

THE SHAMAN

BY:

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - NIGHT

POV: Running...

...in a blind panic, through a labyrinth of green...

...shards of silver moonlight, the only illumination...

...hands, clenching a pair of blood-stained knives, push the stalks aside...

...the sound of FOOTSTEPS, CRUNCHING the undergrowth - mixed with the sound of...

...ragged, staccato, BREATHS and a...

... haunting, sonorous, VOICE -- deep, malevolent -- coming from everywhere and nowhere:

VOICE (V.O.)

You go ahead and run, 'cause if we  
cross paths again, I'm gonna gut  
you, and lick your blood off the  
blade...

... followed by equally bone-chilling LAUGHTER (o.s.) - that rolls across the sky like thunder, over the fields...

...before finally subsiding, miles away, above:

EXT. MAGGIE LUJAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

A simple two-story, on the edge of a murky swamp. A lone sign of civilization perched at the precipice of something much older.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAWN

CLOSE - THE MANTLE: Pictures of a YOUNG RED-HAIRED WOMAN, standing beside an OLDER WOMAN in the expanse of the Sonoran desert.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: A dining table turned into a desk. An old couch against the wall, directly across from it - a large:

Terrarium. A pair of bright green Anole lizards, crawl across a piece of driftwood.

Seated at the table, one of the WOMEN in the photo: MAGGIE LUJAN -- now mid-50s, red hair streaked with gray, her face and manner bear the marks of years of solitude.

She's holding a steaming cup of coffee in one hand, lit cigarette in the other.

She looks past an open copy of the "Upanishads", and the newspapers clippings in front of her (each headline referring to a local disappearance), instead focusing her attention on a:

CLOSE - POST-IT NOTE: Martes 10:17 72

She takes a sip of coffee, continuing to stare at the Post-It:

MAGGIE  
(in Spanish)  
*Looks like today's the day.*

She sets the mug down, and with a little difficulty, rises to her feet.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
(in Spanish)  
*Might as well get this first part over with.*

EXT. ROAD - HIGHWAY 171 - DAWN

The sun hovers just above the horizon - barely visible behind gathering storm clouds.

A nearly empty two-lane highway. A black ribbon of asphalt bisects a large sugar cane field, bushy green stalks swaying gently in the summer breeze.

A Ford pick-up is the only vehicle on the road at this hour.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE behind the wheel. The truck filled with the sound of the engine, reluctant air-conditioning and:

RADIO  
Happy Tuesday Shreveport, this is  
KMJJ, ninety-nine point seven, up  
next we got somethin' from our own  
Jay Electronica...

Her gaze drifts toward a dilapidated billboard in the distance displaying the images of LEE MCKENNA: handsome, early 40s, and his son BRANDON, aged 9.

Under the images, fading text: Missing. Little Smoke Sheriff's Dept. Hotline: 800-347-8915

MAGGIE casts a glance at the darkening storm clouds on the horizon, then back at the road - where she spots a slender white mile marker:

CLOSE - MILE MARKER: 72

Then hazards a glance at the dashboard:

CLOSE - CLOCK: 10:17

She becomes visibly uneasy about her approaching destination.

MAGGIE  
(in Spanish)  
*Tuesday. Ten seventeen AM. Mile  
marker seventy-two.*

Reluctantly, she pulls the truck over to the side of the:

EXT. ROAD - HIGHWAY 171 - CONTINUOUS

The pickup comes to a stop. The door opens and MAGGIE takes a tentative step onto the road.

She fishes in her blouse for a cigarette. She lights it, and inhales, taking a long drag to calm her nerves.

She focuses her attention on the stalks of sugar cane.

Instead of swaying gently, the stalks start to move erratically, accompanied by the sound of SNAPPING.

MAGGIE summons the courage not to flee and remains rooted to the spot, eyes fixed on the area just across the road: Two pale hands, carrying blood-stained knives, emerge from the sea of green.

They find purchase on green leaves, then part the stalks.

A bearded sweaty MAN steps clear of the field: WENDELL BRIGGS, Caucasian, late 30s, a dirty plaid shirt, covered with dark crimson stains, eyes wild with fear.

Blood-stained hands shake violently, barely able to grip the strange, hand-crafted knives.

Wide-eyed and half-crazed, he staggers across the highway without looking. WENDELL finally spots MAGGIE, waiting patiently across the road.

WENDELL

Who are you?

MAGGIE

I've been dreaming about you every night for the last week, 'the voices' told me you'd be here, and maybe I could help. You can call me Maggie.

Hearing her explanation, WENDELL relaxes, loosens his grip on one of the knives, and it CLATTERS on the asphalt.

He looks down at his bloody, shaking hands, then back at MAGGIE and by way of explanation, offers:

WENDELL

They won't stop shaking.

He picks up the knife, slides it into his waistband and finishes crossing the road.

He reaches the pickup, just as all of his adrenaline dries up. Fatigue sets in. He leans against the pick-up for support. MAGGIE reaches out, helps steady him.

He looks at his hands again, still trembling, but less violently.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

They won't stop.

He casts his gaze at MAGGIE, looks at her imploringly, desperate for her to understand:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

They did things to me...

MAGGIE leans in towards him, looks deeply into his eyes, doesn't like what she sees:

MAGGIE

Maybe it's not too late, but you're...

(beat)

...right on the edge.

WENDELL'S not listening to her. His hands grab her firmly by the shoulders, making large red blood-stained handprints on her blouse. His eyes burn with animalistic fear:

WENDELL

I'm not going back.  
 (beat - urgently)  
 He's gonna lick my blood off the  
 blade.

Whoever's traumatized him, he's terrified of them...

EXT. LITTLE SMOKE, LOUISIANA - DAY

A cluster of dark cumulus clouds, amassing in the Louisiana sky.

Sitting between a lake of toxic sludge, and a grassy plain is a sugar processing plant: A collection of cement block buildings, massive tanks, a forest of steel pipes, and stacks spewing plumes of thick white smoke into the air.

**SUPER: One Year Earlier**

EXT. ROAD - HIGHWAY 171 - DAY

A WORKCREW finishes attaching the images of LEE and BRANDON to the roadside billboard.

A caravan of white vans, the letters: KTBS-TV, KTAL, and KSLA marked on the side - cruise down the road, into town, past:

ROAD SIGN: 'Welcome To Little Smoke. Population: 19,347'

EXT. PARKING LOT - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

Three television vans come to a stop in a parking lot. The side doors slide open, disgorging a trio of local news crews.

The REPORTERS emerge from the vans, taking a brief moment to fan themselves. After taking a moment to adjust to the heat, they set up facing a podium where:

A visibly distraught young woman in her early 30s, TERRI ANN MCKENNA, puffy red eyes, normally vibrant face drained of all color, stands at the microphone.

To her left is SHERIFF MIKE TOUSSAINT, mid 40s, physically fit, hair cut military short, brimming with so much confidence - it borders on arrogance.

To her right is a blown-up picture of TERRI ANN MCKENNA, her husband LEE MCKENNA, and son BRANDON in happier times.

TERRI ANN

...three weeks ago my husband Lee went to pick up our nine year old Brandon from school...

A beat as she collects her composure:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

... they never came home... if someone has taken them...

She looks directly into the camera:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...I love my son and husband very much, please return my baby and my husband to me...

She starts to choke up. She tries to finish her plea - but bursts into tears. When it's clear she can't continue, DETECTIVE TOUSSAINT gently moves her away from the microphone, then finishes her statement.

TOUSSAINT

...if you have any information about the whereabouts of Lee and Brandon McKenna...

CLOSE - TELEVISION MONITOR: TOUSSAINT'S hi-res image.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

...please contact the Little Smoke Sheriff's department at...

INT. KITCHEN - BRIGGS APARTMENT - DAY

The television is in the kitchen of WENDELL BRIGGS - now clean-shaven, well-groomed, business casual - a small town yuppie. Completely unlike the half-crazed, traumatized man he'll become in the space of a year.

He's at a small kitchen counter pouring a cup of coffee. He removes a small red jewelry box from his pocket, nervously opens it to reveal:

CLOSE - BOX: A diamond engagement ring.

His girlfriend LAURA, early 30s, professional, aloof, enters - and without greeting him, heads to the sink. He quickly pockets the box.

WENDELL

Did you hear about this? Happened  
right here.

LAURA avoids looking at him, instead glancing quickly at the  
television. She says wearily:

LAURA

People disappear down here all the  
time, go into the bayou and don't  
come out.

WENDELL

Shame what happened to that lady  
though, lost her family.

(beat)

If you and I ever had got married,  
had kids, I'd never let anything  
like that happen to you.

LAURA doesn't respond. There's an awkward silence between  
them.

LAURA

Like I said, people go missing down  
here. Sometimes the Earth just  
opens up and swallows 'em whole.

WENDELL looks at her strangely - she avoids his gaze and  
moves past him toward the sink. She removes wet dishes from  
the sink and arranges them on a rack in the dishwasher.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm going to be a little late  
tonight, so you're on your own for  
dinner.

WENDELL

Girls' night out?

She doesn't look back at him, her attention focused on the  
dishes in the dishwasher. She hesitates for a beat before  
answering. WENDELL doesn't notice her hesitation.

LAURA

No, just something I have to take  
care of.

With that she turns and exits, leaving him to finish watching  
the news story and his coffee. He raises the volume:

TOUSSAINT (O.S.)  
 ...we're asking the good citizens  
 of Little Smoke and the surrounding  
 communities to help us reunite the  
 McKennas...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

A collection of soulless glass and steel office buildings.

INT. SALES FLOOR - STEPIEN INDUSTRIES - DAY

A busy cubicle farm, the air is filled with the chatter of dozens of simultaneous conversations, SALESPeOPLE on the phone, everyone except:

WENDELL'S CUBICLE. His co-worker HARLAN SMITH, mid-30s, business casual, is leaning over the wall:

HARLAN  
 ...so I told her, "Hon, I'm like a  
 used car salesman.

WENDELL momentarily looks up from his monitor. He's smiling despite himself.

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
 No reasonable offer refused."

From their laughter, we intuit he wasn't talking about work. Their laughter stops abruptly when their supervisor JARED STEPIEN JR. arrives: late 20s, round-faced, entitled, arrogant. He turns to HARLAN:

STEPIEN  
 You already made your calls for the  
 day?

HARLAN  
 Just about to get back to it.

Then STEPIEN JR. directs his attention to WENDELL.

STEPIEN  
 Don't forget to update Salesforce  
 when you're done. Then I need to  
 talk to you. Stop by my office  
 today at five.

WENDELL  
 If this is about my numbers, I'm  
 about to close this deal with Humo.

STEPIEN  
Just stop by at five.

Without waiting for a reply he turns and leaves. HARLAN watches him disappear around a corner before launching into an unflattering impersonation of STEPIEN JR.:

HARLAN  
Just stop by at five.

WENDELL  
That didn't sound good.

HARLAN  
You know they lay people off at the end of the day, so they'll just leave quietly.

On WENDELL'S simultaneously anxious and angry reaction.

INT. STEPIEN'S OFFICE - STEPIEN INDUSTRIES - DAY

WENDELL sits quietly across from STEPIEN JR., whose attention is fixed on an Excel spreadsheet on his monitor. They sit in an incredibly awkward silence until STEPIEN JR. finally speaks:

STEPIEN  
I've been going over your numbers.

Sensing where the conversation is headed, WENDELL cuts him off.

WENDELL  
Things have been slow for the last couple months, but...

STEPIEN stops him cold.

STEPIEN  
Sales've slowed across the board, they're down thirty percent from last year.

WENDELL  
Because you keep laying off salespeople.

STEPIEN  
Excuse me?

At this point WENDELL senses he's a dead man walking and just decides to unburden himself:

WENDELL

...you laid off all the people that actually make money for this company...

There's a brief moment when it appears STEPIEN is going to explode with anger, but calms down before continuing:

STEPIEN

The board says we need to trim the payroll, so we're letting you go.

WENDELL

How can you fire me? I was salesman of the year! Me closing deals is the only thing that's kept this place afloat.

STEPIEN

Be that as it may, numbers are down, someone's got to go and you're not pulling your weight..

STEPIEN looks past WENDELL, and waves someone in. WENDELL turns around expecting to see STEPIEN'S ASSISTANT, but instead finds:

Two SECURITY GUARDS, bald, doughy, long beards -- they look like they just left a Proud Boys initiation -- enter and wait on either side of the door.

STEPIEN (CONT'D)

Your severance will be direct deposited tonight. In the meantime, clear out your desk, then these two gentlemen will escort you to your car.

One of the GUARDS reaches out for WENDELL'S shoulder. WENDELL practically snarls:

WENDELL

Don't you fucking touch me.

WENDELL displays a flash of anger, a hint of savagery lurking behind the yuppie facade, that makes the GUARD reconsider touching him.

STEPIEN JR. is now visibly nervous. He tries to de-escalate the situation:

STEPIEN

Let's... uh... try to... stay calm.

He reluctantly extends his hand to WENDELL; but the fury just beneath the surface of WENDELL'S expression, makes STEPIEN JR. unconsciously pull his hand back:

STEPIEN (CONT'D)  
 Good luck to you... uh... in your  
 future endeavors.

An empty platitude, which only makes WENDELL angrier.

WENDELL  
 Fuck you Jared.

INT. SALES FLOOR - STEPIEN INDUSTRIES - CONTINUOUS

WENDELL, half carries a small box of his belongings: A 'Salesman of The Year' plaque and a potted plant, not caring if the contents spill out.

He walks out flanked by the two massive SECURITY GUARDS. This sad procession is watched by an astonished SALES TEAM. Some of his CO-WORKERS touch his forearm sympathetically as he passes.

FIRST COWORKER  
 Hang in there buddy.

SECOND COWORKER  
 You're gonna be fine sweetie.

He smiles at their support. The trio heads to the elevator bank. Once an elevator arrives, they step inside.

The assembled STAFF watches WENDELL marched out to the parking lot.

INT. KITCHEN - WENDELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

He enters to find LAURA at the sink, packing dishes into a box, with her back to him - she doesn't turn around when he enters.

WENDELL  
 Hon, what are you doing?  
 (before she can answer)  
 I had the mother of shitty days...

He opens his fridge. LAURA stops packing dishes. She lowers her head but doesn't turn around.

LAURA

I'm so sorry to do this, but I'm moving out.

He takes a moment to process what he's just heard. Certain he's misheard her, he asks:

WENDELL

You're wha'?

LAURA

(a beat)

I just signed a lease on a place in Shreveport. The movers are coming later. I thought I'd have this done by the time you got home. I'd appreciate it if you could give me a couple hours to finish packing up.

He's tries to maintain a civil tone, contain the anger and bitterness rising inside of him.

WENDELL

We've spent every morning and every night together for the past year and a half, and not once have you said you were unhappy.

When she doesn't answer, the anger rises, now just below the surface:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

So that's it, and now you're just leaving?

LAURA

Things haven't been good between us for a long time.

WENDELL looks at her longingly, but she won't turn around to meet his gaze. She stands at the sink with her back to him.

He removes the ring box from his pocket. Slams it on the counter:

WENDELL

Guess I won't be needing this then.

She doesn't turn around.

He stares at her back. His expression transforms from longing, to bitterness, and finally the anger that's been bubbling just beneath the surface, erupts.

He takes his box from work, then the box of the dishes she's just packed and SLAMS them to the ground.

Breathing heavily, he looks down at the detritus of his personal and professional lives, but his anger remains undiminished.

He picks up another box and SMASHES it to the ground as well.

He looks at the shattered dishes on the kitchen floor.

Realizing he needs to leave before he does more damage, he walks out, SLAMMING the door shut as he does.

After he leaves, LAURA finally turns around - and spots the ring box - sadness and guilt in her expression.

EXT. WALLY'S - NIGHT

If it wasn't for a flashing 'Bud' sign in the window and a few cars parked out front, you'd never know it was a bar. It could easily be mistaken for a shack in the middle of nowhere:

INT. WALLY'S - NIGHT

Locals only. A long narrow bar against one wall, booths with red vinyl cushioned seats against the other, a jukebox in the back. A few regulars - but not too crowded for a Friday night.

