

FOUR IN THE MORNING

Past midnight; cloaked in darkness, the countryside setting is given a haunting touch. With the exception of the moon, the only lights visible in the rural area are dispersed squares from windows of houses, some of which can be seen from the solitary winding road, while others are hidden in a labyrinth of trees. From the road, a small, single-lane track leads through walls of trees, to one such hidden house. Large and Victorian-style, it stands proudly overlooking its spacious garden. Bushes that reach up to cover the whole of the garden wall look like nothing more than a mass of black in the small hours of the autumn morning. One upstairs bedroom light is all that gives any indication of life.

Inside the room, a dressing table lamp creates a soft ambience for a man and woman, still awake and fully dressed. She brushes her flowing locks, not in preparation for bed, just in preparation. He opens a light holdall to retrieve a CD, then after zipping it shut, puts the holdall on the bed, next to two airline tickets. Their flight is in a few hours time so they will be leaving soon. He slips the CD into the player and she smiles at him as a piano solo opens their favourite track. He pours a glass of champagne for each of them. Now that they are packed and ready to go, they can relax until it is time to leave for the airport.

Two dimmed headlights, barely visible, appear from the top of the winding road. A dark, block-shaped vehicle moves along at a slow pace. Almost as quickly as the lights appear, they disappear; switched off, leaving the block making its way along the road slowly in the direction of the house, engine quietly purring. Now, identifiable as a van, and closer to the track leading to the garden's gate, the vehicle comes to a stop.

Doors open quietly and four men step out. They close their doors with as little sound as possible. Heavy jackets make them burly silhouettes against the tint of moon's light as they make their way quickly but quietly to the track. Clad completely in dark clothing, the four intruders will easily blend in to the night. One leads the group, creeping their way to the garden gate, where obeying a single motion of their leader's hand, two of them break from the group and make their own path around the side of the wall to the rear of the house. He then directs his second in command to take position at the other side of the gate.

The third and fourth intruders reach the rear of the house. A tall tree is more than sufficient to hoist them up and over the wall. Effortlessly, they grasp the lower branches and one by one, pull themselves up to reach the top of the wall. After a quick scanning of the grounds, they drop lightly on to the green with no more sound than that of cat's paws. Swiftly running over to the rear door, the third signals to the fourth to mirror the actions of their partners and take either sides of the entrance. This is no spur-of-the-moment operation. The group's every movement has been practised repetitively, in preparation for the morning's work. No words are required, their hand signals acting as their blueprint for action.

The four will storm the house and take the man and woman by force and emotions will not stand in their way. They have it engraved in their minds that what they do can only be the right thing, making it easier for each of them to deal with the inevitable adrenaline hit in their own way. Between them, there are years of varying experience. Their leader, an older man, has long since passed the point of succumbing to the pressure of nerves. It does not enter his mind that they will disturb the peace of a loving couple or that there is a strong potential threat of violence. There is a time for emotion and a time to detach from emotion.

The second and third are each competent on their own but take comfort in working under the direction of the man they know to be the best in their line of business. The fourth and least experienced of all will do exactly as he is told, for fear of jeopardising their task and to earn due respect. The first and second intruders make eye contact, the second waiting for the nod to move.

Inside, the couples' music continues as strings subtly introduce themselves. She finishes grooming and glides across the floor to take a glass of champagne and they both move to the window to gaze out at the night. He places his arm around her waist and takes her against his warm body, her head flopping on to his shoulder.

The first and second intruders are poised to move but they see the two figures appear at the window and hold their positions. Third and fourth wait, hearts pounding so heavily in their chests, they can be heard. They listen. There is no signal from the front of the house as there should be, no sound of the first two intruders breaking in the front door so there has been a minor setback. The initial attack will have to come from them.

Bass drums bring in a touch of drama to the symphony.

Third intruder turns to face the door. This moment belongs to him. Fourth stands at the side. In a second or two, the mood will be very different, but this moment is not for reflection, but for bracing himself. Summoning all his strength, he slams his foot just below the handle. A sickening thud cuts the air, the door is thrown open, the lock tearing through the wood, leaving the metal barrel exposed through the splinters.

Upstairs, their peace is shattered; the sudden rush of fear makes her freeze but he is quick to react, the situation taking but a split second to register, almost as though it had been expected. He barks his order to her to stay in the room.

First and second move fast, now that their targets have been distracted. The garden gate is closed but not locked and is easily pushed open. Racing across the lawn their combined body weight makes light work of the front door and again, shards of wood fly as they burst through the door and proceed through the hallway.

First and second are making their way to the foot of a winding staircase, guns are drawn in anticipation of a showdown. The man almost reaches the foot of the stairs, and suddenly finds himself staring at two handguns pointed straight at him, first's voice bellowing an order to stop and stay perfectly still, though his piercing eyes would be enough root him to the spot. Barely seconds later, third and fourth reach their allies and leap forward, gripping each of their victim's arms and dragging him upstairs to the room where the bedroom door is violently kicked open. His wife screams, helplessly watching him struggle in the hold of his captors. He is thrown face down on the bed while the fourth grasps the wrists of the woman and throws her down alongside her partner. The intruders' handguns are drawn from their holsters and pointed straight at the back of their heads and they are ordered not to move. They close their eyes as their symphony becomes an onslaught of strings, brass and woodwind, a crescendo appropriate to the mayhem that ensues, and possibly the final piece of music they will hear as they wait for death which can only be imminent.

First and second have split and are frantically searching the house, but for money or jewellery? Doors to the various rooms are thrown open, wardrobes and large cupboards are searched. Their prize must be small enough to conceal but too large for confined spaces.

Brass, woodwind and bass drums climax in one orchestral hit, the piano reinstating some sense of peace, accompanied by a quiet drone of violins.

A thin crack of light from the hallway cuts the dark of a little room and spreads out to reveal a small bundle sitting in the corner. A girl, bound, gagged and hunched up, squints at the light as it hits her eyes, clearly having been in the room for some time. She twitches and wriggles at the sight of the imposing figure in the doorway. He steps into the room towards her and crouches down as much as his bulk will allow him to get to her level. Her wriggling becomes more frantic and she pushes back hard against the wall, her head turned to the side, eyes shut hard. If she cannot see him, maybe he will go away. Then he speaks. He says her name and her fear subsides, only slightly. Her name has been used by the two strangers who appeared out of nowhere as she played, and then threw her, kicking and screaming into this dark room, allowing her only bread and water for nourishment. This man is different. Reaching into his pocket, he produces what looks like a wallet, which he opens and holds closer to her. He says her name again and encourages her to look at it in a voice gentle but still carrying the air of authority. The man is indeed a leader. Through the slits of slightly opened eyes, she sees the hallway's light creating a glint on something metallic – a badge. She recognises a Police badge. The voice explains he has come to take her away. Her breathing is becoming rapid again but this time with a warm excitement. He gently removes the material covering her mouth. His powerful arms reach around behind her and his hands take her ropes, snapping them like thread.

Large and Victorian-style, the house stands proudly overlooking its spacious garden. Bushes that reach up to cover the whole of the garden wall are now engulfed in a swirling blue light. Inside the bedroom, the room is fully lit. A man and woman, still awake and fully dressed, are being led away, hands cuffed behind their backs, by the third and fourth. Second is in the room, the light holdall is unzipped and filled with money.

First emerges from the house, bathed in the blue light. A young relieved couple jump from a Police car and run towards their child.

He puts her down and her tired little legs find strength to run to meet her parents half way and be smothered in loving arms. A uniformed officer escorts the family to his car. The man and woman are led less gently from the house, eyes fixed straight ahead, avoiding all contact with their intruders, and taken to their own waiting Police car.

The intruders can now commend each other on their actions. They will each go home and, in time, will regroup to plan another intrusion.

Sandwiched between her parents, the girl turns and has one final look at the house as the car leaves the grounds on its way home.

A piano solo brings the piece of music to a calming close and the CD player is turned off.

Copyright 2008 Andrew Newall -- All Rights Reserved

For the complete Manuscript (for publishing, production or representation consideration only)
please contact Jennifer Brooks at: info@filmmakers.com