

CRONES

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EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - NIGHT

A stormy night.

A nursing home in the midst of a vast garden. Woods sprawl in the distance.

Built in the 19th century, it is a beautiful, imposing neo-Gothic building over two floors, home to over a hundred residents.

Embroidered on banners by the entry gates is the name of the place: SUNSET MANOR, FAIRFORD, EST. 1911.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

ANNETTE (80) sits on her bed, knitting.

The room is divided by a curtain, with basic furniture -- bed, chair, bedside table, small desk -- on either side.

All is quiet...

... When suddenly, the door slams open! Nurse ELIZABETH (50) and an orderly, GARY, half-carry, half-push ZELDA (80s) kicking and screaming into the room.

ZELDA

Let me go! NO!!!!

Annette and Zelda are roughly the same age, yet time has been kinder to sprightly Annette. Zelda looks infinitely frailer and ill.

The nurse and the orderly drag her to bed, but she flails about, desperate to get away.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

No! I don't want to sleep!!!

ELIZABETH

Now, now. You were falling asleep in the living room.

ZELDA

No. NO!

Annette watches as they grab Zelda in one smooth, professionally trained motion.

But Zelda thrashes about so much, she slips out of grasp and crashes on the floor!

ANNETTE

Oh dear. Zelda, are you alright?

The two nurses pick her up, and lay her on the bed.

Gary grabs her arms as Elizabeth ties restraints around her waist.

ZELDA

No! NO! NO! NO!

ELIZABETH

You're being unreasonable, Zelda.

Zelda stops moving, resigned. Tears stream down her face.

Annette pats her hand and smiles reassuringly.

The orderly leaves.

Elizabeth prepares Zelda's medication.

ZELDA

It's coming back...

Annette holds the back of Zelda's neck.

Elizabeth hands her the medication and the glass.

ELIZABETH

How many times have we talked about this?
It's just a figment of your imagination.
A bad dream. Nothing more.

ZELDA

(to Annette)

Please don't let it come near me.

ELIZABETH

You're safe here. It's just Annette and
me. And we would never hurt you, would
we?

Zelda is too tired to argue. She chases the pill with a sip of water.

She opens her mouth wide for Elizabeth to see.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Good.

Annette gets up.

ZELDA

Don't leave.

ANNETTE

I have to go to bed.

(Pointing to the other side)

I'll be right here.

ZELDA

Can't you see it? Can't you..?

ANNETTE

No, Zelda dear. There's nobody else here.

Zelda shakes her head. She is truly terrified.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

I'll keep an eye out tonight, make sure
no one comes near you. How's that?

Zelda nods.

A TABBY CAT enters the room.

Zelda yelps and cowers, horrified.

ZELDA

No! NO!!

The cat strolls towards her. She panics. Neither Annette nor the nurse pay attention, until the cat hops onto the bed.

Annette shudders. But Elizabeth is not impressed.

ELIZABETH

It's just the cat. It doesn't mean
anything.

(to the cat)

Come on kitty, away with you, shoo!

The cat stares them down, hops off, and leaves.

Elizabeth switches off the bedside light.

She walks Annette to her bed.

ANNETTE

(whispering)

What if she did see something? Is it
possible that --

ELIZABETH

It's nonsense, Annette. She's ill. You know that.

Annette slips under the covers.

The nurse draws the curtain dividing the room, then heads for the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT (LATER)

The outdoor light throws long shadows through the large, veiled window. Thunder rolls in the distance.

ANNETTE lies in bed, snoring, her short curly hair in a net.

A noise from somewhere across the room.

She stirs.

Noises again. From the other side of the curtain comes a whimper, along with odd suction sounds and whispers.

Annette looks up to the drawn curtain, and her eyes widen.

There is a shape standing on the other side of the curtain, by Zelda's bed.

She squints but can't identify it.

She sits up and fumbles for her glasses.

The noises continue, increasingly pained...

The shape bent over Zelda seems almost human-shaped, yet its proportions are wrong, stretched out, too long.

Annette puts on her glasses.

It's the shadow of a tree through the moonlit open window.

She breathes a sigh of relief.

Another noise.

Remembering her promise, she pushes the covers, slides out of bed, and steps to the curtain, her bare feet making little noise.

But the cat hisses and runs between her feet, and she loses balance!

She holds on to the curtain, avoiding a nasty fall... and hears a crash on the other side.

She listens.

Quiet.

Annette draws the curtain...

Whatever she sees must be absolutely terrifying -- she opens her mouth for a silent scream, clutching her chest as if seized by a sharp pain in her heart, and staggers backwards!!

Eyes and mouth still wide with fright, she collapses on the floor.

CUT TO:

CREDITS SEQUENCE

INT. FAMILY DINING ROOM - DAY

CU on a birthday cake. A mass of strawberries and whipped cream topped with two candles: '70'.

A quaint, pretty countryside cottage room. Soft, golden light filters through the window.

Framed pictures of ballet dancers and family memories line the shelf on the wall.

JUDITH ALBRIGHT sits in front of the cake, beaming, happy, youthful.

Hair in a loose bun, clothes uniquely styled, a twinkle in her eye, she's the kind of woman who challenges our preconceptions of old age.

She looks twenty years younger and still turns heads wherever she goes.

Her grandson JOSH (17) -- dressed in black, shy and awkward like only a teenager can be -- and her daughter BARBARA (40) sit on either side.

There are a few more people around the table, and everyone is significantly younger than the birthday girl.

Judith blows her candles. Everyone applauds. Josh high fives her. Smiles all around.

A LITTLE GIRL (5) steps up to Judith and pulls her sleeve. She wants to play.

Judith smiles, gets up, and chases the giggling, delighted girl around the room, Josh helping her chase.

BARBARA

Mom, maybe you should take it easy.

JUDITH

Nonsense. Grandchildren keep us young!

Judith keeps running...

Suddenly, Judith slows down. She leans against the side of the table, her grin freezing into a grimace. She tries to move her right arm, glancing around the room, a surprised, pained look in her eyes.

We can hear her heartbeat, loud and irregular.

JOSH

(muffled)

Granny? Are you okay? Granny??

Judith's knees buckle. Still clutching the tablecloth, she falls to the ground, dragging plates, cutlery and cake along with her.

Barbara's voice, and the agitation all around, sound very far away.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(muffled, screaming)

Call an ambulance! Now!! Hang in there, Granny!

END OF CREDITS

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

A car drives through the gates of the Sunset Manor Home.

A high brick wall surrounds the lush gardens.

A surveillance camera turns to film the new arrivals on their way. No one comes in or out these gates unnoticed.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Director CAROLINE BENSON (50), all business and fake warmth, guides JUDITH, JOSH and BARBARA down the hallway to room 211.

Holding Josh's arm, Judith walks a little stooped, but keeps up as best she can. She looks a little worse for wear than when we first met her.

Her hands shake ever so slightly as she checks her watch, fishes a pill case out of her pocket, and pours a couple in her hand. She swallows them quickly.

JOSH
(whispering)
You okay?

She nods.

Two names - 'Judith' and 'Annette' - appear scribbled in cheerful, childish letters next to the room number.

Ms. Benson opens the door.

MS BENSON
Here we are.

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

JUDITH, JOSH and BARBARA walk in, followed by MS BENSON.

On the right side of the room, an old woman sits in the armchair facing the window, her face turned away from the door.

The left side of the room -- previously Zelda's -- has been redecorated and filled with Judith's belongings.

Nurse LIESEL (late 20s) empties Judith's suitcase by the bed.

LIESEL
Oh, hello there.

She smiles.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
I'm Liesel.

JUDITH
Judith.

They shake hands.

Judith's desk is covered with pictures of ballet dancers - the same pictures we've seen in her dining room. She picks up a frame. On closer inspection, the dancer is Judith herself, aged 20.

She sighs and puts the picture back down next to a portrait of her late husband, George (50s), sitting at a piano.

On a poster, her 20-year-old self, dances with devils in an adaptation of Faust. A pair of threadbare red dancing shoes rests underneath, on the bedside table.

Nevertheless -- Judith doesn't look impressed with the room.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

You didn't have to unpack for me. I could have done it myself.

Liesel points to the photos.

LIESEL

Those are beautiful. You were a professional dancer?

JUDITH

(smiling)
I dabbled.

JOSH

Granny's kidding, she was a star.

Judith smiles.

Liesel is about to compliment her, when Ms. Benson interrupts.

MS BENSON

Before I forget: if you've got any medication with you, leave it with me. The nurses will make sure you get the right pills with each meal or at bedtime.

JUDITH

Oh. I've always managed by myself, thank you. I never miss a pill.

There's a hint of condescension in Ms. Benson's smile.

MS BENSON

And we'll make sure you never do.

Judith smiles back, without any warmth. She doesn't surrender the pill box in her pocket.

MS BENSON (CONT'D)

You're also aware of our no cell phone policy.

JUDITH

I'm sorry, what?

MS BENSON

For the peace and quiet of the house, we don't allow phones anywhere in the building. The signal might also interfere with some medical equipment.

JUDITH

You're pulling my leg.

Ms. Benson stares. Barbara nods.

Judith reluctantly relinquishes her phone to her daughter.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

(to Josh, joking)

So much for all the exciting pics I could have sent you from here.

Her grandson by her side, she turns to the window overlooking the garden -- neat, vast, bordered by woods.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Well, at least it's quiet here. That's good. I'm a light sleeper.

Judith observes as a few feet below, an OLD WOMAN makes her way slowly along the building, helped by a NURSE. It's a depressing sight, and Judith cringes.

But she smiles when she turns to Josh - she doesn't want him to see her distress.

MS BENSON

I'll leave you to it. Let me know if there's anything you need.

ON BARBARA AND MS BENSON:

Before she walks out, Barbara joins Ms. Benson for a word out of Judith's earshot.

BARBARA

Ms. Benson... We're hoping she'll stay with us on the weekends. Will that be-

MS BENSON

Actually... I strongly advise against it for the first two to three months. Your mother will need to establish a routine, figure out her new life. We've found that the process slows down quite a bit when residents spend time outside.

BARBARA

Oh.

MS BENSON

But you're welcome to visit any time you like.

She hands her a small piece of paper.

MS BENSON (CONT'D)

Here is the code to exit the front door, by the way. Please keep it out of sight of any residents.

A moment of silence.

MS BENSON (CONT'D)

Don't worry, she'll be fine. Your mother is in very safe hands.

The director leaves.

Barbara turns back to Josh and Judith, and for a moment watches them chat and whisper in hushed voices. There's a clear bond between them.

Her smile is a little bit sad.

ON JOSH AND JUDITH:

JOSH

You don't belong here. It's full of old people.

JUDITH

I'm seventy, Josh.

JOSH

Age is just a number. It doesn't mean anything.

Her expression changes. Grief.

JUDITH

No, my darling. That's just what old people tell themselves to feel better. Age is what makes it hard for me to get up in the morning, or sleep well at night. It's what keep me from dancing, or from chasing little children around the birthday table. It's what made my heart fail and it's the one thing that only gets worse with time.

He tries to smile.

JOSH

Hey, you look younger than everyone here.

She smiles back, sad.

JUDITH

Thanks. I think so too. But you know what? Every single one of these people thinks the same. We all think we're still kids, that we still look young.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Age isn't a number, sweetheart. It's a fucking tragedy.

JOSH

(looking crestfallen)

I can't -- I don't think I can deal with this.

She sighs and puts a hand on his arm, trying to comfort him.

JUDITH

We're both gonna have to learn.

As her words sink in, Barbara joins them.

BARBARA

Okay mom, we'll let you settle.

JUDITH

Right.

JOSH

Already?

Barbara gives her mother an awkward hug.

BARBARA

Call me if you need anything, okay?

