

19. HOSTAGE

He is holding her hostage in her house. She has very little money there. But her bank account is brimming with funds since she has just received an insurance settlement for her husband's death. He wants to force her to write checks on the account. But he is afraid that she will mess with the checks so that they can't be cashed. He has to take a chance. He will leave her tied up while he is gone.

"I'm coming back. So I want to make sure that everything is right."

"Haven't I experienced this once before in my life?"

She is walking by her self when he swings the car around to block her path. She trips over it. He gets out and pulls her in.

"You were my friend."

The world used to seem like this innocent place full of meaning and value. It became something else.

He finds that he is doing this sort of thing all the time.

I need to stop. I just need an excuse to stop. If I get caught. If someone can tell me to stop. That is all that I need.

He spends his nighttime wandering around cemeteries.

After a night of heavy partying, I need a rest. I am on the way home when a man grabs at my arm. I kick his legs from under him.

"I am hearing these weird noises in the apartment below mine."

She is moving against me.

She hasn't moved from where he tied her up. She's afraid that he's going to kill her now that he's got his money

"That would be too good for you. After what you've done to me. I want a little more. I want my revenge. Long and sweet."

"Are you going to torture me?"

She needs to find a way out of her own house.

"You screwed me over. You really did a number on me. You wanted me to fall for you. I loved you."

"If there is a ounce of that love, save me."

"You're crazy. You're the one who made me into a killer. I can't turn it off now."

If he used to have feeling of remorse, those feelings are long gone. She has burned that part away. Now he only lives with primary colors, big emotions. Love. Hate. Anger. Revenge. There is little room for him to reconsider. All action is more or less automatic. He just goes along.

"I thought that you still had a heart."

"I do. And the only way to salvage that is to do away with you."

He is talking like someone in an action picture. He can go back to idle reflection. The program is underway. The buttons have been pushed

"Honey, you wanted it this way." He is mocking her

If the roles were reversed, she wouldn't hesitate in the least. He wouldn't have a prayer. But he's not as good as he wants to be.

It's not really remorse. He just can't motivate himself the way that he would like. She will use that to her advantage.

They want me to work on a sequel for successful horror movie. I find this is really silly. But I need the money. Anything will be better than nothing.

I take the job because the emphasis is going to be on psychology. No cheap special effects. Just good character development. The first picture was shlock. But it had some interesting elements. A man holds a woman hostage in her own house. The sequel has most of the same elements. Now it's my baby.

I need a good actress to carry this picture.

"I thought that we were going to do that independent picture."

"Jennifer, they're giving us all kinds of money to make this. I didn't believe it myself."

It is pretty amazing the kind of money that they throw at this shit. Jennifer is excited about taking on this project. The film could expose her as a more serious actress to a mainstream audience."

"I just don't want to spend the whole picture tied up and gagged."

"You'd look pretty good in some rope right now."

"This is not about my private life."

Jennifer can't imagine her career ending up in centerfolds and B pictures. She is ready to progress to something better. She hopes this is what she needs.

"I've taken acting lessons."

"I thought you took lessons long ago."

"I know, I know. I just found another teacher. It's been like a revelation for me."

Karolina has an idea where he is hiding. But she is going to have to apply herself. Too many distractions have already caused her to be wide of the mark.

"I want to play the psychic. I've had these premonitions before."

"The psychic is supposed to be more of a galpal. I want you playing the star. You're a goddess. You need to walk around the set in a dressing gown edged with faux-fur, a push-up bra, and loads of lip gloss. You know what those poor boys are thinking when they see you on the screen. And you're going to give it to them. Make them all think that they can have you if they just live the American dream."

"I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be flattered or insulted. It sounds as if I'm a float in a parade, and people are ogling me. I just want to be taken seriously as an actress."

"You will be. You'll set a new standard in psychological horror. It will seem that you can never escape from you're your captor. But you will be wearing him down. He'll want to do away with you, but he'll feel caught by the game. And the longer that he lets you live, the harder it will be to do away with you."

