

ORB

by

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Inspired by True Events

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FADE IN:

On thousands of stars giving life to the sprawling night sky. A sight that fills anyone with awe and wonder.

Moving down, we reveal --

A RURAL HOUSE

Illuminated amidst the darkness, every light on inside. A gentle breeze blows waves through the vast wheat fields surrounding it. But that's the only sound...

It's eerily quiet.

A LATE 1990s CAR drives down the gravel driveway and skids to a stop. DR. EDWARD FLETCHER (40s) steps out and hurries to the front door. Rings the doorbell. Looks through the screen into the house -- the front door standing open.

FLETCHER

Hey Liz? Liz, I'm sorry. My shift was about to end and then I had to take someone straight into surgery.

No response from inside. He suddenly realizes how quiet it is. No voices. No television.

FLETCHER

Liz? Mitchell?

He rings the doorbell again.

FLETCHER

Mitchell, you in there buddy? It's dad. Mitchell?

He looks back at the TWO OTHER PARKED CARS, uncertainty growing. Then tries the screen door. It opens and he steps inside --

INT. RURAL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The screen door swings shut with a slam. Fletcher moves forward with caution. Something is very wrong here.

FLETCHER

Mitchell? Liz? Brad? Anyone here?

He sees the dining room table set for five. A pot of stew bubbling on the stove top in the kitchen. A pan of fresh rolls that looks like it just came out of the oven. A chopped salad on the counter. But no signs of life.

Unease growing, he makes his way through the house, glancing through doorways. But there's no one here.

His eyes are drawn to FRAMED PHOTOS on the wall of a HAPPY FAMILY OF FIVE. Liz, her husband, two other kids, and the YOUNGEST SON, MITCHELL (8), whom Fletcher focuses on.

FLETCHER

Mitchell, where you at buddy?

He moves through the house with more urgency. Opening every door. Searching every room.

FLETCHER

Mitchell, where are you?! Mitchell?!

Then he pushes through a closed door and freezes --

We don't see what's in front of him. WE ONLY SEE HIS FACE as he's OVERCOME WITH HORROR AND REVULSION. The sight so terrifying, he can't even muster the will to scream.

EXT. RURAL HOUSE -- NIGHT

Fletcher stumbles outside, in a state of shock. He manages a few shaky steps and hunches over. Tears in his eyes. He's trembling all over. Then he throws up.

Whatever he just saw in there, he'll never forget.

EXT. RURAL ROAD -- NIGHT

MITCHELL jerkily walks down the middle of the dark, empty road, the same YOUNG BOY from the photos. He's barefoot. Eyes completely disconnected from reality. BLOOD splattered on his clothes and face. But it's not his.

The RED AND BLUE LIGHTS of a POLICE CAR illuminate the darkness behind him. Mitchell doesn't react, not breaking his unsteady gait. The car pulls to a stop and the OFFICER quickly climbs out, coming after the boy.

OFFICER

Hey kid! Kid! Slow down!

But Mitchell keeps moving.

OFFICER

Are you Mitchell? Is your name
Mitchell Fletcher? Listen, just slow
down, son. Stop!

He grabs Mitchell by the shoulders. Mitchell resists, focused on the road ahead.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Mitchell sits on the bed with his legs pulled up close, a blanket wrapped around him, held tight by Fletcher.

The blood has been cleaned off, but the detachment is still present. OFFICERS and a DOCTOR stand nearby, talking to each other with heated restraint. We don't see their faces.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Did he see the person's face?

DOCTOR (O.S.)
He hasn't said a word.

OFFICER (O.S.)
He had to have seen someone.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
He's in a state of shock. Could be hours. Could be days.

OFFICER (O.S.)
I've got four bodies, doctor, we need something. Anything.

Fletcher glares in their direction.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Come on. This sort of thing takes time.

He ushers the officers out the door, leaving Fletcher and Mitchell alone.

FLETCHER
Listen to me, Mitchell... You're safe now. It's gonna be okay.

He wraps his protective arms around his son.

FLETCHER
You hear me? I'm not gonna let anything else happen to you.

MITCHELL
(whispers)
It's not time...

FLETCHER
What?

He leans closer.

MITCHELL
It's not time...

But Mitchell's not responding to his father. He's not saying it to anyone. Just staring away at nothing.

FLETCHER
Not time for what?

MITCHELL
It's not time... It's not time...

FLETCHER
What is it not time for?

Mitchell keeps repeating the phrase over and over. Fletcher stares, dread building.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE OVER: 15 YEARS LATER

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

The setting sun's last rays cast a warm glow over the comfortable house that is cozily secluded in the forest, far from the nearest big city. A brisk breeze blows through the tall trees. It's beautiful out here. Peaceful and isolated.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

Several HALF-UNPACKED MOVING BOXES remain, but everything else is in its place. Inviting decor with lots of personal touches. FRAMED PHOTOS show a smiling young couple. At college graduation, on a road trip, in a concert hall, on their wedding day. The unmistakable glow of young love. A BABY GRAND PIANO a distinct fixture in the living room.

Laughter and classic rock emanate from the nearby kitchen. They may have moved in recently, but they're already at home.

KITCHEN

Food sizzles in pans. Knives dice vegetables. Hands sprinkle seasoning over meat. They're making chicken cacciatore and it looks so good you can taste it.

CLAIRE MORGAN (late 20s) moves effortlessly about the kitchen, head bobbing with the music. She's passionate and carefree as she tastes the sauce, then sprinkles a little of this, a dash of that, in no real order, but it all makes sense to her.

By contrast, DAVID MORGAN (late 20s), is serious and focused, with a wry sense of humor that gives him charm. He slices onions with expert precision, wiping away tears from his eyes.

DAVID
You know sweetie, I put the measuring spoons in that drawer right by the stove... So we could use them.

CLAIRE

For what?

She pulls out more jars of spice, seemingly at random, and adds them in. Tastes it, then tosses in more. David smirks.

DAVID

Your grandma gave you her prized cookbook as a wedding gift and all you ever do is go off script.

CLAIRE

Grandma was a master improviser. It's in our blood. Half the recipes in there were happy accidents anyway.

DAVID

So that's why they taste different every time.

CLAIRE

It's something we artists like to call... Experimentation. But I know that's a concept that scientists have no understanding of.

She smirks and glances over at him.

CLAIRE

Oh no David, the recipe specifically calls for onions sliced into one square centimeter cubes. You're gonna have to start all over.

He playfully glares, teary-eyed from the onions.

CLAIRE

Love you, baby. Don't cry.

She smiles and wipes his tears. Then scoops up a handful of onions and tosses them into the pot. David sighs. We get the sense this happens every night.

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

The dinner setting isn't particularly fancy. In fact, there are lit birthday candles clumped in the holders instead of candlesticks. But it's cute. Claire eyes David expectantly as he digs in, trying to hide the fact that he loves it.

CLAIRE

Say it...

DAVID

What?

CLAIRE
You know what...

DAVID
I suppose it is rather... Pleasant
to my palate.

CLAIRE
You mean it's 112% amazeballs.

DAVID
The hint of Cajun seasoning is...
Unique.

CLAIRE
I was leaning more towards perfect.

DAVID
But you know what's really making it
come together for me...
(takes another bite)
The onions. And their perfect
dimensions, no doubt.

CLAIRE
No doubt.

DAVID
Wanna know what else is amazeballs?

CLAIRE
Tell me.

DAVID
Listen.

A moment passes.

CLAIRE
I don't hear anything.

DAVID
Right? No jackhammers. No honking
horns. No helicopters.

CLAIRE
No annoying couple having sex on
that squeaky bed upstairs.

DAVID
I thought you loved the sex noises.

CLAIRE
Seriously, like five times a day!
How is that even physically possible?!

David throws her a suggestive look, willing to try. She laughs.

CLAIRE

Too bad we've already christened most of the house... And you only get to once.

DAVID

We haven't christened the new washer and dryer...

CLAIRE

Ooo, spin cycle? That's hot. Well if you're feeling that feisty, we might as well go right here.

She presses down on the table, playfully testing its strength.

DAVID

I can't do it where we eat.

CLAIRE

So I guess the kitchen counter is out then. And the couch.

DAVID

But the floor's fair game.

CLAIRE

The floor... Oh David. How romantic.
(overdramatic sigh)
In that case, let's just go to the bedroom. Old school.

DAVID

Honestly, I'm happy wherever... I figure we can just see what happens.

CLAIRE

See what happens?

DAVID

Yeah.

And suddenly she understands what he's suggesting. There's a lot more history here.

CLAIRE

David...

DAVID

I know we're waiting. And I'll wait however long we need to. I'm just saying that... Maybe...

CLAIRE

Maybe what?

He reaches across the table and takes her hand.

DAVID

Maybe we're doing better now. Maybe
it's time.

She looks down at the table, weighing the heavy prospect.
Then meets his gaze. And after a long moment --

CLAIRE

Okay.

DAVID

Okay?

CLAIRE

Yeah...

He smiles broadly, rising from his chair.

CLAIRE

It's just that...

She pulls her hand away, taking another bite of dinner.

CLAIRE

This chicken cacciatore is really...
Pleasant to my palate.

She chews it lustfully.

CLAIRE

And if I'm gonna be feeding two of
us, you're gonna have to get used to
me eating... Very... Very... Slowly.

She cuts off another piece and takes an excruciatingly slow
bite. Torturing him.

DAVID

I hate you.

CLAIRE

That's called love.

He leans over and kisses her. She kisses back, full of
vibrance and passion. It's going to be a great night.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David is asleep in bed, Claire snuggled up next to him.

But her eyes are open. Something troubling her.

She slowly gets out of bed, careful not to wake him. Shivering in the cold, wearing only a long t-shirt. She grabs her PURSE from on top of the dresser and steps into the --

BATHROOM

Claire quietly closes the door. She reaches into her purse and pulls out a small pack of BIRTH CONTROL PILLS, halfway through the month. She pops out the next pill. Stares at it for a long moment.

Then puts the pill in her mouth, fills a cup under the faucet, and swallows.

She takes in her reflection in the mirror, a lingering pain shining through. Tears begin to fill her eyes. But she fights them back with deep shaky breaths, trying to keep them buried. And she does. Breathing steady once again.

EXT. DECK, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

The door opens and Claire steps outside onto the deck, wearing pajama pants and pulling on a sweatshirt. She leans against the wooden rail, taking in the starry night sky. So many beautiful little dots.

And yet, her sadness lingers. She stares away, trying to move past it. Then she sees something...

High above, a STAR SHINES BRIGHTER than the others as it STREAKS across the night sky.

A SHOOTING STAR.

Whatever sadness Claire was feeling vanishes as she gazes up. A smile spreads across her face.

Then ANOTHER SHOOTING STAR soars across the sky. And another. And another. It's a METEOR SHOWER.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Claire rushes to David, practically yanking him out of bed.

CLAIRE
David! David, wake up!

DAVID
(groggy)
What? What's wrong? Is it a spider?

CLAIRE
Just come on! Hurry up!

He stumbles out of bed, following her.

EXT. DECK, MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The moment David steps outside, he instantly snaps awake.

DAVID
Holy shit...

High above, HUNDREDS OF SHOOTING STARS STREAK ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY.

CLAIRE
Told you...

She leans her head against his shoulder, absorbing the beauty.

DAVID
I hadn't read anything about a meteor shower --

CLAIRE
Shh... You're killing it.

DAVID
Sorry.

They hold each other close, just taking it in.

DAVID
You know... I think we're gonna be okay here.

CLAIRE
Me too.

They smile, sharing a sweet kiss as the magical light show continues to fill the sky above.

EXT. SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGE -- DAY

Beautiful buildings in the Renaissance Revival style. Tall trees. Angular brick paths bisecting the lush, green lawns.

STUDENTS make their way across the quad, David amongst them in jeans and professorial tweed. Leather attaché case over his shoulder.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE, COLLEGE -- DAY

David sits in front of his laptop. Engineering textbooks line the shelves. Photos of him and Claire on his desk.

A knock on the open door as JOSH HANSON (late 20s) pokes his head in. He's the hip looking, low professor on the totem who could easily be mistaken for a grad student.

JOSH

I see they'll give just about anyone an office nowadays. And yours seems to be bigger than mine, you asshole.

DAVID

Didn't you get the memo? They hand them out now based on intelligence.

JOSH

Damn. That explains everything.

They both laugh as David greets him with a bro hug.

JOSH

I can't get over this look on you. Seems like just yesterday you were stumbling around after a keg stand and hooking up with some hot music major -- by the way, you know that'll get you fired here, FYI.

DAVID

You know I married that music major, FYI. So how was your summer?

JOSH

Enlightening. Thailand is incredible when you're single. So many majestic creatures.

DAVID

I don't even want to imagine what that means.

JOSH

So how's Claire adjusting to the new digs? She miss the symphony?

DAVID

I thought it was gonna be a lot harder for her to transition, but she's really enjoying running her own business. The house has been full of students all summer. Forced us to unpack a lot faster than I was expecting.

JOSH

Cool. I admit I wasn't sure how she was gonna take it.

DAVID

She needed a change. Honestly, we both did.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
I mean, you should see her now, it's
amazing. I mean, compared to two
years ago, she's just...

JOSH
What?

DAVID
She's like the girl I married again.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire sits beside a TEENAGE GIRL playing Chopin's "Prelude in E minor." The girl is hesitant and pauses to find the right chords, but Claire nods along encouragingly, then turns the page for her.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

A GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN in her 70s is now on the bench, playing Luigi Denza's "Funiculi, Funicula" rather stiffly. Claire paces behind her, wanting her to play better so badly.

CLAIRE
You know the notes Margaret. So I
want you to feel the song. It's a
happy song, a festive song. Let your
emotions guide the music.

As the woman continues to play, she relaxes, and the song becomes more elegant and beautiful.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

Claire sits on the piano bench beside ALAN (10), who stumbles through a harmonized version of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," growing visibly frustrated.

CLAIRE
Let's just take it measure by measure.

She points to a measure on the sheet music and he plays the notes. Almost. Adjusts and gets them right.

CLAIRE
There you go.
(next measure)
Pinky finger -- that's it.

Next measure. The harmony is all wrong. Alan sighs.

ALAN
Can we take a break now?

CLAIRE

You're nervous, aren't you? About the recital?

A long moment, then Alan reluctantly nods.

CLAIRE

You want to know something? I was always nervous before my concerts too. Sometimes I felt like I was going to throw up. Once time I even did on my brand new shoes.

