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THE HOUSE ON TRADD STREET

SCREENPLAY

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LEGACY CREATIONS

Marietta, GA 30062

Based upon the novel

By

Karen White

FADE IN

SUPERIMPOSE ON SCREEN: CHARLESTON 2010

EXT. CHARLESTON, S.C. - SPRING MORNING.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT - BEAUTIFULLY RESTORED HOME AFTER HOME OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH OF BROAD. CAMERA MOVES TO A DILAPIDATED CHARLESTON SINGLE HOUSE, TURNED PERPENDICULAR TO THE STREET - ORNATE BLACK IRON FENCE - ALL IN NEED OF REPAIR.

CLOSE ON a woman's well manicured hand on the fence gate.

MOVE to face of **MELANIE MIDDLETON**, 39,

FULL REVEAL a beautiful, exquisitely dressed woman in a silk suit, designer heels and a leather business portfolio tucked under one arm.

MELANIE
 (frowning)
 Sighs disapprovingly
 (under her breath)
 Ugh. I hate these old relics.

She hears a **RHYTHMIC CREAKING SOUND** and looks towards the back of the house. She raises the latch and walks through, carefully placing her steps to avoid the weeds and cracks. The sound becomes more pronounced as she approaches.

WIDE SHOT. Rear garden of the old house, equally as run down, overgrown. A shadow falls over a large, dry, ornate fountain topped with a statue of a cupid relieving himself. It is overgrown with thick weeds and a few remaining flowers. **THREE LARGE ROSE BUSHES BLOOM PROFUSELY.**

CLOSE ON Melanie shivers, straightens her back, turns to look up at the 2nd level of the house where a gray shadow shimmers in one of the windows, then dissolves as a gust of wind blows Melanie's hair.

POV Melanie the rose bushes, sway gently in the breeze.

MELANIE (cont'd)
 (surprised)
 Oh

TRACK TO a rope swing hanging from a large branch of an ancient Live Oak tree as it moves back and forth as if someone is swinging. The hazy image of a woman, **LOUISA VANDERHORST**, appears behind the swing.

She is about 29 years old; beautiful; dressed in expensive period clothes from 1929. Her expression one of utter sadness. She stops the swing, looks at Melanie and dissolves into thin air. Melanie hugs her portfolio close; turns and quickly walks back to the entrance of the house; looking behind her once to see the swing still and no one there.

Melanie stands at the front door; shivers; pulls herself together and rings the doorbell. A short time passes. The **LOCK IS UNDONE**. Door opens to reveal **NEVIN VANDERHORST**, aged 85, tall, elegantly dressed, smiling.

MELANIE

Mr. Vanderhorst? I'm Melanie Middleton with Henderson House Realty. We spoke on the phone yesterday.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

I saw you in the garden.

MELANIE

Umm, yes. I hope you don't mind. I wanted to get a good look at the lot.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

Did you see her?

MELANIE

What? See who?

NEVIN VANDERHORST

The lady pushing the swing.

Taken aback, she recovers quickly.

MELANIE

No. Were you expecting someone?

Nevin steps back, smiling, opening the door with a courtly sweep of his hand.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

Won't you come in? Let's sit in the drawing room. I'll get us some coffee.

MELANIE

Thank you. That's not necessary.

Nevin closes the door and motions her to follow him into the drawing room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Melanie's POV as she quickly studies the interior. It is as run down as the exterior. She follows Nevin into the drawing room; careful not to touch anything; wrinkling her nose; frowning; taking in all the repairs that will need to be made by anyone crazy enough to buy the crumbling mansion.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

Excuse me. I'll just be a minute.
Won't you please have a seat.

He exits. Melanie nods and resumes her perusal of the room. Sheets cover most of the furnishings with the exception of an enormous antique grandfather clock. A small black and white dog (King Charles Spaniel or part Havanese) is curled up on one of the uncovered chairs.

Melanie moves to one of the floor-to-ceiling windows, pushing back a faded drapery panel. As she does so, she notices a series of pencil marks on the wall beside the window. She looks closely.

CLOSE ON a series of pencil marks at intervals from the baseboard up the wall with notations indicating height and the year starting with 1926 (age 1) and the letters "MBG". The marks end at about 4 feet with the year 1929.

Nevin returns carrying a tray with two cups of coffee in china cups and a plate of pecan pralines. He pulls covers off some furniture and places the tray on a table.

NEVIN VANDERHORST (cont'd)

Those are mine - me - my mother
marked my growth

MELANIE

But aren't you Nevin Vanderhorst?

NEVIN VANDERHORST

Yes. M B G stands for My Best Guy.
Her pet name for me.

Melanie nods. Nevin indicates for her to sit in an antique Sheraton arm chair. As she moves from the window, she notices a photograph

CLOSE ON SEPIA TONE PHOTOGRAPH c.1929 of a boy, about 4 years old dressed in clothing from 1929 (short pants), in an ornate silver frame.

NEVIN VANDERHORST (cont'd)
That's me. I was 4. My mother loved
taking photographs.

Melanie nods. Sits. Nevin offers her a cup of coffee and she spoons four cubes of sugar into the cup with a splash of cream and helps herself to a praline, placing it on another plate. Nevin watches, smiling. Melanie sips her coffee.

NEVIN VANDERHORST (cont'd)
The roses you saw in the garden -
they're called Louisa Roses, named
for my mother. This is the only
place in the world you can find them
now.

(pause)
Do you garden, Miss Middleton?

MELANIE
Um, no. I mean, I know what a rose
is and what a daisy looks like but
that's pretty much it...

Mr. Vanderhorst, my real estate
company is very interested in
obtaining the listing on your home.

Melanie sets her cup down and pulls out a brochure from her portfolio, holding it out to Nevin. He ignores it.

NEVIN VANDERHORST
You're Augustus Middleton's
granddaughter. Your granddaddy and my
daddy were at Harvard Law together.
Augustus was best man at my father's
wedding.

(another pause as he
studies her)
They had some sort of falling out
when I was very young. Never spoke to
one another again.

Melanie's leg begins to twitch. She puts her hand on it to stop it and puts a brave smile on her face; her hopes of obtaining the listing sinking fast.

NEVIN VANDERHORST (cont'd)
You favor him a great deal. I never
met your father but I've seen photos
of him - and your mother - in the
papers.

MELANIE

Mr. Vanderhorst, I've got another appointment, so if we could...

NEVIN VANDERHORST

(interrupting)

Your grandfather had a legendary sweet tooth, too. (Beat)
Do you like old houses, Ms. Middleton?

MELANIE

(caught off guard)

Well, they're old, lots of character...what I mean is... they're very sought after in today's market...as you probably know, prices in the historic district have increased dramatically...

Melanie stops, knowing she is blabbering, takes a sip of coffee

MELANIE (cont'd)

Mr. Drayton, your lawyer, contacted my firm about the listing...

As she speaks, Nevin gets up and walks to one of the windows, looking out to the garden. Melanie takes the opportunity to bite into one of the pralines.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

I was born in this house, Miss Middleton. I've lived here all my life; as did my father, grandfather and his grandfather before him. Vanderhorsts have lived here since 1848.

(long pause, he
breathes deeply,
sighs)

I'm the only one left. All those generations; selling silver and jewelry just to keep it going...

This house is a piece of history, Ms. Middleton.

Nevin begins to sway, grabs a table for support. Melanie jumps up, steadying him.

MELANIE
Should I call a doctor?

Nevin waives her away; regains his composure.

NEVIN VANDERHORST
(anxiously, almost
demanding)
Did you see her? In the garden? Did
you see her? She only appears to the
people she approves of.

MELANIE
(pauses, looks into
his eyes, take a
deep breath)
Yes. Yes. I saw her...

NEVIN VANDERHORST
Good. Good. That's very good.
Thank you for coming Ms. Middleton.
I have a few things to do before my
lawyer arrives.

Nevin pulls a linen napkin from the tray and wraps the plate
of pralines, handing it to Melanie.

MELANIE
But...but we haven't discussed...
I can't take your plate...

NEVIN VANDERHORST
Never you mind. It will be back
amongst its things soon enough.

Nevin leans over and gently gives her a kiss on the cheek,
pressing her hand holding the pralines. Melanie is
surprised at her emotional response.

MELANIE
But...I...Thank you.

Nevin takes her elbow, guides her towards the front door,
opening it

NEVIN VANDERHORST
Thank you my dear. You've done this
old man a world of good today.

Melanie smiles, realizing the meeting is over and she hasn't
gotten what she came for, reaches out her hand as they walk
towards the door

MELANIE

Goodbye, Mr. Vanderhorst. It's been
a pleasure meeting you.

NEVIN VANDERHORST

No my dear, the pleasure was all
mine.

Nevin shuts the door. Melanie looks around with regret.
She looks towards the garden, hearing the **SOUND OF THE
SWING.**

EXT. 6:30 A.M. ESTABLISHMENT SHOT - HIGH RISE APARTMENT
BUILDING SEVERAL DAYS LATER

INT. MELANIE MIDDLETON'S SPARSELY BUT EXPENSIVELY FURNISHED
APARTMENT - UNADORNED WHITE WALLS - WHITE WALL-TO-WALL
CARPET - BLACK LEATHER SLEEK ITALIAN SOFA - CHROME/GLASS
COCKTAIL TABLE - EAMES CHAIR.

TRACK TO BEDROOM. WINDOWS LINE ONE WALL WITH SHEER WHITE
DRAPERIES IN WHITE WITH SILVER SLUBBING - KING SIZE WHITE
UPHOLSTERED, TAILORED HEADBOARD - DARK GRAY WALLS -
CONTEMPORARY NIGHT TABLES - GLASS LAMPS - WHITE WALL-TO-WALL
CARPET.

CLOSE ON RINGING CELL PHONE ON NIGHT TABLE.

TRACK TO BED WHERE MELANIE SLEEPS.

She hears the phone; reaches for her eyeglasses; puts them
on; grabs phone.

MELANIE

Damn! 6:30!

Melanie swipes the ringing phone

INTERCUT telephone conversation

MELANIE (cont'd)

Hello?

NANCY FLAHERTY (late 40s-mid 50s) stands in her kitchen,
dressed in golf attire, holding a cup of coffee

NANCY FLAHERTY

Hi Melanie. Sorry to call you so
early. Mr. Henderson said it was
important.

(MORE)

NANCY FLAHERTY (cont'd)

Don't know why he didn't call you himself... 'cept he knows I always have an early tee on Saturdays...

Did I wake you?

MELANIE

No Nancy. I had to get up to answer the phone.

NANCY

Okay. Good. Mr. Henderson scheduled a meeting for you with Mr. Drayton this morning - 9 o'clock and he says you're to be prompt. Something to do with Mr. Vanderhorst's estate.

MELANIE

Mr. Vanderhorst's estate? Oh...that must mean he passed. He was so kind...

NANCY

Yeah. Seems he died in his sleep.

MELANIE

Oh. I just saw him a couple of days ago. Did he mention why Mr. Drayton wants to see me?

NANCY

You know if I had that information I'd pass it on, right?

MELANIE

Yeah. Sorry. I'll be there. Thanks Nancy.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. EXT. CHARLESTON HISTORIC DISTRICT -
BRASS PLAQUE ON SIDE OF BUILDING: DRAYTON, DRAYTON &
DRAYTON ATTORNEYS AT LAW

INT. LAW OFFICES - VENERABLE ESTABLISHED FIRM - VERY "OLD"
CHARLESTON - CONFERENCE ROOM.

Seated around the large mahogany table are **JONATHAN DRAYTON, SR.; JONATHAN DRAYTON, II.** both in well tailored business suits and **MS. GIBSON,** their secretary. Melanie, professionally attired, is seated at the head of the table. She sips her coffee to still her fingers.

CLOSE ON Melanie's right leg, twitching. She moves a hand to still it.

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
Ms Middleton. Thank you for coming. I apologize for asking you here on a Saturday morning but this situation is highly...irregular.

MELANIE
Situation?

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
Yes. You see, Mr. Vanderhorst, God rest his soul, was not only an old client of this firm - he was also a dear friend of my father.

Jonathan nods in the direction of his father, the senior Mr. Drayton, who nods to Melanie. Melanie looks from one to the other, completely in the dark.

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II (cont'd)
(clearing his throat)
I understand you went to see Mr. Vanderhorst two days ago to discuss listing his house. Is that correct?

Melanie nods yes.

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II (cont'd)
Did he give you any indication that he wanted to sell his house?

MELANIE
No. I don't think it ever crossed his mind. I don't know why he even made the appointment. I figured he just wanted some company. He was a lovely man.

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR.
Do you recall what you did speak about, Ms. Middleton?

The two men exchange a look then both look at Melanie. She looks directly at each one of them, annoyed.

MELANIE
What's this all about? Did he decide to give me the listing after all?

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
Do you like old houses, Melanie?

MELANIE
No. Actually, I don't. They're a huge waste of money. Always needing work.

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
But your mother grew up on Legare Sreet - in the Prioleau house?

MELANIE
Yes, but...

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
And didn't she sell it after your grandmother died?

MELANIE
Yes, but...what is this all about?

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II
Did that cause some resentment. Do you feel that you somehow missed out on what you were entitled to?

MELANIE
Entitled to?

Melanie having enough, stands.

MELANIE (cont'd)
What is going on? What does my mother's house have to do with the Vanderhorst listing?

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR.
(standing)
I'm sorry Ms. Middleton. Won't you please let me explain.

Both sit back down.

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR. (cont'd)
I'm actually still in a bit of shock myself at the sudden passing of my dear friend and it's important that everything be made clear. I'm sure you'll understand once you hear what Mr. Vanderhorst has decided. We simply need to clarify there was no coercion...

MELANIE

Coercion? I'm not in the habit of twisting people's arms, gentlemen. Do I have the listing or not?

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II

Well, actually no. (Beat)

It appears Mr. Vanderhorst has left his house and his entire estate to you.

MELANIE

What? No. That's not possible.

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR.

Yes. Ms. Middleton. I drew up the papers myself just the other day. He was most insistent.

Jonathan Drayton, II nods to Ms. Gibson, who stands and walks over to Melanie with a sealed envelope and places it on the table in front of her.

MS. GIBSON

Would you like more coffee, Ms. Middleton?

MELANIE

No. Thank you.

This is insane. His relatives will contest this...

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR.

I assure you, Nevin was completely sane. He has no living relatives. The property is yours, Ms. Middleton. He gave me that letter by way of explanation.

Melanie, shocked, looks at the envelope in front of her and at the two men around the table.

MELANIE

I don't want this. There's nothing in this letter that could make me change my mind. The house is practically derelict. I can't afford it.

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II

Actually, Ms. Middleton, you can.
(MORE)

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II (cont'd)

Mr. Vanderhorst's estate is quite substantial. He established a trust to ensure that the money is spent on the restoration of the house and gardens. You will also be able to draw on the funds for living expenses - as long as you live in the house. The trust will remain in effect until your death.

MELANIE

A trust? Who's the Trustee?

JONATHAN DRAYTON SR.

Your father, Colonel James Middleton.

MELANIE

What? No, that's not possible. I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years. He isn't capable of handling something like this...

Can I just refuse it - walk away?

JONATHAN DRAYTON, II

I suppose. However, I don't believe Mr. Vanderhorst made this decision lightly. We've sent a letter to your father at his last known address.

Miss Middleton, Nevin's house was the child he never had. Please read his letter and take some time to consider.

Melanie stands; followed by everyone else. She gathers her things, puts the envelope into her purse.

MELANIE

Thank you, Gentlemen. I'll be in touch.

EXT. CHARLESTON HISTORIC DISTRICT - ESTABLISHMENT SHOT
STREET SIGN OF TRADD ST. - LATER SAME DAY

Melanie is walking down Tradd Street towards the home she visited a few days ago. As she gets closer, the **SOUND OF THE SWING** begins. Melanie stops; listens; shakes her head; looks ahead and sees a pale, young girl, almost hidden behind a large bush, holding out her hand. She looks very sad and her arm is covered in sores. Melanie gasps; stops; looks at the girl.

We see that she is actually a hazy figure, almost translucent and dressed in clothes from the mid 1800s. She fades into the air. A gust of wind picks up.

MELANIE

(muttering)

Why can't you just leave me alone?

Melanie looks up at the sky and makes a beeline through the gate onto the piazza. She sits in a rocker; takes a deep breath, removes the letter from her bag; opens it

We hear the voice of Nevin as she reads and reacts:

NEVIN VANDERHORST (V.O.)

My dear Miss Middleton,

I know you must be reading this with some shock. I apologize, but this house is meant for you.

As the old adage says: you should stop to smell the roses. And your new house has some beautiful roses.

MELANIE

But I don't want any roses! I don't want this house!

NEVIN VANDERHORST (CONT'D)

I am leaving you my house as a father would leave his child in the care of a guardian. I saw you looking in dismay at the restoration work needed. I have not had the energy or the good health these last years to see to it myself. But I do have the funds.

MELANIE

But I hate old houses! Why? Why me?

NEVIN VANDERHORST

I think it important that you know something of the house's history. Yankee officers were quartered here during the Civil War and the house served as a hospital during the yellow fever epidemics in the 1800s. The Vanderhorst women nursed strangers and dressed the dead in the foyer.

(MORE)

NEVIN VANDERHORST (cont'd)

They sent men off to war and kept food on the table. They were like the foundations of this house-too strong to be swayed by war, pestilence, or ruin.

You are like those women and I believe that is why my mother showed her approval of you.

My mother loved this house almost as much as she loved me. It is said she deserted us when I was a young boy. But there's more to that story, and maybe fate put you in my life to learn the truth so that she might finally find peace.

I know this gift doesn't sit easily on your shoulders.

Reaction from Melanie on that last line

But one must be patient, dear, for all good things will be revealed.

God bless you, Melanie. All of my final hopes rest with you.

Melanie folds the letter, returning it to the envelope and back into her bag. She sighs; stands. The sound of the **ROPE SWING** has begun. Hearing it, she leaves the piazza and walks into the backyard, stopping suddenly.

POV MELANIE looking at the swing.

A hazy Louisa Vanderhorst, smiling and laughing, stands behind the swing which is no longer empty. Holding tightly to the ropes is **4 YEAR OLD NEVIN**, his mouth open in laughter as his mother pushes him in the swing. (He should look **exactly** like the boy in the photo frame that Melanie noticed on her earlier visit, dressed in those clothes). A gentle breeze rustles the rosebushes. Louisa raises a hand and acknowledges Melanie's presence and then both Louisa and 4 year old Nevin dissolve into the stillness of the garden.

Melanie reaches up and wipes tears from her cheeks. Then she shivers and looks to the upper window, seeing the grey shadow, an outline of a man. Melanie's breathing becomes labored and she can't take her eyes off the image. A "no" escapes her lips. She begins to back away, finally turning and quickly exiting the garden.

INT. MELANIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING.

Melanie, hair in pony tail, wearing eyeglasses, dressed in athletic shorts, tee shirt, sweater and sox, carries her phone into her ultra-modern kitchen and checks the clock on the coffee maker.

CLOSE ON 6:30 a.m.

BACK TO Melanie as she places her phone on the table and pours a cup of coffee; grabs a pastry, places it on a napkin; adds a heaping spoon of sugar and a splash of cream from the fridge and sits at the table, scrolling through her messages.

Melanie glances at the clock once again.

CLOSE ON 6:59 a.m.

She picks up her phone and calls **SOPHIE WALLEN** (age 35-40). We hear the phone ring several times before Sophie picks up.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. SOPHIE WALLEN'S BEDROOM.

Sophie is asleep in an antique four poster bed, under several layers of covers topped by an antique quilt. Her naturally curly hair is splayed about wildly. She hears her phone, opens one eye, groans, curses, reaches out with one hand to her bedside table; locates her phone; checks the incoming call, groans again and answers.

SOPHIE

Mrmphm...

MELANIE

Hi, Sophie. It's Melanie. I need you to come look at a house with me.

SOPHIE

Mrmphm

MELANIE

Can you meet me in an hour?

SOPHIE

What the hell are you doing calling me at 7 o'clock on a Sunday?

MELANIE

Sorry. I thought you'd be up by now.

SOPHIE

No you didn't. Call me at noon.

MELANIE

Okay. No. Wait. I'm sorry, but this is really important.

SOPHIE

All right. What's this all about?

MELANIE

Well..it seems I've inherited a house. An **old** house - south of Broad.

Curiosity peaked, Sophie sits up, fully vested in the call, grabs a pen and pad from bedside table.

SOPHIE

What's the address?

MELANIE

55 Tradd

SOPHIE

The Vanderhorst house?

(screeching)

You inherited the Vanderhorst house?

MELANIE

Yeh, seems so. But I wouldn't get too excited. Wait til you see its condition.

SOPHIE

(seriously excited)

I'll meet you there at 8.

Sophie and Melanie hang up their phones.

EXT. 55 TRADD ST. - LATER THAT MORNING.

Melanie and Sophie stand just inside the gate looking at the house. Sophie is dressed in a gauzy skirt with a mis-matched top; comfortable clog-type shoes. Her mass of curly hair has been quickly pulled up onto her head and held in place with a pair of chopsticks. She doesn't wear make-up - but she doesn't need it - she is naturally pretty. She is the epitome of **Bohemian**. Melanie wears jeans, tennis shoes and a Lily Pulitzer style blouse and somehow still looks elegantly pulled together.

SOPHIE

I don't care what condition it's in - even if the roof's caving in - you have to keep it!

This house appears in almost every textbook on architecture I've ever read.

MELANIE

I know about old houses, Sophie. I sell them, remember?

SOPHIE

You know enough to sell them but you don't know anything about them.

Sophie begins to walk towards the piazza; stops. Melanie almost bumps into her.

SOPHIE (cont'd)

I thought you said the house was empty.

MELANIE

It's supposed to be. Why?

SOPHIE

I thought I saw a curtain move.

MELANIE

Probably just the wind blowing through one of the cracks in the walls!

Sophie climbs the steps to the piazza, followed by Melanie. She stops. Studying the house.

MELANIE (cont'd)

I'm told Mr. Vanderhorst left me plenty of money to fix this place up. It's all tied up in a trust...

SOPHIE

Mr. Vanderhorst was a very clever man.

MELANIE

Well, that debatable. He made me his heir. I don't want this. You know how I feel about old houses.

Melanie reaches into her bag and pulls out the letter from Nevin Vanderhorst. She hands it to Sophie.

MELANIE (cont'd)

You may as well read this Professor.

Sophie takes the letter; sits on a rocker; opens and reads the letter. Melanie paces.

SOPHIE

Hey, did you read this part - about his mother abandoning him? "*maybe fate put you in my life to learn the truth so that she might finally find peace.*"

MELANIE

Yes. Not sure what it means, though.

SOPHIE

He was abandoned by his mother - just like you.

Melanie looks away, reliving the pain of her abandonment by her own mother at the age of 7. The sound of the **ROPE SWING** in the back garden starts. Melanie looks up and towards the back, then at Sophie - who doesn't hear anything.

SOPHIE (cont'd)

There's some story - can't quite put my finger on it - something about...

Sophie wrinkles her forehead, trying to remember the story.

MELANIE

Do you hear that?

SOPHIE

Hear what?

MELANIE

The sound of a rope swing.

SOPHIE

(she studies Melanie,
understanding)

No. Hon. Sorry. Nothing.

Melanie sighs, looks away, walking to the end of the piazza.

SOPHIE

Oh, yes! I remember!

Sophie jumps out of her chair and joins Melanie

SOPHIE

Something happened in the 1920s. Some sort of love triangle...a woman who supposedly ran off with her lover, abandoned her husband and little boy.

MELANIE

Huh. That's interesting.
Want to see inside?

Melanie reaches into her bag, realizes she doesn't have a key to the house.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Shoot! I don't have a key. I'm sorry...

Just as she's speaking, the front door is opened by **MRS. HOULIHAN**, Nevin's housekeeper, holding his dog under one arm.

