

THE BIRDS

Snowden, White

DARKNESS. The sound of WIND. Distant lapping waves...

FADE IN:

EXT. SKIES OVER THE TEXAS GULF COAST - NIGHT

Pre-dawn. Dark sky. A HIGH POV passes through low clouds... revealing the churning Gulf Coast waters below. A BUOY bell rings with the coming of the tide...

KEEP FLYING. The shoreline comes into view. A vast stretch of beach and rolling dunes. Past the beach to --

A SMALL TOWN. Mere shapes of buildings in the mist. The kind of place where the tallest structure is the church steeple. We fly over... the lights of the empty main street bleeding through the haze.

Still flying... out to the edge of town. The wind growing quiet. Finally approaching --

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

We slowly drift down to a lonely little road out in Coastal Texas farm country. DRIFT CLOSER to a tiny pool of light in the dark.

We find a burly REPAIR MAN up at the top of a phone pole, working by flashlight in the cold autumn night. He's on a waist-harness -- listening to the radio... George Jones' 'High-Tech Redneck.'

REPAIR MAN

(singing along --)

*...he's a high-tech redneck,
Mayberry meets Star Trek. He's
bumpkin' but he's plugged in...
he's a high-tech redneck.*

Suddenly, there is the sound of FLUTTERING WINGS in the dark and one of the phone lines begins to slightly move... like something just landed on it.

REPAIR MAN looks over with his flashlight to see that a large CROW has landed on the wire in the distance. Bird eyes glinting in the dark.

REPAIR MAN whistles at the bird, happy to have a little distraction from the solitude. But the bird just sits there on the wire. Cold and staring.

REPAIR MAN shrugs and goes back to work, something he probably sees all the time... birds on the wires.

A beat... then the phone line moves again. REPAIR MAN glances over... and the CROW is now closer.

REPAIR MAN reaches into his pocket and pulls out a candy bar. Holds it out for the crow. Curious to see if the animal will come for it.

REPAIR MAN

Hey, partner. Here ya' go. Take a bite.

A beat as the crow studies the candy bar... studies the Repair Man. The crow flies toward the Repair Man and snatches the whole candy bar -- then returns to its perch.

REPAIR MAN

Chow down. I guess it's all yours.

The crow drops the candy bar. Not interested.

REPAIR MAN returns to his work... but now the phone line on the other side of the pole starts to move. REPAIR MAN turns to see a SECOND CROW has landed on the wire. Birds now on both sides of him.

REPAIR MAN adjusts his position and accidentally knocks his radio off the pole. The radio falls... smashes to the ground below... music snuffed into silence. Now it's totally quiet out here.

The TWO CROWS begin to CALL BACK AND FORTH. CAW! CAW! The birds move toward each other down the line... quick hopping and flying moves... closer and closer to the REPAIR MAN.

The REPAIR MAN is starting to feel uneasy about this. Like the crows are closing in on him. He shines his flashlight at the birds, trying to shoo them away... but they keep coming down the line.

REPAIR MAN reaches to loosen his harness... making a motion to go back down back down the tall phone pole --

-- and the CROWS stop. Just sitting there again. Staring.

REPAIR MAN alternates looks between both crows as he moves very slowly... steps down one notch on the phone pole --

-- and suddenly the crows take flight from their perches and come right at REPAIR MAN. They swoop the REPAIR MAN'S head. So fast and quick. Then gone again into darkness.

REPAIR MAN whips around. Scanning with his flashlight. Trying to see where they went, just as the birds come again out of the dark. SWOOPING AND DIVING at the man's head.

REPAIR MAN tries to fight them off. Batting the birds away with his hands. But then he loses his balance -- AND FALLS.

REPAIR MAN gets tangled in his harness... and is now hanging UPSIDE DOWN at the top of the phone pole.

A beat as he catches his breath... struggles to pull himself up. But it's too awkward of a position. He's stuck.

And then out of the dark... the CROWS COME AGAIN. Except this time, IT'S A FULL-ON ATTACK.

It's totally disorienting. Everything upside down. All the REPAIR MAN can see are pounding black wings and claws coming for his face.

He desperately swings his flashlight at the birds, the beam of light wildly cutting through the dark.

REPAIR MAN

Get off me! Jesus Christ get off me!

A claw rips across REPAIR MAN'S face. Blood trickling into his eyes. He SCREAMS. Still trying to fight back. Losing his strength.

The birds pull tufts of hair. Beaks PECKING AND GOUGING. Going for his eyes. The REPAIR MAN IS STILL SCREAMING FOR HIS LIFE... but there's no one who can save him. Not tonight.

The REPAIR MAN finally goes still. Flashlight dropping from his loose grip. The last thing we hear... the sounds of the CROWS flying away into the night.

THE FLASHLIGHT lays on the ground below. Crimson smears dripping down the lens as the batteries die... and the light dims to nothing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARM HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A two-story FARM HOUSE on a large piece of land. Gray and weathered by the decades... shrouded in the morning fog.

INT. FARM HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A PET COCKATIEL sleeps in a cage. MOVE PAST THE CAGE, through the dark downstairs living room. The decor is old-fashioned. Grandmotherly. Framed family PHOTOS everywhere. On top of an upright piano. On the walls --

-- a FATHER holding up a prize-winning sea trout to the camera... a LITTLE GIRL at the helm of a fishing boat... the FATHER and his pretty WIFE dressed up for a night out...

School photographs of the girl line the walls. Each year depicting the child growing older until we stop on a young woman in a cap and gown... graduating from high school.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

We move up the stairs into the bedroom to find an attractive woman sleeping in a large bed. This is CLAUDIA MOORE. The girl from the photos, now grown up.

Claudia stirs... her eyes blink open as she wakes. She seems confused for a moment by her surroundings... and then she casts a glance to find the other side of the bed still made.

She's all alone. As if it's something she's still getting used to.

Claudia looks out the window into the gray of the early morning... the trees stripped of their leaves, stark shapes against the sky.

CLOSE ON A FRYING PAN as -- eggs pour into the skillet. Sizzling and popping.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

At the stove we find Claudia making breakfast. The family DOG sits nearby, watching Claudia's every move. Hoping for scraps as she scoops a helping of eggs onto a plate.

Claudia's six-year-old daughter, MIA, sits at the kitchen table. The PET COCKATIEL is now out of its cage and perched on the girl's shoulder.

MIA

Come on, Sonny. Say 'Mia.' You can do it. 'Mee-ah.'

The bird just chirps as Claudia puts the plate of food down on the table.

CLAUDIA

Honey, the breakfast is for you. Not the animals.

MIA

Okay, Mommy.

Claudia gives her daughter a kiss on the cheek and steps away. Mia watches her mom until her back is turned and then sneaks a bite of food to the bird.

Claudia passes her MOTHER at the counter, making school lunches. This is LUCILLE -- known to the family as GRAN.

Late 60's. There's a simple elegance about Gran. Her clothes. Her distinguished gray hair.

Claudia opens a kitchen drawer. Can't find what she's looking for.

GRAN
 (not looking up from her
 work)
 Top drawer.

Claudia opens the top drawer. Pulls out a box of sandwich bags and starts to pack the lunches.

CLAUDIA
 Thanks, mom. I guess one of these
 days I'll remember where everything
 is.

THE DOG pads over to the table... where Mia secretly slips him a piece of toast.

MIA
 Gran -- can we make cookies today?

GRAN
 Sure. As soon as you get home from
 school.

MIA
 With those little sprinkles?

GRAN
 Whatever you want.

CLAUDIA
 Mia, where's your brother?

MIA
 On his computer I think.

CLAUDIA
 No surprise there...

Claudia packs a lunch into Tate's backpack, and that's when she finds a PIECE OF PAPER. She unfolds the paper... not happy with what she sees.

CLAUDIA
 (calling out into the
 house)
 Tate!

INT. TATE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's a typical 10 year-old's-room. Stacks of video game cartridges... tennis shoes on the floor... the always rumpled bed. But it's also that in-between age of changing interests. Yu-Gi-Oh posters giving way to 'Linkin Park.'

Claudia's son TATE is at the computer. Playing video games. There's a sullen edge to the kid. An anger always just below the surface.

CLAUDIA (O.S.)

Tate -- get down here right now!

Tate hears the tone in his mother's voice. Knows something's up. He cuts off the computer.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Tate steps into the kitchen. Sees that his mother is holding a MATH TEST in her hands. A big red "D" across the top.

CLAUDIA

What's this?

TATE

It's a 'D'.

Claudia stays calm -- ignoring Tate's smart-assed comment.

CLAUDIA

I can see that.

(beat)

The problem is that I know you're actually good at math.

TATE

So...

CLAUDIA

So... you didn't make grade like this at your other school.

TATE

Maybe I liked my school back in Austin better.

CLAUDIA

We're not going through this again, Tate. You're at a new school now. You need to make better grades.

TATE

C'mon, mom. Just sign it. Please.

CLAUDIA
 (fixing him with a look)
 This is the last 'D' I'm signing.
 Understood? --

Suddenly, there's a loud THUMP somewhere in the house.
 Conversation stops. The house falls into silence.

MIA
 What was that?

CLAUDIA
 I don't know.

And then... THUMP. The sound is louder now. The dog starts
 BARKING at the noise.

GRAN
 It's coming from outside.

THUMP! THUMP! Something keeps hitting the house. Claudia
 tries to quiet the barking dog.

CLAUDIA
 Huey -- cut it out.

The family holds still. A few more THUMPS... and then
 nothing. Everyone waits a beat... listening...

CLAUDIA
 It stopped.

The family settles. Silence... just as --

SMACK! Something fast SLAMS HARD into the kitchen window --
 causing the glass to crack. Everyone jumps, startled. Tate
 rushes to the window to get a better look.

TATE
 Something just hit the window.

Claudia heads to the back door. The kids start to follow,
 but she keeps them back.

CLAUDIA
 Stay inside.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Claudia steps out into the backyard -- Gran follows. They
 make their way through dense morning fog. Can't see more
 than a few yards ahead of them.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The kids watch as Gran and Claudia walk alongside the house... disappearing into the mist.

Tate starts to head out of the back door.

MIA

Mommy said to wait here.

Tate rolls his eyes and goes outside anyway.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Claudia and Gran moves along the side of the house... and as they glance down in the wet grass they find --

-- A BLUE JAY. Dead on the ground. Laying beneath the cracked kitchen window.

GRAN

Probably got lost in the fog.

Claudia turns and sees Tate stepping through the wet grass. Mia not far behind.

CLAUDIA

Hey -- I told you guys to stay inside.

TATE

We wanted to see.

CLAUDIA

Tate, you don't even have your shoes on. It's freezing.

Mia notices the bird now. Heartbroken at the sight of the dead animal.

MIA

Is the bird dead, mommy?

CLAUDIA

Yeah, sweetie.

Tate picks up a stick. Starts to fish it under the dead bird's wing.

TATE

He's toast. Musta hit the window going like thirty miles an hour.

CLAUDIA

Tate... please leave it alone.

But Tate's not listening. He lifts up the BLUE JAY so he can get a better look. Keeping it at a distance when --

-- the bird suddenly starts FLAPPING ITS WINGS. Not dead yet.

Tate leaps back -- startled out of his wits. He drops the stick and the bird with it.

The animal hits the ground, flopping about in a last gasp of life. And then with a final twitch... the bird goes still.

Tate looks down, and now he sees something else on the ground, just a few feet away from the dead blue jay --

-- ANOTHER DEAD BIRD. And another. Five birds scattered across the lawn. Sparrows. Finches. Robins. All of them bloody and broken.

TATE

Look. There's more of them. All different kinds.

GRAN

What in the world...?

Claudia looks over at the kids, the two of them shivering out here in the cold.

CLAUDIA

School bus will be here soon. You guys need to finish getting ready.

Gran takes the kids inside while Claudia lingers another moment... looking down at the dead birds.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The SCHOOL BUS pulls away from the front of the house as Gran waves goodbye to the kids. She watches as the bus disappears down the gravel road.

BACK OF HOUSE -- with work gloves on, Claudia picks up the dead birds. Puts them into a trash bag. She looks up to see her mother standing there.

CLAUDIA

Kids get off okay?

GRAN

Yeah. Mia was still worried about the birds. I told her that you'd bury them real nice... say a little prayer.

Beat... Claudia nods. Her mind lost in other thoughts.

CLAUDIA

I don't know what I'm going to do about Tate.

GRAN

He'll be okay. He just needs some time to get used to everything.

CLAUDIA

(beat)

I never thought it'd turn out this way... having to do it all on my own.

GRAN

Claudia -- you're not on your own.

Claudia glances up at her mom. Always there with the right thing to say. Suddenly we are ---

HIGH POV -- looking down on a car as it winds along a Gulf Coast road. The only sound is the WIND in our ears...

EXT. PORT CALHOUN - DAY

Claudia's behind the wheel of her car as it drives past --

-- rolling SAND DUNES covered with tall sea grass.

-- the landmark LIGHTHOUSE. Now inactive. Standing on the shore like some forgotten giant.

-- a prairie field with grazing CATTLE behind barbed wire.

-- cars pulled over at roadside SHRIMP STANDS.

-- an expanse of new CONDOS being built. A field of wood house frames crawling with CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. A billboard advertises the development as "Paradise View."

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Claudia sees a few SEAGULLS gathered on the road ahead. She keeps driving toward the birds, expecting them to scatter.

Almost on top of the gulls now, but they still don't move from their spot. Claudia starts to brake, scared she's going to hit the birds -- but then the gulls lift off the road at the last second.

Claudia casts a quick look out of the rear-view... sees all the birds flying away.

EXT. PORT CALHOUN MAIN STREET - DAY

Claudia's car cruises down the main street of PORT CALHOUN. Population 6,300. Typical stores and establishments. A bank. Post office. Old-fashioned movie theater. A diner.

Like so many Texas Gulf Coast towns, it's a community that has survived against hurricanes, shipping booms and busts, shelling by Union gunboats during the Civil War -- and it's still here. There is a spirit in the people. A toughness.

Claudia pulls up in front of THE DINER among the pick-up trucks. There's a breakfast crowd gathered inside.

INT. TOWN DINER - DAY

Claudia enters amidst casual waves and greetings. This is the kind of diner with trophy fish on the walls and an old jukebox in the corner playing low volume country tunes.

Claudia takes a seat at the counter among the other farmer and fisher types. Faces hard and weathered.

The OWNER of the diner is at the counter. This is VANCE. Older guy in his 70's. This diner is his life.

CLAUDIA

Hey, Vance.

Vance sets a couple of to-go coffees down for Claudia.

VANCE

Hey you. Already got your coffees ready. I know it ain't Starbucks, but it's what we got around here.

CLAUDIA

I'd take your coffee any day.
Remember, I grew up on this stuff.
(beat)
When are you going to come down to the store -- get a little something for your wife?

VANCE

Aw, now you're gonna get me in trouble. She always fusses about me getting her the wrong thing.

CLAUDIA

I'll help you pick something out. She'll love you for it.

LEN -- one the old locals sitting at the counter, leafs through the town paper and launches into his daily rant.

LEN

They're gonna start using that bio-solid fertilizer on the Talbert farm. People are dyin' from that shit.

VANCE

Uh oh, here we go...

LEN

Laugh all you want. But I read a report all about it. We don't know what the hell we're putting in the ground anymore... poisoning everything.

Claudia pays for her coffees as Vance reaches up to dust off an impressive TROPHY FISH mounted on the wall.

VANCE

Hey, Claudia -- I ever tell you about the time your daddy and I caught this bad boy right here?

Claudia smiles, like this is a long running joke.

CLAUDIA

No, Vance. I don't think you ever did --

VANCE

-- me and Calvin had been out on the Gulf for hours. No bites. No nibbles. Nothing. About as lucky as a blind dog with one nut. We're just about to head back when Cal hooks this somebitch...

SHERIFF BOBBY ELLIS enters and approaches the counter, blowing hot air into his hands to warm up. He's about Claudia's age. A good ol' boy in a uniform.

VANCE

Now where were you this morning, Bobby? You're usually opening the place up with me.

SHERIFF BOBBY

Ya'll remember Deke Frazier, big guy used to play football back in school?

CLAUDIA

Deke -- sure. He was a few years ahead of us.

SHERIFF BOBBY

So... he was working late last night, doing a repair up on one of the phone lines just outside of town. Got electrocuted. They found him hanging up there this morning.

Len puts down his paper. Vance stops what he's doing. Everybody now listening to Bobby's story.

VANCE

Damn... he gonna be okay?

SHERIFF BOBBY

He'd been dead for hours by the time they found him. Scavenger birds had already gotten to him.

CLAUDIA

Oh my god...

Beat... everyone unsettled by the news.

BOBBY

I tell you, it's dangerous work up there.

Vance wipes down the counter as Claudia sits in silence...

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Claudia crosses the street, walks down the sidewalk with her coffees. Passing a few stores. Waving to a couple of locals as she enters --

INT. BOUTIQUE - DAY

Claudia steps into a dark store passing the sign that reads "Luna Piena." Claudia calls out into the store.

CLAUDIA

Hey -- Allie. Got your coffee.

Claudia sets the coffees down on the counter and clicks on the lights to reveal the merchandise on the shelves. A cool collection of vintage antiques. Unusual handmade jewelry. Custom bags. All of it the mark of someone with exquisite and hip taste.

Claudia flips on a CD player... the sounds of classic Cat Stevens filling the room.

CLAUDIA

You back there?

ALLIE BRENNICK emerges from the back of the shop. She is Claudia's age -- best friends from the old days.

ALLIE
I was just checking the emails.
You won't believe this order that
came in.

Claudia reads the print-out from Allie... then her jaw drops.

CLAUDIA
They want three dozen of my bags.

ALLIE
They must have seen the write-up in
that magazine. See, I knew it was
a good idea to bring you in as a
partner.

Claudia still can't quite believe it -- this is obviously a big deal for her.

CLAUDIA
But we don't even have that many in
stock...

ALLIE
Well, I guess we better get to
work.

The two friends trade a look. Suddenly excited by the challenge.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A TEACHER lectures at the front of a darkened classroom, clicking through geography slides.

