

HAUNTED

by
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FADE IN...

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - DAY

CUE SONG. Vera Lynn's classic "We'll Meet Again."

As we FLOAT down a GLEAMING-NEW, Art Deco hallway. Beneath sleek lamps. Above the checkerboard tile. And towards--

APT 4-D.

("We'll meet again... don't know where, don't know when... but I know we'll meet again, some sunny day...")

We CLOSE IN ON the APARTMENT NUMBER-- then SQUEEZE and WARP through the PEEPHOLE LENS, into--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

First thing we notice-- BLOOD. Sputtering out from the slashed throat of a DEAD WOMAN, 30's. Eyes glassy. A CHYRON:

MARGARET GRADY
APARTMENT 4-D
1939

Now we track the trail of CRIMSON FOOTPRINTS that step away from the murder scene-- towards a SHUT DOOR.

("...keep smiling through, just like you always do...")

When we're inches from the door-- **BANG!** GUNSHOT! A JAGGED GAP is BLASTED through the wood. Conveniently providing us an entrance, which we press through, into--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - BATHROOM - DAY

We see a loose PISTOL-- and a spattered BUTCHER KNIFE. Then-- a SPRAWLED MAN, 30's. Dead. Clad in a red-drenched wife beater. AND FRESH WITHOUT HIS JAW.

CALEB GRADY
APARTMENT 4-D
1939

("...till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away...")

We continue our tour, DROPPING THROUGH the floor--

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BATHROOM - DAY

--to the apartment below. A SHOWER-HEAD SPRAYS WATER,
preceding--

A FULL BATHTUB. A severe-looking, thin-lipped WOMAN, 40's,
drowned beneath the bathwater's surface. Her hair undulating
in quietly eerie waves.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
APARTMENT 3-F
1952

*("...and will you please say hello to the folks that I know,
tell them that I won't be long...")*

We again DESCEND DOWN to the apartment beneath--

INT. APARTMENT 2-C - DAY

--to now find a HEAVY SET MAN, 40's, in bed. A thin sheet
covers his lower half. An EMT presses a DEFIBRILLATOR to his
chest-- the body bucks--

GUS KOWALSKI
APARTMENT 2-C
1969

*("...and they'll be happy to know, that as you saw me go, I
was singing this song...")*

We head out to the hall, passing another INCOMING PARAMEDIC--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL AND LOBBY - DAY

As we emerge, right beside the main stairwell-- SNAP!

A BODY DROPS into frame, jerking and kicking into stillness.
A MAN, 30, hung from the stairwell chandelier.

FRANK HALL
APARTMENT 3-A
1987

*(The Chorus joins in: "We'll meet again, don't know where,
don't know when...")*

We SKIM down the MAIN STEPS-- briefly pausing at the foot of
the stairs-- over a tipped RAZOR SCOOTER and the facedown,
neck-broke, prostrate body of an 8 YEAR OLD GIRL:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

**LILLY BENNET
APARTMENT 4-E
2001**

PULLING BACK from the now faded, no-longer-so-gleaming Art Deco LOBBY, out the double glass doors--

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - DAY

(BIG FINISH. "...but I know we'll meet again... some sunnnnny daaaay....")

As we reveal, in all her shabby glory-- THE ROSSMORE APARTMENTS. Palmer Park, Detroit, Michigan. An imposing white castle. Quarry stone. 4 stories, 15 units.

And extremely, extremely--

HAUNTED

BLACKOUT!

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

OVERHEAD. Looking down on the placid face of a skinny TEENAGE BOY. Eyes shut. Another victim? We CHYRON:

**MAX MAITLAND
APARTMENT 4-D
PRESENT DAY**

But then-- something different-- a NOISE. Scritch-scrith-scritch. Some kind of rodent-like SCRATCHING.

And Max WAKES. Alive. Sits up. He glances to--

The WALL. Beat of silence. Then again--

Scritch-scritch-scritch.

He rises. Pads to the wall. Touches it. Curious.

As he does-- over his shoulder-- his BEDROOM DOOR YAWNS OPEN. By itself. Max doesn't even notice at first--

Until he pivots. Now sees the door.

ANGLE. From the hall, looking in at Max. Who looks back out. He's sure he shut it. Didn't he?

Off this hushed foreboding...

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Morning. Hectic. Bustling.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION. A boxy, out-of-date Zenith. Matt Lauer chats with Al Roker.

A BABY GIRL, DANA, in a HIGHCHAIR. Happily THUMPS her tray.

JOANIE MAITLAND, late 30's, EXITS from the kitchen. Wears a DINER WAITRESS UNIFORM. Holds a jar of Gerbers.

Spring-loaded SWINGING DOOR behind her-- open-shut-open-shut-- through which we spy a normal galley kitchen.

JOANIE
(grinning at her child)
Okay, hold your horses, I'm coming.

The kitchen door arcs open again-- where we NOW spot EVERY CABINET, IMPOSSIBLY AJAR.

LARRY (O.S.)
Hey, you seen my keys?

LARRY MAITLAND, early 40's. Former star athlete. He enters, weaving past various MOVING BOXES.

JOANIE
Well, where'd you leave 'em?

LARRY
Honey, if I knew that...

Larry proceeds into the KITCHEN, searching, just as--

Max emerges from his bedroom, bee-lines for the front door--

MAX
Bye.

JOANIE
Freeze. Breakfast.

MAX
I'm not hungry.

JOANIE
I don't care.

Max gives a long-suffering sigh. But truth is, he appreciates her cranky affection. Turns for the kitchen--

(CONTINUED)

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LARRY (O.S.)
(from the kitchen)
Babe, you gotta close the cabinets.

JOANIE
I did--

Just as Max steps into the kitchen, Larry steps out. They awkwardly do-se-do around each other. We immediately sense-- unspoken tension here--

MAX (O.S.)
(from kitchen)
Oh, hey-- I think we've got rats--

JOANIE
We do?

But Larry's preoccupied. Rifling through drawers.

JOANIE
Larry.

LARRY
What?

JOANIE
Max says there's rats.

LARRY
No, there isn't. I'd know.

Max emerges from the kitchen, Pop Tart in hand.

MAX
There was scratching in my wall
last night. Like, poodle-sized.

LARRY
(distracted)
I'm telling you-- I'd know. Don't
sweat it.
(to Joanie)
Keys weren't in the wash, were
they?

JOANIE
No, Larry.

Max nods. No big angst here-- but this is a beat from their typical rhythm. Larry never listens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX

I gotta go.
(tickles his baby sister)
See ya, monkey.

The baby giggles. Coos: "Ma--"

JOANIE

Have a good day.

As Max heads for the door, he stops-- spots a LARGE ENVELOPE on an end table. Addressed to him. From "THE BROOKS INSTITUTE." Max is surprised--

MAX

When did this get here?

JOANIE

Yesterday. Why, what's "Brooks?"

MAX

Oh, uh. Nothing important. See you later.

And with that, Max is gone--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Just outside the door, Max rapidly CLAWS at the envelope. Whatever's inside, it's damn important.

He tugs out a COVER LETTER. Eyes hopscotch over the words.

Then... Max grins. Clutches his fist. A small, internal celebration. Yes.

He exits, revealing the NUMBER on the door behind him-- **APT. 4-D**. From the opening.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - MORNING

Max bounds down the steps. When he hears MUMBLING.

A MAN, 50's, climbs up the stairway. DIXON. He speaks, quietly animated, to NO ONE AT ALL. Then... he notices Max just staring at him. Beat.

DIXON

(bone-dry)

Kid. If you're gonna kiss me, go ahead and do it already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

What? No, I'm-- sorry.

Max beats a hasty retreat down the stairwell.

HOLD on Dixon. To thin air:

DIXON

Yeah, I know, I know.

Almost-- almost-- as if in reply-- the stairwell CHANDELIER slightly JINGLES--

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - MORNING

WIDE ON: the apartment building. Beside similar complexes. Bustling urban street.

Max waits on a bench, puts his earbuds in. PUBLIC BUS rumbles up, he climbs on--

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

Pep rally, big game against Northview tonight. The gym is crammed with basketball players, spirit dancers, cheering students. The whole school is here.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Except for Max. Earbuds in (clearly, his default position). He sits. Isolated. The only student in the empty room.

Reading a BROOKS INSTITUTE BOOKLET. Must have gotten it from the envelope. On the cover-- a BLAZING CALIFORNIA SUNSET.

When MS. HILL, the school librarian, approaches--

MS. HILL

Max.

Max can't hear over his mp3. She lightly pokes him--

MS. HILL

Max.

MAX

Oh, hey, Ms. Hill. Sorry.

MS. HILL

What, no pep rally?

(CONTINUED)

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MAX
(genial)
Oh, you know. Don't wanna O.D. on
pep. I could have a seizure.

Ms. Hill's always liked this lonely kid. She sighs.

MS. HILL
Well, then come on. Make yourself
useful.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Max helps Ms. Hill restock books, from cart to shelf.

MS. HILL
So. How's the new house?

MAX
Okay, I guess.
(then)
Actually, I'm lying. It sucks out
loud.

Ms. Hill smiles.

MAX
(ate the canary)
But, you know... least I won't have
to be there much longer.

MS. HILL
What do you mean? Did you-- you
got into Brooks!?

Max grins, but quickly splashes a little cold water:

MAX
It's not a done deal. I still need
like a boatload of grants to come
through.

MS. HILL
Aw, you'll get 'em.
(then)
It's terrific, Max. Really.

MAX
(beaming)
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MS. HILL
Your folks must be proud.

Max reacts. Lowers his eyes. His folks don't know.

MAX
Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

INT. THE ROSSMORE- HALLWAY/APARTMENT 3-F - DAY

The front door OPENS-- revealing Larry in the hall. He carries a TOOLBOX.

LARRY
Hey. I'm the new Super.

CAROLYN SERLING, 20's, before him. Gorgeous, which she feels gives her license to be unpleasant in most other ways.

CAROLYN
Can we hurry this up? I'm late for work.

LARRY
(shit eating grin)
You bet.

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Larry kneels beside the bathtub. Examines the spigot.

LARRY
(calls out)
You said the tub was leaking?

CAROLYN (O.S.)
(from other room)
Sometimes I come home, whole damn thing is full.

CAMERA REPOSITIONS TO REVEAL: OUT OF FOCUS BEHIND LARRY-- a FIGURE. Female. Pale. SOAKING WET.

LARRY
I dunno. Seems okay now.

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carolyn hurries about. Digs in her purse--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLYN
(to herself)
...the hell are my keys?
(to Larry)
Look, just take care of it, if you
don't mind? Awesome, thanks.

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Larry stifles his irritation. He needs this job. Again:

LARRY
You bet.

He pivots to toss his wrench back in the TOOLBOX--

And the PALE FIGURE is GONE. But Larry notices--

A pair of WET FOOTPRINTS on the tile.

Larry. Huh. Were those there before?

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - DUSK

CAMERA POV. A blurred image, which SHARPENS to REVEAL: a dramatic low angle of a small, rusty MERRY-GO-ROUND.

Max. Peering through his trusty camera-- a battered, second-hand CANON SLR. He SNAPS a photo.

He's ALL ALONE in the Rossmore's CENTRAL COURTYARD. The building rises up around a forlorn little playground.

Max lowers the camera to his side.

ANGLE. Max doesn't see-- but we do-- through the CAMERA'S DIGITAL SCREEN. Hazy... but definitely a GIRL, 19, white dress. On the swings. Watching him.

CLOSE ON MAX. As he hears a SQUEAK. Turns to--

The swing. Sways, by itself, in the breeze.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - DUSK

ANOTHER CAMERA POV: APARTMENT 4-E. Door's open. Inside... a MESS. Scattered papers, books. Like a tornado hit.

An ELDERLY WOMAN sits in a chair. Dazed and confused. Her GROWN SON takes in the disarray, sighs, gently scolds her--

(CONTINUED)

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GROWN SON

Ma. What are we gonna do with you?

ANGLE. Max, ever the photographer, surreptitiously SNAPS off a couple of pics. Before--

The son, never noticing, shuts the apartment door.

Max. Thoughtful. Then he pivots away--

Right into a FIGURE, standing before him!

Max jumps back, startled--

Dixon. The man who talks to himself. And no conception of personal space, either. Nose to Max's nose.

MAX

Um. Hello. Do you mind, maybe, taking a step back?

(Dixon complies; a meek:)
Thanks so much.

DIXON

Your Pop's the new Super here?

MAX

Yeah, we just moved in. I'm Max.

Dixon doesn't react to the greeting. Only responds with:

DIXON

Well, you'll see-- this is a funny old place.

Max attempts a tension breaker--

MAX

Like, funny, ha-ha?

Dixon stares. Three beats too long:

MAX

Guess not.

DIXON

Lights flicker. Pipes rattle.
Rooms get cold, all of a sudden--

MAX

Um... you should maybe talk to my Dad about this stuff...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DIXON
(levels a look)
It ain't the kinda stuff that gets
fixed.
(beat)
Son. You just mind yourself now.

MAX
What do you mean?

DIXON
Like I said. Funny place. Lotta
folks tend to clear out in a big
hurry, never say why. But once in
awhile. Someone stays. They stay
forever. You getting me?

MAX
(anxious)
Um. Not really. But, you know,
all sounds pretty ominous.

Dixon only glares at Max. Another long beat. Then Dixon
heads for the STAIRWELL-- glances upward--

DIXON
(mumbling)
...can't say I didn't warn him...

MAX
Sorry?

DIXON
I ain't talkin' to you no more.

Max, spooked, attempts a forced-casual wave--

MAX
Okay. Have a super night.

Off Max--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE. On the bookshelf. TROPHIES. High school photos of
Larry, state champion. Game-winning BASEBALL BAT on a stand.

Larry watches his beloved Detroit Tigers. Baby Dana, beside
him, in her Pack-n-Play Prison.

When Max blows in. Barrelling for his bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Hey.

Larry tries to engage Max the only way he knows--

LARRY

Hey. They're all tied up against
the Twins.

