



Bloodlist 14

THE ALLERDALE BUS TRAGEDY

Written By

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BLACK. The rustle of WIND through LEAVES. The CREAK of TREES. Then, a WHISPER.

WHISPER
Tá an t-ábhar ormsa.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Moonlight streaks dimly through the trees. The WHISPER fades into a DRONE, growing louder, louder, LOUDER.

Among the trees, a gray-skinned boy appears, seemingly materialized from the darkness. *(Has he been there the whole time?)*

CLOSE ON - His face, hollow-eyed and staring. He opens his mouth to scream--

CUT TO BLACK.

SILENCE.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE
(warbling)
Grace? Grace, are you there?

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT [**PRESENT, 1994**]

A woman opens her eyes, alarmed for a moment, then relieved. She lets out a sigh. This is GRACE SUTTER (32).

She sits up in bed. Her apartment is a mess. Liquor bottles on the sill. Cigarette butts piled in multiple ash trays. A shirtless man sleeps beside her.

She rubs her mascara-smudged eyes, looks at the alarm clock on her dresser. **4:04 A.M.** glares redly from its digital face. She scoffs. Then--

The PHONE RINGS beside her alarm clock. The MAN (30s) stirs. Grace frowns, picks up the phone.

GRACE
Hello?

WOMAN'S VOICE
Grace?

GRACE
(confused)
Joy?

Beat.

JOY (V.O.)
Mom's dead.

Grace opens her mouth to respond, but she has nothing to say. The man reaches over, gently grasps her arm.

MAN
Is everything okay?

Grace pulls her arm away, laying back. Light from the street shines through the windows, distorted by the glass, casting an uneven circle on the ceiling.

JOY (V.O.)
Grace?

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The ceiling of an airport terminal passing by in silence, one bar of light after another. Grace stands on a moving walkway, rolling suitcase by her side, watching the lights.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Darkness. Columns shudder by in the gloom accompanied by a rhythmic FOOM, FOOM, FOOM. Then--

Light. Grace is in a train. It speeds out of a tunnel, past the outskirts of New York City. She stares out the window from her seat.

Outside, people in layers linger miserably on train platforms. Then they're gone, replaced by dead leaves piled at the feet of barren trees. Fall has begun its slow descent into winter. Grace peers into the passing forest.

INSERT - Pale fingers sticking out of overturned soil.

Grace looks away, wringing her hands in her lap.

EXT. ALLERDALE TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - DAY

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Friday, October 28th**

It's overcast. Cold. Grace stands on the train platform, rooted to the spot. Beside her a sign reads: **ALLERDALE.**

Then, a sound. Someone CRYING SOFTLY on the platform. Grace looks to see a YOUNG GIRL (12), sitting on a bench, clutching a backpack to her chest. An open newspaper rests on the ground at her feet, PAGES FLAPPING in the breeze.

Grace looks away, grudgingly begins walking toward the road.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - MINUTES LATER

A red-cheeked Grace walks as minivans and trucks roll by.

EXT. ALLERDALE - STREET - DAY

A charming east coast town, with windowed storefronts, cafes, and small restaurants, all festooned with Halloween décor.

FOUR-WAY STOP

Grace frowns as she nears a four-way stop bustling with activity. A few elderly volunteers are assembling a shrine of some sort, unrelated to Halloween. Grace steps around them, peering over their shoulders to see an assemblage of flowers, candles, and old photos below a large plaque affixed to the brick wall of the General Store.

INSERT - The plaque, which reads: **In Memory of Those We Lost on November 4th, 1974.** Beneath, a list of etched names.

GRACE
(whispers)
One short.

Grace steps out of the way of an older woman approaching with an unwieldy bouquet of flowers. She turns to leave.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Grace? Grace Sutter?

Grace turns. The woman waves at her.

GRACE
Mrs. Evanston?

CAROL EVANSTON (60s; warm) approaches her, smiling.

MRS. EVANSTON
Grace. It's been so long.

GRACE
Yeah.

Grace forces a smile, looking for an out. Mrs. Evanston's face softens with pity.

MRS. EVANSTON
I am so sorry for your loss.

GRACE
Thank you, I--

MRS. EVANSTON
I heard about your mother from Janet Harper. You know Janet Harper? Millie's mother from down the street. Such a shame. She was a wonderful woman.

GRACE
Mmhmm.

MRS. EVANSTON
She endured so much. You all did.

Mrs. Evanston places a comforting hand on Grace's arm. Grace weathers it with a grimace.

GRACE
Why are you out here?

MRS. EVANSTON
Oh. For Jason, of course.

Mrs. Evanston gestures at the plaque.

GRACE
(embarrassed)
Oh my God. I am so sorry. I swear, I haven't forgotten, I just spaced.

MRS. EVANSTON
No dear, it's fine. It's a nasty time of year for us all. Lots of memories. In a way though, it's nice. Everyone coming together to remember.
(seeing Grace's frown)
But a hundred good days do not make up for one bad one. My condolences.

GRACE
Thanks, Mrs. Evanston.

Grace hurries away.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

A quaint motel on the outskirts of town.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - SAME

Grace sits cross-legged on a bed, puffing on a cigarette. She looks at her reflection in the darkened screen of the TV. In the glass, her figure looks distorted and inhuman.

She reaches over and takes the room's telephone off of its receiver. She dials a number. RING, RING.

JOY (V.O.)

Hello?

GRACE

Hey, it's me.

A beat.

JOY (V.O.)

What's up?

A BABY COOS in the background.

GRACE

I'm back.

JOY (V.O.)

What like here? In town?

GRACE

Yeah.

JOY (V.O.)

You need some place to stay?

GRACE

No, thanks. I'm good. I just got a room at the motel.

JOY (V.O.)

Oh. So--

GRACE

I just didn't know-- Can I do anything, for you?

JOY (V.O.)

Mark and I made the arrangements. It's all taken care of.

GRACE

I see. Um--

JOY (V.O.)

But why don't you come by the elementary school tomorrow, around 2:30? Say hi. Also, mom left you a box of stuff. I can bring it to work with me.

GRACE

Okay.

JOY (V.O.)

Okay. Good.

A silence stretches. The BABY GRUMBLES in the background.

JOY (V.O.)

I gotta go, but I'll see you tomorrow, yeah?

GRACE

Yeah.

JOY (V.O.)

Good night.

GRACE

Good night.

Grace hangs up and lays back on the bed. She stares at the ceiling, troubled. *(above, on the popcorn ceiling, the barest hint of a circle)*

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Silence. Grace drifts, as if in a trance, moonlight lighting her path. She's barefoot, feet filthy. Her hand trails against the passing trunks of pale, skinny trees, their boles like dark eyes in the night. Then--

She stops. Blinking into awareness. She doesn't know where she is. She looks around, but there's only woods and darkness, boles and circles on every side. She begins to cry for help, but there's no sound, nothing but the CREAK and RUSTLE of the forest.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Grace?

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
I know you're there.

Grace's eyes open. She lets out a long, uneven breath, looks at the plain, popcorn ceiling. The alarm clock on her nightstand reads: **4:04 A.M.**

EXT. CALLAHAN ELEMENTARY - LATER

A taxi pulls up outside a modest, red-brick elementary school. Grace gets out. She's wearing a hoody, dark jeans, and boots, looking like a person who wants to disappear into herself. She stares at the entrance, reluctant.

INT. CALLAHAN ELEMENTARY - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Grace meanders down the hallway with her hands in her hoody's pockets, eyes trailing across posters, locker tags, a board filled with Founders Day events, and--

A HUSHED ARGUMENT sounds around a corner. Grace glances into a classroom. Inside, a woman whispers angrily at a young girl. It's the girl from the train platform.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE
I honestly don't know what to do
with you. And don't tell me you're
going to call your father. He's not
here. I am.

Grace can stand no more and walks on.

DOWN THE HALL

Grace encounters a sparsely filled trophy case. Framed pictures of graduating classes populate the lower shelves. Grace begins to search, looking at the years printed beneath the photos, muttering to herself.

She finds the photo. A rare smile lights up her face.

JOY (O.S.)
Grace?

Grace looks up to see JOY (28), standing with some folders in her hands, a book bag slung under one arm, beside a purse. She looks like a bookish mom.

GRACE
Oh. Hey.

JOY

Hey.

They both take a tentative step toward one another, stop, reassess, and almost jointly decide against a hug.

JOY (CONT'D)

You get over here okay?

GRACE

Yeah. Taxi.

JOY

Nice.

GRACE

Just glad I could make it.

JOY

Glad you could make the time too.

Grace's already forced smile weakens.

JOY (CONT'D)

How is it over there on the west coast? Still going out with... who was it? Jordan? James?

GRACE

Oh, no. That was a while back.

JOY

Yeah. I guess it was.

GRACE

Just me now. Well, most of the time. Me and the plants. But they keep dying. I don't have mom's green thumb, that's for sure.

Joy murmurs a chuckle. They both look at their feet.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Is there anything--

JOY

I already told you, it's all taken care of. The service will be tomorrow, at noon.

GRACE

Okay. I'll taxi--

JOY

I'll pick you up at the motel at
11. Burial at 1 at the cemetery,
right next to Tommy's plot.

Grace grimaces.

GRACE

Did it-- Did it hurt? Was she in
pain?

Joy smiles again, but there's no kindness in it.

JOY

Yeah. For a long time. But at the
end, she was in and out. When it
got really bad, they had her on so
much stuff that she just sort of
napped all day. Dreaming, I think,
from the stuff she'd mutter.
'Thomas. Thomas. Thomas.' Even
called for dad once.

GRACE

She wouldn't have liked to know
that.

JOY

No, she wouldn't.

GRACE

She ever mention me?

JOY

No.

Silence. Grace tries to fill it.

GRACE

You have that box you mentioned?
Stuff for me?

JOY

Ah, shoot. I forgot it at the
house.

GRACE

That's okay. I have a deadline
coming up, I was hoping to go back
into town and do some work at the
library anyway.

JOY

Come by the house tomorrow after
the service and you can pick it up.

GRACE

Okay.

Grace begins to turn, stops, pointing at the trophy case and
photos within.

GRACE (CONT'D)

That's a misprint by the way.

JOY

What?

Grace gestures at a framed photo. A graduation photo; eighth
graders assembled on bleachers. *(in a big circle)* A younger
version of Grace sits beside a sign with details about their
class. Beneath the photo, a line of text reads: **1975.**

GRACE

My graduation year. We were the
class of '74, not '75.

JOY

No you weren't.

GRACE

Yes. I was. Trust me, Joy. I don't
think I'd forget. It's even on the
sign.

Grace points at the sign in the photo. It reads: **Allerdale
Middle School, Graduating Class of 1974.** Joy shrugs.

JOY

Whatever. I'll see you tomorrow.

And with that Joy walks past her down the hall. Grace glances
back at the date on the photograph, peering closer.

She looks at the photograph beside it: different kids, same
bleachers *(same circle)* It also reads: **1975.** Grace frowns and
walks down the hall.

EXT. STREET - FOUR-WAY STOP - DAY

Grace walks past the ever-growing tribute. Streamers have
been hung. Inside a storefront window, two employees place a
sign in respect of the victims of the tragedy, at odds with
the Jack-O'-Lanterns outside.

Tall, votive candles now stand beneath the plaque, flames flickering in the chill afternoon breeze. A few Allerdale citizens mill about the shrine; a visitor takes pictures; an older couple kneels unsteadily to arrange some flowers.

Behind them an elderly man in a knit green sweater and round glasses watches.

EXT. LIBRARY - LATER

Grace arrives at a small, red-brick library. She walks up the sidewalk path to a pair of double doors.

INT. LIBRARY - WORK AREA - MINUTES LATER

Grace sits at a desk, highlighted papers and manila folders spread before her. She holds a pen above the first line of a blank, yellow legal pad.

She stares at the page. Readjusts her grip on her pen. Sets pen tip to paper and--

She lets the pen fall, bringing her face into her hands. There in the dark she breathes, trying not to cry. Willing the tears back. In and out. In and out. Until it's the only thing she can hear.

INT. PRUDENCE'S ROOM - DAY [GRACE'S IMAGINATION]

A sickly woman in bed, an IV drip taped into her. Clear liquid dribbles down the line. Gray light shows through a dirty window.

CLOSE ON - The labored rise and fall of her chest. The WET RATTLE of her LUNGS.

GRACE (V.O.)

No.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY [**FLASHBACK, 1974**]

A small boy stands on the sidewalk. A figure steps up behind him.

GRACE (V.O.)

No. No. No.

INT. LIBRARY - WORK AREA - DAY [**PRESENT, 1994**]

Grace sits back in her chair, eyes swimming. Then she shoves her fist into her mouth, biting the flesh there. Hard.

Tears grow, but the emotion wanes. A second later and she's fine. She wipes a dribble of tears from her cheeks, takes a moment to look at the livid teeth marks on her hand, then gathers her things and leaves.

FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Grace walks toward the exit, thinks of something, and stops. She returns to the front desk where a librarian in her 40s sits, tapping away at the keyboard of a boxy computer. Her nametag reads: DAWN.

GRACE

Do you have microfiche? Of local newspapers and stuff.

DAWN

Wouldn't be much of a library if we didn't.

Grace eyes the woman, annoyed.

GRACE

Can you pull the microfiche for-- Say, November, 1974. The first week of November.

Dawn eyes her suspiciously. Sees her notepad and bag.

DAWN

You a writer?

GRACE

Yeah.

DAWN

You writing a tribute?

GRACE

No. Not yet, I mean. I lived here when I was young and left before-- everything happened. I just wanted to get the whole story.

DAWN

I'll take a look, but know that this is a good town, filled with good people.

(MORE)

DAWN (CONT'D)
They've been through a lot. More
than most. If you're going to
expose, do it gently.

GRACE
I wasn't going to expose--

DAWN
Of course, dear. One moment.

Dawn stands, walking into the back offices. Grace waits,
thinking. She looks at her feet.

INSERT - Her bare, filthy feet walking across the fogged
forest floor.

Grace blinks the image away, rubs her tired eyes. Dawn
returns, perplexed.

GRACE
Something wrong?

DAWN
It seems we've misplaced some of
our files.

GRACE
Oh.

DAWN
But don't worry. Are you here for
the memorial?

GRACE
Not really.

DAWN
Check back tomorrow. I'm sure I'll
have found it by then. Lotta
history in this town if you do some
digging. Not a surprise that
sometimes things get lost in the
shuffle.

EXT. MURPHY'S DINER - NIGHT

An east coast diner, filled with chrome and cozy. Grace sits
alone in a booth in the corner, draining the last of her
coffee from a cup. A plate of eggs and toast sits untouched
in front of her. She flags down a passing WAITER.

GRACE
More coffee, please.

WAITER
Be right back.

The Waiter walks off. Grace sighs as she looks around the diner. A few teenagers sip milkshakes at the bar top, siblings by the look of them, a boy and girl. Next to them, a father and his young daughter. An older woman watches them from a booth, alone.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
(quietly)
But I don't want to.

Grace turns her head slightly, as if listening to the people in the booth behind her.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
Dad asks about you all the time.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
He does?

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
All the time.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
But why doesn't he call the house?

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
You know why. Come on. It will be fun. An adventure. Wouldn't you like to live in the big city?

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
But what about J--

WAITER (O.S.)
More cream?

Grace looks up. The Waiter has refilled her coffee and holds a small ramequin of plastic coffee creamers out to her.

GRACE
Fine, thanks.

The Waiter walks off. Grace drinks the hot coffee, wincing as she does.

LATER

She throws some cash onto the table, stands and walks to the door, lighting a cigarette as she goes. Behind her, the booth is empty.

CLOSE ON - The circle of coffee, left by her mug on the table.

A small, old woman in a green shawl sits in a booth on the opposite end of the diner. She watches Grace leave through the window.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Deep night. Grace lies on her bed, head propped up on a pillow, alone in the dark. An open bottle of whiskey on her nightstand. Her eyelids are heavy, fluttering.

She nods off. Comes to. Rubs a hand across her face. She doesn't want to, but can't help it. Her body slackens as she sinks into sleep.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Utter black. Then, the barest hint of light, cast over darkness, illuminating crags and edges. A gnarled root. A shelf of stone. A cross-section of earth, laid bare. And in the center of it all--

A boy hanging in the void. Pale. Eyes open and gray. Fingernails blue. Dirt in his mouth. Forgotten.

