

DREAM HOUSE

Screenplay
by
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FADE IN

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN (TRAVELING) - CONNECTICUT - DAY

Winter. Early afternoon before the commuter rush. A lone passenger, WILL ATENTON (30s), rests his head against the window, dozing. RAIN blurs the world outside. Loping power lines parallel the track, make a hypnotic pattern against a grey sky.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

New Canaan. Next stop is New Canaan.
Please check for all personal
belongings before leaving the train.

Will stirs. Rubs tired eyes. He has the pale complexion of a businessman too long chained to a desk. He wears a suit but no tie and could stand to gain a few pounds. There's a slightly distracted look to him as though he can never leave office problems behind.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Station stop is Newwww Canaaaaaan...

EXT. NEW CANAAN STATION - DAY

Will steps onto the covered platform. A quaint, upscale Connecticut commuter town an hour from Manhattan. Main Street is veiled in RAIN. Will throws on a thin coat.

TRISH & DEE-DEE(O.S.)

Daddy!

Will's daughters, TRISH (7) and DEE-DEE (5) barrel down the platform in red rain slickers. His face blossoms into a smile as he kneels to hug them.

WILL

Hey, you munchkins. What're you
doing here? What happened to school?

LIBBY

They absolutely refused to go.

Behind them is Will's wife, LIBBY (late 20s), a lovely, naturally warm soul.

TRISH

If we buy this house we won't go to
that school anyway. Wanna see Kumo
one, Daddy? Watch!

Trish launches into her beginner's karate moves. Dee-Dee laughs and imitates her big sister.

LIBBY
I wasn't sure you'd make it.

WILL
Well, I did.

He pulls a paper from his pocket. Reads a name.

WILL
The realtor's name is Heather Keeler.

A horn BEEPS in the parking lot. HEATHER KEELER (40s) waves from beneath a big umbrella. Her green mini-van is marked: "VILLAGE GREEN REALTY."

Libby turns up the collar of Will's coat.

LIBBY
You should've worn something warmer.

INT./EXT. THE MINI-VAN (TRAVELING)

Heather drives. Libby beside her. Will and the girls in back. They pass a stark, white CHURCH with a tall spire overlooking town. Then turn past a cemetery onto a winding suburban country road spackled with wet leaves.

HEATHER
(singing)
"The sun'll come out, tomorrow.." My
daughter's class did "Annie" this
year. All the schools up here are ---

Heather squints through the RAIN-spattered windshield.

HEATHER
Oops! Look at me. Right past our
road. We can take the next turn.
Bramble Branch Circle is a big loop.

Heather takes the next turn.

EXT. 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE

The van drives past handsome colonial-style homes shielded from the road by broad front lawns and landscaped grounds and separated from each other by swaths of woods.

HEATHER
Bramble Branch was designed back in
the Twenties by John Jacob Lang.
Very renowned. The homes share a
common design, but they're all
unique. No cookie-cutters here.

Will catches Libby's eye in the rear-view, sharing a smile at the chatty realtor.

The van zigzags up a long driveway strewn with branches. A sign on the lawn reads: *Protected by Safe and Secure*. An eye-pleasing two-story home is set far back from the road.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

They rush from the van through the RAIN. Neighboring houses are only faintly visible through the woods.

HEATHER

It's all three acre zoning so you have plenty of privacy. But your neighbors are just a stone's throw away. You have Ann Pierson right across the street. She's a doll.

The front door frame is splintered. Heather unlocks a bulky padlock that replaces a broken lock.

HEATHER

The owner doesn't want to put another penny in this place.

LIBBY

How long has the house been empty?

HEATHER

Not all that long really.

Libby and Will exchange a look at her vague answer as Heather shoulders open the stubborn door.

INT. THE HOUSE

The rooms are bare. No heat. Everyone keeps their coats on as they walk through.

DEE-DEE

Where's our room?

TRISH

I know, I know.

Trish dashes off. Dee-Dee right behind her.

LIBBY

Girls, careful.

HEATHER

I hope you can see past some of the little cosmetic flaws. This house has great bones and a wonderful flow.

Libby takes Will's hand -- it *is* a great house. Hardwood floors. Stone fireplace. Wonderful detailing.

HEATHER

Just needs a little spackle, paint and TLC.

WILL

Maybe some new windows and a general contractor.

Heather gives an embarrassed laugh as Will examines a SCREEN PORCH ceiling patched with plywood.

HEATHER

A tree blew down. This fall -- I tell you, the weather's been crazy.

Upstairs, the girls boots THUMP like a herd of elephants.

HEATHER

The pitter-patter of little feet.

WILL

(calling off)

Easy up there, you guys.

HEATHER

Not to worry. This house was made for kids.

THE KITCHEN... is a spacious room with antique country cabinets and an attached GREENHOUSE leads to the backyard.

HEATHER

Isn't this fantastic? They used to have a huge flower garden out back.

Through the windows, rows of wooden stacks and some blown down fencing are visible.

HEATHER

Can't you just imagine this breakfast nook all done with hanging plants.

Will's foot accidentally kicks a STONE across the floor. They notice that many of the greenhouse windows are broken.

HEATHER

Kids. It's a shame a house like this sitting empty.

UPSTAIRS HALL

Will and Libby peer in rooms, glad to get away from the gabby realtor. Water stains make strange patterns on the walls like faces.

LIBBY

Okay, I love it. You knew I would. Now, you can break it to me that we can't afford it, but you get credit for trying.

WILL

Hey, I'm serious about this. And we can afford it.

LIBBY

If we can afford it, there's definitely something wrong with it.

WILL

Obviously it needs work. But the thing is, it's a bank foreclosure.

LIBBY

What happened to the family that was living here?

WILL

I think they got divorced.

LIBBY

That's terrible. It's like we're driving them out.

WILL

Sweetie, we're not driving them out. They're gone. The bank owns the house. If we don't grab it somebody else will.

Will joins Libby looking out a window into the backyard. There is a lopsided playground set beyond the old garden.

LIBBY

This was somebody's home.

WILL

Let's make it ours? I don't want to come home again and find you and the girls gone. I want a second chance.

LIBBY

And you'll have a three hour commute and we'll see even less of you.

WILL

No. I'm leaving GPH and my top three authors are leaving with me.

LIBBY

(teasingly)

You mean all the cute ones.

WILL

The lucrative ones.

LIBBY

And you won't go crazy in the suburbs?

WILL

No, I'll go crazy if I lose you.

Libby leans against him. He's saying the words she's wanted to hear.

TRISH & DEE-DEE (O.S.)

It's snowing! Look!

OUTSIDE IN THE BACKYARD... the rain has turned to a light SNOW FLURRY. Trish and Dee-Dee dance in crazy circles.

TRISH

Can we buy this house?

TRISH & DEE-DEE

Pleeeeeeeeeeease!

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - G.P.C. PUBLISHING - MANHATTAN - DAY

SLEET slaps the windows of a book-lined office. Stacks of manuscripts sprout yellow Post-its. Will is a fiction editor. He empties his desk into a box. A buttoned-down colleague, BOB FERGUSON (30s), leans in the doorway.

FERGUSON

You know what freelance is, Atenton?
Free-fall. Financial oblivion.
You'll be begging to come back.

WILL

Thanks, Bob. You always cheer me up.

SADIE (40s), a heavy-set, maternal senior editor, leans forward on the couch and closes the door on Ferguson.

SADIE

Asshole.

She produces a cigarette and lights up. There are so many personal items in Will's desk -- shirts, toothbrush, razors, etc. -- we get the sense he virtually lived here.

SADIE

I'm on your side, you know that. But you really think you can carry a big house in New Canaan?

WILL

I'm doing the renovations myself.

SADIE

What is that -- like hammers? And what do they call those things--?

WILL

Nails.

SADIE

Oh, so you're an expert. Who knew?

The door opens and pudgy "office-boy", TOMMY PETROCELLI (60s) steps in with the morning papers.

PETROCELLI

Paper, Mr. A.?

WILL

Not today, Tommy. I'm outa here.

PETROCELLI

You buying that house, Mr. A.?

WILL

That's right. You guys'll come up.

SADIE

Not me. I got allergies. And Tommy they keep chained in the basement.

Petrocelli chuckles -- an office lifer.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MANHATTAN

Will sits in a booth with his old friend and mentor, PAUL GREELEY (50s), African-American, greying hair, reading glasses. A wise soul with a knowing unwavering gaze.

WILL

I know you think I'm crazy buying this big house, don't you, Paul? But Libby really wants out of here.

GREELEY

And so do you.

Will smiles. He's right. Greeley eyes him darkly.

GREELEY

A word of warning... Do not try to do the electric work yourself. Or the plumbing for that matter.

Greeley slides Will a business card.

WILL

What's this? I've got your number.

GREELEY

Contractor. Did our summer place right down to the birdhouse. Guy'll save your life.

A WAITRESS sets down a piece of pie for Greeley. He reaches into a paper bag and takes out a small GLASS GLOBE.

GREELEY

Look what I just got my niece. She collects these things.

He shakes the GLOBE. Sets it down. Swirling snow falls on an old steam train at a station. CITY SOUNDS FADE as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - NEW CANAAN - DAY

FALLING SNOW blankets the world. Down the street, a PLOW GRATES against a driveway where a RED PICK-UP clears snow.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Furniture wrapped in plastic sits in bare rooms like works of modern art. A CLATTERING SOUND and the girls sail past on their scooters.

IN THE KITCHEN... Will and Libby paint the walls. A radio plays ROCK. Libby refills their wine glasses.

LIBBY

Definitely prefer painting with a buzz.

Libby's face is smudged with paint, loose strands of hair fall across her face. Will pulls Libby into --

THE PANTRY... closes the door, enveloping them in DARKNESS.

LIBBY

Aren't we supposed to be working?

Will kisses her, draws her close. She can't resist him. It may be the end of painting tonight... Then a KNOCK --

DEE-DEE (O.S.)

Mommy? Can we have another dessert?

Will and Libby separate. Will smiles. Yanks open the door

WILL

Boo!

Trish and Dee-Dee SHRIEK WITH LAUGHTER and scooter off.

LIBBY

Will, look at this.

On the pantry door frame, a series of horizontal lines in pencil -- a kids' growth chart -- are marked "B" and "K." A touching snapshot of little lives.

LIBBY

"B" and "K."... Divorce is so sad.

Libby continues painting, careful not to cover the markings. Will watches her for a moment, touched.

THE CENTER HALL - LATER

Will hangs family photos on the wall. Libby sips wine and directs him -- "a little higher, more to the left," etc.

PAN THE PHOTOS... Will and Libby as college kids draped around each other in a bar. Hiking. Camping. Squeezed together in a tent. Trish as a baby. Then Trish age two, holding her newborn sister like a big doll. Will and Libby both "awwww" and the adorable photo.

WILL

We did pretty good.

LIBBY

I wonder where those girls are now?
"B" and "K." I hope they're alright.

WILL

I'm sure they're fine.

LIBBY

How could you know that?

INT. WILL AND LIBBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will lies in bed grinning as Libby shimmies towards him, wrapped in a red satin comforter. She flashes her naked body and falls on top of him. They begin to make love. Warm. Familiar. They know each other's bodies perfectly. Will sees a shadow pass across Libby's face.

WILL

What's the matter?

LIBBY

I'm too happy... I'm afraid it's all
going to go away.

Will pulls her close and holds her very tight. Outside, big fat SNOWFLAKES seal off the rest of the world.

INT. THE SCREEN PORCH - DAY

On a step ladder Will rips old plywood from the ceiling. A door BANGS OPEN in the WIND and a BRANCH reaches in like a bony hand. Trish and Dee-Dee SCREAM, scattering their game of Candyland.

WILL

It's okay, you guys. The tree just
wanted to come in and say 'Hi.'

Will shuts the door but the branch keeps BANGING against the outside, insistent. The girls watch, frightened.

EXT. WILL & LIBBY'S HOUSE

Will stands in knee-deep snow sawing at the branch, part of a fallen ELM whose massive trunk angles against the screen porch roof. The ice-laced limbs CREEK in the wind.

Will's saw catches on a tangle of rotted rope and he pulls an old WOODEN SWING SEAT from beneath the snow.

Across the street, a car swings into the driveway at the Pierson's - a colonial home similar to Will's. A teenager -
- CHLOE (15) -- gets out of the car, startles to see him.

WILL

Hello!

Will waves. Chloe says something to the driver, then hurries into her house without waving. Will is puzzled.

ANN PIERSON, a pretty, thirtysomething woman, steps from the car. She gives a tentative wave. Will waves back. Feels a little better. Ann goes inside.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Will enters and takes in the warm, cozy scene -- Libby at the stove, Trish and Dee-Dee setting the table.

DEE-DEE

I poured the water all by myself.

Dee-Dee nods proudly. Will sees puddles of water all over the table where she missed.

WILL

No? Really? That is so grown-up.

Will smiles at Libby who tosses him a roll of paper towels.

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM

Will and Libby begin to slide one of the girls' beds against a wall. Libby notices something on the floor.

LIBBY

Wait. Move it back. Look at these.

Libby kneels down. There are THREE INCH-LARGE HOLES that have splintered the floor boards.

WILL

Wonder what they're from?

Libby SCREAMS! scrambling to her feet and out the door as an ugly black WATER BUG scurries out of the hole.

LIBBY

Get it! Get it!

Will laughs at Libby's over-reaction and stomps the bug.

LIBBY

Plug those up. And do not tell the girls. They'll never sleep in here again.

GIRLS' ROOM - SHORTLY LATER

Will squirts bug spray then spackles over the holes.

INT. ATTIC - WILL'S HOME OFFICE

Will sits at a desk surrounded by boxes of manuscripts. He tinkers with a shiny new lock. The GIRLS' VOICES DRIFT UP from below. He notices a writing pad he's labeled "New Clients." It's covered with childrens' drawings of FLOWERS. He flips through -- they've used every page.

LIBBY (O.S.)

Sweetie, the girls want a kiss good night.

THE GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

WIND buffets the house but here it's warm and cozy. Matching curtains and bedspreads. Stuffed animals and dolls. Will and Libby tuck in the girls.

TRISH

Can we have a garden?

LIBBY

Of course we can. In spring.

DEE-DEE

When's spring?

WILL

Not for a little while. When the snow's gone. Then we'll have the biggest garden ever, right, Mom? With a gazillion flowers and birdies singing their little heads off.

The girls giggle.

DEE-DEE

Can we have picnics?

WILL

And tea parties and fashion shows and nose picking contests.

Trish and Dee-Dee crack up.

TRISH

Can we stay here for ever and ever?

WILL

Absolutely. For ever and ever.
No college, no weddings. Hear that,
Mom? We're gonna save a bundle.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Will works while everyone sleeps. On the radio a BACH FUGUE weaves a spell. He washes the walls before painting. Beneath the grime, a thin layer of white-wash comes off revealing some sort of GRAFFITI beneath.

Will scrubs more and steps back, stunned to see a huge BLACK SPRAY-PAINTED EYE encircled with jagged lines. He assaults the other walls with bucket and sponge.

THE DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Will turns slow circles. Stark EYES stare from every wall, interspersed with PENTAGRAMS and other MAGICK SYMBOLS. The frenetic fugue on the radio seems eerily appropriate.

A loud THUMP! upstairs -- like a body hitting the floor.

WILL

Libby?!

WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM

Will flings open the door. Libby's gone. He runs out.

THE GIRLS' BEDROOM

Will rushes in. Catches his breath. Libby bends over Trish who lies sprawled on the floor in her bed covers.

LIBBY

Dee-Dee gets scared, climbs in with
Trish and Trish is the one who always
ends up on the floor.

Libby lifts the sleeping girl in her arms and lays her down beside Dee-Dee. She sees Will's anxious expression.

LIBBY

You okay?

WILL

Yeah. Just finishing up downstairs.

THE DINING ROOM - STILL LATER

Will quickly rolls paint over the EYES and PENTAGRAMS. But the black spray paint shows through the pale yellow.

INT. KITCHEN - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Will is on the phone, listening to a RECORDED MESSAGE.

WOMAN'S VOICE (PHONE FILTER)

You have reached Village Green
Realty. If you know your party's
extension enter it now. Or wait for
the tone to leave a message. BEEP.

WILL

This is Will Atenton for Heather
Keeler. Heather, please call me.
It's very important.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Will rolls on a thick second coat of paint.

EXT. 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - NIGHT

Snow drifts and trees heavy with ice, seem to swallow up
the house. And more SNOW FALLS.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will slips into bed beside Libby. Branches SCRAPE the roof
like claws, as if something wants to get in.

INT. THE GIRLS' BEDROOM - DAY

A grey, misty morning. Libby enters, wearing a bathrobe.

LIBBY

Come on, you guys. Time to --

She doesn't finish -- the girls' beds are empty.

UPSTAIRS HALL -- BATHROOM

Libby looks in the bathroom as Will comes down the hall.

LIBBY

Are the girls with you?

WILL

No.

A jolt of adrenaline between them.

QUICK SHOTS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

Will and Libby race from room to room, calling for the
girls. They meet upstairs at either end of the empty hall.

LIBBY

Will, where are they?!

Then they hear the GIRLS' FAINT VOICES from their bedroom.

LIBBY

Thank God.

THE GIRLS' BEDROOM

Libby and Will rush in. But there is no one there. Will flings open the closet. Empty. Libby's freaking out.

LIBBY

What is going on?!

The GIRLS' VOICES are all around -- coming from the walls.

