

ON A ROAD LESS TRAVELED

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FADE IN:

EXT. CLEARING - DAY (1934)

Dead leaves blanket the empty forest clearing. Overhead, a sharp wind cracks.

Unseen screams of bloody murder, then rising voices.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - SAME

Running is the blur of a giggling YOUNG GIRL.

EXT. CLEARING - SAME

The screams continue. A male voice chaotic answers.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Over there...!

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - SAME

Young Girl's shoes slide to a stop, looks about.

MADELINE EVANS, 9, Irish-American. A precocious beauty of pale freckled skin, dark blonde hair and sharp blue eyes. Don't let her soft features fool you.

A WOMAN screams in response.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
This was the on way!

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
My God! What the hell have you
done?

Curiosity leading, Madeline changes direction.

As she creeps closer, the voices draw her in.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
What the hell have you done!

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Voices encircle, but Madeline doesn't see a soul. Her nerves fraying, she looks ready to bolt.

Something has other plans--

A gust of wind rustles leaves from the floor, to reveal--

A long abandoned rusty knife with a beaten wooden handle.

She reaches down, curiously examines it in her hands.

The cries, the rustling winds, build, reach a fever pitch, before suddenly--

--they cease.

Madeline holds her breath. The quiet unsettles her.

Another voice, this time from the distance.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
Madeline...in!

Clutching the blade, she peers over her shoulder, before, with alarmed haste, flings it away, rushing back.

EXT. BACKYARD - O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER

"Did You Ever See a Dream Walking" tinnily plays from the gramophone on a wood stand.

Keeping watch over the wood is The O'Brien, a lone, rustic two story inn, regarded in its heyday as a popular stop on the way to City By The Bay.

Warm and welcoming, yet only in daytime.

Madeline's frumpy AUNT GENA, 45, waits at the tree line, her attention testily balanced between searching for her niece and the bickering couple behind her.

The couple, Madeline's parents STEPHEN, 45, and MARY EVANS, 48, are engaged in a private argument by the picnic table.

Appalled, Gena storms off, past her towering, gruff husband, UNCLE SAMUEL, 47, setting up the box camera on a tripod.

AUNT GENA
(under her breath)
One good photo is all I ask.
Supposing that's too much.

He hasn't heard her. His attention is fixed on the dark mist materializing from the wood--

Gena fails to notice.

Mary snatches a bite of food from a plate. Her and Stephen speak in clenched whispers.

MARY
I want to leave. Now.

STEPHEN
Their kid just died. Have some
sympat--
(collects himself)
Act civil, eat their food.
Then, we can leave.

Mary coldly takes a step back, addressing the inn.

MARY
That the short of it? Don't think
for one second I'm stepping inside
that house.
(nods toward Samuel)
His Dad dies--

<p>STEPHEN You forget he's your father too--? Okay, that's enough--</p>	<p>MARY --all I care, he can burn in hell. Samuel wants this place, fine.</p>
---	---

Mary brushes past Samuel, racing toward Madeline as she approaches from the tree line, transforming suddenly into the "perfect" mother.

MADELINE
There's something out there!

MARY
Darling! There's nothing out there!

MADELINE
But there is! Voices, a woman's...

MARY
(aside, to Samuel)
There's nothing here for me. Take
it.

Samuel hasn't heard a word. He's distracted by the mist floating ever closer--

THROUGH THE UPSIDE-DOWN FRAME OF THE BOX CAMERA LENS

SNAP! The lens shutter opens. The family poses.

OFF-CAMERA

Gena frames the shot. Everyone poses forward, except Samuel.

The mist approaches, taking shape. A WOMAN'S--

Invisible to all, save Samuel. Her sights set on -- Madeline.

The "Woman" abruptly locks eyes with Samuel. His pale face drops. Behind, he feels eyes on him. Turns into the crowd.

A POV -- whose, we're not sure. His pleading eyes -- please don't. Finally, a consenting nod--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - LATER

The Evans family prepare to leave. As Madeline steps into the backseat of their luxurious car--

A folded piece of paper is THRUST inches from her nose. Reflexively, she jerks back.

Samuel, with a warm smile, places the paper in her hand.

UNCLE SAMUEL

If you should need anything...

Steps from the car, holding his gaze a beat too long--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - EVANS HOME - DAY (1942)

Frantic hands move through the spacious bedroom, shoving clothes and other necessities into several bags.

The hand's owner closes the final bag, revealing--

Madeline, now 17. Beautiful without knowing. The spark hasn't left those eyes -- yet there's a weariness, a fear there.

LEGEND: 1942

Flops on the plush bed, sighs loudly, taking in her surroundings with finality.

Leans over, pushes the quilt off her hope chest, opens it.

She digs through the clutter -- photo albums, school memorabilia, etc. -- producing a thick stack of faded envelopes, tied together by red ribbon.

The return address reads--

"MR. & MRS. R. FROST."

Rummaging further, she finds a framed photograph. Her family posed outside the O'Brien eight years before. Everyone faces forward, except for Uncle Samuel, looking just out of frame.

Her expression void, she tosses it aside, finds a high school Letterman, clutches it to her nose, and inhales.

MADELINE (V.O.)
Do you feel it?

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Some weeks ago. Echoed. A jovial Madeline and her handsome NORMAN, 19, jaunt free on the grass in separate directions.

NORMAN
When are you gonna start acting
like a grown up?!

MADELINE
This is my grown-up look! You don't
approve?

They collide, drop to their knees, laughing as they catch their breath -- the chemistry of young, forbidden love.

Norman makes to speak, but she holds a finger to his lips, kissing him deep. Their eyes search one another.

She begins to disrobe him, but it's awkward. He lets her.

NORMAN
This is what you want?

She flattens his armed services jacket onto the wet grass, pulls him down. Both land hard, giggling.

He's on top, holding her tight. A tear rolls off her cheek.

MADELINE
Do you feel it?

At peace, he nods. They embrace as we leave them alone.

BACK TO SCENE.

Her mind races, having never felt more alone.

EXT. NORMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Late afternoon. Madeline strides the busy sidewalk of a lower-class neighborhood, approaching a modest one-story home.

A WOMAN'S VOICE calls from the house.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Maddie! Good gracious...!

Norman's frumpy MOTHER, late 30s, pushes the screen door open, and limps to a smiling Madeline with outstretched arms.

Wrapped in their embrace, Madeline subtly shifts her stomach aside. Mother notes the disconnect, but keeps it to herself.

Madeline is different to Mother than her own. Warmer, loving.

MADELINE
Wish I could stay. Have to say
goodbye for a bit.
(off Mother's reaction)
It's a short one, needn't worry.
Paying my Aunt and Uncle a visit at
their place.

MOTHER
Of course, my dear. We shall--

Madeline's eyes fall on the Service Flag in the front window. Mother reads her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
We all feel the same. How could he
forget this pretty face?

Madeline avoids her gaze, but forces a smile.

EXT. SIERRA MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Headlights from the Evans car pierce through the lush beauty of the darkened Sierra Nevada Mountains.

INT. EVANS CAR - MOMENTS LATER

From the luggage-stuffed backseat, Madeline's gaze falls between her parent's heads, and out the window.

Both Mary, now 56 and Stephen, 53, are sleep-deprived, yet still maintain their proud, arrogant, disposition.

Stephen glances behind. Mary sees this -- give her something.

STEPHEN

These things can be blessings in
disguise. Your piano's not going
anywhere, Sweet Girl.

Madeline doesn't respond, keeping silent her resentment.

The headlights illuminate something ahead -- a sign:

"Welcome to Beautiful Hasling's Road. Population: 450."

Further ahead, the blink-and-you'll-miss town of Hasling's
Road. Sitting atop the quaint Main Street is a prominent two-
story Victorian style home.

Trees obstruct her view, before the ground shifts.

They've turned onto a desolate dirt road. The O'Brien Road.

Tall trees line the road as they pass a crumbling secluded
cemetery, hidden from the main road.

MADELINE

We were here last...eight, nine
years ago?

Her parents exchange a glance, Madeline observes this.
Mary shakes her head--

MARY

Your Uncle and I. We didn't have
much use for each other, that's it.

Madeline peers ahead, entering her new world.

At the path's end, the old inn floats above the fog.

Smiling, Samuel, now 55, steps from the porch to greet them.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

God, let's make this quick.

SLOW MOTION -- They circle the drive. In a silent moment,
Samuel locks eyes with Madeline.

Stepping from the backseat, chaos. Joyous screams erupt.

RESUME NORMAL MOTION.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - CONTINUOUS

Greetings intersect as Gena, now 53, races down the steps. Stephen and Samuel uneasily shake hands. Mary and her brother exchange pleasantries.

In the intervening years, both Gena and Samuel have gained some weight, and a more distant demeanor.

Madeline steps away to revere the inn, EMITTING A GASP--

Motionless in the second floor window, a young woman stares at Madeline. Her features are difficult to grasp, except for the virginal white nightgown she wears.

Stiff hands fall on Madeline's shoulders -- Samuel's, staring ahead, as he proudly beholds the inn. Madeline shivers.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Your new home. Might as well get a good look.

She locks eyes with Samuel, before peering over his shoulder.

Finds Mary planted by the car, a pure blank.

Stephen gives her a gentle shove. She staggers forward.

Gena follows, glances back curiously to Mary at the car -- she won't be stepping inside.

Being led toward the front door, Madeline peers at the second floor window.

It's now empty.

A portion of the porch ceiling obstructs her view.

The rest of the house swallows her whole--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

They take in their surroundings. Despite some modern touches, there's a melancholy of time being forced to stand still.

STEPHEN

When's check in?

Samuel closes the front door, disdainfully shaking his head as he studies his brother-in-law.

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Some necessities added, sure.
 But, this place...its history,
 deserves our respect.

With a smirk, Stephen buries his hands in his pockets and strides away.

At the banister, Madeline gazes up the stairs. Gena senses, hoping to reminisce--

AUNT GENA
 Do you remember the last time--?

MADELINE
 Is there someone here?

Madeline turns, not acknowledging her flippant tone. Gena and Samuel exchange a puzzled look.

UNCLE SAMUEL
 No. It's just us.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER

The geography tour. Madeline and Gena shake their heads in communal agreement as Samuel gloats.

Through the dining room, the kitchen, the living room--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 You might not notice the changes right away, but I've spent these last few years fixing up the old tomb. Fresh paint here, new roof shingle there. This place deserves a return to its heyday.
 (points)
They deserve just that.

Back in the entrance hall, they find themselves facing the immaculately framed photographs that adorn the wall.

One of DANIEL O'BRIEN, at 25, erecting the inn on the grounds. His wife, KATHERINE, young and beautiful, by his side. Another of the construction process.

Stephen glances, then moves on, indifferent.

Madeline, however, squints close for further study.

CU ON THE PHOTOS -- Daniel enjoys a drink. Katherine serves local, traveling patrons. In another, she sings for a cheering crowd.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
 Must have been quite a time. I'm
 glad you can appreciate the past...

Madeline finds Samuel by her side, transfixed by the photos, his voice tinged with sadness. Dazed, he turns.

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Let's see the upstairs.

Everyone but Madeline turn away. She gives the photos another look, not understanding.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

At the top stair, Madeline peers down the tight corridor, a series of closed doors line both sides.

Save for one at the end. From there, Samuel's voice travels--

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
 Some of these rooms are not in use,
 too much old junk.

Madeline reaches out, testing the doors. The first on the left is indeed locked.

Samuel and the others step back in the hallway, see Madeline, and head further upstairs (into the attic) without a word.

Madeline shakes her head, and snickers. Her Uncle and Aunt, this inn, are merely eccentric.

Having felt things out, her shoulders ease.

Makes to head back downstairs, but stops--

Bleeding across the wall and floor are a puddle of light, coming from the door behind her -- it was closed before.

Madeline swallows hard, steps forward.

Once she disappears, a distorted figure, faint to the eye, is at the end of the hallway.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Like the rest, the room is a relic to the past. Madeline stares at the window, recognizes the pattern of glass where the figure stood.

She approaches the window pane, and looks down.

Mary is there, smoking as she leans against the car.

Resentful, Madeline's eyes narrow.

Somewhere, a piano is faintly heard. Curious, she steps out.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The piano is louder, yet muffled. Frozen, she concentrates.

Madeline turns to the door she tried, across from her bedroom, determined that it's coming from there.

She regards the blown-out light from the door's edges.

Knocks politely. The piano still plays. Reverberating echoes.

Madeline tries the knob, jiggles it. Locked.

Abruptly -- the playing stops. Wood echoes against the floor.

A long silence.

Breathe held, she presses her right ear to the door. Nothing.

She arches her head to try the other ear, GASPS--

Samuel stares at her, mere inches away.

Her pointed eyes dart between him and the door.

MADELINE

I-I heard a piano.

UNCLE SAMUEL

In there? That room's nothing but old rubbish, floor to ceiling.

Old memories...

Madeline looks at him. His smile fades.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Your old Aunt and me, we're happy
you're here -- despite what's
happened. We greatly enjoyed your
letters.

Madeline nods, and smiles despite her anxiousness.

MADELINE

Mother didn't appreciate the
correspondence, once things came to
light.

His charming, gruff smile appears, thoughtful.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Sure, she must've grown wise to the
return address. Mr. and Mrs. R.
Frost? Come on--

They share a slight laugh.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Must be fearful staying here for
the first time. Used to your large
San Francisco house on Nob Hill,
friends, I'm sure. Not this...

MADELINE

No one who'd miss me.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Wilderness here takes some gettin'
used to. Hoping you don't believe
in nonsense like ghosts or spirits.

A glint of coldness. Ignorantly, she smiles, shakes her head.

MADELINE

Nothing of the sort.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

(from downstairs)

We must be leaving soon, Samuel!

They nod, communally. Quiet disgust behind his eyes.

UNCLE SAMUEL

I'll leave you to it, then...

He disappears downstairs.

Once again, Madeline studies the door. The shaft of light
permeates, leaves Samuel's words to be desired.

INT. STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline descends as Stephen's blank voice floats from below.

STEPHEN (O.S.)
--Fields. How reliable is he?

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline reaches the bottom, toward the ajar door.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
He's careful, and very relia--

STEPHEN (O.S.)
Being that this is illegal.

Through a slit in the door, she spies Stephen sitting across from Samuel and Gena. Uncomfortably tense.

Samuel spots his niece. He stands, approaches the doorway.

AUNT GENA
Doesn't take patients unless he
meets them first. The nurses are
never given the names--

Nodding, he gently shuts the door on her face.

Bitter, Madeline steps away -- she won't be apart of the conversation. She approaches the wall of photos once more.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
She's in good hands.

One in particular grabs her attention: Daniel and Katherine locked in an intimate moment, lips pressed together. Perfect.

In the reflected glass, someone is there.

Madeline turns. Gena closes the door, glances about.

AUNT GENA
Not the palace, we're aware, but
it's close to work. Samuel is here,
that's real what matters.

STEPHEN (O.S.)
--say, within the next few weeks?
Sooner the better, right?

At a loss, Gena observes her reaction.

