

THE LAST WITCH TRIAL

Written by

Tom Stohlgren

C O N T A C T S

Tom Stohlgren

Writer

E: [tjstohlgren@gmail.com](mailto:tjstohlgren@gmail.com)

Eleni Larchanidou, LLM

Literary & Talent Manager

E: [Managerelenilllm@gmail.com](mailto:Managerelenilllm@gmail.com)

E: [Movieselenilllm2014@gmail.com](mailto:Movieselenilllm2014@gmail.com)

P: 1-714 702 5507 USA (Google Voice and Direct Number)

P: +30-690 902 0698 GR (WhatsApp, Viber)

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The Last Witch Trial

FADE IN:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

We see JUDGE HORACE GRAY (50), a highly intelligent but worried, judge in a robe, with two stacks of papers on the bench.

SUPER: "May 1878 in Salem, Massachusetts"

The Judge stares to his right at DANIEL SPOFFORD (34), a nicely dressed man with a long-dark beard, sitting alone behind a table. The Judge glances at his notes.

Everyone has New England accents.

JUDGE GRAY  
Mr. Daniel Spofford...

DANIEL SPOFFORD  
(interrupts)  
Doctor Daniel Spofford.

JUDGE GRAY  
Says here you were born in New  
Hampshire, fought for the Union in  
the Civil War, menial laborer  
after. Didn't see medical training.

DANIEL SPOFFORD  
Under Dr. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science  
and Health with Key to the  
Scriptures*, Your Honor.

The Judge rolls his eyes.

JUDGE GRAY  
Says here, you were expelled from  
the Association of Christian  
Scientists on grounds of immorality  
last January.

Spofford looks away.

DANIEL SPOFFORD  
Never proved. Sack 'o lies, Your  
Honor.

JUDGE GRAY  
Never proven. I see.

The Judge turns to his left to see LUCRETIA BROWN (50), a spinster who looks much older and who is in constant back pain.

JUDGE GRAY (CONT'D)

Miss Lucretia Brown from just up the road in Ipswich.

LUCRETIA BROWN

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE GRAY

Says here you suffered a back injury as a child, also studied under Mary Baker Eddy, and you were healed by Christian Science.

LUCRETIA BROWN

Yes, Sir, Your Honor. Power of prayer.

JUDGE GRAY

Your petition for the law suit against Mr. Spofford, here...

DANIEL SPOFFORD

(interrupts)

Doctor Daniel Spofford.

JUDGE GRAY

Mr. Spofford, here, claims that you suffered a relapse these past two years because Mr. Spofford interfered with your health through mesmerism; sending you evil thoughts with his mind.

LUCRETIA BROWN

Yes, Your Honor. Powers of darkness. Witchcraft!

JUDGE GRAY

Says here, and I quote, "the power of his mind influences and controls the minds and bodies of other persons, and uses his said power and art for the purposes of injuring the persons and property and social relations of others."

Lucretia stands in pain and yells at Spofford.

LUCRETIA BROWN  
 He used malicious animal magnetism  
 on me!

Spofford stands and yells back at her.

DANIEL SPOFFORD  
 Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't!

JUDGE GRAY  
 Sit down and be still! The both of  
 ya!

They sit and sneer at each other.

DANIEL SPOFFORD  
 And I know Mary Baker Eddy, founder  
 of Christian Science is waiting  
 outside the courtroom with twenty  
 avid followers.  
 (snickers)  
 Excuse me, doctors, along with  
 reporters from the Boston Globe,  
 Newburyport Herald, and Salem  
 Observer!

Spofford and Lucretia nod 'yes,' and smile as they look back.

The Judge smiles.

JUDGE GRAY  
 I got news for them.  
 (beat)  
 There hasn't been a witchcraft  
 trial on U.S. soil in over 200  
 years, and I'll be damned if  
 there's gonna be one now.

LUCRETIA BROWN  
 But, Your Honor?

Judge Gray points and glares at Lucretia.

JUDGE GRAY  
 I realize you believe in the power  
 of prayer to heal your sore back.

LUCRETIA BROWN  
 Yes, Your Honor. Mary Baker Eddy,  
 who is right outside...

JUDGE GRAY

(interrupting)

But you offered no proof that Mr. Spofford harmed you with his malicious animal magnetism.

Spofford grins and chuckles.

DANIEL SPOFFORD

Not proved.

The Judge scowls at Spofford.

JUDGE GRAY

Mr. Spofford, do you believe in the power of prayer to heal the sick.

DANIEL SPOFFORD

Yes, sir.

JUDGE GRAY

And the powers of malicious animal magnetism?

DANIEL SPOFFORD

Yes, sir. Like Mary Baker Eddy said.

JUDGE GRAY

Exactly, so no matter which one you wins the lawsuit, one of Mary Baker Eddy's theories also wins. Hell, maybe both do.

The Judge stands.

JUDGE GRAY (CONT'D)

You put me in a tough spot. If this case goes to trial and I jailed Mr. Spofford, it would do no good whatsoever, because he could keep sending his malicious thoughts to counteract any prayers Miss Brown might be receiving from others.

Lucretia and Spofford look confused, then reluctantly nod yes.

JUDGE GRAY (CONT'D)

I won't be a part to this frivolous lawsuit without legal theory or factual evidence. I need proof!

The Judge pounds his gavel on the bench.

JUDGE GRAY (CONT'D)  
Case dismissed.

As the Judge turns his back to the two people who glaring at him with evil eyes, he grabs his side in sudden pain as he exits.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Dense fog.

SUPER: "Present Day, October"

A rusty mailbox reads, "James."

A tired excuse of an old, small house has dim lights on in the parlor. In the b.g., a TV plays an episode of "Cheers."

We hear the darkly mysterious voice of DANICA JAMES (15), a genius since birth as everyone knows.

DANICA (V.O.)

Proud to say I was born and raised just 30 minutes away from Salem, Massachusetts, and, I helped put the nearby café on the map as the site of the very last witch trial in America.

(beat)

You see, four years ago, I scored a near-perfect score on a big college entrance exam. I was eleven years, eleven months, and eleven days old. Youngest person to score that high!

(beat)

Worst day of my life for two reasons. First, my father died outside the barn later that very same night. And second, people came out of the woodwork to exploit me, Mama, and my big brother, Norm.

(beat)

I know they're just curious, but that makes me angry. Very, very angry.

(beat)

I'd dreamed I could use a little malicious animal magnetism on them!

(beat)

But tonight, something went very, very, very wrong!

A black cat meows and scurries across the porch and yard.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM BELLINGHAM (60) steps out of the house wearing a hat, blue college blazer with an "H" on the pocket, and carrying a briefcase. He wears a forced smile.

DANICA (V.O.)

And to think Professor William Bellingham from a big Ivy League school was supposedly one of the smartest men in the country.

Half-way across the dirt road to his car, his face and hands begin to show red hives.

By the time he opens his car door, the hives are far worse.

At the front door, Danica steps out and politely waves goodbye with an envelope in her hand. She's a pretty girl with pale-white skin, and bright-red shoulder-length curly hair. She wears a bright yellow dress that's too short, white socks, black shiny shoes, and a Massachusetts smile.

The man begins to scratch uncontrollably. He can't wave back.

He gets in the car, wildly scratches his arms, and races off down the street.

DANICA (V.O.)

In my defense, I just told him the truth, and he got all nervous.

We HEAR the man screaming from half-a-block away.

MAMA (Catherine James; 40s), and son Norman James (NORM; 18), appear behind Danica at the door. Mama has prematurely graying hair, and is dressed in a tattered blue housecoat. Norm is handsome as the day is long in blue jeans and a tight muscle-shirt, but he has a bit of a learning disability that is never discussed.

The man's car is long gone when Danica stops waving. The family turns to step back inside. Everyone has Boston accents.

MAMA

Didn't care for the man. Called Salem, "For Salem."

NORM

He did, Mama. That's a fact. Plus, we don't live in Salem. That's a half-hour from here if we had a car, which we don't.

DANICA

Bet he regrets it, 'bout now.

Mama nods, 'yes,' and Norm and Danica snicker quietly, before shutting the screen door.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We see a family room with a small couch and an easy chair with an end table and lamp between them. Mama, Norm, and Danica are crammed into the couch. The easy chair is empty.

A small TV opposite the couch shows reruns of "Cheers," to which Mama and Norm are glued. The volume is high. Danica has an open laptop, and opens the envelope (15 \$100-bills), and counts it.

She hands a \$100 bill to Mama and Norm.

Mama puts her money in her bra, Norm puts it in his pocket.

NORM

I still hate Grandma, 'cause she hated Father.

Danica returns to the remainder to the envelope, which she puts under her butt.

DANICA

I understand, Norm.

Norm is instantly angry, but doesn't take his eyes off the TV.

NORM

She didn't have to hate Father!

Mama pats Norm on his leg, while watching TV.

MAMA

We understand, baby!

(beat)

Where's the money come from, dear?

DANICA

Anonymous university donors so it can't be traced. No strings attached. A bribe to get me to go to their Ivy League school instead of little Merrimack College.

Norm is calm again.



NORM  
Go Warriors.

DANICA  
Yes, Norm. Go Warriors.

Mama and Norm watch TV, while Danica types into her laptop.

LATER (another episode of Cheers is on TV)

There's a KNOCK at the front door.

No one moves.

There's a second KNOCK on the door. We hear the soft voice of SHERIFF MATEO SANTOS (50s), a Latino in uniform and holster but no pistol.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Catherine, it's Mateo.

Mama yells.

MAMA  
For Christ's sakes, Mateo, come in!

The Sheriff enters with a notebook and pen. He stares at the empty easy chair, then bows politely to each member of the family, as they watch TV and ignore him.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Catherine, Norm, Danica, sorry I  
can't say I been here since Ed  
died. Fishin' hasn't been the same,  
I can tell ya that!

No one looks up from the TV.

The Sheriff steals glances at the TV, and shuffles toward the easy chair. Mama turns angry.

MAMA  
Nobody sits in Father's chair.  
Nobody!

The Sheriff shuffles toward the door, as he reads from his notebook.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Stopped a man drivin' crazy on the  
road from here. Man named Professor  
William Bellingham from Boston.  
Said he came to see you, Danica.

DANICA  
Yes, sir. That's a fact.

The Sheriff begins to sweat.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
'Notha college recruiter? How'd he  
look when he left here?

Danica stands, walks slowly to the Sheriff as she speaks and steals glances at the notes in the Sheriff's notebook.

DANICA  
Like the Archangel Michael  
collectin' souls after he lost his  
own.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Thing is, Danica, I looked up his  
name on that there Googla and it  
said he was like the smartest man  
in America. Comin' here?

The Sheriff puts his notebook in his pocket, and shuffles back toward the front door, but Danica reaches out to hold his two hands in hers. [The sheriff feels increasing pain throughout his body the longer they hold hands.]

Mama and Norm continue watching TV with occasional chuckles.

The Sheriff is stunned as Danica appears to be reading his mind, and the one lamp in the room dims while she reads it.

DANICA  
Yes, I know. Since the dawn of  
time, people disliked other people  
who are different than them, but  
they fear different people who are  
smarter than them.

(beat)

And, Sheriff, you know that city-  
folk get awfully nervous when they  
travel way out here. Specially if  
they come through Salem.

The Sheriff's eyes open widely, in pain, as he glances at the envelope of money that Danica left on the couch.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
And you know how hard it is for  
Mama and Norm to make ends meet  
since my father's passing.

Mama and Norm chuckle at the TV, ignoring Danica.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Yes, Danica, but...

DANICA

(interrupting, smirking  
darkly)

Oh, Sheriff! You know there's never been even one successful prosecution of witchcraft in hundreds of years. You just looked up the case, didn't you?

The Sheriff nods 'yes' nervously. His pain grows.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Why the case of Lucretia Brown versus Daniel Spofford in 1878 in Ipswich, Massachusetts, just a stone's throw from here. Case was based on the Christian Science belief in Malicious Animal Magnetism, where one person could physically harm another by directing mental energy at them. We both know how silly that sounds!

The Sheriff nods 'yes' nervously again. The light in the lamp dims and brightens again.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Judge threw that case right out!  
You knew that, right?

The Sheriff nods 'yes' nervously again in severe pain.

The light in the lamp brightens and dims again, as Danica releases his hands. The Sheriff's pain subsides.

The Sheriff eases out the screen door, happy to leave.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Don't you worry none, Sheriff. You were friends with Father. You got nothin' to worry 'bout, do you?

We hear the Sheriff running to his patrol car and racing off, as Danica waves and smiles goodbye.

We hear Mama and Norm chuckling at the TV.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

It's a warm summer day. The backyard of the old house reveals a 1900s mini-farm. We see four cows in a small pasture, a chicken coop, a windmill, and water troughs. Danica exits the chicken coop with a bowl of eggs, while Norm is weeding the perfectly manicured vegetable garden. Norm smiles at Danica.

NORM  
How's Bernadette?

DANICA  
Spell it for me, please.

NORM  
B-E-R-N-A-D-E-T

DANICA smiles.

DANICA  
D-E-T-T-E. Silent E at the end.

NORM  
I only hear one 'T.'

DANICA  
Two 'Ts' make a one-'T' sound.

Norm looks to the side, thinking. He smiles when he sees his best and only friend, LOUIS (16), a tall, handsome African-American, enter through a side gate. Louis crushes on Danica, but he's never acted on it.

