

STOKER



by Ted Foulke

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CLOSE ON a spider.

Eyes. Fangs. Round hairy back pulsing with life.

Cleaning itself at the center of its web, its small body is a blur of hideous industry.

The image is grotesque, hypnotic, awesome.

Nature at its deadliest and most efficient.

WE WIDEN OUT, revealing our little friend is someplace dark and tight, an ideal spot for going about your business undisturbed...

Until the web begins to shake. Violently. The spider is startled. (So are we.)

Music.

Someone's playing the piano, a piece à la *Gnossienne* No. 4 by Erik Satie.

It's haunting, even when played with more precision than passion (as it is now).

Each note sends vibrations shimmering down the web...

The spider sets off to investigate, moving rapidly over a series of ridges and planes. It comes to a smooth lacquered surface, starts to descend.

As we watch it wind its way down one of the piano's front legs, we realize we've been lurking beneath the instrument the entire time.

The music continues as the spider quietly touches down on the hardwood floor, begins crawling stealthily toward the pedals...

CLOSE ON a shoe.

The black and white saddle kind, the kind a young girl might wear, moving up and down on the gleaming brass pedals.

The spider comes closer. Closer.

The shoe moving up and down, up and down...

And just as we're sure this repulsive creature is about to skitter up that shoe and sink its teeth into tender skin, the shoe casually pivots toward the spider, crushes it underfoot.

End of spider.

WE PAN UP from the shoe.

Meet INDIA STOKER, eighteen years old.

And with no more than a glance at the thing on the floor that used to be alive, this unusually cool customer goes back to her recital.

CLOSE ON India.

Not an easy face to describe.

Not that it's without beauty (it isn't), not that it's without character (it isn't), but it's a face that gives nothing away.

You can't talk about the view with the shade pulled down.

WE WIDEN OUT, taking in the scene.

Dressed in a sweater set and skirt (black), hair pulled back in a ribbon (also black), India sits at a black baby grand in the room her mother refers to as "the parlor."

Chippendale chairs, Georgian tables, Louis XVI commodes. A long way from Pottery Barn.

Back straight, fingering correct, India's pale hands float easily over the keys as April sunshine filters through the big picture window behind her. Outside, gray-green woods and fields stretch to the horizon and beyond.

Everything before us - girl, piano, parlor - feels well-tended and appointed. Tasteful. And timeless.

Could be 2009 or 1959. Could be color, could be black and white. Could go either way.

One thing we do know: the music is gorgeous. Too bad India's on auto-pilot. She's a human player-piano, deaf to its undercurrents of longing and loss. Might as well be "Frère-Jacques."

As the piece crawls to a close a woman appears, stopping just short in the doorway.

This is EVELYN "EVIE" STOKER, on the other side of forty but still full of juice, still ripe for the picking (if only someone would).

Not a hair's out of place but her step is a little wobbly, so she discreetly (she hopes) puts a hand on the wall to steady herself.

Like her daughter, Evie is dressed head-to-toe in black (French, expensive). Unlike her daughter, she is garnished with diamonds.

She sweeps India with her eyes. Sighs. Smiles.

EVIE
Darling. The shoes. Just this once?
Do you think?

India stares at her mother with all the interest of a court stenographer.

A moment slides by. We hear the tick-tock of the clock (also French, also expensive) on the carved mantelpiece.

Evie's smile begins to twitch.

EVIE (CONT'D)
Don't do this to me, India... Not
today. Not. Today.

She walks away, retrieving a tumbler of booze from a small table set just outside the parlor door, just out of (her daughter's) sight.

EVIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get in the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN OF MIDDLE BEND - CEMETERY - DAY - LATER

Hills. Trees. Blue sky and green grass. A nice place to be buried.

WIDE ON a respectable turnout, assembled for just such an occasion. Several dozen mourners gather before an open grave, the steel casket poised and waiting above the void.

THE REVEREND (60's, about what you'd expect) intones the traditional platitudes. As the sound of his voice rises and falls, we hear only snippets.

REVEREND
...Richard Stoker was, first and
foremost, a family man. A devoted
husband to his wife Evelyn, a
loving father to his daughter
India...

Evie and India are seated by themselves at the front.

Even in repose Evie is a standout, a lily among the reeds, black sunglasses shielding her eyes from the sun's bright glare.

India sits next to her, hands in her lap, black and white saddle shoes crossed demurely at the ankle.

Neither of them is in tears.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
...A pillar of our small community,
Richard was a model to the town of
Middle Bend...

At the back stand townsfolk from the aforementioned town.
Acquaintances mostly. People who had business with Richard
Stoker or knew him socially. People who came to show their
respects or to satisfy curiosity. People who had nothing
better to do.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
...What it means to be a man, to
walk through this world with
openness, honesty, integrity...

A breeze ruffles India's hair. She turns her face to the sun,
closes her eyes. When she opens them, she sees something she
didn't expect: a man, alone on the hillside above the funeral
party. He's standing quite still, hands shoved deep in his
pockets.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
...Richard Stoker was taken from us
by a cruel twist of fate, for
reasons unknown and unknowable...

India squints into the sun, trying to get a better look. But
from this distance the man's features are a blur, indistinct.

Someone coughs behind her, loudly. India turns to look.

When she turns back, the man is gone.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
...Let us bow our heads...

India bows her head with the rest, but her eyes remain fixed
on the empty hillside.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Large, white-tiled, the kind meant for staff. An oversize
butcher block island in the middle, a breakfast nook larger
than most kitchens off to the side.

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER ONE and HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO (40's,
matching perms) prepare hors d'oeuvres for the reception at
one end of the island. As the women slice, ladle and pour,
they do what people do best when given time and opportunity.

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER ONE
("whispering")
So who's going to look after her
now?

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO
("whispering")
She's not a kid anymore, she can
look after herself...
(then)
Who's going to look after your
husband? That's the real question,
now the other one's free and on the
loose...

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER ONE
(giggling)
Listen to you...

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO
I'm serious! The two of 'em, all
alone, rattling around in this big
old house... Sounds like trouble...

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER ONE
Well she'd better not come sniffing
around my Carl... Not unless she
brings her checkbook...

The two of them dissolve into loud, animated cackles.

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO
And I know you're not just kiddin'!

MRS. MCGARRICK (O.S.)
If you don't mind...

Caught out, the women fall silent, turning sheepishly to face
MRS. MCGARRICK (50's). Older, stouter, and of a much
different calibre, the Stoker's housekeeper is more than a
match for a couple of local yokels.

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO
Sorry, Mrs. McGarrick...

MRS. MCGARRICK
(stern and low)
"Sorry" won't serve this food. And
"sorry" won't pay your rent.

The women immediately sober up.

MRS. MCGARRICK (CONT'D)
You'll show some respect or I'll
show you both the door...

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER ONE

Sor-

(catching herself)

I mean, it won't happen again, Mrs. McGarrick...

HIRED WOMAN NUMBER TWO

No, it won't happen again...

MRS. MCGARRICK

Good. Alright... Go on. And try to remember where you are...

The women exit the kitchen quickly, platters in hand.

Mrs. McGarrick watches them go, sighs, turns back toward the island, and we reveal India sitting all the way down at the other end.

Whether or not she's been listening is (to Mrs. McGarrick at least) unclear.

Perched on a tall wooden stool, India is carefully arranging deviled eggs on a large serving tray set in front of her. Moving from one egg to the next, her work is slow, methodical, with attention paid to detail.

Mrs. McGarrick comes to stand over India's shoulder, surveying the eggs critically.

MRS. MCGARRICK (CONT'D)

Now I'm worrying I might've kept them in the fridge too long... What do you think, Miss India?

No response. Mrs. McGarrick tries again.

MRS. MCGARRICK (CONT'D)

You don't think I was too stingy with the paprika, do you?

No response. Still, Mrs. McGarrick's attitude remains kindly, maternal. It's clear she cares about the girl. It's also clear she's used to her peculiarities.

MRS. MCGARRICK (CONT'D)

Alright... I guess they'll do. But watch you don't get any on yourself though. Or your mother'll skin us both...

Again, no response. Hint taken, Mrs. McGarrick finally shuffles off, leaving India alone at the island.

We suddenly hear a spike in the noise level beyond the kitchen. It sounds almost... happy.

India turns her head, frowning slightly. She wipes her hands on a dishtowel, rises.

Approaching the swing door to the dining room, she pauses, listening to the voices on the other side, the sound of her mother's (inappropriate) laughter.

India puts a hand on the door and, after a moment, pushes it open.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The swing door opens and ALL SOUND DROPS AWAY.

There he is. The man from the hillside.

He's standing at the center of a small crowd of mourners.

Evie stands next to him, one hand clutching a drink and the other his arm, as if afraid she'll fall over if she lets go. (Or that he'll get away. Maybe both.)

But India's attention is not on her mother.

He is tall, wide-shouldered, with a handsome, unlined face. Almost boyish. Hair shiny and clean, cut short, and parted on the side. Not dressed for a funeral really, but still presentable in a corduroy jacket (tailored), blue oxford shirt, khaki pants (flat-front) and loafers.

He looks like a natty schoolteacher from the 50's. Or a missionary maybe.

Whatever he is, he's in her dining room.

India watches her mother try (unsuccessfully) to stifle another laugh. (He must be very amusing.) Then, seeing India in the doorway, Evie opens her mouth to speak.

THE SOUND RETURNS IN A RUSH.

EVIE

India! India, darling, come and say
hello to your Uncle Charlie!

The man turns his head in India's direction. Meet UNCLE CHARLIE, younger brother of the recently deceased.

India looks into his eyes and freezes.

EVIE (CONT'D)

India, don't be rude! Come and say
hello!

But India's feet have a mind of their own, and they're moving backward, toward the safety of the kitchen. Her eyes remain locked on Uncle Charlie's, her breath quickening.

And then he winks at her.

EVIE (CONT'D)
India! Come here at once!
(to Uncle Charlie)
Honestly, she can be so stand-offish sometimes... But I guess we know who she gets that from...

Evie shakes her head, annoyed. Then, seeming to change her mind, she smiles at her daughter, takes another sip from her glass, turns back to Uncle Charlie.

EVIE (CONT'D)
I swear this is some kind of miracle, Charlie. Richard used to say you were lost forever...

India, forgotten, backs quietly into the kitchen, allowing the door to swing shut on its own. The last thing she sees is Uncle Charlie, smiling warmly, giving her mother his full attention.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

India turns around, light-headed, and finds Mrs. McGarrick standing in front of her, looking concerned. The two hired women hover behind, their eyes large and curious.

MRS. MCGARRICK
Why, India... sweetheart... you're white as a sheet...

She reaches out as if to touch India (but doesn't quite).

MRS. MCGARRICK (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Is something wrong?

INDIA
Yes...

And then, as if they'd been discussing the weather -

INDIA (CONT'D)
My father is dead.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - VARIOUS - LATER

Afternoon turns to evening and the alcohol works its magic.

WE PASS AMONG THE GUESTS, CUTTING BACK AND FORTH AS NEEDED.

LADY NUMBER ONE and LADY NUMBER TWO (40's, bone-thin) stand before a large étagère in the living room, fingering knickknacks and twirling glasses of white.

LADY NUMBER ONE

I wonder if she'll have to sell up now...

LADY NUMBER TWO

Don't count on it. From what I hear she's been well-taken care of...
And then some.

LADY NUMBER ONE

It's too bad...

LADY NUMBER TWO

I know...
(sighing)
I'd kill for some of this crystal...

MAN NUMBER ONE and MAN NUMBER TWO (50's, matching bellies, dark blazers) stand in the walnut-paneled dining room, keeping an eye on the buffet and guzzling scotch.

MAN NUMBER ONE

Hell of a way to go.

MAN NUMBER TWO

Just hope it was quick.

MAN NUMBER ONE

Closed casket - did you see?

MAN NUMBER TWO

No. I think that was the point.

THREE GRANNIES (pearls, print dresses) sit on a chintz-covered sofa in the parlor, drinking tea and nibbling white cake with frosting.

GRANNY NUMBER ONE

(carefully)

From what I understand, they're calling it a car accident...

GRANNY NUMBER TWO
Well I think we all know what that
means...

They nod.

GRANNY NUMBER THREE
Drinking.

CUT TO the men.

MAN NUMBER TWO
Stan was there when they brought
the body in.

MAN NUMBER ONE
You're kidding. What'd he say?

MAN NUMBER TWO
He said he'll be off pulled pork
for awhile.

TWO LITTLE BOYS, one bigger than the other, both dressed in
their Sunday best, sit at the bottom of the carved staircase
in the foyer.

BIGGER BOY
I heard his face was like THIS!

Makes a scary face.

SMALLER BOY
Ewww...

BIGGER BOY
And his eyes were like THIS!

Makes another one.

SMALLER BOY
Stop...

CUT TO the ladies.

LADY NUMBER ONE
But here's the thing: Bill knew
Richard to speak to, and he said he
never touched a drop.

LADY NUMBER TWO
Unlike a certain merry widow...

LADY NUMBER ONE
(giggling)
Listen to you...

Their heads swivel in Evie's direction. She's on the other side of the room, talking to Uncle Charlie (still). The ladies share a look, plucked eyebrows shooting skyward.

CUT TO the boys, the bigger one really getting into it.

BIGGER BOY
And his tongue was like THIS!

SMALLER BOY
Ewww!

BIGGER BOY
And his hands were like THIS!

He reaches out, grabbing and grasping.

SMALLER BOY
I said stop it!

CONTINUE INTERCUTTING AS NEEDED, CREATING THE IMPRESSION OF ONE CONTINUOUS CONVERSATION

LADY NUMBER TWO
(eyeing Uncle Charlie)
Cornell Business. Class of -

GRANNY NUMBER ONE
Yale Divinity. Class of -

MAN NUMBER ONE
Explosives expert. Just got back...

LADY NUMBER ONE
...From a dig in Megiddo.

GRANNY NUMBER TWO
Machakos. Digging wells...

MAN NUMBER TWO
Medic. He said medic.

LADY NUMBER TWO
Whatever. It's an awful thing to come home to...

GRANNY NUMBER THREE
Your own brother's funeral!

MAN NUMBER ONE
At least he's got family...

LADY NUMBER ONE
You mean in-laws...

GRANNY NUMBER ONE
You mean a widow...

LADY NUMBER TWO
A widow and a little weirdo...

MAN NUMBER TWO
And a shitload of cash.

GRANNY NUMBER TWO
Which is whose now?

MAN NUMBER ONE
Hers?

LADY NUMBER TWO
It's all hers.

GRANNY NUMBER THREE
But he is Richard's brother...

MAN NUMBER ONE
He must be getting something...

GRANNY NUMBER TWO
It's only fair...

MAN NUMBER ONE
The man's a veteran...

GRANNY NUMBER ONE
A minister...

MAN NUMBER TWO
A hero...

LADY NUMBER TWO
And single.

MAN NUMBER ONE
Penniless...

GRANNY NUMBER THREE
Homeless...

LADY NUMBER ONE
With a book of poetry out in the
fall...

SMALLER BOY
I SAID STOP IT!

And he SMACKS the bigger boy - hard.

A stunned pause, surprise on both their little faces. Then
there's some sniffing and snuffling before the inevitable.

