

11 ELMRIDGE

Written by

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EXT. SPRINGROSE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Cicadas whirr in the heat over manicured lawns. Sprinklers tick. A lawnmower drones in the distance.

A pristine craftsman-style home stands ahead.

SUPER: CHARLEN, INDIANA. JUNE 11, 2023.

A work truck sits near the open garage. The bumper reads, "Wren Construction." The slogan, "*We don't just build homes, we build families,*" underneath.

A possum lies at the curb in front of the home. Innards splattered across the asphalt. Neck twisted backwards.

An SUV rolls into the driveway. CLARA WREN steps out, mid-30s. A suburban mom to the core.

She circles the vehicle, hand over her mouth as she gags at the dead animal.

Her neighbor, GARY, 70s, calls out from across the street.

GARY

Best not to look at it, Clara.

CLARA

Ugh, what is it?

GARY

Possum. I called Animal Control already. Surprised Dan's not out here with the pressure washer and shovel already.

She fake vomits, half-grins.

CLARA

I'm sure he will be. Thanks, Gary.

GARY

Yep. Tell the boys I said hey.

She smiles and moves quickly around the creature.

A kid's bike lies on its side. Clara sets it upright.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Clara enters a beautiful home filled with calculated color schemes. Rooms no one sits in.

CLARA

Daniel? Jonah? There's a dead pos --

A smell stops her.

CLARA

-- Guys, what's that smell?

She shakes it off.

CLARA

(under breath)

No more unsupervised air fryer.
Little shits.

She grabs a work jacket off the floor.

Family photos of Clara, husband Daniel, and ten-year-old son Jonah line the walls. Daniel's tall, built for construction work. Jonah takes after Clara, with dark hair and fair skin.

She straightens a crooked frame. Listens. Silence.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Clara heads for the sink. Behind her, two blurry figures sit at the dinner table. Motionless.

The sink's filled with dirty dishes.

CLARA

Oh, lovely.

(nose crinkles)

What on earth did you two burn?

No response.

CLARA

Okay, love the silent treatment,
but can we maybe not do this? I...

Clara turns, freezes.

A low buzzing builds, but she's not paying it any mind.

CLARA

Help. What is happening?

The buzzing swells. She trembles, struggles to breathe.

She lets out an agonized cry, eyes wide with terror.

QUICK FLASHES

- Daniel slumped, face unrecognizable. His arm hung down to the side from a gun still in his grasp.

- Jonah sprawled on the chair, a halo of blood spread out beneath him.

BACK TO SCENE

The buzzing pulses beneath Clara's horrible wails. It leads upstairs.

CLARA (O.S.)
No! Don't be real. No. No. No.

UPSTAIRS LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

The buzzing distorts.

DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The sound emanates from a walk-in closet. Clara's screams echo off the walls from downstairs.

WALK-IN CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

The buzzing deepens.

In the back, past mundane items, the drywall is split open in a small, uneven ring. A warped tear in reality, shimmering like liquid glass.

A Ripple.

The surface blurs. Fills with an image of the kitchen downstairs. Daniel and Jonah's bodies at the table.

The buzzing surges, blending with Clara's cries. Everything folds inward. The Ripple implodes into silence. Gone.

BLACK SCREEN

Static. A police DISPATCH cuts in.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
11 Elmridge. Possible multiple victims. Units en route.

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - DAY

SILENT. Two officers escort Clara out the front door, handing her off to paramedics.

They guide her towards an ambulance. She twists back toward the house. Frantic. She collapses to the grass.

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - LATER

Clara sits in the middle of the yard. A shock blanket draped over her. Eyes swollen, raw.

The sound of metal scraping concrete fills the air.

Paramedics, police, and neighbors hover, offering help. Clara barely registers them, locked on the dead possum at the end of the driveway. Animal Control scoops it with a shovel.

SCRAPE.

The shovel slides under the possum.

Through the doorway, a body bag emerges. Then, a smaller one.

SCRAPE.

Gary edges into view.

GARY

Clara. You shouldn't...

She doesn't blink.

CLARA

... I'm not.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - DAY

IMANI RHOADS, 20s, steps in front of a massive mid-century oil painting of a woman and three children by a lake.

SUPER: One Month Later...

IMANI

Welcome, everyone! I'm Imani Rhoads, your tour guide here at the Charlen Historical Museum. Where we discover there's more to Indiana than corn. Kind of.

Imani grins, poised, practiced. She clears her throat.

IMANI

The painting behind me is "The Widow's Vigil," which depicts a mother and her children gazing out over Lake Michigan.

She steps aside.

IMANI

Charlen was founded in 1851 by settlers, including John and Mary Charlen. Back then, Lake Michigan was a vital shipping route. Guess who was a shipping captain? Our very own John Charlen. But, on a tragic voyage, his ship vanished.

Imani holds. Lost in thought. Then pushes on.

IMANI

Mary couldn't accept that he was gone. So, every day, she and her children would stand by the lake, waiting for his return. Years later, Mary died. Her children kept going, but as time passed, so did they. One day, nobody stood by the lake. And John never returned.

She pauses for dramatic effect.

The tour is small, an older HUSBAND and WIFE. The Husband has his hand raised.

IMANI

Yes. You with the hand raised?

HUSBAND

Did you grow up in Indiana?

IMANI

I did not. One hundred percent imposter Hoosier. I grew up in Chicago. Not too... far at all.

Clara enters and heads for the staff office area.

IMANI

Any questions before we move on?

The Husband raises his hand again. Imani sighs, smiles.

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - LATER

The office is lined with accolades from Clara's tenure as curator. Photos with community members capture happier times.

Clara cradles a phone to her ear, settling in.

VALERIE (V.O.)
How does it feel to be back?
Feeling good?

CLARA
Good, Mom? Jesus fucking Christ.

VALERIE (V.O.)
Stop with the f-bombs. I'm only asking. Did you contact that person yet? The counselor?

CLARA
No.

VALERIE (V.O.)
Why not?

Clara switches her computer on.

VALERIE (V.O.)
I wish you had a funeral for them.

Clara moves the phone away from her mouth. Then back.

CLARA
I have a lot to catch up on. Can we do this later?

VALERIE (V.O.)
You are like your dad with that work ethic. Hold on. Here he is.

CLARA
You don't have to put him --

BOB (V.O.)
-- Hi Clar.

The computer blinks to life.

CLARA
Hi, Dad.

The monitor lights up, revealing a desktop background of her, Daniel, and Jonah.

She powers it off. The monitor SNAPS TO BLACK.

CLARA
I really should...

Jonah's image lingers. His eyes glow faintly. His smile twitches.

Clara reaches under the desk, switches off the power strip.

Jonah remains.

BOB (V.O.)
Val. I think she hung up.

CLARA
I'm here. I'm going to call you next week. Okay? Bye.

Clara hangs up. Jonah is still on-screen.

INT. MUSEUM HALLWAY - DAY

Imani nears a corner, catches Clara's reflection as she leaves her office. She slows, then rounds the corner.

IMANI
Hey!

Clara startles.

IMANI
I am so sorry.

CLARA
You're fine.

IMANI
I got your message that you were coming back. Can I do anything? We got a new coffee maker. Old one broke.

CLARA
I'm fine.

Tears gather in Clara's eyes. Imani eases off.

IMANI
Let's... talk later. I have some local artists coming by this week to talk about ideas for the End of Summer Fest, and I think you'll --

CLARA

-- We should stop doing the Widow's Vigil part of the tour.

IMANI

Do we have a new exhibit?

CLARA

No.

IMANI

So, stop doing it entirely?

CLARA

Paintings are just paintings sometimes.

IMANI

It's just that it's a big change, and I get it, but let's come back to it?

Clara zones out. Imani's voice dampens.

IMANI

It's a really popular feature, and the town loves a story --

CLARA

-- the town can go fuck itself. I'm...

A heavy silence.

IMANI

I can go.

Clara forces a smile.

CLARA

I shouldn't be here. I'm going to go. Let's talk about this idea. Yours. Not mine. Mine's dumb.

IMANI

Of course. Yeah.

Clara leaves Imani behind in the hallway.

EXT. CHARLEN TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Clara exits to the lively square, disappears into the crowd.

Red-brick buildings frame the Town Hall and the connecting Museum. Restaurants, bars, and shops line the streets.

A farmer's market buzzes with activity. Vendors push baked goods and Charlen-themed crafts.

JESSA'S BOOTH

At a booth sits JESSA THORNE, 40s, blonde. Charlen's own Stepford wife. Her booth sells mood rings.

She finishes a text to a contact labeled HUSBAND

ON PHONE (TEXT): "Tell him he can't go. Order pizza. Let him pick the place. Be home later." A reply pops up, "Love you."

She sets her phone down as a man approaches with a small dog.

JESSA

Oh my god. Your dog is so tiny.
Stop. May I?

Jessa kneels, adopts the dog-talk voice, pets the pooch.

EXT. CHARLEN TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Clara navigates the crowd, head low. Eyes follow her. Townsfolk whisper.

Jessa's shrill voice cuts through.

JESSA (O.S.)

Clara!

Clara ignores her, keeps walking.

JESSA (O.S.)

Clara! It's Jessa...

Louder. Sing-song. Persistent.

JESSA (O.S.)

Clara!

Now there's venom to it. Clara turns.

JESSA

It's like you didn't hear me. That was so weird. Come here, you!

They embrace in the most awkward hug imaginable. Clara's arms stay at her sides.

JESSA

It's so good to see you out!
Thought you were gonna burst
staying in that house. Everyone at
work must be so excited. Imani?
Manny? What is her name? Your
assistant. Help me.

CLARA

Imani. You've met her.

JESSA

She is so sweet.

They walk back toward Jessa's booth.

CLARA

Mood rings?

JESSA

Trying to bring them back. Slap
bracelets next. Here.

Jessa hands her a ring.

JESSA

So, neighbor talk. It's been too
long. We have a few summer events
before it's over. The block party
is next week. Brad got a bouncy
castle. Yay, Brad. Way to
participate.

Clara slips the mood ring on.

JESSA

After that is the garage sale.

The ring remains black.

JESSA

Then it's the End of Summer Fest...
hold on, hun. Sales-face.

A customer approaches, pulls Jessa's attention.

Clara slips the ring off, leaves it on the booth, escapes.

JESSA

Clara!

Jessa notices the ring. Still black. She shrugs it off,
returns to bubbly mode with the customer.

INT. NICK'S CAR - DAY

NICK PETRALIS, early 40s, with a carefully maintained salt-and-pepper beard, sings along to the radio.

NICK

We built this city on rock and...

He bumps over railroad tracks, lowers his volume as a splattered possum comes into view. Nick grimaces.

INT. CHARLEN TOWN HALL - NICK'S OFFICE - LATER

Nick watches the Farmer's Market through the window.

A plaque on his desk reads, "Nick Petralis, Town Manager."

Above his desk, a row of mismatched headshots of past Town Managers. Each older, sterner, more "official" than Nick.

A knock interrupts. WAYNE MURZYN, 40s, and ALYSSA HERNANDEZ, mid-30s, two council members enter.

NICK

Wayne. Alyssa. Come in. Sit.

WAYNE

We can stand. Shouldn't take long.

NICK

Mind if I sit?

Nick walks across the room to his desk, leaving a comical distance between himself and the others.

NICK

Shoot, guys.

ALYSSA

We wanted to talk about the general temperature.

NICK

Temperature?

ALYSSA

Like the pulse of the town. It's been over a month.

NICK

Since?

ALYSSA
Since the Wren family...

WAYNE
I saw Clara earlier. God, it's sad.
I grew up with Daniel. He was so
normal. Such a nice guy.

ALYSSA
He was in my science class.

Nick nods as they talk, half-listening.

ALYSSA
How would you feel about an
initiative on safety? Mental
health, gun violence. We've had
several parents call in the last
few weeks, concerned.

Nick's foot taps under the desk, nods, uncomfortable.

NICK
You know what I saw on my way to
work? Possum. Smushed. Right past
the tracks on 94th.

WAYNE
We get a lot of them this time of
year. It's summer.

ALYSSA
I saw that one. It's gross.

Nick snaps his fingers. Points at Alyssa.

NICK
We should get this under control.

WAYNE
Get what under control? Possums?

NICK
Roadkill in general, but yes.
Possums seem to be the vast
majority of victims.

ALYSSA
Should I do anything with the
safety initiative, or is that...
where is that?

NICK
We can definitely talk about it.

ALYSSA
We could do that. Now.

Nick leans back, gives a thumbs-up. Wayne and Alyssa exit, draped in confusion.

The portraits glare down on Nick alone at his desk.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - DAY

A quiet, cozy apartment. A voice from a room away cuts in.

LOUIS (O.S.)
You're as stubborn as any creature
on this earth, and you know it.

The front door opens. Imani enters, puts a takeout bag down.

IMANI
Dad?

A chuckle from the other room.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Her father, LOUIS, 60s, waits. Warm smile, heavy sadness.

IMANI
Talking to yourself?

LOUIS
Something like that.

IMANI
Seems like your new thing.

Louis coughs. Imani picks up an inhaler, waves it at him.

IMANI
Mind telling me when you're out?

LOUIS
I thought you could read minds?

Imani smirks, tidies up.

IMANI
We didn't leave the city for you to
get worse. Use the inhaler. Breathe
Indiana's boring, clean air.

LOUIS

I know this isn't home, but it's quiet. And it's got something to it besides the air.

IMANI

Yeah, well, I'm sick of the quiet, so blah to you. Have you been in this room all day by yourself?

A flip-top notebook filled with tic-tac-toe games sits on the table. The Xs and Os in different colored ink.

