

SEE HOW THEY RUN

Written by

Lily Hollander

Producer
Fourth Wall Management
323-549-8600

April 19th 2021

Contact
Jim Ehrich
RBEL Agency
310-247-9898

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A discordant, howling wind sweeps up a thick, cloud of dust.

Closer in, behind the dry storm, a barren, earth-cracked field.

Swirling dust and sand passes over a crude wooden sign stuck in the dirt near a locked iron gate.

The lettering (long eroded by the elements) reads, *House of Mercy and Redemption for Blind Children.*

Behind the gate is a two story farmhouse. Paint chipped, the house is battered and worn.

Broken shutters beat the exterior walls as the dust roars by. A weather vane on the roof spins out of control.

Subtitle (morphing from Braille into Type):

:::::1933

INT. HOUSE OF MERCY AND REDEMPTION FOR BLIND CHILDREN - CONT.

The interior of the house is as desolate as the field outside.

Through the windows we see the cloud of dust and the unrelenting wind incessantly lashing the shutters against the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONT.

What little furniture there is, is austere, worn, and minimal.

The walls are empty except a huge, Pentecostal cross dominating the space above the massive fireplace.

Rows of mismatched school desks make jagged shadows on the cold floor. But there are no toys, no stick figure drawings, nothing to signify the presence of children.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Aside from the whistling storm outside, it's very, very quiet.

And then--

We see them. The bare feet of several CHILDREN walking one behind the other.

Their clothes are dirty and tattered and their hair unkempt.

The children vary in age from 16 to 6. Their hands hold a string that guides them, single file, up rickety wooden stairs.

The last and smallest child, a little GIRL, stops at the bottom of the stairs, hesitating.

Trembling, the girl clutches a handmade doll, patched together from scraps of fabric, to her chest.

INT. HOUSE OF MERCY. UPSTAIRS MASTER BEDROOM - CONT.

The room has a cold, unlit fireplace in the corner, near a small iron bed.

There's a second cross nailed into the wall above the bed and we can just make out a WOMAN beneath it - her hair pulled severely from her face in a tight bun.

The noise of the outside storm is louder here - the banging shutters beating the life out of the exterior of the house.

The children silently gather around the bed, each of them holding some kind of ominous tool behind their back - a kitchen knife, a fire poker, a sharpened stick.

A moment passes before the children raise their weapons and then...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE OF MERCY AND REDEMPTION FOR BLIND CHILDREN - CONT.

SCREAM! The woman's voice reverberates through the house.

The little girl at the bottom of the steps raises her tiny hands to cover her ears, shielding them from the chaos above, her eyes shut tight.

Over the wind, a mix of children's cries and the low, animal growling of what must be the woman fighting for her life.

And then, quiet. The woman's voice is silenced.

The girl's hands drop limply to her sides.

A spot on the ceiling develops into a pool of dark red blood.

Getting larger, a drop of the blood starts to hang heavy and then falls, landing on the girl's face.

As it trickles down her freckles, she opens her eyes and for the first time we finally see: her eyes are hollow. White.

She is blind.

The little girl picks up her doll, singing to it gently as she rocks back and forth, frightened.

GIRL

Peepo Weeper/Chimney Sweeper/Had a wife but couldn't keep her/Had another/Didn't love her/Up the chimney...

TITLE (Morphing from Braille into Type):

SEE HOW THEY RUN

FADE TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Many years later, the neighboring field, no longer an arid desert, is a sea of wheat reaching far out into the horizon.

The wheat rolls in the wind like a colorless, restless ocean. Dark, almost black clouds loom over the house.

The old wooden sign is replaced by a realtor's sign with a RENTED banner hastily stuck over top of it.

A beat-up car hooked up to a small U-haul is parked on a gravel drive behind a tall hedge that obscures the house from the street.

Subtitle (Morphing from Braille into Type):

Present Day

INT. UPSTAIRS - SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

The same, small bedroom with it's own fireplace in the corner.

It's so dark outside that, even though it's day, the lights provide scant illumination, making the room gloomy and cold.

A few boxes are open on the floor but are still filled to the brim. The only "furniture" is a mattress on the floor.

ELSA (30's, blind) enters the empty room, tapping a cane in front.

Elsa is an attractive, capable woman who out of necessity maintains a very ordered, structured lifestyle. But there is something fragile about her demeanor.

ELSA

Sasha? Carrie's leaving.

No response.

A petulant girl, SASHA (9), with a defiant jawline but sensitive eyes, attempts to slip past her blind mother.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Sasha? Are you in here?

Elsa stills herself, listening intently with all her might.

About to pass by, Sasha smiles triumphantly but suddenly...Elsa GRABS her wrist tight!

Sasha GASPS, startled!

ELSA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

Elsa senses the boxes with her cane and reaches down, feeling they are still packed.

ELSA (CONT'D)

And why are these boxes still full?

SASHA

I'm taking them back to Dad's.

Exhausted, Elsa sighs as though this is the ninetieth time they're having this exact conversation.

ELSA

We talked about this and you're staying here, with me.

SASHA
That's what you think.

Elsa is fed up almost to the point of breaking. As Elsa's friend, CARRIE (30's) enters--

ELSA
I am bone tired Sasha. I wish you would just give me a break, just this one time.

SASHA
I didn't even get to say goodbye.

ELSA
You'll make new friends.

Sasha looks away, rolling her eyes.

SASHA
(major attitude)
I wasn't talking about friends.

Before Elsa can react, Carrie interrupts--

CARRIE
You're saying goodbye to me aren't you? Don't tell me I'm too old to be your friend.

Carrie hugs Sasha goodbye.

CARRIE (CONT'D)
Take care of your Momma for me okay? I know this is really hard but, you'll try be a good girl?

Carrie kisses Sasha on the forehead before grasping Elsa's arm and steering her toward the door.

INT. HOUSE UPSTAIRS HALL - CONT.

Walking down the staircase, we get a sense of how independent Elsa is when she has her cane to help her.

ELSA
She's not supposed to hate me for at least another 3 years.

CARRIE
She doesn't hate you.

Elsa stops, concerned and upset.

ELSA

I just hope she'll understand one day.

CARRIE

I think she'd probably understand now if you told her. She's a smart kid.

ELSA

(agitated)

How am I supposed to tell her? How do I explain?

CARRIE

Hey, I'm on your side.

ELSA

I'm sorry. I don't know what I would have done without you, you saved my life.

Smiling as she takes Elsa's elbow--

CARRIE

That's me, Carrie Wolff. Fastest home packer upper in The West.

INT. HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS ENTRY - CONT.

Carrie stops to admire the old wood panelling near the front door. Despite its shabbiness, the house has character.

CARRIE

This house has good bones.

ELSA

I especially love the architectural details. What would you call it? Mid Century? Colonial?

CARRIE

Ha ha. The blind lady is so funny.

Carrie notes some of the updates and accommodations built in for the visually impaired like tactile flooring that changes textures from room to room, appliance knobs and outlets labeled in braille etc...

CARRIE (CONT'D)

All set up for you too. Who lived here before?

ELSA

The agent said a family retrofitted
the place for their blind son. Did
a really good job too.

CARRIE

So why's the rent so cheap? And how
the hell did you find it so quick?

ELSA

Quick? It only took me 10 months of
planning and scheming.

Carrie hugs Elsa warmly.

CARRIE

I'm so proud of you. I wish I could
stay longer. At least to help
finish unpacking.

ELSA

You've helped us so much already.

Opening the front door, Carrie wavers for a moment and then--

CARRIE

You're sure this is the best thing?

ELSA

No. Just the only thing I could
think of.

After saying goodbye, Elsa closes the door behind Carrie and
ascends the stairs.

INT. HOUSE UPSTAIRS HALL - CONT.

Elsa taps her cane out ahead of her from side to side, making
sure her path is clear.

A box (that was definitely NOT there before) sits ominously
in the foreground, just one, small misstep away from a
dangerous drop over the rail down to the first floor.

Elsa's cane swishes from side to side.

But...

Somehow, the cane manages to just miss the edge of the box
causing Elsa to trip over it!

Elsa comes down with a hard THUD, inches away from breaking through the thin, rickety banister and falling to the hard floor below.

ELSA
Sasha!

Unbeknownst to Elsa, Sasha peeks out of her bedroom.

ELSA (CONT'D)
(louder)
Sasha!

SASHA
I'm right here you don't have to yell.

Getting up--

ELSA
Where did this box come from?

SASHA
I don't know.

ELSA
It didn't just grow legs and walk here. Put it away please.

Sasha reluctantly takes the box, slinks past Elsa to her room and SLAMS the door shut causing Elsa to JUMP!

ELSA (CONT'D)
And don't slam the door like that!

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY.

Piles of boxes line the walls. The few boxes that are open have obviously been packed in a haphazard, hurried fashion.

Elsa sits amongst them, sorting through and using a braille label gun to categorize items. The task seems endless.

The fireplace behind her, much larger than the one in Sasha's room, has a dark, eerie quality.

As Elsa unpacks, the black emptiness of the firebox draws us in, the dark cavity an empty abyss.

And if we're REALLY paying attention, we might see what looks like a CHILD crouching in the darkness.

But, just as quickly, the child recedes back into the black.

Suddenly, Elsa pauses, listening.

A SCRATCH and a soft WHIMPER coming from inside the fireplace.

Elsa carefully and slowly makes her way toward it, using her hands to feel her way.

As she closes in, she kneels at the hearth, listening closer, her head getting further and further into the darkness of the firebox, the velvet blackness decapitating her.

P.O.V. FROM INSIDE FIREPLACE:

Elsa's body obstructs the room behind her as she listens intently.

Elsa moves slightly to the left...

...revealing...

...a blind child behind her!

And then--

CLANG!

A metal object falls from inside the flue, clattering to the ground!

ANGLE ON:

Elsa JUMPS, startled, banging her head on the top of the firebox! The child now nowhere to be seen.

ELSA

Ow!

After rubbing the back of her head, Elsa pats her hands across the hearth, into the fireplace and through the ashes searching for whatever made the loud sound.

She stops. When she pulls her chalky, grey hands out, she is holding a strange instrument.

A long, iron rod with a flattened cross at one end.

Elsa feels the length of the rod and the cross, wondering what the thing is, and sensing its weight and sharp edges.

Suddenly--

An earth shattering SCREAM!

ELSA (CONT'D)
Sasha!?!?

Panicking, Elsa feels around toward where she hung her cane on a fold up chair.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Are you okay!?!?

But just as she unhooks it, the chair and the cane both fall to the ground, the cane now out of reach.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Dammit!

Elsa feels for her cane on the floor but, growing more desperate, she gives up, holding onto the wall to feel her way toward the stairs.

Elsa kicks off her slippers so she can feel the tactile flooring beneath her to get a better sense of where she is.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

She makes her way to the stairs clumsily, the sound of childish weeping now emanating from upstairs.

ELSA
I'm coming!

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Elsa opens the door and the crying stops instantaneously.

ELSA
What is it? What happened?

Sasha looks up at her from a book, her face calm, removing headphones.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Why did you scream?

SASHA
I didn't.

Elsa gets down on all fours and makes her way toward Sasha's voice and the soft sound of music from her headphones.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Mom, I'm reading.

Elsa feels Sasha serene face. Sighing, her body slumps, relieved but also annoyed.

ELSA
Sasha, this isn't funny. I came all the way upstairs.

SASHA
I didn't do anything!

ELSA
I'm sick of these little tests.
You're not a mean, cruel kid. How would you like it if I tricked you?

Sasha remains silent.

ELSA (CONT'D)
This is your final warning.

Elsa stands up.

SASHA
What are you going to do? I'm already out here in the boonies with nothing to do. I want to go home.

ELSA
Enough! I can't keep going around and around with you about this!

Elsa takes a beat, regretting her outburst. Sympathetically--

ELSA (CONT'D)
I really need you to cooperate with me, okay? I love you.

Sasha doesn't respond.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Okay?

SASHA
Fine.

ELSA
Thank you. Now can you help me back downstairs please?

SASHA
Why? I didn't have to help you at home.

ELSA
My cane is downstairs, I don't know the house that well yet. I need you to help me.

Sasha grimaces sulkily.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Please.

Reluctantly, Sasha stands.

INT. ELSA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Elsa stands in front of an old, cracked mirror. She hangs her cane on a hook on the back of the door.

Splashing water on her face, she washes the dust and pure exhaustion away.

Wincing in pain, Elsa grasps the side of her ribcage.

She reaches her hands out toward the mirror, nothing out of the ordinary behind her in the reflection.

Elsa finds the edge of the mirror, pushes it open with a click to reveal a medicine cabinet.

Her graceful fingers feel through the various bottles and the rubber bands she's wrapped around them as a way to differentiate one from the other.

Elsa finds the one she's looking for, a small tub that we can read is labelled Arnica.

She lifts her shirt and we see her ribs, back and stomach are riddled with sickening blue and yellow bruises.

She carefully rubs the Arnica onto her battered skin, biting her lip in pain.

Elsa slowly closes the mirror back up to reveal...

...her own face with nothing out of the ordinary behind her.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lounging on her mattress, Sasha watches a video on her tablet while munching on cereal straight out of a bulk-sized box.

Sasha looks small inside the dark room, the gaping fireplace like an open, ravenous mouth.

Suddenly, on the side of her face, the reflection of a light flickers on and off.

Sasha turns to see what it could be. Outside in the hallway, a light flashes on and off, making the shadows in her bedroom warp and move with every flicker.

On.

For a brief moment the shape of the shadows look like two children, running across the bedroom...

