

The Haunting in Georgia

By David Coggeshall

Gold Circle Films
v 7.1a 4-8-10

FADE IN:

INT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Pan slowly along a row of meticulously preserved ANIMALS in dramatic poses. A fox....a falcon...a wild boar - their glass eyes nearly lifelike, flickering in dim FIRELIGHT.

Pull back to reveal a MAN seated at a workbench in a cramped, earthen room lit by a lantern and a roaring fire.

He is the STATION MASTER, a handsome man in his fifties.

SUPER: **Pine Mountain, Georgia**
 1858

The Station Master carefully inserts a glass orb into the EYE SOCKET of a PRESERVED VULTURE on the table in front of him, the dead bird's wings spread dramatically as in flight.

The Station Master runs his fingers through the vulture's feathers and then leans back, satisfied. It's done.

A KNOCK on the door. The Station Master turns slowly.

In the crack below the door, a golden, flickering glow from outside. *Torchlight*.

The Station Master rises and pulls on a long, black coat. He walks toward the door, his face grim.

The Station Master slowly turns the handle and swings the door open. Torchlight dances on his face, as his initial ALARM at what he sees outside turns to stoic RESIGNATION.

SIX MEN stand in a semicircle, holding torches. Each man has a WHITE PILLOWCASE pulled over his head with eye-holes cut out. Some carry guns. Most have knives.

The LEADER of the men tosses a ragged BURLAP HOOD at the Station Master's feet. This hood has NO eye-holes.

 HOODED LEADER
Put it on.

 STATION MASTER
 (bitterly)
So you can't see my face... Ben?

 HOODED LEADER
You did this to yourself. Put it
on.

The Station Master looks down at the hood, knowing there's no escaping what's going to happen. He looks over at the fire in the hearth, then slides the hood over his head.

POV - We're looking out THROUGH the worn burlap, our vision obscured and claustrophobic, seeing only torchlight and the vague shapes of the men.

STATION MASTER
(evenly)
How did you find out?

A sudden MOTION - a sickening THUNK. We fall to the ground limply, gasping out pained breaths through the burlap. We see the vague form of the Leader standing over us, backlit by the fire, holding a rusted SCYTHE. He raises it...

STATION MASTER (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Please, my work must be finished.
I...

Leader SWINGS the scythe down, splitting flesh and bone and silencing the Station Master's pleas.

HOODED LEADER
--Finish in hell.

SMASH TO BLACK:

CARD - **"THE HAUNTING IN GEORGIA"**

CARD - **"Based on the true story"**

FADE IN:

EXT. WYRICK APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN

A dark bedroom. MOVING BOXES. The curtains are drawn, giving just a hint of the pre-dawn grey rising outside.

A disjointed, faint sound...like voices blending together.

We pass a radio ALARM CLOCK and realize that the noise is blurry AM static, stuck between a Baptist preacher and an old George Jones song. A HAND turns it off.

ANDY WYRICK (27) sits up, still half asleep. He looks over to the other side of the bed. It's empty.

INT. WYRICK APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAWN

Andy, wearing pants and a work shirt pushes open the door to the BATHROOM, where LISA WYRICK (25, attractive) lies in the fetal position in the bathtub, the water motionless around her. Light from the hall illuminates the dark bathroom, and Andy sees that Lisa's eyes are open.

ANDY

Jesus, Lisa. It's five a.m.

Lisa barely seems to realize he's there. Andy kneels by the tub, concerned.

ANDY (CONT'D)

This water's freezing, honey. How long have you been in here?

Lisa blinks but says nothing. Andy looks over at the sink, where a PRESCRIPTION VIAL rests ("Xyprexa" Anti-psychotic).

ANDY (CONT'D)

If those pills aren't working, we sure as hell shouldn't keep paying for them.

She rouses herself and turns on the hot water.

LISA

They're working. I couldn't sleep, that's all.

She tenderly smooths out the wrinkles of his work shirt ["Corrections Officer"] with her hand.

LISA (CONT'D)

Go on, or you'll be late for work.

Andy frowns and rises.

ANDY

I'll be back at four to help move the heavy stuff. Will you be able to pack the rest up by then?

(Lisa nods)

We're getting out of this dump, Lisa. To a real ass home.

LISA
(amused)
"A real ass home"?

ANDY
That's right.

Andy gives her hand a squeeze, then walks to the door. He pauses and looks back, concerned, then walks out.

A few moments later, Lisa hears the front door close.

She lies back in the tub and closes her eyes, focusing on the relaxing white noise of the running water.

A *SHADOW* crosses over her, and Lisa's eyes OPEN. She stares at the doorway, but there's no one standing there.

Lisa turns off the hot water and the room goes silent, except for the drip... drip.... drip...

LISA
Heidi?

Silence. Lisa listens carefully, her eyes moving around the shadowy bathroom.

A *CREAK* from within the walls. Gooseflesh breaks out on Lisa's skin. She's nervous.

Lisa rises and pulls on her old robe. She walks to the sink, shakes a *PILL* from the vial into her hand, and stares at it.

A *creaking floorboard* from the hallway, and Lisa SPINS. The doorway is EMPTY.

Lisa walks to the door, steels herself. She steps into the...

INT. WYRICK APARTMENT - HALL - CONTINUOUS

..hallway. Lisa looks to her right and sees... nothing.

She turns around, and at the other end of the hall...

...she catches a brief glimpse of a *LITTLE GIRL* disappearing around the corner, her cotton nightie trailing behind her.

LISA
(relieved)
Heidi.... Jesus.

Lisa walks down the hall after her. As she rounds the corner...

LISA (CONT'D)
Baby, what are you doing out of bed
so...

Lisa trails off - the living room is EMPTY except for moving boxes. There's no sign of the little girl. Lisa looks around the quiet room, unnerved.

HEIDI (O.S.)
(from behind Lisa)
Momma?

Lisa spins, startled. Behind her, at the end of the hall, HEIDI WYRICK (6, adorable) stands in her nightie in the doorway of her bedroom, rubbing sleep from her eyes. *The little girl Lisa saw was clearly NOT Heidi.*

HEIDI (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

Lisa forces a reassuring smile.

LISA
Nothing, sweetie. You're up early.

HEIDI
Is there a swing at the new house?
I dreamed about a swing.

LISA
You did? Well, if there isn't your
daddy might just put one up for
you. Now scoot, back to bed.

Heidi yawns and walks back into her room. Lisa stares at the pill in her hand... and then SWALLOWS it.

EXT. NEW WYRICK HOUSE - DAY

Lisa's hatchback, loaded with boxes, winds down a wooded road and pulls into the driveway of their NEW HOUSE.

SUPER: **Pine Mountain, Georgia**
1993

The house is a small, weathered Victorian with a screened-in porch. The yellow paint has peeled. The grass is long and unkempt.

A vast BACK FIELD is framed by deep, forbidding woods. In the distance, a wide CREEK flows slowly through the countryside. Cicadas chirp in the summer heat.

Andy, unloading furniture from his pickup truck, waves as Lisa's car pulls to a stop and Heidi hops out.

ANDY
(to Heidi)
Ready to see it?

He lifts her to his shoulders. Heidi's excitement fades as she sees the dilapidated house.

HEIDI
Who lived there before?

Andy and Lisa exchange a look.

LISA
Nobody, honey. At least not for
awhile. That's why the bank gave us
such a good deal.

ANDY
(points down the road)
Maybe you'd rather live in there?

Heidi looks. Down the road is an abandoned double-wide mobile home, in even worse shape than the house.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Because that could be arranged.

Heidi shakes her head quickly. Andy smiles.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I thought not. Now tell me how much
you love our new house.

HEIDI
(quickly)
A lot. It's great.

Lisa gives her husband an amused look as they walk toward their new home.

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - DAY

In her new room, Heidi blows dust off a shelf by the window and places old stuffed animals on it, humming softly to herself.

CLOSE on the animals, a fox, a pig, a wolf - their eyes staring forward, eerily reminiscent of the animals in the Station Master's workshop.

INT. ANDY AND LISA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lisa scrubs the counters. She wipes her brow, weary, as Andy walks in, sipping a BEER.

ANDY
Is it just me, or is there a funk
in this house?
(thinks)
What does Radon smell like?

Lisa takes the beer from his hand and sips deeply.

LISA
I don't think Radon has a smell.

ANDY
Is that good or bad?

A THUMP from inside the pantry RATTLES the rickety door. Lisa meets eyes with Andy, who puts his ear to the door.

He hears nothing from inside. Andy glances at Lisa, who takes a wary step back, as...

Andy YANKS open the door. The pantry is deep, and dark - Andy tries switching on the overhead bulb but it is out. He edges forward, squinting to see inside, when...

YELLOW EYES SUDDENLY APPEAR IN THE DARKNESS, as a RACCOON HISSES VIOLENTLY AT HIM.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Jesus!!

Andy begins yelling like a wild man and hurling items at the raccoon until it scurries out through a HOLE in the rear of the pantry. Andy slams the door, breathing hard.

He looks back at Lisa, who stifles a laugh.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You think that's funny?

LISA
Baby, I've seen you stand up to
four men in a bar, but a raccoon
makes you scream?

ANDY

Guys in bars don't have rabies.
Except maybe the ones your sister
dates.

LISA

Cheap shot.

ANDY

True shot. So, am I getting that
beer back or what?

LISA

(sips defiantly)

I trust you bought more than one.

Andy frowns and starts to leave the room, but stops. He looks
around, smiling.

ANDY

Lookin' better already. I knew
you'd shine the place up.
(re: the pantry)
I'll put sealing that hole on my
list.

LISA

Near the top, please.
(off his look, smiles)
I can't have you screaming every
time you come in the kitchen.

Andy gives her a look and walks out.

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - DAY

Heidi finishes arranging her animals and then pulls out a
sheet of butterfly stickers. She kneels in front of the
window and begins putting butterfly stickers on the glass.

Her hand slows as something outside catches her eye.

*Seen through the wavy glass, an OLD MAN in a BLACK SUIT is
walking along the perimeter of the woods behind the house.*

Heidi stares at him, curious.

*The Old Man slowly turns and LOOKS BACK at Heidi. His face is
ancient, his white hair pressed under an old felt hat. He
meets Heidi's gaze with a cold, unsmiling intensity.*

A moment later, he walks on, disappearing into the trees.

Heidi stares out the window after him until he's gone from sight.

A CAR HORN then startles her, and Heidi runs to her other window, where a dusty, convertible Chrysler LeBaron rolls into the driveway, kicking up dust.

Heidi grins wide.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - DAY

JOYCE (27, bruised beauty) steps out of her LeBaron and scoops Heidi up into a hug.

JOYCE
Kid, you grow like a weed.

Joyce sees Lisa walk out onto the porch and smiles.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
Look at you, Miss Homeowner.

Andy walks out and peers into the back seat of Joyce's car.

ANDY
That didn't take long. No suitcase?

JOYCE
I'm not a freeloader, Andy.

ANDY
Today, or historically?

LISA
Stop it.
(takes Joyce's hand)
Joyce is just here to wish us well.

ANDY
(to Joyce, skeptical)
Right. Pop the trunk.

LISA
Andy, come on...

ANDY
(unmoved)
Pop... the... trunk.

Joyce reluctantly opens the trunk. Inside: TWO SUITCASES.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(frowns, to Lisa)
It's a goddamn curse being right
all the time.

Lisa looks at Joyce, who shrugs, embarrassed.

EXT. BACK FIELD - EVENING

Andy and Lisa walk with Joyce across the back field. Heidi trails behind, kicking a pine cone.

JOYCE
It didn't work out with Ray.

ANDY
Was he the married one or the
drunk?

JOYCE
Bit of both, turns out.

ANDY
You sure can pick em, Joyce.

LISA
What about you? Are you...?

JOYCE
(genuinely proud)
Eleven days sober.

ANDY
Shit, call Guinness. On second
thought, bad idea.

He chuckles at his own joke. Nobody else does.

Behind them, Heidi keeps kicking the pine cone, but it rolls down a slope and onto a dirt road near...

..the old mobile home, where a GIRL (NELL, 16, black) steps out of the tall grass and stops it with her foot. It's hard to tell, but it looks like Nell is MISSING her RIGHT ARM. Her gaze meets Heidi's, but when Heidi steps around a tree to get a better look at Nell... she's GONE.

Meanwhile, ahead of Heidi...

JOYCE
I can pay rent. I've still got
alimony coming in.
(MORE)

JOYCE (CONT'D)
(off their reluctance)
Look, I want to be near family. I
don't have anybody else.

ANDY
Then find a place *near* here, but
not here. Get it?

JOYCE
(points: the mobile home)
Who lives over there?

LISA
Nobody, I don't think.

From behind them...

HEIDI (O.S.)
A girl lives there.

They look back at Heidi, surprised.

LISA
You saw a girl, Heidi?
(Heidi nods)
When?

HEIDI
Just now.

Andy and Lisa study the mobile home. It looks overgrown and
abandoned. There's no sign of the little girl.

EXT. MOBILE HOME - EVENING

The foursome arrive at the mobile home.

LISA
Hello?

Andy knocks on the door. Joyce peers through a dusty window.

JOYCE
Not a stitch of furniture. But a
halfway decent kitchen.

She peels a faded NOTICE off the wall. "FORECLOSED".

JOYCE (CONT'D)
(to Andy, satisfied)
"Near here, but not here"?

LISA
(before Andy can protest)
You did say that, babe.

Joyce tucks the notice into her pocket and walks past Andy, smiling. Andy and Lisa follow, but Heidi lingers behind.

HEIDI
What about the girl?

They keep walking away, not hearing her.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

A crescent moon casts a pale glow over the woods.

The back door opens and Lisa carries two empty moving boxes out to the garbage bin. She's exhausted - it's been a long day. She begins cutting them up with scissors, when...

A faint, wet sound from nearby, like a parched mouth trying to swallow.

Lisa slows her cutting and listens, but the sound dissipates. After a moment, Lisa begins cutting again....

..but the strange sound occurs again. Lisa looks around, confused. What the hell is that?