I'm not sure if this is enough to convince her of the benefits of the role. Jennifer Fisher is Jennifer Fisher. She won't be able to change her reputation overnight. This is the first step. Even if it isn't, she's really the only one that can bring that special charm to the screen. No one else can seem so clever in seeming so vulnerable.

I think that Jennifer simply resents the image that she has created for herself. She has crafted this role over time. There is a genius that has enabled her to use her publicity to enhance fan interest. She has a devoted following. And the reverence has only grown over time. She

doesn't even have to explain anything. There is this presence that surrounds her that implies so much more. It may seem like an exaggeration. But there is something that is almost religious in the commitment that she has engendered. She really makes those lonely guys in Omaha think that she can see the light. They are her true followers. They would die individually for a word from her lips.

How can she provoke seemingly contradictory responses? On the one hand, there is an intimacy to her portrayal. She seems like she lives next door and is just waiting for her neighbor to knock so that she can invite them over for some earthly delights. On the other hand, she is almost translucent radiating a shower of light all around her. It blinds her fans. And they are blinded to any shortcomings on her part. It is all about image and has little to do with her skills as an actresses. But she has built this essence. She has worked her natural talents so they are now magnified way beyond their initial worth.

I need to hold her interest. In many ways, the picture has little to do with her. But she is an essential element in the staging. The believers feel that they can rescue her from the evil that threatens her. Even the police and the psychic are not sufficient. Intervention is necessary. The audience is part of this picture.

Without Jennifer Fisher, this would just be story. So she is larger than life. And her fans love this aspect. When she is not on screen, she will still resonate that same power. She cannot be sacrificed to the mania of her captor.

I know it is absurd that she finds strength in her captivity. This only adds to the perversity of the depiction. That feature created her initial hesitation about the picture. If this is a sequel, she feels that she can be asked back for further installments in the series. This is truly getting out of control.

"Maybe, I'm not being paid enough."

"Jennifer, the deal is closed. Take advantage of the opportunity. Not only can you reprise the same role. There will be others."

I guess that she feels invincible up to this point. I've got the money. There's really no point to hold her any longer.

"There's more money if you want it."

"I don't want to draw unnecessary suspicions on myself. If I go back to the bank again, they'll think something bizarre is going on."

"I could go in there for you."

"And tell them what I am doing. I have no insurance that you'd come back."

"You're my alibi. I can blame you and get away with it."

"You've forgotten that you've already gotten away with it."

And indeed she has escaped detection. I'm the only one who has brought any attention to this case. Otherwise, it was slammed shut, case closed. An accident. This will be another opportunity to open it up again.

"I really have no reason to go back to the bank."

"You don't have to kill me."

"You're a witness. You wanted me to get sent to jail. You tried to kill me."

"But this is cold blood. You don't want to do it like this."

"What would you prefer. That I let you tell me how to get rid of you."

"We could make it look like a suicide. I killed my husband. I thought I was going to get caught. I was betrayed by my accomplice."

"Accomplice? I don't want them thinking that I had an accomplice. Besides, you said that they didn't suspect anything."

"They don't. But if they find me dead, there going to look for someone with a motive. You are the most likely candidate."

"That assumes that they are going to find you dead. What if you disappear?"

"That just seems like a lot of effort to go through."

"It's better than having them come looking for me as your killer."

"We got on so well before."

"Before was before. Then you tried to fuck me over."

"I'm sorry that happened. They were coming down on me."

"You said that you weren't a suspect."

"There was some delay in the insurance settlement."

"You've got your settlement. You're in the clear."

I can see her lasting much longer. Her arguments are getting more pathetic. I don't really have the stomach to hurt her. But I feel the need for revenge pretty deeply.

"I told you that I can get more money. I can have it transferred for you."

"It's just not worth it anymore. I've wasted too much time already."

She is not going to be rescued. And I have made sure that she can't get away. She should have never have included me in her plot. It only made me more ruthless. Once I've started like this, I can't turn it off.

