Projection

Written by Dean VallasNearly empty girls’ school

Act I

Prologue, old owner dies, bags of nails under the floor

FADE IN:

ext various maine – day (stock)

Bucolic shots of Maine countryside in autumn: quilted forests of colored leaves, kids diving into piles of leaves, a fly-fisherman casting in a stream, coastal village port as a lobsterman heads out to sea. Etc.

Ext meredith’s house – day

A stretcher snaps into place in an EMS Ambulance in the driveway of a Colonial house in Maine. The house is well maintained, with a much older, saggier one-story wing on one side, the original portion of the house. The house is set in deep woods with no other buildings or roads in sight.

In the driveway the attendant slams the doors shut on the stretcher that we now see holds a body covered by a sheet. In no hurry, he climbs in the cab and drives away from a small centuries-old brick Colonial house in the deep woods of Maine, no lights or sirens.

Out of sight up a footpath leading into the forest a woman, DIANA, 50’s, long grey hair, strong face, composed expression, practical woodsy clothing, watches it go. She returns to the house, walks around back and pulls a SHOVEL from the SHED. Around the back of the house Diana COUNTS STONES CAREFULLY along the foundation wall, then finds her spot under the original portion of the house and begins prying at the undisturbed wall with the shovel. It’s slow, hard work.

As she works we get a glimpse of some kind of plant leaves and stems stuffed under her shirt. In fact it is amaranth.

Eventually she works the stone out and, lying on her belly, peers into the dark hole in the foundation.

DIANA’s POV

We can’t see much more than vague shapes in a shallow space behind the foundation in the gloom.

angle on diana

As she pokes the shovel handle into the gloom. CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSER WITH HER and we can see inside: a tiny space a few inches high, between the ground below and the floorboards of a room above. In the space, some planks on the ground, with TWO ANCIENT CANVAS BAGS, tied with twine, on top of them.

With the shovel handle poking inside, Diana pushes the bags off the planks and to the side.

One of the bags falls open and some ANTIQUE WROUGHT IRON NAILS fall out onto the ground.

Satisfied, Diana works the stone back into the foundation.

ext path into woods – day – same

QUINT, 30’s, hard body, stands in the trees looking at the house but not approaching. His expression is black as thunder with suppressed rage.

He watches as DIANA now quits the property, walking up the driveway, her back to Quint, not seeing him; he is nearly invisible in the woods in any case. Quint watches her go, then walks back down the path away from the house.

ANGLE ON HOUSE exterior – LONG SHOT

There is a flurry of leaves in the breeze.

match Dissolve to:

ext meredith’s house – day – two months later

A flurry of snowflakes in the breeze.

Dissolve to:

Flashback of packing and leaving as a child. Flash forward to today: Leaving anonymous old apartment, trades heels for ll bean boots, 3 deadbolts on the door, sketchy parking lot

ext maine freeway – morning

inject humor and silliness, joy, into this. maybe beavers

A modern hatchback car, crammed to the windows with boxes and furniture, rolls carefully down a snowy interstate. At the wheel is MEREDITH, about 40, character lines, no makeup, strong and attractive, dressed for moving day, focused on driving in the snowy landscape.

int main coastal roads – day

The car crunches along narrow roads through tall first-growth forest, where the sky peeks through thick canopies as if through masking hands. It is winter, and dry snow and deep gloom spread here among the trees on the forest floor.

begin flashback:

int meredith’s old apartment – day

MEREDITH walks through the apartment, checking one last time for anything forgotten. Near the door she digs through a tote bag, pulls off her heels, and slips into rubberized LL Bean boots. She runs her hand over the three deadbolts set into the front door, eyes the heavy layers of chipped paint, the stained carpet, the stained ceiling, the barred windows. She places the keys on the kitchen pass-through, turns and leaves through the doorway.

end flashback

Eventually the road becomes gravel, then as she passes over a gravelly dry riverbed and climbs up onto a small island, dirt. The island is not large, holding only four or five houses, as seen from above, all of them facing outward towards the sea. Meredith continues on, and pulls into the driveway of brick colonial we have met before.

int meredith’s car – day

Her LL Bean rubberized boots are on the pedals as MEREDITH steers through traffic on a snowy interstate. The slap of the wipers and the white tunnel of snow invite reflection.

begin flashback:

int meredith’s childhood bedroom – day – child’s perspective

MEREDITH, age 12, is lying on the floor of a small bedroom crammed with multiple narrow beds, all empty. She is reading a book. The door opens, knocking the book aside.

foster mom

(Snaps her fingers)

Pack up your stuff. You’re moving on.

end flashback

Eventually the road becomes gravel, then as she passes over a gravelly dry riverbed and climbs up onto a small island, dirt. The island is not large, holding only four or five houses, as seen from above, all of them facing outward towards the sea. Meredith continues on, and pulls into the driveway of brick colonial we have met before.

Loving the new house, getting everything just so, spending time looking out the windows, being there, lovingly spreads dining room tablecloth

ext meredith’s house – morning

On the front porch, groceries and luggage in hand, MEREDITH fumbles out her phone and thumbs in a code. The door has an AirBnB style lock operated by cell phone, and now the lock snaps open and the door swings in an inch. Meredith pushes it aside and enters.

int meredith’s house – morning

MEREDITH sets a bag of groceries down on the kitchen counter beside a bowl of white flowers, her realtor’s business card sticking out of them. Meredith smiles at the flowers then more broadly at the experience of being there. Joyous, she is finally home, in her own home.

ANGLE ON MEREDITH

as she pulls a string of colored letters out of her shoulder bag, and a roll of tape, and expands it over the mantel: “WELCOME HOME”, it tells her. She admires it.

Meredith opens cabinet doors, the microwave, the refrigerator, just to interact with the house. She checks the stove to see if the gas is on. It is.

ANGLE ON MEREDITH

as she happens to walk past a WALL MIRROR. She glances at herself, glowing with happiness, and steps over and KISSES HERSELF IN THE MIRROR.

NEW ANGLE AS MEREDITH

moves out of the kitchen. Her eye falls on the door leading into the old, original part of the house. She goes over and opens it, looks inside into a big, empty, dusty room, gloomy with curtained windows. She shuts the door and runs through to the back of the house and onto the patio, still giddy and excited.

In her wake a white petal falls from the bouquet in the bowl onto the counter.

RACK FOCUS PAST THE FLOWERS

to Meredith, on the back porch, her dream coming true.

she has to unpack a bunch of clothes and personal stuff and spend joyous hours decorating the place and putting it away

ext forest outside house – day

MEREDITH WALKS in a winding way into the forest and onto some raised ground. She has her PHONE with her, and when she reaches just the right spot she takes pictures of the house. The woods though deep seem friendly and welcoming, helped by bird song and shafts of sunlight. There is no sign of a neighboring house in any direction.

dissolve to:

ext woodpile – day

MEREDITH walks out to the WOODPILE under the trees a few yards from the house. She KNOCKS THE SNOW OFF the top and gathers up an armful. Suddenly A SMALL ANIMAL LUNGES at her from the woodpile where it has burrowed. It takes a VICIOUS SWIPE at her with long claws and barely misses. Meredith RECOILS BACK but does not drop the armful of wood. She carries the logs into the house.

Meredith re-emerges a moment later and marches back to the woodpile, this time with a long-handled shovel. She pokes the spot where the animal lunged at her. It appears and snaps at her as before.

Meredith is ready. She lunges at the animal with the shovel, killing it. Then she gathers up another armload of split wood and carries it into the house.

ext house – later

MEREDITH walks into frame carrying the shovel she has used to bury the small animal she shot. She leans it up aginast the house and stands on the front porch, breathing in the experience of owning her own house on her own piece of property. It’s hers, and she’s staying.

int living room – day

DISSOLVE THROUGH A SERIES OF SHOTS

Of Meredith moving luggage around, sweeping, putting away groceries, etc. As the sequences progresses the

SHOTS BECOME PROGRESSIVELY LOWER-ANGLED

in a subtle way.

Walks through the old wing, by day. It’s empty, dusty. Sees something in a room upstairs

Meredith glances over at the door leading to the old part of the house. It pulls her attention away from her books. She puts her pencil down and walks over to the door, opens it and steps through.

She activates her cell phone flashlight against the gloom, moving through the living room and two small bedrooms leading off from it. On the wall opposite the fireplace is a staircase. It’s dark, narrow, steep. Meredith leads with her flashlight and climbs the stairs.

int upstairs – day

MEREDITH opens doors that face the narrow corridor. One is empty. One has junk piled in it. But the last room at the end of the hall is neat and tidy. It contains a table, and on the table a small spinet, like a miniature piano. Meredith takes a step into the room.

Gradually she notices in the gloom that a corner of the room seems lighter than the rest. It is some kind of a shape, roundish, and lighter than the darkness in the room. Meredith sees it and recoils from it. It is across the room in the far corner. Meredith peers closely.

A rush of darkness seems to fill the room and overwhelm the lightness in the corner and Meredith’s flashlight too.

Spooked, Meredith runs back downstairs in the dark.

dissolve to:

ext house – day

MEREDITH EXITS the house, bundled up, and sets off on the path through the snowy woods that leads out of the trees and across a broad meadow.

Meredith walks on the beach, sees the little girl, tells no one

dissolve to:

ext house – day

MEREDITH EXITS the house, bundled up, and sets off on the path through the snowy woods that leads out of the trees and across a broad meadow.

ext path – day

MEREDITH walks through the countryside enjoying the sunshine. Along the edge of the trees she passes a Colonial house, much like hers only much bigger, and beside it a sort of extended shed or barn, with smoke rising from a chimney, and a clanging sound coming from inside. She looks at it curiously as she passes.

ext cliff edge – day

MEREDITH continues to follow the path, emerging from the trees to a huge horizon of sea-coast. The path leads towards an old abandoned LIGHTHOUSE, then straight to the cliff edge where it meets a staircase down to the beach. She walks up to the lighthouse. Affixed to the ruined outer wall is a plaque:

“For the greater glory of God, Three Witches Hanged Here 1672”

Meredith walks around the lighthouse and examines it curiously. It’s doorless and windowless and full of graffiti on the inside. The lens and the works are gone, and the spiral staircase leading upwards into the dark is in ruins.

cut to:

Ext beach below lighthouse – day

MEREDITH is alone on the vast stretch of beach in the cold and wind. Snow has built up in the shade where cliff wall meets beach. She walks, lost in the moment of winter wind, beach, and ocean. Turning back, below the lighthouse she spots a small figure in a long black coat, standing and looking back towards her. Meredith continues walking back, looking out at the icy waves, and next time she looks up the figure is gone.

cut to:

ext path near blacksmith’s shop – day

As MEREDITH WALKS BACK to her house the sound of a hammer clanging on an anvil rides the frosty air. The blacksmith’s shop comes into view, and from this direction the BLACKSMITH himself, 30’s, long hair, solid build, is visible in front, hammering hot iron on an anvil mounted on a tree stump. ~~As she walks she passes the BOY FROM THE DRIVEWAY, who is sitting on the ground doing something with his stick. He looks up.~~

~~boy~~

~~Don’t wake her up.~~

~~meredith~~

~~What?~~

~~boy~~

~~You’re waking her up.~~

The boy turns back to his task. Meredith walks on.

ext blacksmith’s shop – day

QUINT, early thirties, hard body, precisely coiffed and bearded in the approved style, looks like he should be in a whiskey ad, shaving with a straight razor in his log cabin while wearing a gold Rolex. He emerges from the woods with an armload of firewood.

quint

Did you find our witch’s tower?

meredith

(approaches him)

Excuse me?

quint

The lighthouse. They hung witches there, so witches’ tower. Not recently though.

