

THE BOY

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEADOW - LATE AFTERNOON

Upstate Washington.

Three girls in scarves and hats walk in a line through a wide meadow toward a large wood. As they walk, the girls sing "Itsy Bitsy Spider" complete with hand motions.

GIRLS

(singing)

Itsy bitsy spider went up the water
spout. Down came the rain and washed
the spider out...

REBECCA CLINE (12) tall and thin, confidently walks in the lead. Behind her LILY WILSON (10), a head shorter than Rebecca, follows eagerly. MARINA HESS (12) shyly takes up the rear.

YOUNG LILY

It's colder than I thought. You think
the lake will have ice?

YOUNG REBECCA

It's not that cold, Lily.

YOUNG LILY

Feels like it's freezing.

Marina looks up and sees four black birds gliding against the sky.

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

The Three walk through the changing trees. The low sun highlights the gold and orange of the autumn leaves. They move casually, running hands along the trees.

Lily mindlessly knocks a stick against the trees - tap, tap, tap. She hums "Itsy Bitsy Spider."

YOUNG LILY

It's even colder here.

YOUNG REBECCA

We're out of the sun, that's all.

They walk deeper into the woods.

--Wading through a drift of fallen leaves, kicking leaves and laughing.

--Balancing on a downed tree.

YOUNG LILY
All the trees are dead.

YOUNG REBECCA
They just look that way.

YOUNG LILY
This one's dead.

--Lily and Rebecca peel the bark from a slender beech tree.

EXT. WOODS - BROOK - DUSK

The three girls come to a shallow brook babbling over stones.
Lily and Rebecca toss rocks into the water.

Marina holds her palm to a tree, looking up its trunk at the
branches silhouetted against the dusky sky.

YOUNG LILY
Think all the animals are
hibernating?

YOUNG REBECCA
Sure. Most. Some are gone.

YOUNG LILY
How do they know where to come back
to?

YOUNG REBECCA
They listen.

Rebecca picks up a fist-sized stone.

YOUNG LILY
Yeah, but to what? I mean, wha--

Rebecca slams the stone against the side of Lily's head. Lily
stumbles sideways, into the water. She awkwardly trips to her
knees.

As Rebecca strides toward her, Lily tries to crawl through
the stream. Rebecca easily catches up to her and hits her
again with the rock. She grips Lily's scarf from behind and
pulls it tight around her neck. She yanks Lily to her feet.

Both girls face Marina who stands unmoving some feet away.
She holds a small black-handled paring knife in her hand.

YOUNG REBECCA
Do it.

YOUNG MARINA
You didn't say it was today.

YOUNG REBECCA
Do it, now!

YOUNG MARINA
But...

Lily's hands pull at the scarf, then scratch at Rebecca's hair and face. Rebecca seems unaffected, though blood runs down her face.

YOUNG REBECCA
Do it, Marina. It's what he wants.
Now.

Marina breathes. She grips the knife but has not moved.

YOUNG REBECCA (CONT'D)
Now!

ABOVE THE TREES four black birds fly against the sky. From somewhere a child screams.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Rebecca, blood on her hands, drags Lily by the feet, her head bouncing along the path.

Marina follows, blank-faced.

EXT. WOODS - LAKE BOWSMAN - SUNSET

The sky glows orange and red as Rebecca drags Lily to the water's edge of the large lake. She looks to Marina with fierce eyes.

YOUNG REBECCA
(stern)
Touch her.

Marina kneels by Lily and gently touches her palms to her blood-soaked chest. The chest moves.

YOUNG MARINA
She's still breathing...

YOUNG REBECCA
It won't be long now.

Rebecca moves around the shore with businesslike proficiency. From her backpack she pulls a baseball, a small pair of antique wire-rimmed glasses, and an 1900's-era school book titled *Every Boys Reader*. She spreads the items on rocks about the shore.

Lily is breathing. Her lips move, nearly imperceptibly. Marina leans her ear close to Lily's mouth. Lily whispers something, but only Marina hears.

REBECCA

Wet your hands.

Rebecca kneels by Marina and pushes her hands firmly on Lily's chest. Lily releases a dry groan.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Give him blood and you're his
forever.

Marina stands.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

The lake. You go.

Rebecca pulls a pair of gardening hand clippers from her coat and leans over Lily. She turns to Marina who is staring in horror.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Marina, move!

Obediently, Marina heads to the lake, wading into the water up to her waist. The quiet murmur of the forest echoes off the water.

From the shore, Lily makes a sick cry and falls quiet. Marina turns as Rebecca stands, holding something.

Rebecca opens her fist. She's holding a severed pinky finger. She lowers her open hand under the water. The finger floats from her palm, drifting away like a twig.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Give the blood to the lake.

The Girls put their palms flat down into the water. They stand in the waters for a quiet moment. Nothing seems to move.

Rebecca shatters the silence.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
(Calling out)
You found us. You chose us. We did
this for you. We did this for you.

Her voice echoes against the water.

The sound of gravel shifting comes from the shore behind them. Marina turns and sees Lily pulling herself away from the lake and toward the trees.

MARINA
(sotto)
Lily.

REBECCA
There!

Rebecca points to the trees on the far side of the lake.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
He's there.

Marina turns back, but lowers her head, watching the water.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Look!

MARINA
Please, Rebecca.

REBECCA
Look!