She smirks and Alan smiles a little.

ALAN

But you always play so perfectly.

CLAIRE

No one plays perfectly. I've made lots of mistakes. This one time, I was sitting at the piano in front of a concert hall full of people for one of my final recitals in college, and you know what happened... I froze.

ALAN

You froze?

CLAIRE

I mean, I completely forgot what I was supposed to play. Not just a note or two. All of it.

Alan's jaw hangs open at the terrifying thought.

CLAIRE

And you know what I did? I started playing my own song instead. It was uncomfortable at first, and a bit silly, but eventually I found my groove. And then something amazing happened. The whole song that I was supposed to play came back to me all at once. I played it straight through and everyone loved it.

Alan smiles, transfixed.

CLAIRE

You see, that's what you do. When you make a mistake or things go wrong, you just have to keep going.

(beat)

Now, what note is that?

ALAN

G.

CLAIRE

And did you know that when you walked
in the door six weeks ago?

ALAN

No.

CLAIRE

Exactly. You've come so far, and
you're doing incredibly well. So
what do you think we should do now?

ALAN

Take it from the top?

Claire nods with a smile. Alan plays the song, pushing through
little mistakes as his confidence grows.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Alan runs around the front yard as ALAN'S MOM (30s) stands
at the door with Claire.

ALAN'S MOM

So does he need to wear anything
specific for the recital?

CLAIRE

Whatever makes him comfortable. Some
kids wear suits. Others wear capes.

ALAN'S MOM

(laughs)

I'm sure we'll find something. Might
have to come out of his older
brother's closet.

CLAIRE

Oh and Donna, he's really nervous
about performing, so if you could
give him some extra encouragement
this week, I'm sure it'd help a lot.

ALAN'S MOM

Of course.

CLAIRE

Perfect. Bye Alan!

Alan waves shyly. Claire watches as they walk towards their
car, Alan's Mom putting her arm over his shoulder sweetly.

It's enough to make Claire's smile fade.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY -- DAY

Claire opens the door and steps into what is clearly her creative sanctuary. A comfy chair, desk, easel, some of her sketches and artwork on the walls. Music books on the shelves.

But that's not what she's drawn to. There are a few remaining open moving boxes. She reaches into one, sorting through its contents. Looking for something. Then she finds it. Wrapped up in a protective layer of paper.

She unwraps it to reveal a FRAMED PHOTO of her, David, and a NEWBORN BABY. Smiling, laughing, perfect. They all look so happy. A family with their whole life ahead of them.

Claire gazes longingly at it, once again resisting the pain.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL -- DAY

Claire walks alone on a trail through the woods. It's calm and beautiful. But she doesn't seem to notice the scenery. Her thoughts wandering as she reaches a --

STREAM

It cascades down rocks, creating a small SERIES OF WATERFALLS. A beautiful and relaxing place secluded from the world.

She takes a deep, soothing breath, looking over the scene.

CLAIRE

(sotto)

We're gonna be okay.

She sits on a fallen log, takes off her backpack and pulls out a sketch pad and case full of colored pencils. Then she puts pencil to paper, drawing the scene before her.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL -- LATER

Claire heads down the path towards home, backpack slung over her shoulder.

A DISTANT SOUND catches her attention.

She listens. What was that?

Then she hears it again. Very faint. There's a melodious quality to it. Along with a twinge of fear. And pain. Almost like the whine of an animal in distress.

Claire listens as the sound seems to come and go on the wind. Then she steps off the path, heading in its direction. She makes her way through the trees, the sound growing louder with every step. Until she emerges into a --

FOREST CLEARING

Sunlight reflects off something shiny on the ground just ahead. Claire curiously approaches and sees that it's a --

SILVER METALLIC ORB

About the size of a bowling ball. It's seamless, not a single line or crease anywhere on it. Distinctly out of place amidst the rich greens and browns of the forest. Sunlight glimmers off of its silvery surface, giving it a warm magical glow that beckons.

Claire looks around, but the sound she heard is gone now. Only the wind blowing through the trees.

Her gaze returns to the Orb. She reaches down and carefully lifts it off the ground. It's lighter than she expected. She looks it over, delicately rotating it.

Then smiles, intrigued.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

The Orb now sits on the fireplace mantle near the piano. A new decoration.

Claire sits on the piano bench, playing a complex, classical piece that only a professional could handle. But there's a hesitancy in her movement, a sense of distraction.

She hits the wrong key and stops. Takes a breath and starts over. Plays several more measures eloquently. Then another mistake.

She takes her hands off the keys and sighs. Closes her eyes for a moment, focusing.

Then begins again. Slower this time, building confidence with each new note. Picking up the pace now, getting comfortable. The piece has a sense of sadness to it, but it is also rising towards something bigger, more powerful.

And slowly, we begin to see who Claire really is. A concert pianist who can command a symphony hall. Her fingers elegantly dancing over the keys. She's in her zone now.

Until a CHORD ABRUPTLY SOUNDS OUT OF TUNE. Claire stops.

She hits the same chord again, testing it. But something is strange about the way it sounds. Like there's something resonating in the air as she plays. She tries a different chord. Same effect.

CLAIRE

What in the world...

ANOTHER NOTE SUDDENLY SOUNDS OUT OF THIN AIR.

Claire startles back and gasps. Then her eyes slowly rise...

To the silver Orb sitting on the mantle. Did it just... It couldn't have.

Then it VIBRATES, and from somewhere inside it, ANOTHER NOTE rings out.

Claire stares, wide eyed. Then hesitantly plays another key.

And the Orb responds with a similar note, tuned slightly differently.

Claire hits the key again. The Orb responds, adjusting its tune as the note sounds. Closer this time.

She plays it again. And this time, the Orb is perfectly in tune. The exact same note. An ethereal, harmonious quality to it, unlike any traditional instrument. Uniquely soothing to the ear. Claire can't take her eyes off of it, dumbfounded.

She slowly plays the first few notes of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star."

And the Orb plays them back with its own special sound.

Claire laughs out loud, enthralled.

INT. FRONT ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David opens the front door and steps in, tired from his day. Claire greets him with a whirlwind of energy.

CLAIRE
You've gotta see this!

DAVID
See what? Did you finish unpacking?

CLAIRE
Better!

She grabs him by the hand and pulls him into the --

LIVING ROOM

She leads him towards the piano.

CLAIRE
Now just stand right there. Don't move.

DAVID
What is it?

CLAIRE

You'll see.

She sits on the bench, placing her hands over the keys before playing the first few notes of Beethoven's "5th Symphony."

DAVID

I've heard you play Beethoven before.

CLAIRE

Just listen.

She stops playing. David stands there, waiting. Claire just smiles, staring at him. David laughs awkwardly.

DAVID

So... Are you gonna keep playing --

The next set of notes RING OUT OF THE SILENCE. David yells and jumps, startled. Claire bursts out laughing. He only now notices the Orb sitting on the nearby mantle.

DAVID

What is that...

He picks it up, looking it over curiously.

CLAIRE

I don't know, but it's awesome. Put it down here.

David sets it next to the music rack on the piano. Claire plays the next few measures. A moment later, the Orb vibrates as it responds with its own rendition.

DAVID

That's incredible.

CLAIRE

Wait, wait, it can do swing too.

She begins playing "Sing Sing Sing" and the Orb responds, sounding along with her. David can't help but smile as Claire and the Orb play the song. You'd think they've been playing together for years.

DAVID

Where'd you get it?

CLAIRE

I found it in the woods.

DAVID

What do you mean you found it in the woods?

CLAIRE

I went for a walk out to the
waterfalls, and it was just lying
there. I thought it was pretty, so I
brought it back.

She hasn't stopped playing, the Orb keeping perfect time.

DAVID

And you have no idea what it is?

CLAIRE

You're the engineer, you tell me.

She stops playing as he takes a closer look at the Orb,
spinning it around with his hands.

DAVID

Well... It's some kind of metallic...
Orb?

CLAIRE

That's the rocket scientist I married.

DAVID

Shut it, music major.

(beat)

It looks like some super expensive
toy you'd find at a high end gadget
store. Like some funky Japanese music
box or something. Why would anyone
leave it out in the woods?

CLAIRE

I don't know, but I'm glad they did.

(beat)

You want to know what song it likes
the best? You'll never guess.

DAVID

What?

CLAIRE

Remember what was playing in the bar
when you first came up and talked to
me?

DAVID

No way...

Claire smiles as she plays the iconic intro to Guns N' Roses'
"Sweet Child O' Mine." The Orb joins in, matching her tempo.

DAVID

You've gotta be kidding me!

David laughs, blown away. Claire and the Orb play the song together, Claire brimming with joy, completely in the moment as she sings along.

CLAIRE

*She's got a smile it seems to me,
reminds me of childhood memories,
where everything was as fresh as the
bright blue sky.*

David watches, elated with how happy she is.

CLAIRE

*Now and then when I see her face,
she takes me away to that special
place, and if I'd stare too long I'd
probably break down and cry. Come
on, David!*

David joins in, quietly at first. Gradually getting more and more into it.

CLAIRE/DAVID

*Oh, oh, oh, sweet child o' mine! Oh,
oh, oh, oh sweet love of mine!*

CLAIRE

Watch, it'll go solo!

She stops playing and the Orb keeps going, continuing to sound out the song. Claire and David watch, big smiles on their faces as they sing along.

CLAIRE/DAVID

*Oh, oh, oh, sweet child o' mine! Oh,
oh, oh, oh sweet love of mine!*

They keep singing, rocking out --

But the song abruptly stops as the ORB SUDDENLY ROLLS TOWARDS THEM, STOPPING ON ITS OWN right at the edge of the piano.

David and Claire leap back and scream.

A few moments pass as they stare, catching their breath. Then they laugh nervously.

DAVID

Okay seriously. What the hell is
this thing?

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER -- NIGHT

Somewhere off the beaten path. Mostly empty. Patrons converse quietly, minding their own business.

A man in a dark jacket sits alone at the counter. We recognize his face - DR. FLETCHER (60s), the father from the beginning. But now his hair is ashen gray. Wrinkles frame his stern expression. A man who has not enjoyed life, but rather survived it. He clicks away on his LAPTOP, focused on the countless NEWS HEADLINES scrolling by in his feed.

WAITRESS

Get ya some more coffee?

Fletcher doesn't respond. Doesn't seem to hear her speak.

WAITRESS

Sir? Would you like some more coffee?

He slides his cup towards her without looking up, continuing his search. She sighs, then refills it and goes on her way.

Fletcher picks it up and slowly raises it towards his lips --
Then freezes, staring.

ON SCREEN: "UNEXPECTED METEOR SHOWER LIGHTS UP NIGHT SKY"

Fletcher's hand begins to tremble ever so slightly. He's not awed by the beautiful imagery in the article. He knows exactly what this means.

He sets down his cup, closes his computer, throws cash on the counter, and walks out the door, leaving his meal practically untouched.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David sits on the bed with his laptop, clicking through a website showing PHOTOS OF A FAMILY in the 1970s posing with a SIMILAR LOOKING ORB. Claire gets ready for bed behind him.

DAVID

So apparently, in 1974, near Jacksonville, Florida, the Betz family was out surveying their land after a forest fire and came across a silver, seamless, metallic ball... Orb... Type thing. Then a few days later, when the wife was playing her guitar, it began to respond musically.

CLAIRE

Shut up.

DAVID

Not kidding. It also says it propelled itself across the floor and caused doors to open and shut. They called it the Mystery Sphere.

CLAIRE

So what was it?

DAVID

That's the thing. No one seems to know for sure. Most people thought it was a hoax. Some thought it was a piece of a satellite or some top secret Russian technology.

(reads more)

Oh get this, one scientist, and I use that term very loosely, concluded that it had an atomic number greater than plutonium and attempting to cut it would set off an explosion on the scale of a nuclear bomb.

CLAIRE

So basically, you're saying we have a doomsday device in our living room.

(smirks)

Sure beats a security system.

DAVID

Looks like the general theory is it was just some ball bearing from a steel mill. Sounds like some fell off a truck in the area a few years earlier. This thing was about the same size and shape.

CLAIRE

A ball bearing that responds to music? Those are some really fancy balls for the seventies.

DAVID

(laughs)

I'm just reading what it says.

CLAIRE

So what happened to them?

DAVID

The balls?

CLAIRE

The Betz family.

DAVID

Oh.

(scans article)

It doesn't really say. The story
just sorta ends...

An unsettling moment.

CLAIRE

I bet the Russians got 'em.

David laughs.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

A SMARTPHONE CAMERA BEGINS RECORDING, showing David sitting
on the floor next to the Orb.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Alright, this is experiment number
one involving our shiny new test
subject. The studly man you see before
you today is David Morgan. Amazing
professor. Mediocre chef.

DAVID

Love you too, babe.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

So why don't you tell everyone what
wonders they're witnessing?

DAVID

We're waiting... To see if it moves
again.

He stares at the Orb expectantly. Nothing happens.

DAVID

Science takes time.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Maybe it just needs a push.

David pushes the Orb gently. It rolls a few feet then stops.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Or... Maybe not. Try calling to it.

DAVID

Call to it? Like a dog?

(silly voice)

Come on shiny ball! Come on! Come
on! Come to dad-da!

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Very scientific, David --

THE ORB SUDDENLY ROLLS BACK TOWARDS HIM. Claire yelps and jumps back with the camera.

DAVID
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Holy shit! Holy shit!

The Orb comes to a rest in front of him.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Do it again! Do it again!

David moves to push it again but before he touches it, the ORB ROLLS AWAY ON ITS OWN.

DAVID
What --

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Oh my God!

The Orb gradually changes direction, and ROLLS TOWARDS CLAIRE, stopping at her feet.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Oh my God... David... David...

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

SMARTPHONE POV: Claire sets the Orb down at the beginning of an OBSTACLE COURSE. Various books, pillows and other objects arranged into a maze. The Orb begins to MOVE AGAIN.

CLAIRE
Look at it! Look at it go!

She claps and cheers gleefully as the Orb NAVIGATES ITS WAY THROUGH THE OBSTACLE COURSE.

DAVID (O.S.)
No freaking way...

The Orb comes to a dead end. Then backs up, and rounds a corner, heading towards the finish.

CLAIRE
Come on, come on, almost there --
Yes!

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

SMARTPHONE POV: The Orb on the table in front of David.

DAVID
Don't try to catch it.