Worst of all is the SILENCE. Complete, but for the SHIFT and SETTLING of earth, the SKITTER of STONE.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Grace sits on the side of her bed, eyes dark with exhaustion.

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Saturday, October 29th**

EXT. MOTEL - PARKING LOT - LATER

Grace stands smoking in the parking lot, frowning under a light drizzle. She waves a hand as a car pulls up, flicks her cigarette away.

INT. JOY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Grace, hair tousled and wet, sits in the passenger seat of Joy's car. Joy drives, biting her lip as if she's stopping herself from speaking. Grace looks over her shoulder, sees the empty backseat.

JOY
Mark took the kids up ahead.
They'll meet us there.

Grace nods, looking at her lap. The RAIN PATTERN intensifies as Joy turns onto a highway. Joy clears her throat.

JOY (CONT'D)
See dad lately?

GRACE
No.

Joy glances at her, waiting for clarification.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I could only give him so many handouts. He needs professional help.

JOY
I could've told you that like twenty years ago.

GRACE
Yeah, well we're not really on speaking terms anymore and he hasn't called after leaving treatment again.

Joy chuckles, shaking her head. Grace frowns, unamused.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What?

JOY
Nothing.

GRACE
No. What?

JOY
Just funny.

GRACE
Funny?

JOY
After all of that he doesn't even talk to you anymore.

Grace's frown deepens into anger.

GRACE

Don't.

JOY

What? I'm not saying anything that isn't true. You left me behind. It happened. I got over it. I grew up.

GRACE

You shut your f-

JOY

I was eight, Grace. Eight!

GRACE

I don't want to talk about this.

JOY

You never wanted to talk about this. Never. Even after I called. Over and over. You know how much I cried, waiting for you to answer the phone?

GRACE

I didn't want to talk.

JOY

You told the police more than you ever told me and mom.

GRACE

What else could I say? How much more could I apologize?

JOY

I don't know. How much sadness was Tommy worth to you?

The air leaves Grace like she's been punched. She shakes her head, at a loss. Her gaze drifts to the window, to the forest flashing by beyond. *(and the boy crouched in the woods)*

Joy's anger softens immediately to regret. She opens her mouth to say something, stops, shakes her head as she refocuses her attention on the road.

EXT. CEMETERY - ENTRANCE - DAY

Joy pulls through the open gates of a cemetery, adding to a long line of cars.

EXT. CEMETERY - FUNERAL HOME - MINUTES LATER

Grace trails Joy as they enter the funeral home alongside others dressed in black. She hunches in her hoody, avoiding eye contact.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

People file into the room, walking between two rows of pews to their seats. Joy spots her husband, MARK (28) in the front, a baby in his arms. A toddler sits beside him. A few police officers in uniform sit in the row behind. Joy walks off to join her family.

Grace lingers in the entryway, looking at a blown-up portrait of her mother that reads: **Prudence Sutter 1937-1994.**

It's an old photograph, capturing Prudence in her early thirties, perhaps the same age as Grace is now. Grace stares.

A stack of programs sits on a small table beside the portrait. She grabs one and walks down the aisle.

Some people note her passing; most pay no mind. At the front she turns and sits on the empty bench opposite Joy and her family. Mark sees Grace alone, turns to Joy.

MARK
(whispering)
Should we ask her if--

JOY
No.

Mark falls silent. A PRIEST appears at the front, walking up to a wooden lectern, all pageantry and no warmth.

PRIEST
Good morning everyone.

A murmur of "Good Mornings" filter through the crowd.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Today we are gathered to honor the
life of Prudence Sutter: a fixture
within our community.

The priest's words FADE as Grace slowly turns the pages of the program. Old photos have been scanned and included between snippets of biblical text.

INSERT - a young Grace cradled in her mother's arms.

INSERT - Prudence holds up toddler Joy's hands, helping her to walk while a young Grace watches.

INSERT - Prudence laughing as she holds up a boy in a red rain coat. It's Tommy. Grace's brother.

MEMORY HIT - The dead boy in the forest. He looks around, as if waiting. *(alone alone alone alone alone)*

Grace closes the program and watches the priest as he continues to talk, but she can hear nothing but the RAIN.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Grace, Joy, and others stand graveside as the casket is lowered into the earth. It's a family plot. Beside Prudence's headstone sits Tommy's. It reads: **THOMAS SUTTER 1964-1974.**

AFTER

Grace and Joy thank people as they file past them on a path. Most hug Joy and offer little more than a polite smile and condolence to Grace.

Mrs. Evanston is among them. She gives Joy a lingering hug, then moves to Grace and does the same. She pulls back, reaching into her coat.

MRS. EVANSTON

If you need someone to talk to,
come to this address tonight at
seven.

She hands Grace a slip of paper.

MRS. EVANSTON (CONT'D)

It's helped me for many years.
Maybe it can do the same for you.

GRACE

(surprised)
I-- Thank you.

Mrs. Evanston walks on. Grace looks down at the card. The train of people reaches its end. Mark approaches them with his and Joy's kids: Hope (the baby) and JAMES (4, the toddler boy).

MARK

Hey, Grace. I didn't get a chance
to say hi. Nice to see you.

GRACE

Nice to see you too.

He hands the baby to Joy and lets go of little James' hand. The little boy trundles around at their knees.

MARK

Been a while. You coming to the house?

Grace opens her mouth to respond, then looks to Joy, who stares appraisingly. Joy shrugs and begins walking toward the parking lot.

GRACE

I'll come over for a bit.

MARK

Nice. Now where's my son?

He peers over Grace's shoulder. The boy's run off, hopping along grave markers like they're stepping stones.

MARK (CONT'D)

Be right back.

Mark walks off to get the boy. Grace watches him go, a hint of yearning in her gaze. Not romantic, but something else. She looks back toward her mother's grave and frowns.

An ELDERLY MAN stands beside it; the same one that was at the tribute earlier. Grace approaches.

GRACE

Um, hello?

He turns to her, smiling in a grandfatherly way; bespectacled and warm.

ELDERLY MAN

Hello.

GRACE

Hi. I'm Grace Sutter. I'm Prudence's daughter. Did-- did you know my mom?

ELDERLY MAN

Oh, no. Unfortunately not, at least not on a first name basis.

Grace nods, trying to figure this guy out. He has an accent, but she can't quite place it. British? No. Irish? Maybe. Sensing her curiosity:

ELDERLY MAN (CONT'D)

Forgive me, where are my manners?
I'm Karl Liman. I used to frequent
the town center when your mother
ran things. The soup kitchen and
such. Always rewarding work. Eased
her, I think. She seemed
comfortable there.

GRACE

Yeah-- I never got the opportunity
to help, but I've heard only the
best things. That was my mom,
always happy yelling at people,
telling them what they should do.

KARL (ELDERLY MAN)

Your mother was a special woman.

GRACE

(smiling thinly)

And you just happened to be in the
neighborhood?

KARL

My house is not far from here. I
wanted to pay my respects.

GRACE

Are you coming to the house? We're
having some food. Everyone's gonna
be milling around, making awkward
conversation if you're into that
sort of thing.

KARL

Alas. I'm not one for crowds. They
unsettle me.

GRACE

You and me both.

KARL

Are you a solitary woman?

GRACE

I'm a writer.

KARL

A writer?

GRACE

Journalist, more like. I write for some publications on the west coast. Zines and stuff. Nothing huge, but it pays the bills.

KARL

That's great. Well if your work is anywhere as pleasant as this conversation, I'm sure it's wonderful.

GRACE

Uh, thanks.

KARL

Anyway, I must be off. My condolences again, dear.

She watches as Karl walks off, not toward the entrance, but away across the cemetery.

EXT. CEMETERY - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Joy smokes a cigarette beside her car. Inside, baby Hope coos in the backseat. Grace approaches. Joy takes one more quick drag, then tosses it away.

JOY

Don't tell Mark about that.

Grace nods toward the baby.

GRACE

I won't if she doesn't.

She rounds the car and opens the passenger side door.

JOY

Why were you talking to the groundskeeper?

GRACE

Huh?

JOY

That old guy?

GRACE

He wasn't the groundskeeper. Just an acquaintance of mom's that wanted to pay his respects.

Joy shrugs. They get in the car.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - LATER

Joy's car pulls into the driveway of a charming colonial on the outskirts of a suburban neighborhood. Joy gets out and walks toward the house without a word, baby in tow. The door opens, revealing Mark, who waves Joy in out of the rain.

Grace gets out and lingers near the car, staring up at the house with dread. SILENCE envelops her, despite the falling rain. She frowns, suddenly realizing she's the only one outside. Alone. Houses stretch down the road on either side of the Sutter house, but not a soul is outside.

Slowly, she turns, facing away from the house and toward--

REVERSE TO REVEAL - the FOREST. It sits on the other side of the road, tree line nearly reaching the asphalt. Grace stares, shudders, then digs her hands deeper into her hoody's pockets, turns and walks up to the house.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Grace sits on a chair in the living room, a plate of untouched food on her lap. A half-drunk drink in her hand. She observes in silence.

Joy makes her rounds. Grace looks a touch envious at how easily her sister navigates the situation even while she placates baby Hope in her arms.

A PATTING of FEET draws Grace's attention to the toddler, James, who runs around the party, giggling and clumsy. He begins pulling himself up the banister of the stairs. Grace puts her plate down and follows.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Grace walks slowly down the hall, looking at the pictures hanging on the walls:

Mark and Joy, looking young and awkward in their high school prom portrait; Joy and an older, ailing Prudence at a soup kitchen; Mark's police portrait; Mark smiling beside Joy, laid up in a hospital bed, a newly born Hope in her arms. Then--

A school portrait of Tommy. The same for Joy. And next to them, a faded rectangle on the wallpaper. Grace touches it, wincing. She takes a gulp of her drink.

A CHILD'S LAUGH sounds from somewhere close. Grace looks. A door stands ajar at the end of the hall.

INT. GRACE'S OLD ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open. Grace steps in, tentative, curious. She frowns.

REVERSE to REVEAL - A room scattered with file boxes and loose papers. Corkboards cover the walls, filled with hand-scrawled notes, highlighted articles, and at the center: a map of Allerdale, with annotations, and a series of *circles* inside the forest to the north of town.

Beneath it all, the remnants of a child's room: a desk, a twin bed, old wallpaper.

James sits on the floor, among a few scattered toys. He looks over his shoulder as Grace enters. She kneels beside him.

GRACE

What are you doing up here, buddy?

JAMES

Toys.

GRACE

Ah. Nice. You know I used to play with my toys up here too. This was my room.

JAMES

Your room?

GRACE

Yeah. I slept right there. And that's where I did my homework. And look.

She stands and walks over to the closet, pointing to a series of tick marks on its frame.

GRACE (CONT'D)

And here, you can see how tall I was. How old are you now?

James thinks, screwing his mouth with the effort.

JAMES

Four.

GRACE

Four years old! So big. Come here.

James stands and walks over. Grace positions him gently in front of the tick marks. She gives him an exaggerated, appraising look.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Wow. You're taller than I was at your age.

Wonder in the boy's eyes. FOOTSTEPS sound outside the room. Grace looks up to see Mark appear in the doorway.

MARK
What's going on up here, guys?

GRACE
(standing)
Just seeing how tall James here is.
He's going to be a giant!

Mark ruffles his son's hair, smiling.

MARK
Nice! You having fun with Auntie Grace?

The boy nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
Good. Now go downstairs. I think your mom is bringing out desert. And-- it's chocolate!

James' mouth opens in an "O" of excitement. He turns to Grace; she shoos him away.

GRACE
You better hurry before it's all gone.

James runs off. Mark smiles after him, turns to leave, then pauses at the door.

MARK
I know it's not really my place, but Joy is really happy that you're here. I know it doesn't seem like it, maybe, but I can tell.

GRACE
You've been around her longer than I have, if you think about it.

MARK

Yeah, I guess so. Anyway, if she's giving you a hard time or anything, just let it roll off. It was hard with Prudence at the end. I think she's still getting back to just being herself.

Grace tries to speak; can't.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh, that shoebox on the desk is for you, by the way.

Mark walks out of sight. Grace turns to the desk and sees an old shoebox. She reaches for it, and hesitates. Her head drops, she sighs. She can't open it. Not now.

She looks up, gaze trailing over the notes and photos on the wall.

INSERT - Messily annotated news articles, most a variation on: **THE RAILWAY KILLER STRIKES AGAIN** and **ANOTHER MISSING PERSON, RAILWAY KILLER SUSPECTED**.

Grace frowns, peering at the map.

INSERT - THE MAP - To the south: Old Town Allerdale and a majority of its suburban development, the elementary and high schools, clearly noted.

To the west, a scrawled note over another suburb. It reads: **MORGANSVILLE, CONDEMNED**. Beside it, an article from 1981: **MORGANSVILLE MINE COLLAPSES**.

To the east: the cemetery. The diner on the side of the road out of town. The train station, rail running against the perimeter of the forest.

A series of *circles* have been marked on the map. Names beside them: *Henry Collins. Margaret Ballast. Alan Tran. Kelsey Halsted*. Grace reads, quietly horrified.

Her eyes stop on a final name. *Tommy*. Next to it, simply: *Where?*

She grabs the shoebox, turns to leave, stops. A slip of paper has been tacked to the side of the map. It reads: **Call Frank Sheahan** and a phone number. And beneath: **WITNESS**. Grace pockets it.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Grace walks down the hallway, heading back toward the stairs. She passes another closed door and pauses. VOICES SOUND beyond, along with the bouncing of a ball.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
You better stop. You'll put a hole
in the wall.

BOUNCE.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
No I won't.

BOUNCE.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
Mom's going to be pissed.

BOUNCE.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Don't say that.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
She will.

Grace opens the door, just in time to see a BALL BOUNCE off a blue wall, speckled with painted stars. She opens the door wider. PEERING INTO--

INT. TOMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grace stands at the threshold, but doesn't enter. There's a sacred air to the place, a time-capsule of a little boy's room, untouched since 1974.

And it's empty.

Grace closes the door and heads for the stairs.

BOUNCE.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The dregs of the gathering filter out the door, where Joy and her perfect family unit bid them goodbye. Grace sits on a chair in the corner, staring at the shoebox in her lap.

JOY (O.S.)
So.

Grace looks up to see Joy standing in front of her, with Hope in her arms. Mark has already begun to clean up, James messily collecting used paper plates at his side.

JOY (CONT'D)

What are you going to do now?

GRACE

I don't know. I have the motel room for a few days. I could go home and work, but writing here is basically like writing back there, yeah?

JOY

Sure, I guess.

Grace clears her throat, then stands.

GRACE

Well, thank you for today. It was-- nice.

JOY

She would've hated it.

GRACE

(smiling)

Yeah. Even more so because I'm here.

JOY

Don't say that.

The silence again. Grace walks for the door. Joy tries.

JOY (CONT'D)

Hey. You want to get dinner one of these nights?

Grace slows. She could say yes, but can't. Or won't. And like that, the moment is over.

GRACE

I'll let you know.

Joy hardens. Grace leaves. Mark exits the kitchen, wiping his hands with a dish towel.

MARK

Grace leave already?

Joy shrugs and starts angry-cleaning.

MARK (CONT'D)
Come on, just go talk to her.
(looking out the window)
She's still in the driveway.

Joy throws up her hands in annoyance and walks away.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace stands at the end of the driveway, staring into the forest. The floodlights from the porch only touch the first row; the rest of the trees shudder and shimmy in the gloom.

(the dead boy's eyes gleam in the dark)

MARK (O.S.)
Hey.

Grace turns to see Mark in a jacket and gloves, jogging up to her, car keys in hand.

MARK (CONT'D)
Where you going?

GRACE
I was gonna walk.

MARK
Grace, come on. I'll give you a ride back.

INT. MARK'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They drive in silence in Mark's police car. Outside, nothing but the two beams of the car's headlights cutting twin circles through the mist.

MARK
You want to talk about it?

GRACE
About what?

MARK
I don't know. Any of it.

GRACE
No.

Mark sighs, leans forward, and wipes a forearm across the inside of his fogging windshield.

MARK

Well, if you ever need--

Grace's gaze drops to the box in her lap. She reaches inside her sweater pocket, pulls out a crumpled piece of paper.

GRACE

(over)

Actually, can you turn around?

EXT. CALLAHAN ELEMENTARY - PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Mark pulls into the parking lot, which is oddly full at this hour.

INT. MARK'S CAR - SAME

Mark parks in front of the school.

MARK

What's going on here?

