

DEAD TOMORROWS

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OVER BLACK:

"Nothing's ever come
from those dead tomorrows
planted yesterday."

--Billy Joe Shaver

FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A dumpster sits in shadow.

A sign on the side proclaims:

PROPERTY NORTH END BUTCHER SHOP - NO DUMPING.

An older model van pulls alongside and stops.

The van idling, TWO MEN step out from either side. Dressed in jeans, work shirts, and caps, they could be construction workers, but they're not.

The older one, JOSEPH COOK, is a bit grizzled and crazy-eyed. Twenty-something years younger, his son, ISAAC, sports a sullen expression on his clean-shaven face.

They move with a purpose, but without any obvious hurry, to the back of the van.

Working together, they toss four heavy-duty trash bags into the dumpster

Wordlessly, they climb back --

INT. VAN - DAY

As the alley recedes through the back window --

JOSEPH

Any thoughts on the next one?

ISAAC

No.

JOSEPH

You best be taking an interest.
One day, the work will be yours.

ISAAC

We have good ones already.

JOSEPH

Don't ever be satisfied, boy, just
leads to decay.

EXT. POOL - DAY

ALEX (20s) mingles about as --

A PARTY is in full swing --

GIRLS in swim suits --

JOCKS in board shorts --

Drinking --

Dancing --

Couples holding hands --

Couples making out --

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

The party is over and the PARTIERS, some stumbling more
than others, head for their cars.

Among them, sober Alex guides not-sober friend across the
street.

None of them take notice of the van further down the
street.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

In the parking lot, the van pulls to a stop behind a particular car.

A SMALL TOOLBOX in hand, Isaac heads for the car.

EXT. BACKROADS - MORNING

The same car rounds a bend.

A beat later the van does likewise.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CAR

sputters off to the edge of the road.

Alex, the frustrated driver, gets out and pops the hood.

After a brief look, she pulls out her cell phone.

She's about to punch a number when she spots an approaching van and waves it down.

Just as the van pulls up beside her, the side door slides open --

Isaac grabs her and yanks her inside.

The van speeds away, leaving --

her cell on the edge of the road.

INT. VAN - DAY

A BLACK CLOTH, breathing in and out.

Her head swallowed by a hood that is held in place by a tight circle of duct tape around her neck, Alex lies on the floor of the van with her hands and ankles bound.

INT. THE PREP ROOM - DAY

A HOOK hangs from the ceiling. Alex's bound hands are forced onto it.

FLASH TO:

Alex's heaving chest --

A pair of hands rip open her shirt.

FLASH TO:

Alex cries and pleads as hands force her face up and roughly scrub away her makeup.

FLASH TO:

Having been spun around, Alex sobs against the wall.

FLASH TO:

A tattoo on her back.

Blood runs from beneath scrubbing steel wool as the tattoo is removed.

FLASH TO:

Hands loop a chain collar around Alex's throat.

A staple gun goes to the back of her neck.

A POP secures the chain in place.

EXT. COOK HOME - MORNING

The sun rises behind an unremarkable rural house.

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

The yard is well-kept but not immaculate. The people who live here keep up appearances without going overboard.

INT. COOK KITCHEN - MORNING

A fork scrambles eggs in a skillet.

Up comes the skillet to hover over a plastic, cafeteria-style plate. A third of the eggs are raked out onto successive plates.

The hand returns the skillet to the stove and reaches for the toast that has just POPPED up. One for each plate.

Three plates of eggs and unbuttered toast with no utensils in sight.

Joseph turns to Isaac, who is sitting at the table, reading his bible --

JOSEPH
These're ready.

Without a word, Isaac rises and comes over.

He gathers the plates, stacking them, and turns away.

Cook cracks an egg to add to the skillet.

INT. COOK OUTBUILDING - MORNING

Dark.

A door opens, shedding brief light. Then a light CLICKS on.

The single bulb illuminates three wire cages about the size of a large dog kennel, each with a matting of straw, a plastic bucket, and a GIRL inside.

Besides a layer of grime and ratty t-shirts, each girl wears a leather collar secured by a small padlock. A length of chain, long enough to allow free movement within the cage, extends from the collar to the door.