LOUIS

You sound like her.

IMANI

We cannot do that.
(under breath)
One day. One day. One day.

LOUIS

The girl speaks in whispers so the old man can't hear.

IMANI

You sound like a gatekeeper troll, Dad. Tell me when you need a refill. I brought Dairy Queen.

LOUIS

Hot or cold?

IMANI

A little bit of both.

He waits until she's gone, whispers to an empty chair.

LOUIS

She's okay. She's fine.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Clara pushes the cart past the aisles. Shoppers pause mid-task. Silent. Eyes follow her.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CHECKOUT LINE - LATER

A young CASHIER bleeps items through, fixed on Clara.

The scanner blinks red. BLEEP. She zones out.

CASHIER
Did you put their heads in plastic?

BLEEP

CLARA
What?

CASHIER
I said is plastic okay?

CLARA
Yes. Sorry.

He BLEEPs another item through.

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - NIGHT

Mild neglect plagues the home. Grass overgrown. Flowers wilt.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clara breaks down, sobbing in what was once a whirlpool.
Pillows and blankets line it. A makeshift bed.

A low whoosh of air cuts through. The door knocks the wall.
Clara jolts up, turns to the door. It sways gently.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A curtain stirs, dividing where the shooting happened.

LAUNDRY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A loud jingle. The dryer stops.

The washer beside it churns. Water slaps the glass slowly as
Clara folds a small stack of her clothes on the counter.

She slides the lint trap free, pinches a clump of gray fuzz.

A single brown hair amongst the fibers. She freezes, then
tosses it in the trash.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

ON TV SCREEN: A male lion devours the carcass of a lion cub.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When food becomes scarce, the pride
may turn on its own. A cruel but
necessary tactic.

Clara hits pause. Head back. Eyes closed.

THUD. Clara jerks upright. A dark hallway ahead. Nothing. She
lays her head back down.

THUD, GROAN. She jolts back up, locked on the empty hallway.

Something's there. A shadow in the corner sways. Almost
imperceptible.

The floorboard creaks. Then nothing.

Clara settles, rubs her temples.

CLARA

Fucking relax.

She clicks the TV off. In the black reflection, pale legs
stand on the back of the couch above her. A pale arm creeps
into view.

CLARA

Holy shit! What the fuck!

She leaps off the couch, turns. The shape is gone.

Clara trembles, hugging herself. A faint buzzing fades.

EXT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Jessa marches to her mailbox as Clara gets in her car.

JESSA

Hey, girl! Going to work?

Clara doesn't respond, zooms off.

Jessa opens her mailbox. Sifts. Stops on a letter. It reads,
"University of Wisconsin-Madison." She bites her lip.

EXT. CHARLEN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

MATT THORNE, early 40s. Blonde. He has an ex-athlete frame,
but slightly softened.

He blows a whistle.

MATT
 Push through the grind, fellas!
 Every day! Great practice.

Matt's phone buzzes.

ON PHONE: The contact reads BABY. Heart emojis around it.

MATT
 Hey. I was just thinking about --

JESSA (V.O.)
 -- Wisconsin? The oven mitt state?

MATT
 I think that's Michigan.

JESSA (V.O.)
 Where is Austin?

Matt scans the field, finds AUSTIN, 17, with other players. A spitting image of his father.

MATT
 Just finished practice. What happened?

JESSA (V.O.)
 Do you know what a united front is, Matthew?

MATT
 It's when we agree.

JESSA (V.O.)
 No. That's agreeing. A united front is an alliance. Are we an alliance?

MATT
 Yes. We are. But he wants to go out of state next year. You knew this was coming. I mean, gives us more time. Silver lining.

JESSA (V.O.)
 For what?

MATT
 Uh, you know what I mean. I mean...

JESSA (V.O.)
 Our son wants to leave, and that's where you are? Focus. My god.

MATT
We'll talk to him.

JESSA (V.O.)
Good answer. I'll set it up.
(switching lanes)
Is Katherine there? I spoke to the
PTA about her being there too much.

A woman, KATHERINE, late 40s, sits by a makeshift memorial off the field.

MATT
That's harsh. Brett was a good kid.

FLASHBACK - BRETT'S PHONE VIDEO

A selfie video. A football player, BRETT, holds the phone.

BRETT
Goin' all the way this --

A baseball from an adjacent field comes into frame, cracks his skull hard. The cell phone fumbles. Panic ensues.

BACK TO PRESENT

JESSA (V.O.)
It's been three years. And we, as
the PTA, feel that her being there
all the time is kinda depressing.
We have to think of the effect it
has.

MATT
Let her grieve, Jess. Just like
Clara.

JESSA (V.O.)
(mimicking)
Let her grieve, Jess. Bye.

The call ends. Matt watches Austin run off the field.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - DAY

Nick heads down the hall. Clara heads in his direction.

He turns on his heel, realizes how ridiculous that looks.
With no choice, he doubles back, straight for her.

Clara gives a curt nod as they pass. Nick exhales, relieved. She continues towards her office.

CLARA
(muttering)
Smile and wave. Get it over with.

She reaches the door, pauses as Imani rounds the corner.

IMANI
Hey! Did you want to meet --

Clara disappears inside.

Imani ignores the diss, strides down the hall, and reaches the lobby of the museum, where several artists, MILES, THERESA, and QUINTON, wait.

IMANI
Hi! So glad you all could make it.

MILES
Thanks for having us.

IMANI
You're all from Charlen, but Miles, you escaped, right?

MILES
I did. Moved the other week.

THERESA
It is so easy to get stuck here.

IMANI
It really is. Well, you are my people. I actually went to SAIC.

THERESA
You should be somewhere way cooler than Charlen. Such a great school.

IMANI
You would think, but I'm helping my Dad out. Yeah. One day, though.

Friendly if less than confident nods.

IMANI
Anyway, I'm so excited to showcase you all at this year's Fest. Last year was a big year, and we are hoping to top ourselves this --

A blood-curdling scream rips through the conversation. Everyone jumps out of their skin. Imani turns sharply.

IMANI

I will be right back. I'm so sorry.

Imani heads towards the screams as they echo down the hall. Heads lean out of offices. Concerned staff gather.

As Imani nears Clara's office, her wails become clearer.

CLARA (O.S.)

Stay away from me!

Imani pushes by people outside her door. The screams stop.

CLARA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Clara's heavy breaths reverberate through the room. Imani finds her in a corner. Pale as a ghost.

Imani approaches carefully, kneels.

IMANI

Hey. I'm here.

Clara stares through her, tracking something unseen.

IMANI

What happened?

Clara mumbles.

IMANI

I can't understand. Talk to me.

CLARA

(whispered)

He was on the ceiling.

Imani turns slowly, checks the ceiling. All clear.

IMANI

It's just us in here.

Imani heads to the doorway. Nick peeks over the group from the very back.

IMANI

She's fine. I'll take her home.

The crowd disperses, leaving Nick. He watches the door shut.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - LATER

Clara exits.

IMANI

Call me for anything. Okay?

Imani backs out of the driveway, catches Jessa hauling a folding table and three folding chairs from her trunk.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - DAY

Jessa places the fold-out table oddly next to the actual dinner table. Puts two chairs on one side, one on the other.

She sits on the side with two chairs, coffee mug in hand. Sips. A manila folder on the table in front of her.

EXT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Austin jumps out of a friend's car, heads to the garage. He punches in the code. The door rises.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Austin enters the kitchen. Jessa and Matt on one side of the fold-out table. An empty chair awaits him.

JESSA

Please sit.

AUSTIN

Why?

MATT

It will only take a second.

AUSTIN

Why? This is weird.

MATT

We just want to talk. It'll only take a minute.

AUSTIN

You said a second. What did I do?

Jessa seethes behind a practiced smile.

AUSTIN

You two are acting so weird. I'm --

JESSA
-- Sit. Austin.

That look. Austin obeys, adjusting his chair a dozen times before settling.

JESSA
This is the Truth Table. It's a place of truths. I want us to start being more honest around here.

MATT
Your mother and I... do you know what a united front is, bud?

JESSA
Good god. Stop. Honey, you know I... we love you, right? Kind of a duh thing to say. If you only knew how much I get the pull to leave home, but we talked about this.

Jessa opens the folder, removes the college letter.

AUSTIN
So what?

JESSA
Attitude. We said the first two years at home to see how things go.

AUSTIN
Literally everyone I know is going out of state. Brett, Dale, Cory.

MATT
Lots of great local schools. We'll go check them out.

AUSTIN
I don't want to stay. I want to leave.

JESSA
Why?

Austin shrugs.

JESSA
Gotta be a better reason than shrugs, Austin.

Austin shrugs again.

JESSA

Why would you want to leave us
after what happened next door?
We're lucky to have this.

AUSTIN

What does that have to do with
anything? Mr. Wren killed --

JESSA

-- You had a twin brother.

Jessa pulls an ultrasound from the folder. Two fetuses.

AUSTIN

What is that? Dad? What is that?

MATT

Jess, we didn't discuss this.

JESSA

You were a twin. There's a
condition called TTTS. Do they talk
about that in health?

Austin shakes his head no, focused on the ultrasound.

JESSA

I won't get technical, but your
brother gave you too much blood,
basically. In most cases, the other
baby is born with tons of health
issues. But not you. You were
healthy...

(her warmth sinks)

...And he died inside of me. He
gave you his blood so you could
live. And look at you.

She places her hand gently on Austin's.

JESSA

I want to see your life. Not just
on weekends or holidays. I don't
want that. And your brother, who
gave you everything, wouldn't want
that.

Jessa slides the ultrasound and letter back into the folder.

AUSTIN

Why would you show me that?

JESSA
Because you should know.

Austin leans back. Jessa to his left, triumphant. Matt to his right, speechless.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Flies swarm roadkill. Nick looms over it, studying the mess.

INT. NICK'S CAR - LATER

Through the front windshield, cars speed down a busy road.

ON CELLPHONE (Search): "Possible diseases from roadkill." He flips to an Amazon Wish List titled "Project Charlen: Cleanup." He adds more items to it.

A possum lumbers into the lane in front of him. Headlights wash over it as a car misses it by seconds. It stays put, black eyes on Nick.

Nick taps the horn. It doesn't blink. He leans on the horn. Still nothing.

It finally scurries off. Nick exhales.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Darkness. Then, a flicker behind a closed door. A tub handle squeaks, water gushes out.

IMANI'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Imani works on her laptop. Lowers her music at the sound of the bath running.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Candlelight flickers beneath the bathroom door as Imani creeps closer.

She presses her ear to the door. The sound of gentle splashing. She knocks.

IMANI
You okay? Kinda late for a bath.

The splashes stop. The door cracks. Imani pushes it open...

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Small white tea candles line the tub edge.

Louis sits on the toilet next to the tub, fully clothed.
Neither speaks for a beat.

LOUIS

We used to do this before you were
born.

IMANI

Is that who you've been talking to?

He nods, yes.

IMANI

Got it. Okay. This is...

LOUIS

She's not just here for me.

The tub shimmers, a DRIP ripples out.

IMANI

You need to stop.

LOUIS

That is not within my power.

IMANI

That is an empty bathtub. She's
gone. That's what that means.

Louis tilts his head. Eyes gloss.

LOUIS

No. That is not what that means.

Imani leaves. Several candles flicker out.

BLACK SCREEN

JONAH (V.O.)

Mom?

CLARA (V.O.)

Jonah?

JONAH (V.O.)

Is that you, Mom?

Clara chokes back cries.

CLARA (V.O.)
Yes, baby. It's me. Where are you?

INT. CLARA'S HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Clara's wakes to Jonah in her face. Gray, rotting skin. A gunshot wound in his forehead. His mouth leaking a distorted wail.

Clara launches out of the whirlpool bed, throws the sheets aside, stumbles towards the door. Freezes.

The wail stops.

CLARA
Fuck, fuck. That is not real.

A sheet in the whirlpool behind her rises in the shape of Jonah. Bones crack and twist.

The shape remains. A low gurgle from beneath. The fabric around the mouth sucks in and out.

Clara forces herself past the door...

UPSTAIRS LANDING - CONTINUOUS

... She walks stiffly. A THUMP from the bathroom. The sound of Jonah's feet on tile.

Clara bolts down the hall for the bedroom at the far end. Jonah twists and cracks as he gains on her.

She reaches the door...

CLARA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

... Slams it shut. Drops to the floor against it. Jonah knocks against the door. BANG! BANG!

CLARA
Stop. Stop.

Nails drag along the door, reach the handle. It twists as Clara locks it. Jonah's hushed voice cuts in.

JONAH (O.S.)
Mom?

Clara covers her mouth with her hand, cries.

JONAH (O.S.)
I want to see you, Mom.

CLARA
You aren't him.

A gurgle. A low tap on the door. His voice distorts.

JONAH (O.S.)
I'm gonna eat you.

Two big BANGS rattle the hinges. Snaps to dead silence.
After a moment, Clara presses her ear against the door.

UPSTAIRS LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

Clara creeps out to the empty hall. Anger and terror build.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Clara enters Jonah's room, smashes toys. Lamps.
- She enters Daniel's office with a similar wrath. Rips out desk drawers.
- From a hidden compartment in the drawer, a journal tumbles across the carpet.
- Behind her, Jonah. A faint shape in the dark.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - JESSA AND MATT'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Jessa peeps out of the window at Clara's house.

Matt stirs, catches her snooping.

MATT
Why?

JESSA
I heard something at Clara's. I think she's in Daniel's office. But why?

MATT
Great.

JESSA
One-word answers for a whole day?
That's smart. What's the issue?

MATT

The fact that you are pretending
not to know is insane.

