

ASHES

1 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

1

ECU of a BURNING CIGARETTE glowing in the pitch black night. We PULL BACK to see it resting between two fingers on a BED.

Pulling back further overhead we see a woman in her 50s, DIANNE, sleeping alone in bed, LIT CIGARETTE IN HER HAND.

SMASH CUT TO:

DIANNE'S SCREAMING FACE IN BED, ENGULFED BY FLAMES!

2 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

2

Two 20 something men, NEAL and ROSS, lean against a DARK CAR. Both are in suits and sunglasses, staring off at their father, RICHARD, who stands in the distance over a freshly dug grave.

Late 50s, Richard STARES at the HEADSTONE in an emotionless daze.

ROSS

It's been almost 4 hours now.

NEAL

I don't think he should be alone tonight.

ROSS

He shouldn't be alone for *months*. But what can you do? He's stubborn. Always has been.

NEAL

It's not good for him to be in that house now. There's not even a bed to sleep on.

A WOMAN in an ELEGANT BLACK DRESS walks up to the two and kisses them both on the cheeks.

WOMAN

I'm so sorry, boys. She was an amazing woman. It's real tragedy. Really.

ROSS

Thanks.

WOMAN
 (tearing up)
 They were just the most... They
 were inseparable.

The Woman hugs them both and walks away.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Hang in there, boys.

NEAL
 We could force him to stay with one
 of us.

ROSS
 Have you ever met Dad? There's no
 forcing him to do anything.

Richard is suddenly right behind them.

RICHARD
 I'm ready to go home.

The boys are startled, then relieved.

3 INT. CAR - DAY

3

The car doors SHUT, as all three buckle in.

NEAL
 Dad, I just wanna ask one more
 time. Please stay with me or Ross.
 At least tonight, but as long as
 you need.

RICHARD
 No. I want to be in my home. With
 my things.
 (looks Neal in the eyes)
 With her things.

Neal looks in the backseat at Ross. Ross relents, giving an
 approving nod.

Neal nods at Richard.

4 EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

4

The car DRIVES AWAY from the gravesite.

5 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 5

The car PULLS UP to into the driveway of Richard's house.
The passenger car door opens and Richard steps out.

6 INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 6

Richard walks inside and locks the door. He looks down the
entry hallway towards an EMPTY WHEELCHAIR.

His gaze turns from the wheelchair to a set of CARPETED RAMPS
installed over STAIRS leading to the sunken living room.

CUT TO:

STAIRS

Richard RIPS THE RAMP off with a HAMMER CLAW, revealing the
steps beneath.

Behind him, the WHEELCHAIR LOOMS nearby, as if it's WATCHING
HIM.

7 INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 7

A BURNER LIGHTS on the stove as Richard cooks SOUP in the
quiet kitchen.

The OVERHEAD STOVE LIGHT flickers and buzzes momentarily.
The soup COMES TO A BOIL, hissing. Underneath the boiling
his we hear a whisper...

WHISPER (O.S.)

Richard, nooooooo...

Richard THINKS HE HEARS SOMETHING, and turns off the burner,
moving the pot off the stove.

He listens... Nothing.

8 INT. HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT 8

The TV flickers a sitcom as Richard eats his soup. Richard
CHUCKLES at a joke.

The wheelchair is RIGHT NEXT to the couch and Richard is
using it as a TABLE, placing his DRINK and BOWL on the seat.

He leans back in the couch and DOZES OFF into a DREAM.

CUT TO:

9 INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 9

Dianne sits in the WHEELCHAIR at one end of the kitchen, SMOKING A CIGARETTE. It's DOWN TO THE BUTT.

At the other end of the kitchen, Richard POURS HIMSELF a scotch.

Dianne puts down her cigarette, a look of mild panic in her eyes.

DIANNE
Richard, I need some help. With
the restroom.

Richard grimaces and acts as if he doesn't hear. He walks into the adjacent DINING ROOM.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
Richard...

10 INT. HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT 10

Dianne follows him into the Dining Room, rolling out of the kitchen in her manual wheelchair.

DIANNE
Richard. I... I had an accident.
Don't make me beg, you know I can't
control it.

Richard groans and puts his drink down.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
Please, Richard. It's embarrassing
enough without your...

He GRABS the back of her wheelchair and pushes her through a door aggressively.

RICHARD
It's like you wait til the EXACT
most annoying moment.

DIANNE
Richard, watch out...

He accidentally SLAMS her LEG into the wall as they pass through a door.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

Richard!

RICHARD

So do it yourself! I'm done changing diapers.

Richard walks away. Dianne's eyes water up and she drops her head and LIGHTS ANOTHER CIGARETTE.

DIANNE

Richard. No, Richard. No...

CUT TO:

11 INT. HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT 11

CRASH!

The sound of GLASS BREAKING startles Richard awake. He TURNS OFF THE TV and looks around.

The WHEELCHAIR IS GONE. His SOUP BOWL is shattered on the ground.

There's a PILE OF ASH at his feet which turns into THIN TIRE TRACKS leading away and DOWN THE HALL.

