

ON A ROAD LESS TRAVELED

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OVER BLACK, a sharp, dead wind--

CUT FROM BLACK:

EXT. A CLEARING - MORNING (1934)

Empty. Dead leaves blanket the ground. The air crackles with electricity, late fall giving in to winter.

Close by, screams of bloody murder, then rising voices--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - SAME

Running between the thick trees is the blur of a YOUNG GIRL, giggling happily in play.

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

The screams continue. A male voice chaotically answers--

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

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - CONTINUOUS

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

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

A WOMAN screams in response.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
This was the only way!
MALE VOICE (O.S.) WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
My God! What the hell have This was the only way!!
you done?!

Curiosity leading, Madeline changes direction.

EXT. APPROACHING THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

As she cautiously steps closer, the voices draw her in--

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

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Circling in every direction, the voices all around --
Madeline doesn't see a soul. Slowly losing her nerve, she
looks ready to bolt.

Something else has other plans--

A gust of wind rustles the leaves from the forest floor,
revealing--

A long abandoned rusted knife with a beaten wooden handle.

Curiously reaches to pick it up. Holds it, appraising.

The cries, the rustling winds, all build -- reaching fever
pitch when suddenly--

--they cease--

In the unsettling quiet, Madeline only hears her deep breath.

Another voice echoes, this time from the distance--

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

Knife still in hand, she peeks over her shoulder, not feeling
altogether alone.

With alarmed haste, flings the knife away, and rushes back--

EXT. BACKYARD - O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER

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

Standing guard over the wood's edge is The O'Brien, an
imposing 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, handsome YOUNG AUNT GENA, 45, stands at
the tree line, her attention testily balanced between waiting
for her niece in the wood and the bickering couple behind
her.

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

Having had enough, Gena storms off, passing her towering gruff-looking husband, YOUNG UNCLE SAMUEL, 47, busily setting up an ancient box camera on a tripod.

He stops. Something out of his peripheral catches his attention. Emerging from the wood, SOMETHING MOVES--

Gena doesn't notice. As she walks away, under her breath--

YOUNG AUNT GENA
One good photo is all I ask.
Supposing that's too much.

STEPHEN AND MARY, in the heat of it. Mary angrily takes a bite of food.

YOUNG MARY
(to herself)
I want to leave. Now.

YOUNG STEPHEN
Their kid just died. Have
some sympathy--

Stephen stops himself.

YOUNG STEPHEN
Look, act civil, eat their
food...then we can leave.

Mary coldly takes a step back, addressing the inn.

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

YOUNG STEPHEN
You forget he's your father
too--?

YOUNG MARY
(clenched whisper)
--for all I care, he can burn in
hell--

YOUNG STEPHEN
That's enough--

YOUNG MARY
--Samuel wants this place,
fine.

With that, Mary brushes past toward her approaching daughter--

YOUNG MADELINE (O.S.)
There's something out there!

--transforming suddenly into the "perfect" mother.

YOUNG MARY

Darling, what?! There's nothing out there.

YOUNG MADELINE (O.S.)

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

YOUNG MARY

(scornfully sotto: to Samuel)

There is nothing here for me. It's yours.

Samuel's not listening, intently focused only on the dark mist floating ever closer --

SMASH CUT TO:

THROUGH THE UPSIDE-DOWN FRAME OF THE BOX CAMERA LENS -
MOMENTS LATER

SNAP! The lens shutters open. The family poses.

OFF-CAMERA

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

Slowly, the dark mist steps forward -- taking shape.

A WOMAN's shape--

--ignored to all, save Samuel. "Her" sights are set on one person -- sensing--

Madeline.

The "Woman" suddenly locks eyes with Samuel. His pale face drops. Feels someone watching. Turns into the crowd--

We don't know who he sees. His pleading face says it all, though -- please don't. Finally, he nods--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT DAY

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 face, causing Madeline to jerk her head back.

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

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YOUNG UNCLE SAMUEL
If you should need anything...

As he steps back, he glances at her a beat too long--

SMASH CUT TO:

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

Frantic hands move through the spacious bedroom. Disheveled clothes and other necessities are tossed into several luggage bags.

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

Madeline, now 17.

Now beautiful without knowing it. The spark hasn't left, yet there's a weariness, a fear, in her eyes.

Flops on the plush bed, trying to calm herself. Takes in her surroundings for what may be the last time.

Leans over to the foot of the bed, pushes the quilt off her hope chest, opens it. Inside, placed messily about: photographs, school memorabilia, etc.

She digs, finds what she's been looking for--

A thick stack of faded envelopes, tied together with a red ribbon. A glimpse of the return address reads--

"MR. & MRS. R. FROST."

Near the envelopes, pulls out a framed photograph. The family posed outside the O'Brien eight years before. Everyone faces forward, except for her Uncle Samuel, looking somewhere just out of frame.

Madeline's face is void. Tosses it aside.

Digs some more, finds a high school Letterman, holds her nose to the fabric, and inhales--

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

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT (FLASHBACK -- SOME WEEKS AGO)

Echoed. A jovial Madeline and her handsome man, NORMAN, 19, run freely on the grass in separate directions.

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

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

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

Norman excitedly begins to speak, but she silences him with a finger to his lips. Kisses him deeply, their eyes searching one another.

She begins disrobing 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, not even through the physical act, just holding her. A tear rolls back off her cheek.

MADELINE
 Do you feel it?

He blinks twice, perfectly calm, nods. She grabs him. Silence takes over, leaving them at that--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - EVANS HOME - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT
 Her mind racing, having never felt more alone.

EXT. NORMAN'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Madeline strides the busy sidewalk of a lower-class neighborhood. Approaches a modest one-story home, and smiles.

A WOMAN'S VOICE calls from the house--

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

Norman's frumpy life-worn MOTHER, late 30s, is at the front door screen, pushes it open, and limps to Madeline with outstretched arms.

Wrapped in their embrace, Madeline subtly shifts to the side. Mother notes the disconnect, but doesn't give anything away.

Madeline's attitude toward Mother is different than that of her own -- warmer, more maternal.

MADELINE

Wish I could stay. Have to say
goodbye for a bit.

(off Mother's reaction)

It's a short one, needn't worry.
Going to visit my Aunt and Uncle at
their place...

MOTHER

Of course, my dear. We shall--

Mother catches Madeline's sorrowful glance over her shoulder to the Service Flag hanging in the front window.

MOTHER (CONT'D) (cont'd)

We all feel the same 'round here.

(strokes her chin)

How could he forget this pretty
face?

Avoiding her eye line, Madeline forces a smile.

EXT. SIERRA MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATE THAT NIGHT

Headlights from the Evans car cut a path through the lush beauty of the darkened Sierra Nevada Mountains.

INT. EVANS CAR - DAWN

Madeline stares at the back of her parent's heads from the luggage-stuffed backseat. In front, Mary, now 56 and Stephen, 53. Age hasn't taken away their arrogant, snooty disposition.

Stephen cocks his head over his shoulder, not sure what to say. Madeline shifts her attention out the window. Mary turns to Stephen -- give her something...

STEPHEN

Sometimes...sometimes, these things
are blessings in disguise. The
piano keys...they aren't going
anywhere, Sweet Girl.

Madeline keeps silent her resentment. Spies something ahead. The headlights illuminate a sign--

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

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

It's soon obstructed by trees. Long beat as the car continues, then suddenly -- the ground shifts.

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

Trees lining the road loom tall as they pass a crumbling secluded cemetery, hidden from the main road--

MADELINE

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

Her parents exchange a glance. Madeline takes note. Mary isn't sure how to answer, shakes her head--

MARY (O.S.)

Your Uncle and I...never had much use for one another. Let's leave it at that.

Madeline leans on the front seat, peering ahead, as she enters her new world--

At the end of the path, the old inn floats above the fog.

On the porch, Samuel, now 55, steps down to approach the oncoming car, all smiles.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

God, let's make this quick.

SLOW MOTION -- They circle around the drive. In a silent uncomfortable second, Samuel locks eyes with Madeline -- she's seen this glance before.

As she steps out of the backseat, the chaos begins. Screams of joy erupt--

RESUME NORMAL MOTION.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Voices of greetings intersect as Gena, now 53, comes down the steps toward the Evans family. Stephen and Samuel uneasily shakes hands. Mary and her brother exchange pleasantries.

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

All the while, Madeline pulls away from the crowd to regard the inn, then stops -- emitting a quiet gasp--

A FIGURE, a young woman -- stares at Madeline motionless from a 2nd floor window. Her features are difficult to grasp, but she notably wears a virgin white nightgown.

Madeline is frozen -- blinks uncomfortably.

A pair of stiff hands fall on her shoulders. Samuel stares ahead, proudly regarding the inn. She shivers.

UNCLE SAMUEL

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

Madeline apprehensively locks eyes with Stephen -- expressionless, yet silent frustration are seen there.

Searching, finds Mary planted by the car, a pure blank.

Stephen steps forward, pushing his open palm on the small of Madeline's back -- toward the house.

Gena follows, turns curiously to Mary back at the car.

Mary won't be stepping inside.

Being led toward the front door, Madeline peers again at the 2nd floor window -- now empty.

A portion of the porch ceiling obstructs her view.

The rest of the house swallows her whole--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

They take in the spacious entrance hall. Despite the subtle modern touches, there's a melancholy of time being forced to stand still here.

STEPHEN

When's check in?

Disdainfully shaking his head, Samuel closes the front door.

UNCLE SAMUEL

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

The brother-in-laws regard one another. Stephen, hands dug in his jacket pocket, walks on with a slight smirk.

Off again from the main group, Madeline gazes up from the staircase bannister, toward the second floor. Gena senses, wanting to reminisce--

AUNT GENA

Do you happen to remember the last time--

MADELINE

Is there someone here?

Madeline stops -- turns, failing to realize her flippant tone. Gena and Samuel exchange a puzzled look.

UNCLE SAMUEL

No. It's just us.

INT. AROUND THE 1ST FLOOR - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

The geography tour. Madeline and Gena shake their heads in communal agreement regarding Samuel's gloating.

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.

(pointing)

They deserve just that.

--and back in the entrance hall, Stephen acknowledges a series of beautifully framed, faded photographs adorning the wall.

One of DANIEL O'BRIEN erecting the inn on the grounds. His wife, KATHERINE, all smiles, young and beautiful, by his side. Another of the construction process -- workers building.

Stephen casually glances at the photos, then disinterestedly steps away.

Madeline, however, squints close to study further--

Daniel enjoying a drink, while Katherine serves her local and traveling customers. Another of her singing happily for a cheering crowd.

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

Samuel is beside her, staring transfixed at the photos, his voice tinged with sadness.

Dazed, he turns and walks away--

UNCLE SAMUEL (cont'd)
 Let's see the upstairs.

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

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

At the top stair, Madeline peers down the claustrophobic-inducing hallway, a series of closed doors line both sides.

Save for one, farther down. Samuel's voice is heard. She chooses not to join.

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

Hearing this, she begins testing them. 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.

A beat. Madeline shakes her head. Her Uncle and Aunt are merely eccentric.

Feeling things out now, she's more at ease. Everything seems friendly, warm and inviting. Severely moth eaten, sure--

Makes to head back downstairs, but stops -- a puddle of light is sprawled across the wall and floor from the door that was behind her.

One that was closed before.

The breath stuck in her throat, she steps forward.

As she disappears -- a figure, distorted, faint to the eye, stands at the end of the hallway--

INT. BEDROOM (TO BE MADELINE'S) - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Like the rest of the inn, the room is trapped in the past. Madeline looks to the window, realizes it's the same pattern of glass where the figure stood.

Not feeling altogether alone, doubt crosses her face as slowly approaches the window, looks down--

Mary is there, leaning against the car below, smoking.

Resentful, Madeline's eyes narrow.

Somewhere -- a piano faintly plays. Curiosity leading, she follows--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Here, the playing is somewhat louder. Madeline stands frozen, concentrating on the identical doors.

Turns to the door she tried first, across from her bedroom, determining that -- yes, it's coming from there.

Stepping closer, she regards the blown-out light pouring from the edges of the door.

Knocks politely. The piano still plays. Reverberated echoes.

Tries the knob, jiggles it loudly. Locked.

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

A long silence--

Drawn in, she presses her right ear to the door, breathe held. Nothing.

As she arches her head to try the other ear--

--Samuel stares back, mere inches from her.

She gasps. He looks calm.

Her eyes pointedly 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)

We're happy you're here, your old Aunt and me...despite the circumstances, of course. Greatly enjoyed your letters...

Madeline nods. Smiling nervously, muttering--

MADELINE

Mom 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. A beat.

UNCLE SAMUEL (CONT'D) (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. Here's hoping you don't believe in such nonsense like ghosts or spirits.

A glint of coldness. She smiles, arrogantly shaking her head--

MADELINE

Nothing of the sort.

Beat. It's broken by Stephen from downstairs--

STEPHEN (O.S.)

We must be leaving soon, Samuel!

They regard one another a moment in communal agreement. Quiet disgust behind his eyes--

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

--and disappears downstairs.

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

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

As Madeline descends, Stephen's blank voice floats out of the dining room--

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

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline reaches the bottom, toward the ajar door.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)	STEPHEN (O.S.)
He's very relia--	Being that this thing is illegal.

Through a slit in the door, she spies Stephen sitting across from Samuel and Gena. An uncomfortable tension is felt. Samuel spots Madeline, stands, walks toward her.

AUNT GENA
He's careful. Doesn't take patients
unless there's a meeting before.

Samuel smiles warmly, then--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
The nurses are never given the
names of the--

Gently closes the door on her. She won't be a part of the conversation.

Steps away bitterly. Idly approaches the wall of photographs.

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

A specific photo grabs her attention: Daniel and Katherine locked in an intimate moment, lips pressed together. The perfect couple.

In the glass reflection, someone is there.

Madeline turns. Gena closes the door behind her, looking about.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Not the palace, we're aware...

Madeline smiles uncomfortably.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)	STEPHEN (O.S.)
It's close to work. Samuel is here, that's really all that matters.	...say, within the next few weeks? The sooner the better, right?

Smiling sadly, Madeline turns away. Gena observes.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
I understand you had to say goodbye to your sweetheart.

Madeline bravely faces Gena, eyes welled.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Stephen awkwardly stands with Madeline by the car. They are father and daughter, but they might as well be strangers. This is goodbye.

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

Sensing her annoyance, Stephen trails off, then speaks with his "warm confidence"--

STEPHEN (cont'd)
This was your decision, just remember. I mean, once everything is complete...you can come home. Everything will be as it...

Stops again -- the silence is felt. With an eternally awkward pause, he quickly hugs her, then makes for the driver's side.

Mary steps up, regards her daughter -- then bundles her up in her arms. Longer than both are used to. Mary makes like she wants to speak -- but the words don't come.