GRACE

Mrs. Evanston invited me. Some sort of support group for parents of kids who died in the tragedy.

MARK

Oh, wow.

GRACE

Never heard of it?

MARK

I lead a very busy, exciting life, Grace.

GRACE

Sure.

MARK

And you felt like coming because--

GRACE

I don't know. I lost someone too, I guess. Not in the bus. But still.

MARK

Of course.

GRACE

I came back once, you know.

Grace blinks, as if she's surprised at this sudden admission.

MARK

What?

GRACE

After Tommy disappeared. Only a few days after the parade. I remember grabbing a paper at the train platform, looking for any news about him. There was barely anything. Just a small blurb that the search for him was ongoing. The rest of the paper was basically a thirty page obituary. I threw it on the ground, sat on a bench, and cried until the next train came.

(beat)

That was twenty years ago.

Mark looks at her, uncertain what to do.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I don't know why I just told you that. I've never told anyone that.

MARK

I won't say anything.

GRACE

Doesn't matter now. Mom's gone.

MARK

Joy's still here. I don't mean to intrude, but--

GRACE

(warning)

Mark.

MARK

She is the only family you have left. Just give her a chance.

He puts a hand on her shoulder. Grace brushes it off.

GRACE

Thanks for the ride.

Grace gets out.

MARK

Grace. Grace!

Grace stomps toward the entrance of the elementary school.

INT. CALLAHAN ELEMENTARY - GYM - MINUTES LATER

Grace enters the gymnasium. In its center, twenty or so people in their late 40s/early 50s sit in a *circle* of fold-out chairs. Mrs. Evanston, clad in hospital scrubs and a sweater, is leading the meeting. She sees Grace, lights up.

MRS. EVANSTON

Oh, Grace. I'm so glad you could come. Here, take a seat.

Grace sits in an empty chair.

MRS. EVANSTON (CONT'D)

Everyone this is Grace Sutter. You may have known her mother, Prudence, who recently passed.

A murmur of condolence filters through the circle.

GRACE

Thanks.

MRS. EVANSTON

You're very welcome. Now, Grace, you can speak if you'd like, or just sit and listen, no pressure.

GRACE

Okay.

MRS. EVANSTON

Now, who'd like to begin?

People shift. Grace looks around. Then a hand goes up. And a man begins to speak.

SERIES OF SHOTS

PARENT #1

My son's name was Gary Miles.

Grace listens. Time passes. More tell their stories.

PARENT #2

My daughter loved the snow.

Grace growing more emotional.

PARENT #3

I got the call and my whole world stopped.

PARENT #4

I just wish I could've been there. They said it was instant, but I don't know. Can you ever really know?

END SERIES - as Mrs. Evanston turns to a severe man with a buzz cut.

MRS. EVANSTON

Grant? Would you like to say anything?

GRANT OLSEN (60s; stern) thinks for a moment, thumbs the last button on his denim jacket, then shrugs.

OLSEN

I'm worried about my boy. I've told you about him before. He, uh-- Lost his sisters in the bus, true, but he lost more than that. He lost his humanity. His humanness. I loved that freewheelin' kid. He was always so happy. Running around, filming stuff, making stuff. Then the-- It happened and he snapped. Organization became obsession. He stopped growing. Turned inward. Grew quiet. And we tried. His mother and I. Took him to therapy every Friday. Still do. Except I'm alone now, since her mind went.

Olsen shrugs, deeply hurt, with his end his normal state. Mrs. Evanston nods, sympathetic.

OLSEN (CONT'D)

Just breaks my heart. That black-hearted bastard took more than forty lives that day. He took more than he would ever know.

Olsen shudders, wipes a hand over his eyes. The parent next to him lays a comforting hand on his shoulder. Grace wipes away tears of her own.

Everyone weeps, except for an old woman, swaddled in a green shawl, eyes hidden behind dark glasses. Grace turns her attention back to the meeting.

LATER

The last of the parents filter out of the gymnasium. Grace is finishing breaking down the fold-out chairs alongside Mrs. Evanston. She places the last one on the rack.

GRACE

Thank you. For this experience. It was...

MRS. EVANSTON

I know. We all suffer. No need to do it alone.

EXT. CALLAHAN ELEMENTARY - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The two women stop at the curb of the parking lot.

MRS. EVANSTON

Where's your car?

GRACE

Oh, I don't have one.

MRS. EVANSTON

I'll give you a ride.

GRACE

Really, it's not--

MRS. EVANSTON

Don't try to talk me out of it.

She winks and begins walking to her own car. Grace looks across the parking lot as she begins to follow. She sees the old woman in the green shawl, passing beneath a street lamp.

INT. MRS. EVANSTON'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Evanston cranks up the heat, rubs her hands together. Grace remembers something.

GRACE

You talked to my mom pretty often, yeah?

MRS. EVANSTON

At least once a month. We'd chit chat. Not that much beyond pleasantries, but it was always nice to catch up.

GRACE

She ever mention a Frank Sheahan?

Mrs. Evanston's face darkens.

MRS. EVANSTON

Oh, Frank. There's a sad story.

GRACE

Who is he?

MRS. EVANSTON

A police officer until his daughter died in the tragedy. After that, he spiraled. Drank. Wife left him. Lost his job. A familiar story.

GRACE

That's terrible.

MRS. EVANSTON

It is. And I surely did my part, much as I regret it. He used to come to our meetings, until I sent him away.

GRACE

What do you mean?

MRS. EVANSTON

He became delusional. Started to talk about how the tragedy wasn't what we all thought it was. It was gibberish mostly, but it upset the other parents. So after a few outbursts over the years, I asked him to leave. He never came back.

GRACE

Why would my mom want to talk to him?

MRS. EVANSTON

I don't know. Like I said, we only said hello. Maybe she thought she could help him find peace.

EXT. MOTEL - PARKING LOT - LATER

Grace at the window of Mrs. Evanston's car.

GRACE

Thanks for the ride.

MRS. EVANSTON
Anytime dear. If you need me, I'm
at St. Dymphna's during the
weekdays. Just call reception.

GRACE
Okay.

Grace stands, watching as Mrs. Evanston drives away.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

ON ALARM CLOCK - It reads: **4:04 A.M.**

Grace sits cross-legged on her bed, the box in front of her, dark circles under her eyes. She takes off the box's lid and puts it aside. Inside is a messy assemblage of old photos, a few letters, and a hand-sized burlap pouch. Grace begins looking through the photos. She smiles.

INSERT - Photo of Tommy standing beside a tween girl at a park. It's the girl from the train platform, from the school: a younger Grace.

Another photo - Tommy in the forest, walking along train tracks. He's looking over his shoulder, smiling at the camera.

Another - Grace, Tommy, and a young Joy running; it's summer. They're on a beach somewhere.

BACK TO GRACE - She puts the photos down, biting her lip, trying not to cry. She can't take it anymore, not now. She puts the photos aside and opens the burlap pouch, emptying it into her hand.

An old, iron rail spike falls into her palm. She starts at the sight of it, smiling, but pained.

EXT. FOREST - TRAIN TRACKS - DAY [**FLASHBACK, 1974**]

A child's booted feet balancing on old train tracks.

ON YOUNG GRACE - Walking behind Tommy. It's summer, sunshine streaking through the trees. He looks back at her. Young Grace snaps a picture with a film camera. Tommy giggles.

Ahead of them stands an old tunnel, yawning in the middle of the forest. Young Grace stops, as if struck.

YOUNG GRACE
Hey, Tommy.

Tommy walks on, not listening.

YOUNG GRACE (CONT'D)

Tommy!

Tommy looks over his shoulder.

TOMMY

What?

YOUNG GRACE

Let's go back. We went too far.

TOMMY

Why?

YOUNG GRACE

I-- Uh.

TOMMY

Are you scared of the tunnel?

YOUNG GRACE

No.

TOMMY

You are!

YOUNG GRACE

I am not! It's just not--

Tommy dashes toward the tunnel. Grace hurries after him.

YOUNG GRACE (CONT'D)

Tommy, stop!

Tommy looks over his shoulder and trips, hard. He smacks to the tracks at the tunnel's entrance, begins to cry. Grace kneels beside him.

YOUNG GRACE (CONT'D)

It's okay. Tommy. It's okay. I'm here.

Tommy calms. Young Grace wipes a tear from his cheek.

YOUNG GRACE (CONT'D)

See? You're alright.

He looks down and sees something on the ground. He picks it up. It's an old rail spike, about eight inches long, rusted and weathered. Solid iron.

YOUNG GRACE (CONT'D)
Wow. Look at that.

TOMMY
(holds it out to her)
Take it.

YOUNG GRACE
Why?

TOMMY
I don't have any pockets.

YOUNG GRACE
Tommy, it's all dirty. Mom would--

TOMMY
I want it. For you.

YOUNG GRACE
Why would I need it?

Tommy shrugs.

TOMMY
Protection. If I'm not with you.

YOUNG GRACE
(smiling)
I need protection? From what?

TOMMY
Monsters.

Young Grace thinks it over.

YOUNG GRACE
Fine. I'll keep it for now, but it
stays in your room. Okay?

TOMMY
Okay.

Young Grace helps Tommy up. They look at the tunnel.

YOUNG GRACE
You still want to go through?

TOMMY
Yeah.

Though he doesn't look as sure as he did before.

YOUNG GRACE
Okay, let's do it.

TOMMY
Really?

YOUNG GRACE
Yeah. Don't worry.

She holds up the rail spike.

YOUNG GIRL
I got this in case we run into any trouble.

TOMMY
Good.

They walk into the tunnel. It grows dark around them. Tommy looks afraid, but bravely walks on.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Grace, are you still there?

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [**PRESENT, 1994**]

Grace lies among the strewn photos of the box, staring at the rail spike.

YOUNG GRACE (V.O.)
Yeah. I'm here.

EXT. ALLERDALE TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

Grace stands on the train platform with her bags. She looks around. The platform is empty except for her. Her gaze drifts to the bench where she remembered Young Grace weeping. Grace's jaw works as she thinks.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The *circle* of parents looking to her as she enters the gymnasium; Prudence's memorial photo; Tommy's empty room; the empty space where her school photo used to be; the railway spike in Grace's palm; her mother's study: shrine to the unhealable wound made by her son's disappearance.

The circles on the map. The circles. (*the circles*) The articles about **THE RAILWAY KILLER**; the list of children's names beneath the plaque commemorating the **BUS TRAGEDY**; the words: *Tommy. Where?*

The figure behind Tommy on the street corner; the line drawn across the map, from **RAILWAY KILLER** to **BUS TRAGEDY**.

BACK TO GRACE

She turns around and walks back into the parking lot.

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Sunday, October 30th**

EXT. CAR RENTAL DEALERSHIP - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

INT. CAR RENTAL DEALERSHIP - SAME

Grace signs for a car.

EXT. LIBRARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. LIBRARY - FRONT DESK - SAME

Grace is on the phone, its noodly wire stretching as it trails her around the corner.

GRACE
(into phone)
The service was very nice, but I
think I'm going to take a few more
days to help my sister out.
(beat)
Thank you so much.

DAWN (O.S.)
(whispers)
Grace?

Grace looks over her shoulder. Dawn brings out a thick manila folder and holds it up. Grace nods in thanks.

GRACE
I also think I might have a story
here. A sort of memoir,
retrospective piece.
(beat)
Have you ever heard of the
Allerdale Bus Tragedy?

INT. LIBRARY - WORK AREA - LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS

ON BLACK SCREEN

A scanned transparency slides into view. It's microfiche. A news article reads: **TRAGEDY IN ALLERDALE**. Beneath, a grainy photo of a school bus smashed into the corner of a building.

The image slides away. Another replaces it, headline reading: **BUS ATTACK INTERRUPTS FOUNDERS DAY PARADE PREPARATIONS**.

Smoke billows from the bus' hood. The interior is consumed with flame. Signs and streamers are scattered on the street. A small girl screams in the chaos.

ON GRACE - Peering closer to the machine's display.

BACK TO IMAGE - FOCUS on the bus' crushed front. Amidst the smoke and chaos, a blurred male shape thrashes against the wall. It looks like a man.

BACK TO GRACE - As she writes in a notepad with a pen: **WHO IS THE PINNED MAN?**

LATER

Grace sitting at a table in the work area, flipping through a large book of old photos.

INSERT - A photo of police and civilians carrying a bloodied child.

INSERT - Another microfiche image of a woman screaming, held back by a wide-eyed police officer.

Grace flips the page. Reads.

INSERT - Photo of a heavyset white man with long, scraggly hair being led out of a small house by police, hands cuffed in front of him. The article reads: **EVIDENCE CONNECTS BUS KILLER TO RAILWAY MURDERS**.

INSERT - Photo of the same man, HERMAN MILLS, being led out of a courthouse, in a jumpsuit and chains, surrounded by police officers, lawyers, and press. **RAILWAY KILLER REVEALED: A Plea for Insanity**.

BACK TO GRACE - At the table, holding a newspaper clipping from 1987. It reads: **SERIAL KILLER HERMAN MILLS COMMITS SUICIDE**.

INSERT - The text: **He is survived by his mother, Joanne**.

BACK TO GRACE - As she leans back in her chair, pensive.

DAWN(O.S.)
You alright?

Grace looks over. Dawn the librarian smiles at her.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Sorry, didn't mean to intrude.

GRACE
It's fine. I need a break. This is
some pretty bleak stuff.

DAWN
I was going to say. Why are you
interested, if you don't mind my
asking?

GRACE
I grew up here. And I'm a writer.
It seemed like a good fit given
what's going on this week.

DAWN
Did you lose someone?

GRACE
Not in the tragedy. But my brother,
he disappeared a few days before.

DAWN
I'm sorry. Did they ever--

GRACE
No.

Dawn looks down to the materials spread on the desk.

DAWN
Was it him?

Grace shrugs.

GRACE
I don't know. A lot of people
wanted it to be.

DAWN
Did you?

MEMORY HIT - Young Grace stands in the hall of her father's
grimy apartment, staring at the phone. Beside it, an alarm
clock glows: **4:04 A.M.**

GRACE
I wasn't around.

DAWN
Oh. Well, let me know if you need anything.

INSERT - PHOTO of Herman Mills, awaiting trial, staring dead-eyed into the camera. He looks afraid.

Grace reads the article.

INT. LIBRARY - COPY ROOM

SERIES OF SHOTS

Grace places newspaper articles and microfiche transparencies into the tray of a copier.

GRACE
(reading)
'Despite an abundance of evidence, Herman Mills maintained until his death that he never reported to work on the day of the attack.'

Quarters CLINK into the machine.

GRACE (CONT'D)
His vehement denial of what occurred, as well as his difficulties in general population prison led to his incarceration in Scotia Psychiatric Hospital in upstate New York, where he spent the last four years of his life.'

A BAR OF LIGHT BUZZES under the tray's hood as it copies.

EXT. LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - LATER

Grace sits in her rental car, smoking a cigarette. She blows smoke out a cracked window, thinking. Looks to the copied documents in her lap. She needs more.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - DAY

Grace sits in her parked car across the street. The driveway is empty.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Grace peers through a high window, fiddles with an old lock.
CLICK.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace walks quietly through her childhood home. Then--

Tommy runs past her, Young Joy (8) trailing him. They hit the front door at the same time, play-fighting for the handle. Tommy opens it and runs outside, giggling, Joy at his heels.

Young Grace descends the stairs.

PRUDENCE (O.S.)

Grace.

Young Grace stops at the open door.

YOUNG GRACE

What?

PRUDENCE (O.S.)

Mrs. Connelly called. She can't watch Joy today.

Young Grace stiffens, thinking.

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

So you're in charge of her. Be back by 6 and I'll make dinner.

GRACE

(weakly)

Okay.

She turns and walks out the door. Grace is alone again. She hangs her head, trudges upstairs.

INT. GRACE'S OLD ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Grace stands in front of her mom's chart.

CLOSE ON - Prudence's scrawled notes: **Tommy. Where?** And beneath: **Herman Mills is not RK. Then who?** And beneath that: **Bus Tragedy --> Real RK --> Tommy?**

Grace considers taking it, but it's too big. She turns to see a file box on the floor, filled with police documents.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace walks downstairs, box of files in hand. She turns to head for the back door, hesitates. Looks down.

INSERT - A family portrait: Joy and Mark, their two kids. Idyllic. Unearned?

Grace reaches out, tips the frame off the table. GLASS SHATTERS.

