

THE DEVIL'S ORCHARD

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BROOM CLOSET

A MARIONETTE with the face of a clown dances in the shadows. Its features are an unpainted white.

Trained hands maneuver the marionette into a spectacular dance. The movements are slow, almost sad. The marionette comes face-to-face with its puppeteer -- this is MARY, 23. She is a nun and is dressed as such.

There are dried tears on her cheeks.

MARY (V.O.)  
Bless me, Father, for I have  
sinned.

INT. CONFSSIONAL

The sliding door is pulled open. Mary is in the box, looking anxious. An UNSEEN MAN is on the other side.

MARY  
It has been two months since my  
last confession.

UNSEEN MAN  
Go on.

MARY  
Eight weeks ago I came to you, and  
you swore to heal my pain.

UNSEEN MAN  
The Lord heals. I do not.

Mary's arm makes a sawing motion, out of view of the unseen man.

MARY  
You called it a healer's hand when  
you attacked me -- when you  
violated me.

UNSEEN MAN  
Mary? You were forced into  
nothing. This is a house of God,  
and we are under his command.

MARY  
This isn't God's house.

Mary studies a BLOODY KNIFE in her right hand. Grimaces.

MARY

It's yours. And this is your sin.

She places a gruesome hand to the threshold. Blood flows from her SLIT WRIST.

The sliding door slams shut, leaving only --

BLACK. Quiet. Finally NATURE'S VARIOUS MELODIES creep in, and we are no longer inside the confessional.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Flames lick up from a bonfire, lighting the sky. This is a large hill adorned by pines.

SARAH and JASON sit next to the fire, entangled in each other's mouths. She's sixteen and he is two years older. More real love than puppy, they trade kisses like they've done a thousand times before.

SARAH

(between kisses)

So... what'd... you... think of... this... new guy?

JASON

You're asking me? Erin's your best friend, which means you're stuck with the judgment call. Sorry.

SARAH

How exactly am I qualified for that?

JASON

You are aware of the term 'best friend' and what it means, yes?

She smiles, gives him one more kiss. Then she lays back, flat across his legs.

JASON

It wouldn't bother me at all if she just didn't show. I'm sure we could find something to do -- all alone and all. It'd be romantic.

SARAH  
("Awww!")  
With the countryside and the stars?

JASON  
Yeah.

SARAH  
You're such a girl.

JASON  
One of us has to be.

He runs a finger across her belly. She smiles. Just as --

A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS roll cross the couple, blinding them. An old FORD PICK-UP rolls to a stop a few feet from the bonfire and the engine dies.

SARAH  
Well, I guess they're here.

JASON  
Coulda done with him killing the high beams a few days earlier.

The driver's side door pops open. MICHAEL, 18, steps out. He's an intimidating figure. He reaches into his pocket...

There's a LAUGH and someone jumps on Michael -- this is ERIN, 17. Giggling loud enough to wake the dead. Michael drops his lighter. With Erin still hanging on, he reaches down to scoop it up.

SARAH  
For Christ's sake, Erin, do you realize how late you are? Remember that lesson we had on how to use a cell phone?

ERIN  
It costs money, and I don't like that part. I prefer face-to-face communication.

Michael carries Erin to the bonfire. They sit across from Sarah and Jason.

SARAH  
Right, because the alternative is me and Jason out here -- alone -- and scared shitless, pretty sure we're about to be raped and killed.

JASON  
Maybe not in that order.

SARAH  
Exactly.

ERIN  
Oh, shut it up. So what's the big occasion? We could be partying -- or doing other things -- and instead we're forced into company with you losers.

JASON  
Sorry to ruin your Saturday night.

MICHAEL  
Ruin? That's a laugh. She spent an hour on the phone begging me for a ride up here.

Erin's eyes are daggers. She slowly turns her attention back to Jason and Sarah.

ERIN  
What's the news? I'm anxious.

Sarah and Jason hold hands. Tightly. She takes a deep breath...

SARAH  
I'm pregnant.

JASON  
We're pregnant.

SARAH  
I don't see you dreading labor. Or your father.

Erin's mouth hangs open. It's really very comical.

ERIN  
Oh... my... God... how long?!?

SARAH  
Three months.

Erin looks from Jason to Sarah, then back to Jason. There's a beat -- then she SLAPS him.

ERIN

I told you to wrap that shit up!  
(slap! slap! slap!)  
Told you! Told you! Told you!

She dives over and hugs Sarah, grinning madly.

ERIN

You have to tell me everything!  
How did it happen? Are you sure?!  
I need details!

SARAH

"How did it happen"? Do I have to  
draw you a picture?

ERIN

I'm better with pictures than  
words.

In unison, they all turn to Michael, like they just  
remembered he's there. He looks at them, a little lost.

MICHAEL

Oh, well... uh... congratulations.  
How old are you?

SARAH

Sixteen.

JASON

Eighteen.

SARAH

Old enough.

MICHAEL

To have a baby? That's really  
young.

(off Erin's look)

I mean, I'm not trying to offend  
anyone. It's just the first thing  
that comes to mind. You're not  
even out of high school.

ERIN

(to Sarah)

You are going to keep it, right?

Sarah and Jason exchanged heartened looks.

SARAH

Of course we are.

ERIN

Then I want to remember this!

Erin digs into her purse, finally scooping out a digital camera.

ERIN

Your kid can look back at this and laugh at how lame his parents were.

Erin, Jason, and Sarah push close together. Erin extends her arm, pointing back at the group, clicks the button --

Sees Michael standing out of camera frame.

ERIN

Come on, negative ninny. You too.

She yanks him next to her, just enough to inch his face into frame as -- FLASH -- the picture is taken.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Michael rips open the passenger door and Erin climbs in. He looks at Sarah and Jason.

MICHAEL

You gonna miss being young? It doesn't last long.

JASON

I can already feel my joints aching.

SARAH

What are we going to miss? Being stupid drunk? Waking up in the arms of men and women -- maybe animals -- that we don't remember?

MICHAEL

You can do all of that anyway. Who doesn't? But, seriously -- the little things.

(slyly)

Small adventures you'll miss out on.

JASON

What are you suggesting?

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL  
Wanna see somethin' scary?

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Michael speeds down the interstate. Jason rides shotgun, with Sarah and Erin scrunched together in the back.

They whisper to each other.

SARAH  
You never told us -- how did you meet Michael?

ERIN  
You know that club downtown? The Underground?

SARAH  
You picked him up at a club?

ERIN  
Kinda. I was watching when the bouncer kicked him out for having a fake I.D. The way he struggled was cute.

SARAH  
Kicking and screaming on the way out. It reeks of sex.

Erin grins.

SARAH  
Wait -- how'd you get into a 21-plus club?

Erin raises an eyebrow. End of conversation. Sarah leans up to the driver's seat.

SARAH  
How much farther?

MICHAEL  
Not very.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Huge oak trees and the NOLAN HOUSE loom over a valley that's hidden in darkness. Michael's pick-up stops at the end of a gravel road.

Everyone gets out of the truck. Jason stares at the far-off house.

JASON  
 (to Michael)  
 Swear to me you don't live in that house with a family of cannibals.

MICHAEL  
 Ma and Pa will love 'ya. Try the finger soup.  
 (off their looks)  
 We're not going to the house, just the valley.

JASON  
 That's comforting. What're we looking for?

MICHAEL  
 A nice spot for show and tell.

EXT. VALLEY - LATER

There's a thick fog as Michael, Erin, Jason, and Sarah trudge forward. Dragging their feet through mud.

Michael stops.

MICHAEL  
 Shit.

SARAH  
 You're lost?

MICHAEL  
 Not at all. I'm just not entirely sure where I am.

JASON  
 I'm glad we've made that distinction.

MICHAEL  
 Stay here. I'll go up ahead.

SARAH  
You wanna split up? On Cannibal  
Lane?

MICHAEL  
Look, I swear I've been here  
before. There's nothing to be  
afraid of.

JASON  
You've got ten minutes, then we  
head back to the truck.

MICHAEL  
Sounds fair. You up for a  
nighttime stroll, Erin?

Erin grins and moves next to him.

ERIN  
'Course I am.

MICHAEL  
Nifty. We'll be back.

He starts forward -- then stops and turns.

MICHAEL  
Oh, watch out for the dog.

JASON  
Dog?

Michael and Erin are already gone, disappearing into the fog.  
Sarah and Jason sit.

Long, uncomfortable silence. Then:

SARAH  
Ten bucks says they're sneaking off  
to make out.

JASON  
I'll take your ten and raise 'ya  
five. They wanna screw.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS

Michael and Erin continue on.

ERIN  
So what're we looking for, exactly?

MICHAEL

A statue.

ERIN

Ooh, pretty?

MICHAEL

Not even close. It's gotta be close by, I remember seeing that --

He indicates a decaying bone sticking out of a thorny bush.

ERIN

Eew!

She dives into his arms.

MICHAEL

Hey, be happy. It proves we're not lost.

ERIN

(smiles)

I know, I was just kiddin'. That really is very gross, though.

They are very close... they draw closer to each other...

EXT. VALLEY

Sarah lays back. Jason rubs her stomach.

JASON

Are you scared?

SARAH

I'd be crazy not to be.

JASON

You'll be a great Mom.

SARAH

Better than mine.

JASON

That's a relief. I wanna grow old and break our hips together.

CRACK. A TWIG SNAPS from somewhere unseen.

SARAH

What was that?

JASON  
We're in the middle of nowhere,  
Sarah.

SARAH  
That'd be why I'm freaked, you  
dork!

Jason looks into the fog, but can't see anything. There's no sound.

JASON  
I'm not goin' out there to check it  
out. You can feel free, though.

She SWATS the back of his head. Laughs. They lean in to kiss --

A ROTTWEILER

bursts out of the bushes and charges at them -- BARKING MADLY! It leaps at them -- they've barely had enough time to scream -- and Jason KICKS his leg hard into the dog's gut. It falls.

He pulls Sarah to her feet. They sprint off -- just as the Rottweiler regains its balance --

EXT. OUTSKIRTS - SECONDS LATER

Jason and Sarah charge forward --

Right into Erin and Michael, kissing and groping as only teenagers do. They stop as:

JASON  
C'mon!

MICHAEL  
What? What's --

The dog BARKS -- its massive form appears in the fog --

MICHAEL  
Holy shit!

Jason spins Michael and drags him along. Sarah does the same with Erin. Sprinting -- blindly...

ERIN  
Where are we going?!?

Charging ahead --

Jason TRIPS, stumbles -- FALLS hard down a steep ten foot hill. The others keep their feet as he rolls to a standing position --

JASON  
Keep going!!

The Rottweiler is right on their heels -- it pounces! --

ZAP. Some kind of charge goes off and the dog SQUEALS -- jumps back in pain.

Michael is the first to stop and catch his breath. Understands. Jason, Sarah, and Erin follows his lead, though not entirely sure as to why. They don't realize it yet, but they're standing in a

GRAVEYARD

The Rottweiler paces the edge.

SARAH  
What happened? Why'd he stop?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL  
See that collar around his neck?  
(they see the collar)  
Old Man Nolan doesn't want him in here. Spent some serious cash setting up sensors to keep him out.