TEACHER
...and thousands of years ago,
tribes and animals were able to
migrate across land bridges that
connected the continents. Like the
Bering Strait, up here where Alaska
is today...

WE FIND TATE AT HIS DESK, trying to pay attention... but then he's drawn by a sound coming from outside. The CAW of a bird.

Tate looks out the window. Nothing out there but the deserted playground. And then a LONE CROW flies in and lands on the jungle-gym. The large black bird continues to CAW... over and over again...

The BELL rings as STUDENTS grab their lunches and begin filing out of the classroom.

Tate straggles behind. One of the last to leave. He glances out the window one last time... and the crowd is now gone. Just an empty playground once more.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

KIDS are packed at lunch tables. The air filled with the excitement of students having a break from class.

WE FIND TATE -- eating alone. Not part of any group of friends. He stands out from the other kids. His clothes... his hair... nothing like the small town look of everyone around him.

He glances up, notices a table of OTHER BOYS looking his way. They seem to be laughing and talking about Tate.

Tate goes back to his lunch, trying to blow it off. But now he feels even more self-conscious.

MOMENTS LATER --

Tate stands in the line to dump his lunch trash.

BOY #1 (O.S.)
Looks like the city dude thinks
he's too good to eat with us.

Tate glances back... it's those BOYS from the other table. Tate turns back around -- ignoring them.

BOY #2
But for real, what's up with those
clothes?

Tate keeps moving along in line. He keeps his mouth shut, but the taunts are starting to get to him.

BOY #1
I didn't know they dressed like
such retards up in Austin --

Tate snaps. He turns quick and SHOVES BOY #1 HARD. The boy falls back onto the ground.

Other kids immediately gather around, expecting a fight. Tate stands ready to take the kid on. Fueled by some kind of deep anger at the world.

The kid on the ground starts to get back up and come at Tate, just as a FEMALE FACULTY MEMBER jumps in and breaks it up from going any further. The other students voice their disappointment in not getting a fight.

CROWD OF STUDENTS

Awww...

The bully kid gives Tate the middle finger as Tate is marched out of the cafeteria by the faculty member.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

MISS PALMER, the school librarian who broke up the fight, stands with Tate in the hall away from the other kids. She's African-American. A recent college graduate who knows how to deal with kids on their level.

MISS PALMER

What was that all about?

TATE

Those kids were being assholes.

MISS PALMER

Nice language.

(beat)

And that's how you think you work out your problems -- push another kid like that?

Tate shrugs.

MISS PALMER

What's your name?

TATE

Tate Moore.

MISS PALMER

You're new here this year. Right?

TATE

Yes ma'am...

Miss Palmer studies Tate for a beat... sees that this is a kid who's slipping through the cracks.

MISS PALMER

Okay, Tate Moore. Let's go see what the principal has to say about this.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Claudia steps out of the PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. She shoots a look at Tate who sits in the waiting area.

CLAUDIA
C'mon. We're getting your sister
and going home.

Without a word, Tate grabs his backpack and starts to head out with his mom. Miss Palmer comes over from the office staff area and approaches Claudia.

MISS PALMER
Mrs. Moore... do you have a minute?

CLAUDIA
(uncertain beat)
Sure.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Claudia and Miss Palmer step into the quiet hallway as Tate waits off to the side.

MISS PALMER
I've noticed your son since he
started school here. He's been
having a hard time fitting in.

Claudia's face fills with worry.

CLAUDIA
I know. Since the divorce... he
just won't talk to me anymore.

Miss Palmer nods. Beginning to understand the full picture.

MISS PALMER
Tate's going to be in my library
for detention this week. Maybe
he'll talk to me. Sometimes kids
open up when their parents aren't
around.

A beat of relief in Claudia's eyes.

CLAUDIA
Thanks. Right now I need all the
help I can get.

INT. CLAUDIA'S CAR - DAY

Claudia and the kids drive home. Tate sits quietly in the backseat. Mia doesn't pick up on the tension in the car.

MIA

Mom, can we get a trampoline for the backyard?

CLAUDIA

I don't think so, Mia.

MIA

Maybe I can ask dad... he can get me one for my birthday.

Claudia's expression tightens.

CLAUDIA

You know what, let's see how we're doing with money at the end of the month and we'll talk more about it.

Claudia adjusts the rear-view mirror to look at Tate... hoping to catch his eye. But he just stares out the window at the vast Gulf. The murky water scrolling by.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Quiet. And then the front door opens. Mia runs into the house calling out for Gran.

MIA

Gran -- I'm gonna get the eggs for the cookies!

Claudia and Tate come through the door behind Mia. Claudia cuts a look at her son.

CLAUDIA

I was thinking about not letting you play in the game tonight --

Tate spins. Can't believe what his mom is saying.

TATE

-- Mom, I'm supposed to pitch --

CLAUDIA

But I thought about it, and I'm going to let you play.

(beat)

So here's the deal. One month. No computer games -- no TV.

TATE

One month?!

CLAUDIA

You want to make it two?

Tate shuts up fast.

CLAUDIA

Your life is going to be chores,
homework, and baseball practice.
Nothing else. You got it?

TATE

(holding back his anger)
Got it.

CLAUDIA

Now go hit the yard. The leaves
need to be raked.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Tate's in the backyard, raking mounds of autumn leaves. He glances over at the house. No sign of his mom or Gran.

ANGLE ON A TREEHOUSE -- nestled up in the branches of an old oak tree. Tate climbs into frame... up into the treehouse --

INT. TREEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tate sits on the floor of the treehouse. He reaches into a hiding place, finds a Game Boy that he keeps stashed up here. He slips on some headphones and tunes out the world.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Mia carries a wicker basket as she runs across the yard toward a CHICKEN COOP...

INT. CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

Slants of sunlight seep through old wooden planks. In the dim light, we see a DOZEN CHICKENS in their stacked roosts. Clucking loudly. Agitated. Something's not right with them.

Mia pushes the door open and steps inside. All the chickens suddenly fall DEAD QUIET. A beat, and then the girl steps further into the coop. Chickens on all sides of her... perched above.

MIA

Alright guys. Who's got the
biggest egg?

Mia approaches a chicken. She slips her small hand underneath the bird... feels around... and pulls out an egg.

The girl keeps gathering eggs, putting them in her basket... and the birds remain totally silent... as if the animals are studying the child.

In the far corner a SILK BANTAM HEN sits on its roost. A real beauty with black feathers and red comb. Mia approaches the hen, gently reaches out and strokes the bird.

Mia slowly reaches under the Bantam... the bird remaining completely still. Mia's face leaning closer and closer to the hen's beak as she feels around. Beat, then --

-- the bird suddenly SQUAWKS AND BEATS ITS WINGS. But the hen only shifts back, revealing a large brown egg.

MIA
Hazel wins again!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mia stands on a stool at the kitchen counter making cookies with Gran. It's a fun mess. Spilt flour. Pans and bowls.

Claudia sits at the kitchen table cutting fabric.

MIA
(to Gran)
How many eggs do I put?

GRAN
Well... let's see here.

Gran slips on her bifocals and checks a cookbook.

GRAN
Recipe calls for three, but I always add an extra yolk for good measure -- keeps the cookies from drying out.

Mia reaches into her BASKET OF EGGS. Picks up that large brown egg and CRACKS it against the side of the bowl. She dumps the contents into the cookie dough...

...and suddenly the little girl's eyes fill with horror. Staring down at something in the bowl. Can barely speak...

MIA
...Gran.

Gran steps over. Looks down into the bowl, stifling a gasp when she sees -- BLOOD. All over the dough.

Claudia looks up to see her daughter's expression.

CLAUDIA
Mia, what is it?

Gran gently pulls Mia off the stool. Her face not revealing how disturbed she is.

GRAN

Go wash up. I'll take care of this.

Claudia steps over and looks into the bowl. Shocked by the sight of the blood in the bowl.

MIA

I think the chickens are sick.

CLAUDIA

Mia, listen to your grandmother. Go wash your hands.

Gran scoots Mia out of the kitchen and closes the door. Claudia and Gran exchange a look as Claudia cautiously picks up another egg from the basket.

A beat... and then Claudia CRACKS the egg into the mixing bowl. Claudia grabs another one now. She keeps grabbing eggs. CRACKING THEM ALL until the basket's empty.

Claudia and Gran stand there, sickened... as we reveal the mixing bowl is now FILLED WITH BLOOD.

EXT. THE GULF - DAY

IN TIME LAPSE, the sun slips below the horizon... the last light of day reflecting across the water. And then everything goes dark...

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Cows stand huddled in the dark. In the distance, BASEBALL FIELD LIGHTS suddenly come to life.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - NIGHT

In a small town like Port Calhoun, a little league game is a social occasion. Entire families out for the evening to watch their kids play ball.

A "Port Calhoun Fall Ball" banner draped up on the fence behind home plate.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

There's a playground next to the ball field. WE FIND MIA -- on the swings. Laughing and having fun with some other kids her age. Gran watches from a nearby bench.

MIA

Gran -- watch how high I can go!

GRAN

That's great, Mia. Try to make
your feet touch the sky.

WE SLOWLY PAN UP... revealing A FEW CROWS perched above on
the swing set. Watching the children.

In fact, what no one seems to notice is that a SCATTERING OF
CROWS have gathered around the entire ball field area...

THE SNACK STAND --

TEENAGERS hang out in clusters. Boys and girls checking each
other out. One of the guys tosses some popcorn to the
ground, feeding a CROW. But what the teenager doesn't see is
that the crow ignores the food.

PARKING LOT --

WE FIND SHERIFF BOBBY sitting on the hood of his patrol
car... smoking a cigarette. Watching the game at the third
base fence line.

SHERIFF BOBBY

Let's go, boys!

As we WIDEN OUT AND UP, we see a couple of CROWS are perched
along the top edge of the scoreboard...

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

AN ANNOUNCER sits up in a little booth behind the bleachers,
calling the plays over the P.A. system.

ANNOUNCER

Bottom of the fifth. Port Calhoun
Stingrays lead by one run.

INT. DUG OUT - NIGHT

THE PLAYERS are gearing up for taking the field. Chewing
gum. Spitting on the ground. Being boys.

COACH

C'mon -- let's keep this lead.
Look alive out there!

WE FIND TATE among the other players. All the boys stick
their hands in a huddle.

PLAYERS

Go Stingrays!

EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

PARENTS are packed into the bleachers. Claudia sits with ALLIE and her husband JIM, all of them eating hotdogs. They cheer as the Stingrays hustle out onto the field.

Tate heads to the pitcher's mound while Allie's son J.J. takes position at short stop.

JIM

Come on, J.J.! Stay in front of that ball!

ALLIE

Hey, Jim -- tell Claudia about that guy at work.

JIM

Just hired a new sales rep --
(back to the game)
Let's go, Tate. I wanna see some heat!

Allie leans in to Claudia.

ALLIE

He's real cute. We should all go out to dinner one night. The four of us.

CLAUDIA

Allie... I don't need any set-ups.

ALLIE

C'mon, Claudia. I don't want to see you like this.

Beat... Claudia's tone shifts. Suddenly very honest.

CLAUDIA

I was with Paul for twelve years. Bit by bit, I slowly forgot who I was. I had just become part of a 'couple.'
(beat)
But since I moved back here, I started to remember who I used to be... and I think I want to keep it this way.

Allie nods. She understands. Down on the field a player comes up to bat as the friends turn back to the game.

CLAUDIA/ALLIE

Look alive, Stingrays! Let's go!

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD -- CONTINUOUS

ON THE PITCHER'S MOUND WITH TATE. He raises his glove. Poised to pitch. He rears back and HURLS the ball -- the batter swinging and missing.

The CROWD CHEERS. Tate glances over at the bleachers. He sees his mom, but the conspicuous absence of his father still gets to him. A quiet bitterness in the boy's eyes.

ANGLE ON THE SCOREBOARD -- beat, then the couple of CROWS perched along the top SUDDENLY TAKE FLIGHT. Heavy wings pounding away into the darkness...

THE SNACK STAND -- the TEENAGE GUY with the popcorn chats with a girl. THE CROW is still standing on the ground amidst the discarded popcorn... watching everyone. And then the bird flies away...

THE PLAYGROUND -- the CROWS on top of the swing set fly off into the night... Mia and the other children innocently playing below.

BACK TO THE PITCHER'S MOUND --

-- Tate readies another pitch... as a SHADOW flickers across his face.

He squints up into the glaring field lights. Hard to see, but there's a DARK SHAPE flying around up there.

A HIGH POV -- the kids so vulnerable and small down on the baseball field...

WITH TATE -- he throws. The pitch is low.

UMPIRE

Ball one!

Tate curses at himself. He gets the ball back, trying to shake it off when...

...MORE SHADOWS flicker across the field lights.

Now EVERYONE is looking up into the lights... all the PLAYERS on the field... THE PARENTS.

And then out of nowhere, CROWS START SWOOPING DOWN OUT OF THE DARK. It starts happening everywhere. All at once. Like a freak hailstorm that no one was prepared for.

-- TWO CROWS swoop down on the SECOND BASEMAN. It's quick and sudden. The large black birds CLAWING at the kid -- TEARING his jersey.

IN THE BLEACHERS WITH THE PARENTS ---

-- a tinge of panic ripples through the crowd... just as A CROW CAWS and dives down on the bleachers. PARENTS scatter. Getting out of the way. Spilling drinks and food.

-- Other PARENTS are moving to the fence. YELLING for their kids to get off the field.

-- CROWS continue to drop out of the darkness. Swooping the players. SCREECHING CAWS filling the night air. In the glare of the field lights, can't even tell how many birds there are. Their movement so fast -- then gone again into the darkness.

-- TATE RUNS. Heading for safety as a CROW flies down out of the dark. Hitting his head. Knocking his hat off.

-- CLAUDIA moves to the chain-link fence. No way to get to her son. The entrance onto the field too far away -- too crowded with other frantic parents.

CLAUDIA

Tate!

PARKING LOT --

SHERIFF BOBBY jumps down off the hood of his car, running along the fence-line toward the bleachers.

SHERIFF BOBBY

Hey -- get those kids off the field!

-- Now COACHES are running out onto the field. Helping the kids into the dug-outs.

PLAYGROUND ---

Mia's with the other children in the sand box --

-- as a CROW swoops down. Clawing at another girl's hair. THE GIRL starts SCREAMING. Trying to get the bird out of her tangled hair.

-- GRAN and a MOTHER go rushing for the children. Shooing the bird away. Grabbing the kids out of the sand box.

SNACK STAND --

A CROW swoops the TEENAGERS. They run for cover. Scrambling inside the snack stand.

THE BLEACHERS ---

Claudia is trapped at the fence with other parents, watching as a COACH helps Tate into the dug out...

...and then suddenly the sound of the birds fades. Everyone glances around... listening... wondering if this is really over. But it remains quiet. THE BIRDS ARE GONE.

SHERIFF BOBBY arrives just as it's all come to an end. He stands there catching his breath... looking around to make sure everyone's okay.

SHERIFF BOBBY
Anybody hurt?

THE CROWD settles from the strange episode. Everyone's fine. More shaken than hurt. People laughing it off.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Well, ladies and gentlemen, looks like the show's over. How 'bout we get back to some baseball?

SHERIFF BOBBY scans the sky -- what the hell was that?

Claudia makes her way into the dug-out and finds Tate standing with the coaches and other kids. She touches her son's face, checking to make sure he's okay.

CLAUDIA
You alright? Let me see your face --

Tate pulls away from his mom. Defensive.

TATE
Yeah -- I'm okay. God...

But Tate looks up -- now uncertain of the sky. The unknown.

PULL BACK from Claudia and Tate -- flying away -- everyone growing very small. The baseball field a little patch of light in the darkness...

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia's dressed in her pajamas, singing to her pet COCKATIEL in its cage on the night stand.

MIA
Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool? Yes sir, yes sir -- three bags full.

Claudia enters the room.

MIA
 Mommy, do you think Sonny's ever
 gonna talk?

CLAUDIA
 If you keep teaching him, I bet he
 will.
 (pulling back the covers)
 Come on, let's get you in bed.

Mia crawls into the bed. Claudia pulls the covers up over her daughter and tucks her in.

MIA
 You know how we were talking about
 getting a trampoline --

CLAUDIA
 -- Sweetie, I said that I'd know
 more at the end of the month.

MIA
 I decided I don't want one.
 (beat)
 I have plenty of other things to
 play with.

Claudia brushes the hair from Mia's face. Her daughter more aware than she lets on.

CLAUDIA
 I appreciate that so much, baby.
 (beat)
 Now you better get to sleep.

Claudia starts to pick up the bird cage.

MIA
 Can Sonny stay in here tonight? He
 gets lonely all by himself.

CLAUDIA
 Sure. Sweet dreams.

Claudia leaves the birdcage on the night stand and clicks out the light.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claudia steps out of Mia's room and shuts the door. She starts to head down the hall when she hears Tate talking to someone.

Claudia moves toward Tate's room. His door is cracked open just enough for Claudia to see her son on the phone.

TATE (INTO PHONE)
 Dad -- you should've seen it. I
 struck out like ten guys.
 (beat)
 I thought maybe you could drive
 down... come to the next game.
 (beat, listening)
 I know... it's five hours. Kinda
 far.

Claudia starts to walk on, not wanting to eavesdrop on Tate's conversation.

TATE (INTO PHONE)
 Did you get a chance to talk to
 Ellen?
 (beat)
 You know, about me coming to live
 with you guys?

Claudia freezes in her tracks. Leans in to the door to better hear the conversation.

TATE (INTO PHONE)
 Yeah...?

Tate lowers his voice. And now Claudia can't make out what he's saying. She leans against the wall. Devastated by the thought that she might be losing her son.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Slowly PUSH IN on the farm house... all the lights off. Everything totally still.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE COCKATIEL... as it suddenly starts flitting about the cage.

Mia stirs. She wakes up and looks over at the pet bird.

MIA
 Sonny... what is it?

But the bird keeps flying around -- growing more agitated.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

In the dark house, we find Claudia at the kitchen table. She can't sleep. Working under a pool of lamp light.

She cuts and sews fabric with a focused determination. Trying to clear her mind. But then --

-- A PIERCING SCREAM cuts through the house. It's MIA.