MRS. HOULIHAN

Why y'all standing out here in this heat? Come on inside.

CUT TO INT. FOYER

MELANIE

(holding out her hand)
I'm Melanie...

MRS. HOULIHAN

I know who you are! You're the spittin' image of your granddaddy!

MELANIE

You knew my grandfather?

MRS. HOULIHAN

Of course not! How old do you think I am? Before Mr. Nevin passed, he showed me a photo of his daddy and your granddaddy - taken on his daddy's wedding day.

MELANIE

Oh! I'd love to see it! May I?

MRS. HOULIHAN

(laughing)

Sure, honey. But you don't need to be asking me - seein' as how you own the place!

SOPHIE

(Extending her hand)

I'm Dr. Wallen from the College of Charleston. And you would be?

MRS. HOULIHAN

Oh, dear me! My manners! I'm Ms. Houlihan, the housekeeper.

(shaking Sophie's hand and then

indicating the dog)

And this is **RHETT BUTLER**.

Melanie glances around the old house.

MELANIE

The housekeeper?

MRS. HOULIHAN

Now, don't you be jumpin' to no conclusions! I kept the kitchen, bathrooms and Mr. Nevin's bedrooms sparkling clean - and anythin' else I could clean without the fear of breakin' any of his precious antiques.

As Mrs. Houlihan speaks, Sophie walks into the drawing room, checking it out.

SOPHIE

These floors are original cypress! Look at those windows! That mantle is stunning - classic Charleston. There's some water damage...

MRS. HOULIHAN

I was just goin' to take Mr. Rhett for his walk, poor dear. He's missin' his master. Hardly eaten since he passed.

(She holds the dog out to Melanie)

Here! You take him. He's yours now.

MELANIE

No! No! NO! Nobody said anything
about a dog!

Mrs. Houlihan forcefully but politely places the dog in
Melanie's arms.

MRS. HOULIHAN

Well, they ain't nobody else can take
him! My husband's allergic. He's
such a sweet thing. You two'll get
along just fine.

Sophie has been walking about, taking everything in. She has
climbed the stairs and disappeared. We hear her calling
from somewhere upstairs and then she appears at the top of
the stairs calling down to Melanie.

SOPHIE

Oh my God! Melanie! You won't believe
what's in the attic! It's a treasure
trove. Thankfully, most everything is
covered because there's a hole in the
roof and a ton of pigeon droppings!

Sophie comes down the stairs, joining them.

SOPHIE (cont'd)

Melanie - you're the luckiest girl in
the world. You own all of this!

Mrs. Houlihan pulls a folded note from her pocket, handing
it to Melanie.

MRS. HOULIHAN

Oh, I almost forgot. My first phone
message for you. A gentleman called
'bout an hour ago. Asked for you to
call him. A Colonel James Middleton.
Any relation?

Melanie's eyes widen in shock and surprise. She can't take
anymore. She stares at Sophie and Mrs. Houlihan, ready to
cry. She turns, opens the door and exits holding the dog
under her arm

MELANIE

Yes! He's my father!

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - GARDEN CONTINUOUS

Melanie puts RHETT BUTLER down, holding his leash. He starts barking. Melanie hears the **SOUND of the SWING**.

POV MELANIE sees the swing with Louisa pushing 4 YEAR OLD NEVIN. The dog runs towards the swing, tail wagging, pulling Melanie by his leash; he stops; sits, looking up. The boy raises his hand and waves at Melanie then looks lovingly at the dog. Then both the woman and boy dissolve. Rhett Butler lays down, whimpering.

Melanie gathers him up in her arms, holding him tightly. She turns and almost runs out of the garden towards the street, overcome. She passes Sophie standing on the steps of the piazza. Sophie looks at her sympathetically.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. INT. MORNING - HISTORIC CHARLESTON - OFFICES OF HENDERSON HOUSE REALTY.

INT. MELANIE'S OFFICE - PRISTINE - MODERN.

CLOSE ON wall a framed **CHARLESTON TODAY** magazine cover with Melanie's face. Caption should read something like: "Melanie Middleton a force to be reckoned with in Charleston real estate."

There should also be awards showing Melanie Middleton: TOP SELLER, etc.

Melanie places a latte and a bag of donuts on her desk; sits; drops her handbag in a drawer; turns on her computer.

CUT TO Door as Nancy Flaherty enters, holding a golf putter in one hand and a stack of pink message notes in the other.

NANCY FLAHERTY

Good morning.

MELANIE

What are you doing here so early?

NANCY FLAHERTY

Mr. H let me leave early Saturday because I had a golf tournament - just making up time. Here you go
(holds out messages)

There's a message from your new client, Mr. Arasi, confirming your afternoon showing.

MELANIE

Yes, the new art professor at the College...interesting guy...

NANCY FLAHERTY

Annd (Beat) three from Jack Trenholm. (she smiles broadly, waving the pink messages)

MELANIE

Who?

NANCY FLAHERTY

Jack Trenholm. The writer. You know, he writes those cold-case true history mystery books. Always on the best seller lists. (Beat) And, he's an absolute Hottie!!!

MELANIE

(unimpressed)

When I was little, my mother's best friend was a Mrs. Trenholm. I don't remember a son.

NANCY FLAHERTY

Well, he called three times yesterday - Sunday. He must be very interested in speaking to you.

MELANIE

Thanks Nancy. I'll call him this morning.

Melanie takes the slips and begins rifling through them. Glancing up, she sees Nancy still standing there.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Don't let me keep you...

NANCY FLAHERTY

You know, if you'd just put yourself out there, you might find you enjoy having a social life.

Nancy gives her a knowing look, smiles and exits. Melanie shakes her head, picks up the phone and calls the number for Jack Trenholm. His **PHONE RINGS AND WE HEAR HIS VOICE**
MESSAGE: *"This is Jack. You know what to do."*

MELANIE

Hello. This is Melanie Middleton with Henderson House Realty returning your call. It's Monday morning; about 7:30. You have the number.

Just then, Nancy walks back in and plops a book down on Melanie's desk, back cover face up with Jack's photo. (Age 36. Very handsome. Tall, well built. Dark hair. Dreamy blue eyes.)

NANCY FLAHERTY

I *Googled* him. Turns out he's single and lives in the French Quarter.

MELANIE

Ooh! You're right! He is a Hottie.

NANCY FLAHERTY

I'll say. He's got one of those faces that says: *I can throw a football, bake a cake, bring you roses, AND make the bed shake!*

MELANIE

Nancy!

NANCY FLAHERTY

And you've got his phone number! Boy, if I was single....

Nancy turns and leaves again. As she gets to the door she turns and indicates for Melanie to pick up the phone.

MELANIE

Oh, what the heck...

Melanie dials Jack's number again. This time after several rings, he picks up

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

JACK TRENHOLM (JACK), 6 feet tall, one gorgeous hunk of a man, is in bed, awakened by the phone.

JACK TRENHOLM

Who the hell is this? Do you have any idea what time it is?

Melanie freezes.

JACK (CONT'D)

Wait..Henderson Realty...

MELANIE

(to herself: shit,
caller I.D. She
tries to disguise
her voice)

One moment please while I connect you
to Ms. Middleton.

Melanie hits the hold button, waits a few seconds, then
connects.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Hello. This is Melanie Middleton.
May I speak with Jack Trenholm,
please?

JACK

Speaking.

MELANIE

I see you called a few times over
the weekend. How can I help you
Mr. Trenholm?

JACK

Thanks for getting back to me.

MELANIE

(picks up the book,
enjoying his photo)

I hope I didn't call too early. You
left three messages, so I assumed it
was important.

JACK

No problem. I had to get up to answer
the phone.

MELANIE

If you'd prefer to call me back...

JACK

And deprive you of the pleasure of
picturing me naked?

MELANIE

Excuse me?
(that's exactly what she has been
doing while looking at his photo)

JACK

Look. I'm sorry. I had a late
night...can we start over?

MELANIE

(long pause; deep
breath)

All right. This is Melanie Middleton
with Henderson House Realty returning
your call.

JACK

Thanks for calling me back, Mellie.

Melanie cringes. She **hates** being called Mellie. It's what
her mother called her.

JACK (cont'd)

I'd like to schedule a meeting with
you to talk about real estate. Why
don't we meet to discuss it - say
over dinner - tonight?

Melanie does a little "dance" at her desk, her right leg
twitching from excitement.

MELANIE

(hiding her
excitement)

Tonight? I don't know. Let me
check my calendar.

Melanie pushes the hold button; looks at her watch; waits 30
seconds.

Jack rolls his eyes; looks at his watch; after 15 seconds,
he smiles; waits.

Melanie pushes the button to reconnect.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Sorry for the wait. I'll have to
juggle a few things but tonight looks
fine. What's a good time?

JACK

Seven o'clock? I'll pick you up -
just text your address - this is my
cell.

By the way, I think you know my
mother Amelia. Trenholm Antiques.

MELANIE

Yes, I do! And seven sounds good.

JACK

Mellie...

MELANIE

Yes?

JACK

You might want to work on that accent. It was pretty bad!

Jack hangs up with a great big grin. Melanie hangs up embarrassed; fuming.

INT. MELANIE MIDDLETON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Melanie, wearing an expensive black dress, black strappy heels, hair swept up on her head, stands in front of a mirror, holding a string of heirloom pearls up in front of her neck. Diamond stud earrings. Deciding she likes the pearls, she clasps them around her neck just as her **DOORBELL RINGS**. She grabs a black clutch bag from her bed and heads towards her door.

MELANIE'S FRONT DOOR.

Melanie opens the door and Jack is standing on the other side. In contrast to her elegant attire, he is wearing a white button-down shirt outside khaki shorts, sleeves rolled up, and a pair of tan loafers. Each reacts to the others' attire with surprise.

MELANIE

Wait a minute! I forgot my purse.

Melanie quickly shuts the door in his face.

CUT TO Jack's look of complete surprise and delight.

BACK TO Melanie pulls her hair down and runs her fingers through it, turns her head down to add volume, throws it back, removes the pearls, grabs her purse and deposits the pearls into it. Taking a deep breath, she opens the door to a relaxed and smiling Jack. There is an immediate sexual tension between these two.

MELANIE (cont'd)

(extending her hand)

Sorry 'bout that. I'm Melanie Middleton.

JACK
It's nice to meet you, Mellie.
Great dress!

Melanie steps into the hallway and closes the door behind her. They walk to the elevator.

MELANIE
Thanks. And, by the way,
no one calls me Mellie.

JACK
But you look like a Mellie

MELANIE
You called me that before you
ever met me.

JACK
What can I say, I'm very thorough in
my research - it's my job. I saw a
photo of you with your mom and I know
she called you Mellie...

MELANIE
(cutting him off)
I prefer Melanie.

INT. CHARLESTON WATERFRONT - LOCAL SEA FOOD RESTAURANT -
SIGN READS: BLACKBEARD'S BAR & GRILL.

Jack and Melanie sit in a booth, perusing menus.

JACK
You look beautiful. Why'd you
change your hair.

He flashes one of his most charming smiles.

MELANIE
Thank you.
(smoothing her hair)
I decided it looked better down.

JACK
Have you been here before?

MELANIE
No...

JACK

It's been here since before prohibition. Not exactly on the tourist path - which is why I like it. They have the best boiled shrimp I've ever had.

MELANIE

Great.
I love shrimp.

Melanie smiles but she's thinking: "great, I got all dressed up to eat boiled shrimp in this place"

Just then a waitress in a pseudo pirate costume of black fish net stockings, black heeled booties, a very short black skirt over crinoline and a low-cut white full sleeved blouse, tightened with a black corset-like apparatus so as to expose her ample breasts saunters up to the table.

She acknowledges Melanie but directs her full attention to Jack, leaning into him to display her ample wares

WAITRESS

Good evening. I'm Rachelle and I'll be at your service this evening. Can I get you something from the bar?

JACK

A shrimp bucket for two with red potatoes and corn bread - oh, and extra butter.

(to Melanie)

What would you like to drink?

MELANIE

(irritated that he
ordered for them
both)

Water, please. And a glass of Chardonnay.

JACK

(flashes her a
charming smile)

Perfect. And I'll have a coke.
Thanks Rachelle.

WAITRESS
 (practically melting
 at his looks and
 charm)
 You got it. I'll be right back with
 your drinks.

JACK
 So, how do you know Nevin
 Vanderhorst?

MELANIE
 Excuse me?

JACK
 He left you his house. You must
 have known him pretty well.

The waitress brings their drinks. She only has eyes for
 Jack. Melanie has just about had enough.

MELANIE
 I didn't. I went to see him thinking
 he was interested in listing his
 house and the next thing I know, he
 died and left it to me.

JACK
 Wow! That sounds like a great plot
 for a novel! Too bad that's not the
 kind of books I write.
 (beat)
 So, when do you move in?

Rachelle returns with their food and they go silent while it
 is placed on the table.

WAITRESS
 Can I get y'all anything else?

MELANIE
 No. We're good. Thank you.
 (to Jack)
 You really didn't ask me out to
 discuss real estate, did you?

JACK
 Well, sorta. Your house on Tradd -
 that's real estate, isn't it?

MELANIE

Look, I don't think this is going to work. If you want to know about Mr. Vanderhorst's house, I suggest you call Mr. Drayton.

Melanie, irritated, takes a drink of her wine; grimaces; grabs her purse; stands.

MELANIE (cont'd)

I'll call a taxi.

Jack grabs her hand before she can get away.

JACK

I'm sorry. I should have been straight with you. But, you have a tough girl reputation so I figured this was the only way to get you to talk to me.

Melanie's not buying it and moves to go. Jack stands, tightening his grip.

JACK (cont'd)

Seriously, I'm really sorry. We're already here - so's our food - can we just start over and chat a bit.

Melanie pulls her hand away, gives in (he is really quite handsome and charming) and sits back down, followed by Jack.

MELANIE

Okay. But I'm not a biscuit, so stop trying to butter me up.

As for the house, I'm no where near making a decision on it yet.

We are given the passage of time as the food gradually disappears. Shots of Jack and Melanie enjoying their food. The following conversation interspersed with the shots:

JACK

I've got an idea for my next book. It's set in Charleston, 1920s. A supposedly devoted wife and mother runs off with another man - rumored to be her lover - leaving her husband and small child.

Jack looks at Melanie to see her reaction. She's inscrutable.

JACK (cont'd)
I was hoping Mr. Vanderhorst told
you something about it that might
jump start my research.

He smiles that charming smile. Much as Melanie wants to
fight it, she's not immune to the charms of Jack Trenholm.

JACK (cont'd)
I promise it won't be too painful.
You might even have a good time while
I'm squeezing you for info....

Just then Rachelle walks to the next table with a serving of
Mississippi Mud Pie. Melanie see it, eyes lighting up.

MELANIE
All right! But you have to buy
me dessert.

JACK
No problem! Have you ever heard
of a man named Joseph Longo?

MELANIE
Don't think so. Should I know him?

JACK
He's connected to the history of your
house. He was behind most of the
organized crime that took place here
during prohibition. He was
infatuated with Louisa Gibbes.

MELANIE
What does that have to do with
my house?

JACK
Louisa Gibbes married Nevin's father.
According to my research, that didn't
stop Joseph from continuing his
pursuit of her even though he was
married - with three sons.

Sometime after the crash of 29,
Louisa disappeared and so did Joseph
Longo. Rumor was they ran off -
together.

MELANIE
Oh, wow! Did they ever find out what
happened to them?

JACK

Nope. Not a trace of either one.

Melanie's right leg begins to twitch and her hands shake. She places her hands on the table top to still them.

MELANIE

Nevin didn't believe his mother abandoned him. He left me a letter. He said there was more to the story and that he wanted me to find the truth so that she could finally rest in peace.

JACK

Sounds like a ghost story! Have you seen or heard anything?

MELANIE

No, of course not! Why would you ask?

JACK

Well, it's well known your mother was famous for having - I don't know - a "sixth sense". Thought maybe you might have inherited her abilities. It would save me a lot of time if you *could see dead people*.

The turn of the conversation makes Melanie uncomfortable. She grips the edge of the table, turning her fingers white.

MELANIE

I don't think that kind of thing is hereditary.

Jack, see her hands and how uncomfortable she has become, reaches across the table and takes one of her hands.

JACK

They're like ice!

Melanie tries to pull her hands away, but he won't let go, takes them both and rubs to warm them.

JACK (cont'd)

What do you think? Can we work together? If you could give me access to the house, I could help with the restoration work.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

I renovated my condo in the French Quarter, and my parents are a treasure trove of information about Charleston and all things old.

(beat)

I'd get the information I need for my book and you'll get the answers Mr. Vanderhorst was hoping for.

As Jack is talking a **COMMOTION** begins at the restaurant bar which can be seen from their booth. Suddenly there's a lot of **BOISTEROUS NOISE** from a group of men at the bar. Melanie looks to see what's going on. Jack turns to look.

POV Melanie. A silver-haired, handsome man in his 60s sits at the bar wearing a U.S. Army uniform. He stands precariously, but is drunk and falls. The **LAUGHTER** grows louder and there's the **SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS**.

Melanie stares at the man on the floor as he tries to stand. She stands, grabs her purse and without speaking to Jack, starts towards the bar.

Jack stands and grabs her hand, stopping her

JACK (cont'd)

I don't think you should get involved.

Melanie ignores Jack and walks over to the man who has managed to make it to a standing position while holding onto his stool. Jack follows.

JACK (cont'd)

Mellie, do you know this guy?

MELANIE

Jack Trenholm, meet **COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON**, my father. Daddy, this is Jack Trenholm. He's going to take you home. Now.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Melanie. I'm sorry. I only meant to have just one.

Jack takes the Colonel's arm around his neck, supporting him.

JACK

I've got him, Mellie.

MELANIE

Just make sure he pukes before he gets into your Porsche. I'll take care of the check.

JACK

(pulls out his wallet)

No. Take my wallet, use my AmX. Please.

Melanie takes his wallet and returns to the table. Sits, motions to Rachelle for the check. She takes out her cell phone and dials.

MELANIE

Mr. Drayton. It's Melanie Middleton. I've decided to accept the house.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - GARDEN - MORNING

Melanie is bent down at the fountain, pulling weeds. She wears gardening gloves, jeans, tennis shoes, lightweight long sleeve blouse. Garden tools lay around her. From the pile of weeds, she's been working for a while. There's the usual **sounds of a Charleston Street** on a warm Spring day.

Suddenly her body tenses and she stops, looking up and then around her, sensing a presence. She shivers; sniffs the putrid air; bows her head

MELANIE

(under her breath)

Go away. Just go away.

She looks up at the second story window which is now filled with the dark shadowy form of a man wearing a fedora style hat from the 1920s. Her breathing becomes more labored and she gags from the stench. She stands, pulls off her gloves. She heads toward the house, covering her mouth and nose with her hand. She pulls a key from her pocket and enters the house.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - FOYER.

Melanie stands inside, closes the door, still holding her hand over her nose and mouth to cover the stench that fills the house. She glances up the stairs, grabs the handrail and slowly climbs the stairs.

MELANIE
(softly with
determination)
I'm stronger than you.
I'm stronger than you.

Still speaking her mantra, she stands outside the room where the presence had been and carefully takes the door knob. Turning it, she thrusts the door open quickly, stepping into the room.

INT. NEVIN'S BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Immediately, she can tell that the presence is no longer there. She removes her hand from her face, takes a deep breath, smelling roses

MELANIE
Roses? But how...

POV Melanie. The window where the presence had been. The heavy Damask draperies are almost closed and the window is closed tightly. She walks towards it, noticing a bedside table with old photographs; including an 8x10 of Nevin's father and one of Louisa holding a newborn baby Nevin and of a young Nevin and his mother, Louisa. She picks one up of Louisa holding baby Nevin.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Louisa. Why are you still in the garden? Is that your scent - the roses?

Melanie looks around the room seeking confirmation from Louisa and checking out the room and its furnishings. Looking down at the photograph.

MELANIE (cont'd)
You don't look like a woman who would abandon her child. What happened?

Melanie puts the photo back and looks around the room.

The room, furnished with expensive antiques, has a distinctly masculine feel. An oriental carpet covers the original cypress wood floors.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Oh, my gosh. I own all this!

JACK
(calling from foyer)
Mellie! Where are you?

CLOSE ON BEDSIDE CLOCK. TIME READS 9:45.

MELANIE
Jack? What the hell. I'm up here.
How did you get in?

Melanie leaves the bedroom and heads towards the stairs as Jack climbs towards her. She waits for him at the top.

JACK
You invited me, remember?

MELANIE
Yes. I said 9:30. You're late. And my name's Melanie. Don't you know how to use a doorbell?

JACK
Sorry bout that. Had to help a friend at the library. As for the doorbell, I didn't need to use it. The door was wide open.

MELANIE
Wide open? But...

JACK
(continues as if she hadn't spoken)
You shouldn't do that. There's a lot of valuable stuff in this place. You should keep the alarm set!

MELANIE
There isn't one...I...

JACK
(cutting her off)
Well, that needs to be a priority.

Jack pulls his phone out and opens the Notes app and starts typing.

JACK (cont'd)
I've got a friend in the business. Now that you'll be living here, security would be good, don't you think?

MELANIE
I'm not living here...

JACK
(cutting her off
again)
Didn't you tell me one of the
provisions of the will is that you
have to actually live in the house?

MELANIE
Yeh, assuming it doesn't fall down
around me.

SOPHIE
(calling from the
foyer)
Melanie? Are you here?

MELANIE
Yeh. Be right down, Sophie.
If you're so concerned about
security, why didn't you close
the door?

JACK
I did!

Melanie and Jack exchange puzzled looks and head to the stairs. At the top, they get in each others way and their bodies graze. Melanie almost loses her balance and Jack reaches out for her, steadying her and Jack's lips graze Melanie's face just missing her lips.

They pull apart quickly and look down the stairs to see Sophie looking up at them. They regain their composure and descend.

POV Sophie, looking up the stairs sees both, surprised and appreciative of Jack as the two descend the staircase.

SOPHIE
Well...well (she holds out her hand)
Dr. Sophie Wallen. Pleased to meet
you.

JACK
(taking her hand)
Jack Trenholm. And the pleasure
is all mine.

Sophie blushes, practically melts at his touch.

JACK (cont'd)
I'm very aware of your preservation work, Dr. Wallen.

SOPHIE
Sophie, please. Thank you. The admiration is mutual. Loved *Suicide or Murder: The Death of Napoleon*. Arsenic in the wallpaper! I was blown away! And despite what happened on Night Owl, your book on The Alamo had a lot of merit.

Sophie glances to Melanie who seems confused at the conversation.

SOPHIE (cont'd)
So, how do you two know each other?

JACK	MELANIE
New friends	Practically strangers

SOPHIE (cont'd)
Ah...a little...interlude...

MELANIE
(too defensively) NO!

JACK
Sounds great.

MELANIE
Jack's writing a book on the disappearance of Louisa Vanderhorst. He's here to do research.

There's a KNOCK on the door. Melanie moves to open it and comes face to face with her father, dressed in jeans and a polo shirt.

MELANIE (cont'd)
What are you doing here?

Jack opens the door wider.

JACK
I invited him. I figured he holds the purse strings, he should be here to help inspect the damage and assess what needs to be done. That way, when we ask for money, he'll know what it's for.

MELANIE

When **we** ask for money? (beat,
staring at Jack; angry)
Who the hell are you to invite
people to my house?

JACK

(gives her one of
those disarming
smiles)
You're right. I'm sorry. This is
your house - you call the shots.
(beat)
But, since he's already here...
(extending his hand)
Colonel Middleton, it's a pleasure to
see you again.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

(shaking hands; steps
inside)
The pleasure's all mine. Thanks for
the ride home the other night. I
don't think I could have managed it
on my own.

JACK

Glad I could help. How was your
meeting? (closing the door)

Melanie glances from Jack to her father.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

(glancing towards
Melanie)
Fine. Just fine. I haven't been
drinking Melanie...