The sound seems to be coming from the tall, unkempt grass behind the garbage bin. Lisa moves closer, curious.

It almost sounds like something chewing... or choking.

Lisa picks up an old RAKE and, after a moment's hesitation, JABS the handle into the grass and steps back warily.

All is still. Lisa listens for a moment, hearing nothing, then slowly moves back toward the bin, but...

..the sound begins again. Wet. Grotesque.

Steeling herself, Lisa grips the rake and moves carefully into the grass.

The sound grows clearer. She's getting close to it.

Lisa parts the grass ahead of her, and GASPS, seeing--

A SEVERED DEER HEAD lying on the ground, with filthy black SUTURES hanging loosely from its bleeding neck. The head is trying to BREATHE, creating the wet, choking sound.

Lisa retreats and presses her palms to her eyes, trying to contain her horror.

LISA
(bitterly, to herself)
Stop it.

But the wet gasping wheezing only grows LOUDER until-

LISA (CONT'D)
Stop it!

HEIDI (O.S.)
Momma?

Lisa SPINS, startled, and sees Heidi in her cotton nightie, standing in the back doorway of the house.

Lisa wipes the tears from her eyes, looks back at the deer head--

But the deer head is GONE. Not a trace of blood remains in the grass. Lisa remains frozen, not trusting her eyes.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
Why are you crying?

LISA
(composing herself)
I'm all right. I just...

Heidi knows better. Lisa straightens up and wipes her eyes.

LISA (CONT'D)
Aunt Joyce is out front. Go say
goodnight, and I'll come tuck you
in, okay?

Heidi reluctantly heads back inside. When the door closes, Lisa's fragile facade crumbles again.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Joyce sits on the creaky porch swing, staring out into the night. Moonlight illuminates the back field. Joyce seems focused. Listening. Watching the trees carefully.

Heidi opens the screen door and steps onto the porch. Joyce looks at her and smiles.

HEIDI
I'm supposed to say goodnight.

JOYCE
(taps her cheek)
You are? Got a kiss for me?

Heidi gives Joyce a kiss on the cheek, but Joyce can see there's something bothering the little girl.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
How about we try that again with a smile?
(off Heidi's reluctance)
Something bothering you, sweetie?

HEIDI
Momma's crying.

Joyce nods slowly and pats the bench next to her. Heidi sits down, leaning onto Joyce.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
Do you know why she gets sad?

JOYCE
I don't think she's sad, Heidi.

HEIDI
Is she scared?

Joyce is silent for a moment.

JOYCE
Now why would you think that?

HEIDI
I only cry when I'm sad or scared.

JOYCE
You cried on Christmas when you got your pretty new bike.

HEIDI
It isn't Christmas.

JOYCE
(looks off into the trees)
No, I guess it isn't.

HEIDI
What's Momma scared of?

Joyce thinks for a moment, conflicted, then looks at Heidi.

JOYCE

Your mom gets *feelings* sometimes.
Feelings she doesn't much care for.

HEIDI

What kind of feelings?

Joyce glances around as if making sure they're alone.

JOYCE

Tell you what. I want you to try
something for me, Heidi. Can you do
that?

(Heidi nods)

Look out there.

HEIDI

At what?

JOYCE

Don't really focus on anything
specific. Just take it all in.

Heidi looks out over the land. There's something about the
deep darkness of the woods, the cicadas, the wind in the
leaves..... There's an eerie vibe. This land is OLD.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Do you feel anything?

HEIDI

I think so. And sometimes...I see
things.

Joyce studies Heidi for a moment.

JOYCE

(softly)

That's 'cause you were born with a
veil, sweetie. Just like your
mother and me. And our mother.

HEIDI

What's a veil?

JOYCE

It means that when you were born,
you had a sheen over your face,
like a wedding veil. And sometimes
folks born that way can sense
certain things other people can't.

HEIDI
Momma never said anything about it.

JOYCE
Well, your mom doesn't like this
kind of talk, of veils and...
feelings. So I hope you'll keep
this conversation between us.

HEIDI
Like a secret?
(Joyce nods)
What do *you* feel?

Joyce looks out into the darkness again. Cicadas chirp in the warm night air. *There's something about this place*. But Joyce notes the concerned expression on Heidi's face.

JOYCE
More than usual.
(off Heidi's look, smiles)
But nothing to worry your pretty
head about. Now run along to bed.
I'll see you in the morning.

Heidi turns and goes, the screen door creaking shut behind.

FADE TO:

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - DAY

The hot Georgia sun hangs over the Wyrick's land and shimmers off the creek's rippling water.

EXT. BACK FIELD - DAY

Heidi's little hands grip a low branch on a TREE near the house. She pulls herself up onto the branch and looks around.

LISA (O.S.)
Heidi Wyrick, get down from there.

Heidi sees Lisa standing on the porch, watching her.

HEIDI
I'm just looking. I won't go any
higher.

Lisa frowns and walks into the house. Heidi looks around the field and watches the sun sparkle off the distant creek.

Glancing at the house for any sign of her mother, Heidi carefully climbs a few branches higher, but...

...her FOOT SLIPS, and Heidi tumbles through the branches to the ground, landing hard on her stomach. Heidi moans.

A SHADOW moves over her, and Heidi sees it as she rolls over.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Momma, I just...

She goes silent, realizing- it's not her mom. Silhouetted in the brilliant sunlight is the OLD MAN in a dark suit she saw in the trees. As he bends to her, his face comes into focus.

Heidi stares up into his grim visage, terrified.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Lisa walks off the porch carrying gardening tools and makes her way to an overgrown GARDEN. She glances over at the tree where Heidi was climbing. She's GONE.

LISA

Heidi?

No sound, except the crows in the trees. Lisa scans the field and woods, then frowns.

LISA (CONT'D)

(calls)

Don't go too far. Lunch is in half an hour.

(beat)

You hear me?

No answer. Lisa looks around one more time, then begins digging in the garden with a pitchfork.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - DAY

The LeBaron rolls into the driveway, and Joyce steps out, holding a folder. She walks to the porch, where she sees a baloney sandwich resting on the table, surrounded by FLIES.

JOYCE

(calls)

Lisa?

Joyce walks to the end of the porch and sees Lisa walking quickly across the field toward her, upset.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
(holds up the folder)
Guess who's gonna be your new
neighbor?
(off Lisa's frantic face)
What's wrong?

LISA
Heidi's been gone an hour. I don't
know where she is.

JOYCE
Maybe she's just wandering.

LISA
Heidi's not a wanderer.

JOYCE
That's cause she's never had
anywhere to wander to. Now she
does. You'll have to get used to...

Lisa's eyes go WIDE, seeing Heidi emerge from the woods.

LISA
Heidi!

Lisa runs off the porch and kneels in front of her daughter.

LISA (CONT'D)
Where in God's name have you been?
I've been worried sick.

HEIDI
I'm not supposed to say.

LISA
What? Who told you that? Who were
you with?
(off Heidi's silence,
erupts)
Goddamnit Heidi, you tell me right--

HEIDI
(scared, interrupts)
Mr. Gordy.

Lisa glances at Joyce, who shakes her head, not recognizing
the name. Lisa looks her daughter in the eye.

LISA
Who's Mr. Gordy?

HEIDI

An old man I met. He said there was
a swingset in the woods, just like
in my dream. Remember, Momma?

Joyce puts her hands to her face, stunned.

LISA

(looks in Heidi's eyes)
Heidi, I want you to tell me the
truth now, okay? Did he hurt you?
(Heidi shakes her head)
Did he try to touch you anywhere?

Heidi shakes her head, nervous. Lisa scoops Heidi up into her
arms and carries her quickly back toward the house.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY

Andy's pickup races down the road near the house, and he
scans both sides carefully. His SHOTGUN rests across his lap.
Seeing an OLD FARMER walking along the road, Andy SLAMS on
the brakes and jumps out of the truck, holding the shotgun.

ANDY

Hey! Are you Gordy? The one
harassing my daughter?
(off his confusion)
You own a black suit?

OLD FARMER

Do I look like I own a black suit?

Andy studies him for a moment, then jumps back in the truck.
The Old Farmer watches him drive away.

OLD FARMER (CONT'D)

(a glimmer of recognition)
Gordy...?

He shakes the thought from his head and keeps walking.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Heidi leads Andy and Lisa to a gnarled TREE in a clearing.

HEIDI

This is it.
(points to the tree)
Mr. Gordy told me there was a swing
here--

Heidi points at the tree but there is no swing.

LISA

Heidi, there's no swing.

HEIDI

Can we put one up? There's a good branch for it.

Andy squints, *seeing the remnants of a RUSTED CHAIN wrapped around the bough high above them, so old that the tree bark has grown practically AROUND it.*

ANDY

I'll be damned.

(to Lisa)

There might not be a swing here now... but there *used* to be.

Lisa remains focused on Heidi.

LISA

Did this Mr. Gordy say anything else to you?

HEIDI

He said there's money buried in the garden.

Andy and Lisa glance at each other strangely. Lisa kneels in front of Heidi.

LISA

Listen to me, Heidi. If Mr. Gordy ever comes up to you again, I want you to holler as loud as you can and get one of us. You understand?

Heidi nods. Lisa takes her hand and leads her away.

ANDY

(after them)

How much money?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lisa washes the family's dinner dishes in the dimly lit kitchen. It's been a long day.

Her motions slow, and she lays the plate back in the sink slowly. Something's bothering her - an uneasiness.

Above Lisa, the light FLICKERS and goes out. She flicks the bulb with her finger, but it stays off. Unnerved, Lisa picks up the plate and begins washing again, but...

A sound, like BREATHING, very close to her, gently blowing the silken hairs on the back of her neck.

Lisa grips the counter, trying to steady herself. She reaches for her purse and pulls out her bottle of prescription PILLS. With shaking hands, she takes one and washes it down with water.

Lisa shivers, rubs her arms, and then walks out of the dark kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lisa walks down the hallway uneasily, but then slows, hearing something through Heidi's bedroom door.

HEIDI (O.S.)
(faint, through the door)
I'm not supposed to talk to you.

Lisa moves to the door and opens it quietly, seeing...

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

..Heidi, kneeling by the open window with several of her little animal figurines arrayed before her on the sill. She's bathed in moonlight as she looks out into the darkness.

HEIDI
They think you're a bad man. You're not, are you?

Lisa stares, disturbed. *There's no one outside the window.* Heidi then leans further out the window.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
Wait, where are you going?
(silence)
No, Mom's in the kitchen. She's...

Heidi trails off, realizing that Lisa IS standing in the doorway, watching her. Heidi hops under her covers, clams up.

LISA
Heidi, was that Mr. Gordy you were talking to?

Heidi shakes her head.

LISA (CONT'D)
Don't lie to me. Was that him?

Heidi slowly nods. Lisa sits down on the bed next to her.

HEIDI
Are you mad at me?

LISA
Not as mad as your daddy's going to be. He missed work today looking for Mr. Gordy.
(serious)
Sweetheart, you should have told us he's your *imaginary* friend. You had us very worried.

HEIDI
Mr. Gordy's not imaginary. He talks to me.

LISA
I was watching just now, Heidi. There was nobody out there. And thank God for that.
(sits down next to her)
I know it's not easy with no other kids around...

HEIDI
Mr. Gordy's *real*.

LISA
Heidi, *stop*. I don't want to hear any more about Mr. Gordy. Do you understand?
(Heidi fumes)
Seeing things that aren't there and making up stories... that's not a road you want to go down.

HEIDI
Have you ever thought something was real that wasn't?

Lisa says nothing, conflicted.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
I think Aunt Joyce has.

LISA
She told you that?

HEIDI
(guilty)
I was supposed to keep it a secret.

LISA
Aunt Joyce gets a little confused
sometimes. And she's had a hard
life because of it. You remember
that.

(Heidi nods)
Heidi, I don't want you ever
keeping secrets from me. Do you
know why?

HEIDI
Because secrets are bad?

LISA
That's right. And the longer they
stay secret... the worse they are
when they come out.

Lisa kisses her and walks out, closing the door behind her.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Lisa steps onto the porch, frowning, and looks around for...

LISA
Joyce?

She hears a SCUFFLING noise from around the other side of the
house. Lisa pauses at the corner, apprehensive.

A breeze blows through the trees... and Lisa steps around the
corner, stopping when she sees..

..Andy and Joyce, covered in dirt, sitting in the vegetable
garden. Lisa walks toward them, upset.

LISA (CONT'D)
I'd like to know what the hell
you've been telling my daughter,
Joyce. You're here one day, and
she's already meeting invisible
friends. This Mr. Gordy?
(taps her head)
Turns out he's up here.
(to Andy)
(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)
And it doesn't help that you're
encouraging her, digging up my new
garden on some wild...

Andy TIPS OVER an ANTIQUE AMMUNITION case, SPILLING OLD
SILVER COINS out onto the ground.

Lisa stares, stunned at the coins glittering in the
moonlight.

JOYCE
You were saying?

Lisa kneels by the coins and holds one up to the moonlight.

"Confederate States of America - 1861"

She looks at Andy and Joyce in disbelief.

EXT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

Joyce directs DELIVERY MEN as they carry new furniture into
the mobile home. She spots Lisa walking toward her and
happily holds up HOUSE KEYS, jingling them.

LISA
(re: the furniture)
Good lord, how much damage have you
done?

JOYCE
Every penny that Jefferson Davis
was kind enough to provide. Buy
anything for yourselves?

LISA
Clothes for Heidi and new tires for
the truck.

JOYCE
Did you tell Heidi where the money
came from?

LISA
No. And neither will you. There's
probably all sorts of stuff buried
in these parts. That doesn't mean
there's a Mr. Gordy.

JOYCE
I beg to differ. Did you look at
the deed to your house?

LISA
What are you talking about?

Joyce reaches into her car and pulls out a document.

JOYCE
This is mine.
(points)
Look at the name at the bottom.

