

- 1) 06. 12. 2021
- 2) 06. 05. 2026

THE TWISTER

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Victorian terraced house. The girls' bedroom has a Jubilee Union Jack taped to the window.

It casts a red and blue tint over a pile of half-read paperbacks and a discarded dollhouse.

A title reads *Friday 3 June 2022*.

MIA (15) stands before a worn mirror. She applies an arterial red lipstick. She does it with extreme focus.

ASH (12) watches from the threshold. She is all knees and elbows, but with the probing eye of prepubescent curiosity.

ASH
You look cute.

MIA
(without turning)
Lipstick isn't 'cute'. It's wild.
It's what you wear when you want
people to stop talking to you and-

ASH
Look at you.

MIA
Yeah.

ASH
Because it looks good.

MIA
You mean me?

ASH
You look like a Lady.

MIA
Arghh.

Ash moves closer, her attention fixed on the silver tube on the desk.

MIA (CONT'D)
There's nothing lady-like about it.

ASH
Dad's taking Debs to the Jubilee
dinner at the pub.

MIA
I know. Lucky he didn't ask you.

ASH
He's wearing that tie with the
horses on it.

MIA
Who's he crying to?

ASH
Debs of course.

They laugh.

ASH (CONT'D)
Can I try? Just to see?

MIA
You're 12, no.

ASH
Please. Just once. Before you go to
the fair.

Mia relents, turning and taking Ash's chin in her hand.

MIA
OK, but don't lick your lips. It's
not jam.

ASH
What does it taste like?

MIA
Acid.

Mia applies the red on Ash's soft, unlined face. Of course it
looks out of place, but Ash beams at her reflection.

And the movement is tender, almost ritualistic, the elder
sister initiating the younger into the mystery of womanhood.

ASH
Now I'm ready. I can come out with
you. I am your grown-up sister.

MIA
No. I told you. The fair isn't safe
for kids, not tonight.

ASH
It's not fair. I'm not a kid.

MIA
Then why can't I leave you here?

ASH
You can leave me here, but I don't
want you to.

MIA
Life isn't fair.

ASH
Don't say that. You aren't Dad.
Please don't be bitter.

MIA
No, I'm not bitter, but I am 'your'
grown-up sister.

Mia's done. Ash scowls and crosses the room to the stereo.

ASH
Not even lipstick can make life
seem fair.

She hits the 'PLAY' button. A pop track, hyper-modern,
synthetic, and loud, ruptures the quiet.

Mia reaches to kill the volume, but Ash blocks her.

ASH (CONT'D)
One dance. Before you go.

Mia sighs, but the rhythm catches her.

They dance. She moves with a fluid, adolescent grace, already
inhabiting her body.

Whereas Ash is a tangle of enthusiasm and missed beats,
trying to mirror a rhythm she hasn't yet internalised.

The music ends on a sharp cut. Mia grabs her jacket.

MIA
I'm going.

ASH
Will you tell me what happens at
the fair?

MIA
Nothing you'd want to hear.

ASH
Dad said you'd take me tomorrow.
Early in the morning. You have to.

MIA
No. Why?

ASH
Because you're a responsible
person. That's what Debs said.

Mia laughs, at the door.

MIA

Debs doesn't even know me. She says a lot of things to make herself feel better about living here. I can't promise tomorrow, I'm busy, but-

ASH

You promise?
(a small voice)
Busy with Nathan?

MIA

No. Bye, Ash.

Mia steps into the hallway.

ASH

Bye, Mia.

Ash rubs her lipstick with her thumbnail. It seems to itch and taste sharp. She hates it.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

The hallway is narrow, smelling of floral shake-n-vac and cheap aftershave. Mia reaches the stairs.

STEVE (46) and DEBS (40) emerge from the master bedroom.

Dressed for a night out. Steve in a stiff-collared shirt, pinching his neck, Debs in something shimmering, synthetic.

STEVE

(a short grin)
What's the name of the lucky chap, then?

MIA

I told you before, Dad. Nathan.

DEBS

Steve's jealous of you going on the rides.

MIA

(to Steve)
But you're terrified of the rides.

DEBS

Worried his brain will turn more to mush.

STEVE

I'm not, I'm being smart. I don't want to get sick after a 20-pound steak.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)
(he leans in towards his
daughter)
Here's a tip. If you take the lad
on the Twister, kiss him before.
You don't want him tasting the
baked beans halfway out your gob.

Debs laughs and slaps Steve's thigh. Mia squeezes past.

MIA
That's gross. You 2 are so gross!

DEBS
Ignore him, love.
(to Steve)
Say something nice, you old goat.

MIA
Have a good one, then.

DEBS
Take care, love.

STEVE
(serious now)
But don't you dare be late back for
Ash. She's your responsibility
tonight.