WENDELL and HARLAN have started drinking. A small collection of bourbon glasses is forming on the bar between them.

HARLAN

I always thought she was kind of a bitch.

HARLAN laughs, then a moment later, almost reluctantly WENDELL joins him.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

And if you two do get back together, I'll deny saying it.

CROWE (O.C.)

(Texas accent)

I hope you don't mind...

WENDELL and HARLAN both turn to find the source of the Texan drawl. They look down the bar to find JORDAN CROWE, late 30s, blonde, All-American, former frat boy - nursing a beer.

CROWE (CONT'D)  
I couldn't help but overhear...

HARLAN looks at him questioningly.

CROWE (CONT'D)  
Name's Crowe.

HARLAN cranes his head:

HARLAN  
Sounds like you're a ways from  
home.

CROWE  
Good ear.

HARLAN raises his arm, points to himself then at WENDELL.

HARLAN  
I'm Harlan, this is Wendell.

WENDELL nods, then makes a welcoming gesture.

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
So what's on your mind?

CROWE  
I heard you two belly-achin', when  
you should be celebratin'.

WENDELL  
I have no job and no girlfriend.

CROWE  
You're looking at this all wrong  
brother.

WENDELL  
How should I be looking at it?

CROWE gestures to the empty booth behind them. CROWE moves to a booth, WENDELL and HARLAN pick up their drinks and follow to a booth. Once they're settled:

CROWE  
Did you like that job?

WENDELL pauses for a moment to consider.

WENDELL  
Not really.

HARLAN  
Our boss is a jackass.

CROWE smiles.

CROWE  
And what about your girlfriend?

HARLAN  
Bitch.

WENDELL is annoyed by his interruption.

WENDELL  
I can speak for myself.

HARLAN, sotto voce, to CROWE:

HARLAN  
...but she is kindofa bitch.

WENDELL shoots him a look.

WENDELL  
We've had some problems, but I thought we'd work through them; I was going to propose. Definitely didn't expect her to just up and leave me.

HARLAN  
And did it on the same day he'd been fired. My boy here goes home expecting some sympathy, some support and she tells him she's moving out.

CROWE  
That's pretty cold-blooded you ask me, but you know what? Good riddance. You know I was where you were you are right now, feeling pretty low. I got hooked up with someone that straightened me out, some folks call him 'The Teacher'.

(beat)

He introduced me to someone, who changed my whole life, hey, I got an idea.

(grinning mischievously)

You boys like to party?

INT. DODGE CHARGER - NIGHT

CROWE behind the wheel, gunning the car down a dark country road - the engine ROARING in protest. HARLAN in the backseat, grinning from ear to ear. WENDELL fighting a growing apprehension about the evening's change of direction.

WENDELL looks out the car window: The countryside passing by is dark and unfamiliar.

WENDELL

Where are we?

CROWE

Relax. The place is a little out of the way. That friend of mine I told you about?

HARLAN

(tipsy - too loud)  
'The Teacher'?

CROWE looks in the rearview mirror and smiles.

CROWE

He told me about this party...

HARLAN

Girls?

CROWE

Oh yeah.

HARLAN pats WENDELL on the shoulder.

HARLAN

We need to hook my boy up.  
(a beat)  
And I wouldn't mind a little  
'strange' myself..

HARLAN turns to WENDELL:

HARLAN (CONT'D)

...and you know my motto: "No  
reasonable offer refused."

HARLAN and CROWE laugh and WENDELL does a bit as well.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Dodge flies down the road, the twin headlights are the only source of illumination on a dark cloudy night, the roar of the engine disrupting the chirping of cicadas.

INT. ENTRANCE - HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door of a large abandoned house opens and CROWE, HARLAN and WENDELL enter and take in the scene: The rooms are all suffused in a deep crimson light.

The entrance and living room are full of people, attractive women, couples slow dancing (or more appropriately grinding) to live music.

CROWE

What did I tell you? Is this  
sumthin' or what?

HARLAN smiles broadly. It's every bit as lurid as he'd hoped it be.

HARLAN

You weren't kidding.

CROWE

I don't know about you boys, but  
I'm pretty thirsty..

The three of them make their way through the crowd into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

If you gave a blues band a healthy dose of Ketamine and put instruments in their hands - this is what they'd sound like: blues played at half speed.

As CROWE, HARLAN and WENDELL enter - they're doing a cover of Geechie Wiley's "Last Kind Words":

SINGER

...If I get killed, if I get  
killed, please don't bury my soul  
I p'fer just leave me out, let the  
buzzards eat me whole...

As they make their way across the 'dance floor', a few of the couples stop grinding long enough to greet CROWE.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They head straight for the makeshift bar. CROWE opens a cabinet and finds a carefully hidden bottle of Wild Turkey. HARLAN fishes out three plastic red cups. CROWE fills their cups, then raises his in a toast:

CROWE  
To being single, seeing double and  
sleeping triple!

They touch cups, then drain their cups in a single gulp. CROWE slaps WENDELL on the back.

CROWE (CONT'D)  
That'll put some hair on your  
chest.

CROWE scans the crowd.

CROWE (CONT'D)  
I've got to find my buddy, so I'm  
going to leave you two to it.  
Don't do anything I wouldn't.

With that, he disappears into the crowd.

WENDELL  
Whose place is this?

HARLAN  
Who cares?

Before WENDELL can respond there's a FEMALE VOICE behind him, loud enough to be heard over the music:

FEMALE VOICE  
Anything to drink over there?

WENDELL and HARLAN turn around to find themselves face to face with two BLONDE WOMEN in their late 20s, family resemblance, attractive.

MARY FRANCES, intense, hair cut just above her shoulders -- locks eyes with WENDELL, while her companion, BIBI, equally intimidating, leather-clad, hair piled high like a Pompadour, settles in next to HARLAN.

WENDELL  
Whiskey.

BIBI smiles.

BIBI  
That'll work.

MARY FRANCES casts a quick glance across the counter.

MARY FRANCES  
Cups?

HARLAN is much quicker to react, he looks around, finds two more plastic cups, hands one to each - then pours a couple fingers of whiskey.

MARY FRANCES extends her hand.

MARY FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Mary Frances.

She and WENDELL shake hands.

WENDELL  
Wendell.

BIBI is a little more standoffish - she examines HARLAN more skeptically.

BIBI  
(to HARLAN)  
Bibi.

HARLAN  
I'm Harlan. Nice to meet you. What brings you out tonight?

BIBI can't hear over the music.

BIBI  
Huh?

She turns to MARY FRANCES and points toward her ear, who picks up on her cue.

MARY FRANCES  
(pointing towards the back door)  
Outside.

The small group makes its way through the crowd of revelers, out the back door into:

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Only a handful of PARTYGOERS in the yard. The band is still audible, but it's not as loud. MARY FRANCES notices the quiet.

MARY FRANCES  
That's better.

HARLAN  
So what brings you ladies out tonight?

MARY FRANCES  
My sister and I are here for the night, from Galveston.

He looks them up and down and can't help but grin.

HARLAN  
Sisters huh?

WENDELL  
Just met this guy named Crowe, he brought us out here.

There's a pause, as MARY FRANCES and BIBI exchange an enigmatic glance. Their tone changes very abruptly. The flirtatious undercurrent disappears.

BIBI  
Yeah, we know Crowe.

MARY FRANCES  
Met him back home.

She offers by way of explanation:

MARY FRANCES (CONT'D)  
...he's a man who's embraced his true nature.

WENDELL  
Which is?

She exchanges a knowing grin with her sister before responding:

MARY FRANCES  
Oh, I expect you'll find out before too long.

HARLAN isn't quite certain what to make of her answer, but is eager to keep them engaged:

HARLAN

Not quite sure I catch your meaning.

BIBI turns her full attention on HARLAN, gazing at him intently, as she responds:

BIBI

You would. If you knew how to listen...

MARY FRANCES and BIBI exchange a dark look. MARY FRANCES continues her sister's train of thought:

MARY FRANCES

...there are special places, where the seams between worlds are weak, this is one of them.

(a beat)

Under just the right circumstances, in just the right place, you get messages about our reality, from other beings, from other worlds.

This time WENDELL and HARLAN exchange an incredulous look. There is an awkward silence, but they don't want to kill the vibe so:

WENDELL

You two sound just like Crowe, matter of fact, he told me there was someone he wanted us to meet...

MARY FRANCES

...'The Teacher', he's around here somewhere, you might be interested in what he has to say.

There is another long silence. BIBI takes a long pull on her drink. MARY FRANCES attempts to lighten the mood and steer the conversation back in a more flirtatious direction.

MARY FRANCES (CONT'D)

So what's your story?

HARLAN, happy the topic of conversation has changed, jumps in:

HARLAN

Well my man here, just broke up with his girlfriend.

MARY FRANCES

Is that so? That's too bad.

Her smile suggests she feels otherwise.

HARLAN  
 Came out to take our mind off our  
 troubles.

WENDELL  
 Or at least my troubles.

HARLAN turns to BIBI:

HARLAN  
 Now we are looking to get into some  
 trouble.

Almost impossible to miss his meaning. BIBI rolls her eyes in  
 mock disgust, but keeps smiling.

BIBI  
 Then I'd say you came to the right  
 place... darlin'.

They laugh. She looks at her sister again and they seem to  
 come to some unspoken agreement. She hands their glasses to  
 HARLAN.

BIBI (CONT'D)  
 Would you two gentlemen be so kind  
 as to get us some water? Get some  
 for yourselves as well.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

WENDELL and HARLAN elbow their way back to the sink. HARLAN  
 dumps the contents in the sink, then turns on the faucet.

HARLAN  
 These chicks are nuttier than a  
 coupla fruitcakes, but I like 'em.

WENDELL  
 Whadya think they have in mind?

HARLAN  
 I'm hopin' it's the same thing I  
 do.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

They walk out and find MARY FRANCES and BIBI standing near  
 the edge of the yard.

HARLAN hands them the glasses.

HARLAN  
Ladies.

MARY FRANCES  
Thank you.

BIBI  
Now. Open your mouths.

HARLAN  
I like where this is headed.

BIBI  
Less talking. Open.

WENDELL and HARLAN do as instructed. BIBI places: A small blue pill, shaped like a woman, on his tongue.

BIBI (CONT'D)  
Swallow. Then wash it down.

She turns to WENDELL.

BIBI (CONT'D)  
Your turn.

Another pill is placed on his tongue.

MARY FRANCES and BIBI follow suit. The four of them take a long drink of water.

WENDELL  
What did you just give us?

BIBI  
Texas' Finest MDMA.

WENDELL is a little worried:

WENDELL  
I've never done this before. What's going to happen?

In response MARY FRANCES grins mischievously.

MARY FRANCES  
You're already on the road of excess darlin' and there's no off-ramp, just relax and enjoy the ride.

MARY FRANCES takes WENDELL by the hand and leads him back into the house, with HARLAN and BIBI close behind.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A murky layer of kush smoke hangs just beneath the ceiling.

The four of them push through the undulating mass of drunken, sweaty dancers, until they're in the middle of the floor.

MARY FRANCES brings him into the middle of the dance floor - just as the band launches into a cover of Koko Taylor & Willie Dixon's "Insane Asylum".

BIBI and HARLAN disappear on the dance floor. Once they're alone MARY FRANCES pulls WENDELL closer and they start to sway in rhythm to the music.

WENDELL

Am I going to trip the fuck out?

MARY FRANCES slides her hands around his waist, gripping his ass - then pulling him towards her. She leans in close, and barely above a whisper:

MARY FRANCES

No darlin', nothing like that, in about twenty minutes...you're going to get very warm...

She raises the cup to his lips, he responds by taking a long drink. Once he's drained the cup, she kisses him.

MARY FRANCES (CONT'D)

...then you're going to want to rub your hands all over everything, and when I fuck you, it's going to feel amazing...

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

MARY FRANCES walks upstairs, WENDELL a couple steps below watching her ass move beneath her skirt as she mounts the steps.

She catches him scanning the crowd for HARLAN.

MARY FRANCES

Don't worry 'bout your boy. He's in good hands.

She pulls him up the stairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MARY FRANCES and WENDELL make their way down the hall, music from the band is still audible (o.s.).

MARY FRANCES leads him by hand, turning around every few seconds to smile lasciviously. She finally stops at the last door. She presses her ear to the door, then turns back to WENDELL.

MARY FRANCES  
It's all about listening.

She turns the knob, slowly opens the door, and sticks her head through the crack: An empty bedroom.

She pushes the door open and pulls WENDELL inside the:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Once across the threshold, MARY FRANCES playfully pushes WENDELL onto the bed, then turns:

CLOSE - DOOR KNOB: Her hands lock the door.

WENDELL pulls her down onto his lap. He kisses her hungrily.

MARY FRANCES  
I hope you don't mind letting me  
'take the wheel'.

He smiles.

WENDELL  
Long as I get where I need to go.

She smiles as well. His smile is lascivious, hers is distinctly predatory.

She leans back, and lifts her blouse off. She's not wearing a bra. WENDELL begins to slowly, sensuously fondle and then lick her breasts. MARY FRANCES leans forward, arching her back - enjoying the sensation.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The sounds of MUSIC and the party are faintly audible in the b.g. On the bed MARY FRANCES is riding WENDELL.

She makes direct eye contact the entire time. It's partly about pleasure, partly about control.

As she stares into his eyes, she glimpses the same rage that STEPIEN JR. and the SECURITY GUARDS did.

Instead of recoiling from it, she uses it. She leans forward, pushes down on his shoulders, pinning him to the bed - as she grinds away even harder.

EXT. US 190 - LOUISIANA - NIGHT

A heavily wooded section of the road, nearly empty at this time of night. A car races down the 4-lane highway.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

BIBI is behind the wheel. Alone in the car. Her eyes focused on the road stretching out before her.

A beat.

BIBI turns to her right. MARY FRANCES is suddenly sitting in the passenger seat, studying the lush landscape just beyond the window.

MARY FRANCES wasn't there a moment ago.

MARY FRANCES

Wendell. I could feel something powerful, dangerous, lurking inside him.

(beat)

And he's not the only one.

BIBI

I didn't sense that in Harlan.

MARY FRANCES turns her head, focusing on something we can't hear, before:

MARY FRANCES

No. Someone else.

(beat)

And I think that's who we really need to be worried about.

(beat - portentous)

I don't think any of this is going to go the way Teach thinks it is.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

WENDELL'S still asleep, but tossing and turning.

CLOSE - WENDELL: Rivulets of perspiration course down his forehead. His eyes flutter wildly. He's clearly in the midst of a particularly intense dream.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAWN

LEE and BRANDON MCKENNA, running through the same field we saw WENDELL in, at the beginning. LEE'S face and shirt are soaked with blood and sweat, bands of reddened, swollen, skin around both wrists - indicate he's been manacled.

He's holding BRANDON by the wrist as they run. BRANDON struggles to keep pace, while fighting back tears.

LEE casts a glance back at this son, trying to remain calm, and positive, despite the circumstances.

LEE

C'mon buddy. I need you to keep moving.

Before BRANDON can respond, the CRACK of a broken stalk, fills the night air. They both stop, remain still.

A long beat, before:

BRANDON

I'm... scared... Dad.

LEE can see the fear plainly etched on his son's features.

LEE

(reassuring)

We're going to be okay buddy, but I need you to be brave for me. Can you be brave?

BRANDON nods. Wipes away the tears welling up in the corners of his eyes.

BRANDON

I will Dad, I promise.

LEE

That's my boy.

LEE tousles BRANDON'S hair, then scans the horizon, and sees the highway in the distance.

LEE (CONT'D)  
Just a little further, we're almost  
there.

He casts a glance back over BRANDON'S head, scanning the area behind them - expecting their unseen pursuer to appear at any moment.

BRANDON  
Are the bad men back there Dad?

LEE  
Nope. Nobody's back there. We just  
need to get to the highway...

In the green stalks ahead of them, a wraith-like FIGURE appears, flickering for an instant, before solidifying into the form of a MAN; his face hidden by the darkness.

He's holding a knife, moonlight glinting off its blade.