JUDITH

Okay.

Judith holds her a bit closer. Whispers in her ear.

BARBARA

Thanks mom.

Josh hugs his grandma.

JUDITH

(whispering)

Don't worry. I'll be okay.

He follows his mother out. Before exiting, he turns for one last look at her.

She looks small and lost in her new surroundings. It dawns on him: nothing will ever be the same.

He shuts the door on his way out.

Finally alone, Judith walks to her desk.

She pulls the box of pills out of her pocket, hides it in the back of her cupboard and moves on... when a whine from the other side of the curtain interrupts her.

Words muttered unintelligibly.

She peeks at the old woman in the armchair by the window.

It is ANNETTE - but her heart attack left her as frail and ill as her late roommate Zelda.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to bother you. I'm Judith. I guess we're roomies. Like the good old days of college.

Annette shakes her head. She grabs her Bible and clasps it against her, but can't manage a coherent response.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Looks like I caught you at a bad time.

She steps away.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Wow.

Judith sits on the edge of her bed.

She sighs.

The contrast between her ballerina pictures in foreground, and the sad elderly lady in background, is striking.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FAMILY DINING ROOM - NIGHT

BARBARA and JOSH sit at the dining table, looking down at their meal, not saying a word.

There's an empty seat between them -- clearly Judith's. Her absence is palpable.

Barbara finally breaks the silence.

BARBARA

We have to remember it was her choice.

JOSH

We could have tried harder to talk her out of it. She doesn't belong there.

BARBARA

No one's ever been able to talk her out of anything she'd decided to do. You know she's *always* right.

Josh smiles at the recollection. Then frowns again.

JOSH

We can't lose her, mom. Just thinking about it -- I'd give anything to avoid it.

BARBARA

I know you would, sweetheart. I know.

They resume eating silently.

JOSH

Who's gonna watch scary movies with me now?

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

ANGLE ON a HORROR MOVIE -- chainsaw, blood, screaming victims.

JUDITH lies in bed, distractedly watching the little television across the room.

She fumbles for the remote.

She switches the movie off -- when a real-life, blood-curdling scream makes her jump out of her skin! The cries come from right outside her door.

EXT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

JUDITH peeks out the door.

IMOGEN (80) screams her lungs out while ELIZABETH attempts to grab her by the shoulders and take her back to her room.

The woman's despair distorts her features; she looks mad, possessed. It's an unsettling sight.

IMOGEN

Let go! I don't want to go to sleep!

ELIZABETH

Now, now.

Elizabeth accidentally touches the woman's hair in her struggle to subdue her.

IMOGEN

No! Not my hair. Don't touch my hair!

The nurse finally gets hold of her arms and pushes her back towards her room down the hall.

Imogen suddenly whips around and stares right at Judith.

IMOGEN (CONT'D)

Go away. Leave.

Judith is taken aback.

ELIZABETH

That's quite enough.

(to Judith)

Go back to bed. I'll take care of her.

Imogen moans on her way back.

IMOGEN

I want to go home.

ELIZABETH

You are home.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH lies on her back, eyes open.

ANNETTE whimpers O.S.

Judith sighs, annoyed by the noise already. She closes her eyes.

Another sound across the room, like a whisper, or a rustle.

She ignores it and places a pillow over her ear.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

JUDITH stands next to a NURSE helping a MAN in a wheelchair.

The man fiddles with his sweater and speaks to no one in particular, shooting anxious glances around him. He's at an advanced stage of dementia.

The elevator doors open. Judith walks out.

INT. GROUND FLOOR DINING HALL - DAY

A large hall with bay windows and round tables.

Decoration is sparse: potted plants, the odd painting.

About forty RESIDENTS, variably able-bodied, sit around the table. NURSES help some of them eat.

A staggering amount of residents are plagued by dementia.

Breakfast tray in hands, JUDITH looks for an empty chair.

LIESEL welcomes her.

LIESEL

How are you today?

JUDITH

Good. First day jitters I guess.

LIESEL

I saved a seat for you by the window. Me, I can't face the day without breakfast. And a cup of tea to put a fresh perspective on things.

JUDITH

Right.

LIESEL

Go ahead, grab a seat.

Judith gives her a warm smile and takes her tray to an empty table by a window.

Liesel pours tea into her cup.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

Would you like to visit the grounds later on? I can make time for a little stroll if you like.

Judith smiles.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

LIESEL and JUDITH walk at a leisurely pace down a tree-lined path.

It's a misty, late summer day, and the building looms like a dark shadow behind them.

LIESEL

Are you from the area?

JUDITH

Not really. My daughter settled in Fairford, so here I am. I've lived everywhere.

LIESEL

Do you miss traveling?

JUDITH

I miss dancing. I miss it more than anything else. It wasn't just my job, it was my way of expressing myself. When I quit the stage I started teaching, but eventually age caught up with me.

She looks around, lost in thought.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I wasn't ready for this change. But I don't want to become a burden.

LIESEL

You look in great shape.

Liesel pats her hand. The gesture is a bit condescending, but Judith lets it slide.

JUDITH

My grandson keeps me young.

They walk in silence for a moment.

On one side is the wire fence encircling the property. It seems pretty sturdy throughout, but Judith frowns when she notices a gap.

Someone has cut the fence, just enough for a slim person to slip through.

She's about to remark upon it when-

LIESEL

Let me show you something.

They head towards the woods.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

JUDITH stumbles in the moss and grass of the woods, pushing away branches, trailing behind LIESEL.

She strains to keep up, frustrated at herself and her slow limbs.

JUDITH

Where the hell are you taking me?

Liesel reaches the edge of a clearing.

LIESEL

You okay?

JUDITH

Sure. Just a little out of practice on safaris.

Judith nearly steps on a dead bird, and recoils.

It's a crow, head missing, body devoured by countless white maggots.

Striding ahead, Liesel hasn't noticed.

LIESEL

Well, this is it...

Judith, staring back at the crow, doesn't notice a tall ominous figure looming over her --

She turns and her mouth drops in awe. An enormous oak tree overlooks an idyllic clearing in the forest.

JUDITH

Wow.

The oak looks ancient, its trunk and branches twisted in impossible knots. Its size and age would be enough to impress, but most striking is the way its sinews twist into a grimacing face halfway up the trunk, making the branches look like arms, twigs like fingers, and stems like antlers sticking out of its head.

From this angle, it looks surreal and scary.

Judith steps up to it and touches the face.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

It's incredible.

LIESEL

Beautiful huh? They call it a witches' tree. They say that in the old days, witches used to --

JUDITH

-- Conduct their Sabbath here?

LIESEL

How do you know?

JUDITH

They're hardly going to have a knitting circle, are they?

Judith walks around the tree, observing it. She's fascinated - at last, something of interest!

Judith runs her fingers over its face...

LIESEL

It was a long time ago, of course. These woods are absolutely ancient. Centuries I guess.

She looks down and comes across a round patch of burned grass.

Someone has lit a fire recently.

JUDITH

Heh, maybe it hasn't been that long.

LIESEL

Damn kids. They have drunken sleep-overs in the grounds. We've added barbed wire on the fence, but now they cut their way through with pliers, we constantly have to replace it.

Judith chuckles - so that would explain the gap she saw in the fence.

JUDITH

Kids are smart that way.

Liesel moves off but Judith stoops to pick up a piece of charred paper in the ashes. A photo of an elderly woman - could it be Zelda..?

LIESEL

What did you find there?

Just outside of the fire is what seems like a bundle of hair, half charred. Judith crinkles her nose, a bit disgusted.

She hands the nurse the picture.

Liesel frowns - she recognizes Zelda.

JUDITH

Anyone you know?

LIESEL

I -- No. Probably not.

But Judith can tell the nurse looks surprised, and her curiosity is piqued.

Liesel pockets the photo.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

This place is so vast, it's impossible for security to keep an eye on everything. Come on. We'd better get back before they send out a search party.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

LIESEL and JUDITH walk down another section of the garden.

LIESEL

Here's our vegetable patch. Some of our residents tend to it.

On either side of the path are little patches, tended to by two residents: TRISH and RUTH (both 70s).

JUDITH

Is this how people pass the time here?
Gardening?

LIESEL

There's all kinds of things to do.
Painting, knitting, tai chi --

Judith frowns. None of these sound very appealing.

JUDITH

Oh dear.

Ruth and Trish have noticed the new arrivals. They turn and smile.

Ruth is short and slim; she wears jeans and has an easy, jovial charm about her.

Trish is tall, lanky and impeccably pulled together. A woman who takes pride in her appearance.

Both look confident, attractive, youthful.

TRISH

Hi Liesel.

RUTH

Oh, hello.

LIESEL

Ladies, this is Judith. She just moved in last night.

RUTH

New blood!

TRISH

You don't say.

Ruth extends her hand. They size her up.

RUTH

I'm Ruth.

TRISH

Trish. Welcome.

JUDITH

Nice to meet you.

Judith bends down to examine the largest patch. She identifies the smell of one of the plants.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Wormwood? Do you make absinth?

TRISH

You know much about plants?

JUDITH

(grinning)

No, but I know a little about absinth.

Judith moves back to look at other plants, not minding where she steps. Just as she's about to slip into a little ditch, two strong hands grab her shoulders and keep her on the path!

Judith gasps!

ROLAND (O.S.)

Watch your step there, young lady!

It is ROLAND (70), who just saved her from an embarrassing fall.

JUDITH

Heck! I didn't see you there.

Roland is visibly amused.

ROLAND

Sorry. Didn't mean to frighten you. I'm Roland. Roland Benson.

Youthful and charming, with rugged good looks and a full head of white hair -- much like Judith's, Roland knows how to make an impression.

JUDITH

Judith. Sorry, I was looking at the -- Benson, as in..?

ROLAND

The director's father, yes. Lovely meeting you. I was planning to come to you later today to -- well, we have a little card group going, and we're missing a player for bridge. You wouldn't by any chance..?

Judith's horror is a bit too evident.

JUDITH

Bridge..? Ah...

Roland laughs.

ROLAND

Ah, I know, we're terribly cliched. It's not as dull as it seems, I promise. And my daughter brings us delicious cake every afternoon.

JUDITH

That -- um, sure. That'd be nice.

ROLAND

Tomorrow?

JUDITH

Sure.

He shakes her hand, holding it just a little too long. His eye contact is direct, confident.

There's a connection here -- something passes between them. As if Roland could suddenly read her thoughts, and in response she blushes like a schoolgirl.

She shivers and withdraws her hand, shrugging it off.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, ladies.

She follows Liesel down the path.

Roland, Trish and Ruth stand by the patch and give her a cheery wave as she heads back to the house. They look slightly odd.

She returns the wave and continues on her way.

FADE TO:

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

The main room of the building.

On one end, high chairs and sofas set around coffee tables. On the other, chairs arranged in a circle around a television.

JOSH and JUDITH sit on either side of a coffee table, placing their pawns on a board of Stratego.

JUDITH
Who's starting?

Josh holds out his fist. Paper, stone, scissors. Josh wins.

He moves his first pawn to attack.

JOSH
Boom --

He looks up at his grandma and jolts -- as IMOGEN looms right above her, staring straight at him!

She sidesteps towards the boy.

IMOGEN
Can you help me?
(to Judith)
Soon you'll see it too.

Josh recoils, uneasy at the intensity and madness in the old woman's eyes. But before she gets too close, ELIZABETH takes her by the shoulders and guides her gently away.

Josh takes a breath, still shaken.

JOSH
That's the worst, I think.

Judith nods.

JOSH (CONT'D)
She may have been really cool, and now her mind is gone. *She* is gone. You can't trust a word she says.

JUDITH
Jeez, make me cry, why don't you.

