



THE RED BOX

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1	<p>EXT. UNDERWATER LAKE SARNISTA/ BULGARIA - DAY</p> <p>A slim, FEMALE HAND releases an open, red music box, from which --</p> <p>Tens of hand written letters float away -- the faint inky words lost in the waters.</p> <p>The music box rises toward the surface.</p>	1	*
2	<p>EXT. LAKE EDGE - DAY</p> <p>A BULGARIAN FISHERMAN notices the music box, bobbing in the lake toward him. He scoops it up with a net. Pulls it from the water, examines it.</p> <p>Holding the music box, the fisherman studies and opens it to reveal a tiny figurine in a traditional Bulgarian ballerina dress. A mirror on the inside lid.</p> <p>Looking into the mirror, the fisherman turns the handle.</p> <p>A haunting yet beautiful melody plays. It features off-key minor-key tritone, it disturbs more than it charms.</p> <p>Instantly -- the fisherman's eyes turn white.</p>	2	*
3	<p>EXT. VARIOUS - DAY/ NIGHT</p> <p>MONTAGE: Across two hundred years, the red music box passes between various pairs of hands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the fisherman's hut, his DEAD WIFE is slumped, twisted in the corner. Her eyes watching him aim a harpoon beneath his jaw. THWIP! Blood splatters against the hut's wooden wall. On the floor -- the red music box. - A NUN enters the hut, winces at the stench. Horrified, she eyes the fly-riddled corpses before being drawn to the red music box. - In a church, the nun opens the music box. Turns the handle. Her eyes turn white. CUT TO: - A PRIEST steps from the church's highest window. Suicide. - In the church, the nun hands the music box to a weeping WIDOW, sitting beside her SON. - At home, the widow opens the music box. Her eyes turn white. CUT TO: 	3	* * * * * * * * *

- On the kitchen floor -- the widow's SON laid dead, holding a knife -- blood seeping from a gash in his left wrist. *
- Distraught, the widow hides the music box beneath the living room floorboards. CUT TO: *
- In the kitchen, the widow bent over with her head in the oven. Dead from carbon monoxide poisoning. *
- Beneath the floorboards -- PUSH IN: On the red music box, on which dust gathers. Decades pass. Until -- light spills in as the floorboards open. A YOUNG BOY's hand removes the box. He eyes the music box in awe. *
- The young boy presents the music box to his MOTHER, who holds the hand of her YOUNG DAUGHTER. *
- In the hold of a World War Two cargo ship, the young daughter sits traumatized between her dead mother and brother. *
- In an American house, the young girl lays dead, the music box open in her limp hand. Her FOSTER PARENTS laid dead in front of her. A bottle of spilled pills on the floor. *
- The music box is dumped into a cardboard box full of the young girl's belongings. The cardboard box is sealed shut. *
- The cardboard box (containing the music box) is handed over the counter of an antique store to an ELDERLY STORE OWNER, who takes it to a back storage room. *
- Hold on the cardboard box. Time passes. Dust gathers. *
- Decades later, an elderly FEMALE HAND (MARIA) opens the cardboard box, and removes the music box. She eyes it in awe. *
- Maria wraps the music box as a gift. Smiles. Perfect. *

4 **INT. KIM'S HOUSE/ LITTLE BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 4

The red music box rests on a chest of drawers.

5 **INT. KIM'S BATHROOM - NIGHT** 5

A little girl -- MILLIE -- white summer dress, sits -- palms flat -- on the edge of a full bubble bath.

She lifts herself to sway her entire body back and forth like a human swing.

Her mother KIM -- bursts in with some fresh towels, scaring Millie, who almost falls into the bathwater.

KIM
(placing towels on the
radiator)
Careful, baby. Don't do that.

Millie keeps swinging. Kim turns to Millie.

KIM (CONT'D)
(stern)
Hey.

Millie stops swinging on the bath's edge. Sits there.

MILLIE
Sorry, Mommy.

Kim bends to Millie, who scoops a finger of bubbles from the bath and dabs them on Millie's nose.

Kim rubs noses with Millie, transferring the bubbles.

Millie giggles, scoops bubbles from the bath, puts them over her eyes.

MILLIE (CONT'D)
(monster voice)
I'm going to get you in your sleep!

Kim feigns a scream, acting scared.

Millie laughs hysterically. Kim smiles.

From another room, she's alerted by a BANG.

KIM
Bath time. Get undressed. Gimme two.

Millie holds two fingers in the air - 'peace.' Kim smiles.
Millie blows kisses. Kim blows kisses back.

Kim steps in to see -- her little boy -- GEORGE -- asleep in bed. Kim smiles softly.

Before she closes the door, she notices -- a red, leather bound music box on the floor. The source of the earlier BANG.

Baffled, Kim picks up the music box. Moves over to the adjacent Millie's bed. Kim sits cross legged on it. Puts the music box on her lap.

Opens it to find a tiny ballerina figurine. Kim turns the its handle. The HAUNTING YET BEAUTIFUL MELODY plays.

MILLIE (O.S.)
Mommy, is that my present from
Grandma and Grandpa!?

*
*

Kim looks into the box's mirror before -- BLACKNESS.

7 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

7

The haunting melody plays out from Kim's bedroom.

MILLIE (O.S.)
Mommy?

8 **INT. GEORGE AND MILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

8

Kim is asleep on the bed when --

The music box's handle stops turning. The melody dies.

Water fills the music box, overflows.

Kim jolts awake. Baffled by the water flowing from the music box.

9 **INT. KIM'S BATHROOM - NIGHT**

9

Kim rushes in. Horror hits her face at the sight. Her worst nightmare.

A full, steaming bath, over which hangs -- Millie's bloodless LIMP HAND.

CUT TO BLACK:

10 **EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ SUBURBIA - NIGHT**

10

Unnerving silence over a lifeless street. One isolated house has a porch featuring a swing chair.

11 **EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ BACK YARD - NIGHT**

11

Uncut and unloved grass stretches far out into the darkness, illuminated by the fairy-lit surrounding fence.

Oak trees tower like guardians over the house.

Perched in a particularly large tree is the pensive ZACH DAINS. Wearing headphones, he listens to melodic metalcore band 'motions.'

Zach aims a digital SLR camera like a sniper rifle.

Through the viewfinder, we see --

He's shooting photos of a FOX, lurking in the shadows of the small cabin. Zach SNAPS the photo. Zach tries to snap another photo but his camera dies. Damnit.

12 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT**

12 *

The bedside clock: 5:45am. In a king-sized bed is BELLA DAINS wearing an oversized KISS T-shirt. Big diamond wedding ring. *

Hair tied up, an ever-warm expression. Beside her, MAX sleeps, gripping a small black torch that isn't turned on.

She absentmindedly strokes Max' long hair as she reads a newspaper article:

ON NEWSPAPER: *Remembering the Ivanov Tragedy: Six months on -- Antique Store Owners Mourn their Grandchildren's death after grieving Daughter's Suicide.* *

Disturbed, Bella pulls her precious sleeping Max closer.

Zach enters, gripping his dead camera.

He sees Max asleep in his bed. Zach creeps toward his bedside, loudly opens the drawer. More NOISE as he searches for something.

Bella touches her lips... 'shhhhh.'

From the drawer, Zach takes a tub labelled 'Diazepam,' removes a pill, downs it. He finds a USB-Charger, plugs it into his camera.

The parents talk quietly, so as not to wake Max.

ZACH
Nightmares?

BELLA

Grandpa Bernie strikes again.

Guilt crawls across Zach's face. He climbs into the bed next to Max, who continues to sleep.

Zach eyes him sadly. Bella reaches over to rub Zach's shoulder, comforting him. He takes her hand, twisting the wedding ring on her finger, which he kisses.

*
*

BELLA (CONT'D)

Catch any beauties?

Zach makes a zero shape with his fingers.

BELLA (CONT'D)

As in perfect or zero?

ZACH

Perfect zero.

Zach turns on the charging camera, flicks through.

ON SLR SCREEN: *The fox's eyes are illuminated, too dark to make it out.*

Frustrated, Zach dumps the camera on his bedside.

Bella presents the newspaper headline about the parents of the dead mother.

BELLA

Can you even imagine?

Zach shakes his head. Keeps at his camera. Bella notices something on the article.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Wait. They're looking for a photographer... to relaunch the store. "A fresh start" apparently.

ZACH

It's hardly Vogue.

BELLA

But worth a shot, no?

Zach shrugs - guess so -- he goes to stroke Max's hair. Max unconsciously bats him away.

ZACH

Even hates me in his sleep.

Bella touches Zach's face, consoling him.

BELLA

Until your tiny violin wakes him.

They share a smile.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Look at what you have. What's a
paycheck without a family to enjoy
it with?

Bella winks. Kisses his cheek.

*

13

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

13

EGGS flip in a pan. Rushing, Zach dumps them on a plate.

ZACH

For thee.

*

Zach hands Bella the plate of eggs. Wearing power dressed separates, she downs a coffee on her way to grabbing Max's school book bag.

BELLA

Just there, honey.

Zach doesn't know where she means, places the plate on the counter. Moves to a breakfast table, sits opposite --

Max -- school uniform - eating a bowl of Rice Krispies. Plays '*Monster Battle*' on his iPad.

He's chewing on an action figure, which Bella - snatches from his hand, and puts on the counter, out of his reach.

Bella grabs a high-end leather bag, featuring a plaque: '*DR. BELLA DAINS.*'

Zach works away at a laptop, editing a photo of a fox. His frustration grows, can't get it quite right.

Out of the window, Bella notices the unloved lawn.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Could you weed the lawn today?

ZACH

(working)

Thought I already did?

BELLA

That was last month, sweetie.

ZACH
(working)
You got it.

Bella spots a bag of chips on the counter, shoves them in Max's bag.

Zach, hyper-focused on editing, hasn't noticed the milky mess Max is making with his cereal.

Bella sees Max's shoes are dirty. Grabs them. Cleans them in the sink. The washing machine beeps. The kettle whistles. Banal chaos.

Bella coughs for Zach's attention. He's too engulfed in his editing -- doesn't notice until she WHISTLES, jolting him as if out of a trance. Zach gets her point...

ZACH (CONT'D)
So, Max... wanna come to a shoot
with me today? Maybe pick up a cool
antique?

Max ignores Zach, who shrugs at Bella - 'See!'

BELLA
(softly)
Bit soon for car rides, babe.

*
*

Bella yanks wet clothes from the machine, then barely manages to carry the huge haul of washing.

Noticing Bella's struggle, Zach quickly 'saves' his work, then tears himself away from his laptop to help --

Given his compulsion to rush, Zach inadvertently knocks over his coffee, spilling it onto Max's iPad, crashing his game.

ZACH
Sorry!

Max glares daggers at him. Zach arrests a 'shit,' quickly grabs some kitchen roll from the counter. Cleans up the coffee. Max scowls, unimpressed.

Bella shakes her head as she carries the washing toward the door. A sock drops from the pile.

Zach grabs the sock, places it back on the pile. Doesn't realize coffee is still dripping from the table.

BELLA
Great! See that, sweetie? Daddy did
his ten percent for the month.

Max grabs a cloth, wipes the coffee from the table.

MAX
Ninety to go!

BELLA
Good maths! Teach *him* that will ya?
Might start contributing.

Max smiles proudly. Bella winks at Zach then kisses him on the cheek.

She barely manages to open the door with her foot.

Zach's phone buzzes. He takes it out. Reads the message.

ZACH
Oh shit. I got the Ivanov gig.

BELLA
Well done. Now get the door for me.

Zach opens the door for her.

ZACH
What would I do without my darling
high school sweetheart?

Bella throws him a 'really?' look. As she walks away --

BELLA
(mocking, demon voice)
Perish.

14

INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE/ BACK STORAGE ROOM - DAY

14

FLASH! SNAP! Zach, DSLR slung over his shoulder, uses a 35mm
to shoot photos of the elderly ALEKSANDER and his wife MARIA.
They pose, holding a sign that reads: '*Ivanov's Antiques.*'

*
*
*

ANONYMOUS POV: Through a gap in the shelves we silently watch
Zach shoot more photos.