LEE (CONT'D)  
... and we'll be...

LEE turns, only to have that knife buried in his chest, again and again, torrents of blood erupting from the wounds like a cluster of geysers.

LEE grunts first in surprise, then agony. He turns to face BRANDON, tries to speak, but only manages to gurgle, and cough up blood.

His knees buckle, and he collapses on the ground.

BRANDON looks down at his father's lifeless body, tears now flowing freely down his cheeks.

BRANDON  
Daddy! Daddy!

The MAN, still grips the knife, crimson blood dripping from the blade. He brings it to his:

CLOSE - MOUTH: A long tongue licks the remaining blood from the blade.

His tastes temporarily sated, the MAN takes a menacing step towards BRANDON.

He raises the knife; just as he's about to deliver the killing blow...

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

... WENDELL'S eyes snap open.

He tries to shake off the horrific dream, then looks around to get his bearings: The bed next to him is empty. The door is locked. The furniture's enveloped in shadow.

One of the shadows seems to move; WENDELL realizes someone is in the room with him, sitting in a chair near the door.

WENDELL  
Mary Frances?

No answer. Ominous silence. WENDELL scans the darkness, and can only spot a pair of bare men's feet.

It's not MARY FRANCES, but someone is there.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
Hey! This ain't a peep show buddy.

There is the sound of soft LAUGHTER from the darkness, followed by a MALE VOICE, with a nicotine rasp like sandpaper.

CORUJA  
Don't get off watching people fuck.  
Nothin' wrong with it ya  
understand, just not my thing.  
(beat)  
Just waiting for you to 'come to'.

WENDELL  
You see her go?

CORUJA  
Nope. Who knows where she's off to.  
Her and her sister, working on  
things most folks can't even  
conceive of.  
(beat)  
I'll tell you this though... just  
make sure you stay on their good  
side. Don't ever give 'em a reason  
to introduce you to Edgar.

His tone changes, now even more serious.

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
You don't want that. You don't ever  
want that.

WENDELL sits up in bed, straining to see CORUJA.

WENDELL

Who the fuck are you?

CORUJA moves closer, but is careful to remain cloaked in shadow:

CORUJA

I'm an old friend of Crowe's, some folks round here call me 'Teacher'...

WENDELL

What do you... teach, exactly?

He leans forward, but the face is still mostly covered in darkness. With a soft raspy CHUCKLE:

CORUJA

I'll make you a bet, I'll tell you about the dream you just had, I get it right, you come out to the house, for a few lessons. If I'm wrong, I'll go back downstairs, and leave you be.

CORUJA stands, his form defying physics and melting into the shadows. His disappearing act is followed by an eerie silence, then:

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Your dream. It was the middle of the night, a father and his son were running through a field 'a cane... then somethin' bad happened to 'em, somethin' real bad.

WENDELL'S expression is a combination of surprise, and confusion - tinged with fear.

When CORUJA speaks again, he's on the other side of the room:

CORUJA (CONT'D)

I'm right, ain't I?

Still flying from the Molly, WENDELL'S head whips back and forth from the place CORUJA was sitting in moments ago, to the place he seems to be standing in, across the room:

WENDELL

How the fuck you'd do that?

CORUJA CHUCKLES again. His soft raspy LAUGHTER barely rises above a whisper.

CORUJA

Looks like you lost the bet, so why  
don't you and your friend come out  
to the house? I'll teach you two  
how to take your first steps  
towards a new world that's...  
beautiful and terrifying...

(beat)

... where 'The Lovely Lady' lives.

WENDELL scans the darkness, not really sure where to direct  
his question.

WENDELL

The who?

CORUJA (O.S.)

'The Lovely Lady'... and if she  
smiles on you, blesses you with her  
gifts, your life will never be the  
same.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LITTLE SMOKE - DAY

A collection of ranch-style starter homes, neatly maintained  
lawns, children playing in driveways, waiting for the bus.

**SUPER: Present Day**

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Where TERRI ANN 'comes to'. The past year hasn't been kind to  
her, nor has she been kind to herself, and it shows.

She sits up groggily, still dressed in her clothes from the  
previous night.

She reaches for a bottle of Advil on the nightstand, then  
washes it down with a gulp of tequila.

She looks at the blinds opposite her bed and the rays of  
sunshine slipping through the drawn blinds.

TERRI ANN

Another beautiful fucking day.

With great effort, she swings her legs over the side of bed,  
stands and heads toward the:

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Standing in front of the mirror, applying concealer to the dark circles under eyes, brushing her shoulder length dark hair.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Now dressed for work in a 'business casual' outfit: a dark pantsuit. She moves awkwardly through the living room.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAY

Her husband LEE is at the front door, getting ready to leave for work.

TERRI ANN

I have to show a client an apartment this afternoon, can you pick up Brandon?

LEE

I'm slammed today.

TERRI ANN

So am I. I can't do everything myself. I need your help.

This is an old argument, one both of them are tired of having. LEE relents.

LEE

Alright, alright. I'll pick him up, and..

(loudly)

..if he hustles, I can take him now...

BRANDON (O.S.)

Coming!

INT. KITCHEN - ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAY

BRANDON, fully dressed, puts his dishes in the sink, then grabs the brown bag TERRI ANN has prepared, and hurries out into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAY

He runs into the living room, trying to run and put on his backpack at the same time. TERRI ANN grabs him gently by the shoulders as he passes.

TERRI ANN  
Slow down there buddy. Here...

She kneels down, slips the straps of his backpack over his shoulder, tousles his hair then sends him on his way.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
Your dad is going to pick you up  
today, okay?

BRANDON  
I heard.

TERRI ANN  
Love you.

Her declaration embarrasses him, he continues heading for the door.

BRANDON  
I know.

She looks at her husband, still annoyed.

TERRI ANN  
Thanks.

He ignores her and looks down at BRANDON.

LEE  
Ready champ?

He opens the door for them, they step across the threshold, the door closes behind them.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The house, once so filled with life and noise, is now eerily silent.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

TERRI ANN hurries into a messy kitchen. The counter is strewn with newspaper clippings about the disappearances, and empty Tequila bottles. The kitchen table piled with dirty dishes and unopened envelopes.

Out of habit, she starts to make a bag lunch for BRANDON.

She then moves to the one corner of the newly spacious counter, turns on the television and immediately wishes she hadn't:

TELEVISION ANCHOR

Today marks the one year anniversary of the disappearances of Lee and Brandon McKenna... their mysterious disappearance has baffled local law enforcement for the last twelve months...

CLOSE - TELEVISION: A freeze frame of a smiling BRANDON.

She can't bear to look -- she turns away only to see the lunch bag sitting on the counter. A lunch she's making for a child that's not there to eat it.

It's too much. She starts sobbing, the grief hitting her like a body blow. Her knees buckle and she slides down the cabinet to the floor, and into a deep well of sadness.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LITTLE SMOKE - DAY

Main Street in a small town; a two block long row of small businesses and Mom and Pop shops.

INT. OFFICE - LAFAYETTE INSURANCE - DAY

A small dark office. Fans, on full blast, are positioned on top of file cabinets.

Beneath the fans, an exasperated TERRI ANN sits across the desk from BILL LAFAYETTE, porcine, early 40s, dress shirt soaked with sweat - despite the fans.

LAFAYETTE

...that is Louisiana law...a person can't be declared legally dead for seven years...

TERRI ANN

Seven years?

LAFAYETTE

If there isn't...

(a beat)

...I'm sorry for being indelicate,  
but if there isn't a body, you have  
to wait seven years before Lee can  
be declared dead 'in absentia'.

TERRI ANN

What am I supposed to do until  
then?

She reaches into her purse and produces a stack of bills:  
Marked 'Final Notice', 'Past Due'.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

I'm three months behind on the  
mortgage, the bank is about to  
foreclose on the house.

LAFAYETTE

You know I'd love to help you, Lee  
was a friend of mine.

TERRI ANN

Lee bought this policy, FROM YOU,  
to make sure I'd be okay in case  
something ever happened to him.

LAFAYETTE pauses, uncertain he wants to broach the subject.

LAFAYETTE

Terri Ann, is there any chance that  
he might've just taken the boy and  
left? Men walk out on their  
families all the time.

TERRI ANN looks back at him, hurt - then angry at the  
suggestion.

TERRI ANN

You just said you knew him, you  
said Lee was your friend. We both  
know he would never do that to me.

LAFAYETTE

Lee was a friend - but you can know  
someone your whole life and never  
ever really know what's in their  
heart.

(searching for something  
helpful)

My advice?

(MORE)

LAFAYETTE (CONT'D)

Talk to Toussaint again, see if he's uncovered anything new, anything that conclusively proves that Lee and Brandon...

LAFAYETTE searches for the right word:

LAFAYETTE (CONT'D)

...have passed. If Toussaint can give us something, anything, then we can pay out the policy.

INT. RECEPTION - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

Where the receptionist JANET can't help but roll her eyes slightly when TERRI ANN walks in.

TERRI ANN

He in?

JANET

Terri Ann you have to make an appointment, you can't just keep coming in here like this.

TERRI ANN'S grief slowly transforming into anger.

TERRI ANN

I'm sorry if my showing up bothers you, sorry if the fact that my family went missing is bumming you out, but I need to talk to the Sheriff.

TOUSSAINT sticks his head out into the waiting area:

TOUSSAINT

Come on in Terri Ann.

INT. TOUSSAINT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TOUSSAINT is seated behind his desk, while TERRI ANN paces back and forth. They're friendly - but there's an undercurrent of guilt and resentment, in their conversation.

TOUSSAINT

I'm sorry but we don't have anything, if we did I'd share it with you, you know that.

TERRI ANN

Nothing? I mean at this point, I just need to know, one way or the other...

TOUSSAINT

I know this is really difficult.

TERRI ANN

No you don't know what it's like, to suddenly have your life ripped out from under you.

(a beat)

You don't know what it's like.

TOUSSAINT can see the pain and frustration and decides to change tack:

TOUSSAINT

There's an old story, a woman loses her husband, and goes to the Buddha, and he says, 'go to every house in the village and bring me mustard seeds.

TERRI ANN

The Buddha?!

TOUSSAINT

Would you listen to me?

TERRI ANN

Sorry, go ahead.

TOUSSAINT

Thank you, so he says bring me mustard seeds from the houses that haven't known loss.' So the lady goes house to house and finds out that everyone in the village has lost a family member at some point.

(beat)

...the point is people close to you dying is natural, it's a part of life. You going to the meetings?

TERRI ANN

At First Baptist? No thanks.

TOUSSAINT

I think it'll help, and in the meantime, I'll go over the case again, if there's anything that can help you with the insurance, I'll let you know. Okay?

TOUSSAINT types into his keyboard, then reads his computer screen for a moment.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

There's a meeting tonight. I really think you should go.

TERRI ANN

I'll think about it.

TOUSSAINT

'Think about it' means you're going to blow it off. I'm going to do everything I can to help you, but you have to do something for me, promise me you'll go.

TERRI ANN nods begrudgingly.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

A church built in the previous century, complete with large steeple. A wooden sign out front reads: WAL-MART ISN'T THE ONLY SAVING PLACE

INT. BASEMENT - FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Dimly lit. A table with doughnuts and coffee is set up off to the side.

In the center of the room a dozen MEN and WOMEN, a range of ages, sit in a circle on rickety folding chairs; their attention is focused on DARLENE BLANCHARD, a woman in her 50s, near tears:

DARLENE

...I've failed as a mother, I failed to protect my child...I know Ray was practically grown, but that feeling...wanting to protect them never goes away...and I didn't protect my baby...

TERRI ANN shifts uncomfortably in her seat, her words have touched a nerve.

DARLENE lowers her head, about to start sobbing, when the group's leader EZRA, early 30s, gentle, unassuming manner, speaks up.

EZRA

You did everything you could for Ray. Him disappearin', that's not on you Darlene. I want you to focus on that. In the meantime...

He looks out at the group:

EZRA (CONT'D)

...we're going to pray for you. Thank you for sharing.

The rest of the group claps. EZRA waits for them to finish before continuing:

EZRA (CONT'D)

Terri Ann...you haven't shared with us in awhile.

TERRI ANN looks around at the expectant faces of the other group members. She sighs and gives into peer pressure:

TERRI ANN

What's going on with me? Well, let me see, my husband and son are gone, the police have no leads, I have no idea what's happened to them, I might never know...

She pauses. The sadness and sarcasm now giving way to anger:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...I can't get any money from our life insurance, because they're not technically dead and unless I can come up with some cash in the next sixty days, the bank's going to take my house...

(beat)

...that's how I've been looking for them, the newspaper, the tip line...

(beat)

...it's all at the house.

EZRA

Coming to terms with their disappearance is a process.

TERRI ANN  
(pointing to their  
surroundings)  
And this ain't helpin'.

EZRA looks around at the group.

EZRA  
You'll be in our thoughts and we'll  
say a prayer for you.

TERRI ANN  
A prayer? Are you kidding me?

A short bitter laugh erupts from TERRI ANN, before she turns  
on EZRA angrily:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
I don't know whether to laugh or  
smack you.

EZRA raises his hands in the hopes it will calm her down:

EZRA  
Now Terri Ann...

It doesn't.

TERRI ANN  
Don't 'Terri Ann' me. Saying a  
prayer is about the most useless  
fucking thing you could possibly  
do, my husband and my baby are  
gone, I'm about to lose my house,  
be out on the street. I've got some  
real problems. I need some  
solutions and all you've got is  
'Thoughts and Prayers'?

She angrily picks up her coat and purse, looks at the  
disappointed expressions of the other group members, and  
storms out.

INT. MINIVAN - NIGHT

TERRI ANN behind the wheel, a bottle of tequila in a brown  
paper bag on the passenger seat.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

TERRI ANN, alone at the table - a glass and the half empty bottle in front of her. The glow from the television screen visible in the b.g.

It's late, she's struggling to stay awake, but that doesn't stop her from pouring herself another shot. With some difficulty, she drains the glass.

She happens to glance over at the kitchen counter: The brown bag - with a half-prepared lunch for her missing son - is still sitting there.

INT. FOWLER REAL ESTATE - DAY

Looking a little worse for wear, TERRI ANN is at her desk, eyes focused on her computer monitor, her co-worker ALICE is working nearby, when the sound of a truck engine forces them to look up: MAGGIE'S truck races by.

ALICE

Ol' Maggie Lujan...in a hurry to  
get somewhere...

She lowers her voice to gossip:

ALICE (CONT'D)

...you know I hear some odd things  
about that woman...

(beat)

...stairs don't quite reach the  
attic if you get my meaning...

TERRI ANN isn't interested, doesn't let ALICE finish the thought. She's suddenly filled with a strange compulsion, gets up from behind her desk and walks out onto:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Into the sunshine and sweltering heat; the heat and humidity hitting her in waves. TERRI ANN watches the pick-up speed down Main Street, eventually disappearing from sight.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

MAGGIE'S pick-up parks in the handicap spot in front of the station. MAGGIE, sleep-deprived, and WENDELL, clearly still traumatized, move as quickly as their tired legs will allow, into the:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

Where JANET, focused on her computer monitor - hears the pair enter, and as she looks up and takes in their haggard appearances, she can't help but mutter:

JANET  
Dearlordinheaven.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

A glorified closet in the back. TOUSSAINT sits at a linoleum table, marked with cigarette burns, across from MAGGIE and WENDELL. No one says a word.

WENDELL has got the thousand yard stare. MAGGIE has to prod him a bit:

MAGGIE  
Tell the Sheriff what you told me.

Her words seem to remind him that he's in a room with other people. His focus returns to the present.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Go ahead... tell him.

WENDELL'S hands start shaking on the table top. MAGGIE sets her hands on his. It calms him. He takes a moment to settle himself, takes a deep breath then:

WENDELL  
I... I know... about the disappearances... Blanchard, Mitchell, the McKennas.... and Harlan Smith.

This gets TOUSSAINT'S attention.

TOUSSAINT  
I don't remember that name.

WENDELL  
He disappeared around the same time I did.

TOUSSAINT  
That you did?

WENDELL  
I escaped. He didn't.