MELANIE

(turning away)
Yeh, well, it's still early.

SOPHIE

Colonel Middleton, how are you?

Sophie reaches out her hand and gives him a peck on his
cheek, smiling brightly.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I'm doing real good, dahlin. Real
good. A kiss from you can cure a
thousand ills.

Sophie reaches up and gives him a peck on the other cheek

SOPHIE

Well, then, there! That should be even better! You were at a meeting? That's great news.

Sophie looks over at Melanie, expectantly. She doesn't respond. Instead, she turns to walk away but is stopped dead in her tracks by

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Melanie. It's good to see you. Your mother called last night. She wants to talk to you.

Camera on Melanie's stricken face.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - 7 A.M. - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Sophie, Jack, Colonel Middleton and Melanie are standing around the dining room table. They are joined by **CHAD ARASI (CHAD)** (Mid 30s-early 40s).

Jack and Colonel Middleton stand next to Melanie, who is looking over a spreadsheet on the table.

JACK

You made a spreadsheet?

MELANIE

Yes. It's easier to divvy up the work and make sure everybody gets their lunch break...

JACK

(interrupting)

Lunch break? You scheduled our lunch time? Did you schedule potty breaks, too?

MELANIE

I thought about it!

Melanie looks around the table at everyone as they try to hide the smiles on their faces.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Look, I don't know how it works in the book-writing world, but in my world, being organized is the key to success. (Beat)

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)
So, everyone has their assignments?

CHAD
Before I get started, I'm going to
take our boy here out for his potty
break!

Everyone has a chuckle at this and Sophie walks over to
Chad, nuzzling Rhett

SOPHIE
Mind if I join you?

MELANIE
Chad, I'm so glad you wanted to be a
part of this project, especially
being new in town. And, really, I
can't thank you enough for taking the
little guy off my hands. He seems
really happy with you.

Sophie sneezes several times. Several "Bless you"s are
said.

CHAD
Aww, Melanie, I'm grateful to you.
You found me the perfect home. I've
made new friends. This little guy and
I have already bonded and yea, I
think he likes me!

MELANIE
Okay, everyone, let's get to work.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - NIGHT

Melanie and jack are walking away from jack's Porsche parked
on the street, towards the house.

CUT TO they stand at the front door, which is wide open.

JACK
Mellie! How many times do I have to
tell you to lock the damn door!

MELANIE
I did! I know I did. I dead-bolted
it from the outside with my key.

JACK
Okay. (Whispering) Do you have your
cell phone?

Melanie nods yes in response.

JACK (cont'd)
 Good. Move over to the side of the piazza. If someone runs out, I want you out of site. Call 911. I'm going to check things out.

MELANIE
 Jack...be careful...

Melanie moves to the darkness of the piazza and takes out her phone. The **ROPE SWING begins its creaking** . Melanie acknowledges it, shutting her eyes.

MELANIE (cont'd)
 (muttering)
 Louisa?

CUT TO INT. DRAWING ROOM - LATER SAME NIGHT.

Jack and Melanie stand in the drawing room, together with two of Charleston's finest

OFFICER 1
 Nothing's been taken? You're sure?

MELANIE
 Yes. We checked the house pretty thoroughly and as far as we can tell, everything's in tact.

JACK
 Thank you for coming, Officers.

OFFICER 2
 You folks really should get an alarm system. There's a lot of valuables in this house.

MELANIE
 Thank you. I have an appointment this week with a security company. I'll be sure to have one installed ASAP.

OFFICER 1
 Well, then, we'll be going. If anything turns up missing, just let us know.

MELANIE
 Absolutely. Goodnight.

Jack walks the officers to the door.

BACK TO drawing room. Melanie is sitting on the sofa, legs curled up under her. Jack enters.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Well, that was interesting. I'm tired; going to bed. Thank you for your help this evening.

JACK

Oh, no. I'm not going to let you stay in this big house all by yourself.

MELANIE

I beg your pardon.

JACK

Don't go getting any ideas. Someone tried to get in here this evening. They might come back.

MELANIE

Absolutely not. I can take care of myself. Thank you, but good night.

JACK

You don't understand. I'm staying. I can sleep on this sofa but I'm not leaving you alone.

MELANIE

Suit yourself. I'll get you some blankets and put fresh towels in the bathroom. But just for one night.

Jack gives her one of those charming smiles and starts for the upstairs. Melanie turns at the same time and once again, their bodies come into contact and there's another awkward, charged moment. They separate and Jack does an "after you" gesture.

CUT TO. Next morning. Melanie wearing a pair of silk pajamas under a high necked velvet robe and matching slippers, tiptoes into the drawing room. Jack is asleep on the sofa.

POV Melanie looking at Jack sleeping. She sees the hazy but distinctive shape of a woman (**EMILY'S GHOST**) with long blonde hair kneeling beside Jack. She is looking at him lovingly, her fingers stroking his hair; her blue eyes sad. She turns her gaze towards Melanie as if pleading for help. We can see her hallowed cheeks and dark circles under her eyes. She opens her mouth as if to speak.

We don't actually see Emily's Ghost speak. Her words are transmitted telepathically to Melanie, who responds with great shock.

EMILY'S GHOST

I never stopped loving him. Please tell him I never stopped loving him...I never stopped...(trails away)

Jack reaches a hand up, responding to her touch. Rubs his face and opens his eyes.

POV Jack, looking at Melanie, who appears frozen, shocked, wide-eyed.

JACK

What's wrong? You look like you've seen a ghost!

As he speaks, the image smiles slightly to Melanie and vanishes.

MELANIE

No, I...Jack, is somebody close to you ill?

JACK

Not that I know of, why?

MELANIE

A young woman, blonde, slim?

JACK

(somewhat taken aback)
Nope. What's going on?

MELANIE

It's nothing. Forget it.
How did you sleep?

JACK

Aww, you do care!

Melanie begins to protest. Jack just cuts her off

JACK (cont'd)

I slept fine. Listen, I think we should drop by my parents' antique store. They know everyone in Charleston. The Longos are big customers - although my mother says they don't know diddly about antiques.

JACK (cont'd)

I've heard rumors about gambling debts and charity pledges never paid.

The last time Joseph Longo was seen, he was in the vicinity of this house. It's rumored Longo and Louisa ran away together.

Mom might have some information or know something about Louisa's disappearance.

MELANIE

Maybe...

JACK

Louisa disappeared the same day as Longo. The husband and child she supposedly loved so much never saw her again.

MELANIE

Why would she leave a child she loved so deeply? She called him "My Best Guy".

JACK

How do you know that?

MELANIE

Nevin told me. It's written on the wall. Over there, by the window. Nevin's growth chart...

JACK

Well, it's been my experience that the most obvious answer is rarely the right one. There's something else. I just haven't dug deep enough. I think it's here, in this house. And I intend to find it.

EXT. ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. KING STREET - CHARLESTON - LATER
THAT MORNING - SIGN ABOVE WINDOW OF ANTIQUES SHOP:
TRENHOLM ANTIQUES

INT. TRENHOLM ANTIQUES - WELL ESTABLISHED ANTIQUE STORE WITH EXQUISITE FURNISHINGS AND ACCESSORIES

Jack and Melanie stand just inside the front door.

CUT TO **AMELIA TRENHOLM**

Amelia (mid to late 60s) is a petite, elegantly dressed woman with well coiffed silver/blonde hair. She stands behind a counter. She sees Jack and beams. She moves around the counter towards Jack and Melanie, taking his hands in hers.

AMELIA

Jack, darling. It's about time you drop by and visit your poor old mother!

JACK

You get younger each time I see you Mother!

I'd like you to meet Melanie Middleton. Melanie, this is my mother, Amelia Trenholm.

Amelia takes Melanie's hand firmly, looking directly into her eyes, smiling.

AMELIA

It's a pleasure to see you again. We met at your grandmother's house on Legare, but I'm sure you don't remember. Your mother and I were good friends.

MELANIE

I do remember.

AMELIA

You look like her but you have your father's eyes. Do you sing?

MELANIE

Not a note!

AMELIA

Oh! Too bad. Your mother has an amazing voice! Would you like some coffee? We can visit while Jack helps his father unpack some boxes from France.

JACK

(taking the hint)

All right Mother. But don't tell her any embarrassing stories.

AMELIA

Oh, my darling boy, we'd be here a month if I tried to do that!

Jack heads to the back storeroom. Amelia motions for Melanie to sit at one of the antique tables.

AMELIA (cont'd)

Have a seat. I'll be right back.

MELANIE

Thank you.

Melanie keeps her head down as we see hazy shadow figures of people from a variety of time periods; some in clothing from other centuries; standing at some of the antique furnishings and she can hear **WHISPERING voices**. Amelia returns with a silver tray, 2 coffees in china cups, etc. **MELANIE SHIVERS**. She notices Melanie's distress but doesn't say anything. She places the tray on the table and hands one cup to Melanie, who adds her sugar and creamer.

AMELIA

(smiling)

Ah, you have your grandfather's sweet tooth! (Beat) Your mother and I were such great friends. Every now and then, she'll get in touch. Perhaps I can offer some insight as to her leaving...

MELANIE

(cutting her off)

Ms. Trenholm, I really have no interest in discussing my mother.

AMELIA

I apologize. Why don't we talk about your new house? I'm sure it has some stunning furnishings.

MELANIE

I'm sorry. I'm just a bit edgy with everything that's happened lately.
(she sips her coffee)

AMELIA

I see why Jack feels so connected
(MORE)

AMELIA (cont'd)
to you - you're both very good at denial.

MELANIE
Ms. Trenholm, I'm **not** in denial.
I've made peace with my past.

AMELIA
All right. I'm surprised you and Jack haven't crossed paths before. I was hopeful when he mentioned he'd met you.

MELANIE
He mentioned me to you?

AMELIA
Yes. He's been so excited about this new book. After the fiasco with his last book, you and your house were an answer to his prayers.

MELANIE
I'm not sure what you mean?

AMELIA
You don't know the story, do you?

Melanie responds with a "no" headshake.

AMELIA (cont'd)
Jack's last book, the one about the Alamo, was publicly debunked on national television-completely discrediting his work.

You see, he had found a diary purportedly belonging to Davey Crockett and it **was** corroborated by experts. That diary altered the historical account of what really happened at the Alamo.

MELANIE
Oh?

AMELIA
Jack was booked on *Night Owl* and he was completely ambushed. Jack was publicly humiliated.

(MORE)

AMELIA (cont'd)

They brought in some of Crockett's descendants. They had a trunk full of documents - and none of the handwriting matched the handwriting in Jack's diary.

It was a debacle. They discredited his research; his book sold poorly and his publisher canceled his contract.

MELANIE

That must have been awful.
I had no idea.

AMELIA

It was a pretty dark time. He still has his loyal fans but until now, he hasn't found a mystery with enough intrigue to write about.

The **TELEPHONE RINGS**.

AMELIA (cont'd)

Excuse me.

Amelia gets up and moves to answer it. Melanie spots a lovely antique box on another table and walks over to it.

CLOSE ON a small burlled walnut box with a brass key. Melanie reaches out her hand but stops short of touching it. Slowly, she extends her hands and when nothing happens, carefully picks up the box. Amelia walks up to her.

AMELIA (cont'd)

It's lovely, isn't it? Strange that of all the objects in this store, you would be drawn to this.

MELANIE

Why is that?

AMELIA

It was a gift to me from Jack's fiancée.

MELANIE

(working hard to hide
her surprise and
disappointment)
Jack's engaged?

AMELIA

Not anymore.

Melanie hands the box to Amelia, who puts it back where Melanie found it.

MELANIE

He hasn't mentioned it.

AMELIA

No. He won't talk about it. His fiancée, Emily, literally left him standing at the altar.

MELANIE

That's horrible. I'm so sorry.

AMELIA

They were so deeply in love. We were all devastated.

There was a horrendous scene at the church. She told Jack in front of everyone that she couldn't go through with the marriage. She just left. Disappeared.

I heard she went somewhere - midwest - I think...

MELANIE

Did she give any reason? Any explanation?

AMELIA

No. None. Jack was shattered. I feared he would never recover.

(beat)

It was a pretty dark time.

A shadowy figure of a woman in full mourning garb from the late 1800s is floating towards Melanie. She looks up, gasps, and takes a step back.

Amelia reaches out a hand to steady her. The figure vanishes.

AMELIA (cont'd)

It's all right, Melanie. Your mother saw them too. She didn't like coming here. It's also why she didn't want you in the Legare Street house. She was afraid for you.

MELANIE

Amelia, what did Emily look like?

AMELIA

Oh, she was beautiful. Long blonde hair, slim, big blue eyes.

Melanie shakes her head in acknowledgment. Amelia looks at her questioning.

The front door rings as a couple enter the shop. Amelia acknowledges their presence.

AMELIA (cont'd)

It was lovely to see you again.
If you'll excuse me...

They shake hands. Amelia moves to greet her customers.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE REALTY - MELANIE'S OFFICE - LATER SAME DAY.

Melanie sits at her desk working when Nancy buzzes her. She picks up the phone, pushes the intercom button

NANCY

Ms. Middleton. You have a visitor.

MELANIE

Nancy, why are you acting weird?

NANCY

Yes ma'am. I'll ask him to wait.

MELANIE

What's going on? Is it Jack?

NANCY

(after a short pause,
whispering)

It's a man. A very good looking man.
His name is Marc Longo!

MELANIE

Okay, why are you whispering?

NANCY

Wait until you see him!

MELANIE

(intrigued)
Okay. I'll come up there.

Melanie checks herself in her mirror, freshens her lipstick, etc.

CUT TO RECEPTION AREA. Melanie walking past Nancy's desk in the reception area. She stops at the *LEADER BOARD*.

CLOSE ON Leader Board showing Melanie in top position. Melanie smiles. She looks at Nancy who shakes her head and her right hand, blows her lips to indicate her feelings about Marc Longo. Melanie shakes her head, smiling.

MOVE TO SEATING AREA. **MARC LONGO** (early 40s) stands. He is over 6 feet tall; very handsome with dark hair, penetrating eyes and impeccably dressed in a tailored suit and Gucci loafers. Melanie gives him her most charming smile, extending her beautifully manicured hand.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Mr. Longo. I'm Melanie Middleton.
How can I help you?

They shake hands. There's definitely some chemistry here!

MARC

Thanks for seeing me. I'd like to discuss real estate and I've heard you're the best.

MELANIE

Well, I don't know about the best but I do work very hard for my clients. Why don't we go to my office.

They walk towards her office, passing Nancy. Melanie gives her a "Yes!" look.

CUT TO Melanie's office. She and Marc sit at a small table. Melanie has a pad and pen, to take notes.

MELANIE (cont'd)

What can I do for you Mr. Longo?

MARC

Well, for starters, you can call me Marc. (he gives her a dazzling smile) I'm thinking of investing in real estate. I'm especially interested in historic properties. I understand that's your specialty.

MELANIE

It is. You're obviously a successful businessman.

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)
Most people have very little idea
what expense an historic property
entails. And you're single..

Marc lifts an eyebrow at this statement. Melanie stammers

MELANIE (cont'd)
It's just...I, I noticed you're not
wearing a ring...

MARC
Not every married man wears a ring,
Ms. Middleton. I'm not married and
I'm no stranger to the upkeep
required. My brother owns the
Victorian mansion on Montagu Street.

I know exactly what I want.
Fifty-five Tradd Street.

MELANIE
My house?

MARC
Exactly. I saw the article in the
paper. The Vanderhorsts and my family
have an old connection.

MELANIE
So I understand.

MARC
But that's all in the past. I'd much
rather focus on the present. I'd like
to purchase your historic house.

MELANIE
I'm sorry Marc but my house isn't for
sale. The terms of Mr. Vanderhorst's
will are very specific. I'm charged
with restoring the house and cannot
sell it or its contents for a year.

Marc takes in this info. Steeples his fingers, thinking of
his next move.

MARC
(smoothly)
I see. That's disappointing. I
guess you'll just have to show me
other properties.

Melanie smiles.

MELANIE

All right. Why don't you tell me what you're looking for - square footage, bedrooms...

MARC

Actually, I have another appointment. Could we discuss this over dinner?

(he stands)

Magnolia's?

MELANIE

That would be lovely. But I'm busy this evening. Tomorrow?

MARC

Excellent. (he extends his hand) It was a pleasure meeting you. May I call you Melanie?

She nods yes.

MARC (cont'd)

I'll see myself out and look forward to tomorrow.

END PART I

THE HOUSE ON TRADD STREET

PART II

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NEW DAY - AFTERNOON.

Melanie stands in front of the china cabinet filled with exquisite china and crystal. She pulls the plate Nevin had given her out of her bag and places it inside the china cabinet. We hear Nevin's voice: ***It will be back amongst its's things soon enough.*** Melanie smiles

MELANIE

Yes. You were right, Nevin.

THE SOUND OF A YOUNG GIRL CRYING SOFTLY is heard from the drawing room. Melanie hears it, dreading it. Knowing it's not from someone living.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Now what! Louisa? Is that you?

Melanie listens again and slowly walks to the drawing room.

FOLLOW MELANIE TO DRAWING ROOM CONTINUOUS

Seated in one of the antique chairs is the hazy image of **HANNAH GRACE**, a young woman early 20s, dressed in clothing from 1864. She holds a letter that has distressed her and mourns the loss of her beau. She looks up at Melanie, holding out the letter

HANNA GRACE'S GHOST

Mama...

And then the image dissolves

The doorbell rings. Melanie jumps, turns and heads to the door.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON an alarm security box

Melanie opens the door to find Mrs. Houlihan holding a large baking dish of lasagna and a bag of groceries (salad items, bread).

MRS. HOULIHAN

Sorry I'm late, I had to wait for
(MORE)

MRS. HOULIHAN (cont'd)
the lasagna to cook.

MELANIE
Lasagna?

Melanie opens the door and Mrs. Houlihan enters. Melanie closes the door behind her, not locking it.

MRS. HOULIHAN
Um hmm. Lasagna. I intend to see you have good, healthy meals.

She starts towards the kitchen.

MRS. HOULIHAN (cont'd)
You're going to need lots of energy to restore this old house.

MELANIE
I have no intention of actually doing the work myself!

MRS. HOULIHAN
Hrmmph! That's what they all say! Then they catch the *restoration bug* and *wham!* They're hooked!

The doorbell rings. Melanie looks surprised; turns back to the door, opens it. Sophie stands on the other side, holding Rhett Butler. Her eyes are red rimmed and she sounds as if she has a nasty cold. Melanie looks at the two of them suspiciously. Sophie enters. Melanie shuts the door, not locking it.

MELANIE
Hey Sophie. Do you have a cold?

SOPHIE
(sneezing)
I think I might be allergic to dogs.

MELANIE
What are you doing with Rhett Butler?

SOPHIE
Umm, Chad thought it'd be good for him to spend some time here...

MELANIE
Chad, huh? You've been with Chad?

Sophie can't help but smile, giving it away.

SOPHIE
Yeh, well, we kinda hit it off...

MELANIE
Aww, that's great! (beat) Why did you ring the doorbell? It was unlocked.

SOPHIE
It was locked.

MELANIE
But I distinctly remember....

Melanie and Sophie exchange a look. Melanie grimaces. Sophie just shakes her head.

The doorbell rings again.

MELANIE (cont'd)
What the hell!

This time Melanie has to unlock the door to open it. On the other side are Chad and Jack. They enter and Sophie immediately hands the dog over to him. They exchange looks like two teenagers in love. Melanie looks pleased at her match-making abilities.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Okay. Let's get started.

They all start towards the drawing room. The **GRANDFATHER CLOCK CHIMES 3 O'CLOCK.**

MELANIE (cont'd)
Sophie, I need you to finish the inventory and give me an idea of where we should start...

She's interrupted by the **sound of something clunking onto the wood floors in the drawing room** just before they enter. They all stop short. Jack puts up his hand, peering around the corner into the room. We can hear the **sound of MRS. HOULIHAN IN THE KITCHEN** clanking around. Jack motions for everyone to follow him as he enters the room to stand in front of the grandfather clock. He stoops down and picks up the silver framed photo of young Nevin and his mother.

MELANIE (cont'd)
I'm sure I left that on the piano.

JACK

How did this get all the way over here?

Melanie joins Jack. Taking the frame from him. Their hands touch. They are both very aware of the tension between them. There's a slight pause before Melanie takes the photo and walks towards the piano.

CLOSE ON Sophie watching, noticing and smiling.

MELANIE

Maybe Mrs. Houlihan moved it.
Do you smell that?

JACK

Smells delicious!

MELANIE

Roses. Can't you smell the roses?

Melanie places the photo on the piano. As she does, she feels a cold breeze on the back of her neck. She shivers; looks around; reaches her hand around to cover her neck.

Sophie, watching her, understands and to take the attention away from Melanie's discomfort, walks over to stand in front of the clock, looking up.

SOPHIE

This is really weird.

MELANIE

What?

SOPHIE

Well, this is a William Johnstone clock. He was a prominent clock maker in the 1860s. All of his clocks had pastoral scenes - but this face has a battle scene. It could make the clock one-of-a-kind.

See, the picture makes a full rotation every twenty-four hours. We should photograph it every three hours so we get the entire picture.

MELANIE

I rely on you for all things historical, Sophie.

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)

I've already met with a roofing contractor and I have an appointment with another one this afternoon. After that, I haven't a clue where to start. I'll need your advice.

SOPHIE

Sure. Chad and I are going to finish the inventory today so we'd best get started.

CUT TO Later same day. Melanie stands at the front door waving off Sophie and Chad who are leaving together with Rhett Butler.

CUT TO Drawing room. Melanie enters. Jack and Colonel Middleton sit on the furniture which has now all been uncovered, sipping tall glasses of iced tea.

Jack, sensing the tension between Melanie and her father, picks up the glasses

JACK

Looks like we could use a refill.
Can I get you anything, Mellie?

MELANIE

Sweet tea, please. With lemon.

Jack exits. Colonel Middleton looks at Melanie. His hands shake and he doesn't try to stop or hide it. Melanie looks at his hands then his face.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Your mother called again.

MELANIE

And?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I told her you would call her when you're ready. She said she has something important to tell you.

MELANIE

(looking directly
into her father's
eyes)

If she calls you again, let her know I'm getting her messages.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Will you call her back?

MELANIE

No.

Jack walks back into the room with a tray of drinks. Melanie takes the one he indicates and gulps it down, as if trying to fill some inner void. Jack gives a glass to the Colonel and sits taking the last one for himself. There is a moment of awkward silence.

Melanie reaches into her bag, pulls out a portfolio, opens it and takes a pile of receipts, handing them to her father.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Here's the receipts so far. I had the alarm company send the invoice to you.

Colonel takes the receipts, gives them a cursory look.

MELANIE (cont'd)

I'm going to open a checking account for the house. I'd like you to deposit \$50,000 into it. That way, I can write checks for the expenses and supply you with copies together with the receipts. (beat) It won't be necessary for you to be bothered with coming here.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

(hurt by her
dismissal)

I'd like to talk about that. I really want to be involved. I can swing a hammer; strip wallpaper. (beat) I think it would be good for me - for us.

He looks at Melanie. She doesn't respond.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)

I've been sober for six days. It's a start. If I have something useful to do; somewhere to go; maybe...we can start over...

MELANIE

Dad...I'm glad you're trying. But I can't....I can't...I've done it so many times before. I can't do it again...

JACK

Melanie, why don't you put him on the schedule. Make him responsible for something. I can be in charge of it if you'd like.

MELANIE

Thank you Jack but it won't work. It never does.

Melanie picks up her bag and glass and stands.

JACK

(quietly)

Give him another chance Mellie. Everyone deserves another chance.

Melanie looks from Jack to her father and back; takes in the glasses of iced tea; **understanding** how Jack identifies with her father's alcoholism, wishing she didn't.

MELANIE

Fine. Fine. But You're in charge of him. (to her father) And the first time you screw up will be the last.