Lisa looks at the name of the previous owner - "J.S. GORDY".
She glances at Joyce, surprised.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
My broker said the Gordy family
owned all this land, going back two
hundred years.
(points to the deed)
This "J.S Gordy" was the last one,
then the bank got it in the
Seventies.
(leans in)
Ask me how they got it.

Off Lisa's look--

INT. WYRICK KITCHEN - NIGHT

Close on Lisa's kitchen table, where DOZENS of PHOTOS of various OLD MEN have been cut out of magazines. Joyce arranges the photos in rows, as Lisa watches, frowning.

LISA
This isn't right.

JOYCE
(ignores her, calls)
Heidi? Come in the kitchen a sec.

Heidi walks into the kitchen and sees the photos laid out.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
Your mother and I are looking for a
husband for you.

HEIDI
(looks, frowns)
They're all old. You marry them.

JOYCE

Fine. Pick a winner for me. But
look at all of them carefully
first. Can you do that?

Heidi scans the photos and then GOES STILL. Among the photos
is a small photo on COPY PAPER, bearing a familiar face. It's
MR. GORDY, in his suit and hat. Cold. Unsmiling.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

You see something, Heidi?
(Heidi picks up the photo
and looks at it closely)
Do you know that man?

Heidi glances at Lisa, then whispers in Joyce's ear..

HEIDI

That's Mr. Gordy.

Joyce looks at Lisa, who averts her eyes, upset. Heidi's eyes
narrow.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

I told you he was real.
(angry)
I told you, and you didn't believe
me!

Heidi walks out of the room. Lisa looks down at a piece of
paper in her hand - where the photo was CUT OUT from. It's an
OBITUARY for "**JAMES S. GORDY (1901-1979)**"

Lisa looks at Joyce coldly, crumples up the paper and walks
out the front door.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Lisa stares out into the night as Joyce emerges from the
door, looking a bit self-satisfied.

LISA

(without looking)
My daughter is not conversing with
the dead, Joyce.

JOYCE

She picked Mr. Gordy's face out of
fifty pictures. Explain that.

LISA

This is your influence coming out
in her. I don't want you talking
about *any* of this with Heidi
anymore. You hear me? She can talk
to *me* about it.

JOYCE

Why would she? You don't listen,
you just tell her what's what. Just
like you did with me.

LISA

You needed it. You still do.

JOYCE

I suppose I'd be better off numbing
myself with pills?

(Lisa glares at her)

You don't think I know? That was
mom's trick too, remember?

LISA

Stop it.

JOYCE

(bitter)

Worked out beautifully for her...

LISA

Goddamn it, Joyce, would you just go
home?

Joyce walks off the porch then turns and looks back at Lisa.

JOYCE

There's nothing wrong with Heidi.
You know what it is, Lisa.

(beat)

It's starting for her.

Joyce walks away down the driveway, as Lisa stares after her,
upset.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Heidi plays on the floor with her stuffed animals, when
suddenly -

A KNOCK on the door.

Heidi looks up, startled, then rises to her feet and opens the door, revealing PASTOR WELLS (50's, black) standing on the porch, holding a TIN and smiling kindly.

PASTOR WELLS
Well, hello there, young lady. Is
your momma or daddy home?

HEIDI
(eyes the tin, suspicious)
Are you selling something?

PASTOR WELLS
No, these are just cookies.
(smiles)
And they're entirely free.

Off Heidi's look...

INT. WYRICK HOUSE - LATER

The tin is open on the kitchen table, and Heidi stares at the cookies longingly as Lisa serves tea to Pastor Wells.

PASTOR WELLS
When I hear of a family moving to
town, I visit and see if they've
found a church yet. Because I
happen to preside over one.
(to Heidi)
Well, don't just stare at 'em.

Heidi looks to Lisa, who nods. Heidi gobbles a cookie.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
Folks around here had been
wondering when this rather special
piece of property would sell.

ANDY (O.S.)
What's special about it...?

Lisa and Pastor Wells look over as Andy walks in the back door, wearing his work shirt.

ANDY (CONT'D)
...aside from it being overgrown as
all hell.
(shakes Wells's hand)
Andy Wyrick.

PASTOR WELLS

Pastor Wells, First Baptist Church.
The property's special because back
around the time of the Civil War,
it was the Station Master's land.
But I'm sure you knew that.

ANDY

What, like a railroad? There's no
tracks on this land.

PASTOR WELLS

(smiles)

It wasn't that kind of railroad.

LISA

(thinks, realizes...)

You're talking about the
underground railroad. The
landowners who hid escaped slaves
and helped them make it up north?

PASTOR WELLS

That's right. Those people were
known as Station Masters, and one
of the most well-known lived right
here on your land. He was an
incredible man, who saved hundreds
of lives from the slave hunters.

(beat)

So don't be surprised if you get
visitors from time to time.

ANDY

Living ones, I hope.

PASTOR WELLS

As opposed to...?

LISA

(quickly)

Andy's just having a little fun.

ANDY

(dry)

I do that.

Pastor Wells leans forward, serious.

PASTOR WELLS

There are entire generations of families that wouldn't exist if not for the Station Master and this piece of land. If you do get visitors, I hope you'll be more understanding than the previous owner, J.S Gordy, was. He didn't exactly share his great-grandfather's... hospitable nature. And that's putting it nicely.

(beat)

Between you and me, there was something seriously *off* about that man.

LISA

(frowns, glances at Heidi)

You don't say.

Pastor Wells eyes her strangely, but before he can inquire...

ANDY

(interjects)

Look, Pastor, we appreciate the cookies and all, but there's football on and it's not gonna watch itself, so, uh...

(off Lisa's stern glance,

Andy straightens up)

I'm sorry, you were saying?

PASTOR WELLS

(smiles)

I was saying you folks should feel honored to live on this land...

(rises to his feet)

...and that now it's time for *all* of us to fulfill God's plan and watch some football.

ANDY

(grins, impressed)

Lisa, I do believe we've found ourselves a church.

Lisa rolls her eyes, as Pastor Wells smiles, pleased.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOYCE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

In the moonlight, garments hang from a CLOTHESLINE outside Joyce's mobile home, blowing gently in the breeze.

Joyce emerges from the mobile home, carrying a laundry basket. She walks across the grass to the clothesline and begins taking down the clothes and folding them.

Joyce unclips a bedsheet and tries to fold it...

...but the sleeve of a hanging blouse gently blows up over her shoulder. Joyce frowns and peels it off.

Joyce resumes folding the sheet, *but an uneasiness seems to wash over her.* Joyce scans the trees, uncomfortable. Seeing nothing, she slowly finishes folding the sheet.

A breeze blows through the trees, and the hanging sleeve of the blouse again slides up over Joyce's shoulder...

...but this time there's an ancient, leathery HAND protruding from it.

Joyce FEELS the hand on her shoulder and CRIES OUT, STARTLED, twisting away and dropping the sheet to the ground.

Her eyes whip to the blouse, but it's hanging normally, swaying in the gentle breeze. Joyce looks around in the darkness for a moment. *What the hell just happened?*

Unnerved, Joyce quickly grabs the laundry basket and begins yanking the rest of the clothes down, stuffing them inside.

When she reaches for the final item - a PILLOWCASE - her hand stops.

An orange, flickering GLOW plays on the white pillowcase. Joyce slowly moves the pillowcase aside and looks past, into the trees.

Deep in the woods, a LANTERN hangs from a tree limb over an OLD STONE WALL, the FLAME dancing in its glass casing.

Joyce moves cautiously into the dark woods, squinting ahead to see the odd antique lantern better.

Draped on the stone wall beneath the lantern is a QUILT embroidered with a peculiar "X" shaped design.

A BREEZE blows through the trees, and the flame flickers and GOES OUT, casting the woods into near darkness.

Joyce goes still, then edges slowly forward, reaching the stone wall, straining to see in the dim moonlight. She examines the lantern, which now looks ANCIENT and RUSTED. The glass is long gone. There's no wick. This lantern clearly hasn't worked in a LONG time.

Looking down, Joyce sees that the quilt is GONE. She bends to the ground and feels around with her hands, until she finds..

...a REMNANT of the quilt buried in old leaves and dirt. The fabric is TATTERED and DECAYED, brittle to the touch. The "X" embroidery is faded, barely discernible.

A TWIG snaps near Joyce, who PALES and SPINS. The woods are dark - it's difficult to see.

JOYCE

Hello?

A sound like children whispering, then a distinct "Shhh". The whispers go silent.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Who's there?

Joyce edges backwards carefully, then turns and runs back toward the house, dragging the remnant of blanket behind her.

FADE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Lisa sits staring out the window as Andy enters, weary from a long day of work. Lisa doesn't even register that he's there.

ANDY

(grabs a beer from the
fridge)

"Hello, Andy. Thank you for working
all day to provide for your
family".

Andy kisses Lisa and looks out the window as well. *In the field, Heidi sits on a stump, staring into the woods.*

LISA

She's been sitting there for two
hours. Hasn't moved a muscle.

ANDY

Like mother, like daughter.
(Lisa frowns at him)
(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

That little surprise we talked about? It's in the truck.

(Lisa nods and looks out the window again)

You can't watch her all the time, Lisa.

LISA

You'd rather she wander off with more invisible friends?

ANDY

No, I'd rather she go meet a real one. What about that little girl she saw?

LISA

Did you see a little girl?

(Andy shrugs - good point)

She's only going to get worse if we let her, Andy.

Lisa glances out the window again, and we go to--

EXT. BACK FIELD - AFTERNOON

Heidi on the stump, staring into the trees. She closes her eyes, like Joyce taught her..concentrating, listening...

A sound, like the forest itself taking a sinister BREATH. Heidi's scared eyes OPEN WIDE, and the sound abruptly STOPS.

Heidi rises to her feet and takes a step toward the trees. She then slows, as..

...an eerie, repetitive CREAKING noise arises, deep in the trees. Heidi edges closer, listening.

HEIDI

Hello?

Creak....creak....creak....

Heidi moves to the treeline slowly. As she's about to step into the trees...

...an aged HAND slides onto her shoulder. Heidi SPINS, seeing Mr. Gordy staring down at her. Heidi backs away, startled.

From in the woods...

Creak....creak....creak....

HEIDI (CONT'D)
What is that, Mr. Gordy?

Mr. Gordy just stares at her with his dark, cold eyes.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
Tell me what it is!

ANDY (O.S.)
Heidi?

Heidi looks back and sees Andy walking across the field. She quickly looks around...

...but Mr. Gordy is GONE. The creaking has STOPPED.

Andy makes it over to Heidi, frowning.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You know what? I think there *is* an
invisible man around here. It's ME.

He picks up Heidi and kisses her.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You miss your daddy?
(Heidi manages a nod)
Right answer. Here's your prize.

Andy WHISTLES LOUDLY. A moment later, an old MUTT comes running down from the driveway, through the tall grass.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Am I the greatest father in the
world or what? Meet Chief.

Chief licks Heidi enthusiastically.

HEIDI
I love him, daddy.

ANDY
C'mon, I'll teach you to feed him,
cause that's your job from now on.

Heidi turns and takes one last, concerned look back toward the treeline before following her Dad.

EXT. BACK FIELD - AFTERNOON

Heidi, carrying a bowl of dog food, exits the house and steps off the porch followed by Andy.

ANDY
Remember to bring the bowl back
after he's...

Andy trails off. Heidi has stopped abruptly in front of him. Chief's LEASH lies on the grass, one end tied to a stake, the other end chewed through.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Oh, for God's sake...
(calling)
Chief!

Silence. Then the WIND picks up and a soft RUSTLING issues from the trees. Andy frowns.

ANDY (CONT'D)
CHIEF!

A mournful, pained HOWLING echoes from the trees, sending a chill down their spines. Birds are startled from the branches and fly off into the sky.

HEIDI
Was that Chief?

ANDY
Yeah.
(starts walking)
Come on.

HEIDI
I don't...want to go in there.

ANDY
There's nothin' in the woods but
trees, Heidi.

Heidi doesn't move.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You'll be all right, just stay
close to me.

Heidi grips her father's leg, and he smiles down at her.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Not that close, baby. Daddy needs
to walk.

Heidi lets go of his leg, and they disappear into the trees together.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Crickets chirp as Andy moves through the dense foliage, peering ahead.

ANDY

Chief?

Another pained HOWL stops them in their tracks, and now Andy is alarmed. He tries to hone in on the source of the HOWLS.

HEIDI

Chief sounds hurt.

Andy thinks, picks Heidi up and rests her on a tree branch.

ANDY

Sit here a second. Don't move.

Andy pushes through the foliage and out of sight.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Andy moves cautiously through the trees, listening. Hearing a sad WHIMPER, Andy pulls back some loose brush, revealing...

A decrepit, rotted wooden HUTCH with a small opening at one end, like an oversized birdhouse.

ANDY

Chief, are you in there?

SCRATCHING is heard from inside. Andy kneels and peers through the dark opening, but can't see anything inside. He moves around the rear, where he finds a HATCH, sealed with an ANTIQUE, RUSTED PADLOCK.

ANDY (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Andy picks up a ROCK and STRIKES the rotted roof, punching a hole. He then rips away wood and stares down, confused.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ...

Chief is trapped in a small, cramped compartment with the BONES of other animals, dry and brittle with age. Andy lifts Chief out but the dog SPRINTS away into the brush, terrified.

Andy stares at the contraption and the bones, concerned.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Heidi sits in the tree, as Chief RACES up beneath her and stops. He considers her, BARKS, then gallops off again.

HEIDI
 (nervous)
 Chief?
 (calling)
 Daddy?

No answer. A moment later...

The soft, metallic, repetitive CREAKING is heard in the woods behind her.

Heidi immediately hops to the ground, pressing her little body against the tree trunk, terrified.

Creak..... creak..... creak....

Heidi slowly peers around the tree trunk, studying the woods.

Deep in the trees, there seems to be something moving back and forth, barely visible through the leaves.

Heidi cautiously creeps through the brush, careful not to make a sound, until, through the thick foliage she SEES...

... an old wooden SWING on a chain, swaying in and out of view behind the trunk of the tree, with no one on it.