HE LIFTS ONE END OF THE TABLE, causing the Orb to roll down --

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Wait, you're gonna break it!

But the ORB COMES TO A STOP ON ITS OWN, teetering at the edge of the sloped table.

DAVID
Jesus...

CLAIRE (O.S.)
But... It's... How?!

The ORB SLOWLY ROLLS ITSELF BACK UP THE TABLE'S INCLINE to safety.

CLAIRE
Are you kidding me?!

DAVID
Unbelievable. It's like it has survival instincts.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

Claire and David sit on the couch with glasses of wine. Claire stares at the Orb on the table in front of them while David searches the web on his laptop.

CLAIRE
Well professor, I've come to the conclusion that that is not a ball bearing.

DAVID
The data leads me to concur.

David types in different phrases and searches.

DAVID
Seriously, there's gotta be someone out there who knows what this thing is. Some kind of fancy toy manufacturer or advanced robotics company or... Something.

CLAIRE

But that's kinda cool, right? Not knowing.

DAVID

It's driving me insane.

It amuses Claire to see him frustrated. She finishes her wine and refills their glasses.

CLAIRE

Did I ever tell you how my dad used to do magic tricks for me when I was little?

DAVID

No...

CLAIRE

He'd put on this velvet cape and hat out of my grandma's old cedar chest. And he'd have me draw a card out of a deck. Then he'd shuffle them all around... And he'd pull out my card every single time. Without fail. He'd even do it with his eyes closed. And I believed it. Literally, the first ten years of my life, I actually thought my dad was magical, like Merlin. And I'd passionately argue with anyone who said otherwise.

(beat)

Then one day, I found his how-to book in a drawer. And I learned that there wasn't really magic. There was just misdirection. It was all a trick. A lie. And just like that, the game was over.

She eyes the Orb, sipping her wine.

CLAIRE

I know that there is some logical explanation for this. But I just... Kinda wish there wasn't.

DAVID

Well, at the very least, it's pretty much the coolest toy I've ever seen. Our kids are gonna love it.

Claire hesitates. Then puts on a smile.

CLAIRE

Yeah.

David kisses her softly and she reciprocates. They set down their glasses, lips never parting when --

The Orb begins to VIBRATE. Softly at first, but slowly growing in volume and intensity.

CLAIRE

David.

They look over at the Orb vibrating, the table beneath it beginning to rattle.

DAVID

What's it doing?

SLIGHT INDENTATIONS appear across the Orb's smooth surface, spreading out in geometrically straight lines. A LOW RUMBLE builds from inside it as --

The ORB BEGINS TO OPEN UP, BREAKING APART INTO SMALLER AND SMALLER CUBES THAT DECONSTRUCT ONTO THE TABLETOP, A BLUE LIGHT GLOWING FROM WITHIN ITS CORE.

CLAIRE

David...

DAVID

My God...

The BLUE LIGHT FLASHES OUTWARD IN A SPHERICAL EXPLOSION. Claire and David scream and flinch back. They look up...

And what they see is beyond their wildest dreams.

THEY ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE COSMOS. GORGEOUS STARS AND BRILLIANT NEBULAE SOARING PAST THEM AT INCREDIBLE SPEED, GIVING THE SENSATION THAT THEY'RE TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE.

All of it is being projected from the Orb, filling the entire room, like an immersive VR film that feels all too real.

Claire and David stand up, mesmerized, taking in the extraordinary sight. Holding hands as the stars fly past.

It's absolutely breathtaking.

Then ALL OF THE IMAGERY IS PULLED BACK INSIDE THE ORB. Its blue glow fades as it CLOSES BACK UP.

And Claire and David are left standing in the living room.

For several long moments, they don't move, no words for what they just experienced.

DAVID

I... I think I...

He takes a moment, trying to compose himself.

DAVID

I know what it is. It's... It's like Voyager.

CLAIRE

Voyager?

DAVID

It's a probe. Like, a deep space probe. And I think it just showed us the journey it took to get here...

CLAIRE

But who sent it?

They exchange a look. Then stare at the silver ball sitting on the table before them, once again looking so benign.

INT. KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Claire walks in, still in a daze, the enormity of the situation setting in. While David is giddy with excitement.

DAVID

This is huge, Claire. I mean, it's beyond huge!

CLAIRE

I know, I know --

DAVID

NASA, CNN, BBC, the White House, I don't even know where to start!

CLAIRE

Just... Just slow down, okay?

DAVID

The technology inside it could be revolutionary. It'll change everything we think we know.

CLAIRE

I get it!

DAVID

Then why aren't you freaking out?

CLAIRE

I am freaking out! It's just...

A long moment passes as she considers.

DAVID

What?

CLAIRE

What would happen if... If we didn't tell anyone.

DAVID

Why wouldn't we tell anyone?

CLAIRE

If this really is... What we think it is... We'll have news vans camped out on our lawn for months. Our faces will be all over every TV, every computer screen, every phone in the world. For years. Forever. Nothing... Nothing will ever be the same.

DAVID

I know!

He's excited by that fact.

CLAIRE

I can't handle that. Not right now.

DAVID

Claire, we can handle it. I know we can.

CLAIRE

They'll focus on everything that's wrong with us. They'll talk about the baby.

DAVID

This isn't about us --

CLAIRE

It's all about us! It's ours. Yours and mine. Standing out there, floating in the stars, I felt like... Everything really could be okay again.
(beat)

This isn't just some probe. It's a gift. It's our gift. We can't just give it away.

DAVID

So what are you saying we should do?

CLAIRE

Would it be so bad if we just enjoyed it ourselves for a little while?

DAVID
But for how long?

CLAIRE
I don't know. Just... A little while.
Until... We're sure we're ready.

David can see how badly she wants this. And though he wants to say more, he reluctantly nods agreement.

DAVID
Okay. If that'll make you happy.

CLAIRE
Thank you.

She hugs him, and he holds her close. But there is tension in his expression. Conflict.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

The lights are out. All is quiet. Moonlight shines in the window, illuminating the Orb, still sitting on the piano.

A low HUMMING SOUND begins to build. We can barely hear it, but it's there. Coming from the Orb.

It slowly rolls itself right off the piano. It lands gently on the carpet and continues to roll, navigating its way through the dark house. Round a corner and down the hallway. Through an open door into --

CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM

It moves quietly towards the bed. Claire and David sleep soundly, Claire's arm dangling off the side. Their steady breathing the only sound. The Orb slows to a stop...

Right beneath Claire's hanging hand. Her fingers lightly touching it, bending around its spherical curve.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- MORNING

Claire walks in, still wearing her night shirt. As she passes the piano, she stops.

CLAIRE
David... Where is it?

DAVID (O.S.)
What?

He walks in in athletic shorts, yawning.

CLAIRE
Did you move it?

DAVID
It was on the piano last night.

CLAIRE
Then where'd it go?

DAVID
You don't think it could have...

But they both do at the same moment and begin looking. Under
end tables. Behind furniture. In different rooms.

DAVID (O.S.)
You find it?

CLAIRE
No.

DAVID (O.S.)
Shit.

CLAIRE'S STUDY

Claire walks past the doorway and sees the Orb sitting in
the center of the floor.

CLAIRE
Here it is!

She picks it up and spins it in her hands with a smile. David
comes down the hall and enters.

DAVID
Where was it?

CLAIRE
Right in the middle of the floor.
Must have rolled in here. Little guy
has a mind of his own.

She sets it down on her desk.

CLAIRE
Probably better in here anyway. So
none of my students see it.

David nods warily as she positions it.

CLAIRE
You want coffee?

DAVID
Sure.

But his gaze lingers on the Orb.

INT. JOSH'S OFFICE, COLLEGE -- DAY

There may be textbooks lining the shelves, but they are surrounded by nerdy ACTION FIGURES and LEGOS. David walks in.

DAVID

Hey man, I need an opinion.

JOSH

Doesn't matter how hot she is, it's not worth it.

DAVID

What would you do if you found something that no one had ever seen before? Would you keep it to yourself? Or would you show it to the world?

JOSH

Well that depends, I guess... Are we talking about a cool new indie band, or an STD?

DAVID

It's... This device. This machine that does all this extraordinary stuff.

JOSH

Like what? You an inventor all of a sudden?

DAVID

I didn't build it. Claire found it in the woods.

JOSH

In the woods?

DAVID

And I think it's something everyone will wanna see.

JOSH

Alright, all this cryptic talk is confusing the shit out of me. You walked into my office, so just spit it out.

DAVID

She doesn't want to tell anyone.

JOSH

So why are you telling me?

DAVID
Because this thing, it's... It's
extraordinary.

JOSH
You said that already.

DAVID
Do you keep in touch with anyone from
when you interned at JPL?

JOSH
Yeah, I still know a couple of them.
What's that got to do with this?

DAVID
Cause I think they're gonna want to
see it.

JOSH
Seriously, what are we even talking
about?

David sighs, torn.

JOSH
Listen man, if this is so important
to you, you know I won't tell Claire.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

The front door opens and David steps in with Josh.

DAVID
Claire's out running some errands,
so we have to be quick. Just wait
right here.

David steps down the hall and comes back a moment later with
the Orb in hand. Josh eyes it.

JOSH
That's your 'machine?' It looks like
a lawn ornament.

DAVID
I think it landed during that meteor
shower the other night. Only it's
definitely not a meteor. Watch this.

David sets the Orb on the floor and gives it a push. It rolls
a few feet before slowing naturally to a stop.

Then it just sits there.

JOSH
I assume something was supposed to happen?

DAVID
Give it a second.

They wait... Still nothing.

DAVID
Wait. It'll move on its own.

Josh eyes him skeptically.

DAVID
Just... Just wait.

But it doesn't move.

David grabs the Orb and sets it on the piano. Plays a few notes. Nothing. Plays a few more. Still nothing.

JOSH
Dude. You're starting to freak me out.

DAVID
I don't know what's wrong. It should be responding. Hold on, this'll work for sure.

He sets the Orb on the table and lifts up one end like before. The Orb rolls down and -- THUNK! -- Lands hard on the floor, just like gravity intended.

DAVID
Come on, you piece of junk!

JOSH
What was it supposed to do?

David sighs heavily. Then has a thought.

DAVID
Here, just watch this.

He pulls out his smartphone and loads one of the videos. Shuttles ahead. ON SCREEN: David on the floor with the Orb.

DAVID
Here we go...

DAVID (FROM PHONE)
Come on shiny ball! Come on! Come on! Come to dad-da!

CLAIRE (FROM PHONE)
Very scientific, Dav --

But just before the Orb moves, the IMAGE BECOMES GARBLED AND
THE VIDEO ENDS.

DAVID
That's not...

David tries to bring up the next video. But it ends in a
garbled mess before it even begins. Same with the next video,
and the next. NONE OF THEM WORK.

DAVID
What the hell!

JOSH
What were they supposed to show me?

Now David is embarrassed.

DAVID
I... Umm... I don't know how to say
this with a straight face.

JOSH
Just say it.

DAVID
I think it came down in the meteor
shower and... I think it's an
extraterrestrial probe.

Josh stares at him. What. The. Fuck.

DAVID
I know it sounds crazy --

JOSH
David, it's a silver bowling ball.

DAVID
It's not. You can ask Claire.

JOSH
I thought we couldn't tell Claire.
Is everything okay with you two?

DAVID
What? Yeah, we're fine. Listen, why
don't we just talk tomorrow so I can
try to sort this out.

JOSH
Alright.
(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)
Well if the magic alien ball starts
shooting laser blasters at you, call
me.

David forces an awkward laugh.

JOSH
You're really okay?

DAVID
I'm fine. Must just be stressed from
starting school and all. I'll see
you tomorrow.

JOSH
Alright man.

Josh leaves, trying to play down his concern. David stands,
frustrated and confused.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

David sets the Orb on Claire's desk.

DAVID
Nice time to get performance anxiety,
pal.

No sign of life. He sighs and walks away.

But as he comes to the doorway, he stops. His expression
hardens as the true ramifications begin to sink in. Is this
thing more intelligent than he was giving it credit for? He
turns to glance back at it --

WHACK! THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT IN HIS FACE, HITTING HIM HARD.

David yells out in pain, holding his nose. He pulls his hand
away, seeing BLOOD. More of it coming from his nose.

He throws opens the door... But the Orb is still just sitting
there. It hasn't moved. Then David notices the CURTAINS
FLUTTERING IN THE BREEZE.

Maybe the wind blew the door shut?

He lingers for a moment, uncertain, before heading towards
the bathroom.

INT. DINING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

David sits at the table, grading assignments, trying to focus.
He glances up, seeing Claire backpedaling away from the Orb,
playfully calling as it rolls after her.

CLAIRE
Come on, little ball. Come on.

David watches with a growing sense of unease.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Claire is asleep. But David lays awake.

He gently throws the covers off and gets out of bed.

INT. GARAGE, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

The workbench light snaps on. David sets the Orb down underneath it. Then starts rummaging through his tools.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

David closely inspects the Orb through a MAGNIFYING GLASS as he runs an X-ACTO KNIFE over the surface. But he can't find the finest seam.

He GENTLY TAPS the surface of the Orb with a HAMMER, listening closely -- a deep thunk, suggesting a solid interior. He taps in different places, yielding the exact same sound.

David ignites a BLOW TORCH. He holds the blue flame to the surface of the Orb. Then he pulls it away, seeing no visible effect. He tentatively tests the surface temperature, then places his fingers firmly on the surface -- it's not hot.

DAVID
Crazy...

He touches the Orb to spin it around --

ZAP! He gasps and pulls his hand away, more in surprise than pain. IT SHOCKED HIM.

He sits there for a moment, staring at the Orb.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David sets the Orb back in its place.

He moves away but hesitates, eyeing the open door. He glances back at the Orb, sitting silently. Then steps out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST -- DAY

The sun's light cuts through the branches, illuminating a TREE that has been SPLINTERED IN HALF by some kind of impact. WOOD SINGED BLACK.

Fletcher stands nearby, staring up at it. He glances at several other DAMAGED TREES, following the trajectory of whatever smashed through them.

Until he sees an IMPACT CRATER in the ground.

Fletcher bends down for a closer look, his hands tracing over the spherical indentation at its center.

He knows what landed here.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire sits at the piano next to an OLDER WOMAN (60s) as she delicately plays a lullaby.

CLAIRE

Your granddaughter's gonna love this.

The Older Woman smiles and continues to play.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

Claire waves out the open front door. Then closes it and returns to the piano bench. She considers the keys for a long moment.