A final glance, then turns for the car.

MOMENTS LATER

They drive away, back toward the main road.

Madeline is left on the porch, watching their descent. The car wraps around the bend -- then is gone. The silence of her surroundings overwhelms as she steps inside, closing the door behind her.

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

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - THAT NIGHT

The arm of the grandfather clock swings back and forth. Clinking of silverware in the next room.

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Their first meal together. Surrounding Madeline are Gena and Samuel on both sides.

Madeline nervously picks at her plate. Samuel eats as if alone, seemingly a normal ritual. Gena subtly glances from one to the other, searching for a simple conversation starter. Finally--

AUNT GENA
Well, I--

MADELINE
Did my father leave
instruction of what I am
allowed to do during my stay?

A slightly embarrassed smile appears as Gena wipes 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
around here. Stay out of--

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

Madeline's decided her path. It's black and white.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lying in bed, Madeline stares at the ceiling, feeling the stillness of the house. Her breathing deepens as we--

FLASH TO:

INT. PARLOR - EVANS HOME - NOB HILL NEIGHBORHOOD - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 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 front and center are Stephen and Mary.

The gathering of faces are focused on Madeline at the piano, playing 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 (FLASHBACK)

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

In the background, through the kitchen, into the walk-in pantry, tells a different story--

Bathed in darkness, yet violently animated in her gestures, is Mary telling Madeline off for whatever insolence her mother has chosen.

Madeline courageously tries to speak -- in a flash, Mary viciously digs her nails into her daughter's wrist.

A wide-eyed Madeline stumbles back against the wall, clutching the wound.

Just like that -- Mary strides through the kitchen, back into the party. Stephen is there, sipping champagne, glances past his wife toward the kitchen. She smiles her fake smile and continues with the festivities.

INT. STAIRCASE - EVANS HOME - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

Silence. While the party echoes elsewhere, Madeline sits at the bottom stair, nursing her bloodied wrist. Hurt, angry tears line her cheeks.

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 (FLASHBACK)

Silence. Madeline and Norman, dressed in his service uniform, hastily run hand-in-hand past the party in the next room out the back door. The door slams shut as we--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS - SERIES OF IMAGES - LATER THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Silence. The hilly city during wartime: a mixture of overabundance of patriotism, and continuance of the everyday.

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

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

INT. DANCE HALL - LATER THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

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

Among them, Norman and Madeline. Norman bumps the shoulder of an OFFICER, and immediately stops to salute.

Madeline stoically observes. She knows, but has tried to forget, just the same.

He's not staying.

The Officer dismisses himself. Norman hesitantly turns to Madeline, knowing her fright and sadness await him.

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

EXT. CITY PARK - LATER THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Silence. Hidden deep in the darkness, Norman and Madeline hold tight to each other, making love for the first time.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

Silence. Fog hangs low over Madeline and Norman's farewell. Both look disheveled, neither sure what to say.

MOMENTS LATER

Madeline steps onto the curb, looks back. Norman is boarding a bus, watching her descent. The bus vanishes around a corner, the fog covering his tracks--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

Long beat. Suddenly, a sob of tears burst out -- scared, unsure tears. Not the confident girl we saw at dinner.

Her hands absentmindedly begin rubbing her stomach.

HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

Her path may be a shade of grey after all--

CUT TO:

HOURS LATER

Dead of night. Madeline has turned over, her closed eyes trapped in the depths of slumber.

Somewhere -- a muffled wailing cry.

With a deep inhale from her nose, Madeline wakes, briefly confused by her new surroundings.

A long silence.

The cry again--

Unsure, she rises, places her ear against the door. The cry does not dissipate. Thinks a moment, then twists the knob.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

An elevated POV watches as Madeline appears at the far end of the corridor, inspecting -- finds nothing. Moves downstairs.

The POV FLOATS -- toward her--

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

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

Upon reaching the bottom step, she whispers into the blackness--

MADELINE
...Aunt Gena...?

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

The echoing arm of the grandfather clock sways back and forth.

Madeline comes to a stop, contemplating returning to bed--

Instantaneously, both the echoing arm of the grandfather clock and the crying --

--HALT.

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

From the photographs on the wall, Daniel and Katherine stare at her with contempt.

A shadow hovers along the wall, startling her to turn. Her breathing deepens, eyes darting, makes for the staircase--

Not so fast, though--

An invisible impression of fingers appear on her wrist, blonde hairs stand on end--

Frozen, her wrist lifts weightlessly. She initially fights it, then like an ether-induced stupor, realizes -- she can't.

INT. KITCHEN - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline is led by the invisible force through the back door into the wilderness.

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - MOMENTS LATER

Giant Sequoia lean imposingly forward as she walks through the freezing night.

Lazily peering over her shoulder, Madeline senses something -- a presence, following.

Specks of blood run down her legs.

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

She steps into the very clearing from her childhood.

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

Spent, shivering and alone, Madeline is suddenly conscious of her surroundings.

Awareness returns as she scrambles to her feet -- desperately needing to escape.

All around her, surrounding -- the whispers converge. Then tearful, paranoid screaming accompany--

What might be a nearby stream, become the calls and pleas of others, heard on the night chill --

--they're all around -- tormenting.

Unbeknownst to Madeline, her right hand desperately searches for something amongst the leaves--

The screams build -- BUILD -- REACHING FEVER PITCH --

--then -- PFFFFFFT...

The cries dissipate -- everything is still.

MADELINE'S FACE

feels it happen. A silent gasp emits, her cheeks and mouth calm, her head limply hangs down, revealing --

THE KNIFE PLUNGED DEEP IN HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

A peaceful beat.

Just out of her peripheral, the silhouette of something -- perhaps a man -- observes from afar.

Madeline pulls the slick knife out slowly, sucking in a gasp of air. Observes it a moment. The very same she found all those years ago--

--then -- though traumatized, somehow --

--PFFFFFFT -- plunges the knife in a second time.

She doesn't register the pain as much -- welcomes it, actually.

The bloodied knife is dropped, rolls slightly, then comes to a rest on the dead leaves.

Madeline collapses, gasping for breath, her nightgown blossoming red.

Pulls her face off the forest floor. A clump of fresh snow is somehow caked on her cheek.

The reality of what she's done slowly dawn on her.

She gags -- spitting up a mouthful of blood. Red impacts on pure white.

Looks about. Snow is everywhere.

Panic takes over.

Something else builds in her. Fear subsides -- long buried strength replaces it.

MADELINE

...no...

She's not going to die here.

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

A streak of debris and blood are left through the snow in her wake.

Invisible footsteps impact in the trail, following--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - THE NEXT MORNING

A bloodshot eye BOLTS opens, staring ahead.

Madeline wakes with a start, in the same position from the previous night -- head on the pillow, turned on her side.

Morning sun beams through the window.

Everything looks normal, yet still something feels amiss.

Yanks the heavy quilt aside to reveal -- nothing.

Gets out of bed, crosses to the full-sized mirror. No blood, nor any outside debris.

Registering this for a long beat, the wheels in her head turn just a little faster--

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline studies Gena and Samuel, eating and making conversation.

Gena feels her eyes -- a subtle apologetic smile. Distracted, Madeline smiles back slightly, noticing that nothing seems out of sorts.

EXT. THE CLEARING - LATER THAT MORNING

Madeline frantically pushes away leaves and branches.

Searching. Searching for a definitive something that confirms what happened wasn't a dream.

Dust rises in the morning air, falls misplaced.

Out of breath, dirt on her face, Madeline looks about -- no snow. No knife. Only uncertainty in her eyes.

Her dirty hands drift to her pregnant stomach, absentmindedly massaging it maternally. Dazed, mumbles--

MADELINE

Are you still there...?

No answer.

MADELINE (cont'd)
 There's a rational answer...there
 is...has to be...

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY

Quiet. Lost in thought, Madeline staggers backward into her chair at the vanity table.

Pulls at her luggage and digs. Finds her Aunt and Uncle's stack of letters, regards them a moment.

Puts them aside to dig further. A notebook and a pen. Opens the notebook and stares at the blank page.

Taking a tense breath, puts pen to paper--

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

Madeline stops, considers the word "murder" on the page. A mixture of emotions. Continues writing in earnest--

LETTER MONTAGE BEGINS.

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - DAY (MONTAGE)

Madeline walks the grounds.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)
 "Once you receive this, the act will have already taken place. 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 just doesn't have a place in this scenario. Please do not think little of me."
 (beat)
 "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 - O'BRIEN - DAY (MONTAGE)

Samuel balances dangerously on the roof's edge, tearing away at old shingles.

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. O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER (MONTAGE)

Carrying a bucket-full of tools down a ladder, Samuel reaches the bottom. As he walks off, we notice, buried partially in the ground, a small door and a lock that protects it--

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"...while living off a large sum of old money."

EXT. TOOL SHED - O'BRIEN - DAY (MONTAGE)

Through the open door, Samuel sharpens a tool.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"Why he'd want this old relic restored is beyond me."

Puts the tool down, takes a swig from his flask.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - DAY (MONTAGE)

The room is sterile white. Laborious screaming. An exhausted Gena, along with a team of other nurses, assist the elderly DOCTOR TIM FIELDS in delivering a baby.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"Gena, a nurse, utilizes her time to assist a Doctor Fields, the man who will make my problems go away."

The YOUNG MOTHER makes a final agonized push and the labor is complete. It's a boy. Fields gently hands the newborn to Gena.

For a brief moment, Gena basks in holding the baby in her arms. Her colleague, NURSE GIBBONS, smiles sympathetically as she takes the baby from her arms to be cleaned.

Gena watches the child disappear from the room longingly--

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

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - DAY (MONTAGE)

Hands dug in his pockets, Samuel is planted inches from the framed photos, concentrating. God knows how long he's been there. Unbeknownst to him, Madeline quietly watches from the top of the stair.

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

INT. O'BRIEN - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY (MONTAGE)

We float through the empty house -- taking in its space, its history--

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

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - AFTERNOON (MONTAGE)

Through the door, Gena prepares dinner in the kitchen. On the dining room table, a stack of plates wait to be set.

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER (MONTAGE)

Madeline wanders, spots an antique kerosene lamp on a table. A relic of the past--

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

--then stops frozen where she stands, listens--

Crying. The very same from her first night.

It's coming from the empty chair in the corner, beside the window.

The crying is intermingled with the sweet, otherworldly lullaby of a whispering woman. Distress pouring out.

Madeline dares not breathe. She steps further to investigate, but--

A floating figure approaches from behind. A warm hand is felt on her shoulder.

Madeline jumps out of her skin, jerks her head -- a confused Gena--

AUNT GENA

What is it?

Madeline's mind is racing--

MADELINE

...nothing. I'll set the table.

Collects herself and exits, leaving a perplexed Gena alone.

She feels out the room for herself. What did Madeline hear-?

A long beat. We slowly move toward Gena's ear as she follows Madeline's gaze -- toward the chair.

We're waiting to hear the same thing. Nothing comes--

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT NIGHT (MONTAGE)

Two place settings. Madeline and Gena eat quietly.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.)

"Night time changes things."

INT. HASLING'S TAVERN - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

A drunken Samuel holds court, spouting a joke for the regulars. They double over in laughter.

Samuel downs his drink, catches someone out of his peripheral -- a WAITRESS serving drinks. She's familiar. Samuel's smile disappears, turns to the BARTENDER--

UNCLE SAMUEL

Gimme another.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DOCTOR FIELDS' HOSPITAL - NIGHT
(MONTAGE)

Intense, blood-curdling screams. The aftermath of a late night abortion. The patient in the stirrups is a hysterical GIRL, about Madeline's age, eyes darting in terror as an enamel pail and its contents are carried away--

GIRL

What have I done?! I'm going to hell, I'm going to hell. Oh God, oh God, oh my God!

Fields locks eyes with Gena -- knows the routine. Gena leans down to comfort the raving Girl.

AUNT GENA

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

GIRL

What do you know?! How could you say that?! I've killed my baby. I wanna die. Oh God, oh God...!

Gena can't take this room any longer. As the screams echo in her ear, she bolts -- fighting back the tears.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

Madeline at the Locked Door, listening. Like Samuel with his photographs, who knows how long she's been here. Speaks, almost to herself--

MADELINE

Who was he?

EXT. THE O'BRIEN ROAD - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

Samuel staggers home, drunkenly singing to himself. Pauses at the sight of the ancient cemetery, thinks a sobering moment, then continues on.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT MORNING
(MONTAGE)

Madeline stands by her Aunt and Uncle's bedroom door as she overhears whispering. Gena's tear-filled praying, while--

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME (MONTAGE)

--Samuel stares lifelessly at the crackling fire.

LETTER MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY

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

Suddenly, something comes to her -- possibly, an answer.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline strides to the wall of photographs, breathless, searching.

Finds the photo of Daniel and Katherine, locked in an embrace in front of the newly constructed inn, smiling at the camera.

Reaches out and touches the glass surface of the frame. Longing in her eyes -- for the past, for an answer.

Katherine and Daniel's gaze almost seems to beckon Madeline -- there's something there.

Shuts her eyes tight, not knowing what is happening.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Races back to the desk, angrily tears the unfinished letter in half as we--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - O'BRIEN - DAY

Strong wind cracks wet clothes hanging from a line.

Gena looks off, a basket in her hands, windswept hair blowing in her face. She doesn't care.

She's watching Madeline at the clothesline, absentmindedly taking laundry down.

Gena knows she has to act, but not press the subject. Approaches--

AUNT GENA
We need to talk...

--and takes the laundry from her hands.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
...you need to listen.

Madeline's tired eyes meets her aunt's gaze.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
You haven't mentioned a thing about
the operation.

Madeline dips her head, distressed. She knew this was coming.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
The doctor needs to meet with you
to discuss--

The cold persona returns, venomous--

MADELINE
But this isn't your decision to
make.

Gena stops. Takes a step back--

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

Madeline doesn't answer. A sobering beat.

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 that...well,
eventually we stopped trying.

The coldness briefly dissolves. Madeline regards her with
pity, but refuses to allow those emotions to surface. Gena
sees this, softens--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
You're not your Mom or Dad, despite
what's been instilled in you.

(MORE)

AUNT GENA(cont'd)

This decision needs to be taken seriously. It needs to be yours.

Makes for the inn, grabbing the laundry basket as she goes--

MADELINE (O.S.)

I've heard voices.

Gena stops, takes a moment, then turns.

AUNT GENA

Where?

Madeline's eyes drift to the inn. A darkness comes over her.

MADELINE

There are whispers. Crying...

Gena hardens, nodding her head. Bullshit.

AUNT GENA

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

MADELINE

(defensive)
--Neither do I.

AUNT GENA

(beat, twisting the knife)
Maybe it's your conscience trying to tell you something. You came up here for a reason...

