

FADE IN ON:

EXT., DAY, A BUILDING ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE OF MANHATTAN

A big sign identifies this old brick building as the home of "The Underground" -- a weekly newspaper in the "Village Voice" mode, only scuzzier. We see a big poster outside showing the cover of this week's edition. A big headline reads, "How to be a Crack Whore" written over a photo of a crack den in which we glimpse things better left unseen. Beneath the headline is written, "A special report by Amy Klein."

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, THE ELEVATOR

It's one of those too-small elevators that you find in older buildings. There are several PASSENGERS on board. Among them is the aforementioned, AMY KLEIN, a woman in her mid-twenties. She's all in black, from her black sneakers and black stockings up to her rimless black sun glasses and jet black hair. The only thing about her that isn't black is a complexion so translucently pale that it bespeaks only the most rare and grudging familiarity with daylight. She has a paper coffee cup and a cigarette in the same hand, and she alternates sips of coffee with puffs of her cigarette with a practiced proficiency. She ignores the unhappy looks of her fellow passengers. She clearly has practice at this as well.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, THE OFFICES OF THE UNDERGROUND

Little office cubbies scattered around a converted loft space. Mostly younger hip-East-Village-type EMPLOYEES with a smattering of non-hip-East-Village types. They sit at desks, typing at computers, conferring at tables -- going about the business of turning out another issue. The entrance door, which leads directly to the elevator, opens and Amy comes out, leaving a cloud of smoke and several disgruntled passengers behind her. CYNTHIA, the girl at the reception desk sees her.

CYNTHIA

Hey, Amy...

AMY

Morning...

CYNTHIA

Morning? It's 4:30 in the afternoon.

CONTINUED:

AMY

Mmm...

She keeps on walking, into the work area. She's about to sit down at her desk when an ASSISTANT calls to her.

ASSISTANT

Amy...

Amy looks. The Assistant gives a broad gesture over her shoulder, pointing toward the Editor's office across the work space. Amy comes back up, nodding, and heads across the way, toward the office. The Assistant picks up the phone.

ASSISTANT

(on phone)

Mr. Firenzi... Amy's here. Right.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, BUD FIRENZI'S OFFICE

BUD FIRENZI, the Editor-in-Chief, is a man in his early forties, sporting a pony tail which, like a moustache on a sixteen-year-old, only serves to emphasize his true age. He's fiddling around with some sort of TV/VCR set up, and is looking away from the door as it opens and Amy enters behind him.

BUD

(without turning)

Ah, I detect that unique and ubiquitous combination of female sweat and patchouli oil that signals the arrival of...

He turns toward a dour Amy.

BUD

...the delightful Amy Klein.

AMY

Eat me, Bud.

BUD

Have a seat, angel of light. I want to get Larry...

He opens the door and leans out.

BUD

Lar? Larry? Can you come on over?

CONTINUED:

Amy, meanwhile, spots an open container of Chinese food on Bud's desk. She inspects it, then picks something out of it with a pair of chop sticks.

AMY

So what? Are we being sued again?

BUD

Hmm? Oh no.

(sees her eating)

Please feel free to have some of that.

AMY

Thanks. What is this? General Tao's cat?

BUD

What? It's not up to your exacting gourmet standards? Excuse me. Go on, sit down. Just something we wanted to show you...

He heads back over to the VCR. Amy ditches the Chinese food and picks up her coffee again. She sits, lights another cigarette.

BUD

Okay... rewind, rewind? Rewind. He finds the button, presses it.

(He presses the button)

Somebody mailed us this thing around two weeks ago but, in keeping with our usual level of efficiency, Betty didn't get around to opening it 'til this morning. Then she brought it to me.

AMY

What is it?

LARRY JACOBS, the Managing Editor, a guy in his mid-thirties, comes in through the time.

BUD

Hey, Lar. Close the door, would you?

Larry closes the door.

AMY

What's the matter? This X-rated or something?

CONTINUED:

BUD
Something.

LARRY
It's bullshit is what it is.

BUD
Right, Larry. Okay.
(to Amy)
For the record, Larry would like to establish up front that he considers this whole thing to be bullshit.

LARRY
Did you ever hear of...

BUD
(speaking over him)
Amy, did you...

The two exchange a glance. Larry waves the floor to Bud.

BUD
Amy, with your encyclopedic knowledge of lower east aide skank-ology -- have you ever heard of "Deaders?"

AMY
Debtors?

BUD
Dead - ers. D-E-A-D-E-R -- S. Deaders.

AMY
Oh, sure. They're generally in their forties, kind of ex-hippy types. They still think Jerry Garcia is like "really cool" even though he's dead.

BUD
Not dead-heads...

AMY
You know, sometimes they wear ponytails. Dream about how great the sixties were. You see 'em in the park sometimes...

BUD
Love of my life, go fuck yourself.
I'm asking you a serious question.

CONTINUED:

AMY
No, Bud. I've never heard of
"deaders."

LARRY
Show her the tape.

Bud goes to the VCR and hits the play button. Amy finishes her coffee and lights a new cigarette with the still-glowing butt of her last one. She leans forward.

ON THE TAPE

The image flickers into view. It's handheld, low-rez, clearly been shot in some dingy apartment somewhere, decorated in a "mattresses on the floor/beer spray on the walls" type decor. There are around half a dozen PEOPLE there, in their twenties and younger. They drift in and out of frame, in and out of focus.

We hear a woman's voice -- clearly the person who is operating the camera, as the camera moves about the room. This is MARLA CHEN.

MARLA
(off screen)
Okay, okay. Here we go. There's
Marybeth...

The camera hesitates for a fleeting moment on MARYBETH, a girl with bright dye-red hair (on the side of her head that isn't shaved). Marybeth looks, with no particular expression and goes away.

The camera turns toward a smudged mirror on the wall and we get a look at Marla, a twenty-ish Asian girl.

MARLA
Here's Marla Chen, official Deader
Archivist. Hello, me.

The camera turns toward a door as it opens and SHEILA, a young round-faced girl with dark hair, comes out, looking a bit nervous.

MARLA
(off screen)
And here's the star of the show.
Sheila...

She gives a little smile. The camera swings over toward a mattress on the floor. Some of the people are tugging a plastic sheet over it.

CONTINUED:

One of them, and. The one who clearly appears to be in authority, is a rather average-looking, serious man with glasses, WINTER. Another is a round-faced young man, also looking a bit pale and nervous, CARL.

MARLA

And here's our deader bed -- this is
the scene of the crime. Crime to be...

The image moves in on Carl.

MARLA

Here's our new Revivalist. How you
feeling, Carl?

CARL

Hmm? Okay. Stare. Okay.

The camera moves in on Winter.

MARLA

And here is the fearless leader of
the Deaders...

Winter glances up, then dismisses the camera altogether. He looks off screen, then raises his hand. The room Quiets. We hear various voices.

VOICES

Shh. Quiet. We're starting.

Winter looks toward Carl, clearly waiting for a response.

CARL

It's ready.

We don't know exactly what he means, but it seems to be the right answer. Winter looks up and the camera swings toward Sheila. She hesitates. A girl next to her starts to prompt her.

GIRL

Say...

SHEILA

(cuts her off)

Okay. Okay...

(reciting)

My skin isn't real. My eyes aren't
real. My muscles aren't real. My
bones, my heart, my veins and nerves,
and flesh and meat... aren't real.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SHEILA (CONT'D)
What I see, what I hear, what I taste,
what I touch, what I remember, what I
think, what I feel, aren't real.

WINTER
(off screen)
Go on.

SHEILA
I'm not real.

The camera swings back to Winter, who gestures for her to come forward, then swings back to see her coming.

The various people in the room gather around as she comes to the mattress. The camera moves this way and that, Trying to get the best angle to cover the action. People spread towels on the mattress, over the plastic, as Sheila unbuttons her long shirt and tugs it off. She's naked underneath. She sits down on the towels, then lays back, flat on the mattress.

Winter looks to Carl. He fumbles around in a bag and Comes up with a big handgun -- maybe a .45.

SHEILA
I'm not real...

The camera moves in closer as Carl takes the gun and slips it into. Sheila's hand.

SHEILA
I'm not... I'm not real...

She slides the gun over and puts it to the side of her head.

AMY

...sits forward in her seat, not quite believing what she's seeing.

AMY
Holy shit... Bud...

BUD
Just keep watching.

ON THE TAPE

Sheila is breathing fast now, but we can't be sure if it's terror, or passion, or some combination of both. She continues to lie on the mattress, the barrel of the gun pressed against the side of her head.

CONTINUED:

SHEILA
I'm not real. I'm not.

Carl reaches out, hesitant, and cocks the gun in her hand. Meanwhile, we see other hands, reaching in, Pressing a folded up towel-against the opposite side of her head. Other hands come in and press a doubled-over pillow against the towel.

SHEILA
I'm not real. I'm not... I'm not...
She closes her eyes, grits her teeth.
Her back arches.

AMY

Drops her cigarette as it burns down to her fingers. She stands.

ON THE TAPE

Sheila holds her breath... and pulls the trigger.

There's a huge CONCUSSION as the bullet tears straight through her head. We can see it splatter out the other side, tearing through the towel and the folded over Pillow, which catch a great blast of bone and brain.

We hear some screams in the room.

AMY

Jumps back.

AMY
Fuck !
(to Bud)
Have you called the police on this?

BUD
Just watch...

AMY
I want to know if you've called the pol...

BUD
I said, "Just watch."

LARRY
I tell you, it's bullshit.

CONTINUED:

AMY

Oh, man, don't tell me that was some fucking special effect...

LARRY

You tell us.

Larry, sitting cross-legged in a chair, points back to the screen. Amy turns.

ON THE TAPE

The camera is now pointing at Carl, who is tugging off his own clothes.

AMY

(voice over)

Oh, man, this is fucking sick...

BUD

(voice over)

That's saying a lot, for you.

Carl, now stripped down, hesitates, looks at Winter. Winter reaches over and kisses him on the lips. Carl, looking scared, turns down toward Sheila, who is lying, as dead as dead can be, on the mattress. Blood has run from the ghastly wound down both sides of the plastic, and towels on-the side of the bed catch the mess.

Carl reaches down and plucks the gun from Sheila's lifeless hand..., and then, very gingerly, lies down on top of her.

The camera moves forward and down as Marla, presumably, elbows hex way through for a better vantage point. The camera moves in close as Carl stretches out along Sheila's body. He places his lips on hers, kissing her -- or maybe something else. It seems almost as if he's breathing into her. His body moves as his lungs expand and expel, and he seems to be struggling toward some non-sexual climax.

AMY

watches, both repelled and fascinated.

ON THE TAPE

Carl continues his odd ritual, finally taking a great final breath, as if he's reached the point of exhaustion, and expels it. Nothing happens.

CONTINUED:

WINTER
(off screen)
Again...

Finding what ever remaining reserves he has, Carl draws in another breath -- he seems to be in agony as he does it -- presses his lips to Sheila's dead ones, and Exhales. The breath seems to go on forever -- longer than it should.

And then, when it seems as if he can't breathe out Another teaspoon of air, Sheila's body abruptly twitches beneath him.

AMY

watches, not quite believing it -- not knowing what to make of it.

ON THE TAPE

Sheila's body twitches again -- and then she sucks in a ragged breath. Her previously open and lifeless eyes, move. Her head raises up.

Carl, exhausted, looks down at her, smiling. There's nervous laughter, sounds of relief from around the room. Carl slides off of her. Sheila looks this way and that, presumably at. The others, looking down at her.

A hand reaches down and she takes it. The camera follows as Carl pulls her unsteadily up to standing. All this despite the fact that there is still an exceedingly large and obvious hole in. Her head... the size of a dime on one side, the size of a half-dollar on the other.

The others move in, touching her, congratulating her. She's still a bit shaky, uncertain. Then she lifts one of her hands to the side of her head -- the side with the big exit wound. She touches it gingerly, confirming that it is really there.

Then she slowly slides her fingers IN. They penetrate her skull, unobstructed, to the second knuckle. Sheila takes her fingers from this ghastly wound and stares at them, bloody. Yet she's alive. Fine. She looks up at the others, then smiles widely. The others move in, giving her hugs, pecks on the cheek.

SHEILA
(as if actually
realizing it)
I'm fine...

CONTINUED:

She touches the wound again.

SHEILA
I feel great...

She starts laughing.

SHEILA
Oh, man! Oh, man...

The image cuts off, goes to snow. There is a moment of silence. Amy turns to Bud.

AMY
What the fuck...

BUD
That's what I said.

AMY
Have you... have you found any of these...

BUD
We haven't done anything. I told you, we just looked at it today. By some chance are you... interested in pursuing this?

Amy hesitates, shaking her head, not sure what it's all about.

LARRY
It's a waste of time.

BUD
Yeah, Larry here doesn't find any of this at all intriguing.

LARRY
Oh, I was intrigued. Because I can't figure it out how they did it. But I know one thing... Shit like this is only intriguing so long as it's a mystery. So let 'em run it on Unsolved Mysteries or something because, all bullshit aside, Amy... Amy, we all know, deep down inside, what the solution to the mystery La. The solution is -- they faked it. This is just some kind of bullshit shot-on-tape gore movie.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)
And since that's all it can be, that's
all you're going find. Let 'em...
let 'em use it in some bullshit TV
special. They can run it after Alien
Autopsy Part III.

BUD

Look, Ame. Maybe this is just what
Larry says, but it sure smells
Different to me. I'm not saying that
we've just witnessed a bona fide
miracle. The fact is, I don't know
what the hell it's about. I don't
know who these people are... but I'd
like to know. If my dear colleague
here is right, and it's bullshit, you'll
know pretty fast. If it's not...

Amy, though, is only half listening, lost in her own
thoughts. She turns to the two men.

AMY

How could she...

She lifts her fingers to the side of her head, duplicating
the action of Sheila slipping her fingers inside the wound.

LARRY

Amy... you know what my father said
once...

BUD

That all writers were queers?

LARRY

No, that was a different time. This
time, we were driving down the block
and there was this fortune-telling
place, you know, this gypsy fortune
telling place in a store front? And
he said, "You know, if I could tell
the future I sure as shit wouldn't be
living in any frigging store front."
Amy, if somebody could do that for
real, they'd wouldn't be hanging out
in some rundown basement. They'd own
the fucking earth.

AMY

But how could she...

She once again duplicates the gesture of putting her
fingers into the aide of her head.

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Amy, it's a magic trick. No different from the kind of shit you see on a stage. Just no sparkles, spandex, or German faggots. Same thing.

(no reaction)

Amy...

AMY

(to Bud)

What else do we have besides the tape?

LARRY

Just a return address on the envelope.

Amy hesitates.

BUD

Hey, Amy, who says miracles only happen at Lourdes?

LARRY

Who says they happen at Lourdes?

BUD

(to Amy)

Hey, do me a favor. Ignore this guy. Just listen to me for a second, your beloved Uncle Bud who pays your salary. I'm not saying that this isn't what Larry says it is. I'm not. I'm just saying that it doesn't smell that way.

AMY

Yeah, well, you do have a particularly good sense of smell, don't you, Bud?

BUD

One of my many sterling features.

Amy looks at Larry, then back at Bud.

AMY

Let me see the envelope.

CUT TO:

EXT., DAY, A LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT

Amy heads up the stairs. She pulls an envelope out of her bag. It's the one that the tape came in.

CONTINUED:

She checks the name on the envelope -- MARLA CHEN -- then checks the buzzers. She. Presses one, waits. No answer. As she presses the button again, a thin young MAN comes up the stairs behind her and unlocks the door. Still receiving no answer to her ringing, she casually follows him in.

INT., DAY, THE SECOND FLOOR

We see the Young Man coming up the stairs, with Amy Behind him. They both reach the second floor and head down it. As they start down the hallway, appropriately ignoring one another, Amy winces and crinkles her nose.

AMY

God, it smells like something died in here.

The Young Man, sensing the need for a response, looks back as he goes to his door.

YOUNG MAN

I've been complaining to the super about it for a week.

Amy, meanwhile, has found the appropriate door. She knocks at it.

YOUNG MAN

It must be a dead mouse in the walls or something...

AMY

Something bigger than a dead mouse.

As she says it, her eyes suddenly come to rest on the door in front of her. She stops in mid-knock.

YOUNG MAN

This place... I should move back to Connecticut.

AMY

Don't let me stop y...

There's a bang as the Young Man enters his apartment.

AMY

Don't let me stop you...

She hesitates, staring at the door... then leans forward and sniffs. The results are inconclusive. Then she lays herself flat down on the floor, presses her nose up against the bottom of the door and sniffs.

CONTINUED:

She jumps back, scrambles up to her feet, goes to the stairs. She almost slips as she rounds the corner, heading down.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, THE SECOND FLOOR

A short time later. A big black guy, THE SUPER, is at the door. He, too, is sniffing, but not down on his knees.

SUPER

I see what you're saying. I see.
Thing is... thing is... I don't have
a key.

AMY

Then break it.

SUPER

No, who did you say you...

AMY

I'm Marla's sister. Amy. Look...

