

BIRD BOX

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by
Josh Malerman

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Chris Morgan / Scott Stuber / Universal Pictures

OVER BLACK:

Two brisk hand CLAPS.
The sound of a woman's voice.

MALORIE (V.O.)
Listen to me carefully. Because I'm
only going to say this once.

HARD OPEN ON

The face of MALORIE.
Late 20s, early 30s. No makeup. No hair products.
Stress waging war with exhaustion.
Around her, a dimly-lit living room.
Blankets cover the windows.
She speaks right to us:

MALORIE
We are going on a trip now. Taking
the rowboat down the river. It
could be a long trip. It could be
quick. But the important thing is
that you both do every single thing
I say. Understand?

REVERSE ON

A BOY and a GIRL. Both four years old.
Underfed. Big, attentive eyes.
Wearing scarves around their necks. They nod.

BOY
Yes.

GIRL
Yes.

MALORIE
It's cold now, but it will warm up
when the sun is high. You have your
blankets. Girl: You have your
puzzle pieces. There is nothing
more you need from here. Do you
understand me?

BOY
Yes.

GIRL
Yes.

In the girl's hand: three jigsaw pieces.
Her fingers toy with them absently.

MALORIE

Under no circumstances will either one of you remove your blindfolds. If I find that you have, I will hurt you. Do you understand?

They nod. Boy mutters:

BOY

Yes.

MALORIE

I need you both to listen as close as you can. On the river. Listen beyond the water, into the woods. If you hear anything in those woods, tell me. If you hear something in the water, you tell me. Understand?

GIRL

Yes.

BOY

Yes.

MALORIE

Don't talk just to pass the time. Girl, you will sit up front and Boy, you'll be in the back. When we get to the boat I will guide you to your place. I will be rowing.

GIRL

Do we need our bicycle bells?

Malorie's eyes get wet. She holds it in.

MALORIE

No. Not for this trip. Now, put your folds on.

Boy and Girl work the blindfolds over their eyes.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

Are they good and tight?

Boy gives her a thumbs-up.
So does Girl.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie leads Boy and Girl.

She reaches the back door.
Boards cover the door's glass inset.

Boy and Girl hold hands.
Girl's knuckles go white.
Boy squeezes back.

On the floor by the door: A bird cage.
Inside: A little, fat budgie.

Malorie bends down, cups her hands...
And transfers the bird to a shoebox.

It coos at her as she covers the box and hefts it.

Malorie then picks up her blindfold.
Before donning it, she looks around.

Inside, all is quiet and still.
A land-line phone sits on the coffee table.
Nothing else around it. As if it were a holy relic.

Malorie secures her blindfold.
Reaches out and grips the door handle.
Takes a breath.

MALORIE

(sotto)

Twenty, thirty-one, fifty-four.

Twenty, thirty-one, fifty-four.

(then)

Here we go.

With trembling hand, she opens the door.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

TIGHT on Malorie's face.
Advancing into the back yard.
Whispering under her breath.

TIGHT on Boy and Girl.
They form a train behind her.
Girl crooks her head left and right.

In the distance, a generator thrums.
Glimpses of: yellowed grass. Overcast sky. It's cold.

Malorie steps carefully.

MALORIE

(sotto)

Eighteen, nineteen... twenty.

Her hand reaches out to her right...
And finds a fence post.

She pivots and marches another direction.
Farther away from the house.
Slightly downhill.

Boy and Girl take note of this shift.

GIRL
(whispered)
Left.

BOY
(whispered)
Okay.

The three march on.

MALORIE
(sotto)
Twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one.

Malorie raises her hand...

And touches a tree branch.

She lets out a breath of relief.
And she changes direction once more.

Boy and Girl adapt.

The sound of the river creeps in.
Malorie quietly counts her steps.

Then: A sound. Rustling.
The sigh of foliage.

Boy's ear perks.
He pauses.
It stops the train.

Boy and Girl turn their heads the same direction.
Beat. Listening.

Then, another rustle.
Back the way they came.

The budgie inside the shoebox CHIRPS.
Its wings scrape against the box lid.

GIRL
(sotto)
Malorie.

Malorie tenses and starts them moving.
Faster now.

MALORIE

(sotto)

Forty-nine, fifty, fifty-one, fifty-
two, fifty three... fifty-four.

The sound of the river is close.

Malorie reaches out and down...

But her fingers grasp air.
No landmark here.

Malorie sweeps her arm around.
Still nothing.

Somewhere off to the right:
Leaves rustle. Closer. The budgie CHIRPS in distress.

Girl tugs at Malorie's arm.

Malorie starts to hyperventilate.
She steps forward. Groping.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Fifty-five.

Rustle.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Fifty-six--

BOY

Getting closer--

Her fingers stretch--
And touch the end of a ROWBOAT.

Malorie puts a foot in the boat and lifts Girl inside.
Then Boy. And follows them in.

The three push off, into the river's flow.

As Malorie begins to row. A branch CRACKS nearby.
The oar dips into the water.

CUT TO:

Malorie's hand dips into soapy bath water. We're now in:

INT. MALORIE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Malorie drains her tub after a bath. She's wrapped a towel around her head, partly dressed in bra and panties, so it's clear she is six months pregnant.

This is five years earlier. She looks radiant, bright-eyed, and when she unwraps the towel, LONG HAIR flows out.

Malorie runs a hand over her baby bump. Questioning.

All by herself, naked both physically and emotionally, she stares at her belly as if it were concerning news.

INT. MALORIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A painting of a river hangs over a cheap fireplace. Nearby, a TV plays a fashion reality program.

Malorie sits on the floor with her back against a faded sofa. She's dressed comfortably now, but made up.

FASHION HOST ON TV (O.S.)
And now it's time to transform her
from 'hot mess' to 'princess.'

Before Malorie: a baby shower gift in pretty wrapping paper. Around it lay the paper remains of previously opened gifts.

She tears into the wrapping.

This baby shower gift is a wipe warmer. And a card.
WRITTEN INSIDE: "Better find a husband soon! xo Alison"

Malorie makes a noise with her teeth.

MALORIE
(sotto)
Alison, you bitch.

She clucks her tongue and logs the gift on a notepad.

Malorie sits up as someone enters her front door.

JESSICA, Malorie's sister. A skinnier, fiercer version of Malorie. Carrying groceries like they're 500 pounds.

JESSICA
Holy fuck, the store was packed.
This thing is serious.

MALORIE
What?

JESSICA
Turn to the news.

MALORIE
What channel?

Jessica carries the bags to the kitchen. Over her shoulder:

JESSICA
Any of them.

SWITCHING CHANNELS, the TV lands on footage of two ambulances at a park at night, loading bodies on stretchers.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
And in Tula, a city south of Moscow, last reports estimated a death toll of twenty-one thousand. It's yet to be determined if this is from an airborne pathogen, but some liken the symptoms to a sudden onset of psychotic behavior.

Malorie gets up and follows Jessica.

INT. KITCHEN

Jessica unloads the bags. Malorie loiters nearby.

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL ON TV (O.S.)
--not that we know of, but somehow it's spreading at an alarming rate, which is why we are being careful--

MALORIE
It's in Russia.

JESSICA
Try telling that to the soccer moms fighting over the bottled water. I don't want you going out there until people remember to calm the fuck down. Okay? Is Dad texting you survivalist bullshit?

Jessica uncaps a beer bottle with her shirt, takes a swig.

MALORIE
I was in the bath. I have that OB appointment, remember?

JESSICA
Shit! Right. I can drive you.

MALORIE
 Maybe we should postpone.

Jessica faces Malorie, who won't make eye contact.

JESSICA
 Hey. We talked about this. It'll be fine. You're having this baby.

MALORIE
 Yeah.
 (then)
 Of course.

JESSICA
 I was an accident, too. Ask mom.

Jessica goes back to stowing the groceries.

MALORIE
 But Dad never bailed on Mom.

JESSICA
 Doesn't matter. Moms are moms.

Malorie nods. Trying to buy into it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 How goes the Great Unwrapping?

MALORIE
 It goes. I don't know what half this stuff does. Alison got me something.

JESSICA
 Seriously? What?

MALORIE
 (grin forming)
 A wipe warmer.

JESSICA
 (laughs)
 Perfect. You'll think of her every time you wipe the kid's ass. C'mon, let's get you to the doctor.

Jessica grabs her car keys and her purse from the counter.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
 --but the CDC has not found any evidence of a contagion.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jessica passes Malorie, on march for the front door, but Malorie lingers a moment, captivated by something on TV.

ON SCREEN: low-quality dashboard camera footage of civilians fleeing past the car in a downtown district. One of the people running by wears a HOSPITAL GOWN.

INT. HOSPITAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

Malorie sits on an exam table, wearing a HOSPITAL GOWN.

DR. SUE LAPHAM (40s, cheery) is dressed in a white coat over her street clothes, and she gestures with her clipboard.

DR. LAPHAM

Thanks for meeting here, by the way. Another patient of mine is about to pop. How have you been feeling? Sleeping any better?

MALORIE

Sleep is still rough. No one told me how hard it would be to get comfortable in this shape.

DR. LAPHAM

You know my method? Couch cushions on the bed. Here and here, so your belly fits between them.

MALORIE

I'll try that.

DR. LAPHAM

You're due in twelve weeks, so let's try some natural remedies for the insomnia before I prescribe anything.

(casually)

You have a name picked?

MALORIE

Not yet. Something about it... It hasn't really clicked with me. You know? The idea. Motherhood.

DR. LAPHAM

That's normal. It will pass.

Malorie smiles sadly and nods. While holding that smile:

MALORIE
What if it doesn't?

Dr. Lapham reads from her clipboard.

DR. LAPHAM
Everything will change after the baby's born. Now, let's talk about the next trimester. Expect more weight gain, but if it gets more than forty pounds over where you were before, call me.

CREEPING IN on Malorie as she listens to the doctor, and it all plays out on her face: A silent war against encroaching anxiety. She looks away. Takes a breath as Lapham continues:

DR. LAPHAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Heartburn will be more common. You might also deal with hemorrhoids, discharge, bleeding, and varicose veins, that's all natural. Be aware of Braxton Hicks contractions at odd hours, like tremors before a real quake...

The doctor's voice grows more and more distant as Malorie struggles to keep it all together. And then--

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie vomits into the toilet bowl.

She cleans herself up at the sink and stares at herself in the mirror. Her own bloodshot eyes stare back.

Malorie washes her face. Then goes to the towels to dry her face and hands.

Nearby: A basket of reading material. Magazines. Pamphlets. Flyers about parenthood, childbirth.

Malorie notices one. Picks it up.

The headline: "YOU HAVE A CHOICE. // Give your child to a good home!"

An informational flyer on adoption.

Malorie considers something.

Then puts the flyer in her purse.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A cacophony of noise.

Malorie navigates a hallway, leaving Lapham's office. A pair of PARAMEDICS rush by the other way, wheeling a MAN with a leg injury on a gurney.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY

The commotion is louder here. Other PATIENTS waiting for urgent care watch in horror at the scene playing out in the corner of the room--

A WOMAN in a pricey jogging suit and glossy fingernails shrills at two NURSES trying to close in on her--

As she SCREAMS non-words she digs her fingernails into her right cheek and begins to tear into her flesh--

With her other hand she starts with the thin skin around her eyelid and pulls--

And the NURSES go for her and blood gets everywhere and Malorie hurries out the door amid the AD LIB SHOUTS--

EXT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie gets to Jessica's car in visitor parking. Shaking. Jessica waits in the driver's seat, texting on her phone.

INT. JESSICA'S CAR

Jessica doesn't look up from her phone as Malorie gets in.

JESSICA
How'd it go? Still having a baby?

MALORIE
It's happening now.

This gets her attention.

JESSICA
The baby?

MALORIE
No, the-- whatever it is in Russia.
The thing that makes you go crazy?
I think it's here.

JESSICA
Doctor Lapham is crazy?

MALORIE
Can we get going please?

JESSICA
Okay, number one, you gotta calm
down for me. And B--

Outside, an ambulance drives up, lights and sirens going, and screeches to a halt at the door. The back of the ambulance rocks violently from some struggle playing out inside.

Jessica notices, tosses her phone in her purse, throws it in back, and starts the car.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Jessica's car tears out just as two squad cars pull in.

INT. JESSICA'S CAR - DAY

Malorie holds her phone to her ear.

JESSICA
Who are you calling?

MALORIE
Mom and Dad.

JESSICA
They'll be fine. Takes an act of
congress to get them out of their
house more than once a week.

Malorie listens with the phone to her ear.

MALORIE
Voicemail.
(to Jess)
It went to voicemail.

Jessica lets out a stiff breath, then changes lanes.

JESSICA
We'll swing by. But I'm calling it
now: They're both fine.

At the next red light, they pull up alongside another car.
A YOUNG MAN drives with his pretty GIRLFRIEND.

He nods at Malorie. Malorie nods back. They're strangers, but just checking in with each other. It's okay.

Then: A loud but distant CRACK. And a RUMBLE. Malorie looks around -- it's behind her.

Four blocks back and one or two over: A FIRECLOUD. Smoke rising like black cellophane.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Damn. Seriously?

MALORIE
I don't like this. Jess, can we just go? Maybe we just drive.

In the adjacent car, Young Man with his panicked Girlfriend does that: he looks at cross traffic, and runs the red light. Other traffic screeches and veers, HONKING.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
Jess--

JESSICA
I'm not doing anything stupid.
You're pregnant.

The light turns green a moment later.

Jessica mashes the gas.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Upper middle class. Not mansions, but trying.

Jessica's car navigates the streets amid sparse traffic.

The clouds are the color of fresh bruises. Distant thunder.

INT. JESSICA'S CAR

Jessica and Malorie take the ride in silence. Tense. Malorie fidgets nervously.

MALORIE
Where is all the traffic?

JESSICA
Okay you need to cool it because you're starting to freak me out now, okay? And we can't both be freaking out.

MALORIE

Sorry.

A phone RINGS. Malorie looks down at her phone in her lap.

JESSICA

Is it Dad?

MALORIE

It's not my phone--

JESSICA

In back, in my purse--

It RINGS again. Malorie reaches back, into Jessica's purse-- She opens the bag and digs for the phone as it RINGS--

Bent over, head down, Malorie finds the phone just as the call screen switches to MISSED CALL and--

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

OH MY GOD what was that, did you see that what was it?

Malorie brings the phone up front, frowning--

MALORIE

See what?

Jessica's body language and posture changes. Her muscles are rigid. Hands wringing the wheel. And her eyes flit constantly. Her voice cracks--

JESSICA

Back there I mean what I saw--

Malorie presses the RETURN CALL on the phone and puts it to her ear while talking to Jessica--

MALORIE

Okay, calm down, hey--

JESSICA

What I saw it was, it was--

Malorie looks back as she listens to RING on the other end of the line--

MALORIE'S POV:

A slight hill in the road prevents her from seeing anything past the SUV half a block back, but it swerves violently--

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I don't care now I don't care
anymore--

And now the phone is RINGING in Malorie's ear and a seat belt alarm is BEEPING and somewhere a truck's HORN is honking the engine REVS as Jessica picks up speed all the while looking right at Malorie--

JESSICA (CONT'D)
We're all going to die.

MALORIE
Jess, what--

Malorie sees it a fraction before it happens:

Jessica has steered into oncoming traffic.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET

A pickup truck SMASHES into the left front bumper--

BOTH VEHICLES crumple at the hood in an eruption of plastic, metal, glass, and shredded rubber--

Airbags deploy like white mushroom clouds--

Jessica's car spins away, momentum carrying it back to the curb as the pickup limps into a parked car--

And then after the screech and crunch and terror:

Stillness. The car's engine has died.