Rebecca pulls Marina's hair back forcing Marina to look. In the shadows of the trees on the far shore of the lake stands THE BOY - small, pale, dressed in an early 1900's school uniform.

Marina screams.

TITLE - **THE BOY**

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DR. WARD'S OFFICE - MORNING

Through a window we see GIRLS in detention uniforms playing in the courtyard two stories below. We can just hear their muffled high-pitched screams.

DR. WARD (O.S.)
Marina?

Marina sits in a chair by the window watching the girls play, her expression blank, her eyes dull. She is perhaps a year older. A worn teddy bear hangs from her hand.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Marina?

DR. WARD, 30's, sits halfway across the room, an open folder on her lap. She's professional and focused, her black hair pulled into a bun. Her demeanor is no-nonsense, but her eyes softened with compassion. She wears a small cross necklace.

Her office is simple: a few chairs, some soft toys on a round rug, wall painted a calming light green. Her cluttered desk is pushed to a corner. Her Doctor of Psychology degree hangs framed on the wall.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Let's talk about the Boy again.

Marina doesn't react.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

You found him--

MARINA

He found us.

DR. WARD

You found his picture on the internet. Did Rebecca find it on her own or were you there?

MARINA

He found us.

Dr. Ward rubs the bridge of her nose.

DR. WARD

We've discussed this--

MARINA

(her voice rising)

He wrote us letters. Wrote us notes.

The open folder in Dr. Ward's lap has a black and white picture of a 1900's school boy. Dr. Ward thumbs through a few handwritten notes in pencil and crayon: **I choose you; Meet me in the woods; I'll never lie to you.**

DR. WARD

Now, Marina.

MARINA

His mother didn't want him. He was gifted and his mother hated him. She murdered him. He told us. She wrapped him in bed sheets. She stuck him like a pig. She threw him in the lake.

DR. WARD

The place you left Lily. The same lake.

MARINA

He told us to. He told us... he needed blood. He said... He told us to do it.

DR. WARD

(calm)

You know that's not true, Marina. You know there is no Boy.

MARINA

He wrote--

DR. WARD

Rebecca wrote the notes.

Marina frowns.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

I think you wrote some, too.

MARINA

His mother--

DR. WARD

I know. Threw him in Bowsman Lake. There's no record of any drowning or any murder. Nothing.

Marina turns back to the window.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

You girls made it up. Just a story.

Dr. Ward sighs and we understand this conversation has been repeated several times.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

You know this, Marina. Rebecca confessed, under oath, that she wrote those letters. She lured you on. Sometimes the mind believes something, Marina. Believes it so much that--

Marina SCREAMS, a sustained yell of fury. She jumps to her feet, throwing down the teddy bear and slamming the chair to the floor, continuing her scream.

Dr. Ward sighs again, unfazed.

Marina RUNS up to Dr. Ward, putting her face inches away from her doctor's. Her voice thunders.

MARINA
I SAW HIM!

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DR. WARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Ward, two years older, reads aloud from a folder. Marina, now 14, pulls hard at her hair and squirms in her chair, as if the words Dr. Ward reads burns her skin.

DR. WARD
Four entry wounds to the left
shoulder. Two to the abdomen,
puncturing the pancreas. Three more
stabs--

MARINA
No. No. No.

Dr. Ward reads over Marina's continuing protests.

DR. WARD
Three more stabs wounds were
inflicted on the chest. While
stabbing the chest the blade snapped
inside the victim.

MARINA
He told me to do it. The Boy. He
claimed me! I'm his!

Marina slips from the chair and curls in on herself, covering her ears. Dr. Ward rushes to her, squats down and continues to read.

DR. WARD
The victim's skull was fractured
along the right side.

Marina twists her head, frantic like a trapped animal.

MARINA
(yelling)
I did not do this! I did not do this!
He made me! He will always find me!

DR. WARD

Contusions and abrasions were present about the neck, eyes, and inner thighs.

MARINA

I don't remember!

DR. WARD

Do you remember her finger?

Marina is shaking her head, but the words are getting through.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

The pinky finger of the victim's right hand was partially cut and eventually torn from the body.

Marina is listening now. Listening to every word. Breathing in hard.

Dr. Ward takes a glossy photo and shoves it in front of Marina's face. We can barely see the image of a mutilated hand with a ragged stump at the pinky.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Look! Look!

Marina looks away. Dr. Ward grips Marina's chin and turns her head to the picture.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Look!

Marina studies the photo. Dr. Ward drops it and reveals another. And another. Marina watches each one, her face growing looser, stranger as if only now realizing the scope of her actions.

Marina locks eyes with Dr. Ward, her eyes blazing.

MARINA

(quiet)

I did this?

Dr. Ward nods.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I did this.

EXT. JUVENILE DETENTION - YARD - DAY

Marina, now 18, walks alone in the crowded yard. Other juvenile PRISONERS gather in groups talking and laughing. But Marina keeps to herself. The other Prisoners hardly glance her way.

GUARDS stand watch.

Marina runs her hands along the fence. She looks up, watching the overcast sky.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DR. WARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Ward sits in her chair. Marina paces the room.

DR. WARD

Self hallucination puts you in some company. William Blake, Hildegard of Bingen, hell, even Jim Morrison thought he had a dead shaman take over his soul. All of them believed in something enough to actually see it, feel it. Angels, spirits, demons.

Marina has wandered behind Dr. Ward and toward her desk. Dr. Ward continues to face forward.

