FEAR THY NEIGHBOR

by
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FADE IN:

INT. LIZ AND CHARLIE'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

CHARLIE and LIZ DONNELLY, 30s, lie motionless in dark. A shadow passes into the room, moves over to Charlie's bedside table. A drawer opens.

FRANK
Get up. Wake up, Charlie, it's show-time.

Charlie grunts. The bedside lamp turns on, jolting him awake. Charlie stares into FRANK's glowering face, uncomfortably close.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's better. You awake, Charlie-boy?

Charlie lunges to open the drawer, but it's already open, his hands goes in, and Frank kick-slams the drawer shut on his hand. Charlie howls in pain.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Too late, Charlie.

Frank laughs, as he releases foot from drawer. Charlie withdraws wounded hand, props up on elbows, stares at Frank, who wears surgical gloves and holds gun on Charlie. Liz, motionless, stares at Frank.

CHARLIE
What do you want?

FRANK
As I said, it's too late. What I want-ed was loyalty.

CHARLIE
I haven't said anything.

Frank looks back and forth between Charlie and Liz.

FRANK
Yeah, maybe, but not out of loyalty. Out of fear. But that won't last forever.

Liz tries to slowly inch her way, under the covers, towards a cell phone on her bedside table. Frank is focused tightly on Charlie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
It's different now, isn't it, Charlie? Now the show's here in your bedroom, not safely over the monitor in mine.

Frank motions the gun towards the baby monitor on the dresser. Liz inches her hand closer to the cell phone.

FRANK
You listen to the whole neighborhood, or just me and Tammy? Yeah, I know about it, thanks to Liz, here.

Liz freezes, her hand inches from the phone.

LIZ
What do you want, Frank?

FRANK
(loud)
It's too late, Liz. You had to stick your nose in. It's bad enough you listened in on our personal lives, but you had to join in and manipulate.

Frank turns back towards Charlie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Charlie, did you know that Liz told Tammy that you heard screaming in my home before my son died?

Charlie spins towards Liz.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Charlie didn't see what happened, but somehow you did! From my sister-in-law's house, 500 miles away!

LIZ
(nervously)
Where's Tammy now?

FRANK
(smiles)
Kinda' quiet over there now, huh?

Liz looks anxious.

FRANK (CONT'D)
After you opened your big mouth, she packed her and the kid up and went to a hotel. She left me - because of you.

CHARLIE
Frank, it's all crazy now. She'll be back tomorrow.

FRANK
I don't think so. Not from the look in her eyes. You don't think so, either, Charlie, not from the look in yours.

Liz slides blanket over the cell phone.

CHARLIE
Frank, we go way back. Let's go downstairs and have a couple of drinks. Whaddya say?

FRANK
I say it's too late.

Franks spins gun towards Liz?

FRANK (CONT'D)
Who're you calling, your detective friend?

Liz freezes. Frank yanks blanket off of Liz, revealing phone in her hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Detective Sanders won't be bothering us any more. The good detective won't be bothering anyone, any more.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

One Year Earlier overlays the screen, fades out. FRANK and TAMMY CHAFFEE; Charlie and Liz sit on chairs, surrounding card table. Both women are very pregnant. All but Tammy look early 30s; Tammy early 20s. Charlie is trim.

Frank is muscular. Frank holds unlit cigar between his teeth. He stares impatiently at card table.

FRANK
C'mon, c'mon, Charlie boy. You in or you out?

CHARLIE
Don't rush me.

FRANK
Charlie, your money's burning a hole in my pocket.

LIZ
Ease up Frank. You're not on ESPN.

TAMMY
He's on something.

LIZ
How do you take him?

TAMMY
With Zoloft.

CHARLIE
I fold.

Charlie tosses in cards, face down. Frank smiles.

FRANK
As I knew you would, Charlie. As you always do.

Charlie rolls eyes, as Frank scoops up the pot. Liz squeezes Charlie's leg under the table.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You never stick your neck out there. I can count on that.

CHARLIE
It was a pretty big pot.

Frank turns over his cards, showing just a pair of 6's. He smiles broadly.

FRANK
Read'em and weep. No guts, no glory. Let's turn'em over, Charlie.

Charles tries to consolidate all of the cards on the table, but Frank snatches Charlie's cards, flips them over, showing three 10's. Frank shakes his head. Liz winces and slides hand off Charlie's leg.

LIZ
Enjoy it now, Frank. Soon, the only thing you'll be turning over will be the twins, to change their diapers, right Tammy?

FRANK
Tammy'll do that. I'll turn Tammy over.

Frank leans back, smiles, and draws unlit cigar out of mouth, holds it up.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I call this one (pause) "Monica".

LIZ
You're disgusting, Frank.

FRANK
Oh really, Liz? Did you know Charlie was a big cigar man, himself, when we served overseas?

Charlie shoots Frank a nervous glance, looks away from Liz.

LIZ
I don't know why Charlie puts up with you. You must have saved his life over there.

FRANK
(nods, to himself)
Once or twice, once or twice.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Five Months Later overlays the screen.

The same two couples play poker. A double stroller sits besides Tammy, on the far side from Frank. The babies are sleeping.

TAMMY
What are the odds on us both having twins?

LIZ
At least we knew it ahead of time.

TAMMY
Frank joked, "Have as many as you want - only one's coming home."

Liz is about to make a play when the noise of a baby crying is heard off screen. Liz turns towards the stairs and rises. Frank slaps his cards face down on the table, sighs, looks at watch, taps foot impatiently.

FRANK
(smirks)
Maybe we should just play on-line.

CHARLIE
C'mon Frank, I'll play her hand.

LIZ (O.C.)
No need!

All look surprised as Liz slides back into seat, one baby in her arm.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(huge grin)
I'll play the mommy card. I can do it all! In less time than it takes Frank to bring down the mood.

Liz scans her cards and the table action in one careful glance, pushes chips forward.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Frank, I'll see your raise, and up it two bucks.

Frank scowls. Baby starts crying. Frank tosses down cards.

FRANK
I can't concentrate. It's getting late. Tammy.

Frank rises, then Tammy.

Liz ignores him. She corrals her winnings, coos down at baby. Charlie sees Frank and Tammy to door, stands talking through doorway.

CHARLIE
Same Bat time, same Bat channel - next Wednesday?

FRANK
(Unenthusiastically)
Sure. I'll bring the Benadryl. C'mon Tammy.

Frank grabs Tammy's butt as they turn. She squeals, as they walk off, Charlie closes door slowly.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Liz cleaned up - you didn't win the big one tonight.

FRANK (O.S.)
Yeah? You're gonna win the big one in a couple of minutes.

Charlie looks depressed as he saunters through abandoned living room. He takes drink glasses from table into kitchen, then goes upstairs. Liz comes out of kids' room, sees Charlie, puts finger to her lips. Charlie follows her into master bedroom, puts arms around her from behind, nuzzles her neck. She lets him. He reaches around to her chest, begins to unbutton her blouse. She grabs his hand, stopping him.

LIZ
Honey, I'm too tired. I hardly got any sleep last night.

CHARLIE
Tomorrow will be four months. How long -

Liz walks away into bathroom, readies for bed. Charlie follows.

LIZ
You don't understand. You're not here all day.

CHARLIE
Gimme a break. I'm "only" at work nine hours a day. It's a regular barrel of laughs, as heads roll. But I don't sacrifice my family life because of it.

LIZ
Now you give me a break. At least nobody starts screaming when you go to the bathroom.

Liz pulls on a long, conservative nightgown. Charlie strips down to underwear.

CHARLIE
Depends what I ate. Just what did you think being a stay-at-home-mom would entail? Showing the babies off at lunch with the girls?

Charlie follows her into bedroom and into bed. She slides off to farthest edge of bed. He lies staring at ceiling, arms folded behind head. Liz opens a book.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
So you're too tired to make love, but not to stay up late, reading?

LIZ
It relaxes me.

CHARLIE
You used to say that our -

LIZ
Since you're awake, I left the baby monitor downstairs. Could you go get it?

Charlie glares at her, starts to open his mouth, throws off covers, jumps out of bed, stomps towards bedroom door.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(sharply)
Don't you wake the kids up - or you'll stay up with them.

CHARLIE
At least they'll love me in the middle of the night.

INT - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie, wearing a suit and tie, walks briskly into his office, tosses his attache case onto chair next to his desk, sits down. He leans over, opens it, starts flipping through files, without removing any.

He looks up, startled, when someone knocks on his open door. He sees MEREDITH HUGHES, mid 30s, attractive, business attire, leaning in.

MEREDITH
Charles? Charles Donnelly?

Charlie sits staring at her, puzzled.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
May I come in?

She strides towards his desk without waiting for an answer. He stands.

CHARLIE
Yes, can I help you - Miss _____?

MEREDITH
Aren't you supposed to say, "My friends call me Charlie?"

Charlie smiles nervously, gesturing to chair that Meredith was already pulling out for herself.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry. You caught me in deep thought.

MEREDITH
(fakes male voice)
My friends call me Charlie. Won't you have a seat, Miss _____

Charlie nervously adjusts tie, gestures towards empty chair.

CHARLIE
Won't -

MEREDITH
(normal voice)
Thank you.

Meredith sits, quickly, gracefully, leans forward, smiles.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
I thought you'd never ask. Now, where were we? Sit down. You're making me nervous.

CHARLIE
I'm making you nervous?

Meredith points Charlie towards his seat. He sits, gives fake grin.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Who are you?

MEREDITH
Meredith Hughes. My friends call me Meredith.

She leans forward, lowers voice.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
My good friends call me, "Mmmmmmm."

Charlie fidgets, clicks pen several times.

CHARLIE
Mmm- uh, Meredith, what can I do for you?

MEREDITH
Or vice versa.

CHARLIE
What?

MEREDITH
I was watching you in the commissary, Charlie. You looked...troubled.

CHARLIE
Well, I was working on a sales proposal for the Mintner account - Wait a minute. Who are you? Do you work here?

MEREDITH
(smiles)
Four years, Charlie. Two longer than you. MIKE GOREN brought me in, same as you.

CHARLIE
I look troubled? Are you the company shrink?

Meredith laughs, leans forward, taps his hand lightly with her index finger, leaves it there. He flinches, but leaves hand under her finger.

MEREDITH
No, Charlie. I manage Corporate Real Estate.

Charlie relaxes, flexes shoulders, leans back.

CHARLIE
You oversee the international properties?

MEREDITH
Let's say I handle acquisitions.

CHARLIE
I'll bet. How do I come in?

MEREDITH
At lunch, you looked too glazed-over to work. You never turned a page.

CHARLIE
You were really paying attention.

MEREDITH
I was eating alone. You looked like you needed someone to talk to.

Charlie catches himself glancing down at her cleavage. Meredith's eyes catch his when he looks back at her face. She smiles, lightly touching her tongue to her upper lip.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
Am I right?

Charlie starts to lean forward towards her. His intercom buzzes, startling him.

CHARLIE
Yeah, KIRSTEN?

KIRSTEN (O.S.)
It's your wife, line 3.

CHARLIE
Tell her I'll call - no, ask her to hang on a second. Be right with her.

Charlie looks up, finds Meredith standing.

MEREDITH
If you need someone to talk to, Charlie, my door's always open.

Meredith smiles, hands him her business card, and leaves. He watches her form exit, then is drawn to the flashing light on his phone, and reaches for it.

CHARLIE
Hey Liz, I'm sorry. I couldn't get off on a business call. You saved me.

Charlie turns Meredith's business card face down, picks it up to toss in trash can, but slides it into corner of desk blotter.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. CAR - LATER

Charlie, driving, hears a montage of previous conversations in his head.

LIZ (V.O.)
I'm too tired. You don't understand.

MEREDITH (V.O.)
You look troubled...I've worked here four years - two longer than you.

LIZ (V.O.)
I'm playing the mommy card.

MEREDITH (V.O.)
If you ever need someone to talk to...two years longer than you.

A car horn blares at Charlie, who slams on brakes, screeches to stop in middle of intersection, barely misses a motorcycle, as rider skids sideways, stays up. He looks up, sees he ran a red light. MOTORCYCLIST raises visor, stares at Charlie.

MOTORCYCLIST
Hey moron, red means stop. It's a new fad.