Makes for the house, calling over her shoulder--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

You're going to that appointment!

INT. SAMUEL AND GENA'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

Samuel and Gena in bed. He's on his side, while she stares up at the ceiling -- a great distance between them.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

I'm worried. She thinks she's hearing things in the house.

Samuel doesn't respond.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

I know you're awake. Why would she make up such nonsense?

He's indeed awake, holding his sleeping position.

UNCLE SAMUEL

I wouldn't know.

AUNT GENA

It's these ghosts you want to keep alive. In her state, she'd believe most anything. What have you told her? Isn't that why you treat this place like an antique?

Long beat.

UNCLE SAMUEL

There's nothing here. Just memories.

AUNT GENA

I hate feeling shut out. You're distracted.

(tenderly moves toward him)

She's the only family we have--

He pulls away from her, climbing out of bed. Gena's face falls, resentful.

UNCLE SAMUEL

No. No, we're not doing that. The only reason she's here is because she happen to get knocked up and needs our help. The years of letters, "friendly correspondence" back and forth, this the only time she needs us. Her prick of a father forcing a sweaty wad of cash in my hand, no. No.

Gena sits up, standing up to him.

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 of Mary there...

An automobile motor grows--

EXT. MAIN STREET - HASLING'S ROAD - DAY

Gena drives up Main Street, toward the town's hospital -- a home converted into a working hospital. Beside her, Madeline spies Doctor Fields looking down on the approaching car from the second floor window.

INT. DOCTOR FIELDS' OFFICE - HOSPITAL - LATER

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

He addresses the ladies with a tiny pair of tongs--

DOCTOR FIELDS
I forget. Was it one cube or two?
My memory...

Gena stands--

AUNT GENA
One-- Tim, let me help, please.

DOCTOR FIELDS
(waving her off)
No, no, no. Sit, both of you. I'm
almost done here.

Places the sugar cube and walks over, presenting each a cup.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
Here you are. I find I'm more
relaxed in the afternoons with a
nice cup of tea and some Bach on
the phonograph. Keeps things on a
steady path for what needs to be
done.

With a warm smile, Fields settles into his chair, takes a good long sip. Madeline and Gena simply have to wait.

Finally, he sighs in satisfaction, and turns to Madeline--

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
Now. You. A few questions are
needed to ensure this...procedure
is necessary. Apologies for prying
into personal matters up front, but
what are your intentions?

Madeline is quiet.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
Well, as you may know, what I do on
the side here is help out young
girls like yourself. Though not
made public, I like to think I
perform a community service. Second
chances are important, because,
simply put, everyone deserves one.

He regards her tired face.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
This is something else, though.

She lifts her eyes to meet his, defensively--

MADELINE AUNT GENA
It's a big decision. That's --Madeline--
all--

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
My apologies, of course. You're
probably right, but-- I can't put
my finger on it...

Fields holds his gaze an extra beat. Approaching footsteps,
then a KNOCK, KNOCK at the door.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
Come!

Nurse Gibbons opens the door, apologetic, to Fields--

NURSE GIBBONS
Doctor, forgive me...
(to Gena)
...Gena, you got a minute? We can
really use the help out here.

Gena looks to Fields and Madeline, then stands, collecting
her things.

AUNT GENA
(to Madeline)
Wait for me outside.

Frustrated, Madeline stands also--

DOCTOR FIELDS
We're still talking.

Both stop. Fields sounded stern, but his face remains gentle as he sips his tea.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
Another minute.

Gena takes pause, but can't protest, and is out the door. Madeline again sits.

He continues to observe her, while she ignores his gaze.

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

No answer. Fields doesn't care, stands and looks out the window, over the open 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...

He crosses back behind the desk, sips his tea.

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
One that was cut short, and quite
deliberate. Like what you're
planning here.

He has her attention now -- she needs to know more.

MADELINE
Who was the child? The mother?

Stirs his tea, loudly taps the spoon on the cup's brim. With a loud slurp--

DOCTOR FIELDS
No one good.

Madeline's mind is reeling, then searchingly--

MADELINE
The house...?

Fields pauses, contemplates his next words carefully--

DOCTOR FIELDS

Whatever you decide about this child, my advice is to decide quick, then leave. Leave the first chance you get.

Considers a moment, then confidentially shifts forward in her chair--

MADELINE

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

A knock. Gena enters. Fields gazes at Madeline, who anxiously doesn't break eye contact.

Gena senses something amiss.

AUNT GENA

I'm not interrupting anything...

A subtle beat. Fields won't be speaking further.

DOCTOR FIELDS

(standing to greet Gena)

No, we're done here, Gena. Thank you ladies both for coming in.

Madeline rises, taken aback by the thoughts plaguing her mind as she makes for the door. Gena makes to follow--

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)

Gena, a minute?

Fields passes Gena to the door, closes it on Madeline.

INT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline presses her ear to the door, listening to the muffled voices. Hesitation in Fields' voice--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)

Watch her. Keep her close.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)

(breaking)

What is wrong with her? I don't know if it's anxiety...she hears things...guilt, prenatal depression...

Madeline turns, not giving her the satisfaction. That would admit defeat. Gena slyly shrugs her shoulders--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Part of being a grown up.

Madeline smirks slightly. That's Gena's cue. Looks over her shoulder as she pulls off the road.

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

EXT. ROAD FROM HASLING'S ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The car idly sits by the side of the empty road.

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
First thing's first, check mirrors.
Know your surroundings.

INT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Now in the driver's seat, Madeline nervously grips the wheel. Gena instructs.

AUNT GENA
You have the clutch, gas pedal,
your brake.

MADELINE
I know all this.

Choosing to ignore, Gena checks over her shoulder for oncoming cars.

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

INT./EXT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car moves, accelerates onto the open road.

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

Madeline tries the shift, the car shakes violently -- then putters to a stop. Madeline sighs. Containing her vomit, Gena shakes the clutch.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Try again.

Madeline glances away, looking like she doesn't want to continue. Gena knows better.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
What's stopping you?

MOMENTS LATER

A steady ride down the road, Madeline tightly gripping the steering wheel, getting the hang of it.

Gena regards Madeline, smiling--

AUNT GENA
Ain't so bad, now is it?

Madeline smiles for the first time, shares a look with Gena. Any suspicion or anger between the two has faded away.

Gena looks out the passenger window, then behind--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
That was our turn...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - ANOTHER DAY

Madeline strolls through the late afternoon light, trees casting long shadows across the leaf-ridden floor.

Distant laughter. Madeline stops -- it's coming from a lane of trees ahead.

A girl's laughter.

Madeline approaches a nearby tree, suspecting the laughter is coming from behind there. Cranes her neck around when--

A REDHEADED GIRL appears instead behind the tree to her right. Giggles. Then darts back.

Madeline turns, surprised.

MADELINE

Oh...hello?

The Redhead appears. Wearing a strangely period dress. Madeline holds out her hand, warm.

MADELINE (cont'd)

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

The Redheads's shyness fades, steps forward. Bashfully holds out her hand to shake back.

A voice calls from the distance, in a demanding Irish brogue--

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Katherine, in!

Momentarily distracted, Madeline turns back to The Redhead --

She's no longer there--

NINE-YEAR OLD MADELINE IS NOW INCHES FROM HER FACE, calmly holding her hand out -- a blank, decrepit expression.

Madeline can't speak, only stand frozen.

The resemblance is uncanny.

Except...

Her eyes turn glassy -- then white, until they're devoid of life.

Madeline can't turn away as she trips over her feet, landing hard. From the back of her throat, a whisper--

MADELINE

...why me?

Hand still extended, Young Madeline takes a step forward.

The second her bare foot impacts the ground -- the leaves on the ground wrestle violently into the air, creating a cyclone.

Madeline looks about in a daze as the cyclone engulfs them. She's petrified, but needs to know.

It can't possibly be in her head --

Slowly, she extends a single finger toward Young Madeline's.

Slowly, ever so slightly--

--their fingers graze--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - THAT NIGHT

A chair has been shoved under the door knob. Madeline grips the edge of the pillow, sweat profusely wetting her sheets.

Whispers outstretch from the hallway -- then a baby's crying -- then --

A VOICE (O.S.)

Madeline...

Terrified, she turns over into a fetal, desperately trying to convince herself--

MADELINE

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

Behind her, she doesn't see -- THE CHAIR SLOWLY MOVING AWAY.

Then -- with a wisp of the wind, THE BEDROOM DOOR OPENS.

Madeline's eyes open, wide -- realizing. Slowly turns on the bed, expectantly toward the empty hallway.

Something feels different about the light out there--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Whispers, mixed with a sudden heavy rain from outside.

Madeline steps from the inky darkness into the doorway, looks about, simply not believing her own eyes, revealing--

The tight hallway is illuminated by kerosene lamps on small tables. Scattered luggage and muddy boot prints lay on the rugs.

The sound of rain triggers her senses. Peers through her bedroom to the far window -- no rain is seen, nor heard. Only reflective moonlight.

Her eyes glance toward her Locked Door. Shadows and light merrily dance underneath.

Is this another waking dream? She blinks twice, focused.

Stepping toward the staircase, the whispers grow louder--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline's POV. Further lamps are lit, emitting a seductive golden warmth. The whispers become raised voices -- jovial conversation--

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline advances toward the door -- and stops cold. A drunk void of voice and laughter--

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

1887 is the present.

Filled to capacity with men and women, engaging in debauchery and drunken indecency. Guests and regulars of the O'Brien.

Ignored by all, Madeline strides amongst them, picking up pieces of conversation amid the drunken customers and guests--

FEMALE CUSTOMER #1	FEMALE CUSTOMER #2
(looking about)	...another gold digger, wed
Vile tongue! The Misses is a	for money, I hear...
saint.	

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 a familiar WELL-POLISHED MAN plays a card game with several REGULARS. The REGULAR seated nearest turns--

REGULAR
O'Brien, your pull.

The Well-Polished Man is indeed DANIEL O'BRIEN. Pulls a card, distractedly leering the bar.

Daniel, 28, carries an air of entitled arrogance. Despite this, he displays kind eyes and chiseled good looks. A man of self-made wealth, born for the big city, which makes his appearance as the proprietor of a backwoods inn even more of a contradiction.

His scrutiny is on a MAN AT THE BAR, subtly watching Daniel as he sips his whiskey. Man At The Bar looks early 30s with a gentle-looking disposition.

Daniel knows him -- as PHILLIP NOTH.

As Daniel rises to confront, a resounding whoop from the back room stops him--

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

The entire room abruptly lifts into celebratory joy!

KATHERINE O'BRIEN, 22, the dramatic that she is, EXPLODES into the room, sashaying herself behind the bar. The room is all cheers as she merrily sets to re-filling glasses all around.

Frozen in his path, Daniel observes his wife entertaining the room.

Now in the back, Madeline beams at Katherine -- transfixed.

Katherine is the definition of a happy and youthful Irish soul. Her beautiful flowing red hair, fierce green eyes and fighting spirit make her easy to love -- a love she easily accepts.

As she strides through the parlor, Phillip subtly holds his hand out to gain her attention. Like Madeline, her manner changes from person to person.

She doesn't acknowledge him, but mutters something in his direction as she passes.

Daniel regards this -- lowering slowly into his chair.

Katherine returns to the bar, preparing more drinks.

Daniel's attention doesn't waver.

Once she's within his arm's length, Phillip gently but firmly snatches her wrist to make her stop. Ignoring his gaze, her face transforms in an instant.

Despite the distance and the ambiance, Daniel comprehends her shouted whisper, though muffled--

KATHERINE
...no, Phillip! You must stop this!
We have nothing to say--

PHILLIP

She wants to see you.

Daniel definitely heard that -- though his unblinking eyes won't acknowledge such things.

At the bar, Katherine goes pale. For the first time, her icy gaze stares falls on him.

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.

Violently yanking her wrist back, she grabs the drink-filled tray and storms away.

PHILLIP (cont'd)

Pray that these decisions please you.

She stops cold. Locks eyes with Daniel, observing from his table, then pleadingly to Phillip--

KATHERINE

Stay away. Please. There's nothing left here.

--and is gone. Phillip watches, finishes his drink.

Daniel appears beside Phillip. An uncomfortable beat. Daniel throws his stomach onto the bar to grab at a stowed away bottle below.

Pours Phillip a shot -- himself too. While doing so, Phillip glances up as Katherine disappear upstairs. Daniel doesn't acknowledge, raises the glass.

DANIEL

Down the hatch.

Downs it. Phillips looks blankly for a beat, then drinks. Daniel studies him. Something menacing in this interaction.

DANIEL (cont'd)

To your liking?

Daniel roughly pats his back, then walks way, leaving Phillip alone.

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER (1887)

Daniel climbs the stair, passing greeting guests with a warm business-like smile, reaching the upstairs hallway.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (1887)

The joyful voices from downstairs have faded away. A piano plays the familiar tune we've heard before -- only with more cheer.

Daniel approaches the present-day Locked Door -- but now it's wide open.

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

He stands at the door, observing--

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

--and closes it on us. Hold on the closed door.

The lock is turned SHARPLY.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (1887)

As Daniel glides towards Katherine, he notices the happiness displayed downstairs has left her disposition.

DANIEL
This was always my favorite.

Smiling sheepishly--

KATHERINE
It's the only one I can recall.

Unbeknownst to them, Madeline appears in the corner -- observing like a spectre.

Daniel sits on the bench beside her, lifts one hand from the keys and kisses it, then smoothly massages her long neck with his lips. Her playing slows. He whispers sensually--

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

She wavers, clenching her eyes shut.

KATHERINE
You know why, my darling.

Courage building, 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 slightly. A knowing beat. Releasing herself
from his embrace, she quickly rises--

KATHERINE (cont'd)
Enough. Our guests need attending.

--save for her hand. An uneasy moment -- then he releases
her, rises from the bench to follow.

The space between them is now vast.

She turns for the door--

--HE KICKS HER SQUARELY IN THE ASS--

--her body pitching viciously to the rug--

--and LANDS HARD.

The air leaves Madeline's throat -- she can only spew a
guttural cry.

His perfected hair slightly disheveled, the true Daniel
O'Brien emerges. As he steps forward, he grows in size over--

--the ragged Katherine. Emitting only emitting small
whimpers, she stays where she is.

KATHERINE (cont'd)
Is that it, this time?

He doesn't respond. Instead, unsheathes a familiar-looking
knife from under his coat, and steps over her back --
bringing his boot down on her porcelain hand.

Agony fills her lungs.

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

He leans his dead weight on her -- grabbing at her dress with a violent RIP--

And begins--

The music and jovial conversation coming from downstairs fade in ever so slightly--

A horrified Madeline is the only witness to this inhuman act.

IMAGES OF the awfulness of it all -- torn clothing -- the tear of skin -- a muffled scream -- the groan of a man --

Madeline forces herself to turn away as the tears overwhelm and drench her beet red cheeks.

