWD OF SILHOUETTES marching towards us.

Their movements are slow and deliberate, like an army
advancing toward its prey.

Fear and dread consume as they get closer and closer, their faces hidden in the shadows.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning illuminates The Crowd, revealing twisted and contorted faces.

As they speed up, we look around for an escape, but there's nowhere to go. Our feet sink into the mud. We can't move, we are stuck as --

The Crowd PUMMELS us with sheer force and brutality --

SMASH CUT TO:

LOU STARTLING FORWARD

It's impossible to breathe. An oxygen mask covers her mouth. She rips it off, placing herself in a hospital room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Lou's banged up with cuts, bruises, a fresh cast on her arm.

A glass wall of windows looks out to a NURSE'S STATION.

In the corner of the room, asleep in a chair, is Wes. His presence provides some comfort.

Lou's heart rate monitor increases in tone as she attempts to climb out of the bed. Wes stirs to the sound.

Lou YANKS off the sensors affixed to her body. Before she can put her feet on the floor, Wes is at her side.

WES

Settle down. You've just been in --

LOU

I have to get out of here.

WES

You need rest.

Her chest leads her to attempt to sit up. Gently, he encourages her back down.

LOU

You have to help me. I need you to listen to me.

WES

Get some rest. Then we can talk.

His demeanor shifts, *this is for your own good*. Lou starts to cry.

LOU
I'm begging you to hear me.

Wes shifts his eyes to the windowed wall. Lou follows them to find a dismayed Ms. Anderson signaling the nurses.

LOU (CONT'D)
Please...

In her eyes is a real fear. Not the kind manufactured by psychosis. They dart around in desperation. Wes beholds them in a newfound belief.

There's a tense silence as the nurses approach the door.

Unexpectedly, Wes jumps to action -- He draws the curtains, cutting off Anderson and the nurses' view.

Lou sits up. *We're doing this... The escape is on.*

LOU (CONT'D)
Thank you.

No time for that. The nurses are opening the door. Wes jams his foot in its path. Flips the lock. Buying them time but also locking them into a no-way-out situation.

WES
Now what?

She doesn't know. Wes goes to the window. They are at street level. Maybe there's a way out. He presses against it, trying to get it open.

Lou's not helping. Her attention is locked on the increasing number of SHADOWS being cast onto the curtain from the other side, where a Crowd is forming...

BANGS against the door rattle her. She has no good options here. She turns to Wes --

He's standing still.

LOU
Wes?

He doesn't respond.

LOU (CONT'D)
Wes, come on...

Slowly he turns to her with a devious look. His head cocks slightly as he steps toward her.

Her heart sinks. A single tear falls from her wet eyes.

LOU (CONT'D)
No, please, no...

WES
Don't fight it.

She breaks down. He extends a hand.

WES (CONT'D)
Join them...

Lou smacks his hand away. Then --

He steps aside to reveal...

The Girl standing in the corner, mud dripping off her to the floor. She motions, *bring her to me...*

Wes follows the instruction and grabs Lou. She fights back, whaling her hands forward. She is no match for him.

He slams her to the bed and firms his hands around her throat. Squeezing... Her eyes plead. His are black.

Lou's hands struggle to find anything that would free her. They make their way to an IV POLE.

She grabs hold and YANKS it down onto Wes -- his grip breaks.

Lou knocks him back with a THUD against the wall.

She's to her feet, loading the IV pole like a bat. *Take one step closer, and I'm going to use it...*

The Girl watches on. Wes looks at her. She motions to attack.

He runs at Lou, who in turn WHIPS the IV pole around, CRACKING the side of his skull open with a BLOODY SPRAY across the curtain --

Instantly, he goes down -- Blood POOLS beneath the headshot.

Lou shakes, dropping the pole.

At his side, she cradles him, trying to stop the bleeding. She can't...

Lou looks around the room. They are alone. The Girl is gone.

The door CRASHES open, and the nurses descend, quickly dragging her to the bed and securing her with a leather cuff.