Motorcyclist revs engine and rides away. Charlie eases back into the flow of traffic.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Jesus - she looked up my file to find out how long I've worked here.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie walks through office hallway, on cell-phone, enters his office, sits.

FRANK (O.S.)
So, Tammy tells me that she got a sitter and we're meeting for lunch. Guess where she takes me? A hotel!

CHARLIE
No kidding?

FRANK(O.S.)
I'm talking room service, champagne, X-rated flicks. She even put on a maid's uniform...or most of it, anyway.

CHARLIE
Can Liz get a transfusion from her?

Charlie slumps forward on his elbows.

FRANK (O.S.)
Hey pal, Liz was busy - she was baby-sitting for us! (laughs) I gotta run, buddy.

Charlie hangs up, sits back upright, looks at Liz' picture on desk. He inadvertently glances down at Meredith's business card, picks it up, feels it between thumb and forefinger, then sniffs it, inhales deeply. He looks at number on it, dials phone.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
Meredith Hughes.

Charlie turns chair, angles away from picture of Liz, which fades out of focus.

CHARLIE
Mmmmm.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
Charlie! How nice to hear your voice.

CHARLIE
You're good.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
You're right.

Charlie smiles, leans back, puts feet up.

CHARLIE
What kind of perfume is this on your card?

MEREDITH (O.S.)
The kind that works. What do you think?

Charlie takes a deep inhale of card.

CHARLIE
I'd say it's...Obsession.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
Very good. And the perfume?

CHARLIE
I, uh, meant --

MEREDITH (O.S.)
(laughs)
Charlie, I'm late for a meeting. Call me tomorrow and we can go get a drink or ten. Thanks for calling. B-bye.

Charlie sits, momentarily grins, hangs up, jumps up.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Tight shot of Charlie in front of a door. He holds roses and a bottle of wine. He rings doorbell, door opens slightly, not revealing person on other side.

CHARLIE
Mmmm. You're looking good.

Liz stands, smirking, in doorway of their house, wearing ratty T-shirt and cut-off jeans. Her hair is messy, she holds a diaper in one hand, and spit-up appears to be on her shoulder. Charlie holds roses and wine forward.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I hold here the antidote.

Liz reaches for flowers and bottle.

LIZ
(smirks)
I probably looked sexier when I was eight months pregnant. (smiles genuinely) What's the occasion?

Charlie steps in, plants closed-mouth kiss on Liz' lips and walks into kitchen. Liz closes door, follows, as Charlie trims roses, fills vase with water, puts flowers in, and begins opening wine.

CHARLIE
The babies?

LIZ
Fed and bed.

Charlie grabs Liz, dips her, gives her a long kiss. Liz feigns Southern belle fanning herself.

LIZ (CONT'D)
My, my Rhett. It's good to have you back from the war.

CHARLIE
It occurred to me that you weren't feeling romantic because you weren't feeling romanced.

He leads her to couch, pulls a corkscrew out of pocket, smiles, opens and pours wine. He offers her a glass. Liz takes it, holding it up.

LIZ
I shouldn't - nursing and all. Oh, I don't suppose one glass would hurt.

CHARLIE
(winks)
Might help keep'em asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Liz walks into bedroom, turns on baby monitor, lullaby music is heard. She dons her non-sexy nightgown, slides into bed.

LIZ
That wine helped take the edge off my all-day headache, but just knocked me out.

Charlie, just in underwear, enters bedroom, slides into bed, over to Liz, tries to embrace her.

LIZ (CONT'D)
No-no-Charlie. I can't.

Charlie stiffens, turns.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Don't be angry.

Charlie spins back towards her, sits up, glares down at her.

CHARLIE
Why not?

LIZ
I'm tired. I just don't feel sexy.

CHARLIE
You look sexy. (pause) Maybe we should see a marriage counselor.

Charlie slides down, puts hands behind his head, stares at ceiling.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I knew I'd have to share you with the kids - not lose you.

LIZ
Oh Charlie, just hold me.

Charlie tentatively puts arm around her. She makes minimal effort to turn towards him. A muffled MAN'S VOICE bursts onto baby monitor, followed by a WOMAN'S VOICE, even farther off mike, behind lullaby music. Liz frantically tries to disengage herself from the covers and rise, but Charlie stops her, rolls over to his end table, fumbles with 9mm. pistol he pulls from top drawer, stops suddenly as voice is heard again.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I don't mean to bother you and your husband.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Yes?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I've been in an accident. Can I use your phone?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(whispers)
Come in. Sssh! My husband's asleep.

LIZ
It's Frank! Frank and -

CHARLIE
What? That's not -

LIZ
Listen. They're putting on voices. I think they're role playing, faaaantasizing.

Charlie continues staring at monitor, then glances out window at Frank's and Tammy's house. He sees shadows behind curtain.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Are you hurt? Come close.

Charlie sees shadows begin to embrace.

LIZ
Charlie!

Charlie returns to bed, puts gun in drawer, slides into bed, back up against headboard.

FRANK (O.S.)
I think I'm OK. Ow - my shoulder.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Let me see. Take your shirt off. Oh my.

FRANK (O.S.)
My knee feels sore, too.

Charlie and Liz exchange glances. Charlie sits back on bed.

CHARLIE
I've heard of this. Monitors have a narrow band set aside, so they're susceptible to criss-crossed signals.

Sound of zipper catches their attention, followed by noise clothes hitting floor, belt buckle jangling.

FRANK (O.S.)
Oh ma'am. I'm a little embarrassed. Oh my God.

Charlie, transfixed, stares at monitor. Suddenly his eyes bug out as he is startled. He looks down at top of Liz' head, bobbing under sheet. He grips headboard, behind him, with both hands, gasps, closes eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D) (O.S.)
You sure your husband's asleep?

TAMMY (O.S.)
Shhh!

FRANK (O.S.)
Come up here.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Stop. We can't. Stop!

FRANK (O.S.)
It's OK. Just lean against the wall.

Charlie pulls Liz up from under covers, turns her on her back, grabs her wrists, and moves up over her.

LIZ
Charlie, Charlie, easy. It's been a long time. Ohhh.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Ohhh. Ohhh!

CHARLIE
How're ya doing, baby?

LIZ
Oh I'm great. Really great -

CHARLIE
Yes, you are.

LIZ
(whispers)
Stop. I was just thinking - if we can hear them -

CHARLIE
Can they hear us?

LIZ
Exactly.

CHARLIE
We could try talking to them.

LIZ
Then what? A virtual orgy. I'll find out. (yells) Frank -

Charlie muffles her yell with a kiss which she accepts.

DISSOLVES TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE FRANK AND TAMMY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Liz, approaches with stroller, knocks on door. Tammy opens it, smiles, Liz enters, door closes.

LIZ
I just need two diapers. Charlie's bringing some home.

Liz looks at baby monitor speaker. The light is on, but it's silent. She glances at Tammy, who is looking the other way. Liz raises volume on speaker, which makes feedback squeal. Liz turns it down just as Tammy spins towards it.

TAMMY
Oh, it's that stupid monitor. It hardly works at all.

Tammy hands Liz the diapers.

LIZ
Thanks for helping us so much.

TAMMY
It's just a couple of diapers.

Liz takes diapers and stroller, walks home, opens her door, releasing blaring Guns & Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" from living room. Liz scrambles to turn down music, picks up phone and dials.

LIZ
I went over there, Charlie. Couldn't hear a thing.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
We're safe. I feel a little...seedy.

LIZ
"Dirty" might be the right word you're looking for. Dirty.

DISSOLVES TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAYTIME

Charlie, absorbed in work, types feverishly. Suddenly, he is startled to look and see Kirsten standing in front of his desk. Kirsten, early 20s, perky, short skirt.

CHARLIE
Oh, I'm sorry. Have you been standing there long?

KIRSTEN
About an hour.

Charlie's eyes bug out. Kirsten shakes head, laughs.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Couple of minutes, anyway. You were so absorbed, I didn't want to...

CHARLIE
What is it, Kirsten?

KISTEN
Your wife called. Twice.

CHARLIE
Why didn't you buzz me?

KIRSTEN
I did. Twice.

Charlie looks at phone with disbelief, taps lights at bottom.

CHARLIE
It never came on.

KIRSTEN
(giggles)
Yes it did. You didn't. I heard it buzz.

Charlie shakes his head, feigning bewilderment.

CHARLIE
I must have been lost. I need to finish this project.

Kirsten leans over his desk. Her hair swings towards Charlie. He has to avert his eyes to keep from staring down her loosely fitting blouse.

KIRSTEN
(huskily)
Y'know what I think you really need?

CHARLIE
What?

KIRSTEN
Your wife on the phone.

She hands him phone, smiles, turns, and sashays out of the office. Charlie dials, phone rings, picks up.

LIZ (O.S.)
Did I call at a bad time?

CHARLIE
Never. What's up?

LIZ (O.S.)
Frank's coming home.

CHARLIE
And...

LIZ (O.S.)
And...our favorite therapist show is on...and the kids are down for a nap.

CHARLIE
Our favorite thera - Oh!

Charlie looks at all the work on his desk.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh jeez -

LIZ (O.S.)
He's coming home. Are you?

INT/EXT. CHARLIE'S STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie cruises towards their houses, pulls over when sees Frank getting out of car, his back to Charlie. Charlie parks, waits until he sees Frank go inside house, then walks towards home.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Liz lie in bed, sun streaking through curtains, across their partially sheet covered figures. They perk up as Tammy's voice bursts from the monitor.

TAMMY (O.S.)
When Courier Express said that you'd deliver, they weren't kidding. (Giggles)

FRANK (O.S.)
You're a satisfied customer, ma'am?

Liz turns to Charlie and sticks her index finger down her throat, disapprovingly.

TAMMY (O.S.)
I like the way you put the package inside the door.

Liz rolls her eyes, then halfheartedly tries to fight Charlie off.

LIZ
Charlie, again? We just -

CHARLIE
My therapist insists.

He pins her, grabs her wrists.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie stands, buttons shirt. Liz lies in bed, wrapped in sheet.

CHARLIE
Hey, how'd you know Frank was coming home?

Liz nods towards monitor.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Do you listen all the time?

LIZ
It's better than Oprah.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but I just don't know -

LIZ
Who'd you rather picture naked - Tammy or Oprah?

CHARLIE
You.

LIZ
Right answer.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Charlie, rises from breakfast table, puts on suit jacket, gathers papers to leave. Liz, in nightgown, carries both twins.

CHARLIE
Today's the big pitch, so no surprise appointments with Dr. Tammy, unfortunately.

LIZ
Actually, she's going to visit her sister Eileen, and won't be back until tomorrow.

Liz sits on couch, pulls children to her. Charlie stops and looks at her critically.

CHARLIE
Does she broadcast an hourly news schedule, now, or did you hook up Tivo to the baby monitor?

LIZ
(angrily)
She told me!

CHARLIE
Who's watching their kids?

LIZ
I am, today. Frank gets'em overnight.

CHARLIE
Frank? He has no patience with kids. Doesn't Tammy nurse them?

LIZ
She wanted to, but Frank pushed her to bottle feed right away. Said it would ruin her breasts.

Charlie glances at Liz' chest.

CHARLIE
Will it?

LIZ
You're the one who gets stimulated hearing her voice. You tell me.

Charlie walks to door, opens it.

CHARLIE
Hey - I'm not the one who needed the neighbors to resume a sex life.

He goes out the door, closes it. Liz sticks her tongue out at him, glances down, smiling, at babies.

LIZ
No, kids, there won't be any therapy calls today.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Charlie, Liz, Frank, and Tammy sit, holding drinks. Liz and Charlie's kids are in a playpen. Frank and Tammy's are in a double stroller, drinking from bottles.

TAMMY
So, were they OK while I was out of town?

FRANK
Fine.

CHARLIE
They only cried when they were awake.

FRANK
Funny. They slept like babies.

Charlie looks suspiciously at Frank, who averts his eyes.

TAMMY
I admit I'm happily surprised, especially since Frank always insists on getting baby-sitters.

CHARLIE
We need a live-in nanny. Maybe a -

CHARLE AND LIZ
16 year old Swedish exchange student.

Liz rolls eyes.

LIZ
Yeah, named Sven, who'll give me massages all day.

Liz smirks at Charlie.

TAMMY
There. I think that this little session has been very helpful.