She is staring up at me with those eyes. I keep thinking that one more time with her will do the trick. But that was the desperation that got me caught up in this in the first place. She will need to use more than her charms to get out of this. That only works if she is still alive. If she's free to walk out of here.

I am hesitating. I remember how hard it was to move against her husband. I held in my anger towards him for so long. I needed to be pushed over the edge. That is not going to happen this time. I need to take the initiative.

I wonder if even Jennifer can save the role. If he acts too quickly, the police will not have a chance to rescue her. Or she won't be able to get away on her own. There goes the sequel. There goes all the other great roles. She'll just be a footnote in this picture.

Why is my own script getting away from me? I think that it is a hidden resentment against Jennifer. She has put me through enough shit in trying to get my picture made. Even though it is happening, I still feel that she is in the way. This is my chance to get back at her. She's under contract. She has to accept the rewrites even if they eliminate her early. I know that she will fight it. She may even walk. I don't want this going to court.

"Jennifer, there is no way that your character can get out of this one. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Sex."

"That's what got it started in the first place. But her luck has run out. She can't have him go back to the bank. We need a new plan."

I don't think Jennifer realizes the gravity of the situation.

“What am I supposed to say?”

“You better figure it out. Otherwise, you get killed in the next scene.”

Jennifer can feel the pressure. She has never been in this position before. She can actually rescue her character. She will have to be clever

“I need some time.”

“We have to break for the day. There is other stuff to shoot.”

She walks away from a set that is getting oppressive. Even though it is just acting, she has convinced herself how real is her captivity. Even when she is off the set, that same feeling is following her around.

“The police could arrive. A sniper could shoot him.”

“He’s not that stupid. He is not going to be near the window.”

“They can storm the house.”

“You don’t have time. You need to be rescued as soon as possible. He wants to kill you right away. To leave before they have a chance to find you.”

She has to play screen-writer as well as actress. There is much more riding on this than in the indie picture.

Jennifer still believes that her body is the trick. All that she has to do is make him aware of her charms.

“You know what I’ve got.”

We all seem to hang on her every word. But that may not be enough. It only incites his feelings of betrayal. This is his union with her.

“You’re a violent guy. You’ve been that way from the beginning.”

“And you think that’s going to stop me.”

“I don’t think that you want to be thought of that way.”

“I’m not looking to be saved. If I was, you should have helped me long ago. It’s just seeming to be a little late for that.”

She has already bought herself a few minutes. He is getting distracted. He feels the need to defend himself.

Jennifer confesses, “I feel that I’m tracking down a phone call. I just need to hang him on the line.”

“That is a good analogy. But you’re clearly running out.”

“I think the thing that I need to do is to challenge him. I feel as if I’m doing good at that.”

“I know what you’re doing. But it isn’t working.”

“It’s already bought me some time.”

“For what? A miracle? No one knows where you are. No one cares.”

“I’m going to get my deal. The psychic will rescue me.”

“That may be more faith than is supported by the evidence. Karolina has never been that precise. Just vague feelings. They’d have to know where she is already.”

“Change it for the script. I do not want to die in the house.”

“You’re not going to die.”

“My career will!”

She moves her body close to him. He can smell her thick perfume. It reminds him of being naked with her. It makes him want her again.

"I should just shoot you right away. Not let you affect me at all."

But it is having its effect. Even if he fails to carry out what he needs to do to survive, she can sense that help is going to arrive.

She works to imagine the times that they were together. Just how great those moments were. This is exactly how he wants to think about things. He wants his fantasy to penetrate her world. He wants her to replace her memories with his. And she is playing along. She is doing what she can to get into his head.

"This is what you've been doing all along."

"What are you talking about?"

"Playing mind games with me. You want me to pretend that we never met. That I broke in here without cause. That I've been persecuting you from the beginning. I've been stalking you. I've been trying to kill you."