JACK

Well, I believe Mrs. Houlihan made us what looks like an amazing dinner. Shall we?

CUT TO dinner over, the three sit around a table in the old kitchen which hasn't been updated since the 1970s. The atmosphere has a chill to the air.

JACK (cont'd)

I almost forgot. Mellie, I found Louisa's photo albums in the attic. There's something I wanted to show you. I'll be right back.

He stands and exits. Melanie stands, clears her plate and her father's, taking them to the sink. Jack returns. They sit back down and he opens the old album to the first page.

Melanie reads the handwritten note out loud

MELANIE

*To Louisa with all my love, given on
the occasion of the birth of our
first child, Nevin Pinckney
Vanderhorst. Forever, Robert*

On the opposite page is a sepia toned wedding photo of Robert and Louisa.

MELANIE (cont'd)

This wedding photo is dated June 1921. Eight years before she disappeared.

The room temperature has dropped. Melanie shivers. We can see her breath and Jack's breath as he speaks.

JACK

There's a bunch of these albums and I found this old Brownie camera in the same box. (beat)
It's gotten cold in here. Did someone turn down the a.c.?

MELANIE

(she is very still)
There isn't any. (she quickly covers her nose and mouth with her hand, stifling a gag and standing)
I don't feel very well, if you'll excuse me.

Jack and Colonel bend their heads over the album. Melanie takes a few steps to leave the room when she is suddenly pushed violently in the back by an unseen force and falls to the kitchen floor, gasping for breath.

Jack and Colonel Middleton jump up, rushing to her side.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Melanie! Are you all right?

They help her into a sitting position. It's no longer cold in the room. She regains her composure, giving her father a steely look.

MELANIE

I'm fine. I tripped.

They help her stand and hear the sound of **something crashing to the floor in the drawing room**. Looking at each other, they exit the kitchen.

CUT TO Drawing room. The room is dimly lit with only one or two lamps. It is night now. All three stand near the piano. Every photograph of Louisa, Nevin and Robert has been removed from the piano, strewn about the floor. The three look at each other, questioningly. Melanie bends down to pick up the photos. The grandfather clock begins to strike 9 o'clock. Jack grabs his cell phone from his pocket and prepares to take a photo of the face of the clock. As he does,

CUT TO Melanie then

POV Melanie looking towards the clock. She is the only one who can see the hazy outline of Louisa standing by the clock with one hand pointing up to the face. Melanie gasps and Louisa fades away. Jack and Colonel Middleton go to her to help.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Melanie, I don't like you staying
in this big house all by yourself.
I think...

He is interrupted by Jack

JACK

No need to worry about her sir.
I'll be sleeping over.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I beg your pardon?

MELANIE

What?

JACK

It's not what you think, Colonel.
I'm concerned for her safety.
I need access to the house for my
research and I've been charged with
taking photos of the clock every
three hours. I'm sleeping on the
sofa here.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I appreciate that.

They have all stood and placed the photos back on the piano. Colonel Middleton turns to Melanie, who holds out her hand, refusing to hug her father. He takes her hand warmly with a sad smile; turns and shakes hands with Jack.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
I'll be saying goodnight then.

JACK
I'll walk you out sir.

CUT TO Jack returns to the drawing room where Melanie is arranging the photos on the piano.

JACK (cont'd)
There's something going on in this house, isn't there?

MELANIE
What?

JACK
What happened in the kitchen. You fell pretty hard. How?

MELANIE
Look, Jack...I...Sometimes I see figures or feel a presence. Sometimes it's good, sometimes not so good...

Melanie paces

MELANIE (cont'd)
I can't explain it. I'm glad you're staying. It's ridiculous for you to sleep on the sofa. There's several guest rooms upstairs. Please take one of those where you'll be more comfortable.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - ANOTHER EVENING - MELANIE'S BEDROOM.

The room has been transformed, no longer looking so masculine. The door is open. Melanie stands in front of a mirror, putting finishing touches on her jewelry. She is dressed for an evening out.

We hear Jack calling from the foyer

JACK
Hey Mellie, you here?

MELANIE
Yes. Up here. Be right down.

Melanie grabs an evening bag and shawl off the bed, takes one last look in the mirror and heads out.

POV Jack from foyer, looking up stairs. Sees Melanie

JACK
(whistles)
Wow! You look amazing!

MELANIE
Thank you. Business dinner.

JACK
Must be a very special client.

MELANIE
Marc Longo. We're discussing real estate investments over dinner - at Magnolias.

JACK
Huh. Be careful. I don't trust that guy. Listen, though, I'm glad you won't be alone here tonight. I've got some research to do at the library so I'll be out too.

MELANIE
Uh huh...the library...

The **DOORBELL RINGS**. Melanie moves to open the door; turns the knob but nothing happens. She tries again; still the door won't budge.

JACK
Need some help little lady?

Melanie glares at him but steps aside to let him have a go. Once again, their bodies are too close for comfort. As she removes her hand from the door knob, Jack reaches out and their hands meet. She draws quickly away, covering her feelings. He gives her one of his charming smiles and easily opens the door. He looks smugly at Melanie. They stare at each other behind the open door.

CUT TO Marc Longo on the piazza, looking at the two of them. Jack extends his hand.

BACK TO Jack

JACK (cont'd)
Hey there. I'm Jack Trenholm. You must be Matt.

MARC

(stepping inside)

Marc. Marc Longo. Melanie. Good evening. You look beautiful.

MELANIE

Hello Marc. Thank you. I'm sorry, I had a hard time opening the door. Old houses...Jack was just helping me out before he leaves.

MARC

Jack?

JACK

Trenholm. I live here...

MELANIE

No he doesn't! He's staying in a guest room temporarily doing some research for a new book and he's helping with the renovation.

MARC

Trenholm? Aren't you the guy that got trashed on *Night Owl*? Something about flawed research on The Alamo?

Jack doesn't flinch but his shoulders tense. He flashes one of his most charming smiles.

JACK

Yeh, that was unfortunate. But I have faith that the truth will come out.

MARC

What's the new book about?

The two men lock eyes.

JACK

A previous owner, Louisa Vanderhorst. She vanished in 1929. The same day that an unwanted suitor also vanished. Joseph Longo. Any relation?

MARC

(crossing his arms
over his chest,
exposing a Rolex)

Yes. He was my grandfather.

(MORE)

MARC (cont'd)

Melanie. Our reservation is for 7:30.
We should be going. Perhaps you can
show me this beautiful old place
another time?

Melanie picks up her purse and a shawl from the table;
glares at Jack; gives Marc a dazzling smile and they exit.
Jack watches them, not very happy with the situation.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE PIAZZA - LATER SAME NIGHT

Melanie and Marc stand at the front door, laughing. There's
definitely an attraction between them. She takes her key out
of her purse, looks up at him, hoping he'll kiss her.

MELANIE

I really enjoyed this evening, Marc.
Would you like to come in for a night
cap?

MARC

I'd like to but I've got an early
morning appointment. Perhaps another
time? Thank you for the lovely
evening Melanie. May I call you.

MELANIE

Absolutely. Good night.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - MELANIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Melanie has changed into bed clothes. She sits on her bed,
looking at Louisa's photo albums. She turns the pages and
stops at one of the garden. The rose bushes are much
smaller. The ancient Live Oak also, but without its swing.

LOUISA VANDERHORST (V.O.)

Look...look...Melanie

Melanie looks more closely. Fingers the photo

MELANIE

The fountain...the fountain's not
there...huh...must have been put in
later.

Melanie sniffs the air

MELANIE (cont'd)

Roses...Louisa are you here?

She puts her hands up to her nose, inhaling deeply

MELANIE (cont'd)
Dirt. I smell dirt..

FOOT STEPS can be heard from the lower level. Melanie looks up, listening. Yes, she can definitely hear footsteps. She gets up, looks around the room, picking up a bronze statue and her cell phone.

MELANIE (cont'd)
(muttering to herself)
I set the alarm. I know I did.

Melanie stops at the top of the stairs, peaks into Jack's room. Empty.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Jack?

No answer. Silence.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Who's there?

The house is dark, lit only by the moonlight and street lights. Melanie takes a few steps down the stairs just as a figure, dressed head to toe in black, runs past her and out the door. She runs down the rest of the stairs, reaching for the door but before she can get to it, she is stopped cold by an unseen force and is knocked backwards onto the floor, the air knocked out of her. Her phone flies out of her hands and she drops the bronze. She tries to get up but something has her pinned down. She begins to gag from the putrid smell that has filled the space. She tries to fight back

MELANIE (cont'd)
Let me go. I'm stronger than you. Let me go. Let me go! (She is screaming, sobbing, scared)

Just then she is released and lays still, catching her breath. She shivers. Sits up. She looks to see the alarm panel blinking green. Trembling, she carefully stands, sees her phone and picks it up; deadbolts the door then turns towards the drawing room.

CUT TO DRAWING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Melanie goes to a table that holds whiskey decanters and crystal glasses and pours herself a drink.

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees an object flit across the room and land with a **THUD** in front of the clock. As she walks over to it, she notices that a portion of the carpet is pulled back. She stoops and picks up the photo of Louisa with young Nevin. She almost drops it when the **DOORBELL RINGS**.

CUT TO FOYER. Melanie cautiously walks towards the front door, gripping the bronze. She can hear Jack on the other side, calling her name and banging on the door, frantic. She hurries to open it, disarming the alarm.

Jack comes in and takes her in his arms.

JACK
Melanie. What happened?

I was at the library. Your number kept flashing on my phone but I couldn't call you.

MELANIE
It wasn't me. I never called you. Someone was here, in the house.

The **clock begins to chime midnight**

INT. CHARLESTON COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Melanie, Jack sit across from one another in a booth. Sophie sits next to Melanie. Melanie dressed for the office. Jack casually. Sophie eclectically attired. Jack and Melanie have coffee; Sophie green tea. Melanie has two chocolate croissants in front of her. Jack has a bagel with cream cheese and Sophie a granola bar.

SOPHIE
You two look like hell. What, no sleep?

MELANIE
We didn't get any sleep because there was another break-in last night. Police were there until about 4 this morning.

JACK
Pretty brazen guy, too. Broke in while Mellie was in the house, presumably asleep.

SOPHIE

Oh, my gosh. Please tell me he didn't break the glass in the door or the sidelights!

MELANIE

No. Thanks for your concern. I'm fine.

JACK

The weird thing is that Mellie remembers setting the alarm; but when she heard the intruder and went to investigate, the system had been disarmed from the inside.

SOPHIE

That's weird.

Melanie shoots Sophie a warning glance not to give too much away, but it's not lost on Jack.

SOPHIE (cont'd)

And nothing was taken?

MELANIE

Not that we could tell. We're thinking the intruder must have read the article in the paper; knew Nevin had passed and assumed the house was empty.

The only thing we could tell that was disturbed was the carpet in the drawing room. It was folded up on one side; as if someone was looking for something underneath it.

SOPHIE

Well, if there's anything there, it'll be easy to find. I planned to start in that room. We'll empty it of all the furnishings and the carpet so we can get to work on the walls, ceiling and plaster work.

MELANIE

Sounds expensive...We should talk to my dad to make sure there's enough money...

JACK
(glancing at Sophie)
Actually, we have

Melanie begins to protest but Sophie cuts her off

SOPHIE
You gave me *carte blanche*, remember?
In exchange for my expertise and
allowing my students to use the
restoration as an extended classroom.

JACK
And you told me you preferred not to
have to deal directly with your dad.

MELANIE
Was he sober?

JACK
Completely. It's been a couple of
weeks Mellie. He created a
spreadsheet for the restoration
budget. Tracks expenses; estimated
costs.

I guess that's where you get it!

SOPHIE
Melanie had a pretty rough childhood,
Jack. Being organized was the only
way she could deal with the chaos in
her life.

So, what are you going to do?
Move back into the condo?

MELANIE
I can't. The terms of the trust
would be violated. Lawyers are
keeping track.

JACK
I'm going to stay in one of the
guest rooms. I don't want Mellie
alone in that house and it gives
me ready access for my research.

SOPHIE
Okay. Good. I've got a class in an
hour. Gotta run.

Sophie goes to the counter on her way out. As soon as she's out of earshot

JACK

So, did he kiss you good night?

MELANIE

What? That's none of your business!

JACK

Ah, so he didn't. The perfect gentleman?

MELANIE

He's coming Sunday for a tour. Then we're going to brunch.

JACK

I see..

MELANIE

What does that mean?

JACK

Mellie, don't you think it's odd that Louisa Vanderhorst disappeared in 1929 on the same day as Marc's grandfather, Joseph Longo? And now you've inherited the Vanderhorst house and suddenly Marc Longo is a part of your life!

I don't believe in coincidences.

SOPHIE

He's looking to buy an historic home. He's a really nice guy. Very good looking too. And so well dressed.

She looks pointedly at Jack's slap-dash attire.

JACK

So he didn't mention the Tradd Street house?

Melanie considers how to answer.

MELANIE

Actually, he did. But I told him it wouldn't be available for another year.

JACK

Whose idea was it to look for other houses after you told him yours wasn't available?

MELANIE

His. Thank you, Jack for thinking the only reason a guy would ask me out on a date is because he's interested in my house.

I'd appreciate it if you weren't there Sunday morning when he arrives.

Melanie stands and walks out of the shop.

EXT. CHARLESTON PARK - LUNCH TIME - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Melanie sits on a bench, enjoying the sunshine, eating a fast food lunch. She is looking over some paperwork.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Fast food? That's not healthy, you know.

Melanie looks up to see her father. He is dressed in a navy polo shirt, khaki pants and loafers, no socks.

MELANIE

Is Jack dressing you these days?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Well, he did take me shopping. Do you like my new look?

MELANIE

Looking good. What's the big occasion?

Colonel Middleton sits down next to Melanie. She offers him a french fry, which he accepts.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

It's been three weeks. Not a single drink. (pats his pocket) Been chewing lots of gum though. Jack recommended it.

Melanie nods, turns her attention to her paperwork to hide her feelings. Colonel Middleton reaches out to her, touching her arm. She looks up at him.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
I know you can't get excited for me but I wanted you to know I'm trying...

MELANIE
How did you find me?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Your receptionist, Nancy.

MELANIE
What's so important you didn't call?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Well, I wasn't sure you'd take my call. Nancy said you come here on nice days. It surprised me!

MELANIE
Why?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
(surprised, she
doesn't remember)
Because your mother brought you here.

MELANIE
I'd forgotten. (Beat) I need to get back to the office...What was it you wanted? (stands)

COLONEL MIDDLETON
I was wondering why you didn't put me on the schedule?

MELANIE
I guess because I figured you could help Jack with whatever he's working on.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
I need my own projects, Melanie.

Melanie looks at him, ponders for a moment.

MELANIE
How about the garden? I remember you liked to plant things...

Okay? I'll see you tomorrow.
Eight o'clock. Sharp.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
 Perfect. It's been a long time since
 I've had a garden. Thank you
 Melanie.

MELANIE
 Sure. See you tomorrow.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE PIAZZA - AFTERNOON - SEVERAL DAYS
 LATER

Marc Longo sits in one of the rockers on the piazza, typing
 a message into his phone. The door opens and Melanie comes
 out. She has been working on the house and sweating. Her
 hair a mess, up on her head with a clip to keep it out of
 her face. She holds a glass of iced tea. Nails no longer
 immaculately manicured. She is surprised to see Marc.

MELANIE
 Marc?

MARC
 Melanie. You look beautiful, as
 always.

He stands and pops his phone into a pocket, taking a hand
 and giving her a kiss on both cheeks.

MELANIE
 What a lovely surprise. Did I
 forget an appointment?

MARC
 Not at all. I couldn't stop thinking
 about you since our brunch date -
 you're very distracting!

Melanie finds herself blushing at his attentions.

MARC (cont'd)
 I wanted to ask if you're free for
 the weekend? I have a house on Isle
 of Palms. Right on the beach. I was
 hoping you might join me.

Melanie is completely surprised. Not sure of his intentions
 at all, she cannot complete a full sentence, just stammers

MELANIE
 I, uh, I, well, I....

MARC

Don't worry. There are eight bedrooms. You can have one for yourself. I'd just like to spend time with you - get to know you better - without all these - distractions.

Just then Chad walks out carrying Rhett Butler under his arm. He's wearing a bright Hawaiian shirt, cut offs and worn out tennis shoes. Hair in his proverbial ponytail.

CHAD

Hey! What's up?

He walks over to them.

CHAD (cont'd)

I'm Chad Arasi. You one of the roofer dudes? Sophie told me to be on the lookout...

MELANIE

Chad, this is my friend and colleague, Marc Longo.

Chad's the new Professor of Art History at the college. I helped him find his home, and he offered to help with the renovation.

Sorry, Chad, haven't seen anyone from a roofing company yet.

Marc reaches out a hand to pet Rhett Butler, who responds with a snarl and low growl. Marc pulls his hand back, embarrassed.

CHAD

Whoa! Where'd that come from?
He's usually so chill!

The front door opens again and Jack, carrying an iced tea, joins the group. He wears the usual khakis, a t-shirt, beat-up tennis shoes, no socks. Rhett Butler jumps out of Chad's arm and runs to Jack, wagging his tail. Jack scoops him up, ruffling his ears.

JACK

Well, hey there Matt. Here to help?
Hope you brought a change of clothes,
cause this work can get pretty messy.

Melanie stiffens. She and Jack are still at odds, avoiding one another.

MARC

It's Marc, actually. And I just stopped by to see Melanie and ask her to join me this weekend at my beach house.

JACK

Hey, well, except for working on the house, I'm free...

MELANIE

I believe the invitation was for me. Just me.

Jack holds up a hand, duly chastened.

JACK

Say no more! I'm sure the four of us and the assorted students can survive one weekend without our task master! Just remember to keep your phone at the ready. Never know with these old houses...

MARC

Four of you?

JACK

Yup. Me. Chad. Sophie and Mellie's dad, Col. James Middleton. Plus there's always a few of Dr. Wallen's students helping out. It's like grand central station some days!

MARC

Well, then Melanie, looks like you've got everything covered. What do you say?

Amelia Trenholm comes up onto the piazza, dressed casually but elegantly.

AMELIA

My goodness! Looks like I'm joining a party! Hello Melanie. Jack. Looks like y'all been working hard.

MELANIE

Amelia. I've been so busy, I almost forgot our appointment.

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)
 This is Chad Arasi. He's the new
 Professor of Art History. And this
 is Marc Longo.

AMELIA
 Professor. Lovely to meet you.

(polite but removed)
 Mr. Longo. We've spoken on the
 phone. The Gibbes Museum's AIDS
 Benefit. Lovely to meet you.

They shake hands. Marc is uncomfortable.

MARC
 Yes. I remember. A pleasure to
 meet you too.

Well, if you'll excuse me, I need
 to return to the office. Melanie?

He takes Melanie's arm and they walk away from the group.

MARC (cont'd)
 What do you say? Will you join
 me this weekend?

Melanie can feel the eyes of the others staring at her. She
 looks up at Marc and gives him a smile.

MELANIE
 Yes. That sounds marvelous.

I've got to get back to work.
 Call me later with details.

Marc takes one of her hands, smiling

MARC
 This truly is a beautiful home. I
 admit to some disappointment at not
 owning it.

MELANIE
 I have second thoughts every day.

MARC
 You made a promise to an old man,
 which shows you have a warm and
 generous heart.

Marc leans in as if to kiss Melanie but is interrupted by
 Jack who has come up behind them.

Jack moves in close to Melanie and puts his arm around her shoulders, protectively. Melanie stiffens.

JACK
That's our Mellie. Heart of gold. Thanks for stopping by Matt. See ya later.

Marc ignores Jack and squeezes Melanie's hand instead.

MARC
I'll call you.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melanie, Jack and Amelia stand in the drawing room.

AMELIA
Melanie! You truly are lucky. I know so many people who would love to get their hands on this furniture, much less the house! These are museum quality pieces.

MELANIE
I'd love for you to find a temporary home for that grandfather clock. Sophie wants to get started in this room and everything needs to be removed.

AMELIA
Oh no, Melanie. You shouldn't move that clock. It's bad luck - haven't you heard?

There's a story from years ago. That clock's been here since before the war and it's never been moved.

Story goes that it's cursed and anybody who tries to move it will meet with some horrible fate. Like the Hope Diamond.

Sophie and Chad (holding Rhett Butler) have walked into the room and up to the clock

SOPHIE
I have a feeling that whoever started that rumor just didn't
(MORE)

SOPHIE (cont'd)
want to move this beauty.

JACK
They were probably right. I still
need to finish taking the photos of
the face. I'm sure we can find a way
to cover and protect it. Sophie?

SOPHIE
Absolutely. I'll get my students
on it.

MELANIE
All right. Let's go up to the attic.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Jack, Amelia, Melanie, Chad, holding Rhett Butler and Sophie
all stand about the attic, which is filled with more
furniture and furnishings.

AMELIA
It's like finding treasure!

Amelia moves to a chest, kneeling in front of it, running
her hands along it.

AMELIA (cont'd)
Definitely French. Beautifully made.
Quite valuable. It needs to be
removed from this attic.

Unseen to anyone but Melanie, Louisa has appeared in the
attic standing beside a desk. Rhett Butler squirms out of
Chad's arms and runs over to the desk, barking furiously.
Louisa disappears as Chad scoops him up.

CHAD
Hey! What's wrong? Something
spooked you?

Sophie steps forward, looking at the desk.

SOPHIE
There's a stack of papers here...

JACK
Yeh. I found them on my last
inventory. Haven't had a chance
to go through them yet.

Just then, Rhett Butler begins barking elsewhere and everyone turns to see what it's about. Louisa appears again at the desk as Melanie moves towards it. Louisa moves a hand pointing to the stack of papers which begin to separate, revealing a particular sheet of paper - a Deed. Melanie looks to see if anyone else has seen this. No one has. Melanie picks it up. Louisa vanishes again.

MELANIE

Look at this. It's a deed to the plantation, Magnolia Ridge.

Everyone gathers around to look.

MELANIE (cont'd)

That signature, the witness, that's my grandfather: Augustus Middleton.

Sophie takes the deed.

SOPHIE

Well, that would make sense. He was a lawyer and a good friend of the Vanderhorsts.

This deed is made over to Louisa Vanderhorst. That's odd. Isn't that the property Marc Longo now owns?

JACK

Yup! And now he's here, snooping around another Vanderhorst property.

Melanie has had all she can take. She glares at Jack. Takes the deed from Sophie and angrily turns.

MELANIE

If you'll excuse me, I need some fresh air.

Melanie leaves the attic. Sophie, Chad and Amelia look at Jack. Amelia's look says: What have you done this time? Jack, looking guilty, follows after Melanie.

JACK

I'll go...talk to her...

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

Melanie is pacing back and forth on the piazza, obviously angry. Jack comes out.

JACK

Mellie...

MELANIE

Stop! Stop calling me Mellie.

JACK

Okay. Melanie. Please. Remember what I said about coincidences? They don't exist. Regardless of what he wants you to think, it is not a coincidence that Marc Longo owns Magnolia Ridge and has suddenly shown up on your doorstep.

MELANIE

I told you. He's a businessman. It makes sense that he would invest in an historic home.

JACK

But why you? Why this house? Don't you think there's something more?

MELANIE

Like what? That he found out his grandfather and Louisa had an affair? He's not the kind of man to get sentimental over an old love story.

JACK

Whatever he's looking for, he hasn't found at Magnolia Ridge so now he's set his sights on this house - and you. He's using you.

MELANIE

Using me? He's using me? (Beat)
He's charming, attractive and attentive. I enjoy his company.

Jack takes her arm, cutting her off

JACK

I've been asking around town. Longo is deeply in debt. He needs cash. Ask my mother. He stiffed the AIDS charity - never paid up.

He wants something Mellie and he's not the kind of guy who takes no for an answer.

