

# **The Resonance**

by  
Fernando Paez

Fernando Paez  
Bludstream Films  
1900 Camino de la Costa, #1  
Redondo Beach, CA 90277  
(415) 578-8700  
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FADE IN

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Range Rover shoots ahead on the dark, two-lane, forested country road. The wind whips the driving rain into the windshield. MELANIE CAMPBELL, 40s, strains to see ahead. She flips the switch on the steering wheel, trying to get a decent radio station.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

Baby, baby, baby! Ooooh, what's the matter? Feeling a little... under the weather? Just let Jimbo, baby, straighten out your umbrella!

"RIDERS ON THE STORM" by the Doors starts up.

Melanie's cell phone chimes.

MELANIE

Hey, Suzie.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Melanie? You sound like you're in a car wash.

MELANIE

Just some shitty weather. It's really coming down.

SUSAN (V.O.)

So how's the movie going? Why aren't you shooting?

MELANIE

Ripley-fucking-Harrington threw a shit fit and stormed off the set. We can't do anything without the big baby. Anyhow I had some time off and since I was so close by...

SUSAN (V.O.)

What? Oh, no. Come on! I thought we agreed you'd stay away from there!

MELANIE

Sorry.

SUSAN (V.O.)

You went to Bramfield? To see Aunt Ruth?

MELANIE

Yeah. She's, you know, basically the same. Still won't talk to me. Just shuts her eyes and looks away.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I never understood that. I mean, Aunt Ruth wasn't always the nicest person, but she wasn't a mute, either. She let me have it a few times, I can tell you that!

MELANIE

You and a bunch of other kids, too. But that Bramfield! God, that place is so awful! There's all these sickos just staring at you.

SUSAN (V.O.)

You mean like your fans?

MELANIE

You're hilarious.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Girl, we talked about this. You promised you'd never go there!

MELANIE

Honestly, I couldn't wait to leave! Sue, please promise me you'll never put me in a place like that.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I may not have a choice.

MELANIE

Don't fuck around, Sue!

SUSAN (V.O.)

I mean, I guess I don't understand why, you know, after what happened.

Melanie sighs.

MELANIE

You're right. And, I don't know, there was something else, this really weird dude.

SUSAN (V.O.)

What?

MELANIE

At first I thought he was one of the doctors, but then I saw he was wearing slippers so he, like, had to be an inmate. I was sitting in the waiting room and next thing I know he comes over and just plops down next to me.

SUSAN (V.O.)

What? Holy shit!

MELANIE

I know it sounds nuts but he scared the crap out of me. Then he said, "Melanie Campbell. Its so nice to finally meet you."

SUSAN (V.O.)

What? How did he know your name?

MELANIE

You know I'm kind of famous, right?

Susan laughs.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I started to say what the fuck but he, he fucking shushed me! Put a dirty finger up to his mouth to shut me up, the prick! Then he just walked away before I could say anything.

Melanie starts sobbing, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I know. I know. I should never have gone there. What was I thinking?

SUSAN (V.O.)

You can't keep torturing yourself like this, Mel! It's been over ten years.

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Melanie keeps crying. SUSAN CAMPBELL, late 20s, holds the phone to her chest, tears streaming down her face.

MELANIE (V.O.)

Come on, Sue. Please don't cry! I didn't call you to ruin your night.

SUSAN

I just... I love you, Mel. I miss you so much.

MELANIE (V.O.)

I promise I'll come see you once I'm finished with this movie. We'll, I don't know, we'll fly to Costa Rica and just hang out, drink margaritas on the beach all day.

Susan snuffles and blows her nose.

SUSAN

That sounds really good.

MELANIE (V.O.)

Listen, I'm going to pull over and get some coffee. I've been driving like three hours straight and I'm starting to nod off. Oh wait, I see a sign down the road. "Billie Jean's Coffee Shoppe".

SUSAN

Call me when you get back, okay?

MELANIE (V.O.)

I promise.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Melanie pulls in next to an old black pickup. She gets out and hurries through the pouring rain, trying to avoid the bigger puddles.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

She stands dripping near the cash register. Melanie squints in the stark brightness. Several customers, country types, turn around and stare at her.

Melanie sits at an empty table. A chunky WAITRESS in a uniform walks over slowly.

WAITRESS

Coffee?

MELANIE

Yes, please.

Melanie grabs the waitress by the arm. She looks down at Melanie's hand, popping her gum and frowning. Melanie quickly snatches her hand back.

MELANIE (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. Where's the restroom?

WAITRESS  
Back by the phones.

She gets up and walks to the restroom.

INT. RESTROOM - NIGHT

The toilet stall door is wide open in the empty restroom as Melanie walks in. She splashes cold water on her face, hastily applies some lip gloss, then pats her hair into place.

Suddenly she hears a sharp CRACK behind her. With a gasp she spins around.

The door to the toilet stall is now shut.

MELANIE  
Hello? Who's there?

She hears faint scratching, and muted whispers from within the stall.

Freaked out, Melanie backs away quickly and hits the wall. The sounds become louder. Slowly, the door to the toilet stall creaks open.

She peers in and sees it is empty.

Melanie looks up at the window. The walls are sooty and dirty. She sees what look like claw marks. Not taking her eyes off the stall, she backs out into the diner.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Melanie stumbles down the aisle, holding on to the booths. The place has emptied out. The waitress stops her before she can leave.

WAITRESS  
Aren't you forgetting something?

Melanie fishes in her purse.

MELANIE  
All I've got is a twenty.

The waitress, still popping her gum, gives her a dirty look and snaps open the register.

Melanie looks out the picture window. The rain splashes down the side.

She watches as a whole family, including mother, father and two kids, get into an old blue station wagon and take off.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Do you know of any decent motels around here?

WAITRESS

Keep on driving South about ten miles. It ain't the Ritz, but it ain't got no fleas, neither.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Melanie pulls out onto the country road. It is still pouring rain. She looks in the rear view mirror and as she pulls farther away, the diner seems to disappear.

A car horn BLARES at her and she snaps to attention, high beams flashing over her startled face. Melanie cries out and swerves at the last second, avoiding a collision.

She exhales with relief, shaking her head. She pulls a cigarette out of her purse and lights it.

Melanie strains to see the dark road ahead. The wind pushes the big car around and she fights to stay in control.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRAMFIELD PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The five story building sits atop a grassy knoll, surrounded by massive oak trees. The storm rages, wind and rain pounding the walls. Lightning flashes across the clouds.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD walks the halls, checking the doors. His footsteps echo on the linoleum. The hospital is dark and quiet. The silence is shattered by distant screams, laughter, and wailing.

INT. REC HALL - NIGHT

The room is empty. A ping-pong table sits unused near the tiny TV welded inside a cage in a high corner.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lining the sides are doors with heavy locking mechanisms on the front and metal slits for windows.

CRANSTON BARNETT, 30s, lanky, wearing hospital scrubs, a knit cap and a surgical mask, walks with a tray, softly whistling an old tune.

DR. ERNEST WATTS, 50s, passes and nods at him.

DR. WATTS

Hello, Cranston. Doing your rounds, I see.

BARNETT

Yes, Dr. Watts. I'm almost done.

Watts, preoccupied, just nods and walks by. Barnett grabs him by the arm.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you.

DR. WATTS

Can it wait?

BARNETT

I'll come by your office in an hour.

Dr. Watts looks down at the floor and nods, defeated.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Inside is a small, solitary hospital bed. The lightning flashes blue through the high, barred window.

An emaciated old woman, AUNT RUTH, lies on the bed. A shadow falls on her and she squirms. Barnett is standing close but she can't see his face through the mask.

BARNETT

Take it easy, Ruth. It's just me.

Ruth struggles to speak.

AUNT RUTH

Go away! Go away!

BARNETT

It's time for your pills.

AUNT RUTH

No! I don't want them! Go away!

BARNETT

Don't make such a fuss. You don't want them to come in here and strap you down again, do you?

Ruth calms down and squints at him.

AUNT RUTH  
Is that you, Cranston? I can't see  
very well. Hand me my glasses!

BARNETT  
Yes, Ruth, its me, Cranston. Here  
you go.

She puts on her glasses and squints at him, a frightened  
look crosses her eyes.

AUNT RUTH  
You're not Cranston!

BARNETT  
Oh, but I am.

AUNT RUTH  
You... you've changed. What  
happened? Did you get a haircut?

BARNETT  
I'm exactly the same as I was  
yesterday. Don't you remember?

AUNT RUTH  
I... I don't. I don't remember  
anything.

BARNETT  
That's not exactly true, is it?

AUNT RUTH  
Wait, I remember... I remember  
putting the boy to bed.

BARNETT  
That's all? Don't you remember? You  
did something bad, Ruth. Very, very  
bad.

AUNT RUTH  
No! No!

Ruth is sobbing now.

BARNETT  
Did you hear the screaming, Ruth?  
Hmmm?

AUNT RUTH  
No... no...

Barnett rears back and slaps her hard with his bare hand.

Ruth recoils and Barnett picks her up by the lapels and starts shaking her. He looks up at the ceiling, eyes rolling back in their sockets. He begins to chant and moan, louder and louder.

Ruth grabs her head, covering her ears, shaking and crying.

AUNT RUTH (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

There is a sudden WHOOSH, a sucking of the air within the room. The old woman's white hair begins rising, as if from static electricity.

A vibration starts rattling her thin bones, faster and faster, until her entire frame is buzzing.

Suddenly, the vibrations stop and she opens her eyes and jolts forward in a mighty spasm, a muffled scream caught in her throat.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Melanie steers through the dense rainfall and fog, straining to see the road ahead.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

That was the late, great King of  
Rock 'n roll himself, Elvis Pre....

Suddenly the radio crackles with static, louder and louder. In the distance, behind the static, Melanie hears a chorus of disembodied voices, chanting, screaming and moaning all at the same time. Melanie leans over and turns the knob.

The sounds are replaced with an ominously deep bass vibration that gradually increases in volume, until Melanie screams and puts a hand over her right ear. She slams her palm into the radio panel.

Suddenly the noises stop.

Melanie breathes hard, shaking.

She looks up--

--and slams on the brakes as a small, BLURRY FIGURE darts across the road in front of her vehicle.

She screams. The car goes into a wild spin on the slick pavement and bounces off the road, up an embankment, slamming passenger-side into a small tree. The airbag deploys and slams into her face.

Melanie sits there in shock, trembling. She presses the ignition but the engine won't start.

MELANIE

Shit! Shit!

The rain lets up slightly and Melanie looks out the cracked windshield. She sees a faint light over the rise of the hill through the fog.

She takes out her phone.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Sue? Yeah. You won't believe it... I just... I just fucking totaled my rental car. On a fucking tree! Goddammit!

SUSAN (V.O.)

Oh my God! Are you hurt?

MELANIE

No. I mean, I'm okay, I think. I may have cut my forehead on the airbag.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Mel, just stay right there! Call a tow truck!

Loud static obscures the call.

MELANIE

Hello? You're breaking up!

SUSAN (V.O.)

What's that? I can't hear you!

MELANIE

Listen, I'm losing you! I think there's a house over the next hill. I can't really tell from here. I'm just going to go and see if I can get some help. Hello? Hello? Shit!

Melanie's phone dies. She throws it in her purse along with a charger and climbs out of the car.

The entire passenger door is caved in and the rear right tire is flat.

The rain lets up, and Melanie walks up the slippery hill towards a white two-story wooden house. The lights are on and the back end of a blue station wagon peeks out from around the far side.

As she approaches Melanie hears faint music and laughter. The front door is partially open, revealing a lighted foyer.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello?

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

The clouds burst open, pouring rain on the veranda. Melanie quickly steps through into the house.

She hears muted laughter and distant footsteps. She knocks again on the door behind her.

MELANIE

Hello? I need some help please.  
Anyone home?

She closes the door and walks through the dining room.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

The bright kitchen is empty.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Okay.

Melanie walks back into the living room and follows the phone line into the den. She finds the end of the line, unattached to a phone.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Christ.

Melanie sits down at the desk and pulls at the middle drawers, all locked.

She plugs in her phone charger and pulls things out of the boxes on the desk. There are some letters. A picture falls from one of the envelopes. It is black and white, with frayed edges.

In the picture a woman sits on a park bench with a tall, thin, man standing behind, and a ten year old boy next to her. Mel squints to look at it.

Suddenly, a loud CRACK sounds in the night and the lights go off. Melanie reels in shock, then exhales as the lights flicker and come back on. She pulls the charger out of the wall and tries to call again with no luck.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

She jams the phone back in her purse, then puts her head in her hands. Melanie rubs her eyes and yawns. She rests her head on the desk, then quickly pulls back up, trying to stay awake.

Almost as soon as she puts her head back down, she passes out in the chair.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

A loud CLAP of thunder in the night causes Melanie to instantly jump-start awake.

The room is pitch black. Melanie holds her breath as she tries to get her bearings.

The only sound in the room is Melanie's hard breathing. Even the rain has let up outside and she suddenly remembers where she is.

The house. The wreck.