SUPER

You're Marla's sister. You ain't t
a Chinese girl.

AMY

She's my half sister. Same Mom.
Different Dads. Hey...

SUPER

Okay, okay. I see what you're saying.
Can I just... you want I ,should just
kick the door in you want me to get
my tools...

AMY

Um... just kick it, I guess.

SUPER

Okay...

The Super steps back and slams his foot against the door. It gives slightly. Another couple kicks and the door pops open.

SUPER

Oh, man...

He and Amy recoil, clutching their faces, from the smell. The Super heads down the hallway, retching.

CONTINUED:

Amy stands facing away from the door, willing herself to stand where she is. She inhales -- drawing in the smell to acclimate herself -- and almost vomits. She steadies herself, drawing in breaths through her nose, tentative at first, and finally in larger breaths, until she can tolerate it.

She looks back toward the Super, who is staring at her from the far end of the hall, looking vaguely embarrassed.

SUPER
I'm sorry...

Amy looks at him, then turns and pushes her way through the broken door.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, MARLA'S APARTMENT

Amy steps in and stops, struggling to keep herself from retching.

She hesitates, then reaches up and takes off her sunglasses and slips them into a pocket. This is the first time we see her eyes, as they scan this dim, prosaic place of death.

This is an average east village one bedroom apartment, relatively bare -- some furniture rescued from the garbage, some books, some magazines, some nondescript art posters on the wall. No sign in the living room of anything dead. No sound except the sinister buzzing of flies. Amy steps cautiously in.

She looks toward one side, sees a closet with a double sliding door. She slides open one side, sees nothing that shouldn't be there -- a ragged winter jacket, a green plastic rain coat, a hangar festooned with scarfs, some other garments still obscured beneath cleaning bag plastic.

She hesitates, then calmly slides the other side open. More of the same.

She turns in the other direction. There's a little kitchen. Nothing dead there. She starts forward then turns back --staring at the refrigerator. She goes quickly over and tugs it open. It's empty. Not so much as a ketchup bottle. Curious, she opens the freezer. The same. Empty.

She heads into the living room and down a narrow corridor leading to the bedroom.

CONTINUED:

She rounds a turn and finds herself looking down the hallway toward the open-door to the bathroom some fifteen feet away.

Marla is there.

The door to the bathroom is open and the toilet, on the far wall, faces the door. Marla, dressed only in bra and panties, is sitting on the closed lid of the john, leaning forward in what seems, at first, to be an impossible angle. Her hands hang forward, almost touching the floor. Her head is cocked back, staring up. Her skin is gray, swollen.

Amy takes a few steps forward, for a better look. As she approaches, she sees the reason for the odd position of the body.

A long bootlace has been tied around Marla's neck and tied to the wall pipe on the toilet. The flesh of her neck has swollen out, almost burying the bootlace. She has hanged herself in this ghastly way.

Amy takes another step forward. As she does, there's a sudden loud buzzing as the flies that crawl on Marla abruptly rise up, alarmed (or whatever it is flies are) at her approach. But they soon return to the corpse, crawling about the face, around the edges of the glazed, eyes, around the margins of the open mouth, rimmed with dry foam -- around the outthrust tongue.

Amy steels herself -- and then walks closer. She looks into the bathroom. On the corner of the sink, there's a thick manilla envelope with something bulky inside -- something that looks just like a cassette tape. There's a name written on it, and the marker is right next to it.

She takes another step forward, trying to read the name, and then hears something -- a sound of movement coming from the living room behind her. She turns and hurries back the way she came.

She rounds the corner, every nerve awake.

It's the Super, standing half inside the door, a handkerchief over his nose and mouth, still unwilling to come in.

SUPER

What? What?

AMY

She's dead...

CONTINUED:

SUPER
Dead...

AMY
She... I think she hanged herself.
In the bathroom.

SUPER
And she's just been there... that
smell. God, I'm sorry. I should
have come up before...

AMY
What? Look. Go call the police, all
right? Just go call the police and
wait for them... Okay? Can you do
that?

SUPER
I'll go do that...
(still on a different
track)
I'm a religious man. It's just... I
should have done something I guess.
But you never know what's going on in
somebody's head. At least I should
have come up when people started
complaining about the smell. I
shouldn't have just left her there
all these days.

AMY
It's okay.

SUPER
It's terrible that she should just be
there like that. All these days.
I'm so sorry.

AMY
It's okay. Go on and call the police,
and... and wait for them down stairs.

SUPER
I'll go. I'm a religious man. I
really am.

He turns, stricken, and departs. Amy moves fast to the door, closes it (as much as it will close) and then turns back to the apartment. Then she rushes back to the bathroom.

Again, as she approaches, there's the great buzz as the flies rise from the body.

CONTINUED:

Amy steps into the bathroom and then reaches for the tape. She has to come horribly close to the body to do it. She grabs it and pulls back, looks at the name on it. It reads, "Winter."

Without further ado, Amy stuffs it into her bag. Then she turns and hurries into the adjoining bedroom.

IN THE BEDROOM

Amy starts to search -- fast, thorough, -- she's done this sort of thing before. She finds a journal, opens it... no writing. She tosses it aside. Pulls open a drawer. She tugs out what looks like a bladeless knife handle. She presses a stud. A stiletto blade snicks out. She tosses it back in the drawer, tugs some other stuff into view.

Some bills, some shoelaces, loose change. An address book. She grabs it up, shoves it into her bag. She goes drawer to drawer, looking for anything that might mean something. Socks, ragged underwear, cheap jewelry, tee shirts and short skirts and jeans.

Amy stops, surveying the territory. Where to look next? Then, deciding, she goes to the bed.

She reaches under it, sliding her hand around, tugs out a dust-encrusted skirt. Feels around some more, hesitates, pulls something else out. She brings it out into view. It's a dessicated mouse. She grimaces and tosses it back under the bed in disgust.

She stops.. then slides her hand between the mattress and the box spring. She feels around, then stops, finding something. She pulls out a little red paper folder -- the kind that photographs come from. She opens it.

It appears to be a photographic record of another "Deader" party. We see some of the same participants -- only we also see Marla herself in some of the pictures. She's smiling, clowning. Amy flips the next photograph.

It shows a stool -- just that, the featured object of the photograph. It is draped in plastic, ready -- like a photo of the altar before the wedding. And then Amy turns a photograph and it shows somebody holding something out in front of Marla. A length of rope with a noose on one end. Marla is on the other side, framed by it -- a kind of "joke" photo.

She has a kind of sickly smile on her face. Amy's eyes narrow. She holds the picture closer.

CONTINUED:

The red-haired girl, Marybeth, is visible in the shadows in the back of the photograph -- or is she? Because the closer Amy looks, the more it seems as if the girl is somehow, literally, half-melted into the wall, with only her face and a part of a shoulder emerging from it. Amy holds the picture closer -- it's hard to tell. The girl is lost in shadows, and the closer she looks the more reality merges with the grains of the photo.

Then there's another noise. Nothing loud or drastic, but it brings Amy up short. A tiny scratching sound, followed by a different sound, a sound we've heard before. The sound of the flies abruptly rising from Marla's corpse -- as if something has disturbed them.

Amy turns toward the door that leads to the hall and the unseen bathroom. She sits, silent, waiting.

Then the sound of the flies rising comes again -- and again, more distinct -- something scratching. She keeps her position, still listening. Nothing. Just the slow steady, untroubled buzzing.

She stands.

And again there's the tiny scratching, and the rush of sound, as if something has disturbed the flies. She jumps, drops the photos. They scatter on the floor.

She hesitates an instant, then moves cautiously toward the door, which stands at right angles to the bathroom. As she moves around, she can look in through the bathroom door, but Marla's hanging body still isn't in view.

She advances, until she can glimpse the edge of one of Marla's hanging, outthrust hands, the tip of one finger just touching the floor. Marla's long fingernails are painted green. Then, as she watches, the finger twitches, the long green-painted nail scratching on the tile floor. The flies rise and fill the air.

Amy gasps and rushes forward.

THE BATHROOM

She comes around the edge of the bathroom door. Perhaps, instinctively, she has interpreted the movement as a sign of life, but whatever she may have thought, she comes up cold as she takes a step toward the corpse -- and Marla's head turns toward her.

It is still tied to the pipe by the shoelace. The shoelace is still buried in her throat. The flies buzz up again. The glazed eyes turn in their sockets toward her.

CONTINUED:

Amy stands, half-leaning over toward the body, literally paralyzed. Marla's lips move, the swollen tongue as well, as if she's struggling to speak. A ghastly wet sound comes out.

Amy's mouth is open too, and she is hyperventilating in terror. Abruptly she looks down -- One of Marla's hands has reached up and is grabbing at the edge of her skirt, tugging on it.

Amy lets out some kind of cross between a shriek and a squeak and swats the dead hand away. As she does, she literally falls backward onto the floor. But her paralysis is broken. She rolls over and, in a half-crawl, half-scramble, gets herself back up to her feet.

THE LIVING ROOM

She tears down the hall, through the living room and out the door.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, THE HALL AND STAIRWAY

Amy comes flying down the hall at top speed. She reaches the top of the stairs and starts down and as she does, her feet slip.

She slides down five or six steps, then over-balances, throwing out her hands to keep her chin from hitting the polished stone steps. She keeps sliding down, finally over-balancing again, flipping over and landing on her back on the landing half-way between the floors.

AMY

Oh, fuck, fuck...

She rolls up against the wall, wrapping her arms around her legs in pain.

AMY

Oh, Christ...

The Super appears at the bottom of the stairs.

SUPER

Are you okay? I called the police...
Did you fall? Look, just stay where
you are...

Clearly, the thought of "staying where she is" doesn't do it for Amy. She gets up and hurries down the remaining stairs, clearly limping in pain.

CONTINUED:

SUPER
Are you okay?

AMY
I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine... I'll
be back in just a minute. I'm okay...

She heads for the door, fumbles impatiently, then almost frantically with the latch until it opens and she rushes out.

CUT TO:

EXT., DAY, THE SIDEWALK

She comes down the stairs and almost collapses against a mail box, gasping, struggling to regain both her breath and her composure. People are on the streets, walking by, studiously ignoring her.

A siren, part of the background noise of the street, starts growing louder. She turns and looks up the block, in time to see a police car turning down the street. She feels frantically for her shoulder bag -- it's still there, then turns and limps off down the block.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, AMY'S APARTMENT

Cluttered, full of books and mess. It might almost be a guy's apartment. Right now the lights are off and Amy is sitting on the floor in front of her couch, now dressed in only panties and a bra -- an image unpleasantly reminiscent of Marla -- especially with the spotting of bruises and roughly bandaged scrapes on her pale skin.

She has a dripping ice pack in one hand, which she applies to this bruise and that -- and a bottle of gin in the other. She doesn't look happy. She takes a drink, then looks toward a TV and VCR in front of her.

There's a tape half-inserted into the VCR. We can see the empty envelope with "Winter" written on it, lying on the floor.

The tape is within reach of Amy's bare foot, and she lifts a toe toward it, hesitant. She puts her toe against the tape-hanging on the edge of decision. Finally, she shoves it forward with her toe.

It slides into the machine. She grabs up the remote and turns on the set.

CONTINUED:

The IMAGE appears.

It's Marla, looking very pale -- unnaturally pale. She's wearing big wing-tipped sunglasses. Amy watches.

ON THE TAPE

Marla speaks, looking into the camera.

MARLA

I'm sorry. I just can't hold it together. I just keep... forgetting, and then I start slipping and, the more I slip the harder it is to make it work... I'm just... I sent a copy of Sheila's change to a newspaper. I thought if... if other people saw it and started believing, that would help... maybe even help all of us. But it didn't make any difference. I don't know what to do now. I don't want to end up like Bobby. And I'm starting to feel pain, too. I just keep... forgetting. I'm slipping back. My eyes hurt. The light really hurts....

She takes off her glasses. Her eyes look glazed over -- dead eyes.

MARLA

And they've gone like this. Like Bobby. I don't know how to get back. I just don't want it any more. I just want to end it. I'm sorry. I can't... believe enough. I just don't want to be here any more. I can't... I...

She moves forward and shuts off the camera. It goes black for a few seconds, and then changes to snow.

Amy sits, staring at the snow, her face empty. A phone rings somewhere. It shakes Amy out of her fugue.

She leans over and drags a lap top toward her. The phone, apparently, is plugged into it -- one of those headphone type things. She drags it up off the floor, slips it on, answers it.

AMY

Yeah...

CONTINUED:

LARRY
(on the phone)
Don't tell me I woke you up. I won't believe that.

AMY
No. What do you want, Larry?

LARRY
(on the phone)
Well, I was just up past my bed time, you know -- Sandy has a cough...

AMY
Larry...

LARRY
(on the phone)
Yeah, I know, I know... you don't give a shit. I was just, uh... I just thought I'd follow up with you on that bullshit story...

AMY
What about it?

LARRY
(on the phone)
The thing is... I mean, let's face it, it's bullshit. But I know you.

AMY
Yeah.

LARRY
(on the phone)
Don't "yeah" me. I know the crazy shit you do. Like with those fucking bikers. Jesus. For a goddamned story.

AMY
That's what I get paid for. So?

LARRY
(on the phone)
So... it's just. Just... the thing is, Ame... some things you shouldn't do, you know what I mean?

AMY
Like what?

CONTINUED:

LARRY
(on the phone)
I say this to you...
(pause)
Look, I say this to you, but in my heart I know that one time it's going to happen... that you're going to end up, I don't know -- dead or god knows what. But when it does happen, I don't want it to be my fault.

AMY
Okay, Larry. I'll make sure it won't be.

LARRY
(on the phone)
You know, you're fucking with my conscience, here. Amy...

AMY
Larry, I can't do the sensitive thing. I don't know how. I get the message. I knew the message before I got it. Okay, Mommy? I gotta go.

LARRY
(on the phone)
Go where?

AMY
I don't know. Somewhere. Bye...

She hangs up. She waits a moment, hesitates -- then tugs the laptop closer. She types something in.

We see a White Pages Directory flash on the screen. Amy types in the name of Marla Chen. She comes to an M. Chen -- checks the address. It matches.

She highlights the number then puts the pointer at the "dial" indicator. She waits, as if for a sign from above, but none comes. Then she hits the button. The phone rings. One, twice, three, four... then there's a click.

A man's voice sounds on the other end. Maybe familiar? We can't really be sure.

VOICE
Hello.

AMY
Um, hi, is Marla there?

CONTINUED:

There's a long pause.

VOICE
Who is this?

AMY
Um, this is her sister, Amy.

VOICE
Hold on.

There's a clunk, as if the phone's been put down, then some sounds of motion. Amy waits. Then the phone is picked up again. But there's no "hello."

AMY
Hello? Hello?

Then a sound comes over the line -- a hoarse gurgling sound - a ghastly wet sound - the same sound Amy heard coming from the throat of the hanged Marla.

Amy gasps, yanks the headset from her head. She punches frantically at the key board, disconnecting the line... then shoves the whole thing away from her. She sits, breathing fast for a second, then she gets up, moving fast.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, A SUBWAY STATION

Lit with cold floourescent light -- this is one of the stations that hasn't been renovated in many a year. Amy, now dressed, with her sunglasses in place, slides her card through the slot and shoves through the turnstyle. She descends the long, non-working escalator -- the only one on it at this time of night.

She reaches the subway platform. It is virtually empty.

Amy has come down stairs that land her just about in the middle. She looks one way -- far down the platform, a lone FIGURE in a shiny green plastic raincoat lies slumped over on one of the few benches. Amy looks the other way -- a couple middle-aged SLACK GUYS in uniform, maybe heading for some night shift somewhere, stand, not moving, hands thrust in pockets.

She starts moving slowly along the platform, staring down, looking for something. She stops.

CONTINUED:

There's a tiny symbol painted near the edge of the platform -- the stencil of a red flower. She takes up a position at the spot. She waits.

A moment later, a bit of a breeze starts moving her hair. A few seconds later, a train comes roaring into the station. Amy watches the car pass her, one by one, as the train slows. The train is virtually empty. One car after the next rolls by as the train slows.

Amy waits.

Finally, as the train moves slowly to a stop, a car different from the others comes in. This one, for some odd reason, seems to have newspaper covering all the windows -- taped up from the inside.

One of the doors of the covered car comes to a stop directly in front of the spot where Amy is standing -- the spot marked by the stenciled rose. There's a pause, then the doors slide open -- just one the one set in front of Amy. The others stay closed. The interior of the car is dark -- the lights, apparently, are not working.

A tall BLACK MAN in a conductor's uniform is standing there. He gestures toward the adjoining car with a nod of his head.

BLACK MAN

Next car.

AMY

Is Joey on this ride?

BLACK MAN

Come on in...

She enters. The doors slide closed. The train pulls out.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, IN THE SUBWAY CAR

The interior of the car has been transformed into some odd-ball cross between a very small nightclub and an opium den. Anyway, there are PERFORMERS at the far side, who start playing as the train pulls out.