LIZ
Actually, I don't like strangers in my house.

FRANK
Yeah, with all those diamonds and furs Charlie buys you.

LIZ
Well, Charlie's got a pistol.

FRANK
So he's always bragged.

LIZ
Once the kids are moving around, I want it out of the house.

CHARLIE
Yeah, their crying will scare burglars away.

FRANK
What've ya got, partner?

CHARLIE
Mac 10, gang bang special.

The other three stare at him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Nah, just a Glock 9, nothing fancy.

FRANK
How much you want?

CHARLIE
I don't know -

FRANK
Let me take it to the range. If I like it, I'll make you an offer.

CHARLIE
(rising)
I'll go get it.

LIZ
No! Not with four kids here.

Liz looks at Tammy.

TAMMY
(to Liz)
Hey, I grew up with guns. My dad, my uncles - all cops. When daddy was alive, he used to take me to the range.

FRANK
(dismissive)
Paper targets.

TAMMY
Yeah, well, one night, when I was in third grade, I woke up. There was a lot of yelling downstairs.

LIZ
Your parents?

TAMMY
My dad's older brother was yelling at my dad. Then my dad got on the phone and he starts yelling. I was scared, so I snuck out to the car, lay down in the back seat and fell asleep. I didn't wake up until I heard the car doors slam and my dad and my uncle got out and went into a warehouse. I was scared out there, so I went in after them.

Everyone's transfixed on Tammy's story.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
I saw them across a big room. There were some other guys I didn't recognize. Suddenly, everything went crazy. I saw...*everything*.

LIZ
What did -

Tammy shakes her head at Liz.

TAMMY
I was sure they could hear my heart beating. Then, my uncle saw me in the shadows and pointed me out to daddy. He ran over. I thought he was going to beat me. But, he just said that I had to keep this between us. Just the two of us, or we'd all be in trouble. Forever. "Our secret world" he called it. I I nodded. Funny thing, I wasn't scared, because he was with me. I told him that and he smiled.

I looked in the paper for days, but there was nothing about it. And I kept my mouth shut - except when we were totally alone. One time, he saw my mom smack me hard for getting my white linen church gloves all dirty, playing, but it'd actually happened when I was helping daddy check one of his guns in a pinch. He told me to wear gloves and they were in the car.
(MORE)

TAMMY(cont'd)
He was proud of me for keeping my mouth shut.

After that, when I was just a little older, he even took me with him a couple of times to distract people he wanted to catch off-guard, who didn't suspect a dad and daughter.

Everyone just fidgets, looking at the ground and each other.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
(to Frank)
Hey Frank, I'm glad things went well with the babies, 'cause my sister has to go back in next week for another procedure.

FRANK
Why not take the kids? She loves them.

TAMMY
Sure, take two babies into the hospital for a couple of days. Nice try, though.

Think of this as a benefit of your not wanting me to nurse the kids - or I'd have to take them.

LIZ
I'm going with you.

TAMMY
That'd be great.

CHARLIE
But -

LIZ
But nothing. My mom will watch the kids while you're at work.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM NIGHT

Charlie and Liz climb into bed. Monitor crackles, piquing their interest.

CHARLIE
I feel like we're teenagers, waiting for our parents to go to bed.

LIZ
Oh my God. Now, we're the parents.

CHARLIE
No, they are.

Charlie nods at monitor.

LIZ
No. It is.

Monitor starts to dominate screen. They jump as Tammy is heard.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Just shove it Frank.

FRANK (O.S.)
I don't see why she can't just hire a nurse.

TAMMY
Because she has me!

FRANK (O.S.)
Yeah, but I'm here with -

TAMMY (O.S.)
This ain't a girls' night out, you moron.

Charlie and Liz look at each other, astonished.

TAMMY (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Eileen's an emotional basket case. They're pulling out her private parts - not a couple of wisdom teeth.

FRANK (O.S.)
All right, just one night.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Let's hope. Oh, put those toys away. I'm in no mood. Good night.

Charlie slides over to Liz.

CHARLIE
Well, it's not like we need their permission.

He starts to put arm over her. Liz puts arm up to block him.

LIZ
I'm sorry, I'm just not...

Charlie stares at her, then the monitor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. HIGHWAY - DAYTIME

Charlie is driving, talking on cell-phone.

CHARLIE
(laughing)
I won't forget to do the laundry... Right, or change the babies' diapers. Once a day, whether they need it or not. Hey, how's Eileen holding up?

LIZ (O.S.)
As good as can be expected. I'll try to make it home tomorrow. No wild parties.

CHARLIE
Yeah, formula and vodka.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie lies alone in darkness. He is momentarily half-awakened by noise on monitor of man and woman giggling, door opening/closing, car engine starts. Clock next to monitor reads 1:15. Charlie sleeps, clock advances to 2:30. Baby crying is heard. Then two babies are crying.

FRANK (O.S.)
Shutup! Shutup in there!

Crying stops momentarily. Charlie gets up and checks on his own sleeping babies. As he returns, he hears a baby start crying again on monitor.

FRANK (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Goddmanit, you've got a clean diaper. Stop crying, just stop it.

Charlie slides into bed. He looks at phone, starts to pick up receiver. Baby's screaming gets louder. A loud crash is heard, then complete silence.

FRANK (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Oh my God! Look what you've done. Look what you've done. Are you happy now?

Crying starts again, but much farther from monitor. Charlie lays back down, pulls covers up and puts pillow over his head.

FADE OUT.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie awakens to whirling, police car lights flash off his bedroom walls. Approaching siren gets louder. Charlie rises and looks out open window, sees police car with door open. An ambulance pulls up, medics rush into Frank's house. One OFFICER stands out front. Neighbors in robes stand huddled in street. Charlie pulls on pants and T-shirt, glances into kids' room, sees they're asleep, goes downstairs, opens door and is startled to be confronted by DETECTIVE standing in doorway, features eclipsed by flashing lights from behind. Detective holds up shield.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Detective Baron Sanders. May I come in?

Detective Sanders leans in. Charlie tries to look around him, momentarily, then acquiesces, leads Detective Sanders into living room. Charlie motions towards living room chairs. Charlie begins to sit, but when Detective stays on feet, Charlie quickly rises.

CHARLIE
Is everything OK?

Detective just looks at him.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Mr. Donnelly, is it?

CHARLIE
Yes, Charles Donnelly. What's going on?

Detective flips open notebook.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Charlie - may I call you Charlie? How well do you know your neighbors?

CHARLIE
Pretty well. Is there something - is Frank OK?

DETECTIVE SANDERS
(coughs)
You wouldn't have a soft drink - or just a glass of water?

Charlie nods and heads towards kitchen. Detective Sanders starts to head towards photos on living room wall, glances towards kitchen.

DETECTIVE SANDERS (CONT'D)
If you could throw a couple a' ice cubes in, two, maybe. Thanks.

Detective Sanders studies pictures of Charlie and Frank together, fishing on boat, and raising toast at Charlie's wedding, surrounded by their wives. Charlie re-enters room with two glasses. Detective Sanders turns around holding framed photo of Charlie and Frank parachuting.

DETECTIVE SANDERS (CONT'D)
Looks like you know Frank real well, Charlie.

CHARLIE
You could say that. Now what -

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Charlie, is Frank someone prone to be quick-tempered?

Charlie puts glasses down, raises hands, palms forward, in "stop" motion.

CHARLIE
Now, hold on Detective. You're in my house, firing questions. Tell me what's going on, or please leave.

The revolving police car lights illuminate room, Detective Sanders peers out window, then motions for them to sit down.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Charlie - I'll be blunt. One of the babies next door died tonight.

Charlie jumps up.

CHARLIE
What? Oh my God! How -

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Purely accidental - at least according to Mr. Chaffee.

Charlie holds up one finger, then dashes off to bathroom, off-screen. He throws up, flushes toilet, runs water in sink. Detective Sanders glances at watch, writes down notes in pad. Charlie comes back in.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry -

Detective Sanders waves off apology.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Charlie, these horrible accidents do happen. I know. No one's fault. Usually. Did you hear anything?

CHARLIE
Did I hear anything?

Detective Sanders smirks.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
Yes, anything indicating a problem next door?

CHARLIE
No. Nothing. Nothing I recall.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
An innocent baby just died, Mr. Donnelly, and you're giving me politically correct answers. In the past two hours, think hard, did you hear anything?

CHARLIE
No. I was asleep.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
I couldn't help noticing that your upstairs windows were all open...as were the Chaffee's. So, I thought, maybe, you heard something that way, kind of like in that movie, Rear Window. No? Is Mrs. Donnelly here?

CHARLIE
She's out of town - with Frank's wife.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
When -

CHARLIE
Tomorrow.

DETECTIVE SANDERS
According to Frank, everything was fine, all was quiet, he was changing a diaper, turned his back for a second, and the baby flopped off the table, hitting his head.

Sanders and Charlie stand staring at each other. Sanders turns to door, opens it, blue and red lights overpower room.

DETECTIVE SANDERS (CONT'D)
Call me when you wake up, Mr. Donnelly.

Sanders flips a business card onto nearby chair, steps outside, slams door, darkening room significantly. Babies upstairs start crying.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

The couples are standing in drizzle at the baby's funeral.

Babies are crying, held one each, by Tammy, Liz, and Charlie. Charlie and Liz stand close together. Tammy and Frank stand separately, Frank's arms folded across his chest. Detective Sanders stands, unnoticed, in the distance. Sanders turns, walks back to his car, is startled when his CAPTAIN, 60, heavy set, calls to him from across the road, signals Sanders to come over.

CAPTAIN
Baron. Ya gotta second?

Sanders walks across to him.

DETECTIVE
What gives?

CAPTAIN
They told me you'd be here, but I'd figured as much. I'm not so sure you should be working this case...with all you've been through.

DETECTIVE
My number came up. I can handle it. When I can't, I'll quit.

CAPTAIN
I don't know. It hits awfully close to home. I'm just sayin'...

DETECTIVE
(firmly)
I said, when I can't do the job, I'll quit.

Sanders turns, hustles back to car, slams door, drives off.

EXT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Liz and Charlie sit at table, each holding a baby against a shoulder. Tammy and Frank sit opposite, Tammy holds sleeping baby against her shoulder, while Frank leans forward, chin on folded hands, solemn.

TAMMY
I keep telling Frank it's not his fault. It could happen to any parent.

FRANK
He'd been so quiet, hardly moving. I turned for a second -

Tammy rises, steps to Frank, kisses him on the head.

TAMMY
(softly)
Stop it Frank. Stop beating yourself up. You've still got two of us who need you.

FRANK
He was just such a good boy.

Frank locks eyes with Charlie, then quickly looks away. Liz looks back and forth, catching this. Frank stands and wraps arms around Tammy.

TAMMY
It's terrible. Nothing but time can heal it.

FRANK
I'm sorry. I was hoping that our backyard get-together would cheer things up a little, make'em seem a little more normal. Instead, I bum everybody out.

LIZ
Not at all. It's part of the healing process for all of us.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Liz slides into bed and over next to Charlie. They both stare at ceiling.

LIZ
I'm not Frank's biggest fan, but I do feel badly for him.

CHARLIE
That's a switch.

LIZ
You're not here during the day. I constantly have to turn my back on the twins. Frank was just very unlucky.

CHARLIE
Yeah, just unlucky. Y'know, he may not "get lucky" for awhile, either.

LIZ
Hey Mr. Warmth, I think Tammy feels really badly for him, the way he's taking it. Besides, she may want to have another as soon as possible. She's from a pretty tough family.

CHARLIE
I don't know if he's ready for that.

LIZ
That may not be his choice. I'm depressed enough for all of us. Good night baby.

Liz turns away, pulls up covers, closes eyes. Charlie remains facing ceiling, eyes open.

FADE OUT.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Liz and Charlie lie sleeping as monitor comes blaring on, with Mae West impersonation. Liz and Charlie struggle to consciousness, slightly bewildered looking.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Hey sailor, you look like you've been at sea a long time, and need a little R & R. Maybe a lotta R & R.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Charlie and Liz relax at a table, drinking wine.

CHARLIE
This is nice.

Charlie reaches across table, takes Liz' hand, sips wine.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
A nice surprise. I owe you one.