It's the tree Mr. Gordy took her to.

Creak.... Creak... the empty swing moves in and out of view.

Heidi steps forward into the clearing where the tree is, and PALES. The swing is empty when it swings to the left of the trunk, but each time it swings BACK....

...there's a YOUNG MAN (LEVI - 15, black) sitting on it! BLOOD drips from the STUMP where his LEFT ARM used to be.

Whoosh, Levi VANISHES as the swing passes the tree and arcs up again....

..but he REAPPEARS as it swings back past the trunk.

Heidi SCREAMS and spins around, running right into....

...Andy, who scoops her up into his arms.

ANDY

Damn it, I told you to sit tight!

Heidi buries her face in her fathers chest, terrified.

ANDY (CONT'D)

What are you yelling about over here?

Heidi looks back at the tree - the swing is GONE. The old chain is as it was before - embedded in the bark, long abandoned. Andy watches her, concerned.

EXT. BACK FIELD - EVENING

Lisa brings a glass of iced tea across the field to Andy, who drags the old wood hutch out of the woods with a rope.

LISA

You figure out what this thing is?

ANDY

It's a trap.

(points through the rotted roof)

You bait that chamber there.

Animals get in and can't get out again. They starve to death inside.

He kneels by the small hatch at the rear with the rusted padlock.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Then you get them out through here. The back door.

LISA

(disturbed)

There must be better ways to hunt. This is just... cruel.

ANDY

No, it's smart. If you're a taxidermist.

(off Lisa's look)

No bullet holes, no broken bones - animal stays intact and unspoiled.

(nods toward the woods)

I've already found three more of these. I'll bet they made good money for someone, back in...

(thinks, shrugs)

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
...whenever the hell people still
used locks like that.

LISA
Well, smash them all up so Chief
doesn't get stuck again. Or Heidi,
for that matter.

Andy nods, and they begin walking toward the house.

ANDY
How's she doing? She say anything
about what she saw in the woods?

LISA
(shakes her head)
She thinks I'll get mad at her.

ANDY
That's because you will.
(off her look)
Can't have it both ways, Lisa. If
you never listen to her, she ain't
gonna tell you nothing.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

The half moon hangs over tall trees.

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lisa tucks a sleepy Heidi into bed.

LISA
Got your bear?

Heidi hugs her stuffed bear and nods. Lisa kisses Heidi and--

HEIDI
Mom?
(Lisa turns)
Did bad things happen here?

LISA
What makes you think that, sweetie?

HEIDI
Mr. Gordy told me.

Lisa frowns at the mention of his name, but she keeps calm.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
He said people used to hide on this land.

LISA
Well, yes that's true, honey. Until the good man helped them. You remember what Pastor Wells said?

Beat.

HEIDI
Pastor wasn't here back then.

Lisa looks at her daughter, concerned.

LISA
Try and get some sleep.

INT. ANDY AND LISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night. Andy and Lisa lie in bed, fast asleep.

A breeze rattles the open window and sends dry leaves skimming over the floor. Lisa, asleep on her back, is perspiring, disturbed, dreaming...

Lisa's eyes flutter under her eyelids until...

..she GASPS and sits bolt upright!

Lisa calms and looks around, getting her bearings. Andy stirs but doesn't waken.

She digs around in her bedside drawer for her pills. As she turns back around, she FREEZES.

A VULTURE is perched in the open window, motionless, watching her with black eyes. Lisa stares at the vulture - it doesn't seem real. It's too still.

LISA
(whispers, tense)
Andy.... wake up.

Andy groans and rolls over, but remains asleep. Lisa slowly rises and pulls on her frayed robe. She edges toward the vulture carefully.

LISA (CONT'D)
(shooing it)
Get out!

The vulture doesn't move, it remains frozen. Lisa closes her eyes, calming herself. She slowly opens them again...

The vulture is still on the windowsill, staring at her. *It doesn't seem alive.*

Lisa slowly extends her finger out toward the vulture and edges a step closer, frightened.

The vulture BLINKS, and Lisa goes STILL.

She slowly reaches for the window to lower it, her fingers inches from the large vulture's grimy beak. Placing her fingertips on the window... she SLAMS it shut!

...Revealing a REFLECTION of Levi standing in the doorway behind her, his blank eyes fixed on Lisa, blood oozing from his severed arm.

Lisa SCREAMS and spins around, KNOCKING over a lamp, which clatters to the floor. She whips her eyes to the door -

Levi is GONE.

ANDY (O.S.)
What in God's name are you doing?

Lisa looks over, startled, seeing Andy staring groggily at her from the bed. Lisa looks at the empty doorway again, and then back at the windowsill...

The vulture is GONE, but a light scattering of SAWDUST remains where the vulture was perched. The sawdust softly blows away in the breeze.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Do I need to put a bell on you or something?

Lisa quickly shuts the door and leans against it, disturbed.

LISA
That's not funny, Andy.

Lisa climbs back under the covers, facing away from Andy. Andy watches her for a moment, concerned, then lays back down on his pillow and closes his eyes.

Lisa studies the pill in her hand, then stares at the window, disturbed.

EXT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - MORNING

The morning sun hangs over the tall trees. Cicadas chirp as the temperature and humidity slowly rise. Lisa walks along the road to the door of the mobile home.

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Lisa finds Joyce watching TV on the couch.

LISA
I see the job hunt is going well.

JOYCE
Fate, it seems, has provided me a few more days of freedom.

She nods toward a small stack of HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS on the counter. Lisa picks up the stack, confused.

LISA
Joyce, I'm trying very hard *not* to understand how one makes this much money by seven in the morning.

JOYCE
(smiles at her sister's insinuation)
Please, a night with me is worth twice that.
(off Lisa's frown)
Someone came by earlier and bought some old ratty quilt I had hanging out front.

LISA
(counts, surprised)
Who pays eight hundred dollars for an old quilt?

EXT. WOODS - DAY

THWACK! Andy smashes one of the TRAPS with an ax, splintering rotted wood and animal bones in all directions. He wipes his brow and gives Chief a rub on the ears.

ANDY
That should be all of them, Heidi.
We can go home now.

He wrestles with the dog for another moment, before realizing Heidi didn't answer.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Heidi?

Hearing a faint whispering, Andy turns and looks into the trees behind him. Heidi kneels on a moss-covered fallen tree, whispering with someone unseen on the other side.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Who are you talking to now?

Heidi slides herself off the fallen tree and pats the dog.

HEIDI
Mr. Gordy.

ANDY
Is that right? Ask him where
there's more money.

HEIDI
I can't. He's gone.

ANDY
(leans, grabs the ax)
Next time then.

As Andy rises, from Heidi's POV we see Mr. Gordy walking away into the trees behind him.

HEIDI
He said there's people coming.

ANDY
People? Who, your mom? Joyce?

Heidi shakes her head. Andy is about to speak, when...

...a TWIG SNAPS in the trees nearby. Andy looks, sees no one.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(softly)
I swear to god, Heidi, we should
take you and "Mr. Gordy" on the
road.
(calls into the trees)
Who's there?

Silence. Andy grips the ax, concerned, and looks at Heidi.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Stay behind me.

Andy moves slowly through the brush, with Heidi following closely behind.

Andy gets a glimpse of something reddish through the leaves up ahead and moves closer, seeing...

..a low, decayed brick WALL, tangled with dead vines. Andy runs his hand along the brick wall, confused. He moves through thick fern stalks and reaches the corner of the wall, where a freshly-cut RED ROSE lays.

Andy picks up the rose, then glances around, realizing...

..the crumbled wall is part of the remnants of a BRICK HOUSE, covered completely with vines and moss. Dried, brittle bouquets of FLOWERS have been laid around it. On the wall, words scrawled in chalk - **"God Bless the Station Master"**.

ANDY (CONT'D)
What the hell is this?

Heidi takes hold of his hand, scared. Andy carefully steps through what's left of the doorway, into...

I/E. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

..the roof-less interior, filled with vines and saplings. At the far end is a CHIMNEY looming over a fireplace...

..where an ELDERLY WOMAN is crouched, facing away from Andy and Heidi. They both pale.

HEIDI
(whispers)
Do you see her too?

Andy slowly nods. The elderly woman slowly turns - she's black, ancient, with grotesque cataracts in her blind eyes.

The Old Woman's lips slowly spread in a macabre toothless smile, and a disturbed Andy DROPS the ax with a clatter.

A faint voice calling urgently from outside...

PRENTISS (O.S.)
Mama Kay?

Andy turns, hearing running footsteps approaching. He grabs the ax and puts Heidi behind him, as...

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
Mama Kay, are you...?

PRENTISS (30's, black, a bit preppy) pushes his way through the vines into the enclosure and REACTS to seeing Andy gripping the axe, on edge.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa... it's okay.

ANDY
Like hell it is. Who are you people?

PRENTISS
My name's Prentiss, just take it easy. This is my grandmother. Is this your property?

ANDY
--That you're trespassing on, yes.

PRENTISS
We were told we could come back here.

ANDY
Bullshit. By who?

PRENTISS
The woman in the mobile home, said she's your sister. She sold us this.

He unfurls the ratty QUILT which raises a cloud of dust. Andy and Heidi look at the strange design, unnerved.

ANDY
Sister-in-law. What is that?

From behind Andy...

MAMA KAY (O.S.)
The Shoo-fly.

They look back at the old lady, unnerved by her creaking voice.

MAMA KAY (CONT'D)
And it's worth more than what you
paid, Prentiss. Be a good boy and
make it right.

Prentiss reluctantly pulls out a MONEY CLIP and begins
peeling off bills. Hands them to a stunned Andy.

MAMA KAY (CONT'D)
Now take it outside and fold it
proper, Prentiss.

Prentiss gathers the quilt into his arms, stepping outside.
Andy follows.

Heidi can't take her eyes off the old woman's cloudy eyes,
which shift toward her, sending a chill down her spine.

EXT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Outside the structure, Prentiss carefully re-folds the quilt
as Andy counts the money, confused.

ANDY
You gonna tell me why a ratty old
quilt's worth this much?

PRENTISS
A long time ago, whenever this
quilt was hung on a wall, it meant
it was safe to approach.

ANDY
Safe for who?

PRENTISS
(nods toward structure)
Her grandmother for one. Do you
even know where you're living?

ANDY
Oh, right. Our pastor said we might
get visitors. Something about the
Underground Railroad.

PRENTISS
That's right.

Prentiss runs his hand along the brick structure.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

This old pile of bricks was the "station" itself. And it's the one place Mama Kay won't die without seeing, Mr...

ANDY

Andy.

PRENTISS

She was never able to come here when she was younger. The previous owner, Mr. Gordy, was an epic son of a bitch.

(Andy smiles, amused)

Is that funny?

ANDY

We have an interesting relationship with him.

PRENTISS

(confused)

He's been dead twenty years.

ANDY

So I hear.

PRENTISS

It's strange that Gordy acted the way he did. If I was the Station Master's great-grandson, I'd be selling tickets to this place.

Andy looks over at the flowers and the scrawled message - "God Bless the Station Master".

ANDY

That guy saved a lot of lives, I guess.

PRENTISS

He was an extraordinary man.

(solemn)

And he deserved better than what happened to him.

Off Andy's concerned look...

I/E. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Heidi stands before Mama Kay, uncomfortable. She silently waves her little hand in front of the old woman's face.

MAMA KAY

You don't need eyes to see, child.

(beat)

But you already know that.

Heidi looks at her strangely.

HEIDI

What do you mean?

MAMA KAY

You asked your father if he saw me.

I do believe that says something about you.

Heidi shifts, uncomfortable.

HEIDI

I'm not supposed to talk about that.

MAMA KAY

Alright. Just remember one thing...

(leans in)

Stay away from things that feel wrong, child. They feel that way for a reason.

Heidi takes this in.

HEIDI

Something bad happened here, didn't it?

Mama Kay slowly nods.

EXT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Andy stares at Prentiss, stunned.

ANDY

You're telling me this incident occurred on my property?

PRENTISS
Right where you're standing.
(off Andy's look, grim)
Guess your Pastor left that part
out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Andy lumbers through the door and looks at Lisa and Joyce,
sitting on the couch.

ANDY
Family meeting.

He stops Heidi from walking in and turns her around, sending
her back onto the porch.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Not you, kiddo.

He kisses Heidi on the head and shuts the door on her. Lisa
rises, annoyed.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Lisa, sit down. You too, Joyce.

Lisa can tell by his face that something is very wrong.

LISA
What happened?

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - PORCH - AFTERNOON

Heidi sits on the porch, bored. She sees Prentiss helping
Mama Kay into his Mercedes down the road. As he walks around
the driver's side...

..Mama Kay "looks" back at Heidi. They hold eye contact for a
moment, and Mama Kay then seems to look at something else.

Heidi follows her eyes to the top of the nearest hill...

...where Mr. Gordy is standing, staring down at Heidi, cold.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Night has fallen. The woods are dark.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lisa sits by the bathtub, where Heidi soaks in a mountain of bubbles.

HEIDI
(puts bubbles on her face)
Who am I?

LISA
Santa Claus.

Heidi nods. Lisa puts a big pile of bubbles on her own head.

LISA (CONT'D)
Who am I?

HEIDI
That guy who paints on TV.

LISA
(laughs)
No, but I'll give you that one.

Heidi leans back in the water.

HEIDI
That man told Daddy what happened
here, didn't he?
(Lisa is silent)
Why can't I know?

LISA
It's not a story for little girls,
sweetie.

HEIDI
I'm a big girl. You always say
that.

Lisa runs her fingers in the water, conflicted.

LISA
A long time ago, a good man owned
all this land. He was what's called
a taxidermist, which means people
would bring him animals they...
shot, and he'd preserve them.
(beat)
But he did something else with his
time, too.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)
 Something he didn't tell anybody.
 He would help hide people who were
 in trouble.

- FLASH TO -

- *The Station Master drapes the "Shoo-Fly" QUILT over the stone wall, before scanning the dark trees. A moment later, a BLACK FAMILY in ragged clothes emerges cautiously.*

LISA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He was kind and generous. If it was
 safe, he'd find ways to entertain
 the children.