LIBBY

Dee-Dee?! Trish?!

IN THE CLOSET... Will sees a loose wood panel. He moves it aside. Gets down on hands and knees squeezing into...

A CRAWL SPACE... above the eaves. Trish and Dee-Dee sit on old suitcases, having a tea party with stuffed animals.

DEE-DEE

You want to join our clubhouse?

Will sags with relief. Libby has crawled in behind him.

WILL

We found their clubhouse.

TRISH

It's supposed to be secret.

Will and Libby's exchange a meaningful look, acknowledging the scare they both just had.

WILL

Where'd you guys get all this stuff?

Trish points into a shadowy corner. Old cardboard boxes labeled "B & K Toys," and "B & K Stuffed animals."

TRISH

Can we play with them?

WILL

I guess so. Why not?

LIBBY

How could they leave all this behind?

Touched... Libby meets Will's eyes.

EXT. BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - MORNING

Chilly. Will, Trish and Dee-Dee wait at the bus stop. A neighbor, MRS. HARRISON, her son beside her, backs her Mercedes down the driveway and waits in the idling car.

A school bus rounds the corner, snow chains RATTLING. The Mercedes door opens and a BOY runs out. Will kisses the girls goodbye.

He tries to track them as they move down the aisle, but the bus windows are too fogged. It rumbles into gear.

Then at the back windows, two tiny fingers write letters on the steamy glass -- a backwards "B" and "K."

INT. KITCHEN & DINING ROOM - MORNING

Libby writes a shopping list. Will sips coffee. He checks out the dining room. The second coat of paint has completely hidden the graffiti.

LIBBY

It looks great, baby. You must've been up all night.

INT. GREENHOUSE - LATER

Potting benches, coiled hose, a clutter of garden tools. Will knocks out broken panes of glass with a hammer.

He notices a maroon-colored BUICK idling at the end of his driveway. Exhaust curls from the tailpipe. It pulls away.

Libby enters in her coat and gives Will a kiss.

LIBBY

I'm going shopping.

WILL

Careful on the roads. It's been snowing all night.

LIBBY

I will. Oh, and could you look at the laundry room sink. I tried some Drano, but it's still clogged.

INT. CELLAR - LAUNDRY ROOM

Clotheslines crisscross a low ceiling. A laundry sink squats beside a washer-drier. Will shines a flashlight underneath. The drain pipe goes through the wall into --

A STORAGE ROOM

Will shines his light and finds the pipe from the laundry room. He hunkers down and opens the trap with a wrench.

The HISS of Draino acid and a flood of GUNK splashes on the concrete floor. Blood and viscera. Bits of fur and hair.

Will covers his nose and mouth. Staggeres back. He GASPS as his head hits something, flashlight sweeping across --

-- a dozen small, skinned ANIMALS dangle from wires, muscle and bone glistening. Among them hang broken DOLLS painted with MAGICK SYMBOLS, EYES ringed with JAGGED BLACK LINES. Will gags.

KITCHEN AND HALLWAY

Will returns from the kitchen with garbage bags as Trish starts down the cellar stairs.

TRISH

Can I help?

WILL

No. No. It's all flooded. Go play upstairs, okay?

Will slips past Trish and locks the cellar door behind him.

CELLAR STORAGE ROOM - SHORTLY LATER

Will wears a kerchief over his nose and mouth. He slips a garbage bag under a dangling carcass then snips the wire. The skinned animal plops into the bag. He moves to the next carcass, raises the wire cutters and freezes --

-- a RUSTLING, SHUFFLING SOUND. As if something is moving behind the walls. Then it stops. WIND WHISTLES through a broken cellar window. Will returns to work. Cuts down the next carcass.

CELLAR LAUNDRY ROOM

Will nails the storage room door shut.

INT. CELLAR STAIRS - SIDE OF HOUSE

From inside, Will shoulders against the angled exterior storm door, straining against the snow on top. He pushes through and comes face to face with --

-- a MAN in a knit cap and old parka. Startled, Will almost falls back down the stairs. The man grabs his arm.

MAN

Sorry, man. Didn't mean to scare you. I'm Cam McConnell.

WILL

Will Atenton.

CAM MCCONNELL (early 30s) has an easy smile beneath a drinker's weary eyes and a scarred face suggesting one too many bar fights. He gestures with a cigarette to a RED PICK-UP with snow plow in Will's driveway.

CAM

I do driveways. Twenty bucks. A lot cheaper than the other guys.

WILL

Okay. Sure. Sounds good.

CAM

End of March and it's still comin' down like a mother. I love it.

Cam hops in his pick-up and begins plowing the drive. Will drops the heavy garbage bag in the trash can.

INT. KITCHEN AND CENTER HALL - DAY

Will is on the phone, clearly angry.

WILL

This is the second message I'm leaving for Heather Keeler. Please have her call me right away.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Hello...?

Their neighbor, Ann Pierson, TAPS at the front window.

INT/EXT. FRONT PORCH AND ENTRY HALL

Will opens the door. Ann stands on the porch, bundled in coat and scarf. She's very pretty. Tentative. Shy. It took a lot to get herself to come over.

ANN

A housewarming present.

She hands him a tray of flower pots covered with a clear plastic lid. Tiny, pale green shoots pierce the earth.

WILL

Thank you. That's so nice.

ANN

Just a little reminder spring will eventually be here. You've got delphinium, peonies and iris. I saw you fixing up the green house.

WILL

My wife's the gardener. I'm the hired hand. Come in.

Ann cautiously steps inside, but keeps her coat buttoned.

WILL

I'm sorry, I'm Will Atenton. My wife's Libby. She's out shopping.

Will extends his hand. Ann seems thrown by this simple formality and shakes hands stiffly.

ANN

Ann Pierson.

On the landing above, floorboards CREAK. Trish and Dee-Dee peek down through the bannister.

WILL

Uh-oh. I think I hear some big mice.

Trish and Dee-Dee GIGGLE.

WILL

This is our neighbor, Ann, you guys.

The girls run off down the upstairs hall.

WILL

That was Trish and Dee-Dee.

Ann wraps her arms around herself, suddenly self-conscious.

ANN

I should go. I just wanted you to have the flowers.

Ann opens the door and starts out.

WILL

Excuse me. Are you friends with Heather Keeler? The realtor?

ANN

No. I don't know her.

WILL

She seemed to know you. I'm trying to get a hold of her. There're some things about this house --

Will thinks he sees a flicker of recognition on Ann's face.

WILL

You know what I'm talking about.

ANN

No. Not really.

Ann goes down the porch steps into the whipping SNOW.

WILL

Did you know the people before us?

But Ann is already halfway down the walk.

EXT. CHURCH - MAIN STREET - NEW CANAAN - DAY

Will carries cans of paint. The girls climb on the stone wall of the CHURCH YARD and balance like tightrope walkers.

DEE-DEE

Daddy, look!

WILL

Careful, you guys. It's icy.

A MINISTER (60s) changing the message on the Sunday Sermon board, gives Will a reproachful look.

WILL

(lightly to the girls)

You better get down, we're gonna get in trouble.

(off the Minister's sour expression)

They're just kids.

Will helps the girls off the wall. The Minister watches them walk off. Then completes a word on the sermon board... "Sacrifice."

INT. WILL AND LIBBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will and Libby sleep. Wind WHISTLES around the house. Old walls GROAN. A THUMP! down the hall and Will jerks awake, heart-pounding. Beside him, Libby stirs and mumbles...

LIBBY

Your turn. It's Trish.

WILL

Right. My turn.

THE GIRLS' BEDROOM

Will lifts the sleeping girl from the floor and puts her back in bed beside Dee-Dee who now hogs most of it.

WILL

Why do we even have two beds?

Somewhere a window RATTLES noisily in the wind.

UPSTAIRS HALL

Will locks the RATTLING window, silencing it. But now another sound rises -- a FAINT, PERSISTENT THUMPING from somewhere below that suddenly crescendos --

-- until the entire house seems to REVERBERATE with the THUDS of a thousand footfalls.

WILL AND LIBBY'S BEDROOM

Will rushes in carrying both the girls. Libby rises from bed in alarm. Will whispers --

WILL

Keep them in here with you. Lock the door. Someone's in the house.

BACKSTAIRS

Will creeps down the steep, angled stairs, clutching a FLASHLIGHT like a weapon. The house is SILENT again. Only the WIND.

THE DOWNSTAIRS

A BLACK CANDLE BURNS on every window sill, throwing jittery light. Will steals past. A HISSING SOUND behind him and his head snaps around to see --

-- a PHANTOM FIGURE of a pale young woman, with waist-length black hair shrouded in a hooded coat.

Will is as astounded as he is scared.

The Phantom appears not to see him. She hunches over the floor and the HISSING SOUND RESUMES as the creature moves backwards in a jerky fashion.

A SNAKING BLACK LINE is left behind on the floor like a blood trail as it moves from one candle flame to the next through the rooms. Then all at once --

-- a blast of GUITAR DISTORTION and DEATH METAL erupts from a boom box in the living room.

The Phantom WHOOPS in excitement and begins gyrating -- suddenly looking very TEENAGE GOTH GIRL and not at all supernatural. The teenager holds a can of SPRAY PAINT in one hand and drags on a joint. She starts to spray paint on a wall (that's the HISSING SOUND) --

WILL

Hey!

Goth Girl SCREAMS! Trips and sprawls on the floor. Scrambles up and runs, Will right behind her.

THE LIVING ROOM

Flickering candlelight and the POUNDING boom box. Goth Girl SCREAMS her lungs out and crashes into three more GOTH TEENS as Will rakes the flashlight across them.

WILL

The hell're you doing in my house?!

The Teens freak -- drop joints and forties -- and scramble off in every direction. A Teen bulldozes past Will, knocking him to the floor. The flashlight goes OUT. DEATH METAL WAILS. A last candle wavers.

WILL'S POV - OUT THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW

The teens' dark shapes melt away in the night, headed to a battered BLACK VAN parked on the street.

Will stomps on the boom box. SILENCE. Then --

-- a DARK SHAPE darts into the cellar.

WILL

Hey!

CELLAR

Will plunges down the stairs but at the bottom finds only INKY BLACKNESS. And the sound of BREATHING...

Will's hands windmill the air and grab the hanging light cord. Yanks it ON as --

-- a 2x4 WHOOSHES through the air, bashing his shoulder. He CRIES OUT.

The Goth Girl's boots CLACK UP the outside steps toward moonlight. Will grabs her ankle and drags her back, flailing and SCREAMING.

WILL

Quiet. Quiet! SHUT UP!

The Goth Girl, CINDI (17), stares at Will with red, stoned eyes, totally freaked.

CINDI

Fuck! You scared the shit out of me.

WILL

What are you doing in my house?

CINDI

Oh, shit! You live here?

WILL

You didn't see my car in the driveway? All my stuff here?

CINDI

We always come in through the cellar.

WILL

You're the ones who spray-painted the eyes and the pentagrams? Killed those animals?

CINDI

That wasn't me, I swear. I don't know who did that. We were just partying. Everybody comes here.

WILL

What the hell is the attraction?

CINDI

'Cause it's supposed to be haunted. Cause of what happened here. I thought you were a frickin' ghost.

WILL

What happened?

Cindi looks at him in disbelief.

CINDI

You don't know? The family all got murdered.

WILL

You're talking about the Wards?

CINDI

Yeah, like ten or twenty years ago. On a Good Friday. There was this like massive freak snow storm in April. And they were all stuck here.

Libby looks down from the top of the stairs.

LIBBY

Will, what's going on? Who are you talking to?

WILL

It was some kids partying in here.

CINDI

Please, let me go. We didn't know you lived here, I swear. This place has been empty forever.

Will pushes open the cellar door.

WILL

If I ever see you here again, I'm calling the police.

EXT. WILL & LIBBY'S HOUSE - TRISH & DEE-DEE'S POV

From their window, the frightened girls watch Cindi lurch down the icy drive and pile in the BLACK VAN. It peels off. Painted on the back is a DAY-GLOW EYE encircled in jagged black lines like the graffiti in the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Will scrubs the fresh black spray paint on the floor with a turpentine-soaked rag. Libby blows out the candles.

LIBBY

Maybe we should call the police.

WILL

Maybe we should find that goddamn realtor.

INT. VILLAGE GREEN REALTY - MAIN STREET, NEW CANAAN - DAY

Will faces a portly, white-haired realtor, TOM BARRION (60s), as a self-important YOUNG REALTOR in a Laura Ashley suit watches from her desk.

BARRION

That property has never been one of our listings. And Village Green does not employ anyone named Heather Keeler. You must have us confused with another firm.

WILL

I'm not confused. She picked me up in one of your goddamn vans. I don't know what the hell you think you're pulling here.

Will strides down the row of desks, checking nameplates. The Young Realtor scrambles out of his way as he accidentally spills a stack of listings onto the floor.

WILL'S POV - A PHOTO OF HIS HOUSE

EMTs carry covered bodies out on stretchers.

WILL

Never listed that house, huh? What the hell is this?

Will thrusts the photo at Barrion.

BARRION

I'm going to have to ask you to leave. Or I am calling the police.

WILL'S POV - THE PHOTO

A second look. The house is only slightly similar to his. And there are no EMTs. No bodies.

Will is baffled. The Young Realtor snatches the photo.

WILL

This is not over.

He exits, slamming the door.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN REALTY - MAIN STREET - NEW CANAAN

Will pauses outside. Looks back in. Barrion is talking on the phone. Will heads down the sidewalk past pricey boutiques and gourmet shops where sportily clad MOMS shop. He sees another Real Estate Office and cuts across Main Street.

TOWN AND COUNTRY REALTY... Before Will can enter, the blinds on the door drop. The lock CLICKS. He raps on the glass-paned door. A thirtysomething woman REALTOR appears.

REALTOR

Sorry. I have to run meet a client.

The realtor backs off into the darkness of the store front, leaving Will perplexed and angry.

EXT. PAY PHONE OUTSIDE THE HARDWARE STORE

Will has called information.

OPERATOR (PHONE FILTER)

I'm sorry, we have no listing for a Keeler, Heather in Fairfield County. May I help you with another listing?

Will hangs up.

EXT. NEW CANAAN PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Will climbs the steps. TEENAGERS perched on the railings, make wise-ass remarks under their breath. Snicker.

INT. NEW CANAAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Will takes an almanac from the shelf. Across the room PRESCHOOLERS sit in a circle listening to a middle-aged LIBRARIAN read a story. She eyes Will suspiciously.

CLOSE ALMANAC PAGE

Reads: "Record Snow Storms." Will's finger slides down a column. Finds "27 inches... April 3rd 1994."

INT. LIBRARY BASEMENT - MICROFICHE ROOM

Old issues of the "New Canaan Courier" are on microfiche rolls in dusty metal drawers. Will finds "MARCH 1994," but no April, no May. Nothing for the rest of the year.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LIBRARIAN'S DESK

Will faces the Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

We've taken those issues out of general circulation.

WILL

Because of the murders.

The Librarian looks at him blankly.

WILL

At thirty-three Bramble Branch.

LIBRARIAN

Yes. There seemed to be some sort of morbid fascination among our high school students. The board decided it was not something our children needed to involve themselves with.

WILL

What about the adults? I'm living in that house, okay?

The Librarian turns away huffily and enters an office where she talks with a SENIOR LIBRARIAN. Both women turn and look at Will dubiously. He raises his voice --

WILL

For crissakes, do I need a note from my mother?

They leave Will waiting, then finally the Senior Librarian emerges with a shoebox sealed with masking tape.

LIBRARY BASEMENT - MICROFICHE ROOM

Will hunches over the bulky machine in the dark room. RIPS the masking tape off the shoebox.

WILL'S POV - THROUGH THICK LENS

Newsprint and photos FLY PAST as Will searches out *Friday April 3rd, 1994*. He scrolls through the paper. Stops on a headline: "MULTIPLE MURDERS SHOCK COMMUNITY."

GRAINY NEWSPRINT PHOTO OF HIS HOUSE

that shows EMT teams carrying bodies out on stretchers -- the EXACT IMAGE he saw in the realtor's office moments ago.

Will pales. The microfiche crank is difficult to control and the frame lurches from LINE to LINE as Will reads.

WILL'S POV - THROUGH THE LENS

"Police summoned to 33 Bramble Branch Circle at 3 a.m... Peter Ward... wife Elizabeth... children whose names and ages are being withheld... presumed shot in their sleep... neighborhood searched for killers..."

Suddenly dizzy Will gropes for the exit, BANGS into an open file drawer.

EXT. 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - NIGHT

Wind whips powdery snow into clouds obscuring the house.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S HOUSE - THE GREENHOUSE

Libby has stopped repotting Ann's flowers -- stares at Will in disbelief.

LIBBY

That's why it was empty so long.
That's why we got such a deal.

WILL

I'm so sorry, baby.

LIBBY

How could you not know?!

WILL

Because they lied to me, goddamnit.
(abruptly)
Shhh!

He hears the RUSTLING, SHUFFLING SOUND he heard in the cellar. A LARGE BLACK SHAPE blurs past a window. Libby SCREAMS.

EXT. HOUSE

Will rushes out. A BLACK BRANCH flails against the window. Will angrily snaps it off.

INT. THE GIRLS' BEDROOM

Will PUSHES aside Trish's bed. The legs SCREECH on the floor. He and Libby look at the three holes he spackled over. Now they know what they are -- BULLET HOLES.

LIBBY

Those little girls were shot here.

He pushes the bed back where it was, covering the holes.

