

FIENDISH

a supernatural whodunit

by

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"It's a pity you didn't know when you started your game of murder
that I was playing too."

— *House on Haunted Hill*, 1959.

A BLOOD MOON.

It looms in the sky like a bloodshot eye. Below its gaze sits a manor house, high on a craggy hill.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Evil echoes. It persists through
time. It stays with us, always
close by. Haunting us.

The manor is shrouded in a pale, eldritch mist. Empty windows gleam like eyeless sockets.

WOMAN'S VOICE
You've felt it, seen it. You just
don't know it.

Rot in the wood, rust in the iron, cracks in the brick. This is the kind of house that keeps secrets.

A black raven swoops towards us with a violent SCREECH --

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

ICE CLINKS in a glass.

His hand trembling, THOMAS VANDERBERG (75, Vincent Price meets Tywin Lannister) lifts a drink to his dry lips.

WOMAN'S VOICE (TV)
The devil doesn't wear horns. He
doesn't have red skin, hooves, and
a pointy tail.

He sits at an executive desk in a double-height, wood-paneled room. His face bathed in the tinny glow of the television on the wall. An old book lies opened in front of him.

WOMAN'S VOICE (TV) (CONT'D)
He looks like you. He looks like
your neighbor, your friend...

Vanderberg downs his drink, his hand still shaking. Something has just happened and whatever it is has him rattled.

WOMAN'S VOICE (TV) (CONT'D)
Like someone in your family.

On the screen, JOANNA FINCH (40, black, British) reads from a book. She sits with an INTERVIEWER on a BBC news hour. It's her voice we've been hearing.

JOANNA (TV)

Evil is everywhere you turn. It's
easy to find but hard to see.
That's where I come in.

Vanderberg looks down at the dusty old book. On the page, we
catch a glimpse of the *intricate lines of an occult symbol*.

INTERVIEWER (TV)

That was Joanna Finch reading an
excerpt from her new book, *A Study
of Shadows*. Welcome, Joanna.

JOANNA (TV)

Thank you. Thank you for hav--

He hits pause. *TICK-TICK-TICK*. A coffin-shaped grandfather
clock ticks indifferently in the silence.

It's just past three o'clock. The witching hour.

Vanderberg takes his glasses off and rubs his temples. He
pours himself another splash of spirits, spilling.

As he knocks the drink back...

JOANNA (TV) (CONT'D)

--is everywhere you turn--

The video suddenly starts up again. But now, that same line
plays in a record-scratch loop.

Vanderberg grabs the remote and turns the TV off.

He picks up his phone and hits a button. He stands up and
starts pacing, anxiously.

VANDERBERG

Thursday, October 17th. 3:06 A.M.
It's gotten worse. Over the past
few days. But, I found something
tonight. I think I just found where
it's coming fr--

Vanderberg JUMPS when the TV switches back on.

JOANNA (TV)

--is everywhere you turn--

The same line looping over and over. Joanna's face glitching
eerily. What is going on?

Vanderberg rushes over to unplug the set. The screen fizzles
to inky blackness.

But, the silence is filled by something else -- a throatless whisper, a sinuous strand of sound...

A woman's voice.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The slow *crrrrreeeak* of a door as Vanderberg steps into the long, dark hallway. An antique mirror on the wall behind him.

The voice is coming from the opposite end, mingling with the wind's hiss outside.

Vanderberg inches towards the sound.

He flicks on dusky lights to see...a wooden stool. Sitting in the middle of the hall. It clearly doesn't belong there.

The lights quiver briefly and then go dark. He flips the switch. Nothing.

The power's out. Shit.

He squints into the murk and notices something. *What is that?* It's a kind of silhouette, standing behind the stool.

VANDERBERG
Who's there?

Vanderberg takes his glasses out...

POV -- His vision transitions from blurry to 20/20 but he sees...*nothing*.

Spooked, he pulls the glasses off, testing, peering -- eyes riveted to the stool when...*it wobbles*.

Then, the mirror behind him suddenly CRACKS! Vanderberg whips around and in the splintered glass he sees...

The hazy figure of a woman. Pale. Dressed in grey. Her bare feet on the stool.

Trembling, Vanderberg holds the glasses up to his eyes.

POV -- The blur in the mirror crystallizes, revealing that the woman is wearing a thin white shroud over her head.

THUD! Vanderberg JOLTS, spinning back around, the glasses slipping from his fingers.

The stool lies knocked over on its side. Like someone just kicked it. *But now, the woman isn't there.*

Vanderberg drops to his knees -- groping blindly -- clawing at the floor for his glasses.

Finally, he finds them and looks up. He freezes. Whatever he's seeing has turned his face to ash...

POV -- A blurry image of the woman suspended in mid-air. Her body writhing, convulsing grotesquely.

But, when he lifts the glasses...

POV -- *She's gone.* 20/20 shows an empty hallway. Just the dark and the silence.

Vanderberg stands, knees weak, still gasping. He stares into the shadows...

Nothing there.

He finally breathes, relieved. Whatever was happening seems to be over. He turns around and --

**THE WOMAN SUDDENLY DROPS DOWN RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM --
HANGING FROM A NOOSE -- TWITCHING AND CHOKING!**

Vanderberg lets loose a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM and we --

SMASH TO:

FIENDISH

Chapter One: Angie

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A glossy autumn day. An old Subaru Outback chugs north on a California highway.

SUPER: TWO DAYS LATER

EXT/INT. SUBARU - DAY

ANGIE GOODWIN (27) snores like a lawnmower. She's asleep in the passenger seat, out like a light. Jaw hanging.

Behind the wheel, BEN VANDERBERG (35, blue eyes and broad shoulders) glances at her with a smile. Then --

BEN

Shit!

-- a big SUV swerves hard, cutting him off. Angie stirs, rubbing her eyes.

ANGIE

...what happened?

BEN

Sorry, this asshole cut me off.

ANGIE

Whatever. You're trying to get us killed, right?

BEN

(chuckling)

It would be a pretty good excuse.

Ben lowers the sun visor. Tucked under the strap is an old photo of two girls with their mom. They're smiling, happy.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry, Dad. Couldn't make it. Just died in a fiery inferno.

Angie smiles through a big yawn, stretching out her stiff limbs in the cramped space.

BEN (CONT'D)

Seriously though. I'm telling you. This is probably going to suck.

She tilts her head at him.

ANGIE

Ben, I got it. You've said that like eight times now. How much longer do we got?

BEN

Three hours. Ish. We should probably stop for gas. Also, you really need to get a new car.

ANGIE

You mean right after I pay off my student loans in 2059?

After a quick laugh, Ben gets a little serious. Angie can't help but notice the subtle change in his demeanor.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

What?

BEN

It's just...I'm not talking shit just to talk shit. I haven't *really* told you just how fucked up my family is.

ANGIE

You make it sound like they're going to release the hounds on me.

BEN

I mean, I wouldn't rule it out.

She reaches over to take his hand, trying to be supportive.

ANGIE

It'll be fine. There are worse things in the world than a bunch of rich douchebags contending for the title of Emperor Douchebag.

Ben smiles gratefully. He loves this girl. Just as he leans over for a kiss -- *BRRRRING!* -- his phone brays insistently.

The caller ID says: "Colin Cancer."

BEN

Oh, God. Right on cue.

Ben immediately swipes ignore.

INT. AIRPORT CHECK-IN - DAY

COLIN VANDERBERG (45, game show host good-looks) hangs up the call, muttering angrily.

COLIN
Little prick piece of shit.

INGRID (40, his beauty queen wife, eyes hiding behind Holly Golightly sunglasses) stays locked on her phone.

INGRID
What?

COLIN
Ben's not picking up.

INGRID
And? What is so pressing? We're going to be there in like an hour.

COLIN
I want to know if he's heard anything. I want to know what this is about.

INGRID
Colin, think about it. He's calling a big family meeting after years apart. Spur of the moment. He's really old.

Colin stares blankly. Ingrid lowers her Manhattans so he can see her eyes roll.

INGRID (CONT'D)
He's dying. That's what this is about. Obviously.

COLIN
(gets it now)
Maybe. I don't know. Dad's always got something up his sleeve.

INGRID
You mean, like disinheriting us?

Colin winces at that possibility -- one he's definitely considered.

INGRID (CONT'D)
Yeah. You probably shouldn't have committed securities fraud, right?

COLIN
 (this again?)
 How many times do I have to say
 this? I didn't do anything wrong.

INGRID
 So, you're being investigated by
 the SEC and the FBI for entirely
 unrelated crimes?

Red splotches form on Colin's forehead. He juts his jaw out, trying to keep his composure.

COLIN
 Ingrid, can we just pretend like
 our marriage isn't the fucking
 Hindenburg? At least for a couple
 of days?

INGRID
 (doesn't miss a beat)
 I don't think I brought enough
 cocaine for that.

EXT/INT. MASERATI QUATTROPORTE - DAY

SNIFF! BRIE MORGAN (38, pretty like a wilting flower) snorts a bump of blow like a pro. After the rush fades --

BRIE
 What if he's dying? What if that's
 what this is about?

RICK (40, her husband, a homeless man's Patrick Bateman) scratches his buttchin before answering.

RICK
 You mean, like, cancer?

BRIE
 Yeah. Six months to live. That kind
 of thing.

They're parked at a gas station off a rural highway. Brie passes him the coke.

BRIE (CONT'D)
 Things would get insane. They'd all
 be like sharks in the water. Colin,
 especially.

Rick inhales a dollop of powder from off the back of his smooth, tan hand.

RICK

...shit.

(shakes it off)

You really think he's going to show up? Your dad did fire his ass.

BRIE

We're talking about two billion dollars, Rick. He'll show up.

RICK

Well, as long as we're taken care of. That's all that matters.

Brie's wheels turn for a beat.

BRIE

How much money do we owe again?

RICK

To the bank or the government?

She slumps down in the seat like a pouty preteen, her lips curling into a frown.

BRIE

Ugh, this is so unfair. I fucking hate money.

RICK

Will you stop worrying? Your dad loves you. You're the baby girl.

BRIE

I know. It's just the idea of fighting with everybody is really stressing me out.

She starts fanning her face with little flutters.

BRIE (CONT'D)

I feel pressured. I can feel the toxins building. My complexion is probably shit right now. September warned me about this.

RICK

Who's September?

BRIE

My new guru. Can you get me the ketamine gummies?

A massive truck ZOOMS past the gas station.

EXT/INT. SUBARU - DAY

The ROAR of the highway fades as Angie rolls up the window.

ANGIE

So, how long has it been since
everybody got together?

BEN

Last time was...before med school?
It's been a while. I haven't even
seen my dad in, like, three years.

Angie thinks about that, twisting her mouth.

ANGIE

Ben, are you sure it's okay I'm
tagging along?

BEN

I told you. Dad is the one who
suggested it. Which is...weird, to
be honest. He hates outsiders.

(thinks)

Kind of makes me feel like he's up
to something.

ANGIE

What does that mean?

BEN

He's *always* up to something. He
likes to pull on people's strings
to watch them dance. It's kind of
his thing.

Angie's eyebrows arch, only half-joking when she says --

ANGIE

What exactly am I getting myself
into here?

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE - ESTABLISHING

The manor looms in the distance. Dark stone and mouldering
brick. The contours of its façade form a Gothic tableau.

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE COURTYARD - DAY

The Subaru pulls around an ornate fountain and rumbles to a
stop next to Rick's Maserati.

As Angie climbs out of the passenger seat, she glances over and almost jumps when she sees --

ANGIE
Who is that?

-- a stone-faced maid at the entrance. Her sunken eyes stare coldly. Her mouth a grim line. This is BRONSON (60s).

BEN
The head maid. Christ, she looks exactly like when I was a kid. Hey, Bronson!

Angie gets her bag out of the trunk. We see that she walks with a pronounced limp, favoring her left leg. An old injury.

As Ben heads towards the front door, Angie steps back and takes in the grandiose manor.

ANGIE
Whoa.

Her eyes land on a third-floor window. She sees a skeletal face -- the gaunt, haunting visage of an old man obscured by the darkly stained glass.

Unnerved, Angie bends down to grab her bag. When she looks back up, *the face is gone*.

INT. FOYER - DAY

A mangy grey cat scampers off as Bronson leads Ben and Angie inside. A gaudy chandelier glitters overhead. High, vaulted ceilings. A winding grand staircase.

COLIN (O.S.)
Benny Blanco!

Ben rolls his eyes as Colin walks over.

BEN
Hey, Colin. Are we the last ones?

COLIN
Pretty much. Everybody's in the drawing room.
(looks at Angie)
Who's this?

BEN
Angie, this is my brother, Colin.
Colin, this is Angie Goodwin.

COLIN

Nice to meet you. Actually, this is good because I got a question. Been wondering about this for a while.

BEN

(here we go)

Colin...

COLIN

What is it like to sleep with a literal asshole?

Ben and Angie can't help but chuckle. Colin's a dick but still kind of charming.

COLIN (CONT'D)

No, I'm serious. I've never tried it before. Does it stink?

Ben leads Angie towards the staircase, flipping Colin off.

INT. BEN'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY

Ben and Angie walk inside. It's old and lofty but it feels less like a museum than the rest of the house.

They drop their bags on the floor by the big four-poster bed, kicking up dust.

BEN

Here we go. My old room.

49ers posters on the walls. Basketball trophies. Rusty dumbbells in a corner.

BEN (CONT'D)

Crazy. It's exactly the same. Like it hasn't been touched.

Angie finds an old Ludacris CD and holds it up.

ANGIE

Seriously?

Ben snatches it away from her.

BEN

(deadpan)

That is not mine. I don't know how that got in here.

Angie notices something fastened to the wall. Looks like a brass knob -- molded into the shape of a monkey's head.

ANGIE
What's this thing?

BEN
Oh, that's a speaking tube. All these old Victorian monsters used to have them.

He pulls the monkey head out showing that it's connected to a flexible air pipe. A brass disc covers the mouthpiece.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's like an old-school intercom.
You talk into this end and it connects to the servants' quarters.

Angie pulls a look.

ANGIE
The servants' quarters?

Ben hangs his head, chagrined.

BEN
Yikes. Sorry.

She chuckles at his plight and brings him in close.

ANGIE
Hey, it's okay. This isn't who you are. I know that. You don't have to prove otherwise.

Ben beams down on her tenderly. Then --

BEN
Wanna fool around?

Angie cracks up, smacking him on the chest.

ANGIE
No, I don't want to fool around.
There are people in the house.

BEN
They won't hear anything. I'll put the Ludacris on.

Laughing, Angie starts pushing him towards the door.

ANGIE

No, you're going to give me ten minutes and then I'm going to meet you downstairs. That's what we're doing right now.

BEN

Yeah but after, right?

Ben gets another kiss in before Angie playfully shoves him out the door, closing it behind him.

The room falls quiet. Now alone, Angie takes a second. She takes a big breath and lets it go.

ANGIE

Okay. Let's do this.

She unzips her bag.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Now wearing a nice but cheap floral-print dress, Angie limps out to the hallway.

She steps in front of an old mirror. We see a silver necklace with a St. Joseph's pendant hanging around her neck. Just a trinket but it clearly means something to her.

Then, in the smoky glass, she catches a *fleeting glimpse* of a grey silhouette -- someone rounding a corner. Angie pivots.

ANGIE

Hello?

ANOTHER HALLWAY

Angie turns the corner to see a woman entering a room, her chalky hand closing the door. Was that another maid?