Claudia jumps up, bolts toward the stairs. Heart racing.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Claudia hurries down the hallway. She gets to Mia's room. Throws open the door --

-- to the furious sound of BEATING WINGS in the pitch black room. She turns on the overhead light to see --

-- A HALF DOZEN BLACK GRACKLES have broken through the window and are flying all around Mia's room.

CLAUDIA
(horrificed)
Mia!

Mia sits frozen in the middle of her bed -- screaming.

Claudia moves fast. Rips a blanket from a nearby chair and starts to SWING. Swatting at the birds. Shielding her face with her other arm as she scrambles toward Mia's bed.

In the chaos, THE COCKATIEL flutters about its cage. SQUAWKING. Trying to get out.

Suddenly, one of the GRACKLES flies up into the light fixture. The bulb SHATTERS -- glass showering down onto the floor. The room falls back into total darkness. Just the horrible sound of those FLAPPING wings.

CLAUDIA
Mia -- stay there! I'll get you.

And then the birds turn on Claudia, diving and pecking at her -- driven by some unstoppable instinct. Claudia can barely see anything. It's all black on black. Just quick flashes of YELLOW EYES -- LUNGING BEAKS -- POUNDING WINGS.

Now Tate and Gran run into the open door of the bedroom. Awake from the commotion. Tate glimpses the shapes of flying birds in the dark.

TATE
Mom -- !

CLAUDIA
Don't come in!

Gran holds Tate back for his safety as Claudia fights her way toward Mia's bed. She SWINGS the blanket -- hits a bird -- the animal SCREECHES as it slams hard into the wall. Dying on impact --

-- BUT THE BIRDS KEEP COMING.

Claudia grabs her daughter and hurries her over to the door, shielding her with her body. Gran takes hold of Mia, but Claudia stays in the room -- continuing to swat and swing at the birds.

The blanket knocks into more GRACKLES -- dead bodies thumping into the walls... hitting the floors...

THE COCKATIEL is frantic now. Banging against the inside of the cage. Knocking it to the floor.

And Claudia keeps SWINGING. Taking everything out on these animals. All her pent-up frustration unleashed.

Gran stands at the door -- can't pull her eyes away from the sight of her daughter fighting these birds.

Claudia swings -- a BIRD SCREECHES... and then the room falls quiet. No more beating of wings. Just Claudia standing there in a sweat... catching her breath...

THE COCKATIEL finally escapes from the cage. Goes flying out through the broken window. Off into the dark of night...

GRAN

Claudia?

Claudia can't speak. Still riding on adrenaline. Coiled tight like another bird might come at her any second.

GRAN

(to the kids)

Why don't you guys go sleep in my room tonight? C'mon, go on.

The kids move away, quietly freaked-out as Gran turns back to Claudia.

GRAN

Claudia... it's okay.

A beat... and then Claudia reaches out with a trembling hand and clicks on the bedside lamp. Yellow light spills into the room revealing...

THE HALF DOZEN DEAD BIRDS SCATTERED ALL OVER THE PLACE. On the bed and pillows... the desk... all over the floor. Beat...

CLAUDIA

Those birds this morning... they weren't lost in the fog. They were trying to get inside. Just like these birds... they wanted in.

GRAN
It was just an accident, Claudia.
It's over now.

WATER RUNS DOWN A DRAIN as we go...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claudia's at the kitchen sink, scrubbing her hands hard... as though she can wash away the horrible incident of the birds in her daughter's room.

Gran steps into the doorway... watches her daughter.

GRAN
I finally got the kids to sleep.

Claudia shuts off the water and dries her hands, keeping her back to her mother. And suddenly it's as if all her anxieties and fears hit her at once.

CLAUDIA
I'm trying mom... I'm trying to
hold it all together.

GRAN
Claudia -- you're doing great.

Claudia turns to face her mother. She fights back tears.

CLAUDIA
What if I can't do it? What if I'm
just not strong enough?

GRAN
You have to be, Claudia. You don't
have a choice.

CLAUDIA
I could lose my family just like
that. I already see them slipping
away from me...

GRAN
Then you do what I always did.
(beat)
You fight.

Claudia wipes her eyes. Trying to find strength in her mother's words.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Early morning. A dull gray sky over the Gulf. A GROUP OF SHORE FISHERMAN are on the beach, trying to make their morning catch. Tall fishing poles dug into the sand... lines pulled tight.

Further out, the vast waters are covered with distant WHITECAP WAVES. From the sound of the ocean's constant low roar, we cut through VARIOUS SHOTS of town folk as they begin their day --

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - MORNING

SHERIFF BOBBY comes out of his house, dressed in his crisp uniform, heading toward his patrol car in the driveway. He's almost to the door -- when a SMEAR OF WHITE BIRD POO drops from the sky and hits his shoulder.

SHERIFF BOBBY
You gotta be kidding me...

Bobby looks down at his stained uniform, so pissed. He glances up... to see A GATHERING OF BIRDS PERCHED ON A POWER LINE ABOVE.

EXT. FARM - MORNING

A FARMER drives his tractor across a field, tilling the soil. It's LEN -- one of the old timers we met at the diner. He glances over and sees that a CROW has landed on the homemade SCARECROW that's propped up here in the field.

Len climbs down off the tractor and grabs a rock. He throws it at the crow, and the bird takes off... but so do about THIRTY OTHER CROWS that were hidden down in the crops.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

In the cold morning light... we see the DEAD BIRDS IN MIA'S ROOM. Some are missing feathers from the fight, others with blood on their beaks.

Claudia stands in the room looking down at the birds... holding a trash bag... contemplating the grim task of cleaning everything up. In PRE-LAP DISSOLVE we hear --

MIA (O.S.)
Mommy... I don't feel good.

INT. GRAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING - LATER

Mia is still under the covers of Gran's bed, putting on her best act of being sick. Claudia sits next to her, hand on her forehead.

CLAUDIA
You're not warm.

MIA
I don't want to go to school.

A beat... as Claudia gives in. Realizing that her daughter is still shaken from the bird incident the night before.

CLAUDIA
You know what, why don't you stay home and play with Gran today.

MIA
Really?

Mia perks up. Her "sick face" vanishing.

CLAUDIA
Yeah. I'll even come home for lunch.

Mia's quiet for a beat.

MIA
I want to build a bird house for Sonny... so he'll come back.

Claudia regards her daughter -- that pure innocence in believing that everything's going to be okay.

CLAUDIA
Sure. I think he'd like that.

INT. TATE'S ROOM - DAY

Tate's at his computer, clicking through webpages. A nature website -- "Why Birds Attack Humans." Tate scrolls through the website. Images and headlines flash by --

"...birds defend their nests and feeding territory..."

"...power lines kill thousands of birds each year..."

"...Virginia roost contained over one million birds..."

AN IMAGE OF A FOREST FIRE. Flocks of birds fleeing the area. The headline reads: "Fire Drives Thousands of Regional Birds from Habitat."

Tate studies the screen as Claudia passes by the door.

CLAUDIA
Hey, I'm driving you to school today.

TATE

How come I'm not taking the bus?

CLAUDIA

Just thought I'd drop you off on my way to work.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Claudia grabs her keys, puts on her coat. But as she glances out the kitchen window, she sees GRAN standing in the backyard. Looking out over the fields. The dog at her side.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Claudia approaches her mother.

CLAUDIA

Mia's going to stay home from school today. She's still upset from last night.

GRAN

I'll keep her busy. Get her mind off things.

Gran looks out over the backyard. Clothes whipping on the laundry line. Dead leaves tumbling across the ground.

GRAN

It's like the wind changed overnight... feels different. Colder.

CLAUDIA

Dad always knew when winter was coming, remember? Said he could feel it in his knees.

A FLOCK FORMATION OF BIRDS passes overhead. Gran watches them pass by with a curious interest.

GRAN

I've been watching them fly past all morning. Seems like there's more than usual.

CLAUDIA

I guess they know winter's coming too. Time to migrate.

Beat...

GRAN

But they should be heading south
over the Gulf.

(beat)

All these birds are coming inland.

Claudia reacts to this information... suddenly feeling that
there's more going on than just the change in the weather.

She glances up at the bleak sky as the last of the flock
passes over.

CLAUDIA

You know what... maybe you and Mia
should stay inside today.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claudia drives... then Tate's voice cuts through the silence.

TATE

Am I in trouble?

Claudia looks over at her son.

CLAUDIA

No. You're not in trouble.

TATE

I must have done something wrong if
you're driving me to school. That
always means you want to talk.

Claudia hesitates. Tries to stay very matter-of-fact.

CLAUDIA

I was thinking, if you want... you
could spend the summer with your
dad.

Tate turns and looks at his mom, surprised.

CLAUDIA

And if that works out, you know, if
you and Ellen get along... maybe
you could go back to your old
school next year.

TATE

You mean live in Austin -- with
dad?

Claudia puts on a mask of strength. Doesn't want Tate to see
that the very notion of this tears her up.

CLAUDIA

Yeah... it's just something to think about. You don't have to decide now.

Tate nods. And as he turns his eyes back to the road --

-- he sees A GATHERING OF BIRDS on the highway in the distance, right in the path of the car.

TATE

Mom... the birds.

CLAUDIA

They'll move.

Claudia keeps driving... and the birds don't budge. The distance closing.

TATE

Stop the car, mom.

Claudia keeps driving, as if she refuses to give in to these birds. The car is almost on top of them now.

TATE

Stop the car!

Claudia hits the brakes. Tires squeal as the car comes to a stop mere feet from the GATHERING OF BIRDS.

Claudia and Tate look out through the windshield. Catching their breath. Disturbed by the unmoving birds.

CLAUDIA

They always get out of the way.

TATE

Well... they're not moving today.

Claudia HONKS the horn. The birds don't even flinch -- totally unaffected by the sudden loud noise. Claudia holds the horn down for a few seconds. Nothing.

A single CROW hops up from the road and lands on the hood of Claudia's car. The animal hops closer, looking through the windshield at Tate and Claudia.

TATE

He's looking right at us...

Claudia HONKS again... and the CROW just stands there.

She hits the windshield wipers, hoping the sudden movement will frighten the bird away. The CROW remain totally still.

Claudia slams her hand on the steering wheel.

CLAUDIA

Move!

...but the CROW doesn't move. Just stares at them with its black eyes.

Claudia lets out a breath. Realizing she's letting this bird get the best of her. She backs the car up a bit and then pulls onto the shoulder... driving AROUND the birds.

THE CROW on the hood of the car hops back down to the road... joining the others.

Claudia eventually pulls past and continues on.

WE STAY ON THE GATHERING OF BIRDS... standing on the road as Claudia's car disappears around the bend.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tate moves along with the crowd of other kids into the school building. He glances back... sees that his mom is still sitting in the car... watching him go.

Tate waves to his mom... she waves back and pulls away.

Tate heads inside. A world of conflict in his eyes.

EXT. PORT CALHOUN - MAIN STREET - DAY

Claudia pulls up in front of her store. She gets out, locks the door, and as she glances up --

-- she sees that SOME BIRDS HAVE GATHERED HERE ON MAIN STREET. A handful here and there... up on the store awnings... gathered on the neon letters of the movie theater marquee. Various kinds of birds... just sitting there.

INT. BOUTIQUE - DAY

Claudia enters the store to find Allie sitting at the counter in the quiet... looking very upset.

CLAUDIA

Allie... what's wrong?

ALLIE

They're all talking about it down at the diner... about how Deke died yesterday when he was doing that repair.

Claudia talks to her friend in a comforting voice.

CLAUDIA
 He was electrocuted... accidents
 like that can happen --

ALLIE
 -- he wasn't electrocuted.

Claudia stops. Realizes there's something she doesn't know.
 She takes a seat next to Allie.

CLAUDIA
 Tell me what they're saying.

Allie continues... finding the words as she goes.

ALLIE
 At first they thought that the
 scavenger birds had gotten to him
 after... but that's not how it
 happened.
 (beat)
 The coroner said Deke died from his
 wounds. Bled to death...

CLAUDIA
 Wait... what kind of wounds --

ALLIE
 -- the birds killed him, Claudia.
 It was the birds.

Claudia reels from the revelation. Allie grows more and more
 disturbed as she recounts the details.

ALLIE
 They said there were cuts on his
 neck... his arms... so much blood.
 His hands were in shreds... even
 though he had been wearing leather
 gloves. Birds tore right through
 em'. And his eyes...
 (beat)
 They found him hanging up there
 without his eyes --

It's too much. Claudia can't bear to hear anymore.

CLAUDIA
 -- Allie, stop... stop.

Allie goes quiet as Claudia tries to compose herself.

CLAUDIA
 I'm sorry. It's just...
 (beat)
 (MORE)

CLAUDIA (cont'd)
 ...last night some birds got into
 Mia's room.

ALLIE
 Is she alright?

CLAUDIA
 Yeah. She's okay. But between
 that... and those birds at the ball
 game...

Her thoughts falls away. Claudia goes to the window. Looks
 up at the birds gathered on the tops of the Main Street
 buildings. Beat...

CLAUDIA
 If you don't mind, I think I'm
 going to take my work home with me.

ALLIE
 Sure... of course...

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Claudia crosses the street toward the diner... all the while
 keeping an eye on the birds above. They are eerily unmoving
 on their perches... heads tucked low as if they're sleeping.

INT. MAIN STREET DINER - MINUTES LATER

There's the usual crowd in the diner -- everyone in heated
 discussion about Deke.

LEN
 -- birds just don't attack like
 that for no reason.

VANCE
 -- probably a nest up on that phone
 pole. Birds'll go crazy if you get
 too close to their young --

LEN
 -- this ain't spring. There's no
 nests around this time of year.

Claudia steps inside and approaches Vance at the counter.

CLAUDIA
 Hey, Vance. I need to talk to
 Bobby. Has he been in today?

VANCE
 He was here earlier this morning...
 had to run out and follow up on all
 the calls he got last night.

(MORE)

VANCE (cont'd)
 Goddamn birds getting into
 everyone's houses.

Claudia tenses -- realizing that her family isn't alone in
 the strange experience. Vance reads her expression.

VANCE
 You too, huh?

CLAUDIA
 Yeah.
 (beat)
 Has Bobby called anyone... somebody
 who might know what's going on?

Vance refills a few coffee mugs... not willing to get worked
 up over this.

VANCE
 You ask me -- I think something got
 messed up with their feeding
 territory... and now they're coming
 here looking for food. Birds can
 act strange when they get too
 hungry.
 (beat)
 I wouldn't worry. They'll be
 moving on.

Down the counter, the conversation continues --

LEN
 This is nothing. You shoulda heard
 my grandfather's old stories --
 about the passenger pigeons.

WAITRESS
 Now we supposed to be scared of
 some pigeons, Len?

LEN
 Not the rats with wings you see
 today. These were wild birds.
 Beautiful things. They're extinct
 now... but back in the day there
 were millions and millions of them.
 Granddad told me once when he was a
 little boy he saw a huge flock of
 them fly over. Took hours until
 they'd all passed by. What'd he
 say...?
 (remembering)
 'So many birds in the sky it turned
 day into night.'

FISHERMAN CUSTOMER

C'mon, Leonard -- I think Vance is putting something in your coffee again.

Some laughter from the group, but Len remains serious.

LEN

No shit. When those birds would come through, they'd destroy whole fields of crops... entire forests. There'd be nothing left.

Len looks at the faces around him. He locks eyes with Claudia, because she's the only one not laughing... affected by his story like it's some kind of dark omen.

Len shrugs and goes back to his breakfast, muttering --

LEN

...nothing left.

From Claudia's disturbed expression we suddenly hear THE SOUND OF CHILDREN SCREAMING, taking us --

EXT. PORT CALHOUN SCHOOL - DAY

Kids pour onto the playground for recess. Climbing jungle gyms... kicking soccer balls... chasing each other around. The air filled with the sound of shouts and laughter.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Tate pushes a book cart down an aisle -- putting books back on the shelves. The muted sounds of the playground ever-present.

Suddenly, there's MOVEMENT at the window. Tate glances over to see a MOURNING DOVE perched on the ledge. It's a graceful little bird, but Tate's spooked by it anyway. He SLAPS the window -- shooing it away.

The bird takes off as Tate stares out the window a moment, watching all the kids on the schoolyard.

Nearby, MISS PALMER works at the computer at the check-out desk. She cuts a look over at the boy -- tries to seem nonchalant as she starts talking to Tate.

MISS PALMER

So, Tate -- you moved here from Austin?

TATE

Yeah.

MISS PALMER
You a Longhorn fan?

TATE
My dad and I would go to all the home games. Had seats right behind the team bench.

MISS PALMER
That sounds fun.

Tate continues his work, trying not to act too interested in talking with Miss Palmer.

TATE
I used to do all kinds of stuff with my dad. Ride mini-bikes, go fly-fishing. Right before I had to move here, he was teaching me how to shoot -- so we could go hunting.

MISS PALMER
You get to see him much?

TATE
I'm supposed to move back there. I talked to him about it last night.

MISS PALMER
Oh. Well... we'll miss you around here.

TATE
He said now's not a good time though... 'cause he's got this new girlfriend and all.
(beat, very casual)
But next year, once he gets settled down and everything... I'm sure I'll get to move back with him.

MISS PALMER
(beat)
You know, when I was about your age -- my parents split up too.

Tate shrugs... not really listening.

MISS PALMER
I was so mad at my mom. Told her it was her fault that my dad left, so I took it out on her. Stopped studying. Always talked back. I made life pretty miserable for her.
(beat)

(MORE)

MISS PALMER (cont'd)
Do you know why I'm telling you
this, Tate?

Tate looks at Miss Palmer.

TATE

No.

MISS PALMER

Because of all the people in the
world, it was my mother who was
there for me.

(beat)

It wasn't until I was older that I
realized how much she did... trying
to make things work.

They're powerful words and we can tell that Tate's never
thought of it that way before. His tough attitude vanishing
for a moment.

Miss Palmer lets it sink in a bit before switching back into
work mode.

MISS PALMER

Okay -- you have to finish that
cart before the end of recess. You
good?

TATE

I'm good.