BIGGER BOY
I'm gonna TELLLLLLLLLLLLLLL...

He stands up, blubbering, goes off to find mommy. The smaller boy gets up and follows, looking guilty. (And maybe a little bit pleased.)

WE STAY ON the stairs, PANNING UP from where the boys were just sitting, until we reach a familiar pair of black and white saddle shoes. We reveal India, sitting halfway up the stairs.

She's clearly heard every word.

India watches the boys go, face impassive. Then she rises, turning to go up to her room...

UNCLE CHARLIE (O.S.)
Hello, India.

...And nearly jumps out of her skin.

We reveal Uncle Charlie, standing at the very top of the stairs. His hands in his pockets, a small smile on his face.

He's been watching her. No telling how long.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Sorry about that. Didn't mean to scare you.

Beat.

INDIA
(evenly)
You didn't.

Uncle Charlie grins a slow one.

UNCLE CHARLIE
It's a bad habit, you know.

INDIA
Sneaking up on people?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Eavesdropping.

Touché.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How about we start again? I'm Charlie... Your uncle.

India says nothing, stays where she is.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's nice to meet you, India... At last.

(then)
I'm very sorry for your loss.

INDIA
It's your loss too.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Yes, you're right. You are absolutely right...
(beat)
Did you know I hadn't seen your father in over thirty years? And now I never will again... It's a lot to take in all at once...

He looks broken suddenly, with a distant look in his eyes.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'll never know what kind of man my brother grew up to be... What kind of husband he was, what kind of father...

INDIA
"Loving, devoted, and a pillar of the community." That's what they said at the funeral anyway.
(beat)
Or maybe you weren't listening.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(smile returning)
Yes, I was listening... But I want to know who he was to you, India... I want to know what he was like behind closed doors, when the neighbors weren't watching... That's when you get the real story. That's when you get the truth.

INDIA
You're asking the wrong person.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Why? Weren't you close with your father? "Daddy's little girl?"

His tone is light but India's eyes darken.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(quiet)
I see... Well we all have our cross to bear.

INDIA
You talk like a bad play.

Uncle Charlie seems oddly pleased by this remark.

UNCLE CHARLIE
You'll find most people do.

India remains silent, watchful.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(beat)
Do you know why you feel at a
disadvantage right now?

INDIA
Because I didn't know you existed
until today?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Because you're standing below me on
the stairs... That means I can look
down on you but you have to look up
to me...

He smiles, shrugging.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Basic stuff, really. Psych 101.
Still, worth paying attention to...

India just looks at him.

Then she takes a step upstairs.

Then another and another, until she's up on the second floor
landing, standing face to face with Uncle Charlie, both of
them on the same level.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You see? Elementary...

Then he smiles playfully, eyes twinkling.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Like how I got you to walk up the
stairs just now...

If India resents this little exercise she keeps it to
herself.

INDIA
(cool)
Do you enjoy playing games, Uncle
Charlie?

UNCLE CHARLIE

(cooler)

Life is about finding ways to keep
yourself amused.

The moment is strange, tense, and broken when Uncle Charlie
turns and starts walking back downstairs.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Well enjoy the party... These
things are for the living, you
know. Not the dead...

But then he stops halfway down, turns back to her, standing
exactly where she stood a moment before.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh - and that reminds me... In
about 60 seconds your mother is
going to tell you that I'll be
staying with you for awhile...
She'll present this as a done deal,
but it's your decision too, and I
want you to have your say.

INDIA

Why?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Because. It's important to me.

India opens her mouth to respond, but before she can -

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'll leave it up to you. Say the
word and I'll go.

He makes a right when he reaches the bottom of the stairs and
disappears. Seconds later, from the opposite direction, Evie
enters. She looks up, spots her daughter on the second floor
landing.

EVIE

There you are!

Evie totters to the bottom of the stairs, face flushed,
leaning heavily on the newel post.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Darling, I've been looking all over
for you! I've got the most
wonderful news...

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - THE FOLLOWING DAY

Wind in the trees, dew on the grass. The sun shining down.

SHOTS of the Stoker estate. Lush. Expansive. Isolated.

Gardens, hedgerows, trellises. Stone benches, wicker lounges, a gazebo painted white.

Koi in the pond, robins on the lawn, blue jays in the birdbath. A black weathervane spinning lazily above the red barn.

Picture postcard.

SHOTS of the house itself (also lush, also expansive).

Eaves, chimneys, a wraparound porch. Black shutters, white clapboards, a red front door.

A large black cat sits on the flagstone terrace, licking its paws, calmly surveying the scene.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY - SAME

India is sitting in the breakfast nook, staring out the window.

Today she's wearing a dress (pale gray) with a dark gray headband and her black and white saddle shoes. It seems her everyday attire is just a few hangers down from her funeral attire. Alice in Wonderland meets Edward Gorey.

On the island behind her, a hot cup of coffee sits waiting. For a moment everything is quiet, hushed.

EVIE (O.S.)

Mrs. McGarrick? Mrs. McGarrick!

The swing door opens. Evie walks in, dressed for the day (as some might dress for evening) but still feeling the effects of the night before.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Mrs. McGarrick?

She sees India sitting by the window.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Oh! Good morning, darling...

INDIA

(absently)

It's afternoon.

EVIE

What? Yes... Yes, I suppose it is... Have you seen Mrs. McGarrick?

INDIA

No.

EVIE

How strange. I could've sworn I heard her car earlier... Well, I hope she doesn't leave us in the lurch today. Not with a houseful of guests...

Evie runs out of gas, puts a hand to her temple, pats her hair.

EVIE (CONT'D)

India, darling, do you think you could -

(sees the cup of coffee)

Oh. Oh, that's a good girl... Thank you.

Evie picks up the cup, takes a sip. Then, not looking at her daughter -

EVIE (CONT'D)

What are your plans for the day, India?

INDIA

(still looking out the window)

I thought I'd draw the curtains and stop the clocks. Cover the mirrors and then retire to my room.

EVIE

Don't be morbid, please.

(then)

I was thinking of going into town and I thought you might like to come... I have to stop by the drug store, pick up a few things... We could get some ice cream for later...

INDIA

In Victorian times a widow was expected to mourn her husband for two years - at least. I'm pretty sure ice cream and trips to town weren't on the menu.

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EVIE

Well we don't live in Victorian times... Thank God.

INDIA

Of course, I would have gotten off a little more easily... It's only nine months if you lose a parent.

EVIE

Do you want to come with me or not?

INDIA

Not.

EVIE

I'm sorry to hear that. I was hoping for some company...

INDIA

(flat)

You were hoping I'd drive you.

EVIE

I can drive myself.

INDIA

Unfortunately, I have to stay home and make jewelry out of father's hair...

EVIE

India...

INDIA

I was thinking maybe a brooch.

EVIE

Please...

INDIA

Or a ring. Would you prefer a ring, mother?

EVIE

(sharp)

India, please!

Beat.

INDIA

Sorry.

EVIE

It's alright. We all have different ways of... of expressing our grief.

INDIA
So it would seem.

Evie looks up sharply. Mother and daughter stare at each other across the kitchen. India turns back to the window.

EVIE
(forcing a smile)
Whatever are you looking at out there?

No answer.

EVIE (CONT'D)
India?

She walks over to find out for herself...

EVIE (CONT'D)
What could possibly be so interesting...

...And she sees it's Uncle Charlie, sitting out on the lawn in a lounge chair. He's got his back to them, facing the woods. But then - as if he knows they're watching - he turns around.

And waves.

EVIE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Maybe I'll ask your Uncle Charlie to take me...

She moves away, leaving India sitting by herself.

EVIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And maybe we'll bring you back some ice cream...

CLOSE ON India as the dart hits its mark.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - GARAGE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The garage doors rise, revealing a mint-condition silver Mercedes-Benz 450SL. Uncle Charlie's behind the wheel, Evie next to him. Sunglasses on, she finishes wrapping her head in a brightly colored scarf while Uncle Charlie puts the top down.

They peel out, taking off down the gravel drive toward town, the tail end of Evie's scarf fluttering behind them in the breeze.

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WE PULL BACK, revealing India at a downstairs window. Watching them go, her expression is (almost) neutral.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The sounds of the car fade away to nothing. India turns from the window. Except for the tick-tock of the clock on the mantelpiece, the house is silent.

A SERIES OF OVERHEAD SHOTS

India at the piano, hands in her lap...

India at the window, playing with the tassels, looking out toward the drive...

India on the couch, an unopened book beside her...

India back at the window...

India on the floor, face up, arms outstretched, making snow angels on the rug...

India at the window again...

India on the floor a second time, face down, arms akimbo, a broken doll...

India at the window again... Waiting. And waiting.

The light outside dimming all the while.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

SHOTS of India wandering the house. Bored. Restless.

She goes from the parlor to the foyer, the foyer to the kitchen...

The kitchen to the dining room, the dining room to the living room...

The living room to the foyer, bringing her back full circle...

But this time she stops at the foot of the stairs and starts up, the oriental runner muffling the sound of her steps.

India knows where she's going but forces herself to take her time. When she gets to the second floor landing, she looks down the hall, all the way toward the back of the house. At the end of the hall is a door.

The door is closed.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - UNCLE CHARLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONT.

The knob turns. We hear a click, and the door swings open.
India stands before us.

We see what she sees: the bed (neatly-made, hospital corners), the men's hairbrush on the bureau, the navy blue sweater draped over a chair, the suitcase standing upright on the floor near the closet...

Uncle Charlie's suitcase.

India steps into the room, her eyes on that suitcase. It's mid-size, yellow, with dark brown trimming around the edges. An old-fashioned valise. It's quite charming, and, for the moment, undisturbed.

She takes another step toward it.

EVIE (O.S.)

India!

India jerks her head toward the door, eyes wide.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

WE'RE LOOKING UP FROM THE FOYER to the second floor landing.

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

India? Are you up there?

India's head appears over the railing.

INDIA

Here I am...

WE REVERSE OUR P.O.V., NOW LOOKING DOWN TO THE FOYER from the second floor landing. And there's Evie.

EVIE

Well? Are you going to make me
unpack all these groceries by
myself?

INDIA

I'll be right down...

Taking one last look at the door to Uncle Charlie's room (closed again, the way he left it), India descends.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

India pushes open the swing door to the kitchen, enters. Uncle Charlie and Evie are unpacking groceries. (He's unpacking groceries. She's uncorking a bottle of red.)

EVIE

Finally! I feel like I've been
calling you for hours... Come help.

India moves to the island, stands opposite Uncle Charlie.

EVIE (CONT'D)

What have you been up to, darling?

INDIA

I was playing solitaire. In my
room.

India looks up, wondering whether this lie flew straight. Her mother is preoccupied with the Cabernet. But Uncle Charlie catches her eye, holds it. And smiles that small, infuriating smile.

INDIA (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)

What are we having for dinner?

EVIE

I have no idea, sweetheart... Why
don't you ask Mrs. McGarrick?

INDIA

I would, but she's not here.

EVIE

What do you mean?

INDIA

She didn't come today.

Evie's glass stops halfway to her lips.

EVIE

Oh no! What are we going to do
about dinner...

UNCLE CHARLIE

(beat)

I can cook a little.

EVIE

You can? Did you hear that, India?

(lifting her glass)

Three cheers for Uncle Charlie!

(MORE)

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EVIE (CONT'D)

I'm sure we would have starved to death otherwise... Charlie, you're a lifesaver!

UNCLE CHARLIE

It's my pleasure...

(then)

India, would you take these down to the freezer, please? I don't think there's any more room up here...

He slides two enormous plastic tubs of ice cream across the island to her.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

One chocolate, one vanilla... Did I get it right?

INDIA

(not giving an inch)

I like the swirl kind.

EVIE

You can make the swirl yourself, you lazy thing! Now do as your Uncle tells you, please... Honestly...

India picks up the tubs of ice cream, one under each arm.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Thank you!

UNCLE CHARLIE

Thank you, India.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Blackness. A door opens at the top of the stairs.

It's India, silhouetted against the light from the kitchen behind her.

She steps down carefully. The stairs are old, rickety.

When she gets to the bottom, she sets one of the tubs down, reaches up into the darkness, finds a chain, pulls it. A bulb flickers on, dangling from a long cord overhead. It doesn't do much.

With a practiced motion, India sets the bulb swinging, its arc illuminating first one side of the space, then the other.

India picks up the ice cream, keeps walking. But the basement is a warren of unfinished rooms, and soon she's standing in the dark again.

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India puts the tub down a second time, reaches up, finds a second chain, pulls it. Another bulb flickers on. It too is set swinging.

SHE HEARS A NOISE BEHIND HER.

India whirls around.

She doesn't appear frightened, but she's not exactly calm either.

As the bulb swings overhead, we see her disappear and reappear, disappear and reappear...

India scans the basement, senses alert. It's damp down here, cold and creepy, boxes and furniture stacked all around. Plenty of places to hide, if one were so inclined.

Finally, satisfied she's alone, India turns around and keeps walking, approaching what looks like a giant metal coffin. It's the deep freezer, humming quietly to itself along the far wall.

She's about to lift the lid WHEN SHE HEARS SOMETHING AGAIN.

India looks over her shoulder, breath catching...

She holds perfectly still, eyes scanning the darkness, listening...

She can hear the creak of the light swinging back and forth, back and forth...

We see her disappear and reappear, disappear and reappear...

India waits another beat...

Nothing.

Keeping her eyes on the room behind her, India opens the freezer and quickly dumps the ice cream inside. Mission accomplished, she gets out of there as fast as she can, letting the lid fall shut on its own.

And in those final seconds before it closes with a thud, briefly illuminated by the swinging of the bulbs, WE SEE MRS. MCGARRICK INSIDE THE FREEZER, TUCKED IN AMONG THE FROZEN FOODS, EYES STARING, MOUTH OPEN, KINDLY FACE BRUSHED WITH FROST.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

We cut from the meat in the freezer to the meat on the table.

Sounds of carving and chewing, the clink of good silverware on good china. SHOTS of linen and silver, crystal and flowers, candlelight.

WIDE ON Evie at the head of the long polished table, Uncle Charlie to her right, India to her left. Seven high-backed chairs ring the other end. We hear music playing softly somewhere in the background.

Evie sighs, beyond content.

EVIE

Oh, Charlie... the *coq au vin* is exquisite!

UNCLE CHARLIE

I'm just glad I could make myself useful...

EVIE

It's delicious! Truly. Don't you think so, India?

India pushes the food around her plate, untasted.

EVIE (CONT'D)

This is a real treat for us, Charlie... Sometimes I think Mrs. McGarrick got her masters in meatloaf.

(taking another bite)

You, on the other hand, are clearly a man of hidden talents... Now tell me where you learned to cook!

UNCLE CHARLIE

Actually, I was lucky enough to spend a summer working in a small restaurant, just outside Bordeaux... Madame Maillard ran a superb kitchen... Michelin-starred, in fact. I tried to soak up everything I possibly could...

EVIE

Sounds like a summer well-spent!

(to India)

Working for a decorated chef, India! And a woman! *En France!*

(back to Uncle Charlie)

Très inhabituel, n'est-ce pas?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Yes, it is very unusual - still. Which I think is unfortunate...