A long beat.

Katherine's beautiful face drowns in the rug. Her bloodshot gaze stares into the emptiness of the room.

KATHERINE'S POV finds something blurry in the corner -- a figure.

--it's Madeline. She chokes out a gasp--

Madeline's eyes widen in horror, as--

--THEY ACKNOWLEDGE ONE ANOTHER FOR A SHARED BREATH--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - THAT NIGHT (PRESENT)

Madeline bolts from her dream with a startled scream, twisting her head about--

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

She is on the floor against the Locked Door, holding her legs in a fetal position.

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

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1887)

FLASHES -- the knife in Daniel's hand. Katherine's anguished face.

Madeline cries--

INT. THE CLEARING - THE FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

FLASHES -- the very knife pulled from the leaves. For an endless moment, Madeline balances its weight in her hands.

SMASH CUT TO:

PFFFTTT -- THE KNIFE PLUNGES--

Just out of her peripheral, the silhouette of something -- perhaps a man -- observes from afar.

The silhouette steps into the moonlight--

Daniel O'Brien -- as he was in 1887 --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

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

After a moment, something escapes from her throat -- a hum. Katherine's piano tune, soothing her--

Hears something -- she stops. The hum echoes elsewhere.

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

The hum has increased in volume as Madeline steps off the bottom stair -- apprehensively toward the door way.

Bathed in the firelight -- sits Samuel, bottle in lap, humming drunkenly. Stops and lazily locks eyes with her.

UNCLE SAMUEL
Where'd you learn that?

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

Crosses, takes a seat, facing him. He burps, exhaling his breath. Though drunk, his words are like stone -- 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?

She shyly 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.
 (mumbles as he drinks)
 Supposin' not for much longer,
 right?

Shallows hard, sheepishly meets Madeline's glare.

UNCLE SAMUEL (cont'd)
 Yeah, I'm sorry. My tongue runs
 when I sip. Why I prefer to be left
 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 here must have a viewpoint
 on the matter. Your Aunt is
 the...rational one. Won't see the
 forest for the trees. You seem to
 be the...accepting one. Don't want
 to be fooled by exceptions to the
 rule, suppose. Rules instilled in
 you by...lesser people.

Holding her bitterness in check, she tries reading him--

MADELINE
 What does that make you?

Samuel tries reading her--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 One that doesn't question.

Gazes to the wall adorned with the O'Brien history. Photos,
 antiques--

One photograph is missing from its frame--

UNCLE SAMUEL (cont'd)
 Rumors, questions...gossip. All've
 long surrounded this place.
 Katherine first, then Daniel. I
 love my history so the pleasure was
 mine in the digging. 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. And just like that,
 rescued her from that impoverished
 mundane potato-eating eternity that
 awaited her...and her folk. Upon
 marriage, however, trouble brewed.
 But. He came out here, built this
 place for her. That's love. In the
 end, this place made them happy.
 (introspective beat)
 Love that story.

Sober to what she's seen--

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

Samuel finishes a swig, curiously studies her--

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. His heart died with
 her.

MADELINE
 They have children?

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Hm. He hated his children.

Beat. Off her look--

UNCLE SAMUEL (cont'd)
 Parents have this way of
 disappointing their children,
 whether they know it 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--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 (raising the bottle in
 celebration)
 --that's right, 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
 just...aren't.

His face drops. His tight lips suggest he has something he
 wants to say. Madeline waits.

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

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Dread fills the lengthening shadows.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - LATE AFTERNOON

The window is cracked open, allowing fresh air in. Sprawled
 across the desk are pages of 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. Regards it curiously--

MOMENT LATER

Her fingers shake as she dresses at the mirror.

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

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

Her pained eyes fall on Katherine.

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Phillip Noth 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..."

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1887)

A ragged Katherine whimpering on the ground. Daniel growing in size over her, knife in hand.

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

BACK TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

Madeline's misty gaze fall through the open door -- to the Locked Door.

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

Turns, finishes getting dressed, her hands a little less shaky. A decision is made.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 "I must submit to the position
 others have chosen for me.
 (MORE)

MADELINE'S LETTER(cont'd)

I'm not the individual I like to think I am."

Briefly rubs her stomach maternally, forces herself to stop.

MADELINE'S LETTER (V.O.) (cont'd)

"I ask your forgiveness, the one person I wish was with me in this dark moment. I don't expect your forgiveness, though, given what I'm about to do."

A 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 - O'BRIEN - THAT NIGHT

Quiet, pitch black. 1 AM.

Moving slowly toward the open window, past Norman's letter. A breeze comes, lightly blowing pages away -- revealing the O'Brien Road. Gena's car drives into the darkness.

EXT. THE 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

Anxiety rising, Madeline leans forward. Through the windshield, observes the welcoming hospital.

As Gena drives past the front entrance, Madeline spies a lone light burning from the second floor.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Headlights now off, the car pulls to a stop near the back door. Greeted there is a waiting Nurse Gibbons.

INT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline is helped along by Gena. The hallway is deserted, save for two whispering nurses at their corner station.

Doctor Fields emerges from his office, producing a warm, assuring smile--

DOCTOR FIELDS

Madeline...are you ready to begin?

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

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

Regarding the room, shes fixates her attention on the precise details surrounding her--

MADELINE'S POV

find Gena in the corner, dressed for the operation, preparing the ether. Nurse Gibbons approaches with a tray of tools. A THIRD NURSE prepares Doctor Fields.

Gena approaches Madeline in slow motion, ether and cone in hand. Fields hovers over Madeline, his mask hiding his warm grandfatherly smile.

The procedure begins.

Madeline's attention lingers on Fields. Desolate silence.

DOCTOR FIELDS (V.O.)

There was a pregnancy there once...

Her mind reels--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (1887) (FLASHBACK)

FLASHES -- Katherine's rape. Her pained eyes look right at Madeline.

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

FLASHES -- the crying in the chair. Madeline hearing it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - THE FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

FLASHES -- the woman's crying, mingled with a baby's. In the darkness, Madeline feels it surrounding her.

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

DOCTOR FIELDS (PRESENT V.O.) (cont'd)
Okay, Madeline, just lie still...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - THE FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Madeline spits up a mouthful of blood. Panic takes over.

But it's brief.

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

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

INT. OPERATING ROOM - HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

Madeline realizes--

MADELINE
It's Katherine...

The muscles in her face calm, her hands defensively wrap around her stomach.

From the back of her throat a distant, but empowered--

MADELINE (cont'd)
...no.

--as if this is the first time she has uttered it.

Everything stops.

Fields glances at Gena, she apprehensively turns to Madeline.

AUNT GENA
 You realize what you're
 saying?

DOCTOR FIELDS
 Madeline...

Madeline sits up -- everyone takes a step back.

MADELINE (cont'd)
 No...

DOCTOR FIELDS
 We must contin--

MADELINE
 --one wants it except me.

A tense electricity is felt. Fields calmly regards her as he steps forward.

DOCTOR FIELDS
 My dear, you're not ready for this.
 Your whole life is ahead of you.
 (beat)
 What we're doing here can keep you
 along that same desired path.

MADELINE
 If only it were your decision --
 this would be my mistake.

Though small and petite, she hops off the table and walks out of the room taller than anyone else.

EXT. ROAD FROM HASLING'S ROAD - PRE-DAWN

The drive home. Gena's car disappears behind a thick layer of fog, descending cautiously down the road.

INT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

With the window rolled down, a serene Madeline stretches her arm out so she can feel the fog through her fingers.

Gena watches with unease.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

The car ambles down the fog soaked road, approaching the haunting sight of the O'Brien. Pulls to a stop.

INT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

Gena senses her niece's body language, but finds it difficult to speak--

AUNT GENA

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

(beat)

Tonight we'll speak further...

Gena searches for any sign that her words are penetrating. Madeline turns in her seat, smiles reassuringly, then gets out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline opens the front door, peacefully regarding the space inside -- then turns back. Leaning against the steering with growing apprehension, Gena watches.

Madeline disappears inside.

INT. GENA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gena waits an extra beat, then puts the car in drive. As she steers back onto the road, she wipes away a motherly tear.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - SAME

Madeline stands frozen, feeling the silence around her. The inn feels different -- cold. She calls out--

MADELINE

Uncle Samuel...hello...?

No answer. A long beat. Nods. The decision is made --

MOMENTS LATER

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

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

SLAM! The dresser is slammed shut. Clothes are again grabbed and stuffed in the luggage. Her few belongings. Doesn't take it all -- won't need it.

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Frantically runs down the stairs, bags in hand.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - SECONDS LATER

Forcefully yanks the front door open, and STOPS ABRUPTLY as she is suddenly face to face with a gray wall of fog.

Hesitant eating at her, she takes in her surroundings -- one last time.

Leave. Now.

Madeline confidently faces the open door, takes her first step forward--

However--

Above her, a SHAPE, out of focus, silently moves from the upstairs landing--

--a shaft of white light floods in somewhere in the darkness.

Madeline senses.

Slowly turning her head, dreading, and yet knowing, what will be there -- sees the light.

Silence.

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

Another part knows -- she never had the option--

Like dead weight, the bags drop on the polished wood floor--

Hold on her face -- she doesn't turn away, stepping further and further away from her escape --

--climbs the stair. Madeline glances over her shoulder -- the front door fading from sight.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

The room sits untouched, with the one exception being the white sheets covering the scattered furniture.

Madeline regards the space. Her eyes fall to the far corner, where she witnessed the rape. Curiously notes--

--a trail of dust has been swept clean on the floor along the wall -- but only that spot. The dusty powder veils the rest of the room.

Her eyes continue following the clean trail--

We notice something subtle in that far corner, something she easily missed -- the design of the wall paper isn't aligned correctly with the rest of the wall.

--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 have scattered through the dust around the shape.

She lifts the sheet, dust rocketing into the air.

The piano.

Slowly 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)

A vast empty room. Young Madeline, about 11 or 12, is in the middle of a lesson with her European-looking TEACHER beside her, meticulously going over each note as she plays.

Stephen sternly observes in the background.

Uncaring and focused, she's the perfect pupil. She plays for the teacher, but no music is heard. Only silence.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

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

Suddenly -- her heart is unleashed --

A warm invigoration expels from her very being for the first time in a long time.

The piece she plays is the ageless tune she's been humming, only now with her own creative ebbs and flows.

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

This is her voice -- her pain, her sorrow --

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

The playing echoes. The empty chair is still --

INT. KITCHEN - O'BRIEN - SAME

The playing echoes off the counters --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - SAME

It's heard deep in the hallway --

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

As she finishes, a grinning, wide-eyed Madeline finally breaks -- letting out a long deserved girlish giggle--

LOW, UNDER THE PIANO

As Madeline's feet slowly ease off the pedals, we--

--slowly glide across the floor -- to the far wall.

Empty frame. Beat.

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 --

A FLASH OF THE MISALIGNED WALL PAPER -- something there --

THINGS HAPPEN QUICKLY--

MADELINE THRUSTS OUT A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM--

--THE PARLOR DOOR VIOLENTLY SLAMS SHUT--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--SPLINTERING A BUCKLED CRACK IN THE WOOD --

--TRAPPING MADELINE INSIDE --

Hold. Slowly, we pull away -- Madeline's screams fades away --
piano keys are struck abruptly -- a scuffle--

...then...silence.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - SAME

The front door breezes closed, darkness enveloping her
luggage as we--

FADE TO BLACK:

Silence. Long beat. Through the black, fog begins to roll in -
- darkness becoming a blanketed gray.

A fog-covered street fades into view--

EXT. NORMAN'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

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

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

From inside, a celebratory homecoming. Through the window, past the Service Flag -- one blue star symbolizing a serving member -- silhouetted shadows move about in happy conversation.

Though beaten, Madeline's beautiful eyes sparkle through the pain, full of relief--

Norman must be home.

Whispers a silent prayer as steps forward up the walk--

MADELINE

Thank you...oh, thank you...

--stops short. Realizes--

The air feels stagnant. Silence.

The house is different. Empty, lifeless--

Locked in grief, a COUPLE approach the house, failing to notice her.

The star on the Service Flag is now gold -- a serving member has died.

Madeline goes pale. She knows. Senses--

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

MADELINE (cont'd)

Please...not this...

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

Madeline defiantly scrambles for the door, raising her fist to knock--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT DAY

BANG!!

Madeline's useless baggage has been shoved aside by the now ajar front door.

BANG!! Slamming doors echo throughout the house.

Elsewhere, Gena and Samuel echo shouts--

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

Inaudibly, Gena answers.

Madeline's open note lays discarded in the middle of the floor.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.) (cont'd)
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, faces of the past silently observe, unblinking.

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

The wresting of keys and a door being unlocked.

UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.) (cont'd)
Get up here!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - SECONDS LATER

The parlor door is swung open. Madeline lies slumped against the wall by the door -- not moving.

Stomping footsteps bound up the stair.

Beat. Madeline sags to the floor like dead weight.

Samuel doesn't move. His hallowed eyes stare down at his niece in disbelief.

A distressed Gena arrives, gasps in shock as she angrily shoves Samuel aside to examine--

AUNT GENA
My God, is she breathing?! What the hell are you doing?!

He gently steps forward--

UNCLE SAMUEL
Move.

--reaches down and awkwardly picks the girl up in his arms, carrying her to her bedroom.

A bewildered Gena is left to register what has happened. Turns to the parlor room, and the open door.

The door is intact - no splintered damage.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)
Will she die?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

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

DOCTOR FIELDS
No. More shock than any physical injury.
(cocks his head curiously)
Still--these bruises leave something to be desired. They're fresh.

Fields gently handles 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.
Suffered quite a scare, whatever it was.

Gena leans on the bed, gently brushing a hair from Madeline's closed eye.

Fields regards Gena as she inspects Madeline, 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, retrieving the letter.

AUNT GENA
Looks it.

Thoughtful, he walks out--

DOCTOR FIELDS
God help her.

She regards him curiously.

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

--Katherine has replaced Madeline in the reflection--

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

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

Gena subtly glances out of the corner of her eye at him. His head is low, eating -- as if nothing is out of the ordinary.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

A bleak darkness, save for the single light burning upstairs.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Stillness cracks the air. Gena reads her book by backlight, throwing the shadows. Madeline lays unconscious.

Glancing for the briefest of seconds in her peripheral

--Gena GASPS--

Madeline now sits upright, her calm eyes locked on Gena. Taking a beat to collect herself, Gena goes into comfort mode--

-

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 meticulously begin rubbing her stomach.
Gena tensely studying her movements--

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

Madeline's distant gaze doesn't register. Needing to anywhere
else, 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 the best she can. Madeline smiles
slightly.

MADELINE
Stay.

Eyes fixed, Gena slowly lowers herself into a chair.

AUNT GENA
You're feeling better?