Then THE ORB STARTS PLAYING A CLASSICAL PIECE FROM THE OTHER ROOM. She smiles warmly at the sound. The Orb pauses...

And Claire takes her cue, continuing the song with fingers flowing over the keys. Then she pauses and the Orb continues. A few measures later, Claire picks up the song again. She pauses --

But the Orb misses its cue. Claire plays the notes again and listens. But there's no response.

Then she hears a SHRILL WHINE. Like the cry of distress she heard out in the woods but far louder.

Claire gets up and rushes into the --

STUDY

THE ORB VIBRATES INTENSELY on her desk, moving around as it shakes. Claire cringes at the sound.

CLAIRE

Jesus! What's wrong?!

She picks it up --

And instantly the Orb quiets, soothed. Claire eyes it as it vibrates subtly in her arms.

CLAIRE
What was that about?

BWONG! Claire jumps at the sound of the old CRT MONITOR on her desk SPONTANEOUSLY TURNING ON. She stares in confusion as --

UNRECOGNIZABLE SHAPES AND SYMBOLS RAPIDLY SCROLL ACROSS THE SCREEN IN ALL DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. Nothing human about it.

CLAIRE
Oh my God...

Several symbols align together, forming a single line of characters -- an unrecognizable sentence. The symbols shift and transform, their shapes quickly evolving into a human language... And finally into ENGLISH:

"DON'T LET HIM TAKE ME."

Claire stares at the haunting words. The reality of the situation sinking in. This thing can communicate.

When she finally speaks, her voice is shaky.

CLAIRE
Don't... Don't let who take you?

The CREAK OF THE WOOD STEPS leading to the front door. Claire rushes to the window, looking out to see --

Dr. Fletcher walking up to the house.

Claire looks back to the message on the computer, realizing.

A LOUD KNOCK on the front door. Claire turns, unsure what to do. The Orb vibrates again, as if its fear is growing.

More knocks.

FRONT DOOR

Claire opens the door to reveal Fletcher standing outside. In spite of his friendly tone, Claire is very uneasy.

FLETCHER
Hello ma'am, my name is Dr. Philip
LaFond from the University of
Washington Astronomy Department. I'm
here looking into the meteor shower
from a few nights ago. Did you happen
to see it?

CLAIRE
Yeah. It was hard to miss.

FLETCHER

Quite beautiful, wasn't it? I was wondering if you happened to see any of those meteors crash nearby?

Claire hesitates.

CLAIRE

No. I don't think so.

FLETCHER

You see, we got a couple calls from local residents who saw one come down in the area. So I've been out there hiking around in the woods, and I came across an impact crater. But the meteor seems to be gone. I'm guessing someone must have picked it up.

CLAIRE

Yeah... We haven't found anything.

FLETCHER

It's also possible that it wasn't actually a meteor. Could be a piece of a satellite, for instance. Something shiny and metallic.

CLAIRE

Sorry. I wish I could help you.

FLETCHER

I don't want to give you the wrong idea, miss. I wouldn't keep it if you did find something. Just take it to the lab and run a few quick tests. Then I promise I'd bring it right back. You have my word.

CLAIRE

I told you. We haven't seen anything like that.

FLETCHER

Okay... Well thanks for your time. Plenty more doors for me to knock on. You stay safe now.

He walks off. Claire watches him go, unsettled.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire steps back in and closes the door behind her. As she turns, she sees a new message written on the screen:

"THANK YOU, CLAIRE."

Claire stares. Somewhere between crept out and blown away.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

David opens the front door. Sets down his bag.

DAVID

Hey, I'm home. Claire?

He hears her voice, but can't make out her words. He follows the sound to the closed study door, listening curiously.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

So how long did it take you to get
here? / That's it?

Confused, David pushes the door open --

DAVID

Claire?

He steps into --

CLAIRE'S STUDY

Where Claire sits at her desk. The Orb in front of her.

DAVID

Who're you talking to?

CLAIRE

David, it can hear us! It can talk!

DAVID

What can talk?

CLAIRE

The Orb, silly! Well, I mean, it
doesn't talk, exactly. But it can
write. Look!

She points to the computer. But THE SCREEN IS BLACK.

DAVID

Where...

CLAIRE

Here, just watch this!
(to Orb)
What's his name?

The monitor remains blank.

CLAIRE

Come on, I know you know his name.
(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(waits, nothing)
Okay... Then what's my name?

Still nothing.

CLAIRE
I... I don't know. Maybe you scared
it when you came in.

He looks behind the desk. Then pulls out the HANGING POWER
CABLE. THE MONITOR WAS NEVER PLUGGED IN.

DAVID
Or you're screwing with me.

CLAIRE
Why would I make this up? It's been
writing up a storm.
(off his look)
After all it's done, is this really
that hard to believe?

DAVID
I suppose not.

CLAIRE
Listen, I came in here and it had
written, "Don't let him take me," on
the screen. Then a moment later,
there's a knock at the door and it's
some college professor asking if
we'd found a crashed meteor --

DAVID
Whoa, whoa, whoa... Someone was here
looking for it?

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

David's laptop is open, scrolling through the University of
Washington's website, cell phone to his ear. Claire pacing.

RECEPTIONIST (FROM PHONE)
Astronomy department.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Hi, can you connect me with Dr.
LaFond.

RECEPTIONIST (FROM PHONE)
I'm sorry, who?

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Dr. Philip LaFond.

RECEPTIONIST (FROM PHONE)
We don't have a Dr. LaFond here.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Oh. I'm sorry, my mistake. Thank
you.

He hangs up.

CLAIRE
I swear that's the name he gave me.

David googles the name. Nothing to see but a wiki on some
old pro wrestler.

DAVID
I believe you... I just don't think
it was his real one.

CLAIRE
Why would he give me a fake name?

INT. KITCHEN, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

Claire and David cook dinner, tension in their demeanors.
Claire chopping vegetables, David managing the stove top.

DAVID
He could work for anyone. The
government, a corporation, some
billionaire, who knows. And if one
guy knows about it, there's bound to
be more.

CLAIRE
He didn't know anything. Some people
saw a meteor come down in the forest.
He found an impact crater. That's it.

DAVID
So that's where you found it? In an
impact crater? That's a pretty big
detail to leave out.

CLAIRE
I found it in a bunch of tall grass.
There wasn't anything... Impact crater
about it. It was just pretty. Come
on, I thought you'd be excited that
it can talk.

DAVID
I am excited. All I'm saying is he
could know something we don't. Maybe
you shouldn't have lied to him.

CLAIRE
You weren't here. It was scared.

DAVID
How can a machine be scared?

CLAIRE
It sounded like it was screaming. And then afterwards, it told me it needed our help. It asked me to protect it.

DAVID
You're talking about it as if it has feelings.

CLAIRE
I think it does. It's all alone here. And there's a world out there that will rip it apart to try and figure out what every last gadget and gizmo inside of it does. So yes, I think it's terrified.

She sees his look.

CLAIRE
You really don't believe me.

DAVID
Honestly, I don't know what to believe.

Claire stares a moment longer. Then turns back to chopping.

DAVID
Listen, if this thing really feels fear, what else can it feel? Have you thought about that?

She doesn't respond. David turns and continues to stir.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire sits alone at the piano, fingers running over the keys, thinking. She picks up her cell and dials.

CLAIRE (INTO PHONE)
Helen, it's Claire. Listen, I'm not feeling so well today and wouldn't want to give either of you a bug. Could we reschedule Aubrey's lesson?

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire steps in, closing the door. Just her and the Orb now.

CLAIRE
Hey... Are you there?

The monitor turns on. Text forms on the screen.

"HELLO, CLAIRE."

CLAIRE
Why wouldn't you talk to David? You
made me look like a crazy person.

"BECAUSE HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND."

CLAIRE
Of course he understands. He thinks
you're amazing. We both do.

"HE WOULD GIVE ME AWAY."

CLAIRE
Well don't worry. He won't do anything
without asking me first.

"ARE YOU CERTAIN?"

Claire hesitates.

CLAIRE
Of course.

But she's not. An uncomfortable moment passes as the screen
stays dark.

CLAIRE
So what's your world like? I hope
you guys didn't screw it all up like
we're doing.

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT?"

CLAIRE
How?

"GIVE ME YOUR HAND."

CLAIRE
Seriously?

"IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IT."

Claire stares at the text on the screen, reservations shining
through.

"DO NOT BE AFRAID."

Claire takes a deep breath.

CLAIRE

Okay...

She slowly sticks her hand out... And places it on the Orb.

The moment she does, the LIGHTS FLICKER IN THE ROOM, before DIMMING DOWN AROUND HER. Only Claire isn't paying attention to the lights.

Her head slowly turns, eyes widening with wonder, LOOKING ALL AROUND HER AS IF SHE'S SEEING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN EXISTENCE. But it's something that only she can see.

She pulls her hand off, and the lights return to normal. She catches her breath, blown away by the experience.

CLAIRE

It's... It's so beautiful. Why would you ever leave?

"I WAS SENT HERE."

CLAIRE

To do what?

"HELP PEOPLE."

Claire stares at the words. Then they transform --

"ARE YOU HAPPY, CLAIRE?"

CLAIRE

I... Yeah. Of course I'm happy. I'm very happy.

"THEN WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS SAD?"

CLAIRE

I... I don't...

"WHO IS THE OTHER WITH YOU AND DAVID?"

CLAIRE

The other?

Then she suddenly realizes, turning to the shelf where she left the PHOTO of her, David and their baby.

CLAIRE

That's Ethan. That's my son.

"TELL ME ABOUT HIM."

CLAIRE

He... He passed away. A little over two years ago.

She waits for another response to form. But it doesn't.

The statement lingers. "TELL ME ABOUT HIM."

CLAIRE

He...

Her eyes fall, weighing if she can.

CLAIRE

He was... Joy. The brightest light
in my life. He was just starting to
smile, with his little pudgy cheeks...
And when he looked up into my eyes,
everything else just seemed to
vanish...

(beat)

He would hold on so tight as he was
falling asleep, his whole little
hand wrapped around one of my fingers.
I'd sit there with him. And when his
hand relaxed, I'd leave him there,
looking so beautiful. And every day,
I'd wake up exhausted, but so excited
because I'd get to see him again.

Tears well up.

CLAIRE

Until one morning, he... He wasn't
breathing. They tried, but... He was
eight weeks and two days old. Everyone
kept saying that it wasn't my fault.
That they don't know why it happens.
But I never should have left him
alone... I shouldn't have left him
alone...

The tears roll down her cheeks. She doesn't bother wiping
them. The pain will never go away.

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOLD HIM AGAIN?"

CLAIRE

Only every second of every day.

A moment passes.

Then the ORB BEGINS TO VIBRATE. Claire watches as --

The ORB OPENS UP AGAIN, breaking into smaller and smaller
cubes like before, BLUE LIGHT shining from within --

Only this time it doesn't show the cosmos. The blue light
begins to FORM A FIGURE. A tiny human figure.

CLAIRE

No...

She can't believe her eyes. It can't be. It's not possible. But right in front of her she sees --

A HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE OF HER SON. Alive and well. A smiling, wiggling baby. Exactly like the picture. The sound of his cooing fills the room.

Tears stream down Claire's face as she gazes in wonder at her baby boy. She reaches out to touch him --

But the light fades and the image disappears, leaving Claire with her arm still outstretched. She looks to the Orb. Its words flow across the screen.

"I CAN BRING HIM BACK AGAIN."

Claire's breath catches as she stares at the words through teary eyes.

"IF YOU TRUST ME."

CLAIRE

How...

"WITH YOUR MEMORIES. IF YOU LET ME SEE THEM."

But Claire has uncertainty now. This is all too fast. Too much. Then, as if sensing her feelings, the Orb writes --

"HE WILL NOT BELIEVE YOU, CLAIRE."

"HE WILL TAKE ME AWAY FROM YOU."

Claire stares at the ominous words. Knowing they're true.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

Claire and David stand, the distance between them growing.

CLAIRE

It told me that where it comes from,
there's no death. They live for
however long they want. Until they
choose to move on.

DAVID

And for some reason when I go in
there, it doesn't say a thing.

CLAIRE

It knows you want to give it away.

DAVID

Of course I do. This might be the most incredible discovery in human history and we're keeping it locked up in our house so you can play piano with it and have afternoon chats. It's insane.

CLAIRE

This is our son we're talking about.

DAVID

Listen, I believe that it talks to you. I can even believe that it projected an image of him. But I do not believe for one second that it can bring Ethan back. I don't think there's anything in the universe that can do that. He's gone, Claire.

CLAIRE

But what if he wasn't? What if this really is possible?

DAVID

What have we been working on for two years? Letting go and moving on. I thought we'd done that.

CLAIRE

I don't want to move on. I want my son back.

A tense moment as her honest words hang.

DAVID

Don't you see what's happening here? We were past this. Now that thing's digging it back up again. It's taking you in and shutting me out.

CLAIRE

Why would it do that?

DAVID

I don't know but I don't trust it. We don't know why it's here. We don't know what it wants. And I'm to the point that I don't care about scientific discoveries or getting famous or any of that shit. I just want that thing gone.

CLAIRE

That "thing" is the only hope we have of seeing Ethan again.

DAVID

Okay, let's say for the sake of argument that it really could bring him back. How do you know he'll actually be our son? Maybe he'll look like him, but he might be something else entirely.

CLAIRE

He won't be buried in the ground. We'll finally have a chance to be a real family.

Pain in David's eyes.

DAVID

I thought we were a real family.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Claire and David lie on opposite sides of the bed, a noticeable gap between them. But David is wide awake, staring across the bed at her. She's sound asleep.

He slowly gets up and quietly goes to the door. A quick glance back to make sure Claire is still asleep, then he slips out.

CLAIRE'S STUDY

David steps in. The Orb sits on the desk in the moonlight. So benign... Yet so ominous.

David approaches apprehensively. Then cautiously reaches out and lifts it, glaring as he holds it in his hands.

THE ORB BEGINS TO HUM ever so subtly...

HALLWAY

David moves quickly, carrying the Orb through the dim hallway. The hum coming from deep within growing steadily louder. Even more intense as he steps out the front door --

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

David doesn't slow, the Orb's warning growing in intensity as he heads towards the car. Then --

A SICKENING SIZZLING SOUND. David YELLS OUT IN PAIN and drops the Orb, SMOKE RISING FROM IT.