(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Madame Maillard used to say that in her opinion, there was nothing a man could master that a woman couldn't make...

INDIA

I don't get it.

UNCLE CHARLIE

It sounds better in French.

The wink is implied.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Speaking of which... Evie, your accent is lovely.

EVIE

Why thank you, Charlie! One of the perks of a first-class education... That and a ticket to oblivion. First-class, of course.

UNCLE CHARLIE

(playfully wagging a finger)

You're being too hard on yourself again... Remember what we talked about earlier? On the way home? In the car?

Evie blushes, sips her wine. India can see her mother hiding a small smile behind her glass. Uncle Charlie looks to India.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I was telling your mother I think it might be time for a change, time for her to start looking at things differently...

(back to Evie)

All kinds of things. Remember?

EVIE

Yes, Charlie. I remember...

INDIA

(to Uncle Charlie)

Better write it down.

Evie shoots India a look.

EVIE

In Victorian times you would have been married off by now. Sold to the highest bidder.

Beat.

UNCLE CHARLIE
My goodness, India... That's quite
an appetite.

India looks down at her plate, surprised. Uncle Charlie's
right. Practically licked clean. Nothing left but the bones.

INDIA
I... I guess I didn't realize how
hungry I was.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Well, I'm glad you enjoyed it...
Can I get you anything else? Maybe
some ice cream?

INDIA
No.

EVIE
You mean, "No thank you."

INDIA
I mean, "no thank you."

EVIE
India, would you like to play
something for us after dinner?

INDIA
No. Would you?

EVIE
(a warning)
India...

INDIA
I mean, "no thank you."

EVIE
Our loss. Well in that case, I'm
afraid I must excuse myself. I'm
feeling... very tired all of a
sudden... Goodnight, Charlie.
Goodnight, India.

Evie gets up from the table. Uncle Charlie stands politely.
She smiles, walks out of the room, wine glass still in hand.

Uncle Charlie sits, looks at India.

India stands.

INDIA
I'll clean up.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(standing again)
I'll help...

INDIA
That's not necessary.

UNCLE CHARLIE
I insist.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sounds of running water.

India is at the sink, her back to us. On the counter to her left is a stack of dirty dishes. To her right, a few feet down, is Uncle Charlie, dish towel at the ready.

She washes the first plate and sets it down on the counter between them. Uncle Charlie picks it up, dries it, puts it down.

She washes another plate, sets it down. He picks it up, dries it, puts it down.

Neither says a word.

A QUICKFIRE MONTAGE of dishes being washed, dried and stacked in what becomes, oddly, a pronounced rhythm. Without seeming to be aware of it, they execute this small bit of domestic choreography like Fred and Ginger.

And then they're finished.

India puts down the sponge, turns to Uncle Charlie.

INDIA
What do you want?

Uncle Charlie looks at her.

UNCLE CHARLIE
To be friends.

INDIA
We don't need to be friends.
(beat)
We're family.

And she exits, leaving him there alone.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A closed door. India's hand reaches into frame, knocks quietly. No answer. She opens the door.

We see Evie across the darkened room, splayed out on her bed, still dressed, fast asleep. Her wine glass dangles precariously from an outstretched hand. India walks over to the bed, looks down at her mother.

On Evie's bedside table, arranged on a silver tray, is her personal pharmacy of little orange pill bottles.

India gently removes the glass from her mother's fingers.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

India stands at the kitchen sink, alone, washing one more glass.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND SENIOR HIGH - DAY

Sun shining, birds tweeting.

ESTABLISHING SHOT of India's school in all its small town, faux-Gothic splendor.

MR. FELDMAN (O.S.)
But helpless pieces in the game He
plays/

INT. MIDDLE BEND SENIOR HIGH - CLASSROOM - DAY - SAME

MR. FELDMAN (40's, about what you'd expect) stands in front of his 8th Period English class, reading aloud.

MR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Upon this chequerboard of Nights
and Days/

We reveal India sitting second row from the back, wearing her saddle shoes, dressed like a schoolgirl circa 1952.

MR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Hither and thither moves, and
checks, and slays/

Outside her own home, glimpsed among her peers, India's uniqueness is (even more) jarring.

MR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

And one by one back in the Closet
lays...

A handful of football jocks sit behind her. One of them, CHRIS PITTS (crew cut, freckles, thick jaw), leans forward, literally breathing down India's neck.

PITTS

I'd like to lay you in the
closet... Or anywhere else.

His buddies snicker. India stares straight ahead, a statue. Pitts grins. Fish in a barrel.

We reveal another boy behind India: WHIP TAYLOR (lean, good-looking), sitting with the jocks but of a different breed. Middle Bend's answer to Steve McQueen. He looks on with mild interest.

PITTS (CONT'D)

Three minutes. That's all I need.

More snickering. India keeps her eyes front.

PITTS (CONT'D)

Two?

His buddies crack up, louder now, finally catching Mr. Feldman's attention.

MR. FELDMAN

Mr. Pitts?

PITTS

Yes, Mr. Feldman?

MR. FELDMAN

Do you have something you'd like to
share with the rest of us?

PITTS

(smirking)

Yeah... I've got something I'd like
to share...

Guffaws from the back row. The bell rings. School's out.

MR. FELDMAN

Perhaps tomorrow, Mr. Pitts...
Something to look forward to...

The class rises, gathering their belongings, chatting amongst themselves, Mr. Feldman already forgotten.

MR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
We'll pick up where we left off...
Hopefully some of you will find Mr.
FitzGerald's translations a little
more worthy of your attention...

India bolts from her seat, beelines for the door, holding her books in front of her like a shield.

Pitts and crew watch her go, laughing.

EXT. MIDDLE BEND SENIOR HIGH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

India exits the building amid a flood of students, a loose leaf on the current. She stops when she sees who's waiting at the curb.

We reveal Uncle Charlie, leaning against the 450SL, wearing a new pair of tortoise shell sunglasses. He's looking very dashing indeed.

As the students around her stop and stare (India talking, India talking to a boy, India talking to a boy with a car, etc.), she walks forward hesitantly.

INDIA
What are you doing here?

UNCLE CHARLIE
I thought you might like a ride.

INDIA
But I always take the bus home from school.

His eyes are unreadable behind the sunglasses.

INDIA (CONT'D)
Always.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(mild)
Suit yourself.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A big yellow school bus passes through frame, trundling down the street.

A moment later, the Mercedes passes through frame as well, following behind, same speed.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER ESTATE - FRONT GATES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The bus pulls away, leaving India outside the entrance to the estate. She looks over, sees the Mercedes idling nearby.

India turns away, walking through the gates and starting up the long road to the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER ESTATE - THE DRIVE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

India enters frame, trudging up the winding drive, eyes straight ahead, dragging her schoolbooks with her.

The Mercedes enters frame behind her, crawling along, same speed.

They caravan like that all the way up to the house.

It takes awhile.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

India arrives at the front porch, and for the first time since she was dropped off at the gates, looks behind her. Uncle Charlie is parking the car on the turnaround.

He gets out, closes the door, leans on the hood.

UNCLE CHARLIE

That was fun. We should do it again tomorrow.

India goes into the house, slamming the front door.

BEGIN MONTAGE - SCENES FROM THE NEXT FEW DAYS

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - MORNING - MONTAGE (I)

The front door opens. India walks out, dressed for school.

She's several paces down the drive when the door opens again. Uncle Charlie appears with a brown paper bag.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Don't forget your lunch!

INDIA
(not turning around)
I don't eat lunch.

She keeps walking. Uncle Charlie keeps watching.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - AFTERNOON - MONTAGE (II)

The front door opens. India walks in from school.

Hearing laughter, she goes to the living room doorway. Uncle Charlie and Evie are down on the rug, playing a board game. Evie looks up, sees her daughter.

EVIE
India! I'm teaching your uncle how
to play Monopoly! And he's already
beating me! It's not fair...

UNCLE CHARLIE
Why don't you come play with us,
India?

EVIE
(somewhat less
enthusiastic)
Yes, come and play...

India turns and walks down the hall, straight up to her room.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - MORNING - MONTAGE (III)

The front door opens. India walks out, dressed for school. As she clears the turnaround and starts down the drive -

UNCLE CHARLIE (O.S.)
Clarkia Unguiculata. Also known as
"Farewell to Spring."

India keeps walking as WE PAN DOWN from her face to the ground, revealing Uncle Charlie on his hands and knees. He's working alongside the drive, all sweaty with his sleeves rolled up, busy planting spring bulbs.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
...They're for your mother.
(then)
(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Native to California, really, but
I'm hoping they might take here
too...

India keeps walking, eyes on the horizon, disappearing down
the drive.

Uncle Charlie smiles to himself, starts digging a new hole.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE (IV)

The swing door opens. Uncle Charlie, wearing his navy blue
sweater, enters with dinner. As he sets it down in front of
Evie -

UNCLE CHARLIE
...Apparently Mr. McGarrick has
been telling everyone she ran off
with another man. He's saying it
was just a matter of time...

EVIE
Good for her!
(laughing boozily)
Although I have to admit she never
struck me as the type...
(looking to her left)
Maybe India knew something the rest
of us didn't...

We reveal India sitting next to her, silent and stony-faced
as Uncle Charlie ladles some green beans onto her plate.

EVIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh, Charlie - *gratin dauphinois*! My
favorite...

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DAY - MONTAGE (V)

The back door opens. Evie steps out onto the terrace,
carrying a racquet and dressed in tennis whites. She sees her
daughter reading a book in a lounge chair, walks over.

EVIE
Good morning, sleepyhead!

India's been up for hours, but she lets it go.

EVIE (CONT'D)
Charlie cleared off the court
yesterday so we're going to walk on
over... He says he's never played
before. Isn't that funny?

India just looks at her.

EVIE (CONT'D)
At least I won't be the one
embarrassing myself this time...
(beat)
You don't want to come, do you?

UNCLE CHARLIE (O.S.)
I'm wearing a belt but other than
that, everything fits perfectly!

Evie and India turn to look at Uncle Charlie, standing in the
doorway, wearing tennis whites three sizes too big.

EVIE
Oh, Charlie - you look like a
little boy playing dress up!

UNCLE CHARLIE
It'll be fine!

EVIE
(to India)
I gave him some of your father's
old things to wear... No sense
being wasteful...

UNCLE CHARLIE
You ready?

Evie gives India a little wave.

EVIE
Good-bye, darling! See you later...

Uncle Charlie waves too. Book forgotten, India watches them
walk off together across the back lawn.

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - DUSK

India opens the front door, revealing a silver-haired woman
in a flowing caftan.

She's holding white lilies in a pot, and there's an enormous, discreetly expensive suitcase at her feet. Behind her, a taxi is just taking off down the drive.

India looks at the woman, a puzzled expression on her face.

AUNTIE GIN

India! It's me, you goose! Come and give your Auntie Gin a hug!

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

India sits on her stool at the island while GWENDOLYN "AUNTIE GIN" STOKER (60's, warm and sharp) makes herself comfortable in the kitchen, the tinkling of her gold bracelets sounding very much like old coins.

The potted lilies sit near the sink.

AUNTIE GIN

(lighting a cigarette)

Now - first things first. I'm very sorry about your father, dear. I'm sure this must be a dreadful time for you. He was an excellent man, you know. A good man. A gentle man. A... a quiet man. Even as a boy I could see that his charms were of the quiet variety. Not for show. Under the surface. Discreet. Your father may not have been particularly artistic or a wordsmith or an inspired dresser, but he was steadfast and he loved you and you were lucky to have him! I was proud to call him my nephew, no matter what you heard me say last time...

(puff, puff)

Second - I'm very sorry I couldn't be here for the funeral. I wanted to be here, believe me, I wanted very much to be here but sometimes the old bones won't cooperate... Sometimes you just ache so badly in the morning you want to get up and die... One day you'll understand... If you live to be my age... If you're lucky...

(puff, puff)

Third - after my last visit I wasn't sure I was ready to be in the same room with your mother, to be frank. She can be very spiteful in that bougie way of hers...

("ashamed")

(MORE)

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

Forgive me, dear - these things should not be discussed in front of children... It's not right and it's not fair... We should be discussing you, India! You! We should be talking about school and boys and college and college boys! Now tell me everything!

(then; remembering)

But first I should really put these things in water...

(picking up the lilies)

So fucking delicate...

Auntie Gin turns back to India, flowers in hand.

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

Now... do we have a vase, dear?

UNCLE CHARLIE (O.S.)

Auntie Gin.

Auntie Gin looks toward the swing door to the dining room. There's Uncle Charlie, in his tennis whites.

AUNTIE GIN

Charles...

The lilies slide from her fingers, pot smashing on the floor. Dark earth spills out across the tiles.

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

You're back.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

And then there were four.

Evie's at the head of the table, Uncle Charlie on her right, Auntie Gin on her left, India moved one place down. Again, music plays quietly in the background.

EVIE

When did you get in, Gwendolyn?

AUNTIE GIN

I believe we flew in around 4.

EVIE

And when do you fly out?

Auntie Gin acknowledges the thrust, parries.

AUNTIE GIN
That remains to be seen.
(glancing at her nephew)
I'd originally planned to stay only
a day or two, but now I'm thinking
I should stay a bit longer... Spend
a little quality time. With India.

EVIE
How nice for her.

The conversation dies. Nothing but the clink of cutlery.

AUNTIE GIN
Charles...

UNCLE CHARLIE
Yes, Auntie Gin?

AUNTIE GIN
How long have you been back?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Not long.

AUNTIE GIN
And how long do you think you'll be
staying?

UNCLE CHARLIE
(winking at her)
That remains to be seen... You see,
I'd originally planned to stay only
a day or two, but now I'm thinking
I should stay a bit longer... Spend
a little quality time. With Evie.

Hearing her own little speech thrown back at her, Auntie Gin
seems momentarily nonplussed.

EVIE
(laughing)
Oh, Charlie... You do like to
tease!

She puts a hand on his, briefly, turns to Auntie Gin.

EVIE (CONT'D)
The truth is we've grown accustomed
to having Charlie around. Cooking,
cleaning... He's been a godsend
during a very difficult time.

AUNTIE GIN
I can imagine...

Again, the conversation stalls.

CLOSE ON India's face, eyes flicking around the table, aware of strange undercurrents.

Auntie Gin takes a deep breath, dives into the breach.

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

Evie, dear... After dinner, I was thinking perhaps you and I could... have a moment to ourselves.

EVIE

What for? I mean - why?

AUNTIE GIN

Oh, you know... To talk.

EVIE

About what?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Would anyone like dessert?

AUNTIE GIN

Any number of things. You know... Like... Like Richard, for instance.

EVIE

Richard?

AUNTIE GIN

(growing impatient)

Yes, Evie - Richard. My nephew. Your late husband.

EVIE

I know who Richard is - was - Gwendolyn. I don't imagine I'll be forgetting him anytime soon.

AUNTIE GIN

Of course not. I just thought there might be... I don't know - arrangements to be made.

UNCLE CHARLIE

I made a maple cake just this afternoon...

EVIE

"Arrangements?"

AUNTIE GIN

Yes - arrangements. Things to be settled.

EVIE

There's nothing to be settled,
Auntie Gin. There's nothing to be
arranged. Arrangements have been
made.