INT. JESSICA'S CAR

Malorie's airbag deflates, revealing a breathless Malorie dusted in white safety powder, trying to get her bearings.

She instinctively puts her hands to her belly.

Her seatbelt and the airbag saved them.

A hiss of air deflating nearby draws her attention to:

Jessica. Pushing her airbag out of the way. Only one arm is working for her. The other one is bleeding profusely. A cut over her forehead has bathed her face in blood.

MALORIE
Oh my god... Jess...

Jessica looks at her with the eyes of a feral creature.

She turns the ignition to start the car again. Her mouth moves as if she's speaking, but it's soft as a prayer.

Malorie is in pure shock, and terrified by her sister.

She unbuckles the seatbelt and opens her car door to escape--

And Jessica grapples Malorie's wrist, croaking a warning:

JESSICA

You stay in.

Malorie struggles to break free--

MALORIE

Let go, Jess, let go--

And wrenches away from her and out of the car.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET

Malorie stumbles away to the sidewalk and looks back at Jessica in shock.

MALORIE

What is wrong with you?!

JESSICA

GET BACK IN GET BACK IN GET--

And the SUV from down the block COLLIDES with the back of the car, WIPING Jessica and the vehicle out of frame like a runaway locomotive.

Malorie flinches in surprise.

But it doesn't stop. Another CAR accelerates from down the street, veering toward Malorie like a missile.

Malorie turns and starts to run.

Her inner ear still rings from the crash. She can't move fast at six months pregnant.

For six utterly agonizing seconds, she moves for a tree while the car barrels down behind her, popping the curb at fifty miles per hour, the driver LAUGHING at the wheel--

Malorie ducks behind the tree trunk JUST AS the car collides with it behind her--

The front end WRAPPING around the trunk on either side of her in a shuddering impact--

And the tree rains down a few hundred leaves on her in a terrible aftershock to the one-note cry of the stuck HORN.

Malorie takes her hands down from her head, still holding her breath.

The horn blares, mingling with the ringing in her ear.

Shell-shocked, she gets up and starts walking.

Anywhere. Away from the wreckage both behind her and on the street, where her sister's body is surely mangled inside.

Her hands shake involuntarily. She can't quite breathe.

FOLLOWING with Malorie, that war with terror and anxiety playing out on her face again.

A hand reaches for her, out of frame, touching her shoulder.

Malorie SCREAMS--

It's a tall, sturdy-looking MAN who shows her his hands in a gesture of peace. His name is TOM (late 30s, blue-collar countenance, gentle eyes).

TOM
Hey, hey. It's okay.
(beat)
But we need to get inside.

MALORIE
My sister--

TOM
Right now.

He holds out his hand. Malorie takes it. And they start to run.

AHEAD: Another pack of people caught outside at the moment also start to run, searching for a destination.

A surly MAN with a pedometer is among them. This Man is DONALD (mid-40s, former hipster). Donald is the perpetual critic who needs to be the smartest man in the room.

DONALD
Don't look back! Just keep facing
this way! Listen to me!

An Hispanic woman (LUCY, 20s, athletic clothes) crosses the street ahead of Donald on a similar mission to find shelter. Then we see where she's going--

Three houses ahead, a well-dressed, middle-aged WOMAN (LYDIA) gestures at them from her driveway.

LYDIA

Hurry! It's not safe out here!

Lucy is the first to her front door, where she meets Lydia's husband GREG (50s, worry lines on his face) in the threshold.

She steps in just as Donald gets there and tells Greg:

DONALD

Pull the curtains. Now.

Greg and Donald go inside--

Malorie moves as fast as she can at six months pregnant. Her focus is on Lydia.

Lydia keeps stepping farther down the driveway as she ushers people into her house, looking past Malorie, trying to shout over the din of the stuck horn.

Then, Lydia's body language changes.

Her posture gets rigid. She trembles as if struck by sudden illness. Her eyes widen.

And her voice stops making words, and instead begins uttering a sound out of tune from the blaring horn.

Lydia takes two steps and then runs directly into the street--

Just as a speeding CAR drives past and RAMS into Lydia, yanking her over the hood and roof--

The crowd witnesses it in silent shock.

Greg appears at the door again. Sees his wife's body. And goes as if to run to her.

Donald grabs him and pulls him back, and soon more NEIGHBORS rush in for him to obscure his view of her--

But Malorie. She can feel that question in her brain. That primal curiosity.

She starts to turn her head and look back.

She nearly does when TOM puts a hand over that side of her face and firmly grips her arm--

TOM
No you're not. Come on.

He guides her for the house. From inside, Greg's voice can be heard, arguing. Tom and Malorie cross the threshold, into--

INT. FOYER

The house. The same one as in the opener. Tom closes the door behind him. They're the last ones in.

Head count: eight or nine. Most of them catching their breath, pacing, two of them silently crying from the trauma of witnessing two deaths up close. Malorie watches as:

Donald pulls at the heavy curtains in the living room nearby.

LUCY DONALD
What the fuck was that-- They're all going crazy!

Greg can't stop pacing. To no one in particular--

GREG
And did you see it? He came out of
nowhere and just ran her over? I
mean what is wrong with the drivers
out there I mean really?
(then)
I have to get his plates.

Greg moves for the door and immediately Lucy, Tom, and two other MEN hold him back.

TOM
It's not safe right now.
Let's just-- give it a while.

Malorie backs away from the door.

Outside, the horn still blares. Accompanied by a scream, suddenly cut off. And then a distant GUNSHOT.

Malorie stares at the door the whole time. Crying in shock, some part of her aware her sister is dead. Trembling.

MALORIE
Something was behind us.

LUCY
Did you see it?

DONALD (O.S.)
Of course not.

Donald steps in from the living room.

DONALD (CONT'D)
If she had, she would've lost her
mind, like the others.

MALORIE
My sister saw it.

Another one of the group chimes in: FELIX (mid-20s, skinny,
leather jacket, a motorcycle helmet in one fist).

FELIX
You're talking about the virus in
Europe?

Tom's attention dances from Malorie back to Donald.

DONALD
That's a bullshit story. It's
living things from who-knows-where--

CHERYL (50s, busybody with "traditional values") interjects:

CHERYL
Like aliens?

Lucy chimes in aggressively. She's the type of woman you'd
guess has five older brothers.

LUCY
Oh come on, aliens?--

DONALD
They discounted that, no airspace
has been invaded--

Another man wearing a fishing vest speaks up loudly, stepping
on Donald's information. This is JASON.

JASON
Give me a break now, really. A few
people get into a car accident and
now we're making up monsters comin'
outta the woods. I don't claim to
know what's going on in some other
countries but I know not to fall
for any of that conspiracy crap--
(pointing at Don)
--and the rest o'you'll come around
once the adrenaline stops flowing.

DONALD
 (re: "that crap")
 Yeah thanks for that.

JASON
 (salutes)
 Now I'm leaving.

But Jason pauses, aware of the chaos and screams out front. He decides better of it and steps back.

JASON (CONT'D)
 I'll take the back door, just to
 avoid that mess.

The others watch Jason march off for the rear of the house. Somewhere beyond, a door slams shut a moment later.

DONALD
 Look, you can join Bold And Stupid
 out the back but I'm telling you
 this is very serious, so listen up.
 People online were saying how just
 witnessing one of those things out
 there is enough to snap your brain--

CHERYL
What things?

More VOICES overlap again, everyone arguing different points until Tom raises both hands up high and CLAPS.

TOM
 Hey! Calm down. We can talk about
 this like adults, and we're out of
 immediate danger. All right? We can
 figure this out.

He says it with conviction, and in a moment gets the command of the room. Malorie sees it happen, just like that-- they don't listen to Donald like they do with Tom. She sees Donald reacting to it, too. Quietly affronted by the turn of tide.

MALORIE
 My parents are about a mile from
 here, on Arbor. I need to get to
 them. I need to go.

Greg is in denial, his voice cracking as he talks:

GREG
 I have to check on Lydia--

The group gets hyper again and then Tom holds up a finger, placing himself protectively at the door.

TOM

Hold on. Let's stay put until the chaos dies down. What's your name?

GREG

Greg.

TOM

This is your house?

GREG

Me and Lydia.

TOM

How many windows do you have on the back side of the house?

GREG

Windows? Uh. Quite a few.

DONALD

(re-asserting)

Curtains?

GREG

Blinds-- why, what does this--

DONALD

Shit...

TOM

You two: What are your names?

FELIX

Felix.

LUCY

Lucy.

TOM

Let's go close some blinds. Try not to look outside if you can help it. And you--

DONALD

Don, yeah. I already did the front side, so I'm just gonna stay here if you don't mind.

Tom leads Felix and Lucy away, toward the kitchen.

The rest of the group remains standing or sitting on the bottom steps of the front stairs.

Donald looks up to the landing.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Greg? How many floors is this?

GREG
Three.

DONALD
A lot of windows.

CHERYL
Can you send your housekeeper up to close them all up?

GREG
Housekeeper?

CHERYL
That girl Lucy, isn't she--?

GREG
I don't know her.

CHERYL
Oh. Well. I live two doors down,
and we have heavy foliage blocking
our house. For privacy?

DONALD
Good for you.

CHERYL
My husband and my son will be back
from Lansing pretty soon. So if you
want to relocate, I'm just saying.

Outside, among the chaos: a distant sound. Inhuman.
Otherworldly. No creature in wildlife sounds like it. The
noise reverberates through the house.

DONALD
It isn't safe to go outside. At all.

MALORIE
How long do you think we'll have to
stay inside?

DONALD
I don't know. A couple of hours?

Malorie's attention returns to the door. Her posture rigid
and tense. And her hand on her belly.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Five years later.

Ivy has snaked over an orphaned tricycle.
Rust cakes a car's sideview mirror.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Malorie steadies herself on the row boat.

Girl turns her head toward Malorie.

GIRL
You stopped rowing.

MALORIE
Just taking a break. Keep
listening. No talking.

Beat. But because she's four years old:

GIRL
(sotto)
How much longer?

MALORIE
(sigh)
A few hours.

BOY
(sotto)
What is it like?

MALORIE
(sotto)
I don't know. It's a safe place.
Protected with high walls. They say
there's even a courtyard, so you
can walk around outside.

Girl asks it like it's Santa Claus:

GIRL
Trees?

MALORIE
Trees.
(hardening)
Now if you refuse to keep quiet,
tell me the steps again. Tell me
the steps.

GIRL
Eighty-six, forty-four, thirty.

MALORIE
Boy. Landmarks.

BOY
Statue. Bridge. Car. Stone.

MALORIE
Good. Now quiet. Listen.

GIRL
(beat, sotto)
What's a car?

Malorie realizes: They don't know.
The children have never seen one.
Before she can explain--

BOY
I hear something.

Girl straightens up.
Her ear perks along her scalp.

Malorie reaches out to the shoebox.

Inside: The flutter of tiny wings.
But otherwise silent.

MALORIE
(sotto)
Is it...

BOY
I don't know.

GIRL
I hear it, too.

And now Malorie does. A faint but rhythmic CLAPPING.

MALORIE
Can you tell where it's from?

Neither child answers for a moment. Then:

BOY
It's getting closer.

Malorie dips the oar back into the water--

It yanks in her hand, nearly slipping.
The current is fast.

And now we see what's making the noise.

A sunken BOAT, its deck still partly surfaced. Part of a human skeleton dangles from a cabin door. This vessel is too big to navigate these shallow waters, and now it's debris.

Malorie's boat is on a collision course.
And none of them sees it coming.

Their blindness makes them eerily unguarded as--

The rowboat SMASHES into the shipwreck--

Lurching everyone and everything inside--

Malorie ballasts herself with the oar but--

A backpack tips overboard and then--

BOY falls off the back--

BOY (CONT'D)

Malorie!

She felt it coming and snake-swift GRABS his leg through some maternal instinct--

But hanging onto him starts to tip the boat over--

MALORIE

Boy!

And Boy flails and splashes--

And Malorie lies flat and drops her oar but refuses to let go of the Boy's jacket--

The boat hits a shallow point, slowing abruptly--

Boy manages to get his hands on the boat again, coughing up water, his breath pluming in the cold air--

Girl is quietly having a nervous breakdown, her hands on the blindfold, ready to pull it off--

Malorie gets both hands around Boy--
Hefts him back into the boat, soaking wet, crying, bleeding--

BOY

Malorie Malorie Malorie--

MALORIE
Shh shh, I got you.

BOY
I'm cold.

MALORIE
Girl: a dry blanket.

Girl still considers taking off her blindfold.
Breathing quickly.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
Blanket.

Girl reaches around in the boat.

GIRL
I can't find the pack. Just the
food bag.

Malorie searches, too. Realizes it's gone.

MALORIE
Okay.

She pulls a thin, folded blanket from under her, what she'd been using as a cushion, and drapes it over herself and Boy, creating a little cocoon in the boat. The blanket is soaked from the collision. It's useless to dry the Boy.

With the blanket fully covering both the boy and her in a makeshift fort, Malorie pulls off her blindfold.

Boy is shivering uncontrollably. Hypothermia.

His forehead is bruised.

BOY
What do I do?

Boy tugs at his blindfold.
Peers up at Malorie with one teary eye.

MALORIE
You need to dry off and warm up.

BOY
B-blankets?

MALORIE
We lost the rest, and this is too wet. So I'm going to get some more and bring them back. Okay?

Boy nods.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
Cover up. Fort goes away.

He adjusts his blindfold.
Malorie dons her blindfold, too.

She lifts the blanket off and slaps it to the boat's floor.

GIRL
Are we going back? What are we
doing, are we going home?

MALORIE
(quietly)
Shh. Listen. I have to get some
blankets. Should be in a house
nearby. I won't be long.

GIRL
You're leaving us?

MALORIE
Sit back-to-back. Listen closely.
The bird stays with you.

Malorie shoves the row boat with her one remaining oar until
it wedges against the shore.

She then takes the soaked blanket.
And very gingerly steps out of the boat.

Boy's teeth rattle and he makes a noise when he exhales.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
Shh.

Boy screws up his face, mustering courage.

Two steps into the woods, Malorie stops.
Reaches out. Finds a branch.

On her belt: a reel of fishing wire.
Weighted at the end with a sinker.

Malorie loops the end around the base of the branch.
Tugs at it. It's solid.

She ventures into the trees.

The fishing wire unspools as she goes.
Pointing her back to the boat.

The reel makes a sound; soft clicking.
Girl and Boy listen to it recede.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malorie moves with one arm out in front of her face and another panning left and right.

She walks quickly, even blind.

She finds a tree, then navigates around it.

The reel clicks softly at her belt.

A rustling sound.

Malorie freezes. Holds her breath.

Then the sound of flapping wings, overhead. Birds.

Malorie breathes again. Visibly relieved.

She marches on.

Distantly: tiny bell-song from a wind chime.
That suggests a back porch. A house.

Another half dozen steps puts her into a clearing.

Her foot nudges something.
She crouches down. Feels.
Stands up clutching a metal rod.
Her hands work their way up the metal-- it's long.
She finds the end: A net.
This is a pool cleaner.

Malorie holds one end and reaches out to thump the ground ahead of her, in an arc.

Soft thump... Soft thump... Concrete.

Malorie advances in that direction.