He gasps for breath, looking at his BURNED HANDS, trying not to scream.

INT. KITCHEN, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David cringes as he runs cold water over his hands. As the pain gradually diminishes, his face becomes awash with something else.

Hatred.

GARAGE

David turns on the light and quickly looks around the shelves, rummaging through his TOOLS.

Until he sees what he's after.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

The garage door opens and David steps back out, now holding a SLEDGEHAMMER. He lifts the sledgehammer high above the Orb and swings it down with full force --

But the SLEDGEHAMMER REPELS TO THE SIDE, like the Orb is EXTREMELY MAGNETIZED, causing the sledgehammer to hit the ground. David swings again, with the same result.

Incensed, David focuses, bringing the sledgehammer down with all of his strength, but the WOOD HANDLE SPLINTERS, stunning his hands, causing him to gasp in pain.

David stares at the Orb in disbelief.

Then has a new idea, moving to the car. He unlocks it and opens the back. Pulls out a pair of LEATHER GLOVES, and slips them on. Opens the passenger door.

He grabs the Orb off the ground. Again, we hear SIZZLING, SMOKE RISING from where the Orb and gloves meet. David moves quickly to the car, struggling to withstand it, and drops the Orb onto the floor. Comes around the driver's side --

INT. DAVID'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

David gets in, starts up the car and hits the gas, backing up to turn around --

But the ENGINE SUDDENLY DIES AND THE CAR LURCHES TO A STOP.

DAVID

You've gotta be kidding me!

David turns the key, but the engine just chugs.

DAVID

Come on!

The DASHBOARD LIGHTS FLICKER. As he turns the key again, all he hears is CLICK, CLICK, CLICKS FROM THE STARTER.

David slowly turns to the Orb, sitting silently on the floor, understanding.

DAVID
Son of a bitch --

SUDDENLY THE RADIO BLASTS STATIC AT FULL VOLUME. David yells and covers his ears. Reaches for the door handle --

BUT ALL OF THE DOORS LOCK SHUT. David yanks the handle but it won't release the latch. He desperately tries to unlock the door, but the moment he does, it instantly locks again.

He covers his ears, the sound overwhelmingly loud. Unbearable.

DAVID
STOP! PLEASE STOP!

Still at full volume, the RADIO BEGINS RAPIDLY CHANGING STATIONS, STRINGING TOGETHER INDIVIDUAL WORDS from different hosts, songs, and commercials, MASHING THEM INTO SENTENCES.

RADIO (V.O.)
DO - NOT - TRY - TO - HURT - ME -
DAVID. YOU - CANNOT - TAKE - ME -
AWAY. THIS - IS - MY - HOME. THIS -
IS - MY - HOME. THIS - IS - MY - HOME.

THE LAST PHRASE REPEATS over and over again, faster and faster. David covers his ears, until he yells out --

DAVID
OKAY! OKAY!

And the radio goes silent. The locks pop up. All is calm.

David catches his breath, in a state of shock.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David returns the Orb to its place on the desk. It sits there, unmoving. He glares, knowing it's far beyond him.

CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM

David dashes in, turning on the light.

DAVID
Claire, wake up. Wake up sweetie, we
have to go.

CLAIRE
(half asleep)
What?

DAVID
We have to go right now!

CLAIRE
What are you talking about?

He pulls her out of bed, putting clothes in her hands for her to pull on.

DAVID
Just trust me, come on.

He guides her out the door.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY -- SIMULTANEOUS

The Orb sits on the desk.

And then it begins to VIBRATE once again with an ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TONE.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

David leads Claire away from their house down the road.

CLAIRE
David, what's happening?

DAVID
I'll explain everything when we get away from here. It's gonna be fine, I promise.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY -- SIMULTANEOUS

The intensity of the Orb's VIBRATIONS increase.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- SIMULTANEOUS

And suddenly CLAIRE SNAPS!

CLAIRE
NO! LET GO OF ME!

She shoves David, clawing at his face like a crazed animal! He struggles to hold her back.

CLAIRE
LET GO OF ME! LET GO OF ME, YOU BASTARD! LET GO!

She screams bloody murder as SHE SWINGS FEROCIOUSLY AT HIM, HITTING HIM HARD. Then BREAKS FREE and RUNS back to the house.

Leaving David alone in the darkness. At a loss.

INT. HALLWAY, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David hesitantly comes down the hall. He opens the door and looks into their room.

CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM

Claire sleeps soundly in bed. Then she stirs, seeing him standing in the doorway.

CLAIRE

(groggy)

David... What are you doing up? Come back to bed.

And David realizes, she has no memory of what just happened.

CLAIRE

David?

He hesitantly lays down next to her. She snuggles up next to him, laying her head on his chest, as his dread grows.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE, COLLEGE -- DAY

David sits at his computer. He didn't sleep last night and didn't bother shaving this morning.

A KNOCK draws his attention. Josh stands in the doorway.

JOSH

You wanna grab lunch, man?

He recognizes how bad David looks.

JOSH

Or if you'd rather nurse your hangover, totally get it.

DAVID

Hey Josh? I need to ask you a big favor.

Josh's jovial demeanor fades as he hears the desperation in David's voice.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Claire stands in the spotlight, a grand piano on stage behind her. She looks out over her wide variety of STUDENTS, some of whom we recognize, along with their FAMILIES.

CLAIRE

I'm so glad that you could be here tonight. Now some of our performers have been playing for years, while others just began a few weeks ago. But all of them have been making incredible progress that they want to share with you.

(smirks)

Or in some cases, I'm making them share with you.

Laughs from the parents.

CLAIRE

Because music is about more than just notes and tempos. It's about family. It creates memories and takes us back to times of happiness, and sadness. And ultimately, it brings us closer together. It means the world that you all are here, standing by your loved ones. So thank you. And without further ado...

Claire sits down in the front row as the first STUDENT walks onto the stage, sits down at the piano and begins to play.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

An old SUV slows to a stop outside.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David watches from a window as Josh approaches the door. He opens it before Josh knocks.

JOSH

I just want to go on the record again as saying that this is ridiculous.

DAVID

Duly noted.

Josh follows him inside.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Alan sits down at the piano, very tense. He puts his fingers on the keys and glances at Claire. She returns a confident smile and nod.

With a deep breath, he begins to play his song, a harmonized version of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." As he successfully plays measure after measure, a smile gradually forms, his confidence growing.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Josh step in. The Orb sits on the desk where it always does.

DAVID

Go on. You have to be the one to carry it.

JOSH

Why?

DAVID

Because it won't do anything to you.
It doesn't want you to know what it's capable of.

Josh rolls his eyes and picks up the Orb. Just as David predicted, it doesn't respond in any way.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Claire watches Alan play, bobbing her head slightly as if willing him through each new note.

Then TEARS begin to form in her eyes. She wipes them away, but they keep coming.

PARENT

(whisper)

You okay?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I'm... I'm fine...

But she's not. She looks away from the stage, as if sensing something is wrong.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

Josh leads the way towards his truck with the Orb in hand. David follows, on edge.

JOSH

Dear NASA, enclosed please find an alien orb. Do as you will.

DAVID

I don't really care what you tell them as long as it's gone.

JOSH

Relax man. I'm sure they get stuff like this all the time. They can put it in their warehouse next to the Ark of the Covenant.

He opens his SUV's door and sets the Orb inside. Heads to the driver's side but David stops him.

DAVID

Listen. If it does do anything...
Just get away from it. Don't talk to
it. Don't interact. Just get away.

JOSH

David, the moment the paperweight
starts talking, I promise you, I
will run.

He climbs into his SUV, starts it up and drives off. David watches as his taillights disappear in the distance. A sense of relief coming over him. It's gone.

EXT. ROAD / INT. CLAIRE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Claire drives, expression stern, intent on getting home.

She passes by Josh's truck going the opposite direction, but doesn't recognize it.

INT. JOSH'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Josh drives towards town, singing along with the music on the radio. Eyes on the road ahead.

The DASHBOARD LIGHTS FLICKER and the music GARBLES WITH STATIC. Josh rolls his eyes.

JOSH

Oh don't give me that, you piece of
shit.

He pounds his fist on the dashboard, like you do in old vehicles. The lights come back and the radio plays clearly. He continues to sing along with the song.

All the while, the Orb sits on the passenger side floor.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

Claire walks in. David greets her from the couch.

DAVID

Hey. How was the show?

CLAIRE

Good. Really good.

But her thoughts are elsewhere. She walks past him to the --

STUDY

Claire goes straight to her desk where the Orb sat. She doesn't even have to look around to know.

CLAIRE

David...

He stands in the doorway. She turns, tears in her eyes.

CLAIRE

David, please...

DAVID

I had to do it.

CLAIRE

No... Oh God...

She staggers, tears flowing. David goes to her.

CLAIRE

It would have brought him back...

DAVID

Claire --

He tries to put his arms around her, but she shoves him away.

CLAIRE

No... NO!

And behind her tears, her animosity grows.

CLAIRE

It was a miracle. A miracle that
came to us. And you gave it away...
You've let Ethan die all over again.

A dagger to the heart. She turns away, crying as all of her pent up emotion boils to the surface. A wound that has been ripped open again.

And David can only watch, helpless.

INT. OFFICE SUITE, COLLEGE -- NIGHT

Josh opens the door and turns on the lights. He sets the Orb on a nearby table. Looks it over.

JOSH

So what are you... Some spectacular
alien probe? Or has David completely
lost his mind?

The Orb just sits there.

JOSH
Option two it is.

He walks across the room and opens a supply closet. Rummages through the various items. Finds PACKING TAPE. Keep rummaging.

JOSH
Damn it Jan, where do you keep the
boxes?
(sighs)
Whatever.

He walks back over to the Orb and sets the roll of tape on top of it like a crown.

JOSH
I guess you'll just have to wait
till tomorrow, ole boy.

He heads for the door and turns off the light.

The TAPE SLIDES OFF THE ORB. Josh glances back at the sound. Then hears a STRANGE HUMMING NOISE coming from the Orb.

His expression hardens, not believing it.

The humming grows louder, the Orb VIBRATING. Small indentations form across its surface as it breaks apart into smaller and smaller cubes.

JOSH
Holy... Shit...

He watches, dumbfounded, as THE ORB OPENS UP --

Its ETHEREAL BLUE LIGHT FILLS THE ROOM.

Josh gazes into it as he steps closer, drawn to it, the radiant light washing over his face. His eyes widen in wonder, transfixed. It's breathtaking...

Then BLOOD BEGINS TO RUN OUT OF HIS NOSE. But Josh keeps staring, spellbound.

Blood runs out of his ears.

Out of his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE -- MORNING

David's car pulls into a parking spot. He steps out, bag over his shoulder, a lot still on his mind.

But he's snapped back to reality as he sees POLICE CARS and an AMBULANCE parked outside his building, lights flashing.

INT. OFFICE SUITE, COLLEGE -- CONTINUOUS

David rushes inside to see several POLICE OFFICERS. A small crowd of FACULTY and STUDENTS has gathered, some crying. David pushes through them to see --

JOSH BEING ZIPPED UP INTO A BODY BAG. His jaw hangs open, eyes still wide with wonder. While JAGGED STREAKS OF BLOOD have dried on his face. A horrific sight.

David watches as the body bag zips closed over his friend's face, realizing what happened.

He begins to look around, searching. But there is no sign of the Orb anywhere.

DAVID
(sotto)
Claire...

EXT. COLLEGE -- CONTINUOUS

David dashes outside, pulling out his cell phone and dialing as he runs towards his car.

He passes several more STUDENTS, among them an older man... Fletcher. He watches David climb into his car and speed away.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY -- SIMULTANEOUS

The blinds are closed. Claire sits alone in the darkness, staring at her sketch of the stream that she drew the day she found the Orb. Her PHONE RINGS. She glances to see "David" on the ID. She considers for a moment. Then silences it and continues to stare away.

Then she abruptly turns, as if sensing something.

HALLWAY

Claire moves through the house, a feeling of hope beginning to shine through her sadness. She opens the door --

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

And steps outside to see --

THE ORB SITTING IN THE GRASS under the morning sun. Waiting there just for her.

INT. DAVID'S CAR -- SIMULTANEOUS

David drives erratically, trying not to panic. He dials Claire again. It rings and rings before going to voice mail.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

Hey, it's Claire. Leave a message.

DAVID

Claire, please pick up! Pick up!

He hangs up and drives faster.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY -- SIMULTANEOUS

Claire sets the Orb back in its place.

Bwong! The old CRT MONITOR on the desk turns on again as letters scroll across the screen, forming --

"HE IS COMING FOR ME."

"THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE."

Claire turns as she hears her PHONE RINGING. She lifts it off the table, seeing "David" again on the ID. Uncertainty as it RINGS and RINGS. She looks towards the Orb.

"YOU'LL GET TO SEE ETHAN SMILE AGAIN."

And she turns her phone off.

The Orb vibrates on the desk as it breaks apart into smaller and smaller cubes. BLUE LIGHT GLOWS FROM WITHIN.

But this time, the cubes rearrange themselves differently, gradually TAKING THE SHAPE OF A BABY.

The blue light grows brighter and brighter as the cubes LIQUEFY and MERGE. THEY TAKE ON A HUMAN SKIN TONE AND MELD INTO MORE DELICATE FEATURES that distinctly define her son.

Ethan begins to wiggle and move in front of her. Glowing blue light radiating off of him.

Tears of joy run down Claire's face.

"DO YOU TRUST ME, CLAIRE?"

CLAIRE

Yes... Please... Please, just bring him back to me.

BABY ETHAN OPENS HIS EYES. Then he smiles and coos as he recognizes her.

Claire beams as she picks him up in her arms.

The glowing blue light radiating off of Ethan grows even brighter now. It SWIRLS AROUND CLAIRE, surrounding them both with its ethereal glow. But she doesn't notice, totally enraptured, as she rocks her baby.

Then WISPS OF LIQUID SILVER EMERGE FROM BABY ETHAN. The same color as the Orb.

THEY SLOWLY FLOW UP HER ARMS AND OVER HER BODY.

But Claire doesn't notice. She just stares away into his beautiful eyes, lost in her happiness.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

David's car screeches to a stop. He climbs out and sprints towards the door.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

David rushes inside, looking around.

DAVID
Claire! Claire!!