MARINA

Did any of them stab someone?

DR. WARD

Joan of Arc did. Hundreds. And they made her a saint.

MARINA

Was that before or after burning her at the stake?

Dr. Ward gives a wry smile.

Marina picks up a framed picture from Dr. Ward's desk. A photo of Dr. Ward and a MAN holding a smiling TODDLER. Marina runs a finger along the silver frame.

DR. WARD

Do you still see him?

Marina shakes her head.

MARINA

But sometimes I wish I did.
(looking up)
(MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

Is that crazy? I miss... believing in him.

Dr. Ward turns in her seat and faces her. She shakes her head.

DR. WARD

Not crazy. People want to believe in something... or someone. Hell, I believed in Santa Claus till I was...
(beat)
I still believe in Santa Claus.

Marina laughs a little.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

We all have faith in something. A religion, a person, a government, our own intellect. It's part of being human.

Marina catches sight of the silver cross around Dr. Ward's neck.

MARINA

How do you know?

DR. WARD

How do you know what?

MARINA

How do you know if what you believe is real?

Dr. Ward follows her gaze and touches her cross.

DR. WARD

You don't.

Dr. Ward reaches behind her neck and unclasps her necklace.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

You have to choose.

She hands places the necklace and silver cross in Marina's palm.

Marina looks from the cross to Dr. Ward. Dr. Ward smiles.

INT. WASHINGTON STATE PRISON - MORNING

Marina, now 28, lays in a prison top bunk in the near dark. She dangles the silver cross above her, watching it spin.

A hard buzz echoes through the cell. Florescent lights flicker to life filling the small cell with a sickly glow.

Marina's CELL MATE stands, looking tired and mean. She smacks Marina's head, casual and cruel.

CELL MATE
Morning, freak.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DR. WARD'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Marina, wearing the cross, holds the same teddy bear she held in the office 15 years before. It's worn down, both bead eyes now missing. Marina smiles sadly.

An older Dr. Ward leans back against her desk.

DR. WARD
So, how's the big house? Any improvement on the food?

MARINA
(chuckles)
Sure. The lobster bisque is outstanding.

DR. WARD
Good. Good. Are you getting along okay with the other women?

Marina nods halfheartedly.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)
And the panic attacks.

MARINA
All gone.

DR. WARD
Good, good.

Marina looks up from the teddy bear.

MARINA
They're talking about releasing me.
(beat)
I don't think they should. I don't deserve to be out. I...

Marina's breaks off and shakes her head.

DR. WARD

You were a little girl, Marina. A
confused little girl. Manipulated.
Deceived. That's not who you are now.

Marina looks down at the teddy bear. Then looks up.

MARINA

I don't want to go, okay? I'm afraid
to leave. How sick is that, Doc? I'd
rather stay locked up.

DR. WARD

(walking toward her)

Hell, that's not sick. It'd be a lot
easier just to stay here. But,
Marina, you stay here and the only
thing you'll have done with your life
is stab Lily Wilson. That's all.

Marina turns to Dr. Ward.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

You have to do more with your life,
Marina. You are meant for more.

MARINA

How do you know that?

DR. WARD

(smiling)

I choose to believe it.

Marina hugs Dr. Ward.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Now listen, a change in environment
can sometimes result in a relapse.

MARINA

I know.

DR. WARD

You'll have my number. I want you to
be prepared. Even if you experience
some mild hallucinations. Hearing
voices isn't crazy...

MARINA

(completing the sentence)

... listening to them this.

(smiling)

I understand.

Dr. Ward smiles.

DR. WARD
Do you know who you'll live with?

EXT. WASHINGTON CORRECTIONS CENTER FOR WOMEN - DAY

ALICE HESS smiles and bounces with excitement.

MARINA (O.S.)
My sister, I suppose.

Alice, 25, has a carefree smile and the energy of an extrovert. She stands smiling in the parking lot of the Center as Marina, now in civilian clothes, exits the building.

Marina appears nervous, uncertain. She tries to smile, but looks like she might cry.

MARINA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She's the only family I have left.
She and her son.

Alice steps forward and embraces her sister in a long hug. Marina looks both afraid of the hug and in desperate need of someone to hold on to.

INT. ALICE'S TRUCK - DAY

Marina watches the passing landscape as Alice's old pickup truck rolls through the Washington countryside. It's late autumn and the trees are a quilt of red and orange. Alice chats away.

ALICE
So Bryce is eight now. Eight and a quarter, he'll insist. He's a good kid, but hot damn, I started too early, you know? Never even hear from his dad, the asshole. But I'm dating again. Seeing this guy, Will. You'll like him. Do you like chicken? My God, your first meal out and I didn't even ask. Is roast chicken okay?

Alice's warmth is contagious and Marina smiles a little.

MARINA
Sounds great.

EXT. BOWSMAN - LATE AFTERNOON

The car rolls through the small town of Bowsman. The town looks a decade past its best years. The town square consists of a handful of struggling stores, a diner, and a two-screen movie theater all framing the hundred-year-old city hall building.

A spire of an old stone church looms just beyond the houses. Marina gazes from the truck's window.

INT. ALICE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Alice nods out the window at the passing store fronts. Marina blinks, taking it all in.

ALICE

Not much has changed here. We had a Blockbuster. But that closed. I work at the diner these day.

MARINA

Why didn't you leave?

ALICE

I did a semester at State. But then, Bryce came along... you know how it is.

