

PET SEMATARY

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Based on the novel by
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FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL MAINE - NIGHT

LONG AERIAL SHOT over a sea of DARK WOODS. The moon hangs over the trees on the horizon, obscured by thin clouds.

A cluster of lights below us. The sleepy town of LUDLOW, MAINE. We pass over HOUSES nestled around ponds, a quaint downtown, tiny roads branching into the surrounding hills.

The last of the houses slips away below as we move further out over the endless trees, slowly descending down into --

EXT. DARK WOODS - CONTINUOUS

We're inside the woods now. Moon flickering through branches as we pick up a NARROW PATH winding through the trees. Our POV slows as we settle on a wooden sign nailed to a tree.

In hand painted childish scrawl it reads: PET SEMATARY.

As we HOLD on the sign, there's a NOISE in the darkness.

ANIMAL FEET crunching through pine needles.

The shape of a DOG comes into view. Just a shadow standing in the trail. Hulking, fur clumped and dirty. Eyes black.

The ragged dog walks down the trail past us as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

A wide, grassy lawn near the edge of the woods. Toys left out for the night. A sprinkler tapping softly somewhere.

There's a LIGHT in the second story window as --

The dog from the woods moves into frame. It stands still for a long BEAT in the darkness. Looking at that window as we --

CUT TO:

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

A YOUNG BOY (9) sleeping in bed. A model of the solar system travels in mechanical circles over his head. After a BEAT --

The boy opens his eyes, sensing something. After a BEAT, he slides out of bed. As his feet come to the floor we NOTICE --

A shovel and some dirty clothes stashed under the bed.

The boy crosses to the window, peering out to --

THE BACKYARD. Toys. Sprinkler. No sign of the dog.

He walks to his bedroom door, slowly opening it to REVEAL --

Nothing there. Just an empty dark hallway.

INT. LONG DARK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The boy moves down the hall followed by his elongated SHADOW that bends up the wall. He pauses by his parent's room, glancing at his MOTHER and FATHER sleeping in their bed.

He continues past their door, turning down the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clothes and toys. A clock ticking softly. After a BEAT --

The Boy comes down the stairs. He moves across the room to the front window, pulling the curtain back to peek out --

POV of the porch... the stairs... the empty lawn. Then --

A DARK SHAPE slips past!

The boy presses against the wall, terror rising as we HEAR --

Two soft SCRATCHES on the outside of the door.

Something wants to come inside. The boy stands for a BEAT, not believing what he knows to be true. Afraid to move.

After a BEAT, he steps closer, reaching for the door --

CLOSE as he turns the knob, pulling it open to REVEAL --

Nothing there.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

The sprinkler taps lightly along the side of the house as the BOY comes down the porch stairs to the lawn in his pajamas.

He squints into the shadows, barely able to form the words --

BOY
Buck? That you, boy?

The house looms behind him, front door hanging open as the boy steps further out onto the lawn. BEHIND HIM we notice --

A dog shaped SHADOW slinking across the lawn.

The boy hears the noise and spins to SEE --

BUCK, the dog from the woods, standing in the shadows. The dog's head hangs low, breathing slow and ragged.

The boy steps closer, eyes filled with wonder and awe.

BOY (CONT'D)
I knew you'd come back. Jesse said
it wouldn't work but I just knew...

The boy stops as Buck moves into the light. Drool swings from his mouth, eyes heavy. A bloody scar over his eye.

BOY (CONT'D)
You hungry? Want some food?

Buck just stares back. Dead eyes locked on the boy.

BOY (CONT'D)
Buck, it's me. You're okay now.

Buck steps forward. A hint of BLACKNESS swirls in his eyes.

The boy glances at the open door. He desperately wants to turn and run as the dog's mouth tightens into a growl.

BOY (CONT'D)
Stay outside, okay? I'll bring you
some food...

The boy turns toward the house, trying to walk slowly as --

SQUEEEK!!! He steps on a plastic DOG TOY on the lawn.

The boy looks over his shoulder as the dog charges. He runs for the house in his pajamas, the dog gaining ground behind him. The boy hits the stairs, slipping and scrambling onto the porch... the open front door only a few feet away --

But he slips. Crashing to the ground on his chest. Lights go on in the house. We hear voices coming from upstairs.

CLOSE on the boy's terrified face as he slowly lifts himself onto his hands to look back over his shoulder and SEE --

The dog in the shadows. Eyes pure black. Teeth bared.

The boy scrambles for the open door as the dog --

LUNGES RIGHT INTO CAMERA and we --

SMASH TO BLACK.

The screaming, snarling dog attack fades into the fluttering sound of a playing card in the spokes of a bike as we --

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

CLOSE on the wheel of a bike with two PLAYING CARDS pinned to the front forks with laundry pins. PULL OUT to REVEAL --

ELLIE (9), hair flowing behind her, eyes shining with life as she steers her bike up onto the sidewalk and into --

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The driveway of a modest, single story home on a block with a dozen identical single story homes. Ellie slows down by the real estate sign in the front yard that exclaims: **SOLD!**

GAGE (3) sees Ellie on her bike and his face lights up --

GAGE

Ellie home!

Ellie's parents RACHEL and LOUIS look up from cramming the last of their belongings into a station wagon. They're sweating and tired from packing. Rachel glances at Louis.

RACHEL

Let me talk to her.

Rachel comes over to Ellie, looking a little concerned --

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Where'd you go, honey? Thought you were just saying goodbye to Stephanie?

Ellie pulls a cute mouse-shaped CAT TOY out of her pocket.

ELLIE

I didn't want Church to be bored.

Rachel's heart melts. Ellie is thoughtful and sensitive.

Louis comes up behind them to grab Ellie's bike. He pauses for a moment, checking in with her.

LOUIS
You gonna be okay?

Ellie nods but we can see she's a little unsure.

ELLIE
You think the kids at my new school
will be nice?

Louis kneels down, brushing the hair out of her eyes.

LOUIS
They're going to love you, El.

Rachel comes over, taking a last look at their old house --

RACHEL
Good bye, Boston.

CUT TO:

AERIAL SHOTS over BOSTON, bays and bridges spill out below. A tangle of buildings, roads and waterways as we PICK UP --

The STATION WAGON crossing the ZAKIM BRIDGE, heading out of the city. The car drives up I-95, through coastal towns, and waterways, finally past a sign reading: WELCOME TO MAINE.

Rural and beautiful. The car turns inland on a small highway winding up into the woods as the sun sinks behind the trees.

INT. STATION WAGON - SUNSET

Louis drives while Rachel navigates. Ellie and Gage sit in back, Church in his pet carrier between them. Gage bangs on Church's carrier with a toy to get Ellie's attention.

GAGE
Ellie. Ellie. Ellie-phant!

ELLIE
Mom? It's not fair to Church.

Rachel glances back. Church is sleeping with his new toy.

RACHEL
I'm pretty sure Church is okay.

Ellie turns to the window, ignoring Gage as Louis slows down.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Must be some kind of ordinance
 against road signs around here?

ELLIE
 Are we lost?

Louis stares out an intersection leading into endless trees.

LOUIS
 No. We're not lost.
 (to Rachel)
 Are we?

ELLIE
 If we don't like it in Maine do we
 get to move back to Boston?

RACHEL
 Daddy's new job is here, honey.

LOUIS
 Think about it, El. Your back yard
 is going to be a whole forest.

Ellie looks out the window.

ELLIE
 Forests are boring.

UP AHEAD we see a small market advertising bait and tackle.

RACHEL
 That's it. Remember that market?

LOUIS
 Hang on, everyone.

Louis makes the turn onto a narrow two lane road.

EXT. RURAL MAINE - LATER

The station wagon cruises down a long stretch of empty road.

INT. STATION WAGON - DUSK

Louis rubs his eyes. Gage has fallen asleep. Rachel stares
 out at big homes set back in the trees. After a BEAT --

RACHEL
 So quiet out here.

LOUIS
Good quiet?

RACHEL
Just quiet.

He glances over --

LOUIS
Having second thoughts?

RACHEL
We could never afford a place like
this in Boston.

Louis studies her face. That didn't answer his question.

ELLIE
Daddy! Watch out!

The DOG from the opening stands in the road.

Louis hits the brakes, screeching to a halt. The creepy dog stands in the headlights, unmoving. Its fur is clumped and dirty, eyes red and dark. Just staring into the light.

LOUIS
(quietly)
Everyone okay?

Ellie and Rachel nod as the dog walks slowly around the car. Gage opens his sleepy eyes as the dog pauses, looking at him.

GAGE
Doggie...

The dog turns, slipping off into the trees.

GAGE (CONT'D)
Bye bye.

EXT. CREED HOUSE - EVENING

Crickets so loud it's almost unnatural. Headlights flicker in the trees as the station wagon creeps up the driveway.

Louis parks by a large two-story home with wraparound wooden porch and swing. The same house from the opening sequence.

Rachel pulls Gage out of his seat as Ellie walks to her father, taking his hand, staring up at the stars overhead.

The night is warm. A light wind. Dark and magical.

ELLIE

Why don't we have stars like this
in Boston.

LOUIS

We do. You just can't see 'em.

RACHEL

What do you think of the house, El?

Ellie walks forward, looking up at the massive house.

ELLIE

This whole place is ours?

LOUIS

(nodding)

Front door should be open. Movers
dropped everything off today.

Ellie opens the door, standing for a moment in the doorway.

Then she takes off running from room to room, switching on
lights, her excited voice echoing through empty spaces.

ELLIE (O.S.)

It's so big! I love it!!

Louis walks with Rachel and Gage into the house as we --

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is partially unpacked, boxes and rugs lying around.

Church lies on his favorite cushion in the front window as
Louis and Rachel unpack boxes in the living room.

Louis prepares to nail a picture hanger into the wall --

RACHEL

Hey, don't. Gage is napping.

Louis leans the picture against the wall, looking around --

LOUIS

Did Ellie finish her room?

BEHIND HIM Church stretches and jumps down to the floor.

As Rachel and Louis continue talking we drop into --

Louis follows them out of the basement.

EXT. SIDE YARD - DAY

Rachel works in her vegetable garden, setting up tall stakes and strings for her bean plants. Ellie comes around down the porch stairs, walking over to her mother.

ELLIE

Can I watch a show? I'm bored.

Rachel pulls off her gloves, wiping her brow --

RACHEL

Why don't you play outside? It's so nice out.

ELLIE

(sulking)

There's nothing to do...

Her voice drifts off as we HEAR a soft repetitive DRUM BEAT somewhere. Dry and sad. Ellie and Rachel walk around the side of the house to SEE --

A procession of CHILDREN marching toward the woods.

A SOMBER BOY in the front pushes a wheelbarrow with a LUMP wrapped in a sheet and some pieces of WOOD and a SHOVEL.

He is followed by a single file line of children in ANIMAL MASKS, walking slowly. At the end of the line, a GIRL in a CAT MASK pounds out the funeral march. Strange and surreal.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

What are they doing?

RACHEL

Looks like some kind of procession.

ELLIE

What's a procession?

RACHEL

Like a parade but not for fun.

Ellie walks closer, mesmerized as the strange children make their way into the trees. The drum beat echoing.

The Girl at the end of the line in the Cat Mask glances back at Ellie as she turns up into the woods. Ellie follows, walking to the edge of the lawn where the trail begins.

ELLIE'S POV of the hand painted sign reading: PET SEMATARY.

The same trail we saw in the opening.

Ellie starts up the trail, then stops. There's something about this place. It's too dark. Too frightening.

A HAND touches Ellie's shoulder and she jumps. It's Rachel.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Must be a pet cemetery up there...

ELLIE
(sad)
One of their pets died?

Rachel can see Ellie's frightened --

RACHEL
Let's go help daddy. Gage will be waking up from his nap soon.

Ellie looks relieved as they turns back. As they walk back down the trail, she glances over to SEE --

Their NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE peeking through the woods.

A cottage with gray shingles, smoke rising from a chimney, dark and mossy. There's someone in the window.

Ellie looks up, noticing her mother has continued walking. She quickly runs to catch up to Rachel as we --

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stuffed animals, posters, books. A night light sends purple butterflies across the walls in lazy circles. Ellie lies in bed as Rachel and Louis tuck her in. She seems worried.

LOUIS
You okay?

Ellie speaks softly, her mind racing with scary thoughts.

ELLIE
When is Church going to die?

LOUIS
Everyone has to die sometime.
That's how life works.

ELLIE
Even you and mommy?

Rachel comes over, sitting on the side of the bed --

RACHEL
You're thinking about all this
because of that place in the woods?

Ellie nods. Louis takes a breath, then launches in --

LOUIS
When someone dies... even a cat or
a doggie... their body goes into
the ground but that doesn't mean
they're gone forever...

OFF Ellie's confused look --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Remember when Nana passed away and
we all flew down to Florida?

Ellie nods.

RACHEL
What daddy's saying is Nana's *body*
went into the cemetery but her
spirit went up to heaven. She's up
there right now. I bet she can
even see your new room.

ELLIE
People in heaven can watch us?

LOUIS
I don't know if it works like that
exactly. No one really knows --

Rachel shoots Louis a look and he quickly switches gears.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
You don't need to worry about any
of this stuff because Church and me
and mommy are going to be around
for a long, long time.

ELLIE
You promise?

LOUIS
Promise.

Louis and Rachel lean in to kiss Ellie good night as we --

PUSH past Ellie's worried face to the dark WOODS outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Louis stands in his pajama bottoms brushing his teeth. As he spits out and rinses, Rachel comes up behind him --

RACHEL
(imitating him)
Everyone has to die sometime, kid.
Deal with it!

He turns around to face her, a playful smile on his face.

LOUIS
You're the one who said dead people
watch us from the sky. That's
pretty creepy for a kid.

RACHEL
They are!

She pushes him over to the bed.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Why do you doctors have such a hard
time with spirituality? You really
think people are just flesh and
bones with no soul?

