

Homecoming Queen

The Maybe True Story of a Country Star's Bloody Rise To The Top

Written by
Eric Rogers

FWRD MGMT - Noah Jones
(310)936-6512
Noahjones@gmail.com

OVER BLACK, a CHYRON reads:

This is a story from a bygone era...

The 1990s

No flannel or boy bands were harmed making this story.

The words FADE... followed by a new Chyron:

1998

As the numbers fade, the SOUND OF HEAVY BREATHING comes up. SOBS BETWEEN BREATHS. Someone running. Hurried steps over CRACKLING LEAVES. Then a LOUD THUD as a body hits the ground.

SMASH TO THE FACE OF:

MOLLY MCQUEEN

17, wearing a formal dress. Lying in the dirt, surrounded by corn stalks. Dust settling onto her tear-stained face. Holding her high-heeled shoes in one hand, removed to allow her to sprint. A beat, then she looks behind her...

NO ONE THERE. Only a path through the corn left in her wake.

She looks forward again and sees a Prom Queen's tiara lying a few feet away, its faux gemstones glistening under the moonlight. She slowly reaches out to grab the tiara when a **FEMALE FIGURE** (*we'll soon know her as TAMI*) steps out from behind the dark of the corn stalks and STOMPS her hand with a sneaker-wearing foot. Molly CRIES OUT, then --

MOLLY
(through tears)
Why are you doing this?

Tami reaches down and picks up the tiara. In her other hand is a tire iron. A long beat as she stares at the tiara... then puts it on her head. Off this, Tami raises the tire iron, preparing to strike --

TAMI
(re: tiara, twang-y
accent)
You don't deserve this. Or your
stupid, meaningless life.

Molly looks up, recognizing the voice but still unable to make out Tami's face --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY

Oh my God. Is that you, T--

The TIRE IRON HAMMERS DOWN -- Molly falls silent and limp. A beat, then Tami puts the Prom crown on her head. Then she quietly begins to SOB. Then brings the TIRE IRON DOWN ON MOLLY AGAIN. And AGAIN... and AGAIN.

The tire iron CONTINUES STRIKING against flesh and bone as a RUSTLING nearby in the corn stalks GROWS LOUDER, and soon, **ANOTHER FIGURE** emerges. *He (we'll soon know him as RYAN)* looks down at Molly's body as Tami continues the assault --

RYAN

Hey! Stop! I said stop!

He goes to Tami and grabs her arms. A beat as they struggle, then she relaxes. Tami takes the tiara off her head and shows him. Molly's blood is sprayed all over it.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Hey. Why are you crying?

TAMI

Because you're mad at me...

RYAN

I'm not mad. You just got a little carried away is all. No biggie.

She pulls away and then extends the tire iron toward him --

TAMI

You wanna hit her a few times?

He shakes his head no, then wipes tears from her cheek as the couple stands silhouetted under the moonlight -- it'd be romantic if there wasn't a dead 17-year-old at their feet. Nevertheless, he pulls Tami in for a kiss. As they continue making out, Tami opens her eyes and looks down at Molly. She gets turned on at the sight of her. The kissing gets more passionate as she begins to tug at Ryan's shirt, which she pulls off over his head. As her hands finds his crotch --

RYAN

You want to do it here?

Tami pulls off her shirt now and drops to the ground, pulling him down on top of her. His hands search her body as she fumbles with his belt. As Ryan's mouth kisses her chest, she begins to HUM a song. Molly McQueen watches the love-making with a glassy, lifeless stare, her bloody tiara nearby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A beat, then Tami's humming morphs into a ROCKING, STEEL-GUITAR DRIVEN COUNTRY SONG. Off which --

SMASH CUT TO:

A CARDBOARD STAND-UP DISPLAY OF A WOMAN'S BODY

MUSIC CONTINUES as the display shows her body from the neck down. She wears a revealing formal dress, which is covered by a silk sash that reads "AS GOOD AS IT GETS?". The Girl looks like she's been in a battle for her life to hold a bouquet of roses in her right arm. Her body is sweat-covered and bruised... the not-so-subtle outline of nipples is seen through the dress's material.

Copy at the bottom of the cover reads, "TAMI LYNNE."

WIDEN TO...

EXT. TOWER RECORDS - CONTINUOUS

A line-up of predominantly **PRE-TEEN GIRLS** stand outside the closed doors of the store. Album cover display, which look exactly like the cardboard stand-up adorn every window. A sign in the door reads "TAMI LYNNE'S NEW ALBUM, AS GOOD AS IT GETS?, RELEASE PARTY! TODAY AT NOON!"

MUSIC V.J. (V.O.)

...Yo yo yoooo, party people, it's Phat Hits Live! The illest news of the day is the new album by pop-country superstar Tami Lynne dropping in record stores all over the world! With the off-the-chain success of her debut album which spawned three number one singles and sold over ten million copies, there's no doubt Tami Lynne is gonna continue her reign as music's supreme young diva!

Answered by the SCREAMS OF O.S. TEENAGE GIRLS. As the COUNTRY SONG FADES DOWN --

INT. VIDEO MUSIC CHANNEL STUDIO - DAY

The VJ, **DARIO** -- 25, white-bread douche nozzle with spiky bleached-tip hair and dressed in baggy hip-hop clothes -- stares into CAMERA as he talks into a microphone to viewers at home. Behind him is a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook Sunset Strip, where the Tower Records store is seen in B.G.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nearby, there's a giant LED SCREEN showing a music video where a pretty girl -- in jean shorts, cowboy boots, a denim shirt open to her midriff, and a cowboy hat over her face as she sings to the SONG THAT TOOK US INTO THE SCENE -- dry-hump rides a MECHANICAL BULL. *This is also TAMI LYNNE...* but a very different girl from the one we met in the corn field.

As the video continues to play, reveal on all sides of Dario are the aforementioned screaming **TEENAGERS** who fill the studio audience.

DARIO

The party's just getting started because we have the ultimate hook-up for you Tami Lynne fans. On the phone with us right now to celebrate the release of her new album "As Good As It Gets?" is the Bad Girl of Country herself -- Tami Lynne!

TAMI (O.S.)

(from phone)
What up, Dario!

DARIO

You know how we do, gurl! Now lemme start by saying, your first number one hit -- "Blunt Force Heartbreak"? Yooooooo, that shiz is legit dope. Like, I hated country music 'til I heard that!

TAMI (O.S.)

Well, um... thank you? I think?

The studio audience gets a LAUGH out of this, then --

DARIO

On the real real though, thank you so much for taking time to talk to us, Tami. This has to be one of the biggest days of your life. So... how you feelin'?

TAMI (O.S.)

It's a crazy time, Dario, but I just want to thank God and all of my fans for supporting me through everything.

The CROWD CHEERS again. Dario bumps his chest with his fist, then throws a gang-like hand sign up to the sky --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIO

Word to the Supreme G, for real.

(then)

Now Tami, all of your fans here and watching at home want to know -- how did you get to where you are today?

TAMI (O.S.)

Oh wow. Where do I start...?

AGENT MORRISON (V.O.)

How about the first time you met Ryan.

INT. MADISON POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Chyron reads:

Two Years Earlier...

FBI AGENT WILL MORRISON, mid 30s, crosses the room with a cup of coffee in his hand. He sets it in front of **TAMI LYNNE DOSS** -- 20, pretty, doe eyes red and raw from crying. Morrison's partner, **AGENT BARRY DELEGEANE**, 40s, sits nearby. Tami looks down at the cup, then --

TAMI

(to Morrison)

Oh, I'm sorry, I don't drink coffee. It stains my teeth -- I got my career to think about.

AGENT MORRISON

The singing stuff?

TAMI

I got a demo out to a bunch of record companies. There's a lot of people interested in signing me.

(off their looks)

Can I get a 7-Up instead?

Morrison nods for Delegeane to handle the chore. Delegeane stands and heads out to --

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Delegeane approaches a soda machine nearby, his hand in his pocket rooting around for coins. He arrives at the machine, puts some coins in, and HITS a button. Over which:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (V.O.)

I didn't know Ryan was gonna do the things he done. When we were in high school, he was so sweet. He had that "boy-next-door" thing...

CAMERA ON the machine's opening. As a bottle drops down --

MATCH CUT TO:

SODA MACHINE

A hand reaches down and pulls out a Sprite bottle. The hand lifts the bottle to reveal its being held by a 15-YEAR-OLD STUDENT. WIDEN TO...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATE DAY

Chyron reads:

Then Two Years Before That...

As the Student takes a drink, he can't help but notice around the corner of the machine is Tami, in a cheerleader's outfit, making out with **RYAN HILL** -- 18, sweet-faced and all-too-happy to be kissing the most popular girl in school.

As the Student walks off, Tami and Ryan take a breather from the lip lock. Ryan stares at her like he's looking into the gates of Heaven.

TAMI (V.O.)

He loved me. He always said...

Ryan mouths the words as she says them --

TAMI (V.O.)

"I would do anything for you."

She grows uncomfortable under his intense gaze, then --

TAMI

Don't you, um, have classes today?

RYAN

Skipping a class now and then never killed anyone.

Before Ryan can respond, another student, **MATT RISNER** -- 17, 250 pounds of offensive lineman wearing his every-Friday-in-the-fall uniform of a football jersey and jeans -- struts by. He stops as he recognizes Ryan --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
 (good ol' boy twang)
 Ryan Hill, 'the hell are you doing
 here?

Ryan throws his arm over Tami's shoulder, marking his territory --

RYAN
 I'm here to see my girlfriend.

MATT
 "Girlfriend"?
 (bursts out laughing)
 Good one, Hill! Wow, I needed that
 today, just... thank you.
 (winks at Tami)
 See you in Chem, girl.

Matt's laugh dies down as he walks off. As Ryan's face boils red with embarrassment, Tami looks around... and sees others looking at her and Ryan with the same disbelief Matt did. Off something like shame suddenly creeping over her --

TAMI (V.O.)
 Ryan was sweet, but I wasn't going
 to spend my senior year of high
 school with someone like him.

Ryan turns to Tami, trying to move on --

RYAN
 So what do you wanna do after
 school? The mall? Or we could play
 GoldenEye at my house 'til my
 parents get home...

Ryan smiles with excitement. Tami... forces one back his way.

TAMI (V.O.)
 I realized then why I had never
 noticed Ryan when we were in
 school. He was... well... a dork.
 So you're probably wondering, "why
 are you with him now"? Well we'd
 been in this musical together the
 previous summer...

FLASHBACK

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

Ryan and Tami stand facing each other, holding hands and singing. He's Tony and she's Maria from *West Side Story*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A spotlight shines on them, truly feeling the emotion of the song's words as they build to the big harmonious finish --

RYAN/TAMI
(singing)
...Somewherrre!

They kiss passionately, then the crowd APPLAUDS.

TAMI (V.O.)
We were the leads in "West Side Story". We had to fall in love on stage... then it happened in real life. I thought it would end when the summer did, when we'd both back at school. Ryan off to college, me going into senior year...

END FLASHBACK

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - RESUMING

Ryan makes small kisses up Tami's arm. She watches this P.D.A. as if he's an alien.

TAMI (V.O.)
But Ryan ended up at the community college, so he was around. All. The. Time.
(beat)
It got old real quick.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The MARCHING BAND plays the Madison Mad Dogs fight song in the middle of the field. On one side stands the Mad Dogs football team, getting fired up for their showdown against the Frankville Falcons who stand on the opposing sideline.

On the sidelines, the Mad Dog cheerleaders do a CHEER to the fight song. Between two of the girls is a gaping hole where someone else should be standing. Off which --

INT. STADIUM - UNDER THE BLEACHER SEATS - SAME TIME

Tami, in her cheerleader's outfit, stands across from Ryan, whose face is glossy with tears. She holds navy-and-white pom-poms in her hands, subconsciously doing the motions of the cheer along to the fight song PLAYING outside.

RYAN
(through sobs)
I don't understand -- what did I do wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

It's not you, Ryan. It's me. I just need some time for myself. You know... senior year and all?

RYAN

But -- but I thought we...
 (saying it for the first
 time)
 I love you, Tami.

A beat as she digests this... still making the motions with her pom-poms. He waits to hear say the words back, until --

TAMI

I have to go cheer.

As she starts to move off --

RYAN

Can we talk about this after the game?

TAMI

We did just talk. I have to go. I'm sorry.

She quickly turns and heads toward an opening to the field, leaving Ryan shell-shocked. As she goes --

TAMI (V.O.)

Turns out breaking up with Ryan was the best thing I could've done... because my senior year was awesome.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Tami stands on a small platform, dressed in a skirt suit, tears on her cheeks as the previous year's HOMECOMING QUEEN places her crown on Tami's head. A handsome, jockish Homecoming King stands next to her, CLAPPING for her along with the rest of the fans in the stadium.

TAMI (V.O.)

First, I won Homecoming Queen which I had dreamed about my whole life.

The Homecoming King hands her a bouquet of red roses, for which she thanks him with a kiss on the cheek. She then looks back out to her adoring public and waves, smiling through her happy tears. Off which --

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Tami is center-stage, wearing a lime green taffeta dress and matching shoes, dancing and SINGING across from her partner, **TYLER**, who wears a tuxedo with cummerbund and bow tie.

TAMI (V.O.)
 ...Our show choir took second place
 in the state finals...

The rest of the show choir, all singing and dancing and dressed the same as Tami and Tyler, end their song with a big flourish of jazz hands.

INT. MADISON HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Tami, dressed as Fantine in *Les Miserables*, sings "I Dreamed A Dream" on the stage.

TAMI (V.O.)
 ...I was the lead in the spring
 musical and I won "Best Actress" in
 the thespian club...

INT. JIM HELLER'S HOUSE - GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Tami is on her back underneath a pool table. **JIM HELLER** -- 17, handsome and athletically-built, lies on top of her and boldly goes where no man has gone before as he penetrates her in a hurried, first-one-to-the-finish-line-is-the-winner manner.

TAMI (V.O.)
 ...And then I fell in love. His
 name was Jim Heller. I had my
 first time with him. I thought
 we'd be together forever.

Jim spasms as he reaches climax. Tami looks slightly frightened as she watches him make a face he couldn't duplicate in a mirror for money.

A long beat, then Jim re-opens his eyes, looking happily spent. He kisses her, then...

A door SLAMS SHUT from somewhere above them in the house --

JIM
 My parents!

He jerks out of her and her face twists with pain. A beat, then her pants fly into her face. Off this --

INT. MADISON HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

Tami and Jim walk to class. They're both greeted by practically everyone -- the cool kids, the geeks, the teachers, and even the Janitor -- all of whom Tami acknowledges with no pretension of knowing she's the most popular girl in school. Jim is the opposite, only bestowing his acknowledgement on those worthy.

TAMI (V.O.)

It was the best year ever.

INT. MADISON HIGH - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Tami does a cheer with the other cheerleaders during a time-out at a basketball game. As she waves her pom-poms, Jim watches from the crowd, CLAPPING along with the cheer.

TAMI (V.O.)

I worked hard...

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC PUMPS as Tami and Jim dance in the center of the crowded floor, beer-filled plastic cups in their hands. Jim takes a drink and moves into Tami. He grinds into her, his mouth finding her neck and kissing it. As Tami cracks a drowsy, drunken grin --

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tami has her head inside the toilet, VOMITING. Jim stands behind her, doing the boyfriend-ly duty of holding her hair back. After a beat, she looks up at him with barf-tinged drool hanging from the corner of her inebriated smile.

TAMI (V.O.)

...I played hard...

She quickly thrusts her head back into the toilet bowl and PUKES again.

TAMI (V.O.)

And just when I thought it couldn't get any better...

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Tami, wearing a gorgeous formal dress and looking as beautiful as a girl should on the biggest night of her life, CRIES tears of disbelief and joy as the Principal crowns her head with a tiara.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (V.O.)

I won Prom Queen too! My life was a dream and I didn't want it to end.