As the train passes out of the station, and the lights dim, we can see the lights from joints and crack pipes -- or at any rate something being smoked in some kind of pipe, glinting in the darkness.

CONTINUED:

Various hands reach up and tug down the newspapers, and the tunnel lights come in, providing a flickering, constantly changing illumination.

In the uncertain light, Amy can see the various CELEBRANTS hanging out --- some on the seats, some on the floor, some dressed, some partially undressed, some engaging in desultory drug use, others in desultory sex acts -- mostly teenagers and twenty-nothings.

Amy looks around -- not taking her dark glasses off, and not particularly effected by the oddness of the scene. The Black Man in the Conductor's uniform touches her arm.

BLACK MAN
Down that way...

He gestures toward the opposite side of the car from the place where the Performers are playing. She threads her way through the tangle of people. In the flickering lights she catches glimpses of pale human flesh, pierced faces, pierced nipples -- pierced things that we can't even be sure what they are.

Expressions flash by in the flickering light, some dull, others laughing. She pretty much ignores it all as she makes her way toward the rear of the car.

There, illuminated in flashes, JOEY, a thin ill-shaved guy in his mid-twenties is sprawled on a seat. One of his lower eyelids has a ring in it. It flicks up every time. He blinks.

A young GIRL is kneeling on the subway floor in front of him, obscuring his lower quarters, apparently giving him a blow job.

Joey looks up and spots Amy. He points an accusing finger at her, but his mood is good-natured. Throughout the course of the following conversation, the girl continues her activities, ignored by both Joey and Amy.

JOEY
Bah. Amy fucking Klein. Bah. And I quote, "Joey Gambo, master of this moveable MTA fuck and drug feast, sits on his G-train throne like a terminal King Midas squatting on a solid gold toilet seat." That's the thanks I get. I let you into my life. I open my heart to you. And you make me feel soiled.

CONTINUED:

AMY

You are soiled, Joey. I only owe anybody the truth, ugly though it may be.

JOEY

Uh huh. You know, I hold a grudge, Amy Klein. That's part of what makes me what I am. And I'm holding one against you. You disdained me in public, and one day I will make you suffer -- so long as it doesn't require any effort.

AMY

Yeah, okay. Understood.

Joey casually gestures to the girl between his legs.

JOEY

Can I interest you in some oral sex?

AMY

What? With you or her?

JOEY

Oh, her. I don't go for that sort of thing. It's not me. It's the whole...

AMY

I know, I know. The whole hair in the mouth thing. You don't like it. You told me.

JOEY

You weren't so dismissive when you wanted to vivisect my life in front of the entire universe. You know, you'll miss me when I'm gone. I'm thinking of closing this thing down.

AMY

What? No more wandering club?

JOEY

My life rolls on. The thrill is gone. I'm thinking of becoming an urban survivalist. You know, I have that shaman-guru thing going. Maybe have a harem or something. Five or six wives. Twenty or thirty kids. Lots of high powered fire arms.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOEY (CONT'D)
Only instead of doing it out in shit creek, Idaho, I'll do it right here in the city. Where I can still send out for pizza. Maybe you can do another story on me.

AMY
Yeah, maybe...

JOEY
Hey, don't go all bubbly with enthusiasm or anything.

Amy comes in close to him.

AMY
I need to ask you about something.

JOEY
I'm all ears. Well, all ears and some...
(gestures to the girl)
...dick. Go ahead.

AMY
A girl named Marla Chen. Another girl named Marybeth, with red hair and half her head shaved. Another girl named Sheila. A guy named Carl. A guy with glasses named Winter.

Joey's eyes narrow. Something has clearly clicked. He laughs slightly, starts shaking his head.

JOEY
Ho, oh, man. You mixed up with those mother fuckers now? You know what they're about?

AMY
You know about them.

JOEY
I know maybe... this much...

He holds up his thumb and index finger around a tenth of an inch apart.

JOEY
If it was up to me, I'd know this much...

He squeezes thumb and index finger together. He stares at her, laughs again.

CONTINUED:

AMY
I'm trying to find them.

JOEY
Oh, jeez. Moral quandary time here... What should he do, what should he do? If he tells her -- the relatively cute and still eminently fuckable Amy Klein is thrown into the pit of oblivion -- or anyway is potentially fucked up for life. A waste. If he refrains from telling her... she may yet be saved. And yet... there's that grudge. Angel and devil on the shoulder... hmm. Angel, devil, angel, devil. Oh, fuck it. Entropy's destroying everything anyway. Why shouldn't I do my part?

AMY
Tell me what you know, Joey. About the Deaders.

JOEY
You answer me first. What do you think they do?

AMY
I think they bring the dead...

JOEY
Hold on, hold on. I'm coming.

He puts a hand lightly on the girl's head between his legs. If this is orgasm, it's a very controlled one. Basically, it looks like he's waiting for a sneeze that never comes. Then, apparently, it's done.

JOEY
Okay. I'm done... Bye bye...

The girl gets up and Joey tucks himself away.

GIRL
You taste funny.

JOEY
I am funny.

The girl yawns and wanders off into the confusion of people.

CONTINUED:

JOEY
(to Amy)
Go on.

AMY
I think they bring the dead back to life.

He holds up the thumb and forefinger again, a tenth of an inch apart.

JOEY
That's not even that much. Is that what you think? That these are, like, a bunch of Doctor Frankensteins? That, like, they're zombies, and doing that voodoo shit or something? Casting spells and shit? It's all about minds, and believing and what's real and what's not. You get deep enough into that shit -- I don't know what it is -- but you never come back. I know people who went in. Sometimes you see them, but, it's like -- they're not there. Not really. And I'm not talking "not there" mental. I'm not really there "mental." I'm talking "not there" physical. You understand?

AMY
No.

JOEY
I don't either. When somebody turns into a fucking ghost. And I'm not kidding. For all I know, they could be listening now. Right now. I'm not fucking around. Sometimes, I walk down the street at night, I start wondering who the fuck is real and who isn't.

AMY
Who are they? Where can I find them?

JOEY
I don't know who this Winter guy is. I think he started it. But I don't know where he came from. There's a place they hang out, some of them -- the ones who still hang out with us humans.

CONTINUED:

AMY
Where is it?

Joey hesitates. There's something in him that clearly doesn't want to tell.

AMY
Joey...

JOEY
Angel, devil, angel, devil. Fuck.

AMY
Joey, I know it's dangerous. I don't care.

JOEY
Yeah, you see, that's the problem.
You've got that fucked up
self-destructive thing going.

AMY
It's my business.

JOEY
Angel, devil, angel devil...

AMY
Joey, I've already seen things. I'm already into it.

JOEY
This is making me unhappy...
(pause)
Avenue B and third street. On the northeast corner, two doors down, there's a stairway going down into a closed up building. It's always locked, and they're not always there. I don't know where they are when they're not. And once you get mixed up with them -- it's like that story with the fucking tar baby -- chances are you never get loose, and if you do, you never get clean.

The "Conductor" shouts from somewhere.

BLACK MAN
Coming in!

Hands promptly reach up, covering the windows with newspaper. The Black Man goes to the door.

CONTINUED:

The band finishes its set as the light from the station shines through the newspapers. Joey, looking drab in the steady uneven light, stares at Amy.

JOEY

I can't take responsibility for you.

AMY

I'm not asking you to

JOEY

Amy Klein, listen to Uncle Joey, I'm doing a change of heart thing here -- don't do it. Don't go any deeper. Forget about it. Move away. Change your name. Become somebody different.

AMY

Come on. I can't do that.

JOEY

Okay. Okay. Then, in that case... I don't want you to come back here any more. That way, I can imagine that you did change your mind. You understand?

The one door hisses open. Amy stares at Joey for a second, turns and departs, back into the floorescent lit station.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE SUBWAY PLATFORM

Amy stands on the platform as the door hisses shut. The train pulls away. She checks her watch, then moves to the other side of the platform. She looks down the tunnel. The light from an approaching train is beginning to reflect off the curved wall of the tunnel.

She looks away -- and then freezes.

Something clicks.

She turns back in the direction she just looked. She tugs off her sunglasses. Far down the platform, there's a bench with a lone occupant - - a slumped over figure dressed in a shiny green raincoat. She turns toward it, staring. In the distance, no details of face or form are visible -- just the lumpy figure in the shiny green raincoat. She takes a step toward it. As she does, we...

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

A FLASHBACK

The same figure sitting on the bench in the previous station.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, .THE TRAIN STATION

Amy keeps moving toward the figure. The sound of the approaching train grows louder.

CUT TO:

A FLASHBACK

Amy tugging open the closet in Marla's apartment -- the green raincoat is there.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE TRAIN STATION

Amy is closer now, but still cannot make out any detail in the slumped over figure. She approaches... as does the train. There is no sign of movement.

She comes around, closer to the edge of the platform, to get a more direct view of the green-coated form. As she does, she sees that one hand is draped off the front edge of the bench, hanging limp. The hand is gray.

Amy takes a step forward.

We see that the fingernails are painted green. Then a fly buzzes out from inside the sleeve of the rain coat. The fingers begin to curl.

Amy gasps, takes a step back -- and her heel lands on the edge of the subway platform. She struggles for balance.

Abruptly, a man's voice comes from somewhere.

VOICE

Amy Klein!

Amy stumbles forward, goes down to her knees and turns. Around twenty feet behind her, standing on the edge of the platform, with his back toward the drop, is Winter, wearing a black trenchcoat, cinched at the waist.

He. Looks down the tunnel. Amy does as well. The train is coming into the station. She turns back toward Winter.

CONTINUED:

He stares at her, with no particular expression, then spreads his arms as if about to dive, looking like some kind of sinister black bird --

And as the train comes flying in, he calmly falls backward, directly into its path.

Amy screams.

In an instant she's up, running alongside the braking train. The doors open, but virtually nobody comes out. The front of the train is still far ahead.

AMY

Hey! You hit someone! Someone fell
in front of the train! Hey! Hey!

The doors hiss and start to close. Finally, Amy reaches the front window of the train. She hammers on it. It opens and a middle-aged WOMAN'S face leans out -- the DRIVER.

AMY

Somebody fell... somebody fell in
front of the train.

DRIVER

What?

AMY

Didn't you see him?

DRIVER

Where? Where is he? Where'd he fall?

AMY

Back there, way back...

She looks back in the direction from which she's come. The bench is now empty.

DRIVER

Aw, shit... Aw, shit...

Amy, though, is now looking, this way and that -- at the confused faces of people peeking out through the doors of the train. There is no sign of a green plastic raincoat.

CUT TO:

EXT., NIGHT, THE STATION

Some time later. The train is still there, doors open. There are TRANSIT COPS on the station, disgruntled passengers hanging out on the platform... TRACK WORKERS are poking around underneath it.

Amy is leaning against one of the metal pillars, her sunglasses back in place, staring at the empty bench -- at the place where the mysterious figure was sitting. She's looking grim.

Behind her, a Track Worker approaches the DRIVER, who's standing with a pair of Transit Cops. He's shaking his head, shrugging. The Driver curses, heads back toward the first car. One of the COPS approaches Amy.

COP
Miss, um, Klein?

AMY
Yeah?

COP
Well, the guys have looked.

AMY
And there's nothing there?

COP
You don't seem terribly surprised.

AMY
Hmm?

There's a sudden hiss. Amy turns as the train doors close.

COP
I mean, you don't seem terribly surprised that there isn't somebody under the train.

AMY
I don't know what to say. I saw him...

COP
Yeah. That's the thing. Can you tell me again, just what it is that you saw?

AMY
Um, I was standing on the platform...

CONTINUED:

The train starts to move out of the station. Amy looks toward it.

The train is moving on one of the center tracks, so that you can look through the windows of the cars and see through them to the platform on the far side.

AMY

...and, um. I saw this man standing on the edge of the platform, facing away from it.

But now Amy is seeing something -- through the windows of the moving train. On the platform on the far side, there are a pair of figures standing -- one dressed in a green plastic rain coat -- the other, in a black trenchcoat. Amy jumps, looks more closely.

COP

Did he say anyth...

AMY

It's them!

In an instant, Amy is tearing down the platform, heading for the stairs that connect to the platform on the other side.

COP

Hey...

Amy is watching, staring through the moving train windows. The figures are still there. Winter is staring at her -- the face of the other figure is hidden beneath the hood of the rain jacket.

COP

Hey, stop! Marty! Marty!

In the next instant, the Cop is giving chase, and another Cop, clearly, the "Marty" called by the first Cop, further down the station, is rushing in to head Amy off.

AMY

It's them! Over there, over there!

In the next instant, Marty tackles Amy and she goes down on her face. Her little black sunglasses go flying off. Even with the rather large Cop on top of her, she's still struggling.

CONTINUED:

AMY
God damn it, get off of me! Get the
fuck off of me... Get...

She keeps struggling as the first Cop, and the others on the station, converge on her. She looks toward the far platform.

The two figures are still there, visible through the windows of the departing train. Then, the last car of the train passes, leaving an unencumbered view of the far side.

The platform is empty. No sign of Winter. No sign of anybody in a green plastic raincoat.

Amy stops struggling, as the Cops tug her arms back, handcuffing her. She hardly notices, but keep staring at the empty platform across the tracks. She glances up at the Cops.

AMY
Where the Hell are my sunglasses?

A panting Marty looks down at her.

MARTY
It's fucking night, you bint.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, A POLICE STATION

Simultaneously dingy and glary, it's full of COPS and UNHAPPY PEOPLE. Amy sits slouched in a chair off against a wall somewhere, looking particularly pale -- but she has managed to find her sunglasses. She puffs aimlessly on a cigarette. She looks about, without much interest -- a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN crying at a desk, a young BLACK KID holding a bloody rag to a cut on his neck -- WHORES, JUNKIES, VICTIMS -- the usual users of Police Services, waiting to be processed through.

A WOMAN COP passes in front of her.

WOMAN COP
You can't smoke in here.

Amy looks up at her, as if tempted to answer back, but instead she takes the cigarette from her mouth and drops it on the floor. The Woman Cop moves off. Amy watches her as she departs.

CONTINUED:

A shadow falls on Amy. She hears a voice.

BUD
(off screen)
Is this where they keep the cheaper
whores?

Amy glances up at him, without expression. He looks down at her.

BUD
Christ, you're lucky to have a boss
like me. Once again, I have saved your
small but relatively shapely behind.

AMY
What were they going to charge me
with, anyway?

BUD
Charge you? They were thinking of
shipping you to Bellevue -- you know,
for... observation. But I managed to
convince them that you were merely
irresponsible. You got your stuff?

AMY
Yeah.

BUD
Come on.

Slowly, feeling her bruises, Amy gets up.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, BUD'S CAR

They drive in silence for a minute.

AMY
Why'd you give me this story?

BUD
Who else would have taken it? Either
they're going to think like Larry, or
they're going to be too afraid of it.
But Amy Klein... Tell me, Amy. Tell
me it's real.

AMY
It's real -- or I'm crazy. I've not
sure which.

CONTINUED:

. BUD
Well, either way, it's a good story.

AMY
I've got leads. I'll know in the end.

BUD
You know, Ame, for the average person, hunger for knowledge is like hunger... for food. We want to know just enough to take the edge off our appetite. Then we're satisfied, and we stop. But you... you're like a glutton. You can't help over-eating.

AMY
I don't see you complaining.

BUD
But you see, that's the point. That's why I need you. Because all that stuff I don't eat... I still want. So I send you in to do the eating for me, and so I get to experience it, like, by proxy, but without actually suffering and mental indigestion.

AMY
That's for me...

BUD
Nobody's forcing anything down your throat. Correct?

AMY
No.

BUD
You see, Ame, you never grew up with all this Catholic god and guilt stuff. It doesn't mean anything to you. I worry about god and heaven and hell. Not during the day, you understand, but around three in the morning, it keeps me up. I want to know what's coming. What's up in heaven and down in hell, or even if there's nothing. It's useful, when you're making plans.

He turns the car toward the curb, puts on the brake.

CONTINUED:

BUD
So go find out. And then we'll tell
the world.

AMY
You know, Bud, there's something
vaguely demonic about you.

BUD
Yeah, so they say. But, did you know,
the word "demon" comes from the Greek
word for "knowledge." As in
"demonstrate."

AMY
No, I didn't know that.

BUD
Fucking modern education.

The car rolls to a stop.

BUD
Door to door service. Not too many
editors do this shit. Now, Amy, go lie
down in your coffin until the hours of
daylight have passed, as is your wont -
- then go get me my story.

AMY
You know, Larry called me last night.
He was worried about me.

BUD
He's a sweet guy. He wants to save
people. Me? I just take 'em as they
come. And use them as they pass by.

Amy gets out of the car, heads up the steps. She turns,
watches as Bud's car moves away, then she hurries back
down the steps, to the sidewalk below.

CUT TO:

EXT., DAY, AVENUE B AND THIRD STREET

A ragged, run-down place, looking bleak and ugly in the
bright light of day. We see the street sign, identifying
the place -- Avenue B and 3rd Street. Amy is there,
looking more than a little ragged and run-down herself.