Miss Palmer steps away. Tate continues his work, but now
overhead... a RATTLING SOUND. Tate glances up. Just a loose
heating vent making noise. He moves on.

INT. FARM HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Mia and Gran sit at the kitchen table, building a little
birdhouse out of popsicle sticks and glue.

Mia shows Gran the different parts of the birdhouse.

MIA

...and this is Sonny's bedroom.
He's gonna sleep here. And this is
his front porch so he can get some
fresh air if it gets too stuffy
inside...

GRAN

Where's the kitchen?

Mia giggles.

MIA

Birds don't have kitchens, silly.
But look, he can eat his food out
of this dish.

Mia shakes some bird seed into a dish and places it in the bird house. Gran smiles, enjoying this time with her imaginative little granddaughter.

GRAN

Well, this is a very fine house
you're making. I think when Sonny
sees it he'll be back in no time.

Mia runs glue around the edges of a painted roof and gingerly places it on top of the birdhouse.

MIA

Sonny is a good bird. He's not
like those other birds that came
into my room.

(beat)

Those are bad birds. When Sonny
comes back... he'll make sure they
stay away.

Underneath her playfulness, Gran sees that Mia is still unsettled from last night's events.

GRAN

You don't have to worry about the
bad birds anymore, Mia. Your mom
took care of them.

Mia looks up at her grandmother with uncertain eyes... then goes back to building her birdhouse.

EXT. PORT CALHOUN SCHOOL - DAY

The recess bell RINGS. Students clear off the playground... heading back into the school building.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Tate grabs his backpack... winds his way through the tall aisles of books. He comes around a corner to find Miss Palmer, setting up a display shelf... autumn themed books and decorations.

TATE

See you tomorrow.

MISS PALMER

See ya, Tate.

Tate's about to step away, when there's that NOISE again from above.... it gets Miss Palmer's attention too. They both look up... a faint SCRATCHING coming from behind the ceiling tiles.

Miss Palmer steps underneath the noise... noticing now that one of the ceiling tiles is loose... slightly moving.

MISS PALMER

What is that?

Miss Palmer pushes one of those rolling book shelf ladders under the loose tile. She starts to climb up to investigate.

MISS PALMER

One of the heating vents must be on the fritz again.

TATE

Wait. Miss Palmer... don't...

But Miss Palmer's already at the top of the ladder, pushing the loose tile to the side.

Tate can only watch as Miss Palmer STICKS HER HEAD UP INTO THE BLACK HOLE OF THE CEILING. A long quiet beat and --

-- nothing happens.

MISS PALMER (O.S.)

I don't see anything.

Tate exhales a small breath of relief, and then --

-- Miss Palmer's body LURCHES. A sudden FLURRY OF BEATING WINGS up behind the ceiling tiles.

Miss Palmer SCREAMS. Her body jerks -- twisting and struggling. Something horrible is happening to her inside that darkness.

Tate stands there frozen as Miss Palmer fights to pull free.

In the struggle, Miss Palmer kicks over the ladder. It CRASHES to the ground. But Miss Palmer is still holding on high above, dangling there with feet thrashing at the air. One of her shoes is kicked off. And then --

-- Miss Palmer's body drops to the ground with a hard THUD.

She lays there on the cold linoleum. Not moving -- her back to Tate. Tate takes a cautious step toward her.

TATE

Miss Palmer...?

Miss Palmer slowly turns... and Tate can now see her face --

-- ONE OF HER EYES HAS BEEN PECKED OUT. Still hanging from the socket by the optic nerve.

Miss Palmer's in shock. Can barely speak --

MISS PALMER
...get... help...

Tate can't even move. Horrified.

Just then, BIRDS fly out of the hole in the ceiling. About ten MOURNING DOVES. Their sharp beaks covered with Miss Palmer's blood.

THE BIRDS descend on Miss Palmer once again with horrific intensity. It's pure predatory nature -- the animals closing in on their weakened prey.

-- they DIVE at her face.

-- CLAWING tufts of hair from her scalp.

-- PECKING AND TUGGING at the already dangling eye.

Tate bolts across the library as THE BIRDS fly around the room in a frenzy. The boy races out into the hallway. He SLAMS the library doors shut, containing the birds inside.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tate stands in the empty hallway, panicked with what to do. Everyone back in their classrooms from recess. He spots a FIRE ALARM on the wall. He runs over to it and PULLS THE LEVER -- THE ALARM now ringing out through the school.

TATE
Help -- somebody!

A COUPLE OF TEACHERS come out into the hallway to find Tate standing there alone. Yelling for help. Looking freaked out.

A TEACHER approaches.

TEACHER
What's going on?

Tate points a trembling finger to the library.

TATE
In there... she's hurt! Miss
Palmer's hurt!

From TATE'S TERROR STRICKEN FACE we go --

INT. CAR - DAY

Claudia behind the wheel of her car. Cruising along the coastal road. Radio tuned to the news.

RADIO

...five day forecast has
temperatures dropping. Time to get
out those heavy coats...

UP AHEAD -- she sees SHERIFF BOBBY'S PATROL CAR pulled over to the side of the road. Siren lights silently flashing.

Bobby stands off to the side of the road with a gathering of SHORE FISHERMEN... all of them looking out over the Gulf. Some of them with binoculars.

Claudia brings her car to a stop. She quickly gets out and approaches Bobby... pulling her coat around her in the cold whipping wind.

CLAUDIA

Bobby -- I heard about Deke...
what's going on?

SHERIFF BOBBY

I don't know, Claudia. These
birds... it's the damndest thing.

CLAUDIA

Have you checked in with the
weather service? Maybe there's a
wind swell off the coast... blowing
the birds inland.

Bobby looks out toward the water with a troubled look.

SHERIFF BOBBY

Already did that. They said
everything's normal.

Now Claudia notices that everyone on the beach is fixated by something out on the Gulf. She follows their eyes... looking out at all those WHITECAPS on the water.

CLAUDIA

Well, must be some kind of storm.
I've never seen so many whitecaps.

SHERIFF BOBBY

It's not whitecaps...

Bobby hands Claudia a pair of binoculars. She lifts the binoculars to her eyes. And now we see what's out there --

-- SEAGULLS. Thousands -- TENS OF THOUSANDS OF THEM -- stretched as far as the eye can see. Gathered on the water. Floating.

Suddenly, in the distance... the GULLS RISE UP MOMENTARILY. A vast ripple of white movement before they settle again on the water.

A sudden forboding runs through Claudia. She pulls her coat tight around her... unable to take her eyes off the gulls in the distance.

CLAUDIA

What are they doing out there?

SHERIFF BOBBY

I don't know.

(and then--)

It's like they're waiting for something.

CLAUDIA

Waiting for what?

The question hangs there as we go --

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

A HIGH POV looks down on the farm house... slowly circling... and then the POV begins to descend toward the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mia threads string through a hook on the now completed bird house. She holds it up and admires her handiwork.

The girl glances outside -- sees the big oak tree in the backyard as an idea comes to her.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gran pulls a load of towels out of the dryer, putting them into a laundry basket.

GRAN

(calling out to Mia)

You know, children who play hookey from school have to help fold clothes.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Gran steps into the kitchen, just as the phone starts to RING. She puts the laundry basket down on the counter, moves toward the phone. Doesn't see through the back window...

...that Mia is OUTSIDE. Running across the yard with her bird house toward the oak tree.

Gran answers the phone.

 GRAN (ON PHONE)
Hello...?
 (beat)
No, this is Tate's grandmother.

Gran's face deepens with concern.

 GRAN (ON PHONE)
Is everything okay?

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mia climbs up the treehouse ladder. Almost to the top when she finds the perfect branch. She reaches out... hooks the bird house over the limb.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Claudia enters the house. Drops her bag in the foyer and moves quickly toward the kitchen.

 CLAUDIA
Mom -- where are you guys?

Claudia steps into the kitchen to find Gran on the phone... that look in her mother's eyes that something is wrong. Gran quickly holds the phone out to her.

 CLAUDIA
Who is it?

 GRAN
Tate's school.

 CLAUDIA
 (taking the phone)
This is Mrs. Moore. Yes... yes...

But out the window, unseen by Claudia and Gran...

...a SINGLE CROW flies in and lands on a branch of the oak tree in the backyard.

 CLAUDIA (ON PHONE)
Is he alright...? Yes... I'm sure
it was terrifying...

As Claudia talks on the phone...

...MORE BLACK CROWS land in the tree behind her. Others are flying in from the distance. Silently finding perches among the oak branches.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mia sits in the treehouse. Drawing pictures on the floor with some old chalk... unaware as a DOZEN MORE CROWS land in the branches of the tree above her.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Back to Claudia...

CLAUDIA (ON PHONE)

Yes. Thank you. I'll come pick him up right away.

Claudia hangs up.

CLAUDIA

There was an accident at the school. We need to go get Tate.
(calling out into the house)
Mia, come on! We have to run out.

But there's no answer...

CLAUDIA

Where's Mia?

Gran looks over at the kitchen table... AND MIA IS GONE. The birdhouse no longer there.

GRAN

She was here two seconds ago.

Claudia becomes instantly panicked as she heads toward the back door.

CLAUDIA

Check upstairs --

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Claudia steps out into the backyard. Scans the yard. No sign of her daughter.

CLAUDIA

Mia --

And then Claudia notices something unusual about the large oak tree... the way ALL THE DARK LEAVES ARE MOVING.

As she steps closer, the horror becomes apparent. It's not leaves -- IT'S BIRDS. The entire tree is FILLED WITH LARGE BLACK CROWS.

Claudia frantically looks around the yard for her daughter.

CLAUDIA

Mia -- are you out here?

Mia's terrified voice floats down from above.

MIA (O.S.)

Mommy... I'm up here.

Claudia's eyes shift up to the TREEHOUSE. Birds are on the roof -- perched in the open windows of the little structure. Surrounding the treehouse in the branches.

Claudia swallows, trying not to panic. She peers up into the treehouse. Can't see her daughter from down here... can only hear her.

CLAUDIA

Mia -- listen to me. Stay perfectly still. Can you do that for Mommy?

MIA

(so scared)

Yes...

Claudia takes a cautious step toward the tree... starts to climb up the wooden rungs.

She moves slowly up the ladder into the branches of the tree. There are BIRDS ALL AROUND HER. Eerily quiet. More CROWS continuing to fly in... gathering.

Claudia keeps climbing. Passing the little BIRDHOUSE that Mia hung on a branch of the tree. A CROW sits on top of it. Its black eyes staring at Claudia. She climbs another rung --

-- and her FOOT SLIPS OFF. Causing her to almost fall. The sudden movement STARTLES THE BIRDS as they shift on their perches. Claudia holds her breath, but the birds stay put...

Claudia finally makes it into the tree house to find...

INT. TREEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mia crouched in the corner... BIRDS ALL AROUND. Perched in the window of the treehouse. Up above in the branches of the open-roofed structure.

MIA
Mommy -- !

Claudia puts her finger to her lips. Whispers.

CLAUDIA
Take my hand. Move really slow --

Mia nods. Starts to move from the corner. Creeping toward her mother's outstretched hand.

CLAUDIA
Doing great. A little further.

Claudia cuts her eyes to the birds. They are just sitting there. Watching... shifting on their perches.

Mia reaches out and takes her mother's hand. Claudia lets out a small breath. Just the touch of her daughter's hand making her feel better.

CLAUDIA
Good girl...
(beat)
We're going down the ladder together. Okay? No sudden movements.

Mia nods. Eyes wide. Doesn't say a word.

EXT. TREEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Claudia and Mia begin to inch down the ladder, when suddenly --

-- THE FAMILY DOG comes running out of the house toward the tree. HUEY starts growling low in his throat... agitated by the gathering of birds.

Claudia tenses, whispers under her breath -- praying that the dog doesn't start barking.

CLAUDIA
No... Huey. No...

The dog circles the tree, protecting his family like any good dog would do. His growls becoming more aggressive.

CLAUDIA
(keeping her voice low but firm)
Huey... get inside right now.

But suddenly the dog starts BARKING like mad at the birds.

Claudia stifles a gasp. The birds collectively shift on the branches -- becoming agitated. Ruffling their feathers.

CLAUDIA AND MIA are totally exposed... out here on the trunk of the oak tree. A beat, and then --

-- the birds ERUPT into the air all at once. All those wings pounding like a CLAP OF THUNDER. The tree now bare again in an instant.

Mia SCREAMS. Claudia shields the girl with her body. Bracing for an attack --

-- but THE BIRDS never come. The dog keeps BARKING as Claudia looks up to see the birds circling in the sky.

MIA
Are they leaving?

CLAUDIA
I think so...

HIGH POV -- hovering over the world of the farm house. The backyard... the oak tree... the BARKING DOG.

Hold -- and then the POV RUSHES IN ON THE DOG.

IN THE BACKYARD -- as a CROW swoops in on Huey. Clipping the animal in the head. The dog YELPS -- as another CROW swoops down from the other direction and nips Huey's back.

ON CLAUDIA -- holding on to the tree with Mia. Watching as the birds zero in on the dog.

ON THE DOG -- as SCREECHING CROWS swoop down from every direction. Clawing and pecking.

INSIDE THE HOUSE -- as Gran hears the commotion outside. She moves quickly through the kitchen to the back door. Steps outside and gasps at the sight of the BIRDS attacking the dog. Gran's terrified eyes find Claudia and Mia stranded in the tree.

GRAN
Claudia -- !

CLAUDIA
Stay inside!

But Gran doesn't listen. She hurries into the yard toward Claudia and Mia when -- a CROW comes flying out of nowhere -- right at her face. Its sharp beak SLASHING at her.

Gran staggers back. Stunned. Touches her face. BLOOD ON HER FINGERS.

The CROW comes at her again, driving her back inside. She slams the door. Helpless now as she can only watch out the window.

The attack on the dog intensifies. CROWS diving and clawing. Wearing the animal out.

Huey SNAPS at one of the crows, manages to snag the bird in his teeth. The dog shakes the struggling bird back and forth, finally killing it with his strong jaws. The dead bird drops out of the dog's mouth to the ground.

A beat -- and then everything really goes to hell...

The birds SWARM THE DOG. Huey retreats into his DOGHOUSE for safety... but the birds descend on it.

Working together with intense purpose, the birds begin to RIP AND CLAW AT THE DOGHOUSE. Tearing the structure apart. Literally pulling the roof away piece by piece.

In a matter of moments, THE DOGHOUSE IS DESTROYED -- Huey exposed and vulnerable once again.

THE BIRDS COMPLETELY OVERWHELM THE DOG. Huey YELPS AND CRIES as he literally disappears under the mass of black birds.

WITH CLAUDIA -- still shielding Mia at the tree. Watching as the dog loses to the attack.

MIA

Mommy -- what's happening?

CLAUDIA

It's okay, sweetie...

HOLD ON MOTHER AND DAUGHTER as we hear a final clipped YELP. Claudia closes her eyes in anguish... it's too much.

THE CROWS disperse, leaving the now limp dog on the lawn... the CAWS of the birds fading as they fly away.

The backyard is quiet once again...

Gran steps out into the yard. The cut still bleeding on her forehead. She looks down at the dead dog. Sickened by the sight.

Her eyes find Claudia's. Neither say a word... both of them still trembling from the violence of the bird attack.

EXT. PORT CALHOUN SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Claudia shuts her car door, looks in through the window at Gran and Mia who are sitting in the back seat.

CLAUDIA
I'll be right back.

INT. PORT CALHOUN SCHOOL - DAY

Claudia comes down the school hallway. Her pace quickening at the sight of TEACHERS around the entrance of the library.

As she approaches, Claudia hears a couple of TEACHERS talking -- "God, just horrible"... "went right for the eyes..."

Claudia arrives at the library... peers in to see the aftermath of the attack. Feathers. A few dead birds. A JANITOR cleaning up the blood.

Claudia's panic rises.

CLAUDIA
Where's my son... where's Tate?

SCHOOL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Claudia hurries in to find Tate sitting in the waiting room. Her face floods with relief to see that he's okay.

CLAUDIA
Tate... oh my god.

Tate glances up. The boy's eyes are traumatized.

CLAUDIA
Come on. We're going home.

Beat... then Tate grabs his backpack and storms past his mother without a word. Claudia follows him down the hall.

CLAUDIA
Tate... wait.

Tate keeps walking as Claudia tries to talk to him.

CLAUDIA
I know it must have been terrible.
What you saw --

Tate stops and gives his mom a hard look. His voice trembles with fear and anger.

TATE
-- you don't know what I saw. You
have no idea.

Claudia backs off. Surprised by her son's tone.

TATE

I wouldn't even be in this stupid school if it weren't for you..

Tate continues down the hall. Claudia takes a deep breath... so alone in all of this.

INT. CAR - DAY

The family drives back through town, cruising down Main Street. Everyone in their own world of thoughts. Claudia glances out at the boulevard -- everything seems business as usual. People out and about, bundled against the crisp air.

Claudia looks at her kids -- still quietly disturbed from everything that's happened.

And then Claudia makes an internal decision. She pulls the car over and parks in front of THE DINER.

Everyone gives her a look, wondering why she's stopped the car.

CLAUDIA

You know what we need?
(beat)
Ice cream.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The family gets out of the car, heading into the diner. Claudia glances across the street toward her store.

CLAUDIA

I need to check in with Allie for a second. You guys save me a couple of bites.

INT. BOUTIQUE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claudia enters the store to find Allie just finishing up a phone call. Breathless.

ALLIE

Did you hear what happened at the school?

CLAUDIA

Yeah. I was coming to tell you. I already got Tate.

ALLIE

Jim's on his way to pick up J.J.
(beat)

(MORE)

ALLIE(cont'd)
I mean, the birds at the game last
night... now this.

CLAUDIA
Seems like it's getting worse.

An uneasy beat...

ALLIE
You know what? Let's close the
store for a couple of days. I just
want to get home.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A MOTHER pushes her BABY in a stroller down the street, when
suddenly from above... she hears the faint sound of FLAPPING
WINGS.

The MOTHER looks up. She stares for a long beat... a curious
expression on her face.

INT. DINER - DAY

Gran and the kids sit at a booth. Vance comes over to the
table with a couple of ice cream sundaes.