WILL

We have to get out of here. We'll put the house back on the market.

LIBBY

And who would buy it? We'll never get our money back now.

From across the hall comes a sharp, SCRATCHING SOUND.

WILL

Look, we'll talk to a lawyer. I'm sure we have a lawsuit against the bank. And the realtors. And Heather Keeler wherever the hell she is.

The SCRATCHING SOUND grows louder, distracting.

WILL

(calling off)

Who is doing that? Stop.

TRISH (O.S.)

(from across the hall)

It's not me. It's Dee-Dee.

WILL

(calling off)

Dee-Dee, stoppit.

LIBBY

A lawsuit will take forever. The girls are already in school. And they're just getting settled.

WILL

(exasperated)

I know, I know. What do you want me to do!

The SCRATCHING is unrelenting, unbearable --

WILL

For crissakes -- !

Will stalks across the hall into --

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Trish stands watching Dee-Dee SCRAPES at a pane of glass with a pair of scissors.

WILL

Dee-Dee, what're you doing? Stoppit.

Dee-Dee keeps scraping the glass as if in a trance.

WILL
(temper erupting)
Stop!

Will snatches Dee-Dee up off the floor and wrenches the scissors from her hand. Startled by her Daddy's anger, the five-year old BURSTS INTO TEARS.

LIBBY
What is wrong with you?

Libby takes Dee-Dee from him. The little girl sobs miserably. Will feels terrible. Tries to calm her...

WILL
Sweetie, I'm sorry. I didn't want you to hurt yourself.

Trish stares at the window.

TRISH
This is where the little girl died.

Will and Libby turn. Scratched into the pane of glass is the single letter "K."

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Branches scrape at the roof. Will and Libby lie awake.

LIBBY
Will, did they catch who ever did it?

Will looks at her, chilled.

EXT. NEW CANAAN POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Will crosses the snowy lot with CAPT. DENNIS CONKLIN (50s). Conklin is civil, but dismissive.

CONKLIN
The State does not close unsolved homicide cases. So it is officially open. But to tell you the truth, Mr. Atenton, I've only had this job two years and I'm just not that up on old cases. In ninety-four I was still a beat cop in Yonkers. New Canaan's a safe town, I wouldn't worry yourself.

Conklin unlocks his squad car with a beeper and gets in.

WILL

Well, there must've been some theories about who did it.

CONKLIN

I think the focus came down on the father.

Conklin shuts the door. Will RAPS on the glass.

WILL

Wait a minute! Jesus Christ. Give me a minute here.

Conklin rolls down the window.

WILL

You mean it was a murder suicide? Ward killed his family then killed himself?

CONKLIN

Peter Ward didn't die. He claimed the intruder shot him and there was never sufficient evidence to prove otherwise.

WILL

So Ward's alive? Where the hell is he?

CONKLIN

Don't know.

WILL

Well, can I see the case file or whatever it's called?

Conklin starts the car.

CONKLIN

We don't release unsolved homicide files to the general public.

WILL

I'm not exactly the general public, am I?

Conklin drives off with out answering.

WILL

(angry disbelief)
Jesus Christ. Fuck is going on -- !?

MAN (O.S.)
Collective amnesia.

Across the parking lot, Cam stands in front of his RED PICK-UP, adjusting the snow plow.

WILL
Collective amnesia.

Cam chuckles, flashes red-rimmed eyes and pulls down his knit cap, covering a ragged bar fight scar at his hairline.

CAM
That's right. You gotta get with the program. Nothing bad ever happened in this town. Nothing bad ever will.

WILL
Very reassuring.

Cam gets in the pick-up and resumes plowing.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Will enters. Libby sits on the couch, Trish and Dee-Dee curled in her lap, crying.

WILL
What happened?

LIBBY
Chloe Pierson. Next door. They heard her talking to a friend on the bus.

TRISH
(choking back tears)
They said everybody who lives in this house gets killed.

WILL
Oh, Jesus...

Will pulls the crying Trish into his arms.

WILL
No, you guys. No. That's something that happened a long, long time ago. And it's never gonna happen again. Do you hear me? Nobody's ever gonna get hurt in this house. Right, Mom?

LIBBY
That's right, babies.

Will notices that the girls clutch the stuffed animals -- a lion and a dog -- they found in the attic.

WILL

Don't they have their own stuffed animals.

TRISH & DEE-DEE

No! Don't, Daddy.

The girls hide they animals, afraid Daddy's going to take them away. Will and Libby exchange a worried look.

INT/EXT. ANN PIERSON'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Will climbs a front porch identical to his and knocks on the door. After a moment, the porch light comes on. Ann opens the front door, but keeps the glass-storm door closed when she sees Will. Beyond her in the living room, Will sees the Minister he saw outside the church.

WILL

So uh... your dumb neighbor has found out what happened in his house.

Ann says nothing. Watches Will warily.

WILL

Anyway... I think your daughter has been talking to some friends about the uh... murders and I'm sure you can imagine for my girls -- they're five and seven -- it's pretty scary. So maybe you could say something to her about laying off the "you're-all-gonna-get-murdered" stuff.

Ann stares at him through the glass, visibly upset.

ANN

I'll talk to her.

WILL

Okay. Well... that's all I'm asking.

ANN

She's having nightmares again. So am I.

She closes the door. Will catches the Minister looking out the window before the curtain falls shut.

INT. WILL'S ATTIC - NIGHT

Will's desk has disappeared under piles of photocopies. He underlines and scribbles in the margins as he reads.

CLOSE A NEWSPAPER PHOTO OF PETER WARD

A posed shot for a corporate annual report shows a thick, muscular man (late 20s) with wavy-hair and a neatly trimmed beard. A look of success and confidence in his eyes.

"... Peter Ward enters second week in ICU... fighting for his life after sustaining a gunshot wound to his head..."

ANOTHER PHOTO - THE HOUSE AT 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH

The driveway and lawn are filled with flowers, candles and handmade signs of remembrance.

"...Peter Ward released from Litchfield County Hospital, three weeks after tragedy..."

ANOTHER PHOTO - DETECTIVES AND PROSECUTORS

A grim-faced group at a press conference.

"... Detective George Boyce declares Peter Ward focus of investigation... single gunshot wound, believed to be from a .38 caliber handgun, may have been self-inflicted."

Will rubs bleary eyes. Glances out a small attic window.

WILL'S POV - HIGH-ANGLE DOWN TO THE STREET

The maroon BUICK materializes from the blurring snow, creeps past the house, trailing plumes of exhaust.

Will rubs condensation from the window. Squints. The driver wears a BLACK HOODED PONCHO hiding his face.

Troubled, Will watches it pass, then returns to reading.

ANOTHER PHOTO - OF PETER WARD

Sitting on the front porch with his family. In the photo PETER WARD'S HEAD TURNS TO THE SIDE to look at his wife and children and for a split-second Will sees them as LIBBY, TRISH AND DEE-DEE.

HANDS FALL on his shoulders and he GASPS.

LIBBY

Sweetie, I'm sorry.

WILL

It's okay, this stuff is freaking me out.

LIBBY

It's after three. Don't you have breakfast with one of you authors -- what's her name? The cute one.

WILL

Robin.

LIBBY

You think she's cute? I meant Madeline.

Will growls and grabs Libby playfully. But her eyes fall on the grisly headlines he's been reading and the mood darkens again.

EXT. NEW CANAAN TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - DAY

Commuters file into a morning rush hour train.

INT. DUNKIN DOUGHNUTS - DAY

Across the street from the station. Will watches the train pull away, then returns to his obsession -- the newspaper photocopies spread out before him.

ARTIE (O.S.)

Dude, you a reporter or just into murders?

A pale teenager with dreadlocks leans over the table, eyeing him intently. ARTIE SKELLA (17) wears a frayed great coat over a SlipKnot T-shirt. On the back of each hand, tattoos of an inverted cross.

ARTIE

You doin' research or something?

WILL

I bought the Ward's house.

ARTIE

Fuckin' awesome. I've been in there.

Will sizes up the kid again.

WILL

You did that shit in the basement.

ARTIE
(grinning)
Satan must be fed.

Will grabs Artie by the collar. Gets right in his face.

WILL
You ever come in my house again I
will have the cops all over your
little Satanic ass. Understand?

Artie pulls away. Stung. Flips Will the double bird.

ARTIE
You got balls living in that house,
dude.

Artie strides off. There's a white pentagram on the back
of his black coat. He stops at the door and shouts --

ARTIE
He'll be back, motherfucker. You'll
see. Satan must be fed.

EXT. DUNKIN DOUGHNUT PARKING LOT

Will follows Artie out into a light snow flurry.

WILL
Hey, wait. Wait a minute.

Artie joins a group of TEENS hanging out under the walkway,
smoking cigarettes. Among them is the Goth girl, Cindi.
She looks down sheepishly as Will approaches.

WILL
What did you mean "he'll be back?"

Artie digs torturing Will, grandstands for his buds.

ARTIE
Like Freddie and Jason, man. They
always come back. That's still his
house. And when he gets out...

WILL
Gets out of where? Where is he? In
prison?

ARTIE
Ward's too smart for prison.

A sly, proud smile slowly forms on Artie's lips.

ARTIE

Greenhaven Psychiatric Center.
Karpas Pavillion North. Two Twenty-
One Bellmore Street. Hartford. 2-0-
1-6-2. I've written him letters.

WILL

He's in a mental hospital?

ARTIE

Biding his time. While New Canaan
waits. Why do you think it's snowing
like this -- almost April. Like it
did twelve years ago? When Satan
takes hold he does not let go.

WILL

What the fuck does this have to do
with Satan?

ARTIE

Satan isn't out there with horns and
a pitchfork.

Artie makes a drilling motion into the side of his head.

ARTIE

He's right in here. Deep into Ward.

He pumps his arms in the air as he walks off.

ARTIE

SATAN MUST BE FED!

The audience of teens CRACK UP. Cindi looks up guiltily at
Will.

CINDI

He can be a real dick.

Artie climbs into his BLACK VAN and drives off. Will sees
the DAY-GLOW STARING EYE painted on the rear door.

INT. TRAIN STATION WAITING ROOM - DAY

Deserted. Ticket windows closed. Will is on a pay phone.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE FILTER)

Greenhaven Psychiatric Center.

WILL

(into phone)

Yes, I'm looking for a patient named Peter Ward. I believe he's in Karpas Pavilion North.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE FILTER)

That's a secure floor, sir. Patients do not have private phones. I can give you the number of the hall pay phone.

WILL

Look, I just need to know if Peter Ward is still there or if he's been released.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE FILTER)

That information is confidential.

WILL

Right, right. Look, this man may be a danger to my family if he's released and no one seems to give a damn. Isn't there some law where you have to tell the relevant people if he's out. You know -- what is it? -- Megan's Law.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE FILTER)

That's for sex offenders, sir. I'm sorry, but I really can't help you.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

At the back door, Trish and Dee-Dee are SCREAMING at each other as Libby tries to get them into snow boots.

TRISH & DEE-DEE

I didn't take them! You did to! Did not! Did to!

Dee-Dee bursts into tears.

LIBBY

Trish, did you hit her?!

TRISH

No! Why do you always take her side?

Will comes in from the front hall.

WILL

Hey, hey. What's going on, you guys?

LIBBY

They can't find those stuffed animals
and it's turned into World War Three.

DEE-DEE

(sobbing)

I want my lion.

LIBBY

We'll find him, sweetie. Now,
outside. Both of you. Until dinner.
And no more fighting.

Libby herds the girls out. She's at the end of her rope.
Will pours two glasses of wine.

In the backyard, Trish and Dee-Dee attack the snow drifts
with stakes from the old garden.

LIBBY

I don't know what has gotten into
them. All they want to do is play in
that filthy clubhouse. They've both
got coughs from the dust up there.
Maybe you could nail the damn thing
shut!

Will hands her a glass of wine. Libby takes a deep breath.

LIBBY

Sorry, baby. How was Madeline or
Robin or whoever it was?

WILL

I found out something about Peter
Ward. He may still be in Greenhaven
Psychiatric. It's about thirty miles
from here. But what's completely
nuts is they won't actually tell me
whether he's locked up in a padded
cell or out buying another .38.

LIBBY

Will!

WILL

Sorry.

LIBBY

No. Look -- !

EXT. BACKYARD

Will and Libby burst out the back door as a MAN IN A DARK PONCHO strides towards Trish and Dee-Dee, something held low at his side.

WILL

Hey!

The MAN turns, raises his arm --

-- and reads the label on the PACKAGE he holds. And now we see the poncho is brown with UPS initials on it.

UPS MAN

Pierson?

Will breathes a sigh of relief.

WILL

That's across the street.

UPS MAN

Says third house on the right.
Number 36.

WILL

You came in the wrong end of Bramble Branch. It's easy to get turned around. This is Thirty-three.

UPS MAN

Oh. Okay. Sorry to bother you.

The UPS Man tromps back around the house the way he came. Will and Libby look at each other, hearts in their throats.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The UPS Van backs down the driveway, revealing the maroon Buick parked across the street.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Will finishes washing the dinner dishes. He climbs the stairs to the DARK HALL. Through the cracked bathroom door he sees Trish and Dee-Dee splashing in the tub together.

LIBBY (O.S.)

It happened right here.

Libby stands at the far end of the shadowy hall just outside their bedroom, her arms wrapped tight around her.

WILL

What happened? What do you mean?

LIBBY

The mother. This is where she was shot.

WILL

Oh, Jesus, Libby. We don't know where --

LIBBY

(cutting him off)

No, I'm telling you. This is where it happened. Right where I'm standing.

WILL

How could you possibly know that?

LIBBY

How could Dee-Dee know the little girl died in the bathroom?

WILL

She doesn't. And you don't either. Now, stop! You're letting your imagination run away with you.

LIBBY

No. There's something about this house. Something's still here. Don't you feel it?

TRISH (O.S.)

Is that where their mommy got killed?

Trish and Dee-Dee, wrapped in towels, stand outside the bathroom, staring at them.

WILL

No, sweetie. No.

DEE-DEE

That's what Mommy said.

The girls pad down the hall and Will sees they're leaving BLOODY FOOTPRINTS on the floor. Will is staggered.

LIBBY

Get back in the tub, you two. You're dripping all over.

Will realizes the dark stains are just WATER.

Libby takes the girls back into the bathroom and stays with them, leaving Will alone in the hall.

He turns back to the spot where Libby was standing and scans the cracked walls. About five feet he sees --

-- a SMALL DARK HOLE in the plaster. Another bullet hole. Libby was right.

He draws closer. Pokes a finger in then pulls it out as --

-- a THICK DROPLET OF BLOOD oozes from the hole, skims down the white wall and PLOPS on the floor. Then ANOTHER and ANOTHER. Will recoils.

Libby sticks her head out the bathroom door.

LIBBY

Will, can you get us some more towels
from the laundry --

(looking at the floor)

OhmyGod!

MORE THICK DROPS OF BLOOD SPLATTER around Will's feet.

LIBBY

Do something! Will!

Will looks back at the floor -- it's not blood -- it's more damn WATER BUGS cascading out of the wall.

Will stomps on them as they scurry under the carpet. Libby registers Will's horrified expression.

LIBBY

My God, Will, are you okay?

Will nods. Libby senses he's not telling her everything.

LIBBY

What did you see? What did you see?!

WILL

Water bugs.

INT. FAIRFIELD PEST SERVICE - NEW CANAAN - DAY

A second-story office, overlooking Main Street. Posters with the slogan "We Kill with Skill" illustrate a myriad of gruesome-looking insects you wouldn't want in your house.

Out the window, SNOW FALLS. Will sees the Minister on the church steps, talking with a MAN and WOMAN.

EXTERMINATOR

Never heard of water bugs in freezing cold like this.

WILL

Well, they're there.

EXTERMINATOR

I believe you. Lemme see when I can get a man out there.

The Exterminator turns to a wall calendar.

Across the street, the couple comes down the church steps -- the woman is Heather Keeler.

EXT. CHURCH - MAIN STREET

Will runs up the block as Heather and the man reach an SUV.

WILL

Heather! Where the hell've you been?

Heather looks at him, bewildered.

HEATHER

Who are you?

WILL

Will Atenton. You sold me the house on Bramble Branch. You never told me what happened there!

HEATHER

My name is Pam Dwyer. And I don't know what the hell you're talking about.

Will pulls her from the SUV.

WILL

Cut the crap! You're Heather Keeler and you and I are going to have a chat with your boss right now.

Suddenly an arm at his throat. The MAN throws Will to the curb.

MAN/BOB DWYER

She's Pam Dwyer. I'm Bob Dwyer. And you're a fucking asshole. Now get the hell away from us.

They get in the SUV. It ROARS off down Main Street.

ANGLE THE CHURCH DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Will tries the large double doors. They're locked. He bangs on them.

WILL
Hello! Hello!

The doors open a crack and Will faces the Minister.

WILL
That woman who was just here --
Heather Keeler. Where does she live?

MINISTER
That wasn't Heather Keeler.

INT. TOWN DINER - NEW CANAAN

Will loudly confronts Capt. Conklin who sits at the counter eating lunch. Everyone in the place is watching.

WILL
I don't know what the hell is with this town, but Heather Keeler has perpetrated a major goddamn fraud. Do you understand me?! And everybody seems to be pretending she doesn't exist. Now if you're not going to help me I will call the fucking Attorney General's office --

CONKLIN
Okay, pal. Okay. Take it easy.
Let's see what I can do for you.