Ahead of her: A dilapidated two-story HOUSE.
With a backyard pool, now scummy with algae.

The cleaner dips into the green water. Splashes.
Malorie course corrects to walk around it.

EXT. ROWBOAT - DAY

Boy is trembling so much, it agitates the budgie in the shoebox. Its wings flutter under the lid.

GIRL

Hush.

BOY

Please. Talk to me.

GIRL

About what?

BOY

Tell me something she would say.

GIRL

Don't click your teeth.

BOY

What if she doesn't come back?

GIRL

She always comes back.

But Girl's voice cracks when she speaks.

BOY

(quietly)

What if she doesn't?

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Sunlight pours in from bay windows, illuminating dust in the stale air inside.

The back door vibrates with a loud thump. Again. And then it's forcibly kicked in by Malorie.

She steps inside. Tense. All is quiet. It's a five-bedroom mausoleum.

Malorie finds a chair. And a table. It's a breakfast table.

Nearby: A counter. The kitchen.

She takes a step deeper into the house-- And the fishing wire goes taut. End of the line.

Malorie curses to herself.

MOMENTS LATER

Malorie ties the reel to a table leg.

She unfurls the wet blanket, drapes it over herself.
Under the sopping covers, she removes her blindfold.

HER POV:

A very narrow world. Blanket, her feet, and some of the tile floor around her.

Just enough to navigate by.

WIDER ANGLE

With the sunlight on her back, Malorie delves into the house.

EXT. ROWBOAT - DAY

Boy's sounds of agony are getting louder.

Girl rocks back and forth, hugging herself.

From the woods: Branches break.
Boy instantly goes quiet.
Girl grabs the oar.

Both sit up like rabbits, listening for a predator.

More branches crack.
The sound bounces around the forest.
No way to tell if it's near or far.

BOY
(sotto)
Is it her?

It isn't.

From the shoebox: two nervous CHIRPS.

The bird cannot see out the holes cut in the box, but it's clear the budgie senses something.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - DAY

Free of the blanket and blindfold, Malorie grabs a set of bath towels off a rack. Shoves them into a duffel bag.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie opens dresser drawers, looking for clothing.
Checks the tags on t-shirts. Takes one.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie rifles through clothes on racks.
Finds a heavy coat. Too big. But better than nothing.

Ready to go, she dons a clean, dry beach towel.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Returning to the kitchen. A noise stops her cold:

The sound of the table being dragged across the floor.

The fishing wire has caught on something.
Something big enough to move the table.

HER POV:

Straight ahead, staring at the fabric of the towel, all that filters through is a vague rectangle of sunlight.

And then a shadow passes in front of it.
Large. Devouring the gauzy sunlight.

Malorie goes rigid with fear.
Slowly, she reaches up and puts on her blindfold.

WIDER ANGLE

The beach towel slides off her back.

She's gripping the scissors in one hand.

Moves. Very. Cautiously. For the door.

The table is jammed against it.

Her hand finds the reel tied to the leg.

The fishing wire is still taut. Straining.
Poised to snap at any moment.

Something splashes heavily, outside.

EXT. BACK LAWN

Malorie stays low, following the line.
Listening intently.

Something is near. In the pool.
What isn't heard: breathing noises. It's unsettling.

Malorie's hand follows the fishing line.

Her foot steps on the pool net she dropped before.

Off to her right, more water sounds.
Something emerging from the pool.

Malorie does something very risky:
She runs while blindfolded.

INT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Thin tree branches lash her as she runs through.

Then, she trips on something and falls hard. Scrapes her arm.

When she gets up, she reaches out, searching, finding:
A CORPSE of a woman. Mostly decayed. But higher up--

The fishing line. She's back on track.

EXT. ROWBOAT - DAY

Boy and Girl huddle together, shivering.

Malorie emerges from the trees--

Girl grabs the oar again, threatening:

GIRL
Stay away!

MALORIE
It's me, Girl. It's me.

Malorie finds the boat and climbs on board.

Boy and Girl cling to her. Hugging tightly.

Malorie embraces them both.
Beat. Then, sniffing:

GIRL
Will we make it now?

Boy tilts his head up at her.

BOY
Will we ever make it?

MALORIE
Of course we will.

She says it sternly. But her head is turned away. Like she's asked that question for years, every day.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Five years ago. An 'X' is drawn in a square.

Long-haired Malorie crosses through a July date on a wall calendar, matching a week of Xs prior.

She's at the counter separating the kitchen from the living and dining area of the house. She flips the calendar to September to note the 28th circled and labeled: "DUE DATE."

Behind her, the living room is busy with the captive members.

INT. KITCHEN

Greg stares at an empty cabinet.

Other cabinet doors hang open, revealing stacks of plateware here and there, and lots of empty space. A rare can of food.

Felix crunches on cereal right out of the box at the island. Standing and eating like a bachelor.

GREG

Is that Choco-Burst?

FELIX

Yeah man. If anything has my name on it, it's this. Why do you even have this stuff?

Gesturing at the box with the cartoon character on its cover.

GREG

It's my nephew's favorite.

FELIX

(mouth full)
He has good taste.

GREG

(judgmental)
He's ten.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tom nods at Greg as he approaches. Waiting for the answer.

GREG

We're out of perishables. And all that's left to drink is well water. You might have to make another trip to Cheryl's house and grab anything else there to eat.

TOM

We did that already. And the two houses on either side.

GREG

We need a real solution here...

As they continue, we drift to find Lucy playing solitaire at the coffee table. Her leg bounces.

Cheryl rearranges the throw pillows on the couch, making idle chatter with Lucy whether Lucy wants to or not.

CHERYL

And if I hadn't been out to check the mail, who knows where I'd be. What were you doing around here?

Lucy tries not to take it as a racist question.

LUCY

I live a mile from here. I'm in graduate studies.

CHERYL

Oh? Maybe you know Felix, I hear he's a recent grad.

LUCY

Pshh. No.

CHERYL

What are you studying?

LUCY

Fitness and nutrition. So basically I'm screwed. Nobody's gonna be counting calories anymore.

Cheryl moves a chair and sits at eye level with Lucy.

CHERYL

This is temporary. When we get out of this, I'm going to have you help Bobby with his candy addiction.

(at Donald)

(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)
 Have they said anything about
 Lansing?

Donald holds up a finger at Cheryl: hold on. He sits near a stereo system tuned to a talk radio station.

Felix returns from the kitchen and joins him.

DEEJAY (V.O.)
 ...would then move north from Ann Arbor securing smaller cities as they go, starting with Brighton, July 27. Fenton, July 30. Waterford, August 10. Flint, August 17. Riverbridge, September 3.

FELIX
 There it is.

DONALD
 Maybe.

FELIX
 Malorie, circle September third.

MALORIE
 National Guard?

FELIX
 Yeah.

Malorie-- still at the wall calendar-- circles the date. Then writes the word "RESCUE" on the date.

DONALD
 Allegedly.

Lucy stands up and rolls her shoulders like a boxer before a fight. Nervous energy.

LUCY
 September? Fuck, that's over a month away.

Cheryl gives Lucy a disapproving look. Lucy ignores her.

FELIX
 We'll run out of toilet paper sooner than that.

DONALD
 We've already cleaned out the kitchen. Some of us don't understand rationing, either.

Malorie joins in, having overheard Greg and Tom nearby.

MALORIE
Tom is talking about a supply run.

CHERYL
The radio said to stay inside.

FELIX
Stuff won't magically come to us.

CHERYL
Somebody must deliver out here.
(off everyone's looks)
I mean, right? ...What?

Felix is first to crack a laugh. It gets everyone giggling.

MALORIE
Cheryl. Nobody delivers anymore.

The doorbell rings.

Everyone tenses. Exchanges looks.
Greg and Tom break from their talk and join the group.

GREG
Was that...?

The doorbell rings again. Nobody moves.

LUCY
Well is someone gonna get that?

She goes for the door.

MALORIE
Is that safe?

Lucy stops at the door. Hand on the knob.

LUCY
You think it's one of those things?

FELIX
(oh come on)
Ringing the doorbell? Like they're
selling cookies?

OLYMPIA (O.S.)
(muted)
Nobody's answering.

LUCY
Who's there?

OLYMPIA (O.S.)
Oh thank god. Hi? My name is
Olympia. Can we come in?

LUCY
What are you doing out there?

Greg marches for the door--

GREG
Oh for god's sake, let her in.

But Tom advances, grabbing a blanket from the back of the
sofa on his way--

TOM
Wait, hang on.
(through door)
I'm going to open the door just a
little and hand you a blanket. There
are two porch lamps on either side
of the door, you need to hang this
on 'em to block the view, okay?

OLYMPIA (O.S.)
Okay.

TOM
(to room)
Look away.

They obey, as Tom opens the door a crack and tosses the
blanket outside, then closes it again.

A moment later, after some shuffling outside:

OLYMPIA (O.S.)
Okay? I think it's up now.

Tom opens the door just a crack and peers outside. Through
the narrow view of the front porch:

A woman. Blonde, put together. Carrying a Hello Kitty travel
bag full of clothes. A timid 30 going on Sweet 16. A scarf
hides her face. She pulls it up and blinks at Tom.

OLYMPIA (CONT'D)
Hi.

Tom opens the door for her and she steps in.

OLYMPIA (CONT'D)

Oh wow, there are a lot of you.

She sets her bag down, revealing her round belly under her dress. She's pregnant.

GREG

You're... uh.

Olympia nods, caressing her bump.

OLYMPIA

Due September 20.

FELIX

Wow, you two are a week apart.

Malorie and Olympia make eye contact.
Malorie instantly dislikes her.

MALORIE

Where did you come from?

OLYMPIA

My husband is in the Air Force, he was deployed last month, so I was staying at a friend's down the block the day everybody started freaking out. She went out to get groceries, uh, that was two days ago. So I went outside, and--

Tom starts to shut the door when a HAND pushes back, keeping the door open.

In steps EDGAR: 60s, weathered and scarred, facial hair, a war veteran's thousand-yard stare. Dressed for mountain hiking. Wearing dark shades.

He plants his feet next to Olympia and takes off his shades.

OLYMPIA (CONT'D)

...and I ran into Edgar.

DONALD

What were you doing outside?

FELIX

Is it safe to go out?

EDGAR

Don't be stupid.

Felix looks to the others: What the hell?

EDGAR (CONT'D)

You listen to me, and listen good. There are at least two of those things out there. Maybe more.

DONALD

Are they hostile?

EDGAR

They don't have to be. Looks like you all got a good thing here. Keep it that way. Stay the hell inside.

TOM

How do you expect us to get resupplied?

EDGAR

With your eyes closed. Nearest store is the Super Target, five blocks south, two blocks west. Had plenty of food as of Tuesday. Find the curb, follow it. And keep your goddamn eyes shut. Who's the owner?

GREG

I am.

EDGAR

You got an attic?

GREG

Yes. It's uh, we made it a game room for my nieces--

EDGAR

Whatever. That's where I'll be.

Edgar starts up the stairs. Donald calls out:

DONALD

Hang on, old man. You talk like you dealt with those things out there.

Edgar levels his glare at Donald.

EDGAR

You don't "deal" with 'em, you avoid 'em.

DONALD

What the hell are they?

EDGAR

Devils. Monsters. Spirits. Take
your goddamn pick.

DONALD

Which is it?

EDGAR

Doesn't matter.

DONALD

So you don't know anything, really.

EDGAR

That's how they get you. They wait
around for you to get curious. They
don't gotta lift a finger to kill
us off. Our need to know will do it
for 'em.

With that, Edgar disappears upstairs. The room listens to his
footfalls all the way up to the attic floor, until a door
slams shut.

OLYMPIA

Um. Do you have any food?

Everyone returns to the immediate problem.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A Scrabble boardgame sits on the coffee table and Tom shakes
a velvet bag in his hands. The contents click like plastic
pieces rattling together.

The rest of the group is gathered around Tom.

TOM

We need to get enough supplies to
last to September three. That's all
we gotta do. National Guard rescue
day. I'll volunteer to go but I
figure we need at least four to
make it quick and safe.

FELIX

Tom, you're a nice guy, but I don't
think anyone else is gonna
volunteer to go out there.

TOM

That's what the tiles are for. Draw
a letter 'E' and you're exempt.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

But there are three 'S' tiles. Draw one of those, and you're going shopping with me. All right?

CHERYL

So it's just random?

DONALD

That makes it fair.

CHERYL

(muttering)

I'm never good at these games.

Tom holds out the bag for Cheryl to draw first.

TOM

Go on.

Cheryl reluctantly reaches in... Pulls out a tile. Reads it. Lets out a breath. It's an 'E'.

Tom faces Donald next. Donald reaches in. Pulls out with his hand in a fist.

Opens his palm: another 'E' tile.

DONALD

Exempt.

Tom offers the bag to Lucy.

TOM

You next.

LUCY

Fine.

Lucy reaches in. Pulls out a tile trapped between two fingers. Angles it so she can see:

Another 'E' tile.

Tom shakes the bag and offers it to Olympia next.

OLYMPIA

I have to do this too? I was just out there.

TOM

We're all in this together.

Olympia looks from face to face, searching for sympathy. Finding none, she draws a tile.

In her palm: an 'S' tile.

OLYMPIA
This isn't right.

DONALD
It's the only way to be fair.

Donald speaks like someone already exempt.

LUCY
Since no one's gonna be the
gentleman, I'll do it. Here.

Lucy takes Olympia's tile and gives her the exempt one.

FELIX
Can you do that?

TOM
I don't see why not.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Greg draws an 'E' and lets out a breath.
- 2) Felix draws an 'S' tile.

TOM (V.O.)
Just one more now.

- 3) Edgar throws a tile on the table and stomps off.
- 4) The tile on the table: another 'E'. Exempt.

ANGLE ON MALORIE

The last one to draw.

MALORIE
Well. I guess we know.

Tom upturns the bag and the remaining 'S' clatters.

She looks around the room, hoping for a volunteer trade.

The other exempt members don't dare meet her look.

FELIX
Sorry, Malorie.

GREG
What I want to know is how you plan
on making the trip.

Tom grins, ready for this one.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

ANGLE ON A CAR: A Cadillac. Upper-middle-class luxury. But American. The product of living close to Detroit.

Tom climbs in. Others from the group spill into the garage, trying to figure it out.

CHERYL

You're gonna drive there?

TOM

It's faster. Easy to stay together.
And it's safer.

DONALD

How is it safer to drive blind?

Tom starts up the car.

The in-dash GPS navigator boots up.

Tom smiles.

TOM

We're not blind.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Tom cuts up a cardboard box with a pair of scissors.
- Black electrician's tape spreads over the windshield.
- The top of a pillowcase catches as a window seals up.
- More tape secures the pillowcase to the window.
- Tom removes the rearview mirror with a wrench, to remove any tape-gaps in the windshield.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Tom's last flourish: taping over the tiny camera above the license plate on the back.

Tom stands with his arms crossed, nodding at his work.
Lucy, Malorie, Donald and Greg all stand with him.

The Cadillac looks like a makeshift meth lab.
Every window is blacked out with cardboard, tape, and linen.

Lucy checks it out more closely.

LUCY

It's like a car for vampires.
(grins at Tom)
Cool.

Tom opens the driver's door, climbs in, and starts the engine. The Cadillac thrums to life.

The interior glows from the light of the electronics.

INT. CADILLAC - LATER

Still idling in the garage, driver door ajar.

Tom sits at the wheel. Malorie sits shotgun. In back: Lucy and Felix. Lucy carries a golf club with her, and Felix has armed himself with a hand-axe.