Meredith

That’s a relief. I saw the plaque. It’s creepy.

quint

You’re not one of the history people, then. You see them around here. Book writers.

meredith

A few book people are ok, I’m told. But no, no book about witches. Just out for a walk.

quint

I’m Cornelius Quint. This is my place here.

He offers two fingers to shake, under the armload of wood, and they shake.

meredith

Meredith Von Huffnickle. I just bought a little house down the path a ways.

Quint

Great! Welcome to the neighborhood. We’re kind of a tight little group around here.

Meredith

The “neighborhood”? Well, I’m the third tree on the left down that way.

quint

(admits)

There are trendier spots.

meredith

Yes there are. But I love my little cottage.

quint

The cottage? The historic…

meredith

Exactly.

quint

(thoughtfully)

I had heard that was sold. Congratulations! So you’re the new neighbor. Have you moved in yet?

meredith

Spent the night last night.

quint

If you ever need anything, day or night, knock on my door. Don’t hesitate.

(clarifies)

Not in a creepy way. Just, neighbors.

meredith

What do you do here?

quint

Come look. This wood’s going to drop in a second if I don’t put it down.

int forge – day

Quint leads Meredith into his forge. He picks up tongs and digs an object out of the coal forge. It is RED HOT. He holds it up so she can see. It’s a forged hairpin with a curious design.

(Cont.)

What do you think?

meredith

Possibly, a hairpin? It’s lovely. Is that what you do here?

quint

“Let the blacksmith wear the chains he has made.”

meredith

A blacksmith? It doesn’t quite fit somehow.

quint

Not a blue-collar blacksmith. Hipster. Artisanal.

meredith

100% natural, AND gluten free! That is lovely. Do you have a gallery, or how do you sell your things?

quint

There’s a little souvenir shop just at the end there, where you meet the main road. That’s about it.

meredith

I will patronize that.

She walks away, then turns.

(Con’t)

There’s always Etsy, you know. Pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr Blacksmith.

cut TO:

int meredith’s room – evening

MEREDITH enters from the terrace, tosses her things aside, and heads for the bathroom. She is struck with a SUDDEN CHILL, enough to make her hug herself and look around for an explanation. She reaches up and feels the air conditioning outlet but nothing is coming out. She fiddles with the thermostat on the wall. It explains nothing. Still hugging herself, motionless now, Meredith darts her eyes around the room. Everything looks innocent, normal. But she is freezing.

She moves to the living room and throws a match in the fire she laid earlier, then crouches, warming herself.

dissolve to:

ext long driveway – night

MEREDITH walks up the driveway in the twilight, passing through the stand of trees on her way to the main road. She carries a FLASHLIGHT, which bores a hole in the thick dark.

ext main road – night

Walking along the main village street, disorientingly busy with pedestrians, cars and businesses, MEREDITH spots a restaurant with a GIANT PLASTIC LOBSTER for a sign. She approaches it.

int lobster restaurant – night

MEREDITH is at a table alone, looking at a menu. A figure appears beside her. She looks up. It is QUINT, the blacksmith.

meredith

Oh, hi! Are you following me?

quint

That’s a pleasant image. But it’s a village. You bump into people over and over. Hence the high homicide rate.

meredith

Would you like to sit down?

quint

(sitting)

Also, not much depth in the restaurant scene locally. I hope you’re not too crushed.

meredith

I come from the ramen and tube steak school, so no, not a big problem.

quint

Tell me, what do you know about the house you bought? Its history?

meredith

Nothing, except it was available, quiet, isolated. And historic. I love the fact that it’s been there for centuries, and it will be there after I’m gone. Someplace where I can belong, be part of something. I bought it sight unseen, you know. Apparently the owner had died.

quint

The original building is very old, back to pilgrim times. The father who built it died and left it to his three daughters. Around that time was the whole witchcraft scare, like in Salem? That’s not far from here. Late 1600’s.

meredith

You’re giving me the creeps.

quint

They say there were real witches back then, people saw what they could do. I’m leading up to the house.

meredith

Accused witches were just women who were a little smarter than the average bear. They got burned because somebody wanted their property. Or some guy they turned down on a Saturday night.

quint

That’s the tree-hugger version. But the full truth is much darker. There’s more to this world than meets the eye, and there are strange and dangerous people who learn to control it. And not for our benefit.

meredith

Now I am creeped out.

quint

I invited myself over and ruined your dinner. My work here is done. Drop by the forge when you’re on a walk sometime.

int lobster restaurant near bar – night – later

MEREDITH has her coat on and is headed for the door, when SCARLET, at the bar in a femme fatale dress, spots her over the heads of the crowd.

scarlet

(waving her drink)

Meredith!

Meredith hears her name and turns, spots Scarlet, approaches.

scarlet

So nice to run into you. Come and have a drink! Do you have time?

meredith

(to herself)

I’m going to have to get used to this.

DISSOLVE TO:

int bar – night – later still

Most of the crowd is gone. MEREDITH and SCARLET sit on bar stools, elbows on bar and heads on hands. They are lubricated. Not sloppy, just a little uninhibited.

scarlet

I grew up a couple of miles from here, spent my whole life in these woods, except for college. Lots of nights sneaking home with pine needles in my panties.

meredith

I’m more of a city girl. My parents left when I was in my teens. Schools have been the only home I’ve had, up until now.

scarlet

Your parents left?

meredith

I call them my parents. I was adopted. Not really. It was foster care, but the same couple almost from birth until 14. Then they left.

scarlet

They left? Where did they go?

meredith

Back to Japan. They were a Japanese couple. I guess they wanted to retire in their homeland, so they returned me.

scarlet

That’s the worst story I’ve ever heard.

meredith

At least I got a career out of it. Japanese. I translate books, mostly poetry books. And now I have my own house, it’s all mine, and that’s where I belong.

ext house – day

MEREDITH, returning from a walk, finds a note taped to the door.

“Having friends over tonight -- holiday cocktails. Love it if you could join us.”

It is signed, “Quint”.

Walks out to lighthouse, sees girl. Flashback to having to pack and leave as a child

ext path – day

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cut to:

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| --- |
|  |

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begin flashback:

int meredith’s childhood bedroom – day – child’s perspective

MEREDITH, age 12, stands by the door in her hat and coat – similar to what the girl on the beach has on – a huge suitcase beside her. She looks back at the part of the room that had been hers as she waits for the door to open.

end flashback

Meredith continues walking back, looking out at the icy waves, and next time she looks up the figure is gone.

walks past blacksmith’s house on path, finds headstones

ext Late afternoon – path past blacksmith’s house

MEREDITH comes along the path, walking slowly and enjoying the moment, in the direction of the lighthouse. At the spot where the BOY had called to her earlier, a bit beyond, in the trees, were some HEADSTONES. Meredith walks off the path and through the bushes to the headstones. She brushes debris off a few of them, trying to read them, for they’re old and the stone has melted.

Many are for the Nurse family. At the edge of the plot Meredith finds three together, same size and shape. Sharon Nurse, Edna Nurse, and Willa Nurse. All have the same marking: “Hanged, July 19, 1692”.

Meredith stands contemplating the graves of the three sisters executed as witches, then sits down on a grave with her back against the headstone and tries to imagine the scene. A warm, calm feeling envelops her and she drifts off into sleep.

int DINER – morning

MEREDITH is ordering from a waitress, SUMMER, late thirties, cheery, friendly, motherly, wearing a nametag. The only other customer, DIANA, indeterminate but wrinkled middle age, long grey unstyled hair, practical clothes, and calm, piercing eyes, is in another booth, alone, her back to them.

meredith

How about the blueberry pancakes?

summer

You got it.

meredith

Blueberries are a thing here, right? Maine blueberries?

summer

Yes they are. But these blueberries are from the freezer. Kind of tractor-trailer to table, than farm to table.

meredith

Hey, I’ll take a chance. And an IV drip of coffee, right in the arm.

Summer walks to kitchen pass-through, puts the order in, brings back a cup of coffee. MEREDITH’s face is in her hands.

Summer

Long night?

meredith

Oh, you know, I bought a house near here.

summer

Oh, congratulations!

meredith

Just moved in yesterday. Spent the first night there last night, all alone. Kind of creepy.

summer

Where is it, out in the woods someplace? Lots of strange noises and creaky stuff out there. You’ll get used to it.

meredith

It’s not just that.

(Summer waits)

I don’t know. I hate to actually say it. Like something else there, with me.

summer

Some *thing*?

meredith

I just need my coffee. First I drink the coffee. Then I say the things.

Meredith meets Quint on the path

cut to:

ext path near blacksmith’s shop – day

As MEREDITH WALKS BACK to her house the sound of a hammer clanging on an anvil rides the frosty air. The blacksmith’s shop comes into view, and from this direction the BLACKSMITH himself, 30’s, long hair, solid build, is visible in front, hammering hot iron on an anvil mounted on a tree stump.

ext blacksmith’s shop – day

QUINT, early thirties, hard body, precisely coiffed and bearded in the approved style, looks like he should be in a whiskey ad, shaving with a straight razor in his log cabin while wearing a gold Rolex. He calls out to her.

quint

Did you find the witch’s tower?

meredith

(Stops, takes a step towards him)

Excuse me?

quint

The lighthouse. They hung witches there, so witches’ tower. Not recently though.

Meredith

That’s a relief. I saw the plaque. It’s creepy.

quint

You’re not one of the history people. You see them around here. Book writers.

meredith

A few book people are ok, I’m told. But no, no book about witches. Just out for a walk.

quint

I’m Cornelius Quint. This is my place here.

They shake hands.

meredith

Meredith Von Huffnickle. I just bought a house down the path a ways.