Each cage's padlocked door has an opening at the bottom that is the perfect size for a plate of food to fit through.

Isaac crosses the floor and sets the plates down atop the first cage.

Taking the top plate, he kneels and slides it through to --

BETSY, 25, though slight of frame, her curt...

BETSY

Thank you.

...as she takes the plate, shows that what she has seen and experienced over the recent weeks has not completely robbed her of who she is.

Without a word, Isaac moves to the next cage.

With her fingers, Betsy scoops scrambled eggs into her mouth.

Betsy's neighbor is MARISSA. As the most recent arrival, she's not quite as dirty as the others. She sits motionless, hugging her knees.

When she ignores the plate, Isaac looks at her a beat before moving on.

In the third cage is Alex, who has been here the longest, squatting on her haunches in the back of her cage.

ALEX

Where's your daddy?

Isaac ignores her.

When he pushes the plate inside, she springs into motion, grabbing his fingers and yanking.

His hand in her grip, she bites.

Pulled off balance, Isaac falls into the cage door but catches himself and jerks free, leaving a bloody scratch on his hand.

ALEX

You dickless piece of shit.

As her taunts continue, he picks up a water hose.

ISAAC

You made a mess.

The force of the water knocks Alex back against the wall of the cage.

She tries to block it to no avail.

Marissa cowers as far from the splatter as she can.

Isaac's face is calm, showing no hint of anger.

With Alex in a fetal position, he redirects the water to wash the eggs away.

Putting the hose back in its place, he heads for the stairs.

Having been startled by the commotion, Betsy picks her dropped food off the floor.

ALEX (O.S.)

You make me sick.

Still chewing, Betsy looks up.

Alex, on her knees, soaking wet and seething, shakes the side of her cage with all her might, using Betsy as an outlet for her anger.

ALEX

You and your goddamn thank you's.
What the hell are you thanking
them for? Not killing us, yet?

MARISSA

Leave her alone.

ALEX

Fuck you. You haven't seen what
they're going to do to us. First
me then Betsy, no matter how
polite she is, and then you.

Alex's outburst has no effect on Betsy, who knows the truth behind the words, but Marissa is shaken and begins to sob.

ALEX

But don't worry, you won't get
lonely. They'll replace me before
they take Miss Thank You.

Alex seems to run out of steam and sinks back to the floor.

With Marissa sobbing, Betsy moves as close as she can.

BETSY

Marissa?

She doesn't look up.

BETSY

Marissa.

This time she does look up, tears streaming.

BETSY

Tell me, again, about...

EXT. COOK HOME - TIMELAPSE DAY TO NIGHT

Without windows, the girls can have no idea that another
day is done.

INT. COOK OUT BUILDING - NIGHT

The girls do their best to sleep.

At the CREAK of the door, the first to look up is --

BETSY

No.

Joseph Cook strides across the room, straight to Alex's
cage.

Alex's anger from earlier is gone. Now, there is only fear
as she cowers at the back of her cage.

Cook kneels to open the door. Doing so, he also grips the
chain.

With the door open wide, he tugs on the chain.

ALEX

fights but she is too weak.

COOK

inexorably pulls her across the distance.

MARISSA

stares in terror.

BETSY

bangs against her cage --

BETSY

No. Take me. I'm ready.

As her pleading continues, Cook drags Alex the rest of the way out of her cage.

Alex scrambles to her feet and tries to run, but with a yank of the chain, she's on the floor.

ALEX

Please, don't do--

Cook steps forward and ZAPS her with a cattle prod.

She screams.

He smiles.

He ZAPS her, again.

AGAIN.

Alex is conscious, but in far too much pain to struggle, when Cook kneels down beside her and shoves a ball gag into her mouth and secures it in place.

Standing, he drags her by her collar to a nearby table.

He picks her up and dumps her on top of it.

With practiced movements, he cuffs her wrists to the sides of the table.

Then, he moves to the end.

She kicks when he reaches for her leg but too weak and too late.

He secures each ankle to the table.

Stepping back, he admires his work.

He turns away and leaves the small room.

Alex turns her head toward Marissa then Betsy.