Jessa moves to the edge of the bed. More threat than wife.

JESSA

Why don't you tell me?

MATT

It's too fucking late, Jess.

JESSA

Don't. Cuss. Tell me.

Matt adjusts, exhales.

MATT

You shouldn't have told him. That
was, and I don't care, fucked up.
You two clearly need space. I'm
taking him to Wisconsin in a few
weeks. You can come or not.

He rolls back over. Jessa's tongue presses against the roof
of her mouth.

JESSA

Yeah?

No response. She crawls across the bed, kisses him deeply.
He's surprised, excited.

He grabs her waist, testing if she'll let him. She slithers
away. Moves to a loveseat near a TV, flicks it on.

Matt moves to the edge of the bed, waves her over.

JESSA

Take it out.

MATT

Really?

She nods. The sound of fabric unfurls.

JESSA

Start.

MATT

Um, is this... what is this?

JESSA

You wanted alone time. You're going
to jerk off while I watch TV.

Dead air. Jessa waves him to start.

After a beat, Matt groans. A mix of discomfort and reluctant
pleasure.

Jessa half-watches the TV and him.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - DANIEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Clara sits against the wall amid the wreckage. The desk
drawer she yanked free lies ahead. Its contents spill towards
her in a trail.

The secret journal lies within arm's reach. She grabs it,
flips through pages of frantic handwriting.

JOURNAL PAGE: "It shows you everything." The word
"everything" underlined a dozen times.

JOURNAL PAGE: The phrase, "I can't change it," scrawled over
and over. Nearly fills the page.

JOURNAL PAGE: "There are others." The word "DeVarn" is
circled in the corner.

She turns a page, a thumb drive tumbles out. No label.

She crawls to the desk, drops into the chair, pulls her
laptop to her lap. She hesitates, slides the drive in.

A single video file appears, dated months prior. Clara
exhales, clicks it. A vertical phone fills the screen.

FLASHBACK - DANIEL'S POV (RECORDED VIDEO)

The phone faces forward, away from Daniel. A buzzing swells.

DANIEL (O.S.)
What the hell is this?

Daniel focuses the camera.

DANIEL (O.S.)
It's not picking it up. There...

The lens adjusts, revealing the Ripple in the drywall of the
closet. Its surface shimmers, reacting to his presence.

DANIEL (O.S.)
I was just in here, and this was
not here. What in the fuck?

Daniel reaches out, touches the surface. It beads violently.
He jerks his hand back.

DANIEL (O.S.)
It's cold.

The surface of the Ripple stabilizes into a smooth TV-like
screen. Images flicker across it. Become clear.

Daniel steadies the phone on the Ripple as the images start.

RIPPLE IMAGE - A delivery room, 1980s. Doctors lift a
screaming newborn into view.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Wait...

RIPPLE IMAGE - A WOMAN takes the baby.

DANIEL (O.S.)
... Mom? What the fuck? That's me.

He taps the surface. The Ripple accelerates.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Five-year-old Daniel at Chuck-E-Cheese's.
Laughter and fun. Daniel sits alone, pizza untouched.
Watching.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Teenage Daniel at a house party. Social.
Smiles. Later at home, he stands in front of the mirror and
punches himself in the face over and over.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Daniel in his 20s on a date with Clara.
Charming. In the moment. Years later, wedding photos. Daniel
at events. Public smiles. Personal hell.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Daniel stares at a computer screen. A Word
Doc: "Dear Clara, I can't do this anymore..."

RIPPLE IMAGE - Jonah's birth. Daniel cries, ecstatic. Years
later, Daniel and Jonah play. Jonah runs off. Daniel watches
the boy a beat too long.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Recent. Daniel enters the closet to film the
Ripple. Moments later, he stumbles out. Vomits into a trash
can by the desk.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Night. Daniel stands over Clara as she sleeps.
He reaches for her shoulder... stops.

DANIEL (O.S.)
 What did I see? This is... I
 haven't...

RIPPLE IMAGE - Daniel's life is bleak. Isolated in his
 office. Scribbling in the journal.

DANIEL (O.S.)
 ... This hasn't happened yet.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Daniel paces, holds a gun. His phone reads,
 "June 11, 2023." Daniel waves Jonah in from outside. His bike
 falls to the ground. Daniel drops his jacket in the hall.

RIPPLE IMAGE - In the kitchen, Daniel pulls out a chair for
 Jonah.

JONAH
 (on RIPPLE)
 Where's mom?

RIPPLE IMAGE: Daniel moves to the other side. The gun clunks
 on the table.

DANIEL
 (on RIPPLE)
 She's not coming with us. Sit
 still, bud.

RIPPLE IMAGE: A GUNSHOT. THUD. Daniel whimpers, then SCREAMS.
 Another GUNSHOT. The video halts.

BACK TO PRESENT

Clara stops the video. Unable to keep watching.

A buzzing rises from the closet. Clothes hangers tremble.
 Clara edges to the entrance. Flips the light on.

Nothing. No Ripple.

She backs away, grabs the journal, flips through with shaking
 hands, lands on:

JOURNAL PAGE: "There are others. "DeVarn" circled in the
 corner. Clara locks on the name as the buzzing fades.

EXT. SPRINGROSE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Jessa stands on a small stage holding a megaphone.

JESSA
 Welcome to the Annual Springrose
 Hills Neighborhood Block Party!

The megaphone SQUEALS. The small crowd claps politely.

LATER

Grills hiss, kids shriek from a bouncy castle, teens hover by the curb. Neighbors trade small talk from lawn chairs and folding tables.

Jessa sits with three women, RHONDA, PAM, and RACHEL.

RHONDA
 I bet it was demonic possession.

RACHEL
 Are you kidding me? Lower your
 voice, Rhonda. Is Clara here?

JESSA
 Wow. We are not doing this, ladies.

RHONDA
 There was the woman in Texas. She
 thought her babies had demons in
 them. Chopped their arms off.

RACHEL
 That would not happen here.

JESSA
 Hey, guess what? This is a party.
 You party at parties. You don't
 talk about death and despair and
 chopped-off baby arms. Thanks.

Over by the grills, Matt chats with neighbors STEVE, BRAD, and ZACH.

Steve pours four glasses of bourbon, hands them out. Places the bottle a bit too near the grill edge.

STEVE
 Cheers, fellas. To dads with
 teenage kids. That's it. That's the
 toast. We're screwed.

They all raise their glasses, sip.

ZACH

Has Austin figured out where he's going next year, Matty?

MATT

Um, we're discussing it. Jessa is having a tough time with the idea.

Brad shakes his head. Zach holds back laughter.

STEVE

I took Maddie to Arizona. I give her a year in that heat. It's unbelievable. Josh still thinking Nebraska, Brad?

BRAD

Ohio State. My boy's getting out in the world.

STEVE

It's a state away.

Brad gives him the finger, but hides it with his other hand, should anyone else dare see. They laugh.

MATT

Austin's going to Wisconsin.

Their laughter trails.

MATT

I'm actually taking Austin up to Wisconsin-Madison in a few weeks.

STEVE

Right on.

BRAD

I bet.

A group over, Nick corners neighbor Gary.

NICK

It's called a ride-along.

GARY

Don't they do that for cops?

NICK

Normally. But Animal Control has been so gracious. Nobody's ever asked either, but I'll get to check out their operation.

GARY

Whatever happened to that pothole project?

Nick shifts, guilty.

Nearby, a group of teens tosses a football. Austin lingers, detached. Attention locked on Clara's house across the street.

The shades hang still. Fingers slide out, grip the fabric, pull it open. Something peers through.

Jessa's hand rests on his shoulder, he shudders back to reality. She points him to the grills.

JESSA

Grab a pop for your Dad.

She returns to her ladies' group.

RHONDA

Summer's almost over. Wah.

JESSA

It's July. Put your parka away.

PAM

From what I hear, you're going to need yours a lot more next year.

Everyone except Jessa nods, chuckles.

JESSA

What does that mean?

PAM

Brad said Matt's taking Austin up to Madison. To look at the school.

RACHEL

Zach told me that, too.

JESSA

When did he say this?

PAM

Just a second ago.

Jessa stews. A smile spreads to cover it up.

JESSA

Way to go, Matthew. Spoiling everything.

In the background, a football smacks into the bourbon bottle, knocks it into the grill. Whiskey ignites.

WHOOSH! A mini fireball erupts. Everyone leaps back.

STEVE
Who threw that?

The crowd cracks up.

Rhonda heads to Steve. Pam to Brad. Rachel to Zach. Jessa hangs back. Eyes on Matt.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - IMANI'S OFFICE - DAY

A KNOCK disturbs Imani. Clara appears in the doorway.

IMANI
Hi! Wait, you're off today?

Clara scans the room.

CLARA
I am. But there's a block party in front of my house, so I want to be anywhere but there.

IMANI
Jessa?

CLARA
Jessa.
(a beat)
Are you busy?

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

They walk toward the connecting Town Hall.

IMANI
DeVarn? That's a last name? I'm sure there are records.

CLARA
Property ownership, maybe? Anything like that will narrow it down. I checked what I could online.

IMANI
Your idea of looking online or mine? There is a difference.

She smirks. Clara's focused.

IMANI

And narrow what down? I still don't know why you need me to ask. You've been here way longer.

CLARA

Because people think I'm batshit. Just say you're doing research for an exhibit.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - IMANI'S OFFICE - LATER

Clara flips through property binders. Imani scours websites.

Clara finds the section for last names starting with D. Her finger traces. No DeVarn. Next records. Nothing.

IMANI

Are you sure it's a last name?

CLARA

Went with the obvious.

IMANI

You know I'm pretty good at this. That's why you hired me. Research and whatnot. If I knew what we were looking for, I could provide... what's that called?

CLARA

Insight?

IMANI

Exactly.

Clara flips through more binders. Imani resumes her search online.

After a beat, Imani perks up.

IMANI

Wait... wait.

CLARA

What?

IMANI

Found a Reddit user named "DeVarn" here, but... no posts. No comments. The account's kinda old.

CLARA

Can you email me that link?

IMANI

Sure. Who is this? You can talk to me.

CLARA

I didn't say I couldn't.

IMANI

At least give me a clue.

CLARA

It's funny how tenacity can get someone hired and fired.

A small smile flickers across Clara's face.

CLARA

I know you would help, that's why I can't --

Behind Imani, Jonah's corpse. Cloaked in shadow. Only his pale, dead eyes visible.

IMANI

You can't, what?

Imani notices Clara staring, follows her gaze. Nothing.

CLARA

I have to go.

IMANI

What were you saying?

CLARA

Nothing. I don't remember. I'll talk to you later.

Imani follows for a step, stops.

Clara turns back. Jonah behind her. Watching.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Louis snores on his chair, remote in hand. The TV plays on mute. Imani reads on the couch nearby.

Her phone buzzes. It's Clara. She answers.

IMANI

Did you remember what you were saying?

No answer. Only her low breathing.

IMANI

Clara?

CLARA (V.O.)

If I told you, you could see your future, would you look?

IMANI

What?

CLARA (V.O.)

I need your help. This is too big. But I need you to make that choice because if I show you, your life changes. Forever.

Imani takes her time.

CLARA (V.O.)

Imani?

IMANI

I'm on my way.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - NIGHT

A knock echoes through the quiet.

Clara opens the front door to Imani on the step.

CLARA

I haven't cleaned.

IMANI

No judgment.

CLARA

You sure about this?

Clara steps aside. Imani takes in the home.

Family pictures stripped from the walls. Mirrors and TVs covered with sheets. Lights blaring.

Clara leads her upstairs.

UPSTAIRS LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Clara's makeshift bedroom is visible through the bathroom door. Cold and lonely.

DANIEL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

On the desk, a laptop. Daniel's video is queued up.

IMANI

Should I be scared?

CLARA

This is very real. I need you to understand that. This needs to stay between us. Promise me that.

IMANI

Of course. Clara, what is this?

CLARA

My husband found something. Right here in our home, in that very closet. He hid it from me. He recorded it. And what it showed him.

IMANI

It?

CLARA

I'm going to walk out of the room. If you need to walk out, the door's unlocked.

Clara leaves. A trace of fear crosses Imani's face.

Her hand moves to the mouse, shifts the cursor over the play button.

A big breath, CLICK.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - LATER

Clara waits at the bottom of the stairs. From above, a door opens, footsteps descend.

Imani appears, shaken. Sits a step above Clara.

IMANI

What the hell was that?

CLARA

I heard it for months. That buzzing. Daniel said it was bad wiring. I had... no idea it was even there.

Clara trails off. Imani at a loss.

CLARA

I need to find one of those things.

IMANI

Why?

CLARA

Because I need to know if *this...* ends. I need to know, otherwise I'm going to fucking explode. I wake up every day, and I want to destroy the world. I don't know why I leave home. I don't know why I come into work because I honestly hate it. And I used to love it. I used to love so many things, and now I fucking hate... everything. I need to know if that ends. If this thing shows you your future...

She hesitates, her gaze drifts to the office door upstairs.

CLARA

... Maybe it's tied to people who experience loss, or I don't know. I don't know. It's all I've got besides this DeVarn. I messaged the account, but who knows if they even exist. Fucking... dead end.

She rises, turns to Imani.

CLARA

Daniel wrote in his journal that there are others. Let's find them.

EXT. CHARLEN TOWN HALL - DAY

Nick stands by the road like he's waiting for the school bus. A Jansport backpack at his feet.

An Animal Control vehicle idles up. A window rolls down slowly to reveal NORBERT SULLIVAN, 40s. Former punk rocker turned municipal burnout.

NORBERT

What up.

Nick waves.