CONTINUED:

She crosses the street, heading east, on the uptown side. She passes one side door -- and then comes to a building that's been sealed up -- doors and windows cemented shut with cinderblocks.

Beyond a narrow railing is a stairway, pressed up sideways against the building, running down to a basement entrance. Amy looks down the stairway to it's narrow bottom. Clearly, a couple year's worth of passers-by having been using the space as a convenient garbage can -- the stairs and the bottom are littered with trash. A filthy mattress lies at the very bottom.

Amy heads down.

EXT., DAY, THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

At the bottom of the stairs, there's a wooden door. A hole's been punched through it and a heavy padlocked chain has been threaded through it and through a heavy hasp that's been bolted to the door frame. Some official government notice of some kind has been tacked to the door -- long rendered unreadable by the effects of time.

Amy inspects the padlock. It's heavy and uncompromising. She tugs on the door and it opens to the limits of the chain -- but that's only a few inches. Amy peers into the darkness beyond, but can't see a thing.

She stares at the door -- an insolubly solid puzzle. She looks down at the mattress that she's standing on, steps to the side and shoves it up, revealing the concrete floor beneath.

There are scratch marks on the ground, like a wide fan, marking the path that the door sweeps when it opens outward. And the marks are recent.

Then, as if the light breaks, she reaches out, grabs the hasp and pulls. The bolts holding the hasp to the wall are loose. They slide out with it. She tugs the whole thing free and pulls the door open.

There is a narrow corridor beyond, all in gloom.

Amy enters.

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, THE CORRIDOR

Amy steps in, her way illuminated only by the indefinite light that leaks in from the street.

CONTINUED:

She slips off her sunglasses and moves down the corridor. There's an archway, presumably leading into the rest of the basement, on one side, but it's blocked by a great heap of rubble -- the detritus of some renovation that was never finished.

Amy ponders the chances of getting through it, and decides to check out the rest of the hallway. It doesn't take long.

There is only a single door left -- at the far end of the hallway. It hangs half-open, but we cannot see what's inside. She approaches it, reaches out and pushes the door open. It's a bathroom.

INT., DAY, THE BATHROOM

This is one of those nasty little makeshift places built into an available corner -- basically a toilet and a sink so close that there's hardly room to move. A mop and some other supplies, long forgotten, long decayed, are propped up in a corner.

Amy steps in, looks down the toilet. Nothing left but some nasty stains -- the water long dried up. Her face brushes against something hanging in the air. She pulls back. It's a pull string hanging from a naked light bulb.

She tugs on it. Nothing. No power here.

She stands in the dark, claustrophobic place, puzzled. She looks back down the hall. It seems as if she's come to another dead end. Then she stares at the bathroom door. Open now, it blocks a piece of the bathroom wall -- the only place she hasn't looked.

Amy steps back, virtually straddling the toilet, and pushes the door closed. As she does, of course, what little light there is, vanishes completely. If there's something behind the door, she can't see it, or anything else.

Abruptly, there's a sharp click as she lights her lighter, and the wavy light illuminates the tiny bathroom -- and the previously unseen space behind the door.

The walls do not meet there. There is a narrow gap, leading to a passage, apparently "between" the walls, perhaps ten inches wide.

Hesitating only a moment, Amy turns sideways and slides herself into the claustrophobic slot.

CONTINUED:

She holds the lighter up ahead of her, but its dim flickery light does not reach to the end of the passage. She moves forward cautiously -- the floor is littered with dried chunks of plaster, rotting insulation -- seventy-five years of stuff crumbled from the insides of the walls.

She reaches a vertical pipe up against one side of the wall - - only a few inches thick, but it reduces the available room to under eight inches. She hesitates. Meanwhile, the lighter in her hand is getting hot. She lets it click off. In some dim half-light we can see her slipping a handkerchief carefully around it, for insulation.

She flicks the flint. The lighter lights.

And, abruptly, around a million roaches, which had returned from their hiding places in the absence of the light, go skittering every which way.

Amy lets out a squeak as the roaches vanish in an instant.

AMY
Christ...

She looks at the pipe again, and then starts to squeeze past it. It's a tight fit. She has to squirm to get through.

AMY
...Headquarters of the fucking Kate Moss cult...

She pops free and comes out the other side. She holds up the lighter. Still the light cannot reach to the end of the passage. Steeling herself, she moves on. But as she does, the space seems to get progressively narrower and narrower.

From ten inches to nine, to eight, until both sides of her body are scraping against the walls. She holds the Lighter out. The wall continues to narrow.

At the end of her outstretched arm, the walls are only around five inches apart.

AMY
Shit...

CONTINUED:

Clearly, she's reached the end of the line. Annoyed, she starts to back out -- then realizes that the light on the far side of her body renders the area into which she's now moving essentially black as midnight.

She brings the hand holding the lighter close in to her body, but she can't bring her hands together in front of her -- the space is too narrow. Finally, she reaches her hand up, over her head, passing the lighter from one hand to the other directly over her head.

As she does, the lighter almost slips. She grabs for it, but it goes out. Again she is lost in virtual darkness.

She strikes the flint. The light returns -- now illuminating the other side of her body -- the way from which she's come. Once again, the roaches go skittering away.

She starts moving -- but something is seriously wrong. The way back isn't widening. It's narrowing. She moves forward, tries to squeeze through. She can't move any further.

She holds up the lighter. The walls on this side now also continue to narrow. The space revealed by the light is barely as wide as her fist, and there is only darkness beyond.

AMY
What the fuck...

Amy stands, simply unable to comprehend this. She looks back... could she have somehow gotten turned around? Confused about the direction?

She starts back the way she came... but now she can barely move a few feet before the wall becomes too narrow to pass. She pushes, trying to shove through the narrow gap. But she cannot move.

She tries pulling back, but now she can't move that way either in some impossible fashion, the walls have literally closed in, until she is now literally pinned between them.

Gasping, Amy pushes against the wall she's facing.

AMY
What the hell is this... Christ...

CONTINUED:

Of course the wall doesn't budge. It's solid as a wall. Amy starts struggling, panic growing on her, trying to climb, to crouch, to tug free in some direction, but she is absolutely pinned.

She is struggling to breathe against the pressing walls.

AMY

Stop this! Stop this fucking thing!

She's flailing her arms now, frantic. The light goes out and once again she's plunged into virtual darkness. One of her hands flies back and hits the wall behind her.

It clunks, hollow, as if she's hit a hollow-core door. Breathing fast, she strikes it again, hearing the hollow sound.

She reaches back with her empty hand, feeling at the wall... her hand reaches something like the sharply defined edge of a sliding door. She tugs at it... it doesn't move.

Gasping, she slides her hand across the expanse of smooth wood... until her fingers brush against a metal slot. She slides her fingers into it and pulls awkwardly.

It slides over, into the wall, and she jams herself over and swings around, now facing into a great empty space.

She stands in silence, breathing fast. She can't see a thing. After a moment, with a trembling hand, she lifts the lighter and flicks it.

The light comes on.

She is standing in a familiar room -- the room on the video tape, the room where Sheila blew her brains out.

And it's not empty.

In fact, its full of PEOPLE -- the same people who we saw in the tape. They have been sitting in the dark, and the light from the lighter now illuminates them, shines in their eyes.

They are all staring at Amy.

Clearly, they have been staring at her, in the dark. She gasps, but holds her ground. Nobody says anything or approaches. She looks to one side.

CONTINUED:

Carl is there, much as he was in the video tape -- or is he? There's something about his face that isn't quite right. Amy stares.

He blinks. And then it is clear. His eyes are too large. Not hugely, but perhaps twenty-five percent larger than they were -- and certainly larger than they should be.

She turns the other way. A girl in the corner who was apparently looking away is now turning back toward her. As she does, it is clear that something strange is happening. It almost seems as if Amy is witnessing the very tail end of some transformation back to human... that the girl's face WAS something else, something stretched out and doughy. But as the girl turns full around, her features seem to knit together and we recognize her as Marybeth.

She stares at Amy.

Amy is about to speak... and then suddenly realizes that there's somebody behind her. It's a big BLACK KID, around nineteen. He puts a hand on her shoulder. Amy gasps, but it isn't a threatening gesture.

BLACK KID
Go on and see Winter. He's through
there.

Amy tries to speak, but her throat is too dry. She nods to the Black Kid and heads for the door he pointed to.

The others move away as she passes, but keep close, distinctly inside her "personal space." She finds herself coming close to a rather cute BLONDE GIRL. At any rate, she'd be cute if her smile wasn't duplicated by a bloodless slash that bisects her throat like a hideous toothless second mouth. She walks on past and goes to the door. She hesitates, about to knock, then changes her mind and simply opens the door.

INT., DAY, WINTER'S ROOM

This is a small, dark space, light coming mostly from a rather conventional-looking standing lamp. Winter is there, sitting in a padded chair in front of a coffee table, reading a book. Amy steps inside. Winter doesn't react to her presence. Abruptly, the door closes behind her. She hesitates and walks forward.

AMY
Winter?

CONTINUED:

He glances up at her but doesn't speak. Amy pauses, unsure, then moves forward and takes a seat opposite him.

AMY

That's one hell of a way in. Makes me thing that you don't...

WINTER

(cutting her off)

People come in here the way they want. If it was hard, that was the way you wanted it. A little mystery. A little danger. A little magical "rite of passage" thrown in. That's what you expected. That's what you found.

Amy leans forward.

AMY

I know about you, Winter.

WINTER

Do you?

AMY

I want to join you.

WINTER

Really? So Amy Klein wants to join us. Should we be honored? Or do you think you can just go along with us for a little ride and then get off when it suits you, like with your friends on the train? You're not going to find it so easy to get off of this train.

AMY

So I shouldn't get on?

WINTER

You're already on it.

AMY

Tell me. Is it real?

WINTER

No.

AMY

All of this, the tape, what happened in Marla's apartment, what you did, falling in front of the train? All tricks. Hypnosis?

CONTINUED:

WINTER

No. Not tricks. Not hypnosis. Just
not real.

AMY

I don't understand.

WINTER

I can't help you. I'm not what you
think. Not a guru. Not a shaman.
Not the "fearless leader." I only
know one thing, and that thing, I
can't teach you.

AMY

Who can?

WINTER

Listen to me, Amy Klein. None of
what I'm going to tell you is real.
But it may help you if you imagine
that it is.

AMY

Okay.

WINTER

There are things that are true in the
light of day. There are other things
that are no less true, that live in
the shadows. When you shine a light
on them, they disappear. They stop
being true. That's because it is the
uncertainty of the dark that makes
them possible. If the dark is deep
enough... anything might be happening
in it. Anything at all.

AMY

Why did Marla commit suicide?

WINTER

Marla can't commit suicide. All she
can do is stop believing that she's
alive. And she can't even do that.
The more she doubts, the... the deader
she becomes. But she can't really
die, because she's not really alive.
She's not really anything at all.

CONTINUED:

AMY
Not real, not real. Like what Sheila said on the tape. That she wasn't real.

WINTER
That's right.

AMY
What the hell does that mean?

WINTER
That's the thing that I can't teach you.

AMY
That's bull. What I saw in that apartment was real. What I smelled was real. Real like this table. Real like, like this hand...

She raps on the table. Winter leans forward and grabs her by the wrist. Amy hisses -- the grip is hard.

WINTER
Please don't raise your voice to me.
I don't like being yelled at.

AMY
I'm sorry.

Winter, still holding Amy's hand by the wrist, reaches forward with his other hand and uncurls Amy's fingers.

WINTER
You say this is real?

He begins to move his fingers over her hand, enumerating the various parts.

WINTER
Epidermis. The dorsal faschia. Palmar fashia. Here's the adductor pollicis. The Opponens Pollicis. Median nerve runs here. Ulnar nerve through here. Proximal palmar vessels. Vincula longa and breva. Transverse carpal ligament across here...

The process is taking on an oddly seductive quality.

CONTINUED:

WINTER

The median nerve underneath it. The bones. First Distal Falange here, Second middle Falange, Third Proximal Falange. Down here, the fourth metacarpal. Down here, the carpal bones... And do you think that all those parts are what makes a hand? I'll show you what makes a hand... here...

He begins to move his fingers through the spaces in between her fingers.

WINTER

These spaces. That what makes a hand. You get it by taking things away. You, Amy Klein, are the infinitesimal speck that's left when we take subtract the infinet possibilities that the space you occupy might might have held.

(refering to her hand)

This thing here isn't a presence. It's an absence. It's a place where things are missing. In all essential qualities, it is less than nothing. In all essential qualities, you are less than nothing. Not solid, not here, not real.

Amy tries to disengage her hand, but he isn't letting go.

AMY

And what about you?

WINTER

Not real. Not me, not this hand, not this table. The world has decided that tables are to be a certain thing, and because it has... they are. But if the dark is deep enough, the hand, the table, the flesh... they can all come free.

She tries to pull even harder, but he holds her with no effort at all.

WINTER

Listen to me, Amy Klein. You're on the train whether you want, to be or not. And I can't be your guide. You've chosen your guide -- the one who first took you into the night.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

WINTER (CONT'D)

She's the only one who can show you the way, who can show you what you have to do. But that's a problem, as I said. Because she's no longer sure herself... and she may already be beyond saving. And if she's lost... you're lost.

AMY

Like Bobby.

WINTER

That's right. Like Bobby, whom you know nothing about, and like a lot of others. Nobody ever said enlightenment was easy. They're still around, but it's hard to find them, because even they can't decide where they, or even what they are. Maybe that's how you'll end up, hanging forever by a bootlace in a toilet, wanting to be dead, but not quite able to pull it off.

AMY

Let go of my hand.

He doesn't move. She yanks again, hard, but he still won't release her. Finally she hauls off and slaps him across the face. This also doesn't seem to phase him.

WINTER

Don't think for a second, Amy Klein, that you are not in danger. You are in more danger than you ever imagined possible. To be beaten, or tortured, or raped, or killed... You think this table is solid?

Be slaps her hand down on the table. She winces.

WINTER

Do you?

She doesn't answer. He slaps her hand down on the table again.

WINTER

Do you?

AMY

Yes.

WINTER

Are you afraid, Amy Klein?

CONTINUED:

AMY

Yes.

WINTER

Good, because fear is the place we go
to learn.

He lifts her hand up and folds it, so that her index and middle finger are sticking straight out, and the other fingers are folded back in a fist. He casually turns her hand so that the two fingers are pointed down at the table.

WINTER

Close your eyes.

AMY

Why?

WINTER

Close your eyes.

Amy hesitates, then closes them. Winter begins to move her hand down.

WINTER

I'm moving your hand down. You're going to feel something wet. There. Do you feel it?

We don't see what Amy's hand is touching, but we hear a kind of wet, sticky sound.

AMY

Yes.

WINTER

What does it feel like?

AMY

I don't know. Like... a mouth. It feels like something sucking on my fingers...

WINTER

Open your eyes.

Amy opens her eyes. Winter takes his hand away, revealing the table beneath. Amy gasps in horror. The face of a baby has somehow grown out of the table, and its tiny mouth is now sucking on her fingers. She pulls away, trying to get her fingers free.

CONTINUED:

AMY
Christ!

Winter abruptly leans forward and shoves the table over. Amy falls to the floor and the table lands on its side. As it does, it starts to undergo a bizarre transformation: The legs of the table start curling around, becoming soft, whitish pink. Tiny fingers blossom from one set of table legs, tiny baby feet from the other. The whole thing is shrinking, changing shape. And the baby's face is changing too... literally growing older. Amy cries out as she finds her fingers clenched between baby teeth. She shoves her hand against the face, trying to pull free, to drag herself away. The table continues its weird transformation, shrinking, thickening. The arms and legs grow closer to their natural thickness. The whole thing is also clearly "aging" at a marked rate. The face now has a crown of black hair and appears to be around twelve years old.

AMY
Make her let go of me!

WINTER
Learn a lesson, Amy Klein. There are no games played here.

AMY
I believe you...

WINTER
Not yet.

Amy stares at the weird twisting object in front of her. The arms and legs are approaching human form, the lower side of the table thickening into a woman's hips, the bare legs swelling out from them. The V of pubic hair blossoms out, and breasts form as the body of the table collapses into the form of a woman's torso, lying lengthwise on the floor, on its side. Finally, the transformation is complete... and Amy finds her fingers clamped tight in the mouth of Sheila -- the girl whom she saw die and be reborn on the tape. Sheila, stark naked and clearly in some feral state, abruptly springs up and throws herself on top of Amy -- still clutching her fingers in her teeth.

WINTER
Close your eyes, Amy Klein.

CONTINUED:

AMY
Get her off of me!
(to Sheila)
Get off of me.

WINTER
Close your eyes.

AMY
Get the fuck off!

Amy gasps as Sheila bites down hard. Finally, Amy takes a deep breath, and then thrusts her thumb into one of Sheila's eyes. It slides right in -- but not into flesh and eye. Instead it seems to sink into the stuff the girl's face, as if the, face were made of clay.

WINTER
You can't hurt her. She's one of us.