(beat)

It's a good town.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Alice's car pulls up to a large, old farm house on the outskirts of town. The house appears to be in the midst of refurbishing. The outside has some new, unpainted planks and the large front door still has tape covering its frosted glass window.

ALICE (O.S.)

The place was abandoned for years.
Got it for a song.

The car comes to a halt under one of the large oaks adorning the yard.

As Alice and Marina step from the car, a large golden retriever lopes around the corner, happily barking. He comes right up to Marina. Marina kneels and scratches his ears.

MARINA

He's beautiful.

ALICE
Followed Bryce home one day and that
was that.

Marina reads the metal tag on his leather dog collar.

MARINA
Rolph.

ALICE
Like the Muppet.

MARINA
(scratching his head)
Hello, Rolph. Hello.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

The stillness of the house holds for a moment before the door swings open. Alice pushes in carrying Marina's one bag. Marina steps in slowly, feeling out the new space.

To her right is a partially furnished living room and to her left a dining room. The rooms are large and still in the midst of refurbishing.

ALICE
Bryce! Are you here, honey? Aunt
Marina's here.
(to Marina)
He walks home from school. He's
usually back by now.
(calling out)
Bryce?

Marina eyes the long staircase stretching to the second floor landing. The banister is newly installed. Alice follows her gaze.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I've done most of the work myself.
Lot of trial and error... Mainly
error. I've hired a few craftsmen for
the bigger jobs. That's how I met
Will. Plumber extraordinaire.
(heading to the stairs)
I'll show you your room.

INT. MARINA'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Alice opens the door and holds it open, presenting the room to Marina.

ALICE

Here it is.

It's a simple, cozy room with a full-sized bed and a window looking out on a nearby meadow. Marina steps in and moves toward the window.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Plenty of closet space. I put some of my old stuff in there if you want. There's a mall out by the interstate. You like it?

Marina turns from the window and nods.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Well, I'll let you settle in and I'll get the fore-told chicken going.

Alice starts to back out.

MARINA

Alice.

(beat)

Thanks. For all of this.

Alice smiles and pulls the door closed after her.

Marina turns back to the window. The meadow looks very similar to the one Marina walked across with Lily and Rebecca as children. Could be the exact meadow.

Behind Marina the bedroom door opens, slowly and silently.

Marina watches the meadow, lost in thought. In the reflection of the glass the hazy image of a child can be seen standing in the open door.

Marina catches sight of the image. She spins, gasping. Nothing but the open the door...

She turns back to the window. Nothing in the reflection. She looks to the side and sees BRYCE standing by the wall, staring. She yelps.

Bryce is eight years old, a little on the thin side, with dark intelligent eyes. Marina catches her breath.

MARINA (CONT'D)

You startled me.

(smiling)

You must be Bryce. I'm your mom's sister, Marina. Or, Aunt Marina, I guess.

BRYCE
I like your room.

MARINA
Me too.

BRYCE
Mom says you were in a special
school. An art school in England. And
it was too expensive to ever visit
before.

Marina is at a loss of how to respond.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Are you going to live with us?

MARINA
Yes. For a little while. Is that all
right with you?

Bryce thinks. Then nods.

BRYCE
I think I can handle that.

Marina smiles.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Marina, Alice, and Bryce sit around the dining room table.
Alice dishes a last scoop of mash potatoes on to Bryce's
plate.

ALICE
I'm relatively certain I broke zero
health code violations. So, dig in.

Bryce chuckles. He and Alice take their first bites.

MARINA
(quietly)
Thank you Father for this food and
for the hands that prepared it.

Bryce and Marina freeze mid bite and share a look.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Amen.

ALICE
Amen.

BRYCE
(with his mouthful)
Amen.

Marina smiles bashfully. Alice laughs.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marina and Alice stand by the sink washing and drying the night's dishes.

The lights flicker, but remain on. Alice shrugs.

ALICE
I got a deal on the wiring. It's on-
again, off-again, like my love life.

Alice chuckles. Marina smiles awkwardly.

A quite beat... Alice looks for a way to ease the tension.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(to Marina)
So what's on the to-do list?

MARINA
Find a job, I suppose. Maybe school,
eventually.

ALICE
(chuckling)
No, no. I mean, fun stuff. Stuff you
missed.

MARINA
Oh. I don't know...

ALICE
Roller coasters, tequila...
(quieter)
A vibrator.

Marina blushes, smiling a little.

ALICE (CONT'D)
There's got to be something you
dreamed of doing.

Marina smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Yeah?

MARINA

A bath.

ALICE

A bath?

MARINA

A bath all alone. Not a shower. A bath. No one watching. No one telling you time is up.

Marina smiles and returns her eyes to the plate she's drying. Alice takes the plate from Marina's hand.

ALICE

We've got tank of hot water and claw foot tub.

Marina opens her mouth to protest.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I got this. Go crazy.

Marina smiles.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

--Rushing water from a tap.

--Marina dips her fingers to check the temperature of the steaming bath.

--Marina lowers herself into the water.

Marina lays in the water, her eyes closed. The drip of the faucet echoes through the small room. Marina runs her hands through her hair and drops her head back and under the water.

When she reemerges, the Boy is standing by the wall behind her. His eyes are focused on her.

Marina senses something in the room. She breathes steadily and closes her eyes.

MARINA

(sotto)

Not real. Not real. I don't believe in you.