END POV.

As if sensing an eerie presence, Zach looks around
suspiciously.

15

INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - DAY

15

Zach enters a store space filled with trinkets and unwanted treasures. Aleksander follows Zach in, closes the door, leaving Maria in the storage room.

*
*

ALEKSANDER

*

You know, I used to play checkers with your father, way back when. He was a good man.

Zach smiles faintly.

Dismissively, Aleksander moves behind a counter featuring a small Bulgarian flag and a framed photo of KIM, MILLIE, and GEORGE.

*

Aleksander quickly reaches beneath the counter and produces --

*

A cardboard box, from which he takes a handful of traditional wooden toy figurines.

Amongst them, a cop, a doctor, grandparents, a farmer, a fireman...

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

*

Sure your boy would love these.

ZACH

How do you know I have a -

Aleksander presents Zach's iPhone. The wallpaper: *Bella and Zach, with Max on his shoulders*. Aleksander hands over the iPhone.

*
*

Zach pockets the iPhone, smiles. Nods a *thank you*.

Attentive viewers will note the the faint CRACKING noise from the walls.

Aleksander shows the figures.

*

ALEKSANDER

*

So what d'ya say? Twenty bucks for the job-lot.

The light flickers. Zach notices but Aleksander ignores it.

*

ZACH

I'm not looking to buy anything.
But thank you.

From the box, Aleksander removes a traditional style MUSIC BOX, which we recognize from the opening prologue.

*

ALEKSANDER

I'll even throw in this...
The oldest antique we have, brought
over from my great Grandpa from the
old country.

Zach eyes the music box in Aleksander's hands.

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

I see the bags under your eyes.

Zach is taken aback, *excuse me?*

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

They're as heavy as a death in the
family.

Zach frowns. In slo-mo, Aleksander HANDS OVER the music box.
Zach takes it.

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

This... is peace in a box.

Zach studies the music box.

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

When you're home, stare into the
mirror, turn the handle and let the
tune play out. All the way through.
You'll be dreaming of apple pie in
seconds.

ZACH

I'm good. Honestly.

Zach goes to hand back the music box.

ALEKSANDER

Screw it, free of charge. The whole
lot. Consider it a tip.

Zach smiles. Fine. He puts the music box in the cardboard
box, and takes it from the counter.

Zach sees Maria glaring at him through the glass hole in the
back room door.

ZACH

Thank you.

Aleksander nods. The lights flicker again. Zach frowns.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I'll be in touch about the photos.

Zach turns and leaves. Aleksander, drenched in hope and relief, watches Zach through the window, heading to his car. *

16 **INT. DAINS HOUSEHOLD/ LIVING ROOM - DAY**

16

Zach, camera hanging at his neck. Dumps the cardboard box by the sofa.

Sits down, removes the red box. Opens and studies it. Checks the underside. Opens it. Looks inside to see a circle of zig-zags.

He eyes the ballerina, and surrounding zig-zag circle. Then takes a photo of it.

17 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT**

17

Bella, red dress and lipstick, moves to the full length mirror in the wardrobe's sliding doors. Checks herself out. Max shuffles in from the hallway, clutching an action figure.

MAX

I don't want you to go.

Burying her guilt, Bella crouches to Max.

BELLA

I'll be home for sleepy cuddles.

Max holds out his pinky. Bella links it.

MAX

It's not the same without you.

BELLA

Baby. I get you're still mad at daddy but I promise it wasn't his fault.

MAX

It was his fault! He wasn't looking at the road cause he was too busy yelling at Grandpa!

Sensing Max's stress, Bella cuddles and comforts him.

BELLA

We all make mistakes, babe. It's about how we learn from them.

MAX

And he still hasn't built my
climbing frame!

BELLA

He will. And it'll be the coolest
thing ever.

Max chews on his action figure. Bella takes it from him,
frowns at an echoed CRACKING noise, coming from the walls.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Boiler's showing its age. Like
Daddy.

Max laughs, Bella laughs too then kisses his head.

18

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

18

At the front door, Bella takes Zach's hand.

BELLA

Not too long in the bath, okay?

ZACH

Don't wet him after midnight.
Noted.

BELLA

And please don't let him chew his
toys.

ZACH

Got it. No choking.

Bella throws him a look.

BELLA

Call me if you need anything.

ZACH

Like pizza, beer... hookers?

BELLA

And no editing. Go win him over.

Zach nods -- he's not so hopeful.

BELLA (CONT'D)

(remembering)

Oh! Babe, could you please take a
look at the boiler? Keeps cracking,
or something.

Zach takes Bella in a hug. He whispers something in her ear to trigger her naughty, knowing smile.

Bella plants a kiss on his lips. Opens the door, leaves. Like he's smitten in high school, Zach watches her walk to the cab.

19

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

19

Max -- in his pjs and playing a monster slaying game on his iPad -- slouches on a different couch to Zach, who --

Picks from a bowl of candy, watches Max playing with his wrestling figures.

*
*

ZACH

Candy?

Max ignores him. Zach hears a CRACKING NOISE from the wall, goes to listen. The sound has gone. He frowns, *strange*.

ZACH (CONT'D)

You prefer chips? I can grab you some chips?

Max ignores him, keeps at his iPad.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Pizza? I know you love pepperoni.

Max shakes his head. Zach moves to beside the sofa.

Grabs the cardboard box of toys from the antique store.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Now we're talking.

Zach opens the box, removes the cop doll, the doctor doll.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Wanna be the cop? Or super doctor like mom!?

MAX

More like super lame.

Zach gets lost in a memory.

ZACH

I used to play these with these kinds of toys with your Grandpa -

Zach stops himself. Realizes he's made a mistake.

MAX

Before you killed him?

Zach stares at him, anger building.

ZACH

Enough. Bed time.

MAX

Mom said I can have a late night.

ZACH

Mom's not here. Bedtime.

Max huffs, gets up. Storms past him. Slams the door.

Leaving Zach drenched in frustration. He eyes his camera on the arm of the chair. A source of comfort and escape.

20

INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

20

A wall clock reads: 10:30pm. Zach at his desk, above which:

A framed collage of photos of his late father in various situations. Christmas, birthdays, with Max at the beach.'

Listening to 'motions' on his headphones Zach edits photos of the elderly couple, Aleksander and Maria. *

Zach uses 'Photoshop' to edit out a baffling black mist, floating behind the couple.

MAX (O.S.)

I can't sleep.

Zach doesn't hear him. Max grabs a cushion from the floor.

Tosses it at Zach, who jolts. Removes his headphones to see --

Max in the doorway. He's clutching a controller for the remote truck at his feet.

Zach gets up, moves to Max, walks away with him toward --

ZACH

You know we'd sell the house if
Grandpa was really in the closet,
right?

MAX

Can I have a gun, just incase?

ZACH

No. I bought you a torch, what more
do you want?

*
*

21

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

21

A lava lamp nightlight on a bedside table. A walk in closet.
Various plushes and action figures. A ball-bat and mitt.

Zach -- holding the music box -- is sitting on Max's bed.

Max grips the bedsheets tight, up to his chin. He's gripping
his small black torch (switched on.)

ZACH

Okay, here's the deal. If it
doesn't work... I buy you a new
toy. And not a lame wooden one. Or
a torch. A cool one. Like a video
game.

*
*

Max eyes him to see if he's lying.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I promise this is going to be
awesome.

MAX

Looks creepy.

ZACH

Sometimes we just gotta face our
fears.

Max turns away to face away from the opposite closet.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Okay. Fine. I wanted to take all
the credit... but this is actually
a gift from mommy.

MAX

Really?

ZACH

Really. She'll try anything to help
you sleep.

Max softens. Relents -- *fine* - takes the box from Zach. He
begins turning the music box's handle, triggering the
haunting melody.

He opens the box's lid.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Look into the mirror.

Max looks into the mirror.

MAX

Nothing's happening.

ZACH

Hang tight, we need to wait for it
to finish.

He points to his eyes then to the mirror. Max, over it, keeps his eyes on the mirror.

Zach eyes Max, waits impatiently. Cynicism growing. He's distracted by the music box when --

Its handle abruptly stops. The music dies. When Zach turns back to Max -- he is fast asleep. Snoring softly.

Zach eyes the music box in awe. Can't believe his luck. He silently creeps out of the room, taking the music box with him.

22 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT** 22

Zach opens the boiler cupboard beside Max's room. Checks the boiler. Taps the boiler. Nothing happens. No cracking noise.

23 **INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT** 23

At his desk, Zach's head in his arms. Asleep. Unfinished photos of Aleksander and Maria on his monitor.

*

24 **INT. DAINS HOUSEHOLD/ DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT** 24

Bella enters, slips out of her shoes.

25 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT** 25

Bella peers in to see the sink full of dishes, open pizza boxes still on the counter. Not a single effort made. But right now, Bella doesn't care.

26 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT** 26

Dim light bleeds up from downstairs. Bella walks up the stairs.

*

*

*
*

That's rich, Dad. Real rich.

GRANDPA

So learn from my mistakes! The poor kid just wants some time with his father. Your work isn't going anywhere. But your family will.

ZACH

Why, cause I'm providing for them?

Grandpa shakes his head.

GRANDPA

Cause you're a workaholic! Never heard of the ripple effect?

ZACH

Maybe if they listened to me once in a while. Goddamnit!

MAX

Please stop yelling!

Zach arrests a response. Eyes Max in the rearview.

MAX (CONT'D)

(pointing, terrified)

DAD!

BAM! Zach unknowingly pulls out from a junction as a TRUCK -- SMASHES into them from the side.

END DREAM SCENE.

31 **INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

31

The ear-shattering NOISE of the CRASH jolts Zach awake.

Silence. Zach looks around. A LOUD THUD from the hallway.

Inside the box, CRACK as the figure's head TURNS one-eighty.

32 **INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

32

Max wakes too. Looks around, confused.

MAX

Mommy?

33 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

33

Zach leaves his office, heads toward Max's room.

Stops at the top of the stairs. Beside the remote toy truck.

Suddenly his face changes. An expression of pure, unadulterated terror and devastation.

Zach's whole world collapsing before his eyes.

His glare is vacant.

His features frozen and numb, as if he's lost all ability to communicate or express.

In slow motion, his cellphone drops from his grip.

And bounces against the floor.

Max leaves his room. Sees what Zach sees -- his eyes desperate and pleading. Incomprehensible distress.

34 **INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

34

Bella's DEAD EXPRESSION. Her body twisted out of place like a contortionist.

Her neck snapped at one eighty.

A pool of blood seeping out from beneath her head.

In the b.g. we hear the hair-raising cries and anguished screams of her beloved husband and son.

35 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

35

Zach sits, expression vacant, on the couch, next to Max. The boy's only protection from meltdown is shock.

Opposite, a young COP -- OFFICER HAWKINS -- finishes making notes in her notepad. Chews gum.

*
*

OFFICER HAWKINS

*

Coroner tells me no signs of force or trauma.

*

Zach nods. Hawkins looks at him suspiciously.

*

OFFICER HAWKINS (CONT'D)

*

Healthy marriage?

*

ZACH

*

What's that got to do with anything? And yeah, we did.

*
*

OFFICER HAWKINS
Bella was a doctor, yes?

*
*

ZACH
This isn't some insurance scam!

*
*

Hawkins eyes him. His hands together. His eyes red.

*

OFFICER HAWKINS
It looks accidental, but I'll
confirm after the autopsy.

*
*
*

Zach nods, looks at Max, like he has no idea how to fix this.

*

OFFICER HAWKINS (CONT'D)
I'll check in again after the
funeral.

*
*
*

Hawkins eyes Zach. Her suspicion rising by the second.

*

35A **INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

35A

Close in slowly on the music box, sitting upon Zach's desk.

The ballerina figure is looking straight ahead again, at us. Closer and closer and closer. Until --

Its head SPLITS in half.

36

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

36

Darkness tempered by a dim night light on Max's bedside. Max lays in bed, facing the wall, wide awake. He's gripping his small black torch (turned on.)

Steam is emanating from his mouth.

In the b.g. we see Zach nudge open the door, checking on him.