MIA
I won't!

She descends the noisy stairs.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The alleyway is dark, but it leads into the glowing pulse of
the CAR PARK. Where the diesel generators resound.

Where burnt sugar is consumed. 'Tis the JUBILEE FAIRGROUND.
Screaming in red, white, and blue.

The strobe lights flare with an aggressive rhythm. Turning
the silhouettes of THE RIDES into jagged, moving teeth.

NATHAN (19) leans against a brick wall. He is dressed in
black, an urban contrast to the Jubilee bunting.

He smokes with a deliberate cadence, savouring the effect.
His eyes are rough, weathered by the dullness of town life.

But there is an ounce of kindness there, the kind that could
make a 15 year-old girl feel like a woman. They kiss.

But it tastes too much like tobacco. Mia breaks it off, her
heart suddenly spiralling before she grounds herself.

NATHAN

What took you so long? I was starting to think you'd been recruited into the Jubilee scouts.

MIA

I was watching TV with Ash. It's a really cool series.

NATHAN

Yeah, what about?

MIA

A future where witches rule the earth.

He stubs the cigarette out on the brick. The sparks die instantly in the damp air.

NATHAN

Fucking hell. Not in my lifetime. I've had enough of women telling me what to do as it is. Not you. I'm talking about Mums.

He looks at her properly now, noticing the way her fingers are fidgeting with the hem of her jacket.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What's wrong? You want a smoke?

The fairground lights FLASH across her face, blinding her for a second.

MIA

I'm good. I don't want to inhale. I want a drink.

NATHAN

I second that. Give me something that burns the throat and not the lungs.

He grabs her hand as they go.

EXT. BAR STALL - NIGHT

The fairground bar is a temporary structure draped in rain-slicked Union Jacks. Its mechanics growl in the background.

Nathan tosses a tenner onto the sticky counter. Then he grabs two bottles of NEON-BLUE LIQUOR from the BAR-WOMAN.

Mia takes a swig. It's cloyingly sweet, and it burns, the heat suddenly hitting her empty stomach.

MACK (18), in a grey hoodie with the strings pulled tight, leans against the bar. His eyes already appear hungover.

MACK
Alright, Nate.

NATHAN
What's up Mack?

MACK
Who's yer gif?

Nathan pulls Mia closer, a hand tight around her waist.

NATHAN
Mia.

MACK
(a knowing grin)
Sound. Happy Jubilee, kids.

Mack disappears into a throng of HOODED YOUTHS. Mia feels a bubble of cool, the chosen girl on the arm of the older boy.

But then she almost TRIPS over Nathan's foot when they set off. The first seeds of vertigo planting themselves.

Too many sharp blue-lights. Flashing. Spiralling.

NATHAN
You OK?

MIA
Yeah.

NATHAN
Dodgems then?

They share a wide smile. Time to let out some adrenaline.

EXT./INT. DODGEMS - NIGHT

The arena is a riot of strobe and spark. The electric stench of ozone from the overhead wires infects the air.

But Mia doesn't care right now, she's in the moment, behind the wheel.

She makes increasingly erratic movements thanks to the booze flooding her bloodstream. She swerves, laughing.

And slams her car into the side of Nathan's. A jarring WHOMP. Nathan's dodgem stops. He keels forwards over his stomach.

The strobe lights flash over him. White, red, blue. Turning him morbidly ghostly for a second. His head hangs low.

Mia kills her engine in a panic.

MIA

Shit. Are you okay? Nathan?

NATHAN

(a pained muffle)

I'm bleeding. Fuck. I think you broke something.

Mia's heart hammers and her hand trembles as she reaches out to help. But then Nathan leaps to with a manic-ass grin.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Just kidding! W-hey!

He guns his engine and veers around, wide-eyed and fixed on payback against Mia.

MIA

Wanker.

Mia roars up her car but she's in sight of Nathan's charge.

Shit. She is trapped. She needs to swerve.

And he is coming right at her full pelt.

CRUNCH. SICKLY. HEAD-ON.

It sends a shockwave through Mia's spine, a violent WHIPLASH that snaps her head back.

Nathan just laughs, an echo lost in the booming cacophony of the dodgems arena.

The world stops being cool. Mia rubs her neck from the blow.

She shuts her eyes as the lights feel themselves like physical blows to her retinas.

And whatever's in her stomach threatens to rise there and then. She windingly steers her car towards the track edge.

She box breathes in shallow inhalations to abate the nausea and pain. She gets out and watches Nathan from the perimeter.

He couldn't care less, as he chases after strangers, a force of chaos, a true nature revealed.

EXT. THE TWISTER - NIGHT

The deadly airborne rotating carousel, with folks strapped in, twisting in mad skeletal spirals of iron and neon.