Greg hands Tom a sticky note from outside Tom's door.

GREG

I made a list, going by your math.
Get as much as you can.

TOM

Will do.

GREG

The store address is eleven oh one
Longview Street.

TOM

Already in the system. Now get
inside, and I'll raise the door.

GREG

Okay. I... Good luck.

Tom nods and shuts the car door. The interior feels more like a submarine, lit by the dome light.

Malorie pulls out a slip of paper. Considers it.

MALORIE

Tom...

TOM

What do you have there?

She holds it out for him.

MALORIE

This is where my parents live. I
was going to check on them--

TOM

Malorie--

MALORIE

--and I just, I haven't heard from them and I know it's out of the way but I just need to know. I'm sorry--

TOM

Hey, hey.

He takes her hand with the note and closes her fingers over it. Tom isn't taking the address. He's having her keep it. But he's being tender with her about it.

TOM (CONT'D)

I get it. I do. We all want to know about someone. But we have to get used to not knowing. Or else we won't make it. Okay?

Malorie takes a ragged breath and nods.

Tom reaches up and presses a button on a remote. Click!

The group listens to the sound of the garage door opening. Tom touches the navigation screen.

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)

Calculating route.

A map appears, with a thick red line forming an L-shape along the streets.

Tom puts the car in reverse.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The rear bumper advances at us, reverse lights aglow.

INT. GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Cheryl begins searching in drawers by the entertainment center, tidying up as she goes.

OLYMPIA

So, are all of you, like, friends and family?

CHERYL

We didn't know each other before last week.

OLYMPIA

That must be weird.

Cheryl chortles and nods like, "You have no idea."

Greg notices her peeking in drawers.

GREG

What are you looking for?

CHERYL

This.

She holds up a PHONE BOOK. Stonebridge is small enough it's a combo white pages/yellow pages.

DONALD

What, as kindling?

CHERYL

You all laughed at me about delivery, but I bet I can find someone who will, mm-hmm.

GREG

(to Olympia)

Olympia, was it? What is it like out there? Were you attacked?

OLYMPIA

No.

GREG

Do you know what those things are?

OLYMPIA

Just that when you see one, you go crazy. So, they're bad.

GREG

But is it just seeing one face-to-face? What about through a camera? Or video footage? How big are they? Why are they out there?

OLYMPIA

I was hoping you guys had some information.

DONALD

Just the radio. Local DJ. The big stations dropped three days ago.

GREG

I have an idea.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The bed in this room tells a tale.

One half is turned down sloppily. The other half is a shrine. Pillows under the covers suggest a body. Atop the bedspread, Lydia's nightgown has been draped. And on a pillow at the head rests a framed PHOTO of Lydia.

Greg stands at a small TV on a dresser. Holding a remote.

Donald, Cheryl, and Olympia are gathered at the door.

GREG

Home security system. Two cameras, in front and back. It's wired through this TV. The image is thermographic, so it can pick up heat signatures at night.

DONALD

Greg, hang on.

GREG

The system stores the last twenty-four hours of footage. This is a digitized signal, showing just the temperatures of objects. It's neutered information. Colors on a flat screen. Harmless.

DONALD

We don't know that.

Greg takes a breath.

GREG

Lydia saw one. She must have. It killed her. So, if I can track them like this, just looking at a few thousand pixels of light, then...

DONALD

Then what?

GREG

I'm getting some thermographic goggles, and a gun, and I'm going to kill every last one of them.

Donald steps back a bit. Watches Greg. Cheryl speaks up:

CHERYL

Or maybe we let the army do that.

GREG

That's what Tom said. He said it wasn't worth the risk. Are we doing just what Tom says now?

Beat. Donald pricks at this. Greg looks at Donald as if expecting it to.

DONALD

Tom doesn't get to make that call. You do. Here is what we should do.

MOMENTS LATER

Greg is tied to a chair with extension cord. Donald tugs at the ones around Greg's torso. Tightening.

GREG

Double knots on the back?

DONALD

Yeah. You sure this is the sturdiest chair in the house?

Greg's arms are strapped to the chair's arms. But he has control of the remote.

GREG

Yes. Loosen the wrist a bit so I can use the clicker.

DONALD

Okay. Remember you can just turn off the TV, at any time.

GREG

I'll call for you when I'm done.

DONALD

We'll be nearby. Okay?

Donald pats Greg on the shoulder and leaves the room.

Greg stares at the TV screen.

It shows bluish coverage of the front and back of the house. In the upper corner, a label: "REPLAY MODE."

The screen flickers.

INT. CADILLAC - DAY

The GPS screen flickers, points Tom straight ahead.

Tom drives. Malorie watches the map closely. The arrow.

The map goes away, replaced with a diagram of the car, alerts flashing at the front right bumper.

MALORIE
What's that?

TOM
Proximity sensor.

Tom steers around it.

FELIX
Probably a parked car. Yeah. Gonna
be cars up and down.

The Cadillac's left tires brush against something. Curb.

Tom corrects again. Keeps driving.

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)
In, half a mile, turn right.

The proximity sensor warns: front bumper.

Tom tries to steer around it, but not fast enough.
The front end rises half a foot, then drops again, running
over the obstacle.

The back end follows.

Malorie gives Tom a look. Tom glances her way.

TOM
Don't think about it.

From the back seat:

FELIX
What was that? A speed bump?

Malorie and Tom don't say what they're thinking it was.

Outside, through the windows, the group can hear the static
hiss of a hydrant leak as they drive past it.

Water pocks the hood, roof, and right side.

Tom keeps going, white-knuckled.

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)
Turn right, here.

The map points the way.

Tom turns slowly.

The proximity sensor beeps: Left front corner.

Tom adjusts. Goes again.

Beep. Right front corner.

Tom steers. Backs up. Looks for another route.

Beep. Rear bumper.

Tom puts it in park.

TOM

There's something, I don't know,
probably a truck...

MALORIE

Keep going around.

Tom goes for the shifter.

Something crashes, outside. Glass breaks.

Everyone remains quiet. The car idles.

Then: Beep. Front bumper proximity.
Growing more incessant.

LUCY

Someone else driving?

TOM

Shh--

Beep-beep-beep-beep.

The front end of the Cadillac sinks. Metal warps.
A heavy weight advances along the car.

MALORIE

(sotto)

Oh god, oh god--

The group looks up:

Dents form in the roof. The middle bows. A muted, rhythmic
RASPING carries heavy from outside.

Felix sweats, his hand gripping the axe.

The roof bows over the back seat.

Lucy holds up her golf club at it, as if to prevent the roof from caving in. It trembles in her hands.

Everyone in the car is on the verge of panic.

Then the rear end lowers. It's walked onto the trunk.

Lucy and Felix look back at the rear window, even though it's walled off with tape and box lids.

Glass cracks.

And then, out of the tense silence: BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.
Rear bumper proximity.

Suddenly: something strikes HARD at the back window--

The taped glass caves inward from it-- exposing the outside--

TOM

Don't look back!

Tom puts the car into gear.
And he drives straight ahead. Alerts be damned.
Sunlight pours in from the partly caved-in window--

The side-view mirror bashes something.

Tom keeps going. He pops a curb. The car lurches.

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)

In one hundred yards, turn left.

Tom speeds up. Driving faster.

MALORIE

Tom...

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)

Turn left, here.

MALORIE

Tom, just slow down--

Tom yanks the wheel left, the car ascends a short ramp--

And the whole car jostles from another curb bump--

And then Tom brakes hard. The tires screech on asphalt.

FEMALE GPS VOICE (V.O.)

You have arrived.

They all catch their breath. Beat.

TOM
Now... we just have to go outside.

Tom brings up a blindfold. Ties it.

Malorie covers her eyes with a sleep mask.

In back, Lucy dons a 'do-rag for a blindfold. Felix puts on his motorcycle helmet, its visor painted black.

The four sit there with their hands on the doors. No one wants to step out first.

INT. SUPER TARGET - DAY

Some lights are still on. But the place is eerily quiet.

Tom, Malorie, Felix, and Lucy enter the store.

TOM
Shut the door behind us.

Lucy and Malorie work together to slide the doors shut, which are papered with ads for some sale, covering any view of the parking lot outside.

FELIX
What now?

TOM
Shh...

Tom listens intently. Quiet is the reply.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm taking off my blindfold.

He peels it off, blinks, and adjusts to the dimly-lit store.

MALORIE
...Tom?

TOM
Form a chain together and follow.
But keep your eyes covered.

Tom grabs Felix by the hand. Felix reaches for Lucy, who in turn grabs hold of Malorie.

MOVING WITH TOM as he checks down every aisle, one at a time.

Emergency lighting casts the warehouse-sized store in red and amber. A handful of carts have been abandoned in aisles but otherwise the store shows no signs of disaster.

Tom reaches the end, and his muscles relax.

TOM (CONT'D)
We're clear.

The others take off their blinders and look around.

FELIX
It's loaded.

Tom smiles.

TOM
Everybody grab a cart.

INT. SUPER TARGET SNACK FOODS AISLE

Felix grabs potato chip bags by the fistful. He tears one open and starts snacking. From somewhere else in the store, Tom calls out:

TOM (O.S.)
Stick to non-perishables. We need
food that will last.

INT. SUPER TARGET LIQUOR AISLE

Lucy twists off the cap to a beer bottle and takes a swig.

TOM (O.S.)
Avoid bulky items. Remember we
gotta pack this into the trunk.

Lucy looks over at her cart: full of energy drinks and beer.

INT. SUPER TARGET HYGIENE AISLE

Tom marvels at the deodorants, shampoos and soaps. Grins.

TOM
I'm gonna be a hero.

INT. SUPER TARGET CEREAL AISLE

Felix searches through boxes of cereal, most of which has been shoved around and mixed together.

FELIX

C'mon baby c'mon... Yes!

He lifts up a box of Choco-Burst like it's a gold medal.

INT. SUPER TARGET WOMENS FASHION

Lucy stands at a mirror wearing a wide-brimmed sun hat and holding up an evening gown to see if it's her size. All of it very dressy and upscale, unlike her workout clothes.

She does a mock accent for the mirror:

LUCY

My name is Cheryl. Don't you have any Pelligrino?

INT. SUPER TARGET DELI SECTION

Malorie picks up a pack of sealed lunchmeats. Sniffs it. A shopping cart rolls into view behind her. Tom.

TOM

Anything still good?

MALORIE

Maybe. If we eat it tonight.

TOM

Thought you might like this.

He hands her a gift bag, complete with hastily-stuffed tissue paper and a bow. And also still sporting the price code.

MALORIE

What is this?

TOM

A baby shower gift.

Malorie smiles and digs into the bag. Pulls out a classic baby's pacifier. She's happy. A small thing with a big gesture behind it.

MALORIE

It's lovely. Thank you.

TOM

No doubt you and your husband already have one back home.

Malorie tilts her head. Is he fishing?

MALORIE

No husband. It was all casual until he knocked me up. But he didn't want his "whole life turned upside down," so he bailed.

TOM

Well. I bet he's gotta be really inconvenienced by how the world has gone to hell now.

He grins at her. Malorie laughs. Nods. Then the distant sounds of someone loading their cart pulls Tom back to:

TOM (CONT'D)

(checking list)

Can you go and grab some batteries? The flashlights take double A. I'm gonna grab some clothes for people.

MALORIE

Aye aye, captain.

Malorie pushes her cart onward and Tom turns his around.

As Tom ventures back to the Mens department, Malorie looks back at him. She smiles.

INT. SUPER TARGET AUTOMOTIVE AISLE

Malorie grabs batteries and tosses them into her cart.

A fly buzzes past her. She sniffs. Something stinks. She approaches the end of the aisle. Wary.

The smell is definitely coming from this end of the store.

Malorie brings up a flashlight. She rounds a corner. More flies buzz from a neighboring section.

Malorie shines her light on the sign: "FOR PETS"

She frowns, and advances.

INT. SUPER TARGET PET AISLE

The flashlight beam reveals a line of cages placed on shelves along one side.

A trampled sign on the floor: "TODAY ONLY / ADOPT A PET!"

Some cages hang open. Empty.

The flashlight glimpses shapes in others. Matted fur. Blood and feces. In this low light it's hard to tell if they are cats or dogs.

Malorie winces, covering her nose and mouth.

And then she hears it. A small CHIRP.

She turns back. Sweeps the light. Finds a bird cage at the end, covered in black silk.

Malorie lifts the veil and peers inside:

Six fat, little BUDGIES turn their heads at her. One hops over to her side of the cage.

MALORIE

You made it. You cute little guys.

INT. SUPER TARGET GROCERY AISLE

Felix wheels his cart up next to another cart.

The abandoned cart is filled with canned goods. Toilet paper. Freeze-dried foods. A lot like his cart.

Felix reaches over and touches one of the thawed packages... and his fingers are wet.

FELIX

Guys?

(louder)

Hey, is someone here?

A POUNDING on a door stops him short.

FELIX (CONT'D)

(tense)

Guys!

INT. SUPER TARGET - DAY

Four loaded shopping carts converge at the back by the deli. Tom, Malorie, and Lucy get to Felix.

FELIX

I think someone's inside.

TOM

Inside where?

More POUNDING. Nearby. Felix points--

Tom shines his light past a cleared-out butcher's counter.
The walk-in freezer door. Its HANDLE VIBRATES as something pounds from inside.

Tom moves around the counter for the door.

MALORIE
What are you doing?

Tom steps to the metal door. It rattles in its hinges.

WEAK VOICE (O.S.)
Let me out...

TOM
Hello?

The voice speaks again but it's too muffled. Tom leans in closer. Puts a hand on the door.

TOM (CONT'D)
Who's in there?

WEAK VOICE (O.S.)
Open the door open the door hurry
please hurry just open it...

Tom puts a hand on the handle.

FELIX
Are you nuts?

TOM
He's trapped inside.

LUCY
So? Leave him there.

TOM
I don't know how to do that.

He grips the handle.

Lucy and Felix join him. Malorie stays by the carts.

FELIX
Just a crack. So you can talk.

TOM
All right.

The POUNDING resumes. Tom slides the lock back and turns the handle... He opens the metal door an inch...

And he leans his face to the edge but doesn't look inside--

TOM (CONT'D)
How'd you get locked in?

Bloody fingers grip the door. Someone wheezes.

WEAK VOICE (O.S.)
They did it, they tricked me, they told me to do it then they left me to rot like raw meat--

By Malorie, the budgies all start CHIRPING madly.

MALORIE
Uh, Tom? Something--

TOM
(to Man)
Calm down, tricked you?

WEAK VOICE (O.S.)
Just open the door and let it out, let it loose let it see you see it--

The budgies flap their wings in a maelstrom of panic--

Something heavy presses on the metal door--

And then, the briefest glimpse of long FINGERS or TALONS at an upper edge of the frame-- what is that?--

Lucy, Felix, and Tom all lean against the door to keep it from opening further but--

THEIR SHOES slide on the floor an inch--

WEAK VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It wants out IT WANTS OUT--

Malorie rushes in, using a cart as a battering ram--

It SLAMS on the man's hand and he HOWLS--

The door then shuts all the way--
Tom slides the bolt locked again--

And everyone steps back. The budgies calm down again.

INT. SUPER TARGET - MOMENTS LATER

The four form a train with their carts and hurry down an aisle back for the entrance.

The front cart suddenly gets caught on something and stops the forward momentum.

Malorie moves around to push it out of the way and then gasps and steps back when she sees it:

A dead man. Recently dead. Gripping a box cutter that's stabbed into his own throat, wet blood around him.