Angie follows, the floorboards grouching. She reaches the door and nudges it open...

INT. PLAY ROOM - DAY

Nothing. There's no one inside. Which is pretty weird. But, Angie shrugs that off and steps through the door.

The room is unoccupied, neglected. Particles of dust float in feeble rays of sunlight.

Angie sees toys and children's decorations. A small bookshelf built into the back wall. Another speaking tube. The furniture is covered by plastic sheets.

Except for an old wooden stool. The same one from the teaser. Angie doesn't pay it much mind.

Then, as she looks around, Angie hears...whispers. More of a presence than a sound. She turns but sees nothing.

THUD! Angie JUMPS when a red book falls off the shelf, hitting the floor in a heap of dust.

She picks it up. It's an old edition of *Through the Looking-Glass*. After a beat, Angie puts the book back and exits.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Angie hobbles to the entryway. Colin, Ingrid, Brie, Rick, and Ben sit in the Kodachrome-colored space. Crowded with garish furniture. An imposing hearth.

Talking amongst themselves, they don't notice Angie standing there. She clears her throat.

ANGIE

Uh, hello.

All faces turn towards her at the same time.

NEXT CUT:

BLACK COFFEE spills on a white tablecloth. Ben tosses a napkin on the flowering stain.

BEN

Who are we missing, then? Just
Tobin and Mom?

COLIN

No way Mom comes. She won't even
breathe the same air as Dad.

Ben and Colin stand at a table where coffee has been set. Colin glances at Angie. She's listening to Brie prattle on.

COLIN (CONT'D)

How long have you guys been
together?

BEN

Me and Angie? Five months.

COLIN

That's it? Kind of a flex bringing
her to meet Dad after five months,
isn't it?

BEN

It was his idea.

COLIN

(nonplussed)

What? Dad said for you to bring
her? Our dad?

Ben nods, leaning in a little closer.

BEN

Do you have any idea what this is
about?

COLIN

No. That's why I was trying to call
you, dickhole. I haven't even
talked with Dad since we fell out.
So, him reaching out a year later?
It's pretty weird, man.

BEN

Also, where is he? Is he even here?

COLIN

I don't know. But, it feels like
he's got someth--

BRIE (O.S.)

Oh, are we doing pictures?

Everyone turns to see Bronson bringing in an old twin-lens
reflex film camera mounted on a tripod.

BRONSON

Mr. Vanderberg has requested a
family portrait.

COLIN

You're joking.

BEN

Where is Dad, Bronson?

BRONSON

Apologies, Dr. Vanderberg. Mr.
Vanderberg will join the family for
dinner at 7:30 tonight.

BRIE

Why isn't he coming down?

BRONSON

Apologies, Mrs. Morgan. I'm not authorized to say anything more.

What does that mean? Ben meets Angie's quizzical gaze. His look says, I warned you.

COLIN

Alright, whatever. Let's just get this over with.

NEXT CUT:

The Vanderbergs line up for a portrait in front of the hearth. Rick helps Bronson set up the camera. Angie stands off to the side, awkwardly. Then --

BRONSON

If you could join the photo as well, Miss Goodwin?

That surprises everyone, especially Angie.

ANGIE

Excuse me?

BRIE

She's not family, Bronson.
(to Angie)
No offense.

ANGIE

(in total agreement)
Yeah, no. None taken.

BRONSON

Mr. Vanderberg has requested you join the portrait.

ANGIE

What?

BEN

Seriously?

BRONSON

He said everyone present should be in the picture.

O-kay. Angie limps over to stand in between Ben and Colin.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Is everyone ready?

Grim faces and stiff shoulders. Not exactly a happy family reunion. Bronson's about to take the picture when --

TOBIN (O.S.)
Well, isn't this nice?

-- TOBIN VANDERBERG (39, the middle child) approaches.
Disheveled. A permanent slouch. A vape pen between his lips.

COLIN
Oh, it's the Hunchdick of
Notre Dame.

BEN
Hey, there he is.

BRIE
Why are you always late to
everything, Tobin? Also, you look
like shit.

Tobin grins, revealing a set of nicotine-stained teeth.

TOBIN
Good to be home.

CUT TO:

MEDIUM SHOT of the younger generation of Vanderbergs posing.
More like a police lineup than a family portrait.

Over their heads, a painting of Thomas Vanderberg hangs on
the wall. The man from our teaser.

The paterfamilias. Looming large. Always watching.

Bronson aims the lens and --

BRONSON
One, two...

-- *CLICK.*

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Ben and Angie walk down a path. The knotty trunks of large
cypress trees on either side stretch towards each other.

BEN
It's pretty weird being back. This
place never really felt like home,
you know?

The natural growth of the trees forms a curving, shadowy
canopy for them to stroll under.

ANGIE
Why not?

BEN

Aside from the fact that I was at
boarding school nine months out of
the year? I don't know. I just
never felt like I belonged.

Angie wraps his arm around her shoulders.

ANGIE

You belong with me.

BEN

(smiling)

Come on. I want to show you
something.

EXT. OAK GROVE - AFTERNOON

The sun sets crimson. Ben leads Angie to a towering oak with
a thick trunk and misshapen branches.

BEN

This was my spot when I was a kid.

Angie gazes at the crooked tree.

ANGIE

Yeah, this thing is terrifying.

BEN

What? No way. I would come here all
the time. Once, we all went to...

His voice fades as Angie focuses on a big branch which
extends straight out. She's hypnotized by it.

There's something about it tha--

BEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Angie?

She shakes out of it.

ANGIE

Does someone else live here?

BEN

What?

ANGIE

I mean, besides your Dad and
Bronson? Maybe another maid?

BEN
 (confused)
 No. All the other maids quit years
 ago. Why?

ANGIE
 It's just, I thought I saw--

BEN
 Whoa. Hey, your nose is bleeding.

ANGIE
 (realizing)
 Crap.

Angie wipes the blood off with her palm as Ben digs into his pockets and finds half a napkin. He hands it to her.

BEN
 Here you go. Are you okay?

ANGIE
 Yeah. I think it's stopping.

She wipes the blood off, holding her head back.

BEN
 (attentively)
 You sure?

Angie dabs at her nose, smiling through the embarrassment.

ANGIE
 Pretty sure. I should probably wash
 up though.

BEN
 Okay, let's head back. Show's about
 to start anyway.

HOLD ON the oak tree as they walk away. Slowly, *whispers gather*. An ominous sound.

As if from the grave itself...

CUT TO:

INT. DISPLAY ROOM - EVENING

A TELEVISION SCREEN. We're watching a MONTAGE -- news footage of Thomas Vanderberg throughout his life and career.

NARRATOR (VIDEO)
 Thomas Edward Vanderberg. An
 American titan.

PULL BACK to see Angie standing alone in an exhibition of
 Vanderberg's accomplishments.

NARRATOR (VIDEO) (CONT'D)
 Founder of one of the most
 successful private-equity firms in
 the nation, Thomas Vanderberg...

Angie's in an evening dress now. Nice but nothing special.
 She browses through the memorabilia of Vanderberg's life.

GENEVIEVE (O.S.)
 Impressive. Isn't it?

GENEVIEVE VANDERBERG (70, surgically preserved) slinks in.
 Her lean figure sheathed in a shimmery Paco Rabanne dress.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
 They leave out the part about how
 much money he made off the opioid
 crisis. Also, that investment in
 detention centers for immigrant
 kids. Details, right?

Her heels CLACK on the hardwood floor as she approaches.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
 Are you the girlfriend?

ANGIE
 Uh, yeah. Ben's girlfriend. I'm
 Angie. Mrs. Vanderberg?

Genevieve nods. There's a hollowness to her, something in her
 eyes. Like she's dead inside.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 It's very nice to meet you.

Genevieve looks her up and down, appraising, taking in her
 Macy's-bought outfit.

GENEVIEVE
 Ben hasn't ever mentioned you. Of
 course, we don't really talk. How
 serious is it?

ANGIE
 Pretty serious, I think. We just
 moved in together.

GENEVIEVE
So, you have designs?

Her icy tone is starting to feel more and more hostile.

ANGIE
I wouldn't put it that way.

Genevieve's mouth narrows like a knife. But, Angie's not the type to get easily intimidated.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Is this the part when you tell me
I'm not good enough for your son?

GENEVIEVE
(a scornful laugh)
My son. Right. You think you know
him, do you?

ANGIE
Yes. I do.

GENEVIEVE
I thought I knew Thomas, too. When
I married him. And then, he turned
out to be a liar, a cheat, a bully,
and a degenerate. And, he spent the
next four decades generally putting
me through hell.

ANGIE
Ben isn't--

GENEVIEVE
Ben isn't like that?

Genevieve gazes at Angie, softening. Something approaching
concern in her eyes.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)
Blood tells. And, Ben still bleeds
Vanderberg. He's still his father's
son. Don't say I didn't warn you.

She exits, leaving Angie alone with that cryptic comment.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A drafty, candle-lit space.

Angie, Ben, and the others mill around an extravagant table.
Waiting for dinner to start.

ANGIE AND BEN

They stand by a heraldic banner on the wall. A family sigil. Under a proud stag in a red field, a motto reads: "I trample it under my feet."

ANGIE

So, I talked with your mom.

BEN

Oof. How'd that go?

ANGIE

Yeah. She's not very nice.

Ben can't deny that. He spots Genevieve and Tobin on the other side of the room, talking in low tones.

BEN

She's not very happy either. She's been trying to divorce my dad since I was a kid. But, he won't let her go. Won't let her win.

(he leans in)

Supposedly, right after I was born, he had her committed.

ANGIE

Jesus. That's awful.

BEN

Colin talks about how Mom "went on a long trip." That's what Dad told them anyway.

Angie looks at Genevieve in a new light.

COLIN AND BRIE

Brie takes a sip of claret.

BRIE

I think he's dying. I think he has cancer.

COLIN

That's what Ingrid says. Wait, do you know something?

BRIE

No. I just *intuit* these things, you know? I was right about Rick's ED.

Colin chooses to let that one go.

COLIN

Well, if you guys are right? If he really is dying? That definitely changes things.

BRIE

Don't be tacky, Colin. You could at least wait until after dinner.

COLIN

Whatever. Don't tell me you haven't thought about it.

BRIE

Of course I have. It's a lot of money. I just wasn't going to be a dick about it. But, I don't have the legal bills you do.

COLIN

Brie, everybody knows you guys are broke as shit. I mean, Rick invested in WeWork.

BRIE

Shouldn't you be more concerned about going to prison?

BONG! -- Half the room JUMPS and everyone turns to see Bronson by a Chinese gong at the wall, mallet in hand.

BRONSON

Dinner is served.

GENEVIEVE

Bronson, where is Thomas?

BRIE

Yeah, I thought he was coming down.

BRONSON

Apologies but Mr. Vanderb--

COLIN

Nope. No. This is getting fucking weird. I think I can speak for everybody. We want to know what's going on, Bronson. Where is Dad?

And, that's when we hear...*whistling*. Someone from off-screen is slowly whistling the tune to "Three Blind Mice."

Eyes drift to the door as *Thomas Vanderberg* steps in. He stops whistling abruptly, leaving the melody unresolved.

VANDERBERG

Well, well, well. Look what the cat
dragged in.

The old man has lost weight. An ashen pallor. But, he still cuts a dramatic, tyrannical figure. Surveying the scene. His mere presence shuts everyone up, even Colin.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

A man nears the end of a long life
and he wants to be with his family.
He wants to be surrounded by his
own flesh and blood. He wants to
feel protected. Safe. That's why I
asked you all here tonight. Because
right now, I feel safer having you
all with me. In this house.

Together.

(beat)

Where I can see you.

Eyebrows raise. That was....weird.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

Let's eat.

NEXT CUT:

Dinner is underway. The rattling of china and silver. The soft buzz of overlapping conversation.

Vanderberg sits silently at the head of the table, beady eyes narrowed behind his glasses, watching everyone like a hawk.

After a beat, Brie CLINKS a knife on her wine glass.

BRIE

Everybody. I don't want to
interrupt but Rick and I have an
announcement. We are officially
starting a new company.

BEN

Another one? Brie...

BRIE

Shut up. This one's going to work.
This is a really good idea.

RICK

Yeah, we're super-pumped about it.
It's a line of workwear designed
specifically...for immigrants. The
idea is to sew padding direc--

COLIN
 (breaks in)
 Can I actually say something,
 really quick? It's just been a
 while since we all got together.
 So, I'd like to make a toast.

He stands up, lifting his glass of wine. It's awkward.

COLIN (CONT'D)
 To family. To loyalty. To sticking
 together, through thick and thin.
 And, Dad? I wanted to say that even
 after everything that happened,
 there's no hard feelings.

VANDERBERG
 Really? How comforting.

COLIN
 I was your CEO and you could have
 stuck by me but you didn't. You
 threw me under the bus. But, you
 know, that's okay. Because I didn't
 do anything wrong.

TOBIN
 Except for get caught.

COLIN
 (fuming)
 Tobin, I swear to God...

TOBIN
 How is that grand jury going?

Colin's about to retort when --

VANDERBERG
 How is rehab going, Tobin?

That wipes the grin off Tobin's face. He darts an instinctive look to his mother.

TOBIN
 I'm done, actually. The program
 finished a few days ago, Dad.

GENEVIEVE
 (fiercely protective)
 He wasn't in rehab. It's called a
 wellness retreat.

Vanderberg shoots her a withering glare.

VANDERBERG

Am I paying for it? Tobin, I asked
a question. Am I paying for it?

Tobin averts his eyes, head bowed, intimidated. This is
brutal. Even Colin feels for his brother.

TOBIN

(very quiet)

Yes, Dad.

VANDERBERG

Right. Then, I think I can call it
whatever I want.

Genevieve and her husband stare each other down like combat-ready gladiators. Then, she swiftly changes the subject --

GENEVIEVE

What about you? What do you do?

Angie stops her fork halfway up, realizing that Genevieve is speaking to her. Everyone waits for an answer.

ANGIE

Oh, I work for a non-profit. I'm a
housing retention specialist.

BEN

She places homeless people in
housing and helps them stay there.

VANDERBERG

Can't imagine there's a lot of
money in that.

ANGIE

Well, that's not why I do it.

VANDERBERG

So, you're one of those people who
pretends to not care about money.

BEN

Do we really have to talk about
money right now?

ANGIE

(defiant)

Actually, I think I value money
more than anybody here.

VANDERBERG

How do you figure that?

ANGIE
Because I used to be homeless.

Ingrid chokes on her wine. Stares all around.

INGRID
Wait, are you being serious?

BEN
Yes, she's being serious but--

ANGIE
No, it's okay, Ben.
(beat)

I never knew my father. And, my mom died of an overdose when I was eight. So, me and my big sister, we had to fend for ourselves. She took care of me for a couple of years and then I lost her as well. They put me in the system. And, I've been on my own ever since.

Ben squeezes Angie's hand. He's so proud of her. Then --

COLIN
Dad, do you have cancer?

VANDERBERG
Excuse me? BRIE
Colin! What are you--

COLIN
Well, I'm sorry but you call us all up here out of the blue, after years. You obviously wanted us here for a reason. So, let's not waste any more time. Just tell us. What are we doing here?

Before Vanderberg can reply -- *BUZZ!* The phone at his elbow goes off. He glances down and reads the message.

Then, he looks up with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

VANDERBERG
Who wants to play a game?

CUT TO BLACK.

Chapter Two: Thus Bad Begins

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Dark, heavy clouds hang in a starless sky, threatening. The wind whips in strong spirals, whistling against stone.