He continues, "But that's not really what happened, is it?"

She just needs him to talk on. Somehow, she has hope that she will be found. It's as if she has left a trail of bread crumbs, and she is waiting for her hero to follow the trail.

The psychic has picked up that trail. And she is leading the police to the location right now.

"We need to get a clear sight to the window."

There is a clear-sight. It is his apartment. The police need to get into his apartment.

"I'm not doing anything wrong. I don't even look out the window much. There's a house across the way. Not a very attractive one at that."

"But what about what's in the window. You like to peep into people's windows."

"That's not really my style. If a woman interests me, I approach her face to face. I don't roll up on her with my flashers spinning round and my siren on full blast."

"You don't respect authority, do you?"

"I just don't respect people violating my privacy."

"Do you have something to hide?"

The psychic is in the background.

"Just burst into his place. We don't have time."

"We have procedure to follow. What if he's in there with a gun."

"I told you that he's holding her in the house. You just need to get in there to get a clear-sight of what is going on."

All that it's going to take is a phone call.

"There's a guy in this house who's hurting this woman. He has her tied up."

But he doesn't want to get involved. He doesn't want to make the effort to call the police. He is enjoying this too much. He can hear the minutes tick away. The longer that he waits, the more dangerous it is for her. He gets another call.

"Honey, how are you?"

"I'm doing great."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm just sitting on my couch. What are you doing?"

"I'm a little lonely. I could use a man's touch at this moment."

"What are you wearing?"

“I’ve got on my white satin dressing gown with the faux-fur lining. Underneath I’m wearing panties and a bra.”

“Do you want to touch yourself for me?”

“I’ll do whatever you want me to do dear. Do you want to touch me? I just had my legs done. They’re so smooth. Can you imagine your tongue leading a path up them. Does that feel good to you? Are you getting off hearing me talk to you?”

He imagines her on the bed. She can hardly resist. The feeling takes her over. She lies back and lets the wave ride over her.

His touch is so insistent. She can’t think about anything else. The pleasure is overwhelming.

“You’ve been doing a great job at messing with me. But you’re never going to get out of here. You’ve stuck her with me. This is forever. You’re going to die here. You’re going to die for you love.”

“This isn’t love. This is some kind of sick perversion that you’ve made happen.”

“If I’ve made it happen, it’s all for the best. It’s what you’ve wanted all along. You don’t want to disagree with me. It’s in your interest that you just go along.”

She needs to keep him hanging on. Remind him of the seduction. Let it pull him deeper and deeper into the vortex.

She has the power. She always has. He has her tied up. But she has to use it to her advantage. Make him think that she is enjoying this. That she’s wanted it like this all along.

“Settle back, my dear. You need to relax. They’ll arrive sooner than you know.”

He can feel her charm. The halo still seems to surround. As if she is untouchable. She is so close. She is tied up next to him. But he cannot still her spirit.

“You’ve convinced me about the role. But you haven’t given me much of a script to work with. I need to get into his head. I need to mess with him the best that I can. Let me do the performance of lifetime. I know what the risks are. This is life or death for this woman. She needs to convince him that she cares for him. Get him thinking. If they just could be together one more time. Have his fingers run down his back. Pull him close. Work their way inside. Her magical touch.”

I listen to her continue, “You’re getting hot just hearing me talk about it. Look at the glow of my lips. If I could just run my fingers along these lips. Let them slide back and forth. Don’t you want to do the same. Can’t you imagine my kiss. I could kiss you all over. Over and over again. Is this getting you excited.”

“Stop, Jennifer. You’ve already got the role.”

“But you could come back to my place. And we could practice. I could tie you up and you could watch as I squirm around naked.”

“You’re supposed to be the one who is naked. I meant you’re the one who’s supposed to be tied up.”

“I am naked. That’s why you’ve been staring at me. There’s something that you want to show me. Something that might convince me of your interest. You are interested. I just can’t tell. I need to feel how certain you are about your love.”