She opens her eyes and slowly turns. Nothing is there.

She breathes a sigh of relief and turns back to see Lily, as bloody and beaten as she was when Marina last saw her, sitting in the bath with her. Lily smiles.

--Marina OPENS her eyes, waking from the nightmare. She scans the room, bewildered.

KNOCK on the door.

ALICE (O.S.)
See you in the morning. Sleep in as long as you want.

MARINA
Yeah. Thanks.

INT. MARINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A gentle knock on the door. Alice cracks the door open holding a tray with a coffee cup and some cream and sugar.

ALICE
Good morning. Whoa.

Marina is fully dressed. Her bed is made perfectly.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You could have slept in, you know.

MARINA
(slight smile)
I tried. Still on prison time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room lays just to the right of the foyer. The sparse second hand furniture is cozy if worn.

Marina sits on a couch flipping through a large photo album. In the front are a few old pictures of young Marina with her sister and parents. But the rest of the album is filled with pictures of her parents and Alice. Vacations, graduations, anniversary parties - the life Marina missed.

She stops on a sweet picture of her parents and a teenage Alice on a forest path. She touches the picture.

ALICE (O.S.)
I'm sorry Mom and Dad aren't around to see this.

Marina looks up to see her sister leaning against the frame between the living room and foyer.

ALICE (CONT'D)
They always looked forward to you coming home.

Alice smiles warmly. And Marina nods.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I wish I'd visit more. Mom and Dad...
they wanted things to be as normal as
they could be for me. As if there was
such a thing as normal.

MARINA

I understand. They were looking out
for you.

Bryce, chased by a barking Rolph, runs through the foyer
behind Alice. He throws open the front door.

ALICE

(calling after him)
Zip your coat! It's freezing out
there.

Alice closes the door behind him.

MARINA

Art school in England, huh?

Alice cringes, embarrassed. She glances toward the front
door, as if to be sure Bryce is out of earshot.

ALICE

I thought that would be... easier. On
everyone.

(beat)

I just want to protect him. And you.
So I made up a story. Is that okay?

MARINA

Sure.

(smiles)

Until he sees me draw.

Alice laughs and returns toward the kitchen.

Marina's smile fades, she returns to the photo. In the
background of the photo, standing in the trees, is the Boy.

Marina looks up to Alice, but she's already left. She looks
down again, and the Boy is no longer in the picture.

MARINA (CONT'D)

(closing her eyes)

Not real. I don't believe in you. I
don't.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Bryce kicks a soccer ball in the backyard. Rolph jumps around the ball, barking.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A black-handled paring knife chops carrots.

Alice stands at the counter chopping.

ALICE

So, I don't know, this Will guy. I mean, I like him. But that's usually a sure sign the guy's an asshole.

RING. Alice fishes her cell from her back pocket.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil.

MARINA

I'll take over.

ALICE

Oh, thanks.

Alice hands Marina the knife and answers the phone.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Will?... Yeah... No, we can wait a bit... Yeah, wine sounds good...

Marina looks at the knife in her hand. A slight fear lights her face. She shakes it off and begins chopping the carrots.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Alice and Marina laugh, sitting around the dinner table in the low lit room just off the foyer. They sip wine as they listen to a story from WILL, mid 20's, broad-shouldered, handsome, and charming.

WILL

I told, I told him twice, you have to pump the thing or your whole house will smell like that. But this guy, some big shot lawyer or something, ain't gonna take advice from some hick, right? Fine by me.

ALICE
(giggling)
Fine by you. Yeah.

Bryce drinks from a glass of milk and watches the adults with curiosity.

With the wine and laughter, Marina seems much more relaxed. As she laughs, she affectionately touches her sister's arm.

WILL
Fine by me. I get paid and go. But
two weeks later...

ALICE
Oh no.

Will refills his wine glass as he continues his story.

WILL
Just two weeks later and this guy
calls me at three in the morning. 'Oh
Jesus, oh Jesus! Everything smells
like shit!'

Everyone laughs, including Bryce. Alice unsuccessfully tries to swallow her laugh.

ALICE
Hey, Will! Language.

WILL
Right. Like, what, poop?

ALICE
Better.

WILL
Everything smells like a shit-load of
poop.

Bryce cackles. Alice nearly spits her out her wine in laughing. Marina does too.

ALICE
Okay, okay. Story time's over.
(to Bryce)
And you, sir, are due in bed a half-
hour ago.

BRYCE
Already? It's a special day.

WILL
No arguing, sport. Up you go.

Bryce groans as he stands and heads out of the room.

WILL (CONT'D)
Whoa, little man. Forgetting
something? Put 'em up.

Bryce returns, smiling indulgently, and puts up his fists. He and Will exchange mock blows.

WILL (CONT'D)
He goes for the chin, the gut, the
chin. Don't forget the knees. A kick
in the knee brings the biggest man
down.

ALICE
Okay, okay. Enough cage match.

Will laughs and puts out a fist to bump with Will. They bump and mime fist explosions.

ALICE (CONT'D)
And your aunt?

Bryce turns to Marina and puts out a fist. Marina looks a little confused, but makes a fist and bangs it. She doesn't mime the best explosion, but Bryce seems satisfied. He smiles and runs off.

MARINA
Good night.

Alice smiles and follows after him, calling back.

ALICE
There's another bottle if we need it.

WILL
(opening a new bottle)
On it.