LIZ
(smiling)
You owe me more than that. We needed to get out. Things have been stressful at home.

Charlie nods several times.

CHARLIE
The kids with Tammy?

LIZ
She loves kids, the more the better.
(MORE)

LIZ(cont'd)
Ours were crying when I left, but frankly, I think she misses the constant noise around the house.

CHARLIE
She's from a big family. Sometimes you can hide in all that noise.

LIZ
It hasn't stopped their sex life.

CHARLIE
It did for awhile. Maybe she wants to have another asap.

LIZ
The whole thing was so freaky. I'm extra cautious when I'm changing diapers.

Charlie looks down, avoiding Liz' eyes.

CHARLIE
I know. I feel like a basketball player, always keeping a hand on the man I'm covering.

Liz' cell phone rings. She looks at it, before answering.

LIZ
It's Tammy. Hey, what's up? Oh my God.

Charlie, startled, looks up.

LIZ (CONT'D)
It's that bad? No, no. Do what you have to. It'll be OK, I'm sure. Thanks for calling.

Liz closes cell phone, takes bite of salad, chews, without looking up.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Tammy's sister had a bad drug reaction. It looks bad. She's going back.

CHARLIE
Do you have to - are you going with her?

LIZ
No, she's flying out tonight. She called from a cab to the airport, to let me know that Frank's watching the kids.

Liz dives back into her salad. Charlie freezes.

LIZ (CONT'D)
God, I hope her sister pulls through. She was Tammy's soul-sister in that huge, crazy family.

CHARLIE
But the kids were OK with Frank?

LIZ
They were screaming their heads off when she left. That's why she called. She felt bad. But she changed their diapers first.

Charlie stands up, signals waiter for bill.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry, we gotta go.

INT/EXT. CAR WEAVES THROUGH TRAFFIC - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie maneuvers car on wet streets. Liz looks grim.

LIZ
Now tell me. What is it?

Charlie just stares ahead.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Watch the road!

CHARLIE
I don't really trust Frank. Not with the twins.

LIZ
Just what the hell does that mean?

CHARLIE
I told the detective that I heard nothing through the open bedroom window. But I had heard plenty of yelling and crying on the monitor.

LIZ
Why didn't you tell -

CHARLIE
Honey, it's Frank!

LIZ
So what! So he saved your butt once and he gets a pass for life?

Charlie looks hard at Liz, has to swerve suddenly to avoid a car.

LIZ
Watch the road!

CHARLIE
I can't be sure what I heard.

LIZ
Oh, please.

CHARLIE
You're not a guy. You don't know. One word, one hint of abuse and you're guilty. If I'd seen what happened--

LIZ
If it was our kids, Charlie?

Charlie glances down.

CHARLIE
I know.

LIZ
If anything happens to them you're equally guilty.

CHARLIE
Nothing's going to happen to them.

They come to a halt behind a broken down truck, flashers on. Rain beats down. Charlie grimaces, punches steering wheel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT/EXT. DRIVING - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Liz come around the corner onto their street. In the distance are flashing police lights.

They glance at each other. As they get closer, they see squad cars in their driveway.

LIZ
Charlie!

Liz jumps out of the car before it's completely stopped, runs towards house. As she gets to front door, she runs into FIRST OFFICER coming out, who stops and holds her.

OFFICER
You live here, ma'am?

Liz struggles futilely to free herself.

LIZ
Yes! What's going on?

OFFICER #1
You know this man?

Officer indicates towards Frank, who's standing with SECOND OFFICER, at squad car parked at curb. Frank is being questioned, his face illuminated by flashing lights.

Liz has stopped struggling, but Officer still has loose grip on her.

LIZ
Yes. What the hell is going on?
Where are my children?

Charlie jumps out of car, heads towards Frank, but Second Officer motions him to stand back. Charlie's eyes meet Frank's, momentarily, then Charlie spots Liz, heads towards her.

OFFICER #1
He says that he lives next door, and that he was baby-sitting your kids, and came here to get some diapers. Says he was carrying one of your babies, who pushed the lit up button on your home alarm pad. Your burglar alarm went off. We came. Found him coming out with your child. Sound legit?

LIZ
(relaxing)
Yes. Where are my children?

FEMALE OFFICER
They're fine. A FEMALE OFFICER is with them next door. They've been asleep for awhile.

Liz collapses into Charlie's arms.

OFFICER #1
Never even needed the diapers.

Liz and Charlie stare through the rain at Frank, still at the squad car, who stares back at them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Liz sits up in bed, back against the headboard. Charlie walks in from bathroom, slides into bed, flicks off light, room goes dark. They're barely illuminated from outside lights.

LIZ
So what else, Charlie?

CHARLIE
What else what?

LIZ
What else did you "neglect" to mention, like what really happened the night their baby died?

CHARLIE
(sighs)
Nothing. I didn't know for sure -

Liz turns on her bedside light.

LIZ
And he's your buddy. And you hadn't seen anything...

Charlie gets up, walks to window, shuts it a little too hard.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Don't you wake those babies up!

Charlie shuts bedroom door softly, paces.

CHARLIE
And I'd already lied to the police.

LIZ
Great. Why?

CHARLIE
It was so sudden. I wanted to get my bearings. You weren't here. The detective comes in here, firing questions in the middle of the night - like it's his house.

LIZ
What if it had been our kids and you'd walked into the house and heard me beating one? Would you just let it go?

CHARLIE
Stop! I didn't let it go. But, if I'd told you, then you'd be in the middle of it. Then what? Would you call the police and say your husband was withholding evidence on a murder? Would you run over and tell Tammy that while you two were out of town you know her husband killed her child?

They stare at each other in silence.

LIZ
OK. Now what?

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Detective Sanders walks into office lobby at Charlie's company, sees strict security procedures, heads back outside. He goes around to back, mixes in with smokers, feigns looking for pack of cigarettes, grabs door as a smoker comes out, lets himself in, scouts around, glancing into offices.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie sits at desk, with his back to door. He spins at noise of knocking, and is surprised to see the detective in his doorway.

DETECTIVE
Hey Charlie, glad I caught you in. This a good time?

Detective smiles and walks in without waiting. He flips open notebook, walks towards Charlie, who rises, looking apprehensive, and shakes his hand.

CHARLIE
I don't see a security badge. How'd you get in?

DETECTIVE
I let myself in - for your sake. I didn't think you wanted me to attract attention.

CHARLIE
What can I do for you now?

DETECTIVE
(sits)
I just had a couple of quick questions.

Detective motions for Charlie to sit, which he does begrudgingly.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Now, your wife, _____.

CHARLIE
Liz.

DETECTIVE
Right, Liz. She wasn't home when the baby died, right?

CHARLIE
Yeah. You knew that.

DETECTIVE
Just double checking. She was what - out of town with Tammy, right?

Charlie just stares at him.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Then why did she think that you heard something from next door?

CHARLIE
She didn't. You're making that -

Detective makes dismissive gesture.

DETECTIVE
She told me that. Call her and ask.

Detective gestures towards phone. They both look at it, then back at each other for a moment.

CHARLIE
When did you -

DETECTIVE
Immaterial. Did you or didn't you hear anything?

CHARLIE
(firmly)
No.

Charlie stands and starts to turn his back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But thanks for coming by. I'm sure you know the way out.

Detective stands and takes a step towards door, then pauses.

DETECTIVE
Charlie, is your marriage OK?

Charlie turns back towards detective, puts hands on hips.

CHARLIE
Close the door. Sit down.

Charlie hits intercom button on desk.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Kirsten, hold my calls please.

Sound of door closing is heard, as detective sits. Charlie sits.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You have kids?

Detective shakes his head no.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's tough - all on the job training. It's a wrestling match. Some parents are quiet, others not. Frank's the loud type. He's always been.

DETECTIVE
So, you heard loud noises. What specifically?

Charlie shakes head.

CHARLIE
Nothing. Look, Liz has never liked Frank.

Detective rises.

DETECTIVE
Charlie, I'm not a shrink, but I really do play one on the street. I think that Liz' problem is with you, not Frank. Or, why would she talk to me? She's using me, to get to you.

CHARLIE
You're a real piece of work, you know that? What's your conclusion, doctor?

DETECTIVE
That you should get your head out of...the sand. Step up to the plate.

CHARLIE
(angrily)
Meaning what?

DETECTIVE
Look at your life, Charlie. You got this great job, a beautiful wife, kids, nice house. But, it's a house of cards.

They stare at each other.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Meaning...do the right thing. For the dead boy. And the living one. And for Liz' opinion of you. And for your opinion of yourself, too.

Detective walks towards door.

CHARLIE
What the hell do you know?

Detective opens the door, turns back.

DETECTIVE
Now I know that you know I'm right.

Detective steps out and closes door. Charlie grabs desk set, with pens and business cards, and fires them into the back of the door. Door opens, detective sees Charlie standing amongst business cards floating to floor around him.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Assaulting an officer of the law.
You're starting to fall apart,
Charlie.

Detective closes door gently, smirks, walks off.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie is on hands and knees, picking up scattered debris. His back is to door, as a knock is heard.

CHARLIE
(angrily)
What do you want now?

Door is heard opening.

MEREDITH (O.C.)
My, it looks like the Big Bad Wolf
huffed and puffed and...

Charlie spins and stands, sees Meredith enter.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry Meredith. I was just
trying to get the stress out, doing
some exercising...

Charlie points around office. Meredith sees the wooden desk set laying behind door, looks upward to divot in the door, as Charlie scrambles around scooping up remainder of debris. Meredith steps back into hallway.

MEREDITH
(frowns)
Looks more like exorcising.

EXT. CHARLIE AND LIZ' STREET - LATER

Liz is walking with the kids asleep in the stroller. Charlie drives past them, sees them, backs up, parks, and hops out. He joins stroll.

LIZ
Hey stranger, what brings you home this early?

CHARLIE
A mutual friend.

Liz looks puzzled, glances at Frank and Tammy's house.

LIZ
Honey, I'd love to - but the kids'll be up soon.

CHARLIE
When did you talk to the detective?

LIZ
When did I talk to him?

CHARLIE
Nice stall. When was he here?

LIZ
This morning, not long after you left.

CHARLIE
Why didn't you call me?

LIZ
You said you were working on deadline.

CHARLIE
What did you tell him?

LIZ
Hold on, Detective Connelly.

CHARLIE
Liz, he came to my office and said that you told him I'd heard something that night. What did you say?

Liz turns stroller and begins to walk back home.

LIZ
Just that, nothing more. You didn't commit a crime, but now it's all about you, isn't it?

CHARLIE
You back-stabbed me. You didn't need to say anything.

LIZ
Well maybe you did. I'm more interested in that other baby's welfare than Frank's.

Liz stops and softens grimace.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Hey - I never mentioned the monitor.

CHARLIE
(tense)
This whole thing is starting to get out of control.

LIZ
(hardens)
It got out of control when Frank did.

Charlie glares at her.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Don't look at me like that. You're the only one who can do anything about it.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Charlie opens door from inside, Frank walks in, looks right past Charlie and keeps walking, then spins towards Charlie.

CHARLIE
Frank, what's going -

FRANK
I saw that detective over here yesterday. What did he want?

CHARLIE
You. He's still probing about the...accident, y'know.

Frank picks up framed photo of the two of them in the navy, holding up liquor bottles at a tiki bar.

FRANK
(smiling)
God, we go back a long way.

Frank drops smile, stares eye to eye with Charlie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Nothing to probe, right partner? (pause) You haven't told him anything different, have you?

CHARLIE
There's nothing to tell, is there?

FRANK
I was always there for you. I bailed your butt out, more than once.

Frank struts around the room, arrogant, but edgy.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You wouldn't want me to tell things about you.

CHARLIE
I didn't do anything that bad.

FRANK
No? There aren't things you wouldn't mind your wife...or your boss hearing about? (pause) You're thinking about it, aren't you, Charlie boy?

CHARLIE
Frank, I don't know what you're referring to, but I've got nothing -

FRANK
Think Charlie, think. Think about an officers' training exam you had a little trouble with. Think about the night a fight broke out, outside that bar overseas - where were you, Charlie? I was there when they questioned you. Remember? Think about that Asian girl. How old was she Charlie, old boy.

Frank walks towards Charlie until they're face to face.