Melanie jerks out of his grasp. Full blown angry, moving closer to the steps

MELANIE
I'm a big girl Jack. Maybe I
just want to have some fun...

JACK
Melanie, I....

MELANIE
Is it too much for you to believe
that an attractive, intelligent man
could possibly be interested in me?

Melanie stops, tearful, realizing how desperate she sounds.

JACK
(quietly, tenderly)
I could never think that.

He takes her hand again.

JACK (cont'd)
All I ask is that you be careful.
Please. I don't want you to get hurt.

Melanie looks up at him, searching his face, wanting to believe he is sincere but she has been deeply hurt.

MELANIE
Why did Emily leave you?

Melanie's barb has reached it's target. Too late, she realizes she has been cruel. Jack recovers but his pain is evident.

JACK
She told me she never really
loved me.

MELANIE
Jack, I...

Just then Melanie realizes the putrid smell has returned and she gags, covering her nose and mouth. A gray haze appears behind her and she is violently pushed straight into Jack. The force pushes Jack backwards and he grabs Melanie and holds onto whatever is at hand to break their fall. The haze moves towards them again and they are thrown against the rail of the piazza, closer to the steps. Jack puts his arms around Melanie to protect her as they fight against the unseen force.

Melanie cries out during this scuffle, as does Jack, not understanding what is happening as they are knocked about but realizing she is not the one in charge. Melanie calls out her mantra: ***I'm stronger than you.*** Louisa appears and just as suddenly as it began, the scuffle ends with Jack and Melanie both on the floor as the gray haze dissipates.

Jack sits up, continuing to try to protect and help Melanie, looking at her, questioning

JACK

What the Hell? Are you all right?
What just happened?

Melanie is too stunned to speak.

JACK (cont'd)

You were standing still! Then suddenly you're flying at me - like someone...something...pushed you... violently

Melanie still breathing heavily, only looks at him, unable to explain.

JACK (cont'd)

Something broke our fall.
What's going on?

MELANIE

I can't...

JACK

Mellie. Please. Tell me.

She looks up at him, wondering if she can trust him. He traces a finger across her cheek, brushing back her hair and holding her gently.

Just then another **THUMP** is heard from the drawing room inside the house. Melanie and Jack exchange looks and he helps her up.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Melanie stand in front of the grandfather clock. The framed photo of Nevin and his mother has mysteriously appeared on the floor, out of place. Jack bends down and picks it up.

JACK
So there's nothing out of the
ordinary going on in this house?

Melanie, remembering she is still angry with him, turns and leaves the room. He watches her go.

EXT. ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. 55 TRADD STREET

The house is undergoing major renovation. People working on the roof, paint, repairs, etc.

MOVE TO INT and we see the same thing. All furnishings except the grandfather clock (which has been covered) have been removed from the drawing room and dining room. Work tables, folding chairs have taken their place. It's a beehive of construction/renovation activity.

Sophie stands in the dining room with a clipboard talking with a contractor.

Jack is working on something that requires him to physically attack it - ripping something apart or similar action. He is definitely working out his frustrations.

Col. Middleton stands a short distance away, holding a glass of iced tea, watching Jack with amusement, shaking his head, then he moves away.

CUT TO

EXT. ESTABLISHMENT SHOT - A MC MANSION ON ISLE OF PALMS - SCREAMS NOUVEAU RICHE - LOCATED DIRECTLY BEACHFRONT - AFTERNOON.

Continuous. Moving along the exterior beach side of the house down to the pristine beach.

Melanie and Marc are relaxing on lounge chairs. Classical music plays (Italian composer) and they sip champagne. They've just shared some amusing conversation and Melanie erupts in laughter. They are relaxed, smiling, enjoying the company of one another.

CUT TO

INT. OF MARC LONGO'S ISLE OF PALMS HOUSE - A BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Melanie is sitting up in bed, wearing silk pajamas, looking lovely, as Marc places a breakfast bed tray over her legs. French toast, strawberries, coffee. She smiles up at him. He kisses her - a quick peck on the cheek. He takes a cup of coffee and moves to a chair and sits, smiling at Melanie. (Have they or haven't they? We don't know.)

MARC

You look lovely. What would you like to do today?

Melanie acknowledges his compliment, lifting her cup of coffee. She tucks into the breakfast.

MELANIE

Oh, my God! This is delicious!
Don't tell me you cook too!
Aren't you eating?

MARC

Me? No. I rarely eat breakfast.
I'll grab a protein bar before I shower. I'm glad you like it.
(Beat) Now, what would you like to do today?

MELANIE

I'm on the schedule to scrape paint in the front hallway.

MARC

You have a work schedule?

MELANIE

Long story...But there's a ton of people working on the house and it would be embarrassing if I didn't show.

Marc doesn't even try to hide his amusement.

MARC

Because your name's on the schedule.

MELANIE

Exactly. Obligations. You know.

MARC

Well, then. I'll drive you back into town. I'm going to grab a shower.

Marc gets up and comes over to take the tray. Melanie reaches out and takes his hand, looks up at him.

MELANIE

Marc. This has been wonderful.
I didn't realize how much I needed
some R&R. Thank you. (Beat)
Can we do dinner tomorrow evening?

MARC

I'd like nothing more but I have to
go out of town. But I will call you
the minute I return.

CUT TO

EXT. 55 TRADD STREET - LATER SAME DAY

Marc's Mercedes is parked in front of the house. There are contractor's vehicles and other cars taking up every available space, as well as in the driveway.

CUT TO view of Jack looking out one of the front windows, watching, scowling.

BACK TO Marc and Melanie standing by the passenger door. He moves to kiss her

CUT TO view of Jack. He is visibly angry. Moves quickly away from the window

BACK TO Melanie as she stops Marc from kissing her

MELANIE

My dad's here. Probably best if I go
in alone. I know I'm a grown woman
but...well...

MARC

I understand. No matter how old a
woman is, she's still Daddy's little
girl.

Marc leans in and their foreheads touch. Melanie looks up at him, smiles.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - SEVERAL WEEKS
LATER - DAY

Melanie and Jack are working on scraping paint from the fireplace mantle and surround.

They work silently, still at odds with one another. Their tension is palpable. Jack moves away from the fireplace and stretches his back.

JACK

At this rate, we might finish this one by next December. How many fireplaces are there?

MELANIE

Six!

Melanie puts down her scraping tool and also stretches.

JACK

Well, I pride myself on how well I handle my tools.

Jack picks his scraper back up and moves back towards the fireplace. Melanie sends him a withering look.

JACK (cont'd)

Get your head out of the gutter, little lady. I only meant that I live in an 1850s rice warehouse which I restored all by myself.

MELANIE

I knew what you meant, Jack. You're just immature enough to think otherwise.

Jack gives her one of his charming smiles, chuckles and Melanie can't help but respond in kind. They continue working.

JACK

Any more phone calls?

MELANIE

(slow to respond)

Yes, actually, there have been. About two or three a night now. Last night, I finally decided enough and unplugged the phone so I could sleep.

JACK

What if there's an emergency? Another break in?

MELANIE

I keep my cell next to the bed.

JACK
Still no idea who it is?

MELANIE
Nope. None.

JACK
If it's all right with you, I'll
plug a phone in my room. That way,
if he calls again and I answer, might
dissuade him from calling back.

They go back to scraping. They're working in close proximity. Melanie becomes aware of how close he is. She closes her eyes, inhaling his scent. Jack looks at her. Their eyes engage; both look away and get back to scraping. A few minutes later.

JACK (cont'd)
Have you shown him many houses?

MELANIE
Him? Oh, you mean Marc?

Enjoying Jack's discomfort.

MELANIE (cont'd)
A few. Nothing that suited him
though.

JACK
I'd be willing to bet money
nothing will.

Jack begins getting more aggressive in his work. Melanie picks up a jeweler's tool to scrape the intricate details of the carving. They lapse into silence stealing glances at one another from time to time.

MELANIE
How's your book coming?

JACK
Slowly. I've been researching the
Vanderhorsts. Charleston Blue
Bloods. Men fought in every war
since the revolution.

MELANIE
Anything on Louisa?

JACK
Unfortunately, no.
(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

I did confirm that your grandfather and Nevin's father, Robert were great friends. Attended law school together. And, Gus was best man at Robert and Louisa's wedding.

MELANIE

Yea. Mrs. Houlihan showed me a photo. Guess I have Grand Dad Gus to thank for this predicament.

Did you find anything interesting in that stack of papers from the desk?

JACK

Still going through them. (Beat) The state ended up owning Magnolia Ridge. Failure to pay taxes. Which I can't figure out because Robert remained a very wealthy man - even throughout the depression. So why just let the property go?

MELANIE

Judging by the condition of this place, I'd say he just gave up after Louisa's disappearance. Funny Nevin never made any major improvements either. Stopped with the kitchen in the 1970s.

Jack stands to stretch and grab a drink of water.

JACK

You know what? Sophie's not here and my rebellious streak can no longer be kept at bay. Be right back.

Jack leaves the room. Melanie sits back and also stops to grab a drink of water. Jack returns brandishing a heat gun.

JACK (cont'd)

Got it from your Dad. He's been taking classes at the local home center. Sophie took one look at it and commanded: "Thou shalt not use that in this house!"

MELANIE

Shut the door and LOCK it!

JACK

If she knocks, we can pretend we've been wrestling - naked.

Jack plugs in the heat gun and goes to work. Melanie continues digging around the intricate carving with her jeweler's knife.

INDICATE TIME PASSING

Jack has loosened paint with the heat gun and is scraping it off. Melanie stands drinking more water. Jack discovers a scrap of fabric in a crack between the mantle and the wall.

JACK (cont'd)

Whoa! What's this?

Melanie comes over to have a look. There's a moment of discomfort as they are so close together. Their faces should come very close together - awkward!

MELANIE

Hold on. Let me see if I can pry it loose with this.

Melanie uses her jeweler's tool to snag the fabric and pulls out an old piece of linen with faded stitching showing the house.

MELANIE (cont'd)

It's part of a cross-stitch sampler of this house! Hanna Grace Vanderhorst. 1854! Age 12 years.

Melanie takes a moment to remember the ghost she saw in the drawing room a few weeks back.

MELANIE (cont'd)

It's like holding a piece of history in your hands.

They are interrupted by a knock at the door. Jack grabs the heat gun, quickly unplugging it.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Who is it?

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON

Just your dad.

Melanie and Jack exchange a look of relief. Jack unlocks and opens the door. Col.

Middleton enters, carrying another heat gun. Melanie smiles broadly and hurriedly shuts the door, locking it.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON (cont'd)
Hiding from Sophie?

Jack and Melanie both respond simultaneously. "Yes!"

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON (cont'd)
I can guess why. She's been after me about the garden. Doesn't want anything used that wasn't around in 1848!

JACK
Which basically leaves you with water and manure.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON
That would be correct.

They have a good laugh. Melanie studies Jack and her dad. They are completely at ease with each other. The Colonel is tanned from his outside work and he no longer shakes.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON (cont'd)
Melanie. Would you come outside with me? There's something I want to show you in the garden.

CUT TO

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Melanie and Jack stand with her dad next to the dry fountain which has been cleared of all the debris. The garden is taking shape under his hand and is quite impressive. Colonel Middleton bends down, points to a stone panel.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON
I uncovered this. Look.

CLOSE ON A raised stone panel inserted into the fountain wall. In the center are the Roman numerals: XLIII. Below that in the left corner are the Roman numerals: XXIV and in the right corner: XLI.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON (cont'd)
43. 24. 41. Do those numbers mean anything to either of you?

Jack begins walking around the fountain.

JACK
Not to me. Melanie?

MELANIE
No. Not a clue.

JACK
Is the fountain original to
the house?

MELANIE
No. There's a photo of the garden in
Louisa's albums. I don't remember the
date, but there wasn't a fountain.

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON
Sophie told me the fountain wasn't
built until after 1929.

Melanie and Jack exchange a look.

JACK
That's the year Louisa
disappeared.

The **ROPE SWING BEGINS CREAKING**. Melanie hears it. Looks at
Jack and her father, both oblivious. She looks over at the
oak tree and sees Louisa and 4 year-old Nevin. She gasps.

Jack moves to her.

JACK (cont'd)
Mellie. Are you all right?

MELANIE
Yes. Fine. Just admiring the garden.
Dad, you've done a beautiful job.
It's right out of Garden & Gun!

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON
Thank you, honey. I'm glad you
like it.

Jack takes out his cell phone and begins taking photographs
of the date stone.

JACK
Guess I've got more research to do.
How 'bout we order take out for
dinner and go through some of those
papers?

COLONEL JAMES MIDDLETON
 Can't. I need to go to the nursery
 and then I've got a meeting tonight.

MELANIE
 Me neither. I'm having dinner
 with Marc.

JACK
 Business or pleasure?

MELANIE
 Just dinner. I have some listings
 to review with him.

JACK
 And he can't do this during normal
 business hours?

MELANIE
 He's a very busy man. Evenings
 are more low key for him.

JACK
 I'm sure they are. Like weekends
 on the Isle of Palms.

MELANIE
 Exactly.

JACK
 I'll be here when you get back -
 going through those papers. I'll
 let you know if the phone rings
 and nobody's there.

Jack shoves his hands into his pockets, turns and heads back into the house. Melanie stands in the garden, confused. The **ROPE SWING CREAKS**. She turns to see Louisa and 4 year-old Nevin smiling. Just before she fades, Louisa lifts a hand and points to the stone in the fountain. We hear her words: "**Look closer Melanie. Look closer.**"

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - FOYER - LATER SAME DAY

Melanie is in the foyer with Rhett Butler. She glances at her watch, sighs, then bends down to put a leash on Rhett. As she does so, the hazy image of a confederate soldier (about 25 years old) moves past her. As he reaches the front door, he stops, turns looks lovingly past Melanie. Then he passes through the front door.

Melanie turns to the direction he was looking and the ghost of Hanna Grace stands with one hand raised in farewell. Melanie stands. Shaking her head.

MELANIE
(muttering)
I can't help you. I'm sorry.

Melanie moves to the door attempting to open it. It refuses to open. She looks down at Rhett Butler.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Do you have anything to do with this? No, I suppose not.

RICH KOYBLT
Can I help you with that, Miz Middleton?

Melanie turns to see her plumber coming down the stairs towards the door. He's loaded with tools having completed his work for the day.

MELANIE
Thank you. Sometimes it gets stuck!

Rich walks up to the door, puts his gear down and slides the dead bolt easily, opening the door. They all exit.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Melanie hands him her key and watches as he locks the door.

MELANIE
Thank you, Rich. I'll see you tomorrow.

Rich stands, clears his throat, obviously wanting to say something.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Is there something else?

RICH KOBYLT
Miz Middleton, can I ask you something?

MELANIE
Sure...

RICH KOBYLTL

Are you the only one living in this house?

MELANIE

Yes. Well, that is except Mr. Trenholm sleeps here in one of the guest rooms - temporarily...why?

RICH KOBYLTL

Well, it's...you're going to think this sounds weird...I hope I'm not jeopardizing my job...but, well...every time I walk through the drawing room I get a chill. You know, the hairs on the back of my neck kinda stand up.

You know that grandfather clock in there? Well, I always see this lady standing next to it - kinda out of the corner of my eye...

But when I turn to face her, she's gone...

MELANIE

Umm. What does she look like?

RICH KOBYLTL

Well, I've never seen her long enough to get a good look. She's blonde, slim - like you - and her clothes - well, they're old fashioned. Kinda like from that gangster movie Bonnie & Clyde.

Melanie is not sure how to respond. She remembers Nevin told her Louisa only appears to those she approves of - that's a positive. A bubble of nervous laughter

RICH KOBYLTL (cont'd)

And roses! I always smell roses! Reminds me of my grandmother. She always smelled of roses too.

Miz Middleton. I don't want to scare you, but I think your house is haunted.

MELANIE

Really?

RICH KOBYL T

Yes, M'am. I don't think you need to be worried 'bout her though, she seems nice enough. I just thought you should know.

MELANIE

Okay...

RICH KOBYL T

Although..again, I don't want to scare you. I really don't like to talk about this much, but ya see, I kinda got this gift. You know, *second sight*. So, sometimes I see things other people don't.

MELANIE

It's okay, Rich. I understand.

RICH KOBYL T

Thank you. I kinda thought you might. I, um, well, she's not the only spirit I've seen.

When I'm working upstairs in the bathrooms, sometimes...well, there's something - someone - else. In the hallway...and you see...well, he ain't so nice.

I don't think he wants us here. He moves my tools. I'll be working on something and need a tool and it's not where I left it! Found things in the strangest places...

You need to be careful!

MELANIE

I see. Thank you.

RICH KOBYL T

But - here's the thing - I think the lady downstairs - well, I think she keeps an eye on him. I always feel better knowing she's around.

I was thinkin, you should hire one of those psychics. Maybe find out what he wants so he'll go away.

MELANIE

That's a good idea. And Rich, I promise, your secret's safe with me.

RICH KOBYLTT

I appreciate that M'am.

Rich picks up his gear and starts down the piazza steps.

RICH KOBYLTT (cont'd)

I'm still havin trouble with that fountain. I've checked it out. Can't find any blockage. We may need to do some digging...

MELANIE

Oh. Thanks. I'll talk to my dad.

RICH KOBYLTT

Well, I'll see you 'bout 6:30 tomorrow morning. Have a good night.

He drops a tool at the bottom of the steps and bends over to pick it up. Melanie is treated to the sight of his drooping pants and a partial view of Rich Kybolt's ample backside.

EXT. 33 LEGARE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Melanie holds Rhett Butler's leash on the sidewalk in front of another old Charleston restored home.

MELANIE

Did my Grandmother call you, too? How did you know this was her house? This was supposed to be mine. After she died, I was whisked away by my father and my mother was off on a concert engagement.

Melanie stoops down and rubs the dog behind the ears then scoops him up holding him close.

MELANIE (cont'd)

My father didn't tell me for years that it had been sold. How about that? I didn't cry then about losing my house; my grandmother; my mother...and I still haven't.

A white Cadillac pulls up to the curb beside Melanie and the passenger side window is lowered. Amelia Trenholm leans over to speak

AMELIA

What a coincidence! I was just on my way to see you.

Amelia parks the car, turns off the engine, exits and walks around to Melanie. She gives Rhett Butler a good ear scratching.

AMELIA (cont'd)

I just love your little dog.

MELANIE

He's not mine. He was Nevin's. Want him?

AMELIA

I would love to have him but I think you need him much more.

What brings you here? (indicating the house)

MELANIE

Rhett Butler - he needed a walk and insisted on coming here.

AMELIA

Oh. I thought it might have something to do with the house going on the market again.

MELANIE

What?

AMELIA

You haven't heard? It's not official but I've heard through the grapevine. (Beat)

You should call your mother, let her know. Your father said she's been trying to reach you.

MELANIE

I don't want to talk to her. Besides, if she really wanted to talk to me, she'd call me directly.

AMELIA

Maybe she wants you to call her so she knows you want to, not that you just felt obligated to answer the phone.

(MORE)

AMELIA (cont'd)
 I wish you would talk to her Melanie.
 It's been a long time. (Beat)
 She loves you. She never stopped.

MELANIE
 Amelia, do you have a photo of Emily?

AMELIA
 (surprised)
 Why yes. I keep one in my wallet
 because it was the last time I
 remember Jack being truly happy.

Amelia opens her handbag, takes out her wallet and pulls out a photo of Jack and Amelia, showing it to Melanie.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPH of a beaming Jack looking lovingly at Emily.

Melanie looks at the photo, letting a small sigh of recognition escape. Amelia studies Melanie.

MELANIE
 She's beautiful.

AMELIA
 Yes. Jack always said she was the
 other half of his soul. When she
 left, something broke inside him.

MELANIE
 She really loved him, you know.
 She still does...

AMELIA
 How do you know? Melanie, please.

MELANIE
 Where did you say she went?

AMELIA
 Midwest. I believe that's what
 her boss told me...why?

Melanie turns slightly away. Amelia reaches out, touching her arm.

AMELIA (cont'd)
 Emily's dead, isn't she? You've seen
 her, haven't you. You have the gift,
 like your mother.

MELANIE

Yes. Yes. I have.

AMELIA

(understanding)

Don't worry. It will be our secret. But please Melanie. If you can find out what happened. I don't think Jack will ever fully recover unless he knows her leaving had nothing to do with him.

Melanie nods, holding Rhett Butler tightly.

AMELIA (cont'd)

Thank you.

Amelia turns to walk back to her car. Stops, remembering why she stopped, fishes a business card from her handbag.

AMELIA (cont'd)

I almost forgot. The reason I stopped. This is the name of the master carpenter I recommended. Use my name when you call.

Amelia walks to her car and before she gets in

AMELIA (cont'd)

One more thing. The grandfather clock in your drawing room. I'm very familiar with Johnstone's work and I'm convinced that the clock face isn't original.

MELANIE

Sophie thinks so too. I'll have someone look at it.

AMELIA

No rush, it runs fine. Just in terms of assigning a correct value, you should have it checked out.

Amelia gets in and pulls away. Melanie puts Rhett Butler down and they head back home.

EXT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

Melanie and Rhett Butler come up the steps and are met outside the house by Mrs. Houlihan, who is very agitated.

MELANIE

What's wrong?

MRS. HOULIHAN

I thought everyone was gone but I heard a thump and footsteps coming from your room so I thought I'd wait for you out here.

Melanie hands the leash to Mrs. Houlihan.

MELANIE

Huh. Well, there's still a lot of settling going on. You know with all the construction. I'll go check it out.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - OUTSIDE MELANIE'S BEDROOM

Mrs. Houlihan stands at the bottom of the stairs, holding Rhett Butler.

Melanie stands outside her room and reaches her hand out slowly to open the closed bedroom door, dreading what she might encounter on the other side. She opens the door cautiously.

POV Melanie of her room. The telephone is unplugged and upside down in the middle of the floor. Louisa's photo albums are scattered over the bed and floor.

MELANIE

It's all right Mrs. Houlihan. Some books just fell - that's all.

A relieved Mrs. Houlihan puts Rhett Butler down and heads towards the kitchen.

BACK TO BEDROOM. Melanie looks around, walks over to the bed and notices an album open to a photo of Louisa. She reaches out to pick it up. As she touches it, she reacts with shock but doesn't drop it. She sits on the bed, cradling her body with her empty arm.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPH of a beaming Louisa holding baby Nevin in a long white lace christening gown of the period. Louisa is wearing an ivory silk dress with a V neck. On her neck is a beautiful very large diamond necklace. Melanie's fingers trace the necklace, then move to her own neck.

(It is very important here that we understand Melanie can feel what Louisa feels. The deep mother love for her newborn child.)

MELANIE (cont'd)
Oh. Louisa. What happened.

Melanie's hand moves from her neck to the opposite page and reads aloud what is written in Louisa's lovely hand. As she does, the voice becomes Louisa's voice

MELANIE (cont'd)
LOUISA'S VOICE WILL BLEND INTO
MELANIE'S AND FINISH

*November 5, 1925
Our son, Nevin, was christened today.
We are so Blessed. Robert presented
me with the most beautiful diamond
necklace which I wore for the
occasion. It was photographed. I wish
it had not been. Shortly after the
photo appeared in the paper, someone
attempted to break into our home.
I'm not sure I can ever wear it
again.*

Melanie notices handwritten notes and envelopes tucked into the spine of the pages and is compelled to pick up one envelope in particular. It is of high quality vellum, weathered with age. She opens it and pulls out an old newspaper clipping and a business card.

CLOSE ON the newspaper photograph of Louisa. Someone has drawn a circle around her necklace with black ink. She holds up the business card:

CLOSE ON embossed bold capital letters: **JML**

MELANIE (cont'd)
JML? Joseph Longo?

Melanie gasps as the air is sucked out of her lungs and the album flies off her lap.