LOUIS
I'm just injecting an element of
reality into her life. Everything
you're selling is a fairy tale.

A flicker of pain in Rachel's eyes --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I didn't mean your
sister...

Rachel sits on the edge of the bed.

RACHEL
I know what it's like to lose
someone when you're a kid. I don't
want her thinking about this stuff
yet. Let her have the fairy tale.

He lies down, pulling her into her arms --

LOUIS

You're right. I'm sorry. Let's
live the fairy tale.

Rachel folds into Louis' chest, kissing him.

RACHEL

Thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREED HOUSE - MORNING

The sun rises over the Creed home and surrounding woods.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Ellie stands in the grass, staring at the trail leading up
into the woods. She takes a breath, heading up the trail.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie walks past the PET SEMATARY sign, winding up the narrow
trail, heading deeper into the forest.

Trees block the light as Ellie grows smaller in the trail,
disappearing around a corner. Swallowed up by the woods.

EXT. PET CEMETERY - DAY

Ellie comes to a clearing of grass with tiny GRAVESTONES.

She slows down, taking in the sudden presence of death all
around her. Each name represents a family pet who died.

She pauses by a freshly dug grave. The wooden sign reads:
TALULAH. Best dog in the world. June 6, 2016. A dog collar
hangs on the sign. This must be the pet from the procession.

She walks around the rings of graves. Birds, cats and
hamsters. She stops at one: **Biffer. One Helluva Sniffer.
Oct. 1958.** The ones in the innermost ring are old and
decayed, clumps of grass obscuring the names: **SMUCKEY. 1917.**

The wind blows through the trees, catching Ellie's attention.

She notices the path through the cemetery stops abruptly at a
pile of branches and trees. Ellie looks for a way around the
huge pile but it's blocked by thorny THICKET and BRAMBLE.

Someone built a DEADFALL to block the path.

Ellie reaches for the first limb. It creaks under her weight. She moves higher, branches bending as she makes her way to the top of the pile. Suddenly, a VOICE behind her --

OLD MAN (O.S.)
Get off of there!

Ellie turns and loses her balance. She tumbles backwards to the ground, cutting her knee open on a rock as the OLD MAN runs up behind her, glancing nervously at the deadfall.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You kids shouldn't be up here.

Ellie touches the blood on her leg, eyes fluttering.

ELLIE
I cut my knee...

FADE TO BLACK.

BOOTS crunching through underbrush as we FADE IN to --

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The OLD MAN carries Ellie down the trail in his arms. His hands are huge and rough, face hard as if carved from stone.

Ellie's head lolls as he walks. Her eyes drift open --

ELLIE'S UPSIDE DOWN POV: the trees bouncing up and down with the movement of his gait. She passes out again.

FADE TO BLACK:

The sound of water running as we FADE IN to --

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellie wakes up on a couch in a dark cottage. It smells like cigarettes and stale beer. Water runs in a sink somewhere.

Ellie sits up, realizing she's in a stranger's home.

Her head is still foggy as she looks around at DEAD ANIMALS mounted on the walls. Taxidermy. A rifle on the wall.

Ellie stands, heart racing. This feels dangerous. Suddenly, the OLD MAN appears in the door behind. Ellie spins around --

ELLIE

Who are you? How did I get in here?

The OLD MAN from the pet cemetery steps into filtered light.

This is JUD (60's), unflinching, a reclusive hunter with a five day beard and some hard years etched in his eyes.

JUD

You fell off the deadfall. Must have passed out when you saw blood.

Ellie takes a step backwards, assessing the threat.

ELLIE

I should get home. My mom...

Jud drags an ottoman across the floor with a heavy scratch.

JUD

Sit down. Not gonna bite you.

Ellie senses something in Jud's eyes. This guy is shy, not mean. He's not intimidating. Just a sad and lonely man.

Ellie sits down putting her leg on the ottoman. Jud sits across from her, cleaning the scrape with a warm washcloth.

She watches him as he works, concentrating. After a BEAT --

ELLIE

What's your name?

Jud ignores her for a BEAT, then --

JUD

You first.

ELLIE

Eleanor Creed. We just moved here from Boston.

Jud nods, glancing up --

JUD

Jud.

ELLIE

I saw you in the window the other day. You're our neighbor.

JUD
Lived in this house for sixty three
years. Seen a lot of people come
and go from yours.

Jud walks to the bathroom to look for something.

JUD (CONT'D)
(mumbling as he rummages)
Kids shouldn't be up in those
woods. Not safe up there.

Ellie notices a PHOTO on the table nearby and picks one up.

ANGLE on the photo: Jud in a suit, much younger, standing
proudly next to a PRETTY GIRL in a bridal gown.

Ellie notices Jud in the doorway holding a Band-Aid.

JUD (CONT'D)
You make a habit of going through
people's things?

Ellie sets the photo down. She studies him a moment, then --

ELLIE
Is that your wife?

Jud sits again, unwrapping the Band-Aid. He glances up.

JUD
Her name was Norma.

ELLIE
She's pretty.

Jud busies himself with the Band-Aid. Hiding his sadness.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What happened to her?

Jud looks up. This girl is confounding him.

JUD
She was sick. Passed away.

ELLIE
She's still here, you know. She's
watching us from heaven.

Ellie smiles at Jud. A layer of ice melts off his heart.

JUD
That so, Ellie?

Ellie nods, jumping up. She walks to the door --

ELLIE
You want to come and meet my cat?
His name is Church.

Jud stands up.

JUD
I don't keep pets. Not around
here.

Ellie nods to the animals stuffed on the walls --

ELLIE
You only like to shoot them?

Jud sighs, following her to the door --

JUD
Fine. I'll come meet your damn cat
if you want...

INT. CREED HOUSE - DAY

Ellie walks out of the woods with Jud. Rachel looks up from her garden, surprised to see Ellie with some strange man.

She comes over, wiping her hands on her work pants --

RACHEL
El? Everything okay?

ELLIE
I fell on a rock. Jud helped me.

Ellie points to the Band-Aid. Rachel kneels down.

RACHEL
Oh, sweetie. You okay?

Ellie nods. Rachel stands, holding out her hand to Jud.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Mr. Crandall, right? Thank you.

JUD
Most folks just call me Jud.

Rachel smiles, trying to break the awkwardness --

RACHEL

Well, thank you, Jud. It's nice to meet our neighbors.

Ellie grabs Jud's hand, pulling him toward the house.

ELLIE

Come and meet Church.

She points to her bedroom window upstairs --

ELLIE (CONT'D)

My room's on the second floor. Our house in Boston didn't even *have* a second floor...

Jud glances back at Rachel as Ellie tugs him up the porch.

JUD

Kid's like a force of nature.

RACHEL

You have no idea.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The dining room table is covered in dishes and empty bottles of beer and wine from dinner. FLOAT past the mess into --

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jud sits in a chair as Ellie performs a dance for him. Louis and Rachel sit on the couch with Gage curled on Rachel's lap.

This is Ellie's favorite thing, spinning through the room, free and easy, swooping past her parents to make them laugh.

Jud sips a beer, enjoying the show as Ellie finishes with a *pirouette*. Ellie beams, taking a bow. Everyone claps.

Louis starts rummaging in a wooden cabinet --

LOUIS

Want another drink, Jud? Think I have some scotch here somewhere...

JUD

Better get home while I can still walk.

Louis notices Jud's wedding ring.

LOUIS
 Didn't realize you were married.
 (to Rachel)
 We should've invited his wife over.

ELLIE
 You can't dad. She died.

RACHEL
 Ellie, hey. That's not polite.

Jud waves this idea away, standing up --

JUD
 Ellie didn't mean anything by it.

He turns to Louis --

JUD (CONT'D)
 Been a long time since I got to sit
 with folks and just jaw a little.
 (to Rachel)
 And even longer since I had good
 home cooking like that. Thank you.

Louis walks with Jud to the door.

LOUIS
 We'll have you over again, Jud.
 Nice to meet you.

ELLIE
 Jud, wait...

Ellie runs over to Jud, giving him a long, spontaneous hug.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
 Good night, Jud.

JUD
 Good night, Ellie.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

Ellie stands by the kitchen door in her dance clothes.

ELLIE
 Come on, mom. I don't want to be
 late.

Rachel appears with Gage, shouting over her shoulder --

RACHEL
Louis? You coming?

Louis arrives in his scrubs, jingling the keys in his hand.

LOUIS
Was looking for these.

The family rushes outside as Louis reaches back to pull the kitchen door closed. Slamming it a little too hard.

The barrier on the cat door slides down with a THUNK!

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The station wagon pulls out of the driveway.

Church comes trotting up the driveway to the cat door. He tries to push it open but the barrier is down. Locked out.

He tries to nudge through but eventually gives up and walks around the house, heading down the path toward Jud's place.

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - DAY

Jud stands over his stove frying HASH in a skillet, cigarette dangling from his lips. He scrapes the food onto a plate then takes the pan to the sink. As he turns --

Church jumps up into the kitchen window behind him.

As Jud cleans, Church steps down to the counter, inching closer to the food, taking a bite of the steaming pile.

Jud turns to see Church eating his lunch.

JUD
Get away from that.

Jud waves his hand, shooing Church away but the cat startles, accidentally knocking the plate onto the floor with a crash.

JUD (CONT'D)
Go on! Get out of here.

Jud opens the kitchen door, shoving the cat into the driveway with his foot. He turns back to the mess on the floor.

JUD (CONT'D)
Goddamn scavenger.

As he starts to clean up the mess we --

CUT TO:

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Classical music plays as a DANCE INSTRUCTOR directs a group of YOUNG GIRLS through their routine. Rachel sits along the back wall with the other MOMS, bouncing Gage on her leg.

MOVE IN on Ellie as she concentrates to stay in time with the other girls. The music continues to play as we --

CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Louis holds a chart as he enters an exam room. A STRANGE LOCAL WOMAN sits in a chair, leg in a compression stocking.

LOUIS

Morning, Mrs. Hughes. Wanna tell me what's going on with that ankle?

The woman's face knits into a grimace of disappointment.

MRS. HUGHES

Who the hell are you? Never seen you before.

Louis slides a chair over, preparing to examine her foot.

LOUIS

That's because I'm new. My name's Doctor Louis Creed. I'm taking over for Bill Jacobson.

The woman begrudgingly extends her swollen foot.

MRS. HUGHES

About time they put Bill Jacobson out to pasture. Old coot could hardly see past his own nose.

CUT TO:

INT. DANCE STUDIO - SAME TIME

Music still plays but all the other kids have gone home as Ellie continues practicing her routine. Rachel approaches.

RACHEL
Sweetie, we have to get home.

Ellie doesn't hear her mother, lost in the music, tracing her finger through the air.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Louis comes down the hallway exhausted from a long day. Two Nurses run past him the other way.

LOUIS
What is it?

NURSE
A boy got hit by a truck.

Louis turns, following them around the corner as --

PARAMEDICS roll a gurney through the door. The YOUNG MAN on the gurney is soaked with blood. Half his face scraped away.

Louis waves the EMT's through, falling in beside the gurney.

LOUIS
What do we know?

EMT
(visibly shaken)
His, uh, name is Paskow. Victor Paskow. Got hit by a logging truck up on Lovell Creek Road...

Louis leans down to the boy as they walk --

LOUIS
Victor? Can you hear me?

The Boy moves his head, his single working eye finding Louis.

He moves his mouth, trying to speak as blood gurgles out --

VICTOR PASKOW
Don't want to die...

LOUIS
You're not dying, Victor. Stay with me, okay? Stay with me...

They turn a corner into a TREATMENT AREA as the paramedics quickly transfer Victor to the table. A nurse peeks in.

NURSE

Life Flight is on the way from
Bangor. Twenty minutes.

Louis nods. That's too long. He goes back to Victor.

LOUIS

Victor. Listen to me. We've got a
helicopter on the way. I just need
you to stay focused on my voice.

Victor tries to speak, his eye wide with fear.

VICTOR PASKOW

I'm dying...

LOUIS

No, Victor. Just stay with me.
(to the nursing staff)
We need a hemostat on the femoral
artery. Prep two units of blood.

There's a buzz on the machine as Victor's heart stops.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Goddammit. He's coding!

Louis immediately begins compressions on Victor's chest as --

Victor's hand shoots out, gripping Louis' arm. He pulls
Louis down toward his gasping mouth. Trying to form words --

VICTOR PASKOW

I can feel it inside me now.

LOUIS

Feel what, Victor?

Victor takes a ragged inhale. Eyes locked on Louis.

VICTOR PASKOW

Death.

Victor's body seizes up, going rigid as his eyes slip away.

Then he softens. His hand loosens its grip. He's gone.

After a BEAT, Louis lifts Victor's hand away, laying it
across the boy's chest. Louis turns to the Nurse, eyes down.

LOUIS

Mark the time.

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

Church picks himself up in the driveway as we hear Jud cursing and cleaning the mess in his kitchen.

We hear a rustling as Church turns to SEE --

That evil Dog from the opening emerges from the woods.

The animal looks worse now. Fur clumped up and ragged, head slung low as it moves forward, eyes locked on the cat.

Church hisses, backing up.

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Jud dumps a pile of broken plate and food into the trash as --

We hear a loud CAT SQUEAL and a deeper, loud SNARL.

Jud goes to the window, looking out --

The Dog has church in his jaws, shaking him wildly.

JUD
Sonofabitch!!

Jud grabs the broom and races out to --

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jud swings the broom at the wild Dog. The Dog jumps out of the way, giving Church a final, deadly shake with his head.

CRACK! We hear the SICKENING SNAP of bone breaking as the Dog drops Church, racing off into the trees.

ANGLE on Church, blood seeping from puncture wounds.

His head flops to the side. Neck broken.

JUD
Dammit... Ellie...

Jud glances over at the Creed House as we --

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rachel sits on the edge of Ellie's bed. Ellie seems worried.

ELLIE

I don't understand. Church always comes home for dinner.