TOUSSAINT

Escaped from where? What happened  
to him?

TOUSSAINT realizes he's firing questions faster than WENDELL can answer. He takes a beat before continuing:

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

Why don't you just start at the  
beginning?

TOUSSAINT produces a small note pad and starts writing as WENDELL speaks:

WENDELL

'The Teacher'. Me and Harlan were  
at his place, used to be a  
plantation, another red flag I  
ignored. How long were we there?  
Months? A year? Time passed so  
strangely there...

(beat)

...one night he said...

MAGGIE leans in - listening with even greater interest.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

...we were ready...

WENDELL pauses for a moment, lost in thought, before continuing. He gazes dreamily at the far wall as if he's watching images on a screen.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

In the center of four shacks, former slave quarters. Thick grass, ankle high. A solemn ceremony takes place:

CROWE, CORUJA (barefoot again), HARLAN and WENDELL sit around a campfire, on stools fashioned from wooden logs.

An iron pot hangs above the open flame. The pot's murky, soup-like contents come to a boil.

CORUJA takes a ladleful of the dark liquid, then offers it to WENDELL, like a priest offering communion.

WENDELL (V.O.)

...to take an important step on the  
road to 'a beautiful new world'.

Despite his reservations, WENDELL takes a long drink, wincing as he swallows the bitter tasting liquid.

CORUJA moves next to him, and forcefully taps him seven times, once each on:

The genitals.

The groin.

The stomach.

The heart.

The throat.

The space between his eyes.

The very top of his head. With that last tap...

...WENDELL'S hands begin to twitch. He looks down, at first amused by the twitching. The smile is wiped away as the twitching degenerates into an uncontrollable palsy.

The palsy spreads to the rest of his body, he loses control of his legs, before crashing to the ground.

WENDELL'S face shows the strain of the mental effort necessary to regain control of his limbs.

The convulsing stops. He lies still as a corpse.

A geyser of flame shoots from the top of WENDELL'S head.

The flame dies and a ghost-like 'ASTRAL FORM' emerges.

The ASTRAL FORM floats weightlessly into the night air.

POV - WENDELL'S ASTRAL FORM: Looks down on his PHYSICAL BODY, resting near the fire. It's no mere hallucination, because...

CROWE, CORUJA, and HARLAN are looking up at him - watching his ASTRAL FORM FLOAT towards the...

EXT. MAIN HOUSE - PLANTATION - NIGHT

...a sprawling, dilapidated plantation style mansion, rising out of a riot of weeds. The weeds stop just short of the steps leading to the front door.

POV - WENDELL'S ASTRAL FORM: Floating over the wild, unkempt lawn, towards the main house.

Faint sound of cicadas, acoustic guitar and a lone human VOICE, wailing plaintively in the night (o.s.)

WENDELL FLOATS, following the VOICE into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A turntable sits in a room furnished with antiques.

The notes from SKIP JAMES' falsetto and acoustic guitar, hang eerily in the air:

SKIP JAMES (O.S.)  
You know I'd rather be the ol'  
devil...

His ASTRAL FORM sinks through the floor into...

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bunker-like, illuminated by a faltering fluorescent bulb. Under its harsh but intermittent white glow we see:

A large industrial sink, washer and dryer. In the middle of the concrete floor, in one of the few well-lit spaces, is LISBETH - 60s, gray hair, wearing an old housedress covered in blood.

She's down on all fours, scrubbing. Two buckets, a bottle of bleach and two garbage bags sit beside her.

LISBETH'S gnarled arthritic hands cleaning up two distinct pools of blood.

It looks like a crime scene.

The SKIP JAMES tune is still audible (but faint) down here:

SKIP JAMES (O.S.)  
Well, I'd rather be the devil..than  
to be that woman man...

She pauses briefly to wipe her brow, before dumping the contents of the first bucket, across the floor:

SKIP JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You know, rather be the devil than  
to be that woman man...You know I'm  
so sorry you know, so sorry...

A wave of fresh water splashes across the floor, forcing blood, bleach and water to circle the drain before eventually disappearing from sight.

SKIP JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ...That I ever fell in love you,  
 oo, hoo, oo... because you know you  
 don't treat me... Baby like you  
 used to do, hoo...

In the middle of the room, a door appears. It's free-standing, it shouldn't be there - but it is.

It opens. Defying the laws of physics, it reveals: a sugar cane field, and a DARK TOWERING FIGURE barely visible in the distance.

WENDELL can hear his HEART POUNDING; it FILLS HIS EARS, obliterating all other sounds.

Even this brief glimpse of the DARK TOWERING FIGURE on the other side of that door provokes atavistic fear.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

WENDELL returns his attention to MAGGIE and TOUSSAINT, both listening intently - so much so that TOUSSAINT'S stopped taking notes altogether.

WENDELL  
 I didn't go to the place of power,  
 not that time, but I saw things I  
 wasn't supposed to...in the  
 basement...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

WENDELL and HARLAN stand at the far end of the hallway, illuminated only by glowing bars of silver moonlight.

WENDELL (V.O.)  
 ...and the locked room.  
 (beat)  
 There was this room in their house,  
 that was always locked. They were  
 real weird about it, they were  
 weird about alotta shit, but  
 especially weird about this.

They're focused on a locked wooden door at the end of the hall. The hallway seems a million miles long.

WENDELL (V.O.)

One night curiosity got the better  
of us...

With some trepidation they tip-toe down the hall, careful not to make any noise.

HARLAN, out front, steps on a loose wood panel, which emits a slight CREAKING sound. They both stop in their tracks and remain frozen in place. They listen carefully for sounds of movement around them.

They look around to confirm that they're alone: The hallway is still empty.

HARLAN sighs with relief. WENDELL urges him forward and they continue down the hall - carefully measuring each step until, after what seems like hours, they arrive at the locked door.

HARLAN kneels down to the keyhole and removes two small pins. He slides them into the lock and manipulates them until there's a loud CLICK.

HARLAN

Told ya. Easy as pie.

Smiling at a job well done, HARLAN slowly turns the knob and just as slowly opens the door - careful not to make any noise. Once the door is completely open - they step across the threshold into:

INT. STORAGE ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

There are two shelving units against the walls. On the bottom shelf are two large antique mahogany boxes, each with a silver lock.

HARLAN

This must be what they didn't want  
us to see.

They kneel down. HARLAN picks the lock on the first box, opening it to reveal: A large cloth bundle.

He removes it and unwraps the bundle to discover: A trio of antique knives. Hand-crafted. Difficult to determine where they were made.

From left to right: A knife with Bone White handle with a long, slightly curved blade - in the middle a knife with a handle formed by two intertwined serpents, and on the left, one with a handle with a vaguely female shape. Each covered with indecipherable engravings.

WENDELL

These are the knives they're always talking about.

WENDELL holds them up in the low light to examine them.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Wonder how old they are? What's in the other one?

HARLAN opens it just as easily as the first box: Wallets, backpacks, purses, cell phones, keys, various personal belongings.

HARLAN removes a wallet from the box and opens it: A driver's license, behind a clear plastic shield. The name is Lee McKenna.

HARLAN holds it up to WENDELL:

HARLAN

Why does that name sound so familiar?

WENDELL flashes on:

The billboard on Highway 171. LEE MCKENNA. BRANDON MCKENNA.

His dream.

WENDELL

Him and his boy went missing about a year ago.

(beat)

I think I saw them, in a dream.

A pair of bare feet appear in the shadows behind them, making no sound as they step forward.

From the darkness, a nicotine raspy voice says:

CORUJA (O.C.)

Yes you did.

HARLAN and WENDELL leap to their feet and spin around. They peer into the darkness - where they can see CORUJA'S silhouette, and a glint of steel at his side.

HARLAN looks back at the door.

HARLAN  
How did you?

CORUJA  
Locked doors don't mean shit to me  
son. You should know that by now.

CROWE (O.S.)  
We told you this room was off-  
limits.

HARLAN spins around to find CROWE standing behind him,  
blocking the doorway.

WENDELL  
We were curious is all.

CROWE laughs.

CROWE  
Curiosity huh? You know what they  
say about curiosity?  
(takes a step forward)  
We would've showed all of this to  
you, when you were ready.

HARLAN  
So what is all this stuff?

CROWE  
You know what it is and you know  
why it's here.

WENDELL is still reluctant to fully accept what he's seeing  
and hearing:

WENDELL  
You two are behind all those  
disappearances?

CROWE  
You've seen the things we can do.  
Where do you think that comes from?

CORUJA is mock friendly to WENDELL and HARLAN, as if nothing  
has changed between them.

CORUJA  
It all comes from 'The Lovely  
Lady', she only asks for one thing  
in return: life.

The tension is almost unbearable. HARLAN is frozen in place.

Sensing which way the wind is blowing, WENDELL takes a step closer to the shelving unit. His hand inching toward the knives.

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
Could be any life. And your  
'curiosity' just moved you to the  
top of the donor list.

CORUJA'S quiet tone loses none of its menace.

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
We got a saying back home...we hang  
horse thieves, but not murderers.  
Know why?

When they don't respond:

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
Because horses never need stealing,  
but sometimes there's people that  
need killin'.

With surprising grace and speed, WENDELL slides all three knives off the shelf. He spins, his body nothing more than a dark blur.

He stabs CROWE in the abdomen. The first blade sinks into flesh and muscle with a sickening SQUISH, blood splashing across the blade.

For a brief moment, CROWE is surprised by WENDELL'S speed. Then his handsome features twist in agonizing pain.

HARLAN pushes CROWE backward out into the hall, just as CORUJA'S hands reach for WENDELL.

A wrinkled hand reaches out for WENDELL'S shoulder and just misses.

WENDELL spins again and with two knives in the other hand - he lunges at CORUJA. CORUJA is even faster and steps to the side, evading WENDELL'S attack.

WENDELL seeing that he's missed CORUJA - decides it's time to make their escape. He shoves a knife into HARLAN'S hand.

WENDELL  
Take this. Come on.

They turn and leap over the fallen CROWE, back into the:

INT. HALLWAY - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

HARLAN in the lead, they sprint down the moonlit hall as if their lives depended on it.

They turn a corner...

INT. STAIRWELL - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...and take the stairs two at a time. When they're midway to the first floor, LISBETH appears in their path. She reaches for HARLAN, but he leans away, easily eluding her grasp - but losing his balance and tumbling down the stairs.

At the first floor landing, he jumps to his feet and looks back: WENDELL moves past LISBETH, CROWE is at the top of the stairs, his abdomen bleeding freely.

HARLAN looks around:

HARLAN  
Where's Coruja?

That question is answered when he turns toward the front door and CORUJUA lunges out from the shadows to his right...

...and plunges a knife deep into HARLAN'S chest.

WENDELL looks on in absolute uncomprehending terror.

After a good yank, CORUJUA removes the blade from HARLAN'S chest - streams of blood squirting everywhere, splashing the walls and floor.

Holding the dripping blade, he steps toward WENDELL.

Without wasting any time, WENDELL stoops down to pick up HARLAN'S knife, then runs for the door. He throws the front door open and runs..

EXT. FRONT YARD - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sprinting through the overgrown weeds, into:

CROWE (O.S.)  
You took our knives...I guess you  
were paying attention...

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAWN

A hint of sunrise. WENDELL is running scared, his legs pumping like pistons. He struggles against the large stalks, sweating and breathing heavily.

He stops to listen for sounds of pursuit and get his orientation.

He changes direction, stops again and looks around. He's lost his bearing and fighting to suppress the panic rising inside of him.

He hears the sound of stalks MOVING ahead of him. They sway in front of him.

He stops in his tracks. He hears what sounds like a voice WHISPERING to him.

CROWE (O.S.)

But if you want to use 'em, you're going to have to come back.

WENDELL turns around again, the WHISPERING is coming from every direction. It is a circle of sound that is closing in on him. He's trapped.

CORUJA (O.S.)

And when you do, we'll be waiting, to give you one last lesson.

The air itself is filled with CORUJA'S haunting, raspy laughter.

WENDELL feels something touch his shoulder and spins around - but it's just a stalk brushing against him. He pushes it away angrily. He turns to his left and runs.

WENDELL is running with an increasing sense of panic. He trips over a stalk and falls to the ground.

He leaps back to his feet and keeps running, breathing heavy, almost out of breath.

He looks up at the sun peaking over the horizon, and he can see the edge of the field in the distance.

This spurs him on. He keeps running. Bringing him back to where MAGGIE found him, and fully into the present.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

TOUSSAINT looks at him more closely, jotting down notes on his pad.

TOUSSAINT

So you found items belonging to the missing victims?

WENDELL reaches into his pocket, and slides LEE MCKENNA'S license across the table. TOUSSAINT studies it.

WENDELL

They were keeping souvenirs.

TOUSSAINT

Where was this?

TOUSSAINT looks WENDELL over, studying him for cues. His detective's instincts are telling him to take the story seriously.

WENDELL

Old plantation just outside of town, halfway between here and Jimson. They are kidnapping and killing these people...

(a beat)

...Sheriff, these guys are real dangerous. Call the Sheriff from Jimson, call S.W.A.T., hell call Homeland Security, but take back-up, don't go up there alone.

TOUSSAINT

I appreciate that son, but I can handle myself.

WENDELL focuses all of his attention on TOUSSAINT. He speaks slowly and deliberately:

WENDELL

Not against these two you can't.

TOUSSAINT

You managed to tangle with them and live to tell the tale.

WENDELL

I got lucky. You can't count on luck with them.

TOUSSAINT

I'll go have a look around,  
anything looks hinky, I'll call in  
for back-up, now where are you  
going to be?

Before WENDELL can answer:

MAGGIE

He'll be at my place.

TOUSSAINT

You taking in strays now?

MAGGIE

Looks that way.

He stands and guides them toward the door.

TOUSSAINT

When I get back I'm gonna want to  
talk to you again.

INT. MAGGIE'S TRUCK - DAY

MAGGIE steers the pick-up down the street, having a bit of  
difficulty shifting gears. They ride in silence, until:

WENDELL

I have to talk to her.

INT. FOWLER REAL ESTATE - DAY

Slow work day. Not too much activity. TERRI ANN is at her  
desk, surfing the web, when the DOOR CHIME above the door  
forces her to look up: To find WENDELL and MAGGIE standing at  
her desk.

WENDELL

Terri Ann McKenna?

She nods.

TERRI ANN

Now what can I do for you two  
today? Where you looking for a  
rental or a purchase?

They're nervous, not exactly eager to deliver bad news:

WENDELL

I need to talk to you about your son and your husband.

TERRI ANN'S expression registers her surprise.

INT. FRANGO DINER - DAY

This place put the greasy in greasy spoon. A solitary window looks out onto the street. The cashier/maitre'd/waiter: MUGGY - long hair, salt and pepper beard disguising a pock-marked face, two milky eyes - is at the register.

MUGGY hands them menus as they pass by.

MUGGY

Sit anywhere you want. I'll get your order in a minute.

The back of the diner is lined with booths, green plastic cushions and not well lit.

WENDELL leads them to a booth in the back; despite the hour - it's very dark at the back of the diner.

TERRI ANN

I can barely see.

TERRI ANN'S curiosity and apprehension give way to a growing fear - which MAGGIE and WENDELL pick up on.

WENDELL

Probably best if people...  
(beat)  
...don't see us talking.

TERRI ANN

Not to be rude, but you said you had some information about my family. Mister...

WENDELL

Briggs. Wendell Briggs.

MAGGIE extends her hand.

MAGGIE

Folks just call me Maggie.

TERRI ANN shakes it absentmindedly, then returns her attention to WENDELL.

TERRI ANN  
Mister Briggs. My family?

Before he can answer, they're interrupted by MUGGY.

MUGGY  
Now I could give you the standard  
line about how everything on the  
menu is good, but people come here  
for one thing, the chicken why?  
Because it is god-damned delicious.  
I'll put our chicken up against  
KFC, Popeye's, any a that fast food  
crap, any day a the week, in fact  
I'll fight anybody that says our  
chicken isn't the tastiest thing  
they've ever put in their mouth.

He's gotten himself worked up. He pauses to catch his  
breath.