But he is immediately overtaken by BEAUTIFUL PIANO MUSIC echoing through the house. Mozart's complex variation on "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," played with amazing speed and dexterity. He follows the sound into the --

LIVING ROOM

Where Claire sits at the piano, completely engaged in the music, hands flowing over the keys. But while Claire is a pro, this is on an entirely different level.

DAVID
Claire?

She stops playing and turns with an elated smile.

CLAIRE
Hey, you're back early.

She comes over and greets him with a loving kiss.

CLAIRE
What are you doing home? Don't you
have a class soon?

Then she catches his demeanor.

CLAIRE
Baby, what's wrong?

David looks over his wife, not sure what to make of her.

DAVID
Claire... Josh is dead.

CLAIRE
Oh my God! What happened?!

DAVID
It... It killed him.

CLAIRE
What killed him?

David stares at her, trying to comprehend.

DAVID
Where's the Orb, Claire? Did it come back here?

CLAIRE
The what?

DAVID
The Orb! Where is it?

Complete bewilderment in Claire's eyes.

CLAIRE
Sweetie... What are you talking about?

DAVID
Don't play games with me. Where is it?!

CLAIRE
Where is what?

David storms away, heading into --

CLAIRE'S STUDY

He looks around but the Orb is nowhere to be seen. He starts rummaging, searching everywhere. Claire watches from the doorway with confusion, concern rapidly growing.

CLAIRE
Babe, you're really freaking me out.
What happened to Josh?

DAVID
Where is it?! Where did you hide it?!

CLAIRE
Where did I hide what?!

DAVID
The silver ball you found in the woods! The alien probe that rolls around and writes messages and told you it could bring Ethan back! I know it's here!

CLAIRE
There's nothing here! Now just talk to me. What happened?

DAVID
I don't know why you're doing this. But I'm gonna find it.

He heads out of the room. Claire follows him into the --

LIVING ROOM

Where David searches in closets, behind furniture, everywhere.

CLAIRE
David... David stop!

He turns as she comes to him, trying to calm him by putting soothing hands on his shoulders.

CLAIRE
You have to listen to me. There's nothing here. It's just you and me. Okay? It's just you and me. I am so sorry about Josh, but we're gonna get through this. Together. Like we always do.

She hugs him tightly, holding him close.

CLAIRE
Do you hear me, baby? I'm here for you. Everything's gonna be okay.

David holds her. But there is genuine fear in his eyes.

INT. KITCHEN, MORGAN HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Claire make dinner. Claire whistles along with a classic rock song, happy as a clam. David watches her, uneasy.

Claire's eyes scan the recipe book. She opens a cupboard and takes out two measuring cups. Uses them to precisely measure out the proper ingredients, her movements meticulous. David can't help but notice, knowing it isn't like her at all.

She opens the fridge to put away the milk. But as it closes, she stops, staring inquisitively. David notices.

DAVID
What're you looking at?

CLAIRE
The girl in this picture...

DAVID
What about her?

CLAIRE
What's her name?

David eyes the collage of photos on the fridge, focusing on an old one of CLAIRE (9) and ANOTHER GIRL.

DAVID
You're serious?
(off Claire)
That's Megan... Your cousin. Who lived with your family for two summers.

Claire stares at the image, not recognizing her.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David opens a PHOTO ALBUM and sets it in Claire's lap.

DAVID
Who's that?

CLAIRE
This isn't necessary at all.

DAVID
Then just tell me who they are.

CLAIRE
That's Lily...

She points from photo to photo.

CLAIRE
And Brad. Tom was your freshman roommate. Darcy was his girlfriend but they broke up before senior year, right?

David scrambles to pull out an OLDER ALBUM.

DAVID
These people?

CLAIRE

David...

But she sees how intent he is.

CLAIRE

That's Uncle Lyle, with hair. And
Aunt Joan before she stopped eating
carbs.

(turns the page)

And --

She freezes. David looks from her face to the photo of Claire
next to another girl.

DAVID

You don't know who that is, do you?

CLAIRE

Just... Just give me a second.

DAVID

That's Stacy, Claire.

She looks at him, baffled.

DAVID

Your best friend growing up. She
lived right next door to you for
twelve years. Your birthdays were a
week apart for God's sake. You
celebrated them together every year.

Claire turns the page and sees herself with STACY at a
children's birthday party.

CLAIRE

Oh right, of course.

But it's clearly unsettling to her. She stares at the photos
for a long moment, before closing the album.

CLAIRE

Come on, dinner's probably burning
by now.

David watches her put the album back, his own trepidation
growing.

INT. CLAIRE & DAVID'S BEDROOM -- LATER

David is asleep, dreaming of something, eyes moving behind
his closed lids, body shifting subtly. He shudders, eyes
snapping open. He lays there for a moment, catching his breath.
Then realizes --

Claire is not in bed next to him.

He sits up, looking around.

DAVID

Claire?

Only silence. He gets up and steps out into the --

HALLWAY

All the lights are off as David wanders, peeking into darkened rooms, his footsteps making the floor creak.

DAVID

Claire?

He moves on, anxiety rising. Opens the door to her study and looks in. But she's not there.

DAVID

Claire?

His voice lingers in the silence.

DAVID

Claire?!

CREAK!

David jumps and turns. Claire stands behind him, silhouetted in the darkness.

DAVID

Jesus. What are you doing? Do you have any idea what time it is?

CLAIRE

It's not time...

DAVID

What?

But she doesn't move. Her eyes are open but unfocused, like she's in a trance.

DAVID

You okay?

He nervously approaches. But she doesn't seem to notice him. Not moving a muscle.

DAVID

Claire?

She stares through him like he's not even there. David puts his hands on her shoulders, shaking her gently.

DAVID

Wake up, honey. Wake up!

No reaction.

DAVID

CLAIRE!

The glazed over look disappears and Claire focuses on David.

CLAIRE

(groggy)

Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you. I was just getting a drink of water.

DAVID

No, you were sleepwalking.

CLAIRE

What are you talking about? Come on, I'm tired.

David eyes her warily as she heads back towards the bedroom.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

The DOCTOR spins his monitor around for David and Claire to see. On it are a variety of MEDICAL TEST RESULTS. He clicks through the MRI imagery.

DOCTOR

There's no cortical abnormality to imply a seizure focus. No abnormal enhancement to suggest a tumor. No volume loss to imply a hallucinatory dementia. I'm not seeing any indicators that anything is wrong.

CLAIRE

That's good, right?

DOCTOR

Of course, that's very good.

DAVID

There has to be some more tests that you can run.

DOCTOR

Tests for the sake of tests can often cause more harm than good.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Not to mention rack up your out of pocket expenses. Or is there something I'm missing here?

He looks back and forth between David and Claire. Claire seems perfectly satisfied. But David --

DAVID

I guess there have just been some... Changes in her personality lately.

CLAIRE

David, he said I'm okay. I feel fine.

DAVID

And she's been forgetting things.

CLAIRE

I forgot the names of two people who I haven't seen in years.

DAVID

But they're people she should know. And she's been sleepwalking too.

CLAIRE

One time. Ever. Babe, he's saying there's nothing wrong. I'm fine.

DAVID

Will you stop saying that!

An uncomfortable beat. The Doctor isn't sure what to make of them. Claire sighs.

CLAIRE

Listen, one of his best friends just passed away suddenly and I think he's afraid of something happening to me too.

The Doctor nods, suddenly understanding.

CLAIRE

But sweetie, I really am fine. You're not gonna lose me. I promise.

She puts her hand on his and smiles warmly. But it only unnerves him more.

DOCTOR

A loss like that can be difficult for anyone. I know several great psychologists if you'd like to --

DAVID

I don't need a shrink! That has nothing to do with this.

DOCTOR

Well then maybe you can tell me a little more about the root of your concern?

David can't bring himself to respond.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- EVENING

Claire steps back inside, David following her.

DAVID

I know you're toying with me. I know this is all part of... Whatever's going on.

Claire looks him over with genuine sympathy.

CLAIRE

I can't imagine how hard this is on you, especially after all that Josh did to help us get here. But there's nothing going on.

(off his look)

Don't you trust me, David?

He sure doesn't. Not now.

CLAIRE

Well clearly I'm not the one who needs a doctor.

She walks into her study and closes the door, leaving David standing alone in the quiet house.

DAVID

(sotto)

Fuck.

He eyes the framed photos adorning the walls. All of his memories with Claire from years past. They look so young and in love.

Then the LIGHTS SUDDENLY FLICKER.

David looks around. What was that?

The LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN. Then the SOUND SYSTEM TURNS ON, scanning between static and different radio stations.

The TV TURNS ON. David watches as a series of BIZARRE SYMBOLS AND SHAPES scroll across it from all directions, just like the ones Claire saw before.

He races towards Claire's study, bursting through the door --

STUDY

Claire lies on the floor, BODY TWITCHING, EYELIDS BLINKING RAPIDLY. Her lips are moving, MUMBLING something. The computer monitor is on, the SAME BIZARRE SYMBOLS AND SHAPES MOVING ACROSS IT in all directions.

For a moment, David just stares, frozen in horror by the sight. Then he rushes to Claire, shaking her.

DAVID

Claire, wake up baby! Snap out of it!

She continues mumbling. And David realizes --

She's not speaking English. It's some kind of GROTESQUE UNRECOGNIZABLE LANGUAGE. Inhuman.

DAVID

Oh God...

He shakes her hard.

DAVID

Claire, please wake up! Open your eyes!

She mumbles incessantly, her volume increasing. He slaps her across the face! Nothing. Harder! Still no reaction. The words are coming more rapidly now. Harsher. The symbols on the computer screen moving faster and faster.

David stands up, beside himself, not knowing what to do.

Then, just for a moment, the terrifying symbols on the monitor TRANSFORM INTO ENGLISH, spelling out --

"HELP ME."

Before turning back into the alien language.

DAVID

No...

He lifts the computer monitor up, its power chord dangling. Then SMASHES IT DOWN ON THE CORNER OF THE DESK. Glass and parts fly as he slams it over and over and over again.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

David?!

David turns --

Claire is no longer on the floor. SHE'S STANDING IN THE DOORWAY. Totally normal looking. But shocked by the sight.

CLAIRE

What are you doing?

DAVID

You were... You were on the floor speaking this crazy language, and the computer... The computer...

He looks around, seeing the broken computer pieces scattered across the floor.

CLAIRE

David... I was in the kitchen.

He can see the way she's looking at him, questioning his entire reality.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Classical piano music echoes through the house. David sits at his laptop making uneasy glances towards the next room. He looks terrible, a desperate man approaching his breaking point.

ON SCREEN: Window after window of crackpot internet crap about alien abductions. Every new website more ridiculous than the last. David grows more infuriated with every click. Blurry photos of UFOs. Strange symbols carved into stone. Bizarre statues from ancient times. All sorts of ridiculous stories and comments from total lunatics.

He's grasping at straws. Searching for any kind of answer.

The house PHONE RINGS. David doesn't care. It continues to ring and ring, until Claire answers in the next room.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Hello.

(listens)

It's not time.

David looks up. *What did she say?*

He quickly moves to the doorway, spying on Claire.

CLAIRE (INTO PHONE)

It's not time.

(listens)

No problem. Goodbye.

She hangs up. David walks into the room.

DAVID
Who was that?

CLAIRE
Just a wrong number.

She goes back to playing the piano as if it was nothing.

INT. CLAIRE AND DAVID'S BEDROOM -- DAY

David steps in and quietly closes the door. He grabs the phone off the end table and eyes the caller ID. Dials the number. He waits anxiously as it rings... And rings... Then --

Someone picks up... But they are silent on the other end.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Hello? Who's there?

FLETCHER (FROM PHONE)
What time is it?

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
What? Who is this?

A moment passes.

FLETCHER (FROM PHONE)
What time is it?

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Who is this?! Tell me who you are!

No response.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Tell me who you are!

Nothing. Then David eyes his watch.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
It's eleven thirty-seven, now who is this?

FLETCHER (FROM PHONE)
Good. I had to be sure.

DAVID (INTO PHONE)
Sure of what?

FLETCHER (FROM PHONE)
That you weren't one of them.

David stiffens.

FLETCHER (FROM PHONE)
I know what happened to your friend,
Mr. Morgan... And I can tell you
what's happening to your wife. Meet
me at the diner on Ridge Road in an
hour. Do not bring a computer, phone,
or any other electronic device.

Click. David stares at the phone, unsettled.

INT. LOCAL DINER -- DAY

Another mostly empty place. David sits at the counter,
nervous, plate of food untouched.

FLETCHER (O.S.)
Mr. Morgan?

David turns to see Fletcher standing over him.

FLETCHER
You took the precautions I requested?

DAVID
Yes, of course. No phone. No computer.
Claire thinks I'm at work.

FLETCHER
Then let's take a drive.

DAVID
You gonna tell me who you are first?

FLETCHER
My name is Dr. Edward Fletcher. And
I'm the only person who's ever going
to believe you.

EXT. RURAL ROAD -- DAY

Fletcher's nondescript car drives down the lonely road.

INT. FLETCHER'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

David sits in the passenger seat as Fletcher drives. The
POLICE SCANNER on his dashboard crackles with a radio call.

FLETCHER
It might be a glitch in their
programming or something different
about how they perceive the world,
but for some reason, they don't think
of time the same way we do. To you
and me, it's five minutes to one.
But to them, "It's not time yet..."

DAVID
Not time for what?

FLETCHER
I don't know. And that's what scares
me the most.

(beat)
I'm afraid I don't have good news
about your wife, Mr. Morgan.
Unfortunately, your story starts the
same way as many others.

DAVID
With finding the Orb?

FLETCHER
Yes. The Orb, sphere, magical ball,
whatever name you choose to give it.
It hones in on our emotional
vulnerabilities. Maybe someone wants
to bring their family back together
after a divorce. Or they lost a parent
or a child. It claims that it can
fix everything and lures us in with
promises of its extraordinary powers.

DAVID
And she believed it.

FLETCHER
Even in our darkest times, we still
have hope. It understands this...
And uses it against us.

DAVID
But it's gone now. I've searched
everywhere.

FLETCHER
Where does she think it is?

DAVID
She acts like it never even existed.

Fletcher slowly nods with understanding.

FLETCHER
That's because it's inside her now.

David turns and stares.

FLETCHER
What landed near your home wasn't a
machine. It's a living creature. A
creature that needs a host to survive.
(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

And now it has one. After a few days,
it'll take her over completely.

(beat)

Then she'll kill you...

The statement chills David to his core.