The dog runs off.

MICHAEL  
That's right, pup. Back to the pound.

JASON  
You're a lunatic, 'ya know that?

SARAH  
Spent money to keep him out of what?

She turns, so do the others --

And they see the graveyard. A few graves are plotted, overgrown... something bigger is at the center.

Sarah is standing in front of SIX-FOOT ANGEL STATUE. It's charcoal black.

SARAH

Oh.

JASON

What is this?

MICHAEL

This, my friend, is what we're here to see. Ever hear of Sister Mary Ashboro?

SARAH

No. Who is she?

MICHAEL

A nun. Lady of the cloth. All that jazz, as you mighta guessed from the whole "Sister" part. She was found dead in a confessional.

ERIN

How did she die?

MICHAEL

Suicide.

Sarah clutches her belly. She doesn't look well.

JASON

You all right?

SARAH

Yeah, yeah... I just feel a bit queasy all of a sudden.

Sarah is mesmerized by the statue. She draws closer to it. Like instinct.

SARAH

If it was a suicide, why is there a statue?

It's all very quiet now. Something catches her gaze. The statue's face... its eye... it's BLEEDING. A red tear.

SARAH

Are you guys seeing this --

She turns, but nobody else is there. It's dream-like and surreal... but somehow, it's absolutely normal to Sarah.

She reaches her hand out and runs a finger under the blood tear... catches it...

Her eyes roll back. Sarah falls, slowly... enveloped by --  
BLACK.

The state glides. A RIVER OF BLOOD crashes into invisible walls as the angel fades away.

Strings appear over black --

It's the marionette doing its dance. Intricate twirls. And now we're back inside

THE BROOM CLOSET

from our opening scene.

Mary is here. She finally places the marionette on the floor, finished with it. A face peers out from the blackness: it's Sarah, watching.

Mary reaches into her robes and retrieves the knife. She spares a glance at the door -- at Sarah --

A hand digs the blade into the wrist -- slicing flesh -- tracing it down the forearm.

IT'S SARAH

in the robes now, taking Mary's place. She pulls the blade free and lets the BLOOD pour onto her robes.

There's a RUSTLE outside -- Sarah covers her arm with a start, just as the door is ripped open --

It's a LITTLE BOY, eight-years-old.

LITTLE BOY

Mary! We've been looking for you.

And now it's Mary again, in her rightful place.

MARY

Is he still hearing confessions?

LITTLE BOY

He's just finishing for the day.

Mary hides the knife within the fold of her robes.

INT. CONFESSIONAL (DREAM)

Mary sits in the box. She sneaks knife out again and looks at it.

Presses the blade to her wrist, ready to finish --

MARY

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

INT. DARK ROOM (DREAM)

Rapid fire FLASHES. Mary's gown is forced open and a MAN cradles her breast. It's violent, horrible rape.

Mary SCREAMS.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT (REALITY)

Sarah jolts awake, gasping. She's in the back seat with Jason. Michael and Erin freak up front.

JASON

Jesus! Are you all right?!

SARAH

What -- what happened?

She looks sickly.

MICHAEL

You just collapsed back there. One second you're touching the statue, the next, you're out like a Tai hooker.

ERIN

What?

Sarah sits up.

SARAH

I'm fine. I don't know what happened but I feel okay.

Sarah runs a hand along her arm, where the blade cut flesh. There's a hint of a scar. Perplexing.

SARAH  
Just take me home.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael's truck rolls up to a two-story home in suburbia.

Sarah gets out, followed by Jason. They walk to the front door, which is adorned by a crucifix.

JASON  
Get some rest. I'll come by tomorrow and see how you're feeling. We'll get some breakfast if you're up for it.

SARAH  
'Kay. Bye.

He jumps back into Michael's truck and it takes off down the street.

Sarah enters the house.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sarah rinses her arm under the sink's running water. Rubs it in, frantic, not knowing what's wrong.

Behind her, through the open door --

Something appears in the darkness. Indistinct. Then -- wings, face -- it's the black angel. Sarah doesn't notice.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Michael's truck stops next to Jason's car, hidden behind a tree. Jason climbs out. Erin rolls down her window:

ERIN  
You're sure she's okay? If anything happens, I'm blaming you.

JASON  
She'll be fine, Erin.

ERIN  
Good. I just wanted you to be aware.

JASON  
 (to Michael)  
 How far do you have 'til home?

MICHAEL  
 Other side of town. You people are  
 the opposite of convenient.

JASON  
 Come on, Erin, I'll take you home.

ERIN  
 Why?

JASON  
 Save Michael the gas. And if Sarah  
 calls my cell, you'll know not to  
 butcher me.

ERIN  
 That okay with you, Michael?

MICHAEL  
 It's fine. Get outta here,  
 already.

She kisses him, gets out of the truck.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sarah exits the bathroom, drying her hair. She's wearing a  
 bath robe. A clock on the wall ticks away, almost 2 a.m.

She tries to slip into her bedroom...

MR. CASTLE (O.S.)  
 I told you to be home early  
 tonight.

Sarah freezes as the hallway light clicks on. MR. CASTLE  
 (45) is friendly enough, but you couldn't tell it from the  
 look on Sarah's face.

SARAH  
 I'm sorry, Dad.

MR. CASTLE  
 Were you with Jason?

SARAH  
 I was. Nothing happened.

Sarah quickly runs a finger across her stomach. Nervously -- she hasn't told him. Mr. Castle doesn't notice.

MR. CASTLE

It's too late to rant and rave, and you don't look very good. Let's get you something to drink before bed.

KITCHEN

Sarah and Mr. Castle watch a pot on the stove, filled with milk. He takes it and pours the milk into a nearby glass. Hands it to her.

MR. CASTLE

This'll help you sleep. You do realize you have to be up in the morning?

SARAH

What? Why?

MR. CASTLE

Church.

SARAH

You're kidding.

MR. CASTLE

Afraid not.

Sarah crosses into the dining room. There's a picture on the wall -- Sarah (a few years younger), Mr. Castle, and another woman: Sarah's mother. Kind face. A crucifix necklace hangs from the picture frame.

SARAH

Come on, Dad. I know Mom was into the religiosity and all that, but it's not me.

MR. CASTLE

Twice a month. That was the deal.

She rolls her eyes, then drains the glass.

SARAH

I can't wait.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Michael speeds down the freeway at 100 miles-per-hour. He turns the radio dial. Static. Off. It's one of those long, quiet drives. He taps the wheel to stay awake. Stay focused...

A COP is parked on the shoulder. Michael brakes just in time to get it under 60. Passes the cop.

He smiles in victory. Tries the radio again but it's still static. Suddenly, OVER THAT:

LITTLE BOY (V.O.)  
(whispers)  
What are you doing? What are you  
doing?

Michael eyes the place warily -- no one's in the cab. He kills the radio and there's silence for a beat. Then:

LITTLE BOY (V.O.)  
Mary, what are you doing?  
(screams)  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! STOP IT!!  
STOP IT!! STOP IT!!

Michael tries to get it out of his head -- shakes -- covers his ears --

MICHAEL  
Shut up!

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

A LITTLE BOY is in the road! The truck races up on him FAST - he's in the headlights just as Michael sees -- Michael jerks the wheel and the truck swerves off the freeway and CRASHES into a grove of trees --

Quick glimpses. Wood impacting steel. A tree branch SMASHES through the windshield, careening right at Michael's head.

The truck's headlights illuminate the mangled tree.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - LATER

Michael snaps awake, gasping for breath. Crying. The branch juts into the back seat -- missed him by inches.

A few cuts are the worst of it, but Michael panics, fighting to get free of his seat belt. Struggling, gasping --

The door is ripped open! Michael freaks!

It is the TRAFFIC COP.

TRAFFIC COP  
Jesus Christ! You okay, kid?!

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Jason rolls in and parks behind Mr. Castle's car. Exits. He walks to the front door and knocks.

Nothing.

JASON  
(knocks again)  
Sarah?

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sarah and Mr. Castle slide into a pew. The hall is filled with well-dressed WORSHIPPERS.

She sighs. Anxious. Waste of time.

MR. CASTLE  
You could try and pay attention.

SARAH  
I could be balancing my  
checkbook... and I don't even have  
a checkbook.

He gives up.

FATHER MARINELLI steps up to the altar and cracks open his Bible.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Jason digs into his pocket and retrieves a key. He slides it into the lock and turns. Opens the door. Walks

## INSIDE THE HOUSE

where he sees that it's completely empty. There's a sense of coldness to the place.

JASON

So much for breakfast, then.

He turns to leave --

But a SOFT MELODY catches his attention. It's pretty, an inviting tune.

JASON

Babe?

Jason closes the front door and follows the sound. He comes to the staircase -- it's coming from upstairs.

He starts up.

## INT. CHURCH - DAY

The MELODY continues over this, bringing the scenes into rhythm.

Sarah studies her surroundings as Father Marinelli drawls on at the pulpit. His words are indistinct, drowned out. She sees a statue of Christ, eyes closed and in pain. A little unsettling.

She looks away --

And spots a very familiar confessional. It's the same as in her vision. And beside it: Mary.

She's looking at Sarah. Their eyes are locked for a beat, then Mary turns and enters the confessional.

Suddenly Marinelli's words are clear:

FATHER MARINELLI (O.S.)

'The sinners in Zion are afraid;  
fearfulness hath surprised the  
hypocrites.'

## INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - DAY

Jason rounds the corner, following the melody. It's coming from

## SARAH'S BEDROOM

Jason enters. It's a well-kept room with daylight pouring in through the window.

The television at the head of the room is on. The melody is coming from its speakers.

## ON SCREEN

is the image of a BLOOMING ROSE. Of life becoming.

FATHER MARINELLI (V.O.)  
 'Who among us shall dwell with the  
 devouring fire?'

## JASON

studies his surroundings --

A SHADOW starts from the window and moves inward. This is almost like black light -- it starts from outside and sucks every bit of light away from the room.

It is pitch black, save for the television which still displays the rose.

## INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sarah stands just outside the confessional. She catches her breath, then slides it open --

There's no one inside. Marinelli looks right at her as he says his final words:

FATHER MARINELLI  
 'Who among us shall dwell with  
 everlasting burnings?'

He snaps the book shut.

## INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - SARAH'S BEDROOM

Still black.

JASON  
 What the hell?

He digs out his cell phone and scrolls through his phone book. Clicks on 'Sarah.'

SARAH (V.O.)

(phone)

Hi, this is Sarah. I'm not here,  
so sing your song at the beep.

It BEEPS.

JASON

Shit.

Jason notices something -- a FLICKERING LIGHT just down the  
hall. Candlelight.

He crosses through the hall and into the

MASTER BEDROOM

The light's coming from here, but there's no source in sight.  
It's mostly black, save for

A JESTER

His back is turned to Jason and he's juggling. Wicked fast.  
He's very good at it.

JASON

Is this a dream?

Jason reaches a hand out to touch the Jester's shoulder --

The "balls" drop. They SPLASH into something on the floor.  
Jason kneels to take them. Examines:

They're eye balls. Hideous and ripped out, they fell into  
blood puddles on the carpet. Jason drops them, shrieks. He  
spins --

The Jester is gone.

