

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MORNING.

Mallory walks down the sidewalk of a dead street in her neighborhood. You'd think the street would be busier considering the time of year, but in this part of the neighborhood there aren't many homes that can host a Thanksgiving. She is on her way to her boyfriend's house for his family's Thanksgiving get together, crossing the two blocks it takes to get to the posh houses that stay-at-home wives are so proud of.

Leaves cross her path like tumbleweeds in the desert. She likes to try to crush the leaves before they can fly off the sidewalk and into the street, her wandering mind just trying to focus on the crunchy satisfaction under her feet instead of the trap she knows she's willingly walking into.

MALLORY

(mumbling)

It's only gonna be like,

(counting on her fingers)

ten, eleven, twelve, one, two, three,
four, five, oh my god. That's like a
whole work shift.

(shaking the anxiety from her head)

Whatever, it'll be fine. Just hang
with Thom, grin and bare it. You can
come home afterward and just do
nothing.

POV SHOT - CAMERA WATCHING MALLORY WALKING FROM BEHIND A BUSH
ACROSS THE STREET

Mallory continues on, taking her time and taking in the cool breeze seeping through the threads of her cheap coat. There is a CRUNCH somewhere behind her. She slows her walk but does not stop, peering back to see if anyone is walking behind her. Seeing no one, she picks up her pace back to normal.

She's not completely freaked out, but she stops crunching leaves just so she can hear anything else happening around her. Looking up from the sidewalk, she can see where the drab road she walks along transforms into the lavish entrance to *Hunter's View*, complete with a median showcasing well-watered mums and evergreens planted by the elite garden club.

Mallory wants to roll her eyes, but she knows that she actually likes the sight of the perfectly laid bricks around the trees that contrasts the concrete sidewalk on either side. She likes knowing that something this pretty exists near her.

But that median, those gates that advertised a "Hunter's View" was still a misshapen block away.

Another crunch breaks the silence Mallory had grown used to. This time she stops, turning in all directions to find the source of the suspicious noise.

POV SHOT - CAMERA WATCHING MALLORY FROM TEN FEET BESIDE HER, HIDING BEHIND A THICK TREE TRUNK SEPARATING MALLORY AND THIS UNKNOWN ENTITY.

MALLORY

(trying to come off casual and not
afraid in case Thom was messing
with her)

Yellow?

She pauses for a moment, listening for anything. She quickly takes in her surroundings. No cars parked on the street. Everyone spending the holiday with family and friends in better houses, something she could be doing right now even if it was begrudgingly. No one in their yards, just no one. She looks to Hunter's View. There are plenty of cars lining the pristine sidewalks, plenty of people in the warmth of their friend's and family's homes. Not out here. Out here, Mallory is alone.

When she doesn't hear anything else, Mallory takes another cautious step forward. Nothing. So she continues on. As she passes the tree, we see a shadow lurking behind the tree.

OTS - STEADY CAM FOLLOWING MALLORY AS SHE WALKS.

Meer moments pass, and Mallory can feel something following her. She turns to find a masked figure stretching a pair of gloved hands across her neck. Mallory ducks and pushes the figure away -- something that she can do surprisingly easy.

With the masked figure on the ground and recovering, Mallory looks around her. Hunter's View is still a long way away, and her apartment is still pretty close. She hasn't hit the halfway point yet.

She breaks out into a sprint to her apartment, the masked figure barely missing the tail of her coat as she escapes. Looking back occasionally, Mallory starts to lose sight of the person trying to kill her and reaches her apartment.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - THIRTY MINUTES LATER.

Once inside, she reaches into her coat pocket to pull out her

phone, but comes up empty. She searches the other pockets and still can't find it.

MALLORY
(desperate)

No.

While she thinks of what to do, she checks the windows, making sure they're locked and blinds are closed. Her apartment might have some issues, like a broken hinge on the bathroom door and a small hole in the wall by the stove, but she made sure that her windows and doors could lock the world out at night. She never realized she'd be using those locks so ferociously and not as a safety blanket at night.

She checks the back window one more time, eyes peeled for any movement. She finds no movement, but she does spot her phone. The bright red case gleaming under the cloudy light of the morning, laying still in the grass in the yard she cut through to get home.

MALLORY
Dammit.

A knock on the door disrupts any plans she could have formed in that moment. Wearily, Mallory remains quiet, focusing on her breathing so to not be too loud. Her door doesn't have a view hole, so she slowly steps to the kitchen window, squatting down to sneak a glimpse through the closed blinds. Her knee pops as she lowers herself, and she winces. But through the slats in the blinds, she can make out a very different image than the one that attacked her earlier.