NORBERT

I'm Norbert. ACO. Hop in. What's up with the backpack, man?

Nick climbs in. Norbert cranks punk rock music.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

A massive Rottweiler growls, froths from its mouth.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL VEHICLE - SAME TIME

Norbert sizes up the dog through the windshield.

NORBERT

What you've got here is a classic case of a cornered dog. Do I lunge or run? I could try the catch pole, but a buddy of mine, town over, got his jaw torn off trying that. Now he talks funny and can't smoke cigarettes.

Nick swallows.

NORBERT

Option two, call the cops. It's volatile. We got kids in the vicinity. They'll probably shoot it. I do not like that outcome.

Norbert grabs the catch pole from the backseat.

NORBERT

Showtime, baby.

NICK

I thought this was going to be more roadkill pickup.

NORBERT

For real? There's plenty of that. Let me get this dog. Then we can go find some dead shit.

Norbert jumps out, fearless. The dog growls as he approaches.

EXT. CHARLEN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A CRACK of helmet on helmet. A summer scrimmage game is underway.

The whistle blows. Players split for huddles. Austin yanks off his helmet, catching his breath.

From the bleachers, Jessa motions for him to put it back on.

BLEACHERS - SAME TIME

Parents shift uneasily as Jessa makes a show.

JESSA

Put it on! Ugh. Sometimes. This sport is going to screw his brain up.

She sits, eyes drift to the edge of the field. Katherine lingers by her son Brett's memorial. Jessa grunts.

Brad drops into the seat beside her.

JESSA

(heavy sarcasm)
Oh hey, Brad.

BRAD

Jessa.

She does the mock cute pose with her hands under her chin. Brad scoffs. The whistle blows after a play.

BRAD

So, big Austin's going to the cheese state, huh? Surprised.

JESSA

Easily, I imagine.

FIELD - SAME TIME

Austin takes the handoff, dodges a defender, bursts into the open field for a big gain.

BLEACHERS - SAME TIME

Jessa cheers.

BRAD

That had to be tough. Letting them
off the leash.

JESSA

Them is plural, Brad. Maybe focus
on the game.

FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Austin waits for the snap, checks the bleachers. Jessa stands
there, fixed on him.

But this isn't Jessa.

Her mouth stretches, teeth jagged, bulging eyes, a single
black iris.

In her arms, a bloody bundle wrapped in white. A wet cord
dangles from it.

The play unfolds, but he can't look away. The defense barrels
through. A blindside hit. Austin smashed to the turf.

AUSTIN'S POV

A shrill ringing fills his ears. He turns his head as
teammates and staff crowd around.

No one reacts as Other Jessa slips through them. Her movement
jagged, stuttering.

Austin's frozen, unable to flinch.

Other Jessa kneels beside him. Soft, choking cries slip
through her teeth. She pets his helmet slowly, leaving
streaks of blood.

She forces the bundle into Austin's arms, wraps the wet cord
around his neck. Faster and faster. Austin squirms as the
cord reaches his mouth...

FIELD

Austin leaps up, spins in panic. No bloody bundle. No Other
Jessa. Players and staff stare in confusion.

The real Jessa rushes up.

JESSA

Austin! Austin!

She reaches for him, he backs away, rattled.

He moves to the sideline. Matt intercepts.

Parents and players gather. Katherine stands by the memorial.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - CLARA'S OFFICE - DAY

A clock ticks. Clara and Imani wait at the desk.

IMANI

Maybe she's at the memorial?

Clara shifts, annoyed.

A museum coworker walks by, looks in, walks off.

IMANI

Are we allowed to do this here?

Clara shrugs far too nonchalantly, then strikes Katherine's name off a list.

CLARA

We're just talking to people.

Imani notes Clara's tapping foot under the desk.

IMANI

Who's next?

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - CLARA'S OFFICE - LATER

ASHLEY, 20s, blonde, sits across from them, clutching a small, unnerving clay statue of a man. His proportions are off, eyes a bit too low.

ASHLEY

Do you like it?

They both force a polite nod.

ASHLEY

My uncle makes things out of clay, so I asked him to make me this. He says that clay has chemical reactions important to the origins of life. Did you know that? He uses it, hoping they'll come back.

IMANI

We're so sorry about your brother.

ASHLEY

Thank you. Clara, do you remember me? I was a few years behind you. I am so sorry for what happened to your family. Is this for a grief group or something?

IMANI

Uh... yeah. Kind of. Do you mind sharing what happened?

Ashley sets the statue on the desk.

ASHLEY

I told him not to ride at night.

QUICK FLASH

- A car plows into a biker on a dark road, drags him for yards. Blood streaks the asphalt.

BACK TO SCENE

ASHLEY

Chris Archer, the guy who did it, didn't even realize he'd done it until the next day. Found my brother in the wheel well.

IMANI

And he only got six years?

Ashley nods.

CLARA

Do you wish he were dead?

IMANI

Okay. Maybe we don't ask that.

CLARA

Why not?

ASHLEY

No. Hey. It's fine. I did. I even looked up places online that put curses on people, but they didn't work. I don't forgive him. I never will. I think that's worse for him.

Imani inhales. Readies herself.

IMANI

We have some questions that might sound strange. Just bear with us.

Clara sees the statue rock slightly. No hands near it.

IMANI

Before the accident, did your brother ever mention strange noises?

ASHLEY

Like what?

The statue rocks again. Still untouched.

IMANI

Did he ever mention hearing a buzzing in his home?

ASHLEY

A buzzing? Like bees?

IMANI

No. Not like bees.

The statue stops.

CLARA

How was your brother's mental health?

ASHLEY

He was fine. Why is that important?

CLARA

You're sure?

ASHLEY

I knew my brother.

CLARA

He didn't have secrets?

ASHLEY

What are you asking? What is this?

CLARA

Are you sure?

Imani sits back, uneasy. Clara presses. Ashley fumes.

CLARA
Have you checked all the closets in
his house?

ASHLEY
Closets? I don't like this.

She grabs her statue off the desk.

CLARA
Did your brother know he was going
to die?

Ashley explodes out of the seat and smashes the statue on the
desk. It shatters into fragments of gray clay.

She gasps, realizing what she's done.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - CLARA'S OFFICE - LATER

Imani re-enters, eyes wide.

IMANI
What was that?

Clara's elsewhere.

IMANI
If we're going to do this, we --

CLARA
-- We asked the right questions.
She just wasn't the right person.

Imani holds. Masks her worry.

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

A lone podium sits on a stage. The American and Indiana state
flags flank it.

Townspeople fill rows of foldable chairs.

In the crowd, Jessa and family. Austin texts. Jessa nudges
Matt, who holds out his hand until Austin reluctantly passes
the phone over.

Up front, Council members Wayne and Alyssa sit at attention.

Nick hustles up to the podium, taps the microphone. Norbert
beside him.

NICK

Hello, everyone. I know we usually do these things at Town Hall, but I thought more people would show.

A few coughs. Glasses clink.

NICK

I'm here to talk about an important initiative. One that has been on everyone's mind lately. I know... we've been avoiding it.

Alyssa perks up.

NICK

Charlen has a possum problem.

The crowd trades uneasy looks.

NICK

I've spent time with Animal Control, and the situation is dire.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Nick, in oversized gloves, hands a dead possum to Norbert, who drops it into a black bag and tosses it into the back of the truck on top of dozens of others.

BACK TO SCENE

NICK

Forty-seven possums. Twenty raccoons. Too many squirrels to count. Ten deer. Those are tough. Especially the fawns.

Norbert leans into the mic.

NORBERT

If you see a deceased deer, please do not try to drag it home. Do not take selfies with it. And please, do not desecrate it.

NICK

We will be putting up more signs and crosswalks. Let's help our friends with no voice. Let's keep Charlen clean! Any questions?

Every hand in the room goes up. Nick gulps.

EXT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL - LATER

Nick and Norbert huddle from the others.

NICK

That was a lot of questions.

NORBERT

I don't think they give a fuck about roadkill, dude.

NICK

They were emotional. Are you not going to help anymore?

NORBERT

I have to. It's my job.

Jessa, Matt, and Austin walk past.

JESSA

Hey Nick, jerky people are still shooting off fireworks near us at all hours. The super loud ones. I'll give you a ring if I see a dead skunk, though. Be better.

Matt gives Nick an apologetic nod.

JESSA

Austin, c'mon. What are you doing?

Austin stands in the dark lot. Blank. Other Jessa moves on all fours toward him. Slow. The scrape of palms on gravel.

JESSA

Austin?

He breaks, joins his parents.

Nick fidgets as the rest of the townspeople move by.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - CLARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Imani hangs her head off the back of a chair as Clara walks through the door. The office upside down from her POV.

IMANI

Another round?

CLARA
If they all show.

Clara runs her finger down a clipboard of names, most crossed out. "No Show" scrawled beside them.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Through the frosted glass, a man's silhouette.

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - DAY - INTERVIEW #1

TERRY SOWELL, 40s, enters. He sports a Tommy Bahama shirt and a big grin. He moves straight to them, sticks his hand out.

TERRY
Hey. Terry Sowell. Clara? Imani?

IMANI
Yes. Thank you so much for coming.

A DING on Terry's phone. He holds his finger up.

TERRY
Sorry, it's my daughter.

Imani and Clara exchange a look.

Terry finishes up.

TERRY
My bad, guys.

IMANI
Sorry, but we were under the
impression your daughter was...

TERRY
Oh, it's a chat thing I set up on
my phone. It's not really her. So,
what ya got for me?

He holds that smile.

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON - INTERVIEW #2

SCOTT HARRIS, 40s. Rocking a white shirt with his father's face on it. He holds up his phone, blasts a demo rock song.

IMANI
If we --

SCOTT
-- Shh. Hold on. Dad's part.

A chaotic drum fill rattles the phone speaker, then silence.
The drumsticks fall to the floor.

SCOTT (V.O.)
(on recording, panicked)
Dad? Dad?

Scott stops the recording.

SCOTT
Heart attack. Gave it his all on
that one.

CLARA
Do you think he knew?

SCOTT
Knew what?

Imani closes her eyes at the question.

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - EVENING - INTERVIEW #3

A toothbrush moves back and forth slowly. DESIREE GARZA, 20s,
absently scrubs her molars.

IMANI
Is that your boyfriends?

The brush keeps moving. Back and forth.

FLASHBACK - BATHROOM - DAY

Desiree picks up a toothbrush from the sink.

DESIREE (V.O.)
... First thing I grabbed when I
found him.

She moves to the tub. An arm droops over the side.

BACK TO PRESENT

She stops, pulls the brush out.

DESIREE
You said you had weird stuff to ask
me?

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - NIGHT - INTERVIEW #4

LYNN and ANDREW, 70s. Matching tattoos of a buck with massive antlers span their shoulders. "RIP" inked beneath.

ANDREW

A buzzing? What are you talking about? What is she talking about?

Imani's defeated, sits back.

LYNN

I said I didn't want to come.

They get up, leave.

IMANI

Guys, hold on.

CLARA

We have a few more questions.

Lynn stops. Turns back.

LYNN

Mrs. Wren, I gave you the courtesy of coming here to talk about my granddaughter. But you, of all people... asking these types of things? Shame on you.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Lynn slams the door shut.

- Desiree slams the door shut.

- Scott slams the door shut.

- Terry slams the door shut. It bounces back open from the force. Terry gently closes it.

BACK TO SCENE

Clara and Imani stand alone in the office.

The lights flicker as a storm picks up outside.

EXT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - NIGHT

A violent storm rages. Trees almost bend in half from the wind. A siren drones in the distance.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - SAME TIME

The rain lashes the windows.

IMANI
It's not giving up.

CLARA
I'm waiting it out. Guess you're
stuck with me.

Imani moves to a long table in the display area. Artifacts of Charlen all around. Books, clothing, mock room setups.

CLARA
How is your dad? He has breathing
issues, right?

IMANI
He's better. Indiana to the rescue.

CLARA
Think you'll stay here? Since you
clearly love it so much?

IMANI
Looks that way. For the foreseeable
future at least.

The wind picks up.

CLARA
You never talk about your mom.

IMANI
Still investigating or what?

Lightning CRACKS through the room. Lights SNAP off. A few CLUNKS from the power.

CLARA
Where are the generators?

IMANI
I think we keep flashlights here.

Imani disappears into the shadows, returning moments later with flashlights. She shines it on the table. Clara's gone.

She sweeps the beam across the room, catches Clara. Jumps.

CLARA
Just me.

They sit back at the table. Imani hands Clara a flashlight.

IMANI

This place is not creepy at all.

Imani shines the flashlight up at her face, voice low.

IMANI

Want to tell ghost stories?

CLARA

No.

Imani grins, falters.

IMANI

I don't remember my mom.

Clara perks up.

IMANI

She died when I was five. Who remembers being five? The only memory I have of her, and it's so random, is that we used to stand across the room from each other and like... mimic each other.

(a beat)

My dad has never accepted that she's gone. I feel bad that I don't feel that bad, but honestly, he does enough for the both of us. Am I horrible?

CLARA

No. I don't think so.

IMANI

He'll always say something like, "*She's not gone. She's just not here.*" Cryptic, old man.

Clara's attention is on the window. A branch TAPS the glass.

IMANI

I think we need to accept that there may not be another one of those things out there.

CLARA

Even if they did see one, would they tell us? Daniel kept it from me. We need to push harder. More direct questions...

Clara rambles. Digs at a chipped corner of the table.

IMANI

Is this helping? What we've been doing? Because I don't think we're looking for that thing anymore.

Clara snaps a small piece of wood off the corner.

CLARA

Let's turn detective mode off.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - LATER

Clara jolts awake to darkness. She's on her feet by the table, disoriented.