She gets up too quickly, knocking some papers and a stapler from the desk onto the floor with a loud crash.

Suddenly she freezes as she hears steps on the floor above her, the sound of running feet.

There is a wind chime tinkling outside on the porch and she can hear it clearly. She walks slowly through the dark room, afraid of hitting something, her hand stretched out in front of her, searching for the wall and the light switch.

Her hand finds the switch but she clicks it up and down unsuccessfully several times. Disgusted, Melanie walks back into the front room, where the moonlight from the window makes it easier for her to navigate.

Once again she stops cold as she hears distant running sounds, echoing softly.

A cloud passes over the moon and the room suddenly becomes darker. She stands still, looking into the corner, watching the shadows shift.

As the clouds pass and the moonlight returns, she thinks she sees the shadow or shape of a person, just for a split second, walking into the kitchen.

She panics and heads quickly for the front door.

But at the last second she looks out and realizes that there is zero visibility in the front yard.

The lawn that stretches out over the hill, at the bottom of which is her wrecked car, looks like a gaping black chasm.

Melanie gets closer to the big picture window, trying to adjust her vision to the inky blackness outside. Around the tree line she sees shadows and eerily shifting black shapes.

With a shudder, Melanie slowly backs away into the front room. She backs straight into the bannister of the staircase.

She sees a flicker of candlelight at the top of the stairs. Relief pours over her, realizing that she is not alone in the house.

MELANIE

Oh, thank God.

Melanie goes up. She turns the corner of the staircase and up the last short flight, onto the second floor.

A long hallway stretches out in both directions, several doors to either side. To her right, she sees an open door and the glow of light.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello? Is anyone here?

INT. HOUSE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Melanie sees blue tile on the floor and a mirror over the washstand. On the counter top is a small votive candle in a glass dish.

Beyond is a bathtub with the curtains drawn tight, the gentle sounds of lapping water, a subtle sensation of movement behind the opaque plastic curtain. Melanie approaches slowly, her hand reaching for the edge.

MELANIE

Hello?

Melanie pulls back the curtain and looks inside the tub. Her head snaps back, a muffled groan escapes her lips, and she begins shaking her head in denial, grasping the curtain and using it to steady her suddenly useless legs.

Inside the white tub is the burned corpse of a small CHILD, floating face down in the water, the flesh blue, black, charred, and bloated, bobbing in the gray, murky water.

Melanie stares, transfixed, horrified.

A sudden strong puff of wind blows out the candle flame, leaving the room a solid black. Melanie just stands there breathing hard, whimpering.

She tries to feel her way out, but she slips on the soaking floor and goes down hard, cracking her arm and head painfully on the washstand before hitting the linoleum.

Dazed, she moans in agony and lays on her stomach, blood on her lips and chin. She grunts and hoists herself up on all fours, shaken and weak with fear.

Melanie freezes as she hears movement behind her, coming from the tub. Trembling, she slowly turns her head to look back. She holds her breath.

Something grabs the curtain from inside, snapping it taut. Melanie shrieks!

MELANIE (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

Melanie wails in panic and scrambles to get up, slipping on the wet floor, the sounds behind her getting louder. She pulls herself up, grabbing onto the countertop.

Sobbing and shaking, but fighting to stay calm, Melanie turns to the door, which swings forward and slams shut. She fumbles desperately with the knob, trying to wrest it open and finally does.

She looks back and sees the dead infant crawl over the edge of the tub and she screams again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Melanie stumbles blindly down the dark hallway, frantically searching for the stairway that she knows is somewhere close by to the left. She keeps running, feeling in front of her in the darkness with her flailing arms, but somehow, there are no stairs, just an endless hallway.

Melanie stops and wails, sobbing hysterically.

MELANIE

Help me! Help! Oh, my God! Help!

Melanie hears a shuffling behind her. Slowly, quaking, she looks back over her shoulder and realizes that something is in the hallway about twenty feet away.

Something small and dripping and dark, and coming straight at her.

She shakes her head, and feels her legs give way beneath her.

As she slumps down, she tries to brace against the wall and crab-walk back down the corridor, not daring to take her eyes off the thing that is slowly coming for her.

Melanie touches the round knob of a door to her right and behind her. Half-expecting the door to be locked, Melanie tries to turn the knob but her hands are too sweaty, and she can't get a grip.

The dead infant continues to walk towards her through the darkness, coming closer and closer. Melanie wipes her hand on her skirt and manages to turn the stubborn knob.

Suddenly, the infant stops. Melanie holds her breath. The thing looks around and around. It stops, looking straight at her in the dark. It opens its mouth and starts wailing, crying in an unnaturally loud voice. The crying begins plaintively but gets progressively more angry and aggressive. It starts running at her, screeching.

She pulls the door open behind her and quickly steps into the room. She slams the door shut just as the thing reaches for her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

She sits with her back against the wall. All is quiet and she can hear herself breathing hard.

Silence.

Suddenly there is a powerful, hammering pounding against the door. Boom! Boom! Boom!

Melanie shrieks and throws her weight against the door. Just as suddenly as it started, the pounding stops.

Melanie stands there pushing the door shut with her body.

All of a sudden, the thing smashes violently into the door, causing it to jerk backward into Melanie.

She lets loose a sobbing wail but keeps pushing, crying and swearing. Melanie manages to find the latch and secures it, turns the lock and backs quickly away from the door.

The pounding continues for several seconds, then she hears small footsteps running away down the hall.

The shock hits Melanie, and she shakes uncontrollably. She hugs her body with both hands until eventually, she starts giggling hysterically.

She bites her finger, hides her head in her hands, and backs into a corner.

Melanie cringes, turns and realizes that she is inside of a large bedroom, a big four-poster bed dominating the room.

She tries the light switch and a dim lamp goes on in the corner. She sees that there is an old landline phone on the table under the lamp. Relieved, she picks up the receiver with a trembling hand and gets a dial tone.

MELANIE

Thank God!

She dials 911. A dispatcher picks up on the other side.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

911. Please state the nature of your emergency.

MELANIE

Oh my God! Oh my God! Thank you God! Please, please, I... I need some help. Right away! Oh God. Please! Please hurry!

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Calm down, ma'am. Tell me where you are.

MELANIE

I... I don't know exactly. Some country road off route 50. A big, white house on a hill. Wait... my car is in a ditch at the bottom of the hill. I don't know the address, but they can't miss it. It's a new black Range Rover. Hello? Hello? Please, someone, something, is trying to kill me! Do you understand? Hello? Hello? Please! Oh God! No! No! Fuck! Fuck!

Melanie clangs the phone back down in frustration when suddenly she hears a voice behind her.

BOY (O.S.)

Mama?

The hairs on the back of her neck stand up. She turns from the wall slowly. A little boy wearing pajamas stands backlit in the doorway of the adjoining room.

BOY (CONT'D)

Mama?

Melanie puts her arms out slowly, trembling. She takes a tentative step towards the boy.

MELANIE

Joey? Joey, baby, is that you?

She stops short, her hands fluttering up to her mouth, then Melanie collapses in a heap on the carpet, unconscious.

CUT TO:

INT. L.A. FLOWER MARKET - DAY

Susan stands next in line, holding flowers to purchase from MR. KIM, 40ish, the Korean man who runs the stand.

All around her, a hundred other vendors and buyers are milling about, shouting, talking, and laughing. There is a controlled frenzy in the warehouse-sized room.

A MEXICAN MAN, 40s, in a white cowboy hat, pushes ahead of her. Holding a wad of cash in one hand and a huge amount of flowers in the other, he jostles Susan and tries to push past to the merchant.

COWBOY

*Cuanto por estas? Cuanto dice?  
Tambien tengo estas aqui.*

MR. KIM

*Cuarenta y seis dolares. Forty-six  
bucks. Only for you, amigo.*

Susan puts her head down and shoves her way back in, defiantly carving out her territory.

SUSAN

I was here first, *amigo!* Mr. Kim!  
Mr. Kim!

MR. KIM

Oh! Susan! How are you today! How's  
your sister?

SUSAN

Great, Mr. Kim. Thank you very much  
for asking. How much is that----

The Mexican guy shoves her from behind, cutting her off and pushing her forward into Mr. Kim. Susan turns around and confronts the man, who sneers at her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me? We have something called  
manners around here!

She turns back to Mr. Kim who now has a frown on his face.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh. No. That's not what I meant.  
I'm not a racist. Oh God, no! I  
mean, you know, um, my God, Mr.  
Kim, you look fabulous today. Are  
you working out again?

MR. KIM

Hundred eighty dollar.

SUSAN

Come on, Mr. Kim!

MR. KIM

Sorry, Susan. I make nothing on  
this deal. Price one eighty, take  
it or leave.

SUSAN

Please, Mr. Kim! All I got is one  
twenty. Half of them are opening  
already for God sakes!

MR. KIM

No can do. Now, hurry up and pay or  
get out of the way.

(to the Mexican)

Okay, *Señor, estas listo?*

SUSAN

Alright! Alright! Mr. Kim. Alright.  
Jesus Christ, you're freaking  
tough!

Mr. Kim laughs and Susan reaches into her pocket. She pulls  
out two brand new hundred dollar bills, kisses them goodbye  
and hands them over.

The little man snatches them and gives her twenty back. She  
turns around, pissed but happy.

Susan, holding the flowers up high, backs through the  
crowd, making sure to jab the Mexican cowboy in the ribs on  
the way out. Mr. Kim waves at her.

MR. KIM

(to the Mexican)

She Susan. Favorite customer. Her  
sister, *hermana, es* big movie star,  
very famous. *Muy famosa.*

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susan struggles getting into her apartment, holding the door open with her foot while carrying all the flowers. As soon as she walks through the door, her cell phone rings.

SUSAN

Okay. Hold on. I'm coming! Don't hang up, damn it!

She stubs her toe on the edge of the couch and drops the flowers.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Owwwww!

Susan fishes her phone out of her purse and hits the speaker button.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hello?

Nothing.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Shit!

Susan slams the phone down on the counter. She limps into the bathroom, unzipping her pants as she goes.

A few seconds later the phone rings again. Susan comes running out of the bathroom, pulling up her pants.

She lunges at the phone, landing on the couch.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

This is Susan. Hello?

On the other end of the line is silence and she clicks to hang up. Susan doesn't immediately hear the dial tone so she pulls the phone back up to her ear.

The hair on the back of her neck stands on end as she hears the strange far-off muted strains of many voices screaming and wailing.

Somewhere at the bottom of that noise Susan thinks she hears... Melanie, far away but trying to be heard. Susan holds the phone away from her ear, then yells into it.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hello? Mel? Is that you, Sis?

Susan strains to hear and finally Melanie's voice comes to the front.

MELANIE (V.O.)

Susan? Oh, thank God! Help me, Sue!  
You have to help me!

SUSAN

Calm down, Mel! Tell me where you  
are, I'll come get you, I promise!

She hears more voices and static, with Melanie's pleading voice in the background, breaking up.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hello? Mel?

MELANIE (V.O.)

I can barely hear you, Sue. Listen,  
I'm in some house somewhere off  
that country road I crashed on.  
Sue, there's something here with  
me, some *thing*, and its not letting  
me leave!

Melanie screams.

SUSAN

What is it? Are you alright? Oh, my  
God! Call 911!

MELANIE (V.O.)

I tried! This... this... it won't  
let me talk... I can't explain it!  
Hurry, Sue!

Melanie sounds like she's fighting off something, yelling and screaming in the background.

Susan distinctly hears crying now. But in place of her sister's wailing, she hears the laughter of a child.

Suddenly, the phone goes dead. She puts the phone back down on the night stand and backs away, shaken. Susan tries calling back but gets no answer. The phone goes straight to voicemail every time. She grabs her bag and runs out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILLS POLICE STATION - DAY

Susan sits in the waiting room. Every few minutes she tries calling Melanie's phone, with no luck. A young black female cop, OFFICER CULL, comes out carrying a tablet.

OFFICER CULL

Susan Campbell? I'm Officer Cull.

Susan stands up and is led into the station.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Susan sits at a green desk. Officer Cull sits across from her on her laptop.

OFFICER CULL

So, let me get this straight. Your sister, Melanie Campbell, is in some house somewhere around the Napa area. She told you that she's somehow trapped in this house with some sort of maniac or monster or something. Is that right?

SUSAN

No. I mean, yes. I know it sounds crazy.

OFFICER CULL

Does your sister take drugs?

SUSAN

What? No. Never!

OFFICER CULL

I don't mean just recreational drugs. Any prescriptions?

SUSAN

Not that I know of. After her son died she was taking some anti-depressants for a while. But that was years ago.

OFFICER CULL

Uh-huh. Do you know if she has any friends who live in that area?

SUSAN

I don't know. Its possible, I suppose. We grew up not too far from there. But, like I told you, she called me last night. She wrecked her car and went looking for help at some house, she said. I guess she's probably still there.

OFFICER CULL

But you have no idea *where* this house is?

SUSAN

No. All she said is it was off some country road near Healdsburg.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

But it can't be too hard to find, can it? Can't you guys just track down her cell signal?