MAX

Oh. That's... good.

Max continues on, disinterested. Exits to his room.

Larry sighs. Another missed opportunity.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: the camera's small DIGITAL SCREEN. Flipping
through images.

Max SCANS through the day's work. (And he's talented--
compelling perspectives. Sees things that others don't.)

When he stops on one particular IMAGE:

THE OLD WOMAN. In the messy apartment. Max captured
something melancholy in her weathered expression. And he
captured something else, too--

Behind her-- a BLURRY, TRANSLUCENT FIGURE. Short, almost
like a CHILD.

Max leans in. Could be a trick of the lens. Or the light.
Could be. Has to be. Or else...?

Max looks up. Disturbed.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Larry moans over a bad call. Then glances at the playpen--

And Dana's not there!

Larry GASPS-- but then suddenly HEARS--

The baby. Bawling. On the floor. YARDS AWAY.

Larry picks her up. Bewildered and relieved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Dana-- you okay...?

How in the hell did that just happen?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Study hall. So, no studying. KIDS flirt, gossip, etc.

Max. Once again, isolated on the other side of the room. At a COMPUTER.

ON THE SCREEN. Max types "**DETROIT, ROSSMORE APARTMENTS**" in the Google Search Box. Hits return. A list of WEB RESULTS.

Max clicks on one--

Some type of Classic Crimes WEBSITE. We see a LURID HEADLINE: "**THE BUTCHER OF PALMER PARK!**"

Under which-- Weegee-like CRIME SCENE PHOTOS. The couple from the opening. Margaret Grady, throat slashed. Caleb Grady, sprawled in the bathroom, jaw missing.

Max reads the text. Fascinated.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - VARIOUS - NIGHT

KITCHEN. Joanie readies dinner-- one of those Costco rotisserie chickens.

WORK ROOM. A small side room-- basically a converted closet. Larry's erected a work bench, putters away on something.

MAIN ROOM. Max enters. Mom hears him, exits the kitchen--

JOANIE

Hey. Where have you been?

MAX

There was a murder here.

JOANIE

Excuse me?

MAX

Like, right here. Where I'm standing. This guy Caleb Grady-- no reason, takes a butcher knife to the missus. Then goes to the can, our can, blows half his face off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANIE
(calling)
Larry.
(to Max)
How do you know?

Max hands her a series of INTERNET PRINT-OUTS. We RECOGNIZE many of the FACES from the opening.

MAX
See, they have these magic boxes
called 'computers.'
(then)
Been other deaths, too, all over
the building. A drowning, a heart
attack, a hanging.

JOANIE
(reading)
Larry!

WORKROOM. Distracted as usual, Larry finally hears.

LARRY
What?

MAIN ROOM. Larry approaches.

JOANIE
Did you know about this?

Larry takes the print-outs. Reads.

LARRY
No...

JOANIE
How could they not tell you--

LARRY
It's a rental, they don't have to
disclose anything-- guys. The
place is almost a century old.

MAX
So?

LARRY
(voice of reason)
So, there's bound to be a few
accidents over the years. Every
building's got its skeletons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX
(hesitant)
What if... it's more than that...

LARRY
What do you mean?

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: the DIGITAL SCREEN on Max's camera. The Old Woman, with the VAGUE, BLURRY FIGURE behind.

Joanie and Larry examine it.

MAX
Well?

LARRY
You're spying on tenants.

MAX
You're so missing the point.
(points to blurry figure)
What's that?

LARRY
(pointed at Max)
I dunno. Maybe someone
photoshopped it.

MAX
I'm not making this up!

LARRY
Like that x-rated shot of your
principal?

MAX
Okay, that I made up. But this--
and it's not just this, there was
that weird guy in the hall.

JOANIE
What guy?

MAX
You know, the guy who... talks to
himself a lot...
(realizing)
Which doesn't exactly help my
argument, I'm aware--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Max--

MAX

I'm serious. Don't you think this place is a little-- a lot-- creepy?

Larry. Glances at the EMPTY PLAYPEN. Remembering Dana's escape. But he only transmits 'calm and steady.'

LARRY

No. I don't. I was lucky to get this job, Max. I need this job. You know that.

Max finds himself up against his Dad's stone wall again.

MAX

Whatever. You're the ones who have to live here.

JOANIE

What, and you don't?

Realizing he almost let his college secret loose--

MAX

I mean, you know. I'm not gonna be here forever. Right?

Max gives a whitewash of a smile.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dark. A SMALL TELEVISION. Late night infomercial. Justin Bieber uses ProActiv. BZZT! A HIT of STATIC. PAN TO:

Max. In his bed. Sleeping. PAN TO:

Bedside table-- the DIGITAL CLOCK goes WONKY. Flitting through its numbers. Finally PAN TO:

A FIGURE. Standing right beside the bed. Watching.

His back is to us, but we notice the figure is REED-THIN. Blood-drenched WIFE-BEATER.

We ARM around to reveal-- he's got no FUCKING JAW! It's CALEB GRADY.

CLOSE ON MAX. His eyes SNAP OPEN. He JOLTS UP!

(CONTINUED)

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WIDE ON ROOM. Empty. Silence.

Max. Deeply unsettled. Then he notices--

THE TELEVISION. Commercial over, midnight movie resumes:
BEETLEJUICE. Michael Keaton terrorizes Winona Ryder.

Even Max has to grin. Then laugh. The absurdity of it.

MAX
(smiling to himself)
Dude. You are losing it.

Max snags the remote.

CLOSE ON TV. As all this ghost craziness SNUFFS OUT.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Max. Head down. Earbuds in. He WEAVES, stealth, through
the BUSTLING CROWD of STUDENTS. Careful to be INVISIBLE.

ANGLE. Max spins his combo, opens his locker.

Inside, his CELL PHONE. **"NEW VOICEMAIL."**

Max presses a button. Holds it to his ear--

ABBY WALKER
(VOICEMAIL)
Max? This is Abby Walker, from the
financial aid office at Brooks.
I've got some good news. Call me.

CLOSE ON MAX. To himself. A smile.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Max ushers his parents to the couch. Dana must be asleep.

MAX
Just sit down. Relax.

He hands his father an icy can of Milwaukee's Best.

LARRY
Seriously?

MAX
What, I can't show you a little
appreciation?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beat.

LARRY
No. JOANIE Not really.

MAX
Okay, fine. Here.

Max hands his parents the BROOKS INSTITUTE BOOKLET.

LARRY
What is it?

MAX
Brooks. In California. Pretty
much the best photography school in
the country.

JOANIE
That envelope the other day.

MAX
(here goes)
Right. Which said-- that I got in.

Mostly, Joanie and Larry are stunned.

JOANIE
Max, that's... we didn't know you
applied.

MAX
(quickly)
Cause I knew you'd look at me...
well, like that. So I got my "t's"
crossed first. I won a Merit
Grant, a Pell Grant, I qualified
for Work Study...

Joanie and Larry trade looks--

JOANIE
...wow, honey.

MAX
I just need one more thing.

Max hands Larry a GOVERNMENT FORM. Larry glances over it,
quickly realizes--

LARRY
This is a loan application.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX
Federal loan. For school.

LARRY
For how much?

MAX
(the shoe drops)
Six grand a year.

LARRY
(pales)
Six grand?

MAX
But the interest rate's super low,
and we have, like, forever to pay
it back--

LARRY
Max. Even if we could get the
loan, which is a big 'if,' that is
just so not possible--

JOANIE
Honey. I wish you had told us
about this--

MAX
But-- I'll pay it back--

LARRY
(dismissive)
How? Taking pictures?

JOANIE
Larry.

MAX
(bristling)
Yeah, Dad. Taking pictures.

Beat. Larry trades another look with Joanie.

LARRY
Look. Your Mom and I. We were
talking. Maybe next year you start
at Wayne County--

MAX
(a death sentence)
Stay here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LARRY

Free room and board. That really
so bad?

MAX

(frustrated now)
They don't have a photography
program.

LARRY

Okay. So then maybe you study
something else. Something a little
more realistic.

MAX

(drowning)
Dad, please...

LARRY

(the verdict)
I'm sorry. But you're not a kid
anymore, you gotta start thinking
practical. And this Brooks... it's
just outta the question.

Max desperately studies the floor. Trying hard not to cry.
Then he looks up. Eyes wet. And aflame.

MAX

You know. Just cause your life is
over, doesn't mean mine is.

JOANIE

Max!

LARRY

What'd you just say to me?

MAX

I said you're an asshole.

LARRY

(through gritted teeth)
Go take a walk.

Max glares at Larry-- with VENOM. Raw, uncut hatred. Then
he breaks the moment, pivots, STORMS OUT-- SLAM!

Larry feels terrible-- he sighs--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Max sits on the stairwell steps. Trying, and mostly failing, to hold it together. Then he hears-- a MALE VOICE--

VOICE (O.S.)

Max...

MAX

Dad?

VOICE (O.S.)

Max.

It's coming from below. Frowning, Max investigates.

As he exits... the CHANDELIER rattles. Tink-tink.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BASEMENT - OUTSIDE BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Max heads down the steps, reaches the basement landing-- and right before him-- an OPEN METAL DOOR.

MAX

Hello?

Max continues forward. Stepping through the entrance, to--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Overhead pipes DRIP-- plink. Moldy, mildewed boxes. But mostly, a LARGE FURNACE DOMINATES the room.

Max takes a step in. Regards the sinister space. (CLOCKING a BOX of WOODEN MATCHES-- and an ANCIENT TRANSISTOR RADIO-- on a nearby end table.)

Okay. That's it.

MAX

So, whoever you are? Screw this and screw you.

He pivots to the metal door just as--

SLAM! SHUTS HARD, CLANKING. And blanketing the room in--

UTTER DARKNESS. And I mean BLACK. Can't see a damn thing-- just the dim furnace flames across the room. We HEAR--

Max POUNDING on the DOOR. BANG BANG BANG!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Hey! This isn't funny, you prick.
Let me out!

Pounding quiets. Another murky beat. Then--

Light. Max FLARES UP one of the wooden matches. He's scared. He rattles the knob. It's locked. No use.

MAX
Hey! Hello!

Still no answer. He yanks the string to an overhanging LIGHT BULB. Broken, of course.

Ouch! Match singes his finger. He drops it.

BLACKNESS. A beat.

Max IGNITES ANOTHER MATCH. He scans the room. Spots, in the dull gleam of the furnace--

Beside a COLUMN. A TABLE. With a PHONE. PLUGGED IN.

He steels himself. Heads in.

We HANG BACK, noticing--

Behind him. Low on the wall. A FAUCET silently turns on. Spreading WATER across the grimy floor.

TRACKING WITH MAX. As he weaves through the clutter. Stacked chairs. An old birdcage.

ANGLE ON PHONE. Beside the large column. Max approaches us. But, waiting behind the column, hidden--

CALEB GRADY. Just a FLASH of that serene, horrific face.

Max approaches. Slow. A lamb to the slaughter. And when he reaches the column--

The match SIZZLES OUT. BLACK.

MAX (O.S.)
(just his voice)
Dammit.

An excruciatingly long beat-- shit, shit-- then Max finally flares up another.

And now Grady's GONE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Max steps to the phone. Lifts it. No dial tone. Perfect.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT - A MOMENT LATER

ON THE DOOR. As Max steps up. Holding a MATCH in one hand, alternately PULLING and KNOCKING with the other.

MAX
Hello? Somebody! Help!

Match extinguishes.

This time, over the DARKNESS, we hear a sudden, loud NOISE--
A SHARP SCRAPE--

Max lights another match. What the hell was that? He pivots into the room.

Nothing there. Stillness. Long beat. Then...

SLAM! A TABLE KNOCKS OVER. By itself.

Max jumps--

Then... a FLOOR LAMP. Then a STORAGE RACK.

Moving closer and closer to Max.

As if something were coming for him.

Which it is.

Max allows himself just a frozen, incredulous half-beat, before he PANICS!

DROPPING the LIT MATCH, WHIRLING BACK to the DOOR-- HAMMERING AT IT for dear life!

MAX
HELP! LET ME OUT!

ANGLE. The transistor radio FLIPS ON. Blaring a CACOPHONY of MUSIC and STATIC, as the needle darts up and down the GLOWING DIAL.

ANGLE. Chairs, the birdcage, etc., HURLED OUT of the WAY, as this invisible force marches to Max--

ANGLE. The faucet, still spewing water across the floor--

ANGLE. The lit match on the ground. The puddle washes over it. The flame hisses out, taking us to--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOTAL DARKNESS. Just the sound of Max's terror--

MAX
HELP ME! DAD!

Then the CRASHING THUMPS, the RADIO-- it all STOPS. UTTER SILENCE. Max quiets enough to notice.

Max flares one last MATCH to life. Back against the steel door, he scans the boiler room.

Chair, shelves, lamps, etc., completely upright. Nothing is overturned-- nothing is even out of place.

All completely and totally normal.

A hushed, confounded beat. Did Max imagine it?

A long beat.

Anoth---

Two BARE ARMS LUNGE OUT from the STEEL DOOR-- MATERIALIZING THROUGH IT-- they CLUTCH Max, like granite--

He drops the match... it lands on a stack of books. Its flame illuminating--

Max's feet. Standing in the PUDDLE.

ANGLE. The transistor radio. GLOWS to life. Then SLIDES by itself... closer to the end table's edge. Perched right over the WATER-- ABOUT TO TIP--

CLOSE ON MAX. Screaming. Vainly fighting to free himself from these... these impossible hands.

They're AWFUL-- gray; mottled; deep criss-crossing KNIFE CUTS across the palms.

As the match sizzles to--

BLACK.

Then... a SHOCKING STROBE of SPARKS-- the fearsome BUZZ of ELECTRICITY-- and we--

BLACKOUT!

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON MAX'S EYES. As they drift open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sits up. Still in the boiler room. SHAFTS of PALE, DUSTY SUNLIGHT stream in through the windows high on the walls.

He feels his head. Ouch. As if one helluva hangover.

MAX
(puzzled)
...what the...?