Tami looks out at her adoring peers, most prominently Jim, CLAPPING and CHEERING louder than anyone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Tami and the Prom King have the first dance in the center of the dance floor. As they move, Tami locks eyes with Jim, watching them with the rest of the crowd. She smiles sweetly his way. He forces a smile in return, not entirely at ease watching her in the arms of another man.

TAMI (V.O.)

But as wonderfully crazy as my senior year was, there was one thing I didn't do to make sure my future would be just as great...

TOM (O.S.)

You forgot to apply to college?

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Tami stands in front of a body-length mirror wearing a graduation gown. Tami's mother **CAROL** -- 44, once attractive and energetic but now weary from being Tami's never-ending chauffeur, therapist, and ATM -- kneels at her feet, sewing a hem into the bottom of the gown. Her father **TOM** -- 45, sturdy with muscle covered by fat, weathered from working in a steel mill since age 18 to support his family -- stands behind her. He stares at her reflection with bewilderment. Jim is seated on the bed nearby, holding Tami's cap and tassel in his hands.

TAMI

I've been busy, all right?

CAROL

Tom, we have to leave in twenty minutes. Will you please just go put on your suit?

TOM

Why didn't you stay on her about this?

CAROL

Oh I'm sorry, I didn't realize I was raising the kids solo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM

You're the one who drives her to every goddamned extracurricular activity! It didn't occur to you to make sure she got college applications at some point?

CAROL

She did get applications.
(beat)
She just didn't fill them out.

TOM

What about taking the SAT?

CAROL

(realizing)
Shit!

TAMI

(realizing)
Shit!

Tom rubs his forehead to keep it from exploding.

APRIL (O.S.)

Mom!

APRIL -- 13 going on 25, sass, a pain in Tami's ass for the fun of it -- barrels into the room in a panic.

APRIL (CONT'D)

I need to find my locket!

CAROL

Let me finish up with your sister, April, and then I'll come help you.

APRIL

But I can't find it!

TAMI

I'm the one graduating today, I think the Case of the Missing Charm Bracelet can wait.

TOM

You're still going to college. Maybe you have to wait a year to get into a good four-year school, but you can start at Benniton and--

TAMI

-- I not going to a community college!

JIM

Losers go to community college.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

APRIL

Ryan Hill goes to Benniton and he's
not a loser...

TAMI

April, get lost!

April shakes her head in disgust and goes. Tami looks at Jim through the mirror, whose tightening jaw reveals his aversion to the sound of Ryan's name.

TOM

How? How does this slip your mind
when every other person in your
class remembers to get their
applications and SATs done--

TAMI

-- Dad! Not now!

CAROL

Tom, you're stressing her out and
she's gonna get a pimple.

TOM

Fine. No college? You can get a job
if you want to live under my roof.

TAMI

(horrified)

A job?!

JIM

(to Tami, sotto)

You can move in with me.

Tom glares at Jim.

TOM

Jim, me and your dad have worked
together for a long time, so out of
respect for him, I won't smack the
teeth from your mouth for saying
that.

TAMI

Dad! Jesus! I am so done with this
conversation.

(on the verge of tears)

Can't I just fucking graduate??

Tami tries to keep the tears from falling, fanning her hands at her face and taking deep breaths. Carol glares at Tom --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CAROL
Happy now?

TAMI
I'm okay, I'm okay...

A long beat, then Tom exits out, shaking his head. Another beat, then Carol returns to her sewing. A few more stitches, then she leans back and regards her work.

CAROL
There, all set.
(looking up)
Are you okay, sweetie?

TAMI
I'm fine.

Carol stands and looks Tami up and down, her eyes teary. Carol pulls her into a tight hug. After a beat --

CAROL
I better go make sure your father
doesn't wear the tie with the
Corvettes on it.

Carol walks out. Tami dons her cap and looks at herself in the mirror. As she stares at her reflection --

TAMI (V.O.)
I thought about how fast high
school went by as I waited to hear
my name on Graduation Day...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Tami stands at the base of a stage, upon which is a podium where the **PRINCIPAL** stands handing out diplomas. Tami's senior classmates are in line with her, waiting for their names to be called to ascend the stairs.

TAMI (V.O.)
How you work so hard and so long
for one anticlimactic day...

PRINCIPAL
...Tami Lynne Doss...

Tami heads up the stairs and towards the podium. As she arrives, she shakes the Principal's hand and receives her diploma. She flashes a wide smile out to the crowd, where Carol, Tom, April, Jim, and OTHER MEMBERS of the Doss family stand CHEERING, waving, and snapping pictures.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (V.O.)
 ...and just like that? You're done.
 There's no going back.

As she moves past the podium and descends the stage, her smile fades as reality sinks in.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GAS STATION SERVICE MART - EVENING

Days later. Jim and Tami enter and part ways as they head down different aisles. He gives her a playful smack on the rear as she moves off.

She arrives at the freezer section, opens the door, and pulls out a bottle of water. She turns to head off and sees Ryan Hill standing a few feet away, his eyes locked on something inside another freezer door. She watches him a beat, noting that his appearance has changed since they parted ways -- his face has lost its baby fat, his clothes are more college-oriented, and he's grown into his looks. He doesn't feel her stare; either not noticing or playing it cool. After a beat --

TAMI
 Hey you.

Ryan turns and instantly brightens.

RYAN
 Tami! Hi! How are you?

TAMI
 I'm really good. How 'bout you?

RYAN
 I'm great.

A beat as they hold each other's stare.

TAMI I'm sorry-- RYAN (CONT'D) I would've called--

Both LAUGH, then --

RYAN (CONT'D)
 You first.

TAMI
 I just wanted to say I'm sorry.
 About how I left things between us.

RYAN
 Ancient history.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat as they hold each other's stares, then --

TAMI
You remember Jim Heller? He's my
boyfriend now.

As Tami looks for Jim, Ryan looks at his Swatch watch --

RYAN
I gotta go.

TAMI
Oh. Okay...

RYAN
See ya, Tami.

TAMI
See ya.

Ryan quickly walks off. Tami watches him go, then turns to head off in the opposite direction and sees Jim watching her from the end of the aisle. A beat, then he turns and storms off. As she heads off to follow him --

INT. JIM'S CAR - LATER

The car idles in park as Jim stares straight ahead, gripping the wheel, white knuckles. Tami pleads her case from the passenger seat --

TAMI
I just said hi. He saw me first...
(beat)
What is the big deal? Why are you
so jealous of him?

Jim slowly turns to look at her.

JIM
What did you say?

TAMI
I just don't get what your problem
is with Ryan--

His right hand springs off the wheel and BACKHANDS HER HARD across the face. A beat of shock, then tears fill her eyes. Jim keeps looking out at the road.

JIM
Get the fuck out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Still unable to process what's happened, Tami brings her hands to her face to touch the blow. Jim leans across the seat, opens the door, and pushes her out to --

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF TAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tami falls onto the pavement. With her clear of the door, Jim PULLS IT SHUT and drives away. Another long beat, then reality sets in and Tami begins to CRY SO HARD her sobs can't make a sound. Off which --

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tami walks down the dark hall toward her open bedroom door at the end. She passes a closed door, which suddenly swings open, revealing April, exiting the bathroom dressed in pajamas. The bathroom light shines out into the hall, revealing the welt on Tami's face as she crosses by --

APRIL

Tami, what happened?

Tami enters her bedroom and CLOSES the door. April follows her and pushes into --

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tami curls up on her bed as April approaches --

TAMI

Leave me alone.

APRIL

What happened to you?

(silence, then)

Tami... please tell me.

Which is answered with quiet SOBS from the bed. April walks over to her sister and touches her shoulder. After a beat, Tami reaches up and clutches her hand. April climbs into the bed and spoons into Tami. As Tami CRIES herself to sleep --

TAMI (V.O.)

If he had called me that night or the next day to apologize, that would have been the end of it. I never would've seen him again. Instead, he did the one thing no one had ever done to me before...

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

She lays on her bed, the right side of her face now sporting a bluish welt. A cordless phone rests on the bedside table nearby, her eyes glued to it, waiting for it to ring --

TAMI (V.O.)

He ignored me. That asshole hits me
and I'm waiting for him to call.
God I was so stupid.

The bedroom door swings open and Tom enters. Tami quickly rolls over to hide the welt. Tom stands in the doorway, wearing his grey, soiled work jumpsuit --

TOM

You need anything before I go?

TAMI

I'm fine, Dad.

TOM

I can pick you up some flu medicine
or some soup...

TAMI

I just need to rest.

A beat, then --

TOM

You feel better then.

(beat)

'Bye Kitten.

Tom goes, closing the door behind him. A beat, then Tami rolls back to the phone, continuing to wait for it to ring.

TAMI (V.O.)

I waited three days for him to
call. It was like I didn't exist
anymore. I couldn't take it, so I
did the only thing I could...

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - EVENING

Jim opens the door, revealing Tami on the front porch. He sees the almost-healed welt on her face and looks away. A long beat, then he opens the screen door for her. She enters.

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - GAME ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Jim and Tami sit on a couch near the pool table. He strokes her hair with one hand and caresses her thigh with the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIM

It's just that I saw you talking to him and... I get so mad when I think of you with anybody else.

TAMI

I'm with you. I love you.

JIM

I know. I'm sorry.

She looks at him.

TAMI

If you ever do it again...

JIM

I won't, I promise. That's so not who I am. You know that, right?

(as she considers this)

It's crazy how much I love you.

He leans in and kisses her cheek. Then he does it again. Then his mouth moves down to her neck. She closes her eyes, knowing she shouldn't give in so easily but does so nonetheless. Soon, her mouth finds his and he gently lays her down on the couch. As he moves into position over her --

TAMI (V.O.)

I couldn't end it with Jim, despite what he'd done. With things settled between us, I set to trying to figure out what I would do next with my life. I figured it'd come to me before the end of the summer. But like all summers, it went too fast.

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Tami sits on the steps, watching as her neighbor **LINDSAY** carries a box toward an SUV parked in the driveway, a U-Haul trailer hitched to its back. As Lindsay places the box inside the trailer --

TAMI (V.O.)

The people I graduated with were off to college. Jim was back at Madison for his senior year.

Lindsay looks over to see Tami watching her, then waves --

LINDSAY

Write to me, Tami!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Lindsay turns back to continue packing her life into the trailer, Tami gives her the middle finger.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Tami watches a soap opera on the couch, still dressed in her pajamas, remote in hand and face blank with boredom.

TAMI (V.O.)

Everyone else had someplace to be during the day. I just waited for Jim to come by after school.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - LATER

Tami is now on top of Jim, riding him, her pajama top still on. He reaches climax under her, but she's still not there and keeps pumping away. A beat, then --

JIM

(breathless)

Wh-what are you doing?

TAMI

I'm not there yet...

She keeps riding. Jim looks at his watch.

JIM

How much longer?

TAMI

I don't know, just... be quiet.

He lets her continue for another beat, then looks at his watch again. Finally, he sits up and moves her off of him.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Hey!

As Jim stands and puts on his pants --

JIM

I gotta go.

TAMI

Go where?

JIM

Football practice.

TAMI

Football? You said you weren't gonna play this fall...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIM

I changed my mind. It'll look good
on my transcripts. Gotta get those
college applications out soon.

Whether or not it's meant to be a dig, Tami can't help
feeling hurt. She looks away, covering her lower half with a
pillow. As Jim finishes dressing, oblivious --

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Tami watches the game from the stands, a spectator for the
first time in her life. Her attention drifts from the game to
the cheerleaders on the sideline. Between a cheer, they
smile, laugh, socialize... obliviously happy as she once was.

TAMI (V.O.)

My life revolved around Jim's. I'd go
to his football games...

INT. MCDONALD'S - NIGHT

Jim and Tami sit with other members of the football team after
the game. As Jim socializes with his teammates, Tami LAUGHS when
they do. Listens to *their* stories. Waiting for someone to
acknowledge *her*... include her in on the joke... no one does.
As she looks around, out of place but smiling through it --

TAMI (V.O.)

After we'd go eat with his friends,
who now acted like they didn't know
me even though they were kissing my
ass a few months earlier.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tami sits at the dinner table with Tom, Carol, and April. As
the family chats back and forth about their day, they ignore
Tami, who stares blankly down at her untouched plated of food.

TAMI (V.O.)

And as if a giant "L" wasn't
already branded on my forehead, the
moment finally came when I knew I
had officially become a loser.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Tami, wearing her homecoming queen crown and a pretty dress,
rides in the open backseat of a Mustang convertible. It
crawls along the track encircling the field as she waves to
the CHEERING and APPLAUDING fans in the bleachers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (V.O.)

Being homecoming queen the year before, it was now my duty to come back to the Homecoming Game and give my crown to the new queen.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - A LITTLE LATER

Molly McQueen (wearing a different dress from her previous death scene) CRIES joyfully as she climbs a small platform to join her awaiting Homecoming King -- *Jim*. Tami approaches from the field with her tiara in hand. She arrives at the platform and Molly bends her head to be crowned. Tami does nothing for a long beat, then Molly looks up, confused --

MOLLY

(low-voiced)

Aren't you going to give it to me?

Tami says nothing. Another beat, then --

JIM

(also low-voiced)

Tami, c'mon -- give her the freakin' crown already.

Still flashing her crowd-pleasing smile, Molly reaches down and grabs the crown. A small tug-of-war with Tami ensues. Before it gets out of hand, Tami finally releases the tiara and Molly places it on her head herself. As the stadium ROARS for the new Homecoming Queen --

TAMI (V.O.)

I was nothing now. Somebody everyone would soon forget.

As Jim and Molly enjoy their moment, Tami shrinks to the back of the platform unnoticed.

TAMI (V.O.)

I realized that high school was officially a closed chapter in my life. But it was exactly the kick in the pants I needed to start working toward the future.

Tami turns and descends the platform. As she walks off alone, a GUITAR-STRUMMED, OFF-KEY G-NOTE plays repeatedly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tami, again in her PJ's, sits on the edge of her bed STRUMMING the previously-heard acoustic guitar.

TAMI (V.O.)

I vowed to make the most of my time. I started by teaching myself to play guitar.

She tries to SING the note she's "playing", but the sound of the out-of-tune guitar with her voice is equivalent to dying cats. Off which --

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tami stands in the middle of the room, her eyes bright with possibility as she surveys her surroundings.

TAMI (V.O.)

I also moved onto bigger projects. More adult things.

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Tami stands admiring the re-arranged furniture.

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Tami, now wearing overalls and hands flecked with paint, admires the repainted walls.

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The furniture is once again moved and the walls are painted another color. Tami stands between Tom and Carol, reviewing her latest renovation. After a beat --

TAMI

This room isn't big enough for me anymore. I'm an adult now -- I need to live like one.

TOM

You don't have a job, which means you've got no money. How exactly do you plan on doing this?

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - A MOMENT LATER

A light flips on, illuminating the colorless but expansive room. Storage boxes are lined up against the walls, a weight bench is covered in cobwebs, and a water heater occupies a corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A staircase leads down from the house and Tami, Tom, and Carol descend into the room. Tami reaches the bottom and turns to her parents with a hopeful smile --

TAMI

It's the guest house you never knew you had! With some carpet and a little paint--

TOM

-- No.

Tami swings her gaze to Carol -- her saving grace.

CAROL

You know, I have been wanting to do something with this space, Tom...

TOM

I said no and I mean no.
(for good measure)

No.

ON TAMI'S FACE

Smiling excitedly --

TAMI

YES!

WIDEN TO...

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom, Carol and April stand at the base of the stairs and take in the newly refurbished room, now adorned with Tami's furniture, new carpet, and fresh paint. Boxes of her packed-up belongings are stacked nearby. Tami turns to her family --

TAMI

Isn't it great! I can write songs, practice my guitar in private, and I can come and go through the garage without anybody knowing!

Said as she indicates the nearby door.

TAMI (CONT'D)

It's like my own little apartment!

A beat, then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM

You want to act like you're living
in an apartment? Then you can pay
rent like people who live in them.

Tom heads for the stairs.

TAMI

Dad, come on...

He disappears up the staircase. Tami looks to Carol --

CAROL

Well you do need to do something
with your time.

APRIL

She is -- she's renovating the
house, room-by-room.