It screeches, and some of the riders SCREAM. The edges of the screen begin to SWIRL.

And then we leap out of Mia's POV and see her wide-eyed, chewing on a bouquet of pink candy-floss.

It's sickly sweet, a but a good hit of glucose to counter the rising nausea. Nathan snatches it from her.

Then he tears off a hunk of the cloud with his teeth. It stains his mouth an almost predatory pink.

He wipes a smudge of red lipstick from Mia's chin. For a second the world goes still...

Mia thinks he might kiss her, but then he just whips out a cigarette. He sparks it with a clipper lighter.

NATHAN

Queue's moving. Let's get in.

Mia digs her heels into the grisly tarmac.

MIA

I dunno. It looks-

NATHAN

You don't have a choice now that you're here. Come on. You said you would.

MIA

But- But if I'm sick-

NATHAN

You won't be. It's just a baby ride.

MIA

I'm really nervous.

NATHAN

You'll be fine.

MIA

(shakes her head in strength, not denial)

Fuck it.

He takes her hand with a firm grip. They reach the queue against the barriers.

Mostly a long line of more HOODED YOUTHS, their faces drained of colour in the darkness.

GARETH, a long-bearded dude, joins the queue behind Mia and Nathan, with his mates of a similar biker ilk.

He's thick-necked, in a tattered denim jacket, hungry and aggressive for the ride.

PANG, the operator, another large, gruff dude, moves down the line. Mia watches him closing in, the ferryman of her fate.

PANG

Fiver a head! Get pumped up for the Jubilee. Fiver a head!

MIA

(taps her pockets)

Shit.

NATHAN

(displaying a tenner)

I'm paying for everything tonight.
Every, single, thing.

The implication that there's more to come looms on Mia's mind, as Nathan hands over the 10 quid to Pang.

Pang hands over 2 tickets. Mia's palms are so slick with sweat the paper slips in her hands and falls to the ground.

She lunges to pick it up and almost stumbles over. The whiplash from the dodgems has inflamed her spine.

Spikes of sudden stabbing pain. But she manages. Then Nathan pulls her in close.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Just imagine you're a rockstar.
Like dancing to the music.

MIA

(unsure)

Yeah, music-

NATHAN

You're bopping out.

MIA

Like a gig?

NATHAN

Yes.

MIA

I've not been to a proper gig.

He kisses her, staring into her anxious eyes. His hands are on her waist, pulling her into the heat of his body.

He lingers on her lips but parts from her in a gentler way than he went in. In the moment they forget where they are.

GARETH

Move out the way, you cunts. Gates are open.

Gareth shoves past, his shoulder brushes Mia.

Nathan bristles with adrenaline, but he lets it go, as the crowd carries them forwards onto the raised STEEL PLATFORM.

Startled, Mia tries to slow them down. But, as luck would have it, there are 2 seats next to each other.

NATHAN

Last 2 seats. Perfect.

Mia tries to say something but nothing vocalises. They sit. Bolts of panic surge through her more vigorously now.

Her heart starts to flutter. She stares straight ahead at the fairground world of the car park. But it spaces her out more.

Nathan is enthused, rocking his head at Mia. Pumped for the ride. He wants her chemistry but only sees a frozen girl.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Hey? You OK?

The heavy rubber safety belts HISS down over their heads.

PANG

ARMS UP!

The belts lock in with a metallic clack. Mia pushes against the restraint, testing it, but also prompting an escape.

And it feels way too tight. *How is it so fucking tight?*

NATHAN

Was it too soon?

MIA

What?

NATHAN

You know I like you.

MIA

No. Why- is- this- so- fucking-
arghh.

NATHAN

This is going to be so fucking
sick.

His voice echoes off her eardrums, distorted. Her head swirls and she kicks her legs back and forth. She pales dreadfully.

FLIGHT MODE ANXIETY. Losing cool rapidly.

MIA

I can't breathe!

She eyes Pang in the control box.

MIA (CONT'D)
Wait! Let me off!

NATHAN
(tries to laugh it off)
You'll be fine. It's just the
adrenaline. Like- think of it like-

MIA
HEY!

GARETH
(shouts at her)
She's having a fucking panic
attack. Fucking adolescents.

SPIKEY HAIRE D DUDE
(stoner laugh)
Stupid bitch. Look at her.

SPIKEY HAIRE D DUDE is Gareth's best mate, sat one over from him. Their laughing triggers Mia's fear further.

She's spiralling, and her heart wants out of her chest.

MIA
LET ME OFF!

Pang sighs, he's seen 'breakdowns' like this before. He hits the release button on the controls. The belts hiss upwards.

Mia dashes off the platform. Her feet clatter over the jagged steel. Not looking back.

GARETH
Waste of a seat.
(to Nathan)
Leave her mate!

