

REACHING DAWN

Written by

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EST. HOME - DAY

A quaint home in a quiet suburb.

The familiar sounds of BIRDS CHIRPING and LAWN MOWING echo through the idyllic neighborhood.

INT. HOME, BATHROOM

A WOMAN (30s) steps out of a hospital gown and into a running shower.

INT. HOME, BEDROOM

The Woman looks through clothes in a closet, selects a pair of jeans and a shirt.

She sits at a vanity, stares at a picture of herself, fixes her hair, applies make-up to cover-up a pink scar across her hairline but it doesn't quite hide it completely.

INT. HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Woman stands in the kitchen, hovers over an answering machine.

A framed photo lies facedown next to it.

She attempts to re-record the greeting message.

WOMAN

You've reached the home of Dawn  
Ridley. Please leave your name,  
phone number and a brief message  
and I will get back to you as soon  
as humanly possible.

She saves the message, then plays it back.

She frowns, deletes the message and tries again, this time with a slightly higher-pitched voice.

She's immediately not happy with it and deletes without playing it back.

She tries again, this time with a slight British accent.

She stops halfway through and deletes it.

WOMAN  
(sotto)  
Nope, more New England.

She tries again but shakes her head, deletes it, then hastily writes something on a piece of note paper.

INT. HOME, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The Woman takes the stairs down to the finished basement. A single light bulb illuminates a circle in the middle of the floor, shadows creep from the corners.

She steps to one of the shadowed areas, the SCRAPE of a chain dragged across the cement floor rattles from the dark corner.

The Woman approaches, squats down, holds out the paper. A hand from the shadow reaches out and takes it.

A pale foot extends from the edge of the shadow, a handcuff and long chain wrapped around the ankle.

DAWN  
Rebecca-

WOMAN  
Read.

A quavering female voice reads the text.

The Woman closes her eyes, concentrates on the voice.

DAWN  
You've reached the home of Dawn  
Ridley. Please leave your name,  
phone number and a brief message  
and I will get back to you as soon  
as humanly possible.

WOMAN  
Again. Happier.

DAWN  
You've reached the home of Dawn  
Ridley. Please leave your name,  
phone num-

WOMAN  
You're not doing it right.

DAWN  
I'm sorry-

WOMAN  
Just do it right.

DAWN  
You've reached the home of Dawn  
Ridley. Please leave your name,  
phone number and a brief message  
and I will get back to you as soon  
as humanly possible.

WOMAN  
You've reached... you've reached...  
there's something in the "rea" of  
reached. You've reached... reached.  
That semester abroad really changed  
your voice. We used to sound  
exactly alike. Remember all those  
phone pranks on our boyfriends?

The Woman affects a perfect imitation of Dawn's voice.

WOMAN  
You've reached the home of Dawn  
Ridley. Dawn Ridley. Ridley.  
Ridley. The home of Dawn. My home.

The Woman beckons, the hand from the shadow returns the note.

The Woman turns to leave, then pauses when she hears...

DAWN  
We had to put you there. Mom and  
Dad had no choice. What you did...  
they said you were dangerous, to  
yourself, to others. This thing  
you're searching for, it isn't  
real. They don't know. No one  
knows, I swear.

WOMAN  
It's real, and you've all hidden it  
from me.

DAWN  
No, we haven't. Please, Rebec-

WOMAN  
Shut up!

The Woman takes a taser from her waistband and stabs into the  
shadow, Dawn SCREAMS in response.

The strobe-light effect flashes and for the first time we see  
the face of her captive, the same as her captor.

INT. HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Woman returns to the answering machine.

She flips the picture over, stands it up.

She stares at the family photo: a mom, dad, and twin girls (10), one smiling, the other sullen.

The Woman hits the MESSAGE button.

ANSWERING MACHINE

First saved message.

BOSS

Hey Dawn, just wondering when you were coming in. We have the Anderson Project on hold, just waiting on your reports. You sound much better-

The Woman deletes it, then records another greeting message, smiles when it sounds right.

She saves it, a call comes in.

The Woman is giddy with excitement.

After a few rings, the answering machine picks up.

WOMAN

(from answering machine)

You've reached the home of Dawn Ridley. Please leave your name, phone number and a brief message and I will get back to you as soon as humanly possible.

BEEP!

FRANK

Hey there, your friendly neighborhood neighbor checking in. Saw someone hanging around your garage last night and wanted to make sure everything is a-ok. Though, now that I think of it, it kind of looked like you, so I'm probably just being my old, nosy self. Bertha says I should put the binoculars down and pick up a paint brush 'cause the house could use a fresh coat, ya know. Anywho, hope you're feelin' better.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Bertha's on her way with some baked goods, just wanted to give you a heads-up. Prepare to hear all about our trip to Yellowstone. Bye bye.

A KNOCK at the door.

BERTHA (O.S.)

Dawn? I got some lemon squares, your favorite.

The Woman grabs the taser, hides it behind her back, leaves to get the door.