EXT. MURPHY'S DINER - ESTABLISHING - AFTERNOON

INT. MURPHY'S DINER - SAME

Grace sits at a booth in the corner, police reports spread before her. Prudence's notes are annotated in red ink.

KARL (O.S.)
That looks like quite a project.

Grace looks up. Karl smiles down at her through his circular glasses.

GRACE
Yeah. It's for an article.

KARL
Ah, witnessing the magic.

GRACE
I wouldn't call it that.

KARL
May I sit?

Grace hesitates, then shrugs. Karl slides into the seat opposite.

KARL (CONT'D)
What are you investigating?

GRACE
The Railway Killings. I think. Or maybe the Bus Tragedy. My mom seems to think there was a connection.

KARL
I see. Well there is. Or was. The janitor.

GRACE
Yeah, Herman Mills.

She points to the scanned photo of Mills being led out of the courthouse.

KARL
Did your mother believe he was innocent?

GRACE
Somehow. I mean, his house was practically a gift-wrapped present of evidence to the cops. Duct tape, ligatures, gags, murder weapons. Open and shut from my understanding.

KARL
Then what did Prudence see that the police could not?

GRACE
That's what I'm trying to figure out. My mother was a-- She was not a stupid woman. She knew people. Something told her this wasn't right. Maybe a gut feeling.
(beat; sitting back, tired)
Or maybe it was just the chemo. Her mind starting to go.

KARL
I wouldn't be so quick to discount her. Even when last I saw her, enfeebled and thin, she was razor sharp.

GRACE
Yeah?

KARL
Yes. And as for gut feelings. I believe in the value of them.

The Waiter comes by, pours Grace a coffee refill without giving Karl a second glance.

GRACE
Why? Big believer in intuition?

KARL

Not particularly. At least I wasn't. My wife, she hated the water. She was-- Austere, you know? Regal in a way. When she'd get mad at me, I'd say, "Forgive me, my Queen."

Grace cracks a smile.

KARL (CONT'D)

Needless to say, she did not like that. Anyway, though she was loathe to dirty herself, I enjoy nature, and my walks, and would harangue her until she gave in and joined me. We'd walk along the railway path, cross at a gap in the fence, and stroll at the river's edge. My favorite place is a concrete landing, a few miles out of town. One day we'd had a row, and I left angry. Later, at work, I suddenly felt a chill. A deep discomfort. I called the house. She didn't answer. I called her work. She had not come in. So, I rushed home, and found it empty. I didn't call the police, because even then I think I knew. I found her at the landing. I could only see her hair, bobbing in the water like seaweed. She'd fallen into the river and her foot had snagged in a section of netting caught between the landing's supports just beneath the water.

GRACE

Karl, I'm so sorry.

He smiles sadly.

KARL

Thank you. It is a long time ago now, but I'll never forget that feeling, that deep, primal feeling of unease. If you feel even the slightest bit of that, as your mother seems to have felt, I think you owe it to yourself to pursue this matter to whatever end.

EXT. LIBRARY - MORNING

INT. LIBRARY - WORK AREA - SAME

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Monday, October 31st**

Grace pours over police reports from the day of the Bus Tragedy again. Her pen scribbles onto a notepad: ***Police Officers on scene: Sommerset, Callahan, Jenkins, Sheahan.***

She reaches to move a scanned article away, then hesitates. She peers closer, noticing the photo credit. It reads: **BILL HEDINGER.**

FRONT DESK - LATER

Grace flips through pages of a phonebook. Stops on "H." Her finger trails down the list of names. Hedinger is absent.

EXT. ALLERDALE - STREETS - LATER

Grace's car rolls through town. Halloween decorations all around.

EXT. ALLERDALE DAILY OFFICES - ESTABLISHING - AFTERNOON

INT. ALLERDALE DAILY OFFICES - BULLPEN - SAME

Grace is led by a Newspaper Man through a quietly busy office.

NEWSPAPER MAN

Yeah, Bill's not a terribly talkative guy. Especially not these days.

GRACE

Something happen?

NEWSPAPER MAN

He doesn't like to say, but the Tragedy really messed him up. Which is crazy because he was a war photographer in Korea. Guess those kids were the last straw.

INT. ALLERDALE DAILY OFFICES - ARCHIVES - MOMENTS LATER

Grace waits. Aisles of file folders stretch down the room. The Newspaper Man returns from the stacks, frowning.

NEWSPAPER MAN

We seem to be missing the negatives
for the day you're looking for.

GRACE

(incredulous)

For the Bus Tragedy? Arguably
negatives for the most important
photos this paper has ever
published?

NEWSPAPER MAN

Okay, you don't have to get on me.
It was a while ago, and we weren't
always so organized.

GRACE

You're not yanking my chain are
you?

NEWSPAPER MAN

(frowning)

Why would I?

Grace stares into him, sees truth there, relents.

GRACE

Fine. Then you're going to give me
Hedinger's address.

NEWSPAPER MAN

I'm what?

Grace steps closer. Almost threateningly.

GRACE

To make up for the disappointment.

EXT. SUBURBS - EVENING

Grace drives through a charming suburb. Old houses. Older
occupants.

EXT. HEDINGER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace gets out of her car. Walks to the door. Knocks.

INT. HEDINGER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace sits awkwardly on a plastic-wrapped couch. Across from
her, BILL HEDINGER (70s) reclines in a sofa, looking tired.

A younger portrait of him in uniform stares down from the mantelpiece.

GRACE

Thank you again for doing this.

He waves her off.

HEDINGER

Not doing it for you. I just want to be rid of them. That goddamn box has been squatting in my attic too long, poisoning this house.

GRACE

What do you mean?

HEDINGER

What do I mean? I mean I did my duty as a photojournalist when it went down, regretted it ever since. As far as I'm concerned those negatives are a cursed object. They'll bring you nothing but misery, mark me.

GRACE

Why didn't you just throw them away? Burn them?

Hedinger chews on that.

HEDINGER

Because it seemed wrong to those kids. To those people. Rarely do you capture someone's last moments in celluloid. I felt obligated to keep them until the day I could give the responsibility over to someone else.

GRACE

And in all these years, nobody at the paper was worthy?

HEDINGER

Nobody asked.

FOOTSTEPS. Hedinger's Wife enters, holding a dusty box.

HEDINGER'S WIFE

Here you go, dear. Sorry for the wait, it took some digging.

GRACE

Thank you.

Grace takes the box. Hedinger's Wife sits on the sofa beside him, rubs her hands together, relieved to be rid of the thing. Grace stands.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Well I won't trouble you any further.

She makes to leave.

HEDINGER

Bad things happen in this town.

GRACE

What?

HEDINGER

The Bus Tragedy was just one thing. The biggest thing. But there's badness here. I feel it like I felt it over there. Not the people. The ground is bad.

HEDINGER'S WIFE

Oh, Bill. Stop that.

HEDINGER

It's true! Be careful with those. Be careful.

Grace stares at Hedinger, her composure cracking ever so slightly.

EXT. SUPER MARKET - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. SUPER MARKET - ONE HOUR PHOTO - SAME

Grace stands at the counter while a PHOTO TEEN counts over the negative sheets.

PHOTO TEEN

This is a lot, lady. And I'm off in like twenty minutes.

GRACE

Can I just pick them up in the morning?

PHOTO TEEN

Yeah.

Grace rolls her eyes and walks off.

INT. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Grace drives, but doesn't want to go home.

EXT. BAR - ESTABLISHING - LATER

INT. BAR - SAME

Deep night. Nothing but regulars and truck drivers. Grace sits at the bar, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer.

MALE VOICE

Grace Sutter?

Grace looks to see a handsome man in a ratty sweater and jeans approaching.

GRACE

Brian?

BRIAN (late 20s) smiles as he sidles up next to her.

BRIAN

Wow. What are you in town for?
Haven't seen you in forever.

GRACE

My mom died.

BRIAN

Shit. I'm sorry to hear that.

Grace shrugs. Takes a drag on her cigarette. Blows the smoke out the side of her mouth.

GRACE

What've you been up to?

BRIAN

Let me buy you a drink and we can
talk about it.

LATER

Grace and Brian sit in a booth, buzzed and tipping quickly toward hammered.

GRACE

I swear you were such a little
shit. It took a lot for me to not
kick your ass.

BRIAN

Babysitters are usually hired to
take care of the children.

GRACE

Oh, I wouldn't have taken care of
you. No one would've ever found
your body.

Brian laughs. Grace does too.

INSERT - Tommy, gray-faced, hanging in a void of earth.

Grace's laugh dwindles. Brian doesn't notice.

BRIAN

So what'd you say we--

Grace kisses him.

EXT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace kisses Brian against the side of her rental.

BRIAN

Should I call a taxi?

Grace opens the back door of her car and pushes Brian in.

EXT. SUPER MARKET - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Tuesday, November 1st**

INT. SUPER MARKET - ONE HOUR PHOTO - SAME

Grace, disheveled and sunken-eyed, stands in front of the
counter. The Photo Teen flips through a series of envelopes.

PHOTO TEEN

It should be here.

GRACE

(exasperated)

Kid, I swear to God--

PHOTO TEEN
Oh, found it.

Grace throws twenty dollars onto the counter, swipes the envelope out of the kid's hand, and walks away.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace flips through the black and white photos.

INSERT SERIES - Picturesque store fronts. Smiling townsfolk. A man hanging a streamer. A police officer. A circle of brambles, leaned against a wall. The Four-Way stop, General Store on the left of frame. The Four-Way stop again, General Store on the right of frame after Hedinger crossed the street. Then-- The blur of the bus. The crash. The photos from the news articles.

Grace frowns. Flips back a few photos to the police officer. He's handsome, light-haired. In his mid 40s.

Flips forward. General Store in the right of frame again. And across the street: the police officer. Then-- He disappears behind the bus. Grace lowers the photos, thinking.

EXT. ALLERDALE POLICE STATION - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. ALLERDALE POLICE STATION - SAME

A Police Officer eyes Grace's ID at the front desk.

POLICE OFFICER
He won't want to talk about this.

GRACE
I just need two minutes.

INT. ALLERDALE POLICE STATION - JENKINS' OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

CAPTAIN JENKINS (60s; stern, muscle gone to fat) sits behind a desk, eyeing Grace's list of police officers who were present at the tragedy.

CAPT. JENKINS
And what do you want me to do with this?

GRACE

I'm just trying to write an article. Get as much eyewitness info as possible. You were mentioned--

CAPT. JENKINS

Yeah, I was there.

He tosses the list onto his desk, folds his hands together.

CAPT. JENKINS (CONT'D)

Told the paper all I care to tell back then.

GRACE

I'm not a paper journalist, Captain. I'm a writer. I want to get to the emotional core of this story.

CAPT. JENKINS

What story? Herman Mills died in prison for his crimes. What can your story do besides salt the wound?

GRACE

It can let people know about how to endure. How to-- to move on.

CAPT. JENKINS

That's what you think we're doing here? Let me tell you something. Allerdale has a lot of fine folk, good at all manner of things. Moving on is not one of them.

GRACE

You--

CAPT. JENKINS

(over)

You think I like seeing this goddamn parade every year? The memorial? It's a pretty thought, but we'd have all been better off burying our dead and getting on with it.

GRACE

Why would you say that?

CAPT. JENKINS

Because I pulled Herman Mills over the week before, going 80 in a 55. Could've docked his license right there, stopped him from driving those kids. But I didn't. And I have to live with that. Every day. Every person I know being somehow connected to that bus.

(laughing)

And that's not even commenting upon our failure to see the signs that Herman Mills was the Railway Killer too.

GRACE

Are you sure about that?

CAPT. JENKINS

What?

GRACE

Well, there's been an undercurrent of doubt surrounding Mr. Mills'--

CAPT. JENKINS

Ms. Sutter, I'm going to stop you right there.

GRACE

I'm just saying it is suspicious--

Capt. Jenkins slams his fist down on his desk.

CAPT. JENKINS

I can't have that. I won't. Out.

GRACE

Captain Jenkins--

CAPT. JENKINS

Out!

EXT. ALLERDALE POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Grace walks out in a huff. Sees Mark coming up from the parking lot.

MARK

Grace?

GRACE

Hey.

MARK

What are you doing here?

GRACE

I don't know. Honestly. I tried to ask Jenkins about the tragedy.

MARK

I could've told you that was a bad idea.

GRACE

Well, here's your 'I told you so' moment.

Grace shrugs and begins walking past him, then stops.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Hey, can you help me with something?

MARK

Oh, am I of use now?

She ignores him, opening her manila folder, pulling out the Hedinger photos. She flips to the police officer.

GRACE

Do you know this man?

Mark frowns, bites his lip.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You do. Who is it? I had a list of everyone on-site. Jenkins. Sommerset. Callahan. Sheahan.

MARK

Callahan's dead. Sommerset retired, moved out of state. That's Frank Sheahan.

Grace's eyes narrow, making a connection.

GRACE

Frank Sheahan.

MARK

Yeah. He's, uh, a bit of a nut now. Holed up across town.

GRACE

What happened to him?

MARK
(shrugging)
It was just too much. The tragedy.
Just too much.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace pulls a crumpled piece of paper from the back pocket of her jeans. The scrap from Prudence's evidence board.

INSERT - Frank Sheahan's scrawled name and contact info.

EXT. PHONEBOOTH - LATER

Grace listens as the PHONE RINGS. Someone picks up.

EXT. FRANK SHEAHAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Grace stands in front of a dilapidated house. Rusty junkheap in the driveway. Dead lawn. WEATHERVANE SCREECHING as it twists in the wind. She knocks on the door.

GRACE
Mr. Sheahan?

FOOTSTEPS within. The door opens, revealing a woman in her late 50s, matronly, in a chartreuse sweater. A NURSE.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hi, is Frank Sheahan here? We spoke
on the phone earlier.

NURSE
And who might you be?

INT. FRANK SHEAHAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Nurse leads Grace through the house. It's filled with newspapers and clutter.

NURSE
Now listen, Frank is in a delicate
state.

GRACE
I'm not here to take him on a jog.

NURSE
I know, but he's excitable these
days, despite his poor health.

(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)
 If you're here to talk about what I
 think you are, please try to keep
 him calm.

INT. FRANK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Nurse opens the door, ushering Grace through. Half of the room is dominated by a messy hospital bed and IV stand. The other a makeshift study, a mirror of Prudence's.

Articles. Scraps of written notes. A stack of books on folklore (faerie stories and urban legends). Messy charcoal drawings of a smiling man and *circles. Circles. circles.*

And in a chair in the center: FRANK SHEAHAN (late 60s; prematurely old). He's swathed in a blanket. An oxygen tank sits beside him, plastic canula trailing up to his nose. Empty beer bottles are scattered at his feet.

FRANK
 Grace! Nice to meet you.

Frank raises a hand. Grace takes it.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 That will be all, Briony.

Nurse Briony gives Grace a warning look, leaves.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Sit, sit.

Grace sits on a stool beside Frank. He smiles at her dreamily. Breath wheezing in and out of him. His irises full and black. He wets his lips, swallows.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 So, what brings you?
 (before Grace can answer)
 I must say it's nice to have a
 visitor. Briony's as fickle as the
 wind. Never know how she's going to
 be from day to day.

GRACE
 Yeah, I-- Thanks for having me. Did
 you know my mom?

FRANK
 Yes. Prudence and I were friendly.
 And I must say, you've inherited
 her good looks.

Frank grins, but there's nothing malicious in his words.
Grace smiles, embarrassed.

GRACE
Friendly, how? You guys date or
something?

FRANK
Nothing so exciting. Just had some
things in common.

GRACE
Like what?

FRANK
Dead kids.

Grace's face falls. Frank nods off almost, blinks. Trying to
stay sharp, stay lucid.

GRACE
Yours--

FRANK
In the bus.

GRACE
And that brought you two together?

FRANK
We were hobbyists in a way.
Obsessives with a common subject of
interest.

GRACE
(gesturing to walls)
Carol Evanston made it seem like
you were a conspiracy theorist.

FRANK
Been called that before, but it
doesn't matter to me. I'm concerned
with the truth, not what people
think of it.

GRACE
And what is the truth?

FRANK
Not what. Who. Herman Mills.

GRACE
What about him?

FRANK
You're a journalist, right?

GRACE
I write for zines. Not really the same thing.

FRANK
What's a zine?

GRACE
It's like-- I mean, I'm not an investigator.

FRANK
Then what are you doing now?