As she regains focus, she catches a sound coming from behind the table. A soft, wet crunch. Muffled whimpers.

CLARA

Imani?

CRUNCH.

Multiple voices. Layered and broken.

She gets closer. A soft cry, the sound of chewing.

Clara looks over the table. Horrified.

A grotesque, undead version of Desiree and Terry sit cross-legged on the floor, faces smeared with blood.

They force pieces of flesh into their mouths from Imani's torn-apart corpse splayed between them.

Terry sobs, shoves a piece of Imani's cheek into his mouth. Whimpers as he chews.

Desiree pulls a bone from Imani's ribcage and scrapes her teeth with it. Back and forth.

The sound builds. Crunching, sobbing, scraping.

Clara inches back in fear. The room shifts with her.

Desiree and Terry jerk upright, drag themselves towards Clara.

Desiree reaches out. Clara backs into the hallway...

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... Scrambles through the dark. Bolts for the Staff Bathrooms...

STAFF BATHROOMS - CONTINUOUS

... Closes the door. She fumbles for the lock in the dark. Hears footsteps near the door.

Clara stumbles to a stall. Listens. Careful breaths.

The bathroom door creaks open. Terry's groans and whimpers get closer. Then stop outside the stall. A shuffle.

Her foot nudges close to the gap beneath the door. Teeth scrape flesh. Clara screams.

The power HUMS. Lights SNAP on.

Between the floor and the stall. Terry's head. Mouth clenched on her ankle.

Clara shakes him off, flings the stall open. Nearly trips over him as he jolts upwards after her.

MUSEUM HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Clara bursts out. Imani moves up.

IMANI

Hey! What happened? You were just asleep. I left for a second.

Clara calms. Terry nowhere.

CLARA

Can we go?

IMANI

Sure. Yeah. Storm's over now.

Imani walks off.

Clara leans down and rolls up her pant leg. Runs her fingers over red teeth imprints.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - BEDROOM - DAY

Jessa paces, phone to her ear.

JESSA

One little thing isn't one little thing, Rachel. It's a dozen little things disguised as one thing. It's disorder. You starting your garage sale early is disorder.

She hangs up. Breathes in, then out. Slow.

A phone with a Chicago Bears case buzzes on the bedside table. Jessa picks it up without hesitation.

ON SCREEN: A notification preview reads, "Reminder: Your upcoming stay at Best Western Madison East. Check-in..." The rest cuts off.

Jessa puts the phone down. Sits on the edge of the bed, a sharp inhale. Her fingers curl tight around the comforter.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Austin eats breakfast. He's pale, shadows under his eyes.

MATT

You doing okay, bud?

Austin nods, chews his waffle. Interrupted by...

JESSA

Garage sale day! Woot woot! Seven whole tables this year!

MATT

We have that much?

JESSA

We sure do.

MATT

We can help after practice.

JESSA

Perfection.

Matt and Jessa smile. Neither means it.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - BASEMENT - DAY

A shrine to sports.

Matt's trophies, jerseys, and plaques on one side. Austin's on the other. Pro memorabilia, signed footballs, jerseys, and helmets fill the rest of the shelves.

Jessa takes it in. A long, heavy sigh.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Jessa takes items off the shelves. Places them in a box.
- Box after box is filled. The shelves grow bare.
- The last item is taken down. The last box closed.
- Jessa pauses on a family photo left on the wall.

EXT. SPRINGROSE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The block hums. Families wander from garage to garage.

Jessa stands proudly in the middle of the street.

She overhears Rhonda, who talks Nick's ear off through the window of an Animal Control van nearby.

RHONDA

I keep hearing scratching at my back patio. It sounds just like my Winny. RIP, baby girl.

JESSA

It's a stray, Rhonda. Stop putting your trash out early.

Rhonda shoots daggers as Jessa walks to Clara's door, knocks. No answer.

BRAD (O.S.)

What's wrong with you?

Jessa turns. Brad holds some of Matt and Austin's stuff.

BRAD

Poor fucking bastards.

Matt's truck pulls in. Matt and Austin, still in football gear, climb out. They wander into the garage.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tables are stacked with Matt and Austin's memorabilia. Neighbors clutch items.

Jessa enters, waits an uncomfortably long beat.

JESSA

Thank you all for stopping by our garage sale. And this weather? I'm just glad that storm last night passed. Sheesh.

She moves behind the tables. Picks up a trophy.

JESSA

Matt has some cool memorabilia, huh? The signed Bears stuff went fast. I did not think the trophies would sell, but people really love to win.

Austin grabs what's left on the tables of his stuff.

JESSA

Austin. Dorms are tiny. You can't take it all. I brought your baby stuff out. Do you want that too?

MATT

(low)
Let's go inside.

JESSA

No, let's not. Oh, and guess what? Gary bought all your jerseys! His grandsons are going to love them.

GARY

Matt, I can give them back.

Matt waves it off.

JESSA

That's what garage sales are. They buy our stuff so we can buy more stuff that we'll sell at our next garage sale, and then we will do it all again next year. This is what we do. This is how it works.

Neighbors stare, stunned. A few slip out quietly. Jessa's smile holds.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - DAY

DEREK VARN, 30s, stands beneath the Widow's Vigil painting, muttering to himself.

DEREK

End of the line. End of the line.

A museum employee, HOLLY, approaches him.

HOLLY

Hello, sir. Anything we can...

She notices scabbed puncture wounds on his arm.

HOLLY

... help you with?

DEREK

Where's the one who usually does the tours?

INT. IMANI'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Imani clicks through obituaries on her monitor.

ON SCREEN: Obituaries flick by in Wicker Park, Chicago - circa 1996 using Imani's last name, "Rhoads."

A KNOCK stops her search. Holly stands at the door.

HOLLY

Hey, Imani. A guy by the Vigil is asking for you.

IMANI

A guy, huh? Does he have a name?

HOLLY

DeVarn. I think.

Imani stops, turns.

IMANI

Where is he?

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Imani and Holly walk towards the exhibit area. Derek still faces the painting. Holly parts ways.

Imani approaches slowly, edges up to him. Keeps distance.

IMANI
Who are you?

DEREK
Nobody.
(nods to painting)
This shit really happened, huh?

IMANI
According to history.

DEREK
According to history. That's...
fuckin' wild.

IMANI
What do you want?

DEREK
I don't want shit.

IMANI
You need to tell me how you found
me --

DEREK
-- Do you know how many times I've
seen this moment? You think I want
to be here? I *have* to be. Because
this is what the fuck happens.

Derek pulls up a photo on his phone, turns it towards her. A
Ripple. Embedded in the floor of a large, backyard shed.

DEREK
Call Clara.

Imani looks to the museum exit. Derek SNAPS his fingers. Nods
towards the offices.

DEREK
You're gonna eventually fuckin' do
it. Call her.

Derek returns to the painting. Imani walks towards her
office. Terrified.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Clara wakes to her cell buzzing. She answers, groggy.

CLARA
Hey. What? Slow down.

She sits up on a mattress on the floor outside the closet.

CLARA

He's there? What's his name?

She grabs Daniel's journal from beside the mattress, jots down, "Derek Varn."

CLARA

He showed it to you?

She shifts, revealing Jonah's corpse clinging to the wall above the closet doorframe behind her.

CLARA

I'll be there.

Jonah descends. Stands upright. Clara's focused on the call.

CLARA

Go to my office. I'll be there as soon as I can. Calm down.

Jonah inches closer. Stutters like frames are missing.

CLARA

Imani, I don't fucking know. What do you want me to say?

Jonah stops.

CLARA

I'll be there soon.

Clara hangs up, turns... Jonah inches away. She's paralyzed.

Jonah creeps closer. His veiny finger stretches out and taps her chest. Clara trembles at his touch.

The taps intensify.

Tap. Tap. TAP. TAP. TAP.

Clara sobs. Frozen.

Jonah stops. His rotted fingernail presses into her skin.

CLARA

Jonah, please...

Jonah's mouth falls open wide, screams. Clara shuts her eyes.

Silence. She opens them as Jonah backs into the closet, his face still visible in the shadows.

Clara sits alone. Touching her chest.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - LATER

Imani paces in the hall outside Clara's Office. Through the window, Derek slouches on a chair.

Clara rounds the corner, rubs her chest.

IMANI
Where have you been?

CLARA
Did anyone see him?

IMANI
Holly. I said it was "grief group"
stuff.

CLARA
What has he said?

IMANI
He was waiting for you.

Derek and Clara lock eyes.

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Derek leans forward, dead center in front of Clara and Imani. Clara examines the Ripple photo.

Derek watches the clock hands. TICK TICK.

DEREK
I saw it open up.

FLASHBACK - INT. DEREK'S SHED - DAY

Derek slumps against the wall of the dimly lit shed. A needle on the floor at his side. His eyes sink, breathing slows...

An unearthly GROAN brings him back. Light bursts out, illuminating his face.

A Ripple opens on the concrete floor. Buzzing. Shimmering.

Derek crawls to it. Kneels. His finger moves to the surface. The Ripple beads, the glow surges...

BACK TO SCENE

Clara hands his phone back.

CLARA
What did it show you?

DEREK
Enough.

Derek checks the clock again. TICK TICK

IMANI
Where did it come from?

DEREK
You think it had a shipping label?
You've seen it. How the fuck do you
explain that?

IMANI
You said you had ideas.

His eyes dash to the clock. TICK TICK. Faster.

DEREK
All I know is we probably weren't
meant to see it. And if there was
one in her house, and mine... there
has to be more out there. Maybe
people were lucky enough not to
fuckin' touch it...
(looks to clock)
... Is that thing moving fast?

The clock ticks as normal. He calms, pulls out a small case.

CLARA
Why did my husband have your name
in his journal?

DEREK
Guessing my Reddit. I had one post
up for like a week. Then I wiped
everything. Prolly saw that. He
didn't message me, since you're
gonna ask.

Clara's attention sways.

DEREK
The one in your house is closed,
huh? You still feel it, though.

The office door trembles.

DEREK

She's seeing shit right now. I know that fuckin' look.

IMANI

What is he talking about?

DEREK

It turns you into, like, a projector. Makes your thoughts into whatever the fuck those *things* are. It doesn't just mess with someone who looks into it. My neighbors didn't, but they fuckin' swore they were hearing noises in their walls.

(to Imani)

Surprised you aren't seeing shit just being around her.

CLARA

What do you see?

DEREK

My mom.

FLASHBACK - INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Derek props himself against the headboard. Fixed on the foot of the bed.

Something shifts under the covers. Whispers his name. He grabs a lighter from his bedside table, cluttered with paraphernalia.

He lifts the sheets, flicks the lighter. His mother is underneath, dressed in a hospital gown, staring back at him. Her wrinkled fingers creep towards him.

Derek slams the sheets down.

BACK TO SCENE

Derek exhales.

CLARA

Is your mom still alive?

DEREK

For now.

IMANI

You know when your own mom dies?

CLARA

Do they touch you?

Both turn to Clara.

DEREK

Nope. Thank fuckin' god.

Derek snaps open the case. Dozens of pills.

DEREK

I'd ask permission, but...

He pops a pill. Imani tenses. Clara doesn't react.

DEREK

Do you know what it's like knowing how the rest of your life goes? I tried to change things. Fuck, I still... try. But you can't. Once you look, it's all reruns. Bet your dead husband knew that. After he saw what he was gonna do? No wonder he didn't tell you. You need to... understand one thing about whatever it is.

He leans forward, voice drops.

DEREK

What it shows you... that's the only way it plays out.

(a beat)

I don't give a shit about you. I'm playing this the fuck out.

Clara fights tears, jaw quivers.

CLARA

What did it show you?

Derek shakes his head slowly in amazement.

CLARA

Why did you come here if you aren't going to let me see it?

DEREK

Because nobody should see it, you psycho fuck. I'm trying to see if I can at least change --

Derek jumps back. His mom is crammed into the leg space under Clara's desk, face tilted up at him.

DEREK
Fuck! God damnit.

Derek grabs his things.

Clara rounds the desk and checks the leg space. Nothing.

CLARA
Where are you going?

Clara moves to block him.

DEREK
Everything's the same. That means we aren't done. But I'm out of here.

CLARA
What does that mean?

DEREK
Even if I told you, fuck does it matter?

CLARA
I need to see it. Please.

Derek ignores, moves by her, throws his sweater hood up.

IMANI
This is insane.

CLARA
Can you find his address?

IMANI
Clara, Jesus...

CLARA
Fine. I'll find it on my own. Can you please leave?

Imani exits, stops in front of the door as it shuts.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - GARAGE - DAY

Matt and Austin work beneath the open hood of Matt's truck.

MATT
If you let the oil run dry,
friction will eat the whole thing
up. That little oil light is for...

AUSTIN
... I know what it means.

MATT
You say you do.

They laugh. Austin's fades.

AUSTIN
Hey, can I talk to you about
something...

Jessa steps out from the garage doorway, cuts him off.

JESSA
Look at the two mechanics. What are
you chatting about?

MATT
Nothing.

AUSTIN
Nothing.

MATT
We're almost done. I can grab us
Dairy Queen.

Jessa musters a grin. The coldness is palpable.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - TOP OF STAIRS - NIGHT

Austin lurks, listens to Jessa and Matt in a hushed fight
downstairs.

MATT (O.S.)
You act like this is war!

JESSA (O.S.)
You colluded. Against me. Now
you're actually taking him up to
Wisconsin? Actually.

MATT (O.S.)
I don't even know what colluded
means, Jess. I mean fuck.

JESSA (O.S.)
Can I describe how I see this?

MATT (O.S.)
Sure.