The pure blue jeans and flowy burnt orange blouse on a petite feminine body. The lengthy blonde curls that stay in place without a single flyaway. Thom's mom.

Mallory didn't know who would have been worse to see on the other side of that door -- the attacker or *her*.

Slowly, Mallory stands up and wraps her hand around the doorknob. She takes a deep breath and opens the door.

MALLORY
(faking a smile)
Hey, Cindy! What are you doing this side of the block?

CINDY

(obviously faking a similar
greeting)

Oh, you know, it's good to see how the
other half lives every once in a
while!

Mallory and Cindy laugh awkwardly together as Cindy brings
Mallory in for an equally awkward embrace.

MALLORY

So, um, can I get you anything?

(fumbling over her words)

I guess you probably have everything
over at your house, um, I don't know,
some water?

CINDY

That's alright, Mallory.

(She says her name with a subtle
sting)

I noticed you weren't there this
morning, and I thought I'd come check
on you.

MALLORY

(in disbelief)

Check on me? I...

CINDY

You got the invitation I assume. *Thom*
surely passed along the information
without a doubt.

MALLORY

I mean, yeah. I was just,

(she thinks for a second)

getting ready to come over there, but
I couldn't find my phone.

CINDY

Amazing that you can afford one.

MALLORY

What?

CINDY

Nothing. Look.

Cindy puts her hand on Mallory's shoulder and lowers her onto
the couch so that they sit side by side. Her eyes watching

Mallory and never blinking. Cindy moves her hand to Mallory's thigh, and Mallory looks at it in disgust. She tries to scoot over to force Cindy's hand off, but Cindy adjusts to keep it there.

CINDY (CONTINUED)

It's my job to protect Thom. I hope you know that.

Mallory stays silent in disbelief that Cindy would even be over here talking to her willingly.

CINDY (CONTINUED)

(taking in Mallory's silence)

Yes, well, *Thom* is very adamant that you join us for Thanksgiving.

MALLORY

Yeah, I was planning on it.

CINDY

Oh, you were? Well then you probably knew the start time was ten this morning, and you didn't show.

MALLORY

I just told you what happened.

CINDY

(snapping before Mallory can go on any longer)

Do you know how distraught Thom is without you? It's disgusting.

MALLORY

If Thom is so *distraught* maybe he should have come here himself.

CINDY

(seeping in a deep breath to keep calm)

I'm here to tell you, to inform you, that if you're going to be a part of this relationship, you are going to have to be respectful.

MALLORY

(shocked)

Uh, my relationship with Thom is between me and him.

Cindy digs her nails into Mallory's thigh. Mallory can't believe what's happening.

CINDY

Thom wants you. Loves you. And right now, I'm just trying to peel the skin off of the tension between you and I.

Mallory stands up, appalled and disturbed at Cindy's actions. She crosses the room, putting as much distance between the two of them as possible.

MALLORY

I'm sorry, but I think I'm feeling a little...I think I'm fighting a stomach bug or something. So maybe I shouldn't come today.

(trying to come off as sincere)

I was seriously planning on coming this morning, but I guess this weather is just getting to me a bit.

Mallory cautiously moves towards the door, hand on the doorknob, ready to redirect Cindy back to her own home. The mood in the apartment has definitely shifted from plain uncomfortable to unbearably dangerous. Cindy remains seated on the couch, comfortably.

CINDY

Your relationship with Thom is all of my business.

Cindy gets up from the couch.

CINDY

Is it your womb he emerged from? No.

Cindy approaches Mallory across the room, and Mallory shifts her weight uncomfortably.

CINDY

Was it your hand that taught him manners? No.

Cindy sidesteps Mallory and looks at the bookshelf next to her, picking up a framed picture of Mallory and Thom. She looks it over, stroking her son's two-dimensional face.

CINDY

Mallory, you brainless, meaningless, thing. Thom only wants you for one

reason.

MALLORY
(cautious)
And that is?

Cindy puts the frame back on the bookshelf, setting it picture-down.

CINDY
You don't know my son like I do.

MALLORY
(thinks for a beat)
Yep, I'm feeling it. Lots of nausea.
I'm just gonna go to the bathroom real quick.