“You thought that this was going to be so simple. That you were going to try to convince me that you loved me. And I’d want you over and over again. If you could get me attached to

the sex. If you could link it up with the jealousy of your husband. That my only hope was to kill him. You know that you turned me on. That whole routine in the window. I couldn't think about anything else after that. And when you let me touch you, I mean really touch you. I hardly needed to ask."

"Yeah, it was so simple. You played me like a piano. Playing inside and out. But you didn't count on the sonata ending like this. For you, it's a real dud. You probably hate me for it. But it's just the way that it has to be, my dear. This is true love."

"I'm sure that you thought that it might be the other way around. That someone would end up doing this to me. Another guy. Or your husband. Or you for that matter. Don't you wish that you could have killed me?"

"I can see it through the window. This man has the woman tied up in the bedroom. He's going to kill her if you don't get her quickly. We're running out of time. You have to hurry."

"I need your address. We can send a car to your place to investigate."

"It's not happening at my place. She's being held in the house."

When the police arrive, they knock on his door.

"We don't see a woman."

"She was over there. In that room. I'm sure that he moved her."

"What were you doing peeking in your neighbor's window?"

"I wasn't peeking. I just happened to see what was going on."

"And you've happened to see in the past as well."

"I've never really seen anything before. You can't see in the daytime. And at night, she closes the curtains. But this time, it wasn't her. It was the guy who had her in the bedroom."

"Are you a voyeur? Do you get off on watching other people have sex?"

"I'm a meek person. I would never do anything to her."

"We've had reports from around here. Some guy looking into women's rooms. Is that you?"

"I usually shut the blinds. I don't want to even be tempted."

"Have you been arrested for this kind of thing before?"

"Not at all. I'm just like any guy. If I see an attractive woman, I'll look."

"She is an attractive woman. This woman across the way."

"She's not really my type. A little brassy."

"But you wouldn't mind a roll in the hay with her."

"Officer, there isn't any hay around here."

This doesn't really match all the details of what is happening. Two officers arrive. Both are in uniform. One is tall man. The other is shorter. The shorter man is well-built, but not in as good condition as in his day. The taller man asks the question. The other officer looks around.

"These pictures of these girls. Did you take these photographs?"

"Yeah. I studied photography. I wanted to be a photographer."

"Do the women know that you are taking their pictures?"

"They are friends of mine."

"And they let you shoot them like this."

"They like it."

"How do you get women to shoot them like this? Do you threaten them? Do you drug

them?”

“I’m not the one who is doing something strange to a woman. Are you going to investigate?”

“It’s already 11 at night. We’re not going to go over there unless we’re sure about your complaint.”

“I called at 9:30. She could be dead by now for all the time that you took.”

“You’re a little bit of a pervert. You’ve got to admit that. But your story does check out. We’ll go over there.”

“Yeah, we’ll check it out tomorrow. The lights are all off over there.”

“Are you guys crazy? Tomorrow. She’s in danger right this moment. If she isn’t dead already. If you wait, he’s going to get away.”

“Are you telling us how to do our jobs?”

“This time I am. You need to get over there right away. Sooner if possible.”

“Listen, smart ass, we’ve got enough to take you downtown for questioning. So don’t interfere with an ongoing investigation.”

“Are you guys really cops? You don’t seem like it. I call in a complaint, and you’re more suspicious of me than of the perpetrator. It’s not as if he called in.”

“I told you, sir, that we’ve got some complaints. Naturally, everyone’s a suspect.”

“That’s bull shit. That woman is going to die if you don’t go there now.”

“You need to watch your language. We are officers of the law.”

“Is that a friend of yours in the apartment over there. I see his light flashing on and off. Is he going to rush in to save you? Is he looking for a signal. Should I turn your light on and off.”

“Don’t do that!”

“Why? You don’t want him to come over here. Was that the game. Lure me here. And then get him to arrive in the nick of time and shoot me. Is that your game? You’re pretty good at making it happen.”