JESSA (O.S.)
One word? You make me want to tear
my hair out. You making *me* want to
do *anything* is insane.

A SHRIEK from his bedroom sways Austin's attention down the
upstairs hall. Matt and Jessa continue their bout downstairs.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Austin washes his face. Brushes his teeth. Lingers on his
reflection for a few moments.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Austin approaches his room. Stops. Stares at his bed through
the open door. Something watches him in the darkness.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Austin sits on the couch watching TV. A pocketknife nearby on
the coffee table.

From behind, Jessa calls out.

JESSA (O.S.)
It's late. Lights out.

AUSTIN
I'll turn it down.

No response. The floorboards creak as she gets closer. Her
hand comes into view and rests gently on his shoulder.

JESSA
Lights. Out.

AUSTIN
Just like, five more minutes.

Jessa's hand doesn't move.

AUSTIN
Can you move your arm?

No response. Austin tries to push it away, but it's heavy.

AUSTIN

Mom?

He grasps her hand.

AUSTIN

Move your --

Other Jessa looms over him. Her open mouth inches from his face.

He leaps back, tumbles over the coffee table to the floor. Other Jessa dips below the back of the couch, eyes firm on Austin.

After a beat, her contorted body inches out from behind the couch, crawls on top of him. Limbs crack and contort.

Austin locks up as she hovers over him. Drool dripping from her teeth.

She grabs the pocketknife off the table, raises it to her forehead, and slowly saws at her hairline. Scalping herself inch by inch.

She peels it off. Blood streams down as she moves the knife to her forehead, carving her face. Her cries turn to shrieks.

A hand shakes Austin hard. He SNAPS out of it.

MATT

Austin! Bud, c'mon.

Austin blinks, Matt's there. Normal Jessa stands feet away.

JESSA

Austin? Baby. Why are you on the floor?

AUSTIN

Make her leave! Get the fuck out!
Dad! Please! Make her leave!

Jessa moves to comfort him. Matt blocks her.

MATT

Go. Look at him.

She steps back, rejected. Leaves.

AUSTIN

I don't know what's happening to me. I keep seeing these things. They're so real. I can smell them. I don't want to be here. I want to leave. Dad, I want to leave.

Matt holds Austin, locked on Jessa as she heads upstairs.

Behind them, Other Jessa stands in the corner watching Austin. Her face hanging on by a shred of skin.

EXT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - PATIO - DAY

Louis sits on a patio chair, fixed on a single spot at the edge of the forest beyond the complex.

Behind him, through the sliding glass door, Imani crosses the apartment. Stops.

IMANI

What are you doing?

LOUIS

Watching.
(a beat)
She's dancing.

Imani walks off.

Moments later, Imani marches toward the tree line.

She looks around, then throws her arms out.

IMANI

(shouting)
Where?

Louis disappears inside.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Clara plays Daniel's video. Rewinds. Pauses. Plays.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Holes riddle the drywall. Clara sits outside the closet, snacking, staring into the dark.

In her hand, an address.

INT. CLARA'S CAR - DAY

Clara holds the paper with the address.

She's tucked behind a car across from a worn house. A shed rises behind a tall fence.

The garage opens. Derek steps out and moves down the driveway. He stops, points at Clara.

She panics, peels out. Speeds off the other way.

INT. CLARA'S CAR - LATER

Clara pulls into the drive. Someone sits on her front step.

She idles, hand on her keys. Finally, turns the car off.

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine sits on the porch step as Clara approaches. She shifts, making room.

Clara hesitates, then sits beside her.

KATHERINE

I realized on my way over here that
I haven't been to this side of
Charlen in about two years. I saw
you all got a new Walgreens.

Clara smiles. It fades fast.

KATHERINE

I am so sorry that Jessa Thorne is
your neighbor. She was so quiet in
school. What on earth happened?

CLARA

Yeah, she's... Jessa.

KATHERINE

Why did you ask me to come to the
museum a few weeks ago, Clara? We
barely talked in high school. I
felt guilty, so here I am.

CLARA

Why didn't you show up?

KATHERINE

I have my days. That was one of them.

CLARA

Today isn't one of them?

KATHERINE

Do you want to know a secret? My boy, Brett, hated baseball. If he knew that a baseball was what got him? Oh, I can hear it now. "*Mom, seriously?*" He would always say that. He would be so pissed.

Katherine chuckles. Clara joins nervously.

KATHERINE

I joke about it, which makes people uneasy. Honestly, it makes them uneasy when I grieve. Ask your lovely neighbor and her PTA goons.

(a beat)

I laugh because everything else ran dry. There were no more tears. No more anger. But I can laugh about him. He was a funny boy. Was your boy funny?

Clara's eyes gloss over.

KATHERINE

Talk about him.

CLARA

I can't.

Clara fights it.

QUICK FLASH

- A memory seeps in. Clara plays with Jonah. Happy times.

BACK TO SCENE

Tears stream down Clara's cheek.

CLARA

He was the sweetest boy on planet Earth. His hair, his eyes, his hands, his face, his freckles. He was my perfect little human.

Clara goes cold.

CLARA

Now, I don't know what he is. I don't know *what* my husband was. What was in his head. I didn't see it. I couldn't... see it.

Clara wipes a tear from her lip that hangs on.

CLARA

And after all the questions, I come back to the same one. Why didn't he want me there when he did it? I'll ask myself that question forever.

(a beat)

I asked you to come in because I have questions.

KATHERINE

You want answers. You want to know how to move on. If this gets better. I can sit here with confidence in my heart and tell you that it absolutely does not. You need to be okay with that. Because you don't have a choice.

Katherine places her hand on top of Clara's.

KATHERINE

The only choice you have is to wake up and hope for the good days. But find any shred of joy in this because we are not just grieving mothers. We are warriors against a horrible, horrible truth: We will never be okay. But we're still here. We didn't let it eat us.

Katherine pushes up off the step.

KATHERINE

I'm going to go. Let's talk again. Will I see you at the fest?

CLARA

We'll see. Thank you, Katherine.

Katherine uses her fingers to push her mouth up in a smile.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Clara enters, scans the quiet home.

She steps to a mirror, pulls a sheet off it. Stands face-to-face with her reflection.

Her fingers move to her mouth, pushing up in a smile.

EXT. CHARLEN TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A banner stretches overhead, "Charlen End of Summer Fest 2023!"

SUPER: Two Weeks Later...

Booths line the streets. Carnival rides spin. Games buzz with laughter.

A beer garden teems with suburban dads getting a few minutes of escape.

Clara moves through the crowd. She's brighter. More alive.

Imani darts by, busy.

CLARA

Hey! The exhibit looks amazing!

IMANI

I am very happy with it, and I'm also very stressed about it.

CLARA

That is very conflicting.

IMANI

Speaking of, I need to go check on... all of the things. I'll see you later, right?

CLARA

Yep. We should probably talk at some point.

IMANI

Probably. You know, I did find his address. Derek's.

CLARA

So did I.

IMANI

Glad to see you here then.

CLARA

Batshit Clara leaves her cave.

Imani grins, touches Clara's arm as she passes, walks to an outdoor display of art all themed around Charlen.

Jessa passes by the art display with Rachel.

JESSA

Well, that is interesting art, huh?

RACHEL

I like it.

Jessa rolls her eyes, peels off towards her booth. Matt sits behind the stand. Feet up.

JESSA

Sell any?

MATT

Three.

JESSA

Mood rings or slap bracelets?

MATT

Both.

JESSA

Told you they'd sell.

Matt nods in acknowledgment, but not much else.

JESSA

Still leaving tomorrow for Wisconsin?

MATT

Nine a.m.

A CUSTOMER approaches. Jessa shifts.

JESSA

Hi! How are you enjoying the fest?

CUSTOMER

So much fun. You two look like the happy little business owners.

JESSA

Don't we?

Nick walks by Jessa's booth with Norbert.

NICK

How much?

NORBERT

If my calculations are correct,
which they usually are, roadkill is
down seventy-five percent. Which
is, ya know. Good.

Nick beams.

NORBERT

Guess you can get back to other
shit, huh? A lot to do. I hit this
pothole and jacked my rim up. Not
sure what you can do about that.

Nick notices Clara. She smiles. He answers with an awkward
wave.

EXT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - LATER

Clara chats with her neighbor, Gary.

CLARA

It's good to see you, too. Please
check out the art exhibit. They
worked so hard.

Gary shambles off.

Jessa's booth sits unattended. Clara sneaks up, slips a mood
ring on.

It shifts, then returns to black. She pulls it off.

Out of the corner of her eye... Derek Varn. He moves through
the crowd. A group passes in front of him. He's gone.

Clara panics. Chest heavy. She searches the fest, spots Imani
by the museum steps. Hurries to her.

CLARA

Derek's here.

IMANI

What? Where?

CLARA

He was walking through the crowd.

IMANI

You're sure you saw him?

CLARA

Yes.

Imani scans the crowd. No Derek.

IMANI

Obviously, do not go looking for him. If you see him again, find me.

INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - NIGHT

Through the open front doors, the fest still hums outside. The museum is silent, empty.

Clara exits her office, locks up.

She passes the exhibits, stops in front of the Widow's Vigil painting.

A shape moves through a dark doorway behind her.

A THUD. Clara turns. Derek stands in the shadows. Doped out of his mind, holding a gun in his hand.

CLARA

Oh fuck. Derek...

He motions to the painting. Moves closer.

DEREK

Why you? Why here? You're a stranger. Maybe if you didn't fuckin' come looking for me.

He lumbers in front of the painting.

DEREK

My mom died last week. I fuckin' knew it was going to happen, but... I can't do this. I can't know these things.

Derek itches his brow, gun in hand.

CLARA

I'm very sorry. Can you please put the gun down? I'm so sorry about your mom.

The painting looms behind him. Massive, sacred.

DEREK

She had something she used to say. When she got sick. Really fuckin' sick.

"You bow before what you can't control." You asked what it showed me? This. This exact room. It showed me you.

(a beat)

Shed's open. Go look at your fuckin' life.

He shoves the gun in his mouth and pulls the trigger. Brain and blood smack the painting.

Clara reels back in horror. All sound cuts out.

EXT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - NIGHT

Police and ambulances swarm. Townsfolk crowd for a glimpse.

INT. CHARLEN POLICE STATION - SAME TIME

Two officers gently question Clara.

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - LATER

Clara and Imani walk close. Voices low.

IMANI

What did they ask you?

CLARA

You're fine.

IMANI

That's not what I meant.

CLARA

I told them he came in for the meetings and that I didn't know him beyond that. It's fine. It's like he said, he's a nobody. Nobody remembers him. Nobody remembers shit in this town.

IMANI

What did Derek say to you? Stop.

They halt before the exit to the lot.

CLARA

He told me his mom died.

Imani steps back.

IMANI

I'm staying over tonight.

CLARA

You don't want to be there.

IMANI

Why?

CLARA

Because it's going to be really bad.

IMANI

We'll figure it out. I'm going to call my dad, and I'll follow you home. Please stay here. Please?

Imani heads toward the lobby.

Clara pauses, rubs blood off her shirt. Then walks straight out the exit doors.

Moments later, her car drives by.

After a few beats, Imani returns, catches Clara's headlights flare as she peels out of the lot. Imani dashes for her car.

INT. CLARA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Clara races down a dark back road.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - SAME TIME

Imani speeds out of the station lot onto the main road.

EXT. DEREK'S HOUSE - LATER

Clara marches up to the lifeless property. No cruisers yet.

The shed looms over the fence. The buzzing swells.

Clara rattles the gate open to the backyard. The shed creaks and cracks as she approaches.

At the threshold, she pauses. Last chance.

EXT. BACK ROAD - SAME TIME

Imani's car flies down the empty road.

INT. DEREK'S SHED - SAME TIME

A yank of a chain light reveals a bare, neglected shed.

A pulse of light near the back wall. The buzzing draws Clara to it.

A Ripple is open on the floor. It beads, then stills.

Clara kneels before it. Her hand inches towards the surface. A pause, then touches it.

Shifting light plays across her face as her life rolls by on the Ripple. Voices echo. Young Clara, Daniel, Jonah, her parents.

She watches in wonder, sadness, and laughter. Tears well.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Clara's agonizing cry pierces as images flash of her finding Daniel and Jonah dead at the kitchen table.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Recent. Clara walks into the shed.

The images continue. The future.

Wonder slips from Clara's face. Her own screams and pleas echo from the Ripple. Hell.

RIPPLE IMAGE - Clara's kitchen. Crowded with faces of familiar neighbors singing Happy Birthday.

JESSA

(on the Ripple, muffled)
Clara, what's happening?

RIPPLE IMAGE: A blinding light, screams... and the images stop. The Ripple returns to a still state.

CLARA

What? No. No. What happened?

She presses it again. Each time, the same end.

CLARA

What happened!

EXT. DEREK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Imani sprints up to the shed...

INT. DEREK'S SHED - CONTINUOUS

... Pushes through the clutter, the buzz swelling.

Imani finds Clara pounding the Ripple's surface.

IMANI

Clara!

No response. Clara slows, presses once more.

IMANI

Clara! Stop!

CLARA

Get away from me.

Imani moves closer.

CLARA

Get the fuck away from me!

Imani breaks. Backs away.

EXT. DEREK'S SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Imani walks straight to her car. Her hand trembles as she unlocks it, climbs in...

INT. IMANI'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

... Shuts the door, sits in the quiet as the buzzing rises.

She frantically pounds the steering wheel. Screams.

Moments later, she drives in silence.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - LATER

Jazz blares through the apartment as Imani enters.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A record player spins, crackles.