AUNT GENA

I understand you had to say goodbye
to your sweetheart.

Madeline smiles, as she wipes a tear from her eyelashes.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Stephen awkwardly faces Madeline by the car. This is goodbye.

STEPHEN

Remember...stay out of sight. No
one knows you're here...just--

Sensing her annoyance, he shifts tactics -- warm confidence.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

This was your decision, Sweet Girl,
just remember. Once everything is
complete -- you can come home.
Everything will be as it.

Stops himself, sighs. He hugs her, then steps away.

Mary waits there, regarding her daughter. With some
difficulty, she bundles Madeline up in her arms.

Mary tries to speak, but the words don't come. With a final
glance, she turns.

MOMENTS LATER

At the porch, Madeline tracks the car descending around the
bend, then is gone.

She steps inside, the sounds of nature rising in our ears.

As we pull away from the inn, a rhythmic tapping brings us--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

That night. The grandfather clock arm sways back and forth.
Silverware clinks in the next room.

INT. DINING ROOM - SAME

Their first meal together. Madeline is in the middle, with
Gena and Samuel on both sides.

Madeline nervous picks at her food. Samuel eats quietly, his head bowed, a normal ritual. Gena looks about--

MADELINE

Did my father leave instruction on what I'm allowed to do while I'm here?

Gena smiles, wiping her still-chewing mouth. In her own environment, she's more relaxed.

AUNT GENA

Well...be a member of this house. See to your studies, be of good use. Stay out of--

MADELINE

As you know, it won't be long. It's been -- we've already decided.

They pause. Again, Madeline wasn't aware of her tone.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

What...? I'll be returning to school soon. Back to my playing.

Gena's charm dissipates. Tries a different tact.

AUNT GENA

Speaking of which: congratulations are in order. We were told how well your public debut went recently.

Thoughtful Gena knows she shouldn't push it, but still--

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Only -- is that what you want? Or your parents?

(off Madeline's reaction)

Well. All I'm -- this is your life, after all.

Madeline twists the fork, her expression hardens.

AUNT GENA

Is it a mere coincidence that you want to follow in your father's footsteps--?

UNCLE SAMUEL

--Gena, enough now.

AUNT GENA

A pianist for the San Francisco Philharmonic? Better yet, being here in the first place...?

Madeline turns cold. At the right angle, we see Mary.

MADELINE

Actually...yes it is. I have my
life, and this one dream only. Once
I pass this...bump in the road,
I'll be able to move on.

(beat)

The sooner the better.

She pointedly stabs her food, leaving them silent.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that night. Madeline lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, feeling the stillness. Her breath deepens as we--

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. PARLOR - EVANS HOME - NIGHT

Some weeks ago. Silence. Framed photos of the Evans' family line the walls. An awkward glamour studio shot of Madeline.

Sinister faces of San Francisco high society stare ahead, seated. Poised amongst, front and center, Stephen and Mary.

They are gathered around Madeline at the piano, performing a recital in her parent's large, Nob Hill residence.

Well trained and practiced -- but not playing for herself.

MOMENT LATER

Silence. The recital at an end, the crowd erupts in cheer as Stephen toasts her. In the middle, Madeline is surrounded.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVANS HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Silence. In the foreground, a celebratory party is in full swing. Liquor, heavy smoking, Big Band, happy laughter.

In the background, through the kitchen, and the walk-in pantry, it's a different story--

Bathed in darkness, yet animated in her gestures, Mary tells Madeline off for any insolence she has chosen.

Madeline dares to talk back. In a flash, Mary digs her nails into her daughter's wrist.

Wide-eyed, Madeline stumbles back, clutching the wound.

Just like that, Mary strides off, re-joining the party.

Stephen sips champagne, glances toward the kitchen. Mary gives him her fake smile and begins to socialize once more.

INT. STAIRCASE - EVANS HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Silence. While the party echoes, Madeline sits on the bottom step, nursing her bloodied wrist. Angry tears fall.

Double doors, leading to a darkened part of the house, slowly part. Madeline takes pause.

From the darkness, a guiding hand emerges -- beckoning. Her face lights up as she stands, takes the hand, and disappears.

INT. KITCHEN - EVANS HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Silence. Hand-in-hand, Madeline and Norman, wearing a service uniform, hastily run past the party, out the back door.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - NIGHT

Silence. The city during wartime: a mixture of patriotism, paranoia and the everyday.

Madeline grips Norman's hand as they make their way through the crowd, kissing and necking.

The sights and sounds don't excite her -- Norman does. Around him, she's altogether different. She's free.

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

Silence. The floor is filled shoulder to shoulder with men in service uniforms, slow dancing with their dates.

Norman and Madeline are among them. Norman bumps the shoulder of an OFFICER, and immediately pauses to salute.

Madeline observes. She knows, but has tried to forget -- he's not staying.

The Officer steps away. Norman hesitantly turns.

She grabs onto him. Their embrace turns into a slow dance. Guilt-ridden, he whispers in her ear.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

Silence. Hidden deep in the darkness, Norman and Madeline embrace, making love for the first time.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The next morning. Silence. Fog hangs low over Madeline and Norman's farewell. Both are disheveled, at a loss for words.

MOMENTS LATER

Madeline steps onto the curb, looks back. Norman boards a bus. It turns a corner, the fog covering his tracks--

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Long beat. A sob of tears abruptly burst out. Scared, unsure tears. Not the confident girl we saw at dinner.

Her hands begin rubbing her stomach.

HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

Her path may be a shade of grey after all.

HOURS LATER

Dead of night. Madeline has turned over, deep asleep.

Somewhere -- a muffled, wailing cry.

Inhaling deep, Madeline wakes, confused as she looks about.

A long silence.

The cry again.

Unsure, she rises, places her ear to the door. The cry doesn't dissipate. Thinks a moment, then twists the knob.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

From the far end of the hallway, an ELEVATED POV spies Madeline. She finds nothing, and moves downstairs.

The POV FLOATS, toward her--

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

--following Madeline's descent. The cries echo, now sounding like the wailing of a helpless newborn.

Upon reaching the bottom step, she whispers into the dark.

MADELINE
Aunt Gena...?

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

The arm of the grandfather clock sways.

Madeline stops, peers back upstairs.

Instantaneously, the clock's swaying arm and the cries--

--HALT.

Piercing silence. In the moonlight, Madeline's pale nightgown gives her a spirit-like presence.

The photos of Daniel and Katherine stare ahead in contempt.

A shadow hovers along the wall, startling her to turn. Her breath deepens, eyes dart, as she makes for the staircase--

On her wrist, an invisible impression of fingers appear, blonde hairs stand on end.

Her wrist lifts weightless. Initially, she fights it, but like an ether-induced stupor, realizes, she can't.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline is led through the back door into the wilderness.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - MOMENTS LATER

Giant Sequoia lean in as she stumbles through the cold.

Lazily peering behind, Madeline senses a presence following.

Specks of blood run down her legs.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

She steps into the very clearing from her childhood.

Feels a release, pitches to her knees like a rag doll.

Spent and shivering, Madeline is suddenly conscious of her surroundings. She scrambles to her feet, desperate to escape.

All around, the whispers converge. Tearful, paranoid screams accompany. Tormenting.

Unbeknownst to Madeline, her right hand desperately reaches amongst the leaves--

The screams build, BUILD -- REACHES FEVER PITCH--

Then -- PFFFFFFT--

Everything goes still.

She silently gasps. Her face drops, bows her head, exposing--

THE KNIFE PLUNGED DEEP IN HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

From her peripheral, the silhouette of a shape, a man perhaps, observes from afar.

With sluggish, wet palms, Madeline pulls the slick knife out, sucking in air. Studies it -- the same she found years ago.

Traumatized, she --

PFFFFFFT -- plunges the knife in a second time.

Madeline pants. Unblinking, a tear runs down her cheek, right into the crevice of her forming grin.

The bloodied knife drops with a thud amongst the dead leaves.

Madeline collapses, her nightgown blossoms red.

Lifting her face, a snow clump is caked on her cheek.

Reality slowly dawns--

She gags, spitting up. Blood sprays on white.

She finds -- snow is everywhere.

Panicked, Madeline kicks up fresh powder.

In that instant, something within her builds. Fear subsides, buried strength replaces it.

MADELINE

No...

Desperately, she pulls herself along the ground, beginning the long crawl back to the inn.

In her wake, a trail of debris and blood are left.

Invisible footsteps impact in the trail, following--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A bloodshot eye BOLTS open, stares ahead.

Madeline wakes with a start.

The sun beams through the window.

Yanks the heavy quilt aside, revealing -- nothing.

Crosses to the full-sized mirror. No blood, no debris.

Studying her reflection, the wheels turns a little faster.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline studies Gena and Samuel over breakfast.

Gena senses, produces a subtle apologetic smile. Distracted, Madeline smiles back.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Madeline frantically searches, shoving aside leaves and dirt.

Out of breath, face caked in dirt, Madeline looks about. No snow. No knife.

Dazed, her filthy hands streak down, massaging her stomach.

MADELINE

You still there...? Rational answer
-- there has to be. Has to be--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bewildered, Madeline staggers into a chair at the vanity.

Reaches for her luggage, and digs. Finds her Aunt and Uncle's stack of letters, puts them aside.

Fishes out a notebook and pen. Flattens the notebook, tensely sighs, and begins to write.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"Dearest Norman. Things change in the blink of an eye. Some for the better, others...well. I'm writing from my Aunt and Uncle's Inn, deep in the Sierra Mountains. I'm here to commit what you'll think of as murder."

Madeline considers the word "murder". She continues.

LETTER MONTAGE BEGINS.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - DAY

Madeline walks the grounds.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"Once you receive this, the act will already be done. My heart dies for you, yet I need my peace. I need to oblige what I was born to do: my parent's bidding. If I'm to be a concert pianist, my dream, a child doesn't have a place in this scenario. Try not to think little of me."

(pause)

"The people I'm staying with are good people, Norman. Good souls of the Earth that have given me shelter in my moment of need."

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Samuel tears at old shingles, balancing close to the edge.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"My Uncle spends his quiet days restoring the O'Brien to its once former glory for guests that have long since checked out..."

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Samuel steps off the ladder, his bucket of tools slung over his shoulder.

At his feet, submerged under leaves and dirt at the base of the house -- a small door.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "...while living off a large sum of
 old money."

EXT. TOOL SHED - DAY

Through the open door, Samuel sharpens a tool, looks about.
 Places the tool down, takes a swig from his flask.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Why he'd want this old relic
 restored is beyond me."

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - DAY

Sterile white. Laborious screams. With a exhausted team of
 nurses, Gena assists elderly DOCTOR TIM FIELDS in delivering.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Gena, a nurse, utilizes her time
 to assist Doctor Fields, the man
 who will make my problems go away."

The YOUNG MOTHER makes one final, agonizing push, before
 she's joined by a second scream. It's a boy.

Fields gently hands the newborn to an adoring Gena.

Gena's smile is a heartbreaker as she cradles the newborn.
 Her sympathetic colleague, NURSE GIBBONS, gently takes the
 baby from her arms to be cleaned.

Enamored, Gena watches the child disappear from sight.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Suffice it to say, they have no
 children to call their own."

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Samuel studies the framed photos, God knows for how long.
 Unbeknownst to him, Madeline secretly watches from the stair.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Their inn, however, has an effect.
 Its own energy..."

INT. O'BRIEN INN - DAY

SERIES OF IMAGES -- floating through the empty house, appraising its history.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
"...its own memory. We're simply included."

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Late afternoon. Through the door in the kitchen, Gena prepares dinner. Atop the table, a stack of plates.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline wanders, spots an antique kerosene lamp on a table.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
"If I believed in things like spirits, you'd think me mad. Well, I'm not ma--"

Stops frozen, and listens--

Cries. The very same from her first night.

They are coming from the empty chair in the corner.

The cries are intermingled with a woman's whispered lullaby. Distress pouring out.

Eyes peeled, Madeline slowly moves forward.

Behind, someone approaches. A hand falls on her shoulder.

Madeline jumps, jerks her head around -- Gena.

AUNT GENA
What is it?

MADELINE
Nothing. Setting the table now.

Madeline's mind races, but collects herself and exits, leaving a perplexed Gena to feel out the room.

What did Madeline hear--?

Gena looks around, ears sharp, following Madeline's gaze toward the chair. With held breath, she waits. Nothing comes--

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Madeline and Gena eat in silence.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Night changes things."

INT. HASLING'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Drunk, Samuel holds court, spouting a joke. Patrons double over in laughter.

As he knocks back another, Samuel catches the eye of the young BARMAID serving drinks. She's familiar. His smile drops as he pushes his glass forward--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Gimme another.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Intense, blood-curdling screams.

A GIRL, about Madeline's age, fights her way out of the stirrups. Her manic glare fixed on the enamel pail, and its contents, as they're hurried from the room.

GIRL
 What have I done?! I'm going to
 hell! I want to die! Oh God!

Fields nods to Gena. She tries comforting the raving Girl.

AUNT GENA
 God loves you, no matter what deed
 you've committed.

GIRL
 I've killed my baby, what do you
 know?! What the FUCK do you know?!

Suddenly nauseous, Gena covers her mouth, as she bolts. The Girl's screams echo as she holds back tears.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Madeline listens at the Locked Door. Like Samuel with his photos, God knows how long she's been here.

EXT. O'BRIEN ROAD - NIGHT

Samuel staggers home, singing. Pauses at the ancient cemetery, thinks a sobering beat, then continues on.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Madeline stands by her Aunt and Uncle's bedroom door, overhearing Gena's tear-filled praying, while--

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Unmoved, Samuel stares at the crackling fire.

LETTER MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Madeline stares at the half-written letter, unable to finish.

Abruptly, it comes to her -- possibly, an answer.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Breathless, Madeline searches the wall of photographs.

Finds the snapshot of Daniel and Katherine, all smiles, embracing in front of the newly constructed inn.

Her fingers graze the photo, longingly -- for an answer.

Their eternal gaze beckons to Madeline.

Purses her lips, shuts her eyes tight. What is happening?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline bitterly tears the letter to shreds -- RIP!!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

CRACK!! Winds snap against wet clothes hanging on a line.

Gripping the basket, windswept hair blowing, Gena studies Madeline's back as she distractedly takes laundry down.

Gena approaches, pulling the laundry from Madeline's grasp.

AUNT GENA

We need to talk. You need to listen.

Madeline's swollen eyes meets Gena's. Bows her head.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

We haven't spoken about the operation. The doctor needs to meet with you to discuss--

Madeline's head rises -- her cold persona returns.

MADELINE

This isn't your decision to make.

AUNT GENA

You think this is what I want? I love you, but I don't care about your dreams, or your wants. Only the life growing inside you.

Madeline doesn't answer.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Your Uncle and I were expecting once. Years ago. Supposed to be the happiest time of my life. Anything to cleanse this old...

(collects herself)

It was a miscarriage, close to delivery. After -- well, eventually we stopped trying.

Madeline softens briefly, regarding her with pity. Gena gently holds her wrists.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

You're not your Mom or Dad, honey. This needs to be up to you -- your decision.