Zach steps in, hugs himself, cold. Steam from his mouth.

Zach moves to the window, closes it. Moves back to the bed where he spots a framed photo under the bedside table.

He quietly takes it: *Max and Bella pulling a silly face.*

Zach frowns. Removes the photo to see himself folded under, ostracized from the moment.

A tear creeps from Zach's eye, he touches Bella's face.

Lost in a memory, drenched in regret. Desperate for an escape. Sensing a presence, he twists his neck to see --

A shadowed presence in the corner. He gingerly moves over -- removes his iPhone, flicks on its torch. Slowly lifts it to illuminate --

A black hoodie hanging on the chair.

Relieved, Zach lowers his phone torch. Turns to Max in bed.

MAX
(whispered)
I promise, Mommy.

ZACH
What did you say?

Max doesn't respond. Zach moves over, takes a seat on the bed. Max doesn't turn around.

ZACH (CONT'D)
You thought anymore about what we
talked about? Mommy's funeral?

Max ignores him, holds the sheets up to his eyes.

Behind Zach, on the wall -- a bruise-like mould appears.

*

37 **INT. DAINS HOUSEHOLD/ LIVING ROOM - DAY**

37

Zach is pacing up and down, he's on his iPhone. He downs two Diazepam pills.

ZACH
(into iPhone)
Believe me, sis, I've tried. He
called it a death party. If you
could, I'd owe you big time.

Mid-call, Zach places a rug over the thin blood stain at the bottom of the stairs.

38 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY**

38

Zach does his tie in the walk-in-wardrobe's mirror.

He eyes the smudge of Bella's hand print against the mirror.

He holds his hand against the print. Lowers his head. Hears the DING-DONG of the doorbell downstairs.

39 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

39

Max is sitting on the bottom step of the stairs. The twisted rug exposing a thin line of Bella's blood between the floorboards.

Zach, wearing a black suit and tie, moves down the stairs.

The doorbell rings again. Zach quickly takes the rug, places it back over the blood.

Zach opens the front door to STACEY, hair up, nurse's scrubs, athletic. High energy, positive attitude.

She moves in, hugs Zach, who squeezes her tight.

STACEY
You both holding up?

Zach nods unconvincingly. Peels away from Stacey, who --

Checks him over. Adjusts his tie, brushes his shoulders.

Stacey eyes the surrounding mess.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Least you're clean.

Half empty cups of coffee, packets of uneaten chips. Clothes strewn.

ZACH
It's on my list.

STACEY
Yeah well don't forget who's on the top...

40

EXT. DAINS HOUSEHOLD/ BACK GARDEN - DAY

40

MAX'S SCREAMS. Not a scared shriek. A joyous one.

A super fun game of hide and seek with Stacey, who --

Plays along, pretending to not know Max is hiding behind a tree, barely able to contain his laughter.

Stacey gets closer and closer and closer.

STACEY
Now where could he be?

Max struggles to hide a squeal. Stacey prowls the garden.

Max, hiding behind the tree, spots an opportunity across the garden toward the --

41

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

41

Max rushes in toward a perfect spot behind the curtain.

Stacey looks around before Max SCURRIES from behind the curtain. Stacey dives toward him.

STACEY
GOTCHA!

With Max in her arms, she rolls over, tickling him as he screams.

They land with Max on top of her, pretending to pin her down like a warrior. A clear parental connection between them.

MAX
I could come live with you.

STACEY

What would your daddy do without
his lil sidekick?

MAX

Sit in his office?

STACEY

I promise you, once you two get
through this... you'll be closer
than ever.

Max doesn't seem so sure.

MAX

I need to pee.

STACEY

So go. Shoo.

Max smiles then climbs off Stacey, who watches him go.

Behind Stacey, a shape twitches behind the curtain. *

She starts tidying around, picks up the cups, the packets...

42

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

42

Max checks the hallway through the ajar door, then quietly
closes it.

He heads to the nearby dresser where a chair sits. He pulls
the chair toward the wardrobe, which he opens.

Max has no idea about the veil of black mist that hangs in
the air behind him. Or the darkened mould on the wall. *

He climbs onto the chair and reaches up. The music box is too
far away, so he yanks at a hanging sweater.

The music box drops from the wardrobe --

Onto the floor, along with -- Zach's HANDGUN.

Panicked, Max leaps from the chair. Grabs the handgun, at
once in awe and afraid.

He climbs back onto the chair and quickly dumps it back in
the wardrobe.

He steps from the chair, grabs the music box.

The bedroom door opens to reveal Stacey, arms folded.

STACEY

Long pee.

MAX

I wanted to show you something.

Max presents the music box.

MAX (CONT'D)

It helps you sleep.

Stacey frowns then follows Max to the bed, where he sits.

Stacey takes a seat and goes to take the music box but Max holds it to his chest.

MAX (CONT'D)

Just stare into the mirror.

STACEY

(handing back the box)

Please. Be my guest.

Max takes back the box in a vice like grip. He stares into the mirror.

(Again, we don't have view of what he sees in the mirror.)

Suddenly, Max's eyes turn white.

*

STACEY (CONT'D)

Max? Quit it!

Suddenly, a HISSING NOISE from the hallway alerts her.

She listens in. The music box's melody overpowers the --

High-pitched seething noise. Stacey looks around, the lights go out, and suddenly she's alerted by --

A CRYING cloth bundled newborn in the middle of the room.

Stacey gingerly and with trepidation heads toward the newborn to and picks it up... it's drenched in afterbirth.

But baby's screaming stops as the cloths collapse into Stacey's arms.

Terrified, Stacey turns and --

BAM! Max, eyes black as death, jolts toward her --

Panicked, Stacey closes the music box. Max GASPS awake.

MAX

Mommy?

Stacey, horrified to see the cloth bundle is still in her arms. Freaked, she drops it. *

Speechless, Stacey gets up and puts the music box back in the wardrobe. *

STACEY

Your dad hid this for a reason. *

43 **INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT**

43

Stacey eyes Max through the ajar door to his bedroom. *

He's fast asleep in bed. Stacey doesn't see the shape move slightly behind the curtains.

44 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

44

Stacey is pacing up and down, freaked, unsettled.

The room is a lot tidier than it was when she arrived.

BAM! A failed attempt to open the front door gives her a scare.

She moves to the door, eyes the spy-hole then dislodges the lock and chain.

Opens the door. Zach bursts in, black tie loose around his neck, clearly drunk. Stacey steadies him. He stumbles.

STACEY

How was it?

Zach ignores her. Stumbles. She steadies him.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Free bar?

She sits him down.

ZACH
Was Max okay?

STACEY
Yeah. Weird shit aside.

ZACH
Weird shit?

Stacey preps herself to say this --

STACEY
(spitting it out)
Zach. There is something very, very
wrong with that fucking music box.
I had this vision of...
(struggling)
It was like a nightmare.

*
*

ZACH
Pretty fucking insensitive to prank
me don't you think?

STACEY
I'm not! Wasn't even me using it!

ZACH
It's the melody, hypnosis or
something. Who gives a shit?

Stacey goes to respond but Zach slumps onto the chair.

ZACH (CONT'D)
It should have been me.

Zach starts crying before he COLLAPSES into Stacey's arms.

A severe outpouring of anguish and emotion.

Stacey isn't used to this, but she comforts him.

ZACH (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be here. She should.

Zach cries into Stacey's shoulder. She is drenched in worry.

CRACK! As he turns the lid of the Diazepam bottle. Downs with some water before --

He looks around to see --

The entire cast of WOODEN FIGURES standing in various spots around the room. Staring at him.

CRACK. Slowly, Zach gets to his feet. Steps with trepidation between the figures as --

CRACK.

A pulsating red glow of a dark room comes over the space.

Unnerved, Zach reaches the stairs when --

DEAD GRANDPA (O.S.)
I told you to tidy your shit!

Zach turns to see the back of his FATHER (MAX'S DEAD GRANDPA), sitting on the couch, facing the TV.

CRACK as his father TURNS his head to realize -- his face his bashed and battered, rotted skin, and glaring right at Zach.

DEAD GRANDPA (CONT'D)
You were a terrible son. An even worse father!

Terrified, Zach glares at his father as he backs away.

Dead Grandpa aches to his feet -- his bones CRACKING with every movement. He limps after Zach, who --

51 **INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT**

51

Zach, terrified, sprints up the stairs. Dead Grandpa limps after him. Grabbing at Zach's ankles.

52 **INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

52

Zach bursts in, slams the door, to see Max entranced by the music box. The haunting melody in full flow.

The various lava lamps are flashing, like a twisted rave.

Grandpa's footsteps can be heard -- ever nearing -- up the stairs. Closer and closer. Zach yanks the bedside table over the door.

53 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

53

Dead Grandpa limps toward Max's room.

54 **INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

54

Zach grabs Max by the arms, desperate to snap him out of his trance.

Max doesn't hear him, he's in a trance-like state, eyes white. He's SMILING EUPHORICALLY. Hands clasped tight around the music box. *

Zach tries to grab the music box but Max's grip around it is too strong.

With all his might, Zach tries and fails to snatch the music box. Grandpa's nearing footsteps. BANGING on the door.

Zach tries again to grab the box. Still, Max's grip on the box is too great.

The doorknob TURNS. Grandpa's force pushes the bedside table away. He's about to enter.

The door opens to reveal no-one is there.

Zach desperately tries to close the box but it's no use.

BANG! BANG! BANG! On the closet.

Terrified, Zach quits trying to grab the music box and turns to the closet.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Again on the closet.

Zach gets up and moves to the closet.

BANG! BANG! BANG! More banging on the closet.

Zach turns to Max, trance-like, still gripping the music box.

Zach turns back to the closet. Reaches for the handle, grabs it and pulls the door across.

Nothing out of the ordinary. Hanging clothes. Quilts and pillows on the internal floorspace.

Zach moves aside the hanging clothes. Nothing there. Crouches to move aside the quilts and pillows. Nothing.

Zach frowns, turns back to Max.

BAM! From the quilts in the closet -- GRANDPA'S ROTTED HAND grabs Zach's calf. Digs in his yellow finger nails.

Screeching, Zach tries to pull away.

Grandpa's hand grips Zach's calf harder then YANKS him to the floor and --

PULLS him into the closet, into the mass of sheets and quilts.

Suddenly, Dead Grandpa clambers from the closet and ambles toward Max, who's still entranced, gripping the music box.

Arms outstretched, Dead Grandpa leers over Max. Ready to grab him when --

SMACK! Zach wraps the ball-bat around Grandpa's skull, causing him to STALL.

*

BLACK MATTER oozes from his mouth and drips onto Max, who -- looks up from the music box before --

*

Horrificed, Zach desperately snaps shut the music box in Max's grip, killing the melody.

Dead Grandpa is nowhere to be seen.

Max is terrified to see he has black matter on his skin. Zach can't believe what he's just witnessed. Beyond fear.

*

ZACH
(horrificed)
Like Aunt Stacey said.

Deeply disturbed, Zach checks over Max, wipes away black matter from Max's face and body. Max is silent.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Say something for me.

MAX
Something for me.

Freaked the fuck out, Zach picks Max up, leaves the room. Looks back. Shuts the door

Zach, sitting on the bed, checks his own calf. Grandpa's finger marks have caused a dark rash.

Max, in his fresh PJs, hair wet, all clean, sits beside him. Clutching his knees, freaked, silent. *

ZACH
So much for not getting wet after
midnight.

Max stares into space. Zach notices Max has a faint rash on his neck.

ZACH (CONT'D)
(intrigued)
What did you see? *

Max looks at Zach, like he's not supposed to answer.

Drawn to the box, Zach takes the music box from the bedside and eyes it. As if he can't resist, he opens it. *

MAX
(worried)
What are you doing?

ZACH
Finding out what you saw.

Zach looks into the lid's mirror to see -- *

His own reflection. He turns the handle, triggering the melody. He doubts himself, but knows he has to try it for himself.

Max watches Zach glare into the music box. The melody plays, and within seconds --

Zach becomes entranced by the unseen force he sees in the box's mirror.

MAX
Wait!