Louis slow-dances by himself. His hands rest on an invisible waist. Lost in the moment.

The music cuts. Louis slows to a stop.

LOUIS
Give me your wrath.

IMANI
Wrath? This is pity, Dad. That is
not your wife. Say that she's gone
or I'm gone.

He lowers his head.

IMANI
You need to say it.

LOUIS
Please stop.

IMANI
Say it!

LOUIS
I can see you are hurting, but stop
this. Please, baby.

IMANI
Say it!

LOUIS
You're scaring her.

IMANI
I can't do this. If you only knew.
That's not your wife. That's not my
mom. It's that... thing.

Louis notices her hand trembling.

IMANI
I can't live with your ghosts, Dad.
If you can't say it...

LOUIS
You're gone.

IMANI
Yeah.

Imani heads for the dark hallway.

FLASHBACK - INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

An open door lies ahead. The hallway beyond it. The air is
hazy, dreamlike. A memory. Footsteps approach.

A shadowy figure appears in the doorway. Still, slow breaths.
The shadow steps inside. Closes the door behind them.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jessa stands at a window. Half there, half lost in memory.

Through the front window, Matt and Austin load overnight bags into Matt's truck. Matt walks back toward the house.

Jessa opens the door as he reaches the welcome mat. Neither says a thing. Then finally...

MATT

We'll be back in a couple of days.

JESSA

Okay.

MATT

We need to talk when I get back.
About us. About... this.

She mouths, "Okay." He shakes his head and leaves.

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - LATER

Jessa sits alone at the dinner table, a stack of small, blank envelopes in front of her.

Each envelope has a tiny printed silhouette of birds in flight in the corner. She snips an excess piece.

Jessa opens and closes the scissors. Slow, growing.

The scissors open. Close.

QUICK FLASH

- The shadowy figure closes a door behind them.

BACK TO SCENE

Scissors open, close. The scissors open. Hold.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jessa drags the Truth Table down the hallway towards the kitchen...

INT. TOWN HALL - NICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick looms over a newspaper headline that reads, "CHARLEN STRUCK BY TRAGEDY AGAIN AT SUMMER FEST."

INT. TOWN HALL - HALLWAY - LATER

Nick storms down the hall. Staffers swarm him with questions. He exits, leaving angry council members in his wake.

EXT. TOWN HALL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Nick bursts out of the front doors, muttering. He digs for his keys. Stops hard.

Across the lot, a buck with massive antlers stands motionless.

A standoff. Its chest barely moves. Black eyes on Nick.

A HORN BLARES. The deer startles, trots off. A car pulls forward, inches by where it stood.

The buck disappears into the tree line.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick paces on his phone. Someone answers.

NICK
You're awake? Great!

NORBERT (V.O.)
What?

NICK
I'm picking you up. I need you

NORBERT (V.O.)
Job is done.

NICK
Plenty still to do. Wake-up time.

Norbert grumbles.

NORBERT (V.O.)
Dude, are you out of your fucking
mind?

CLICK.

NICK
Hello? God damnit. God... damnit!

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick zooms along a dark back road. Headlights on blast.

Ahead, something lies in the center lane. Nick slows feet
from it, grabs a plastic bag and a shovel from his backseat.

EXT. BACK ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

A possum sprawls in the middle of the road. Dead-looking.
Nick reaches it, kneels, gloved hands ready.

Something shiny glints in its mouth.

Nick leans closer, unhooks a small locket from its teeth.

It's an old locket. He flips it over. An engraving reads,
"For Mary. 1851."

He pockets it, reaches down for the possum. It jerks to life,
lunges, sinks its teeth into exposed skin on his wrist.

Nick screams. Cracks it with the shovel over and over. It
squeals, gurgles.

Nick checks the bite marks. Deep, red. Blood wells up fast.

NICK
Oh shit! Oh no...

He springs to his car, dives inside.

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

He drives recklessly. Blood streams down his forearm.

He fumbles for his phone, drops it, lets out a primal scream.
Shakes the steering wheel.

He leans down, snatches his phone, looks back up...

IMPACT!

The buck crashes through the windshield. Antlers rip through the glass. The animal lets out a guttural groan.

Nick's car swerves off the road, flips. The world turning and turning. Smashes into a tree. The buck lodged in the glass.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clara sits on the edge of her bed. Drained, pale.

A horrible wail fills the room.

QUICK FLASH

- The Ripple vision of her future. Neighbors back away from her.

BACK TO SCENE

Jonah hovers inches from her face, mouth open wide.

A floorboard CREAKS in the hall. Jonah stiffens. Moves away slowly. His head creaks towards the door.

Daniel's ghostly corpse steps through the doorway, staggered and glitching. The back of his head blown open from the self-inflicted gunshot wound, wet and glistening.

Clara shuts her eyes. Then, he speaks. Low and horrible.

DANIEL
Sit still, bud.

Clara whimpers as Daniel rips her off the bed and out the door in a single violent pull. Her screams trail off --

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A gray cordless house phone rings on the counter. Clara's voicemail prompt kicks in.

VOICEMAIL GREETING (V.O.)
(Clara)
Hi, you've reached the Wrens,
Clara...
(next)
... Daniel...
(next)
... and Jonah!

(Clara)
 Leave your name at the little beep!

BEEP.

VALERIE (V.O.)
 Hi, Clar. It's Mom. And dad. He's
 here too, he says. I wanted to
 call, Miss MIA. We haven't heard
 from you. You sounded more upbeat
 last time we chatted...

The rest of the kitchen drifts into view. Counters buried,
 plates stacked, everything in quiet ruin.

VALERIE (V.O.)
 ... We're going to try and come out
 in a few weeks. We can get a hotel.
 We know you like your space...

Beyond the kitchen, the living room.

VALERIE (V.O.)
 ... Please give us a call. Oh, and
 change the voicemail, hun. It's
 time. We hope you're okay...

Daniel and Jonah's corpses pin Clara against the living room
 wall.

She squirms, mouth open in a quiet scream. The voicemail
 drowns her out.

VALERIE (V.O.)
 ... Talk to you soon.

Clara is dragged toward the ceiling as the message ends.

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - LATER

Imani heads down the drive. Next door, Jessa hovers at her
 window. Imani smiles, Jessa sinks away.

Imani checks Clara's dark windows. Rings the bell. Knocks.

IMANI
 Clara. It's me. Please answer.

She pulls out her cell. Calls. No answer. She knocks again.

As she turns to leave...

CLARA (O.S.)

Imani.

Imani gets close to the door.

CLARA (O.S.)

I told you to stay away.

IMANI

I want to help you.

No response.

IMANI

What did you see?

Clara mutters to herself.

IMANI

Are you alone in there?

INT. CLARA'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - SAME TIME

A floorboard creaks in front of Clara.

CLARA

No.

IMANI (O.S.)

I don't want to leave you.

CLARA

You will.

Clara leans back against the wall. The buzzing pulses.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Imani sits by a window, eyes on the woods behind her complex.

She opens her phone, pulls up Clara's contact, then closes it.

Out the window, a figure stands near the tree line.

EXT. EDGE OF APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Imani moves through a low mist that settles amongst the grass leading up to the woods.

She stops. Yards ahead, a figure stands. Cloaked in shadow. Swaying back and forth.

Imani raises her hands in the air. A beat later, so does the figure.

She raises her right arm. It mimics.

She jumps in the air. The figure holds, hops.

Imani turns around, checks to see if it copied.

It stands a few feet from her. Too close.

Imani backs away, leaves it standing still in the mist.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - DAY

Imani's parked outside of Derek's house.

The buzzing from the shed lures her in.

Imani turns the car off, reaches for the handle. In the rearview mirror, something drops out of view in the backseat.

She turns... empty. She starts her car back up and pulls away.

INT. CHARLEN HOSPITAL - DAY

Nick sits on the edge of a hospital bed, arm in a cast, bruises blotting his left side, a bandage around his waist.

He rolls the gold locket between his fingers.

A NURSE enters, checks his charts.

NURSE

Looks like you're ready to go. Do you need a ride? We can call.

NICK

I called an Uber.

NURSE

That arm will need at least six weeks. Everything else, a little longer.

NICK

I've never broken a bone before.

NURSE

Well, now you've broken a bunch.

INT. CHARLEN TOWN HALL - NICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nick enters his dark, lonely office.

On his desk, a single vase of flowers, a handful of Get Well cards.

He flips through them. One has a zombie on the front. Someone drew possum features on it.

A small white envelope sticks out from the rest. Tiny silhouetted birds on the corner of it.

EXT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Matt and Austin jump out of the truck. Grab luggage out.

AUSTIN

That drive felt like forever.

MATT

Ready to do that every weekend?

INT. THORNE HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Matt and Austin enter.

MATT

You say that now, but once you...

Matt stops. Jessa sits at the fold-out table, her Truth Table. Two empty chairs wait across from her.

JESSA

Please join me.

MATT

We just walked through the door.
Can we do this later? Is this about
what I said?

JESSA

This is about everything.

Matt sits first. Austin follows. She reaches out, palms up. They hesitate, then take her hands.

JESSA

I want to start by saying I'm sorry. I've been horrible to you both. I know what I'm like.

She squeezes Austin's hand.

JESSA

Austin, I'm sorry for treating you like a child when you are a man now. I hope you know it's because I love you. So. Fucking. Much.

Austin's stunned at the language.

JESSA

Matt, honey. You're the glue. You really are. I'm sorry for what I've done to hurt you.

Matt nods. Confused, but listening.

JESSA

I've never talked about my family.

Jessa pauses for what feels like an eternity. Her knuckles whiten on the table.

JESSA

I never... talk about my family.

She takes a shaky breath. Forces herself.

JESSA

I had a brother, and his name was Nathan.

Focus stays on her.

JESSA

He was four years older than me.
Not even your dad knew about this.
(to Matt)
I know. I'm sorry for not telling you. I am. Just... please listen.

She rubs his hand. Continues.

JESSA

Everyone loved Nathan. But he...
only loved me. My mom said he
barely left my side from the day I
was born. He would cry if we had to
do separate things.

"That's normal, Jessa. Big brothers are like that. Be glad he's protective." That's all he was for a while. Overprotective Nate. Until I turned twelve.

Jessa strains, collects herself.

JESSA

That's when he *really* started to love me. He would come into my room most nights, and he would do terrible things...

QUICK FLASH

- The shadowy figure closes the door.

BACK TO SCENE

JESSA

... It went on for years. He would hurt me. Make me hurt myself. When I was fifteen, he found razor blades in my drawer. I said they were for shaving. He hurt me so bad I had to tell our mom and dad I got into a fight at school. He told me, *"Don't ever try to leave again."*

Jessa drifts, returns.

JESSA

He said if I ever told anyone, he would kill our parents. Poison them or stab them in their sleep. So, I lived two lives. I got really good at that. But whenever he wanted, I was his. I couldn't have friends or boyfriends. No way. He skipped out on going away to college. For me. Then, one day, he gets a job at the mill here in town.

An odd grin forms.

JESSA

This job sends him on a work trip. He tried to get out of it, but they said no. He left for five days. Five. Whole. Days.

She glows.

JESSA

There was a girl named Tory in my class. Literally every Friday, she would ask me to hang at her house. Her mom worked nights, so she had these parties. I would have to say no, but this time, I said yes so fast. I went straight to Target after school and bought an outfit. I did my hair. Makeup. And I danced. I danced to every song for the whole night, and it was *everything*. I got very drunk. Because I never had. I tried to sneak in, but my dad was up. Waiting for me.

The glow slips.

JESSA

I thought he was going to yell. Say that a neighbor could have seen me. But he didn't. He held my hair while I threw up.

(a beat)

And I told him everything. Everything Nathan had done.

A calm creeps over her.

JESSA

Nathan was arrested. I remember watching them put handcuffs on him and feeling so... angry. I was angry to see him leave. I'll never understand that.

She wipes tears.

JESSA

My parents made sure it was quiet, but it didn't matter. Nathan killed himself three days later because he knew he would never see me again. I haven't said his name until now.

She sighs deeply, pushes a loving smile through.

JESSA

Austin, if you want to go away to college, I won't stand in your way. And Matt, if you need more space. I understand.

But I needed you both to hear my truths, and if you'll have me... let's get this family back on track.

Matt and Austin sit stunned.

MATT

Jess, I...

Austin gets up, moves around the table, hugs Jessa.

AUSTIN

Holy shit, mom. I'm so sorry. I'll stay. I'll stay.

They embrace. Matt sits back.

Jessa opens her eyes, meets Matt.

JESSA

(mouthing)

I love you.

Matt is horrified as Jessa pulls back. She breathes calmly.

JESSA

Now, we have a neighbor who needs us. And I've been working on something.

INT. IMANI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Imani wakes, drenched in sweat. She props herself up, catches her breath.

She scans the dark room. Shadows dance.

Her attention drifts past a chair in the corner... snaps back.

The figure from the field sits. A shifting shape in the darkness. It sways back and forth, dancing.

IMANI

Is that you?

The shadow halts. Now, a faint outline of a person.

IMANI

You're not there.

It sways again.

IMANI
You're not there.

Stillness.

IMANI
You don't get to just come back to
help. I don't know you, and you
aren't there.

A final sway.

IMANI
Go away.

The shadow's still. Simply a shadow again.

EXT. BINGO LAKE - MORNING

A sign juts from the dirt. It reads, "Pray for Charlen."

Around it, life goes on. Children play, dogs bark.

A rock hits the sign. Then another. And another.

Imani sits nearby on the banks of the lake, picks up a rock,
tosses it into the water. Lost in the ripple it makes.

As the water settles, a shape forms in the reflection behind
her. She lets out a half-laugh.