Gena slowly makes for the inn, basket in hand.

MADELINE (O.S.)

I've heard voices.

Gena pauses, before turning, expectant.

Madeline's peers toward the inn, a darkness enveloping her.

MADELINE

There are whispers. Crying...

Gena hardens, nods her head. Bullshit.

AUNT GENA

Don't care to believe in that sort
of thing--

MADELINE

(defensive)
--Neither do I.

AUNT GENA

Maybe it's your conscience trying
to tell you something. You came
here for a reason.
(calls over her shoulder
as she walks)
You're going to that appointment!

INT. SAMUEL/GENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Samuel lays on his side, eyes wide open, while Gena stares at
the ceiling -- a great distance between them.

AUNT GENA

I'm worried. She thinks she's
hearing things in the house.
(no response)
I know you're awake. Why would she
make up such nonsense?

UNCLE SAMUEL

I wouldn't know.

AUNT GENA

It's these ghosts you're keeping
alive. In her state, she'd believe
anything. What have you told her?
Is that why you treat this place
like an antique?

Long beat.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Nothing's here. Only memories.

AUNT GENA

You're distracted.
(tenderly moves closer)
She's the only family we have--

He moves away, abruptly getting up. Gena turns resentful.

UNCLE SAMUEL

No. No, we're not doing that. The only reason she's here -- she happened to get knocked up. Years of correspondence, friendly letters back and forth -- now she needs us? Her prick of a father shoving that sweaty wad of cash at me, no. No.

AUNT GENA

Despite our differences, Sam, she's just a girl. There's a life she wants to lead, not one that others will lead for her. She needs us. We need to be her family.

He hesitates, shakes his head--

UNCLE SAMUEL

There's too much Mary there...

INT./EXT. GENA'S CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel, Gena drives up Hasling's Road's main street, approaching the hospital, once a converted home.

Beside her, Madeline spies Doctor Fields watching from a second floor window.

INT. DOCTOR FIELDS' OFFICE - LATER

Bach on the phonograph. Fields prepares tea for a seated Madeline and Gena. He carries himself like a pillar of the community, a patriarch.

He addresses the ladies with a tiny pair of tongs.

DOCTOR FIELDS

I forget. Was it one cube or two?

AUNT GENA

(reaches out)

One-- Tim, let me help, please.

Waves her off with a warm smile. Drops the sugar cube in each cup, and hands them to the ladies.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Here you are. Afternoons, I find myself more relaxed with a nice warm cup and old Bach in my ears. Keeps things steady for --later.

Fields settles behind his desk, taking a good, long sip. Madeline and Gena wait.

Sighing with satisfaction, he turns to Madeline.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)

Now. You. A few questions are needed to ensure this -- procedure is necessary. Apologies up front, but -- what are your intentions?

Madeline is quiet, the coldness seething under the surface.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)

As you may know, um, I help out young girls like yourself. Though not made public, I like to think we perform a community service. Second chances are important, because, well, everyone deserves one.

(regards her tired face)

Though -- this is something else.

Her raging eyes meet his. Gena knows what's coming.

AUNT GENA

Madeline--

DOCTOR FIELDS

It's a big decision, but, I don't know -- this is something else.

Fields holds his gaze. Footsteps approach, then a KNOCK.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)

Come!

Nurse Gibbons enters, apologetic.

NURSE GIBBONS

Doctor, forgive me...

(to Gena)

You got a minute? We can really use the help out here.

Gena stands, collecting her things. Madeline does likewise.

AUNT GENA

Wait for me outside--

DOCTOR FIELDS

We're still talking.

Both ladies pause. Fields sounded stern, but his demeanor is calm as he sips.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
Another minute.

Gena doesn't protest, and leaves. Madeline again sits.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
You're staying at the old O'Brien
with your Aunt and Uncle, right?

Fields doesn't wait for a response. He rises and peers out the window, overlooking the wood with distant eyes.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
There was a pregnancy there once.
Did you know that?

MADELINE
My Aunt lost her child, yes.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Gena's loss was sad, but I refer to
another. One that was cut short,
and quite deliberate. Like what
you're attempting here.

Fields eyes her, reaching for his tea. Her attention peaked--

MADELINE
Who was the child? The mother?

PING! PING! PING! He taps the spoon on the cup's brim.

DOCTOR FIELDS
No one good.

MADELINE
The house...?

Fields pauses, contemplating his next words.

DOCTOR FIELDS
My advice: whatever you decide
here, decide quick, and then leave.
The first chance--

Her mind reels, as she shifts in her chair.

MADELINE
I can't ask anyone else...do you
think that--?

A knock. Gena enters, sensing something's amiss. Fields gazes across at an anxious Madeline.

AUNT GENA
I'm not interrupting anything...?

A subtle beat. Fields stands, greeting Gena.

DOCTOR FIELDS
We're done here, Gena. Thank you ladies both for coming in.

Madeline rises and steps out the door, thoughts plaguing her.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
Gena, a minute?

Fields passes Gena, closing the door on Madeline.

INT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline presses her ear to the door, listening to the muffled conversation. There's hesitation in Fields' voice.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Watch her. Keep her close.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
(breaking)
What is wrong with her? Don't know if it's anxiety, or-- she hears things. Guilt, prenatal depression--

Throughout this, Madeline's face is a mixture of emotions. Again, being discussed without a say.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Alright, settle down -- good. I'm not a shrink. What I do know is if this procedure is going to happen, it needs to be soon. She's already six weeks along. Friday. Same as usual.

Nurse Gibbons walks past, eyeing Madeline with suspicion.

Gena is heard taking a deep breath.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
If it's prenatal depression -- which may very well be -- more of a reason to keep an eye. Whatever it is, it might taper off soon after.

(MORE)

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.) CONT'D
 She'll go home to Mom and Dad, all
 is forgotten. Out of everyone's
 hair. Away from that house.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
 The...what? She-she can't be
 watched ever moment. Between this
 and Samuel...

Silence. Madeline holds her breath.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
 Try.

The door flies open. Face to face, Gena freezes and gasps.
 Madeline doesn't blink, her suspicions mounting.

INT. GENA'S CAR - LATER

Gena and Madeline drive in silence. Gena side-eyes her sullen
 niece, trying to get a read.

AUNT GENA
 Ever driven?

Madeline shifts, not giving in. Gena shrugs.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 Part of being a grown up.

Madeline smirks slightly. That's Gena's cue. Peers over her
 shoulder, as she slows to the side of the road.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 Didn't bother till I was 43. No
 time like the present...

MOMENTS LATER

The car sits idle by the side of the empty road. Madeline
 nervous grips the wheel.

AUNT GENA
 First thing's first: check mirrors.
 Know your surroundings. Now, you
 have the clutch, gas pedal, your--

MADELINE
 Yeah, I know this.

Ignoring the tone, Gena checks over her shoulder.

AUNT GENA

All right, smarty, let's try it
then. Pull out slow. You're good.

The vehicle accelerates onto the open road. Gena nods.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

All right, a little speed, now
shift into second.

Madeline yanks the clutch -- they putter abruptly to a stop.
Containing her vomit, Gena shakes the clutch.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Try again.

Madeline glances away, doubting. Gena knows better.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

What's stopping you?

MOMENTS LATER

Now a more steady ride. Madeline notices Gena's proud smile
out of the corner of her eye.

AUNT GENA

Ain't so bad, now is it?

Madeline smiles back, shares a look with Gena, and shakes her
head. Any suspicion between the two has faded.

Gena peers out the back window--

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Okay. That was our turn...

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - DAY

Madeline strolls in the early evening light. Trees cast long
shadows across the leaf-ridden floor.

Distant laughter is heard, a girl's -- Madeline pauses,
squints. It's coming from the tree lane ahead.

Madeline investigates a nearby tree. Cranes her neck around--

From Madeline's right, A REDHEADED GIRL, about 9, pops her
head out. She giggles before darting back.

Madeline turns, surprised.

MADELINE

Oh...hello?

The Redhead reappears, curiously wearing a period dress. Madeline warmly extends her hand.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I'm-- Madeline. It's okay...

Redhead's shyness fades, steps forward a few paces, and shyly holds out her little hand.

From the distance, a demanding Irish brogue calls out.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Katherine, in!

Caught off guard, both Madeline and Redhead turn. Distracted, Madeline turns back--

9-YEAR OLD MADELINE IS NOW INCHES AWAY, calmly holding out her hand. Her expression is blank, decrepit.

Madeline stares, frozen in place--

The resemblance is uncanny. Except--

Young Madeline's pupils dim to pure white -- devoid of life.

Madeline can't scream. Stepping back, she trips over her own feet, staring up. A hoarse whisper escapes her throat.

MADELINE

...why...me?

Hand extended, Young Madeline steps closer. As her foot touches the ground, leaves wrestle violently upward, creating a cyclone.

Petrified, Madeline crawls backwards, avoiding her doppelganger's touch. Looks about, dazed -- the cyclone engulfing them.

Madeline shakes her head -- this can't be her imagination.

Young Madeline towers over Madeline, extending her little finger closer--

Slightly, their fingers touch--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

That night.

Madeline grips the edge of the pillow, sweating profusely.
Shoved under the door knob is her vanity chair.
Whispers from the hallway, then a baby's cries, before--

A VOICE (O.S.)
Madeline...

Eyes shut tight, she flops into the fetal position.

MADELINE
It's not real. It can't be...

Behind her, THE CHAIR GRADUALLY DRAGS AWAY FROM THE DOOR.
With a wisp of wind, THE BEDROOM DOOR SWINGS OPEN.
Her big eyes open, realizing -- and turns.
Flickering shadows dance about outside the hallway.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Distant whispers, sudden heavy rain outside permeate.

Madeline emerges from the bedroom, and GASPS--

Kerosene lamps atop small tables illuminate the hallway.
Scattered luggage and muddy boot prints track on rugs.

Hearing the rain triggers Madeline's senses. She peers to the far window, through her bedroom. No rain is evident -- only a full moon.

She gazes on the Locked Door. Below, shadows dance merrily.

Indecisive, she blinks -- another waking dream?

Shakes away such thoughts as she crosses for the stair.
There, the distant whispers grow.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

MADELINE'S POV -- more lamps emit a seductive, golden warmth.
Whispers have become raised voices, jovial in conversation.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline stops cold at the door, met with a drunk void of voice and laughter.

The dining room is now the Downstairs Parlor, as it looked in the entrance hall photographs.

WE ARE IN A FLASHBACK - 1887.

Filled to capacity with men and women, engaged in debauchery and drunken indecency. Regulars and guests of the O'Brien.

Ignored, Madeline strides through, picking up bits of gossip.

FEMALE CUSTOMER #1
(looks about)
Vile tongue! The Misses is a saint.

FEMALE CUSTOMER #2
...another gold digger, wed for
money, I hear...

MALE CUSTOMER #1
(downs a shot)
Courteous word is whore, my dear...

Madeline regards this before vanishing from sight.

We're left at a table where several regulars play cards with an unseen WELL-POLISHED MAN.

REGULAR
O'Brien, your pull.

Reveal -- the Well-Polished Man is DANIEL O'BRIEN, here 28.

Daniel's kind eyes hide an arrogant disposition. A self-made, big city man of wealth, his appearance as the proprietor of the O'Brien make him something of a contradiction.

As he pulls a card, he scrutinizes the lone man at the bar, subtly watching Daniel while he nurses a whiskey.

Daniel knows him as PHILLIP NOTH, early 30s.

As Daniel rises to confront him, a resounding whoop from the back room gives him pause.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
WHO NEEDS A TOPPER?!

The room abruptly lifts into celebratory joy!

KATHERINE O'BRIEN, 22, the dramatic that she is, EXPLODES into the room, sashaying toward the bar, merrily re-filling glasses as she goes.

Standing frozen, Daniel observes his wife entertaining.

In the back, Madeline beams at Katherine -- transfixed.

Katherine is the definition of a happy, youthful Irish soul. Flowing red locks topple over fierce green eyes. A fighting spirit make her easy to love -- a love she easily accepts.

As she passes, Phillip subtly gestures to gain her attention. Like Madeline, her manner changes, depending on the person.

Coyly avoiding him, she mutters something in his ear.

Daniel slowly sits, attention unwavering.

Katherine returns to the bar, preparing more drinks.

Once she's close, Phillip firmly snatches her wrist. Ignoring his glare, her expression transforms in an instant.

Despite the distance, Daniel catches bits of the exchange.

KATHERINE

--Phillip, no! We have nothing more to say--

PHILLIP

She wants to see you.

Daniel clearly heard that. His face is a mask.

Katherine goes pale. Her icy gaze falls on Daniel.

KATHERINE

You need not mention her. She's here every time you are...

PHILLIP

(calmly spiteful)
You've had to make some difficult decisions yourself, I see.

She forcibly yanks her wrist back, grabs the drink-filled tray and storms away.

PHILLIP

Pray these decisions please you.

Locking eyes with Daniel, she addresses Phillip. Mournful.

KATHERINE

Stay away, please. There's nothing left here.

She leaves. Phillip watches, downs his drink, and suddenly feels a presence, turns -- Daniel is beside him, observing.

With a huff, Daniel throws his stomach onto the bar to fetch a stowed-away bottle.

Pours them each a shot. While doing so, Phillip glances as Katherine ascends the stairs. Choosing to ignore, Daniel raises his glass.

DANIEL
Down the hatch.

Downs it, studying him.

Baffled, Phillip waits a beat before drinking.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
To your liking?

Daniel roughly pats Phillip on the back, steps away.

INT. STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel climbs the stair, passing guests with a warm, businessman smile.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Up here, the jovial conversation has faded, replaced by a piano playing a familiar tune, only with more cheer.

Daniel approaches the present-day Locked Door -- now open.

Through the doorway, he finds Katherine, seated at a piano in what is an upstairs parlor.

Shoulder leaned against the door jamb, he regards her.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Darling...we have guests...

Closes it on us. The lock is turned SHARPLY.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

As Daniel glides towards Katherine, he notices her happy disposition is gone.

DANIEL
This was always my favorite.

KATHERINE
(sheepish smile)
It's the only one I can recall.

Unbeknownst to either, Madeline watches from the corner.

Daniel sits beside her on the bench. Lifts her hand from the keys, and kisses it. Sensually kisses her neck.

Katherine lightly pants.

DANIEL
Tell me...why is our returning
guest Mr. Noth downstairs?

She wavers, her eyes clenched shut.

KATHERINE
You know why, my darling.

Courage building, she whispers sensually in return.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Tell me -- why were you taking such
good care of those gentleman at
your table, letting them win and
such?

Daniel wavers, a knowing beat. Releasing herself from his embrace, she rises--

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Enough. Our guests need attending.

Her hand is still in his grasp. With a smile, he lets go.

Katherine makes for the door, when--

SHE PITCHES FORWARD VICIOUSLY ONTO THE RUG -- LANDING HARD.

HE'S KICKED HER SQUARELY IN THE ASS.

Madeline spews a guttural cry.

With disheveled hair, he engulfs the ragged Katherine.

She doesn't move, emitting only small whimpers.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Is that it, this time?