INT. UPSCALE CHARLESTON RESTAURANT - LATER THAT EVENING

Melanie and Marc sit having just finished dinner. An empty chocolate dessert plate sits in front of Melanie. Marc looks at her amused. They still have drinks.

MELANIE

Have you ever wondered what happened to your grandfather?

MARC

Years ago my father hired a private investigator. Never turned anything up. It's a cold trail by now.

MELANIE

He didn't leave any clues? No correspondence? Journals?

Marc takes a thoughtful sip of his cognac.

MARC

I don't believe so. My father was the one who handled everything. I guess it's just one of those mysteries that will remain unsolved.

He leans forward, touching Melanie's hand.

MARC (cont'd)

Besides, I like to look to the future.

MELANIE

But you must have some questions, some curiosity?

MARC

When I was a kid but it's all ancient history.

EXT. THE RESTAURANT.

MARC

Can we walk a bit?

Marc takes off his suit jacket and places it over Melanie's shoulders. They walk slowly down one of Charleston's older streets.

MARC (cont'd)

I love Charleston. I know I have this reputation but I do what I do because I truly appreciate this city.

MELANIE

Oh?

MARC

It's beautiful, full of rich history and character and architecturally significant buildings. But, it's inhabitants can be blind to progress.

As much as I respect the preservationists, I sometimes lose patience with their passion for saving crumbling bits of ruin just because they're old.

MELANIE

So why do you want to own an old house?

MARC

Perhaps as a person grows older, he finds the need to get back to his roots; his family; ancestors.

Marc stops. Their hands are entwined. Marc cups one hand under Melanie's chin, looking into her eyes.

MARC (cont'd)

You're a very special woman, Melanie. Smart. Successful. Funny. You deserve only the best.

Feeling her wine, Melanie sways ever so slightly into him. Marc takes her in his arms and kisses her. Melanie returns his kiss. Feeling comfort, but not passion.

MELANIE

Well, I guess that proves it...

MARC

Proves what?

MELANIE

That you're not gay.

MARC

What?

MELANIE

Well, we've been out quite a few times. Spent a weekend together, you made me breakfast and you've only ever given me a peck - until now.

MARC

Ahh. Okay. Well, I'm not a man who dabbles with women and I usually don't mix business with pleasure. It's just that you've been a lovely, unexpected surprise.

Before she can respond, he pulls her to him again and this time kisses her very thoroughly. Melanie responds.

MARC (cont'd)

Well, I guess I should take you home now.

MELANIE

No. Don't. I have a roommate. I'm assuming you don't.

Marc studies her then takes her hand.

MARC

No. I don't.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Melanie closes the door dressed in the same clothes she wore on her date with Marc. As she turns around, she is confronted by her father, Jack and Rich Kobylt.

JACK

Where the Hell have you been? We were about to call the police.

All three look disapprovingly at Melanie. Rich stands by the stairs, a wrench in one hand.

MELANIE

I was out with Marc. Not that it's any of your business.

JACK

That's exactly why I was worried. Why didn't you answer your phone?

MELANIE

I turned it off.

Jack takes a step towards her. He is visibly angry.

JACK

You turned your phone off? That is the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

Didn't it occur to you that we might be worried when you didn't come home and we couldn't reach you?

RICH KOBYLT

We wouldn't have been so worried if you had your phone, Miz Middleton.

Everyone turns to look at Rich. He looks from Melanie to Jack then back to Melanie. Everyone is shocked that he spoke. He's embarrassed.

RICH KOBYLT (cont'd)

Um, well, I guess I'll just get back to work on that hall bath, Miz Middleton. You just let me know if you need me.

He turns and trudges up the stairs. Melanie waits until he has reached the top before turning on Jack.

MELANIE

Just because you live here temporarily, that does not give you the right to run my life. (Beat) You're really starting to piss me off, Jack.

Colonel Middleton places a hand on Jack's arm.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

We were worried sick Melanie. We're relieved that you're okay. But you should have called.

MELANIE

Isn't it a little late for you to play the concerned father?

Colonel Middleton flinches. Melanie raises her hand in a sign of truce.

MELANIE (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I'm tired and I feel as if I've just been attacked in my own home. I appreciate your concern but I'm a 39 year old woman. I don't need you watching over me.

Jack and the Col. exchange a look of concern.

MELANIE (cont'd)

What's wrong? What's happened?

JACK
Melanie, I think you should come
into the drawing room.

MELANIE
For what? I'd like to go upstairs
and change. I've got work to do.

She starts towards the stairs but is stopped by her father.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
No. Melanie. I think you need to
hear this.

Melanie recognizes the military tone of voice and follows
them into the drawing room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM.

Melanie sits on one of the folding chairs. Col. Middleton
stands by the grandfather clock. Jack paces in front of
Melanie.

MELANIE
Well

JACK
You know I've been doing research on
the Vanderhorst family. I've also
been investigating the Longo family -
to see how they might intersect.

I learned that Marc Longo is in debt
up to his eyeballs. His winery is
sucking money and he's got some
pretty impressive gambling debts.

MELANIE
I see. This is about Marc - not
about Louisa or Joseph or my house.

JACK
He's in dire need of cash, Melanie.
Did he tell you he had to go away for
business recently?

Melanie doesn't answer. She gives Jack a look of intense
dislike and stands up.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Melanie, please. There's more. It
has to do with this house.

(MORE)

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
(Beat) You'd better start at the
beginning, Jack.

Melanie reluctantly sits back down.

JACK
Okay. Well. In 1862, the Sultan of
Brunei gave the Confederacy six ten-
carat flawless diamonds to support
the Southern cause.

No records exist to confirm it but
there are two eyewitness reports that
the diamonds were in Richmond with
the confederate gold.

Melanie has had enough. She gets up and begins to leave the
room. Jack stops her with

JACK (cont'd)
I believe the diamonds are here in
this house and I believe Marc Longo
thinks so too.

Melanie turns around and walks up to Jack, confronting him.

MELANIE
What are you talking about? Diamonds?
They sure as Hell aren't here! You've
seen the condition of this place.

JACK
Dammit Melanie. There's enough of a
paper trail to prove that Jefferson
Davis had the diamonds when he fled
Richmond.

When they reached Washington, Ga, the
treasure was split up and a large
portion was entrusted to John Nevin
Vanderhorst.

But when he returned home, he said
he had been attacked and the treasure
was stolen. He was later killed in
the war.

Melanie remains silent; defiant. She sits. Jack continues.

JACK (cont'd)
The legend holds that Vanderhorst
(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
hid the diamonds - either at Magnolia Ridge or here - but they've never been found.

MELANIE
But you believe they're here?

JACK
Yes. I do. When I was in the military, I discovered I have a gift for breaking codes.

I attended an estate auction with my parents in Washington, Ga not long ago.

The trunk that supposedly held the treasure is there in the Confederate Museum. Carved around the bottom, so it would look like part of the design, is an old Atbash substitution cipher. In plain sight for anybody actually paying attention...

It was supposedly used by the Knights Templar and replaces the first letter...

MELANIE
(losing patience)
Jack! What did this cipher say?

JACK
Loosely, something like: "A fortune in gold for our hero's souls; their widows shed tears of glittering ice."

MELANIE
Glittering ice! (mocking) No such thing as coincidences, right?

JACK
After I saw the trunk, I went to Austin. The University has a collection of Davis' papers.

I found a letter he wrote to General Lee saying he had the means to support the Confederate widows.

That's when I decided what my next book would be about.

MELANIE

Because you needed something really big to resurrect your failed career.

Jack nods yes.

MELANIE (cont'd)

So when we first met and you told me about Louisa and Joseph, that was just a ruse to gain access to me - my house.

JACK

Yes. (Guilty) Although I was pretty sure that the two mysteries are intertwined. I think their disappearance has something to do with the missing diamonds.

MELANIE

So you've been lying to me since the day we met?

Melanie stands; her anger and disappointment getting the better of her. She needs to get out of the room before she breaks down.

JACK

I'm sorry Mellie. I didn't mean for it to go this far. I planned on getting the information and leaving. That was before I got to know you.

MELANIE

I would have given you access if you'd told me why solving the mystery was so important. I would have understood. You didn't have to lie.

JACK

I know that now but I didn't know you then. This was so important to my career that I acted like a complete ass. I thought I'd be in and out fast. I hadn't planned on caring about you so much. I was wrong. Mellie. Your friendship means more to me than resurrecting my career. I'm very sorry.

MELANIE

Friendship? What friendship? I hate you right now. (Turning to her father) And you knew about this?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

No. Jack just told me last night - out of concern for you - because of Marc Longo.

JACK

Mellie, please listen to me. No matter how you feel about me right now, Marc Longo is desperate and he could be dangerous. I don't think you should be alone with him. I wouldn't be surprised if he were behind the break-ins and phone calls. Desperate men have been known to do desperate things.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Melanie, there's more...I've been crunching numbers and while Nevin left you a substantial sum of money, this house is eating it up. Replacing the roof alone took up a large portion of the funds.

MELANIE

Are we out of money?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Not out. But I'm not sure there's enough to complete the work to Sophie's standards. If the diamonds are here and we find them, they would belong to you.

Melanie is at breaking point. She raises her hands in front of her as if to wipe out the news of the morning.

MELANIE

I can't...When Chad and Sophie get here, tell them we're taking the day off. We'll talk with Sophie another day but right now...

Melanie starts to exit the room; stops; turns to Jack

MELANIE (cont'd)

Jack, I want you out of here within the hour and I never want to see you again.

JACK

Mellie, please. Please listen. You could be in danger. It's not about the book anymore. Or my career. It's you I'm concerned about now.

MELANIE

No! Just leave, please. And stop calling me Mellie!

END PART II

THE HOUSE ON TRADD STREET

PART III

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - MELANIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The house is quiet. Jack has vacated. Melanie is asleep.

CLOSE ON the bedside clock: 3:00 a.m.

MOVE TO land line plugged into the wall connected to a phone on the table beside Melanie's bed. Also her cell phone.

The land line rings. On the third ring, Melanie, half awake, reaches over and answers. There is a great deal of static on the line.

MELANIE

Hello

MELANIE'S GRANDMOTHER

Hello Peanut. I've missed you.

Melanie reacts; stiffens; her grandmother has been dead for years but recently she has been calling again.

MELANIE

(whispers)

Grandma?

MELANIE'S GRANDMOTHER

You need to call your mama, Peanut.
She misses you so.

The line goes quiet. Melanie is fully awake now. She sits up and throws a pillow across the room with a loud "aarrgghhh". She turns on the lamp and looks at her nightstand where Louisa's album rests. She picks it up, reacting to the electric shock it gives her and quickly drops it beside her on the bed.

Melanie draws her knees up to her chest and rests her forehead on them. She inhales and exhales deeply several times. She takes a part of the sheet to protect herself and opens the album to the photo of Louisa and Nevin from the christening.

MELANIE

(taking another deep
breath)

Louisa, if you're here, please

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)
let me help you.

Melanie presses the pads of her hands into her closed eyelids.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Why would you leave your son
when you loved him so much?

Melanie opens her eyes and breathes deeply again and this time, we can see her cold breath. She shivers and pulls the covers closer. She picks up the photo album - no spark this time and places it open on her lap. The pages begin to flip slowly as if blown by the wind. Melanie takes a deep breath.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Roses...

The pages stop turning on a page with an old newspaper clipping. The clipping is NOT purposely put there - at least not by Louisa.

CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER CLIPPING. Dated December 30, 1929.
HEADLINE: **TWO PROMINENT GENTLEMEN END THEIR LONG-TIME ASSOCIATION.**

Melanie reads aloud.

MELANIE (cont'd)
A spokesperson for the esteemed legal practice of Vanderhorst and Middleton reported today that the firm is being dissolved.

No reason is given as to the dissolution but many speculate it could be related to the recent disappearance of Mr. Vanderhorst's wife, Louisa Gibbes Vanderhorst, whose whereabouts are unknown.

Melanie stares at the article; closes the album; drops her head into her hands.

MELANIE (cont'd)
(very quietly,
patiently)
I know all this Louisa. What I don't know is why you left. Where did you go? Why have you returned? What do you want me to do?

Melanie opens her eyes and looks around the room. Receiving no answers, she gets out of bed, goes to her closet and grabs a suitcase and plops it down on her bed.

CUT TO Melanie stands in the foyer, dressed with her handbag and suitcase. She looks around the house, picks up her key, unlocks the deadbolt. As she does, she smells the putrid odor associated with the malevolent spirit. She shivers, hurriedly opens the door and leaves.

MOVE TO the grey hazy shadow of a man in a fedora standing at the top of the stairs.

INT. MELANIE MIDDLETON'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Melanie wakes up to a wet, gray, cloudy morning. She picks up her glasses from beside her bed, puts them on, grabs her phone and looks at the time.

CLOSE ON PHONE TIME: 8:38

Melanie groans and calls the office.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

NANCY FLAHERTY
Henderson House Realty. Melanie?

MELANIE
Hello Nancy. Look, I'm sorry, I'm not feeling well. I'm going to take the day off.

NANCY FLAHERTY
What? You've never called in sick!
Are you with a man?

MELANIE
No. Nancy. I just...don't feel good.

NANCY FLAHERTY
It's Jack, isn't it?

MELANIE
No. It's not Jack. It's not a man.
I'm just under the weather, that's all.

NANCY FLAHERTY
Sorry. Besides, I knew you weren't with Jack.

MELANIE

You did? How?

NANCY FLAHERTY

Because he called here earlier. Said you'd gotten some bad news yesterday. He's worried about you.

Listen, I've got your calendar. Nothing earthshaking that I can't move - clear you for the rest of the week. You need some time off. I'll tell Mr.H you have the flu or something.

MELANIE

But...

NANCY FLAHERTY

But nothing. And don't accuse me of mothering you. It was Jack's idea. Oh, there's another line. I've got to go. Get some rest. See you next week.

Nancy hangs up. Melanie looks at her phone, frowns, turns it off, puts it down on her night table, grabs a sleeping mask and goes back to bed.

INDICATE THE PASSING OF DAYS. Melanie has hardly moved from the bed except to occasionally eat delivered food from well-known Charleston eateries. Bags have not been cleaned up. Half-eaten donuts and empty sweets boxes are strewn about her apartment.

INT. MELANIE'S OFFICE - HENDERSON HOUSE REALTY - NEW DAY

A refreshed Melanie with newly manicured hands is working through her stack of messages and listings when Nancy pops her head in the door.

MELANIE

Nancy, I really need to catch up

NANCY FLAHERTY

I know you don't want to see anyone but Marc Longo is here. He's pretty adamant that he needs to see you.

MELANIE

Okay. Send him back.

Melanie gets up from her desk, walks around and waits near the table and chairs. There's a **KNOCK** on the door

MELANIE (cont'd)

Come in.

Marc enters, goes to Melanie and kisses her. He keeps her hands in his.

MARC

I've missed you. I hope you're feeling better.

MELANIE

Yes. A little...

MARC

Good. I was afraid you were avoiding me.

Melanie drops her eyes and his hands from hers.

MELANIE

Let's go outside for a moment so we can talk.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Melanie and Marc walk down the street, stopping at an empty bench. Marc pulls out his handkerchief and wipes the seat for Melanie. She smiles at him, sits, placing her hands under her thighs. Marc sits beside her.

MARC

What's this all about Melanie? I thought we were...enjoying one another's company.

MELANIE

Marc, when you said you had to go out of town a few weeks ago, did you go to a high-stakes poker game in Vegas?

MARC

Yes. Yes. I did. My younger brother, Anthony, has a gambling problem. If I know he's headed to a game, I sign up too. To keep an eye on him. It's a family matter. Is that what your silence is about? You disapprove of gambling?

MELANIE

No. It's more that I disapprove of lying and misrepresenting yourself in order to get what you want.

Marc turns fully to Melanie.

MARC

What are you talking about?

MELANIE

(looking him squarely
in the eye)

Marc, are you familiar with the legend of the Confederate gold?

MARC

Of course! But what has that to do with me?

MELANIE

Have you ever heard that part of the Confederate treasure might be hidden in my house on Tradd Street?

MARC

Gold? Hidden in your house? With all the work going on in there, don't you think you would have found it by now?

MELANIE

Not gold. Diamonds.

Melanie is watching Marc closely for any sign he knows anything. He gives nothing away.

MELANIE (cont'd)

It seems the Sultan of Brunei gave six large, flawless diamonds to the Confederacy. A Vanderhorst ancestor, a Confederate soldier, is supposed to be the last person to have seen them. But he died in the war and they've never been seen since.

MARC

Just like my grandfather, Joseph and Louisa Vanderhorst.

Melanie, historical events with perfectly logical explanations tend to become legends as time passes.

(MORE)

MARC (cont'd)

It's so much more romantic to think a respectable Charleston woman ran off with her lover...or that a loyal soldier embezzled a failing government out of it's fortune...

MELANIE

So you've never heard of the sultan's diamonds?

Marc extracts one of Melanie's hands, taking it in his, looking directly into her eyes.

MARC

Look, Melanie. Your friend Jack is probably the one who has filled your head with these ideas. His career depends on taking ordinary events from history and making them extraordinary.

Good for him - we all need to escape reality now and then. But we can't lose sight of the fact that it's all based on lore and conjecture.

I suppose what you really want to know is whether or not I believe it enough to pursue you in order to gain access to your house.

Melanie looks down at his hand holding hers then back up to his eyes.

MELANIE

Did you?

Marc closes his eyes. He appears genuinely hurt by her accusation. He looks her straight in the eyes.

MARC

The night after our dinner - did that seem fake to you?

MELANIE

I'm sorry, Marc. It's just that... well, things aren't going too well with the restoration and I just couldn't take more bad news.

MARC

What's wrong Melanie? Tell me.

MELANIE

The restoration is costing much more than we anticipated. I'm not sure I can afford to complete it.

MARC

But you don't even want the house! Didn't you refer to it once as "the goiter on the back of your neck"?

He chuckles and Melanie softens a bit too, also chuckling.

MELANIE

Yes. Yes I did. But that was then. I've invested so much time, energy, and money...I don't think I can abandon it now.

MARC

What would happen if you did?

MELANIE

I don't know. I'll have to talk to my Dad. He's a trustee. I don't want to fail Nevin or lose the house.

MARC

Well, if you find those diamonds, all your problems will be solved!

Melanie jerks her head up to meet Marc's eyes and sees that he is teasing her. The both laugh.

MELANIE

Yes. Yes they would! Oh Marc, I feel so stupid

MARC

You're not stupid Melanie. Just overworked and stressed. You're incredibly intelligent but you're also very trusting. We're okay, aren't we?

Melanie shakes her head yes.

MARC (cont'd)

So, why don't we plan a de-stressing weekend at my beach house? I promise, you don't even have to get dressed - unless you want to.

EXT. CHARLESTON PARK - LUNCH TIME

Melanie sits on the same park bench having lunch. She is perusing her phone. This time she is eating a healthy salad. Her nails are beautifully manicured and she appears rested and relaxed.

JACK

You haven't returned any of my calls.

Melanie looks up to see Jack standing beside the bench in front of her.

MELANIE

Are you surprised?

JACK

No, not really. But I am surprised you haven't given me a chance to redeem myself. I thought we were friends.

MELANIE

I don't think you can redeem yourself. Please, just go away.

Melanie begins gathering her things.

JACK

I can find the diamonds for you.

Jack sits beside her.

JACK (cont'd)

What about Louisa and Nevin? Are you going to abandon them and the house? I think you and I agree that something pretty horrible had to happen to make her leave her child.

What about the photograph of Louisa and Nevin? Why does it keep getting thrown across the room?

Don't try to deny there's something going on in that house. Louisa and Nevin need you to find out the truth.

A small burst of wind blows as Emily's Ghost appears beside Jack. She reaches out and strokes his hair above his ear. Jack reaches up his hand as if to swat away whatever is buzzing around his head.

Melanie watches. Emily's Ghost's lips never move but Melanie can hear her whispering

EMILY'S GHOST
Tell him I love him. Tell him
that's why I left. Tell him.

Jack tilts his head slightly. He's looking at Melanie who is responding to Emily's Ghost.

JACK
What is it? You look like you've
seen a ghost!

Melanie hastily grabs her things, stands.

MELANIE
I've got to go.

Jack's cell rings. He takes it out, looks at it.

JACK
It's your Dad. Hello Colonel.

Melanie begins to walk away. Jack gets up and follows.

JACK (cont'd)
Melanie! Please...

Melanie stops while Jack listens. He hangs up.

MELANIE
Well...

JACK
He's been going through your
grandfather's papers. Remember you
told him Gus' name was on the deed
to Magnolia Ridge? He found a locked
safe box. Said he had to break the
lock and we need to come see what was
inside.

MELANIE
You go Jack. I don't care anymore.

JACK
Melanie, has it occurred to you
that without this project to work
on, your dad's a little lost?

MELANIE
Is he drinking again?

JACK
That might depend upon how
quickly we get there.

MELANIE
Where?

JACK
Blackbeard's.

INT. BLACKBEARD'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Colonel Middleton sits alone at a table in a back corner, a bottle of whiskey and a glass in front of him. A metal safety box on the table beside him. Melanie and Jack sit at two other chairs.

MELANIE
Daddy? Are you all right?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
It's amazing isn't it? How something
so small can seemingly take away all
your troubles...

JACK
You shouldn't be here, Jim.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
You're right, but here I am

MELANIE
How much have you had?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
None...yet.

A waitress appears.

JACK
Three cokes, please.

Melanie and Jack sit back. No one speaks. The waitress comes back with their cokes and Melanie and Jack take a sip. Wait.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
What is it with mothers leaving their
children? Can there be anything more
devastating to a child?

Every muscle in Melanie's body goes rigid.

MELANIE

Daddy, I don't want to talk about Mother. We're here to help you.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

But that's why I drank, don't you see? I was standing in my room, holding your grandfather's box when it hit me.

MELANIE

What Daddy?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I don't think I can kick this thing, Mellie, if we don't talk about what changed our lives.

MELANIE

I don't understand....

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I need to tell you things that won't be easy to hear, but maybe once I get it all out I won't have this compulsion to destroy myself.

The Colonel picks up his coke, takes a drink. Leans forward, looking at Melanie

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)

When you and your mother first moved in with your grandmother, it was because of me. We were ...arguing.

Stupid, it was about your imaginary friends. Your mother encouraged it and I didn't think it was healthy.

I've realized that was my excuse. I thought your mother was growing away from me. That golden voice. Her Opera career was taking off. She was getting great publicity; rave reviews; offers pouring in.

It scared me - so I picked fights - and I drank. I accused her of being a bad mother.

But she wasn't. She was wonderful and she loved you more than anything.

(MORE)

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)

But this one night, I'd read a glowing article about her latest performance in the newspaper..how Charleston couldn't contain the talent of Ginette Middleton...how she had to share it with the world..

There was a photo of her with her manager. I knew there wasn't anything between them but...I said some nasty things. She was all I ever wanted. And you. My family. I loved you both so much.

I was drunk. I told her to leave and she did. Only she took you with her. And my heart broke.

MELANIE

Didn't you try to work things out?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Yes. Your mother and I were doing pretty good. She started working again and then offers to tour poured in. She had just agreed to go when your grandmother died suddenly. She didn't want to leave you but couldn't break the contract and then my orders came through for Japan.

It was a very difficult time. Total chaos. We argued...

You shouldn't blame her for leaving Melanie.

MELANIE

I was seven! She never called me! Never came to see me.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Yes she did.

MELANIE

What?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

She did. She had a concert in Australia and stopped over when we were in Japan.

(MORE)

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
 I told her she shouldn't see you.
 That it upset you too much. Each
 time, I told her that until it
 became the truth. And I kept
 drinking to bury my shame.

MELANIE
 How many times? How many times did
 she try to see me? How many times?

Colonel Middleton can't answer her. Can't look at her.

MELANIE (cont'd)
 (stands)
 She tried to see me and you wouldn't
 allow it?