Will moves to fill Marina's wine glass. But Marina puts up a hand.

MARINA
No. I better not. This is, you know,
my first drink ever and I'm feeling
pretty dizzy.

Will fills the glass anyway.

WILL
Come on. Like the kid said, special
day.

Marina smiles shyly and takes a sip of her wine. Will smiles at her for a beat.

WILL (CONT'D)
Must feel pretty good to be out, huh?

MARINA
Strange, more than anything. I keep waiting for someone to tell me what to do.

WILL
(smiling)
Ah, give Alice a day or two. She'll start ordering you around. She'll probably have you sanding the stairs tomorrow.

Marina laughs and sips more of her wine. Will takes a large swig.

WILL (CONT'D)
So what's next for you?

MARINA
Not sure. Apply for jobs, I suppose.

WILL
(laughing)
Well, no one's going to call your resume boring.

Will notices Marina's smile disappear.

WILL (CONT'D)
Sorry, was that rude?

Marina looks down.

WILL (CONT'D)
(shaking his head)
That was rude. Just trying to ease the tension.
(beat)
You think about it much?

MARINA
I don't really remember.

WILL
Sure. It was a long time ago. But you remember some of it, right? I mean, it happened less than a mile from here. Just over--

MARINA

I'd rather not--

WILL

Oh, I'm sorry. Of course. It's just... I'm kind of a true crime buff. Just wolf those books down, you know, the Andrea Yates case, Bundy, all of it. So talking with you is like talking to a celebrity. I mean, I know they kept most of the details out of the press. There was that long piece in the Times. Did you read that?

MARINA

I haven't read anything.

Marina glances to the stairs, looking for her sister.

There's no malice in Will's tone. He's simply oblivious to Marina's discomfort. He gulps some more wine and refills his glass.

WILL

There was one book. *Blood in the Woods*. Pretty trashy. Came out fifteen years back. Ever read it?

MARINA

Please, I--

WILL

It was full of all kinds of rumors about you being abused and crap like that. I hope your parents never read it. Had a good chapter on the Boy. Something about a manifestation of repressed homo-erotic desire. Kind of fun.

MARINA

Please...

WILL

Lots of mumbo-jumbo about menstruation guilt. What was it you said about him in the trial?

(deeper voice)

'Give him blood and you're his forever.'

(chuckling)

Was that it?

Marina grips the table. Will only now notices Marina's unease.

WILL (CONT'D)
Hey, you okay?

ALICE
What's going on?

Alice is standing in the doorway looking at Marina.

WILL
We're just talking.

ALICE
Damn it, Will. I told you not to bring it up.

Alice moves to Marina's side, glaring at Will.

WILL
I didn't... I mean, it just came up.

MARINA
(quiet)
I'm okay. I'm just going to go to bed.

WILL
Hey, I'm sorry. I'm a little drunk, I guess. I'm sorry.

Marina is already heading for the stairs.

ALICE
Good night.

Marina heads to the foyer and the stairs.

INT. FARM HOUSE - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

As Marina climbs the stairs she hears Alice berate Will.

ALICE
Jesus, I can't believe you...

WILL
What? She probably wants to talk about it.

Marina turns at the top of the stairs and sees Bryce in his pajamas standing, listening to the conversations below. He looks at her with frightened eyes. Marina opens her mouth to speak, but Bryce runs to his room and slams the door.

INT. MARINA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marina closes the door behind her, blocking out the bickering of Alice and Will. The room is still, quiet. Marina sits on the bed and breathes deeply. Her face trembles and she squeezes back tears.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Alice cracks the door open.

ALICE
You okay?

Marina nods, wiping her eyes dry.

ALICE (CONT'D)
He can be really annoying I know. But
he's a good guy. Bryce loves him.

MARINA
It's okay, really. I'm just tired.

ALICE
Okay. Okay. If I'm gone when you
wake, the fridge is stocked. Okay?

Alice backs out of the room, closing the door behind her.

INT. MARINA'S ROOM - LATER

The room is dark. Marina lays asleep under the sheets. Her eyes POP open. She rolls over to face the door. It is now OPEN. She breathes deeply, watching, watching.

She turns away and sits up, placing her feet on the floor. Behind her a small figure RACES passed the door. We hear the patter of feet.

Marina turns and looks at the open door.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Marina tightens the robe around her as she walks down the shadowy 2nd floor hallway. The old floorboards creak with every step.

INT. LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

Low growling.

Marina moves to the landing and looks down into the foyer. Rolph stands in the glow of the foyer's one lamp. He points his body into the shadows of the living room, a menacing growl emanating from his clenched jaw.

MARINA
(quietly calling)
Rolph?

The dog looks up at her, whines, and trots off to the back of the house.

Marina watches the foyer.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Alice?

Nothing.

She continues down the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Marina doesn't turn on the light. She quietly walks to the cabinet and retrieves a glass. Then walks to the fridge.

Marina opens the fridge shedding a slice of light over the dark room. Marina pulls a jug of water out and lets the fridge door swing closed.

She fills her glass and reopens the door. The same slice of light now reveals Bryce. He watches as she closes the door.

The room is dark.

BRYCE
(whisper)
Marina?

Marina SCREAMS and throws the glass to the floor. It shatters.

Rolph runs into the room and positions himself between Marina and Bryce. He barks at Marina.

Alice rushes into the kitchen wearing a night shirt and sees Bryce crying, terrified.