NORM  
I guess two 'Ss' make one 'S'  
sound, right? Here comes Louis the  
ass-ss-hole!

Louis laughs and smiles, and bear-hugs Norm. He thinks twice about bear-hugging Danica, but backs off.

DANICA  
Hi, Louis. What brings you way out  
here?

LOUIS  
Had to see my best bud, Norm, and  
to tell ya the news I heard outside  
the post office just now.

NORM  
What happen? Dani get more mail?  
Gets more mail than anyone in three  
counties.

LOUIS

Some professor was found drowned at  
Crane Pond.

NORM

Only two-feet deep?

DANICA

Last night?

LOUIS

Told Sheriff Santos he was headin'  
south to Boston, but drove west to  
Crane Pond, hiked out in the fog  
and dark, then fell flat and  
drowned!

Norm smiles and paces excitedly.

NORM

'Member when we went to Crane Pond  
and set off them bottle rockets?

DANICA

Norm, this is serious.

Norm stops smiling, but continues talking.

NORM

All Massachusetts saw 'em.

DANICA

Who found him?

LOUIS

Sheriff found his car at the  
trialhead. Few tiny drops of blood  
leading to the pond.

DANICA

This isn't good.

Norm doesn't quite understand.

Mama yells from inside the house.

MAMA (O.S.)

Somebody answer the goddamn door!

DANICA

Comin', Mama.

Danica races in the back door, while directing Louis.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Louis, help Norm out here for a bit, and I'll help you with history homework later, okay?

LOUIS

Sure, Dani.

(to Norm)

Let's get these ass-ss-hole weeds, Norm.

Norm smiles and weeds, as Louis looks worried.

NORM

I didn't hear no knock on the door. How did you hear it?

They both continue weeding while they talk.

LOUIS

I'm the only black in the town now since my dad got shot in Iraq. If there's a loud knock on a door anywhere in the three-county area, I hear it!

Norm smiles.

NORM

That's funny.

LOUIS

What's funny, Norm.

NORM

You only hear one 'T' in Bernadette, but there's really two, and one 'S' in asshole, but there's really two!

Louis laughs nervously.

LOUIS

You're so right, Norm!

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mama watches reruns of *Cheers* on the couch, as Danica answers to door.

DANICA  
 Hi, Sheriff. What a surprise. And  
 Ms. Reynolds, Haven't seen you  
 since fourth grade.

The Sheriff struts in first, followed by MS. REYNOLDS (40s),  
 a pale-white school teacher with a constantly sour  
 disposition.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Mind if we come in?

MS. REYNOLDS  
 Hello, Danica. Mrs. James.

DANICA  
 We can sit at the kitchen table.

Danica leads them past Mama, who looks around them to see her  
 show.

We see a perfectly clean kitchen right out of the 1950s.  
 Danica grabs three water glasses and a pitcher of ice water  
 from the fridge.

They sit around a small wooden table with four chairs. Danica  
 sits so she can keep an eye on Louis, who has his shirt off.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
 What brings you by?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Haven't you heard the news?

Ms. Reynolds folds her hands together on the table.

MS. REYNOLDS  
 Or felt the news?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 (to Ms. Reynolds)  
 Now, Ms. Reynolds.  
 (to Danica)  
 That Professor who was here last  
 night. We found him in Crane Pond  
 this morning. Dead.

Danica calmly sips her water.

DANICA  
 That's awful! What time did he die?

SHERIFF SANTOS

That was easy. Watch stopped at  
8:05 PM. Filled with water.

DANICA

You've got a perfect alibi,  
Sheriff. You were here talking to  
Mama, Norm, and me at 8:05.

The Sheriff checks his notebook, and pockets it immediately  
with a nasty expression on his face.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Like I said last night, I stopped  
him on the road for driving wild.  
Crazy! Scratching like a hound.  
Tryin' to drive while switching  
hands to paw at himself.

MS. REYNOLDS

Sounds awful! But I remember fourth  
grade...

DANICA

(interrupting)

I'm sure you do, Ms. Reynolds.

Danica reaches across the table and holds both of Ms.  
Reynolds' hands gently. Ms. Reynolds can't speak. She starts  
to feel her body ache all over.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Fourth grade was my last year at  
the school, wasn't it, Ms.  
Reynolds?

Ms. Reynolds nods 'Yes' with a worried look. Her lips move,  
but she doesn't speak. She tries to hide her pain.

The Sheriff stares back and forth from Danica to Ms.  
Reynolds. He stands suddenly.

SHERIFF SANTOS

We should get going.

He peeks toward the garden.

DANICA

Home schooling seemed a better fit  
for me, don't you agree, Ms.  
Reynolds?

Ms. Reynolds nods 'Yes,' almost in tears.



SHERIFF SANTOS

Is that Louis out there with Norm?

Danica is not distracted by the Sheriff, and continues holding Ms. Reynolds hands. She's in real pain now.

DANICA

Thanks for dropping by. Always a pleasure to hear from you. I thank you every day for the education you gave me.

The Sheriff grabs Ms. Reynolds' hand and breaks the spell. Ms. Reynolds is furious.

MS. REYNOLDS

You gave every student an inferiority complex!

SHERIFF SANTOS

We'll stop by another time.

MS. REYNOLDS

You showed me up and embarrassed me every day!

The Sheriff pulls Ms. Reynolds past Mama and to the front door.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Gotta run.

MS. REYNOLDS

Gave me an inferiority complex!  
There's something not right with you!

The Sheriff pushes Ms. Reynolds out the door.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Maybe I'll call you later, Danica.  
I still have a few more questions.

MS. REYNOLDS (O.S.)

I told the Sheriff everything!  
(yells)  
Everything!

Danica peeks out the front door.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Sheriff guides a nervous Ms. Reynolds to his patrol car.

Danica waves goodbye with a smile.

MS. REYNOLDS  
(whispers)  
I feel itchy. Do you feel itchy?

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Danica shuts the door, and strolls by Mama with a smile.

DANICA  
Deviled egg sandwich for lunch,  
Mama?

Mama remains glued to the TV.

MAMA  
Sounds heavenly, dear.

DANICA  
Louis is outback with Norm.  
Inviting him for lunch. Gonna help  
him with his studies later.

Danica pours Mama a glass of cold water and delivers it.

MAMA  
(grumbles)  
Never liked that tramp, Ms.  
Reynolds!

DANICA  
I know, Mama. I know.

EXT./INT. CAFÉ - DAY

A big white man, JUDGE RAY BRICKLE (60) adjusts his gray suit coat, and steps out of his new white SUV.

A ladder leans against café where someone has left a half a strand of Christmas lights dangling over the door.

The Judge walks under the ladder enters the café like a local god. IZZY BRUENER (40s) wears a white apron at the counter and is already writing his order.

JUDGE  
Corned beef on rye...

IZZY  
 (interrupts)  
 Extra rye toast, extra butter, and  
 coffee, white and sweet!  
 (looks up)  
 Sheriff's in the corner waitin'.

The Sheriff stands politely as the Judge joins him. They shake hands and sit.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Thanks for drivin' all this way,  
 Judge.

JUDGE  
 Hell, ten miles for Izzy's corned  
 beef on rye is worth it. Why we  
 meeting here instead of the  
 courthouse or the Sheriff's Office?

The Sheriff leans in with a serious look and whispers.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Don't want the publicity.

JUDGE  
 'Bout your suicide?

Izzy brings two cups of coffee and hesitates to gather gossip.

IZZY  
 Meal's coming. This about that fool  
 who drowned himself?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Izzy...

IZZY  
 Every three years or so,  
 somebody...

The Judge looks sternly at Izzy.

JUDGE  
 Izzy! Keep your ears tucked in on  
 this one. Bad for business.

Izzy grunts, turns, and mumbles as she leaves.

IZZY  
 Brought you two in, didn't it?  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

IZZY (CONT'D)

Folks is saying he met with that scary Danica James. Whole family's different if you ask me!

The Sheriff reaches for his coffee cup without looking and knocks it half-over before catching it. He wipes up spilt coffee as the Judge whispers.

JUDGE

Coroner says nothin' wrong with him. What's buggin' ya, Mateo?

SHERIFF SANTOS

No cell phone call before he drowned. No suicide note. No trouble at home, his university, nothin'! Doc looked at him before your coroner took him.

JUDGE

What did ol' Doc Not-dead-yet have to say?

The Sheriff pulls out his notebook and reads.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Now, Ray, she's well north of seventy, but she's seen it all 'round here.

JUDGE

Spit it out!

SHERIFF SANTOS

That's what's bugging me. Doc Shelly says there were no bug bites.

JUDGE

Coroner's report also said scratch marks on his hands, face, and neck, but no bug bites. Don't that beat all?

SHERIFF SANTOS

Zero bug bites?

JUDGE

Checked for mosquitos, midges, black flies, ticks, everythin'.  
(worried)  
Nothin'! I mean nothin'.

SHERIFF SANTOS

That's why you're here. Somethin'  
ain't right.

Izzy hears the Sheriff as she delivers two corned beef on rye dinners. She grabs the salt shaker off the table, shakes a little salt in her palm, and tosses it over her shoulder.

The Sheriff and Judge smirk in disbelief.

Izzy returns to the counter mumbling but they hear her just fine.

IZZY

Father was a drunk, Mama was a  
whore, brother ain't right in the  
head, and that Danica's a witch.  
That's what!

SHERIFF SANTOS

That's enough, Izzy.

Izzy turns back to them from the counter.

IZZY

What folks been sayin' for years.

The Sheriff whispers.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Here's the thing, Ray. Ms.  
Reynolds, teacher at the school  
says the exact same thing in  
different words. I took her by the  
house this morning for my own  
safety.

JUDGE

Protecting you from what?

SHERIFF SANTOS

The girl! That's what I'm saying.  
Ms. Reynolds says ain't no way a  
big Ivy League university should be  
recruiting a fifteen-year-old from  
the sticks for law school when she  
ain't even been to college yet! And  
that ain't all.

JUDGE

What?

The Sheriff reads from his notebook.

SHERIFF SANTOS

She's had dozens of other recruiters show up at her door from universities, research laboratories, computer firms, even the federal government from what I found out on the Googla! All since she passed that damn college entrance exam before she was twelve!

JUDGE

That isn't any of our concern, Mateo. Good for her. Sounds like her family could use a break!

SHERIFF SANTOS

Day she passes that exam, her father gives her a fancy laptop computer, and he up and dies that night.

JUDGE

How'd he die again?

Izzy chimes in as she delivers the check from the counter.

IZZY

Found him out behind the barn, not a damn thing wrong with him, 'cept he was dead.

(shakes her head in disgust)

Ask our Mexican sheriff!

Izzy races back to the kitchen.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Your coroner said the same thing. Natural causes. 'Cept he did have scratches on his hands, face, and neck too!

The Judge looks away, scratching his neck.

JUDGE

I'll ask my Coroner to see if anybody else scratched that professor, or if he scratched himself. One of those fancy new DNA tests.

Both are eating their corned beef on rye sandwiches, but they have difficulty swallowing. They avoid eye contact.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Ain't the worst of it.

They lock eyes in an ominous stare.

JUDGE  
Now what?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Ms. Reynolds started scratching  
after we visited the girl, and I  
had to take that teacher right on  
over to the Doc's to get her some  
of that Benadryl.

The Judge is suspicious.

JUDGE  
But you were fine?

The Sheriff looks away.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
I was scared.  
(smiles)  
Not now, but I was then. Can't  
explain it! Just can't explain it.

JUDGE  
Uh huh.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Ain't ya gonna do nothin'?

The Judge pushes his plate away, with one untouched piece of  
rye toast.

We ZOOM IN on the rye toast to see tiny green and purple mold  
hidden in the toast.

JUDGE  
Ask the Coroner to test the  
fingernails. Better be gettin' on  
down the road.

The Judge reaches out to pick up the check.

The Sheriff sees the Judge is developing red blotches on his  
hand.

The Sheriff grabs the check with a worried look at the Judge.

SHERIFF SANTOS

I got this, Ray. Call me tomorrow,  
will ya?

The Judge nods 'yes,' hides his hands, and races out the door.

The Sheriff grabs the uneaten rye toast off the Judge's plate, and starts to eat it.

He takes out his notebook, and scribbles a note that reads, "Witch?"

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Mama and Norm sit on the couch, mesmerized by the T.V.

Danica is helping Louis with his homework at the kitchen table. Danica's laptop computer and a U.S. History book lay unopened on the table, as they have hot coffee, white and sweet, and Nilla Wafers, sneaking glances at each other. Louis's hands are below the table.

DANICA

1620?

LOUIS

Mayflower lands at Plymouth,  
Massachusetts, carrying settlers.

DANICA

John Winthrop, a Puritan, named the  
Massachusetts Colony after an  
Algonquin tribe. What do you think  
of that?

LOUIS

There was a tribe named Colony?

Danica glares at him.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Moving on. Puritans hated  
Catholics, and wanted to purify  
Protestants, and take the Indian's  
land.

DANICA

Native Americans!

LOUIS

Native Americans.



DANICA

How does that make you feel?

Louis chuckles as he pulls an arm from under the table and grabs for a cookie.

LOUIS

Don't feel nothin'. Wasn't there.

Danica sees he has a few red blotches on his hands and arms.

DANICA

What are those red marks?

Louis remains calm.

LOUIS

Mosquitos. I'm like meat bait.  
Since I was a kid. My mom put me in  
the corner of the kitchen 'cause I  
attracted 'em.