Several kids sit rapt under the moonlight, waiting their turn at the crude swing fashioned from the heavy chain and a leather strap. Among them, if we look closely, is a young couple-- NELL and LEVI. Levi takes his turn, and Nell laughs with delight. In her hand she holds a simple CORN-HUSK DOLL.

LISA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Some other landowners in the area,
 they found out what he was doing.
 And they didn't like it.

- *The Station Master, working on the stuffed vulture, hears the KNOCK on his door.*

LISA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 So they did some very unkind things
 to him.

- *The Station Master, his head covered with the burlap hood, is held down by the masked men, his stomach bleeding from a deep WOUND. THE HOODED LEADER grabs handfuls of SAWDUST and STUFFS it into the wound as the Station Master SCREAMS in agony through the burlap.*

LISA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Things no one deserves.

- *Nighttime - The Station Master lies alone on the ground in the moonlight, left to die slowly. His CRIES echo in the dark trees.*

LISA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 It took several days for his pain
 to end.

- *Afternoon. The Station Master's skin is ravaged with sunburn and insect bites. His faint breaths are heard from beneath the burlap hood... until they finally stop. His hand slides from the sawdust-packed wound to the ground, limp.*

Camera moves along the dusty ground, over the threshold of the workshop and finally stops at the FIREPLACE. The last embers of the fire finally BURN OUT.

AND BACK TO -

Heidi looks up at her mother.

HEIDI

They hurt him just for helping people?

LISA

They didn't quite see it that way, sweetie.

HEIDI

I told you something bad happened here.

LISA

It was a long time ago. All that evil's over and done with.

HEIDI

It's still here, Mama. I can feel it. It's in the woods. It's coming for me. Mr. Gordy says--

LISA

(erupts)

--There is no Mr. Gordy! It's all in your head, don't you understand that? *It's not real.*

(upset)

You have to fight this, Heidi...Put it out of your mind, or...

HEIDI

(cold)

..I'll be like you?

Lisa goes silent, emotional. She pulls a towel from the rack and lays it next to the tub.

LISA

(softly)

Dry off.

She walks toward the door, wiping her eyes.

HEIDI

If you loved me, you'd believe me.

LISA
(turns, heartbroken)
It's because I love you that I
can't, baby.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lisa closes the bathroom door, emotional. Composing herself, she begins folding laundry and placing it into a linen closet.

LISA
I don't hear you getting out.

No answer. Lisa finishes folding a pillowcase and looks at the door.

LISA (CONT'D)
Heidi Wyrick, do not make me come
back in there.

Silence. Lisa frowns and walks back to the door. She opens it, revealing...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

...the old, cast-iron tub filled to the brim with water, but no Heidi.

HEIDI
Heidi?

Lisa glances around the bathroom, but there's no sign of Heidi. Lisa walks slowly toward the tub - the water is motionless. Lisa reaches the edge and looks down...

Heidi lies underwater at the BOTTOM of the tub, her eyes LIFELESS. A single BUBBLE drifts up from her nostril.

LISA
Oh my God, Heidi!

Lisa grabs Heidi and yanks her roughly out of the water.

LISA (CONT'D)
(shaking her)
Baby, can you hear me?

Heidi is limp. Lisa grabs her face and listens for breathing, and hearing none...

LISA (CONT'D)
Oh please, no!

Lisa bends Heidi over her thigh and shoves hard on her back to force the water out of her lungs.

LISA (CONT'D)
Heidi, wake up!

She STRIKES Heidi's back hard with the palm of her hand. Heidi suddenly CONVULSES, retching. Lisa's eyes go wide.

LISA (CONT'D)
That's it, baby, get it all out...

Heidi's body is RACKED with violent spasms, and she begins to VOMIT, but what comes out isn't water...

...it's rotted SAWDUST, infested with MAGGOTS that squirm in the wet pile on the floor.

Lisa SCREAMS in horror...

INT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andy runs down a hospital hallway, studying the room numbers. He pushes through a door, finding...

INT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

..Lisa comforting Heidi in a hospital bed. Joyce sits near.

ANDY
What happened?

Lisa holds out her hand, and Andy kneels by the bed.

ANDY (CONT'D)
What's wrong with her?

DR. SEGAR (O.S.)
There's nothing wrong with her.

Andy sees DR. SEGAR (40's) enter the room.

LISA
How is that possible?
(looks at..)
Andy, she was unconscious,
convulsing, and...

DR. SEGAR
(checks the chart)
..vomiting sawdust and insects?

ANDY
What?

DR. SEGAR
Are you on any medication, Mrs.
Wyrick?

Lisa puts her hands to her face, nearing her breaking point.
Dr. Segar looks to Andy, who reluctantly nods.

LISA
You weren't there. You didn't see
what I saw. I saw her...

DR. SEGAR
Heidi, do you remember any of this?
(Heidi remains silent)
It's all right. Tell me what you
remember.

Heidi looks at Lisa, who meets her eyes, emotional. Until...

HEIDI
I didn't dry off like I was
supposed to. So mommy pulled me out
of the tub real hard...

LISA
That's *not* what happened...

ANDY
(to Dr. Segar)
I think they've been through enough
tonight. Just tell me exactly what
we do here.

DR. SEGAR
I don't know the answer, Mr.
Wyrick. This is a case for a
psychiatrist or an exorcist. I
strongly recommend the *former*.

Dr. Segar leaves the room. Andy touches Lisa's shoulder.

ANDY
Let's let Heidi rest up a sec.

Lisa reluctantly follows him to the door. As they leave,
Heidi looks over at her mother.

HEIDI
It's hard when people don't believe
you...
(Lisa looks back at her)
..isn't it?

Lisa stares at her. Andy leads her out of the room.

INT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Andy closes the door and folds Lisa into an embrace.

ANDY
It's gonna be all right.

LISA
Heidi shouldn't be in that house
anymore.

ANDY
She or you?
(Lisa looks down, ashamed)
We've moved three times, Lisa. This
isn't about where we live, it's
about you.

LISA
This didn't happen to me, Andy, it
happened to our daughter.

ANDY
Then we do what the doc said. We
talk to a psychiatrist.

Lisa slowly looks at him.

LISA
That's not all he said.

Andy frowns, realizing where she's going with this.

ANDY
You can't be serious.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Sun shines over the Wyrick's lush property, reflecting
brilliantly off of the rippling water of the creek.

Pastor Wells stands waist deep in the water, holding Heidi in his arms. Standing near them are Lisa, Andy and Joyce.

PASTOR WELLS
Heidi, I want you to pray with me.
Can you do that?

Heidi nods. Andy and Lisa bow their heads as well. Joyce looks away, annoyed. She clearly doesn't support this idea.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
I speak to the demon inside this
innocent child...

Pan down the solemn faces of Lisa and Andy....until we reach Joyce, who looks troubled.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
...in the name of our Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ...

The Wyricks lift their hands from the water and gesture their palms upward, as if in church. Lisa sees Joyce not participating and gives her a look. Joyce reluctantly lifts her hands as well.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
...who gave His life for the
forgiveness of our sins. I cast you
out.

Close on Joyce's face, as she hears the sounds of WHISPERING CHILDREN in her ear. She looks around, a bit unnerved.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
In the name of the Father, I cast
you out.

Lisa, Andy and Heidi lift their hands upward.

Joyce lifts her hands from the water and gestures her palms upward... but this time the water dripping from her hands is RED WITH BLOOD. With her eyes still closed, Joyce touches her troubled face. Putrid red water drips down her cheeks.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
In the name of the Son..

Heidi and the others lower their hands into the water. As Joyce does the same...a SEVERED ARM drifts past her waist, brushing against her fingers.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
 ..I cast you out.

Joyce slowly opens her eyes - *The creek is red with blood. Severed, bleeding LIMBS float past on the surface.*

Joyce looses a choking cry of terror, but Lisa grabs her sister, gripping her tight.

LISA
 (a harsh whisper)
 Stop it... you will not ruin this.

Joyce stares in horror at the body parts drifting around them - why the fuck isn't Lisa seeing this? Joyce squeezes her eyes shut, shaking with fear, as...

PASTOR WELLS
 In the name of the Holy Ghost, I
 cast you out!

Lisa edges Joyce to the creek bank and holds her down in the shallows. Joyce splashes and kicks in terror at the bloody clumps of hair and bone drifting around her....

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
 (gripping Heidi)
 I cast you out!

Joyce SCREAMS, the horror finally erupting out of her. Lisa holds her, as Andy hurries over to help.

But Joyce then looks at her hands....which are glistening with pure, clean water in the midday sun. She looks at the Pastor, who calmly meets her gaze. Joyce looks around her - the water is unbelievably beautiful. The WHISPERING has been replaced with the cleansing natural sound of the RIVER.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
 Blessed are these waters now,
 child. Holy as the River Jordan
 itself.

He dips his finger in the water and makes the sign of the cross on Heidi's forehead, smiling kindly at her.

Joyce slumps back against the grass, traumatized but relieved, and slowly allows herself to breathe again.

INT. ANDY AND LISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lisa lies in bed, looking out the window. Her PILL lies on the bedside table, next to a glass of water. Andy enters with a beer, pulling off his shirt, tired but playful.

ANDY
(re: the pill)
We should be crushing those pills
up in your sister's corn flakes.

He falls across the bed, still wearing his dirty ball cap.

LISA
You were right. It wouldn't matter
if we moved, would it?
(touches her head)
The problem's in here. For Joyce,
for Heidi... for me.

Andy looks at her, sympathetic.

ANDY
If it makes you feel any better...
(strokes her bare leg)
..the rest of you is tip-top.

Lisa smiles, appreciative of Andy's unconditional love.

LISA
You married into a family of
crazies.

ANDY
You married into a family of
drunks.
(pulls on his beer)
Or maybe I'm crazy. Let's make
another one.

Lisa smiles and kisses Andy tenderly.

LISA
Are you going to take off your hat?

ANDY
I'm better with it on.

And they start to make love.

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Heidi, in bed, holds her little fawn figurine up to her slowly-revolving night light.

Outside, Chief BARKS a few times, then silence. Heidi shifts onto her side and closes her eyes.

A ROLLING NOISE is heard on the floor... and then it stops.

Heidi's eyes open. She glances over the side of the bed and sees...

...a glass MARBLE lying on the wood floor. She stares at it strangely.

Another marble then rolls across the floor toward her, and Heidi watches it, frightened. She glances where it came from and sees a small HOLE in the plaster under the window...

..where an EYE is peering at her from outside. Heidi buries herself in her covers, terrified. After a moment, she peeks out. The eye is still there.

HEIDI
(whispers, frightened)
Pastor sent you away.

The eye blinks, then moves away from the hole.

Heidi carefully gets out of bed and moves to the window. Steeling herself, she looks out at...

...the back field, bathed in pale moonlight.

Nell is standing in the field, looking directly at Heidi. The stump where her right arm used to be still bleeds. Nell gestures with her other hand for Heidi to come out. Heidi shakes her head.

Nell holds up a small object, and Heidi tries to make out what it is. Nell places the object on the ground, then backs away, disappearing into the trees.

Heidi starts to return to bed, but curiosity gets the better of her.

She looks out at the object lying in the grass. What is it?

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Heidi quietly climbs out of the window in her nightgown. Looking around carefully, she runs through the moonlit field until she reaches the object.

It's a CORN-HUSK DOLL, a children's toy. Heidi picks it up and studies it, fascinated. She strokes the silky hair.

She looks into the trees and sees Nell hiding, staring back at her. Heidi holds out the doll - offering it back.

Nell gestures to her. *Follow me....*

Nell begins walking into the trees. A moment later, Heidi slowly follows, vanishing into the dark woods. Wind blows through the leaves - the night is dark and moonless.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andy quietly closes his bedroom door, yawns as he pulls on his work shirt and walks down the hall.

He gently eases Heidi's door open to look in at her...

..but her bed is EMPTY. The fawn lies on her pillow. And the window is OPEN.

ANDY
Jesus Christ.

Andy races to the window and looks out at the vast, empty field.

ANDY (CONT'D)
HEIDI!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ANDY AND LISA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lisa JERKS awake at the sound of Andy yelling. A second later, Andy bursts into the room, yanks open a drawer and pulls out a HANDGUN.

LISA
What--? Where's Heidi?

ANDY
Gone out the window. Call the cops.

He runs out of the room, as Lisa grabs the phone, dials **911**.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Andy sprints out of the front door and grabs a FLASHLIGHT from the porch railing. He shines it into the trees.

ANDY

Heidi!

No sound but the WIND in the leaves. Andy runs to the edge of the woods, shining the light around.

Something then catches his eye, lying in the grass.

It's a ribbon from Heidi's hair. Andy looks around, then...

ANDY (CONT'D)

(whistles loudly)

Chief!

A moment later, Chief pads down from the porch and Andy grabs him by the collar. He rubs the ribbon in Chief's nose, then smacks the dog on the rump.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Go on! Go!

The dog begins running across the field. Andy runs to keep up, the beam of the flashlight dancing across the grass.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Andy shoves his way through shrubs and trees, following Chief. But then...

...Chief STOPS COLD, facing a patch of brush. Andy looks around.

ANDY

Heidi!

No answer. Andy rubs the ribbon in Chief's nose again, frustrated.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Chief, come on!

Chief lets out a scared WHIMPER and lowers to his haunches.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(grabs Chief's collar)
Goddamnit, move!

Chief GROWLS angrily, baring his teeth. Andy looks at the dog, surprised. Chief's eyes remain locked on the patch of brush ahead.

Andy slowly moves through the brush, pushing aside branches until he finds himself standing once more in front of...

...the crumbling, decrepit brick workshop, tangled in vines.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Lisa waits at the end of the driveway, as Joyce comes out in her bathrobe, sleepy and confused.

JOYCE
What are you doing out here?

Police lights crest the nearest hill, headed their way. Lisa waves her arms to them.