OFFICER CULL

Maybe, but that could take weeks and we'd have to get a court order. Has she missed work or disappeared before?

SUSAN

No. Never. She takes pride in never being late.

OFFICER CULL

No disrespect, and I know you're her sister and all but there's not much we can do from down here. I think its best to get the locals on it.

SUSAN

Can you do that?

OFFICER CULL

Well, maybe, but there's so little to go on, don't you see? There's no location and not that much time has passed yet. But yes, I suppose we can make a few calls. What's your schedule like?

SUSAN

For this, I'm wide open. Why?

OFFICER CULL

If it were my sister, I'd get up there as soon as possible. Talk to the local sheriff and dig around some. Just some friendly advice. If she's in some kind of danger, every minute counts.

SUSAN

Yes. You're right. I'll get going, then. Thank you.

OFFICER CULL

Here's my card. Keep me in the loop, please. I'll call you if we can get those coordinates.

SUSAN

Thank you.

OFFICER CULL

And, miss. Please stay safe. If you find anything, call us or call the sheriff. Don't try to be a hero.

Susan shakes hands and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - DAY

The plane taxis on the busy tarmac.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Susan sits in the window seat, sunglasses and headphones on, a mask covering her face. She looks out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The rented car shoots through the vineyard roads.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Susan pulls into one of the empty parking spaces in front of the old stone Civic Center building. She looks at herself in the mirror then steps out of the car.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

Susan sits alone in the waiting area. She looks around and sees pictures of the big Sheriff, surrounded by deputies in one, a little league team in another.

A young man in uniform, DEPUTY JESSE TORRES, 20s, sits at a desk typing on a laptop.

SHERIFF BARKER, 40s, walks in and shakes hands with Susan.

SHERIFF BARKER

Miss Campbell. I'm Sheriff George Barker. Nice to meet you. I'm very sorry to hear about your sister. She's a fine actress. Would you like a cup of coffee? Some water?

He turns to the deputy.

SHERIFF

Torres, get the lady a bottle of water.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Barker sits down behind his old desk and points to a photo where he is standing next to a heavysset woman.

SHERIFF

My wife Bonnie. Passed two years ago. Breast cancer.

SUSAN

I'm sorry.

SHERIFF

Thanks. Anyhow, I did some checking and just like you said, your sister did in fact leave the movie set two days ago. She was driving a rented Range Rover. Haven't checked with Bramfield yet.

Susan, pissed, holds in her anger. She changes tack.

SUSAN

So what about this Billie Jean's Coffee Shoppe place she mentioned?

SHERIFF

Are you sure, she said "Billie Jean's"?

Susan nods.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Well, about that... there used to be a diner with that name. Long time ago.

SUSAN

I'm not following.

SHERIFF

Burned to the ground about twenty years ago. It was in all the papers. People died. Very tragic.

SUSAN

But Melanie said she stopped there.

SHERIFF

Must have been a mistake. That place is long gone.

SUSAN

But she told me--

SHERIFF

Excuse me, Miss Campbell, was your sister on any drugs or medications?

SUSAN

No! Never!

SHERIFF

Well, you know, movie biz...

SUSAN

Listen Sheriff, we're locals. Grew up not ten miles from here in Healdsburg.

SHERIFF

No offense, but it's no secret those folks know how to party, if you catch my drift.

SUSAN

Holy shit, sheriff! My sister does not do drugs, and she doesn't "party", whatever the hell that's supposed to mean! Jesus Christ! I thought all you wine country people were liberals?

In the next room, the Deputy coughs loudly, making choking sounds.

SHERIFF

(clearing his throat)

Look, I'm sure she'll turn up soon. Maybe she's just taking a break.

SUSAN

Uh-uh. No way. She would never miss work without calling. No, I heard her, loud and clear! She's in trouble!

SHERIFF

Then I don't know what to tell you except that we'll keep looking. We've put out an alert.

Susan blows her top. She stands up and shouts.

SUSAN

An alert? Why don't you just get off your ass and help me find her, Goddammit!

SHERIFF

Lower your voice!

SUSAN

I will not lower my voice! I'm going to keep yelling until you lazy motherfuckers start doing something! Fuck this! Let me talk to your superior!

SHERIFF

This isn't Walmart. I make all the calls around here! Now calm down or I'll toss you out myself!

Susan fumes and sits down. She puts her head in her hands and starts crying.

The Sheriff sees her cry and softens up. He hands her a tissue. Susan blows her nose and snuffles, calmer now but still upset.

SUSAN

What about the house?

SHERIFF

Without knowing which road she was on, hell, it's damn near impossible. Do you know how many back roads there are around here?

The Deputy pokes his head in.

DEPUTY

Excuse me, Sheriff, Mayor's on line three. Says it's urgent.

SHERIFF

Sorry Miss Campbell, I have to take this. We'll call you if we find anything. I promise.

Susan, angry, stares at the Sheriff, who turns his back on her and laughs softly into the phone. Susan gets up and stomps out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Susan sits at the wheel of her rented car, frustrated and angry. She grips the wheel hard and turns to her left where...

Deputy Torres is standing, leaning in towards the window. Susan gasps and jumps a little.

TORRES

Sorry.

SUSAN

What the fuck!

TORRES

Sorry. I wanted to see if you're okay. I'm Jesse, by the way.

He reaches out and shakes her hand.

SUSAN

So what is it, Deputy Torres?

TORRES

I just, well, I thought I could help.

SUSAN

You heard Sheriff good-ole-boy in there. What a fucking asshole!

Torres laughs but gets serious when he sees Susan is not in the mood.

TORRES

Yeah, well, he doesn't know everything. Listen, I can't really talk here. Can you meet me after my shift?

SUSAN

Seriously? Are you trying to hit on me? I'm in no mood, Jesse.

TORRES

No. Of course, not. I just want to help you, you know, find your sister.

Susan looks at him. He seems sincere in a kind of puppy-dog, innocent way. She almost feels sorry for him.

SUSAN

Okay. Where?

TORRES

You're at the Stardust, right? I'll come by and get you.

Torres walks quickly away from Susan's car towards the station. Susan watches him go in, then drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. BRAMFIELD PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. Watts walks through the corridor reading a file, passing interns wheeling patients.

INT. DR. WATTS' OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Watts sits behind his desk, working on his computer. Hospital Administrator MARGARET INGRAM, a severe woman in her 50s, comes in and closes the door behind her. She sits in a chair and gestures with her head towards the liquor cabinet.

Watts sighs and gets up. He opens the cabinet, taking out two glasses and a bottle of scotch. He hands a drink to Ingram.

INGRAM

How long have you been working here, Ernie?

WATTS

Let's see, close to 30 years now. Most of my adult life.

INGRAM

You know what's happening, right?

WATTS

Yes, Margaret. It's been made quite clear. There's no more money. We'll just have to make some cuts.

INGRAM

It's worse than that.

Ingram nods and puts a folder in front of Watts.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

We have two months, maybe three at most before they pull the plug.

WATTS

What? Close the hospital?

INGRAM

This is coming from Sacramento. And its not just Bramfield.

Watts sighs and shifts in his seat, looking out the window. Storm clouds are gathering.

WATTS

Looks like we're in for some weather.

INGRAM

We need it, what with the mega-drought and the fires.

Watts turns around, serious. He takes a long drink.

WATTS

What the hell happened to us, Margaret? I know, I know... its the economy, its not us, blah, blah, blah.

INGRAM

You were going to retire soon, anyhow. Me, I'm totally fucked.

Ingram walks behind Watts and picks up a framed photo of a teenaged girl wearing soccer shorts, smiling at the camera in shiny braces.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

Your girl looks sweet.

WATTS

Chrissie. The light of my life. After her mother passed away, she's all I have left.

INGRAM

You're lucky to have her.

Watts nods, distracted. He rubs his forehead.

WATTS

What are they going to do with the inmates?

INGRAM

I imagine the worst ones will go to real prisons. Some to private care. Some will just be released.

WATTS

Uh-huh. Barnett came to see me.

INGRAM

Yeah? Well, he's definitely going to San Quentin if I have anything to say about it!

WATTS

Yeah, you know, Margaret, he's been here a long time. Well-behaved. Well-adjusted. He even helps out a lot since our budget was slashed.

INGRAM

No way, Ernie! Stop right there!  
You know what that monster did!

WATTS

I know but, what if I... hear me  
out... what if I take full  
responsibility?

INGRAM

What? I can't believe you're even  
thinking of letting that maniac  
out!

Watts looks up, wringing his hands, looking down at his  
daughter's picture.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

Wait a minute! He's threatened you  
somehow! You're scared of Barnett!  
But that's all the more reason to  
make sure he's locked up!

WATTS

No, Margaret, no. You don't get it!  
You don't know what he's capable  
of! He's different. He has gifts...  
supernatural powers, even!

INGRAM

That's ridiculous.

WATTS

Yeah, you keep thinking that. See  
where that takes you. Why are you  
choosing to ignore this, Margaret?  
You know he can control things!  
With his mind! You've seen it  
yourself!

INGRAM

Do you even hear yourself? I'm  
telling you as a friend, Ernie,  
don't ever repeat that to anyone  
else. Ever! You hear me?

WATTS

I've tried to keep him under  
control. With pills, mostly. And  
it's worked so far. He's calmer,  
less violent. We were making real  
progress! And now, this?

Ingram walks around and pours herself another drink.

WATTS (CONT'D)

Margaret, please, listen to me. I don't fear for myself. But my family... my daughter.

Ingram gets angry and downs her drink, getting up quickly.

INGRAM

I'm sorry, Dr. Watts, but there's no way I'm signing off on that! Not with that monster. That fucker is pure evil and he deserves to rot! Now, don't push me!

She slams the door on her way out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Deputy Torres knocks on Susan's door, looks at his watch, then walks back to the car. Susan walks towards him from the lobby, munching on a bag of chips.

SUSAN

Just went to get a few snacks. Been waiting long?

TORRES

Just a few minutes. I was just about to leave and come back later.

SUSAN

You want to come in?

Torres nods and they enter the room.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Torres takes a look around the room and notices that it's very neat, nothing out of place. He takes a head shot of Melanie's from the bureau mirror.

TORRES

She's very beautiful.

SUSAN

Mel was the "it" girl. Once upon a time, that is. Luckily she doesn't have to rely on beauty anymore to get parts.

TORRES

Are you two close?

SUSAN

I don't see her much. But yeah, we're pretty tight. We usually talk two or three times a week, no matter how busy we are, we make time.

TORRES

Has, uh, this happened before?

SUSAN

Well, about five years ago she checked into rehab and we didn't find out for a few days.

TORRES

You told the Sheriff she didn't do drugs.

Susan gets angry.

SUSAN

She doesn't! Look, Melanie's been cold sober since that last time and anyway, she would never leave in the middle of a job! It's just not like her.

Torres stares at the picture in his hand.

TORRES

You know, I've seen several of her movies. "Stone Canyon", "Adelia". She seemed, I don't know, turbulent? You know what I mean? One minute super nice, the next, bam! What's she like in real life?

SUSAN

She's... what can I say, she's spoiled as hell. It comes from having your ass kissed twenty-four-seven. All that money doesn't help, either.

TORRES

Envy much?

SUSAN

What? Nah, I like having my own business. I'll never get rich but hey, I'm pretty low maintenance.

Susan laughs and changes subjects.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

So, Deputy Torres, what's your angle in all this? I know you're not trying to score points with that asshole boss of yours. Or wait a minute, that's it, right?

TORRES

Well...

SUSAN

Shit, I'm pretty fucking good at this, huh? Let me guess, Sheriff Shithead won't let you work any cases? Am I getting warm?

TORRES

Wow. You're really something. What if I just wanted to help? I've been in these parts a long time. I... I know some things.

SUSAN

Oh yeah, like what?

TORRES

Not here.

Torres quietly turns and puts Melanie's picture back up on the mirror.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Let's take a drive.

CUT TO:

INT. MELANIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Torres drives Susan's rented Taurus. He takes them out of the town limits and soon they are on the dark country roads.

EXT. ABANDONED LOT - NIGHT

Torres pulls the car into an abandoned lot. An old, burned-out ruin of a building stands in one corner, nearly covered by trees. Torres gets out of the car.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP RUINS - NIGHT

They walk around the place and Susan folds her arms over her chest, trying to ward off the chill. The windows are boarded over, there's trash and out-of-control weeds and tagger graffiti on the charred walls. Torres leads the way around back, using his flashlight. He pries open the back door and walks in.

Scurrying sounds in the dark startle Susan.

SUSAN

What's that?

TORRES

Who knows. Probably some possums,  
or skunks. Maybe rats.

SUSAN

It smells awful in here.

TORRES

The fire gutted the inside pretty  
bad. You can see where the booths  
melted.

Susan realizes they are in what used to be a diner.

SUSAN

Wait a minute. This is...

TORRES

Billie Jean's.

Susan hears a NOISE from the other side. Definitely louder  
than a rat.