He doesn't remember last night. It slips away from him like a dream upon waking.

He pulls himself to his feet. The steel door is WIDE OPEN.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BASEMENT - OUTSIDE BOILER ROOM - DAY

Max climbs the steps. When we TILT UP, LOOKING DIRECTLY OVERHEAD--

High above Max (which he doesn't see): a BODY is DANGLING. From a NOOSE.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Max slips in the ALREADY OPEN FRONT DOOR. Stops. Confused by the sight of--

ABOUT FIFTEEN PEOPLE. Milling about. In dark suits, whispering in small klatches. Some kind of ad hoc reception.

Max weaves through them-- spotting--

Larry. Sitting on the couch. Staring, deep and quiet and alone, into a glass of Jack.

Max steps behind him.

MAX
Hey. Since when are you throwing a party?

Larry doesn't answer. Melancholy.

MAX
Dad. What is it?
(just an expression)
Who died?

Still no answer. Max reacts, troubled. This is getting weird. Max approaches--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The TABLE. Joanie clears away used paper plates, cups.

MAX
What's going on? Mom?

But Joanie doesn't answer.

When Max's AUNT SARAH crosses, takes the plates from Joanie.

SARAH
Joanie. Stop. Sit down.

MAX
(surprised to see her)
Aunt Sarah?

JOANIE
(anything to keep busy)
We're out of ice.

SARAH
Sweetie. It's okay.

MAX
Not funny, guys. Hello!

Still no answer. They just move away.

Max takes a deep calming breath. Trying to convince himself--

MAX
Okay. This is just a dream.

Just then-- from the corner of his eye, he spots-- a FIGURE
WIPING PAST the doorway of his parents' room.

He turns for a better look. But whoever they are-- they're
gone. He heads to the bedroom.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Max enters the bedroom. And now can see--

A WOMAN'S BACK. Crouched over the CRIB (which they keep in
the master). She holds a 'coochie-coo' finger out to Max's
sleeping baby sister.

MAX
Excuse me?

This woman hears him-- SPINS-- it's MARGARET GRADY! Throat
still bloody and slashed, just like in the opening!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max's mouth goes slack. He backs away, horrified.

But she approaches. Trying to talk-- insistent eyes-- trying to tell Max something obviously very important. But only a RASPY GURGLE bubbles up from her cut throat.

She REACHES out for him--

Max, breathing fast and shallow, retreats. Until he's literally backed against the wall.

Except-- he doesn't back against it-- he FALLS RIGHT THROUGH IT! As if the wall's solid-- and Max isn't.

INT. APARTMENT 4-E - DAY

Max tumbles onto the floor of the neighboring apartment. Shocked. Disoriented. He rises, to see--

THE ELDERLY WOMAN. Sitting, blanket over her lap. Gazing, bleary, out the window.

And LILLY, a little girl, TRASHES the place. Scattering papers, KNOCKING BOOKS off the table. No wonder it's always such a mess.

Max. Absolutely gobsmacked.

When Lilly looks up. Sees Max. She sports an angry purple bruise on her neck-- and a bit of protruding BONE.

LILLY
Where's my Mommy?

Max gapes. Only pivots, reaches for the front door knob.

But his HAND GOES THROUGH THE DOOR. Tries again, same result. So then he takes a deep, insane breath--

And PLUNGES HIMSELF THROUGH THE UNOPENED DOOR. Into--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY/STAIRWELL - DAY

--the hallway. Max sprints for the main steps. Hops down, two at a time. Reaches a landing. Glances over and sees--

A MAN, HANGING from a NOOSE in the middle of the stairwell. FRANK. Dangling at Max's eye level. Deadpan--

FRANK
What the fuck you looking at?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

About to dump his marbles, Max backs away, continues racing down the stairs--

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - DAY

Max SLIPS THROUGH the SOLID GLASS DOORS-- takes a few steps away from the building-- and stops cold.

It can't be. It can't be.

We ROCKET BACK from MAX-- a HELICOPTER SHOT-- to REVEAL:

The buses, the city streets-- shit, the whole city-- GONE.

THE ROSSMORE now IMPOSSIBLY SITS ALONE on a JAGGED ISLAND of TOWERING WHITE CLIFFS-- the island isn't much bigger than the APARTMENT BUILDING ITSELF.

We SCUD BACKWARDS-- away from Max. Below-- a ROILING OCEAN. Above-- a SURREAL, SWIRLING MAELSTROM of YELLOW THUNDER CLOUDS.

CLOSE ON MAX. Begging himself. Willing himself.

MAX

Wake up. Come on... just wake up.

When... from behind Max... a VOICE:

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

The breathers can come and go. But not us.

A GIRL, 19, steps beside him. CHRISTINA. Simple, timeless white cotton dress. She's beautiful-- but with a no-nonsense vibe; a little sour to cut all that sweet.

CHRISTINA

I don't know why-- why we're trapped here, if it's like this for other souls, other places.

(beat)

But we are. No heaven, no hell. Just the Rossmore.

MAX

Who are you!?

CHRISTINA

Christina. Just trying to help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
What is this??

CHRISTINA
Well. You're dead, of course.
(adds, helpful)
My condolences.

Max. Incredulous. And horrified--

MAX
No. This is a dream. I'm
dreaming.

CHRISTINA
I'm sorry. But you'll never dream
again.

But Max isn't having it. He heads back to the building--

MAX
Just stay away from me.

Christina watches him go. With sympathy and concern.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The funeral reception is over. Aunt Sarah is gone.

Larry, tie loosened, sits. Contemplates the melting ice in
his whiskey glass.

Joanie deposits stray cups into a garbage bag. She's upset.

JOANIE
I just... don't understand what
you're saying--

LARRY
(quietly wrecked)
I'm sorry.

REVEAL-- Max. Between them. Desperate. Neck deep in
denial. This isn't happening--

MAX
Guys!

JOANIE
You want to stay? In the same
building your son...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She trails off. She can't even say "died."

MAX
I'm right here--

LARRY
Of course not. But we got nowhere
else to go.

JOANIE
Sarah's? Or a motel?

MAX
Listen to me--

LARRY
She doesn't have the room, and we
don't have the money.

When we REVEAL-- Christina. Off to the side. To Max--

CHRISTINA
They can't hear you.

MAX
Leave me alone--

JOANIE
(forlorn)
Larry... I just want to get outta
here...

LARRY
And we will. But I gotta get
another job first. It's that or
the street.

From the master bedroom... the baby CRIES--

MAX
(frantic)
Guys! Please!

Joanie heads for Dana. Walking RIGHT THROUGH Max--

CHRISTINA
You see?

In the B.G., Larry moves to his WORK ROOM. Shuts the door.

As Max whirls to Christina. Broken.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX

No-- no. I'm leaving... I'm going
to California...

CHRISTINA

This is just getting sad.

(then)

Buddy. You are deceased. You're
not going anywhere. Ever.

MAX

Just so you know-- for someone
trying to help-- you're shitty at
it!

CHRISTINA

Hey, I'm not doing this for my
health. You were murdered.

Finally-- Max stops.

MAX

What?

CHRISTINA

Caleb Grady deep-fried you in the
boiler room. Made it look like a
freak accident.

She holds out her arm. We see a SLASHED WRIST.

CHRISTINA

He made mine look like a suicide.

(then)

He killed all the others, too.
He's a dark soul. The spirit
spirits are afraid of.

(eyes up and around)

And your family's living in his
house.

This is all too much for Max to take--

MAX

Leave me alone--

CHRISTINA

Max... they're in trouble--

MAX

Please-- just go away--

Beat. Christina looks at Max. Sombre.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Then we CUT WIDE to REVEAL: she's vanished.

Off Max. His life unraveling. Into death.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - SUNSET

The BROOKS INSTITUTE BOOKLET. On the desk. Again, that BLAZING SUNSET. Max's sunset.

Max stands over it. Reaches for it--

But his hand GOES RIGHT THROUGH IT. Through the table.

CLOSE ON MAX. On the verge of tears. He'll never go to school. He'll never go anywhere else again.

He turns to the window, numb. Takes in the menacing storm clouds. The endless sea.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - SUNSET

A boy, ALEX, 10, in the playground. Tosses a football to a FRIEND. When he happens to glance up--

Alex's POV. In a fourth floor window. Through the glass... a translucent, sorrowful face. MAX. A GHOST.

But then Alex double-takes-- and the face is gone.

The boy reacts. Disquieted.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Night. Max sits on the floor. Arms around his knees. Bereft. Alone. He doesn't know what else to do--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - DAY

Day. Hours later. Max. Still huddled on the floor. Hasn't moved a MILLIMETER.

When... his bedroom door opens. It's Joanie. She looks in. Distraught. Red-rimmed eyes.

Max stands. Approaches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Mom. It's me.

And she reacts. Puzzled. As if she just noticed a DISTANT ECHO-- did she hear him?

MAX
Mom...?

But Joanie shakes it off. Overcome, she exits, shutting the door behind.

Off Max. Emotional--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Night again. Max. Back on the floor. Simply lost.

But this time... rattle-rattle-rattle.

One of the shut desk drawers. CLATTERING. By itself. As if it were alive.

Max looks at it, chilled. Reaches out his hand-- his fingers inches from the drawer--

When it stops. Still.

A long 'what-the-hell' beat-- when--

CRASH! EVERY DRAWER-- DESK, DRESSER-- ALL FLING OPEN AT ONCE! Spewing their CONTENTS into the air!

Max GASPS, flinches...

The INTERNET PRINT-OUTS flutter down around Max like autumn leaves. Max's COMPUTER RESEARCH.

Photos of Grady. His wife. The other Rossmore victims.

As Max examines them, we ARM AROUND-- SUDDENLY REVEALING:

CALEB GRADY! Standing right behind. For a beat, Max doesn't notice.

Then... Max senses something. Turns. Sees him!

MAX
Jesus!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And Grady APPROACHES. Aggressive. Spluttering from that jawless face.

He OUTSTRETCHES HIS HAND, as if to CLUTCH Max's neck.

Max stumbles back, terrified-- then he stops. REACTS--

WIDER. Because Grady is now GONE. Room's empty.

Max goes cold, as a thought occurs to him. His family.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Max races through the main room--

Past Larry, upright and asleep, on the couch, TV still on--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

--into his parents' room. His Mom, fitfully asleep in bed.

And his baby sister. Safe. Standing in the crib, hands on the railing. Staring DIRECTLY at Max.

There's no doubt she can see him. She smiles. Coos: "Ma--"

Max steps to her. Relieved. And astonished.

MAX

Hey Dana.

(then)

We gotta get you outta here.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Max. On a stairway landing. He chokes down a sizeable chunk of trepidation and steps forward.

MAX

Um. Excuse me?

As we reveal-- he stands below Frank. The hanged man.

MAX

Have... you seen that girl?

Frank doesn't respond. Just rotates, slow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Christina, I think? I, uh, I need
to talk to her--

Finally, Frank rains his glower down--

FRANK

So what, just cause I'm a captive
audience, you get to walk up and
spew your dumb shit at me? That
what you think?

MAX

No-- I just-- what?

FRANK

Hell. You won't even look me in
the eye.

It's true, Max hasn't been looking directly at him. It's too
bizarre. Dead man, in a noose, browbeating him.

FRANK

(gestures to his neck)
Cause of my disability, right? You
won't meet eyes with a cripple?
That the kinda person you are?

MAX

No, I'm sorry, I mean, I'm looking
at you--

Just then--

DIXON

Leave the kid alone, Frank, he's
been through enough already.

DIXON. Climbing the steps. Carrying a HEAVY STACK of
DISTINCTIVE, LEATHER-BOUND BOOKS. And regarding Max and
Frank as real, VISIBLE PEOPLE--

FRANK

Ah, climb a ladder and blow me,
Dixon.

MAX

(to Dixon, amazed)
Wait-- you can see us?

DIXON

No. I'm talkin' to thin air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX

But... how?

DIXON

(sardonic as hell)

Just a gift, I guess. Which I
cannot return.

Dixon passes Max, heads up the steps. Max chases him. Frank
observes, an ever-present peanut gallery, dangling in the
middle--

MAX

Wait! I need your help!

DIXON

Already tried that, remember?

MAX

I know, but-- you gotta talk to my
parents for me. Warn 'em, get 'em
out.

DIXON

I look like Whoopi Goldberg to you?

FRANK

A little.

DIXON

Shut up.

MAX

Please. That Grady guy's gonna
kill 'em--

DIXON

(warmer)

They ain't gonna listen. Never do.
Neighborhood schizo ain't exactly
swimming in credibility, you know?

MAX

But if you just tried--

DIXON

Look. I'm working on the problem.
My own way. Alright?

MAX

What's that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DIXON
(enigmatic)
Means I'm gonna sort Grady right
out.

FRANK
(snorting)
Please. You can't sort your
puckered ass from a hole in the
ground. You ain't gonna do jack.

Dixon and Frank trade quick loaded looks. There's subtext
here, but we don't know what it means. Not yet.

For now, Dixon simply reaches his apartment. Enters. Looks
back at Max.

DIXON
I'm sorry for your loss.

Slams the door behind him--

MAX
Wait!

Max tries to follow through the door-- but BANG!
Unexpectedly SMACKS into it, as if he were SOLID AGAIN.

Steps back. Holding his nose. That actually hurt.

FRANK
(laughing)
Cold iron, dummy. It's like ghost
repellent.

Max looks-- nailed above Frank's door-- A HORSESHOE (and this
was the original purpose for hanging horseshoes; look it up.)

FRANK
Anyway, kid, you don't need him.
You want your family out, do it
yourself.

MAX
How?

FRANK
How!? Christ, you're a bag 'a
hammers! Haunt 'em, that's how!

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joanie. Still asleep. A BOTTLE of Ambien on the nightstand.

And Max stands over her. Self-conscious. Waves his hand in front of her face. Even waves his hand THROUGH her face--

MAX

Mom? Hello? Bloody deranged ghost
in the building. House is haunted!
Get out! Get. Out!