WE STAY with the answering machine.

WE HEAR the door open.

BERTHA (O.S.)

Hello, Dawn. Just thought you'd want some comfort food while you're getting over your... Dawn?

WOMAN (O.S.)

It's me.

BERTHA (O.S.)

But... you're the sister, aren't you?

WOMAN (O.S.)

I'm Dawn.

BERTHA (O.S.)

The scar, from... I, uh... maybe I'll come back another time when you're not so busy.

WOMAN(O.S.)

Nonsense. In fact, I have something for you.

The SOUNDS OF STRUGGLE, the door SLAMS SHUT, Bertha cries out but her SCREAM is cut off but the CLICKING of the taser.

A HEAVY THUD on the floor. WHIMPERING.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Where is it?

Bertha tries to speak but it comes out as GURGLES.

WOMAN (O.S.)

What's that?

More UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEECH. The taser CLICKS and then silence.

The Woman returns to the kitchen, picks up the phone, hits the speed-dial, then the speakerphone when it picks up.

FRANK  
(from phone)  
Hello?

WOMAN  
Something happened to Bertha.

FRANK  
Well, she just loves to bake, you  
know how she is.

WOMAN  
She's hurt.

FRANK  
What happened? Oh God.

The phone is set down, the Woman can hear Frank run through his home, out the door.

A moment later, RUNNING STEPS, Frank bangs on her door.

Once again, we stay with the answering machine as the Woman goes to the door.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Where is she? What hap... oh no,  
no. Bertha. Call an ambulance.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Where is it?

Frank sobs.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Please, call 9-1-1.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Where is it?

FRANK (O.S.)  
Call someone. I left my phone on  
the counter. I always do that.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Reveal the source.

FRANK (O.S.)  
What the heck are you talking  
about?! Call for help! Bertha?  
Darling?

WOMAN (O.S.)  
I'll ask you one more time. Where  
is it? Reveal the source.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Goddamit, get out of my way.

The CLICK of the taser, followed by a HEAVY THUD, GROANING.

FRANK (O.S.)  
My pills... help me.

SFX: Rapid heartbeat that quickly slows, then stops.

GURGLING, DEEP SUCKING BREATHS, then SILENCE.

A call comes in to the phone, a few rings and then the  
answering machine picks up.

BEEP!

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Dawn dear, is everything alright?  
The ladies and I are having our  
monthly book club and tea tasting  
and Gladice saw Frank and Bertha at  
your door. Are you having a party  
and didn't invite us? Anyway, she's  
going to stop by and ask you over.

The Woman picks up the phone, hits the speaker button.

WOMAN  
(into phone)  
Where is it?

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
(from phone)  
Dawn? Everything ok?

WOMAN  
Reveal the source.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
I don't understand.

A KNOCK at the door.



WOMAN  
Will she know?

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Who, Gladice? Will she know what?

The Woman lays the handset down, leaves to check the door.

Again, we stay with the answering machine.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
(from phone)  
Dawn? Should I call someone? I feel  
I should call someone.

WE HEAR the door open. MUFFLED voices.

GLADICE (O.S.)  
Oh my, what happened to your face?

Sounds of STRUGGLE.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
This happened with my niece. She  
was acting strange but we figured  
it was just a phase, and then she  
did a bunch of drugs and stole a  
van and drove it through her math  
teacher's house.

Taser CLICKS, a FAINT WHIMPER and then a THUMP on the floor.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Turns out they were having sex  
after school and he dumped her for  
the new transfer student from  
France. Listen to me, rambling on  
about other people's problems when  
you know all about that kind of  
thing, after what happened with  
your sister. Sorry, I shouldn't  
have said anything.

The Woman returns to the phone, picks it up.

WOMAN  
She didn't know.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Gladice? Well, that's not  
surprising, she picked that dirty  
Mr. Grey book. Sorry folks, but God  
labeled that hole exit-only.

(MORE)

MRS. CRABAPPLE (CONT'D)  
Not much going on upstairs if you  
know what I mean.

WOMAN  
Do you know where it is?

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Excuse me?

WOMAN  
Reveal the source.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
If you mean Bertha's lemon square  
recipe, that is a closely guarded  
secret I can assure you.

WOMAN  
Maybe you should come over. Gladice  
isn't feeling well.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
She isn't? She looked to be in  
perfect health just a moment ago.

WOMAN  
She was unable to reveal the  
source. Please come over.

MRS. CRABAPPLE  
Well, I guess I could nip over for  
a moment.  
(to the ladies in her  
home)  
You gals can hold down the fort  
while I pop over to Dawn's.  
(to the Woman)  
I'll see you in a tic.

The Woman sets the phone down, grabs a butcher knife.

WOMAN  
(sotto)  
If you won't tell me where it is,  
I'll have to cut it out of you.

She leaves, we linger on the family photo, the sounds of  
CUTTING, STABBING, SCREAMS, and GURGLING drift from  
offscreen.

Knock, knock, knock.

CUT TO BLACK. THE END.