EXT. TOWN DINER - NEW CANAAN

Will stands in the cold outside Conklin's squad car as he talks on the radio. After a moment, he hands Will a slip of paper.

CONKLIN
Heather Keeler. Ninety three Old Town Road. Stamford.

WILL
I looked in the phone book.

CONKLIN
Unlisted.

EXT. 93 OLD TOWN ROAD - STAMFORD

Will faces a decrepit Victorian house in a trash strewn neighborhood on the fringe of the city. An SUV passes THROBBING HIP-HOP as Will climbs the front porch. A sign reads: *The Harkness Residence. A Way Back.*

INT. HARKNESS HOUSE

A BELL JANGLES over the door as Will enters. Off to one side is a PARLOR where a half dozen MENTAL PATIENTS sit on old sofas, reading, watching TV, playing board games.

Opposite the parlor, a black woman in her fifties sits at a reception desk, watching a PREACHER on a small TV and takes no particular notice of Will. Will approaches her.

WILL

Excuse me, I think I might have the wrong address, but I'm looking for Heather Keeler.

RECEPTIONIST

This the place. You have your release papers for me?

WILL

No, I'm not a... a.... It's another matter. Is she here?

The receptionist gestures down a hall to an open door where a WHITE-HAIRED WOMAN in her 60s counsels a patient.

RECEPTIONIST

She with someone.

WILL

That's not Heather Keeler.

RECEPTIONIST

Only one we got. Have a seat.

The woman turns back to the TV. Will stares incredulously at the white-haired woman, but decides to at least talk to her. He sits. On TV the Preacher exhorts his flock.

Will notices a wall of mail slots. A hand-written label leaps out at him -- Peter Ward.

He glances at the receptionist, then pulls an envelope from the slot. Something from Connecticut State Disability. The Harkness Residence address includes Room 308.

Will turns and looks up the shadowy stairs.

INT. HARKNESS HOUSE - THIRD FLOOR

Will moves down a dimly-lit hall. Residents' names are affixed to bedroom doors with hand-written labels. Several RESIDENTS on line at the bathroom eye him suspiciously.

Will finds *Peter Ward's* name taped to the door of Room 308. He checks the crack below the door -- no light. Slips in.

INT. PETER WARD'S ROOM

Will quickly closes the door behind him. Doesn't turn on the lights. A narrow single bed. Stacks of newspapers beside it. On the dresser, toiletry items and a mirror that reflects --

-- a MASSIVE MAN on his knees in the corner. Will doesn't see him as he bends to open dresser drawers. In one drawer, he's shocked to find --

-- the girls' missing stuffed animals. Then his eye catches something in the mirror -- not the MAN by the door, he's disappeared -- but instead he notices --

-- a PHOTOGRAPH stuck in the frame. Libby, Trish and Dee-Dee with himself torn out of the picture.

PETER WARD (O.S.)

What are you doing in here?

Will spins around. PETER WARD rises from the dark corner and lays his Bible on his pillow. Institutional haircut. Sallow skin. His eyes burn into Will.

PETER WARD

This is my room now.

WILL

I knew you were out, Ward. You fucker.

PETER WARD

Don't call me names. I'm living with my disability. I'm going to my program. I'm not breaking any rules.

WILL

Sneaking in my house? Spying on my family? That's not breaking the rules?

PETER WARD

I don't know what you're saying. You're talking too fast.

WILL

You want it slower -- ?

Will plucks the photo from the mirror.

WILL

Where the fuck did you get this?

Ward clicks on the bedside lamp. Studies the photo.

PETER WARD

That's not mine.

WILL

Damn straight it isn't. You got this from my house. And you've been in my daughters' room.

Will shakes the stuffed animals and Ward.

WILL

And I'm going to the cops.

PETER WARD

That's from the guy before me.

WILL

Bullshit.

Peter Ward opens the door and reads the name tag.

PETER WARD

Peter Ward.

He tears the tag off the door and hands it to Will.

PETER WARD

They didn't put my name up yet. I'm Martin. I didn't even unpack.

And now Will sees a SUITCASE on the floor.

WILL

So where the hell is Peter Ward?

MARTIN/PETER WARD

Someone told me he went home to live with his family. Mine don't want me.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Will races up the front porch and inside.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

Will bounds upstairs, colliding with Libby as she steps from the girls' room. She sees the urgency in his eyes.

LIBBY

What is it?

WILL

The girls okay?

LIBBY

They've both got fever. I think I'm getting it now.

He sees perspiration on her forehead. Tenderly touches her cheek. Takes her hand. Serious.

INT. KITCHEN

DARK. Will closes the curtains. Libby's about to turn on the light --

WILL

No! Leave them off. It's harder to see in.

Libby looks at him, scared, waiting for the rest of it.

WILL

They released Ward to a halfway house in Stamford.

Will puts the stuffed animals on the table. Libby gasps.

LIBBY

He's been here.

WILL

He still thinks this is his house. And that you and the girls are his family.

Will shows Libby the torn family photo. She goes pale.

WILL

We're leaving first thing in the morning.

Will attaches the chain on the back door.

WILL

And there's more. There's something else.

CELLAR

Libby stands on the stairs, watching Will check and double check the lock on the outside cellar door.

WILL

I think they wanted us to be in this house?

LIBBY

Who did? Who are you talking about?

WILL

Everybody in this town.

LIVING ROOM & SIDE PORCH

Libby follows Will in the DARK, her fear and paranoia rising with his. He locks the windows, draws the curtains.

LIBBY

Will, you're not making any sense.
Why would they want us in this house?

WILL

I don't know. But think about it --
we have two little girls like the
Wards. Almost exactly the same age.

LIBBY

(freaked)
Stop. Stoppit!

Will and Libby's eyes meet -- both starting to lose it.

DINING ROOM

Will enters. Stops in his tracks. Every pane of glass is
SCRATCHED WITH THE LETTER "B" OR "K."

WILL

The girls did this?

LIBBY

They would've done every window in
the house if I hadn't stopped them.

WILL

What the hell is going on?

DEE-DEE (O.S.)

(calling from upstairs)
Mommy?

LIBBY
I'm coming, sweetie.

Libby hurries upstairs. Something catches Will's eye. He turns ON the lights. The MAGICK SYMBOLS are BLEEDING through the coats of paint.

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will enters. Trish and Dee-Dee are feverish, soaked with sweat. Libby removes a thermometer from Dee-Dee's mouth.

LIBBY
One-oh-three point five.

TRISH
My throat really hurts. And my shoulder, too.

LIBBY
It's the fever, baby. I'm gonna give you some medicine.

DEE-DEE
And my tummy hurts. Really bad.

WILL
That doesn't sound like a fever.

Libby catches a wild look flash across Will's face.

INT. ATTIC - WILL'S OFFICE

Will frantically flips through his photocopies. Libby climbs the stairs behind him. She reads over his shoulder.

CLOSE THE TEXT... "... hospital releases information on children's death... Beatrice Ward was struck in the shoulder and throat. Katherine was hit in the stomach."

LIBBY
Ohmygod!

WILL
What's the date today?

LIBBY
April third. That's when it...?

Will nods. Both totally freaked.

INT. GIRLS' ROOM

Trish and Dee-Dee deeper in the grips of the fever, whimper and tremble in delirium. Will bends over Trish.

On her throat is a dull red disc the size of a quarter, the skin slightly raised. He pulls aside her pajama top -- another dull red mark on her shoulder.

Libby looks over from Dee-Dee, the little girl's pajama top pulled up -- an identical red mark on her stomach.

Will and Libby's eyes lock -- disbelief and panic.

LIBBY

We have to get them to the hospital.

WILL

Just wrap them in their blankets.
We'll take them like this.

Will and Libby swaddle the girls in the blankets. Libby winces in pain. Her hand flies to her cheek.

WILL

What's wrong?

LIBBY

Where was the mother shot?

Beneath her fingers a quarter-size dull red mark rises on her cheek just like the girls'.

WILL

Oh, Jesus --

Libby steels herself.

LIBBY

I'm okay. Let's go!

Libby picks up Dee-Dee. Will picks up Trish. Then suddenly --

-- a SHUFFLING, RUSTLING SOUND.

WILL

Shhh.

They freeze. Listen intently. Hardly breathing.

There is it again -- SHUFFLING -- beneath the floorboards, like someone dragging themselves on their stomach.

Libby backs into the corner, holding Dee-Dee.

They scan the floor, following the SOUND with their eyes as it SHUFFLES under Trish's bed and stops.

Will and Libby look at each other in terror.

Will puts Trish down on Dee-Dee's bed on the other side of the room and inches towards Trish's bed.

LIBBY
(a terrified whisper)
Will, don't -- !

Will violently shoves Trish's bed aside.

WILL
Who's in there?!

AN EYE BLINKS up at him through one of the bullet holes.

Libby SCREAMS!

SHOCK CUT TO:

WILL BOLTS UP FROM HIS NIGHTMARE

Shaking. He's in bed beside Libby. His breath comes in ragged gulps as he gradually gets his bearings.

He looks at Libby, sleeping peacefully. Notices something in the half-light. He moves closer.

On her cheek, the skin raised in a dull red disc the size of a quarter just like his dream.

And something else. At the back of her neck. A slight protrusion. He feels with his fingers. Something hard beneath the skin.

It's moving! Pushing its way out. A narrow metal cylinder. Stretching the skin. Piercing it.

WILL
Oh, God -- !

Will pulls out a BULLET wet with blood and tissue, leaving behind the ragged hole of an exit wound.

SHOCK CUT TO:

WILL WAKES FROM HIS NIGHTMARE

Beside Libby in bed. Gasping for air. He's alone in the dark. The door opens --

LIBBY

You awake? Their fevers broke.
They're fine.

Will jumps up. Turns on the light. Looks closely at Libby. Her cheek is unscarred.

LIBBY

What?

INT. THE GIRLS' ROOM

Will checks the girls. No marks on them either.

LIBBY

More nightmares?

INT. KITCHEN - SHORTLY LATER

Will downs a glass of scotch. Libby in her bathrobe.

LIBBY

You want to tell me?

WILL

No! I want to get out of here. Now.

LIBBY

Will, it's three in the morning.

WILL

I don't care. I don't care. I am
losing my fucking mind in this house!

Libby studies Will a beat, worried.

LIBBY

I'll start packing.

Libby goes up the back stairs. Will finishes his drink and turns to put his glass in the sink, when he hears --

-- the RUSTLING, SHUFFLING SOUND (it's a poncho rubbing along the outside wall) and --

-- A MAN IN A HOODED BLACK PONCHO stares in the window over the sink, his face in shadow.

Will drops his glass. It EXPLODES on the floor.

EXT. BACKYARD

Will flies out the back door in bare feet. Sees only
DRIVING SNOW. Then the CRUNCH OF BOOTS. This is real!

WILL

Ward!

THE WOODS

Will runs blindly through the snow. Branches tear at his
face and arms. He stumbles. Stops. His quarry lost.

Then the silhouette of a tree explodes in movement as the
BLACK PONCHO separates -- and the phantom figure runs.

Will takes off again. Tumbles down a snowy embankment onto
another NEIGHBORHOOD ROAD. Hits the icy pavement.

He raises his head. Nothing but snow.

Then the MURMUR of a car engine. RED TAILLIGHTS float in
the snowy distance then disappear in WHITE.

EXT. BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - NIGHT

Will's house is lit by the RED dome lights of a New Canaan
POLICE CAR. Will speaks with a YOUNG OFFICER (20s).

YOUNG OFFICER

You sure it wasn't one of these
teenagers? They've been sneaking in
this house for --

WILL

It wasn't a teenager. It was Peter
Ward. I've seen him here before. A
maroon Buick. He almost killed me.

YOUNG OFFICER

Okay, okay.

The young officer diligently takes notes.

WILL

Jesus Christ. You know who Peter
Ward is, don't you?

YOUNG OFFICER

I've heard the story.

WILL

The story? This isn't a story, this
is real.

One house down, Will's neighbors, the HARRISONS (40s), stand in their driveway, staring. Ann Pierson watches from her porch. Will shouts to them.

WILL

It's Peter Ward! He's back! Do you hear me? Peter Ward is back!

YOUNG OFFICER

Sir, please. You're going to have to keep your voice down.

WILL

Why? They need to know?
(shouting again)
Peter Ward is back!

The Harrisons retreat up their driveway.

LIBBY (O.S.)

Will.

From the porch, Libby gestures for Will to come back.

LIBBY

(sotto voce)

Let him go. Let's get out of here.

WILL

(sotto voce)

They're in on it, aren't they?

The young officer calls to Will from his squad car.

YOUNG OFFICER

This is a safe town, sir. Please go back inside.

EXT. NEW CANAAN TRAIN STATION - DAY

The platform is deserted. Through the RAIN Will and Libby see a New Canaan squad car idling in the parking lot.

WILL

Drive straight to your folks' house.
I'll call you from Greenhaven.

LIBBY

Why go there if you know Ward's already left?

WILL

Because its the only way to get to the bottom of this. I'm not going to be driven out of my own house.

The TRAIN glides into the station.

EXT. GREENHAVEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Turn-of-the-century red brick buildings. RAIN turns the snow to slush. A forlorn, neglected feel to the place.

INT. KARPAS PAVILION - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Will enters a cavernous foyer decorated with a fading mural of "*Medical Progress*." The reception desk is deserted.

INT. HALLWAYS - KARPAS PAVILION

Will walks the gloomy halls. He peers through a slit into a WARD where patients wander like wraiths. A SHRILL RING --

-- and an ORDERLY exits, pushing a cart loaded with FILES. Will bends over a water fountain, watching the cart pass.

INT. BASEMENT FILE ROOM - KARPAS PAVILION

Fluorescent lights ripple on. The Orderly enters, pushing the cart. Will catches the door before it closes.

BASEMENT FILE ROOM - LATER

In a labyrinth of floor-to-ceiling shelves, Will finds the "W's." and on a high shelf a box marked "WARD, PETER M." He climbs up. Pulls it out. Empty.

WILL

What the hell -- ?

And then he CRIES OUT in alarm as hands grab him from below. Two hospital SECURITY GUARDS slam him to the floor.

INT. CONSULTATION ROOM - GREENHAVEN PSYCHIATRIC INST.

Will paces in a windowless room. The door opens and a Guard lets in DR. MEDLIN (40s) an over-worked clinical psychiatrist with thinning hair and a hospital pallor.

WILL

What the hell is going on? Are you arresting me?

DR. MEDLIN

No one is arresting you.

The Guard exits. Closes the door.

WILL

I'm not a criminal. I'm just trying to protect my family. Find out where this goddamn murderer is.

DR. MEDLIN

I understand.

WILL

So where the hell is Ward's file? There's some sort of conspiracy, isn't there?

DR. MEDLIN

Not at all. Here's the file. Captain Conklin said you might be coming.

Medlin hefts several thick files under his arm.

DR. MEDLIN

Let's see what we can do for you?

Will's guard is up. Leery. Paranoid.

DR. MEDLIN

Please, sit down.

Will sits. Medlin puts on reading glasses and begins flipping through the files that bulge with countless years of dog-eared, yellowing paper. He skims a page.

DR. MEDLIN

Ward was a voluntary admission -- which meant he could leave whenever he wanted. Not when we wanted, I'm afraid. He was transferred here from Fairfield County Hospital in ninety-four where he had several surgeries.

WILL

He'd been shot, right? Or shot himself.

Dr. Medlin turns the file for Will to see --

INSERT - A SMALL PHOTO STAPLED IN THE FILE

A heavy-set man (late 20s) with an untrimmed beard. One side of his head is shaved, laced with ugly post-operative scars. His face is puffy, eyes almost sealed shut.

WILL
My God. That's him?

DR. MEDLIN
Twelve years ago. A bullet creased
his skull, did not penetrate, but
caused considerable damage.

Dr. Medlin flips past a series of MRI TRANSPARENCIES, their
multi-colored brain images like strange abstract art.

DR. MEDLIN
There were indications of brain
abnormalities, impaired visual
perception, hallucinations, memory
function deficits...

WILL
He claimed he couldn't remember the
attack.

DR. MEDLIN
He didn't even remember who he was.
(reading from the file)
"Patient consistently refuses to
respond to the name Peter Ward...
unknown whether this is a result of
head trauma or a dissociative defense
mechanism of the patient. By
rejecting the identity of Peter Ward,
patient refuses to acknowledge or
accept the loss of his family."

Dr. Medlin removes a tattered manila envelope from the file
and spills the contents onto the table between them.

Twenty white plastic HOSPITAL ID BRACELETS. He holds up
one after the other -- they've all been broken apart.

DR. MEDLIN
Peter Ward couldn't tolerate his name
on any hospital ID.

FLASHFRAME - LOCKED WARD (12 YEARS AGO)

Ward, one side of his head shaven, huddles in a corner
gnawing at his ID bracelet like a wolf caught in a trap.

BACK TO SCENE (THE PRESENT)

Will examines the teeth marks on the bracelets. Dr. Medlin
slides him another PHOTO.

DR. MEDLIN

Instead he invented a new name. Here he is six years ago.

INSERT - ANOTHER PHOTO

Heavily medicated. Twenty pounds lighter. Stubby beard. Hair cropped close. Staring at the camera with dead eyes.

Will is thrown -- something very wrong. Medlin offers another PHOTO.

DR. MEDLIN

And here he is last year.

INSERT - ANOTHER PHOTO

Forty pounds lighter, face gaunt, eyes hollow. And now we plainly see --

-- IT IS WILL.