VANCE
Sorry, kiddos. We were all out of
regular ice cream. You're gonna
have to take these sundaes instead.
(with a wink to Gran)
On the house.

GRAN
Thank you, Vance.

He sets them down on the table. The kids' mood lightening.

Tate takes a bite. He glances across the diner... out the
window... where he sees the MOTHER with the stroller just
standing there in the street. Still looking up into the sky.

INT. BOUTIQUE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Claudia and Allie close up the store. Locking cases.
Shutting off the lights.

But as Claudia looks over, she notices that PEOPLE ARE
STANDING OUT IN THE STREET... looking up.

CLAUDIA
Allie --

Allie follows Claudia's gaze... now both of them looking out
the window as a CROWD IS STARTING TO GATHER OUTSIDE.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Claudia and Allie exit the store, joining the GROWING CROWD. People are spilling out of the other businesses, stopping their cars in the middle of the street...

...and everyone is looking up.

Claudia raises her eyes to the sky, AND NOW SHE SEES WHAT EVERYONE HAS BEEN LOOKING AT.

BIRDS HAVE GATHERED ALL UP AND DOWN MAIN STREET. Perched on nearly every high surface. Light poles... on roof edges... packed thick along the power lines over the main intersection.

And the birds keep coming. Flying down out of the sky. THOUSANDS OF THEM.

It's every kind of bird -- CROWS... PIGEONS... BLUE-JAYS... BLACK BIRDS... GRACKLES...

Birds gathering so dense on the "Calhoun" movie theater marquee that the sign now simply reads "C...h...."

Birds are simply everywhere...

THE CROWD continues to watch. Everything has come to a complete stop. Townspeople just standing there... watching the gathering of birds.

Claudia turns to Allie -- dread rising in her eyes.

CLAUDIA
This isn't good.

One of the crows starts CAWING, a loud jag of sound across the hush of Main Street. Now a few other CROWS join in. CAWING back and forth.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Tate gets up from the table. He joins Vance and Len at the window for a better view of the scene outside.

LEN
-- but you don't see birds of all those species together like that. Crows with blue jays. They usually keep to their own.

Outside, THE CROWS continue to CAW back and forth. Now other birds have joined in. The SCREECHING and CHITTERING of blackbirds and jays. The sound getting LOUDER.

TATE

I was reading some stuff about birds on the internet... they use their calls to communicate. All the calls mean something different.

Tate stares up through the window, transfixed by the sight of all the birds.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

THE BIRDS start to shift on their perches. Ruffling their feathers. And in an instant -- ALL THE BIRDS take flight!

A THUNDEROUS SOUND of beating wings. The birds rise and circle overhead... joining together as a single MASSIVE FLOCK.

Claudia starts to pull away from the crowd.

CLAUDIA

My kids. Come on -- we gotta get to the diner.

The two women start walking. Fast. Moving through the crowd. Crossing the street toward the diner.

But other than Claudia and Allie, EVERYONE ELSE ON MAIN STREET IS COMPLETELY MOTIONLESS. Like that sense of collective awe when people are watching a fireworks display.

THE HUGE FLOCK OF BIRDS begins flying in tight formation. Sweeping across the gray sky like a moving, sentient cloud. A single entity.

ALL THE BIRDS turning on instinct in the same direction... displaying that mysterious silent understanding between animals.

AND THEN THE BIRDS DESCEND. That huge flock turning together -- dropping low -- and coming right down Main Street.

THE BIRDS fly through the crowd. RUSHING PAST PEOPLE -- missing them -- in the same way that birds can avoid branches flying through trees at 35 miles an hour.

THE CROWD audibly reacts with a sense of wonder at being this close to such a phenomena.

CLAUDIA AND ALLIE ARE RUNNING NOW. Trying to make their way through all the people.

THE BIRDS rise again into the air... wheeling... turning as one... descending back down through MAIN STREET. But this time, instead of passing by -- PEOPLE START GETTING HIT.

As if the birds' first pass through was to show their power...

The vibe of the crowd shifts in an instant -- everyone realizing that this is about to get very dangerous. Folks start running for cover. Heading into the stores.

Some people get out of the way in time... and some don't.

-- A MAN is hit by the force of a WALL OF BIRDS. He goes tumbling to the pavement... scrambling to get up...

-- THE MOTHER WITH THE STROLLER is running. She realizes that the stroller is slowing her down. She hurries to unbuckle her screaming CHILD. A splinter flock of birds coming her way.

THE MOTHER grabs her child out of the stroller... goes running... making it inside the diner as THE BIRDS knock the stroller over.

INT. DINER - DAY

Vance swings the diner door open, waving people in. He spots CLAUDIA AND ALLIE -- getting caught up in the chaos.

VANCE
Come on! Hurry!

Now GRAN AND MIA are at the window with TATE -- all of them watching in horror as Claudia tries to get off the street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

THE MASSIVE FLOCK OF BIRDS continues to rush down Main Street like a storm wind. Turning in unison... careening... wheeling around only to come flying through again.

CLUSTERS OF BIRDS swoop down, aiming for the last few people who still haven't found shelter inside.

A BIRD lands on Allie's back. LATCHING ONTO HER with its claws. Claudia swats the bird away -- pulling Allie along as they finally make it into the diner.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Claudia and Allie rush inside as Vance pulls the doors firmly shut. Beat... everyone collects themselves. Still coming down from the shock of the bird attack.

Claudia goes to her family. She looks into the faces of her kids -- sees how scared they are.

CLAUDIA
I'm okay... we're all safe in here.

It's a random assemblage of people thrown together here in the diner --

THE MOM WITH HER BABY... some CONSTRUCTION GUYS... couple of FARMERS... the STAFF of the diner.

Allie tries to gather herself, talking to no one in particular.

ALLIE

What the hell was that...?

MOTHER WITH BABY

-- anyone got a first aid kit? My ear got cut.

THE WAITRESS is at the window.

WAITRESS

Hey -- look.

Everyone gathers at the window to see THE BIRDS settling once again on Main Street. Resuming their perches on the power lines... landing on light poles... rooftops and ledges.

It's very territorial behavior. As if the birds are saying -- 'this is our street now.'

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Great. We're stuck inside here. What're we gonna do now?

MOM WITH BABY

Well, we're not going back out there!

Mia's taking everything in. Growing more and more frightened by the adults' mounting tension.

MIA

Gran -- I want to go home.

GRAN

I know, sweetie. We'll be home soon. Why don't we go look at the jukebox? You can pick out a song for us.

Gran takes Mia over to the jukebox, while across the diner Allie starts to really unhinge --

ALLIE

What the hell was that?! I mean, what on Earth got into those birds?!

LEN

Maybe they don't want us here anymore.

ALLIE

That's ridiculous --

LEN

-- think about it. It's like they finally figured out there's more of them than us. How many birds they say there are in the world -- a trillion?

(beat)

Maybe they all finally got organized.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

The boulevard is now a bizarre sight. Totally devoid of human life. Completely taken over by the birds...

BIRDS perched on the traffic signal above the intersection. The light changes... but there are no cars moving through.

A FEW BIRDS are standing on the toppled over baby stroller. A crow spinning one of the wheels with its beak.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Tate sits at a table, nervously plays with a straw. Twisting it around and around his finger. Across the diner, Len is going on with one of his rants.

LEN

-- global warming. Bird flu. I mean, Jesus Christ -- think of everything we put into the air --

Claudia sees that the words are scaring Tate.

CLAUDIA

Don't listen to him.

TATE

But maybe he's right...

LEN

-- all the cell phone signals probably microwaved their little brains and drove em' crazy.

Claudia turns, addressing Len across the room.

CLAUDIA

Okay, Len. Let's take it easy.

But Len is on a roll. He points his finger at one of the CONSTRUCTION WORKERS.

LEN

What the hell you guys doing over there at that construction site anyway?!

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

What're you talking about?

LEN

Bulldozing everything. Building right on top of the wetlands like that -- we never wanted those new condos here --

The baby starts CRYING, his mother trying to comfort him. Vance tries to settle things down.

VANCE

Len, stop it! You're scaring the kids.

The CONSTRUCTION WORKER takes a step toward Len.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Hey -- we're just doing our jobs.

LEN

You screwed something up! What are the birds supposed to do when you keep building and building and driving them out of their homes --

People start talking over each other. Gripped by paranoia and fear. The baby's CRIES getting louder. And then suddenly -- a LOUD SOUND. SMACK!

Everyone JUMPS at the noise. The diner falls silent... except for the CRYING baby.

The Waitress looks out the window, down at the sidewalk. She turns back to face everyone.

WAITRESS

(weirded out)

One of them just flew into the window. Killed itself.

TOURIST

Why would a bird do that?

FARMER

They see their own reflection.
Think it's a predator.

SMACK! Another bird flies into the same spot on the window. Creating a SMALL CRACK in the glass. Everyone in the diner getting really unnerved.

The birds keep coming at consistent intervals -- SMACK! SMACK! SMACK! The glass fracturing, cracking more and more.

Claudia takes an instinctive step back.

CLAUDIA

No... they don't see their reflection. They're trying to get in. They'll keep killing themselves until they're in here.

SMACK! Another bird. SMACK! Another. More birds plow into the window... the glass continuing to crack.

The same thing is happening at other businesses on Main Street. Birds SLAMMING into windows.

Claudia spins. She has a split second to size-up her situation -- Gran and Mia standing over by the jukebox... Tate all by himself at the table.

CLAUDIA

Mom -- get Mia to the back!

SUDDENLY -- a flock of birds comes SMASHING THROUGH THE DINER WINDOW IN A SPRAY OF GLASS. Pouring into the diner.

GRAN AND MIA go running through the doors into the kitchen.

ALLIE GOES TUMBLING TO THE GROUND -- hit by the force of birds and flying glass.

CLAUDIA RACES TO THE TABLE and grabs Tate.

CLAUDIA

Under the table!

Tate hurries under the booth tables while Claudia grabs the MOTHER AND HER BABY -- all of them now scrambling under the table. Backs pressed against the wall. Breathless. Terrified.

WITH GRAN AND MIA -- the grandmother moving as fast as she can, pulling Mia along with her. Running through the back kitchen as a swarm of approaching birds are right behind!

Gran and Mia make their way to the walk-in refrigerator and hurry inside -- SLAMMING the thick door shut.

Gran huffs with frosty breath, looking out the small door window as birds fly against the glass. Too thick for them to get in.

BACK IN THE DINER --- under the table with Claudia and Tate... the MOTHER and her baby.

They can only catch glimpses of what's happening from their low POV --

-- feet running past --

-- chairs toppling over --

-- birds SCREECHING and FLAPPING --

-- people SCREAMING --

ACROSS THE RESTAURANT, Claudia sees ALLIE cowering under a table. Starting to loose it.

CLAUDIA locks eyes with her friend. A desperate look that says -- 'stay there.'

-- but ALLIE can't take the sound of the SCREECHING BIRDS anymore. She bolts from under the table. Runs out of view -- pursued by birds. SCREAMING as she's taken down.

BACK WITH CLAUDIA AND THE OTHERS -- the MOTHER holds her baby tight. Tate covers his ears to drown out the screaming.

A MOCKING BIRD lands on the floor right in front of their table... spots Claudia and the others in their hiding place. It starts to move in toward them --

TATE

Mom!

Claudia KICKS hard at the bird and it flies away. SCREECHING up into the room. On to easier prey.

Looking out again from under the table, SOMEONE starts to crawl into view... bleeding arms struggling across the tile floor... then a face --

It's ALLIE. Birds all over her. PECKING FURIOUSLY. Allie keeps crawling until she's simply out of strength.

And then a CROW starts CAWING. Rising above all the noise. Suddenly, all the birds stop what they're doing.

CLAUDIA AND TATE hold their breath in anticipation --

-- and then THE BIRDS TAKE OFF... as if on command.

The diner falls quiet... the sound of the birds receding.

Beat of hesitation, then Claudia crawls out from under the table to find the diner in a TOTAL STATE OF DESTRUCTION.

Now other people are coming out of their hiding places. GRAN AND MIA stepping out from the kitchen. They're okay...

Claudia hurries to Allie's side. Takes her hand. Her friend in bad shape. Face almost unrecognizable from all the scratches and wounds.

CLAUDIA

Allie -- you're gonna be okay.

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER is on his cell phone, calling 911. Taking in the scene before him... all of the injured people.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I'm down here at Vance's diner...
we need some help... people are
hurt...

Claudia holds Allie's hand as she struggles to breathe. She stares up at her friend with terrified eyes.

CLAUDIA

Just hang in there.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER (O.S.)

No... it was birds. These birds...
(can't even begin to
explain it)
Please... just get here as soon as
possible.

Tate steps up behind his mom. Looks down at Allie as she tries to say something to Claudia.

CLAUDIA

It's okay. Help is coming.

But Allie's eyes fade... never getting out those final words.

CLAUDIA

Allie -- ?

But there's no response. Claudia trembles as she lowers her friend's limp arm to the floor. Stunned by what's just happened.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

SHERIFF BOBBY comes driving up Main Street in his patrol car. Lights flashing. A couple of AMBULANCES right behind him.

The patrol car comes to a stop and Sheriff Bobby steps out, taking in the devastation. It's like a tornado came through. Broken glass everywhere. White smears of bird droppings on buildings and cars like mass vandalism.

Claudia and her family emerge from the diner. Claudia sees SHERIFF BOBBY -- waves him over.

CLAUDIA

Bobby! In here -- we got people who need help!

And now from the other buildings... WOUNDED PEOPLE stagger out into the street. A GUY sits down on the hood of a car, holding a rag to his bleeding face. A MAN helps his WIFE... she can barely walk.

EMS WORKERS head into the diner. Start tending to people in the street.

Claudia looks up and sees that the BIRDS HAVE SETTLED BACK ON MAIN STREET. But they are all now completely still. Quiet. The birds' eyes are open but their bodies are squat. Heads tucked low. Some of them with blood on their feathers.

Claudia turns to her family... fear in her heart.

MIA

Are we going home?

CLAUDIA

No... we can't go home now. We're going to drive. Get as far away from here as we can.

CUT TO:

ROLLING SAND DUNES. Tall sea grass swaying gently in the low wind. A TWO-LANE COASTAL ROAD down below --

-- as CARS RACE PAST. A steady flow of vehicles. People hurrying out of town.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claudia drives hard, hands tight on the wheel. Tate in the passenger seat. Gran and Mia in the backseat.

There's a tense energy in the car. Everyone still shell-shocked from Main Street. Talking over each other --

CLAUDIA

Mom -- what's the quickest way to get inland?

TATE

Where are we going?

GRAN

There's a highway just past Bayside... about fifteen miles from here.

CLAUDIA

Tate -- look in the glove compartment. There's a map in there somewhere.

MIA

Can we go get my bear?

CLAUDIA

We're not going back to the house, sweetie.

MIA

I want my bear...

Tate fetches the map from the glove compartment. Claudia takes it from him. Unfolds it while she's driving -- glances down to make sure she's got the route.

TATE

But where are we even going?

CLAUDIA

Driving. Just driving.

Tate looks out the window... distant BEACH HOUSES passing by across the SAND DUNES and WETLANDS.

TATE

Is it only happening here?

No one answers his question...

TATE

Mom... the birds... you think it's only happening here?

CLAUDIA

I don't know, Tate.

...and then rising in the distance, an eerie ALARM. Like a STORM WARNING SIREN.

No one in the car says a word. Everyone listening to the sound of the rising and falling siren. It's chilling. The kind of thing you hear when something's really wrong. Then --

MIA
What's that sound?

GRAN
It's the hurricane siren.

MIA
Is a storm coming, Mommy?

The siren keeps blaring... echoing across the coastal landscape. Claudia and Gran exchange a troubled look in the rear-view mirror.

CLAUDIA
Something like that...

GRAN
Tate -- turn on the radio. There's an emergency channel on the AM. They'll tell us what's going on.

Tate starts flipping through the radio stations.

TATE
Yeah -- that's what they told us to do in school... if we ever heard the sirens.

The radio scans past music... a religious program... finally finding the EMERGENCY BROADCAST CHANNEL. A series of DIGITAL BURSTS and tones, like what you hear at the beginning of a weather bulletin. Pause...

...then the voice of SHERIFF BOBBY comes over the radio. He sounds shaken. Trying his best to be authoritative.

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
This is Sheriff Robert Ellis. An emergency warning is being issued for Port Calhoun and the outlying areas. I repeat, this is an emergency warning for the county until further notice.

THE FAMILY stares at the radio. Hanging on every word as the sheriff continues --

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
We are experiencing some kind of... infestation of birds. There was a situation on Main Street.
(MORE)

SHERIFF BOBBY (cont'd)
 Numerous injuries. Two fatalities.
 I've gotten reports of other bird
 attacks in the area as well...

Tate looks out the window, watching as A COUPLE OF CARS speed by -- passing in the left hand lane -- even more urgent than Claudia to get out of town.

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
 Everyone needs to seek secure
 shelter immediately. Stay away
 from windows. Do not go outside
 under any circumstance.
 (beat)
 Keep your radio tuned to this
 station for any changes or updates
 to this warning.

Long beat. Bobby speaks one last time... not as the Sheriff, but as one of the townspeople.

SHERIFF BOBBY
 Folks -- for right now... we're
 just gonna have to wait this thing
 out.

Silence... followed by more DIGITAL BURSTS signifying the end of the broadcast message. And then just a dull WHITE NOISE coming out of the radio... stand-by mode.

THE FAMILY sits in the quiet. Just the sound of the car engine. The Sheriff's message making all of this seem even more ominous and unexplained. Then --

TATE
 We can go to Austin. Stay with
 dad.

Claudia hesitates at the suggestion.

CLAUDIA
 Look... we've got a full tank of
 gas. We're just going to keep
 driving until we don't see any more
 birds.

Claudia glances in the rear view mirror -- connecting with Mia's frightened eyes. She reaches back and takes her daughter's hand.

CLAUDIA
 We're going be okay. I swear.

EXT. BEACH ROAD -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

FURTHER UP AHEAD ON THE ROAD -- those two SPEEDING CARS that passed Claudia are cruising along, still in the left hand lane. Passing the other cars that are heading out of town.