Quint

Great! Welcome to the neighborhood. We’re kind of a tight little group around here. Odd, but nice.

Meredith

The “neighborhood”? Well, I’m the third tree on the left down yonder.

quint

(admits)

There are trendier spots.

meredith

There are. But I love my house. And I love it here, in the woods.

quint

The Colonial? The historic…

meredith

Exactly.

quint

(thoughtfully)

I heard that was sold. Congratulations! So you’re the new neighbor. Have you moved in yet?

meredith

Spent the night last night.

quint

How was that? If you ever need anything, just knock on my door. Don’t hesitate.

(clarifies)

Not in a creepy way. Just, neighbors.

meredith

So, much call for a blacksmith nowadays?

int forge – day

Quint leads Meredith into his forge. He picks up tongs and digs an object out of the coal forge. It is RED HOT. He holds it up so she can see. It’s a forged hairpin with a curious design.

(Cont.)

What do you think?

meredith

Possibly, a hairpin? It’s lovely.

quint

“Let the blacksmith wear the chains he has made.”

meredith

A blacksmith, huh? It doesn’t quite fit somehow.

quint

Not a blue-collar blacksmith. Hipster. Artisanal.

meredith

I see, 100% natural, AND gluten free! That is lovely. Do you have a gallery, or how do you sell your things?

quint

There’s a little souvenir shop in town. That’s about it.

meredith

I will patronize that.

She walks away, then turns.

(Con’t)

There’s always Etsy, you know. Pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr Blacksmith.

Moving truck arrives with boxes from long term storage. She is moving in permanently, unpacking once and for all. Flashback of having to leave stuff behind

ext meredith’s driveway – day

A box truck sits idling, smoke curling out of its exhaust. Meredith sees it from the path and comes running up, knocks on the driver’s door.

int meredith’s living room – day

Driver and Assistant carry boxes in, stacking them up against the wall, as Meredith watches.

dissolve to:

Meredith signs a clipboard and the men leave. The stack of boxes is shoulder high along an entire wall. But where to put it all? Meredith’s eye falls on the door that leads into the old, original part of the house.

int living room – day – later still

MEREDITH opens the front door and PLUMBER, complete with tool belt and FRED’S PLUMBING LOGO on his T-SHIRT, enters. They both walk about. Meredith examines the thermostat.

meredith

I’m glad you’re here.

plumber

How can I help?

meredith

It’s freezing in that room. The bedroom. It’s like an icebox.

They enter the bedroom and stand still.

meredith

(con’t)

I can’t understand it. It’s like there’s an air conditioner blowing every time I go in there.

plumber

It is winter though, Miss.

~~meredith~~

~~This is more than that. The whole house is heated. There’s a huge fireplace. It’s not a small difference, it’s enormous. No wind, no breeze from outside, just absolutely freezing.~~

meredith

It’s gone now.

plumber

What’s gone?

meredith

Oh. The chill. It’s gone.

Meredith bonds with the house, Scarlet visits

int meredith’s living room – night

The light is moving towards afternoon as MEREDITH enters the frame dragging a big sheet of plywood trash, which she struggles to heave into a DUMPSTER that has appeared in the driveway. Meredith surveys her progress. It’s still a mess, but less of one.

SCARLET pulls up the driveway, parks, and walks over carrying a box

meredith

Oh, Hi! What’s that?

scarlet

Just a little housewarming. An excuse to take a break.

ext. meredith’s house – day

MEREDITH and SCARLET sit in chairs on the porch, teacups and plates with slices of cake on them in front of them on the table.

meredith

Do you have to be anywhere?

scarlet

No.

meredith

Come in, we’ll watch some TV. Order out maybe.

Scarlet sees a ghost

int meredith’s living room – night

EMPTY CARTONS of Chinese food are on the kitchen table, chopsticks protruding upward. EMPTY BEER BOTTLES fill out the mess. MEREDITH and SCARLET are curled up together on the couch, under a comforter, watching TV.

[INSERT TV WATCHING SCENE, THE CROWN, BACHELOR OR SOMETHING]

scarlet

(a little buzzed}

I’m so cozy but I have to get up. I’m about to ruin your sofa.

meredith

(makes spider fingers)

Hmmm. Is anyone ticklish?

scarlet

NO! I’ll wet myself! Don’t be so mean!

meredith

(points at a door}

In there, then last door on the right. It works, but not very pretty yet.

Scarlet exits through the door, closing it behind her. MEREDITH pulls the comforter up to her chin and watches the TV. After a real time 30 seconds or so, the door opens, Scarlet standing in the doorway. From her pallor and the odd way she POINTS BEHIND HER INTO THE HOUSE, not moving, she is in profound shock.

meredith

(eventually notices something must be wrong, looks over)

What?

Scarlet is pointing behind her into th dark.

scarlet

There’s something in there. I saw something.

Meredith stands up, tossing the comforter aside.

meredith

What do you mean, “something’s in there?” You mean a mouse or something?

(Scarlet doesn’t answer)

What?

Quint hints he would buy house if she were to sell

int. day another scene somewhere

quint

It would be tricky to sell. You’d have to disclose the issue to buyers. Look: let’s find a way for you to stay. Meantime if you need to get out of the house I can try and make you an offer. I could take my time, sell it later.

The story of the witches, from scarlet

int. day – meredith’s house

scarlet

Out in front of the main gate now is Route 1 – the King’s Highway. It was the main road along the whole coast from maine to past New York. In olden times there was no main gate, the road swung right around here in front of the house. This was a roadhouse, an inn, and stables, biggest one for miles. Town Center, really. I mean, they hung the witches here.

meredith

They told me when I bought it. And I’ve seen the placque. What was the story? Do you know? Who were they?

scarlet

Everyone knows the story around here, you learn it in kindergarten practically. Two widowed sisters came into the ownership of the inn – this place. But the parson wanted the business and he wanted the women, too, or one of them. There was a stepchild who lived with the women, worked as a maid here in the inn. Around 9 or 10, I think. The parson

Local oddball who says the house has always been a problem

int. oddball’s house – day

Storing her books in the old wing. Quint arrives. They hear a faint spinet from upstairs

int old wing – day

The ceiling is much lower in here, the walls not perfectly rectangular. It’s gloomy, unfurnished, dusty. Meredith’s POV as she walks around, checking the place out. The fireplace looks like it would work.

CUT TO:

Meredith has laid a fire and sets a match to it. The fire catches and builds, throwing pulsing light around the room. Along the back wall, opposite the fireplace, are floor to ceiling shelves. It might have been a library, once.

cut to:

Meredith has filled the shelves with her books. Empty boxes cover the floor. The fire, big and bright, has cheered the room. Meredith runs her hand over the spines of her cherished and long-stored books, pulling a volume here and there in delight, looking at it, then returning it for another.

QUINT CALLS OUT FROM THE FRONT DOOR

quint

(O.S.)

Hello! Anybody home?

meredith

(Takes a moment to decide)

Hello. In here.

Quint enters.

quint

(looking around)

Still a ways to go yet. The fire helps a lot. This place hasn’t been alive in years.

meredith

That’s an odd way to put it.

quint

So, just wanted to say Hi. Kind of creepy, I admit.

meredith

Luckily I had my pants on.

quint

How are you liking it so far?

meredith

There’s something off about this part of the house. I love the newer part. I love all of it. But you feel something different in these rooms. I do. The age, the emptiness. All the people who lived and died here, all filled with silence.

quint

Can I ask you a personal question? Why do you want to live by yourself like this, all alone in the woods in an old spooky house? Do you have some terrible secret to conceal?

meredith

On the full moon I get an uncontrollable urge to murder a blacksmith. It’s a curse.

FAINT SOUND OF A SPINET PIANO, OFF SCREEN. THERE AND NOT THERE. THEN BACK AGAIN. ALMOST AS IF IT WERE A WISP OF SMOKE ON THE WIND.

meredith

(Con’t)

Do you hear that? It’s upstairs.

(They listen. Then, disbelieving)

Oh, come on.

quint

Let’s see.

meredith

Suddenly I’m glad you’re here.

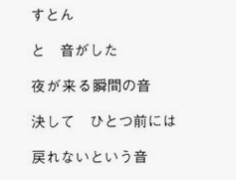
They HEAD UP THE STAIRS, Meredith first. In the fireplace, the logs are burning down. One BREAKS IN HALF. Soon it will be nothing but dying coals.

Pleasant afternoon translating Japanese poetry in her new house

int living room – day – later

MEREDITH is at her writing desk by the window, books spread out, deliberately considering and taking notes on a book of Japanese poetry.

As she does JAPANESE CHARACTERS KEY IN, white, and FLOAT ACROSS THE SCREEN. After a moment, the TRANSLATION begins to appear, sequentially, in real time as she parses out the characters and finds English words for them. As a line appears, a previous line disintegrates into dust and floats away:



there was a thump.

the sound of the moment we fell.

the sound that says we can never go back to

the moment before

Out to dinner alone, runs into Quint, Scarlet

ext lobster restaurant – night

Busy local white-tablecloth spot with a giant plastic lobster on pillars in front.

int lobster restaurant – night – same

MEREDITH is at a table alone, looking at the menu. A figure appears beside her. She looks up. It is QUINT, the blacksmith.

int lobster restaurant near bar – night – later

MEREDITH has her coat on and is headed for the door, when SCARLET, at the bar in a femme fatale dress, spots her over the heads of the crowd.

scarlet

(waving her drink)

Meredith!

Meredith hears her name and turns, spots Scarlet, approaches.

scarlet

Hi! Come and have a drink! Do you have time?

meredith

(to herself)

I’m going to have to get used to this.

DISSOLVE TO:

int bar – night – late

Most of the crowd is gone. MEREDITH and SCARLET sit on bar stools, elbows on bar and heads on hands. They are lubricated. Not sloppy, just a little uninhibited.

scarlet

I grew up a couple of miles from here, spent my whole life in these woods, except for college. Lots of nights sneaking home with pine needles in my panties.

meredith

(they giggle)

I’m a city mouse. My parents left when I was in my teens. Schools have been the only home I’ve had, up until now, my new house.

scarlet

Go back. Your parents left?

meredith

I call them my parents. I was adopted. Not really. It was foster care, but the same couple almost from birth until 14. Then they left.

scarlet

They left? Where did they go?

meredith

Back to Japan. They were a Japanese couple. I guess they wanted to retire in their homeland, so they returned me.

scarlet

They returned you? That’s the worst thing I’ve ever heard.

meredith

I got a career out of it. Japanese. I translate books, mostly poetry books. And now I have my own house. It’s all mine, finally, a place to belong.

scarlet

(quoting)

“We never live, we are always in the expectation of living.” But you have your house now, and you can live. Wish I had something.

meredith

Was that Charlie Brown?

scarlet

Voltaire. Good guess though.