The floor glistens red. BLOOD IS EVERYWHERE. Lou's covered in it.

Through the team of nurses holding her down, Lou makes eye contact with a disappointed Anderson.

Lou's desperate to say something, but the CCs of sedative injected into her system knock her out --

TO BLACK:

THEN... AFTER A MOMENT...

Lou's eyes flutter open and focus.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

At the foot of her bed, Ms. Anderson stands next to a woman, DR. ABBAS, 50s. Both take her in with warmth and compassion.

Lou reviews her surroundings. It's the same room, but it's restored. No blood. No drawn curtain. The only sign of past events is the CUFF that binds her to the bed.

MS. ANDERSON
Welcome back. How are you feeling?

Then it hits her --

LOU
Wes. Is he okay? I didn't mean to hurt him.

Anderson's face falls. Terror engulfs Lou.

LOU (CONT'D)
No... Is he...?

Dr. Abbas steps forward. Lou recoils. She doesn't know her --

DR. ABBAS
Lou, I'm Dr. Abbas. You have been --

LOU
-- Where is Wes? Tell me what happened.

DR. ABBAS
Wes died.

Lou SCREAMS. Her body violently trembles. Fury, despair, dread, and a storm of feelings overwhelm her as the understanding sets in.

LOU
I didn't mean to...

Anderson cuts in. Takes a gentle seat at her side.

MS. ANDERSON
Lou, Wes died three years ago.

She doesn't understand. Neither do we.

LOU
What are you saying?

DR. ABBAS
Lou, for the three years since you lost your fiancé, you have been in and out of my care. And as Ms. Anderson has attested, you've been doing well the last twelve months.

There's no earthquake, but her world rocks just the same.
This doesn't make any sense.

LOU
No. You're lying. He was just here, and I killed him? I didn't mean to.

Is this another trick, another haunting? Lou struggles to grasp what is and isn't real. What's in her head, and what is the curse...

DR. ABBAS
Wes's passing was not your fault. The grief you experienced when he died was understandably too much. You continued to see him, but he wasn't there. You seemed to have moved on until now. We made so much progress, but sometimes we run too fast, so we will continue to work on all this back at the facility.

Facility...?

MS. ANDERSON
I've re-enrolled you in Dr. Abbas's care. Just for a little while. With all the pressure of ending the conservatorship, maybe I pushed too hard.

LOU

No. I'm not crazy. I know what I...

Lou sees her stuff on a chair.

LOU (CONT'D)

I don't understand. Wes, he sent
me...

DR. ABBAS

Sent you what?

LOU

The case. Tabitha Pierce...

DR. ABBAS

I don't see how that is possible.

LOU

I'll prove it to you. He left me a
voicemail. It's on my phone. I can
play it for you.

Her eyes plead to Ms. Anderson, who in turn looks to Dr. Abbas, who half-heartedly condones the action.

Anderson gets Lou's phone from her bag. Hands it over. Lou plays the voicemail...

VOICE (O.S.)

Lou, it's John Singer from Allied
Insurance. I just sent over a fresh
case I need your eyes on. Looks
open and shut --

IT ISN'T WES...

The realization overwhelms her. Lou plays out her interactions with Wes in her mind.

MONTAGE

- Lou plays the voicemail back. It's not Wes.
- Lou enters Wes' building, passing an apartment for sale sign.
- Lou enters the apartment. She is alone. No, Wes.
- Lou sits at the counter, talking with herself. No, Wes eating muffins.
- Lou enters and stops at the public speaking event, standing still where we had seen her talk to Wes.

Now we see it from Ms. Anderson's perspective. Watching Lou talking with herself.

And finally, and the most searing reality of the situation...

- Lou struggles ALONE in the hospital room. Ms. Anderson watches on, dismayed, as Lou heaves into the bed, jumps out, and grabs the IV pole as the nurses enter. They take it from her before she can do any harm and land her on the bed to deliver the sedative.

BACK TO THE SCENE

Lou's entire world is a puzzle, and she's just come to the debilitating solve.