CHARLIE
I never did anything that bad, Frank. Nothing that -

FRANK
Nothing that what? Nothing that mattered much then, when you had nothing to lose. It's different now, my friend. You've got a wife and kids. You've got an executive job in a conservative company.

Charlie just stares at him.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's my boy, Charlie. Already thinking about how to cover your butt, keep your hands clean, never stick your neck out for anyone. But yourself.

Frank shoved their framed photo into Charlie's hands, up at his chest, then walks out, slams door.

EXT. IN FRONT OF A SUPERMARKET - DAY

Tammy pushes double stroller up to entrance. She pauses to fix her remaining baby's strap. Detective Sanders walks up to them.

DETECTIVE
Tammy?

Detective opens wallet to show shield.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I'm Detective Sanders. I wanted-

TAMMY
You were at the funeral. I saw you standing off to the side.

DETECTIVE
Yes, ma'am. I just needed to ask you a few questions.

TAMMY
Why?

DETECTIVE
I'm still investigating the m - accident.

TAMMY
No, why were you at the funeral?

DETECTIVE
I was at your house the night in question. I just wanted to get a feel for the...case.

TAMMY
What case? There was an accident. A horrible accident. I think you're just trying to make up a case...right?

Tammy pushes forward through the electronic door. Detective Sanders follows.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
How'd you know I was here? Were you following me?

DETECTIVE
I rang your doorbell. I was leaving. Liz was outside and told me that you were going to the supermarket.

Tammy moves about the aisles, reads labels and puts items in basket, while they talk.

TAMMY
So, why are you still looking into this accident?

DETECTIVE
I'm just trying to make sure that I've done my job.

Detective puts hands on cart, stops her from moving it.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
The cause of death was ruled inconclusive. It was a subdural hematoma. It could have been as your husband reported it. But there were bruise marks that weren't consistent with such a fall.

Tammy wrenches the cart away, walks off more purposely. Detective stays on her heels.

TAMMY
What are you saying? You think my husband killed our baby?

Detective just stares at her. Two other women stop and stare at both of them. Detective turns his gaze on them.

DETECTIVE
Can I help you ladies?

The women nervously move on.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I'm investigating a still open case. That's my job. Has your husband ever talked to you about his feelings from that night?

TAMMY
Feelings? His feelings? You think Frank sits around watching Dr. Phil?

DETECTIVE
Has he acted any differently since the accident?

Tammy stops cart and looks at detective.

TAMMY
He has seemed a little depressed. But knowing Frank, I'll bet it's because he thinks that everyone is looking at him, blaming him. Wouldn't you feel that way?

DETECTIVE
I'm sorry to have to pursue this Tammy, but would you say that your husband was - is - a loving father, happy to be a father? Or it's more of a burden to him?

TAMMY
Ohhh, so you're Dr. Phil now? I think our session is over now.

Tammy pushes away from him. He stands there, staring at her back.

DETECTIVE
(yells)
When you're ready to answer the question, call. I left my card in your purse.

Tammy, still walking away, glances down, sees business card sticking out of her purse. She shoves it down, inside.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liz walks into dark bedroom. Charlie lies in bed.

CHARLIE
They both up?

LIZ
No, thank God.

Liz glances out window, does double-take, sees baby-sitter, next door, walk to her car. Liz looks at clock, sees 3:15. She looks at Charlie, says nothing, slides into bed, closes eyes, as car engine is heard starting in background.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK PORCH - EVENING

Liz, Charlie, Frank, and Tammy play poker. Liz has most of the chips. Frank and Tammy's baby sleeps in now half-empty double stroller.

TAMMY
(studying cards)
Your kids went down early.

LIZ
Yeah. Probably too early.

Charlie nods head and begins to rise.

CHARLIE
I'll go get the monitor.

LIZ
No!

Liz and Charlie exchange glances.

LIZ (CONT'D)
We're right below their window.

She looks up.

LIZ
If one cries the other hears it twice.

CHARLIE
(nodding)
It feeds back, too.

LIZ
Just open the window. Quiiiietly.

Charlie goes inside.

TAMMY
Liz, would Charlie ever hire a sitter and go out when you're away.

Tammy glances at Frank, who remains stone faced.

LIZ
No. Unless there were a real emergency.

Liz begins to laugh.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Who'd he be able to get, anyway? Seriously, no. Why?

TAMMY
Frank does. A couple of nights I'm gone to take care of my sister and he can't -

FRANK
(rises, slams down cards)
Can we air all our dirty laundry? Really! One night, I take a couple of clients out and you act like -

Back door swings open, Charlie enters, carries tray of drinks and snacks.

CHARLIE
(exuberantly)
Supplies!

Charlie hands out drinks and sits.

TAMMY
Which clients, Frank?

FRANK
What?

TAMMY
You heard me, Frank. You won't answer me at home, so I'm using our friends, here.

Frank rises, then Charlie.

FRANK
I didn't realize I needed a lawyer.

TAMMY
You don't. Just the truth.

CHARLIE
Come on, Frank. Calm down. Sit down. Let's finish -

FRANK
I am finished. Have a nice night, everyone.

Frank walks toward gate. Charlie remains standing, staring after him.

TAMMY
Let him go.

Frank pulls wooden gate open.

LIZ
Don't slam -

Gate slams shut. Liz winces. Babies start crying.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOXING GYM - AFTERNOON

Frank's in the ring with a grizzled club fighter, early 40s. Frank throws a flurry of punches to the head, takes two to the body, bell rings, Frank puts up hands, palms out.

FRANK
I've had enough - gotta go.

Sparring partner waves him off, turns away. Franks climbs out of ring, uses teeth to untie gloves, pulls them off, removes mouth guard, looks up, surprised, to see Detective Sanders.

FRANK (CONT'D)
What do you want, now?

DETECTIVE
I see that you hit people who can hit back, too.

FRANK
I'd hit you if you didn't have the big, bad badge protecting you.

DETECTIVE
I'll let that pass.

Frank shoves past him.

FRANK
I gotta go.

DETECTIVE
Got a hot date...with a baby sitter?

FRANK
You got something to say, say it.

DETECTIVE
I'm saying you're not the grieving, innocent parent.

Frank reaches his Corvette at curb, spins back.

FRANK
Don't screw with me, and leave my wife out of this. She's had a tough enough time with this and her sister.

DETECTIVE
Good news, there, Frank. Her sister's stabilized.

Frank's eyes widen.

FRANK
How the hell -

DETECTIVE
I talked to Tammy. You should try it sometime. Chicks dig it.

FRANK
Stay away from her, you hear?

DETECTIVE
You're starting to squirm a little, Frank. Sooner or later, someone's going to crack. If not you, someone around you.

Frank turns away and starts to get into car.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Oh hey - I forgot to mention - I talked to the Jacksonville police. They remember you, Frank.

Frank re-emerges from car, fuming.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
It's like in the ring, Frank.

Detective flicks head towards the gym.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
You're getting trapped in the corner.

FRANK
I don't know what you're talking about.

DETECTIVE
Sure you do. I can tell from experience, you'll take a lot less beating if you throw in the towel yourself.

FRANK
You really are crazy. Maybe we should go a couple of rounds.

DETECTIVE
I think we already have.

Frank gets in car, slams door, roars off.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Tammy and EILEEN sit across from each other at a picnic table. Eileen, attractive, looks like a 30 year old version of Tammy. Tammy is gently rocking double stroller with her one baby, back and forth.

TAMMY
Are you still in a lot of pain?

EILEEN
Me? Are you in a lot of pain? I can lie down, take some med's. You can't escape yours, can you?

Tammy shakes head.

TAMMY
Only when I sleep, sometimes.

EILEEN
How're things going with Frank?

TAMMY
OK, I guess. He wanted to go on like nothing happened. He still insists on playing those fantasy, role playing scenes. Like, is there something wrong with me, just being me? It's getting old. I just did it to make him happy.

EILEEN
Listen - I have to tell you. I feel so guilty. If I hadn't had my surgery, and you not been with me -

TAMMY
Stop it! Right now. You had nothing to do with my baby dying. You can't be with your children every second of their lives. You're not the one I'd blame.

EILEEN
So, you blame Frank?

TAMMY
I don't know. I don't know.

LIZ (O.C.)
Hey! Lunch is here. Are your appetites?

They look over, startled to see Liz, pushing her double stroller, carrying a huge bag of food. Eileen rises and gives Liz a hug, as Tammy eyes the two babies. They all sit. Liz starts to spread out the food.

LIZ (CONT'D)
You're looking a lot better. How're you feeling?

EILEEN
A little better each day. I was telling Tam that I feel partly to blame for what happened, dragging you two out of town.

TAMMY
I told her to shut up about that. Y'know, maybe the worst thing is the lack of closure. It's not like a car accident. I don't really know what happened. I may never know if Frank was really at fault. I find myself blaming him, sometimes hating him - but I still love him, too. But it's eating away at our marriage. Some days I'm thrilled to see him come home; sometimes I hope he'll never come home. And I might be completely wrong to blame him, but...

Tammy looks at Liz.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Do you know anything?

LIZ
I wasn't even there. I was with you.

Liz looks quickly back down. Tammy just stares at her.

TAMMY
I thought maybe...The detective said that he thought Charlie might have heard something.

EILEEN
Tam, have you thought about going back home? I'm sure mom and dad would love to have you and the baby. Maybe get away for awhile, chill out.

TAMMY
Nah, I can't run away from myself. I left with Frank to get away, and this is my life, now. Dad and the boys would come down here anytime if I needed help. Anytime.
(MORE)

TAMMY(cont'd)
I just feel like I've woken up in someone else's nightmare, and no one will tell me what's happening. I wish I could wake up again and this was all the dream.

Tammy breaks down sobbing, the other two hold her, Liz looking away.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Charlie stands over tee, readies to hit the ball. THREE OTHER GOLFERS stand to side. Charlie starts back-swing.

DETECTIVE (O.C.)
Charlie. Charlie Donnelly.

Startled, Charlie spins around, looks awkwardly at others.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. Did I catch you at a bad time. Your office said I could catch you here.

Detective smiles at other golfers.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Can we talk openly with your friends?

Charlie grabs him by the arm and starts to turn him to side, while addressing other golfers.

CHARLIE
Gentlemen, this is a detective who's doing a background check for a friend of mine, as a favor. You can't be too careful these days.

Charlie smiles at them and they return equally false smirks.

DETECTIVE
(discreetly)
Charlie, did you know a DIANE FELSTEN, in Jacksonville?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I met her once or twice. Frank was engaged to her briefly. Why?

DETECTIVE
Engaged? Sounds serious. What happened?

Charlie holds up index finger to his friends. They start playing.

CHARLIE
I don't remember, exactly. He told me that he broke it off with her.

DETECTIVE
(smirks)
Well, there are always two ways to look at it, and he is your friend. Did you know she had a son?

CHARLIE
No. It wasn't Frank's, was it?

DETECTIVE
No, he wasn't Frank's...It's tough to date a single mother. The kids can get in the way of the good times, as you can imagine, right? Anyhow, I didn't know if you were in touch with Diane. She's listed with information. Hey, go ahead and get to your game. Don't let me distract you.

Detective turns and walks away. Charlie rushes to set up his shot as the rest of his foursome wait, and takes a giant divot, sending the ball skittering to the right side of the tee box.

EXT. BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Charlie and Liz work in the garden. Charlie pulls weeds, Liz prunes with large pair of sheers. The monitor sits on table.

LIZ
(loudly)
So just when were you going to tell me something else had happened - when their other child accidentally died?

Charlie glances at Frank and Tammy's house. Motions for Liz to calm down.

CHARLIE
Hey - keep your voice down, will you?

LIZ
Oh. You mean be silent, like you? What is this: Boys against the girls now? Are we on a Survival episode?

CHARLIE
Listen. Listen. You've blown this out of proportion.

LIZ
What! Out of proportion? A baby died. Our neighbor's baby. Are you listening to yourself?

Liz' anger starts to turn into tears. Charlie puts his arms around her. He furtively glances up at Frank and Tammy's house. Liz suddenly shoves him away, stands back, staring at him, shaking head.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I don't know, Charlie. I don't know if I know who you are.

Liz looks down and away, takes off into house. Charlie takes off gloves and follows her, pausing to pick up monitor, which is attached to extra-long extension cord. Sound of water turns Charlie towards kitchen, where Liz rinses baby bottles and puts them in dishwasher. Charlie puts monitor down on table.