IMANI
Want to know the history of that
bench over there?

Louis sits on the ground next to her. She picks up another
rock, rolls it in her palm.

IMANI
See, a while ago, they decided
people shouldn't have to sit on the
ground anymore.

Louis grins. Sees the rocks at the base of the sign, the
rocks in Imani's hand. Shakes his head.

IMANI
Nothing, huh?

LOUIS
No more riddles. I understand why
you can't see her.

Imani averts her eyes, guilty.

LOUIS

I'm at peace with that. I always
will. What we had was... cosmic.
One day you'll understand.

Imani chokes back tears.

LOUIS

I know what this means, so you
don't have to speak it. You aren't
meant for this place. I see that.
You have a mission. She told me.

Louis forces the words out.

LOUIS

Go live your life. Find love,
whatever that may look like for
you. We'll be fine right here.

Imani drops the rock. It tumbles to the water.

IMANI

"We'll."

Louis gets up, touches her shoulder, then moves away.

The sounds of the park drift beneath the morning sun.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - DAY

Darkness. Blinds drawn. Small beams of light break through.

DANIEL'S OFFICE CLOSET - SAME TIME

Clara's against the back wall. The lightbulb at the entrance
flickers, dying, reviving.

CLARA

(muttering)

You bow before what you can't
control. You bow before what you
can't control. You bow before...

A GROAN. A CRACK of bone. Jonah and Daniel are nearby.

Clara steadies herself, then bursts out the door...

DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As she exits, Jonah and Daniel's rotting, ghostly corpses crawl along the wall after her. Grotesque. Half-decomposed.

UPSTAIRS LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Clara runs down the hall, flipping on lights. They immediately shut off.

Something yanks her backward into darkness. She claws her way back into a shaft of light, gasping.

She makes it to the stairs, hits the switch. It snaps off again. She's pulled back into the dark, then violently thrown down the stairs.

Clara stumbles to her feet, flicks on another light. It dies instantly.

She rounds the corner to the front lobby. Daniel stands before the door. Upright, neck bent at an inhuman angle.

Clara backs away slowly, heads back up the stairs.

UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She slams the door closed, climbs in the whirlpool. The pillows and blankets still there from her makeshift bed.

Footsteps creak on the stairs. Daniel approaches, stops outside the door. Clara crouches further down.

A subtle CRACK from inside the bathroom. Jonah's corpse rises from the shadows. Clara recoils, trapped.

The door creaks open as Daniel steps in, joins Jonah. They circle her, predatory.

CLARA

Not this. Not this. Please.

Daniel looms over her, reaches into the whirlpool.

CLARA

No! No! Stop!

Jonah leans in. They gurgle and beg. Their voices overlap.

DANIEL

Sit still, bud.

JONAH

Let me in, Mom.

Clara's fingers jerk to her chest like they're being pulled.

She tries to stop herself, but her nails dig into her chest.

Before she can break skin, a seam appears. Blood spills over her fingers as they sink into the split of flesh.

Daniel and Jonah mimic the motion, blood leaking from their eyes as they beg. Their voices distort.

A faint glow emits from the spreading seam.

Jonah and Daniel climb over the whirlpool's side, bones popping as they shift closer to her tearing chest.

Clara wails, thrashes as they force themselves into the seam.

The bathroom vibrates, distorting over Clara's screams of terror.

INT. DEREK'S SHED - SAME TIME

The Ripple pulses with light.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dead silence. Clara hangs over the side of the whirlpool, breathing shallow. A light dims from her chest.

EXT. SPRINGROSE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME TIME

The block goes on as if nothing happened. Neighbors walk dogs. A lawnmower sputters in the distance.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NEIGHBORS GET READY

- Nick stands in front of a mirror, adjusting his bow tie.

- Jessa at her vanity. Matt passes behind, a gentle hand on her shoulder. In the mirror, Jessa smiles. Satisfied.

- Austin holds his Wisconsin letter, folds it, sets it aside.

- Brad catches his reflection in the TV, runs a hand over his bald spot. Pam smooths wrapping paper. Josh tosses a football, nearly hits a lamp.

- Rhonda burns her finger on a curling iron, hisses. Steve picks between bourbons, indecisive. Maddie scrolls, detached.

- Rachel lights a cigarette by a bathroom vent, snuffs it out as her husband Zach and daughter TAYLOR knock. She fumbles, grabs an envelope, tiny birds under her thumb, slips out.

INT. CLARA'S HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Clara snaps to. Gasps for air.

She collapses onto the cold tile, saliva strings from her lips. She touches her chest, no seam. Daniel and Jonah gone.

A KNOCK from the front door downstairs. Another. Then the doorknob tests, a subtle rattle.

UPSTAIRS LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

The knocking continues.

Clara limps to the top of the stairs. Behind the frosted glass of the front door, someone shifts.

JESSA
(through door)
Clara! Open up! It's just me.
Swear.

Clara descends, knocks continue.

CLARA
(under breath)
Leave. Please leave.

CLICK. The key turns. Clara's heart drops as Jessa enters.

JESSA
Sorry. It was the only way...

She steps aside. A wall of NEIGHBORS fills the doorway.

CROWD
Surprise!

JESSA
With everything going on, we didn't
celebrate your b-day so I said to
myself, we'll bring it to her!

People pour into the foyer, eyes up on Clara at the top of the steps. Gary waves. Rhonda leans in to Jessa, hushed.

RHONDA

You said she wouldn't care. Look at her. Look at this... place.

JESSA

It's fine. Get set up in the kitchen. Austin! Help Rhonda.

The crowd filters into the kitchen, leaving Clara and Jessa alone.

CLARA

How did you get in here?

JESSA

You gave Matt a key a few years ago to housesit. He found it the other day. Guess we forgot to give it back. Eek. Figured it would come in handy if you didn't answer.

CLARA

You shouldn't have done that.

JESSA

It's. Fine. If I've learned anything lately, sometimes you gotta force things. I'm forcing you to have fun, c'mon. Literally not taking no for an answer.

Jessa walks off, humming. In her own world.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The crowd mingles. Austin and Matt decorate with streamers.

Clara enters, trembles, eyes wild, a hand pressed to her chest. A quick bump under the skin.

IMANI (O.S.)

Clara?

Imani stands a few feet away.

CLARA

(low)
No. No. No.

IMANI

(to Jessa)
I just got your message about this.

JESSA

Sorry. I forgot until the last minute. Clara. Let's go. Come here.

IMANI

Jessa, this is a bad idea. Everyone should go.

CLARA

(low)
They can't.

JESSA

We're doing this. Music. Now. I have a playlist.

Jessa turns the music on through her phone.

The adults chat. Kids lounge on the couch. Austin meets Clara's gaze. Then fear takes him.

Steve and his daughter Maddie sit at the dinner table. For a FLASH, Clara sees Daniel and Jonah's bodies overlay them.

Realization hits Imani the longer Clara surveys her home.

CLARA

You aren't supposed to be here.

IMANI

Why me?

A beat.

CLARA

Because that's what it showed me.

Jessa dims the kitchen lights. Music stops.

Imani backs away through the crowd toward the door. Slips out as people close in on Clara.

FLASHBACK - INT. CLARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Derek leans forward.

DEREK

What it shows you... that's the only way it plays out.

BACK TO PRESENT

The whole crowd sings.

CROWD
Happy birthday to you...

Jessa approaches, cake in hand. Candles flickering.

Clara mutters, drowned out by the singing. Jessa's overdone and operatic.

CROWD
... Happy birthday to you!

CLARA
Stop.

CROWD
Happy birthday, dear Clara!

Jessa gets closer. Clara's muttering rises.

CROWD
Happy birthday to --

CLARA
STOP!

The singing cuts. Jessa halted a few feet away, cake frozen mid-hold out. Clara trembles, pants.

CLARA
Why did you come here? I am not
your neighbor anymore. I am not
your friend. I am NOTHING! You
stand there. In my house and my...
fuck...

Jessa notices cracks of light webbing down Clara's chest.

CLARA
MY FAMILY IS DEAD!

Her scream lingers. Austin catches the cracks of light now.

AUSTIN
Mom...

JESSA
Clara, what's happening?

The light spreads.

CLARA

They're dead, and you want to eat
cake? And sing? I can't keep
shoving it away like all of you!

JESSA

Clara, let's relax.

People back up, grab family members. Jessa moves closer.

CLARA

Get away from me! This town is rot!
I just want them back. I just... I
just want. Oh my god...

She inhales sharply, eyes strained, broken.

CLARA

I JUST WANT MY FUCKING FAMILY BACK!

Clara bursts in a blinding blast of light, shredding the
entire crowd in seconds. Flesh and fractured bone hit tile.
Blood drenches the walls.

SILENCE. Then, a car door slams shut from outside. Footsteps
approach the front walk.

The carnage is unveiled in full. No survivors. Only piles of
gore where they once stood.

Nick stands in the doorway. Frozen in shock. The invitation
in his good hand.

He drops it. It flutters down, face-up, the birds in the
corner disappearing into a creeping trail of blood and flesh.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - SAME TIME

Imani drives. Shellshocked. Grips the wheel tight. Suburbia
passes fast all around her.

INT. DEREK'S SHED - SAME TIME

The Ripple hums, beads, collapses in on itself.

BLACK SCREEN

Static. A police DISPATCH crackles.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Dispatch to all units. 11 Elmridge.
Reports of multiple casualties.
Number unknown. Caller said... they
said they can't tell.

It fizzles out to...

MONTAGE - VARIOUS NEWS REPORTS

ANCHORS report live over scenes outside Clara's home.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
Breaking news out of Charlen,
Indiana, tonight. Emergency crews
are responding to an explosion
inside a residential home...

ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)
... Initial reports say dozens are
feared dead...

ANCHOR 3 (V.O.)
... This marks the second tragedy
at this address in as little as a
few months. The home was the site
of a tragic murder-suicide earlier
this summer...

EXT. CLARA'S HOME - DAY

Police tape flutters. Emergency crews in and out.

SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

A FEMALE NEIGHBOR speaks to a reporter behind the tape.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR
This is a good town, full of really
good people. There was no way to
see this coming. We're devastated
for everyone involved. Things like
this, they don't happen here.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - DAY

Imani leans back in her seat, fixed on the road ahead.

SUPER: Two Months Later...

She lifts her phone, dials. A voicemail picks up. A BEEP.

IMANI

Hey. I wasn't expecting an answer,
but needed to talk. I'm heading
out.

She exhales. The world fades to memory.

FLASHBACK - EXT. IMANI'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Imani packs a moving cab attached to her car.

IMANI (V.O.)

I keep having this recurring dream
where I'm five years old, and
somebody asks me if I want to see
my future. I look at them right in
the face and say, "No way."

Imani shuts the moving cab door.

BACK TO PRESENT

Imani plays with something out of sight on her rearview.

IMANI

I've been thinking about what
happened here...

FLASHBACK - EXT. CLARA'S HOME - DAY

Medical examiners in hazmat suits cart sealed black bags on
stretchers out of Clara's home.

One after another. They slosh back and forth as they move.

IMANI (V.O.)

... I keep asking, how do you come
to terms with something like this?
How do you keep it from consuming
you? From consuming all of you?

One examiner pulls off his mask and vomits beside the porch
as he exits the home.

IMANI

Maybe you don't.

BACK TO PRESENT

Imani shifts.

IMANI

I think a reckoning happened here.

FLASHBACK - INT. CHARLEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - DAY

An empty wall.

IMANI (V.O.)

... And all of the past, and
present, and future converged...

Four museum maintenance WORKERS hang a new painting where the
Widow's Vigil once was.

IMANI (V.O.)

... to reveal every horrible truth.

They pull a sheet off to reveal an oil painting of Clara's
home. It's pristine, radiant, wrong. Angelic representations
of those who died hold hands in a circle around it.

IMANI (V.O.)

Or maybe that's just Charlen.

BACK TO PRESENT

Imani sits up in her seat.

IMANI

You thought you were the only one
who lived with ghosts. We all do...

EXT. CHARLEN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - SAME TIME

Katherine kneels at Brett's memorial.

IMANI (V.O.)

Some people laugh with them.

Katherine raises her head to the sky and laughs.

EXT. BINGO LAKE - SAME TIME

Louis jots something in his flip-top notebook, sets it down.

IMANI (V.O.)
Some dance with them.

A breeze pushes a page of the notebook up to reveal all the tic-tac-toe games in one color of ink.

INT. CHARLEN TOWN HALL - NICK'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Nick's at his desk. Pale, trembles.

IMANI (V.O.)
... And some choose to look away...

Standing before him are the ghostly corpses of everyone who died in the explosion at Clara's.

Jessa, Matt, and Austin are fused at the limbs in a grotesque embrace. Their bodies arranged as if for a family portrait.

IMANI (V.O.)
... Until you can't.

Clara stands at the center. Empty eye sockets locked on Nick.

INT. IMANI'S CAR - SAME TIME

Imani starts her car. The engine hums.

IMANI
I'm gonna go. Got a mission. I'll miss you, and hey, this isn't forever. I'm... I'm just not here.

She hangs up, reaches for a lanyard on her rearview. Spins it. As it untangles, it stops. A museum staff badge.

"Contemporary Museum of Art, Chicago."

Imani catches her reflection. A faint, mournful smile. She hesitates, puts the car in drive. Foot off the brake.

EXT. SPRINGROSE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME TIME

Imani's car pulls away, revealing that she was parked in front of Clara's boarded-up home. Fall leaves litter the yard.

At the end of the driveway, a possum lies still and unmoving. Then, ever so slightly, its foot twitches.

FADE OUT.