As if triggered by Zach's use of the box --

A CROAKING NOISE from the hallway. Terrified, Max grabs the bedsheets.

MAX (CONT'D)
Dad?

Zach is glued to the music box. Smiling at the mirror.

MAX (CONT'D)
Dad, please close it.

The croaking gets louder, coupled with nearing footsteps.

MAX (CONT'D)

Dad! DAD PLEASE!

The footsteps and the croaking get louder and louder. Max is crying, terrified. Glaring at the ajar door. He turns --

BAM! GRANDPA is standing at the end of the bed. SMILING through a crimson mask of blood. He slides a shard of glass from his neck. Max backs away in terror.

MAX (CONT'D)

Daddy!?

Zach keeps his grip on the music box, which Max tries to close but it's no use.

Grandpa, still smiling, crawls onto the bed toward Max, who --

Grabs a glass of water from the bedside. Tosses it over Zach, JOLTING him from his sleep. When Max turns back he sees --

Grandpa is gone. Zach sees Max's terror.

ZACH

Jesus, you're shaking.

Max does his best to gather himself.

MAX

Did you see her?

Amazed, Zach nods. He knows what he has to do.

56 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

56

Zach, carrying the box... opens the front door. Steps outside.

57 EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

57

A trash can at the end of the driveway.

Zach moves from the the hooded porch with the box -- down the driveway -- the moment he steps off the driveway -- he winces in pain. He looks down at his arm to see a dark red rash.

He puts the box on the driveway, steps off the driveway onto the sidewalk. Screeches in pain. Develops more of a rash.

ZACH

What the f-

Max's SCREAM from inside causes him to rush back inside with the box.

58

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

58

Gripping the box, Zach belts in to see Max, gripping his neck in pain.

Zach moves over, gently pulls Max's hand from his neck -- a rash, similar to the one on Zach's arm.

MAX

I don't get it. How come Aunt
Stacey left okay?

ZACH

She said she didn't use the box.
But it still messed with her... it
messed with me.
(remembering)
The ripple effect...

MAX

What does that mean?

ZACH

It doesn't just... haunt... the
user -- maybe it locks in whoever
is near them. It's trapped us...

MAX

Like a key?

ZACH

(understanding)
Like an addiction.

Zach grabs the box, bashes it against the floor. Causing --

Max to scream. Zach winces too. A burning rash on his arm,
and another on Max's neck.

Zach glares at the music box in absolute terror.

59

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

59

Dishes piled high in the sink. The room, unloved.

Zach, clutching the music box, is on his iPhone -- waiting
for the recipient to answer the call.

Zach roots through printed articles. He finds one, fingers
the news story. The headline: *'BURNING MEMORIES: Family
caught in suicide tragedy.'*

*'In a poignant and unsettling detail, authorities discovered
a burnt photograph of Millie among Kim's belongings.
Investigators believe the act may have been a final, symbolic
gesture of grief.'*

*

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

60

INT. KIM'S HOUSE/ MILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

60

Kim brings a handgun to her head. Tears streaming down her face.

*
*

GEORGE (O.S.)
MOMMY NO!

*
*

BANG!

*

A handgun loose in Kim's lifeless hand, down which blood pours. In the b.g. a burning photo of Millie, on a stand -- against the anguished SCREAMS of George.

*
*
*

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MOMMY! MOMMY WAKE UP! PLEASE!

END FLASHBACK. BACK TO SCENE.

61

INT. DAINS HOUSE/ KITCHEN - NIGHT

61

Disturbed, Zach looks up from the article. Eyes the music box in front of him. Struggling to resist it's pull.

ALF'S VOICE (V.O.)
(from iPhone)
Welcome to Ivanov's Antiques.
Unfortunately we're now closed.
We'll look forward to seeing-

Zach, frustrated, cuts the call. He grabs the bottle of Diazepam, opens it. Downs two.

62

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - DAY

62

A DOCTOR pushes a wooden stick onto the tongue of Max, who sits on the edge of his bed. Zach watches, desperate for answers.

The doctor uses the stethoscope on Max's chest, listens to his chest. He does the same to his back, then shines a torch in each of his eyes. The full checkover.

DOCTOR
Any other strange occurrences?

Zach eyes Max, doesn't trust him not to tell the truth.

ZACH
No... no.

DOCTOR

Well there's nothing wrong you both physically... could certainly be stress or anxiety related... Normal... given the circumstances. Or it could simply be an allergic reaction -- a change in detergent perhaps.

Zach nods. Eyes the music box on the chest of drawers. He goes to speak, as if to reveal the truth. Decides not to.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
First step would be therapy. For both of you.

Zach nods, getting it.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
The body has an interesting way of telling us we need to get out more. No harm in a holiday. Bit of TLC. A distraction wouldn't harm.

Zach smiles. The Doctor moves to leave. At the door, he turns.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Bella truly was one of the best.

Zach nods sadly. The Doctor smiles sympathetically. Leaves.

63

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - DAY

63

Zach re-enters with the music box. Max is sitting up, about to turn its handle.

Just in time, Zach snatches it from him. Max looks deflated.

ZACH
(attempting to distract)
You wanna hear a joke? You like jokes, you used to like jokes.

Max says nothing. Keeps his eyes on the box on the fridge.

ZACH (CONT'D)
What's a cat's favorite color?

Max shrugs.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Purrrrrrple.

Zach hopes for a reaction, a smirk even. But it doesn't come.

ZACH (CONT'D)
That was funny right? Come on, you gotta admit that was a good one.

Zach puts the box on the chest of drawers. Shrugs.

MAX
How can we stop it?

Zach buries his deep concern to comfort Max.

ZACH
We ignore it.

Max doesn't get it.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Doctors orders.

Zach smiles.

BEGIN PARENTING MONTAGE:

- Zach pours the Diazepam pills down the toilet. Flushes.
- Zach, wearing gardening gloves, yanks weeds from the lawn. Uses sheers to trim the long grass along the fence.
- Zach tidies around, the cushions, the cup, the strewn clothes. Dusts, hovers, polishes. It revitalizes him.
- Zach washes the dishes. Wipes down the counter.
- Zach reads a bedtime story to Max. Zach finishes building Max's fifteen foot colorful climbing frame.

END MONTAGE.

64 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT**

64

Max, asleep, snuggles into Zach, who lays awake, glaring at the ceiling. Lost in a memory.

BEGIN MEMORY FLASHBACK.

65 **EXT. ROAD - DAY**

65

Smoke swirling from Zach's upturned car. Folded like an accordion.

Zach, battered and bruised -- crawls from the wreckage, which he quickly turns back and reaches into --

ZACH
Max! Max, grab my hand!

MAX
I'm stuck!

ZACH
I need you to wriggle free!

MAX
What about Grandpa!? He's really hurt!

ZACH
You gotta focus, son. Come on!

Terrified, Zach sees petrol dripping from the tank. He reaches into the car.

MAX
After three okay? One, two...

END FLASHBACK. BACK TO SCENE.

66 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY**

66

Zach SITS UP, as if hearing something.

BELLA (O.S.)
I knew you could do it. I'm so proud of you, Zach. For being the best dad Max could ever wish for.

Zach can't believe what he's hearing, shakes his head.

BELLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I love you, Zach.

Zach takes a pillow, pushes it over his head, to block out the sound.

BELLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come and take me. One last time.

Zach overwhelmed by temptation climbs out of bed.

67 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

67

Zach creeps toward the stairwell. Downstairs he can hear the low thrum of the music box. A faint red glow cast across the living room floor.

68 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

68

Absentmindedly, Zach reaches for the music box from the top of the fridge.

69 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

69

Zach sits the music box down on the coffee table. Opens it.

BELLA (O.S.)
You deserve this, Zach.

On the floor, Zach notices Bella's wedding ring. *What the hell?* He reaches for it, eyes it in awe.

ZACH
Impossible.

He pockets the wedding ring as DARKNESS PULSATES around them.

Zach takes out his phone.

Zach looks in the box's mirror, turns the handle. Eyes white --* he smiles.

BAM! The TV turns on at full volume.

70 **INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT**

70

Hearing the TV, Max jerks awake. Rubs his eyes - *what the heck?*

71 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

71

Max heads down the stairs. He sees the back of Zach, who's *
sitting crossed legged on the floor, child-like -- staring into
the box's mirror.

ON TV: Zach and Bella's wedding video PLAYS out on the screen.
He reaches for the remote, tries to turn off the TV.

Instead the volume grows louder and louder.

The wedding's emotive music blasting through the room.

Behind the TV -- Bella's joyous laughter morphs into a HEINOUS
CACKLE.

Terrified, Max looks around for an answer.

ON TV: Bella, in her wedding dress, turns to face him, looking
outwardly from inside the TV. She SMACKS her palm at the inside
of the TV screen.

TV BELLA
 (from TV)
 Max, help! Help me, baby! Help me!

Max looks in horror at the TV.

ON TV: Bella desperately bashes her fists at the inside of screen until her knuckles CUT and BLEED.

Max's fear is palpable as --

TV BELLA (CONT'D)
 (from TV)
 MAX! HELP ME! ZACH, BABY!?

ON TV: Bella SCREAMS. Still leathering fists at the inside of the screen.

Max grabs the nearby remote, tries to turn off the TV.

Max looks around for something that will wake Zach.

72

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

72

Max rushes to the kitchen sink -- can't reach the tap -- grabs a stool to climb on -- reaches to turn the tap --

The tap doesn't work.

Afraid, Max climbs from the stool. Rushes to the fridge. Nothing there.

73

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

73

Bella still bashing the inside of the TV --

Zach, still grinning, trembles.

Max jerks back, unnerved.

The music box pulsates in Zach's hand.

MAX
 Dad, please. Daddy! Wake up!

Max turns to the TV -- His mother on the other side of the screen -- BASHING the glass, which is closer and closer to smashing completely.

BELLA
 LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!

Beyond terror, Max shakes his head.

MAX
(crying)
Stop it! Stop it, Mommy, please!

Beat.

The TV smashes outwards.

Max drops backwards.

The music box's melody ENDS -- the ballerina stops turning --

Zach's SNAPS into consciousness. Looks around at the smashes glass.

Doesn't see -- but hears behind him --

Max GROANS on the floor. Zach turns to Max, laying with a shard of glass in his leg. Struggling in pain.

Zach rushes to Max. Goes to call '911.'

MAX (CONT'D)
(in pain)
No! They'll take me away from the
box! It would kill me!

Zach's frustration is palpable; he's right. Panicked, he calls 'Stacey.'

74

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

74

Zach in the doorway, watches --

Stacey, in her nurse's scrubs, finishes up stitching Max's leg wound.

STACEY
Such a brave boy.

Stacey's phone rings. She kills the call.

MAX
Can I go now?

*

Zach nods. Max limps out of the room. Stacey turns to Zach.

STACEY
Wasn't too deep. Bella must have
been looking out for him.

ZACH
About that.

75

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

75

Stacey, in shock, sits at the dinning table. She's holding a pen, a blank pad in front of her. Glaring at the music box.

ZACH
I tried already. No going past the garden, the driveway. Strictly on property. With or without it.

STACEY
An agoraphobic music box. Who knew.

ZACH
Not funny.

STACEY
A little funny.

Zach brushes the remaining glass into a trash can. Dumps it in the kitchen.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Why did passing it on work for the Ivanovs?

Zach takes a seat opposite Stacey.

ZACH
They clearly don't have morals.

STACEY
So find a fucking murderer!

ZACH
Maybe they knew I was driving the car.

STACEY
Here comes the pity party.

ZACH
What cause I don't want anyone to else fucking die?

STACEY
Ever think about Max in all this?

ZACH

I ONLY think about Max. You have no fucking idea what it means to be a parent.

Stunned.

STACEY

Really? You're going there?

ZACH

I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

Stacey arrests tears.

ZACH (CONT'D)

It's just... I already escaped going down for manslaughter. Next time I might not be so lucky.

Elbows on the table, Stacey runs her hands through her hair.

STACEY

If you won't look up some scumbag to pass it to... at least look up an expert who can help you. Church, police... dudes who bust ghosts.

Stacey's phone rings again. She checks it.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Work. I need to go. ICU calls.