Abruptly, Winter springs forward, literally leaping, tiger-like, across the intervening distance. Lie comes slamming down on top of the two, and as he comes down, for an instant, it seems as if he's landing not on his hands but on the front limbs of a white tiger, his face drawn back, cat-like. In an instant, he leans forward and all traces of the beast vanish.

WINTER
Close your eyes!

But Amy is in the midst of a full-fledged panic and isn't about to do anything. Winter turns, looking back toward the light stand by his chair. He swipes his hand back behind him, as if to knock the thing over, even though it's a good ten feet away from him.

It doesn't fall over. Rather, the upper portion of the lamp quite simply vanishes, as if literally erased by the sweep of his hand.

The room plunges into almost complete darkness. Winter reaches back and tears Sheila off, flinging her away.

With a cat-like squeal, she literally goes flying off into the darkness -- dwindling into a dark, cluttered, distance, despite the wall that should have stopped her.

Winter turns toward Amy, who's still struggling.

WINTER
Close your eyes!

CONTINUED:

AMY
No... no!

Winter reaches down and clamps his hand across her eyes, then picks her up and flings her.

CUT TO:

SOMEPLACE ELSE, INT., NIGHT

Abruptly, she hits a vertical plain of safety glass. It bursts into a thousand tiny fragments and she goes crashing back, through it....

Her head hits hard against a tile wall and she goes sliding down, in the dark, her hand scrambling for something to hold onto.

Her reaching hand grabs some metal handle. She pulls... and abruptly, water begins to cascade down onto her face.

She turns herself sideways and rolls over, gasping. She's in a bathtub... in fact she's just been thrown through the safety-glass door. She scrambles over the bottom edge of the sliding glass door, scraping herself across the tiny pegs of glass that still line the border of the frame.

She pulls herself up, her hand feeling for a light switch... Finally, she finds it, flips the switch.

She's in a bathroom -- in fact, she's in her bathroom, slumped over against the sink. Soaking wet, scratched, shaking, gasping, she stares at herself in the mirror.

There's a tiny square of glass stuck into her shoulder. She tugs it loose. It clinks as she drops it into the sink.

AMY
It's not real... it's not real...

She lifts her hand to wipe the wet hair from her face... then pauses. She stares at her fingers. No sign of a bite mark. Drained, she turns toward the bathtub. She reaches through the shattered door and turns off the shower.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, AMY'S APARTMENT

She's scrunched down in her chair, the little telephone headset on her head. She's punching in a number.

CONTINUED:

She hits "dial." We can hear the phone ringing on the other side for a long time. Finally, somebody answers. We hear a WOMAN's voice, sleep-blurry.

WOMAN
(off screen)
Yeah, hello?

AMY
Is Larry there?

WOMAN
(off screen)
Hmm? Oh, hold on...

There's a sound of motion, some voices, the words of which we cannot understand. Then a clunk as the receiver on the other end is picked up again. Larry's voice, blurry with sleep, comes on the line.

LARRY
(off screen)
Yeah, hello?

AMY
Larry...

LARRY
(off screen)
Amy, you okay?

AMY
Larry, I'm going to quit the story.
Can you tell Bud?

LARRY
(off screen - pause)
Yeah, sure. Did you, um, did anything happen...

AMY
I... I just don't know. I'm kind of falling apart here a little bit. I just don't know.

LARRY
(off screen)
Where are you?. You want me to come over?

Amy feels something, reaches a hand up to the pocket of her jacket. She reaches inside.

CONTINUED:

AMY
No...

She tugs out her sun glasses. They've been shattered.

AMY
I'm just a little... fucked in the head. I'm going to get some sleep.

LARRY
(off screen)
Yeah, okay. That's a good idea.
I'll see you tomorrow.

AMY
Yeah. Maybe not tomorrow.

LARRY
(off screen)
Okay.

Amy's attention is focused on the broken sunglasses. Suddenly, she remembers. That she's on the phone.

AMY
Hey, Larry, did you know that the word "demon" comes from the Greek word for knowledge.

LARRY
(off screen)
Um, yeah. Yeah, I guess I did know that.

AMY
Well, I wish somebody had fucking told me about it.

LARRY
(off screen)
Right. Look, Amy, just take it slow.
Okay?

AMY
Right. Right. Okay. Bye...

She hangs up... then tosses the remnants of the broken sunglasses into a wastebasket. She tugs the headset off.

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

NIGHT, AMY'S APARTMENT

The room is dark, drained of all color the way things appear when we see in them in almost total darkness. Amy's lying in bed -- actually just a mattress on the floor -- on her stomach. The sheet has crumpled off of her. She's dressed only in her panties.

Her pale, naked skin is visible in the dim monochromatic light, marked with scratches and bruises.

We are MOVING toward her, seeing her as if from the P.O.V. of someone approaching her, coming down toward the pale vulnerable expanse of her naked back.

We come in CLOSE on Amy's head and shoulders. Abruptly, a fly buzzes down, brushes her face. She doesn't wake.

Abruptly, there's the sound of a wettish "thud" and Amy seems to bounce a little. Her eyes open, but she isn't alarmed. Still lying on her back, she flicks her eyes this way and that, but, seeing nothing, she closes them again.

A few seconds later, we see some black liquid trickle across her shoulder, coming from the unseen center of her back. It follows a course down her backbone, then swerves and finds a path along the inner edge of one of her shoulder blades, finally trickling down her neck. It continues to flow, staining the pillow by her face.

She stirs slightly, clearly feeling the trickle. She puts her hand to her shoulder, smearing the black liquid. Still half-asleep, she tries to "brush" it off... but it continues to flow. Finally, her eyes open. She sits up painfully and looks at her hands -- stained with this sticky black stuff. She stares at it, not quite awake enough to figure it out.

She reaches over her shoulder, pulls her hand back, stained with the black stuff. She looks down at her pillow, also stained. Confused, she rises, painfully awkward, and heads toward the bathroom. We can see that her feet leave blackish wet footprints across the floor as she moves toward the bathroom.

She moves in, stares in the mirror -- sees the side of her face and her shoulder, smeared with black. She fumbles for the light, flips it on.

In the sudden, shocking glare of returning light, COLOR abruptly re-enters the world...

CONTINUED:

And the black of the liquid that's stained Amy's face and hands, that track the floor of the white-tiled bathroom, that smear the wall where she flipped on the light switch turns instantly to its true color --

The color of blood.

Amy gasps at the sight -- she looks like she's just crawled out of a slaughterhouse. She reaches behind her, feeling her back, trying to find the source of the blood that seems to be pouring out of her, dripping to the floor, pouring down the small of her back, staining the back of her panties a vivid, ghastly red.

In a sudden impulse she turns on the water in the sink full blast, washes away the blood from her hands, scooping handfuls onto her face and the front of her body. The water drips to the floor, commingling with the blood, turning it a nasty pink.

She reaches behind her back, feeling again -- her hand comes back as vividly red as before. Again she washes them. She stops dead, seeing something in the mirror.

Something is glinting between her breasts. She touches her finger to it. It looks like a tiny bit of gleaming metal, poking out from inside of her, almost like a tiny steel splinter. It appears to have just barely broken through the skin from "inside" -- barely a drop of blood.

She stands staring down at it, breathing fast. What the hell is it?

Then, slowly, almost against her will, she turns her back to the mirror and looks over her shoulder. She sees -- and we see for the first time -- the center of her back where her questing hands couldn't reach.

There is a knife there, literally thrust through the middle of her back. The gleaming splinter between her breasts is the tip of the knife that has literally transfixed her -- and clearly transfixed the center of her chest -- her heart.

She strains her hands back, trying to reach this impossible thing, but her grasping fingers can't touch it. She turns back toward the mirror, staring into her own eyes.

AMY
It's not real... it's not real.

CONTINUED:

She clenches her eyes... opens them. Her fingers feel desperately for the metal tip between her breasts. It's still there.

AMY

Wake up... wake-up... wake up...

She starts slapping her hands against the side of her face -- not gently, hard slaps. But she isn't "waking up." She grabs her hair, pulls hard. Nothing. She's still there. The knife is still stuck, impossibly in her back.

She sits on the closed seat of the toilet... not knowing what to do. She reaches again for the knife, but she can't touch it. She buries her face in her bloody hands.

AMY

I'm dreaming, I'm fucking dreaming...
I'm fucking dreaming.

She stands, turns this way and that, not knowing what to do. She looks around her bathroom, searching for something. She tugs open the medicine cabinet, searches beneath the sink, tugging the various stuff out. Whatever it is that she's looking for, she can't find it.

She goes tearing out of the bathroom, scrambles across the dim landscape of her apartment, into the narrow kitchen.

She yanks open the silverware drawer and starts digging through it. Not finding what she wants, she goes to another drawer, full of junk, with various unused serving pieces mined in.

Finally, she comes up with what she's searching for -- a foot-long skewer -- a two-tined metal thing -- the kind of thing that might be used for holding a turkey while being carved.

She races back to the bathroom, turns toward the mirror and reaches back with the skewer. Clearly, we understand now what she wanted the skewer for -- to lever the knife out of the middle of her back.

Using the reverse-image in the mirror as a guide she reaches down, the skewer drifting this way and that as she tries to get it into position. She slips the two tines over the narrow handle of the knife... tugs back. The skewer slides loose. The knife stays where it is. Amy gasps and again struggles, trembling hand, to catch the knife handle on the tines of the skewer. She finally slips it back into position.

CONTINUED:

She twists the skewer, hoping that torque will hold it in place on the slick handle. With a groan she pulls back... and the knife begins to move.

We can see the tiny silver tip between her breasts vanish from view, drawn back inside her body. Slowly, making a wet, sticky sound, the long thin knife begins to slide out.

With an couple inches of the blade now exposed, she slides the skewer down, locks it against the blade, behind the handle -- a better lever. With a gasp she heaves out... and the knife goes flying. It bounces on the floor, splattering blood. With shaking hands, Amy bends over and picks it up. She stands, staring at it. It's some kind of nasty stiletto. Amy stands, staring at it.

A FLASHBACK

Amy searching Marla's drawers, tugging one open -- pressing the stud on a stiletto. On this stiletto.

INT., NIGHT, AMY'S APARTMENT

She looks down toward the floor. She is literally standing in a pool of her own blood. She gasps, turns back toward the mirror.

Blood is pouring from the wound. Gasping, almost crying, Amy stumbles back into the main room. With shaky hands, she moves to open the lid on her lap top, then realizes that she's still holding the stiletto in her hand. She drops it on the table, tugs the headset over her head. Her bloody fingers press in the numbers -- 9-1-1.

She waits, standing in the middle of her dark apartment, shaking, bloody. She can hear the phone ring and ring.

Finally, there's a click as the line picks up. But there's no voice on the other end.

AMY
Hello, hello? Hello? Is there anyb...

Then she stops dead. There is somebody there, and making a sound we've heard before. The nasty gurgling that Amy heard when she tried calling Marla's place.

She stands, listening, trembling. And then, suddenly, the sound of the gurgling changes.

Suddenly, it no longer is distorted by the phone line. It seems to be close -- real.

CONTINUED:

Amy turns slowly around -- toward the open door of her bathroom.

She looks. Only now, it isn't her bathroom on the far side of the door. It's Marla's bathroom. And Marla is there, hanging as before... but not quite as before, because her eyes are staring at Amy. Her lips move and the ghastly noise comes out.

Then Marla raises her hand toward Amy and gestures -- a gesture for her to come. In a sudden impulse, Amy lifts her laptop and flings it toward the image in the bathroom. It arcs through the air and abruptly strikes something hard.

The vision of Marla abruptly shatters and vanishes. Amy's bathroom abruptly reappears. The lap top has hit the mirror in the open medicine cabinet door, smashing it. The cabinet door flies back to the wall and rebounds, floating back into view.

We see Amy reflected in the shards as she approaches. She stares into the shattered mirror and realizes suddenly that more than her image is being reflected. Some of the bits of glass are reflecting another form -- Marla's .

AMY

What do you want? What the hell do
you want?

And then, in the shards, she can see the image of Marla's dead swollen fingers -- gesturing. Gesturing for her to come.

Amy stands, frozen for a minute, her blood dripping on the floor, her breath coming in ragged gasps. Then she turns and moves.

A MOMENT LATER

We see her rolling a towel up into a tight cylinder.

Hands trembling, she lays it across a wide strip of duct tape that she's unwound from a roll and laid down on the table, sticky side up. She presses the towel down so that it sticks, then picks up the tape, with towel attached. She slides the towel down the center of her back until it covers the wound, and then tugs the tape tight across her chest, compressing the towel against the wound. She takes the tape and awkwardly loops it around the towel and herself a couple more times, finally biting through the tape and tossing the roll away.

CONTINUED:

She yanks yesterday's clothes up, discards the skirt in favor of a pair of black jeans. She tugs them up over her bloody legs, pulls a black shirt on over her top, thrusts her bloody feet into a pair of heavy shoes and finally tugs on a black leather jacket. She goes to the mirror, turns, trying to see how her profile looks with the towel stuffed in her back -- but in the shattered glass she can't really tell.

She turns, about to leave... then realizes that her hands are red with her own blood. She hurries to the sink, rinses them off, and rinses the blood off of her face and neck, then grabs her bag and heads for the door.

Once again she stops. She goes back, grabs the stiletto, presses the stud and lets the blade slide back down, and stuffs it into the pocket of her jacket. She heads out the door.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE TRAIN

Amy is huddled in a corner seat, looking miserable, scared, and slightly guilty. She looks down the length of the subway car.

There are a few scattered riders -- a group of BLACK KIDS at the far end of the train, a uniformed GUARD either on his way to work or on his way home. A "post-punk" COUPLE looking dull and heroin-pale. None of them look at her.

Amy hugs herself across the chest, looking as if she's about to cry. Finally, she looks up as the train pulls into a station.

The doors open and an OLD MAN comes through the door as Amy rises from her seat and heads out. The Old Man looks toward the seat recently vacated by Amy.

OLD MAN

Hey...

Amy turns and looks back. The seat and the floor beneath it is stained with blood. Amy hesitates for only a second, then turns and hurries out through the subway door just before it closes.

CUT TO:

EXT., NIGHT, THE STREET

Amy is leaving bloody footprints as she walks, but there is nobody on the street now to notice.

EXT., NIGHT, THE FRONT OF MARLA'S BUILDING

Amy climbs the stairs,, checks the buzzers. There's Marla's name. It hasn't been removed. She lifts her finger to press the button. Before she touches it, a prolonged buzz sounds. She turns toward the door and shoves it open.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE HALLWAY OF MARLA'S APARTMENT

We see Amy moving up the stairs, turning the corner and heading down toward Marla's apartment. The lock on the door is still broken. Yellow police tape has been taped across it. She tears the tape away, shoves the door open and enters.

MARLA' S APARTMENT

She comes in, closing the door behind her and flips on the light switch. It doesn't go on. Power is dead. She moves in to the apartment. Lights from the city beyond the window provides some marginal illumination. It is essentially the same as she saw it the first time -- except that the windows are now open and standing fans have been placed there, now no longer spinning -- presumably to remove the smell.

Amy then turns and heads down the corridor. She turns the corner. The corridor is completely dark. If there is something in the bathroom at the far end, it isn't visible. Amy moves fast down the corridor to the bathroom.

It is empty. The cord is still there, tied to the pipe, but it's been cut.

Then, in the silence, there's a noise -- a brief sound of movement. Amy turns toward the bedroom. She steps in.

INT., NIGHT, THE BEDROOM

The bed is there, visible in the indefinite light, empty. But something is different. The quilted bedcover is missing. Amy's eyes move left and right. No sign of motion.

Then slowly, she moves to the other side of the bed -- to the three-foot space between the bed and the far wall. The quilted bedcover is piled up in the far corner, between the bed and the wall.

CONTINUED:

But something isn't quite right. It looks a bit too "full" somehow. Amy stares at it, then slips the stiletto out of her pocket.

She presses the stud. The blade snicks out.

Then, slowly, the bedcover begins to move. Something tugs it downward from within, and it slips down, revealing Marla's eyes, peeking, child-like over the top. She's still apparently wearing the green plastic rain coat.

If anything, the effects of decay seem to have advances. There are ulcerations around her eyes. Her skin is turning dark.

AMY
What the fuck did you do to me?

She brandishes the blade.

AMY
What!

Marla lowers the bedcover, revealing her face and neck. Ulcerations are also growing around her mouth. The cord is still tied around her neck. She reaches a hand out from under the cover, scratches at it. We can see from the marks on her throat, that she's been trying to get it loose, without success. She reaches a hand out toward Amy. Amy hesitates, then moves forward. Marla lifts her head, revealing her throat. The cord is virtually buried there.

AMY
No, no, no... bend your head down.

Marla bends her head down. Amy reaches out and brushes her hair out of the way, revealing the cut-loose end of the cord. She tugs it up and slides the edge of the knife between the knot and Marla's swollen neck. As she works it in, some nasty fluid begins to seep out of the sodden flesh. She recoils at the smell.