GRACE
I don't know. Trying-- My mom thought there was some connection between my brother's disappearance and the tragedy and as far as I can see, that's Herman Mills.

FRANK
But?

GRACE
But it doesn't add up. By all accounts Mills was a normal guy. Not too bright. Small circle of friends. Drinking buddies, really. They all said he was mentally incapable of planning and executing a murder, let alone multiple. Some of which went unsolved for years after.

FRANK
What else?

GRACE
The articles described the tragedy as the culmination of a psychotic break.
(thinking it through)
Which began as a series of child killings?

FRANK
It doesn't make sense. Does it?

GRACE
No.

FRANK

That's what always stung me. What stung your mom too. What caused her to seek me out. Herman Mills was supposedly one of the most prolific serial killers of the modern age, legendary even, if you attribute all of the disappearances along the Metro North line to him. Then one day, he just decides he's done and his grand opus, the thing he decides to do to make his mark, is a bus accident. And after the accident, he's discovered at home, in bed. Not fifteen minutes after the crash.

GRACE

But the man was insane. Does that not account for something?

FRANK

Was he? Or was he just a normal man, maybe a bit simple, scared into a nervous breakdown. Convinced that he was either crazy or set up.

GRACE

Set up?

FRANK

Grace. He never copped to the crime because he didn't do it.

GRACE

What do you mean? He died in a psych ward. He was delusional.

FRANK

(over)

And what did Carol say about me? What did Jenkins say when he fired me? My wife when she left? Do I seem delusional to you?

Frank coughs wetly, grimaces.

GRACE

I didn't mean that. It's just the evidence--

FRANK

It doesn't add up and no one cares.
Because there's a cloud over this
town, Grace. Think about it. Look
at the facts. Disappearances. The
mine collapse past Morgansville.
High rates of dementia. I've run
the numbers. It's all there, all--
(coughing; struggling)
Bad things. Inexplicable things
happen here and people forget or
can't see--
(wheezing)
Please.

Frank chokes. Grace turns to yell.

GRACE

Nu--

FRANK

(grasping her sleeve)
Listen. I've been thinking about
this for nearly two decades. Herman
Mills may have gone to prison for
what happened. But he wasn't the
bus driver that day.

GRACE

How do you know that?

FRANK

Because I saw it. The door, Grace.
The bus' door was crushed. It had
to jump out of the driver side
window. And it did.
(voice growing louder;
strained)
Sixty miles an hour and it leapt
out without a scratch.

A rattling cough. Frank hunches over. Grace can't take it.

GRACE

Nurse! Help.

FRANK

It wasn't Herman Mills. It wasn't--

Grace slides off the stool, kneels at Frank's feet.

GRACE

Who was it?

FRANK
It was-- It was--

He falls into a coughing fit. Nurse Briony enters, rushing to Frank's side. Fussing with his tank. Frank points a shaking finger at his wall. Grace looks. Sees a sketch of the Smiling Man.

She stands, walking backward as Nurse Briony works to calm Frank.

NURSE BRIONY
In and out, Frank. Breathe.

Grace reaches back, untacks the drawing, and puts it quietly into her pack.

INT. FRANK'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Grace looks at herself in the mirror, shaken. She looks at Frank's sketch in her hands, but her gaze slides off to the grime between the tiles, the ring in the tub, an empty bottle of vodka beside it. She opens the medicine cabinet: it's full of orange prescription containers. Grace sighs.

EXT. FRANK SHEAHAN'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Grace exits. She turns to Nurse Briony, who crosses her arms against the developing chill.

GRACE
I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

NURSE BRIONY
(waving her off)
It's fine. Like I said, he's excitable. And stubborn. It's a miracle you got him talking as long as you did what with all that muck in his lungs.

GRACE
How did that happen?

NURSE BRIONY
The cancer? Probably fumes and mineral debris. After Frank lost his job at the police he went over to work in the mines past Morgansville. The way he talks about it, it sounds like hell. But I think he misses it.

GRACE

Why?

NURSE BRIONY

Because it was a thing he could disappear into. Literally in that case, but you get my meaning. The bottle, the mines, the Tragedy. They're all the same.

Grace doesn't like that answer.

GRACE

What do you think about it?

NURSE BRIONY

The Bus Tragedy? I don't indulge him. Not out of cruelty, but for peace of mind. I was at the hospital that day. I saw the aftermath. It makes me more comfortable thinking the man responsible got what he deserved.
(smiling)
Plus, who believes in monsters?

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace thinks. Looks down at her notes. A messy scrawl. At the bottom she writes: **Herman Mills is**

DINK. DINK. DINK. Grace looks up. It's begun to rain.

INT. SUPER MARKET - NIGHT

Grace waits as her items are scanned. Thinks of something, asks the cashier:

GRACE

Do you have a phone I could use?

ONE HOUR PHOTO

The Photo Teen stares at Grace as she waits, phone to her ear. She glares at him, turns her back.

MALE VOICE

You've reached Scotia Psychiatric Hospital. Our office hours are from 6am to 8pm every day. Please leave a message after the beep.

Grace flips through her notes to a scan of a news article. Looks down to a highlighted portion about Herman Mills' psychiatric treatment.

GRACE

Hi, my name is Grace Sutter. I'm looking for a Doctor Barbara Layton. If you could have her call me back--

EXT. SUPER MARKET - LATER

Grace runs out, arms laden with bags, a poster board under one arm. Rain pounds down from the sky.

INT. LIBRARY - WORK AREA - LATER

The wet poster board on the table. The Four-Way stop drawn in marker, ink smearing. Grace labels the building at one corner: **GENERAL STORE.**

She draws an "X" on the sidewalk opposite. Beside it she writes: **FRANK.** In the street in front of the General Store, another "X." **HEDINGER.**

She stares at her map, pondering. Beside them, blown up versions of Hedinger's photos, blurred by their enhancement.

Dawn approaches with a handful of copies. She places them on the table.

DAWN

Microfiche files of missing persons prior to 1942 and post 1974.

GRACE

I don't deserve you, Dawn.

DAWN

Oh don't say that, dear. You being here has been the most exciting this place's been in a while.

GRACE

Glad to be of service.

DAWN

Any reason why you wanted those in particular?

GRACE

Just thinking about some stuff.
Trying to look at the bigger
picture, outside of Herman Mills
and the Railway Killings.

DAWN

Hmm.

Dawn peers at Grace's sketch, and the photos.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Anything new?

GRACE

Nah, just got some info from Frank
Sheahan. Made an interesting case.

DAWN

For the creature? Or whatever it
was.

GRACE

(frowning)

You know about that?

DAWN

Most people my age do. It's the
reason why Frank's not terribly
popular with people around here.
It's disrespectful to the memory of
those who passed. No need to muddy
what happened with some self-
important fantasy. We should be
better than that.

Grace's frown deepens.

GRACE

We?

DAWN

Oh. My sister died on the sidewalk.
(points to area across
from General Store, past
Hedinger)
Struck by the bus while decorating
for Founders Day.

GRACE

Dawn, I'm so sorry. I didn't know.

DAWN

It's okay. It was a long time ago.
I stopped being angry at Herman
Mills years back.

GRACE

How?

DAWN

(shrugging)

I was exhausted. Tired of being
angry. Of being sad. So I left it
behind.

GRACE

I wish I could do that.

DAWN

Forgiveness is a choice.

Grace's face says, "But who to forgive?" Dawn turns to leave,
hesitates.

DAWN (CONT'D)

It's too bad you don't have his
footage.

Grace sits up.

GRACE

What did you say?

Dawn points at one of Hedinger's photos. And sure enough, in
one before the crash, a young man is exiting the General
Store. And in his hand: a blurred box, yet its shape is
unmistakable. It's a Super 8 camera.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Dawn, my God. Thank you. How did
you--

DAWN

I'm a librarian, Grace. Details are
kind of my thing.

She walks off. Grace looks back at the photo. Looks to the
next. The Super 8 man is gone. She flips back. Sees that he's
just about to turn right in the photo. Grace can't believe
it.

GRACE

He was on the other side of the
bus.

EXT. MOTEL - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - SAME

Grace enters. Her room phone's light glows red. She plays the message.

FRANK (V.O.)

Grace, it's Frank. Apologies for earlier. My health is-- Not what it was. Funny enough, I have the same thing your mother had. Though my road seems to be a bit longer. Damn mines, right? Breathing that shit--

Frank devolves into a coughing fit. Grace lays down as she listens, saddened.

FRANK (V.O.)

Anyway, my wife was a nurse at St. Dymphna's. She took some photos of the aftermath. I've been looking for them as best I can, but have had no luck and Briony refuses to aid me in my efforts. I don't know if they'd help, but if I do find them, I'll send them your way. Until next time.

CLICK. Grace sighs. Staring at the popcorn ceiling. The popcorn looks subtly different tonight. *(a large circle dominates the center, spiraling into itself)*

INSERT - Frank's charcoal circle sketch.

Grace's eyes grow heavy.

INSERT - The male figure stepping up beside Tommy on the street corner.

REVERSE TO REVEAL - the man's face: a charcoal-sketched horror. His drawn mouth smiles impossibly wide.

REVERSE AGAIN - To show Tommy, pale, dead. He opens his mouth and mud falls from his tongue.

Grace's eyes open and she breathes a deep, shaky breath. She looks over at her clock, though she already knows what time it's going to be. **4:04 A.M.**

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Wednesday, November 2nd**

EXT. MCMAHON GENERAL STORE - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

INT. MCMAHON GENERAL STORE - BACK ROOM - SAME

The old Store Owner looks at the blown-up Hedinger photo.

STORE OWNER

Ah yeah. I remember him. That camera was practically glued to his hands. Always filming.

GRACE

Do you know his name?

STORE OWNER

Can't say I do. Sorry. Was a long time back and uh-- Well, last time I saw him was that day.

EXT. MCMAHON GENERAL STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace steps out onto the sidewalk. Turns and walks to--

EXT. FOUR-WAY STOP - CONTINUOUS

She stops. Standing where the bus struck the corner of the General Store. She turns. A young Bill Hedinger stands frozen in the street to her left, camera raised.

She looks across the street: there a younger Frank Sheahan screams, pistol held uselessly in one hand.

Grace looks both ways down the street, walks into the crosswalk, turns, looking back at the site of impact. Raises her hands as if holding a camera. Lowers them, thinking.

HONK. She starts, sees she's blocking a car. Crosses to the opposite side of the road where Frank stood.

GRACE

(muttering)

Always in his hands.

EXT. ALLERDALE HIGH - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. ALLERDALE HIGH - FRONT OFFICE - SAME

A parent talks to a secretary. Grace peeks around the corner, then walks past.

HALLWAY

Grace walks. Classes are in session around her. Ahead she sees a sign: **LIBRARY**.

LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Grace slips in. A few students work at desks here and there. A lone librarian sits behind a desk in the corner. Grace hesitates. The librarian clicks on something at her computer. Stands and crosses to a printer. Grace slips past.

MOMENTS LATER

Grace kneels at a dusty shelf, scanning the titles of old faux-leather yearbooks. She stops on **1974**. Pulls the book. Flips through pages. Stops.

INSERT - A page titled, **MEDIA CLUB**. And beneath, a group of students posing, the frame encircled by coiling film. Among them: a tall, skinny boy. In his hands: a Super 8 camera.

Grace looks down to the description beneath.

GRACE
(whispering)
Drew Olsen.

She flips to the senior profiles. Finds Drew's.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Desire: cinematographer. Siblings:
2. Thanks to his mom and dad.
Sherri and Grant Olsen.

Grace frowns. Rummages in her pack. Pulls out her notes. Flips to the list of kids killed in the tragedy. Trails a finger down until she stops on a line that reads: **Tori and Karen Olsen**.

MEMORY HIT - The angry man with the buzz cut, talking at the grief counseling meeting. Talking about his girls.

BACK TO GRACE - It was Grant Olsen. Drew is his son.

EXT. LIBRARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. LIBRARY - FRONT DESK - SAME

Grace updates Dawn.

GRACE
It's Drew Olsen.

DAWN
Oh dear.

GRACE
What?

DAWN
Be careful, Grace. This family's
been through a lot. They lost two
kids in the bus. Twins.

GRACE
I know, it's just I need that
footage.

DAWN
Need and want are two different
things.

GRACE
What do you mean?

Dawn doesn't want to hurt her feelings, but shrugs.

DAWN
I mean, this is for fun mostly,
right? Or not fun, but amusement?
You don't expect to find anything
new.

GRACE
We don't know that. I didn't think
so at first, but now--

DAWN
Now you're sounding like Frank.

GRACE
Maybe.

Dawn grimaces.

DAWN
Just be gentle. Please. For me.

GRACE
I promise.

EXT. ALLERDALE POLICE STATION - LATER

Grace waits beside her rental. Sees Mark walking down from the station. He groans.

MARK

Jesus. You know you could just come to the house.

GRACE

I didn't want... complications.

MARK

Uh huh. So, what do you need now?

GRACE

Can you get a court order to unseal confidential medical documents? From a case?

MARK

Is this about Herman Mills? You know, you really seem stuck on this. It's the same answer as before, Grace. No. It's a shut case. No new evidence. No.

GRACE

But what if I had new evidence?

MARK

(suspicious)

Do you?

GRACE

I'm working on it.

MARK

I don't even know what that means, and I'm not sure I want to. Now if you'll--

He tries to move around Grace. She steps in front of him.

MARK (CONT'D)

Grace, even if you did, you're not an investigator. You're not a medical doctor. You'd have to submit the evidence through the appropriate channels. Even if that happened, who are you hoping to exonerate? Mills? Guy's been dead for nearly a decade.

GRACE

And his memory? That everyone thinks he did this horrible thing.

MARK

Because all evidence points to that being the truth. I know it's not what you want to--

GRACE

(over)

Not with 100% certainty. Listen, I thought it was ridiculous too, but there's too much the police overlooked.

MARK

Oh yeah, like what?

GRACE

He crashed the bus at 60 miles per hour. Had no bruising. No wounds. But a blood alcohol level of .09. Found in his home, in his bed.

(beat)

How does that work? He got hammered on his lunch break at the school before picking the kids up? Crashed, jumped out the window, and ran home without anyone witnessing him leaving the scene?

(lower; seriously)

The police found him less than fifteen minutes after the crash. His mother said he'd been in bed the whole morning, hungover.

Mark frowns as if hearing this for the first time.

MARK

That is... Odd, but doesn't mean anything unless you have someone else to pin the crime on.

GRACE

I might. Soon. I think I'm onto something.

MARK

You're worrying me.

GRACE

I think there's footage of the crash.

MARK
(flabbergasted)
What?

GRACE
Yeah. It belongs to a man named
Drew Olsen.

MARK
Drew Olsen? Grant Olsen's son? No.
Grace. No. I picked Grant up a few
years back for assaulting a
neighbor. Don't mess with them.
They've been through enough.

GRACE
But Mark. There's-- I saw Drew in a
photo taken right before the crash.
He has a camera. A Super 8 camera.

MARK
You don't know if he filmed it.

GRACE
We don't. But he might have.
Wouldn't you want to know?

Mark looks away, troubled.

MARK
I guess. Yes. But this is too big a
stretch. We can't order a search
warrant without probable cause for
a crime. And there is none. Okay?
There's nothing I can do.

Grace steps closer. Getting desperate.

GRACE
Mark. I need this. Okay? I need it.
Mills got put away and everyone
thought he was the Railway Killer.
But if he wasn't then-- There might
still be a way to find more
evidence, to find something that
lets us know more about-- about the
people we never found.

Mark's face softens.

MARK

Tommy's gone, Grace. And I'm sorry,
but I don't think he's ever going
to be found. And that's horrible,
but just think--

Grace turns and begins walking back to her car.

MARK (CONT'D)

How you feel now is how Grant Olsen
felt about his daughters. Still
feels. Don't mess with him. Grace.
Grace?

She gets in her car. Pulls away. Mark hangs his head.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace holds her breath, bottom lip trembling. Pushes the
scream in her throat down. Finally lets the air out. She
punches the wheel of her car. Again. Again.

INT. MURPHY'S DINER - AFTERNOON

Grace holds her head in her hands, peering down.

CLOSE ON - Her coffee cup, cream twisting in a spiral in the
coffee's center.

KARL (O.S.)

Grace, are you alright?

Grace looks up. Karl's seated across from her. Her notes
spread on the table, highlighted and underlined.

KARL (CONT'D)

You just stopped talking.