AUNTIE GIN

Yes, of course, dear. I didn't mean
to suggest otherwise...

UNCLE CHARLIE

It's a favorite of mine...

EVIE

I know what you meant, Auntie
Gin...

UNCLE CHARLIE

From back when I was little...

EVIE

Auntie Gin doesn't say what she
doesn't mean...

UNCLE CHARLIE

A real treat...

EVIE

Auntie Gin isn't shy when it comes
to expressing her opinions about
and/or around me. It's one of her
many attractive qualities... But
what Auntie Gin might be surprised
to learn is that those opinions are
neither wanted, needed or
appreciated...

UNCLE CHARLIE

Evie...

EVIE

Yes, I suppose this might come as a
shock, but we were getting along
just fine before you swanned in
from sunny California... And I
suspect we'll do much the same once
you've swanned back out!

Uncle Charlie reaches for Evie's hand. She snatches it away.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Evie, I'm sure Auntie Gin didn't
mean anything by it.

(turning to Auntie Gin)

You didn't mean anything by it, did
you?

AUNTIE GIN

No...

(to Evie; sincere)

No, of course not, Evie dear.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Well that settles it. No one meant to upset you, Evie. No one meant anything by anything. Now... who wants cake?

Evie pushes up from the table abruptly, knocking her plate to the floor. She stops, rights herself, and walks out.

There's a long pause.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

India... Would you like to play something for us after dinner?

INDIA

No thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - NIGHT - LATER

Auntie Gin is about to get into a waiting taxi. Uncle Charlie puts her suitcase in the trunk. India is on the front steps.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Are you sure you won't stay here tonight? We've got plenty of room.

AUNTIE GIN

(noticing the "we")

No, Charles. I'll be perfectly fine at the motor inn. They know which room I like...

Uncle Charlie closes the trunk, comes over to Auntie Gin, gives her a warm hug.

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

Oh... Um... Thank you. Goodnight, Charles. Be a good boy, alright?

He releases her.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Goodnight, Auntie Gin. Sleep well.

AUNTIE GIN

Yes...

(backing away, turning to
India)

India, dear, tell your mother I'll
be back tomorrow morning. Maybe we
can have breakfast together... Just
us girls... Doesn't that sound like
fun?

INDIA

I have school tomorrow, Auntie Gin.

AUNTIE GIN

Oh... Well, tell your mother
anyway... Please. Goodnight, dear.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Goodnight!

Auntie Gin gets in the taxi. Uncle Charlie waves good-bye. As
the car starts down the drive, Auntie Gin looks back through
the rear window, sees Uncle Charlie standing next to India on
the steps, both backlit by the open door behind them.

Two dark figures.

Her eyes grow frightened.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND MOTOR INN - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOTS of the town's finest accommodations for
out-of-towners.

It's a basic one-story L-shape with a pool, the kind where
guests park three feet from their room. A neon "Vacancy" sign
buzzes on and off by the curb. It's completely quiet at this
hour, no lights in any of the windows except the manager's
office.

A single street lamp flickers high overhead.

INT. MIDDLE BEND MOTOR INN - AUNTIE GIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Auntie Gin lying awake in bed, in the dark, polyblend
coverlet up to her chin. She sits up, eyes her purse on the
dresser across the room. Lies back down.

Auntie Gin standing at the dresser, looking through her
purse.

Auntie Gin turning on the light, looking through her purse again.

Auntie Gin dumping her purse out on the bed.

Auntie Gin picking up the black rotary dial phone on the bedside table.

Auntie Gin on the phone.

AUNTIE GIN

Hello? Hello, yes, I'm staying in room 307... Yes - "with the pool view." Listen, I was wondering whether someone had turned in a cellular phone. I think I might have dropped it while I was checking in... No? And you are absolutely certain? Alright then... Oh, wait - how much to make a local call from my room? Oh. Oh, that's not so bad... Yes, yes, I know it's late...

(rolls her eyes)

Yes, I will certainly take that into consideration if I should decide to call someone... Thank you... Goodnight!

She hangs up, reaches for her cigarettes.

AUNTIE GIN (CONT'D)

Good Christ this place...

ANOTHER SERIES OF SHOTS

Auntie Gin pacing the room, cigarette burned down to nothing. She stubs it out in what's become a very full ashtray. She stops pacing, looks at the phone.

Auntie Gin in bed, in the dark, watching an old movie on TV, the light from the TV playing over her face. Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant spar and flirt their way through "His Girl Friday." Auntie Gin doesn't hear a word. She turns her head, looks at the phone again.

Auntie Gin snapping on the light, picking up the phone, starting to dial. No dial tone. She checks again. Nothing.

Auntie Gin putting the phone down slowly, more and more concerned. She looks toward the motel room door.

EXT. MIDDLE BEND MOTOR INN - MIDNIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The door to room 307 opens a crack. Auntie Gin peeks out, looks around.

The door opens wider. She pokes her head farther out.

HER FIRST P.O.V.: to the left, the manager's office. The windows are now dark.

HER SECOND P.O.V.: to the right, a payphone, across the parking lot from her room.

Auntie Gin looks around again. Coast clear. Then she sets off toward the manager's office. She reaches the door, tries the knob. Locked.

Frustrated, she turns around, looks back toward her room. The door is still open a crack. She can see the light from the TV flickering inside.

Auntie Gin looks toward the payphone, all the way across the lot. Thinks for a moment. In for a penny, in for a pound.

She starts walking toward the payphone, nothing to light the way except the street lamp and its dull fluorescent glow.

She picks up speed as she goes, turning her head to look left and right, her old lady slippers making small smacking sounds on the concrete.

She reaches the payphone at last, out of breath.

Auntie Gin lifts the receiver, begins to dial...

AND A LONG SHADOW FALLS ACROSS THE KEYPAD.

She turns around slowly, face sagging. Her mouth drops open. A low moan escapes.

WE STAY ON Auntie Gin as a man's hand reaches into frame, gingerly takes the receiver from her trembling fingers.

SOUNDS OF A DIAL TONE OVER A SERIES OF SHOTS

The motel.

The street lamp.

The parking lot.

The pool.

The door to room 307.

A sandal lying in the gutter.

The payphone, receiver still dangling by its cord.

We hear a recorded message, very faint, like it's coming from the moon: IF YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE A CALL, PLEASE HANG UP AND DIAL AGAIN... IF YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE A CALL, PLEASE HANG UP AND DIAL AGAIN...

The last shot is the "Vacancy" sign, buzzing on and off by the curb.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND HIGH - THE NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

SLOW FADE IN

Birds tweeting, sun shining. The ringing of bells as students burst through the main exit. Children laughing and calling to each other, heading home.

India is not among them.

We see Uncle Charlie waiting at the curb with the car, but India never shows.

EXT. MIDDLE BEND HIGH - SIDE DOOR - SAME

Down the street from the school's main exit, a door opens.

India peeks out, looks around. The door opens wider. She pokes her head farther out, sees Uncle Charlie waiting with the car up the street, not looking her way.

India quickly slips out the side door, head lowered, walking in the opposite direction. Rounding a corner, she makes her way down the narrow service alley behind the school.

Then she stops. There's something up ahead, something she doesn't like the look of.

But she can't go back the other way, not with Uncle Charlie there waiting.

So, taking a deep breath, India decides to keep going.

She heads down the service alley, pressing forward. As she does, WE SWIVEL AROUND HER to reveal Pitts and his crew, lounging on the steps of the school's service entrance.

India is going to walk right by them.

She clutches her books tighter, forcing herself to look straight ahead, forcing herself not to run...

And she passes them.

And just when we think she's going to make it out of there -

PITTS
Hey, Stoker!

India throws a look over her shoulder but doesn't stop. When she looks back, one of the jocks is standing right in front of her.

India tries to move around him, but he moves left when she moves left, moves right when she moves right.

PITTS (CONT'D)
Hey Stoker! I'm talking to you! Or do you go by "Stroker" now? 'Cause I hear that's what your mom's been doing... to your uncle.

The boys snort with laughter.

PITTS (CONT'D)
Tell me something, Stroker - you gettin' in on that?

And then, to their surprise and delight, India turns around. In twelve years of shared schooling she's never said a word to any of them.

That's about to change.

INDIA
What did you say?

The boys start hooting, thrilled they finally got a rise out of her. This is getting good.

PITTS
(mocking)
"What did you say?"
(winking suggestively)
I think you heard me, Stroker.

More laughter.

India walks up the steps so she's standing eye-to-eye with Pitts (just like someone taught her).

She can see the vein throbbing below his right eye. She can smell the Doritos on his breath.

INDIA
Say that again.

Gleeful shouts from the peanut gallery. This just gets better and better.

Surprised, publicly called out, Pitts steps into her nice and close. Time to tip the scales.

PITTS
I think you'd better watch your
step, Stroker... You know what
happens to little girls who fuck
with me?
(beat)
They get fucked.

Pitts grins, makes like he's going to walk away, then turns back AND THROWS A PUNCH, stopping his fist half an inch from her face.

India doesn't flinch. Not even a little.

And that's when Pitts sees something shift behind her eyes, a flicker that makes him take the smallest step back.

WHIP (O.S.)
Alright, Pitts... Enough.

It's Whip, appearing out of nowhere. He strolls up the steps, nonchalant, coming to stand beside them.

PITTS
Fuck off, Whip...

Whip isn't bigger than Pitts, but the alpha card is still his to play.

WHIP
Follow the bouncing ball, jackass -
she's not interested.

Pissed, secretly relieved he's been given an exit strategy, Pitts spits out a bitter laugh, starts walking away.

PITTS
Yeah - like I enjoy wasting my time
on this bitch...

He retreats, quickly, giving India a look that's hateful (and maybe a little bit fearful too). His buddies follow.

Whip watches them go, turns back to India.

WHIP

Sorry about that... He's a
shithead, okay? Just ignore him.

He's about to shift gears, take the conversation someplace a
little more interesting, but India's walking away.

WHIP (CONT'D)

Hey! Where you going?

But she's already halfway down the alley, and she doesn't
look back.

WHIP (CONT'D)

You're welcome!

WE STAY ON Whip's face, intrigued.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR - AFTERNOON - LATER

India is at the piano, hands frozen on the keys.

She is utterly alone. No Evie, no Uncle Charlie, no Mrs.
McGarrick. No one. Not a sound from the rest of the house.

CLOSE ON India's normally placid face, now rippling with the
tiniest of tremors.

After a moment, she begins to play. It's the same song from
the beginning, the one she played before her father's
funeral.

But this time her playing is hesitant, unsure. She fumbles
the notes, one after the other.

India stops, starts over. Again, her fingers betray her. It's
not coming this time.

She stops, swallowing hard, like there's something caught in
her throat. (Tears? A scream?)

India closes her eyes.

When she opens them, Uncle Charlie is standing next to the
piano.

Without a word, he sits down beside her.

And he starts to play. Beautifully.

It's the same piece India was playing a moment before.

But this time it's different. This time it's resonant with passion and feeling. Emotion.

India sits there, entranced, listening to the piece like she's never heard it before.

She glances up, looking from Uncle Charlie's fingertips to his face. He seems lost in the music, completely engrossed.

He hasn't looked at her once.

Then India looks down, sets her fingers on the keys, and starts to play.

She's tentative at first, cautious, improvising a quiet harmony to his melody.

But she gains confidence quickly, their strange collaboration evolving rapidly into something effortless and organic. A minor piece for two hands becoming a major one for four...

The music starts to crescendo... The tempo to quicken...

India can feel her temperature begin to rise... She steals another glance at Uncle Charlie...

He's pounding away at the keys, busy weaving chords so intertwined, so intimate, she can't tell where their lines end and begin...

India looks back down, forgetting him now entirely, and their hands skate across the keyboard... Faster and faster... Caressing and coaxing, stabbing and demanding...

It's romantic and roiling, relentless - something Philip Glass might cook up during a lightening storm...

And then they're crashing into and through the final climactic chords... Their combined sustain reverberating throughout the house...

And then it's over.

India removes her hands from the keys, gently, as if they might break.

They sit in silence for a moment, until he turns to her, waits for her to look at him.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Thank you.

And he's gone.

India is left alone. Sweating. Shaken.

She looks down at the spot on the bench where Uncle Charlie was sitting a second before...

WE PAN DOWN from her face, coming to rest on a small sprinkling of dirt, scattered across the velvet seat cushion.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR - NIGHT - LATER

India wakes with a start on the chintz-covered sofa in the parlor. Her eyes are dazed, her forehead damp. It's dark. She looks at her watch. 8 o'clock.

Then India tilts her head toward the doorway, listening. We hear music.

Someone singing.

India walks into the foyer, the music getting louder. It sounds like it's coming from the back of the house. Jo Stafford crooning "No Other Love." Old-timey. Cheesy. (And beautiful.)

India walks into the dining room, sees light shining beneath the swing door to the kitchen. She tip-toes to the door, hears music coming from the other side.

She pushes it open a crack, and sees her mother and Uncle Charlie slow dancing in the kitchen.

India watches as they make their way around the island, lost in their own world, a small transistor radio playing on the counter.

Evie has her head on Uncle Charlie's shoulder. Her eyes are closed, her expression peaceful.

Uncle Charlie's arms are strong around Evie's waist, holding her close. He seems dreamy, far away...

UNTIL HE LOOKS RIGHT AT HER.

India gasps, letting the door swing shut. She backs away, turning and running, fleeing into the darkness beyond.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - GOLDY'S GRILL - NIGHT - LATER

A real-live diner, like you'd find along Route 1 in Jersey. Middle Bend's only "hotspot" for teens. "Goldy's Grill" is written in red neon lettering along the roof.

The bell above the door tinkles as Whip and a couple of buddies exit. They're halfway across the parking lot when -

INDIA (O.S.)

Whip.

We reveal India, standing off to the side of the lot, half-hidden in shadow. Surprised, Whip stops, smiles, walks over.

WHIP

Hey... What are you doing here?

INDIA

I just thought I'd... stop by. I've never been here before.

WHIP

No kidding.

One of his buddies titters. Whip turns to them.

WHIP (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow.

He waits until they start moving to their cars, looks back to India.

WHIP (CONT'D)

So... You wanna go inside?

INDIA

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - PARK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

India and Whip walk along a densely wooded path, the "Goldy's Grill" sign now in the distance, over the treetops behind them. They take their time, winding their way toward a playground in the middle of the park.

A breeze blows. Stars shine. Night sounds all around them.

WHIP

You kind of caught me off guard.
Back there, I mean...

India walks with her eyes on the ground.

WHIP (CONT'D)

Hanging out in the parking lot at
Goldy's... Doesn't really seem like
you.

INDIA

Not that you would know.

WHIP

No, I guess you're right... I wouldn't. Just caught me by surprise, that's all.

INDIA

Yes... I know what you mean.

WHIP

Oh yeah? How's that?

They've reached the playground now, walking over to a little metal roundabout, painted red. India sits down on it. Using one foot, she sets herself and the roundabout in motion.

When she finally speaks, her words are hesitant, halting. While far from unsophisticated, it would seem self-examination is not a favorite past-time.

Unlike her peers, India is clearly not in the habit of taking her emotional temperature every five minutes, let alone sharing the results with strange boys in the park.