LOU
This is all her. This isn't me,
Wes, seeing him...

Lou can feel the disbelief, the judgment on their faces.

LOU (CONT'D)
Let me show you something. Please
can you give me my bag?

Against her better sense, Abbas condones this as well.

LOU (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Lou rifles through her bag.

LOU (CONT'D)
I'll show you. I'll show you the
truth.

She pulls out her laptop. Opens it. Ready to go is the video feed of Tabitha in the subway.

MS. ANDERSON
What is this?

LOU
Please watch.

Her eyes beg. Once again, Dr. Abbas gives Anderson permission to continue but tosses a *be-on-alert* glance to the nurses.

The video is all too familiar. Tabitha runs onto the platform. Except it isn't the same video. This time it's different.

We can now clearly see The Girl, joined by a CROWD surrounding Tabitha.

The Girl grabs Tabitha and holds her head out past the edge of the platform.

Tabitha is calm. She looks at the camera at Lou. The Girl does the same, and then --

WHAM!

An oncoming train DECAPITATES Tabitha.

MS. ANDERSON
My gosh, Lou.

LOU
Did you see her? That girl in the crowd... covered in mud. She's behind all this.

Anderson shakes her head. *She doesn't know what to say.*

MS. ANDERSON
What girl? What crowd?

Lou backs up the video... Plays the footage...

There's no Girl.

No Crowd.

Only the glitching footage of Tabitha leaning herself head first in front of the train --

Frustration and fear boil. Lou tosses her computer. Smashing it to the floor.

MS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Calm down.

LOU
I need help. Please help me.

MS. ANDERSON
We will.

She opens the door, and nurses enter.

LOU
No, not like this, from her... She is coming for me. I don't have much time --

DR. ABBAS
I am sorry it has to be this way.
We will get better together.

Lou heaves wildly, but their strength is too much for her. Her screams echo off the walls as she delivers a brutal kick to one of their stomachs.

The nurses close in as one of them JABS her with a sedative.

NURSE
Stay calm. Mam, stay calm.

LOU
Hel..p...meeee....

As Lou passes out. She notices The Girl in the corner of the room.

It all fades as Lou FALLS BACKWARD toward the mattress, but she keeps falling, descending into darkness...

Eventually, landing with a THUD!

Looking up, there's a RECTANGLE OF LIGHT. It's far away.

Then someone leans into the light.

It is The Girl --

Suddenly, Lou is THRUST into a VISION --

FIREWORKS EXPLODE

We are back at the fairground. Except now, the fair is in full swing, with bright lights, loud music, and the chatter of excited crowds.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

CARNIVAL BARKERS shout and beckon people to come and try their luck at neon-soaked games and attractions.

Children shriek on the Tilt-a-Whirl, teenagers brave the Drop Tower, a long line snakes from the Funhouse, and families bond over carnival games.

Above it all, sparkling with lights, the Ferris wheel stands tall, and amidst all the fun, we find --

A YOUNG COUPLE

We instantly recognize them as Adeline, the missing girl, and Chase, the teen boy from the news report.

Holding hands, they stroll through the dense crowd. The dizzying array of colors, lights, and sounds overwhelm their senses.

Every few feet, they stop to act on puppy love with a passionate kiss. The world ahead of them, they bask in each other's glow when --

A RUMBLE OF THUNDER shakes the ground beneath their feet.

Unnerved, they grasp each other tight and look to the sky --

IT'S BLACK. There are no twinkling stars, only the fair's SPOTLIGHTS, crisscrossing THUNDERHEADS.

The young couple huddles together. Rain begins to fall.

People murmur, but the fun doesn't stop UNTIL --

LIGHTNING CRACKS and THUNDER BOOMS.

The rain intensifies, lashing down.

Behind the young couple, the Ferris wheel looms.

Its METAL FRAME gleams in the flashes as riders flee to safety.

With a deafening CRACK, the Ferris wheel takes a direct hit --

SPARKS FLY

Energy courses through it, shorting power lines and plunging the fair into darkness.