Grace lowers her arms, shakes her head, blinking back into
awareness.

GRACE

Sorry, I just, um, I'm out of it.

KARL

How long has it been since you
slept?

GRACE

(laughing)

Ah. Years, I think. Feels like it.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

(beat)

What were we talking about?

KARL

The dates. Missing persons.

GRACE

Oh yeah.

Grace rubs the heels of her palms into her eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I had Dawn comb the archives for missing persons reports. From the years before Herman Mills' birth and after his incarceration.

Grace reaches over and rotates a document on the table. At the bar top, a Waiter watches her, frowning.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Look at this list. Even before the Railway Killings, there were disappearances in Allerdale.

KARL

Aren't there disappearances in any developed area?

GRACE

There are. But not like this. Seventeen percent higher than the national average.

KARL

Remarkable.

GRACE

And that's the rub. It was that high before the Railway Killer's seven year spree.

(beat)

And continued to be about the same after Mills' incarceration.

KARL

I doubt this figure went unnoticed then.

GRACE

But it did. Details slipped by. Reports were filed, incomplete. Numbers were wrong.

INSERT - Grace's elementary school graduation photo. 1975.

GRACE (CONT'D)

It happens a lot here, I think.
More than it should.

KARL

Then why not take this to the
police?

GRACE

By itself, it means nothing. People
disappear, so what. I need new
evidence to reopen the case. The
thing that really sucks is I know
where it is, but can't get to it.

KARL

Why not?

GRACE

Legal stuff. Breaking and entering.
Little bit of theft.

KARL

Ah.

Karl mulls it over. Grace sighs. Takes a sip of her coffee.
Blinks. Neck loose. She's barely holding it together.

KARL (CONT'D)

You know, sometimes Grace, I think
you get in your own way. You share
that quality with your mother.

GRACE

What do you mean?

KARL

I mean that every time I saw her at
the kitchen, she spoke of you.

GRACE

(yawning)

I thought you didn't know each
other that well.

KARL

Not by name, but we chit chatted
enough times that I felt like I
knew her. She didn't go so far as
to say that she wished to contact
you, but her curiosity was clear.

GRACE

And?

KARL

And she was too stubborn to call.
To reach out to you to try and mend
this--

(gestures to Grace)

Whatever this void between you was.

GRACE

I don't think she wanted to mend
it. Don't think she could. Find
forgiveness for me in her.

KARL

What do you mean?

Grace hesitates. Then shrugs. Why not.

GRACE

Because on the day my brother
disappeared, I was supposed to walk
him home. But I ran away. Horrible,
right?

Karl can't find words.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Left him at a street corner. With
my eight-year-old sister.

Grace runs her hands through her greasy hair, growing
emotional.

MEMORY HIT - Tommy on the street corner. This time with Young
Joy at his side. The Male Figure looming behind them.

ON GRACE - Speaking through her teeth.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I hopped a train to the city. By
the time I walked into my dad's
apartment, Tommy had already been
taken.

(scoffs)

Funny thing is, I gave up my life
here to go see my dad. Have fun,
you know? I thought it would be an
endless weekend with him. He'd even
given me a key. But when I got
there, he wasn't around. Hint of
things to come I guess.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
Out at some club while I sat, and
waited, not knowing.

INT. GRACE'S DAD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - [FLASHBACK, 1974]

Grace stares at the phone. A voice on the receiver, leaving a message. The clock beside it reads: **4:04 A.M.**

PRUDENCE (V.O.)
(livid, desperate)
Grace. I know you're there. You
answer the goddamn phone this
instant. You answer the phone and
tell me if your brother is with
you, okay? Grace? Grace!

INT. MURPHY'S DINER - NIGHT - [PRESENT, 1994]

Grace wipes a tear away.

GRACE
So no. I don't think she wanted to
fix it. Because it couldn't be
fixed.

Karl takes a long beat, considering his response, then:

KARL
Perhaps not. I apologize. I was
only an observer, but perhaps this
situation can. And if you think
there's even the slightest chance
that justice could be found
(beat; shrugging)
Isn't whatever you're considering
worth it? For Herman Mills? For
those children? For all the pain
that this town has been forced to
endure?

ON GRACE - Tearful; bone-tired; indecisive.

EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - LATER

Grace drives by an old colonial. Slows as she passes. There's a light in one of the upper windows. And the silhouette of someone looking out. Grace drives on.

INT. BAR - LATER

Deep night again. Grace slouches on a stool at the bar top, staring into an empty glass.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Hey you.

Grace looks up. Sees Brian. He leans on the bar top, giving her a flirty smile, oblivious to her pain.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

What's up?

Grace shakes her head, says nothing.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Grace?

Someone calls to Brian from across the bar. He frowns at her, shrugs, and leaves.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Grace staggers into the room. A message on the phone. She presses "Play" as she sits on the bed.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello, this is Margaret from Scotia
Psychiatric. I'm afraid Doctor
Layton no longer works here. That
being said, even if she did, we are
unable to release confidential
medical files without a court
order...

Grace lays back on the bed as the message plays on.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Grace walks on a crowded sidewalk, confused as to why she's there. A Whisper at her ear.

WHISPER

*Braitheann mé ar do thruaill,
deochim do náire.*

She looks up. Sees Tommy, alive, with his back to her and-- A man approaches him from behind. It looks like Herman Mills.

The Whisper grows louder, incessant. Grace starts to run. She screams, but there's no sound.

The press of people around her increases inexplicably. An unrelenting tide. She pushes and pulls her way toward Tommy, but it's too much. She screams as the man reaches a hand toward him. The skin around his fingers begins to fall off, revealing--

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Grace sits on her bed, puffy-eyed, exhausted. She looks down at the alarm clock. Sees the time. Calmly, she grabs the clock and hurls it against the wall.

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Thursday, November 3rd**

EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - DAY

Grace stands on the porch. She smooths her hair, nervous. FOOTSTEPS within. The door opens, revealing Grant Olsen.

GRACE
Hello, Mr. Olsen.

OLSEN
(suspicious)
Who are you?

GRACE
My name is Grace Sutter. I saw you
the other day at the meeting.

OLSEN
I don't know you.

He moves to close the door. Grace steps forward, stopping it with her foot. Olsen's eyes narrow.

GRACE
Mr. Olsen, please let me explain.

OLSEN
Take your foot out of my property
this instant, young lady.

GRACE
I just want to talk to your son, if
he has a moment. I know he's a
talented filmmaker and I just--

OLSEN
I said not interested.

GRACE

I think he has information that
might help us. Help with the Bus
Tragedy.

Olsen bares his teeth, nudging the door open with his
shoulder, sending Grace stumbling back.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Mr. Olsen, please. I just need to
speak with him.

OLSEN

You don't-- You don't get to do
that. Not to my boy. He's had
enough people in his head. He
doesn't need another.

GRACE

I don't want--

OLSEN

You have thirty seconds to get off
my property before this gets bad.

He stares her down, fingers twitching at his side.
Grudgingly, Grace leaves.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace driving. On the verge of tears. Angry at Olsen. At
herself. She looks at her notes. Two last names on it: Olsen
and Joanne Mills. Grace makes a sharp turn.

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - FRONT DESK - SAME

Grace smiles at the secretary, looking disheveled and tired.

SECRETARY

Her niece?

GRACE

Listen, it's been a long time and
she may not remember me, but I'm
the only family she's got left.
Please. I can't imagine she has
many visitors.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Grace sits across from a frail woman in her 80s. She stares dreamily through Coke bottle glasses.

GRACE

Joanne?

JOANNE MILLS looks over at her as if noticing her for the first time.

JOANNE

Oh, hello dear. Do I know you?

GRACE

I'm a friend of Herman's.

JOANNE

Really? That's wonderful. That boy, always so shy. He'd never tell his mother about meeting a pretty girl.

GRACE

I guess not.

JOANNE

Now where is he? I need my medication. He always gives me my medication.

GRACE

Herman's-- Herman's gone, Joanne.

JOANNE

What? He-- Oh. He is, isn't he.

She takes off her glasses, immediately upset.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

It was a crime. A crime what they did to my boy.

GRACE

For the bus crash.

JOANNE

(yelling)

He was never even there! He was at home with me.

A few people look at them. Grace leans closer.

GRACE

I know.

JOANNE

He was-- He was a simple boy.
Couldn't even wash his own clothes,
let alone-- Do whatever it is they
said.

She shoots Grace a dangerous glance, suspicious.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

You think he did that awful thing?

GRACE

I don't.

JOANNE

(incredulous)

You don't?

GRACE

(lying)

I never did.

Beat as Joanne takes this in. Then, suddenly--

JOANNE

Thank you.

Joanne hugs Grace, hard. Grace seems surprised at first, but
relents, accepting another mother's sadness.

GRACE

Joanne, I need something from you.

Joanne lets her go.

JOANNE

Anything, dear.

GRACE

Do you remember Dr. Layton?

JOANNE

Of course. She-- She was always
kind.

GRACE

I need to see her.

Joanne looks at her for a moment, then nods.

JOANNE

Reach me my purse, dear.

INT. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Grace drives. Looks to the passenger seat. A ripped out page of an address book sits atop Grace's notes.

EXT. PHONEBOOTH - AFTERNOON

Grace on the phone.

GRACE

Hi, Dr. Layton, my name is Grace Sutter. I'm a friend of Joanne Mills.

Dead air.

LAYTON (V.O.)

What's this about?

GRACE

It's about Herman.

LAYTON (V.O.)

I can't discuss Herman's case with-- Who are you again?

GRACE

A friend of the family. I have reason to believe Herman was innocent and I just need a moment of your time, I--

LAYTON (V.O.)

Miss. I'd like to help. I really would, but I can't. I'm retired. Herman's case is confidential. It's over. I'm sorry. I just can't.

She hangs up. Grace bites her lip, then shakes her head. No.

EXT. ALLERDALE TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

Grace on the platform.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - MINUTES LATER

A train zooms by.

EXT. POUGHKEEPSIE TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

End of the line. Grace steps off the train.

EXT. LAYTON'S HOUSE - LATER

A large house. Brick and columns. Arched windows. Grace RINGS the DOORBELL. Waits. RINGS again.

LAYTON (O.S.)
One second!

Grace looks at the peep hole. Sees the light beyond. It disappears.

LAYTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do I know you?

GRACE
My name is Grace Sutter. We spoke
on the phone earlier.

LAYTON (O.S.)
We-- And you took that as an
invitation to come to my home? How
did you even find out where I live?

GRACE
Joanne Mills told me.

Beat. A SIGH. The door opens, revealing DOCTOR BARBARA LAYTON (70s; austere, professorial).

LAYTON
If Joanne vouches for you, I'll
give you ten minutes.

INT. LAYTON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Grace and Layton sit on cushioned chairs. Layton sips tea from a tea cup. Grace nurses a coffee.

LAYTON
Cold tonight.

GRACE
Yeah.

LAYTON
What made you brave the chill to
come all the way here?

GRACE
I'm investigating the Allerdale Bus
Tragedy.

LAYTON
Investigating?

GRACE
Yes.

LAYTON
Why?

GRACE
My-- My brother died. But he still
had people that loved him. Herman
died too. And all he had was
Joanne. And everyone else hated
him. That didn't seem fair. Not
after I looked at the facts more
closely.

Layton regards her thoughtfully, suspicious, but warming.

LAYTON
What about it doesn't add up?

GRACE
You know the case. And you knew
Herman. I imagine you know.

LAYTON
I do.

GRACE
Then why is he dead? Why was he
stuck in the Scotia Psych Ward?

LAYTON
Because, all evidence pointed
toward a conviction. There was
nothing to be done.

GRACE
And did you believe the evidence?

Layton takes a deep breath. Puts her tea on the table.

LAYTON
In my time as a psychiatric
specialist, I was involved in over
two hundred cases, Grace.
(MORE)

LAYTON (CONT'D)

Two hundred cases involving persons who may or may not have been clinically insane. I shouldn't be telling you any of this, but seeing as I'm retired, and that you are especially persistent, I will say that Herman Mills was either innocent, completely delusional, or the most brilliant actor the world's ever seen.

GRACE

And what do you believe?

LAYTON

In my professional opinion, I will say what I said to the court. He was delusional. Clinically insane.

GRACE

That's what you said, but what do you believe?

LAYTON

I believe... I believe that Herman Mills was incapable of committing the crimes for which he was convicted. But that doesn't matter.

GRACE

Why not?

LAYTON

Because the evidence didn't support that conclusion. Despite what we may sometimes desire, our judgments clouded by emotion as they are, justice is most often an empirical exercise. Herman needed evidence to exonerate him and sadly, that evidence does not exist.

Layton quiets. She and Grace stare into the flames of her fireplace.

INSERT - The bus, the inside filled with smoke and flame. Small hands beat at the windows.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - LATER

A train heads back the other way.

INT. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Grace drives, determined, settled on her course.

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Grace closes the door. Sees a message on her machine. Presses play.

FRANK (V.O.)

Hey Grace. I'm spent from rummaging, but I found my wife's photos. Don't know if they'll be much help, but I packaged them and sent Briony along to get them to you. She left them at the front desk of the library. God speed. And be careful.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

The dream again. Grace fights against the press of people. Trying to get to Tommy and Young Joy and--

She stumbles past the crowd. She stands straight, surprised. She looks behind her. The sidewalk is empty. She turns around. Tommy is gone. Young Grace looks back at her.

YOUNG GRACE

What are you trying to do?

GRACE

I'm trying to fix this.

YOUNG GRACE

You can't.

GRACE

I have to try.

YOUNG GRACE

They're going to kill you.

Grace feels a presence at her back. A hand latches onto her shoulder. She turns, beginning to scream-- Stops. She's looking back at herself. Then her skin *ripples*, begins to tear--

INT. GRACE'S MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Grace sits in the bathtub, smoking a cigarette. Outside the bathroom door, the pieces of the alarm clock still lie on the floor.

INSERT TITLE CARD - **Friday, November 4th**

EXT. LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Grace rubs her hands together, breath clouding in front of her. She gets out of the car.

INT. LIBRARY - FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Grace enters, sees Dawn--

GRACE

Hey, Da--

--and another woman. She turns around. It's Mrs. Evanston.

MRS. EVANSTON

Grace.

GRACE

Mrs. Evanston--

MRS. EVANSTON

Were you over at Grant Olsen's yesterday?

GRACE

I wanted to talk to his son.

MRS. EVANSTON

Grace, I-- We invited you to group. I invited you as a gift. To share in our pain.

GRACE

(defensively)

I didn't ask for your pity.

MRS. EVANSTON

(getting angry)

And now I hear you've been to see Grant Olsen, at his house. You heard him. You know what he's been through.

GRACE

His son might have new evidence.

Mrs. Evanston frowns, surprised.

MRS. EVANSTON

New evidence? What's this about?

Grace quiets, jaw taut.

GRACE

I've been to see Frank Sheahan.

MRS. EVANSTON

Oh God, Grace. What are you doing?

GRACE

Trying to make things right, if I can. We don't know the full--

MRS. EVANSTON

Yes we do! You know, Prudence told me you were a piece of work, and I tried, I tried to lend a helping hand. But this-- Shame on you.

She walks out of the library. Grace turns to Dawn.

DAWN

You went to Grant's house?

GRACE

Dawn, I--

DAWN

I asked you to be careful.

GRACE

He didn't give me a chance.

DAWN

I thought you cared about these people. I told you to pry carefully and what did you do?

GRACE

I care about the truth.

She regrets it as soon as it's past her lips.

DAWN

Please leave.

GRACE

Frank left photos for me. I need them.

Dawn has no time for her. She grabs an envelope from the front desk, tosses them to Grace.

DAWN

Take them. There's nothing new. I checked. No creature. Nothing but carnage and pain. Pain that you seem intent on making the people of this town relive.

GRACE

Dawn, please. I just want--

DAWN

I don't think I care anymore, Grace. You need to leave.

Grace turns, seething, and storms out.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace screams as she drives. Frustrated and angry.

EXT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Grace cradles a phone between her shoulder and ear, flips through the phone book, realizes she's still holding the envelope Frank left for her in a death grip. She puts it into her pocket.

OPERATOR

Operator.

GRACE

Hi, yes. I'm looking for a Karl Liman. I can't seem to find him in the phonebook.

Grace puts the book down.

OPERATOR

One moment.

Grace looks through the dirtied glass of the phonebooth. Beyond: the forest stands. Ominous. Foreboding. Beckoning?