Off.

...but wait, was that a trick of the light?

On.

There they are again!

Off.

Nothing.

On.

Off.

Frightened, Sasha opens the door into the hallway and peeks out.

Toward the end of the upstairs hallway, a thin light surrounds the edges of Elsa's closed bedroom door.

The light flips on. Then off.

On and Off.

On and off.

Sasha's heartbeat quickens.

SASHA

Momma?

Without taking her eyes off the flickering light, she steps out.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Sasha pauses, watching, scared.

The hallway seems darker and longer. At the end of it, the thin light around the door still flips on and off - but not quickly like an electrical issue.

Slow.

Like a person flipping a switch on and off.

On and off.

Sasha swallows her fear and slowly walks toward it, looking tiny in the empty, dark hallway.

When she reaches the door, Sasha places her small hand over the knob and turns.

Slowly.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

The light now off, the room is pitch black.

There is a soft creaking sound coming from the corner.

Sasha peers through the darkness, toward the creak, creak, creak. She can just make out what looks like a figure sitting in a rocking chair, rocking back and forth.

Back and forth.

Hand shaking, Sasha searches for the light switch and flips it on to find...

...it doesn't work.

Shivering, Sasha slides her hand down the wall, toward the rocking chair, looking for a second light switch.

Meanwhile the figure in the rocking chair creaks back and forth.

A sinister, forbidding rocking.

Sasha finally finds the second switch and flips it to see...

...Elsa reading a book in braille as she rocks in a chair near a window.

SASHA

Momma?

Elsa JUMPS, startled!

ELSA

You scared me! I didn't hear you come in.

SASHA

What were you doing with the light?
It was flicking on and off.

Sasha flips the light on and off and then on again, inspecting the switch.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Is it broken or something?

ELSA

I hope not. Maybe the bulb isn't screwed in right.

Her mouth suddenly dry, Sasha swallows, nervous.

SASHA

Were you flicking it on and off?

ELSA

Why would I do that?

Shrugging, sullenly--

SASHA

Because...I left the box in the hallway. Where you fell.

ELSA

You think I...

Elsa pauses, rethinking her strategy. She reaches out, waiting in vain for Sasha to come forward for a hug.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Sweetie, I know moving is hard and...it seems like all of this was so sudden to you. How do I explain?
(beat)

I'm asking a lot but, I need you to trust me okay? Can you do that?

Sasha remains silent.

ELSA (CONT'D)
 I always hated when grownups said
 this to me when I was your age but,
 one day you'll understand.
 Everything I do, everything I've
 ever done is to keep you safe. You
 believe that don't you?

Sasha ponders this for a moment. Then--

SASHA
 Momma?

ELSA
 Yes?

Sasha pauses, gathering the courage to speak.

SASHA
 Can I sleep in here tonight?

Elsa smiles, relieved, putting her arms out again for a hug - this time, Sasha moves in closer and reciprocates.

ELSA
 (squeezing tight)
 My sweet girl.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Another grey day. The wind whistles plaintively through the wheat.

We close in on Sasha, sitting criss-cross applesauce and humming a sweet, childish melody, her small fingers playing a game of Cat's Cradle.

Sasha's head pops up, hearing a car on the driveway.

She runs, excitedly to see who it is.

We follow her movement through the field, marked only by the stalks of wheat rippling like an arrow toward the house.

Breathing heavily, Sasha peeks through the plants.

A DELIVERY MAN gets out of his van, pausing to look at his reflection in his sideview mirror. He likes what he sees.

SASHA
 Dang it.

Disappointed, Sasha plops down where she is.

EXT. HOUSE - CONT.

The delivery man takes grocery bags from his van, rings the doorbell, knocks quickly and looks in through the window.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Hearing the bell--

ELSA
Be right there!

Elsa pats her way over to a drawer.

Searching under stacks of appliance manuals, Elsa finds a thick wad of cash. She feels out a few wrinkled 10's and then makes sure the cash is well hidden before exiting.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

The delivery man spams the doorbell. Elsa finally opens.

DELIVERY MAN
I was starting to think you weren't
home.

Noticing Elsa is blind, he grins foolishly.

DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)
I didn't realize...

ELSA
Kitchen's straight down the hall.

Elsa steps aside, letting him in.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

The Delivery Man brings in grocery bags as Elsa puts things away, unpacked boxes still lining the walls.

Admiring Elsa's ability to get around--

DELIVERY MAN
Pretty impressive how you got it
all figured out. How do you do it?

ELSA

I wouldn't know any other way.

DELIVERY MAN

Born blind, huh?

He stops, using the opportunity to leer at Elsa's ass as she lifts a heavy, bulk container of laundry detergent out of one of the bags.

DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

Shouldn't your husband help you out with this? Or is he blind too?

ELSA

(acidly)

Like you said, I got it all figured out.

Elsa opens a cabinet. The delivery man watches closely, quietly opening a drawer right behind her.

As Elsa turns toward the open drawer, he puts his hand out getting ready to stop her from bumping into it, his real intention of copping a feel becoming clearer BUT...

...before he is able to catch her by the waist, Elsa, sensing the hazard ahead of her, shuts the drawer.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Something you were looking for?

DELIVERY MAN

(playing dumb)

I beg your pardon?

Sasha enters through the back door and the man smirks slightly, squinting his eyes at her.

Ignoring him, Sasha pours herself a cup of orange juice.

ELSA

That's the lot isn't it?

Not ready to get kicked out just yet, he leans back against the counter making himself comfortable.

DELIVERY MAN

I'm guessing they didn't tell you about the place?

Enjoying his moment of power--

DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

Family lived here in the 80's had a blind kid and one of the kids, the normal one not the blind one, killed the whole lot of 'em.

Elsa's mouth purses up at the word, "normal".

ELSA

A killer kid? What's normal about that?

DELIVERY MAN

Ha! Ya got me there!

As Elsa passes him, he steps away from the counter, putting himself in her path.

DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

They gotta tell you this stuff when you buy a place but renters...I guess they don't give you a heads-up, do they?

ELSA

Thanks for the info.

DELIVERY MAN

You're welcome darlin'.

He helps himself to some candy from a dish thinking Elsa won't notice and gives Sasha a wink. Sasha visibly rolls her eyes at him.

ELSA

Help yourself.

Surprised but not ashamed--

DELIVERY MAN

Thanks.

Elsa exhales, not able to stand a moment longer.

DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

Full truck of deliveries. Places to go, people to see!

Elsa waits for the front door to shut, noticeably relieved and utterly skeeved out.

SASHA

What was he saying about a killer?

ELSA

Oh sweetie, don't listen to that
nonsense he was spewing. Go wash up
for lunch.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elsa lies in bed, asleep.

THUNK!

Something heavy drops in the hallway. Elsa wakes up,
startled.

SSSSSSCRAPE!

Whatever the source of the sound is now sliding heavily
across the floor.

ELSA

Now what?

Grabbing her cane, Elsa exits.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

The hallway looms dark ahead of Elsa, the SSSSSSSCRAPE
getting louder as she slowly taps her way forward.

ELSA

(calling out)

Sash? Everything okay?

SSSSSSCRAPE!

Elsa's face falls, suddenly worried the sound isn't Sasha!

ELSA (CONT'D)

(panicked)

Who's there?

A DARK FIGURE morphs out of the blackness at the far end of
the hall, making its way toward Elsa.

The figure holds something long and slender in its hand,
dragging it slowly across the floor, creating the--

SSSSSSCRAPE!

The figure moves closer...

...closer...

ELSA (CONT'D)
I'm going to call the police!

...closer till...

...it suddenly stops in front of Sasha's open bedroom door.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Hello?

Elsa moves closer, heading toward the figure.

The figure's head turns to face Sasha's room, then back again to face Elsa. Slowly turning from one victim to the next.

And then...

...it enters Sasha's room.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

ANGLE ON:

We realize that the long, slender item the figure holds is the iron rod Elsa found in the fireplace.

Once again the figure drags the rod with a SSSSSCRAPE across the wood floor.

Hearing the sound, Elsa stops in the hallway, looking in.

ELSA (O.S.)
Sasha this isn't funny.

Close up we see the figure is a woman. Dressed in an old fashioned pinafore, hair scraped back revealing a hard, angry face. A terrifying face.

A face that has been dead for many years.

ELSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Why won't you answer me?

The woman looks over her shoulder, snarling soundlessly at Elsa as she enters.

The woman moves closer toward Sasha, vulnerable as she sleeps, the metal cross dragging silently across the rug.

Lingers over Sasha, the woman raises the iron in the air, ready to strike!

ELSA (CONT'D)
SASHA, ANSWER ME!

Sasha wakes up startled!

SASHA'S POV:

Elsa's face hovers over her, angry.

Frightened, Sasha bursts into tears. Confused, Elsa wraps her up in a hug.

ELSA (CONT'D)
What is it? What happened?

SASHA
(through tears)
There was a woman coming for me.
She was so horrible.

ELSA
Shhhhhh. It's all gone. All over.

But Sasha is inconsolable.

ELSA (CONT'D)
It was just a dream sweetie. You
must have been sleepwalking.

Elsa rocks Sasha, kissing her forehead as she tries to comfort her daughter.

ELSA (CONT'D)
It's okay, it was just a dream.
You're okay. Shhhhhh.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The old weathervane on the top of the house sits still and rusty on the roof.

Suddenly the wind changes and the weathervane very slowly inches over to point in the opposite direction.

DING DONG!

The incongruous sound of a loud doorbell.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Elsa opens the door.

ELSA

Yes?

A WOMAN (40's) stands smiling. The kind of smile that begs desperately for acceptance and love.

The woman's clothing is childish, as though her sense of style stopped evolving in elementary school. Something about her demeanor gives off an air of instability.

WOMAN

Hey neighbor!

The woman peers past Elsa into the house--

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You don't mind me popping by. I'm Opal. I heard you moved in and I thought I'd introduce myself.

Looking at Elsa's blank expression--

OPAL

You do mind. I'm an idiot, I shouldn't have come. I'm sorry.

(to herself)

So stupid. You always do that.

ELSA

No, please. I'm Elsa. It's nice to meet you.

OPAL

I tried calling but I guess you haven't set up the phones yet.

Not waiting for an invitation, OPAL moves past Elsa into--

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

OPAL

I haven't seen this place in a minute. Hasn't changed at all.

ELSA

We haven't finished unpacking yet.

OPAL

Oh, I won't tell anyone.

Elsa reluctantly closes the front door and follows Opal.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

Opal stops, awed by the boxes, packing paper and mess that greets her.

OPAL

You weren't kidding! Sheesh!

ELSA

It takes time for me to organize things so I can find them.

OPAL

Yeah but you've been here a week already. I mean, I'm not judging or stalking or anything but you need help.

ELSA

I'm fine. I'll get it done.

OPAL

By next Easter maybe but who's waiting that long?

Opal unzips her sweatshirt, rolling up her sleeves.

OPAL (CONT'D)

I can't stand knowing a neighbor's living like this and not at least help a little.

ELSA

I don't want to be rude but there's a certain way I need to do it.

OPAL

Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. My brother was visually impaired, didn't I mention that?

ELSA

Uh...no. You didn't.

Opal opens several drawers, familiarizing herself with Elsa's system.

ELSA (CONT'D)

You don't want to bother with all this.

OPAL

Of course I don't mind!

Opal opens a drawer, seeing a large kitchen knife--

OPAL (CONT'D)
You can't just put a knife in a
drawer like this. You'll slice your
fingers off like sausages.

Opal takes an empty paper towel roll out of the recycling and slips the sharp edge of the knife inside.

OPAL (CONT'D)
I'm putting it in a cardboard roll.

Opal takes Elsa's hand, allowing her to feel the knife's new safety cover.

OPAL (CONT'D)
See?

Elsa smiles, pleasantly surprised but still reluctant.

ELSA
That's a good idea.

OPAL
Told you I know what I'm doing.

ELSA
Are you sure because I'm fine. I
can do this, really.

OPAL
Oh I know you can do it but it'll
go by faster with a little company.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

True to her word, Opal has helped Elsa put away a large chunk of the boxes. They sit at the counter drinking tea.

OPAL
He is such a creep bless his heart.
I always say, "leave my groceries
at the front gate" but he always
ignores me and comes inside. Like I
can't lift the bags myself.

ELSA
He mentioned something about a
family that lived here being
murdered?

Opal's smile fades, a more serious expression taking over her whole demeanor.

OPAL

Such a sad story. I don't think the cops ever truly figured out exactly what happened. Heartbreaking.

Opal pauses for a moment, thinking.

ELSA

Did you know them? The family I mean.

OPAL

Did I say I did? I can barely remember what I ate for breakfast this morning. Why do you ask?

ELSA

When you came in, it sounded like you'd been in the house before.

OPAL

Oh right! Well, it's such a small town. Probably isn't a house I haven't been in for one reason or another.

The crunch of the school bus on the gravel outside.

ELSA

That'll be Sasha, my daughter.

The front door opens and promptly SLAMS shut followed by a THUD on the floor and footsteps running toward them.

SASHA (O.S.)

Mom! The school put Grandpa's last name on my record!

Entering, Sasha stops short when she sees Opal.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Who the heck are you?

ELSA

Sasha!

OPAL

Oh that's alright, I don't mind.
(to Sasha)
I'm Opal. I'm helping your Momma unpack.

Sasha climbs onto the countertop (still in her shoes) to reach a bag of chips in an upper cupboard.

ELSA

I hope you took your shoes off before standing on my kitchen counter.

SASHA

I did.