People SCREAM --

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

With abandonment, LIGHTNING STRIKES, illuminating the fairgoer's petrified faces.

They scramble, knocking over games and booths in their rush to escape. Their only regard themselves.

On the ground, the rain has turned the dirt into treacherous, soft, muddy terrain.

People slip, slide, and fall -- struggle to get up.

In the chaos, the young couple fights to keep their feet as the crowd sweeps them up and into --

THE EXIT PATH

Where carnie games and other fair structures create a funnel, trapping the terrified crowd desperate for safety.

People push and shove --

Limbs get INTERLOCKED --

Bones BREAK with sickening cracks --

A lucky few erupt free and through to the exit.

The young couple tries to stay together, but the force of the crowd is too strong. They're jostled and bumped, battered and bruised as they are moved along.

TOP DOWN, in a stream of bodies, we find the young couple drowning in the melee.

Desperate, they claw to break free. It's impossible. They're trapped in the crush.

Mustering all they have, they try to stay afloat, but the current of the crowd is immense, and without warning --

THEY'RE PULLED UNDER, swallowed by the frenzied sea of bodies.

Within the savagery, Adeline screams.

She struggles to get up. The mud beneath her is too deep. She sinks in as the crowd tramples over her.

ADELINE

Help me!

Chase makes it to his feet and looks down at her, fear etched on his face.

Through the bodies, Adeline reaches out for help, GRABS HIS HAND to pull her up --

He hesitates as the crowd pummels her with violent blow after blow.

Her wrist stretches as she is pulled away from Chase's grasp.

He knows that if he tries to help her, he might get caught and be unable to escape.

ADELINE (CONT'D)
Don't let go --

He makes a split-second decision and starts to claw himself away, selfishly pulling his hand out of hers.

She won't relent.

He uses his free hand to pry her fingers lose, and in the action --

He SNAPS ONE OF HER FINGERS BACK, breaking it and her grasp --

ADELINE (CONT'D)
(choked with fear and
desperation)
No, please! Help me!

Chase looks at her through the crowd pushing against him before turning and fleeing.

Through the bodies, Adeline watches him go. Her heart breaks into millions of pieces. Her despair is palpable as tears stream down her face, and she lets out --

A VIOLENT SCREAM

With each passing moment, the mud threatens, and the crowd delivers organ-crushing blows.

Adeline sinks deeper and deeper, pushed down by the heavy stomps of the panicked crowd. She's running out of time...

IN HER POV, limbs kick and push. Hands grasp, pull, and punch. It's violent and aggressive.

She heaves and tries to keep her head above the mud.

COUGHING out globs of it as it invades her mouth, choking her. It's too thick and heavy.

She's drowning...

Her mouth submerged, bubbles the muddy water around her as she fights for air, lifting her head for a final gasp --

Her eyes burn with an unquenchable thirst for vengeance, cursing the one she loved... who wouldn't help her, who left her to die, and all those who would do the same...

As she disappears under, only her hand protrudes, the finger broken by Chase dangles, until the crowd's feet stomp over and submerge it, and we --

SLAM CUT TO:

LOU'S EYES ERUPTING OPEN

To a calmer scene. The drabness of her hospital room. She's in pain. She wreathes around.

LOU
He lied... He didn't help her...

She repeats it over and over...

Her pulse quickens. The monitoring machines in the room BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.

Abruptly, she leans over and begins to RETCH --

Coughing up thick, gooey CLUMPS OF MUD.

It projects out of her mouth, splattering heavily onto the floor as she gags for air.

The door flings open. A NIGHT SHIFT NURSE attempts to calm her down.

It's no use. Lou is thrashing faster than the Nurse can attend to her.

LOU (CONT'D)
Stay away. Stay Away.

Lou's hand slips through the cuff.

The Nurse desperately reaches for the RED CALL BUTTON, but Lou strikes her to the ground.

LOU (CONT'D)
I am sorry, I have to get out of here. I have to help her. She didn't run away. She needs me to find her. It's the only way.