Yet here she is. In the park. With a strange boy.

INDIA

Has someone ever shown you a photograph of yourself, and it was taken when you didn't know you were being photographed? And it's you... but it's you from an angle you've never seen before... An angle you don't get to see when you're looking in the mirror...

The roundabout continues its humble rotation, taking India for a spin.

INDIA (CONT'D)

It's you but you don't look like you. And you think, "That's me. That's... also me." Do you... Do you know what I'm talking about?

She looks at him questioningly, as if wondering whether they could possibly speak the same language.

WHIP

Yeah, I think I do...

India shivers, and not because it's cold.

INDIA

Well, that's how I feel tonight.
Surprised... At myself.

WHIP

Huh.

Whip gently stops the roundabout the next time she comes close. India looks up into his eyes, holds his gaze.

WHIP (CONT'D)

I'm glad you feel like you can
share this stuff with me...

INDIA

(beat)

Please don't spoil it.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - PARK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Whip stumbles backward, up against a tree.

India closes in, kissing him deeply. Again.

They've moved away from the little playground now, into the woods. Where it's dark. Private.

India pushes into him, feeling his mouth on her mouth, his hands around her waist.

She's alert to everything - the earth beneath their feet, the bark behind Whip's back, the heat of their bodies, the warmth of their breath, the cool of the night air against their skin...

It's sensory overload. Too much and not enough, all at the same time.

Whip groans softly, totally floored by this girl.

And then India bites down on his lip. Hard. Drawing blood.

WHIP

Ow! Fuck!

Whip jerks his head away, puts fingers to his wounded mouth.

He stares at her, incredulous. India stares back with an almost identical expression.

WHIP (CONT'D)

You fucking bit me...
(then; almost in awe)
(MORE)

WHIP (CONT'D)

Holy shit... Everyone said you were
crazy - off your fucking rocker...
But they have no fucking idea, do
they?

Then he smiles nastily, pulls her back in, mashing his bloody
mouth against hers...

India recoils, spell broken. Whatever this was, it's now
something else entirely...

INDIA

No... Please, Whip... I think I
want to go home now...

She twists away, struggling to get free...

INDIA (CONT'D)

Please, Whip... Let me go... I said
let me go!

But Whip's not having it. He grips her tighter, his voice now
a menacing whisper...

WHIP

Oh no you don't...
(laughing)
You opened this door... And now
you're gonna walk through it...

INDIA REARS BACK AND STRIKES HIM BRUTALLY ACROSS THE FACE,
knocking his head back against the tree...

She breaks loose, gasping, turning to run for the
playground...

BUT WHIP GRABS HER FROM BEHIND, throws her down on the grass,
flips her over on her back...

India lets loose with a blood-curdling scream...

Not of terror, but of fury...

WHIP (CONT'D)

(slapping a hand over her
mouth)

Ssssh... Quiet...

He pins her with his body. Smiles...

WHIP (CONT'D)

I bet you're really surprised now,
aren't you?

India is kicking and clawing this entire time, a wild animal
fighting for its life. There's no crying here. No tears. Her
face is twisted with rage and shock...

She's a warrior, but a warrior who's fatally miscalculated the fight...

They're face to face now, Whip's hand over her mouth...

WHIP (CONT'D)
Hold still... This is gonna hurt...

Whip reaches down with his free hand, reaches down to yank up her skirt and unzip his jeans...

India squeezes her eyes shut, bracing for the unthinkable...

WHEN SUDDENLY HE COLLAPSES ON TOP OF HER.

WHIP SHUDDERS ONCE, TWICE, THEN LIES STILL.

India opens her eyes, wondering why he's stopped, why he's not moving, why she's been spared.

Then, suffocating under the weight of him, she pushes Whip off of her.

She sits up slowly, confused. India looks over at Whip lying motionless in the grass. Then she looks down at her hands.

THEY'RE COVERED IN BLOOD. It's everywhere.

India looks at Whip again. THIS TIME SHE SEES THE SIDE OF HIS HEAD HAS BEEN BASHED IN.

HE'S DEAD.

She looks up. There's someone standing over her, silhouetted against the stars...

UNCLE CHARLIE.

He casually drops a large branch to the ground, its underside dark and wet with Whip's blood.

It's a shocking, suspended moment. They stare at each other, gauging, assessing.

Then, finally -

UNCLE CHARLIE
Sloppy... Very sloppy.
(beat)
You've got a lot to learn, young lady...

He reaches out a hand, India's fingers slip into his, and he pulls her to her feet.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Now help me with the body.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER

We hear the sounds of running water.

CLOSE ON blindingly white floor tiles. Thick and clean.

WE INTERCUT WITH FLASHBACKS TO THE HOURS FOLLOWING WHIP'S MURDER

CLOSE ON a pair of men's loafers, making their way through the underbrush, late at night...

A few seconds later, a pair of black and white saddle shoes also enters frame, following close behind...

PAN UP to reveal Uncle Charlie and India, walking in tandem...

Whip's body is slung over Uncle Charlie's shoulder, like a sack of grain...

Both of them are silent and alert, focused totally on the task at hand...

CLOSE ON a pristine white towel (also thick, also clean) being spread out carefully over the white tiles...

India sitting next to the body by the side of a dark road, her knees to her chest...

Suddenly she's illuminated by headlights... There's a car coming...

CLOSE ON a pair of filthy black and white saddle shoes, thickly crusted with dirt and dried blood, stepping precisely into the center of the white towel...

India rising slowly as the Mercedes pulls over to the side of the road...

Uncle Charlie getting out of the car, taking a thick wool blanket from the trunk...

CLOSE ON India's hands, caked with dirt, entering frame, beginning to unlace the first saddle shoe...

Uncle Charlie and India wrapping Whip's body in the blanket...

CLOSE ON India's hands as she starts to unlace the second shoe...

Uncle Charlie and India loading the body into the trunk, closing the lid...

CLOSE ON India's hands as she pulls off one white sock after the other, both sticky with blood and earth...

Uncle Charlie and India driving down the road, not speaking, both staring straight ahead...

CLOSE ON a soiled skirt as it hits the towel, dropping down around India's bare feet...

Uncle Charlie and India driving through the front gates of the Stoker estate...

CLOSE ON a torn and bloodied blouse, also dropping to the towel, landing next to the skirt...

The car pulling over, somewhere on the long stretch of drive between the front gates and the house...

CLOSE ON a white bra and panties, slipping down to the towel as well...

Uncle Charlie and India lifting Whip's body from the car...

Uncle Charlie reaching back into the trunk, pulling out a shovel, surprisingly prepared...

India shooting him a look...

CLOSE ON India's bare feet, stepping off the towel and back onto the tiles...

Uncle Charlie carrying the body through the woods, India following behind, carrying the shovel...

The stars shining down as they quietly make their way...

CLOSE ON India's hands as they fold up shoes, clothes and socks inside the towel, making a tidy bundle of it...

Uncle Charlie and India, deep within the woods, laying Whip down on the ground...

WIDE ON a shower curtain, drawn, a small figure outlined behind it...

Sounds of the shower running...

India noticing what are clearly two fresh graves...

FLASH OF MRS. MCGARRICK IN THE FREEZER...

FLASH OF AUNTIE GIN AT THE PAYPHONE, TURNING AROUND SLOWLY...

India looking at Uncle Charlie...

Uncle Charlie holding her stare, then finally turning away, choosing a new spot, starting to dig...

MOVING IN TIGHTER ON the shower curtain...

India sitting against the trunk of a tree, watching Uncle Charlie dig Whip's grave...

The work is intense and physical... Primal...

As he swings the shovel overhead, Uncle Charlie looks powerful and terrifying, god-like...

TIGHTER ON the shower curtain...

Sounds of the shower running and now something else as well...

Uncle Charlie and India rolling Whip's body into the grave...

Uncle Charlie holding the shovel out to India...

TIGHTER ON the shower curtain...

It sounds like someone is sobbing...

India taking the shovel, starting to fill the hole...

Uncle Charlie watching, hands shoved deep in his pockets...

PASSING THROUGH the shower curtain and into the shower...

Moving through the clouds of steam...

Revealing India, her back to camera...

The Mercedes pulling up to the house, lights off...

TIGHTER ON India, hunched under the showerhead, one arm propped up against the tiles for support...

India getting out of the car, caked in dirt, a look in her eyes like she's a million miles away...

TIGHTER ON the dirt and the filth sluicing down her wet back...

India entering the house...

Uncle Charlie standing by the car, watching her go...

TIGHTER ON her small shoulders, trembling as she gasps for breath between sobs...

India walking up the stairs in the dark...

TIGHTER AND TIGHTER... UNTIL WE SWIVEL AROUND TO REVEAL INDIA ISN'T SOBBING AT ALL...

SHE'S MASTURBATING, COMING FAST AND HARD, BODY CONVULSING WITH PLEASURE AS SHE CRIES OUT...

CUT TO BLACK

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - LATER

A hand knocks gently on a half-open door, warm light shining from within.

EVIE (O.S.)
Come in...

The hand pushes the door open, revealing Evie in her bedroom.

It's a warm cocoon of creams and linens, satin and down. Evie's at her dressing table, wearing a silk robe and matching nightgown.

When she turns from the mirror, we see a woman coming apart at the seams. Hair half up, dark circles under her eyes, several substances coursing silently through her veins.

But she makes an effort, smiling gamely at whoever's standing in the doorway.

We reveal India, hair damp and dressed for bed, wearing a soft pink nightgown. She looks young and innocent.

Except for the eyes.

EVIE (CONT'D)
India... What are you doing up?
It's so late...

Evie looks around her for a watch or a clock, her movements slow and disconnected, like she's underwater.

EVIE (CONT'D)
What time is it? It must be past
your bed-time, darling...

INDIA
It is.

EVIE
What time is it...

INDIA

Late.

Not finding a watch or a clock, Evie gives up, drops her hands in her lap, a puppet with the strings cut.

INDIA (CONT'D)

Mother?

EVIE

Yes, darling?

INDIA

Will you brush my hair?

EVIE

(delighted)

Of course... Come and sit down...

India pads over in her bare feet, sits down on the floor with her back to her mother. Evie picks up a large silver brush from the dressing table.

EVIE (CONT'D)

It's been a long time...

A few beats while she quietly brushes her daughter's long hair.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Your Auntie Gin never did come back, did she?

INDIA

No, mother.

(loaded)

She's gone now.

EVIE

Yes, I bet she is...

(laughing to herself)

Well, I'm not surprised. We're all alone now, darling... All alone...

INDIA

Yes, mother.

EVIE

Except for your Uncle Charlie...

INDIA

Yes, mother.

EVIE

You like your Uncle Charlie, don't you?

INDIA

Yes, mother.

EVIE

Good... I like him too. I like him very much... Whatever would we do without your Uncle Charlie?

INDIA

I don't know.

EVIE

(a sing-song)

What would we do without our Uncle Charlie...

(then)

India, darling...

INDIA

Yes, mother?

EVIE

I've been thinking... I've been thinking it's time we made a few changes around here... How about you? What do you think?

INDIA

I think... that's a good idea.

EVIE

Good... I do too. So tomorrow, I want you to get up, bright and early, and I want you to help me clean out your father's things...

India's shoulders tense.

EVIE (CONT'D)

(oblivious)

What do you think, darling? Will you help me do that?

INDIA

(beat)

Alright, mother.

Evie smiles down at her daughter tenderly.

EVIE

That's my girl... That's my good little girl...

WE PULL BACK, out into the hall, where we find Uncle Charlie, standing next to the door, listening in the dark.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - RICHARD'S STUDY - THE NEXT MORNING

The door swings open. It's India, feet bare, and wearing blue jeans today. Until now it's always been dresses and skirts.

This seems like a small but definite shift.

She pauses at the threshold. We get the sense this is not a room she's visited often.

The setting is masculine - dark leather, a fieldstone fireplace, wood paneling painted that British racing green.

India takes a step inside, looking around, walks over to what was clearly her father's desk.

SHOTS of India standing over the desktop, examining the items she finds there: Mont Blanc pens, black-framed reading glasses, assorted paperweights, etc.

India picks up a silver-framed photo of herself and her father, taken long ago. She's sitting in her father's lap, both of them looking toward camera, both clearly uncomfortable, both clearly pretending not to be.

India does not trace her father's face with her finger. Nothing of the kind. She merely studies him for a moment. Then she puts the picture down, careful to return it to its original position.

SHOTS of India opening various desk drawers, not touching what's inside. Files mostly. This is a respectful investigation. The word "rifling" does not apply.

She tries the bottom desk drawer. Locked. She goes through the pencil drawer again, finds a small key, tries it on the locked drawer. It opens.

Inside is a handgun, a large bundle of letters tied with string, and a small cardboard box.

India leaves the gun where it is, takes the box out, opens it.

Inside are black and white photos.

She casually flips through a few of them, stopping at one of three boys, sitting together on the steps of a massive house, a Spanish Revival à la George Washington Smith, a row of palm trees along the front.

Looks like California maybe.

The oldest boy, a teenager, is smiling, sitting with a frisky toddler on his lap. The third boy sits a few steps down from the other two. He's small for his age, with an eerily expressionless face.

All three wear short-sleeve shirts, khaki shorts and tennis shoes - summer uniforms of the privileged from days gone by.

India turns the photo over. On the back, written in a beautiful cursive, in faded ink:

"Richard (17), Charles (6) and Jonathan (2)... Summer fun!"

India flips to the next photo.

The same teenager (Richard), now wearing a sweater and long pants, sits under a lavish Christmas tree, face dark and solemn. The little boy (Charles), sits next to him, laughing, looking up at his older brother adoringly.

The baby is nowhere to be seen.

India turns the picture over. In the same writing as before: "R. & C. Xmas." And that's it. No Jonathan.

India puts the photos back in the box, turns back to the desk drawer, removes the large packet of letters. She freezes when she sees the letter on top is addressed to her.

India tears off the string. There must be hundreds of them.

All addressed to her.

Stunned, she sinks down to the rug, sets the letters in front of her in a pile, opens one at random.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.)
Happy Birthday, little one...
You're five years old today, and
that means you are officially a big
girl... I wish I could be there for
your party but I'm far away... in
Africa... taking pictures for the
magazine... Someday I'll bring you
here... I'll show you the lions and
the giraffes... all the animals
you've only read about in books...
That'll be your birthday present
from your Uncle Charlie... I
promise...

India opens the next one.

WE BEGIN AN OVERLAPPING MONTAGE OF INDIA READING HER LETTERS,
ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Dear India... I'm writing this
letter in the smallest hotel room
you've ever seen... not too far
from the red cliffs of Petra... I
wish you could see them for
yourself, India... One more place
to put on our long, long list...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...My dearest India... Greetings
from Heidelberg... That's the one
with the ruins on the hillside,
looking down over the city... I've
spent many hours walking in the
gardens there... and many times you
came to mind... too many to
count...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...My dearest India... greetings
from Saint Etienne...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...from San Sebastián...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...from St. Petersburg...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...from Stockholm...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...from Shanghai...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...from Monte Carlo...

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Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Merry Christmas...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Happy Easter...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Happy Halloween...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Happy New Year...

Next letter.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Happy Valentine's Day...