JOSH
I'm serious. It's the worst thing in the world.

For a moment, Judith seems deeply lost in thought. Then --

JUDITH
Worst thing, really? Worse than having to pull a tapeworm out through your mouth?
(off Josh's disgust)
(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Worse than your house key falling into
dog poop?

JOSH

(smiling)

Worse.

JUDITH

How about being slowly sucked dry by one
of these octopuses?

JOSH

Ew.

JUDITH

Or getting paper cuts between each of
your toes? Or, wait -- between your
teeth?

JOSH

(eek)

Okay, that's worse.

A moment of silence. Judith moves a pawn on the board.

JOSH (CONT'D)

It's gonna get easier. Right?

Judith smiles, comforting, and points to the game.

JUDITH

Your turn.

ANGLE ON - COMMERCIAL

A woman (20s) advertises for an anti-ageing cream she's
obviously too young to need.

She rubs the cosmetic onto her face and smiles. Not a
single wrinkle cracks that perfect skin.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH switches off the TV with a sigh.

LIESEL enters, carrying a tray of medications to ANNETTE,
once more in her chair by the window.

LIESEL

Annette, are you ready for bed?

No reply.

Liesel remains cheerful. She gives Annette a couple of pills.

Annette whines and shakes her head, then throws the pills to the ground.

Liesel picks up the pills and tries again. The patience of a true pro.

JUDITH

Do you need help?

Annette looks up at Judith.

ANNETTE

Don't you see them around us at night?

JUDITH

Pardon me?

ANNETTE

The people. Watching us sleep.

Judith turns to Liesel, unsure how to respond.

JUDITH

Can't say I have.

Liesel gives the old lady her pills, then helps her get into bed, tucks her in, and switches off the light.

Annette is too frail to resist, but she whines her disagreement.

Liesel steps away, then whispers to Judith.

LIESEL

Would you believe, she used to be a highly respected scientist. A brilliant mind, lost forever.

They both stay silent for a moment, listening to Annette's moans.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

My grandfather had Alzheimer's the last years of his life. It was like little pieces of his mind falling apart one by one. Everything that made him who he was.

JUDITH

I'm sorry.

LIESEL

That's why I became a nurse. I wanted to help make a difference.

She pulls the little golden chain around her neck, revealing a small angel-shaped pendant.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

My grandparents gave me this when I was little. I like to think they're watching over me.

Liesel shakes her head, remembers who she's talking to.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

Sorry, I shouldn't speak like that. It just kind of gets to me sometimes.

(cheerful again)

How was your first day?

Judith shrugs.

LIESEL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it takes a bit of time, but you'll fit right in.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The moonlit gardens around the retirement house are quiet and deserted.

A foot crunches on fallen leaves. A rustle, like a whisper, travels through the trees.

Judith walks into the forest, finding her way by torchlight.

The forest looks creepy at night. There's a feeling that she is not quite alone.

We hear the cry of an owl, the flutter of bats and the steady murmur of crickets.

At last Judith reaches the clearing.

Moonlight cuts through the canopy of the old oak tree, bathing it in an eerie glow.

Judith approaches it slowly.

The face in the bark has its eyes shut. It seems asleep.

She studies it with the light from her torch. Then reaches out for it.

The face opens its eyes and shrieks at her, claw-like branches spreading out in her direction.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH wakes with a start, drenched in sweat!

She sits up and takes a moment to let her racing heart slow down.

... She hears suction noises coming from her neighbor's side.

She looks up at the partition curtain... and sees a shadow on the other side, by Annette's bed.

From where she sits, she can only see a shape through the curtain. But there's a gap in the middle, where she hadn't drawn it properly...

Slowly, without a sound, she shifts to the side, edging to see through the gap...

... and yelps as she glimpses a painfully thin, horned creature, crouched over ANNETTE, its stretched face reminiscent of the tree's! (We will refer to it as the MINION from here on).

It whips its head in her direction and starts striding towards her!!

Judith reaches for the call button, pushing her book off the table...

Moments after her call, ELIZABETH rushes in, flinging the door open, the curtains of the open window billowing madly in the draft!

Judith points to Annette.

JUDITH

There!!

Elizabeth rushes by Annette's side.

Judith awaits, cowering under the sheets.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

What is it?

Elizabeth opens the partition.

Annette is asleep - practically comatose -, slumped halfway out of her bed, mouth wide open.

She looks incredibly frail.

But the creature is nowhere in sight.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Where..?!

ELIZABETH

Did you have a bad dream, Ms.Albright?

JUDITH

Fuck, yes!

ELIZABETH

Is that kind of language absolutely necessary?

JUDITH

I'm not a child.

ELIZABETH

Clearly not. Good night then...

Elizabeth heads out, leaving Judith fuming.

JUDITH

(under her breath)

Patronizing cow.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

JUDITH makes her way to the table where ROLAND, RUTH and TRISH await.

She takes in her surroundings.

Half a dozen RESIDENTS sit in front of a TV show. But most are asleep, or too sick to pay it any mind. The contrast between the beautiful, youthful faces on screen and the ravaged, ill men and women around it is striking.

Judith peers at the activity board, above a little group of crocheting residents -- everything from 'mild stretching and exercise' to 'pottery workshop' looks boring and too clearly aimed at the elderly.

ROLAND gets up to welcome her.

ROLAND
Judith! So glad you could join us.

Judith finds the remark funny -- as if she had better things to do?

JUDITH
Hah. Nice to see you all.

She takes a seat. Points at the activity board.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
With this wealth of exciting activities on offer, I wasn't sure I'd find time in my schedule.

Roland laughs and focuses on pouring her a cup of tea. He's very precise about it, as if tea making were a ritual.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Thank you. Slice of lemon.

ROLAND
Yes, they clearly think we're old people. Easy mistake to make.

She smiles.

RUTH
So. Do you have any family?

JUDITH
I do! A daughter. And my grandson Josh. He's 17.

TRISH
(sighing)
Enjoy the visits, if they do come. They thin out quickly.

JUDITH
They'll keep coming. Josh is a great kid.
(smiling)
He's so much fun. He keeps me young.

RUTH
Does he, really?

JUDITH
His father passed away when he was little, and when his mother was too...
(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

distraught to cope, we grew very close.
But -- don't you have family?

TRISH

Well, there's Roland's daughter of course.

ROLAND

(to Judith)

I know what you mean. She keeps me young too, in a way --

RUTH

But visitors never last long. Once you're here, you're irrelevant. You no longer matter to society.

TRISH

You'd think we were in prison.

ROLAND

Well, I guess we are on death row.

Judith almost spits out her tea. Macabre sense of humor. She likes it.

TRISH

Husband?

JUDITH

Gone ten years now. Miss him every day.

ROLAND

Sorry to hear that. I lost my wife a long time ago. Still miss her dearly.

Trish puts a hand on Roland's, who in turn puts his free hand on Judith's knee.

Judith's eyes widen. He smiles.

RUTH

Jeez, enough of this depressing talk already! How are you liking your new home?

JUDITH

Fine. I mean, it takes a while to adjust, right?

All three nod.

TRISH

You've got to accept the change and move on. People who don't, they end up looking like--

She nods at a RESIDENT across the room, whose face is stretched by excessive plastic surgery. Judith gasps.

JUDITH

Well, I can't throw the first stone. I've not been against a bit of nip and tuck myself.

TRISH

Really..?

Judith smirks.

JUDITH

Minor stuff. I was a dancer. My work depended on my youth -- or the appearance of it, anyway.

TRISH

Well, I've had three face lifts!

RUTH

I've tried every fad diet.

TRISH

I've had injections.

JUDITH

Had I been told bathing in the blood of virgins actually worked, I would have gone the way of Elizabeth Bathory.

They giggle.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

In the end, there's only so long you can hold the fort, right?

TRISH

Fighting nature always comes at a cost.

For a moment they are silent, subdued.

Trish and Ruth glance at each other.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - NIGHT

It's a stormy night around the eerie house and its grounds.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

A clap of thunder. JUDITH stirs awake.

She tries to relax and go back to sleep.

She opens her eyes again.

Lightning reveals the MINION, perched at the foot of her bed, crouching, staring at her.

She yelps! The room is again plunged into darkness.

Unsure what she's seen in that brief moment, Judith whispers.

JUDITH

Who are you? What do you want?!?

Lightning and thunder -- the minion has lunged forward on the bed, its face inches from her!

Judith reaches for the call button and presses it like mad, screaming at the same time!!

She doesn't notice, in another flash, the creature scuttling up the wall towards the ceiling, where it disappears in the shadow!

ELIZABETH bursts into the room.

In the light from the hallway, it's clear there's no one else there.

JUDITH hops out of bed and looks around, stunned.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

What was that??

ELIZABETH

What?

JUDITH

The monster on my bed!!

ELIZABETH

No one's come in or out of your room.

JUDITH

It was right there! Right there!

She rushes to ANNETTE's bedside and tries to shake her awake.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Annette! What is it? What do you know?!

But the old lady is too unwell -- she can only whimper and mutter incoherently.

Judith insists, but Elizabeth grabs her arms and pulls her away.

Judith tries to fight her off, but the nurse holds tight.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

What the hell?!? Let me go!!

ELIZABETH

Calm down. You're going to hurt yourself.

Finally, Judith wriggles out of the nurse's grip.

JUDITH

Stop patronizing me! I'm not senile.

ELIZABETH

Well, there's no one here. You can see that. It's another nightmare, and if you panic and get hurt, it'll be under my watch.

JUDITH

I know what I've seen.

ELIZABETH

A monster on your bed. Of course. Go back to sleep.

Elizabeth waits until Judith is back under the covers before she leaves.

In the darkness, Judith lies still, terrified.

INT. ROOM 211 BATHROOM - DAY

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: Skin. Wrinkled, lined, spotted. Old - but there's a glow, a beauty to it.

We move along JUDITH's arm in ECU as she rubs in moisturizer.

She stands in her nightgown in front of the mirror.

She examines her features -- crow's feet, fine lines around her mouth -- and pulls her skin tight, like a facelift.

When her cheeks drop, she sighs at her jowls.

She puts her hands through her hair, looks for the brush.

It's not there.

She looks around and under the sink, in the cupboard, on the tub. Nothing.

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

JUDITH rushes out of the bathroom, hair flowing madly around her face, and looks around.

ANNETTE is still in bed.

JUDITH

Have you seen my hairbrush?

Annette shudders. But doesn't answer.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Of course not.

A NURSE walks past in the hallway. Judith steps out.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

JUDITH calls the nurse. ELIZABETH turns around.

JUDITH

Oh. You.

ELIZABETH

Do you need something?

JUDITH

I don't know. Have you seen my hairbrush?

ELIZABETH

No. Would you like me to-

JUDITH

Has anyone else been in my room this morning?

ELIZABETH

I wouldn't think so. Let me help you find it.

JUDITH

It's gone, I tell you. Someone took it.

Elizabeth sighs, tired of Judith's stubbornness, and follows her in.

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

JUDITH heads straight for the bathroom.

JUDITH

See, it was --

ELIZABETH points to the desk.

ELIZABETH

Is this it..?

Judith blushes.

JUDITH

Yes. Yes!

Elizabeth smiles -- not entirely benevolently.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

But how did it get there? I put it back on the sink, like I always -- Did you move it?!?

ELIZABETH

I bet you were distracted. New habits. People here misplace objects all the time.

JUDITH

No! I know I didn't.

Elizabeth leaves.

Judith picks up the brush, puzzled.

INT. GROUND FLOOR DINING HALL - DAY

JUDITH carries her tray through the hall.

ROLAND waves her over and she sits with him, RUTH and TRISH.

Ruth nibbles a cookie. Roland glares as she chews open-mouthed.

TRISH

You look tired.