JASON

Oh, Christ! Jesus Christ!

There's motion behind him --

The Jester reappears and his face finally comes into the  
light. He wears a seditious smile and has TWO EMPTY SOCKETS  
where his eyes should be. The Jester wraps his arms around  
Jason's neck --

Then, BLACK. Lights out. The Jester LAUGHS.

INT. CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Sarah slides in and shuts the door.

She runs a finger across the sliding panel between booths like it's instinct. Looks at the finger. There's a single drop of blood.

She stares for a tense beat --

PRIEST (O.S.)  
How may I serve you, my child?

Sarah jumps. Composes herself.

SARAH  
What? Oh, nothing. I was just...  
window-shopping. Not buying.

She hops out.

CHURCH

The proceeding has ended and people are coming to their feet. Sarah's PHONE BEEPS. She takes it, reads:

"1 MISSED TEXT MESSAGE."

She clicks it. From Jason. An image loads.

It's the rose from the television screen, but instead of blooming, it's dead. The pedals are rotten.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erin washes dishes. The TV is on in the living room, tuned to the local news.

The front door opens and MR. BATES enters. He's dressed in a second-hand suit and tie. He slips the jacket off and loosens his collar.

ERIN  
Hi, Daddy.

He opens the refrigerator. Grabs a beer.

ERIN  
What kept you at work so late? I  
had lunch ready, but --

MR. BATES  
I ate at the plant.

He collapses onto the sofa.

ERIN  
That's fine, it's just I make plans  
with my friends based on your  
schedule so I can have things  
ready...

MR. BATES  
You're not your mother, Erin.

ERIN  
I know that -- and I'm not trying  
to be. I just think it'd be easier  
if I --

Mr. Bates stands and walks through the hall, disappears into  
the bathroom. The door locks.

ERIN  
(low)  
It's not my fault she left.

Erin makes for the kitchen -- stops, turns. Something  
catches her eye.

ON THE TELEVISION

it's still the local news. A pretty ANCHORWOMAN reads as a  
picture of Michael is displayed in the upper left corner.

ANCHORWOMAN  
(TV)  
Local teen Michael Rosenberg is  
lucky to be alive this afternoon  
after crashing his truck into an  
oak tree off of Interstate 29.  
Police say he lost control shortly  
after 1:30 a.m. --

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Michael is laid out on the bed with all manner of tubes and  
needles poking into him. A YOUNG NURSE checks his vitals.

His eyes flutter open.

YOUNG NURSE  
You're awake. Welcome back.

MICHAEL

Did I go some place?

YOUNG NURSE

Very nearly. You were in a nasty car accident. Do you remember?

MICHAEL

I remember waking up in a ditch, which I doubt is an ideal parking space. How long am I a prisoner for?

YOUNG NURSE

Not long. Dr. Sumner fixed you up. You only have a few cuts and bruises.

(looks at the door)

Your fan will be glad you're awake.

MICHAEL

My 'fan'?

The Young Nurse exits, is gone for maybe two seconds, then returns -- with Erin.

She rushes to Michael and kisses him.

ERIN

Oh my God! I was so worried!

MICHAEL

Hey! How'd you know I was here before I did?

ERIN

There's this great new invention called the television. Very high-tech. Pretty soon it'll be in color.

MICHAEL

Smart ass.

She wraps her arms around him.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Sarah and Mr. Castle walk along.

MR. CASTLE

Church is a good experience for you, even if you don't believe.

SARAH

I don't see the profit in waking up at six a.m., dressing up, then hauling myself through a mass of mindless drones to listen to a speech that basically amounts to an infomercial.

MR. CASTLE

That's not fair.

SARAH

What is?

They reach the front lawn of

SARAH'S HOUSE

Mr. Castle stops her.

MR. CASTLE

I know it doesn't mean much to you, but your mother was always adamant that she wanted you to have some faith in your life.

SARAH

Who she wanted me to be and who I am are two entirely different things.

Sarah pushes the door open. Turns back.

SARAH

That place doesn't promote faith, Dad. It promotes religion and those that profit off of religion. Not even close to the same thing.

They look at each other for a moment, neither seething -- but it's uncomfortable. Sarah turns and sees Jason's car.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE

Sarah enters.

SARAH

Jason? You here, babe?

Mr. Castle follows her in. He sheds his jacket and tosses it onto the sofa.

MR. CASTLE

I know you insisted on Jason having a key, but I really don't feel comfortable with him being here by hims --

SARAH

Shh!

She's listening to two very different sounds -- one is the MELODY that Jason heard. Another is a rhythmic THUMP-THUMP, like the sound of a beating heart. They're coming from upstairs.

Sarah follows them.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Sarah rounds the corner. Her bedroom door is only open a crack, but the sound is coming from inside. She pushes the door open and walks into

HER BEDROOM

She sees something that freezes her spine --

JASON

is hanged, his feet dangling a foot above the floor. Dead. The rope is tied up through the ceiling. His body sways as though pushed by an invisible wind. THUMP-THUMP as he hits the wall.

Sarah gags, covers her mouth -- tears burst -- she tries not to puke. Closes her eyes -- opens them --

THE JESTER

is on the floor, pushing Jason's body against the wall like an amused toddler. He looks at Sarah and smiles -- laughs. It's a child's laugh.

Sarah backs into the hall, hits the wall hard and falls. She looks again --

The Jester is gone.

Sarah collapses, sobbing.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Erin flips through a few pages then tosses a magazine away. She watches a LITTLE GIRL play with a doll.

Her PHONE RINGS. Erin grabs it.

ERIN  
 (into phone)  
 Sarah, you're never going to  
 believe what happened to Mic --  
 (listens)  
 Oh, Mr. Castle is everything ...  
 what?

Erin drops the phone, stunned. The little girl stares at her.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Two POLICE CRUISERS are parked in the driveway, lights flashing. An OFFICER stands at the door, talking to Mr. Castle. Beat. The Officer leaves. Mr. Castle closes the door.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Castle locks the dead-bolt. He sees Sarah on the sofa. She's holding up. He sits down next to her.

He reaches for her...

MR. CASTLE  
 Honey, I am so --

She pushes him away.

SARAH  
 Why, Dad?! Why did this happen?!

MR. CASTLE  
 I don't know. I can't explain it.

SARAH  
 He never did anything. Jason never hurt anyone.

MR. CASTLE  
 Sometimes these things just happen.  
 People break.

SARAH  
 You had the nerve to tell me I  
 should have faith. Faith in what?  
 The idea that bad things happen to  
 good people?

He looks at her. Doesn't have a reply. Sarah stands and  
 makes for the stairs --

MR. CASTLE  
 You have to have faith --  
 (Sarah stops)  
 -- that things will be better in  
 the end.

She looks at him.

SARAH  
 I'm pregnant.

MR. CASTLE  
 What?

SARAH  
 Three months. Jason and I were  
 going to wait awhile to tell you,  
 but... it doesn't seem so important  
 now. I love you, Daddy.

She goes upstairs as Mr. Castle takes this all in.

SARAH'S BEDROOM

Sarah closes the door and keeps the light off. She collapses  
 onto the bed.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Pulleys lower a coffin into the ground.

Groomed MOURNERS watch with wet eyes. Sarah is draped in  
 black. She watches grimly.

Father Marinelli reads.

FATHER MARINELLI

'From fear to faith -- From defeat  
to defeat to defeat' --

Sarah studies the coffin. Reacts to a sound -- THUMP...  
THUMP... She looks around. Is anybody else hearing this?  
Nobody reacts. She looks at the coffin again --

FATHER MARINELLI

'Birth is a beginning' --

THUMP!THUMP!THUMP!THUMP!

FATHER MARINELLI

'And death is a destination' --

Sarah turns, scared --

INT. COFFIN

Sarah is inside the coffin! She cries, scared -- bangs on  
the lid, screaming -- THUMP-THUMP --

She catches sight of her arm -- the wrist has been slit and  
is bleeding.

SARAH

Help me! Please, get me out!! Get  
me out!!

Somebody grabs her wrist! It's Jason! Sliding closer in the  
claustrophobic box, unaffected by space... looking sickly...

JASON

I love you.

He grabs her wrist and squeezes. Blood pours out at an  
alarming rate. FILLING THE COFFIN. Drowning Sarah as it  
creeps over her neckline and finally envelopes her mouth --  
she pounds --

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A hand grazes Sarah's shoulder and she snaps back into  
reality. It's Erin, with Michael at her side. She manages a  
smile for Sarah.

ERIN

Hey.

Marinelli finishes.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 'But life is a journey -- a sacred  
 pilgrimage -- Made stage by stage --  
 To life everlasting.'

Sarah takes Erin's hand.

EXT. MEADOW - LATER

Sarah, Erin, and Michael walk along, the funeral procession  
 off in the distance.

ERIN  
 (to Sarah)  
 I realize this is a horrible  
 question before I ask it, but are  
 you all right?

SARAH  
 I'm as fine as I can be.

MICHAEL  
 You're not crying. I guess that's  
 a plus.

SARAH  
 I don't cry -- I never cry. Side  
 effect of a piss-poor childhood.  
 Something... something about this  
 is all wrong.

MICHAEL  
 That's obvious enough.

SARAH  
 No, I don't just mean this. I mean  
 everything. I've been... seeing  
 things. Things that wake me up at  
 night. Sometimes I'm not even  
 dreaming.

ERIN  
 Is it Jason?

Sarah nods.

ERIN  
 I'll get you through this.  
 Promise.

SARAH  
 Yeah? What can you do?

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A quaint little place. LAUGHS spill out.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Sarah, Erin, and Michael sit at a small table with Cokes in front of them. They're laughing -- red faces all around.

MICHAEL  
You're kidding!

ERIN  
I am not! Jason thought he'd just been accepted to State. He was so proud!

This causes merrier laughs. Sarah is very much into it.

MICHAEL  
Did you ever tell him the truth?

SARAH  
About the fake? No! I didn't. Little Miss Moppet here spilled the beans, though.

MICHAEL  
Oh, God. What'd he do?

SARAH  
It doesn't matter what he did. I had to make it up to him with a mercy screw. Worst forty-three seconds of my life.

ERIN  
Forty-three seconds? I wonder what that is like...

Michael elbows Erin playfully.

SARAH  
(to Michael)  
I heard about your accident. How's your truck? I figure that's more important to you than any broken bones.

MICHAEL

You figure right. Truck's fine.  
All it took was me guaranteeing two  
years' worth of pay to the auto  
body shop.

Sarah rubs her belly.

MICHAEL

Are you going to keep it?

SARAH

Yeah...

(resolute)

Yes. As long as I have him -- or  
her -- there's a piece of Jason  
with me. I owe him that, no matter  
how hard it gets.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Michael, Sarah, and Erin stand outside.

SARAH

He wouldn't do this. Jason. You  
know that, Erin.

ERIN

I wanna think that, but it's hard --

SARAH

The things I've been seeing... they  
didn't start when Jason died. It  
was before that, when we saw  
statue. You guys thought I blacked  
out.