VANDERBERG (PRELAP)
The game...is murder.

The first patter of rain. A storm is coming.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Vanderberg and his guests now sit in a ring of chairs set around a large Persian rug. Only Bronson sits off to the side, watching keenly.

BEN
Like, the party game? Seriously?

We're in a large and lofty space. Heavy antique furniture. Dusty bookshelves. Dark oil paintings on the walls.

VANDERBERG
It'll be like when you were kids. I assume you remember how to play?

Vanderberg smirks, relishing the confusion he's provoked.

BRIE
...yeah. A few of us are victims.
And, somebody plays the murderer.

Rain now pours outside, pelting the outer walls.

VANDERBERG
That's right. But, we can't start the game just yet. We're still missing a key player.

GENEVIEVE
What? Who else is coming?

Another smile tugs at the corners of the old man's mouth. Ben drops his chin, sighing.

BEN
Dad, can you just--

VANDERBERG

(interrupting)

Three weeks ago, I flew to Zürich on business. I was gone for eight days and when I returned, to my surprise, I saw that the power had been cut. Someone had broken into the mounting box just off the road and tampered with the main breaker. Everything was shut off. *Including the security cameras.*

He pauses, gauging his family's reaction to that last part.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

Apparently, the outage occurred during the two days when Bronson happened to be on leave and away from the estate. Meaning, there was a period of roughly 48 hours during which this house was both empty and unmonitored.

Where is he going with this?

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

At first, I thought it was just a robbery. But, I checked. Nothing had been stolen. And then, soon after I got back...it started.

TOBIN

What started?

VANDERBERG

Sounds. Noises in the night. Scuffing, creaking, knocking. I didn't think much of it. But then, I heard whispers. I started seeing things. Shadows moving. Faces in mirrors.

Ben finds Angie's eyes, confusion growing in his gaze.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

I'll admit it: I was afraid. It's not a feeling I'm accustomed to. I thought I was going crazy. But, I couldn't deny what was happening. There was something in this house. A presence. And, I had to know what it was. I had to know where it was coming from.

FLASHBACK:

In the study, late at night. Vanderberg ransacks the room, overturning furniture in a frenzy. He's coming undone.

VANDERBERG (V.O.)
Then, two nights ago...I found it.

He stops, panting. He sees that the Persian rug is askew.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

VANDERBERG
I found something and it nearly killed me.

Found what? Everyone waits with bated breath.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)
Colin. Ben. Roll up this end of the rug for me.

The brothers bend down, each at one corner of the rug. They roll it back, slowly revealing the surface underneath.

COLIN
What the hell...

AN OVERHEAD SHOT reveals -- a large occult symbol burned onto the hardwood floor.

It's a perfect circle, six feet in diameter. Within it, we see an elaborate pattern of figures, lines, and stars.

BEN
Dad, what is this?

The others stand, crowding each other to see, flabbergasted.

JOANNA (O.S.)
It's called the Seal of Solomon.

Thunder CRASHES and heads swivel to see -- JOANNA FINCH, standing at the door, drenched by the rain. Everyone stares, startled by her abrupt appearance.

COLIN
Who the fuck are you?

She steps into the light.

JOANNA
Joanna Finch.

We see that she's carrying an old carpet bag and wearing a pink Hello Kitty fanny pack.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Did somebody call about a ghost?

NEXT CUT:

A FIRE CRACKLES.

The wood popping softly as it burns. The flames cast long, flickering shadows.

JOANNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
"This is the Form of the Secret
Seal of Solomon..."

PULL BACK to see everyone sitting again as Joanna holds court, reading from an ancient tome.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
"....wherewith he did summon up and
bind the Seventy-Two Demons of Hell
and their Legions."
(closes the book)
Medieval mystics believed that this
seal could be used together with
specific incantations to open a
portal to the realm of spirits and
conjure demons into our world.

A loaded beat. Then, Colin starts chuckling sardonically, deflating the tension.

COLIN
"The realm of spirits?" What is
going on, Dad?

BRIE
Yeah, why would you put this here?

VANDERBERG
I just told you. I didn't. *One of
you did.*

Jaws go slack. What in the world is he talking about?

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)
Someone in this room broke into the
house while it was empty, burned
this symbol onto the floor, and
cursed me with a demon.

FLASHBACK:

From the teaser, Vanderberg cowers in the hallway as the grey figure hangs from the noose, writhing and twitching.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Ben casts a severely skeptical look at Joanna.

BEN

Just so I have this straight. You are from England and you're here to...catch a ghost? Or something? This is what you do for a living?

Joanna hesitates. This is always the tricky part.

JOANNA

I investigate the occult. I specialize in demonology, mysticism, exorcism, witchcraft. And, magic.

Ingrid laughs. She's not the only one.

GENEVIEVE

This is ridiculous.

INGRID

Wow. You are really committed to the bit here.

TOBIN

(to Joanna)

Wait, you're saying it's actually possible to conjure a demon like Dad thinks?

JOANNA

Yes. It is possible but very difficult and extremely dangerous--

COLIN

Oh, come on. You can't conjure a demon. Demons don't fucking exist. What are we even talking about?

BEN

Hold on, Dad. There's got to be a thousand people out there who would love to see you dead. So, if you think all this ghost shit is real, why are we the only ones here?

Vanderberg turns to Joanna for an answer to that. As does everyone else. She proceeds cautiously.

JOANNA

To be clear. I *did not* know that Mr. Vanderberg would be inviting you all to the house.

(beat)

That being said, when he hired me, I may have told him that the most likely murder suspects are always those *closest* to the victim.

Colin throws his hands up, turning on his father.

COLIN

So, *she's* the one feeding you this garbage? And, you're actually listening to her? We don't even know who she is, for fuck's sake.

BRIE

(stepping in)

Dad, we're family. Why would one of us want to kill you?

Vanderberg's face darkens, eyes filling with disdain as he regards them all.

VANDERBERG

The money. You've been waiting to get your hands on it for years. All of you. Licking your chops like greedy little dogs. Counting the days while you fail and fuck up at everything. Now one of you has decided they don't want to wait anymore.

(pause for effect)

So, I changed my will.

Sudden silence. He's got everyone's full attention now.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

Yesterday, I put all of my assets into a charitable trust.

GENEVIEVE

What?!

COLIN

Dad, what the fuck?!

Even Joanna is caught off-guard by that news.

JOANNA

I didn't know about this part either.

Vanderberg stands, that wolfish smile returning.

VANDERBERG

The good news is that the trust
doesn't take effect until tomorrow
night at midnight. After that, it
becomes irrevocable. Which means
you all have roughly...

He glances over at the stately grandfather clock on the wall.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

...26 hours to give me what I want.

TOBIN

Which is?

Another theatrical pause.

VANDERBERG

A confession. Whoever did this, if
you confess now, I'll revoke the
trust and reinstate the provisions
of my will for everyone else. If
not? If no one comes forward by
midnight tomorrow? None of you gets
a penny. Not even you, Bronson.

The maid's permafrown turns into a scowl. Then, Vanderberg
hands Colin a dossier and --

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)

Let the game begin.

-- walks off unceremoniously. Leaving his family in the
fallout of the bomb he just dropped.

BEN

Dad? Dad, come on! Is this
for real?

GENEVIEVE

Thomas! Get back here!

Genevieve rushes after Vanderberg as Colin furiously turns
the pages in the folder.

COLIN

Nononono, this can't be happening.

BRIE

Is that it? The new will?

TOBIN

Colin, let me see it!

As a noisy argument breaks out, everyone talking over each
other, Angie glances at Joanna. Who is staring right at her.

An enigmatic smile on her face.

INT. BEN'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits with a laptop open. Angie throws on some pajamas, getting ready for bed.

BEN
(scrolling)
Memory loss. Confusion about time
or place. Losing things. Could be.
I don't know.

ANGIE
He seems pretty lucid to me.

BEN
This is a nightmare. The
inheritance is all they have.
They're nothing without it. Mom,
Colin, Brie, even Tobin. They'd
sell their souls to get their hands
on Dad's money.

Angie sits down on the bed next to him.

ANGIE
I'm sorry, babe.

BEN
Demons? A portal? This shit with
his will? It can't be real. He's
got to be playing some kind of sick
practical joke.

Angie closes the laptop for him. They lay down together, Ben wrapping her up in his strong arms.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hey, if you want to leave, I get
it. But, I really don't think I can
do this without you.

Angie nestles her head on his chest.

ANGIE
No, don't worry about that.
(beat)
I'm not going anywhere.

HOLD ON her pensive face as we --

FADE TO BLACK:

SUDDENLY:

INT. BEN'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

GASP! Angie wakes in fright. She sits up in bed, sucking air, eyes wild. Gradually, she remembers where she is.

All is quiet. Just the steady snarebeat of rain outside. Ben snoring beside her. Angie rubs her eyes and gets up.

BATHROOM

Angie trudges inside. She switches on the light and sees a dark smear on her upper lip. Another bloody nose.

ANGIE
Goddamn it.

She turns the faucet. The water runs softly. As she cleans up, she hears a faint...*crrrrreeeak*.

Was that the door?

BEDROOM

Angie steps out of the bathroom and sees that the door to the bedroom is open. Huh.

She tiptoes across the room, dragging her left leg. She pulls the door open quietly, slowly.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Angie sticks her head out into the hallway. There's nothing out there. Just layers of shadows.

She treads towards the railing and tilts eyes down onto the bottom floor...*a light glows*.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

Angie limps into the empty, tenebrous space. A single stove light shines dully, fuzzy and buzzing.

We see an old-fashioned service elevator towards the rear.

Angie gazes through the window that overlooks the yard. Rain falls heavy. A vivid crack of white lightning illuminates the dark world outside.

Then, a soft, slithery sound drifts...*the whispers*. The hair on the back of Angie's neck rises.

She definitely heard that.

Then, she grasps at her chest reflexively...her necklace is gone. What the hell?

Angie searches the kitchen floor, eyes straining in the dim light. Finally, she glances towards the service elevator...

There it is. The accordion gate has been pulled back and her necklace lies on the elevator floor.

She shuffles inside. She bends down to pick the necklace up when the gate begins to close!

Angie turns quickly to grab the door but it won't stop. It closes and CLICKS shut.

CLANK! The ancient gears GRIND into action. The elevator starts moving. Going up.

ANGIE
Motherfu--...

She puts her necklace back on and faces the latticed gate. The elevator climbs. Looks like she's going for a ride.

As we reach the second story, brick wall gives way to open space and Angie's breath catches when she sees...

A *murky grey figure*. A woman in a maid's uniform. The same person she saw earlier?

The woman stands unnaturally still at the end of the dark hallway -- back turned, head held low.

The elevator keeps rising and soon all Angie sees is the brown brick between floors. She can't suppress a shudder. Who was that? *What was that?*

Slowly, the elevator approaches the third story. Angie steadies herself. But then...

CLANK! The elevator halts with a jolt before reaching the next floor, revealing an open gap of just a couple of feet.

TAP. Angie presses the down button. The elevator doesn't budge. TAP-TAP. Nothing. It's stuck. Shit.

Thinking, Angie wedges her good foot into a crevice of the latticed gate -- a foothold.

She grabs the upper part of the gate and hoists herself up. It's like she's doing a pull-up.

Her head INCIES towards the gap, eyes slowly breaching the edge to see...*the same grey figure*.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

The woman stands at the end of another dark hallway with her back turned -- *the exact same position*.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

...uh, hello? Sorry, can I get some help here?

No response. The figure remains perfectly still. Angie struggles to keep her eyes up. Then...

The woman moves! She turns slowly, revealing the hint of a shroud over her head.

Startled, Angie loses her grip and slips -- stumbling back down to the elevator floor.

Angie ignores the pit in her stomach and hikes up the gate again, stretching to see into the third story.

Bracing, ready for anything, her eye-line rises above the edge of the gap and she sees...

Nothing. There's no one there. Angie holds herself up for another beat before --

YOWL! THE GREY CAT LEAPS INTO THE FRAME!

Angie YELPS -- falling off the gate and landing on her ass with a painful THUD!

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Goddamn it, cat.

Peering with chartreuse eyes, the cat MEOWS innocently. Angie looks up and flips it off.

CLANK! The elevator lurches into motion, cables GRINDING. Heading down. Angie breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

Still spooked, Angie yanks the accordion gate open and steps out. She turns and faces the empty elevator. It doesn't move. A silent beat passes when --

JOANNA (O.S.)

Are you alright?

-- Angie JOLTS! Joanna is standing right behind her.

ANGIE
Dude, what the hell?!

JOANNA
Sorry!

Angie gets her breath back, recovering.

ANGIE
What are you doing down here?

Joanna holds up the glass of milk in her hand as an answer.

JOANNA
Your name's Angie, isn't it? Ben's
girlfriend?

ANGIE
Yeah.

Joanna smiles that enigmatic smile.

JOANNA
What are you doing down here?

ANGIE
(hesitates)
I just...thought I heard something.

JOANNA
In the lift?

Angie can't find an answer that makes any sense. Joanna just stares at her, eyes probing. Then --

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Can I...would you mind if I tried
something?

Joanna sets her glass down and takes Angie's right hand.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
This will only take a few seconds.

She begins kneading Angie's palm, as if searching for something in the lines of her skin.

ANGIE
What are you doing?

JOANNA
(troubled)
Hmmm. That's a lot of...pain.

Angie tenses, feeling like Joanna is seeing into her soul. She pulls her hand away abruptly.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Is there anything you'd like to
tell me, Angie?

Angie rubs at her palm, weirded out by this woman.

ANGIE
No. I'm good.

JOANNA
(beat)
Well, if you happen to change your
mind, I'll be around.

Angie watches her leave before heading out the other way.

FADE TO BLACK:

And, OVER BLACK, we hear the *whispers* again. Faint at first.

The sound swells slowly, building, becoming something darker and angrier, until a voice cries --

VOICE
He's mine!

SUDDENLY:

INT. BEN'S OLD BEDROOM - MORNING

Angie finds herself standing in front of a vanity mirror, fixing her hair. What the hell?

BEN
...they want to talk about it while
my dad's with that detective.

She turns to see Ben buttoning up his shirt, realizing that she's also fully dressed, ready for the day.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hey? Are you okay?

ANGIE
Uh, yeah. Sorry. I just spaced out.

BEN
...alright. Well, just come down
when you're ready.

Ben gives her a quick kiss. As he heads for the door --

ANGIE

Hey, Ben. Are you sure there's
nobody else in the house?

BEN

Yeah. Bronson's the only one who
can take Dad's shit. Ang, is
everything alright?

She contemplates telling him...but decides to cover instead.

ANGIE

Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine. Forget it.

After Ben exits, Angie looks back at her reflection. She
stares for a long beat.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Joanna kneels down by the symbol on the floor, inspecting it
with an old-fashioned magnifying glass.

JOANNA

This is impressive, technically
speaking. The level of detail. Must
have taken hours. So, whoever did
this needed time.

Vanderberg stands behind her, looking on, looming.

VANDERBERG

Two days? Would that be enough?

JOANNA

Tight. But, doable. They timed it
for when both you and Bronson would
be away. Which means, you were
being watched.

(stands up)

My people are backtracing your
family's movements during those two
days. Ben was at a conference in
Denver. Tobin was on furlough from
rehab. Your wife was by herself in
the Atherton house. It's more of
the same for the others. We need to
dig further but I'm not seeing any
rock-solid alibis here.