Suddenly, SOME SEAGULLS burst out of the roadside sea grass, right into the path of the SPEEDING CARS.

It all seems to happen in an instant...

-- the birds SMASH INTO THE CAR WINDSHIELDS.

-- THE TWO CARS SWERVE, COLLIDING INTO EACH OTHER.

-- OTHER APPROACHING CARS hit their brakes, tires smoking -- but it's not enough distance.

-- SMASH! More cars collide into the first wreck. Metal on metal. Vehicles spinning across the road.

-- everything settles and suddenly it's a FIVE CAR PILE-UP. Blocking the entire width of the narrow road.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

BACK WITH CLAUDIA -- as she sees the approaching accident up ahead. She hits the brakes -- bringing the car to a safe stop.

The family looks out the windshield -- the pile-up about fifty yards ahead. Everyone involved in the accident getting out of their cars. Checking on each other.

BUT TRAFFIC'S NOW AT A TOTAL STANDSTILL...

GRAN

Looks like everyone's alright.

Claudia glances out the driver's side window toward the Gulf. ALL THOSE WHITE GULLS ARE STILL OUT THERE... massing... gathering... bobbing on the rising and falling swells.

CLAUDIA

We need to turn around. Find another way out of town.

Claudia puts the car in reverse, looks in the rear-view mirror to see --

-- THAT MORE CARS HAVE NOW PULLED UP BEHIND HER. Traffic in the outbound and inbound lane. Everything backing up because of the accident. The car is totally blocked in.

TATE

There's cars behind us, mom.

CLAUDIA

I see that, Tate.

Claudia slams the vehicle into park. Kills the engine.
Anxious silence in the car.

CLAUDIA

We're gonna be sitting out here
forever...

Gran catches Claudia's eyes in the rear-view... sees her
daughter's rising panic. Gran leans up, speaks quietly to
Claudia so that the kids can't hear.

GRAN

Claudia -- we have to get off this
road.

Claudia turns around to face her mother -- not understanding.

GRAN

(softly)

We're too exposed out here. You
saw what those birds can do --
they'll get into this car.

(beat)

We need to walk to one of those
houses.

Claudia looks out across the SAND DUNES... a few isolated
BEACH HOUSES in the near distance.

GRAN

Claudia... we need to go.

Claudia pulls her clenched hands from the steering wheel.
She weighs her options. Then --

CLAUDIA

Mia, Tate -- I want you to listen
to me. We're getting out of the
car and walking somewhere.

TATE

What?!

CLAUDIA

At the diner, after the attack --
the birds were resting. But I
don't know how long it's going to
last.

(beat)

(MORE)

CLAUDIA (cont'd)
 We've got to get to that house over there.

Tate follows the direction of his mom's gaze.

TATE
 That's crazy. It's too far --

GRAN
 -- Tate, listen to your mother.
 Mia, come on. You're going to hold my hand.

Mia nervously glances out the windows. The car surrounded by the rolling dunes... the sea grass moving in the slight breeze. It's big, unknown territory out there for her.

TATE
 We're just going to leave the car?

Claudia's growing impatient with Tate's questioning.

CLAUDIA
 Yeah -- leaving the car. Leaving everything.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Some MOTORISTS in the stuck traffic are out of their cars... standing in the road... impatiently looking up ahead to see when the accident might clear. Other cars are HONKING -- people growing restless with the delay.

Claudia and Tate get out of the car -- but as Tate glances over at the Gulf... he too now sees the THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF SEA GULLS ON THE WATER. His face goes slack... barely comprehending what he sees.

TATE
 Look at the water...

Claudia pulls Tate's attention away. Doesn't want him to see the enormity of what's out there.

CLAUDIA
 Tate, come on --

TATE
 -- those are birds out there.
 Thousands of them...

A SHADOW crosses Claudia's face. She shoots a look up... a GULL flying overhead. Circling above the road.

Claudia moves faster, helps her mom out of the backseat. And then in the distance...

...a RISING NOISE. A strange agitated cacophony of sound. Everyone standing out in the road looks over... toward the Gulf... watching as the MASS OF GULLS begins to stir on the water. Wings flapping -- stretching -- preparing for flight.

CLAUDIA

It's already starting...

Claudia looks back to the car... sees that Mia is still sitting against the far side of the back seat.

CLAUDIA

Mia, come on.

MIA

No...

CLAUDIA

Sweetie, we don't have time for this.

MIA

I'm not getting out of the car.

That NOISE IN THE DISTANCE is getting LOUDER. The overlapping sound of THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF SCREECHING GULLS.

Claudia leans in to the car. Growing more urgent.

CLAUDIA

I'm serious. We need to go --

MIA

-- I want my bear.

CLAUDIA

I already told you -- we're not going back to the house.

There's a look in Mia's eyes. Locked into fear. No words are going to get through to her.

MIA

The birds got Huey. They're gonna get us too.

Claudia reaches into the car for Mia, but the little girl goes SCRAMBLING OVER INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT. She loops her arm through the steering wheel in defiance.

Claudia's almost at her breaking point --

CLAUDIA

Mia. Now.

But Mia won't even look at her mom. She sits in the driver's seat shaking her head -- 'no... no... no...'

Suddenly, coming up off the Gulf is A HUGE RISING OF BIRDS. TENS OF THOUSANDS OF GULLS lifting up into the sky. It's like a storm cloud -- moving in.

CLAUDIA
Give me your hand --

MIA
-- No.

The gulls continue to rise off the Gulf. They reach a certain altitude... hover for a moment... and then they start DESCENDING TOWARD THE HIGHWAY.

Tate stands with Gran, watching the sky in terror.

TATE
They're coming!

Claudia goes to that totally calm voice that parents use when they've completely run out of options.

CLAUDIA
Mia, I want you to look at Mommy.

Mia looks over -- still holding tight to the steering wheel.

CLAUDIA
You know how sometimes we play games together? This is just like a game. We're going to run -- as fast as we can. But we have to go. Right now.

Beat... as Mia finally lets go of the steering wheel. She scoots across the seat into her mother's arms.

CLAUDIA
Everyone stick together -- move as fast as you can.

The family moves as one. Running past all the cars that are now just stuck in the road. Behind them, that SOUND OF THE GULLS is growing louder -- more agitated.

Claudia glances over her shoulder, and what she sees makes her blood run cold. THE GULLS ARE HURTLING DOWN OUT OF THE SKY. Diving into the traffic jam. Moving ever closer.

OTHER PEOPLE who were standing out in the road are starting to run too. Everyone moving fast -- trying to escape from the approaching flock --

-- as the BIRDS swoop down, SLAMMING into vehicles and people.

CLAUDIA AND HER FAMILY keep running fast, winding through the cars. ALL AROUND... horrible scenes unfolding.

A YOUNG COUPLE runs hand in hand. Suddenly, the WIFE slips and falls.

HIGH BIRD POV -- flying down. We see the WIFE fall away from her husband... and our POV goes in right for her.

WITH THE FALLEN WOMAN... as birds attack her. It all happens so fast. Birds clawing at her hair. Her face. Pulling at her clothes. Going for her eyes.

Her HUSBAND turns in horror to see his wife getting attacked. He goes to help her -- gets too close -- and now the birds turn on him as well.

ELSEWHERE ON THE ROAD...

A MAN is being swooped by birds, so he hops back into his convertible for safety.

But the GULLS descend on the car. Tearing into the convertible top -- RIPPING IT TO SHREDS -- peeling it away. Relentless. Beaks slashing like knives.

THE MAN is helpless -- trapped inside the car -- as THE BIRDS swarm through the decimated convertible top and attack.

WITH CLAUDIA, GRAN AND THE KIDS --

Still running. Claudia holding on to Mia. All around them the sound of CAR ALARMS, BREAKING GLASS, people SCREAMING.

MIA

Mommy -- I want to go home!

Claudia stays focused -- riding on adrenaline and fear.

CLAUDIA

Just hold on to me...

They run past a PICK-UP TRUCK. A couple of people still inside the vehicle.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

A couple of CONSTRUCTION WORKERS -- guys we saw in the diner earlier -- are sitting in the cab of their truck. One of the guys talking on his two-way, trying to get help.

CONSTRUCTION GUY #1
 -- no, we're stuck out here!
 Fuckin' birds everywhere!

It's hard to see out the windows. The crowd moving past the truck. People SHOUTING. Bumping against the vehicle. The scene outside becoming more frantic.

And the sound of the birds is getting CLOSER...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER #2 looks up out the window, glimpsing one or two BIRDS swooping down out of the sky. Diving into the crowd. SCREECHING.

-- suddenly, a large gull SMASHES right into the front windshield of the pick-up truck. Glass CRACKING and spiderwebbing. The bird dead on impact.

The CONSTRUCTION GUYS watch as the dead gull slides down the windshield in a nasty smear.

Now more birds PLOW INTO THE WINDSHIELD... WHAM! WHAM! Right into the same spot where the first bird hit. The safety glass starts to sag inward... about to give.

CONSTRUCTION GUY #1
 Hell with this.

The guy goes for the door handle...

Too late...

The windshield caves in as GULLS SWARM INTO THE TRUCK. The CONSTRUCTION GUYS are overwhelmed in an instant. Lost under the mass of wings and biting beaks.

The guys are SCREAMING for their lives. Hands SLAP at the windows. A final attempt to escape this grim fate.

PULL BACK THROUGH A WINDOW -- OUT OF THE TRUCK... the vehicle rocking from the struggle. Gulls hungrily SCREECHING as A BLOODY HAND smears across the glass.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

BACK WITH CLAUDIA AND HER FAMILY --

-- as they break away from the road... heading off into the SAND DUNES toward that house.

EXT. SAND DUNES - CONTINUOUS

The family winds their way through the mounds of sand and TALL SEA GRASS.

It's hard to see where they're going -- the grass like a wall all around them. Just the roof of that house visible in the distance.

But then up ahead, GULLS DIVE DOWN INTO THE TALL GRASS. There's SCREAMING. Someone unseen is getting attacked.

The gulls rise back up with SHREDS OF BLOODY CLOTHES IN THEIR CLAWS... clumps of hair... and then they go diving back down to the sounds of MORE SCREAMING and thrashing in the grass.

Claudia brings everyone to a stop. Changes direction --

CLAUDIA

This way.

Claudia guides her family, veering them away from the attack. Still trying to get to that house in the distance.

And then ANOTHER SOUND RISES against the cacophony of SCREECHING BIRDS. Tate looks up as a COAST GUARD HELICOPTER ROARS OVERHEAD.

There's a rush of hope in the boy's eyes...

TATE

Mom, look! They're coming to help.

THE HELICOPTER banks over the highway, circling the scene.

THE HUGE FLOCK OF BIRDS breaks up and SCATTERS AWAY from the path of the helicopter. The presence of the huge machine distracting the birds from their attack.

Claudia and her family watch with a sense of total relief.

CLAUDIA

They're stopping... the birds are stopping.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The PILOT circles over the scene... looking down at the wrecked cars below on the highway... scattered DEAD BODIES of bird attack victims.

But as the PILOT glances over, he sees a SMALLER FLOCK OF BIRDS coming right toward the helicopter.

EXT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

THE BIRDS RUSH IN on the helicopter and fly RIGHT INTO THE TAIL ROTOR.

There's a horrible GRINDING NOISE as the birds continue to SLAM THE TAIL ROTOR -- piling up so thick that the blades come to a stop.

The HELICOPTER starts to lose forward control. Spinning.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The PILOT tries to regain control. Staying calm and professional in his headset.

PILOT
Mayday. Mayday. We have engine failure -- proceeding with emergency landing.

He's working the controls, not looking as outside the cockpit windows we see A CLOUD OF BIRDS coming at the helicopter from every direction. And then --

-- a MASSIVE SURGE OF BIRDS dives down into the main rotors, killing themselves instantly, SPRAYING AWFUL GORE all over the cockpit windows.

The PILOT is now flying blind -- can't see a thing.

PILOT
Mayday! Mayday!

EXT. SAND DUNES - CONTINUOUS

TATE LOOKS UP INTO THE SKY -- watching in horror as the helicopter spins. Losing control. The air filled with that unmistakable sound of engine failure.

AND WORST OF ALL... THE HELICOPTER IS COMING THEIR WAY...

CLAUDIA
Tate -- come on!

Tate turns and runs. Catching up with the rest of his family. While behind them --

-- THE HELICOPTER CONTINUES TO FALL. Keeling over. Spinning rotor blades going vertical as --

-- it CRASHES INTO THE SAND DUNES. Kicking up a VIOLENT SPRAY OF SAND AND EARTH.

-- ROTOR BLADES SNAP AWAY AND GO FLYING INTO THE AIR.

THE FAMILY RACES through the tall grass --

-- as a BROKEN ROTOR BLADE GOES TUMBLING PAST THEM across the dunes. Just missing them.

THE HELICOPTER CATCHES FIRE. Roiling flames sending a thick cloud of black smoke into the air.

THE BIRDS circle the wreckage. Veering away from the rising plumes of smoke. All of man's technology... taken down in a matter of moments.

EXT. SAND DUNES - CONTINUOUS

THE FAMILY rounds a sand dune and sees the house just up ahead. But the GULLS ARE COMING AGAIN. Circling. Searching. Their SCREECHES AND CALLS filling the air.

Claudia spots a METAL GARDEN SHED at the edge of the house's property. There's no time to make it all the way to the house -- this is their only option.

CLAUDIA

Let's go -- in here!

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Everyone crams into the corrugated metal shed as Claudia pulls the door shut -- holding on to it to keep it closed. Dark in here. But outside, the assault continues.

TATE crouches down... and there's a small hole in the side of the shed. He puts his eye to the hole... peering out.

WE ZOOM OUT THROUGH THE HOLE -- watching as...

A WOMAN runs past laundry lines in the distance. The sound of birds are all around her. Backlit bird shadows moving across the hanging sheets.

THE WOMAN realizes that the birds are surrounding her. She tries to backtrack, but a GULL is right there! Flying toward her.

THE WOMAN falls back into the sheets -- getting tangled -- struggling as more GULLS join in on the attack.

THE WOMAN spins -- can't get away.

She stumbles behind another hanging sheet -- the struggle plays out as backlit shadows... blood spattering across the white linen.

AND THEN WE ZOOM BACK THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE SHED --

-- Tate's eye still pressed to the hole. He's seen the whole thing. Frightened like never before.

And then -- BANG! A bird flies into the side of the metal shed. Hitting it so hard that it makes an indentation.

Tate flinches away from the wall as --

-- BANG! BANG! More birds hit the shed. It's so loud. The sound of banging metal. And then it's an onslaught...

So many birds POUNDING into the metal shed. Beaks actually puncturing small holes in the metal... creating pinpoint shafts of light. But the shed holds...

Gran puts her hands over Mia's ears -- doesn't want her to hear the horror of what's going on outside.

The POUNDING continues. Relentless. Like it's never going to stop. Tate covers his ears too and closes his eyes -- praying that this would all just go away.

And after what seems like forever, the POUNDING slowly subsides... like a storm finally passing over. A couple more LOUD HITS... and then quiet.

Claudia stays at the door -- bracing it shut with every muscle in her body. Not believing that this attack is really over as we LONG DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAND DUNES - DAY - LATER

Under a darkening afternoon sky... we see THE SHED. Sitting out here in the dunes.

INT. SHED - DAY

THE FAMILY is huddled in the dark of the metal shed. Like they've been waiting it out for a while.

It is quiet outside... no one says a word. Until --

MIA

What happened to all those people
back there?

Silence. Claudia looks over at Gran. She knows she can't protect Mia's innocence much longer.

MIA

Did those people get hurt?

No one will answer the little girl.

MIA

Mommy -- are they hurt?

Tate can't take it anymore. He snaps.

TATE

They're dead! They're all dead,
okay? The birds got them -- and
they're gonna get us too.

CLAUDIA

That's enough --

Tate spins on his mother.

TATE

-- what are you gonna do? You
can't stop it! You can't stop any
of this! If Dad was here he'd be
able to do something --

Claudia takes Tate by the shoulders and looks her son dead in
the eyes. She's not messing around.

CLAUDIA

Now you listen to me.
(voice low... end of her rope)
Your dad's not here. I am. You
can keep hating me all you want,
but we are going to work together
as a family... and it's going to
start right now.

Tate shuts up. He's never seen his mom react like this.

CLAUDIA

You hear me?

TATE

(quiet)
Yes, ma'am.

Claudia goes back to the door of the shed... listens to the
silence outside for a long beat... and then opens the door.

She peeks outside... looking for birds. But the skies seems
quiet... for now. That HOUSE in the near distance.

Claudia turns back to her family.

CLAUDIA

Look -- we don't know how long this
is going to last. It could be
days... and we can't stay in here.
We don't have food... or water.
(beat)
We have to get to that house.

The kids trade a look with each other -- dreading that this
is what they have to do.

Claudia glances around the shed... among the auto equipment and old cans of paint on the shelves, there's also random SUPPLIES. A TOOLBOX.

CLAUDIA

There's things in here we can use.
Grab whatever you can.

Everyone starts rummaging around the shed. Searching through the dusty shelves. Grabbing a jar of nails... rope... a power drill. Anything they can.

EXT. SHED - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

THE FAMILY steps out from the shed... everyone holding some supplies and tools. A final contemplation of what they're about to do.

CLAUDIA

It's just a little walk. We can do this.

Claudia takes Mia by the hand as they begin their trek toward the house.

THE FAMILY makes their way out of the edge of the sea grass... onto a long gravel driveway that leads to the house. They walk alongside a FENCE... the only sound is their footsteps on the gravel.

And then they come to a stop. All of them looking at something up ahead. WIDEN OUT to reveal that...

...BIRDS ARE MASSED -- perched along the entire fence-line.

Mia sees the birds, buries her face in her mother's side.

MIA

I want to turn around...

Claudia stares hard at the animals -- all of them totally still. The birds' eyes are open but their bodies are squat. Heads tucked low.

CLAUDIA

It's okay. They're resting again.
Must be a pattern. They attack...
and then they rest.

(beat)

Let's keep going.

And so THE FAMILY continues on... very cautiously... moving along the fence... past all those staring birds.