Nathan sizes up to Gareth, violence a hair-trigger away.

NATHAN
Fuck off, you prick.

GARETH
What's your problem dickhead?

NATHAN
What's your fucking problem!

Gareth is about to burst at Nathan but the belts come back down, locking him into his seat like a caged animal.

Nathan laughs in his face, then turns and runs after his frightened girl into the neon dark.

EXT. FAIRGROUND / BACKSTREETS - NIGHT

Mia darts her way through the kaleidoscopic nightmare, largely silhouetted against the strobe lights.

Red, white, blue. Red, white, blue. Flashing off the brickwork like a searchlight.

The Jubilee CROWDS are a blurred mass of laughter and chatter. She ducks behind a rifle-range stall.

But it's a dead end of stacked crates and wrecks of spent gunpowder. She backtracks.

Then stops to gain control of her breath, coming in ragged, shallow whistles, as the panic threatens to seize her.

She spots a narrow ALLEY. She knows the street it leads out onto. She slips down that quite patch of darkness.

She paces down the BACKSTREET until she hits another and turns right towards THE PARK.

Nathan frantically searches the main drag of the car park, fuelled by a desperate need to pursue and reclaim Mia.

He runs to the back of a stall, away from the pedestrian traffic, but still no sight of her.

He stands under a sodium lamp and looks left and right, his shadow elongating, then he realises it's obvious...

She's not here. She's gone home.

EXT. STREET / PARK PATH - NIGHT

Mia strides down the pavement. She wipes her face, but the red lipstick only smears further. The night from hell.

She catches her reflection in the window of a parked SUV.

As she feared, her hair is a bird's nest, her eyes wide and haunted. Too ashamed she looks away.

A group of lads shout from a passing car. Mia flinches, coiled for defence. It isn't Nathan. She relaxes a bit.

She reaches the mouth of the park. The path is a vein of asphalt disappearing into the overgrown dark of the trees.

It is a sketchy descent, but also the fastest way back. She takes it.

Moments later, Nathan reaches the same street, and then the same mouth of the path.

He spots Mia now, a little smudging of light halfway through the trees. A grin spreads over him and he runs.

Mia hears footsteps and stops.

NATHAN

Mia! Wait! I'm sorry!

She mutters curses to herself, caught between the shame of her panic and a hardening hatred for the boy behind her.

MIA

It's fine. Just leave me. I'm going home. My sister needs me anyway.

Nathan's caught up, breathing hard alongside her.

NATHAN

I'll walk you. Those wankers on the ride. I don't know them. I'm sorry.

MIA

I get it.

NATHAN

I'd have fucked them up.

MIA

It's fine. I'm fine.

NATHAN

It's not your fault. Maybe it was the hot dog. You've got a weak stomach, eh? I know the high life doesn't suit you.

He laughs, a bit sharply, at his own warped humour.

MIA

It's not fucking funny. My head is still spinning.

NATHAN

I'll buy you another drink.

MIA

No, I don't feel right. See you later.

She turns to walk on, but Nathan's hand is a vice on her arm.

He pulls her back and lands a sudden, firm tobacco-stained kiss on her lips.

She wipes her mouth, shock turning into the severe panic of losing agency. The temperature has dramatically changed.

This guy is not a boy, but a maturing, dangerous beast.

NATHAN

Come on-

MIA

What are you fucking doing-

NATHAN

Just over here-

MIA

Let go.

He keeps tugging at her, not letting go.

NATHAN

Away from the path.

MIA

No.

NATHAN

Please.

She goes with it, surrendering to wherever the tug will lead, as he pulls her into the darkness of the overgrown hedges.

But the rusted metal of a fence bites into her back. Tattered Jubilee bunting hangs nearby from a wire like shed skin.

MIA

Oww.

The noise of the fair is now only a distant hum, overtaken by Nathan's breathing as he pins Mia and kisses her.

NATHAN

I love you.

Then he invasively tries to slide his hand under her shirt.

MIA

I'm sick. I can't-

NATHAN

Lean into it.

MIA

No.

NATHAN

You're just high on the night, babe.

MIA

Stop it.

NATHAN

Don't be a tease. You put the lipstick on. Lady.

His strength increases, the pin is painful, and he starts to grope at her waist for a way in.

MIA

Stop it!

Mia ruptures, acting. She shoves Nathan with all her hidden, feral strength.

He stumbles back and his boot catches on a discarded cider bottle. He goes down hard.

Head narrowly missing the rusted fence. But his shoulder is busted, at a sickly crooked angle.

NATHAN

You injured me. You mental bitch!
You're fucking crazy!

Mia doesn't care for the words, she turns and runs for home.

FIREWORKS erupt in the distance.

The red and blue light filters through the hanging branches of the trees, over a hunched Nathan, illuminating his agony.