He responds by unsheathing a familiar-looking knife from under his coat. Steps over her--

Bringing his boot down on her porcelain hand.

Agony fills her lungs.

DANIEL

No...this is your punishment...an
on-going reminder...

Daniel roughly pushes his weight down on her. Grabs her dress with a violent RIP--

--and begins.

Music and jovial conversation from downstairs fade in.

Growing more horrified, Madeline is the only witness.

IMAGES OF the awfulness -- torn clothing, tear of skin,
a bit lip, a muffled scream, the groan of a man--

Madeline turns away, tears drenching her cheeks.

Katherine's beautiful face drowns in the rug. Her bloodshot gaze stares ahead into nothingness.

HER POV finds, in the corner -- a figure.

Madeline.

Despite her pain, Katherine chokes back a gasp.

Madeline's eyes widen in horror--

THEY ACKNOWLEDGE ONE ANOTHER FOR A SHARED BREATH--

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Madeline bolts awake with a startled scream, twisting about.

It's the dead of night. The house is still.

She's on the floor, leaned against the Locked Door, holding herself in a fetal position.

A mournful sob escapes her throat. Then, she starts to cry.

MEMORY HIT.

1887. Daniel holds the knife over Katherine's anguished face.

The first night, in the clearing. The same knife pulled from the leaves. Madeline appraises it in her hands.

SMASH CUT TO:

PPFFTTT -- THE KNIFE PLUNGES--

From her peripheral, the silhouette of something, perhaps a man, observes from afar.

The silhouette steps into the moonlight -- Daniel O'Brien.

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline's tear-stained eyes open, understanding no more.

Something escapes her throat -- a hum. Katherine's piano tune, soothing her.

Stops abruptly, hearing -- the hum echoing elsewhere.

Is it another trick? She stands, and follows it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline apprehensively steps from the bottom stair, approaching the door way. The hum is louder.

Bathed in firelight, sits Samuel, bottle in lap, drunkenly humming. Pauses, lazily locks eyes with her.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Where'd you learn that?

She timidly peers back up the stairs. Samuel waves her over with a large, sweaty palm.

Crosses, she sits, facing him. He burps, and exhales. Though drunk, his words are solid and sure.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

S'okay, I couldn't sleep either.
Demons in my head won't let me.

(beat)

How you feeling?

Anxious, Madeline smiles, nods.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Been out of sorts since arriving.
Maybe the change in scenery...the
morning sickness, ahh--suppose
expectin' will do that.

(MORE)

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D) CONT'D
(mumbles as he drinks)
Supposin' not for much longer?

Shallows hard, ashamed, he meets Madeline's glare.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Yeah, I'm sorry. My tongue runs
when I sip. Why I prefer to do it
alone most times.

MADELINE
Hmm.

Samuel senses the condescendence.

UNCLE SAMUEL
Niece Madeline, what do you think
is here with us?

Blind sided, this gets her attention.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Everyone must have a viewpoint on
the matter. Your Aunt -- the
rational one. Won't see the forest
for the trees. You seem to be
the...accepting one.

Takes a swig.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Don't want to be fooled by
exceptions to the rule, suppose.
Rules instilled in you by...lesser
people.

Keeping her bitterness in check, she tries to read him.

MADELINE
What does that make you?

Samuel tries to read her.

UNCLE SAMUEL
One that doesn't question.

Gazes to the wall of photos. They help to tell the story.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Rumors, questions...gossip. All've
long surrounded this place.
Katherine first, then Daniel. Love
my history, so the pleasure was
mine in the digging.

Wedding photos of the happy couple.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
 How they met. The shy, meek man
 filled with amour and...probably
 something else for the girl in the
 saloon that night. Persuading her
 that he fit into her life somehow.

Their honeymoon. On horseback by the bay shores.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
 Just like that, rescued her from
 that impoverished mundane potato-
 eating eternity that awaited
 her...and her folk. Upon marriage,
 however, trouble brewed. But--

Photos of the ground-breaking. Framing, scaffolding and
 construction. An army of laborers.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
 He came here, built this place for
 her. That's love. In the end, this
 place made them happy.
 (introspective beat)
 Love that story.

On the far end of the wall, one photo is missing.

MADELINE
 That's true? Their happiness...?

Samuel gulps a swig, stunned by the question.

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Of course.

Madeline's eyes soften as she leans forward.

MADELINE
 What happened to her, Uncle?

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Katherine? Got herself lost one
 winter's night in a violent
 blizzard. Froze to death, the poor
 thing.
 (beat)
 He left this place soon after,
 never returned. The man's heart
 died with her.

MADELINE
They have children?

UNCLE SAMUEL
Hm. He hated his children.
(off her look)
Parents have a way of disappointing
their children, whether they mean
to or not.

MADELINE
Doctor Fields -- told me there was
a pregnancy here.

UNCLE SAMUEL
Ah yes, the good doctor. Unsung
savior of this community--

Samuel's expression is vacant. Madeline is unwavering.

MADELINE
Nothing good came of it.
(beat)
There is something here. Things
that I couldn't possibly be
imagining. My Aunt didn't belie--

He hoists the bottle over his head, celebratory.

UNCLE SAMUEL
Your Aunt did mention something!
Voices, here and there. She doesn't
believe a word, but it got me to
thinkin': why you're so privy,
while others --aren't.

His tight lips move to further elaborate. Madeline waits.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)
An acre's worth of advice: listen
to those who know.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Late afternoon. Dread fills the lengthening shadows.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

With the window cracked a bit, fresh air seeps in. Sprawled
across the desk is a hand-written letter.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Dearest...once there was a woman
 that understood."

Madeline rummages through her luggage, finds a white
 nightgown, bewildered.

MOMENTS LATER

Her fingers shake as she dresses at the mirror.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "...understood my plight."

Madeline reaches under her pillow, pulling out the missing
 photo -- Katherine and Daniel in front of the inn. Regards
 the pained Katherine.

MEMORY HIT.

1887. Phillip grabbing for Katherine's wrist.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "She had love. A forbidden love
 that she turned away from. Because
 of her husband..."

In the upstairs parlor, a ragged Katherine whimpers on the
 ground. Wielding the knife, Daniel grows in size over her.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "...and his jealousy. Others
 decided for her."

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline gazes the hallway, and the Locked Door.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Her life was lived for her."

Finishes dressing, her hands a little less shaky. Confident.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "I must submit to the position
 others have chosen for me. I'm not
 the individual I want to be."

Momentarily rubs her stomach, forcing herself to stop.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "I ask your forgiveness, the one
 person I wish was with me now."

(MORE)

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.) CONT'D
 I don't expect your forgiveness,
 given what I'm about to do."

Muffled, Gena calls from downstairs.

MADELINE
 Coming.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "It takes bravery to be a grown up,
 Norman. I'm scared to do it, but
 that's part of being one."

Out the door she goes.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Quiet, pitch black. 1 AM.

Moving toward the open window, past Norman's letter, a breeze
 blows pages away, revealing the O'Brien Road.

There, Gena's car drives into the darkness.

EXT. O'BRIEN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Headlights cut through the black wood.

EXT. MAIN STREET - HASLING'S ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Deserted. The car ascends the hill past the closed shops.

INT. GENA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Gena drives past the hospital's front entrance. Anxious,
 Madeline spies a light burning from the second floor.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Headlights swing around the corner, braking at the back door.
 Caught in the beams is a waiting Nurse Gibbons.

INT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Deserted, save for Nurse Gibbons and a THIRD NURSE at the
 station. Madeline is helped along by Gena.

Fields emerges, producing a warm, assured smile.

DOCTOR FIELDS
 Madeline...are you ready to begin?

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing a gown, Madeline lays on the table, her bare feet awkwardly placed in the stirrups.

Observing, she fixates on precise details--

In the corner, dressed for surgery, Gena prepares the ether.

Nurse Gibbons approaches with a tray of tools. The Third Nurse prepares Fields.

Gena steps, dream-like, toward Madeline, ether and cone in hand. Fields hovers over her a grandfatherly smile hidden behind his mask.

The procedure begins.

Her attention fixed on Fields, Madeline's mind reels.
 Desolate silence.

DOCTOR FIELDS (V.O.)
 There was a pregnancy there once...

MEMORY HIT.

1887. Mid-rape, Katherine's pained eyes stare at Madeline.

Cries permeates from the empty chair. Madeline hears it.

The first night. A woman's cries, mingled with a baby's.
 Madeline feels it surround her.

DOCTOR FIELDS (V.O.)
 ...it was cut short and deliberate.

DOCTOR FIELDS (PRESENT V.O.)
 Okay, Madeline, just lie still--

SMASH CUT TO:

The clearing. Madeline spits up blood, panicking --
 but only briefly.

The fear subsides, a long buried strength replaces it--

DOCTOR FIELDS (PRESENT V.O.)
 --while we apply the ether.

BACK TO SCENE.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - MOMENTS LATER

The car ambles around the fog-soaked drive, and pulls to a stop. At this hour, the O'Brien is a dark silhouette.

INT. GENA'S CAR - SAME

Gena puts the car in park, takes a breath. Madeline glances up at her bedroom window, as she did that first day.

Sensing her niece's body language--

AUNT GENA

I have work still, but I'll be--we
love you. Don't do anything hasty --
please.

(beat)

Tonight, we'll speak further...

Madeline turns, smiles reassuringly, then gets out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Madeline opens the front door, peacefully regards the space inside, then turns back.

Leaning on the wheel with growing apprehension, Gena watches. Madeline disappears inside.

INT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gena waits an extra beat before putting the car in drive. Proceeds back, wiping a motherly tear away.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - SAME

Madeline stands frozen, feeling the silence. It feels different, cold. She calls out--

MADELINE

Uncle Samuel...hello...?

Nothing. Nods, her decision made--

MOMENTS LATER

Through the doorway to the living room, Madeline leans over a table, writing. Folds the paper, places it against a vase of flowers in bloom and steps back--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

SLAM! Dressers are slammed shut. Clothes are grabbed, stuffed in bags. Madeline doesn't take it all -- she won't need it.

INT. STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Frantically bounds down the stairs, bags in hand.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - SECONDS LATER

Forcibly yanks the front door open, and ABRUPTLY STOPS -- face to face with a gray wall of fog.

Hesitance gnaws at her, she looks about -- one last time.

Leave. Now.

She confidently faces the open door, takes a step forward--

However--

Behind, A SHAPE silently glides along the upstairs landing--

Above, a shaft of blinding white light floods the darkness.

Madeline senses--

Dreading, she turns, already knowing. Sees the light.

Silence.

For a long moment, she contemplates. The logical part of her brain knows -- LEAVE.

Another part knows -- she never had the option.

The bags drop like dead weight on the polished wood floor--

Madeline crosses the hall, and ascends the stair.

She glances back -- the front door fades from sight.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Steps onto the landing, turns to the light source.
THE LOCKED DOOR IS NOW WIDE OPEN. She steps inside.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The room remains untouched -- with the one exception. White sheets now cover the scattered furniture.

Feeling the space, Madeline's eyes fall to the far corner, where she witnessed the rape. Curiously notes the floor--

Along the wall to the far corner, a dust trail has been swept clean, while a layer veils the rest of the room.

Curiously, something anyone could have missed -- the design of the wallpaper isn't properly aligned in that spot.

Following the clean trail, her gaze takes her to the rug, permeating by two long-dried brown spots.

Her eyes stop on the bulky covered centerpiece of the room.

Bare footprints mark dusty activity around the shape.

She lifts the sheet.

The piano.

Slow slides onto the bench, facing the keys. She hasn't been in front of a piano since she left home.

Enchanted, her delicate fingers hover above the ivory keys.

INT. MUSIC CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The room is vast, empty. Young Madeline, 11, sits with her European-looking TEACHER, mid-practice, as he meticulous goes over each note that she plays.

In the background, Stephen sternly observes.

Uncaring and focused, she's the perfect pupil. She plays for the teacher, but we hear no music -- only silence.

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline's fingers stretch across the ivory, ready to strike--

Suddenly, her heart is unleashed -- she plays.

A warm invigoration expels from her very being.

The piece is the ageless tune she's been humming, now with her unique ebbs and flows.

This isn't the concert pianist-trained girl, no--

This is her voice. Her pain, her sorrow.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - SAME

SERIES OF IMAGES -- the playing echoes, off the empty chair --
off the counters -- heard deep in the hallway.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

As she finishes, a wide-eyed Madeline finally lets out a
prideful girlish giggle.

LOW, UNDER THE PIANO--

As Madeline's feet ease off the pedals.

We glide slowly across the floor, to the far wall--

There--

Fresh blood drips into a growing puddle. From above--

Silently, bare feet, muddied with soil and specs of blood,
FLOAT DOWN onto the wood floor.

A creak--

Madeline turns. Her smile evaporates--

There--

KATHERINE O'BRIEN

--in her rotting white nightgown--

SEVERAL BLOODY WOUNDS BLOSSOM FROM HER STOMACH. FRESH AS THE
DAY SHE DIED--

FLASH OF THE MISALIGNED WALL PAPER. Something is there--

THINGS HAPPEN QUICKLY--

MADELINE'S SCREAM IS BLOOD-CURDLING--

THE PARLOR DOOR VIOLENTLY SLAMS SHUT--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

--SPLINTERING A BUCKLED CRACK IN THE WOOD.

TRAPPING MADELINE INSIDE.

Hold. We slowly pull away--

Madeline's screams fade. Piano keys are struck abruptly.
A scuffle--

Then silence.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - SAME

The front door breezes closed, darkness enveloping her bags.

FADE TO BLACK:

Silence. Amid the black, fog begins rolling through the early morning, darkness becoming a blanketed gray.

A fog-covered street fades into view--

EXT. NORMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

With a drained GASP, Madeline's battered, weary face staggers forward. She looks like hell, staring at--

Norman's house. Cars strewn in the driveway and street.

Past the service flag (one star stitched blue, a serving member), through the window, silhouetted shadows mingle in happy conversation.

Madeline's beautiful eyes sparkle through the pain, relieved.

Norman must be home.

Whispering a silent prayer, she approaches, then stops short--

The air feels stagnant. Silence.

The house is different. Empty, lifeless.

Locked in grief, a COUPLE pass by, ignoring her.

The Flag's star is now gold -- the serving member is dead.

Madeline goes pale. Turns--

On the sidewalk, as she was in 1887 -- Katherine O'Brien, staring expectant at Madeline.

MADELINE
Please...not this...

Wide-eyed and gleeful, Katherine's smiles spreads.

Madeline scrambles to the door, raising a fist to knock--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

BANG!!

Hours have passed. Madeline's bags have been shoved aside by the now ajar front door.

BANG!! Slamming doors echo. Distant shouts.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
She's not up here! You checked
outside?!

Inaudibly, Gena answers.

Madeline's open note lays discarded on the floor.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
Dammit, I can't hear you!

The back door slams shut. Heavy footsteps permeate.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
She's not outside!

From the framed photos, Daniel and Katherine silently watch.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
Oh, God...

Keys are wrestled free, and a door is unlocked.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
Get up here!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

The parlor door is swung open.