Sasha looks critically at Opal to see if she'll narc on her but Opal winks to show they're in on the secret together.

OPAL

Who's your teacher?

SASHA

Becker.

OPAL

Brickface Becker!?! She's still alive!??!

Sasha is immediately charmed by Opal.

SASHA

Why do you call her Brickface?

OPAL

Cause brick rhymes with another word I can't say in front of your Momma.

Sasha giggles, her eyes sparkling. Hearing the change in her demeanor, Elsa smiles at the sound of her child laughing.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Becker's got to be at least 80 by now. She used to make us join hands and pray before every test.

SASHA

Why did she do that?

OPAL

This is a town of true believers. Now I love The Lord Jesus Christ same as my neighbor but around here being Christian is like a religion!

Opal pauses, thinking about what she just said.

SASHA

What else did she do in the olden days?

OPAL

Olden days? You make it sound like we carried our books to school with a belt strap and practiced our letters on tiny little chalkboards!

EXT. TULSA WORLD NEWSPAPER HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

Carrie exits the office towers of *The Tulsa World Newspaper*.

A MAN approaches her.

MAN

Carrie Wolff?

Carrie continues walking, all business.

CARRIE

Who's asking?

The man forces his way ahead to block Carrie's path, uncomfortably close to her and forcing her to stop.

MAN

Ed Houston. I'm a private investigator. I was hired by Deputy Sheriff Richard Kristoffsen.

Carrie sidesteps the man and continues walking as Ed catches up with her brisk stride.

CARRIE

Crime isn't my beat. Try the hotline if you've got a story.

Ed puts a large, hairy paw on Carrie's shoulder.

ED HOUSTON

You know why I'm here.

CARRIE

Hands off Mr. Houston.

Ed lifts his hand off her.

ED HOUSTON

It's not gonna be hard tracking down a blind woman with a little girl.

Reluctantly, Carrie stops.

CARRIE
So what do you need me for?

ED HOUSTON
I'm hoping you'll talk some sense into her. So she and the girl can come home where they belong. No hard feelings.

CARRIE
No hard feelings!?! You have no idea what you're talking about.

Carrie turns, looking Ed square in the eye.

CARRIE (CONT'D)
Why do you think he had to hire you? Shouldn't the Sheriff's office be out looking for the Deputy's wife and daughter?

ED HOUSTON
If I only worked for the good guys, I'd never work.

Realizing he's not getting anywhere, Ed hands Carrie his card.

ED HOUSTON (CONT'D)
It's okay. I'll find them. I always do.

As Ed walks away--

ED HOUSTON (CONT'D)
You might want to think about letting her know that!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elsa finishes chopping up a salad, carefully washing and replacing the sharp knife into the cardboard cover Opal created earlier, acknowledging Opal's cleverness.

Elsa opens a cupboard, feeling around for a beat and then removes a large pot.

She heads to the sink. Turning on the faucet, she places her thumb inside the pot as a way to make sure she doesn't overfill it.

RING! RING! RING!

Elsa freezes at the sound of the landline ringing, an old rotary phone on the wall in front of her.

RING! RING! RING!

As the sound permeates the room, Elsa grows more tense. Meanwhile, we can just make out a reflection in the steel cooking pot.

The blurred form of a YOUNG GIRL standing at the stove, turning the range on.

RING! RING! RING!

Elsa turns the faucet off, still not answering.

When the phone finally stops ringing, Elsa breathes a sigh of relief and takes the receiver off the hook.

She takes the pot and turns to the stove where the girl...

...is gone! But a burner on the range is on, the hot blue flames warbling unusually high!

Elsa edges closer to the fiery licks wavering above the stove.

The flames hiss and spit higher.

About to place the pot on the flame and burn her hands...

GRAB!

A hand reaches out and GRABS her wrist! Elsa YELPS! Water spilling out of the large pot.

OPAL (O.S.)

I didn't mean to scare you, it's just me.

After turning the stove off, Opal takes the heavy pot out of Elsa's hands.

OPAL (CONT'D)

It's Opal. The flames were almost to the rafters.

ELSA

Opal...Please don't take this the wrong way but...what are you doing here?

OPAL

Daddy always said I'd leave my head at home if it wasn't attached to my neck. I came back for my purse. I tried ringing the bell but there was no answer so I went ahead and let myself in.

Elsa is still too shocked to respond.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Good thing too. You almost burned your hands off.

ELSA

(confused)

I did?

OPAL

Well, I'll show myself out.

Sasha bursts in. Happy to see Opal--

SASHA

Hi!

Sasha helps herself to a candy from the dish on the counter, unwrapping it loudly.

On autopilot, still trying to understand what just happened--

ELSA

You think I can't hear you unwrap that candy? You'll ruin your appetite.

SASHA

(mouth full)

No way, I'm starving. When's dinner?

(turning to Opal)

Are you gonna stay?

OPAL

That's sweet of you, squirrel. I don't have any other plans - aside from nuking a frozen pizza bagel and shoving it in my lonesome, old face.

Elsa doesn't make an offer, still in shock.

OPAL (CONT'D)
But, I better get going. My
goldfish will be missing me.

Opal makes as if to leave but Elsa stops her.

ELSA
No wait! It's so late. Sasha set
another place at the table.

OPAL
Oh you don't want me to stay.

But Opal doesn't really move to go anywhere. In fact, she
puts her purse down on the counter.

ELSA
It's the least I can do. You helped
me unpack and now I guess you saved
me a trip to the E.R.

OPAL
Well, since you put it that way. To
be honest, I'm not sure that old
goldfish even knows I exist. He
must think the food he gets is
Manna from Heaven.

Elsa hears Sasha pick out another piece of candy.

ELSA
Put it back, I said no.

Sasha reluctantly puts it back.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Elsa, Sasha and Opal sit together playing a lively game of
Bananagrams, adapted with braille markings on each tile.

An old fashioned oil lantern brings additional light to the
poorly lit room.

Opal uses her last tile.

OPAL
Peel!

All three grab a tile.

SASHA
No fair. I got a J.

ELSA

There's lots of words you know with
J in them.

OPAL

Jam, jelly, joyful, jolly,
judicious, juicy. Jubilant.

Realizing Sasha is looking at her, unimpressed.

OPAL (CONT'D)

I'll stop now.

Sasha jumbles up all of her words.

SASHA

I give up! Let's play something
else. Spoons?

ELSA

No, no. It's time for bed.

SASHA

Monopoly?

OPAL

Your Momma's right. We can play
another time.

SASHA

We have Taboo? Momma you love
Taboo!

ELSA

Nope. Bedtime.

SASHA

Awwwww.

OPAL

Elsa you mind if I use the bathroom
before I head out?

ELSA

Of course.

(to Sasha)

You can read in bed for another 30
minutes.

Elsa feels for the oil lantern and turns the key to lower the
flame.

SASHA
Can I play Minecraft for 30
minutes?

As Elsa and Sasha continue bartering, Opal exits, smiling in her usual way.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONT.

Opal enters and stops at the sink. When she looks up at the small, milky mirror there's something different about her face.

Opal's pleasant smile is gone and has been replaced with a suddenly serious frown.

Opal reaches into her pocket and removes a glass vial with a silver stopper, elaborately etched, the metal rusted.

Inside the vial is a white, granular substance. Salt.

Careful not to spill any, Opal opens the vial, sprinkling the salt into the corners of the bathroom.

Opal stands up again and looks deeper into the mirror. A second mirror behind her creates an infinite reflection - multiple Opals going further and further back...

...getting smaller...

...smaller...

...morphing into the severe looking woman holding the iron rod!

The woman points a crooked, arthritic finger accusingly at Opal. In a deep, hoarse voice--

WOMAN
You!

Open vial in her hand, Opal jumps in fright! Sending the salt into her eye!

OPAL
Ow!

Opal rubs her eye, only making it worse! She turns the faucet on, ducking her head as best she can under the running water.

Eyes still closed Opal breathes deeply, trying to calm herself before opening her eyes and seeing...

...just her own reflection, multiplied, staring back at her.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Rubbing her eye uncomfortably, Opal exits the bathroom surprised to find Elsa and Sasha waiting for her.

ELSA
Sasha wanted to say goodnight.

SASHA
What's wrong with your eye?

OPAL
Silly me! I went and rubbed soap in it by accident. I'll be alright.

ELSA
(to Sasha)
Okay, say goodnight and up you go.

Sasha gives Opal a hug.

SASHA
Thanks for coming.

Opal is touched by the gesture.

OPAL
You're so welcome sweet girl.

Opal watches Sasha drag her feet reluctantly up the stairs. Halfway up, Sasha stops and turns.

SASHA
Momma? Can I stay with you tonight?

ELSA
Go upstairs and brush your teeth and read for a while and I'll be up in a minute to tuck you in.

Sasha rolls her eyes and continues up the stairs, kicking each step as she goes.

ELSA (CONT'D)
(explaining)
She's had nightmares these last couple nights but, I don't want her getting in the habit of sleeping with me.

Elsa opens the front door before Opal can respond.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Well, thanks again. You really
don't have to come back tomorrow. I
can do the rest myself.

OPAL

Oh no, you can't get rid of me that
easy! I said I was gonna help you
and I meant it.

Elsa smiles defeatedly waiting for Opal to exit. Oblivious,
Opal takes one last look up at Sasha and then steps out.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

ELSA

Goodnight.

Elsa shuts the front door, relieved.

ELSA (CONT'D)

That woman is fucking looney.

SASHA (O.S.)

Ha! You owe me a dollar!

Back downstairs, Sasha sidles up to Elsa.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I like her.

ELSA

I thought I told you to brush your
teeth?

SASHA

I'm thirsty. I was getting water.

ELSA

Fine but brush your teeth right
after so I can tuck you in, you
hear me?

Off to the kitchen--

SASHA (O.S.)

I hear you!

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

Sasha slices a banana into a tall glass of chocolate milk,
splashing it all over the counter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONT.

Sasha hurries through the living room toward the stairs, paying no mind to the milk and banana sloshing around the rim of the cup till she spills a bunch out.

SASHA
Shoot!

Sasha pauses, deciding whether or not to wipe up the mess.

SASHA (CONT'D)
She'll kill me.

Reluctantly, Sasha puts her cup down carefully on a table and kneels to wipe the mess up with her pajamas.

INT. ELSA'S BATHROOM - SAME

Elsa enters, hanging her cane up on the hook on the back of the door.

Passing the closed cabinet doors, Elsa feels her way toward the bath faucet and turns it on.

Leaving the bathwater running, Elsa turns and we see that as she walks past the bathroom cabinets, they are all wide open!

Unaware, Elsa grabs a towel, the cabinet doors hanging open. Swaying. Taunting us.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Sasha still cleans up the milk from the floor.

Suddenly--

CHILD (O.C.)
(singing very softly)
Eeper, weeper, chimney sweeper...

Sasha freezes, terrified.

CHILD (O.C.) (CONT'D)
*/Had a wife but couldn't keep
her...*

Sasha very slowly turns her head to where the sound is coming from - the cavern of the fireplace!

CHILD (O.C.) (CONT'D)
.../Had another, didn't love her...

Hand shaking, Sasha moves closer to the deep firebox, her eyes open wide.

INT. ELSA'S BATHROOM - SAME

The cabinets still open, Elsa is about to remove her bathrobe when suddenly...

BANG!

All the bathroom cabinets SLAM shut simultaneously causing Elsa to SCREAM!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Sasha stands, transfixed by the creepy singing coming from the fireplace.

She steps closer, as though pulled by the sound.

CHILD
.../Up the chimney...

Sasha steps closer still, her feet stepping onto the hearth itself.

Eyes wide, listening...

...when...

...a set of two, small, dirty hands dart out of the fireplace and GRAB her!

CHILD (O.C.) (CONT'D)
STAY AWAY FROM HER!

Visible on one forearm is an angry red scar, the exact same shape and size as the cross on the severe woman's iron rod.

Sasha SCREAMS and manages to pull away, running just in the nick of time as a fire suddenly explodes inside the fireplace, causing the child inside to SCREAM in pain!

SASHA
MOMMA!!!

INT. ELSA'S BATHROOM - SAME

Still shocked by the sudden noise, Elsa feels around frantically trying to figure out what caused the sound.

SASHA (O.S.)
(blood curdling)
MOMMA!!!

Elsa SLIPS and just manages to catch herself on the counter.

SASHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MOMMA!!!

Without the use of her cane to guide her, she runs out of the bathroom--

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

--into Sasha, crying inconsolably!

SASHA
Momma! There's someone...I saw
someone!

ELSA
Who? What did you see?

SASHA
In the fireplace. There's
someone...

Sasha bursts into tears making it difficult to understand her. Elsa wraps her in a calming hug.

ELSA
Shhhh. It's okay. There's nobody
here but you and me.

SASHA
NO! You don't understand. I SAW
someone! I heard them!

Sasha clutches Elsa's arm, pulling her to the staircase.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I'll show you!

Sasha leads her mother down the stairs, Elsa having difficulty keeping up as she tries not to stumble.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONT.

Sasha pauses at the fireplace, which now looks perfectly ordinary.

SASHA

There.

ELSA

What?

Sasha pulls Elsa down with her to the hearth.

SASHA

In there! The chimney. Listen!

Elsa leans in toward the fireplace, listening. Nothing.

Sasha's tears take on a whole new level, her sobs heaving her entire body as she gasps for breath in between.

ELSA

Sasha you have to calm down!

Concerned for her daughter, Elsa hugs Sasha tight, trying to console her.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Shhhhh. It's okay.