EXT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Andy slowly moves through the crumbled doorway, apprehensive. He looks around the interior, trying to see into the shadows of the thick tree roots and shrubs.

ANDY
Heidi?

HEIDI (O.S.)
(faint, calling)
Daddy?

Andy FREEZES, looking around.

ANDY
Where are you, baby?

HEIDI (O.S.)
Down in the hole.

Andy gets chills - he follows her voice, moving to the old FIREPLACE. Andy sees a WISP of ash blow out from beneath the andirons, as if a small breeze was coming from underneath.

An old, stone SLAB lies askew beneath the andirons, and Andy shines his flashlight at it. There's an CARVING on it - a symbol, the same design from the QUILT.

ANDY
(whispers to himself)
The "Shoo-fly"...

Andy reaches behind the slab, feeling SPACE below. He grabs the slab and strains to pull it toward him, revealing...

ANDY (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ...

..a dark HOLE underneath. Andy shines the light down into the deep, dark musty blackness, as centipedes and earwigs scurry out of the hole.

HEIDI (O.S.)
(from below)
I can't reach the rope, daddy.

Andy shines the light around the dank walls of the hole, confused.

ANDY
There's no rope, Heidi. What the hell are you talking about?
(struggles to think, then)
Sit tight. I'll be back in a second.

He scrambles toward the door of the workshop, but...

HEIDI
Don't leave me down here with them, daddy!

Andy stops cold.

ANDY
With who?
(silence)
Heidi, with *who*?

No answer. Desperate, Andy races out the door...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Andy runs to the tree where the SWING used to be, and he climbs up, reaching the bough where the old CHAIN is wrapped. Using all of his strength, he begins UNWRAPPING the chain...

I/E. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Andy fastens one end of the twenty-foot chain to a thick root and lowers the rest down the hole.

ANDY

Hold tight, baby. I'm coming down.

Holding the flashlight in his teeth, Andy steels himself and crawls into the fireplace, wedging himself into....

INT. HOLE - NIGHT

..the dark, musty, narrow HOLE. Andy's feet scramble for purchase on the slick walls as he lowers himself awkwardly down the chain.

His hands SLIP, and he begins to FALL, but he grabs on again and slows his descent, dropping the light from his teeth in the process. It falls down the hole and disappears below, landing with a clatter and TURNING OFF. Now in utter darkness, Andy carefully lowers himself, until he reaches...

..the END of the chain, dangling in the dark. Andy looks down, concerned. How much further is it?

ANDY

Listen to me, Heidi. Find the flashlight. Aim it up here. Can you do that?

HEIDI (O.S.)

It's too dark.

Andy looks up, conflicted.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

Daddy, don't leave me alone.

Andy knows what he has to do. Takes a deep breath, LETS GO..

..And FALLS, bouncing off the walls of the hole, until...

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

...He lands HARD on a stone floor. Andy groans and rolls over, feeling around on the floor for the flashlight.

He finds it and bangs it on his hand until it turns ON, just as....Heidi LEAPS onto to him, throwing her arms around his neck. She still holds the corn husk doll...

ANDY
Heidi, Jesus!
(hugs her back)
How the hell did you get down here?

Heidi sobs into his shoulder. Andy aims the light around, seeing...

..a cramped CAVERN, dug right into the bedrock. Andy moves the light around, seeing...

ANDY (CONT'D)
My God...

..WRITING on the wall, written in chalk. "Isaiah - June, 1849".... "Clara - October, 1843". Hundreds of other names are etched upon the wall.

A rudimentary MAP, faded with age, has been painted on the wall, showing the entire AREA for miles and miles - the woods, the creek, all of it. A PATH has been drawn in, guiding the way to the next "station", further upstate.

ANDY (CONT'D)
This is where he hid them...
(stunned)
How did you find this place, Heidi?

HEIDI
The little girl showed me.

Andy studies her.

ANDY
Is she the one you said was down here with you?

HEIDI
No.

She slowly points to the rear of the cavern. Andy shines the light, revealing...

...a FAMILY of DUSTY SKELETONS, huddled together in the corner, covered with cobwebs. Andy's eyes go WIDE, and he slowly rises, staring in horror at the skeletons.

ANDY
Oh God...

HEIDI

I don't want to be here anymore,
daddy.

ANDY

That makes two of us, baby.

Andy points the flashlight up the hole, draws his handgun
from his belt.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Cover your ears.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Chief remains crouched beyond the threshold outside the
workshop. FOOTSTEPS approach, moving swiftly toward us, but
the dog remains focused on the workshop. A moment later..

Two local COPS push through the brush, stop when their
flashlights show Chief holding vigil before the crumbling
brick WORKSHOP. Suddenly...

A muffled GUNSHOT. The cops quickly draw their guns, move
cautiously toward the ominous workshop.

Another BLAST from inside blows brick chips out of the
chimney. The cops raise their guns, aiming at the workshop.

COP 1

(shouts)

Pine Mountain PD! Drop the gun and
step outside now!

A moment later, a faint voice from inside...

ANDY (O.S.)

(muffled, calling)

Gun's down.

(beat)

Part two's a problem.

The cops look at each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL - DAY

News vans are parked outside the hospital.

INT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Joyce pushes through a crowded waiting room.

JOYCE
(to the desk nurse)
Joyce Cathey. I'm family.

The nurse lets her through. Among the onlookers is Pastor Wells, who watches Joyce disappear down the hall.

INT. WARM SPRINGS HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lisa and Andy sit by Heidi's bedside. Joyce enters, smiling to see Heidi unharmed.

JOYCE
How's our little spelunker doing?

ANDY
If you're talking about me, I'm
scarred for life.

Joyce gestures toward a police officer waiting outside.

JOYCE
(quietly, to Lisa)
They need one of us there when they
bring up the... you know. Don't
worry, I'll handle it. You guys
stay here with Heidi.

Lisa nods, grateful. Joyce gives Heidi a kiss on the forehead and *whispers something to her* before walking out of the room. When she's gone...

LISA
What did she say to you, baby?

HEIDI
She said I did a really good thing.
(beat)
She said I freed them.

Lisa and Andy glance at each other.

LISA
Freed who?

INT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Using a ROPE LADDER, policemen carefully extract the skeletons from the hole and carry them on stretchers out of the structure, as Joyce and Pastor Wells watch solemnly.

PASTOR WELLS
(disturbed)
The poor souls starved to death
down there.

Off Joyce's look, Pastor Wells points to the slab of stone with the "shoo-fly" symbol on it.

PASTOR WELLS (CONT'D)
This must be where the Station
Master hid the slaves he helped,
and when he was murdered--
(grim, re: the skeletons)
--there was no one to let them out.

Joyce nods slowly, digesting this.

INT. WYRICK LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE TV - A REPORTER stands outside the hospital.

REPORTER
..Most Pine Mountain residents know
the story of the Station Master,
who helped slaves escape to freedom
as part of the Underground
Railroad. But today, a six year-old
girl uncovered a sad, unknown
chapter in the saga right in her
own back yard...

CLICK. Andy turns the TV off. Pan to reveal Lisa and Joyce sitting alongside him in the living room. Andy notices Heidi watching them from the hallway.

ANDY
What are you doing up?

Heidi nestles onto the couch next to her mother.

HEIDI
I don't want to live here anymore.

As Lisa comforts her daughter, Joyce steps up to her.

JOYCE

It's all right now, Heidi. The things you...

(corrects herself)

...we saw - they've moved on. Their spirits aren't trapped anymore. Because of you.

LISA

Joyce, please. Spirits...?

JOYCE

Don't you understand what's happened here, Lisa?

(beat)

Those people in the chamber wanted to be *found*. That's what all of this has been about. Don't you see? They're free. There's nothing to be afraid of anymore.

HEIDI

Mr. Gordy says it's not safe to be here.

They look at her, surprised.

JOYCE

You've seen Mr. Gordy? Tonight?

HEIDI

(nods)

He said I shouldn't have gone down in that hole.

JOYCE

Why?

HEIDI

Because there's something bad down there. And I let it go.

LISA

(rising)

That's enough. Heidi. Let's get you back to bed.

Lisa tries to usher Heidi away, but Heidi won't move.

LISA (CONT'D)

Heidi Wyrick, follow me, right now.

Heidi shakes her head, defiant.

HEIDI

You told me the longer a secret
stays that way, the worse it is
when it comes out. You *said* that.

LISA

I wasn't talking about this.

Heidi looks up into her mother's eyes, pleading.

HEIDI

We can't be here, Mama.
(softly)
I went in the hole and he saw me.

JOYCE

Who saw you?

Beat.

HEIDI

The bad man.

This sends chills down their spines.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

He saw me, and now he wants me. Mr.
Gordy said..

LISA

Stop this, right now!
(looks over at...)
Andy, would you please tell your
daughter that there's nothing to be
afraid of?

Andy remains silent a moment too long. Finally...

ANDY

"Mr. Gordy" said there was money in
the garden, Lisa. And there was.
He said something terrible happened
here. It did.

(beat)

For something in Heidi's mind, Mr.
Gordy is sure as hell *right* a lot.

Lisa stares at him, stunned.

LISA

You don't actually believe this, do
you?

ANDY

I believe that there was a cave
filled with skeletons on our land.
We should fucking move if for no
other reason than *that*.

(beat)

Excuse my French.

They're all silent.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lisa microwaves a mug of MILK, warming it. When it's done,
she takes out one of her PILLS and carefully breaks it open
with her fingernail. Hands shaking, she pours the blue powder
into the milk and stirs it around.

INT. HEIDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Heidi sips the warm milk in her bed, as Lisa strokes her
hair.

HEIDI

What if the bad man comes for me?

LISA

No one's coming for you,
sweetheart. Not tonight.

HEIDI

How do you know?

Lisa looks at the mug of warm milk, feeling guilty.

LISA

Mothers just know.

(beat)

You're not going to see anything
unpleasant anymore, Heidi. I
promise.

HEIDI

Are we really moving?

LISA

Well... I have to talk to your
daddy about that.

(kisses her)

Goodnight, sweetie. I love you.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lisa walks down the hall, tired. She enters her bedroom and sees Andy packing multiple SUITCASES full of clothes. She stands in shock.

ANDY

--What?

LISA

You can't be serious. We don't have anywhere to go, Andy.

ANDY

They probably haven't rented our old apartment yet.

LISA

There's no running away from this. It's a deficiency that Heidi got from me, that's all. She just needs medication...

ANDY

We can barely afford yours, Lisa. Did it ever occur to you that there IS something here? That the things she saw might NOT be in her head? Or yours?

LISA

No, it didn't. And you're sounding like Joyce.

ANDY

How the hell did Heidi get down in that pit, Lisa?

(beat)

Even if she *could* move that granite slab, which she *can't*, it's a twenty-five foot drop after that, and there wasn't a scratch on her.

Lisa is silent.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I'll show you where it is in the woods. You can see for yourself.

LISA

I don't want to see that place.

ANDY

Good. 'Cause I don't feel like
going back there.

(beat)

I don't see the things Heidi sees,
Lisa. But if there is something
evil on this property, it's coming
right out of that goddamn hole.

Lisa stares at him.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Clouds scud through the night sky, obscuring the moon.

A figure steps into frame and we follow him as he moves to
peer inside--

HEIDI'S CLOSED WINDOW

For the first time, Heidi sleeps soundly, lit by the soft
nightlight. We now see that the figure watching her is--

MR. GORDY

He touches his fingers to the window, but Heidi never stirs.

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - THE NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

Heidi sits on a stump, holding a full GLASS OF MILK and
watching Lisa and Andy load up the truck. Joyce walks up to
her.

JOYCE

It's going to be lonely here
without you guys.

HEIDI

You should leave too. This is a bad
place.

JOYCE

No, sweetie, it was a bad place.
Now it's not. Because of you.

HEIDI

How can you be sure?

JOYCE

Have you seen anything scary since
the other night?

(MORE)

JOYCE (CONT'D)
(Heidi shakes her head)
Well there you go.

Heidi smiles, slightly reassured. Joyce kneels by her.

HEIDI
You're really not scared anymore?

JOYCE
Heidi, the fact that someone as
special as you isn't seeing the bad
things anymore? Well, that tells me
that the bad things are gone.
(beat)
And that means there's nothing to
be scared of.

Heidi sets down her milk, and gives Joyce a warm hug.

CLOSE on the milk, which has fallen over and drains in the
grass.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

A harvest moon hangs low, casting the trees in a pale glow.

Andy hauls the last of the boxes out of the house and loads
them in the back of the truck, exhausted. He pops a beer and
glances in the passenger window, where Heidi watches him.

ANDY
(re: the beer)
I'm allowed. I'm making your mother
drive.

He WHISTLES. Chief comes running and hops in the back.

INT. ANDY AND LISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lisa stands looking at the empty kitchen, sadly, and opens
the pantry door. A naked bulb illuminates the bare shelves
and the spot on the far wall where Andy has blocked the hole
with an improvised piece of cardboard.

Lisa smiles at the memory of Andy reacting to the scary
raccoon, then turns off the light and closes the door behind
her.

EXT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Joyce takes her laundry down from the clothesline, a toothbrush sticking out of her mouth.

A whispering from the trees.

Joyce slowly turns... but sees nothing there. Unnerved, Joyce picks up the laundry basket and makes her way back to the door, pausing to pick up Heidi's MILK GLASS next to the stump where she was sitting earlier.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Andy sits in the truck with Heidi, looking at the front door.

ANDY

I've come up with a game, Heidi.
Try to think of animals who move
faster than your mom.

HEIDI

(grins)
Snails?

ANDY

Shoot, I was gonna say that.

Heidi leans against the window, looking out. After a moment, she straightens up.

At the crest of the hill, bathed in moonlight, is Mr. Gordy. He looks at Heidi, and slowly gestures - come. Now.

Mr. Gordy looks toward the treeline. Heidi follows his gaze, but doesn't see anything.