He looks at his dropped shoulder in disgust and hyperventilates. He picks up the discarded cider bottle.

He grips it. Then with a guttural snarl, SMASHES it against concrete. The glass splinters into a hundred pieces.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

('spitting')

Fuck. Fucking. Fucking witch!

Then Mack slowly emerges from the shadows, hoodie pulled tighter than a cowl. Scarily casual about everything.

He looks from the broken glass to Nathan's shoulder.

MACK

Ouch. Nate mate, just chill.

NATHAN

(gasps)

Mack mate. She went mental.

MACK

What did you do to her?

NATHAN

Nothing. I was just- we were talking and she snapped.

MACK
I'm joking mate. She's feral.

NATHAN
Fucking feral. She caused this
mother-fucker.

Mack examines the joint, and seems at ease with the sight of a fucked up humerus.

MACK
Yeah, you need me to-

NATHAN
Just do fucking it.

MACK
Do it.

Mack grips Nathan's forearm and the back of his shoulder.

NATHAN
I'm gonna go mental if you-

MACK
Count to 3.

NATHAN
No. For fucks-

MACK
1.

CRACK!

NATHAN
Arghh!

Like a branch going SNAP.

Nathan collapses against the gritty fence, sagging, a cold sweat lighting his brow. He is screaming on the inside.

Mack offers a joint, the smell of lit skunk cutting through the wet air. It brings Nathan round a bit. He takes a drag.

His hands are shaking, but he's got fire in his eyes, and a burning resolve. The night is yet young, though dark.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
She's gotta pay.

MACK
Payback.

NATHAN
This is a fucking-

MACK
Terror, mate. That's what it is.

NATHAN
Terror.

MACK
Give her a taste of the terror.

NATHAN
Yeah?

MACK
Rob all her shit Nate.

NATHAN
She isn't rich.

MACK
Fuck money.

NATHAN
Fuck money?

MACK
Terror brother. Just terrorise the bitch.

NATHAN
Scare her for life.

MACK
You're not in love with her?

NATHAN
No. Fuck her.

Mack watches Nathan as the spiral of ill intent takes hold of a severely bruised ego.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I want an apology.

MACK
Let's go make her sorry for what she did then.

Nathan looks at Mack. He means a home invasion mission.

NATHAN
A nice chat in the comfort of her own home?

MACK
No funny games.

NATHAN
No. Don't touch her.

MACK

I'm joking mate. I thought she has a younger sister?

NATHAN

You sick bastard.

MACK

Take a joke mate.

NATHAN

You just popped my shoulder.

MACK

You owe me one for sorting that out.

Mack flicks the roach into the dark. It glows for a second, then vanishes. They head towards the residential lights.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Mia reaches her house by street-lamp, the porch light is bust. The keys rattle against the lock of the worn-out door.

Nathan steps out of the darkness, right behind Mia, a man now clearly possessed of a dark mask. She spins round.

MIA

What-

NATHAN

Give me the keys.

MIA

Get lost.

NATHAN

Give them to me.

MIA

Go home and nurse your sick head. Weirdo.

NATHAN

I'm not the one who's weird. You fucking attacked me and now you owe me.

MIA

You assaulted me.

NATHAN

Say you're sorry.

MIA

Fuck off. Move.

She turns to the door, but then a second person appears, leant against the brickwork.

Mack. He stands up to Mia. And before she can run or shout, they pin her.

Nathan clamps her mouth. Mack forces her up against the door.

MACK

We just want a few things that you owe Nate. Not like that. Don't look so scared. Just let us inside and don't make a scene.

They wrench the keys from her hand, turn the lock, breach.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

They burst into the living room.

Nathan throws a struggling Mia onto the sofa and presses her down with a knee over the chest and belly.

Mack begins desecrating the place.

He swipes a row of framed family photos off the sideboard. He overturns the cushions, kicking over Steve's armchair.

The only thing he seizes is a smartphone and an iPad lying on the table. Then Ash appears on the stairs.

She rubs her eyes, in oversized pyjamas.

ASH

Mia?

She stays frozen on the bottom step. Mack sees her and a wicked smile crosses his face. He looks from Nathan to Ash.

MACK

She's your score mate.

NATHAN

What?

Mack charges over to Mia.

MACK

Tell Nate you're a mental bitch and you're sorry for fucking up his shoulder. Say it. Or we take your sister and throw her into the sea.

MIA

You wouldn't.

MACK

Shut up.

MIA

Ash, go upstairs! Lock the bathroom door!

Nathan stares at Mia. He's gone hollow, unable to hear his conscience, just waiting for her to submit to the terror.

NATHAN

It's for your own good- Just-

Mia leans up and violently spits into Nathan's face.