RACHEL

He's probably out exploring.

ELLIE

He shouldn't be out in those woods.

RACHEL

Shhh, honey. Church will be fine. You need to get some sleep.

Ellie lies back. Her mind spinning bad thoughts.

ELLIE

Will you keep the lights on in case he's trying to find us?

Rachel gives Ellie a little kiss.

RACHEL

Of course, I will.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Louis drives down the road, his mind still back in the ER, distracted by the trauma of losing Victor Paskow.

He absently flicks on his blinker, about to turn up the driveway when we hear a loud *HOOOONK!* Headlights fill Louis' car as he looks up to SEE --

A HUGE 18 WHEELER roaring right toward his car.

The truck veers into the shoulder, missing his car by inches. Louis watches in the mirror as the huge truck rumbles past, a freight train of chrome and dust, disappearing behind him.

He takes a breath and carefully pulls up the drive to find --

Someone standing outside his house in the driveway.

It's Jud.

CUT TO:

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Louis and Jud stare down at a LUMP on the washing machine.

LOUIS
 Jesus... what happened?

Jud pulls the sheet back to reveal Church, bloody puncture wounds on his side, blood crusted on his nose and mouth.

JUD
 Wild dog. All kinds of animals in those woods...

Louis touches Church's body. It's already going stiff.

JUD (CONT'D)
 It's my fault. Church had jumped in here and made a mess. I got so steamed, I shoved him out the door.

Jud pours two shots from a bottle of whisky. He throws one back, hands shaking. He hands the other to Louis.

JUD (CONT'D)
 Animals out here are scavengers. Bet that old dog had his eye on Church since you guys moved in.

Louis tosses his whisky back, taking a moment to think.

LOUIS
 What do I tell Ellie? The move has already been so hard for her. This is going to break her heart.

Jud watches Louis. An idea brewing in his head.

JUD
 What are you going to do?

LOUIS
 I don't know.

Louis nods as he pulls the sheet back over the cat.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 You mind keeping him here while I go talk to Rachel? She's better at figuring this stuff out.

JUD
 Sure thing.

Louis heads for the back door, lost in thought --

JUD (CONT'D)
 Louis, wait...

Louis pauses in the doorway, looking back.

LOUIS

Yeah?

Jud wants to say something but decides against it.

JUD

It's nothing. Go be with your family. I'm here if you need me.

Louis nods, ducking out the door as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CREED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rachel sits on the couch wiping tears from her eyes. She looks over at Church's empty cushion, reality sinking in.

RACHEL

Oh, god, Louis. Ellie thinks he's coming home. Are you sure?

LOUIS

I saw him myself. His neck is broken.

Louis sits next to Rachel as she starts to cry.

RACHEL

Dammit, Church. Loved that cat...

Louis glances at the stairs to make sure Ellie isn't there.

LOUIS

(quietly)

Maybe we can do a little burial up in that cemetery? Give Ellie a chance to say a proper goodbye.

RACHEL

No, I don't want her to start obsessing about death and dying like I did when I was her age.

LOUIS

So what do we do?

Rachel wipes her tears, formulating a decision --

RACHEL

I don't know... sometimes cats run away when they move. We tell her Church is still out there...

She looks up at Louis, eyes pleading --

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Anything but dead.

Louis holds her eyes, nodding.

LOUIS

I'll take care of it with Jud.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Louis heads back across the lawn, ducking through the trees.

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Louis gets close he notices the house is pitch black. He comes up the porch, tapping lightly on the windows --

LOUIS

(whispering)

Jud? You asleep?

No answer. Louis turns, thinking what to do when he SEES --

A flashlight heading up through the trees.

It's Jud and he's carrying something over his shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. PET CEMETERY - NIGHT

Jud stands amongst the graves, eyes bleary from too much whisky. He sets the HEAVY LUMP in the sheet on the ground and tosses his shovel to the ground. Then he turns --

Taking a couple wobbly steps through the markers as his light comes to rest on the one that reads: **BIFFER.**

Jud sways in the moonlight, taking another slug of whisky.

JUD

(mumbling)

There you are.

His eyes move up to notice something else --

The DEADFALL across the cemetery lit by the moon.

Jud stares at the twisted pile of dead branches, unable to turn away as the wind picks up in the trees. Finally, he kneels down in front of Biffer's grave, tears on his cheeks --

JUD (CONT'D)
Goddamn, I miss you, boy...

A SHADOW appears behind Jud, growing as it approaches --

Jud startles, turning to see Louis standing behind him.

LOUIS
I saw the flashlight.

Louis reaches for the bottle in Jud's hand, taking a swallow.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Didn't think I'd make you do this
all by yourself, did you?

Jud gathers himself, pointing at his dog's grave.

JUD
That's my dog Biffer right there.

Jud's gaze drifts to the deadfall again, lost in memory.

JUD (CONT'D)
Death changes you when you're a
kid. Gets into your bones.

Louis takes another swig of whisky, studying Jud's face.

LOUIS
Let's get this done.

Louis hands the bottle of whisky back to Jud, grabbing the shovel off the ground to dig a hole. As he starts to work --

Jud takes a step toward the deadfall --

JUD
(softly)
I need to see it...

Jud picks up the sheet with the cat and walks away.

LOUIS
See what? Jud?

EXT. MARSHY BOG - CONTINUOUS

A low SWAMP with clumps of GRASS jutting out of the black water. Fog curls as Jud wades out into the shallow marsh.

LOUIS
What the hell are you doing?

Jud ignores him, wading into the water. Louis comes to the edge of the bog. He pauses, his vision blurring again.

Shadows shift and move. The darkness is alive.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Jud, man. Stop.

Jud pauses in the water, pointing at something --

JUD
Over there.

Louis follows Jud's finger to SEE --

A circular MOUND OF DIRT sticking out of the marsh.

JUD (CONT'D)
It has to be right there.

Jud sloshes up onto the mound of dirt. Louis calls out --

LOUIS
I don't understand. What is this place?

Jud drops the sheet with the cat on the ground, turning back to Louis. The wind swirls with that soft whispering voice.

JUD
Can't you hear that? It's alive.

Louis shakes his head, sloshing out into the bog. He steps up onto the mound of dirt, tossing the shovel down.

Church's dead face stares up at him in the moonlight.

JUD (CONT'D)
Bury your cat. Right here.

LOUIS
This is crazy...

Louis turns, stumbling back in the water. Then he stops.

The grass rustles around him. Wind whispering. He can't leave and Jud knows it. This place won't let him.

Louis turns back to see Jud holding out the shovel.

JUD
Bury your cat.

CLOSE as the shovel slams into the ground.

Dirt. Shovel. Dirt. Shovel. Dirt. Shovel. Low and rhythmic like a heartbeat as a hole opens in the ground.

Louis slides Church into the hole, pulling dirt over the cat. He tries to wipe it off on his pants as Jud steps into frame.

Staring down at Louis as we --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CREED HOUSE - DAWN

The first sign of light in the sky over the sleeping forest.

A flock of birds suddenly takes flight in the morning sky, swirling up and then disappearing over the Creeds' house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

TRACK past muddy shoes and clothes scattered across the floor. SETTLE on Louis' face sleeping in the bed as --

His eyes open. He sits up on his elbows. No memory of coming home or climbing into bed. He glances over at Rachel, sound asleep. His hands are still caked with dirt.

Louis sits on the edge of the bed, trying to piece his memory back together as a HAND reaches out for him. He jumps.

RACHEL
(groggy)
Come back. It's too early...

LOUIS
Can't sleep.

Louis gathers his clothes off the floor, stuffing them into the hamper as he walks to the shower. Rachel looks over.

RACHEL
Hey, wait. You and Jud take care of everything last night?

Louis gets into the shower. The water goes on.

 LOUIS (FROM THE SHOWER)
Yeah. It's all done.

Rachel slides out, walking over to the bathroom door.

 RACHEL
And?

 LOUIS (FROM THE SHOWER)
Nothing. We buried him. That's
it.

 RACHEL
We still have to talk to Ellie.

 LOUIS
I know.

Rachel watches steam fill the bathroom. Something seems off in Louis' voice.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - LATER

Ellie sleeps in her bed. The window is open, curtains blowing lightly in the breeze. Louis and Rachel enter.

 LOUIS
 (whispering to Rachel)
Did we leave that open?

Louis goes to close it as Ellie wakes up.

 RACHEL
Morning, sweetie.

Ellie looks up at her parents. They seem weirdly serious.

 ELLIE
What is it?

 LOUIS
Church, honey. Jud and I went to
look for him last night.

 RACHEL
Remember how I was telling you how
sometimes when cats move to a new
home they get the urge to explore?

 ELLIE
It's okay. He didn't run away.

LOUIS
Well, we don't know for sure...

ELLIE
Yes we do, dad. He was outside my window last night so I let him in.

Louis notices CAT PRINTS on the comforter. Thick black mud.
His bloods turns to ice. It can't be Church.

LOUIS
Oh, honey. That was a different cat... one of the neighbor's...

ELLIE
No it wasn't. Look.

Ellie points behind him to the closet.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
He's right there.

Louis turns to see a silhouette of a CAT in the closet.
Sitting quietly in the darkness.

Louis walks to the closet, stomach churning. His hand reaches for the closet door, gently pulling it open --

The sliver of light slowly grows to REVEAL --

Church innocently licking his paws. Alive and well.

LOUIS
(barely audible)
Can't be...

Rachel comes up next to Louis, giving him a "what the fuck" look. He shakes his head, completely at a loss, reeling.

Louis kneels down, reading the cats collar: **CHURCHILL.**

RACHEL
Poor guy's all covered in mud.

Louis reaches out for Church, his hand getting closer. Church backs away, his ears going flat, growling low.

LOUIS
Easy. Just want to take a look...

Louis tries to reach for Church but the cat hisses, swatting his finger. Louis pulls his hand back.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Ouch!

Church darts past Louis, running out of the room. Ellie slides out of bed, glaring at her dad.

ELLIE

Leave him alone, dad.

Louis puts his finger in his mouth as Ellie runs after her cat. Rachel turns to Louis once she's gone.

RACHEL

You said he was dead?

LOUIS

He... his neck was broken...

Rachel shoots him a look as she goes after Ellie --

RACHEL

Good thing you're not a vet.

EXT. CREED HOUSE - DAY

Louis stomps through the trees to Jud's house. UP AHEAD we see Jud chopping wood on a stump behind his cottage.

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

WHACK!! The axe comes down splitting a piece of wood.

Jud glances up at Louis, cigarette smoldering in his mouth as he sets another piece of wood on the stump.

JUD

Louis.

Louis glances back to his house to see if anyone's around.

LOUIS

What's going on? Church is walking around over there like nothing happened!

Jud searches Louis's face. He raises the axe.

JUD

That's what you wanted, wasn't it?

Louis thinks about this. There's some truth to that.

LOUIS
That cat was dead, Jud. His body
was getting stiff.

JUD
Ellie happy he's back?

LOUIS
Of course she is. She's thrilled.

JUD
Then maybe just leave it alone?

WHACK!! Wood splits as the axe comes down. Louis stares at
Jud for a moment. The conversation appears to be over.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Creed family eats dinner at the table.

Rachel feeds Gage peas as Ellie talks about her dance class.

ELLIE
Today Miss Colette had us do this
cool dragon dance where you have to
follow the person in front...

Ellie continues her story as Louis slowly looks over at --
Church on his cushion. Staring back with yellow eyes.

RACHEL
Dragons, Louis. Ellie's asking you
if they're real or not.

LOUIS
Hmm? No... not real...

Rachel glares at Louis, annoyed.

ELLIE
It's okay dad.

LOUIS
I'm sorry, El. I'm tired.

RACHEL
Why don't you go lay down?

LOUIS
Yeah... okay. Sorry guys.

Louis picks up his plate, walking into --

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louis puts his plate in the sink, glancing out to the woods.

Then he notices something else in the window --

THE REFLECTION of Church sitting on the table behind him.

Church's image is surrounded by the trees outside, half in shadow. Sinister and evil. Louis turns around.

He stares at the cat for a moment, sensing something strange.

Church just stares back with his yellow eyes.

Louis goes to the cabinet, taking out a bag of kibble.

LOUIS
Down to eight lives, buddy.

Louis pours food in Church's bowl, jiggling the bag.

Church ignores him. Just staring back at Louis.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Not hungry? That's a first.

Louis moves closer. He can see the puncture marks on Church's ribs, now scabbed and matted under dirty fur.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
(softly)
What the hell happened to you?

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis lies on the bed as Rachel walks past him in her pajamas. She opens a drawer, pulling out a small wooden box.

RACHEL
Maybe he was paralyzed? You said
it was his neck.

LOUIS
I said his neck was broken.

She comes back to the bed with a JOINT in her hand. She offers it to Louis. He shakes his head --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I can't tonight. My head.

Rachel puts the joint in her side drawer, lying next to him.

RACHEL
You guys were drinking. Maybe
Church was in shock or something?

Louis rolls onto his stomach, mumbling into the pillow.

LOUIS
Didn't seem like shock. Seemed
like dead.

Rachel crawls onto Louis' back to rub his shoulders.

RACHEL
Well, Ellie's happy.

LOUIS
That's what Jud said.

Louis closes his eyes, finally relaxing a little. She leans down close, her hair spilling across his body.

RACHEL
It's been a tough month. Your new
job and Church. We need to have
some fun. Let's throw a party for
Gage's birthday. Have our Boston
friends come out, my parents..?

Louis sighs, flipping over to face her.

LOUIS
I love all of that except the part
about your parents.

Rachel makes a face, pushing down on his chest.

RACHEL
Jerk...

He pulls her close, kissing her.

LOUIS
Stoner.

They kiss more passionately now, rolling together on the bed.

As it heats up we FLOAT past them to the door to REVEAL --

Church sitting in the hallway watching them.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME TIME

CAT POV watching Rachel and Louis make love. After a BEAT --

The POV turns, gliding low and smooth over the floor, down the hallway and around the corner to a slightly open door.