In the back of the pickup, though--

CHIEF

suddenly starts BARKING. The dog's eyes are FIXED on the woods near Joyce's house. Just as suddenly, his barking STOPS. The dog WHIMPERS with fear and jumps out of the pickup, disappearing around the house.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Where the hell is that dog going?
(yells)
Chief! Damn dog.

Andy frowns and starts after Chief. Heidi GRABS his arm, her face ashen.

HEIDI

Daddy...

(he looks at her)

We need to leave right now.

ANDY

Without your mother? I'm not sure
how she'd take that.

He takes Heidi's hand off his arm, kisses it, then walks away. Heidi scans the dark trees, but sees nothing. She turns on the RADIO to ease her fears.

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joyce keeps brushing her teeth as she places Heidi's milk glass on the counter by the kitchen sink.

She spits into the sink, but then goes STILL, noticing something. She picks up the MILK GLASS and looks at it strangely.

There's a blue powder residue at the bottom.

JOYCE

(realizing)

Oh my god...Lisa, what did you do?

A CREAKING noise from behind her. Joyce slowly looks and sees the SCREEN door slowly swaying in the breeze. It takes her a moment to realize...

...there's someone standing outside on the grass.

Joyce can't make out who it is, through the dirty screen.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Lisa?

The figure doesn't move or respond. Joyce moves slowly toward the door.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Hello?

The figure remains still. Joyce slowly opens the door, and the breath catches in her throat.

Nell stands in the shadows, the stump of her right arm bleeding down her thin cotton dress. Nell lifts a finger to her lips.

NELL

Shhh...

Nell's eyes flick to the side, and Joyce sees...

..Levi, standing right by her, the stump of his left arm bleeding! He lifts a finger to his lips...

LEVI

Shhh...

Joyce stands frozen in place, trying to control her fear.

JOYCE

Why are you here?

Nell gestures to Joyce. *Come with us.*

Joyce looks at her, conflicted, but doesn't move.

Levi and Nell suddenly go STILL, hearing something. They move quickly to the brush, crouching down in the shadows. Levi looks back at Joyce and gestures again. *Come... now.*

Joyce takes a reluctant step forward, but...

In the trees... the LANTERN flickers to life, the small flame casting an orange glow on the trees.

Nell and Levi's EYES GO WIDE. With a remorseful look back at Joyce... they RUN into the woods, terrified. Joyce looks over at the lantern deep in the trees...

..and her blood goes cold as the whole woods seems to TAKE A BREATH.

Joyce takes an unconscious step back. *She scans the trees, seeing nothing, but as she turns away...*

..SEES a DARK SHAPE deep in the trees. It looks like a TALL MAN in a LONG COAT, but nondescript, as if clad in shadow. The figure moves slowly across the field toward the Wyrick house...

...Where Joyce sees Heidi sitting alone in the pickup, truck.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

(calling out, frantic)

Heidi! Heidi, get away from there!

Heidi can't hear Joyce over the sound of the RADIO. The figure, though, STOPS and turns now towards Joyce, his long coat trailing across the grass.

Terrified, Joyce spins and RUNS to the door of her mobile home, ripping it open...

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

..and slamming it shut behind her. Joyce twists the deadbolt and runs to the PHONE. Frantic, she dials and presses the phone to her ear...

JOYCE
Lisa, please pick up....

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lisa UNPLUGS the phone, just as the very first SPLIT-SECOND of a ring is heard. Lisa looks at the phone, confused, then plugs it back in.

LISA
Hello?

Dial tone. Lisa unplugs the phone and puts it in a box.

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Joyce lowers the phone, terrified and alone. Behind her, a DARK SHADOW moves past the moonlit window. Joyce *senses something*, still holding the phone, and turns around...

Nothing. She slowly places the phone back in the cradle, when...

...A droplet of BLOOD falls onto her hand. Joyce touches her face and nose to see if she's bleeding - she's not - touches the nape of her neck and jerks her fingers back in PAIN.

Joyce looks in a mirror and sees.. a THIN METAL NEEDLE protruding from her collarbone. She stares at it in stunned disbelief. She takes the needle between her fingers and gently pulls it out, revealing it's...

..a SEWING NEEDLE, attached to a COARSE BLACK THREAD stretching INTO her skin, taut.

JOYCE
(horrified)
Oh my god...

Joyce tugs gently on the thread, and she sees it STRETCH UNDER HER SKIN, leading all the way down beneath her SHOULDER.

Joyce slides her hand down her side, feeling along the tiny thread stretching under her skin. In utter terror, she looks at the mirror and slowly lifts her shirt, revealing...

...a dead, leathery human FACE, SEWN right onto her back.

Joyce SCREAMS in horror.

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Andy, searching through the tall grass after Chief, stops, hearing the faint scream echoing in the trees.

Concerned, he peers back around the corner and sees Heidi sitting in the truck where he left her. He glances at a window, seeing Lisa packing final items into a box.

Andy continues his search through the grass...

ANDY
(whistles)
Come on back, Chief!

He claps his hands, looks around. There's no sign of the dog.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

The country song on the radio seems to *slow* eerily, then fades into STATIC. Heidi shifts nervously in the passenger's seat, studying the woods near Joyce's house.

Looking for the headlights, she begins fiddling with the controls. The windshield wipers turn on, and she turns them off, frowning. Heidi then presses the HAZARD LIGHTS button.

BLINK.... BLINK.... BLINK. Orange light flashes intermittently, illuminating the surrounding trees.

Heidi leans her elbows on the dashboard, studying the field each time the light flashes.

BLINK - To her right, we see the DARK FIGURE in a long, black coat, standing in the trees near Joyce's house. Heidi, though, is looking straight ahead.

The light blinks off, casting the area into darkness.

The light blinks ON, revealing that the figure is now CLOSER, only halfway across the field. Heidi looks the wrong way.

The light blinks OFF - all is dark.

The light blinks ON. The figure is ten feet away!

The light blinks OFF.

The light blinks ON - The figure is now NEXT TO THE WINDOW, and for the first time, we get a look at....

The STATION MASTER, wearing the filthy burlap HOOD and coat he was murdered in.

Heidi's eyes whip over, and the color drains from her face as she presses her little hand against the glass, terrified...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLICK - Lisa turns OFF the last lamp in the house and puts it in a box. All is dark as she walks across the living room, carrying the box.

Lisa hears a fluttering of wings nearby, and she slowly turns, frightened.

The VULTURE stands in the moonlit doorway, sawdust leaking from under its rotted feathers.

Terrified, Lisa goes still. Suddenly--

The sound of GLASS BREAKING outside.

The vulture, previously still as if stuffed, now FLAPS its wings, and flies away into the night.

LISA
(frightened)
Andy?!

No answer. Lisa runs toward the doorway and walks out onto...

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - NIGHT

...the driveway, where the truck's hazard lights are still FLASHING in the mist.

Lisa sees glass on the ground near the passenger side window and moves closer to look inside. The slow, warped sound of the country song still bleeds from the radio. The window is SHATTERED, the truck seat is littered with glass and--

--SAWDUST, CRAWLING WITH MAGGOTS.

Lisa steps back, repulsed.

LISA
(looks around, calls)
Heidi?

No answer. Lisa sprints around the side of the house and sees Andy walking toward her.

LISA (CONT'D)
Where's Heidi? *Where is she!?*

ANDY
She's not in the truck?

Lisa puts her hands to her face, paling. Alarmed, Andy looks around the corner and sees the truck's broken window.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Check Joyce's.

Lisa takes off running. Andy runs to the truck and reaches inside, turning on the headlights. Pale light pierces through the mist, and Andy scans the field. No Heidi. Andy then looks at the ground in front of him.

There are gouges in the dirt, leading away from the truck. Shoes. Heidi's been DRAGGED AWAY.

Andy jumps into the truck and GUNS the engine. The truck ROARS forward, bouncing over the rough terrain.

INT/EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Andy grips the wheel as he's jostled in his seat, peering ahead through the mist.

The truck JERKS as he runs over a stump, and Andy struggles to maintain control. He floors it, roaring across the field. Andy squints to see through the thick mist.

A shape looms ahead, and as the mist parts, Andy sees...

A brief glimpse of a MAN, with the head of a DEER.

Andy goes WHITE and jerks the wheel at the last second.

The truck swerves sharply to the side, kicking up dirt. Out of control, the truck plunges down into a ditch, and CRASHES violently to a stop at the bottom.

Silence, as the engine steams inside the crumpled hood. The door slowly creaks open, and Andy slumps out, falling limply to the grass.

Andy touches his bleeding head and tries to raise himself to his knees...but then collapses to the ground, unconscious.

EXT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

KNOCK-KNOCK. Lisa's knuckles rap on the door to Joyce's mobile home.

LISA

Joyce, open the door!

No answer. After a moment's hesitation, Lisa throws her shoulder hard into the door, and the lock BREAKS OFF. The door swings open. Lisa steps inside, into...

INT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

..Joyce's living room. Lisa looks around.

LISA

Joyce?

Lisa moves further into the living room and as she passes the sofa, she STOPS SHORT.

Joyce is lying on the floor, frozen in a hideously contorted position, her eyes cloudy and grey.

LISA (CONT'D)

(horrified)

Oh my god...

(kneels by her)

Joyce, can you hear me?

No response. Lisa tries to lift Joyce from the floor, but Joyce's limbs are rigid, unmovable.

LISA (CONT'D)
Listen to me.
(looks in her eyes)
Heidi's been taken.

Joyce's grey, cloudy eyes flicker, but she says nothing.

LISA (CONT'D)
Where is the cavern? You've been
there. Tell me where it is.

Lisa holds Joyce's face in her hands, desperate to wake her from her catatonic state.

LISA (CONT'D)
Joyce, please!

Lisa then notices the hideous black SUTURES in the skin behind Joyce's ears. She goes still, horrified, then squeezes her eyes shut, trying to calm herself.

LISA (CONT'D)
Oh God, please... not now.

Lisa opens her eyes again, but she still sees the sutures moving grotesquely through Joyce's skin. Lisa, nauseous, digs in her pocket and pulls out her vial of PILLS. Joyce looks up at her with TEARS flowing from her vacant, grey eyes.

LISA (CONT'D)
(sees Joyce looking at
her)
Joyce, please... where is Heidi?

JOYCE
(barely audible whisper)
With *him*.

LISA
Who?
(Joyce is unresponsive)
Joyce, *who*?!

The sutures begin moving through Joyce's skin like snakes, the hideous pattern shifting, lengthening - as if sewing ITSELF. Lisa fights off her horror and nausea.

Lisa looks at the vial of pills, conflicted, never having wanted one more in her life. She moves to open it, but Joyce's hand touches hers. She meets Joyce's eyes again.

LISA (CONT'D)
Please.... I can't.

Tears flow from Joyce's eyes. Lisa presses her hands to her face and lets the vial fall to the floor. She looks into Joyce's eyes, desperate.

LISA (CONT'D)
Where's my little girl...?

JOYCE
(barely audible)
They know.

Lisa breathes deeply, facing her fear, centering herself. She slowly turns and sees--

LEVI standing in the corner of the room, blood pouring from the stump of his missing arm.

Lisa REELS back, hitting the wall hard. *Levi slowly points toward the front door.*

Controlling her fear, Lisa slowly rises and moves cautiously past Levi and toward the door.

She reaches for the handle, slowly pulls it open, and...

EXT. JOYCE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

..steps out of the house. She goes PALE, seeing...

..FACES in the trees, watching her. Lisa swallows her terror and stands her ground.

Nell steps forward out of the shadows, the stump of her missing right arm bleeding profusely. Her eyes meet Lisa's.

Nell then turns and walks into the woods. Lisa carefully follows. The figures of other emaciated people, once-slaves but now free, young and old, step aside to allow them to pass, staring in gaunt, hollow-eyed curiosity at Lisa. They have an awesome dignity even now.

Lisa sees the old LANTERN hanging in the tree, the flame dancing in its glass housing. Lisa lifts the lantern off its hook, then follows Nell and Levi into the woods. The lantern casts a flickering light in the deep darkness of the trees.

TIME CUT

Lisa moves through the dark trees and brush, keeping an eye on Nell and Levi walking ahead of her.

Lisa hears a METALLIC CREAKING and sees the old SWING swaying back and forth once more on its ancient chain, with nobody on it.

They move through the brush, and Lisa draws in a frightened breath as she lays eyes on...

..the crumbling brick WORKSHOP looming ominously in the moonlight. Police tape blows gently in the breeze. The lantern's flickering light casts an unsteady glow on the bricks.

Nell and Levi stop - this is as far as they go. Lisa looks at them for a moment, then forces herself to move through the crumbled door of the structure into...

INT. STATION MASTER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

..the overgrown, filthy interior. Lisa makes her way to the fireplace, where the hole lies open, the slab pulled aside.

A ROPE LADDER hangs down into the hole, left behind by the police. Lisa calls down softly...

LISA

Heidi?

Only the echo of her own voice answers her.

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

Lisa descends the unstable rope ladder, struggling to keep hold of the lantern. She reaches the stone floor of the cavern and holds the lantern out, realizing...

LISA

(frightened)

Oh please, no...

The cavern is EMPTY. Lisa checks every shadowy nook, but there's no sign of Andy or Heidi.

LISA (CONT'D)

(cries out)

Heidi?

No answer. Lisa slumps to her knees, distraught. She holds her head in her hands, desperately tries to keep it together.

After a moment... Lisa slowly looks up, a realization washing over her face. Close on Lisa's eyes as she remembers...

ANDY (O.S.)
It's a trap.

FLASH TO - Andy, standing over the wooden CONTRAPTION he found in the woods.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Animals get in, and then can't get
out again. They starve to death
inside.

AND BACK TO -

Lisa looks around the cavern, seeing the ancient writing on the walls. The names of those whose fate brought them to this chamber.

FLASH TO - Andy kneels by the small HATCH on the back of the contraption, where the dead animals would be retrieved.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Then you get them out through here.
The back door...

AND BACK TO -

Lisa PALES with realization. She lowers herself to the floor, feeling around in the dirt and dust. She crawls along the floor until her fingers find...