FLETCHER

Along with anyone else who knows about
the Orb's existence, like your friend.
It's how these things have remained a
mystery after all these years. Ever
hear those stories about a mother or
father who was perfectly normal one
day and then slaughters their entire
family the next? Sometimes, people go
crazy. Other times... It's them.

EXT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Fletcher's car pulls up to a lone farmhouse out in the middle
of nowhere, wheat fields stretching away to the horizon in
every direction. The distant rumble of MACHINERY.

INT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

The quaint home is decorated with antique furniture. Nothing
to suggest a believer in extraterrestrials. Fletcher and
David look over old framed photos of Fletcher and his son,
MITCHELL, whom we met in the beginning.

FLETCHER

I was never a good father. When
Mitchell's best friend passed away,
I didn't even bother to drop a shift
to go to the funeral. Instead, he
got a two minute phone call before I
went into some surgery that any other
doctor could have performed.

David looks on with sympathy.

FLETCHER

And then one night when I called, he
was over the moon about his new little
toy. A magical ball. He found it out
in the field near their house. It
rolled around, and talked to him. Of
course, I thought it was a boy's
imagination at play. Part of his
grieving process. But he'd fallen
into the trap. And then it was too
late.

DAVID
He couldn't have...

FLETCHER
I was the one who found the bodies.
His mother. Step father. Siblings.
Snapped necks. Crushed skulls. His
step sister bled out because he slit
her throat. She was only a year older
than him.

(beat)
The coroner couldn't understand it.
All the evidence made it clear that
my son, my eight year old son, had
killed them. But no one could believe
it. Except for me. I figured out
what really happened.

DAVID
So how did you save him?

FLETCHER
I didn't.
(beat)
But I might be able to save your
wife.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire sits next to Alan as he plays the piano. She nods along, but she's not really present. A glassiness in her expression.

INT. FRONT DOOR, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

Claire stands with Alan's Mom, Alan already by the car.

ALAN'S MOM
So we'll see you next week.

CLAIRE
Actually, this is going to be Alan's
last lesson.

ALAN'S MOM
What?

CLAIRE
I'm going away for a while.

ALAN'S MOM
Back to the symphony?

CLAIRE
Yes. Back to the symphony.

ALAN'S MOM

Oh. Well I'm sorry to hear that. I mean that's great for you, but Alan will be...

(sighs)

Listen, I didn't want to pry, but you left the recital the other night in an awful hurry.

CLAIRE

Something came up. A close friend needed my help.

ALAN'S MOM

Is everything okay?

Claire eyes her, smile unwavering.

CLAIRE

You should leave now.

A tense moment. Then Alan's Mom walks towards the car, glancing back over her shoulder with unease. Claire waves to Alan with a smile. He innocently waves back.

INT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

FLETCHER

Over the years, as I encountered more cases like my son's, I developed a procedure... A very dangerous procedure.

DAVID

And it'll save her?

FLETCHER

It's worked before... It's also killed those who weren't strong enough to endure it. But if you love your wife, this is her only chance.

DAVID

You're saying Claire's only chance is some kind of crazy procedure that might kill her?

FLETCHER

I wish there was another way.

DAVID

I can't risk her life. She's all I've got.

FLETCHER

That's what everyone says when I first explain it to them... So let me show you something that might change your mind.

INT. STAIRCASE, FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Fletcher opens a door to reveal a DARK STAIRCASE DESCENDING TOWARDS A CLOSED DOOR, bright white light shining around the frame. Fletcher begins descending. David follows warily.

FLETCHER

The police believed my son was an innocent witness to a horrible tragedy. But I knew what he really was. I knew he would kill again. So if they weren't going to protect people from him, then I had to.

DAVID

Had to what?

FLETCHER

It's a father's responsibility to protect the world from what he's made. I hope you can understand.

Fletcher opens the door at the bottom, flooding the stairs with BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT. They step into the --

BASEMENT

The walls, floor, ceiling, every surface is white, like a clean room environment. Banks of florescent lights overhead. And standing in the center of the space is a --

PRISON CELL

The inner walls are made of thick clear plexiglass with holes at regular intervals. While the outer walls are made of thick metal bars, each wrapped with TIGHT COILS OF WIRE that run up to an ELECTRICAL GRID that spider webs across the ceiling.

Within the cell, a man in a white jumpsuit sits on a chair, facing away from the door. This is MITCHELL (late 20s). No other furniture within.

DAVID

What the hell is this...

FLETCHER

An electromagnetic prison. It's the only way to contain him.

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

The engine you heard outside is a generator that powers the magnetic field twenty-four hours a day. I can't let it run out of fuel. Not ever. Or else he'll walk right out of here, and I'll be a dead man.

DAVID

This is torture.

FLETCHER

This is necessary.

MITCHELL

Aren't you going to introduce me to your new friend, Dr. Fletcher?

David startles. Mitchell still hasn't turned to face them.

FLETCHER

You already know who he is.

MITCHELL

Do I?

FLETCHER

Maybe you should start by introducing yourself.

Mitchell stands from his chair in a slow, fluid motion and turns to face them. A neutral expression on his face.

FLETCHER

Why don't you tell him your name.

MITCHELL

My name? I don't have a name. I am... Me.

FLETCHER

And what are you doing here?

MITCHELL

Waiting.

FLETCHER

Waiting for what?

MITCHELL

Until it's time.

FLETCHER

And when will it be time?

MITCHELL
Not much longer now.

David exchanges a glance with Fletcher, suddenly understanding.

FLETCHER
This is what Claire will become.
When that happens, she will kill you
without hesitation.

But David can't bear the sight anymore.

DAVID
I... I can't... I have to go.

He moves towards the stairs --

MITCHELL
You shouldn't worry, Mr. Morgan...

David snaps back around.

MITCHELL
Claire will be much better very soon.

And for the first time, he smiles subtly.

INT. CLAIRE'S STUDY, MORGAN HOUSE -- DAY

Claire stands alone in her study, glancing around. Her eyes fall upon the framed photo of Ethan, David, and her. She focuses on Ethan's smiling face, gazing at it blankly.

Then she picks up the frame. REMOVES THE PHOTO from it. And DROPS IT IN THE TRASH.

She takes a framed photo of her and David off the wall. Stares into it, emotionless. Then begins to take apart the frame.

EXT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Fletcher follows David towards the car.

FLETCHER
I know you're frightened, but you
have to trust me when I say that
there's no other option.

David hesitates, turning back to him.

DAVID
This procedure of yours... What
exactly do you do?

FLETCHER

It's a form of electroshock therapy. It seems to interrupt the connection between whatever this life form is and the human mind. You might think of it like an exorcism, but with science instead of religion.

DAVID

And what if it doesn't work?

Fletcher just stares, his implication clear. David looks away, torn.

FLETCHER

Mr. Morgan... What's inside her, it's like a cancer. The sooner you catch it, the better her chances. I've never been able to save someone who has been incubating for more than a few days. Claire doesn't have much time left. Ultimately... This comes down to your will against its.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE / INT. DAVID'S CAR -- NIGHT

David's car pulls into the driveway. He sits there, grappling. Dreading what's to come. Then steps out, seeing his house before him, the lights on inside.

His eyes rise to the STARRY NIGHT SKY overhead. What was once so beautiful now appears ominous. He stands there for a long moment, one small man beneath the overwhelming cosmos.

Fletcher's car pulls up behind him. David turns as Fletcher climbs out and approaches. They exchange a knowing look.

Then head towards the house.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

David walks in, Fletcher behind him. All is quiet.

David looks around to see that there are NO PHOTOS IN ANY OF THE FRAMES ON THE WALLS. He turns to Fletcher, who has clearly seen this before.

STUDY

David steps into the doorway.

NUMEROUS PHOTO ALBUMS lay open on the floor, THEIR PAGES BARE. PHOTOS PILED IN THE TRASH. All of her artwork is gone.

Claire stands holding another album, methodically removing the photos one by one, letting them fall to the floor.

No emotion on her face. David is heartbroken by the sight.

DAVID

Claire?

Her head turns and she eyes him for a moment. Then seems to remember. A smile spreads.

CLAIRE

Oh hi, honey. I missed you.

Fletcher steps in behind David. Claire's smile instantly fades. Their eyes lock.

FLETCHER

Hello, Claire. Do you remember me?

Claire lets out a SCREAM and LUNGES FOR HIM --

But DAVID GRABS HER FROM BEHIND, one arm around her neck, the other restraining an arm as she screams and struggles.

CLAIRE

David, no! Let me go! You can't trust him!

She claws at him as Fletcher steps forward, PULLING OUT A SYRINGE. He yanks the cap off with his teeth and STABS THE NEEDLE INTO CLAIRE'S ARM, pressing the plunger down.

Claire continues to scream and struggle.

CLAIRE

David stop! Please! Let go! Let go...

But her fight diminishes, strength fading, eyelids getting heavy. And she falls unconscious.

FLETCHER

Quickly!

DINING ROOM

David and Fletcher haul Claire's limp body to the table, laying her on it.

FLETCHER

Get these on her.

He pulls a bag off his shoulder and removes HAND AND LEG RESTRAINTS. David looks to Claire, unconscious on the table.

DAVID

These are really necessary?

FLETCHER
Extremely necessary.
(beat)
Now, David! We have no time to lose.

David musters a nod.

SERIES OF SHOTS: Restraints are fastened around Claire's arms and legs. Fletcher sets up a BOXY OLD COMPUTER. Old MEDICAL MONITORS are powered on. ELECTRODES are attached to Claire's head and body.

INT. DINING ROOM, MORGAN HOUSE -- LATER

Fletcher comes in the front door, unspooling a THICK CORD all the way to his computer system.

FLETCHER
The generator's setup about a hundred feet away. It shouldn't be able to interfere with it at that range.

DAVID
What do you mean interfere with it?

FLETCHER
Exactly what it sounds like.

DAVID
(re: old computer)
And you don't think it'll be able to interfere with that?

FLETCHER
This is electromagnetically shielded, like old combat computers from the Cold War. It'll hold.

Fletcher powers up all of the electronics. Monitors come to life showing Claire's vital signs and brain activity.

FLETCHER
Alright. The shock therapy will attempt to sever the connection. But electricity isn't enough on its own. The brain activity from Claire's own emotions and memories has to overpower the invading entity. She's still in there. You have to help her find her way back.

Fletcher takes a step closer to David, his expression grave.

FLETCHER
Now...
(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Whatever this thing is that's inside her, it's going to recognize that it's in danger. And it's going to fight back aggressively. It will target your emotions and exploit your love of your wife. But no matter what it says, no matter what it does, no matter what happens... We cannot stop the procedure. You understand?

David nods apprehensively.

FLETCHER

Now grab yourself a pair of gloves out of that bag.

Fletcher makes final adjustments on his computer as David unzips the bag and rifles around. He finds the gloves and grabs them. But underneath is a holstered REVOLVER. David eyes it with dread. As he turns, Fletcher is already watching.

FLETCHER

A last resort. If we fail, we shoot her in the head. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

DAVID

There's no way you're using that on my wife.

FLETCHER

Mr. Morgan, if this doesn't work, my guess is you'll use it on her yourself.

David grits his teeth, putting on the gloves. Fletcher presses several keys, initiating a CRUDE BRAIN WAVE ANALYSIS PROGRAM. Beside it he has an OLD CONTROL BOARD covered with dials, knobs and sliders.

FLETCHER

Take her hand.

David takes Claire's hand, held down by the restraints.

FLETCHER

And remember, it's not your wife on this table.

David nods, holding Claire's hand in both of his.

Fletcher begins to gradually adjust dials on the control board. He takes a breath, readying himself. Then he MOVES UP A SLIDER --

Claire's body subtly SPASMS.

Fletcher moves the slider up more...

Her spasms grow more frequent. More intense as Fletcher continues to increase the voltage. David holds her hand tighter.

Then Fletcher moves the slider up even further --

And CLAIRE'S ENTIRE BODY SHAKES VIOLENTLY. HER EYES SNAP OPEN and she gasps for breath, CAUSING DAVID TO JUMP BACK.

Her head whips around, taking in her situation -- restrained to the table, not recognizing anything around her. Another spasm rocks her and SHE SCREAMS OUT IN PAIN.

FLETCHER

Take her hand!

David stares with wide eyes. Then steps closer as she continues to wail. As he takes her hand, her eyes lock on him, pleading.

CLAIRE

David... David, what are you doing?
Why are you doing this?! DAVID!

FLETCHER

Don't listen to her!

Fletcher turns up the voltage, causing her to CRINGE IN PAIN.

CLAIRE

Help me, David! Please help me --
(spasm / scream)
Don't do this --
(spasm)
He's hurting me! Don't let him hurt
me!

Fletcher continues to turn up the voltage, making her SCREAM EVEN LOUDER as David watches, horrified.

FLETCHER

Focus! I can't do this without you!

DAVID

I... I love you, Claire. We're trying
to help you.

But his words can barely be heard over her strained screams.

FLETCHER

She needs a lot more than that!
(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Tell her stories. Memories. Anything that she can latch onto.

DAVID

I... Claire... Do you... Do you remember when --

FLETCHER

Louder! She has to hear you!

Claire screams out in pain. David flinches back.

Then he suddenly seems to take stock of the situation and steels himself. He firmly grabs her hand and runs his other hand through her hair, speaking loudly to her.

DAVID

I need you to remember the first time we met, Claire! In that shitty bar on University Way --

She wails and cringes, but David doesn't falter.

DAVID

I know you remember the song that was on, but I never told you this part.

Suddenly, the LIGHTS BEGIN TO FLICKER.

DAVID

I was always too embarrassed to tell you...

The flickering lights grow more frenetic.

DAVID

When I saw you across that bar, I envisioned our entire life together --

ALL OF THE ELECTRONICS BEGIN TO FREAK OUT. Flashing, flickering and buzzing. The STEREO TURNS ON, rapidly flipping through stations -- COUNTRY MUSIC, HEAVY METAL, LOVE SONGS.

But David just raises his voice.

DAVID

I saw our house. I saw our kids. I saw our family. I suddenly didn't give a shit about anything else. Not classes or other girls or anything. In one moment, you changed my life. You took my breath away and you still take it away every single time I wake up next to you.

The blaring music from THE STEREO CHANGES TO STATIC AS ALL OF THE LIGHTS FREAK THE FUCK OUT.

CLAIRE

David, he's killing me! He's killing me!

David rips off his gloves, and grabs her hand even tighter, stomachaching the pain. He yells over the noise.