Colonel Middleton reaches out, takes one of Melanie's hands.
 She looks down at them, noticing how worn they have become
 from working on her house.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
 Never - not ever - did either one of
 us stop loving you. I'm so very
 sorry, Mellie.

MELANIE
 Why are you telling me this now?

The Colonel drops her hand, looks at Jack and the bottle,
 nods, then reaches for the box. Jack removes the bottle and
 glass placing them on another table.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
 Because I think the house came to you
 for a reason. Losing your mother was
 a horrible thing - for both you and
 Nevin. Not ever knowing the truth is
 worse.

Maybe if we can learn the truth about
 Louisa, you might find some
 forgiveness in your own life.

He taps the box.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
 Open it.

Melanie lifts the lid.

CLOSE ON CONTENTS OF BOX: dried rose petals; a canister of
 120 roll film; an ivory envelope.

Melanie lifts the sealed envelope. On the front in script is written: **Nevin**. In the lower right corner the date: **January 15, 1930**

She slips a finger under the flap and breaks the seal, pulling out a single sheet of paper and reads aloud:

MELANIE (READS)

*My precious son,
You are too young to read this now or
even to understand all that is
contained in this box. That is why
I'm giving it to my friend, Augustus
Middleton, in case something should
happen to me before you are old
enough to know the truth.*

*Be vigilant in all that you do and be
secure in the knowledge always that
you were greatly loved by both of
your parents and all who knew you.*

*Remember what your mother used to
call you and never have any doubt.*

*Cerca Trova.
Your Loving Father,
Robert Nevin Vanderhorst*

MELANIE

Cerca Trova?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Seek and ye shall find.

JACK

Weird...I've seen that recently...

MELANIE

But why didn't Robert get the box
back after Gus died?

JACK

They died within days of each other.

Jack reaches into the box and pulls out the roll of film.

JACK (cont'd)

My dad is good friends with a guy
who buys and sells old cameras. I'll
take this to him, get it developed.

Melanie folds the letter and puts it back in the box. They all stand. The Colonel leans in the Melanie, whispering in her ear.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Thank you. For not giving up. For letting me be a part of this. I didn't deserve it. It's given me a chance to see the person you've become and I couldn't be prouder.

Melanie reaches up and gives him a kiss on his cheek.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)

Well, we'd better get going. We've got a big day ahead of us tomorrow.

MELANIE

Who's Adam?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

You remembered!

MELANIE

Yeah. Hard to forget something I said every morning. Up and Adam... Will you be all right Daddy?

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Yes. I'm fine.

They begin to move

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)

But you need to move back into the house. Not just to keep everything legit but I think there's more clues to find.

JACK

He's right Mellie. The bathrooms are working and a lot of the work is done. You can't really call living at 55 Tradd Street in Charleston roughing it anymore!

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Well, good night. See you two tomorrow.

The Colonel leaves. Jack turns to Melanie

JACK

I am so very sorry Mellie - about lying to you. It's just...I don't know...I guess losing Emily made me very cynical where women are concerned. I know that's no excuse. I just want you to know how sorry I am. I was a jerk. I know I disappointed you...

Jack is interrupted by his cell ringing. He looks at it

JACK (cont'd)

I'm sorry. This is my friend at the library. It's important.

MELANIE

Of course. Wouldn't want to keep you from your library friend.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Melanie stands inside the foyer, waving goodnight to Sophie and Chad. Thanking them. She closes the door and turns into the house. She begins to move but steps on something. She stops, looks down and stoops to pick up a stuffed dog toy. Smiling, she sets it down on the steps.

She walks into the drawing room. We see a house that looks vastly different from only a few months ago. New paint on the walls. The crystal chandelier has been cleaned, restored, etc. But the furnishings have not been returned. The uncovered grandfather clock chimes. Melanie turns off all but one lamp and heads to her room.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - MELANIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Melanie is asleep. She wakes, groggy. Looks around.

MELANIE

Louisa?

Melanie turns on the bedside lamp; gets up; puts on her glasses, picks up Louisa's photo album, returning to her bed. The pages again turn on their own stopping at the christening photo.

CLOSE ON PHOTO the diamond hanging around Louisa's neck.

Melanie's hand moves to the diamond.

CLOSE ON MELANIE'S FACE. Recognition.

MELANIE

Oh my God. The diamonds!
Jack was right.

Melanie puts the album down and reaches for her cell phone but it's not there.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Damn, left my phone in my purse
downstairs.

CLOSE ON BEDSIDE CLOCK

She sees that it is 3:15 in the morning. The numbers are a bit hazy. She blinks. They're still hazy. She shivers. Breathes out and her breath is visible. She gets up and puts on her robe and slippers. She goes to the door and when she takes the knob, it is hot. She pulls back, covering her hand with her robe, she carefully opens the door and walks into the hallway.

MOVE TO HALLWAY.

The door slams shut behind her and a dark shadow flits across her vision. She starts down the hall, at a table with a mirror above she glances in the mirror. A strong *whoosh* knocks her breath out of her and she catches her fall with the table. She begins her mantra

MELANIE (cont'd)

I'm stronger than you.
I am stronger than you..

She glances in the mirror seeing the shimmering grey figure of a man in a fedora looking back at her. She gasps; tries to step back but she is blocked. Melanie opens her mouth to scream but inhales smoke that is now rising from the floor below. She gasps for air, drops to the floor and crawls to the stairs, quickly making her way to the first floor.

MOVE TO FOYER.

She hears the **POPPING AND CRACKING OF FIRE** coming from the kitchen. She makes her way to the front door but cannot open it. It will not give. She turns and sees the grey shadow of the malevolent spirit standing a few feet away. Where his eyes should be are red flames and the image radiates red. Melanie gasps; then passes out.

THE SOUND OF SIRENS CAN BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - KITCHEN - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Melanie, Jack, Col. Middleton stand just beyond the remains of the destroyed kitchen.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

The fire chief said probably started by faulty wiring but they got here fast enough to contain it. Thankfully your call came in time.

Melanie turns away, knowing she did not make the call. Jack looks at her but says nothing. They move towards the drawing room.

JACK

There's not too much damage. Thankfully the furnishings are still out.

What were you doing here, Melanie?

MOVE TO DRAWING ROOM.

MELANIE

I stopped by to check on the house. Sophie and Chad and a bunch of students were working, so I stayed. It got late and I decided to sleep here.

I woke up in the middle of the night remembering a photo I had seen of Louisa in one of the albums.

She's wearing a large diamond necklace in it. Robert gave it to her as a christening gift.

Then I smelled smoke...

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Where's the album?

MELANIE

Probably still in my bedroom.

JACK

That means Robert knew about the diamonds.

MELANIE

Jack, do you happen to know what Joseph Longo's middle name was?

JACK

Yes. Marcus.

MELANIE

J.M.L. He sent a newspaper clipping to Louisa with the photograph taken on the day of the christening. He drew a circle around the necklace; no note, only his business card.

JACK

So, Joseph Longo knew about the diamonds, too.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Right. Well, we'll have double down on our efforts.

How about I grab us some lunch. You two get these windows and doors open. Get some fresh air in here.

MELANIE

Sounds good.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I'm glad you're okay, Sweet Pea.

He gives her a hug and kiss and exits.

JACK

Actually, I'm glad we have some time alone. I know you're not the one who called me.

One of the firemen gave me your purse. Said he found it on the foyer table. Your phone was in it.

Melanie remains quiet.

JACK (cont'd)

And when I got to the door and tried to open it, it felt like someone was holding it closed from the inside. It wasn't locked but I couldn't get it open.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

When I looked through the side lights, I could see a woman staring at me. I heard her tell me to hurry and then the door opened. I picked you up and made it outside just as the firemen arrived.

Melanie looks at him, waiting.

JACK (cont'd)

I had a very strong feeling that you were not alone.

Melanie, is your house haunted?

Melanie lets out her breath. Still doesn't reply.

JACK (cont'd)

What are you afraid of? That I'll laugh at you? I wouldn't. I think it's a pretty amazing gift. Your house is haunted, isn't it?

MELANIE

There are three prominent ghosts. A woman, a little boy and a man who is wholly evil.

I'm sure the woman is Louisa and the boy is Nevin. He's young - before Louisa left.

I don't know who the man is but I'm pretty sure it's not Robert. Robert was tall and Louisa loved him. I'm sure of that.

JACK

Okay. So you can see dead people? That's really amazing.

MELANIE

Yes. I've been able to since I was a child. I can't even remember when it started.

JACK

Must get annoying (joking)

MELANIE

Yeah. Mostly. Sometimes I can just ignore them. Sometimes not. Each time I listen to one of them,
(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)
it takes a little something from me.

JACK
Do they ever scare you?

MELANIE
Sometimes. The evil presence in this house scares me. I believe it's trying to kill me but then Louisa will come and I think she protects me.

Jack...I...Emily. Emily loved you. She never stopped.

JACK
You've seen Emily?

MELANIE
Yes. A few times. Always around you. She wanted me to tell you that she only left *because* she loved you and that she loves you still.

JACK
Did she tell you why she left?

MELANIE
No. But I know why. Your mother told me that Emily had gone somewhere in the mid west. I made a few phone calls.

She went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. She had a cousin near there.

I'm so sorry Jack. Her cousin told me Emily had lymphoma and by the time they discovered it, it had already spread to her vital organs. There was nothing they could do.

She tried to make you hate her. Hate's a lot easier to get over than love.

I'm so sorry. I should have told you as soon as I found out.

JACK

I found out about the cousin too but I was so angry with her I didn't bother to take it any further. It never occurred to me that she was ill.

Do you know where she's buried?

MELANIE

I can find out if you like.

JACK

Not yet.

Melanie reaches out for Jack and he folds into her arms and sheds the tears that have been there for years.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NEW DAY

Melanie and Jack stand in a cleaned-up drawing room, surveying the room.

MELANIE

I'm glad you're all right, house.

JACK

Me too house! And I'm especially glad you're all right, Melanie.

MELANIE

I haven't thanked you...

JACK

Aww, I get that a lot...

MELANIE

(punching his
shoulder)

For saving my life. Thank you.

JACK

I'm glad I was here. (Beat) And I need to thank you, too. In a way, you've saved my life.

I've always heard people say "not knowing" is worse than knowing the truth and I never understood them until now.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

It's freeing. I feel like I've been given permission to grieve; to finally move on.

Melanie reaches out to him and he moves closer. An object whizzes past them and lands with a **THUD** on the floor in front of the grandfather clock. They turn

JACK (cont'd)

What the...

They see the framed photograph of Louisa and Nevin on the floor in front of the clock and move to it. Melanie picks it up and tucks it under her arm.

MELANIE

I think it's Louisa. Do you smell roses? I always smell them when she's around.

She's been trying to tell me something; I just can't figure out what.

JACK

Maybe it has something to do with the clock. That photo always lands here. The photographs I took of the clock face show a naval battle in Charleston Harbor...

MELANIE

Both Sophie and your mother said that wasn't the original scene. Why would somebody change it?

JACK

It depicts the firing on Fort Sumter. That's where the first shots were fired in the Civil War.

MELANIE

I know that! I'm from Charleston.

Jack walks over to the clock.

JACK

When I examined the painting more closely, I realized that some of the lines are three-dimensional. Just enough to be detected by feel.

MELANIE
Why would someone do that?

JACK
I made a wax rubbing...

MELANIE
(cutting him off)
What did it tell you? Did it say
where the diamonds are?

JACK
I wish it were that easy! It's like
your ghosts - they don't give up
their secrets easily. Hold on...

Jack grabs his bag and pulls a file folder out, finds the
paper he's looking for and shows Melanie.

CLOSE ON WAX RUBBING SHOWING:

IFANKRNGMFEFIVEEMNROQNPDKNIASRKE

MELANIE
Looks like a line of letters

JACK
It's a substitution cipher. Pretty
simple - IF - you know the key word.
I've been working on it but...

MELANIE
That's why you wanted those cipher
books we found in the attic!

JACK
Yes. All the books are from the last
century; which makes me think it was
Robert Vanderhorst who changed the
clock face.

And there's something else.

Jack opens the front panel door.

JACK (cont'd)
I found a secret compartment..

MELANIE
And you didn't tell me?

JACK

Well, it's empty so I didn't see the need.

Jack reaches inside the case. The compartment is hidden above the opening of the door so you can't see it. He pulls a lever so a door pops open. Melanie moves forward and reaches in. As she does so, the framed photograph she's been holding falls. She's intent on the clock, so they ignore it. The compartment is empty.

MELANIE

Well, there's obviously no space between this and the sides of the clock...

JACK

Exactly. And the opening goes straight up into the pediment. If there were ever any diamonds in there, they're long gone.

Melanie steps back, disappointed as Jack closes the clock.

MELANIE

Jack, I remembered something else. When you were giving me CPR in the garden, I saw Louisa. She was standing by the fountain and she bent down and pointed to the Roman numeral panel. She told me to "look closer". She keeps telling me "*look closer*".

JACK

Your dad and I have been playing with those numbers, trying to discover if they correspond to someone or something significant in the Vanderhorst family. So far, we've found nothing.

I'd like to see that photograph of Louisa with the diamond. It would help to know the size and shape of what we're looking for.

MELANIE

Sure

Melanie stoops to pick up the framed photograph from the floor. The back of the frame has opened.

As Melanie picks it up, she pulls it fully open, revealing a torn piece of paper.

MELANIE (cont'd)
What's this? It looks like part
of an envelope.

Melanie turns it over

CLOSE ON ENVELOPE. Written on the reverse:

Susannah Barnsley

Orchard Lane

MELANIE (cont'd)
Mean anything?

JACK
Just another piece of the puzzle

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR SITTING AREA - LATER

Melanie is sleeping on a sofa, covered by an afghan. Colonel Middleton stands over her, looking lovingly at her.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
(shouting)
MELANIE!

Melanie is awakened. Alarmed. She reacts quickly.

MELANIE
Dad! I'm not a recruit. You don't
need to shout at me. Don't ever do
that again.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Sorry Sweet Pea. I've got those
photographs from the role of film in
Gus's safe box and wanted to show
them to you.

Melanie sits up and makes room for the Colonel, who sits next to her. He pulls the 3 photographs from the 1920s out of a portfolio and hands them to Melanie. He also pulls out a Companion notebook and a pen and opens them.

COLONEL MIDDLETON (cont'd)
I've started making notes on what we
find. Sometimes information falls
into place somewhere down the line.

CLOSE ON as Melanie looks at the photographs

A photo of the fountain and the Roman numeral stone. The fountain is dry.

MELANIE

Well, we know about the stone. The fountain's empty here and Rich hasn't been able to figure that out...might mean something

She moves to the next photo of the grandfather clock.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Look at this! The clock face isn't the one that's there now. It **was** replaced. Robert did replace it! But why?

She moves to the third photograph showing a young Mulatto woman, about 15 years old. She sits on a piano bench in front of a piano holding sheet music titled: OH SUSANNAH!

COLONEL MIDDLETON

I confess, this one puzzles me. Any idea who she might be? She's holding sheet music titled OH SUSANNAH...

MELANIE

Yes! Jack and I found an envelope just this morning with the name Susannah Barnsley written on it.

Melanie's cell phone rings. She hands the photos to her dad, gets up, answers her phone.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Hey Sophie. What's up?

Melanie listens

MELANIE (cont'd)

Okay. Sounds good. See you and Chad later today. (beat) Oh, by the way, does the name Susannah Barnsley mean anything to you?

Melanie listens, hangs up. Her dad responds to her reaction.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

What did she say?

MELANIE

Susannah Barnsley was a mixed-race woman who lived in a nice house on Chalmers. Seems she was supported by a white benefactor.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Really? Does she still live there?

MELANIE

No - the house and neighborhood were pretty much abandoned by the 50s. The entire area would have been torn down if not for the Preservation Society.

A white benefactor? Robert? Why did Gus have these photos and why keep them hidden?

SOUNDS OF A **CAR DOOR CLOSING** OUTSIDE. Colonel Middleton hears and walks over to a window, looking out.

COLONEL MIDDLETON

Jack's here. Looks like he's moving back in...

CUT TO FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Melanie opens the door to Jack, carrying two suitcases and a potted orchid, followed closely by Marc, elegantly dressed, also carrying a potted orchid.

Jack doesn't say anything. He walks inside, places the orchid on the hall table and proceeds directly up the stairs with the suitcases. Colonel Middleton follows him.

Marc also steps inside, embraces Melanie, kissing her on both cheeks and hands her his orchid.

MARC

Melanie. I heard about the fire. I was worried but Nancy told me you were safe. An electrical fire?

MELANIE

Yes. Started in the kitchen. It's gutted but still in tact.

MARC

Ah, so that's the way of it? I've been told these things are pretty contagious.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
(coming back down the
stairs)
What's contagious? Marc. (nods his
head in acknowledgement)

MARC
Old houses! Melanie seems to have
caught the bug.

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Well, that's not surprising. Her
earliest memories are from her
Grandmother's house on Legare.

You're a Charleston native. Does the
name Susannah Barnsley mean anything
to you?

MARC
No. Don't think so. Why?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
I found a photo of her in some of
grandfather Gus's things. She was
posing in front of the piano in the
drawing room here.

MARC
Weren't your father and Robert good
friends?

COLONEL MIDDLETON
Yes. Business partners. Had some sort
of a falling out.

Jack comes stomping down the stairs.

MARC
I hope I'm mistaken, Jack but it
would appear you're moving back in?

JACK
Well then, Matt, your powers of
observation would be as strong as
your cologne.

Marc ignores the barb, turning to Melanie, steering her out
to the piazza.

EXT. PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

MARC

They're having fireworks tonight at
Patriot's Point for Veterans Day.
Join me?

MELANIE

I'd like that very much

MARC

Great. Dinner at Jestine's? Coconut
Cream pie! I'll pick you up at
seven.

Marc pulls Melanie in close and smiles triumphantly at Jack,
who is hanging out in the doorway. Then he gives Melanie a
thorough kiss. Jack's jaw and fists clench.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. EXT. CHARLESTON HISTORIC SOCIETY
BUILDING.

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melanie and Jack are walking into the room.

JACK

There she is!

They walk over to a table where **YVONNE CRAIG, (late 70s
early 80s)** is studying a large book.

JACK (cont'd)

Hello Gorgeous!

Yvonne Craig turns to Jack, beaming. He hands her a bouquet
of yellow roses.

JACK (cont'd)

Yvonne Craig, I'd like you to meet
Melanie Middleton.

Melanie and Yvonne shake hands. Melanie is gob-smacked that
this is the friend Jack has repeatedly mentioned who does
him favors.

MELANIE

It's lovely to meet you.

YVONNE CRAIG
So, you're the lucky one who
inherited Nevin's house.

Middleton did you say?

MELANIE
Yes. Jack speaks so fondly of you.

YVONNE CRAIG
Ha! I bet he lead you to believe I
was some young thing seeking his
affections! (beat) Not that I
wouldn't jump at the chance if I
didn't think it wouldn't kill me!
(winking) Hand me my cane, Dear Boy.

Jack hands her the cane and waggles his eyebrows at Melanie
mocking her.

JACK
Yvonne, everybody knows the heart of
a 20 something beats inside of you!

YVONNE CRAIG
Remember young man! Flattery will get
you everything - almost!

JACK
Yes m'am! So, what did you find out
about Susannah Barnsley?

YVONNE CRAIG
Some very interesting information!

Jack and Melanie take seats side-by-side at the table.

YVONNE CRAIG (cont'd)
Sorry it took me so long but I had
some trouble locating the right book.
It seems someone came in this morning
before I did and they failed to put
it back in its proper place! Pure
laziness if you ask me. Shelved it
amongst some 18th century maps!

She motions to a large, old volume which Jack moves to her.
She opens the book, flipping through until she comes to the
page she wants.

YVONNE CRAIG (cont'd)
You're very lucky, you know. About
seventy-five years ago, someone
(MORE)

YVONNE CRAIG (cont'd)
 began documenting the descendants
 of the slaves from Barnsley Hall
 plantation. He was a grandson of one
 of the blacksmiths.

I figured - rightly so - that with
 Susannah's last name, that would be
 the place to look!

I've already made photocopies for
 you.

She lifts the photocopied sheets and passes them to Jack and
 Melanie.

YVONNE CRAIG (CON'T)
 Susannah's grandfather was white.
 Her mother was a laundress in North
 Charleston. That's all I can find
 about her early years.

This part is notable though. At the
 age of 18, she moved to a house on
 Chalmers.

I think, Miss Middleton, this will
 be of particular interest to you.

She hands Melanie another photocopied sheet of paper.

MELANIE
 It's a lease agreement.

She scans the document

MELANIE (cont'd)
 (taken by total
 surprise)
 Augustus Middleton! That's my
 grandfather! Why would he be
 signing a lease for her house?

Jack and Yvonne sit, smiling, waiting for Melanie's
 recognition. Finally

MELANIE (cont'd)
 Oh! Oh, he...I see...it wasn't
 Robert!

It appears he leased the house for her for some years. She
 moved out in 1929.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Oh. Any idea where she might have gone?

YVONNE CRAIG

I knew you were going to ask! So I did more research.

It seems the landlord kept meticulous records - including addresses of former tenants!

With a self-satisfied smile, Yvonne produces another document.

YVONNE CRAIG (cont'd)

She moved there. I looked her up, found her phone number, called it and asked for Susannah. The woman who answered said that she was napping. I guess that means she's still alive!

JACK

Susannah Barnsley. 102 Orchard Lane. Colchester, Vermont!

Jack slides back his chair, gets up and hugs Yvonne

JACK (cont'd)

Yvonne, you're a jewel! It would have taken me weeks!

YVONNE CRAIG

One just needs to know where to look, Dear Boy.

I believe this means you owe me dinner!

JACK

Yes I do! Blossom again? Or someplace new?

YVONNE CRAIG

Blossom is perfect! And I hope Miss Middleton will join us.

MELANIE

I'd love to! And please, call me Melanie.

Melanie's cell begins to ring. She pulls it out of her purse.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Excuse me.

Melanie rushes out.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

By the time Melanie has gotten outside, her phone has stopped ringing, so she listens to her voice mail. We hear Marc's voice

MARC (V.O.)

Melanie, Hi. Listen, sorry, but something unexpected has come up and I need to go out of town for a few days. Call you soon Beautiful.

Jack has come outside, hears the voice mail

JACK

Too bad. Guess that gives us time to work on the cipher and plan our trip to Vermont.

MELANIE

We're going to Vermont?

JACK

Well, you could stay here but don't you want to go meet the mysterious Susannah Barnsley?

MELANIE

Yes. I most definitely do.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT - SIGN "WELCOME TO COLCHESTER" - MORNING

Jack is driving a car with Melanie in the passenger seat holding a map. They pull up to a lovely white Cape Cod house.

CUT TO EXT. Jack and Melanie stand on the porch. Jack rings the doorbell. They wait. The door opens.

MRS. MARSTON

Hello. I'm Mrs. Marston, Miss Barnsley's companion. You must be Jack and Melanie. We've been expecting you.

CUT TO INT. LOVELY HOME FURNISHED IN BEAUTIFUL ANTIQUES -
CONTINUOUS

A fire burns in the fireplace. The room is elegant but cozy. **SUSANNAH BARNESLEY** (she has made it to 96 years old) sits in a chair by the fire. She is petite. Her feet rest on a footstool. Her white hair is beautifully styled and she wears slax and a lovely blouse with a sweater over. She has gorgeous, almost wrinkle free light brown skin. Her green eyes are bright and sparkling. Her voice still carries the soft cadence of a Charlestonian.

Melanie and Jack sit opposite her.

JACK

Ms. Barnesley, thank you for
allowing us to visit.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

You look like your grandfather

MELANIE

Yes. Many people tell me so...It must
have been odd to hear from someone
from Charleston after so many years.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Well, yes...and no. Nothing for years
and years and then suddenly there's a
flurry of calls! Yours was the third
one in just a few days.

