(A)Typical Night

The place is unknown, but this much is clear: I am with my family in some sort of outdoor setting. We are just sitting around, discussing relatively trivial matters. The trees around us are just as abundant as the sounds of nature. We continue to talk, so wrapped up in our conversation that no one notices that the sounds drop off one by one until the forest is eerily silent.

I catch the first glimpse of him. He is standing off into the distance, not moving, just staring. My first impression is that this is a huge man. Not as in obese huge...huge as in football player huge. He wears a non-descript mask which serves well in giving him the look of a killer from a slasher movie.

Our eyes are locked and I can’t look away. My sister notices my faraway gaze and turns to look in the same direction. What she sees frightens her, as evidenced by her scream. The sound of her voice seems to jolt the stranger out of his stillness, and he begins to run in our direction. It is then that I notice the obscenely large weapon in his hand. Is it a butcher knife? A meat cleaver? Why am I standing here even contemplating the issue?

I break free from my trance and begin to run...my family members have all gone in different directions, and I am alone. Except I am not...the stranger is behind me, running me down. I pump my legs faster, faster, faster, but can’t seem to shake being followed. Like a horror movie cliché, a tree root snares my foot, bringing me to the ground. And, of course, I hit my head...I know nothing of what happens next.

My eyes gently flit open, although considering the extreme dimness of my current surroundings, it doesn’t really matter if they are open or closed. I am confused...this place is unfamiliar...and very dark. There’s not much I can make out, but a few things are certain. The air is damp and musty, and the walls are made of stone. Am I in a basement?

The memory of my family members and their safety hits me like a ton of bricks. I bolt upright and feel along the wall, desperately searching for an exit...and at that moment become aware of the shackle on my left ankle. I grasp the steel chain and follow it to the wall...and the reality of the situation gets more concrete with each chain link that my hand passes...I am being kept prisoner.

Though I have not uttered a single word, the sound of the chain speaks enough to alert my captor that I am conscious. Above me, I hear a chair being pushed aside and footsteps trudging down a staircase. A key turns in a lock and the stranger from the forest stands in front of me. He appears the exact same way, except the dim lighting gives the contours of his mask a much more sinister look. He stands and he stares,
much like he did in the forest. I stare back, still not vocalizing a thing, despite the panicked questions that swirl around my head.

I have absolutely no idea how long we stand there and look at one another. It seems like forever...yet my fear subsides with each passing moment. When he leaves, I feel nothing. I lie back down and go to sleep.

Over the next few days, the stranger comes down at least twice a day. He brings simple food and water. The mask is always on. He never speaks a word, nor do I. We simply stare.

One day, I am awakened by screams. I can’t tell where they are coming from, but they are definitely being made by someone in the same house. The screams are prolonged, and the accompanying sounds bring dreadful images to my head. After some time, the screams stop, and before long, I hear the footsteps on the stairs again. The door opens, and there stands my captor...and I recoil from the sight of him. Everything seems the same as previous days except for one thing: he wears a white apron that is covered, nay, drenched with blood and gore. Again, he stares, and I step back. He makes neither a motion toward me, nor does he make an acknowledgment of my disgust. Eventually he leaves and I am left in a ball on the floor.

This pattern repeats itself, and in my captivity, I have nothing to do but keep track of the victims. I listen to their screams. Some die faster than others do. Some scream loudly, some whimper and cry. I wonder what he does to them. He always comes to see me afterward, and I notice he comes closer and closer to me each time. And then one day, it happens. Fresh from a killing, covered in the remnants of his victim...he holds me. At first, I panic...I expect him to do to me what he has been doing to others. Shockingly, he does nothing but hold me to him. No words are spoken, which strikes me as odd...but ultimately realize that none need to be said. My panic subsides and I wrap my arms around him. We stand there. After some time, he leaves. And in utter disgust, I come to my realization that I am in love.

He comes down each day, but I look forward most to the post-killing visits. He holds me and I feel safe. I never get to leave the room, but I don’t need to.

One day, I hear him upstairs doing his daily duties (by now, I’ve figured these out...what else would I do to pass time?) He prepares for his killing of the latest target...I can hear her whining and going through the “you-don’t-have-to-do-this” routine. It never works.

Suddenly, I hear some crashes, some voices, some footsteps running all throughout the house...and then the gunshots. Something is wrong. Something is terribly wrong and there is nothing I can do. The commotion is more than I can bear, and this strikes me as odd: I’ve been in an alternate reality for months, not caring about the outside world until this moment.
I hear voices...screams, warnings, orders. They come from all areas of the house. I hear things being thrown around and gunshots get more frequent. The door at the top of the stairs flies open. I hear someone take a step but then lose balance. The sound of the body falling down the stairs sounds so painful that even I can feel it. I fear it is him. I hope desperately that it is one of the intruders, but that hope dims as I hear the person dragging himself along the floor to the door of my room. The knob turns slowly. He crawls in, wounded, reaching for me. Still being chained to the walls, I cannot reach him, only reach out to him. We almost touch but are disrupted by the incoming police officers. They stand over him, and the gunshots tear him apart.

For the first time in months, I make a sound, a wailing in an attempt to drown out the sounds of the guns. When they are done, and as they are breaking my chains, I weep. They think I weep for freedom, and they will never know that I weep for him.