MICHAEL

You did black out. I was there.

SARAH

I didn't. I saw a woman -- Mary.  
You told us she killed herself.

MICHAEL

That doesn't mean she actually did.  
A guy hears a story and he passes  
it on.

SARAH

I saw her cutting her wrists during  
confession.

MICHAEL

You called bullshit on it when we were there. Why would she have a statue if she'd killed herself?

SARAH

It's private property. If the church didn't raise it, maybe the owner did. So... who owns it?

MICHAEL

Why? You wanna drop by and have a little chat?

SARAH

I want to see the statue again.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

It's raining. The black angel stands in the middle of the yard, creepy as ever.

Sarah walks between gravestones. Stops at the statue.

She regards it for a long, long beat. Locks eyes with it as though it were a living, breathing creature

SARAH

What do you want from us?

Sarah gazes at the statue's open right hand. It's inviting, almost like an offer. Sarah thinks, then takes the statue's hand -- her fingers lock around it --

There's a FLASH -- Sarah recoils, looks again --

Her hand is locked into Mary's.

MARY

Finish it.

Mary gives the smallest smile, then -- ANOTHER FLASH -- and it's the statue again.

Sarah falls back, holding her breath. Trying to figure out what the hell just happened. Her right hand is balled into a tight fist. Finally she lets herself breathe and opens her palm to find --

The KNIFE that Mary used to cut her wrist. Stained with blood. Sarah's face says it all: Ho. Ly. Shit.

EXT. NOLAN HOUSE - DAY

Sarah steps onto the porch, holding Mary's knife. She examines it for a spell, then pockets it.

Sarah knocks on the door. No response.

SARAH  
Mr. Nolan? Mr. Nolan, I need to  
talk to you --

She knocks again --

The door opens a crack. Sarah peers inside, sees a dusty old living room.

She considers, then:

SARAH  
Maybe later.

She leaves.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael sheds his jacket and sets it on a pew. Erin takes his hand.

ERIN  
What are we doing here, Michael?  
Haven't I explained to you that I  
am not a Bible-thumper?

MICHAEL  
Yeah, yeah. But I'm feeling  
righteous.

ERIN  
So?

MICHAEL  
So -- you're going to confess.

ERIN  
I am not!

MICHAEL  
You most certainly are. C'mon, do  
it for me.

ERIN

Why?

MICHAEL

It'll make me feel better.  
(serious)  
Remember the car accident?

ERIN

That was like two days ago. Yes, I remember.

MICHAEL

There was a little boy in the road.  
I swerved to miss him.

ERIN

Oh my God! Is he okay?!

MICHAEL

That's not the point. The little boy... was me. I was eight.

ERIN

You know you took a hit on the head, right?

He draws closer to her. Not joking.

MICHAEL

I feel like something bad is coming. It really would make me feel better, Erin. Please.

INT. CONFESSIONAL 1

Erin slides in. Doesn't look happy.

ERIN

Bless me. I've sinned. I'm really sorry about it.

INT. CONFESSIONAL 2

Michael is much more enthused. Seems to think there's a point to the whole thing.

MICHAEL

It's been six years since my last confession.

INTERCUT between confessionals.

MICHAEL  
 It's been awhile, but let's see. When I was eleven I killed my cousin's rat. I'd like to say it was an accident, but the damn thing just annoyed me. I tend to swear obscenely when I'm driving. It's not my fault, it's the others drivers'. I've had premarital sex... a bunch. I know it's wrong, but you made them so hot, so am I really sinning? If they were ugly, I'd wait until marriage 'cause I wouldn't want to do anything anyway.

ERIN  
 I really don't know what I'm doing here. My boyfriend said I should confess, so whatever. I'm really sorry that I caused Mindy Lynn to go crazy in seventh grade. I was only recommending hair products to make her look, well, okay. I'm also really sorry for all the boys I've let inside me. Totally. But Jimmy was hot and Ian was really nice and Michael, well -- he's really well-endowed...

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Michael and Erin exit the side-by-side confessionals. They look at each other.

ERIN  
 Well, I feel better.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah tosses a pair of keys onto the stairs. Calls out:

SARAH  
 Dad, the car's back.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Rain pelts the window. Sarah sits at the desk, staring at the picture Erin took a few nights earlier -- Sarah, Jason, Erin, and Michael. Jason is kissing Sarah on the cheek.

Mary's knife is sitting on the desk, next to a sheet of notebook paper. She scribbles something: "WHY ME?"

Sarah leans back in the chair, thinks. Remembers.

BLACK.

This is a surreal, dream-like sequence. Mary's face peers out from the darkness.

MARY (V.O.)

You called it a healer's hand when  
you attacked me. When you violated  
me.

THE DARK ROOM

The OLD MAN tears at Mary's robes. Forces her legs apart.  
Despicable. Mary cries.

UNSEEN MAN (V.O.)

You were forced into nothing.

CONFESSIONAL

Mary holds her wounded wrist as the unseen man comments:

UNSEEN MAN

This is a house of God, and we are  
under his command.

MARY

This isn't God's house, it's yours.

Mary forces her bloody hand to the threshold, as before. But  
it's only now clear that her eyes are focused on something  
else -- her left hand rubs her belly as she cryptically  
finishes:

MARY

And this is your sin.

SARAH'S BEDROOM

Sarah is hit with sudden realization. She grabs the pen and  
marks under the first question: "SHE WAS PREGNANT."

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Michael's truck slows to a stop in front of the entrance.  
Erin hops out, leans over the driver's side window, and gives  
Michael a kiss.

ERIN

I'll see you tomorrow.

MICHAEL

Bye.

He drives off.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Erin digs for her key. She holds her breath, calms herself.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Wind blows in through the half-open window. Michael looks lost in thought.

He grabs his cell-phone. Scrolls through his phone book until he finds "Sarah." Dials.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a dingy little place. Not very homely. Erin slides out of her jacket and tries to disappear into the bedroom before:

MR. BATES (O.S.)  
You finally home, girl?

Erin freezes. Her spine runs cold.

ERIN  
Daddy. I didn't know you were home. I thought you were working late tonight.

Mr. Bates exits the bathroom. He's dressed in his fanciest wife-beater.

MR. BATES  
I'm obviously not. The hell you doin' out so late for?

ERIN  
I was seeing Michael, Daddy. He's my boyfriend.

MR. BATES  
Michael? That the newest one? You seem to run through 'em awful quick.

ERIN  
Please don't start. I'm going to bed.

She goes to her bedroom and slams the door shut. Mr. Bates gives the oddest of smiles, then walks into the kitchen.

He takes a BUTCHER KNIFE from the block.

MR. BATES

Don't start? We're almost done,  
girl.

He looks at the blade --

The Jester's face stares back in the reflection! Empty eye sockets and wicked grin on his face.

Mr. Bates' grin.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael knocks. In quick fashion Sarah opens the door.

SARAH

Hey. Come in.

He follows her into

THE LIVING ROOM

but he doesn't sit down. This is a business call. Michael digs into his wallet.

MICHAEL

You said that -- that when you saw  
Mary, there was a little boy there.  
What did he look like?

SARAH

He was just a kid. Seven, eight.  
Somewhere in there.

Michael shows her the picture.

MICHAEL

Is this him?

It's a grinning Little Boy (from our opening scene), lovingly held from behind by Mary. She looks very happy.

SARAH

Where did you get this?

MICHAEL

It's me, Sarah. I helped out around the church. When I had my accident, I saw a little boy in the road.

SARAH

On the highway?

MICHAEL

This was the little boy! It's impossible, but I swear he was there.

SARAH

So I'm not the only one who's been seeing things.

MICHAEL

I am officially, one-hundred-percent past the denial phase. What the fuck is going on here?

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bathed in black, save for an oblong of light coming from a crack in the doorway.

Erin is asleep on the bed. The door is pushed open a few inches and Mr. Bates peers in with a hideous smile. He's still brandishing the butcher knife. He slides through the open door and into the room.

Mr. Bates runs a hand along Erin's exposed thigh. Gently moving up the leg...

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Bolting faster than is typically allowed by law. Michael at the wheel, Sarah in the passenger seat with her cell phone.

MICHAEL

Thanks for the very enlightening no-talking back there. Why are we rushing to Erin's?

SARAH

Something's happening. Your accident, Jason, me... Erin's in trouble. We've gotta help her.

MICHAEL  
She'll laugh at us.

SARAH  
Better she laughs at me than I see  
her in a box.

She dials. RING...

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

RING. The phone in the living room. RING-RING.

It forms a strange rhythm as Mr. Bates continues up her thigh... he lifts her blouse for a beat... raises the butcher knife...

RING!

Erin wakes.

Mr. Bates raises the knife... Erin sees...

ERIN  
Daddy?

Mr. Bates STABS through with the knife, just as Erin rolls out of the way -- the blade tears into her pillow --

She backs against the wall.

ERIN  
What are you doing?!

MR. BATES  
You little bitch!

He THRUSTS at her again -- Erin screams -- she dodges! The knife goes into the wall. She spins, sprints like mad for safety as he frees the knife -- she rips the door open and trips into

THE LIVING ROOM

Erin quickly gets to her feet -- Mr. Bates grabs her leg! She tries to kick him off as he brings the knife closer -- closer -- he SLICES through her ankle! Erin cries out.

She kicks again -- connects -- sends him backward. She crawls... vomiting tears... he's to his feet.

MR. BATES  
 ...little whore...

He grabs her by the hair and TOSSES her against the balcony door. She hits hard. Ouch.

Mr. Bates casually slides the glass door open.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The truck skids to a stop. Michael and Sarah fly out and rush to the front door. It's locked.

SARAH  
 Shit!

She sees the keypad. Hits a number.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Bates kneels over Erin. He grabs her by a wad of hair and forces her to face him. Blood pours from her lips.

ERIN  
 Why... are... you... doing this...  
 to... me, Da...ddy?

MR. BATES  
 Little cunt.

Mr. Bates raises the butcher knife... strikes -- Erin catches him at the wrist! -- there's a struggle -- then, with renewed vigor, Erin manages to PUNCH him in the face -- he recoils -- she grabs the knife --

Erin stabs Mr. Bates in the chest!

Mr. Bates gasps, falls back. Then -- smiles. Right at Erin. He PULLS THE KNIFE OUT, looks at it. Isn't affected by the wound. He brings the knife to his lips, thinking of something...

But his eyes flash that a better idea has come to mind. He brings the knife to his neck and -- SLOWLY CUTS THROUGH HIS NECK, SLICING THROUGH BLOOD VESSELS -- thick crimson spills out from the wound.

Mr. Bates grins.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Sarah angrily jabs at the keypad. No answer.

SARAH

Erin!

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Mr. Bates hurls Erin onto the balcony. She's on her last legs. She struggles to stand --

He buries the knife into her back. She snaps back, in shock. He STABS her again -- and AGAIN -- her eyes roll back --

And with a great heave Mr. Bates tosses her over the balcony -

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Erin falls thirty feet and SMASHES into the concrete, ten feet away from Sarah and Michael. Her body is broken. Dead.

SARAH

ERIN!

