TETHERS

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Logline: A man caught in a storm is welcome into a family's exquisite rural home. Once inside, unexplainable events begin to take place leaving everyone to question who can be trusted.

A forewarning: This script is full of GHOSTS.

They are present but will not be fully revealed until page 50. Until then, they are only seen indirectly, like through a LENS or a REFLECTION.

They are passively lurking... for now.

FADE IN

EXT. HOUSE ON RURAL ROAD - EVENING

The sun is low, casting a warm yellow haze as it sets like a falling S.O.S. flare. The golden hour.

A SUBARU sits parked on the side of a narrow road. Across from it, a large, modern PROPERTY contrasts with the sparsely populated street.

“The STICKS” as it’s often referred to. This is the heavily wooded outreaches of the county.

INT. MODERN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

An airy, design-forward home. A study in minimalism. Aesthetics and emotion over practicality. Large open social areas, a centerpiece FLOATING STAIRCASE without rails ascends a far wall. Adjacent, the eastern facing wall is ALL GLASS allowing for natural light.

INT. HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A well organized room with a desk and comfortable seating. An area rug offers a slightly lived-in feeling.

Against the wall are shelves holding a few books and some collectibles including:

- an unopened bottle of PAPPY VAN WINKLE 23 YEAR

- a VIP Pass from LOLLAPALOOZA

- a select few self-help books such as ATOMIC HABITS, and...

- Two pairs of pristine, high top SNEAKERS in different color ways. There is an EMPTY SLOT for a third pair.

INT. LIVING ROOM SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A middle aged, MAN in smart-casual attire sits in a leather butterfly chair. He looks like he was dressed by a Nordstrom personal shopper. His attention is on an iPAD. This is CAREY (mid 40's and hopefully aware of what is hip).

INSERT

Carey's iPad screen is open to an eBay page bidding on a pair of SNEAKERS. The exact color way missing from the office shelf. The time left to bid is TWO HOURS and counting.

END INSERT

MARLENE (mid 40s, crunchy but timelessly stylish) stands at the edge of the room observing her husband as he argues with his iPad like a 14 year old playing Fortnite.

CAREY
Just let me win. I fucking own you.

MARLENE
Carey.

CAREY
Dude, stop bidding. They're already mine.

MARLENE
Carey.

CAREY
OK dickhead. I can play this game too.

INSERT

Carey turns on ALERTS on his phone to keep track of this bidding war. When he switches the alert on, the phone DINGs.

END INSERT

MARLENE
Carey!

Carey startles, unaware his wife was nearby.

CAREY
Mar, I was in the middle of...What did you want?

MARLENE
You were in the middle of buying more things to clutter our shelves.

CAREY
My shelves. I'm finishing a set.

MARLENE
Why?

CAREY
I don't want two thirds of a set in my Zoom background. It'll look like I can't complete anything. And they hold their value.

MARLENE
They have no real value.

CAREY
Well, Stock X says they do.

Marlene sits down across from her husband and rests her chin in her hands, making a puppy dog face.

MARLENE
I'm bored.

Carey quickly becomes dismissive.

CAREY
So find something to do.

MARLENE
Want to play a game?

CAREY
What? No. Why don't you read your book or something.

MARLENE
I don't want to read. I want to talk.

CAREY
OK? So call someone.

MARLENE
Carey.

CAREY
Marlene.

MARLENE
We’re stuck inside and I’m fucking bored and there’s nothing I want to do here.

CAREY
Jesus, Mar. You’ve got a studio back there. Go work. Or watch a movie. I don’t know. I’m not in the mood to entertain you right now.

MARLENE
You said when we moved out here that you would keep me busy.

CAREY
I said it would be an adjustment. There’s plenty to do here.

Marlene’s demeanor has now taken a defensive turn.

MARLENE
But I want to socialize and we’re in the middle of nowhere.

CAREY
We’re not that far out.

MARLENE
We may as well be in Antarctica.

CAREY
Well, it’s safe.

MARLENE
You promised we would still see people.

CAREY
So I’m wrong for wanting to keep my family out of harm’s way?