CHURCH sits outside Gage's bedroom, nudging the door open with his nose.

INT. GAGE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back to CAT POV as Church slinks into the room, looking around, clocking the mobile on the wall, the night light, the window, the crib. The POV moves closer to the crib.

REVERSE to Church sitting outside the crib. Watching Gage sleep. His tail flicks nervously. Intense and focused.

We hear Ellie's voice from somewhere in the house.

ELLIE (O.S.)
Church? Here, kitty, kitty...

Ellie appears in the doorway. We're back in CAT POV as we turn around to see Ellie tip-toeing closer, looming over us.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
There you are, you naughty boy.

Ellie leans down, reaching out for us with huge arms as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The moon hovers over the Creed House in the distance.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel and Louis sleep with the window open. The breeze from the woods billows the curtain, a piece of paper flutters.

As it settles we HEAR --

Those soft voices we heard in the woods.

Louis suddenly opens his eyes in bed. Wide awake.

He swallows, trying to assess if he is awake or dreaming.

The wind rises and the curtain billows, the paper flutters.

He shivers, sitting up on his elbows. Something doesn't feel right. The house is too quiet. He glances over --

LOUIS

Rach? Hey, you awake..?

No answer from Rachel. She's sleeping on her side, facing the other way. Louis reaches over, shaking her gently --

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Did you close the window in Ellie's room? Rach..?

Louis shakes her again and she rolls back to REVEAL --

It's Victor Paskow.

White jaw bone gleaming through his shredded face. Louis pushes backwards, getting tangled in the sheets as --

Victor's hand clamps onto his leg.

VICTOR PASKOW

It's cold, Louis. Cold...

Louis screams, shoving himself backwards out of bed. He gasps, sliding away as VICTOR rises up to REVEAL --

It's only Rachel. She clicks on the light, groggy.

RACHEL

What are you doing?

Louis looks up at Rachel, unable to speak. Then --

LOUIS

(unsure)

I was... I must have been dreaming?

Louis thinks about this for a moment. Then he NOTICES --

Church sitting on a chair nearby. Watching him.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Louis sits at the breakfast table in his scrubs, eyes bleary as Rachel packs his lunch into a thermal carry bag.

RACHEL
 (re. Victor)
 That's so sad. Why didn't you tell
 me what happened?

LOUIS
 The whole thing with Church
 happened that night. Guess I just
 tried to put it out of my mind...

Rachel comes over, sliding a chair close to him --

RACHEL
 Please don't do that. I need to
 know what's going on with you.

Louis nods, memories of Victor washing over him --

LOUIS
 He was a kid, Rach. Maybe five or
 six years older than Ellie.
 (glancing at her)
 If we were in Boston, I could have
 done more. Maybe saved his life.

RACHEL
 Oh, honey. You were there for him.

Rachel comes closer, hugging Louis tight --

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 You gave him peace...

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER - LOUIS' OFFICE - DAY

Louis eats lunch at his desk in his doctor clothes, chewing
 his food as he scrolls through SEARCH RESULTS on his laptop.

ON THE SCREEN we see a map with the words: **Mi'kmaq Tribal
 lands.**

Louis leans closer. There is a shaded area with a header
 explaining: **Area of Extinction Event (1788).**

Louis clicks another link and suddenly we SEE --

The SYMBOLS that were carved into the trees. Below each one
 is a translation: **Death. Resurrection. Hunger. Evil.**

Louis sits back as a charcoal sketch of the LAST TRIBAL CHIEF
 loads on the screen. His eyes are pure black.

Louis notices something in the background. He enlarges the images to see that the Chief is surrounded by a marshy bog.

A mound of dirt peeking out of the black water behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Ellie sits with Church in the middle of the floor. She has towels spread out and some pet grooming supplies.

ELLIE

What have you been digging in out there? You smell terrible...

She reaches for a pet brush and begins to brush out Church's coat. CLOSE as the bristles pull through matted knots.

Ellie looks at the brush: big clumps of fur are coming off.

Church tries to squirm away but Ellie holds him down --

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Hang on, Church! There's something gross in your hair.

She tries to brush the cat but Church SPINS and HISSES, swatting her leg with his claws. Ellie screams, jumping back as Church scampers out of the room. She stands, horrified --

Deep scratches bleeding down her leg.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Headlights through the trees as Louis arrives home from work.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - LATER

Ellie lies on her bed as Louis tapes gauze bandages to her legs where she was scratched.

LOUIS

There you go, honey. All finished.

Ellie rolls over, looking up at her father.

ELLIE

Why would he do that? Church has never scratched me before...

Louis looks troubled as he stuffs his supplies back into his DOCTOR BAG sitting open on the bed.

LOUIS

I don't know. Maybe living way out here is making him wild again.

Ellie pulls up her blanket, face clouding up.

ELLIE

Maybe he doesn't like it here.

She rolls over, facing away from him --

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Neither do I.

Louis sits for a BEAT, then --

LOUIS

Stephanie is coming up with her mom and dad to visit for Gage's party. She could sleep over if you want?

Ellie rolls back, looking up at Louis --

ELLIE

Really?

LOUIS

(nodding)

I don't see why not. We got all the room in the world.

A flicker of anticipation bounces into her eyes --

ELLIE

I could show her my new dance.

Louis leans down, kissing Ellie on the forehead.

LOUIS

She'll love it. Now get some rest. You have school in the morning...

Louis kisses Ellie and clicks off the light. He walks to the door, leaving it open a crack as he steps out into --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Louis stops as he NOTICES --

Church sitting at the end of the hallway.

Louis reaches back, closing Ellie's door all the way until it clicks. He turns toward Church, shooing him with his hand.

LOUIS
(quietly)
Get out of here!

Church turns and scampers down the stairs as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. LUDLOW, MAINE - THE NEXT DAY

Louis drives slowly through the quaint business district. He slows, searching for an address and pulls into a non-descript building marked COUNTY RECORDS OFFICE.

INT. COUNTRY RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

Louis follows LIONEL HAVERING (70's), administrator of public records and land deeds for the town of Ludlow. He talks as they walk down a hallway past a number of office doors.

HAVERING
They've been talking about putting
all these old records on computers
for years but with all the budget
cuts we've had...

LOUIS
Our house, 2116 Bear Creek. It
runs right up against the woods.

Havering pauses as his SECRETARY hears the address. She shares a knowing glance with Havering then looks down.

The Old Man opens his office door, waving Louis into --

INT. HAVERING'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cramped with file cabinets, maps of the Ludlow on the wall, stacks of files and papers shoved into messy piles.

LOUIS
 You know the specific lot I'm
 talking about?

Havering glances at Louis --

HAVERING
 I know every plot of land in his
 town... but that one tends to come
 up in the system more than others.

He pulls out a surveyors map from the 1950's, spreading it
 out across his desk. Louis joins Havering as he points --

HAVERING (CONT'D)
 Here's your house. Top of Bear
 Creek Road. Only other person
 lives up there is Jud Crandall.

LOUIS
 We've met Jud. He's a nice guy.

Havering glances at Louis, a curious look on his face --

HAVERING
 Crabs are nice, too.
 (beat)
 When they've been steamed.

ANGLE on the map as Havering traces out an old boundary line.

HAVERING (CONT'D)
 All this land including the lot
 under your house was part of the
 old Mi'kmaq reservation. Wasn't
 'til the early 1900's that it got
 officially incorporated.

LOUIS
 I thought the Mi'kmaq died off in
 some kind of extinction event?

HAVERING
 Some say they moved north. Some
 say they got smallpox. All we know
 for sure is they never came back.

LOUIS
 What about the people who had the
 house before us? The Pearsons.

HAVERING

Moved away after they lost their son. Bank took over the property and I guess they sold it to you.

Louis thinks about this, almost not wanting to know --

LOUIS

And the people before them?

A beat as Havering studies Louis' face --

HAVERING

Like I said, that particular lot has changed hands more than a few times.

OFF Louis' face looking down at the map we --

CUT TO:

EXT. CREED HOUSE - DAY

Rachel plays with Gage on the rug in the living room. We PAN over to pick up Church sitting behind them on the couch.

The tea kettle begins to whistle in the kitchen as Rachel playfully moves a small fuzzy giraffe closer to Gage.

RACHEL

(Giraffe voice)

Hey mister! You gonna just sit there or play with me?

Gage giggles, smiling at the giraffe --

GAGE

Play with you!

RACHEL

(Giraffe voice)

Well, come on then. Get playing!

Gage reaches for the toy as the tea kettle whistles louder.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

(Giraffe voice)

Mommy's going to go make her tea.

Gage plays with the giraffe as Rachel slides back and walks off toward the kitchen. As she exits, we hear a soft *THUMP!*

Church has jumped down and is walking across the rug.

GAGE'S POV as the cat moves around him in a slow circle.

GAGE
Churchie kitty.

Gage drops his giraffe and reaches for Church but --

Church grabs the giraffe and slips past Gage.

Gage stands up, waddling after the cat --

GAGE (CONT'D)
No... my toy!

Church runs up the stairs as Gage wanders over, looking up the stairs. Church pauses at the top, looking back.

GAGE (CONT'D)
My toy...

Gage starts up the stairs as we --

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Church crosses to the open FRENCH DOORS that lead out to --

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

The cat jumps up onto a chair and then up to the narrow WOODEN RAILING that runs along the edge of the balcony.

Gage appears at the door, brow furrowed. He sees Church on the railing and walks over, climbing onto the chair.

Church backs away. Toy still clutched in his mouth.

GAGE
You're bad, Church. My toy...

Church drops the toy over the side of the balcony.

ANGLE as the toy sails down to the PAVING STONES below.

Gage screams, upset. He wraps his hands around the railing, pulling one knee up, then the other, pulling himself up to --

THE RAILING.

Gage wobbles precariously, staring down at his giraffe on the flat stones below. Not noticing as Church inches closer --

Nudging his leg!

Gage loses his balance, arms spinning as he falls out and --

Rachel snatches him off the railing!

RACHEL

*Gage... oh my god!!! What are you
doing up here!!!*

Rachel's panic makes Gage cry harder. Rachel clutches her son to her breast, crying with him as she NOTICES --

Church slinking back into the bedroom.

She glances over the balcony, noticing the toy lying below.

OFF her face as she puts this all together we --

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rachel sobs as Louis consoles her.

RACHEL

*It happened so fast. I went to
make a cup of tea and he was gone.*

LOUIS

Shhh. It's okay. Everyone's okay.

Rachel looks up at Louis, deep fear in her eyes --

RACHEL

*He must have followed Church up the
stairs. I just don't get it...*

Louis stares at her for a BEAT, his mind spinning. Then he turns, pulling on his jacket. As he heads for the door --

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

CUT TO:

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE on Jud's face looking at us.

JUD

I was exactly Ellie's age when
Biffer got hit. Guy who did it was
drunk. Made me swear not to tell
my parents what happened.

REVERSE to reveal Louis sitting across from Jud.

JUD (CONT'D)

He told me he could fix my dog.
Said he knew how to bring him back.

Louis takes a swallow from a glass of whisky. Transfixed.

JUD (CONT'D)

He took me up to that place, the
marsh behind the pet cemetery.
Said people around here been using
it for years.

LOUIS

Using it for what?

JUD

To fix the dead.

Jud reaches for his whisky as this hangs in the air --

JUD (CONT'D)

You gotta understand, Louis... I
never thought Church would be any
trouble. He was so gentle. Just a
big, lazy cat...

There's something more in Jud's eyes. Something hidden.

LOUIS

What happened with Biffer?

Jud takes a breath. This is hard. He looks at Louis --

JUD

He came back. Just like the man
said he would. Was fine for a
while, too...

LOUIS

Then what?

JUD

Something had changed. He was
mean. Started biting people. Damn
dog nearly ripped the tendons out
of my mother's leg.

(MORE)

JUD (CONT'D)

That's when my daddy put him
down... for the second time.

Louis' eyes harden, his hands shaking --

LOUIS

That night in the graveyard. You
were already planning on going
there, weren't you?

A long BEAT, then the truth comes spilling out --

JUD

That place gets inside you. Some
part of me always knew I'd go back.
I needed to see it again.

LOUIS

That was our cat. He nearly killed
Gage today!!

Jud looks up, pleading with Louis --

JUD

God, I'm sorry, Louis. I was
wrong. The ground up there is
sour. It's sour...

LOUIS

Jesus. What do I do..?

JUD

Whatever killed the Mi'kmaq is
still alive. It lives in that
swamp. And it's inside Church now.
(beat)
You have to kill him, Louis. It's
not safe to have that cat around.

OFF Louis' face we --

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The room is empty and dark. After a BEAT, we SEE --

A CAT SHADOW moving across the wall.

The shadow walks around the room heading for the CAT DOOR.

The cat door jiggles as Church pushes through. He walks over
to the door leading to the rest of the house.

But there's a chair wedged under the knob. Church freezes.

A figure moves in the shadows behind him. Louis has been sitting in the dark, waiting for Church to come home.

He reaches over sliding the barrier on the cat door closed.

Church turns as Louis steps closer, facing off with him.

LOUIS

Game over.

CLOSE on Church as he hisses and we --

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Louis holding the cat to the work bench with one hand in a gardening glove as he reaches for a syringe with the other.

Church hisses and claws at him. Defiant.

LOUIS

Hold still. Just like going to sleep...

Church stops fighting, switching his tactics. He looks up at Louis. Frightened. Helpless. Innocent.

The syringe quivers in Louis' hand. He puts it down.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Dammit.

He looks over to see the plastic PET CARRIER in the corner.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Louis winds up a mountainous road, the carrier on the seat next to him. Church watches him through the wire door.

Louis drives past mountains and lakes, deep into the National Forest. A sign reads: FOREST SERVICE VEHICLES ONLY.

Louis kills the engine.