JUDITH

Do I? I feel a bit tired, I guess.

RUTH

Bad dreams? Common problem here.

ELIZABETH walks past with the coffee pot and starts pouring for the three friends.

ELIZABETH

(to Judith)

Feeling better than last night, I trust?
Quite the nightmare you had.

The nurse pats Judith's hand. As soon as she has her back turned, Trish mocks her.

TRISH

'Quite the nightmare'... Hah, she treats us like children.

JUDITH

Right..?

Feeling she can trust them, Judith leans forward and whispers, conspiratorial.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I wasn't having a nightmare last night. I was awake. I saw something.

ROLAND

What did you see..?

JUDITH

I'm... not sure. Someone perched on the foot of my bed. Watching me sleep.

RUTH

A nurse?

She shakes her head. Hard to find the words.

JUDITH

It... it didn't look human.

The three friends glance at each other.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinking! But I saw the same thing the night before --

ROLAND

Are you sure it was the same?

JUDITH

Well, no, but --

TRISH

How clearly could you see?

JUDITH

Well it was dark, but -- I don't know whether to move away, or call the police, or --

ROLAND

No.

JUDITH

What's that?

ROLAND

Don't call the police. Don't do anything dramatic. I'm not saying I don't believe you. But to everyone else, not being able to distinguish between dream and reality is a sign of dementia. They'll have you diagnosed in no time.

TRISH

It's true. They all believe we're a bit cuckoo anyway.

RUTH

And then you'll never leave this house again.

Judith looks deflated.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

A MUSICIAN plays nostalgic songs on a piano by the door, and a group of RESIDENTS have gathered around, swaying gently to the tunes.

JUDITH, ROLAND, TRISH and RUTH sit around the table.

Trish deals cards as the three friends chit-chat.

Judith doesn't pay attention. She stares at the senile crowd around her.

A sad spectacle.

Judith looks up at the door to the lobby.

Her late husband GEORGE sits at the piano, handsome and smiling, playing a melody from the opera 'Faust'.

Astonished at first, Judith gets up and steps to him.

She starts dancing on her way.

A suddenly rejuvenated, 30-something Judith takes the stage in front of the admiring crowd of residents. She pirouettes as the music ends, and finds herself in George's arms.

JUDITH

How did you --

GEORGE

It doesn't matter. Get away with me and you will never grow old.

She laughs.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Still in her seat, JUDITH smiles, eyes closed.

TRISH and RUTH, cards in hand, stare at her, waiting for her to respond. Trish clears her throat.

She wakes up, pulled from her daydream.

Harsh return to reality.

JUDITH

Er. Sorry. What was that? Do I bid?

Ruth shakes her head, trying hard to hide her annoyance. She picks up Judith's cards.

RUTH

I bid, one spade. You can go with one heart -- Look. Are you listening..?

JUDITH

Sure. Sure.

Roland puts a hand on hers.

ROLAND

You'll adjust. When my wife died, I never felt so old and useless.

(gestures at his friends)

Then I moved here, met these lovely ladies. You'll find a new reason to get up in the morning. Give it time.

JUDITH

What was her name? Your wife?

ROLAND

Abigail. Abby.

He takes a cardholder out of his pocket. Hands Judith an old Polaroid.

On the picture, a charming woman in her 50s -- Abby -- laughs and shies away from camera, unsuccessfully trying to hide her face behind her hand.

JUDITH

Oh. What a great photo.

ROLAND

Thank you.

She spots what looks like a tattoo on the woman's forearm: V divided by a long line in its middle.

She smiles, amused.

JUDITH

What's the tattoo?

ROLAND

The what-

She's about to show the picture, when Ruth takes it out of her hand and gives it back to Roland, who seems embarrassed and confused.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Oh, right. That's nothing. It was a scratch.

He pockets the picture.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Shall we play?

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

CLOSE-UP on Judith's eye, brightly lit by an examination lamp.

CLOSE-UP on a stethoscope on her chest.

CLOSE-UP on a needle inserted into Judith's arm. Blood fills the syringe.

JUDITH sits on the examination chair at the doctor's surgery.

ELIZABETH draws out the needle.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY (LATER)

CLOSE-UP on a stack of blocks Judith needs to connect.

She works slowly, frustrated.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY (LATER)

ELIZABETH shows JUDITH a series of cards with pictures to identify.

JUDITH

A lion. A chair. Um - a bird.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

Tall, thin and intimidating, DR GEOGHEGAN (60s) sits behind his desk, facing BARBARA and JUDITH.

DR GEOGHEGAN

We'll know more once we have the physical results tomorrow, but I'm not going to lie to you. Some of what I've seen here is worrying. Diagnosing any specific form of dementia is not as simple as it seems, and it'll take some time to examine the results.

JUDITH

I'm sorry -- dementia..?

DR GEOGHEGAN

(to Barbara)

Your mother has complained about vivid dreams, which she couldn't distinguish from reality.

JUDITH

Who told you..?

Barbara looks surprised.

DR GEOGHEGAN

It's a warning sign; we can't ignore it.
We have to rule out B-12 deficiency,
Parkinson's disease, signs of a stroke...
But we can already establish a
fluctuation of cognitive functions and
possible hallucinations.

His soft-spoken tone is gratingly condescending.

JUDITH

This is ridiculous. What are we talking
about here? I've always had a clear head,
and I don't see why I should suddenly be
treated like an old goat.

DR GEOGHEGAN

I understand, Ms. Albright. I'm just
doing my due diligence. And with your
heart condition...

BARBARA

There are a lot of people with dementia
at Sunset Manor. Right?

DR GEOGHEGAN

There are. I would say the percentage is
a little higher than in some other homes.
We are known for our early detection
system.

(to Judith)

Ms. Albright, try not to worry. You're in
good hands here.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

JUDITH walks across the lobby, past the reception, to the
glass front doors of the building.

She pushes the door to get out, but it doesn't budge.

She looks to the side for an exit button. There is a
little keyboard to type in a code, and a call button.

She's about to push to call, when a voice interrupts her.

MS BENSON

Ms. Albright, everything all
right?

Judith turns to face MS BENSON, standing tall behind her.

JUDITH
I'd just like to get some air.

MS BENSON
Why not go to the patio at the back?

JUDITH
I want to go for a walk.

MS BENSON
Outside walks must be accompanied.

JUDITH
What do you mean? We're locked inside?!

MS BENSON
We need to know where our residents are
at all times. Some wouldn't be able to
come back on their own.

JUDITH
(under her breath)
Or wouldn't want to.

Ms. Benson gestures for her to follow her back to
the reception room across the lobby.

MS BENSON
Come with me, we're having a children's
choir recital in the living room in a
moment.

JUDITH
I'd rather poke myself in the eye.

Ms. Benson smiles, condescending.

MS BENSON
Ms. Albright. Trust me. We only have
your best interest at heart.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

ANGLE ON Judith's feet in her faded red dance shoes.

She tries to take a couple of simple steps, then lifts
herself onto tiptoes...

... But her legs aren't strong enough. She loses balance,
collapsing on her nearby bed.

She sits up, takes off her shoes, sighs. Then she slides under the covers and switches off the light.

Something moves in the darkness of the room behind her. She doesn't notice.

A dark silhouette moves closer and reaches out...

Its hand grabs Judith's shoulder! She yelps and turns around!!

It is ROLAND, wearing nothing but a robe and a big smile.

JUDITH

What are you doing here?!

He climbs onto the bed.

ROLAND

Heh, I thought we'd prove ourselves we're not as old as they think.

He leans to kiss her, but she pushes him and quickly backs away.

JUDITH

What the -- no! What made you think..?
I'm flattered by the attention, but really, shouldn't you try to woo me first, Roland..?!

As she pushes his shoulder, his robe slips, revealing a mark on his shoulder.

Three rough cuts, forming the same pattern as on his late wife's arm.

Judith frowns, intrigued.

Roland steps back and wraps his bathrobe shut.

ROLAND

I'm sorry. There's not much to do around here, you get your fun where you find it.

She grimaces.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I thought you'd be game. Guess I was wrong.

JUDITH

Okay, well, let's not mention it, alright?

ROLAND

No harm done. The night is young.

He slips out of the room.

Judith shakes her head, incredulous.

JUDITH

What a madhouse.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Chanting. We see flashes of:

A campfire in the darkest part of the woods.

The tree stands watch.

Silhouettes dance around the flames. The wind in the trees around them echoes their whispered incantations.

Someone breaks the neck of a crow and rips its head off.

Old hands open the wooden box and throw a tuft of hair - Judith's hair - into the fire, which suddenly burns brighter.

The face in the tree stretches, separates from the trunk - the MINION, half bark, half flesh, steps out.

It runs out of the clearing, towards the house.

The silhouettes cackle madly at the moon.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

The same moon shines outside the open window.

JUDITH lies in bed, motionless, asleep.

A noise on the other side of the room - like a rustle in the trees outside, and a scuttle from the window. She opens her eyes.

JUDITH

Who's there? Roland..?

Nothing.

She falls back to sleep.

Moments later, a shadow stirs.

But this time, it isn't Roland.

The MINION, little more than a shadow itself, crawls down the wall above the window, limbs stretched, spider-like.

It glides closer, hunching forward, hungry, and leans over Judith.

She wakes and opens her eyes, coming face to face with the monster - just as long, bony fingers elongate towards her mouth and muffle her scream!!

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The weather has changed. Yellow leaves swirl in the breeze.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

CU of a BRAIN SCAN.

The scan hangs on a lit surface on a portable device DR GEOGHEGAN brought.

The doctor sits facing MS BENSON, BARBARA and JUDITH. Again, he only speaks to Barbara, as if Judith were a child.

DR GEOGHEGAN

So although the brain imaging isn't in itself conclusive, I believe we're talking about Lewy Body Dementia, or LBD. Your mother shows all the classic symptoms: hallucinations - especially of people who aren't there -, stiff muscles, nightmares and sleep talking...

JUDITH

What does it mean? Lewy Body?

DR GEOGHEGAN

A Lewy body is an abnormal protein which develops in the brain and affects the processing of visual information. That is why hallucinations are so common.

(MORE)

DR GEOGHEGAN (CONT'D)

Any unusual object, or speck of dust in the light, can be misinterpreted by the patient's brain and cause them to think they're seeing a stranger, for example.

JUDITH

My 'hallucinations', as you call them, weren't ghostly. They were tangible. They had a smell. They made sounds.

DR GEOGHEGAN

Hallucinations aren't always visual.

JUDITH

There was someone in my room. I know it!

BARBARA

(to the doctor)

So what can we do?

JUDITH

What we should do, is call the police! Are you just going to ignore what I'm telling you?!

DR GEOGHEGAN

(to Judith)

Would you wait outside a moment, Ms. Albright? I just have a detail or two to settle with your daughter.

JUDITH

Really? You're going to discuss the treatment of my disease, without me? Am I a child now..?

BARBARA

Mom, please.

Judith is about to start a fight, but Ms. Benson walks her to the door.

Barbara is close to tears.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I don't understand what she's talking about, she was-

DR GEOGHEGAN

I'm afraid it's not unusual for people her age.

Dr. Geoghegan opens a folder and pulls out a few pictures.

The first is a woman lying in bed, surrounded with half a dozen ghost-like beings staring at her.

DR GEOGHEGAN (CONT'D)

These are examples of what your mother may be experiencing.

The second picture shows insects crawling on a man's arm and on the table around him.

BARBARA

That's horrifying.

DR GEOGHEGAN

As you understand, it's often unsettling for the patients.

Barbara wipes away tears.