ALICE
Jesus!

She turns on the light and scoops the crying Bryce into her arms.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Rolph, down!

The dog calms down and trots to Alice's side. Marina tries regain her composure.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What happened?

She looks at Marina with questioning eyes, a little accusatory.

MARINA
I was startled. I'm didn't mean to yell. I...

Marina reaches a hand to Bryce, but he pulls away.

ALICE
Okay. Let's just all get some sleep.

MARINA
I'll clean this up.

ALICE
No, no. I'll get it in the morning.

Alice hushes Bryce as she carries him from the room.

Marina watches them go.

MARINA
(quietly)
I really am sorry.

Marina takes a step and winces. She lifts her foot. A small chunk of glass is in the bottom of her foot.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Marina stands before the mirrored medicine cabinet looking at her reflection. The bathroom is empty behind her.

She opens it and roots around, finally pulling out a box of band-aids. She closes the medicine cabinet. She sighs at her reflection and turns.

INT. MARINA'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Marina steps inside her room and closes the door. She leans against the door for a moment breathing in deeply. She turns and walks to her bed.

On her pillow lays a folded piece of construction paper. Marina stops. She looks around the room. It's empty.

She takes a step, slowly. Then quickly snatches up the paper. She waits a moment before opening it.

There in childish scrawl are the words:

I FOUND YOU.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Marina sits at the breakfast table sipping coffee while Alice sweeps up the last of the glass. The note lays on the table.

ALICE

He must have put it there before he left. I'm sure he meant it as a joke.

MARINA

It wasn't there when I went to bed.

ALICE

Maybe it was under your pillow or something. I don't know. I'll talk to him.

MARINA

(quiet)

It's his handwriting.

Alice dumps the dustpan into the trash and doesn't hear Marina's last word. Alice surveys the floor, looking tired. She glances at her sister, who is studying the note again.

ALICE

Look, I'm taking Bryce to school. I tried to take the day off, but the other waitress had a grandma die or something. Bryce usually hangs at the library. I'll pick him up on my way home.

MARINA

You're leaving?

ALICE

I'll be back by six. Six thirty at the latest.

(walking from the room)

If you want something to do, the banister on the stairs needs sanding.

INT. ALICE'S CAR - MORNING

Alice drives, glancing at Bryce sitting in the backseat.

ALICE
I can bring home some day-olds, if
you want. Apple pie for dessert?

BRYCE
Sure.
(beat)
Mom. Did Aunt Marina do something
bad?

Alice looks at Bryce through the mirror, then back at the
road.

ALICE
Why do you ask?

BRYCE
What did she do?

ALICE
Nothing, Bryce.

BRYCE
They wouldn't let her out.

ALICE
I told you. She was in art school. A
very special school far away.

Bryce thinks.

BRYCE
Mom. Who's the Boy?

Alice's brow bends.

ALICE
I don't know what you're talking
about.

Bryce frowns and looks out the window.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Marina runs an electric sander along the farm house banister.
She pushes in long strokes, clearly pleased to be losing
herself in work.

The sander unexpectedly clicks off. Marina glances down the stairs and sees the cord laying unplugged in the foyer next to the old fashioned wall heating grate. The cord has plenty of slack.

Marina walks down the steps. She looks to the living room and dining room, then kneels and plugs in the cord. The sander buzzes to life. Marina jumps up the stairs and picks it up.

Just as she gets started it stops again. The cord is once more laying free of the plug.

Marina walks down, kneels and examines the plug. She looks back to the sander, confused. She looks back to the plug.

Two eyes stare from the wall heating grate - a small, shadowed face.

Marina jerks away falling.

Beside her the front door opens.

Will pops his head in. She looks up at him from the floor.

WILL
Hey. Whoa.

She looks back to the vent. Nothing is there.

Will follows her gaze and glances at in the grate. He looks back to Marina.

WILL (CONT'D)
You okay?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kettle whistle whines.

Will notices Marina's shaking hands as she pours hot water into a teapot.

WILL
Sorry again about last night. I was,
let's see, how did Alice put it?
Inappropriate.

MARINA
Yes.

WILL
I just get a little star struck.

Marina faces him, her arms crossed.

WILL (CONT'D)
Oh, I, ah, brought you something.

Will fishes something from his jacket.

WILL (CONT'D)
Thought you might be interested.

Marina turns to see Will drop a worn paperback title of *Blood in the Woods* on the table. It looks to be an exploitative true-crime book. The cover shows a grainy picture of a young Marina and Rebecca.

WILL (CONT'D)
First edition.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

The small town library has a few clientele wandering the aisles. The librarian, MRS. BELLOWS -- late-twenties, petite, prim, but kind-eyed -- replaces books on the shelves.

Against the wall at the end of the aisle, Bryce sits in a beanbag chair. He's half-reading a book, clearly distracted.

Mrs. Bellows notices his lost gaze. She holds up a book with a torn cover.

MRS. BELLOWS
It's a tragedy how people treat
library books.

Bryce looks up at her.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
The problem is, we lend them out for
free. People just don't respect
things unless it costs them
something.

She smiles warmly and turns to the shelves.

BRYCE
Mrs. Bellows?

Bryce motions her closer. She kneels beside him. He asks in a quiet voice.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Do you know who the Boy is?

MRS. BELLOWS
I know lots of boys.

BRYCE
No. The Boy.