In a flurry of terror, Lou rips off the monitors and IVs, setting off a cacophony of alarms that ricochets through the halls like a hail of bullets.

Lou jumps off the bed, grabs her bag, and sprints, leaving the Nurse before she can recover.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lou hustles down the hall. The nurses are in pursuit and joined by others determined to stop her escape.

Ahead, footsteps approach. She whirls around, but a retreat is impossible -- Nurses are coming that way too.

She ducks into a room off the corridor --

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lou keeps the door cracked inside just enough to watch the Nurses race by. Once they pass, she closes it in need of a game plan.

She's in an OBSERVATION AND PREP ROOM with a window to a larger room filled with GURNEYS, each holding a CADAVER covered by a white sheet.

She rifles through her bag, looking for anything to help her.

A few personal effects aren't going to do much good, her laminated "Panic" card... She takes it and tosses the rest as she spots -- A STACK OF SCRUBS.

MOMENTS LATER

Lou's finishing getting on the scrubs. WHEN --

BAM! BAM! BAM!

She turns to find --

The CADAVERS have risen from their gurneys and are at the window, BANGING to break through --

Lou back-peddles and runs out the door, not wasting a millisecond.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY

Lou comes out the stairwell door, head down.

On alert, Nurses and security run past. Her disguise is working, the exit only a few paces away --

When a security guard stops her.

SECURITY GUARD

Hey, where's your badge?

She looks up, her eyes meeting his. He knows some things off. It radiates off of him.

LOU
I... It's. I --

His radio GOES OFF. He's needed elsewhere. He gives Lou a momentary stare down, then leaves her to exit the building.

She glances back to the closing automatic doors.

To find The Girl, surrounded by a Crowd, standing in repose.

Lou shudders, *she's not ready to give up.* She picks up pace running off as the doors close.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Lou's in everyone's way, trying to google ways to "Havenwood Fairgrounds" on her phone, knocking into people, and pushing past.

She can't stop. She has to keep moving. Find a way to save herself, to get to the fairgrounds.

As she turns a corner down another street --

People STOP, TURN, and FOLLOW.

More join as she rushes forward, not realizing DOZENS OF PEOPLE are now at her back.

TOP DOWN, we see Lou, followed by THE GROWING CROWD.

As she crosses streets and intersections, flows of people pour in at her back.

Finally, Lou stops, landing in an EXTREME CLOSEUP.

The noise of the city fades to a muted silence.

Lou turns to discover --

THE MASSIVE CROWD

Rivaling a gathering at the start of a marathon.

Lou takes a single step back and --

IN UNISON, with a reverberating echo --

THE CROWD TAKES A SINGLE STEP FORWARD.

Lou shudders and takes a few more steps back.

Again in unison, the massive crowd does the same. Except they don't stop when Lou does. No, they are marching forward --

Lou RUNS!

Off like a bullet, she zooms down the street, at her back --

THE MASSIVE CROWD

Pursues, climbing over each other, trampling the less determined, adding MORE BODIES to its ranks with each passing street.

TOP DOWN, the mass of humanity moves like a tidal wave, consuming everything in its path.

Lou turns a corner and finds herself in a dead-end alleyway.

The only way out -- A FIRE ESCAPE that stretches up to one of the building's roofs.

Lou scrambles up while --

The MASSIVE CROWD fills the alleyway and climbs the fire escape after --

EXT. ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Lou runs from the top of the fire escape and looks back to see the MASSIVE CROWD coming up behind her.

Moving faster, her heart pounds in her ears.

In a desperate attempt to escape, she makes a DARING LEAP from one rooftop to another.

But her leap is SHORT -- BANG! CLANK!

She SLAMS into the fire escape of the other building, grasping it with a single hand.

BELOW, a MASSIVE CROWD fills the alley --

On the roof she leaped from, The Crowd in pursuit relentlessly pushes forward, bodies CASCADE OFF like lemmings landing into The Crowd below --

Lou strains to keep her grasp. She is failing the task, slipping...