(then)

Dana, stop it.

Sure enough, his baby sister stands in her crib. Watching Max. Giggling.

MAX

Mom. Come on--
(can't believe it's come
to this--)
Whoooooooothis is stupid.

CHRISTINA

(circling in Max's general
direction)
What is... all that?

Christina watches. Seriously bemused.

MAX

I don't know. But I know that I
suck at it.

He steps forward.

MAX

Listen. I'm sorry about before.

CHRISTINA

(shrugs it off)
You had a lot on your plate.

MAX

But... I could use some help...

Christina gives a small smile. Nods. Okay.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Larry. Still sleeping upright on the couch. Full glass and empty bottle of Jack beside him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When... multiple LAMPS. All FLICKER. Going black. Just as--

On a SHELF. A MUSIC BOX flips open. Playing an eerie, child-like, tinkling tune. Just as--

On the floor. Dana's ELECTRONIC TOYS. All spring to life. Gyrating, whirring, laughing, singing.

And Larry lightly snores. He doesn't even wake.

As we REVEAL-- Christina and Max stand in the midst of all this phenomena. She regards a slumbering Larry. Surprised.

CHRISTINA

I don't get it.

MAX

Don't take it personally. He barely notices the living.

CHRISTINA

But... the toys. The tinkly music box. These are classics.

MAX

Look. Maybe we need a bigger boat.

CHRISTINA

What's that mean?

MAX

You know-- someone who can really scare the piss out of him, get him out fast. No offense.

CHRISTINA

Hey. I can be scary.

MAX

I'm sure you can... but... I mean, look at you... you're... you know...

Max wants to call her 'pretty,' but he just doesn't have the skill set. Finally, she puts him out of his misery.

CHRISTINA

Max.

MAX

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTINA

You always this smooth around
girls?

MAX

(sheepish)

Girls like you.

She can't help but smile. He's cute.

Then-- back to business--

CHRISTINA

Look. The others. They won't help
you. They're not very nice. Some
of 'em are flat-out angry.

MAX

(properly frightened)

Awesome. But still, it's my
family. I gotta try...

CHRISTINA

Okay. Don't say I didn't warn you.

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max, tentative, enters a dark bedroom--

MAX

Um. Hi. Mrs. Deagle? Christina
sent me...

No answer. He PASSES a shadowed WALL VENT--

--in which a pair of piercing GREY EYES SUDDENLY APPEAR.
Watching him. He never notices.

MAX

Hello?

Then-- abruptly, Carolyn (the pretty-mean-girl tenant)
enters. Already unbuttoning her jeans, and now she promptly
peels them off. Revealing thong panties.

Instinct takes over, Max pivots away--

MAX

Jeez, sorry, I--
(remembering)
Oh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sure enough, she doesn't see him, can't hear him. Only walks right past him, unbuttons her blouse, revealing a BRA.

A humorously awkward, conflicted beat for Max. He doesn't know whether to spy or look away. Finally--

He peeks. Death should have some privileges.

She removes her BRA (her lovely bare back to Max for a beat)--

MAX

Holy shit.

--before slipping on a T-shirt.

She climbs into bed, CLICKS off the light. Settles in, shuts her eyes.

We STAY with HER a beat. As--

A COCKROACH. Creeps out from under the sheets. RIGHT past Carolyn's head. But it doesn't touch her, so she doesn't notice. Then--

Another. Then ANOTHER. Skittling, scurrying. Then--

DOZENS. Spilling out from the side of the comforter. From beneath the mattress. From inside a pillow. Fucking everywhere. Still, she's horrifically unaware-- until--

One finally climbs up. Grazing over her lips.

First, she doesn't open her eyes, only brushes it away. Like it's a fly. But then she senses something amiss.

She looks. Takes her a minute to even realize what's happening-- to even notice--

The COCKROACHES SCUTTling EVERYWHERE--

Horrified, Carolyn throws back her comforter to REVEAL--

THOUSANDS of COCKROACHES. Like the Horsehead scene from "Godfather," with a SHIFTING BLANKET of CLICKING INSECTS.

Carolyn SCREAMS bloody murder, dives off the bed, frantically swipes them from her body. Then looks back--

And they're gone!

Bed's empty. Nothing there.

What. The. FUCK? Did Carolyn imagine it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Trying her best to hold it together, she moves for the bathroom, past an AMAZED MAX-- this Mrs. Deagle knows how to haunt.

MAX
Holy shit.

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the sink, Carolyn splashes water on her face. Looks up in the mirror, seriously questioning her sanity. When--

SQUEAK. The bathtub SPIGOT turns on. By itself. Behind the CLOSED SHOWER CURTAIN.

Carolyn turns. What now? She approaches the bathtub. Slow.

ANGLE. Water GUSHES from the tap.

Jittery, Carolyn steps up to the tub. Reaches for the shower curtain. Steels her nerves-- then WHIPS the CURTAIN BACK!

Nothing's there. Just a tub. Overflowing with water.

The water spills over the edges, spreading under Carolyn's bare feet.

She kneels down. Turns the handle. Squeak squeak.

The water stops. Drip. Drip.

How in the hell did it fill so quickly?

ANGLE. We can see to the tub's bottom, and Carolyn's befuddled reflection in the water's surface. As she reaches in, to pull the stopper--

SUDDENLY, SHOCKINGLY--

ELEANOR DEAGLE LUNGES UP from the TUB, CHURNING water everywhere! Visible, though she wasn't just a BEAT BEFORE.

Mrs. Deagle is pale, wet, ghastly. She CLUTCHES the sides of Carolyn's face--

Carolyn HOWLS. Sprints for DEAR LIFE out of the bathroom. Right past Max, who watches her flee for the front door.

This black-belt level of haunting unsettles Max. But still--

MAX
Mrs. Deagle, that was, um--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pivots back to the tub. But it's empty. She's gone.

MAX

Hello?

No answer. Beat. When CAMERA REVEALS--

She STANDS RIGHT BEHIND MAX. Dripping. Furious.

ELEANOR DEAGLE

...you're not Henry...

MAX

(whipping around)

No, I... who? I just wanna talk...

ELEANOR DEAGLE

YOU'RE NOT HENRY! GET OUT!

She SLASHES at Max with LONG, YELLOWED fingernails. And surprisingly, she CONNECTS-- it HURTS-- opens up a cut on Max's forehead.

MAX

Ow!

He scrambles back from her-- STUMBLES through the wall into--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

--the hallway. Max is alone. He tries to calm, regain his bearings. A beat.

He looks to his right. Then looks back forward--

And MRS. DEAGLE'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM-- BOO!

ELEANOR DEAGLE

I said GET OUT!

And with that, she shoves him-- through the STAIRWELL RAILING. Max PLUMMETS DOWN--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BASEMENT - OUTSIDE BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

--SMACKING his BACK on the basement landing!

If Max had breath, it'd be knocked out of him. He shakes the cobwebs. Finally FOCUSES, only to see--

Frank. Hanging above him. LAUGHING his ASS OFF.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
Kid. You. Are. Priceless!

Off Max, stewing--

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - NEXT MORNING - TO ESTABLISH

We SOAR over the black ocean waves, towards the Rossmore,
isolated on its craggy island. Daybreak.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - MORNING

We push in on Dixon's apartment door. On the cold iron
horseshoe hanging overhead.

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - DAY

The lonely WHINE of an old TEA KETTLE.

DIXON. Pours himself a mug, returns to his table.

Which is PILED HIGH with his STACK of DISTINCTIVE, LEATHER-
BOUND BOOKS. One is open--

We see IMAGES-- pentagrams, dancing skeletons. And a
headline: **BANISHING SPIRITS.**

Also spread EVERYWHERE-- black cat bones. John the Conqueror
Root. The organic, tactile beauty of AUTHENTIC HOODOO
FOLKLORE. Can almost smell it.

What the hell is he up to?

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Joanie still sleeps. Depressed.

"General Hospital" babbles, inane, from a TV.

ANGLE ON CRIB. The baby naps, too. When...

A FIGURE steps before the crib. Gore-splattered wife-beater.
Grotesque face. Caleb Grady.

He gently brushes Dana's chubby cheeks with a grimy finger.

Then... he reaches down... and LIFTS the BABY. CRADLES HER.
Rocks her. So. Friggin. CREEPY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dana wakes. Sees Grady. SHRIEKS!

ANGLE ON JOANIE. She JOLTS up. Looks--

Dana is BACK IN HER CRIB. SOBBING. Otherwise, the room is empty...

Joanie races to Dana. Lifts her. The girl's inconsolable.

JOANIE

Shhh. Baby, what happened...?

And Joanie looks up and around the room. She can't put her finger on it, but something just feels... off. She even ventures a tentative--

JOANIE

...hello...?

No response.

Spooked, Joanie carries the baby out of the room.

Right PAST-- GRADY. Watching them go. With bottomless eyes.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - WORK ROOM - MORNING

Larry, on the phone--

LARRY

...Ms. Serling, calm down. I get it, you're moving out, I just want to know why.

(a CLICK)

Hello?

Larry sighs. Hangs up. Returns to his work bench. Passing Max. Who's been watching, frustrated.

MAX

So, that's it? Just another day at the office?

Larry sands something here, glues something there. (We don't call attention, but he's crafting mahogany picture frames).

Max claps his hands by Larry's ears, LOUD, AGITATED--

MAX

Dad! There's a killer in the building-- your family's in danger!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)
You gotta get out now! Listen to
me-- listen!

But Larry doesn't hear. Max smiles, rueful. Beat.

MAX
Then again-- why should you? Why
should anything be different?
(this is painful)
I mean... do you... even notice
that I'm gone? Do you care?

No answer, of course. With quiet resentment--

MAX
And you wondered why I wanted to
leave.

SCRITCH SCRITCH SCRITCH. The moment is interrupted by... a
SHUFFLING and SCRATCHING-- coming from INSIDE THE WALL.

Max hears it. So does Larry. Larry stands to investigate.
Maybe Max was right all along-- maybe it's rats?

Larry presses his ear against the wall. Beat. Quiet.

Max observes-- then glances up and sees--

BEHIND THE HEATING VENT. Those GREY EYES.

MAX
(startled)
Hey!

The eyes retreat back, into the dark.

Max. Thinking. What to do?

MAX
Max, don't be an idiot.

But he decides to be one anyway. He FOLLOWS-- through the
plaster--

INT. INSIDE THE WALLS - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Pipes. Slats. There's a shadowy WORLD in between the walls--

Max squeezes through the tight space-- though wide enough for
a man. He tries to mount a confident voice. But he's not
very convincing--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Grady?

He hears a CREAK. Someone is up ahead--

MAX

Stay away from my family or...

But Max doesn't have an "or." He's just fucking scared.

But still, he continues. It's dusky. Anything could jump out. Few beats of suspense... then...

Max rounds a corner to another, WIDER SECTION.

And slows. Taking in something very, very strange--

KEYS. Hundreds and hundreds of KEYS. Key rings LOOPED through overhead pipes. Others HANGING on NAILS-- row after row after row. Dangling and clinking.

It's even kind of beautiful. A loopy combination of wind-chimes, folk art, and straight up hoarding.

Max. Intrigued. When--

Behind him... a heavy-set MAN'S FACE. Peering out from behind a corner. Watching-- then--

A JINGLE of keys. Max spins. The face retreats--

MAX

Who's there?

Finally, from around the corner-- a VOICE:

GUS (O.S.)

Go away.

MAX

Who are you?

(no answer)

Come on out.

GUS (O.S.)

No.

MAX

What are you, three? Come on.

The man pokes his head from around the corner. But still won't emerge. GUS KOWALSKI. A meek, gentle giant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GUS
I can't. I'm naked.

This throws Max for a loop--

MAX
Sorry?

A sigh. The primary pain of Gus's life--

GUS
As a jaybird. Tell you the one
thing worse than dying in dirty
underwear.

Max smiles at that.

MAX
Oh. It's not that big a deal.

GUS
It is to me. Mother would be very
ashamed.

MAX
(ookay)
So... you live in here?

GUS
I don't go out much. Oh, except to
collect keys. I used to be the
Super. I like keys.

MAX
So I gather.

GUS
But mostly, I just... you know...
watch everybody.

(then)
I saw you with Mrs. Deagle--

MAX
Oh, yeah? She's a treat.

GUS
She's just upset about Henry,
that's all.

MAX
She mentioned him. Who is he,
anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GUS
Look to your right.

Max clocks a COLORFUL TOY KEY RING, hanging from a nail--

GUS
Those are Henry's.

MAX
(realizing)
She had a little boy.

GUS
After she croaked, state took him
away, she never saw him again.

Max steps to the toy keys. Inspects them. Thoughtful.

GUS
Thing is. Except for Grady, most
of the stiff around here...
they're not bad... they're just
lonely...

CLOSE ON MAX. Thoughtful. If there's one thing he
understands... it's loneliness. As an idea forms...

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - OUTSIDE 3-F - DAY

Larry, exasperated. Standing with a (now-dressed) Carolyn,
outside her apartment. Some of her FRIENDS lug boxes out.

LARRY
If you'd show me the problem...

CAROLYN
I'm not setting foot in there!

INT. APARTMENT 3-F - DAY

Max. Moving past a COUPLE GUYS carrying BOXES OUT.

MAX
Mrs. Deagle?

A couple beats of Max searching.

Quiet. Empty.

Then suddenly we see-- standing at Max's side--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mrs. Deagle. Just as soaked. Just as SEETHING.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
You're not Henry!

Max is scared. But he squarely faces her.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
Get out!

MAX
You're right, I'm not. Henry's
gone.
(then)
But she isn't.

And with that, Max turns to-- LILLY. The little dead girl.

Mrs. Deagle freezes.

MAX
And frankly, she could use some
adult supervision.
(then)
What do you say?

Mrs. Deagle's face is unreadable. She approaches Lilly,
slow. Kneels before her. Lilly looks at her--

LILLY
Where's my Mommy?

Long beat.

Then Deagle smiles, sad. Brushes hair from Lilly's forehead.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
I don't know, sweetheart.