EXT. NATIONAL FOREST ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Louis sets the pet carrier on the road, flipping the door open. Church steps out, looking up at Louis.

LOUIS

Good luck.

CLOSE on Church in the middle of the road as Louis walks back to the car and drives away. OFF the cat watching him we --

CUT TO:

EXT. CREED HOUSE - BIRTHDAY SEQUENCE - DAY

Cars parked along the driveway, people mingling in the yard. Kids run around in packs on the lawn, chasing each other.

A table decked out with balloons, a cake with a giant number 3 candle. Rachel sips mimosas with GIRLFRIENDS from Boston.

Louis sees Ellie sitting off by herself. He crosses the party, sitting next to Ellie on a bench.

LOUIS

(to Ellie)

Stephanie was looking for you.

ELLIE

I know... I just...

LOUIS

You still thinking about Church?

She looks up at her dad, nodding with tears in her eyes.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I got you something so he'll never be too far.

Louis pulls out a silver necklace with a CAT PENDANT.

ELLIE

But... it's Gage's birthday today.

LOUIS

I know but I thought you could use something, too.

Ellie wipes her tears, turning around so her father can clasp it around her neck. Her fingers move to the silver cat.

ELLIE

I love it, daddy. Thank you.

Louis hugs Ellie and then stands up, indicating the party --

LOUIS

Now go have some fun, okay?

Ellie runs off as we CUT TO --

VARIOUS SHOTS from the party. Ellie and her friend Stephanie dancing in the grass, kids playing games in the yard, Louis and Rachel corral everyone around a cake to sing.

EVERYONE

*Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you...*

Ellie lifts Gage up, holding him so he can reach the candle.

EVERYONE (CONT'D)

*Happy birthday to Gaaa-aage,
Happy birthday to you!!*

Everyone cheers as Gage blows out the candle.

JUD

Good lungs on that kid!

The kids all jockey for cake as Rachel and Louis pass out plates and pour champagne. Ellie drifts away from the party.

She stands back away from the group, noticing something through the parked cars. An animal walking in the road.

Ellie wanders over to the road. Gage sees her and follows as she slides through parked cars, not believing her eyes --

A cat is walking down the middle of the street.

ELLIE

Church?

Ellie doesn't notice Gage as she walks forward in disbelief.

ELLIE'S POV as heat from the asphalt distorts Church's image like a hero from an old western as he walks toward her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Church!

BACK IN THE PARTY: Rachel looks around for Gage.

RACHEL

Louis, do you have Gage?

LOUIS

Don't you have him?

Louis looks around. There's kids everywhere. It's chaos.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Gage?

ON THE ROAD: Church is huge in the frame now. He's been walking for days. Epic. Determined. Evil.

Rachel sees Gage by the driveway, slipping through the cars.

RACHEL

Over there. By the road!

Louis heads toward the road when a group of KIDS suddenly swarm him, laughing and trying to pull him to the ground.

SCREAMING KIDS

HE'S THE NEW MONSTER! GET HIM!!!

Kids jump on Louis, hanging on his arms and legs.

LOUIS

Guys! I'm not playing monster.

Rachel runs across the lawn past Louis, chasing after Gage --

RACHEL

Gage! Out of the road!

Church sits in the middle of the road as Ellie approaches.

ELLIE

I knew you'd come home.

Rachel hears a DIESEL ENGINE. An 18 WHEELER approaching.

RACHEL

Gage! Stop!

But Rachel doesn't see Ellie and Church down the street. Her eyes are locked on Gage as he wanders into the road.

The truck roars around the bend, gears shifting. Rachel has seconds to act, running for the road.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Gaaaaaaage!!!

Gage looks back at his mother. The truck is upon him!

Rachel takes two more steps then LUNGES in front of the truck, dragging Gage to safety on the other side. As they hit the ground, she rolls over, looking back to SEE --

Ellie and Church in the impact zone. The cat darts away but Ellie simply turns, paralyzed as the truck races at her.

She throws up her hands, bracing for IMPACT as we --

CUT TO BLACK.

A long beat of SILENCE. A church bell begins to toll as we begin to see SPLINTERED FLASHES of the aftermath --

GLONG! Louis running up to Ellie as blood spreads below her.

GLONG! Flashing lights on kids' faces, watching in shock.

GLONG! Birthday decorations blowing across the lawn.

GLONG! Ellie lies face down on a table as a MORTICIAN staples a flap of skin back onto her skull.

GLONG! MOURNERS stand around a grave in a local cemetery.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Rachel and Louis stand by the grave holding Gage's hand.

It's cold. Summer has broken. Fall around the corner. This time the image doesn't fade. Instead, we stay on Rachel and Louis as the MINISTER finishes his eulogy.

As he lowers his bible, all eyes turn to Rachel. She steps up to a pile of FRESH EARTH, a small shovel sticking out.

RACHEL'S POV into the grave. A kid size coffin below.

She reaches for the shovel but can't bring herself to do it. Louis' hand closing around hers. They'll do it together.

Now looking up from inside the grave as Louis and Rachel scoop a pile of dirt and toss it down into the hole.

The dirt lands on us, wiping us to BLACK.

A long BEAT then --

FADE IN:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - THREE DAYS LATER

RACHEL'S PARENTS wait in their Mercedes with Gage as Louis loads the bags into the trunk. Rachel approaches behind him and he turns. She's shattered, eyes red from crying.

For a BEAT there's nothing to say. Then --

RACHEL

I can't do this, Louis... please...
I don't want to leave you here.

Louis holds her close, trying to stay strong.

LOUIS

I have to transfer my patients and
close my office. Three days tops.

The sun flickers through the trees. Louis squints at Rachel.

RACHEL

You shouldn't be by yourself. We
can stay with you...

Louis glances over at Gage waiting in the car --

LOUIS

It's better Gage isn't here. I'll
come and meet you.

He closes the trunk of the car, turning to Rachel. A long
BEAT as he moves the hair out of her eyes. They hug again.

RACHEL

(whispering)
God, Louis, I miss her so much.

Louis holds Rachel tighter, eventually glancing up to SEE --

Church sitting on the porch in the background. Watching him.

His blood turns to ice. He pulls out of the hug.

LOUIS

Better get going. Your parents
don't like to drive in the dark.

Rachel gets in the car as Rachel's father backs down the
driveway. Louis waves at Gage until they're out of sight --

Then he turns to face the house. And that cat.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATER

Louis comes around the side of the house.

He's carrying a white garbage bag with a CAT SIZED LUMP.

Louis shoves the bag into the trash bin and drops the lid.

He turns and walks away. Numb. As he comes around the front of the house, he pauses... looking out to the woods...

LOUIS POV of the trail leading up to the cemetery and beyond.

He pushes that thought away walking quickly inside.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louis sits in front of a plate of untouched food. His knee bouncing up and down nervously, lost in thought.

He pushes the food away, going to the cabinet and pulling down a bottle of whisky.

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Footsteps on the porch. The door swings open to REVEAL --

Louis standing there, poison thoughts stirring in his head.

He holds out a bottle of scotch.

LOUIS

I could use some company.

Jud goes to fetch a couple glasses. He drops ice into them and comes back, setting them on the coffee table.

JUD

Saw Rachel leave earlier. Imagine she took Gage with her?

Louis pours two stiff whiskies. Jud takes his and sits back in his chair, firing up a cigarette. Louis nods.

LOUIS

Boston. Her parent's house.

JUD

What about the cat?

LOUIS

I took care of it.

Jud watches Louis for a moment, drinking his whisky.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Branches sway. Moonlight piercing the canopy from above.

We see Louis and Jud talking through the window.

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - LATER

Time has passed. Ashtray full. Louis on the couch, watching as Jud tries to stamp out his cigarette. He's drunk.

JUD

This is my fault. I should never
have shown you that place...

Louis looks down, barely able to hear those words.

LOUIS

We both had a hand in it.

JUD

Grief poisons a man. It makes you
do things...

Louis watches Jud. The old man is slurring now, delirious.

JUD (CONT'D)

It won't stop now. It used Church
to get to Ellie. It wants more.

Jud looks up at Louis, suddenly focused, eyes wet with tears.

JUD (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Louis. Ellie was the
first person to touch my heart in a
a long time. I didn't want to see
her go through all that pain...

The glass slips from Jud's hand, falling to the rug.

JUD (CONT'D)

Dammit...

Jud tries to stand up, losing balance. Louis comes over.

LOUIS

Take it easy. I'll clean this up.

JUD

Just need to close my eyes.

Louis stands over Jud, looking down as he passes out, then --

Thump, thump, thump...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The sound of tires as LANE MARKERS whiz below us.

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Louis drives through town, face dark and determined.

On the seat we see a bunch of ROPE, two SHOVELS, a plastic TARP, a BUCKET. The bottle of whisky.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Louis drives slowly past the FUNERAL HOME where we saw Ellie's service, following the brick wall around to the back.

He shuts off the engine and lights, coasting quietly to a stop by the WROUGHT IRON GATES of the rear service entrance.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

A tarp wrapped around tools hits the ground with a THUD.

A moment later, Louis drops to the ground. He stands up, wiping dirt of his torn pants. As he starts to collect his tools, we hear a CAR approaching. He turns to SEE --

A POLICE CAR making rounds.

Louis quickly grabs his tools, diving behind a pair of headstones. He rolls onto his back, holding his breath.

The police car slows outside the gate, using a SEARCHLIGHT to scan the lock and the chains.

The light sweeps just over Louis' head.

Then he notices his SHOVEL lying out in the open grass.

As the light swings away, he reaches out and pulls the shovel out of sight. The light swings back. It holds for a BEAT --

Then the police car moves on.

Louis gets up on his knees, watching as the police car rolls around the corner. He quickly gathers his tools and ducks into the graveyard.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - ELLIE'S GRAVE - LATER

A headstone by a freshly dug grave: **May 9, 2006 - July 19, 2016. Eleanor Rose Creed. Our beloved daughter.**

Louis drops his tools, staring at the name. The gruesome nature of his task sinking in. He leans on a nearby tree and vomits. Then he unfolds the tarp and picks up a shovel --

And starts to dig.

VARIOUS SHOTS of Louis digging. Shovel hitting ground. Back breaking work. Dripping with sweat. The hole goes deeper. He's waist deep now using the bucket to bring the soil up.

LATER Louis is deep in the hole. We can only see the top of Louis' head and the occasional shovel moving. More dirt.

THUD! The dull, hollow sound of wood. Louis clears away soil from around the lid of the casket and slides the tip of the shovel into the seam. He leans down --

CRAAAACK!!! Wood creaks and groans, starting to give way.

CASKET POV looking up as the casket opens to REVEAL --

Louis standing over us. A length of rope in his hand. He stares down, emotions washing over him as he whispers --

LOUIS

Just going to slide this rope
around your chest... gonna get you
out of here... take you home...

As he voice fades we --

CUT TO:

EXT. CREED HOUSE - NIGHT

Louis crosses the lawn with Ellie's body slung across his arms. As he ducks through the trees, he looks at over at JUD'S HOUSE. A single light in the window. No movement.

Jud is still passed out.

Louis slips up the trail, disappearing into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Louis hikes up the dark trail, cradling Ellie's body as he walks. He passes under the PET SEMATARY sign, heading deeper into the woods. Determined. Possessed.

As he passes some trees we catch a quick GLIMPSE of --

A PERSON standing in the shadows. Watching him.

Louis doesn't notice as he continues up the dark trail.

EXT. PET CEMETERY - NIGHT

Louis steps out into the pet cemetery, thin shafts of moonlight illuminating the tilted markers and stones.

He still holds Ellie in his arms, her dress spilling out over his hands, legs bouncing stiffly as he walks.

Louis approaches the DEADFALL, pausing to shift Ellie's body in his hands as he prepares to climb the pile of branches.

VICTOR PASKOW (O.S.)
Stop, Louis... this is wrong...

Louis pauses. Sensing the presence in the cemetery.

He turns, squinting into the darkness.

Mist curls around the stones. There's no one there.

Louis takes a breath, collecting himself. He's exhausted.

Finally, he turns back to the deadfall into --

Victor Paskow blocking his way. Face still wet with blood.

Louis stumbles back, nearly tripping over a grave marker.

LOUIS
Get away from me!!!

As his voice rings out he looks again. Victor is gone.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
(quietly to himself)
You're not even real...

Louis looks down at Ellie's face in the moonlight. She's beautiful and innocent. Even in this horrible state.

He approaches the deadfall again and begins to climb.

EXT. MARSHY BOG - NIGHT

Louis stumbles into frame, coming to the edge of the water with Ellie's body in his arms. He stands for a moment, a silhouette against the black water. Staring out at --

The mound of dirt peeking up through the fog.

Louis pushes out into the water, wading over to the ground in the center of the bog. As he lays Ellie's body down --

We hear the WHISPERING VOICES in the trees.

The voices rise, swirling like the wind in shifting layers.

ANGLE on Ellie's face. Eyes closed in the moonlight.

Louis reaches for a stone on the ground, slamming it into the dirt. CLOSE as he digs, rips, pulls away dirt. Obsessed.

As he digs we WIDEN to REVEAL --

The wild dog from the opening on the shore of the marsh.

Watching Louis dig with its pure black eyes.

LATER.

Louis sits over a shallow grave. Hands black with dirt.

As he turns to pull Ellie's body into the hole he SEES --

Her eyes are open now. Staring right at him.

The VOICES are louder now. Powerful. Growing urgent as --

Louis quickly drags Ellie into the shallow grave.

LOUIS
I'm sorry, baby...

Ellie's feet disappear, her legs, her dress, her hands.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry...

Louis pulls the last of the dirt over Ellie's face.

The voices suddenly stop. Louis turns away from the grave, ashamed and sick to his stomach in the horrible silence.

Then his face changes. *What has he just done?*

He drops to his knees, pulling the loose dirt away --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
No, Ellie... no, no! I'm sorry...