He flinches and wipes the bile away. He stands up and turns to Ash. Mack understands Nathan's intent. To kidnap.

He chases after Ash. He's fast. He catches her by the waist within a few steps. She screams for her sister.

MIA

No! Leave her!

Mack and Nathan drag Ash down the steps and over and against the carpet, her bare feet scrambling for a hold.

But finding nothing. Mia attacks Nathan from behind but he slings her off.

She hits the floor and rolls on the rug, winded. Nathan takes one last disdainful look at Mia.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They drag Ash out into the night. She is stark white figure against the black tarmac. She sobs, but doesn't fight.

Mack throws her into the back of his beat-up hatchback. The doors slam. The engine turns over with a throat-tearing rasp.

Mia stumbles out of the house. But all she sees are the red tail-lights disappearing from view. She heaves.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

She races into the kitchen. The blue light of the digital oven clock reads 23:15.

She opens a drawer and, ignoring the silver and other blunt tools, reaches for a PARING KNIFE.

Short and weighted like a dagger. She checks the edge, with her lipstick-stained thumb. Ouch. It's sharper than hell.

She takes out her phone. Her hand shakes so violently she almost drops it.

She presses '999'. She speaks like one in shock, fluctuating between a raspy whisper, then suddenly loud.

MIA

Wonford Estate- 43- They took my
sister- She's 12! Please just-
Nathan- I don't know his surname-
Just come!

She hangs up. She sits at the table, the knife lying on the wood. She stares at it until her vision blurs.

Music wails from a passing car. She 'wakes up' thinking it's a siren, but it's just rap and bass.

Then Mia pockets the knife. Against her thigh.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Blue light pulses over the screen. From a police car, as PC SHAW (30s, female, tired) pulls up outside.

Her radio crackles with reports of fairground brawls and drunk and disorderlies. She gets out, walks up to the house.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Mia jolts up to answer the door. Moments later, she enters the kitchen with Shaw who calmly sits her down at table.

PC SHAW

Look at me, Mia. Deep breaths. Are
you physically hurt?

Mia shakes her head, shrugging, not really. But her eyes fix on the floor in fright.

PC SHAW (CONT'D)

Did they touch you?

MIA

No. I'm fine. I just-
(she looks up)
You have to find my little sister,
Ash. She's barefoot and- in her
pyjamas.

PC SHAW

I have two units already circling
the estate, from here to the coast.
(MORE)

PC SHAW (CONT'D)

I need a description of the vehicle, as much as you can remember. What kind of hatchback was it?

MIA

Old.

Mia's phone blares on the table. The caller ID is NATHAN.

PC SHAW

Put it on speaker. Be as calm as possible. Let me do the talking if he gets aggressive.

Mia taps the screen. The audio is rather distorted by the high-whistling winds of an open space other end of line.

NATHAN

(V.O. through the speaker)
Mental bitch. You still there?
What's up? I want you to come and meet me. I didn't mean for any of this shit to happen, tonight was supposed to be really special for you. For us.

MIA

I'm with the police.

NATHAN

Bring the pigs!

PC SHAW

Nathan. This is Officer Shaw. I'm with Mia. Listen to me, you're making this a lot worse than it needs to be. Bring the girl back and we can resolve this without anyone getting hurt.

Nathan laughs.

NATHAN

I don't think so, Wonford is a shit hole. I'm done with going there. Tell your boys to head to the River Park. By the old rowing club. I'll leave Ash waiting. I admit this is a big fucking mistake. Officer. But I don't want to waste your time with any more funny games.

Shaw nods and writes down the information.

PC SHAW

OK, The River Park. Stay on the line, Nathan-

NATHAN

Take me off speaker. I want to speak in private with my girlfriend. Do it or the kid stays put.

PC SHAW

Where is she, Nathan? I need you to tell me that she isn't hurt.

NATHAN

She's comfy in the fucking car while I'm out here in the cold!

Shaw hesitates, then nods to Mia. Mia switches the speaker off and presses the mobile to her ear.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(low)

You know the pigs are idiots, Mia. You know where I am. Remember where you told me you liked me, that I had nice eyes.

MIA

(nods)

Yeah-

NATHAN

Sandy Bay.

MIA

OK.

NATHAN

If you aren't there in 20 minutes, I'm rolling Mack's shit-tin over the cliffs, handbrake off. Come alone. Or she goes over.

The line goes dead.

PC SHAW

Did he change the location? What did he want?

Mia's lying mask almost breaks down.

MIA

No. He said he's afraid or something. The usual bullshit, looking for sympathy.

PC SHAW

I am sorry, Mia. You're very brave. Well done.

She stands up, hitting her radio.

PC SHAW (CONT'D)

Dispatch, target vehicle heading
for River Park, old rowing club.
I'm heading there now.