Madeline nods.

MADELINE
Like my old self.

AUNT GENA
I need to phone your parents.

Madeline serenely nods "no."

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

A dark light comes into Madeline's eyes as she coldly turns
to her aunt.

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 can't comprehend this. Logic and resentment set in--

AUNT GENA
We found your note. You wanted to.
What's stopping you from leaving
again--?

Abruptly stops, tensely tries another line of questioning--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
How did you get into the 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.

Gena slowly becomes motionless, tension building--

INTERCUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - SAME

A tall, lifeless FIGURE stands in the center of the room,
ruminating in the moonlight -- Samuel.

Suspiciously notes the clean trail leading to the far corner.

AUNT GENA (V.O.)
(hesitant)
There's no one in this house. It's
always been just us.

He steps around the bulky shape, still draped by the white
sheet -- the piano, untouched.

AUNT GENA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Madeline, this is concerning me.
Doctor Fields thinks something may
be the matter with you.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Are you listening?!

He coolly blinks.

UNCLE SAMUEL
What would that accomplish? The girl needs a home. One with love and care. Think she'll receive any from her parents? Might I remind 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. Icily--

AUNT GENA
You're too calm. How did she get in that room in the first place?
(no answer)
She saw a ghost in there. Least that's what her imagination is telling her. Some...woman.
(long beat)
Katherine O'Brien.

Samuel snaps his attention to her, caught off-guard for the first time--

UNCLE SAMUEL	
Why would she say that?	
AUNT GENA	UNCLE SAMUEL
(isn't it obvious?)	--she knows.
Because she's mad, that's	(long beat)
why. You need to tell her	What family does Madeline
who Katherine is--	have now besides the one
	under this roof?

Their eyes meet -- a lifetime of shared pain and sadness pass between them--

UNCLE SAMUEL (cont'd)
You and I...ours was taken away.

Gena's gaze softens. Wraps her arms around him, offering comfort.

AUNT GENA
You believe her?

Silently, he nods.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
 Just hope we're doing the right
 thing.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

Phone receiver to his ear, Samuel waits, palm to his forehead
 -- he doesn't want to make this call. Jerks his head 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 -- as another party is taking place.

The Evans maid, ETTY 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, yanking her expensive
 earring off with a CLANG on the table, producing an icy tone--

MARY
 Okay.

INTERCUT with Samuel.

MARY (cont'd)
 Is it done?

Samuel's face is crest fallen--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 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, she'll be fine. The
 doctor suggested she stay and rest
 here in the meantime. I'm hoping
 this is...

Mary is struck silent. She wants to ask a thousand questions -
 - actual questions befitting a mother -- but the words can't
 formulate.

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...must dull the
 pain. Do you ever feel bad for what
 you've done? I know I do...

Her hands shake--

--then desperately SLAMS the phone down--

Samuel doesn't react.

Mary holds her trembling hands to her mouth, sinking deep
 into the plush couch.

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

STEPHEN
 Darling...?

MARY
 What?!

Stephen knows.

STEPHEN
You're neglecting your guests.

Mary thinks a moment, slowly pulling herself back together--

MARY
Am I?

As she stands, her "society face" returns -- but has a difficult time composing herself.

As they descend back into the party--

Madeline's piano waits in the corner, played for a recital that seems ages ago--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

Insect-like whispers surround Madeline at the window -- lost in her mind.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - DAY (FLASHBACK - 1887)

FLASH -- Katherine runs out the front door, loses her footing, and plummets face first in the mud. As she raises her mud-caked face, she SCREAMS into the fog --only silence emits--

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

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - THEN KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY (FLASHBACK)

FLASH -- Hair now haggard and once-beautiful skin sagging, Katherine gazes at her reflection -- or rather through --in the full-length mirror as she dresses--

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

She pauses. The dress is too tight -- her stomach now protrudes a baby bump. Remembers--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - NIGHT (1942 - FLASHBACK)

FLASH -- PFFFFT!!! The knife plunges into a stomach with grotesque detail--

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

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT
 Madeline's body is shaking -- the madness taking its toll.

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - DAY

Huffing as she goes, Madeline uncomfortably hobbles the unsteady terrain -- she's now carrying the weight of her unborn child.

Stops in her tracks--

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

--and collapses to the ground in agony -- sobbing. Fixes her hands to her ears, and breathe 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 seriously. It needs to be
 yours.

Just like that -- EVERYTHING STOPS. The whirling voices, the surrounding ambiance -- everything.

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

Testing her other senses, she slowly pulls her hands away from her ears -- nothing.

Pointedly turns behind her -- toward the inn -- THEN RUNS!

Delicately holding her stomach, Madeline blurs past trees, throwing branches aside--

She's not going back. Not ever.

Looks every which way for potential danger -- sees nothing.

Something is ahead, though--

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 into a bushel of thick brush, fiercely CLAWING THROUGH --

--when suddenly, she's face to face --

EXT. O'BRIEN GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

--an open secluded, well-manicured graveyard. The one seen distantly from the O'Brien Road.

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

Out of the corner of her -- one catches her attention. Kneeling, she brushes aside clinging moss and leaves--

The stone is simple, yet elegant--

"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 quietly at the grave.

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

Gena rises, stands beside Madeline as she regards the stone.

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 thoughtfully--

AUNT GENA
 After that, our correspondence
 began. Samuel was as eager to
 receive them as he was to write
 them. His spirits seemed lifted.

Madeline hangs her head slightly to herself -- looks away.

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

MADELINE
 ...Norman...?

Gena twists around Madeline, following her gaze -- see's
 nothing. Regards her niece with pity. Sensing, a silent
 glance is exchanged.

Gena wraps Madeline's arm in hers, and they walk back up the
 lane--

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER

As Madeline is escorted back, she cranes her head to the
 second floor window -- the upstairs parlor. Her body sags
 slightly in defeat.

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - LATE AFTERNOON

At the window, Madeline observes the depths of 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, turns and faces the room--

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

EXT./INT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY/NIGHT

The O'Brien in late fall -- winter forcing its way in.

The untouched dining--

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

Gena and Stephen's empty bedroom. The bed isn't made. Beside, on the floor, an open sleeping bag with pillow--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - DAY

Gena leans apprehensively against the wall in shadow, waiting, her bloodshot gaze 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 - O'BRIEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A catatonic Madeline stares unblinkingly at a fixed point ahead. Over her shoulder, Gena holds a tray of food.

AUNT GENA
You need to eat.

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

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
 You want to continue like last
 week?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY (THE WEEK BEFORE)

Mid-fight -- screams of hatred, twisted bodies. Samuel subdues a deranged Madeline, as Gena tries showing food down her throat.

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

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

What is now a daily routine -- Gena stands over the shoulder of a seated Madeline at the window, wrapped in a blanket. Gena clutches her shaking hands together -- barely repressing her fears.

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

Feeling a migraine coming on, Gena slowly sinks onto the bed. Studies her own reflection--

AUNT GENA
 Is today the day?
 (beat)
 There was a time you spoke to me
 about your fears, about Norman,
 about 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 out of me,
I'd feel...free--

--without a word, she FLINGS the door open, her 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--

EXT. THE CLEARING - LATE AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)

Long shadows pull across the ground.

The heartbeat--

Filled with purpose -- perhaps guided -- Madeline approaches
the empty space, drops to her knees--

--and begins digging. Focused, alert. Blinking quickly, her
mind reeling, she determines a different spot -- near the
base of a tree -- is where it's at --

Stops -- drawing in a breath. Fishes it out--

An old wedding ring.

Admiringly rolling it between her fingers, she slips it on --
a perfect fit.

Instantaneously, THE HEARTBEAT SLOWS--

Madeline closes her eyes, owning the moment --

Shadows lengthens all around, enveloping her in its darkness.

Her eyes open -- a menacing calmness rests there --
her persona fading further away.

Staggers to her feet, starts back home. The dead leaves blow weightlessly to the side -- allowing her a path--

BACK TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

CLOSE ON -- her fist unclenches -- the ring has left a bruised imprint.

CLOSE ON -- the upturned chair. The discarded blanket on the floor--

REVEAL--

--a peaceful Madeline -- LEVITATING MERE INCHES OFF THE GROUND -- the whispers now swirling freely around her.

MADELINE

...yes...

INT. DOCTOR FIELD'S OFFICE - DAY

Shaking from distress and a lack of sleep, Gena sits in a daze across from Doctor Fields.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Where's Sam? I thought he was to join us.

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 in this room. I've failed. Something is there, with her.

Fields lowers his head--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

Something needs to be done.

He doesn't speak. His silence the last straw, she angrily makes ready to leave--

DOCTOR FIELDS
There is something.

Gena stops. His face is a blank. A beat, finally --
--she nods.

AUNT GENA
Good.

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

Groceries in hand, Gena approaches the car, stops dead in her tracks--

Across the street, Samuel watches her intently--

He's unreadable. The gaze passes, she continues to the car. He staggers toward her--

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

His bulky figure is right in her face, blocking -- slams the door in the her face. SHE EXPLODES--

AUNT GENA	UNCLE SAMUEL
--I can smell the whiskey!	How can I trust you when you go behind my back?!

Roughly yanks him by the arm--

AUNT GENA
You know what?

--pulling him past the storefronts--

EXT. ALLEY BETWEEN STOREFRONTS - 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 alley wall--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Yes, keep your silence! That's what
you do--

She slowly steps toward him, choosing each word carefully--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
Something needs to be done.
It's being done.

--and makes to leave. Without looking, Samuel steps in front
of her. Gena locks eyes with her husband -- measuring her
short stature with his bulky frame.

Lacking intimidation, she scoffs and brushes right past him.

His pained face wants to tell her every last detail -- but
the words don't come.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

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

KATHERINE (V.O.)
I've always been here...I've always
been with you...

A shadow of malevolent intention envelopes her.

Madeline only gazes ahead, a tiny light in her eyes reflect
that -- in the darkest depths, her humanity is still in
there, fighting to get out.

As she regards the ring in her palm--

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

This time, speaks to herself. Willing an answer--

MADELINE (cont'd)
What is the significance?

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

Madeline wanders to the dining room, and stops. Gena is there, eating alone, a depressed hand to her temple.

Beat. Gena senses -- turns. Their eyes meet. She rises from the table, disappearing into the kitchen. Madeline steps forward, pocketing the ring--

INT. DINING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

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

AUNT GENA

Eat.

Madeline's brow furrows. For the first time, she see's something in her Aunt that was somehow missed before -- an affection, a light -- but mostly a natural maternal energy.

She begins to eat, gathering her strength--

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Madeline ascends the stair, her mind racing.

MADELINE (V.O.)

...the significance? What is it?

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - LATER

Bundled deep in her blanket, Madeline's troubled eyes dart under closed eyelids--

MADELINE (V.O.)

...let her in...you need to see...

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY (MADELINE'S VISION)

Floating toward the empty chair -- echoes of tears--

MADELINE (V.O.)

The visions are...abstract...

The voices are near, somewhere--

EXT. THE CLEARING - NIGHT (MADELINE'S VISION)

Floating 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--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (1887) (MADELINE'S
 VISION)

The door glides open into an immaculately-lit parlor of the
 past--

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

--when suddenly, the voices are sucked up into--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

--deafening silence.

Madeline senses someone with her -- nearby. Her breathing
 intensifies, but she doesn't turn.

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

Still, Madeline doesn't turn. She arches an eye out her
 peripheral -- SOMEONE IS THERE.

MADELINE'S POV -- A WOMAN'S HAND reaches out for hers from
 the darkness beside her --

A VOICE, calm, cold, and registering barely above a whisper,
 speaks--

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

CLOSE ON a confident Madeline, as she tilts her head up --

MADELINE
 Show me, then.

MATCH CUT TO:

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

--a distraught Katherine, staring out the window, gazing into the woods.

Over her shoulder, a familiar voice--

A MAN (O.S.)
Did you hear me?

Seated there, YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS -- a fresh-faced widower of 23. His office feels incomplete, more like a home in transition.

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS
Katherine, please sit.

Katherine doesn't move. Fields sighs--

YOUNG 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--

Katherine catches sight in the window's reflection of the ajar door behind her -- a small lingering figure. She turns. It's a SMALL GIRL.

KATHERINE
No. It's twins, remember?

Her smile is bittersweet. Fields senses the Girl at the door. With a sharp SNAP of his fingers--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS
Out!

Caught, the Girl playfully scampers away. At a loss for words, Fields turns to Katherine with a sigh--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
I wish you the best. I should hope this is good news.

EXT. ROAD FROM HASLING'S ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Mud splatter specks onto Katherine's dress as she trudges the dirt road home. Distant commands and the rhythmic CLIP-CLOP of an approaching horse-drawn wagon cause her to peer over her shoulder. Pulling gently on the reins to a stop is local farmer, THOMAS.

THOMAS

Mrs. O'Brien. Mind a lift?

Katherine looks ahead -- a gray curtain of fog awaits her. 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 -- a survivor.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK - 1887)

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

--a pile of waiting luggage.

Her face is unreadable, but she can't turn away.

Heavy footsteps approach. Busily putting 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 about the pregnancy -- but she lacks the courage--

DANIEL (cont'd)
 (nonchalantly checking his
 pocket watch)
 Shouldn't be more than a
 week...or so...the firm needs
 a good whip into shape...

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 -- this is difficult.

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

Her beautiful eyes glaze slightly -- the color leaves her
 tender cheeks as she slowly realizes that the world is ending--
 -

KATHERINE
 Why?

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

DANIEL
 Because. Because I can no longer be
 around the whore of a woman who is
 my wife. You betrayed me--

KATHERINE
 --you betrayed me.

A savage beat--

DANIEL
 Should have left you in that saloon
 I found you crawling around in.
 Understand...I'm sick of the sight
 of this place...life here
 is...dirty -- unsophisticated. With
 some luck, I hope all this burns to
 the ground.

Katherine can't inhale a single breathe -- only sob. An-
 almost inaudible whisper--

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

Daniel's cold eyes regard her -- wants to strike her.

Sensing, Katherine props open a tear-swollen eye. He pauses and instead, gently places a palm on her stomach.

Their eyes meet. Nothing else to be said--

DANIEL

Twins...

He contemplates this a moment, then--

Grabs his belongs, brushes past her -- and is out the door for the last time.

The fog takes him and soon, he's gone. The intermingling of nature outside overtake.

The intermingling of coexisting nature soon overtakes Katherine's hearing -- while her eyes must be deceiving her--

All she can do is stare at the fixed point where he stood. She BOLTS for the door--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK - 1887)

--loses her footing, and plummets face first in the mud. As she raises her mud-caked face, she SCREAMS into the fog--

KATHERINE

DANIEL!!!!