SUSAN

Let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN'S CAR - NIGHT

They sit in the car, smoking and trying to get warm,  
putting their hands up to the heater.

SUSAN

What the hell happened in there?

TORRES

There was this kid. Cranston  
Barnett. Ever heard of him? Nah,  
why should you have?

Torres takes a drag from his cigarette.

TORRES (CONT'D)

About twenty years ago, this  
Barnett, well he was just another  
kid around here, kept to himself  
mostly. Came from an immigrant  
family. People say he was... you  
know, abused.

SUSAN

By who? His family? Are they still around?

TORRES

Negative. Died years ago. They were from Hungary or Romania. Some place like that.

SUSAN

How do you know all this?

TORRES

I'm kind of a geek. I looked up old newspaper articles. Anyhow, one day, no one really knows why, Barnett burned the place down. With everyone in it.

SUSAN

Holy shit! But how? Why didn't they get out?

TORRES

Well, that's the head-scratcher. The doors were unlocked, but somehow the people couldn't open them, no matter how hard they tried.

SUSAN

Oh my God! What about the windows?

TORRES

Wouldn't open. Some of the men even shot the windows, but still the damn things wouldn't break.

SUSAN

Like in that movie, "Carrie".

TORRES

Right. Well, this was real life.

SUSAN

Fuck. What happened to this kid?

TORRES

They found him at home playing video games. The whole side of his face was burned off. They put him through the system but eventually, you know, he was found "insane".

SUSAN

Holy shit! Wait a minute. Where is he now?

TORRES

Last I saw he was at Bramfield. You know it?

Susan nods.

SUSAN

Melanie was coming back from there when she disappeared. We have an aunt at Bramfield.

TORRES

What's her story?

SUSAN

It was Christmas time, about ten years ago. Melanie was out of town on movie business. My aunt was baby-sitting Mel's son, Joey. Anyway, somehow, the house caught fire and burned to the ground. They found my Aunt walking down the street a few blocks away with a gasoline can in her hand.

TORRES

Let me get this straight. Your aunt... she what? She burned the house down with the kid still in it? What the fuck? What did she say?

SUSAN

Nothing. Zilch. She wouldn't talk to us or the police. She was a wreck. She's been at Bramfield ever since.

TORRES

Oh my God! That's very disturbing.

SUSAN

Yeah, well, it gets worse.

TORRES

How so?

SUSAN

I was there earlier that day, at the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The two-story, gabled house sits in the shade of several elm and oak trees. Christmas lights adorn the windows. A blow-up lighted snowman on the lawn.

INT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A big decorated Christmas tree stands alone in the corner surrounded by a toy train and wrapped gifts. Susan sits in one of the bar stool chairs, talking to her Aunt Ruth who is doing the dishes in the kitchen. Little JOEY runs around the front room, shaking presents. He runs up to Susan.

JOEY

Auntie, is Santa coming tonight?

AUNT RUTH

Come on, Joey. Stop being such a pest.

SUSAN

It's alright. No, Joey. Christmas isn't until next week. In five days. See, 1-2-3-4-5. Five days.

She counts her fingers.

JOEY

Oh! Five days? That's too much!

SUSAN

How old are you, Joey?

JOEY

I'm this much.

He puts up five fingers.

SUSAN

You're five already? Wow! You're not a baby anymore!

JOEY

Nope! I'm big!

Susan grabs him and gives him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. Joey wipes it off and runs away to play some more.

SUSAN

He needs a little brother.

AUNT RUTH

You got that right. God, ever since Melanie hit the big time she's got me changing diapers a couple of times a week.

SUSAN

He's kind of old for diapers.

AUNT RUTH

I'm just teasing.

SUSAN

He seems kind of lonely.

AUNT RUTH

Tell you the truth, she's spoiled that little brat rotten.

SUSAN

Come on! He's a wonderful boy!

AUNT RUTH

Yeah, yeah. You're just like the mothers of all the kids I taught over the years. Always blame the teacher. Well, I wasn't putting up with any of that crap.

SUSAN

Why did you stop teaching?

AUNT RUTH

Me? I'm too old for that horseshit. Anyhow, kids are too soft these days. Back then we knew how to draw the line. No molly-coddling, I can tell you that!

SUSAN

When's Mel coming home?

RUTH

Supposed to be tomorrow but you never know. She's on that promo tour.

There's a crash from the other room and Ruth looks up. She hurries to the living room. Susan can hear her yelling.

AUNT RUTH (O.S.)

Damn it, Joey! I told you not to play with that thing! Give me that!

Joey cries in the distance. Ruth comes back to the kitchen.

SUSAN

Is he alright.

AUNT RUTH

He's fine. He was playing with the iron for some unknown reason.

They both chuckle and Susan sips her wine. Her mobile phone vibrates and she picks up.

SUSAN

Oh hey, Charlie. Okay. No problem. See you in a few.

She downs the wine and grabs her bag.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, got to run. Can I take a few of these cranberry cookies? They're amazing.

RUTH

They won't eat themselves.

Susan kisses Ruth on the cheek and runs out the door.

EXT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Susan skips down the stairs looking down at her phone and almost runs into a lanky man in his 20s, wearing a dark hoodie and jeans. He has a dirty, smudged Santa hat on.

Susan jumps back, startled.

SUSAN

Oh my God! Sorry about that.

He looks up at her, the hood partially shadowing his face. She sees he has a huge burn scar on the left side of his face and that he's missing an eyebrow. His left eye is sealed shut under scar tissue.

MAN

Merry Christmas.

Susan tries not to stare.

SUSAN

Merry Christmas.

She puts her head down and walks to her truck. Looking back she sees the man is still standing there staring at her.

INT. SUSAN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Susan picks up her cell phone.

SUSAN

Aunt Ruth?

AUNT RUTH (V.O.)

Yes? Did you forget something?

SUSAN

No, it's just that... well, its probably nothing but there was this creepy guy standing outside your house.

AUNT RUTH (V.O.)

What? What did he look like?

SUSAN

Tall. Skinny. Fucked up face.

AUNT RUTH (V.O.)

Fucked up how?

SUSAN

Like... melted. I don't know.

INT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aunt Ruth rushes to the window and pulls back the curtains.

AUNT RUTH

I don't see anyone.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I didn't want to worry you. I'm sure it was nothing. Just... I don't know, be careful please. Lock all the doors.

AUNT RUTH

I always do, Suzie. Now don't worry so much. I got a baseball bat around here somewhere. Just let him try! You don't mess around with me, Goddammit!

END FLASHBACK

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUSAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Torres lights a cigarette, looking out the window.

TORRES

But how? Barnett was at Bramfield.

SUSAN

What are you thinking, Deputy Torres?

TORRES

First your sister goes missing, then you tell me about her kid. Now this Bramfield connection. It's just so... bizarre. You know what I mean?

Torres starts up the car, then turns to Susan.

TORRES (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you'd like to take a little field trip out to Bramfield with me tomorrow?

SUSAN

What time and who's driving?

TORRES

Tomorrow's my day off, so I think we should take your car. I don't want the Sheriff getting wind that I'm helping you. He can be pretty unpleasant when he's crossed.

SUSAN

He's a piece of work, alright.

TORRES

Don't get me wrong. He's a good law man. But he's not big on this kind of stuff.

Torres starts laughing.

SUSAN

What?

TORRES

I was just picturing his face when you called him a liberal.

She laughs with him, breaking the tension. She stops and looks at him carefully.

SUSAN

What about you?

TORRES

Let's just say that I've always been curious about... you know, weird stuff.

SUSAN

So, what? You believe in ghosts and shit?

TORRES

Not just ghosts, but yeah, I definitely believe there's something else, besides this. Don't you?

SUSAN

I'm starting to. I don't know what's real anymore.

He gestures around them.

TORRES

All this, the physical world. What we can feel with our own five senses. Is this really all there is?

SUSAN

Sounds like some New-Age bullshit. You some kind of flat-earther?

They both laugh.

TORRES

Okay, what about animals, huh? Their senses are hundreds, maybe even thousands of times sharper than ours! Can we even begin to comprehend what that must be like?

SUSAN

(Sarcastically)

Oooh! It would be like... like having a whole other set of senses!

He punches her in the arm gently.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Ow! I deserved that.

TORRES

Please, don't get me started on all that crap. I'm nerdy enough as it is. Why are you asking me about this... this *stuff*?

SUSAN

It's just that, well, you're going to think I'm stupid.

TORRES

Go on.

SUSAN

Before I left L.A. I got a strange phone call. It sounded like, remember that movie "The Exorcist"? It sounded like that part when the girl talks but it's not her voice.

TORRES

You mean where it sounds like a bunch of voices moaning? It was supposed to be demons from hell. Scared the shit out of me. I couldn't sleep for weeks.

SUSAN

Right, exactly. Well, that's what it sounded like.

TORRES

It could just be someone playing a prank. There's apps for all that shit now.

SUSAN

No. This was something else. I felt it.

TORRES

You mean you heard it.

SUSAN

No. I physically felt it. I don't know how to explain it. It felt like someone was touching me... on my neck... from behind. Actually physically fucking touching me!

Outside, a clap of thunder and rain begins falling.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Melanie is in the kitchen. She warms some milk in a small pot, singing softly to herself. Testing it with her fingers, she shuts off the heat. Melanie hears something and tilts her head up. A child cries in the distance.

MELANIE

I'm coming, sweetheart.

Melanie walks up the stairs carrying a tray with a glass of milk and some cookies. Outside, the rain falls steadily, a bluish half-light entering through the windows.

She turns into the hallway and walks down, entering the second doorway on her right.

Inside, the room is well-lighted by several candles, in contrast to the shadowy hallway. Melanie sets the tray down on the bureau, then turns to the bed.

Inside the bed, a little boy sleeps with the covers pulled up to chin. Melanie looks down on him, smiling. She touches the boy's hair gently.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I've brought your cookies, Joey.  
And some warm milk.

The sharp ROAR OF THUNDER and a FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

Lying on the bed is the BLACKENED CORPSE OF A CHILD.

Melanie backs up screaming, shaking her head.

Melanie collapses in the corner, knocking over the tray.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN'S CAR - DAY

Torres stares out the window, watching the trees and the occasional farmhouse glide by. Susan stares straight ahead, concentrating.

TORRES

What are you thinking about?

SUSAN

Nothing. Everything. Melanie. My work. What the hell are we doing out here?

TORRES

I thought we were looking for your sister.

SUSAN

By going to some mental hospital out in the middle of nowhere? For what? Some kind of supernatural bullshit? Come on! You have to admit it sounds ridiculous.

TORRES

Maybe. But what else do we have to go on? Your sister disappears right after she calls you. Says she was at a place that burned down years ago. Don't you think that's just a little strange?

SUSAN

Maybe I heard wrong. Maybe it was some other place with a similar name.

TORRES

And how do you explain the fact that she had just left Bramfield?

Susan just stares ahead, slowly shaking her head.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Ok, I'm going to close my eyes for a little while. Let me know if you want me to spell you.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRAMFIELD - DAY

Bramfield Psychiatric Hospital sits on a three acre meadow at the crest of a slight rise. Surrounding the main building are a large parking lot and a serene lake, with the dense woods beyond.

The sun has broken through the clouds and birds fly through the air.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Susan looks down on the her aunt, laying on the bed under the covers. The woman's eyes are open but she does not talk. Susan sighs and walks out to the hallway, where Torres is pacing.

TORRES

No luck?

Susan just shakes her head and they walk down the hallway.

INT. INGRAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Susan and Torres sit in a small, cluttered office, books and files strewn haphazardly throughout. Margaret Ingram comes in and shakes hands with them.

TORRES

You've heard about Susan's sister?  
Melanie Campbell?

INGRAM

It was on the news this morning.  
How can I help you?

SUSAN

Ms. Ingram, Melanie called me right  
before she disappeared. She told me  
that she had been here earlier that  
day. Last Saturday. To visit her  
aunt, Ruth Campbell. You know her?

INGRAM

No, not really. She's on the second  
floor. Most of those patients are  
comatose or bed-bound.

SUSAN

What about my sister? Did you see  
or speak with her?

INGRAM

We don't get very many celebrities  
here so you can imagine the stir  
she caused. But no, I didn't  
personally talk to her. Would you  
like to see the guest log book?

Margaret pulls a big ledger book out of her desk. She scans  
the pages and then points to an entry, turning the book so  
that her guests can see it.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

Here. Right here. Saturday. She  
came in at 6:15 and signed out at  
7:35 pm.

Torres looks up.

TORRES

What can you tell us about Cranston  
Barnett?

INGRAM

He's a patient here. Why?

TORRES

Has there been anything strange  
going on with him?

INGRAM

Such as...?

TORRES

Are you familiar with a diner called "Billie Jean's"?

INGRAM

You mean the place he burned down? Yes. Why do you ask?

TORRES

Well, Melanie called Susan shortly after she left here. She said she was there... at Billie Jean's. Having coffee.

INGRAM

I wasn't aware that they had rebuilt the place.

TORRES

They haven't. We were just there yesterday. Nothing but a burnt-out ruin.

