

COUNTDOWN

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INT. SHOPPING CENTRE - NIGHT

The body of a man, 20's, lies motionless on the cold marble floor, a marksman's gunshot to the head. Heart shaped silver balloons tied to his wrist float ethereally above, reflected in a dark crimson pool of congealing blood.

Metres away sits ABIGAIL HARPER, early 20's, pale and tearful, wearing a once pretty, now blood splattered dress. She sits upright, shoulders back, unnaturally still. Her eyes are glazed over, milky -- she is BLIND.

Under her seat an EXPLOSIVE DEVICE, a digital clock readout -- 01:59 and counting down. She is sat on a pressure pad, unable to move, as the device is meticulously inspected by --

DALTON BECKER, 30's, bomb disposal expert, face steeled with focus. He is regaled in heavily padded kevlar. He wipes the sweat from his forehead as he painstakingly unscrews a panel beneath the clock steadily ticking down. A tense but peaceful expression on Abigail's face.

ABIGAIL

I remember... as a little girl, the look in my mother's eyes when the doctor told her about my sight. She tried not to let me see it, but I saw her fear.

Dalton glances up.

DALTON

It's OK to be scared.

ABIGAIL

Thinking of her, it helps.

DALTON

You'll be home soon.

Dalton turns his attention back to the device, panel removed. Something is wrong. Abigail senses a shift in his demeanour --

ABIGAIL

What is it?

Dalton looks up, says nothing. Rising to his feet, he backs off, turns away and speaks in to his radio in hushed tones --

DALTON

Sir, we have two power sources, one most likely a decoy. A whole mess of wires. This guy knew what he was doing.

Silence. Dalton looks over his shoulder at Abigail who stares blank ahead. The clock approaches ONE MINUTE. Dalton's earpiece crackles to life as he pushes his finger to it --

MAN (V.O.)
(with reticence)
Pull out Becker. There's nothing
more you can do.

DALTON
Sir, there must be...

MAN
You have your orders Becker.

Dalton turns to Abigail. She seems resigned to her fate.

ABIGAIL
It's OK.

Dalton is taken aback.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Losing one sense, the others
compensate. Really, it's OK.

Dalton stares at her for a moment, touched by her composure.

DALTON
No. It's not.

With renewed vigor, he swiftly gets on his knees up close to the device, inspecting each wire methodically, tracing its path, analysing, trying to make sense of the mess of wires.

His earpiece crackles with the voice of his superior --

MAN (V.O.)
Becker. Report. Where are you?

Dalton throws his earpiece to the floor, carries on working. The clock shows 32 SECONDS LEFT as he sweats profusely. He lowers his head, exasperated. No hope.

Abigail extends her hands, embracing Dalton's head either side, and raising it slowly. He looks in to her eyes. It's almost as though she can see. A brief moment of connection.

She leans forward and kisses him, softly, on the forehead, and smiles.

Calm. 12 SECONDS LEFT on the clock --

Dalton smiles back.

He removes a pair of wire cutters from his top pocket. Separating the wires precisely and isolating only one with the cutters, he looks up at Abigail. She closes her eyes as the clock ticks over -- 00:01

Dalton cuts the wire.