OPERATOR (CONT'D)
(faintly)
Mam? Mam?
(louder)
Mam?

Grace shakes her head. She'd lost herself for a moment.

GRACE
Hi, yeah, sorry. Yes?

OPERATOR
I'm afraid the person you're
looking for appears to be unlisted.

GRACE
It's okay, thanks.

Grace hangs up, growing desperate.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Karl, where are you?

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace sits, stewing. She takes a swig from a bottle of whiskey, chases it with a shot of Red Bull.

GRACE
Screw it.

She puts the car into drive, guns the engine.

INT. RENTAL CAR/EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - DAY

Grace takes another big swig, stares out her car at the Olsen's house, a few doors down. She waits.

LATER

Grant exits. A gangly man in his early 30s follows.

GRACE
Drew.

Grant yells at Drew, but Grace can't hear. Drew nods apologetically. They get in the truck at the curb and drive down the street toward Grace. She ducks down as they pass.

Waits a few seconds. Then gets out of her car. She walks to the Olsen's house. Glances around, then begins circling.

She finds a low, basement window. She slips a credit card through the top, against the latch. CLICK.

INT. OLSEN HOUSE - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Grace lands in a basement. Tiptoes up a flight of stairs.

GROUND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Quietly, Grace walks around. Somewhere a TV plays LOUDLY. She creeps through a kitchen, peeks around the corner. Sees the back of a woman's head; she's seated in a sofa, watching TV.

Grace retreats, chest hiking up and down, the adrenaline kicking in. She summons her courage, exits the kitchen, swings a corner, and begins heading upstairs.

INT. OLSEN'S TRUCK - SAME

Grant driving. Turns to Drew.

GRANT
You bring your journal?

Drew looks at his lap, suddenly panicked.

DREW
Oh, no. Dad, I'm so sorry.

GRANT
It's okay, son.

He turns on his blinker, begins turning the truck around.

INT. OLSEN HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAY - SAME

Grace glances downstairs. Nothing. She turns to the hallway ahead, peeks into an open door. Another. Reaches the last door. She opens it and steps into--

DREW'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Perfectly, obsessively ordered. One wall filled with VHS tapes. Boxes stacked against the others. Grace walks to the wall. Checks the labels. Gameshows. TV movies. She shakes her head. Turns to the boxes. Checks the labels. They're years.

EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - SAME

A police car drives by on patrol. It passes Grace's rental. Then stops. Reverses. The window rolls down. Mark looks out, troubled.

MOMENTS LATER

Mark stands at the passenger side window, peering in.

CLOSE ON - Grace's scattered notes, photos, discarded Red Bulls, and alcohol.

INT. OLSEN HOUSE - DREW'S ROOM - SAME

She searches. Finds 1974. Carefully pulls the other boxes off the top of it, then opens it. The inside is lined with 8mm film reels. Grace fingers through them. Pulls one up. Each is labelled with a day. She pulls the next. Getting closer.

INT. MARK'S CAR/EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mark, sitting in his car, parked behind Grace's. He reaches for his radio, thinks better of it, sits back. Looks up as Grant Olsen's truck drives past, turning--

INT. OLSEN HOUSE - DREW'S ROOM - SAME

Grace looks up as she hears TIRES in the DRIVEWAY. She has to hurry. She looks through a few more reels. Then she sees it: **November 4th, 1974.** Written in neat handwriting on a piece of masking tape. Grace throws it in her pack.

GROUND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace sneaks down the stairs. Stops at the bottom. KEYS JANGLE outside. She looks around the corner. Sees the chair, but there's no woman, turns toward the basement door and--

A WOMAN SCREAMS in her face. Grace screams too as she falls to her butt. The old woman is dressed in a nightgown, wiry white hair a mess, eyes vacant, mouth yawning.

The door flies open as Grace scrambles to her feet.

OLSEN (O.S.)
What the hell?!

Grace sees Grant Olsen. He darts toward her. She ducks his arms, slips by and--

EXT. OLSEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Runs into Drew on the porch. He holds up his hands, taking in a few panicked breaths. Grace tries to get around him, but Olsen grabs her by the arm. Twists it up. She cries out.

He manhandles her to the driveway, presses her up against the hood of his car, reaching behind his back, toward his waistband. And then--

A revolver muzzle presses against the back of her head. She cringes away, but can't move.

OLSEN
What did I say, lady? What did I say?!

MARK (O.S.)
Grant!

Grant looks up. Mark's in his driveway, his own pistol drawn.

OLSEN
What are you doing here?

MARK
I was on patrol and heard a yell.

Grace tries to bolt, but Olsen holds firm.

OLSEN
You're staying right here with me until you tell me what you stole.

GRACE
I didn't steal anything.

OLSEN
Liar!

He cranks Grace's arm up further. Grace hisses.

MARK
Grant stop! Put the gun down and let her go.

OLSEN
She was in my house, Conners. In my goddamn house.

MARK
And that was wrong, but this--

OLSEN

It's a crime. She's trespassing. I could--

MARK

Do what? You gonna shoot her, Grant? You missed your chance when you saw her in your home. This wouldn't be self-defense. It'd be murder.

DREW

Dad, please.

OLSEN

Shut it, Drew!

Drew clutches the nightgown woman's side on the porch. Mark sees Grace's pack on the concrete next to Olsen's truck. He thinks of something.

MARK

How about I take a look inside there. Prove that she didn't take anything.

Mark doesn't wait for an answer, walking forward slowly, kneeling, and picking up Grace's pack. He opens it.

CLOSE ON - The reel, seated among Grace's wallet, notes, and trash.

Mark looks up to Olsen.

MARK (CONT'D)

Nothing.

OLSEN

You're lying. You're trying to protect her.

MARK

I'm protecting you, Grant. You're already assaulting someone. And you have an unregistered deadly weapon. I know because I looked at your file when I took you in a few months back. No guns on record. That won't go over well.

Olsen bares his teeth, a hint of panic growing in his eyes.

MARK (CONT'D)
Let her go and I'll take care of
it.

OLSEN
You'll take her in?

MARK
She'll get what she deserves, trust
me.

Olsen tenses, then hears his wife crying. He looks back to
see her shuddering in Drew's embrace. He softens. Lets go.

OLSEN
Get outta here.

Mark walks up and takes Grace's arm, putting it behind her
back. He cuffs her and begins leading her toward his patrol
car. Grace looks over her shoulder, sees the Olsens watching
her as she's led away.

INT. MARK'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Mark fumes as he drives, Grace behind the grate, in the back
seat. After a few moments, Mark pulls over, exits, and opens
Grace's door.

MARK
Get out.

Grace does so. He spins her around and uncuffs her. Gets back
in the driver's seat. Grace gets in the passenger seat.

GRACE
Mark.

MARK
Just shut up, Grace.

GRACE
You don't understand. I'm so close.

MARK
Close to what, Grace?! Getting
killed, because that's what
would've happened if I didn't show
up. And now what? Grant's going to
check if I took you to the station.

Mark grits his teeth, grips the wheel, white-knuckled.

MARK (CONT'D)
 Seriously, what's this about?

GRACE
 I'm close to finding out who
 committed the Bus Tragedy.

MARK
 Oh my God, are you drunk? High? I
 can't with you right now.

GRACE
 Mark, please. You have to listen--

MARK
 You're delusional. I should've
 listened to Joy. She warned me. A
 wrecking ball, she called you.

GRACE
 She doesn't know anything about me.

MARK
 And now I'm in your path,
 willingly. God, I'm an idiot.

Grace, teary-eyed, frowns as she recognizes her surroundings.

GRACE
 What are we doing here?

MARK
 I don't know, I need to think about
 what to do with you.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mark turns to pull his car into the driveway. A minivan is
 already there, with Joy getting her son out of the back seat,
 baby in her other arm. She sees Grace.

MARK
 Well shit.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Joy shakes her head, on the verge of rage tears. Mark looks
 out a sliding glass door to the forest. Grace stands alone.

JOY
 I don't even know what to say. I
 can't believe you.

GRACE

I'm just trying to help.

JOY

Who Grace? Who? Mom? She's dead.
Tommy? He's dead too. You're making
me scare my children. Making Mark
endanger his career--

MARK

She's not making me do anything--

Joy holds up a hand.

JOY

I'll get to you later.

(to Grace)

And you sure as hell aren't helping
me. So who is it, Grace? I'll give
you a hint. It's the same answer as
always. You. You're helping
yourself with your latest
obsession. In seventh grade it was
horses. In eighth it was leaving.
And now apparently it's fucking up
my life.

GRACE

That's not fair.

JOY

Not fair? Not fair!

(seething)

I can't handle this. I can't handle
having to be the adult all the
time. You left me. On a street
corner, you selfish bitch. Served
me up on a platter alongside Tommy.
You're lucky we're not both gone.

GRACE

I wish it'd been you.

MARK

Hey!

Joy smiles, pityingly.

JOY

You can't hurt me, Grace. Not with
that. I mourned for our brother.
But that wasn't the hard part.

(MORE)

JOY (CONT'D)

No, the hard part came after, when I had to go from being a girl to being a caretaker. For the house. For mom. For myself. You skipped out on all of that to booze with dad. Barely scrape through school. Rave or whatever bullshit you decided to waste your life on. I didn't do that. I built something here. Something meaningful, beautiful. Something hard won, and it was a mistake ever letting you back in.

Grace's crying, searching for words.

JOY (CONT'D)

Mom would be so ashamed.

Grace chokes back a sob.

GRACE

Joy, please.

JOY

Get out of my house.

GRACE

Joy.

JOY

This time, you can walk.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace steps out and turns to say something, but Joy slams the door in her face. Grace stares at it, breathing hard. She hangs her head and staggers toward the sidewalk. She looks to the forest, as if hoping to see Tommy, but he isn't there.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

The day wears down. Grace walks, shoulders hunched, hood up. It begins to snow.

INT. SUPER MARKET - LATER

Wet and disheveled, Grace purchases a bottle of whiskey. Pays the cashier, turns for the exit. Nurse Briony walks in, wearing a red knit sweater. Grace's face lights up.

GRACE
Nurse? Nurse Briony?

Briony looks up, confused.

NURSE BRIONY
Yes? Do I know you?

GRACE
It's me. Grace. From the other day?

NURSE BRIONY
I'm sorry, you must be thinking of
someone else.

She walks off, leaving a befuddled Grace at the exit.

EXT. SUPER MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Grace untwists the top of the bottle, pops it off. Takes a big swig. Wipes her mouth with the back of her hand. Takes another.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Grace staggers, drunk, miserable. Suddenly people are around her. A crowd. She looks up. Everyone's holding candles.

FOUR-WAY STOP - CONTINUOUS

They talk quietly to one another. Some begin to notice her. She weathers their judging looks. Many of them are parents from the grief counseling group. Dawn with them. Then--

OLSEN (O.S.)
Hey!

Grace looks up to see Grant Olsen, striding through the crowd.

OLSEN (CONT'D)
Come here!

Confusion filters through the crowd as everyone looks. One of them is Mrs. Evanston.

GRACE
Get away from me.

Grace passes into the center of the crowd, standing beside the shrine. Olsen reaches her, stops as he sees the bottle in her hand.

OLSEN

You gonna hit me?

MRS. EVANSTON

Grant. Stop. She's not worth it.

(to Grace)

Grace, you need to leave now.

GRACE

Maybe I don't want to. Maybe while
I have your attention I'll tell
everyone they're wasting their
time. Herman Mills is innocent!

A murmur of dismay, edged with anger. Mrs. Evanston steps up close to Grace, taking her wrist. Grace tears it away. Mrs. Evanston speaks quietly, trying to salvage the situation.

MRS. EVANSTON

Grace. We're not here for whoever
killed our family members. We're
here for them. For their memory.
Can't you understand that? You're
ruining that.

Grace's struggles for words.

GRACE

You're-- I'm sorry. I--

OLSEN

I've had enough of this.

He steps toward her. Grace grits her teeth, flips the bottle, and smashes it against the wall of the General Store. She holds up the jagged edge toward Olsen and lets out a scream.

GRACE

You want this? Huh? You want to
hurt me, then hurt me! Come on!

Olsen's enthusiasm wanes. Then-- Panic in the audience. People push past Grace, then stop, uncertain what to do. She looks down: the whiskey has soaked the shrine, igniting the candles. It's beginning to catch fire. Mrs. Evanston shakes her head and begins coordinating. Grace holds eye contact with Olsen as she staggers past.

OLSEN

You're pathetic.

EXT. MURPHY'S DINER - LATER

Grace vomits against the side of the building.

INT. MURPHY'S DINER - LATER

Grace sits alone at her booth in the corner, nodding off. She blinks hard, trying to stay awake. She takes a gulp of her coffee, winces as it burns. Places it back on the table.

Looks down to see the coffee ring upon coffee ring next to one another on the wood grain. *(circles upon circles)*

KARL (O.S.)

Grace?

Grace looks up to see Karl approaching in his green sweater.

KARL (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Grace, what happened?

GRACE

I tried to call you.

He slips into the seat opposite her.

KARL

What have you done?

Grace shrugs.

GRACE

Torpedoed the whole thing.

(scoffing)

Thought I'd actually figured something out. Convinced myself that Herman Mills didn't do the Bus Tragedy. Wasn't the Railway Killer either. Stupid.

Her head wobbles on an unsteady neck.

GRACE (CONT'D)

But everything went wrong. Because I'm me. Because I'm a bad person.

KARL

You were trying to make good.

GRACE

Trying. Failing.

KARL
Did you get what you were looking
for?

GRACE
The footage? Yeah.

KARL
Let us see it.

Grace fumbles with the zipper of her bag, opens it, places
the 8mm reel on the table. Karl smiles.

KARL (CONT'D)
Then I believe the day can be
salvaged.

GRACE
How?

KARL
I have a projector at my house.

EXT. MURPHY'S DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Karl leads a stumbling Grace to an old truck.

GRACE
This is yours?

KARL
It gets me from place to place.

INT. KARL'S TRUCK - LATER

Karl drives. Grace stares drunkenly out the window as the
night slides past, nothing outside except the shape of pale
trees. *(and Tommy standing on the side of the road)* Then--

Houses appear. Obscured by the moisture on the windows. White
and idyllic, picket-fenced, all windows lit, glowing with
warmth and the promise of comfort.

EXT. WEST ROAD - SAME

Karl's truck drives past a sign obscured by snow, the only
letters visible: **MOR--**

INT. KARL'S TRUCK - SAME

GRACE
Where are we?

Karl doesn't seem to hear her.

EXT. KARL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Karl's truck pulls to a stop in the driveway of a modest colonial. All the windows are lit. Wreathes hang in the eaves.

GRACE
It's beautiful.

KARL
You know it was the Irish that first settled Allerdale. Their original homes were torn down, but the bones are still there. I keep this one in memory of them.

INT. KARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Grace sits on an upholstered couch, looking around. On the walls: framed, painted landscapes; a mirror; a bookshelf filled with hardcover volumes. Everything spotless.

FOOTSTEPS from the other room. Grace looks up to see Karl enter with a film projector.

KARL
Here we are.

He places it on the living room table, rotates it until it faces a bare wall.

KARL (CONT'D)
Do you have the reel?

Grace holds it out unsteadily. Karl takes the reel, deftly unwinds the film, and threads it through the machine.

GRACE
It's freezing in here. Karl, aren't you cold?

Done, Karl stands back.

KARL
Alright, shall we? Or would you
like some tea to warm up?

GRACE
Let's just watch. Do we need to
turn off the--

Karl claps his hands and the lights turn off.

KARL
(off Grace's look)
Clapper.

GRACE
Nice.

Grace watches as he flicks a switch on the projector. It
BUZZES into life.

ON WALL - A FLICKERING IMAGE. Numbers and scratched film,
then-- A sidewalk, straight out of 1974. People mill around,
some waving and smiling at the camera, others distracted by
their parade preparations.

The footage cuts to the inside of the General Store. Drew
Olsen's hand runs over boxes of candy, takes one, pockets it.
Swivels to the entrance.

ON GRACE - As she watches, hands instinctively going inside
her pockets. Something CRUMPLES. She looks down. Pulls out
her hand. It's Frank Sheahan's envelope. She'd forgotten all
about it.

ON WALL - The POV walks out of the General Store entrance,
looks up the street. Flags trail from the light posts; a
banner is just about to be pulled into position.