The anticipation is excruciating... wondering if at any moment the birds will snap out of their quiet rest and attack.

TATE moves carefully. One of the birds SHIFTS ON ITS PERCH... Tate pauses... but the bird was only adjusting. Tate keeps going, but he's breathing hard. Scared.

GRAN
(whispering)
Tate -- just keep your eyes forward.

Gran steps next to her grandson. Talks so quietly.

GRAN
I was remembering something today... when your grandfather used to take you fishing.

Beat. Tate whispers back. It's the quietest conversation. Anything to keep their minds off all the birds along the fence.

TATE
Yeah... he used to let me bait the hooks.
(beat)
What was that funny name he always called me?

GRAN
'Sharky.' Cause you never stopped moving. Just like a shark.

MIA
(whispering back to them)
What did Granddaddy call me?

GRAN
You were just a baby when he died. But he called you 'Minnow.' Cause you were so little.

Mia likes the sound of that. She looks up at her mother who quietly walks on... keeping her eyes on the birds as a low wind whistles through the fence.

Gran glances down at Tate. That way that grandparents look at their grandchildren. Pure love.

GRAN
Granddad would've given anything to see you now... becoming such a young man. He would have been so proud of you.

Something changes in Tate's eyes. As if in that very moment he grew up just a little.

THE FAMILY finally makes it to the end of the fence, almost at the HOUSE.

Claudia casts a final look back... the birds still there. Staring. Watching...

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- DAY

The family finally arrives at the front porch of the BEACH HOUSE. It's a large two-story home. Vintage design. Built back in the glory days of Port Calhoun. It sits alone out here. No other houses around.

Claudia knocks. No answer.

Gran scans the outside for any signs of bird entry.

GRAN

No broken windows... looks okay.

CLAUDIA

Who lives here?

GRAN

I don't know. Someone's vacation house, I guess.

Claudia knocks again. Still no answer. She tries the doorknob. It's locked. Claudia picks up a large shell that's sitting out here the porch --

-- and SMASHES the small window by the door. She reaches inside through the broken glass, unlocks and opens the door.

Tate and Mia look up at their mother. Emotions conflicted. Claudia sees the troubled look from her children.

CLAUDIA

I know this doesn't seem right -- breaking into someone's house, but everything's changed now. We have to do whatever we can to make it through this.

The kids nod... they understand.

Claudia steps inside the house, calling out --

CLAUDIA

Hello... anyone here?

No answer...

INT. BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

It's quiet. Everything absolutely still. Claudia scans the downstairs. Antique furniture... some of it covered with white dust tarps for the off-season. A vacuum cleaner oddly sitting in the middle of the floor.

Claudia's eyes go to the windows... all of them intact.

CLAUDIA

Alright -- everybody inside.

Gran and the children step into the house, closing the door. Gran tries the lights -- they work.

GRAN

We have power. That's something at least.

CLAUDIA

We'll be safe here.

TATE

But the birds can get in... like they did at the diner.

CLAUDIA

We'll make it so that they can't. We can close all the storm shutters. Nail them shut. Move stuff in front of the doors.

GRAN

I'll start on the upstairs.

CLAUDIA

The kids and I'll work down here. Tate -- find a radio. We need to keep listening for any news.

(beat -- calm)

Let's go. Everyone has a job to do.

A HAMMER POUNDS -- hitting nails into wood.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Claudia hammers the storm shutters closed on one of the downstairs windows. Tate's at the dining room table, looking through a ROADSIDE EMERGENCY KIT they took from the shed. A PORTABLE RADIO on the table next to him.

Everyone works with efficient urgency --

CLAUDIA
Anything good in there?

TATE
Road flares. A flashlight. Not
much else.

Mia comes in from the kitchen with some bottled water and a bag of food.

MIA
There was some water in the kitchen. I found some cookies too, but they're kinda nasty. The crackers are alright, though.

CLAUDIA
Good girl. I'm sure there's some other things in there we can eat. Grab all that stuff and bring it in here.

Suddenly, the RADIO emits the familiar pre-bulletin alert tone. Tate turns the volume up.

TATE
Hey, mom -- they're saying something.

Claudia comes over to listen to the radio. It's SHERIFF BOBBY continuing with another bulletin --

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
-- I've been in touch with the regional weather service, and they told me that there are... 'formations' on the Gulf moving inland. I guess sometimes on the radar screens these things can look like clouds -- but it's birds. Millions of them. Moving closer and closer to us.

SLOWLY PUSH IN ON CLAUDIA -- hanging on every word.

CLAUDIA
My god... millions.

Tate glances around the downstairs... as he spots a SHOTGUN in a glass display case. He goes to the case, drawn to it. He tries the door -- it's locked.

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
 -- we are advising everyone in the
 region to stay indoors and prepare
 like you would for a storm.

Claudia continues to listen, not watching as --

-- Tate steps up on a chair. He feels around on the top of
 the gun case... and finds a KEY hidden up top.

SHERIFF BOBBY (ON RADIO)
 -- if you have it, secure hurricane
 paneling over the windows. Keep a
 supply of fresh water.
 (a long beat)
 God be with us all tonight...

The radio returns to STATIC. Claudia stands there in the
 somber quiet of the house. Sheriff Bobby's warning fully
 sinking in.

But as Claudia looks over, SHE SEES TATE HOLDING THE SHOTGUN.
 Taking imaginary aim with the weapon.

CLAUDIA
 Tate -- put that down.

TATE
 But we could use this. Dad showed
 me how to --

CLAUDIA
 -- I don't like guns. Put it back.

Beat... then Tate puts the gun back in the case.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Gran HAMMERS, finishes securing the storm shutters in one of
 the bedrooms. She steps back from the window. Satisfied
 with her work.

She turns and regards the bedroom. It's a LITTLE GIRL'S
 ROOM. The twin bed covered with a pink comforter. A doll
 house, toys and games on the shelves.

There's a rocking chair with stuffed animals. Gran spots a
 TEDDY BEAR -- just like Mia's.

Gran picks up the bear. Smiles to herself.

GRAN
 You are going to make a certain
 little girl downstairs very
 happy...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gran steps out of the little girl's room... into the hall. There's another BEDROOM further down. The door partially cracked open.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gran pushes the door open. Steps inside to find a MASTER BEDROOM. It's dark in here. The curtains drawn.

Gran steps in a little further. Big king sized bed neatly made... chest of drawers... everything very tidy.

Gran goes to the window. And as she looks down she sees --
-- a bottle of Windex. Just laying here on the floor.

Gran pulls the curtains open to get to the storm shutters, and as light pours into the room she sees --

-- a DEAD BODY. Slumped against the corner in the shadows... now revealed in the light.

It's a WOMAN in a cleaning uniform. A maid who probably takes care of the house in the off-season.

But the horror is almost too much to take in at once. The woman has been PECKED TO DEATH. Neck torn open. Empty dark red sockets where her eyes should be. Feathers and caked blood on her skin.

Gran's hand goes over her mouth... too shocked to even make a sound. Her mind races -- how could birds have killed this woman? Where would they have come from?

And then... there's a RISING SKITTERING SOUND coming from somewhere in the room.

Gran slowly looks over... her heart going into her throat as she spots -- A FIREPLACE. Originally unseen in the dark.

The RISING SKITTERING sound grows LOUDER... echoing out of the smoke blackened fireplace. It's birds. They're coming.

Frozen beat as Gran glances over at the bedroom door... WIDE OPEN. Panic fills her eyes... knowing that the birds will soon be in the rest of the house. And then --

-- hundreds of CHIMNEY SWIFTS come flooding out of the fireplace! The birds fill the room in an instant with chaotic flight and SCREECHING NOISE.

Gran SCREAMS. Instantly overtaken by the WHIRLWIND OF BIRDS. She runs for the bedroom door.

But instead of trying to escape, Gran slams the door CLOSED -- keeping the birds contained in the room.

INT. HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Claudia hears her mother SCREAM and she goes running in a heartbeat. Racing up the stairs --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

-- Claudia rushes down the hallway to the bedroom door.

CLAUDIA

Mom!

Claudia opens the door for a split second -- just in time to see the astonishing MASS OF BIRDS IN THE ROOM -- the incredible volume of the SCREECHING --

-- and then she sees her MOTHER -- emerging out of the swirling birds. Hair wild and tangled. Face covered with BLEEDING SCRATCHES.

GRAN

Claudia -- they'll get into the house! Don't open this door!

Gran SLAMS THE DOOR CLOSED ONCE AGAIN.

Claudia tries to get the door open -- BUT IT'S NOW LOCKED! She pounds at the door.

CLAUDIA

Mom! Mom -- don't do this!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gran falls to the floor as the CHIMNEY SWIFTS continue their brutal assault. She's on her back -- fighting as hard as she can as the SWIFTS TEAR AT HER HANDS. Streaks of blood running down her arms.

Gran tries to roll away from the birds, but they simply won't stop. So she starts crawling... making her way to the fireplace. The SWIFTS are all over her. In her hair. Tearing away at her clothes. But she keeps going...

...finally getting to the fireplace. Gran reaches up... manages to close the damper. Preventing any more birds from getting in.

And then Gran collapses to the floor. Her struggling body finally going still against the relentless onslaught of birds... losing the fight.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Claudia is in tears... her ear against the door. Listening for any sign that her mother's still alive. But it's just the sound of the birds.

CLAUDIA

Mom...? Mom... please...

Claudia slumps against the bedroom door. Shattered... trembling. Can't believe that her mother is gone.

There's movement in the hallway. Claudia looks over to see Mia and Tate -- standing at the top of the stairs. The look on their stunned faces says everything. They know their grandmother is dead.

Claudia has to turn away from her children... can't bear to think of losing them this same way. Her world falling apart.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

It's now evening. The isolated house sits beneath a huge HARVEST MOON hanging low in the sky.

PUSH IN TOWARD THE BEACH HOUSE... we see that the all the shutters are closed. Nailed shut.

KEEP PUSHING toward one window... TATE'S EYES peering out from between slats. The boy watches... waiting.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Tate pulls away from the window. As he walks through the downstairs, we see that everything's been rearranged in the living room and connecting dining room.

A heavy ARMOIRE is now pushed against the front door. A couch upended against one of the windows. Everything that can be used is stacked up in front of the doors and windows.

Claudia is on the house phone, trying to dial out.

TATE

Gotten through yet?

Claudia shakes her head.

CLAUDIA

Circuits are still down.

TATE

Do you think anyone's coming for us?

Claudia doesn't answer. She places the phone on the receiver and sits next to Mia on the floor. Blankets are spread out. A couple of plates of peanut butter and crackers.

Tate joins his mother and sister on the living room floor. He quietly eats a few crackers.

A dark pall has fallen over the house. Gran's death still reverberating. Mia stares up at the ceiling.

MIA

Are the birds still up there? I don't hear them anymore...

CLAUDIA

You need to take some bites, sweetie.

MIA

I'm not hungry...

Mia just keeps staring at the ceiling. There's a certain look in her eyes -- as if she's going into shock. The birds... Gran's death... all of it just too much for the little girl.

Mia's expression sends a chill through Claudia... seeing her daughter traumatized like this.

CLAUDIA

Why don't you eat your candy bar then? It's your favorite kind.

Mia doesn't answer. Beat... Claudia wondering what she can do. Then --

CLAUDIA

You know... earlier while Tate and I were working, we talked about taking a family vacation. Tate thinks we should go to Florida.

Tate glances at his mom, doesn't have any idea what she's talking about. Claudia fixes him with a desperate look -- "help me with your sister."

Tate understands in an instant. Plays along.

TATE

Yeah, Mia. It'd be so much. They have like tons of theme parks --

CLAUDIA

-- and there's this hotel I read about that's got indoor pools and water slides.

TATE

That's where I'd want to stay. Wouldn't that be cool, Mia?

Slowly, Mia's mood begins to lift.

MIA

Yeah. That sounds cool.

CLAUDIA

I went to Florida once, when I was about Tate's age. Your Uncle John talked me into riding the roller coaster.

Tate looks at his mom -- a story about her he's never heard before.

TATE

You on a roller coaster? You don't even like ferris wheels.

CLAUDIA

They have this camera that takes a picture of everyone as the ride comes down the big drop at the end. You should've seen the picture of me. My mouth is wide open -- screaming my head off!

Claudia makes a funny face. Tate laughs. And then -- thankfully -- Mia does too.

MIA

When we go, we're gonna make you ride it again, mom.

CLAUDIA

Oh no I'm not.

TATE/MIA

Yeah you are -- c'mon, mom!

Everyone gets so caught up in the idea of the vacation, it's like they've forgotten their dire situation for a moment. They're just a family having fun. Making plans.

PULL BACK FROM THE FAMILY as they continue to tell stories... their laughter fading away as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Mia is asleep on a blanket, exhausted from the long day. Tate flips through a magazine.

Claudia sits on the floor next to the children, loading new batteries into a flashlight.

TATE

Mom... why is this happening?

Claudia stops her work and looks at her son. The mind of a child, always searching for answers. Claudia thinks for a beat. Then, quietly --

CLAUDIA

I don't know. It's like... the birds... their world has been changed so much because of us. They have to keep adapting. They keep getting pushed.

(beat)

Maybe something shifted in their instincts... now they're pushing back.

Tate nods. In this moment, it makes as much sense as anything. He stretches his legs. Walks over to some FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS on the wall. All of them of the FAMILY who own this house...

...Christmas morning as the FATHER opens a present from his kids... the DAUGHTER at a dance recital... the entire FAMILY enjoying a BBQ on the beach...

CLAUDIA

You should try to get some sleep.

Tate doesn't respond. He's just standing there looking at a particular photo. It's of the YOUNGEST SON at a swim meet... his parents proudly clapping as the boy receives a medal.

CLAUDIA

Tate...

TATE

(beat)

Dad's not going to ever see me play ball again, is he?

The question catches Claudia totally off-guard. She stops her work and approaches Tate.

CLAUDIA

Of course he is, honey.

(beat)

Like we were talking about... maybe you can stay with him this summer. You could probably even get back on your old team.

Tate turns and looks at his mother. Heartache in his eyes.

TATE

He doesn't want me.

(beat)

I talked to him last night. He said that now's not a good time.

(beat)

But I know that it's never going to be a good time.

Claudia crouches down next to Tate. Brushes his hair back.

CLAUDIA

I'm so sorry, baby. I'm sorry for everything.

TATE

Then why didn't you try harder?

Claudia swallows. Devastated to see how much her son has been hurting.

CLAUDIA

Your dad and I... we tried so hard to make it work. But sometimes moms and dads just can't fix their problems.

TATE

(quiet)

But what if one day... you didn't want me either?

Claudia looks like she's had the wind knocked out of her -- realizing that this has been her son's darkest fear since the divorce.

CLAUDIA

That could never happen. You're my baby and I will always love you. Nothing could ever take those feelings away. Nothing. Do you hear me?

Tate nods, fighting back his emotions. These words meaning everything to him.

Beat... then Tate surprises his mom with a fierce hug. The anger... the attitude... all gone.

Claudia hugs back. Like she finally has her son again.

But then... in the distance there's the sound of the town's EMERGENCY SIREN. That dreaded noise rising and falling... rising and falling...

Claudia and Tate slowly pull away from each other... trading a look as they listen to the wailing, echoing siren.

Claudia goes to the radio. She tries to find the emergency information channel, but there's only STATIC.

CLAUDIA

Nothing... I'm not getting anything.

Mia wakes up. She hears the sirens too.

MIA

Is it the birds?

CLAUDIA

I think so...

Everyone keeps listening to the sirens. All eyes staring up... waiting for the inevitable sound of birds.

Mia starts singing a quiet little song... something to make her feel better in this dark hour.

MIA

Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?

Now -- ANOTHER SOUND approaching. Like a SLOW ROLLING THUNDER coming from far away...

MIA

Yes sir, yes sir -- three bags full.

The EMERGENCY SIREN continues to wail as that other THUNDEROUS NOISE grows louder... moving CLOSER.

The family moves closer together, listening as we go --

EXT. PORT CALHOUN - NIGHT

The deserted Main Street. Like we last saw it. Broken windows. Buildings smeared with bird droppings. The traffic light the only sign of movement out here as it changes from yellow to red.

And then there is movement in the sky -- LIKE A THUNDERCLOUD MOVING IN. What must be MILLIONS OF BIRDS PASSING OVER TOWN.

Hard to even comprehend the magnitude of birds -- just a MASSIVE VEIL OF DARKNESS moving across the night sky... blacking out the HARVEST MOON and the stars.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

All the abandoned cars still on the road in the dark... just where they were left. Like an eerie auto graveyard.

AS THE MASSIVE FLOCK OF BIRDS flies overhead... and begins to descend from the sky.

The sound getting louder and more distinct as we hear all the different SCREECHING and CHITTERING and CAWING of the birds.

THE MASSIVE FLOCK begins to splinter -- separating into groups of LARGE FLOCKS. Heading in different directions.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

A RUSTY OLD WINDMILL slowly spins, turning and SQUEAKING in the night breeze.

And then that sound approaches... THE BIRDS coming closer and closer. The windmill starts to spin a little faster, as if the HUGE FLOCK OF BIRDS are generating a small wind.

The SQUEAKING goes faster and faster and suddenly --

-- the WINDMILL is overtaken as THE BIRDS fly past. The mill blades snap off. The frame bends and snaps from the force of the mass impact.

Some birds fall dead from the collisions, but it's a mere fraction compared to the total size of this HUGE FLOCK.

This SPLINTER CLOUD OF BIRDS moves on... leaving the destroyed windmill in their wake.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

The family is still standing together in the downstairs living room, staring up at the ceiling. Listening with a growing sense of doom. The rising sound of the birds starting to drown out the emergency siren.

And Mia continues to sing...

MIA
*One for the master, one for the
 dame...*

And now the sound is RIGHT OVER THE HOUSE. Like a jetliner roaring overhead.

The family trades quiet looks with one another. The fear of the unknown has never been more intense.

Mia stops singing, too scared to continue.

CLAUDIA
 That's a beautiful song, sweetie.
 Why don't you keep singing?

MIA
*One for the little boy who lives
 down the lane.*

Now the sound changes. THOUSANDS OF BIRDS landing and settling on the roof. The noise like a hail storm. All those clawed feet SCRATCHING against the shingles.