Max watches, relieved. Thank Christ that worked.

Deagle looks up at Max--

ELEANOR DEAGLE
Why are you doing this?

Off Max--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Christina moves through Max's apartment-- calling out--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA

Max?

MAX (O.S.)

(from the kitchen)

In here!

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - KITCHEN - DAY

Christina materializes through the door-- and reacts in
BAFFLED WONDERMENT.

Because Max stands with Mrs. Deagle and Lilly.

MAX

Hey check it out. Ms. Deagle
taught me.

And with that-- Max LIFTS a COFFEE CUP.

We CLOCK a REFLECTION in a WALL MIRROR-- the CUP seemingly
FLOATS by itself.

MAX

See? Totally Swayzed that fucker.

ELEANOR DEAGLE

"Swayzed?"

MAX

He's-- nevermind.

CHRISTINA

(looking at Deagle)

Max. How in the world...?

MAX

She's a pretty cool lady, actually.

She's gonna help us out.

(to Deagle)

Here, show her.

And with that-- Mrs. Deagle glances at--

A PLATE on the COUNTER-- A DESICCATED, PICKED-OVER COSTCO
CHICKEN. BLOOD and ENTRAILS SEEP out of its OPEN CAVITY.
Spreading all over the counter-- plopping onto the floor--

MAX

(inspecting close)

Mom is gonna freak. How do you do
it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELEANOR DEAGLE

(shrugs)

They're just thoughts. Can do some powerful thinking, when you don't have a body to hold you back.

LILLY

Can I try?

ELEANOR DEAGLE

Just picture something in your head, dear. Concentrate.

But Lilly's already FOCUSING on the sink. The disposal--

And a beat later-- a BACKWASH of MAGGOTS RISES UP from the DISPOSAL. Literally FILLING the ENTIRE BASIN--

ELEANOR DEAGLE

(proud as punch)

Maggots. Very creative.

Max grins at Christina.

MAX

You know-- creepy, pasty ghost kid. It's a classic.

Christina grins right back. Amazed at Max.

Then... Max looks to the door. Sighs. Feels a certain reluctance over what he has to do--

MAX

Okay. Showtime. Let me go get 'em.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Dana's asleep in her crib.

Joanie, sad and alone, sits in bed, watching more bad TV.

Max stands beside her--

MAX

Sorry. But this is for your own good.

And with that-- he KNOCKS a FULL SODA CAN off the nightstand. It SPILLS, POURING into the shag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANIE

Shit!

But then... she looks up. Into thin air.

MAX

Yeah, Mom. It's me.

Then Joanie stands-- moving for the kitchen. She opens the bedroom door, just as--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

--Larry approaches her. Something is different. He seems clipped. Choked up.

LARRY

Hey. I want to show you something--

JOANIE

(still moving)

Just a sec, I need a towel--

LARRY

Joanie. It's important.

Joanie stops. Curious.

Max, even more so.

Larry leads Joanie across the room. Humbly presents his handiwork:

MOUNTED on the LIVING ROOM WALL. SIX BEAUTIFUL MAHOGANY PICTURE FRAMES. Crafted with patience and love.

DISPLAYING MAX'S PHOTOS. Some, he took in Act I. Some we haven't seen before.

Joanie is amazed. Max, even more so.

MAX

...these are... mine...

JOANIE

Is this what you've been working on all this time?

Larry nods. Manages, just barely, to hold back his tears--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Joanie. What happened to Max. It wasn't an accident.

JOANIE

What?

MAX

What?

LARRY

What if... he did it. To himself. On purpose.

JOANIE

But... why would he...?

LARRY

(infinite pain)

Because of me. Last thing I said to him. It was my fault. This happened... because of me...

Joanie's eyes mist. She moves to her husband--

JOANIE

Honey, no--

LARRY

I'm sorry. I am so sorry.

Joanie and Larry hold each other.

And Max watches. Emotional. He can't believe his eyes--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - KITCHEN - DAY

Max ENTERS. The place is still a HELLISH MESS. The blood, the maggots, even MORE GOO on the walls. The other ghosts wait, grinning, expectant-- this oughta be good.

CHRISTINA

Well?

But Max is quiet--

MAX

Get rid of it.

ELEANOR DEAGLE

What? Why?

MAX

Just-- now. Please!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Christina locks eyes with Max. He's serious. And she's concerned.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Alex (the boy who spotted Max's spirit) follows his MOTHER up to the apartment building. His Mom is a NURSE-- hospital scrubs.

Alex slows, as he notices--

The rusty MERRY-GO-ROUND, creaking. It begins to rotate.

Alex watches, transfixed, until--

ALEX'S MOTHER

Alex! Come on!

Alex hurries to catch up, as we return to the PLAYGROUND, now REVEALING--

The playground isn't empty at all. Young Lilly rides the merry-go-round, delighted, as Mrs. Deagle watches. Deagle waves her hand in the air, causing the ride to SPIN.

Max and Christina stand nearby. Gazing up at the ebony sky. Which, from a ghost's POV, is a SURREAL, SPINNING, VAN GOGH STARRY NIGHT, orbiting a MASSIVE MOON.

MAX

I gotta admit. It is beautiful.

CHRISTINA

So. You wanna tell me what happened back there?

MAX

With what?

Christina gives him a look like "what else?"

MAX

I don't know. I just... need a second to think, that's all...

CHRISTINA

'Second to think,' like, second thoughts?

MAX

No. Of course not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But he doesn't exactly sound convincing.

CHRISTINA
They're in danger, Max.

MAX
I know... it's just... isn't there
anything else we can do?

CHRISTINA
About what?

MAX
Grady.

CHRISTINA
(looks around, scared)
Shhh!

MAX
That guy Dixon said he was working
on something-- said he was gonna
sort Grady right out.

CHRISTINA
Dixon's nuts. And you're nuts for
even thinking it.

MAX
(dry)
What's the worst case? He kills me
again?

Christina pokes the CUT on Max's forehead. The one that Mrs.
Deagle gave him. It's still there. Still smarts. Ouch!

CHRISTINA
See that? You got it forever. We
don't tend to heal too well.

Again, she displays her SLASHED WRIST--

CHRISTINA
So what if he tears your jaw off?
Makes you look like him?

MAX
Okay, okay.

Christina takes a beat. Something she has to say--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTINA

And besides. This isn't just about Grady.

MAX

What do you mean?

CHRISTINA

Max. What do you think'll happen if they stay? You'll just... watch your sister grow up, your parents grow old?

MAX

I dunno. Maybe.

CHRISTINA

Well, you won't. All you'll see, is them forget about you. Cause sooner or later, they will. They'll leave you. They always do. Until no one's left who knew you were ever born.

(pained)

And you're still there. Alone. Just... watching.

Christina, hurt and vulnerable, is obviously talking about herself. Max feels for her--

MAX

That must be hard.

She doesn't respond-- only looks at a BALDING PATCH OF GRASS, beside the SWINGSET. Stares at it. Troubled.

MAX

What is it? Christina?

But she shakes it off. Back to business.

CHRISTINA

Just-- it's better to pull the bandage off now. Trust me.

Max takes this in-- studies the grass, thoughtful.

When he sees-- Gus. Spying. From a SEWER GRATE. Only his face-- he still obscures his body.

MAX

Oh. Hey, Gus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GUS
(busted)
Hey, Max. How's it going?

Christina stares at Max.

MAX
What? He's a nice guy.

Christina is astonished. He's bringing these spirits together in a way she never thought possible.

CHRISTINA
You're... unbelievable...

MAX
Thanks. I think.

ANGLE. A high apartment window. Obsidian BLACK. When...

CALEB GRADY steps from the shadows. Watching. His ghastly, jawless face. His blank, clinical eyes...

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT - LATER

Frank. Excuse the awful pun, but just hanging around. He twirls, slow. Beat. Then:

FRANK
(idly sings to himself)
*"...my baby takes the morning
train, she works from nine to five
and then..."*

When he stops. He hears something. A dusty GRINDING. He looks up to see--

A CRACK. In the drywall. GROWING. SPREADING.

Towards Dixon's IRON HORSESHOE.

FRANK
Dixon?

The CRACK dislodges the nail-- the HORSESHOE CLANKS to the ground--

And Frank reacts, surprisingly urgent--

FRANK
DIXON!!

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANGLE. A needle on old vinyl; a rusty Muddy Waters tune. Muddy's growling drowns out Frank's warning.

Dixon still pores over his ARCANES BOOKS. SCRIBBLES NOTES on a DENSELY PACKED NOTEPAD. So focused, he doesn't notice--

His yellowed, out-of-date wallpaper. Printed with VINES.

Which now IMPOSSIBLY SLITHER across the wall.

Past some DRY-CLEANING, slung over a ratty easy chair. The plastic bag shivers in the breeze. (And do we catch a quick SHIMMERING REFLECTION in the plastic?)

Past the stove. Flames whoosh to life, beneath the old TEA KETTLE.

Finally past-- a COUNTERTOP. A grimy PAIR of KITCHEN SCISSORS. They rattle, ever so slightly.

CLOSE ON DIXON. He hears it. Immediately knows. Something is very, very wrong.

Feigning casual-- he takes a pull from a beer. Glancing over at the countertop.

POV. Scissors are GONE. So is the Tea Kettle. There's just an empty burner now, hissing with blue fire.

Dixon stands. Making no sudden movements, he gathers his books and papers.

The RECORD PLAYER. The music SLOWS-- WARPING and DISTORTING. Transforming the tune into a low dirge.

Dixon peers over the room. Anxious.

POV. Scanning, from point to point. Nothing there. The warped music provides an unnerving soundtrack.

Dixon bundles the books and notes under his arm. Moves for the exit. Wary.

As he reaches the door, he hears-- growing over the music--

The lonely train STEAM WHISTLE of the tea kettle--

Dixon makes the mistake of pivoting into--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The kettle, FLOATING in the air. Steam now SCREAMING--WHINING, PIERCING. The heavy kettle SMASHES HIM across the face, a thundering roundhouse--

Dropping Dixon like a sack of bricks. His papers FLUTTER.

On the ground, Dixon spits copious amounts of blood. He barely, just barely, manages to climb to his feet.

When... from behind... the DRY CLEANING BAG WRAPS OVER HIS HEAD. Bunching around his NECK.

Frantic, Dixon TEARS at it. But no good, it's tight against his face and neck, choking him. Sucking into his mouth every time he roughly inhales.

He stumbles back, knocking over an end table, a LAMP SMASHES, then he slams into a large WALL MIRROR--

And suddenly, two GREY, MOTTLED ARMS LUNGE out from the mirror, as if it were a pool of water! Ugly CRISS-CROSSING RED KNIFE CUTS across the palms.

The rotting hands CLUTCH Dixon's face, ROUGHLY PRY his MOUTH open, as if inspecting some poor beast of burden.

CLOSE ON DIXON'S WIDE EYES. As he hears something.

Snip snip. Snip snip.

He looks in horror over to--

THE SCISSORS. Skimming through the air. To him.

They grow closer. Snip snip. Closer.

Finally INSERTING THEMSELVES INTO HIS MOUTH.

We PAN off the scissors, onto Dixon's WIDE, RAVING EYES. SCREAMING a silent, plastic scream--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Larry and Joanie. Together. At the table. They both shuffle through stacks of old photos.

Larry stops on one picture in particular--

INSERT - PHOTO. Larry and a 9-year-old Max, grinning in front of a behemoth ROLLERCOASTER.

Max. Stands right behind. He chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

I begged you for front seat,
remember? Then I puked, and it
blew back on all the people behind
us.

Larry CHUCKLES, too, obviously remembering the same thing.
Almost as if he can hear Max.

MAX

(can he hear?)

Dad?

But Larry doesn't answer.

Joanie responds to Larry's laugh.

JOANIE

What?

Larry holds up the picture. She smiles. Wistful. Then--

JOANIE

I miss him.

LARRY

Me, too.

Max watches Larry. Realizing-- he never really knew his
father. And now it's too late to do anything about it.

Then... A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Larry opens it-- it's an EMT.

EMT

You're the Super?

LARRY

What happened?

EMT

In 2-A. There's been an accident.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY/NEAR STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Larry, rattled, stands with the EMT.

LARRY

Christ. How's a guy... cut out his
own tongue?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)
(EMT shakes his head)
Is he gonna make it?

EMT
Lost a lotta blood-- but hope so.
(then)
You know if he had any family,
anyone we can call?

LARRY
I'm sorry, I don't.

MAX. Moves past them. To Dixon's apartment.

He spots the FALLEN HORSESHOE.

Then Max looks over to Frank.

MAX
What happened?

But Frank doesn't look at Max. Won't answer. So Max continues, through the wall--

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

And Max sees it-- all the BLOOD. Arterial SPRAYS across the wall mirror, large sticky puddles of it across the floor.

MAX
Jesus.

Then Max turns-- right into Margaret Grady! He gasps.

Her throat still slashed. She tries to talk, but it's only a wet gurgle.

MAX
Your husband did this?

She looks at Max with her wide, frightened eyes. Desperate. Imploring. Reaches out to him-- an OUTSTRETCHED HAND.

Then... she VANISHES.

Max exhales. Uneasy. Steps forward. Spotting--

The NOTES scattered on the floor. The HOODOO relics on the table. The OCCULT BOOKS, the odd illustrations.

Max pages through the books (getting pretty damn good at manipulating objects, by the way).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When Max TURNS another page-- to find a LOOSE PHOTOGRAPH, being used as a bookmark. The photo's overturned, with some scrawled writing on the back. Max reads--

INSERT - the back of the photo. "DIXON and FRANK. 1984."

He FLIPS the photo over. His eyes widen.

MAX

No way.

INSERT - THE PHOTO. It's FRANK. Beside a much younger Dixon at age 24. And we realize--

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

MAX

You two are brothers?

Max stands on the steps. Eye level with Frank, dangling in the stairwell. Frank's emotions are at a high simmer--

FRANK

Ain't exactly a state secret.

MAX

Why'd Grady do it?