Joanna puts the glass back in her fanny pack.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Do you have the pictures I asked
for? 120 roll film?

Vanderberg hands her a folder. Joanna opens it, scans
through, and clicks her tongue.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
That's not good.

CLOSE ON a headshot of Vanderberg. A dozen of them. In each,
we see a dark shadow, smearing the celluloid around his head.
Joanna flips to the family portrait with Angie in it.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Doesn't look like anyone else has
been affected though.

VANDERBERG
There's two missing in that
picture. Plus, Bronson. And, what
do you have on this Goodwin girl?

JOANNA
The full background on her should
come in soon.

VANDERBERG
She seems clean but I still want to
rule her out.
(thinks)
You're sure that the demon has
attached to me directly?

JOANNA
I'm not sure of anything yet. But,
yes. That's how it works. We call
it latching. The seal creates a
portal for it to cross over but the
curse follows you wherever you go.

VANDERBERG
So, why hasn't it killed me yet?

JOANNA
To be perfectly blunt, it wants to
fuck with you. It wants to oppress
and torment you before it devours
your soul and discards your body.
Like a husk.

Vanderberg lifts a single eyebrow.

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Angie sits next to Ben on the spacious veranda. The remains of a brunch spread on a patio table.

COLIN

Ben, he's 75 years old and he's seeing ghosts. Literally.

The family is in the midst of a heated argument.

INGRID

Well, not literally.

COLIN

Okay. He literally *said* that he's seeing ghosts. He drew that thing on the floor. He thinks we're trying to kill him with a demon.

RICK

Really solid points.

BRIE

Honey, can you just...

COLIN

What I'm saying is, he's losing it. And, he's a danger to himself.

BEN

I don't disagree but you can't declare him incompetent after one conversation. Besides, how do we know he's not fucking with us? Wouldn't be the first time.

GENEVIEVE

We need to call a lawyer. See what options we have.

BRIE

Okay, can we just slow down for a second? I feel like this is kind of getting out of control.

INGRID

(exasperated)

No, Brie. We can't slow down. We're all getting cut out of the will at midnight. Remember that part?

COLIN

Meaning, we have to figure this shit out fast.

TOBIN
 Or whoever conjured the demon could
 just kill Dad right now. Save time.
 Make us all rich.

BEN
 Come on, man. GENEVIEVE
 Tobin, don't be odd.

Tobin sniggers as the argument escalates. Feeling a bit
 conspicuous, Angie gets up quietly and steps away.

NEXT CUT:

Angie stands at a railing, staring out at the lush grounds of
 the estate as the scene plays out behind her.

TOBIN (O.S.)
 Who do you think it is?

She turns to see Tobin. That crooked grin on his face.

TOBIN (CONT'D)
 The conjurer. Which one of them do
 you think did it? My money's on
 Genevieve.

ANGIE
 Your mom? What makes you say that?

TOBIN
 She's tried to kill Dad before.
 (off Angie's surprise)
 It was right after Ben was born.
 She went at him with a knife. At
 least that's how the story goes.

Angie looks at Genevieve, disconcerted by that anecdote.

TOBIN (CONT'D)
 Whoever it is, I kind of hope they
 pull it off. Wouldn't mind seeing
 the old man get eaten by a ghost.

ANGIE
 You mean, demon?

He's obviously playing the provocateur. Relishing it.

TOBIN
 I've always thought this place was
 haunted. Even think I saw a ghost a
 couple of times. When I was a kid.
 (beat)
 Maybe it was the Grey Woman.

ANGIE
The Grey Woman?

Another smile smears his face. Those yellow teeth.

TOBIN
Oh. Ben hasn't told you about her?
How interesting.

He saunters off. Angie looks over at Ben, Tobin's puzzling comment still ringing in her head.

JOANNA (PRELAP)
Do you have any idea *why* someone
would want to do this to you?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Joanna stands in front of the cracked antique mirror.

VANDERBERG (O.S.)
That's obvious. The money.

RACK FOCUS to see Vanderberg behind her. Joanna turns.

JOANNA
We are talking about your family.

VANDERBERG
We're talking about two billion
dollars. Cain killed Abel over a
bowl of soup.

JOANNA
No, Cain killed his brother out of
anger and envy. Money is never the
only motive for murder. There's
always something deeper.

(she moves on)
At any rate, antagonizing our
suspects last night wasn't exactly
your best idea. Changing your will?

Vanderberg can't resist a cunning grin.

VANDERBERG
I needed to reset the game. To
raise the stakes.

JOANNA
That's just it, Mr. Vanderberg.
This isn't a game.

VANDERBERG

No, you're right. It's not a game.
It's a trap. There is a rat in my
house. I've set the trap. Now, I
need you to catch it.

Joanna chews on her lip. She doesn't like how this is going.

JOANNA

If someone is trying to kill you,
then last night you gave them every
incentive to do so as quickly as
possible.

VANDERBERG

Good. I've spent the past thirteen
days with this thing in the house.
Whoever's doing this, I want them
to make a move. I want them to
stick their neck out.

JOANNA

I understand that. But, you've now
put me on a ticking clock. Because
of your midnight deadline, I've got
less than twelve hours to figure
out who the conjurer is and how to
break their bond with the demon.

Vanderberg leans in, smiling, a hint of mordant menace.

VANDERBERG

Then, you better work fast.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

The family sits in silence as Joanna ambles about, looking around, taking a moment. Then, she steps to a small piano and tinkles the high keys.

JOANNA

They hate this. I like to torture
them.
(winks)
Ghostbusters.

Crickets. Tough crowd.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Well, then. I see that you're all
skeptical of my presence here.
Which I understand. But, believe
me, I do not have an agenda.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Mr. Vanderberg thinks that he has been cursed with a demon. I don't care if he's right or wrong. But, I have been hired to find out. And, I *will* find out.

Ben groans, not bothering to hide his disdain.

BEN

How? How are you going to do that?
And, how much is my dad paying you?

Angie grabs his hand, silently urging him to calm down.

JOANNA

(ignores that jibe)

Before we start, I'd like to make something very clear. If one of you has managed to conjure a demon here, that doesn't mean you're *controlling* it.

(lets that land)

You've let a lion inside this house. An angry, ravenous thing that is just as likely to kill you as it is Mr. Vanderberg. So, please. Come forward. No crime has been committed yet. Help me put a stop to this before it's too late.

No one speaks. Just scoffing looks. They're not taking this very seriously.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Right. Looks like we're going to have to do this the hard way.

BRIE

What does that mean?

Joanna smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.

Chapter Three: An Old-Fashioned Séance

EXT. GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Angie and Ben stroll through a small, spoiled garden off of the main house -- cracked statues, dead flowers, wild weeds.

BEN

A séance? A fucking séance? Oh, and obviously it "can only be performed under the canopy of night when the spirits of the dead are blah, blah, bullshit."

Angie stares blankly into the middle distance, not really listening to him complain.

BEN (CONT'D)

I can't believe we're actually going to do this. Dad might be in serious decline here and...Angie? Hey, you with me?

She slowly comes back to the moment.

ANGIE

Yeah. Sorry. It's just Tobin said something kind of weird.

(pauses)

...the Grey Woman? Have you heard that before?

After thinking, Ben figures out what she's referring to.

BEN

Fucking Tobin. It's this ghost story Colin used to tell me. The Grey Woman. She's looking for her baby. She's going to get you.

ANGIE

That's it? Just a scary story?

BEN

(wavers for a beat)

No. Look, it's just gossip. But, the rumor is that Dad got a maid here at the house pregnant and supposedly she got an abortion.

That makes Angie shiver. She crosses her arms, as if cold.

BEN (CONT'D)
It was a long time ago.

FLASHBACK:

Dawn. A light mist over the grounds. A grey sunrise.

BEN (V.O.)
I must have been around eight years old. It was early. I couldn't sleep and I went out for some reason.

LITTLE BEN traipses across the lawn leading to the grove.

BEN (V.O.)
I got to the old oak in the grove.
And...that's where I saw her.

He stops dead in his tracks when he reaches the oak tree. We only catch a glimpse of what he sees...a woman's bare feet. A body dangling.

EXT. GARDEN - AFTERNOON

ANGIE
Why didn't you ever tell me about this? I mean, we were just there. At that exact same spot.

BEN
Ang, I was a kid. It was a really long time ago. I guess I'd just forgotten about it.

ANGIE
(insistent)
Ben, you saw a woman kill herself.

Ben sighs. He doesn't like getting grilled like this.

BEN
I'm saying, I don't even really remember it. And, yes. What happened is sad but there's no Grey Woman. It's not real, obviously.

BEN (CONT'D)
Angie, listen. I wasn't trying to keep anything from you. I would never do that. Okay?

Angie's only slightly mollified, still deeply unsettled.

BEN (CONT'D)
I've got to go try to talk to my
dad again. Is that okay?

Ben squares himself to her, looking deep into her eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hey? Are we good here?

She relaxes, nodding and giving him a hurried kiss.

ANGIE
Yeah. Yeah, go ahead. I'm okay.

After Ben leaves, Angie lingers for a beat, pensive.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
(softly)
I'm okay.

INT. PLAY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Angie enters, closing the door quietly. There's something in here, something about this room. She just knows it...

THUD! Angie JUMPS at the sound. She pivots to see that the same red book has fallen off the shelf...*exactly as before*.

Angie picks it up. She opens it and sees girlish handwriting inside -- "Property of Grace Cooper. So, hands off!"

She runs her fingers along the page, smiling. She places the book back and that's when she sees it...

A razor-thin cleft, nearly imperceptible, at the top of the bookshelf where it embeds into the wall.

Angie traces a fingertip along the cleft. She presses down and hears a soft -- *click*.

The shelf opens, revealing a small closet -- a collection of old knick-knacks inside. Plus, an old Keds shoebox. Angie lifts the lid and discovers dozens of sepia-toned photos.

Going through them, she finds a picture of a boy near that old oak tree. A woman stands behind him, her face blurred.

Angie flips the picture around. She sees that same girlish handwriting on the back: "Maddie and Ben - 1986".

Then, she hears...*the whispers*. The sound gathers and swirls in the air, like smoke.

Nerves quivering, Angie turns. She follows the faint sound to the wall. She presses her ear to the faded wallpaper...

Maddie?

Was that...a child's voice? Did it just come from the speaking tube?

Maddie, are you there?

Angie picks up the brass monkey head. She slips the disc covering the mouthpiece aside.

ANGIE
...hello?

She holds it to her ear, waiting for a response, on edge.

Come and get me!

Shocked -- Angie drops the tube and RUSHES out the door!

INT. BEN'S OLD BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Angie drags herself inside. Her eyes sweep the empty space. There's no one there.

But, the speaking tube...*is dangling from the wall, swaying gently*. As if someone just dropped it.

Angie picks up the tube. She brings the brass head to her ear. Waiting. Breath held. An agonizing suspense until...

He's mine...

That was a different voice, darker. Angie drops the tube, her skin prickling.

HALLWAY

From outside the room, we see Angie open the door. She stands still, warily scanning. And, when she steps away we see...

A ghostly figure standing just behind, looming ominously, her face covered by the shroud.

It's the Grey Woman.

INT. PLAY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Angie limps back inside. The photo of Little Ben lies on the floor. Angie picks it up.

As she stares at it...a single drop of blood falls from her nose onto the picture.

Then, from behind, a raspy whisper BLOWS her hair gently...

He's mine...

THE GREY WOMAN IS SUDDENLY STANDING RIGHT BEHIND HER! THE SHEER SHROUD LIKE A HELLISH DEATH VEIL --

HE'S MINE!!

The force KNOCKS Angie down! Dazed, she turns to look up as the specter *slowly removes the shroud from her head* --

SUDDENLY:

INT. PLAY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Angie stirs awake. Fresh blood around her nostrils. She looks around, vision hazy. The room is empty. Silent.

She staggers to her feet and limps out as fast as she can.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Angie stands in front of the mirror. Hands on the edges of the sink. Breathing hard. She gazes at her distraught face.

INT. SUBARU - AFTERNOON

Angie gets into the car and SLAMS the door. She squeezes her eyes shut. Blocking out the world. Trying to get it together.

Then, she lowers the visor and pulls out the photo. Now we know this is Angie, her big sister, and their mother.

CLOSE ON her mother's light brown, almond-shaped eyes. Angie's eyes. The picture seems to calm her.

But then, a KNOCK on the glass --

JOANNA

Hiya!

-- and Joanna suddenly appears, making Angie YELP.

ANGIE

Okay, you *really* need to stop doing that shit.

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Dark clouds roil in the sky as Joanna and Angie walk a gravel path that makes a circuit around the manor.

JOANNA

Conjuring a demon is actually a two-part process. Summoning the demon using the Seal of Solomon is the second part of that process.

Joanna casts her eyes about the grounds as they walk.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

First, you have to perform a sacrifice. An offering to the demon. To bribe it, essentially. To make a deal.

ANGIE

You mean, like, animal sacrifice?

They round a bend. A big barn-like structure comes into view, half a football field away from the main house.

JOANNA

Typically. Though they do tend to prefer people.

(off Angie's reaction)

Oh, yes. Give a demon a taste of human blood and it'll do anything you want. Are those horse stables?

INT. STABLES - AFTERNOON

Joanna and Angie enter the musty, derelict space. It's empty. A long row of horse stalls extends across to the other side.

ANGIE

So, what's supposed to happen when you summon a demon?

Shafts of sunlight stab through the high rafters. Cobwebs quiver in the shadows. The webwork dotted with dead flies.

JOANNA

A portal is opened. A nexus to the world of spirits. I call it the Other Side. Once opened, an entity can cross over.

Joanna STOMPS on the ground as they pass by empty box stalls.

ANGIE
(skeptical)

I don't know. Except for Ben, I wouldn't put *murder* past any of the Vanderbergs. But, I mean normal murder. Not...demon-related.

JOANNA

You may be right. Performing a proper spell does take years of practice, dedication. And, talent. It's like playing the piano. You can hit the right notes but that doesn't mean you're making music.

She STOMPS again in the same spot. A hollow ring. Squatting, she clears off dirt to reveal...a *trapdoor*.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Well, there's a thing.

INT. ROOT CELLAR - AFTERNOON

A pair of flashlight beams shine down from above. Joanna and Angie head down scarred wooden stairs.

JOANNA

This is a root cellar. For storing vegetables, fruits, and the like.

It's very dark down here. Insects and rodents scuttle about. Rotting wood. A rancid stench.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Perfect for a sacrifice ritual.

They head deeper into the fetid bowels of the cellar. Joanna shines her beam on a corner as Angie steps forward to see --

ANGIE

Ugh, are those...

BLACK RATS.

Nine of them. All arrayed in a circle with their tails tied together. *And, they've been burned.*

Defying every olfactory instinct, Joanna kneels. She spots the faintest trace of chalk markings on the ground.

JOANNA

A *burnt offering*. The sacrifice of an impure animal. Interesting.

She extracts a spring-loaded switchblade and scrapes a substance onto the edge. She holds it up to her nose.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Sulfur. Mandrake root. *Very*
interesting.

Angie dry heaves.

EXT. STABLES - AFTERNOON

Angie retches, bent over at the waist, still nauseated. Joanna pats her gently on the back.

JOANNA
It's called a rat king. Happens when a few rats get their tails tangled up with sap or resin.

ANGIE
Was that the sacrifice?

Joanna nods. For the first time since we've met her, she actually looks a little worried.

JOANNA
In the lore, rats are often called the devil's disciples. Carriers of lies and deceit. Meaning, whoever's done this has gone arse over tit.