Mallory tries to squeeze between the wall and Cindy to run to the back of the apartment. Something is definitely off, and Mallory is afraid. She can't get far before Cindy grips her arm with no intention of letting her go.

CINDY
It's a no brainer that I'm not a fan
of you, Mallory.

Mallory continues to struggle out of Cindy's grasp to no avail.

CINDY
Thom can do better, *has* done better.

Mallory falls to the floor as Cindy further binds her arms behind her back, preventing her from escaping further into her own apartment. Her fear grows on her face, and she lets out a shriek.

CINDY
But that's not even the point.

Cindy gets on the floor to pin Mallory down.

MALLORY
What are you doing? Get away from me!
Leave me alone! Help!

But she doesn't scream loud enough. Her only neighbor is away for the holiday and the closest person is a few doors down. Cindy stuffs Mallory's mouth with the scarf, tying it around her neck until Mallory can feel the corners of her mouth

stretching the rest of her lips until they are just a pair of fine lines on her tear-streaked face. She notices the little leaves on the scarf, all the cute fall colors complementing each other. Exactly something Cindy would wear.

CINDY

Look at it this way. I'm *saving* you.

MALLORY

What?

A knock on the door shuts down all the noise in the room, both women shocked and taking in the new noise.

THOM

Mallory?

But Mallory's shock fades quicker than Cindy's, and she lets out another muffled scream for the man that she loves. Cindy rips the scarf from her neck, leaving a red mark behind that will eventually fade away. She quickly and efficiently wraps the scarf around Mallory's head, stuffing a great deal in Mallory's mouth.

CINDY

Shut up, shut up, shut up! You idiot!

More banging on the door until finally the cheap material in the door frame collapses under the pressure. The door flies open, shedding the cloudy light of the morning onto the two women. Mallory begins to thrash, and Thom is frozen in the doorway.

MALLORY

(through the scarf)

Thom what are you doing?

Thom stares at the two women in his life -- not afraid, not confused, not concerned in the slightest. The look on Thom's face is calculating, taking in what his mom has done, what Mallory may or may not have deserved, *does* deserve. Cindy watches Thom, unmoving from Mallory

CINDY

Mallory was just getting ready for Thanksgiving, dear.

Thom slowly enters the apartment, closing the door behind him.

CINDY

I was just giving her a hand, Tommy baby.

Thom stands over Mallory's body, and Mallory thrashes, trying to escape from under Cindy and get the scarf out of her mouth. Cindy tightens her legs' grip on Mallory and strokes her son's side.

THOM

Stop.

Cindy and Mallory both stop what they're doing and look at the man they both seem to love.

THOM

Mother, can I speak to you for a moment?

(he glances from his mother's eyes to Mallory's)

Privately.

CINDY

But what about her? There's no telling what she'll do.

THOM

(thinks for a moment)

Just throw her in the bathroom.

Cindy cautiously removes herself from Mallory and grasps her arms to get her up and lead her to the bathroom. Thom walks to the kitchen, out of sight.

CINDY

(mumbling loud enough for Mallory to hear but not Thom)

You imbecile, you intolerant monkey.

You better stay in this bathroom while

I figure out what to do next. You should have never spoke with him.

Cindy throws Mallory in the bathroom, and Mallory hits her head on the side of the bathtub. It's not enough to knock her unconscious, but it's enough to disorient herself. Cindy shuts the door, and Mallory hears the doorknob rustle -- Cindy must be locking it from the outside with something. The lights aren't on, and there's no window -- everything is pitch black. The only light is seeping through under the door, and she watches as Cindy's shadow walks away toward the kitchen.

While Mallory's eyes try to adjust, she listens to Cindy's footsteps walk away, she can hear the muffled conversation between Cindy and Thom.

Then she hears a thud. Something hits the wall that separates the bathroom and the kitchen, and she can hear the clock on the wall above her shake.

A muffled scream, some more footsteps, and another shadow moving the light under the door.

Mallory tries to feel her way into the bathtub, and she can hear whatever Cindy put in front of the door slide away.

The door opens, and a black shadow stands in the door frame. Mallory sits in the bathtub behind the transparent shower curtain. Her vision adjusted to the light, all she can see is a silhouette. Mallory bites down on the scarf to minimize the sounds her breathing makes. But Thom isn't an idiot.

Thom walks into the bathroom, pulls the shower curtain back, and grabs Mallory by the hair.

THOM
I really wish she hadn't talked to
you.

CUT TO BLACK.

SFX: KNIFE STABBING INTO FLESH.