Tears leak from Alex's eyes as she and Betsy say their silent goodbyes.

FOOTSTEPS. Cook is coming back.

At the sight of him carrying a metal pan loaded with scissors, various sized knives, and other instruments --

BETSY

slumps down.

COOK

places the pan near Alex's head. He closes his eyes and bows his head in silent prayer.

His eyes open and he looks down at Alex --

JOSEPH

Tell them that I will send you all back to hell.

MARISSA

sobs.

BETSY

looks on, numb.

ALEX

shakes her head frantically and pleads as much as she can through the gag.

Legs kicking, she fights against her bonds.

COOK'S HAND

clamps down on Alex's face, holding her steady as he leans down close with a pair of forceps in hand.

With some effort, he extracts her eye.

Holding it up --

COOK

examines it approvingly and drops it into a jar of murky liquid.

TEARS

stream down Betsy's face. She buries her head in her arms.

BEYOND HER

Cook picks up the scissors. He cuts and rips the t-shirt from Alex's body.

Betsy can't cover her ears hard enough to block the sounds of what the maniac is doing to this girl that she first laid eyes on six weeks ago when she awoke in a cage...
...the sounds of what will one day happen to her...

...and to Marissa.

The muffled screams, the awful jangling of unyielding chains, all seem to go on forever.

Until they don't.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK'S MOVING ARM

casts shadows on Alex's lifeless face.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

BETSY

rocks back and forth, trying to block everything out.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK

washing down the bloody table.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK

leans down to look into Betsy's cage, a self-satisfied grin on his blood-streaked face --

JOSEPH
You'll be next.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

THE ROOM

is silent.

Betsy and Marissa are slumped in their cages, a mixture of shock and exhaustion.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

BETSY

stares numbly at the plate of eggs and toast balanced on her crisscrossed legs.

Marissa sits looking at Alex's empty cage.

MARISSA

Betsy?

Betsy stares at the floor, her face a blank.

MARISSA

How long before...?

BETSY

(resigned)

Not long.

Marissa turns to face Betsy.

MARISSA

Tell me about...what are you going to do when we get out of here?

Betsy looks up, glares into Marissa's eyes --

BETSY

You still don't get it, do you?
We're not getting out of here.
This is the last place either of us will ever see.

A swift fist to the door of her cage punctuates her statement.

MARISSA

I think we should keep in touch because--

BETSY

Shut up, please, just be quiet. I can't--

MARISSA

Betsy...

Marissa's eyes have gone wide --

MARRISSA

...your lock. Look, it-it's...

Betsy looks and her lock is hanging open.

BETSY

(disbelieving)

My God.

Her eyes dart to Marissa's cage door.

BETSY

Is yours?

Marissa SLAPS at her door, but the lock doesn't budge.

She shakes her head, dejected.

Betsy reaches her fingers through the wire to manipulate the lock out of the latch.

She stops.

MARISSA

What are you doing? Don't stop.

BETSY

What if-what if it's a trap?

MARISSA

Could it be any worse?

Betsy resumes working at the lock.

Her fingertips work the lock up to where it's sideways.

One good push at its bottom and --

It CLATTERS to the floor.

Betsy pushes her door open.

She looks at Marissa and clambers out of her cage.

MARISSA
Are there keys?

BETSY
I don't know.

Standing upright for the first time in over six weeks, her movements are stiff as she hobbles toward the workbench.

Opening every drawer and cabinet there is --

She finds nothing but a solid piece of pipe.

BETSY
(turning)
I can break it.

Marissa is dejected but still thinking --

MARISSA
No. You have to go.

BETSY
He'll kill you.

MARISSA
Not if you get help. Just go.
Please.

Hesitant but giving into reason, Betsy slips the pipe into Marissa's cage.

BETSY
Just in case.

She hurries for the door. Stops. A deep breath and...

EXT. COOK OUTBUILDING - DAY

The door eases open.

Betsy's head pokes through, looking every which way.

Sure that the coast is clear, she darts out and around to the side of the building.

Ahead and to her left, all that she sees are dense woods.

She looks right and silently debates.

EXT. COOK'S HOME - DAY

Betsy creeps onto the back porch.