DR GEOGHEGAN (CONT'D)

Your mother is very perturbed, to the point where even now, she refuses to understand the reality of her situation. What's important here is that neither you nor any member of your family encourage her delusions. She needs to understand that her nightmares and hallucinations are all in her head. And don't worry. I've been working in this house for over twenty years. She's perfectly safe.

BARBARA

(reluctant)

Very well.

DR GEOGHEGAN

It's going to be a long journey, I'm afraid. Sorry it's not better news.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

On their way out, JUDITH grabs BARBARA and whispers.

JUDITH

Listen to me. Those things I've seen at night, they're real. I don't care what he says, I can tell the difference. There's something very wrong going on here. At least call the police, since they won't believe me. Or let me come home. I've tried to make the most out of this, being here, in a nursing home. I really have. But it's clearly not working out for me.

BARBARA

Mom... I can't do that. I can't go against the doctor's advice.

JUDITH

(exasperated)

Why won't you believe me? Why would you believe these strangers and not your own mother?

BARBARA

You chose those strangers, mom. You wanted to be here, I didn't force you. It was your choice. These people only want your comfort. We're *all* trying to look after you. There's no conspiracy here. I'm sorry.

Judith storms away.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

The Gothic building looks threatening under heavy dark clouds.

Crows gather noisily by the entrance.

INT. GARDEN - DAY

JOSH and JUDITH walk slowly around the enclosed garden of the residence, followed at a distance by LIESEL, who supervises the walk.

Their breaths are visible clouds in the cold, crisp air.

Judith shivers and turns up the collar of her coat.

JOSH

We can go back inside if you're cold.

JUDITH

No! I'm happy to be out.

She looks weak, exhausted, and more anxious than usual.

JOSH

What's on your mind, grandma?

She shrugs.

JUDITH

I don't want you to worry.

JOSH

Oh man. Then it's bad.

JUDITH

No, no. Perhaps moving here wasn't as easy as I hoped. But it's alright, I'll-

She suddenly freezes as in the distance, staring at her, is IMOGEN.

The old lady stands in the middle of the field, plucking feathers off a dead crow.

She stares directly at her.

JOSH

(OFF Judith's expression)

You're scaring me.

Imogen sees Judith looking back and she drops the dead bird. Judith turns away.

JUDITH

You have to understand. This place... being surrounded by all these sick, old people...

She fights back tears.

Josh doesn't know what to do. He gives her an awkward smile.

They walk in silence -- when they encounter ROLAND, strolling up the opposite direction. He smiles and opens his arms, welcoming and somewhat theatrical.

ROLAND

Ah! This will be the grandson! Josh, I believe?

He shakes Josh's hand.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I'm Roland. A friend of your grandmother's.

(glancing at Judith)

I hope.

She smiles.

JOSH

Hi.

ROLAND

Well, enjoy this beautiful day.

The moment Roland is gone, Josh makes a face -- *what was that?*

JUDITH

Roland's a good one. He and his friends are the only ones who make sense around here.

They reach the steps to the entrance at the front of the house, where his bike is tied to a post.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I'd like to get out this weekend. Can you two pick me up? Go for some Sunday lunch or--

Josh looks down.

JOSH

Mom says we're not allowed.

JUDITH

What..?

JOSH

They say you'll settle faster if you don't go home right now.

JUDITH

What did I get myself into..? Do you know I don't even have the code to go out?

They reach the front gate.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Sorry I'm a such a wet blanket right now. Come back soon, okay? I miss spending time with you.

He gives her a peck on the cheek. Then grabs a pen out of his coat pocket and hiding from others' view, scribbles the entry code on her wrist.

She smiles. They exchange a conniving look.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

(lowering her sleeve)

Good boy.

JOSH

I'll be back tomorrow. Call me if you need, right?

JUDITH

Don't worry about me. I'll be fine.

He hops onto his bike.

She watches him disappear, then follows Liesel back inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GROUND FLOOR DINING HALL - NIGHT

ANGLE ON paper cutouts of pumpkins and witches taped to the dining hall walls.

Everyone gathers for dinner.

The dining hall is where the contrast between healthy and senile is at its starkest. Some RESIDENTS are able to eat on their own. Others can barely swallow without being reminded to.

JUDITH sits with ROLAND, TRISH and RUTH.

ANNETTE is wheeled to her table.

She looks weaker than ever.

RUTH

(whispering)

Your roommate is not looking too good.

JUDITH

She took a turn for the worse overnight.

The TABBY CAT strolls into the dining hall.

Heads turn.

It hops up and sits on Annette's lap. Audible gasp from everyone in the room.

Annette freezes and lets out a long, mournful moan.

ELIZABETH shoos the CAT away.

ELIZABETH

Off, kitty! Off you go!

The cat jumps off, but refuses to leave. It purrs and strokes its back against Annette's legs and chair.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Annette, dear. It's ok.

MS BENSON storms in.

She assesses the situation quickly.

MS BENSON

(to the cat)

Shoo! You're scaring everybody!

The cat hisses and leaves.

Elizabeth wheels Annette out of the room.

MS BENSON (CONT'D)

What are you all looking at?

The residents reluctantly look away and resume eating.

JUDITH

I don't understand. What's the problem with the cat?

ROLAND

My daughter's cat. Poor thing.

RUTH

It can sense who's about to die. We may all have one foot in the grave, but no one wants to be the next to go.

Judith looks stunned.

ROLAND

It is remarkable, but not unheard of. I read there's a cat called Oscar in Rhode Island who has the same gift. Oscar, isn't that a lovely name?

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH sits on the bed, in her nightgown. She stares at ANNETTE, wondering if this night is indeed her last.

LIESEL hands Judith a pill and a glass of water.

LIESEL

The doctor recommended you try a little something to help you relax.

JUDITH

Why..?

LIESEL

Residents get agitated when the cat, um, misbehaves. We want to make sure everyone has a good night. And avoid incidents.

JUDITH

Incidents..?

Liesel doesn't reply.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Just leave it on the table. I'd like to read a bit first.

LIESEL

I've been asked to make sure you take it.

JUDITH

I will. I just don't want to sleep yet.

Liesel lowers her tone.

LIESEL

Are you worried about going to sleep?
(off Judith's look)
Many people here have had the same nightmares you've had.

JUDITH

Many people..?

LIESEL

They're just bad dreams, that's all. I'm sure...

But she doesn't sound sure at all.

JUDITH

So others had those dreams? Did Annette ever say what she saw..?

Liesel is about to reply when MS BENSON appears on the doorstep.

MS BENSON

(to Judith)

Don't let other residents drag you into their delusions. Now please, take your pill.

Ms. BENSON grabs the pill and glass and hands them to Judith, who takes a sip, swallows, opens her mouth wide. The director nods in approval.

Ms. Benson switches the light off and they both leave. Judith spits out the pill.

FADE TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH is asleep.

The room is dark, and noise comes from Annette's side. Footsteps, and the whispering sounds we heard before.

Judith stirs. Opens her eyes.

She checks the time.

Almost 1 am. She yawns and stretches.

She switches on the bedside light...

... and finds herself face to face with ANNETTE: crazy-eyed, wild-haired, dried and gaunt, looking like death in the faint glow of the lamp!!!

She yelps!

Annette grips her with the last of her strength!

ANNETTE

You.

She collapses to the ground, clutching her nightgown!

She's dead, her eyes still wide with fear.

Judith screams!!

JUDITH

Help! Somebody!!

She pushes the call button.

LIESEL rushes in!

LIESEL

What...- ow!!

She kneels down and checks the old woman's pulse. GARY walks in.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
 (to Gary)
 Get the doctor! Quick!

Gary runs out.

Liesel checks for a pulse, for breath - nothing.

They look at each other.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
 Are you okay?

She nods, still in shock.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT (LATER)

ANNETTE's body, covered in a sheet, is wheeled out on a stretcher.

Outside, a few RESIDENTS have assembled to watch.

A man prays out loud. All look somber and weary.

LIESEL and MS BENSON stay behind with JUDITH.

LIESEL
 I'm so sorry you had to see this.

MS BENSON
 Will you be alright for the night?

JUDITH
 ... Sure.

Ms. Benson switches off the light and they exit, leaving Judith alone.

She gazes at the empty bed across the room.

She gets up, heads to the bed, switches on the bedside lamp.

Annette's side is a mess, her belongings thrown across the place to make way for the stretcher.

A few religious artefacts line the shelf and bedside table.

Judith quickly searches the drawers. Nothing but family photos and old magazines.

She looks under the bed.

At first she doesn't see anything.

Then she finds it, stuck under the springs of the mattress: a small bundle of herbs, crow feathers... and hair. Again.

Attached to it is a handwritten note: a succession of names, meaningless to us until the last few.

Fourth to last is Zelda. Then, scribbled by an increasingly unsteady hand, comes 'ME'... and 'Judith??', underlined.

All names, besides 'me' and 'Judith', have been crossed off.

Judith understands right away: Annette knew she'd die soon, and thought Judith would be next in line.

Suddenly it hits her. If she stays here, she will die.

She clocks the half-erased scribble on her wrist. *Her way out.*

She puts on her coat, frantic, and heads out.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LOBBY - NIGHT

It's pitch black outside.

JUDITH tries the office door. It is locked.

JUDITH
(under her breath)

Damn.

She looks around the lobby, opens a cupboard by the office door.

She scans it quickly, and finds what she needs on the last shelf, behind a box of light bulbs. A flashlight.

She heads for the door and types in the exit code Josh gave her.

The doors open. One last look around, and she rushes out.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - NIGHT

It's pouring down.

Arms folded to keep warm, hair already glistening with rain, JUDITH looks down the path from the house to the main gate.

No exit that way.

She turns the other direction and heads for the woods.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The rain has abated. The flashlight pierces the darkness, throwing long shadows.

JUDITH tries to find her way to the gap in the fence, but she seems confused and lost.

The woods echo with whispers and the rustle of the breeze in the trees.

Judith looks around, then down. There's no path under her feet.

She hears laughter in the forest and jolts. She whips around -- nothing.

She's about to panic... when her light finally finds the fence ahead.

JUDITH

Oh thank Christ.

She rushes to the fence and almost reaches it, but she trips and falls flat in the mud!

She pulls herself to her hands and knees. Notices what she tripped on.

A rucksack, hidden under a tree root.

She pulls it out, opens it. Finds a sweater, a long skirt -- the kind of clothes pensioners wear.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

What the..?

Suddenly the laughter -- closer this time.

She stuffs the clothes back in the bag, pushes it under the root, and scampers away.

Voices get closer. A torch lights up the woods. Quickly, she hides behind a tree.

Moments later, she sees a BOY and TWO GIRLS (20s) walk in her direction, giggling and chatting, seemingly drunk.

They walk right past her, pick up the rucksack and leave.

Astonished, Judith turns to watch them disappear. But she loses her balance - and catches herself on a branch, which cracks loudly.

One of the girls stops in her tracks. She peers through the darkness.

GIRL

Hold on! I heard something.

The girl backtracks and looks around.

She steps towards Judith... She's inches from her hiding place when --

GIRL #2

Oh, come on. It's cold here.

The girl turns back. They leave. Judith sighs her relief.

She hurries in the direction they came in, and soon comes across the gap in the fence.

She pushes the flap of wire fencing aside and crawls through.

The bottom of her coat gets stuck.

She pulls on the coat and rips it, setting herself free.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

A dreary, rainy morning.

INT. GROUND FLOOR DINING HALL - DAY

The RESIDENTS eat breakfast.

Going around the tables with a coffee pot, LIESEL notices Judith's empty seat. She turns to ROLAND, TRISH and RUTH.

LIESEL
Have you seen Judith today?

TRISH
Not this morning, no.

She rushes out.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

JUDITH walks down a country road, lashed by wind and rain.

There's very little traffic. She's pretty much alone.

She looks around the crossroads, visibly lost.