(proudly)

I was her no-pest strip and fly  
paper rolled into one. In that  
vegetable garden of yours, me and  
Norm were the only source of blood!

Danica laughs.

DANICA

Want Benadryl?

LOUIS

Nope. Gone by morning.

(beat)

Didn't they burn witches in  
Massachusetts?

Danica stands and faces out the window sadly.

DANICA

1692. Group of young girls down the  
road in Salem were acting  
strangely. Said invisible forces  
were biting and pinching them.  
Caused a wave of panic. Villagers,  
including some of my distant  
ancestors, said the girls had been  
bewitched.

Louis itches his arms, face, and neck.

LOUIS

Crazy talk.

DANICA

The girls accused a Native American slave, a beggar woman, and an old, crippled widow...

Danica glances at her Mama.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Of casting spells on them.

LOUIS

They hang 'em?

DANICA

Over 200 men, women, and children were accused, 20 of 'em were tortured or hanged, including a preacher!

LOUIS

Twenty hanged! My Lord!

Danica laughs.

DANICA

My grandma says that means a hundred and eighty got away! Love my grandma's way of looking at things.

LOUIS

Jesus! Most are still out there!

DANICA

That's why history is important.

LOUIS

So we don't repeat it, right?  
(laughs)  
Wish my teacher didn't repeat it.

Danica whispers to Louis.

DANICA

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."

Danica pulls Louis up by the hand, and leads him toward the back door. They share a moment and smile.

INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Izzy has a towel in one hand wiping down tables, as she speaks into her cell phone with a snarky voice.

IZZY

That's what folks are saying. It's not me!

(pause)

Uh huh.

(pause)

Now they're looking into how poor Ed died.

(pause)

Uh huh.

(pause)

Ms. Reynolds was covered with hives or welts or bites or something.

That's a fact!

(pause, astonished)

Africanized Killer Bees? Not this far north. Tourists tell me they're in Texas, Arizona, and California, but I'll keep my ears open as always.

(pause)

Uh huh. Well, I don't want to be speaking out of school, but nothin's been the same since Sheriff Tucker, a fine Protestant mind you, took that promotion in Springfield, and they replaced him with the Mexican.

(pause)

Uh huh. Two-dollar tip for two dinners, but he is kinda cute, and between you and me, he's one of the only other Christians in the county who goes to church!

(pause)

Uh huh. Other one's the priest.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

Mama wears an old print housecoat, and sits on the couch watching TV, when she hears a soft knock on the front door. She ignores it.

A louder KNOCK follows, so Mama yells.

MAMA

Answer the door!

She hears a familiar voice. It's FATHER PETR NOVAK (50), a Catholic Priest in robe and collar, speaking softly.

FATHER NOVAK (O.S.)  
Catherine. It's me, Petr. I mean,  
Father Novak.

Mama's eyes open widely.

MAMA  
Just a minute, Father!

Mama jumps from the couch, and races into her bedroom. A little later, she yells again.

MAMA (CONT'D)  
Another minute, Father!

We hear rustling in the bedroom.

MAMA (CONT'D)  
Almost there, Father!

Mama races out of the bedroom in a black V-neck dress, with black pumps, and hastily applied red lipstick. She has a scarf wrapped around her head to hide her un-brushed hair.

Mama opens the door to see the handsome priest soaking wet.

MAMA (CONT'D)  
Father, come in. You're soaking  
wet!

The Priest points to a bicycle leaning against a tree.

FATHER NOVAK  
A parishioner from the parish lent  
me the bicycle. The Lord lent me  
the rain.

As the Priest enters, Mama looks out at the darkening sky.

MAMA  
My heavens, looks like we're in for  
quite a storm.

Mama turns off the TV. The priest laughs.

FATHER NOVAK  
Maybe a tornado if I play my cards  
wrong.

Father Novak heads to the easy chair, but Mama hooks his elbow, and leads him toward the kitchen table.

MAMA

Come, I'll make us hot coffee,  
white and sweet.

The Priest looks around at the rather clean house.

FATHER NOVAK

Where are the children?

MAMA

They finished their chores. That nice young man, Louis came by to take them to the café for lunch. Norm came into some money, and he likes to feel like a big shot from time to time.

FATHER NOVAK

I mean, I haven't seen them, or you, for that matter, at Sunday Mass for some time.

The Father sits down at the kitchen table. Mama looks totally lost in the kitchen.

MAMA

Busy since Ed passed.

FATHER NOVAK

Busy, huh?

MAMA

All took on more chores around the house.

Mama can't find the coffee pot.

MAMA (CONT'D)

Lost without my Ed.

The Priest gets up and finds the coffee maker in the first cabinet he looks in.

He fills it with water and coffee, and plugs it in.

FATHER NOVAK

That's why I'm here, Catherine.

Catherine turns to face him, stunned, as the Priest hugs her briefly to comfort her.

MAMA

For me?

FATHER NOVAK  
It's about Danica.

Mama pushes the Priest back, and hunts for two coffee cups, which takes longer than it should. Mama turns angry.

MAMA  
What's she done now?

Father Novak points to God, and preaches loudly.

FATHER NOVAK  
Idle gossip, sprinkled with limited information, spreads like the fire and damnation of vicious rumors. The devil's playground!

Mama fills two coffee mugs, adds milk and sugar, and brings them to the table before collapsing on a chair. She looks down.

They hear THUNDER roar outside.

MAMA  
Devil's playground.

The Priest looks out the window to the backyard. He speaks like a sly devil to Mama.

FATHER NOVAK  
Are you sure they'll be gone a while?

Mama jumps up from the chair, grabs the Priest's hand, shuts off the coffee pot with her other hand, and guides the smiling priest into her bedroom.

MAMA  
Come all this way to hear my confession?

LATER

Mama, back in her housecoat, and the Priest all dressed but his collar is missing, are sitting at the kitchen table, trying to catch their breath, as Norm and Danica enter the front door.

The Priest stands, still breathing heavily.

DANICA  
Father Novak, what a surprise? Saw your bike outside.

Norm turns on the TV and returns to the couch in a sour mood.

Danica slowly walks around the kitchen.

FATHER NOVAK

Riding by. Stopped to see how you  
were all doing. Curious as to why I  
haven't seen the family at mass.

Danica feels the coffee pot, which is only warm.

She glances over at the mugs on the table to see full cups.

DANICA

Well, Father, we were only half-  
Catholic to begin with, and the  
half that was Protestant didn't  
want us to attend Mass, and half  
that was Catholic didn't want us to  
attend Protestant services.

The priest nervously puts his index finger to pull out his  
top-buttoned shirt. His eyes open widely as he feels for his  
priestly collar, but doesn't feel it.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Lose something, Father?

Mama sees that the Priest is missing his collar, and she  
races to her bedroom. Danica's eyes never leave the priest.

Mama returns with a hand towel, busy wiping the collar dry.

MAMA

Father Novak got stuck in that  
downpour.

Mama looks up to see Danica holding Father Novak's two hands.  
The priest is in pain.

DANICA

Thunderstorm had everything  
shaking, did it?

Father Novak opens his eyes widely, but can't speak. His pain  
grows.

Mama looks on helplessly.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Catholic Church was a thousand years old before it suggested celibacy for its priests in 1139 A.D., but they didn't enforce it back then. Isn't that right, Father?

The Priest nods, 'Yes.' Mama storms off to her room and slams the door.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Fact is, in the early years of the church, the clergy were largely made up of married men.

The Priest nods, 'Yes,' as he winces in pain.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Some studies today suggest that only 50% of priests retain their celibacy, and that over 6% sexually abuse minors.

The Priest nods, 'Yes,' biting his tongue so he doesn't scream.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Now that the storm has reached its climax, so to speak, I think it's time you peddle your goods elsewhere.

Danica releases the Priest's hands. He breathes a sigh of relief, turns and stomps furiously to the front door. Norm gives the Priest the evil-eye as he crosses the room.

The Priest stops, turns, and points a finger at Danica. He's shaking in fear; his eyes are huge and red.

FATHER NOVAK

They're right! You are a witch!

The priest turns and races out the door.

Danica shrugs at Norm, like she's puzzled.

Danica races to the door, and waves politely from inside. She sees the Priest struggle getting on the bike. As he rides away, she yells.



DANICA

Try Ms. Reynolds at the school, or Izzy at the café. They need to loosen up! That's a fact!

Norm remains glued to the T.V., but he chuckles.

NORM

That's a fact!

The old wall phone RINGS in the kitchen. Norm ignores it, so Danica answers it.

DANICA

James residence.

(pause)

This is she.

(pause)

Sasha Kinski, Ph.D.?

(pause)

Yes, Dr. Kinski, I'm familiar with your research laboratory: GMOs, fake foods, and pharmaceuticals, right?

(pause)

Biochemistry, Microbiology, Gastro-endocrinology, and a medical doctor?

(laughs)

Is that four Ph.D.s or two? Do I call you Doctor, Doctor, Doctor, Doctor Kinski?

(pause)

Just two Ph.D.s, I see. So it's just Doctor, Doctor Kinski.

(pause)

Uh huh.

(turns her back to Norm)

Isn't that interesting? You scored a perfect ACT score at the age of twelve in 1999. Hmmm. If my memory serves me correctly, you were almost 13 years old, were you not?

(pause)

That's right! I was 11 years, 11 months, and 11 days old on the day of the test with a near-perfect score.

(pause)

I know it's not a pissing contest, Dr. Kinski, I merely wished to establish...

(pause)

No, no.

(MORE)

DANICA (CONT'D)

I would love to meet with you, but it has to be here. I care for my...

(glances at Norm)

Ailing mother. Besides, I can't wait to meet the person who holds the record. If your alumni donors have anything to contribute to my mother's health fund, it will be greatly appreciated.

(pause)

Great. I'll see you tomorrow. Around dusk okay? We're busy all day.

(pause)

Wonderful. See you tomorrow, Doctor Doctor Kinski.

Danica hangs up the phone with a worried look.

Thunder ROARS again outside.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

The Sheriff tries to enjoy a cup of coffee, white and sweet, as he reads the morning newspaper.

Izzy refills his coffee cup.

IZZY

Like it white and sweet, don't you, Sheriff?

The Sheriff tries to ignore the snide remark. His cell phone rings. Izzy listens in.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Santos.

(pause)

Hi, Judge.

(pause)

DNA under the fingernails matches the deceased. Hmmm. I don't get it.

(pause)

Not your typical suicide victim: full social calendar coming up, other perspective students to see, booked flights, happy marriage, financially sound, never depressed. Don't make sense.

(pause, angrier)

I don't know what he and the James girl discussed, but I'm gonna find out!

(MORE)

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

(pause)

I get it. The family wants his body home. Cause of death, confirmed suicide. End of story. Right! But I'd still like to see that coroner's report. Thanks, Judge.

He ends the call, and takes out his notebook and furiously makes a note of the call.

Izzy shakes her head in disbelief.

IZZY

It ain't right. They can't test for witchcraft, can they, you M... Sheriff?

Izzy starts to stomp away.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Izzy? Your ancestors come on the Mayflower?

Izzy turns, angered by the question.

IZZY

Immigrated before World War One. Fine upstanding Lutheran farmers from Germany.

The Sheriff smiles.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Really? Great-grandparents, then?

IZZY

(insulted)

I'm not that old. They were my great-great grandparents! I suppose your parents snuck in across the fence! Tunnel, boat, hot air-balloon?

The Sheriff smiles again.

SHERIFF SANTOS

No. No. The Santos family dates back to the twelfth century. Proud noble coat of arms with centuries in Spain before coming to Florida with Ponce de León in 1513. Settled around St. Augustine. Nearly complete baptismal records.

IZZY

So?

SHERIFF SANTOS

So, that's a hundred years before northern-European pilgrims landed in the Mayflower. A hundred years before the first slave ships landed. I know you call me, 'the Mexican Sheriff.' Word gets around.

Izzy's eyes open widely. Like a deer in the headlights.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

You late-comers sure can be uppity! Thought you should know, I ain't never been to Mexico!

He smiles, leaves a five-dollar tip, and begins to stroll out.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Call me if Doc Shelly comes in, will ya? 'Nother fiver in it for you if you do, Señorita!

The Sheriff smiles.

Izzy pockets the five bucks, and glares at the Sheriff as he leaves.

Izzy takes out her cell phone and turns her back.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

Mama watches TV in a catatonic state, as Danica, Norm, and Louis sit at the kitchen table eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and drinking coffee, white and sweet.

NORM

I like this lunch.

LOUIS

Eat this every day, right?

DANICA

If it ain't broke...

NORM & LOUIS

It ain't broke!

Danica laughs, then Norm and Louis laugh.

Danica yells toward Mama.

DANICA  
Mama, how's your sandwich?

MAMA  
I asked for ham!

Everyone ignores Mama.

LOUIS  
Sheriff Santos called me this morning.

Danica is angered immediately. She yells.

DANICA  
What?

MAMA  
(yells)  
I asked for ham.

DANICA  
Not you, Mama.  
(to Norm)  
You stay here and eat. Louis, I'd like to talk to you outside.

Danica grabs Louis by the T-shirt, and yanks him out the back door.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A few feet from the door, Danica grabs Louis by the collar of his T-shirt, pulls him close with a threatening look.

DANICA  
What did he ask you? Exactly!

Louis gulps for air.

LOUIS  
Wanted to know if you had any dark moments or violent tendencies.