As stealthy as possible, she tries the backdoor.

It opens.

INT. COOK'S KITCHEN - DAY

Just inside the backdoor, Betsy's eyes fix on --

KEYS

on the counter.

From the other end of the house, a TOILET FLUSHES --

Followed by a DOOR OPENING.

Joseph Cook appears in the hallway, striding toward the kitchen.

Detouring to a cabinet, he grabs a snack.

Behind him, Betsy holds her breath as she hunkers down beside a desk.

Almost as an afterthought, Cook picks up the keys and sticks them in his pocket as he turns away.

He heads toward the front of the house.

At the sound of a door CLOSING --

Betsy breathes.

Getting to her feet, Betsy's eyes dart about, expecting a trap to spring at any moment.

Moving with all the stealth that she can muster, she follows Cook's trail to the front door.

Keeping to the side of the window pane, she leans ever so carefully over for a peek --

OUTSIDE

Both Cooks are in the yard.

BETSY

steps back from the window. She stares at the floor, debating her options.

Her decision made, she retraces her steps back through the kitchen.

Her hand goes to the door knob --

Freezes --

A TELEPHONE.

Whispering to herself --

BETSY

No way.

She picks up the handset and hears --

A DIALTONE.

She hits 911.

OPERATOR

What is your emergency?

Betsy's voice is a panic-filled whisper --

BETSY

I-I don't know where we are.
Please, tell me you can--

OPERATOR

Yes, ma'am, I have the address.

BETSY

Thank God. Please, hurry. He's
going to kill us.

INT. COOK OUTBUILDING - DAY

At the sound of the door opening, Marissa lays down,
pretending to sleep.

BETSY

Give me that pipe.

Marissa's head jerks up --

MARISSA

What are you doing? You're
supposed to be--

BETSY

I'm getting you out of here.

FLASH TO:

THE PIPE

BANGS into the lock.

AGAIN --

And AGAIN.

Finally the lock falls open.

Betsy helps Marissa from her cage.

As Marissa tries to get her legs under her, they hear --

The DOOR OPENING.

In the doorway, Cook has his cattle prod in one hand and a
big butcher knife in the other.

He eye-balls the scene before him.

Like a protective mama tiger, only with a pipe instead of claws and bared teeth, Betsy stands in front of Marissa.

She is defiant and ready. Either she or Cook will meet their end.

He advances. A smile spreads across his lips.

He triggers the cattle prod.

Marissa jumps. Betsy does not.

Advancing to within striking distance, he jabs the prod at Betsy.

Sidestepping, Betsy swings her pipe --

connecting with Cook's midsection.

He is more surprised than hurt.

Her second swing knocks the knife from his hand.

Still between the girls and the door, Cook starts for them, smiling, with renewed determination.

He stops --

POLICE SIRENS.

The smile drops from Cook's face.

A glance over his shoulder, gauging, then back to the girls.

His decision made, he points at Betsy --

COOK
You're still next.

He turns and rushes out the door.

Betsy stares after him --

Her eyes, unblinking.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Betsy's eyes dart from one side to the next.

MUSIC FADES UP

THE LIGHT has gone DARKER and MORE COLORFUL

ON STAGE --

A BAND plays.

IN THE CROWD --

Betsy is near the front, cleaned up and looking every bit the girl-next-door, but very nervous.

She's not handling the crowd well.

She turns to push her way out.

A HAND touches her shoulder but she shrugs it off.

The owner of the hand, JEFF, follows her out, helping her through the crowd as best he can.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Coming out the door, in a panic --

BETSY

We have to go. We have to go.

On her heels, Jeff manages to get a hold of her --

JEFF

Baby, what's wrong. Talk to me.

Betsy leans against the wall, shaking, breath ragged, eyes still darting.

Without knowing how, Jeff tries to comfort her.

Betsy twists her fingers around each other, trembling.

BETSY

I saw him. He was in there.

JEFF

Who, baby? What are you talking about?

BETSY

Joseph Cook. I saw him. I saw--

JEFF

But that's crazy. Honey, he's...

She sinks down to the sidewalk as she loses it even more.

BETSY

I saw him. I saw him.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

As Betsy reaches to open the door of her car, Joseph Cook comes up behind her.