JUDITH
Crap.

She starts down one path, then changes her mind and goes the opposite direction.

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

LIESEL enters Judith's room and looks around.

LIESEL
Judith? Ms Albright?

She's nowhere in sight.

She spots the bundle on Annette's bed. Examines it.
Frowns.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
Shit.

She grabs her phone and calls.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
It's Liesel. Judith Albright is MIA.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

JUDITH sits on a bench by the road.

A car stops in front of her. BARBARA is at the wheel;
JOSH comes running out the passenger side.

Judith looks exhausted. She's drenched.

JOSH

Granny!!

He puts an arm around her and helps her to the car.

The car speeds away.

INT. COUNTRY PUB - DAY

JUDITH and JOSH sit in silence at a table at the local pub.

It's a family-friendly environment, with kids running around and dogs sleeping by their humans' tables. Empty plates and the remains of a meal in front of them. Judith has barely touched hers.

Barbara is on the phone right outside the window.

BARBARA (O.S.)

What do you mean, no harm done!? For chrissake, she's not even dressed!!

Judith looks down at the nightgown under her coat, embarrassed. She was in such a hurry to leave, she forgot to get changed.

JOSH

I don't understand, granny. Why didn't you call me? Why didn't you get a taxi?

She ignores the question. She leans towards him and whispers.

JUDITH

Josh. I have to tell you something. But you have to promise to listen and keep an open mind, okay?

JOSH

Uh... sure..?

She takes a deep breath.

JUDITH

I think there's something out there in that house. Something, or someone killing us.

JOSH

Us..?

JUDITH

The residents.

JOSH

What...? Why?!

JUDITH

I don't know who or what it is. But I've seen things at night and so have some of the others. Someone comes into my room... and it's... not human.

JOSH

Is that your nightmares? Mom says you've had bad dreams?

She sighs.

JUDITH

They're not dreams. I was awake. Help me out, Josh. Your mom won't listen. But I need to get out of that place.

Josh looks freaks out -- clearly not believing a word she's saying.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Why does everyone treat me like a child? Just because I'm older, doesn't mean I'm a different person. Even you react that way. I'm not crazy! You know when you were little, I chased the monsters from under your bed. I listened to your stories and your excuses when you came home late. *I have faith in you.* Can you have the same faith in me?

Josh doesn't know how to react. With her mad hair, nightgown, and angry expression, she looks out of her mind.

Mercifully, BARBARA enters the room.

BARBARA

Mom. You can't do this again. Ever. If Ms Benson hadn't called... If we hadn't found you...

She sits by her side.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

We spoke to Ms. Benson early on. She warned us the first weeks would be tough.

JUDITH

I'm not a prisoner. I shouldn't be locked up.

BARBARA

It's for your own good. And it's temporary.

JUDITH

For my own good..? Don't you think I know what's best for myself?

BARBARA

After today? Clearly not! Mom...

JUDITH

I want to go home.

BARBARA

I'm not taking you home, mom. Not now. Not today. You wanted Sunday lunch, fine, but the doctor--

JUDITH

That doctor is a charlatan. Let's find other arrangements. I'm not going back.

BARBARA

Dr. Geoghegan has worked with that house for years. He knows what--

JUDITH

Alright, that's enough. I'm your mother. Not your child.

Judith stands.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I'll be right back. End of discussion.

Judith leaves the room.

A moment of stunned silence.

Barbara looks defeated, confused.

JOSH

Mom, maybe this whole thing is just a way of telling us how unhappy she is there. Maybe we should have her stay over-

BARBARA

No. They've all advised against it. They've warned me about this.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I don't want to make things worse than they already are.

JOSH

You can't send granny back now. She's too upset.

Barbara looks close to tears.

BARBARA

Honey. I know granny's worried. I know she's scared. We all are. It's a difficult time for everybody.

JOSH

You don't understand. She-

BARBARA

It's already arranged. Josh... You need to know. Granny... She's not doing so well.

JOSH

What do you mean..?

INT. COUNTRY PUB HALLWAY/PUB - DAY

JUDITH walks down the corridor to the ladies' room at the back of the pub.

Dozens of framed pictures line the walls. Photos of village life over the years, locals gathering at the pub, enjoying the sunshine with a pint, or celebrating holidays. Some go back up to sixty, seventy years.

Judith barely looks as she walks past, but a photograph holds her attention.

The nursing home in the 1970s. The building, with its staff lined up to pose on the front steps.

Something isn't right. She looks closer... and shouts in surprise.

JUDITH

Shit! How..?!

But before she can continue, there's a noise coming from the main room -- voices and footsteps -- and BARBARA, GARY, ELIZABETH and another PARAMEDIC appear around the corner!

BARBARA

They've come to pick you up, mom.

JUDITH

No!!

JOSH joins too, watching the proceedings from a distance, horrified.

Judith points out the picture to her daughter.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Barbara! Look -- look at the picture!

The paramedics grab her under the arms. The book clatters on the ground.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Leave me alone! I don't want to go back!!

(to Barbara)

I'm not mad, see?! Why won't you just look..?

But Elizabeth blocks Barbara's path to the photograph. Barbara doesn't insist.

Judith tries to fight them off, but they're stronger, and she is soon lifted up.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

(to Barbara)

How can you betray me like this?! I'm your mother!!!

IN THE MAIN ROOM --

Heads turn as the orderlies drag Judith through the main room.

ELIZABETH

Come on now, don't make a scene.

JUDITH

Make a scene? You're the ones dragging me away!!

Judith stares at Barbara, pleading.

BARBARA

I'm so sorry. The doctor... It's for your own good.

Barbara looks away. She wraps her arms around her son, close to tears.

The paramedics pull Judith out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

A crisp December day.

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

JUDITH drinks tea near RUTH, TRISH and ROLAND. The cafeteria is buzzing with the sounds of the residents' lunch.

A few Christmas ornaments attempt to brighten the hall.

Judith's friends chat happily, but Judith remains quiet, shooting suspicious glances.

She barely touches her food.

MS BENSON talks with ELIZABETH on the opposite side of the room.

Judith throws them a look of disgust and gets up.

JUDITH
(to her friends)
Excuse me.

She leaves the dining hall.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

The lobby is empty.

JUDITH walks through -- and notices the office door is wide open.

She takes a look around. No one.

Careful not to be seen, she sneaks inside.

A security camera turns in her direction.

INT. MS BENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

JUDITH walks into the large, airy office.

Framed family pictures on the desk. A couple of plants. Wooden file cabinets lined against the back wall.

She opens a drawer in the desk, shuffles some papers and comes across a photograph: a young Ms. Benson, Roland, and Roland's wife.

She frowns. Judging from the director's age the picture is at least 30 years old, yet Roland looks the same he does now...

For a moment, her hand hovers over the phone on the desk, but she spots the file cabinets on the far side of the room, and changes her mind.

She heads for the file cabinets, opens a drawer, checks the dates on the files. Moves on.

Current files are at the end of the row. She flicks through them.

She finds hers, has a quick look at the brain scans and diagnosis. She grimaces.

She grabs a bunch of files. A couple slip through and scatter on the floor.

They also contain brain scans.

She examines them, comparing them to hers.

Suddenly frantic, she opens other files and pulls out brain scans and diagnoses.

All are exactly the same. All signed by the same doctor, with the same diagnosis.

JUDITH

I knew it..!

Then she comes across Roland's file. Instantly, it looks different from the others.

The document looks older, the paper yellowed. All dates are blanked out. No brain scans.

The picture, although taken at the time of his admission, looks the same as today.

She moves on to another row of files, 20 years older.

She goes through a few files and finds Roland again. Same picture. Same face. Different dates.

She doesn't have time to look further... there's voices on the other side of the door - Ms. Benson!!

Judith shuts the drawer, looks around for a hiding place, and tucks herself in a corner, out of sight.

MS BENSON and ELIZABETH walk in.

MS BENSON (O.S.)

I could have sworn I'd locked the door.

ON MS BENSON AND ELIZABETH --

Ms. Benson quickly looks around. Sees nothing unusual. She goes to her desk while Elizabeth waits.

ELIZABETH

Before I forget. Mister Feig isn't looking too great today. Your Grandpa's using up these poor souls fast lately.

MS BENSON

(shrugging)

If he picked them younger, they'd last longer. But I don't think he cares.

ELIZABETH

That's more work for us.

Ms. Benson grabs the papers she was looking for.

MS BENSON

Can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs. And really -- better them than me. I've given enough.

Ms. Benson and Elizabeth leave, closing the door behind them.

BACK TO JUDITH --

She comes out of her hiding place.

She stuffs the file and scans under her belt, covering them with her sweater.

She rushes to the phone, picks up and dials.

JUDITH

Josh? Are you home? Come see me right away! It's important. Please.

She hangs up and hurries to the door -- but it is locked.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Oh shit. Shit!

A moment of panic.

She looks around for a way out of the building, eager to run away.

She tries to open the windows, but they're all locked.

There's no other way out of the office but the door. Judith pulls out a hair pin and tries to crochet the lock.

The pin twists and falls under the door.

No way out. She's locked in.

Judith takes a deep breath, tries to figure out her options.

Footsteps approach.

They're too close and the desk is too far! Judith hides against the wall, behind the door.

The door opens.

ON JUDITH:

She waits, anxious, as MS BENSON walks in.

Miraculously, the director leaves the door open. As soon as she's a few feet away, her back turned as she steps to her desk, Judith hurries out of the office.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

JUDITH rushes out of the office, turns around... and bumps into LIESEL!

JUDITH

Ow! I, um... I was looking-

LIESEL

I know. I'm --

MS BENSON spots the nurse from her desk and hails her.

MS BENSON

Liesel! Come in, please.

Liesel pats Judith's hand quickly and steps inside.
Judith sneaks away, unsure if she's been seen.

Once out of sight, she hurries to the front door.

She types in the code.

Access denied.

She tries again.

The code has been changed.

JUDITH

No!!

She bangs her fists against the glass, and gives up.

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

JUDITH drops the files onto her desk by the door and
heads to the bathroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

C-U on TELEVISION: cartoon witches dance around a large,
horned devil, and fly off on broomsticks.

JOSH walks in.

JOSH

Granny! Are you okay?

JUDITH switches off the TV.

She looks frantic, her hair wild around her head, making
her look like a mad scientist.

JUDITH

I have to get out of here, Josh.

He looks disappointed.

JOSH

Oh.

JUDITH

I know who it is who's killing people
here. It's Roland.

JOSH

That old guy you play cards with..?

JUDITH

Possibly his friends too. I'm in danger.
Along with every other resident.

JOSH

Why don't you speak to the director then?
Can't she help?

JUDITH

She's his daughter. Or rather
granddaughter. She's in on it.

JOSH

In on what??

JUDITH

The so-called nightmares I've been
having? This man is behind them.

JOSH

I thought you said what you saw wasn't
human?

She shakes her head. Thinking out loud.

JUDITH

No, no, it's not him -- or is it? It
could be him, changing at night --

JOSH

Granny, what the hell are you talking
about?

JUDITH

He's somehow using power to live forever.
I saw him on a photograph at the pub, in
the hallway. He looked exactly the same
in the seventies.

JOSH

Uh... You think he's... a vampire?

JUDITH

A witch. Probably. I can't be sure.

He doesn't believe her for a second.

He looks down, avoiding her gaze.

She notices.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I know, it sounds a bit much.

JOSH

The doctor said you'd try to convince us you're seeing stuff, but that it's not real.

JUDITH

Is that what you believe? That I'm crazy..?

JOSH

He said that you've got...

He looks for the right words, taps his head with his index finger.

JUDITH

Dementia.

He nods.

She gets up.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

That doctor is a crook. He's part of the conspiracy. I can prove it.