Elsa thinks for a moment.

ELSA (CONT'D)

You know, sometimes when things around us change real quick and you're upset, your mind can do strange things. It's just how your brain deals with stress.

Sasha looks up into her Mother's vacant eyes, sniffing.

SASHA

I want to call Daddy.

Elsa furrows her brow, concerned.

ELSA

Sasha...

Sasha's tears start flowing again.

SASHA

I miss my Daddy! I want Daddy!

ELSA

Sweetie it's too late. He's probably sleeping.

SASHA
Can I call him tomorrow?

Elsa remains silent, swallowing.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Can I? Please?

Finally, very reluctant--

ELSA
We can try tomorrow.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Elsa's hand feels for the braille numbers on the old rotary phone, slowly dialing as Sasha hops up and down excitedly.

SASHA
Why can't we use a real phone?

ELSA
(smiling)
What do you mean? This is a real phone.

SASHA
No, I mean like your actual phone.

ELSA
My cell phone doesn't work out here.

SASHA
Why am I not surprised?

Elsa pauses, listening for a few moments and then hangs up.

ELSA
He's not answering.

SASHA
What!?!?

Elsa hugs Sasha.

ELSA
I know you're disappointed. He's probably really busy.

The sound of the front door opening.

OPAL (O.S.)
Yoohoo!

ELSA
In here!

Really upset, Sasha almost bumps into Opal as she exits.

OPAL
(calling after Sasha)
Well hello to you too!

Carrying a large shopping bag, Opal turns to Elsa for a clue.

OPAL (CONT'D)
What's biting her backside?

ELSA
Another nightmare. This move's been
really hard on her.

OPAL
Aw, poor little thing.

Elsa hears Opal place her oversized bag on the counter.

ELSA
What's that?

OPAL
Oh just some odds and ends I
thought we could use. And I went
ahead and brought some lunch for us
all too.

ELSA
You really didn't need to do that.

OPAL
I know you're sick of me hanging
around but I hope a little homemade
picnic might take the sting out.

ELSA
You cooked?

OPAL
I even baked my own bread. I've
been babysitting this sourdough
starter for months now. Sometimes I
sing to it.

Suddenly self conscious--

OPAL (CONT'D)
Is that too much information?

ELSA
Sasha will love it.

Opal starts putting the lunch away for later.

OPAL
Go on ahead, I'll meet you in the living room. We can get started on the books.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Opal and Elsa unpack more boxes, chatting.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Sasha peeks into the living room. Not wanting to be noticed, she slinks past.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

Sasha enters the kitchen, checking over her shoulder that neither Opal nor her mom are behind her.

Sasha makes her way to the rotary phone. She climbs up onto the kitchen counter so she can reach it.

As soon as Sasha picks up the receiver, an aggressive beeping sound emits from the phone. A sound Sasha has probably never heard before.

Beep, beep, beep, beep.

The sound of a phone that's been off the hook for a while.

Sasha dials her dad's number just the way she saw Elsa did earlier.

SASHA
9-1-8-5-5-5-3-7-4-3

But the beep, beep, beep sound keeps going on and on.

When nothing happens, Sasha peers closer at the phone itself.

Suddenly a voice on the other end! Sasha excitedly puts the receiver to her ear.

PHONE
 If you'd like to make a call,
 please hang up and try again.

And then back to beep, beep, beep.

Sasha takes another look at the phone and discovers that a paperclip has been jammed under the hook to keep it up.

Angry, Sasha clenches her jaw, removing the paperclip from under the phone hook before replacing the receiver.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONT.

Elsa and Opal, still on the living room floor, break down empty boxes.

Sasha stomps in, clearly upset.

SASHA
 You lied to me!

ELSA
 Excuse me?

SASHA
 You didn't call Daddy! You only
 pretended!

ELSA
 Sasha I didn't lie, it's just not a
 good time...

SASHA
 I knew it! You're still lying!

Sasha runs up the stairs but before Elsa can go after her--
 RING! RING! RING!

Elsa freezes as Opal gets up off the floor.

OPAL
 I'll answer it, give you two a
 minute to talk.

ELSA
 NO!

Opal stops in her tracks, shocked.

RING! RING! RING!

ELSA (CONT'D)
No. I'll get it. Would you mind
checking on Sasha?

OPAL
Sure. No problem.

Elsa exits, visibly shaken, leaving Opal confounded by her
strange behavior.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

RING! RING! RING!

Elsa taps her way to the phone, takes a deep breath and
answers.

ELSA
Hello?

INTERCUT:

EXT. DOWNTOWN TULSA - SAME

Carrie walks down a bustling Tulsa street on her phone.

CARRIE
Finally! I've been trying and
trying you!

ELSA
Carrie!?! You scared the living
hell out of me! How did you get
this number?

CARRIE
(sarcastic)
J. Edgar's great grandson owes me a
favor. I'm a reporter, it's my job!

ELSA
I was so worried. I thought it was
Richard.

CARRIE
Well you're not far off because he
hired a private investigator.

ELSA
I figured he might try something
like that.

CARRIE

So then you have a plan B right?
You didn't just steal your kid off
to some out-of-the-way town and
expect everything to just be okay?

ELSA

I didn't have a choice Carrie. I
couldn't stay there with him and I
wasn't going to leave Sasha.

CARRIE

I know. I'm just worried about you
two is all. Maybe y'all should come
stay here with me. We'll call the
police and deal with this.

ELSA

The police will never believe me.
Mr. Charismatic Deputy Sheriff who
everyone loves? Nobody's ever seen
that other side of him but me.

CARRIE

But he's gonna find you, I know
these private dick types. Like a
dog with a bone, he not going to
let go.

ELSA

I have a little time. I'm only
using cash, I got rid of my cell
phone, nobody but you know that
we're here.

Elsa thinks for a moment.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Except...

CARRIE

What?

ELSA

There's this neighbor woman who
keeps dropping by.

CARRIE

Elsa! You can't have some strange
person around!

ELSA

I know, I know. I want to get rid of her but she's like a barnacle you can't scrape off. Plus Sasha's taken a liking to her and I'm not trying to make her any angrier at me than she already is.

CARRIE

Well at least make sure she's not some busybody, gossip.

ELSA

She's harmless, trust me. She's more Grey Gardens than Unibomber.

CARRIE

That's not comforting at all.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Opal sits with Sasha on the mattress, the child's small, soft hand between her two rough, veined ones.

SASHA

But why would Momma lie like that to me?!? Why doesn't she want me to talk to Daddy?

OPAL

Only your Momma can answer that one, hon.

Opal smooths out the cover on Sasha's mattress.

OPAL (CONT'D)

You know when I was your age, I didn't get along with my parents all the time either.

SASHA

You didn't?

OPAL

Nope. And it was a real shame because I really could've used some of their wisdom.

SASHA

What did you want to ask them about?

Opal stops, contemplating something painful from her past.

Sasha looks up at Opal.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Opal?

OPAL
It was such a long time ago. But
that's a story for another time.

Opal places her hands on Sasha's shoulders and looks her
straight in the eye.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Your Momma says you've been having
nightmares. Why don't you tell me
about them? Maybe I can help?

Sasha thinks for a moment.

SASHA
There's a horrible woman coming
after me.

OPAL
What's she doing?

SASHA
She wants something but I don't
know what it is. Something
terrible. And she HATES Momma.
Really hates her.

OPAL
Anything else? Like voices or
anything?

SASHA
Children's voices. I saw one of
them in the fireplace last night.
Momma said it was just my
imagination but it felt so real.

OPAL
That's because....it was real.

SASHA
How do you know?

OPAL
I've seen them too.

Sasha's eyes widen.

SASHA
But Momma said...

OPAL
(interrupting)
Your Momma can't see them. Can she?

Opal looks into Sasha's horrified face.

OPAL (CONT'D)
I don't want to scare you
sweetheart but this house...we're
not alone in here.

SASHA
Did you tell Momma? You have to
tell her!

OPAL
I'll try but I'm not sure if she's
ready to believe me yet. So for
now...

Opal takes the old amulet of an evil eye off her neck.

OPAL (CONT'D)
I want you to wear this.

Opal puts the amulet around Sasha's neck and drops it under
her sweater out of sight.

OPAL (CONT'D)
It's an Evil Eye. It'll keep you
safe.

Sasha gives Opal a tight hug.

SASHA
Can you stay here with us?

OPAL
Don't you worry. Your Momma will
come around. Eventually. Meanwhile,
the necklace will keep you safe.

Still hugging Sasha, Opal notices the iron rod propped up in
a corner of the room. Her expression hardens.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Opal exits, running straight into Elsa.

OPAL

Poor little mouse. She just needed
a shoulder to cry on.

ELSA

I'm sorry I snapped. I didn't give
this number out, so when the phone
rang...it startled me is all.

OPAL

Oh you're fine. I'm just grateful
there's someone new in town I can
hang out with. Someone who's read
more than just the wall of a gas
station restroom.

Elsa's smile is thin and tight lipped.

ELSA

About Sasha...

OPAL

That's your business Elsa, you
don't have to explain anything to
me. Sasha on the other hand...
Well, secrets in a family are like
wounds, they fester.

ELSA

You're right. It is none of your
business.

Opal swallows nervously. Trying to shake it off, she holds
the iron, allowing Elsa to feel it.

OPAL

By the way, I found this branding
iron in Sasha's room.

ELSA

Branding iron? Is that what this
is?

OPAL

Mind if I find it a better hiding
place? I wouldn't want Sasha to
play with it and hurt herself, it's
sharp.

Defensive--

ELSA

I put it back in the fireplace
where I found it. I thought it was
fire poker.

OPAL

No ma'am, not a fire poker. Granny
told me stories when I was little.
The kind folks tell their kids when
they're misbehaving. Around here,
it wasn't the bogeyman, it was The
Church of Mercy and Redemption.

Opal rubs the cross absentmindedly.

OPAL (CONT'D)

They were big around these parts a
while back. Real intense fire and
brimstone people. And this...

Opal squares off, adjusting her grip on the iron brand.

OPAL (CONT'D)

...they used this old thing to
brand sinners.

ELSA

Brand people? What's it doing here?

OPAL

I didn't want to say anything and
worry you but, this house used to
be a home for blind children. The
church ran it. Well...One of the
parishioners ran it. A woman. Story
goes that the children were real
delinquents. Violent types. In
fact, one night they all got
together and killed the caretaker.
Right there in Sasha's bedroom.

Elsa shifts the weight of her feet impatiently.

OPAL (CONT'D)

You know, Sasha told me about a
woman and some children in her
dreams.

ELSA

It's perfectly normal when a kid is
going through something like moving
or starting a new school to have
nightmares.

Opal steps closer into Elsa's space.

OPAL

When you told me about Sasha's nightmares and I knew the history of the place, I thought maybe... Well, that's why I brought some salt and sage bundles to help clear out any negative energy that might be lingering.

ELSA

Listen, I appreciate your kindness but there's no such thing as ghosts, spirits, poltergeists, whatever. And the last thing I want to do is put a whole lot of...stuff around the house. The only thing that'll do is frighten the heck out of Sasha. I know you're trying to help but...no.

Opal swallows, sniffing loud enough for Elsa to hear.

OPAL

I can see I've overstayed my welcome. If you don't need my help anymore I'll just...

ELSA

I didn't say that. I don't want you to think I don't appreciate all your help.

Elsa pauses, taking in a breath.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Moving has been hard on Sasha. It's been hard on me too. That's all.

Opal purses her lips, resigned.

OPAL

I understand.

Indicating the branding iron--

OPAL (CONT'D)

I'll just find a place to put this.

Opal turns toward the stairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Opal steps down the stairs, examining the iron rod, looking closely at the cross.

She looks around to make sure she truly is all alone.

Pressing on the panels beneath the stairs, Opal finds one that clicks open, revealing a hidden door.

She takes one more look around and, satisfied, steps into--

INT. BASEMENT - CONT.

Holding the branding iron, Opal comes down a set of steep stairs into a dark, cold basement.

A single window provides insufficient light that fights to enter through thick, iron bars.

An old, wood chair sits in the middle of the space alone. What happened here? Interrogations? Torture?

Seeming to know exactly where to go, Opal approaches a dark, spider webbed corner. She brushes the cobwebs aside and finds a deep, dark hole in the wall.

Opal takes the branding iron and places it inside, her arm going in all the way up to the shoulder.

As she pulls her arm out, her sleeve rises revealing--

ANGLE ON:

A distinct scar in the exact same shape as the cross on the iron brand and the scar on the child inside the fireplace.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elsa sleeps heavily, sweat covering her brow.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sasha sleeps restlessly, tossing and turning - her sheets tangled around her small body.

The door to her room is closed.

CHILDREN (O.S.)
Come with us.

Sasha opens her eyes.

She wrestles out of her sheets and sits up in bed, listening.

Trembling, Sasha walks tentatively to the fireplace, pausing to listen.

Nothing.

When Sasha turns back around, she finds the door is now open.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Sasha walks down the hallway, the sound of the wind outside getting louder, carrying with it the soft sound of children's voices.

Peeking over the banister, Sasha realizes that the front door is wide open - the sounds of the night wafting inside.

Frightened, Sasha walks down the stairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Sasha looks out, small and defenseless in comparison to the velvet, black night.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONT.

Sasha hears a high pitched, metallic SCREECH.

Startled she looks for the source of the sound...her eyes finally settling upon the rusted iron gate swinging open.

The wind blowing Sasha's hair back from her face begins to sound eerily like voices.

Sasha searches the darkness, bewildered.

Children's voices.

And then...