Another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...I was thinking of you this
morning...

Another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...You were in my thoughts this
afternoon...

Another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...You'll be in my prayers
tonight...

Another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Love... Your Uncle Charlie...

Another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Much Love... Uncle Charlie...

Another.

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UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Love and more love... Uncle
Charlie...

And another.

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...All my love... Charlie...

It is now dusk.

Staring into space, India carefully puts the last letter back in its envelope. Picking up her precious stack, holding her letters close to her chest, she gets up and walks out of the room.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

India starts up the stairs, gaining speed as she goes. When she gets to the second floor landing, she turns the corner, heading toward the room at the end of the hall. She is almost running as she reaches it -

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - UNCLE CHARLIE'S ROOM - DUSK - CONT.

The door flies open -

INDIA
Uncle Charlie?

But no one's there.

India looks around, disappointed. As she turns to go, she drops one of the letters. It lands on the floor, backside up.

Seeing something odd, she bends over, picks it up. Brow furrowed, India walks over to the window, holding the letter in the fading light so she can see better.

The return address is a rubber stamp.

This is what it says:

WRENFIELD INST. BOX 6292, WRENFIELD, PA 19086.

Not Shanghai. Not Monte Carlo.

India chooses another letter, flips it over. Same stamp.

WRENFIELD INST. BOX 6292, WRENFIELD, PA 19086.

She flips through one letter after the other, dropping them on the floor as she goes. They're all stamped with the same address:

WRENFIELD INST. BOX 6292, WRENFIELD, PA 19086.

WRENFIELD INST. BOX 6292, WRENFIELD, PA 19086.

WRENFIELD INST. BOX 6292, WRENFIELD, PA 19086.

Different stationery, same return address.

India lets the last one fall from her hands. Then her eyes dart to Uncle Charlie's suitcase, sitting in its usual place by the closet door.

Without a moment's hesitation she goes to the suitcase, kneels down, opens it.

India tears through what she finds there - neatly pressed shirts, a couple of ties, clean handkerchiefs. Totally unremarkable, everyday items...

And then everything comes to a halt.

There's one thing left in the suitcase. Hands shaking, India reaches down to the bottom, pulls out a man's leather wallet.

It's worn and smooth, with an "R" and an "S" embossed in faded gold.

Eyes round, she flips it open to a small laminated copy of the photo we just saw in the study downstairs. The photo of India and her father.

It's her father's wallet.

CLOSE ON India's face, as the world starts to shift and slide around her.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - EVENING - LATER

Uncle Charlie walks through the front door, half-carrying Evie, who is very much out of it but in otherwise excellent spirits. Uncle Charlie pauses, looks around.

UNCLE CHARLIE

India? Would you come and give us a hand, please?

No answer.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

India?

They stumble to the foot of the stairs, laughing. Then he sweeps Evie off her feet, begins carrying her up to her bedroom, a perverse echo of a bride and her groom on their wedding night.

Nearing the top, they see India waiting on the second floor landing. Evie gives her daughter a friendly wave.

EVIE

Hello, darling!

They reach the landing, walk over to India, Uncle Charlie still carrying Evie in his arms.

UNCLE CHARLIE

(amused)

I found her down in the woods past the tennis court... Can't figure how she got that far. I was looking for her for hours...

India just stares at him, her face a careful blank.

Evie looks dazedly from one to the other, smiling, blissfully unaware of the silent conversation taking place just over her head.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(finally)

Well... I guess we both found what we were looking for.

Then he turns away and starts down the hall, toward Evie's bedroom. Evie waves to India as she goes.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

The swing door opens and Uncle Charlie walks in.

India is at the sink, her back to him.

Her father's wallet sits on the island between them. It is the only thing on the countertop.

After a long moment, India turns around, and we see that she is dry-eyed, calm, bizarrely collected considering the circumstances. One more indication that we are dealing with someone far from ordinary.

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India and Uncle Charlie face each other across the island,
the air between them electric.

It's time to put the cards on the table.

INDIA
How did my father die?

CUT TO:

EXT. WRENFIELD - FLASHBACK - DAY

An empty road, somewhere deep in the mountains. Dark skies.
Pouring rain.

A Jeep Grand Woody drives by, SPLASHING CAMERA.

INT./EXT. CAR - FLASHBACK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sounds of windshield wipers, sloshing back and forth.

A hand reaches down to the heater, turns it up a notch. WE
PAN UP from the heater to the man we just saw posing with
India in the silver-framed photograph.

Meet Richard Stoker, Uncle Charlie's older brother.

He's late 40's, tall, heavy-set. Kind of tweedy. (At the
moment, a very damp kind of tweedy.)

Hard to imagine this person with Evie. Then again, looking
more carefully, you can see he might have been handsome once.
Maybe even impressive. Someone with breeding and potential.

But a life spent in the shadow of horror has clearly taken
its toll.

Richard's got his eyes on the road but his mind is someplace
else.

He flies past a sign: "Wrenfield - A Great Place to Visit, An
Even Better Place to Live."

GRAINY FLASH: A LONG WOODEN STAIRCASE, STRETCHING FROM A
CLIFF'S EDGE DOWN TO A BEACH FAR BELOW... THE OCEAN BEFORE
US... THE SUN SHINING... CLEARLY CALIFORNIA...

THE ONLY THING WE CAN HEAR ARE THE SOUNDS OF THE WAVES
CRASHING... EVERYTHING ELSE IS MUTED...

WE START TO DESCEND, HOLDING ONTO THE STAIR RAILS FOR
SUPPORT...

Back to Richard, listening to the windshield wipers going back and forth, back and forth. He blinks, takes a breath and exhales, trying to shake it off.

GRAINY FLASH: WE'RE DOWN ON THE SAND NOW... WE LOOK TO OUR RIGHT, SEE A GLAMOROUS-LOOKING WOMAN IN HER 40'S... SHE'S WEARING A BATHING SUIT, SITTING UNDER A STRIPED UMBRELLA AND READING A BOOK...

SHE TURNS TO US, LISTENING FOR A MOMENT, THEN SAYS SOMETHING WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND, SHAKING HER HEAD "NO"...

WE LOOK TO OUR LEFT, ALL THE WAY DOWN THE BEACH TO A SMALL OUTCROPPING OF ROCKS... WE SEE SOMETHING SMALL AND DARK, MOVING QUICKLY, OUT OF SIGHT... WE START HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION... WALKING AT FIRST...

AND THEN WE START TO RUN...

Back to Richard, moisture on his brow. He unbuttons another button around the collar of his oxford shirt.

GRAINY FLASH: WE'RE STANDING ON TOP OF THE ROCKS NOW, LOOKING DOWN AT A TINY INLET, COMPLETELY HIDDEN FROM THE BEACH PROPER...

THERE'S A LITTLE BOY PLAYING ALL BY HIMSELF IN THE SAND... THE SAME FIVE YEAR-OLD FROM THE PHOTO INDIA FOUND, THE ONE WITH AN ODD LOOK ON HIS FACE...

HE LOOKS HAPPIER NOW, SITTING IN THE SAND IN HIS LITTLE SWIM TRUNKS, BUSY MAKING CASTLES WITH A PLASTIC SHOVEL AND PAIL...

Back to Richard, breathing in through his nose and out through his mouth, trying to calm his rattled nerves.

His car slows down in front of tall iron gates, turns in. We see a discreet sign posted on one side of the entry: "WRENFIELD INSTITUTE. A Home Away From Home. Founded 1875."

GRAINY FLASH: WE'RE NOW STANDING OVER THE LITTLE BOY... HE DOESN'T LOOK UP, JUST GOES ABOUT HIS BUSINESS, CAREFULLY PATTING THE SAME LITTLE SPOT OF SAND WITH HIS SHOVEL, AGAIN AND AGAIN, MAKING SURE IT'S NICE AND SMOOTH...

WE SQUAT DOWN AND SHOVE HIM ROUGHLY ASIDE...

AND THEN WE START TO DIG...

Back to Richard, pulling up to the institute. It's massive, Victorian, gray and gloomy. He puts the car in park, sits for a moment, staring out the windshield at it, breathing hard.

GRAINY FLASH: WE'RE ALMOST A FOOT DOWN NOW, OUR HANDS BLEEDING AND RAW AS WE SCRATCH AWAY AT THE SAND, MORE AND MORE DESPERATE...

THE LITTLE BOY STANDS NEARBY, WATCHING, A CLOSED LOOK ON HIS FACE...

THE WOMAN IS RUNNING TOWARDS US NOW, HER FACE TWISTED WITH CONCERN, SHOUTING SOMETHING WE CAN'T MAKE OUT OVER THE CRASH OF THE WAVES...

WE'RE PANICKING NOW, BREATHING HARD... AND THEN WE STOP DIGGING...

WE'VE FOUND SOMETHING... SOMETHING BURIED DOWN DEEP IN THE SAND...

ONLY NOW DO WE HEAR THE WOMAN AS SHE OPENS HER MOUTH AND SCREAMS...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WRENFIELD INSTITUTE - FLASHBACK - HALLWAY #1 - CONT.

A catacomb-like corridor, poorly lit and eerily quiet.

A patient (elderly, vacant stare) shuffles silently PAST CAMERA, accompanied by an orderly in white. We reveal Richard sitting behind them in the shadows, all alone on a long wooden bench.

He's calmer now but still simmering under the surface, agitated and apprehensive, his eyes ringed with darkness.

A thick metal door opens down the hall from the bench. A woman walks out of an office, turns to him. This is THE DOCTOR (60's, no-nonsense, white consultation coat). When she speaks, she speaks with a French accent.

THE DOCTOR
Mr. Stoker?

Richard looks at her, stands, bracing for what comes next.

INT. WRENFIELD INSTITUTE - FLASHBACK - HALLWAY #2 - CONT.

Another dark hallway. The floor is cracked concrete, the walls painted public school gray. The doctor walks a pace or two ahead of Richard. They are mid-conversation.

THE DOCTOR
Legally? Nothing at all... The decision was his to make, Mr. Stoker... As it has always been. And of course he has his financial independence.

(MORE)

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THE DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Your parents saw to that thirty years ago, when he first came here... As you are no doubt aware.

Richard reaches for a degree of composure. Sadly, his reach is a little short today.

RICHARD

I don't... I don't quite understand what I'm supposed to do now... What am I... What are the things I need to know?

The doctor stops in front of a closed metal door, turns to face him, tired but not unsympathetic.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(almost stammering)

Please, Doctor... I'm just trying to... to understand my options here...

He looks like he's about ten seconds from bolting.

THE DOCTOR

Mr. Stoker, you must try to accept that the present is the present and the past the past. If we enter into a situation believing the worst will occur, we have already gone a long way toward guaranteeing it...

Richard looks far from convinced.

THE DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'm afraid there's nothing more I can do for you, Mr. Stoker... I'm sorry. You have my number. And I will have you in my thoughts. And my prayers.

She turns to the door, unlocks and opens it.

WE REVEAL UNCLE CHARLIE, sitting in what is, surprisingly, a cheery little room. Whatever we might have been expecting, this isn't it.

We see an oriental rug on the floor, a lamp and a comfortable reading chair by the (barred) window. The walls are painted a warm yellow, lined floor-to-ceiling with books. There's a neatly-made bed in one corner and an upright piano in the other, the latter looking polished and well-cared for.

It's clear that someone has worked hard to make this room comfortable and inviting, a stark contrast to the rest of the facility.

Uncle Charlie is sitting on the edge of the bed. When the door opens, he rises, suitcase in hand, and the brothers lay eyes on each other for the first time in 30 years.

EXT. WRENFIELD INSTITUTE - FLASHBACK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Charlie and the doctor stand on the steps saying their good-byes. There's clearly a long history here.

THE DOCTOR
You will remember what I have told
you, yes?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Bien sur.

THE DOCTOR
"Idle hands," Charlie...

Uncle Charlie gives her a hug. Surprised, she accepts, then disengages gently.

UNCLE CHARLIE
*Au revoir, Docteur Maillard!
Jusqu'à notre prochaine
rencontre...*

(So this is "Madame Maillard," the "French chef" in the tale Uncle Charlie told at dinner.)

DOCTOR MAILLARD
*Oui, Charlie, until we meet
again...*

QUICK CUTS OF UNCLE CHARLIE LEAVING WRENFIELD

Richard putting Uncle Charlie's suitcase in the back of the Jeep...

Richard sinking heavily into the driver's seat, slamming the car door shut...

Uncle Charlie fastening his seatbelt...

Richard putting the car in gear...

Uncle Charlie staring out the back window, waving to Doctor Maillard until she disappears from view...

Uncle Charlie turning around to face forward, eyes bright and hopeful, excited...

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - FLASHBACK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The car travels down an isolated 2-lane stretch, thickly wooded on either side. Flashes of greenery and overcast skies.

Uncle Charlie is glued to the window, watching the world go by, taking it all in.

But suddenly, the ride's over.

Richard pulls the car over to the side of the road at a small intersection. There is the only car in sight. Turning the engine off, he rests his hands on the steering wheel.

RICHARD
This is it, Charlie.

Surprised, Uncle Charlie looks around.

UNCLE CHARLIE
I don't understand.

Richard takes the wallet we saw previously out of his pocket, removes a ticket, puts it up on the dashboard between them.

RICHARD
This is where I'm letting you out.
And that's your ticket. Take it.
There's a bus passing through in an hour...

UNCLE CHARLIE
A bus to where?

RICHARD
Wherever it is you're going.

Uncle Charlie looks at him, confused.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Charlie, I need you to listen to me carefully. You're not coming home with me.

UNCLE CHARLIE
What do you mean?

RICHARD
I can't have you around my girls, Charlie. I can't have you around my family.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(stricken)
But... why?

Richard looks out the driver's side window, not wanting to get into this. Not at all.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Why not?

RICHARD
Don't do this, Charlie...

UNCLE CHARLIE
Why not?

RICHARD
Charlie... Please...

But Uncle Charlie wants answers.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Why not? Why not? WHY NOT?

RICHARD
(finally losing it)
You know why, Charlie! You know why not!

Silence, and then - maybe - the sound of someone choking back tears.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Goddamn it, Charlie...

Beat. Then, soft and quiet -

UNCLE CHARLIE
You still love me, don't you, Richie?

Richard takes a deep breath.

RICHARD
Of course I still love you. I just have to love you a little less now.

As if he's talking to a small child -

RICHARD (CONT'D)
You understand, don't you? You understand that's what family means... It means sacrifice. Even when we don't want to. Even when it hurts... You understand that, right?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Yes, Richie... I understand.

Richard's face softens.

RICHARD
You'll always be my brother,
Charlie. That's never going to
change... No matter what.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(fumbling for the door)
Would you excuse me?

Uncle Charlie staggers out of the car, sinks to his knees by
the side of the road, and vomits.

Holding his stomach, he gags repeatedly until there's nothing
left inside.

RICHARD
(under his breath)
Jesus, Charlie... Jesus...

We watch Uncle Charlie on all fours, trying to gather
himself, his hands sliding out and away from him, into the
grass beyond the asphalt, fingers digging into the earth for
purchase...

QUICK CUT to Uncle Charlie settling back into his seat,
swinging the car door shut.