MELANIE

Really! Anyone you knew?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Well, Mrs. Marston told me the first
two were just hang-ups. She
recognized the Charleston area code,
but no one spoke. Then there was the
lady from the library.

What is it you would like to know?

Melanie opens her handbag and removes the photograph of
young Susannah, handing it to the woman.

MELANIE

Is this you?

Susannah takes the photo and studies it, her emotions
rising. She traces her younger self with an elegant finger.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

(softly)

Yes. It is. Gus had that taken. He said he liked keeping it with him.

JACK

Ms. Barnesley, did you know Robert Vanderhorst?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes. I knew him - not very well. Things were different back then. My place was not with the likes of the Vanderhorsts and Middletons.

JACK

But Gus put you up in a house...

Susannah takes no umbrage at Jack's directness.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes. Gus and I were lovers. He wanted to marry me but I knew that would never do - not just because I was years younger. He would have had to give up everything for me and I wouldn't have it.

Mrs. Marston returns carrying a tray with coffee and cake. She serves. Melanie helps herself to cake and extra sugar for her coffee. Mrs. Marston leaves. Susannah watches, smiles.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

Ahh, Miss Middleton. I see you have your grandfather's sweet tooth.

MELANIE

Yes M'am. If you don't mind me asking, why did you leave Charleston?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Because Gus asked me to.

MELANIE

He asked you to leave?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes. But before I go further, would you mind if I asked some questions?

MELANIE

Of course, please...

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

How did you find me?

Melanie looks at Jack. He nods for her to answer.

MELANIE

Well, it's a long story. But several months ago, I inherited a house from Nevin Vanderhorst, the son of Robert and Louisa. He was very certain that his mother had not abandoned him. We've been restoring the house. And then my dad found a box containing some papers from Gus, which included that photograph of you.

It's all a bit of a mystery. We've been trying to figure out what happened to Louisa and

Melanie looks at Jack. He encourages her to go on

MELANIE (cont'd)

well, there's a rumor that the Vanderhorsts were in possession of diamonds that were stolen from the Confederate treasury back in 1864..

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Ahh. So that's what this is all about.

MELANIE

Actually, no. At least not entirely. You see, Nevin left me a letter and he believed that I was put in his life to find the answer to his mother's disappearance. He wanted me to find the truth. He died never knowing what happened to his mother.

Jack and I have been trying to figure it out, but we've only found bits and pieces of what seems to be a large, complicated puzzle.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Nevin is gone? He was such a beautiful child. Seems wrong that he would be gone before me.

(MORE)

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

As far as Louisa deserting her child, no, that would never have happened. He was her life.

JACK

So, you knew Louisa? And Nevin?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Not socially, no. Only through Gus. She was what in those days, we referred to "real quality". A true lady. No, she would never desert her child.

JACK

Do you know what happened, Ms. Barnesley?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

No. I'm sorry, I don't. Gus knew but he would never tell me. He would only say that the fewer people who knew the truth, the better. He said it was the kind of knowledge that could get a person killed.

Jack and Melanie exchange looks. Susannah takes a sip of her coffee. She picks up a bell from the table beside her chair and rings it. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Marston appears and Susannah nods to her. She nods back and closes the door.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

The night Louisa disappeared, Gus came to see me. It was very late - woke me up. He told me something very bad had happened - he wouldn't tell me what. But he said I had to leave Charleston right away.

It was horrible. I cried. Pledaded. I didn't want to leave my home. Gus. I loved him so much. But he was adamant.

He promised me that he would take care of me. Said he had something to give me and that nobody must ever find it. If they did, it would mean certain death for him and Robert. Perhaps even Nevin.

Jack stands and picks up one of the cloth napkins from the tray, taking it to Susannah. He returns to sit by Melanie, taking her hand in his.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

Gus promised I would be taken care of and never want for anything. He was wrong, of course, all I ever wanted was Gus.

JACK

But you agreed and came here.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes. I knew Gus. I knew he wouldn't ask it of me if it weren't necessary.

There is a **KNOCK** and Mrs. Marston enters holding a safe box like the one Melanie's father found. Susannah motions for Mrs. Marston to give the box to Melanie and Jack.

Jack stands and takes the box. Mrs. Marston leaves.

JACK

The lock is still in tact.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Gus gave that to me when he put me on a train to Atlanta. He said a friend would meet me there and I was to go to the address he provided. Gus didn't know my destination. I never heard from him again.

The room is silent. Still.

MELANIE

I'm so sorry.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Gus loved me. But he loved his friend and godson too. I believe he did the only honorable thing open to him.

JACK

And you have no idea who Gus was so afraid of?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

No. And I promised that I would only show this box to Nevin should he ever find me. Nevin's gone.

(MORE)

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

He chose you to find the truth and you've been led here.

JACK

Robert and Gus died within days of each other. They took their secrets with them.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

I didn't know about Robert. I knew Gus had passed. Someone sent me the newspaper obituary. I can feel him with me here, in this house.

MELANIE

And Nevin died never knowing the truth.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

But he did know. He never believed his mother abandoned him and he trusted that you would seek the truth.

That is why I have decided to give you the box and not that other gentleman.

JACK

What other gentleman? Was someone else here asking about Louisa?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes. Yesterday afternoon. He was only here for a short time.

MELANIE

Do you remember his name?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Sorry, let me think...

MELANIE

Can you describe him?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

He was very well dressed, handsome gentleman. Tall. Dark hair. Expensive suit. That's something Gus taught me - how to recognize good tailoring.

JACK

Was his name Marc Longo?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Yes! That's it. I should have remembered! It was Joseph Longo that Louisa supposedly ran away with.

JACK

Did he ask you about Louisa and Joseph? Joseph was his grandfather.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Oh, I see. No, I don't believe he ever asked about them. Only about diamonds. He asked several times if Gus gave them to me.

JACK

What did you tell him?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

I told him no, of course not. That I never heard of any diamonds. Which wasn't wholly true. I had heard the rumors but I didn't believe them.

There was something about him that made me uncomfortable.

MELANIE

Would you like us to open the box now?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

No. It was never meant for me. I've kept it safe as I promised.

Jack nods. Stands. As does Melanie.

JACK

Ms. Barnesley. We've taken up enough of your time. We're grateful.

MELANIE

Yes. Thank you. Thank you for entrusting Nevin's box to me.

Susannah reaches out her hand to Melanie who moves across the room and takes it. Susannah wraps both hands around Melanie's and looks up at her.

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Thank you, my dear. I'm so glad we met.

(MORE)

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY (cont'd)

It's so nice to see a part of my
beloved Gus after all these years.
You've made me very happy.
But I do have one thing to ask.

MELANIE

Yes?

SUSANNAH BARNESLEY

Promise me that you'll set it right -
for all of us.

MELANIE

Yes. I promise.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. JACK AND MELANIE'S CAR PULLING OUT OF
DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack is driving. Melanie holds the box in her lap. They
drive a short way.

JACK

So Marc knows about the diamonds.
Thank God you didn't sleep with
that guy.

Melanie goes very still. She doesn't respond; turns away.
Jack looks at her, seeking the answer he wants; not getting
it, he turns his attention to driving the car, gripping the
steering wheel with his anger in check.

JACK (cont'd)

(muttering)

That son of a bitch.

MELANIE

I don't want to talk about Marc.
It's not like we're kids Jack.
He was very charming and attentive.
He made me feel special. That's it.
It's over. Move on. That's what
I intend to do.

They continue in silence. Melanie's leg begins to twitch.
She is gripping the box tightly. She can no longer wait to
find out what's in the box.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Pull over.

Jack looks at Melanie, finds a place to pull the car onto
the side of the road, stops.

MELANIE (cont'd)
Help me find a rock.

They exit and begin searching for a rock large enough to break open the box.

JACK
Here.

He joins Melanie beside the car. She puts the box down on the ground. Jack moves in

MELANIE
No. Let me.

It takes Melanie a few tries to break the lock. They exchange looks. Melanie picks up the box and they get back in the car.

Holding the box in her lap, Melanie opens the lid then she looks at Jack.

JACK
Whoa! That's certainly unexpected.

He reaches over and lifts out a small gun, checking the two barrels.

JACK (cont'd)
It's a Remington derringer. Empty.

Melanie looks back inside the box and lifts out an envelope. Jack nods for her to open it.

Melanie does then begins reading

MELANIE
September 1, 1929

My Precious Son,

If you are reading this, then I am gone, having never had the chance to tell you what happened the night your beloved mother disappeared.

I deeply regret that this is how you must learn the truth but I hope you realize that I had no choice and that every decision I made was out of love and to protect you.

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)

I had a business arrangement with Mr. Joseph Longo, who had a hand in every vice in Charleston and beyond, in order to save Magnolia Ridge and our family from bankruptcy.

Mr. Longo came to our home believing your mother would be alone. He had seen a photograph of her in the society columns of the newspaper wearing a diamond necklace; a gift from me upon your christening. He threatened her and demanded she give it to him.

She must have done so as I found it in one of his pockets.

The diamond was one of several I had acquired through our family. They were to be your inheritance, save the one I gave your mother and a second to my dear friend, Augustus Middleton as payment for a profound debt.

That day, I returned home to retrieve some papers. I saw Longo's car and rushed in when I heard your mother's cries.

He had a gun pointed at you, my dearest son. When I entered, your mother ran to you. He fired.

Your mother put herself between you and the gun. She took the shot and died instantly.

I threw myself upon Longo, wrestling the pistol away and shot him in the chest. Holding you, I watched as the life ebb from him. My only thought was to protect you.

I called your godfather, Augustus Middleton. We formulated a plan and buried your mother and Mr. Longo.

Heartbroken, to keep you safe, Gus and I began the smear campaign that your mother had run off with Mr. Longo.

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)

*Gus gave this box with the truth
hidden away in it to Ms. Barnsley
for safekeeping.*

*You were so young. You must have
blocked what you had witnessed from
your mind. To my great relief, the
next morning, you asked for your
mother.*

*My deepest fear and our family secret
is no more. Be assured, my son, you
were dearly and deeply loved.*

*Until we meet again,
Your loving father,
Robert Nevin Vanderhorst*

Melanie stops reading and they are silent for a moment. She folds the letter, replaces it in the envelope and puts it back into the box.

MELANIE (cont'd)

Poor Nevin. He died never knowing
the truth.

JACK

And there's still so many questions.
Where are Longo and Louisa buried?
Robert had the diamonds. He gave one
to Gus so he could take care of
Susannah. But where are the other
four?

Jack takes the box, opens the lid, returns the revolver. He moves aside the newspaper clipping of Louisa wearing the diamond necklace and sees a small red pouch.

JACK (cont'd)

Melanie...

Melanie turns to Jack. He lifts her hand, palm up, opens the pouch, depositing its contents into her palm. They look on in surprise as Louisa's diamond necklace shimmers before them.

ESTABLISHMENT SHOT. EXT.- TRADD STREET HOUSE - NEXT DAY -
EARLY EVENING

Jack and Melanie are walking up the piazza steps with their suitcases, returning from their trip.

The tree **SWING** can be heard.

JACK
Do you hear that?

Melanie pauses to listen. She smiles.

MELANIE
Yes. That's Louisa and Nevin. They're letting us know they're here.

JACK
Okay.

MELANIE
They won't hurt us. They're trying to help. And Nevin told me she only appears to those she approves of.

JACK
Oh?

MELANIE
Uh huh. Me. Rhett Butler, Rich Kobylt and now you.

JACK
Rich Kobylt? The plumber?

MELANIE
Uh huh. He's seen her too.

JACK
(shivers)
Do you feel that?

MELANIE
We've got company.

JACK
Good company? Or Bad?

MELANIE
Not good. If it were Louisa, we'd smell roses. If you just feel cold and nervous...well...it's the other one...he's not nice.

JACK
Great. What do we do?

MELANIE

You just keep telling yourself
you're stronger than he is. Works
most of the time.

JACK

Most of the time? What about the
rest of the time?

MELANIE

Then he sets the house on fire and
traps you inside.

JACK

Uh huh. So why are we moving forward?

MELANIE

Because, now I know his strength.
He doesn't want me here. He's the one
who needs to go. This is my house.

We just need to stay together. If we
smell roses, that's a good thing;
means Louisa's here and he can't hurt
us.

JACK

Do you know who **he** is?

MELANIE

I think it's Joseph Longo. Now that
we know he was killed in this house.

JACK

Okay, that makes it easier.

MELANIE

Really?

JACK

Sure. Picturing how you're going to
pulverize a guy who tried to kill an
innocent little boy makes your
adversary easier to deal with - ghost
or not.

Melanie has taken her key out of her purse. She holds it up.

MELANIE

Ready?

JACK

Ready.

Melanie unlocks the door and it opens easily. They look at one another and step inside.

INT. TRADD STREET HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

They stand with their suitcases in the foyer, looking around. While they've been gone, the place once again has been cleaned and there is no longer evidence of the fire. A table lamp has been left on in the foyer.

JACK

Do you feel that? It's not cold.

MELANIE

I think he knows we're not afraid of him anymore.

(She sniffs) Louisa's near.

MOVE TO DRAWING ROOM. The grandfather clock chimes. Jack moves to stand in front of it.

JACK

Cerca Trova! It's here. On one of the signal flags in the painting.

A **SCRATCHING SOUND** is heard nearby.

MELANIE

Did you hear that?

JACK

Yea. Termites? Mice?

MELANIE

No. Like someone scratching plastic.

Melanie moves to the wall where a sheet of plexiglass covers Nevin's growth chart. She kneels down for a closer look, running her fingers over the chart and stops on the initials MBG.

MELANIE (cont'd)

My Best Guy! My Best Guy!
Cerca Trova. That was written in the letter to Nevin, just after these initials! It's what Louisa called Nevin, remember? Oh my God.

JACK

That's it!

Jack runs into the foyer and returns with his bag where he keeps his research. He pulls out the file with the cipher info, a pencil and a clean sheet of paper.

CLOSE ON as Jack writes **MY BEST GUY** across the top of the page, then underneath, the letters of the alphabet.

Melanie takes another sheet of paper and pencil and waits.

JACK (cont'd)

Write this down. **A. T. M.**

Indicate time passing. Jack looks at Melanie and they both look down at the completed cipher.

MELANIE

At midnight stars shine like diamonds.

JACK

Mellie. Do you remember the photograph of the clock from Gus's box? Both hands were pointing to twelve. Midnight.

MELANIE

But Jack, we've been in this room at midnight plenty of times. Nothing's ever happened. Do you think we can move the hands now?

JACK

No. Let's not force it. Let's unpack. Refresh. Have dinner and wait.

MELANIE'S BEDROOM - LATER. Melanie comes out of her bathroom, dressed in comfortable clothing. Jack, having already showered and changed is sitting on her bed going through a book. She smiles seeing him there.

JACK (cont'd)

Where did this come from?

CLOSE ON BOOK TITLE: **CIPHERS AND CODES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD**

MELANIE

I don't know. Never seen it before.

JACK
It was on your bed.

MELANIE
(shrugging, smiling)
I didn't put it there. Welcome to my world. Somebody wants us to see it.

JACK
(turns a few more pages)
Whoa...

MELANIE
What?

JACK
This.

CLOSE ON Jack points to a grid on the page.

JACK (cont'd)
I forgot what you said about the ciphers being meant for Nevin.

This cipher substitutes numbers for letters. The code is a series of numbers that when solved, become words.

MELANIE
The fountain?

JACK
Do you remember the numbers?

MELANIE
(closing her eyes,
seeing the stone)
Forty-one. Forty-three and twenty-four.

CLOSE ON Jack's face as he concentrates on moving letters and numbers combinations around on the page. Impatient, Melanie moves next to him. Jack makes the discovery

JACK
R.I.P. Rest In Peace. Mellie.
That's what is usually put on a tombstone.

MELANIE

That's why the fountain never worked.
It was probably never hooked up.
Robert built that as a monument to
Louisa. It's probably why she
appears in the garden.

JACK

We need to call the police.

MELANIE

I know. But Louisa likes it there,
Jack. I'd like to give her one last
night.

Oh, Jack. Can you smell the roses?
She's here. I think she's saying
thank you.

The grandfather clock **CHIMES the half hour.**

JACK

11:30. Let's head down.

They both stand and move to the door. Jack stops, putting
his arm out to shield Melanie.

JACK (cont'd)

Do you smell that?

Just then, Melanie's bedroom door slams shut. Jack goes to
it but it will not open.

JACK (cont'd)

God, where is that smell coming from?
I've smelled it before when I was in
the service; hoped I'd never have to
smell it again.

MELANIE

He's here. He's trying to scare us.
Don't let him or he'll win. Louisa is
on our side.

Jack reaches for the door knob and turns. At first it
doesn't budge but then it opens. The lights in the rooms
flicker. Jack takes Melanie's hand leading her into the
hallway.

JACK

Don't let go of my hand, Mellie.

MOVE TO UPPER HALLWAY The lights in the house all go out.

JACK (cont'd)
 Close your eyes Mellie. That way
 you'll rely on your other senses
 until your night vision kicks in.

POV an observer from the bottom of the stairs as Jack and
 Melanie make their way down in the darkness.

MELANIE
 I'm stronger than you.
 I'm stronger than you.

As they reach the last three steps, they are violently
 pushed, landing on the foyer floor. They scramble to get
 up. Melanie continues her mantra.

JACK
 Are you okay?

MELANIE
 Yes.

The grandfather clock begins to **CHIME**

JACK
 It's almost midnight, hurry.

MOVE TO DRAWING ROOM. A soft light from the full moon and
 street light illuminate the room. Jack pulls his cell phone
 from his pocket and finds the flash light app, turning it
 on. They stand in front of the clock as it finishes chiming
 midnight.

JACK (cont'd)
 Listen. Do you hear that?

The **FAINT CLICKING SOUND OF THE CLOCK MECHANISM AND ANOTHER
 CLICKING SOUND CAN BE HEARD.**

JACK (cont'd)
 It's coming from inside the clock.

Jack opens the front panel and Melanie reaches inside and
 pushes the mechanism to reveal the secret compartment.
 There's a click as the clock mechanism strikes 11 and the
 compartment opens. Jack shines his flashlight into the
 clock and a red velvet pouch is revealed dangling from a
 cord behind the clock face. He grabs it quickly. The clock
 strikes 12.

Melanie is shaking. They both sit. Jack opens the pouch.
 Melanie cups her hands as Jack drops 4 perfect diamonds
 identical to the Louisa necklace into her hands.

Suddenly, a violent storm erupts outside. There's a loud crack of lightening. Melanie and Jack rush to a window to look out into the garden.

The wind whips and there's a loud crack as a branch of the ancient oak falls onto the fountain. Another flash of lightening shows the fountain split. A large black mass forms beside the fountain and the wind begins to keen. As they watch, the form of the spirit with the fedora is pulled into the black abyss, howling in agony. A third flash and the blackness disappears.

Melanie turns into Jack and he holds her tightly. The lights in the house come back on.

JACK (cont'd)
It's over. Mellie. It's over.

EXT. TRADD STREET GARDEN - NEXT DAY

SOUNDS COMING FROM THE GARDEN OF WORKERS TEARING DOWN THE FOUNTAIN.

Jack, Colonel Middleton, Policemen and workers buzz about. Sophie and Chad watch as the fountain base blocks are removed.

CUT TO front of house

Melanie, holding Rhett Butler on his leash stands on the sidewalk with Marc.

MARC
I've been trying to reach you.
What's going on here?

MELANIE
I'm taking my dog for a walk.

She tries to move beyond him. He puts out a hand to stop her.

MARC
What's wrong?

MELANIE
How was Vermont, Marc? Do any
sightseeing while you were there?
Did you discover anything
particularly brilliant?

MARC

So you know.

MELANIE

Yes. I know. I know you've been lying to me from the start.

MARC

I'm sorry Melanie. You don't know how very sorry I am. Can I explain? I do care for you.

Melanie stoops down and scoops up Rhett Butler, holding him close.

MELANIE

You have two minutes. Then you need to leave.

MARC

About a year ago, I came across a safe-deposit box that had belonged to my grandfather. It contained an old newspaper article about the confederate diamonds and a newspaper announcement of Nevin's christening with a photo of Louisa. She was wearing a diamond necklace.

MELANIE

That's when you bought Magnolia Ridge.

MARC

Yes. I thought I could find the diamonds.

MELANIE

But they weren't there. Then Nevin died, left me this house and you saw your chance.

MARC

That's not the whole story, Melanie. Yes, at first I only wanted the diamonds but then I came to really care for you.

MELANIE

And the vandalism? The break-ins? That was you, wasn't it?

MARC

They weren't going to hurt anyone.
No one was supposed to be home. I was
stupid, desperate. But now...you've
changed me, Melanie...

Marc reaches out to Melanie again, taking one of her arms.
She clings to Rhett Butler and pulls back. He lets her go.

Jack has come from behind the house and walks up to them.

JACK

Hello Matt. Did you enjoy your visit
to Vermont? Beautiful this time of
year, isn't it?

MARC

If you don't mind, Melanie and I are
having a private conversation.

MELANIE

Actually, I think we're done here.
Jack...(she motions for them to go)

Melanie puts Rhett Butler on the ground but Marc isn't ready
to give up yet. He grabs Melanie by the hand.

MARC

Melanie...please...

JACK

If you know what's good for you,
you'll let go of the lady.

Marc, still holding Melanie

MARC

Give me another chance...

JACK

Don't say I didn't warn you...

Jack pulls back and with one quick motion, slams his fist
into Marc's jaw. Marc loses his balance and falls. He sits
there, rubbing his jaw.

Rhett Butler begins barking, alarmed. Melanie, agog, looks
at Jack, then at Marc and bursts out laughing. She scoops up
the dog.

JACK (cont'd)

Come on Melanie. There's something in
the garden you need to see.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

Marc, you'll be glad to know we've found your grandfather.

CUT TO GARDEN.

Melanie (with Rhett Butler) and Jack stand apart from Colonel Middleton, Sophie and Chad, as the fountain is dismantled.

Police officers observe. Colonel Middleton tries to guide the workers as much as possible so as to preserve some of his work.

Melanie looks over to the ancient oak tree and waves as Louisa and a happy 4 year old Nevin stand BEHIND the swing. They smile, wave and then dissolve.

Melanie looks at Jack.

MELANIE

Did you see them?

JACK

Yes. Why do you think they're here?

MELANIE

They're saying good-bye. There's nothing holding them here now.

JACK

So, what's next?

MELANIE

I'm moving in here full-time. To finish. Besides, my condo doesn't allow dogs. You?

JACK

Yeh, a dog's a good reason to move. I need to finish writing my book. I'll probably need to come back from time-to-time. You know, just to check on a few details...If that's all right with you.

MELANIE

Of course. I think I can handle that. And Jack?

JACK

Hmm?

MELANIE

Thanks for defending my honor
back there.

JACK

Well, little lady, it was the
least I could do.

Melanie laughs, tilts her head up to him and he begins to move in for a (finally!) kiss just as Melanie's cell phone rings. She reaches into her pants pocket and pulls out her phone, keeping eyes locked with Jack, not looking to see who it is, she answers

MELANIE

Hello?

GINETTE MIDDLETON

Hello Mellie. It's so good to hear
your voice.

Melanie freezes.

GINETTE MIDDLETON (cont'd)

Your father gave me your cell number.
I heard the house on Legare is for
sale. I plan to purchase it and I
want you to be my realtor.

I'm coming home to Charleston.

Melanie is in a panic. She latches onto Jack.

MELANIE

No mother. Please don't come back.

GINETTE MIDDLETON

There are things you need to know,
Mellie. About your grandmother and
the house. Why I had to let it go.
There are secrets that shouldn't be
kept any longer.

Melanie abruptly ends the call. Looks up at Jack and falls into his arms.

MELANIE

Oh, Jack. What am I going to do?

JACK

Well, let's start with this...

He lifts her chin, looks into her eyes and kisses her. The others witness it and cheer them on.

THE END