DANICA  
What'd you tell 'em?

LOUIS  
Told him no.

Danica lets his shirt go, and Louis steps back.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Asked how well I know you? Told 'em me and Norm are best buds, and that me and you 'bout the same.

DANICA

What he say?

LOUIS

He heard around town, probably from that ol' biddy, Ms. Reynolds, that you been doing my homework and Norm's homework since you was seven or eight, and I told him you was seven!

Danica smiles, but still looks worried.

DANICA

Sorry, Louis. That Sheriff has me riled up like a swarm of bees.

Louis steps closer to comfort Danica.

LOUIS

Come on then. Bring it in.

Danica shrugs and steps in for a hug.

The hug does not go as planned, as Louis gets an erection, and Danica's eyes open widely. She tries to push Louis back, but he instinctively clings tighter.

No one hears the back door open, and two heads pop out; Norm's and DR. SHASHA KINSKI (30s), a mysterious, dark-haired beauty. She wears all-black, and dark sunglasses.

Danica shoves him back as hard as she can, and Louis goes flying on his back.

NORM

A Doctor Kinski is here, went to mit.

Dr. Kinski sighs at Norm's inabilities.

DR. KINSKI

That's M.I.T. I didn't go to M.I.T.

NORM

That's what I said, mit.

Danica is angered by the disruption with Louis, and glares back and forth from Louis to Dr. Kinski.

DANICA  
Supposed to arrive at dusk!

Dr. Kinski stares at Louis bulging pants.

DR. KINSKI  
Was I interrupting something? I  
like to assess wildlife in its  
natural habitat.

DANICA  
Touché, Doctor, Doctor!  
(beat)  
You met my older brother, Norm.

DR. KINSKI  
I like Norm.  
(whispers to Danica)  
But we both know he has a dark  
side.

Danica glares at Dr. Kinski suspiciously.

Louis pops up chuckling, covering his erection with his arms  
and hands.

LOUIS  
I'm Louis. Friend of the fam!

Dr. Kinski, with one hand behind her, pushes past Norm and  
out the backdoor to shake hands with Danica.

DR. KINSKI  
(seductively)  
If that's how she treats her  
friends, I hope she hates me.

Danica pauses, then everyone laughs. Dr. Kinski shakes hands  
with everyone. In her left hand, she carries a 2-oz bottle  
with the label, "White & Sweet 1-Billion."

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
Call me, Sasha.

Norm is smitten. He is the last to shake hands, and shakes  
Dr. Kinski's hand a little longer than typical.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
I brought you probiotic coffee  
sweetener, our newest top-selling  
creation, and a box of chocolates.

NORM  
Nuts and chews?

DANICA  
"White & Sweet One Billion?"

DR. KINSKI  
Very observant, Norm. They are nuts  
and chews. Light and dark  
chocolate.  
(winks at Norm)  
I prefer dark.

Norm is giddy with happiness.

DANICA  
Norm, why don't you share them with  
Mama and Louis inside, while Dr.  
Kinski and I talk?

Norm and Louis race in the house with the box of chocolates.

NORM  
Thanks for the chocolates, lady.

LOUIS  
Yeah, thanks.

Dr. Kinski eyes Norm's butt.

Danica waits to hear the backdoor slam.

DANICA  
One billion what?

DR. KINSKI  
Live microorganisms to improve your  
gut flora. Sold everywhere. Our  
company breeds them and improves  
them, the microorganisms, that is.  
I handed samples out all over town.

DANICA  
Raw milk contains probiotics,  
prebiotic fibers, enzymes, and  
healthy fats. Why would I buy White  
& Sweet?

DR. KINSKI  
We add millions of other  
microorganisms, genetically  
engineered to make you strong.  
(laughs)  
But if you don't want to be  
strong...

Danica interrupts.



DANICA

Ever milk a cow, Doctor? I'll introduce you to life in northern Massachusetts. Follow me. And tell me why you're really here.

Danica walks down to a small open-air barn, with three cows eating alfalfa.

DR. KINSKI

Curiosity, mostly. Our probiotics team is recruiting you, like they recruited me. We do genetic modifications too, of course.

Danica points to a cow.

DANICA

That's Myrtle.

DR. KINSKI

After Myrtle Beach, South Carolina?

DANICA

After country singer Merle Haggard. Norm misspelled it. She's a girl anyway.

Dr. Kinski chuckles.

DR. KINSKI

Been tracking you since your college exam. We see you've aced many online college courses.

Danica stops and glares at Dr. Kinski.

DANICA

See Mama when you walked in?

DR. KINSKI

Yes, of course...

DANICA

(interrupts)

See Norm and the house?

Dr. Kinski looks away.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Looked you up. Your father's a world-famous neurosurgeon. Mom's an astrophysicist.

DR. KINSKI  
Your father died...

DANICA  
(interrupts)  
They can't take care of themselves.  
Don't ya see. I'm never leaving  
here. Never.

Danica turns. Tears form, but she quickly wipes them away.

DR. KINSKI  
I'll go.

Dr. Kinski turns slowly.

Danica grabs her by the arm and begs her.

DANICA  
What's it like?

The question puzzles Dr. Kinski.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
Being as smart as you?

Danica leads Dr. Kinski to a bale of hay, and sits. Dr. Kinski joins her.

DR. KINSKI  
Big, open-ended question.

DANICA  
They're the best kind.

Dr. Kinski lifts her sunglasses, and looks darkly into Danica's eyes.

DR. KINSKI  
Take my hands.

Danica pauses and resists like something is wrong.

Dr. Kinski smiles, and puts her hands out further.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
They don't bite.

Danica nervously presents her hands to Dr. Kinski.

Danica looks worried as dark clouds form overhead.

We hear THUNDER in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

DOC MAVIS SHELLY (70s) looks like everybody's grandma, and that's how she's treated when she enters the café. Four Patrons (various ages) stand to greet her, and cheer her health. The Doc laughs.

DOC SHELLY  
Go on, now. Eat.

Izzy comes out of the kitchen, waves and smiles at Doc Shelly, and turns and yells to the kitchen.

IZZY  
Doc's here. I'll grab the water.

The Sheriff enters and quickly grabs Doc's elbow to guide her to the back table.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Glad you could join me, Doc. Izzy,  
I'll have what Doc's having.

IZZY  
It'll cost you.

Izzy turns to the kitchen.

IZZY (CONT'D)  
Doc times two.

DOC SHELLY  
(whispers)  
What's all this about, Sheriff?

The Sheriff picks the table furthest away from anyone.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Few quick questions 'bout that  
professor fella that drowned, and  
about Danica.

DOC SHELLY  
Better hurry. Wanna be home before  
the storm this afternoon.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Seems I'm expectin' some kinda  
storm every time I say that girl's  
name!

We hear one roll of THUNDER in the distance. They both look out the window.

DOC SHELLY

You gone plum crazy too, with all those mind reading and witchcraft rumors?

Doc Shelly glares at Izzy.

The Sheriff ignores the comment and fires questions in rapid succession from his notebook.

SHERIFF SANTOS

That dead man, Professor William Bellingham. What did you think of the scratches on his face, hands, and neck?

DOC SHELLY

Nerves, bug bites, habit. Drowning's what killed him. Not them scratches.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Enough to drive him crazy?

DOC SHELLY

Crazy enough to drown himself? Don't believe so.

Izzy drops off two bowls of clam chowder and two glasses of water.

IZZY

Chowder. Even Mexicans like it, Sheriff.

Izzy smirks and turns back.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Thanks, Izzy.

DOC SHELLY

What's got her goat?

SHERIFF SANTOS

Coroner said the same thing. Suicide.

Doc sips her chowder.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
Just that it happened right after  
he visited your granddaughter.

Doc spits out her chowder. A look of terror on her face.

The Sheriff is stunned.

Then she laughs and scoffs at the Sheriff.

DOC SHELLY  
Salem, Massachusetts, is it?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
You didn't know?

Doc pushes away the bowl of chowder and gets up to leave.

DOC SHELLY  
I'm goin' home to beat the storm,  
and before ya hang me too!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Wait, Doc! Just a few more  
questions!

They hear thunder again. The Doc is leaving, so the Sheriff follows her with questions.

DOC SHELLY  
She's smarter than you! That's all.  
Smarter than all of us.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Tell me what you know about her.

Doc Shelly snarls at the Sheriff.

DOC SHELLY  
Doctor-witch confidentiality!

Doc Shelly turns and continues to exit quickly.

The Sheriff looks worried and puzzled.

DOC SHELLY (CONT'D)  
(mumbles)  
Mark my words, Sheriff. You look  
for pure evil, and you're gonna  
find it! I lived long enough to see  
everything in this town; lynching,  
torture, brutal murders.  
(turns and glares)  
(MORE)

DOC SHELLY (CONT'D)  
I'll tell you what scares people  
worse. The truth!

She exits. The Sheriff is stunned.

Thunder roars.

BACK TO:

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

Danica is still holding Dr. Kinski's hands, and she looks like she's in pain.

Danica slumps over and looks drained and worried, while Dr. Kinski sits up straight and looks strong and evil.

DR. KINSKI  
How many prestigious universities  
have tried to recruit you?

Danica answers weakly.

DANICA  
'Bout seventy, over three years.

DR. KINSKI  
How many slipped you cash from  
anonymous alumni or donors?

Danica looks away in pain.

DANICA  
'Bout seventy.

DR. KINSKI  
Hope you've been investing the  
cash.

DANICA  
Most of it.

DR. KINSKI  
Day trading?

DANICA  
Uh huh.

DR. KINSKI  
Diverse portfolio, mix of blue-chip  
and penny stocks, IPOs, tech-start-  
ups?

Danica nods 'yes.' She fights the pain.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
Who else knows?

Danica is silent, but her hands shake in fear and extreme pain.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
Who else knows?

Danica establishes eye contact, but she continues to shake in fear.

Thunder roars in the distance.

DANICA  
The sheriff. He's smart. Maybe the judge. Not as smart.

DR. KINSKI  
Where can I find them?

Silence.

Danica winces as if in pain. She tries to break her hands free, but can't.

Danica screams.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
Where can I find them?

DANICA  
Only café nearby. Practically live there!

DR. KINSKI  
Who else knew? Did Professor William Bellingham know?

DANICA  
How do you know about Professor Bellingham?

DR. KINSKI  
The dead travel fast!

Danica tries to pull away but can't.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
He knew, didn't he?

Danica slowly and reluctantly nods in pain, 'yes.'

A bolt of lightning flashes nearby, and thunder roars like a sonic boom.

Dr. Kinski calmly lets go of Danica's hands. It appears her spell, or means of control, vanishes.

DANICA

I'm curious, Dr. Kinski. How does someone as smart as you, two Ph.D.s and a medical degree settle for designing genetically modified coffee sweeteners?

Dr. Kinski is furious. Danica, who is frightened, races inside the house and locks the backdoor.

Dr. Kinski stomps out the side gate and disappears as a torrential rainstorm hits.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Danica races in to see Mama, Norm, and Louis with an empty box of chocolates on the couch in a catatonic state watching a blank TV screen.

Danica shakes in fear, but no one notices.

DANICA

Cable out again?

The couch potatoes nod 'yes.'

Norm smiles.

NORM

I like Dr. Kinski from mit.

DANICA

She's too... old for you, Norm.

Norm stares back at the blank TV.

NORM

She held both my hands for the longest time.

Danica's eyes open in panic.

DANICA

I need the Internet. Louis, can I borrow your bicycle?



LOUIS  
If we can go to the café later.

Danica smiles shyly as she nods yes.

DANICA  
Like a real date?

Louis nods 'yes.'

Norm and Mama are oblivious to the conversation.

Danica smiles before she disappears into her bedroom, and returns with a backpack and a poncho. She shoves her laptop into the backpack, throws it on her back, then tosses on the poncho and heads out the door.

BEGIN MONTAGE - Danica rides to Doc Shelly's

-- Danica rides the bike on a muddy road in the storm.

-- Danica passes the café without stopping. She turns her head to see the Judge and Dr. Kinski shaking hands at one table.

-- Danica rides up another muddy road in a storm.

-- Danica reaches a modest house, with a mailbox that reads, "Doc Shelly."

END MONTAGE

EXT. DOC SHELLY'S HOUSE - DAY

It's pouring rain. Danica races around the back of the house, past a small purring generator with a 5-gallon can of gasoline a few feet away.

She reaches the screen door.

She pauses for a moment, then pounds on the door.

DANICA  
It's me, Grandma.

INT. DOC SHELLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Doc Shelly unlocks the door, and opens it for Danica.

The inside of the kitchen is like a small weather monitoring station, flat-screen TV, and an antique table with two comfortable chairs. A tea pot is whistling.

DOC SHELLY  
Come darling, you'll catch a death.

Danica removes the poncho. Doc hands her a towel.

DANICA  
That's what I'm afraid of.

DOC SHELLY  
These fool forecasters have no  
idea...  
(beat)  
They found you, haven't they?

DANICA  
Yes.

DOC SHELLY  
Who?

DANICA  
Dr. Sasha Kinski. Two Ph.D.s from a  
top Ivy League university.

DOC SHELLY  
Abilities?

DANICA  
Same as me, stronger maybe.

DOC SHELLY  
How much stronger?

DANICA  
Scary strong. All I know. I need to  
borrow your generator's electricity  
for my laptop, and your satellite  
Wi-Fi.

Doc smiles, and removes the tea kettle.