He stares straight ahead.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
You okay?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Yes, Richie... I'm fine. I'm fine
now.

Uncle Charlie turns to his brother, looks him in the eye.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(sincere)
Thank you for asking.

AND THEN HIS HAND COMES UP FAST, SWINGING THE ROCK HE GRABBED
FROM THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, SHATTERING RICHARD'S NOSE.

We're suddenly outside the driver's side window, PULLING
BACK, away from the car. A SPLASH OF BLOOD ACROSS THE GLASS
blocks our view of the interior. AS WE PULL BACK, we continue
to hear the sounds of rock meeting flesh again and again.

QUICK CUT to Uncle Charlie opening the driver's side door. Richard is slumped in his seat, slipping in and out of consciousness, face a mask of blood and gore.

Gingerly, Uncle Charlie starts to pull his brother from the car.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Of course I still love you,
Richie... I just have to love you a
little less now...

Uncle Charlie, arms tucked under Richard's arms, drags his brother backwards towards the rear of the Jeep.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You understand, don't you?

Setting his brother carefully down on the asphalt, Uncle Charlie opens the car's rear door.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You understand that's what family
means... It means sacrifice...

Uncle Charlie gets ready to heft Richard in.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Even when we don't want to... Even
when it hurts...

Richard tumbles into the back with a painful thud, groaning.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You understand that, right?
(imitating Richard)
"Yes, Charlie... I understand..."

He finds a blanket in the back of the car, folds it.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You'll always be my brother,
Richie...

He slips the blanket under Richard's head, so he'll be comfortable on the long drive home.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That's never going to change...

Uncle Charlie looks down at Richard, expressionless.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
No matter what.

The rear door SLAMS SHUT.

QUICK CUT TO AN OVERHEAD SHOT of Richard's car lurching forward and stopping suddenly. It starts forward again, tentatively, as Uncle Charlie gets the hang of an automatic.

The car weaves a little more as it pulls away, eventually straightening out and disappearing over the hill.

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

When we next see India, she's standing in the same spot near the sink.

But Uncle Charlie stands much closer.

He's now exactly where he stood the night they washed dishes together after dinner, looking at India with an expression beyond expectant, aware of fault lines shifting, aware that everything - everything - hinges on what happens next.

Finally, India breaks the silence. And when she speaks her tone is almost... matter-of-fact. Something that would chill anyone other than the man standing next to her.

INDIA
(eyes down)
Why now?

UNCLE CHARLIE
What do you mean?

INDIA
I mean why now? Why come back now?
Why wait so long?

Uncle Charlie slides down the counter a little, closing the distance between them.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(softly)
The day I left Wrenfield... The day
your father had his accident...
What day was it? Do you remember?

INDIA
(almost to herself)
Yes... I remember...

UNCLE CHARLIE
What day was it, India?

At last she looks up at him, at last she meets his eyes.

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INDIA
My birthday.
(beat)
It was my eighteenth birthday.

Uncle Charlie nods.

UNCLE CHARLIE
I was waiting, India... For you.
Everything I've ever done... For
you.

They're standing very close together now, looking into each other's eyes...

WHEN THE DOORBELL RINGS, startling them both.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

India answers the door by herself. There's a man standing on the front porch with his back to her. Hearing the sound of the door opening, he turns around.

Meet SHERIFF HOWARD (50's), a thoughtful, weathered-looking man in full uniform.

SHERIFF HOWARD
Good evening... Sorry to bother
you, miss. Your name India Stoker?

Her first instinct is to slam the door in his face, but India concentrates on keeping her face smooth, relaxed.

INDIA
Yes. It is.

SHERIFF HOWARD
I'm Sheriff Howard, with the Middle
Bend Police Department...
(shows his badge)
Hope you weren't in the middle of
dinner...

INDIA
No.

SHERIFF HOWARD
Excellent, excellent... In that
case, do you mind if I trouble you
to answer a few questions?

INDIA
No. Not at all.

SHERIFF HOWARD

Good, good...

He then proceeds to say nothing. India can feel the hairs rising on the back of her neck.

SHERIFF HOWARD (CONT'D)

(finally)

Well... I guess I should start by saying how sorry I am for your loss... I didn't know your father, but I'm told he was a good man...

India nods, says nothing.

SHERIFF HOWARD (CONT'D)

Miss Stoker, I'll get right to it... You familiar with Goldy's Grill? In town?

Beat.

INDIA

We drive past it all the time.

SHERIFF HOWARD

Ever stopped in for a bite?

Beat.

INDIA

Is everything alright, Sheriff?

SHERIFF HOWARD

I hope so, Miss Stoker. I certainly hope so...

Another long pause, both of them waiting for the other to fill the silence. The sheriff may be smiling but his eyes aren't, and by now India can see his good ol' boy routine for what it is: a ruse.

INDIA

Sheriff, my mother hasn't been herself since the funeral. She needs my attention. So if you could please tell me what this is all about...

SHERIFF HOWARD

Sorry, Miss... The wife is always telling me I have a habit of running on...

The sheriff chuckles, waiting for India to join in. She doesn't.

SHERIFF HOWARD (CONT'D)

So I guess I'll get right to it...
The Taylor boy - Whip's his name,
I'm told he's a classmate of yours -
is missing. His folks haven't seen
him since yesterday. And I've got
two young men saying you were with
him. Last night. In the parking lot
at Goldy's...

(smiles)

So I was hoping you could help me
out here.

With increasing clarity, India understands she's wandered
into the middle of a very serious game. And if there's a rule
book, she's without it.

INDIA

I...

SHERIFF HOWARD

Yes?

INDIA

I...

SHERIFF HOWARD

Don't be shy now, Miss...

UNCLE CHARLIE (O.S.)

India? Is something the matter?

Uncle Charlie appears behind her in the doorway. India turns
to him, careful to keep the relief off her face.

INDIA

Uncle Charlie, this is... Um...
This is...

SHERIFF HOWARD

(helpfully)
Sheriff Howard.

INDIA

...This is Sheriff Howard. He's
asking about a boy I know. From
school.

Uncle Charlie sticks out his hand. The men shake.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Charlie Stoker. Nice to meet you.

SHERIFF HOWARD

Likewise... Now... You were saying,
Miss?

India looks at her uncle. Her cornerman. Her ally. Her...

In the space of a second Uncle Charlie's eyes seem to reach all the way down inside of her, and whatever he finds there, fluttering, is stilled.

India turns back to the adversary.

INDIA

Yes, Sheriff, I did see Whip last night...

SHERIFF HOWARD

That so?

INDIA

(nodding)

Yes. I got hungry so I stopped by Goldy's for some fries. I ran into Whip in the parking lot, and we decided to go for a walk...

SHERIFF HOWARD

At night?

The sheriff's forehead crinkles with concern.

SHERIFF HOWARD (CONT'D)

Miss Stoker, that neck of the woods isn't safe for a young lady at night...

INDIA

Oh, I wasn't scared...

(smiling shyly)

Not with Whip there.

SHERIFF HOWARD

I see.

INDIA

So we went for our walk and it was...

(practically blushing by now)

Well, we had a very nice time.

SHERIFF HOWARD

Oh... I see.

INDIA

But I didn't want to be away too long, what with my mother not feeling well. So I went home. And I thought Whip said he was heading home too....

SHERIFF HOWARD
Any idea what time this was?

INDIA
Sorry. But I do remember making
sure I wasn't out too long...

SHERIFF HOWARD
So you came home and you went right
to bed...

INDIA
No, actually... When I came home,
Uncle Charlie and I played a board
game. And then I went to bed.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(smiling)
Monopoly.
(shrugging)
Wins every time.

The sheriff sags a little, disappointed that's all there is
to it.

INDIA
I hope Whip's okay...

SHERIFF HOWARD
So do I. His folks are a mess.

UNCLE CHARLIE
I'm sure they are.

SHERIFF HOWARD
Then again, I have a feeling he'll
turn up. Boys that age... Well, you
know how they are.

INDIA
I'm sure I do.
(then)
Sorry I couldn't be more help,
Sheriff. You'll let me know if you
hear anything, won't you? I don't
think I'll be able to sleep until I
know Whip's alright...

SHERIFF HOWARD
Will do, Miss. Will do.
(backing down the steps)
Okay... I'll be in touch. Thanks
again. Nice meeting you both...

INDIA
Goodnight, Sheriff.

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UNCLE CHARLIE
(waving)
Goodnight, Sheriff.

They're about to close the door when the sheriff pivots on his heel, turns back to them.

SHERIFF HOWARD
Oh, by the way... Did your
housekeeper ever get in touch with
you after she left town so quick?

Beat.

Beat, beat, beat.

INDIA
No... She didn't. Has her husband
heard from her?

SHERIFF HOWARD
Nope. Not yet...
(then)
Strange how people can just...
disappear on you.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - FOYER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Charlie and India shut the door, locking it quietly behind them. Uncle Charlie looks out through the side lite, making sure the sheriff is getting into his car.

UNCLE CHARLIE
(whispering)
He'll be back.

INDIA
(also whispering)
What are we going to do?

There's no panicking here, but they're both aware the stakes have just jackknifed. Uncle Charlie takes a deep breath, turns to his niece... and leaps.

UNCLE CHARLIE
What I've been waiting to do ever
since I got here...
(beat)
Leave. With you.

There's a pause while India looks into his eyes...

And then she makes her decision.

INDIA

When?

And suddenly Uncle Charlie is reaching out to her, reaching out with one hand to touch India's face, her soft cheek...

If either of them are aware of a line, it's about to be crossed for the very first time...

His fingers are just seconds from her skin when they hear a strange, strangled noise behind them...

They turn as one and see Evie, halfway up the stairs, watching.

EVIE

Oh. Oh, I... Excuse me... I thought
I... I thought I heard the
doorbell...

Evie is dumbfounded, unable to process the moment she's just witnessed between her daughter and her dead husband's brother.

She sways backward suddenly, losing her balance, sitting down awkwardly on the stairs, legs splayed out in front of her.

For a moment Evie looks lost and helpless, like a fish somebody dropped on the stairs. Shaking, she tries to sit up, tries to straighten her skirt, to compose herself.

Uncle Charlie moves to help her, but Evie stops him with a look.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Don't. Don't touch me... Don't you touch me.

Face slack, eyes staring, she looks back and forth between the two people in the foyer below. Then she looks away, bewildered, trying to add it all up and arrive at a different number.

She fails.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Well.

(beat)

Well I don't know what to say...

What does one say? It's... It's all
very...

(then)

I think I'll go back to my room
now...

She flips herself over, starts to make her way back up the stairs, crawling at first and then getting to her feet, moving up and up and into the darkness.

Uncle Charlie and India watch her go, both remaining motionless until they hear the sound of her bedroom door closing somewhere up above.

Only then does he turn to India, only then does he answer her question.

UNCLE CHARLIE
Tomorrow night.

CUT TO BLACK, OVER WHICH WE HEAR

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Right after we tie up a few loose
ends...

CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE - THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON a little bell over the door, ringing cheerfully as it opens...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR - SAME

CLOSE ON India's fingers as she begins to play a new piece on the piano. It starts in the same key as the little bell...

WE HEAR THIS PIECE OVER THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE, INTERCUT BETWEEN INDIA AND UNCLE CHARLIE

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE

Uncle Charlie, wearing his tortoise shell sunglasses, pokes his head in and looks around, making sure it's near empty...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

CLOSE ON India's fingers, flowing over the keys with new-found power and dexterity...

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE

Uncle Charlie walks slowly down a brightly-lit aisle...

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He passes shelves stocked with all kinds of items, but we can't tell what those items are, or what kind of store this is...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

CLOSE ON India's feet, bare and dirty, moving up and down on the brass pedals...

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE

Uncle Charlie is now deep in conversation with a FEMALE EMPLOYEE (20's, cute). We see her only from the neck up, so we can't tell what she's wearing...

FEMALE EMPLOYEE
Well, it's not normally our
policy...

Uncle Charlie flashes that killer smile.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
(blushing)
Okay. But just this once...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

CLOSE ON India's back, hair loose and swaying around her shoulders...

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE

Uncle Charlie holds up a pair of plastic-wrapped scissors with bright green ends, sets them down on the counter...

UNCLE CHARLIE
Almost forgot! I'll take these too,
please...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

CLOSE ON India's mouth, lips parted, breathing deeply, giving the piece everything she's got...

INT. MIDDLE BEND - STORE

Uncle Charlie puts his sunglasses back on and walks out the door, a white paper bag tucked under his arm...

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We hear the little bell ringing again...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

WIDE ON India, dressed in khaki shorts and a plain T-shirt...

We're looking at a woman transformed, in small ways and large, both inside and out...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - DOWNTOWN

The Mercedes-Benz RIPS out of town, PICKING UP SPEED as it passes the "Welcome to Middle Bend" sign...

We reveal a police car hidden behind the sign. It pulls out, takes off in pursuit...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

WIDE ON India as she leans and sways, her playing athletic now, physical and visceral...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND

The Mercedes passes through frame, WHIPPING through the countryside, leaving the town of Middle Bend far behind...

The police car passes through frame soon after, lights and sirens now flashing...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

India looking radiant in the dying spring light, playing for what might well be the last time...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

The Mercedes pulls over along a quiet strip of road, corn fields on either side...

The police car pulls up behind it. The cop gets out, starts ambling up to the Mercedes...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

The music getting louder now, picking up speed...

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INT. MERCEDES-BENZ

OUR P.O.V. FROM INSIDE THE CAR: it's Sheriff Howard walking up to the window. He stops, hands on his belt...

SHERIFF HOWARD
In a hurry, Mr. Stoker?

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

INT./EXT. MERCEDES-BENZ

CLOSE ON Sheriff Howard, leaning in near the window now, smiling...

SHERIFF HOWARD
Know how fast you were going?

UNCLE CHARLIE
Just fast enough, Sheriff...

SHERIFF HOWARD
Fast enough to what?

CLOSE ON Uncle Charlie, smiling too, showing some teeth...

UNCLE CHARLIE
To get your attention.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

CLOSE ON UNCLE CHARLIE JAMMING THAT PAIR OF SCISSORS IN GOOD AND DEEP, RIGHT UP IN THE SHERIFF'S THROAT, RIGHT IN THAT SWEET CORNER POCKET WHERE NECK MEETS CHIN...

CLOSE ON SHERIFF HOWARD GUGGLING AND SPLUTTERING, REACHING UP TO TOUCH THE BRIGHT GREEN SCISSOR ENDS JUTTING FROM HIS NECK...

CLOSE ON THE BLOOD TRICKLING DOWN FROM HIS MOUTH...

CLOSE ON THE SHERIFF STAGGERING BACKWARD, AWAY FROM THE CAR, SUNLIGHT BOUNCING OFF HIS SUNGLASSES...

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INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

WIDE ON Sheriff Howard as he JERKS and SHIMMIES across the road, doing a strange little dance as he fumbles at the scissor ends, trying to pull them loose...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

The Sheriff stumbles off the road, blood pumping down the front of his uniform, goes tumbling into the corn fields...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

Sheriff Howard enters frame, staggering, choking...

He drops to his knees, blood splashing the corn stalks as he crawls through the field, heading nowhere...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

Uncle Charlie enters frame a few steps behind, following the trail of blood and trampled stalks, out for a stroll, calm as you please...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR

Louder, faster...