WILL

That's not Peter Ward. That's me. How did you get that photo?

DR. MEDLIN

You lived in this institution for twelve years, Peter.

Will stands.

WILL

This is ridiculous. I am not Peter Ward. I am Will Atenton.

DR. MEDLIN

Please, sit down.

WILL

I am Will Atenton.

DR. MEDLIN

You gave yourself that name.

Medlin holds out an ID BRACELET to Will. The name PETER WARD has been SCRATCHED OUT, but the ID NUMBER is still there: "W1-1L--810-10."

DR. MEDLIN

"W-one-one-L"... became "Will." And the numbers eight-ten-ten... became Atenton. Will Atenton.

WILL

Why are you doing this to me? I didn't make up my name. My wife and I just bought a house together.

DR. MEDLIN

That's your house, Peter. Your wife's life insurance paid for it.

WILL

No.

(digging in his wallet)

Here's a contractor's business card a friend gave me. And here's the name of the realtor who sold us the house.

He slaps down "the evidence" on the table -- the contractor's card (that Paul Greeley gave him at the office) and a slip of paper with Heather Keeler's name.

DR. MEDLIN

This is Doctor Paul Greeley's card.

WILL

I worked with him in publishing.

DR. MEDLIN

You were one of his *patients*, Mr. Ward. He took you off your meds for reasons I will never understand and your condition deteriorated severely. Greeley was fired. But by then the damage had been done. And you refused to remain here.

Medlin picks up the slip of paper.

DR. MEDLIN

Heather Keeler is the social worker assigned to you at the halfway house. Apparently, you came and went for awhile, but would not stay. They gave up your room.

Dr. Medlin eyes a green-tinted check in Will's open wallet.

DR. MEDLIN

And that is a Connecticut State disability check.

A silent, vertiginous moment as Will lets in these impossible thoughts.

DR. MEDLIN

You're been having a rough time, I can see. You're out in the real world trying to hold together a dream.

Will catches his own REFLECTION in the glass of a framed art print and for an instant sees himself not as he imagined he was, but as he really is --

-- face gaunt, hair and beard unkempt. His body is terribly thin, his hands red and chapped, several fingers blackened with frostbite. And then suddenly --

-- that clarity is gone and Will sees himself as he has been for the last few months.

Will can hardly breathe. The room swims before his eyes.

DR. MEDLIN

I'd like to admit you, Peter.

Will moves to the door on rubbery legs.

WILL

I have to get back. My family is waiting for me. They'll be worried.

DR. MEDLIN

Peter... your family died twelve years ago.

WILL

SHUT-UP!!

Will swipes his arm across the table -- a blizzard of file papers fly -- and stalks out, shoving past the Guard.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Will stands at a pay phone, growing more agitated as the line RINGS unanswered. He glances at Dr. Medlin watching from the end of the hall. A BOOM like a gunshot and Will snaps back to the phone as --

-- a BULLET HOLE PERFORATES the wall. He stares at it in disbelief. A CRACK OPENS ZIGZAGGING towards the ceiling. Splitting it open. Plaster rains down --

LIBBY (PHONE FILTER)

Hello.

The WALL SNAPS BACK TO NORMAL, taking Will's breath away.

WILL
(into phone)
Thank God.

LIBBY (PHONE FILTER)
Will, what is it? What's wrong?

WILL
I think I'm losing my mind. What
they're telling me here.

LIBBY (PHONE FILTER)
Do they know where Peter Ward is?

WILL
No. Yes. I mean, I don't believe
them.

PETROCELLI (O.S.)
Is that you, Mr. A.?

Petrocelli (last seen as the 60ish office boy) shuffles
towards him, dog-eared newspapers under his arm.

LIBBY (PHONE FILTER)
Will? Come home.

WILL
(into phone)
Aren't you at your parents?

The line goes dead. Dazed, Will hangs up.

PETROCELLI
Where you been, Mr. A.? This place
has gone to hell in a hand basket
without you running things. I got
your papers for you. Want me to put
them in your office?

Petrocelli indicates an empty room across the hall.

WILL'S POV FLASHFRAME - THE ROOM (ONE YEAR AGO)

Will sees himself/Peter Ward sitting at a small desk,
hunched over a newspaper. He feverishly underlines and
writes in the margins. There are piles of old newspapers
everywhere (his manuscripts) sprouting yellow Post-its.

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)

Will takes the paper from Petrocelli. It's the REAL ESTATE
SECTION with dozens of home listings CIRCLED IN CRAYON.

PETROCELLI

Marked a few things for you there.
You're still lookin' for that dream
house, aren't you?

SADIE

No, he's not. Leave him alone.

It's the maternal, fortyish woman we last saw in Will's
"Office." She plucks a cigarette from her mouth.

SADIE

I told you you were takin' on too
much. Didn't I tell you? You belong
back here, baby.

WILL

No. I don't.

SADIE

You murder your family, kiddo -- you
belong here.

(brightening)

Nothing to be ashamed of. You were
sick, baby. It's not your fault. I
wouldn't have killed Sol unless I was
instructed.

Will heads for the exit. He collides with the Male Nurse
(the obnoxious colleague Ferguson from Will's "office").

NURSE FERGUSON

Knew you'd be back, Eight-Ten-Ten.
The even numbers always come back.

Ferguson shakes his head, chuckling.

EXT. GREENHAVEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - THE LAWNS - DAY

In bone-drenching SLEET Will leans against a tree trunk and
vomits into the grass.

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN (TRAVELING)

Out SLEET-SPLATTERED windows loping power lines run
parallel to the track. Will sits hunched over, head in
hands, as if bracing for a crash.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Station stop is Neeeeeww Canaaaaaaan.

EXT. NEW CANAAN STATION - TWILIGHT

Will hurries down the platform steps and bumps into Pam Dwyer (the woman he thought was "Heather Keeler".) She wears a windbreaker with Pam embroidered over the pocket and holds a large umbrella for a YOUNG COUPLE climbing into a van marked "Town Taxi." Will backs away.

WILL

I'm sorry. Sorry about before.

PAM DWYER

I remember you now. Last month. I drove you to that empty house on Bramble Branch. You need some help.

She gets in her van and drives off, leaving Will in the RAIN. Pam's husband, Bob, steps from the TAXI OFFICE.

BOB DWYER

You're not off my lot in two seconds, I'm calling the cops, asshole.

EXT. LONG RIDGE ROAD - TWILIGHT

Will strides along the shoulder as cars whoosh by in the RAIN. He looks truly insane. A lost soul.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is DARK. SLEET has stripped trees of their magical mantle of snow and exposed dark splotches on the lawn. Will walks up the driveway past the lawn sign: *Protected by Safe & Secure.*

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Will tries the light switch. It doesn't work. In the DARK he sees a few pieces of scavenged furniture. A rusted metal table. A chair held together with duct tape. WATER drips from the ceiling, puddling on the floor.

MEMORY FLASH/HALLUCINATION - DEE-DEE

proudly holding a pitcher, happily oblivious of the puddle she's spilled on the floor.

DEE-DEE

I poured the water all by myself.

KITCHEN - PRESENT

On the counter Will sees a camping stove, Sterno cans, water jugs. In the corner, old boxes labeled: *Camping Gear*. His hands shake as he lights a kerosene lantern.

GREENHOUSE

Will inspects the flowers that Ann brought and Libby transplanted. The shoots are brown, dead.

THE LIVING ROOM

Will's lantern throws flickering yellow into empty corners. No furniture, no curtains, no rugs or pictures.

THE UPSTAIRS HALL

Will's lantern pendulums his shadow from wall to wall. He pushes open the door to --

THE GIRL'S ROOM

Bare. A branch THUMPS! against the house, exactly like the sound of Trish falling out of bed and for a moment --

MEMORY FLASH/HALLUCINATION - TRISH

lies on the floor beside her bed, tangled in the covers. Then she vanishes.

WILL AND LIBBY'S BEDROOM

A sleeping bag and a tattered knapsack. A RED THERMAL BLANKET hung over a broken window stirs in the breeze --

MEMORY FLASH/HALLUCINATION - LIBBY

Naked and laughing beneath a RED SATIN COMFORTER.

BEDROOM - PRESENT

Will glimpses his haggard reflection in a broken window and sags to the bare floor. Shivering, he pulls the sleeping bag around him. A COUGH wracks his body.

RAIN beats on the roof and Will's gaze rises to the ceiling where WATER STAINS coalesce into faces and phantoms...

... then disappear.

The HOUSE GROANS in the wind...

... and a CRACK snakes across the ceiling as if searching for Will in the corner.

Will shuts his eyes tight, burrows into the sleeping bag as if trying to turn off his hallucinations.

Then faintly through the rain, THE SOUND OF A CAR coming up the driveway. Car doors OPEN and SHUT.

Will bolts up.

The voices of LIBBY AND THE GIRLS move towards the house.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS

Will stumbles down the stairs into the kitchen. Up the long center hallway, the front door. Outside, the JANGLE of keys and VOICES on the porch --

TRISH (O.S.)

Can I have Capt'n Crunch?

LIBBY (O.S.)

After dinner. We going to eat in ten minutes.

TRISH (O.S.)

But I'm starving.

Libby pushes the door open and enters with the girls.

LIBBY

Will, are you home?

Will is riveted -- his family is exactly as he left them. Dee-Dee shouts enthusiastically --

DEE-DEE

Daddy, we got Captain Crunch!

And as they come towards him down the hall, carrying groceries --

-- the bare house is SUPERNATURALLY RESTORED -- painted walls and carpets, furniture, decorations and the kids' toys materialize out of nowhere in a TERRIFYING RUSH.

Libby and the girls don't see what Will sees, but he is overwhelmed. He trips over a RUG that wasn't there a second ago -- tangles in COATS and GALOSHES, UMBRELLAS and the girls' SCOOTERS. Retreats to the kitchen --

-- and crashes over a chair SUDDENLY THRUST UP in his path.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Will flees to the far edge of the lawn, heart pounding. He looks back at the house. He can see Libby's moving silhouette in the eerie glow of the kitchen windows.

TRISH (O.S.)

Daddy.

Will flinches. Trish stands a foot away, in her hooded red slicker. Her face is drained of color. Her eyes are blank. Hair matted with BLOOD. She is DEAD.

Will stumbles back in shock, but Trish's little hand flies out impossibly fast and seizes his --

-- and then suddenly she looks NORMAL AGAIN.

TRISH

Dinner's ready.

Trish smiles and leads Will back across the yard.

Dee-Dee, also in her hooded red slicker stands in the old garden stabbing at the snow drifts with a garden stake.

TRISH

You too, Dee-Dee. Come on.

Dee-Dee looks up -- eyes lifeless, skin ashen, dead.

DEE-DEE

When can we start the garden?

TRISH

We have to wait 'til spring, right
Daddy? It's still snowing, silly.

Dee-Dee takes Will's other hand and like Trish suddenly she looks NORMAL AGAIN. The ghosts lead Will inside.

INT. KITCHEN - SHORTLY LATER

Will has dinner with his family just as he had the night before. The girls chatter happily. Will trembles with his terrible new knowledge.

TRISH

I remember everything we had.
Pantsies and 'santhemums...

DEE-DEE

Sunflowers!

TRISH

... and marigolds...and tulips.

DEE-DEE

Two lips!

LIBBY

Baby, you okay?

Will looks down, grief and loss at a family he no longer believes is there. And terror at how insane he must be to hear them so distinctly.

LIBBY

What is it?

She gives Will's hand a loving squeeze. It's like an electric shock and he stands abruptly. Takes his plate to the sink. Brushes away tears.

DEE-DEE

Daddy's sad.

LIBBY

Girls, go upstairs. Go on now.

The girls start upstairs, but linger in the shadows.

LIBBY

Will, what happened at the hospital?
Please don't keep things from me.
What did they tell you?

WILL

They told me you're not really here.

LIBBY

What?

WILL

(softly)

They told me you and the girls are
dead.

LIBBY

Will, stop. You're scaring me.

WILL

I'm not Will Atenton. I'm Peter
Ward.

Will suddenly pulls Trish and Dee-Dee to the pantry door.

LIBBY

Don't hurt them. What're you doing?

The girls begin to CRY. Will holds Trish against the old growth chart on the pantry door. She is a perfect match for the highest line marked "B."

WILL

What's your name? Not your nickname, your real name. It starts with "B."

LIBBY

Will, stoppit!

TRISH

Beatrice. We leave off the front.

WILL

And Bea-trice becomes Trish.

Will puts Dee-Dee against the door frame. She is the exact same height as the line marked "K."

WILL

And what's your real name?

LIBBY

Will, let her go. Please.

TRISH

Her name's Katherine. Katy. I used to call her K-D-D.

WILL

"B" for Beatrice, "K" for Katy. Beatrice and Katherine Ward. And you're Elisabeth Ward... Libby. We lived here before

LIBBY

Girls, get upstairs.

Libby sends the frightened girls up the backstairs.

LIBBY

(frightened, clinging to her reality)

Maybe it's something about this house, Will. It's making you sick. We need to get you help.

WILL

They tried to help me in the hospital.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

But they couldn't change what happened. Elisabeth Ward died twelve years ago.

LIBBY

Stop saying that!

Libby backs up the dark stairs, the color fading from her face, her eyes losing their shimmer as life seems to drain from her right before Will's eyes.

LIBBY

What is it? Why are you looking at me like that?!

Libby's hand goes to her cheek. Where the red disc had appeared a BLACK HOLE now opens like the empty socket of a third eye. She WHIMPERS in terror.

LIBBY

And the babies? Oh God, the babies!

Libby bolts upstairs. SHRIEKS! Will comes up behind and sees what she has seen --

-- Trish and Dee-Dee stand in the hall as Will saw them earlier in the garden -- pale, bloodied, dead.

Libby rushes to her children. Pulls them into her arms. Her SCREAMS of pain and loss unbearable.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Will stands in shirt sleeves on the wind-blasted porch, shaking, SOBBING.

The MAROON BUICK SILENTLY MATERIALIZES from the swirling SNOW, creeping towards the house.

Will wipes tears from his eyes and stalks down the driveway to intercept it. But it never comes. Gone. Just another phantom. He turns back to the house.

The man in the BLACK HOODED PONCHO blocks his way. His face hidden beneath the hood.

WILL

Who are you?

The WIND flaps the poncho noisily.

WILL

WHO ARE YOU?!

BLACK PONCHO

I'm watching you, Mister Ward. I see you in there talking to the walls, but I don't buy it.

WILL

Why are you spying on my family?

BLACK PONCHO

(with disgust)

Your family? Your family is with the worms.

Will explodes in anger. Rushes him. The MAN jams a .38 at will's temple and forces him to his knees in the snow.

BLACK PONCHO

I was the first detective on the scene. I saw what you did to your family.

WILL

You're George Boyce. I read about you.

THE .38 VANISHES -- apparently nothing but the man's index finger pointed like a gun. Black Poncho opens the hood slightly and flashes a malevolent smile and piercing black eyes. This is GEORGE BOYCE (50s).

BLACK PONCHO/BOYCE

I've been waiting to tell you something, Mister Ward. Your case is officially reopened.

He kicks Will to the ground with his heavy boot. When Will looks up, Boyce is disappearing into the blurring snow.

BOYCE

You don't have a family anymore. All you got is me.

The WHITE swallows him up.

For a moment, Will doesn't move from the ground as if he wished the snow would bury him.

Ann approaches bundled in a winter coat. Sees Will in shirt sleeves, covered in snow.

ANN

My God -- Will! You're going to freeze to death.

WILL

You know that's not really my name,
don't you? Don't you?!

ANN

Yes.

INT. ANN'S BEDROOM & BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hot water streams into the tub. Will sits on the edge of the bed, trying to unbutton his shirt with frostbitten fingers. Ann kneels and does it for him.

WILL

Why didn't you tell me who I am?

ANN

How could I? You told me you were
Will Atenton. What was I going to
say? No, you're not.

She helps him peel off his dirty shirt.

ANN

Look at you, you're skin and bones.

WILL

I shouldn't be here.

He starts to get up. She eases him back down.

ANN

Take it easy. I'm not getting in the
tub with you.

WILL

The police have reopened their
investigation of me.

ANN

Idiots. What is wrong with them? My
God, you were shot trying to protect
them. Don't you remember? You
almost died.

Will touches the scar beneath his scalp.

WILL

The police said I did this to myself.

ANN

They're wrong. You would never hurt
them. You loved the girls.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

You loved Libby. I always envied what you two had.

Ann turns off the water taps in the STEAM-FILLED room. She undoes Will's belt buckle and turns her back.

ANN

I've got some old clothes for you from the thrift shop. I was going to bring them over. They're on the bed.

Will sinks into the hot tub.

INT. ANN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Will sits at the kitchen table eating a bowl of soup. The clothes hang loosely on his starved frame.

WILL

Why was the minister here when I came over before?

ANN

People started to realize who you were. He wanted me to say you were dangerous. Sign a petition. Peter, you can't keep living the way you are. You're going to get sick. And someone in this town is gonna to do something crazy.

Ann's daughter, Chloe (15), trots downstairs wearing her iPod. Startles to see Will. He turns and smiles.

WILL

Hello, Chloe. Do you remember me?

Chloe shakes her head and quickly retreats upstairs.

ANN

Chloe! Come down here and say hello.

WILL

It's okay. Don't make her.

ANN

I'm sorry... Isn't there someone from the hospital you can still talk to?

INT. THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Will is on the phone. He holds Greeley's card.