“That’s not what’s going on. No one know that I’m here. That you’ve got me tied up.”

“Exactly. I’ve got all the time in the world.”

“So you are going torture me?”

“The mental suffering is enough. I’ve been feeling anguish all this time. Now you’re getting a taste of your own medicine.”

Jennifer appears to be adapting to the role. Just watching her, I am even feeling it. It is all about her. She has been clever. She simply dominates every scene. Her captor seems helpless even though she is the one who is tied up.

“Do you like what you see?”

Everyone does. They all want more. But she realizes that with each revelation that they only submit to her intent. She gives nothing of herself. She uses her image to get in their heads.

I think that I have my success. It feels great that I have finally convinced her to give everything of herself to this role. This could be the break that she is looking for. In turn, it will only mean better things for me.

“There’s one thing in the script that doesn’t make sense. He keeps talking about how she set him up. He implies that they know each other. That they’ve been together. But I thought

that the story was all about this guy who stalks a woman and then breaks into her place. What's going on?"

"He is trying to make up in his mind that they've been together before."

"He doesn't sound as if he's making it up. It really is convincing."

"He's a good actor."

"But you've put all this stuff in the script."

"Do you think that she enjoys being tied up. Then he can do anything that he wants to her. The sex can come as a total surprise."

"I'm being serious here. I really think that he knows her."

"It doesn't matter either way. He broke into her place and tied her up."

"It does matter a great deal. What if she really got him to kill her husband? And if she intended to kill him or turn him into the police. She's been taunting him all this time. Challenging him to break in. Well, here he is. He has arrived. What is she going to do? Wait for the police to come. Wait for them to shoot the guy. She's got to have tipped them off. Otherwise, she wouldn't be so confident."

"Jennifer, I thought that all that confidence came from you."

"Flattery will get you nowhere. You're not listening to me."

"Of course, I am. But that doesn't make any difference. It's only a story. There's not really a woman tied up in her house."

"There might be. This seems like the kind of thing that gets you excited."

"Really, how would you know?"

"I told you that I was psychic."

"A lot of good that did you. He still broke into my place."

"I had a feeling that it might happen. That's why they finally decided to check on me. And they arrived just in time. Another few minutes, and I think that he might have killed me."

"What happened to him?"

"He got shot!"

"Is he alive?"

"No. He died. He was a monster. But I got to know him pretty well. So it was all very freaky."

"When I left the clinic, you were following me. Why was that?"

"I'm not at liberty to discuss it."

"You know why I was in there. I was held hostage by this guy. It really left me messed up. He was following me for about a month. He was looking in my windows. Finally he made his move. He broke in. But the police got to me before he could do anything. A sniper took him out. I was so relieved."

"That would mess anyone up."

"Are you protecting me? Is that why you followed me?"

"I really can't say."

"You just show up like that. It seems weird."

"It's all for the best."

"That's how he used to talk."

"It's not the same."

“I didn’t invite you. I don’t know why you’re here. He was one crazy fucker. You’re not with the police. Then who you are. After everything that I went through, why are you harassing me?”

The sniper is her way out. It reinforces every element of her story. Rescue from on high. Providential intervention.

This is how she wants it. I look down from my window at her bedroom. She has her curtains open. I even see her adjust them. The light is on. She wants me to look in, to observe. She wants me to see what is happening.

She is in a dressing gown. It is open. She only has a pair of panties underneath. I find her appealing. She moistens her lips. She lies on the bed. She is tired. I can fill her up with energy. I can bring her back to life

“Honey, I am there for you.

She knows it. She runs her hands along her smooth legs. She has just had them done for me. I love them smooth.

“Some people are very simple. They pretend that there’s more to their life. Great plans. Intentions. But it’s all pretty basic.”

“Jennifer, you are about exaggeration.”

She touches her finger to her mouth.

“What do you want now? Do you want me to suck on my fingers for you?”

“I didn’t think it was that kind of movie.”

“It’s all about the suggestion.”