TAMI

Eat shit, April!

APRIL

My room next, loser!

April runs up the stairs. Carol offers a sympathetic smile to
Tami. Off which --

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Tami descends the staircase with a box in her hand. As she
reaches the bottom, she stumbles and falls forward, falling
onto the box, whose lid comes off.

TAMI

Shit!

As Tami recovers, she glances inside the open box.

POV - TAMI

Several folded letters lie on top. She reaches in, grabs one,
and unfolds it open to reveal a picture attached to the
letter by paperclip. The photo is of Ryan and Tami, dressed
in their *West Side Story* costumes, arms around each other,
smiling and happy. Tami lifts the picture to read the
attached letter. Over this:

TAMI (V.O.)

But as I tried to find my way into
adulthood, some things from high
school kept reminding me of those
times. Things like Ryan.

BACK TO SCENE

Tami smiles as she reads. After a moment, the DOORBELL RINGS. A beat, then she quickly stands and heads up the stairs, the letter and picture still in her hand.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - A MOMENT LATER

Tami opens the front door, revealing Jim. As he enters --

JIM

Hey baby.

He kisses her and wraps his arms around her. She hugs back with one hand, the other holding the letter. As he notices the half-hug, he pulls away --

JIM (CONT'D)

What's with the half-assed hug?...

His eyes find the picture of Ryan and Tami in her hand. He then looks back up at Tami, eyes flashing with anger --

TAMI

I found this in a box and was about to throw it aw--

His balled fist SLAMS ACROSS her face, sending her to the floor. A long beat as she pushes up to her hands and knees. She puts her hand to her nose and sees the blood on her fingertips. Her teary eyes lock on Jim --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Goddamn you! Get out of my house!

As she tries to push up to her feet, he moves over her and flips her onto her back. As he takes her by the wrists and shakes her hard --

JIM

You bitch! You still have feelings for that faggot, don't you??

He delivers an open-handed SMACK across the face. She reels, her eyes wild with fear and shock as Jim leans close --

JIM (CONT'D)

Don't you get it? He doesn't want you, Tami. No one's ever gonna want you again 'cause you're a loser.

(beat)

Don't you know I'd die for you? No one's ever gonna love you like I do... and this is how you treat me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clamping both her wrists inside his right hand, he begins to undo his belt with his left.

TAMI
No! Jim, stop it!

As he UNZIPS his pants, a thick, weathered hand WRAPS around his neck and throws him to the floor. Jim recovers and looks up to see Tom standing over him, face flush with rage. Tom looks from Jim to Tami, seeing clearly for the first time his daughter's battered face covered in a mix of blood and tears. Tom slowly turns back to Jim, then --

TOM
Come near anyone in this family
ever again and I'll kill you.

Jim scrambles to his feet and heads for the door. As he crosses, Tom grabs him by the back of his shirt and throws him THROUGH the screen door.

On the porch, Jim pushes to his hands and knees, then turns to see Tom approaching. Jim quickly gets up and sprints off. Tom watches him go, then turns back to Tami, who lies on her back, CRYING SOFTLY. Tom crouches, scoops her up in his arms, and carries her down the hall. As they go --

TAMI (V.O.)
Me and Jim were finally over.

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tami lays on her side on her bed, holding an ice pack to her face as she CRIES in the dark.

TAMI (V.O.)
And now I was completely alone. I
had nothing in my life.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALL - DAY

A couple weeks later. Tami, face now healed, stands at an Orange Julius talking to the Manager, who hands her an application. She smiles and shakes his hand, then turns and walks over to where Tom waits for her. As her smile fades --

TAMI (V.O.)
Now that I had even more time to do
nothing, my dad stayed true to his
threat that if I was gonna live at
home, I had to work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tom puts his arm around her shoulders and gives her an encouraging squeeze. As they walk --

TAMI (V.O.)

It was then, right there in the mall, that my destiny appeared before my eyes.

Tami's eyes widen as she sees something nearby --

TAMI

Dad, look!

She moves past him. He turns and follows Tami to a KARAOKE RECORDING BOOTH. Tami beholds it with stars in her eyes, perusing a song list on the side of the machine. From inside, as seen on a small TV monitor hanging off the top of the booth, a group of **TEENAGERS** WARBLE some Ace of Base.

TAMI (CONT'D)

(excited)

I can make a demo here! We could send it to record companies!

TOM

You're here to look for a job...

TAMI

I know, but this is something I could do when I'm not working. A side project!

(beat)

C'mon, Dad -- you know this is what I've always dreamed of doing.

Tom gives the machine a leery glance --

TOM

It just seems like a big waste of time and money...

TAMI

You get three songs on a CD and a video! Once I get a job, I'll pay you back with my first check.

She waves the application in front of him.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Please, dad. I need this.

She shows the smile that's made him weak in the knees since the day she was born. Off which --

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - LATER

Tom and Tami drive home. Tami's CD PLAYS from the stereo. To Tom's surprise, it sounds *excellent* for mall karaoke. He looks at Tami, impressed.

TOM

Not bad, Kitten.

(thinks, then)

So I know this guy at work -- Conrad -
- he used to play in some bands and
he had a record contract when he was
younger. I think he makes demos now
for anybody who wants them. Real
demos, not this mall stuff.

TAMI

Dad, you have to give my CD to him!

TOM

I'm not making any promises... but
I'll talk to him.

TAMI

Thank you, Daddy!

Tami leans over and kisses Tom on the cheek. Then she begins to SING along with her voice on the radio. Tom smiles at her, then turns his attention back to the road. The windows are down, the summer wind blows in, and Tami's pretty voice fills the air. Not bad at all. Off which --

EXT. INTERSECTION - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tom's truck stops at a red light.

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Tami is listening to her demo for the eighth time in a row. As they wait, her gaze drifts out her window.

POV - TAMI

Sitting catty-corner from them at the intersection is Jim's car. He's at the wheel. Molly McQueen is at his side -- the new King and Queen of Madison High. Jim gazes out and sees Tami. He flashes a self-satisfied smirk, then puts his arm over Molly's shoulders. She melts into his arms. A beat, then Tom looks over and sees Jim. The light turns and Jim quickly drives off.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM
 Little fucking prick.
 (turns to Tami)
 You okay?

Tami looks away to hide her teary eyes. A beat as her CD continues to PLAY. She quickly turns it OFF. Tom opens his mouth to speak, then thinks better of it and simply hits the gas. As they drive off in silence --

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Tami enters and shuts the door behind her. She crosses to the bed, curls into a ball and begins to SOB quietly...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

Chyron reads:

ONE WEEK LATER...

Tami lies in the exact same spot, wearing the same clothes. Unfinished food plates and cups litter the area around and on her bed. The bedroom door opens and Tom descends into the room, a few rented DVDs in his hand. He clears the stairs and surveys the pathetic scene. A beat, then --

TOM
 You can't just lay here for the
 rest of your life.
 (no response)
 Tami, he ain't worth this. You're
 letting him win.

Still nothing. Another beat, then --

TOM (CONT'D)
 Look, I gotta get these DVDs back
 to the video store but I don't have
 time before work. Can you do it for
 me?

Another silent beat, then Tom pulls out his wallet and takes out a ten dollar bill.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Why don't you get yourself a couple
 movies?
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM (CONT'D)

Something to cheer you up --
 "Pretty Woman" or "Ghost", or that
 one with Cameron what's-her-name.

(beat)

Please you do this for me?

Tom waits. After another quiet beat, he sets the DVDs and the money on the desk nearby, then heads up the staircase. After a beat, Tami's eyes find the DVD pile. Off her stare --

INT. "BIG BUDGET" VIDEO STORE - AFTERNOON

Tami, showered and wearing a fresh set of clothes, stands at the register as the **VIDEO STORE DORK** -- late 20s, white trash Tarantino -- slowly opens the top DVD container to make sure the disc is inside.

VIDEO STORE DORK

Annnnd... this one's okay.

He then scans the box under the sku gun to log it in. He gives her a smile, then turns to do the same routine to the next box. Tami rolls her eyes, which ultimately find a "Help Wanted" sign hanging off the front of the counter. A beat, then --

TAMI

Are you still hiring?

VIDEO STORE DORK

Sure are. You want an application?

TAMI

It's not for me. It's for a friend.

VIDEO STORE DORK

(getting it)

Right. Well you think your friend would be okay working twenty hours a week at six-forty-five an hour?

Tami considers this, then --

TAMI

My friend will probably think that sounds good.

VIDEO STORE DORK

Wait here and I'll get your friend an application from the back.

As the Video Store Dork walks off toward a back room --

RYAN (O.S.)

Tami?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns to see Ryan behind her, a couple DVDs in hand --

TAMI
Ryan, hi. How are you?

RYAN
Great. You?

TAMI
I'm okay.

A beat as they don't know what to say.

TAMI (V.O.)
There was Ryan again. It had to mean something.

RYAN
So... you getting a movie?

TAMI
Dropping some off actually.

RYAN
Well, you look great.

TAMI
No, I don't...

RYAN
Yes you do.

They lock eyes. After a beat --

RYAN (CONT'D)
So... how's Jim?

As Tami opens her mouth to respond --

VIDEO STORE DORK (O.S.)
Here's that application, "friend".

Off Tami, staring daggers at the Dork --

EXT. VIDEO STORE - PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ryan and Tami walk together, the application in her hands, DVDs in his.

TAMI
My dad says I gotta get a job,
so... here I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN

I come here all the time. I'd see you all the time if you got the job!

TAMI

I probably won't apply -- it's more like a worst-case-scenario sort-of thing. Like if all the other options I got fail.

RYAN

Really? That's too bad.

They look at each other for a long beat, then her eyes fall to the DVDs in his hands --

TAMI

So you gonna go watch some movies with your girlfriend or something?

RYAN

Nah, it's just me. I haven't had a girlfriend in a long time.

Meaning her. They arrive at his car.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Do you need a ride or...?

TAMI

(points)
My car's over there.

Another beat, then --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Do you want to get something to eat?

Off Ryan, smiling at this...

EXT. PERKINS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ryan's car is parked far from the restaurant entrance in an isolated spot, the windows fogged.

INT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Tami are in the back seat -- she's on top of him, riding him. He stares up at her with wide-eyed awe, then kisses her neck passionately. He can't fight off his climax any longer and he shudders under her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She holds his head to her chest, not quite making it to the finish line herself as evident by the brief flash of disappointment on her face. After a beat, then Ryan looks up at her, smiling, his hands trembling as he reaches up to touch her face. As she sees this --

TAMI
You're shaking.

RYAN
This is... my first time.

Tami digests this, then --

RYAN (CONT'D)
I missed you so much, Tami.

TAMI
I should never have broken up with you. I was so stupid... can you forgive me?

Ryan looks away, a little choked up.

TAMI (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

RYAN
I never stopped loving you.

She reaches over and touches his face --

TAMI
I never stopped thinking about you either. How sweet you are, how good you were to me... especially when I was with Jim.
(tearing up)
He was so awful.

RYAN
What do you mean?

She looks away --

TAMI
He beat me.

RYAN
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMI

All the time. He'd slap me or hit me with his fists... Sometimes I thought he'd kill me.

Ryan looks away, unable to process her words. After a beat --

RYAN

Jesus. How could he do that to you?

She shakes her head, choking on her sobs. Ryan pulls her to his chest. Silence as he digests what she's said, his jaw tight and eyes staring ahead. Tami looks up.

TAMI

What is it?

RYAN

I'd kill him, Tami. If he were here right now, I would. I swear to God.

TAMI

He deserves it. Sometimes I just wish I could give him a taste of his own medicine.

RYAN

You let me know where and when. We'll do it together.

As she stares at him, digesting his words --

TAMI (V.O.)

He was more serious about killing Jim than I could imagine. I'd soon find out how serious.

Off this --

TAMI

I'm starving. Are you hungry?

RYAN

Totally.

(glances at his watch)

It's pretty late. Not much would be open.

TAMI

Burger King's drive-thru is twenty-four hours?

Ryan nods. As they start to put their clothes back on...

EXT. BURGER KING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Local losers hang out next to their parked cars, others cruise the lot in slow, monotonous circles in search of the opposite sex. Among this group is Jim Heller, hanging out with friends. He LAUGHS at someone's joke, but his smile soon fades as something catches his eye --

POV - JIM

Ryan's car is at the ordering menu in the nearby drive-thru. As Ryan leans out to order, Tami stares over at Jim, making sure that he sees her.

After a beat, she leans over, pulls Ryan's face to hers, and kisses him passionately.

BACK TO SCENE

Jim watches the kiss, his anger boiling.

INT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tami breaks off the kiss and leans back into her seat. Ryan looks over at her as he catches his breath.

RYAN

Wow. What was that for?

TAMI

Because... I think I love you.

Ryan is stunned silent, a grin on his face. After a beat --

VOICE FROM ORDER MENU (O.S.)

Do you still need more time, sir?

RYAN

Uhh...

Ryan looks at Tami, who turns back to the parking lot, where Jim continues to watch her.

TAMI

Let's get a hotel room. I don't want this night to end.

As Ryan's grin grows goofier by the second...

VOICE FROM ORDER MENU (O.S.)

Noice, dude!

EXT. BURGER KING - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jim continues watching as Ryan's car pulls around the other side of the restaurant. After a beat --

JIM
(to his friends)
I gotta dip. See you guys tomorrow.

Jim turns and heads for his car.

EXT. PARADISE INN MOTEL - NIGHT

Ryan's car is parked outside. Tami sits inside, waiting.

INT. PARADISE INN - FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

Ryan stands at the check-in desk as the **CHECK-IN CLERK** keeps his eyes on the Hustler open in front of him on the counter --

CHECK-IN CLERK
It's thirty-five with tax. Check-out's at ten, but you'll be gone long before then, won't ya, sport?

RYAN
(nervous)
Uhh, well, I have to be up very early... I'm on a business trip. On my way to Cleveland.

The Clerk flicks his gaze up to meet Ryan's for a beat. Then he slides the sign-in book in front of Ryan.

CHECK-IN CLERK
Sign this. Will you be paying cash or cash?

Ryan stares down at the dossier for a long beat.

CHECK-IN CLERK (CONT'D)
Don't have to be your real name, sport.

Off Ryan's look, the Clerk puts a room key on the counter. Ryan quickly scribbles a name, then takes out his wallet from which he retrieves two twenties. As he sets the money on the counter, the Clerk looks at the name in the book, then --

CHECK-IN CLERK (CONT'D)
Enjoy your stay, Mr. Heller.

The Clerk hands him his change. Ryan takes the key and splits.

EXT. PARADISE INN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ryan and Tami walk hand-in-hand toward the door to Room 23.

INT. JIM'S CAR - SAME TIME

He watches them enter the room in his rearview mirror. His knuckles white from his grip on the steering wheel. After the motel door shuts, Jim waits a beat. His eyes find a tire iron on the floorboard of the passenger side. He picks it up and exits the car.

INT. ROOM TWENTY-THREE - A MOMENT LATER

Ryan and Tami are on the bed, enveloped in each other again. As Ryan pulls up Tami's shirt and kisses her stomach, she turns her head toward the window. Through the drawn curtains, she sees a shadow cross by the room outside. The shadow stops at the window. An eye peaks through a slit in the curtains. The figure watches Ryan's mouth moving south on Tami's body. Then the figure quickly moves toward the door. A beat, then the door pushes OPEN until the chain lock tenses, keeping the door from opening all the way. Ryan looks up.

RYAN

Hello? Someone's in here!...

The door KICKS IN -- Jim enters, tire iron in hand.

JIM

Looky here... I always knew you two losers would get back together.

Ryan's on his feet, his eyes on the tire iron.

RYAN

Jim, chill. Don't do anything crazy.

JIM

"Crazy"? You're the one with this slut and I'm the crazy one?

Ryan moves away from the bed.

RYAN

What do you want?

JIM

I don't really know what this spell is you got on Tami, but it's obvious she doesn't know how much of a pussy you are. It's only fair to show her your true colors, Ry guy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jim moves toward Ryan, SLAPPING the tire iron into his palm over and over.