Madeline lies slumped against the wall -- not moving.

Off-screen, stomping footsteps bound on the stair.

Beat. Madeline sags over like dead weight.

Samuel's hallowed, disbelieving eyes stare down at her.

Gena arrives, gasps, angrily shoving Samuel aside to examine.

AUNT GENA

My God, is she breathing?! The hell
are you doing?!

Samuel steps forward, reaching down.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Move.

He awkwardly picks up Madeline, carrying her to her room.

Bewildered, Gena is left to register what has happened.
Turns to the opened parlor door--

It's intact -- no splintered damage.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)

Will she die?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Madeline lies comatose, a bruise on her forehead. Fields
confers with a distant Gena at the window.

DOCTOR FIELDS

No. More shock than any physical
injury.

(cocks his head curiously)

Still--her wrists. These bruises
leave something to be desired.
They're fresh.

Fields gently examines her wrists. Deep purple imprints,
shaped like large, strong hands.

Gena takes pause, glancing toward the hallway.

AUNT GENA

I noticed. What about the coma?

Fields packs his medical bag.

DOCTOR FIELDS

She'll wake when she wants. Had
quite a scare, whatever it was.

Gena leans over Madeline, brushing hair from her closed eye.

Fields regards Gena as she's in process of lifting her shirt
to check on her pregnant stomach.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)

True she's keeping it?

Gena digs in her coat pocket, produces the note.

AUNT GENA

Looks it.

Thoughtful, he walks out.

DOCTOR FIELDS

God help her.

She regards him curiously.

Fields passes the full-length mirror, where Madeline is reflected. Gena follows. As she passes the mirror--

KATHERINE NOW LAYS IN MADELINE'S PLACE--

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

At opposite ends, Gena and Samuel eat in heavy silence.

Gena subtly glances up. His head is bowed, eating like nothing were out of the ordinary.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - NIGHT

Middle of the night. Bleak darkness, except for the single light burning upstairs.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Stillness. Gena reads by backlight, throwing the shadows. Madeline lays unconscious.

Gena glances up for the briefest of seconds, GASPS--

Madeline sits upright, eyes calmly locked on her aunt.

Taking a beat, Gena collects herself--

AUNT GENA

Here. Let me fix your blank-- you
must be cold--

All the while, eyeing Madeline.

MADELINE

Don't like myself much right now...

Her thin fingers meticulous rub her stomach. Gena tensely studies her movements.

AUNT GENA
 Yes, well. You didn't go through
 with it. You'll be fine.

Madeline's distant gaze doesn't register. Swallowing hard,
 Gena makes for the door.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 It's been a few days, you'll be
 needing--

MADELINE TWISTS HER GRIP AROUND GENA'S WRIST.

Gena suppresses her shock. Madeline smiles slightly.

MADELINE
 Stay.

Eyes fixed, Gena slowly lowers herself into a chair.

AUNT GENA
 You're feeling better?

MADELINE
 (nods)
 Like my old self.

AUNT GENA
 I need to phone your parents.

Madeline serenely shakes her head.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 It's possible they'd change their
 minds about being grandparents...if
 given the change of mind.

A dark, cold light comes into Madeline's eyes.

MADELINE
 Do you wish me to leave?

AUNT GENA
 I'm only looking out for--

MADELINE
 I couldn't leave this house. Not
 now. Even if I wanted to.

Gena blinks twice -- she can't comprehend this. Logic and
 resentment set in.

AUNT GENA

We found your note. What's stopping
you from leaving again--?

(new line of questioning)

How did you get into that room? Did
you find the key?

Long beat. Madeline's eyes are dazed.

MADELINE

There was a woman. She was in the
room with me -- she's here.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - SAME

Like a perched statue, a tall FIGURE ruminates in the
moonlight -- Samuel.

Arches his head around, suspiciously noting the clean trail
leading to the far corner.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)

(hesitant)

I told you from the beginning:
it's always been just us.

He steps around the bulky shape, still draped in the white
sheet. The piano has remained untouched.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)

Madeline, this is concerning me.
Doctor Fields thinks something may
be the matter with you.

On the floor, he spies something. Crouches down.

In the V.O., Madeline's words come at a nerve-induced pace.

MADELINE (V.O.)

At first, I thought it was a
man... Daniel O'Brien...it
was his wife, Katherine, all
along...every strange thing
that I've seen...heard...has
been her--

AUNT GENA (V.O.)

(becoming upset)
--my God, will you listen to
yourself. She's been dead
fifty...years, Madeline.
People die, they don't come
back!

He finds scattered footprints interspersed with more feminine
shoe prints. Samuel considers things a moment.

BACK TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Exhausted, Gena pauses at the doorway, and turns.

AUNT GENA
Last time...what did you see?

MADELINE
(matter-of-factly)
My fate.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Later that night. Through their open bedroom door, Gena paces frantically, mumbling. Reaches for the door, slams it.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
Enough silence...

The lock turns SHARPLY.

INT. SAMUEL/GENA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

AUNT GENA
I feel betrayed, Sam. Disgusted by the whole thing. We need to send her home. Now.

Seated on the edge of the bed, Samuel calmly listens to Gena, his mind reeling.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
Are you listening?

He blinks coolly.

UNCLE SAMUEL
And what would that accomplish? The girl needs a home, one with love and care. Think she'll receive any of that from her parents? I'm reminding you they're the one's that forced their own daughter to have an abortion in the first place.

Spent, Gena falls into a chair.

AUNT GENA
You're too calm. How did she get in that room in the first place?
(no answer)
(MORE)

AUNT GENA CONT'D

She saw a ghost in there. Least that's what her imagination is telling her. Some...woman.

(long beat)

Katherine O'Brien.

Caught off-guard, Samuel snaps his attention to her.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Why would she say that?

AUNT GENA

(isn't it obvious?)

Because she's mad, that's why. You need to tell her who Katherine is--

UNCLE SAMUEL

--she knows.

(long beat)

What family does Madeline have now besides the one under this roof?

Their eyes meet. A lifetime of shared pain pass between them.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

You and I...ours was taken away.

Gena softens. Wraps her arms around him, offering comfort.

AUNT GENA

You believe her?

Silent, he nods.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Just hope we're doing the right thing.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Phone receiver to his ear, Samuel looks pale, holding a palm to his forehead. Jerks to attention when a voice answers.

UNCLE SAMUEL

Person to person, please.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVANS HOME - SAME

The phone BLARES several times. It's difficult to be heard from the next room -- another party is underway.

ETTY, the Evans maid, enters, but is soon trailed by a gleeful Mary, both approaching the phone.

MARY

Etty, please. Mr. Evans needs a topper. Oblige him.

Etty does so, heading back. Mary picks up the phone.

MARY (CONT'D)

Yes?

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Ma'am, will you accept a call from Mr. Samuel O'Brien?

Her smile drops. Flops onto the couch, yanks the expensive earring from her lobe, tosses it on the table with a CLANG--

MARY

Okay.

INTERCUT with Samuel:

MARY (CONT'D)

Is it done?

UNCLE SAMUEL

(crestfallen)

Yes. It is.

The gulf between them is evident.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

The thing-- she doesn't want to return right away. As she-she had complications from the procedure. She's alright, just fine. The doctor suggested she stay here and rest in the meantime. I'm hoping this is...

Mary is struck silent. Befitting any normal mother, she would have a thousand questions. But the words don't come.

Samuel senses--

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Do you ever feel bad for what you've done?

The words barely emote from the back of her throat.

MARY

I had forgotten what was asked of me.

Beat. Mary's eyes begin to well.

UNCLE SAMUEL

I'm sure all the booze, those social obligations...will dull the pain. Do you ever feel bad for what you've done? I know I do...

With shaking hands, she desperately SLAMS the phone down.

Samuel doesn't react.

Mary's covers her mouth, repressing the screams.

Stephen is at the doorway, having witnessed the whole thing.

STEPHEN

Darling...?

MARY

What?!

STEPHEN

You're neglecting your guests.

Mary thinks a moment, slowly pulling herself together.

MARY

Am I?

As she stands, her "society face" returns, this time with some difficulty. Together they return to the party, passing--

Madeline's piano, played for a recital that seems ages ago.

Buzzing sounds slowly rise, giving way to--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Insect-like whispers torment Madeline at the window, lost--

MEMORY HIT.

1887 -- the Front Drive. Katherine runs off the porch, loses her footing, and plummets face first in the mud. Raising her mud-caked face, she SCREAMS into the fog. Silence--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 ...things to do...much to do...dust
 the shelves...

Madeline's bedroom. Katherine dresses in the full-length mirror, hair now haggard and once-beautiful skin sagging.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 ...Daniel will arrive soon from the
 city...must be looking your best--

Pauses. The dress fits too tight. A baby bump now protrudes her stomach. Remembers--

SMASH CUT TO:

The clearing, the first night.

PFFFFT!!! The knife grotesque plunges into a stomach--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 ...Daniel wants things done by two.
 Check-in time.

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline's body shakes, her madness taking its toll--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - DAY

Huffing, Madeline hobbles the unsteady terrain, now carrying the weight of her unborn child, before stopping.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 ...an inventory needs to be done in
 the case of a random lodger...

Collapses to the ground in agony and begins to sob. Fixes her hands to her ears, breathing deep.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)
 ...You're not your Mom or your Dad,
 despite what's been instilled in
 you. This decision needs to be
 taken serious. It needs to be
 yours.

EVERYTHING STOPS. The whirling voices, surrounding ambiance.

Ears still covered, Madeline opens her eyes, peers about--

Testing, she pulls her hands away, and listens -- nothing.

Pointedly turns, with the inn behind her, and RUNS!

Delicately clutching her stomach, Madeline blurs past trees, throwing branches aside.

She's not going back. Not ever.

Looks every which way for potential danger.

Something's ahead--

A building, obstructed by trees.

Mouthing a secret prayer, she scampers quickly, approaching a break in the trees, and STOPS--

THE O'BRIEN TOWERS OVER HER.

Without thinking, she whips around, away from the inn.

Another structure block her path -- THE O'BRIEN.

Whips around -- THE O'BRIEN.

THERE'S NO ESCAPE.

INSECT VOICES SCRATCH AND GNAW AT HER EARS.

Madeline tears, face-first, past a bushel of thick brush, fiercely CLAWING THROUGH, suddenly, face to face--

EXT. O'BRIEN GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Manicured, secluded. The very one seen from the O'Brien Road.

Dream logic takes over, as an astonished Madeline walks the center lane. Erected stone crosses mark the dead.

From the corner of her eye, one catches her attention. Kneeling, she brushes aside clinging moss and leaves from the simple, yet elegant stone--

"Our beloved son, Sean."

AUNT GENA (O.S.)

--everything seemed fine during the pregnancy.

Madeline twists around. Gena is perched in the shadows on a secluded bench, gazing at the stone.

AUNT GENA
 'Til full term when I contracted
 these terrible pains and --
 he simply stopped moving.

Gena rises, and stands beside Madeline.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 Your Uncle. His grief was difficult
 to take.

Gena turns to her, eyes simmering with beaded tears.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 It seemed to leave, all of it, the
 day you came to visit those years
 ago. You and your parents.

MADELINE
 Still have the picture we took.

Gena smirks, thoughtful.

AUNT GENA
 Soon after, our correspondence
 began. Your Uncle was as eager to
 receive them as he was to write
 back. His spirits seemed...lifted.

Madeline looks away slightly, finding--

At the graveyard's edge, beside a decrepit tombstone,
A YOUNG MAN WATCHES--

MADELINE
 Norman...?

Gena follows Madeline's gaze, sees nothing. Regards her niece
 with pity. Madeline senses, a silent glance is exchanged.

Gena wraps Madeline's arm in hers, walking back up the lane.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

As they emerge from the tree line, Madeline peers to the
 second floor window, the upstairs parlor. She sags in defeat.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - DAY

Late afternoon. At the window, Madeline observes the woods.

MADELINE'S POV -- a figure moves conspicuously from one tree to another, similar to the young man in the graveyard.

Without a second glance, she faces the room, and knows--

The answers are here. Breathes deep and begins the search.

EXT./INT. O'BRIEN INN - DAY/NIGHT

SERIES OF IMAGES -- the O'Brien in late fall, with an approaching winter.

--The untouched dining room.

--At night, Madeline's bedroom door is barricaded. Scattered clothes lay about.

--Gena and Stephen's bedroom. An unmade bed. On the floor, lays an opened sleeping bag and pillow.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Apprehensive, Gena lies in wait in the shadows along the wall. Her bloodshot gaze is fixed on Madeline's open door, and the inviting white light that bleeds out.

LEGEND: Seven Months Later

AUNT GENA (V.O.)
Madeline. This cannot go on.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Madeline is catatonic, staring out the window. Behind her, Gena holds a tray of food.

AUNT GENA
You need to eat.

She notes a second tray of untouched food on the floor.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
Want to continue like last week--?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mid-fight. Screams of hatred, twisted bodies. Samuel subdues a deranged Madeline, as Gena shoves food into her mouth.

AUNT GENA

Eat, dammit! If not for you, for
your child!

BACK TO SCENE.

Stillness. What is now a daily routine, Gena stands behind a seated Madeline at the window, wrapped in a blanket.

Gena clutches her shaking hands, repressing her fears.

Madeline has physically changed. Her stomach has grown to full term, yet gaunt eyes and a haggard appearance have taken away her brimming, youthful confidence.

Sensing an approaching migraine, Gena sinks onto the bed, studying her own reflection.

AUNT GENA

Is today the day?

(beat)

There was a time you spoke to me
about your fears, about Norman,
your dreams. Seems so long ago.
Nothing from Katherine for months.
Now -- nothing from you.

With resolved nod, she makes for the door--

MADELINE

Wish I knew why you wanted to be a
mother.

Gena turns. Madeline's gaze remains fixed out the window.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Doesn't make sense. Not now. If
only there was a way...

Anticipating the worst, Gena braces, turning pale--

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I would rip this vile ugliness from
me. I'd feel...free--

With a cry, Gena FLINGS the door open, distressed footsteps echoing down the stairs.

Now alone, Madeline twists in her chair, feeling it.

Pulls a closed fist from the blanket--

She has something clenched--

The energy becomes static-filled. A heartbeat permeates over--

EXT. CLEARING - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Long shadows pull along the ground.

Filled with purpose, guided perhaps, Madeline approaches, and drops to her knees -- begins digging.

Focused, alert. Mind reeling, blinking quickly, she digs in a new spot, near the base of the tree.

She stops, drawing in a breath. Fishes it out--

An old wedding ring.

Rolls it between her fingers, she slips it on. A perfect fit.

Instantaneous, THE HEARTBEAT SLOWS--

Madeline smiles, owning the moment--

Shadows lengthen, enveloping her in shadow.

A menacing calmness comes over her, our Madeline fading further away.

Staggers to her feet. As she walks, dead leaves blow sideways, allowing her a path--

BACK TO SCENE.

Her fist unclenches. The ring has left a bruised imprint.

The upturned chair. The discarded blanket on the floor.