She gets up. Zach goes to grab the box. Stacey gets there first.

ZACH

Wait!

Too late, Stacey leaves the room with the box.

STACEY

Imma go say bye to my bestie.

She leaves Zach uneasy and torn.

He grabs the pen, paper -- and his phone, into which he starts humming the haunting melody.

Stacey knocks, then enters. Moves to Max, sitting innocently on the bed. A bandage on his leg.

Stacey sits next to him, strokes his hair. Checks his chest bandage.

STACEY

How we holding up, big man?

Slyly hands him an old Nokia cellphone. Taps her nose.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Here's my number. If you feel
afraid... you text 'DEN,' okay?

Max smiles, nods.

MAX

Is dad okay?

Stacey smiles softly. She kisses his cheek, hugs him. Max
smiles gratefully.

*

77

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

77

As if on the brink of discovery -- Zach uses a magnifying
glass to zoom into the printed photo he took yesterday -- of
the underside of the music box:



Using his phone, he snaps a photo of the image and uploads it
to a TRANSLATOR app.

TRANSLATOR VOICE

(from phone)

This Glagolitic text translates to:
Five, nine, fifteen, six, eighteen,
nine, fifteen, twenty, eighteen.

ON NOTEPAD: Zach writes 5,9,15,6,18,9,15,20,18.

Zach studies the sequence of numbers, then the written Glagolitic equivalent. Beneath the number '5,' he writes the letter 'D' - beneath the number '9,' writes the letter 'I.'

78

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

78

Stacey, holding the music box, gives Zach a goodbye hug. Peels away. Pen behind his ear, he's holding the notepad. Stacey's phone rings again.u

STACEY

(re: work call)

I'm coming. Jesus! Can no-one else pack a wound for chrissakes!?

ZACH

I looked into the box's pattern.

Zach grabs the printed photos from the nearby coffee table, flicks through them to show Stacey.

*
*

Reaches the photo he took of the box, when he first received it. He zooms in.

ZACH (CONT'D)

See... it's a code.

Zach shows a pen-written word on his hand: "*Dioecious*."

Stacey grabs the pen from behind Zach's and draws an arrow protruding from the word's 'o' and a cross protruding from the second 'o.' The male and female symbols.

STACEY

It means male and female.

Zach produces his phone.

ZACH

And the melody...

He produces his iPhone, a DSP app plays the song: '*Dance with Death*.'

The eastern European tune plays out in Bulgarian.

STACEY

Catchy.

Zach reads from the notepad. Stacey's phone buzzes. She checks it.

ZACH

It translates to... *'Sacrifice.
Dance with death, a worthy partner.
A final bow. A solo act. I'll turn
the weak insane. A living Hell
remains. Naked eyes won't see me
save you.'*

STACEY

I really gotta run. Do some
research. Local gangbangers,
burglars, drug dealers. Someone who
deserves this more than you.

Zach isn't paying attention -- he's staring at the 35MM
camera in his hand.

ZACH

(an idea)

Naked eyes won't see me save you.

Stacey pats his back. He's deep in thought.

STACEY

And don't use it. I beg.

Zach grabs the 35MM camera. Stacey leaves.

79

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

79

*

Moonlight shines through the gap in the curtains. The various
toys and cupboards casting shadows across the carpet and up
the walls.

*

*

*

Max's torch (turned off) sits on a chest of drawers.

*

Zach, 35MM camera hanging at his neck, and gripping the music
box, nudges Max, who wakes from a deep sleep.

The rashes and burns around Max's neck appear to be **ROTTING**
and spreading onto his shoulders. Max moans with exhaustion.

Zach dabs Max's rash and burns with anti-septic cream, then
pockets the cream -- just incase.

ZACH

Son, I need you to do something for
me.

Zach points to the camera hanging at his neck.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Naked eyes might not see the
spirit... but a camera... Worth a
shot, right?

MAX

Please don't make her more mad.

ZACH

Believe me... this isn't the first
time I've pissed off your mom.

*

*

80 OMITTED

80

*

*

81 INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

81

*

Zach holds the music box up to Max's eyes. It's clear he
doesn't want to do this. He hesitates. Second thoughts. No,
he has to.

*

*

*

Zach moves to the bedside table, onto which he places the
music box.

*

*

Zach turns the music box's handle, triggering the haunting
MELODY (*which plays out over the following scenes.*)

*

*

Max's eyes turn white. His trance-like state. Bella in the
music box's mirror, smiling and waving.

*

*

Zach edges with trepidation to the middle of the room. Looks around at the toys and plushies. *

DEAD GRANDPA (O.S.)
Why didn't save me, son? Why did
you want me to die?

Horrified, Zach turns to see --

Dead Grandpa, sitting on a chair in the gloom of the corner.
A gash in the side of his head.

Dead Grandpa -- reaches out for Zach, who jerks back, shaking his head.

DEAD GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Help... me...

Desperately holding his nerve, Zach takes the camera from around his neck and -- *

SNAPS a photo of Dead Grandpa, who bellows a LAUGH.

Zach turns in a circle, snapping multiple flash photos.

DEAD GRANDPA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did you mean to kill Bella too? *

The figure's split head TURNS to stare at Zach -- and -- *

-- as if by telekinesis -- blasts Zach back against the -- *

The chest of drawers, knocking him out. The force of the collision moves the torch toward the edge of the drawers before it --

TURNS OFF --- engulfing the room in moonlit semi-darkness. *

Grandpa is LAUGHING. *

Zach, coming to, desperately reaches for Max, and the music box, but he can't move. He's paralyzed. All he can do is watch, from behind Max as --

*

From the floor, Max grabs a nearby wooden toy DOCTOR.

*

Grandpa's laugh grows more heinous.

*

To Zach's horror, watching helplessly from behind --

Max twists his neck to Zach. Max's eyes turn PURE BLACK.

MAX

Let her take me, you murdering
cunt.

Max turns back away from Zach, who watches in horror --

Max slides the toy doctor into his mouth and down his throat.

Zach tries to scream but there is no sound. He twists his neck to see the torch on the edge of the drawers.

Zach bashes his fist against the dresser behind him.

Max pushes the toy doctor into his throat. He chokes as Zach bashes his fist against the dresser. Over and over.

Finally, the torch drops from drawers. Zach grabs the torch and flicks it ON. Aims it at the music box's mirror - causing the light to reflect into Max's eyes.

Max wakes from his trance with a GASP -- YANKS the toy doctor from his throat.

Panicked, Zach rushes to Max. Holds him, kisses him.

82

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

82

On the bed, Zach sits next to Max, who watches Zach flick through the printed photos he took on his 35MM.

*

Nothing out of the ordinary. Zach's frustration grows.

*

MAX

Guess we failed again.

Zach shakes his head. Deep in thought. Frustrated. Eyes the cuts and bruises on his knuckles. Max's throat bruising.

ZACH

(quoting the poem)

"I'll turn the weak insane...

(MORE)

ZACH (CONT'D)
 a living hell remains." The more we
 use the box, the more it's able to
 affect reality.

Suddenly a phone buzzes. Zach reaches for his phone.

No message. A phone buzzes again. Zach turns to Max.

ZACH (CONT'D)
 Do you have a phone?

Max shakes his head. Zach moves over. Another buzz.

ZACH (CONT'D)
 Give me it.

Max reluctantly hands over the Nokia phone that Stacey gave Max.

She's messaged him: '*REMEMBER SAFE WORD - DEN.*'

MAX
 Are you mad at Aunt Stacey?

Zach shakes his head. He knows she's right.

ZACH
 Course not.

A sad acceptance comes over Zach, who pockets the Nokia. He produces his iPhone, into which he types: '*Local Parapsychologists.*'

83

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

83

Zach, holding the music box, opens the door to JAKE BUCKLEY. He's rotund, unkempt, dresses like he hasn't changed in days.

Zach involuntarily winces -- he smells as bad as he looks.

He holds out his hand for Zach to shake. Reluctantly he does.

ZACH
 Thanks for stopping by.

JAKE
 My pleasure.

Zach nods, gestures for Jake to take a seat. He does. Zach sits opposite.

ZACH
 Drink?

JAKE
(re: the music box)
Holy shit, is that ornate casting?

Jake moves to inspect the music box.

JAKE (CONT'D)
May I?

Zach gestures -- *of course*. Jake takes the box, holds it to eye level. Inspects it.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Fascinating. This is from the
golden age of mechanical music.

Zach watches him.

JAKE (CONT'D)
The zig zag pattern -- it's very
specific -- Slavic... or Thracian,
if I'm not mistaken.

Jake points at Zach, snaps his fingers. Continues to stare in wonder at the box. Zach considers his next words. Thoughts swirling.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You tried it?

Zach considers telling the truth, shakes his head.

A tense beat.

JAKE (CONT'D)
So what do ya wanna know?

Zach stalls, appears to be changing his mind.

ZACH
Any history... myths. I'm...
writing a book. On haunted
artifacts.

JAKE
Coolio.

Jake takes out his phone. Checking something.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Lemme see. You signed the contract,
right?

Zach nods.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Any weird shit happened since you got this?

ZACH

Like?

JAKE

Any dead relatives?

Zach mulls over his response. Jake eyes him suspiciously. Then laughs.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm just busting your balls, man.

Changing the subject, Zach presents the ink-written word on his hand: '*Dioecious*.'

ZACH

See this... it's inscribed on the underside. Any...

Zach stares at the word '*Dioecious*.' Notices something.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Reason?

Jake smiles knowingly.

JAKE

It starts with a girl and a boy.

Zach frowns, confused.

*

83A INT. ARISTOCRAT HOUSE - DAY

83A

*

A PEASANT GIRL scrubs the floor. The MAN OF THE HOUSE slaps her across the face then KICKS her.

*

*

Curled in pain, she grabs a sponge then looks up in fear at a YOUNG MALE ARISTOCRAT, who -- takes her hand.

*

*

JAKE (O.S.)

*

A young peasant girl fell tragically in love with a teenage aristocrat.

*

*

*

*

83B INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

83B

*

A jam-packed party of the filthy rich. The wealthy drink and

*

The man of the house and his ARISTOCRAT WIFE presents a *
BEAUTIFUL GIRL to the young male aristocrat, who rejects her. *
The aristocrat wife presents him another STUNNING GIRL. *

The young aristocrat rejects the stunning girl then looks to *
the back of the room to see -- the peasant girl. They share a *
smile - forbidden love. *

84

EXT. SARNISTA LAKE (BULGARIA) - DAY

84

The young aristocrat waits by a lake before the peasant girl *
turns up. They kiss. A passing MAN sees them -- the couple *
laugh, run away, giggling -- secretly in love.

JAKE (O.S.) *

A love so forbidden most of their *
communication was limited to *
letters... that she hid in a music
box.

85

*
*

85A

*
*

*

*
*

*
*

*

86

*

87

*

88

89

JAKE (O.S.)

She was only let out when the boy
went missing. What she found next
changed everything.

The aristocrat, laid out on rocks by the lake -- a stream of
dried blood from his left wrist has dripped onto --

The upturned music box, spilling the girl's letters.

The girl screams in distraught agony.

The girl, gripping the closed music box --

Walks into the lake -- beneath the water.

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

She never returned. Destroyed by
grief... they say it twisted her
soul. And beneath the waters,
transformed her into a Samodiva.

90

INT. IN THE LAKE - DAY

90

*

The peasant releases the open, red music box, from which --

*

Tens of hand written letters float away -- the faint inky
words lost in the waters.

The girl's body twists and snaps. Her bones CRACK and SNAP as
she transforms into --

A HIDEOUS hag like woman with decrepit skin, large hook nose,
and beady eyes like black pocks deep in her face.

Rotted by death. A nightmarish version of the PEASANT GIRL --
this is the THE SAMODIVA, whose body --

*

DISSOLVES into a soul-like states and ENTERS the music box.

*

JAKE (O.S.)

A spirit of vengeance, bound to
this box and the pain that put her
there. She'll stop at nothing to
bestow the same suffering and grief
she feeds on. By killing its
owners' most beloved, taking their
image and tempting their family to
the afterlife.