...more clearly--

CHILDREN (O.S.)
Come with us!

Sasha turns quickly to the sound and sees...

...One by one, a line of BLIND CHILDREN, hands on the shoulder of the one in front of them, exit the yard. The black night envelops each child as they walk into the wheat field.

The last child, a BOY, stops at the gate, turning to face Sasha as he beckons for her to follow.

ANGLE ON:

The boy's eyes - milky white, colorless and blind are surrounded by bruised and bloodied eye sockets.

Sasha is frozen in horror at the site.

Suddenly--

The boy SCREAMS in an almost animal-like voice!

CLOSE UP:

A terrifying reflection in the boys' eyes! The house behind Sasha is engulfed in flames!

SASHA
MOMMA!!!

The boy runs in to the field to escape, following the rest of the children as we hear them scatter.

But Sasha turns, not into a fiery blaze but...

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

...straight into the severe woman who suddenly grabs her!

The woman's evil, black eyes, devoid of any light, penetrate Sasha as though delving deep into her very soul. Her mouth in a victorious sneer.

Her leathery, veined and muscled hand grips Sasha's forearm, digging her nails deep into the child's skin.

Hot breath engulfing Sasha's small face, the woman raises the branding iron - the cross glowing orange.

WOMAN
They must repent!

The woman presses the hot iron cross into Sasha's flesh, a horrible burning HISSSS of smoke escaping.

And as Sasha opens her mouth to SCREAM in agony...

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Elsa packs a lunch for Sasha. Her face weary, dark circles beneath her eyes betray the rough night she's had.

As Elsa turns, we notice Sasha standing in the doorway, staring silently with blank eyes. Elsa is oblivious to the presence of her daughter.

ELSA
(yelling)
Sasha! You'll be late for school!

SASHA
I'm ready.

Elsa startles but quickly recovers.

ELSA
You're like a cat, sneaking up on
me like that.

Elsa hands Sasha the brown paper bag she has just finished packing.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Here you go.

SASHA
I'm sorry we fought yesterday
Momma. I don't like fighting.

Elsa hugs her daughter back, surprised but also relieved as she strokes the back of Sasha's head.

ELSA
Me neither sweetie. I love you more
than anything.

We get a glimpse of the fresh burn mark on Sasha's forearm as Elsa kisses her forehead.

ELSA (CONT'D)
We'll get used to it here. You'll
see.

Elsa sighs, sounding exhausted.

SASHA
You look tired Momma.

Elsa half smiles.

ELSA
That's because I am tired.

SASHA
Why don't you take a nap?

ELSA
You are a wise old soul. A nap is a great idea. You better hustle up before you miss the bus.

SASHA
See ya later.

ELSA
Have fun at school. Love you.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The town elementary school. A squat, grey, uninspired building on a dark, sunless and rainy day. Just the look of it could drain the happiest child of any spark.

EXT. SASHA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

An elementary school classroom with all the usual harsh primary colors. The children sit in desks facing MRS. BECKER, a woman in her late 70's.

Mrs. Becker has written the words "Health Science" on the whiteboard and is droning on and on.

MRS. BECKER
Okay children, now a parasite is a living organism that benefits or lives off of it's host.

We focus in closer on the children and see Sasha, sitting at the back of the classroom quietly.

Unmoving. Void of any emotion.

MRS. BECKER (CONT'D)
Leeches, ticks, mosquitoes, head lice.

CLASS
Ewwwww.

MRS. BECKER
Alright settle down now.

We slowly move in closer and closer to Sasha and notice a tiny trickle of blood just starting to emerge from one of her nostrils. Sasha seems completely oblivious.

MRS. BECKER (CONT'D)
Those are all examples of ectoparasites. They live on the outside of our bodies.
Endoparasites live inside the body and...

The boy beside Sasha, HECTOR, notices the red blood now dripping faster from her nostril.

Hector raises his hand, practically jumping out of his seat, till Mrs. Becker finally acknowledges him.

MRS. BECKER (CONT'D)
What is it Hector?

Hector simply points at Sasha and we now see blood pouring out of both nostrils, pooling on the open notebook on her desk.

MRS. BECKER (CONT'D)
Oh dear me!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's dark but we can just make out the shape of Elsa lying on the sofa.

The light adjusts and the sun peaks in through the closed curtains, revealing Elsa in a fitful slumber, her brow glistening with sweat.

TAP! TAP! TAP!

Elsa wakes with a very sudden GASP!

Sitting up, Elsa's T-shirt shows darkened stains under her arms and through her chest. Home alone, her bruised arms are now on full display.

Elsa feels the bureau beside the couch where she hung her cane. She pauses, startled to find that THE CANE IS GONE.

Elsa pats along all the drawers, checking every single handle.

Hands out in front, Elsa searches for her cane, bumping her shin hard into the sharp edge of a table.

Stumbling in pain, Elsa loses her footing and falls, twisting her ankle painfully underneath herself and slamming her chin on the floor with a loud CRACK!

Biting her lip in agony and starting to worry, Elsa, on all fours, pats across the entire floor, near the bureau.

Suddenly--

Tap! Tap! Tap!

ELSA

Hello?

Elsa feels her braille watch.

A shushing, whispering sound swirls around Elsa!

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The shushing turns into what sounds like multiple children, all whispering incoherently.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Who are you!??

Elsa's face turns deathly pale and she GASPS, stumbling unsteady without her cane.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Why are you doing this to me!?!?

Elsa follows, pale and frightened, cautiously taking steps on her swelling ankle, her arms out in front of her.

Tears begin rolling down her face and her breath becomes panicked.

CLOSE UP:

Elsa's cane TAP TAP TAPPING on the floor.

There's a tap from down the hall!

Elsa turns toward it.

Then a tap behind her!

Elsa turns again.

Confused and frightened, Elsa struggles, disoriented.

Elsa stumbles out of the living room, following the voices and the sound of the TAPPING.

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - SAME

Sasha sits on a gurney, pinching her nose with a cold, wet towel.

A kindly looking NURSE sits at his desk doing paperwork, checking in on Sasha from time to time.

Growing impatient, Sasha places the towel down and stands, looking around the room as the nurse continues typing.

Scraping her finger against the wall, she slowly makes her way toward his desk which is full of picture frames of his family.

Sasha notices that one of the nurse's children is in a wheelchair in all of the pictures over the years.

Sasha picks up a photo of the child, staring at it intently. The nurse looks up over his spectacles and smiles at her.

NURSE

That's my boy, David at his graduation.

SASHA

God hates the lame.

NURSE

(not sure he heard
correctly)

What did you say?

SASHA

God. Hates. Cripples. It says so in
the bible.

The nurse's eyes widen, unable to believe what he is hearing.

SASHA (CONT'D)

*For no one who has a blemish shall
draw near, a man blind or lame, or
one who has a mutilated face or a
limb too long...*

NURSE
(hoarse whisper)
Stop.

SASHA
*Those that are fractured or maimed
shall not offer to the Lord...*

NURSE
(jaw clenched)
I said stop it.

SASHA
Well that's what it says.

NURSE
You can go back to class now.

Shaking with rage, the nurse signs a hall pass and thrusts it at Sasha who doesn't move, staring at him with round eyes.

SASHA
You're a sinner.

Her face accusatory, Sasha raises her hand, pointing her finger in his face.

SASHA (CONT'D)
You and the cripple.

Unable to contain his anger any longer the nurse suddenly SLAPS Sasha clean across the face!

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Trembling, Elsa runs her hand over the wall, searching in the direction of the sound as best she can till she finds...

...the secret door beneath the stair is open!

Disoriented and scared, Elsa enters--

INT. BASEMENT - CONT.

Pleading desperately--

ELSA
Please! I need my cane!

The whispers bounce from one side of the house to the other, changing volume and tone as they go.

CLOSE UP:

A child's hand holding the cane as it rat-a-tat-tats across the railing on the stairs.

From above--

ELSA (CONT'D)
Tell me what you want!

Elsa places her thin hand onto the rail, slowly coming down the stairs into the darkness, unsure of her footing.

Suddenly--

Elsa steps into a pale light coming from a basement window and we see she is face-to-face with a blind child at the bottom of the steps! Their noses inches apart.

Utterly oblivious, Elsa stops, petrified.

Barely visible in the murky light we can make out shadows of more blind children, all speaking at the same time...

...Elsa realizes she is surrounded.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Just tell me who you are?

The children all share the same cross-shaped scar burned into the flesh on their forearms.

But aside from that, they all have very different markings:

The young girl whose blurry reflection we saw in the cooking pot - her hands burned badly, the skin melted almost down to the bone.

The small boy who had beckoned for Sasha to follow him into the wheat field with his scarred and wounded eyes.

A tiny girl whose dirty, blackened hands had tried to grasp at Sasha to pull her into the fireplace, emaciated and filthy.

All the blind children wear Depression era rags except one.

A blind TEENAGE boy with a yellow walkman clipped to his jeans, headphones around his neck, has a single, small bullet hole going straight through his chest.

The children surround Elsa as the teenage boy approaches her, his hands feeling through the air for her, following the sound of her crying.

Petrified, Elsa weeps for mercy!

The teenage boy reaches Elsa, palpating her face. Elsa cringes, startled and frightened.

The boy keeps one hand on Elsa's hand and with the other, takes his walkman and places it in Elsa's hands.

Elsa trembles, holding the walkman in her hand.

ELSA (CONT'D)
What is this!??!

The children continue speaking all at once, incoherently.

Suddenly--

OPAL (O.S.)
ELSA!

Elsa drops the walkman to the cement floor!

ANGLE ON:

Holding Elsa's cane in her hands, Opal stands at the top of the steps, peering down into the darkness of the basement.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Elsa?

ANGLE ON:

Leaving the walkman on the floor, Elsa slowly emerges into the light where Opal can see her, still crying.

Opal races down the stairs!

OPAL (CONT'D)
What is it? How did you get down
here without your cane?

In reply, Elsa collapses into tears, her shoulders shuddering.

Opal wraps Elsa in an embrace, trying to comfort her.

But Elsa is beside herself, scared and worried.

OPAL (CONT'D)
You felt them didn't you?

Elsa doesn't respond, crying inconsolably.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Elsa and Opal sit in the kitchen, Elsa desperately trying not to betray her feelings.

OPAL
Are you sure you're al...

ELSA
I'm fine Opal. I went into the basement without my cane and I panicked is all.

A moment of awkward silence.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I just need to get to know the house better.

The silence settles over them creating a thick tension.

Suddenly--

RING! RING! RING!

Elsa stiffens.

OPAL
Should I...?

ELSA
No!

RING! RING! RING!

Opal leads Elsa to the phone. Picking up--

ELSA (CONT'D)
Hello?

A pause as Elsa holds onto the kitchen counter looking shocked and troubled by what she is hearing.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I'll be there as soon as I can.

Elsa hangs up.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I need you to take me to Sasha's school.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

As Opal and Elsa approach the front doors, the nurse exits, carrying a box and a briefcase, shaken and angry.

When he sees Elsa and Opal, his expression hardens into a mixture of pure hatred and remorselessness. He stands aside to let them through.

OPAL

Thank you.

The nurse doesn't respond but watches them enter before letting the door swing shut with a loud BANG!

INT. FRONT OFFICE - LATER

Opal and Sasha, swinging her legs, sit side by side facing a glass window looking directly into the PRINCIPAL'S office.

They watch as Elsa and the principal are deep in a tense discussion.

Concerned, Opal turns to Sasha.

OPAL

How are you doing hon?

Sasha turns to face Opal, her face stony and unemotional.

SASHA

Oh I'm just fine. How are you?

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME

Arms folded, Elsa grinds her teeth impatiently.

PRINCIPAL

The fact remains Mrs. Kristofssen
that your daughter...

ELSA

The fact remains that my daughter
was hit by a school employee.

PRINCIPAL

Yes and I suspended him but we
still need to investigate. Whatever
your daughter said must have set
him off.

ELSA

It's unconscionable that you could even suggest that something an eight year old said could in any way excuse a grown man from hitting a child.

Elsa stands, signifying the conversation is over.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Unless this suspension ends in termination, you will be hearing from my lawyers.

INT. FRONT OFFICE - CONT.

The principal's door opens and Elsa exits. Opal stands to guide her.

ELSA

Let's go home.

Sasha hops off the chair to follow her mother and Opal out.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Elsa sits on the edge of Sasha's bed. Sasha is propped up on her pillows, looking stiff and uncommunicative as she holds an icepack to her cheek.

ELSA

I just don't understand what made you say a thing like that. Where did you hear it? It's not like you at all.

SASHA

I don't think it was me.

ELSA

What do you mean? Was there anyone else there?

Sasha doesn't respond - her eyes unfocused.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Sasha? Answer me. This is serious stuff and that nurse is probably going to lose his job because of it so I need to know if what he is saying is true.

SASHA

I don't want anyone to be in trouble.

ELSA

You're not in trouble. But I need to know. Did...did you say anything that would make the nurse do this to you?

Sasha shifts uncomfortably her expression changing. A dark cloud seems to pass over her.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. It's never okay to hit. That nurse was dead wrong no matter what you said to him.

Elsa rubs Sasha's knee.

ELSA (CONT'D)

And you did the right thing telling Mrs. Becker. You always tell if someone hits you.

Sasha looks into Elsa's unseeing eyes, placing her small hand on her mother's.

SASHA

What about if I see someone else getting hit? Like with you and Daddy.

Elsa's face is suddenly pale and colorless.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Should I tell someone then?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - A MOMENT OR TWO LATER

Elsa closes Sasha's door, steadyng herself, clearly shaken.