Sarah sprints to Erin's body, immediately takes her head into her lap, like a mother with her child.

SARAH

No!! Oh, God, Erin!!

Michael falls back against the wall, stunned. In shock. White as a ghost.

Sarah risks a look up, sees --

ON THE BALCONY

the Jester looks at her. He waves, then disappears.

A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS

roll around the parking lot as a car finds a stall. The CAR DOOR slams shut.

MR. BANES (O.S.)

(weak)

Erin?

Sarah's head jerks. Mr. Banes (the real McCoy), in a suit and tie, stares at his daughter.

CUT TO BLACK.

A DREAM

The unpainted marionette, dancing. Slowly. Something falls from above and dabbles onto the puppet. A droplet of blood. Then another falls... and another...

The marionette is stained red.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

The picture on the desk. Jason kissing Sarah. Erin dragging Michael into frame.

Sarah sits next to the desk, looking at nothing in particular. Lost in thought. The clock on the wall TICKS.

She looks at the picture.

LIVING ROOM

Sarah hurries down the stairs. She grabs the car keys on the coffee table.

She stops, looks at the picture on the wall -- her, Mr. Castle, and Mom. Happier times. The crucifix chain hangs from the frame.

Sarah takes it.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Smoke rises from a cluster of twigs -- a fire extinguished. Michael sits beside it. Sarah's car rolls up, stops. She steps out and walks to Michael. Plops down next to him.

SARAH

Hey. How're you doing?

MICHAEL

How'd you know I'd be here?

SARAH

It's the last place that was --  
decent, before all of this started.

MICHAEL

I guess it's as good an explanation as any.

Sarah looks at the smoke.

SARAH

We're being picked off one-by-one. It's not gonna stop.

MICHAEL

Leave me alone, Sarah.

SARAH

You're just going to sit here and wait to die?

MICHAEL

It crossed my mind.

SARAH

Whatever happened to, "I'm past the denial phase"?

MICHAEL

It's not denial. This is my fault. If I hadn't taken you guys to that stupid angel... none of this would've happened.

SARAH

You said you'd been there before. I'm gonna wager a guess and say nothin' like this happened.

MICHAEL

Good guess.

SARAH

Don't blame yourself for failing to see a vengeful ghost coming.

(smiles)

I mean, seriously, what are the odds of that?

He cracks half a smile despite himself.

MICHAEL

You're taking this well.

SARAH

I loved Jason and Erin. Very much. But I'm not gonna just sit here.

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)  
I need to find a way to stop this --  
and I need your help.

She stands.

SARAH  
I don't want to die. Do you?

He shakes his head. Then:

MICHAEL  
What d'you wanna do?

SARAH  
We need to find out everything we  
can about Mary. About her suicide.

MICHAEL  
Is there a plan?

SARAH  
You're gonna work the church. Find  
someone who remembers you and is  
willing to help.

MICHAEL  
(stands)  
I'm not as cute as I used to be.

SARAH  
You'll do fine.

MICHAEL  
How 'bout you?

SARAH  
I'm gonna pay a visit to Old Man  
Nolan.

She digs into her pocket and hands Michael the crucifix  
necklace.

MICHAEL  
What's this?

SARAH  
You're a Christian and you don't  
know what this is?

MICHAEL  
Are you thinking of taking vows? I  
knew you'd come around to my side.

SARAH  
Hopefully it'll give some kind of  
protection.

MICHAEL  
I'm going to a church, Sarah.  
Plenty of crucifixes to go around.

SARAH  
Couldn't hurt.

He puts the necklace in his pocket and smiles.

MICHAEL  
Okay.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael enters. Looks around -- empty pews, stained-glass windows, etc. Not a soul sight.

MICHAEL  
Is there a bell?

He thinks, spots the confessional. Michael takes a deep breath and walks to it. He doesn't get in --

He knocks. Awkward. No response. He knocks again.

Finally the door opens and the PRIEST looks at him, stunned.

PRIEST  
Yes?

MICHAEL  
Hi there. I would've gotten in the  
other side but I haven't sinned  
lately. I plan to in the future,  
though, to keep you in business...  
(Priest stares)  
I'm hopin' to find Father  
Marinelli.

EXT. NOLAN HOUSE - DAY

Sarah on the porch. Light drizzle. She warms herself with her arms. Knocks.

A DOG BARKS from inside.

SARAH  
Oh, Jesus.

The door opens...

NOLAN, a weathered old-timer, gives Sarah the once over. His Rottweiler chomps at the bit, but he holds him back.

NOLAN  
Can I help you?

SARAH  
Mr. Nolan, I wanted to ask you a few questions.

NOLAN  
About what?

SARAH  
Mary Ashboro.

NOLAN  
I don't have anything to say.

Nolan steps back, closing the door --

Sarah slips into

THE HOUSE

as the door latches shut. Nolan stares at her, doesn't know whether to be pissed off or impressed.

NOLAN  
Who are you?

SARAH  
Nobody important. I just need to know -- everything -- about that woman.

NOLAN  
She was a nun at the local church.

SARAH  
Why do you have her statue on your property?

NOLAN  
It's personal.

SARAH  
She killed herself. The church  
isn't known to honor that.

NOLAN  
I'm not the church.

He walks into the

KITCHEN

pulling the Rottweiler behind him. Sarah takes the cue to  
follow.

Nolan pours a new can of food into the dog's bowl. It chomps  
right in.

SARAH  
How did you know her?

NOLAN  
I found her.

SARAH  
Like, she was an orphan? Abandoned  
somewhere?

NOLAN  
Not quite. She has a mother and a  
pair of sisters. I met her on a  
church mission. Simple as that. I  
was sad when she passed.

INT. CHURCH - MARINELLI'S OFFICE - DAY

The Priest leads Michael into the golden, spacious room.  
Father Marinelli rises from his desk.

FATHER MARINELLI  
Yes?

PRIEST  
A Michael Rosenberg to see you,  
Father.

FATHER MARINELLI  
Michael Rosenberg? Michael  
Rosenberg!

Marinelli grins, walks to Michael, and hugs him.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 (to Priest)  
 You can leave us.

Priest bows, exits.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 Michael! It's been such a long  
 time. How are you?

MICHAEL  
 Walkin' and talkin'. Things seem  
 pretty much the same around here.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 We do our best. So what can I do  
 for you? You've gotten tall.

MICHAEL  
 Yeah, I'm also growing hairs in  
 weird places and thinking strange  
 thoughts about 'girls.' It's  
 terrifying.  
 (Marinelli glares)  
 It's not a social call, Father, and  
 I'm sorry for that.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 It rarely is these days. Take a  
 seat.

Michael slides into a chair at the desk. Marinelli does the  
 same.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 How can I help you, Michael?

MICHAEL  
 Do you know why Sister Mary killed  
 herself?

FATHER MARINELLI  
 (taken aback)  
 What?

MICHAEL  
 It's a simple enough question.

FATHER MARINELLI  
 I'm surprised you even remember  
 that.

INT. CHURCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Little Boy (young Michael) approaches the confessional.  
He pushes the door open --

MARY'S CORPSE is in the box. Caked blood everywhere.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Some things stick with you over  
time.

INT. MARINELLI'S OFFICE - DAY

Marinelli studies Michael.

FATHER MARINELLI  
I'm sorry for that.

MICHAEL  
The past is the past. But it's  
important to me and a friend.

FATHER MARINELLI  
No, Michael, I don't know why she  
did it. Mary was... disturbed.  
She had been ever since she arrived  
here.

MICHAEL  
I don't remember anything like  
that.

FATHER MARINELLI  
You wouldn't, would you? You were  
only eight -- and she adored you.

Michael squirms.

FATHER MARINELLI  
She had a close relationship with  
someone in the church. It might've  
been what brought her here in the  
first place.

MICHAEL  
Who was the relationship with?

FATHER MARINELLI  
I'm not at liberty to say. I'm  
sorry, Michael, but that's very  
private.

MICHAEL

Did she have any family? Someone  
else I can talk to?

Marinelli stands, rounds the desk and stops beside Michael.

FATHER MARINELLI

Why dig this up again? It caused a  
great deal of hurt to many people.

MICHAEL

Would you believe me if I told you  
it was life or death?

FATHER MARINELLI

No.

MICHAEL

Then... I honestly can't think of  
anything clever. Rest assured that  
it is life or death.

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY - LATER

Michael leaves Father Marinelli's office. He digs out his  
cell phone and dials.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Sarah looks at something. Her phone rings. She answers.

SARAH

(into phone)  
Hello?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

(filtered)  
Hey. How goes your Nancy Drew-ing?

INTERCUT their conversation.

SARAH

I didn't get much. Nolan wouldn't  
tell me why he threw the statue up.  
Best I got is that Mary apparently  
has family in the area.

MICHAEL

I'm one step ahead of you -- I have  
an address.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Her mother's in Hastings. Comes  
from a farming family.

SARAH  
Good work on that.

MICHAEL  
There's one other thing -- Father  
Marinelli mentioned that Mary had a  
relationship with someone in the  
church.

SARAH  
That's interesting.

MICHAEL  
Very. Anyway, go home. Stay away  
from sharp objects and anything  
that might kill you. We'll think  
up a game plan in the morning.

SARAH  
Will do. Bye.

MICHAEL  
Bye.

They hang up.

SARAH

gazes at the thing she was looking at just before the call  
came through. The black angel.

She turns and starts to walk away. Fighting temptation. She  
risks one more look --

THE LITTLE BOY

is sitting on the statue's shoulders. He's wearing a mask --  
a mask of the Jester's face. Very scary. He turns his head,  
amused, and waves at her... Sarah backs away, freaked, turns  
around --

She bumps right into the Jester!

Everything goes blurry. Then, BLACK.

A DREAM

The Jester, against black. Surreal.

THUMP-THUMP. Jason's body, hanged, beats against an invisible wall. The Jester puts his palms to his face, takes hold of something, pulls -- it's the mask. He slides the pasty face over Jason's head.

Leaving nothing but a rotting visage of dried blood as the Jester's face.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATER

Nolan shakes Sarah awake. It takes a moment but she finally stirs.

SARAH

Where -- what? What's goin' --

NOLAN

I think it'd be best if you stay off my property from now on.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah enters, closes the door. Mr. Castle sits on the sofa, waiting for her.

MR. CASTLE

Where were you?

SARAH

Out. I was just... out.

MR. CASTLE

What does that mean?

SARAH

Nothing. I'm taking care of a few things, that's all.

Mr. Castle stands and walks to her.

MR. CASTLE

Is everything all right?

SARAH

Fine.

MR. CASTLE

You're lying.

(she shies)

Where is your mother's necklace?

SARAH

I took it. I just -- I just need it right now. It makes things better.

Mr. Castle nods, understanding.

MR. CASTLE

Can I do anything for you?

SARAH

No, and I'm sorry. I know you want to help, but this is something I have to get past on my own. In the end, it's just me.

MR. CASTLE

There are always people around who love you, Sarah. Remember that.

She kisses him on the cheek.

SARAH

I know. I just hope it stays that way.

Sarah disappears upstairs.

SARAH'S BEDROOM

Sarah lifts her shirt and feels her bare stomach, trying to relish the feeling.