RYAN

I don't want to fight you.

JIM

This is exactly what I'm talking about. How're you gonna stand up for her if you can't even stand up for yourself?

Jim moves closer. Ryan backs into the wall.

RYAN

Don't do this.

JIM

I'm doing it. The only question now is how much are you gonna bleed.

As Jim raises the tire iron to strike, he's CLOCKED from behind by a lamp. Jim drops to the floor, revealing Tami with the BEDSIDE TABLE ALARM CLOCK in her hands.

TAMI

How do you like that, you fucker!
(then, to Ryan)
Get the tire iron!

Ryan picks up the tire iron and steps over Jim, who slowly pushes up to his hands and knees. He puts his hand to the back of his head and feels the blood coming out. Tami BASHES Jim over the head with the alarm clock again, this time making it COME ON AND PLAY MUSIC. Off this, Tami throws it down to the floor, then takes the tire iron from Ryan's hands --

JIM

Jesus... you cut me, you bitch...

TAMI

Let's see how much you bleed.

She SWINGS and connects with his jaw. He drops to the floor again. Tami looks at Ryan.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Shut the door.

Ryan stares at her for a long beat, paralyzed with confusion.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Ryan! Shut the door now!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He finally snaps to and does as told. From the floor, Jim covers his mouth with his hand, then pulls it away to reveal thick blood pooling with SEVERAL TEETH in his cupped palm. His jaw is also SEVERELY UNHINGED from his face, hanging there in a sack of his skin.

Ryan crosses back and Tami extends the tire iron to him.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Here. Your turn.

Ryan doesn't take the tire iron as his eyes stay glued on Jim's deformed face.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Hit him!

Ryan meets Tami's look -- he can't do it. Disgusted, she raises the tire iron over her head with both hands to strike again. As she does, Jim lunges up and PUNCHES her in the stomach, doubling her over. Jim then grabs for Tami, which snaps Ryan from his dazed state. He wraps his arms around Jim's neck and pulls him off. Jim pushes Ryan backwards until they both fall onto the bed. They wrestle there, Jim SLAMMING his elbows repeatedly into Ryan's stomach.

Tami catches her breath and sees the struggle on the bed. She approaches, the tire iron raised high again. As she swings it down, Jim rolls out of the way and she SLAMS Ryan square in the chest. As he CRIES OUT --

TAMI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry!

Jim rolls off the bed and crawls for the door. Tami sees this and jumps onto his back. Before she can hit him again with tire iron, he shakes her off, throwing her onto her back next to him. He then moves on top of her and pins her arms to the floor with his knees, his unhinged mouth dripping blood over her face.

He then begins to peel her fingers loose from her grip on the tire iron. He then takes the tire iron and raises it high to bring down into her face. As he reaches full arm extension, a PHONE CORD LOOPS AROUND HIS THROAT and JERKS him off of her.

Jim's eyes bug as Ryan, holding the phone cord, pulls it tighter around his neck. Jim drops the tire iron as he's forced to use both hands to pull the cord away. Jim GAGS for breath. Ryan feels Jim's body weakening. But just as Ryan is about to let go... the TIRE IRON IS STABBED INTO JIM'S EYE SOCKET. Then it's jerked back out. Jim goes limp and Ryan drops him to the floor. Tami is standing there, tire iron in hand... and an exhilarated smile on her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TAMI (CONT'D)

I feel so... awesome right now!

INT. ROOM TWENTY-THREE - BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ryan stands at the sink, feverishly scrubbing blood off his hands and face under the RUNNING FAUCET. The tire iron rests on the sink's ledge, also cleaned and wiped down. Tami sits on the toilet nearby, seat down, drying off her hands with a towel. She looks up and watches Ryan for a beat. He feels her eyes on him and turns in her direction.

RYAN

We need to wipe off the alarm clock, too.

TAMI

What for?

RYAN

Fingerprints. Haven't you ever watched *NYPD Blue*?

He turns back to the task of washing the blood out from his fingernails. After a beat, Tami goes to him, wrapping her arms around his waist and looks at the reflection of the two of them together in the mirror over the sink --

TAMI

We just fit together, don't we?

Ryan stops washing and looks at her through the reflection.

RYAN

How can you be so calm about this?

TAMI

Jim deserved it. We did a good thing here, Ryan -- the world's a better place without him.

RYAN

We killed him. We could go to jail for this.

TAMI

But we won't 'cause no one's ever gonna find out.

Ryan looks away. She starts kissing his neck, then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (CONT'D)

You know, this room's already paid for. We could do stuff if you want.

He turns to her and pushes her off --

RYAN

Tami, there's a dead body out there.

TAMI

He won't mind...

She tries to move in, but he keeps her at arm's length --

RYAN

We're not having sex here! Now pick up these towels, wipe off that clock, and let's get out of here.

Ryan grabs the tire iron with a hand towel and exits. Tami watches him go, then turns back to the sink. A beat as she looks at herself in the mirror, then peers closer, noticing something hanging from a strand of hair. She reaches up and pulls one of Jim's TEETH out. Another beat as she inspects it, then --

TAMI

Gross.

She drops the tooth into the sink, where it disappears into the drain hole under the FAUCET. Off which --

EXT. RYAN'S CAR - LATER

Outside Tami's house, idling in park. The silhouettes of two heads kissing inside.

INT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Tami part. A beat, then --

TAMI

I can't believe we're back together.

Ryan tries to smile, but it's obviously an effort.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Will you stop worrying?

RYAN

What if someone saw us leaving the motel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

No one saw anything, no one knows
we were there...

RYAN

The guy at the desk does.

TAMI

Did you give him your name?

RYAN

No.

TAMI

Then it's over. I can get on with
my life now and be happy again.

She smiles. Ryan does the same.

RYAN

So are we -- y'know -- officially
boyfriend-girlfriend again?

TAMI

Is that what you want?

RYAN

More than anything.

TAMI

Then we are.

They kiss again. After a beat, she pulls away and looks at
the clock on his car stereo.

TAMI (CONT'D)

I'm so late, my parents are gonna
flip out. You want to come over
tomorrow?

RYAN

I've got class 'til noon, but I can
come over after that.

TAMI

Sweet.

One last kiss, then she opens the door and gets out. Before
she shuts the door, she leans in --

TAMI (CONT'D)

I just want you to know how happy I
am right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Off his smile, she SHUTS the door and runs up her driveway.

TAMI (V.O.)

And I truly was. Things suddenly felt like they were going right for me. After what Jim had put me through? I deserved that.

Ryan watches her go, then drives off --

INT. ROOM TWENTY-THREE - A LITTLE LATER

DETECTIVES JOE MANDEL, late 40s, and **LANDON JAMES**, early 30s, stand in the open doorway with the Check-In Clerk. CRIME SCENE TECHS work around Jim's body on the floor.

CHECK-IN CLERK

...He signed the book and I gave him a key and that was that.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Was anybody with him?

CHECK-IN CLERK

Probably. These dipshit kids don't come here for the free continental breakfast.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Did you see anybody else?

CHECK-IN CLERK

No.

A beat, then --

DETECTIVE JAMES

What name did he write in the book?

CHECK-IN CLERK

Jim Heller. But none of 'em ever writes their real name down.

(beat, then)

Wait, that was his real name?

(another beat)

Dipshit kid.

Mandel hands him a card.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Thanks for you help. Give us a call if you think of anything else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Clerk nods and moves off. James turns to Mandel, whose mind is obviously elsewhere.

DETECTIVE JAMES

What's up, Joe?

DETECTIVE MANDEL

I know a girl who dated this kid for awhile. She's the daughter of one of my old high school buddies, Tommy Doss.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Let's talk to her.

Mandel nods, then dons a pair of rubber gloves and heads for Jim's body.

DISSOLVE TO:

TAMI'S FACE

Eyes closed, smiling in her sleep. A SHADOW crosses over her. A beat, then she slowly stirs and opens her eyes --

POV - TAMI

Tom is there, looking down at her.

TOM

Someone was having a nice dream.

BACK TO SCENE

Tami stretches, then sits up. WIDEN TO...

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She props up against the head board and stretches as Tom sits next to her.

TAMI

What time is it?

TOM

Almost nine. What time did you get in last night?

Tami wipes sleep from her eyes as she quickly recalls the events from a few hours prior. Another beat, then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

Um, around eleven? Not too late.
 (then)
 Why aren't you at work?

TOM

I need to talk to you about
 something.

TAMI

(suddenly excited)
 Did you give your friend my demo?

TOM

Not yet--

TAMI

-- Dad, you said you'd do it--

TOM

-- Tami, be quiet for a minute.
 (as she calms)
 Something happened to Jim Heller
 last night... something real bad.

Off Tami, knowing full well but playing dumb...

INT. BENNITON COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CAMPUS COMMONS - MORNING

Ryan enters the study area, backpack slung over his shoulder. As he crosses through, he spies a group of STUDENTS gathered around a TV playing in the corner. He moves toward them and sees on the TV a **REPORTER** standing in front of the Paradise Inn. Police squad cars and ambulances are prominent in B.G. --

ON TV

REPORTER

...Seventeen-year-old James Heller was found beaten to death here at the Paradise Inn late last night. Police urge anyone with any information to call as soon as possible.

BACK TO SCENE

As Ryan watches, the gravity of what's happened sinks in.

STUDENT #1

(to Student #2, re: Jim)
 I knew that dude. He went to my high school.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STUDENT #2

Duuuude.

(then)

Let's get some cheese fries.

As the students move off, Ryan feels his stomach churn and he quickly heads for the exit. Off which --

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Tami sits at the table, flanked on each side by Tom and Carol as Detective Mandel sits across from her, notepad in hand. Detective James stands nearby. Tami's eyes are puffy and red from crying.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

I appreciate you making time for us this morning. And I'm not gonna drag this out any more than we have to, okay, sweetheart?

(off her nod)

Just a couple quick questions and we'll be out of your hair.

CAROL

I don't know why you're talking to her, Joe. She hasn't spoken to Jim Heller in months, let alone seen him--

TOM

-- Carol, let the man do his job.

A beat, then --

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Tami, you and Jim used to date?

TAMI

I broke up with him a long time ago. I've got a new boyfriend now.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

What's his name?

TAMI

Ryan Hill.

Carol and Tom share a look -- this is news to them.

CAROL

Since when?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI
Since yesterday.

DETECTIVE JAMES
Were you with Ryan last night?

TAMI
Yeah. We got dinner, then he brought me home.

TOM
And you're back together just like that?

TAMI
Not "just like that". We talked and we realized we never really stopped caring for each other, and... it just happened. And I'm happy. For the first time in a long while.

She offers a contented smile. Carol smiles too, happy for her.

DETECTIVE MANDEL
Tami, do you know if Jim had any enemies? Someone that was angry with him or might've wanted to hurt him for any reason at all?

Tami and Tom share a look.

TAMI
I don't. Like my mom said, we hadn't talked in a long time. I have no idea what his life has been like since we broke up.

Mandel nods and flips his notepad shut.

DETECTIVE MANDEL
That's all we--

DETECTIVE JAMES
-- So you weren't anywhere near that motel last night, Tami?

TAMI
I already told you, I was with Ryan.

Mandel glares at James, who ignores it and powers ahead --

DETECTIVE JAMES
What time did you come in?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMI

Um, about eleven. Why?

DETECTIVE JAMES

(to Tom and Carol)

Can either of you verify that?

Carol looks to Tom, shaking her head. After a beat --

TOM

I can. I was outside having a smoke
before bed when she got home.

Tami looks to Tom, who keeps his stare on Detective James.
Mandel finally steps between them, hand out to Tom.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

That's all we need, Tommy.

Tom shakes with him. Mandel then turns to Tami and hugs her.

DETECTIVE MANDEL (CONT'D)

Thanks for your time, darlin'.

She nods. As they part, James extends his notepad to Tami.

DETECTIVE JAMES

We need Ryan's address so we can
verify he was with you last night.

Mandel snaps the notepad from James' hand, pissed.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

We're done here.

A heated look between the partners, then Mandel nods for them
to go. The detectives see themselves to the door. After
they've gone, Carol goes to Tami and hugs her tight --

CAROL

Are you all right, sweetheart?

TAMI

I'm fine.

CAROL

Jim might've been a troubled boy,
but he didn't deserve what happened
to him. Nobody does.

TAMI

It's just... awful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Tami and Tom lock eyes. A beat, then Tom stands and heads for the doorway --

TOM
I gotta go to work.

He exits out, leaving mother and daughter in their embrace. After a beat --

CAROL
I can stay with you today if you want. I'll call in sick...

TAMI
No, Mom. I'm okay, really.

Carol doesn't let go.

TAMI (CONT'D)
Really.

CAROL
Just let me hug you. We don't hug as much as we should.

Carol keeps her grip locked tight. Off which --

TAMI (V.O.)
Remember how I said I was finally happy? Finding out about Jim made me even happier. I mean, I couldn't show that too much... but fuck him. I hope he's rotting in hell and the Devil himself is beating his ass with a broken glass bat.

During her speech, a little smile spreads over Tami's face.

INT. GREETING CARD SHOP - A LITTLE LATER

Ryan stands behind the register. He hands some change to a Customer.

RYAN
Three, four and sixty-cents makes five. Have a great day.

As the Customer heads off, Detective James steps up to the register.

RYAN (CONT'D)
How can I help you, sir?

James flashes his badge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DETECTIVE JAMES

Detective James. Are you Ryan Hill?

RYAN

Yeah. Why?

DETECTIVE JAMES

Just have a couple questions for you.

RYAN

About what?

DETECTIVE JAMES

Do you know Jim Heller?

RYAN

Uh, not really. We were in high school at the same time, but he was a couple grades below me... What's this about?

DETECTIVE JAMES

Jim was found dead last night.

RYAN

Whoa. That's... crazy.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Where were you last night?

RYAN

Umm, out with my girlfriend, Tami. I mean, I think I can call her my girlfriend since we just got back together. You see, we used to be together, but then she dumped me--

DETECTIVE JAMES

-- Did you see Jim Heller last night?

RYAN

No.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Tami was with you the whole time?

RYAN

'Til I dropped her off.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Which was when?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RYAN

Umm, I'm not sure of the time, but it wasn't too late 'cause I had to be up for school this morning.

James considers Ryan for a long beat, then --

RYAN (CONT'D)

Need anything else, Detective?

DETECTIVE JAMES

Yeah.

James lays a greeting card on the counter. Ryan picks them up and scans them into the register. Ryan checks out the cards as he puts them in a bag.

RYAN

A birthday card for your grandmother. That's really nice. How old will she be?

James stares at Ryan. A beat, then --

RYAN (CONT'D)

Your total is five-seventy-eight.

Off James, pulling out his wallet --

TAMI (V.O.)

While you police guys were trying to find Jim's killer, the strangest thing happened...

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - LATER

Tami lays on her bed, head on the pillow, watching a TV across the room. Her hand listlessly grips the remote. On the TV, the Reporter (from previous) stands in front of a modest ranch-style house --

REPORTER

I'm standing in front of James Heller's house, where minutes ago family members began arriving to console his grieving mother and father. One family member described "Jim" as a gentle young man whose dream was to become a veterinarian.

TAMI (V.O.)

Everybody cared more about that shit dead than they ever did alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER

We talked to some of Jim's former classmates and asked what they'll remember most about their friend.

ON TV

Matt Risner speaks into the camera, wearing his game-day navy-and-white jersey --

MATT

I'll always remember his laugh. He was one of those guys who was always laughing, and that made you want to laugh. Then he'd laugh some more, and then you'd be laughing at him laughing... it was pretty funny.

(dramatic beat, then)

We lost a Mad Dog today. And that sucks ass. So much ass.

BACK TO SCENE

Tami's mouth gapes with exasperated shock --

TAMI (V.O.)

People that never said three words to Jim were suddenly his best friends. All because he was dead.

Disgusted, Tami hits a button on the remote and the channel flips to an A&E-type program about Jeffrey Dahmer. Images of Dahmer's arrest and subsequent court appearances play over MONOTONE NARRATION and DRAMATIC MUSIC CUES. As Tami watches --

TAMI (V.O.)