INGRAM

There has to be some logical explanation.

SUSAN

We don't know what to make of this, Ms. Ingram. That's why we're here.

TORRES

We'd like to talk to Barnett.

INGRAM

That would be highly irregular.

TORRES

Ms. Ingram, this whole thing... everything, is highly fucking irregular, pardon my French.

Margaret looks at her watch, thinks about it for a minute. She picks up the phone and punches some numbers. After a minute she sets the receiver down.

INGRAM

Wait here, please.

Margaret walks out of the office.

INT. DR. WATTS' OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Watts is standing, facing the window. He sees Margaret's reflection.

INGRAM

I just went to Barnett's room. He's not there.

Watts turns and there are tears streaming down his face. He pulls at his graying hair.

WATTS

I'm sorry, Margaret. I had no choice. I'm so sorry.

Ingram shakes her head and leaves. Watts calls out after her.

WATTS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Margaret! I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Torres drives, Susan sits in the passenger seat and stares out the window. There is an uncomfortable silence between them.

INT. SUSAN'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

They open the door and Susan enters her room. Torres lingers near the door.

TORRES

I can't believe they let that fucker go free! It doesn't make any sense!

SUSAN

My fucking head is going to split open. Where's my God damn pills?

Susan roots around in her purse and takes out a bottle of Excedrin. She pops two with a drink of water from the tap.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I need to lay down for a while.

TORRES

I... I'm not sure...

SUSAN

Goddammit, Jesse! Just leave me alone for awhile! Fuck!

Jesse, embarrassed, looks down.

TORRES

We'll start again tomorrow. I think a trip to the library is in order. Fill in the blanks if we can. Good night, Susan.

He turns to leave. Susan stops him.

SUSAN

What about Sheriff Fuckface?

Torres just puts up his middle finger.

Susan laughs as Torres goes out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Melanie awakes suddenly with a gasp and sits upright, surprised to find herself on the darkened stairwell.

Her hair is wild and there are streaks of dirt on her face. She looks down at her torn dress and fumbles with the fabric, clumsily tearing it worse.

She stares at it then starts to giggle, then laughs out loud, trying to stop, putting her hands to her mouth.

Melanie tries to stand but just manages to fall down, her knees banging painfully on the steps. With a groan she struggles to right herself on the landing, still laughing and mumbling incoherently.

A sudden sharp noise above her and Melanie turns to look, a wild look of panic in her eyes.

She hears running feet, back and forth in the hallway, along with the sound of a child's laughter.

CHILD (O.S.)

Mama! Mama!

Melanie shakes her head, back and forth, back and forth. She holds her hands to her ears.

MELANIE

No! No! You're dead! You're dead!

Melanie cringes, shaking her head and backs straight into a window. A crack of thunder, followed by a bolt of lightning that lights up the night outside, revealing the hideous, hellish face of Cranston Barnett outside, not two inches from the window.

After the flash comes pitch darkness.

Melanie screams and staggers down the stairs. She stops at the front door, not wanting to look out the windows to the lawn, shaking her head in defiance.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

Melanie swings open the door, revealing the sopping wet grounds of the front lawn. Swirls of hard, cold rain soak her instantly as she steps outside.

Sobbing, she slips and falls on the slick grass. She tries to sit up but stops as she sees something moving in the forest next to the house.

Melanie squints, wiping the rain from her eyes. Trying to see into the darkness. A shadow moves from tree to tree.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Help me, please. Help. Oh, please,  
God help me.

Melanie holds her breath, staring into the shadows of the woods.

Suddenly Melanie hears an otherworldly shriek from behind her. Melanie spins and sees Cranston Barnett gliding towards her across the lawn, laughing and shrieking at the same time.

Melanie stands up and lurches back to the house, screaming. She looks back over her shoulder as she reaches the stairs and realizes that the thing has somehow reached her, grabbing her.

Melanie screams.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Susan bolts upright in her bed, sweating and breathing deeply, clutching the sides of her head. Susan sits there for a minute, and then gets up out of bed slowly, walking to the bathroom.

She runs some water and splashes her face. Looking into the mirror, she sees the dark circles under her eyes.

Suddenly, she hears the sound again, not so loud this time but distinct. A deep thrumming like a train passing a few miles away. She puts her hands to her ears, trying to make it go away, but it continues.

Suddenly the sound increases and Susan grabs her head and shouts.

SUSAN

Stop! Stop!

She turns around and bumps into Melanie, who is standing there in front of her, soaking wet, a crazed look in her eyes. There is a darkness to her that is disturbing.

Susan screams and backs up, hitting the washstand. Melanie opens her mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. She reaches her hands out to touch Susan, but Susan hesitates.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Melanie?

Suddenly two hands grab Melanie from behind and pull her into the darkness. Susan screams and falls to the floor. She sees something on the floor in front of her.

A set of muddy footprints and a puddle of water.

Susan follows the prints into the bedroom and all the way to the front door. She opens the door and sees distinct prints in the mud outside the motel room.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

The rain pours down hard but Susan ignores it. She walks out into the rain wearing nothing but a t-shirt and underwear, which is soon plastered onto her thin frame.

Susan follows the prints. They lead to the road and end there. She stares up and looks down the darkened highway. There is nothing there. She kneels down in the middle of the road, head down, wet hair dangling.

CUT TO:

INT. BRAMFIELD - DAY

Dr. Watts enters Ingram's office.

WATTS

Have you heard anything, yet?

INGRAM

No. Ruth's gone.

WATTS

She must be here somewhere.

INGRAM

We'll have to alert the police. Now get out of here.

Watts does not react immediately.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

Dr. Watts, did you hear me? You can't be here when the press arrives, and they *will* arrive. You need to leave right now!

WATTS

I heard you. I was just thinking of where she could have gone. It's just... so bizarre.

INGRAM

Really? You knew Barnett was going to her room every night, right?

WATTS

He went to all the rooms. He was handing out pills.

INGRAM

Cut the shit, Ernie. I'm on to you. You're covering for that maniac! I want you to pack your shit and get out of here! I'll have to figure out what to say to the police. Christ, what a clusterfuck!

WATTS

Listen to me! Just give me some time. I'll find her. I'll bring her back!

INGRAM

Are you out of your fucking mind?

WATTS

Margaret, how long have we known each other? I need for you to trust me now! Please don't call the police just yet. Give me three days to find her. Just three days, that's all I ask.

Ingram sits down and puts her head in her hands.

INGRAM

Do you know what you're asking me to do? I'll be jeopardizing my position. Everything we've worked so hard for all these years...

Ingram stares at him, angry.

WATTS

Three days, Margaret. I'll find her. I'll bring her back, I swear.

Ingram taps the pencil on her desk, then stands up and looks out the window.

INGRAM

Alright, I'll give you exactly seventy two hours, but not one minute more. Dr. Watts? Do you hear me?

But Dr. Watts has run out of the room and down the hallway. Dr. Ingram scrambles to the hall and yells after him.

INGRAM (CONT'D)

Find her! Find her and bring her back! Do you hear? Bring her back!

CUT TO:

EXT. BRAMFIELD PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Margaret Ingram walks to her car, a silver-grey Mercedes four door. She pops the trunk and puts her briefcase in then closes the trunk.

INT. INGRAM'S CAR - NIGHT

She gets in her car and reaches back to grab her seat belt, but its stuck. She yanks at it a few times but it won't budge. She decides to just drive away so she turns on the car, and the big engine roars to life.

She turns to her right and is startled to find---

Cranston Barnett, still wearing his hospital gown, mask, and cap, sitting in the passenger seat. Margaret screams.

INGRAM

Where the hell did you come from?  
Oh my God, you scared the shit out of me!

Cranston laughs.

BARNETT

That was the point, Miss Ingram. What good is a boogeyman if he can't scare people to death?

MARGARET

Goddammit, Cranston! Get the hell out of my car! I'm calling security!

Margaret fumbles around in her purse.

CRANSTON

Looking for this?

He is holding her phone. He opens it and starts scrolling through the pictures.

CRANSTON (CONT'D)

Oh, nice family. Is that your dog?  
What's his name?

INGRAM

Give me that!

Ingram lunges for the phone, but Cranston backhands her hard, drawing blood.

CRANSTON

Now, now. That wasn't very polite.  
I wasn't through yet. Now let me  
see. Hmmm, what have we here? Oh  
my, Miss Ingram, these are some  
very naughty pictures! Is it okay  
if I send them to myself?

Cranston starts punching in some numbers. Ingram screams and tries to get out of the car but the driver's door is jammed and won't budge. She turns again to Cranston but he's not there.

A tapping on her driver's side window makes her gasp and turn. Cranston is standing outside, laughing and holding up her phone with the nude pictures.

CRANSTON (CONT'D)

Dr. Watts told me all about you,  
you bitch. He said you want to send  
me to San Quentin.

INGRAM

No! No! I'll make sure you go  
somewhere safe. I promise!

CRANSTON

Shut up! Just shut the fuck up with  
all your bullshit! You're all the  
same! All a bunch of fucking liars!

Cranston raises his hands over his head and starts chanting in tongues. His gestures become increasingly frantic and his hands and arms start glowing, deep red, then yellow and white.

Suddenly, the car radio comes on to a loud rap station.

She recognizes the funky sounds of Wu-Tang Clan with their hit song, Protect Yo Neck.

CRANSTON (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, got to love Method Man! Wu-Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

The song becomes louder and louder and the bass notes even louder, so all she can hear is a booming THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

Margaret screams and hold her hands to her ears to stop the sound, blood streaming down the sides of her head from her shattered ears.

EXT. BRAMFIELD PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cranston walks away from the car. He can hear the loud thumping through the closed windows, growing fainter as he walks farther away and into the forest.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Torres and Susan comb through scanned copies of old newspapers. They each have an old computer monitor and are scrolling slowly through the yellowed pages.

TORRES

What a bunch of garbage. Look at all these stupid ads. Did people really fall for that crap?

Susan puts up a hand to quiet him.

TORRES (CONT'D)

What? Did you find something?

Torres gets up and looks over Susan's shoulder.

SUSAN

I found this in the Healdsburg Gazette. Its from 2001.

Torres looks closer and sees a class photo. There is a stern looking woman near the front, the kids in the back.

TORRES

Holy shit. Is that... is that your aunt?

SUSAN

Yes. She was so thin back then.

TORRES

Can you zoom in? Right there, on the end.

Susan zoomed as close as she could on one of the boys. The names are listed under each student.

TORRES (CONT'D)

That's him. Barnett.

SUSAN

So she was... she was his teacher.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. HEALDSBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Kids run around on the playground. The school itself is just a simple, three-story wooden structure, but there are lots of big trees around it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

YOUNG CRANSTON sits in the back of the room. The teacher stands with her back to the students while writing on the chalkboard.

Some of the bigger boys turn and throw paper and pencils at Cranston, hitting him in the face. One of the pencils hits him in the eye and he cries out.

The teacher turns around and is revealed as YOUNG AUNT RUTH, thin and in her 30s. She looks angry and stomps towards Cranston.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH

I told you not to disrupt my class,  
young man!

YOUNG CRANSTON

But... but it wasn't me!

YOUNG AUNT RUTH

I said get up! Now go sit in the  
corner facing the wall. Now!

All the kids laugh in ridicule as she takes Cranston by the ear and makes him stand in the corner. Cranston keeps crying softly.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The bell rings and the kids all file out. Cranston goes to the cloakroom, gathers his backpack and turns to leave. The teacher stands in his way.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH  
Where do you think you're going?  
Put down those things.

Ruth closes the door. She walks back to her desk and gets out a long wooden ruler.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH (CONT'D)  
You've been very naughty, Cranston.  
Very naughty and disruptive. This  
is the third time this month. I've  
talked to your parents but they  
don't seem to care.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
They don't understand English, Miss  
Campbell!

AUNT AUNT RUTH  
Well, they need to learn! This is  
America. We speak English here!

Cranston fumes, clenching his fists.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH  
You're becoming a real problem,  
Cranston.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
But Miss, it wasn't my fault.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH  
What's that? Stop sniveling and  
talk like a man.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
They... they were bullying me! They  
always bully me. They hate me!

YOUNG AUNT RUTH  
And why do you think that is,  
Cranston? Why do they all bully  
you? Hmmm.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
I don't know, Miss.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH  
Because you're different, Cranston.  
You look different. You dress  
different. You even smell  
different. You and your people...  
you don't belong here. Your  
classmates, they all come from good  
families. Yours, well, we know what  
they're all about, don't we?

YOUNG CRANSTON

No! Take that back!

He rears his hand back to strike Ruth, but stops at the last second.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH

What on Earth? You think you can  
lay your dirty little paws on me?

She grabs him hard by the ear and puts him in the corner.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH (CONT'D)

Now pull down your trousers!

YOUNG CRANSTON

No! I don't want to! No! No!

Ruth tugs at the boy's pants, ripping them and tearing them off. She's furious and out of control. She takes the ruler and cracks him hard on the butt.