MIA
*Baa baa black sheep... have you any
 wool. Yes sir yes sir -- three
 bags full.*

Mia finishes her song. The sound of the birds on the roof slowly growing more quiet as they settle.

-- and then a CROW begins to call out -- CAW! CAW!

TATE listens to the calling. His mind racing as --

-- the sound of the birds RISES AGAIN. Taking flight.

Claudia follows the sound of the movement with her eyes... as THE BIRDS ARE NOW AT THE WINDOWS. Pecking. Desperately trying to get in through the storm shutters.

Everyone holds their breath as the pecking and clawing to get in grows more hostile.

CLAUDIA
 It's holding...

Suddenly -- there are THUMPS AT THE DOOR. The sound of large birds ramming into the front door. THUMP! THUMP! The door rattles from the pounding impact, but the heavy armoire holds it steady.

Claudia is suddenly filled with a rush of hope.

CLAUDIA

It's holding. They're not getting in.

THE CROW calls again and the efforts at the windows and door suddenly stops. THE BIRDS take flight and settle once again on the roof.

The quiet returns. Just the settling sound of birds on the roof. The house CREAKING from their weight.

Long beat...

TATE

What are they doing now?

Claudia shakes her head. Eyes searching. Waiting. Then --
-- some kind of metallic RATTLING NOISE coming from the back of the house.

Claudia turns toward the sound. Listening.

CLAUDIA

Stay here.

Tate puts a protective arm around Mia as Claudia goes to investigate the sound. Moving into --

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Claudia glances around. Everything still sealed up tight in here. But then there's that sound again... a metallic RATTLING... coming from the utility room.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claudia takes a step inside the small dark room. She scans around -- where is that sound coming from?

And then there's a THUMP in the dryer...

Claudia takes another step forward... as the dryer THUMPS again. Something bumping around in there.

Claudia's mouth goes dry as the realization hits her --

CLAUDIA

The dryer vent... they're coming through the dryer vent.

The dryer door RATTLES... and then slowly pops open. Just darkness inside the dryer. Nothing comes out.

Beat... then a CROW flies out of the dryer and lands up on the hot water heater -- looking around. And then it's as if the animal is staring right at Claudia.

Claudia shoves a step ladder in front of the dryer, jamming the door shut. She backtracks into the kitchen... AS THE CROW COMES FLYING IN. Taking a perch on the back of one of the kitchen table chairs.

The bird starts to CAW! -- the jarring sound so loud in the confines of the house.

Claudia closes the kitchen door. Holds it shut with her body.

CLAUDIA

Tate, bring me the hammer -- some nails!

Tate rummages through a toolbox on the dining room table as the CROW keeps calling from the kitchen. But the sound of the call is different. It's now a GUTTURAL, CLICKING NOISE.

Up on the roof, we hear the sound of SHIFTING BIRDS. Tate's eyes track the movement. In a whisper...

TATE

It's talking to the other birds.

Suddenly, the sound of a MASSIVE AMOUNT OF BIRDS lifting off from the roof. Taking flight.

MIA

Are they leaving?

The family can only listen as the WAVE OF SOUND SEEMS TO CIRCLE THE HOUSE. It's like standing in the middle of a vortex. As the sound reaches a crescendo --

-- there's an EXPLOSION outside. BOOM! Lights flicker in the house. Tate goes to a window, peeks out between a narrow crack in the slats to see --

-- in the dim light of night, SWARMS OF BIRDS ARE FLYING INTO THE POWER LINES. Flying and SLAMMING into transformer boxes on utility poles.

The sheer MASS WAVE OF BIRDS causes power lines to snap. Another transformer box EXPLODES in a shower of sparks against the dark night.

And suddenly the house is PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS. Power out. Just the dull glow of MOONLIGHT now.

Beat in the dark house... then FLASHLIGHTS TURN ON.

Claudia's still at the kitchen door -- holding it closed. She shines her light around, a quick check to make sure where everyone is.

CLAUDIA

This is probably happening to all the houses. The birds cutting everyone off.

THE CROW continues to call from the kitchen.

MIA

The bird's still talking.

TATE

The calls keep changing... maybe he's telling the others that we're in here.

A beat... and then Tate goes to the gun case and pulls out the SHOTGUN.

CLAUDIA

Tate -- what're you doing?

TATE

We have to stop that bird --

CLAUDIA

-- but I don't know how to shoot a gun.

Tate grabs a box of ammo from the gun case... loading shells into the shotgun.

TATE

I do.

Claudia's conflicted, but she knows that now is not the time to argue about this. She quickly turns to Mia.

CLAUDIA

I want you in that corner. C'mon -- hurry.

Mia goes to a safe corner of the living room.

Tate grips the gun... Claudia holds her flashlight. She nods at her son. A beat and then Tate slowly pushes opens the kitchen door -- points the shotgun into the kitchen.

Claudia steps up from behind. Scans the flashlight around the room... looking for the crow. The bird no longer perched on the back of the kitchen table chair.

In fact... there's no sign of THE CROW.

They take a cautious step into the kitchen. The flashlight scanning light across the counter... the stove... up on top of the refrigerator. And sitting up there in the dark --

-- THE CROW. It CAWS and comes FLYING AT TATE AND CLAUDIA.

Tate pulls the trigger -- BANG! Fires into the kitchen.

The shot SHATTERS one of the dish cabinets, but THE CROW had already flown past -- evading the shot. Disappearing into the dark downstairs of the house.

Tate and Claudia pull back out of the kitchen. Into the living room, trying to figure out where the bird went.

Claudia holds a hand up to Mia -- just stay here.

Tate moves further into the living room -- shotgun aimed and ready while Claudia sweeps the room with light.

CLAUDIA
(under her breath)
Where the hell are you...?

They keep searching and scanning.

Tate's finger tenses on the trigger as --

-- THE CROW COMES FLYING OUT OF THE DARK -- RIGHT INTO THE GLARE OF THE FLASHLIGHT. A rush of black feathers and claws.

Tate swings the gun, trying to line up a shot. But the crow bursts right past them -- flies off to some unseen perch.

Mia whispers out from the corner --

MIA
It's coming for the light.

Tate and Claudia look over at Mia. Both of them now understanding what they have to do. Tate loads another shell into the shotgun.

Mother and son stand there -- listening hard. They can hear the CROW moving around the room from spot to spot. Over here... now over there.

They wait... and now there's no sound from THE CROW. Like it's about to strike any second. Beat --

-- then Claudia THROWS THE FLASHLIGHT into a far corner.

The flashlight rolls to the floor and THE CROW instantly dives toward the light. Pecking and clawing at the flashlight -- holding a perfect position while Tate lines up a shot and --

BANG! The crow is silenced... the flashlight now blown to bits as well.

Mia runs out from her safe spot. Shines a flashlight down at the DEAD CROW.

MIA
You got it!

Tate looks at the dead bird -- amazed that he actually hit it. Claudia and Mia grab Tate in a hug. Even though it's just one bird, it feels like a victory.

BUT NOW OUTSIDE, there is the sound of the birds taking flight again. And for the first time, IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY ARE FLYING AWAY. The sound fading from the house.

The family stands together -- listening. Trying to understand this latest turn of events.

CLAUDIA
Please... let them be leaving.

THE SOUND OF THE BIRDS continues to fade... fade...

...and then it comes ROARING BACK. LOUDER AND MORE FEROCIOUS THAN EVER as birds SLAM INTO THE HOUSE.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In the dark of night we see THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF BIRDS POUNDING AGAINST THE HOUSE. Attacking from all sides. On the roof, at the walls.

THE HOUSE IS COMPLETELY COVERED -- no part of it even visible anymore. As if all the birds are one single-minded force of nature trying to get inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The family looks up, listening as GLASS STARTS TO SHATTER upstairs. WOOD BREAKING and SNAPPING. A new fear hitting everyone at the same time.

TATE
They're getting through the storm
shutters...

Everyone huddles closer together. Suddenly, a loud POUNDING begins upstairs. Claudia and the kids jump at the noise.

TATE

They're in the bedrooms... trying
to get through the doors...

CLAUDIA

They're sealed. They'll hold.

THE POUNDING continues. The sound BOOMING through the house.
Claudia looks up at the noise. Pure dread on her face.

CLAUDIA

Get in the hallway. Hurry.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Claudia gets the kids into the corridor and shuts the door.

They are all now in an enclosed hallway. The door at the
other end already nailed shut. The only other door in here
leading to a small hall closet.

The family stands with their flashlights as that SOUND
continues upstairs -- the relentless POUNDING.

Tate's still holding the shotgun, breathing hard.

TATE

We have to do something -- try to
drive them out --

CLAUDIA

-- but there's too many of them.

Beat, and then Tate says quietly --

TATE

Smoke... they don't like smoke.

Claudia looks at Tate, listening intently.

TATE

I was reading that when there's
forest fires, birds leave the area
because of all the smoke.

Claudia remembers something --

CLAUDIA

Like today when that helicopter
crashed -- the birds stayed away
from the smoke.

(beat)

We could try to make some smoke.

(a revelation --)

The flares.

TATE

-- but we don't have them. We left em' out there.

CLAUDIA

I'll go get them.

Mia suddenly realizes that Claudia is going to leave them.

MIA

Mommy -- don't go.

CLAUDIA

You guys are going to keep this door closed behind me.

MIA

Mommy...

CLAUDIA

There's nothing that's going to stop them. They're going to get us all if I don't do something.

Tate fights back tears, scared he's never going to see his mom again.

CLAUDIA

(to Tate)

You stay close to your sister. You can do this -- I know you can.

Tate takes a breath. Finds his strength.

Claudia kisses Mia and Tate on top of their heads. Total resolve and love in her eyes.

CLAUDIA

We're all going to get through this. I promise.

And then the hardest thing she's ever done in her life... Claudia steps away from her kids, back out into the LIVING ROOM as she shuts the door.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

CLAUDIA backs away from the hallway door. Moving fast through the dark to the dining room table --

-- only to discover that the ROADSIDE EMERGENCY KIT ISN'T THERE. In all the work around the house... it got moved.

There's a SOUND FROM UPSTAIRS. A bedroom door comes loose and CRASHES TO THE FLOOR. Rattling the house.

Claudia frantically scans around with her flashlight -- where the hell's the emergency kit!? And then she spots it. Across the way in the living room.

Claudia bolts for the flares --

-- as BIRDS START POURING DOWN THE STAIRS. SHRIEKING and flying through the flickering moonlight.

Claudia grabs a blanket off the floor and wraps herself up, pulling it over her head like a hood --

-- just as she is SWARMED BY THE BIRDS. The SCREECHING and CAWING is deafening. There is no other sound.

The birds SLAM into Claudia as she scrambles for the EMERGENCY KIT. The pecking and clawing is immediate and savage. Her blanket the only thing protecting her.

Claudia finally reaches the kit. She hunches over it and pulls out one of the FLARES. Fumbling with it as the birds peck at her exposed arms and hands.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mia and Tate stand in the hallway as birds begin to SCRATCH AND THUMP on the other side of the door. Mia looks down... her eyes going wide.

MIA

Tate!

Tate looks down to see SMALL BIRDS SQUEEZING THROUGH THE CRACK UNDER THE DOOR. He stomps them. Killing the birds.

Tate whips off his jacket, stuffing it under the bottom of the door to keep more birds from coming in.

Tate backs away from the door... pulling Mia with him. They keep backing away until they're at the far end of the hallway.

But BIRDS ARE STARTING TO POUND on the hallway door...

Tate's eyes are fixed on that door. It's the last barrier between the birds and them. THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! Tate raises the SHOTGUN -- aiming it at the door -- ready.

TATE

Don't be scared, Mia. Just don't be scared...

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

THE BIRDS are clawing at Claudia's protective blanket, trying to tear it away from her --

-- but she is totally focused on the flare. Struggling to light it against the striking surface of the flare cap.

A BIRD bites her hand -- HARD. Holding on and not letting go. Claudia SCREAMS OUT in pain. She flings the bird off -- but loses the flare in the process as it goes rolling away across the floor.

She grabs another flare. Pulls the cap off. Working the tip across the striking surface.

CLAUDIA
Come on -- dammit!

It's not working... she keeps trying. Again -- and again --

-- and finally THE FLARE IGNITES. The downstairs area suddenly BLASTED WITH GLARING INTENSE LIGHT.

It's a shocking sight. The flare revealing just how many birds are in the house. A thick surging mass of pounding wings and eyes and screeching beaks.

Claudia rises. Blanket wrapped around her. She waves her burning flare at the birds -- a mother pushed to her most primitive instinct to protect her children.

CLAUDIA
Get out!

Claudia WHIPS THE FLARE back and forth -- hitting birds.

CLAUDIA
Get away from my family!

THICK SMOKE is starting to fill the downstairs --

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tate and Mia stand together as the BIRDS CONTINUE TO POUND the door at the far end of the hall. And now --

-- THE DOOR STARTS TO SPLINTER. The wood cracking and splitting from the force of the birds. The SOUND AND FURY absolutely relentless.

TATE RAISES THE SHOTGUN --

-- as the hallway door continues to SPLINTER -- the top end of the door falling away from the hinge. SMALLER BIRDS starting to get through the gaps -- flying into the hall.

BANG! Tate fires. Birds drop. But more are coming. So many more...

Tate pumps the shotgun --

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

-- Claudia keeps swinging her burning flare at the birds as she hears the SHOTGUN BLASTS ringing through the house.

CLAUDIA

Tate!

But there's no response from her son...

Claudia grabs two more flares from the kit -- uses the burning end of her flare to light them --

-- WHOOSH! MORE GLARING LIGHT BLASTING THE ROOM.

THE BIRDS ARE IN A COMPLETE FRENZY, a swarm of flying shapes SCREECHING around the house. Disoriented and agitated by the blinding light and smoke.

Claudia tosses one of the flares into the SWARM OF BIRDS. They scatter. The flare hits the ground, creating even more smoke in the downstairs.

Claudia keeps swinging her flare at the attacking birds.

One of the birds gets too close -- AND CATCHES ON FIRE.

The BURNING BIRD sputters around the room -- flying blindly into the walls... dropping to the floor in death.

THE SMOKE DOWNSTAIRS IS NOW SO THICK. Claudia covers her mouth with the blanket -- coughing.

...and then there's a SHIFT IN THE BIRDS. Their attack subsides. Weary from the smoke and flares.

And now just as urgently as the birds were trying to get in, THE BIRDS ARE RETREATING FROM THE HOUSE.

ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE WE SEE -- birds flying out through the broken doors and window paneling. Squeezing back out through holes that are now torn in the side of the house. An exodus.

Claudia staggers toward the hallway... coughing hard... barely able to see through all the smoke. The last remaining birds flying past...

She finally reaches the hallway -- her fear rising as she sees the SPLINTERED DOOR.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Claudia steps into the hall.

CLAUDIA

Mia! Tate!

No answer. Claudia looks down to see Tate's JACKET laying on the floor... torn to shreds by the birds.

Claudia moves fast through the smoke to the end of the hallway... NO SIGN OF HER FAMILY. Just the SHOTGUN and a flashlight on the ground.

Claudia drops to her knees. Beyond devastation. Fearing that the worst has happened to her kids.

And then the quietest voice calls out...

MIA

Mommy...?

Claudia is jolted by her daughter's voice. She turns and sees the HALLWAY CLOSET. She pulls the door open --

-- AND THERE ARE HER CHILDREN. Huddled on the floor in the dark. Safe. Alive.

Claudia pulls everyone into an embrace... all of them holding on to each other as if they may never let go again.

THE THUNDEROUS SOUND OF THE BIRDS OUTSIDE echoes away as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORT CALHOUN - MORNING

As the sun rises over the Gulf, we DISSOLVE THROUGH IMAGES of town. Everything set against an otherworldly quiet...

EXT. FARM FIELD - MORNING

That HOMEMADE SCARECROW lies in tatters... its clothes strewn across the ground.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - MORNING

The outfield plywood wall is in pieces. Dead birds snagged and hanging in the chain-link fence behind home plate.

Everything looking so desolate... like it's been decades since kids played here.

EXT. CONDO CONSTRUCTION SITE - MORNING

Nothing left of the wood housing frames. Levelled. All that remains is the battered "Paradise View" billboard.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Simply wiped out. Hard to imagine that people could ever live here again...

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Claudia, Tate and Mia step out through the front door. As they continue further outside, they can see in the light of morning all the damage done to the house.

Shingles stripped from the roof... siding torn away... framework and insulation visible through huge holes in the walls... not a single window left intact.

Dead birds are scattered everywhere... thick utility poles splintered -- broken and tilted like mere twigs.

THE FAMILY keeps walking... making their way to the top of a low sand dune... a view of everything around them. They look to the sky... the trees... the power lines. Not a sign of a bird -- anywhere.

TATE

Where'd they all go?

Claudia stands there in the quiet after the storm.

CLAUDIA

It's like they did what they needed to do.

(beat)

Moving on to someplace else...

A MAILBOX lays broken in the sand, somehow tossed here in the wake of the birds. Mia pulls the mailbox out of the sand... brushing it off.

MIA

What about our house? Do you think it's okay?

Claudia looks out over the Gulf... the clear open waters. A renewed sense of strength in her eyes.

CLAUDIA

Yeah.

(beat)

It's going to be okay.

PULL AWAY from the family. Up into the sky. Taking in the destruction of the HOUSE... the surrounding area.

KEEP PULLING AWAY until it all seems so small and distant.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LIGHT POLE. Sitting there empty for a long beat... and then a CROW comes in and lands on the pole. THE BIRD'S black eyes looking out. Studying...

WIDEN TO REVEAL there are OTHER CROWS AND BIRDS perched on nearby poles and wires...

WIDEN FURTHER. It's a HUGE GATHERING OF BIRDS. All different kinds of species.

ANGLE COMES AROUND TO REVEAL that the birds are looking at A CITY in the distance. All those big buildings and freeways and neighborhoods... all those people.

A CROW begins to call. Now the others birds join in. The noise growing LOUDER AND LOUDER as we --

SLAM TO BLACK. The birds still calling in the darkness.

The end.