DOC SHELLY  
Great way to pass the time during  
the storm. I'll make instant  
coffee, white and sweet. Family  
gonna be okay without you?

DANICA  
Had to leave 'em. I'll message  
Louis to keep an eye on them. Can't  
tip off my location 'til I figure  
things out.

Doc Shelly puts her arms on Danica's shoulders and speaks softly and prophetically.

DOC SHELLY

I've told you this story a hundred times. Native American elder says to his grandchild, "We each have two wolves inside of us; a good wolf and a bad wolf."

DANICA

And the grandchild asks, "Which one of the two wolves will grow?"

DOC SHELLY

And the elder says, "Which ever one you feed."

Danica stares at her Grandma with loving eyes.

DANICA

I'll feed the good wolf, Grandma.

They smile and share a moment.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

The Judge and Dr. Kinski sit in a corner table where they are whispering so low, Izzy can't hear them, driving her mad.

Dr. Kinski reaches across the table and holds both of the Judge's hands in hers, as Izzy comes by with coffee.

JUDGE

More coffee and sweetener, and some privacy, Izzy.

Dr. Kinski turns her face so as not to be easily identified.

Izzy pours two coffees, leaves two containers of "White & Sweet," snarls at the Judge, and returns to the kitchen.

DR. KINSKI

Thanks for seeing me, Judge Brickle.

JUDGE

Call me, Roy, Dr. Kinski.

Dr. Kinski smiles, then holds his hands a bit more firmly.

The Judge stares at their hands, but doesn't resist as he begins to feel small pains in his stomach.

DR. KINSKI

Danica James tells me you've been a district judge for thirty years, Roy?

JUDGE

Uh huh.

DR. KINSKI

How long have you known the James family?

JUDGE

Twenty-five years, or more.

DR. KINSKI

Danica tells me you and Catherine James share some history.

The Judge twitches in pain.

JUDGE

I'd secretly help out the family when they met hard times.

Dr. Kinski winks at the Judge and whispers quieter.

DR. KINSKI

Hard times for you too. She told me earlier today.

The Judge tries to pull his hands back, but can't. He's hiding the pain well.

JUDGE

Catherine needed the money.

DR. KINSKI

Danica said you needed the sex. Tell me about Edward James, Danica's father.

JUDGE

Town drunk. Couldn't hold a job. Took it out on the family. I almost put him away for good last time. Three years ago.

DR. KINSKI

When young Danica took her exam.  
College entrance exam and a beating  
on the same day. Poor kid.

Dr. Kinski is stunned. The Judge winces in more pain.

JUDGE

Records were sealed. How could you  
know?

DR. KINSKI

Danica.

JUDGE

Goes on more than you think in  
rural America. Said he was drunk,  
apologized, sold his car and  
tractor, and bought the kid a  
laptop computer, and died that  
night.

DR. KINSKI

Died?

JUDGE

Natural causes. Heart attack,  
behind the barn, drinking,  
shoveling cow manure. Plopped over  
dead, if you'll excuse the pun.

DR. KINSKI

Who signed the death certificate?

The Judge refuses to answer until the pain is too great.

JUDGE

Doc Shelly! My coroner concurred.  
Always does! Doc Shelly knows her  
stuff!

DR. KINSKI

Does she know about your past?

Izzy tries to come over with a coffee refill, but the Judge  
shakes his head 'no,' and she heads back to the kitchen  
making grunting noises. The Judge is in excruciating pain.

JUDGE

You don't know my past.

Dr. Kinski doesn't squeeze harder, but the judge experiences  
even more pain in hands, arms, and entire body.

DR. KINSKI  
You were ten? Sunday school?

JUDGE  
No way you could know...

The Judges eyes are huge and helpless. Dr. Kinski whispers.

DR. KINSKI  
Easy to search sex-offenders on the  
Dark Web these days. Easy to do  
with any laptop computer and Wi-Fi.  
May want to be more careful.

The Judge looks away, ready to scream.

JUDGE  
I... I...

DR. KINSKI  
I can imagine why you didn't bother  
to tell the James's. That Catherine  
must know some real tricks, excuse  
the pun.

JUDGE  
I... I...

DR. KINSKI  
Don't worry, Judge. This isn't  
about you. Tell me everything you  
know about Danica James. How smart  
is she? Who's helping her?

BACK TO:

INT. DOC SHELLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Danica types madly away on her laptop computer, and Doc Shelly is on the phone. She hangs up.

DOC SHELLY  
You were right. My old friend,  
Charlie Hawkins is the security  
guard at the regional airfield. He  
says a woman matching Dr. Kinski's  
description arrived three days ago.

Danica looks up from her laptop, stunned.

DANICA  
Three days ago? Been here the whole  
damn time! Rental car? Where's she  
staying?

(MORE)

DANICA (CONT'D)

Did she arrive with Professor Bellingham? Both from the same area!

DOC SHELLY

Good questions, dear. I'll give Charlie a call back.

DANICA

Should I tell Sheriff Santos?

DOC SHELLY

(mumbles)

Hard to know who you can trust these days.

Thunder roars outside.

DANICA

Best be gettin' home. Worried how Norm is handling the storm.

Doc's TV shows the weather radar.

DOC SHELLY

First round is about over, but there's another storm cell building up for late this afternoon. Maybe all night. Safe to bike home if ya go now.

Danica is typing madly away on her laptop.

DANICA

Thanks, Grandma. I got a bad feeling about Dr. Kinski.

Danica closes her laptop, puts it in her backpack, and throws on her poncho.

DOC SHELLY

I'll call ya if I find out anything.

Danica gives Doc a big hug.

DANICA

I know you had to disown my father and your only son...

DOC SHELLY

(interrupts)

Not 'cause he was a drunk! He was violent. And worse. You know.

DANICA  
I know. I know.

Doc ends the hug, and holds Danica at arm's length.

DOC SHELLY  
You won't tell Norm you were here.

DANICA  
Our secret! As usual!

Danica kisses Doc Shelly on the cheek.

Doc Shelly's eyes well up with tears.

DOC SHELLY  
Be safe out there, child.

DANICA  
Will do, Grandma.

Danica departs with a smile.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Dr. Kinski finally releases the Judge's hands from her grasp. He is relieved, weak, frightened, and speechless.

Dr. Kinski stands and throws down ten bucks to cover the tab and tip.

Izzy races over to check on the Judge.

IZZY  
What'd you do to him?

DR. KINSKI  
We had a nice visit.

Izzy gets in Dr. Kinski's face.

IZZY  
You a witch too? Like that James girl?

Dr. Kinski grabs Izzy's two hands before she can resist. The Judge turns, but he's powerless to stop Dr. Kinski.

DR. KINSKI  
Izzy Bruener. Danica tells me you're German through and through. Might wanna check your family tree on Ancestry-dot-com.

(MORE)



DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)

The relatives you left behind were very strong Nazi supporters. Sent thousands of Jews to the camps. Yet you are at least one-quarter Jewish blood. Your name is Izabel, a strong Jewish name. Be proud of your heritage, Danica James says.

Izzy's eyes open widely, but she's speechless and in a little pain.

The Judge's face turns red with anger.

Dr. Kinski glares at Izzy.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)

Where will I find Doc Shelly?

Izzy squeals like a pig in pain.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Danica pedals the bike as fast as she can.

Behind her, we see the Sheriff's patrol car approaching with LIGHTS and SIREN.

The Sheriff drives past Danica and skips to a stop, blocking her from proceeding.

He hops out.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Hold it right there.

DANICA

Did I break any laws?

SHERIFF SANTOS

Not exactly?

DANICA

Why the lights and siren?

SHERIFF SANTOS

Judge reopened the investigation on Professor Bellingham's death. Didn't release the body to relatives. Says, now, the death is suspicious.

DANICA

New evidence?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
I dunno. He just called.

DANICA  
What's this got to do with me?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
(mumbles)  
You're not gonna hold my hands  
again are you?

DANICA  
No.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
(mumbles)  
Person of interest.

DANICA  
A what?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
(louder)  
Person of interest.

DANICA  
We were together when he drowned.  
You a person of interest too?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Don't be ridiculous.

DANICA  
Mind explaining how I'm a person of  
interest?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Judge wants to know if Professor  
Bellingham had anything to eat or  
drink at your house.

DANICA  
No. You think I poisoned him?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
No, but...

Danica keeps interrupting with her own questions.

DANICA  
Did the autopsy toxicology report  
find poison in him?

SHERIFF SANTOS

No, but...

DANICA

Alcohol? Drugs of any kind?

SHERIFF SANTOS

No, but...

DANICA

Partially digested foods?

SHERIFF SANTOS

No, but...

DANICA

Did they change the official cause of death from suicide?

SHERIFF SANTOS

No, but...

DANICA

So how is the death suspicious now, where it wasn't suspicious before Dr. Kinski met the Judge at the café?

SHERIFF SANTOS

How do you know Dr. Kinski met the Judge at the café?

DANICA

So, you know Dr. Kinski?

SHERIFF SANTOS

My house guest.

Danica is furious. She drops the bike and paces in the mud.

DANICA

What? How did she become your house guest? When did you meet her?

SHERIFF SANTOS

I'll ask the questions here!

DANICA

Let me guess. Three days ago. She came into town, flirting with folks at the airfield, around the post office, or the café.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Post Office.

DANICA  
Probably said she's always wanted  
to see Salem, beautiful  
countryside, get to know the  
people, and later, drop by my place  
for a recruiting from for her  
research laboratory?

Sheriff Santos looks away.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Maybe.

The Sheriff looks back.

DANICA  
You, being the most eligible  
bachelor in town since your wife  
divorced you.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Nothin' to do with Darlene!

DANICA  
And you have that big, empty three-  
bedroom house.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Not what I said.

DANICA  
And the nearest motel being so far  
away. It just made sense that she  
stay at your place.

The Sheriff looks away again.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
I noticed when you came by the  
house you weren't wearing your  
wedding ring, so she must have been  
there before that!

The Sheriff looks at his left hand. No ring.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
This has nothing to do with Sasha!

DANICA  
Sasha, is it?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
You're twisting everything I say!

DANICA  
Just want to know what I'm accused  
of.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Not accused of anything.

DANICA  
Suspected of, then?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Can't say exactly.

DANICA  
I see.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
And that's not all!

DANICA  
What else?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Judge wants to know more about your  
father's death!

DANICA  
Three years ago. Natural causes.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Now the judge ain't so sure.

DANICA  
I see. So now I'm a person of  
interest in two investigations?

The Sheriff looks away again.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
No wonder you were using the lights  
and sirens. Biggest thing to happen  
'round here in years! Double  
homicide!

(beat)  
Will there be anything else,  
Sheriff? Unsolved bank robberies?  
Unpaid parking tickets? Tickets to  
the policemen's ball on Halloween?

The Sheriff looks back, at a loss for words.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
 Sheriff? Can I go now? I'd like to  
 get home before the next storm cell  
 passes over!

The Sheriff turns angry as he waves his arm for Danica to  
 move along.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 This ain't over! I know you did  
 somethin.' Can't prove it yet, but  
 I know you did something.

DANICA  
 I was in the same county where two  
 people died!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 May have more questions later.

DANICA  
 After you talk to Sasha and the  
 Judge? Tell 'em hi for me. I've  
 gotta go! I have a date!

Danica peddles away smiling.

The Sheriff furiously stomps back to his patrol car. His body  
 aches all over.

Thunder rumbled in the distance.

The Sheriff gets in his patrol car, and makes a cellphone  
 call.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Darling?  
 (looking terrified)  
 Sorry, Dr. Kinski. I just  
 thought...  
 (more frightened)  
 How did you know...?  
 (like a scolded child)  
 Yes, dear.

We hear yelling on the other end of the phone.

The Sheriff covers the phone speaker with his hand, shakes  
 his head angry at himself, and listens in as he stomps around  
 like a mad man.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
 No, I don't know where Doc Shelly  
 is.

(MORE)

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
 Probably making house-calls, like  
 she always does.  
 (listens to more  
 screaming)  
 I'll check the café and call if I  
 find her.

EXT./INT. CAFÉ - SUNSET

The Sheriff reads from his notebook as he enters the café. He glances around to see Ms. Reynolds and Father Novak sharing the table in the far corner. They're sipping coffee with looks of despair.

Izzy is at the counter in a sour mood.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 I'll join the happy couple back  
 there. Just coffee, Izzy.

IZZY  
 (snarls)  
 White and sweet! Another big night.

The Sheriff puts his notebook in his pocket and trudges to the back table.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 May I join you?

FATHER NOVAK  
 Suit yourself.

MS. REYNOLDS  
 You arrest her yet?

The Sheriff sits facing the front door as Izzy brings a cup of coffee and a container of "White & Sweet."

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 Arrest who?

MS. REYNOLDS  
 That witch! Danica James.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 No proof of...

IZZY  
 Judge was in for corned beef on rye  
 with the coroner fella.  
 (MORE)

IZZY (CONT'D)

They were hoping you'd drop by,  
 Sheriff, but I told them you were  
 probably busy with that evil  
 Russian seductress you got staying  
 at your house.

The Sheriff is embarrassed. The priest and teacher are  
 stunned.

FATHER NOVAK

Seductress? Staying at your house?

MS. REYNOLDS

Sheriff Santos!

The Sheriff glares at Izzy, who begins to walk away.

SHERIFF SANTOS

What the Judge and Coroner say, big  
 mouth?

The Sheriff tugs on Izzy's arm.