CLOSE THE CARD... Dr. Paul Greeley, M.D., Ph.D. GREENHAVEN HOSPITAL has been crossed out and a new number written in.

WILL
 (into phone)
 Dr. Greeley? It's uh... Peter Ward.

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR (TRAVELING) - BRAMBLE BRANCH - NIGHT

Ann drives. Will beside her.

ANN
 I was home the night it happened.
 Chloe was at her grandmother's. It
 was that crazy snow storm.

INT/EXT. PIERSON HOUSE AND STREET - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

The neighborhood is blanketed in snow. Ann stands on her porch, traumatized, tearful.

ANN (V.O.)
 I heard gun shots and called the
 police.

Across the street the Ward's driveway and lawn are filled with police cars and ambulances, lights flashing.

ANN (V.O.)
 I watched them take out four
 stretchers.

A photographer's FLASH ILLUMINATES EMTs carrying a stretcher down the porch -- the newspaper photo Will saw earlier.

ANN (V.O.)
 And no one ever came back.

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)

Ann and Will in the car.

ANN
 I visited you a few times at
 Greenhaven, but you didn't know who I
 was. Libby's estate maintained the
 house for awhile. Then they stopped
 bothering. Kids were breaking in all
 the time. I painted over graffiti
 more than once. That was still your
 house. I'm glad you made it back.

Will smiles, his eyes speaking gratitude.

WILL
 Why are you doing all this for me?

ANN

Maybe you don't remember. We used to be pretty good friends. I moved here after my divorce. Jack, my ex, had moved back to the city, but was calling me in the middle of the night, making threats. We were in this terrible custody battle and I was a total basket case. You and Libby really helped me get through it all.

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR - MAIN STREET - NEW CANAAN - NIGHT

Ann slows. The street is clogged with CARS trying to park near the CHURCH. On the steps, the Minister greets people - Will's neighbors the Harrisons, the realtor Barrion, Capt. Conklin, Pam and Bob Dywer from the taxi stand.

WILL

They're meeting about me.

Ann nods. Someone BANGS on the roof of the car and CURSES.

ANN

Idiots!

WILL

I must be driving down the real estate market.

Ann sees an opening and accelerates away.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - INNER CITY BRIDGEPORT - NIGHT

Will and Ann wait at the EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS DESK. Dr. Paul Greeley (Will's "office colleague") steps from an examining room in a white hospital coat. He breaks into a broad smile as he approaches.

GREELEY

I had no idea what became of you.

Then Greeley sees the sorry condition Will is in.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - PSYCHIATRIC E.R.

Will sits on an examining table. Greeley bandages his frostbitten fingers. Ann looks on. Greeley is calm, observant, thoughtful. Outside his white coat, he wears a small Buddhist pendant.

WILL

I thought you and I worked together.
At a publishing house. You were the
senior editor.

GREELEY

No, you were the senior editor. I
was the psychiatrist.

From a neighboring room comes the agitated RAMBLINGS of a
psychotic emergency admission. It puts Will on edge.

GREELEY

Easy... We're okay.

Greeley places a stethoscope on his back.

GREELEY

Breathe... Again...

He doesn't look happy with what he hears.

WILL

I don't remember meeting you.

GREELEY

I'm not surprised. Six months ago
they had you stoned on every drug
known to modern pharmacology.

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM - GREENHAVEN - (SIX MONTHS AGO)

GRAINY VIDEO IMAGE: Will/Peter Ward paces back and forth,
gnawing at his hospital ID bracelet. He freezes at the
sound of the OPENING DOOR, but doesn't look.

GREELEY (O.S.)

Let me help you with that.

Greeley steps forward, gently takes Will's wrist and clips
off the ID bracelet. Will keeps his gaze averted.

GREELEY (V.O.)

I eased you off the medication and
after a few weeks you introduced
yourself.

INT. DAY ROOM - GREENHAVEN - (FIVE MONTHS AGO)

GRAINY VIDEO IMAGE: Greeley sits across from Will as he
writes with trembling hand on a pad.

W...1...1...L...8...10...10

Greeley turns the pad and slowly deciphers it.

GREELEY

Will... Eight-ten-ten. Will Atenton.

Will's gaze slowly rises until he's looking into Greeley's wise, Old Testament eyes. A connection.

GREELEY (V.O.)

Gradually you tried to reconnect to your old life. But to a time before you lost them...

INT. WILL'S ROOM - GREENHAVEN - (THREE MONTHS AGO)

GRAINY VIDEO IMAGE: A narrow bed. A small window. Stacks of newspapers. Will sits at a desk, hunched over a newspaper, circling, underlining, taking notes, 'working.'

GREELEY (V.O.)

As if your life was a book you could rewrite. Like a work of fiction.

Will looks up as Greeley enters and Petrocelli scoots out.

WILL

Listen to what I found.

(reading the newspaper)

Three bedroom center hall colonial.

Secluded country lane. New Canaan.

GREELEY

You know New Canaan?

Will hesitates for a second -- a far away look in his eye

WILL

I think I do... I think Libby does.

GREELEY (V.O.)

You were still operating in your own world. But I believed you were slowly finding your way back. The powers-that-be unfortunately saw only disaster. How can you support a delusional patient?

INT. STAFF CAFETERIA - PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Will, Ann and Greeley sit at a table in the deserted cafeteria.

GREELEY

I was fired and barred from contacting any of my former patients. You continued the journey alone. It should never have happened that way.

WILL

So, this journey... everything I've been seeing and thinking was happening is just... delusions. Hallucinations.

GREELEY

I don't know. Perhaps there are spirits in that house.

Ann looks at Greeley, incredulous.

GREELEY

The Javanese believe that spirits can't exist in this world alone, independent of the living. They need a living soul to invite them back. To sustain them, see them, talk to them. It's a partnership between the living and the dead. Answering some profound need. Drawing the two worlds together.

He draws his palms together until they touch.

GREELEY

And most often it is the people others would call mad -- delusional -- psychotic -- who can make that connection. Maybe this is all part of your journey back.

ANN

Okay, so now we know why you're not at Greenhaven.

Greeley smiles. Doesn't take offense.

WILL

So what is it that Libby needs? What does she want?

GREELEY

Perhaps she wants to live with you as though nothing ever happened. But it's not real. And I think it will kill you. You have to make peace with her. And your children.

WILL

How can I do that? I don't even know what really happened?

GREELEY

What if you were to ask Libby?

WILL

I don't think she knows. She didn't even know she was...

GREELEY

A spirit.

Will falls silent, folding in on himself.

WILL

I don't see her all the time now. Or the girls. Or the house. It's fading. Coming apart.

GREELEY

Reality -- or let's say our reality -- is reasserting itself.

ANN

It means you're getting better. Isn't that what it means, Doctor Greeley?

WILL

That's getting better? To not see them anymore. To lose them all over again. Why the hell would I want to get better?

GREELEY

Sometimes getting better is just as inevitable as getting sicker.

Will stands abruptly. His chair SHRIEKS on the linoleum. He looks around for the exit.

GREELEY

Easy. Where are you going? I want to admit you for the night. We need to do X-rays for that chest.

WILL

No. My family's waiting for me. Just answer this -- did I do it?

Greeley is caught off guard. Doesn't answer right away.

WILL

Did I?

GREELEY

I don't know.

Will is thrown. Ann, too, though she is first to recover.

ANN

You didn't, Peter. That's ridiculous. Why would you say that?

But Will's eyes never leave Greeley -- the only voice that matters right now.

GREELEY

I was there to treat you. No matter what.

Will's head snaps to the side, eyes riveted on the floor.

Ann and Greeley exchange a look -- both know Will is seeing something they cannot.

Will's eyes follow small BLOODY FOOTPRINTS across the cafeteria floor too --

-- Trish -- pale, dead -- standing twenty feet away.

TRISH

When are you coming home? Mommy's crying.

INT. CORRIDORS - TRACK WITH WILL

Running. Desperately looking for a way out. Greeley and Ann behind, calling his name. But to Will ALL IS SILENT. He bursts out an EXIT DOOR into the snowy night.

INT/EXT. COUNTY BUS (TRAVELING) - NIGHT

Will is the only passenger. SNOW CHAINS RATTLE. His eyes go to the driver's wide rear-view, jolted to see --

-- BOYCE, IN HIS BLACK HOODED PONCHO, in the last row. Will spins around, staring as Boyce comes down the aisle.

TEEN IN PONCHO

Whatchu lookin' at?

It's not Boyce. The bus stops. The TEEN gets out.

EXT. ALL-NIGHT GAS STATION - NEW CANAAN - NIGHT

Will exits the bus into WIND and RAIN and runs beneath the covered gas pumps. He shivers. Expels a ragged cough. Nearby, Artie Skella (the Rasta teen from Dunkin Doughnuts) pumps gas into his battered black van.

ARTIE

Peter fucking Ward. Told you they always come back. I didn't even recognize you, man. Nobody would have if you weren't out on your lawn screaming "Peter Ward is back." Now the whole town's going nuts.

Will is hardly listening, his gaze fixed on the STARING EYE on the van's rear door.

WILL

You painted that eye in my house.

ARTIE

I got that from you. It was on all your letters. Well, I mean, my letters that got returned.

INT. ARTIE'S VAN - THE GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Artie digs into a storage box behind his seat and shows Will a stack of letters.

ARTIE

You never opened them or anything, but you'd always draw that eye.

CLOSE THE LETTERS - WILL'S POV

The envelopes are all stamped *Return to Sender*. On the back in pencil is the EYE staring through a jagged hole.

ARTIE

You couldn't talk 'cause they were watching you, right? That what it meant? Or maybe like, you know...
(lowering his voice)
... the Master.

Will looks at him in disbelief. Artie starts the engine.

INT. ARTIE'S VAN (TRAVELING)

Artie's van has only one headlight. He keeps glancing over at Will, a mixture of awe and curiosity.

ARTIE

You know the cops're gonna come after you again big-time, right? They know they fucked it up last time.

WILL

So you think I killed my family.

ARTIE

(self-conscious)

Well... yeah. Everybody knows that.

Artie stops at the end of Will's driveway. Will gets out. Artie peers up at the dark, empty house.

ARTIE

You got heat in there?

INT. WILL'S HOUSE (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY) - NIGHT

Will crosses the threshold into the furnished home. Libby rushes into his arms. She is whole again. Beautiful. She holds him tight, her neediness heart-breaking.

LIBBY

I was afraid you weren't coming back.
I need you. You know that, don't
you? I hate it when you go out. I'm
so lost...

IN THE KITCHEN

Candlelight. Libby sets Will's dinner in front of him. He hesitates, knowing none of it is really there.

LIBBY

Go on, it's getting cold.

Slow and deliberate he picks up his fork. Libby pours wine. Will watches the red liquid tumble into the glass, mesmerized by how real it seems. He struggles to keep his mind on track.

WILL

Doctor Greeley wanted to admit me at the hospital.

LIBBY

Why? You're fine. Look at yourself.

Will sees his reflection in a window. He looks strong and healthy. He looks down at his hands. They're not bandaged. No sign of frostbite. Libby squeezes his hand.

LIBBY

Nothing has to change.

WILL

This is what I wanted.

LIBBY

What we both wanted. Didn't I meet you at the station? With the girls. You forgot to wear a warm coat the way you always did.

WILL

And you turned up my collar.

LIBBY

And we came to look at this house and you said we could buy it. And now we're living here. All of us together again. Isn't that what you wanted?

Libby slips onto his lap. He feels her weight. Her warmth.

WILL

More than anything.

LIBBY

Than what's wrong?

WILL'S POV - THE KITCHEN - (OUR REALITY)

Over Libby's shoulder. That side of the room is BARE. UNFURNISHED. Their shared reality dimming for him.

BACK TO SCENE (WILL AND LIBBY'S REALITY)

Will buries his face in Libby's hair. Inhales her scent.

WILL

I need to know what happened.

LIBBY

No, you don't.

WILL

Can't you tell me?

LIBBY

No. I don't know. I never knew. We don't need to know.

And suddenly she is kissing him desperately, hungrily. He feels her body against his, tastes her lips, and he is quite lost again. Libby leans over and blows out a candle.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE KITCHEN - (OUR REALITY)

Will, gaunt, hands bandaged, belt cinched tight, drops the lid on the Sterno can to put OUT its purple flame.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

Will and Libby make love under the red satin comforter in the king-size bed. The room is warm and FURNISHED. She clings to him, whispers --

LIBBY

Stop asking so many questions. All we need is each other.

Outside the SNOW FALLS.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ann KNOCKS on the front door. Her car idles in the driveway, the headlights BRIGHT against the dark house.

ANN

Peter...?

INT. BEDROOM - (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

Will wakes alone in bed beneath the red comforter.

ANN (O.S.)

Peter...?

AT THE SOUND OF HER VOICE the room's furnishing's begin to MELT AWAY --

ANN (O.S.)

It's Ann. Are you here?

-- until Will is left with only his sleeping bag in the freezing corner.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - SAME TIME

Ann tries the door. It swings open. The car headlights THROW THEIR BEAMS across the threshold and into the house.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL

Ann enters, carrying a picnic cooler. She sees the house as it truly is, BARE and COLD. A CREAK on the stairs --

ANN

Peter...?

-- but there is no one there.

ANOTHER ANGLE THE STAIRS... Libby half-merged with the shadows, watches Ann intently.

ANN

I'm leaving some food down here for you. Please eat something.

Ann sets down the cooler. Again a CREAK on the stairs. Ann turns. Again, no one there. Ann swallows...

ANN

Libby...?

ANOTHER ANGLE THE STAIRS... Libby is taken aback, her first impulse to retreat, but she stays.

ANN

Libby are you there?

Ann scans the empty stairs for a sign of another presence.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Will stands in the doorway, straining to hear Ann's words.

ANN (O.S.)

It's Ann. From across the street.

INT. STAIRS AND FRONT HALL

Libby (unseen by Ann) listens to her entreaty.

ANN

I don't know if you can see me... or hear me... or whether I'm just... talking to myself...

Ann laughs at herself, can't believe she's really doing this, but keeps going, her voice falling softer.

ANN (O.S.)

... Peter loves you and the girls more than anything in the world... But let him go. Let Peter find his answers. But let him have the rest of his life.

Ann looks up the stairs once more, her gaze meeting Libby's for a second as she whispers...

ANN

Please...

Libby looks away, uncomfortable -- and Ann, suddenly self-conscious, quickly exits.

After a moment, Ann's car backs away down the driveway, headlights FADING and Libby slowly descends the stairs.

Libby opens the cooler. Inside are sandwiches, fruit, soup -- simple, basic things she can no longer give her husband.

INT. ATTIC

Libby sweeps the old newspaper photocopies into her arms.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM

Libby drops the photocopies on the bed in front of Will -- a silent offering. He looks up at her. Understands.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM - LATER - (OUR REALITY)

Will sits in the corner in the FREEZING COLD, sleeping bag canopied over his head. The photocopies are laid in front of him. He takes notes on a pad. Across the empty room --

WILL'S POV - ACROSS THE ROOM - (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

Libby is wrapped in the red satin comforter in the king-sized bed, watching Will with quiet resignation -- in this moment, their realities have split apart.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - DAY - (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

ICY RAIN darkens the windows, but here it is still WARM, COZY, FURNISHED. IN THE FRONT HALL... Trish and Dee-Dee play the board game "Sorry" with colored marbles.

IN THE KITCHEN... Libby busies herself with breakfast dishes, trying not to look at the writing pad and stack of photocopies Will has at the table. He looks up guiltily.

WILL

You don't want me to do this...

LIBBY

Go ahead. Tell me.

They speak in lowered voices so the girls don't hear.

WILL

The cops screwed up in every way. They didn't canvas the neighborhood until three days later. They contaminated the crime scene. And none of them had homicide experience. First they thought it was some transient who wandered in off the Thruway. Then it was gangbangers down from New Haven. Then...

LIBBY

They thought it was you. I found this after you went to sleep.

Libby unfolds a photocopy page and hands it to Will.

CLOSE THE NEWSPAPER PAGE... *"Prosecutor Seeks 'Other Woman' in Ward Murder. Suggest motive was affair."*

WILL

Libby -- no. No. It's not true.

Down the hall, the GIRLS SCREAM and run to their mother as HEAVY FOOTSTEPS THUMP on the front porch. The front door BANGS open and Boyce looms on the threshold in his black poncho. Boyce sees only Will at the end of a bare hall.

BOYCE

May I come in?

LIBBY

(panicked)

Who is that? What does he want?

Libby protectively pulls the girls to her and backs away, MELTING THROUGH A WALL AND VANISH. Will gasps.

BOYCE

Like to take a look around.

As Boyce crosses the threshold his presence ERADICATES WILL AND LIBBY'S REALITY. His boot kicks the girls' board game scattering not marbles but pieces of BROKEN GLASS.

From Will's POV, the entire house is STRIPPED OF ALL ITS FURNISHING IN A FRIGHTENING RUSH that leaves him staggered. Boyce sees the look on Will's face and snickers.

WILL

You can't just come walk in my house.
You need a search warrant.

BOYCE
Oh, yeah. Here it is.

Boyce produces HANDCUFFS in latex-gloved hands. Slams Will into the single kitchen chair and cuffs him to the table.

WILL
Why the hell re you doing this to me?
I want the same thing you do.

BOYCE
Really. What's that, Mister Ward?

WILL
To find out who killed my family.

BOYCE
Good. We both know why we're here.