The music box rises toward the surface.

91

INT. DAINS HOUSE/ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

91

Zach digests the story. Jake grins, enjoying how disturbed
Zach is.

ZACH

Can it be... stopped?

JAKE

So... two ways to break the cycle.

ZACH

Give it away?

JAKE

To someone grieving. Or... hold a
love token in your left hand, and --

Jake puts a finger gun to his head. Pulls the trigger.

Zach frowns. Eyes the word '*Dioecious*' on his hand.

ZACH

Love token? Like the peasant girl's letters...

JAKE

Exactly, or a family heirloom, that kind of thing. Cool plot point, right?

ZACH

How would suicide end it? I thought it's supposed to want death?

JAKE

It is. But only on its terms. Control is key.

Zach is deep in thought.

JAKE (CONT'D)

This your first novel?

ZACH

Yeah! God loves a trier.

JAKE

(re: the music box)

If the book flops, you could always sell this bad boy. Given it likely didn't even reach the states until world war two... it's surely worth *something*.

Zach digests the information.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'd love to give it a spin, if that's cool with you?

ZACH

Maybe not. Wouldn't want it killing any of your relatives.

Zach laughs nervously.

JAKE

Too late for that. Lost my Aunt Beth recently. She practically raised me. Bummer, to be honest.

ZACH

Do you believe it... the legend?

JAKE

Fuck no! But some of the crazy fuckers I visit, they fall for my stories like I'm reading from the fucking stock exchange. Talk about easy money.

Zach frowns - an idea hits. He glares at the box. Pulsating, willing him to take it. But he's so desperate to give it away. So torn.

ZACH

I... I'd be happy for you to take it.

JAKE

For real? Even though it could be worth something?

Sweat trickles down Zach's temple. Works hard to hold his nerve.

ZACH

No, I barely paid ten bucks for it, must be a fake. You can probably get more joy from it than me.

Jake is amazed, but whatever, cool. He takes the box.

JAKE

Holy fuck. Thanks, man! My kids are gonna love this! They love all that creepy story shit.

ZACH

(off the word *kids*)

On second thoughts, maybe not. I... I think my boy would be too upset.

JAKE

Come on, dude, are you serious?

ZACH

I need it back.

Zach goes to grab it from Jake, who holds it out of reach.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Give me the box.

JAKE

No. Fuck you. You haven't even paid me, bro.

ZACH

Give me the fucking box!

Jake yanks the box away so Zach HITS him with a hard right, knocking him down.

Quickly, Zach grabs the music box -- which glows and pulsates in his grip -- as if feeding off the negative energy.

Willing him to use it. He opens it.

92 **INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

92

The bedroom lights flicker. Max sits up from his bed.

93 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

93

Jake struggles to his feet, glaring at Zach --

Who's entranced, eyes white, smiling at the music box's mirror. Unable to help himself from staring into it.

*

JAKE

What the fuck?

In a flash -- a red glow comes over the room. Zach makes no response, still gripping the box.

JAKE'S POV: Zach is --

Jake's DEAD NANA in a hospital gown. Her toothless mouth wide open, croaking. She holds both arms out, zombie like.

Saliva seeping from her mouth -- she reaches out for Jake, who's terrified.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Nana?

Jake shakes his head. Nana licks her flaking lips.

Trembling, Jake looks around for help.

Nana's bones CRACK as she thunders toward Jake -- her arms reaching out, she SHOVES Jake to the floor.

Pins him down, chokes him and prizes open his mouth -- a STRING OF SALIVA lowering from her mouth and toward his.

Just out of reach, Jake spots a large shard of glass under the coffee table. Quickly grabs it in panic. Wields it.

Nana chokes Jake as his fingers touch the shard. Jake loses consciousness. Fading fast.

Seconds before passing out, he grabs the shard and in one quick movement -- reverses Nana so that he's mounting her -- about to STAB her with the shard.

BANG! Jake's body goes limp. Drops to the floor.

Zach jerks out of his trance, snaps the music box shut to see, beside him -- Jake -- Dead on the floor. Shot through the chest.

In shocked horror, Zach turns to see Max -- holding the gun, outstretched, aimed at Jake. He's trembling.

Zach gets up, rushes to Max. Takes the gun, shoves it in his jeans.

ZACH

What did I say to you!? No guns!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

DEAD GRANDPA shoving a shard of glass toward Zach's neck.

END FLASHBACK. BACK TO SCENE.

Max is staring in disbelief at Jake's dead body.

MAX

(terrified)

That's not Grandpa! I saw Grandpa!
I swear it was Grandpa! He was
trying to kill you! I promise!

Zach pulls the crying Max to him, kisses his head.

94

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

94

Zach drags Jake's through the shadows toward the shed at the back. He opens the shed. Dumps the corpse inside. Closes and locks the shed door. Closes his eyes. Goes to throw up.

95

INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

95

Zach panic-flicks through a printed images of the 35MM photos he took in Max's bedroom. Nothing of note in the first few.

Neither Dead Grandpa nor the silhouette of the ballerina are showing. Yet on one of the images, Zach notices something.

Zach grabs a nearby magnifying glass. Holds it to the printed image. To his horror, he sees --

ON PHOTO: *BLACK MIST* in Max's bedroom.

But the more Zach zooms in the more he's able to see the obscure outline of a person.

Zach having returned to the image, is too engrossed to respond. It arrests his terrified gaze.

A shapeless FIGURE. Bella's form forged in the blackness. Staring right at the camera.

The HAUNTING MELODY playing from outside - the back yard. He eyes his desk. The music box isn't there.

96 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT** 96

Zach rushes to window and peels away the blinds to see --

97 **EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ BACK YARD - NIGHT** 97

DARKNESS. The faintest of activity in the shadows.

98 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT** 98

Zach peers out. Too dark.

Fear rising. He feels around. The wall - flicks a switch. *

99 **EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT** 99

BAM! The light comes on.

Max -- sleep walking across the tall climbing frame. Gripping *
the music box -- eyes white, looking not in the box's mirror *
but at the ground. Dark rash and burns spread down his arms. *

At the foot of the frame, DEAD DEAD GRANDPA, twists a screwdriver at the frame's foundation--

MAX'S POV: Bella, angelic in the glow of the movement sensor light, is reaching up to him.

BELLA

*

Jump, Max. It's quiet down here. No
-one telling you you're a bad boy.
For being a murderer like daddy.

We look at the shed. Then down -- the fall is high enough to
break our neck. At best.

END POV.

100 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

100

Zach darts away from the window and out of the room.

101 **EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ BACK YARD - NIGHT**

101

Max, entranced and gripping the music box, is standing at the
very edge of the fifteen-foot frame.

One more step and he falls.

Zach rushes out of the house. Dead Grandpa still at the foot
of the frame -- unscrewing the climbing frame --

The frame loosens, wobbles, Max, who's -- on top of the frame
-- walking closer and closer to the edge.

Max reaches the edge of the frame. Ready to drop off.

With malicious intent, Dead Grandpa works at the frame --
causing it to break slightly.

With haste, Zach grabs the SHEERS propped against the fence.

Zach rushes to the bottom of the climbing frame toward the
Dead Grandpa. Grabs him. The old man turns the screwdriver on
Zach.

DEAD GRANDPA

Going to hurt me again?

Zach hesitates. Guilt rising. He wields the sheers. Dead
Grandpa holds out his arms, gestures for an embrace.

DEAD GRANDPA (CONT'D)

Give your old man a hug.

Zach shakes his head. No. Dead Dead Grandpa THRUSTS the
screwdriver at Zach.

Zach HACKS the sheers at Dead Grandpa, lodging it in his chest. Dead Grandpa drops to the floor. Zach eyes him in disbelief then --

Looks up to Max, on top of the climbing frame.

ZACH

Max. Max, wake up, son!

MAX'S POV: Bella is glowing angelically, arms reached out for Max.

BELLA

Drop, baby, mommy will catch you!
Mommy loves you very much.

END POV.

Zach holds out his arms for Max.

ZACH

I'll catch you, son!

Max steps off the frame at the same moment --

Zach catches Max, the music box still tight in his grip. Zach snaps shut the music box.

Max's eyes flutter open. He looks around, confused.

Zach embraces Max, who snuggles into him. Zach is drenched in relief. Max cries into Zach's arms.

MAX

Please don't leave me anymore.

Zach nods, kisses Max's head.

102

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

102

Zach and Max sit side-by-side, swaying softly on the swing.

The stars bright. The street is dead. Max is pale, gaunt, arms covered in rashes. Dark shadows under his tired eyes.

Zach has the red box on his lap.

MAX

Am I going to go to jail?

ZACH

No. But if anyone asks, including the police, you tell them it was self-defense, do you understand?

MAX

I understand I'm a murderer.

ZACH

He was trying to take the box. You probably saved his kids' life.

MAX

I made it worse her didn't I? By killing him. I made her stronger.

Zach turns to Max.

ZACH

It's not a she. It's an it.

Beat.

ZACH (CONT'D)

You know what I realized when we learned your mom was pregnant?

MAX

That you didn't wanna be a dad?

ZACH

Heck no! I realized that the only way to truly make your mom happy... was to make sure you were happy.

Max digests the revelation.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I never wanted to tell you this... but when you were born...

Max looks at Zach, curiously concerned.

ZACH (CONT'D)

For a minute, things weren't looking so good. I'd have taken a bullet for you to start breathing.

Max watches his dad relive the memory.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I've never cried so hard as the first time I heard your voice.

Max takes his dad's hand in his.

ZACH (CONT'D)
I should never have made you cry
again.

Max rests his head on his dad's upper arm/ shoulder.

MAX
We all make mistakes. It's about
how we learn from them.

Zach looks at Max. He recognizes that phrase.

MAX (CONT'D)
I forgive you.

*

Zach kisses Max's head.

MAX (CONT'D)
Hey, Dad. What's a cat's favorite
cereal?

*

*

*

Zach has no idea.

*

MAX (CONT'D)
Mice Krispies.

*

*

Zach smiles. Kisses Max's head.

*

MAX (CONT'D)
Would you still take a bullet for
me?

ZACH
Every day. Twice on a Sunday.

*

MAX
I don't want you to.

*

*

Beat.

*

MAX (CONT'D)
Why else would you have a gun?

*

*

Zach takes Max's hand.

*

ZACH
To protect you.

*

*

MAX
But you could have quit. You won,
Dad. You're still here.

*

*

*

Realization flashes across Zach's face. A spark of an idea. *

103

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

103

Max watches Zach, who plants the music box down in front of himself on the breakfast table. *

Zach sits and glares at the box. He looks ready, determined. Despite his sickness, his exhaustion. His spirit, unwavering. *

ZACH
I won, right?

Max smiles. *

Zach holds out his fist. Max bumps it. *

ZACH (CONT'D)
A no. All it takes is a no. *

MAX

You got this, Dad.

Zach reaches over to carefully open the music box.

Fear crosses Max. Zach, laser-eyed, glares into the box's mirror. A single twist of the handle triggers --

The haunting melody plays. BELLA appears in the music box's mirror. She looks more beautiful than ever.

Zach's eyes fill with tears. His hand trembles. He shakes his head. Zach's eyes flick to the gun on the nearby counter.

BELLA

Join me, baby.

Zach shakes his head -- temptation stronger than ever.

Max's terror rises, willing his dad to resist.

Zach's temptation is destroying him. A war within himself as he forces himself to resist. Bella's sad eyes in the music box's mirror.

BELLA (CONT'D)

I love you, Zach.

ZACH

NO!

With a SCREAM, Zach SLAMS the music box shut.

Suddenly - his burns FADE. He gasps.

MAX

You did it. You won.

Zach can't believe it.

ZACH

Means nothing unless you can too. I
still can't break it, or take it
away without hurting you.

Suddenly, Max's attention turns to --

BELLA'S VOICE (V.O.)

I love you, Max. I miss you so
much.

ZACH

You hear her?

Max looks around the room, listening.

*

BELLA'S VOICE (O.S.)
Come with me. Take the box.

ZACH
Resist her, son. You can do this.

*

*

Max's eyes filling with tears, he's desperate not to succumb
to the urge.