Finally, Amy flicks the blade to the side, cutting through the cord. Marla draws in a great, ragged gasp. But the cord still sticks, and Amy must draw it slowly back, out of the flesh of Marla's neck. She tosses the cord away.

MARLA
(mumbling)
I'm sorry.

CONTINUED:

AMY

What?

Marla looks up at her.

MARLA

I said I'm sorry.

AMY

You're sorry?

(almost laughing)

What the fuck is that? I'm bleeding all over fucking lower Manhattan. It was you, wasn't it? It was you who did this?

MARLA

It's the way it's supposed to work. The one who initiates you is the one who has to be your guide.

AMY

This is the initiation? Stabbing somebody in the back?

MARLA

No... please, help me up...

She reaches out a swollen hand. Amy hesitates, then reaches out and grabs it, tugging Marla up out of the corner. She doesn't quite make it all the way up, but slumps instead across the bed.

MARLA

That's the way it's supposed to work. First the guide does it -- to make it easier for you to believe. Then you do it to yourself. I'm sorry. I'm the wrong person to be explaining this. I just thought... if I could help you, maybe I could help myself.

AMY

Help me? You stabbed me. I'm bleeding. I'm bleeding to death.

Marla pulls herself up. Amy, for a moment, goes to help her, then decides against it. She steps back as Marla turns and sits herself on the bed.

MAMA

Don't think that way. That gets you into trouble. Witness... witness me.

CONTINUED:

AMY

There's a hole in my back. My feet
make squishy sounds when I walk because
my shoes are full of blood...

MARLA

That doesn't matter...

AMY

What the fuck do you mean it doesn't
matter!

MARLA

Could you get me a glass of water?

AMY

Listen. Let me make this clear. I
AM BLEEDING TO DEATH!

MARLA

Could you get me a glass of water?

Amy hesitates, then rushes out, goes into the bathroom. Marla sits, relatively placid, while Amy fills a glass and comes back. Marla takes it, lifts it to her lips, slowly drinks. She lowers the glass to the bed, lets it tip over onto its side.

MARLA

We shouldn't stay here.

AMY

I can't leave like this... I'm trailing
blood wherever I go. Somebody's going
to see. Somebody's going to stop us.
Us... how can you go anywhere?

MARLA

Where we're going, that doesn't matter

AMY

Where?

MARLA

You have to tell me. You know the
way. Now. Go on. We can't stay
here forever. This isn't a stable
situation.

AMY

It's not stable...

CONTINUED:

MARLA

We've got to go. This place is too solid. We can't hold on to it. I've been drifting in and out all night. I'm only here now because you want me to be. Please...

AMY

But, I don't know...

MARLA

Help me, and I'll help you. But we've got to go.

Abruptly, there's a sound like something cracking. Amy turns toward the window. Outside, she can see the night lights of the city -- but something strange has happened. There's a crack in the window, but NOT in the glass.

It appears as if the world outside, in fact, has cracked, and through the crack, the same city is visible, but a city bright as noon. A brilliant sliver of daylight is pouring through the crack, and it cuts across the bed like a knife.

Marla jumps up and pulls away from, the light.

AMY

What is it?

MARLA

We're losing it...

She scrambles toward the bedroom door, pressing herself up against the wall. There's another sound of cracking... and then more, coming from the other room.

Marla makes no move. Amy finally gets up and hurries past her.

INT., THE LIVING ROOM

Amy comes around the corner and then freezes. The same weird sight presents itself. The night world outside the windows appears to be shattering, letting in splinters of a daylit version of the city beyond.

But something even stranger appears to be happening, because as the shafts of light cut diagonally across the dark room, they appear to be illuminating sharp slices of HUMAN FIGURES that are simply NOT THERE in the adjoining shadows. Another crack appears, and another shaft of light cuts across the room.

CONTINUED:

The shard of light flickers through the spinning blades of the fan -- but the "Night fan" -- clearly visible surrounding it -- isn't spinning. It is only the "daylight" version that appears to be in motion.

As the cracks grow, the floating shards of figures begin to assemble into something recognizable. There's the FIGURE of a POLICEMAN -- or, at any rate, we can glimpse a slice of his uniform afloat in the air, another slice, a bit lower, shows his hands holding a notebook, writing something in it. Near him, we see slices of a second figure, hovering in the shafts of light -- a black man.

We begin to hear dull echoes of voices, and we recognize one of them -- the black man, in fact, is the Super who let Amy in.

Another crack in the world beyond the window cuts a thin shaft across his face. We hear his words, dully.

SUPER
(muted)
I'm a religious man, you know...

We see the disconnected sections of the Policeman turn, his gesturing hand, drifting in and out of. View as it moves in and out of the light that defines the borders of its visible existence. His voice, too, comes out muted and incomplete.

POLICEMAN
(muted)
Look, did... ...tually see a bod...

Amy continues to stare, mesmerized by this strange phenomenon. She doesn't notice as Marla comes up tentatively up behind her. She stands a few feet behind Amy, who fails to notice her.

Finally, she reaches out a finger and taps her shoulder. Amy jumps, turns.

MARLA
We have to go... we have to go ...

AMY
What's happening?

MARLA
Our thing only sticks in the shadows.
In the dark. You don't understand that
yet... and I can't hold onto it...
it's a my situation.

CONTINUED:

AMY
What happens if we stay?

MARLA
In their world, in the daylight, a knife in the heart is fatal. If you stay, if you get sucked up in that world, then you'll have to live by their rules. The rules that make you dead.

Amy turns on her, angrily.

AMY
Then why are you so anxious to leave -- if what you want is to be dead?

MARLA
Because there's no version of me that makes sense in their world any more. I can't fit back in! What do you think I was trying to do? Please. We've got to go!

Behind them, the cracks in the "night" are growing, filling the room with pools of painfully bright radiance.

Amy looks down toward the floor. She can see her own bloody footprints in the shadows there. As she looks another "crack" spills a bright slash of daylight across the floor -- and in the light of day, her bloody footprints are simply not there.

Another crack of light cuts across the floor, cutting one of the footprints neatly in half -- visible in the shadow, gone in the light.

AMY
Go how? What's outside the door?
Day or night? Where do we go?

MARLA
You have to decide.

Amy looks around the apartment, as if deciding what to do.

AMY
(pause)
It's the bathroom, isn't it?

Marla doesn't answer. Amy turns and heads out of the bedroom. She looks back toward Marla.

CONTINUED:

AMY

Come on!

They turn and hurry toward the bathroom.

INT., NIGHT, THE BATHROOM

The two enter the dark space. Amy backs away as Marla enters, coming unpleasantly close to her. She hesitates, then closes the door. Behind it, set into the wail, there is a narrow archway -- leading to a flight of scuffed black steps, leading down into gloom.

AMY

Where does this lead?

MARLA

I don't know. I've never seen it before.

AMY

Go on... you're the guide. You go on first... .

Marla starts toward the arch. Abruptly, a "crack" forms in the narrow bathroom window, sending a shard of light cutting across the archway -- -- only in the "daylit" strip, the archway and the open space beyond literally aren't there.

What the strip of day light illuminates is simply a narrow strip of white-tiled bathroom wall, perhaps six inches wide. Marla pulls away, retreating from the light.

AMY

Hurry up, hurry up. Go underneath it... .

Marla advances cautiously, then literally ducks underneath the strip of "reality" and starts down the stairs. Amy hesitates, reaching a hand out toward the illuminated strip. But as soon as her hand passes into the range of the light, her fingers change, turning grey, the nails black -- the hand of somebody dead.

Gasping, she pulls her hand back, then she, too, starts to duck underneath the illuminated strip. Another "crack" and the strip widens -- now almost a foot of the archway has become solid wall. Gasping, Amy ducks low, beneath the light and the solid wall it illuminates, and heads down the stairwell.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE STAIRWELL

These are steep and narrow, made of some dull, scuffed black stone. The walls are unfinished, the flip side of a lathe and plaster wall. Marla is waiting some distance down the stairs.

Amy descends toward her. There is another "crack" from above. She turns to look back the way she came.

From the "night" side, the odd phenomenon is reversed. In the areas unlit from the bathroom side, the bathroom is clearly visible.

But the areas lit from the far side appear to be physical gaps, opening onto a literal continuation of the stairs, running up into darkness. As Amy watches, the "cracks" seem to compound.

Slash by slash, the bathroom vanishes from view, revealing more and more of the "alternate" reality -- the night reality, consisting of a stairway impossibly long, reaching impossibly high.

Finally, with a dull boom, the final sliver of the bathroom vanishes from view. Now only the endless stairway remains.

AMY

What...

MARLA

It's all daylight now, on the other side. Wow. That was close. I was worried...

AMY

Worried?

MARLA

Come on. Let's see where this thing leads to...

Marla starts down the stairs. Amy follows.

AMY

You really don't know?

Marla turns back, looks down toward Amy's feet, trailing blood. Vaguely embarrassed, Marla looks away, talking to Amy as she precedes her down the stairs.

CONTINUED:

MARLA

See... you see, that's the problem.
I'm supposed to help you. Like...
like Carl helped Sheila. Like Marybeth
helped me. But I don't know if I
can. You see, that's my trouble.

AMY

No, I don't see. I don't see one
fucking thing.

MARLA

Okay. Analogy. It's like a tightrope
walker... you're walking along on
this rope, and everything's fine, and
then all of a sudden, it's like you
realize -- fuck, I'm walking on a
fucking rope a hundred feet up in the
air. And that's when you fall. I
was in the room with the other deaders,
for my initiation. I put my head
through a noose and I jumped ten feet
down, and broke my neck, and crushed
my throat. And they cut me down, and
my friend Marybeth breathed into me,
and I was alive. She was my guide.
And my revivalist. She's so great,
you know? And everybody was happy...
and like, congratulating me...

AMY

Then what happened?

Marla pauses on the stairs. Amy stands behind her,
looking down at her, not knowing quite what to do. Then,
suddenly, Marla seems to fold up. She slides down and
lies curled up against the wall, sobbing. Amy doesn't
know quite what to do.

Finally, awkwardly, she slides down and sits as "next" to
Marla as she can, given that the stairs aren't wide enough
for them to sit two abreast. She reaches out a tentative
hand and touches her on the shoulder.

Clearly, Amy isn't used to doing this sort of thing even
for alive person, never mind a dead one.

AMY

Come on, come on... don't, you know...
don't be doing that.

(pause)

Marla... Marla... what happened to
you?

CONTINUED:

Marla looks up, her face wet with yellowish tears.

MARLA

For awhile, everything was fine.

But..

(struggles to control
herself)

But I can't... I can't make myself stop thinking that I'm dead. And I'm stuck. So long as I'm thinking, I say to myself, I can't be dead. You know, I think therefore I am. But it's like, I think, therefore I am -- fucked. Because I can't stop thinking that I should be dead. I tried to kill myself a second time. Didn't work. How could it? How could it? Already dead. So, what I'm supposed to say is, in terms of the bleeding... it can't kill you unless you're sure that it has to.

AMY

Oh, come on, what the fuck does that mean? How the hell am I supposed to do th...

MARLA

Like I said. Wrong person to ask? Right? Just... just think of it this way...

Marla turns and stares up at Amy.

MARLA

You're sitting here talking to a rotting corpse. An hour ago I stabbed you in the heart, but you feel no pain, and you're still walking around. Isn't that a bit unusual? Don't you find it difficult to reconcile this state of affairs with your previous view of reality? Why aren't you dead? Why aren't I?

AMY

I don't know. I just don't know.

MARLA

Because, when it's dark enough, there's no such thing. No difference between dead and alive. Corpses can talk, people can be stabbed in the heart and not die.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARLA (CONT'D)
You can turn into anything. Make
anything be anything. Where you can
blow your brains out and still be...
just fine. In the daylight, that can't
be. But in the night world, in this
world, it can. You see, it's easy to
say, but it's not easy to do. As... as
witness me.

AMY
Why am I bleeding like this?

MARLA
Don't you understand?

AMY
Stop asking me that!

Marla turns and starts down the stairs. Amy follows.

MARLA
Fine. You're bleeding because you want
to be. You're the one who's in charge.
You've been in charge ever since you
saw me in the bathroom. Everything
that's happened to you... is the way
you wanted it to be. We all find our
own way. Sometimes it gets you
through. Sometimes it's a dead end.
Pardon the expression. This is the way
you've picked.

AMY
I didn't choose you to stab me in the
back.

MARLA
Yes, you did. Here's the final,
ultimate deal. It isn't enough for
somebody else to stick a knife into
you. That's just a passive thing it
still lets you have doubts. You
have to come to the point where you
can do it to yourself -- that's the
test. That's the acceptance. For a
second, I was there... like, I had no
doubts, for that second. But they
came back.

AMY
You have to know how to stop this
bleeding.

CONTINUED:

MARLA
Oh, God. Bleeding, bleeding, bleeding.
(pause)
If you say so, maybe I do.

AMY
Well, then, stop it.

MARLA
Hey...

Marla hesitates, gestures downward. They've come to the bottom of the stairs. A narrow door swinging door with a circular window in it, let's in a shaft of artificial light.

The sounds from the other side are oddly familiar -- the clank of pots and pans, clinking glasses, the echoes of VOICES.

It sounds like the kitchen of a restaurant.

AMY
What should we do? There are people there...

MARLA
Don't worry about that. That's not daylight. We're still in the night world. Nothing can hurt you here... except yourself. As... um, as evidence me. Let's go look.

Marla moves down the stairs, with Amy trailing hesitantly behind her.

AMY
There are people...

Marla looks back toward her, questioning.

AMY
I'm all bloody. I don't want them to see me...

Marla stares at her for a second, and then, frustrated, gestures to herself... clearly, she's a much more frightful sight. Then, without a word, Marla goes to the bottom of the steps and starts through the door.

Amy moves toward her.

CONTINUED:

AMY
Fear is where you go to learn?

MARLA
It's where you go... and sometimes
it's where you stay.

She doesn't wait for Amy, but pushes through. As the door flaps back and forth, the sound grows loud and soft, loud and soft. Amy, suddenly aware of her aloneness, hurries after her. She shoves through the swinging door.

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, THE KITCHEN

Amy pushes through the door and stops, staring at the place, not knowing quite what to make of it. Through the steamy air, Amy can see what looks, on the surface, like the kitchen of a Chinese Restaurant.

Rows of metal counters, great steaming pots.

CHEFS and WAITERS move about, carrying trays of orders, carrying food to be prepared. Others are cooking at great blazing ovens, stirring who-knows-what in big woks, with the splashes sending out great whooshes of fire.

Amy looks left and right, trying to find Marla. Finally, she spots her, moving down a narrow corridor, squeezing past Waiters and Chefs.

She's almost out of sight.

Amy moved forward at once, almost colliding with a gaunt WAITER burdened with a tray covered with little covered metal dish. As they bump, one of the silver covers on one of the silver serving dishes jiggles, splattering some red down the side of the dish.

Amy glances toward the Waiter, who glances at her with glazed, dead eyes.

As the Waiter moves on, Amy turns and looks back down the aisle. Marla is out of sight. She pushes forward, urgent, circling around the various figures, leaving bloody footprints on the floor behind her.

AMY
Ma... Marla! Marla!

But there's no answer. She reaches an intersection, where two aisle cross, she looks this way and that...

CONTINUED:

The aisles seem to literally reach to the horizon, or at least as far as she. Can see before they vanish into steam.

Abruptly, something wet drips down onto her arm. It is something thick, like reddish oil. She looks up.

Above her, strung in rows, like so many Peking Ducks, are dead cats, hanging from strings, their skins shaved, red-orange with whatever they've been cooked in.

There's a loud bang. Amy turns.

On the far side of the Counter, she sees a row of CHINESE CHEFS, all grossly overweight. They are wielding cleavers, chopping something on the tables in front of them. We don't see what, but their faces have a kind of fiendish glee as they chop and chop, red and black splashing up onto their white aprons.

As Amy stares at them more closely, she can see that these Chefs are distinctly "wrong" -- some of them with visible but bloodless wounds, others with glazed eyes, one with a head that appears to be rather the wrong shape for a living person's head.

Amy backs away, moving down one of the aisles. She turns... and sees Marla in the distance.

AMY

Marla!

She starts after her. Abruptly, a mouse goes flitting across the floor. Amy jumps back. Then another one comes running across. She looks up. One of the CHEFS is tending one of those huge aluminum soup kettles.

He lifts the metal lid.

The kettle is literally full of mice, roiling like a kind of ghastly living liquid. As he stirs the living mass, the occasional escapee jumps out and goes flitting across the floor.

She backs away, knocking some pots and pans off a shelf, then turns and hurries in Marla's direction.

But once again her guide has vanished. She moves to the next intersection, staring this way and that. No sign of Marla -- and the ghastly kitchen still seems to go on forever.

She glances back the way she came.

CONTINUED:

Coming down the crowded corridor, following her bloody trail, is a scrawny BUSBOY, pushing a broom, wiping up her bloody footsteps, coming her way. He looks up at her and smiles -- the inside of his mouth altogether too red to be natural.