REVEAL -- Madeline peacefully LEVITATING OFF THE GROUND.
The whispers now swirl freely around her.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

...yes...

INT. DOCTOR FIELD'S OFFICE - DAY

Gena sits, dazed, across from Fields, shaken from distress and lack of sleep.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Where's Sam? Thought he was to--?

Gena sniffs with frustration, flinging away a tear.

AUNT GENA

Told him there was a last minute shift.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Why lie?

AUNT GENA

You're my boss, Tim, but we're also friends--

(Fields doesn't speak)

"Watch her." "Keep her close." You told me this, right here. I failed. Something's there with her.

Fields lowers his head.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Something needs to be done.

He doesn't respond. Gena angrily stands to leave--

DOCTOR FIELDS

There is something.

Gena stops. Finally, she nods.

AUNT GENA

Good.

EXT. MAIN STREET - HASLING'S ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Carrying groceries, Gena approaches the car, stops dead--

Across the street, Samuel watches her intently, unreadable.

She continues on, toward the car. He staggers toward her.

The closer he gets, the faster she shoves bags in the backseat, until--

His imposing figure blocking, he slams the door in her face.
SHE EXPLODES--

AUNT GENA

--I can smell the whiskey!

UNCLE SAMUEL

How can I trust you when you go behind my back?!

AUNT GENA

You know what?

Roughly yanks him by the arm, past the storefronts--

EXT. ALLEYWAY - HASLING'S ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Where she has it out--

AUNT GENA

Why don't you want her to leave--
huh?! She's not your prisoner,
she's a child, having a child!!

UNCLE SAMUEL

You don't understand--

AUNT GENA

--she needs proper care, even
if the people that are
supposed to love her the most
don't give the first shit!

Samuel shrinks against the wall.

AUNT GENA

Yes, keep your silence! That's what
you do--

She inches close to his face, choosing each word carefully.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

Something needs to be done.
It's being done.

Starts to leave. Samuel steps in her path.

Gena purses her lips, peers up, and locks eyes with him.

Lacking intimidation, she scoffs, and brushes right past him.

Pained, Samuel leans his head against the wall, wanting to
tell her every last detail -- but can't.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bathed in inky blackness, Madeline sits, as voices coil
around her. One in particular--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

I've always been here...I've always
been with you...

Over her shoulder, a malevolent shadow envelops her--

Madeline gazes ahead. A faint light in her eyes reflect that,
even in the darkest depths, her humanity is still intact.

She turns the ring over and over between her fingers.

MADELINE (V.O.)
What is the significance?

This time, speaks to herself, willing an answer.

MADELINE
What is the significance?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Madeline wanders to the doorway, stops. Gena eats alone, a depressed hand to her temple. Her head rises--

Their eyes meet. Without speaking, she disappears into the kitchen. Madeline approaches, pocketing the ring.

Takes a seat, as Gena returns with a plate of food. Madeline studies the food. Gena takes hold of her fork, holds it up.

AUNT GENA
Eat.

Madeline's brow furrows curiously -- she missed the affectionate, maternal light that surrounds her Aunt.

She begins to eat, gathering her strength.

INT. STAIRCASE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Madeline's mind races as she ascends the stair.

MADELINE (V.O.)
...the significance? What is it?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bundled up, Madeline's eyes dart under closed eyelids.

MADELINE (V.O.)
...let her in...you need to see...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

We move toward the empty chair. Echoed cries.

MADELINE (V.O.)
The visions are...abstract...

The voices are near.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

We move into the empty clearing.

MADELINE (V.O.)
She shows me what she wants me to
see...

One by one, the voices begin to descend away--

MEMORY HIT.

1887. In the upstairs hallway, the door opens into an immaculate-lit parlor of the past--

MADELINE (V.O.)
...specific things...show me.

Suddenly, the voices are sucked up into--

BACK TO SCENE.

The silence deafens.

Madeline senses someone is here. Her breath intensifies, but she doesn't turn.

A LONG SQUEAK from the mattress. Madeline SINKS slightly, as extra weight has been applied to the bed.

Still, Madeline doesn't turn. She peers out her peripheral --
SOMEONE IS BESIDE HER.

A WOMAN'S HAND reaches out for hers from the darkness--

A VOICE, cold and registering bare above a whisper, speaks--

KATHERINE (O.S.)
I want to show you something...

Confident, Madeline tilts her head up.

MADELINE
Show me, then--

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. DOCTOR FIELD'S OFFICE - DAY (1887)

Distraught, Katherine stares out over the woods.

Over her shoulder, a familiar voice--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Did you hear me?

Seated there, Fields, a fresh-faced widower of 23. His office is incomplete, like a home in transition.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Katherine, please sit.

Katherine doesn't move. Fields fidgets with a desk ornament.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
There are worse things. You could be barren.
(beat)
See it as a blessing that you and Daniel will have a little one running about that inn. I'm to assume that today--

In the window's reflection, Katherine spies a small, lingering figure hidden behind the open door -- A SMALL GIRL.

KATHERINE
No. It's twins, remember?

Her smile is bittersweet. Fields sharply SNAPS his fingers.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Out!

Caught, the Girl playfully scampers away. Fields sighs.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
I wish you the best. I should hope this is good news.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Mud splatters onto Katherine's dress as she trudges home. Distant commands and the rhythmic CLIP-CLOP of an approaching wagon compel her to turn.

Pulling the reigns to a stop is local farmer, THOMAS.

THOMAS
Mrs. O'Brien. Mind a lift?

Katherine looks ahead. A gray curtain of fog awaits her. Decisive, she shakes her head.

KATHERINE

Thank you, no. I'll brave the road
just fine.

THOMAS

Careful now.

Tipping his hat, the wagon lumbers on. Katherine presses on.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Darkened. The front door opens. Katherine takes a step
inside, observing the gloom, when her muddied boot bumps--

A pile of waiting luggage.

Her face is unreadable, she doesn't turn away.

Heavy footsteps approach. Busily pulling his gloves on,
Daniel enters, dressed for travel.

DANIEL

You're home. I'd had hoped I
wouldn't have to leave a note. I
have business in San Francisco.

Katherine doesn't move a muscle -- he must know, but she
lacks the courage.

Nonchalantly, he checks his pocket watch.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Shouldn't be more than a week --or
so. The firm needs a good whip--

KATHERINE

Your business is here now...this is
your home...Daniel...we must
speak...TWINS...I'm
expecting...twins, Daniel...you
must listen...

Shuts his eyes tight, sighs deep--

DANIEL

Should have left the note. Fine--
I'm not leaving for business.
I mean not to return at all.

Her beautiful eyes glaze, the color leaves her tender
cheeks. She slowly realizes her world is ending--

KATHERINE

Why?

Daniel's sympathy ceases to exist -- this is it.

DANIEL

I can no longer be around the whore
you've become. You betrayed me--

KATHERINE

--you betrayed me.

A savage beat.

DANIEL

Should have left you behind in that
saloon I found you in. I'm sick of
the sight of this place. Life here
is dirty. Unsophisticated. With
luck, I hope all this -- burns to
the ground.

Katherine sobs, bowing her head. Barely inaudible--

KATHERINE

It's him, isn't it...?

Daniel coldly studies his wife, wanting to strike her.

Katherine senses, propping open a tear-swollen eye. Instead,
he gently places a palm on her stomach.

Their eyes meet, nothing else to be said.

DANIEL

Twins...

Grabs his belongs, brushes past her, and leaves.

The fog takes him and soon, he's gone.

Katherine stares at the spot where he stood, before BOLTING
for the door--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - CONTINUOUS

Loses her footing, plummeting face-first in the mud. She
raises her mud-caked face, SCREAMING--

KATHERINE

DANIEL!!!!

Katherine withers into sobs. Nearby, Madeline sadly observes.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - DAY/NIGHT

SERIES OF IMAGES -- there is no life left. Bedrooms, saloon, entrance hall -- all empty. Indecipherable whispers.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 Lost...isn't lost...there's a
 way...always...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eyes blood-shot, Katherine rocks in the chair by the window.

KATHERINE
 ...things to do...much...dust the
 shelves...wash the sheets...guests
 will be arriving...Daniel wants
 things done by two. Check-in time.
 An inventory needs to be done in
 case of a random lodger. Much
 planning to be done...

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Katherine dresses in the full-length mirror. Her hair is now haggard, her once-beautiful skin sags.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 ...Daniel will arrive soon from the
 city...must be looking your best--

Pauses. The dress fits too tight. From her stomach, a baby bump now protrudes. Remembers--

Her bony fingers touch with child-like curiosity, then halts, continuing to dress.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

The piano echoes through the house. We float toward the open parlor door, where -- Katherine plays, looking her best.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 Was always your favorite, remember?
 You loved when I played it for you.

The same tune Madeline will later hum.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 It kept you home if I played it.

We float past, toward the stair. Somewhere, BANGING--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Down the stairs. Katherine's piano and whispers are faint to the ear. The BANGING continues, like a hammer--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Toward the front door. Under the door, movement. A figure sways from one side to another.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - SAME

A gruff, bushy-haired BANK EMPLOYEE, clutching a hammer, steps back to acknowledge his handy work.

Across the door jamb, a wood sign hangs--

"Closed for business by order of management."

He tilts his head curiously when hearing the faint piano, then returns to work. BANG--!

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - LATER

BANG, BANG! Katherine stops abruptly, on full alert--

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine swings the door open, JOLTS BACK by the sign obstructing her view.

Phillip Noth stands there, hat in hand. His timid eyes full of purpose.

The sign separates them. She's taken aback, but irate.

PHILLIP

I heard what happened with Daniel.
The inn.

Katherine is at a loss. He offers his hand, gently guiding her under the sign. As she reads, she scoffs--

KATHERINE

We have guests every night.
Daniel's away on business...

PHILLIP

Katherine, you have no reason left
to stay. I can take you away, we
can raise the children together--

Confused, Katherine stares at him. He touches her stomach.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

--all of them.

KATHERINE

(recoils, disgusted)

I don't give you the permission to
touch me!

Phillip politely takes a step back.

PHILLIP

I'm in love with you. I want us to
be wed. I bought a house -- settled
down in San Francisco. Mary can
grow in a stable environment--
--her mother should be there.

Katherine shakes her head, peering right through him.

KATHERINE

Children have taken away every good
thing I ever had. I don't want
this!

(building anger)

I had hopes and dreams once, a
husband I adored, our life
together. All that was taken.

PHILLIP

You don't owe that man a damn--!

KATHERINE

Mary is lucky -- should have
suffocated her the moment I laid my
foolish eyes on her--!

Stunned silence. Phillip's face drops -- it's over.

PHILLIP

I leave today, I won't return.
You'll never see her again...

Pause. Katherine slinks under the sign.

KATHERINE

Mary would do right to stay away.
Best to avoid bad mothers.

Slams the door in his face.

Phillip takes a moment, then steps off the porch toward his carriage, wiping away grief-stricken tear.

The O'Brien Inn is left--

TIME-LAPSE -- to decay into ruin.

Several months pass -- weeds spring through the porch. Roof shingles crumble into debris.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - DAY/NIGHT

SERIES OF IMAGES -- the piano plays, yet no one's there.

Katherine, at full-term, lays in the hallway, sprawled on her back, staring at the cracked ceiling.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Death...I pray for you...

Katherine hypnotically glides through the downstairs parlor, voices dancing all around her, occasionally passing the face of a long-gone customer--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

If these children were to pass away
from this life into the next...I'd
feel victorious. If all
children...KNEW...MY...WRATH...

AN EAR PIERCING SCREAM--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

The scream carries--

SLOW MOTION -- Katherine collapses like dead weight.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DARK VOID

The scream carries--

SLOW MOTION -- Madeline, shaken to her very core, collapses.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

The scream carries--

Katherine withers on the floor, unblinking, allowing the agony to flow through her, finding--

Madeline hovers over her. Katherine stares back.

INT. SAMUEL/GENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (1934)

YOUNGER GENA (45) experiences a raging nightmare, as KATHERINE LEVITATES OVER HER. Katherine brings a spectral hand across Gena's naked stomach.

Faintly visible under the stomach, a small palm presses from inside. Both hands meet, before Katherine YANKS hers away--

The tiny palm is gone -- NOTHING MOVES.

Petrified, Madeline has witnessed this, looks away. In the corner, she finds a silhouette, watching.

She steps forward, darkness revealing--

--Samuel, his cowardly eyes closed. Pitiful tears running.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT (1942)

PPFFT! Madeline RELIVES the knife plunging through her pregnant stomach--

As she stabs herself a second time, a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM--

INT. INSIDE THE WALL - DAY

VOYEUR POV -- spies the Upstairs Parlor through a tear in the wallpaper as Madeline is attacked by Katherine--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - SAME

REVERSE -- we creep toward the far corner, close to the bland, mismatched wallpaper.

CRASH! Something falls on the piano keys, pulling us to--

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Madeline collapses, holding her stomach tenderly. Sobs--

MADELINE

...why not me...I'm not special...
I'll love it, keep it safe. No
matter what...I promise...

Light dances across the ceiling -- an approaching vehicle.

Outside, a door creaks open and shuts, STARTLING Madeline.
She turns, and GASPS--

Gena kneels before her, eyes filled with somber resolve.

Relieved, Madeline pulls at her aunt's sweater--

MADELINE (CONT'D)

...thank God...we need to speak...
Samuel...Katherine. It was--

Gena shakes her head, calmly "shhh-ing" her -- it's over.

AUNT GENA

Enough.

Downstairs, Samuel greets someone at the door, a voice
replies. Footsteps ascend the stairs--

Gena's expression is blank. Madeline pulls Gena tighter,
tensely peering down the hallway.

AUNT GENA

Let go, Madel--!

Footsteps, louder now. Madeline's words spout in rapid-fire--

MADELINE

No, no, I can explain this --
Katherine -- all this -- never
loved her children -- never saw a
reason be--because the man she loved
-- didn't love her in return--

At the top stair, STANDS AN OMINOUS FIGURE.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I was wrong, alright? She's not
after me -- Katherine -- it's my
child -- How-how do I stop it? -- I
don't know -- please--

The figure carefully steps forward -- Fields.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
 You're no longer safe, you or your
 child. There's a place. You can't
 care of this baby...others will--

Madeline doubles over, sobbing hard.

MADELINE
 It's not yours to take!! I was
 lured here! You can't have
 children, she has to kill mine too.

Gena pauses mid-step, taken aback.

AUNT GENA
 That's what you believe?

Disbelieving, she steps aside -- Fields advances, restraining
 her with measured force.

MADELINE TWISTS AND CONTORTS TO AVOID HIS HANDS--

MADELINE
YOU WON'T TAKE MY BABY!

DOCTOR FIELDS
 We're only trying to help, dammit!
 This is the only--G-Gena--
 (to Gena, indicating)
 --my pocket, prepare the sedation!

Gena does so. Grabs Madeline's arm, injects the shot.

Madeline's eyes glaze, drifting to Gena--

MADELINE
 ...do you know what happened to
 Sean? I can tell you...I can--

Her eyes flutter drowsily. The fight leaves her.