CHARLIE
You don't understand. It's not blown out of proportion. You are blowing what I know out of proportion. All I ever heard - through foggy sleep - were noises, yelling. I didn't see anything happen.

Liz stands there, nodding head slightly.

LIZ
No, but you heard. We hear a lot on that monitor, Charlie, don't we? A lot. And I think I'm learning a lot from it. A lot about you.

Liz turns away from Charlie and busies herself with counter-straightening activities. Charlie picks up drinking glasses, one after another, and dries them off.

CHARLIE
What do you want from me?

LIZ
I want you to be a man. I want you to do the right thing.

CHARLIE
Meaning what? Meaning that I should play witness, prosecutor, judge, and jury over Frank? Meaning that I should fill in all the blanks with what I think might have happened? Meaning, that on my guesswork, not only would Tammy have lost the life of a child, but now her husband, her emotional and financial support and partner, not only is lost too, but worse - is sitting in prison? Tell me, does she just forget about him and tell their other child that his father was killed in the war, or does she acknowledge him, and do they have Sunday outings to visit daddy in prison? Does she make up a story about why daddy's there, and hope her child never finds out the truth? And if she goes that way, is Tammy now the prisoner of a lie for life, knowing that there's no statute of limitations on lying to your child about his whole existence?...Or does she tell him right away? Can she move away if she wants, start over fresh, or does Frank actually have parental rights at some point? Is that the button you want me to push? Or are you now playing girls against the boys?

Liz walks around kitchen, silently for a moment.

LIZ
What worries me Charlie is how much thought you've put into this.
(MORE)

LIZ(cont'd)
You might not just be rationalizing what you're doing, but heaping as much dirt as you can on top of it, burying the truth so far down that I can't see it, that you can't even see it. And it makes it easier - for you. But for me, I'm now the one who feels like I'm lying to my friend every time I see her, every time we speak. She talks about it all the time to me. It's like having a best friend who confides that she suspects her spouse is cheating on her, and you have to console her...even though you are the one he's cheating with. And the worse part isn't even the lie you're living with. No, the worse part is that you don't know if she knows it the whole time.

Charlie drops glass, which shatters, as he turns shocked, to see Detective Sanders standing inside the back doorway.

DETECTIVE
Did I catch you two at a bad time?

They look around at each other, rapidly, say nothing. Charlie stares at Detective, then looks away.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I knocked on the front door, but you must have had the water on, so I came around the back and heard loud voices in here. Everything OK?

Charlie begins to pick up pieces of glass, looks down at them as he goes. Detective joins him, putting shards in trash.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
It's a shame. You just can't always put things back together, the way they were. Look, I just dropped by to see if either one of you had thought of anything else. Anything you might have remembered.

Detective Sanders looks up from his chores at Liz, who looks at Charlie. Detective follows her gaze.

CHARLIE
No, nothing.

A baby's crying starts to come over monitor. Charlie quickly turns off monitor, starts towards stairs, glances back at Detective.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I have to go check on the kids. If we think of anything, we'll let you know.

EXT. OUTSIDE POLICE STATION - EVENING

Detective Sanders walks to his car, enters, drives off. Frank pulls out behind him in Corvette, keeps his distance. Detective pulls into parking lot of bar, gets out, enters bar. Frank pulls into parking space across the street, checks handgun he is wearing under jacket, puts back under jacket.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Detective exits bar, walks toward his parked car. Frank starts to get out of his own car, sees OFFICER #5 and OFFICER #6, both in uniform, exit bar, call to Detective, who stops to talk momentarily with them. Frank ducks back into his own car, shuts door. Detective goes to his car. Cops remain standing in parking lot. Detective drives off. Frank pulls into side-street traffic behind him. Officer #5 glances at Frank's car, studies it, as it pulls out. Frank and Officer #5 glance momentarily at each other. Frank looks away quickly, but glances back and sees Officer #5 get on walkie-talkie.

EXT. CAR RENTAL LOT - DAY

Mid-sized, American car pulls up to security booth at exit, window rolls down, Frank hands paperwork to GUARD who checks it, returns it, opens gate. Frank rolls up window, drives off.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Charlie dials phone, drums fingers as ringing is heard at other end. WOMAN's voice answers.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(tape)
Hi, this is Diane.
(MORE)

WOMAN(cont'd)
Josh and I can't come to the phone. You know the drill.

Answering machine beeps.

CHARLIE
Uh, Diane. You don't really know me. My name's Charlie Donnelly. I'm a friend of -

Click and squeal of phone pick up interrupts Charlie.

WOMAN/DIANE (O.S.)
(matter-of-factly)
Frank. I know who you are, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Great. You don't seem too surprised.

DIANE (O.S.)
Not since the detective called. What can I do for you Mr. Donnelly?

CHARLIE
What did the detective say?

DIANE (O.S.)
I've got half a minute, Mr. Donnelly.

CHARLIE
What did happen? Frank told me that you just didn't see eye to eye any longer?

DIANE (O.S.)
Is that how he put it?

CHARLIE
Please. I'm trying to do the right thing.

DIANE (O.S.)
At first, things were great. Frank was a father figure to Josh. You know what a commanding, stoic figure Frank can be. Josh was six then. Then I started noticing red marks on Josh's arms. Josh made up stories, I think, about fights with kids at school. But then he'd beg me not to leave him with Frank.
(MORE)

DIANE(cont'd)
Even cried sometime. That's not Josh. He didn't even cry at this dad's funeral.

CHARLIE
Did you confront Frank?

DIANE (O.S.)
Of course I did! He denied everything. When I told him that I'd already filed a police report, he told me that I was crazy, with some pretty strong language. After that, you could say that we didn't see eye to eye any longer.

CHARLIE
Josh never said anything later?

DIANE (O.S.)
He didn't have to. After Frank left, so did the red marks and the crying.

INT. LIZ AND CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liz and Charlie walk in together, her in front, touching. She carries the monitor, puts it down on dresser, turns on lamp. He turns lamp off, nibbles on her neck. She pushes him away, halfheartedly.

LIZ
(giggling)
Stop. You're bad.

Liz turns light back on.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Go get ready for bed.

CHARLIE
I'm already ready.

Liz glances at him.

LIZ
I guess you are. Get the onion off your breath.

Charlie goes into bathroom, runs water. Liz plugs in monitor. Muffled voices are heard, indecipherable over monitor. Liz stops in place, picks it up, listens. Door is heard opening, voices clear.

FRANK (O.S.)
(loud)
That's the third time this week.
What's going on, Tammy?

Door slams over monitor. Tammy's voice becomes indecipherable. Charlie turns off water, re-enters room.

CHARLIE
Now, where were we?

LIZ
Shhh!

CHARLIE
They can't hear us.

LIZ
I'm trying to hear them.

CHARLIE
Come to bed.

Door opens on monitor, voices clear.

TAMMY (O.S.)
I'm just tired, that's all. I've
Got the kids - kid, all day.

FRANK (O.S.)
I know; I'm lounging at the beach,
right?

Charlie walks over to bed, pulls back covers. Liz still stands by dresser, holding monitor.

CHARLIE
Liz, what're you doing?

Liz turns towards him, puts down monitor, lowers volume.

LIZ
Not what you want, Charlie. Don't
be mad. I've just lost the mood,
that's all.

CHARLIE
Because Tammy's not in the mood?
Is this one of those women's
periods all line up together
things?

LIZ
Don't mock me. You're not exactly innocent, here, Charlie. You and Frank!

Charlie slides into bed.

CHARLIE
What! I didn't kill my child.

LIZ
Well there it is. You finally said it.

CHARLIE
I always said it was suspicious.

LIZ
You didn't say anything until you thought our kids were in danger. Now, you just told me that in your heart of hearts, you believe he killed his son. Just admit it.

CHARLIE
I don't know. Not like that. Not for sure.

Liz folds arms across her chest, stares at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
OK look, nothing's happening here tonight. You might as well come to bed, anyway.

Liz relaxes, turns monitor back up.

TAMMY (O.S.)
(clear)
From Diane.

FRANK (O.S.)
Diane. Diane who?

TAMMY (O.S.)
Diane your ex-fiancee! She called me today. I don't know how she got our number, but she told me about her little boy.

Liz, transfixed on monitor, turns off lamp, backs towards bed, slides in, far away from Charlie.

FRANK (O.S.)
Enough! She was a nut and so was her kid. That's why I broke it off. It killed me to do that to him. I was like a father to him, but I could never do enough for her. I don't want you talking to her again.

TAMMY (O.S.)
You can't tell me -

FRANK (O.S.)
Oh no? I'll change our number,

TAMMY (O.S.)
(laughs)
Too late. I got hers off Caller ID.

FRANK (O.S.)
What is it?

TAMMY (O.S.)
I didn't memorize it.

FRANK (O.S.)
(anger rising)
Good. Give it to me. Let's go get it now.

TAMMY (O.S.)
You touch me, I'll call that detective.

Liz picks up phone. Charlie stares at her and phone.

FRANK (O.S.)
All right, all right, let's calm down.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Fine. You calm down. Listen Frank, I married you, not Diane. But you have me a little worried.

FRANK (O.S.)
I'm sorry. I'm stressed about work. Then that cop starts messing with my family. I'll be OK.

Liz puts down phone, slides down under covers.

LIZ
Will they be OK, Charlie? Or will Frank snap and it'll be too late for you to speak up, and you'll have to live with your silence forever?

Charlie just looks at her.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Charlie, she talks to me and I can't tell her what you told me. You put me in the middle. I feel like I'm lying to her. I don't know if I can hold out forever. I'm in their nightmare now, Charlie.

Charlie, looks troubled, turns away from Liz, presses head into pillow, closes eyes.

FADE OUT.

EXT/INT. TALL APARTMENT BUILDING PARKING LOT EVENING

Frank pulls up in rented car, exits, walks to building, enters outer lobby, looks at directory, sees, "Sanders," in 3B, almost pushes button, hesitates, presses three different apartments on 9th floor.

WOMAN ON INTERCOM (O.S.)

Who is it?

FRANK
UPS. Delivery.

WOMAN ON INTERCOM (O.S.)

I didn't order nothing.

FRANK
Someone did. J.C. Penney. I'll leave a slip. You can pick it up, downtown.

WOMAN ON INTERCOM (O.S.)

Wait.

Door buzzes. Frank enters and goes to elevator, enters.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank exits elevator, looks around, finds 3B, knocks on door, waits. Nothing happens. He knocks harder, still nothing. Frank goes back to elevator, opens door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Frank approaches his rental car, opens door, starts to get in. Detective Sanders grabs him from behind, grips his collar, pins Frank between the car door and opening, with Frank's head above the roof.

FRANK
I-

DETECTIVE
Funny thing, my buzzer never buzzed. Who else do you know in my building, Chaffee?

FRANK
I wanted to talk to you.

DETECTIVE
Start talking.

FRANK
Why are you harassing me? Haven't I been through enough lately?

A small crowd starts to form on perimeter.

DETECTIVE
You? How 'bout your kid? The one you killed.

FRANK
I didn't do anything, Sanders. Why are you interrogating my wife. You wanna come after me, bring it on, but leave her out of it.

DETECTIVE
You mean you don't want her to know about you. I'm trying to protect her - and your other kid - from you. Sooner or later, someone's going to crack and give you up, and you're going down, Chaffee.

FRANK
Oh, so it's not Detective Sanders, it's judge and jury Sanders. I've got rights, too.

A squad car silently pulls up behind Sanders and Frank, out of their view.

DETECTIVE
Just like your kid had rights?

Police car door closes. OFFICER #7 approaches from side.

OFFICER #7
(surprised)
Detective Sanders. I didn't realize. Everything OK?

DETECTIVE
Yeah. He was just leaving.

Sanders steps back, releases door. Frank stands up.

FRANK
Officer, may I have your name and badge number, please?

The three of them stand there, staring at each other.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Detective Sanders approaches his car door. Captain strides quickly towards him from behind.

CAPTAIN
Hold up, Sanders.

Surprised, Sanders turns, straightens up.

DETECTIVE
What is it Captain?

CAPTAIN
What's going on with you?

DETECTIVE
What? I just went off duty.