Cranston sobs even harder, humiliated and hurt.

YOUNG AUNT RUTH

I'll show you who's in charge here!  
You disgusting little shit!

She whips and whips the boy until blood comes up on the welts.

END FLASHBACK

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Torres and Susan sit in a booth at a local restaurant. Susan pushes her bread sticks around, not really eating. Torres wolfs down a bowl of pasta.

SUSAN

Too bad you're not really hungry.

TORRES

I come from a big family. If you  
take too long there's nothing left.

They both look up as Dr. Watts comes through the door and approaches their table.

WATTS

May I sit down?

Torres nods and Watts sits down next to Susan.

WATTS (CONT'D)

The guy at the motel said I might find you here.

He gathers his thoughts.

WATTS (CONT'D)

Its about your aunt Ruth. There's no easy way to say this. She's... she's disappeared.

SUSAN

What?

TORRES

What do you mean? Disappeared how?

WATTS

She wasn't in her room this morning. We looked everywhere. She's just... gone.

TORRES

What about the security cameras?

WATTS

Nothing. I'm sorry. This... this has never happened before at Bramfield. Never.

SUSAN

Holy shit! Oh my God! First, Melanie, now Aunt Ruth!

WATTS

And there's something else. We found Ms. Ingram this morning. She was dead in her car. Ruptured eardrums, some sort of brain hemorrhage.

Torres and Susan stare at him, open mouthed. The doctor rubs his hands through his hair.

WATTS (CONT'D)

I think... I mean, I *know* Barnett has something to do with this... with all of this.

SUSAN

What?

WATTS

It appears he had some sort of... relationship with your aunt.

TORRES

Yeah, we know all that. Ruth was one of Barnett's teachers. Don't tell me you didn't know.

WATTS

God, no! In all our sessions that was never discussed!

SUSAN

So what was their... relationship?

WATTS

He spent a lot of time in her room, talking with her. I just assumed they were friends.

SUSAN

So, let me put this together. This psycho Barnett, let's just assume he's got my aunt, and more than likely my sister, too. He burned down the diner and he probably burned down Melanie's house.

TORRES

And don't forget poor Ms. Ingram. And you let him loose?

WATTS

Well, that's why I came here to see you. If you know something, anything at all, that could help us find them...

TORRES

What the fuck are you saying? That we had something to do with this? Are you out of your fucking mind? Jesus Christ! Have you not heard a single word we've said?

SUSAN

Do you know what we've been through? Do you? Look at me, doc, I'm a fucking mess! I... we, haven't slept for days!

WATTS

I'm sorry. I... I just... I don't know what to believe any more.

TORRES

You knew it was that piece of shit, Cranston! You let him go and that makes it your fault!

(MORE)

TORRES (CONT'D)

You're just trying to cover your  
ass, aren't you?

WATTS

No. No! You're twisting everything.

The waitress comes over and they stop talking.

WAITRESS

Do you need anything else here?

Something distracts her and she walks away. The waitress  
pauses to look out the big picture window. There's a  
commotion going on across the street.

She opens the front door and she sees distant flashing  
lights. There are shouts of people in the street, and car  
horns honking before she shuts the door, drowning out the  
sounds.

SUSAN

There's something you're not  
telling us, isn't there?

Dr. Watts pauses, tearing his paper napkin into little  
uniformly sized pieces.

WATTS

Barnett, he's not just insane.  
Everyone at the hospital was  
terrified of him. They say he's  
some sort of... dark creature, a  
real-life monster. They call him *El*  
*Demonio*.

TORRES

The Demon. And this is your  
clinical opinion, doc?

WATTS

I've spent the last five years  
studying Barnett. He's... not like  
you and me... he... he can control  
things... with his mind.

The commotion outside draws his attention. Watts stands and  
looks out the window.

Across the street he sees his daughter Chrissie. She is  
standing there looking straight at him.

WATTS (CONT'D)

Chrissie? Over here, Chrissie! I'm  
here!

Dr. Watts waves at his daughter. She just looks at him with blank eyes, dark circles under her eyes. She turns and walks away.

WATTS (CONT'D)

Wait!

Dr. Watts gets up from the booth and hurriedly steps outside onto the sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Watts walks quickly, trying to see ahead. He thinks he sees his daughter turning right on the next street.

There are crowds of people outside, walking the same direction as him. Some of them are running.

Dr. Watts shouts and walks faster.

WATTS

Chrissie! Chrissie!

Suddenly a WOMAN screams. A MAN shouts out.

MAN

The library's on fire!

Watts hears this and tries to push through the throng.

Up ahead he sees that the library is ablaze. Fire trucks are racing to get in position amidst the general confusion.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Susan and Jesse see the crowd rushing by. A fire truck roars by, sirens blaring. They both jump out of the booth and out the front door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE LIBRARY - DAY

Shooting flames come out of the soot darkened windows. The fire engine pulls up and TWO FIREMEN jump off and attach the hose to the hydrant. They turn the huge screw and wait but nothing happens.

FIREMAN #1

There's no water!

FIREMAN #2

What the hell? That's not possible.  
Try again!

Screams pierce the night.

Susan and Torres push their way through the crowd. They can feel the heat from the flames.

TORRES

Look, there's Watts!

SUSAN

What the hell is he doing? Dr.  
Watts! Dr. Watts!

Watts starts walking closer to the burning building.

Torres reaches and grabs him from behind. The heat makes him sweat and his face turns bright red. Watts struggles to get free.

TORRES

What are you doing? Get away from  
there!

Watts points at one of the windows, smoke billowing out.

WATTS

My daughter's in there! Chrissie!  
Chrissie!

Torres looks and sees nothing in the window, just black smoke.

TORRES

There's nothing there, doc!

WATTS

What's wrong with you? Can't you  
see her? She's right there?

He points at one of the windows. Watts sees his daughter Chrissie hanging halfway out, coughing and screaming for help.

CHRISSIE

Help me daddy! Help me!

WATTS

I'm coming, sweetheart! I'm coming!  
Hold on, baby!

Torres looks and sees nothing and no one at the window. Susan joins them as Torres tries desperately to hang on to the writhing doctor.

Suddenly, Watts turns and punches Torres in the nose, knocking him down.

Dr. Watts runs straight towards the burning library, shielding his face from the heat. Torres tries to follow but it is way too hot and he backs off, yelling after him.

TORRES

Stop! Stop!

A firefighter grabs Torres from behind and pulls him back.

Watts, ignoring the intense heat and pain, runs headlong into the building.

INT. LIBRARY FOYER - DAY

Watts spins around, coughing, trying to find his daughter.

WATTS

Chrissie! I'm here, sweetheart!  
Daddy's here! Where are you? Answer  
me! Where are you?

He screams hoarsely, and stumbles, losing his glasses. His hair is wild and his face is beet red. He doubles over coughing and drops to his knees.

Suddenly, all of the noise stops, replaced by a deep, cold silence.

Watts looks up. He sees the building falling apart in slow motion, flames leaping all around him.

He puts a finger in his ears, trying to clean them out. In the silent library he can still see the timbers falling, sparks flying, and flames erupting.

Watts sees through the smoky haze. A lone figure walks out of the flames in front of him.

Suddenly, the silence cracks in a deafening, roaring blast, the reverberation of the Resonance, blasting him with the force of a foghorn from two feet away.

He grabs his ears with both hands, trying to block out the sound.

WATTS (CONT'D)

No! No!

He is immediately engulfed in fire and begins writhing, beams falling down all around. The pounding sound gets louder and louder.

Watts screams and falls to his knees, his hair and clothes bursting into flames. He crawls forward in the dark and the smoke, trying to grope his way near the floor.

He feels in front of him and realizes that he has crawled straight into a pair of legs.

He looks up and sees Cranston Barnett sitting comfortably at a computer terminal, smiling down at him.

The burning Watts screams in agony, but like any good librarian, Barnett puts a finger to his lips and points at a nearby sign that says:

"Quiet Please"

BARNETT

SHHHHHHHH!

This is the last thing that Watts sees before he hears a sharp crack, then a burning crossbeam lands on him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIBRARY - EARLY MORNING

The charred and still smoking ruins of the old building.

INT. LIBRARY - EARLY MORNING

In the middle, the charred body of Dr. Watts, curled and blackened on the floor, a black beam, still smoldering, across his chest.

In the background, firemen sift through the rubble.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Susan and Torres stand looking at the entrance.

Torres turns to walk through the ashes, but Susan grabs him and pulls him back. He gently pushes her away and walks in to the library.

TORRES

Wait here.

Susan stands outside, not daring to move, trembling in the morning cold. Torres moves around in the rubble looking for some kind of clue, anything.

Susan hugs herself, suddenly chilled. She looks up and sees storm clouds, dark and threatening, gathering with speed and force.

CUT TO:

INT. TORRES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Torres turns the key in the lock, opens the door and goes inside. He is soaking wet from the rain. He takes his jacket off as he walks in, looking around the bright room.

He sits on the edge of the bed and turns on the TV. The news is on.

The local TV field REPORTER stands in front of the blackened library building, near the front steps.

REPORTER

Fire crews were on the scene all afternoon, and as you can see behind me, there's not a whole lot left of what only yesterday was one of the biggest buildings in town. The fire started at approximately 5pm Sunday afternoon. The library was closed, yet there was one confirmed fatality in the blaze.

The picture changes to show the smoking ruins inside.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Investigators discovered the charred remains of a man. Police have not released his identity pending notification of his family.

Torres turns it off, unable to watch more. He puts his head in his hands, bone weary. He grabs a whiskey bottle off the coffee table and drinks straight from it.

INT. TORRES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Torres tosses and turns. He moans and cries out in his sleep.

CUT TO:

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Torres walks through the rubble again. The smoldering ruins beneath his feet crack and crunch. He realizes with a start that he is walking on top of a pile of bones.

He tries to get out of there but he steps on a skull, which pops under his feet, slimy and wet.

He backtracks, trips and falls on his behind. The rain starts to fall heavily and the rubble becomes soaked instantly.

Overhead, through the burned rafters of the library he can see the dark clouds and flashes of lightning.

He tries to get up but his hands sink into the ooze. He looks down and sees that he is sitting in the middle of a jumbled stack of decomposing bodies, skin falling from faces and bone, maggots eating at flesh.

Torres gags and again tries to stand up, but a shadow passes over him, blocking the light.

Cranston Barnett stands directly behind him. The killer presses close, whispering maniacally.

BARNETT

Do you smell that, Deputy Torres?

Barnett takes a deep whiff, closing his eyes in rapture. Torres tries to get away from him but he can't. Barnett holds him easily as if he has super strength.

Barnett lets out a maniacal cackle.

Torres wants to scream and opens his mouth, but no sound comes out. A strangled puff is all he can manage.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

What's that, deputy? You want to say something? Here, let me wet your whistle.

Barnett grabs a handful of the decomposing bodies and stuffs it into Torres' gaping mouth.

Barnett stands back and stares, transfixed, while Torres coughs and vomits the disgusting ooze.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

See you soon, Jesse. Very, very soon.

Torres looks up and sees Barnett walking up the side of the hill, towards a white house.

Torres looks down and sees that he is now laying in a field of grass. Below him to his left is a wrecked Range Rover, leaning up against a tree.

He looks again and Barnett is gone. He can see the house on the hill at the top of the lawn's rise, lights glowing, a blue station wagon peeking out from behind.

Torres gets up and starts climbing up the slope, but no matter how much he walks, he can get no closer.

Every time he looks he is actually a little farther away. He stops, completely disoriented. Torres looks up and sees trees. He looks down again and realizes that he is standing at the front door of the house. He knocks.

The door opens slowly.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Torres knocks on the door. Susan lets him in.

SUSAN  
What happened to you?

TORRES  
Worst nightmare of my life.

Torres puts his hand to his mouth. He looks at his hand and there is some congealed dirt in it.

SUSAN  
What's wrong?

Torres tries to hide his hand, but Susan grabs it.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
Did you go out last night?

TORRES  
No. I don't know. I don't remember.  
Just... this, this fucked up dream.  
It was so real, so vivid. Barnett  
was there. He spoke to me. He  
showed me things.

Torres begins to shake visibly.

SUSAN  
It was only a dream, Jesse.

Torres shows his dirty hand.

TORRES  
Was it? Come on, Sue, get dressed.

SUSAN  
What did you see? In your... in  
your dream? What did he tell you?

Torres grabs her, holding on, his eyes tortured.

TORRES

Listen to me. Please. He, he gave me a clue.

SUSAN

How? How do you know?

TORRES

Barnett. He told me... in the dream, if that's what it was. He showed me. Look, Susan, you have to believe me. I was there... I saw it myself!

SUSAN

Hmmm, now you know how it feels. Of course, I believe you. But I'm really scared now, Jesse. What the hell have we gotten ourselves into? If this guy, Barnett, if he's got this kind of power... what the hell can we do?

She plops down on the bed.

TORRES

I don't know. But my gut tells me we have to follow through. There has to be some sort of logical explanation for all of this.

SUSAN

That's what they always say in the movies before someone's head gets ripped off by a fucking monster.