He smiles, with his bloody mouth, nodding, and keeps on coming, mopping up her bloody footsteps as he comes.

Amy turns and starts to run, no longer caring. Panting, she shoves past a WAITER, knocking him over, and going down with him. The platters go flying, along with their contents.

One of the dishes spills its contents in front of her. It is the face of a woman -- not a head, but just the face, as if peeled neatly off the skull, surrounding by Chinese vegetables, now spilled this way and that by the fall.

The woman's hair is also, apparently in place... bright dye-red hair, trailing down one side. The face is Marybeth's. But taking the place of each eye, finishing off the hideous "dish" -- a decorative carrot curl...

Amy has used up what terror she has. She breaks down and starts crying.

AMY

Please... please... I don't want to
be here. I don't want to be here...

She hears the sound of a mop being dunked in water. She looks back. The Busboy with his mop is still coming, still grinning.

Amy turns, glances underneath one of the metal tables. She can look through to the far side, to the parallel aisle. She sees Marla's high-heeled boots, clearly nothing that anybody else in this place is wearing.

AMY

Marla! Marla!

She scrambles up and starts down the aisle. She reaches a cross-aisle and turns, heading back up the aisle where she's seen Marla.

But this aisle, apparently, doesn't go on forever. In fact, it ends in a culvert where a big floor-to-ceiling freezer stands. And as the scene comes into view, Amy sees a cluster of the grotesque CHEFS shoving Marla into the freezer.

CONTINUED:

She is struggling, her hands reaching.

AMY

Marla!

MARLA

Help... Amy...

But Marla can't stand against the Men. They shove her in, start to close the door. Her pale swollen hand reaches out. They push it in, get the freezer door closed.

Then they turn toward Amy. She turns.

The Busboy with the mop and bucket is coming, washing up her bloody footprints, smiling as he comes. Behind him, others are coming, the demonic waiters and Chefs, hemming her in.

Amy spots a carving knife on one of the preparation tables. She grabs it, holds it out toward one of the grossly fat CHEFS as he approaches. The Chef stares at her with glazed eyes, then reaches forward and tugs up his apron and undershirt, pulling them up over the great expanse of his belly and chest, baring them.

There seem to be no fewer than a dozen knives thrust in -- the handles have been broken off, leaving merely the naked metal edges, almost flush to the skin, to mark where they've been plunged in.

Amy stands, holding the weapon, now clearly a useless thing. Slowly, inch by inch, she lets her hand fall, until the knife tumbles out. She looks down and sees the mop, coming toward her. She looks up, into the face of the blood-mouthing Busboy. He smiles.

Now hands are reaching for her. She tries to shove them away, but in a moment she's overwhelmed, lifted up.

The Busboy stands, leaning on his mop, the same smile on his face, watching as the crowd carries Amy off down the aisle, crying, making wordless panicked sounds, struggling, squirming in their grip.

The Busboy looks down. There's a trail of blood drops. He dips his mop in the bucket and follows, cleaning up as he goes.

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

THE HEAT LOCKER

At any rate, it's someplace where carcasses of various kinds are suspended from the ceiling by books. Amy is there now, also hanging upside down in the near-dark, her hands bound behind her back, her ankles tied together.

The bindings between her ankles are strung onto the nasty metal hook that holds her a couple feet up off the ground.

She looks to one side. Near her, hanging from another hook, is something that literally looks like a white leopard. But now, though alive, it's barely moving, its white fur stained red.

Further on, other things, some animal, some human, others unrecognizable, are hanging from the various hooks.

There's a clank and the metal door opens. The great bulk of one of the Fat Chefs blocks the door.

He comes waddling in, carrying a metal basin. He goes over to Amy.

AMY

What do you want... what...

The Chef slides the basin beneath her head. He takes a small knife from his belt.

AMY

Wait... wait.

But the Chef pays no more attention to her words than he would to the squawking of a goose. He takes her by the hair, turns her head to the side, and calmly draws the knife diagonally across the side of her neck, opening up the arteries.

Amy screams as the blood begins to come out, running down her neck, into her hair, spilling into the bowl.

AMY

No, no, please... no, I don't want to be here. I don't want to be here!

But the Fat Chef pays her no mind. He comes back up to standing with a grunt, turns, and inspects the hanging body of the leopard. Apparently finding it satisfactory, he reaches up and unhooks it. Draping the barely alive thing across his huge back, he heads out the door.

CONTINUED:

Amy struggling weakly, hears the door close with a metallic bang.

CUT TO:

INT., THE MEAT LOCKER

Some time later. We can hear a slow, irregular drip. We MOVE through the nightmarish place of death until we find its source -- the basin beneath Amy's head.

As we watch, a final drop of blood lands in it, and the ripples come to stillness. Above, Amy is there, still hanging, still alive, but hardly aware of her surroundings.

There's a sound of movement, a metallic clanking, like a padlock being locked, and then a shadow falls across Amy. She moves her head slightly.

It's Marla. She bends down low, so that her face is close to Amy's. We don't know how much time has passed or where she's been, but the effects of decay seem even more pronounced. The eye lids on one of her eyes doesn't seem to be working any more, and the eye on that side sags unpleasantly.

MARLA

Okay. Okay. I think we're making progress.

AMY

Wh-what...

MARLA

You wanted the bleeding to stop.
It's stopped. I mean, it's kind of a weird way to do it...

AMY

No, no, no, no... oh Christ. Oh, fucking Christ... I don't want to be here...

MARLA

Me either. This is some fucked up place. I mean, really.

AMY

I just want to go home, I just want to go home, please...

CONTINUED:

MARLA

Don't think that. Personally, I think that was a big mistake, trying to keep my apartment.

AMY

What...

MARLA

It was like, I wanted to be part of this big, black mystery, this crazy night nirvana thing -- but I didn't want to give up my apartment. I thought I could keep a foot in the daylight, you know what I mean. I'm speaking metaphorically. But I don't think that really works. You can't be a thing of the night and, like... pay rent and stuff. I think that contributed to, like, my major confusion and this whole situation...

Amy meanwhile, has started to cry, though at first it's a bit hard to tell whether she's sobbing or laughing. Marla just sits, a bit uncomfortable. She fidgets, feeling at the corner of her sagging eye.

MARLA

Come on, it's... I don't know. It's okay.

AMY

Tell me. Tell me... is it a dream?
Am I dreaming?

MARLA

It's the wrong question.

AMY

Is it real? Is all this real?

MARLA

Wrong question.

AMY

Am I crazy? Is that it?

MARLA

No, no, no. Wrong question. Major wrong question.

AMY

Why? Is that it? Is that it?

CONTINUED:

MARLA
Don't go there, Amy. That's a dead end. You can't get where you need to go, going there...

AMY
Going where? Going where?

MARLA
Look, there's no dreaming, there's no waking, no crazy, no sane. Nothing like that...

AMY
That's it... I've got to be... I've got to be losing my mind...

MARLA
No, it's not your mind you want to lose...

There's the sound of motion, like approaching footsteps.

MARLA
Listen, we should go.

AMY
Go?

Now we see the latch on the door being tried -- and we also see a padlock holding the door closed.

MARLA
I padlocked the door. Now we need to go. You need to find the way out...

Now there's thumping at the door as whatever it is on the other side tries to knock it down.

MARLA
Amy...

AMY
Crazy, it's crazy... I don't have any blood in me... he cut my throat.

MARLA
That doesn't matter. I'm not kid...

AMY
He cut my throat! You stabbed me!
This is not real!

CONTINUED:

MARLA
Stop saying that!

There's a sound like the awkward ringing of a bell as something metal shatters.

Amy turns toward the door.

One of the hinges has shattered and the latch itself, through which the padlock has been threaded, is half-pulled from the door frame.

There's another bang. The metal freezer door moves, falling slightly out of the frame.

AMY
I don't believe it. I don't believe it.

MARLA
Amy, you've got to stop thinking that.

Now we see distorted hands reaching around the borders of the door. Fat swollen fingers, thin withered ones, the black-nailed hands of children, which scrabble at the padlock, trying to tug it free.

AMY
You're not here. You're not real...

MARLA
Please stop saying that. Please.

AMY
I know it. I know it. This can't be real. None of this. I don't believe in it...

The heavy door starts to squeak and pop hideously as the force of weight on the other side begins to bend it in the middle.

Now whole arms are sliding through, grabbing at the door. Marla turns to look, then looks back toward Amy.

MARLA
Please, Amy, please don't do this.
Please don't leave me here...

AMY

Go away, go away. I'm not going anywhere with you. All of you go away! Get away!

CONTINUED:

Abruptly, the door heaves forward and we see what's on the other side. The hands and arms are not connected to separate beings, but are stitched together into some impossible Hydra-like thing, arms threaded together into a single mass like so many snakes. The air fills with a horrible wet tearing sound as it moves forward.

AMY

No! Get out! Get out! Get awa...

CUT TO:

INT., DAY, A BED

In an instant, the noise and fury are gone. Amy's eyes abruptly pop open.

She's lying on a white pillow, with white sheets tucked up over her. She turns her eyes to one side. There's a hospital curtain, the kind on a railing, pulled closed around her. She looks down.

She's lying in a hospital bed. An IV needle is in her arm. The sound of other voices, speaking quietly nearby -- apparently she's in a ward of some kind.

She looks in the other direction. Larry is there, in a chair, watching her.

LARRY

Good morning.

She doesn't answer.

LARRY

How are you?

Abruptly, Amy's hand springs up to her throat, feeling for a wound. Nothing. She puts her hand to her chest.

Abruptly, the curtain tugs aside a bit and Bud enters, carrying two coffees.

BUD

Hey, what are you doing? Checking to see if you're still alive.

AMY

Yes.

BUD

Ooo-kay.

CONTINUED:

He hands a cup to Larry.

BUD

Sorry, I thought you were still in bad-brain-chemical land. I'd have brought you a coffee.

LARRY

You want...

Larry holds out his. Amy holds her hand up to say no. As she does, she sees that there are reddish cinch marks on her wrists. She stares at them.

AMY

Larry, what the fuck happened?

LARRY

We didn't hear from you. Don't you remember? Bud and I went over to your place. You were lying on the floor...

BUD

Yeah, covered in every kind of stuff that can come out of a human body...

AMY

The blood...

BUD

Okay. Every other kind.

AMY

I don't remember.

LARRY

You were sort of...

BUD

You were having a psychotic episode, sweets. Major mental blow-out. And frankly, it's about fucking time. What do you think those marks are? You were tied down for a day and half.

AMY

Where the fuck am I?

LARRY

Listen, I was trying to get you transferred to some place else, but this scumbag...

CONTINUED:

BUD
Hey, Do I look like fucking Rupert Murdoch? I'm not a charity.

AMY
Where am I?

LARRY
They took you...

BUD
The big B, baby. Bellevue. The snake pit. There's a babe in the next bed who thinks she's Gwyneth Paltrow. Only I'm pretty sure Gwyneth has all her front teeth.

LARRY
Look, Amy, you probably won't have to stay...

AMY
Hey, Larry, Larry... this is the best fucking news I've ever had.

BUD
Well, there you go. A whole new definition of optimism.

AMY
What about Marla Chan? What about the story?

LARRY
They found her dead in her apartment. She hanged herself.

AMY
They found her. You mean the police?

LARRY
Yeah. She'd been there awhile. Probably did it right after she sent us the tape. But there's no question. I mean, about it being suicide.

AMY
Where is she?

LARRY
Jesus, I don't know. Does it matter?

CONTINUED:

AMY
No, I guess not.
(pause)
Larry, did I call and tell you I was
quitting the story?

LARRY
No. No, you didn't, actually. But
it's a moot point. We're not going
to do the story. Okay?

AMY
Yeah.

BUD
But it's okay, because this is a good
story too. Call it, "My Psychotic
Episode" -- or, wait, maybe "Psychotic
Episode One." Or "Psychotic Pilot
Episode." You know, some play on words
with episode.

AMY
Bud, do me a favor...

BUD
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Look, there's a
lot of raw material around here.
Emphasis on the word "raw." Maybe
they'll let you use a felt-tip pen or
something to take notes.

Somebody pulls the curtain aside. Its an ORDERLY.

ORDERLY
Excuse me, folks. Doctor's going to
come by in a minute and check the
lady...

AMY
I'm no lady.

BUD
Okay. Anti-psychotics...

LARRY
Listen, will you please knock off
that bullshit?
(to Amy)
Look, we're going to wait and talk to
the Doctor afterward. Okay?

CONTINUED:

AMY
Yeah, okay.

BUD
Right. Feel better....

He leans over, gives her a little peck on the cheek. As he does, he whispers to her.

BUD
(whispering)
I'll see about getting a camera in here...

He stands, winks at her.

LARRY
You going to be all right?

AMY
Yeah.

LARRY
I'll see you in a little bit.

BUD
When you get a chance, check out the public area. It's a swinging place. I mean, like, they're literally... swinging.

They head out. Larry turns back.

LARRY
Oh, I brought these for you.

He reaches into his pocket and comes out with her sun glasses. He puts them on the table by her bed. Larry smiles, turns and follows after Bud.

The Orderly moves in closer.

ORDERLY
I'm going to sit you up...

He puts down the railing on one side of the bed, helps her sit up and swing her legs out over the side of the bed. He puts one of those disposable thermometer things in her mouth, takes her pulse.

AMY
What day is today?

CONTINUED:

ORDERLY
Hmm? Thursday.

Be takes the thermometer, writes some stuff down on the chart.

AMY
Means nothing to me.

ORDERLY
Doctor Magid'll be here in a minute...

AMY
Thanks.

The Orderly puts the chart on the bed and heads out. Amy sits for a moment, turns, looks out a nearby window through which a bright, if rather seedy, day-lit view of the city is visible.

Something flickers by in her field of view. She glances down, toward the lowered railing. A fly is there. It meanders along the rail. Amy reaches out and waves her hand near it, to shoo it away.

But it doesn't go.

She waves her hand again. The fly ignores her. She brings her hand closer. The fly abruptly buzzes off the railing and lands on the back of her hand. Amy stares at it for an instant, then brings her other hand down on top of the fly with a slap...

Or is it a slap?

The sound seems somehow louder than it should, and strangely familiar. A kind of crack -- like the cracks that let the light of day into Marla's apartments.

Amy freezes at the familiar sound. Then, hesitantly, she takes her hand away. There's no fly on the back of her hand. She turns the other hand around. No fly in the palm. No sign of it.

AMY
No, please... please...

Then there's another crack. She jumps, turns toward the table by the side of the bed.

Nothing particularly sinister about it -- but something different. There's a strip of shadow across it, passing close to her folded sunglasses.

CONTINUED:

She reaches her hand cautiously out toward the shadow. Abruptly, there's another "crack" and another shadow abruptly falls across her sunglasses.

Now it becomes clear that this isn't merely a shadow, but the bizarre inverse of the effect she witnessed before.

Where the new sliver of shadow crosses her sunglasses, they appear shattered. In the light -- intact, in the shadow, broken.

It is the "night" world leaking in.

Hanging in the bright air, in fact, Amy can see the "shafts" of darkness, like shafts of light, coming from the direction of the window.

She turns toward the window.

She can see the splinters of darkness, the reverse of what she saw before, revealing slivers of a "night world" beyond the window, utterly different from the daylit world that now dominates.

She rises, moves toward the window, then stops, realizes that she's still attached to the IV. She reaches out, tears the bandage away and then, with a hiss, extracts the needle.

There's another crack, and another, wider fissure cuts across the window. She moves forward, breathing fast, making sure to avoid the shafts of darkness.

She comes close to the wall with the window. It is part of a long, open passage, lined with windows, like the one she's standing before, spaced at intervals along its length, facing the curtained beds. A lone, ELDERLY WOMAN, in a hospital gown, is standing some distance down, her back to the wall, some figure lost in her own world.

There is another crack, and another "fissure" in the outside world opens up, sending a shaft of darkness into the room. Now she hears other, more distant cracks and pops and when she looks down the hall, she realizes that the "night" is leaking in down its entire length.

A distant sound, like the sound of a subway train, comes to her ears. She moves forward, leaning to the side, and glances up, through one of the wider gaps.

CONTINUED:

OUT THE WINDOW

Through the dark gap in reality, she can see an urban landscape completely unlike the one visible in the daylit world.

An Elevated Train is roaring by above her, making a nasty clatter as it strikes some loose spot and sends out a lightning-bright electric spark at regular intervals as it passes.

In the windows, she can glimpse inhuman shapes, but they roar by too fast, and are seen too distantly to make them out with any certainty. What she can be sure of is that the sparks from the passing train are casting their light upward -- revealing the shadowed areas above the El and the low, brick buildings that crowd it.

And above them both, impossibly -- there is a roof, made of girders and stained rotting concrete, not merely covering the train, but somehow encompassing the entire visible night world.

She gasps. Abruptly, a voice sounds behind her.

MAGID

Miss Klein? Miss Klein?

Amy turns abruptly. DR. MAGID, a young Indian Doctor, is standing by the bed. The bands of growing darkness are cutting across him. In the light of day, he is simply a familiar figure dressed in a white Doctor's coat.