Richard STANDS and CAUTIOUSLY FOLLOWS the TIRE TRACKS.

12 INT. HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT 12

The tire tracks lead DOWN THE LONG HALLWAY and STOP at a CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR.

The tracks go UNDER THE DOOR.

Richard LIGHTLY TOUCHES the door, running his finger along the edge where we see DARK STAINING from SMOKE DAMAGE.

A LOUD FIRE ALARM GOES OFF IN THE HOUSE!

Richard turns and runs toward the blaring sound in the rear of the house.

13 INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 13

THICK BLACK SMOKE plumes out of the kitchen as Richard frantically races in.

The STOVE is on, a flame burner going FULL BLAST, scorching the LITTLE BIT OF SOUP left in the pot.

Richard TURNS THE STOVE OFF and TOUCHES the POT HANDLE.

RICHARD

Ouch! Shit!

It burns him. He sifts around in a kitchen drawer and pulls out a rag to grab the pot handle. He moves it off the burner and FANS THE SMOKE AWAY FROM THE SCREECHING ALARM in the ceiling, finally PULLING THE BATTERY out of the alarm to get it to stop the piercing sound.

The LIGHTS above the stove FLICKER and THROUGH THE THICK SMOKE behind Richard we see the SILHOUETTE of a WOMAN IN A WHEELCHAIR roll by the door in the connected dining room.

WHISPER (O.S.)

Richard, nooooooo...

Richard SPINS AROUND. There's no one in the doorway. He slowly walks toward it.

14 INT. HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT 14

Richard enters the dining room. There are ASHEN TIRE TRACKS across the floor leading down the newly revealed STAIRS.

RICHARD

Who's in here? Neil, Ross? Are you in the house?

ANOTHER FIRE ALARM GOES OFF! This one back at the other end of the house.

Richard RUNS down the stairs.

15 INT. HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT 15

SMOKE wafts out from UNDER THE CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR where the tire tracks lead.

Richard RUNS UP, terrified the house is on fire. AN ORANGE GLOW flickers in the smoke behind the door and we hear the CRACKLING of FLAME on WOOD.

Richard FLINGS THE DOOR OPEN.

16 INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT 16

The room is quiet. Cool. Empty. There is no smoke, there is no fire. All is dark except the soft blue moonlight spilling from behind the drawn curtains.

In the center of the room is a BURNED BED FRAME. No mattress.

Richard approaches the burnt bed, looming over it. He loses himself in thought as the scene transitions to...

17 INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT 17

THE NIGHT IT HAPPENED.

Now we look over Richard's shoulder and there IS A MATTRESS ON THE BED. Dianne IS SLEEPING ON IT.

Richard stares at her, evil in his eyes. He holds a GLASS OF WHISKEY. Richard lightly POURS THE WHISKEY on the blanket Dianne sleeps under.

He OPENS A BOX OF CIGARETTES on her nightstand and LIGHTS ONE. He PUFFS ON IT, the orange glow casting a sinister light on his face.

Richard takes the cigarette from his lips and starts ASHING on the BLANKET covering Dianne. The embers GLOW on the dark bed around her body.

Dianne slowly WAKES UP and looks at Richard, confused and sleepy.

DIANNE

Richard? What's wrong?

He doesn't look her in the eyes. He just KEEPS ASHING on the blanket.

Dianne looks at the bed and sees the GLOWING CIGARETTE ASH all over her.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

Richard!

Richard ASHES SOME MORE. The BLANKET CATCHES FIRE.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

Richard, no! Richard!

The fire on the blanket QUICKLY SPREADS. Dianne REACHES OUT to throw the blanket off her paralyzed body.

Richard GRABS HER HANDS and PUSHES HER BACK DOWN into the bed. Holding her STILL.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
RICHARD, NO!

Richard finally looks her in the eye as he DROPS THE CIGARETTE ON HER BLANKET. His eyes are frighteningly ALIVE, as if he almost can't himself believe what he's doing.

Unable to move from the bed, Dianne SCREAMS as her body is ENGULFED IN FLAME.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
RICHARD, NOOOOOOOOOOO! RICHARD,
NOOOOOOOOOOO!

Richard PULLS HIS HANDS BACK, to avoid being burned. He watches his wife die, the ORANGE FLAMES reflecting in his wide eyes.

18

INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

18

We transition BACK TO PRESENT DAY.

Richard stands over the EMPTY, CHARRED BEDFRAME. There is a CREAKING SOUND on the floorboards in the room.

Richard looks up and sees SOMEONE IS BEHIND THE THIN CURTAINS, their OUTLINE BACKLIT by the moon.

WHISPER
Richard, noooooooooo...

The PERSON ROLLS FORWARD, as a WHEELCHAIR peeks out behind the curtain.

Wide eyed, Richard slowly BACKS AWAY.

The curtain DRAPES OVER the person, getting slowly PULLED BACK as they ROLL FORWARD.

WHISPER (CONT'D)
Richard, noooooooooo...

Richard TURNS to LEAVE and THE EMPTY WHEELCHAIR IS RIGHT BEHIND HIM! His leg BUMPS INTO IT, startling him. He GASPS and TURNS AROUND.