She looks up and hanging over the fire escape, inches from her is --

THE GIRL

Her presence sends a shock wave through Lou, who instantly loses her grip and PLUNGES down to The Crowd --

Landing hard, she writhes in pain, but she hasn't fallen into The Crowd, and she isn't lying in the alley --

No, she's struggling to get to her feet back on the roof --

SHE MADE THE INITIAL JUMP

Looking back in awe of her achievement, she finds no sign of The Crowd below, but on the roof across the alleyway stands --

THE GIRL

Lou gulps for air. Reaching into her pocket, she pulls out and unfurls the crumpled "What to do in a Panic Attack" card.

Rather than use it, she holds it tight. She doesn't need it anymore because --

LOU
(under breath)
I know what I need to do.

With steel eyes, Lou screams across the gap --

LOU (CONT'D)
You can't have me!

The Girl's non-response sends a chill, saying... *we will see.*

On the other hand, Lou might have something to say about that as she stares The Girl down, discarding her "Panic" card into the alley below.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Lou, hoodie up, watches a DOOR DASHER double-park for a quick delivery.

We follow him to the building door, where he hands the order to a CUSTOMER.

Striding back to his car, he double-takes -- IT'S GONE.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - LATER

Lou's grip on the wheel tightens. She speeds down the highway. Her view drifts out the driver's side window to --

A MID-SIZE SUV and the family inside -- a FATHER, a MOTHER, and TWO PRE-TEEN GIRLS laughing in the back seat.

A pang of longing stirs in her chest, and she wonders what her life would have looked like if Wes were still here.

She turns to the passenger seat with a smile --

To her comfort, WES IS THERE, smiling back.

She looks back to the road, happy. Then double takes back to him --

The Girl has replaced Wes --

Lou looks away and finds the SUV, the father driving with no regard for the road ahead as he joins his family --

TURNING TO LOU

Holding her vision with a blank stare and without warning --

THE FATHER CAREENS the SUV into her, on IMPACT --

LOU STRUGGLES FOR CONTROL --

Tires SCREECH, her car SPINS OUT --

Her frantic heartbeat thunders. Her seatbelt cuts into her chest as her vehicle grinds to a halt on the side of the road.

Recovering, Lou glances around. She takes a moment to orient herself --

Through the windshield, the harsh sunlight beats down. Her car sits stationary on the side of the road.

There is no damage. No sign of the other car. The father and his family were nothing more than another horrible vision.

She drops her head to the wheel but is shocked back by the shrill horn --

Squinting, Lou manages to make out a sign indicating:
"HAVENWOOD FAIRGROUNDS, 10 MILES."

Her pulse kicks up again with purpose, and she throws the car into gear.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - LATER

COMING OFF A "NO TRESPASSING" SIGN

We find Lou at the rusted front gate of the once-vibrant fairground.

The location is remote. Surrounded by dense trees and overgrowth from years of neglect. The place feels forgotten, cut off from the rest of the world.

The main entrance is well fortified. She will have to find another way.

WALKING THE FENCE LINE

She finally finds an opportunity and slides her way through to discover --

The rides are RUSTED and BROKEN, the booths, and games long since abandoned.

Lou moves deeper into the fairground. The air thickens with an eerie stillness.

DARK SHAPES lurk within the forgotten rides and stalls -- Their sinister frames, ominous amongst the decaying facades.

Rather than inspire fear, they appear to encourage her as if she is one of them.

Ahead, she catches a glimpse of Wes meandering down the main thoroughfare.

Lou calls out --

LOU
Wes!

He gives no response. Instead, he turns and disappears into the dilapidated FUNHOUSE.

Lou swallows deeply, then pursues --

INT. FUNHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lou's heart races as she enters and turns on her phone's flashlight.

Her footsteps echo through the dimly lit hallways as she moves deeper inside.

Whispers and murmurs ricochet through the maze-like corridors.

The shadows writhe and twist with a life of their own.