*

*

MAX
I can't do it.

ZACH
Hey!
(locks Max's eyes)
You got this.

Max nods. Knows what he has to do. Glares at the music box.

MAX
Leave me alone.

ZACH
Tell her, son.

Max reaches out toward the box.

BELLA'S VOICE (V.O.)
Good boy. A little further.

Max sits on his hands. He's crying, screaming. A desperate, anguish laden scream.

*

MAX
LEAVE US ALONE! PLEASE LEAVE US
ALONE!

Max glares at the box as if it's a fallen enemy, one he just crushed. He can't look away from the box, even though he clearly doesn't want to.

*

*

ZACH
Max?

Suddenly from the hallway -- the same thud as when Bella fell down the stairs -- arrests Zach's attention.

Without thought, Max grabs the box and flicks it open.

Zach turns from the hallway.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Max, no!

Too late. Max spins the handle, which triggers...

*

BELLA appears in the box's mirror. She's crying, anguished, begging for her son.

MAX
Mommy?

A BLACK MIST fills the mirror.

*

BELLA
Soon.

*

Zach lunges for the box.

But Max grabs it first in a vice-like grip.

MAX
NO! NOOOO! Mommy!

Zach tries to wrestle the box from Max but it's no use.

His eyes white. Unblinking.

*

The music box is locked within his vice grip.

*

The kitchen door OPENS. SLAMS SHUT. OPENS. SLAMS SHUT. Faster and faster like a shutter film -- until --

Zach looks out of the kitchen window and we're in --

104 **EXT. BACK GARDEN - DAY**

104

A PRIEST stands at the wedding arch, silently addressing a room full of around fifty WEDDING GUESTS, including Stacey.

A MUSICIAN plays the the music box's haunting melody.
Standing at the arch is Zach.

*

104A **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

104A

*

Holding the box, Max unconsciously walks to the gun on the counter, where he puts down the box.

*

Zach is glaring, unaware, out of the window. Max grabs the gun. He holds it to his head. His finger on the trigger.

104B **EXT. BACK GARDEN - DAY**

104B

*

At the arch, Zach turns to see -- BELLA in a wedding dress -- walking down the isle.

She is clutching NEWBORN MAX, blue, dead, drenched in birthing fluid. His umbilical chord wrapped around his neck.

Bella smiles at Zach as if it's the happiest day of her life.

ZACH

No. NOOOO!

At the last second, Zach PULLS himself from the vision.

END VISION.

BACK TO SCENE.

105 **INT. DAINS HOUSE/ KITCHEN - DAY**

105

Max is about to blow his brains out, when --

MAX
Goodbye, Daddy.

Zach PUSHES down on the box, forcing the lid shut.

*

The gun drops from Max's grip.

The kitchen door stops banging. Max GASPS. Zach yanks away the music box and holds it out of Max's reach.

*

Suddenly, the music box thrums - tempting.

MAX (CONT'D)
I could just break it. Least now
you'd survive.

*

ZACH
Take that back. Never ever say that
again. Never think about it again!

MAX
Then it would never hurt anyone!

*

ZACH

You quit that talk, do you hear me?
That's not the answer, okay?

Max nods, motivated by his dad's words. Zach's vision shifts the newspaper article on the breakfast table:

'BURNING MEMORIES: Family caught in suicide tragedy.'

ZACH (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Kim's drawing of Millie. Maybe she burnt it because she was trying to stop her.

MAX

On my video game 'Monster Battle,' if you rip up a photo of the monster, it makes it have less health. Maybe if we had a picture of her, we could do the same!

Zach takes Max's face in his hands. Kisses his cheek.

106 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

106

Zach hovers over Max, on his 'Monster Battle' video game.

MAX

(reading from TV)

'Legend has it that settlers in the middle ages would burn ancient drawings of demons in order to rid certain spirits from their households.' Worth a shot, right?

Zach smiles.

107 **INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

107

Max peers over the shoulder of Zach, who's skimming through printed photos of the presence.

Zach eyes the photo of the figure behind the mist. Bella's form -- forged in the blackness.

Max is glued to the photo. Zach grabs an over the shoulder satchel, into which he dumps -- the closed music box.

108

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

108

Drenched in a deep red glow, Zach, wearing his music-box -
carrying satchel, hangs the photo on a string line.

*

A 35MM camera hangs at his neck.

*

Max peruses various hanging, abstract photos.

*

MAX

*

So cool.

*

ZACH

*

Film captures magic. Apparently.

*

Max looks around at all the photos his dad has taken. Of
various animals in the nearby woodland:

Foxes, bats, foals. Even a bear.

Zach can't hide his smile.

Zach takes out a lighter, flicks it on.

Then holds the flame to the glossy photo --

The image of black mist Bella sets alight, goes up in flames.

Max takes a step back, at once freaked and amazed.

MAX

Did it work!?

Zach gestures for Max to stay back.

The photo's ashes drop to the ground.

And to Zach and Max's horror...

From the ashes emerges a black mist, within which...

The image of BELLA forms.

Zach and Max step back, beyond the capacity for rationale.

MAX (CONT'D)

I think we've made a mistake.

Zach shakes his head.

Tears fill Max's eyes. His legs like quivering bows.

MAX (CONT'D)

Mom?

Zach goes to talk but nothing comes out. He's overcome by emotion.

Bella morphs ---

*

The shape of her legs.

Her body.

Her neck.

Her face.

She is wearing the same silk red gown she wore the night she died. And she is utterly, and completely beautiful until --

With the CRACK of SNAPPING BONES.

Her shins, hands, chest, face. Each CRACK harder than the last.

-- she contorts and transforms --

-- limb by limb, bone by bone, part by part into --

THE SAMODIVA.

Beyond terror, Zach stands in front of Max, protecting him.

Zach removes the gun from his jeans, nervously aims at the Samodiva.

ZACH

Stay back!

The Samodiva steps forward. Zach SHOOTS at the Samovida --
zero affect. He tries again. Nothing. Shit.

*
*

He plants the gun back in his jeans. Then --

Grabs the 35MM camera.

Before he can snap a photo, the Samodiva SNATCHES the camera from around his neck. Tosses it at the wall.

The Samodiva LAUGHS manically.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Max, run.

Max stands there glaring in horror at the Samodiva.

*

ZACH (CONT'D)

RUN!

The Samodiva snaps her vision to Max, who --

Limps out of the room.

The Samodiva lunges at Zach who dodges and belts out of the room.

*

109

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

109

Zach SLAMS the door on the Samodiva.

Takes out a key and locks it.

He quickly gathers himself.

Then turns to --

The bottom of the stairs.

The Samodiva laid, contorted in exactly the same position Bella was when she fell.

BAM! The Samodiva SNAPS her neck to look at Zach, who backs off in terror.

Zach hears Max whimpering under the coffee table. It's closed.

He rushes over, crouches to Max.

Reaches out for his cowering son, who recoils further. Zach checks behind him.

The Samodiva, nowhere to be seen.

ZACH

Come on!

Max, terrified, turns away.

*

ZACH (CONT'D)

Look at me. Max, look at me.

Max reluctantly looks at his father.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I love you. I'm not going to let anything happen to you. I promise.

Zach urges Max to comply.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

A quick memory of Zach reaching for his FATHER from the car-wreck. His father's trembling hand, desperately reaching.

Max pacing, crying behind him, praying he's okay.

Grandpa's hand stops trembling, goes limp. Max screams. He starts HITTING Zach, an anguished, emotional breakdown.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE.

Still Max doesn't move from beneath the coffee table.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Son. Give me your hand.

Max reluctantly holds out his hand.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Good boy.

Zach pulls Max from beneath the table.

Max SCREAMS.

*

Zach quickly turns to see --

The Samodiva --

Jitters with purpose to Zach and Max.

She hisses as she looks down upon Max and Zach.

Max is beyond fear, looking away as he holds onto his father for dear life.

The Samodiva's mouth is an inch from Max's ear.

Zach presses Max's face into his clavicle.

Steaming, black ooze slips from the Samodiva's lips.

*

Her hissing vitriol causes Max to cover his ears.

Zach surreptitiously reaches into his bag for the music box, opens it and --

SHOVES the mirror in the Samodiva's face.

*

The Samodiva SCREECHES then recoils onto the sofa.

The music box STEAMS, scolding hot, causing Zach to drop it.

En route, thick black smoke mist fills the space.

Carrying Max, Zach holds his sweater over his mouth and nose, avoiding the stench.

He wafts away the black mist to reveal --

The music box on the floor. Before Zach can grab it, he's stopped in his tracks on sight of --

BELLA --

Crawling from the foot of the stairs.

She isn't undead, she isn't decrepit.

This is Bella in her human form.

This is the Bella that Zach loves. His beautiful wife.

And she's dying, desperately reaching out for help.

MAX

Mommy!

BELLA

Help me. Please, Zach. Help me!

Zach glares at her, gripped by temptation.

But he resists, grabs the box, now cooled down, and rushes toward the door.

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

Zach, please! I love you, Zach!

Too late -- Zach shakes his head, leaves.

BELLA (CONT'D)

(screaming)

ZACH!

110

EXT. DAINS HOUSE/ DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

110

Carrying Max, Zach bursts from the house. Rushes toward the car.

Max is fading, becoming weaker. Color draining from his face. Rash and burns spreading over his cheeks and nose. His leg wound, worse than ever. He's in increasing pain.

Zach ushers Max into the back of the nearby parked car.

111 INT. CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT 111

Zach gets in the driver's seat. Music box on his lap. He turns the ignition.

A SCREAM: The metalcore band '*motions*' BLASTS from the speakers. Jolting Zach.

Zach turns it down, reverses the car off the driveway.

[illegible]

Zach's car fires down the road.

113 INT. ZACH'S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT 113

Zach drives, laser-focused on the road ahead.

Max, in the back, glaring out of the window.

MAX

Where are we going?

Zach eyes the rear-view.

114 EXT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT 114

Zach pulls the car up outside the store.

115 INT. ZACH'S CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT 115

From his jeans, Zach takes the handgun. Turns to the back seat to see Max staring into space.

ZACH

Dad's going to fix this okay?

Max makes no reply. Zach eyes the music box.

116 EXT. STREET OF STORES - NIGHT 116

Gripping the music box, Zach leaves the car, puts the gun under his shirt and heads toward Ivanov's Antique Store.

He knocks on the front door.

ZACH

Open up!

No answer. He knocks again.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Come on! Ain't got all night!

117 **INT. ZACH'S CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT** 117

In the back seat, Max reaches to the front seat for the music box. He glares at it with pure hatred. Vengeance in his eyes. *

118 **EXT. STREET OF STORES - NIGHT** 118

Gripping the music box, Max creeps away from the car to --

119 **EXT. NEAR IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT** 119

Max is holding a heavy rock. The closed music box on the ground in front of him.

Max raises the rock over his head.

120 **EXT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT** 120

Zach bangs on last time on the door. No answer. Frustrated no-
is answering, he pats his satchel. Opens it.

The music box has gone. *How!?*

Zach notices something in the store window's reflection --

He turns to see --

His car door is open.

Shit.

He moves back to the car.

It's empty.

Zach looks around.

Max is nowhere to be seen.

ZACH
Max!?

Nothing.

In the distance, he hears MAX'S CRY.

121 **EXT. NEAR IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT**

121

Zach's rushes over, horrified to see...

The rock beside the dented music box.

Max is laid out, barely conscious and a stream of black blood is trickling from his eye.

MAX
(struggling)
I tried to stop her.

ZACH
Come here, baby boy.

Zach reaches down and scoops the fading Max into his arms. Max's rash and burns and leg wound, increasingly nasty.

Zach eyes the word '*dioecious*' written in ink on his hand.

With his free hand, Zach grabs the music box, drops it into his satchel, and heads back to --

122 **EXT. STREET OF STORES - NIGHT**

122

Zach, carrying Max, bashes on the antique store door. No answer. Shit.

He produces his iPhone. Calls 9-1-1.

Through the antique store window, Zach sees a flash of activity from inside.

Zach tries the door. Locked. He looks around at the empty streets.

Makes a decision. He tries to call 'Stacey' - no signal.