That's when Ryan got the idea to keep killing. He liked people talking about the things he did, even if they didn't know it was him doing it. They'd care. He mattered. And nothing meant more than that.

As Tami continues watching the show, CAMERA PUSHES IN ON HER FACE, the wheels spinning in her head.

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - A MOMENT LATER

Ryan pushes the DOORBELL button. After a beat, the door opens and Tami greets him with an excited smile --

RYAN

Tami, we have to talk...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

I know!

She pulls him inside and SLAMS the door shut.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tami is holding Ryan's hands as they sit at the table. He looks bewildered as he processes what she's told him. A long beat, then --

RYAN

You want to kill people for fun?

TAMI

Not for fun. We'll be doing everyone a service. They'll be thanking us.

He stands to face her --

RYAN

You're talking about murder.

TAMI

There are a lot of terrible people in this town -- in the world -- and we can do something about them.

RYAN

They already have people that can do something about them -- they're called cops. Speaking of which, a freakin' detective came and talked to me today while I was at work.

TAMI

What did he want?

RYAN

He asked if I knew Jim and if I saw him last night and if you were with me all night...

TAMI

What'd you say?

RYAN

Oh, y'know, how we bashed Jim's head in and that he really deserved it because he was an abusive shit.

Tami stares at Ryan, half-believing him, then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN (CONT'D)

Of course I didn't say that! I told him we were out together, then I dropped you off and that was it.

TAMI

Well then everything's fine.

Ryan returns to his seat next to her.

RYAN

Tami, about what we did -- I didn't go to that hotel intending to kill Jim, but I'm not sorry about it because that bastard got what he deserved. But it's not happening again, all right? Just get that out of your head.

A beat, then Tami stands and heads out. As she goes --

RYAN (CONT'D)

Tami, what are you-- Wait!

He follows her out --

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ryan descends into the room to find Tami on the bed, curled up, CRYING into her pillow. He goes over and sits next to her. As he touches her leg --

RYAN

Tami, c'mon...

TAMI

Get off!

(kicks his hand off,
then, with disgust)

I don't know why I thought things would be different with you this time.

RYAN

We can't go around killing innocent people, Tami.

TAMI

I'm not talking to you!

Silence, then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN

It isn't right. It's not our place
to decide who gets to live and die.

(beat)

God, what am I saying? I can't
believe we're talking about this.

She sits up and faces him --

TAMI

We can have rules about who gets it
and who doesn't.

RYAN

"Rules"?

TAMI

Like... it has to be someone who's
done something to hurt someone else
-- like Jim! -- or the person has
to be someone everybody else
hates... that sort of stuff.

A beat.

RYAN

Why, Tami? Why do you need to do
this?

TAMI

I want to do something good with my
life...

RYAN

Be a nurse!

TAMI

No no no! I don't want to go to
school and I don't want to work
somewhere that requires a stupid
name tag.

(beat)

This what I want. This feels right.

He sits now, shaking his head.

RYAN

But it's not.

TAMI

Ryan, us coming back together is
fate.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMI (CONT'D)

After everything that's happened,
it's you and me now -- I'm yours
forever and I promise I'll never
let you go again.

(beat)

But if you can't support me and my
dreams, then we can't be together.

She stands and starts to walk off, but he grabs her hand,
stopping her and turning her back to him. A beat, then she
kisses his hand and puts it over her heart.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Do this for me. For us.

Ryan gives a small smile. She goes to him and straddles him
on the bed. As they begin to kiss --

TAMI (V.O.)

It'd be awhile before I find out
what Ryan was up to, but he really
did think his "rules" made
murdering people okay.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - DEN - LATE DAY

Tami and Ryan on the couch. She holds a pen and legal pad in
her hand. As she writes, he watches her nervously --

RYAN

(low-voiced)

Do we really need to make a list?

TAMI

There are a lot of people that
don't deserve to breathe the air
they're breathing. We have to
prioritize.

April bounds into the room and plops down next to Ryan --

APRIL

What're you guys doing?

Ryan leans into April's sight line as she tries to sneak a
peek at the note pad --

RYAN

Nothing. Just hanging out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI
 (as she writes)
 Actually we're making a list of all
 the people we want to kill and
 you're at the top.

Ryan looks to Tami, eyes bugging.

APRIL
 You're such a nob, Tami.
 (then, to Ryan)
 You want to play Goldeneye?

TAMI
 Get lost, April.

April stands. As she heads out --

APRIL
 You should put that creeper who
 lives across the street on your
 list. He always watches me from his
 window when I walk home from
 school.

Tami turns to her.

TAMI
 He used to do that to me too.

APRIL
 He's, like, a serial killer waiting
 to happen.

As April exits, Tami writes the neighbor's name.

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tami eyes the computer monitor on her desk as the printer
 nearby PRODUCES two sheets of paper.

POV - TAMI

The screen shows her now-typed kill list, entitled "PEOPLE
 WHO NEED TO DIE", followed by a list of names. After a beat,
 a window pops up reading "Save Changes To 'Untitled Document'
 Before Exiting?"

BACK TO SCENE

Tami thinks, then moves the mouse over the "NO" button. She
 CLICKS it and the document disappears. She grabs the printed
 kill lists off the printer and turns to hand one of the
 sheets to Ryan, who sits on her bed nearby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

One for you and one for me.

Ryan doesn't take the list. After a beat --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Will you stop worrying? You know,
you're really no fun when you act
like this.

Before he can respond, Tami is struck by a thought.

TAMI (CONT'D)

I almost forgot the most important
thing!

(off his look)

Do you have any money?

INT. AUTO STORE - DUSK

Tami and Ryan walk down an aisle. Tami peruses the shelves of merchandise, then finds what she's looking for: a shelf of TIRE IRONS. She picks a black-colored one, considers it, then sees a chrome one and picks it up. As she shows both to Ryan --

TAMI

What do you think, black or silver?

RYAN

Does it matter?

TAMI

Yes it matters. We killed Jim with
a tire iron so we should kill
everyone else the same way.

RYAN

(low-voiced, anxious)

Could you say it a little louder? I
don't think the people in the
parking lot heard you.

She ignores him, trying to make her choice between tire irons.

TAMI

It's gonna be our "thing". Like
how Marilyn Manson always sang
"Helter Skelter".

RYAN

You mean Charles Manson?

TAMI

Whatever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat, then Tami returns the chrome tire iron to the shelf.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Black goes with everything.

Tami walks off to pay for the tire iron. Off Ryan --

EXT. DRUG STORE - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

Tami carries the bag with the tire iron inside, following Ryan toward his car parked at a nearby meter. As they walk, Tami references her printed "to-kill" list --

TAMI

This is so exciting! Who do you think we should start with?

Said as they pass a **HOMELESS BEGGAR**, who puts a Styrofoam coffee cup in Ryan's face.

HOMELESS BEGGAR

Spare some change, man?

RYAN

Sorry, dude.

HOMELESS BEGGAR

Then fuck you, cocksucker!

Ryan ignores the insult, but Tami stops cold and turns back to the Beggar.

TAMI

Wanna make ten bucks? All you gotta do is take a ride with us.

RYAN

(low-voiced)
What? Tami, no--

TAMI

-- Shush.
(to Beggar)
You coming or not?

Off the Beggar's unsure look --

INT. RYAN'S CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The windows are down as Ryan and Tami hang their heads out to counter the rank body odor wafting towards them from the Beggar in the back seat. Ryan casts leery glances into the rearview mirror every few seconds, watching the Guy. The bag of tire irons sits between Tami's legs on the floorboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (V.O.)

I remember that KFC night pretty well. I wondered why it took Ryan so long to come back with our food.

HOMELESS BEGGAR

Where we goin'?

TAMI

You want something to eat? Any place, our treat.

The Beggar considers the offer, then --

HOMELESS BEGGAR

How 'bout KFC?

(off Tami's nod)

Wait, buying me food don't count against my ten dollars, does it?

TAMI

Nope.

Ryan looks at Tami, who keeps her face turned toward the fresh air coming from outside. Off which --

INT. RYAN'S CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ryan is handed a bag of food by the Cashier at the drive-thru window. He hands the bag to Tami and pulls away. As they go, Tami turns to the Beggar --

TAMI

You want your food now?

HOMELESS BEGGAR

I ain't here for the company.

TAMI

(to Ryan)

Turn here.

Ryan shoots her a confused look, but turns nonetheless.

EXT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Driving down a dark, poorly-lit street.

INT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

After a beat --

TAMI

Stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He follows her order. Another beat, then Tami tosses the KFC bag out the window.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Oops.

The Beggar quickly opens the back door and climbs out.

RYAN

(to Tami)

What are you doing??

Off Tami's smile --

EXT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The Beggar scoops the bag off the ground and opens it up.

HOMELESS BEGGAR

(inhaling the aroma)

Ain't nothing like famous recipe...

(then)

They forgot my baked beans!

As he spins back to protest, a TIRE IRON DRILLS HIM ACROSS THE FACE. The Beggar drops as Tami moves in over him, wearing latex gloves --

RYAN

(calling from the car)

Tami! What are you doing?!

TAMI

(calls back)

Almost done, sweetie.

She then looks down, where the Beggar has put his hands up to shield himself from another attack, blood pouring from an open gash on his forehead --

HOMELESS BEGGAR

Please stop...

TAMI

Sorry. You chose me.

She SLAMS the tire iron down into his skull again.

Ryan looks away from the attack, wishing it were a nightmare he could wake from.

Tami STRIKES AGAIN. As the Beggar convulses on the ground and chokes on his own blood --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (CONT'D)

Oh be quiet.

Tami takes the tire iron and STABS THE POINTY END INTO THE GUY'S THROAT. Now he's quiet. Tami jerks the tire iron free, causing BLOOD TO SPRAY UP ON HER CLOTHES.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Ew.

Tami turns and starts back to the car. She's struck by a thought and stops again. She goes back to the Beggar and bends down to pick up the KFC bag, also covered with blood. She quickly runs back to the car and climbs in --

INT. RYAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ryan pushes the accelerator to the floor, eyes wide and darting to see if anyone has watched what they've done as Tami removes her gloves.

RYAN

Jesus! He didn't do anything!

TAMI

He called you a cocksucker.

RYAN

Are you out of your mind?!

TAMI

Ryan, he was a bum. Which he wouldn't be if anybody gave a crap about him.

RYAN

You don't know that.

She reaches over and touches Ryan's face --

TAMI

We're doing good here, baby. Try to remember that, all right?

As the car enters a well-lit area, Ryan realizes they aren't being chased by cops and stops the car at a light turning from yellow to red. He takes a deep breath, then releases the steering wheel. His hands shake. Tami sees this, then --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Somebody's a Stanley Stressball.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at her, then looks down at her feet where the blood-stained tire iron rests on the floorboard between her sneakers. Ryan then looks back up to see the blood-splattered KFC bag on Tami's lap. As she reaches into the bag --

RYAN

You took his food?!

TAMI

Our food. We paid for it. Besides, it's not like he was gonna eat it.

She pulls a biscuit from the bag and takes a bite. As she chews, she reaches into her pocket and removes her "kill list" and a pen. She thinks for a beat, then --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Do I put "Homeless Guy" or "Unknown Victim Number One"?

Ryan snatches the list away, which gets streaked with the Beggar's blood off the food bag --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Hey!

RYAN

No more list!

He stuffs into his pocket. As he hits the gas, she takes another bite of her biscuit.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Tami's on the couch, enraptured by the news on TV where another **REPORTER** stands on the darkened street where the Beggar's body was found. She's got her notebook in hand and is writing something down as she listens --

ON TV

REPORTER #2

...The police cannot yet identify the body of a homeless man found beaten to death just a few hours ago. Officials within the department won't verify whether or not a murder weapon was found at the scene, but anonymous sources are saying the wounds on the victim are similar to those of 17-year-old James Heller, who was found murdered late last week.

BACK TO SCENE

As Tami continues watching with a flicker of delight in her eyes, Tom enters the room, dressed for work. Tami keeps her eyes on the TV as he approaches. He waits for her to look over, then --

TOM
Tami... Tami? Tami.

She looks up, annoyed --

TAMI
What?

TOM
Conrad listened to your demo -- he really liked it.

As her scowl melts into a smile --

TAMI (V.O.)
More things going my way!

EXT. CONRAD'S TRAILER - DAY

Tami and Tom stand outside the mobile home, which rests on stacks of cinder blocks at its four corners and has seen better years. Tom KNOCKS on the door and waits. Tami has her notebook in hand. After a beat, the door opens revealing **CONRAD SWEAT** -- late 40s but looking ten years older, sporting a thick mustache and wearing a dirty work jumpsuit. An ass-ugly McCaughnehey that smiles with tobacco-stained teeth as he eyes Tami up and down --

CONRAD
Goddamn, Tom, you didn't tell me she was a looker too!

TAMI
I'm the whole package!

Conrad steps out from the trailer and extends his hand --

CONRAD
Conrad Sweat, guitar god and sometimes songwriter.

Tami shakes, smiling despite the obvious squalor --

TAMI
Tami Lynne Doss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONRAD

From now on it's just...

(dramatic)

Tami Lynne. All the big stars don't use a last name and what I heard on your demo is star-time.

TAMI

Thank you!

A beat, then --

CONRAD

Shit, where's my manners? Come in!

Conrad turns and re-enters the trailer, holding the door open for them to follow. Tami and Tom enter --

INT. CONRAD'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Tami and Tom step inside the dirty shell. They survey their surroundings which includes a sink full of dishes, empty beer cans on the table, and a cat eating from an overflowing trash can. As Conrad swats the cat off the table --

CONRAD

Maid has the decade off.

He crosses past them and deposits himself into his La-Z-Boy throne, then gestures to the couch nearby.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Sit, y'all, sit.

Tom and Tami do so as Conrad pulls a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and takes one out. As Conrad lights the heater and takes a draw --

TOM

Conrad made a record once. He played it for me at work, it was real good.

TAMI

That's awesome.

Conrad studies Tami, then points with his cigarette --

CONRAD

I know what you're thinking -- "how in the world is this hillbilly gonna help me"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI
 (panicked)
 No, I swear I wasn't!--

CONRAD
 -- God knows you wouldn't be the first to think I ain't got shit to offer, and most of the time you'd be right. But when it comes to music, I know what's what. Now I could sit here all day and tell you you're gonna be a big star, but that's about as valuable as this cigarette telling me I'm gonna win the lottery.

He puts the cigarette to his ear and listens. Tom and Tami share a look, then--

CONRAD (CONT'D)
 (off the silence)
 Guess not today.
 (another drag, then)
 Tami, can I show you something?

TAMI
 Sure.

Off his nicotine smile --

INT. CONRAD'S TRAILER - BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Conrad sits on the edge of his bed, cigarette dangling from his lips and guitar in hand as he PLAYS A COMPLICATED, SEARING SOLO, picking the strings with soiled fingernails. After a beat, he begins a RIFF OF DIRTY, ROLLING STONES-LIKE BLUES. Continuing the riff, he looks up and smiles at Tami and Tom, who watch transfixed from the doorway. He ends the solo with a SPLASHY DISPLAY OF FRET-WORK. A beat as the guitar FADES and he sets it aside. He gives Tami and Tom a long beat to digest his considerable ability, then --

TAMI
 Wow.

CONRAD
 You write lyrics?

TAMI
 I do! I brought my notebook, I got a few songs in here if you want to check them out...

She extends the notebook to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONRAD

Why don't you just sing one to me?

Tami looks to Tom, who smiles and nods. Tami takes a deep breath, then opens the notebook. She flips through the pages and finds the song she wants. She sits the notebook down on the table, then --

TAMI

Can I borrow your guitar?

Conrad extends it over. Tom looks surprised -- she can play too? Off this, Tami starts to PLAY AND SING...