BOYCE SCANS WILL'S YELLOW PAD... Killer... Random? Serial killer? Pattern? Similar cases? FBI? Transient?... Gang? Burglary? Nearby? Neighbors? Someone Libby knew? Someone I knew?

BOYCE
You're a busy little psychopath, aren't you?

WILL
I'm learning what a shit job the police did.

BOYCE
Well, we're trying to make amends now, aren't we?

Boyce turns the pad to Will and reads a word in the corner.

BOYCE
"Me?" That would be you, wouldn't it, Mr. Ward?

WILL
I want the truth. Whatever it is.

Boyce picks up Will's pen in his latex-gloved hand and SCRIBBLES OUT everything on the page except the words Killer... and Me...

BOYCE
Killer... Me... Thought I might turn up some new evidence.

Boyce produces a large, clear plastic evidence bag and slides the yellow pad inside.

WILL

That's not evidence.

BOYCE

Sure it is. Your pad. Your pen.
Your handwriting.

WILL

But you crossed things out.

Boyce looks at Will as if he's crazy.

BOYCE

I didn't cross out anything. Maybe
you forgot.

WILL

You fucker.

BOYCE

Just like you forgot everything that
happened that night. That's what
you're still saying? You don't
remember anything.

WILL

I was shot in the head for crissakes.
I'm trying to remember, goddamnit!

BOYCE

If you don't remember, you'd have to
admit the logical possibility that
you are guilty?

WILL

Yes.

BOYCE

Yes? Yes, you did it, Mister Ward?

WILL

That's not what I said. I said...
since I don't remember it's a logical
possibility. But I didn't do it.

Will sees Libby standing in the dark corner listening.

BOYCE

Something over there, Mister Ward?

Boyce (who cannot see Libby) crosses to the corner, kicks aside the old boxes labeled "Camping Gear."

WILL

I love my wife.

BOYCE

Loved her. Past tense, asshole. Or I wouldn't be here.

Boyce flips open a pocket-size notebook.

BOYCE

Had a lot of names come up in connection with you. Robin Neeley, Madeline Enwright, Selma Blair.

WILL

Those are my authors. I'm an editor.

BOYCE

Women authors. Working late. In the city. Sometimes people have two different lives.

WILL

I never cheated on my wife.

BOYCE

How the fuck do you know? You're the guy that doesn't remember anything.

Will glances at Libby. She doesn't like what she's hearing. He tries to reassure her.

WILL

I never cheated.

BOYCE

Over here, Mister Ward!

Boyce BANGS his fist on the table.

BOYCE

I think she found out what was going on. I think there was a fight. I think things got out of control.

WILL

There was no fight.

BOYCE

Then why did she shoot you?

WILL

The killer shot me. I was trying to defend my family.

BOYCE

That's what you read in the papers. I was here, motherfucker.

FLASHFRAME - UPSTAIRS HALL (11 YEARS AGO)

LOW ANGLE ACROSS THE FLOOR -- Boyce standing back from Libby's body as a FORENSIC PHOTOGRAPHER's CAMERA FLASH -- illuminates her hand still gripping the gun.

BOYCE (V.O.)

The gun was still in your wife's hand.

BACK TO SCENE - THE PRESENT

A GASP from the corner and Will's head snaps to Libby, her expression one of shocked disbelief.

BOYCE

She was defending her family. From you.

A dead overhead LIGHT BULB EXPLODES! Boyce startles. Will twists around --

-- Libby's is gone.

WILL

It's not true! If you had all this why the hell didn't you indict me?

BOYCE

Because we only had Elisabeth's prints on the gun. Not yours. And our chicken-shit D.A. wouldn't bring a circumstantial case against one of our own.

WILL

I don't believe you. Let me see the evidence. Let me see the forensic reports. If I'm guilty, I'll blow my fucking brains out. That good enough for you?

BOYCE

I think that's why you came back to New Canaan. Back to this house. To do what's right.

Boyce reaches inside his poncho and withdraws a plastic evidence bag containing a .38 handgun. He removes the gun and sets it in front of Will.

BOYCE

You put four lead slugs through your babies while they slept.

One by one he drops four BULLETS. They BANG against the metal table.

BOYCE

And one through your beautiful wife's face.

Boyce drops a last bullet. Will looks up at Boyce incredulous.

WILL

What the hell kind of cop are you?

Boyce smiles enigmatically. Boyce leans closer and unlocks Will's handcuffs.

BOYCE

If you love your family. Honor their memory. Let's you and I bring the real killer to justice. An eye for an eye.

Boyce spins the .38 on the rusted metal table like a bottle in a game of spin the bottle. Will stares at it a moment and when he looks up

-- Boyce is gone. The FRONT DOOR SLAMS behind Boyce and in a RUSH the bare house is RESTORED. Rugs and chairs, lamps, family pictures -- normalcy. Will catches his breath.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

Will enters. The red satin comforter is draped across the king-size bed. The bathroom door is ajar and Libby stands in front of the mirror. Everything around her is normal.

But her skin is pasty and pale, her hair stringy, eyes dull. Her finger touches the scar in her cheek -- the ugly BLACK HOLE where the bullet entered.

LIBBY

What if you did this?

(her voice cracking)

What if you did everything he said?

WILL
(agonized)
Is that what you remember?

LIBBY
(anger rising)
I remember you never wanted to move
here. You never wanted this family.
Or the marriage --

WILL
That's not true.

LIBBY
Nothing's true, is it? Only what you
want to believe!

WILL
Libby, stop.

Will rushes forward and grabs her.

WILL
Please...

Libby twists around and for a split-second ANOTHER EYE
PEERS THROUGH THE BULLET HOLE IN LIBBY'S CHEEK!

Will SCREAMS and Libby RUSHES THROUGH A WALL and VANISHES!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - (OUR REALITY)

Will staggers out into the BARE hall, alone in the freezing
house again. He calls out, plaintively --

WILL
Libby...?

DOORS SLAM up and down the hall. That's her answer. Will
slides down the wall to the floor.

WILL
I need you...

The FLOOR BOARDS SCREECH, straining against their nails,
then stop.

A TAPPING SOUND behind Will and he turns.

BRASS BULLETS DRIP out of a HOLE in the hall walls TAPPING
on the floor. One by one at first. Then FASTER until --

-- they're spilling out like coffee beans from a funnel,
FILLING THE HALL LIKE RISING WATER.

Will pulls his knees up close, head buried in his arms as the SHELL CASINGS COVER HIM, and then in the next instant --

-- HIS HALLUCINATION IS OVER. He sits huddled in the empty hall like a patient on a mental ward. A HACKING COUGH shakes his body, then subsides.

EXT. STREET - MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Will slogs along the icy sidewalk, holding his flimsy jacket closed against a biting wind. He turns up an empty driveway, passing a mailbox marked: *George Boyce, Jr.*

INT. BOYCE'S HOUSE - DAY

Will smashes the kitchen door window, reaches in and unlocks it. An ALARM BEGINS TO WHOOP, but Will moves calmly. It's a lonely bachelor's place. Neat, but dingy.

IN THE BASEMENT... Will finds a work bench with an old computer. Stacks of police file boxes marked *DET. BOYCE*. Yellowed newspapers. Boyce's long obsession with the case.

Will picks up a file. Thick with dust. Skims it. Stuffs it in his knapsack.

EXT. BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - DAY

Twilight. Will emerges from the snowy woods, carrying the knapsack stuffed with files. An official-looking SEDAN is parked in his driveway.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE & DRIVEWAY

Will walks up. Two COUNTY INSPECTORS meet him.

COUNTY INSPECTOR #1

Mister Ward? We just posted an order to vacate on your front door.

BLUE TAPE crisscrosses the front door, a legal notice taped there. Official-looking "No Occupancy" SIGNS are nailed to the porch railings.

COUNTY INSPECTOR #2

No electricity, no heat, no proper plumbing. Doesn't qualify for a Certificate of Occupancy.

Down the street, the Minister and realtor Tom Barrion stand with the Harrisons in their driveway.

Will stares at them a moment, then climbs his porch.

COUNTY INSPECTOR #1
You can't go back in there, Mister
Ward. If you do, we'll have to
notify the police.

Will rips off a "No Occupancy" sign and hurls it. It
CLANGS off their car. Inspector #2 opens his cell.

COUNTY INSPECTOR #2
That's a night in jail, Mister Ward.

ANN (O.S.)
You don't have to do that.

Ann strides past the men, scolding them.

ANN
You should be helping him for God
sakes.

ON WILL'S PORCH... Will is tearing the blue tape off the
front door. And comes up behind.

ANN
Peter, don't. They'll arrest you.

WILL
For what? Breaking into my own
house?

ANN
Don't make it so easy for them.

Their eyes meet. Will knows she's right. She takes his
arm. They come down the porch steps together.

INT. ANN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Will and Ann stand in the DARK at the front window. Across
the street in Will's driveway, a New Canaan Police Officer
talks with the County Inspectors.

WILL
I heard you talking to Libby. Did
you see her?

Ann shakes her head.

ANN
Maybe I was really just saying it to
you, Peter.

The Police and Building Inspectors drive off.

WILL

I have to go now.

Ann takes Will's hand and places it on her cheek.

ANN

Does she feel like this?

Ann's soft skin is electric to Will. He starts to take his hand away, but Ann holds it there, gazing into his eyes, her love for him evident.

ANN

You loved Libby when she was alive.
And you love her now. But, Peter,
you don't owe her your life. She
can't expect that. It's not fair.

WILL

It's fair if I'm guilty.

Will takes a sudden step back, breaking the contact.

ANN

I'll never believe that.

WILL

How can you be so sure about
something I don't even know?

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ann sadly watches Will go down her front walk, carrying the knapsack of police files.

INT/EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - (WILL & LIBBY'S REALITY)

Will tears off the rest of the blue tape, but the door is locked. Inside, the house is once again FURNISHED.

WILL

Libby, open the door.

Libby backs away down the dark center hall. Will SMASHES the glass of the front door sidelights. He reaches in and unlocks the door, but it still won't open.

The living room couch and a cabinet block it. Will batters against the door. BOOM... BOOM...

LIBBY

Go away! Leave us alone.

Will slams his weight against the door. The furniture jerks backwards slightly. Libby VANISHES through a wall and all at once --

-- the house is STRIPPED BARE. The furniture that blocked the door is GONE, the door FLIES OPEN and Will stumbles in.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Will stands at the counter trying to light the old kerosene lantern. A CLATTERING SOUND -- metal against metal -- from the DARKNESS. Finally, the lantern FLARES, illuminating --

-- the GUN Boyce left, SPINNING on the rusty metal table. It slows and stops, the BARREL pointed at Will.

He freezes, half-expecting it to blow him away.

INT. WILL & LIBBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will empties the knapsack on the floor. In the jittery lantern light he begins reading the crime scene files. RAIN PATTERS on the roof.

INT. THROUGHOUT THE UPSTAIRS - MOVING WITH WILL

as he studies DIAGRAMS, reconstructing the night of the murder. He drops FORENSIC PHOTOS on the floor as if dealing out a hand of solitaire.

CLOSE A PHOTO - Bloody princess sheets cover Trish's body.

CLOSE A PHOTO - Dee-Dee's tiny footprints in blood.

CLOSE A PHOTO - Libby's body sprawled on the hall carpet.

CLOSE A PHOTO - Libby's hand, gripping the .38.

Will unconsciously touches the scar on his head. He hears a familiar TAPPING SOUND. Tries not to look. Then has to.

BRASS BULLETS drip out a hole in the wall. When they hit the floor they become WATER BUGS scurrying for cover.

Will clenches shut his eyes. Knows it's an hallucination.

WILL

(softly, like a prayer)

Stop... Please... stop.

The tapping STOPS. He opens his eyes. Only the photos and the bare hall.

IN THE UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Will drops PHOTOS of Dee-Dee's bloody footprints, following their path to the window where she scratched the "K."

WILL

Why did Dee-Dee come to this window?
What did she see out there?

BELOW IN THE BACKYARD... RAIN melts the snow where Libby's garden once stood exposing tangled weeds.

Will drops ANOTHER PHOTO... Dee-Dee curled beneath the windowsill, dead.

LIBBY (O.S.)

(a furious whisper)
How can you look at those?!

Libby stands in the corner, pale as death, eyes raging.

LIBBY

Get them out of my house!

Libby RUSHES at Will with terrifying speed, blurring through him and vanishing as --

-- a BLAST OF WIND scatters the photos like so many leaves. The lantern almost goes out, then FLICKERS back.

Will sees all the photos and files he brought to the house are gone.

INT. ANN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Ann parts the curtains in her upstairs bedroom window, gazing across the street to Will's. O.S. a TV PLAYS.

CHLOE (O.S.)

Mom, the show's starting.

ANN

I'm coming sweetie.

She lets the curtain drop.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALL

Will sits, slumped against the wall. The STACCATO of the rain on the roof. Then another sound --

-- WHISPERS. Rising from the walls. Will starts to cover his ears -- to stop the hallucination -- then realizes.

-- it's Trish and Dee-Dee. Will stands. Tracks the sound along the cracked walls. Down the hall and into --

THE CRAWLSPACE

Will enters on hands and knees. Trish and Dee-Dee, pale and DEAD, sit at their table of old suitcases, having a tea party. Their eyes are milky, their pajamas stained with blood. Will can't bear the sight and closes his eyes.

WILL

Oh God...

DEE-DEE

Daddy, what's the matter?

WILL

Did I.. did Daddy ever hurt you?

TRISH

Mommy says we shouldn't talk to you.

WILL

Just tell me -- did I do this?

DEE-DEE

I'll show you.

She offers Will her hand. He clasps it and his face goes as pale as hers. His lips turn ice blue and his eyes go glassy white. On the CRACK OF A TREE LIMB SNAPPING --

CUT TO:

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT (11 YEARS AGO)

The old elm's rope swing branch CRASHES into the side porch beneath the girls' bedroom window.

INT. THE GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (11 YEARS AGO)

Dee-Dee darts into bed with Trish and burrows under the covers. WIND and SNOW lash the window, where branches from the fallen limb SCRATCH at the pane like fingernails.

Dee-Dee hears FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

DEE-DEE

Trish... What's that?

TRISH

(half-asleep)

It's Daddy... Move over...

The FOOTSTEPS STOP. Dee-Dee looks up.

A FIGURE IN A STOCKING MASK looms in the doorway. Five quick muzzle FLASHES and the ROLLING THUNDER OF GUNSHOTS.

BENEATH THE COVERS Dee-Dee's eyes are frozen wide as Trish's BLOOD soaks the sheets. A VOICE from far away --

LIBBY (O.S.)
Girls?! Girls? What was that?

Libby's FOOTSTEPS in the hall.

KILLER (O.S.)
What the hell -- ?!

LIBBY (O.S.)
Who are you?! What're you --

ANOTHER GUNSHOT ECHOES. The THUD of Libby's body ion the hall carpet. Dee-Dee nudges her sister, whispers...

DEE-DEE
Trish..?

Her sister doesn't answer. Already gone. Dee-Dee slips out of bed. Peers through a crack in the door.

AT THE END OF THE HALL... the Killer stands over Libby.

KILLER
(distraught)
Oh, God, no. No...

Libby looks up, bewildered, partially paralyzed, a bullet hole in her cheek. The Killer's hand shakes as he aims.

KILLER
(muffled, emotional)
I'm sorry... Oh God, I'm really --

All at once --

-- the THUMP OF FOOTSTEPS on the stairs and --

-- PETER WARD (Will, twelve years ago) explodes from the DARK, plowing into --

-- the Killer.

The gun falls to the floor, where --

-- Libby strains to reach it.

The men grapple in the DARK, a single, indistinguishable shadow as --

-- on the floor, Libby grips the gun with her last ounce of strength and unaware Peter is even there -- FIRES.

A GASH RIPS THE SIDE OF PETER'S HEAD and he and the killer avalanche down the backstairs into the kitchen.

AT HER BEDROOM DOOR... Dee-Dee hears SHOUTS, CRASHING furniture and a SLAMMING door as the fight moves outside.

Dee-Dee pads across the hall leaving a trail of tiny red footprints, unaware she has been hit.

IN THE UPSTAIRS BATHROOM... Dee-Dee can't see out the icy window, but hears the TERRIBLE SHOUTS.

DEE-DEE

Daddy!

With a pair of scissors she BREAKS the glass and THROUGH A JAGGED HOLE can see --

INTO THE BACKYARD... where the Killer flees. But trips and falls amidst the snow-covered strings and stakes of the garden. Peter attacks --

-- slashing at him with something like a rake, RIPPING through the Killer's jacket and stocking mask until --

-- his strength gives out. He staggers. His head lolls back. And he sees --

THE EYE STARING THROUGH THE JAGGED HOLE... Dee-Dee gazing down from the high window. For an instant their eyes lock - a memory incised.

Then Peter drops his weapon. Collapses.

The Killer scrambles up and hobbles off into the woods, disappearing in the BLURRING SNOW.

AT THE UPSTAIRS WINDOW... snow flutters through the jagged hole window and floats down on --

-- Dee-Dee's tiny body now curled motionless on the floor beneath the window... exactly like the forensic photo.

IN THE YARD... Peter rises. A hand to his head comes away BLOODY. He looks up.

AT THE WINDOW... Dee-Dee is gone.

Peter stumbles back inside. The SNOW ERASES all signs of the struggle and buries the weapon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT - (THE PRESENT)

Will stands at the spot where he fought the killer. The warm spring RAIN has dissolved the snow, revealing bare earth and weeds. He grips the handle of an old shovel.