But in the shadowed areas, we glimpse things more sinister. Where it falls across his clothing we see a coat stained with blood and filth. Where it falls across the side of his face, we can glimpse flesh pale and festering.

AMY

Please, please help me. It's coming again. It's coming.

MAGID

What is coming?

AMY

The night... please, don't let it take me. I want to stay here...

There's another crack. Amy lets out a shriek and jumps aside.

CONTINUED:

Now the new sliver of night falls more widely on the Doctor's face, revealing more of the nightmarish "dead" version -- an ear all but gone, hair matted with black stuff.

AMY

Oh, God, don't let me go.

Then the Doctor takes a step -- and comes almost completely out of the shadow areas that he, clearly, does not see. He speaks in a calming, confident voice, the kind of calculatedly gentle voice that comes from long experience with the insane.

MAGID

Miss Klein, nothing is going to take you away. Please, come back to bed. Come. Take my hand. I promise, we will not hurt you.

He holds out his hand, coming no closer. Amy hesitates, then moves away, ducking underneath one of the shafts of darkness. She reaches her hand out in little halting jerks. Magid remains calm, impassive.

MAGID

I'm just going to give you an examination, and then we'll talk.
All right...

AMY

Yes...

MAGID

Come, just sit down here...

She reaches out her hand, touches his, hesitant, then takes it. He tightens his grip. Then, suddenly, there's a loud crack and a vertical fissure of darkness opens up in the window behind them. The shaft of darkness cuts between them, falling on their hands.

Only now, in the darkness from the night world, the hand that holds her is a ghastly wet thing -- and her hand, in the darkness, is pale, bruised, splattered with blood. The hand starts to pull her... only now Amy is pulling away. She looks up, into the calm face of Dr. Magid. He speaks, but now his voice comes out distorted. She cannot understand the words.

Instead, the sound of the Elevated Train is coming again, louder. She turns, looks toward the window.

CONTINUED:

The night world is gaining dominance -- and down the hall, the windows are a patchwork of day and night. Another train comes rumbling by outside. Amy looks.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS OF THE TRAIN

We see the faces of things dead, things not human at all. Amy feels a sudden tug. She looks back. A band of darkness abruptly cuts across the lower part of Magid's face. The bland gentle face is suddenly replaced, within the night-lit world, with a chinless, gaping mouth, lined with tiny baby-shark teeth. It speaks, but this voice, though wet and whispery, we now hear clearly.

THE SHARK MOUTH
Help me, Amy Klein. Help me...

AMY
Help... help you...

She tries harder to pull away, but her bare feet slip on the floor. The Shark Mouth gapes, as if trying to swallow air. And, impossibly, above it, somehow connected to it in some weird way, is the face of Magid, now starting to look a bit alarmed.

THE SHARK MOUTH
You know Marla... I'm a friend of hers.

AMY
What?

Amy looks down. The hand is pulling her harder. She struggles to break free, but the grip of the wet, nasty hand is unbreakable.

THE SHARK MOUTH
Maybe she mentioned me...

AMY
No! No!

Finally, Amy hauls back and punches, back-handed, at the twin faces.

Her hand hits something -- but it is not the Shark Face that vanishes. Rather, the impact of her fist literally seems to knock Magid out of view, and in a single ripping instant, the day-lit world has vanished, as if torn away by her action.

CONTINUED:

Now, the corridor is all darkness, except for strange lights behind the curtains, and the shadows of strange things moving in the lights, cast up on the curtains.

But Amy has more immediate concerns. With Magid torn away, the full features of the SHARK THING are now visible.

It seems to have no rigidly fixed shape. Rather, its face and form, almost like liquid, flow back and forth, sometimes more like a shark, sometimes more like a scrawny twenty-year old, sometimes other things, perhaps the shadows of other living things, bristle out on his face, or beneath his clothing, and vanish.

Amy, now, has also reverted to her "night" form -- back in the same ragged black garments she wore before, bruised, her hair clotted with blood, the horrid knife cut in her throat. She gasps as the Shark Thing hauls her close.

SHARK THING

Are you sure she didn't talk about
me? I'm Bobby...

AMY

Bobby... you... the one who got lost...

SHARK THING

Lost? Is that what happened? Is it?

AMY

She was afraid she'd end up like you.
Lost. That's... that's what she said.

SHARK THING

Where is she?

AMY

I don't know.

SHARK THING

Right. Right. So SHE'S lost. I'm
not lost. I'm right here, with the
others.

(leans close)
And with you...

Abruptly, he slides a ghastly arm around her shoulder and turns her.

CONTINUED:

SHARK THING

And, if, if you can save her, why not
me? Be my guide... find your way
out... and I'll follow.

AMY

I don't even know where I am...

The Shark Thing begins to laugh, a weird wet laugh. He thrusts his face into hers.

SHARK THING

I don't even know THAT I am. It's
one great fucking mystery, only it's
got no last page. It just keeps
getting more and more fucking
mysterious, until you can't even
remember where one things leaves off
and another begins.

He leans in close to her. And then, suddenly, it's as if the two literally begin to melt together. Amy screams, and it echoes, unnaturally loud, down the long corridor. She twists wildly, and literally tears loose from the Shark Thing, tumbling to the ground, her clothing torn around the shoulder, back and side, her skin exposed, weirdly raw.

She grabs a wheeled IV holder and flings it toward the Shark Thing. As it hits, she turns, stumbles, and starts running down the corridor. The IV pole has buried itself in the Shark Thing's shoulder, as if in clay. He tears it lose and throws it to the ground.

SHARK THING

She knows the way out! She knows the
way! Follow her!

As Amy runs, suddenly, the curtains start to tear open, behind her, next to her, in front of her, and THINGS come loping out. Some rotted, like Marla, some much worse, little more than skeletons.

Other THINGS, incomplete, like human beings melted like plastic, or in pieces, cut apart and glued back together. And still others, like the Shark Thing, weird, half-finished amalgams of Human and Other.

AMY

I don't know! I don't know anything!

The Shark Thing comes loping after her.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY
Liar! Liar! Where's Marla! She
should be here with us!

Amy stops, finding herself face to face with a broken-necked Horror, dives to the floor, and scampers under it.

Other things paw at her, some with rotting fingers, others with animal paws, or wet tendrils. She dives to the side, clambering over the beds, tearing the curtains aside as the awakened things come after her. Abruptly, she finds that one of the curtains is literally clinging to her, wrapping itself around her. Gasping, she grabs it and tears. The thing, whatever it is, is alive, and as it tears we see tissue tear wetly, blood weave out it screams as she flings it away.

But the mob is clearly crowding her, threatening to overwhelm her. They press her forward until she comes to the far wall.

AMY
Get away! I don't know where Marla is!
I can't help you! Leave me alone! Get
away!

She comes to a narrow door, she grabs for the knob, tries to pull it open against the press of people. Suddenly, she spots the Shark Thing, trying to make its way through the undead press. Abruptly, she points at him.

AMY
He knows! Bobby knows! Follow him!
He knows!

Abruptly, eyes turn toward the Shark Thing. It is only a brief confusion, some ignoring her words, others pressing back toward Bobby, but it gives Amy the moment she needs.

She hauls the door open and throws herself in, pulling it shut behind her.

INT., THE CLOSET

Her fingers find the little latch and she turns it, locking the door -- but as she turns, she realizes that this is the deadliest of dead ends -- a closet barely three feet deep and three feet wide, and those three feet are cluttered with mops and detergent and god-knows-what.

She presses her hands against the door, and her back meets the back of the closet -- not even enough room for her to hold her arms out straight in front of her.

CONTINUED:

She can hear the sounds of the Things on the other side, scratching, hammering. She watches the door move as they pull at the door knob, trying to get in.

Abruptly, there's a sudden loud roar and something huge and white, like a white tiger comes literally out of nowhere, shoving her against the side of the closet with its huge paws on her shoulders... Or was it a tiger?

In an instant, the paws are hands, and the ferocious white furred face is replaced by a familiar one. It's Winter. He leans in close -- what else can he do in this narrow space?

WINTER

I hate repeating myself, Amy Klein.
You're more trouble than you're worth.

AMY

I... I...

WINTER

Don't say anything. Whatever you say, it's wrong. Don't ask any questions. Don't look for any answers. There's a kind of fire that you can't steal and carry back to the world. All you can do, is let yourself be consumed by it. Burnt up, so that there's no you left. Only the fire. Now listen to me. There's a Way that I've made. You're on it. Make no mistake. It is no more real than I am, or that you are. I made it to bring people to me that are congenial to my sensibilities. Nothing more. Those that are... come through. Those that can't get through, or who can't hold on -- end up here. Forever. But now you've created a problem for me. I've made the Way, and I can't break it, without disrupting everything I've made for myself. But the Way requires that the initiates, like you, have a Guide. But, as you may have noticed, you've misplaced your Guide.

AMY

Where is sh...

Winter shoves Amy hard against the wall.

CONTINUED:

WINTER

I said, "Don't ask any questions." Now, here is what I'm going to do, to remedy this situation. If she's lost, she can't guide you, she can't witness your initiation, and she can't revive you. So you must find her. You find her by wanting to. I have decided that you two are now one. I've said it. That makes it so. You find her, wake her up. When you initiate yourself, she will witness it, and she will believe and be reborn, and then SHE will revive YOU. If you can't do what you need to do, then the both of you can stay here forever. That's all. That's all I'm willing to do. Anything more will wreck my whole night world, and you're not worth it. One final thing. To get where you're going you have to leave everything behind. Everything.

AMY

I know. Even myself.

WINTER

(pause)

Maybe you'll be decent company after all. There are advantages to nothingness, Amy Klein. But it's not for everybody.

Winter takes a step back -- strange considering that there's no room to do it -- and folds into the wall. Amy is alone. There is silence now. The door is still. She looks at it, then turns toward it, unlocks it and shoves it open. The Ward is gone. Now there is a flight of wide marble steps leading down into darkness.

INT., THE STEPS

She comes out of the closet and stands on the upper landing. Then she calmly begins to undress, tossing aside her bloody clothing. She tears through the duct tape that holds the now-useless towel to the wound-in her back. It comes away sticky. She drops it, steps out of her panties, black with dried blood.

She stands, naked, her body covered with bruises and stained with blood.

CONTINUED:

Then she starts down the stairs, her bare feet making echoing slaps on the cold marble. She comes to the bottom. There are double swinging doors there, with circular windows in them -- unpleasantly like the door that opened onto the nightmare Chinese kitchen. She moves forward and pushes through.

INT., NIGHT, THE MORGUE

That's what this place is, apparently. The room is spare and metallic. Rows of drawers stand against a far wall. There are no bodies out. Everything is neatly tucked away.

She crosses to one of the drawers. There is no hesitation. She grabs it and pulls it out. There's a great buzzing of flies as Marla, still in her green plastic raincoat and underwear, comes sliding out. But now she looks dead. Really dead -- and really dead for awhile. The flies have laid their eggs, and the eggs have made maggots, and the maggots are doing their work on her face and on the exposed parts of her body.

Her eyes are open, but sunken, the orbs all gray. Amy leans down close to her. She speaks in a quiet voice.

AMY
Marla, it's Amy. Wake up.

Marla doesn't stir. Amy bends down even closer.

AMY
Marla. Wake up. You're not dead, and you can't stay here. Marla. Wake up...

Now Amy's lips are almost touching Marla's dead ones. Then they do touch. Amy brushes her lips against Marla's, then kisses her lightly.

AMY
Marla. I need you. Wake up.

Amy hesitates an instant, waiting, then kisses her more deeply.

AMY
Wake up.

Then, with a wet sticky sound, Marla's eyes turn. They see Amy. Her lips move.

CONTINUED:

AMY

You know me. You're my guide. Tell
me what to say. Tell me what to do.
Come with me. I've come to learn...
and I'm not afraid any more.

Marla's lips begin to move as she struggles to speak.
The words begin to come out, little more than breath.

MARLA

M-m-my skin...

AMY

My skin...

MARLA

...isn't real.

AMY

...isn't real.

MARLA

My eyes... aren't real.

AMY

My eyes aren't real.

MARLA

My muscles...

Now Amy begins to speak over her, sometimes coming in a
bit late, synchronizing the litany.

AMY

My muscles...

MARLA AND AMY

... aren't real. My bones, my heart,
heart, my veins and nerves, and flesh
and meat... aren't real.

MARLA

What I see, what I hear, what I taste,
what I touch, what I remember, what I
think, what I feel...

AMY

What I see, and hear, and taste, and
touch. What I remember, what I think,
what I feel... aren't real.

MARLA

Aren't real.

CONTINUED:

But now Marla's final words, this time following Amy's come in a much stronger voice. Amy looks down at her.

She seems to have shifted into an odd state. Her prior, intact self is there, but the deader version flickers across her skin like sparks, no longer dominant, but still there. She sits up. Amy stares at her.

AMY
I'm not real...

Abruptly, the room is now no longer empty. There are familiar figures there. Carl, Marybeth. Sheila. And Winter, standing in the background.

WINTER
Go on.

AMY
I'm not real...

Marla slides off of the sliding table. Hands help Amy climb up. She lies down.

AMY
I'm not real...

Sheila comes up to Marla and places the .45 -- the big gun, in Marla's hand. Marla turns and places it in Amy's.

AMY
I'm not real.

She places the gun to her head. Marla leans over and kisses her.

MARLA
You'll be back.

Amy stares at her, smiles.

We MOVE IN in an instant as her finger tugs the trigger. No hesitation. But there is no sound of an explosion. Instead, we --

CUT TO:

INT., NIGHT, STATIC

Instead of the sound of a gunshot, we suddenly find ourselves lost in some bright flickering space, filled with the sound of static.

CONTINUED:

Abruptly, the static vanishes, the flickering space congeals and we realize that we are watching a television screen.

And as we PULL RACE, we realize that we are seeing the original footage, showing the death of Sheila. It's Bud's office, late at night. He's there, in the dark, watching the tape.

He weighs the remote control loosely in his hand. The door opens and Larry comes in. He watches Bud for a moment. Bud, for his part, doesn't even seem to notice that he's there.

LARRY

I was just over at the 14th Precinct.
You know, I know Tommy McKay, he's a
detective over there...

BUD

So ...

LARRY

So, nothing. She's just gone. Left
her apartment, left her clothes, left
her money. No sign of her anywhere.

BUD

See no Amy. Hear no Amy...

LARRY

Just like with Marla Chen. Apartment
just left empty. No trace. No trace
of her for six weeks, since she sent
us that tape. No trace of Amy for a
month.

BUD

So you think they met with foul play.

LARRY

Amy's not going to run off and join a
cult. Marla was a traitor for sending
us that tape. I'm sure they're both
dead. They were taken somewhere and
killed. There's no other explanation.

BUD

Too bad. It would have made a hell of
a story. Still would, if I could find
somebody else crazy enough to do it.

LARRY

Yeah. Well... I'm quitting.

CONTINUED:

Bud keeps watching the tape. He doesn't answer.

LARRY
I said, I'm qui... .

BUD
What do you want me to do? Give you
an argument? So you're quitting.
Good bye.

LARRY
(pause)
You ought to stop watching that thing,
man. It's getting to be a bad habit.

BUD
Your concern for my welfare is greatly
appreciated as always, Larry. See
you around.

Larry turns and walks out the door. As he closes it, Bud
hears a voice.

AMY
Hey there, Bud.

Bud jumps, turns. Amy is sitting on the couch, dressed
as she was when we first saw her, and wearing her black
sunglasses.

BUD
Jesus fucking Christ, Amy. How the
hell did you get in here? And where
the fuck have you been? You know, some
people have been looking for you.

AMY
Don't worry, Bud.

BUD
Who said I was?

AMY
Why are you watching the tape, Bud?

BUD
Hmm?

AMY
Why are you watching the tape? What
do you think you're going to see?

CONTINUED:

BUD
Shit, I... I don't know. What the hell's the matter with you?

But Amy doesn't speak. She just watches him from behind the opaque disks of her sunglasses.

BUD
I sent you out to find out what the fuck I was seeing.

AMY
Don't be afraid, Bud.

BUD
I'm not afraid. It's just a fucking piece of video tape. Fine, you don't want to look, fine...

He grabs for the remote control. It goes flying off the little table and lands on the floor in between the two. They both bend over, reach down for it. As they do, Amy's sunglasses fall onto the floor. Bud hesitates, then picks up the remote. Amy remains in her bent over position.

AMY
I meant, don't be afraid of me.

BUD
What?

AMY
Don't be afraid. I'm not real.

BUD
What do you...

Bud looks up. And Amy starts to raise her head.

BUD
What...

Bud looks, and freezes, his eyes wide.

AMY
I said, Bud... don't be afraid. I'm not real...

And as she utters the final words, she turns her head up. We see what Bud has already seen.

CONTINUED:

The eyes revealed by the falling of the sunglasses are simply not there at all. They are simply holes, stretching into the empty blackness of Amy skull.

AMY
I'm not real...

FADE OUT

THE END