FRANK

Cause he's a goddam psycho.

MAX

You know what I mean. Dixon found it, didn't he? A way to stop the bastard.

(no answer)

And what were those weird books in there?

(still no answer)

Frank.

Finally-- Frank glares at Max. Lashes out.

FRANK

They're how-to's, okay, dummy? How to banish ghosts. Exorcise spirits. How to kick Grady's ass clean outta here.

MAX

Christ.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Years, Dixon's been searching...
and when he finally hit pay dirt--
(pantomiming a slice
across his mouth)
--Grady shut him right up.

Frank's voice quivers. His hurt and pain, loud and clear.

FRANK

I told him. Don't be an asshole.
Just move away. Don't matter what
Grady did to me, you don't owe me
nothing. I told him.

Off Max, spooked, upset. His jaw clenching in resolve--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Joanie. Pacing before Larry.

LARRY

...what are you saying?

JOANIE

(halting)
...I don't know... I mean, I've...
noticed things... felt things...

LARRY

Like what?

JOANIE

Like, sometimes I'm alone... but
I'm not. Like someone's there.
And now that poor man downstairs.
(then)
I'm saying... what if Max was
right? What if there's something
wrong with the building?

Max is there. Watching them.

LARRY

You mean ghosts?

JOANIE

It sounds nuts, I know... but what
if... that's what happened to Max?

Larry tries to process this-- the sheer impossibility of it--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max. Torn. He truly doesn't want them to go.

MAX
Sorry, Dad. But this time, you
gotta listen--

And with that, Max KNOCKS a MUG off the coffee table.

Larry cocks his head-- did he really just see that?

We play the next FEW BEATS from Larry and Joanie's POV:

As... a pile of MAGAZINES FLUTTER off a table by themselves--

JOANIE
Larry?

LARRY
(dumbstruck)
I don't...

Then it escalates... into a FULL-ON POLTERGEIST ATTACK--

CHAIRS FLING through the air!

The TV FLIPS OVER, SPARKING!

Max's CAMERA HURLS by itself across the room, SMACKING into
the wall-- STROBING ON IMPACT--

LAMPS SHATTER to the floor!

Joanie SCREAMS! They shield themselves from shrapnel!

LARRY
Get the baby!

Joanie races to collect Dana--

We RETURN to Max's PERSPECTIVE. Absolutely TRASHING his
parents' apartment. It's cathartic.

MAX
YOU HEAR ME?! I SAID GET THE HELL
OUT!

He's WHIPPING his Dad's old baseball TROPHIES into the wall!

Joanie returns with Dana, and with Larry, they SCRAMBLE out
the door, without taking anything else--

Max finally ceases. Exhausted. Spent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They're gone.

Quiet.

He glances up-- sees-- he inadvertently tossed a trophy into one of his Dad's mahogany picture frames. Decimating it.

He regards the shattered glass frame, the splintered wood. Looks back towards the door.

Immediately remorseful.

WIDE ON MAX. Alone. Possibly forever.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - ROOFTOP - DAWN

Max and Christina. Sitting, precarious, on the LIP of the building, legs dangling over the side.

Taking in the DAWN. But no sunrise. Just a few pinpricks of grubby light, poking through the twisting storm clouds.

They watch in silence. Max is solemn, thoughtful.

CHRISTINA

You okay?

MAX

(beat)

Just... wish I coulda done things different.

CHRISTINA

You had to get 'em out.

MAX

That's not what I mean. I mean, when I was alive.

CHRISTINA

Oh yeah? Like what?

MAX

Well, I wouldn't have gone down in that goddam boiler room, for one.

Christina smiles at that--

MAX

And I would've... I dunno... at least tried to make friends.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)
I would've made things right with
my Dad.

Max takes a long beat. Pained.

MAX
I wouldn't have been so alone.
(beat)
Fact is. I was a ghost long before
I died.

CHRISTINA
(heart breaks for him)
Can I make a confession?

MAX
Sure.

CHRISTINA
When you were breathing. I'd watch
you sometimes.

MAX
(mock offended)
In the shower?

CHRISTINA
(dry)
Don't flatter yourself.
(then)
I saw how lonely you were. I... I
related, to tell you the truth.
(beat)
But now. I don't know.

She leans into him.

CHRISTINA
Maybe now you don't have to be.

And they kiss. Max is surprised-- but not displeased.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - DAY

Max heads down the hallway. To his apartment. 4-D.
Considers it, downcast. Then PASSES THROUGH--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY

--to find, to his surprise (and Max can't deny, to his
relief):

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joanie and Larry are back. Movement. Energy. Joanie is on her cell. Larry is setting up a new, CHEAP-O RADIO SHACK VIDEO CAMERA.

JOANIE

...no, Sarah, I can't really explain. Just give Dana a kiss from us, I'll come see her tomorrow...

MAX

Um. What the hell?

Larry crosses. Now looking up at the ceiling:

LARRY

Max. Can you hear me?

Larry just addressed Max.

MAX

Holy shit.

LARRY

Listen. I don't know what's going on-- not even a little. But we know that you're here.

MAX

I... how...?

JOANIE

Is... someone-- something else here too? Did something hurt you, Max?

That's when Max sees... on the table. His DIGITAL CAMERA. There's an IMAGE ON IT. He cocks his head. Approaches.

LARRY

Well. Whatever it is. We're not leaving you.

Max kneels down, looks at the camera screen.

MAX

Holy shit.

INSERT - THE SCREEN. When Max tossed the camera earlier, it went off. Capturing a TRANSLUCENT, STROBED, yet DISTINCT IMAGE. Of MAX'S FACE.

Max. Staggered. What the hell is he gonna do now?

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - DAY

Christina. Sitting, quiet and sad, on the SWINGS. Gazing at that bald patch of grass. Contemplating painful memories.

When... Max steps before her.

CHRISTINA

Max. What is it?

Off a NEW DETERMINATION in Max's expression--

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - DUSK

ANGLE ON WALL MIRROR. A REFLECTION of Dixon's CLUTTERED KITCHEN TABLE. As NOTEPAD PAGES are invisibly FLIPPED, BOOKS are magically RIFLED THROUGH, etc.

We PULL BACK to REVEAL: Max and Christina. At the table. Max is poring over the research. Christina watches, alarmed.

CHRISTINA

This is crazy. What, exactly, do you think you're gonna do?

MAX

I'm gonna banish the sonofabitch, beam him right off the starship.

CHRISTINA

Off the what?

MAX

It's-- nevermind.

(reading)

Listen to this. "The souls of unavenged murder--" that's us-- "are trapped, unable to move on..."

CHRISTINA

Max--

MAX

So maybe if we get some... you know... avenge-ment on Grady... we won't be stuck here anymore...

CHRISTINA

Or maybe this is all gibberish.

MAX

Maybe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA

I'm serious. You're just gonna piss him off. And after he rips you to shreds-- and he will-- he'll start in on your family.

But Max looks up. Equally serious.

MAX

Look. I'm not saying I'm not scared. I don't even like confrontation. But what else can I do?

CHRISTINA

You can make them leave.

MAX

You don't know my Dad.

Off Christina... extremely worried...

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - DUSK - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: JUMP CUTS. Max COMPILES a HOODOO BAG. A cinched, baseball-sized CLOTH SACK. He pours in a VIAL of HERBS here, ground root there, etc.

Using Dixon's NOTEPAD as reference--

MAX

This isn't so hard. Like a recipe. Dash of this. Sprinkle of that.

CHRISTINA

Yeah, then what?

MAX

(awkward)

I just... you know. Torch this thing in Grady's face. That should do it.

CHRISTINA

Oh, is that all?

MAX

(reading the notepad)

Wait.

CHRISTINA

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

We're missing something. "Personal
effect of the deceased."

Christina's relieved.

CHRISTINA

Well, that's it, then. You're
cooked.

Max thinks. Then... a lightbulb.

INT. INSIDE THE WALLS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: an OLD RUSTY KEY.

Gus reaches out from around the corner, hands it to Max.

MAX

Grady's?

(Gus nods)

Thanks, Gus.

(then)

Don't suppose you'll come down
there with me?

No response. Max peers around the bend.

Gus has ALREADY VANISHED. Max calls after--

MAX

No one cares if you're naked!

INT. THE ROSSMORE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

FRANK

Get down? How in the hell am I
supposed to do that?

Max and Christina. On the steps. Before Frank. The
following exchange spins faster and faster.

MAX

You ever try?

FRANK

Course I tried.

MAX

Well, try again. I need your help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
It's impossible, dummy--

MAX
Just pull it off your neck--

FRANK
I can't--

MAX
Or rip it down from the ceiling--

FRANK
I said I can't--

MAX
Can't or won't?

FRANK
(finally)
Won't, okay?! Christ!

Beat. Frank SIGHS, deep and frustrated--

FRANK
I'm staying right here. But hey,
you wanna hunt Grady, that's your
funeral.
(adding)
Again.

MAX
What about Dixon?

FRANK
What about him?

MAX
Come on...

FRANK
He stuck his neck out, it got
chopped. So why should I do the
same?

MAX
Cause he's your brother.

FRANK
Oh, so you're Mr. Family Values,
all of a sudden.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX

You telling me-- you don't care?

FRANK

Life, death, win, lose-- we all end
up in the same shitty boat.

MAX

I don't believe you--

FRANK

Well, it's true. Give it a couple
decades, kid-- not tasting or
smelling or sleeping, everything
you touch is winter glass. See how
much you care then.

Beat. Max shakes his head.

MAX

Know the worst part? You don't
even believe you. You're just
scared.

(quietly)

Well. Makes two of us.

Max walks away. Christina follows.

CLOSE ON FRANK-- we catch a quick glimpse. Max may have
pierced his enamel. Just a bit.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - DOWN THE STEPS - NIGHT

Max moves forward. From behind--

CHRISTINA

Max.

He pivots. She's genuinely terrified--

CHRISTINA

Please. Don't do this.

Max gives her a look. Exhales. Not so tough. More like
"I'm about to soil my trousers."

But he still turns away from her.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BASEMENT - OUTSIDE BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Max steps down to the basement landing. Apprehensive.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Max MOVES through the OPEN STEEL DOOR.

And once again-- overhead pipes drip-- plink. Moldy, mildewed boxes. And that LARGE, DOMINATING FURNACE.

Max pauses. Takes in the scene of his murder. Seriously second guessing himself right about now.

Then he moves forward, cautious. Carrying that HOODOO BAG.

ANGLE. He passes a large dusty mirror. We SEE the BAG, seemingly floating by itself.

MAX

Grady...?

It's foreboding as hell. Detritus everywhere. Nothing but shadowy corners in which to hide--

POV. From one of the shadowy corners, somebody WATCHES Max.

MAX

I just want to talk.

ANGLE. Max pads deeper into the room. Behind him, out of focus, a BLURRY PALE FIGURE WIPE FRAME!

He spins to it. Nothing. No one there.

MAX

Grady. Come out.

Mute. Blackness. Stillness.

Max reaches the FURNACE. OPENS the DOOR, REVEALING the licking flames. As CAMERA DOLLIES around him, we see--

GRADY. Right behind Max!

Max senses him. Knows he's there. Slowly pivots. Face to grisly, JAWLESS face.

Grady regards Max. A string of drool from his savaged maw.

Max is beyond frightened. But--

MAX

You. Are a serious asshole.

And with that, Max TOSSES the HOODOO BAG into the FIRE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON: the BAG IGNITES into jet-blue flame--

And so does Grady! He steps back, shocked. SIZZLES and ROASTS. Flesh searing.

Horrible HOWLING from his mouthless face--

Max averts his eyes. It's awful. But it's working.

CLOSE ON: the burning BAG.

As... FEMALE HANDS suddenly LUNGE right into the FIRE, immune to the heat-- YANKING OUT the bag--

WIDER: it's MARGARET GRADY!

She quickly tosses the bag into a nearby puddle. It sputters. Doused. Done.

Saving Grady. He extinguishes.

Margaret steps beside him. He catches his breath. Looks gratefully upon his beloved wife-- though his skin is charred and scarred, blotchy with burns.

Then... they pivot to Max. Who backs away in utter terror.

MAX
I, uh... huh.

And Grady TACKLES Max! KNOCKS him to the floor. ENRAGED.

His OUTSTRETCHED HAND, GRASPING for Max's FACE!

Max turns his head to the side. Awaiting his inevitable dismemberment. But then something unexpected happens.

Which is to say, nothing at all.

Max glances up at Grady.

Grady looks down at Max. With wide, insistent eyes.

And Max realizes-- Grady is TRYING TO TELL HIM SOMETHING--

--TRYING TO SHOW HIM SOMETHING-- the PALM of his HAND--

MAX
Wait. You're not gonna peel my
face off?

Grady only stands. Moves back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Max climbs to his feet.

Margaret steps beside her husband. Gazes at him, tender. He returns it--

Max takes this in, confounded. They're warm, loving...

One last time, Grady shows Max-- his PALM. Look. Look.

MAX

I'm sorry... I don't...

Just then... GRADY IGNITES into FLAME! SCREECHING!

He drops to his knees. His skin crackles like paper, into spark and smoke and pain.

ANGLE. The BURNING BAG, BACK in the FURNACE.

Christina stands before it. She tossed it in!

Max pivots. Sees her.

Christina gives him a reassuring smile.

Grady. By now, the awful screeching has faded. Nothing remains but a vaguely humanoid pile of ash. Which crumbles and sifts away.

Margaret watches her husband's demise. In horror. Then she looks up at Christina.

And something interesting in Margaret's expression: PURE TERROR. A tear skips down her cheek.

Max clocks it. Before Margaret VANISHES.

Christina steps to Max. Hugs him.

CHRISTINA

(dry joke)

Sorry I'm late.

(then)

You were right, Max. About everything.

But Max's wheels are spinning. His whole world is spinning.

MAX

...he coulda demolished me...

CHRISTINA

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Christina steps back. Innocent.

MAX

Grady. He should've. So why
didn't he?