MAGGIE looks around the table and they come to an unspoken  
agreement.

MAGGIE  
Then I guess we'll have the  
chicken.

MUGGY  
Good choice.

He ambles away. Once he's out of ear-shot. TERRI ANN,  
exasperated:

TERRI ANN  
Mister Briggs. Please.

He says it quickly, like ripping off a band-aid.

WENDELL  
Your family, they were kidnapped by  
a pair of men named Crowe and  
Coruja. I'm sorry to say this..

Gently taking her hand.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
...I think that they were murdered,  
and these men disposed of the  
bodies.

The comment literally takes the air out of her lungs. TERRI  
ANN sits back into the cushion like she's been punched.

She takes a moment to fight back tears and collect herself before continuing.

TERRI ANN  
Did you tell the Sheriff?

MAGGIE  
He's already looking into it.

TERRI ANN doesn't quite know what to do with herself. MAGGIE does. She sets her hand lightly on TERRI ANN'S forearm, echoing her gesture at the Sheriff's. It too has the desired calming effect.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
We're gonna see if this chicken lives up to the hype. Then go back to my place, sit a spell, and hope the Sheriff comes back with some news.

EXT. MAIN HOUSE - DAY

TOUSSAINT'S cruiser inches down the driveway, finally coming to a stop near the front door.

TOUSSAINT emerges from the car - alone - and takes in the sight.

POV: He notices a summer breeze blow through the yard.

He mounts the steps to the front door. He leans forward, and sets his ear against the door - he can hear NOISES inside.

He knocks on the door. No answer. He knocks again.

TOUSSAINT  
Sheriff's department.

He tries the knob, with a noise SQUEAK, it turns. He opens the door and steps into:

INT. ENTRANCE - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the distance, he can hear the sound of RUNNING WATER, human activity. Someone else is definitely in the house. He calls out, louder:

TOUSSAINT  
Hello? Sheriff's department.

The SHERIFF studies the house, hallways branching off to the right and left. He follows the sound of RUNNING WATER through the:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The source of the RUNNING WATER is close.

TOUSSAINT

Hello?

He cautiously makes his way forward, through the living room into the:

INT. DINING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

An empty table and four chairs. The sound of RUNNING WATER, FOOTSTEPS ON TILE are louder here, just on the other side of the door. TOUSSAINT, as cocky as ever, confidently crosses the threshold:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Where LISBETH, wearing yellow gloves, stands at the sink, filling a bucket with water.

TOUSSAINT

Excuse me M'am, your door was open,  
I'm Sheriff Toussaint.

CORUJA enters from the basement.

This is the first time we've seen him in the light of day: mid-60s - wild, uncombed gray hair, lean, ropy muscles, his skin is deeply tanned, leathery -- giving him a decidedly reptilian appearance.

He stands unnaturally still, grinning devilishly, still barefoot.

CORUJA

Yes Sheriff, come on in, we've been  
expecting you.

TOUSSAINT'S face registers his surprise at "We've been expecting you." He files it away and continues:

TOUSSAINT

We got an anonymous tip. I'd like to have a look around, easy, friendly-like, of course, you can refuse, make me come back with a warrant, then it won't be so easy, or friendly.

Instead of reacting angrily, CORUJA simply smiles, completely unfazed.

CORUJA

Please, Sheriff, have a look around. We got nothin' to hide.

TOUSSAINT makes a show of poking his head into the living room, before heading for the stairs, leading to the:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

His attention is focused on a door at the end: The Locked Room. His real target.

Unaware of how vulnerable he is - TOUSSAINT casually makes his way down the hall, CORUJA just behind him.

CORUJA

If you don't mind my asking, what's this all about?

TOUSSAINT

An open case.

He reaches the doorway, with CORUJA still just an arm's length behind him.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

Can you open this for me?

CORUJA

No locked doors around here, like I said, we got nothin' to hide.

TOUSSAINT tries the knob, sure enough the door opens easily into:

INT. STORAGE ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

There are two shelving units against the walls, a pallet piled with boxes.

CORUJA'S bare feet appear on the threshold just behind TOUSSAINT.

Oblivious to the threat, TOUSSAINT opens one of the boxes, to reveal: A dozen bottles of Clorox.

CORUJA  
We like to keep a tidy house.

TOUSSAINT looks around again, there's nothing but Costco sized quantities of various cleaning supplies.

TOUSSAINT closes the door, his manner now more cordial.

TOUSSAINT  
We got this tip, the source was kind of questionable, but I had to check it out...sorry for disturbin' you folks.

They walk down the hallway, back toward the stairs.

CORUJA  
No problem, no problem at all, we're always happy to cooperate with the Sheriff's department, I hope you catch whoever it is you're looking for.

INT. ENTRANCE - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Where CORUJA sees TOUSSAINT to the door, while LISBETH watches in the b.g.

TOUSSAINT  
Thank you. Y'all have a good day.

CORUJA  
You too Sheriff.

With that, TOUSSAINT opens the front door and steps outside:

EXT. MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Back into the heat. TOUSSAINT descends the front stairs muttering to himself in frustration and amusement in equal measure:

TOUSSAINT  
Call Homeland Security my ass...

He unlocks the door to cruiser, and climbs in.

From the front porch, CORUJA and LISBETH watch the cruiser, back down the driveway, before turning onto the road and disappearing from sight.

EXT. ROAD - JIMSON - CONTINUOUS

As the verdant outskirts of Jimson roll by his windows TOUSSAINT is still muttering to himself.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)  
 ....on some old couple in the  
 middle a nowhere. I'da never heard  
 the end a that.

He activates the police radio, it SQWAKS in response.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)  
 Janet, this was a wild goose chase,  
 those people didn't know jack about  
 the McKennas.

CROWE appears in the backseat, on the other side of the steel mesh divider.

His body becomes transparent, wraith-like, and he floats through the steel mesh divider.

TOUSSAINT replaces the police radio, and when he looks up again: CROWE is suddenly sitting in the front seat, right next to him.

CROWE  
 Actually Sheriff, we know about the  
 McKennas...

TOUSSAINT instinctively reaches for his holster....

He's too slow. CROWE plunges a blade deep into TOUSSAINT'S chest. He removes the blood-soaked blade and plunges it in again, this time, all the way to the hilt.

The attack is fast, shocking, in its pure savagery.

The SHERIFF tries awkwardly to keep one hand on the wheel and staunch the blood flowing freely from the wounds in his chest.

CROWE pushes TOUSSAINT against the driver's side door, as he slides over to work the brake and take the wheel.

He slowly guides the cruiser to the side of the road. Once the cruiser's come to a complete stop, CROWE slides back across the front seat, and examines TOUSSAINT'S bloody corpse.

CROWE (CONT'D)  
... we know a lot.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DUSK

The sun is disappearing beneath the horizon. The stores and banks are closing, the bars are just opening. Neon signs sputter to light, casting an intermittent glow down the darkening street.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DUSK

Night is mere minutes away. The Sheriff's patrol car is noticeably absent from the lot.

EXT. CYPRESS ROAD - NIGHT

Country dark. No streetlights. Surrounding swamp: dense, overgrown vegetation, dark murky waters - it's like stepping back a hundred thousand years into the distant past.

MAGGIE'S truck and TERRI ANN'S minivan both parked in front of MAGGIE'S house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

TERRI ANN'S on the couch, with the phone to her ear. While she's listening, she surveys the strange surroundings: piles of newspapers strewn about, clutter, and the large terrarium.

TERRI ANN  
Thanks Janet, let me know as soon  
as you hear from him.

She ends the call. Her eyes come to rest on WENDELL, who's sitting at the far end of the couch, sweating Lone Star in hand - staring off into the distance.

TERRI ANN turns her attention back to the terrarium. The lizards immediately scamper up to the glass, causing TERRI ANN to involuntarily jump back; MAGGIE stifles a giggle as she heads toward the kitchen.

WENDELL  
 (to TERRI ANN)  
 Sheriff hasn't come back, has he?

MAGGIE returns from the kitchen with another beer, she hands it to TERRI ANN and sits down across from them.

TERRI ANN  
 Janet said he checked in a few hours ago, but he isn't back yet.

MAGGIE and WENDELL look at each other, and exchange a worried look - which TERRI ANN notices.

WENDELL quickly rises to his feet and starts pacing.

WENDELL  
 I tried to warn him.  
 (beat)  
 But if I'd told him about 'The Lovely Lady', about what Coruja and Crowe can really do, he'd 'a locked me up.

TERRI ANN  
 Who's 'The Lovely Lady'?

WENDELL and MAGGIE exchange another glance, but pointedly don't answer her question. She presses on:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
 Okay, you two want to keep secrets, fine; but if something's happened to the Sheriff, we've got to tell the state police, shit, the F.B.I.

She looks back and forth between them, but neither responds.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
 We've got to tell someone.

WENDELL continues to pace the floor, seemingly lost in thought until he stops in the middle of the room:

WENDELL  
 No. I've got to do this. I know how, and I've got the knives. FUCK!

TERRI ANN and MAGGIE are startled by the outburst.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 I don't wanna go back there.  
 (softer, resigned)  
 ...but it has to be me.  
 (MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Gotta go back to the last fucking place in the world I want to be.

MAGGIE

You remember what you said when I found you, about Coruja licking your blood off his blade? You go back there, maybe she helps him, do just that.

With mounting frustration:

TERRI ANN

She? No, wait, don't tell me - 'The Lovely Lady'. Who is she?

WENDELL

It's not a 'who', it's a way to make the unknowable, familiar.

TERRI ANN is understandably confused. WENDELL, doesn't elaborate, and instead turns to MAGGIE:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

You could help me.

MAGGIE

That's what I've been doing since the moment we met; but I'm not going to kill them.

(beat)

I'm not going to give her what she wants.

WENDELL and MAGGIE stare at each for a long beat. The graciousness TERRI ANN exhibited moments ago is gone:

TERRI ANN

You two keep talking about Coruja and Crowe, and this mysterious 'Lovely Lady', same way my Brandon talked about the boogeyman.

Her patience exhausted, she slams her beer down on the table:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

So, would one of you like to tell me exactly what the fuck you're talking about?!

Her outburst gets their attention. MAGGIE and WENDELL exchange a glance, before turning back to TERRI ANN:

WENDELL

You're gonna need another beer.

MAGGIE

I'm thinkin' the whole six-pack.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

The swamp lies twenty feet away; the air filled with the sounds of frogs, cicadas, the songs of mockingbirds and Whippoorwills. A small boat with an outboard motor - is docked just behind them.

They stand near the dock entrance, polishing off the six-pack, empty bottles at their feet. MAGGIE takes a long pull on her beer.

MAGGIE

There are 'forces' at work in the universe, you can access them, usually through an intermediary, manipulate them, use them to your advantage.

(beat)

These beings are unimaginably old, and powerful, space and time are mere playthings to them.

TERRI ANN

I'm not drunk enough for this.

TERRI ANN regards them both, their serious expressions, then fights not to laugh. She takes a long pull on a Lone Star. She finishes it, and immediately opens another.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

Okay, keep going.

WENDELL picks up where MAGGIE left off:

WENDELL

One of these 'beings' is called 'The Lovely Lady'... and I've seen Coruja and Crowe...

The far off stare returns as he remembers his escape from the plantation house.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

...do 'impossible' things, with the power she gives them.

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)

They killed my friend Harlan while we were trying to get away, and they almost got me.

TERRI ANN

Your friend? I'm sorry I didn't know.

He nods stoically, goes quiet for a beat before continuing:

WENDELL

That's what 'The Lovely Lady' is all about, power in exchange for life, got to feed the beast.

(beat)

I learned some of their secrets, if I go up against them, with some luck, I might be able to kill them.

MAGGIE directs her comment to WENDELL, forcefully.

MAGGIE

If you think that all this violence is going to solve this, you're wrong. You can't 'kill' your way out of this.

(a beat - to TERRI ANN)

Listen chica...

BEGIN MONTAGE:

LEE MCKENNA, lying in bed, smiling at his wife.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

... Love, family, are a part of life.

A smiling BRANDON MCKENNA on a playground full of children.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

But so is loss, so is pain. You can't go back to your old life.

Her empty house, devoid of life, messy, full of empty tequila bottles.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

I'm not saying it'll be easy, but one day you'll be able to move on.

END MONTAGE.

TERRI ANN

And what about justice? That a part of life? These... men... took Lee, my baby from me, they took my sweet boy away from me...

Her anger rising to the surface.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...Coruja and Crowe killed them, they haven't been arrested, and if they're not going to jail, then someone's got to make them pay.

Then to WENDELL:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

If you need help going after them, I'm with you, all the way; but I've never done... what you're thinking about doing.

WENDELL

If the lady likes you, she'll guide your hand. The problem won't be spilling blood...

MAGGIE

...the real danger, is that you might start liking it.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Dense fog has descended on the primordial swamp. The sound of an outboard motor cuts through the cacophony of the swamp's night creatures.

The curtain of fog parts, revealing MAGGIE'S boat gliding noisily across the surface of the murky green water, headed deep into the swamp.

WENDELL pilots from the stern, while TERRI ANN sits at the bow, as the small boat powers deeper into the fog enshrouded swamp.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT

The small boat is moored at the base of a small shack, set on stilts just over the water.

TERRI ANN and WENDELL climb a ladder onto a small landing.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

They enter, WENDELL turns on a light - while TERRI ANN looks around: A cot, table, and small kitchenette under a bare bulb.

TERRI ANN  
Love what you've done with the  
place.

He ignores her snarky comment, and motions for her to have a seat:

WENDELL  
Have a seat.

WENDELL reaches into his backpack and produces a small plastic baggie. He removes ten small brown vegetable buttons, hands five to TERRI ANN.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
You hungry?

She takes them, starts chewing, and makes a sour face.

TERRI ANN  
Ugh. These are bitter.

She finishes chewing them and swallows. WENDELL hands her a Thermos of water. As she drinks:

WENDELL  
I need you to pay very close  
attention to what I'm about to  
say...  
(beat)  
... 'cause shit's about to get  
weird.

He places an old fishing bucket next to the bed, then sits down across from her. She's not certain how seriously to take this:

TERRI ANN  
Ok.

WENDELL  
In a few minutes you are going to  
'cross over' and 'The Lovely Lady'  
is going to send her...  
(a beat)  
...'Emissary' to meet you, and you  
have to be clear about wanting this  
power.

TERRI ANN  
Hold on a minute, back up, did you  
just say 'cross over'?

WENDELL  
It's going to seem like a  
hallucination.

TERRI ANN  
I'm not really into drugs.

He directs her attention to the package of dried brown  
mushroom buttons.

WENDELL  
You are now. You just took a  
shitload of *Psilocibe Cubensis*...

TERRI ANN looks around nervously, not sure what to do.

TERRI ANN  
What? Oh shit. Oh shit.

WENDELL moves over to the bed and drapes his arm protectively  
over her shoulder, the other hand grabs the fishing bucket.

WENDELL  
Ok, this first part isn't so  
pleasant.

No sooner have the words left his mouth, than TERRI ANN  
starts to dry heave. WENDELL holds the bucket underneath her  
mouth, as she vomits into it.

He sets the bucket down, while TERRI ANN wipes specks of  
vomit from her mouth.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
I would never, ever, put my hands  
on a woman... but it can't be  
helped...  
(beat)  
... sorry 'bout this.

WENDELL gently stands her up, and forcefully taps her seven  
times, repeating CORUJA'S earlier movements.

Just like before, with that last tap to the crown of her  
head, TERRI ANN starts to lose control of her muscles.

WENDELL helps ease her back onto the bed, makes her  
comfortable as...

POV: Her field of vision takes on a reddish-orange glow. There is a bright flash of the blood orange light, momentarily obliterating MAGGIE'S shack.

EXT. SPACE

TERRI ANN'S supine form, motionless, yet...

FLYING: Through a vast star field, then through a black gaseous cluster at the center of the Milky Way.

If you look at the gaseous cluster closely enough, it suggests the form of a HUMAN FACE.

WENDELL (V.O.)

Remember, your intentions have to be clear... when she sends 'The Emissary' to meet you...