(to Mia)

I'll have a car come and sit with
you, OK?

MIA

No, don't.

PC SHAW

I can't leave you here alone.

MIA

My Dad said they'll be back soon.
And it's the Jubilee. I heard your
radio is full of it. I'll lock the
door. Just go, get her, please.

Shaw looks at Mia, really looks at her. She sees the smudged
red lipstick and the trembling, not the scheming beneath it.

She scribbles a number on a notebook leaf and tears it out.

PC SHAW

That's my direct. You call me if
there's anything at all suspicious.
I promise you your sister will be
safe with us.

Shaw exits. The front door rattles.

The blue lights outside fade. Mia sits in the kitchen's dim
glow, a few weak bulbs overhead.

She reaches into her pocket and feels the handle of the
knife. She slips her jacket back on, heads out the back door.

EXT. SANDY BAY CLIFFTOPS - NIGHT

The estuary is a vast, black void below. The wind ripples
through Nathan's clothes and blows his smoke away.

His arm still stiff from the reset, he has to change hands
with the cigarette.

He looks small against the horizon, but up close his eyes are
shot with adrenaline, almost pulsing.

Mia is at the edge of the plateau, stopping for air.

Her lungs burn after the mile-long run, and the salt spray is
unpleasant.

100 yards away, she spots Mack's hatchback. An interior light
on, but with its headlights cut.

And then Nathan, nearby, staring over the cliff-edge. The spot where in the past they shared that 'romantic' moment.

She strides towards him. He senses her presence and turns.

NATHAN

Good you don't think this was also a joke.

MIA

What are you talking about?

NATHAN

Why am I a joke to you? You fucking embarrass me and then break my shoulder.

MIA

Your shoulder's broken?

NATHAN

You popped it.

Mia almost laughs.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Shut the fuck up.

MIA

Where's Ash?

NATHAN

Relaxing in the car, probably getting high, I don't know, maybe your sister is wild like you.

MIA

You're such a loser. Who even cares about you other than you're pathetic friend who kidnaps children? It was his idea, wasn't it?

Nathan advances on her and raises his voice.

NATHAN

What did I do wrong? Tell me. I paid for the ride. I treated you! Tell me what to do and I'll put it straight. Tell me!

MIA

Just fuck off out of my life!

Mia turns towards the car, but Nathan violently reaches for her. She recoils and barks at him.

MIA (CONT'D)

You tried to force me in the park-
You're a dog! Using force doesn't
make anything right!

NATHAN

I wasn't going to. I was being
passionate!

(snarls)

But maybe that's what you wanted,
eh? Is it your dirty secret? That
you're a sick, twisted bitch, and
that you're afraid of a little
ride, afraid to be loved, only game
for a bit of abuse? Martyr!

Tense beat of hatred passes between them, and then suddenly
Nathan lunges at Mia.

He tugs her down against a weather-beaten wooden post. He
suffocates her with his weight, absolute domination.

Then he jams his forearm against her throat, cutting off her
oxygen. His other hand fumbles with her waistband.

Mia's world narrows to the smell of his sweat and the light,
rhythmic crashing of the waves a hundred feet below.

She is tuned out, in this mutilated space between life and
death, fast approaching the end.

But then 'she wakes'. A sudden drive to exist. Her hand,
buried in her pocket, closes around the paring knife.

Nathan bites her neck, claiming her flesh, a human-beast,
totally possessed.

Mia can't breathe now, but she can still act to save her life.
She pulls the knife out and DRIVES IT UPWARDS.

SLOSH, steel sliding through fabric and meat. Nathan's face
turns to shock. He lets out a punctured gasp.

Then he sags, the power draining out of him, as Mia pushes
him back and gets to her feet.

The wound is in Nathan's thigh. He clutches it, as the blood,
looking black under the moonlight, gushes freely out.

He stumbles up but falls instantly against the grass, utterly
broken. Mia stands over him, knife wavering in hand.

Finished. Then she remembers what she has to do. Staring over
at Mack's car, Mia wipes her hands, pulls out her phone.

She calls the direct line Shaw gave her and clears her throat
from the dry needles caused by death-throes.

MIA
Officer Shaw.

PC SHAW (V.O.)
Mia? We're at the River Park-

MIA
I'm at Sandy Bay, the clifftops. I
lied. And he's- he tried- I almost
died.

PC SHAW
Don't panic. I'm coming.

MIA
He's bleeding. Ash is somewhere, I
think she's in the car.

PC SHAW
We're on the Exmouth road now. 5
minutes.

Mia drops her phone. She looks out over the estuary, able to
make out the red, white, and blue of the fairground lights.

She hears distant sirens amidst main road traffic hum. Then
she runs towards the hatchback.