She falls back on the bed and closes her eyes.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Michael unfolds a map and spreads it out upon the park bench. Sarah studies it.

SARAH

Two hundred miles. Ish.

MICHAEL

If we haul ass we can be there and back before nightfall.

SARAH

That's it, then. Let's go.

She gives the map another once-over, its unfolded pages filling her eyes... filling everything...

Towns, roads, rivers -- all marked, as is their destination.

Hastings.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Michael's truck races down the empty highway, dusty plains in the distance.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Sarah sketches in a notebook while Michael's at the wheel. She flips the page and starts again.

MICHAEL

There's something that's been bothering me about all this.

SARAH

That's funny. Everything about this is bothering me.

MICHAEL

You know that I mean.

(turns)

My accident came first... then Jason... then Erin. But for everything you've seen, this thing hasn't touched you.

SARAH

Are you upset about that?

MICHAEL

No, not at all. I mean -- there's no consistency here. Why show up days apart and pick us off at random times? It doesn't make sense.

SARAH

Who says it has to? Maybe there aren't rules.

MICHAEL

Everything has rules. Something caused her to do this.

SARAH  
She was pregnant.

MICHAEL  
What? How would you know that?

SARAH  
The vision I have the most is of  
her at confession.

INT. CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mary, in the box. She feels her stomach.

SARAH (V.O.)  
She says something -- about  
violation.

INT. DARK ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Rapid-fire. The man tearing at Mary's robes.

SARAH (V.O.)  
She was raped.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

MICHAEL  
She confessed about being raped?

SARAH  
I think the priest is the one who  
raped her.

Michael looks at her, horrified.

MICHAEL  
Christ. So, putting the story  
together: this fucker rapes Mary.  
Gets her pregnant, and at the same  
time completely screws her up in  
the head to the point she puts a  
blade to her wrist.

Sarah feels into her pocket... and pulls out Mary's knife to  
make sure it's still there. Puts it back.

SARAH  
Basically, yeah.

MICHAEL

Skip ahead ten years and pasty, non-corporeal Mary is fixated on you. So here's the million-dollar question -- why?

SARAH

Because she was pregnant. She identifies with me.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The truck roars past a sign that reads: "WELCOME TO HASTINGS -- Home of the Mighty Hounds!"

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The town America forgot. Shops line both sides of main street. It's the 1950s all over again.

Michael pulls his truck in front of the Post Office and kills the engine. He and Sarah get out.

MICHAEL

Do we have a plan, or do we just start screaming from the rooftops?

SARAH

We'll ask around in here. If that fails, much scream-age.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Sarah and Michael wind through ropes designed to hold off long lines. There aren't any. The place is empty, save for a MALE WORKER at the front desk. Their presence startles him.

WORKER

Hmph. Can I help you? You sending a package? Receiving?

SARAH

We were hoping you could point us in the direction of a family that lives around here. The Ashboros.

WORKER

Doesn't ring a bell, but truth be  
told I haven't worked here too  
long.

Sarah turns on the seductive charm.

SARAH

Truth be told, we really need to  
find them. Couldn't you just look  
through your records and tell us  
the address?

WORKER

(very red)

Well, I'm not -- they're very  
specific that we can't --

She's practically leaning over the desk. Michael watches  
her, amused.

SARAH

Please?

WORKER

I really shouldn't...

He really looks into her deep, gorgeous eyes --

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Sarah triumphantly displays a piece of paper with a hand-  
written address on it. Michael grins.

MICHAEL

I gotta be honest, I didn't think  
you had that kinda thing in ya.

SARAH

What does that mean?

MICHAEL

Well, some girls... have it... some  
don't --

She stops, maybe a little offended.

SARAH

All girls have "it." Most just  
don't lower themselves to using  
"it" because it makes us look like  
bottom-feeding whores.

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)  
 (smiles)  
 Besides, I had an excuse. Life or death and all that.

MICHAEL  
 Didn't mean to hit a nerve, I just figured you more for the girl scout type.

SARAH  
 I was a girl scout. Still, Erin Bates has been my best friend for ten years. You really think I wouldn't pick up a thing or two?

He smiles as they move again, reach his truck, and rip the doors open.

EXT. ASHBORO FARM - DAY

A scarecrow sways in the midday breeze, overlooking long rows of corn.

Michael stops the truck twenty feet from the old FARMHOUSE that stands as the head of the property. He and Sarah get out. Look the place over.

MICHAEL  
 Just our luck, a farm. Plenty of sharp things to cut us in tw --

He stops mid-joke. Sees something:

THE LITTLE BOY

perched on the arms of the scarecrow. Staring at him with an odd little grin.

Michael's heart skips a beat.

MICHAEL  
 Sarah -- do you see that?

He points. She looks:

Just the scarecrow swaying in the wind.

SARAH  
 The scarecrow?

MICHAEL  
 I figured. Let's get on with it.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

They step onto the porch. Sarah raises a hand to knock --

MICHAEL

Wait.

He digs into his pocket and retrieves the crucifix necklace. Hands it back to her.

MICHAEL

You best keep this. I don't think it's gonna do me any good.

SARAH

Why?

MICHAEL

It's yours, Sarah. Take it back.

She takes it. Tries to put it in her pocket -- but Michael stops her.

MICHAEL

No, not like that.

He gently takes the necklace from her, unhooks it, tries to place it around her neck --

MICHAEL

Even if you don't believe -- pretending's better than nothing.

SARAH

(stops him)

Maybe. But not today.

She pockets the chain. Turns to the door, catches her breath, and raises her hand --

She sees Michael duck behind her, using her as a shield. Sarah smiles -- relief -- and then... knocks.

The door opens. Michael and Sarah wait, anxious -- then find themselves looking two feet lower. A YOUNG GIRL, 10, looks at them with curious eyes.

YOUNG GIRL

Yes?

SARAH  
 (winging it)  
 Hi, sweetie. Is -- is your Mom  
 home?

Young Girl nods.

SARAH  
 Can we talk to her?

She shakes her head: no. Sarah and Michael exchange glances,  
 then -- Young Girl smiles from ear-to-ear. Joke.

YOUNG GIRL  
 She's in the back yard.

They follow the Young Girl into

#### THE FARMHOUSE

which is a dusty old place that's seemingly from a different  
 era. Stairs climb for miles. Dusty pictures show the  
 generational growth of a single family.

But enough of that. Sarah and Michael trail the Young Girl  
 through the house.

#### EXT. BACK YARD - LATER

The Young Girl leads Sarah and Michael to a woman who chops  
 into the grass with a SCYTHE. This is LUCY, 51. A quiet  
 look about her.

YOUNG GIRL  
 Momma, these two wanted to see you.

LUCY  
 Thanks, sweetie. Now why don't you  
 run back inside and play your  
 games?

The Young Girl smiles and exits back into the house. Lucy  
 studies the newcomers.

LUCY  
 What can I do for you? It must be  
 important, whatever it is, to drag  
 you all the way out here.

SARAH  
 We just came from town.

LUCY  
But you're obviously not from  
there.

MICHAEL  
Do we stand out?

LUCY  
Only a little. So what brings  
about the visit?

SARAH  
We wanted to know a few things  
about your daughter. About Mary.

LUCY  
Are you from that church?

SARAH  
No.

Lucy glances from Sarah to Michael, back-and-forth. Worried.

LUCY  
Has something happened to Mary?

MICHAEL  
Nobody told you?

LUCY  
Told me what?

Michael and Sarah look at each other. Uh-oh.

SARAH  
(to Lucy)  
I'm so sorry, Ma'am. But your  
daughter is dead.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lucy's face is in her hands, crying. She sits with Michael  
and Sarah at the kitchen table.

LUCY  
She killed herself?

Sarah just sits. Unsure of what to say.

LUCY

I never thought... why would she do such a thing? She was always such a good girl.

MICHAEL

You didn't hear from her at all after she left?

LUCY

We had a fight because I didn't want her to go. She stormed out and we never spoke again. Oh, God...

The revelation hits her anew.

MICHAEL

Why didn't you want her to go?

LUCY

Because she was doing it for someone else and not herself.

SARAH

Who did she do it for?

Lucy finally looks at something other than her wet palms. At Sarah.

LUCY

The year before Mary left there was a terrible storm. It destroyed everything. Those of us that called this town home had to start over. It made the news and got us a bit of attention. With that came disaster relief. And then --

Lucy wipes her eyes.

LUCY

The church. They felt compelled to help once Nightline's cameras had rolled through.

MICHAEL

They were opening the church at the time. I remember.

Michael pulls out his wallet and retrieves the picture of him as a little boy with the smiling Mary.

He hands the picture to Lucy. She relishes it, then -- finally recalls what she was talking about.

LUCY

Death as an advertisement for Christ. Can you believe it? Still, we couldn't deny the help. If you don't want the fruits of sin, stay out of the devil's orchard.

SARAH

Who caused her to leave?

LUCY

She became infatuated with a priest. Father Nolan.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Dingy. Sarah stands at the sink, sweating a little. Breathing hard.

SARAH

(remembering)

"You called it a healer's hand when you attacked me... when you violated me..."

Sarah looks at herself with newfound knowledge. She knows what to do...

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out Mary's knife. With a startled breath she raises the blade to her wrist, cuts just enough to draw blood --

SARAH

"...you called it a healer's hand when you attacked me..."

INT. CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL (FLASHBACK)

Right back into the flashback, Mary in the confessional with the knife at her wrist.

MARY

...when you violated me.

UNSEEN MAN

Mary?

And for the first time we go

THROUGH THE THRESHOLD

to reveal the man on the other side. Nolan.

NOLAN

You were forced into nothing. This is a house of God, and we are under his command.

MARY

This isn't God's house, it's yours. And this is your sin.

She places the bloody wrist to the threshold --

And Nolan freaks. Panics. Shut into a claustrophobic space. He bangs his arm against the door and falls out into

THE CHURCH

Nolan gets to his feet, trying to catch his breath. He grabs hold of the confessional door.

NOLAN

Who do you think you are? A woman doing this in my church!

He opens the door --

Mary LUNGES out, sending him to the floor! He fights to get her off, then finally sees --

She has buried the knife into his abdomen.

MARY

For what you did to me... for what you did to us...

Nolan grabs her wrist... he PULLS THE KNIFE OUT... tosses it away. Pushes onto her back.

NOLAN

You -- how could you? I am a priest in the service of God --

MARY

You serve yourself and do it in his name!

Nolan fumes. He looks around, at the church -- it's empty. Then his gaze returns to Mary.

She can see something in his eyes, starts to back away --

Nolan charges her! He wraps his arms around her neck -- pulls her to her feet -- and pushes her back... back... into

#### THE CONFESSIONAL

Nolan slams the door shut, continues to choke the life out of Mary. She struggles... tries to force him off... too weak... Her vision glazes... fingers retract... and finally, she goes still.

NOLAN

I forced you into nothing -- you couldn't be forced. It's your place to obey me in all ways, as is written.

Nolan observes her, fascinated by his prey. Mary's eye fogs over.