IZZY

I may have slightly overheard  
 things I shouldn't have.

The Sheriff stands angrily and doesn't release Izzy's arm.

SHERIFF SANTOS

What did you slightly overhear,  
 Izzy?!

IZZY

Coroner might have said there was  
 no fresh water in the dead  
 Professor's lungs, so he was dead  
 before his face hit Crane Pond.

Izzy tries to pull away, but the Sheriff pulls her back.

SHERIFF SANTOS

What else?

IZZY

Judge said he's gonna call you to  
 tell you the Coroner thinks  
 Danica's father probably died the  
 same way: asphyxiation.

The Sheriff collapses in the chair in despair.



## SHERIFF SANTOS

But there was no sign of strangulation in either case. No sign of hands, rope, pillow, or plastic bag. No mechanism in either case! What could have caused it?

The café door swings open, and in walk two giggling teenagers on a date: Danica and Louis. Danica wears black jeans and a sexy, emerald-green blouse. Louis wears blue jeans and a new, tight T-shirt.

Izzy leans in and whispers to the Sheriff.

## IZZY

Not what! Who?

Louis sees the Sheriff, and leads Danica to the table nearest to the front window and away from the others.

Izzy fakes a smile and brings them two menus.

## IZZY (CONT'D)

Hi kids, what can I get you started with? Coffee?

Danica giggles, stares into Louis's eyes, and smiles.

## DANICA

Been thinking 'bout this for a long time. I'll have a cup of coffee, white and sweet, and a hot fudge sundae, whipped cream, cherry, and nuts, please. Thanks, Ms. Bruener.

## IZZY

You two 'bout old enough to call me Izzy like everyone else. And, you Louis?

Louis can't take his eyes off Danica.

## LOUIS

Same for me. Thanks. But on the sundae, scratch the nuts.

Danica and Louis giggle and share a moment, as Izzy stomps back to kitchen in a dark mood.

Danica and Louis are oblivious to the glares they are receiving from the Sheriff.

Meanwhile, the priest and teacher are arguing in whispered voices across the table.

FATHER NOVAK

You said you were a non-practicing Protestant. What difference does it make to you?

The teacher leans in and glares at the priest.

MS. REYNOLDS

Lot of difference. Just isn't so!

FATHER NOVAK

Is so.

MS. REYNOLDS

Isn't. Ask Izzy!

FATHER NOVAK

I'm not asking Izzy!

The Sheriff is distracted by the petty argument. He whispers his way into the argument.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Is it because one of them is white and the other's black?

The priest and teacher look stunned at the Sheriff.

MS. REYNOLDS

We were discussing whether the Catholic and Protestant God, is the same God as the Muslim God.

The Sheriff's eyes open widely.

SHERIFF SANTOS

What difference does it make?

FATHER NOVAK

Exactly my point!

MS. REYNOLDS

I say they're different!

The Sheriff turns away and mumbles.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Good luck proving that one either way!

Izzy brings two magnificent sundaes to Danica and Louis, and two cups of coffee, white and sweet.

LOUIS  
Thanks, Ms. Bruener, I mean, Izzy.

DANICA  
Yes, Thank you so much.

Izzy fakes a smile and begins to turn away.

Louis sips his coffee, but Dani doesn't touch her cup.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
Oh, Izzy, would you mind taking a  
photo of my date and me?

Danica pulls her smartphone from the back pocket of her jeans.

Izzy reluctantly grabs the phone, steps back, and prepares to take the photo.

We see the happy couple smiling toward the phone, and in the background, outside and across the street, we barely make out the image of Dr. Sasha Kinski, wearing a black full-length coat and sunglasses, staring into the café.

Izzy takes the photo and hands the phone back to Danica.

Danica returns the phone to her the back pocket of her jeans without checking the photo.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
Why did it take you so long to ask  
me out?

LOUIS  
Scared, I guess.

DANICA  
Scared?

LOUIS  
Best friend's sister, my tutor.  
Just scared.

Danica leans in and whispers in a seductive way, as Louis sips his coffee. Danica never touches her coffee.

DANICA  
Scared of me?

Louis leans in, whispers, and smiles.

LOUIS

Known ya since we was kids. Didn't know, that's all.

Izzy is back at the counter, beside herself that she can't hear what's being said.

The Sheriff in the back is equally curious, and distracted by another whispering argument that sprung up between the priest and the teacher.

MS. REYNOLDS

She corrected me all the time.  
Devil of a child in class.

FATHER NOVAK

Was she right? When she corrected you?

MS. REYNOLDS

That's not the point. Disruptive and disrespectful!

FATHER NOVAK

But was she right?

The teacher is red with anger.

MS. REYNOLDS

Proper thing to do was come up after school, not during class!

The teacher is violently angry now, and can't control the volume of her whisper. Danica and Louis hear her.

MS. REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

She's a witch!

Danica and Louis stare back at the teacher with sad faces.

The Sheriff, the priest, and the teacher look away, embarrassed.

Izzy smirks.

Louis takes out his wallet like a gentleman to pay the bill, but Danica reaches out to hold his hands with both of her hands. She whispers to Louis.

DANICA

We're fine here. We're bigger than them.

Louis smiles, puts his wallet back and takes a huge bite of his sundae.

Danica eats her sundae as well, taking her eyes off Louis for a moment.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Across the street from the café, Dr. Kinski raises her sunglasses and glares at Louis with her dark, penetrating eyes.

We see Louis has trouble swallowing the spoonful of the sundae.

We hear an owl HOOT.

Dr. Kinski lowers her sunglasses calmly and strolls away into the dark.

BACK TO:

INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Louis still has trouble swallowing.

The Sheriff sees Louis is in anguish. His eyes turn to Danica.

Izzy looks up from the counter to see Louis's skin is getting hives.

Danica finally looks up from her sundae to see Louis. Her smile disappears. She leaps to Louis's side.

The Sheriff's phone RINGS, as he leaps from his table to go help Louis. He answers his phone while taking long strides to Louis.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Santos.

Danica starts pounding Louis with an open hand on his back, while leaning him forward. She sees the hives forming on Louis's arms and neck.

DANICA

You're going to be okay, Louis.

Danica pounds on his back, as the Sheriff reaches them.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Oh my, God. No!

Louis coughs up a gooey wad of ice cream and a red cherry, and he's breathing again.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Danica. It's your Grandma, Doc  
Shelly! House is on fire! Louis,  
you gonna be okay?

Louis, who is fading fast, gives a thumbs-up sign, as the Sheriff races out the door.

DANICA

Benadryl! Izzy. Got any Benadryl?

Louis is fading faster.

The priest and the teacher stand idle in the back of the café.

Danica stares out the window of the café to the dark street, but she sees nothing.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Izzy? Benadryl? Emergency here.

Izzy is fumbling in drawers.

IZZY

First-aid kit somewhere!

The priest pulls out an Epi-pen.

FATHER NOVAK

I carry an EpiPen for bee stings.

Danica is furious.

DANICA

Get your ass up here, Father!

The priest leaps to Louis and Danica, but his hands are shaking badly.

Danica rips the EpiPen from the priest's grasp, opens it, and stabs Louis in the upper leg.

Louis feels comfort immediately. He speaks weakly.

LOUIS

Thanks, Father.

DANICA  
(to Father Novak)  
Thanks, Father. I'll get you a  
replacement tomorrow.  
(to Louis)  
Louis, can you drive?

LOUIS  
No, but you can.

DANICA  
Let's go!

Danica drops a \$100-bill on the table, and helps Louis out.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
Keep the change!

EXT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Danica helps Louis to his mom's old car. She loads him into the passenger side, shuts the door, then stops.

She stares into the café with a worried look. She clearly sees Izzy, the priest, and teacher staring at the \$100 bill, and arguing.

She takes out her phone and looks at the picture of her and Louis. She squints her eyes to see a dark figure across the street.

She zooms in on the photo to see Dr. Kinski's evil face across the street.

She glances in the car at weary Louis, before racing around to hop in the driver's seat.

She screeches out of the parking area like a pro!

EXT. DOC SHELLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Danika approaches the house at a great speed, and slams on the breaks. The car skids just short of the Sheriff's patrol car. The house is engulfed in flames. The Sheriff stands at a distance as the heat is tremendous.

Danica runs to the Sheriff, who is impatiently on the phone. He hugs her.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Started just a few minutes ago.  
Neighbor reported it. I'm so sorry,  
Danica.

Louis limps up to them with tears in his eyes. He hugs  
Danica.

LOUIS  
Know how much she meant to you.

The Sheriff is still on the phone.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Where the hell is that fire truck?!

Tears form in Danica's eyes.

The Sheriff suddenly winces in pain, like he was hit in the  
gut.

DANICA  
Sheriff? You okay?

The Sheriff holds his neck in pain.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Ow! That smarts!

Danica looks out in the pitch darkness behind them. Her tears  
turn to anger! She sees nothing, but she keeps looking.

Danica steps toward the darkness and yells.

DANICA  
I know you're out there!

Louis limps to the Sheriff to help him stand, but the Sheriff  
is heavier, and Louis is weak.

The Sheriff is weaker, wobbly.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Who's out there?

DANICA  
What are you feeling, Sheriff?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Little pain. It's nothing.

The Sheriff collapses to the ground, bewildered.



DANICA  
I know who did this!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Any proof?

Looking up at a near-full moon, Danica answers in a deep, dark voice.

DANICA  
There won't be any proof!

EXT. DOC SHELLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Doc's house is burnt to the ground, but parts are still smoldering with black smoke.

We see the Sheriff's patrol car parked in front, and we see the Sheriff poking around with a fireplace poker.

Danica rides up on Louis's bike, sets it down and runs toward the Sheriff. Her eyes are red from crying.

The Sheriff turns and glares at Danica.

DANICA  
Find Grandma yet?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Got half the county out looking for her!

DANICA  
(mumbles)  
Worthless!

The Sheriff hears her and turns angrier.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Stay back. Still smoldering in the basement, and this is a crime scene.

DANICA  
Crime scene?

The Sheriff taps the 5-gallon gas can by the burnt-up generator.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Can's empty.

DANICA  
Always kept it full.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Filled it for her last week. Only  
one small storm. Would have used a  
half-gallon if the electricity went  
out, which it didn't.

DANICA  
(sarcastic)  
You think!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
You, Louis, Izzy, Father Novak,  
Miss Reynolds, and I were together  
at the café.

The Sheriff stares into Danica's eyes.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
Your brother, Norm, didn't care for  
his grandma.

DANICA  
Norm? He wouldn't...

SHERIFF SANTOS  
(interrupting)  
Fact, he hated her for disowning  
your father.

Danica gets defensive.

DANICA  
Our father beat Norm more times  
than I can count, but Norm wouldn't  
hurt a fly!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
I gotta question him and your Mama.  
She had no use for her either.

DANICA  
Mama had her reasons!

Danica grabs the Sheriff's arm, and he breaks free and backs  
up.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
What about Dr. Kinski? Gonna  
question her?

The Sheriff smirks, and reads from his notebook.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Dr. Kinski was home at my house  
when I got home 'round midnight,  
after the fire gone out, and nobody  
could find your grandma.

DANICA

I looked around all night. So did  
Louis!

The Sheriff ignores Danica and keeps reading.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Anyway, Dr. Kinski reports that she  
picked up Norm for a date...

Danica is furious.

DANICA

What?

SHERIFF SANTOS

She picked up Norm for a date just  
after sunset.

DANICA

Norm would never...

SHERIFF SANTOS

(interrupting)

She says she drove him out to Crane  
Pond to, and I quote, "watch the  
submarine races."

DANICA

Watch the...

SHERIFF SANTOS

(interrupting)

She drove him home, and I quote,  
"with a smile on his face" at 11:30  
PM.

Danica turns in a huff, and jumps on her bicycle, and yells  
as she rides off.

DANICA

Perfect alibi! Ever think of that,  
Sheriff?

(beat)

I'll kill her!

The Sheriff yells to her.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Wouldn't try that if I were you!  
Two consenting adults.

(beat)

Be by soon to check the story out  
with Norm and interview your Mama  
after I check out Crane Pond!

BEGIN MONTAGE - Danica rides toward home.

-- Danica rides the bike on a muddy road.

-- Danica passes the café without stopping. She turns her  
head to see the Kinski drinking coffee at the table by the  
window.

-- Danica rides up another muddy road, and feels a sharp pain  
in her side, and stops to rest.

-- Danica glares back in the direction of the café, before  
she begins to ride again in a very angry mood.

-- Danica arrives home. She's still angry, dumps the bike,  
and races into the house.

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT. CRANE POND - DAY

The Sheriff parks his car a distance from the pond. The trees  
are beautiful in their fall colors, but there is a dark,  
foreboding sense of evil in the wind.

The Sheriff investigates tire tracks in the mud on the way to  
the pond.

He takes out binoculars and looks all around the pond.

He takes out his smartphone and makes a call.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Judge?

(pause)

No sign of Doc Shelly. Just keeping  
you informed. Said I would.

(pause)

Yeah, I'm out there now.

(pause)

Same tire prints as when I picked  
up the Professor. His and mine,  
plus one new set that matches the  
rental car by Dr. Sasha Kinski.

(MORE)

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

(pause)

My house guest, but nothing's going on, I told you!

(pause)

No. I told her not to leave town for 24 hours 'til we sort things out.

The Sheriff HEARS a coyote howl and yap and is startled.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Just a coyote.