MADELINE'S POV -- blurred. Samuel comforts Gena in his arms.

FLASHES OF the upstairs parlor -- the wall in the corner.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
 Help me, Gena!

Madeline squints to focus.

MADELINE'S POV -- Katherine is there, staring coldly--

Madeline knows, she's alone. The trauma becomes unbearable--

SHE LETS OUT A GUTTURAL, AGONIZING CRY--

THE FLOOR RUNS WET AT MADELINE'S FEET.

Gena staggers back. Everyone stops.

AUNT GENA

Jesus...

DOCTOR FIELDS

Let's move her to the bedroom!
She's going into labor. Sam--

Samuel lumbers over, carries Madeline into her bedroom--

Cradled in his arms, Madeline stares at him. Viciously
whispering through her drowsiness--

MADELINE

...I've seen what you've done.

Samuel reacts -- air catching in his throat.

As they approach the bedroom, Madeline's eyes go wide--

MADELINE

NO...NO! It can't happen here!
Not here!!!

Ignoring, they proceed forward--

With finality, Madeline passes out.

FADE TO BLACK:

Distorted voices echo through a prism.

CUT FROM BLACK:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BLURRED, DISTORTED FIGURES SURROUND THE BED--

Madeline wakes with a start, shaking manically--

She tries lifting her arm -- can't. It's bound by torn cloth.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)

Get her gown up, we're going to
need a Caesarean to save the--

MADELINE'S POV -- stares at the menagerie of shadows dancing
across the ceiling.

Slowly, Madeline realizes what's happening--

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
She's waking! Where's the ether?!

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Leave it! Help me here--!

GENA'S SCREAM PIERCES -- EVERYTHING STOPS.

Silence, as they take in the full horror--

Madeline is strapped down -- IMPALED KNIFE WOUNDS UP AND DOWN
HER NAKED STOMACH. Healed, but scarred--

AUNT GENA
...oh, my God...

Fields looks away -- he's seen this before.

Madeline wails out, breaking the tension.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Christ...let's begin.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Clouds move rapidly, revealing the moon.

DOCTOR FIELDS (V.O.)
There's a chance...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Both sleep deprived, Gena and Fields speak in hushed tones,
glancing to Madeline's open door.

DOCTOR FIELDS
...well, you saw the scars. She may
not make it. She's seventeen, but
whatever trauma she's sustained has
left her as frail as an old woman.
(off Gena's look)
It's best now to save the child--

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
Tim!

Fields pushes past Gena. Gena takes this in as she follows--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Out of her peripheral, Gena senses--

THE DARK VOID SNAKING FROM THE CEILING, TOWARD MADELINE--

Gena doesn't blink -- much less breathe.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Gena, I need you!

She races to assist Fields. Distractedly, she peers up--

The void is gone.

Hallucinatory silence slowly mixes with heavy breathing--

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - DAY

SERIES OF IMAGES -- Early morning. Gray fog envelops the inn. Rain clouds approach. On the horizon, distant thunder.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Her stomach is opened up, knife marks visible--

Madeline's breath deepens.

Peers to the edge of the bed -- sees herself there.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - SAME

SERIES OF IMAGES -- Down the dark corridors, through the gloomy living room. The house senses the laborious cries--

EXT. ROOF - SAME

The first raindrop plops.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Plethora of movement. Fields in the midst of it, Gena assists, feeling the dark presence all around.

Through the mattress, a pool of blood seeps--

EXT. O'BRIEN ROAD - DAY

Enveloped in fog, a MAN kicks in the dirt, searching, then turns -- Norman, smiling, inviting.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Madeline GASPS!! Eyes wide as she gulps air, breaching a watery surface. A single tear rolls down her porcelain cheek.

Only then, the release--

A BABY'S FIRST CRIES--

Her heavy-lidded gaze falls on something as it's handed off.

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Let's get her cleaned.

The damn breaks. Madeline melts into panicked tears, searching each unseen face--

MADELINE
A girl? Where--where are you taking
her -- MY BABY?!
(shakes her head)
Nnno-no-no-no-NO--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Your Aunt is getting your little
girl situated. I'll tend to you.
(to Samuel, sympathetic)
The ether, Sam--

Madeline shuffles, but SHRIEKS OUT, collapsing back--

HER STOMACH IS STILL OPEN--

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.)
My God...

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Sam, the ether! It's right there!
Need to get her sewn up now!

Weakened and pained, her tear-filled eyes see--

MADELINE'S POV -- Gena carries the crying newborn away. Fields obscures her view, applying the cone and ether.

Her fleeting glance is ruined. She passes out.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Gena dries the baby off with a towel. Fields stands in the doorway, wiping his bloodied hands.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Baby looks healthy.

AUNT GENA
And beautiful.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Mom is all sewn up. Lost a lot of
blood.

Gena ignores him -- something is on her mind.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
It's a wonder she made it as far as
she did in this house.

Gena smiles sadly.

AUNT GENA
My niece is a brave one. I'm
starting to -- I think she's
defying whatever's here.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Through the window, rain has converged. The afternoon sky
shines, despite the weather.

Between sleep and consciousness, Madeline instinctively feels
her stomach--

The baby is gone.

Madeline grimaces, attempting to sit up--

MADELINE
WHERE IS SHE?! Where--?

A SHADOW FLOATS BY, then darts off. A rhythmic rubbing sound.
Madeline turns--

Norman--

In his service uniform. Flushed with boyish excitement, he
leans forward, rubbing her hand with his. He's calm, serene.

NORMAN
Made it in time...she's beautiful.

Madeline trembles with relief and fear.

MADELINE
They took her.

NORMAN
Then, find her. She needs you--

MADELINE
--I need you.

Longing sorrow fill his eyes. He shakes his head, lost.

NORMAN
She's all that matters now--

Madeline regards his touch, WHERE A STREAM OF FRESH BLOOD
RUNS DOWN HIS SLEEVE.

She knows.

MADELINE
I don't know how to stop it.
Something that feels so much hate.

Norman stands, shrugging freely as he crosses to the door.

NORMAN
Elizabeth--

Madeline laughs to herself, nodding.

MADELINE
--your mother's name.

He peers out the door, smiles awkwardly, and is gone.

Realization takes hold, as she tries to suppress calm--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Norman. Please come back.

Her stubborn eyes refuse to pull from the doorway--

ABRUPTLY, THE LIGHT CHANGES. Through the window, daylight has
dimmed through the rain.

SEVERAL HOURS HAVE PASSED.

A FIGURE passes. Madeline jerks her head, finds a flustered
Gena pulling Madeline's belongings from drawers.

AUNT GENA	MADELINE
You've been asleep two days.	--where is she? Answer me--
You'll need your strength to--	now-please--WHERE--
(ignores)	(not letting up)
I'm taking you home. Tonight.	WHERE IS SHE?!

Gena's shoulders tense, clutching the edges of the luggage.

AUNT GENA	MADELINE
There's no keeping her. You	--have you done? I need to
need to move on, forget this--	see her!

Madeline rips herself from the bed with superhuman strength. Gena forcibly pins her down.

AUNT GENA
No, dammit! This is how it is --
s'already been arranged!
She'll find a good family!

Madeline claws from her arms--

MADELINE
I'm her family--! PLEASE BELIEVE!!
I-I know about Sean!

AUNT GENA
You're unfit! She needs someone
with a sound mind!

With a final SHOVE, Gena falls backward, LANDING HARD.

Appalled, Gena stares at Madeline. Suppressing her rage, Gena stands.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
You have no idea what happened to
my boy. Only what I told you.

MADELINE
You're wrong. I've seen it--

AUNT GENA
(strained)
What happened was natural.

MADELINE
What's natural about his own father
having a hand in his death?

Gena's lip quivers -- the final straw.

AUNT GENA
What a horrible child you are...

MADELINE

While you slept -- he was there.
She killed your Sean.

Gena tears away, gripping the luggage, weakened legs threatening to buckle.

Madeline doesn't move, allowing her a moment.

AUNT GENA

Who?

MADELINE

Katherine O'Brien.

AUNT GENA

She's--what knowledge do you have of any of--?

Gena reads her niece -- there's no lie there.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)

If somehow possi-- why would she?

MADELINE

She infected this place with her malice, her hatred. We're the ones made to suffer. Samuel -- he's always been a part of this.

Gena turns, continues to pack -- she can't believe this.

Knowing she's losing her, Madeline grows desperate--

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Samuel wrote the letters, not you! Somehow, he knew that I'd get pregnant and need you -- I was lured here. There's something -- something in us that makes our babies die -- Katherine. She lost hers -- you lost yours, it makes--

GENA THRUSTS THE EXPENSIVE LUGGAGE AGAINST THE WALL.

AUNT GENA

MARY DIDN'T LOSE YOU!! What about you?! WHAT MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL?

Madeline isn't scared, but perplexed. Jigsaw pieces form--

MEMORY HIT.

The first day. At the window, Madeline looks down on Mary at the car, refusing to step inside.

In the front drive, Mary bundles up Madeline, longer than usual. She wants to speak, but the words don't come--

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline's mind reels, pieces snapping into place. The air has left her parched and betrayed.

MADELINE

She knew...my own mother knew...

AUNT GENA

(calm)

If it's true, all of it -- what about yours? How did she survive?

INT CLEARING - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The first night. Screams build -- BUILD, reach fever pitch--
--then -- PFFFFFT...

The cries dissipate. Everything is still.

She emits a silent gasp. Her cheeks and mouth calm, as she hangs her head, revealing--

THE KNIFE PLUNGED DEEP IN HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

A peaceful beat--

MOMENTS LATER

Mid-panicked -- something else builds. Fear subsides, long buried strength replaces it.

MADELINE

...no...

BACK TO SCENE.

MADELINE

I fought back -- Katherine had to try harder. I had to do it myself.

(beat)

Do you...believe me?

Gena quietly sobs, trembling hands cover her bloodshot eyes. Finally -- she nods.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Where is she, Gena?

She can't speak, only mutter--

AUNT GENA
...I don't know.

Madeline slowly tries to stand, but stumbles back, grimacing.

AUNT GENA (CONT'D)
No, your stitches will open up.
I'll go.

An idea strikes. Reaches for her medical bag, fishing out -- a syringe and vial. Madeline observes as she prepares a shot.

Gena pockets it, smiles reassuringly as she makes for the door, then is gone.

The rain has subsided. The room is now eerily quiet. Feeling vulnerable and small, Madeline looks about--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Gena stalks the gloom, peering through doorways. Gripping the syringe in her pocket like a holstered pistol--

AUNT GENA
Sam...please...

No answer.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sweating, Madeline struggles to stand, makes for the door--

SLAM!! THE DOOR IMMEDIATELY SWINGS SHUT--

The voices return.

She lunges for the knob.

A FORCE KNOCKS HER BACK--

Winded, but defiant, she rises--

MADELINE
I'm not afraid -- not of anything--

Grave silence. HEAVY BREATHING--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

Not yet...

PURE DARKNESS overtakes her. Scuffling--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Back on the landing, Gena peers down the hallway -- nothing.

Turns. Madeline's closed door -- piercing silence.
Gena reaches for the knob, when--

She hears the piano playing, and jerks her head--

The parlor door is ajar--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Pitch black. Gena's wide eyes search. The piano plays,
taunting, but the bench is empty.

Gena approaches, unsteadily. The keys aren't moving.

Trying to make sense of it, she whispers--

AUNT GENA

What are you?

Finally she stops, and squints. The wall in the corner --
something there is amiss.

She ignores the piano, and approaches the corner.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Madeline's ragged body LEVITATES off the ground, gurgling for
help through a crushed windpipe--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

How dare you prevent me.

MADELINE

I'm...stronger...than my mother--

SHE'S FORCIBLY FLUNG ON THE BED, panting hard--

A FIGURE in a white nightgown walks beside the bed.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

...foolish girl...

Winded, bruised, but unrelenting, Madeline staggers up--

MADELINE
...stronger than my Uncle...

Invisible fingers imprint on Madeline's shoulder, ferociously pinning her--

Her nightgown lifts, exposing flesh, caesarean stitches, and faint stab wounds--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
...stronger than...

A single caesarean stitch RISES--

CLIP -- THE FIRST STITCH SNAPS.

Madeline CHOKES in air, STAGGERS to rise. SHE'S PINNED--

CLIP -- ANOTHER.

Her mouth agape, lips quiver--

CLIP -- ANOTHER.

The caesarian wound dehiscence's -- EXPOSING OPEN FLESH--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - SAME

Gena flail's her flat palms over the corner wall, brushing a wet, sloppily overlaid piece. She blinks twice.

Furiously, she scratches, fingernails ripping aside ancient paper. Shards gather at her feet.

She recoils back in shock--

A door, missing a knob, is embedded in the wall.

Hungrily, Gena pries at the edges.

Though maneuvering is painful, she doesn't quit.

AUNT GENA
Son of a bitch-- how could --
you do this -- to me...?

With a desperate cry, the door swings open, SLAMMING against the opposite wall.

There, a black abyss waits--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sweat pours into Madeline's glazed eyes. Her stomach is open. She's close to passing out--

Inches above, KATHERINE O'BRIEN LEVITATES over Madeline. Piercing, malevolent eyes bore into her.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
I hope this hurts. Soon, she will
be feeling so much more.

Madeline's retina's peer into the dark eyes before her -- a challenge is met.

Katherine smiles venomous--

CLIP -- ANOTHER.

Madeline cries out in agony--

INT. INSIDE THE WALL - SAME

Gena fumbles in the dark, before shuffling forward--

Her legs DROP. SHE PLUNGES DOWN THE UNSEEN HOLE--

INT. SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

--FLAILING for anything to break her fall.

GLIMPSES -- she's cut, bruised, before--

CRACK!! LANDS HARD -- on the dank, rock floor. Gena WAILS, clutching her left leg. It's broken.

Panting, she peers up. Feet off the ground, is a rotted wooden ladder.

She grips the stone wall, lifts herself up, nursing the bum leg as she does.

Then realizes -- she's under the house.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Seconds from passing out, Madeline's goes limp--

Abruptly, a shadow PASSES from her face. The room goes still.

Her eyes flutter, registering the empty room. Weakly lifts her hand -- nothing is pinning her.

She needs to go. Now.

Painstakingly, she lifts herself up -- this won't be easy.

Yanks her nightgown down, grips her open stomach closed. Makes for the door--

Weakly, SPILLING onto the floor--

INT. SHAFT - SAME

Gena rummages through debris, thin pieces of old wood.

Finds a suitable piece, rips a strand from her dress -- binds a makeshift sling.

Hobbling through the darkness, she spies a beam of light -- another door. Shoves against it with her remaining strength.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Madeline crawls to the door, tightly clutching her stomach. Shuffles herself up the wall, twists the knob -- unlocked.

Gasping with relief, she inches around the door, using the knob as leverage, tossing it wide open--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Staggeres out, surveying. Makes for the stairway, calling into the parlor's inky darkness--

MADELINE

Gena?!

No answer.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline ambles down the stair, struck with the obscurity before her.

Darting eyes peeled, she reaches for the kerosene lamp and matches on the nearby table.