#### INT. FARMHOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sarah's eyes snap back into focus. Realizing. She looks at the blade held to her wrist, then sees her reflection.

SARAH

'Finish it.'

#### EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Michael lights a cigarette on the porch. Takes a long, joyous drag. Sarah stands next to him.

SARAH

Mary didn't kill herself, she was murdered. By Father Nolan.

MICHAEL

What?

SARAH

I saw it. That's what this whole thing is about, Michael. She wants us to kill him. To finish what she started.

MICHAEL

Sarah, have you considered that the visions might not be real? This woman isn't attacking you, she's leading you along. And the only map you get is the one she gives you.

SARAH

Meaning?

MICHAEL

She's guiding you towards a destination, and she'll show you anything she can to get you there.

SARAH

It has to be real, or all this will have been for nothing.

He looks at her.

MICHAEL

Fine. Good enough for me.

Michael tosses the cigarette away and heads back inside. The cigarette catches on a twig but doesn't extinguish.

Mary starts to turn back, but sees --

MARY

standing in the middle of the cornfield. Inviting. Sarah takes the first step toward her...

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucy leads Michael through a long hallway with doors to each side.

LUCY

Her room's as close as it can be to when she left.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

She uses a rusty old key to unlock one of the doors, and they step into

## MARY'S BEDROOM

It's a charming little place. Shelves filled with books and the bed is made. The closet door is open a crack.

Nothing extraordinary.

LUCY

What are you hoping to find?

MICHAEL

Anything that might explain what happened. Is this all?

LUCY

There's a little bit more.

Lucy walks to the closet and slides the door open. Michael looks inside...

It's Mary's collection of dolls. Marionettes hanging about, wicked little faces carved out of wood --

## EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Stalks sway around Sarah as she moves deeper into the field.

SARAH

I know the truth. If you want me to end this, just give me time.

The wind intensifies --

## EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME TIME

Michael's cigarette, still burning... the wind catches it... there's a SPARK...

FIRE burns through grass, running along a trail towards the cornfield.

## INT. FARMHOUSE - MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy and Michael look at the marionettes in the closet.

MICHAEL

She made all these?

LUCY  
Yes, she was incredibly gifted at  
it, even as a little girl.

MICHAEL  
Why so many?

LUCY  
Mary loved them. She considered  
them extensions of herself.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Sarah, turning, looking --

SARAH  
No more games or visions. This has  
to end.

She sees Mary, ten feet away. She just stares at Sarah,  
serene.

SARAH  
Good. Trust me to --

The stalks sway, violently, blocking out everything. They  
calm... Mary is gone.

Frustrated, Sarah turns around --

And stares right at the Jester. He brandishes Lucy's scythe.  
Smiling at Sarah. And she sees behind him --

THE FIRE

tearing through the cornfield. Lighting the sky and  
advancing on Sarah.

SARAH  
Michael!!

INT. FARMHOUSE - MARY'S BEDROOM

Michael hears. He hurries to the window, looks out -- and  
sees the BLAZE.

MICHAEL  
Sarah!

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Michael bursts out of the front door, through the farm, and jumps into his truck -- starts the engine --

EXT. CORNFIELD

Sarah is cornered, flames licking all around her. She twists, turns, trying to get away, but this place is a labyrinth. Everywhere she turns she faces incineration...

She trips, twisting her ankle. The fire burns faster --

MICHAEL'S TRUCK

slides in right beside Sarah.

MICHAEL

Get in!!

She jumps up, hops to the passenger side -- the flames are deadly close -- she rips open the door and dives in --

He slams on the accelerator.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK

He spins the wheel, lost in the inferno -- plows through it -- Sarah screams --

Michael makes a sharp turn, around a chunk of flame, finally sees the edge of the cornfield and safety -- he speeds towards it, one last wall of fire -- he charges into it --

The truck's wheel smashes through a rock... but the rock wins. The truck loses its balance and OVERTURNS, crashing hard into the soil no more than five feet outside the cornfield.

The wheels roll to a stop. No movement inside the truck.

FADE TO BLACK.

The SOUNDS of butchered engine components struggling for life.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The cornfield is still ablaze, but the truck rests on a patch of field outside of the fire's range.

The passenger side door (vertical) opens. Sarah drags herself out of the truck on instinct. Falls to the grass, dirty, dragging herself along. Then she seems to remember something...

SARAH

Michael?

She hobbles to her feet and peers in through her door --

MICHAEL

is still in his seat, bloodied. And he's not moving.

SARAH

Michael? Come on, Michael, we've gotta go... come on...

But he doesn't move. It's very silent. She starts to slide away, crying --

Michael jerks awake!

MICHAEL

Oww...

She bolts back into place, looking down at him.

SARAH

Michael? Michael!

MICHAEL

My driving record is officially shot to hell.

SARAH

How could you do that to me?? You shit!

MICHAEL

'Cause it was all about putting you on. Get me outta here, will ya?

She reaches in and takes his hand -- PULLS -- the truck wains as he rises from his seat -- finally he bends over the passenger door and falls out of the truck to a patch of grass.

MICHAEL

You okay?

SARAH

I got off easy. Thanks for saving my life.

MICHAEL

Don't mention it.

She helps him to his feet and kisses him on the cheek. Is he blushing?

MICHAEL

What's the plan?

SARAH

We have to get out of here, now.

MICHAEL

That's rapidly becoming the story of our lives.

Michael and Sarah help each other forward, away from the flames and toward the farmhouse.

MICHAEL

I think when we get back, we should pay Old Man Nolan a visit.

SARAH

I'm thinking the same th --

THUNK. They freeze. Stare at each other for a long, hopeless beat.

Then, finally, they let their eyes drift downward to see what happened.

THE SCYTHER

is jutting from Michael's chest. The Jester has impaled him from behind.

SARAH

MICHAEL!!

Michael drops. The Jester gives a small bow to Sarah, then disappears into the burning cornfield.

Michael lays back, in shock. Sarah takes his hand.

MICHAEL  
Sarah... why did he...

He turns his head and sees

MARY

with the Little Boy beside her. The Boy looks at her, then takes a step back into the dark. Gone.

Mary holds the jester marionette in her hand. She brings it to her chest, her eyes locked on Michael the entire time.

MICHAEL

turns away from Mary to look at Sarah, and he suddenly seems himself for one moment:

MICHAEL  
Sarah... I'm so sorry...

SARAH  
Don't be... Michael, please  
don't...

He grips her hand tightly... and releases. Closes his eyes. Michael is dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Sarah sits at the back of the bus. Only a few other PASSENGERS. Rain pelts the windows.

She pulls out the crucifix chain and looks at it. Thinking.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah follows the sidewalk to her front door. Sullen. She reaches under the doormat and takes a spare key. Inserts, pushes --

Stops.

She takes a second to rest her head on the door, exhausted, then pushes it open and walks

INSIDE

to come face-to-face with Mr. Castle. She closes the door.

MR. CASTLE

This is a really nasty habit,  
Sarah. Where were you?

SARAH

Nowhere.

MR. CASTLE

It's two a.m. and you've been gone  
all day. That's a long time to  
spend 'nowhere.'

SARAH

Yeah. I'll try to cut it shorter  
next time.

MR. CASTLE

There isn't going to be a next  
time. Tomorrow you're not to leave  
the house, do you understand me?

SARAH

All except the 'not leave the  
house' thing, 'cause that's the  
part I'm not loving.

MR. CASTLE

Sarah --

SARAH

Relax, Dad. I was making with the  
funny.

Her face says differently. She looks at him for another  
second, then takes the first stair up.

MR. CASTLE

Church tomorrow.

SARAH

Already?

MR. CASTLE

'Fraid so. Sundays come along  
fairly regularly.

SARAH

See? You're the funny one. I  
should try harder.

She goes upstairs. Mr. Castle watches her up, not at all  
amused.

SARAH'S BEDROOM

Sarah crosses to the bed and sits. Her eyes fix on the  
picture from the hillside --

She starts to cry.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower kicks in. Sarah lets the water soak in. She  
can't control herself, starts crying again. Every ounce of  
misery forcing itself to the surface. She collapses with  
grief.

LATER

Sarah stands in front of the mirror. She is naked. One hand  
covers her breasts and the other runs along her stomach.

She turns, looking at her sideways reflection. The smallest  
hint of an expanding stomach. She rubs the free hand along  
her belly, her only glimmer of hope.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Sarah leans over to tie her shoes. She's dressed casually in  
a pair of jeans and a hoodie.

She grabs the crucifix chain off the dresser. Regards it,  
then hooks it around her neck and wears it. She looks at the  
photo of her friends, then moves to the window -- slides it  
open.

She climbs outside, onto

THE LEDGE

Sarah finds her footing and lowers herself down.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - LATER

Sarah hops in, turns the key, and hits the road.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Headlights cross the black angel statue. The car stops, but the lights stay on. Sarah gets out.

She approaches the statue.

SARAH

The world was cruel to you. Nolan was cruel to you. But it doesn't change anything. You're a coward, Mary. Taking the easy way out. Trying to take him with you.

Sarah reaches into her pocket and registers Mary's knife.

SARAH

So I'll do what you couldn't. But after tonight, it's finished.

She pockets the knife and walks back to the car, opens the door --

Freezes. There's a SOUND in the bushes...

It's a GROWL.

Sarah's eyes dart. Where is the goddamn thing?

GRR.

SARAH

You've gotta be shitting me.

She takes a hesitant step forward, then another, scoops down to get inside the car --

THE ROTTWEILER

bursts out from under the car!

Sarah SCREAMS, backs away in a panic as the Rottweiler gets to its feet --

The beast jumps at her, jaws CHOMPING DOWN on Sarah's arm -- she grimaces -- jerks her arm every which-way, trying to break free -- no luck -- the teeth draw blood as she cries out --

She raises her leg and kicks -- finally shakes the dog off. Sarah jumps to her feet and takes off, the Rottweiler in hot pursuit --

She runs like death is on her heels. The dog jumps --

Sarah drops --

It overshoots her, hits the ground, and spins. Sarah gets to her feet. Tense beat as she and the dog just stare at each other, its jaws flaring, disgusting drool dripping to the ground --

She risks a look at the car, its driver's side door still open...

SARAH  
C'mon, poochie.

Sarah bolts back to the car -- the dog follows -- BARKING --

She gets a foot into the car, starts to climb, but the dog is on her -- it jumps at her --

Sarah suddenly dives back, but the Rottweiler is already in the air -- it PLOWS into the car --

Sarah slams the door shut.

It thrashes about, shaking the vehicle. But it's locked in. Harmless.

The Rottweiler barks at her through the window. Sarah catches her breath, then starts up the hill.

EXT. NOLAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah approaches the front door. She takes the handle and holds it for a long, suspenseful moment... twists it...

Locked.

SARAH  
Shit. When did society start to frown on breaking and entering?

Sarah looks at the tall oak trees that hang over the house. She hurries to one. Reaches up and takes hold of a branch. With great effort she heaves herself up, over the branch -- climbing -- kicks her legs around --

She drops off the tree-branch onto the

#### LANDING

Twelve inches of space between the window and a two-story drop. She inches toward the window.