ANGIE
What does that mean?

JOANNA
Only a handful of demons will accept burned rats as a sacrifice. And, they're all quite vicious. Which does tell us something else.
(thinks)
Mr. Vanderberg is wrong. This isn't about money. This conjurer could give a toss about the inheritance.

Joanna pauses for grim effect.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
No. There is...darkness here.
Something *hateful*. Whoever's doing this truly hates Thomas Vanderberg.

Thunder GROWLS in the distance.

INT. STUDY - EVENING

The curtains have been drawn. The room is awash in darkness. Somber, sulfurous shadows.

JOANNA
Can I ask you something?

Angie watches as Joanna begins lighting nine black tallow candles set on a table next to the Seal.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
How did you hurt your leg?

Angie wasn't ready for that question. She falters for a moment before replying.

ANGIE
It was after my mom died. Me and my sister had been in and out of the system. We busted out of this foster home in Echo Park. After a few days, I got pretty hungry. We got caught stealing granola bars from a gas station and we ran.

Her voice quavers. Turmoil builds behind her eyes.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I never saw the truck coming. Sarah grabbed me and spun around so it would hit her. She died before the ambulance got there. Her arms were still wrapped around me.

Joanna leans in close, her expression suddenly quite serious.

JOANNA
You've seen something here. Haven't you? You've had a brush with the Other Side.

Angie pales visibly. How did she know? Then, as if reading her mind, Joanna answers.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Spirits are drawn to old wounds. To pain. True pain. They perceive it as weakness. And, if I could sense it in you...

Angie rubs at her palm, remembering what happened in the kitchen. She looks up at Joanna, still hesitant.

ANGIE
 (comes out with it)
 I keep seeing...a woman. She's in a
 maid's uniform. I think it's her.

She hands Joanna the picture of Little Ben and Maddie.

JOANNA
 Demons will often use the spirits
 of the dead like puppets. To break
 down their victims. To torment
 them. To make them suffer.

A bone-chilling beat. Joanna reads the names on the back.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
 Maddie.

She flips it over and stares at Maddie's haunting image.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
 What happened to you?

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

An Old Testament torrent of rain pours down from wrathful
 clouds. A bolt of lightning SPLITS the sky.

COLIN (PRELAP)
 So, I think we might be fucked.

By the pricking of my thumbs...

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Colin and Brie stand next to a pendulum wall clock, talking
 confidentially.

COLIN
 I mean, he's not budging. He's not
 even listening to Ben.

It's 11:15. *TICK-TICK-TICK*. The midnight hour draws near.

BRIE
 Okay but we're getting disinherited
 in less than an hour so we should
 probably do *something*, right?

The others stand scattered about the room in the dull
 lamplight, waiting.

COLIN

(spit-ballng)

What if we just go along with the demon thing, then? We could use it against him in court and invalidate the new will on account of him being batshit.

BRIE

Would that even work?

Just then, the doors open. Vanderberg enters, followed by Joanna and Bronson. The maid carries a big plate with grilled cheese sandwiches on it.

BRIE (CONT'D)

Wait, are those...sandwiches?

Bronson places the plate on a nearby stand and then joins Joanna and Vanderberg by the séance table.

JOANNA

Spirits crave light and warmth. They're also drawn to familiar smells. I've found cheese toasties to be fairly effective.

An awkward beat. No one knows what to say to that because it's weird as shit.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Shall we get started?

NEXT CUT:

A hushed silence. Everyone sits around the table now.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

A séance is an invitation. A call to the Other Side bidding spectral manifestations into our presence.

Their faces are illuminated by the ring of black candles arrayed in the center of the table.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Demons don't usually appear in the open. But, if we can communicate with the *spirit* of a departed person, I should be able to discern whether there is something more powerful lurking in this house. And then, hopefully, find out who let it inside.

Joanna inhales deeply, closing her eyes, focusing.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
To create the proper energy, we
must stay calm and connected. Let's
all join hands, forming a circle.

Yeah, right. No one moves. But, Vanderberg's sharp glare --

VANDERBERG
Do it. Now.

-- snaps everyone into compliance.

JOANNA
We'll begin by clearing our minds
and closing our eyes.
(beat; eyes close)
Breathe in. Breathe out.

Plumes of flame flutter across their faces.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Now. Open your eyes.
(another deep breath)
To any spirit, to any soul in our
presence, we bring you gifts from
life into death. Commune with us
and move among us.

Angie looks around the room, half-expecting to see something
floating through the walls...but nothing happens.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
To any spirit, to any soul in our
presence, we bring you gifts from
life into death. Commune with us
and move among us.

Again, nothing.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Everyone. Please repeat with me:
Commune with us and move among us.

This is getting really dumb. But, not wanting to test
Vanderberg again, the group joins in.

EVERYONE
Commune with us and move among
us...Commune with us and move among
us...Commune with us and--

A soft breeze. The lights flicker.

TOBIN INGRID
Is there a window open? What was that?

JOANNA
It's okay. Steady, everyone. Keep holding hands. There is something here. An entity.

The mood shifts. The table hushes anew. The shadows around them seem to have grown darker.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Spirit. If you are present and you
wish to communicate with us, blow
out a candle.

A long beat. Then...a candle blows out!

Hands fly to mouths. Eyes bug. Everybody talking at the same time. Only Joanna and Vanderberg aren't blindsided.

JOANNA
Everyone, please stay calm. Let's
all rejoin hands.

VANDERBERG COLIN
I told you, goddamn it. Now, Nonononono...okay, no way.
do you believe me? She's doing this somehow.

Joanna cocks her head at Colin.

JOANNA

Colin puffs out his chest, still defiant.

COLIN
Okay, fine. Spirit. Fuckface. Are you the one trying to kill my dad?

A beat. Nothing happens. The flames keep flickering.

JOANNA
Spirit. Is someone at this table
trying to kill Thomas Vanderberg?

A long beat. Then...another flame blows out. Everyone's staggered, sharp GASPS all around. This is real.

This is really happening.

VANDERBERG
Who? Ask it who!

JOANNA
Mr. Vanderberg, please!
(gathers herself)
Spirit. Do you wish to speak?

Every eye stays fixed on the candlelight. Fear ripples throughout the room.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Spirit? Do you--

GENEVIEVE
Shhhh.

Everyone turns towards Genevieve. After a beat, she opens her eyes...*they shine like black orbs.*

COLIN BRIE
Oh, shit. M-Mom?

Genevieve takes a raspy, rattling breath.

JOANNA
Who are you? Tell us your name.

COLIN RICK
How are you doing that shit Okay, this is fucked up.
with her eyes?

JOANNA
Spirit. Is your name Maddie?

Vanderberg trembles, a flash of recognition.

VANDERBERG
What? No...no, that's not--

A third candle extinguishes.

INGRID BEN
Can we maybe stop now? Yeah, enough. This is sick.

GENEVIEVE
Shhhh...He can hear you.

Her voice sounds different, higher-pitched, softer.

JOANNA
Spirit? Is there someone with you?

Genevieve's whole body TWITCHES spasmodically, as if reacting to the possession.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Spirit?

Genevieve laughs -- a blood-curdling, inhuman sound.

GENEVIEVE
(growling)
Scortum. Scortum, non intelligitis lingua mea?

RICK
What the fuck language is that?!

JOANNA
Everybody remain calm. Breathe. Do not agitate the circle's energy. There is a different presence in the room now.
(to Genevieve)
Yes. I understand you.

GENEVIEVE
Cupio quid de me?

JOANNA
I want to know who you are.
Identify yourself. Now.

GENEVIEVE
Ego in Spiritu septuaginta secundi Ordinis. Andromalius nomen meum.

Joanna goes wide-eyed, genuinely frightened.

JOANNA
Oh, fuck me.

Vanderberg shoots to his feet, breaking the circle.

VANDERBERG
What?! What did she say?!

Genevieve emits a low MOAN, licking her cracked lips before spewing that heinous laughter once more.

VANDERBERG (CONT'D)
What do you want?! What the fuck do you want with me?!

Silence. Everyone's on tenterhooks, as if waiting for an answer, when...

CRASH! A violent burst of wind suddenly SHATTERS a window! Brie SHRIEKS and heads swivel to see what happened.

And, in that distracted moment, Angie turns back to see...

Vanderberg's whole body SEIZING violently! His eyes blacken, turning into empty pits.

ANGIE
Oh, my God...

And, just as his jawbone begins to unhinge --

ALL LIGHT GOES OUT -- THE ROOM PLUNGES INTO TOTAL DARKNESS!

OVER BLACK we hear a cacophony of VOICES arguing -- talking over each other -- panicking.

CHAOS and then -- *THHRRRMM*!

Emergency LED sconces on the walls power up, flooding the space with a darkly fluorescent red glow.

JOANNA
Is everybody okay?!

Everyone's on their feet except for Genevieve. She's slumped in her chair, head lolling, semiconscious.

BRIE
Mom?!
TOBIN
Ben! Over here!

Ben joins Brie and Tobin in checking on their mother.

GENEVIEVE
(groggy)
I don't want to...

Angie looks up from her phone.

ANGIE
Does anybody have reception?! My phone's not working!

INGRID
I got nothing!
RICK
What the fuck is going on?!

Colin's trying to keep his cool but the cracks are showing.

COLIN
Hey! Settle down! It's just a blackout, alright? Show's officially over now. Okay, Dad? I admit the candles were kind--

He turns to Vanderberg's seat.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Dad?

The chair is empty. Colin looks around, scanning the room.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Wait, where is he?

The old man is gone. Nowhere to be found.

BONG! The clock CHIMES stridently, piercing the silence and announcing the midnight deadline.

Vanderberg's game is over.

Then, another clanging BONG and we --

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

THE DOOR BANGS open and Rick pops his head through. He looks up and down the empty hallway with frantic eyes.

RICK
(calling out)
He's not out here either! Man, this is fucked.

He heads back inside --

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

-- where the tension is ratcheting all the way up. Ben turns on Joanna, fists clenched.

BEN
Okay, you know what? Enough of this shit. Where the hell is he?

JOANNA
How am I supposed to know?!

BEN
Because you're doing all this!
Whatever the fuck this is! You've been a part of it the whole time!

Ben starts stalking around the room, checking behind the furniture and curtains.

BEN (CONT'D)
Alright, Dad! You've had your fun.
You can come out now.

ANGIE
Ben, stop it.

He doesn't hear anything, blood pumping in his ears.

BEN
You wanted a confession, right?
Okay. I confess. I'm the one, Dad.
I conjured the fucking demon!

ANGIE
Ben!

BEN
(shouting now)
I'm the one trying to kill you,
okay?! Are you happy now? Can we
call it a fucking night?!

Ben suddenly grabs the séance table and upends it with a
CRASH! He glowers at his family.

BEN (CONT'D)
Dad was right. You're all just
greedy little dogs, begging for
scraps. You want his money? Fine. I
don't. He can take it to the
goddamn grave for all I care.

Ben storms out of the room. Angie throws a look at Joanna
before following him out.

After a nervous beat, Ingrid turns to Joanna.

INGRID
So, what do we do now?

INT. KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

A PANEL OPENS, revealing the faces of Bronson and Joanna as
they peer inside.

JOANNA
What's the problem?

PULL BACK to see the two women in the kitchen. They're both
huddled over a circuit breaker.

BRONSON

I don't see one. None of the switches are out of line.

JOANNA

What about security?

BRONSON

Down for now. The cameras aren't connected to the generator. I'll try to reset everything.

Bronson starts flipping all the breakers off.

JOANNA

No need. I don't think it's a mechanical problem. Besides, this isn't why I asked for your help.

The older woman reacts, confused.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Maddie. She was a housemaid here.

Bronson blanches at that name.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I need you to tell me everything you know about her.

INT. BEN'S OLD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angie watches anxiously as Ben crams clothes into his overnight bag.

BEN

No, I'm done with all the bullshit. I'm done with the games.

ANGIE

You still think this is some game? After what we just saw?

BEN

What? What did we see? A few magic tricks? Candles blowing out?

Angie takes a second, trying to find the right words.

ANGIE

No, it's not just...I can't...Ben, I think your dad was right.

BEN

What are you talking about?

ANGIE

I think there's something in this house. I've felt it. I've seen it.

Ben hangs his head.

BEN

Ang, come on.

ANGIE

I'm serious. Something really bad happened here.

BEN

Wait, are you talking about that maid again? From when I was a kid?

ANGIE

Yes. The one who hanged herself. I don't think it was just--

BEN

Okay, what is this? What are you doing right now, Angie?

He's just not listening to her.

ANGIE

Ben, your dad just *disappeared*. He was there one second and then--

BEN

No, don't. Don't get caught up in this. That's exactly what he wants.

ANGIE

I'm telling you, there is something in this house. This is real. Why don't you believe me?

BEN

Believe what? That you saw a ghost? I don't believe you because ghosts aren't real. And, nothing *happened* here. People commit suicide, okay? It's really sad but we don't need to do séances and they don't turn into fucking ghosts!

His forehead veins pulse. Angie backs up a step as Ben struggles to keep his temper.

ANGIE

Ben. What is going on with you?

He wills himself back to calm.

BEN

We just need to get out of here.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

Bronson's gruff voice carries in the foreboding silence. Joanna listens intently as the maid tells all.

BRONSON

Jones, I think. We all just called her Maddie. She had been here for a while by the time I got hired.

JOANNA

What was she like?

BRONSON

Quiet. Mopey. We didn't talk much. She was in charge of the children.

JOANNA

What about her and Vanderberg?

BRONSON

I heard the rumors. Vanderberg seduced her. Might be true. Also might be why Mrs. Vanderberg went at him with a knife. But, Maddie knew what she was doing. With those big Bambi eyes. How she would look at him.

Joanna pushes past that ugly tone.

JOANNA

So, she got pregnant?

BRONSON

That was actually before my time. All I ever heard was gossip. Some said Vanderberg made her get rid of it. Or that she gave it up for adoption. Either way, she managed to get herself fired. And then, she came back and did what she did.

Joanna processes that. Something isn't clicking yet.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 Is this real? What's been
 happening? I thought the old man
 was crazy but now it--

JOANNA
 Bronson, listen very carefully.
 This is absolutely crucial. Thomas
 Vanderberg. Was he involved with
 any other women here at the house?
 Any of the other maids?

Bronson eyes her warily.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
 Was Maddie Jones the only one?

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

As he totes their overnight bags down the stairs, Ben spots
 Colin blocking the front door.

BEN
 You really don't want to do this
 right now, buddy.

Angie schleps behind him, struggling to keep up.

COLIN
 You're not going anywhere, Ben.

The others stand to the side, nerves raw. Genevieve leans
 against a wall, fading, legs wobbling like wet noodles.

COLIN (CONT'D)
 It's past midnight. Which means
 we're broke now, supposedly. So,
 you're not leaving until we figure
 this shit out.

Just then, Joanna and Bronson return.

JOANNA
 What is going on here?

BEN
 Get out of my way, Colin!

As the argument intensifies, Genevieve lumbers over to Angie.

GENEVIEVE
 I don't want to...

Angie's creeped out by the older woman's goggle-eyed stare.

ANGIE
Mrs. Vanderberg? Are you okay?

GENEVIEVE
She says he's coming...he's going
to kill them all, but I don't...

Angie cringes as drool dribbles down Genevieve's chin.

COLIN (O.S.)
I said, no!

Colin and Ben's argument rises back to the fore.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Nobody is going anywhere until we
find Dad and get him to fix his
fucking will!

THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK!

Eyes shoot up as heavy THUMPING sounds come from above. Dust drifts off the ceiling.

RICK
What was that?

They all stop, listening. Seconds pass. No sound save for the persistent rain outside. Then --

BRIE
Mom? Where are you going?

Angie turns abruptly. There's no one next to her.

She follows Brie's eyes to see Genevieve hurrying up the winding staircase.

BRIE (CONT'D)
Mom?

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Joanna leads everyone inside to find Genevieve standing at the edge of the Seal of Solomon.

JOANNA
Mrs. Vanderberg?

Genevieve turns, teetering unsteadily. Her cadaverous face half-hidden in the scarlet darkness.

GENEVIEVE
I don't want to...

Suddenly, her knees buckle and she collapses.

BEN
Oh, shit.

Ben and Colin rush over. Joanna takes charge as they haul Genevieve over to a nearby divan.

JOANNA
Everyone, please. I know this is hard to believe. But, there is a demon in this house.

Tobin scratches at the skin of his wrist, getting jittery.

TOBIN
So, we should probably leave then, yeah? Like, right the fuck now?

JOANNA
Won't make a difference. We've all been exposed. Even if we leave now, the demon can still follow. And, he will follow.

No snide commentary, nobody sniping. They're all starting to take her seriously now.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Listen, closely. I cannot stress this enough. Whoever did this does not know what they are doing. They probably didn't even think that this was going to work, so they must be...Angie?

Blood trickles out of Angie's nose. She wipes it off, her fingers trembling.

ANGIE
Oh, man.

THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK!

Everyone JOLTS. That BOOMING stampede sound just came from outside, in the hallway.

THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK! THA-DUNK!

Paintings wobble on the walls. And, then...

Crrrrreeeak -- the door to the study begins to open, slowly, deliberately...as if being moved by an unseen hand.

TOBIN
Holy Christ.

BEN
(to Joanna)
Okay, what are you doing?

Joanna holds up her hands.

JOANNA
I'm not. Doing. Anything.

The door finally stops moving. It's all the way open.

No one moves.

A hair-raising beat as all eyes drill into the rosy darkness, waiting for something to emerge. Then...

BRONSON IS SUDDENLY GRABBED BY THE HAIR AND -- DRAGGED AWAY BY A POWERFUL FORCE!

SCREAMS all around as something SNAKES Bronson across the floor and -- YANKS her through the doorway!

The door to the study suddenly SLAMS shut and a stunned silence falls.

A bewildered beat. Jaws dropped, everyone struggles to process the absolutely bonkers thing that just happened.

Then, just as Colin opens his mouth to say something --

CUT TO BLACK.

Chapter Four: See How They Run

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

His hands shaking, Colin pours himself a glass of whiskey.

JOANNA (O.S.)
It's real. Do you see that now?

Joanna's in full command-mode, everyone deferring to her.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Ghosts and demons and all that
shite. *It's all real.* I know this
is shocking new information but
let's try to skip over the no-no-no-
this-can't-be-happening part, okay?

The terrified looks on their faces satisfy her. Even Ben has turned several shades paler.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Good. Now, listen. Bad news first.
Someone in this room is trying to
kill Thomas Vanderberg.

Now, they all regard each other with unveiled suspicion.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
And, whoever it is has unleashed
one of the nastier demons in Hell.
Andromalius.

COLIN
(downs his drink)
Andromalius?

JOANNA
The Violator. He commands 36
legions of devils and he has one
job: to punish the wicked on Earth.

INGRID
Well, that sounds pretty not good.

JOANNA
He is a bad one. And, right now, he
is running amok in this house,
completely out of control.

BRIE
So, what do we do?

JOANNA

The phones are still down so looks like reinforcements aren't an option. I can save both your father and Bronson but we need to find them first. I need to get close to them. And, soon.

BEN

So, you think Dad is still somewhere in the house?

JOANNA

There's only one way to find out.

RICK

Then, what are we waiting for? Let's go find him so we can get the hell out of here.

TOBIN

There are twenty-two rooms in this house, chucklefuck.

(thinks)

We should split up.

INGRID

What?!

BRIE

No way!

Joanna breaks in.

JOANNA

No, he's right. That'll be the fastest way to cover as much ground as possible.

BEN

Okay but somebody has to stay with Mom. And, Angie is not going anywhere without me.

COLIN

Whoa, hold on. What if you two are the killers? What if you're in cahoots?

BEN

In cahoots? Are you kidding? ANGIE

Why would I want to--

TOBIN

God, shut up! I'll stay with Mom. The rest of you just figure it the fuck out.

ANGIE
(to Joanna)
Wait, what's the good news?

Joanna looks at her, confused.

JOANNA
Sorry?

ANGIE

JOANNA

NEXT CUT:

TRACK OVER fearful faces as Joanna lays out the plan.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
We've got three floors and a basement. Angie and I will take the first floor. If you see anything remotely ghost-y, come and get me. If you find Mr. Vanderberg or Bronson, come and get me. And, once you've finished searching, come back here to the study at once. Any questions?

Rick wipes the flop sweat off his forehead.

RICK
This is fucked. We are so fucked. I
need a gun.

COLIN
We don't have any guns. We're
Democrats, you moron.

RICK
Don't you call me a fucking
Democrat!

JOANNA

Everyone shuts up and looks at her.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I know everybody's scared but if
we're going to make it through
this, we need to stick together.

BRIE

I thought we were splitting up?

Colin's chin drops.

COLIN

Christ.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Low ceilings. Exposed pipes. Fusty air. Darkness oozes, shot through with the intense crimson glow of the LED lights.

RICK (O.S.)

(nervous chatter)

...always on their knees cleaning
toilets and picking lettuce and
shit, right?

Rick enters the frame, descending rickety wooden stairs.

RICK (CONT'D)

So, that's when it hits me.
Kneepads. For immigrants. Like,
sewn into the pants, you know what
I mean?

Ben follows close behind. They reach the bottom.

BEN

Rick, for fuck's sake...

They creep deeper into the dank space. They see discarded appliances, shelves stacked to the brim with junk.

RICK

Sorry, dude. I'm just really...
(makes a panicked face)
...right now and--

BEN

Whoa, hold on.

Ben gulps. There's something just ahead of them, only a few yards away...a ghostly figure.

RICK

What is that?

Ben takes a tentative step forward. He pulls on a plastic sheet. It falls off, revealing...a *lifeless mannequin*.

RICK (CONT'D)
(exhaling)
Oh, of course. Of course, there are creepy-ass mannequins. Jesus.

Several mannequins stand there, covered by plastic sheets.

BEN
Brie used to dress them. Come on.
Let's just get to the cistern.

As they tread further into the belly of the basement...a *big black rat scurries behind in the shadows*.

INT. THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Colin, Brie, and Ingrid prowl through a hallway.

INGRID
(a harsh whisper)
Colin! Where are you going?

Colin ignores her, striding forward, determined.

BRIE
Hey, aren't we supposed to be on
the second floor?

She grabs his arm and Colin turns intent eyes on both women.

COLIN
Alright, look. Dad got taken by a demon. As stupid as that sounds, it is apparently true.

BRIE
But, the detective said that she could still save him.

COLIN
Are you kidding? He's gone, okay?
Dad is gone and now we have to start thinking about what's next.

INGRID
What are you talking about?

COLIN
(steals himself)
Just follow me.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the grey cat, slinking away as Angie follows Joanna inside the old-fashioned library.

JOANNA
Over here.

They find a candelabra on a table. Joanna starts lighting the candles one by one.

ANGIE
So, this maid I saw. Maddie.

Angie hobbles off to search the dark corners. Meanwhile, Joanna digs around in her fanny pack.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
The one being controlled by the demon? We have to help her, right?

She checks behind a shelf of yellowing old books. Nothing.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
We have to help her cross back over to the Other Side and...

Angie trails off as Joanna extracts a small Ziplock bag with two chocolate chip cookies inside.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Aren't we supposed to be looking for Mr. Vanderberg?

JOANNA
No, he's dead. Probably.

ANGIE
(dumbfounded)
So...what? We're just going to have a snack?

Joanna holds up a cookie.

JOANNA
Chocolate chip. With 1.5 grams of psilocybin baked in.

ANGIE
Psilo-what?

JOANNA
Mushrooms.

ANGIE
You're going to get high?! Now?!

JOANNA
Bottoms up.

She takes a big bite.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ingrid watches as Colin rifles through his father's desk.

INGRID
Colin! Listen to me.

He finds a pen knife and starts prying open a locked drawer.

COLIN
Goddamn it, what?

Ingrid leans in, her voice low.

INGRID
Are you the one doing this? The
demon thing?

COLIN
(indignant)
No! Wait, are you?

INGRID
No. So, should we maybe get the
fuck out of here? I mean, who cares
what that woman says.

COLIN
We can't. Not yet.

Brie walks over carrying a scented candle.

BRIE
I found more light! Citrus
Cilantro.

CLANG! Colin finally manages to get the drawer open.

COLIN
Yes! Fuck you, desk.

INGRID
What are you looking for?

COLIN
(rummaging)
Dad's fire escape.

INGRID
Colin! This really isn't the time
to be dramatically cryptic. What
are you talking about?

Before he can answer -- thunder BOOMS outside like a bomb.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Tobin LEAPS out of his skin, startled by the thunder. He paces, gnawing on his nails.

Behind him, his mother lies on the divan. Passed out.

He stops, blocking our view of Genevieve. He takes out his phone and hits a few buttons.

TOBIN
I am breathing in, I am breathing
out. I am breathing in, I am
breathing out. I am brea--
(still no bars)
Fuck!

He tosses the phone away. A cold sweat breaking, he takes out his pills but drops the bottle.

And, when he bends over we see...Genevieve rise to her feet.

Tobin doesn't hear, doesn't notice as she zombies towards him slowly, her limbs splayed.

She lurches forward like a fucked-up marionette as the possession slowly takes hold. Getting closer and closer...

Suddenly -- Tobin hears an inhuman SHRIEK from behind, a sound that could strip paint, and we --

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Angie's mind is melting at whatever Joanna just told her.

ANGIE
Run that by me one more time.

JOANNA

(chewing)

The séance didn't work. I still need to find out who conjured Andromalius, break their bond, and send the rotter back to where he came from.

She swallows the cookie.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

The fastest way to do that is to find the portal, cross over to the Other Side, and confront the demon myself. And, to do that, I need to be properly cabbaged or else my mind will melt into a nice, warm Christmas nog.

Angie hangs her head and lets out a massive sigh.

ANGIE

You know what? I don't know what any of that meant but if I'm dying tonight, I'm not going to be fucking sober.

(grabs the other cookie)

So, this better be some Satan Death-ass jungle shit.

She shoves the whole thing in her mouth.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

(chewing)

Also...I think I know...where the portal is.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A COBWEB, its fine filaments shimmering. We see Ben and Rick through the maze-like mesh, skulking towards us.

PULL BACK to see they've reached the rear of the basement. They find another set of wooden stairs heading down.

RICK

A basement in the basement? Man, fuck this house.

They descend gingerly, the old wooden steps moaning with every heavy footfall.

It's much darker down here. No LED lights.

BEN
Get your phone out.

Nervously, they extract their phones and turn the flashlights on. A tomblike space unveils itself in the white beams.

A soft SPLASH. Rick just stepped in a puddle. He lowers his light to see that the floor is wet.

And, just ahead, they spy a concrete cistern housing a water tank. It's been flooded, waist-deep.

BEN (CONT'D)
That's the cistern. Shouldn't be flooded like this though. Do you see my dad anywhere? There's nowhere else for him to--

RICK
Whoa, shutupshutup.

There seems to be something there in the cistern, standing in the dark water...*a shape*.

BEN
Dad?

The small shape shifts, rocking back and forth. They can hear nauseating sounds -- CRUNCHING and SQUELCHING.

Ben and Rick gape into the murk, shining both flashlights on the dark silhouette.

RICK
Wait. Is that...

The shape stops moving. It stands stock still. Slowly, a head turns and we see...

RICK (CONT'D)
Bronson?

Yep. Her pupils shine like black specks in the light. Her mouth and chin seem to be soaked with blood and grime.

BEN
Hey, are you okay?

Bronson wheels all the way around and we see that she's holding an immense black rat...*and she's fucking eating it*.

RICK
Oh, my God!

She unleashes a hideous HOWL and -- BOLTS straight at them!

INT. SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Eyes edge around a corner. It's Angie, cautiously peeking.

ANGIE
This is it. The portal.

Joanna steps out into the open.

REVERSE POV to see the tenebrous end of the hallway. The red gloam of the LED lights. An eerie stillness. Like a catacomb.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
It's the last door on the left.
That's where I saw her.

Joanna nods to herself a few times, quick breaths, psyching herself up.

JOANNA
Okay. No matter what happens. Don't come after me.

Angie stares at her like she's insane.

ANGIE
I don't think this is a good idea.

Joanna unzips her fanny pack and extracts the switchblade.

JOANNA
(gallows humor)
Don't be absurd. It's a horrible idea. But, here we are.

The *whispers* slowly fill the frame as Joanna treads towards the door, rising with every excruciating step she takes.

Finally, she reaches the play room. Angie can barely watch as she pulls the door open to reveal...

ANGIE
What the fuck...

An otherworldly white light.

Angie lifts her hand to shield her eyes, blinded by the intensely brilliant glare.

Joanna stands her ground despite the searing shine. She turns fearful eyes on Angie --

JOANNA
Run.

SUDDENLY -- JOANNA GETS YANKED INTO THE ROOM! THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT BEHIND HER!

Angie SCREAMS and SPINS to find herself *face to face with the Grey Woman!*

The apparition SMACKS Angie on the forehead and we --

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

SLAM! Colin shuts a cabinet door so hard its hinges break.

COLIN
Dad's been stashing away hard assets off the books for years now. It's all in a safety-deposit box in the Caymans. Uncut diamonds, bearer bonds. That kind of thing. He calls it his fire escape.

He moves on to another cabinet.

COLIN (CONT'D)
But, the box is coded. That's what I'm looking for. The code.

INGRID
So...money? You're talking about money? Colin, I think we've got more important things to worry about right now.

Colin stops. He gnashes his teeth, hesitating.

COLIN
Alright, look. I did it.

BRIE
(jaw drops)
You conjured the demon?!

He shakes his head like an exasperated high school principal.

COLIN
No, Brie. Jesus. No, I did the...securities fraud.

Ingrid smiles triumphantly.

INGRID BRIE
I fucking knew it. Oh, Colin.

COLIN
Yeah, okay, okay. Go ahead and gloat all you want but with Dad gone? Right now this box is the only thing we've got left. And, we're going to need it because I am 100% going to prison.

BRIE
(hyperventilating)
Okay, just stop. Wait a minute. Is this real? Is this really happening right now? Are you saying that we're actually going to be poor?

Colin HURLS a paper weight against the wall.

COLIN
Yes, we're going to be poor! We've got nothing left, Brie! You're going to have to learn how to pump gas! You're going to have to sell your fucking Peloton to buy cans of tuna at Wal-Mart! Fuck!

BRIE

THHRRRRMM! The television suddenly switches on and their eyes WHIP over to see Vanderberg's face on the wide screen.

VANDERBERG (TV)
My name is Thomas Edward
Vanderberg. I am recording this
message of my own free will, of
sound body and mind.

How is that playing when the power's still off?

Colin grabs the remote and presses the button. Nothing. The video continues.