FLYING: Faster now - into a dark oily mass at the center of the cluster.

Light. She opens her eyes, sits up and finds herself:

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

Lying in the field. She climbs uneasily to her feet and looks around uncertainly: The sky is bathed in an unnatural copperish glow.

TERRI ANN freezes and looks around - completely terrified. Her heart starts to beat faster, THUMP THUMP THUMP.

It starts beating too fast, growing in volume, until it reaches a crescendo.

She looks down: Half expecting her heart to burst from her chest, instead she sees a blood orange light glowing inside of her.

It moves painlessly, out of her stomach, and hovers in mid-air in front of her, before flying into the field.

A long beat. The field, catches fire, thick tendrils of black smoke snake upward into the sky.

Instead of dissipating in the air, the smoke twists into the form of: THE EMISSARY, an enormous FIGURE composed entirely of thick black smoke, easily 5 meters tall.

The EMISSARY'S lids open, to reveal glittering - white on white eyes.

Fight or flight kicks in. TERRI ANN turns and runs for dear life.

It takes a step toward an increasingly terrified TERRI ANN. In a few steps it has completely closed the gap between them.

Too frightened to scream, she picks up the pace, running faster and deeper into the field.

She's just about reached the edge of the field, with THE EMISSARY in close pursuit.

As she runs, she spontaneously bursts into flames.

The EMISSARY holds out its 'hands', scooping up the ball of flame and swallowing it.

A long beat. THE EMISSARY'S facial features contort, as if in incredible pain. It tries to take another step forward, but the pain is too great.

It stops in its tracks, grabbing its head, hands scratching at a point in the middle of its forehead. It BELLOWS in pain.

THE EMISSARY takes another step forward, but is overcome with pain and CRASHES to the ground.

The space right between its eyes, bulges, once, then twice - something in its 'skull' is trying to get out.

The head BULGES again, and the dark smoky surface layer breaks, EXPLODING from the inside unleashing another cloud of flame and smoke into the surrounding field.

Thick black smoke billows from a hole in THE EMISSARY'S head, followed by a burst of steam.

A small, slender charcoal-gray hand appears, then a second. They find purchase on either side of the hole they've created, and a body slides from the fallen EMISSARY'S head.

The form that tumbles forward is FEMALE, but covered by a charcoal gray layer of smoke mimicking THE EMISSARY'S own and partially obscured by a thick cloud of steam.

The steam finally evaporates revealing a kneeling FEMALE FORM. The dark gray FEMALE HUMAN FORM slowly, unsteadily, rises to its feet like a newborn colt.

Once it is erect, it's finally recognizable...as TERRI ANN.

TERRI ANN looks down at her new form - at her new layer of 'smoke skin'.

She finally finds her voice and SCREAMS.

INT. SHACK - DAY

TERRI ANN sits bolt upright on the cot, covered in sweat, hair matted, clothes dirty.

WENDELL  
Welcome back.

He hands her a large cup of water.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
Drink this.

TERRI ANN gulps it down greedily, before WENDELL puts his hand on the bottom of the glass.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
Slow down, easy...

She finishes hydrating, then sets the glass down.

TERRI ANN  
What time is it?

WENDELL  
It's about four. Tuesday.

TERRI ANN  
I was out for two days?

WENDELL  
Yup.

TERRI ANN  
What the hell happened?

WENDELL points to a small pile of neatly folded clothes next to the bed. He gently teases her:

WENDELL  
I went to your place. Looks like an Ann Taylor blew up in your closet, how many pantsuits do you own?

TERRI ANN  
Hey.

WENDELL  
Relax. My ex used to shop there too. I brought some stuff that might be more 'useful'...

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 under the circumstances.  
 (still teasing her)  
 And you might want think about a  
 shower. You're kind of ripe.

She's tired, irritable and in no mood for jokes.

TERRI ANN  
 Sorry I couldn't maintain my  
 hygiene after you dosed me.

Her insult doesn't phase him. He responds calmly:

WENDELL  
 If I'd told you first...

Her tone softens.

TERRI ANN  
 ...I probably would've told you to  
 go to fuck yourself.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

TERRI ANN, showered, in a clean white tank-top, dark jeans  
 and hiking boots is seated near the edge of the outcropping,  
 under WENDELL'S watchful eye.

TERRI ANN  
 You did that too?

He nods, his expression suggests it isn't a pleasant memory.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. EMPTY ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

No furniture. The walls and floor splattered with liberal  
 amounts of blood.

In the center of this disgusting tableaux, WENDELL his shirt  
 stained with dark red blood, is standing over a freshly  
 mutilated corpse, laughing maniacally. He's in the middle of  
 a full-blown psychotic break.

WENDELL (V.O.)  
 Yeah, but my comedown wasn't so  
 smooth.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

He tries to shake off the memory before turning back to TERRI ANN. He leans forward:

WENDELL  
What did you see?

She stares off into the distance, while searching in the recesses of her mind for a deeply buried memory.

TERRI ANN  
...hard to remember what  
happened... there was a field,  
fire, a man made out of...smoke...

TERRI ANN trails off. He takes her in, studying her closely, like a specimen under a microscope:

WENDELL  
You're different.

She examines her arms, much like she did during her 'hallucination'.

TERRI ANN  
I don't feel any different.

A beat. When WENDELL finally speaks, his tone is ominous:

WENDELL  
You will.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Both TERRI ANN and WENDELL are hunched over the tiny table, two bowls of hastily prepared jambalaya in front of them.

TERRI ANN eyes her bowl suspiciously.

TERRI ANN  
Anything in this I should know  
about?

A rare smile from WENDELL:

WENDELL  
No. Eat.

TERRI ANN  
(a beat)  
Tell me about them.

WENDELL  
Coruja, Crowe?

She nods.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
Crowe was in Galveston. That's  
where Coruja found him...  
(a beat)  
...I don't know if Coruja made him  
what he is now or just brought out  
a darkness that was in him the  
whole time.

WENDELL pauses, lost in thought, before he turns back, but  
can't quite bring himself to meet her gaze:

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
Hell, now that I think about it,  
could say the same thing about me.

She sees him grappling with this troubling realization and  
changes the subject:

TERRI ANN  
And Coruja?

A beat as WENDELL searches his memory.

WENDELL  
I don't actually know that much  
about him, except a couple times he  
talked about this guy Edgar. Said  
he was only man in the world that  
scared him.  
(beat)  
But all you really need to know is  
that they're extremely dangerous,  
they can move through walls, you've  
constantly got to be aware of your  
surroundings. You've got to keep  
your head on a swivel, because they  
can be almost anywhere.

She stops eating, looks at him, there's still just a hint of  
disbelief in her expression.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
When you see it with your own  
eyes...you'll believe, in all of  
it.

He looks down at her empty plate. She nods that she's finished. He takes the plates away and puts them in the sink, before coming back to the table.

TERRI ANN

So we're dealing with two very bad men and some weird type of...

(beat)

...I don't know what to call it.  
Any good news?

WENDELL smiles slightly and reaches for his backpack.

WENDELL

When I escaped, I managed to get out with these.

He reaches into the backpack, removes the familiar cloth bundle and sets it on the table. He unwraps it revealing the three hand-crafted knives, each covered with the strange engravings.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

These are their knives.

He points to the Bone White one on the far left:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

This is Crowe's, these...

Then towards the others.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

...are Coruja's.

TERRI ANN

What's wrong with a gun? You've heard of the Second Amendment right?

WENDELL

You walk in his house with a gun, he's likely to take it and use it on you. A gun isn't going to do much good against them.

TERRI ANN

That doesn't make any sense.

WENDELL

You're going to have to trust me on this.

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)

You give your weapon part of your power, it's the only thing that can hurt you. These are their knives.

TERRI ANN

So we're going to use their own power against them?

He cracks another smile, glad she's finally grasping the concept.

WENDELL

These knives are all we need.

TERRI ANN

Ok.

He picks up CROWE'S blade, and leans in very close.

WENDELL

Since you have to use this, that means you're going to have to get in close, look him right in the eye...

(beat)

...and use his knife on him, can you do that?

She picks up the knife in the center, with the silver animal shaped handle, and brings it up to WENDELL'S throat, in what at first appears to be a mock threatening way.

TERRI ANN

He killed Lee, my baby, he stole my life.

Her sadness again turns into controlled rage. She unconsciously moves the blade so close to WENDELL'S throat, she could give him a shave:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

I can damn sure cut his throat.

He sees the rage in her eyes. He gently pushes the blade away from his throat, then holds out his hand for the knife, but TERRI ANN finds herself reluctant to let go of it.

She looks down and realizes she's clutching it more tightly than she thought. She looks back up at WENDELL confused.

WENDELL

See...

Like he's taking a dangerous weapon away from a child, WENDELL slowly unwraps her clenched fist, removes the knife and replaces it in the bundle.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 ...she's already got hold of you.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

The boat glides across the surface of the brackish waters, again accompanied by the sounds of frogs, the songs of mockingbirds and whippoorwills. The back of MAGGIE'S house faintly visible in the distance.

INT. BEDROOM - MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Morning sun streams through the blinds. TERRI ANN slowly stirs awake. She opens her eyes to find: MAGGIE sitting in a chair next to the bed, examining her like a doctor.

TERRI ANN  
 What's going on?

MAGGIE leans in really close to study her face: Dark eyes, set against pale, waxy skin.

MAGGIE  
*Si, puedo verla...*

TERRI ANN  
 You ever heard of 'personal space'?

MAGGIE ignores her:

MAGGIE  
 I can see her, behind your eyes,  
 but it may not be too late. I know  
 your pain. I've lost people too...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

The WOMAN we glimpsed in the photo on her mantel. Standing at the entrance to a cave, deep in the desert.

MAGGIE (V.O.)  
 The woman that taught me everything  
 I know, what I'm trying to teach  
 you...

(MORE)

MAGGIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(beat)  
...she was...

END FLASHBACK.

It's too painful to continue. MAGGIE changes the subject, back to the present:

MAGGIE

...I know what you're feeling, but this, what you're going to do, there may not be any way to come back from this, *entiendes?*

TERRI ANN nods in acknowledgment.

TERRI ANN

I get it.

MAGGIE

No, I don't think you do.

(beat)  
You're going to have to make a choice, learn to deal with the pain, and move on...

TERRI ANN

So people keep telling me.

MAGGIE

... or go back to the way things were; but there's a price. And when the bill comes due, believe me *chica*, you won't want to pay.

(beat)  
Don't do this. Don't do it.

TERRI ANN considers MAGGIE'S words, shakes her head.

TERRI ANN

(a beat as she remembers)  
...They kidnapped a child from Darlene Blanchard, someone from the Mitchells, Wendell's friend Harlan... the Sheriff... and if someone doesn't stop them they'll just go on killing.

A long beat. MAGGIE looks at TERRI ANN, sees her determined ferocity. She sighs heavily. With a little difficulty, MAGGIE rises to her feet and heads for the door. Without looking back:

MAGGIE  
There's food downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

MAGGIE'S made a big breakfast of eggs, chorizo, and coffee; but the mood is somber - no one says a word.

WENDELL is busy eating, while MAGGIE and TERRI ANN just exchange glances - appearing to silently rehash the conversation they just had.

WENDELL looks up and notices that TERRI ANN isn't eating.

WENDELL  
Eat up. You're going to need your strength.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The minivan parked near the end of the driveway. TERRI ANN behind the wheel, WENDELL in the passenger seat. MAGGIE stands next to the open driver's side window, addressing them one last time before they set off.

MAGGIE stares off dreamily, past them, into the middle distance, at something we can't see. She paraphrases something from "The Upanishads":

MAGGIE  
You can create new worlds for yourselves...

She pauses again, scanning both of their faces for signs of understanding.

WENDELL and TERRI ANN exchange a curious glance.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
...but living in those worlds comes at a terrible price.

From their confused expressions, MAGGIE, exasperated, tries to clarify:

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Your desire to go back to your old lives, 'how things used to be', is going to be the death of you...

Still not understanding, TERRI ANN starts the engine.

MAGGIE backs away from the minivan and lights a cigarette, as she watches it back down the driveway, makes a right and disappears from sight.

EXT. TERRI ANN'S MINIVAN - CONTINUOUS

TERRI ANN drives the car down Cypress Road. TERRI ANN turns to WENDELL:

TERRI ANN  
What was that supposed to mean?

WENDELL shrugs:

WENDELL  
Guess we'll find out.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

The sky is filled with an unnatural copperish glow.

A light breeze gently bends the stalks. Standing in the middle of the field is CORUJA, motionless - yet still menacing. He stares a few feet ahead of him, waiting...

A long beat passes. There's no sound except for the wind whistling through the leaves.

In the space ahead of him, THE EMISSARY appears - tendrils of smoke rising from its 'body'.

The EMISSARY and CORUJA stare at each other, engaging in a silent conversation. Whatever is communicated between them brings a creepy smile to CORUJA's face.

The EMISSARY disappears, leaving only a thin cloud of smoke in its wake and a smiling CORUJA alone in the field.

INT. KITCHEN - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

LISBETH is serving breakfast to CROWE and CORUJA.

CORUJA closes his eyes, and strains to hear something no one can else seem to hear. A smile slowly spreads across his wrinkled face.

CORUJA  
The Emissary came to me last night.

All activity in the room comes to a halt. Complete silence except the sound of running water in the sink.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Told me we're having guests, tidy up, maybe put on some music, cause we are going to be entertaining today.

LISBETH

Please 'entertain' 'em outside, or in the basement.

She's mildly annoyed, but very casual, as if she's discussing cleaning up spilt milk.

CORUJA

Will do darlin'.

He looks at CROWE.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Make sure there's enough wood out back.

CROWE

More cops?

The corners of CORUJA'S mouth twist up into a malignant smile.

CORUJA

Our old friend is stopping by. He's bringing our knives...

He closes his eyes.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

...and a friend.

His ancient lips twist into a licentious smile.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Oh you're going to love her.

CROWE gets his meaning and smiles creepily.

CORUJA leaps to his feet -- eager for the confrontation ahead.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Let's give them a special welcome.

EXT. HIGHWAY 171 - DAY

Very little traffic on the road at this time of day. The minivan takes advantage of that, at a rate clearly in excess of the posted speed limit.

EXT. TERRI ANN'S MINIVAN - DAY

TERRI ANN'S eyes are focused on the road ahead, hands gripping the wheel too tightly, foot heavy on the accelerator.

WENDELL

He lives outside of Jimson. We're going to go through the fields.

WENDELL sits calmly beside her. He glances at the speedometer: 80 m.p.h.

TERRI ANN

Something I've been meaning to ask you...

Without turning to look at her:

WENDELL

Go ahead.

TERRI ANN

Hypothetically speaking, 'The Lovely Lady' has given you, me, Crowe, Coruja this 'power'. Right?

A beat. WENDELL senses where her line of questioning is leading and is reluctant to reach the conversational destination.

WENDELL

Yeah.

TERRI ANN

So if 'she' is working through all of us, at the same time, won't all of this end up in a...

(beat)

...stalemate?

WENDELL

No. She'll pick a favorite. Whoever she likes the most.

TERRI ANN

And what happens to everyone else?

WENDELL

They die.

EXT. ROAD - HIGHWAY 171 - DAY

The minivan slows down - then pulls off the road, just outside the cane fields. TERRI ANN and WENDELL get out. He opens the hatch in back, removes the backpack.

He sets the backpack on the floor in the back and removes the bundle. He unwraps the bundle, revealing the three knives.

WENDELL

Go ahead and take it.

She picks up the animal-handled blade and grips it tightly in her hand. A smile involuntarily flashes across her face, which worries WENDELL. He picks up the other two, one in each hand, then turns to her again:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Keep that in your hand, keep it raised at all times. Do not drop your guard, even for a minute...

(a beat)

...because the second you relax, that's when they'll strike.

She raises the knife to stomach level. WENDELL inspects her grip and stance. Satisfied with what he sees:

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Good.

He closes the hatch. He turns and heads towards the edge of the field, with TERRI ANN following close behind.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

They move quickly, keep your head on swivel.

TERRI ANN

Got it.

He stops at the edge of the field and turns back to face her.