OPAL (O.S.)

How is she?

Startled, Elsa attempts to pull herself together.

ELSA

She'll be alright.

Opal puts a hand on Elsa's arm, trying to comfort her. Elsa flinches at her touch.

OPAL

I was thinking that it might be a good idea if I stayed the night. I can sleep on the sofa downstairs. Just in case.

ELSA

That won't be necessary.

Hoping Elsa will reconsider, Opal is about to respond when--

ELSA (CONT'D)

I hope you don't mind if I don't show you out. It's been a long day.

OPAL

But...

ELSA

Goodbye Opal.

Opal watches silently as Elsa moves toward her bedroom door and closes it behind her.

Making her way slowly and silently, Opal takes the familiar looking glass vial out of her pocket.

Opal sprinkles the salt on the floor at the edges of Elsa's bedroom door.

As she stands back up, Opal takes a lipstick out using it to draw something on Elsa's door.

While Opal walks back down the stairs and out the front door, we focus in on Elsa's bedroom door where we see she has drawn a crude evil eye.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

The sound of someone coming up the basement steps is heard through the closed door.

The door to the basement creaks open slowly.

Elsa exits, holding an object in one hand and her cane in the other.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

The room is heavy with silence.

Elsa enters and closes and locks her door and then places the object on a table.

The yellow walkman the ghostly teenage boy gave her earlier.

Elsa puts the headphones on and feels the braille labelling on the buttons. She presses play.

Suddenly--

A very loud song from the 80's breaks the silence.

Elsa feels for the volume control, turning it down.

The song continues for a brief moment and then stops very suddenly. We hear the clicks of someone recording themselves.

Then--

A muffled sniffling sound.

TEENAGE BOY
I'm gonna make a record of this
alright?

(narrating into
microphone)

My name is Jason Hansen, I'm 14
years old and my family moved into
1312 Milbank Rd about a week ago.
That's when me and my little sister
started noticing strange things
happening, like the voice in the
fireplace.

A shuffling sound as though the boy is moving the microphone over.

TEENAGE BOY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Tell me again what you heard.

LITTLE GIRL (O.C.)
(very upset)
It sounded like there was someone
inside the fireplace, singing.

TEENAGE BOY (O.C.)
There's someone else in this house.
We're not alone. We've heard
children and...
(to his sister)
Say what you saw. Go on!

LITTLE GIRL (O.C.)
Why did we have to come here? I
wanna go home.

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.)
I need you to say it, okay? We've
got to tell what's happening.

LITTLE GIRL (O.C.)
I can't, I'm scared! I don't feel
right. She's makes me feel bad
things!
(sobbing, panicked)
She's tells me bad things!

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sleeping in bed, Sasha's eyes suddenly POP open - and she is immediately wide awake.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Sasha makes her way down the hall toward Elsa's bedroom door in the dark.

Nearing the door, Sasha hesitates.

She looks up at the evil eye, her face blank.

CLOSE UP:

Sasha's feet, inches from the salt granules.

Toes getting closer, the salt slithers toward Sasha's feet.

It's as though the combination of Sasha's skin and the salt granules create some kind of chemical reaction, eating away at her skin like an acid.

Sasha looks down at her feet, with growing curiosity.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Elsa stands, white knuckling the top of her cane as she listens intently.

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.)
It's been three days since I last
recorded.

The boy's voice is weak and his tears make him breathless.

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Something's wrong with my sister. I
called the library, and the lady
said that years and years ago the
house was an orphanage for blind
children.

Elsa bites her lip.

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
One of the orphans is still alive.
She lives around here. Her name's
Mary. Maybe she knows something?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Sasha still stands at Elsa's door, staring down at the salt on the floor. Her eyes move slowly back up to the evil eye.

Slowly, Sasha moves her hand toward the doorknob but the closer it gets, the skin on her hand bubbles up with blisters as she grimaces in pain.

Sasha pulls her hand back, GASPING for breath from the effort.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Elsa stands, anxiously listening to the recording - a mix of white noise, background voices and recording stops and starts.

Elsa fast forwards, searching for the boy's voice.

She presses play and listens to silence for a beat. Waiting.

Suddenly--

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.)
...I heard a gun shot! I've been in
the basement for hours, everything
was quiet and then...
(sobbing)
I haven't heard Mom or Dad and I
don't know what's happening!

The sound of a door CREAKING open eerily frightens the boy into silence.

We hear the boy's jagged breathing, clearly struggling to keep quiet and stop crying.

Footsteps come closer to the recording device.

The boy holds his breath.

Then--

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
Who are you talking to?

Shuffling sounds as though the boy is moving the recording device.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Still making your tape?

The footsteps get closer.

TEENAGE BOY (O.S.)
Where are Mom and Dad? What was that sound I heard?

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
You think I hurt Mom and Dad?

Closer...

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(angry crying)
HOW COULD YOU THINK THAT?

JASON (O.S.)
I don't know what's happening! I can't hear Mom and Dad! They were screaming and now I can't hear them!

The girl's crying morphs into a strange, throaty, rasping which then turns into an evil laugh that resonates through the recording.

EVIL VOICE (O.S.)
What ever happened, you did to them.

JASON (O.C.)
(alarmed)
Who is that!?! Where are you!?!?

Elsa clenches her fists.

JASON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What have you done with my sister?

The boy's voice recedes as we hear him move about the room.

EVIL VOICE (O.S.)
SINNER YOU WILL REPENT!

A gunshot BAM! Makes Elsa JUMP!

The recording goes silent and Elsa fast forwards several times for more but the rest of the tape is just silence.

Elsa hears Sasha's gasp just outside the door. She opens it.

ELSA
Sasha?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Elsa opens her bedroom door.

SASHA
Momma I don't feel so good.

Elsa reaches her hands out to find Sasha's face but Sasha can't move toward her. Finally, Elsa finds her and feels her forehead.

ELSA
You're burning up.

Elsa takes Sasha's hand.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Let's get you to bed hmmm?

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Elsa tucks Sasha into her bed.

ELSA
I'll be right back.

She feels her way to--

INT. ELSA'S BATHROOM - CONT.

Elsa finds a hand towel and wets it under some running water, wringing it out before heading back to Sasha's room.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Elsa enters in her bathrobe and heads straight for the rotary phone. She removes the paper clip she must have reinserted and dials.

INTERCUT:

INT. CARRIE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Carrie's cell phone on her messy bedside table rings, waking her up.

CARRIE
(groggy)
Hello?

ELSA
Sorry I woke you.

Carrie sits up, concerned.

CARRIE
What happened? Is everything okay?

ELSA
I need you to look into something
for me. I need a phone number or
maybe an address.

Carrie looks at the time.

CARRIE
Elsa, what's going on?

Elsa's voice warbles but she quickly pulls herself together.

ELSA
It's Sasha. Well, it's the house.
You're going to think I'm nuts but
I think there's...a presence...

CARRIE
I knew it!

ELSA
No, you don't understand. I think
the house might be haunted.

CARRIE
That's what I'm saying! I knew
something was off the second we
drove up to that place!
(MORE)

CARRIE (CONT'D)
It creeped the crap out of me but I
didn't want to worry you.

Carrie pulls out a laptop computer, sitting up in bed.

CARRIE (CONT'D)
This isn't the first haunted house
I've covered you know.

Elsa relaxes, relieved.

ELSA
I love you so much.

CARRIE
What do you want to know?

ELSA
(exhaling)
I need you to find someone for me.
The house was an orphanage for
blind kids in the 30's. One of the
orphans might still be alive. At
least I hope she is.

Carrie begins typing away on her keypad.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

A small town Main Street grocery store.

The delivery van is parked out front and the asshole delivery man is loading grocery bags into the back.

The cars that drive by are all trucks, dusty and rugged until a sleek, black sedan pulls up beside the van.

Ed Houston, the private investigator puts on his blinkers and gets out of the car.

Ed approaches the delivery man, taking a photo out of his pocket.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Opal helps Elsa into a waiting taxi.

ELSA
Thank you for staying with her.

OPAL

Of course. What are friends for but to help out when you're in a tight spot?

Elsa smiles stiffly.

ELSA

If she starts feeling warm again...

OPAL

(interrupting)

A wet towel and some TLC. I got this. You go get your errands done and I'll stay right here with Sasha. She's safer with me than anyone else, I promise.

INT. TAXI - CONT.

Opal shuts the door as Elsa maintains her upright posture, looking more and more uncomfortable as the DRIVER heads off.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - DAY

A very small home with an overgrown, weed-infested front lawn.

The taxi pulls up and the driver gets out to help Elsa to the front door.

Elsa knocks as the driver leaves to wait inside the taxi.

A NURSE opens the door and, upon seeing Elsa, smiles broadly.

NURSE

Can I help you hon?

ELSA

Hello. My name's Elsa Kristoffsen. I'm looking for Mary George? I'm new in town and I thought it might be nice to introduce myself.

NURSE

That's so sweet!

The nurse still seems conflicted.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I'm not supposed to let visitors in strictly speaking.

ELSA

Please, I won't be long.

The nurse considers, looking at Elsa and then at the taxi and down the street for anything suspicious. Satisfied--

NURSE

Mary does love visitors. Come on in then.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The lack of lighting in the room makes it seem dark. Opal finds the old fashioned lantern and lights it using a box of matches from a chest of drawers.

Opal sits and watches Sasha intently as the little girl stares at the TV covered in a blanket.

OPAL

You're awful quiet. You sleep alright?

Sasha remains silent, her eyes on the screen.

OPAL (CONT'D)

How was last night? Everything go...well?

Opal grows impatient.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Sasha?

No response. Opal turns the TV off.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Did you see her?

SASHA

Who?

OPAL

The woman. Remember? We talked about her? And the children?

SASHA

I don't think Momma would like it if she knew you were trying to scare me.

OPAL

I'm...I'm not. Of course I'm not.

SASHA

You shouldn't say things like that
to me you know. I'm just a child.
Especially if...

OPAL

What?

SASHA

Well, I don't think you want to get
into any trouble do you?

OPAL

Why do you want to hurt me?

SASHA

Why did you come back? This has
nothing to do with you.

Silence invades every inch of space between them as Sasha and Opal stare into each other's eyes for a long, uncomfortable pause.

Tears well up in Opal's eyes as she scans Sasha, focusing in on her neck and realizing...the evil eye necklace is missing!

Suddenly--

Opal GRABS Sasha by the arm!

The hostility between them thickens as Sasha tries to pull her arm away but Opal holds on even tighter.

Opal examines Sasha's arm and finds the scar, her eyes full of fear.

DING DONG!

The doorbell breaks the tension slightly. Opal drags Sasha to the arch that separates the living room from the hallway still gripping her tight.

OPAL

You stay here where I can see you.

Sasha rips her arm out of Opal's squeeze but reluctantly stays put.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Opal slightly parts the curtain of the window near the door and peeks out to see Ed Houston. She opens the door.

ANGLE ON:

Sasha peeking out of the living room, watching Opal and Ed speaking.

ANGLE ON:

Opal talking with Ed.

OPAL

Can I help you?

ED HOUSTON

Elsa Kristoffsen live here?

OPAL

She's not at home right now. I'm watching her daughter.

ED HOUSTON

When do you think she'll be back?

OPAL

I'm sorry. I'm just helping a friend out. You'll have to come back later.

Opal attempts to close the door but Ed stops her with his foot.

ED HOUSTON

You're aiding in a kidnapping. You realize that?

OPAL

I don't know anything about a kidnapping.

ED HOUSTON

You don't know that your "friend" Elsa stole the little girl away from her own father? What kind of friend is that?

Opal sets her jaw and stands up a bit straighter.

OPAL

Like I said, I don't know anything about a kidnapping.

ED HOUSTON

Well, if that's true you have a choice.

(MORE)

ED HOUSTON (CONT'D)

You could come out on the right side and help me out. Or face a felony charge and, in Oklahoma, you're looking at up to 20 years.

Worried, Opal considers Ed's words.

ED HOUSTON (CONT'D)

At least let me take a look at the kid, make sure she's safe.

But hearing these last words, Opal changes her mind.

OPAL

Of course she's safe. She's with her mother.

ED HOUSTON

I thought you said Elsa wasn't home?

Ed looks past Opal into the house, putting Opal on edge.

Opal turns toward the living room expecting to see Sasha but...she's no longer there.

Opal's eyes dart around nervously, finding nothing. Reluctantly she turns back to Ed, now anxious to get rid of him.

OPAL

She's not but she left Sasha with me.

Opal squares her shoulders trying to exude confidence despite being clearly on edge.

OPAL (CONT'D)

She trusts me.

Ed looks at Opal, judging her for a beat.

ED HOUSTON

Trusts you? So she told you everything? The whole story? She explained to you why she moved into town? A blind woman, by herself, with no help?

Opal's anger is palpable.

OPAL

She has help. I told you she has me.

ED HOUSTON
 A stranger?

Opal balls up her fists, her nails digging deep into the flesh of her hands.

ED HOUSTON (CONT'D)
 Nah. You don't know hardly anything about her either. My guess is she thinks you're just the lonely, gullible neighbor lady who's happy to have company even if it means you're being taken advantage of. And make no mistake, she's taking advantage. Nice, trusting lady like you who doesn't ask any questions.

Opal's eye twitches as she contemplates Ed's mean-spirited words.

OPAL
 Why do men like you always think you know everything when you know absolutely nothing at all?

Opal SLAMS the door shut in his face!