VANDERBERG (TV)
I'm sending you this message, Ms.
Finch, because I believe there is
something in my house.

They're all panicking now.

BRIE
Colin! Turn it off!

He MASHES every button on the remote. Nothing works.

COLIN
I'm trying! VANDERBERG (TV)
There is something in my
house and I believe someone
put it here.

He YANKS the plug out of the wall socket but the television
still won't turn off.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Shut up!

Colin SCREAMS at his father's face before grabbing hold of
the television and -- WRENCHING it off the wall.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Shut up! Shut the fuck up!

It CRASHES on the floor -- a spiderweb cracked on the screen.
The video stutters for a beat before dying. Then...

Crrrrreeeeak.

INGRID
What was that?

The door. They all turn, bracing. Another sinuous CREAK. The
door opens very slowly and...

Genevieve appears in the threshold. Her thin figure cloaked
in the red Argento-esque shadows.

BRIE
Mom?

She just stands there, perfectly still, unnaturally frozen.
Hands held behind her back.

COLIN
Mom, are you okay? Where's Tobin?

She steps towards them.

GENEVIEVE
He's here.

*As she gets closer, they notice that...her eyes are once
again glowing like burning black coals.*

INGRID

Uh, guys...

Genevieve brings her right hand forward to reveal...

GENEVIEVE

He's going to kill everyone.

Tobin's severed head!

They all HOWL in abject horror as Genevieve cracks a ghoulish harlequin grin and --

HURLS THE HEAD RIGHT AT THEM!

EXT. OAK GROVE - SERIES OF VISIONS

A BRIGHT LIGHT melts away and Angie finds herself in the shade of the oak grove.

It's a beautiful sunny day. But, there's a strange pall over the scene -- a home-movie sepia sheen.

She sees Little Ben playing in front of the tree. Maddie stands nearby -- older, thinner, sadder. She lingers behind the child, keeping watch.

ANGIE

Maddie...

Just like in the photograph.

Another uniformed maid stands in front of them with a camera. She kneels down and takes a picture.

A strong RUSH OF WIND and we --

CUT TO:

A dark dawn. A cemetery silence in the oak grove. The air is heavy and foul.

Angie sees Maddie by the old tree. She places the wooden stool underneath that thick branch.

A noose dangles overhead.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

No...

Shuddering, Maddie steps onto the stool. It teeters.

Tears streak her frightened face as she takes out a white pillowcase and puts it over her head -- *the shroud*. She slips the noose around her neck...

Angie tries to scream but can't. It's like she's underwater.

Maddie kicks the stool out. The rope pulls taut. Her slender body twists and writhes as her neck CRACKS, fracturing.

Realizing, Angie turns to see...Little Ben right behind her, his eyes flooded with fear.

Angie's pupils suddenly dilate and we --

CUT TO:

Nothing.

Angie now stands in a place of utter nothingness. Everything is inky black. Fibrous mist swirls all around her.

A faint sound. She hears a woman crying. Slowly, she turns to see Maddie sitting on the ground. *She's pregnant.*

The skin of her heavily swollen belly is exposed. Her legs are splayed. She sobs and mutters to herself.

Angie takes a step to help when...*Maddie's stomach bulges.* She SCREAMS in pain.

Something inside her begins to WRITHE violently, thrusting against its fleshy prison. Then...*a claw PIERCES through Maddie's skin!*

Her stomach TEARS as if it's fabric -- black tar spills out.

Angie's blood freezes as a dark, tiny creature emerges from the tar surrounding Maddie's legs.

Stumbling, it gets to its little feet and Angie sees...

A HIDEOUS BABY-RAT MONSTER!

Maddie gazes at the freak that she has just given birth to.

MADDIE
He's mine...

The Baby-Rat wipes viscous fluid from its eyes. It looks up.

Just as it begins WARBLING like an innocent newborn, Angie SHRIEKS in terror and we --

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK GROVE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Angie's face. It's still dark but now she's outside somewhere. Totally soaked. Heavy rain falls in icy sheets.

Angie looks around, disoriented. And, as lightning CRASHES overhead, we PULL BACK to reveal...

A noose wrapped around her neck!

The rope is tied to the branch above her head. Angie tilts her eyes down...*she's standing on the wooden stool*. The soles of her sneakers scuff the surface.

Angie freaks out. The stool wobbles with every twitch, with every breath she takes.

She teeters precariously, the wooden legs sinking into the sodden earth when --

JOANNA (O.S.)
Angie!

-- Joanna RACES through the rain -- BOLTING up to the tree. She gathers up Angie's legs.

Angie CLAWS at the rope and wrenches it off her neck. Then, she and Joanna CRASH onto the ground in a tangled heap.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Are you okay?!

Angie grips Joanna's shoulders, breathless, her eyes blazing.

ANGIE
Maddie...she showed me...I saw it.
I saw everything.

Joanna nods. We note that her left hand has been wrapped with a thick bandage.

JOANNA
Yeah. Me too.

Another STRIKE of white lightning forks the sky and we --

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

CRASH! Brie SLAMS to the ground with a hard THUD -- the possessed Genevieve is on top of her in a flash.

BRIE
AHHH! GET HER OFF ME!

A savage struggle. Genevieve BANGS the back of Brie's head against the floor with preternatural strength.

COLIN
Mom! Stop!

Genevieve CACKLES demonically, her jaws SNAPPING. Colin tries to pull her off -- but she SWEEPS her arm out and -- sends him FLYING across the room!

Genevieve turns back to Brie, her mouth foaming, and gently strokes her face.

GENEVIEVE
(demonic voice)
Et comedent faciem tuam.

Then, Genevieve's face WARPS into a grotesque death mask.

BRIE
AHHHH!!!

Her mouth YAWNS wide and becomes a black maw with *three rows of jagged teeth!*

Brie unleashes a glass-shattering SCREAM -- the ravenous jaws lowering towards her face when -- WHACK!

Genevieve DROPS like a sack of rocks!

Ingrid stands over her -- a blood-tipped candlestick in hand and a feral look in her eyes.

She leans over and -- BAM! BAM! BAM! She turns Genevieve's head to pulp with blow after blow -- blood SPRAYING. Finally, she stops, panting.

INGRID
She's dead.

Colin looks down at the crushed watermelon that used to be his mother's head.

COLIN
You think?! You fucking killed her,
Ingrid!

Colin and Brie huddle over the gruesome sight -- blood oozing into a syrupy black puddle.

BRIE
What did you do?! COLIN (CONT'D)
Oh, shit...

Suddenly -- Joanna and Angie run into the room, screeching to a halt just inside the door.

JOANNA
What happened?!

Brie points an accusatory finger at Ingrid as Joanna and Angie approach the dead body.

BRIE
She killed Mom!

Ingrid drops the candlestick, backing away.

INGRID
She was possessed! She killed
Tobin! What was I supposed to--

BEN (O.S.)
Hey!

They all spin around as Ben BARRELS through the doorway, a terrified look in his eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)
I found him. I found Dad.

CUT TO BLACK.

Chapter Five: A Fiendish Plan

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

MEDIUM SHOT of Joanna, Angie, Ben, Colin, Brie, and Ingrid.

BEN

As soon as I got out of the basement, I came straight here. Just like Ms. Finch told us to. This is how I found him.

PULL BACK to reveal...*the body of Thomas Vanderberg*. The old man lies lifeless, sprawled over the Seal of Solomon. His tongue lolls. His eyes are empty bulbs.

Joanna bends down to inspect the corpse. We note red marks on his neck as she checks his pulse.

JOANNA

He's dead.

Everyone's far too overpowered to speak. Joanna uprights and faces the family.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Alright, we've got three people dead, including Thomas Vanderberg. And, two still missing.

Brie turns a tear-stained face to Joanna.

BRIE

We need to go look for Rick! He could still be alive.

(to Ben)

You didn't actually see Bronson kill him, right?

BEN

I barely got out, Brie. We got split up in the dark and...I don't know. I don't think he made it.

Brie breaks down, sobbing quietly into Angie's shoulder.

INGRID

(to Joanna)

Does this mean it's over?

JOANNA

What?

INGRID

The demon was conjured to kill Thomas Vanderberg, right? Well, he's dead now. The demon killed him. It's over.

JOANNA

Not quite. There are ligature marks on his neck. The hyoid bone is fractured. *He was strangled.* And, the body's still warm so I'd wager he was killed within the past twenty minutes or less. The demon didn't do this.

COLIN

So, whoever killed him...

JOANNA

Is standing in this room.

A charged beat as everyone takes that in.

INGRID

Do you know who did it?

THHRRRMM! The power comes back on and regular light floods in, the red LED sconces fading.

INGRID (CONT'D)

Ms. Finch?

Joanna's phone suddenly CHIRPS. She takes it out and checks the message, reading with intense eyes.

INGRID (CONT'D)

Do you know who the killer is?

Joanna looks at Angie, recognition in their silent exchange.

JOANNA

Oh, yeah.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

A FIRE CRACKLES in the chimney, flames dancing in the dark.

Angie, Ben, Colin, Ingrid, and a whimpering Brie sit before Joanna in the dim light, riveted as our detective prepares to lay out the case, to reveal the truth.

JOANNA

The plan was simple.

We note that Angie sits alone, openly avoiding Ben.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Sneak into this house while Thomas Vanderberg was away. Conjure a malevolent entity into the physical world and bind it, compelling it to commit a murder.

(thinks)

I guess that's actually quite complicated now that I think about it. But, if it could be pulled off, we're talking about the perfect crime. An old man murdered in his own home by an invisible enemy, by an unseen hand. And, the killer? Miles away.

Outside, the storm gains in strength.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

The plan was simple. Until it wasn't.

FLASHBACK:

Vanderberg unfurls a corner of the Persian rug to see the edges of the Seal of Solomon burned onto the floor.

JOANNA (V.O.)

Until Thomas Vanderberg discovered what was happening to him. Until he decided to fight back.

He trembles with fear and anger.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA

Unbeknownst to me, Mr. Vanderberg decided to gather all the suspects under one roof. Together. He decided to set a trap, to gamble with his life, with his soul.

FLASHBACK:

VANDERBERG

I needed to reset the game. To raise the stakes.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA

I suspect the killer arrived not even knowing whether their plan had worked. Not knowing what kind of darkness they had unleashed.

COLIN

So, who did it?

JOANNA

Oh, we'll get to who. I'm more interested in why. Because, to me, this has never been about money. Vanderberg is worth two billion dollars. A very tidy sum. Perhaps worth killing for. But, the lengths to which this killer has gone? Dabbling in the dark mystic arts, tormenting an old man, heedless of anyone in their way. There is hatred here. A deep and dangerous hatred for Thomas Vanderberg.

Angie looks directly at Ben. He averts his eyes.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

This was never about money. This killer wanted to see Vanderberg suffer. This killer wanted to wrap their hands around his throat and watch the light go out of his eyes. This was about revenge.

(beat)

And, that takes us back to your question, Colin. Who? Who conjured the demon that wreaked havoc upon this family? That led to the deaths of three people? Who killed Thomas Vanderberg?

Silence as our suspects exchange wary glances.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

To answer that, we need to go back. To the distant past. To a different time and a different death. When a young woman, a housemaid, hanged herself from an oak tree here at the estate. You all know the story, I presume.

FLASHBACK:

We're in the courtyard in front of the manor.

JOANNA (V.O.)
Madeleine Jones. Maddie.

A fresh-faced Maddie Jones stands at the imposing door. Her clothes are cheap but clean. Her eyes are bright and eager.

JOANNA (V.O.)
Soon after she arrived to work for the Vanderbergs, the master of the house, abusing his wealth and privilege, took advantage of her.

The door opens, revealing...a younger Thomas Vanderberg.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA
Soon, Maddie gave birth to a child. A little boy whom Vanderberg was determined to keep. But, not as a bastard. He coerced Maddie into giving up all custody, promising to give the child every advantage.

INGRID
Wait, how do you know all this?

Joanna turns to Angie with a meaningful look.

JOANNA
Maddie showed me.

FLASHBACK:

Little Ben plays by the oak tree.

JOANNA (V.O.)
And so, the child was passed off as the natural born son of Genevieve Vanderberg.

Maddie stands nearby. She's older, thinner, sadder. She lingers behind Little Ben, keeping watch.

The other maid takes the picture as we PULL BACK to see...

Joanna standing off to the side of the scene, observing. This isn't a flashback. *It's a vision.*

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA

Eight years later, when Maddie had second thoughts and wanted her son back, Vanderberg fired her. He threw her out and left her with nothing.

A fraught, silent beat.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

And so, one day, Maddie returned. She hung a rope off of the old oak where she and her son used to play. And, well. You all know the rest.

Angie wipes away a tear.

ANGIE

He killed her. Your dad. He didn't put the noose around her neck but it was still him.

JOANNA

And, that is why you murdered him.

Everyone realizes that *she's talking to Ben*. Who goes white, guilty as sin.

COLIN

INGRID

Wait, it was Ben?

Holy shit.

BEN

Oh, come on. What are you talking about? I did not kill Dad.

ANGIE

You did know about your mom though, didn't you? Your *real* mom.

Ben contemplates denying that for a beat before relenting.

BEN

Okay, yes. I knew. I always knew who she really was. She told me. It was like...our secret.

BRIE

So, you had motive!

Ben rises, getting agitated.

BEN

No! Look, yes. Dad was a piece of shit. He was a monster. I knew that. I knew what he did to my real mom. He used her up and then tossed her out like trash after taking the only thing that ever mattered to her. But, I did not. Kill him.

RICK (O.S.)

HEY!

Rick stands in the open entryway, bloody and beaten, clothes ripped and frayed.

BEN

Oh, shit.

BRIE

Rick!

Rick RUSHES at Ben, raging.

RICK

This piece of shit left me to die down there!

Colin and Joanna step in front of him.

BRIE

Wait, what happened?!

FLASHBACK:

In the basement, Bronson unleashes a hideous HOWL and BOLTS straight at Rick and Ben!

She TACKLES Rick -- SNAPPING with voracious jaws.

RICK

AHHH!!!

Ben turns tail and SPRINTS OFF without a moment's hesitation.

RICK (CONT'D)

Ben, you motherfu--

Bronson's teeth take a CHOMP out of Rick's right ear.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

RICK

The little bitch just ran! And, Bronson bit my ear off!

His mangled ear looks like Mike Tyson got a hold of it.

BRIE
How did you get out?!

FLASHBACK:

Bronson HURLS Rick with demonic strength -- he CRASHES hard against the wall.

Then, he comes to and sees a butane torch lying nearby.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

RICK
I set Bronson on fire and got the fuck out.

JOANNA
Is she dead?

Rick winces, realizing that he just killed someone.

RICK
Oh. Shit. I mean, I'm pretty sure.

FLASHBACK:

Bronson is a HOWLING ball of red-hot flames.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Colin stands up, accosting Ben.

COLIN
Wait, so if Rick's been in the basement this whole time, where have you been?

BEN
What?

INGRID
Yeah. Yeah. From the time you left Rick to die until when you found us in the office. Where were you?

BEN
I was...I was looking for Dad.

COLIN

Bullshit. You're lying.

BEN

Fuck you, Colin! How do we know it wasn't you?!

BRIE

Because he's been with me. This whole time. Colin, Ingrid, and I haven't left each other's sights.

COLIN

Mom was murdering Tobin and then trying to kill us, so it wasn't either of them. Plus, Angie and Broadchurch were with each other the whole time. Weren't you?

Angie nods.

COLIN (CONT'D)

See! It could only have been Ben. Whoa. Holy shit. Did I just solve the case?

Ben backpedals unconsciously, on the defensive, desperate.

BEN

No! No, I didn't...no, it was Mom! She's the one who was possessed! Or maybe...I don't know, maybe Bronson got out somehow and--

ANGIE

Ben.

BEN

What?!

Ben turns on Angie in a fury. But, his anger fades when he sees that she's crying.

ANGIE

Just stop. It's over.

Ben holds on for another moment before finally giving up. He deflates, slumping down into his chair.

JOANNA

What happened, Ben?

FLASHBACK:

Ben staggers through the basement door and SLAMS it shut, locking it, relieved to be alive.

BEN (V.O.)
I got out of the basement. I was about to go look for Angie.

He takes a step before suddenly stopping.

It's Maddie. The ghost of his mother. Her haunting, pale figure. The pillowcase in her hand.

BEN (V.O.)
That's when I saw her.

She approaches, her white feet touching lightly on the floor.

BEN
(mesmerized)
Mom?

She extends a hand to brush away the tears streaming down his face. Then, she turns away.

Ben follows.

FLASHBACK:

Ben is in that place of nothingness, shrouded in black mist. The space is empty, devoid of life...except for Vanderberg's prone body.

BEN (V.O.)
She took me to him.

The old man lies on his back. Maddie's ghost stands over the body. She looks at Ben, her eyes shining with tears.

BEN (V.O.)
I knew. I knew what she wanted.

Ben, aching with pain and rage, kneels. Just as he wraps his hands around Vanderberg's throat, the old man opens his eyes.

Maddie's ghost leans in, murmuring into his ear when -- a shadow forms behind her, like a swarm of flies.

BEN (V.O.)
I wasn't going to do it. I swear I wasn't going to do it.

The shadow swirls into a silhouette, the figure of something demonic -- *it's Andromalius.*

His long, talon-like fingers rest on Maddie's shoulders. As she whispers, *her lips split into a wicked rictus.*

And, slowly, the vision of black nothingness melts away and we find ourselves actually in --

STUDY

We watch as Ben strangles the life out of his father.

BEN (V.O.)
She just wouldn't stop whispering.
It was all I could hear...

Vanderberg's feet twitch spasmodically, life draining from his body. Then, slowly...they stop.

He's dead.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits quietly now. Consigned to his fate, to the truth.

BEN
I stood there for so long. That morning. I didn't move because her feet kept twitching and I thought she might still be alive. I saw her die. I've seen it in my head every day since then. My whole life.

He forces himself to look at Angie.

BEN (CONT'D)
I guess there's always been a part of me that wanted to kill him. For what he did.

A morose beat. Just when we're starting to feel for him --

COLIN
So, you thought you'd conjure a fucking demon? Jesus, Ben.

JOANNA
Oh. No, Ben didn't conjure the demon.

What? That catches everyone off-guard, especially Angie.

ANGIE

Yes, he did. He killed his dad. He just admitted it.

JOANNA

He killed Mr. Vanderberg, yes. But, he didn't conjure the demon.

ANGIE

Then, who did?

JOANNA

You. You did, Angie.

WAIT, WHAT?!

ANGIE

What? What are you talking about?

No fucking way. All eyes snap to Angie.

JOANNA

It was you. You conjured the demon.

ANGIE

You're crazy. I didn't conjure a demon. I didn't kill anybody. Ben literally just admitted it.

Joanna doesn't blink.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Come on. I didn't even know the old bastard. I hadn't even met him until a couple of days ago.

JOANNA

No, you didn't know him. That's true. But, your mother did.

Angie's face suddenly hardens.

BEN

What? Her mother?

JOANNA

Maddie Jones wasn't the only maid that Thomas Vanderberg abused. Grace Cooper.

Angie flinches.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

That was her name. Wasn't it?

FLASHBACK:

In the play room, Angie opens the front cover of the red book and sees girlish handwriting inside -- "Property of Grace Cooper. So, hands off!"

Angie smiles at that. She runs her fingers along the page.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA

And, your name, your real name
is...

(looks down at her phone)
Brenda Cooper. You had it changed
nine years ago. Full background
check just came in.

Angie's cold expression gives away nothing.

FLASHBACK:

Little Ben plays by the oak tree. Maddie lingers behind him as the other maid takes the picture.

It's the same vision as before except this time, the second maid lowers the camera and...we see her face.

JOANNA (V.O.)

After Ben, Thomas Vanderberg
decided that another bastard child
wouldn't be worth the trouble.

She's a young woman, a pretty brunette. *Light brown, almond-shaped eyes.* We've seen her before.

Her belly is swelling slightly. And, around her neck...she wears Angie's St. Joseph's necklace.

JOANNA (V.O.)

Especially since it was a girl.

PULL BACK to reveal Joanna again in the vision, watching.

Only now we're getting the full picture...*the other maid is Angie's mother.*

FLASHBACK:

Angie sits behind the wheel of her car. She lowers the visor and pulls out her family photo.

We focus on her mother. The same face we just saw in Joanna's vision. The face of Grace Cooper.

JOANNA (V.O.)
A girl who would eventually become
your older sister.

Angie reaches for the pendant on her necklace.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Angie glowers murderously as Joanna continues.

JOANNA
Thomas Vanderberg kicked Grace out
on the street while she was still
pregnant. She got by for a few
years, had another daughter. But
soon, times got hard.

FLASHBACK:

Angie tells her story to the table at dinner.

ANGIE
My mom died of a drug overdose when
I was eight. So, me and my big
sister, we had to fend for
ourselves.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA
And then, a tragic accident took
your older sister's life.
Vanderberg's daughter. Sarah.

ANGIE
Don't you say her name again.

Her voice sounds different. It's darker, angrier.

JOANNA
I imagine that you nurtured a
hatred for Thomas Vanderberg.

FLASHBACK:

Angie, clad in black, stands at a utility pole on an isolated road. She breaks open a mounting box with a crowbar.

JOANNA (V.O.)
 For what he did to your mother. To
 your sister. To you.

The Vanderberg House sits against the dark backdrop of the distant sky behind her.

FLASHBACK:

Angie stands alone in the pitch-black root cellar.

JOANNA (V.O.)
 You lived with that anger. With
 that pain. You let it fester in
 your heart.

She tosses a match onto the wriggling mass of rats. The flames rise as she murmurs an incantation.

FLASHBACK:

The grey cat watches with unblinking yellow eyes as Angie rolls back the Persian rug in the study.

JOANNA (V.O.)
 You found the darkness within. You
 embraced it. And, you turned it to
 your advantage.

With a high-powered soldering iron, Angie begins burning the Seal of Solomon into the wood.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

JOANNA
 It was a simple plan. A fiendish
 plan. And, you almost got away with
 it. Didn't you?

Angie scowls at Joanna for a defiant beat. Can this possibly be the truth? Then...

Angie smiles.

ANGIE
 You know, it all worked out even
 better than I thought it would.

The Vanderbergs gape at her, speechless. Thunderstruck.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

I didn't even know about this thing with Ben's real mom. Honestly, I couldn't have drawn it up better myself.

Ben is gobsmacked, staring at Angie with sudden fear.

BEN

So, it really was you, Angie? You did all this?

ANGIE

(shrugs)

Yeah. Sorry, I guess. Not really, though.

JOANNA

It's over, Angie. You need to stop before someone else gets hurt.

ANGIE

What? No, it's not over. It's not even close to being over. I'm not done yet.

Her eyes flash ominously at the surviving Vanderbergs.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

You people. You have no idea what we went through. Me and my sister. You just glide through it all, breaking shit, smashing, leaving broken glass everywhere you go. In this house, with your money. Well, now you're going to watch me burn it all to the fucking ground.

The fire beside her begins to rise, dancing and crackling. The ground begins to RUMBLE.

Then, Angie closes her eyes and...*the flames in the fireplace come alive!*

JOANNA

Angie, don't! Whatever spell you're trying isn't going to work!

Angie's eyes open. They shine a nightmarishly obsidian black, backlit by the rising flames behind her.

ANGIE

(chanting)

Conjuro potentiae Lucifer...

The Vanderbergs cower as wind WHIPS violently in the room. Furniture FLIES and CRASHES into the walls.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
*Patefacio a porta ad inferos...Et
 tua deamones transire...*

A blast of wind LIFTS Joanna off her feet and -- sends her FLYING against the wall -- *SLAM!*

Dazed, gasping for breath, Joanna looks up to see...

A shimmering veil of shadows materializing behind Angie, emanating from the heat of the fire.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Sic urantar mundi!

A choir of UNHOLY SCREAMS fills the frame as Joanna drags herself towards Angie, bracing against the infernal wind.

JOANNA
 Angie, stop!

As the world CRASHES in on itself, out of the shadows and fire, we see the hints of a shape, the diabolical figure of --

ANDROMALIUS! HIS MASSIVE WINGS OUTSTRETCHED! THE PAZUZU-LOOKING DEMON LOOMS BEHIND ANGIE, CASTING A MONSTROUS SHADOW!

JOANNA (CONT'D)
 You can't do this!

ANGIE
 You're not going to stop me! I
 won't let you!

JOANNA
 No, I mean you *actually* can't!

The room stops shaking all of a sudden.

ANGIE
 Wait, what?

Joanna unwraps her hand, *revealing a deep cut on her palm.*

JOANNA
 You never really did have control
 over the demon. And, you certainly
 don't now. I do.

Angie gapes at her in total shock.

FLASHBACK:

Joanna stands in the bright metallic light of the portal. She begins muttering a spell in low tones, clutching her knife.

JOANNA (V.O.)
I made Andromalius a better offer
and bound him to *my* will.

She SLICES her palm, blood trickling onto the hardwood floor.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGIE
What the fuck did you do?!

JOANNA
I told you. Give a demon a taste of
human blood and it'll do anything
you want.

Angie spins around to see the demon's inky figure vanishing slowly. She fumes, resigning herself to defeat.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
It's over now. You can come out.

The Vanderbergs gradually emerge from their hiding places as Joanna, exhausted, plops down onto a chair.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
And, could someone be a dear and
ring the police, please?

INT. PLAY ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Angie stands at the window overlooking the courtyard. She's holding her mother's book in her hands.

ANGIE
You know they can't hold me, right?

She watches as cop cars and an ambulance enter the courtyard. The Vanderbergs rush out to meet them.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I mean, unless the police here are
Spanish Inquisitors, I'll be out by
the end of the day.

Joanna lingers just inside the door.

JOANNA

Perhaps. Not up to me. But, whatever happens and for whatever it's worth. I'm sorry.

ANGIE

Fuck off. I don't need your pity.

JOANNA

I mean it, Angie. For everything you've gone through. I am sorry.

ANGIE

If that were true, you wouldn't be taking their side. Or their money.

JOANNA

I'm not taking either. I'm here because it's my job.

ANGIE

Yeah. The job Thomas Vanderberg hired you to do.

JOANNA

I was never working for him.

That catches Angie off-guard. What does that mean?

JOANNA (CONT'D)

My job, my *real* job, is to monitor the unsanctioned use of witchcraft and magic.

Angie cocks her head, mystified by this strange woman.

ANGIE

Who are you?

Joanna digs into her fanny pack, extracts a business card, and hands it to Angie. Underneath an intricate rose cross symbol, the contact info reads:

Joanna Finch
Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn
jofinch_99@hotmail.com

Angie looks up at her, perplexed.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

What the fuck is Hotmail?

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE COURTYARD - EARLY MORNING

Colin, Ingrid, Brie, and Rick stand on the front steps of the grand old house.

They're exhausted, shattered by the night they just endured.

They stare out onto the courtyard, watching Joanna speak with the officer in charge of the crime scene.

Watching as a despondent, cuffed-up Ben gets loaded into the backseat of a cruiser.

Then, a cop slaps handcuffs on Angie's wrists and shoves her into another cruiser. Joanna climbs in after her.

As the vehicles pull away, that grey cat trots out through the front door, passing between Ingrid's legs.

That's when she notices something. She sniffs at the air.

INGRID

What is that smell? Is that...

INT. FIRST FLOOR - EARLY MORNING

They all stand in front of the basement door.

RICK

I set Bronson on fire and I guess, technically, I never put the fire out, so...yeah. My bad.

Smoke seeps out from underneath the door.

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

As the sun rises over a new day, a raging fire engulfs the Vanderberg house. Black smoke curls into the crisp air.

It's an inferno.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The portrait of Vanderberg warps as flames consume it.

INT. STUDY - EARLY MORNING

The Seal of Solomon gets swallowed up by the fire.

EXT. VANDERBERG HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

From a distance, the surviving members of the Vanderberg clan all watch their ancestral home fall apart. Piece by piece.

WIDE ON the red pandemonium, burning bright and high.

FADE TO BLACK:

SMASH TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Angie sits alone in a spartan space. Just a table and chairs. Grey walls. A CCTV camera mounted in a corner on the ceiling.

Angie yawns, drumming her fingers on the table and staring at the semi-opaque two-way mirror in front of her.

After a beat, she puts her lips together and *starts whistling the tune to "Three Blind Mice."*

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Joanna watches from the other side of the glass. Her arms crossed. Chewing on her lower lip.

The door opens. Joanna glances over to see a dapper man in a bespoke suit enter the room.

He closes the door and sidles up next to her. This is ALEC TREADAWAY (50, a debonair lawyer).

ALEC
You Brits have an expression.
Something about a sticky wicket?

Joanna side-eyes him. Not really in the mood for banter.

ALEC (CONT'D)
I'm saying, you could have called us earlier. We could have helped.

JOANNA
Things were moving quite fast.

Alec shrugs at that.

ALEC
Well, it took some effort but you've been downgraded to person of interest. They're letting you go.

JOANNA
What about her?

ALEC
They've got zip. Ben Vanderberg has confessed to killing his father. But, they can't hold onto her for much longer.

Joanna doesn't like that at all.

ALEC (CONT'D)
We'll keep a close eye on her though. Won't be the first rogue witch we've handled over on this side of the pond.

JOANNA
Nevertheless, I would be very careful with this one, Alec. She's inexperienced but she's got loads of natural talent.

Sensing eyes on her, Angie throws up a middle finger.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
And, she's cast-iron all the way through. She won't like being watched.

Joanna's eyes drill through the glass, connecting with Angie's one last time. She can't resist a small smile.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
I don't think she will but if she tries anything, anything at all, you call me immediately.

She turns away and heads out the door.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Exhausted, Joanna trudges through the doors, Alec following.

ALEC
Wish I could've been there. To see the great Joanna Finch at work.

Joanna frowns at that, angling him another sideways glare.

ALEC (CONT'D)
The Adeptus Major over here speaks very highly of you. I wonder if--

JOANNA

Listen, Alec. I hate to be uncivil
but it's been a long night. Would
you mind terribly giving me a lift
to the airport?

At that moment, a luxury SUV pulls up alongside the curb.

EXT. SFO AIRPORT - DAY

The SUV stops outside an international departures gate. The backseat door opens.

Joanna climbs out and shuts the door. As she turns away, the window rolls down and Alec pops his handsome head out.

ALEC

Hey. So, I know you're due back at
the temple in London but since
you're in the neighborhood.
Something kind of...interesting
just popped up on our radar. In
Mexico City.

JOANNA

(intrigued)
A job?

ALEC

Yep. Something that might require
your particular set of skills.

Joanna turns to the departures gate. Then, back to Alec with a deep sigh. She can't resist asking --

JOANNA

What kind of job?

She smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.