TORRES

There's no monsters here. I don't believe in the boogeyman.

SUSAN

After everything that's happened? You still think this is, what? Some sort of trick? An illusion? What about the fires? The bodies?

TORRES

I don't know. I don't know, Goddammit! Maybe he's like some fantastic hypnotist or crazy magician. I don't know!

SUSAN

That seems to be the operative phrase around here these days.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

If we only knew more about this  
freak, but there's nothing.

TORRRES

There has to be. We just... we  
can't give up now. We just have to  
keep on digging.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Young Cranston, head down, limps as quickly as he can through the schoolyard holding his ripped pants up. He has tied his hoodie around his waist to hide the rips and tears. Lucky for him there are no other boys around.

EXT. TOWN STREET - DAY

He is walking down the street when he sees a pack of his schoolmates hanging around by the corner. He ducks into a yard behind one of the houses and waits.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

After a while, Cranston thinks he's safe so he edges away from the yard and climbs a fence to cross a vacant field behind it.

Just as he's reaching for the top of the chain-link fence, the boys show up and grab him from behind, pulling him down. They begin to beat him and kick him. He curls up protecting his head and privates.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DUSK

Cranston limps across the field.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The boy finally reaches the hill leading up to his home, a dilapidated white house with a blue station wagon sitting in the driveway.

EXT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Cranston sits on the porch. His father comes out, smoking a pipe. He looks at Cranston's torn clothing. Cranston, ashamed, turns away.

FATHER

Who did this to you?

YOUNG CRANSTON  
It's nothing. I got into a fight.

FATHER  
A fight? Don't lie to me, boy! Look  
at me!

Cranston looks up at his father, his face bruised and  
crusted with dried blood.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
I will ask again. Who did this?

YOUNG CRANSTON  
Nobody.

FATHER  
Nobody, huh? It's always nobody.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
Why am I so... so weird? What's  
wrong with me?

FATHER  
There's nothing wrong with being  
different, boy. But you're also the  
same.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
What does that mean? Same as what?

FATHER  
I think it is time to show you our  
ways. The ways of the old country.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
What are you talking about?

His father puts up a finger and shushes Cranston. He puts  
the pipe in his mouth and puts the other hand up in the  
air. He begins chanting and rocking, back and forth. With a  
quick flourish, his hand lights on fire, from the wrist up.

YOUNG CRANSTON (CONT'D)  
Oh my God! Doesn't that hurt?

FATHER  
It is just one of our many gifts,  
handed down through the years.

YOUNG CRANSTON  
Can I... can I do that?

FATHER  
Not yet. But I believe its time you  
learned. Come inside.

The fire goes out, smoke trailing in the air. His father puts an arm around him and leads him into the house.

END FLASHBACK

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Torres and Susan sit in the rented car by the side of the road near the ruins of Billie Jean's.

SUSAN

So...what are we doing here?

TORRES

Waiting.

SUSAN

Waiting? For what?

TORRES

What the fuck do I know, Sue? And believe me, I hope that nothing happens. Nothing at all would be just fine with me.

SUSAN

You mean except for finding Melanie.

TORRES

Yeah, there's that. I mean, I don't want any more batshit craziness and sick shit happening. I don't know if I can take much more. But if something does happen...

He pulls out his revolver and cracks it open, making sure that it's loaded.

SUSAN

What makes you think that will stop him?

TORRES

He's just a man. He may have crazy powers, who knows, but if I shoot him, he'll bleed and die just like anybody else. Two days ago I would have considered all of this shit impossible, no, fucking insane!

Suddenly, they hear a loud CLICK and the lights go off.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Jesse and Susan look out the window and it's pitch black.

SUSAN

What the hell?

TORRES

Listen, it's coming again!

They both hear a loud thrumming vibration building louder and louder. The car begins shaking violently, as if in a major earthquake. It sounds like a train is bearing down on them. Susan screams.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Hold on!

Lights come shining into the car from all angles. Outside it sounds like one giant explosion that never ends.

Suddenly, the shaking stops and the sound subsides. Outside it is very dark. All they can hear is their own heavy breathing. Susan stifles a sob.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Shhhh. I hear something.

They hear a low humming and footsteps and people murmuring.

Suddenly, they hear a loud CLICK and all the lights come on.

They are no longer sitting in their car.

They're inside Billie Jean's Coffee Shoppe.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Susan's mouth is agape and she jumps in her seat. They're seated in one of the red vinyl booths. A waitress moves down the aisle towards them.

WAITRESS

What'll it be, toots?

Before Susan can talk, Jesse puts a hand on her shoulder.

TORRES

No worries, dear, I'll order for us both.

Susan looks at Torres' eyes and just nods.

TORRES (CONT'D)  
Two slices of pie please and two  
cups of coffee. Black.

The waitress walks away.

SUSAN  
What the hell just happened, Jesse?

TORRES  
Who knows. Maybe this isn't real. I  
have zero clue.

SUSAN  
So what do we do?

TORRES  
Look around. What do you see?

She looks around the room. There are kids eating and old  
folks and everything including the clothes are straight  
from the year 2000.

SUSAN  
Oh my God! Everything looks like...  
old. Wait, not old, but like, you  
know, a long time ago, like in the  
movies! I'm... I'm feeling  
nauseous.

She leans her head down.

TORRES  
Are you alright?

SUSAN  
I'm okay, I think, just need to get  
a grip. It feels like reality, real  
life... it's slipping away, like  
I'll never be able to get it back.  
Yet, everything looks and feels...  
so real.

TORRES  
What do you think happens next?

Susan shakes her head then realization hits.

TORRES (CONT'D)  
That's right.

SUSAN  
Everyone here...

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
Oh my God! We have to get them out!

TORRES

No, Susan, none of this is real, can't you see? It's some sort of psychic re-creation of the event. And it's our only chance to get Barnett. He's the key to finding your sister. We have to see this thing through!

Torres looks down and sees that he's still cradling the pistol. He puts it away in his pocket.

The waitress comes back with their pie and coffee.

WAITRESS

Here you go.

Susan stares at the pie, making a face.

SUSAN

Uh-uh. No way am I eating some psychic re-creation of pie. God, I can't believe those words just came out of my mouth.

Torres chuckles and digs in to his piece.

TORRES

Suit yourself. I'm starving.

He eats and makes a yummy sound.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Oh my God. They just don't make pie like this anymore. You got to try it.

SUSAN

Are you kidding me? You just said nothing here is real.

TORRES

I could be wrong. What the hell do I know. Ummm-ummm, this is so good. Can I have yours?

Susan gives him an incredulous look.

She sees that there is a commotion near the front. A little boy, young Cranston, is being teased by several larger kids. He comes down the aisle, wiping away tears and scowling. His hands are tight fists down by his side.

The kids near the front call out after him.

KID  
Come back here, you pussy!

KID 2  
Yeah, come back and take it like a man!

The kids start sing-song chanting.

KIDS  
Cranston, Cranston, Cranston!

SUSAN  
Oh my God, that's...

TORRES  
Jesus Christ, just when I thought it couldn't get any weirder. Where's he going?

SUSAN  
Come on, let's follow him.

They both get up and head to the back. They see the kid go in to the restroom. They hear the click of the lock being turned. The indicator on the door goes from the green "vacant" to the red "occupied".

Torres gingerly walks up to the door. He knocks on it softly.

TORRES  
Hey, uh... kid. You in there? Open up, will ya?

Torres looks back sheepishly at Susan, who winces and shakes her head.

SUSAN  
That was pathetic.

TORRES  
How the hell would I know how to talk to some weird, future, serial-killer kid?

Susan pushes Torres out of the way and knocks loudly on the door.

SUSAN  
Come on, Cranston, we know you're in there! We just want to talk to you. Please come out!

They both hear the lock turning and the indicator goes from "occupied" to "vacant".

Torres looks around furtively and opens the door. They both go in and he shuts the door behind them.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

TORRES

Hey, uh, kid, you in here?

He looks around.

Inside it is darker, the light is dim. There is one stall and the door is closed. But there's no sound, no one is in the room.

Suddenly, they hear the wailing of sirens in the distance.

The door to the restroom slams shut behind them.

Susan and Torres look at each other, then Torres grabs the door and strains to open it, but it won't budge.

From the dining room they hear a WHOOSH and then crackling sounds mixed with screams and shouts. Torres thinks he can hear Barnett laughing hysterically over the noise.

SUSAN

Oh my God, I can feel the heat in there!

The room is beginning to smolder at the edges, smoke billowing in from under the door. People are smashing against the restroom door, screaming for help.

Torres grabs the door handle again but this time burns his hand.

TORRES

Arghhh! We have to get out of here.  
Try the window!

Susan gets up on the toilet seat and tries to unlock the window, but its stuck tight. The smoke is rapidly filling up the room. Susan coughs violently.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Get out of the way!

Torres gets up and pulls out his gun. He shoots the window and it shatters. He reaches back and pulls Susan, helping her through the window frame. The smoke is dense and they can't see where they're going.

He follows her and falls out of the burning building.

Susan and Torres lie on the ground, sputtering and coughing, their faces smudged with soot. Susan wipes the hair from her eyes and looks up.

EXT. HILLSIDE MEADOW - NIGHT

They are no longer outside the diner. They are now on a hillside, on top of the grass. It is evening but the full moon shines bright through the sparse clouds.

There is a path leading into the forest.

SUSAN

What the fuck? Where are we?

Her phone chirps and she looks at it.

TORRES

What is it?

SUSAN

Officer Cull from Beverly Hills.  
She just texted me the GPS  
coordinates from Melanie's phone!

She plays with her phone for a few seconds then looks around. She starts walking down the path into the woods.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

This way.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

They walk through the forest for a few minutes, making a couple of corrective turns to stay on track.

Torres taps on Susan's shoulder and she looks up.

TORRES

Look, there's the car.

He points down the hill to the Range Rover wrapped around the tree. Susan looks up the hill and sees the white house.

SUSAN

And there's the house. Do you  
think... Mel's in there?

Torres shakes his head in disbelief.

TORRES

I guess we'll find out soon enough.  
Are you up for this?

Susan just gives him a bad look and climbs to her feet. She starts up the hill, then turns around to look at an astonished Torres.

SUSAN

What the hell are you waiting for?  
Let's go get my sister!

Susan powers up the hill with Torres trying to keep up behind her. Susan switches on her flashlight and Torres does the same.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Melanie sits up in the bed, knitting and humming softly. The door to the room creaks open and a dark figure comes in. The candlelight throws shadows on the walls.

MELANIE

I need to get Joey dressed for school.

The shadow shifts and walks into the light. It's Cranston Barnett, scrawny and bent, but with a powerful, crazed look in his one good eye.

BARNETT

Not today, my dear. We are going to have some visitors.

Barnett turns to leave.

MELANIE

Wait. Wait.

BARNETT

Yes, what is it?

MELANIE

Why? Why are you doing this to me?

BARNETT

Why? You should ask your dear Aunt Ruth.

MELANIE

Aunt Ruth? How do you know her?  
Wait, of course! Oh my God, was she, was she your teacher?

Melanie starts laughing.

BARNETT

Very funny. Very funny. Do you know what your dear old auntie did to us poor kids?

MELANIE

So what? Look at you! You're a fucking B movie cliché, for fuck's sake! The poor, mistreated boy. Boohoo. You're pathetic!

Barnett, half his face melted off, comes over and claps.

BARNETT

Bravo! You figured it out long before your idiotic sister. Are you sure you two have the same parents?

MELANIE

Susan? Where is she? Please don't hurt her. Please! Just leave her alone. I'll do whatever you want.

Melanie sobs.

BARNETT

Why the long face? One would think you'd be overjoyed to be with your son again.

MELANIE

My son? But that, it can't be...

BARNETT

What did you say? Do you want me to take him away? He burned once, He can burn again.

MELANIE

No! Please!

BARNETT

Is that what you want? Just say the word...

Barnett raises a hand and flame shoots out of his fingers, almost touching the ceiling.

MELANIE

No! No! Please!

BARNETT

Shhhhh. Calm down now.

Her hand flutters. She realizes that something is wrong.

BARNETT (CONT'D)  
I've brought you a little gift.

Barnett gestures to the dark corner behind the door.

Aunt Ruth steps into the light. She is still in her thin blue robe from the mental hospital and looks ancient, tired, and confused. The old woman smiles when she sees Melanie.

RUTH  
Melanie? Is that you?

MELANIE  
Aunt Ruth? Oh my God.

Melanie goes and hugs her aunt, who doesn't respond much.

MELANIE (CONT'D)  
Are you alright? What has he done to you?

BARNETT  
Its not what I've done to her. You have it ass-backwards. It's what she did! Why don't you tell her, Miss Campbell? What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

Barnett holds out one hand and opens it, revealing a purplish-red tongue.

Melanie screams and backs up. She sees that Aunt Ruth's mouth and the front of her blouse is spattered with blood

Barnett gets behind the old woman and holds her with one forearm.

BARNETT (CONT'D)  
So long, you old bitch!