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - COUNTRYSIDE

CLOSE ON Sheriff Howard losing steam and momentum, rolling over onto his back...

CLOSE ON Uncle Charlie standing over the sheriff, looking down at the dying man with all the interest of a court stenographer...

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - PARLOR - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON India, breathing hard, brow glistening with sweat, hitting those final chords with passion, energy, life...

The music trails away to silence...

She takes a second, lifts her hands off the keys...

EVIE (O.S.)

Brava.

India looks up, surprised, sees her mother in the parlor doorway.

Evie is almost unrecognizable to us. Slouched and disheveled, clearly unwashed, she's an unsettling shadow of the woman we first met in that very same doorway, the day of her husband's funeral.

Like India, Evie is also transformed. They've come a long way in a very short time, one blossoming, the other...

Mother and daughter stare at each other across the room.

EVIE (CONT'D)

What's for dinner?

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Evie's in her chair at the head of the table, glass of red at the ready. India sits in her usual place.

We notice there's nothing on the table. No food, no plates, no candles. No music playing. No noise from the kitchen. Nothing. It's the complete opposite of their first dinner with Uncle Charlie.

The moments tick by. Finally -

EVIE

So... where is he?

INDIA

Town. He had a few errands to run...

India trails off.

EVIE

So helpful. Or should I say handy?

She gives India a look.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Or maybe you have your own word for it.

Evie chuckles darkly, then falls silent again. India keeps her eyes on the table, on the swing door, on the sideboard. Anywhere but on the woman sitting next to her.

EVIE (CONT'D)

I'm hungry. Starving, in fact...

INDIA

He should be back soon.

Evie takes a big gulp of wine, polishing it off. Plunks the glass down on the glossy tabletop.

EVIE

I'd like another, please.

India rises, goes to the sideboard, retrieving the open bottle of wine. She fills her mother's glass, keeping a discreet distance between them. Then she sits back down, puts the bottle on the table between them.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Why don't you pour one for yourself? You're old enough now.

India looks at her mother, wondering where this is going. Evie stares back until India drops her eyes.

India does as she's told. She gets up again, goes to the sideboard, gets another glass, sits back down. She reaches for the bottle, fills it.

India takes a small sip of wine, looking at her mother over the rim of the glass, wary.

Then she takes a larger sip.

Evie's lips press down in something approximating a smile. She nods once. (Approvingly?)

Then Evie lifts her own glass and drains it in one gulp. Sets it back down on the table.

Beat.

EVIE (CONT'D)

You know, I've often wondered why it is that people have children in the first place... And the conclusion I've come to... is that at some point in our lives we realize that things are fucked up beyond repair... So we decide to start again. Wipe the slate clean. Start fresh... And we have children... Little carbon copies we can turn to and say, "You will do what I could not... You will succeed where I have failed..." Because we want someone to get it right this time... for chrissake...

(beat)

But not me. Not me, my darling...

Evie leans in close to her daughter, making sure she has her undivided attention.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Personally speaking, I cannot wait to watch life tear you apart.

Then Evie sits back in her chair. And then she starts to cry, big shuddering sobs, ratcheting up from her small, shattered center.

India doesn't move a muscle, nor does she look away this time, as her mother unravels right there at the table.

EVIE (CONT'D)

Oh India... Oh India, I'm so frightened... I'm so frightened for you...

CUT TO:

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

India stands quietly at the island opposite Uncle Charlie.

She's dressed as we last saw her. Uncle Charlie, of course, has showered and changed since his appointment with Sheriff Howard.

On the counter in front of him are the following: A bottle of scotch. A silver spoon. A large glass. A white bowl. A wooden pestle. And a white paper bag.

Uncle Charlie picks up the bag, opens it, removing several orange bottles with little white caps. He sets them down on the island in a neat row.

There are three in total, and Evie's name is on all of them.

They're the prescriptions he just refilled at the drug store in town.

India watches quietly as Uncle Charlie moves down the row of bottles, taking a handful of pills from each. He drops the pills in the white bowl, begins grinding them with the pestle.

Once the pills have become powder, Uncle Charlie picks up the large glass, fills it with scotch. He pours the mixture into the glass, picks up the spoon, stirs the mixture until the powder dissolves.

He takes the spoon, bowl, and pestle to the sink, washes them, puts them back in their proper places.

Finished, he comes back to the island, standing opposite India again.

There is nothing on the counter between them but the glass, which he slides across to her.

India looks at it, then at him.

He waits.

And then something passes between them. Uncle Charlie knows without being told.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Okay...

(beat)

Maybe next time.

He gives her a reassuring smile, patient as the day is long.

India's eyes fall on the glass again. Another moment passes.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(gently)

India?

She looks up, as if woken from a trance.

INDIA

Yes?

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UNCLE CHARLIE
You'd better get ready. We'll be
leaving shortly.

She continues to linger. He smiles at her encouragingly.

UNCLE CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's alright... Go ahead. I'll
clean up.

India turns, walks out through the swing door.

Uncle Charlie picks up the glass, goes to the sink, and pours
it slowly down the drain.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT BETWEEN INDIA AND UNCLE CHARLIE AS THEY PREPARE FOR
THEIR DEPARTURE

India walking through the dining room and into the foyer...

UNCLE CHARLIE WASHING THE GLASS AT THE SINK...

India climbing the stairs...

UNCLE CHARLIE DRYING THE GLASS...

India reaching the second floor landing, turning...

UNCLE CHARLIE PUTTING THE GLASS BACK IN THE CABINET...

India walking down the darkened hallway...

UNCLE CHARLIE HANGING THE DISHTOWEL ON ITS LITTLE HOOK...

India arriving at a half-closed door, reaching out to turn
the knob...

UNCLE CHARLIE STANDING VERY STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
KITCHEN...

India pushing the door open to a darkened bedroom...

THE KITCHEN, NOW EMPTY...

India reaching for the light switch on the wall...

THE SWING DOOR TO THE DINING ROOM, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH...

India turning on the lights...

THE LIGHTS TURNING ON IN EVIE'S BEDROOM... EVIE, IN BED,
TURNING TOWARD THE DOOR, BLINKING...

India revealed in the doorway to Uncle Charlie's bedroom, NOT HER MOTHER'S...

UNCLE CHARLIE REVEALED IN THE DOORWAY TO EVIE'S BEDROOM...
EVIE SEEING HIM AND STARTING TO RISE, AWARE THAT SOMETHING IS
VERY, VERY WRONG...

India moving into the room, calmly, with purpose...

UNCLE CHARLIE MOVING INTO THE ROOM, CALMLY, WITH PURPOSE...

India reaching the bed, picking up his navy blue sweater,
left unpacked...

UNCLE CHARLIE REACHING THE BED, LEAPING UP AND INTO THE AIR,
FACE DARK AND FERAL...

India closing her eyes, lifting Uncle Charlie's sweater to
her face...

UNCLE CHARLIE LANDING ON TOP OF EVIE, STRADDLING HER...

India inhaling Uncle Charlie's smell...

UNCLE CHARLIE SLIPPING HIS HANDS AROUND EVIE'S THROAT...

CLOSE ON India as she puts the sweater against her cheek...

CLOSE ON UNCLE CHARLIE AS HE SMILES AND STARTS TO SQUEEZE...

India folding the sweater neatly...

EVIE STRUGGLING, EYES BULGING WITH FEAR AND SURPRISE...

India carrying the sweater over to Uncle Charlie's
suitcase...

EVIE BEATING AT UNCLE CHARLIE WITH HER FISTS...

India kneeling down next to the suitcase...

UNCLE CHARLIE SQUEEZING... AND SQUEEZING...

India opening the suitcase...

EVIE BEGINNING TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS, EYES STARTING TO ROLL
IN HER HEAD...

India gently packing the sweater inside...

EVIE CLAWING MORE AND MORE WEAKLY AT UNCLE CHARLIE...

India leaving Uncle Charlie's room, suitcase in hand...

UNCLE CHARLIE SQUEEZING TIGHTER... AND TIGHTER...

India walking down the hallway...

EVIE CHOKING, GASPING, DYING...

India walking down the hallway...

UNCLE CHARLIE SQUEEZING... AND SQUEEZING... ALMOST DONE NOW...

INDIA (O.S.)
Uncle Charlie?

UNCLE CHARLIE LOOKING TOWARD THE DOOR, SEEING INDIA STANDING THERE...

INDIA (CONT'D)
I'm ready.

INDIA RAISING HER FATHER'S HANDGUN, SHOOTING UNCLE CHARLIE ONCE, THROUGH THE NECK...

Uncle Charlie tumbling off the bed, blood spurting from his wound in a long graceful arc...

Uncle Charlie falling to the floor, face up, blood seeping onto the thick carpet...

India dropping the gun, running to his side, falling to her knees...

India pulling Uncle Charlie into her arms, cradling his head as his blood pumps out, soaking them both...

India caressing Uncle Charlie's face, watching the blood bubble up from his mouth and over his lips...

Uncle Charlie looking up into India's eyes... Searching them for something... AND FINDING IT...

UNCLE CHARLIE DYING WITH A BLOODY SMILE ON HIS FACE...

India throwing back her head AND SCREAMING...

Evie, alive, gasping for breath, pushing herself up from the bed, seeing India crouched on the floor, covered in blood...

Evie clambering off the bed in a panic, crawling towards her daughter, on her hands and knees...

EVIE
India... my baby... I'm here... I'm here...

Evie reaching for India, lifting her daughter's head, looking into her eyes AND RECOILING...

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Evie jerking away from her daughter, pulling backwards, FACE REGISTERING SHOCK AND HORROR...

CLOSE ON India's face, streaked with blood and stained with tears, HER EYES NOW ALIVE WITH SOMETHING UNSPEAKABLE...

India laying Uncle Charlie down gently...

INDIA REACHING FOR THE GUN, LYING DISCARDED ON THE CARPET...

EVIE (CONT'D)

No...

INDIA'S BLOODY FINGERS CLOSING AROUND THE GUN...

EVIE (CONT'D)

No, India... Please...

INDIA'S EYES ON HER MOTHER, A HUNTER ZEROED IN ON ITS PREY...

EVIE (CONT'D)

PLEASE... INDIA...

INDIA LIFTING THE GUN SLOWLY OFF THE CARPET, A WICKED GRIN CURLING HER MOUTH UP AT THE CORNERS...

EVIE (CONT'D)

INDIA!

CLOSE ON EVIE AS SHE SCREAMS...

EVIE (CONT'D)

INDIAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DAWN

Silence.

SHOTS of the Stoker estate. Wind in the trees, dew on the grass.

The gazebo. The koi pond. The weathervane.

The patch of earth along the drive where Uncle Charlie planted bulbs. Still bare. (And always will be.)

The white house with its chimneys, its eaves and black shutters.

The red front door... left wide open.

A PAIR OF BLACK AND WHITE SADDLE SHOES SITTING JUST INSIDE
THE DOORWAY, ABANDONED.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SHOTS of the interior.

The piano in the parlor...

The island in the kitchen...

The swing door to the dining room...

The stairs in the foyer...

Uncle Charlie, eyes wide, lying face up on the floor of
Evie's bedroom, a broken doll, the bulls-eye in a circle of
blood...

Evie, eyes wide, lying motionless in bed, on her side facing
the window, making us think she's dead...

UNTIL SHE BLINKS.

EXT. STOKER RESIDENCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SHOTS of the exterior.

The house from a distance, and again from farther away...

The three graves in the woods...

The front gates standing open...

The road winding away through the trees...

The Mercedes-Benz speeding over a hill...

INT. MERCEDES-BENZ - DAY - SAME

We reveal India, sitting behind the wheel.

She's showered and fresh, dressed in clean shorts and one of
Uncle Charlie's pressed shirts, open at the neck.

The window's down, a breeze blowing through her hair.

Her face and attitude are calm, the world ahead of her and
all the time in it.

WE PAN OVER to the passenger seat, reveal Uncle Charlie's suitcase. India reaches over, opens it. We see the gun inside, lying on top of his navy sweater.

India fishes around, finds what she's looking for: an eyeglass case. She cracks it open, takes out a familiar pair of tortoise shell sunglasses. Sticks them on her nose.

The better to see with.

EXT. MERCEDES-BENZ - DAY - SAME..

WIDE ON the Mercedes shooting away from us, up and over a hill, and then disappearing from view.

Beat.

Empty hillside.

Beat.

And then, quite unexpectedly, the Mercedes is coming back over the hill, shooting right towards us.

IT TEARS PAST CAMERA, speeding back toward Middle Bend...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE BEND - SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sun shining, birds tweeting.

WIDE ON a Mini-McMansion, one of many, all squatting together in a tired-looking subdivision. It's immediately clear we're a long way from the Stoker estate.

We take in the house. Missing shingles and peeling stucco. Cracked sidewalk. Dead-spots on the grass. Children's toys on the lawn...

A Big Wheel, a deflated basketball. A couple of baseballs, dirty and chewed...

An aluminum bat lying next to them.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON frying eggs and bacon, cooking on a grease-stained stove.

A WOMAN (40 but looking 50), still in her bathrobe and slippers, stands over the food, halfheartedly poking at it with a plastic spatula.

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING. It's tinny. Loud.

The woman goes on cooking, half-asleep.

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING AGAIN.

The woman looks up, finally hearing the bell. Then she looks at the ceiling, screams.

WOMAN
WOULD SOMEBODY GET THAT?

No answer. Seconds pass.

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING AGAIN.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(much louder)
WOULD SOMEBODY GET THE DOOR,
PLEASE? I'M TRYING TO MAKE
BREAKFAST DOWN HERE!
(beat)
HELLO? IS ANYBODY LISTENING?
(then; to herself)
For fuck's sake...

THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
GODDAMN IT! I'M NOT GOING TO ASK A
SECOND TIME! GET THE GODDAMN DOOR!

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - FRONT HALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON the front door.

THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.

WOMAN (O.S.)(CONT'D)
GET THE DOOR!

We now hear a man's voice, calling back from upstairs.

MAN (O.S.)
ALRIGHT ALREADY! I'LL GET IT!

CLOSE ON the front door.

Sounds of feet moving around upstairs.

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING AGAIN.

WOMAN (O.S.)
GODDAMN IT!

More noise at the top of the stairs, somebody starting down.
THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP...

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING AGAIN AS WE CONTINUE TO HOLD STEADY
ON THE FRONT DOOR.

MAN (O.S.)
OKAY, OKAY!
(muttering)
For fuck's sake...

He's closer now, almost to the door...

WE HEAR THE DOORBELL RING AGAIN.

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

And then his hand is reaching into frame, grabbing the
doorknob, turning it...

INT./EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

The front door swings open... it's Pitts.

He blinks a few times, like he can't believe who's on his
doorstep at 7 o'clock in the morning.

PITTS
What the fuck are you doing here?

AND WE SWIVEL AROUND HIM TO REVEAL INDIA IN HER BRAND NEW
SUNGLASSES, JUST IN TIME TO WATCH HER BRING THAT ALUMINUM BAT
UP AND OVER IN A SIZZLING ARC - RIGHT INTO CAMERA.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END