DAVID

Claire, do you remember our wedding day? How it poured rain. It poured for hours. And then suddenly the clouds parted right before you walked down the aisle.

Claire fights against her restraints, continuing to scream in agony.

DAVID

We swing danced in front of everyone, and I nearly fell. But you caught me, and somehow made it look like it was all part of the show.

CLAIRE

I can't see! Oh God, I can't see anything! Everything's going black!

She cries out, struggling far more violently. ONE OF HER HANDS SUDDENLY RIPS FREE of the restraints.

FLETCHER

Tie her back down!

David runs around the table and fights to grab her arm as it flails violently through the air. He uses all of his strength to muscle it back into the restraint. And after he cinches it tight, he continues to speak, tears in his eyes.

DAVID

Claire, I know you're in there and if you'll remember anything, you'll remember this. When they took Ethan from your arms, I held you. I held you tight and I promised you that no matter what, we'd be okay, that I'd always be with you. And I always will be. I'm here, Claire. I'm right here --

A moment of clarity in her eyes --

CLAIRE

I remember, David... I remember...

Another jolt of electricity makes her spasm. David's confidence begins to falter at the sight.

FLETCHER

Don't believe a word she says! Just keep talking! Keep talking to her!

DAVID

Claire, I...

But David is growing more distracted by all of the chaos around them.

CLAIRE

David, please, I remember! I remember everything now! You have to stop him!

The TV suddenly shows a VIDEO OF THE FIRST KISS FROM THEIR WEDDING. Static. CLAIRE FROLICKING IN TROPICAL OCEAN WAVES. Static. CLAIRE AND DAVID KISSING SWEETLY in front of a sunset. Static. CELEBRATING TOGETHER AT THEIR COLLEGE GRADUATION.

Tears fill David's eyes as he watches.

FLETCHER

Close your eyes!

Fletcher pushes up the voltage even higher.

CLAIRE

DAVID! HELP ME!

Claire's heart rate grows more erratic on the monitor. Her screams and pleas become more disjointed.

The scene around them grows more chaotic with all of the electronics going haywire. ONE LIGHT BULB EXPLODES. THEN ANOTHER. AND ANOTHER.

Then Claire's ENTIRE BODY GOES RIGID and HER EYES ROLL BACK. She's unconscious and spasming.

DAVID

Claire? Claire?!

CLAIRE (V.O.)

(calm and soothing)

David...

David whips around, looking for the source of the voice. But Claire's body is still locked rigid by violent spasms.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

David... I love you.

THE VOICE IS INSIDE HIS HEAD. Tender, soft and heartfelt.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
I've always loved you. From the first
moment our eyes met.

DAVID
No...

David is crumbling. Fletcher looks up, realizing.

FLETCHER
Stay with me! Don't listen to her!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
You can't let him take me from you.
I don't want to live without you.

FLETCHER
It's not real! It's not her talking!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
I want to be with you forever, baby.
You and me. We're a family, David...
We're a family... We're a family...

David clamps his eyes shut, holding his hands over his ears.

Then he suddenly HEARS A BABY CRYING. He opens his eyes --

Their BABY SON is right in front of him, wailing in Claire's
arms. She's awake and nestling Ethan close, smiling at him
sweetly.

CLAIRE
We're a family, David.

DAVID
Ethan...

Ethan holds his little hand out. David reaches to touch him.

FLETCHER
There's nothing there, David! There's
nothing there!

David looks back to Claire. The baby is gone and she's still
unconscious. He's beside himself, not knowing what to believe.

Fletcher pushes up the voltage even higher. CLAIRE SPASMS
MORE VIOLENTLY. No human being could take this.

And then LIQUID METAL suddenly becomes visible FLOWING THROUGH
HER VEINS, bulging, seeping through to the surface before
instantly BOILING AWAY INTO THE AIR.

FLETCHER
It's working! It's working!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
I forgive you, David...

FLETCHER
Just hold on! Just a little longer!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
I forgive you... For killing me...

David turns to the monitors, and Claire's heart is barely beating. Growing more faint...

DAVID
You're killing her...

Her heartbeat is moments from flat lining...

FLETCHER
We're nearly there!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
I love you, David...

DAVID
You're killing her!

And suddenly DAVID SHOVES FLETCHER OUT OF THE WAY AND RIPS THE PLUG OUT of the system.

In an instant, EVERYTHING GOES DEAD in the house and THERE'S SILENCE. Claire's body goes limp, the liquid metal gone.

David rushes to her, grabbing her head.

DAVID
Claire? Claire?!

She doesn't respond.

DAVID
Claire!

An agonizing moment of silence.

But then there is a low beep... Beep... Of her heart beating. Getting stronger by the second.

DAVID
Yes, baby! I've got you! I've got you!

Fletcher comes over to her, taking her vitals with a renewed sense of hope.

DAVID

Did it work? Please God tell me it worked.

Claire's eyes slowly open...

And she focuses on David, recognizing him. Remembering.

A smile forms on her face.

She's home.

FLETCHER

I think... I think it just might have.

David lets out a cry of joy as he quickly removes the restraints from her hands and legs.

Then Claire turns to Fletcher.

And HER EXPRESSION GOES DEAD NEUTRAL.

FLETCHER

No!

Her hand rises with lightning speed and LOCKS AROUND FLETCHER'S THROAT. He fights against her grip, gasping for breath.

David stumbles back, dumbfounded by the sight.

And then CLAIRE LAUNCHES FLETCHER ACROSS THE ROOM WITH INHUMAN STRENGTH. HIS BODY SLAMS INTO THE FIREPLACE HEAD FIRST.

David watches, horrified, as Claire calmly walks over to Fletcher. He groans, trying to move. She turns his body over with her foot. Then she picks up the nearby FIRE POKER, looking into his terrified eyes.

CLAIRE

Mitchell asked us to say... Goodbye.

SHE STABS THE POKER THROUGH HIS NECK. He gasps and gargles, as she watches with idle curiosity. Until he moves no more.

Then she turns to face David...

In a panic, he scrambles to Fletcher's bag and PULLS OUT THE REVOLVER. Aims it at her with shaking hands. She shows no fear, no love, nothing at all.

CLAIRE

David... Why are you frightened?

David backs away as she slowly approaches, not lowering the gun. She smiles at him.

But there's something wrong with her expression, something foreign and frightening.

CLAIRE

Come here, David. I can make it all better.

David's shaking finger rests on the trigger... But he can't do it. He just can't do it.

DAVID

Shit...

He frantically pulls out his cell and dials 9-1-1. But Claire TILTS HER HEAD SLIGHTLY. THE SCREEN GLITCHES AND GOES BLACK.

DAVID

Shit!

David drops the phone and backs away from Claire, holding the gun between them as she continues her slow advance.

CLAIRE

David, where are you going? Stay here with me. This is our home now.

But David turns and runs out the front door. Claire's expression goes neutral once again.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

David heads straight for the car, scrambling to pull out his keys. He jumps into the driver's seat and shoves the keys into the ignition --

BUT THE STARTER JUST CLICKS.

He pumps the gas, but the engine won't turn over.

Then he sees Claire standing in the open doorway, staring at him in the car. It's not going to start.

David gets out of the car and runs into the woods.

Claire calmly walks down the steps after him.

EXT. FOREST -- CONTINUOUS

David runs as fast as he can through the darkness.

He ducks behind a thick trunk, gasping for breath. Looks back and sees Claire walking through the trees after him.

Then she stops, eyes scanning, listening.

CLAIRE

David? I know you're close. I want you to know, that I remember. I remember everything. I remember our first dance together. That look in your eyes. I instantly knew it was love. I knew we were always meant to be together --

He takes off running again, revolver still in his hand. Claire's head snaps around like a predator, and she moves after him.

David zigs and zags, tree branches cutting at his face. He struggles to push through. HE TRIPS AND FALLS, DROPPING THE GUN. Scrambles to pick it back up --

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Why are you running from me, David?

David freezes, looking back over a rock. Somehow she is still close behind him, head panning, searching.

CLAIRE

We can't run away from our problems. Isn't that what the doctors always told us? We have to face them. We have to face them together.

David gets to his feet and runs.

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

David comes out of the trees and runs down the center of the rural road towards the nearby CROSSROADS. Several STREETLIGHTS illuminate the intersection.

Claire walks out of the trees, still calm, totally unfazed by the chase.

David looks desperately up one road, and the other.

Claire's eyes rise to the streetlights and suddenly --

A BULB EXPLODES, sending down a SHOWER OF SPARKS near David. He flinches as another bulb explodes. Then the last one, plunging the road into darkness again as Claire gets ever closer. He doesn't wait a second longer, ducking back into the trees.

EXT. FOREST -- CONTINUOUS

David sprints, revolver in hand, constantly glancing back over his shoulder. Claire is nowhere in sight, but he doesn't slow down.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
 (distant, echoey)
 Daaaviiid...

David stops in his tracks and turns, scanning the trees. No sign of Claire. The voice is in his head.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
 (from the right)
 Come back to me, David.

David frantically spins with each new sound, but he sees no sign of her.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
 (from the left)
 I love you.
 (behind)
 It's time to have another baby.
 (all around)
 We can be a family again.

David sprints away, terrified.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
 David... David...

His head turns on a swivel. And he doesn't see as --

THE GROUND DROPS OUT FROM UNDER HIM AND HE TUMBLES DOWN A STEEP EMBANKMENT. Barely avoiding tree trunks. Rolling over rocks. Bouncing. Sliding. Before skidding to a stop.

He's badly beat up, but forces himself back to his feet. Gets a few feet then falls again, his strength sapped. He looks around, struggling to get his bearings.

EXT. STREAM, FOREST -- CONTINUOUS

And we realize that he's at Claire's special, secluded place, near where she first found the Orb.

Then Claire emerges from the trees. She calmly approaches until she is standing right over him. He looks up at her.

DAVID
 Please... Claire... Come back to me.
 I know you're still in there.

Claire looks down on him without annoyance or anger. Only the slightest hint of curiosity.

CLAIRE
 Claire has to go now. She's been chosen for something far greater than you could ever understand.

DAVID

No! Let her go! You've destroyed everything that we had! We were a family! We were happy!

CLAIRE

If she was happy, she wouldn't have let us in.

David struggles to his feet, fueled by rage, RAISING THE REVOLVER with more certainty now.

CLAIRE

She's not coming back, David. It's time to let her go.

DAVID

No...

CLAIRE

She's with us now. And she's much happier...

She steps towards him.

DAVID

NO!

Tears in his eyes, HE PULLS THE TRIGGER. Again, and again, and again. HITTING CLAIRE SQUARE IN THE CHEST.

A surprised expression comes over Claire's face as blood runs down her clothes.

Then she stumbles back, and falls to the ground. But she doesn't show any sign of pain. Just lies on her back and breathes once... Twice... And then stops. Not moving. Dead.

David lowers the gun. His anger quickly fades, replaced by the horror of what he's just done.

Tears run down his cheeks as he gasps for breath, falling to his knees next to her body, completely breaking down.

DAVID

Oh God... Oh God, Claire... Claire,
I'm sorry... I'm sorry!

He rests his head on her chest as he continues to sob. Alone in the dark woods.

But suddenly a GLOWING BLUE LIGHT BEGINS TO FLOW THROUGH CLAIRE'S WOUNDS -- the same light cast by the Orb.

David sees it and stumbles away, watching as --

The light swirls around her chest wounds, and miraculously they BEGIN TO REPAIR. Blood ceases to flow, and unblemished skin grows over them.

CLAIRE TAKES A DEEP BREATH. Her eyes blink. Then focus on David standing over her.

David is overtaken with panic. He points the gun at Claire again and pulls the trigger --

Click. Click. Click. No bullets left.

Claire gets back to her feet with no sign of aggravation. She moves towards him. David is too stunned to move as --

SHE HUGS HIM.

And something in David makes him hug her back. He clings tightly to her as his tears run.

DAVID

I love you.

A hint of conflict shines through Claire's eyes as A SINGLE TEAR STREAMS DOWN HER FACE. She delicately kisses David on the cheek and whispers in his ear...

CLAIRE

Goodbye.

Then SHE EFFORTLESSLY SNAPS HIS NECK.

David's body collapses to the ground. Claire looks down at her dead husband... And wipes away her tear.

Then she calmly walks away into the forest, disappearing into the shadows.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

A beautiful, sunny day at Fletcher's home. The same distant sound of the generator... Until it chugs, stuttering.

EXT. GENERATOR, FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The industrial GENERATOR is installed behind an outbuilding, with a several THOUSAND GALLON FUEL TANK next to it...

But the GAUGE HAS FALLEN BELOW EMPTY. The generator sputters once, twice, and THEN IT DIES.

INT. BASEMENT, FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mitchell sits in his chair. The HUM of the electrical field around him suddenly GOES SILENT.

He slowly glances from one side. To the other.

Then he calmly stands.

CUT TO:

A door opens to reveal another room in the basement. Mitchell walks in.

The walls are covered with ARTICLES AND OBITUARIES RELATING TO MYSTERIOUS METEOR SHOWERS AND DEATHS. To MASS MURDERS and MISSING PERSONS. All of them linked together on a WORLD MAP with pins, strings and arrows. All of Fletcher's work.

Mitchell's gaze drifts over it. Then he sees a LIQUID NITROGEN FREEZER in the corner. He lifts the lid, unleashing a WAVE OF WHITE GAS. It clears to reveal the contents of the tank:

A DOZEN SOFTBALL SIZED ORBS, smaller than the one Claire found, but equally ominous.

A subtle smile creeps across his face.

EXT. FLETCHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mitchell walks out the door, now wearing jeans and a jacket, a backpack over his shoulders. Looking perfectly normal. He walks away up the gravel drive towards the road.

Behind him, ROILING BLACK SMOKE BEGINS TO RISE out of the house's door and windows. But Mitchell doesn't look back.

EXT. METROPOLITAN CITY CENTER -- DAY

We're somewhere in a big city. PEDESTRIANS fill the sidewalk, moving with all of the haste that their busy lives call for.

And amongst them we find Claire, now with a different hair color and appearance, walking at a relaxed pace. She looks just like any other city dweller.

But as she moves through the crowd, she MAKES EYE CONTACT with certain others, who EXCHANGE KNOWING LOOKS. Young people. Old people. Even a child. She subtly nods to each in turn and they return the gesture in an almost imperceptible way.

They walk among us... Right in front of our eyes.

SMASH TO BLACK.