She goes to her desk to fetch the file.

It's not there.

She looks around the table and under the bed.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Where the..?!

JOSH

What are you looking for?

JUDITH

The file!

Panic mounts as she frantically searches her desk and surroundings, in vain.

JOSH

What file?

JUDITH

It's gone!

She faces him, horrified.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

It was right here! Somebody took it!

JOSH

What was it?

JUDITH

My brain scan. And those of others here, diagnosed with the same disease. All exactly identical. They're fake, Josh. They're covering up for--

JOSH

Brain scans? How do you know? How can you tell they're not subtly different? And someone took them from you..? I mean, I hate to say it, granny, but this sounds --

She sits on the bed next to him, defeated.

A moment of silence.

Embarrassed, Josh fiddles with the zipper of his coat.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I should go back.

He gets up.

JUDITH

You only just arrived.

JOSH

Mom is waiting for me.

A white lie. She can tell.

She nods.

JUDITH

Are you coming back tomorrow?

JOSH

I... I don't think so. I have a lot of homework this week. But next week, for sure.

JUDITH

Next week..?!

He gives her a peck on the cheek.

Tears stream down his face. His biggest fear has come true: his grandma is a crazy old lady.

JOSH
Good night, granny.

He exits, leaving her stunned and downhearted.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

JOSH pedals away fast as he can, wiping off tears streaming down his face.

The worst scenario imaginable has happened.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH paces the room.

Her hands shake, and she stops to open her cupboard and grab her pills.

She pours one out and swallows it dry. Then she hides the box back in the cupboard.

She goes to open her window.

She looks out, contemplating whether she could escape that way. It's the second floor, but there's a roof ladder running to the side of the wall.

She leans out to reach for it.

LIESEL (O.S.)
Judith! What are you doing?!

Judith whips around and sees Liesel walk in with her medication tray.

The nurse strides towards her, panicked.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
It's dangerous!

She closes the window and draws the curtains.

LIESEL (CONT'D)
Come on. Time for bed.

JUDITH
Oh, not yet.

Liesel takes her gently by the arm.

LIESEL

Oh yes. It's already late.

Judith sits on the bed.

Liesel takes a wide belt from the side of the bed, and attaches it around Judith's waist.

JUDITH

What is this for?

The nurse helps her lie down.

LIESEL

I've been asked to --

She grabs a strap which fastens onto the waist band, and starts securing it to the bed.

JUDITH

What..? No!

LIESEL

It's for your own good. So, you won't fall off your bed if you have a nightmare.

Liesel is about to attach the other side of the strap, but Judith pushes her away.

JUDITH

I said no!

ELIZABETH rushes in to help.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Get away from me!

She thrashes about, tries to push them away but the nurses are stronger!

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Let go! Get the fuck off me!!

Soon she is subdued.

ELIZABETH

Doctor's orders. Trust us.

Judith gives Liesel a cold look.

JUDITH

You said you wanted to help. You wanted to listen. You think your grandfather would be proud right now?

Liesel blushes, wounded.

ELIZABETH

I heard Dr. Geoghegan say that when you experienced something disorienting, you should close your eyes and count to five. When you open them again, whatever you saw or heard will be gone.

JUDITH

Oh, come on. Count to five? What kind of advice is that?

Judith spots ROLAND through the partially opened doorway, his expression one of sadness.

He waves her good night. She looks away, terrified -- now he knows she's helpless.

But the moment Elizabeth leaves, Liesel's demeanor changes. She leans forward and whispers.

LIESEL

I believe you.

JUDITH

What..??

LIESEL

Play along for tonight. I'm being watched. I know what's going on. I'll check in on you and we'll talk in the morning.

She runs out.

Judith stares in the dark, stunned.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - NIGHT

The wind howls. Rain clatters against the building.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

POV from the ceiling: it's the middle of the night, but JUDITH is awake, listening to the rain.

The sound of the window opening. The wind and rain suddenly louder.

Judith jolts, all her muscles tense.

Footsteps on the other side of the curtain. A shadow appears. Indistinct at first, but getting closer...

A thin, long hand opens the curtain, revealing the MINION.

It steps closer to the bed.

For the first time, Judith can see it clearly. Stretched, twisted and spider-like, with empty eyes and an enormous mouth. It looks entirely malevolent.

JUDITH

Liesel! LIESEL!!

But Judith's terrified voice barely amounts to a squeak!

She struggles to free herself but can't reach the buckles behind her back!

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Liesel, WHERE ARE YOU?!?

She tries not to give in to panic...

She remembers the doctor's advice and closes her eyes... takes a deep breath...

JUDITH (CONT'D)

One. Two. Three. Four.

She keeps her eyes shut tight, struggling to ignore the monster, feeling his breath on her.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Five.

She opens her eyes - and finds the MINION's face inches from hers!

She is about to scream and reach out for the creature's head, but its monstrous mouth elongates, tendrils and twigs growing towards her and enveloping her face as she passes out!

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY

JUDITH, barely awake, lets ELIZABETH open the curtains and unbuckle the straps.

ELIZABETH

Morning Judith.

Judith looks exhausted, frail, disheveled, terrified.

JUDITH
Where is Liesel?

ELIZABETH
I haven't seen her today.

The nurse leaves.

Judith sits up slowly and rubs her neck and back. Every move is a struggle.

She moans, and her moan slowly turns into a wail.

INT. FAMILY DINING ROOM - DAY

JOSH sits at the table. From his ruffled hair and puffy eyes, it's clear he hasn't slept much either.

He flicks through family pictures on his laptop -- memories of happier days.

He stops on a photograph of Barbara and Judith at the pub where they had their last lunch.

OFF Josh's frown, intrigued...

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Gloomy and weak, in the same crumpled clothes as the previous day, JUDITH eats her lunch in a corner, looking out the window to avoid seeing all the sick old RESIDENTS around her. There's an eeriness to their behaviors -- and a sense of her being watched -- that she cannot face right now.

No sign of Liesel anywhere.

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Seated in a large armchair, surrounded by some of the house's most able RESIDENTS, JUDITH shows no interest whatsoever in the day's activity: watercolor painting.

The TEACHER leans over her.

TEACHER
Are you alright?

JUDITH

Oh... yes. Have you seen Liesel today?

The teacher shakes his head, no.

EXT. COUNTRY PUB - EVENING

JOSH stops in front of the pub and ties his bicycle outside.

INT. COUNTRY PUB - EVENING

JOSH walks into the main room of the pub.

He nods hello to the bartender, and a couple of customers he knows, sitting at a table.

Josh heads for the corridor.

INT. COUNTRY PUB HALLWAY - EVENING

Josh examines the pictures on the walls.

He freezes when he sees it -- Roland, looking the same as he does today, standing in front of the nursing home with the staff.

On another picture, Roland, Trish and Ruth are photographed in the garden, mid-eighties, looking the same.

Josh runs out.

INT. ROOM 211 - EVENING

JUDITH sits on her bed, facing the window, lost in thought.

Behind her, the door creaks open.

She turns around.

The TABBY CAT enters and struts across the room, locking eyes with her as he hops onto her bed.

JUDITH

No....!

Now it's clear: she will die tonight, at the hands of the witches! She freezes in horror as the cat rubs himself against her, then scurries out of the room.

Judith wipes away her tears, and with shaky hands, opens her cupboard to get her pills...

She contemplates the box. Pours out one pill. Then a second.

EXT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME - NIGHT

JOSH hops off his bicycle, dropping it to the ground, and runs up the stairs to the front door.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

Judith stares longingly at the poster on her wall -- the dazzling picture of her graceful 20-year-old self.

She pours the rest of the pills out.

She's taking destiny into her own hands.

She takes a deep breath, closes her eyes, open her mouth, and lifts the pills to her mouth...

ON THE DOOR:

JOSH bursts into the room.

JOSH

Grandma!!

Judith jolts and drops the pills on the floor. Suddenly conscious of what she was about to do, she blushes, embarrassed.

Josh doesn't notice. He looks horrified.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I've seen the photos. On the wall. That friend of yours.

Judith looks up. Hope!

JUDITH

You did..?

JOSH

What does it mean?

JUDITH

I'm not sure. I think some kind of black magic is involved, or some cure they somehow draw from the other residents. Whatever it is, he's guilty, and I intend to prove it.

Josh shakes his head, still struggling with it all.

JOSH

I can't believe this is real.

Footsteps outside in the hallway.

JUDITH

Shit. The nurse. You've got to hide!

Josh runs to the wardrobe, and disappears inside just as the door to the room creaks open.

Judith hops into bed as ELIZABETH walks in.

ELIZABETH

Good evening.

Judith lies on her bed. The nurse fastens the belt.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

We're remarkably quiet tonight.

Judith forces a yawn.

JUDITH

I'm tired.

Elizabeth leaves and closes the door.

Josh steps out of his hiding place.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Help me out.

He looks on, shocked to see his grandma so helpless.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Come on, hurry. I'm not Houdini.

Moments later, Judith is free.

JOSH

Okay, so do we go to the police?

JUDITH

Not yet. Trust me, they won't believe us.

JOSH
I'm sorry *I* didn't believe you.

She hugs her grandson tight.

Then grabs her coat.

JUDITH
What we need is evidence.

He follows her out.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY/ROLAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

JUDITH hurries down the hallway, towards Roland's room, JOSH hot on her heels.

She stops in front of Roland's door and knocks.

No response.

She tries again. When it's clear he's not in, she opens the door.

INT. ROLAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roland's room is immaculate. A few photos, a bunch of dried flowers, some books: surprisingly few personal items for someone who's lived here so long.

JUDITH holds up a fist to JOSH, who understands immediately. Paper, stone, scissors.

He loses.

JUDITH
You watch the door.

Judith goes round the room, lifting the mattress, checking corners.

Nothing unusual.

JOSH
What are we looking for?

JUDITH
Anything unusual. Anything incriminating.

JOSH
Huh. Like what?

JUDITH

I don't know, a cauldron and a broomstick? Just watch the hallway. Let me know if anyone shows up.

Judith opens the drawer chest, one by one. Underwear. Socks. Shirts.

In the second drawer, she finds the file lying on top of a pile of folded shirts.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

The scans!

She brandishes them to Josh. He nods.

Judith opens another drawer, and finds a little wooden box, which she opens.

Under some cuff links is a tuft of hair bound by an elastic band.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I knew it! I knew I hadn't misplaced my brush.

JOSH

What's that?

She shows him the hair.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Ew.

JUDITH

Quite sure it's mine.

JOSH

What a creep.

Suddenly, she understands.

She pockets the hair, heads to Roland's bathroom and steals some hairs off his brush, which she stuffs into the elastic band.

Josh looks out the door.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Shit. Someone's coming!

He closes the door.

Judith is still in the bathroom.

JOSH (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She rushes out and puts the tuft of hair in the drawer -- but just as she's about to push it shut, she catches the glint of a tiny golden angel head: Liesel's pendant.

Judith's eyes widen in horror.

Already hidden under the bed, Josh calls out, scared --

JOSH (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Granny!

The door creaks open...

Judith shuts the drawer and slides down next to Josh just a split second before ROLAND walks in.

He sits on the bed, takes off his slippers, rubs his feet.

Perfectly ordinary.

He bends down to the ground and for a moment, Judith and Josh fear he might see them under the bed...

But he simply picks up his slippers and puts them away neatly, then goes to the bathroom.

They hear him urinate, then flush.

He walks out of the bathroom, yawns loudly. Then goes to his shelves, whistling a happy tune.

They see him open the drawer, pull the hair out of the wooden box, and stuff it in his pocket.

Judith gasps.

She crawls out from under the bed, no longer caring to be seen.

JUDITH

Now what the --

Josh tries to stop her!