CAPTAIN
You went off, all right - last night. And I heard about it all day.

DETECTIVE
What? That Chaffee scumbag complained! He didn't happen to confess to killing his son at the same time, did he?

Sanders starts to open his car door. Captain slams it shut.

CAPTAIN
He didn't complain. His attorney did.

DETECTIVE
His attorney? He killed his baby. I know it. You know the case - the baby "fell" from his changing table. I think his best friend next door is covering for him, says he heard nothing. So far. I'm telling you, their neighborhood is so quiet at night, everyone will wake up if you spin the toilet paper roller too fast. The case stinks and I'm going to break it.

CAPTAIN
And do what - make a citizen's arrest?

Sanders looks surprised. He opens his mouth, says nothing at first.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Listen, his attorney played a tape recording of you shaking him down, "I know you killed your kid...You're going down." Sanders, what are you thinking?

DETECTIVE
Did his attorney mention that we were in the parking lot of my building, where I caught him stalking me!

Sanders pauses, looks down, shakes head, holds up thumb and index finger half an inch apart.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I'm this close, Captain. Something's going to break.

CAPTAIN
You're this close, all right. Officer Lakey had to back up Chaffee's story. He was on the tape, too. Look, you and I go back a long way, Sanders. I'll back you up on your record, but you've got to back off. Now.

DETECTIVE
You just going to let him walk away?

CAPTAIN
Him or you, Sanders. Him or you.

Captain turns and starts to walk towards building.

DETECTIVE
You wanna know what I think, Captain. Between you and me, I think you're counting your days. Counting your days to retirement. You used to take on those guys...and the department. But I think you've lost your priorities.

Captain spins back angrily.

CAPTAIN
I've lost my priorities? You've lost your mind; that's what I think. Let me remind you, Sanders, when JULIE left you and you were in a fog, I backed you up plenty. Then - when your son, may God bless his soul, had that accident, who kept you on? Huh? Internal Affairs came to me and said you'd been heard saying that Julie's boyfriend would pay the price, but I still backed you up. Put my butt on the line for you, Sanders.
(MORE)

CAPTAIN(cont'd)
They wanted you on psychiatric leave to protect the department, but I kept you working and saved your damn career and your mind. Now I think maybe you're transferring your son's death onto Chaffee's hands. Let-it-go. You're off the case. That's final.

Captain looks him in the eyes, turns and walks away. Sanders is left staring after him.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CHARLIE AND LIZ' HOUSE - EVENING

Charlie exits car, briefcase in hand, Liz walks outside, one baby in each arm. She looks exhausted.

LIZ
Charlie, I'm so glad you're home. I'm trying to get dinner ready and clean up -

As she starts to hand babies to Charlie, they're both distracted by a car horn. Frank pulls up fast, almost hitting Liz. He leans across passenger seat, yells through window.

FRANK
Hey good buddy, hop in.

CHARLIE
Frank, I just got home and Liz needs -

FRANK
(nodding)
I just need one second, that's all,

Frank winks at Liz, who looks away. Charlie looks sheepishly at Liz, shrugs his shoulders, holds up index finger, and gets in Frank's car. Frank races off as Charlie closes door.

CHARLIE
Hey -

FRANK
I had to get you away for your sake. I didn't want Liz to give you any interference, here, and put you in a tight spot.

They stare at each other a moment.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's what longtime buddies do for each other - watch each other's backs, right? Look, you've talked with that detective, Sanders, so you know I don't have to tell you what an SOB he is. Thinks he can just push everyone around. That's over my friend. I'm tired of him harassing not just me, but my wife, you, even Liz. I'm standing up for all of us. You should try it some time.

CHARLIE
Just what are you saying?

FRANK
Don't worry about it. But this is where you come in.

Charlie glances at his watch.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Sanders was always trying to trump up a case against me. Total B.S. I don't know, maybe he's got a quota, like a traffic cop. Maybe he ought be a traffic cop. But he's not using me to build his career. For some reason, he wants to get someone to say that I was responsible for my son's death. I mean, I feel bad enough, right? This guy's gotta try to destroy what's left of my family and my life, to boot. It's a load of garbage - you know it, too.

Frank looks at Charlie and nods. Charlie just looks at him blankly, which puts a sneer on Frank's face.

CHARLIE
Look Frank, I need to get home.

FRANK
Listen to me! When we were overseas, and there was a shipment missing, they came to me and asked your whereabouts. I didn't know where the hell you'd been that night. But, I did know you owed some people some money.
(MORE)

FRANK(cont'd)
Some real bad people some real money. I told them I'd seen you around that night. I gave you an alibi. If I'd said that I hadn't seen you for six hours, you know they'd have pulled you in. If I'd said that I saw you slip in at 2:00 in the morning - what do you think would have happened? I don't know what you were up to, and I didn't ask. But friends get tight,

Frank looks at Charlie, makes a tight fist, holds it up head-high, and nods.

FRANK (CONT'D)
when outsiders try to stick their noses into our business. Sanders doesn't know what happened that night. He conjures up the whole thing. Makes it up! But, if he pressures everyone enough, someone's going to say, "Frank does have a temper." Look, Frank's not Ward - friggin' - Leave -It -To - Beaver - Cleaver. Who is? And this guy's going to run with that ...right to the D.A? Heck, they're probably drinking buddies, trying to make their careers on my back. I need you, buddy, to stick to what you know, and not start making stuff up just to get Sanders off your back. I can count on you, right?

They look at each other. Charlie gives a half-hearted nod.

FRANK (CONT'D)
C'mon, I gotta get home.

INT. LIZ AND CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Charlie and Liz lie motionless in dark. A shadow passes into the room, moves over to Charlie's bedside table. A drawer opens.

FRANK
Get up. Wake up, Charlie, it's show-time.

Charlie grunts. The bedside lamp turns on, jolting him awake. Charlie stares into Frank's glowering face, uncomfortably close.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's better. You awake, Charlie-boy?

Charlie lunges to open the drawer, but it's already open, his hands goes in, and Franks kick-slams the drawer shut on his hand. Charlie howls in pain.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Too late, Charlie.

Frank laughs, as he releases foot from drawer. Charlie withdraws wounded hand, props up on elbows, stares at Frank, who wears surgical gloves and holds gun on Charlie. Liz, motionless, stares at Frank.

CHARLIE
What do you want?

FRANK
As I said, it's too late. What I want-ed was loyalty.

CHARLIE
I haven't said anything.

Frank looks back and forth between Charlie and Liz.

FRANK
Yeah, maybe, but not out of loyalty. Out of fear. Fear of getting involved. And fear of me, but that won't last forever.

Liz tries to slowly inch her way, under the covers, towards a cell phone on her bedside table. Frank is focused tightly on Charlie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
It's different now, isn't it, Charlie? Now the show's here in your bedroom, not safely over the monitor in mine.

Frank motions the gun towards the monitor. Liz inches her hand closer to the cell phone.

FRANK
You listen to the whole neighborhood, or just me and Tammy? Yeah, I know about it, thanks to Liz, here.

Liz freezes, her hand inches from the phone.

LIZ
What do you want, Frank?

FRANK
(loud)
It's too late, Liz. You had to stick your nose in. It's bad enough you listened in on our personal lives, but you had to join in and manipulate.

Frank turns back towards Charlie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Charlie, did you know that Liz told Tammy that you heard screaming in my home before my son died?

Charlie spins towards Liz.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Charlie didn't see what happened, but somehow you did! From my sister-in-law's house, 500 miles away!

LIZ
(nervously)
Where's Tammy now?

FRANK
(smiles)
Kinda' quiet over there now, huh?

Liz looks anxious.

FRANK (CONT'D)
After you opened your big mouth, she packed her and the kid up and went to a hotel. She left me - because of you.

CHARLIE
Frank, it's all crazy now. She'll be back tomorrow.

FRANK
I don't think so. Not from the look in her eyes. You don't think so, either, Charlie, not from the look in yours.

Liz slides blanket over the cell phone.

CHARLIE
Frank, we go way back. Let's go downstairs and have a couple of drinks. Whaddya say?

FRANK
I say it's too late.

Franks spins gun towards Liz?

FRANK (CONT'D)
Who're you calling, your detective friend?

Liz freezes. Frank yanks blanket off of Liz, revealing phone in her hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Detective Sanders won't be bothering us any more. The good detective won't be bothering anyone, any more.

Charlie and Liz look shocked.

CHARLIE
You killed the detective?

FRANK
(laughs)
Looks more like you did, Charlie. I used your gun.

Frank waggles Charlie's pistol. Charlie looks at drawer.

CHARLIE
How -

FRANK
You gave Tammy and me the burglar alarm code, after that diaper incident. So I let myself in, borrowed your gun. You did say I could try it out, remember? I like it, but I think I'll leave it here.
(MORE)

FRANK(cont'd)
And Liz, while you were so busy, falsely accusing me, I wrongly accused the detective. I was sure he'd told my ex-fiancee, Diane, to call Tammy - but he told me that he'd only talked to one person about her. You. That means you called my old girlfriend and set me up to lose everything, telling her to call my wife!

Charlie, shocked by this, stares at Liz.

LIZ
B-but, I didn't think -

FRANK
No. No, you didn't think. Seems everyone is playing judge and jury. Now, it's my turn.

Frank shoots Liz through the chest. Liz bounces up once, then lays motionless. Babies start crying in the background. Charlie, frozen, stares at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)
No turning back, now, Charlie. Pick up the phone.

Frank nudges the bedside phone.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You wanna save what's left of your family? Pick it up. Call my house. When the machine answers, just say, "Frank, I just shot my wife. Help me."

Charlie hesitates.

FRANK (CONT'D)
What? Does it look like I'm bluffing?

Charlie dials, voicemail answers after three rings.

FRANK'S VOICE (O.S.)
This is Frank Chaffee. We're not here. Leave a message.

CHARLIE
Frank. I just shot Liz.

Charlie glances over at Liz' blood-soaked body.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I - I need your help.

Franks nods, motions Charlie to hang up. Charlie does.

FRANK
Thank you. Now, that's a loyal friend; sticking his neck out. But, we both know that you can't stick to that. The best deal that I can offer you is to kill you - make it look like a murder suicide with you and Liz, here - and spare your kids. They're not witnesses. Of course, if you don't go along, I'll shoot them first. What'll it be? Sacrifice yourself Charlie, and let them live.

CHARLIE
The cops will figure it out.

Frank shakes his head, "No."

FRANK
The truth is too far fetched. You know it. I just got here too late after your call woke me up. You can't save yourself. Save your kids, it'll be over in a second. But, it's got to look like you shot yourself. Put the gun in your mouth, then your hand on top of mine, for the paraffin test.

Charlie, shaking, begins to oblige, opening his mouth. The phone rings. Charlie and Frank freeze, stare at each other and the phone.

LIZ (O.C.)
Would ya get the phone?

Charlie, shocked, looks over at Liz. She's still lying dead. The phone rings a third time. As Charlie looks back at it, Liz starts to rise.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Charlie! Get the phone.

Liz lunges across Charlie, grabs phone. Charlie, dripping sweat, stares at ceiling.

LIZ (CONT'D)
That's OK, Tammy. No really - I was already awake. I had kind of a rough night. Sure, just bring him over. I'll feed him. No, don't worry.

Liz replaces receiver, leaps out of bed, opens curtain, morning light streams in. She goes into bathroom. Charlie rises slowly, looks over at clean sheets, feels them, opens drawer, sees his gun, closes drawer. Liz re-enters bedroom, pulling sweatshirt on, looks over at Charlie, who's still in a daze.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Tammy's dropping her son her off. She's got to fly back up to get her sister out of the hospital.

Liz notices Charlie is still sitting motionless. She snaps her fingers.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Snap to it, sleepyhead. You look like you've just seen a ghost.

Charlie rises slowly, looks over at monitor, stops, re-opens drawer, lifts and sniffs gun, puts it back.

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Charlie loads a suitcase of Tammy's into his car trunk. They enter car, Charlie drives off.

TAMMY
I really appreciate your coming out so late - on short notice to pick me up.

CHARLIE
No problem. There really was no other option. Frank was working late and you'd have had to pay the sitter longer. And he said that she couldn't stay that late, anyway. And if Liz came, I'd have had to put the kids to bed.

They look at each other and laugh.

