

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 red pool of congealing blood.

Metres away sits ABIGAIL HARPER, 20's, pale and tearful, wearing a once pretty, now blood splattered dress. A vacant look in her eyes, glazed over -- she is BLIND.

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

DALTON BECKER, 30's, bomb disposal expert, confident and affable. He is regaled in full protective gear, heavily padded kevlar. He wipes the sweat from his forehead as he painstakingly unscrews a panel beneath the digital readout steadily ticking down. Off Abigail's tense but otherwise unexpectedly calm expression --

DALTON

A rousing endorsement for internet dating eh?

Forcing a wry smile --

ABIGAIL

My friend persuaded me. Said it would do me good to get out the house. He seemed nice, at first.

Dalton smiles as he clasps her hand.

DALTON

Forget him. He's gone.

He turns his attention back to the device. Something is wrong. Abigail senses a shift in his demeanour --

ABIGAIL

What is it?

Dalton looks up, says nothing. He backs off some distance, turns away and speaks in to his radio in hushed tones --

DALTON

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

Silence. Dalton looks over his shoulder at Abigail who stares ahead. The digital 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
I can't. 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 kneels down up close to the device, inspecting each wire methodically, quickly, tracing its path, analysing the inner workings, trying to make sense of it.

His earpiece crackles with the voice of his superior --

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

Dalton turns off his radio, carries on working. The digital 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. She smiles. He looks in to her eyes. For a moment, it's almost as though she can see. There is a connection between them.

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

A moment of 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.