(pause)

No. She was perfectly calm about it.

(pause)

Danica James? Angry as pack of angry wolves!

(pause)

Don't know. Heading over there now.

(pause)

Tonight. Nine PM. See you there!

The Sheriff hangs up. He looks down at his hands and sees hives forming.

He scratches them.

He feels a sharp pain in his side, and covers it with his hand.

He looks around for the cause of his pain, but sees nothing.

BACK TO:

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

Norm watches TV in his regular spot on the couch, as Danica paces in front of them, making it difficult for him to see the TV from time to time.

DANICA

Norm? What were you thinking?

Norm ignores Danica.

DANICA (CONT'D)

Norm? Where's Mama?

Norm looks away before mumbling.

NORM

Out looking for Grandma.

DANICA  
She never goes out!

NORM  
Told me to stay put!

DANICA  
And what about last night? With Dr.  
Kinski?

NORM  
Name's Sasha.

DANICA  
Wasn't safe, Norm!

NORM  
Never been to no submarine races.

Norm stands, scaring Danica, and he pushes her.

NORM (CONT'D)  
Mama gave me her blessing!

DANICA  
Wasn't safe, Norm! She's dangerous.

NORM  
Safe enough! Mama gave me a thingy!

Danica is furious with Norm, who pushes her more.

DANICA  
You didn't go out looking for  
Grandma! Sheriff's coming by to ask  
questions! I hope you got answers!

Norm gets in Danica's face. His hands form fists.

NORM  
You know what to do then! Get rid  
of him like the others!

Danica yells in defiance.

DANICA  
What others, Norm? What are you  
talking about?

Norm is screaming now and seriously threatening Danica.

NORM  
Scare away everyone! That's what!  
Whatever it is you do.  
(MORE)

NORM (CONT'D)

Ya do nothing round here! I have to do it all! I've had it you, you stupid...

They hear a loud KNOCK on the front door.

The Sheriff hears them arguing and charges in.

DANICA

Come in, Sheriff.

The Sheriff enters to Norm is ready to kill Danica.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Easy, Norm. We don't need any more trouble 'round here.

DANICA

Yes, Norm. Time to watch TV.

Norm sits in his regular spot. The Sheriff attempts to sit down next to Norm, but Norm yells.

NORM

That's Mama's spot!

The Sheriff pops up, glances at Father's easy chair, then walks across the room to the kitchen table.

Danica follows him.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Where's Catherine?

DANICA

Norm said she went out looking for Grandma, but that don't make sense.

The Sheriff looks sadly at Norm.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Norm, mind if I look around.

Norm is dead silent. Now, Danica is nervous.

DANICA

I'll check her room.

SHERIFF SANTOS

I'll check out back.

Danica races to check in the house as the Sheriff steps out the back door.

Danica re-enters the family room when she hears the Sheriff from the back yard.

SHERIFF SANTOS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Danica. Out here. Behind the barn.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

Danica leaps out the back door, then trudges toward the back of the barn with a sinking feeling.

As she rounds the barn, she sees the Sheriff, then her Mama, leaning against the barn, dead in her housecoat.

The Sheriff looks at Danica.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
I'm sorry.

Danica glances back toward the house, then collapses to the ground in tears.

The Sheriff makes a phone call.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
Send the Coroner to the James  
house, out back.  
(pause, angry)  
Because we still can't find Doc  
Shelly, that's why!  
(pause)  
And hurry. Need someone to identify  
a skin rash.  
(pause)  
Gotta hurry. They disappear fast!  
And tell the Judge Brickle that I  
want a court reporter for tonight.

The Sheriff ends the call, and examines Mama's skin.

EXT./INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Outside, the wind howls on a night with a full moon.

The cardboard sign on the window says, "Open."

Inside, Izzy wipes down the counter as the clock on the wall reads 9 PM. Father Novak and Ms. Reynolds are sitting at the back table drinking coffee, white and sweet.

The wind howls as Sheriff Santos enters first, pulling Norm by the coat sleeve.



SHERIFF SANTOS  
Judge here yet, Izzy?

Izzy sees that Norm's wrists are bound with a plastic restraint, partially hidden by the sleeves of a down jacket.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)  
Izzy?

IZZY  
No, Sheriff. What's Norm done?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Want to put up the closed sign?

Izzy walks way around Norm to change the sign to "Closed."  
Norm smiles innocently.

NORM  
Izzy has two "Z"s in it, but you only hear one.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Hearing only one Izzy is fine with me.

IZZY  
Sorry about your Mama, Norm. How'd it happen?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Let's not get ahead of ourselves, Izzy. Coroner's report said her last meal was curry, but not spicy enough to do real harm.

IZZY  
And they still haven't found Doc Shelly?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Couldn't report her missing 'til after 24 hours, just a bit ago.

Father Novak stands and makes the sign of the cross in the back of the room.

FATHER NOVAK  
Didn't find her in the burnt house?  
Thanks God.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Still ain't found her yet. Nothing  
to be thankful for. She lost  
everything!

Danica and Louis burst in the front door and they hug and  
console Norm immediately.

DANICA

Norm, everything's gonna be okay,  
Norm.

Norm looks puzzled at Danica.

NORM

I don't think so, Dani. Mama's  
dead, remember?

Danica hugs Norm again, and begins to shed tears, as Dr.  
Kinski, still dressed in black, sneaks in the front door. The  
wind howls behind her and gives her away as she shuts the  
door.

Danica wipes the tears from her face to glare at Dr. Kinski.

The Sheriff sees Danica's threatening eyes and steps between  
Danica and Dr. Kinski.

SHERIFF SANTOS

I asked Dr. Kinski to join us.

DANICA

Why?

SHERIFF SANTOS

She was in town for these strange  
events, and she's really smart.

DR. KINSKI

My medical expertise might be of  
use.

Norm is giddy as he sneaks peeks at Dr. Kinski.

NORM

She went to mit.

MS. REYNOLDS

What are we doing here, Sheriff?!

SHERIFF SANTOS

Wanted to straighten a few things out and get some questions answered before this thing gets blown of proportion.

Ms. Reynolds stands annoyed.

IZZY

Three murders and house burnt down in as many days, what can get blown out of proportion?!

SHERIFF SANTOS

That's enough, Izzy! We have two deaths by natural causes, and one missing person 'til we hear any further. That's why we're here!

Louis gets in the Sheriff's face.

LOUIS

Oh yeah? Then why is Norm in handcuffs.

The Sheriff pushes him back a step.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Wrist restraints. 'Til we find out what's going the hell on 'round here!

The Judge enters with a cute female Court Stenographer (25), dressed in a white blouse, tan jeans, and a light-tan jacket. She is immediately attracted to Norm. The stenographer carries a small box with a stenograph and extra rolls of paper.

Norm, despite his wrist restraints, takes the box from the Stenographer and sets it down on a table.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Thank God, you're here, Judge.

The Judge waves.

Norm smiles, and can't take his eyes off the Stenographer.

JUDGE

Doing this as a favor to the Sheriff. No one's on trial. This isn't a hearing of any kind.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I brought along our stenographer,  
Ms. Carlyn Newman to take notes for  
the Sheriff.

MS. REYNOLDS

Notes about what?

JUDGE

His discussion tonight. I'm just as  
curious as he is to get to the  
bottom of the everything crazy  
that's going on up here.

The lights dim for a moment in the café and everyone looks  
around.

SHERIFF SANTOS

That happen regularly?

Izzy looks worried.

IZZY

No.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Anyway, I'd like to get started, so  
if I can get Louis's help to  
arrange some tables...

The Sheriff begins to arrange the tables instinctively like a  
courtroom. The Judge sits with the stenographer at a table by  
the door.

The stenographer sets up her recorder, and puts the box down.

The Sheriff points to a table with three chairs to the  
Judge's right.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Norm, maybe you and your sister can  
sit over there.

NORM

Can Louis come too?

SHERIFF SANTOS

Sure, Norm.

The Sheriff points to a table at the judge's left, and speaks  
to Dr. Kinski.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Would you mind sitting over here  
with me, Dr. Kinski?

Dr. Kinski, hesitates.

DR. KINSKI  
I told you I can't stay long. I  
have to get home.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Won't take long, Sasha.

Dr. Kinski glares at the Sheriff, but sits next to him.

FATHER NOVAK  
What about us?

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Sit anywhere. Just stick around in  
case there are any questions.

JUDGE  
Izzy? Still serving coffee?

Izzy snarls as she brings the Judge a cup of "white and  
sweet" coffee.

IZZY  
White and sweet.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
Same for me, Izzy.  
(beat)  
Tell 'em, Judge!

Izzy snarls as she brings the Sheriff a cup of "white and  
sweet" coffee.

JUDGE  
Lock the door, Izzy. Pull the  
shades.

Everyone looks puzzled as Izzy locks the door. We HEAR it  
LOCK! She pulls the shades.

JUDGE (CONT'D)  
Ms. Newman, collect the cell phones  
in that box of yours.

Dr. Kinski resists and stands.

DR. KINSKI  
I will not. I know my rights.

The Sheriff pulls out his pistol, and cocks it.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Do as he says.

The stenographer collects all the phones. Norm stands last, with his hands restrained.

NORM

Back pocket.

Danica and Louis chuckle as the stenographer checks for a phone but doesn't find one.

DANICA

Doesn't own one.

Norm swerves like a shy schoolboy, and snickers.

The Stenographer gives Norm a flirting pat on the butt, and returns to her table with a smile.

Dr. Kinski glares at Norm as he sits down.

Norm avoids eye contact with Dr. Kinski.

The Judge stands like a god, raising his finger.

The Judge looks around, then whispers to the stenographer.

JUDGE

Forgot my gavel.

STENOGRAPHER

Use your coffee cup.

The Judge chugs the "white and sweet" coffee and smacks down the cup on the table.

JUDGE

Court is in session.

The Stenographer types away, even as the lights dim and come back on.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Serious charges have been made  
against two members of our  
community!

Most gasp! The Judge, Sheriff, and Dr. Kinski look around calmly.

SHERIFF SANTOS

On this, the Judge and I agree.

JUDGE

These are the ground rules. Break them and you'll be charged with impeding an investigation and obstruction of justice, a felony, and face up to 20 years in prison.

Louis stands in a panic.

LOUIS

I didn't do nothing!

Danica stands in a panic.

DANICA

Norm did nothing wrong!

Danica hugs Norm.

JUDGE

Sit down.

The Judge sits.

Dr. Kinski stands calmly.

DR. KINSKI

I was not summoned, subpoenaed or arrested, and I demand to leave immediately.

The Judge reaches into his coat pocket, and pulls out four thin envelopes, and hands them to the Stenographer, who stands, and hands them Dr. Kinski, Danica, Louis, and Norm.

They rip open the envelopes and are reading the letters when the Judge stands.

JUDGE

Stand as raise your right hand.

Everyone stands.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Do you all solemnly swear to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

FATHER NOVAK

So help me God?

JUDGE

Everyone responds, with "I do?"

ALL

I do.

STENOGRAPHER

Be seated.

JUDGE

Sheriff, tell 'em why they're here.

The Sheriff stands, and paces as he speaks.

SHERIFF SANTOS

In my second year as Sheriff, I had to pick up the body of fishing buddy, Ed James. Body leaned up against the side of his bar.

NORM

Father.

Danica comforts Norm who is grief-stricken.

SHERIFF SANTOS

He weren't the best father, I know. He told me he beat the wife and kids, but only after he drank.

The Sheriff looks over at Danica.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

The day he died, I had a feeling he did other things too. Terrible things.

Danica looks away.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Doc Shelly, Ed's mother, and the kids' grandma, couldn't find anything wrong with him, and said he died of natural causes.

DR. KINSKI

(mumbles)

Bit of a conflict of interest?

SHERIFF SANTOS

So she asked the County Coroner to step in for cause of death. He agreed.

DR. KINSKI

Autopsy?



SHERIFF SANTOS

Natural causes. Autopsy and toxicology report are on file. As are related reports.

Danica looks away again, but the Sheriff takes a sip of his coffee, then moves to face her eye-to-eye. He yells.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Oddest thing. This morning, Catherine James was found in the exact same spot. Not similar. Exactly the same!

The Judge glares at Danica and Norm.

JUDGE

What are the odds?

The Sheriff holds his side in pain, then continues.

SHERIFF SANTOS

And what are the odds that Professor William Bellingham from that big Ivy League school talks to Ms. Danica James, then dies of natural causes the same night.

Norm stands and yells, as the Sheriff buckles over in pain.

NORM

I heard he drowned.

SHERIFF SANTOS

In one foot of water? At Crane Pond? Don't think so. Coroner found no water in his lungs. Eyes were bulging and lips were red like he suffocated without any strangulation marks on his neck! How?

The Sheriff is in real pain now, holding back screams.

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Doc Shelly told me she didn't know.  
(beat)  
But I think she did know. And last night, Louis got hives and needed emergency medications.

The Sheriff can no longer speak.

The Judge tries to walk over to help him, bet he has a pain in his side too.

Father Novak starts to pray.

Ms. Reynolds shakes in fear, and starts to itch all over.

Izzy's makes the sign of the cross!

IZZY

Witchcraft! Malicious Animal  
Magnetism! Where a witch sends  
someone pain with their mind!

The Judge, Sheriff, Stenographer, Louis, the Father Novak, and Ms. Reynolds gasp.

The Judge notes that neither Dr. Kinski nor Danica gasped!