Trish and Dee-Dee stand in their red slickers, watching. They look like 'normal' kids again.

TRISH

It must be spring, right, Daddy? All the snow's gone.

DEE-DEE

We can start our garden.

WILL

Yes.

He starts to dig. Soon, the shovel CLANKS against something metallic underground. Excited, he looks up --

-- but the girls are gone. Will kneels in the mud. Sinks in his fingers. And lifts --

-- an old, rusted GARDEN EDGER -- a semicircular blade at the end of a wooden handle. And now it hits him --

FLASHFRAME (11 YEARS AGO)... the lawn edger slicing into the Killer's stocking mask.

BACK ON WILL... mind leaping.

FLASHFRAME (LAST WEEK)... Cam pulling his knit cap down to cover a long scar at his hairline.

SHOCK CUT TO:

EXT. DUNKIN' DOUGHNUTS PARKING LOT - NIGHT

RAIN. Will slams Cam against the door of his red pick-up, spilling the take-out coffee across his shirt front.

CAM

Shit, man! What're you doing!

Will yanks off Cam's knit cap. Stares at the OLD SCAR. Then rips open Cam's flannel shirt.

CAM

Get the fuck off me.

FLASHFRAME (11 YEARS AGO)... the lawn edger slashes through the Killer's jacket.

BACK TO PRESENT... Will stabs his finger at the old scars on Cam's arm and shoulder.

WILL

I did this. And this. AND THIS.

Will HURLS Cam against a car, then hauls him to his feet.

WILL

You murdered my family.

Cam gives Will a cock-eyed grin.

CAM

You're a crazy fuck.

Will seizes Cam by the throat, ready to kill him.

WILL

WHY?!

Artie, Cindi and town teens spill out of the Dunkin' Doughnuts. Artie runs over.

ARTIE

Easy, man. You're gonna kill him.

WILL

Get the fuck away!

Artie backs off. Will's hands tighten on Cam's throat.

WILL

Why did you do it?

CAM

(softly)

You know why, motherfucker. You paid me to. Ten thousand dollars.

Will is rocked. His grip loosens.

CAM

Then you fucking went nuts on me. Thought you could take care of this loose end, huh? Then make yourself out to be the big fuckin' hero who tried to save his family.

Cam throws a sucker punch that catches Will off guard and sends him to his knees. Blood spills from Will's nose.

CAM
You piece a shit. Almost fucking
killed me.

Cam kicks Will violently. Artie shoves Cam away.

ARTIE
Leave him alone.

WILL
I don't believe you. Why would I
ever want to do that?

Cam laughs, darkly ironic. Leans down close...

CAM
You had this thing for that divorcee
across the street. Had to get rid of
your family for a piece of ass.

Will is left speechless. Cam climbs in his truck and roars
out of the lot in the RAIN.

INT. KITCHEN - ANN'S HOUSE

DARK. Ann enters. Opens the refrigerator. Takes out
juice. Closes the door and GASPS --

-- Will stands three feet away, soaking wet, bruised and
bloodied. His eyes blaze.

ANN
Mygod -- I almost had a heart attack.

WILL
We had an affair.

ANN
What?

WILL
You and I. When I was married to
Libby.

ANN
No.

Will grabs her roughly. She CRIES out in alarm.

WILL
Don't lie to me.

He pins her arms.

WILL

I hired Cam McConnell to do it. And I'm asking you if you knew.

He's shaking her now.

WILL

Did we plan it together? To kill them all.

ANN

Peter, stop it! Stop! You're not making any sense. There was never anything between us. We were good friends -- that's all. You and Libby.

WILL

I don't believe you. We'll let Detective Boyce sort it out.

Will picks up the phone, starts punching numbers.

ANN

Who?

WILL

Detective Boyce. He's been watching me since I got back. He knew I was guilty before I did. He didn't know about you though.

Ann stares at him in disbelief.

ANN

Detective George Boyce?

WILL

That's right. I guess you know who he is, don't you?

ANN

George Boyce died five years ago.

Will emits a nervous, sarcastic laugh.

WILL

I just went to his house. I got the files on the case.

ANN

Okay. I think his son lives there.
But George Boyce -- the detective on
your case -- is dead.

WILL

Jesus Christ, stop! I've talked to
him. I've seen him.

ANN

Like you see Libby? Like you talk to
her? Peter, there is no Boyce. It's
another phantom.

Will hangs up the phone. Can't speak. Sits down at the
kitchen table. Numb. Hopelessly lost.

FRONT HALL - ANN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ann is her cell phone, speaking in a hushed voice.

ANN

Doctor Greeley... it's Ann Pierson,
Peter's friend.

Ann hears a THUD upstairs and calls off, anxiously --

ANN

Peter...?

INT. UPSTAIRS - ANN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Will feels his way in the DARK. Opens a door. Finds the
switch and turns on the light -- CHLOE BOLTS UP IN BED.

WILL

I'm sorry. I was looking for your
mother's room... to lie down. I'm
not feeling very...

Chloe is frozen in fear as Will's gaze falls on a FRAMED
PHOTO on the dresser. (We can't see the photo from OUR
ANGLE) but Will is riveted... then confused...

WILL

Who is that? Is that your father?

Will reaches for the photo, but Chloe snatches it away.

CHLOE

Get out of my room!

The photo falls face down on the floor, SHATTERING the glass. Will backs out into the hall and Chloe SLAMS her door as Ann comes running up the stairs.

ANN

What happened?

WILL

I went in the wrong room. Our houses are backwards. I mean, opposite.

Ann regards Will warily -- no idea what he's talking about.

INT. ANN'S BEDROOM - SHORTLY LATER

Will lies on the bed, mind troubled. In the hall he hears Ann trying to calm her daughter. A door SLAMS again.

Will's eyes follow HEADLIGHTS wheeling from left to right across the ceiling as a car passes on Bramble Branch.

In the hall, he hears Ann speaking softly with Greeley.

ANN (O.S.)

... you know he won't commit himself voluntarily, but isn't there something we can do? The delusions are getting much, much worse...

Another car passes. Will's eyes follow the headlights across the ceiling in the opposite direction this time, right to left. He sits up, electrified.

INT. CHLOE'S ROOM - ANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chloe whispers into her cell phone.

CHLOE

(terrified, into phone)

Daddy, Peter Ward is here... Yes. In the house. In mommy's room.

EXT. CADILLAC ESPLANADE (TRAVELING) - SAME TIME

The SUV ROARS down the town road towards Bramble Branch.

CHLOE'S FATHER/JACK (PHONE FILTER)

Okay, baby. Don't worry. I'm on my way. Can you get out of the house?

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - ANN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Chloe on the phone, tears in her eyes.

CHLOE (PHONE FILTER)
I don't know. I think so.

JACK (PHONE FILTER)
Get over to the Harrison's, okay.
Okay, sweetheart?

INT. ANN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ann enters almost colliding with Will as he crosses the room. He speaks with a manic intensity that frightens Ann.

WILL
Ann, it's a circle. Bramble Branch Circle. Everyone gets turned around. The realtor -- I mean the taxi -- when she drove me to the house she missed the turn. And the UPS guy who was looking for you. Do you see what I'm saying -- ?

ANN
(overlapping)
Doctor Greeley's coming over.

WILL
(overlapping)
--- if you take the first turn on Bramble Branch, your house is the third on the left. But if you missed that and took the second turn, then everything's reversed and my house is the third on the left.

Will takes Ann's hands in his as if trying to convey some great emotion.

WILL
Do you see what I'm trying to say?

Ann shakes her head, frightened by his madness. None of this makes any sense to her.

WILL
Cam lied to me. I didn't hire him. There was a snow storm that night. Cam missed the turn. He ended up at the wrong house.

Ann startles as he grabs her wrist and pulls her out into the hall.

EXT. THE CADILLAC ESPLANADE (TRAVELING) - NIGHT

The SUV swings onto Bramble Branch.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - ANN'S HOUSE

Will pulls Ann out into the DARK hall.

WILL

I went in Chloe's room because your house is the reverse of mine. The same thing would've happened to Cam. If he came up the back stairs looking for your room -- the first door on the right -- he would've found you. But he was in my house and the first door on the right is Trish and Dee-Dee's room and he just opened the door and shot.

ANN

Ohmygod...

WILL

Then when Libby came out of our room - he realized he'd made a mistake. But what could he do? He *had* to shoot her.

ANN

But it was supposed to be me. Because of the divorce...

Ann goes pale as the realization engulfs her.

ANN

My husband wanted me dead.

IN CHLOE'S BEDROOM

A KNOCK then Will enters. Chloe is gone. He picks up the framed photo with the shattered glass and shows it to Ann.

WILL

This is him, right? Jack.

Ann nods. Will stares at the photo.

WILL

This is who I've been talking to, Ann. He told me he was Detective Boyce.

ANGLE ADJUSTS and we see the photo for the first time.
Jack is DETECTIVE BOYCE.

WILL

When I came back to town, back to my house, he must've started to panic. What the hell was I doing back? What would I find out? He had to keep an eye on me. Get rid of me. And he knew that if I ever told anyone about him they'd say exactly what you said -
- Detective Boyce died five years ago. You're just a lunatic talking to ghosts.

The SHRILL of the phone makes them both jump.

INT. KITCHEN - ANN'S HOUSE

Ann is on the phone with her neighbors the Harrisons.

ANN

No, it's not an emergency. We don't need the police. I'll be right over.

Ann hangs up. Turns to Will as she puts on her coat.

ANN

Chloe got scared and ran next door. I'm going to go over.

EXT. BACK PORCH - ANN'S HOUSE

Will stands in the chilly night air, watching Ann cross the back lawn to the neighbor's. The Harrison's door opens and Chloe, still in her pajamas, tearfully embraces her mother. They go inside. The door closes.

A VOICE FROM THE DARK

I thought you had the guts to do what needs to be done, Mister Ward.

Will scans the LAWN. Can't see anyone.

BOYCE/JACK (O.S.)

Guess you're gonna need another little push.

JACK PIERSON -- the man Will knew as Det. Boyce -- emerges from the DARK -- his black poncho SNAPPING in the wind.

WILL

You fucking bastard. I know who --

THUNK! -- A log cracks Will's head from behind and he crumples to the ground. Cam McConnell materializes from the shadows. Helps Jack drag Will off.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. CELLAR - WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Will is gagged. Tied to a chair. His eyes flicker open to a HISSING SOUND he's heard before. In the lantern's glow, Cam writes on the walls with spray paint --

-- *I KILLED THEM ALL FORGIVE ME I KILLED THEM ALL FORGIVE.*

Jack steps forward. He wears leather gloves. Holds the .38 HANDGUN he left earlier. Will strains against the ropes, bangs the chair on the floor.

JACK

Easy there. You should feel good about this, Mister Ward. Finally, you're going to do the right thing.

Jack forces the gun into Will's hand, clamping his finger's around the trigger. Will struggles furiously.

JACK

(impatiently to Cam)
Get over here. Hold him down.

Cam tosses the spray can and reluctantly joins Jack. He pins Will as Jack forces him to raise the gun to his head.

CAM

I'm sorry, man. It wasn't supposed to be your family. Or anybody's family.

JACK

Shut the fuck up. Hold him.

Cam clenches his eyes shut as Jack forces Will to squeeze the trigger. BLAM! Point blank --

-- into Cam's chest. He's dead before he hits the floor.

JACK

You both needed to pay.

Jack wrenches Will's arm, jams the gun barrel to Will's head, crushing his finger against the trigger, when --

-- A BLAST OF WIND extinguishes the lantern, plunging the cellar into PITCH BLACK.

Jack CURSES. Puts down the gun and strikes a match. He kneels to relight the lantern. It FLARES up. Jack GASPS!

Dee-Dee, pale and dead, stands beside her father, staring at Jack with blank eyes. She begins cutting Will's ropes with rusty scissors.

Jack staggers back in shock. Falls over Cam's body and drops the lantern. The kerosene ignites -- WHOOSH!

Jack scrambles up the cellar stairs as FLAMES carpet the floor and BLACK SMOKE climbs the walls.

At the top of the stairs Jack reaches for the door just as it locks with a LOUD CLICK -- trapped.

Below flames. Smoke. And an empty chair. Will and Dee-Dee are gone.

Panicked Jack desperately shoulders against the door.

Libby SURGES through the wood. Pale and dead, her bullet-scarred face and blank eyes an inch from Jack. He SCREAMS!

Crashes down the stairs into the SMOKE. FLAMES eat away at the overhead beams, casting the room in twilight.

Jack grunts in fear. Feels his way up stone steps to the slanted exterior door. He reaches for the handle when --

-- Trish, pale and dead, RISES from the stones and bolts the door.

Jack turns terrified circles in the BLACKENING ROOM as Libby then Trish then Dee-Dee emerge from the DARK corners shrouded in SMOKE, BLANK EYES reflecting the FLAMES.

JACK

Stop! Please!

Will RUSHES from out of nowhere and swings the LAWN EDGER --

JACK

No!

-- SLASHING Jack's throat and KILLING HIM INSTANTLY! Will and the ghosts stare down at the body. BLOOD pooling. Then with a SHRIEK OF TIMBERS the ceiling COLLAPSES!

EXT. ANN'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A Bridgeport Hospital AMBULANCE pulls up and a breathless Ann runs out to greet Dr. Greeley and an EMT crew.

ANN

I can't find him. He must've gone back to his house.

From across the street, an EXPLOSION OF FLAMES as the FIRE ERUPTS through the entire house.

ANN

Oh God!

Ann, Greeley and the Medics race across the street.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SMOKE BILLOWS from the windows as Ann charges up the porch.

GREELEY

Ann, stop! You can't.

Greeley drags her back as windows EXPLODE! throwing them to the ground. FLAMES BELLOW as if the house were alive.

INT. CELLAR - WILL'S HOUSE

CAMERA CREEPS through smoke and rubble. A SIREN CRIES in the distance. Will lies motionless. Libby leans down and kisses him.

LIBBY

Can you forgive me?

WILL

For what?

LIBBY

For what I thought you did.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN IMPENETRABLE NOWHERE OF SMOKE - SILENCE

Libby leads Will by the hand. Calm. Peaceful. Trish and Dee-Dee walk with them. Look up at Will and smile. His heart leaps. He is with his family again.

WILL

We can all be together now.

Libby stops. Gazes into his eyes.

LIBBY
Not yet, baby. Not yet.

A BLAST OF WIND as Libby rushes forward pulling Will with her through a WALL OF SMOKE AND FLAME --

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

The door BLASTS off its hinges and Will is flung out. FIREMEN, in protective gear, rush forward. Drag his limp body down the steps as --

-- the ENTIRE HOUSE COLLAPSES like a great breath expelled.

A SUDDEN SILENCE.

Then Will convulses, lungs screaming for air.

EMTs slap on an oxygen mask. Will gazes up at --

-- PLUMES OF SMOKE rising from the wreckage into the night sky. Like spirits being released. WHITE ASH flutters down like snow. Glowing in the moonlight.

Will startles as a hand takes his. Ann, tears in her eyes, moves alongside his stretcher. He's burned and bloodied.

INT. AMBULANCE (TRAVELING) - NIGHT

SIREN SOUNDS STRANGELY MUTED. Greeley and an EMT monitor Will's vitals, expression grave. Ann wipes away her tears.

ANN
Don't you dare die. Look at me.
Look at me.

Will's eyes lock with hers, shimmer with hope, hanging on. Then a seizure convulses his body. The SIREN SCREAMS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 33 BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - ONE MONTH LATER

A beautiful spring day. The lawn in front of the fire-gutted house is a CARPET OF WHITE AND YELLOW CROCUSES. Ann kneels in the sunlight, sinks a gardener's trowel into the warm earth, transplanting flower and bulb into a pot. CAMERA LEAVES HER as if borne on the breeze, moving toward -

THE RUINS OF THE HOUSE

CAMERA FLOATS through the charred landscape, past the stark silhouette of a blackened wall and finds Will. Suddenly, the SOUND OF CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER and --

-- Trish and Dee-Dee throw themselves at him, clinging like little chimpanzees. Will's eyes fill with tears. Libby steps through the skeleton of a doorway.

LIBBY

You made it.

WILL

I made it.

They kiss. She gently strokes his cheek.

THE FRONT YARD

Ann rises holding a lush bouquet of white and yellow. Hears a faint voice. Calls out --

ANN

Peter?

THE RUINS OF THE HOUSE

Will turns at the sound of Ann's voice.

ANN (O.S.)

Peter...?

LIBBY

You should go.

Will nods. He kisses Trish. Then Dee-Dee. Hands both girls to their mother.

WILL

Take good care of them.

LIBBY

I will.

TRISH

Goodbye, Daddy.

DEE-DEE

Bye, Daddy.

Libby kisses Will. Caresses his cheek. A WIND BLOWS through the house. The ashes shift then settle. And the ghosts are gone.

EXT. BRAMBLE BRANCH CIRCLE - DAY

Ann looks up as Will comes down the front walk. He has a slight limp and uses a cane. Ann hands him a small tray of the flowering crocuses.

ANN

I hope you don't mind... They're for
your new place. Wherever that is.

WILL

It won't be too far.

She smiles. They embrace. Will puts the flowers in the
back seat of a second-hand car then gets behind the wheel.

CAMERA RISES as the car pulls away. Ann waves, then
crosses the street to her house.

CAMERA RISES FURTHER to watch Will's car follow the long
arc of Bramble Branch Circle.

FADE OUT.

THE END