TAMI (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Cold and alone,
cardboard box for a home,
your broken body sleeps on the
street...
Sending prayers up to a God who's
given up on you,
never knowing when you'll eat.
This life a far cry from the one
you once dreamed,
a "dream" -- those are all long
dead...
Wishing you could die too,
not waking up sounds nice,
But it's another day of your wasted
life instead.*

Tami stops and looks up. Tears in her eyes. Deeply in her feels. Conrad and Tom stare back with gaped mouths. After a long beat --

CONRAD

Well hell, that was...

TOM

Amazing.

CONRAD

Yep. Definitely amazing. Also grim as shit. You got anything more upbeat?

TAMI

(wiping the tears away)

I do. I just wrote that one about the homeless man on the news -- the one that got murdered?

(sobbing)

It's just so sad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOM
That just happened, didn't it?

TAMI
(nods through the tears)
The words came to me while I was
watching the story.

Tom looks even more impressed. Off this --

CONRAD
Well you can honor his death -- and
our bank accounts -- by continuing
to write amazing lyrics all about
the world around you and letting me
lay it all down on my four-track.

He gestures to an antiquated four-track recording machine in
the corner, the only thing that looks cared for and dust-free.
Tami looks from the four-track back to Conrad --

CONRAD (CONT'D)
How's next week sound?

TAMI
Amazing!

CONRAD
Giddy-up. So... partners?

Conrad extends his hand to Tami. She shakes enthusiastically.

TAMI
Partners.

As they continue to shake, Tami shoots a look over at Tom,
who beams at her beyond proud. Over this:

TAMI (V.O.)
I felt like Conrad could help me be
a star. But in order to achieve the
thing I wanted most in life, I had
to do the thing I hated most.

INT. "BIG BUDGET" VIDEO STORE - DAY

Video Store Dork looks over an application. Tami stands
across from him, looking pained. A beat, then --

VIDEO STORE DORK
Welcome to the team. Be here
tomorrow at ten. You open with me.

Tami nods as the Dork looks her up and down --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIDEO STORE DORK (CONT'D)

If somebody had told me one day
I'd be working here with the
goddamn Homecoming Queen...

TAMI

Can I go now?

VIDEO STORE DORK

Tomorrow, ten sharp. We got the new
Van Damme movie coming in. It'll be
a consumer baptism of fire for you,
missy.

As Tami heads for the door --

TAMI (V.O.)

I really hated that nerd. Guess
that's why Ryan killed him too.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONRAD'S TRAILER - DAY

Tami SINGS lyrics from a note pad in her hand as Conrad PLAYS
his guitar.

TAMI (V.O.)

Sorry, where was I? Right -- my
life was going great again. I was
working hard to make my dream come
true.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

Tami sits looking out the window as Ryan kisses her neck.
Tami has her song notebook in hand.

TAMI (V.O.)

Me and Ryan were perfect too. With
each passing day, I was more and
more convinced that he was my soul
mate. Of course I had no idea the
awful things he was doing when we
weren't together.

She grows tired of his affection and shrugs him off.

TAMI

Will you focus?

Tami turns her gaze back out the window. Ryan grudgingly does
the same.

POV - TAMI AND RYAN

April approaches the house, walking down the sidewalk across the street. In B.G., a **MAN'S** FACE watches her from a window in a house across the street from Tami's. As April reaches the front porch, the Man's face disappears behind curtains.

BACK TO SCENE

TAMI

You see him? You saw him, right?

RYAN

Just 'cause he likes to watch her doesn't mean he's a perv.

TAMI

Why else would he do it?

(then)

It's only a matter of time before he tries to do more than watch.

April enters the room and drops her backpack on the floor as she sits on the couch opposite of the chair Ryan and Tami occupy. April picks up the TV remote and clicks the TV on.

APRIL

Hey. What're you guys doing?

Ryan quickly stands and crosses over to April.

RYAN

Nothing. You want to get your ass kicked on Punch-Out?

APRIL

Bring it!

Ryan and April sit on the floor in front of the TV and April pulls a Nintendo 64 console from the TV stand. Off Tami, continuing her watch for the Neighbor Perv...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

The following day. Tami and Ryan sit watching as the Reporter delivers a story from in front of the house across the street --

REPORTER

(into camera)

The body of Earl Broadus was found inside his home early this afternoon.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Although authorities have not revealed how Mr. Broadus died, witnesses say there was a tire iron found outside the home, the same instrument used in the murder of James Heller. Fear is spreading that the attacks are connected and that a serial killer may be running loose in Madison. For Action Eight, I'm Tad Pergram.

As the Reporter moves off with his Camera Man, Ryan looks over and sees Tami writing in her notebook.

RYAN

What are you doing?

TAMI

Writing lyrics for a song. I call it "Ain't Creepin' No More".

RYAN

Wait, you're writing about the guy across the street??

TAMI

Yes, Ryan. Write what you know -- duh.

RYAN

That's like keeping a scorecard of what we're doing!

TAMI

No, it's me being an artist. Sorry you can't understand that.

RYAN

I just think there are better ways of writing your little songs, Tami.

TAMI

"Little songs"? Wow. Really appreciate the support of my dream.

As Ryan realizes this is a no-win argument... April approaches from the sidewalk, backpack over her shoulder. She sees the police coming and going from the house across the street, then turns to Tami --

APRIL

What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMI

That creeper who was always watching you from his window got murdered.

(off April's silence)

Weird how we were joking about that, huh?

April takes this in, then looks skyward --

APRIL

Hey Universe, the name of my geometry teacher is Mrs. Rollman! In case you want to do us another solid!

She starts to laugh, then goes into the house. A beat, then Tami writes the name down. Ryan sees this, then stands and stalks off inside too, beyond annoyed. Off this --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Detective Mandel sits with Tom at the table. Both have highball glasses and a bottle of bourbon in front of them. As Tom refills Mandel's glass --

DETECTIVE MANDEL

(slurring)

Twenty-six years on the Job, Tommy. You'd think that'd count for something. But if the Feds think they can catch Mr. Tire Iron Psycho Killer? Qu'est-ce que c'est...

They both slam their drinks. A door SHUTS from a nearby room. A beat later, Tami enters and crosses through, her clothes and hair disheveled as if she'd been in a struggle --

TAMI

(startled)

Oh, hey Dad, hey Uncle Joe.

She gives Joe the usual peck-on-the-cheek.

TOM

Where've you been?

TAMI

Out with Ryan.

(fake yawn, then)

I'm beat. 'Night, y'all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As she crosses the room, Mandel looks down and sees red spots on her sneakers --

DETECTIVE MANDEL

You got something on your shoes...
almost looks like blood.

Tami sees the spots, then looks up --

TAMI

Oh, I know what that is -- me and Ryan stopped for dinner. At Sonic. See, Ryan got some french fries, but then he dropped his tray... so that must be the ketchup from that on my shoes.

(beat)

Anyway... G'night!

She exits out. Mandel watches her go... something in his expression says he's not quite buying her story. As Tom clocks this --

TOM

Let me refill that glass for you.

Which he quickly does for both of them. Off this...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

As sun slips through the curtains, Mandel lies sleeping on the couch, a small blanket barely covering his torso. He's fully dressed still, shoes and all.

After a long beat, he stirs and sits up in a panic -- where is he and how did he get here?? Then he puts a hand to his head, where the bourbon from a few hours early stabs at his brain. Oh yeah. That's why he's asleep on a couch in his clothes.

Another beat as the hangover pain subsides briefly... then he sees a bottle of aspirin on the floor near his foot, along with a note and a glass of water. Mandel picks up the note and reads:

*"Hope you feel better than I do this morning.
I'm off to work. See you soon.*

Tom"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Off this, Mandel quickly grabs up the aspirin, pours out 4, and swallows them down with the water. He then slowly stands, stretches, then goes to exit the room.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - SECONDS LATER

Mandel approaches the front door... but then he stops. Remembering something from the night before:

FLASHES IN HIS MIND -- *Tami's red-stained shoes.*

He can't let it go. He needs to know for sure. Mandel turns and heads back into the house.

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - TOP OF THE STAIRWELL - A MOMENT LATER

The door to Tami's bedroom opens and Mandel stands there, listening. After a beat --

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Tami? You down there?

(then, louder)

Anybody home?

Answered by silence. Mandel gives it a long beat... then he descends inward.

INT. TAMI'S BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Mandel reaches the bottom of the staircase and looks around -- no one here. He then moves deeper into the room and begins his search for Tami's sneakers. He checks every corner, under clothes piles... no sign of the shoes anywhere. Mandel then decides to look under the bed, pulling out a small mag flashlight to aid his search.

As Mandel gets on his knees and starts investigating the darkness under the bed...

TAMI QUIETLY APPEARS IN THE GARAGE DOOR ENTRANCE. She stands watching Mandel... knowing why he's there... which is why she is HOLDING A TIRE IRON.

After a long beat, Mandel finds nothing. He stands and turns to see...

TAMI, HOLDING THE TIRE IRON HIGH TO STRIKE DOWN.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Tami, what are y--

WHAM. She brings the weapon down hard into his forehead, splitting it like a watermelon. As Mandel drops to his knees, Tami STRIKES AGAIN AND AGAIN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blood sprays up into her face, into her now smiling mouth. Think Hannibal Lecter beating the Officer to death to make his escape. Unrelenting brutality.

Tami's eyes twinkle with joy as she keeps doling out violence on a body that's quickly becoming a lump of crushed flesh, bone, and blood. As she continues the attack...

DETECTIVE MANDEL (V.O.)

Tami?

SMASH TO...

TAMI LOOKING NORMAL. No blood or tire iron to be seen. *It was all a sick daydream*. As she realizes this, she sees...

MANDEL, right in front of her, on his feet and looking her way as she stares in from the garage entrance. He's empty-handed -- no shoes found.

TAMI

Uncle Joe. What are you doing in my room?

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Oh... right, um... Yeah I was, uh... just on my way out.

TAMI

(pointed)
Through my room.

A long look between them... then Mandel cracks a smile.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

Guess I'm still drunk from last night. I was looking for the bathroom too.

TAMI

Also upstairs. Like the front door.

Another beat.

DETECTIVE MANDEL

I'm sorry, Tami. This is your private space and I shouldn't have come down here.

(beat)

Forgive a silly, hungover old man?

Tami stares with cold, unblinking eyes. Mandel finds himself wilting... then he turns and heads back up the staircase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Tami waits until she hears not only her bedroom door shut, but also the closing of the front door...

Then she *releases* the tire iron and enters her room. Off this...

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

As Mandel finds his way to his car, he passes by a GARBAGE BIN. Red-stained SHOE LACES hang limply from within and down one side. Mandel has no clue as he arrives at his car and gets in to drive off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CORN FIELD - NIGHT

Tami stands over Molly McQueen, wearing her prom dress, her tiara in Tami's hand. As Tami stares down at the tiara --

TAMI (V.O.)

So the year went on... Winter became spring and Molly McQueen was crowned Prom Queen, which I didn't like one bit. And I guess I said as much 'cause Ryan decided there was only one way to turn my frown upside down...

Tami raises the tire iron high over her head, preparing to hammer down the final death blow.

TAMI

(re: tiara)

You don't deserve this. Or your stupid, meaningless life.

Molly recognizes Tami's voice but can't make out her face as moonlight encases Tami in silhouette --

MOLLY

Oh my God. Is that you, T--

Tami STRIKES. Molly's body goes limp. Tami CONTINUES BEATING her with the tire iron, then begins to CRY. A beat, then Ryan appears from the corn, stopping in his tracks as he stares in shock at the sight of Molly's body. He moves to Tami and grabs her arms, stopping the assault (as seen previous). Soon, he pulls her into his chest.

TAMI (V.O.)

Molly was, like, the eighth person Ryan attacked.

ON MOLLY'S FACE

As blood snakes slowly over her cheekbones --

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

MOLLY'S FACE

The morning sun now shining on her. The RUMBLE of a tractor rolling over corn stalks GROWS LOUDER. A beat, then the engine GOES QUIET, followed by the sound of feet jumping to the ground and walking toward Molly's body.

FARMER (O.S.)

Hey, are you...? My lord.

A beat... then Molly GASPS AWAKE, coughing up dried blood. The Farmer runs off. Over which:

TAMI (V.O.)

But Molly didn't die. Somehow, she hung on and was found practically brain-dead. The doctors didn't have much hope she'd last longer than a few more days, but she was stronger than anyone knew.

DISSOLVE TO:

RYAN'S FACE

Looking off, troubled, his mind elsewhere.

TAMI (V.O.)

That's when I noticed a change in Ryan. He started keeping to himself, like he was thinking about something else all the time -- it was Molly on his mind. And it felt like he was gonna crack at any minute.

TAMI/TOM/APRIL/CAROL (O.S.)

*Happy Birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you...*

WIDEN TO...

INT. HAPPY HOUR HAMLET - NIGHT

A T.G.I. Friday's/Applebee's-type restaurant with cheap eats, draft beer, and sports on endless TV monitors. Ryan, Tami, April, Tom, and Carol sit in a booth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Empty dinner plates litter the table. A birthday cake with lit candles is in front of Ryan, who wears a forced smile as the Doss family SINGS --

TAMI/TOM/APRIL/CAROL
*... Happy Birthday, Dear Ryyy-annn
 Happy Birthday to Yooooouuuu!*

As they CLAP and Ryan eyes the cake --

TAMI (V.O.)
 It was the night my family took
 Ryan out to dinner for his birthday
 that I found out he was the one
 doing all that killing.

TAMI
 Make a wish and blow 'em out, baby!

Ryan finally does as Carol SNAPS a picture. The family CLAPS and CHEERS again. Carol sets the camera aside and looks for something on the table --

CAROL
 Do we have anything to cut the cake
 with?

Their waitress, **ANGELA** -- 18, goth-y hot, tats and piercings -
 - arrives at the table.

TAMI
 (curt)
 Are we supposed to cut the cake
 with our fingers?

ANGELA
 I'm sorry, I'll get you a knife.

As Angela moves off --

TAMI
 She just blew her tip.

RYAN
 Tami, chill out.

TAMI
 Common sense says bring a knife
with the cake. Duh. And I still
 haven't got my Dr. Pepper refilled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

APRIL

(to Ryan)

Looks like someone's "friend" is in town for her monthly visit...

TAMI

Fuck off, April!

CAROL

Tami! Watch your mouth!

A beat, then Tami turns to Ryan, smiling again --

TAMI

Why don't you open my gift while we're waiting?

She reaches down next to her on the seat, produces a Best Buy bag, and hands it to Ryan. Carol readies her camera again as Ryan reaches into the bag and pulls out a box. He then opens the box and pulls out a Hi-8 video camera. Off his bewildered look --

TAMI (CONT'D)

It's a video camera!

RYAN

I can see that.

TAMI

You said you wanted one that day we went to Best Buy, remember?

RYAN

Tami, this is a seven hundred dollar camera. You don't have the money for this.

APRIL

Mom and dad paid for it.

Which draws death glares from Tami and Carol --

APRIL (CONT'D)

What? It's true!

TAMI

Don't you like it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RYAN

No, I do, it's just... I know you can't afford this and I don't want you going in debt to your parents when you've got more important things to pay for, like your music or maybe going back to school...

Tami looks up at him, horrified --

TAMI

School? Screw that.

RYAN

I'm just saying it's an option if the music thing doesn't pan out...

TAMI

You don't believe in my music?

RYAN

(exhausted with her act)
No, Tami, all I'm trying to say is that your music -- or whatever else it is you want to do -- is what you need to be spending your money on. Okay? Not some super-expensive birthday present for me.

TAMI

(tearing up)
I just wanted to make you happy.

RYAN

I am happy--

CAROL

-- Ryan, this is what Tami wanted to do for you and she is going to pay us back so it doesn't matter who bought it -- it's a gift and you should be grateful.

RYAN

I am, really--

CAROL

I don't like this attitude one bit.

RYAN

It's not attitude, I'm just saying--

Angela, holding a knife, arrives at the table with a small armada of her co-workers in tow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ANGELA/CO-WORKERS
 (singing, to the tune of
 "Camptown Races")
*Today is the day you were born!
 Do-dah! Do-dah!
 So cut the cake and have some fun!
 All the do-dah-day!*

CAROL
 -- Shut up!