WENDELL

We stay together.

TERRI ANN

Ok.

WENDELL

That's important. We stay together,  
no matter what. When they show up,  
if you get close enough...

He taps his chest, between the ribs.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

You sink the blade all the way to  
the hilt. Once they go down, cut  
the throat, just to make sure they  
stay down. Then we take the bodies  
out back, burn them and get the  
hell out. We clear?

TERRI ANN

Got it.

She looks up and down the road.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

Isn't someone going to notice my  
minivan, or see us? Why are we  
doing this in the middle of the  
day? Why not do it at night and  
surprise them?

WENDELL answers her question as he walks.

WENDELL

Certain places have power, where  
the seams between the worlds is  
weakest.

TERRI ANN

Guess I'm just going to have to  
take your word for it.

WENDELL

Same's true for certain times of  
day. Night, that's when the seams  
between the worlds are weakest, and  
when they'll be at their strongest.

(beat)

We don't want to face them once the  
sun goes down.

TERRI ANN

Got it.

With that, she pulls her dark hair into a ponytail.

WENDELL

Besides, we're not going to surprise Coruja. He knows we're coming.

TERRI ANN

Say what?

Without answering, WENDELL turns and heads into the field. TERRI ANN follows close behind.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

Hot and humid. WENDELL, sweating, shirt soaked through - hacks away at the stalks -- moving through the field is slow going and hard work.

TERRI ANN, also sweaty, wipes perspiration from her forehead - but stays on his heels, as they make their way, a few meters at a time through the field.

EXT. YARD - DAY

At the edge of the field, two pairs of hands slowly part the stalks at the edge of the field.

She takes in the main house for the first time.

TERRI ANN

An old plantation. Why am I not surprised?

WENDELL pauses for a moment as the memories coming flooding back.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

The upstairs hallway. WENDELL and HARLAN running for their lives.

HARLAN, near the front door, searching the shadows.

CORUJA burying a blade in HARLAN'S chest.

Blood everywhere. HARLAN trying in vain to remove the knife.

END FLASHBACK.

A long beat as WENDELL grapples with his memories of the house, and his lizard brain fear of re-entering it.

WENDELL

Remember: we stay together, be aware of what's around you, we do this, get rid of the bodies and get out. Then comes the hard part...

TERRI ANN

The hard part?

WENDELL

Living with it.

She simply nods. WENDELL raises his knife to hip level and TERRI ANN does the same.

FROM OVERHEAD

As they stealthily cross the yard (or as stealthily as you can in broad daylight).

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE: A wrinkled hand takes the stylus and places it on an old 78'.

CLOSE: Robert Johnson: "Me and The Devil"

ROBERT JOHNSON (V.O.)

Early this morning, when you  
knocked upon my door...

The sounds of his voice and the chords of a lone acoustic guitar echo eerily through the house.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WENDELL and TERRI ANN take each step slowly and quietly. The front door is unlocked, with his elbow WENDELL pushes the door open, they slowly - carefully - step into:

INT. ENTRANCE - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

And immediately hear the music.

ROBERT JOHNSON (O.S.)

"Early this morning, when you  
knocked upon my door..."

WENDELL and TERRI look around: A long entryway, a larger room off to the left and stairs to the right.

ROBERT JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
 ...and I said Hello Satan, I  
 believe it's time to go..

WENDELL motions to head to the left. TERRI ANN follows his instructions, looking from left to right, then behind her - before turning left into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The room trapped in time. Dusted and cleaned, but empty. The song hangs eerily in the air around them:

ROBERT JOHNSON (O.S.)  
 ...and I said 'Hello Satan, I  
 believe it's time to go...

WENDELL motions towards the door at the far end of the room. They silently cross the room, emerging in the:

INT. DINING ROOM - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Set for a formal dinner for five people.

ROBERT JOHNSON (O.S.)  
 ...Me and the Devil were walking  
 side by side..."

TERRI ANN takes in the strange tableaux, WENDELL notices:

WENDELL  
 Don't get distracted.

He passes by the dining room table into:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Clean. Spotless. Empty.

ROBERT JOHNSON (O.S.)  
 ..."Me and the Devil were walking  
 side by side..

WENDELL looks around the room and sees a door in the far corner. They move to the door, WENDELL opens it slowly to reveal: A long dark stairwell, descending into an even darker basement.

WENDELL'S Zen-like calm fades and for the first time, now they both seem nervous.

ROBERT JOHNSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
..and I'm going to beat my woman,  
until I get satisfied"...

WENDELL takes the lead again:

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

They descend the dimly lit stairs, WENDELL first - TERRI ANN just behind, the music barely audible above them. The music is replaced by the sound of their FOOTSTEPS and HEARTBEATS.

They move deeper into the basement, into a:

INT. STORAGE ROOM - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

A large, open space. The air is fetid and dark like a tomb. Their footsteps ECHO on the floor.

Both TERRI ANN and WENDELL squint in the darkness, hoping their eyes will quickly adjust to the low light.

Each side of the storage room is lined with smaller alcoves.

TERRI ANN looks to either side: The alcoves don't have doors - but the openings are dark. The perfect place to lie in wait.

She unconsciously grips her knife a little tighter.

WENDELL pauses at the threshold to the larger room beyond. He takes a moment to steel himself, also squeezing his blade tighter, before stepping across the threshold and into:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Under the laundry room's faltering fluorescent bulb, WENDELL is the first to see LISBETH at the sink, rinsing out one of her buckets.

They stop on the basement floor, five feet behind her. She hears them, but doesn't turn from the sink.

LISBETH  
Wendell?

TERRI ANN is surprised by not only her recognition, but by the politeness of his response.

WENDELL  
Yes M'am.

LISBETH

They're waiting for you, outside.

At that, she turns off the running water and turns to face them. She takes in TERRI ANN, inspecting her head to toe.

LISBETH (CONT'D)

I asked them not to do it down here. Y'all always make such a mess.

TERRI ANN

I don't plan on being a stain on your floor lady.

LISBETH

Nobody 'plans' on it darlin', but they end up that way just the same.

Then she smiles, revealing a mouthful of crooked yellowed teeth.

A FIGURE steps from the shadows behind WENDELL and TERRI ANN.

WENDELL is troubled by LISBETH'S smile, decides to turn around. That's when he finds:

POV: CROWE standing in front of him, his eyes full of malicious intent.

CROWE

Welcome back bud.

CROWE lunges at him, his left hand little more than a blur.

WENDELL, tensed and ready, is able to twist away in time, CROWE'S blade just missing his midsection.

The fighting style is like Thai Krabi Krabong knife fighting; it's a slow, elaborately choreographed dance, but once the opponents get close to each other, it immediately turns lethal.

TERRI ANN watches them move, at what appears to be speeds faster than humans should be capable of.

She snaps out of her reverie and springs forward to join the fight, failing to notice: LISBETH'S thrown a handful of lye at her.

TERRI ANN'S field of vision obscured by a cloud of poisonous white powder.

She covers her eyes. LISBETH uses the opportunity to charge at her.

TERRI ANN cranes her head to hear the FOOTSTEPS ECHOING LOUDLY on the concrete floor, like a herd of elephants heading her way.

Her eyes still covered, TERRI ANN jabs, with alarming speed, in the general direction of the FOOTSTEPS.

She opens her eyes to find: LISBETH is mere inches in front her - wearing an expression of surprise and confusion.

TERRI ANN looks down to find that she's buried the blade deep in LISBETH'S upper thigh - severing her femoral artery.

She uses her free arm to push LISBETH back, as the blade slides out of her body, a jet of arterial blood splashes TERRI ANN'S tank-top. LISBETH falls to the ground in a circle of ever widening blood.

TERRI ANN raises the red stained blade into the air, momentarily captivated by the sight of the blood. The sound of footsteps forces her to look away from the blade and toward:

WENDELL and CROWE circle each other in the confined space. She starts towards them, intending to come to WENDELL'S aid when...

A familiar pair of bare feet appear on the concrete floor just behind TERRI ANN.

She can feel the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end.

She turns around to find: The hilt of CORUJA'S blade rushing toward her face.

He smashes her nose with a sickening crunch. Blood flows freely from her nostrils. She falls to the ground, slipping into unconsciousness.

He kneels down beside her, then leans in close and whispers.

CORUJA

You killed ol' Lisbeth. So when we're done with your buddy...

Focused on remaining conscious, she doesn't respond.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

...I'm going to let Crowe take it out on your sweet little ass...

He smiles.

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
 ...and he likes it slow, likes to  
 take his time.

Meanwhile WENDELL is focused on CROWE in front of him, but can't help but see CORUJA dragging TERRI ANN'S limp body, off into the shadows.

CORUJA'S dragging TERRI ANN by the hair towards a closet. He opens the door and:

INT. CLOSET - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Flings her body through the air like a rag doll. She slams against the far wall and falls to the ground, unconscious.

CLOSE - DOOR KNOB: CORUJA closes the door, then locks it. The door making a loud SNIK sound as it locks.

INT. BASEMENT - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WENDELL and CROWE still circle each other. WENDELL keeping a wary eye on his opponents: CROWE still in the foreground, CORUJA in the background walking towards them.

Now both CORUJA and CROWE are circling WENDELL - just waiting for the opportunity to strike.

The odds are decidedly against him.

WENDELL keeps moving to his left, closer to the shadows. He takes a step further, and is completely swallowed by shadow.

A long beat. CORUJA and CROWE don't even hear WENDELL'S footsteps. He's disappeared. CORUJA is simultaneously impressed and annoyed.

CORUJA  
 He's been practicing.

CROWE  
 The woman?

CORUJA  
 Dessert.  
 (beat)  
 But first things first.

EXT. BACK YARD - MAIN HOUSE - DUSK

The sun floats just above the horizon, bathing the yard in an amber glow; normally beautiful, the sunset now seems ominous.

When CROWE and CORUJA open the back door, they find that WENDELL is standing in the middle of the yard, waiting for them.

CORUJA looks towards the setting sun.

CROWE

You should've come earlier. Sun's going down.

CORUJA grins malevolently.

CORUJA

You know what that means.

WENDELL

I know what it means.

Without saying another word, CROWE takes a step forward, his knife raised high.

CROWE

You took my knife when you left, but you were in such a hurry you forgot something...

He holds up a steel handled knife for WENDELL to examine.

CROWE (CONT'D)

...you left one of yours behind too.

He smiles, but WENDELL is unfazed, completely focused on the task at hand.

CROWE steps forward and stabs downward with the left hand, his knife hand. WENDELL reaches up with his right hand, slamming into CROWE'S wrist - and blocking his attack.

WENDELL uses the opportunity to stab upward with his right hand. CROWE anticipates this, blocking the upward movement with his left arm.

While WENDELL is looking down at his right hand which failed to find the target, he takes his focus off the left hand. CROWE stabs again, in a downward motion.

WENDELL sees the blade coming and steps back a few inches, but CROWE'S blade makes contact and opens up a nasty gash across WENDELL'S chest.

WENDELL twists back toward him, using the momentum to drive his fist into CROWE'S face. The force of the blow knocks CROWE back a few feet.

WENDELL uses the next few seconds to check his wound, it's bleeding - but not bad enough that it requires him to bandage it right away.

Before he can plan his next move, CORUJA steps forward and punches WENDELL in the jaw. The blow hits him like a hammer. While he's dazed, CORUJA grabs him by the hair and flings him back towards the house. WENDELL falls to the ground in a heap.

CORUJA looks back at CROWE, who's risen to his feet by now.

CORUJA  
Stop playing with him.

CROWE nods in acknowledgement and steps forward purposefully toward WENDELL who's risen onto his forearms.

CROWE grips the hilt of his knife, blade down, ready to stab downward. He raises his arm to bring the blade down on WENDELL...

While his arm is raised WENDELL kicks out at CROWE - finding his kneecap and pushing it all the way back - the wrong way. It snaps with a sickening CRACK.

CROWE screams in pain, and drops to his good knee, holding the other one.

Now that they're both at the same height, WENDELL takes another swing at him. His fist finds its target - putting CROWE on his back.

CORUJA lurks at the edge of the fight.

As WENDELL looms over CROWE'S fallen body. CORUJA slices at WENDELL'S back, cutting his shoulder blade.

WENDELL spins - with knife in hand - slicing back at CORUJA who uses his speed to back up out of the reach of the blade.

Those few seconds give WENDELL the time necessary to return his attention to CROWE, still clutching his shattered knee.

WENDELL grips the blade tightly in his right hand and stabs downward. Before CROWE can bring his hands up to block it - WENDELL brings the blade down...

CLOSE - CHEST: sinking it into CROWE'S heart, unleashing a torrent of crimson.

CORUJA'S expression of genuine surprise is quickly replaced by a smug smile - as he backs away deeper into the yard, toward the old former slave quarters.

CORUJA (CONT'D)  
That's your first isn't it?

When WENDELL doesn't respond, he backs up - disappearing amidst the shacks.

CORUJA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You're a regular ol' killer now,  
but I won't be so easy.

CORUJA has disappeared for the moment. Relief washes over WENDELL. He takes a moment to catch his breath, reach back and check the gash on his back.

He breathes in deeply, exhales slowly - then bends over and dislodges the blade from CROWE'S chest. Once he's removed it - he heads towards the shacks.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

The field is ablaze. In the midst of the conflagration, LEE and BRANDON, deathly pale, stand in front of TERRI ANN. The flames approach...

EXT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A 'smoky' hand grasps the door and turns it until it CLICKS.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

The flames move forward like a living thing - consuming LEE and BRANDON in fire and smoke. Finally the flames reach TERRI ANN, engulfing her as well.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. CLOSET - BASEMENT - NIGHT

TERRI ANN wakes up screaming.

TERRI ANN

Nooo!!!

Her vision slowly comes into focus. She's no longer in the field, but a dark, cramped closet.

She touches her nose and is filled with a sharp shooting pain.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

Ouch. Sonofabitch.

She slowly, unsteadily, rises to her feet. Again, the hairs on the back of her neck are standing on end - she is filled with a sense that she's not alone in the darkness. She looks around:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Wendell? Wendell?

She reaches out and turns the knob, expecting it to be locked, but it clicks and opens.

She pushes it further open and steps out into:

INT. BASEMENT - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The aftermath of the fight. The ground is covered with white powder. In the middle of the floor, the old woman, LISBETH, lies bleeding:

Her blood disappearing down the same drain she used when we first saw her.

TERRI ANN sees her knife lying exactly where she dropped it, near LISBETH'S body. She picks it up, wipes the blood off on her jeans - then steps over the body toward the stairs:

INT. KITCHEN - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Quiet as the grave. She strains to distinguish between the night sounds and footsteps - like a predator scanning the aural landscape for signs of its prey.

CLOSE - TERRI ANN: As she concentrates.

The SOUNDS of the cicadas and nocturnal animals GROW QUIETER and the SOUNDS of FOOTSTEPS crunching weeds, grow LOUDER.

She turns in the directions of the FOOTSTEPS, out into the:

EXT. BACK YARD - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She steps out into the yard. The air ahead of her is suddenly full of smoke - like someone's just extinguished a small fire.

She's so focused on the CLOUD OF SMOKE - that she almost doesn't notice CROWE'S bloody corpse. She stops just before she trips over him.

She looks down at CROWE'S body: It mutates into something twisted, barely recognizable as human. A geyser of flame shoots out of the form...

...and into the cupped hands of THE EMISSARY, towering over the corpse.

She looks down again - only to find CROWE'S lifeless body.

She looks up suddenly - again filled with a sense that she is not alone.

TERRI ANN  
(whispering)  
Wendell?

A slight breeze that blows through the weeds, it almost seems as if the night itself is answering her. She whispers:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
What happened to sticking together?

Before crossing the yard, she remembers WENDELL'S instructions.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
Don't get distracted. Head on a swivel...

She looks around:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
...knife raised.

She raises the blade into a offensive position and carefully crosses the yard toward the shacks.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

In the center of the four shacks, overrun with weeds a foot high.

WENDELL and CORUJA, each in a crouched fighting position slowly circle one another.

WENDELL

No place for you to hide.