Dissolve To:

A creepy feeling that grows. Loud noises, glimpses

int house various – day – later

The “Welcome Home” SIGN hung over the mantel is prominent throughout.

SHOTS OF MOVING IN CONTINUE AS MEREDITH carries the rest of her things in from the car, pushes furniture into new alignments, lays a fire in the fireplace, dusts, sweeps, and opens every door. IN THE FREEZER is the stack of TV dinners she put there, nothing else. She takes out the whole stack and flips through them, picking one.

int meredith’s bedroom – day – later

MEREDITH makes her bed using linens she tears out of packages from the store. She straightens abruptly and hugs herself. It’s so cold in here! Checks the thermostat on the wall, bumps it up a little.

As she bends over her luggage, unpacking, Meredith FEELS A TOUCH ON HER NECK. She straightens, turns around sharply. Nothing is there. Then she notices the string hanging from the overhead light. She smiles, feeling silly.

int house – night

Her pace has slowed as she settles in. As night falls MEREDITH takes a last long, lingering look into the forest from her front porch, happy and deeply satisfied, then firmly shuts the door, locking it. She walks through the house to the back slider and locks it, pulling the drapes across. She glances around the house to make sure it is secure.

dissolve to:

ext house – LONG SHOT – night

SMOKE RISES from Meredith’s chimney, the little house alone in the woods, the only light coming from the moon filtering weakly through the thick canopy, and a warm yellow window lit from inside.

int living room – night

MEREDITH is making herself at home. She draws a chair up to the fire and settles in with a cup of tea, her laptop on her knees. Sounds from the forest outside seem amplified. The shadows in the house are unfamiliar, made worse by a flickering fire. HER EYES DART around nervously. Did she see a shadow? Nothing there. She is a little spooked.

int bedroom – night

MEREDITH OPENS THE DOOR and enters, switching on the light. Again, instinctively, she hugs herself. It’s so cold in here! She sets her purse on the nightstand, undresses, puts on sweat pants, socks, and a sweatshirt, heads into the connected master bathroom.

CUT TO:

MEREDITH emerges from the bathroom, turns on the lamp on the nightstand, shuts off the overhead light with the switch beside the doorway, and climbs into bed. She draws the covers up to her chin. After a moment of satisfaction and gratitude, she reaches over and snaps off the lamp. In the gloom CAMERA TILTS DOWN from the lamp to include her open purse on the nightstand. Barely visible inside is the glint of something metal.

ext house – night

LONG CRANE SHOT of MEREDITH’S house, nestled in tall trees, over a calm protected inlet. From the middle distance the red light from her dying fire visible through the window looks isolated and fragile in a huge, dark, looming landscape. In the foreground, silhouetted against the sky, a squirrel gnaws on an acorn.

A disturbing knock at the door in the middle of the night

ext meredith’s house – night

SMOKE CURLS from the chimney and warm light spills from the window, in the dark snowy clearing.

int house – night

The fire has burned down to embers. The house is dark. Meredith is asleep in her room. The door to the old wing is ajar.

A LOUD RAPPING comes from the front door. Meredith, asleep, doesn’t react. The sound comes again. Halfway through, she sits bolt upright in the bed, orienting herself. She hears the rapping. She hears it stop. Someone has knocked on the front door. She checks the clock. 3 AM.

She swings her legs down onto the floor, thinks it over, then gets up, pulls the bathrobe off its hook on the closet door, and walks across the living room to the front door. She listens quietly. There is no sound. She looks around the room at the exterior windows. No movement. She opens the door.

No one is there.

Meredith looks down at the porch in front of the door. There is a dusting of new snow, with no marks on it, no footprints. She takes a step out onto the porch, scans from left to right, looking for movement, or a figure. Nothing. Lit only by moonlight filtering through the dead trees, the scene before her is nothing but deep shadows and slightly lighter shadows.

She goes back inside, closes the door, locks it tight. She looks again around the empty room, notices the door into the old wing is open slightly, walks over and shuts it tight. Then she walks to the fireplace and, taking the poker, returns to her bedroom. She leans the poker up against the wall beside her bed as she climbs back in.

Meredith lies in bed with the covers up to her chin but her eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling.

Meredith buys a gun. Talks to Summer about spooky night, Diana overhears

ext sporting goods shop – day

ANGLE THROUGH STREET WINDOW as MEREDITH, at the counter, watches a SALESMAN showing her how to load a pistol.

Meredith exits the shop carring a large heavy-looking paper bag. She crunches through the snow to her car and climbs in.

int meredith’s car – day

Meredith empties the bag onto the seat. Two boxes, one big, one smaller. A handgun in one, cartridges in the other. She pulls the automatic out of the box, hefts it. It and the box of cartridges go into the glove compartment.

int DINER – day

A BUSY NEIGHBORHOOD PLACE, the hub of the town, especially at breakfast. MEREDITH, alone in her booth, is ordering from a WAITRESS, SUMMER, late thirties, cheery, friendly, attractive, wearing a nametag. DIANA is sitting alone in another booth. We have seen her long grey unstyled hair, practical clothes, and calm, piercing eyes before: when she was digging in the foundation of the house Meredith has bought. Now, in her booth, she is within earshot of Meredith.

meredith

How about the blueberry pancakes?

summer

You got it.

meredith

Blueberries are a thing here, right? Maine blueberries?

summer

Yes they are. But these blueberries are from the freezer. More like tractor-trailer to table, not farm to table.

meredith

Hey, I’ll take a chance. And an IV drip of coffee, right in the arm.

Summer walks to kitchen pass-through, puts the order in, brings back a cup of coffee. MEREDITH’s face is in her hands.

Summer

Long night?

meredith

Oh, you know, I bought a house near here.

summer

Oh, congratulations!

meredith

Just moved in yesterday. Spent my first night there last night, all alone. Kind of creepy.

summer

Where is it, out in the woods someplace? Lots of strange noises and creaky stuff out there. You’ll get used to it.

meredith

It’s not just that.

(Summer waits)

I don’t know. I hate to actually say it. Like something else there, with me.

summer

Some thing?

meredith

I just need my coffee. First I drink the coffee. Then I say the things.

dissolve to:

Returns home with shopping, finds christmas party invite. Foster brother, girlfriend and daughter call from town – they’re here. she meets them in diner. He’s scratching off lottery tickets

cut TO:

ext house – day

MEREDITH, returning from a walk, finds a note taped to the door.

“Having friends over tonight -- holiday cocktails. Love it if you could join us.”

It is signed, “Your Friendly Neighborhood Blacksmith”.

Her cell phone rings.

meredith

What? No. No, not... No! There’s a diner in the village. I’ll meet you there.

int diner – day

PERCY, 20’s, feral, is scratching off lottery tickets on the table of the booth he occupies with COBY, 20’s, cute but aging fast, and CLEMENTINE, 3, their feisty daughter. Percy uncovers a winning ticket out of the pile. He shows Coby as MEREDITH walks up to the booth.

percy

Two bucks! There she is. Hey, foster mama!

meredith

Percy, what are you doing here? Hey Coby, hey Clementine. How are you, pretty girl?

clementine

I’m fine.

percy

We came to see you! Heard the news about the house. Finally pulled the trigger, huh? We’re dying to see it. You want to see maw maw’s new house, don’t you, Clem?

clementine

If I can make a snowman.

meredith

Heard the news? My house is private, ok? I don’t know why you looked me up. We don’t have any kind of connection. You’re not moving in.

percy

I’ve got a deal going near here that’ll wrap up in a couple of days. We were hoping we could spend that time together, catch up. Visit with Clementine while she’s still a baby.

clementine

Who says I’m a baby?

meredith

A deal? No. Are you fucking kidding me? Coby, I’m sorry but no. I don’t know what he told you.

coby

It was just for a day or two. No biggie. And then we’re out of here, back to Cali! We’re in the wind. You’ll never see us again.

meredith

(thinking)

Were you out there last night, knocking on the door?

percy

Just hit town, maw maw. Must’ve been somebody else.

meredith

I don’t even know where to begin. Look. I don’t owe you anything. We’re not connected. You can’t come to my house. Go to a motel. Or just turn yourselves in now. I’m sure you’re wanted for something. Or soon will be.

percy

So darlin’ Clementine winds up in foster care? Family tradition? That what you want for her?

int meredith’s room – evening

MEREDITH enters from the terrace, tosses her things aside, and heads for the bathroom. She is struck with a SUDDEN CHILL, enough to make her hug herself and look around for an explanation. She reaches up and feels the air conditioning outlet but nothing is coming out. She fiddles with the thermostat on the wall. It explains nothing. Still hugging herself, motionless now, Meredith darts her eyes around the room. Everything looks innocent, normal. But she is freezing.

She moves to the living room and throws a match in the fire she laid earlier, then crouches, warming herself.

cut to:

ext house and forest path – night

MEREDITH exits the house and heads up the path leading into the woods, a flashlight in her hand, which bores a hole in the thick dark. As she walks WORDS KEY ONTO THE SCREEN, fluttering:

Walking along

my shadow beside me

watching the moon

Christmas party at Quint’s, sees Scarlet there, drunk.

int quint’s house – night

MEREDITH, hair and makeup in order, circulates around the LARGE COLONIAL LIVING ROOM, a champagne flute in her hand, eyeballing the other guests, the décor, and her host as he mingles, while a big fire blazes in the open stone fireplace.

There is wrought iron everywhere: curtain rods, fireplace implements, art pieces on plinths of gossamer beauty made of beaten iron: a bouquet of iron roses, the petals all but dripping dew; lacy window coverings of steel.

VARIOUS ANGLES on SMALL KNOTS OF PEOPLE, standing with drinks in their hands, talking but also glancing around. They are youngish, mid twenties, up to sixties, all dressed in REINDEER SWEATERS, etc., appropriate for the occasion. And they all seem to be UNUSUALLY ATTRACTIVE.

No kids.

Meredith is speaking to a MAN WITH A DRINK.

man

We have our own, you might say, little society, up here. Like a club. We like our privacy. Not looking for attention.

quint

(approaches)

Welcome, welcome, merry Christmas, happy holidays.

MAN withdraws.

meredith

Thank you. Such a lovely home.

quint

You think so? We’ve had it for centuries. Literally. So how have things been going in your new home? How are you holding up?

meredith

Oh, there’s a settling-in process. Lots of noises and creaking to get used to. I’ve never lived out in the woods like this before.

quint

Creaking noises?

meredith

(admitting)

No, there’s more. Shadows. Feelings. But why bring all this up now, at your Christmas party? Everything looks so perfect!

quint

We have a special interest in matters like that. A number of us live in old houses, and we talk those things over from time to time.

meredith

Someone else mentioned a club.