Strikes the match with trembling hands, the lamp ignites. The glow bounces off--

Framed photographs. Daniel and Katherine singed in time.

She cautiously swings the lamp about, when -- it suddenly begins to dim, bathing her in darkness.

MADELINE (O.S.)

Shit! No...

Blows hard into the burner. FLICK! FLICK! An amber sparks -- Dread building, she re-lights the lamp.

Twists the flame up. Light spreads, illuminating--

A SEA OF SEATED FIGURES. HUNCHED SHOULDERS, BOWED HEADS, HUDDLED IN A SPECTRAL POSE -- NONE MOVE.

Madeline gasps, breathing hard. Swings the lamp --

They're everywhere.

No sign of Samuel, Gena or Elizabeth.

Slowly, Madeline steps forward, balancing one foot in front of the other, past the figures.

Through the flickering, they resemble wax sculptures -- long-departed guests from 1887.

From among the crowd, ancient lanterns gradually light.

The inn is remembering--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Can you not realize -- how easy it is to hate? It was the only way.

Madeline reels from her tormenting words.

EXT. BACKYARD - SAME

The night is dark, moist. Gena has broken the door and hobbles out in a state of confusion, crying out--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

I had to be free of them. Daniel was my only path. I strayed but it wouldn't happen a second time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Approaching the side door, Madeline places the lamp down, peers over her shoulder. The room glows vibrantly in 1887.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 When it happened, it was all so
 very easy.

Across the ages, a BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM CARRIES US--

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

1887. Katherine collapses. Flails about, like a caged animal.
She's going into labor.

Sensing, she turns. With bulged eyes, Katherine scampers back
 in horror -- past customers surround her, judging.

She's finally grasping her madness--

KATHERINE
 Stay away--!

Scurries to her feet, flings the door open, finding--

BACK TO SCENE.

A beautiful snowscape wood. Madeline peers from the doorway--

MADELINE
 Where did you go--?

Winces, her head drops. From her open wound, a bloody puddle
 sticks to her nightgown. A thick stream runs.

Gazing into the woods, she knows where to go--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline staggers from one tree to the next, in pursuit--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Katherine trudges through the snow, wailing in pain. Paranoia
 provokes her to gaze over her shoulder--

BACK TO SCENE.

Dripping sweat, Madeline trudges forward.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Over Katherine's shoulder, tormenting SHADOWS PURSUE.

BACK TO SCENE.

Madeline grips onto a branch, exhausted--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Katherine cries out as she lurches on--

KATHERINE
Stay away!!! Plea--!

BACK TO SCENE.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
--seeee!!!

Madeline shakes back to life. Everything hurts.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - PAST/PRESENT

Passing one tree after another, there's Katherine one instant, Madeline the next -- past and present merging.

Katherine's sobs meld into a baby's cry--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - NIGHT

The cry's echo--

A POV -- cautiously approaches the clearing. Creeping ahead, trees block labored wheezing, rambling whispers, REVEALING--

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Samuel cradles the wailing Elizabeth with one hand. Through tears, he whispers to himself. The other hand is not visible--

Madeline advances, a palm raised, suppressing her fear--

MADELINE
--please.

Samuel turns, realizing a presence.

Fatigue lingers in his eyes. Deeper in those eyes, madness. Regards her bloody nightgown, steps closer--

UNCLE SAMUEL
What has happened?

Madeline recoils, her gaze between him and Elizabeth--

MADELINE

We'll leave, never come back.
Just please--

UNCLE SAMUEL

You were always meant to come here.
You're aware by now.

Madeline nods, holding back the tears.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D)

That afternoon--

MEMORY HIT.

1934. Young Madeline runs through the woods, playing--

AUNT GENA (O.S.)

Madeline, in!

--she stops, and turns.

MOMENTS LATER

The backyard. Silence. The family poses for the photograph.

Except Samuel--

At the tree line, a youthful Katherine glides forward,
ignored to all except Samuel. Her attention is on Madeline.

Katherine studies her -- then locks eyes with Samuel.

His face drops, senses a presence watching. Twists around to--

Mary. Guiltless eyes, only malice.

LATER THAT DAY

In the backseat of the luxurious Evans car--

A folded piece of paper is THRUST inches from Madeline's
nose. She jerks her head back.

Samuel, with a warm smile, places the paper in her hand.

UNCLE SAMUEL

If you should need anything...

BACK TO SCENE.

Transfixed, Samuel advances, forgetting Elizabeth in his arms. Madeline sees nothing else--

UNCLE SAMUEL

She saw your potential. Knew you would arrive -- eventually--

MADELINE

The letters--

UNCLE SAMUEL

(smiles)

Nothing more -- than a son's duty--

SAMUEL LUNGES AT HER. FABRIC AND FLESH RIPPP!!!

MADELINE DOUBLES OVER, EYES BULGING--

DELIBERATELY, HE DROPS THE BABY. Confidently steps away, preparing himself--

THE BABY CRIES HYSTERICALLY--

--then silence.

Madeline stops, no words pass her lips.

Ignoring the pain, she crawls to her child--

MADELINE

NO!!!

Samuel steps over her, BRANDISHES DANIEL'S KNIFE IN HIS CONCEALED HAND--

THRUSTS DOWN--

PLUNGING THE BLADE DEEP IN HER SHOULDER. SHE SCREAMS OUT, STAGGERING ONTO HER BELLY--

Samuel RIPS it out, BLOOD OOZES--

In the dirt, Madeline is still. Slowly, she reaches a pitiful hand out to comfort her sobbing child--

Hate fills her eyes. Achieving superhuman strength -- she's not done.

EVERYTHING HAPPENS INSTANTLY--

THE KNIFE THRUSTS DOWN--

She twists, weakly CATCHING his wrists. Defying the pain--

Samuel smirks. Wiggles free--

THE KNIFE RISES--

THRUSTS DOWN--

THIS IS NO VICTIM. MADELINE ACTS--

KICKS THE LEGS OUT FROM UNDER HIM--

Instantaneously blind-sided, HE DROPS SIDEWAYS--

CRACK! His cheek IMPACTS the base of a tree, THEN--

PPFFFTTT!

THE KNIFE EXPLODES THROUGH FLESH--

Samuel goes still.

Staring into his eyes, she could finish him if she wanted.

Instead--

She scrambles to her child's side--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
...Elizabeth...Elizabeth...

THE BABY DOESN'T MOVE. Agonizing realization dawns--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
She's the sacrifice--

Madeline senses her close. Tears form as she shakes her head. Delicately scoops up Elizabeth, refusing to let go.

MADELINE
She was an innocent -- just leave
us be.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
Just like your mother gave you to
me, you gave her up. You are free--

MADELINE
--no, no, no -- she can't be alone
in all that dark--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
There was so much pain...the pain
set me free--

Madeline notes those words -- knows what needs to be done. She's bleeding out profusely, and doesn't care--

Scrambles to Samuel's body, ignoring Katherine's taunts--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

She's the reason you are here. You saw things that needed to be seen to ensure this moment took place. There is no other way.

With some effort, Madeline flips Samuel over. Despite the knife plunged in his chest, he still takes shallow breaths.

Madeline stares at her Uncle.

MADELINE

I'm sorry for what happened to you.

Madeline turns, defiantly boring her gaze into Katherine--

Katherine is taken aback.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

There is always another way.

MADELINE RIPS THE KNIFE FROM SAMUEL'S CHEST. BLOOD SPOUTS--
PLUNGING THE BLADE INTO HER OWN STOMACH--

KATHERINE'S EYES GO WIDE--

KATHERINE

Noooo!!!!

Madeline rolls over, the light in her eyes dimming--

The SCREAM carries--

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - NIGHT (1887)

BLURRED FIGURES move quickly, tracking the elated screams ahead. They are inconspicuous, draped in heavy winter wear.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

This was the only way! This was the only way!

The LEADER, a scarf concealing his mouth, points--

LEADER

Over there!

They take a new path. The others follow, a MAN and a WOMAN.

INT. CLEARING - NIGHT

The Leader stops, slowly pulls his scarf down, horrified -- Young Fields.

The others pull their down. Thomas, the farmer that offered Katherine a ride, and his WIFE. Wife looks ready to vomit.

They witness--

Katherine, her arms raised in wait -- INSANE SMILE PLASTERED ACROSS HER BLOOD-SPRAYED FACE.

MULTIPLE STAB WOUNDS HAVE IMPACTED HER PREGNANT STOMACH--

Gripping the knife, blood drips down her arms. She doesn't feel the pain -- only the pleasure.

DOCTOR FIELDS

My God...

He dashes forward, knocking the knife away. It lands in the debris of the white forest floor.

DOCTOR FIELDS

What the hell have you done?!

Recognizing Fields, the dam breaks for a moment--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

This was the only way--

She collapses. Fields drops to his knees, and goes to work, trembling hands examine her.

DOCTOR FIELDS

There's so much blood, I don't--

(realizes)

Jesus -- stay with me! Katherine!

You're going to deliver! Do you understand?

Katherine's stares dazedly, uncomprehending.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)

Help me, Thomas!

Thomas scurries over, parting her legs.

Katherine wakes from her stupor, SWATTING them away.

KATHERINE
No!!! Let them die!

Fields counters with ferocious anger.

DOCTOR FIELDS
The child is more important than
you! Now stop! PUSH!
(to Thomas)
Dammit, hold her down!

The delivery begins.

THOMAS'S WIFE
So much blood...the baby couldn't
have survived the puncture...

THOMAS DOCTOR FIELDS
...be quiet... ...hold her...!

Katherine's mouth agape, her body jerks from the sensation.

KATHERINE'S POV - Later, trees overhead sway.

Delirious, Katherine finds Thomas. Their eyes meet.

KATHERINE
Thank you for your kindness--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
(grateful)
He's crowning!

A baby CRIES -- Fields sighs, hands it to Wife.

DOCTOR FIELDS
Hold him -- a boy. He looks well.

Cradling the boy, Wife's gaze falls on the protruding bloody
mass pouring from Katherine's open stomach.

DOCTOR FIELDS (CONT'D)
(mournful)
She had twins...

MOMENTS LATER

The second child is delivered. With care and solemn eyes,
Fields gently handles the bloody shape.

Traumatized, Wife cradles the baby boy.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

I've failed--

Collectively anxious, they turn. The blood-soaked mess in the nightgown stares with malice at her wailing baby -- Samuel.

Fields inspects Katherine's glassy eyes. Nothing can be done. In a heartbeat, the eyes go vacant.

She's dead.

Things go still.

Fields and Thomas lift Katherine off the forest floor, carrying her back to the inn. Holding Samuel, Wife follows.

KATHERINE'S WEDDING RING slips off her lifeless finger, impacting the snow. Wife tramples it deep as she steps past.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Madeline weakly rocks the lifeless Elizabeth. Breathes in her essence in the early morning light.

This is the first time she's seeing her daughter.

Deeply bewildered, Katherine leans close.

KATHERINE

You -- would do this willingly?

Madeline moist eyes don't pull away from her baby. Despite everything, she's too happy--

MADELINE

Look at her. She's beautiful.
Her smell--

In her eyelash, a tear catches, then rolls down.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You'd deprive me of this? Love is sacrifice. I don't want her alone in that darkness. She-she wouldn't know how to find me.

Katherine can't comprehend. Madeline shakes her head -- it doesn't matter now.

Madeline GASPS, her eyes suddenly AGLOW with newfound life. She breaks down, mouthing a silent prayer--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Thank you -- thank you--

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
God, no--!

Gena hobbles forward, taking in the horrific sight. She's supporting her weight on a thick branch under armpit.

Katherine is gone.

Gena weakly drops at Madeline's side, regards Elizabeth, before rushing to her niece, sharing a long look.

Dazed, Madeline smiles. Gena is baffled, but works quickly to stop the blood-loss.

Madeline waves her away.

MADELINE
No--

Instead carefully places Elizabeth in Gena's arms. Gena peers at this small, wonderful bundle, and shakes her head.

AUNT GENA
I-I can't--

Madeline smiles relieved, despite the light leaving her eyes.

MADELINE
She's breathing -- she's breathing--

Gena blinks twice -- inspecting. SHE IS BREATHING!

Sharing in Madeline's joy, Gena still can't give up.

AUNT GENA
No. We-we can try to save you...

MADELINE
It was meant to be -- save her.

Gena's gaze falls on the beautiful newborn. There are no words -- she's heartbroken.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
She's safe. I did the one thing
Katherine couldn't do--
(beat)
--nor my mother. Love her children -
- unconditionally--

Devoid of worry, Elizabeth coos in her sleep.

Madeline's breath lessens--

MADELINE (CONT'D)

For once -- I did something right --
I was a good mother--

With a serene smile, her eyes drop slightly, then go clear--

Madeline has died.

Gena takes a moment to grasp what's happened, then smiles.
There's something beautiful in Madeline's translucent eyes.

She bows her head in prayer.

From Gena's peripheral, a figure tenderly holds Samuel's
still hand, brushing a hair from his unblinking eyes.

Gena staggers to her feet, carefully balancing her shattered
leg with the newborn. Sensing, she turns.

Katherine, in all her once-youthful beauty.

Daughter and mother-in-law meet for the first time.

Katherine acknowledges the sleeping Elizabeth in Gena's arms,
the slightest hint of sorrow washing over her.

The sunrise beams through the trees. Gena turns distractedly,
then back -- Katherine has vanished.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - DAY

Sunrise radiates, warming the crisp surroundings.

Temporary crutch under her arm and Elizabeth at her chest,
Gena limps back, mournful tears streaming down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gena places Elizabeth is placed in a chair, surrounded by a
pile of blankets. Her face blank -- what to do next?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Gena washes a crying Elizabeth in the sink.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)

Need to call her parents -- phone
the police -- Doctor Fields--

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gena tenderly dries a crying Elizabeth. Face to face, a light enters the woman's eyes -- she's falling in love.

As the cries echo, we descend toward the staircase--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Somewhere, distant voices, then car doors slamming.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Approaching Madeline's closed bedroom door, sunlit on the edges. The door swings open. There, at the window--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline, dressed in a virginal white nightgown, where the figure stood at the beginning.

She finds the recently arrived Younger Madeline below, accompanied by her parents, greeting her Aunt and Uncle.

The time loop continues.

Younger Madeline glances up to the window, and GASPS.

Madeline nods calmly.

Something provokes her to turn away -- Elizabeth's cries.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline steps out, pausing to hear her newborn's sobs. Smiling gratefully, she feels alive.

She senses the figure shrouded in darkness at the end of the hallway. There's no reason to be afraid -- not anymore.

Madeline strides on, leaving the figure alone in the dark.

INT. O'BRIEN INN - CONTINUOUS

SERIES OF IMAGES -- Sunlight beams through the inn once more.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Her nightgown flowing, Madeline gracefully wisps past an unsuspecting Gena, toward Elizabeth.

Madeline gently tugs at her hand, kisses her soft forehead.

She will never leave her side -- never.

Katherine's tune ethereally seeps from the upstairs parlor.

Elizabeth's gazes about curiously sensing her mother.

Always close. Always loving--

*

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END