It's JASON. The disbeliever who left their house on day one.

Tom urges them, pressing on:

TOM
Keep moving.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Cheryl dusts with a dry cloth in the living room, listening to Sinatra on the radio. Olympia watches her. Donald applies duct tape to the curtains in the living room.

They're all full of nervous energy.

DONALD
Give him time. He's got twenty-four hours of footage to watch.

CHERYL
Maybe they don't get close enough to the house for the security cameras. You know?

Thump. Thump thump. They all stop and look up at the ceiling.

OLYMPIA
Is that...?

DONALD
Oh no. Greg...

More THUMPING overhead now. And then a sound. From Greg's vocal cords, but not quite a scream. Something else.

And it rises in pitch. Then it becomes clearer that Greg is shrieking a word over and over: Donald's name.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The THUMPING is shockingly loud now. Accompanied by crashing and breaking, as framed photos in the room topple off walls.

Donald reaches the door and puts his hand on the knob, ready to rush inside, but he stops. Steps back.

Greg has stopped HOWLING by the time Cheryl and Olympia catch up. Olympia doesn't reach the top steps, reluctant to get close. Cheryl starts to panic:

CHERYL

What are you waiting for?

DONALD

The TV faces the door.

A final, sickening CRUNCH ends the THUMPING. Cheryl now takes a step back as Donald grabs the doorknob again.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Greg? Greg just listen to me.
Everything's gonna be fine. Just
take some deep breaths, okay?

No response.

BY DONALD'S SHOES, blood seeps into the hall from under the door frame.

Donald takes a breath and squeezes his eyes shut.

He opens the door.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Arms outstretched, eyes closed, Donald enters the room.

The first thing to note is that the overhead lights are off. With the sealed windows, the room is dark save for the wan, flickering light from the TV, casting everything in blue.

DONALD

Greg? Say something.

Donald takes a step and nearly slips on the blood-slicked floor. But he gets his balance and keeps his eyes shut.

Donald's foot brushes a chair leg. He steps over it...
Past more pieces of the demolished chair.

And then, in the glow of the TV: a severed finger by the remains of the chair.

But no Greg.

Donald gropes for the TV. It buzzes softly with power.

As he searches blindly for the cord, the screen becomes partially visible, at an oblique angle.

The security footage has been paused, an image frozen in time. The thermographic video flickers and wobbles...

But a SHAPE in shadow is nearly exposed on one side.

Just when we're about to get a clearer view of it-- POP. Donald shuts the TV off.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Okay, it's off!
(opens his eyes)
Where...

Cheryl leans in, reaches to the light switch and flips it--

And then SCREAMS in shock at what she sees:

Greg's broken, mutilated body. Hanging from the canopy bed like a giant insect caught in a spiderweb, his broken legs and arms twisted at inhuman angles, the rope caught on the bedposts, gouging into his bloodied neck, suspending him.

Blood trickles onto the framed photo of his wife. And then, a distant mechanical sound. The garage door.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The garage door lowers behind the Cadillac as it pulls in.

The door reaches the ground... and then Tom and the others climb out of the beat-up car.

Malorie takes the bird cage out on her side and makes eye contact with Tom on the driver's side.

She notices his attention to the car.

MALORIE
What is it?

Tom feels the hood and roof. Traces the indentations.

TOM
It has feet. And it's heavy.
(to others)
Two things we didn't know before.

Cheryl enters, pale and trembling.

CHERYL
 Something happened to Greg.

Tom frowns and leaves. Lucy and Cheryl follow.

A can of yellow corn rolls to Malorie's foot. She picks it up and stares at it.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Blindfolded, Malorie opens a can of cold pork-and-beans.

Jabs a plastic utensil in the can.

She scoops out a spoonful.
 Holds her hand out.

MALORIE
 Scoop.

Girl reaches out her hand.
 Finds Malorie's wrist.
 Guides the spoon to her mouth.

Girl taps Malorie's wrist gently.
 And Malorie knows to refill the spoon.

Right now, no one rows.
 Malorie feeds Boy next.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
 Boy. Scoop.

Wrapped in blankets, he reaches out, guides the spoon.
 Takes a bite.
 Taps her wrist.
 She pulls it away.

BOY
 My hands and feet feel like, like
 needles. Poking. All the time.

MALORIE
 Remember your job. Listen. With
 both ears.
 (beat)
 Girl. Scoop.

Girl takes a bite. Chews.

BOY
 Malorie...

MALORIE

Yes, Boy.

BOY

Why did God give us eyes?

MALORIE

To look.

BOY

But, we can't really look. You taught us to wake up with them closed. Why give us eyes at all?

Beat.

MALORIE

To give us hope.

Boy ponders this answer.

INT. GREG'S HOUSE - FIVE YEARS EARLIER - NIGHT

Pressing in on the back door, set into a "mud room" off the kitchen, with a place for boots, heavy coats, etc.

Malorie (long-haired, seven-months pregnant now) enters from outside, carrying a paint bucket filled with water. She's also wearing a blindfold. Her breath plumes in the night air.

Just as she shuts the door behind her, we catch a glimpse of the setup: The back door has a tarpaulin hood covering view of the outside, attached to a small awning, so it creates a little cocoon just outside the door.

Malorie sets the pail down, takes off her blindfold, and reaches over to one wall...

...where a large WHITEBOARD hangs with a set of instructions:

WATER WELL SCHEDULE

35 steps from back porch

follow the chain (left of door)

handle cranks AWAY = up, TOWARD = down

everyone participates!

Below is a list of names with check marks by their names to indicate the number of water trips they've taken.

Malorie puts a check mark by her name.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Water pours down a funnel from the pail into a plastic jug.

Malorie then gets a glass for herself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Malorie sits on the couch, drinking the water.

Her attention drifts to the coffee table, where the landline phone sits alongside the Stonebridge phone book.

She scoots the book toward her, flips through the pages.

And then picks up the receiver. Holds it to her ear. Remarkably, there is still a dial tone. (This is probable but only with old landline telephony.)

Malorie flips to the yellow pages section and finds a listing for the hospitals.

She starts dialing.

Behind her, over her shoulder, the open kitchen area. And, farther still, the back door in the mud room. That area is unlit now, but the white of the back door stands out.

And the door starts to open.

Malorie doesn't hear. She's busy trying numbers.

PRESSING IN on Malorie as she dials and listens for a working number on the other end, edging out the view of the door and the kitchen as something gets closer...

Then that sound.
That otherworldly, inhuman noise.

Malorie's whole body goes rigid with sudden fear.

She snaps her eyes closed and leans down into the couch to try and hide.

Her shallow breath is overtaken by the sound of rasping.

Close on her face, eyes firmly shut, and then--

Two ragged FINGERS with wet, black talons on the ends reach in and press against her cheek and eyebrow. Malorie whimpers in shock, tries to turn away from the contact, but then--

The fingers spread, pulling her eyelid open, forcing her to look directly at the thing--

Her pupil contracts in terror--

And for a singular frame we see: A wide-mouthed, pale, wet FACE with bulging eyes like a deep-sea monster, then--

INT. MALORIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Malorie wakes up from the nightmare, breathless.

Her hair is damp with sweat.

It takes her a moment to calm down.

Olympia snores softly in the neighboring bed.

Malorie reaches for a glass on her nightstand. It's empty.

INT. FOYER

Malorie descends the stairs with her empty glass, headed for the kitchen. She passes the front door...

A moment later, there's a VOICE from outside.

STRANGER (O.S.)
Anyone? Hello?

Malorie freezes. Tense. Waits it out.

A pause. Silence.

Malorie turns, shaking her head, then:

STRANGER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Help, is there anyone?

Malorie goes to the door and calls out:

MALORIE
Someone there?

STRANGER (O.S.)
Oh god, oh thank god.

The sound of boots on the wood planks of the front entry. Fumbling sounds of the blanket insulating the front door.

MALORIE
Who is it?

His voice rises at the end of his sentences, so sometimes they sound like questions.

STRANGER (O.S.)

My name is Gary? I'm, I got lost scavenging for food and, hello? Is this the front door?

MALORIE

It's the middle of the night.

GARY (O.S.)

Is it? Shit, it's been hours...

Malorie looks upstairs for help. No one else is awake. She hesitates. Then remembers the budgies.

They slumber in their cage, a few paces away. Unfazed.

Malorie double-checks by picking up the box and holding it close to the door. She whispers to them:

MALORIE

(to budgies)

Is it safe out there?

GARY (O.S.)

Please. It's cold. Can I come in?

MALORIE

There's a protocol. I can't let you inside right now. You have to wait.

GARY (O.S.)

I fell and I'm bleeding. I can't see how bad it is? I don't want to bleed to death, please...

Malorie sets the box of budgies down and debates with herself. They didn't consider someone with an injury when they made the rules.

She closes her eyes, then opens the door.

GARY (late 30s) steps in. Tall, wearing a flannel jacket. Could be a truck driver. Also blindfolded.

GARY (CONT'D)

I'm in.

He helps her shut the door. Then he takes off his blindfold.

His arm is badly cut, matting his flannel jacket. He notices it and sets down his backpack, to ease out of his coat.

GARY (CONT'D)

Okay, so yeah, I'm gonna take this off. And then maybe you have some gauze or a towel or something?

Malorie hurries to the powder room and returns with a thin hand-towel.

MALORIE

I'm Malorie.

Gary takes the towel and wraps his wound. The cut is long but not deep; superficial.

GARY

Pleasure. Thanks.

(notices)

Wow, you're about ready to pop.

MALORIE

Where have you been staying?

GARY

Over on Lincoln? Like maybe quarter mile that way? No, this way.

MALORIE

Alone this whole time?

GARY

No. What about you? Are you alone?

He looks back at her. The question is unsettling.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone's awake now, sitting around the room: Malorie and Olympia, Lucy, Tom, Don, Cheryl, and Gary. Gary holds court.

GARY

My brother has always been that guy. You know the one? With the disaster "go bag" and the ammo reloader for his AR-15? He was always sort of an asshole, but I knew I'd be safer with him than anywhere else. By the time I got there he had six other guys all staying with him, hunting buddies. Eddie-- my brother-- he had blankets on the windows, but they were ready to arm up, go out and bag them a monster.

TOM

How'd that work out for them.

Gary shakes his head.

GARY

Two of them went out, never came back. But we let this guy in? He looked lost, said his wife and kids just... he was alone. That... changed things.

MALORIE

Who was he?

GARY

Just some guy. Carl? That was his name, I think. Kept to himself, didn't talk much, wouldn't join the group for meals. I think he was scared of my brother's friends.

Gary takes a breath, knowing where his story is going.

GARY (CONT'D)

The one time he did join us, he said something. He believes this whole thing is a hoax. There are no creatures, or whatever, out there. And we're all being tricked. Of course that didn't go over well with anyone else, and he shut up after that.

INT. EDDIE'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Gary and six rough-and-tumble MEN sit around a dining room table, passing a bottle around. It's a frat party for middle-aged men. Gary tries to keep up.

GARY (V.O.)

The guys raided a liquor store and we all celebrated that night.

INT. EDDIE'S UPSTAIRS HALL - FLASHBACK - MORNING

Gary approaches the stairs down to the first floor. His clothes are disheveled.

GARY (V.O.)

But I can't drink like they do. I passed out upstairs at some point.

(MORE)

GARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And when I went back down to beg my
brother for some aspirin...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to scene.

GARY
Carl had pulled down all the
blankets and left the doors open.

Olympia gasps.

TOM
You know it was Carl, and not any
of your brother's friends?

GARY
My brother and his friends are all
dead, in that house. But Carl... He
left. And he left the door open
behind him.

FELIX
How is that even possible? I mean,
everyone who's seen one of those
things...

DONALD
What if he was already insane? We
don't know what it does to you if
your mind's already broken. Maybe
it doesn't affect you. Maybe it can
affect everyone differently.

LUCY
Like that guy in the freezer at the
store. Shit... Bad enough we gotta
worry about monsters or whatever
the fuck they are. Now this?

The group erupts into conversation. Donald pulls Tom out of
the group for a sideline talk.

TOM
What?

DONALD
Aren't you worried?

TOM
About what?

DONALD

Old man Edgar. He keeps to himself, always getting paper, his fingers have charcoal stains... Didn't you hear Gary's story?

TOM

No.

DONALD

Tom, yes.

TOM

He's been here for weeks without incident. He's harmless.

DONALD

Or he's a time bomb.

Donald walks away. Tom stays, struggling with the issue.

INT. SPARE BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie brushes her hair after a shower, prepping for bed.

Olympia enters with a glass of water.

OLYMPIA

I'm going right back to bed.

Olympia opens the medicine cabinet and grabs three pill bottles. Vitamin supplements. Pre-natal prescriptions.

Malorie notices. Inspects a bottle, surprised.

MALORIE

Where'd you get the pre-natal supplements?

OLYMPIA

I had them on me.

Malorie suddenly feels like the worst mother ever. She stops combing out her hair and stares at her reflection a beat. Olympia jars her out of her silent shame--

OLYMPIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

MALORIE

For what.

OLYMPIA

For coming over here. I hear what Don says about us. One pregnant woman was a problem, two is too much. I'm a burden.

MALORIE

No you're not.

OLYMPIA

Yes I am. I'm so used to my husband handling things. He loves me so much... I got soft from all that love. Forgot how to do things. Now he's out there, and maybe he's flying jets but, I mean...

Olympia tries really hard not to cry. It's clear now, she feels like the unprepared one, and sees Malorie as better.

Malorie moves to comfort her. Takes Olympia's hand in hers.

MALORIE

Hey. It's going to be all right.

Olympia smiles with a sadness at Malorie.

OLYMPIA

If something happens to me, I want you to care for it. Okay?

MALORIE

It's your baby.

OLYMPIA

I don't think that means much anymore.

MALORIE

(emphatic)

It's going to be okay. We're going to make it. All of us.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Five years later. Just Malorie and the children. Girl and Boy perch at either end of the boat.

Malorie rows. All of them are still blindfolded.

MALORIE

Children... I need to tell you about the waterfall.

(MORE)

MALORIE (CONT'D)

(breath)

This is the hardest thing we have
ever done together. One of you...
One of you needs to be brave--

BOY

Shh.

Malorie frowns. Cranes her neck.

BOY (CONT'D)

(whispered)

You hear that?

Now they all strain to hear.
And there it is: an outboard motor. Getting closer.

Malorie rows back for the bank.

MALORIE

Keep your heads down.

She finds the shallows.
Just as the engine noise gets even louder.
Like it's moving for them.

Malorie grips the oar tightly. Girl and Boy listen.

GIRL

What is it?

MALORIE

Do not take off your blindfolds.

The boat's engine cuts abruptly.

The air smells of gasoline.
Footsteps cross what sounds like a deck.

MAN (O.S.)

Hello there!

(beat)

Hey you three, it's okay. You can
remove your blindfolds, I'm just an
ordinary man.

MALORIE

(sotto, to children)

No you cannot.

MAN (O.S.)

There's nothing out here with us,
Miss. We're all alone.

Malorie is still. Tense.

MALORIE
...How do you know?

MAN (O.S.)
Miss, I'm looking right now. I've
had my eyes open the entire trip
today. Yesterday, too.

MALORIE
You can't just look. You know that.

The stranger chuckles.

MAN (O.S.)
Really, there's nothing to be
afraid of. Not anymore. Just us two
on the river, crossing paths.

Girl puts her hand to her blindfold.