CHRISTINA

(shrugs, who knows)
He was a whack job.

MAX

Right. Cause he murdered his wife.
Except... they were like Brangelina
over there.

CHRISTINA

Who?

Christina steps close to Max. Takes his hands in hers.
Warm. Comforting. Reasonable.

CHRISTINA

Max. You're just shaken up. It's
okay... it's over.

But Max isn't so sure... maybe. But then...

He CLUTCHES Christina's WRISTS-- turns her PALMS OVER--

And he sees them, really notices them, for the first time.

As do we.

They're CRISS-CROSSED with DEEP KNIFE CUTS.

Off Max's stunned reaction, we FLASH TO:

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Max. Against that steel door. Those mottled gray arms
CLUTCHING him. He's disoriented, thunderstruck, but still
resists. Still notices--

POV. The rotting HAND in his face. CRISS-CROSSED with DEEP
KNIFE CUTS.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT - **PRESENT**

Max looks up at Christina's face. She flinches, just a bit.
But still maintains her facade--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He roughly stumbles from her--

CHRISTINA
Max...?

MAX
(icy)
...they tried to tell me...

CHRISTINA
What?

MAX
In their own Asperger's way, they
tried to tell me...
(then)
It wasn't Grady... he didn't kill
anyone. Did he?

QUICK FLASHES

A previous scene. Max's bedroom. Caleb Grady stands before Max. Outstretching his HAND. Now we realize-- Grady was only trying to show Max his UNCUT PALM.

Another previous scene. Margaret Grady. Approaching Max. Holding up her hand--

Finally-- Caleb Grady's eyes. STRUGGLING to communicate--

RESUME SCENE

CHRISTINA
Max... what are you talking
about...?

Max levels a frightened look at her.

MAX
Who are you, Christina? Really?

CHRISTINA
It's me.

MAX
(running the numbers)
Everybody else's death, I saw in
the paper. But not yours.

QUICK FLASH

Max's bedroom. We realize now-- the INTERNET PRINT-OUTS at Max's feet. All the Rossmore victims. Except Christina.

Grady. Willing Max to understand--

RESUME SCENE

She moves to him. Wants to hold him--

CHRISTINA

Max...

MAX

Just stay back--

CHRISTINA

You think that...?

MAX

Why'd you do it?

She's GENUINELY HURT, though in a frantic, desperate way. She wants his touch. His affection.

CHRISTINA

I didn't--

MAX

You did.

CHRISTINA

No...

MAX

I saw your hands, Christina. I know--

CHRISTINA

Please-- don't. Max--

MAX

(raw, hurt)

Why'd you do it?!

And then she blurts it out, heated--

CHRISTINA

Because I wanted to be with you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She said it. Both she and Max are stunned. Christina knows there's no turning back now.

So she confesses-- but without malice. With emotion, despair. She loves Max. Wants him to understand.

CHRISTINA
Listen-- just listen. Max. I
didn't lie to you--

MAX
Um. You might've left out a
little...

CHRISTINA
Try to understand. I've been
here... a long time. Since before
there was a building. Before there
was a city.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

We see TIGHT, IMPRESSIONISTIC, SHALLOW FOCUS SHOTS:

Christina, escorted into the woods by a YOUNG MAN. (These are settlers from the 1700's. The frontier. Dress is simple, grimy, timeless).

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
A boy took me out to the woods. I
thought I knew him. I was wrong.

RAPID-FIRE SHOTS: the man kisses Christina's neck-- she resists, wildly--

Her DRESS STRAP, roughly torn--

A KNIFE arcs through frame.

Christina's HAND, held up in DEFENSE, SLICED.

Her eyes swim as the BLADE PLUNGES into her heart.

We're in a HOLE. A SHOVEL rains DIRT on us.

Now the shovel tamps down the black soil, over a patch of balding grass.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
My Father searched. I'd see him,
scream to him. But then he just...
stopped coming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the DISTANCE. Between the trees. A sad OLD MAN searches.

CLOSE ON CHRISTINA. SCREAMING. SILENT, NO AUDIO. Her Father moves on-- doesn't see. Doesn't hear.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT - **PRESENT**

MAX
(quietly)
Doesn't give you the right to kill anyone.

CHRISTINA
I was trapped here. Alone. For centuries. You have no idea what it was like--

Then, eyes up at the building--

CHRISTINA
Then... they built all this.

Off Christina profound sadness--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY - 1939 - **FLASHBACK**

Repeat of the movie's opening. But this time, we see what really happened.

A Victrola needle lowers on a worn disc. Again, a scratchy rendition of Vera Lynn's "We'll Meet Again."

Margaret Grady smiles. Breathes in the tune. But never seeing--

BEHIND HER. A BUTCHER KNIFE on the table. It RATTLES.

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY - 1939 - **FLASHBACK**

Caleb Grady, in his undershirt, erecting a BABY'S CRIB. When he hears a SCREAM. Runs out--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - DAY - 1939 - **FLASHBACK**

--only to find his prostrate WIFE, THROAT SLIT, blood puddling.

CALEB GRADY
Maggie!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He dives to her. Cradles her head. She's weak, but not dead, not yet. She looks at him with wide, imploring eyes.

Tries to tell him something. To warn him. But only a raspy gurgle bubbles up from her mutilated throat.

Then she death rattles. Stills.

In shock, Grady looks at her. Sees the KNIFE, strewn nearby on the carpet. Sees an OPEN CABINET-- box of BULLETS inside-- clearly where he stored his gun.

A METALLIC CLICK. He hears it. From the bathroom. The assailant?

He stands. White-hot fury. He moves to the bathroom, picks up the BUTCHER KNIFE along the way.

Leaving a trail of BLOODY FOOTPRINTS behind. Entering--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - BATHROOM - 1939 - **FLASHBACK**

--but the bathroom's empty. No one there. Grady scans the room, completely bewildered. Then pivots to see--

IN THE MIRROR. His own PISTOL. Floating! POINTED AT THE SIDE OF HIS FACE!

PULL BACK to REVEAL: CHRISTINA. In the room. Gripping the weapon. She FIRES! The white MUZZLE FLASH TAKING US TO:

INT. THE ROSSMORE - BOILER ROOM - NIGHT - **PRESENT**

POV. Through a VENT. WATCHING Christina and Max.

It's GUS. His mouth open in dumb shock.

CHRISTINA

They were a lovely couple. So I...

I brought them over.

(understatement)

It... didn't go very well. They were upset.

ANGLE. Christina steps forward. Max steps back.

MAX

You think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA

So the next time... when I drowned
Mrs. Deagle--

MAX

You told her Grady did it.

CHRISTINA

She bought it. So did all the
others. So did you. Worked like a
charm.

MAX

(adds it up)

Which is why you carved up Dixon.

CHRISTINA

Well, yeah, I couldn't let that
schizo just banish Grady-- Grady
was useful.

(then)

'Course... then all this happened.
Because of you.

Max's stomach drops at her casual accusation--

But she speaks to him with WARM AFFECTION--

CHRISTINA

It's okay. I'm not mad. How could
I be?

(beat)

Everyone I killed, all these years.
I just wanted a family. And you--
you gave me that. I don't know how
you did it, but you did, you
brought us all together.

Max. Sickly horrified.

CHRISTINA

I love you, Max. Everything's
going to be alright.

And with that, she VANISHES--

Off Max--

INT. APARTMENT 4-D - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Joanie. On the couch. Holding a mug of coffee, rubbing
tired eyes. And watching--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry. Wielding Max's STILL CAMERA. Panning it around the apartment. Hoping-- praying-- for an image of his son. We get the sense he's been at this for hours.

LARRY
Max. Please.

Then... a confessional as much as a plea--

LARRY
Look. I... just wanna talk to you
again. Just one more time.
Please...
(emotional swallow)
...if you're here. Let me know.

SUDDENLY-- as if to answer...

The room's lamps. FLICKER. Plunging the room into DARKNESS.

Larry. Joanie. Looking. Beat. Then... on the floor--

ALL of Dana's TOYS FLIP on at once! WHIRRING. BEEPING.
BLARING sing-song nonsense...

Joanie jumps.

They watch the spinning electronics. Then lock eyes.
Amazed. Could it be...? Then:

On the BOOKSHELF. THE MUSIC BOX. OPENS. Playing its eerie,
tinkling tune.

(And by now we realize-- this is Christina. After all... she
loves the classics.)

Slowly, Larry heads to the shelf. To investigate.

Points the camera towards it. Nothing on the screen.

But Larry does notice-- his high-school, game-winning
BASEBALL BAT isn't in its STAND--

He frowns. Weird. But then--

JOANIE
LARRY!

Larry spins-- just in time to see-- his FLOATING BASEBALL
BAT. SWINGS directly at his skull!

He blocks it, SHATTERING his FOREARM! He SHOUTS! CRASHING
BACK into the bookshelf--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Joanie SCREAMS--

The bat again SWEEPS at Larry-- but this time he catches it--
STRUGGLING against a powerful and invisible force-- then--

Larry jolts, as he yanks it free-- it's now lifeless.

He and Joanie exchange terrified looks.

Quiet.

Dim.

Clock TICKS.

If there's something here, it could come from ANYWHERE.

They move slow for the front door. Eyes everywhere at once--

They reach the door. But it won't BUDGE. Locked tight.

LARRY
(whispers)
Fire escape.

So Joanie and Larry head back into the room.

The SQUEAK of the floorboards under their feet.

They pass the RADIO SHACK VIDEO CAMERA, on its tripod.

They don't see-- but we do--

ON THE SCREEN: Christina. Calmly watching.

Larry and Joanie reach the WORKROOM DOOR-- that's where the
fire escape window is--

Larry's hand on the knob. Twists.

Swings open the door--

And ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

Inside-- a FLOATING NAILGUN. It SHOOTS!

Thinking fast, Larry SLAMS the DOOR SHUT, as-- THWAK! THWAK!
NAIL POINTS JUT through the wood--

Larry grabs Joanie's hand-- pulls her away--

Vases EXPLODE. Glass SHATTERS. Razor sharp SHARDS blown at
them from all directions!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As the work room door FLINGS OPEN-- the NAIL GUN FIRES--

Nails embed in the wall, mere inches behind them, as they sprint across the room--

THEY DIVE, flipping down the DINING ROOM TABLE as cover!

BEHIND THE TABLE. Joanie and Larry huddle, panicked. As a FEW MORE NAIL POINTS THWAK through.

They stop. A quiet beat. Then--

A CIRCULAR BUZZ SAW WHIRRRS through the wood, so close it blows Joanie's hair back. She SCREAMS!

Suddenly--

MAX

Stop!

CHRISTINA. Standing there. But she doesn't stop.

As Max approaches her-- in the background, Joanie and Larry are UNDER SIEGE. The circular saw, the nail gun, more tools.

MAX

Christina-- please.

CHRISTINA

(almost dreamy)

I just want you to be happy, Max.

MAX

Then let them go.

(sincere)

I'm sorry for what happened to you.
But you gotta stop this.

CHRISTINA

(also sincere)

But you were right. They're your
family. And you love them. I see
that now.

(off Max's horror)

So you should be with them.
Forever and ever. Then you'll be
happy.

And with that, Christina glances over to the dining table.
It immediately flings UP and AWAY, across the room.

Revealing Joanie and Larry. Exposed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Max CLUTCHES Christina, spins her around--

MAX

Don't!

But Christina SHOVES HIM BACK-- and Max TUMBLES across the floor. She's clearly a lot stronger than she lets on.

CHRISTINA

This is for your own good.

Joanie and Larry. Done for.

The CIRCULAR SAW, hovering before them. Moving in. Closer.

Max. Dazed. Shaking cobwebs. Horrified.

Christina. Grim. Takes no pleasure in this... but it has to be done. When suddenly-- we REVEAL:

Margaret Grady-- right behind Christina! Margaret grabs her ARM--

And there's GUS-- out in the open, in all his NAKED GLORY-- he grabs her other arm!

And FRANK IS THERE, TOO! Down from the rope! He throws an elbow around her neck.

All trying to restrain her. She struggles and strains, bucks like a mustang, but her focus is broken.

Joanie and Larry. The circular saw was LITERALLY SLICING Larry's shirt sleeve-- when it CLUNKS to the ground.

Finally, with a shivering WAIL, Christina VANISHES, right in the middle of the three-way grip.

But right before she does-- we catch a GLIMPSE:

HER TRUE FORM. Foul. Pale. Corpse-like. Centuries of wounds, mental and physical, that will never heal.

And then she's gone.

Joanie and Larry don't hesitate-- they sprint for the door-- and now they can open it. They exit, fast.

Max climbs to his feet, gives the ghosts grateful smiles.

MAX

Thanks, guys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GUS

(shy)

Sure.

FRANK

Yeah, yeah, we're terrific, shut
up, now what?

A beat. Max contemplates their next move--

MAX

Dixon's exorcism. We mix it up
again. For Christina, this time.
(dammit)
Except... we need something she
owned...

GUS

But she's ancient...

FRANK

So, doesn't really have a lot of
shit laying around.

Max's wheels spin. Then... a lightbulb.

QUICK FLASHES

Christina, gazing at that bald patch of grass next to the
swings. Cloudy expression.

Later. Max approaches Christina, sitting on the swings.
Again, she stares at that same bald patch--

RESUME SCENE

MAX

Bones would work.

FRANK

What?

MAX

I'll bet you she's buried in the
playground.

(to Gus and Margaret)

Go check. Near the swings.

(to Frank)

You come with me.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - LOBBY - NIGHT

Larry and Joanie SHAKE-PULL-SHOVE at the glass front door.
But it won't open.

ANGLE. Behind Joanie's shoulder-- an ART DECO LOBBY
FOUNTAIN. Presided over by a black marble STATUE. Like a
large Rolls Royce ornament. Streamlined. Faceless.
Disturbing. Then--

It TURNS ITS HEAD. As if to LOOK AT THEM. They never see--

Larry SHATTERS a nearby FIRE EMERGENCY BOX with his elbow.
Removes the AXE.