JUDGE

You two didn't gasp. You knew!

Dr. Kinski grabs her belly in pain. She folds over in agony.

DANICA

Wasn't me... I swear...

Izzy, Father Novak, and Ms. Reynolds point at Danica.

IZZY & FATHER NOVAK & MS. REYNOLDS

She's a witch!

The Sheriff turns to them.

SHERIFF SANTOS

That's why Dr. Kinski came here.  
Not to recruit Ms. Danica James,  
but to expose her as a true witch.

Dr. Kinski smirks.

The others gasp, as the Sheriff winces in pain.

FATHER NOVAK

She can read minds!

Danica glares at the Priest and sounds like a witch.

DANICA

I can look things up on the web! We  
all leave trials bigger than the  
Northwest Passage!

(looks around)

(MORE)

DANICA (CONT'D)  
 Live long enough and we all have  
 secrets!

Danica stands, and glares directly at the Priest.

DANICA (CONT'D)  
 Father Novak here, or should I say,  
 Petr Horvat, was convicted of sex  
 crimes, and served five years in  
 prison before finding God, changing  
 his name, and joining the seminary.

The Priest collapses in his chair.

FATHER NOVAK  
 God forgave me.

DANICA  
 I don't.

MS. REYNOLDS  
 She is a witch!

Danica turns to Ms. Reynolds.

DANICA  
 Ms. Reynold, your inferiority  
 complex stems from distrust and  
 self-doubt. Your logic tells you  
 there's no such thing as ghosts,  
 the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and  
 the Devil. It's beneath you,  
 (yells)  
 And beneath you all to believe in  
 witches!

SHERIFF SANTOS  
 You're not helping yourself,  
 Danica!

DANICA  
 Neither are you, pretending to be  
 Spanish! Baptism records clearly  
 show your family lived in Mexico  
 for the past five generations.

IZZY  
 I knew it.

The Sheriff pleads to the Judge.

SHERIFF SANTOS

I've done some digging on the Googla myself, and I found out Ms. Danica James has been taking college classes over that Web thing in statistics, bio-chem, micro- and macro-economics, US history, political science, psychology, women's studies, and getting straight A's!

JUDGE

Doesn't mean she's a witch, Mateo. Just means she's smart. Not like that -- she did them classes in alphabetical order.

Dr. Kinski smirks.

DR. KINSKI

Sounds like witchcraft to me.

The Sheriff turns to Dr. Kinski.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Exactly! And you don't want to recruit her anymore, is that right?

DR. KINSKI

I felt uncomfortable with her ability to read minds, and get people so nervous they get the hives, like that boyfriend of hers on their date at the café.

LOUIS

I got nervous. Never been on a real date with a pretty girl.

DANICA

He got hives. Lots of people get nervous.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Around witches they do!

DR. KINSKI

She spoke privately to me about putting curses on people and using malicious animal magnetism on them!

DANICA

Dreaming about using malicious animal magnetism on them!

(MORE)

DANICA (CONT'D)  
That's impossible, regardless of  
what Dr. Kinski believes!

Dr. Kinski stands and remains calm.

DR. KINSKI  
Malicious animal magnetism?  
Transferring pain to others? Only a  
fool would believe that!

Norm smiles, but the Sheriff and Judge are in pain.

DR. KINSKI (CONT'D)  
Perhaps, Ms. Danica James was never  
smart enough for our research  
laboratory.

Danica paces furiously.

The Judge is in pain as he speaks.

JUDGE  
I don't know what to believe  
anymore! I thought it was  
impossible to preside over a witch  
trial, but here we are, and I gotta  
tell ya, I feel cursed!

Dr. Kinski smiles, and smirks, enjoying Danica's tirade.

The Sheriff races to Danica and forces her into her seat.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
You gave that Professor drugs, and  
he went crazy, like he was  
possessed. He didn't commit  
suicide! You killed him, like you  
did your Father!

Danica looks stunned, as Norm looks away.

NORM  
Dani wouldn't do that! She watches  
out for us! All she's ever done.

The Sheriff gets in Norm's face.

SHERIFF SANTOS  
You were all alone with your Mama  
the morning she died! How did you  
kill her?! How?! Did your sister  
put a spell on you to kill her? Did  
you two kill Doc Shelly too?  
(MORE)

SHERIFF SANTOS (CONT'D)

Maybe with a timer device on the gas canister? You could have removed the timing device when I was in pain from the malicious animal magnetism spell you put on me.

DANICA

Norm's right. He wouldn't do it, and I wouldn't do it!

The Sheriff gets in Danica's face as Father Novak, Ms. Reynolds, Izzy, and Dr. Kinski move in like an angry mob.

The Sheriff gets in Danica's face.

SHERIFF SANTOS

I knew you'd deny it. I told the Judge that today. All witches deny it! Kind of proves their guilt if you ask me.

Father Novak, Ms. Reynolds, Izzy, and Dr. Kinski nod in agreement.

Silence.

The front door bursts open, the lock goes flying across the café floor, and in steps Doc Shelly. The wind howls behind her. Her clothes are covered in black ashes. In one hand, she has a bottle of scotch, in the other hand, a bottle of Benadryl.

Danica jumps for joy and runs to hug her grandma.

DANICA

Grandma! You're alive!

DOC SHELLY

Who's in pain or itchy?

The Judge, Sheriff, and Ms. Reynolds wave their hands.

Doc Shelly hands Danica the scotch and bottle of pills.

DOC SHELLY (CONT'D)

Two pills and two swigs each!

DANICA

Got it, Grandma.

The Judge goes first, then the Sheriff, then Ms. Reynolds.

DOC SHELLY

Scotch will help knock out nasty bugs that cause food poison, like salmonella and norovirus. The Benadryl is an antihistamine to fight allergic reactions.

Dr. Kinski tries to sneak out the door, but Doc Shelly pulls her back, and slams the door shut.

The Sheriff pulls his pistol, but his side aches terribly.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Get back here, Dr. Kinski, 'til this thing is settled!

Doc Shelly gets in Dr. Kinski's face.

DOC SHELLY

I'm not as smart as you, but my grand-daughter is, and you couldn't stand that idea, could you, Doctor Doctor Sasha Kinski?

Dr. Kinski looks around, and acts calmly but defensively.

DR. KINSKI

She's a mad woman. Probably a witch herself.

DOC SHELLY

Tell 'em, Danica.

Danica stands and paces like a prosecuting attorney.

DANICA

That's right, Grandma. Sheriff Santos knew these strange deaths and everyone's aches and pains coincided with Dr. Kinski's arrival three days ago.

DR. KINSKI

Coincidence.

DANICA

Not a coincidence that you were passing out free samples of your company's new coffee sweetener with so-called healthy probiotics, millions of living bacteria.

DR. KINSKI

All healthy, I assure you!

DANICA

But, not all of the millions of organisms are healthy. Some are bad bacteria that cause stomach cramps. I figured it out when Louis and I ate the same things the night of our date at the café, and he drank his coffee and got stomach pains, and I didn't.

DR. KINSKI

I thought he got hives and needed to borrow an Epi-pen.

DANICA

Only way you would have known that is if you were spying on us from outside the café. Gotta photo to prove it on my phone.

The Judge points to the box with all the cell phones in it.

JUDGE

Show mw.

Danica grabs her phone from the box and shows the Judge.

Danica returns to Dr. Kinski's face.

DANICA

I always suspected Mama killed my father because he beat us all, was drinking more, and she wanted to protect us.

(beat)

But maybe she just hated him.

SHERIFF SANTOS

But Doc Shelly and the Coroner said natural causes.

DOC SHELLY

Lots of poisons don't show up in autopsies without very specialized tests.

(looks away sadly)

My son was an incurable drunk and abusive bully. I was worried about my grandchildren and didn't suggest the poison tests. Norm needed Catherine, until Danica got older.



JUDGE

If you suspected poison and didn't report it, you withheld evidence.

DOC SHELLY

Sue me.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Coroner said Catherine had curry in her stomach.

Danica spins and looks at Doc Shelly.

DANICA

That explains it, Grandma. Mama poisoned Father with spicy curry laced with Cerbera, a common suicide poison looks like a heart attack, nearly all autopsies miss it.

Norm starts to sob, and Louis comforts him.

NORM

Mama made me curry too, but had peanut butter and jelly instead, because I have it every day.

Danica comforts Norm.

DANICA

Norm, I'm sorry to tell you this, but I think Mama may have poisoned Father too.

NORM

Mama wasn't right in the head sometimes.

DOC SHELLY

Norm, Danica, I'm so sorry.

SHERIFF SANTOS

How did the professor die?

Danica spins and paces like a prosecuting attorney again.

DANICA

I didn't know until everyone started getting stomach pains. Izzy started using Dr. Kinski's free coffee sweetener to cut her own costs. This was probably, Dr. Kinski's first stop in town.

Izzy nods 'yes.'

DR. KINSKI  
Circumstantial evidence.

Danica remains calm.

DANICA  
Burning witches? Just like in Salem! Except, those poor, starving women and children were delirious from eating hallucinogenic mushrooms they found in the forest or from moldy rye bread. Made them feel like insects were crawling under their skin. Temporarily crazy. Would have passed in time. Not witches at all.

(to everyone)  
But like you, the townsfolk were suspicious! They were insecure, frightened, and most of all, afraid of people who were different than them, or smarter than them, or people who knew the real truth!

The lights mysteriously dim, then brighten again.

DR. KINSKI  
You have no proof of any of this.

DANICA  
I told grandma that if there was something wrong with Dr. Kinski's coffee sweetener samples, she might want to cover it up. We'd require proof!

DOC SHELLY  
She knew Dr. Kinski would be paying me a visit and told me to record everything with my phone, but keep the door locked.

Doc Shelly produces her smartphone and laughs.

DR. KINSKI  
Inadmissible recording without consent.

Doc Shelly plays the video.

Through a corner of her window, behind a curtain, we SEE Dr. Kinski spreading gasoline on Doc Shelly's house with the 5-gallon container, while ranting.

DOC SHELLY

All I had to do was crawl into the root cellar with a few blankets to keep me warm. Danica's idea.

The Sheriff is furious.

SHERIFF SANTOS

You knew she wasn't dead!

DANICA

We didn't want Dr. Kinski, an arsonist and Grandma's attempted murderer leaving town!

SHERIFF SANTOS

It's going to be impossible to link Dr. Kinski to the Professor's death.

DANICA

Competition. Ask Dr. Kinski who recruited her to his university!

Dr. Kinski is stone silent, glaring at Danica.

SHERIFF SANTOS

Professor William Bellingham?

DANICA

Public record. I looked it up.

Dr. Kinski comes unglued.

DR. KINSKI

He wanted to ruin me. Recruit you to take my place as soon as you were capable. I told him you would never be as smart as me. I'm the one who got the perfect test score at age twelve!

(looks away)

He disagreed!

Doc Shelly laughs hysterically and gets in Dr. Kinski's face.

DOC SHELLY

You pompous academic. Did you ever examine the only three questions on the college entrance exam that my granddaughter missed?

DR. KINSKI

No. Why should I bother?

DOC SHELLY

She was exactly 11 years, 11 months, and 11 days old the day of the test. She skipped question 11 in the math portion, 11 in the science portion, and 11 in the English portion. She knew getting a perfect score would draw too much attention to her family.

DANICA

Correct answers were C, A, and D.

Dr. Kinski smirks.

DR. KINSKI

Are we supposed to believe...?

DANICA

(interrupts)

What would "s" have to be such that  $x^3 + 5x^2 + sx$  is divisible by  $x + 2$ . The answer was A. 9. Should I go on?

DOC SHELLY

Would have been the youngest student in the world to have a perfect score.

DANICA

Couldn't draw that attention to my Father, Mama,  
(glances at Norm)  
And others.

DOC SHELLY

And that coffee sweetener with probiotics that you designed, and your company makes, uses dangerous GMOs. Causing stomach cramps, everywhere, I imagine.

DANICA

I smell law suit!

JUDGE

I've heard enough, Sheriff. Take her away.

The Sheriff cuts the wrist restraints off Norm, and he and Louis cheer and hug.

Dr. Kinski fights with the Sheriff as he puts real handcuffs on her.

DR. KINSKI

You'll never get away with this! I want to speak to my lawyer!

SHERIFF SANTOS

What should we do with her?

JUDGE

What do we do with all witches?

Everyone but Dr. Kinski answers.

ALL

Burn 'em.

The Stenographer gathers several rolls of recording paper. Norm races up and kisses her. Then, they hold hands.

JUDGE

You kids have such a good time, don't you?

NORM

We sure do, Judge.

STENOGRAPHER

Can I light the fire, Grandpa?

DR. KINSKI

Can't be serious...

Izzy holds hands with the Sheriff, who leads Dr. Kinski out through the kitchen. The others follow in pairs, cheering.

Father Novak and Ms. Reynolds hold hands as they exit.

The Judge and Doc Shelly stroll out smiling.

Norm and the Stenographer carry the rolls of paper and the subpoenas as fuel. Only Danica and Louis remain.

Louis races over and kisses Danica.

LOUIS

You were magnificent. I hope this  
isn't our last witch trial  
together.

Danica passionately kisses him back.

Danica pushes him back, and stares into his eyes.

DANICA

You stuck by me the entire time. I  
love you, Louis. Would you come to  
the Halloween bonfire with me?

Off set we HEAR Dr. Kinski SCREAM.

FADE OUT

THE END