But there's nothing there. Ellie's body is gone.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

HOT WATER pounds Louis as he sits on the floor of the shower.

He's been there for hours trying to scrub the black dirt off his hands. A phone rings somewhere in the house.

Louis ignores it. In the background we HEAR --

RACHEL (ON MACHINE)
Louis, hey it's me. Please pick
up. I really need to talk to you.
(beat)
Shit, okay. I'll try you at the
clinic. Just call me when you can.

Louis looks up, eyes vacant. A worm of fear in his stomach.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Louis busies himself in the yard, picking up the kid's toys.

He glances over at the woods.

LOUIS' POV of that trail leading up into the trees.

There's no sign of movement. No sign of Ellie.

He goes back inside.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Louis pushes the door open and steps inside. He hasn't been in here since Ellie's death. It's dark and musty.

He opens the shades and cracks the window. He strips the bed and puts on new sheets. He arranges her stuffed animals.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Louis shoves his muddy clothes in the trash. He looks down --

The bag with Church's body is there.

Then we hear a SOUND nearby, something moving through the trees. Louis walks slowly around the side of the house --
 There's nothing. Just trees and shadows. He seems deflated.
 When he turns back around --

JUD IS STANDING BEHIND HIM.

JUD
 What time you leave last night? I
 must've passed out...

Louis closes the garbage bin to conceal his muddy clothes.

LOUIS
 I don't know, around midnight...

Jud notices Louis' hands. Raw and blistered from digging.

JUD
 Wanna play some cards? I could
 cook something on the grill.

Louis slides his hands into his pockets, moving to the door.

LOUIS
 Maybe tomorrow. I need to start
 packing...

JUD
 I'll bring some food over. You're
 gonna have to take a break...

Louis slips back into the house --

LOUIS
 It's okay, Jud. Rachel left me
 plenty of food.

OFF Jud's face, watching as the door closes we --

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louis sits at the table, talking to Rachel on the phone --

LOUIS (INTO PHONE)
 Has he been asking about Ellie?
 (beat, he sighs)
 House is almost done. Still have
 to finish up at the clinic...

A DOOR creaks somewhere in the house. Louis looks up.

 LOUIS (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Rachel... hang on a minute...

Louis peeks into the hallway, holding the phone in his hand --

The house is dark and quiet.

He walks down the hallway into --

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Louis stands in the middle of the room. We can hear Rachel still talking on the other end as he looks around.

There's a soft tapping noise. He turns around to SEE --

The front door is open. The screen tapping in the wind.

 LOUIS (INTO PHONE)
 Rach, sorry. I think Jud is coming
 over. Let me call you in the
 morning. I will. Love you, too.

Louis hangs up the phone, setting it down. He walks toward the front door, peering out the window at the empty yard.

He opens the door, stepping out onto --

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Wood creaks under his weight, moths flutter around the light.

Louis comes down onto the grass, standing for a moment in the yard. The screen door taps behind him in the wind.

Louis shivers, his mind playing tricks. Still nothing there.

As he comes back up the porch, Louis freezes on the top step.

ELLIE'S MUD COVERED SHOES SIT BY THE FRONT DOOR.

Louis steps closer, barely able to breathe.

The shoes Ellie was buried in. Thick with black mud.

There's a small muddy HAND PRINT on the wall by the door.

Louis pulls the screen door open, stepping back into --

INT. CREED HOUSE - NIGHT

Louis steps into the room. Empty spaces and shadows suddenly feel huge, the silence filled with tension and dread.

We hear a creak on the ceiling and he looks at the stairs.

LOUIS
(barely audible)
El?

Louis starts up the stairs, pausing at the top. The hallway is dark and long. Ellie's door hangs open --

A light spills out of her room. The purple night light.

Then something moves. A SHADOW fluttering inside the room.

Louis comes down the hallway, heart pounding. The shadow inside the room twists and turns as he reaches for the door --

Louis approaches the door, pulling it open to SEE --

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The night light on. Purple butterflies float across the wall. Both windows are open, curtains fluttering in the breeze. That's what was making the shadow.

Louis walks across the room, closing the windows. Then he pauses, sensing something behind him in the closet --

The same closet where Church hid when he first returned.

Louis walks over, hand pulling the door open to REVEAL --

Nothing inside but Ellie's clothes and toys.

He turns back to the room, thinking, nerves tense.

There's something under the bed. A dark shadow. He comes over to the bed, slowly lifting up the skirt to SEE --

A rumpled white dress caked in mud.

Louis pulls Ellie's dress out, unfolding it in his hands.

Lace ripped and stained with black muddy dirt.

As he stares down in shock at the dress we HEAR --

BARE FEET running down the hall.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Louis comes out of door, looking around. The hall is empty.

LOUIS

Ellie?

She's playing a game. He steps out, heading down the stairs.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

A HAND reaches inside, clicking on the overhead light. Louis looks into the darkness, terrified of what he might find.

The bulb overhead makes his shadow long as he comes down the stairs. He peeks under the work bench. Nothing there.

He turns to the CUBBY HOLE. Ellie's secret hiding place.

Louis comes over, kneeling down. He reaches out, taking hold of the small curtain, hands shaking as he pulls it open --

The cubby is empty.

Louis deflates again. Is this real? Is he losing his mind?

As he sits back up we NOTICE --

ELLIE CROUCHED IN THE SHADOWS BEHIND HIM!!

Her head is lowered, looking out of the top of her eyes, body caked with dried black mud, hair hanging in stringy clumps

RACK FOCUS to bring her into focus. Eyes glued to Louis.

Louis doesn't see her. He's too absorbed in disappointment as she rises up to standing, coming closer, reaching out with tiny mud caked fingers, hand coming to rest on his shoulder --

ELLIE

Daddy.

Louis screams, spinning around. He slides backwards across the floor, breathing rapidly, terrified. Staring at Ellie.

But she's shivering. Her body cold. Terrified and confused.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Where am I?

Louis' terror melts away, his father instincts kicking in as he goes to Ellie, wrapping his arms around her.

LOUIS
You're home, baby.

CLOSE on Louis' face, holding Ellie tight --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Home.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Ellie sits in the tub, knees sticking out of dark grey water with pieces of SWAMP GRASS floating around her.

LOUIS
Tilt your head back.

She does. Louis gently pours water over her head, careful not to get it in her eyes. She looks straight ahead.

Louis brushes out Ellie's hair, pulling gently down through heavy strands. Ellie winces as he gets caught on a tangle.

ELLIE
Ouch.

Louis notices clumps of hair in the brush. He pulls them out and drops them in the wastebasket, going back to brushing.

Ellie winces again --

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Daddy.

LOUIS
Sorry. Mom usually does this.

He pulls the brush away from her head. There's something under the hair he keeps getting snagged on --

Louis uses his fingers to slide her hair aside to REVEAL --

MORTICIAN'S STAPLES holding the back of her scalp down.

Louis closes his eyes, turning away. He lets the hair fall back over the wound. Ellie looks up in the mirror.

ELLIE
What is it?

Louis swallows, pushing the horrific truth away.

LOUIS
Just a tangle.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ellie lies in her bed, covers pulled up as Louis turns down the lights. She shivers, scared. Louis sits with her.

LOUIS
What is it, honey?

ELLIE
Church is gone. Isn't he?

She watches his face, searching for the truth --

LOUIS
(lying)
The truck in the road hit him.

Ellie sits up, eyes locked on Louis --

ELLIE
No, it didn't. The truck hit me.

Louis freezes. Ellie's eyes clear and dark. Focused on him.

LOUIS
Church is dead, honey. I'm sorry.

Louis gets up to turn down the light. Behind him we HEAR --

ELLIE
(soft whisper)
So am I.

Louis spins around. *Did he just hear that correctly?*

Ellie looks up at him with huge, sorrowful eyes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Can I sleep with you tonight? I'm
scared.

Louis swallows, blood going cold. He nods slowly --

LOUIS
Of course, honey. Come on...

A flicker of a sinister smile in Ellie's eyes as she slides out of bed, reaching for Louis' hand.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Louis lies in bed, staring at the ceiling. Ellie lies facing him, curled up under the covers. She reaches out with her finger, tracing it across his face. He can barely breathe.

ELLIE

Where's mommy and Gage?

Louis glances over at her --

LOUIS

They went to Grandma and grandpa's
for a couple days.

ELLIE

When are they coming back?

She watches his eyes. Searching his face for the truth.

LOUIS

A couple more days...

Ellie keeps her eyes on him. He's hiding something.

ELLIE

Does mommy know what you did?

LOUIS

Shh, baby. It's late. Time to
sleep.

Louis reaches over and clicks off the light. As he lies back on his pillow, Ellie has moved closer. Inches from his face.

ELLIE

Love you, daddy.

LOUIS

(terrified)
Love you too, El.

Louis closes his eyes, praying for sleep to take him.

MOVE IN on Ellie's face, lying in the darkness, eyes open.

Staring at Louis in the moonlight.

EXT. CREED HOUSE - MORNING

Gage's tricycle sits in the driveway, grass slick with dew.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Louis wakes up in bed with a start. He rolls over but Ellie is gone. He looks around the bed, heart skipping a beat.

LOUIS

Ellie???

Then we hear something. Music on the stereo downstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Louis comes down the stairs in disbelief. Ellie is there and she's doing what she loves most. She's dancing.

Louis comes into the room, watching as she gets lost in the graceful joy of the dance. Spins around. Alive and free.

It's beautiful, sweet, tender, gentle. Tears flow down Louis' face but he's not sad. His heart is full again.

Ellie sees him and smiles. Spinning faster and laughing.

LOUIS

Careful, sweetie...

Ellie lets out an excited yell as she twirls past Louis.

Now her movements are too fast. Aggressive and dangerous, striking the wall, kicking over a chair.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Ellie, stop it! Stop!

But she can't. She won't. She's out of control.

Louis tries to grab her but she bites his arm and ducks away.

Running past Louis and down the hallway, out into --

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ellie bursts out of the house, laughing and breathing hard.

She pauses for a moment, feeling the sun on her face. It's glorious. Louis appears in the doorway, looking around.

LOUIS

Ellie! Dammit! Get back inside.

Ellie's face sharpens, her eyes convicting him --

ELLIE
No! I like it out here.

Louis runs after Ellie but she takes off around the house --

LOUIS
Goddammit, Ellie... *come back!!*

Louis dives for her but she ducks away, sprinting around the garbage bins and down the side of the house to --

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Ellie swoops across the open lawn with her arms outstretched like an airplane as Louis comes running up behind her.

ELLIE
Can't catch me!

She turns backwards, mocking Louis as she comes around the corner of the house and bumps into --

Jud standing in the path.

Ellie stops, looking up at him as Louis comes up behind, panting. Jud stares down in horror at Ellie. In shock.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(playful)
Hi, Jud!

She moves to hug him. Jud steps back. He doesn't trust her.

JUD
Ellie.

Jud looks up at Louis. His secret exposed.

LOUIS
(sharp, to Ellie)
Get back inside.

Ellie looks from her father to Jud. Then she turns, walking casually over to the house, lingering in the doorway.

ELLIE
Can't I just stand right here?

LOUIS
No. Inside. Now.

Ellie sticks her tongue out at Louis and goes inside.

Jud turns to Louis, fuming behind his cold eyes.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
What was I supposed to do?

JUD
What everyone else does. *You're supposed to suffer.*

ELLIE peeks through the curtain, watching Louis and Jud.

LOUIS
I'll take care of it.

JUD
You couldn't even put Church down --

LOUIS
(angry)
None of this would've happened if you hadn't shown me that place!!!

Jud drops his eyes. He knows this is true.

JUD
I couldn't stop myself... that place gets into your blood...

He looks up at Louis, determined --

JUD (CONT'D)
(whispering)
She's gonna go bad. Just like Biffer did. Just like Church.

LOUIS
What was I supposed to do? I just wanted to tuck her into bed one more time, kiss her goodnight...

Louis hands his head, ashamed.

JUD
Ellie's not a cat, Louis. She's dangerous.

LOUIS
She's my daughter.

ELLIE'S POV: listening and watching as Jud speaks --

JUD
Not anymore.

Jud turns and walks back to his house. After a BEAT, Louis reaches for the door, heading inside as --

ELLIE

BOO!!!

Ellie jumps out from behind the door, laughing.

LOUIS

Jesus, El. Please don't do that.

ELLIE

Try and find me!

Ellie runs away as Louis steps inside and closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ellie sits on the couch, watching quietly as Louis begins packing up the house into boxes.

We see his DOCTOR BAG sitting on the table.

ELLIE

Why are you packing up?

Louis stops packing for a moment, glancing over --

LOUIS

We're going back to Boston for a little while.

Ellie watches him closely. Searching for the truth.

ELLIE

All of us?

Louis looks her straight in the face --

LOUIS

Yes. All of us.

A BEAT while this lie hangs in the room. Then --

The phone rings. Louis glances at the screen.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

It's mommy.

Ellie gets up, coming closer --

ELLIE

Oh, can I talk to her?

Louis steps back, holding the phone away from Ellie --

LOUIS
Not quite yet, okay? I don't think
she's ready.

Ellie pouts, standing just behind Louis as he answers --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Rachel, hi. How are you guys?

MOVE in on Ellie's face listening as we --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BEAUTIFUL BOSTON HOME - DAY

Rachel sits in her parents' home. THROUGH THE WINDOW we see her MOTHER and FATHER playing with Gage in the back yard.

RACHEL
I was getting worried. You've
haven't been calling me back.

LOUIS
Been busy with the house.

Something is off in Louis' voice.

RACHEL
Don't keep things from me. If
you're having a hard time, I should
be there with you.

Louis glances at Ellie, lowering his voice --

LOUIS
I just need some space right now.

RACHEL
God, Louis. Why do you do this?
Gage misses you. I miss you.

Louis closes his eyes, tears streaming down his cheeks --

LOUIS
I miss you, too.

RACHEL
I'm bringing Gage back for the
weekend. He'll cheer you up.