As they talk Meredith notices that all eyes in the room seem to be on her and Quint. Were they studying them, gauging their interaction? Or were they just waiting for her to leave? Either way, she began to feel uncomfortable.

QUINT is chatting with SCARLET, 30’s, professional. He notices Meredith and brings Scarlet over to introduce them.

quint

Meredith is our newest homeowner in the neighborhood. She bought the big house with the old inn. Scarlet is good to know, but watch your step. She’s a lawyer.

SCARLET

E pluribus unum. And welcome!

meredith

Hello. Thanks. I just moved in yesterday. What does that mean, anyway?

scarlet

Damned if I know. How are you settling in?

meredith

Takes some getting used to. You know, weird noises and stuff.

scarlet

Are you kidding? This place is spook central. Everything that goes bump in the night. The good citizens hung some witches here way back when, and ever since, the powers of darkness have been abroad in the land.

meredith

You’re saying my house is haunted?

scarlet

I never heard that, but there’s usually a story attached to every old building up here.

meredith

I have to admit, I did not know that reputation when I bought the place. It wouldn’t have mattered, though. Makes it interesting.

scarlet

Well, it gives me the willies.

Scarlet withdraws and melts in to the crowd.

Quint notices Meredith standing alone, and approaches.

Meredith

I think it’s time I started back. Kind of a long walk in the dark.

quint

I don’t like to think of you all alone in that big place. You have my number. Call me if you want company.

meredith

Alone? Feeling alone is not the problem, believe me.

Quint walks Meredith to the front door, retrieves her coat from the closet. As this happens the other party goers stand and begin to make for a closed door that leads down to the cellar.

Scarlet and Meredith walk home from the party through the woods. Creepy. Scarlet drunk, unaware.

ext quint’s house – night

MEREDITH switches her flashlight on, sweeps the yard, and finds the path that leads back to her house.

ext path – night

Meredith walks home along the forest path, her tiny flashlight boring a feeble shallow hole into the looming night.

Foster son is there, on the porch. Scarlet is put to bed. Foster son points out legal notice affixed to door. She gets rid of them.

Ext meredith’s house – night

As she approaches she sees silhouetted movement through the curtains in the lighted living room.

Clementine sees a ghost.

int front door – night

MEREDITH tries the front door. It is unlocked. She opens it and finds Percy, Coby, and Clementine.

Percy

Merry Christmas! Who’s your friend?

(Scarlet staggers a little)

You’ve been celebrating!

coby

I’m sorry, Meredith. We’re not staying. It’s just that it’s Christmas.

(indicates Clementine with an eyebrow)

We thought you’d give us a break.

meredith

What. The. Fuck. Are you doing in my house? You broke in? This is not okay. I’m calling the cops.

scarlet

Hey, it’s okay. Are these your relatives? What’s your name?

clementine

Clementine.

scarlet

Wow, that’s pretty cute.

clementine

It’s a kind of orange.

scarlet

Let them stay the night anyway.

meredith

They can get a motel. It’s not my problem. You don’t understand.

In the morning, she and Scarlet go for breakfast. Meredith mentions her foster care background. Diana introduces herself

Diana

(slow smile)

That’s yours now, is it?

meredith

(something about the smile irks Meredith)

What?

diana

Oh it’s got an interesting history, your house. You came to the right place! Important building at one time, long ago. Post office, town hall, hotel.

(mildly)

There was even a witch executed there they say. Strung up right in front of the door. Who really knows though, Maine is full of old wives’ tales.

(indicating Quint)

What about your friend?

quint

(speaking of himself)

He has the house at the end of the road. Past Meredith. Towards the beach.

meredith

What can you tell me about the place?

diana

You saw something, didn’t you? This isn’t just an idle question. Who was it? Was it the White Witch? Was it the Sisters?

int diner – day

MEREDITH, despondent, slips in and finds a seat. In the next booth, sipping a tea, is DIANA, this time facing Meredith, her eyes as calm and steady as her expression. SUMMER, the waitress, approaches with the coffee pot that grows out of her hand.

SUMMER

Hey, welcome back. How are the ghosts doing?

MEREDITH’S face crumples in slow motion and finally she stops fighting it and buries her face in her hands. Summer is shocked.

SUMMER

(cont.)

I’m sorry, honey. That was so stupid. I’m the one who should be burned at the stake.

diana

They weren’t burned at the stake. They were hanged.

Meredith and Waitress turn and look at her in amazement.

diana

(cont.)

They were hanged for what they did, or what others did. But not burned, not till after they stopped dancing and they cut them down.

SUMMER

OK, that’s enough, Diana.

meredith

(interested)

Who are you?

diana

(regards Meredith calmly. She is in command)

Take some good advice, young girl. If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

Diana drops some money on the table and rises.

summer

Please, Diana, she’s upset.

diana

(to Meredith, kindly)

The end of Maiden Lane. Can you remember? Come see me.

Diana leaves without looking back.

meredith

What was that?

SUMMER

Diana? Don’t let her upset you, one of our local crazies, too much time alone in the woods.

Dissolve to:

Quint asks Meredith on a date, for a lobster dinner

ext path – day

MEREDITH, on the path headed toward the ocean, meets QUINT near his house.

quint

Good morning!

meredith

Good morning to you.

Quint

I’ve been meaning to ask you. What are your views on crustaceans?

meredith

You mean like lobsters? Steely detachment. Kill them and eat them, I say.

quint

I’m going out to the waterfront for dinner tonight. An old lobster shack. Very primitive. Friend of mine. It would be an assimilative experience for you, living in Maine and all. Would you like to join me?

meredith

(Appraising him)

I’m not fucking you.

quint

I wasn’t asking…

meredith

Yes you were. Sure. Let’s sacrifice some lobsters.

A creepy feeling that grows. Loud noises, glimpses

int meredith’s bedroom – day – later

MEREDITH makes her bed using linens she tears out of packages from the store. She straightens abruptly and hugs herself. It’s so cold in here! Checks the thermostat on the wall, bumps it up a little.

As she bends over her luggage, unpacking, Meredith FEELS A TOUCH ON HER NECK. She straightens, turns around sharply. Nothing is there. Then she notices the string hanging from the overhead light. She smiles, feeling silly.

dissolve to:

int house various – day – later

The “Welcome Home” SIGN hung over the mantel is prominent throughout.

SHOTS OF MOVING IN CONTINUE AS MEREDITH carries the rest of her things in from the car, pushes furniture into new alignments, lays a fire in the fireplace, dusts, sweeps, and opens every door. IN THE FREEZER is the stack of TV dinners she put there, nothing else. She takes out the whole stack and flips through them, picking one.

int house – night

Her pace has slowed as she settles in. As night falls MEREDITH takes a last long, lingering look into the forest from her front porch, happy and deeply satisfied, then firmly shuts the door, locking it. She walks through the house to the back slider and locks it, pulling the drapes across. She glances around the house to make sure it is secure.

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int living room – night

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int bedroom – night

MEREDITH OPENS THE DOOR and enters, switching on the light. Again, instinctively, she hugs herself. It’s so cold in here! She sets her purse on the nightstand, undresses, puts on sweat pants, socks, and a sweatshirt, heads into the connected master bathroom.

CUT TO:

MEREDITH emerges from the bathroom, turns on the lamp on the nightstand, shuts off the overhead light with the switch beside the doorway, and climbs into bed. She draws the covers up to her chin. After a moment of satisfaction and gratitude, she reaches over and snaps off the lamp. In the gloom CAMERA TILTS DOWN from the lamp to include her open purse on the nightstand. Barely visible inside is the glint of something metal.

ext house – night

LONG CRANE SHOT of MEREDITH’S house, nestled in tall trees, over a calm protected inlet. From the middle distance the red light from her dying fire looks isolated and fragile in a huge, dark, looming landscape. Yet in the foreground, silhouetted against the sky, a squirrel gnaws on an acorn.

I need information about the house.

CUT TO:

int living room – day

Meredith is giving Scarlet a cup of tea.

meredith

Thanks for coming by!

They settle on the sofa to talk.

scarlet

At your service.

meredith

scarlet

I don’t know much. A couple owned it for a short time before you. There was a story they were going to turn the old wing into an AirBnB.

meredith

What happened to them?

Scarlet

(shakes her head, palms to the sky)

The way I heard it, at a certain point they stopped getting the mail, stopped turning the lights on at night, stopped shopping in town. People got curious. The cops came out one day, and they were gone. Furniture, pots and pans, paper towel rolls. Gone. Eventually the property reverted back to the county as abandoned, and the court sold it. You were the lucky winner.

Meredith gets up, opens the big slider, walks out onto the porch. Scarlet follows.

meredith

The more I hear, the less I know. Are there any stories about the house itself?

scarlet

Not my area of expertise. It’s haunted, of course. All the old houses here are. Or so they say, whoever they are. This place goes back to Pilgrim times. Of course in this case the county was the seller, and they would have no obligation to pass along rumors of a haunting to a buyer. I don’t see how you could reverse the sale.

meredith

I don’t want to reverse the sale. It’s not a legal issue. Look.

Meredith takes Scarlet by the hand, walks her over to the bedroom door and opens it. She takes a couple of steps inside. Her breath is visible in the frigid air.

Dinner at the lobster shack. She talks about the legal problem and her problems and how the house solves them. He tries to scare her with tales of the ghosts. Making out but no sex. Then home alone.

meredith

I come from the ramen and tube steak school, so no, not a big problem.

quint

Tell me, what do you know about the house you bought? Its history?

meredith

Nothing, except it was available, quiet, isolated. And historic. I love the fact that it’s been there for centuries. Someplace where I can belong, be part of something. I bought it sight unseen, you know. Apparently the owner had died.

quint

The original building is very old, back to pilgrim times. The father who built it died and left it to his three daughters. Around that time was the whole witchcraft scare, like in Salem? That’s not far from here. Late 1600’s.

meredith

You’re giving me the creeps.

quint

They say there were real witches back then, people saw what they could do. I’m leading up to the house.

meredith

Accused witches were just women who used natural herbs to heal people. Mostly they were burned because somebody wanted their property. Or some guy they turned down on a Saturday night.

quint

That’s the tree-hugger version. The full truth is much darker. There’s more to this world than meets the eye, and strange and dangerous people who learn to control it. And not for our benefit.

meredith

Now I am creeped out.

quint

I invited myself over and ruined your dinner. My work here is done, I can see. Drop by the forge when you’re on a walk sometime.

meredith walks home alone, at night. as she gets there, the light goes out

ext path – night

THE MOON has waned to barely a sliver, none of its light reaching the forest floor. MEREDITH walks in darkness, her flashlight boring a hole through the solid featureless void. The blackness seems to close in on her and she casts the powerful beam around rapidly, trying to catch something moving, trying to confirm what she feels, that she is not alone.