Takes the Nokia from his pocket, it has a signal.

911 RESPONDER
9-1-1. Please state your emergency.

ZACH
(quickly, into iPhone)
My name is Zach Dains. I live at
forty three, Hampton Boulevard. I'm
calling to confess a murder.

Zach steps back, shoots the store door lock and heads inside.

123 **INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT** 123

Zach steps inside -- gun aimed, carrying Max. Sees no-one is there --

Steps inside the back.

124 **INT. BACK STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT** 124

Zach, gun aimed, carrying Max -- heads in.

Aleksander, standing behind the counter, aiming a shotgun at him. *

 ZACH
 Put the gun down.

Aleksander ignores him. *

 ZACH (CONT'D)
 PUT IT DOWN!

Maria moves from the back, pushes down Aleksander's shotgun. *

 ZACH (CONT'D)
 We need to talk.

125 **INT. BACK STORAGE ROOM - LATER** 125

At a table, Zach, Max on his knee, aims his gun at Aleksander and Maria opposite. The music box between them on the table. Aleksander nurses a glass of whisky. He takes a shot. *

Aleksander pushes the box across the table. *

 ALEKSANDER
 I can't take it back. It doesn't
 work like that. You can only pass
 it to someone new, who's grieving. *

Zach's devastation is palpable. Aleksander downs the whisky. *

 ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)
 A stowaway family brought it over
 from Bulgaria. I assume that's why
 it landed here. *

Zach listens attentively. Aleksander points to a tidy stack of antiques in the corner. *

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

It was amongst the family's things.
My grandfather dumped it, right
over there. Never spoke of it. Not
once.

MARIA

I didn't even find the god forsaken
thing until last year.

ALEKSANDER

If we'd have known, we'd have never
given it to our granddaughter.

ZACH

Bullshit! You checked the fucking
obituaries, lied about knowing my
father. You knew I was grieving so
you hired me to fuck up our lives
to save your own! Despite knowing I
have a family!

ALEKSANDER

I had to protect my wife. She's all
I had left.

ZACH

You could have found a murderer.

ALEKSANDER

I tried, for months. Hardly anyone
in mourning... and any who were
they were...

Aiming the gun at Aleksander, Zach glares daggers at him.

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

(ashamed)

They were too dangerous.

ZACH

So you killed an innocent mother.

Max coughs up BLOOD. Zach aims his gun at Maria.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Don't move.

Zach carefully places Max on the floor, keeps his gun on
Maria.

MARIA

Is that really necessary?

126 INT. DAINS HOUSE/ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 126

After several attempts at KNOCKING. The front door opens revealing --

MALE POLICE OFFICER
Police! Open up!

A MALE and a FEMALE POLICE OFFICER. Guns ready they eye --

The destroyed coffee table. The smashed TV and glass on the floor.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER
What the fuck?

127 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT** 127

The male police officer notices a blood stain on the floor.

128 EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT 128

The police officers, proceed with caution, guns aimed toward the shed, where they open the door, from which --

Jake's CORPSE drops. Scaring the shit out of them.

129 EXT. ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL CAR PARK - NIGHT 129

Heading to her car, Stacey receives a text from the Nokia:
'DEN. Come to Ivanov's Antiques.'

Stacey rushes to her car. Gets in. Starts the engine.

130 INT. STACEY'S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT 130

Driving, Stacey attempts to call 'Zach.' No answer.

STACEY
Don't ignore me, Zach. Do not
fucking ignore me.

The beep of the 'Answer machine response.'

STACEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Zach, don't you fucking dare do
what I think you're going to do.

She cuts the call, calls 'MAX EMERGENCY.'

The call rings out. Her frustration grows. A beep.

STACEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Max, have your daddy call me,
okay!?

In the distance, she sees a long line of traffic.

STACEY (CONT'D)
FUCK.

Stacey quickly dials 9-1-1.

131 **INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE/ BACK STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT** 131

Tending to Max, Zach doesn't see Aleksander get up from his chair. *

Max coughs blood into Zach's chest. Mouths the word '*Daddy.*'

ZACH
I got you, son. I got you.

A shotgun cocks to Zach's head.

ALEKSANDER *
Lower the gun.

BAM! In a flash, Zach SHOOTS Aleksander in the leg, buckling him. Maria screams. *

Zach gets up, the upper hand, he aims his gun at Aleksander on the floor. Aleksander crawls backwards toward Maria, who tends to his wound. *

ZACH
You killed my wife! My son is dying
because of you!

Zach keeps the gun on Aleksander, who trembles, terrified. *

ZACH (CONT'D)
Tell me how I end it before I make
a choice of my own.

ALEKSANDER *
We didn't mean to kill anyone I
swear!

Max coughs blood, his skin almost transparent. Eyes bleeding.

Keeping the gun on Aleksander, Zach grabs the music box from *
beside him.

Zach opens the music box and holds it Max's eyes.

ALEKSANDER (CONT'D)

What are you doing!?

*

Zach turns the handle. The haunting melody plays out.

ZACH

Can't kill what isn't here.

The lights fizzle. Zach jerks back as --

Max's entire body arches backward like a dying slug.

Maria gasps in horror. Aleksander crosses himself. A second later --

*

To Zach's horror --

Max levitates, in the arched position, off the ground...

His mouth flings open, his jaw LOCKS in position.

He makes a deathly croak.

Zach watches in pure terror as -- Max continues to contort in the air.

The air is being sucked out of Max, who fights for his life.

Max's body twists and contorts more violently in the air.

Max is clearly fighting as much as he can. But it's a losing battle. Rage sprawled across his face, Zach spits the lines:

*

ZACH (CONT'D)

*Sacrifice! Dance with death, a
worthy partner! A final bow! A solo
act! I'll turn the weak insane! A
living Hell remains! Naked eyes
won't see me save you!*

*

Suddenly, the music box's handle STOPS along with the melody before --

THE SAMODIVA is in the corner. Her twisting, gnarled hands like those of a hellish puppeteer. Telekinetically --

CRUSHING Max in mid air. In agony, Max twists and turns and contorts as his bones SNAP under his skin.

He screams in pain and gasps for air. Seconds from a heinous, merciless death.

ZACH'S POV: The hopeless, sheer horror slips Zach into a slow-motion, nightmare state. He looks at the Samodiva, engineering Max's painful death. His only son.

Zach SNAPS out of his trance.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Hey!

The Samodiva snaps her vision to Zach, giving Max a brief reprieve.

Only for the Samodiva to throw out a palm toward Zach --

HURLING Zach across the room. He lands head first against the wall. Blood trickles from his temple.

Zach comes to, but through blurred vision, he sees the Samodiva, about to crush Max to death from across the room.

Zach desperately and agonizingly aches to his feet -- tries to run toward the Samodiva -- but she again --

Telekinetically BLASTS Zach against the wall.

Aleksander takes Maria's hand, comforts her as they witness the horrifying reality. *

Zach tries to muster resilience but it's no use. Through blurred vision, Zach sees --

Max reach out for him. Near death desperation.

Zach wipes the tears with his hand. Vision still blurred, Zach sees the lettering on his hand:

It reads not 'dieocious,' but with the 'o's' altered to the male and female symbols -- an anagram remains -- the word 'suicide.'

An anagram. All of a sudden, Zach knows exactly what he needs to do.

132 **INT. STACEY'S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT**

132

Stacey zooms into a parking space outside the antique store.

133 **INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE/ BACK STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT**

133

The Samodiva twists her wrist to SNAP Max's knee.

Zach takes the handgun from his pocket.

134 **EXT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT** 134

Stacey rushes from her car, races toward the antique store.

135 **INT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE/ BACK STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT** 135

From across the room, the Samodiva twists a finger, snapping Max's other knee. Max desperately clutches at the air.

Pleading and SCREAMING for his father, who holds the gun to his head.

Zach transfers Bella's wedding ring from right to his left hand. Grips it in a tight fist.

BEGIN FLASHBACK, IN A SERIES OF HIGH SPEED IMAGES, Zach's memories flash before his eyes:

- Zach and Bella's wedding day. The alter.
- The first dance.
- Zach hugging Grandpa (his father.)
- Zach and Bella cuddling in bed. Their noses rub together. Eskimo kisses.
- Max, heartbroken, slamming his bedroom door on Zach.
- Bella comforting Zach.
- Zach watching Bella walk toward the cab, his final memory of her.
- Zach and Max on the porch. Max taking Zach's hand in his.

END FLASHBACK. BACK TO SCENE.

ZACH
I love you.

Zach SHOOTS HIMSELF in the head.

Max falls to the floor, still gripping the music box.

MAX
NOOOOOO!!!! DADDDDDYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!

Maria SQUEALS as she ducks under the counter.

*

The Samodiva bursts into ASHES that DROP --

Into the music box. The music box's lid drops shut.

Max is glaring -- traumatized -- at his dead father.
Aleksander struggles to digest what he just witnessed.

*

Stacey BURSTS through the store's entrance door.

Horror and terror across Stacey's face. Stacey rushes toward Max, to turn his attention away from the horrible reality.

Hold on the music box for an uncomfortable moment.

*

136 **EXT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - LATER**

136

Aleksander and Maria are helped by COPS into COP CARS.
Stacey, wearing Zach's satchel, talks to a POLICE OFFICER.

*

TWO PARAMEDICS carry Zach's body bag out of the antique to store.

137 **INT. AMBULANCE/ BACK - NIGHT**

137

Max, hooked up to a drip, wearing an oxygen mask, is laid on a gurney. He looks out to focus on --

138 **EXT. IVANOV'S ANTIQUE STORE - NIGHT**

138

Zach's satchel hanging at Stacey's hip.

139 **INT. DAINS HOUSE/ BACK GARDEN - DAY**

139

Max, two casts on his legs, and a neck brace, watches Stacey places the music box on a disposable BBQ, douses it in petrol.

She tosses the match on the box.

Max's face shimmer behind the rising flames, in which we notice --

The faint outline of a slim woman in a white dress. She twists turns, her dress becomes red in the fire -- The Samodiva.

140 **OMITTED**

140

*

141

INT. DAINS HOUSE/ MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

141

'Moving out' boxes, scattered around. Labelled '*Max's toys.*' '*Max's clothes.*' '*Max's books.*' '*Max's video games.*' A walker by his bed. A night light.

Stacey kisses Max goodnight. His legs and arms in casts, his neck in a brace. He grips his torch, flicks it on and off.

*

MAX

Promise me he didn't want to die.

STACEY

He did it because he loves you.

MAX

Even more than a cat loves mice krispies?

Stacey smiles.

STACEY

Yeah.

Then flicks off the light.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Goodnight, prince. New chapter tomorrow.

MAX

Goodnight.

Stacey smiles, leaves Max alone. She leaves the door ajar, causing the hallway's light to cast against the wall.

Max stares into the semi-blackness. Flicks off his torch. He closes his eyes, lays in the silence. Broken by a light tapping on the closet door.

*

The banging intensifies, growing into a BANGING that causes Max's eyes to SNAP open. It continues from the closet.

*

Max flicks the torch back on.

*

MAX (CONT'D)

Aunt Stacey? Do you hear that?

No response. A now HEAVY BANGING from the closet. Terrified, Max struggles in his casts but manages to pull the bedsheets over his head. Max cowers under the sheets.

The GROAN of the opening closet door. Nearing footsteps and heavy breaths. Closer and closer and closer.

Max trembles. Then -- nothing. He conjures the courage to pull away the bedsheets. Nothing there.

The closet door is closed. But eyes the closet -- desperate for peace of mind.

He struggles out of bed, grabs his walker and slowly hobbles toward the closet. He opens the closet.

Nothing. Relieved, he places the torch, still on, into the closet. Turns and hobbles back to his bed. Climbs in. Satisfied he's safe, he turns around to see --

*
*

BAM! A flash of JAKE'S dead face.

Max blinks and it's gone. Terrified, he turns onto his back and glares at the ceiling.

The closet door slowly closes with a soft thud. Max stares at the thin beams of light protruding through the slits in the closet door. When --

CLICK. The torchlight dies. Shrouding Max in darkness.

THE END