--before collapsing into a withering mess. Daniel is gone--

Madeline is there, silently observing--

INT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY/NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1887)

There is no life left here. Empty bedrooms. Empty saloon. Empty entrance hall. Only whispering -- indecipherable whispering--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

...lost...isn't lost...there's a way...always...

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Eyes blood-shot, Katherine rocks back and forth in the chair by the window, mumbling--

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 the case of a random lodger. Much planning to be done...

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - THEN KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Hair now haggard and once-beautiful skin sagging, Katherine gazes at her reflection -- or rather through --in the full-length mirror as she dresses--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

...Daniel will arrive soon from the city...must be looking your best--

She pauses. The dress is too tight -- her stomach now protrudes a baby bump. Remembers--

Her bony fingers feel the stomach with a child-like curiosity. The moment soon passes, and continues to dress--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - ANOTHER DAY (FLASHBACK - 1887)

The piano echoes throughout the house as we float toward the open parlor door -- Katherine is there, looking her supposed best.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

It's your favorite, remember? You always loved it when I played it for you.

The same tune Madeline will later hum and know by heart -- the very same Katherine performed, prior to her rape.

KATHERINE (V.O.) (cont'd)

It kept you home if I played it.

--we float past, toward the stair--

Somewhere, a hammer bangs repetitively --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK - 1887)

--down the stairs. Katherine's piano and incoherent whispers are faint to the ear--

--the banging of the hammer continues--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK - 1887)

--toward the front door. Under the door, movement is seen -- a figure moving from one side to another.

Katherine doesn't hear the now-incessant hammering for good reason -- it's coming from outside--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Hammer in hand, a gruff, bushy-haired BANK EMPLOYEE steps back to the acknowledge his handy work -- a wood sign hanging across the door jamb--

"Closed for business by order of management."

When he hears the faint piano, he pauses to tilt his head curiously in a window. Perplexed, he returns to hammering--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - LATER (FLASHBACK - 1887)

BANG, BANG!

Katherine stops abruptly -- jolts her head up, on full alert. Now she hears it--

EXT. PORCH - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK - 1887)

Swinging the door open, Katherine JUMPS BACK by the blocked sign in her face.

Hat in hand, Phillip Noth stands on her porch, timidly meeting her eye line -- but there for a purpose.

The wood sign separates them.

She's taken aback, but no less irate--

PHILLIP

I...heard about Daniel. About the inn...

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

KATHERINE

This is a joke? 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--

Katherine is transfixed by his words. He places a hand on her stomach--

PHILLIP (cont'd)

--all of them.

She recoils in disgust--

KATHERINE

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

Taken aback, Phillip steps 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--
(beat)
--her mother should be there.

Katherine shakes her head, looking right through him--

KATHERINE

Children have taken away every good thing I've ever cared for.
(re: her stomach)
I don't want this!.

--her tone building in anger--

KATHERINE (cont'd)

I had hopes and dreams once, a husband I adored, a life with him. All that was taken from me.

PHILLIP

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

KATHERINE

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

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

PHILLIP

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

A sobering beat. Katherine slinks under the sign--

KATHERINE

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

--slamming the door in his face.

Phillip steps off the porch and returns to his carriage, wiping a grief-stricken tear from the corner of his eye.

The O'Brien Inn is left --

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY/NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

TIME-LAPSE -- to decay into ruin. As the next several months pass, and one season accelerates into another, weeds spring through the porch, roof shingles collapse into debris --

INT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY/NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

In the upstairs parlor, the piano plays, -- yet no one is present.

In the early morning light, a full-term Katherine shuffles the hallway, wrapped in a blanket. The walls disintegrating all around her--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Death...I pray for you...

ANOTHER DAY

In the downstairs parlor, she hypnotically glides about the darkness, voices dancing with her -- drinks ordered, distant music played -- the occasional face of a long gone customer--

ANOTHER DAY

Sprawled on her back on the upstairs hallway floor, she stares unblinkingly up at the cracked ceiling--

KATHERINE (V.O.) (cont'd)
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--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN (FLASHBACK - 1887)

--the scream carries--

SLOW MOTION -- Katherine collapses like dead weight to the floor--

INTERCUT TO:

INT. DARK VOID

--the scream carries--

SLOW MOTION -- Madeline, shaken to her very core, collapses to the ground--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN (FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS - 1887)

--the scream carries --

Withering on the floor, Katherine doesn't blink, allowing the agony to flow through her--

A shaken Madeline hovers over Katherine -- Katherine stares blankly at her--

INT. SAMUEL AND GENA'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - 1934)

A YOUNGER GENA (45) has raging nightmares in her sleep -- AS A LEVITATING KATHERINE HOVERS OVER HER -- A SPECTRAL HAND IS SPRAWLED OVER GENA'S NAKED STOMACH.

Just visible under the skin -- a tiny palm presses from inside the stomach. Katherine's hand meets the tiny one, waits a cold beat -- then YANKS it away--

The tiny palm is now gone--

--NOTHING ELSE MOVES.

Witnessing this moment, a horrified Madeline looks away -- a dark silhouette stands expectantly in the corner--

She steps forward, the darkness falling away, revealing--

--Samuel. Pitiful tears wet his cheeks as he turns away -- his cowardice disallowing him to face what he's done--

EXT. THE CLEARING - THE FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

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

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

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE UPSTAIRS PARLOR WALL - O'BRIEN (FLASHBACK - DAY)

--the scream carries. A VOYEUR watches through a tear in fabric as Madeline is attacked by the spectre of Katherine--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN (FLASHBACK - DAY)

--as the attack unfolds, we creep toward the far side of the wall, toward nothing of specific note -- only the bland design of the ancient, mismatched wallpaper.

As something falls on the piano keys, we--

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

--where Madeline collapses hard to the floor in great pain. Unmoving, she holds her stomach as tenderly as possible. A mumbling sob emits--

MADELINE

...why not me...what makes me special...?

(long beat)

I'll love it...keep it safe...I promise...I promise, no matter what...

She's afraid to move--

Light dances across the ceiling as an approaching motor is heard--

Somewhere, a door opens, then closes -- STARTLING Madeline's attention. Sensing, turns and GASPS--

Gena, kneeling to her eye line -- sadness but determination buried in those eyes.

Relieved, Madeline gratefully clamors to Gena--

MADELINE (cont'd)

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

Gena calmly "shhhhhh"'s her, shaking her head -- it's over.

AUNT GENA

Enough.

The Front Entrance Hall door opens, Samuel's voice in greeting, a voice replies -- footsteps descend the stairs--

Madeline jerks her head to the end of the hallway--

Gena is blank. Madeline tenses, grabbing--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

(calmly)

Let go, Madel--!

Footsteps, louder now -- Madeline's eyes dart down the hallway, her frantic words spouting, 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 far end of the hallway, STANDS THE OMINOUS FIGURE OF A MAN -- WATCHING. Madeline's desperation rises--

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--

Out of the darkness, the figure slowly steps forward, one
 careful foot in front of the other -- Doctor Fields--

DOCTOR FIELDS
 Madeline? Hello--
 MADELINE
 (accusingly to Gena) What have you done?
 AUNT GENA
 Maddie, I'm sorry--

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
 Doctor McCormack is ready when you
 are to receive--
 AUNT GENA
 (a pleading whisper) I didn't want to have to do
 this. You were wrong about
 this place--
 MADELINE
 --you bitch, no, no--

AUNT GENA
 There's nothing here to fear--
 Ignoring the approaching Fields, Madeline stares dumbstruck
 at Gena--

AUNT GENA (cont'd) It's just you.
 MADELINE
WHAT THE FUCK HAVE YOU DONE?!

--and SPITS IN GENA'S FACE. Gena recoils in shock--

Betrayed tears well in Madeline's eyes -- this is it.
 DOCTOR FIELDS
 Okay, my dear, we're going to ask--
 AUNT GENA
 --something you couldn't do
 yourself.

--ANIMAL-LIKE, MADELINE CRAWLS ON ALL FOURS DOWN THE HALLWAY -
 - AN ESCAPE--

--fixates on window at the end of the hallway -- considers--

--the others sensing--
 DOCTOR FIELDS
 NO--!
 AUNT GENA (O.S.)
 No! Let me take care of this!

Madeline turns -- Gena considers each step forward, calming hands out--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
 You aren't safe to yourself, or your child, any longer. We have a place for you. If you can't take care of this baby...others will--

Madeline stops -- a realization. She doubles over as the anxiety overwhelms her, sobbing hard, spitting rage--

MADELINE
 It's not yours to take!! I was lured here! You can't have children, she has to kill mine as well...

Another figure appears at the end of the hall, silently observing -- Samuel.

Gena pauses, taken aback--

AUNT GENA
 That's what you believe?

Gena shakes her head in disbelief -- steps aside as Fields approaches.

As he tries restraining her with measured force -- MADELINE TWISTS AND CONTORTS TO AVOID HIS HANDS --

<p>MADELINE <u>YOU WON'T TAKE MY BABY! I'm the only one that wants it to live!</u></p>	<p>DOCTOR FIELDS We're only trying to help you and your child. This is the only way-- (to Gena, indicating) --my pocket, prepare the sedation.</p>
---	---

Gena does so. Grabs Madeline's arm -- injects the shot--

Madeline pleadingly drifts her gaze to Gena--

MADELINE
 ...do you know what happened to Sean? I can tell you...I can tell you...

Her eyes flutter drowsily -- the fight leaving her--

MADELINE'S POV -- cluttered and unfocused. Gena's heartbroken face -- is it genuine sadness? A saddened Samuel -- looks away. The upstairs parlor from her memory flashes -- the wall in the corner -- among the hallway occupants -- someone else--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Help me, Gena!

--Madeline squints to focus as the sedation takes effect--
MADELINE'S POV -- Katherine. Emotionless -- staring coldly --
Madeline knows -- she is truly alone. The trauma becomes too much --

SHE SCREAMS A GUTTURAL CRY IN AGONY--

--THE FLOOR RUNS WET AT MADELINE'S FEET--
Gena staggers back -- knows. Everyone stops.

AUNT GENA
Jesus...

DOCTOR FIELDS
Okay, let's move her to the
bedroom! She's going into labor.
Sam--

Samuel lumbers over and picks Madeline up, awkwardly holding her in his arms as they rush for the bedroom--

Cradled in his arms, Madeline's eyes peer at him through her induced drowsiness, viciously whispering--

MADELINE
...seen what you've done.

--the air catches in Samuel's throat.

On his heels, Fields follows. As they approach the bedroom, Madeline's heavy eyes go wide with horror--

MADELINE (cont'd)
No...what are you doing?! It can't
happen here! Not here!!!

No one listens.

With finality, Madeline passes out--

FADE TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK -- distorted, distant voices echo through a prism.

CUT FROM BLACK:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - NIGHT

A disfigured blur of images and voices surround the bed --

TIGHT ANGLES -- Madeline. Wakes with a violent start,
involuntarily shaking--

Her dangling hands try to lift. Can't -- they're 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 -- staring at the ceiling as shadows dance
about. A menagerie of people--

It takes Madeline a moment to realize what's happening--

AUNT GENA (O.S.)	DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
She's waking! Where's the ether?!	Leave it! Help me here--

Gena's single scream PIERCES the room -- EVERYTHING STOPS.

Silence -- as they take in the full horror --

-- Madeline strapped down -- IMPALED KNIFE MARKS UP AND DOWN
HER NAKED STOMACH -- healed, but scarred--

Gena can only whimper--

AUNT GENA
...oh, my God...

Fields "busies himself" -- he's seen this before.

Madeline wails out, breaking the tension. Sighing--

DOCTOR FIELDS
Let's begin.

EXT. OPEN SKY - OVER THE O'BRIEN - NIGHT

Nighttime clouds move rapidly -- briefly revealing the moon.

DOCTOR FIELDS (V.O.)
There's a chance...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - SAME

In a darkened corner, a worn Gena and Fields speak in hushed tones. Fields' eyes dart over Gena's shoulder 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 made 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. She slowly steps toward the doorway--

Madeline's eyes flutter -- slipping into unconsciousness.

Out of her peripheral, Gena senses something--

A DARK VOID SNAKES ALONG THE CEILING, DOWN THE WALL --
APPROACHING MADELINE--

Gena doesn't blink -- she can't even breathe--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Gena, I need you!

Arches down to Fields as he leans over the girl. Looks up to the ceiling --

--the void is gone.

Gena cautiously steps forward--

A hallucinative silence -- mixed with Madeline's heavy breathing--

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - EARLY MORNING

A gray curtain of fog encompasses the house. Approaching rain clouds -- distant thunder not far behind on the horizon--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

TIGHT ANGLES -- her stomach being opened up -- knife marks visible --

Madeline's breathing deepens --

Peers out of the corner of her eye -- sees herself at the edge of the bed--

INT. O'BRIEN INN - SERIES OF IMAGES - SAME

Down the dark corridors -- floating through the gloomy living room -- the house senses the laborious cries--

EXT. ROOF - O'BRIEN - SAME

The first raindrop plops--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

A plethora of movement -- Fields in the midst of it, Gena assisting -- peering at Madeline from time to time -- feeling the presence all around her.

A pool of blood seeps through the mattress--

EXT. OPEN ROAD - MORNING (DREAM SCAPE)

Enveloped in fog, a MAN kicks in the dirt, searching. Turns -- it's Norman, smiling, inviting.

The gray curtain of fog swallows him whole--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

TIGHT ON MADELINE -- GASP!! Her eyes goes wide as she takes a breath like she's breached a watery surface -- a single tear rolls down her porcelain cheek--

Only then -- the release--

--A BABY'S FIRST CRIES--

--her heavy-lidded gaze follows something unseen as it is handed from one set of hands to another.

Fields, exhausted--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
Let's get her cleaned.

--and finally, the damn breaks -- Madeline's face melts into pleading, panicking tears, as she searches each unseen face--

<p>MADELINE A girl? Where--<u>where are you</u> <u>taking her</u> -- MY BABY?! (shaking her head) Nnno-no-no-no-NO--</p>	<p>DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.) Your Aunt is getting your little girl situated. I'll tend to you. (to Samuel, sympathetic) The ether, Sam--</p>
--	---

--Madeline shuffles her body to sit up -- but SHRIEKS OUT, collapsing onto the pillow--

Her stomach is still open--

<p>UNCLE SAMUEL (O.S.) My God...</p>	<p>DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.) Sam, the ether! It's right there!</p>
--	---

Weakened and pained, her tear-filled eyes see--

DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.) (cont'd)
--need to get her sewn up now!

MADELINE'S POV -- a hazy Gena carrying her crying newborn out of the room --

Fields applies the cone and ether to her face--

--her one fleeting glance is obscured. She passes out--

INT. BATHROOM - O'BRIEN - LATER

Gena dries off the now-resting baby, ignoring the observing Fields in the doorway, as he wipes his bloodied hands with a handkerchief--

DOCTOR FIELDS
(re: the baby)
She looks healthy.