...a BRASS LATCH. She brushes away the dirt and finds... A TRAP DOOR.

LISA
Oh my god..

She pulls on the latch, but the trap door is LOCKED. She sees a KEYHOLE, but there's no key.

Lisa rises to her feet, grits her teeth and STAMPS on the wooden trap door. She STAMPS again, and the rotted wood begins to fracture.

LISA (CONT'D)
Come on!

She STAMPS hard, and the trap door COLLAPSES into the darkness below. Lisa covers her nose with her sleeve, repulsed by the foul odor rising from within.

LISA (CONT'D)
 (calls down)
 Heidi?

Silence from below. Lisa grabs the rope ladder hanging from the hole above. She throws the excess length into the hole.

Taking a deep breath, she begins to climb down with the lantern in one hand, her face knotted with repulsion at the odor.

INT. LOWER CHAMBER - NIGHT

We see the glow of the lantern above us, and it grows brighter as Lisa climbs down into view, clinging to the rope ladder.

There's something in the foreground as we look at her - it's difficult to make out. It looks almost like someone's HAND... but leathery. Taut. Dead.

Lisa steps from the ladder and holds up the lantern.

LISA
 (softly, frightened)
 Heidi?
 (silence)
 Baby, are you in here?

Her voice echoes from the dank, moldy walls. We hear the hollow dripping of water. The darkness is deep and pervasive, absorbing the lantern light. As Lisa steps forward, we see a dark alcove behind her...

...where a FIGURE stands motionless in the shadows. Lisa slows, the hairs on the back of her neck standing up.

Lisa slowly turns toward the figure and holds out the lantern, gasping in horror at seeing...

...the withered, leathery body of the man with the head of a DEER. It's the figure Andy encountered, but rotted and decayed with age.

Lisa nearly vomits. The deer's head is SEWN onto the man's torso with coarse black thread - a hideous hybrid "sculpture". Lisa steps back in horror as she realizes it

..is contained in just one of SEVERAL alcoves dug into the wall, each creating a horrible display - like a museum of human suffering and cruelty.

FLASH TO -

LISA (CONT'D)
 (to Heidi, in the tub)
 A long time ago, a good man owned
 all this land...

AND NOW -

Lisa sees the withered bodies of once-young Levi and Nell, their corresponding arms REMOVED, their bodies SEWN TOGETHER to make them appear as CONJOINED TWINS. Nell's rotting lips and face have been "sculpted" in a hideous smile of manufactured joy.

FLASH TO -

LISA (CONT'D)
 He was what's called a
 taxidermist...

AND BACK TO -

In the alcove next to Levi and Nell's, an old black woman's preserved body has the dusty WINGS of a VULTURE sewn onto her back, as her decayed face looks skyward - ecstatic, angelic, horrible. Sawdust leaks from the seams of her sewn-on wings.

There are more, stuffed with sawdust, their bodies mummified and arranged in macabre poses, each more horrifying than the last. Most are now so rotted as to be almost unrecognizable.

Lisa stares in horror, realizing that the Station Master was not a great man, he was a monster of unspeakable evil.

She stumbles back, terrified, dropping the lantern with a CLATTER. Kerosene spills out, IGNITING A FIRE. The flames rise up around the hanging ROPE LADDER.

LISA (CONT'D)
 No!

Lisa pulls out her KEYCHAIN KNIFE and begins sawing desperately at the rope ladder above the flames, trying to sever the burning section. The flames climb to her hands, though, and she CRIES OUT in pain, reeling back.

Lisa stares in horror as the flames rise up the ladder, trapping her in this macabre chamber of horrors, and spread now to a sawdust-filled body...LIGHTING up the chamber...

..and that's when Lisa sees the corner of a TABLE in a dark recess at the other end of the chamber.

Lisa moves toward it, frightened.

Heidi lies on the old oak table, bound with frayed hemp ropes stained with ancient blood. Grotesque TOOLS hang on hooks near the table - bonesaws, scalpels, needles, spools of black thread. Lisa rushes over to Heidi, knocking over a barrel of SAWDUST, which spills onto the ground, sending INSECTS scurrying into the shadows.

Lisa desperately examines her daughter. Heidi's eyes are clouded over, catatonic. Her exposed wrists and ankles have been marked in INK as if prepped for an operation.

Stunned, Lisa notices a second table nearby, where the weathered carcass of a BOAR lies. All four HOOVES have been removed and lie neatly on the table, ready for--

Lisa gags, reels back toward Heidi with urgency.

LISA (CONT'D)
Heidi? Baby, can you hear me?

The flickering firelight in the room begins to dim.

Lisa looks back at the burning ladder, which falls to the ground in an ashy heap, the flames dying away. Even the burning body is quickly burning out.

Lisa stares in hopeless desperation as the chamber grows darker and darker.

A fluttering of WINGS near Lisa's head, and she reacts as something lands in the shadows near her...

...the VULTURE, standing on the stone floor, sawdust leaking out of its feathers. The vulture looks to the side, revealing a human EYE grafted onto the back of its head.

Lisa screams and stumbles backwards, as...

..all of the other rotted "sculptures" slowly turn toward her, their papery necks crackling grotesquely.

Lisa closes her eyes for a moment, trying to control her rising terror.

The flickering flames of the lantern die completely. All is dark. Lisa slowly opens her eyes.

She holds out her hand, realizing there's a FAINT, PALE LIGHT on her skin. She looks around, seeing...

...a tiny beam of light streaming in from a hole in the stone wall. In disbelief, Lisa moves to the hole and looks out - it's the MOON.

Lisa cries out in surprise and tries to wedge her hand through the hole - it's barely wide enough for her fingers.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The tips of Lisa's fingers poke desperately out of a tiny hole at the bank of the CREEK.

INT. LOWER CHAMBER - NIGHT

Lisa tries to pull rocks and earth away to widen the hole, but WATER from the creek begins to trickle in, making the rocks too slick to grasp. She grabs Heidi and SHAKES her.

LISA

Heidi, oh god, please wake up...

She uses her keychain knife to sever the ropes binding Heidi's hands and feet, then runs to the wall again, desperately clawing at the rocks and earth. WATER from the creek streams in, gathering in a puddle at her feet.

An ominous sound, like the cavern itself taking a deep breath.

Lisa freezes, listening carefully. She looks at the "conjoined" twins, Nell and Levi, whose decayed eyes are CRYING. Their heads slowly turn toward the trap door.

A breeze seems to blow through the chamber, gently scattering the ashes of the burned rope ladder across the floor.

Lisa begins ripping rocks and earth from the hole with increased intensity, water running over her hands and arms.

She grabs Heidi's limp body and desperately shoves her up toward the hole... but when she glances back over her shoulder, she sees--

--THE STATION MASTER stands in the shadows at the other end of the chamber in his filthy burlap hood.

Lisa reacts with abject horror. The Station Master starts across the chamber toward her. His tattered black coat slides along the dusty floor.

LISA (CONT'D)

No!

Lisa shoves Heidi up through the hole, but it's a tight fit. Lisa strains with all of her might.

EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

Heidi's little body emerges from the hole, as if birthed by the riverbank itself. Mud smears her cotton dress as she slumps limply in the wet reeds.

INT. CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Lisa tries to pull herself up through the hole, but the rocks are too slick; her feet find no purchase.

The Station Master moves past his sculptures toward Lisa. Sawdust leaks out of his bony fingertips, which clasp a rusted SCALPEL in one hand and a handful of black threaded sewing needles in the other.

Lisa is white with terror as the Station Master drifts closer. He's twenty feet away... ten feet.

LISA

Jesus, please!

Lisa tries to rip away rocks and dirt from the hole to widen it, but slips and falls to her knees. She looks back, only to find that the Station Master is...

..right behind her. Lisa reels back, terrified, hitting the rack of rusted tools, which clatter down around her, cutting her skin.

Lisa crawls through the expanding puddle toward the moonlit hole, as the Station Master stalks toward her, reaching for her with his rotting, leaking hands.

Water spreads across the floor, reaching the deformed, stuffed vulture. As soon as the water touches its talons...

..it disintegrates into feathers and sawdust, which then washes away as the water moves along the floor.

The Station Master pauses, SENSING this - disturbed.

The water reaches the feet of the conjoined bodies of Nell and Levi, and their faces suddenly ARCH skyward, their mouths opening impossibly wide in a silent scream of relief. Their frail bodies COLLAPSE, disintegrating in the water.

Lisa, stunned, looks at her hands, wet with the water. It's pure, *sparkling* in the moonlight.

FLASH TO - Lisa holding Joyce in the creek, as Pastor Wells gently paints a cross of the BLESSED river water on Heidi's forehead.

AND BACK TO -

The Station Master THRASHES as the water moves around the bottom of his cloak. He advances on Lisa...

..who lurches to her feet, desperately hauling herself up into the hole.

She looks back - the Station Master REACHES FOR HER. She scrambles upwards into the muddy opening, her fingers searching for a grip but find NONE.

The Station Master's dead fingers wrap around Lisa's ankles, and she CRIES OUT in terror. The scalpel in his other hand flashes as it catches the moonlight and slices the air--

--Until a MAN'S HAND plunges down from above.

Lisa reaches up and GRASPS the hand, which PULLS her upwards through the watery opening. She looks back, as the Station Master's hands lose their grip on her ankles, and Lisa gives him a final vicious KICK as the blessed water 'takes' him.

EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

Lisa emerges from the hole, screaming, and topples into the shallows of the creek.

Behind her, the opening from which she escaped COLLAPSES in a SINKHOLE, as the water of the creek floods the underground chamber. Lisa holds onto solid ground with all of her strength to avoid being sucked under.

The entire cavern seems to EXHALE, as water and earth seal it forever.

Lisa, exhausted and barely conscious, looks around the creek..

LISA

Andy?

(no answer)

Andy, where's H...?

She trails off, finds Heidi, lying UNCONSCIOUS in the grass on the bank of the creek. But there's no sign of Andy. Lisa embraces Heidi, who begins to revive in the cool night air.

Now Lisa looks at her own hand...

FLASH TO - The MAN'S HAND reaching down through the water toward her.

Lisa looks around, confused. If it wasn't Andy...?

Lisa senses motion in the trees, and she looks into the shadows.

There stands Mr. Gordy in his black suit and hat. Lisa's eyes flow with grateful tears as she acknowledges him.

Mr. Gordy nods slowly to Lisa and then steps back into the shadows and disappears into the night.

Pull back from Lisa on her knees in the shallow water of the creek, as we...

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK -- **"Two weeks later"**

FADE IN:

EXT. WYRICK HOUSE - DAY

The hot Georgia sun shines down on the property. Cicadas whine in the summer heat.

Joyce walks up the driveway, HUMMING to herself. A BANDAGE is affixed to her neck, disappearing down her blouse.

ANDY

Damn..!

Joyce smiles, seeing Andy standing at the base of a tree, looking up at a TIRE stuck in the branches, attached to a ROPE.

JOYCE

You know the tire's supposed to go
at the *bottom* of the swing, right?

ANDY

(annoyed)

You got a better idea how to get
the rope up around the...

(sighs)

You know what? Forget it.

JOYCE

Don't worry, Andy. Heidi's gonna
love it. Every girl wants her own
dirty rubber nest up a tree.

Andy eyes her angrily as she walks away.

ANDY

Nobody likes you!

Joyce smiles and keeps walking, finding Lisa sitting on the
porch swing.

LISA

Are you ever going to get a job and
leave us in peace?

JOYCE

I'm quite content with my present
occupation, thank you very much.

LISA

I've told you before, Joyce,
divorcee is not an occupation.
Besides, you need to find a new
man.

JOYCE

Honey, I'm not done punishing the
old one. It's gonna be a while.

Lisa smiles. Joyce sits down next to Lisa and rests her head
on her shoulder. They look out across the back field.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

You think Mr. Gordy knew what his
ancestor had done?

LISA

It would explain why he never let
anyone onto the property.

(thinks)

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)
Maybe he wanted the Station Master
remembered for the people he saved,
not the ones he killed.

JOYCE
Protecting his family name?

LISA
Or a legend that meant something to
a lot of people.

Joyce thinks about this for a moment, then looks at her
sister for a moment.

JOYCE
You feel anything anymore?

Lisa nods. Off Joyce's curious look...

LISA
(smiles)
Thirsty. It's hot as the devil's
ass out here.

Joyce rises from the swing.

JOYCE
Two sweet teas, coming up.

She pats Lisa on the shoulder and walks inside. Lisa looks
out at the road, where...

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY

Heidi sits on her BICYCLE, her feet keeping it steady.

LISA (O.S.)
(from the house)
Careful now, Heidi.

Heidi nods back at her mother and slowly pushes herself
forward on the bicycle, wobbling unsteadily.

She puts her feet down again, frustrated. Taking a deep
breath, she tries pushing herself forward again, but finds
herself wobbling and losing balance, until...

..the bike STEADIES itself. Surprised, Heidi slowly looks
back and sees...

..Mr. Gordy holding onto the seat of the bike, steadying her.

Heidi smiles at him, and he smiles back.

Mr. Gordy gives her a gentle push, and Heidi's bike rolls forward, gaining speed, STEADY. Riding on her own...

Heidi grins as the wind blows through her hair. In her bike's basket lies Nell's CORN HUSK DOLL. She looks off to her left, to the grassy field and sees...

NELL and LEVI

Running alongside through the tall grass, keeping pace. There's no fear on their faces, only joy. Their souls are truly free, and their limbs restored. Heidi grins as Nell and Levi wave to her and run happily into the woods and finally out of sight.

Heidi looks back at the receding figure of Mr. Gordy, who raises a hand, waving goodbye as she rolls smoothly down the hill.

Mr. Gordy slowly walks away, disappearing into the shimmering heat waves coming off the road.

FADE OUT:

POSTSCRIPT

The Wyrick family remained in the Gordy house for another five years.

Several months after these strange events, Lisa gave birth to Heidi's sister. They named her Jordan.

Now in her twenties, Heidi is married and helps others cope with matters of the paranormal.

She never saw Mr. Gordy again.