Toys with it.

MALORIE
You can leave now.

She hears the man sigh.

MAN (O.S.)
There's no need to live like this.
Consider these children. They're
missing a chance to view a brisk,
beautiful day.

Malorie is trembling.

Full on fight-or-flight mode.

MALORIE
Stay away from our boat.

The man does not answer.

Then: splashes in the water. Nearby.

Malorie raises the paddle.
Her only defense.

MAN (O.S.)
Miss, the view is incredible.
When's the last time you looked
outside? Years? Have you seen this
river? The sun?

MALORIE

We are keeping them on.

MAN (O.S.)

I gave that up yesterday. I moved on. You can do it, too.

His voice is closer. Wading.

MALORIE

Leave us alone.

Girl keeps a hand on her blindfold.

Head crooked in the direction of his voice.

MAN (O.S.)

They can't haunt you forever. They can't force you to live like this.

(closer now)

Your worries only keep you safe long enough to worry some more.

The Man's HAND reaches the front of the boat.

His body near Girl.

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

And I'll tell you what...

His MOUTH speaks near the Girl's ear.

MAN (CONT'D)

I've seen one.

Malorie grabs Girl and pulls her close.

She makes a soft yelp in alarm.

They hear the man laugh.

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

They aren't as ugly as you'd think, Miss. Just, well, no way to describe them. You gotta see one.

The Man's arm reaches in, moving to caress Malorie's cheek...

She senses it a moment before--

And swipes with a survival knife in her fist--

Suddenly it's a closed-quarters fight--

The Man trying to pull her overboard--

Malorie struggling, stabbing with the knife--

MALORIE
Stay away from us--

MAN (O.S.)
 I'll make you all look--

He grabs onto the knife, tearing it from her grip.

And Malorie shoves off the bank. Hard.

The boat gets loose from the Man.

He was too busy grappling for the knife.
 Malorie sacrificed it to escape him.

And now they're in the current again.

MALORIE
 Keep your eyes closed!

MAN (O.S.)
 Where are you going to go?

She's rowing now. Faster.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Are you going to cry every time you
 hear a stick crack?
 (shouting)
 Who's the crazy one? Kids, your
 mother is not well, take off those
 blindfolds! See the world!

Malorie paddles.

They're moving dangerously fast now.

MALORIE
 What is the rule. Tell me.

BOY
 I didn't look.

GIRL
 I didn't either.

She brings them into a tight hug.

MALORIE
 You did so well.

They hug back. Beat.

GIRL

Malorie? Was that the man who sings
all the music?

Malorie lets out her tension with a laugh.

MALORIE

No, honey. No it was not.

The faint crooning of FRANK SINATRA fades in--

INT. GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

The living room radio plays the music.

Returning to five years ago. The room is crowded with
listeners, including Malorie, Donald, Cheryl, and Gary.

The furniture in the room has been moved since last time.

A thin line of SUNLIGHT slices into the room from the
curtains hanging on the picture window. This is the only sign
of sun in the room, possibly the whole house.

At the bar counter leading to the kitchen, Lucy stands and
stares at the calendar. September 3 has an 'X' through it,
along with the next two days after it.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, Sinatra ends and the deejay returns.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

Well. That was the whole album.
Probably my favorite of his.

(beat)

I don't know if anyone's listening
anymore. No one's talking, that's
for sure. Cell towers are dead. No
chatter on the shortwave. September
third came and went without a sign
of the Guard.

There's a pause. Like the Deejay is out of things to say.
Nervous at the silence, Cheryl stage whispers:

CHERYL

I wish we could call him.

DONALD

It's a digital switchboard. He
doesn't have a landline like us.

CHERYL

How come the landline works?

DONALD

It's a "land line." Physical wires,
not cell towers and satellites. And
you don't need juice to use them.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

Whatever is out there, maybe it got
everyone. Maybe all that's left is
me, Sinatra, and those things.

There's a mechanical sound over the radio, and it prickles
Malorie's nerves. A slide locking.

She goes to the landline phone on the end table. The phone
book is opened to a page with the radio's call-in number.

Malorie starts dialing while the others listen.

DONALD

Malorie, didn't you hear what I
just said?

MALORIE

I have to try. One more time.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

There is a lot I don't know...

Malorie paces with the phone, frantic.

MALORIE

(sotto)

Come on, come on...

DONALD

What are you doing--

MALORIE

Shut up!

DEEJAY (V.O.)

But I do know one thing. Those
monsters aren't going to get the
satisfaction of doing me in.

(beat)

Sing it, Blue Eyes.

MALORIE

No, no-- Gary, turn it off, turn it
off right now!

Sinatra's dulcet tones kick in. "Softly As I Leave You."

GARY

What? It's fine.

And then, muffled-- A GUNSHOT.

Everyone jumps as if electrocuted by the sound.

Malorie slams the phone down in anger. This is what she was desperately trying to stop, futile as it was from here.

CHERYL

Oh my god.

MALORIE

I told you to turn it off!

Tom enters, hearing the flaring tempers.

TOM

What happened?

Felix finds a dry humor way to it, trying to cope:

FELIX

Someone just ruined a perfectly good Sinatra song for me is what.
(off Tom's look)
We lost our news guy.

Overhead, the lights flicker Everyone looks up.

DONALD

Power grid has been down for days.
We need to keep the generator running, and we're out of diesel.
Isn't that right, Tom.

FELIX

How long can we last with what we've got?

TOM

A day. Maybe less.

The room erupts into ARGUING, voices overlapping--

FELIX

--not even with meal assignments--

TOM

--can't point fingers now--

DONALD

--told you we are too many--

MALORIE

--just turn everyone away?

It escalates quickly when Donald and Cheryl square off--

CHERYL

And I've been trying to keep the place tidy all week--

DONALD

But that's all you do, you just
move furniture around and run the
vacuum, you aren't making a real
difference here!

Before Cheryl hisses a response, a sound shuts them up.
The sounds of CHIRPING. The budgies. In their cage. Set by
the front door.

Everyone gets very quiet. Watching the birds freak out.

Then: A SHADOW blocks the strip of sunlight from the picture
window. Something looms close by.

Olympia puts her hands over her face. Felix comforts her. But
everyone keeps waiting.

The shadow leaves. The sliver of sun returns.
And the budgies quit CHIRPING.

Olympia spasms on the couch, snaking her hands around her
belly. Grimacing in pain.

OLYMPIA

Oh. Oh no.

FELIX

What?

OLYMPIA

That. That was a contraction.

DONALD

You're not due for two more weeks.

Olympia starts to panic at this statement.
Malorie gives Donald a look: Shut the fuck up, Donald.
Then she goes to Olympia and grabs her hand.

MALORIE

Hey, it's fine, it's probably just
Braxton Hicks. You get those early,
like little tremors.

This starts to calm Olympia down again. She exhales slowly.

Tom addresses the group.

TOM

We need to make another run, right
now. For fuel and any medical
supplies to help with childbirth.
I'll volunteer. I need three more.

Tom grabs the Scrabble pouch and holds it out.

Everyone looks at the bag with dread.

LUCY

Tom shouldn't be the only one to
volunteer. I'll go again.

Not wanting to be outdone by Lucy, Felix steps up.

FELIX

Fine. If she's going so am I.

And then Cheryl steps next to Felix.

CHERYL

I'll go.

Said right at Donald with a glare.

Donald gives her a look back: Good for you.

TOM

All right, so us four.

SERIES OF SHOTS

1) Lucy grabs a baseball bat from an upstairs exercise room she's claimed as her bedroom. A sleeping bag drapes over a stationary bike and a knapsack hangs as a punching bag.

TOM (V.O.)

I have a new plan.

2) Tom holds open a shoebox with holes cut in the sides. He gingerly takes a budgie from the cage and transfers it.

TOM (V.O.)

We find a manhole cover and take to
the tunnels. If they're clear, it
gives us direct routes into town.

3) Felix tries on his motorcycle helmet. Waves his hand in front of his visor.

TOM (V.O.)

Then we find our access points to
gas stations. Grocery stores.
Hospitals. We stock up.

4) Cheryl stands in the bathroom, staving off a panic attack.

TOM (V.O.)

And we return home the same way.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Cheryl steps out of the hall bathroom, still full of dread.

Lucy catches up to her at that moment. Nearly passes her by.

LUCY

Hey. You okay?

CHERYL

Oh, yes.

(then)

I don't know how you do this.

You're so... brave. And clever.

Cheryl's whole concept of who Lucy was has been demolished.

It's enough in this moment for Lucy to revise her views, too. She reaches out and puts a comforting hand on Cheryl.

LUCY

I'm scared, too. Just like you. But we got this. Because we're clever.

Cheryl nods, mustering courage again.

CHERYL

Yeah. Okay.

INT. GREG'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - DAY

Malorie washes her face with water she pours from a jug. She hears voices nearby. Leaning out the door, she spies--

DONALD AND TOM facing off in the dimly-lit dining room, near a china cabinet of plateware no one will ever use.

DONALD

No one's thinking about it.

TOM

What are you on about this time?

Donald speaks quickly with clenched teeth:

DONALD

Soon we'll have two infants. That's an added strain to our food supply, our medical supply, and fresh water supply, not to mention the noise of two crying babies could bring those things right to our door. What are you gonna do when that's a problem?

Tom is done with Donald's shit.

TOM

What's your solution? Go on.

DONALD

Doesn't matter, I'm not the leader. You are. They're your problem. One day you'll have to tell everyone the only way to guarantee survival is to stab out your own eyes, and then we'll see how popular you are.

TOM

Is that what this is about? Being leader? Fine, take it. It's yours. Go tell everybody your plan.

Donald balks at this. Starts to retort but doesn't have a ready comeback. Tom slaps him on the shoulder.

TOM (CONT'D)

All right, then how about you try to think in terms of group survival versus just your own. Okay?

Tom leaves Donald to stew his own fear of leadership.

DONALD

Maybe I will.

Malorie, who's seen this all, slinks out of the bathroom.

INT. MUD ROOM - DAY

At the back door, Tom is first to arrive at the mud room for the supply run.

Malorie approaches and hugs Tom. He hugs back. But she doesn't let go. Into his ear:

MALORIE

I read that when you hug for twenty seconds, it releases oxytocin into your system. Helps calm the nerves.

TOM

I'll take it.

MALORIE

What did you do? Before all this.

TOM
 You really wanna know?
 (then, grinning)
 Optometrist. There goes my career.

Malorie laughs. Nearly snorts. A genuine surprised laugh. It's infectious, and gets Tom giggling.

MALORIE
 Oh my god! Ohh. I can't remember
 the last time I laughed. Thank you.

She puts her hand on his chest. He keeps it there. An unspoken invitation to tenderness. Malorie's eyes sparkle.

TOM
 And you? What did you do?

MALORIE
 Whatever paid the bills until I
 figured out what I want to be.

TOM
 A mom?

MALORIE
 Not really. I'm terrible at it.

The budgie in the box near Tom TWEETS softly. Lyrically.

TOM
 I don't think you give yourself
 enough credit. You're a survivor,
 and survivors make good parents.
 (grins)
 Wouldn't I make a good father?

Malorie looks up at Tom. Wondering if he's asking what she thinks he is. She starts to reply, when Tom looks past her:

TOM (CONT'D)
 Gary?

Malorie looks back to find Gary standing nearby. Felix, Lucy, and Cheryl all arrive behind him.

GARY
 I was thinking? You guys have been
 doing this for a while, and really
 I'm the new one around here, so I
 should go.

TOM
 We could use one more.

GARY

No, I mean, I should go in
someone's place. Most of you have
already done this at least once.

TOM

Well. You don't have to--

FELIX

(eager)
I'll stay.

All eyes on Felix now. But he's not ashamed of it.

FELIX (CONT'D)

What? Those things out there scare
the shit outta me.

LUCY

I thought you were going with me.

FELIX

Only because you're hot, but then I
realized I'm gonna be blindfolded
the whole time, so, whatever.

TOM

All right, let's go. Gary, get
something for your eyes.

(at Malorie)

We'll be back in a couple hours.

Malorie nods. The others gather at the back door.

Lucy looks back at Felix, eyebrow arched.

LUCY

You think I'm hot?

FELIX

Well, I mean--

(owns it)

Yes. Yes I do.

Lucy points to him before she exits with the others.

LUCY

Be ready when I come back.

Felix realizes her meaning and looks to Malorie with a grin
of surprise: "I'm gonna get laid today!"

EXT. GREG'S BACK YARD - DAY

From the tarp-covered back door, a four-person chain emerges on march alongside the house.

Tom leads, followed by Lucy, then Cheryl, and Gary brings up the tail. They walk with one hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. All wearing some form of blindfold.

INT. MUD ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie stays by the door, listening to Tom's voice leading the group away.

DONALD (O.S.)
Tom better come back.

She looks over at Donald, who's been watching her.

MALORIE
Why do you care now?

DONALD
He's the glue of the group. And most of you wouldn't know how to survive on your own.

Donald exits down into the basement, leaving Malorie cold.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie sits down next to Olympia and returns to holding her hand. Olympia smiles through her cramps.

OLYMPIA
Can we--
(breathes)
Can we do something distracting?

MALORIE
Like what?

OLYMPIA
Anything.

Malorie looks around and her eyes land on the phone book, next to the phone.

She gives the book to Olympia and puts the phone in her lap.

MALORIE

Here. Turn to the bookmarked page
and read me the next number.

Olympia opens the book to find PAGE AFTER PAGE of residential
names either circled or crossed through. Stopping at 'M.'

OLYMPIA

What is this?

MALORIE

I've been calling people, leaving
messages when I get a machine.
Maybe there's a doctor out there,
or someone who knows more about
what's going on. Anyway, it be nice
to talk to someone new. Yeah?

Olympia doesn't argue. She finds the next name.

OLYMPIA

Bill Martinson. 980-1023.

Malorie dials the number. Listens to it ring.

MALORIE

(into phone)

Hello, yes, my name is Malorie.
There is a group of us here in
Riverbridge, on Shillingham Drive.
If you get this message, call us
back at this number. Please.

OLYMPIA

Julie Marx. 761-8811.

Malorie dials another number. Listens. Waits. Shakes her head
at Olympia.

Olympia marks through the name, but winces at the end of it,
dropping her marker. Her eyes go wide--

OLYMPIA (CONT'D)

Malorie. It's happening now.

MALORIE

You sure?
(off her look)
FELIX!

EDGAR (O.S.)

It's comin' out.

Malorie whips around to see EDGAR at the entry.

He stares at the two women, clutching a thermos in one hand. The other shakes as if from Parkinson's. And his fingertips are fully blackened from using charcoal sticks.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Only one room with enough space for you to do it. The attic.

MALORIE

The attic? That's your room.

Edgar keeps talking like it's a done deal. Donald arrives in time to hear Edgar's speech:

EDGAR

We used a midwife for our two kids. You're gonna need lots of water. Sponges. Towels. Surgical tools would help but I doubt you got those, so you can cut the cord with a pair of scissors an' a coupla binder clamps.

Malorie nods, feeling more uneasy by the moment.

MALORIE

Okay. Thanks.

EDGAR

And a belt.

OLYMPIA

A belt?

EDGAR

Give you something to bite down on. So you don't scream.
(leans in)
There's gonna be a lot of blood.

Felix enters from the kitchen with a bowl of dry Choco-Burst.

FELIX

That right there? Is why everyone calls you "creepy guy."

Malorie puts the phone down and stands, now a live-wire of nervous energy.