AUNT GENA
--and beautiful.

DOCTOR FIELDS

Got her all sewn up. Lost a lot of blood.

Gena ignores, continuing to dry the baby -- something is on her mind. Fields peers toward the bedroom -- smiling with relief--

DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)

It's a wonder she's made it as far as she did in this house.

Gena smiles sadly, thoughtful--

AUNT GENA

Cause my niece is a brave one. I'm starting to feel that-- she's defying whatever's here.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - AFTERNOON

Through the window, a layer of rain has converged. The mid-afternoon sky is still light, despite the weather.

In between sleep and consciousness, Madeline instinctively reaches to feel her stomach--

--the baby is gone.

--remembers. With an audible gasp, she grimaces as she attempts to sit up -- calling--

MADELINE

WHERE IS SHE?! Where--?

--a SHADOW floats along the wall -- then darts away. A rhythmic rubbing sound -- Madeline turns--

Norman--

--in his service uniform, and flushed with boyish excitement, leans over her as he rubs her hand with his thumb--

NORMAN

Made it in time...she's beautiful.

He's calm, serene. 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 as he shakes his head--

NORMAN

She's all that matters now--

She regards the rhythmic rubbing -- A STREAM OF FRESH BLOOD
RUNS DOWN HIS SLEEVE -- she knows.

He gazes ahead, elsewhere -- lost in thought.

Defeated --

MADELINE

I don't know how to stop it.
Something that feels so much hate?

Back from wherever he was, Norman rises with an airless shrug--
-

NORMAN

Elizabeth--

Madeline laughs to herself -- a slight nod.

MADELINE

--your mother's name.

He crosses to the open door, peers out the hallway -- voices
descending--

Smiles his awkwardly charming smile, and is gone--

Realization takes hold, as she tries to suppress calm--

MADELINE (cont'd)

Norman. Please come back.

Her eyes stubbornly refuse to look away from the doorway --
he'll come back.

SUDDENLY -- THE ATMOSPHERE FEELS DIFFERENT -- outside the
light has dimmed through the rain -- SEVERAL HOURS HAVE
PASSED--

--a BLURRY FIGURE passes her eye line -- jerking her head --
finds a flustered Gena, frantically pulling Madeline's
belongings from drawers--

<p>AUNT GENA You've been asleep two days. You'll need your strength to-- (ignoring) I'm taking you home. Tonight.</p>	<p>MADELINE --where is she? Answer me-- now-please--WHERE-- (not letting up) WHERE IS SHE?!</p>
---	---

Gena's shoulders tense as she clutches the edges of the luggage--

<p>AUNT GENA There's no keeping her. You need to move on, forget this ever--</p>	<p>MADELINE --have you done? I need to see her!</p>
---	---

--rips herself from the bed with superhuman strength. Gena forcibly pins her down--

AUNT GENA
 No, dammit, this is how it needs to
 be -- it's been arranged -- she'll
 find a good family!

Trying to claw from her arms--

<p>MADELINE I'm her family--can tell you everything! PLEASE BELIEVE ME!! I-I know about Sean!</p>	<p>AUNT GENA You're unfit! She needs someone with a sound mind!</p>
--	---

--with a final SHOVE, Gena falls backward -- LANDING HARD.

The struggle ends.

Madeline stares at she's done -- Gena's appalled eyes are fixed on hers. Suppressing the last grasp of her stability, she stands--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
 You have no idea what happened to
 my boy. Only what I told you.

MADELINE
 (shaking her head)
 You're wrong. I've seen it--

A strained beat--

<p>AUNT GENA --what happened was a natural part of life.</p>	<p>MADELINE --what's natural about a father having a hand in his own son's death?</p>
--	--

Gena's lip quivers -- the final straw--

AUNT GENA
What a horrible child you are...

MADELINE
While you slept -- he was there.
While...she killed your Sean.

Gena forces herself to look away, gripping the luggage edges once more, her weakened legs threatening to give--

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--

They lock eyes -- there is no lie in Madeline's face.

AUNT GENA (cont'd)
If it was-- why would she?

MADELINE
This place is a curse. She's
infected it with her malice -- her
hatred. We're the ones made to
suffer. Samuel -- somehow he's been
a part of this from the start.

Burying all of this deep down, Gena returns to packing that luggage -- she cannot believe this.

Madeline realizes she losing her--

MADELINE (cont'd)
Samuel wrote the letters, right?
Not you. He knew that somehow I'd
become pregnant and need you --
I was lured here. There's something
-- something in us that makes us
lose our children -- it's
Katherine. She lost hers -- you
lost yours, it makes--

--WITH A WRATHFUL LUNGE, 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 forming
the picture--

INTERCUT TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - DAY (THE FIRST DAY -
FLASHBACK)

FLASH -- Madeline looking down on Mary at the car from the
window -- refusing to step inside--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

Madeline's face -- the pieces snapping into place--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - AFTERNOON (THE FIRST DAY -
FLASHBACK)

Mary bundles Madeline in her embrace -- longer than usual.
She wants to speak -- but the words don't come--

BACK TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

--in a nightmarish daze, the dry air last left her parched--

MADELINE
She knew...my own mother...

Madeline's eyes brim with betrayal -- things become calm--

AUNT GENA
If it's true, all of this --
what about your child? How could
she have survived?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - THE FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The screams build -- BUILD -- REACHING FEVER PITCH --

--then -- PFFFFFFT...

The cries dissipate -- everything is still.

MADELINE'S FACE

--feels it happen. A silent gasp emits, her cheeks and mouth calm, her head limply hangs down, revealing --

THE KNIFE PLUNGED DEEP IN HER PREGNANT STOMACH.

A peaceful beat--

MATCH CUT TO:

A MOMENT LATER -- panic invading her--

Something else builds in her. Fear subsides -- long buried strength replaces it.

MADELINE

...no...

BACK TO:

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

MADELINE

I fought back -- my defiance--
 (beat, glassy-eyed)
 Katherine had to try harder -- I
 had to do it myself.

Pleadingly searching Gena's eyes--

MADELINE (cont'd)

Do you...believe me?

Gena covers her bloodshot eyes with trembling hands, sobbing quietly. A grave understanding--

MADELINE (cont'd)

Where is Elizabeth, Gena?

At a loss, she can't speak, only shake her head--

AUNT GENA

...I don't know.

Madeline heartily tries to stand, but stumbles back in pain--

AUNT GENA (cont'd)

No, your stitches will open. I'll
 go.

Gena's senses something -- an idea. Reaches for her medical bag. Her back to Madeline, fishes something out -- a syringe and a vial. Madeline can only observe as she prepares a shot.

Quickly pockets it, smiles reassuringly at her niece, then cautiously steps out the door -- and is gone.

The rain has since subsided -- the room now eerily quiet. Suddenly feeling naked and small, Madeline looks about--

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - O'BRIEN - SECONDS LATER

Gena stalks the gloom, hand gripping the syringe in her pocket like a holstered pistol -- eyes and ears peering through doorways, everywhere --

AUNT GENA
Sam...please...

No answer--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Beaded sweat running, Madeline struggles to her feet, approaching the door--

SLAM!! THE DOOR IMMEDIATELY SWINGS SHUT--

She staggers back -- the voices return--

Lunges at the door knob -- AN INVISIBLE FORCE KNOCKS HER BACK--
-

Winded, but defiant, she rises--

MADELINE
--not afraid -- not of anything--

Grave silence. A HEAVY BREATHING--

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Not yet...

PURE DARKNESS -- a shadow overtakes her -- SCUFFLING HEARD--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - SAME

Back on the landing, Gena peers down the hallway -- nothing.

Passes Madeline's closed door -- no movement, no sound.
Crosses to approach--

Then she hears it, jerking her head -- piano playing.

The parlor door is ajar--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--stepping inside, gazes about the darkened room -- the piano continues playing, taunting. There is no player seated.

Gena unsteadily approaches -- the keys aren't moving.

Overwhelmed by the moment, trying to make sense of it all, whispers--

AUNT GENA

What are you?

--and finally stops in her tracks. Regards the wall in the corner -- something there feels amiss. With great effort, ignores the piano and steps forward--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Madeline's ragged body LEVITATES off the ground, as she tries to gurgle for help through a crushed windpipe--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

How dare you prevent me.

MADELINE

I am...stronger...stronger than my mother--

--SHE'S VIOLENTLY FLUNG ON THE BED.

A FIGURE in a white nightgown walks alongside the bed--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

...foolish girl...

Winded and bruised, an unrelenting Madeline staggers to her feet--

MADELINE

...stronger than my Uncle...

An imprint of fingers appear on Madeline's shoulder, ferociously pinning her down--

Madeline's nightgown rises, exposing the fresh caesarean stitches and scar visible around the stab wounds--

Almost to herself--

MADELINE (cont'd)
...stronger than...

--a caesarean stitch LIFTS OFF HER FLESH--

--CLIP -- THE FIRST STITCH SNAPS--

Madeline CHOKES in air -- STAGGERS to rise -- IS PINNED--

--CLIP -- ANOTHER--

--her mouth agape, nothing comes out -- only quivering lips--

--CLIP -- ANOTHER--

--the caesarian wound is breached -- EXPOSING OPEN FLESH--

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR - O'BRIEN - SAME

Gena's investigative hands flail over the corner wall. After a moment, she touches a wet, sloppily overlaid piece. Blinks twice--

Scratching like a cat, her fingernails digging into the ancient paper as shards pile up at her feet -- she stops, staggering back in shock--

--the outline of a wooden door, flat and flush with the wall.

Hungrily reaches for the edges, prying--

The door is heavy. As much as it hurts -- she won't quit--

AUNT GENA
--son of a bitch-- how could--
do this to me...?

--with a final, desperate cry -- the door swing open, SLAMMING hard against the other wall.

Gena gazes into the dark abyss before her--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Madeline's stomach is open -- sweating and glazed eyes, she's close to passing out--

--floating inches from her face -- a LEVITATING KATHERINE O'BRIEN -- her piercing malevolent eyes staring down--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
I hope this hurts. Soon, she will
be feeling so much more.

Soon -- Madeline's retina's focus on the dark eyes before her -- a challenge is met. In turn, Katherine smiles venomously--

--CLIP -- ANOTHER--

--despite her brief moment of courage, Madeline still cries out in pain--

INT. SECRET ROOM BEHIND PARLOR WALL - O'BRIEN - SAME

Gena blindly fumbles in the dark -- nothing of note in here. Shuffles forward --

--Her legs COLLAPSE out from under her -- SHE PLUNGES THROUGH THE UNSEEN HOLE--

INT. SHAFT BELOW SECRET ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--too scared to scream, she FLAILS for anything that will break her fall --

GLIMPSES IN THE DARK -- she's cut, scratched, bruised --

Then--

CRACK!! LANDS HARD -- on the dank, rock floor. Wailing in pain, she lunges at her left leg -- it's broken--

Withering on the stone floor, peers up the shaft -- attached, mere feet off the ground, a rotten wooden ladder.

She needs to keep going. With agonized pain, desperately grips the stone wall to lift herself up, nursing the bum leg as she does so.

A realization hits her -- she's under the house--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

--seconds from passing out, Madeline's limp body sags--

A shadow SHOOTS across her face -- and the room becomes still.

It doesn't register immediately, but she senses it -- the room is empty. Weakly lifts her hand, nothing is holding her down--

She needs to go -- now--

Painstakingly lifts herself up -- this won't be easy.

Yanks her nightgown down, clutching her open stomach in her hand -- she makes for the door.

Her body too weakened -- she SPILLS onto the floor--

INT. SHAFT BELOW SECRET ROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Rummaging amongst debris of thin discarded wood, Gena finds a suitable piece. Rips at her tattered dress, and binds the bum leg the best she can--

Inching through the darkness, spies an inch of light before her -- a door. Hobbles toward it, feels it out -- and pushes mightily with what remaining strength she can muster, trying to break it open--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Clutching her stomach tight, Madeline crawls on her side toward the door. Shuffles herself up the wall beside the door -- reaches for the knob, twists it -- it's unlocked.

Blinks with relief -- now to stand. Using the knob as leverage, she slowly inches her body up -- throws open the door--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Staggers out, surveying -- nothing. As she makes for the stairway, calls into the inky darkness of the parlor--

MADELINE

Gena?!

No answer--

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline ambles down the stair -- struck in the face with a wall of obscurity before her.

Eyes wide, daring not to breathe, she reaches her free hand through the darkness to the nearby table -- fingers searching the top for the kerosene lamp and matches--

With trembling hands, strikes the match and ignites the lamp. The glow bounces off--

--the framed photographs -- illuminating the faces singed in time.

She swings the lamp out, her appearance spectral. Eyes peeled as she cautiously steps forward, the lamp begins dimming -- then fades. Bathed in darkness--

MADELINE (O.S.)

Shit! No...

Blows hard into the lamp. Then -- FLICK! FLICK! A lone amber sparks to life -- the second match is lit. Her dread building -- re-lights the lamp -- the lamp catches--

Twists the kerosene flame up -- the light spreads to the darkest corners of the room -- where she finds herself--

--ADRIFT IN A SEA OF SEATED PEOPLE, HEADS DOWN, HUNCHED SHOULDERS -- HUDDLED IN THEIR GHOSTLY POSE -- NONE MOVE.

Madeline doesn't blink. Swing the lamp in all directions -- they're everywhere--

No sign of Samuel, Gena -- or Elizabeth.

She knows -- the only path around is straight through. Balancing one foot in front of the other, she slowly steps past -- daring not to make a sound.

In the flickering light, the figures carry a resemblance to grotesque wax people -- shadows reenacting their roles as long-departed guests from 1887.

From the heart of the crowd, multiple ancient lanterns gradually warms their surroundings -- the inn is remembering--

As she navigates, Katherine whispers tormentingly--

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Can you not realize? How easy it is to hate? It was the only way.

Madeline reels from her words--

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - SAME

A moist, dark night. 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, yes. I assure you, it wouldn't happen a second time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - SAME

Approaching the side door, Madeline peers longingly over her shoulder -- the room is now the vibrant world of 1887. The glow of the saloon light makes her lamp no longer necessary -- with a final look, she puts it down--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 When it happened, it was all so very easy.

Across the ages, a BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

Katherine collapses to the ground -- she's going into labor.

Like a caged animal, she viciously tears at anything she grip onto--

Out of the corner of her eye -- past customers surround her, judging her with their silence.

Eyes bulging, she scampers back -- grasping her own madness for the first time--

KATHERINE
 Stay away--

Scurries to her feet -- flings open the side door--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE DOOR - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

--to a beautiful snow scape wood. A winded Madeline peers aghast from the doorway--

MADELINE

Where did you go--?