INT. HATCHBACK - NIGHT

Mack sits in the driver's seat, rolling joints, and playing
tinny beats from his phone.

Ash sits in the back, huddled against the door. Small, pale,
but not without a precocious clarity of the situation.

ASH
Why are you so quiet?

MACK
Shut up.

ASH
Aren't kidnappers supposed to do
something?

MACK
Shut your mouth.

ASH
I don't see the point of it.

MACK
If you don't shut up I'll-

ASH

Why don't you kidnap someone your own size? How old are you? You're hiding in a car while your friend fights with a girl. It's so sad. I wonder what are you so afraid of?

Mack is so frustrated his tobacco spills. He throws his papers into the footwell. He kicks the glovebox.

MACK

I ain't afraid of nothing!

ASH

Except the dark.

Mack kills his anger by throwing the door open. He storms out towards the cliff edge.

MACK

Nate! We're going! Now!

EXT. SANDY BAY CLIFFTOPS - NIGHT

Mia sees Mack and crouches in the scrubland, staying low in the gorse. She knows this place well.

She circles around the perimeter, easily avoiding Mack. The wind swallows any sound of her breath and movement.

But she has to step on it, as she spots that Mack is approaching the fallen Nathan. She has seconds.

She reaches the car. The doors are locked.

She tries the rear, the boot of the old hatchback is a rusted bit of engineering with a damned latch.

Mia slams her palm against the handle and jerks upwards. The boot groans open.

MIA

Ash!

Ash scrambles over the back seat and tumbles into Mia's arms.

Meanwhile, Mack reaches his bleeding mate. He begins to hear the sirens. He realises the score.

MACK

(barely audible into the
wind)

Fuck this.

Mack flees on foot into the dense scrubland of the estuary.

Mia's weapon hits the grass.

ASH
Is that Debs' kitchen knife?

MIA
No. Just a shit lighter. Don't need
it anymore.

ASH
Use a bin.

Mia pulls Ash into a crushing embrace. Ash shivers, her bare feet soaked in mud.

The sisters stand under the cold, indifferent light of the moon. The waters below ripple a silver mirror.

MIA
Not tonight.

The first blue strobes of the police cars reach the shot.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It's still wrecked.

Through the window, the blue pulse of a police strobe outside lights up the broken glass of photos and upturned furniture.

Mia sits at the kitchen table, with PC Shaw opposite her. Mia has washed her face, but her skin is raw and patchy-paled.

The blue light of the digital oven clock reads 01:15.

A taxi pulls up outside. Doors slam. Steve and Debs burst through the front door. Shaw meets them in the corridor.

Their voices come through to Mia as a blur of words.
'Safety', 'Sandy Bay', 'Custody'.

Mia braces herself, waiting, expecting to be completely berated. Then Steve walks in, and he doesn't shout at her.

He looks smaller than he did earlier this evening, and genuinely afraid for his daughter.

His tie is loose, and he throws it off. He crosses the room and pulls Mia up into a strong hug.

She tires hard not to sob, but finally, and suddenly, feels safe and able to.

MIA
Dad- I'm sorry. I left her. I-

STEVE
(holding her head)
No, you kept her safe.
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

You got her back. And you're safe.
You did the right thing. There's
nothing to be sorry for. And we'll
get that bastard. It's not your
fault. He's old enough to do time.
Serious time behind iron bars.
You're safe now.

Debs stands by the counter. Tears track through her
foundation. She just picks up the kettle. English tea ritual.

LATER. The police have gone.

The house feels peacefully hollowed out, all broken things
put aside and just Ash and Mia in the living room together.

On the sofa, wrapped in a duvet, staring at the television.
Ash has a large teddy bear tucked under one arm.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets is paused on a frame
of a dark corridor.

ASH

Why did you pause it?

MIA

Let's sleep. I said I'll sleep in
the bunkbeds with you.

ASH

I don't want to sleep.

Ash moves her teddy aside, gesturing to the space beside her.
Mia cuddles up to her.

MIA

But you can't go to sleep on me.
(reaches over for the
remote)
Which one is it anyway?

ASH

Harry Potter? *The Chamber of
Secrets*. Obviously. It's the best
one.

MIA

Yeah. Defo.

A silence, as Mia holds the remote without pressing anything.

MIA (CONT'D)

Do you still want to shop tomorrow?

ASH

Oh.

MIA
We'll spend every penny I've got
left from my savings if you want
to.

ASH
(a small beam)
Really? I have £20 as well.

MIA
Yep. Let's go.

ASH
But not to the fair?

MIA
You-

ASH
No!

MIA
We'll go to the shopping centre, of
course.

Ash grabs the remote off Mia and hits 'PLAY'. The light of
the film warms the room.

Mia doesn't watch the screen. She just holds Ash's hand, her
grip firm and grounded.