Sarah kneels and weaves her fingers in, under the window frame. She tugs -- hard -- and finally raises the window by three inches. She cracks her knuckles and has at it again -- opens the window.

She sticks one leg in, then another, and finally slides fully into

#### AN EMPTY BEDROOM.

##### SARAH

The old girl scout comes through again.

She takes a look around -- bare walls and a thick layer of dust.

Sarah reaches into her pocket and pulls out Mary's knife. She holds it at the ready. Takes a slow step forward, then another, increasing pace as she goes. She moves out into

#### THE HALLWAY

careful as she goes. Each gentle step grates the floorboards...

Sarah follows the hallway down. Doors loom over her from both sides, but she has eyes for one at the end -- the door is open a crack. She reaches it, presses a hand to the wood and pushes --

#### MASTER BEDROOM

The door opens wide enough for Sarah to slide in. The room is pitch black. Only the outline of a bed is visible.

Sarah moves toward the bed:

One step.  
(silent)

Another step.  
(CREEEEEEK...)

Sarah stops, curses under her breath. Waits. There is no movement.

She takes another step, lighter on her feet. Another. Two more and she's right beside the bed. A mass sticks out under the covers.

Sarah studies the bed, hesitant -- breathing hard -- she raises the blade -- can she really do this? --

She STRIKES! Once, twice, a third time -- STABBING into the bed, rapid-fire. Trying to get it over with as quickly as possible. She finally slips the blade out, begins to gag --

Sarah rips the blanket away. Forces herself to look:

There's nothing there, just a pillow ripped to bits. It hits Sarah.

SARAH  
(panicked)  
Oh, fuck.

Sarah turns back into the

HALLWAY

and stares at the doors to each side. She cautiously approaches the one on the left and wraps a hand around the knob... opens it...

Another empty room.

She struggles to follow the hallway... pushing through black... she STUMBLES!

Sarah balances herself against the wall. She has reached the stairs. With agonizing difficulty she takes the first stair, then the second. She holds the knife like it's a flashlight.

## LIVING ROOM

Sarah rounds the bottom stair. Huge windows allow the stars to spill into the room. Somehow, that makes it creepier.

She pushes through shadow, finding her way...

## AN OAK BRANCH

smacks the window. Makes Sarah jump. She calms herself, taking the last few steps into the

## KITCHEN

She finds her way to the counter. Feels around... her hand reaches the butcher's block. The largest knife is missing.

SARAH

No... oh, no...

NOLAN (O.S.)

Marinelli told me some kids were digging around.

The light clicks on.

Sarah turns, her heart skipping ten beats --

NOLAN

is behind her, standing in the small pantry hallway.

NOLAN

Shoulda known it'd be you.

He attacks -- SLASHING Sarah across the face with the butcher knife!

She hits the floor, Mary's knife clattering away.

CUT TO BLACK.

## A DREAM

Sarah, against black. A bloody cut across her cheek. She sees something in the distance, something WHITE --

## NOLAN'S KITCHEN

Sarah's eyes flutter. Nolan binds her wrists and ankles with tape. He drags her away --

Leaving the knife on the floor.

## DREAM

The white figure approaches Sarah. It is Mary.

She kneels in front of Sarah, regarding her, eyes locked together --

## NOLAN

tosses Sarah against a wall in the LIVING ROOM.

## MARY

takes Sarah's hand in the dream, their fingers locking together like lovers. Blood trickles down their wrists.

Mary leans in and kisses Sarah on the cheek, a thank you, then pulls back --

Sarah is holding the knife.

## NOLAN'S LIVING ROOM

Sarah comes to, feels something in her hands -- the knife. She really has it.

She CUTS into her bonds...

Nolan grabs a chair and places it on front of Sarah. He sits. Doesn't see what she's doing.

## NOLAN

Marinelli said it was a boy who came to see him. Who was it?

## SARAH

He didn't tell you?

NOLAN

He wanted to give me fair warning.  
Didn't expect I'd have to take  
matters into my own hands. But  
that's what happens when someone  
tries to kill you in your sleep.

SARAH

Maybe you deserve it.

NOLAN

Everyone has it coming for one  
reason or another. Doesn't mean I  
have to sit here and let it happen.  
One last chance -- who is the boy?

The knife slices into her bonds... half-way there... Sarah  
keeps cutting...

SARAH

What if I tell you?

He holds the butcher blade to her neck.

NOLAN

It'll be nice and quick.

SARAH

Believe it or not, offering to kill  
me isn't as great an incentive as  
you might think it is. So fuck  
you.

NOLAN

Have it your way.

Nolan presses the point of the blade to her neck -- draws  
blood --

SARAH

Wait!

He pulls back.

NOLAN

Yes?

SARAH

One thing. You answer me one  
thing, I'll tell you what you want  
to know.

She keeps cutting... Success! Her hands are free. She starts on her ankles...

NOLAN  
Fire away.

SARAH  
Why the statue? You killed her,  
ran away from the church to dodge  
the guilt. Why put up the damn  
statue?

NOLAN  
I've never told anybody.

Almost there...

SARAH  
I find myself thinking I'll take  
the secret to my grave, so tell me.

NOLAN  
The statue isn't for Mary. It's  
for our daughter.

SNAP. Sarah is free.

NOLAN  
Now, I honored my side --

SARAH  
A knife to my throat. How very  
honorable.

NOLAN  
-- who was the boy?

SARAH  
He's dead.

NOLAN  
Shame.

He touches the blade to her neck --

Sarah grabs his hand and pins it to the floor -- STABS the  
knife into his wrist! Nolan screams as she STABS again!

Nolan's fingers twitch in a bloody heap. Sarah gets to her  
feet, holding the knife, ready to finish it --

NOLAN  
You bitch!

Nolan grabs the butcher knife with his free hand, SLASHES Sarah's ankle! She cries out, backs away -- he manages to stand, protecting his limp hand. He waves the butcher knife threateningly --

Sarah looks at her knife, then his. In this game, size matters -- and he has the advantage.

NOLAN

Now... where were we?

Sarah sprints to the door, limping -- Nolan follows -- She manages to rip the door open, but Nolan is on her --

He tries to stab with the knife, but she manages to swing the door against him -- knocks him back -- finally she gets an idea and throws her whole weight against the door -- trapping Nolan between the door and the frame --

NOLAN

Ahhhh!

He swings with the knife --

Finally, defeated, he slips outside to safety -- and Sarah closes the door. She struggles to find the lock --

The BUTCHER KNIFE stabs through the door! One thrust, then another! Missing Sarah by inches.

She backs away, has to make a decision... Sarah bolts upstairs, just as --

Nolan forces the door open, a look of murder in his eyes.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Nolan follows the hall. It is still dark. He regards both doors to the sides. Considers one. Opens the door and walks into

THE EMPTY BEDROOM

The window is half-open. Nolan closes it, thinking. He smiles.

NOLAN

I don't think so. This won't be quite that easy.

He returns to the

HALLWAY

and trails it to the end. One door left. He enters.

MASTER BEDROOM

Curtains flutter in the wind. Nolan studies the room, deciding.

NOLAN

I know you're here, little girl.  
It'll be easier if you just come  
out. Easier in both this life and  
the next.

He moves to the closet. Opens it and clicks on a light. There's nothing inside but hanging clothes.

NOLAN

Do you know how women are viewed in  
the afterlife? The Bible calls Lot  
a "just man," and he offered his  
two daughters to an angry mob to do  
as they please. A "just man,"  
girl.

He walks to the bed.

NOLAN

That's how you will be treated. As  
a whore, forever. It's why Mary  
was always mine. Promising future,  
isn't it?

Nolan looks down. He leans over, preparing to look under the bed --

A HAND

shoots out from below -- holding the knife -- it STABS Nolan  
in the foot! He falls, aching.

Sarah slides away from her hiding place, gets to her feet.

Nolan tries to stab with the butcher knife, but Sarah slices  
him across the arm. He drops the knife, bleeding. Sarah  
kicks it away.

She stands over his broken, helpless form.

SARAH

You hide behind religion, you don't practice it. And maybe we are subservant to you -- in a book that's two-thousand years old. But that was then.

NOLAN

Please... don't...

SARAH

This is now.

She STABS him, AGAIN and AGAIN, burying the knife into his chest. Repeatedly. It's sick.

Sarah steps back, looks at him. Nolan coughs up blood. Fights for breath. She watches him curiously. Is that mercy in her eyes? No --

She buries the knife in his neck. Nolan twitches, then dies.

Sarah takes a step back, falls onto the bed. She looks at her bloody hands.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

The sun peaks over the horizon. Sarah stumbles forward, a little out of it. The knife is still in her hand.

She reaches the car. Sees --

The Rottweiler still inside, staring at her. Just sitting. Sarah cocks her head, opens the door.

The dog bursts out of the car and sprints across the lawn, tongue wagging. Sarah watches it go. She can't help but smile. She looks at the knife in her hand, then at the black angel...

Sarah walks to the angel, stops. Stares at it for a long moment.

She drops the knife.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - LATER

Sarah slides in, slams the door shut. She inserts the key into the ignition, almost turns it --

Stops herself. She leans her chair back and enjoys a well-deserved nap.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Mr. Castle exits his bedroom, buttoning his shirt.

MR. CASTLE

Sarah? Come on, girl, you've got less than an hour to get ready.

He enters

SARAH'S BEDROOM

to find that it is, in fact, empty. Curtains flap in the wind.

He doesn't look pleased.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Sarah stands over an intricate gravestone. She holds a dozen white roses. The headstone reads: "JASON ALEXANDER KELLER. November 14, 1989 - September 7, 2008."

Sarah kneels and places the roses on the freshly cut grass. She kisses the stone.

One hand touches her belly.

SARAH

I'll name him Jason. Jason Michael Keller. I miss you so much.

She stands.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Worshippers shuffle into empty pew spaces. Mr. Castle is among them, settling in near the end.

He's absolutely stunned as

SARAH

takes the seat next to him.

SARAH  
Hi, Daddy. Sorry I'm late.

MR. CASTLE  
Wha -- How -- are you okay?

He sees the scar on her cheek.

MR. CASTLE  
What happened?

SARAH  
Nothing. It's fine now.  
Everything's alright. I can  
finally say that.

MR. CASTLE  
I figured I'd find you back at the  
house when I got home. Never in a  
million years did I think you'd  
show up here.

SARAH  
I'm just full of surprises lately.

MR. CASTLE  
You're sure you're okay?

SARAH  
A hundred percent.

They look at each other. She smiles.

MR. CASTLE  
Why did you come? You had an  
excuse not to on account of your  
sneaking out last night -- again.  
Can't say I'm too pleased with  
that.

SARAH  
It won't happen again.

MR. CASTLE  
Coming to church or sneaking out?

She smiles mischievously.

SARAH  
I just thought I could give it a  
shot. Never really gave it a fair  
shake before.

MR. CASTLE

I'm glad.

Everyone stands. So do they. Sarah feels the crucifix around her neck.

SARAH

So am I. Pretending's better than nothing.

That answer doesn't seem to comfort him. Sarah, on the other hand, just closes her eyes and enjoys the feeling.

FADE OUT.

**THE END**