Winces -- feels a pain. From her open wound, a sickly puddle of blood is fixed to her nightgown -- a thick stream running down. Gazing deep in the wood, she knows where to go--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline staggers from one tree to the next, in pursuit--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

Katherine trudges through the snow, wailing in pain -- her paranoia provoking her to gape over her shoulder--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - PRESENT

Dripping sweat, Madeline trudging forward--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

KATHERINE'S POV -- over her shoulder, ONLY SHADOWS PURSUE, tormenting her further--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - PRESENT

--Madeline grips a branch to stop herself, exhaustion catching up--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

Katherine cries out over her shoulder as she lurches on -- her words through a prism--

KATHERINE

Stay away!!! Plea--!

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - PRESENT

KATHERINE (V.O.)

--seeee!!!

--shaking Madeline back to life -- everything hurts.

EXT. WOOD - PRESENT/PAST

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. Both women's run intensify to the point they become a blur--

EXT. APPROACHING THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

A POV -- cautiously converges on the clearing and the ear-piercing echoes of a baby's cries. Somewhere ahead, labored wheezing and rambling whispering are heard -- a tree blocks the view.

Creeping around the tree--

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

--in the middle of the clearing, Samuel embracing a wailing Elizabeth with one hand. Through his tears, he whispers to her, unaware of anyone else -- the other hand is not visible--

With bloodshot eyes and palms raised, Madeline carefully steps forward -- keeping her fear at bay--

MADELINE

--please--

Slowly realizing a presence -- Samuel turns.

A distant exhaustion lingers in his eyes. Something else -- on the edges, madness. Regards her bloody nightgown--

UNCLE SAMUEL

What has happened?

Samuel approaches -- Madeline tenses, steps back. Her gaze darting 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--

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK - 1934)

Young Madeline runs through the woods, playing--

YOUNG AUNT GENA (O.S.)

Madeline, in!

--she stops, turns--

EXT. O'BRIEN INN - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

THROUGH THE UPSIDE-DOWN FRAME OF A CAMERA LENS

Spectral silence. The family poses for the photograph --the single memory Madeline had of the visit--

OFF-CAMERA LENS

Gena frames the shot. Everyone is posed -- except Samuel--

On the edge of the wood -- a youthful Katherine. They know each other. She glides forward, ignored to all except Samuel. Her attention on one person -- Madeline.

Looking her up and down -- Katherine senses something in her--

Katherine locks eyes with Samuel, his face drops -- feels a presence watching. Twists his neck to--

Mary. No guilt in those eyes -- only malice--

EXT. FRONT DRIVE - O'BRIEN - LATER THAT DAY (FLASHBACK)

Madeline steps into the backseat -- a piece of paper is thrust in her face. Samuel stands over her, a warm smile--

YOUNG UNCLE SAMUEL
 If you should need anything, be
 sure to write...

BACK TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

Transfixed, Samuel steps forced forgetting Elizabeth in arms -
 Madeline sees nothing else--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 She saw your potential. Knew you
 would arrive -- eventually--

MADELINE
 --the letters--

Samuel smiles slightly--

UNCLE SAMUEL
 Nothing more -- than a son's duty--

--SAMUEL LUNGES AT HER BLOODIED NIGHTGOWN --

--FABRIC AND FLESH RIPPP!!!

--eyes BULGING, SHE DOUBLES OVER--

--DELIBERATELY LET'S THE BABY -- DROP. He confidently steps
 away, preparing himself--

THE CHILD CRIES HYSTERICALLY--

--then silence.

Madeline stops--

MADELINE
 No--

--her pain an afterthought, wildly crawls past Samuel to her
 child--

MADELINE (cont'd)
NO!!!

--he steps behind his niece -- BRANDISHING HIS FATHER'S KNIFE
 IN HIS CONCEALED HAND--

--THRUSTS IT DOWN ON MADELINE--

--PLUNGING SICKLY DEEP IN HER SHOULDER BLADE -- SHE SCREAMS
OUT -- THE FORCES PITCHES HER DOWN ON HER BELLY --

--Samuel RIPS it out -- BLOOD OOZING--

She barely feels the pain, however. Reaches out a pitiful
hand -- trying still to reach her child--

Her face turns to hate -- achieving superhuman strength in
this moment -- she's not done--

EVERYTHING HAPPENS IN AN INSTANT--

THE KNIFE THRUSTS DOWN--

She twists -- weakly CATCHING his wrists to hold him back --
fighting the pain at all costs--

No matter -- Samuel smirks, having the advantage. Wriggling
his hands free--

THE KNIFE RISES--

--THRUSTS DOWN--

THIS IS NO VICTIM -- SHE ACTS--

KICKS HIS LEGS OUT, THROWING HIM OFF HIS FEET--

Blind sided -- he flies SIDEWAYS -- HAS A SECOND TO REACT
BEFORE--

CRACK! His cheek IMPACTS on the base of a tree -- THEN--

PFFFFTTTT!

--THE KNIFE EXPLODES THROUGH FLESH--

--Samuel goes still.

Staring into his eyes -- she could really end him if she
wanted to. The thought lasts a second-- it doesn't matter now--
-

--she's already on her knees, scrambling to her child --

MADELINE (cont'd)
...Elizabeth...Elizabeth...

--and stops.

THE BABY DOESN'T MOVE -- a long realization dawns on
Madeline, frozen with agony--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 She's the sacrifice--

Knows Katherine is close. Shaking her head, the tears build--
 Madeline scoops up her precious 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--

This can't be how her journey ends--

KATHERINE (V.O.)
 There was so much pain...the pain
 set me free--

Madeline knows what needs to be done -- the blood loss is
 taking its toll -- she doesn't care--

--scrambles to Samuel's body, ignoring Katherine's taunts--

KATHERINE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 She's the reason you are here. You
 saw things that needed to be seen
 to ensure this moment took place.
 (long beat)
 There is no other way.

With some effort, Madeline flips Samuel over, still breathing
 in a lost daze -- the knife is plunged deep in his chest--

Madeline doesn't turn away. Senses Katherine's presence--
 acknowledges it--

MADELINE
 I'm sorry for what happened to you.

Madeline turns -- they make eye contact -- for the first time
 since the vision of Katherine's rape--

--Katherine is slightly taken aback--

Defiant--

MADELINE (cont'd)
There is always another way.

Beat--

Then--

MADELINE RIPS THE KNIFE FROM SAMUEL'S CHEST -- SPOUTING BLOOD
OUT IN REACTION -- AND TEARS THE KNIFE INTO WHAT'S LEFT OF
HER OWN STOMACH--

KATHERINE'S EYES GO WIDE -- SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED--

KATHERINE
Noooo!!!!

Madeline rolls on her side -- the light beginning to leave
her eyes--

The SCREAM carrying over--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WOOD BEHIND INN - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

A trio of BLURRED FIGURES move quickly, following the echoed
screams of elation just ahead. The figures are draped in
heavy winter wear -- preventing any identification--

KATHERINE (O.S.)
This was the only way! This was the
only way!

The LEADER, a scarf over his mouth, points--

LEADER
Over there!

--and takes a new path. The others follow -- a MAN and a
WOMAN--

INT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUATION OF FLASHBACK (1887)

The Leader stops in his tracks -- slowly pulling his scarf
down, sickened by the horrific sight. The others pull their
own down in like--

--the Leader is Young Doctor Fields, along with Thomas, the farmer that offered Katherine a ride and his WIFE. The Wife's looks like she's going to vomit--

They witness--

--in the clearing -- Katherine -- her arms raised in wait --
A SMILE OF INSANITY ACROSS FROM HER BLOOD-SPRAYED FACE.

MULTIPLE STAB WOUNDS HAVE IMPACTED HER PREGNANT STOMACH--

--still gripping the knife -- blood drips down her hands. She doesn't feel the pain -- only the pleasure it brings--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS

My God...

He dashes toward her -- forcing the knife away--

It lands deep in the debris of the white forest floor--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)

What the hell have you done?!

Recognizing Fields, the dam breaks for a moment--

KATHERINE (O.S.)

This was the only way--

--then collapses. Fields falls to his knees --goes to work. Trembling hands examine her--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS

There's so much blood, I don't--

(realizing)

Jesus -- stay with me! You're going
to deliver, Katherine! Do you
understand?

Katherine's blankness doesn't comprehend--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)

Help me, Thomas!

Thomas scurries to Fields side -- opening her legs, the men begin the delivery--

Katherine snaps back -- violently SWATTING them away--

KATHERINE

No!!! Let them die!

Fields counters with such intensity--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS
 Your child is more important than
 you! Now stop! PUSH!
 (to Thomas)
 Dammit, hold her down!

He does so--

The birth begins. Fields is a professional -- despite the
 horror he is witnessing--

THOMAS'S WIFE	
So much blood...the baby couldn't have survived the puncture...	
THOMAS	YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS
...be quiet...	...hold her...!

Katherine's mouth is agape -- feeling the jerking motion of
 her body experiencing childbirth--

KATHERINE'S POV - LATER -- the trees sway in the night--

In her delirium, Katherine finds Thomas over her. Their eyes
 meet -- a thin smile --

KATHERINE
 Thank you for your kindness--

The moment ends--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (O.S.)
 (grateful)
 He's crowning!

--A baby CRIES -- entering this world. Fields breathes again,
 sighing relief--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
 (to Thomas's Wife)
 Hold him -- a boy -- he looks well.

The Wife reacts sickly -- her eyes falling on the mass of
 blood protruding from Katherine's destroyed stomach--

A dark realization comes over Fields--

YOUNG DOCTOR FIELDS (cont'd)
 She had twins.

MOMENTS LATER

--the second child is delivered. With great care, Fields gently handles the bloody figure. Solemn eyes--

In the Wife's arms, the baby boy cries -- sadness in those tears--

KATHERINE (O.S.)
I've failed--

--collectively anxious -- they turn. The blood-soaked mess in the nightgown -- dying -- stares at her baby with empty eyes--

Knowing there's nothing that can be done, Fields leans close to Katherine -- inspecting. Her glassy eyes have gone vacant - - deeply fixed on her crying baby -- Samuel.

She's dead.

Things go quiet--

Both men exchange a look, then begin to lift Katherine's corpse, carrying her toward the inn. Holding Samuel, the Wife follows--

--THE WEDDING RING -- Daniel's ring -- slips from her lifeless finger. Impacting the white powder -- the Wife unknowingly tramples it -- burying it deep in the snow--

BACK TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - BEFORE SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS OF PRESENT

A horrified Madeline weakly scoops up her lifeless Elizabeth, gently rocking her, taking in her essence -- this is the first time seeing her daughter.

Katherine leans down to face her -- deeply bewildered--

KATHERINE
--you -- would do this willingly?

Madeline moist eyes don't leave her baby. Despite what's happened, she's too happy--

MADELINE
Look at her -- she's beautiful. Her
smell--

-a single tear rolls down her cheek.

MADELINE (cont'd)
 You'd deprive me of this? Love is
 sacrifice. I don't want her alone
 in that darkness. She wouldn't know
 how to find me.

Katherine can't comprehend -- Madeline regards this, but it
 doesn't matter--

A twitch -- Madeline arches her neck, GASPS a deep breath,
 her eyes GLOWING with seemingly newfound life -- then breaks
 down, gratefully mouthing a silent prayer--

MADELINE (cont'd)
 --thank you -- thank you--

A cry ECHOES in the wilderness--

AUNT GENA (O.S.)
 God, no--!

At the edge of the clearing, a sweaty exhausted Gena hobbles
 to Madeline, supported by a long stick to crutch her leg. As
 she takes in the horrific sight -- Katherine is gone--

--Gena weakly falls to her knees at Madeline's side --
 regards Elizabeth, then turns to her niece -- sharing a long
 look understanding.

Though dazed, Madeline still smiles -- Gena is baffled by
 this, but quickly works to stop her blood-loss. Madeline
 carelessly waves her away--

MADELINE
 No--

--instead she carefully lowers Elizabeth to Gena's arms. Gena
 can only shake her head--

AUNT GENA
 I-I can't--

The light is leaving Madeline's eyes -- she doesn't mind. Her
 smile is priceless--

MADELINE
 She's breathing -- she's breathing--

Gena blinks twice -- can't believe it. Inspects the newborn --
SHE IS INDEED BREATHING AGAIN!!

--still, she doesn't want to give up on Madeline--

Elizabeth coos in her sleep -- Gena's eyes dart to her.

When she looks up -- Katherine is gone--

Gena looks about--

EXT. WOODS BEHIND INN - MORNING

A beautiful sunrise radiates through the trees, warming the crisp surroundings--

The temporary crutch under her arm pit and Elizabeth carried across her chest, Gena limps back to the inn -- mournful tears streaming down her cheeks--

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth is gently placed in a soft chair, surrounded by a pile of assorted blankets. Gena steps back, regarding the newborn -- in her haze, she has forgotten what to do--

INT. KITCHEN - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

As she washes a crying Elizabeth in the sink--

AUNT GENA (V.O.)
 --need to call her parents -- need
 to phone the police -- need to
 phone Doctor Fields--

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - MOMENTS LATER

Gena tenderly dries a still-crying Elizabeth in her arms -- a light enters the woman's eyes as they are face to face--

--she's slowly falling in love--

--we descend away -- toward the staircase--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--up the empty stairs -- Elizabeth's cries echo throughout -- distant voices -- somewhere car doors slam--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--toward Madeline's closed bedroom door, sunlit on the edges -
- the door opens -- there at the window--

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--stands Madeline, dressed in a virginal white nightgown --
where the figure stood at the beginning--

--finds the nervous younger Madeline below, accompanied by
her parents, greeting her Uncle Samuel and Aunt Gena--

The time loop will continue--

The Younger Madeline regards the inn, then glances up to
Madeline's window and -- stops dead--

Madeline calmly nods -- an unknown understanding passes--

Over her shoulder, a crackling of movement provokes her to
look away--

The crying continues. Madeline steps out--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

--and stops, listening to the reverberated sobs of her
newborn. Smiling gratefully, she feels alive--

Pauses, mid-thought -- sensing the figure shrouded in
darkness at the end of hallway.

She doesn't acknowledge -- she doesn't need to. There's
nothing left to fear -- not anymore--

Madeline takes a confident step forward -- leaving the figure
eternally alone in her darkness--

INT. O'BRIEN - SERIES OF IMAGES - CONTINUOUS

Through the windows, the sun beams warmly throughout the
decayed inn--

INT. LIVING ROOM - O'BRIEN - CONTINUOUS

With her elegant white nightgown trailing, Madeline gracefully wisps past an unsuspecting Gena -- toward her beautiful newborn daughter--

--placing a comforting hand on her forehead, gently kissing it.

She will always be there for her child -- nothing can possibly stop that now--

Katherine's familiar tune ethereally plays from the upstairs parlor--

Elizabeth's eyes gaze curiously -- sending her mother--

Always close -- always loving--

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END