With a hand to her shoulder, he spins her around and smashes a fist into her jaw. She drops.

He kicks her.

Over and over, again.

A van stops behind him and the side door slides open.

Cook tosses Betsy inside.

REWIND TO THE BEGINNING

As Cook reaches for her shoulder --

Betsy whirls, knife in hand, her arm arcing up then down.

The blade plunges into Cook's chest. As he drops --

Betsy goes to the ground with him.

Astride him, she swings the knife up and back --

Drives it down --

Blood flies --

Betsy, ferocious, repeatedly drives the knife downward until --

out of breath, she slumps.

She scoots back and off of Cook's bloody body then drags herself back a few feet from his lifeless corpse.

Her face spattered with blood, she smiles.

Her smile vanishes. Now, it's --

Jeff's body in front of her, lifeless, and covered in gore.

She screams.

INT. BETSY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Betsy awakes with a half-scream carried over from her dream.

JEFF
(groggy)
You okay, baby?

She looks over at him and relief floods her face.

BETSY
Just a dream.

She snuggles against him to try for more sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING LIGHT

streams through the bedroom window.

During the night, Jeff has rolled onto his side and moved to the very edge of his side of the bed.

His eyes come open and he attempts to roll onto his back but can't because Betsy is pressed so tightly against him.

Careful not to wake her, Jeff eases out of bed and stretches as he heads for the doorway.

He stumbles as he tries to avoid stepping on something that caught his eye at the last moment.

The slight commotion wakes Betsy

As Jeff bends down --

BETSY

You okay?

Jeff straightens, holding up a BUTCHER KNIFE.

JEFF

What is this doing on the floor?

Betsy's eyes go wide --

BETSY

I-I-don't know.

With a quizzical look, Jeff continues on out the door.

Betsy buries her face in her hands.

INT. BETSY'S DEN - DAY

An artist's paintbrush dabs at the splotch of red paint on the multi-colored palette.

At the base of the canvas leans a Polaroid of a red and white rose, matching the one taking shape on the canvas.

INT. BETSY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Reflected in the mirror, Jeff stares at his toiletries bag.

Resolute, he zips it up and walks out.

INT. BETSY'S DEN - DAY

Boasting the usual accoutrements, the room is nothing if not tidy. Everything is in its precise place.

A row of canvases, sporting flowers and other bucolic images, lines the wall.

In the corner, an easel forms a triangle with the walls, inside of which is Betsy. A smudge of paint on her cheek, she concentrates on her work.

A FOOTSTEP.

She looks up as --

Jeff enters.

BETSY

Hey, I just had a great--

Her eyes go to --

HIS HANDS --

One holds a gym bag and the other grips the handle of his guitar case.

BETSY

What are...?

Her words trail off, but her eyes finish the question.

Jeff looks at her then breaks eye contact. Setting his things on a nearby table, he turns back to face her.

JEFF

Betsy, I'm leaving.

The brush falls from her grasp.

She rises and bumps past her easel, starting toward him --

BETSY

But why? You-you're just walking out without...

She stops, unsure of what to do.

JEFF

Look Betsy, I'm sorry, but I can't
keep living like this.

She wants to go to him, but she can't. Her arms go about
herself in a weird sort of self-hug.

JEFF

It's just too much for me.

BETSY

But I'm getting better. I mean,
don't you think...?

He almost seems moved. He resists the impulse to go to her
and wrap his arms around her. He knows that he is doing
what's best for himself and, possibly, for her.

JEFF

Betsy, I'm sorry, but I just can't
give you what you need.

Her eyes come up and lock onto his.

They stand there for what to each of them must seem an
eternity.

He starts toward her, extending his arms for a goodbye hug.

But he comes up short as Betsy flinches away.

BETSY

Don't touch me.

JEFF

What? Betsy, I--

BETSY

If you're leaving, leave.

Betsy's eyes bore into him.

JEFF

We can--

BETSY

Just go.

He hesitates a moment and then turns to gather his things.

Betsy's eyes never leave him.

BETSY

Like everyone else.

Jeff opens the door and walks out, pulling the door closed behind him.