In the middle distance, silhouetted by an open patch of sky, what looks like a WITCH sits on a high branch much too thin to support her, watching. There are optical illusions and dark rabbit holes to suck in the unwary everywhere.

Eventually Meredith sees the LIGHT she has left burning on the porch for her return. She enters the clearing and stands at its edge, looking at her house.

The LIGHT GOES OUT. Meredith stands in darkness. Her flashlight beam looking terribly impotent in the looming dark. She spends a long moment SENSING whether anyone – anything – is there. Then she squares her shoulders and walks up to the house, onto the porch, and in the front door.

int bedroom – night

MEREDITH OPENS THE DOOR, reaching in to turn on the light. On the far wall is a fleeting shadow, waist tall. It is gone in the blink of an eye.

Meredith stands rooted to her spot in the open doorway. But the shadow if it had really been there does not return. She walks in and turns all the lights on. She looks behind the drapes, in the closet, under the bed. There is no evidence of anything out of the ordinary.

She begins to calm down. It was only a glimpse of an image, maybe it was nothing?

She TURNS AROUND SHARPLY, sensing something. But nothing is there.

She gets ready for bed, lies down, turns the light out.

The faint sound of the spinet. Hail on the roof starts almost immediately, drowning it out. Her house and dream slipping away.

int living room – afternoon

MEREDITH is translating poetry in the room by the fire, but she is uneasy with the feeling that she is not alone, that she is being watched. She gets up, goes to the bedroom door, opens it, turns the lights on. No one is there. She leaves it open with the lights on and returns to her books.

ext meredith’s house – long shot – night – later

The house is dark and quiet in the dark wood, silvery moonlight reflecting off the snow in patches full of dark shadows. A curl of smoke wisps out of the chimney as the fire dies out. The forest is still, no shadows moving.

int meredith’s bedroom – night

MEREDITH is fast asleep, the room dark except for moonlight coming through the window. It is quiet, peaceful, the faint natural sound of the forest outside penetrating the walls.

Meredith moves slightly on the bed. She makes a small sound. Another movement, along with a sound. Soon her hips are moving back and forth. She is moaning a little. Then more, louder. Regular rhythm, increasingly frantic. It is clear the end is approaching.

On top of her, the sheet is unblemished. But Meredith, alone in bed, is having sex with an unseen partner. Gradually as she nears the climax she AWAKENS.

Panting, still moving in the bed, she looks around, confused. She cries out!

No one is there.

Sitting up in bed, Meredith tries to clear her head in the moonlit gloom, tries to absorb what happened, still not fully awake.

A SOUND LIKE A RIFLE SHOT! Meredith swims back from a deep sleep. ANOTHER SHARP CRACK! Meredith sits up slowly, trying to orient herself. What is really happening? Is she dreaming? The pace of the sounds increases and becomes a steady loud drumbeat like loud hard rain. Meredith gets out of bed and looks out the window. Hundreds of hard objects are bouncing off her roof and onto the snowy ground. She cannot make out what they are.

Then, just as terrifying, as suddenly as the shower of rocks began, IT STOPS.

int house – night – various

Meredith flings off the covers and jumps out of bed. She bangs her bedroom door open and marches across the silent living room towards the door to the old part of the house. Behind her embers glow red in the fireplace. Furious, she jerks the door. It’s no lighter in the library, but the moonlight is enough. Meredith stares at the staircase. It is empty.

meredith

(screaming)

Fuck you!

She waits for a response but there is nothing.

meredith

Fuck you I said!

ext house – night – same

MEREDITH exits the house carrying a flashlight. The snow around the house is pockmarket with big holes. The porch has fist-sized chunks of ice scattered on it. Beyond a perimeter around the house the snow is virginal and untouched. The hail fell here on the house, and no where else.

PAN FROM clean untouched snow to pocked snow around house as MEREDITH contemplates the scene.

meredith

You picked the wrong girl, fucker. I have no where else to go! You’re going to have to kill me.

ANGLE ON MEREDITH as she lowers herself onto the steps, slowly breaks down, and weeps. Her dream, her need for safety, and stability, and belonging, all dashed away at the moment of triumph. She has achieved her dream, her house, and it is uninhabitable.

She sobs like a lost child, alone in the world. But slowly Meredith’s aspect changes. Her brows knit, her jaw sets, her hand balls into a fist. She marches through the front door back into the house.

Meredith will stay and fight

int living room – night

Horrible, animalistic noises tear through the room.

MEREDITH shakes her fist, shouting at no one, the house dark and empty.

meredith

I’m not leaving! Fuck you! I’m not leaving! This is my house! You can leave!

The noises stop.

fade to black

Act II

What will she do?

fade in:

Breakfast at the diner with Scarlet, make a plan

int diner – day

MEREDITH is sitting alone in a booth having breakfast. Scarlet enters the diner, cheerful and upbeat. They smooch over the table, and Scarlet sits and joins her.

scarlet

How can you live there? I would be scared to death every minute.

meredith

I’m not moving out. It would have to be pretty bad.

scarlet

It’s like some kind of vermin, rats or something, ruining the property for you.

meredith

Rats would be easy. What we need is information.

Scarlet is looking at her phone.

scarlet

Ghostbusters. I’m not kidding. Paranormal. I wouldn’t trust these people to tell me the time.

meredith

I have a publisher! Lots of books and authors. Every topic in the world. I bet they could give me a number.

Meredith thumbs a message into her phone.

Professor Acton

ext meredith’s car outside diner – day – same

MEREDITH and SCARLET are climbing into the car when Meredith’s phone beeps a message alert.

meredith

Here it is.

(thumbs the screen, holds the phone to her ear as it dials)

Hello? This is… Yes. I’m calling… They told you. Great. Let me explain the problem.

PROFESSOR ACTON

Some sort of manifestation at your home, I take it.

meredith

Terrifying. I just moved in. But it’s centuries old.

PROFESSOR ACTON

It’s hard to say anything useful at a distance. The first step would be to discover who they are ghosts of? Who were they in real life? Then, what do they want?

meredith

How do we do that?

PROFESSOR ACTON

Well, that’s going to be the problem, isn’t it? Newspaper stories, historical society items, local legends. Not an easy problem, and full of false trails.

ext rugby pitch – day

There is snow under the trees on the sidelines, and the spectators, standing and stamping their feet, are bundled to the eyebrows with parkas, scarfs, and hats. On the pitch two teams do battle. There is a lot of contact, scrum after scrum in midfield.

SCARLET and MEREDITH walk to the sidelines from the parking lot. Meredith approaches a MAN standing near the team’s equipment and asks a question. The man points at a player. Meredith returns to Scarlet.

meredith

He’s out there. It’s almost halftime.

An outcry and the game stops momentarily as an injured player is helped off the field by his teammates, his uniform muddy and his face bleeding.

meredith

I think that’s him.

ext rugby pitch bench – day -- continuous

PROFESSOR ACTON sits on the bench as COACH examines his forehead above the eye. BLOOD is streaming down his face, which is muddy and red from exertion.

coach

Yeah. I can glue it or sew it.

PROFESSOR ACTON

I don’t want that glue getting in my bloodstream.

coach

Right.

COACH rummages around in a large plastic tackle box containing first aid supplies. Coach threads a curved needle with black thread. Throughout this scene he continues to stitch PROFESSOR ACTON’s eyebrow.

PROFESSOR ACTON

(to Meredith)

Were you waiting for me?

meredith

Excuse me. You’re Dr. Acton? We spoke earlier.

PROFESSOR ACTON

Oh yes. The haunting.

meredith

Possibly. I mean, if there is such a thing.

PROFESSOR ACTON

Ok. Tell me what’s been happening.

meredith

I feel like I’m not alone, like I’m being watched. And it’s always freezing in my bedroom, seriously, really cold. I keep almost seeing things out of the corner of my eye. Does this sound as stupid and hysterical as it sounds to me?

scarlet

I’ve felt it too. The cold.

PROFESSOR ACTON

And you are?

meredith

She’s my bodyguard.

PROFESSOR ACTON

This sort of thing is not as unusual as you might imagine. A highly localized manifestation like this, with associated temperature changes and the feeling of a presence often means the remains are nearby.

meredith

Remains? Do you mean some kind of a grave?

PROFESSOR ACTON

They often go together. Current theories posit a physical “death marker” in the local environment, that then is perceived in a culturally specific way, but is a psychological reaction to evidence that someone has died nearby.

meredith

Who? Who died? I don’t know how to go forward.

PROFESSOR ACTON

I would start with research. Who owned the house before? What happened to them? What do they want?

Historical society

ext historical society – day

MEREDITH and SCARLET pull up and park in front of an old Gothic style stone building in the village, on a leafy street with lots of shadows. A bronze cast plaque announces: “Down East Historical Society” to those with an interest. Meredith tries the door. It’s open.

secretary

Hello and welcome, please come in. How can I help?

meredith

I just moved into a house locally and I was hoping to be able to research its history, find out what I could about who may have lived there over the years.

secretary

Wonderful! And welcome again. Now let’s see… What’s the address?

meredith

99, Old Kings Highway. Out near the coast.

secretary

That seems to ring a bell. Could it be…

She goes into the stacks in the rooms behind her desk. Alone, Scarlet flashes a boob at Meredith. They are nearly caught.

secretary

One of the things we’re known for, unfortunately, is the executions in 1692.

meredith

The witches.

secretary

You’ve heard then.

meredith

I saw that plaque on the old lighthouse.

secretary

That was the place of execution, quite right. But they didn’t live there, the two women. They lived in your house.

Meredith

My house!

secretary

They weren’t witches, of course. There are no such things as witches. Just women living alone in a house in the woods. It would have been a lot more lively back then judging by the address: The Kings Highway. Must have been a busy spot.

Meredith

What can you tell me about the house?

secretary

(flipping through her books)

At one time it was a chapel. Then a public house. That was when the sisters owned it, apparently. After about 1750 I don’t see any records, probably it remained in private hands.

scarlet

What about this witch business?

secretary

Witchcraft is not my area, I’m afraid.

scarlet

But why here? Why witches here? It’s not something you hear about in every town in New England.

secretary

That’s a fair question. Since colonial days we’ve had a group of, you could call them researchers, into forbidden topics. It began with one bad apple, apparently, and it exists to this day.

meredith

Is any of this connected to the ghosts?

secretary

There are no ghosts, or goblins, or witches. But there are people with a lot to lose by being exposed. You should keep that in mind if you’re going to pursue this. Now, was there anything else?

ext historical society – day – same

MEREDITH and SCARLET are walking to the car.

meredith

You know, there was a woman in the diner the other morning. Kind of creepy actually. She seemed to know about my problem. “Come and see me,” she said.

scarlet

Do you know her name? Or how to find her?

meredith

She gave the location. The end of Maiden Lane. The waitress said she was just a local crazy.

scarlet

What do you think we sound like?