She feels a presence behind her and whirls around to find --

A Crowd, their faces twisted, closing in.

Lou spins. The Crowd is doubling in every direction, tripling at every angle, hemming her in.

She stumbles forward, SHATTERING THROUGH a MIRROR --

Falling hard on the other side.

Recovering, she brushes off the shards. Rises to her feet, gliding her phone light around, and realizes the dark forms were only her reflections in a hall of mirrors.

Lou takes a moment to catch her breath and assess her surroundings when --

In her flashlight beam, a body whips by --

Lou turns, trying to catch it, and finds --

WES

Ten or so yards down a pathway.

WES

I love you.

Lou SLAMS her eyes closed. *Please go away... Please...* She opens them, and he is gone.

Lou's heart breaks as it has thousands of times since he died.

A CACKLING SCREAM

Rushes through the Funhouse.

LOU

What do you want from me?!

From behind, a WRETCHED VOICE BOOMS --

THE GIRL (O.S.)
You...

Lou turns to find no sign of The Girl, only Wes, who is now running off.

Lou is quick to follow, but the space is tight and dark.

Jagged and broken walls deliver scratches and scrapes as Lou tries to find him --

Lou scans the Funhouse with her phone light, landing on --

The Girl

Lou drops her phone. Cracking the flashlight. When she looks up, The Girl is GONE.

Suddenly, Wes takes Lou's hand --

WES
Come on!

Lou hesitates. Her phone *screw it*, and she takes off with him in the other direction --

INTO THE DARKNESS...

INT. FUNHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lou puts on the brakes --

A DOOR stands stoically in their path. Lou steps towards it.

Wes PULLS on her hand, staggering her back --

WES
No, not that way.

LOU
Wait, wait a minute.

WES
We can't. You have to run away.

Facing the moment that defined her life, Lou realizes what she has to do.

LOU
I have to stop running. I have to face the truth.

She OPENS the door and STEPS THROUGH into WES' APARTMENT --

INT. WES APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Memories flood, the apartment alive with good times seamlessly playing out as we drift around the space without cuts.

- Lou and Wes flirting as they make dinner.
- Lou and Wes cuddled on the couch.
- Wes coming home, flowers for Lou in his hand.

As they play out, the moments eventually break down. Whatever light was in the space has shifted dark as --

Lou comes to find Wes staring into space, slumped in a chair.

The same chair she sought refuge in after Garza's death.

The one she thought she leaned into Wes's generous hand, only now to realize it was only a throw blanket draped over the back. He had never returned, and she was only comforted by an illusion.

She turns to find the door to their bedroom slightly open, then back to the chair. Wes is gone.

LOU
Wes?

She enters THE BEDROOM --

The clothing stack on top of the dresser takes on a new meaning, as on the floor beside it is an empty moving box, a sign of Lou's inability to let go.

Blood slithers to her feet. She steps away, locating its origin under the bathroom door.

Hesitantly, she steps around the flow and opens the door to --

THE BATHROOM

Now seen in a new light, we realize Lou's early visions in the bathroom were from Wes' apartment.

In the tub, Wes is bleeding out. His blood falls to the bathroom floor, oozing toward her...

It's a horrifying realization.

WES (O.S.)
Did you have no part in what
happened to me?

She spins to find she's back IN THE FUNHOUSE, A BLOOD-SOAKED WES before her --

INT. FUNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A sense of control sets in. She's faced the truth. Now she can face her curse. She has to survive this. A purpose. For herself, for Wes.

LOU
I did have a part. I couldn't help you. I own that, but that's not the same as it being my fault... But I am going to help her... that's all she wants is someone to get her out of here, not to be discarded without a care, to be shown mercy, to be helped. That's what she wanted for her victims. It's what she wants for herself...

Wes GRABS at her, and she pushes back, breaks away, and goes down the corridor towards...

A LIGHT

It's her phone. It wasn't cracked. Its light is still illuminated.

As she approaches, the structure around her begins to TREMBLE and GROAN, coming apart at the seams.