MALORIE

We can't wait for them to get back.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Felix barges in, a man on a mission. Trying not to freak out. He grabs the bath towel hanging over the shower pole then puts it back, frustrated--

FELIX

Wet.

He digs through cabinets and finds a dry wash cloth.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Too small.

Upstairs, Olympia MOANS in pain. Felix looks up, nervous. He decides to grab the floor towel.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL

Malorie and Donald heft Olympia up the stairs to the attic. She may be petite, but with the baby Olympia isn't an easy carry. Donald tries being positive for once:

DONALD

Doing great, just one more flight.

INT. ATTIC ROOM

Donald and Malorie bring Olympia to the hardwood floor here, straining in one last heave to set her down gently.

FLUID SPLASHES around Malorie's feet. Her water broke.

Her eyes go wide.

Donald notices. Realizes.

DONALD

Oh shit. You too?

MALORIE

But I'm not due for three weeks!

Far downstairs, a door SLAMS shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Felix runs in carrying the floor towel and a pillow.

Gary stumbles in from the back of the house, wheezing. Bleeding from his chin.

FELIX
 Just in time!
 (beat)
 Where's everyone else?

Gary doesn't answer right away. Tries to catch his breath.

FELIX (CONT'D)
 Gary...

Donald hurries downstairs, grinding to a halt by Felix when he notices Gary on the floor.

Gary looks up and shakes his head.

GARY
 There was... was one in the...
 tunnels. We got separated, and...
 god, I just ran.

Gary doesn't want to make eye contact.

DONALD
 This just keeps getting better.
 (to Gary)
 Stay downstairs. You hear me?

Gary nods. Overhead: Olympia's CRY of pain.

EXT. GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Angle on the third floor and the gray sky beyond.

Olympia's WAIL is joined by a second one: MALORIE.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Felix frantically fills a container with water at the sink--

Donald enters and starts pulling towels from a hanging rack--

FELIX
 Both of them?

DONALD
 This is what you'd call a stress-
 induced birth.

FELIX
 Do they know about Tom?

DONALD

No. And they aren't going to. Not until we get through this.

Donald moves for the stairs with the towels--

INT. ATTIC ROOM

Olympia and Malorie lie on their backs on the floor, atop mattresses covered with beach towels. Both are sweaty, trying to control their breathing. A sheet covers Olympia's lap, and a throw covers Malorie's.

It's raining, outside. Lightly. The rain tap-dances on the skylights above. There isn't enough light to get a good sense of the walls in the room.

A lantern sits on a rolling table near the women. Curled up by the lantern: TWO LEATHER BELTS, still with their Target price tags stuck to the buckles.

Malorie MOANS. And looks to Olympia.

Olympia looks back. Scared.

OLYMPIA

It's happening. It's really happening.

MALORIE

Tom? Tom!

Donald arrives and sets the towels by a set of tools: A pair of scissors. A knife. Metal binder clips.

DONALD

Tom's not here yet, but you're doing great. Both of you. Okay?

OLYMPIA

What do I do, tell me what to do--

DONALD

Keep breathing. And push. With every breath.

OLYMPIA

Are you sure?

He considers something. Tries to find the appropriate words:

DONALD

Do you, uh, want me to check, under
the sheet, and see--

OLYMPIA

(interrupting)

No no!

(breath)

Okay yes, okay!

Donald looks. Olympia squeezes her eyes shut.

DONALD

I can see the head, keep pushing!

Felix enters, drops off the container of water. But it's tall
and narrow, no good for soaking towels or washing newborns.

FELIX

Here.

DONALD

That isn't the right-- never mind,
stay with them, I'll go get it.

Donald rushes down the stairs, leaving Felix awkward and
nervous with the two women.

Malorie looks away, at the other wall...

And sees Edgar standing just beyond the overhead light.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Donald returns from upstairs and makes a bee-line for the
large, shallow Tupperware container.

The chaos and muffled sounds of footsteps in the attic can
still be heard down here.

DONALD

This is crazy. You don't bring kids
into this world.

The sudden sound of heavy KNOCKING on the back door startles
Donald. He goes to the mud room and looks in...

...to see through the covered glass portion of the door: the
silhouette of a MAN.

THE DOOR HANDLE wiggles. Trying to open.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Who's there!

TOM (O.S.)
Tom! It's Tom! Let me in!

Something with the sound of his voice... it's not like we've heard Tom before. Ragged. Raspy.

Donald starts for the door, but stops. Just like he did in front of Greg's bedroom door.

DONALD
How do I know you're not crazy?

TOM (O.S.)
Because you're an asshole!

Beat. Donald nods -- yeah, that's Tom. He reaches up to a shelf over the water-well whiteboard--

And grabs a SHOTGUN.

MOMENTS LATER

LOW ANGLE as Tom collapses on the floor of the mud room. Cuts and bruises mar his face. His coat is peppered with pieces of foliage as if he's run through the woods. His blindfold barely covers his eyes. And he's out of breath.

The shotgun barrel descends into frame by his head.

DONALD (O.S.)
Gary said you were dead.

Tom pulls off his blindfold. His eyes are wild with panic.

TOM
You let Gary back inside?

The shotgun barrel lifts away...

And now Donald is tense with a new fear.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Gary stands at a corner. His back to the room. Just standing there.

TOM (O.S.)
(from back of house)
GARY! YOU SON OF A BITCH!

Gary's hand reaches out and caresses a curtain.

The budgies in the cage begin CHIRPING wildly.

QUICK POPS:

1) Gary SMILES as he yanks down the curtains in his brother's house. There is no Carl. He then opens the door and something LARGE begins to push through the quilt protecting the threshold.

2) Gary steps on the front porch of Greg's house at night, noticing the wan light leaking out of corners of covered windows. He then takes a knife and cuts his own arm, feigning emergency to get Malorie to let him in.

3) Gary peels off his blindfold in the tunnels with Cheryl, Lucy, and Tom. He SMILES as they all stop in their tracks, the bird inside the box chirping and fluttering in panic.

INT. ATTIC ROOM

The women push. They strain. They sweat.

The blood vessels in Malorie's eyes burst, making her look extremely bloodshot.

Felix keeps reading from the parenthood book's chapter on the childbirth part and checking on the women.

FELIX

Little more...

A muted BLEATING. Non-localized.

Malorie stops pushing. Looks around.

MALORIE

Is that my baby?

Gasping for breath, the women both stop and listen. No, not bleating. SCREAMING.

OLYMPIA

What is that?

Felix stares at the attic door, behind Malorie. Unsure of what's happening downstairs he placates them with:

FELIX

Okay ladies, keep going, come on--

OLYMPIA

Is it out? Is it over?

Something CRASHES heavily downstairs. And then the sharp, shrill SCREECH of someone's voice.

Another CRASH shakes the dust off the attic rafters.

MALORIE

Felix, please...

Felix moves for the stairs--

FELIX

Hang on.

MALORIE

Don't go please wait--

But he passes her, bumping the rolling cart with the lantern.

The table drifts to the back wall as Malorie hears Tom's footsteps down the stairs...

The lantern illuminates the wall, exposing DOZENS OF CHARCOAL SKETCHES OF MONSTERS. All shapes and sizes. Creatures with hideous bodies and human faces. Things with no discernible head or tail. Beasts inspired by snakes, and spiders, and squid, and grizzly bears. Thin, gangly beings with hollow heads. A coterie of teeth, venom, and unblinking stares. The entire wall is papered with the artwork.

Malorie shudders in shock at it.

EDGAR

You all got stories. Mine is the worst of all.

(leans close)

Because I'm immune.

Malorie gazes, wide-eyed, at the wall, and then at Edgar.

MALORIE

You've... seen one?

Edgar nods. Nearby Olympia makes a noise as she pushes again, somewhere between a cry and a groan.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

(calling)

FELIX!

(back at Edgar)

You drew it? One of those things?

Edgar admires his work. Then faces Malorie.

EDGAR

If only it looked like one of them.

From downstairs, more SHOUTS, and then a thunderous GUNSHOT.

TOM (O.S.)

Gary has pulled down the curtains!

Malorie recognizes Tom's voice and wants to get up right now and go to him. But she can't move from her bed.

MALORIE

Tom! Is that you?! Tom--

More loud noises downstairs. And then footsteps.

The door opens, and Tom steps through. He looks unhinged, holding the shotgun Donald had moments ago.

TOM

The babies are coming now?

Malorie holds out her hand, and Tom goes to her side, gripping it.

MALORIE

I'm early, we're both early, it just started and then my water broke and I don't want it now--

TOM

Hey hey hey, shh, look at me. You're fine. You're going to make it. Okay? And right now I have to go back down and stop Gary before one of those things comes in.

Malorie tightens her grip on his hand.

MALORIE

Don't go. Don't go.

Tom leans down and kisses Malorie on the forehead.

TOM

I won't let them hurt you.

And then he leaves, shutting the door behind him.

Malorie, in tears, shakes her head and calls Tom's name, but her voice is drowned out by Olympia crying out, and then--

A newborn infant's cry. She's had her baby.

EDGAR
(to Malorie)
Your turn.

Malorie pushes. Her own baby gasps for air under the throw.

Nearby, Olympia pulls at the sheet over her lap, searching for her baby.

The old man reaches under the throw and lifts out Malorie's child, still attached to the umbilical cord.

Terrified of Edgar, Malorie takes the baby protectively--

MALORIE
Give him to me--

Edgar smiles with bloodied hands.

EDGAR
It's a boy.

OLYMPIA
Mine is a girl! I had a girl.

She's laughing as she cries, in hysterics.

EDGAR
Starin' down one of these things
didn't break me. Watching my wife
turn on our two kids nearly did.
She gored 'em both with a kitchen
blade, then cut her own throat.
(beat)
She sang to us as she did it.

MALORIE
Shut up shut up--

And then another heart-stopping GUNSHOT, this time from the second floor. And in that vacuum of silence...

Sounds from the stairs. Creaking of steps.
And the sound of the door opening.

Edgar looks up, toward the door. And frowns.

EDGAR
Don't you come up here.

OLYMPIA
Tom?

EDGAR

Don't look--

Olympia looks.

Still on her back on the mattress, she tilts her head back to look toward the stairs upside-down.

Her eyes widen, and her mouth opens in a gaping smile.

But with her head leaned back, it's a macabre frown.

MALORIE

Olympia no no--

Olympia doesn't blink, doesn't look away from the thing at the top of the stairs.

OLYMPIA

You're not so bad...

You're not so bad at all!

(then)

You wanna see my baby?

Malorie closes her eyes and puts her hand over her boy's face. She calls out to Olympia--

MALORIE

Cover the baby's eyes-- Olympia,
please-- cover her eyes--

EDGAR

Go on, get out of here. Git.

MALORIE

Please, please-- Olympia, just let
me hold her for a moment...

Olympia SNARLS. Chews on something just out of view, her body hunched over her child.

Malorie reaches out with one arm, keeping the other on her own baby, close to her chest. But she doesn't open her eyes.

EDGAR (O.S.)

You're doin' good, Malorie. Better
than my wife did.

Floorboards creak again. And then that raspy breath. Inches away. Close enough to agitate Malorie's hair.

Something wet tears. Splashes.

Olympia's bloody hand grabs a binder clamp.

The baby Girl's face is covered by the bloody bedsheet.

MALORIE

Olympia... Talk to me...

But she doesn't. Instead, Olympia moves to the window.

Malorie refuses to look.

Edgar gets to his feet, his leg quavering under the effort. Staring down the thing just outside view.

EDGAR

Nobody else is lookin' at you
today, now git.

Trailing a chewed-through umbilical cord gushing vital fluids from her insides, Olympia yanks a blanket off the window.

Gray morning light hits Malorie in the face. She shelters her eyes with her arm. The window creaks open.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

What are you doing, woman--

Olympia climbs up and sits on the ledge, facing inside.

She leans back like a diver going into the water--
And then falls out the window--

Edgar moves to stop her, but gets there a moment too late--

In anguish, Malorie screams--

MALORIE

GET OUT OF HERE!

The thing just a few feet from her takes a step back.

The stairs creak.

EDGAR

That's it, go on outta here.

It retreats. Malorie still keeps her eyes closed. Messy with afterbirth. Her breathing shallow.

Edgar leans close.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

You did it.

Malorie shudders, clinging to her child. Edgar stands upright and sneers:

EDGAR (CONT'D)

It was that new fella. Gary.

Malorie doesn't answer. She's beyond words.

Edgar limps for the door.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Gonna have to put him down.

At the top of the stairs, the old man looks back at the room a final time. And on Malorie, alone with the two infants.

With that, he leaves.

Malorie shakes from the trauma. She hears the baby Girl let out a weak cry from under the sheet.

With effort, Malorie finally opens her eyes and zeroes in on the place where the Girl has been hidden.

She crawls to the other baby and cradles her with her own.

Malorie sits there.
Holding the two infants.

All is quiet.

No birds chirping.
No screaming or shouting.
No crashing of furniture.
The rain has stopped.

Just Malorie and the two newborns. And then...

A phone rings.

Malorie's posture stiffens. She waits.

It rings again.

She sees the scissors on the floor. The clamps.
And the towels.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie descends, still cradling both babies.

She wears a stretch of towel as a blindfold.
The boy and girl are covered as well.
And she's snipped and clamped her umbilical cord.

From the ground floor, the phone continues to ring.

Carefully, cautiously, she crosses the hall.
Her foot steps on a body. In a pool of blood.
Malorie trembles. And steps over the body.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie descends the last few steps and nearly slips on more blood in the entry. The front door hangs wide open.

She passes by another body on the floor.
The phone rings. For the tenth time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malorie sits down on the couch.

Felix's body is seated on the other end of the couch.
But his head is missing.

The phone rings loudly on the coffee table.

Malorie's hand reaches out... finds it.
Just as it stops ringing.

Malorie brings it to her ear, hopeful--

MALORIE
Hello? Hello?

A faint dial tone bleeds out, audible from here.

MALORIE (CONT'D)
No... No no no--

She hangs up and presses asterisk-6-9.

Holds the phone to her ear again, in time to hear the high octave three tones preceding:

AUTOMATED VOICE
(filtered)
We're sorry but that number could
not be reached. Please hang up--

With a trembling hand, she sets the phone down.

And she begins to cry.

With head in hands, she sobs.
All the while, blood seeps toward her from Felix's body.

EXT. BACK LAWN - DAY

The sun hangs low over the lawn, where a fire burns.
A bonfire made of a pile of bodies.

Malorie stands a dozen paces away, hearing it burn.
She wears a scarf over her eyes.
And carries a pole on her shoulders.
Water jugs dangle from the pole.

In this pose, in this light, she looks like Lady Justice.

Among the burning bodies: The ADOPTION FLYER she took from
the hospital so long ago. "You have a choice!"

It catches fire.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The months tick by:

- 1) Malorie opens the phone book, red pen in hand.
- 2) Malorie holds infant Girl in a rocking chair to the sounds
of Frank Sinatra on the radio. The house is a mess.
- 3) A fire burns in the fireplace. The babies are close for
warmth. Malorie's breath is visible.
- 4) The phone book. The final name in the Z alphabet. Last one
in the book gets a red line through it.
- 5) Malorie hangs up the phone in defeat. Utterly alone.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

A year later. The two crib-forts sit in the room.
Covered by a blanket.

Malorie arrives. Trembling.
Holding a hypodermic needle in her hand.

Outside, something bumps against the house.
A tree, maybe. The wind.

Malorie approaches the cribs.
Draws back the blanket.