Who is Scarlet?

Meet diana’s current slave

Diana’s house, convo in the clearing: Ghosts unmasked

ext diana’s house – afternoon

DESCRIBE

DIANA emerges from the dark under a stand of trees as MEREDITH and SCARLET walk up the path towards her house.

meredith

Good afternoon. Do you remember me, from the diner?

Diana smiles.

meredith

(cont’d)

I’m, I’m having a problem in my new house.

diana

Yes.

meredith

I don’t really know how to begin. But you did mention to come and see you. So maybe…

diana

I understand.

meredith

There seems to be some kind of, manifestation.

diana

You have ghosts in your house. You have a haunting.

meredith

I feel sure, but still, it’s ridiculous, isn’t it?

diana

Walk with me.

She leads Meredith and Diana into the edge of the forest, where there are benches made of split logs spread around a clearing. A stone firepit in the center is full of cold ashes. Further back under the trees is a large flat boulder, the size of a small car, barely seen in the gloom.

ext diana’s forest clearing – afternoon – continuous

The three women take seats on the benches.

meredith

What a lovely spot.

diana

I have a group of friends and we meet here at times. It suits our purposes. Who’s your pretty friend?

meredith

Scarlet, meet Diana. Diana, Scarlet. Scarlet is my attorney.

diana

An attorney! Is someone to be put in irons?

meredith

This group. Are you…?

diana

We’re just as God made us. Isn’t that what you say in Church? Tell me about this house of yours. Where is it located?

meredith

Out on the old King’s Highway.

diana

(slow smile of recognition)

Oh yes. The Three Sisters.

scarlet

You know about the house?

diana

Everybody here knows about it, or should. The Sign of the Three Sisters. That was the old public house where the witches lived, their own house actually. The three sisters they executed at the lighthouse for witchcraft.

scarlet

Horrible. Is there any connection between that and the ghosts?

diana

What would be your guess?

meredith

Are you saying the ghosts of the three witches are haunting my house?

diana

You already know it’s true.

Meredith gets up, walks around the clearing a little. As she does, Scarlet speaks to Diana:

scarlet

What’s that structure over there? It looks like a little greenhouse.

diana

That’s where I keep my pets. No pets at the moment, I’m afraid. They live so much shorter lives than us.

ANGLE ON DIANA as she eyes Scarlet up and down, appraising her.

DIANA’S POV at Scarlet. Camera takes a long, lingering tilt up and down her body, slightly DUTCH.

meredith

(returning to the conversation)

What is it they want?

diana

It’s their house. You’re in the way.

meredith

What can be done about this?

diana

You could leave. Like I said, it’s their house.

meredith

(stiffens)

It’s my house. My home. I’m not leaving.

diana

(transfixes her with her gaze)

You’re prepared to fight? Will you pay a price? Think it over. Anyway, it’s getting dark. You don’t want to be caught in these woods after dark.

meredith

(rising)

Can you give me any advice? Is there anything I can do tonight?

diana

There are some common measures. They don’t work. What you need is help.

Int living room – day

MEREDITH is at her laptop, leaning in. This is how she solves problems: research.

She is poking around on GOOGLE:

INSERT LAPTOP SCREEN showing Google search results for searches “Ghosts Of Maine”, “Get Rid Of Ghosts”, “Ghosts Harmful”.

ANGLE ON SCREEN as she flips through a couple of websites for real-life ghostbusters. They seem ridiculous.

ANGLE ON SCREEN as she lands on a forum page. She opens a message box and types in a message:

“witches’ ghosts”

She hits “Post”.

Pregnant girlfriend calls, raises the stakes. A black cat starts hanging around the house. She adopts it

Fighting back: countermeasures from online, plus HVAC guy

Int living room – day – later

CUT THROUGH SEVERAL SHOTS OF COUNTERMEASURES:

Puts a bowl of salt under the bed

Pours a line of salt across the front and rear threshholds.

Finds a piece of rope in the kitchen drawer, cuts it with scissors, lights an end on fire, blows it out, and then goes around the house waving the smoking end in all the rooms

The cat watching something moving in an empty room, and reacting to the closed bedroom door

Scarlet calls, wants to come over and deliver news. She starts at sound of phone

int house – night

scarlet

Hi client! What’s up in your world? Want to go for a drink?

meredith

More than I want dimples in my cheeks. Is this going to be an attorney-client thing?

scarlett

Oh, I hope not.

Meredith brings Scarlet into her bedroom, it’s freezing cold. Scarlet is mortally frightened at first, then begins talking to someone, feels hot, languid, takes her clothes off, offers to serve… Terrifying because we can’t see the other side of her conversation. Scarlet back to normal, no memory of it

int meredith’s bedroom – night

MEREDITH is in bed, asleep. She is awakened by the sound of chains dragging on the floor, clanking slightly.

meredith

Go away! It’s not going to work. I’m not leaving. Just drop it.

Foster son and pregnant girlfriend show up, she throws them out. Hand holding incident

ext living room window – night

ANGLE THROUGH THE WINDOW, ACROSS THE DARKENED LIVING ROOM AND THROUGH THE BEDROOM DOOR to reveal SCARLET and MEREDITH in bed together, making out passionately. They are in a warm, reddish and flickering pool of light thrown by candles on the nightstand next to Meredith. Small lamps in the living room do little to dispel the dark shadows that have grown as the fire burned down.

int bedroom – night – same

SCARLET and MEREDITH are in bed, embracing. Without warning all the lights go out, including the candles. Through the open bedroom door the very dim glow of the dying embers in the fireplace is the only visible light. Scarlet snatches Meredith’s hand, holds it tight. Meredith is shivering with fear, and her hand feels clammy. They sit in the dark for a moment, listening, waiting for what’s next. From the dark living room comes a voice.

scarlet’s voice

(from the next room)

Meredith?

Meredith jumps out of her skin. If that’s Scarlet in the next room, whose hand is she holding?

scarlet’s voice

(from the next room)

Meredith? Come out to the fire.

Meredith drops the hand, feels in the nightstand for matches, and lights the candle on the nightstand.

Scarlet lies beside her in bed, apparently asleep. Meredith gets out of bed, taking the candle, and ventures into the living room. Holding the candle high, she inspects the dark corners of the shadowy room. There is no one there. Defeated, Meredith sits down on the floor in front of the fireplace, curls up in front of the embers and hugs her knees.

Eventually Meredith gets up, takes the candle with her, and returns to the bedroom. Scarlet is in bed asleep. She awakes and turns to Meredith.

scarlet

What?

meredith

Nothing. I was dreaming.

Knocked in the head, lands in fireplace, Scarlet saves her

int meredith’s living room – night

MEREDITH is dressing to go out with Scarlet. She has a vampy dress on and walks across the living room, putting earrings on, her back to the bedroom. STRUCK A SUDDEN BLOW IN THE HEAD FROM BEHIND, Meredith falls to the floor, unconscious, inches from the fire in the fireplace. Beside her the wrought iron Eye of Horus rolls to a stop, crumpled and mangled. She lies there, out cold.

ext beach – dream sequence – day

MEREDITH is on the beach below the lighthouse. She is moving and thinking in slow motion, MOS. She sees the LITTLE GIRL in the distance. The girl is standing on the ocean, far from shore. The girl BECKONS.

CUT TO:

int meredith’s living room – night – seconds later

ANGLE ON FRONT DOOR

SCARLET knocks, then tries the door and opens it.

scarlet

Hello? Meredith?

ext beach – dream sequence – day -- same

The vision of the little girl and the sunny beach BLURS.

int meredith’s living room – night – continuous

Scarlet sees Meredith unconscious by the fire. Strands of hair are on fire. She drags her away from the fire, rolls her onto her back. She runs to the refrigerator, finds a bottle of water, returns to Meredith and pours it on her head and face. Meredith regains consciousness. Scarlet puts a sofa pillow under her head.

meredith

What happened?

scarlet

Are you ok? You almost got burnt. It’s ok, it’s nothing. Do you remember anything? Did you faint?

meredith

I never faint.

Meredith turns to look at the fireplace and sees the mangled Eye of Horus on the floor. She drags it over.

scarlet

What is that?

(probes around on Meredith’s scalp)

Wait, let me look. You’re bleeding a little. There’s a pretty good egg here. Did that thing fall on you?

meredith

It tried to kill me.

scarlet

What tried to kill you?

Meredith goes to Diana for help, annoys her

ext. diana’s front door – day

MEREDITH KNOCKS and after a pause DIANA opens the door. She looks at Meredith but doesn’t say a word.

meredith

I came to find out about my house.

diana

Your house! I guess you better come in.

She moves away from the door, making a path.

meredith

I have to enter of my own free will, is that it?

diana

It will speed things up. Unless you want to talk standing out there.

Diana walks in.

INT. DIANA’s HOUSE – day – CONTINUOUS

DIANA settles into an armchair by the fire.

diana

What have you been hearing about me?

meredith

That you’re a witch

diana

A witch! I took you for a serious person.

meredith

I don’t know anything. I’m just trying to gather information. What can you tell me about my house?

diana

(lights a hand rolled cigarette from a pile on the table, stares through the smoke)

So you’ve met Elizabeth.

meredith

Who is Elizabeth? Let me rephrase that. Who the fuck is Elizabeth?

diana

Let me just set you straight first. If I am what you say I am, wouldn’t you be much more prudent to take care the way you talk to me?

Meredith walks over by the fireplace and takes a chair. Diana gets up and moves into the kitchen. Camera can see Meredith in her chair and the open kitchen doorway. Diana puts a tea kettle on the fire. Her back is to Meredith throughout.

Diana

Who is that with you?

meredith

(Shocked)

Don’t try to creep me out.

diana

(re-entering the room with her tea)

It seems like a little girl. Quiet. Sad. I don’t think she likes you.

meredith

There’s nobody here.

diana

Is that what you saw in the house? That must’ve spooked you. They can be very frightening when they want to.

meredith

They? Who is they? Is this that silly story about the witches they hung four hundred years ago?

diana

Is that the way you talk to your students at school? You’re used to being in charge, I think. Well, you’re not in charge now. You don’t want to irritate me, miss.