With the other he pulls out a long, thin blade and swipes it across her neck. A long ribbon of blood sprays out. Barnett drops the cadaver.

Melanie screams in terror.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Susan and Torres approach the house. They hear the screams from inside.

SUSAN  
That was Melanie! Come on!

She rushes to the door, expecting it to be locked, but she opens it easily and walks in. All the lights are on inside.

TORRES  
Hello? Is anyone here?

He sniffs the air.

TORRES (CONT'D)  
Do you smell that?

SUSAN  
Smells like... apple pie?

Torres and Susan walk into the kitchen.

TORRES  
Hello?

There is a pie sitting on the table. Torres puts a finger in it.

TORRES (CONT'D)  
Still warm.

He starts to put it to his lips. Susan grabs his arm and just shakes her head. He thinks better of it and wipes his hands on his uniform.

Suddenly, they hear a loud CLICK and the house goes dark, pitch black.

Susan stifles a scream and grabs Torres. He flicks on his flashlight and waves it around the room.

He sees the pie on the table, but there are flies and maggots crawling all over it.

The sudden CRACK of thunder outside and a static flash of sheet lightning break the silence.

A scream rips through the air.

SUSAN  
Melanie? Is that you? Where are you?

The crying and sobbing seem to be coming from above them. Susan runs towards the stairwell.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
Come on!

TORRES  
Wait! Wait!

He grabs Susan, who struggles to free herself. She has a wild, frenzied look in her eyes. Through the window behind her, he can see the rain beating hard against the window.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Let me go first!

She nods reluctantly and he pulls out his revolver.

The screaming stops. They pause at the sudden eerie silence.

They slowly ascend the stairs. They hear footsteps running around on the second floor, the laughter of a child.

SUSAN

Hello? Who's up there? Hello?

Suddenly the footsteps stop. They strain to listen in the darkness.

They both hear the shushing sound with some faint giggles in the background, muted whispers.

TORRES

What the fuck?

SUSAN

Seriously, Jesse? Now you're confused?

Torres stops, holding his head.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

TORRES

I'm feeling dizzy. I have to sit down.

He plops down on the landing.

SUSAN

Come on! We have to keep going!

TORRES

I, I can't. There's something. Something I have to tell you.

SUSAN

Listen, Jesse...

TORRES

No, Susan, you listen to me. The reason, the reason he... Barnett... the reason he's doing all this...

(MORE)

TORRES (CONT'D)

I think, I think it's all because of me.

SUSAN

What the fuck are you talking about?

TORRES

You asked me before, what was I doing here? Why was I helping you?

Torres grimaces in pain.

TORRES (CONT'D)

My father, he was Sheriff years ago when all of this went down. He's the one that found Barnett and put him away. I should have realized it sooner.

SUSAN

No, Jesse, that can't be true. How could he have known?

TORRES

I, I don't know, but I'm sure it has something to do with me.

SUSAN

Don't go fucking crazy on me, Jesse! None of that crap matters anymore, and anyhow I don't believe it! Want to know what I think? I think that he does all this shit because he's an evil fucker and because he just fucking *can*, that's why! Period!

TORRES

Then we're totally fucked.

Suddenly Torres stops and holds his head, groaning, in real pain.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stop it! Arghhhh!

SUSAN

What is it, Jesse? Oh my God!

TORRES

Don't you hear it? That droning sound, so loud, so fucking loud! It's like an ice pick in my brain! Make it stop, please, make it stop!

Susan holds him tightly, trying to comfort and calm him. A noise from the top of the stairs draws her attention.

She sees a CHILD, alone in the deep shadows.

SUSAN

Hello?

The boy steps back into the darkness of the hall.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Jesse, stay here. I need you to  
pull yourself together right now.  
Come on! Give me your fucking gun!

Torres, shaken, hands her the revolver. He lowers his head, still in agony.

TORRES

Be careful, Susan.

She nods and goes up the stairwell, the gun in her shaky hands.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Susan steps into the dark hallway. She sees doors on each side going down the narrow hall. The boy is nowhere to be seen.

She tries the handle on one door, but it is locked. She moves on to another room. Once again, locked.

At the third door she is about to try the handle when she senses something. She looks down the hall.

She sees the silhouette of an infant, standing at the end.

Thunder roars and the lightning cracks nearby, throwing glaring light on the small figure. She sees that it has horrible burns over most of it's body.

The child's face is a mask of blood and pus, an open sore. Part of the mouth is gone, revealing gums underneath and part of the jawbone.

It speaks with a guttural voice.

CHILD

Auntie?

Susan screams.

The thing starts coming down the hall towards her.

Frantically, Susan turns the handle but her hand slips. She pushes against the door but it won't budge. She tries the handle again, slipping, unable to get a good grip.

As the infant creature gets closer, Susan puts the gun up, aiming it at the child. The gun shakes in her hand. Tears come down her face.

SUSAN

Stop! Stop!

But the child-thing continues advancing on her. She shoots. The bullet lifts the small body and slams it back, onto the floor.

Susan sobs, still holding the pistol. She kneels down in front of the body.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

Suddenly, the thing stirs and begins to stand up.

Susan screams and turns back to the door. She still can't get the handle turned.

A hand touches her shoulder. She screams, and turns quickly, almost firing the gun.

Torres holds his hands up.

TORRES

Whoa!

SUSAN

Oh my God! I almost killed you.

TORRES

I heard a shot.

Susan gestures to the hallway, but the creature is gone.

SUSAN

I... I shot this, this thing! Oh my God it looked like, like... Joey only.... dead. Didn't you see it? It was right there coming at me just a second ago.

TORRES

Relax. I believe you. After all that's happened, I almost *expect* crazy shit.

They both kind of laugh at that, relieving the tension. Jesse takes the gun out of her hand.

TORRES (CONT'D)

I'll take that.

SUSAN

Come on, Jesse, help me with this door.

Torres grunts with effort, but manages to open the door.

He shines his flashlight in the room.

TORRES

Looks empty.

He calls in.

TORRES (CONT'D)

Hello? Is anyone here?

Suddenly Susan gasps. In the corner is a body, the body of an older woman wearing a blue robe, hunched over, back facing them at a crazy angle.

SUSAN

Oh my God! Mel! Mel!

Susan pulls on the body, turning it around. She screams as she realizes it's her Aunt Ruth, her neck slashed from ear to ear, almost decapitated.

Susan backs away, screaming. Torres crouches down and hugs her from behind, trying to block her vision. She fights him, pushing him away.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

That fucking asshole!

Susan shouts into the darkness.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What have you done with my sister, you son of a bitch? You're a fucking coward! Those kids were right! You're a fucking pussy!

A super loud throbbing noise and the house begins to shake. Pictures fall off the wall.

Torres grabs Susan's hand and pulls her to her feet.

TORRES

Come on, let's go!

SUSAN

No! Not without my sister! Come on Barnett, you fucking lunatic, show your face!

Susan stands up and almost falls down again, hanging on to the shaking wall. She runs into the hallway, trying all of the doors.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Come on, Jesse! You try the doors on that side!

All of the doors open and close at the same time, slamming loudly, the floors buckling.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Fuck you, Barnett! Fuck you, you bastard!

Torres, hanging on for dear life on the threshold of one of the rooms, calls back to Susan. He has to shout to be heard over the noise of the crumbling house.

TORRES

Susan! In here!

Susan crosses the hall just as a piece of the ceiling gives way and crashes down, barely missing her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Susan holds on to the door jamb at the entrance to the room, she sees the figure of a woman on the bed, covered in a comforter.

SUSAN

Mel!

She stumbles to her sister and pulls back the blanket. Melanie is in shock, wide-eyed but unresponsive, drool running down her face.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God!

Torres runs over and helps pick up Melanie. She is dead weight and difficult to lift. They head towards the hallway, banging off the walls as the house collapses in the violent quake.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

They stumble down the stairs as the house just caves in, piece by piece, windows cracking and plaster falling.

At the bottom, Melanie stirs in Jesse's arms.

MELANIE

Where am I?

SUSAN

Mel! Don't worry, Sis, I'm here!

Melanie looks at Susan, trying to connect the dots. Suddenly, she looks beyond Susan and screams.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aunt Ruth, covered in blood, sits on the sofa. She is breast feeding the monster child, half of his face missing.

Melanie screams.

SUSAN

It's not real!

Ruth looks up and smiles, blood pouring out of her wounded throat. Suddenly the roof caves in bringing most of the second floor down on them.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Come on!

Susan leads them out the front door. They run a few steps and then, exhausted, they fall on the grass.

EXT. HILLSIDE LAWN - NIGHT

They look back at the house as it collapses in on itself.

Melanie cries on Susan's shoulder. Torres is completely spent, the gun slips from his hand into the tall grass.

The skies open up and it starts raining again.

Susan looks up.

Barnett is standing between them and slope down to the road. He walks slowly into the light.

BARNETT

I never did like that house. Too many bad memories. Hello, Jesse. Good to see you again. How's your daddy? Please tell him that I send my regards. On the other hand, I think I'll go tell him myself.

Torres groans and hurls himself at Barnett. He reaches for his gun but its not in the holster. He looks back and sees it in the grass.

Barnett steps to one side and pulls out a long knife which he had hidden in one hand. He stabs Jesse in the side.

Jesse's eyes go wide and he lets out an anguished whimper.

Barnett grabs Jesse behind the neck and pulls him closer until their faces are almost touching.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

There, there, now.

He pulls on Jesse bringing him down hard on the knife. Torres convulses.

SUSAN

No! No! You motherfucker!

Barnett drops Jesse and turns to face Susan. The rain continues to fall hard and Susan is shocked, soaked and pissed. She picks up the gun laying in the grass.

She raises it and shoots at Barnett. Three shots. Bang! Bang! Bang!

He looks down at himself, sees that he is shot. The smile disappears from his face. He looks up, sad and pleading.

BARNETT

You... you've killed me.

Susan holds the gun out, her hands shaking, the rain falling hard on her.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

You've... you've...

Suddenly he stands up straight and laughs.

BARNETT (CONT'D)

---you've been a bad, bad girl!

Susan recoils in shock. She shoots the gun again. One of the bullets hits Barnett in the face, tearing away most of his right cheek. He swipes it with the back of his hand.

Barnett just laughs and limps away into the darkness, disappearing into the fog.

Mel grabs Susan from behind and drags her down the hill. They stumble together in the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Susan sits at her sister's bedside, reading a book.

Melanie opens her eyes and turns her head.

MELANIE

How long was I out?

SUSAN

Just a few hours this time.

MELANIE

Oh my God. I need to get back to work.

SUSAN

Soon, sis, soon. For now you have to take it slow and easy. The sheriff came around asking questions. I didn't tell him much.

Susan shifts in her chair.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I, I feel like what happened isn't real. It can't be real. And there's no way I can even begin to explain it to anyone. They'll think I'm crazy.

MELANIE

Hey, I was there too, remember? You're not in this alone.

SUSAN

No, Mel, we can't tell them what really happened. It's too, too fucking much. It would ruin your career for sure. No, we have to work out a story and we have to do it now. I don't think we have much time before Sheriff Asshole shows up again. He doesn't look like the type to give up easily.

Melanie nods and Susan takes out her notebook.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Okay, I've been thinking about this. First, we have to say you were kidnapped after your car broke down. You don't know who did it or where they took you. Whoever it was, they... they put a bag over your head or knocked you out or something.

MELANIE

Whoa, wait a minute, Suzie. We can bullshit and lie all we want but what about that murderer? What if he's still out there somewhere?

SUSAN

I shot him three times, Mel. He must be dead. He has to be.

Susan looks away, not convinced at all by her own words.

MELANIE

Okay, so I was kidnapped by two guys. They knocked me out, covered my head and put me in a truck or van...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. L.A. FLOWER MARKET - DAY

Susan buys flowers from Mr. Kim.

EXT. L.A. STREET - DAY

Susan drives her car through the city. It is getting dark outside.

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

She lugs the flowers up the stairs and lets herself in.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

She stands in the shower, face up, letting the hot water hit her.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Susan sits in bed watching TV. She flips the channels.

She stops when she sees a structure fire on one of the news channels. A TV FIELD REPORTER is standing with a microphone in his hands. Behind him firefighters scramble to put out the blaze.

FIELD REPORTER

---say the fire started sometime around three in the morning and spread very quickly. There were approximately one hundred patients here at Bramfield and the fire department is now officially reporting that there were no survivors.

(MORE)

## FIELD REPORTER (CONT'D)

If that is true then this makes it  
the single deadliest structure fire  
in American history...

Susan sees something behind the reporter so she inches closer to the TV. Behind him about ten feet away, a man comes into the picture and stares at the camera. He is blurry but unmistakable.

Susan gasps as she realizes that it is Barnett.

She sits up on the bed, shaking her head in disbelief.

Barnett shifts and appears to look straight at her through the TV.

He puts a finger to his lips and smiles.

Suddenly, Susan grabs her head. The ear-splitting, throbbing, pounding noise returns.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Susan screams.

FADE OUT.