The POV swings, unfocused, panning right, catching sight of a
young Frank Sheahan standing on the street corner. Step,
step. Freeze. Frank Sheahan looks up the street. Yells. The
POV swivels left and--

There it is. The Bus. Already halfway down the street. People
on the sidewalk looking up, throwing up their hands,
hopeless, terrified.

ON GRACE - Grimacing, but forcing herself to watch. Karl
behind her, the horrific scene reflected in his circular
glasses. No sound besides the CLACKING of the PROJECTOR.

ON WALL - Smoke and bodies. Frank Sheahan runs toward the
inferno. The POV swings wildly, then jerks back to the scene.

Focuses on the bus from the other side of the street, front crushed into the brick of the General Store, billowing smoke, the back interior already glowing with flames and then--

A man. Halfway out the driver side window, leaning out almost casually. He pulls himself free, tumbles, turns midair, and lands gracefully on his feet. He stands. And looks straight at the camera.

CLICK. Grace stops the reel. The image shudders back and forth. The light behind flickering.

ON GRACE - Peering closer, panicking:

GRACE (CONT'D)
Who is that?

CLOSE ON - The man. The smallest hint of a smile on his face. His features lean. Elongated. And sharp. Too sharp.

Grace plays the film. The man keeps walking. Turns his head. Looks back and-- His face is different. Blurred. Hair longer. Growing curly. Herman Mills.

Grace rewinds the footage. Plays it back. Smile. Turn. Change. Herman Mills.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh my God. Oh my God.

Grace looks down. Realizes she's standing. Steps back.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Frank was right. Holy shit.

KARL
Incredible.

GRACE
I-- What do we do?

KARL
This is-- Unexpected.

GRACE
It wasn't him. It wasn't Herman.
(head sagging)
It wasn't Herman. I need to tell
Joanne. Someone-- People have to
know. I--

She sits on the couch, beginning to hyperventilate. Karl rounds on her.

KARL

Grace. Calm yourself. Look at me.

She looks at him through his circular glasses. He's smiling.

KARL (CONT'D)

In. Out. In. Out. Good.

Grace's breathing slows.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now just take a moment to breathe.
I'll get that tea and we'll talk
more, hmm? Be right back.

Karl stands, exits the room. Grace sighs wearily. Looking up at the wall. The killer's distorted face vibrates there. Unnatural, disturbing.

From the room beyond, Grace can hear Karl making tea. Grace looks down, sees Frank Sheahan's envelope still grasped tight. She unclenches her fingers, slowly tears open one end.

GRACE

I have something else to show you
too. Something I forgot.

KARL (O.S.)

Alright, dear. Be right out.

Grace pulls the photos out of the envelope. Black and white. The size of postcards. She begins to flip through them.

INSERT - The photos: scenes from a hospital. A corridor, filled with blurred shapes. Blood on the floor. A woman with a head dressing. A crying child in the waiting room. Doctors and nurses consulting--

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

Sugar?

GRACE

Yes, please.

Grace flips to the next photo and--

It's a man seated in a hospital bed. His right arm has been amputated, nearly to the shoulder, and dressed. A relieved woman clings to his remaining arm.

GRACE (CONT'D)

The Pinned Man.

Grace opens her mouth to say something to Karl, but the noise gets stuck in her throat.

WIDEN TO REVEAL - The man's face, looking directly into the camera, face pained, skin stained by soot and dirt.

It's Karl.

KARL (O.S.)
Your tea, dear.

Grace looks over her shoulder to see Karl, standing on the other side of the couch.

CLOSE ON - *His right arm extended, holding a saucer and cup of tea.*

KARL (CONT'D)
Are you feeling better?

GRACE
Yeah.

Grace takes the saucer. Turns around. Places it on her lap. Her eyes search, trying to conceal her panic. Karl rounds the couch. Sits in a chair opposite. Between them, the thing smiles from the flickering wall.

GRACE (CONT'D)
No tea for you?

KARL
Not thirsty.

Grace nods. The SAUCER SHAKES in her trembling hands.

GRACE
So.

KARL
So. What do you make of this thing?

GRACE
I-- I don't know. It-- Um.

KARL
Think Grace. Think of the town. Its people. Their history. Their names.

Grace bites her lip again. Eyes growing wet. Then-- Realization.

INSERT RAPID SERIES OF SHOTS - The names from her list of witnesses. Names of businesses around town. Sheahan. Callahan. McMahon. Murphy.

Grace struggles to sober up; working through her drunkenness.

GRACE
It's not-- It's not from here.

KARL
It came from across the sea, didn't it? From the Old World.

INSERT RAPID SERIES - The incorrect dates and times. Grace's graduation photo. Dawn unable to find the files. The Newspaper Man failing in the Archives.

GRACE
Its presence is--

INSERT - Grace unable to sleep. Haunted by visions of Tommy.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Disruptive... Confusing.

KARL
(nodding)
Corruptive even. It's cast a pall over the town.

INSERT - Articles from Frank's wall: The Morgansville Mine collapse. The disappearances. The dementia rates. Suicides.

GRACE
One that's lasted a long time.

KARL
Centuries.

GRACE
But-- but why?

KARL
Perhaps it was banished from the Unseelie Court.

A whisper sounds beneath his speech, tickling Grace's ear.

GRACE
But why the killings? Does it--
consume its victims?
(beat; thinking)
No. That doesn't make sense. Not with the bus.

Karl smiles.

KARL
Perhaps it doesn't feed on
meat or milk.

WHISPER
*B'fhéidir nach mbraitheann sé
feoil nó bainne.*

Grace's eyes widen.

KARL (CONT'D)
Perhaps it feeds on something
else.

WHISPER (CONT'D)
Rud éigin eile.

INSERT RAPID SERIES - The shrine to the Bus Tragedy's victims, parents mourning before it. The grief counseling circle in the gymnasium. Joanne, alone. Frank Sheahan drinking himself into a stupor, mad with grief.

GRACE
Emotions. Pain.

Karl stills. It's as if his body is settling. Relinquishing all artifice that made him appear human. The only movement: a mad smile spreading across the mask of his human suit.

GRACE (CONT'D)
And it can assume different forms.

Tears brim heavy in Grace's eyes. Her breathing quickening.

INSERT RAPID SERIES - The old woman at grief counseling, sitting between weeping parents. At the diner, watching her. Nurse Briony with Frank as he wheezes his life away.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Can appear as it wants to.

INSERT - Grace talking to Karl at the graveyard. Joy watching them from the entrance. From her POV, Grace speaks with a groundskeeper.

The Waiter coming to Grace's table to ask if she wants a coffee refill. She glances at the other side of the table. It's empty.

GRACE (CONT'D)
But why stop the Railway Killings?
Why the Bus Tragedy?

KARL
One death starts a cycle of pain. A circle.

The Whisper continues behind his speech, beguiling, terrifying.

INSERT - Circles. Circles everywhere. Drawn in textbooks. Boles on trees. On the ceiling of Grace's motel room. Glistening coffee stains. Blood on soil. On sidewalk.

KARL (CONT'D)

Round and round. Each new pain
unique, deliciously different.

(beat; savoring)

But as the years pass, one requires
more. Perhaps it thought why start
one cycle at a time when it could
start forty? Link the circles like
a chain, lay it about the town, and
weigh every moment with the hurt of
it, the inescapable, abyssal nature
of it. No man, woman, or child
unscathed. Do that and perhaps it
would be satiated. Perhaps then it
could merely bask in the wound for
all time.

A tear streaks down Grace's cheek.

GRACE

Karl's wife didn't drown by
accident.

KARL

(smiling)

She did hate the water.

GRACE

And Tommy? Did you kill him too?

KARL

And therein lies the beauty of the
circle.

INSERT - The Male Figure behind Tommy and Young Joy on the
street corner in 1974.

KARL (CONT'D)

(amused)

I didn't. I don't know who killed
Tommy. The circle is self-
perpetuating. Crafted by one, yet
imitated by many; the Railway
Killings and those of pretenders
woven together to make a miserable
tapestry.

REVERSE TO REVEAL - The man. Just a man. A stranger. Another face passing in a crowd. Tommy looks over his shoulder.

Grace's face falls. She trembles with the anguish of it. Karl savors her desolation.

GRACE
It's not fair. It's not--

KARL
No, it isn't.

A long beat. Grace breathes a shaky breath.

GRACE
So. Now what?

KARL
Now, we end this farce.
(beat)
See.

Grace blinks and it's like a light was turned off. She's in an abandoned house. Covered in filth and grime. Windows broken, curtains billowing. She looks down to see a circle of mold in the bottom of her chipped tea cup.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST ROAD - SAME

Snow slides from the face of the sign, revealing it fully. It reads: **MORGANSVILLE**. And beneath: ***Condemned by Order of the Allerdale Town Council.***

BACK TO:

INT. KARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Karl smiles... and it RIPS HIS FACE OPEN. Grace screams as it stands, SHUDDERING OUT OF ITS SKIN, revealing a too-tall, fay creature, lithe, deadly, and unnatural.

Grace hurls her pack. It bats it away with a flick of its wrist, sending it crashing through a window into the night. Grace turns, running. Karl--or the thing that was once Karl--cackles as he vaults the couch, pursuing her.

FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Grace heads into the next room, turns, sees Tommy standing in front of her.

He opens his mouth, letting out an inhuman screech. Grace turns around, ducks the fay creature's arms as it reaches for her, heading upstairs.

SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Grace in a hallway. She opens a door, sees Herman Mills hanging there, blue-faced, tongue lolling, reaching for her. She slams the door shut. Turns, sobbing, hyperventilating.

FAY CREATURE(O.S.)

Grace! I'm coming for you. You
can't escape. *Beidh tú bás anseo.*

Grace blinks away her tears. Opens another door. Prudence lies on her deathbed, IV wormed into her arm.

PRUDENCE

How dare you show your face here.
Get out. Get out!

She rips the IV from her arm and leaps to her feet, rushing the door. Grace slams it, holding it shut with her back. But no impact comes. CREAKING from the STAIRS. She looks back.

The Fay Creature mounts the final step. Peers down the hallway. It's empty. It takes a step. Sniffing with its nose, and something deeper, as if drinking Grace's essence.

FAY CREATURE

Grace. Grace?
(then, in Prudence's
voice)
Grace, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

It turns into a bedroom, with a rusty bedframe and soiled mattress, a tall mirror in the corner, and closet doors.

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)

(laughing)
Did you like that? Did it hurt?

INSIDE THE CLOSET - Grace holds a hand over her mouth, muscles standing out in her neck, whole body trembling.

FAY CREATURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Your fear is... sublime.

Across from Grace in the closet, Tommy squats, eyes wide and staring. His face nears hers. Grace squints her eyes against the horror of him.

IN THE ROOM - The Fay Creature sinks lithely to all fours, peering under the bed. Sees nothing. Unlimbers back upright.

INSIDE THE CLOSET - Grace cringes away from the door.

FAY CREATURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 So many years of pain, gathered
 like kindling in the deepest parts
 of you.

A FLOORBOARD CREAKS. A shadow passes beyond the slats.

FAY CREATURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Who knew your mother only need die
 to set it alight?

Tommy opens his mouth to scream, but no voice escapes as dirt falls from his tongue, landing noiselessly at Grace's feet. She shakes her head, screwing her eyes shut, forcing herself to control her breathing.

IN THE ROOM - The Fay Creature turns to the mirror.

FAY CREATURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I drank from your mother as I drink
 from you now. Her hurt sweeter than
 any mother's milk. Her pain old,
 filled with regret. Delicious.

It casts the mirror to its side, SHATTERING the GLASS on the floor, but there's nothing but empty space behind it.

INSIDE THE CLOSET - Grace opens her eyes. Tommy's gone. Grace looks up, resolute.

IN THE ROOM - The closet doors burst open as Grace makes a run for it. The Fay Creature turns, snarling. It bounds at her back, bowls her over with a shoulder, sending her flailing to the floor of the hallway.

She lands hard, smacking her face. Tries to push herself up, but the Fay Creature's foot lands upon her back, kicking her down. Her face snaps into the floorboards, comes up bloody.

It lets her rise, then swipes her with its sharp fingers, tearing through her clothes. Grace lets out a breathless cry and the Fay Creature laughs. It swipes her again and she stumbles back, scrambling. Seeing the thing in full as it stalks toward her.

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)
 Irony is the sweetest morsel. Grand
 ironies. A simpleton thought to be
 a serial killer. A woman struck
 with waterfright, drowned.
 (in Karl's voice)
 (MORE)

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)

A pathetic, pitiful girl who wants
nothing more than to be loved,
betrayed by the one person she
thought cared for her. All a lie.

Its tongue licks across its lips.

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)

I will miss feeding upon you.

Grace, bleeding, nose broken, face bruised, lets out an
animalistic scream and kicks at the thing's shins. It laughs.

GRACE

You don't know me. You don't know
anything.

Suddenly it's upon her, hand around her throat, hoisting her
up until her feet are dangling above the musty floorboards.
It walks without effort toward the end of the hall, its too-
long, too-thin face sneering at her.

FAY CREATURE

Truth be told, there's not much to
know. You're nothing but a self-
exile. A saboteur. I had no choice
but to leave my home. But you--
(losing all sense of
satisfaction)
are your own foil.

And with that it throws her through the second floor window.

EXT. KARL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

GLASS SHATTERS as Grace flies out the window, clips the roof,
and is sent tumbling through the air. She hits the ground
hard, the wind driven from her, one ARM SNAPPING.

She screams, writhes in the snowy dirt and dead leaves.
Karl's house looms over her, dilapidated, dark, and cold.
Grace chokes a sob and--

She sees her pack. Realizes something. She begins to crawl.
FWUMP. The Fay Creature lands behind her. A breeze stirs the
leaves on the forest floor. Grace crawls. The thing
approaches, savoring the lead up to the kill.

FAY CREATURE

Your whole life you ran from it.
From this. But I can feel the stuff
of you.
(inhaling deeply)
(MORE)

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)

In your heart, you know. You
deserve this. You simply never had
the courage to do it yourself.

Grace reaches her pack, reaches inside. The Fay Creature
kneels down behind her, sharp teeth parting in a smile.

FAY CREATURE (CONT'D)

For Tommy.

Grace glances over her shoulder, one eye nearly swollen shut,
tears staining her dirty cheeks. She nods as the creature's
face nears her own.

GRACE

You're right. For Tommy.

Her hand comes up, holding the IRON RAIL SPIKE Tommy gave
her. She slams it into the Fay Creature's neck. A CRACK
SPLITS THE AIR, the GUNSHOT CLAP of the magic that kept it
together breaking. Its eyes go wide as the METAL HISSES in
its skin, immolating it from within. It stumbles back,
thrashing, wailing, trying to remove the spike, but unable to
grip the iron, which now glows with sudden, white heat.

Grace doesn't stay to watch it die. She flees into the woods
even as the thing stills, fire climbing its limbs. Its hands
slide away from its throat; its pinprick pupils dilate. And a
whisper of breath leaves its body.

FAY CREATURE

(halting)

Pain.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Grace runs, one arm limp and useless, the other grasping it.
As she runs, she cries. For what she did to Joy. To Prudence.
To Tommy. Hyperventilating, sobbing, bleeding; she doesn't
stop. The trees pass in the night, and then--

Clouds move and moonlight streams down through the boughs,
illuminating her path. And Tommy's beside her. Running. Not
dead. But as she remembered him. Her little brother.

Her breathing slows. But still she cries.

INT. SUTTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Joy and Mark sit on the couch watching TV. BANG. BANG. BANG.
They look at each other, then look at the time. It's past
midnight.

They stand, Mark grabbing his pistol from atop the fridge as he moves up behind Joy, who reaches for the door's handle. She looks through the peephole. Concern on her face. She opens the door.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - SAME

Grace stands on the porch, covered in blood and filth, but alive.

JOY
Grace, what--

Grace takes her in an embrace. Hugs her tight and close.

GRACE
I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm
sorry for everything.
(sobbing)
I'm sorry.

Joy, taken aback, returns Grace's hug. Glances over her shoulder to Mark, who watches, confused, yet heartened. She looks back to her sister.

JOY
It's okay. It's okay.

She hugs Joy harder. Joy rocks her back and forth. Runs a hand through her blood-streaked hair. Looks over Grace's shoulder.

Beyond, the FOREST stands. The moonlight is gone, making the trees look eerie and otherworldly in the gloom. They SWAY and CREAK and WHISPER. LEAVES RUSTLE at their feet.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END