(she hooks her thumb at the front door)

Party’s over.

Meredith rises. She wants to say something but bites her tongue.

int. meredith’s car – day

It has begun to SNOW. MEREDITH cranks and cranks the engine, at first expectantly, but then hopelessly, as the battery runs down and the WINDSHIELD covers with snowflakes.

Meredith gets out of the car and walks back to Diana’s front door. She knocks. No reply. She takes a step back from the door. Smoke has begun to rise out of the chimney. Meredith fishes her cell phone out of her bag.

int. coffee shop – evening

MEREDITH joins SCARLET, who waits for her in a booth.

scarlet

Well? What did you find out?

meredith

Not what you think. OK, what you think, but also, I made a new enemy.

Professor again: false ally gives bad advice downplaying witches and giving pseudo scientific explanations to gaslight her into helping the little girl

Diana’s house, alone this time. Diana asks for a commitment; she wants Scarlet as her pet. She says Meredith owns her at present

ext day – diana’s house

MEREDITH walks up the Maiden Lane path towards the end. A LONG SHOT INCLUDES HER IN THE FOREGROUND, and back on the main road, PART OF A CAR PARKING. Meredith seems hesitant, unsure, and frightened. DIANA is outside in her overgrown garden, cutting weeds with a snipper.

meredith

Sorry for tracking you down. I’m having a problem.

Diana goes on with her work.

meredith

There’s a disturbance happening in my house.

diana

Yes.

meredith

You know? Have you heard of this? Do you know the story?

diana

I don’t have time to waste. I can help you but kindergarten is out. If you want my help you’ll pay me a dreadful price.

meredith

What? Slow down a second. What are we even talking about? Slow the fuck down.

diana

It makes no difference to me. You can try to live with them, see what happens to you. Maybe you’ll be different. Or you can accept my terms.

meredith

What terms? My soul?

diana

That’s the right attitude. Not your soul. But you will deliver something of great value.

meredith

What?

diana

I’ll explain everything.

meredith

Deliver, how?

diana

Agree.

meredith

Do you want me to sign it in blood or something? What do I get?

diana

You must be very brave, to speak to me like that.

meredith

No disrespect. I’m frightened and my house is slipping away. What about my problem?

diana

Your house has been infested for hundreds of years. I can scatter them like leaves in the wind. Or I can show you how.

meredith

This is all sounding very dark and psychotic, actually.

Diana

You’ve just peeked through the keyhole. Soon they’ll throw the door wide open and drag you in. You will drown in your own fear. Have they started to hurt you yet?

meredith

I don’t think the dark arts thing is for me. I better say no thanks. But thanks. Thanks for your time. I’m just going to leave now, and walk away, if that’s ok.

diana

You won’t like that outcome. You came here. Now commit.

meredith

Nothing good can come from this.

Meredith turns and runs back toward her car. The parked car on the main road is gone. Diana watches her go, then closes the door.

Leaving Quint’s house, walking through the woods at night, local seer contacts her from message left. Let’s meet

Someone at the door. That person may not have been real

Scarlet, true ally, gives her the secret knowledge she needs (witches are quite real, and malevolent, here and now) but it’s inadequate and she is almost destroyed

Quint comes calling, they walk out to the lighthouse

ext meredith’s house – day

ANGLE ON BLACK CAT IN THE SNOW, as MEREDITH sees QUINT walking up the path and comes out, already bundled up.

quint

Ready?

meredith

Ready like Freddie. Where should we go?

They BEGIN WALKING down the footpath through the woods.

QUINT

Let’s go down and look at the lighthouse.

At a distance, and indirectly, the black cat seems to follow.

She goes for a walk, enters the open forge, he’s not there, she looks behind a partition, finds the shackles etc.

Scarlet texts her she has penetrated the corporation concealing the legal notice: it is Quint. This investigation has jeopardized Scarlet

Silly séance led by Quint and his diletantes in the lighthouse: Christmas eve. It turns real.

Need some significant objects for this

hulk

Do you believe in other worlds?

meredith

Excuse me? No, I don’t think so.

hulk

Can we see a hundred thousandth of what is around us? Ultraviolet, radio wave, these are commonplace now, studied and used, yet they are unseen. Imagine what other universes hide from us?

meredith

I think you fail to make your point, sir. Isn’t that an appeal to ignorance?

hulk

You have studied rhetoric?

quint

She’s a poet.

meredith

Thank you, just a translator.

hulk

Which of us is not? The unseen universe is all around us. Either we are alone in all the cosmos, a greasy smear on a tiny rock, or we are not alone. Both thoughts are equally terrifying.

girl on the beach again, in a vision during séance, turns out it’s real, she’s following girl into the freezing surf

ext beach below lighthouse – night – long shot

The group from the séance is making their way down the cliffside staircase to the beach below. Flashlights are waving.

various

Meredith! Can you hear us? Quiet, let her answer!

voice

There she is!

QUINT dashes ahead into the surf. MEREDITH is above her waist in the freezing waves, walking out to sea. He grabs her, sweeps her up into his arms, walks back out of the water to the beach. Meredith does not resist or respond.

The séance group gather around her as she is lit with flashlights. She is soaked, draped in Quint’s arms, eyes open but not responsive.

CUT TO:

Receives Notice to Vacate regarding challenge to the deed

All is lost. Nowhere to turn. Accepts Diana’s help

Tries to give up and leave but no where to go. shuts off the car and goes back inside

int quint’s living room – night

A log fire is leaping to life as MEREDITH sits up on the couch, draped with blankets, working on a mug of tea. Her hair hangs in streaks, still wet.

meredith

I’m done.

quint

You need a rest. Care.

meredith

Care? I’m done. I give up. I can’t fight this.

quint

Stay here tonight. Dry out. Rest. We can talk at breakfast.

meredith

I need to grab some stuff and leave, tonight. I have to leave.

quint

(thinks before answering)

You can’t walk back like that. I’ll have someone drive you.

She looks at him curiously.

quint

(Con’t)

I can’t. I have people here.

cut to:

ext meredith’s house driveway – night – later

Meredith’s ride from Quint’s house sits in his car as it idles in the driveway, waves of snowflakes drifting through the headlight beams. MEREDITH shuts off the lights and exits the house with a large beach tote, and a shoulder bag. She throws the tote bag into the trunk, the shoulder bag onto the front seat. She gets behind the wheel, takes a moment to breathe and collect herself. She turns the key in the ignition. The car cranks and cranks but won’t start.

Act III

True ally: waitress. witches are quite real, and quite malevolent

everything plays out now. All the machinery set up in act II unwinds here.

int diner – night

MEREDITH is done with her meal, the dishes still on the table as she leans forward talking to the waitress.

meredith

They have some kind of private club. Maybe more like a cult. What are they, devil worshippers?

SUMMER

You mean the swingers?

meredith

Swingers?

waitress

Everybody knows them around here. They have a swingers group, get together for orgies or whatever they do. I know some of them, though. Probably they wear blindfolds to get through it.

meredith

I thought they were Satanists.

SUMMER

Nothing that interesting has ever gone on around here.

meredith

What about the three witches they hung for no reason?

SUMMER

No reason? That’s not the way I heard it. Plenty of innocent women were killed that way, sure, but there were also ones who got what they deserved. Witches, evil through and through.

meredith

I thought they were just innocent victims.

SUMMER

Whoever has been telling you that is leading you astray.

Séance, the old ghosts leave

int. meredith’s house – night

(maybe bring in another character, a medium)

MEREDITH, DIANA, SCARLET, QUINT enter the old part of the house and wander through the sitting room, which is empty of furniture. DIANA pulls a brass candlestick with a candle in it from a shelf, lights the candle with a lighter, and places it on the floor. Eerie shadows and monster lighting ensue.

scarlet

This is where I saw it.

diana

They’re here with us. Can anyone feel it?

quint

What I feel is terrified. Isn’t that what I’m supposed to feel?

meredith

I don’t mean you any harm. But this is my house now.

scarlet

(struggling to breathe)

Our blood is in these boards.

meredith

Your time is past. There’s no place here for you now.

Back to normal, ghosts gone

Meredith, alone, sees an unmistakable but indirect sign that they’re back. In the garden, in water, in a fireplace flame, etc.

Meredith walks up to the house at night, enters, goes to bed, confronting the ghost

int. night – bedroom – third act

MEREDITH is awake in the dark, staring at the ceiling. She makes a decision, flings the covers back, and pulls on a pair of jeans.

ext. night – road

Pitch black, middle of the night, complete stillness, Meredith walks alone up the driveway to her house, looming slightly darker than the night sky. She is not carrying a flashlight or anything else, just walking up to the house.

As she reaches the porch steps her courage wavers and she hesitates. But she finds the guts and mounts the echoing porch steps in the dark, walking up to the front door.

Meredith puts her hand on the door knob. The silence is singing in her ears. Through the door glass she sees nothing moving inside. She grips the knob and turns.

int. night – meredith’s living room

There’s a perfect stillness throughout the house. Meredith, hyper-sensitive, listened and looked but there was nothing visible, nothing to hear. The empty room looked back at her, the closed doors leading out of the room.

Meredith squares her shoulders and walks through the dark room to the door to her bedroom. She grips the knob, twists, and opens it.

ext motel office – day

Through window

SCARLET is talking to the MANAGER, who shakes her head. Scarlet exits the office, looks down the row of rooms to the maid’s cart parked outside Meredith’s old room.

ext.meredith’s house – day

SCARLETT drives up the driveway and stops. She can see MEREDITH in an upstairs window. Meredith is looking down at her without a greeting.

quint

I don’t want you to leave. That’s the bottom line.

meredith

I don’t know how I even would leave. Without this house I’m broke. Anyway, that’s not happening.

CLIMAX: back to the beach, girl entices her, almost drowns. they do have power -- the power to deceive. but she saves herself

int nice restaurant – night

SCARLET enters the restaurant and spots MEREDITH, who is already seated at a table. Scarlet removes her coat and sits down. She’s looking pretty fabulous. It’s a warm greeting, but no air kisses: too real for that.

seduction then in the morning she slips something from diana into scarlet’s tea

int house – day

MEREDITH sets up her materials on a table by the window in the main room: books, a yellow pad, pen, highlighter, etc.

int closed room – night

CAMERA TRACKS down gloomy hallway towards door into closed room, which is ajar and through which light can be seen. Camera enters room and PANS LEFT, revealing a shimmering shadow motionless in the corner. Camera PANS RIGHT to reveal MEREDITH seated at her desk, a notepad and open books in front of her, calmly translating poetry. ON HER FACE as she struggles with a word, thinks of an answer and writes it down. Then she GLANCES towards the corner, happy.