The group goes silent. Carol turns her glare back to Ryan.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 Tami has a lot on her mind right now. She's doing the best she can and you're being a little -- well, I have to say it -- asshole by pulling a stunt like this.

TOM
 Carol...

CAROL
 No, if he can't appreciate what Tami does for him -- everything she sacrifices to be with him -- then we'll take the check and go home. Is that what you want, Ryan?

He's shamed into silence. The wait staff share awkward glances, then slowly start to inch away from the table. Carol takes a deep breath, then grabs the knife from Angela.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 Now if we're all done with this nonsense, let's have some goddamn cake.

As Carol cuts the cake, Angela's eyes meet Ryan's. She offers a sympathetic smile, which Tami sees. As Angela walks off --

CAROL (CONT'D)
 (as if nothing happened)
 How big a piece does the Birthday Boy want?

RYAN
 I need to go to the bathroom.

Ryan is quickly up and gone. After a beat --

TOM
 Christ, Carol.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CAROL

He's an ingrate. We should take the camera back and see how he likes that--

TOM

-- Please, for the love of God, shut the fuck up.

As his family's mouths gape in unison --

EXT. HAPPY HOUR HAMLET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ryan stands outside the entrance, trying to clear his head. A beat, then --

ANGELA (O.S.)

Happy birthday.

Ryan turns to see Angela standing nearby, cigarette in hand. She studies him for a beat, then --

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You don't remember me, do you?

(off his clueless look)

I was a year behind you at Madison, same class as Tami. We passed each other in the hall now and then, but that was about it.

RYAN

Oh. I'm sorry I didn't recognize you.

ANGELA

Don't be. From what I saw, you got bigger problems.

(off his embarrassed look)

Sorry, it's none of my business. I'm just a busybody on her smoke break.

She tosses her cigarette to the ground and rubs it out.

RYAN

Have you worked here long?

ANGELA

A few months. I'm in school over at Benniton. I'm saving for a transfer to the main campus.

RYAN

Me too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

No kidding. Maybe I'll see you around -- we can have lunch or something.

RYAN

That would be cool.

ANGELA

Well... later.

Angela starts toward the restaurant entrance --

RYAN

Wait. You know my name, but I don't know yours.

Angela comes back, hand out. As Ryan shakes --

ANGELA

Angela Rupe.

RYAN

(thinking, then)
Mike's little sister?

ANGELA

All grown up.

Tami appears in the doorway behind them and sees their connected hands. Ryan sees her and quickly lets go --

RYAN

Tami, hey -- you remember Angela Rupe, from school?

Tami glares at Angela, then eyeballs Ryan --

TAMI

Get lost on your way to the bathroom?

Tami goes back inside. A beat, then --

RYAN

(miserable)
I should go.

ANGELA

Okay. See ya.

He nods and heads in. As Angela watches him go --

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan has the video camera out of the box. Tami sits next to him on the bed, long-faced. He turns on the camera, removes the lens cap, and aims it in Tami's direction.

POV - VIDEO CAMERA

Tami looks away. A beat, then --

RYAN (O.S.)

This is pretty nice...

(no response)

I'm sorry about what happened at the restaurant. I like the camera, Tami, I promise.

(silence)

C'mon, I said I was sorry. Smile for me... please?

She finally turns his way.

TAMI

There's a reason why I got it for you. I thought we could have some fun with it.

His hand moves into frame and reaches for her thigh --

RYAN (O.S.)

What did you have in mind?

She considers him, then smiles into the camera.

INT. RYAN'S CAR - LATER

Ryan and Tami sit and watch the Happy Hour Hamlet entrance.

RYAN

(shaking his head)

No. No! Not her.

TAMI

That skank thinks she can steal my man? She can learn the hard way.

RYAN

All she did was introduce herself, she didn't do anything wrong.

TAMI

Says you. We're doing this whether you like it or not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ryan turns to Tami, realizing now how far gone she is --

RYAN

Do you hear yourself? You're talking like a crazy person.

TAMI

She thinks she's better than me...

RYAN

What the hell is wrong with you?

TAMI

(screaming)

-- Shut up! Shutupshutupshutup!

Tami SLAMS HER FISTS UP AGAINST THE SIDE OF HER HEAD over and over in time with her words. Soon, her eruption subsides. She's crying yet again as she catches her breath. A long beat as Ryan stares over, not knowing what to say or do.

TAMI (CONT'D)

People are always trying to make me unhappy. Why can't it be like it used to be?

(then)

Don't you want me to be happy?

RYAN

(wearily)

Yes, Tami, of course--

TAMI

-- Then do it. Kill her with me.

At that moment, Angela exits from the restaurant. Tami and Ryan watch as Angela walks toward her car. Silence, then --

TAMI (CONT'D)

(re: Angela)

I remember her now. We were in biology together my sophomore year.

(off Ryan's look)

Let's go.

EXT. HAPPY HOUR HAMLET - PARKING LOT - A MOMENT LATER

Angela's car drives away. A beat later, Ryan's car follows.

INT. ANGELA'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Angela behind the wheel, head bobbing to the RADIO, window down, cigarette between her fingers. As she takes a drag, she notices something coming up fast through the windshield.

POV - ANGELA

Her headlights find Ryan standing next to his car at the side of the road, the car's hazard lights blinking.

BACK TO SCENE

Angela turns the wheel to pull over.

EXT. ROAD - A MOMENT LATER

Angela emerges from her parked car and approaches --

ANGELA

Ryan? Is that you?...

She comes closer, hearing his QUIET SOBS, then seeing his tear-stained face --

RYAN

Run.

ANGELA

What?

RYAN

RUN!

Before Angela can react, she's SLAMMED IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD by Tami's tire iron and she drops at Ryan's feet. Tami looks over at him, pissed --

TAMI

What was that?!

She pushes him in the chest. Angela MOANS from the pavement and her arms flail up at him, clawing at his clothes as she tries to pull herself up. She looks up at Ryan, blood running over her face --

ANGELA

H-help me...

She claws at his arms trying to pull herself up further.

TAMI

Shut up, bitch!

Tami SLAMS the tire iron into the back of Angela's head again. Her nails RAKE down Ryan's arms as she drops to the ground. Silence as he looks at the bloody scrapes on his arms. Nearby, Tami HAMMERS AWAY at Angela.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (CONT'D)

You like that? That feel good, you whore? Guess you won't be trying to steal people's boyfriends anymore!

Ryan leans against the car and slides down to the pavement. He covers his face with his hands as Tami finally finishes and looks over. Ryan SOBS, muffled by his hands. She stares at him, unsure why he's so upset. A beat, then she's struck by an idea --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Get the video camera.

Ryan stares up from his hands in disbelief.

TAMI (CONT'D)

What? I told you I wanted to have some fun with it. And somebody doesn't look like he's having fun...

After a long beat, he pushes back up to his feet and heads off walking down the road.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

As Tami watches, Ryan moves further down the road and into the darkness. She throws the tire iron down in frustration.

TAMI (CONT'D)

Dangit Ryan, I can't hit her and video tape it at the same time! I need your help! Ryan?

He continues walking off. A beat, then Tami just throws up her hands in frustration and looks around. As she does, something inside of Angela's open car door gets Tami's attention. Tami goes over, leans inside, and re-emerges with Angela's purse. Tami opens it and sees something that makes her eyes light up. She stuffs a blood-stained hand in and pulls out a FAT WAD OF ANGELA'S TIP MONEY.

TAMI (CONT'D)

You don't need this anymore, slut.

Off Tami smiling as she stuffs the money into a pocket.

TAMI (V.O.)

That poor, sweet, innocent girl from Happy Hour Hamlet was just trying to be nice. But Ryan got it all wrong and thought she was trying to steal my man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He was just... broken at that
point. There was no going back.

Said as a GUITAR-DRIVEN, UPBEAT COUNTRY SONG PLAYS over
picture, then TAMI STARTS TO SING OVER THE TRACK --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONRAD'S TRAILER - BEDROOM - DAY

MUSIC CONTINUES as Conrad and Tami sit on the bed, listening
to her newly-finished demo on his four-track. From which, we
hear:

TAMI (O.S., FROM FOUR-TRACK)

(singing)

*Angie, don't you take my man!
Don't you dare take him from me!
'Cause Angie, if you take my man,
I'll be the last thing you ever
seeeeee!*

With a flourish, the song ENDS. Tami begins jumping up and
down, unable to control her excitement --

CONRAD

Take it easy now, the cinder blocks
can't take you rocking the trailer
back and forth like this...

Tami stops and turns to him --

TAMI

I sound like a star!

CONRAD

'Cause you are a star. I even told
the people I know in Nashville
about you.

TAMI

You did?!

CONRAD

This old boy I used to play with,
his son's a suit at Capitol
Records. I called him yesterday,
played him a little of your demo...
he'll get it in the mail this week.

A beat, then she SCREAMS and jumps around even more --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Tami, goddamn now, I meant what I said, you're gonna tip my house...

She suddenly rushes over to him and hugs him around the neck.

TAMI

Conrad, thank you so much! Thank you thank you thank you!

CONRAD

All right now. That's all right...

She pulls away --

TAMI

I could kiss you.

CONRAD

Why don't you just pay me for my work and we'll call it even.

TAMI

Right! Hang tight.

She goes to her purse nearby and pulls out a messy wad of cash. Among it, ANGELA'S BLOOD-STAINED TIP MONEY. She hands the wad over to Conrad --

TAMI (CONT'D)

It's all there.

CONRAD

Looks a little... I don't know... kinda like blood?

Tami sees the stained bills, then flashes a smile --

TAMI

Well you wouldn't believe who I had to murder to get you paid.

Conrad ERUPTS WITH LAUGHS. Off Tami, laughing along...

TAMI (V.O.)

It was that night Ryan decided to tell me everything he'd done.

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tami enters the dark room through the adjacent garage door. She flips on a light, revealing Ryan sitting on her bed, waiting. She jumps as she sees him --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

Ryan?! What are you doing here?

RYAN

We need to talk. I didn't want to see your parents, so I came in through the garage.

She moves past him, placing her purse on a desk, then --

TAMI

Okay, so...?

He looks away, struggling to find the words. After a beat --

RYAN

I can't do this anymore.

TAMI

Do what?

RYAN

All this killing. I can't watch you murder innocent people anymore.

TAMI

"Innocent"? You're saying that Happy Hour Hamlet slut was innocent when she was flirting with you? That Jim was innocent when he was beating the shit out of me? Is that what you think?

RYAN

All I'm saying is that I'm done.

TAMI

Is this about Molly McQueen, 'cause if you're still worried about that--

RYAN

-- She could wake up from her coma. She'll tell them what happened--

TAMI

-- She's a vegetable, Ryan. She has to breathe through a tube for the rest of her life. She doesn't know her name, let alone what we did.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RYAN

If you can't stop this, I can't
be with you.

Tami considers him, then --

TAMI

Are you... You're breaking up with
me?

He crosses to her.

RYAN

I'm asking you to stop hurting
people. Can you do that?

Another beat, then --

TAMI

All right, maybe killing Angela Rupe
was going too far. But it's only
'cause I love you so much. How 'bout
we just make up some new rules, huh?

RYAN

Why can't you just stop?

A long look between them. Off her silence, Ryan turns and
heads for the stairs --

TAMI

Where are you going?

RYAN

I have to figure out what I'm gonna
do.

TAMI

What do you mean 'do'?

RYAN

I don't know, Tami.

She thinks, then --

TAMI

You were there for each one of 'em.
That makes you as guilty as me.

RYAN

I don't know what I'm gonna do! All
right? I just... I need time to
think. Away from you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

It hits her that he's really leaving.

TAMI
(with a small sob)
Ryan... I love you.

RYAN
I love you too. It's not enough.
(then)
'Bye, Tami.

He starts up the stairs. Panicked, Tami runs over and TACKLES him into the staircase, sinking her fingers into his HAIR and riding his back --

RYAN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
What're you doing?!

He pushes up with Tami still on his back and drives her back until they SLAM into a wall. Her fingers lock tighter into his scalp. He swings her around the room until they CRASH into her desk, where the drawers fly open and the contents inside spill out onto the floor. He falls and she goes down on top of him.

Wrestling now, Ryan searches for a weapon and his desperate fingers find a LETTER OPENER, which he grips and STABS into one of her hands. Tami CRIES OUT and pulls her pierced hand away, but keeps a tight grip on his hair with her other hand.

Ryan jabs an ELBOW into her side, then ANOTHER. As she takes the blows, she looks around and sees a stapler on the desk nearby. She quickly grabs it and REPEATEDLY PUNCHES STAPLES INTO HIS FACE. Even HIS EYES. He WAILS as he brings his hands up, trying to defend himself. Tami finally tosses the stapler away and finds a CURLING IRON amidst the desk clutter.

Tami lets go of his hair, then grabs the curling iron, pushes Ryan onto his back, and straddles over him. Ryan's mouth is OPEN AS HE SCREAMS, his eyes still blinded by the staples --

TAMI
I really did love you.

She BRINGS THE CURLING IRON DOWN INTO HIS MOUTH, silencing him. She then POUNDS IT DOWN FURTHER INTO HIS THROAT WITH HER FIST... CHOKING HIM TO DEATH.

With the Curling Iron almost all the way down his throat, Tami pushes up to her feet... and she steps back to watch Ryan DIE on her floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

His body convulses... slowing after each spasm. Off this, Tami kneels back down and leans close. As tears to start to fall from her face onto his staple-covered one --

TAMI (CONT'D)
I'm not crying 'cause I'm sad...
I'm practicing for later.
(beat)
'Bye, Ry.

She gives him one last kiss him... and Ryan STOPS MOVING.

Tami wraps her hands around the Curling Iron and PULLS IT FREE. She then tosses it under her bed, then looks around for the letter opener. She finds them on the floor, goes back to Ryan, and STABS HIM IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS CHEST. She then lies down, rolls over onto her back, and pulls his limp body on top of her. Another beat... she looks around, making sure the scene is ready... and then SCREAMS IN SHORT, QUICK BURSTS.

Seconds later, the bedroom door opens and Tom descends into the room. He stops at the base of the staircase, taking the carnage in --

TAMI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Daddy! Get him off of me!

Tom quickly goes to her and pulls Ryan off. Tami sits up into his open arms.

TAMI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
He was gonna kill me, Daddy.

He rocks her as she BAWLS into his chest.

TOM
It's okay, Kitten... you're okay...

As Tom continues to hold her --

TAMI (V.O.)
(through sobs)
That's when we called my Uncle Joe -
- he's not really my uncle, but I
call him that -- and we came here
to talk to y'all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - PRESENT

Morrison and Delegeane listen to Tami, who wipes her teary face on her sleeve.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

The night he tried to kill me, I told Ryan the only thing to do was come see you too... admit everything he'd done...

She BREAKS DOWN again. The agents wait as she tries to collect herself. A long beat, then --

TAMI (CONT'D)

I understand if you gotta arrest me now for not coming in sooner.

Tami extends her hands toward them, SNIFFING and giving her best hang dog look as she awaits the cuffs. Delegeane and Morrison exchange a look, then --

AGENT MORRISON

Tami, we're not arresting you.

TAMI

Y-you're not?

AGENT DELEGEANE

We have to look into everything you've told us and take it from there. But if what you've said is true, I don't think you have anything to worry about.

Tami offers a small smile of gratitude, which again collapses with ANOTHER FIT OF TEARS. The agents are taken by the performance. After a beat, Morrison looks back at a two-mirror hanging on the back wall of the room.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mandel and James stand with **LIEUTENANT BENTON**, 50s, watching the scene in the Interview Room. After a beat --

LIEUTENANT BENTON

Take her home, Joe.

Mandel nods, heads out. After a beat --

LIEUTENANT BENTON (CONT'D)

Hell of a tale.

DETECTIVE JAMES

You believe her?

Benton says nothing, then turns back to the Interview Room as Mandel enters and leads Tami out. Off which --

INT. TAMI'S HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

Tom enters with Tami. From the lounge, Carol approaches and pulls Tami into a tight hug.