Inside: Boy and Girl. Each maybe a year old.
Asleep. Fitful sleep.

Malorie cries silently.
Reaches in with the needle.

The pointy tip is charred black from heat.
Pointed straight down. Shaking in her grip.

It hovers over Boy's left eyelid.
An inch. Less.

Malorie's fingers reach and open Boy's eye.
A breath from receiving the needle.

Something creaks nearby. Something stirs.

Malorie looks up and recoils in surprise.

Girl sits up in her crib.
Looking at Malorie. Head tilted.
Just watching. Innocent. Confused.

Malorie puts a hand to her mouth.
Drops the needle.
Slumps against the wall. A mess.

For a long time, she sits there.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Eyes and nose red from tears, Malorie steps in.
Stares at her reflection in the mirror.

She reaches out, picks up a pair of scissors.
Brings them to her face...
And then starts to cut her own hair.

PANNING to the mirror...
It's now the end of the haircut.
Short-cropped. A warrior's cut.

Malorie hardens her face.
She's made a decision: Survival. But on her terms.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Two years later.
Boy and Girl are both nearly the age of the opener.
Playing with simple toys.

Sounds of HAMMERING nearby.

Malorie reinforces a wood plank over a window.
Muscular arms. Still short hair.

When she's done, she steps back.

MALORIE

All right. Going out for dinner.
You remember the rules?

The children nod. Malorie nods back, like a sergeant.

She crosses past a wall now covered with a giant Riverbridge city map, likely taken from a municipal building. The map is riddled with push-pins. She's covered a lot of ground.

Before Malorie leaves for the back door--

GIRL

Malorie?

MALORIE

Yes, Girl.

GIRL

Do you think you'll get to letter
'K' again today?

The phone book rests open again on the coffee table.
Its place marked by the pen.

MALORIE

(beat)

We'll see.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Quiet. Stillness.

Malorie crouches, following a string.
Her boots crunch under the winter ground.

The string leads to a rabbit trap.
Something furry caught inside.

Malorie feels it: A dead rabbit.

EXT. BACK LAWN - DUSK

Malorie, still blindfolded, carries two dead rabbits tied together, marching cautiously toward the back door.

Her hand searches for the fence line.
Finds it. Her familiar landmark.

She takes a breath. Distantly...
A phone rings.

Malorie perks up. Hurries for the back door.
Abandoning the rabbits.

She gets to the back door.
Struggles with the keys. Rinnng!

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The phone rings loudly in here.
Boy and Girl stand arguing about it.

A door slams and Malorie runs in--

GIRL
We don't know what to do!

MALORIE
I got it--

She grabs the receiver and answers, breathless--

MALORIE (CONT'D)
Hello!

RICK (V.O.)
(filtered)
Hello, is this Malorie?

MALORIE
Yes! Yes, that's me, yes.

RICK (V.O.)
(filtered)
My name is Rick. I got your
message.

MALORIE
Rick what?

RICK (V.O.)
Holland.

Malorie flips through the book to the 'H' entry.

ECU: "Holland, Richard." Circled in red.

MALORIE
Oh thank god.
(emotional)
Where are you, Rick? Are you safe?
Are... are you with others?

RICK (V.O.)
We're a community here. Seventy-
three of us and counting.

MALORIE
Rick... Do you, do you have room
for three more?

Asked as if it were the most important question on Earth.

RICK (V.O.)
Of course.

Malorie sits down. Suddenly weak-kneed.
Boy and Girl huddle close.

RICK (V.O.)
Where are you coming from?

MALORIE
Riverbridge. Upper east side, near
state highway one-eighty.

RICK (V.O.)
(beat)
You'd have to take the river.

MALORIE
What's wrong with the river?

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Catching up to the trip on the river.
Late in the afternoon. The sun hangs low.

Short-haired Malorie rows.

Girl plays with her three puzzle pieces.
They all hear something, ahead. Rapids.

MALORIE
Children? It's nearly time.

GIRL
For what?

MALORIE
To look.

This is what's wrong with the river.
Girl whips her head around at Malorie-- "look?"

Malorie steadies the boat with the oar. Slows down.

Birds SQUAWK and CAW in flight overhead.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

There are many rocks here, and the water is shallow in places. But we need to land before the waterfall.

BOY

I thought we weren't supposed to look. Ever.

Malorie takes a breath.

MALORIE

This time is different. We can't miss the first landmark. The statue. Remember the steps?

GIRL

Eighty-six, forty-four, thirty.

MALORIE

Good. Landmarks?

BOY

Statue. Bridge. Car. Stone.

A hundred migrating birds above them.

All making noise now.

GIRL

Malorie? Birds.

MALORIE

That's a good sign. It means everything's all right.

The row boat gently moves downstream.

Overhead: The birds chatter, in migration. It's a chorus of normalcy.

The sound of the river rapids gets nearer.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

We're close. I am going to look now. Okay?

Malorie grabs for her blindfold. Hooks a thumb underneath it. But a new sound gives her pause:

The birds. They sound more aggressive.

The chatter becomes a psychotic symphony.

CLOSE ON THE FLOCK in midair.
They crash headlong into each other.

They pick at their wings mid-flight.
They attack one another.
Beaks. Feathers. Blood.

Drops of blood land on Malorie's face.

Around them: splashes. Everything is not all right.

Birds dropping like feathered meteors.

Boy and Girl tense up.

BOY
They're falling out of the sky!

A blackbird crashes into the boat with them.

Wings convulsing. Neck broken.

Then: Their boat suddenly stops with a jolt.

BOY (CONT'D)
What happened?

MALORIE
We hit a rock.

In the shoebox, their budgie begins CHIRPING.

Girl stiffens in alarm. TIGHT ON her face:

GIRL
(sotto)
No we didn't.

The boat tilts slightly, from external weight.

And then that god-forsaken sound, close to our ears:
The signature, UNEARTHLY CRY of one of those things.

Malorie, Boy and Girl clamp their hands over their ears.

In the distance: A DOZEN MORE SOUNDS just like it.

Malorie grips the oar--
Then stabs in the direction of the noise--

She comes in contact with something. Resistance.

In retaliation, it capsizes the boat.

They all start to SCREAM as they go into the river--

FROM UNDERWATER:

Malorie splashes in, toppled off the boat.
BOY and GIRL drop in nearby, but travel faster underwater in
the current, their limbs wheeling for purchase--

Overhead, on the surface, the boat upends.

Malorie reaches out for Boy as he passes by--
Her blindfold still around her face--

And then the water cavitates at Malorie's leg and something
SPLASHES in and grabs hold of her ankle--

But the foaming water and chaos is too much to get any sort
of distinct look at it-- is it a hand? A claw? It's pale--

Boy and Girl drift past, still carried by the water--

Malorie kicks hard-- gets free, goes up for air--

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE

Boy and Girl cling to the embankment.

Boy climbs to shore and helps Girl up.

BOY

Malorie!

No response.

FARTHER BACK, Malorie emerges from the water, gasping for
air. Her blindfold has been torn away in the current.

She coughs, keeps her eyes closed.
Splashes behind her. Something advances.

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

Where are you?

Malorie launches in the direction of his voice.

MALORIE

Go! Find the statue!

Boy leads Girl off the shore, reaching ahead still
blindfolded, arm outstretched until it touches--

A FIGURE towering over Boy.
 Made of stone.
 The Virgin Mary, eight feet tall.

Boy touches it. Confirms it.
 Then he calls out to Malorie:

BOY
 Here, it's here!

ON MALORIE, trying to zero in on Boy's voice.
 She changes course and moves for them--

MALORIE
 Keep talking!

BOY (O.S.)
 We're at the statue!

Behind Malorie-- sound of something reaching shore.

And farther back-- MORE splashes.
 Five. Ten. A dozen. All zeroing in on them.

Boy and Girl stand at the statue, full of fear.
 Remarkably, Boy still has the shoebox with budgie inside.

It CHIRPS in alarm, telling them what they already know:

GIRL
 They're coming!

Malorie gets there first.

MALORIE
 I'm here, I'm here.

GIRL
 Malorie. I can't run that fast.

All three know that. The creatures are moving in.

Malorie crouches down to speak close to them.

MALORIE
 You two follow the steps. Go. Now.

Boy doesn't need to be told twice. He grabs Girl and goes.
 But Girl's head still faces Malorie, asking:

GIRL
 What are you going to do?

Malorie stands up and faces back the way they came.
At the sound of the dozen creatures closing in.

MALORIE
COME AND GET ME.

Then she turns and runs in a different angle from her kids.
BOY'S FOOT stomps the ground until it finds a paved path.

BOY
Start counting.

He pulls Girl by the hand.

STAYING WITH BOY AND GIRL as they run, Boy clutching the box.

Girl counts to herself, her mouth moving--

Their feet slapping along a gravel path until--

Baseboards. Wood. A guard rail. A babbling brook.

They're on a bridge. Still running.

Girl's arm cracks against the railing.
Boy course-corrects.

After the bridge the path intersects a road--

And ahead: a stalled CAR in the ditch.

GIRL
Eighty-two, eighty-three--

They're early. Boy collides with the car.

They both get their breath. Boy shouts back:

BOY
Car!

GIRL
Are we going?

BOY
Wait.

They breathe hard.

FINDING MALORIE running blindly but full-tilt through tall
grass, small branches of trees whipping her.

STAYING WITH MALORIE like we did with Boy and Girl--

She keeps her arms outstretched--

Moving fast--

MALORIE'S POV

Black. Her breath is hard and heavy.
Her heartbeat is strong, palpable.
The sounds of her feet crunching in tall grass.
In one forward speaker, distantly: Boy's voice.

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

Malorie!

Malorie pauses.

The monsters stampede behind her: A mountain of sound,
crashing foliage, snapping branches. Getting closer.

The sound of Malorie's feet thump again until suddenly--

A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD as Malorie trips into the brook just a
few feet from the bridge, eyes flitting open on the way down--

MALORIE (O.S.)

Oh god--

ON MALORIE

Hitting hard in the brook, clamping her eyes shut again.

But this is just a little stream full of rocks. Her arm is
cut and possibly broken by the fall.

STAYING WITH MALORIE again as she gets up and climbs the
other bank of the stream. Breathless.

Trees bend and fall into frame behind her. Crashing.

One comes down frightfully close to her. A hailstorm of
leaves descend around her.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

Keep running!

ANGLE ON TREETOPS

The monsters plow through the wilderness.
Then sounds of them crossing the brook in pursuit.
Always just out of frame.

FINDING BOY AND GIRL

Running. Along a corridor made of barbed wire.
Like threading a needle. Purposefully set up.

They're not on a road now but smooth concrete.
Like the entry to a museum or school.

GIRL

Forty-one, forty-two, forty-three,
Boy, stop!

Boy skids to a stop.
They're still in the barbed-wire corridor.

Boy reaches, pulling Girl three steps further, into a corner
where the wire dogs right--

And a large stone PLACARD is set into the walkway.

His hand touches and pulls Girl to face their right.

As they run this final corridor, they count together.

REVEALING the text on the placard as Boy and Girl run toward
a set of double doors thirty paces ahead--

JANET TUCKER SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

TIGHT ANGLE ON MALORIE

Running. Lost. Eyes squeezed shut.
Bleeding from cuts. Favoring one leg.

The monsters thunder behind her like a herd of buffalo.

Then-- the inevitable. Malorie trips.
Takes a hard spill on the ground.

PRESSING IN ON MALORIE'S FACE

The earth trembles around her.
Shadows of misshapen feet pass by, shark-swift.

All the while she keeps her eyes shut.
Shaking in terror.

AT THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Boy and Girl reach the doors just as a door opens.

RICK steps out to steer them in, built like a lumberjack,
both eyes full of cataracts. He's completely blind.

RICK

Children! In here!

Girl rushes to the sound of his voice, lets him steer her
through the doorway inside.

Boy reaches Rick but stops short of going in.
Instead, Boy turns and shouts out toward Malorie:

BOY

Malorie!

TIGHTER ON MALORIE'S FACE

Among the rasping of the creatures surrounding her.
Through it, the distant voice of Boy.

One of those THINGS turns her over on her back.
Shadows fall over her face.

MALORIE

Stay. AWAY.

She finds her strength again and rises.
Clutching something in her fist. A knife.

She raises it in threatening gesture--

MALORIE (CONT'D)

I'm not going to look at you.

Then she turns the knife blade on herself.
Holds its tip a centimeter from her eyelid.

MALORIE (CONT'D)

I'll make sure of it.

Beat.

Remaining TIGHT on Malorie, glimpsing only briefly one of
those things behind her, blurred, moving unlike anything that
lives in this reality.

Sounds of movement, around her.

She presses the blade to her lid. Piercing it enough to
elicit a drop of blood.

The monsters all retreat. As if they somehow know, as the one
did in the attic: She won't look.

With that, Malorie collapses again to the ground.

PULLING BACK AND UP, revealing more of the world around
Malorie. The creatures always just offscreen.

Their shadows from the sun dance over her body, elongated and
distorted beyond accurate description as they retreat.

BOY (O.S.)
Malorie! Get inside!

Boy's voice registers in Malorie's ears.
She raises her head.

INT. SCHOOL - DUSK

Peering out through the narrow opening in the door, over Rick's shoulder.

Malorie limps the final steps of the barbed-wire corridor, drawn to Rick's voice.

RICK
Just a little further, that's it.

She steps inside with Rick's guidance, and Rick shuts the door behind her.

RICK (CONT'D)
There you go. You're safe now.

Malorie dares to open her eyes. This is her destination. If it's not safe now, there's no other option.

She does.

The school grounds are protected by high walls and overhangs, letting in natural light.

The main space is a garden-like courtyard with trees, the roof built as a chain-link cage, creating a kind of aviary.

More PEOPLE OF ALL AGES gather to greet them. Some of them blind, but many who are sighted. Refugees, like Malorie.

Malorie takes it in and starts to weep.

GIRL
Can we look now?

Malorie pulls Girl and Boy close. With a wet face:

MALORIE
Yes, you can look.

She pulls at their blindfolds.

Boy and Girl look around at all the people. And at the sky. And the trees.

They want to look everywhere at once. Because they've never seen any of it before. Rick crouches down beside them.

RICK

And what are your names?

BOY

Boy.

GIRL

Girl.

Rick tilts his head. What? But Malorie turns the children to face her.

MALORIE

No.

(to Boy)

Your name is Tom.

(to Girl)

And yours is Olympia.

Boy and Girl look at Malorie with wonder. Girl gasps. Their faces light up like it's Christmas morning.

BOY

Tom? My name is Tom? Tom!

GIRL

I have a name?

Malorie nods. The wall she's put up in front of her emotions begins to crack, with a hitch in her breath.

She reaches out and brings them both close, into a hug. It's the kind of affection they've craved for years. They hug back, clinging to Malorie, not wanting to break the spell.

When they part, Boy and Girl then run to the other CHILDREN in the group and begin introducing themselves with their names, like it's a new outfit they're showing off.

Boy remembers the budgie in the shoebox, goes to it and opens the lid of the box.

Inside: The budgie flutters. Looks sideways at Boy.

BOY

Go on, now.

He picks it up in cupped hands, and lets it free.

The little bird takes to the air, now in the safety of this outdoor aviary.

Rick puts a gentle hand on Malorie's shoulder.

RICK
Are they both yours?

Malorie finally owns it. Watching the children look wide-eyed at the world, she smiles proudly through her tears.

MALORIE
Yes. I'm their mother.

FADE OUT.

THE END.