LOUIS
No, Rach. Don't do that.

MOVE in on Ellie standing just behind her dad. She smiles.

RACHEL
Stop arguing. We're coming out
tomorrow. Just for a couple days.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ellie in her pajamas sitting in front of a bowl of cereal.

Louis sits across from her, watching as she lifts the spoon to her mouth. Food tastes strange to her now. Foreign.

She sets the spoon down, pushing the bowl away.

ELLIE
Not hungry.

Louis nods, taking the bowl to the sink. He pauses for a moment, looking out at the trees.

Then he NOTICES --

Ellie standing behind him in the reflection.

Just like Church did that first night he came back.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What did you and Jud talk about?

Louis turns, facing Ellie. She moves closer, watching him.

LOUIS
He was just surprised to see you
back, is all...

ELLIE
I can tell when you lie.

Louis looks over at her. What else does she know?

LOUIS
It's nothing. He's just concerned.

Ellie moves closer, staring up at him. Louis can't move back any further, body pressing up against the sink.

Then Ellie holds out her hand with a creepy smile.

ELLIE
Can we go to bed now?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis sleeps in the bed as wind rattles the windows.

PAN over to SEE --

Ellie watching him in the darkness. After a BEAT --

She quietly slips out of bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie stands in front of her father's medical bag on the table. Her hand slips inside, feeling for something.

CLOSE as she pulls out his shining SCALPEL.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Rain pours down through the trees, hitting the leaves in heavy wet drops. We hear something moving in the woods as --

Jud steps into frame. His huge body in silhouette, watching the Creed House through the trees.

Jud moves closer, moving a branch to get a better look --

A light is on in Ellie's room. The window open, curtains billowing in the wind. After a BEAT they settle, revealing --

Ellie standing in the window. Looking out at the woods. Her eyes are closed, head tilted slightly back.

Jud moves closer, pulling a branch aside to see better.

The curtains billow again, blocking our view of Ellie. As the wind settles she comes back into view and we SEE --

SHE'S LOOKING RIGHT AT US!

Jud pulls back into the trees, heart racing. Rain comes down around him as he builds the courage to look again --

This time, Ellie is gone. The window is empty.

Jud turns back, heading for his house.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie comes out the front door. Looking around. She steps slowly down the stairs, walking out into --

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Ellie crosses the grass. There's something in her hand. The moonlight hits the tiny SCALPEL, glinting in the light.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Ellie sneaks through the trees toward Jud's house. She pauses, seeing a light in the window. As she moves closer --

Jud lunges out of the bushes, trying to grab her!

Ellie swings the knife, slicing Jud's hand. He slips backwards as she scampers away into the woods.

Jud pulls himself up, reaching for his light.

JUD'S POV of the dark woods. Ellie is nowhere to be found.

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jud comes around the front of his house to SEE --

The front door is open.

He comes up the wooden steps, pausing at the threshold.

JUD

Ellie. Come on out of there.

FOLLOW as Jud walks slowly through the door into --

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jud stands in the dark room, eyes adjusting to the light. He listens to the empty room, taxidermy staring silently at him.

As he crosses to the kitchen we catch a GLIMPSE of --

Ellie passing across a doorway behind him.

Jud spins around, heart pounding.

JUD
Dammit, Ellie. Just come out.

Jud walks to a drawer, reaching in to pull out a REVOLVER.

He clicks it open to check the bullets. It's full. He flips the chamber closed, walking to the kitchen.

JUD (CONT'D)
I just want to talk to you.

No answer from the house. He moves through a door into a long, dark hallway leading to his bathroom and bedroom.

Jud stands in the hallway for a beat. His bedroom door is open. He takes a few cautious steps, gun held out.

JUD (CONT'D)
I know you're scared. I'm scared,
too.

Jud moves down the hallway to the bathroom. He holds the gun with one hand as he slowly turns the knob with the other --

Pushing the door open and sweeping the gun around.

The bathroom is empty. Just a toilet, empty bath, sink.

Jud backs up, continuing down the hallway to his bedroom.

He taps the door with his foot and it swings open slowly with a horrible creak. He inches forward into the room --

The bedroom is empty. Moonlight filtering through curtains.

Jud moves around the bed to the closet. He opens it to SEE --

Nothing but old clothes hanging there. He peeks behind them.

He turns, walking past the bed as we DRIFT DOWN to reveal --

Ellie under the bed. Gleaming SCALPEL clutched in her hand.

She screams, swinging her hand out with the blade and --

Slicing Jud's ACHILLES TENDON.

Jud screams, falling to the ground. He rolls over on his side to see Ellie sliding backwards under the bed and aims --

BAM! BAM!! Jud fires two shots under the bed but Ellie is gone. He moans, his leg bleeding badly as he tries to pull himself up but his foot won't support his weight.

Jud rolls onto his back, taking a breath --

JUD (CONT'D)
Come on out, Ellie. Where are you?

He pushes himself up with one hand, craning his head to look around the dark room. No sign of Ellie anywhere.

He rolls onto his knees, sitting up higher as we NOTICE --
Ellie crouched on the dresser behind him like a FERAL CAT.

Jud freezes, sensing Ellie's presence --

CLOSE on his hand: silently cocking his revolver.

Ellie screams, leaping from the dresser into the air --

The knife flashing in the light as Jud spins and fires!

The bullet hits a photo on the wall, shattering the glass as Ellie lands on Jud, knocking him to the ground and SLAMMING --

The scalpel into his chest.

Jud gasps, grabbing Ellie with his hands, holding her back --

ELLIE
(struggling)
I thought we were friends?

JUD
I was friends with Ellie. Not you.

Ellie smiles at Jud. Her eyes have gone PURE BLACK.

Evil like that black swamp water.

JUD (CONT'D)
Let your parents live. Ellie's
death was punishment enough...

Ellie reaches down, forcing the revolver in Jud's hand to point back under his chin.

ELLIE
You don't know what punishment is.

HARD CUT TO:

Ellie sits up behind him in the bed. She smiles.

ELLIE
Mommy's home.

Louis comes to Ellie, pleading with his eyes. He knows that she's the one in control.

LOUIS
Maybe you can give her a little
time to get adjusted before..?

ELLIE
Don't you think she'll be happy to
see me?

Something in Louis melts. He still sees her as his daughter.

LOUIS
Of course, honey. It's just, it's
going to take some time.

ELLIE
Maybe I should hide? Like a game?

Louis gets the chills. This doesn't feel like a game to him.

LOUIS
Okay, great. I'll go talk to her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Louis comes slowly down the stairs as we HEAR --

Footsteps on the porch. The front door opens and Gage bursts inside, running up to his father.

GAGE
Daddy, daddy, daddy!!!

Louis scoops Gage into his arms, hugging his son.

LOUIS
I missed you so much. Wait a
second, did you get bigger?

Gage squeals with laughter as his dad lifts him up and down.

Then Louis notices Rachel in the doorway. He sets Gage down.

RACHEL
Hi.

LOUIS

Hi.

They come together, hugging. This is the first time in days that Louis has felt fully alive. He doesn't want to let go.

RACHEL

Oh, babe. I missed you.

LOUIS

I missed you, too.

Rachel walks into the house. She pauses, looking around.

Nothing has been packed.

RACHEL

What happened? I thought you'd been packing this whole time?

LOUIS

It was hard, Rach...

Rach moves around seeing Ellie's sneakers by the wall, her scooter by the door, her sweatshirt on a chair.

She shakes her head, looking back at Louis --

RACHEL

What are you doing? This is all Ellie's stuff.

Gage walks to the stairs as a SHADOW appears on the wall.

But Rachel is absorbed with Louis, deeply concerned --

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Are you doing this on purpose?
Trying to punish yourself?

ON THE STAIRS Ellie moves into view. She puts her finger to her lips indicating for Gage to be quiet.

GAGE

Mommy!

Rachel doesn't respond. She's staring at Louis. Furious.

LOUIS

Rach, it's not like that --

RACHEL

This is why I wanted to leave. How do we explain this to Gage?

Gage is tugging on his mother's shirt now, pointing at something. Rachel looks down at him --

RACHEL (CONT'D)
What is it, honey?

GAGE
Ellie. Ellie. Ellie-phant!

ELLIE
(softly)
Don't call me that.

Rachel looks over in shock as Ellie steps closer.

Rachel screams, pushing herself backwards along the floor until she hits the wall. She's going into shock.

GAGE
See, mommy? Ellie!

Rachel gasps, trying to form words. She looks to Louis --

RACHEL
How this is happening..?

LOUIS
That place behind the Pet Cemetery where Jud and I buried Church... it's a special place, Rach. It has power.

Rachel glances at Ellie in horror, then back to Louis --

RACHEL
I don't... this can't be real...

LOUIS
It's real. It worked with Church, too. It brings things back.

Ellie stands in front of Rachel now. Looking down at her mother, majestic and powerful. Somehow alive and dead.

Rachel looks at Louis, fear turning to dread --

RACHEL
You moved her body? You took her into the woods?

LOUIS
Of course, I did. How could I not, knowing it would bring her back?

Ellie reaches out for her mother. A moan slips out of Rachel's mouth as Ellie's hand traces across her cheek.

ELLIE
Aren't you happy, mom? I missed
you.

Rachel turns to her dead daughter, voice trembling --

RACHEL
I missed you, too.

Rachel stiffens as Ellie moves in to hug her. It's horrible and awkward. But it's also her daughter so something melts.

Gage comes over, trying to soothe his mother, hugging both Rachel and Ellie. This makes Rachel cry and hug them both.

Finally, Louis kneels down, wrapping his arms around them.

The family reunited.

As the family hug continues we come around to Ellie's face looking over her mother's shoulder to the dark woods outside.

Ellie smiles. Her eyes pure black.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Rachel sits on the lid of the toilet, eyes red from crying.

We hear Louis knock softly, his voice through the door.

LOUIS
Rachel? Can I come in?

The door opens and Louis slips inside, looking down at her.

RACHEL
(terrified)
I don't understand. What is going
on?

LOUIS
It doesn't matter. She's back.

RACHEL
It matters to me. You can't just
say there's some place in the
woods. *That's not good enough!!*

Louis glances into the hallway, pulling the door closed --

LOUIS
Shhh, okay. Keep your voice down.

Louis sits on the edge of the bathtub, taking a deep breath.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
It's been like this for hundreds of years. That place has power.

As he continues to explain we CUT OUTSIDE THE DOOR --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME TIME

To find Ellie standing in the shadows, listening to her parents' voices through the crack in the doorway.

After a BEAT, she backs away, turning down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Gage eats a cookie as Ellie approaches him from behind.

ELLIE
Want to play a game, Gage?

GAGE
Okay.

ELLIE
Turn around.

Gage turns around, obeying his sister. She takes a cloth napkin and ties it over his eyes like a bandana.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I didn't like being gone. I like being with you and mom and dad.

Gage holds out his hands nervously, trying to balance --

GAGE
I can't see.

ELLIE
That's how the game works. It's called Marco Polo. Every time you say Marco, I say Polo and then you try to find me. Understand?

Gage nods as she steps back. He turns, feeling for her.

GAGE

Marco.

Ellie steps back as Gage takes a step forward.

ELLIE

Polo.

GAGE'S POV from behind the blindfold: we can only see a tiny slice of the room at the top and bottom of the frame.

GAGE

Marco.

ELLIE

(further away)

Polo.

Gage moves into the room, feeling with his hands as we --

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rachel has stopped crying now, leaning close to Louis --

RACHEL

You were supposed to be the strong one. A medical doctor. You see death all the time...

LOUIS

It was different with Ellie.

RACHEL

She's changed, Louis. Her skin. I want to remember her like before.

Louis sighs closing his eyes. He knows she's right.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Not just that. Remember what happened with Church. We need to think about Gage. He needs you.

This makes Rachel think of something --

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CREED HOUSE - SAME TIME

Ellie slides backwards around the dining room table as her brother comes into the room, his hands out, feeling his way.

She has her father's scalpel in her hand.

GAGE

Marco.

Ellie jumps out of the way, dropping the scalpel on the ground. Gage turns, hearing the noise.

Gage turns around, waving his hands.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Marco?

GAGE'S POV inside the blindfold: we see Ellie reaching for something on the ground. She doesn't answer Gage's call.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Marco. Marco?

An excruciating BEAT inside the blindfold. Then, finally --

ELLIE

Polo.

Ellie is right in front of him. Gage pulls his blindfold up.

GAGE

Got you!

Ellie smiles at him. Her hand hidden behind her back.

Then her eyes move to something else --

Rachel coming down the stairs. She walks quickly over to Gage, gently pulling him back from Ellie.

RACHEL

Let's play outside. Get some air.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Ellie plays with Gage on the lawn, chasing and giggling as they roll around in the grass. BEHIND THEM --

Rachel watches from the porch. Her face is blank. Numb.

Louis comes out, sitting next to her. After a BEAT --

LOUIS
We'll do it tonight. After dinner.

She glances over at him, a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
It was wrong... I'm so sorry...

His eyes tear up. Rachel pulls him close, hugging him.

RACHEL
Shhh, okay... it's gonna be okay.

Ellie turns away from Gage on the lawn. Listening to them.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(whispering)
We'll do it together.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - SUNSET

Gage carries silverware behind Louis, carefully placing a fork on each folded napkin as Louis lays out the plates.

LOUIS
That's it, Gage. One fork for everyone.

Ellie enters with a bowl of spaghetti and red sauce.

GAGE
Bas-getti!

Gage tries to reach into the bowl, Ellie lifts it away --

ELLIE
Careful, Gage... it's hot...

Everyone takes their seats.

LOUIS
Should we do our thankful fors?

Louis nods at Ellie as they all hold hands.

ELLIE
I'm thankful mommy and Gage came home.

She smiles at Rachel.

GAGE
I'm thankful for bas-getti!

LOUIS
I'm thankful we're all together.

They all look at Rachel. She's barely able to speak.