Marlene gives an unamused look.

CAREY (CONT’D)
You got your dream house. What more do you want?

MARLENE
Something to do in it.

CAREY
Fine. We can have people over next weekend

Marlene waves her hand dismissively and walks across the room toward the front of the house.

She stands by the front window looking out on the sunset as the rain picks up. But then she sees something unusual.

CAREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This is how adults live, Mar. We don't have to worry about who's stalking around at night or the sound of car alarms and -

MARLENE
Carey.

CAREY (O.S.)
What?!...

MARLENE
...There’s someone outside.

INT. FRONT WINDOW OF HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene and Carey stand in front of their large frameless window. It’s now nearly dark outside. There are no streetlights.

A SUBARU OUTBACK is parked on the street in front of the house with it’s lights on. A MAN in a raincoat is looking under the car’s hood with a flashlight.

MARLENE
You should see if he needs help.

CAREY
Why me?

Marlene gives a dead stare, unamused that he would even suggest sending his wife out into the night alone.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Stepping out from under the awning, the sound of the RAIN envelopes Carey.

He walks down a ground-lit driveway and up to the man in the raincoat.

EXT. CAR PARKED ON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Approaching the man, Carey has to yell over the downpour.

CAREY
Everything OK?

MAN
Sorry to park here. My car died.

CAREY
Can I help?

MAN
You know anything about engines?

CAREY
Not really.

MAN
That makes two of us. I’m just going to call someone.

CAREY
You probably won't get reception out here.

The man looks around at the dark, unlit road and back down at his car.

MAN
How far is the closest gas station?

CAREY
Probably five miles.

MAN
So much for walking then.

Carey turns back to the house and sees his wife in the window staring.

He shrugs.

He then watches the man struggle to close his hood while holding his flashlight.

Looking back at Marlene, she signals to come inside.

CAREY
Are you alone?

MAN
Unfortunately.

CAREY
Do you carry a gun?

MAN
Should I?

Carey eyes the man up and glances in the car. There's very little inside.

CAREY
OK, why don't you come inside and use our phone?

The man hesitantly follows Carey back toward the house.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Just so you know, I have a gun inside.

MAN
I assumed.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Before opening the door, Carey inconspicuously steps to the side allowing his RING DOORBELL [ghosts] to record a view of the man close up.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

The men remove their raincoats and Carey hangs them on a hook. The stranger (HUDSON, early forties) is slightly younger than Carey with a larger build. He's ruggedly handsome with great hair and a strong jawline.

CAREY
This is my wife, Marlene. I'm Carey by the way.

HUDSON
I'm Hudson.

MARLENE
Nice to meet you Hudson. Are you alright?

HUDSON
A little wet, but I'll survive. Your husband was gracious enough to invite me in... After a thorough background check.

MARLENE
That's why we don't let him watch Fox News anymore.

While Carey retrieves a cordless house phone, Hudson marvels at the interior.

HUDSON
Wow! What a house. It's like a catalogue.

Carey perks up a little at the compliment.

CAREY
Oh, thanks man...that's really Mar's thing though.

HUDSON
I feel so at peace in here.

MARLENE
I hate clutter. A good purge will show you what's actually worth holding on to.

Carey passive aggressively rolls his eyes so hard you can almost hear the distain.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Carey would be a hoarder if permitted.

Carey throws up his hands in defense.

HUDSON
Woah. It was just a compliment. I'm gonna make this call now.

He looks around at all the open space. There's no where to go for privacy.

HUDSON (CONT'D)
I'll just step over here. I'll try not to get anything wet.

Hudson walks just out of ear's reach. Marlene and Carey discuss quietly.

MARLENE
What do you think?

CAREY
He seems fine. And I told him I have a gun.

MARLENE
You have a hunting rifle you can barely hold.

CAREY
Hey, I'm just playing it safe. I don't know him.

MARLENE
I'm surprised you haven't dug a bunker yet.

CAREY
Maybe I have and it's secret.

MARLENE
Then enjoy your life as a groundhog. Do you think you'll have to drive him home?