But as soon as it closes her sudden confidence vanishes and she looks around for Sasha, in a panic.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - SAME

Elsa enters a dusty room overflowing with a lifetime's worth of knickknacks.

The nurse places Elsa's hand on her elbow so she can lead the way.

NURSE
 Take my arm hon. Mary's a bit of a pack rat and I don't want you to trip and hurt yourself.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - CONT.

An ancient, frail biddy, shrunken in a hospital bed surrounded by old magazines, dried flowers, doilies etc...

This is MARY. Her eyes are white with a slight opalescent sheen.

We notice a familiar old, handmade doll sitting on the dresser. The same one Mary sang to as a little girl.

The nurse helps Elsa sit in a chair beside Mary's bed before exiting and leaving the door open.

ELSA

Miss Mary? My name's Elsa
Kristoffsen. My daughter and I just
moved into a house you once lived
in?

Mary sits unmoving and silent.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I'm blind too so the house made it
easier to...

Mary nods her head wisely, her hand beginning to search in
Elsa's direction.

MARY

(interrupting)
The House of Mercy and Redemption
for Blind Children.

Mary's wrinkled, shaky hand grasps Elsa's arm with a
surprisingly strong grip, startling her.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm so happy you found me dear.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Opal enters, still very upset.

OPAL

Sasha?

No answer. Opal rushes out.

INT. ELSA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Opal peeks inside.

OPAL

Sasha, this isn't funny!

Still nothing. Opal BANGS her fist against the wall in
frustration before leaving.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Opal races down the stairs.

OPAL
SASHA! Where are you!?!?

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

Opal runs in.

OPAL
ANSWER ME! NOW!

Opal crosses to the back door, opening it.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONT.

Opal steps out and walks around the side of the house, clenching her jaw.

Opal stops suddenly, seeing--

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT YARD - SAME

Ed Houston, on his cell phone, lingering outside the house.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Elsa shifts uncomfortably, still sitting by Mary's bed.

ELSA
I'm worried about my daughter.
She's been having nightmares and
she said she saw a child in the
fireplace. I think there's
something wrong inside the house.

Mary's smile disappears, leaving her face grey and unhappy.

MARY
Us kids called it Sinner's House.

ELSA
I heard children. I felt them on my
skin. And my daughter, she says she
saw a woman.

MARY

When the Depression came, kids like me who couldn't pitch in to help feed their family was just extra weight. So Ma and Pa moved on to find work and left me. In her care.

Mary's hand releases its grip on Elsa.

MARY (CONT'D)

Jezebeth.

The sun that was shining in through the soft, lace curtains, hides behind a cloud and the room is suddenly darkened.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh I don't blame them. But I can't forget the pain she caused. Her hatred! Like a snake hunting it's prey! Relentless.

ELSA

What did she do to you?

After a long pause, Mary again grips Elsa's hand even tighter. Elsa GASPS!

Mary tugs her hand closer and Elsa can't help but resist slightly, unable to tell what Mary's intentions are.

But Mary simply places Elsa's hand over the paper-thin skin on her forearm.

MARY

You feel it?

Elsa tentatively touches her fingers across Mary's forearm and finds...an old, pale pink scar.

A scar we immediately recognize as the very same one we saw on Opal's forearm. The very same scar all of the ghost children have.

The same scar now brutally burned into Sasha's soft skin.

ELSA

A scar?

Elsa pays closer attention to Mary's scar and suddenly remembers--

ELSA (CONT'D)

The branding iron.

EXT. FRONT YARD - SAME

Somebody breathes heavily, watching Ed Houston sneak around the front of the house taking photographs. Whoever it is, is holding the branding iron.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Elsa recoils from Mary's scar.

ELSA
Why did she do it?

MARY
Punishment for our sins of course.

ELSA
But you were just a child. What sin could you have committed?

MARY
She claimed, and the Church claimed, that sins had caused our blindness.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOUSE OF MERCY. KITCHEN - 1930'S - NIGHT

A blind YOUNG GIRL stands at the sink, filling a pot with water as Jezebeth watches.

MARY (O.S.)
It's what they believed.

The girl doesn't realize the water starts overflowing.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That He branded us with blindness so that good, God-fearing folk like her could make sure we paid for whatever sins we committed in the life before...

Angry, Jezebeth takes the girl by the hair and drags her to the stovetop where she plunges the girl's hand into the flames!

INT. HOUSE OF MERCY. LIVING ROOM - 1930'S - NIGHT

A small, crying child climbs inside the fireplace to hide. Moments later Jezebeth enters, looking frantically, yelling at the top of her lungs.

MARY (O.S.)
...or any little thing we did in
this one.

Her eyes fall upon the fireplace and a sinister grin crosses her lips.

INT. FIREPLACE - CONT.

The child huddles inside the dark, sooty fireplace her opaque eyes wide as she shivers, frightened.

Suddenly, the reflection of a fire roars across the white opalescence of her eyes!

ELSA (O.S.)
Mary?

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tears are streaming down Mary's wrinkled face, a reminder of the blood that dripped down her young, freckled skin so long ago.

Elsa hears Mary's sobbing.

ELSA
Mary? Are you alright?

Hearing Mary cry, the nurse enters and tries to comfort Mary.

NURSE
What's all this? None of that now.
Shhhhh.

The nurse turns slightly to Elsa.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

Nervous her visit will be cut short--

ELSA

Mary, please! I need to know if you think Jezebeth is still in the house? And the children. What do they want?

Mary grows more agitated.

NURSE

Alright Miss Mary, it's alright.

ELSA

Please! Answer me, I need your help! My daughter needs your help.

Mary becomes increasingly upset, howling as she cries. Her frail body suddenly tensing, she begins beating her fists into her eyes as she cries out in pain!

EXT. FRONT YARD - SAME

Ed Houston still struts the front of the house, tapping at his phone.

Suddenly--

He hears the sound of gravel moving and looks up!

A shadow crosses over him but before he is able to speak...

...the sharp edge of the branding iron comes down onto his head, slicing easily through the skin and sticking into his skull!

We hear a THUD as his body hits the ground!

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Mary still in the throws of a terrifying tantrum as the nurse tries to subdue her.

ELSA

I really need your help. Please, can't you tell me anything??

NURSE 2 (O.S.)

What the hell is this!?!?

A no nonsense NURSE (NURSE 2) enters, unceremoniously pushing Elsa and the other nurse aside and expertly restraining Mary.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
I told you not to let anyone in!

The second nurse attempts to suppress Mary's outburst.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
Is this about that House of Mercy
nonsense? Why remind an old woman
of the pain and suffering she went
through as a child? Dementia isn't
enough she has to deal with this
too!?! It's unforgivable!

Glancing over at Elsa angrily, nurse 2 holds Mary down as the
old woman flails and writhes.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
I don't know what's wrong with you
people! If I ever see either of you
anywhere near here again I'll call
the police!
(to nurse 1)
Get her out the hell of here!

The first nurse takes Elsa by the elbow, steering her out of
the bedroom.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - CONT.

ELSA
What did she mean, "you people"?
Has someone else been here?

NURSE
That lunatic Opal Hansen woman.
Don't worry I know you wouldn't
have anything to do with her.

Elsa's whole body is suddenly paralyzed with fear.

NURSE (CONT'D)
25 years in a high security
psychiatric hospital. You don't
come out of that without your brain
being scrambled.

ELSA
Did you say Opal Hansen?

The nurse opens the front door.

NURSE

She was the little girl who killed
her parents and her blind brother
all those years ago. Can you
imagine? A little girl...

Before the nurse can finish her sentence Elsa is out the door, determined to get back to Sasha.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - CONT.

Seeing Elsa exit in a hurry, the waiting cab driver gets out of his taxi to help her in.

NURSE

Hey! Hey you!

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Despite the sun's setting light coming in from the window, the house is gloomy.

A floorboard creaks. Someone is approaching. Slowly.

OPAL (O.S.)

Sasha? Where are you girl?

Opal enters from the living room, looking around stealthily. She heads up the stairs.

OPAL (CONT'D)

You want to watch T.V.?

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

We hear breathing from inside the closet.

SASHA'S P.O.V.

Inside the closet, peeking out at the bedroom, Sasha sits, clasping her bony knees up to her chest. She watches through a tiny crack in the closet door.

OPAL (O.S.)

Where d'you go?

Floorboards creaking again. This time coming from the hallway and getting closer.

And in walks...

...Opal.

OPAL (CONT'D)
You hiding from me?

Opal checks under the bed.

Turning to the closed curtains, Opal steps toward them.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Don't be scared. I just want to
talk.

Opal sweeps the curtains open! Checking for Sasha.

Sasha's eyes follow as Opal stops in the middle of the room, listening.

Opal turns to face the closet, making eye contact with the exact spot where Sasha sits.

Pause.

A bead of sweat escapes Sasha's hairline, trickling down her face.

But then Opal seems to hear something from the hallway and turns to the door.

Sasha watches as Opal walks out of view...toward the door...

Disappearing completely off screen...

Sasha's body seems to relax.

Then...

OPAL (CONT'D)
Gotcha!

Opal's face appears right in front of Sasha's!

She opens the closet door.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

The taxi pulls up, it's headlights shining on Ed's sleek car, still parked on the curb.

Elsa opens her door without waiting for the cab driver to help her out.

Obviously unaware of Ed's car's presence, Elsa rushes toward the house, behind the tall hedge.

Elsa steps up the porch stairs, heading toward the front door and...

...suddenly she trips and falls over something, coming down hard!

CLOSE UP:

Elsa sits up on her knees, her hands scraped and slightly bloodied.

Elsa feels around on the ground, searching for what tripped her up.

Her pale, white eyes suddenly widen in horror! And as we pull out we see the very dead body of Ed Houston, a large gash in his head oozing out a pool of blood!

Elsa stifles a scream!

ELSA
No! Please no!

Terrified, she feels Ed's face but is unable to recognize him as her fingers get sticky with blood.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Sasha!

Elsa slowly stands, now approaching the front door very cautiously, shaking in terror.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Elsa enters, silently closing the door behind her. We see her knees are also scraped from her fall, smears of Ed's blood on the front of her clothes.

She stops, listening intently.

A muffled sound comes from below.

Her hand leaves a smear of blood across the wall as she feels her way toward the sound.

Swallowing, Elsa grips her cane, determined. She quietly opens the door to the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - CONT.

Elsa stops at the top of the stairs, listening.

The sound of Sasha whimpering.

She very carefully places her cane and foot down a step, trying not to make a sound but--

OPAL

Elsa?

SASHA

Momma! Help!

OPAL

Don't come down here!

SASHA

She's hurting me!

Elsa hurries down as quickly as she possibly can. Through the darkness we see that Opal is attempting to tie Sasha to a chair, as Sasha fights her off.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Momma! Momma!

Elsa feels her way toward her daughter's voice.

OPAL

Stay away!

ELSA

Please Opal. Please just let her go and leave us.

Opal continues holding Sasha down in the chair, unable to tie her up as the child wriggles and writhes, crying.

OPAL

I can't do that Elsa. You need me now more than ever.

Elsa gets closer.

OPAL (CONT'D)

Stay back! I'm warning you!

SASHA

Momma, she's hurting me! She killed her family! She wants to kill me!

ELSA

Leave my daughter alone! I don't care about what happened before, I just...please! Leave us alone!

Opal yanks Sasha's arms behind the chair, struggling.

SASHA

MOMMA!

ELSA

Opal, I don't want to call the police.

OPAL

You can't call the police.

Elsa clutches her cane tighter, coming closer.

OPAL (CONT'D)

I know you took her and ran away. A man came to the door looking for you. I told him to go away. I helped you.

ELSA

The man outside? You helped me? By killing him!??

Elsa abruptly lifts her cane up and, hearing the sound of Opal's voice follows it...

OPAL

(confused)

But I told him to go.

...hitting her square on the side of her head with every ounce of strength left in her to save Sasha!

Opal's hands release Sasha's skinny little arms and she hovers for a moment, clutching her head in pain.

Sasha BOLTS upstairs as fast as she can.

Elsa follows the sounds of Opal, unsteady on her feet, moving about the basement.

Confident she knows where Opal is, Elsa strikes her again!

This time Opal falls SMACK, her head hitting the sharp edge of the stairs creating a gut wrenching CRACK! And rendering Opal unconscious.

Elsa rushes up the stairs to find her daughter.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

As soon as she's upstairs, Sasha runs into Elsa hugging her tight.

SASHA
Momma. Why did you leave me with
her?

ELSA
I'm sorry sweetie. I'm so sorry.

Elsa kisses the top of Sasha's head.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here quick!

Elsa heads toward the kitchen.

SASHA
I'm not going anywhere with you.

ELSA
Sasha we don't have time for this
right now. You have to listen, we
have to go!

Sasha's expression hardens.

SASHA
You shouldn't have done it. Taken
me away from Dad.

Elsa turns, worried and desperate to explain herself.

ELSA
I had to get out of there. You
understand that don't you? I
couldn't just leave you.

Sasha spies the branding iron at the foot of the steps, now
sticky with blood and hair. She scoops it up.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I was trying to protect you.

SASHA
You're lying. You always lie to me.

Elsa searches for her daughter with her hands.

ELSA

Sasha, listen to me. We have to go.
NOW. She's going to kill us! She's
already killed the man outside!

No response from Sasha. Elsa clenches her jaw.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Stop being so stubborn!! If we
don't move now we won't get out of
here alive! Don't you understand
that!?!?

Sasha laughs. A low, sarcastic cackle. She slowly steps
closer to Elsa, dragging the iron across the floor toward
Elsa, making a horrible SCREECHING sound.