TAMMY
Well, thanks, but I could have taken a cab.

CHARLIE
Nah - just give me the 60 bucks.

They laugh.

INT. CHARLIE & LIZ' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Liz puts laundry into dresser drawers, pauses as she hears Frank over the monitor.

FRANK (O.S.)
Relax. Her plane was due in at 11:00. It'll take her at least an hour to get home. Come here, baby.

Liz shudders as she walks around the bedroom, hearing kissing noises. She stops suddenly and picks up phone, dials. Ringing is heard over monitor.

FRANK (O.S.)
Damnit. She better not want me to pick her up. (angrily) Hello.

LIZ
(Cheerful)
Hi, Frank. I hope I didn't wake you.

Her voice is heard both on screen and through the monitor. As she turns and walks too close to monitor, it squeals feedback noise for a second, until she quickly turns away.

FRANK (O.S.)
No. I was taking care of the baby. What's up?

LIZ
Well, I just called the airline and they said that they thought Tammy's flight would be at least an hour late, probably more, due to the weather. I just didn't want you to worry.

INT. FRANK AND TAMMY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank is holding phone. The baby-sitter, wrapped in a towel, gathers her clothing. Frank turns, leers at her, and smiles. She stops as he grabs her by the towel.

FRANK
Thanks for the info, Liz. Good night.

Frank hangs up abruptly.

BABYSITTER (O.S.)
What was that about?

FRANK (O.S.)
A temporary reprieve from the governor. Where were we?

Frank pulls her towards him.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. CHARLIE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Tammy exit the airport.

CHARLIE
How's your sister doing?

TAMMY
Much better. That's why she told me to go home tonight. She was just so weak from overdoing things too soon, but just needs to take it easy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT OF CHARLIE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie takes Tammy's suitcase out of trunk. Tammy looks over at her driveway, sees a car parked at curb.

TAMMY
Frank must have just gotten in. The sitter's car is still here.

CHARLIE
Yeah. He's been putting in a lot of late hours.

TAMMY
Let me use your bathroom to freshen up before I go home. I don't want to wake everyone up.

CHARLIE
(laughs)
Sure - wake my house up, instead, right?

TAMMY
Hey, I can see all of your lights on.

They walk to front door, Charlie unlocks, opens.

CHARLIE
Oh yeah, it's movies till dawn around here. Whoopee!

They go inside. Liz, clipping coupons at the kitchen table, gets up and hugs Tammy.

LIZ
So, how's she doing?

TAMMY
Great. Really great. She sends her love.

Tammy starts to move towards powder room, just off living room.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Mind if I use the facilities?

LIZ
Actually, that one's on the fritz.

Charlie looks surprised and groans.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Use the one in our master bedroom, so as not to wake the kids.

Charlie moves ahead of her.

CHARLIE
Let me make sure there are no kids' booby traps on the floor in the dark.

TAMMY
Sure, you mean some magazine you don't want me to see.

They walk through dark bedroom into bathroom. Charlie puts on lights, picks up towels.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Would you have a band-aid? I cut my finger earlier.

Charlie moves to medicine cabinet, gets one, hands to Tammy, who sits on vanity seat to open and apply. Suddenly, noise bursts from the monitor, making them both lookup.

FRANK (O.S.)
C'mon, once for the road.

BABYSITTER (O.S.)
(giggles)
Stop! Your wife's gonna catch us, Frank. You've had too much booze.

FRANK (O.S.)
That's a laugh. Never happen. She's too stupid. Tammy didn't even notice when you left your panties on the bedroom floor.

Tammy walks to bathroom/bedroom doorway, stares at the monitor, then back at Charlie - who just looks down, back at the monitor. Tammy just stands there listening, puts hands over her mouth.

BABYSITTER (O.S.)
Just cause there were other clothes scattered. You got lucky that night.

FRANK (O.S.)
I think you got lucky that night, twice.

Gasping noises are heard.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Just like tonight.

BABYSITTER
I've gotta go. Frank, nooooo. (through kissing sounds) Oh, Frank. I really...should...go.

Noise of door closing over monitor. Tammy walks into bedroom, closes door on Charlie, who sits, head in hands, on vanity seat. Charlie rises, after a moment, splashes water onto face, exits bathroom into dark bedroom. As Liz enters bedroom, their eyes lock. They freeze as the monitor comes on.

FRANK (O.S.)
What the - Tammy, put that down now! Give me-

TAMMY (O.S.)
Stay back! Now who looks stupid, Frank?

FRANK (O.S.)
Give me that gun, before you hurt yourself.

Liz and Charlie stare at each. Charlie looks over at bedside drawer which is wide open. The gun's not inside.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Look Frank, I'm not too stupid to take the safety off.

FRANK (O.S.)
(yelling)
Give me that -

A gunshot is heard over the monitor, the silence, then a baby crying. Liz and Charlie just hold each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRANK AND TAMMY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

A body is covered by a sheet on the floor. Tammy sits in shock in a chair, holding her baby. The pistol is on the floor. Detective Sanders has small notebook in his hand. OFFICER #8 stands off to side. The door is ajar, the police car lights revolve through the room.

DETECTIVE
So, Mrs. Chaffee. You admitted to the 911 operator that you shot your husband. How did it happen?

They both look around, surprised, at the sound of Charlie's voice, as he walks in through front door.

CHARLIE (O.C.)
She's innocent. I heard the whole thing, detective.

DETECTIVE
You heard -

CHARLIE
I can hear what's going on, over our baby monitor. The frequencies cross with theirs. I heard the whole thing happen. It was self defense. Frank had borrowed my gun, to check it out, in case he wanted to buy it. It sounded like he'd been drinking. Frank and Tammy got in an argument, and he pulled the gun on her. She tried to take it away from him, and...

Tammy just stares up at Charlie.

DETECTIVE
You heard the whole thing? Over your monitor - like on a radio show?

CHARLIE
It sounds crazy, but come next door, and see - hear, for yourself. It doesn't happen all the time. But it did tonight. She was only trying to get the gun away.

A momentary smile crosses Tammy's face, then disappears. Detective's and Charlie's eyes lock.

DETECTIVE
Does that sound right, Mrs. Chaffee?

Tammy sits there, nods.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Let's go next door and see this monitor. Officer stay here with Mrs. Chaffee.

OFFICER #8
You want me to bag the gun for prints?

The officer starts towards gun. The detective cuts in front of him.

DETECTIVE
That won't be necessary.

Detective picks up gun with bare hand, showing no effort to protect prints, sticks it in his own pocket.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Officer, would you get Mrs. Chaffee some water, please?

The Officer nods, heads into kitchen. The Detective looks down at Tammy.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Tammy, let me know if you have any problems with your husband's life insurance company. I'll call them for you if they try to stall you.

Tammy nods. He hands her a business card.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIZ AND CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Liz, Charlie, and Detective stand in front of dresser, Detective holds monitor, shakes head, as light conversation is audible from next door.

DETECTIVE
That's amazing. Would you mind if I take this?

CHARLIE
Please.

DETECTIVE
I'm going to tell the District Attorney that it appears to be an accidental shooting, done in self-defense. Mr. Donnelly, I'll need you to come down to make an official statement tomorrow.

CHARLIE
No problem - didn't I give you the statement already?

DETECTIVE
I want it said on the record. (Pause) Hey, I'm sorry, but would you also mind if I use your bathroom? I'm going to be next door for a few hours, and I don't like to touch anything at the scene of a shooting.

LIZ
Sure. The powder room is right down the hall.

The Detective nods appreciatively and leaves the room.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(near whisper)
Charlie, that was the greatest thing I've ever seen you do. I'm so proud of you.

She wraps her arms around him, kisses his face. Toilet flushes off-screen, bathroom door opens, Detective, monitor in hand, walks towards Charlie, sees the couple's embrace, turns away.

DETECTIVE
I'll let myself out. I always appreciate citizens who step forward to help the police, Mr. Donnelly.

Detective smirks amiably and waves at Charlie as he opens door. Front door closes behind him.

LIZ
Charlie, let's go to bed.

CHARLIE
Hey - I thought you said the front bathroom wasn't working.

LIZ
(smiling)
Did I say that? I think the plumbing's working just fine tonight, Charlie, just fine.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. DONNELLY'S FRONT YARD - EVENING

ONE YEAR LATER overlays screen. Charlie rakes leaves, but looks up to see a car pull up and park along the curb, at the imaginary line between the Donnelly's and Chaffee's homes. Detective Sanders, alone, gets out, walks towards Charlie. They shake hands perfunctorily.

CHARLIE
What brings you back, Detective?

DETECTIVE
Tammy. Charlie, I'm relentless at times. But, my Captain was right to pull me off the case. I was letting my emotions cloud my view. And I missed something as a result. But it wouldn't stay...buried, for lack of a better word.

Charlie begins to shift a little uneasily.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
When the case was over, it kept working at me, even more than usual. After about six months, a detail worked its way to the surface. It woke me up at 3:00 AM. A couple of things became clear. For one, there had been a car parked out front of the Chaffee's that night. It was late. Normally, I'd have processed that immediately, but like the Captain said... But, I went through all the files. Sure enough, one of the officers had noted the plate. When I ran it, I found it had been sold about a month after the shooting. But like I said, I'm relentless.

The car had belonged to a woman who had been baby-sitting for the Chaffees that night. You didn't happen to hear her voice on the monitor, did you Charlie?

CHARLIE
I - I don't seem to recall.

DETECTIVE
That's the right answer, Charlie. Anyhow, seems that this nameless woman was a single mom, lived with her child at her mother's house while she was finishing college. Somehow, without any "real job," she managed to trade in the old car and buy a new one for about $30,000. Paid cash, too. Coincidentally, this was shortly after the insurance company paid off Tamm-- Ms. Chaffee on her husband's life insurance. At first, she played dumb, but -

CHARLIE
You're relentless.

DETECTIVE
Riiiight. I explained that our discussion was all hypothetical, but that there were serious felonies associated with Accessory After the Fact laws, insurance fraud, etc. Felonies that could put her away until after her child had grown up...somewhere, but that I really wasn't interested in some dusty old case about a lowlife who died...I just wanted to sleep better. Finally, she told me that when she heard Tammy coming, she hid in the closet. But she saw what happened. What really happened, Charlie. She had to stay in there until everyone was gone. Everyone except Tammy.

CHARLIE
So what happened?

DETECTIVE
Y'know Charlie, I really think you don't know this part, but I could be wrong. I don't know if what I'm told is fact, either.

CHARLIE
Which is...?

The two men stare into each other's eyes. Finally, the Detective nods slowly.

DETECTIVE
I'm told that they reached a mutual, financial agreement that night. Kind of binds them together, don't you think?

CHARLIE
Have you asked Tammy?

DETECTIVE
About what, Charlie? Remember, my Captain pulled me off this case a long time ago.

Detective Sanders turns and starts towards Tammy's house. Charlie follows him.

CHARLIE
Where're you going?

The Detective stops, looks back at Charlie.

DETECTIVE
I told you that a couple of things had become evident.

The Detective continues towards Tammy's house, followed by Charlie. The Detective knocks on the door. Tammy, dressed very nicely, opens the door, starts to step out, but stops, looks back and forth at the two men. She looks a little puzzled.

TAMMY
Charlie, what's up?

Charlie opens his mouth to speak but they all suddenly turn when they hear, then see, Liz arriving on the scene.

CHARLIE
I just thought you might need some...protecting.

TAMMY
Protecting? (laughs) I'm going on a date with a cop. I don't think I'll need any more protection.

CHARLIE
A date?

DETECTIVE
That was the other thing, Charlie. I realized how attached I'd become, (nods towards Tammy), even after the case, itself, had faded. So, unless I need your permission -- or you care to make a statement on the record, we've got plans. Tammy?

TAMMY
No statements here, Detective.

Tammy pulls door shut, locks it, takes the Detective's elbow offered in mock courtesy, but after a couple of steps slides her hand into his. They start to walk towards his car. Tammy looks back over her shoulder at Charlie and Liz.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Don't wait up.

The Detective opens the passenger door for her, then goes around to driver's side, while Tammy reaches over to unlock door. Charlie and Liz start back home.

CHARLIE
I never saw that coming. You think it could work out?

LIZ
It could. But I'll bet he'll think twice before cheating on her.