CORUJA

I don't need to hide, we both know what's going to happen here.

WENDELL meets his smile, his expression unchanging.

INT. FIRST SHACK - NIGHT

TERRI ANN steps inside the one-room shack, at first not realizing how crowded the small space is...

As she accidentally brushes against a table and knocks over a glass, that SHATTERS on the floor.

TERRI ANN jumps at the noise. She looks down and realizes it's just a broken glass. She attempts to calm herself.

TERRI ANN

Relax.

She takes a moment, waiting for her heart to stop racing - and then furtively looking around to make sure she hasn't given away her location. Satisfied she's still alone, looks around the confined space. As her eyes adjust to the light:

POV: Evenly illuminated and clear for the night - almost as if she's wearing night-vision goggles.

She can make out a large stained mattress, chains and manacles on the floor next to it.

She manages to keep her revulsion under control, maintaining a firm grip on her weapon - she turns around: No one behind her.

With the knife raised, she backs out the door:

INT. BACK YARD - MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Her feet descending the stairs backwards, then feet hitting the ground, one at a time.

Ahead of her is another shack, she heads towards it, stepping inside:

INT. SECOND SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Where the stench of death hits TERRI ANN like a punch in the nose. One hand covers her mouth, the other grips the knife tightly.

Her eyes adjusted to the low light she can make out all the objects in the room - much to her chagrin:

POV: More manacles, shackles mounted to the wall and floor. The decaying wooden floors around her are stained with dried blood.

She looks away from the shackles out the window. Through a grimy glass, she can see:

TERRI ANN  
(relieved)  
Wendell.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

TERRI ANN whips her head around and realizes that she's outside in the clearing itself: Surrounded by four shacks.

Before she can figure out how she got outside, she sees that:

CORUJA and WENDELL are in the middle of the clearing, knives drawn, circling each other like prizefighters. CORUJA turns toward TERRI ANN:

CORUJA  
You're Lee's wife, little Brandon's  
mommy. I had 'em chained up in the  
back.

As she imagines her family's final days:

INT. FIRST SHACK - NIGHT

Her husband LEE lying wounded and bleeding on the mattress, trying to protect BRANDON as CROWE and CORUJA loom over them.

CORUJA (V.O.)  
Your husband begged for Brandon's  
life... said he'd trade his life  
for the kid's... problem was, I  
needed 'em both.  
(MORE)

CORUJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

They managed to get away, for a lil' while, but I got 'em in the end. Always do.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

TERRI ANN winces at this. She buries the pain. The pain becomes anger and when she speaks it is calm and steady:

TERRI ANN

You killed my husband and my son...

WENDELL

...Harlan and Toussaint.

TERRI ANN

Now we're going to make you pay.

CORUJA

Is that right?

TERRI ANN nods, hoping she's succeeded in controlling the anger rising inside of her.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

Well then little darlin' come on over and join the party.

TERRI ANN moves around behind CORUJA. He turns around to note her position; as he turns TERRI ANN and WENDELL mimic his movements exactly - like a long spoke turning a wheel.

CORUJA turns his murderous gaze at TERRI ANN. She returns it, her gaze matching his hostility.

She's not sure if it's the 'shrooms or the scales have fallen from her eyes - but CORUJA takes on a dark, mutated form, much like CROWE - angular, inhuman and covered with the swirling dark 'smoke skin'.

CORUJA notices that TERRI ANN'S eyes have briefly glazed over. He uses the momentary distraction to charge at her.

He is inhumanly fast - in the blink of an eye, he's closed the distance between them.

CORUJA stabs, again the hand is a blur. Much to his surprise, and TERRI ANN'S, she awkwardly side-steps the blow.

CORUJA lunges at her again. She uses the forearm of her free hand to block the lunge. At the same time, uses her knife hand to stab at him. CORUJA easily knocks her arm away.

They separate, CORUJA attacks again. This time using brute strength to knock her backward.

She stumbles; before she can completely regain her balance, CORUJA surges forward.

He raises the knife, bringing it down toward her head. She reaches up with her free hand, and grabs him around the wrist, preventing the blade from falling.

While her attention is focused on the blade hovering malevolently above her - CORUJA reaches into his waistband and stealthily removes a second blade, quickly sinking it into TERRI ANN'S side.

WENDELL sees the blade disappearing into TERRI ANN'S side.

WENDELL

Noooo!!!

He rushes toward them.

WENDELL raises his blade overhead, preparing to bring it down into the CORUJA'S neck - when CORUJA releases TERRI ANN. She drops to the ground.

WENDELL'S right arm is already falling toward CORUJA'S neck when...

CORUJA spins around and sinks both blades into WENDELL. The blade in his left hand sinking into a lung, the right handed blade sinking into his stomach.

WENDELL'S face registers his surprise. He stumbles backward, his hands trying in vain to staunch the bleeding. He falls to his knees.

CORUJA strides toward him triumphantly.

CORUJA

I told you how this was gonna end  
didn't I?

He raises the knife, blood dripping down off the blade, to his lips. His tongue sensuously licks the flat side of the blade.

His lips smeared with blood, CORUJA looks down at: WENDELL writhing in pain, blood pouring from his wounds.

CORUJA (CONT'D)

As much as I'd like to leave you  
like this for a little while, I'm  
gonna go ahead and finish you off.

CORUJA'S statement is abruptly cut short. He arches his back, his face twists with pain. His hands desperately reach toward his back. He turns revealing a blossoming red stain on his back, and...

...TERRI ANN standing behind him, silver animal-handled blade still thrust forward. Her shirt still soaked with not only her blood, but LISBETH'S and CORUJA'S as well. Her free hand keeps pressure on the wound.

He is temporarily frozen with surprise. TERRI ANN uses the opportunity to lunge in, violently stabbing him a second, third and even fourth time - geysers of blood erupting from his body.

Confident the wounds will prove fatal, she steps back to watch him die.

CORUJA takes an uncertain step forward, drunkenly lunging at her.

She simply steps aside as CORUJA'S momentum carries him forward and he falls face first into the weeds.

TERRI ANN steps forward purposefully, hovering just over his prostrate form. Her eyes, her expression are emotionless.

TERRI ANN

...and I just told you...

She leans down and with her left hand, grabs a fistful of greasy hair, and powerfully jerks him up by the head.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...I was going to make you pay...

TERRI ANN places the razor sharp edge of the blade against his neck. CORUJA closes his eyes, expecting the coup de grace.

TERRI ANN is about to open an artery, when she remembers:

MAGGIE (V.O.)

These powers are unimaginably old,  
elemental, powerful, space and time  
are mere playthings to them...

Instead of slicing CORUJA'S throat, TERRI ANN looks out into the pitch black Louisiana night:

TERRI ANN

Show yourself! I know you're out  
there! Show yourself.

A long beat.

Wisps of black smoke materialize out of thin air, the smoke twists into the EMISSARY, terrifying as ever. It silently looms over them.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

I know the deal, I kill, then you give me strength, speed, walking through walls... I don't want any of that shit.

She casts a quick glance down at CORUJA, then back at THE EMISSARY:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

I kill this motherfucker. You wipe this shit stain out of existence and...

An ominous silence that seems to last an eternity. TERRI ANN interprets its silence as agreement.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...you send me and Wendell back, a year...

She does a quick mental calculation.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

...a year and three weeks.

The EMISSARY doesn't answer, only stares impassively, seemingly daring her to act.

TERRI ANN tightens her grip on CORUJA. She looks into the EMISSARY'S white eyes and in one quick motion - she severs CORUJA'S carotid, sending an arterial spray into the air.

She lets go. CORUJA falls forward, face first - dead before he hits the ground.

A geyser of flame erupts from the top of CORUJA'S head -- shooting upward into the EMISSARY'S waiting hands.

TERRI ANN watches, without a trace of remorse.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

Ok, I held up my end...

Her white tank top splattered with blood, adrenalin dissipating, TERRI ANN staggers forward a few steps before falling to her knees - next to WENDELL. His breath's coming in ragged gasps. He's still alive, but barely.

She rubs his face with bloody hands and says for her benefit as much as his:

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
Hold on Wendell, everything's gonna  
be alright.

He can hardly get the words out:

WENDELL  
Don't...let...me...die...here.

She vigorously shakes her head 'No'.

TERRI ANN  
You said stay together, we're gonna  
stay together.  
(beat)  
And we're going home. Together.

She looks up at the EMISSARY. Her strength draining, her demands becoming pleas.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)  
Send us back.

The EMISSARY'S glittering eyes FLASH WHITE, like magnesium flares.

TERRI ANN and WENDELL...

CAREEN backwards through time and space, like they're on strings that have just been pulled taut. The stars warp and blur around them, as they hurtle toward the black gaseous cluster.

Inky blackness finally giving way to...

EXT. MAIN HOUSE - PLANTATION - ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAWN

Light. The sprawling mansion. Completely abandoned, as if it hasn't been inhabited for decades.

Weeds and vines snake through missing doors and broken windows, almost completely re-claimed by nature.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAWN

Taking shelter from the heat, MAGGIE sits on her shaded front porch, sipping her first beer of the day, a lit cigarette in the ashtray next to her.

Once again, she responds to voices we can't hear, again paraphrasing the Upanishads:

MAGGIE  
 (in Spanish)  
*"...Having created the creation,  
 the Creator entered into it. This  
 is also true for us..."*

INT. KITCHEN - BRIGGS APARTMENT - ONE YEAR EARLIER - MORNING

WENDELL opens his eyes and finds himself: Already sitting at the table, eating breakfast, dressed for work.

MAGGIE (V.O.)  
*...we create our world, then enter  
 into that world. We live in the  
 world that we have created..."*

He pauses mid-bite, momentarily disoriented, then re-examines his surroundings.

LAURA notices his sudden disorientation.

LAURA  
 You okay babe?

WENDELL  
 Thought I heard somethin'.

He shrugs it off, then reaches for the coffee pot, but his hands have started shaking so violently that he can't grip it properly.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 Somethin' wrong, with my hands.

With growing concern:

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 They won't stop shaking.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - ONE YEAR EARLIER - MORNING

A beautiful spring morning. TERRI ANN'S neighborhood, coming to life - people leaving their homes, cars pulling out of driveways, yellow school buses picking up SCHOOLCHILDREN.

INT. BEDROOM - ONE YEAR EARLIER - MORNING

Where TERRI ANN opens her eyes, and finds LEE sitting at the edge of the bed, already half-dressed. He notices her slowly waking up.

LEE

Good mornin' sleepy head.

She looks around in a moment of profound disorientation, shakes her head:

TERRI ANN

This is wrong. I shouldn't be here.  
You shouldn't be here.

LEE puts his arms around her.

LEE

Must've been some nightmare. You're  
fine baby, everything's fine.

She leans into his embrace. It calms and centers her.

TERRI ANN

You're right, just a bad dream.

A beat, as she reorients herself. She shakes her head, this time to clear the cobwebs; she glances at the time of phone, then pulls back the covers.

TERRI ANN (CONT'D)

I've got to get Brandon ready.

LEE

Brandon got himself ready today.  
You need me to pick him up today?

TERRI ANN

No. I'll get him...

She throws her feet over the side of the bed, not noticing the blood-stained tank-top and jeans on the floor next to the bed.

INT. KITCHEN - ONE YEAR EARLIER - MORNING

TERRI ANN, wearing a trusty pantsuit, comes downstairs, to find BRANDON, ready for school, putting his dishes in the sink:

BRANDON

I made my own breakfast today!

TERRI ANN

Daddy told me, you're practically grown up.

She reaches out for a brown lunch bag, but the counter is empty. There's a moment of confusion, she dismisses it, and follows BRANDON to the:

INT. LIVING ROOM - ONE YEAR EARLIER - CONTINUOUS

Front door. LEE is ready to leave for work. BRANDON struggles to put on his backpack. As TERRI ANN kneels down to help him, her hand starts shaking in an uncontrollable palsy.

She looks down at a hand, that's refusing to obey her.

BRANDON

Mom! I'm going to be late.

The shaking stops. She finishes slipping the straps of his backpack over his shoulders, tousles his hair, and kisses the top of his head.

TERRI ANN

Love you.

BRANDON is embarrassed by her show of affection. A beat before he reluctantly responds:

BRANDON

Love you Mom.

LEE opens the front door, BRANDON sprints for the bus-stop, with that limitless kid energy. TERRI ANN stops LEE before he leaves, playfully grabs him by the arm.

TERRI ANN

Uh, aren't you forgetting something?

They share a long deep kiss. With that, he heads outside. She steps across the threshold:

EXT. MCKENNA HOME - ONE YEAR EARLIER - CONTINUOUS

Where she bends down to pick up the paper on the doorstep. She waves goodbye to BRANDON getting on the bus, then to LEE pulling out of the driveway.

She stands there for a beat.

A familiar silver Acura passes by, the car stereo playing Jay Electronica.

WENDELL BRIGGS is behind the wheel.

They exchange a long look. There's a momentary flash of recognition -- but as they try to grab hold of their shared memories, they slip through their fingers like sand.

The moment passes and it's gone.

WENDELL returns his attention to traffic, and TERRI ANN goes back into the house, returning to the domestic tranquility she thinks is waiting for her...

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY 3 - TEXAS - NIGHT

Miles of empty blacktop stretch into the horizon. MARY FRANCES and BIBI'S car, ENTERS THE FRAME.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sitting behind the wheel is BIBI. MARY FRANCES in the passenger seat. BIBI silently watches the white dashes on the highway disappear.

EXT. PRISON FARM - NIGHT

Intentionally located in the middle of nowhere. Set amidst several sprawling acres are a small cluster of buildings abandoned years ago: decaying, vandalized, covered in graffiti.

Despite its apparent decrepitude, there are FLASHING lights emanating from deep within one of the buildings -- someone still haunts its halls.

INT. EXECUTION CHAMBER - NIGHT

The gurney, and some of the lethal injection set-up's been cleared out. Dark walls covered in grease, smoke damage and graffiti.

THREE GRIM-FACED MEN in dark uniforms, acting as a ceremonial guard, stand near the door, their attention focused on the center of the space, where:

The now familiar cloud of the unknown oily black emulsion is FLOATING malevolently in midair.

A DARK FIGURE emerges from the cloud -- slowly descending, almost as if he's walking down invisible stairs.

Once on the ground, we see the DARK FIGURE more closely: a hulking mass of chiseled muscle, easily 6 feet plus, long scraggly beard, harsh fluorescent light gleaming off his bald pate.

He takes in his surroundings, orienting himself; his survey of the environs interrupted by a pair of approaching headlights - visible through the windows.

EXT. PRISON FARM - NIGHT

MARY FRANCES and BIBI'S car pulls up to the main entrance.

The car comes to a stop. They step out, their boots ECHOING on the cracked asphalt as they head into:

INT. CELL BLOCK - PRISON FARM - CONTINUOUS

Deserted. More graffiti. Rust eating away at the bars of the cells.

They walk through the labyrinthine derelict cell block, their footsteps ECHOING through the cavernous space, announcing their arrival at:

EXT. HIGH SECURITY CORRIDOR - PRISON FARM - CONTINUOUS

Where the GRIM-FACED MEN in dark uniforms stand guarding the door.

After a brief examination of MARY FRANCES and BIBI, they move aside, allowing them entrance into:

INT. EXECUTION CHAMBER - PRISON FARM - CONTINUOUS

Immediately after crossing the threshold, they exchange a knowing look with the DARK FIGURE, before addressing him:

MARY FRANCES

Edgar.

(beat)

Coruja and Crowe are dead.

EDGAR grunts before speaking:

EDGAR

You know who did the deed?

MARY FRANCES  
They found some kind of loophole,  
disappeared for a little while.

BIBI  
Must've worked out something with  
The Emissary.

MARY FRANCES  
But we found 'em.

EDGAR grunts his approval.

BIBI  
They're relaxed, guard's down,  
won't see you coming.

EDGAR turns his gaze East, towards Louisiana, staring out the  
window and into the dark Texas night:

EDGAR  
Don't you go nowhere, you stay  
right where you are.  
(beat)  
Mister Edgar's gonna come pay you a  
visit.

FADE OUT.

The End