SASHA

You can't see your hand in front of
your own face, how can you
understand anything!?! Daddy's
right! You're not even a whole
person! You'll never be able to do
anything by yourself!

SCRRRRAAAAPE!

The whites of Sasha's eyes turn black and her body goes
rigid, muscles tensing.

Spitting angrily--

SASHA/JEZEBETH

You're nothing! Just like that
pathetic, pimply, nothing boy
recording his stupid "diary"! God
made you both blind for a reason!

Elsa senses Sasha/Jezebeth approaching her, the SCRRRRAAAAPE
of the brand getting louder and scarier!

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)

Your existence is a desecration of
God's image.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

SCRRRRRRRAPE!

The sound from above pierces Opal's consciousness.

CLOSE UP:

Opal's face on the cold floor, blood mixed with spit dribbling out of the corner of her mouth. She starts to come to.

A shadow passes over her body and as Opal looks up she sees a ghostly, accusatory finger emerge from the darkness.

Opal shrinks back in absolute terror.

The finger moves closer, slowly followed by the arm...

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

SCRRRAAAAPE!

Sasha/Jezebeth still moves closer to Elsa.

Tears fill Elsa's blind eyes.

SASHA/JEZEBETH

You're just like those ungrateful orphans. Deformed miscreants. Even their own parents couldn't stand to look at them.

SCRRRAAAAPE!

Elsa backs away, not having any sense of what lies behind her.

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)

They left them here to be absolved.

Sasha lifts the branding iron, beginning to swing it through the air like a machete through a thick forest.

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)

And those wretched monsters murdered me. In my own house.

SWISH!

ELSA

Please baby, don't do this! I love you.

SASHA/JEZEBETH

But I made sure God got his vengeance!

SWISH!

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)
First, the sinners. Then the boy.

Sasha/Jezebeth backs Elsa, shivering, into a wall.

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)
And now you.

SWISH!

Sasha closes in on Elsa, trembling with fear as she crouches lower and lower.

SWISH!

ELSA
No! Please...no!

Sasha/Jezebeth lifts up the branding iron, holding it like a baseball bat ready to swing!

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Opal looks up horrified at the accusatory finger and arm emerging from the darkness followed by...

...the rest of the body till...

...Opal's face suddenly softens as she recognizes the tall, skinny 15 year old blind boy in 80's era clothing with a yellow walkman clipped to his jeans.

OPAL
Jason?

Opal waivers, unsure of her brother's feelings toward her.

OPAL (CONT'D)
She's back. Jezebeth, I saw her!

From overhead--

Elsa SCREAMS in agony!

Jason cocks his head toward the ceiling where the sound is coming from as Opal looks up.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Crumpled to the floor and holding her arm, wounded by the branding iron, Elsa lies at Sasha/Jezebeth's feet.

ELSA
Sasha please listen to me!

Elsa searches for Sasha/Jezebeth, holding on to her feet, practically begging.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I thought I was doing what was best
for you.

Slow tears trickle down Elsa's face.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Every single decision was for you.
To keep you safe. To make you
happy.

Sasha/Jezebeth looks down at Elsa, considering her words.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I didn't want you to think it was
okay, what was happening in our
home. I didn't want what was
happening to me to destroy you.

A small glimmer of understanding reveals itself in Sasha's eyes. Just for a moment.

ELSA (CONT'D)
You're right. I blamed myself for
too long. I shouldn't have kept so
many secrets. I thought it was the
only choice I had.

For a moment Sasha's black eyes fade, almost starting to look normal.

Elsa finds her way to standing, holding her daughter's hands.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry! Please forgive me
Sasha. Please!

But when Elsa hears no response she slowly lets Sasha's hands go.

Then--

SASHA
Momma?

Elsa stops, hopeful she's getting through.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I'm scared.

Elsa edges closer to Sasha about to wrap her up in an embrace when...

Sasha's eyes darken once again and...

...suddenly she STABS Elsa in the leg with the branding iron!

Elsa SCREAMS in pain as she pushes Sasha to the ground and hurriedly uses her hand to search for something on the wall.

Elsa finds a second hidden panel in the wall. She surreptitiously opens it, revealing a fusebox.

Elsa turns all of the breakers off, plunging the entire house into total blackness!

In the dark, Sasha/Jezebeth looks about blindly as Elsa rushes up the stairs--

SASHA/JEZEBETH
Momma!?!?

Sasha/Jezebeth BUMPS into the banisters, the corner rail punching HARD into her shoulder!

Getting angrier--

SASHA/JEZEBETH (CONT'D)
Where are you!?!?

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Absolute pitch black. The sound of Sasha BANGING around above, frustratedly searching for Elsa.

OPAL
Jason!?!?

CRASH! BUMP! SCRAPE! From upstairs.

OPAL (CONT'D)
I can't find you!

JASON
(comforting)
Stay here with me.

Through the soft moonlight coming from the small window, Opal barely makes out Jason standing, his hand outstretched toward her.

CLOSE UP:

Opal's face, hesitating as she considers taking Jason's hand.

More BANGING from upstairs, followed by the sound of items breaking as Sasha desperately moves around above them.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Spitting angry, Sasha/Jezebeth searches in the dark blindly for Elsa - the slightest sound attracting her attention like a hunter and its prey.

Elsa sidles up to the staircase, placing each foot carefully on the old, wood floors trying not to make a sound.

Sasha/Jezebeth pauses, pricking her ears up like a lioness.

Silence.

Then...

Elsa again places her foot down but this time the floor exhales a plaintive, whining CREEEEEAK!

Sasha/Jezebeth turns precisely to the spot where Elsa is but, thinking fast, Elsa throws her cane across the room! Letting it CLANG loudly, bouncing to the floor!

The demon pounces after the noise, allowing Elsa to easily race up the stairs, un-phased by the pitch black!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Elsa hurries down the hall. She comes to--

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Elsa feels her way to close and lock the door and crouches behind a bureau, shivering with fright as she listens to Sasha tearing through the house.

Suddenly--

BANG!

Elsa JUMPS!

BANG!

Making fists, Elsa prepares herself for battle.

ELSA
(calming, to herself)
She can't see me.

BANG!

The door BURSTS off its hinges and in walks...

...Opal!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Sasha/Jezebeth struggles to find her way around, battering herself and sending items CRASHING to the floor.

She comes upon a chest of drawers and, recognizing it, she opens the top drawer and feels around for a box of matches.

Carefully on the top of the bureau she finds the old fashioned lantern and manages to light it.

Sasha/Jezebeth smirks, satisfied by the low glow of the lantern.

Eyes blackened, Sasha/Jezebeth hears the sound of Opal BANGING from upstairs.

SASHA/JEZEBETH
Ready or not...

Using the lit candle, Sasha/Jezebeth heads upstairs, knocking over anything that stands in her way.

INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Opal feels her way further into the room.

ELSA
My beautiful, little girl. What's happening to her!?!?

OPAL
It's not Sasha, Elsa. It's not her.

ELSA
(sobbing)
I just want her back.

An animal GRUNT startles them both and when Opal looks up she sees Sasha/Jezebeth lit hideously by the lantern.

SASHA/JEZEBETH
It's time for God to get His
penance.

Sasha/Jezebeth slides serpent-like toward Elsa, the branding iron clasped firmly in her small hand.

Elsa backs up toward the fireplace, leaving Opal behind the bureau.

Suddenly Opal LEAPS at Sasha/Jezebeth causing the lantern to fall through the air, hot oil spilling everywhere!

Opal manages to restrain Sasha/Jezebeth as she writhes and SCREAMS bloody murder!

Elsa places her hands on her daughter, desperate to hang on to whatever is left of her.

OPAL
Lord, help me. Help me cast this
demon from this child's body.

Sasha/Jezebeth KICKS and GROWLS!

OPAL (CONT'D)
Help me heal this child and help
her mother, Lord. They are your
servants.

Sasha/Jezebeth's eyelids flutter open, revealing the whites of her eyes are still black. Evil.

Sasha/Jezebeth's face distorts with the effort of holding on to Sasha's body.

OPAL (CONT'D)
In the name of Jesus Christ, who
are you? Name yourself demon. Tell
us who you are.

Sasha/Jezebeth's growling grows louder and her body begins to shake, froth foaming from the corners of her mouth.

SASHA/JEZEBETH
I'm going to use this little brat
just like I used you! You were only
too happy to kill your whole
family!

OPAL
Who are you demon! Name yourself so
we can cast you out!

The hot oil finds suddenly ignites, a small fire quickly charging through the room.

Sasha writhes, trying to escape!

SASHA/JEZEBETH
I'LL GOUGE YOUR EYES OUT WITH MY
OWN BARE HANDS!

OPAL
Who are you!?!?

Sasha ROARS and SCREECHES and then slowly her animal sounds begin to sound more like words until finally--

SASHA
I AM JEZEBETH!

The fire seems to hear the demon's words and FLARES up!

Opal opens her eyes, looking into the black voids where Sasha's eyes once were.

Elsa cries, hugging Sasha/Jezebeth as the child bucks and wriggles trying hard to get free.

OPAL
Why are you here? Why have you
taken this body?

Sasha/Jezebeth leans in to her mother, shouting and sending black spittle into Elsa's face.

SASHA
DON'T TOUCH ME BITCH!

Sasha/Jezebeth laughs. An evil throaty laugh, her fingers tensing and contorting into impossible positions.

ELSA
This isn't you Sasha! It's not you!

SASHA/JEZEBETH
YOUR DAUGHTER DESPISES YOU!

OPAL
Get out! Get out of here! Leave
this family! Let them be!

SASHA/JEZEBETH
YOU'RE A WORTHLESS WHORE!

Opal searches in her back pocket and removes the vial of salt.

Opal uses her teeth to open the vial and then shakes it at Sasha, sprinkling it like holy water.

OPAL
In the name of Jesus Christ Our
Savior leave!

The salt burns Sasha's skin and the child/demon SCREAMS in agony.

ELSA
No! Stop! You're hurting her!

OPAL
I command you to leave here!

ELSA
Stop! Please!

As Sasha SCREAMS in agony, Elsa loses her will and releases her hold on Sasha who immediately strikes Elsa right in the face!

Opal keeps going with the salt, following Sasha's jerking movements as her skin burns.

OPAL
God loves all his creatures!

SASHA
NOT THE DEFECTS! NOT THE DEFORMED!

At this, Elsa's face hardens. Gathering strength, she places her hands on Sasha/Jezebeth once again, this time determined to get her daughter back.

OPAL
In the name of Jesus, demon stop
your lying!

Despite her skin searing off, Sasha starts to overpower Opal but...

Suddenly--

Two childish hands, charred and beaten, escape the ever growing flames that have now spread into the fireplace.

More hands join Opal in keeping Sasha from escaping!

The blind ghost children have emerged from the shadows surrounding Elsa, Opal and Sasha.

The ghost children move Sasha closer toward the fireplace and the two small hands hold on to Sasha's shoulders.

Elsa holds onto her daughter, at odds with the ghost children.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Leave this child Jezebeth!

Sasha's body shakes so hard, the chair begins to move with her!

OPAL (CONT'D)
LEAVE THIS CHILD! AND TAKE ME!

ELSA
What are you doing!?!?

Suddenly--

Sasha's body seems to slump forward into Elsa's arms, leaving a translucent version of Jezebeth behind!

ELSA (CONT'D)
Opal! NO!

In one movement, Jezebeth GRABS onto Opal! Filling her eyes in all black as the monster starts to take over Opal's body.

ELSA (CONT'D)
OPAL!

The ghost children try to push Opal/Jezebeth into the flames as the child in the fireplace pulls her in closer and Elsa holds on to Opal with all her strength!

ELSA (CONT'D)
I'M NOT LETTING GO!

Just then, Jason appears along side Elsa, helping her keep hold of Opal as the other ghosts PULL Jezebeth's soul into the fire! Leaving Opal's body behind.

Jezebeth, restrained by the children and engulfed in flames, SCREECHES a high pitched, painful sound - fighting off certain death! Her form now completely demonic as it prepares for hell!

As the children continue fighting Jezebeth, Jason and Opal embrace one last time.

OPAL
I don't want to be alone anymore.

JASON
You won't be.

They take one last look at one another before Jason nods his head slightly and Opal joins Sasha and Elsa, turning to leave.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONT.

Opal and Sasha help Elsa down the stairs.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONT.

Holding onto Sasha's shoulder, Elsa runs with her daughter away from the house with Opal as the entire place suddenly lights up in a massive fire!

They race out of the back gate and then--

The entire house explodes into a gigantic blaze!

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - CONT.

Opal, Elsa, and Sasha cut across a corner of the neighboring wheat field and onto the road, slowing down as they get further and further away from the house.

They all collapse in the midst of the wheat, embracing.

Elsa feels Sasha's face and body for any injuries.

ELSA
Are you alright?

Sasha looks down at her arm to where her cross-shaped scar is and sees that it is slowly disappearing and so is Opal's.

Sasha looks back at the house, and in the window sees the blind children and Jason looking out at them from a window engulfed in fire.

SASHA
Uh huh.

Opal follows Sasha's gaze and sees her brother, a tear sliding down her cheek. She turns to Elsa and takes the blind woman's hand in hers.

OPAL
Thank you for being my friend.

Elsa squeezes Opal's hand.

ELSA
Thank you for being my friend.

Elsa hugs and kisses Sasha once again.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry sweetie.

SASHA
It's okay Momma. I love you.

ELSA
I love you too.

Elsa feels for Opal and squeezes her hand.

FADE TO BLACK.