CAROL

Honey, are you all right?

TAMI

I'm fine. I just want to go to bed.

CAROL

You can't do that yet, sweetie.
There's somebody here who needs to
talk to you.

(whispers)

He's from a record company!

Said as **CHRIS BURROW**, 40, wearing a hip suit and a slick smile, appears from around the corner --

CHRIS

Tami, hi, Chris Burrow.

Chris extends his hand. Tami looks down at it, then self-consciously touches her ratty hair, knowing she looks like hell. After a beat, she reaches out and shakes --

TAMI

Uh, hi.

CHRIS

Your mom and dad told me what you've been through tonight, and if you don't feel like talking, I totally understand. I'll go find a hotel and wait until you're ready... but I want you to know, I heard your demo -- I think you can be huge, Tami. Really fucking huge.

(to Tom and Carol)

Excuse the F-bomb.

CAROL

It's totally fine!

Tami continues shaking his hand as her weary face brightens. Over which, ROCKING UPBEAT COUNTRY GUITAR KICKS IN --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RYAN'S CAR - DAY

MUSIC CONTINUES as Agent Morrison stands nearby, watching as Agent Delegeane emerges from the car holding a pink-tinged towel. Morrison unwraps the towel to reveal a cleaned tire iron. As they consider the murder weapon, TAMI SINGS:

TAMI (V.O.)
*You said you loved me
 and I bought the line,
 You promised we'd be together
 'til the end of time...*

INT. PARADISE INN - FRONT DESK - DAY

Mandel and James stand with the Check-In Clerk. James shows him a picture of Ryan. The Clerk points at the photo and nods emphatically. Over which:

TAMI (V.O.)
 (singing)
*...But the shouting and cheating
 and your flying fists
 Left permanent marks,
 and baby, now I'm pissed!...*

INT. POSH OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Tami sits at a long table with Chris Burrow and several other **SUITS** from the record company. Chris pushes a pen and a contract toward Tami, who is the image of a high-priced makeover: gone are the crunchy hair-spray bangs, the average skin, the cheap make-up, and Gap wardrobe, all replaced with high-end, image-conscious "It"-girl apparel, grooming, and style.

Tami picks up the pen and turns to see Tom, Carol, and April standing nearby, all wearing the same ecstatic smile Tami does. Tom SNAPS a couple pictures. A beat, then Tami looks back down to the contract and signs her name. Over which and throughout:

TAMI (V.O.)
 (singing)
*This is gonna hurt you more than me!
 I'm leaving for good,
 Just you wait and see!
 I'm walking away
 And still you wonder why --
 Tell me how does it feel
 to watch a good love die!*

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A GUITAR SOLO PLAYS as Morrison and Delegeane, each wearing rubber gloves, comb through Ryan's belongings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Morrison's at a desk, rifling through a drawer. Delegeane's inside a closet. Morrison takes pause as his fingers lift out a sheet of paper from the desk.

AGENT MORRISON

Partner.

Delegeane emerges from the closet and crosses to Morrison, who hands him the sheet.

POV - DELEGEANE

He looks over Tami's "to-kill" list, bearing the names of every realized and potential victim. Specks of blood stain the sheet.

As MUSIC RAMPS UP AGAIN TOWARD CHORUS...

INT. NASHVILLE RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Tami stands inside a sound booth, wearing ear phones and facing a microphone. Through a window on the far wall, Chris stands inside the Engineer's booth with a **PRODUCER** and an **ENGINEER**. He bobs his head to the tune as she leans close and continues her SONG, the music THUMPING around her --

TAMI (V.O.)

*This is gonna hurt you more than me!
I ain't coming back
no matter how much you plea!
I'm walking away,
You know damn well why!
Say your last words
and kiss your ass good-byyyyyyyye!*

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - NIGHT

CHORUS REPEATS as Morrison is on the phone at a desk. Delegeane, Mandel, and James are nearby, looking through files. Morrison hangs up and turns to them.

AGENT MORRISON

Lab matched the skin under Angela Rupe's fingernails to Ryan Hill's DNA. And the blood on the list we found in his desk? From Rupert Sands.

AGENT DELEGEANE

The homeless guy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGENT MORRISON

(nods)

Add it to the tire iron and this is
a fucking slam dunk.

The agents HIGH-FIVE each other. James smiles and gives up his palm to the exuberant agents for a couple more HIGH FIVES. Over which, Tami's song ENDS WITH A ROLLICKING GUITAR RIFF.

DARIO (V.O.)

Dammmmmn, Tami! Your story is off the chain!

TAMI (V.O.)

I wouldn't believe it myself if I hadn't lived through it. But sometimes you have to go through the crap to appreciate all the good things. And the past couple of years have been a dream come true...

INT. POLICE STATION - PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Morrison and Delegeane stand at a bank of microphones on a dais. Members of the **MEDIA** crowd around with their cameras. Gower, Mandel, and James stand behind the two Agents along with other police officials.

AGENT MORRISON

(into mics)

Based on evidence both direct and circumstantial, combined with the eyewitness testimony of Tami Lynne Doss, our findings are that Ryan Michael Hill is the perpetrator of the eight Tire Iron Terror murders and the assault of Molly McQueen.

Which is followed by an avalanche of SHOUTED QUESTIONS from the media horde. Over which:

TAMI (V.O.)

I made my first album, which sold, like, a gazillion copies.

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Carol, Tami, and April sit waiting. The Mailman walks up with their mail in hand. The Doss women quickly spring on him and he hands the mail over. They rifle through the assorted letters and catalogues until they find the magazine they're looking for.

POV - CAROL, TAMI, AND APRIL

Looking at the cover of "US" magazine. Tami is on the cover, looking beautiful yet pensive as she stares out at the reader, sitting on her bed in her basement bedroom. The copy under the picture reads: "Pop Star's Exclusive Interview: 'HOW I SURVIVED THE TIRE IRON TERROR'".

BACK TO SCENE

The Doss women look at each other and SCREAM with delight.

TAMI (V.O.)

Then there were the awards: the Grammys, Teen Choice, Billboard...

DARIO (V.O.)

That dance you did over the tank of Great White Sharks at the VMAs? So ill!

EXT. TAMI'S HOUSE - DAY

A limo is in the driveway. The **DRIVER** puts Tami's luggage into the open trunk. Tami stands with Tom, Carol, and April.

TAMI (V.O.)

And then I went on tour, which was, like, the best thing ever.

TAMI

I guess this is it.

CAROL

(teary-eyed)

I can't believe you have to do this for four months. The longest you've ever been away is swim camp when you were ten and you called me every day crying to come home.

TAMI

I'll be back before you can blink, Mom.

Carol blinks. More tears fall. Tami pulls her into a hug. In B.G., a back window POWERS DOWN at the limo, revealing Chris Burrow inside.

CHRIS

Tami! We gotta dip!

After a beat --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROL

I'm going to miss you so much.

TAMI

I'll miss you too, Mom.

CAROL

You call every day, no matter where you are or what time it is, okay?

Carol finally pulls back. Tami turns to April.

TAMI

Try not to be a jerk.

APRIL

That's your thing. I'm the sweet one, remember?

They smile, then hug as well. A beat, then Tami pulls away and turns to Tom. He looks at her with tear-filled eyes.

TAMI

Daddy, you're gonna make me cry.

TOM

This is your time. This is the life you always dreamed about and you deserve all of this -- you earned it. So don't take a single day for granted, okay? Enjoy every goddamned second of it.

Tami cries as she falls into Tom's arms and stays there for a long beat.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm proud as hell, Kitten.

Tom and Tami finally pull apart. Tami gives them each a last smile, then turns for the limo.

TAMI (V.O.)

It's been a wild ride... but I'm happy I'm able to use all this life experience on record my new record, which is dedicated the memory of murder victims everywhere.

Said as Tami climbs into the car. She looks back out from the lowered window and waves as the Limo drives off. Her family waves back. As they grow smaller in the distance...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAMI'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

A couple months later. Tom stands looking at a bookshelf crowded by all of Tami's high school accomplishments. His glossy eyes scan over all manner of relics -- framed photos from her Homecoming and Prom Queen wins, the tiaras from those victories, pom-poms, vocal competition trophies, and shot glasses from Spring Break. On a lower shelf, a weathered, velvet-covered box sits alone. Tom bends and picks it up. He opens it to reveal a small, antiquated ballerina in the middle of the box on a small, thin stand -- it's a music box. The inside of the lid is engraved: "TO MY KITTEN ON HER 8TH BIRTHDAY. LOVE ALWAYS, DAD."

Tom's face twists with concern as he realizes the music isn't playing and the plastic ballerina isn't moving. He shakes the box and hears something rattle inside. Curious, he reaches in and finds a bent corner on the ballerina's platform. He pinches the corner between his fingers and lifts the platform off. He looks even more confused as he reaches in and removes another TIARA -- A *BLOOD-STAINED ONE*. The year 1998 is engraved on it. The year after Tami has graduated. As the gravity of what he's discovered sinks in --

CAROL (O.S.)

Tom? Are you down there?

As Carol descends into the room, Tom quickly hides the tiara back inside the music box. Carol approaches from the stairs, holding a basket of laundry.

CAROL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She sees the music box in Tom's hands and realizes he's having a nostalgic moment... or at least he was.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I can't believe she's gone either.

(beat)

She's such a good kid.

Tom forces an acknowledging smile as Carol crosses past with the laundry. As she goes, Tom's smiles does too. Off this --

TAMI (V.O.)

But the best part of all my success
was coming home to play the final
date of my tour...

INT. ARENA - STAGE - NIGHT

Tami stands center-stage in front of 20,000 screaming **FANS**. Her band PLAYS behind her as she SINGS into her mic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the band plays the song's bridge, Tami goes to the edge of the stage and reaches out to touch fans' hands in the front row as they attempt to reach her over NFL-sized bodyguards. As Tami moves down the line, she pauses as she reaches a young woman in a wheelchair: her head is in traction and an oxygen tube protrudes from her mouth; drool falls from her lips and pools over a picture of Tami's face on the tee-shirt she's wearing; she stares up at Tami, who recognizes her -- *MOLLY MCQUEEN*.

Tami holds Molly's look for a long beat, then she jumps off the stage and goes to her. She takes Molly's hand and raises it high with hers.

TAMI

(into mic, to crowd)

This girl right here -- Molly McQueen
-- she is what tonight's all about!
She's a survivor and proof that no
matter how bad your life gets -- even
if you'll never walk again or have
babies or eat solid food -- you're
still alive and it's all good!

The crowd CHEERS. Tami smiles big, united then looks back down at Molly, who continues staring up at Tami, her eyes wide with recognition that will never have a voice. After a beat --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Molly, this next one's for you!

Tami climbs back onstage as the band KICKS INTO another song.

INT. ARENA - BACK STAGE - A LITTLE LATER

Tami, fresh from the stage, leads her band down a hallway crowded with fans, journalists, and photographers, all of which are pushed out of her path by the large bodyguards. Cameras FLASH as everyone clamors for her attention. She flashes her best smile and signs autographs as she goes.

FANS

We love you! / I'm your
number one fan! / Marry me,
Tami!...

TAMI

I love you all too!

Tami heads for Molly, waiting nearby in her wheelchair with her MOTHER and Chris Burrow on each side.

CHRIS

Tami, they want to get some
pictures of you and Molly together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI

Sure!

Chris produces a giant, cardboard check and hands it to Molly's Mother, who it extends over Molly's lap where Tami grabs the other end. The check is in Molly's name in the amount of \$25,000. As the FLASHBULBS POP --

CHRIS

(over the clamor)

Tami is proudly donating ten percent of tonight's proceeds to her foundation, which benefits the families of youth violence -- S.A.A.A.V.Y.: Singers And Artists Against Violent Youth.

REPORTER

Tami, what do you ultimately hope to accomplish with S.A.A.A.V.Y.?

CHRIS

Tami will be happy to answer everyone's question in the press room. If we could all migrate in that direction?...

Chris starts to usher Tami off down the hall, the journalists on their heels. As they go, someone catches her eye: Tom -- standing near the entrance of her dressing room a few feet away, wearing a backstage pass around his neck and staring at her with distant sadness.

TAMI

Chris, gimme a sec...

To Chris's visible consternation, Tami peels away and approaches Tom. As she arrives --

TAMI (CONT'D)

Is this awesome or what?
(looks around)
Where's Mom and April?

TOM

In the press room. Some reporters are interviewing your sister, asking if she wants to follow in your footsteps...

He falls silent at the thought, looks away. A beat, then --

TAMI

What's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOM

I found this while you were gone.

He looks around to make sure no one is watching, then he pulls out the blood-splattered tiara from his jacket. He shows it to Tami, who flashes a confused smile --

TAMI

What are you doing with my tiara?

TOM

It's not yours. You graduated in '96.

Tami looks down, sees the date inscribed on the tiara. The blood dots and lines staining the metal. Her smile goes as her eyes darken and find Tom's again -- a long stare between them as she realizes he knows the truth.

TAMI

We've made a lot of sacrifices to get here. The whole family has.

TOM

(low)
What have you done?

From behind them, they hear the sound of BANGING. Tami turns to see Molly watching her as she SLAMS her head into the chair's headrest, her eyes locked on HER prom tiara. As she grunts in time with her body's increasing CONVULSIONS --

MOLLY'S MOTHER

Uh oh... I think all this excitement is getting to someone.

Molly's Mother wheels Molly away. Tami turns back to Tom, eyeing him coldly. Then she turns to address the Reporter who asked the question a moment before --

TAMI

What do I want to accomplish with S.A.A.A.V.Y.? The pain and suffering these victims' families go through will never end, so using my God-given talent and celebrity, I want to let them know someone cares. I want to help them someday return to their normal lives. Because it could easily have been me in Molly's wheelchair...

(to Tom, pointed)
Or my little sister, April.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As Tom goes pale at the threat --

TAMI (CONT'D)

(back to reporters)

I know better than anyone how traumatic this sort of violence is, and if I can give these families some small sliver of hope that tomorrow will hurt a little less than today, then maybe all these deaths won't be in vein.

(to Tom)

And God willing, our quiet little town will never have to go through something this awful ever again.

Tami flashes her winning smile and CAMERAS FLASH again, but keeps her stare on Tom, who shrinks away from the scene, placing the tiara back inside of his jacket. As the press swarms around Tami, she continues watching Tom as he walks off by himself against the tide of Tami Lynne lovers who fill the hallway. Over which:

TAMI (V.O.)

Being able to touch people, Dario -- to affect their lives and give them some small nugget of joy? That's the reason I sing.

INT. VIDEO MUSIC CHANNEL STUDIO - PRESENT

Dario the VJ talks into the camera, addressing his audience watching the show.

DARIO

Tami Lynne, one last question for you: after all you've been through and all of your success... is this as good as it gets?

TAMI (O.S.)

No. There's so much more and I can't wait to experience it all.

DARIO

(choking up)

You got me fighting back real tears. Real tears. You are such an inspiration to everyone here and the rest of your fans all over the world.

The in-studio audience CHEERS. Over which:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMI (O.S.)
(from phone)
Thank you so much, Dario.

DARIO
Thank you, Tami Lynne, for giving
us your precious time, and I'll
catch you on the flippity flip!

EXT. MADISON FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Tami sits in the open back seat of a convertible, cell phone to her ear. She flips it shut, then hands it off to the Bodyguard. Tami takes a deep breath, tired. A beat, then the **DRIVER** in the front seat of the car turns to Tami.

TAMI
Let's roll.

Tami flashes her showbiz smile as the Driver puts the car in gear. They ride out onto the field...

WIDEN TO REVEAL a banner on the convertible's door reading "*TAMI LYNNE, HONORARY GRAND MARSHALL, HOMECOMING PARADE 2005.*"

Tami waves out to the over-capacity crowd in the stands as the car slowly moves toward a dais set up in the middle of the field. On the platform is the new year's Homecoming Court -- which includes April, smiling pretty. *Following in her sister's footsteps.*

Tami drinks in the adoration -- it's as if she never left. As she continues to smile and wave... on top of the world...

THE END