With his GOOD HAND, he takes a POWERFUL SWING at the glass
door--

Only the GLASS doesn't break. The AXE does-- the HANDLE
SPLINTERS! Fuck, that hurt!

JOANIE
The hell...?

LARRY
Come on.

They head back into the bowels of the building--

INT. DIXON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Frustrated, Max throws open Dixon's cabinets, his pantry.
Rifling through them. But nothing--

MAX
It's all gone. Shit!

Frank inspects the NOTEPAD on the table. Now CHARRED and
illegible.

FRANK
Guess she's onto us.
(then)
Now what?

Max exhales. Focuses.

MAX
I remember the list. It's not that
hard. We just gotta go shopping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
Um. Where?

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Beside the slide. Gus. Arm PLUNGED into the dirt-- through
the dirt-- up to his elbow. He feels around.

And, while prim angles preserve our rating, let's not forget--
he's BUCK NAKED.

Margaret. Flinches at Gus's plumber ass.

GUS
(I got something)
I think... yeah--

Margaret. Watching. Only now--

Christina stands behind her! In her true form. Moldering.
Nasty.

GUS
(glances up, SEES)
Hey!

Margaret spins, to find herself face to face with Christina.

Who BACKHANDS Margaret, sends her rolling across the grass.

Gus jumps to his feet-- but it's too late. Christina stands
right before him.

She SHOVES her hand deep into his CHEST. He GASPS!!

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alex, the boy from the building. In bed. He wakes. Hears a
COMMOTION.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alex appears in the doorway. Peering at:

The bathroom. Undergoing a POLTERGEIST ATTACK. Open
medicine cabinet. Bottles SCATTERED and TOSSED, pell-mell.

His jaw slacks. Then we change our ANGLE:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And now see Frank, rifling through the medicine cabinet.
Digging for supplies--

FRANK
St. John's wort, come on...
(finds it)
Nice!

INT. THE ROSSMORE - TOP OF STAIRWELL - NIGHT

RATTLE RATTLE. Rooftop door. A SIGN: EXIT TO ROOF. Also
SEALED TIGHT.

Larry and Joanie stand before it.

LARRY
Dammit!

They exchange looks. Now what?

INT. THE ROSSMORE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

POUND POUND POUND POUND.

Larry and Joanie. Moving down the hall. Each BANGING ON as
many APARTMENT DOORS as they can--

JOANIE
HELP!

LARRY
Wake up!

A few TENANTS begin to OPEN DOORS. Alex's MOTHER is closest
to Larry-- alarmed--

ALEX'S MOTHER
What's going on?

LARRY
Your fire escape-- please--

ALEX'S MOTHER
There a fire?!

LARRY
Um. Kinda. Look, we gotta get out
of here. All of us--

When-- the overhead LAMPS. All EXPLODE into a SWARM of ANGRY
spark, glass, and FLAME. One after another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alex's Mother SCREAMS. Then... her APARTMENT DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Hard and violent. Right in her face.

The other tenants, too. SLAM SLAM SLAM. One tenant's FINGERS get BROKEN in the shut door--

Apparently, no one is leaving.

Larry and Joanie shield themselves from the fire and glass. Madly scramble for the lobby. As they do--

Chunks of BRICK BLAST OUT from the wall-- WATER PIPES BURSTING and SPRAYING-- the elegant Art Deco decor is ABSOLUTELY DESTROYED.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

We TRACK, low, across the grass. In the deep background, out of focus, barely decipherable, we clock BODY PARTS. An arm. A torso. Then, we PASS, UP CLOSE and PERSONAL--

HALF of GUS'S FACE. As if his skull was SPLIT in two.

It lay, limp and unmoving, on the grass.

And then it BLINKS. ALIVE. So surreal.

Christina must've torn them limb from limb. Literally.

Mercifully, we continue on, finally LANDING ON:

A bald patch of grass. Beside the swing. Beat.

Then... the DIRT starts pushing up. From below. Like a burrowing animal. Finally revealing--

A JAWBONE. Held by a little girl's hand.

It's LILLY. She sets the jawbone down. Hoists herself out of the ground.

Mrs. Deagle picks up the jawbone. Smiles at Lilly.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
Good girl.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - LOBBY - NIGHT

From ACROSS the STREET, we see-- Joanie and Larry. In the lit lobby. Wet. Desperate. Scared. Pounding, impotent, on the glass. SCREAMING silently from behind the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When... the lobby LIGHTS GO OUT. Darkness.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - LOBBY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Larry and Joanie, frightened, pivot into the room.

Peering into the shadows.

Seeing nothing.

Long beat. Something is coming. But when? And from where?

Finally, we REVEAL--

Christina. Putrefied, decayed visage. She steps to them.
In front of them.

But they can't see her.

She glides closer. Closer.

When... Max is behind Christina!

MAX

Wait!

Christina turns to Max.

MAX

Don't do it.

CHRISTINA

We've been over this, Max.

He circles her. She pivots to follow. (Taking her eyes off
the rear of the lobby.)

MAX

No, I mean-- I don't want to be
with them.

CHRISTINA

What?

MAX

I want to be with you.

Christina cocks her head.

MAX

I love you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - BEHIND CHRISTINA. Near the steps. Frank, Lilly, and Deagle. Frank holds a BROWN PAPER LUNCH BAG-- the impromptu hoodoo bag.

Frank subtly makes eye contact with Max-- they're ready.

CHRISTINA
You don't mean it.

Max delivers a helluva performance:

MAX
I do. Christina. We can be
together. Forever. Please.

And with that... he leans forward... and KISSES her festering, rancid lips. Ew!

Christina shuts her eyes. Kisses him back.

Mrs. Deagle shoots a look at the EMPTY LOBBY FIREPLACE.

It IGNITES into FLAME.

Christina, still lip-locked. Just the SLIGHTEST TINGE of FIRELIGHT on her cheek-- but she notices.

Her EYELIDS SHOOT OPEN. Wide. Demented.

And... she steps back. Glaring at Max. Calcified.

A NOOSE SNAKES DOWN from the overhead chandelier, VIPER STRIKES at Frank. Coils around his neck, HOISTS HIM UP.

He DROPS the HOODOO BAG. It falls limp to the floor.

He CHOKES and STRUGGLES and TEARS at the rope. To no avail.

Mrs. Deagle feels dizzy. She falls to her knees. Vomiting MASSIVE AMOUNTS of WATER. Dry-drowning.

LILLY
Mommy!

Christina stares at Max. Not evil-- betrayed.

CHRISTINA
I loved you, Max. I loved you.
And you do... this to me?

Max. Fearful. Fucked.

Christina flicks a look over in Larry's direction...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And Larry's FLUNG through the air-- across the ROOM--

CRACKING his head against MARBLE-- SPLASHING into the fountain--

JOANIE

Larry!

Larry lifts his head from the water, addled. When--

The BLACK MARBLE STATUE. Its ARMS SHOVE Larry BENEATH the water! Drowning him!

Joanie. Staggered. How...?

MAX

NO--

And Christina levels her curdled yellow eyes on Max. Hell hath no fury.

CHRISTINA

You really hurt me, Max.

With that, she WHACKS Max, a bone crushing blow, sends him crumpling to the floor.

Max attempts to shake it off-- but now Christina's right on top of him.

SHE POUNDS him across the face. Over and over.

Breaking his nose. Drawing blood. All wounds he'll sport forever and ever.

Joanie. Crying. Struggling to free Larry against those stone arms. But to no avail--

JOANIE

Help! Somebody help me!

ANGLE. UNDER THE WATER. Larry. Weakening. Eyes starting to reel.

Frank. Hanging.

Mrs. Deagle. Gaggling.

Lilly. Whimpering.

Max. As Christina's FISTS JACKHAMMER into his face. It's all starting to look very "Raging Bull."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

That's it. Fat Lady steps up to the mike...

ANGLE. UNDER THE WATER. Larry's eyes glaze over.

JOANIE
(primal)
HELP ME!

We PAN from the fountain-- from Larry's body-- OVER TO:

A PAIR OF UPRIGHT LEGS. Now tilting to REVEAL:

LARRY. LARRY'S SPIRIT! He blinks. Bewildered. Confused.

Looks down on Joanie, looks down on his own body. A 'what the holy hell' moment.

Then turns, immediately noticing--

This putrid WRAITH. Perched over his SON. BEATING him into oblivion--

Larry doesn't understand what's going on. But he doesn't need to--

ANGLE. Max. In agony. Bruised and bloody. When suddenly--

LARRY IS THERE! He RIPS Christina off his boy.

LARRY
Get off him!

Christina turns to Larry, surprised-- shoves him off-- Larry sails back-- oof!

But Max is already out from under her. Already power-sliding across the marble.

Max snags the HOODOO BAG. WHIPS IT INTO THE LIT FIREPLACE!

WHOOSH! It IGNITES!

As does Christina!

Her skin CRACKLES and CHARS. She SHRIEKS. SIZZLING and SMOKING and TWISTING-- she drops to her knees--

Larry and Max watch, grim, until CLIMACTICALLY--

Christina EXPLODES into GORY, FIERY CHUNKS! GONE!

Then... quiet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Dust settles.

It's over.

The black marble statue returns to its original position.
Joanie DRAGS Larry's body out of the fountain.

He doesn't move-- Joanie weeps--

JOANIE

No-no-no-no, come on-come on--

(one more time)

Help! Please!

Frank unceremoniously PLUNKS to the floor. Ouch.

Mrs. Deagle sits up. No longer spouting water. Gives Lilly a warm, reassuring smile. Mommy's okay.

And Max climbs to his feet. Steps to his Dad's SPIRIT. (And we notice... Max's bruises and blood. HEALING. Right before our eyes.)

Larry's ghost moves forward to meet his son. Stunned. Isn't sure if he's dead. Or dreaming.

They stand before each other. Both emotional. So much to say. How-- where-- can they even begin?

MAX

Hey, Dad.

LARRY

Max. Is... this real?

MAX

It's real.

LARRY

What... happened?

MAX

It's alright. It's over now.

They both look back at--

Joanie. Bawling over Larry.

As Alex's Mother (remember, a nurse), now obviously free from her apartment, enters. RUSHES to Larry, feels his carotid--

ALEX'S MOTHER

There's a pulse. Call 911.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

She hands Joanie her phone-- begins rescue breathing--

Larry and Max turn back to each other--

MAX

You can't stay, you know. Mom
needs you. Dana, too.

LARRY

Yeah, well, we need you.

MAX

(sad smile)

Think that ship's sailed. Just
tell Mom that I'm okay. That I
love her--

LARRY

(don't do this)

Max...

MAX

That I said goodbye.

Larry swallows this.

LARRY

Son. I wanted to tell you... I'm
sorry.

MAX

It's not your fault I died--

LARRY

No, I mean-- I'm sorry. I wish I
coulda done things different. And
I just...

He's going to say "I love you," but he's too choked up. But
Max knows what he means.

MAX

I know. Me, too.

(then)

Give Dana a kiss from me.

ANGLE. Larry's body. As Alex's Mother continues her
breathing. His HAND TWITCHES. Life begins to return--

Larry sees this. Not much time left. He and Max regard each
other. Hearts breaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

LARRY

Guess this is goodbye.

MAX

Guess so. See ya, Dad.

One last look between father and son--

Then... Larry reaches out. HUGS his son. Max hugs him back. Which speaks a thousand words.

Larry's body. He GASPS, SPUTTERS. Eyes open. ALIVE. His spirit, back inside.

Joanie cries and cries.

Max. Observes this. Sad. And grateful.

Frank steps beside him. They trade looks. Then:

Miraculously, Gus and Margaret ENTER. HEALED. INTACT.

MAX

You guys okay?

GUS

(bewildered)

We weren't, but now... I don't understand what's happening.

Paramedics arrive. They burst through the door, begin treating Larry.

Lilly glances out the door as the EMT's enter. Amazed.

LILLY

Look!

The whole undead crew pivots. Eyes widen. Mouths open. They all melt though the glass to see--

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - SUNRISE

The building NO LONGER SITS on a lonely, stormy cliff.

It's now in the middle of an ENDLESS GREEN FIELD. Heading directly into a beautiful, ruby-red SUN on the HORIZON.

None of them can quite believe it--

ELEANOR DEAGLE

But how...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max smiles. Realizing.

MAX
Consider yourself avenged. You're
free to go.

Young Lilly is the first-- giggling--

LILLY
Come on!

She races across the field. Mrs. Deagle gives Max a grateful
nod. Then follows.

ELEANOR DEAGLE
Wait for me!

Gus and Margaret grin as well. Follow the others.

Leaving Max and Frank behind. Watching.

MAX
So. You coming?

FRANK
Not yet. Gonna stick around a bit.
Wanna bitch at my brother one more
time. What about you?

Max looks back at his parents. The EMT's tending Larry.
Joanie, beside him.

MAX
Yeah. I think I'm ready.

FRANK
(nods)
See you on the other side, kid.

MAX
Definitely.

Now Max pivots back, one last time, to his parents.

MAX
Bye, guys.

INT. THE ROSSMORE - LOBBY - SUNRISE

CLOSE ON LARRY AND JOANIE. He's dazed. She's in shock. But
they both glance up-- and they're almost SURE they see--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POV. Just outside the door. The SUNLIGHT catches a GLINTING, translucent figure. Just for a second. MAX.

He looks at them. Then turns away. Then he's GONE--

Larry and Joanie. It's painful. Bittersweet. But... the sun shines.

EXT. THE ROSSMORE - SUNRISE

CUE SONG. Bob Dylan's cover of "In My Time of Dying."

As Max heads across the field.

Frank watches him go.

Max. Feels the cool grass under his feet. Feels the soothing warmth of:

THE SUN. (And we've seen this sun before-- from the cover of Max's college book).

"In my time of dying, don't want nobody to mourn..."

CLOSE ON MAX. Smiles.

As he VANISHES into the very sun of which he's always dreamed.

"...all I want for you to do, is take my body home.

"Well, well, well--

"So I can die easy--"

BLACKOUT.

THE END