JOSH

(whispering)

No!

But Roland is nowhere in sight..!

Josh crawls out and looks around the room.

They have a quick look inside the open bathroom. Nobody.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Where the hell did he go?

He goes to the open window.

The rain has stopped.

He looks down...

... and can't believe his eyes!! Roland is outside, crawling down the wall from the second floor, on all fours, hands and feet like claws, head first!!!

Josh is about to scream, but Judith clasps a hand on his mouth!

They both look on as Roland reaches the ground and scampers towards the forest!

Another window opens and TRISH crawls out onto the wall.

Josh and Judith quickly step out of sight.

Trish climbs down the wall in the exact same manner -- and so does RUTH, on the other side.

JOSH (CONT'D)

How -- What the hell is that?! *What* are they?

Josh is absolutely panicked.

JOSH (CONT'D)

What do we do? Do we call the cops?!

JUDITH

We still don't have any evidence.

JOSH

Then I have to follow them. Film them, whatever they're doing.

JUDITH

We have to follow them.

JOSH

It's too dangerous for you, granny.

JUDITH

I'm not leaving you. You have your phone?

He nods.

JOSH
What are we gonna do?

He looks out the window.

The trio run across the grounds towards the woods, barely visible in the darkness.

JOSH (CONT'D)
And how? The doors are locked at night.
So are the downstairs windows.

JUDITH
Follow me.

She heads out.

INT. HALLWAY/ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JUDITH goes to her window and points to the ladder.

JUDITH
This way.

JOSH
I can do it. But I'm not sure it's a good
idea for you-

JUDITH
Go, and help me once you're on the
ladder.

JOSH hesitates. She nods.

He steps over the sill, and with a last look to his
grandma, disappears outside.

EXT/INT. SUNSET MANOR NURSING HOME/ROOM 211 - NIGHT

JOSH holds on to the gutter and makes his way towards the
ladder, inch by inch, trying not to look down.

JUDITH doesn't dare say a word for fear of startling him.

Once he's safely on the ladder, Josh calls out.

JOSH
Okay!

But now she looks down... and hesitates.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Come on!

A door slams in the hallway. Footsteps. Someone may be coming.

Judith steps over the sill, onto the gutter.

Josh offers his arm.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Hang on.

She reaches out for him - when a crow flies right in front of her, startling her!

She loses her footing!!

For a moment she dangles two storeys above ground... but Josh grabs her wrist and she manages to reach the ladder and hang on.

Moments later, she safely steps down after Josh.

They reach the ground and make their way towards the trees.

INT. ROOM 211 - NIGHT

ELIZABETH walks into the room.

She sees the empty bed, glances around the room. Goes to the window. Looks out.

Spots JUDITH and JOSH walking away towards the woods.

MS BENSON walks in.

ELIZABETH

Look at this.

The nurse points at Judith and Josh, vanishing at the horizon.

MS BENSON

Oh great. More bodies to dispose of.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

JOSH and JUDITH reach the treeline beyond the vegetable patch.

Josh uses the flashlight on his cell phone to find his way, keeping it low to avoid giving away their presence.

They move slowly, cautiously, unsure what awaits.

After a couple of minutes, they spot a light in the distance and hear voices chanting, cackling, screaming.

Dead crows and stick figures hang from branches along the narrow path.

They see a campfire in the middle of the clearing.

JUDITH
(whispering)
Turn the light off.

He puts his phone in his pocket.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Before we go any further. If anything goes South -- *anything* -- I want you to run away, fast as you can. I can't run, but I don't have much to lose. You...

JOSH
No. No way, I'm not going anywhere without you. I let you get into this mess. I'll help you out of it, or we'll both get caught.

For a moment, she hesitates.

JUDITH
I have no choice, do I?
(OFF his resolve)
Let's do this.

They move forward and take position behind a tree, still as can be.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

The trio dance under the tree, chanting verses JOSH and JUDITH can't understand.

A pentagram has been drawn with sticks in the dirt.

They throw herbs - sage, wormwood - into the fire, which glows green every time something falls in.

Josh's jaw drops.

JOSH
 (whispering)
 They're witches! They are fucking
 witches!

ROLAND starts a long incantation, his voice otherworldly,
 as if possessed.

His followers chant a response.

Hidden behind the tree, Josh and Judith can hardly
 believe what they see.

He pulls out his phone and starts filming...

The witches face the oak tree.

RUTH presents Roland with a knife. TRISH offers him a
 crow.

Roland cuts the bird's head off.

All three smear blood on their faces as they chant an
 incantation and take turns drinking some rancid spirit
 from a jug.

Roland throws some of the liquid upon the fire and it
 ignites in a fireball, lighting up the forest.

JOSH and JUDITH quickly duck behind cover, but can't take
 their eyes off the proceedings.

Everything is performed quite playfully, a ritual the
 three friends are familiar with and enjoy.

Roland addresses the tree.

ROLAND
 Lord of the Forest, welcome art thou unto
 us. Within this circle, so long as we
 need thee, we are bound. From the
 original three, to the three before you
 today, we worship thee.

RUTH/TRISH
 Amen.

ROLAND
 We refuse the degradation of our bodies.
 Allow us once more to feed on the weak.
 To absorb their energy and replenish
 ourselves. To thrive through their ill
 health, to live beyond their deaths.

RUTH/TRISH

Amen.

ROLAND

Send your minion to feed for us...

Roland pulls out the tuft of hair Judith found in his room.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

... On Judith Albright.

Upon hearing his grandma's name, Josh bursts out into the clearing!

JOSH

No!!!

The three witches turn and freeze -- Roland doesn't complete the ritual.

Josh rushes him, but the old man is unexpectedly strong -- Roland grabs Josh by the throat and holds him at arm's length!

Trish spots Judith hiding in the bushes.

TRISH

There!

Trish and Ruth attack Judith! She claws at their faces, but they quickly subdue her.

Ruth grabs her hair and drags her through the brush, into the clearing.

Josh and Judith are forced to their knees. Trish supervises, threatening them both with her knife.

ROLAND

Search the boy. Find his phone.

Roland steps closer to Judith.

She recoils, shaking.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

It's really nice of you to come all the way here, Judith. We won't even have the trouble of sending the minion to your room. Just... dump your body once we're done.

Josh screams.

JOSH

Help! HELP!!

Roland laughs.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Why are you doing this?!

RUTH

Isn't it obvious?

ROLAND

I watched my wife lose her mind little by little, become a stranger who'd wet her bed and couldn't recognize her own daughter. She had the gift, but she didn't want others to suffer for her benefit, so she never used it. The tree chooses who's next to get the gift, and when she died, it chose me. Well, I'm not going through that degradation... ever.

JOSH

What about the innocent people you kill?

He shrugs.

ROLAND

If you cheat nature, there's always a price to pay. I get to be young again, a few hours each night. Trust me... it's worth the cost.

Judith's expression changes.

JUDITH

The kids in the woods -- it was you?!
That's... incredible.

ROLAND

Too bad you won't be here to witness it again.

Roland pulls the hair out of his pocket, considers it.

He grins at Judith and extends his arm towards the fire.

Josh reacts, but Judith keeps him still...

Roland throws the hair in the fire!

The fire flashes brighter! ... Then silence.

Then... there is movement on the trunk of the tree. The knot which resembles a face comes alive...

Hands, human in form but bark-like in texture, burst from the tree trunk and extend into long arms. The MINION, dripping with sap, pulls its body out of the tree.

Judith and Josh's eyes widen like saucers.

The witches cackle with joy!

The minion crawls slowly towards Judith, who holds her breath, terrified, a jubilant Roland by her side.

Josh screams and attempts to get up and protect his grandma, but Trish holds him down, knife on his throat.

The minion leans towards Judith and Roland... and grabs the old man, who shrieks in terror!

ROLAND (CONT'D)

No! Not me!

He just about has the time to look down at the remaining hairs in his hand -- and looking closely, realizes they're his, not Judith's!

He turns to her, stupefied.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

You tricked me!

The minion's mouth stretches against his face and with a hideous suction noise, starts draining him!

When the putrid creature finally lets him go, Roland is little more than a dried husk, parchment skin on bones, shattering into dusk on the ground.

Trish and Ruth stagger back, confused and horrified.

Judith seizes her chance. She finds the jug Roland had used to light the fire and brandishes it towards the tree!

JUDITH

Back off. Let us go.

(stepping closer to the tree)

Or I swear, I will burn this tree to the ground.

RUSH

No!

The witches glance at each other. Silently agree.

TRISH

Join us, Judith.

RUTH

You don't belong in that decaying body.

TRISH

We'll welcome you among us. *Both* of you.

Judith hesitates, surprised by this unexpected choice.

RUTH

(pointing at Josh)

You have a familiar. A *young* familiar.
Like Roland, when his granddaughter was
young. It can be a perfect partnership.

TRISH

You can destroy the tree and grow old and
slowly die, along with everyone in that
house. And you, young man -- you can
watch your grandmother decay, lose her
mind... and die.

(to Judith)

Or you can join us, and be young again.
Young forever.

(to Josh)

You'll never have to know the pain of
seeing your loved one grow old.

Realization dawns on Judith's face.

She slowly lowers the bottle. Looks at Josh. He's
listening...

TRISH (CONT'D)

The price to pay is very small, really.

RUTH

We dance, Judith. We dance every night.

This last thought strikes a chord. She makes a decision.
Josh nods. Extends his hand.

She grabs it.

Together they turn to the tree.

It stretches its branches towards them...

Ruth and Trish cackle joyously!

The tree grabs her by the wrist and wraps itself around Judith, branches and twigs encircling her arms and body, its hold more an embrace than a threat.

It slowly lifts her off the ground...

Ruth and Trish are transfixed. No one dares say a word...

All stare as the tree gently lifts up her sleeve... and draws the three-lined symbol into her flesh.

The same symbol appears on Josh's skin.

Judith winces. Closes her eyes. The tree lowers her back to the ground.

Her eyes snap open.

She stares at Josh and the two witches with eyes gone completely black.

Ruth and Trish step forward and hold out their hands.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Bound.

Judith and Josh grab the witches' hands.

Energy emanates from them in a great flash of white light, illuminating their faces, which start rejuvenating as the whole screen is awash with light.

FADE IN:

INT. GROUND FLOOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

ANGLE on a birthday cake. The candles read '71'. JUDITH blows them out.

WIDE ON THE ROOM:

Soft, golden light.

RESIDENTS sit in chairs all around the table. In their midst, Judith smiles as everyone applauds her.

TRISH and RUTH sit opposite Judith. Everyone around is older than Judith.

They chat and laugh happily.

A banner reads, HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR JUDITH!

Judith unwraps the presents on the coffee table in front of her: a couple of books, a shawl... - typical gifts for an elderly woman.

She looks great, younger and healthier.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Are we too late?

Judith breaks into a big smile when she spots BARBARA and JOSH shyly stand in the doorway.

JUDITH

Barbara! Josh. Sweetheart.

Barbara leans to kiss her daughter's head. Josh hands her a present.

JOSH

Happy birthday, granny.

She unwraps it.

Her red shoes, restored, as new. Rejuvenated, like she is. Her eyes light up.

BARBARA

We thought they'd remind you of the past.

JUDITH

This is wonderful. Thank you.

(to the assembly)

My grandson, everybody.

(smiling proudly)

He keeps me young.

Then she grabs a large knife off the table.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Alright, who wants cake?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Feet in red ballerina shoes crunch the grass in the clearing.

A woman in a flowing red dress dances around the oak tree, lit only by a fire.

Her hands have age spots and lines, but as we move up along her body, she appears younger and younger.

JUDITH dances on, an ecstatic smile on her 20-year-old face.

FADE OUT.