RACHEL
I'm thankful... for Ellie...

Rachel quickly looks down, not able to continue. Louis breaks the tension by serving up food onto everyone's plate.

Ellie just watches Rachel. Studying her.

ELLIE
You're lying.

RACHEL
No, I am thankful. I love you.

ELLIE
(to Louis)
You didn't tell her I was back because you knew she wouldn't let me stay. She wants me dead again.

UNDER THE TABLE we see Ellie holding the scalpel in her hand.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(to Rachel)
I know you're planning on killing me. I can see it in your face.

LOUIS
Ellie... stop... please...

RACHEL
We're your parents. We will always love you. No matter what --

ELLIE
That's another lie!

The house rumbles as if an earthquake were starting. A picture frame slides down the wall shattering on the ground.

CLOSE on Ellie's face, glaring at her mother --

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(cold)

You chose Gage over me.

Rachel doesn't answer. She can't. Her ability to speak arrested by the realization they are now suddenly outside.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Somehow the family is sitting around the dining room table --

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD WHERE ELLIE WAS HIT BY THE TRUCK.

Rachel looks at Louis, terror rising in her throat.

RACHEL

She's doing this...

Louis looks around. Wind blowing through the trees. Asphalt under his feet. Lane markers stretching out behind them.

Gage giggles, banging on his plate --

GAGE

I like trees!

Ellie stands, scalpel by her side as she walks toward Rachel.

ELLIE

The day of Gage's party. You saw him in the road and made a choice.

Rachel keeps her eyes on Ellie but we notice something else --

Bright HEADLIGHTS approaching behind her.

We hear the sound of a truck downshifting. The grinding of gears. The bellowing of exhaust. But --

Rachel keeps her eyes on Ellie, shaking her head --

RACHEL

I didn't choose... I didn't have time... I just saw Gage there...

Louis looks behind Rachel into the oncoming headlights.

LOUIS' POV of the TRUCK barreling right at them.

When he looks back at Ellie he sees blackness swirling in her eyes. For the first time Louis clearly sees her as something other than his daughter. A monster. Hungry and evil.

LOUIS

Stop...

The headlights swallow them up as Ellie stands in front of Rachel, hair blowing in the wind, streaks of swamp water leaking out of her black eyes and down her face. She smiles.

ELLIE

How does it feel knowing you're about to die?

The scalpel in her hand glints as she moves her arm but --

Louis lunges from behind, pulling Ellie down to the table.

WIDE on the family in the road: table cloth billowing in the wind, Louis holding Ellie down by her shoulders.

The truck approaching from the side at 70 miles per hour.

CLOSE on Louis' face --

LOUIS

Stop it, El.... STOP IT!!!

He glances over to SEE --

Rachel standing up, crying as the truck races up behind her.

Ellie slices at Louis' arm and slides out of his grip. The truck BLARES its horn. Brakes hiss and squeal as --

Louis dives for Rachel pulling her out of the way.

Louis hits the ground with Rachel in his arms, rolling out of the path of the truck. They turn to look back as --

SLOW MOTION OF THE TRUCK PLOWING THROUGH THE DINING ROOM TABLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DARK ROAD!

REVERSE to Gage's awestruck face, sitting in his high chair as we HEAR the truck destroying everything in its path.

Louis screams, covering Rachel from flying debris as the truck roars past them in a cloud of dust. Then it's quiet.

Louis and Rachel open their eyes to SEE --

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The house is back to normal. The walls have returned. The table neatly set. Steam wafts off pasta in the bowl.

Everything just the way it was. Louis slowly stands --

LOUIS
That *thing* is not our daughter.

Rachel turns, noticing Gage's chair sitting empty.

RACHEL
Oh my God, Louis, she took Gage.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ellie leading Gage up the trail. Gage stumbles along, but he's frightened. She grips his wrist, pulling him faster.

GAGE
Where are we going?

They pass the PET SEMATARY sign, winding into the woods --

ELLIE
Somewhere special.

GAGE
I don't want to go somewhere special. I'm scared.

Ellie glance down at her brother, eyes smudged with black.

ELLIE
Don't you want to be with me?

GAGE
Yes.

ELLIE
We can be together forever.

Ellie pulls Gage further up the trail as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CREED HOUSE - SAME TIME

Louis and Rachel search the house for Gage and Ellie. They look in the basement, kitchen, inside closets.

LOUIS
Go upstairs. I'll look outside.

RACHEL
What's she going to do, Louis?

Louis looks at her for a moment, sick with panic --

LOUIS
We'll find him. Go.

Louis runs out the front door as Rachel runs upstairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARSHY BOG - NIGHT

Ellie leads Gage down to the edge of the swamp.

Fog curls over the black water.

She stands there for a moment, eyes closed, breathing in.

ELLIE
When you're like me you won't be
scared anymore.

She opens her eyes, glancing at Gage --

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I can see in the dark now. You'd
like that, wouldn't you.

Ellie pulls her brother to the water, his feet squashing into the wet mud. Gage looks over to see something in her hand --

The glimmer of their father's SCALPEL.

Ellie walks out into the water, pulling her brother along --

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I can see so many things now...

CLOSE on Gage whispering to himself, building up courage --

GAGE
One... two... three!

Gage shoves Ellie and she drops the scalpel.

Ellie screams as the blade swirls down into the muddy water.

Gage pulls away, running into the trees as Ellie reaches into the shallow water, searching for the knife.

BEHIND HER Gage slips away into the trees.

ELLIE
Gage, come back!

After a moment, she comes up with the knife in her hand.

She turns, listening to the woods for a moment.

Then she follows.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rachel searches the frantically. Under the bed and in the closet. She moves over to the window, looking out to SEE --

Jud's house through the trees.

RACHEL
Jud...

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rachel runs down the driveway, ducking into the trees.

EXT. JUD'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rachel comes out of the trees in front of Jud's house.

She pauses, looking up at the house. A single light on.

RACHEL
Jud?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ellie walks through the trees, searching for her brother.

She's angry, her eyes appearing black again as she passes through a shaft of moonlight. She pauses, calling out --

ELLIE
Gage, come out! I promise it won't
hurt. I don't want to be alone.

She listens for a moment, then keeps walking. The scalpel glimmers in the moonlight by her side as she passes us.

She slips away through the trees.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
 (voice fading)
 Gage? Please. Where are you?

After she's gone we HOLD for a moment, then --

Gage peeks out from inside some bushes. He slides out from his hiding place, running back to the trail.

EXT. WOODS - TRAIL - NIGHT

Gage comes running down the trail. In the distance we hear his father calling out for him.

LOUIS (O.S.)
 Gage? GAGE?

Gage runs down the trail, coming around the bend to FIND --

Louis running up the trail toward him.

He runs into his daddy's arms.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 You're safe now. I got you.

Louis looks around in the darkness --

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 Where's Ellie?

GAGE
 Out there.

Gage points to the dark woods. Louis nods, walking quickly back down the trail to the house in the background.

LOUIS
 Okay... okay. Let's get you home.

INT. CREED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Louis walks into the silent house holding Gage in his arms. The doors are open, the night wind blowing in from outside.

LOUIS
 Rach? Rachel, I got Gage.

No answer from the house.

Louis sees Rachel's purse on the table and goes over, digging out her car keys.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Come with me, buddy.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

Louis puts Gage inside the station wagon, standing him on the front seat so Gage can hold the steering wheel and look out.

LOUIS
I want you to hide right here until
I find mommy, okay? Don't come out
for anyone. Even Ellie.

Gage nods.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
If you see your sister, I want you
to honk. Understand?

Gage nods again. He looks scared. Louis steps back closing the door. He presses the key and the car *bleeps*. Locked.

Then he turns and walks off. Heading back into the house.

INT. JUD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rachel pushes open the door to the dark cottage. Taxidermy staring down from dark wood walls. She clicks on a light --

Empty beers on the table, ashtrays filled with butts.

RACHEL
Jud? It's Rachel. You home?

The house is quiet. Rachel walks across the room into the kitchen. She looks down the hallway to the back bedroom.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Jud?

Rachel walks toward the bedroom.

No answer. Rachel reaches into the doorway, feeling along the wall for the light. Her fingers find the switch and --

CLICK! The bedroom light comes on and we SEE --

Jud's body lying in a pool of blood. Part of his skull missing. Flies buzz around exposed brain matter. Feeding.

Rachel screams, turning away. Then she remembers something.

There was a REVOLVER in Jud's hand.

Rachel forces herself to look again. She slowly moves closer, stepping over sticky blood squirming with maggots.

She winces, holding her breath as she reaches Jud's hand, sliding the gun out of his stiff fingers.

EXT. WOODS - TRAIL - SAME TIME

Rachel has a flashlight and the revolver. Sweeping the light through the trees as she runs up the trail after Ellie.

She's focused and determined. Ready to end this.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Louis stands on the grass, looking out to the woods.

We can see the beam of Rachel's flashlight in the trees.

EXT. PET CEMETERY - LATER

Rachel walks into the clearing. The moon lights rings of graves from above.

She walks around the crooked stones, sweeping her flashlight around as she searches for Ellie.

The forest is dark and quiet.

BEHIND HER we see a SHADOW slipping through the mist.

She turns, hearing the grass moving. Small footsteps.

RACHEL

Ellie?

Rachel swings the light past us, pointing the gun. After the beam passes in front of camera we NOTICE --

Ellie now standing behind her mother. Scalpel in her hand.

ELLIE

Biffer. One helluva sniffer.

(beat)

Kinda liked to bite people, too.

Rachel closes her eyes, sensing the girl behind her.

Ellie moves closer a few steps, shrouded in moonlight.

Almost a ghost.

RACHEL
 I'm sorry, El. I should have
 protected you. I love you.

Rachel bites her lip, building up courage and SPINS AROUND --

BAM!! The bullet hits one of the gravestones. Rachel swings
 the flashlight to find Ellie but the girl slips away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - TRAIL - SAME TIME

Louis pauses in the trail, hearing the gun shot.

LOUIS
 Rach? RACH???

Fear fills his veins as he runs faster up the hill.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. PET CEMETERY - NIGHT

Rachel moving through the graveyard, swinging the light.

A shadow moves in the mist, the sound of grass behind her --

Rachel turns again, shaking with fear, holding out the gun --

RACHEL
 Please, El... stop...

Rachel moves past a tree and we see a shadow move. She turns
 the light and catches a glimpse of Ellie darting away.

BAM! The bullet zings through the trees.

Rachel moves closer, hands shaking as she peers around the
 tree. More graves and mist. No sign of Ellie.

From the darkness we hear a voice --

ELLIE
 Please don't hurt me mommy.

The flashlight flickers. Losing power. Rachel turns around,
 gripping the gun, lip quivering, losing her resolve --

RACHEL
 (whispering to herself)
 You're not my daughter.

ELLIE
 I'm scared.

BACK ON RACHEL as her hand shakes, listening --

ELLIE (CONT'D)
 Mommy.

Rachel freezes. The voice is moving. Getting nearer --
 Something is running in the darkness, she spins around as --

ELLIE LUNGES AT HER MOTHER WITH THE SCALPEL.

Ellie screams as she swings the blade, eyes wild.

Rachel screams, falling backwards as the blade cuts her hand.

She drops the gun and the flashlight in the grass.

Rachel hits the ground, clutching her bleeding hand.

She hears footsteps in the grass and crawls to the flashlight, grabbing it and swinging around to SEE --

The gun lying in the grass. Ellie running for it.

Rachel lunges out, grabbing Ellie's leg and pulling her to the ground. Ellie kicks at her mother, sliding free.

Rachel jumps up, scrambling for the gun but it's too late.

Ellie rises up in the curling mist --

POINTING THE REVOLVER AT HER MOTHER.

Rachel is surrounded by graves. Helpless. Facing Ellie.

RACHEL
 Ellie. Please...

Rachel steps closer, her arms out, begging for mercy --

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 I love you.

A smile curls on Ellie's lips. Her eyes pure black.

ELLIE
 Love you, too, mommy.

Ellie slowly squeezes the trigger and *BAM!!!*

The gun goes off as Louis jumps out of the darkness.

He falls away, into the grass. The woods are quiet.

Rachel screams, running up to see the bullet hole over his heart. Louis tries to speak, blood gurgling out his mouth.

LOUIS

I...

RACHEL

Louis... oh god, no, please...

Rachel drops to her knees, clutching Louis. Her heart breaks all over again as his life slips away.

LOUIS

I love... you.

His eyes go blank. Rachel screams, clutching him again --

RACHEL

Louis, please... please...

Rachel sobs over her husband, broken and shattered.

Ellie steps into frame, mist curling around her feet as she points the gun at the back of her mother's head. But there's something about her mother's pain, watching her cry...

Ellie lowers the gun, stepping closer, leaning down --

CLOSE on Ellie's lips whispering into Rachel's ear as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Light spreads through the trees as dew drips off the leaves.

EXT. CREED HOUSE - DAWN

MOVE IN on the car parked in the driveway. Windows steamed.

Gage lies curled up on the front seat, asleep.

As we settle on his sleeping form, suddenly --

TWO HANDS hit the driver's window. Gage wakes up to SEE --

Ellie standing outside the car, smiling at Gage.

Gage looks nervous until he sees his mother walking up the lawn. She unlocks the car and reaches in for Gage.

Rachel walks over to the front porch, sitting with Gage in her lap. She looks exhausted, gazing out to the woods.

A piece of her soul missing. We see her hands --

They're raw with BLISTERS and DIRTY.

WIDEN OUT to REVEAL --

Ellie on the grass in front of them. She's dancing. Happy.

She moves around the yard, tracing her fingers through the air as she silently runs through her routine.

A sound in the woods behind her. Rachel looks up.

A SHADOW falls across the lawn in front of Ellie. She stops dancing, looking right up at us.

CLOSE on her face for a moment, filled with awe and surprise.

Then she smiles.

ELLIE

Daddy!

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END