Snatching it up, she frantically scans the area for an exit, her mind racing, *is this the end?*

Suddenly, she spots a way out --

She risks a glance at Wes, then runs for the exit. The deafening roar of destruction surrounds her as she makes her escape --

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Lou stumbles out as the Funhouse collapses in on itself.

She doesn't turn to it, rather she takes off as fast as she can, her feet pounding against the dirt as she makes her way to --

THE EXIT PATHWAY

Lou's eyes are fixed on the ground. She knows that somewhere, buried beneath the mud and debris, is the key to unlocking the mystery of what happened all those years ago.

She tries to remember anything that would help her locate Adeline.

She stops short, a memory from one of the visions --

Adeline claws, head above the crowd. She hasn't been dragged under yet. Her vision darts around... a few yards away, a lamp post.

Lou moves quickly, finds the lamp post, and takes about a dozen paces from it to where Adeline was, looks down --

A MOMENT LATER

She moves quickly, her hands tearing through the damp earth as she digs deeper and deeper.

Sweat drips down her face. Each second ticks by. The urgency to escape this nightmare amplifies. She digs more and more away.

It's a gruesome and terrifying experience as the mud clings to her hands and clothes. But Lou is determined to find the truth, no matter the cost.

Finally, after what seems like hours of digging, she finds something buried in the mud.

With newfound strength, Lou starts to shovel the dirt aside, her hands moving faster and faster. Digging deeper and deeper, uncovering --

A HUMAN SKULL

Lou recoils at the sight. Her mind reels. It's a moment of pure terror and elation as Lou realizes she has found what she's been looking for.

She goes to unearth it when --

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Stop!

Her voice drives Lou's attention to its source. But we do not see it, instead --

A LARGE CROWD

Surrounds Lou, among them, Garza, and Tabitha Pierce, joined by years and years of The Girl's victims --

LOU
(calling out)
Isn't this what you wanted? Someone to find you, someone to acknowledge you, your pain? To help you? To take you out of here?

There is no response. A thick silence hangs heavy in the air.

Then, after what feels like an eternity, The Crowd parts, creating a path to --

THE GIRL

She steps forward, brushing the mud from her face, Lou feels a sense of fear and awe wash over her as Adeline's true face is revealed -- horrid, decrepit, mangled.

THE GIRL/ADELINE
There is no salvation for those who turn a blind eye...

LOU
I am not. I am here to save you. To help. I understand your pain.

Even as fear grips her, Lou approaches. She knows she must stay strong and find a way to help her find peace, no matter the cost.

As she looks into Adeline's eyes, she knows that this is the moment she's been waiting for -- the chance to finally put the past to rest and to make things right, once and for all.

LOU (CONT'D)
I will not forget you.

Lou stretches out her hand...

Adeline considers. Her face begins to heal itself, restoring to its human visage, and as she produces a smile we --

CUT TO:

Flashlights darting through the darkness.

EXT. THE FAIRGROUND - LATER

Lou emerges from the entrance, blinded by the wayward light.

Towards approaching FOREST RANGERS and MEDICS, Lou carries Adeline's skull wrapped in her jacket.

LATER

A makeshift trauma unit has been set up. Lou is draped in a blanket. Ms. Anderson and Dr. Abbas walk with her toward an ambulance.

We don't hear the conversation, but it's clear Lou agrees to go with them and get help in their care.

As they walk with her, we look back to discover...

EVERYONE HAS COME TO A HALT

The rangers and medics are no longer in motion. Rather they are all focused on them.

And at the fair entrance...

Adeline is joined by Garza, Tabitha Pierce, Chase, and a CROWD of her past victims, including --

LOU...

And now we realize that Ms. Anderson and Dr. Abbas were not walking with Lou but rather following a gurney with her body bag to an awaiting ambulance.

Ms. Anderson turns to the fair entrance, and a curious expression crosses her face.

She's taken by something...

...and before we can confirm what we know it to be --

WE CUT TO BLACK: