

THE JUDGE'S HOUSE

Written by John Richard Sullivan

(Adapted from the short story by Bram Stoker)

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EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - EARLY EVENING

The Judge's House is a singular stone-and-brick 17th century edifice, its facade colored a golden brown by the early evening light, strengthening its shadows. It is crowned by a bell tower, and sits in the middle of a cobblestone side street, surrounded by other ancient buildings. The time period is the early 1970s.

A young woman with scarlet red hair peers up at the Judge's House through colored oval spectacles. This is JACQUELINE FYRE. She wears a black one-piece miniskirt with bell sleeves, tied at the waist by a large medieval-style belt, and thigh-high black boots. A fashionable cherry-red purse is slung over one shoulder.

The Judge's House stands remote and vacant.

JACQUELINE continues to stare, trance-like, up at the Judge's House, her long wine-colored tresses draped about her shoulders.

An old thick hand reaches over and grasps JACQUELINE'S shoulder.

JACQUELINE turns, startled.

The hand belongs to an older gentleman. This is ROBERTO, the agent. ROBERTO withdraws his hand and looks contrite.

ROBERTO
Scusa signora.

JACQUELINE sighs with a smile and touches her chest.

JACQUELINE
Jackie.

ROBERTO
Il casa è in affitto.
(The house is for rent.)

JACQUELINE

Oh.

JACQUELINE turns her gaze back up at the house with a strange smile.

JACQUELINE

Bene, Signore Roberto, bene.

JACQUELINE and ROBERTO turn and stroll down the side street. ROBERTO is shorter than JACQUELINE by at least a foot, and struggles with his English. JACQUELINE speaks Italian fluently but with an English accent.

ROBERTO

I am happy to rent, er, la casa to anyone. It is - empty so long that, er, people - stay away.

ROBERTO turns to JACQUELINE with a sheepish and slightly creepy grin.

ROBERTO

But as a - bella ragazza -

JACQUELINE shakes her head and smirks.

ROBERTO

- wants to have it for some time - eh, maybe people don't fear it too much.

JACQUELINE laughs, and responds in Italian, which is subtitled in English.

JACQUELINE

Lieto di aiutarla! Starò in albergo stanotte e mi trasferirò a la casa domani.

(Happy to help! I am staying at the hotel tonight and then moving into the house tomorrow.)

ROBERTO

Molto bene.

INT. FOYER AND DRAWING ROOM, HOTEL VERDI, ITALIAN CITY - EVENING

The hotel foyer is lit by stained glass lamps that cast a deep multicolored light over the decor. JACQUELINE enters the warm ornate glow of the interior, twilight blue behind her outside as she shuts the door.

JACQUELINE pokes her head through a doorway and glances around at the hotel drawing room.

The drawing room is as ornate as the rest of the establishment. The furniture is red velvet. Velour curtains are already drawn across the windows and the room is lit by table lamps. A couple of fellow HOTEL GUESTS are seated in the room. They look up silently at JACQUELINE with blank stares.

JACQUELINE is slightly discomfited, and continues on her way.

INT. LOBBY DESK, HOTEL VERDI, ITALIAN CITY - EVENING

JACQUELINE approaches the hotel lobby desk, which is unattended. She leans against the desk and waits a moment. A basin of soapy warm water sits on the desk. JACQUELINE reaches over and picks up a small bell. She is about to ring it when a clattering sound can be heard from the room behind the desk.

A woman emerges from the kitchen area behind the hotel lobby desk. This is ANNA, the concierge. She carries a towel, washcloth, and a basin full of clattering cutlery. She smiles with warm familiarity at JACQUELINE.

ANNA

Buonasera, my dear - Jacqueline, yes?

JACQUELINE

Jackie.

ANNA

And was your search for regular lodging, er, success?

JACQUELINE

Si! I shall move in tomorrow.

ANNA

Bene! And where is it?

JACQUELINE

The old stone house with the bell tower; down the via -

JACQUELINE is interrupted when ANNA spills the cutlery onto the floor.

ANNA mutters to herself as she bends down to retrieve the knives.

ANNA

Che sbadato. Anna, più attento.
(How careless. Anna, be more careful.)

JACQUELINE leans over the desk and watches ANNA with an amused smile.

JACQUELINE

Stai bene, Signora Anna?
(Are you okay, Miss Anna?)

ANNA re-emerges with the knives safely in hand and sets them back into the tub. She then turns to JACQUELINE and addresses her with a suddenly fearful and pensive look and a hushed voice.

ANNA

The via giustizia?

JACQUELINE

Si.

ANNA nervously folds out the towel on the desk next to the water basin.

ANNA

You intend to live in the Judge's House?

JACQUELINE

I presumed it was abandoned. Signore Roberto, the agent, said nothing about whose house it is, or was -

ANNA

Of course not. Piccola merda - he wants to get travelers to stay there again.

JACQUELINE

Yes, well, he wasn't exactly coy about his intentions.

ANNA begins cleaning the knives with the washcloth in the water basin in a nervous state, placing the clean ones on the towel.

ANNA

And think nothing of letting a young lady stay there alone -

JACQUELINE laughs at ANNA'S fretting.

JACQUELINE

Signora Anna, I shall be perfectly safe, I assure you. Why is there such a prejudice against the place?

ANNA pauses and bows her head in contrition.

ANNA

You must forgive me for my, er, disturbing talk.

JACQUELINE smiles and pulls up a nearby stool to sit.

JACQUELINE

On the contrary, I am more fascinated than disturbed.

ANNA once again fixes JACQUELINE with a fearful look.

ANNA

That is what concerns me.

ANNA sighs and takes up cleaning the cutlery again, rubbing the knives aggressively in the water with the washcloth.

ANNA

Very well, then. Many years ago - perhaps, er, hundred or more, non sono sicuro - the master of - la tua casa, he was a fearsome judge - malevolo! - held in great terror by the people of the town.

JACQUELINE takes a chocolate mint from a tray on the desk as she listens intently to ANNA.

JACQUELINE

Why? What did he do?

ANNA

He held sway over the town with the mighty hand of the law. He would have, er, accusation made, against those he thought had wronged him, and apply the hangman's noose.

ANNA turns a disconcerting eye up at JACQUELINE.

ANNA

He was fond of the hangman's noose.

JACQUELINE

OK, so he was a bastard villain; but he's been dead a hundred years or more, so what does that have to do with the house?

ANNA pauses and then replies in a harsh whisper.

ANNA

La casa sia infestata!
(The house is haunted!)

JACQUELINE pauses and thinks a moment. She is then startled by the presence of someone behind her.

The HOTEL GUESTS from the drawing room approach the desk. They look JACQUELINE up and down with strange disconcerting eyes.

ANNA affects a smile, turns, and finds the HOTEL GUESTS' room key. She turns and hands it to them.

JACQUELINE watches as the HOTEL GUESTS proceed to their room.

ANNA takes up the knives again.

ANNA

There is a - feeling among the people here in town that there are . . . somethings . . .

JACQUELINE

Somethings.

ANNA reaches over and touches JACQUELINE'S hand.

ANNA

See here - you are a brave young girl, but I would not stay an hour there alone, not for all the gold in St. Peter's.

ANNA takes up the cutlery again.

JACQUELINE

I do appreciate your concern, Signora Anna, but I'll be too engaged with my studies to be disturbed by any - somethings.

ANNA spares JACQUELINE a disapproving frown.

JACQUELINE

If you were my girl, you wouldn't stay there a single night.

JACQUELINE frowns, offended.

JACQUELINE

But I'm not *your* girl. I'm no one's girl! And no one can tell me what to do, not anymore! I'll have the key to my room now.

JACQUELINE alights from the stool and takes her room key from ANNA. JACQUELINE leaves the lobby.

ANNA watches JACQUELINE depart with a strange fearful gaze. She turns and goes back to her cutlery.

INT. LECTURE HALL, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

THE PROFESSOR addresses a class of students in a large stadium-seating lecture hall. A pull cord for a movie screen hangs on the wall behind THE PROFESSOR'S desk. The room is low-lit, and a slide of Susanna and the Elders by Tintoretto fills the screen. THE PROFESSOR speaks English with an Italian accent, in a deliberately slow fashion.

THE PROFESSOR

The men of the Renaissance, the great artists, turned their thoughts away from the spirit, and began to contemplate the body. Their subject became more of, oh, the anatomical.

JACQUELINE sits and listens attentively to THE PROFESSOR. Next to her sits a fellow student, MADELEINE HOFFMANN. MADELEINE is a young woman about JACQUELINE'S age, her blonde hair tied up in a bun.

THE PROFESSOR (o-s)

And not the merely carnal, mind you. The prohibitions of the church were still in force.

THE PROFESSOR turns to contemplate the slide of the painting, and continues his lecture in the same slow, deliberate manner.

THE PROFESSOR

So they circumvent the regulations with subjects from the Bible. For instance, here we have the story of Susanna and the Elders, painted with aplomb by Tintoretto.

THE PROFESSOR takes up a pointer and indicates specific parts of the painting.

THE PROFESSOR

Here you have our heroine, disrobing for her bath, yet regarding her own nakedness through a mirror. Was this

meant to depict mere vanity, or did Tintoretto mean to imply that Susanna gained some species of erotic satisfaction from the contemplation of her own pneumatic body?

THE PROFESSOR turns back to the class.

JACQUELINE raises her hand.

THE PROFESSOR
Yes, signorina?

JACQUELINE
Susanna è stata falso imputato di, er, fornicazione dai giudici -
(Susanna was falsely accused of fornication by the judges -)

THE PROFESSOR
Signorina Fyre, you are fluent in the Italian language, si?

JACQUELINE smiles and nods.

JACQUELINE
Si, fluente.

THE PROFESSOR nods pleasantly and replies breezily.

THE PROFESSOR
Seeing that the student body here is international in composition, let us defer to English. Now then -

THE PROFESSOR turns back to the screen.

JACQUELINE frowns.

MADELEINE leans in towards JACQUELINE with a whisper.

MADELEINE
I don't speak Italian very well either.

JACQUELINE smirks and shakes her head.

EXT. CLOISTER, UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

JACQUELINE strolls along the colonnaded cloister, carrying her books and a purse. MADELEINE comes up behind her. MADELEINE wears a green button-down shirt with a wide floral scarf, a tan miniskirt, and a wide black belt. She addresses JACQUELINE clearly in English but with a German accent, as a bell tolls somewhere in the distance.

JACQUELINE turns and smiles at MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

Ciao!

MADELEINE

Hello! I wanted to introduce myself -

MADELEINE holds out her hand.

MADELEINE

I am Madeleine Hoffmann, from Heidelberg, Germany.

JACQUELINE shakes MADELEINE'S hand.

JACQUELINE

Jacqueline Fyre, from Reading, England. But you can call me Jackie.

MADELEINE

I tried to get your attention but you left the lecture hall so quickly.

JACQUELINE

Oh, I am so sorry. I have a lot on my mind at the moment. I'm moving into a house today in the via giustizia, which I'm renting cheap. It dates back to the 17th century.

MADELEINE

It sounds romantic.

JACQUELINE

It does have the charm of antiquity to it, but then so does everything else in this country.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE share a laugh.

JACQUELINE

Where are you staying?

MADELEINE

Oh, no place special.

JACQUELINE

You are welcome to come and stay with me if you like.

MADELEINE

Oh, that is so kind of you. Perhaps I will.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE continue to stroll along together in silence for a moment.

MADELEINE

So, what do you think of the class?

JACQUELINE

The professor seems like a bit of a pervert.

MADELEINE

Ooh, maybe he is a sex maniac, like in the novels?

JACQUELINE laughs.

JACQUELINE

I don't think I'd go that far.

INT. FOYER, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

The interior of the Judge's House is gray and dark. Though clean and tidy in its furnishings, the interior has a ghostly atmosphere. Breezes whistle through the halls and rooms, rustling curtains and tapestries.

A key turns in the front door. It opens on clanging hinges. JACQUELINE stands outside, a suitcase and a stack of books tied up with thread by her side. She picks them up and steps over the threshold.

As soon as JACQUELINE enters and shuts the front door, a stirring is heard in the room to her left.

JACQUELINE pauses and regards the sound for a moment.

The door to what is the dining room opens slowly. A ragged stout woman of middle age stands and regards JACQUELINE. This is OLIVIA.

JACQUELINE
Signora Olivia?

OLIVIA gives a slight nod.

OLIVIA
La casa has been prepared for you, signorina.

JACQUELINE sighs and smiles.

JACQUELINE
Bene, bene.

OLIVIA comes forward and takes up JACQUELINE'S suitcase.

OLIVIA
The bed has been prepared for you -

OLIVIA points upstairs.

OLVIA
Up above.

JACQUELINE
Molte grazie.

JACQUELINE closes the front door, takes up her books, and follows OLIVIA into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

Windows emit a hazy early evening light into the room. In the wall opposite the door sits an ornate fireplace, its hearth colored with soot. Next to the fireplace sits a large high-backed carved oak chair. A long wooden table of great antiquity sits in the middle of the room. Along the inner wall hangs a large painting; cobwebs, soot, grime, and dust hopelessly obscuring its subject. And in one corner of the room, a long rope hangs from a hole in the ceiling.

JACQUELINE

È molto gentile da parte tua fare per me; con tutte, um, le voci sulla casa.

(It's very kind of you to do for me; with all the rumors about the house.)

OLIVIA sets JACQUELINE'S suitcase down by the table and gives JACQUELINE a haughty look, pausing for effect, as JACQUELINE places her books on the table.

OLIVIA

Fantasmì!

JACQUELINE pauses, and turns to OLIVIA with a raised brow.

MISS DEMPSTER

Fantasmì, porte cigolanti, tegole sconnesse, vetri rotti e cassetti che cadono nel cuore della notte.

(Ghosts, creaky doors, and loose slates, and broken panes, and drawers that fall down in the middle of the night.)

OLIVIA points to the lower part of the walls.

OLIVIA

Guarda il rivestimento di legno qui in questa stanza.

(Look at the wainscot here in this room.)

The wainscoting along the base of the walls is chipped and peeling, with holes.

OLIVIA

Antica - hundreds years old!

JACQUELINE walks over next to OLIVIA and peers down at the wood paneling along the floor.

OLIVIA

Pensi che non ci siano segreti in queste mura? E lei immagina, signorina, che quei segreti non la troveranno? (Do you think there are no secrets in these walls? And do you imagine, miss, that those secrets won't find you?)

OLIVIA gazes upon JACQUELINE with a strange quizzical look as she slowly steps away towards the door.

JACQUELINE continues to stare pensively at the wainscoting. She then jumps slightly as OLIVIA addresses her from the other side of the room.

OLIVIA

Fantasmì, I tell you, fantasmì!

OLIVIA turns and leaves the room, crossing herself in the process. JACQUELINE frowns and gazes upward.

The mysterious, dust-covered painting looms oppressively on the wall.

Cross-fade.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

A fire crackles in the hearth. A tea kettle sits on the grate, a little off to the side.

JACQUELINE sits in a corner of the long table nearest the fire, wearing reading glasses. A lit three-pronged candelabra sits

before her; several open books and sheets of paper are spread out around it. She scribbles away at one of the sheets.

The paper is covered in notes. An open book next to her shows images of Italian Renaissance paintings. Nearby sits an open Tarocco Siciliano tarot deck.

JACQUELINE focuses on her work, taking occasional sips of tea from a stone mug.

Cobwebs slowly flutter in the corners of the ceiling. The sound of the crackling fire is mixed with creaking noises coming from indeterminate areas of the house.

JACQUELINE closely studies the open book next to her. She then looks up through her spectacles, apparently listening to the creaking noises.

The creaks seem to come from no particular direction.

JACQUELINE frowns and looks down at a wrist watch sitting on the table.

The watch says half-past nine o'clock.

JACQUELINE sighs and sets her pencil and glasses down.

JACQUELINE stands and drops a couple of logs on the fire.

JACQUELINE takes the mug from the table and sips some tea.

JACQUELINE
Fantasmi, fantasmi.

JACQUELINE sets the mug down and picks up the candelabra. She casually walks over to the alarm bell rope.

JACQUELINE lifts the bell rope in one hand, and gently rubs it.

JACQUELINE contemplates the bell rope for a moment, the flame from the candelabra flickering in her eyes.

The rope is smooth to the touch.

JACQUELINE comes out of her trance and lets the bell rope fall. She goes on perusing the room, holding the candelabra up to the walls.

JACQUELINE comes up close to the large painting on the wall.

Most of the subject is obscured by years of dust, soot, and neglect, but it appears to be a portrait.

JACQUELINE walks up close to the painting, holding the candelabra up to it.

In the flickering candle and fire light, a hint of scarlet can be discerned in the subject's garment.

JACQUELINE gazes upon the painting, candlelight flickering in her eyes.

INT. LECTURE HALL, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

THE PROFESSOR scribbles something on the chalkboard while holding a book. Behind him the lecture hall is empty. Suddenly the CLEANING LADY appears in the doorway, pushing a mop wringer and bucket set. THE PROFESSOR turns around and smiles.

CLEANING LADY

Lavorare fino a tardi come al solito, professore?
(Working late as usual, professor?)

THE PROFESSOR

Si, come di solito, Signora Donatella.
(Yes, as usual, Signora Donatella.)

CLEANING LADY

Buonanotte, Professore.

THE PROFESSOR

Buonanotte, Signora Donatella.

The CLEANING LADY departs and THE PROFESSOR returns to the chalkboard.

After a few moments, THE PROFESSOR wanders over to a stack of books on a side table. He opens one up and studies it for a moment.

THE PROFESSOR then wanders back over to the chalkboard as before. Visible now behind him, partially in shadow and standing just inside the doorway, is a figure garbed shoulder to foot in a large scarlet robe lined with ermine. A large judge's wig sits upon the figure's head, their features obscured in shadow. This is THE JUDGE.

After a moment THE PROFESSOR becomes aware of THE JUDGE'S presence behind him, and a look of fear comes over his face. He turns.

THE PROFESSOR gazes up at THE JUDGE with terror and bewilderment in his face. He can only manage to utter one word.

THE PROFESSOR
Il giudice.

INT. CAFE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE
Cappuccino, per favore.

JACQUELINE addresses the BARISTA at a cafe near the university campus. JACQUELINE wears her colored oval spectacles, and looks tired.

JACQUELINE hands the BARISTA the requisite lira and then puts her wallet back in her purse. JACQUELINE takes the proffered cup from the BARISTA and downs it in one slurp. JACQUELINE hands the cup back to the BARISTA.

JACQUELINE
Grazie mille.

JACQUELINE turns and leaves the cafe.

EXT. CAFE AND STREET, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE exits the cafe and turns to her left. She does not notice ANNA sitting at a table nearby.

At the sight of JACQUELINE, ANNA gets up abruptly and catches up to JACQUELINE. She taps JACQUELINE on the shoulder. This has the effect of startling JACQUELINE.

ANNA

I am sorry to disturb you - er, Signorina Jacqueline, yes?

JACQUELINE

Jackie.

JACQUELINE, looking annoyed beneath her shades, continues walking, as ANNA follows along at her side.

ANNA

Yes, I wanted to inquire as to how you passed the night in your new house. Well, I hope?

JACQUELINE sighs.

JACQUELINE

Yes, perfectly well, Signora Anna.

JACQUELINE and ANNA continue to walk in silence for a moment.

ANNA

I was glad when Signora Olivia told me that you were safe and sleeping soundly when she came in to clean this morning.

JACQUELINE

Yes, she is very loud, but I appreciate her keeping house.

JACQUELINE stops and turns a quizzical face towards ANNA.

JACQUELINE

How do you know Olivia? She works for Roberto, the agent.

ANNA

No, did she not tell you? She works for the real owner di la casa, with whom I am acquainted.

JACQUELINE

Ah.

JACQUELINE resumes walking, with ANNA continuing along at her side.

JACQUELINE

No, I was not informed the house was actually owned by anyone.

JACQUELINE and ANNA continue along in silence a moment, while ANNA scrutinizes JACQUELINE'S face. She touches JACQUELINE'S arm, bringing the two of them to a stop once again.

JACQUELINE

I am perfectly all right.

ANNA

You're paler this morning than you should be.

JACQUELINE scowls and resumes walking, a touch faster than before.

JACQUELINE

I keep late hours, if you must know.

ANNA

Late hours and hard work are no good for a pretty signorina.

JACQUELINE

I happen to disagree. As a matter of fact, I left my home back in England precisely to work hard, and live my own life.

JACQUELINE and ANNA continue a while in silence. ANNA addresses JACQUELINE in a low, earnest voice.

ANNA

Tell me - were there - somethings?

JACQUELINE affects a mischievous smirk.

JACQUELINE

Si. Fantasmi!

ANNA puts her hand on her chest.

ANNA

Misericordia!

(Mercy!)

JACQUELINE begins trying to deliberately scare ANNA.

JACQUELINE

In fact, there was one enormous, wicked-looking old devil that sat upon the chair by the fire, and wouldn't go 'til I chased him with a poker, and he vanished . . . into the darkness.

ANNA gasps, cupping her hand over her mouth.

ANNA

Oh, take care, signorina, take care! Un vecchio diavolo? Il guidice!

(An old devil? The Judge!)

JACQUELINE laughs and shakes her head.

JACQUELINE

Signora Anna, I am joking. There were no ghosts, just noises.

ANNA waves her hand.

ANNA

Oh, you young people think it easy to scoff at things that make old ones shudder -

JACQUELINE

You really believe the ghost of the Judge is lurking in the walls of the house -

ANNA

Never mind! Laugh all you want! I wish that you'll always be laughing!

JACQUELINE winces as ANNA turns sharply and walks away. JACQUELINE sighs, grunts, and waves her hand dismissively, and continues on her own way.

INT. CORRIDOR, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE come around a corner, talking and laughing. JACQUELINE has her shades off now.

MADELEINE

Perhaps, after class, we can have lunch together.

JACQUELINE

I would like that, very much.

MADELEINE'S expression changes as she notices something up ahead. JACQUELINE turns to look as well.

Up ahead, a crowd of BYSTANDERS, including staff and students, is milling around in front of the entrance to the lecture hall.

JACQUELINE

Isn't that our lecture hall?

MADELEINE

Yes, I wonder what it could be.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE arrive at the group of BYSTANDERS. Without inquiring from the others, JACQUELINE pushes through the group and enters into the lecture hall, followed by MADELEINE.

INT. LECTURE HALL, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE enter the room. JACQUELINE evinces a look of shock and disgust, while MADELEINE cries out and turns her head away.

As seen from the rear of the lecture hall, THE PROFESSOR'S body hangs from the pull cord on the wall behind his desk, bathed in the warm morning light coming through the windows.

MADELEINE, covering her face, leaves the room. JACQUELINE spares the body one last look of disgust before turning and leaving as well.

INT. CORRIDOR, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

As MADELEINE and JACQUELINE re-emerge from the lecture hall into the crowd of BYSTANDERS, voices are heard coming from down the corridor.

POLICE OFFICERS and DETECTIVES are hurriedly marching towards the crowd of BYSTANDERS. The POLICE OFFICERS are waving their batons and shouting at the crowd to disperse.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE step aside, along with the rest of the BYSTANDERS.

As the POLICE OFFICERS and DETECTIVES file into the lecture hall, one of them turns his gaze towards JACQUELINE. This is ISPETTORE ALESSANDRO.

JACQUELINE stares back blankly at ALESSANDRO.

ALESSANDRO turns and enters the lecture hall.

INT. LECTURE HALL, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

As soon as ALESSANDRO enters the room, he stops and gazes at THE PROFESSOR'S body.

THE PROFESSOR'S body continues to hang from the pull cord.

ALESSANDRO begins issuing orders to his men.

ALESSANDRO

Libera quel corridoio e metti al sicuro la stanza!
(Clear that hallway and secure the room!)

ALESSANDRO points around at the furniture as he continues down the stadium seating to the front of the room.

ALESSANDRO

Scopri cosa è stato toccato!
(Find out what was touched!)

ALESSANDRO approaches THE PROFESSOR'S body and gazes up at it.

As seen from below, THE PROFESSOR'S body hangs on the pull cord, and swings slightly, the pull cord creaking lightly. THE PROFESSOR'S face is swollen and blue, with his eyes bulging and his tongue blackened and protruding from his mouth.

ALESSANDRO continues to gaze up at THE PROFESSOR'S body, and mutters to himself.

ALESSANDRO

Il giudice ritorna.

EXT. CAFE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE sit across from one another at a table on the street outside the cafe from earlier. Both wear sunglasses and look despondent, drinking coffee and eating salads.

MADELEINE

It seems strange the professor would want to kill himself.

JACQUELINE

I'm not convinced he did.

MADELEINE

How so?

JACQUELINE

It would have been very difficult to have hung himself by that cord. And didn't you notice there was no overturned chair beneath him?

MADELEINE

No, I must have turned away too quick. It was a horrible sight.

JACQUELINE

Yeah.

JACQUELINE looks at the street in pensive thought for a moment. She then turns to MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

I'd like to invite you once more to move in with me, at the Judge's House. I'd feel - safer with someone else there.

MADELEINE

That is so kind of you, Jackie. It would be fun!

JACQUELINE

Well, I do have to warn you - there's running water, but no shower - only baths. And no electricity either.

MADELEINE

Ooh, like traveling back in time.

JACQUELINE

And apparently there are ghosts in the walls; but at the moment, they appear to be keeping to themselves.

MADELEINE giggles.

MADELEINE

Reminds me of my grandmother's house in Wismar.

JACQUELINE laughs in reply, and then descends into pensive thought again.

MADELEINE takes a bite of her salad.

JACQUELINE

The Hanged Man.

MADELEINE pauses mid-bite and looks up at JACQUELINE.

MADELEINE

I beg your pardon?

JACQUELINE

The Hanged Man. One of the major arcana of the tarot.

JACQUELINE looks over at MADELEINE and smiles.

JACQUELINE

Forgive me. Um, have you ever had a tarot reading, Madeleine?

MADELEINE

Fortune telling? No, I have never wanted to know my fate.

JACQUELINE grins and shakes her head.

JACQUELINE

No, tarot isn't fortune telling. Tarot shows you where you are in the present moment. It's a guide for self-reflection.

MADELEINE

You should give yourself a reading, then.

JACQUELINE

I did, recently.

MADELEINE leans forward with interest.

MADELEINE

Ah, and what did the cards say?

JACQUELINE gazes pensively out at the street again.

JACQUELINE

"The path forward is uncertain."

MADELEINE

That's true for all of us, yes?

JACQUELINE turns to MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

Would you like me to give you a reading? I have a deck in my purse.

JACQUELINE shrugs and grins.

JACQUELINE

I carry it with me everywhere I go.

EXT. COURTYARD, UNIVERSITY, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE sit cross-legged across from one another in the quiet sanctuary courtyard of the university campus. JACQUELINE doles out cards from the Tarocco Siciliano deck face-down on the grass between them.

JACQUELINE

What is your birthday?

MADELEINE

December 18.

JACQUELINE

Ah, Sagittarius. Your ruling planet is Jupiter, which means you live life to the fullest and take things as they come.

MADELEINE
That is certainly true.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE share a laugh.

MADELEINE
And what is your birth sign?

JACQUELINE
Scorpio, ruling planets Mars and Pluto.

JACQUELINE glances up at MADELEINE with a smirk.

JACQUELINE
Sex and death.

JACQUELINE shrugs.

JACQUELINE
Probably why I study art.

JACQUELINE turns her attention back to the cards.

JACQUELINE
Okay, let's see . . .

JACQUELINE turns each card over and contemplates the suit for a moment.

The suit comprises Death, Justice, and the Hanged Man.

JACQUELINE gazes at the cards with a strange foreboding in her eyes.

MADELEINE cocks her head to read the cards.

MADELEINE
Okay, what are we looking at here?

JACQUELINE

Well - the important thing to remember is that the cards aren't literal. Um, for example, your cards are all upright; therefore -

JACQUELINE'S finger touches each card as she describes it.

JACQUELINE (o-s)

Death means an end but also a new beginning, Justice stands for balance, and the Hanged Man - the Hanged Man means circumspection or change.

MADELEINE fixes JACQUELINE with a serious expression.

MADELEINE

And all of that means what?

JACQUELINE laughs lightly. She then frowns and gathers up the cards.

JACQUELINE

Nothing. Here - let me draw another suit for you.

MADELEINE smiles again, reaches over, and pats JACQUELINE'S knee.

MADELEINE

Oh, don't worry. We will postpone the reading for another time. We both still have shock from seeing the Professor earlier.

JACQUELINE

Yeah, I suppose you're right.

JACQUELINE puts the tarot deck back in her purse. She then leans back on her hands and gazes around at the courtyard.

JACQUELINE

It's so peaceful here. So unlike home.

MADELEINE

Home is so noisy for you, then?

JACQUELINE

No, just - not peaceful.

JACQUELINE smiles at MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

I'm glad I came here. It was all I could do to get away from the blame and guilt; that regime of oppression. I had to get as far away from it as possible. So I chose to study abroad, as we English say.

MADELEINE

I'm glad I came here as well, Jackie. I feel I have found a good friend in you.

JACQUELINE beams at MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

And what are you fleeing from, Madeleine?

MADELEINE

Oh, nothing. Just restless. Perhaps something was calling me here.

MADELEINE beams at JACQUELINE as a bell tolls in the distance.

MADELEINE

And you can call me Maddie.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE share a laugh.

INT. ISPETTORE ALESSANDRO'S OFFICE, STAZIONE DI POLIZIA, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

ALESSANDRO sits at his desk, studying a series of photographs.

The photographs are of THE PROFESSOR'S body, hanging from the cord but also lying on the floor and on the autopsy table.

ALESSANDRO looks aside and takes up another set of photographs.

The photographs appear to be older. They show other hanging victims throughout the town.

After a moment, ALESSANDRO looks up as someone enters the room.

DARDANO, another detective, enters the room and drops a set of papers on ALESSANDRO'S desk.

DARDANO

Il rapporto del medico legale.

(The coroner's report.)

ALESSANDRO sighs, puts down the photographs, and takes up the report.

DARDANO lights a cigarette and takes a seat across from ALESSANDRO'S desk.

ALESSANDRO looks up and over at DARDANO with a blank expression.

ALESSANDRO

Non fumare qui.

(No smoking here.)

DARDANO frowns, bends over, and puts the cigarette out on the floor. He tosses the cigarette in a nearby trash can.

DARDANO

Secondo il medico legale, il professore si è suicidato.

(According to the coroner, the Professor committed suicide.)

ALESSANDRO'S expression remains blank as he peruses the coroner's report.

ALESSANDRO

Certo che l'ha fatto.

(Of course he did.)

DARDANO

Ma pensi che il Giudice sia tornato.
(But you think the Judge is back.)

ALESSANDRO sets the report down and takes up the photographs again.

ALESSANDRO

Se è così, ha fatto un ottimo lavoro nel nascondere le prove.
(If so, he did a great job of hiding the evidence.)

ALESSANDRO peruses the photographs.

ALESSANDRO (o-s)

Nessun segno di lotta, non sono state trovate fibre di parrucche, e certamente nessuna impronta digitale.
(No sign of a struggle, no wig fibers were found, and certainly no fingerprints.)

ALESSANDRO looks DARDANO squarely in the eye.

DARDANO

Allora, qual è la nostra prossima mossa?
(So, what's our next move?)

ALESSANDRO

Sembrerebbe che dovremo aspettare la prossima vittima.
(It would appear that we will have to wait for the next victim.)

DARDANO frowns and looks down.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE share a laugh over a bottle of wine. Candelabra illuminate the table and a fire burns brightly in the hearth. Books and notes are spread out before them on the table, but they don't appear to be getting any work done. MADELEINE sits across from JACQUELINE, her back to the painting on the wall. JACQUELINE wears her reading glasses.

MADELEINE

I tell you, the ghosts are not as active as you say.

JACQUELINE

I think having you here has scared them off. Together we make a lot of noise.

MADELEINE and JACQUELINE laugh some more. MADELEINE pours out some more wine for the two of them. They appear tipsy.

MADELEINE

Well then - as we await our new professor, we shall have to find some other means to occupy ourselves.

JACQUELINE gazes up at the painting, and thinks a moment. She glances over at MADELEINE with a smirk.

JACQUELINE

How do you feel about art restoration?

MADELEINE smiles with wide eyes.

MADELEINE

Ooh, that sounds most interesting. What did you have in mind?

JACQUELINE sets her wine glass and reading glasses down and takes up the candelabra from the table.

JACQUELINE steps over to the painting and holds the candelabra up to it.

MADELEINE turns, stands, and with wine glass in hand, comes over next to JACQUELINE.

JACQUELINE

This.

MADELEINE

Must be a portrait, in oil. Very old. Do we know the subject?

JACQUELINE

No, but I have my suspicions.

JACQUELINE hands the candelabra to MADELEINE and steps over to the alarm bell rope in the corner.

JACQUELINE

Consider how well preserved this house is. Signora Olivia comes in daily and cleans it thoroughly - and noisily.

JACQUELINE smirks at MADELEINE as she takes the rope in hand.

JACQUELINE

And yet -

JACQUELINE strokes the rope for a moment, and then lets it drop. JACQUELINE then turns and gestures at the portrait.

JACQUELINE

That painting - which occupies such a large, seemingly important place on the wall in the front dining room, has been allowed to be overtaken by dust, fireplace soot, and age.

MADELEINE

Someone thought it best to leave it to decay.

JACQUELINE

Then why leave it on the wall? Why not simply destroy it?

MADELEINE frowns and stares back up at the painting.

MADELEINE

It is a mystery.

JACQUELINE reaches over and takes up her wine glass. She approaches MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

Then let us uncover that mystery.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE toast, down their wine glasses, and then spontaneously throw them at the hearth, where they shatter. The two then share a laugh.

INT. BEDROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

Bright sunlight blasts through the curtains of the window.

JACQUELINE wakes up in bed, squinting and looking slightly hungover. From somewhere in the house, a vacuum cleaner can be heard. She shields her eyes, sits up, and alights from the bed.

Garbed in a red nighty, JACQUELINE yawns, stretches, and opens her bedroom door.

INT. CORRIDOR, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE steps out into the corridor, the drone of the vacuum cleaner louder and emanating from downstairs. JACQUELINE is still half-asleep, her scarlet hair wild and unkempt, and eyelids half-closed as she walks.

A naked MADELEINE emerges from her own room and bumps into JACQUELINE. MADELEINE wears her hair up, and carries a towel in one hand and a basket full of bathing products in the other.

JACQUELINE laughs blearily.

JACQUELINE

Oh, good morning, Maddie.

MADELEINE appears more bright-eyed and bushy-tailed than JACQUELINE. She laughs as well.

MADELEINE

Guten morgan, Jackie. I am just off to the bath.

MADELEINE continues on her way past JACQUELINE. JACQUELINE turns and watches MADELEINE with an amused expression.

MADELEINE shuffles down the corridor and into the bathroom, naked except for the large fuzzy slippers on her feet.

JACQUELINE shakes her head and continues the other way.

EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE opens up the shutters and slides up the window in one of the front rooms of the house. She leans on the window sill and gazes out and around at the street.

JACQUELINE pauses and stands up straight as she notices something.

A MAN, wearing civilian clothes, leans against the wall across the street, lighting a cigarette with a zippo lighter. The brim of his hat is pulled down, shielding his eyes. He glances up and notices JACQUELINE, but remains where he is, looking away.

JACQUELINE quickly lowers the window and closes the shutters.

INT. ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE pulls the shutters closed and turns around, only to be startled.

OLIVIA stands in the doorway, waiting patiently.

JACQUELINE puts a hand to her chest and sighs.

JACQUELINE
Buongiorno, Signora Olivia.

OLIVIA
Good morning.

JACQUELINE
Scusa, uh, Signora Olivia, mi hai spaventato.
(Sorry, Miss Olivia, you scared me.)

OLIVIA

Non era mia intenzione, signorina.
(It was not my intention, miss.)

JACQUELINE

Ovviamente. Er, vorrei ringraziare, um, il proprietario della casa per aver permesso a Madeleine di stare qui con me. Mi fa sentire più a mio agio.
(Of course. I'd like to thank the owner of the house for allowing Madeleine to stay here with me. It makes me feel more comfortable.)

OLIVIA

A dire il vero, morirei io stesso se dovessi dormire in questa casa, rinchiuso con ogni sorta di cose che nella notte fanno capolino dai lati del letto e ti fissano mentre dormi.
(Truth to tell, I would die myself if I were to sleep in this house, locked up with all sorts of things that peek around the sides of the bed in the night and stare at you as you sleep.)

JACQUELINE stares deadpan at OLIVIA for a moment.

JACQUELINE

Signora Olivia, chi è quell'uomo fuori che spia la casa?
(Miss Olivia, who is that man outside spying on the house?)

OLIVIA replies with a confused expression and comes over to the window.

EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE once more opens the shutters and lifts the window. She points to where the MAN was standing, then throws her arms up in exasperation.

The MAN is no longer there.

OLIVIA leans out and scans the street from end to end.

The street is bereft of people.

INT. ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

After OLIVIA withdraws her head, JACQUELINE sighs in frustration, once more closing the window and the shutters.

JACQUELINE
Never mind.

OLIVIA
Ho ripulito il bicchiere di ieri sera.
(I cleaned up the glass from last night.)

JACQUELINE
Oh, molte grazie. È stato, um, un incidente.
(Oh, thank you very much. That was an accident.)

OLIVIA
E il tuo dottore è qui per il tuo esame.
(And your doctor is here for your exam.)

JACQUELINE once more stares deadpan at OLIVIA for a moment.

JACQUELINE
My what?

INT. PARLOR, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

DR. SABATINI sits at a table, his medical bag open, warm morning sunlight bathing the room through the windows. SABATINI is a middle-aged man with graying sides and a debonair manner.

JACQUELINE enters the room. She wears a bathrobe. She gives SABATINI a quizzical frown.

SABATINI stands as JACQUELINE enters the room.

SABATINI
Buongiorno, signorina.

JACQUELINE
Good morning.

SABATINI
Do you prefer we converse in English, then? I was told you were fluent in Italian.

JACQUELINE
Si, fluente. Who are you and why are you here?

SABATINI
Yes, sorry for the intrusion. My name is Sabatini. Doctor Sabatini. I gather you are Miss Fyre, the new tenant.

JACQUELINE
And how do you know my name?

SABATINI smiles bashfully.

SABATINI
Well, I've just arrived back in town and was surprised to discover they had found a tenant for the house.

JACQUELINE takes a seat across the room from SABATINI, and gestures at the house around them.

JACQUELINE
You are familiar with this place?

SABATINI resumes his seat.

SABATINI
Yes, well, I have some small knowledge of its history.

JACQUELINE
And Signora Anna summoned you here to see me?

SABATINI
I -

JACQUELINE

In all my years, I have never met a more troublesome busybody -

SABATINI

No, it was not -

JACQUELINE

Signora Olivia, then? Or was it Roberto?

SABATINI

A concerned party. That is all I am permitted to say.

SABATINI pauses, affecting an expression of guilt.

SABATINI

I suppose my clumsy haste made you suspect that I did not come here of my own accord.

JACQUELINE

I assumed you're not in the habit of making random house calls.

SABATINI

The individual who asked me to pay you a visit is - curious as to how your health is faring in this house. It is quite old, as you may know, and has remained uninhabited for many years.

JACQUELINE

I can assure you that Signora Olivia keeps it well clean. It is free of rats and other vermin, and is quite cozy in its way.

SABATINI

The individual I represent was told of the pallor of your features, and the late hours you keep.

JACQUELINE

I didn't realize my lifestyle was of such great interest to people in the neighborhood.

SABATINI

And, well, I was interested myself in meeting the person who decided to rent this house for the first time since -

JACQUELINE waits a moment for SABATINI to finish his cryptic statement.

JACQUELINE

Since what?

SABATINI

Nothing. Let me apologize, and say that I am equally culpable for the ruse.

JACQUELINE sighs and folds her hands, addressing SABATINI with forced politeness.

JACQUELINE

Please extend my thanks to this concerned individual for their kind interest in my well-being.

SABATINI

Of course, of course. Now then, may I -

SABATINI gestures to his medical bag.

JACQUELINE sighs again, stands up, and pulls her chair closer to SABATINI.

SABATINI clears his throat and leans in to scrutinize JACQUELINE'S features.

SABATINI

Mm, yes, I see what they mean about your complexion. Your eyes are also quite red.

JACQUELINE rolls her blood shot eyes.

SABATINI

May I check your heart rate?

JACQUELINE frowns and sticks out her arm.

SABATINI rolls up the sleeve of JACQUELINE'S robe. JACQUELINE crosses her legs, showing a good amount of her thigh and calf.

SABATINI glances down at JACQUELINE'S leg, and then quickly glances up at her face.

JACQUELINE replies with a blank stare.

SABATINI glances away and places his fingers on JACQUELINE'S wrist, checking her pulse.

SABATINI

Heart rate is good.

SABATINI releases JACQUELINE'S wrist. He loosens his arms and moves his hands towards JACQUELINE'S throat before pausing.

SABATINI

May I?

JACQUELINE frowns and looks up.

SABATINI examines JACQUELINE'S upper neck area beneath her jaw with his fingers.

JACQUELINE gazes up at the ceiling with forced patience.

SABATINI finishes, sits back, and takes a few notes on a pad.

SABATINI

All your vital signs appear to be in good order. Now then
- do you regularly imbibe alcohol, wine . . .

JACQUELINE smiles slyly.

JACQUELINE

Only the best.

SABATINI frowns and clears his throat again.

SABATINI

As your physician, I must advise you, if possible, to lessen your alcohol intake, and not keep such late hours.

SABATINI smiles warmly.

SABATINI

I was a keen student in my time, so I suppose I may take the liberty and advise you not quite as a stranger.

JACQUELINE replies in a voice completely lacking in conviction.

JACQUELINE

I promise to drink less and go to bed at a more reasonable hour.

SABATINI beams.

SABATINI

Bene! Now, I will be in town for the next few days. After that I must go to Geneva for a conference. Here is my card
-

SABATINI hands JACQUELINE his card.

SABATINI

Eh - seeing as there is no phone or electricity here, should you be in any immediate need of aid, don't forget to pull the alarm bell. You are acquainted with the location of the rope?

JACQUELINE nods and gazes at SABATINI inquisitively.

JACQUELINE

Why should I be in need of immediate aid?

SABATINI

Merely a precaution.

SABATINI closes up his bag. He then pauses and turns back to JACQUELINE with a strange expression.

SABATINI

I suppose you know what that rope is - or was.

JACQUELINE

No, I don't.

SABATINI

Nevertheless, you are familiar with the Judge, yes?

JACQUELINE

The Judge who once lived here? The one who liked hanging people? The one everyone around here is still scared of?

SABATINI fixes JACQUELINE with a stern gaze.

SABATINI

There is a very good reason for such fear. They told you of the Judge's Ghost?

JACQUELINE smirks.

JACQUELINE

I have not yet had occasion to make his acquaintance.

SABATINI

The ghost - was deadly real.

EXT. STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

Flashback:

Two YOUNG MEN, possibly drunk, stagger down a street in the same city as the Judge's House, laughing and talking loud, dressed in the clothing of a decade earlier. SABATINI narrates the scene in voice-over.

SABATINI (v-o)

A series of hangings and strangulations plagued this town ten years ago, the last time this house was occupied.

The two YOUNG MEN stop in horror as they see something ahead.

A man with a noose around his neck is dropped from a hanging sign hook sticking out from the side of a building over top of a restaurant or shop, just under the roof. The man's body sways and twitches, illuminated by a streetlamp which casts its dancing shadow against the building.

The two YOUNG MEN point at something on top of the entrance canopy.

THE JUDGE, their face shadowed and obscured, notices the two YOUNG MEN. THE JUDGE turns and flees over the rooftops.

SABATINI (v-o)

The killer was reported to have been garbed like a judge in 18th century costume.

INT. PARLOR, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE gazes at SABATINI with a look of confusion.

JACQUELINE

Why was I not told of that?

SABATINI smiles and waves his hand.

SABATINI

It is hardly surprising. Most people in this town choose not to speak of it.

SABATINI takes up his bag and stands. JACQUELINE stands as well.

SABATINI

Thank you for your cooperation, my dear, and please accept my apologies once again for intruding on your day.

SABATINI is distracted by someone in the doorway. JACQUELINE turns.

MADELEINE stands in the doorway, smiling with interest at SABATINI. She wears a tight one-piece miniskirt.

MADELEINE
Buongiorno!

SABATINI nods his head and smiles at MADELEINE.

SABATINI
Signorina.

MADELEINE smiles flirtatiously at SABATINI before turning and walking away.

JACQUELINE turns to SABATINI with a blank look.

JACQUELINE
Would you like to examine her, too?

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

MADELEINE stands before the painting, sipping a cup of coffee. JACQUELINE comes storming in in her bathrobe and sits down angrily in a chair at the table. MADELEINE glances over at her.

MADELEINE
Your caller was quite handsome, yes?

JACQUELINE
You mean Doctor Pervert?

MADELEINE turns to JACQUELINE with a frown.

MADELEINE
He is not a friend of yours?

JACQUELINE
They always take me for a child! It doesn't matter where I go in this world, I just can't cover my tracks! They're still there - always people! I can't stomach them! I

finally find a place for myself where I can live my own life, and all people can do is continue to bother me!

MADELEINE

Do I - bother you?

JACQUELINE looks up at MADELEINE in contrition.

JACQUELINE

No, not you, Maddie.

JACQUELINE stands up and comes over to MADELEINE. JACQUELINE glances up at the portrait before turning a smiling face to MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

You're sweet and kind, and I'm glad I met you.

MADELEINE sets her cup down on the table. She and JACQUELINE embrace.

MADELEINE

And I am glad I met you, Jackie.

MADELEINE holds JACQUELINE tightly, caressing JACQUELINE'S back.

JACQUELINE pulls away from MADELEINE and smiles at her. JACQUELINE then glances up at the painting.

The painting sits on the wall, obscured in dust and soot.

JACQUELINE smiles at MADELEINE and jerks her head at the painting.

JACQUELINE

What do you say we get to work?

INT. MONTAGE, DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

The montage consists of various images of JACQUELINE and MADELEINE restoring the painting:

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE applying rubber gloves.

JACQUELINE standing on a ladder while MADELEINE stands on the floor, the two delicately removing the painting from the wall.

Laying the painting upon the dining room table.

Cleaning off the dust with a soft brush.

Cleaning the surface with a soft cloth and soapy water.

Pouring vinegar into a bowl.

Dabbing a cotton ball into the vinegar and gently rubbing the painting down.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE pausing and gazing down at the painting on the table, turning to each other with foreboding looks.

The application of fresh varnish to the canvas with a soft brush.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE, once more standing on the ladder and on the floor, hanging the painting back on the wall, though the subject itself has yet to be revealed.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE stand back on the other side of the table, gazing up with fearful looks at the restored painting.

The painting, now restored, is illuminated by the late-afternoon light in all its deep, bright color. The face of the subject is round and pocked, framed in a large judge's wig. The mouth is amphibian and grotesque, the eyes fiery and full of hate. The scarlet of the robe, lined with ermine, is blood-red. The subject sits in a carved oak chair identical to the one in the corner of the dining room.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE gaze up at the painting, transfixed. JACQUELINE'S gaze draws her over to the wall. MADELEINE follows JACQUELINE'S gaze.

The carved oak chair sits against the bare antique wall.

JACQUELINE

This really is his house.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE turn their apprehensive faces back to the painting.

The Judge, seated in the carved oak chair like a throne, glares down at them from the canvas.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE are startled by a scream. They jump and turn towards the door.

OLIVIA stands in the doorway with her hand cupped over her mouth, staring at the painting. She then furiously crosses herself.

OLIVIA

Il guidice!

JACQUELINE

Signora Olivia, we -

OLIVIA turns to JACQUELINE and MADELEINE with anger in her eyes.

OLIVIA

Perché? Perché hai riportato indietro il diavolo?

(Why? Why did you bring the devil back?)

JACQUELINE

Olivia -

OLIVIA turns and hurries out of the room. A moment later the front door can be heard opening and slamming shut.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE stare helplessly after OLIVIA.

JACQUELINE

Right, I think we just lost our cleaning lady.

EXT. HIGHRISE CONDOMINIUM BLOCK, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

An upscale condominium highrise towers over the surrounding buildings.

INT. HIGHRISE CONDOMINIUM, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

A party in the living room of a swank condominium is underway. The GUESTS are well-dressed, milling about, talking and laughing. Various wait staff serve drinks and hors d'oeuvres to the guests from trays. Tables are littered with bottles of J&B scotch whiskey and Punt e Mes. Lounge music plays in the background. The decor is current for the period, with stripes and bold colors. Large front windows look out into the night.

SABATINI and SABATINI'S WIFE stand, drink, and chat pleasantly with some other GUESTS.

After a few moments, SABATINI and SABATINI'S WIFE and the other GUESTS part company. SABATINI pulls his WIFE in for a kiss.

SABATINI'S WIFE

Sembri di buon umore stasera.
(You seem in good spirits.)

SABATINI drinks from his glass and then holds it up.

SABATINI

I buoni spiriti stanno aiutando.
(Good spirits are helping.)

SABATINI and his WIFE share a laugh as SABATINI sets his glass down on a nearby table.

SABATINI

Dovrò lasciarti in pace adesso.
(I'll have to leave you alone now.)

SABATINI'S WIFE

Sali per la tua solita fumata?
(Going up for your usual smoke?)

SABATINI gives his WIFE another kiss and a pat on the derriere.

SABATINI

Non scappare con uno di questi playboy mentre sono via.
(Don't run off with one of these playboys while I'm gone.)

SABATINI'S WIFE laughs as SABATINI leaves her company.

EXT. ROOF, HIGHRISE CONDOMINIUM BLOCK, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

SABATINI emerges from the doorway onto the roof. He is apparently alone. There is a light breeze.

SABATINI pulls out a cigarette, lights it, pulls his dinner jacket close, exhales, and gazes out into the night. A moment passes in quiet. Suddenly a noose comes down over SABATINI'S head.

SABATINI drops his cigarette as he cries out, struggling to remove the noose from around his neck.

THE JUDGE, their face obscured, yanks SABATINI around by the rope.

SABATINI loses his footing.

THE JUDGE yanks SABATINI back up by the rope.

SABATINI is now choking and struggling to breathe.

THE JUDGE drags SABATINI over to the edge of the roof.

SABATINI, still gasping for air but losing consciousness, attempts to struggle with THE JUDGE.

THE JUDGE drags SABATINI onto the lip of the roof.

Without ceremony, THE JUDGE kicks SABATINI off the roof.

SABATINI'S body falls from the roof.

The rope slides through the black-gloved hands of THE JUDGE, who has their foot propped up against the lip of the roof.

Behind THE JUDGE, the rope uncoils from where it lays upon the cement.

The other end of the rope is tied around the base of a metal air duct.

THE JUDGE suddenly grasps the rope tightly.

The fall of SABATINI'S body is abruptly stopped, causing his body to fall in and smash violently against the wall of the building.

SABATINI'S head cracks open against the brick.

With the sound of the black gloves grasping the rope, THE JUDGE slowly lowers SABATINI'S body down the side of the building.

INT. HIGHRISE CONDOMINIUM, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

The GUESTS continue to mill about at the party.

In the background, as seen through the large front windows, SABATINI'S body is slowly lowered in a jerking fashion into view, his front facing the interior.

The GUESTS look up at the window and scream at the sight of SABATINI'S body.

SABATINI'S body jerks to a stop. Illuminated by the light from within the condo, SABATINI'S dead eyes stare forward, his tongue jutting out from his mouth, blood and gore all down the side of his head and face.

SABATINI'S WIFE drops her glass and stares at SABATINI'S body in shock before passing out.

EXT. ROOF, HIGHRISE CONDOMINIUM BLOCK, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

Gloved hands slowly pull the rope up over the lip of the roof.

Several POLICE OFFICERS pull SABATINI'S body back up onto the roof.

After a few moments, SABATINI'S body comes up over the lip and flops down onto the concrete.

ALESSANDRO looks down with a look of intense anger and frustration at SABATINI'S body. DARDANO comes up next to him.

DARDANO

Sembra che abbiamo la nostra prossima vittima.
(Looks like we have our next victim.)

ALESSANDRO turns away from SABATINI'S body in anger.

ALESSANDRO

Voglio pattuglie di polizia 24 ore su 24, in tutta la città!
(I want 24-hour police patrols, all over the city!)

DARDANO

Non abbiamo la forza lavoro per questo.
(We haven't the manpower for that.)

ALESSANDRO

Allora assumi più uomini! Il Giudice è tornato e la corte è in seduta!
(Then hire more men! The Judge is back and court is in session!)

DARDANO

Non abbiamo i fondi per farlo. Ricordi i tagli al budget?
(We don't have the funds to do it. Remember the budget cuts?)

ALESSANDRO

Quindi bozza il consiglio comunale in servizio!
(Then draft the city council into service!)

ALESSANDRO storms away. DARDANO is left behind with a frustrated expression on his face.

EXT. STREET, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

JACQUELINE walks slowly down the street towards the Judge's House, reading a newspaper.

The front page of the newspaper has a picture of Sabatini under the headline Dottore brutalmente assassinato per impiccagione.
(Doctor brutally murdered by hanging.)

JACQUELINE stares at the newspaper with an unsettled look in her eyes. As she comes to her doorstep she looks up with a fearful, thoughtful gaze. She is suddenly startled by something out of the corner of her eye.

OLIVIA is standing against the wall across the street, her hands folded.

JACQUELINE sighs in frustration.

JACQUELINE

You're always there, lurking.

OLIVIA approaches JACQUELINE with a stern, fearful look on her face. When she reaches JACQUELINE, she looks down at the newspaper. She turns her gaze back up to JACQUELINE.

OLIVIA

Il giudice è tornato.
(The Judge has returned.)

JACQUELINE

Yes, apparently, I summoned him by taking up residence in his house.

OLIVIA
I have - information for you.

JACQUELINE
Che cosa?
(What?)

OLIVIA leans in close to JACQUELINE and speaks in a low voice.

OLIVIA
Il giudice non è un fantasma.
(The Judge is not a ghost.)

JACQUELINE
Sì, naturalmente.
(Yes, of course.)

OLIVIA
I - have suspicion - who.

JACQUELINE
Sì?

OLIVIA looks up at the Judge's House with strange foreboding in her eyes.

OLIVIA
No. Not here.

JACQUELINE
Vieni dentro. Puoi dirmelo in, er, salotto.
(Come inside. You can tell me in the parlor.)

OLIVIA
Guiseppe's - la piazza centrale. Stasera alle nove.
(Guiseppe's - the central plaza. Nine o'clock tonight.)

JACQUELINE
Signora Olivia, Madeleine ed io, eh, rimuoveremo il dipinto e -
(Signora Olivia, Madeleine and I will remove the painting and -)

OLIVIA
No! No.

OLIVIA looks back up at the Judge's House, and crosses herself.

OLIVIA
Not here. Not here . . .

OLIVIA turns and wanders off.

JACQUELINE gazes after OLIVIA and frowns. She turns to enter the house and then notices something.

Further down the street, the MAN from before leans nonchalantly against the wall, smoking and looking away from JACQUELINE.

JACQUELINE eyes the MAN nervously, and then turns and enters the house.

Cross-fade.

EXT. ITALIAN CITY SKYLINE - SUNSET

The sky darkens over the city.

39. EXT. GUISEPPE'S, PIAZZA CENTRALE, ITALIAN CITY - SUNSET

JACQUELINE sits by herself at a table on the street outside Guiseppe's Ristorante. She is surrounded by other diners and wait staff. She eats a meal but frequently glances up and looks around as if waiting for someone.

JACQUELINE glances down at a newspaper next to her plate.

The newspaper is the same one from earlier, with Sabatini's picture on the front page.

JACQUELINE glances aside, chewing thoughtfully. Suddenly MADELEINE'S voice is heard.

MADELEINE
Jackie!

JACQUELINE looks up and over at the street.

MADELEINE waves to JACQUELINE from a car full of other STUDENTS.

JACQUELINE wipes her mouth with a napkin, stands, and makes her way over to the car.

JACQUELINE
Hey Maddie!

MADELEINE
We are going to watch a music group at an old church
outside of town. Come along!

JACQUELINE
Oh, thank you, Maddie, but I'm still waiting for Signora Olivia.

MADELEINE
Oh, you can speak to her tomorrow.

JACQUELINE
She says she has very important information about who this
killer might be.

MADELEINE
Let her tell the police then. Come, come, get in.

MADELEINE opens the door from inside.

JACQUELINE frowns and glances around.

MADELEINE
What does she have to tell you, except superstitious tales?

JACQUELINE sighs and jerks her head back towards her table.

JACQUELINE
Might I at least finish my risotto?

EXT. RURAL ROAD, OUTSIDE ITALIAN CITY - DUSK

JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and their FRIENDS make their twilight way along winding roads away from the city. The caravan comprises two carloads of people, as well as a couple of Vespas containing one or two riders.

Small ancient villages appear on hilltops along the roads in the black and blue dusk, flickering lights and incongruous bonfires giving the villages a vaguely sinister aspect, like apparitions from the Brothers Grimm.

The full moon follows JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and their FRIENDS, peeking out from behind stone pines and cypresses.

The headlights from the cars and motorbikes illuminate the road ahead, partly shrouded in mist.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE sit in the backseat of one of the cars. MADELEINE chats with a FRIEND while JACQUELINE looks out at the nightscape around them, lost in thought.

EXT. SIDE ROAD AND CHURCHYARD, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and their FRIENDS travel slowly through the forest along a rough side road, the headlights yet again providing the sole source of illumination.

JACQUELINE peers out from the back passenger window.

Gradually, on either side of the road, ATTENDEES, in small groups or pairs, come into view, strolling through the trees. Some of them glance back at JACQUELINE and the others in the cars with nods and smiles of greeting and recognition. Many of them carry lanterns to light their way. All are dressed in clothing at once diverse and unusual, esoteric and colorful.

JACQUELINE gazes at the ATTENDEES with fascination and expectancy.

In a few minutes a darkened relic comes into view in a clearing at the terminus of the road. This is the abandoned church. It is a large stone and cement edifice in the Romanesque style, clothed in overgrowth and foliage, framed by oak, pine, and cypress trees. The roof and spire are still intact but the tall windows on the sides of the building are open, gaping orifices.

The car containing JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and their FRIENDS pulls to a stop, along with the other car and the Vespas, a little ways from the church, right next to a derelict, overgrown cemetery.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE alight from the vehicle. JACQUELINE gazes at the cemetery a moment.

The tombstones, tilted and half-buried in the foliage, stand like eerie totems among the trees.

JACQUELINE looks around at the strange scene.

The ATTENDEES, who have come to see the band perform, emerge through the trees, faces floating in the air by lamplight.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE stroll along with the others. MADELEINE exchanges smiles and greetings with a few before turning to JACQUELINE.

MADELEINE

I hope you do not despise me for dragging you here.

JACQUELINE laughs and hugs MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

I could never despise you, Maddie. And, well, actually I don't really feel comfortable being alone right now anyway.

MADELEINE

I think we shall have good company tonight.

JACQUELINE

It feels - dangerous, though, out here in the darkness.

MADELEINE

You do not like danger?

JACQUELINE smiles at MADELEINE.

JACQUELINE

Sometimes.

JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and the other lamplit gatherers begin filing into the darkened derelict church as "Ti Risvegliarai Con Me" by Il Balletto di Bronzo begins.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Visible through the church windows, branches illuminated against a night sky rendered blue and gray by the light of the full moon gesticulate up and down to the music, animated by a warm autumn wind.

The interior of the church is lit by candles whose flames flutter and leap as the wind blows heedlessly through the open windows and around the rafters.

JACQUELINE continues to gaze around at the ATTENDEES with fascination.

IL BALLETO DI BRONZO is set up on the old dais behind where the pulpit once stood. They are illuminated from below by floor lights, which give the band members a multicolored demonic aspect. The lights and equipment are powered by generator. The band is a four-piece comprising the singer/organist, bassist, guitarist, and drummer. All four wear long hair and cod-medieval fashion, with studded belts tied around their waists, studded bracelets, leather pants, and furry platform boots. They all resemble beautiful models, with an edge.

JACQUELINE, MADELEINE and their FRIENDS make their way closer to the dais.

The band is expressive and their music loud and visceral.

JACQUELINE and MADELEINE groove and dance to the music, along with their FRIENDS.

Other ATTENDEES drink and smoke, both nicotine and pot.

Bats flutter around at the top of the ceiling.

The wind whips up, blowing out some of the candles.

ATTENDEES scream with delight.

JACQUELINE leans over to MADELEINE and yells in her ear over the music.

JACQUELINE

What's the band's name?

MADELEINE

What?

JACQUELINE

Their name!

MADELEINE

Oh!

MADELEINE shrugs and continues dancing.

JACQUELINE turns to one of their Italian FRIENDS, a beautiful raven-haired girl named MARIA, and yells in her ear.

JACQUELINE

Qual è il nome della band?
(What is the name of the band?)

MARIA

Il Balletto di Bronzo.

JACQUELINE
Che cosa?
(What?)

MARIA
Il Balletto di Bronzo.

MARIA keeps on dancing.

JACQUELINE
Okay.

JACQUELINE shakes her head, not having understood.

The band bellows and pounds out the music. The singer/organist also plays harmonica.

JACQUELINE, flanked by MADELEINE and MARIA, dances to the music, smiling. She glances up at the stage.

The singer/organist has set his harmonica down. This is GIANNI. He glances down and makes eye contact with JACQUELINE.

JACQUELINE gazes up at GIANNI with a curious, slightly alluring gaze.

GIANNI resumes singing, gazing down at JACQUELINE with a sultry smile.

EXT. GUISEPPE'S, PIAZZA CENTRALE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

OLIVIA sits alone at a table outside the restaurant, a look of fear and foreboding on her face. The hour is late and the wait staff are cleaning up the tables and setting the chairs upside down on the tabletops.

OLIVIA stares into space. Suddenly she looks up and around, as if expecting to see someone. She then settles back into a state seemingly of despair.

A WAITER comes over to OLIVIA.

WAITER

Mi dispiace, signora, ma ora stiamo chiudendo.
(I'm sorry, signora, but we are closing now.)

OLIVIA gazes up at the WAITER with a hollow gaze, and then nods silently.

OLIVIA gets up sharply and walks away. The WAITER takes her chair and turns it upside down on the tabletop.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The performance is finished. JACQUELINE and MADELEINE are milling about with FRIENDS, chatting and laughing.

MARIA approaches JACQUELINE and MADELEINE and the others with an excited look on her face.

MARIA

La band ci ha invitato a tornare nella loro villa.
(The band has invited us back to their villa.)

JACQUELINE replies with an amused smile.

JACQUELINE

Oh, veramente?
(Oh, really?)

MARIA

Sì, vieni a conoscerli!
(Yes, come and meet them!)

MARIA practically drags a laughing JACQUELINE and MADELEINE to meet the band, followed by their FRIENDS.

EXT. ABANDONED CHURCH, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

In a small cloister outside the church, the band members (GIANNI, MARCO, GIANCARLO and VITO) stand and chat with their ENTOURAGE.

MARIA drags JACQUELINE and MADELEINE, followed by their FRIENDS, up to the band.

GIANNI, MARCO, GIANCARLO and VITO and their ENTOURAGE turn and look at JACQUELINE, MADELEINE, MARIA, and their FRIENDS as they approach.

JACQUELINE walks up and smiles at GIANNI.

GIANNI gazes at JACQUELINE with a seductive gaze.

GIANNI reaches over and takes JACQUELINE by the hand.

GIANNI leans over and kisses JACQUELINE on the hand. He then looks up at her with a smile.

GIANNI

Buonasera . . . bellissimo.

JACQUELINE smiles coyly at GIANNI.

JACQUELINE

Jackie.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

THE JUDGE, their face obscured from view, pulls their wig out from a hiding place, their hands gloved in black.

EXT - STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

OLIVIA kneels before a street altar, which is lit by small candles.

OLIVIA crosses herself, gazing up with a hollow gaze at the figure of Jesus.

The face of Jesus, lit by flickering candlelight, gazes down on OLIVIA from the altar.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

THE JUDGE violently pulls a rope taut with black-gloved hands.

EXT. VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

A villa overlooks the countryside, its windows lit from within, several cars and Vespas parked in its circular driveway.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The interior of the villa is garish and gothic, its decor highlighted in red.

GIANCARLO pours out J&B scotch whiskey from a bottle into glasses for himself, JACQUELINE, MADELEINE, MARIA, GIANNI, MARCO and VITO, as well as their FRIENDS and ENTOURAGE. Everyone is laughing and enjoying themselves.

EXT. STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

OLIVIA walks alone through the dimly lit and deserted streets.

OLIVIA stares forward with a harrowing gaze.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

GIANNI toasts his glass with JACQUELINE.

JACQUELINE replies with seductive eyes and smile.

JACQUELINE and GIANNI sip from their glasses.

EXT. STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

Seen from behind, THE JUDGE stalks the dark and deserted streets of the city, robed in red.

INT. VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

FRIENDS and members of the ENTOURAGE are making out in various places around the villa. Some are beginning to take their clothes off. A fire burns brightly in the drawing room hearth.

MARIA, topless, dances around, taking rose petals from a tray and showering them on the FRIENDS and ENTOURAGE.

MADELEINE is making out with MARCO and GIANCARLO as they casually remove her clothes.

JACQUELINE sits on GIANNI'S lap. The two kiss sensually. JACQUELINE pulls back and, with a lustful grin, removes her top.

GIANNI gazes with ardor at JACQUELINE'S chest. He then turns his gaze to JACQUELINE'S eyes with a satyr smile.

JACQUELINE tilts her head back and laughs.

MARIA continues to shower the FRIENDS and ENTOURAGE with rose petals until she is grabbed from behind by a shirtless VITO. MARIA, laughing, drops the tray.

The red rose petals scatter across the floor.

EXT. STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

OLIVIA hurries along the dimly lit empty street until she is suddenly grabbed from behind by THE JUDGE.

OLIVIA screams as THE JUDGE violently jerks her by the hair.

INT. VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

JACQUELINE laughs with pleasure as GIANNI has sex with her in the drawing room.

MADELEINE and MARIA are having sex with GIANCARLO and VITO, respectively, in the same room.

The FRIENDS and ENTOURAGE have sex in various places around the villa, all grinning, laughing, and moaning with pleasure.

EXT. STREET AND BACK ALLEY, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

THE JUDGE continues to grip OLIVIA by the hair with one gloved hand and grasp her around the mouth with the other. OLIVIA'S eyes are shut as she screams through the gloved hand in shock.

THE JUDGE drags OLIVIA over to the stone steps leading down into the city's catacombs and thrusts her forward. OLIVIA tumbles violently down the steps.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

GIANNI nuzzles JACQUELINE about the neck as he continues to enthusiastically thrust from behind.

MADELEINE and MARIA have now swapped GIANCARLO and VITO.

EXT. CATACOMBS, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

Surrounded by medieval stone walls and lit dimly by moonlight from a hole in the arched ceiling above, THE JUDGE grips OLIVIA by the hair and punches her violently in the face. OLIVIA'S face and head are cut and bloodied from both the fall and THE JUDGE'S beating. A few of her front teeth are missing. OLIVIA cries in agony as THE JUDGE beats her mercilessly.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

GIANNI and JACQUELINE gleefully make love on a couch. JACQUELINE turns and glances over to her left.

MARCO has MADELEINE bent over the armrest of the couch with his hand around her throat, play-choking her from behind as they engage in rough, playful sex. MADELEINE notices JACQUELINE, rolls her eyes back, and sticks out her tongue as if pretending to be strangled.

JACQUELINE laughs out loud, her body jerking back and forth with GIANNI'S thrusts.

EXT. BACK ALLEY, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

OLIVIA'S face is a bloodied mass as THE JUDGE drags her body by a noose wrapped around her neck through the darkened alley. OLIVIA looks as if she is unconscious, or already dead.

INT. VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

JACQUELINE wipes her mouth with the back of her hand and looks up at someone with an almost feral grin.

EXT. STREET, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

A group of PEOPLE are walking along a street, laughing and chatting until one of them looks up and screams. The others pause and gaze up in the same direction in shock and revulsion.

OLIVIA'S body hangs by a noose from the top of a tall wrought-iron spiked gate, her face bloodied and her mouth gaping.

INT. BEDROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

JACQUELINE awakes with a start. She looks around with sleepy eyes for a moment before noticing GIANNI asleep in bed next to her. She leans over and gazes at him.

GIANNI sleeps peacefully, looking more angelic than satyr-like in the sunlight.

JACQUELINE looks as if she is about to wake him. She pauses, smiles to herself, and then turns and alights from the bed.

INT. BEDROOM, VILLA, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

JACQUELINE, dressed and carrying her handbag, finds MADELEINE sleeping in bed next to GIANCARLO. JACQUELINE sits down on the edge of the bed and gently rubs MADELEINE'S shoulder, whispering her name.

JACQUELINE
Maddie -

MADELEINE stirs, groans slightly, waves JACQUELINE off, and then turns over, exposing her buttocks.

JACQUELINE looks at MADELEINE'S derriere in amusement for a moment, and then turns her gaze back to MADELEINE, whispering to her once more with an affectionate smile.

JACQUELINE
I'll see you soon.

JACQUELINE gets up and leaves the room.

EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

A taxi pulls up to the Judge's House. JACQUELINE exits the cab and pays the driver. The taxi drives off.

JACQUELINE steps up to the front door, searching in her handbag for her key. She sticks the key in the lock before realizing that the door is unlocked and slightly ajar. JACQUELINE puts her key back in her handbag, and then steps slowly and cautiously over the threshold.

INT. FOYER, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

JACQUELINE enters the foyer with a fearful look on her face. She peers into the parlor.

As seen from the foyer, the parlor is empty.

Just then JACQUELINE hears voices from the dining room.

JACQUELINE goes up to the dining room door and flings it open. As seen from outside the room, ALESSANDRO and DARDANO are sitting beneath the portrait of the Judge.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

JACQUELINE enters the dining room with an angry look on her face.

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO stand up and bow their heads.

ALESSANDRO

Signorina Fyre, I am Ispettore Alessandro Bianchi of the police. This is my partner, Ispettore Dardano Graziani.

JACQUELINE

Ciao. What are you doing in my house?

ALESSANDRO turns and glances back at the painting before turning back to JACQUELINE. He nods his head at the painting.

ALESSANDRO

You mean the Judge's House.

JACQUELINE slowly approaches the table and sets her handbag down.

JACQUELINE

Fine, if you like; but I am renting it.

ALESSANDRO

We wish to question you about a series of murders that we believe are connected to this house.

JACQUELINE grows nervous and sits down at the corner of the table.

JACQUELINE

Connected . . . how?

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO return to their seats. For the moment DARDANO remains intimidatingly silent, keeping his eyes fixed on JACQUELINE.

ALESSANDRO

Well, perhaps, I did not explain myself correctly. My English is not that fluent.

JACQUELINE
Seems pretty fluent to me.

ALESSANDRO
What I meant to say was that these murders are connected to you.

JACQUELINE
Me? How?

ALESSANDRO
Well, first, we have your professor.

JACQUELINE
That was ruled a suicide.

ALESSANDRO
Not anymore. And then we have the doctor - Sabatini?

JACQUELINE
And how am I connected to him?

ALESSANDRO
Well, he came to visit you - here.

JACQUELINE
How do you know that?

ALESSANDRO affects a contrite smile.

ALESSANDRO
You will forgive us, Signorina, but we have had a man
watching your house for many days.

JACQUELINE's expression grows angry again. She places her
forehead in her hand.

ALESSANDRO
And now, last night, the woman who cleans the house.

JACQUELINE looks up sharply with shock in her eyes.

JACQUELINE
Signora Olivia? No!

ALESSANDRO
Yes. All three - connected to you.

ALESSANDRO points an accusing finger at JACQUELINE.

JACQUELINE
Are you suggesting I murdered them? How?

DARDANO
Where were you last night?

JACQUELINE
I - I went with my roommate Madeleine Hoffmann to see a band perform at an old church.

ALESSANDRO
Where?

JACQUELINE
Somewhere out beyond the autostrada. On an old back road - I can't remember where.

DARDANO
What was the name of the band?

JACQUELINE
I can't remember. Ballet-something.

ALESSANDRO
You have difficulty remembering things which occurred mere hours ago.

DARDANO
Where did you go after the concert?

JACQUELINE
We went with the band back to their villa.

ALESSANDRO

And where was that? Ah, let me guess - you can't remember.

JACQUELINE grows agitated.

JACQUELINE

Look, Madeleine was with me the entire night. She can confirm that for you when she returns.

ALESSANDRO

Where is she now?

JACQUELINE

The last I saw of her was at the villa.

ALESSANDRO

And you were there all night?

JACQUELINE glares at ALESSANDRO.

JACQUELINE

All night.

ALESSANDRO

And the band members may confirm this?

JACQUELINE'S glare momentarily softens to a slight sardonic smile.

JACQUELINE

I should think so.

ALESSANDRO turns to DARDANO and nods. They both then stand.

ALESSANDRO

Very well. We would ask that you remain in town until such time as we can confirm your movements.

JACQUELINE

You think I'm this killer, the one who has returned after ten years? I was a 12 year old girl living in Reading ten years ago!

ALESSANDRO

Today's killer could be, as you English say, a copycat.

JACQUELINE looks away.

JACQUELINE

You're mad.

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO turn and look back at the painting.

ALESSANDRO

A fine restoration.

ALESSANDRO turns back to JACQUELINE with an impressed look.

ALESSANDRO

It must have required much labor.

JACQUELINE

It was for a school project.

ALESSANDRO

Many in this town would have preferred it lost to the ages.
But not you.

JACQUELINE jumps up and points her finger at the door.

JACQUELINE

Get out of this house and take your insinuations and bloody red herrings with you!

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO frown at JACQUELINE, and then bow to her.

ALESSANDRO

As you English say, we will - be in touch.

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO march out of the dining room. A moment later the front door can be heard opening and slamming shut.

JACQUELINE slumps back into her chair. After a moment, she looks up at the painting.

The Judge in the painting glares down at JACQUELINE malevolently.

JACQUELINE straightens up, stares back at the painting in defiance, and then hurries out of the room.

INT. ANTEROOM, ROBERTO'S OFFICE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

A RECEPTIONIST sits at her desk on the phone in the small anteroom when JACQUELINE bursts through the door.

JACQUELINE
Where is Roberto?

The RECEPTIONIST is startled and addresses the person on the line before addressing JACQUELINE.

RECEPTIONIST
Scusi - che cosa?
(Sorry - what?)

JACQUELINE points at an adjacent door.

JACQUELINE
In his office?

JACQUELINE begins heading for the adjacent door.

The RECEPTIONIST holds her hand up.

RECEPTIONIST
Non puoi entrare!
(You may not enter!)

JACQUELINE
Bugger off!

JACQUELINE charges into ROBERTO'S office.

INT. ROBERTO'S OFFICE, ITALIAN CITY - DAY

ROBERTO stands up in surprise from his desk in the small nondescript office as JACQUELINE enters the room.

JACQUELINE slams the door shut and locks it behind her. Throughout their exchange the RECEPTIONIST can be heard banging on the door.

ROBERTO
Signorina, you should make call first -

JACQUELINE
I want you to tell me who the owner of the house is, and where I can find them.

ROBERTO
Che cosa?
(What?)

JACQUELINE grows more agitated.

JACQUELINE
La casa! Il proprietario della casa! La casa del giudice!
(The house! The owner of the house! The Judge's House!)

ROBERTO
Mi dispiace, signorina, ma non posso dirti il loro nome.
(I am sorry, miss, but I cannot tell you their name.)

JACQUELINE, unperturbed, walks straight up to ROBERTO, making use of her greater height to intimidate him.

JACQUELINE
I think you will.

ROBERTO replies with a skeevey smile, looking JACQUELINE up and down.

ROBERTO

Well, uh, signorina, I may tell his name - if, uh, you and I can come to, uh, un accordo.

JACQUELINE affects a slight smile before suddenly slapping ROBERTO hard across the face.

JACQUELINE

Pig.

ROBERTO raises his hand as if to strike JACQUELINE.

ROBERTO

Cagna!

JACQUELINE easily swats ROBERTO'S hand away and grabs him by the collar.

JACQUELINE

Tell me his name and address - now!

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS, MICHELE'S VILLA, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

JACQUELINE enters the foyer of the villa. The front door appears to be unlocked.

The interior of the villa is dim in the early evening light. It is decorated ornately in a late 19th century style.

JACQUELINE

Hello? Signor Michele?

JACQUELINE receives no answer.

JACQUELINE tiptoes through the house, peeking into each room. They are all empty of inhabitants.

INT. LIBRARY, MICHELE'S VILLA, ITALIAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

JACQUELINE enters the library. A fire is burning in the hearth. A large high-backed carved oak chair sits facing it.

JACQUELINE is distracted by a book on a nearby table.

It is a book about the tarot, illustrated by the Tarocca Siciliano.

MICHELE (o-s)

The tarot speaks to us, but rarely do we listen.

JACQUELINE jumps at the sound of MICHELE'S voice, which emanates from the high-backed chair. MICHELE'S voice is deep and mellifluous, with a light accent.

JACQUELINE creeps around to see who is in the chair.

MICHELE looks up and smiles at JACQUELINE. He is a bespectacled elderly man, and wears a blanket across his legs.

MICHELE

You will excuse me for not rising to greet you, but age has rendered me infirm.

JACQUELINE

Scusi, Signor Michele, non volevo, er, intramettermi.
(Excuse me, Mr. Michele, I did not mean to intrude.)

MICHELE

No, let us converse in English. It is such an elegant language.

JACQUELINE takes a seat nearby in an embroidered chair.

JACQUELINE

I suppose you know why I'm here.

MICHELE

I am glad to finally make the acquaintance of the young lady who was brave enough to take up residence in the

Judge's House. Such was my curiosity that I sent the late Dr. Sabatini to visit you, and to apprise me of your constitution.

JACQUELINE frowns.

JACQUELINE

He was a very eager participant in your elaborate ruse. But I'll have you and everyone else know I am not a child -

MICHELE interrupts JACQUELINE with a wave of his hand.

MICHELE

Your experience hardly matters in this affair, my dear. The house is tinged with the mark of the devil.

JACQUELINE

Yes, I was made aware of its reputation, and its malevolent influence, from the start. First, by Signor Roberto, and then more forcefully by a Miss Anna, a concierge who works over at the Hotel Verdi.

MICHELE

I heard you had made Anna's acquaintance.

JACQUELINE

And how are the two of you acquainted?

MICHELE points at something on the mantel over the fireplace.

JACQUELINE rises and goes to the mantel. She takes a framed picture down and looks at it with a furrowed brow.

The picture is an old black-and-white image of a man and a little girl.

JACQUELINE turns a surprised gaze to MICHELE and points to the picture.

JACQUELINE

Is she - your daughter?

MICHELE

You notice the resemblance?

JACQUELINE frowns and looks back at the picture.

The young Michele and Anna are seated in the parlor of the Judge's House.

JACQUELINE

This was taken in the Judge's House.

MICHELE

You have the perceptive eye of the art student.

JACQUELINE

When did the two of you live there?

MICHELE

Until she was grown. After her mother died.

JACQUELINE

How did your wife die?

MICHELE turns a suddenly stark expression to JACQUELINE.

MICHELE

Something in the house drove my Carolina mad.

INT. KITCHEN, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

Flashback:

The dead body of CAROLINA, MICHELE'S wife, hangs by a rope around her neck from the ceiling candelabra.

The CHILD ANNA enters the kitchen in her pajamas and gazes up in shock.

CAROLINA'S corpse sways slightly on the rope, her long hair hanging down and obscuring her face.

MICHELE (v-o)

It was Anna who discovered her mama, hanging from the kitchen candelabra.

The CHILD ANNA covers her eyes and screams.

INT. LIBRARY, MICHELE'S VILLA, ITALIAN CITY - DUSK

MICHELE gazes upon the framed picture of himself and his daughter.

MICHELE

What did Anna say to you about the house?

JACQUELINE

That it was haunted. Infestata.

MICHELE turns to the fire, smiling sadly and nodding in reflection.

MICHELE

Anna blamed the house for her mama's death. She grew frightened of it. Perhaps I should have moved her away sooner.

JACQUELINE

Were you still living in the Judge's House when the killings began?

MICHELE

Ah, the Judge's Ghost, as the local populace prefer to call him. No, we had left the house long before that. The murders began when the house was first rented, to the last person to live there before you.

JACQUELINE

And who do you think was the killer?

MICHELE gives JACQUELINE a wry smile.

MICHELE

The specter of the ancient adjudicator? I suspect it was the tenant, a madman who was inspired by the portrait in the dining room - the portrait wasn't yet shrouded in soot at that time. Yes, it must have been him, for the killings ended soon after he disappeared.

JACQUELINE

Why didn't you sell the house?

MICHELE

Anna urged me to keep it. She felt it would be unhealthy for others to live there. I must confess, I agreed with her. But such fears were groundless - no one else has taken residence in the Judge's House, apart from the previous tenant - and you.

JACQUELINE

And now I am presumed to be a killer as well, in the latest rash of murders.

MICHELE

You?

MICHELE smiles benevolently at JACQUELINE.

MICHELE

You hardly seem the type to commit such outrages.

JACQUELINE

I wish the police shared your view.

JACQUELINE stands.

JACQUELINE

Thank you, Signor Michele, for the background. Unfortunately, it hardly gets me any closer to the identity of the true killer.

MICHELE

I wish there was more I could tell you.

JACQUELINE turns and stares into the fire.

JACQUELINE

All I want is to awake from this nightmare, and learn to live again.

MICHELE gestures back to the table with the tarot book.

MICHELE

Read the cards. They will give you guidance.

JACQUELINE smiles sadly, and turns to leave.

MICHELE

Jackie.

JACQUELINE turns back to MICHELE with a surprised smile.

JACQUELINE

Yes?

MICHELE

Have you had occasion to explore the secrets in the walls?

JACQUELINE responds with confusion.

JACQUELINE

I - no.

MICHELE smiles again in reflection.

MICHELE

Anna would hide herself there. It was her sanctuary.

MICHELE'S expression turns contemplative.

MICHELE

Strange how she burrowed herself deeper into the house
which scared her so.

JACQUELINE pauses and thinks for a moment. She turns and gazes
at the fire.

The fire burns brightly in the hearth.

EXT. STREET CORNER, VIA GIUSTIZIA, ITALIAN CITY - DUSK

The MAN from earlier, the police informant, stands at the
corner. He watches the Judge's House further down the street.

The MAN looks down and takes some notes on a small notepad. As
he does, a noose comes down over his head from behind, and then
violently tightens round his neck. The MAN drops the pencil and
notepad and grabs the rope with his hands, his eyes bulging as
choking sounds sputter from his mouth.

The JUDGE drags the MAN violently by the neck with the rope into
the shadows of a nearby doorway.

INT. FOYER, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MADELEINE enters the darkened foyer and locks the door. She
sets her handbag down on a small table and lights a candle. She
steps forward, listening.

MADELEINE

Jackie?

There is no reply. The house is dark and silent, save for the
flicker and the sound of firelight coming from the open door to
the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MADELEINE enters the dining room.

A fresh fire is burning brightly in the hearth, but the room is devoid of people.

MADELEINE glances around with apprehension. She then glances up at the portrait of the Judge.

The Judge seems to glare down upon MADELEINE menacingly.

MADELEINE turns and leaves the room.

INT. PARLOR, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MADELEINE pokes her head inside the darkened parlor and scans around.

The parlor is also bereft of people.

INT. CORRIDOR, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MADELEINE continues down the corridor, increasing anxiety in her voice.

MADELEINE
Jackie?

MADELEINE holds the candle up and looks up the stairs.

As seen from the bottom of the stairs, the second floor of the house is dark and silent.

MADELEINE frowns and turns. She hurriedly makes her way back to the front of the house when suddenly THE JUDGE appears out of the dining room up ahead and blocks her way. Throughout this sequence, THE JUDGE'S face remains obscured in shadow.

MADELEINE screams and drops the candle. She turns and runs back to the rear of the house. She turns a corner and THE JUDGE suddenly appears in front of her.

MADELEINE screams again and races back to the front door. As she gets close to the front door THE JUDGE appears at the entrance to the parlor, as if by magic.

MADELEINE stares at THE JUDGE in horror as THE JUDGE blocks her way to the front door. MADELEINE backs away from THE JUDGE into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MADELEINE races towards the fireplace and grabs the poker from the rack. She turns around to face THE JUDGE, brandishing the poker as a weapon.

THE JUDGE has vanished once more.

MADELEINE moves slowly and cautiously around the table. Behind her, between the portrait on the wall and the alarm bell rope, a portion of the wall opens. THE JUDGE emerges stealthily from the dark opening, their face still obscured in shadow.

As MADELEINE passes beneath the portrait, THE JUDGE grabs her from behind. MADELEINE screams and drops the poker as she grabs at THE JUDGE'S arms. THE JUDGE wrestles with a screaming MADELEINE, dragging her towards the alarm bell rope.

MADELEINE manages to wriggle free of THE JUDGE. She runs forward but trips over the brick hearth in front of the fireplace, and falls violently upon the floor, knocking her head.

Moaning and dazed, MADELEINE attempts to crawl across the floor. THE JUDGE looms up behind her, the fireplace poker in hand. THE JUDGE grabs MADELEINE roughly and turns her over.

Blood trickling down her forehead from her head wound, MADELEINE gazes up at THE JUDGE in dazed horror.

THE JUDGE raises the poker high into the air and brings it down.

EXT. BELL TOWER, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

The alarm bell begins tolling, slowly and rhythmically.

EXT. STREET, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

LOCALS are milling about nervously in the street in front of the Judge's House, gazing up at the alarm bell with fretful and fearful looks.

Police cars emerge in the background further down the street. Their sirens force the LOCALS to step aside and let the police cars pull up to the front entrance.

ALESSANDRO and DARDANO emerge from one of the police cars and look upward.

As seen from the street, the bell continues to toll slowly and rhythmically in the bell tower.

ALESSANDRO motions to the POLICE OFFICERS.

The POLICE OFFICERS go to the front door and attempt to force entry.

DARDANO looks around and then turns to ALESSANDRO.

DARDANO

Dov'è il nostro uomo?
(Where's our man?)

ALESSANDRO

Vai a trovarlo.
(Go and find him.)

DARDANO hurries away.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

The sound of violent pounding upon the front door of the house can be heard. A moment later the POLICE OFFICERS burst into the house, followed by ALESSANDRO. The POLICE OFFICERS enter the

dining room and look upwards fearfully. ALESSANDRO pushes past them, stops, and looks up with resignation and pain in his eyes.

Illuminated in the warm glow of the flickering firelight, MADELEINE'S body hangs by the alarm bell rope, which has been fashioned into a noose. Her right eye stares lifelessly into space. Her left eye is a gaping hole, blood and gore oozing out and staining the front of her blouse. Her body rises and falls gently with the toll of the alarm bell.

ALESSANDRO gazes up at MADELEINE'S body in remorse. He then turns his gaze to the side.

The opening in the wall next to the portrait looks in upon darkness.

ALESSANDRO goes over to the opening as POLICE OFFICERS begin working to get MADELEINE'S body down.

As seen from inside the secret passage, ALESSANDRO peers his head through the opening.

ALESSANDRO withdraws his head, thinking pensively with a frown. He looks up.

DARDANO approaches ALESSANDRO, gazing up at MADELEINE'S corpse with sadness.

The POLICE OFFICERS begin lowering MADELEINE'S body to the floor, one of them standing on The Judge's chair.

DARDANO

Lei pagato per i nostri tagli al budget.
(She paid for our budget cuts.)

ALESSANDRO

Dov'è il nostro uomo che avrebbe dovuto sorvegliare la casa?
(Where is our man who was supposed to watch the house?)

DARDANO

Morto, in un vicolo dietro l'angolo.

(Dead, in an alley around the corner.)

ALESSANDRO turns his gaze to the floor, rage in his eyes.

DARDANO

Strangolato, con una corda.

(Strangled, with a rope.)

ALESSANDRO turns back to DARDANO, fuming.

ALESSANDRO

Trova Signorina Fyre e falla entrare!

(Find Miss Fyre and bring her in!)

INT. ALESSANDRO'S OFFICE, STAZIONE DI POLIZIA, ITALIAN CITY -
NIGHT

JACQUELINE sits in a chair across from ALESSANDRO'S desk, flanked by two POLICE OFFICERS. JACQUELINE'S face is stained with tears. She is exhausted and traumatized, and addresses ALESSANDRO in a frightened voice.

JACQUELINE

I don't understand. What are you saying?

ALESSANDRO

Signorina Hoffmann was the only person who could confirm your alibi last night. And now she is conveniently dispatched.

JACQUELINE

Oh, for God's sake, I told you the band could also corroborate my whereabouts!

ALESSANDRO

Ah, yes, Ballet-something, I believe, is their name, yes?

JACQUELINE puts her head in her hands.

JACQUELINE

Fuck you.

ALESSANDRO

We are deadly serious here, Miss Fyre. Four people connected to you have been murdered, as well as an officer of the law.

JACQUELINE looks up at ALESSANDRO sharply.

JACQUELINE

And now the murderer is coming for me. Have you thought of that? Or do you just want to blame me for the fact that your department is too incompetent or underfunded or whatever to protect the community?

ALESSANDRO

Is this the direction you wish to pursue, Miss Fyre? For if you choose such a course, I would recommend you tread carefully, as you English say.

JACQUELINE

The only course I'm taking is to the British Consulate.

ALESSANDRO

I would not try to leave the country at this time.

JACQUELINE

Well, if you won't protect me, maybe they will. I did not come to this country just to wind up on the end of a rope -

JACQUELINE breaks down and once more buries her head in her hand.

JACQUELINE

Oh, Maddie . . .

DARDANO opens the door, carrying papers. He walks up to ALESSANDRO and speaks quietly in his ear. ALESSANDRO frowns and nods impatiently, waving DARDANO off. DARDANO leaves.

ALESSANDRO

Yes, well, as much as I am loath to release a potential killer back onto the streets, it would appear the evidence against you remains, as you English say, circumstantial.

JACQUELINE turns her gaze back up to ALESSANDRO with intense loathing.

JACQUELINE

So I'm free to go?

ALESSANDRO

Oh, I would not think of it as freedom, Miss Fyre. Yes, we may be suffering from lack of funds, as you were so kind to observe, but we are not so lacking that we cannot bring you in at any time at our discretion.

JACQUELINE stands up and turns to leave the room.

JACQUELINE

Perhaps I can spend my reprieve, then, finding the real killer. It would appear you need the help.

JACQUELINE pulls the door open and stomps out of the room.

ALESSANDRO frowns and turns to one of the POLICE OFFICERS.

ALESSANDRO

Segui lei! Lo pagherò io stesso!
(Follow her! I'll pay for it myself!)

ALESSANDRO grumbles and throws a pencil down violently on the table.

INT. LIBRARY, MICHELE'S VILLA, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

MICHELE sits in front of the fireplace as before. He stares down at the framed picture in his hand.

The picture is the one seen earlier of him and Anna as a child.

MICHELE looks up and gazes into the fire, the light flickering in his spectacles, obscuring his eyes.

MICHELE takes up a vintage candlestick phone from a small table next to the chair, places the receiver on his ear, and dials a number. After a moment he speaks into the microphone.

MICHELE
Polizia, per favore.

INT. LOBBY DESK, HOTEL VERDI, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

ANNA emerges around the corner to the concierge desk, carrying a tub full of cutlery as before. She looks up and freezes, nearly dropping the tub again.

JACQUELINE stands a few feet from the desk, staring at ANNA with a hollow, harrowing gaze, her eyes red and her face wan.

ANNA is startled and regards JACQUELINE fearfully for a moment. She turns and slowly places the cutlery on a high shelf behind the desk. She then turns back to JACQUELINE and folds her hands.

ANNA
Buonasera, signorina. Posso aiutarla?
(Good evening, miss. May I help you?)

JACQUELINE
Tell me about the secrets in the walls.

ANNA grows pale herself.

ANNA
Signorina, penso che dovrete andartene. La scrivania è chiusa.
(Miss, I think you should leave. The desk is closed.)

JACQUELINE
You misled me about the house! You lied to me! Everyone did!

ANNA

Keep your voice down! I will not have you disturb my guests.

JACQUELINE

The only one disturbed here is you! You killed them!

ANNA

Little witch, how dare you!

JACQUELINE

Living in that rotten house drove you mad, just like your mother, and you wanted to make sure no one else could live there! So when the tenant moved in ten years ago, you brought the Judge back, to drive the tenant from the house, by pinning the murders on him! And you did drive him away - or you murdered him, too, along with the others! Is that to be my fate as well?

ANNA

Get out of here! Sto telefonando alla polizia!
(I am calling the police!)

ANNA turns towards the phone.

JACQUELINE

Go ahead and call them! They probably followed me here.
Where's your bloody robe?

JACQUELINE goes back behind the concierge's desk to the kitchen in the rear.

ANNA turns to JACQUELINE in horror.

ANNA

No!

ANNA hurriedly follows JACQUELINE back into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN, HOTEL VERDI, ITALIAN CITY - NIGHT

JACQUELINE enters the kitchen and begins rooting around the cupboards. ANNA emerges into the kitchen behind her.

ANNA
Puttana lasciva!
(Lascivious whore!)

JACQUELINE
Spare me your judgment!

JACQUELINE moves towards the storage closet in the corner. ANNA comes up and grabs JACQUELINE from behind.

ANNA
No, you must leave!

JACQUELINE
Think you can murder me like you did poor Maddie, you deranged cow?

JACQUELINE overwhelms ANNA and pushes her aside.

JACQUELINE turns and tears open the doors to the closet.

Before JACQUELINE hangs the Judge's robe and wig.

JACQUELINE gazes up at the robe and wig in horror as her suspicions are confirmed.

Suddenly ANNA throws a cord around JACQUELINE'S neck. JACQUELINE grabs the cord with her hands as a crazed ANNA tries to strangle her. After a few more moments of struggle, JACQUELINE has the presence of mind to violently kick ANNA in the shin. ANNA cries out in pain and loosens the cord just enough for JACQUELINE to free herself.

JACQUELINE, coughing and rubbing her neck, backs away from ANNA.

ANNA slowly advances on JACQUELINE with crazed eyes, and hisses at her.

ANNA

Non puoi sfuggire al giudizio!
(You cannot escape justice!)

JACQUELINE attempts to make a break for the exit, but ANNA tackles her and brings her to the floor, the cord once more around JACQUELINE'S neck.

JACQUELINE makes choking sounds as ANNA kneels over her, strangling her with the cord. Suddenly a POLICE OFFICER'S voice is heard.

POLICE OFFICER (o-s)
Polizia! Fermare!
(Police! Stop!)

ANNA pauses and looks up.

Two POLICE OFFICERS stand just inside the entrance to the kitchen, pointing guns at ANNA. Behind them ALESSANDRO and DARDANO carry MICHELE into the kitchen. MICHELE gazes at ANNA with a profound look of pain and sadness in his eyes.

ANNA alights from JACQUELINE'S back, releasing her. JACQUELINE immediately pushes away from ANNA, stands up, and throws the cord onto the floor.

JACQUELINE steps back away from ANNA, holding her bruised neck, her face flush with tears of trauma.

ANNA remains on the floor, staring up at MICHELE with the frighten eyes of a child.

ANNA
Papà?

MICHELE
Basta, Anna.
(Enough, Anna.)

ANNA remains on her knees, gazing up beseechingly at MICHELE.

ANNA

La casa è sicura, papà? La casa di mamma è al sicuro?
(Is the house safe, papa? Is mama's house safe?)

MICHELE

Sì, Anna. La casa di mamma è al sicuro.
(Yes, Anna. Mama's house is safe.)

ANNA bows her head and begins to weep.

MICHELE pushes away from ALESSANDRO and DARDANO. He slowly and painfully kneels down and takes a crying ANNA in his arms.

ANNA

Nessuno vivrà più lì, papà! Nessuno!
(No one will ever live there again, papa! No one!)

MICHELE

No, piccola mia. I segreti rimarranno nei muri.
(No, my baby. The secrets will remain in the walls.)

MICHELE cradles ANNA in his arms.

JACQUELINE, still rubbing her throat, gazes with bitterness at ALESSANDRO.

ALESSANDRO frowns at JACQUELINE for a moment, and then looks down at MICHELE and ANNA.

MICHELE rocks back and forth with ANNA in his arms as ANNA cries in pain.

Fade out.

EXT. THE JUDGE'S HOUSE, ITALIAN CITY - MORNING

JACQUELINE, her neck bandaged, sits on the step outside the door to the Judge's House. Next to her sits her suitcase, along with her stack of books tied up with thread. She contemplates something across the street.

The portrait of the Judge sits across the street, leaning against a wall where JACQUELINE placed it.

JACQUELINE turns to her left as a police car approaches and pulls to a stop.

ALESSANDRO alights from the police car.

JACQUELINE regards ALESSANDRO with a blank stare for a moment, and then turns her attention back to the painting.

ALESSANDRO approaches JACQUELINE. He turns and glances across the street at the painting.

ALESSANDRO

You and the Judge are leaving the house, I see.

JACQUELINE

Yes.

ALESSANDRO

Will you be returning to England?

JACQUELINE

No.

ALESSANDRO nods.

ALESSANDRO

Out of curiosity, may I ask your destination?

JACQUELINE glances down with a tremor in her voice.

JACQUELINE

Heidelberg.

ALESSANDRO

Ah, yes, a beautiful city. And a venerable university.

An awkward pause follows as JACQUELINE continues to stare at the painting.

ALESSANDRO looks up at the house.

ALESSANDRO

It is interesting how a house can drive someone to madness.
Or perhaps . . .

ALESSANDRO turns his attention to the painting as well.

ALESSANDRO

Perhaps some houses contain such foul spirits of the past,
that they torment the innocent.

The Judge in the painting stares back at JACQUELINE and ALESSANDRO with a malevolent gaze still unsettling in the bright morning light.

ALESSANDRO turns his gaze off into the distance.

ALESSANDRO

It is strange. Still - it serves to remind us that,
sometimes, we judge too harshly in haste.

JACQUELINE glances down once more, then looks up at the sound of another car approaching from her right.

A taxi approaches.

JACQUELINE stands up.

JACQUELINE

Here is my taxi.

The taxi pulls to a stop in front of the house.

ALESSANDRO

Well, then, as we Italians say, buon viaggio.

ALESSANDRO turns and heads back to his car.

As the CAB DRIVER opens the trunk for JACQUELINE, ALESSANDRO'S car turns and drives back down the street. The CAB DRIVER places JACQUELINE'S suitcase and books in the trunk of the taxi and closes it.

JACQUELINE casts one last glance back at the painting, and then turns to the CAB DRIVER.

JACQUELINE

Un momento, per favore.

JACQUELINE opens her handbag and looks inside.

The tarot deck sits inside the handbag.

JACQUELINE smiles sadly to herself.

JACQUELINE roots around inside the handbag and pulls out a matchbook. She approaches the painting, strikes a match and, with a frown of loathing, throws the match against the painting.

The varnish on the painting immediately catches fire as "Neve Calda" from Il Balletto di Bronzo begins on the soundtrack.

JACQUELINE goes to the taxi and jumps in the back seat, pulling the door shut behind her. The taxi drives away.

The painting is now ablaze.

Seen up close, the malignant face of the Judge is consumed in flames. Il Balletto di Bronzo continues over the closing credits.

THE END

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