There is NO ONE BEHIND THE CURTAIN ANYMORE.

THE FIRE ALARM GOES OFF IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN.

Richard STUMBLES OUT OF THE ROOM, grabbing his forehead. He feels he's losing his mind.

19 INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 19

Richard RUNS into the kitchen.

THE POT IS BACK ON THE STOVE, THE BURNER ON FULL BLAST, SMOKE FILLING THE ROOM.

Richard TURNS the burner OFF again.

A BLACKENED, CHARRED ARM REACHES OUT OF THE POT and GRABS AT HIM!

RICHARD
Holy Christ!

Richard RUNS OUT OF THE KITCHEN.

20 INT. HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT 20

Richard RUNS DOWN THE STAIRS into the FRONT HALLWAY, towards the FRONT DOOR.

He stops DEAD IN HIS TRACKS.

The WHEELCHAIR sits DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE DOOR.

Richard stands still. Watching it.

We slowly ZOOM IN. The wheelchair does not move.

The house is quiet and still.

Painfully so.

Richard stares and stares at the inanimate wheelchair blocking the front door.

Nothing. No movement. No sounds. No whisper.

CREAK! The wheelchair LEAPS FORWARD a HALF INCH.

Richard RUNS INTO THE ...

21 INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 21

Richard OPENS A GUN CABINET and PULLS OUT A SHOTGUN.

He FUMBLES WITH A BOX OF SHELLS as he LOADS IT and SPINS AROUND, aiming it at the FRONT DOOR.

The Wheelchair is GONE.

Richard pants, frantic. Sweating. Shaking.

SQUEEEEEEEAK. We hear the TURNING OF THE WHEELS somewhere in the room.

They are GETTING CLOSER. And CLOSER. And CLOSER.

The SQUEAK of the wheel gets PUNISHINGLY LOUD, then STOPS.

Richard BACKS UP against the FIREPLACE, his eyes darting all around the room.

A BURNT, CHARRED BLACK WOMAN LEAPS OUT OF THE FIREPLACE BEHIND RICHARD in a FLASH OF FLAME AND SMOKE!

She GRABS AT RICHARD as he STUMBLES FORWARD, away from her.

Dianne, NAKED AND COVERED FROM HEAD TO TOE IN BLACK, CRISPY FLESH, DRAGS HERSELF ACROSS THE FLOOR TOWARD RICHARD.

Her LEGS still PARALYZED, she PULLS HERSELF WITH HER ARMS, leaving ASH BEHIND HER on the ground.

Richard SCREAMS! Dianne CACKLES from behind a lipless, hissing grin. Her face is all EXPOSED TEETH in FLAKING, RAW SKIN and a BALD HEAD with a few random strands of GREY HAIR.

Richard TRIPS over the WHEELCHAIR behind him and lands with his BACK AGAINST THE LIVING ROOM WALL.

Dianne BARKS WORDS at him with a SMOKY RASP.

DIANNE

Richard, No. Richard, No.
Richard, No. Richard, No.

Richard AIMS THE SHOTGUN AT HER and is about to pull the trigger.

Dianne GRABS THE BARREL and PULLS IT UP as she...

STARTS TO STAND!

Richard, slackjawed and trembling, STRUGGLES WITH THE SHOTGUN as she PUSHES IT BACK TOWARD HIS OWN FACE.

Dianne STANDS ABOVE the COWERING RICHARD, her SKELETAL MOUTH GRINNING in her BURNT HEAD.

ROSS
Dianne, NO! Dianne, NO! Dianne,
NOOOOOO!

Dianne PUMPS THE SHOTGUN and HISSES AT HIM...

DIANNE
Richard, YESSSSSSSSSS...

She BLASTS THE SHOTGUN IN RICHARD'S FACE.

BLOOD AND BRAIN sprays across a HANGING PHOTO of the couple in happier times right above him.

Richard slumps forward, holding the shotgun in his hands in a classic SUICIDE POSE.

Dianne is GONE. Richard's corpse is alone in the room. Just him and the WHEELCHAIR, which is nearby. It is positioned toward him. Like it's WATCHING. Enjoying the moment.

We MOVE IN toward the BLOODY FRAMED PICTURE of Richard and Dianne. RED AND BLUE lights begin to REFLECT OFF IT as we hear a POLICE SIREN outside.

We hear the voices of POLICE OFFICERS, and then his SONS as we push in CLOSER and CLOSER to their bloody, smiling faces.

NEAL (O.S.)
No! No! Dad!

ROSS (O.S.)
Christ! Oh, Jesus! We shouldn't
have left him alone!

NEAL (O.S.)
Dad. Oh, God, Dad.

The lights DIM on the picture, the room going black. A SPOTLIGHT shows only the WHEELCHAIR reflected in the frame glass as we push further in.

ROSS (O.S.)
He couldn't live without her. He
loved her so much. He had to be
with her.

NEAL (O.S.)
He's with her now. He's with her
forever.

CUT TO BLACK:

DIANNE (O.S.)
(whisper)
Richard. Yessssssssssssssss...

THE END