Mrs. Bellows studies his face.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
(whisper)
I think he lives in my house.

MRS. BELLOWS
(a little condescending)
Oh, I see.
(half-smiling)
Have kids at school been talking
about the Boy?

Bryce shrugs.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
Pretty scary stuff, huh? I wouldn't
want him living in my house, that's
for sure.
(standing)
Come on.

Bryce stands. They're nearly eye-to-eye. She smiles.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
I want to show you something.

INT. LIBRARY - COMPUTER - MOMENTS LATER

Bryce sits at one of the library's public computers with Mrs. Bellows behind him.

She reaches over him and clicks through a few memes, articles, ads featuring the same image of the Boy in an old-fashioned school uniform: **The Boy says 'Eat your vegetables.'**; **The Boy: the podcast.** The last is an article with the headline: **The Boy and other Fictional Boogie Men.**

MRS. BELLOWS
See? The Boy is just a story. He's
like Mickey Mouse or Superman. He
can't live in your house. He lives...
(taps her head)
... in here.

Someone clears his throat loudly. Mrs. Bellows looks over to see an older man, MR. CROSBY, standing with a huge stack of books at the desk.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
Looks like Mr. Crosby has picked out
his week's reading. You okay?

Bryce nods, staring at the picture of the Boy featured in the article.

Mr. Crosby clears his throat again.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
Coming, Mr. Crosby.

She pats Bryce's back and heads to the desk.

Bryce is left alone with the computer. He slowly clicks through more images of the Boy.

--The Boy in the background of a group of children playing circa 1930.

--A pencil drawing of the Boy crying blood.

--A faded photo of a pregnant woman with a pale, ghostly hand resting on her shoulder.

--The Boy standing in a cemetery.

The images grow more sinister as Bryce speeds through them. A few phrases pop out to Bryce:

He said I'd be rewarded. He promised.

I couldn't wipe the blood away.

Even when I close my eyes, I see him.

The last image is a crayon drawing of the Boy with black holes for eyes. Scrawled beneath it:

The Boy made me do it.

Bryce stares at the image. The Boy's eyes are penetrating, cold, mesmerizing.

Bryce presses on a link to a video. A grainy color home video showing a child's birthday party begins. The noise comes through the speakers, but Bryce quickly mutes the computer.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

IN THE VIDEO...

--CHILDREN in bathing suits swim and play around a pool.

--Children gather on the porch. A MOTHER brings out a candle-lit cake.

Far in the background, unnoticed by the children, the mother, or the person filming, a CHILD splashes in the water, drowning.

The video slows. The picture crops closer, making the image more pixillated. Standing on the side of the pool, near the drowning child, is the Boy. He stares forward, into the camera.

We move closer and closer to the image until we see the nothing but pixels.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

A hand grips Bryce's shoulder. He looks up to see Mrs. Bellows.

MRS. BELLOWS

That's enough screen time for one day.

The library door swings open and Alice walks in.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Look who's here.

She looks compassionately at Bryce.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The book lays on the table between Marina and Will. She's staring at the book.

WILL

So this thing's been out of print for years. Like I said, it's crap. You know, rushed out for a quick buck. They interviewed Rebecca. And there's a chapter about Lily--

MARINA

I don't want to know.

WILL
But, surely you heard--

MARINA
(firm)
I don't want to know!
(quieter)
I've worked hard to not read anything
about that time. No books, no
articles... I hardly remember. It's
like it wasn't even me.

WILL
(smiling)
But it was you. I mean, you paid your
debt and all that. Now you deserve to
profit a little. This is the perfect
time for a new book. We could
collaborate. Hell, I'd do most of it.

MARINA
I told you, I don't remember.

WILL
I can help with that.

Marina lifts her tea and sips it.

WILL (CONT'D)
Look, your sister, she's not making
big money down at the diner. One bad
month, she loses this place. But we
knock out a couple of chapters, we
sell your story. Big money. Enough to
send Bryce to college.

MARINA
(standing)
I need to get back to sanding.

Will follows as Marina walks from the kitchen.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Marina climbs the stairs to the sander and clicks it on.

Will follows, speaking over the buzz of the sander.

WILL
Come on. Just listen to me. I'll
write the book. You don't have to do
a thing. Just put your name on it.
That's it.

He touches her shoulder.

MARINA
(yelling)
Get away from me!

She turns quickly. The sander scrapes against Will's knuckles. He yells and steps back. Marina is horrified at the blood.

The front door opens and Alice and Bryce walk in. Alice holds a full apple pie.

ALICE
What's going on?

Will rushes down the stairs cradling his injured hand.

WILL
You're goddamn sister just attacked me. That's what's going on.

He pushes past and out the door. Alice looks to Marina, who shakes her head. Alice glances quickly at Bryce. She turns and follows Will.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She runs a few steps down the path,

ALICE
Wait, Will, hold up. Come inside and let's just talk this out.

WILL
To hell with that! I'm not going near that psycho bitch.

ALICE
Calm down.

WILL
I offered to write the whole goddamn book. She wouldn't have to do a goddamn thing.

ALICE
Book?

Alice looks back to see Bryce and Marina standing in the front door, watching. She looks back to Will.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What were you doing here?

Will opens his mouth, then closes it again. He frowns.

WILL
There's some good money to be made--

ALICE
Oh my God.

WILL
It was just an idea.

ALICE
You are such a dick.

WILL
I'm a dick?!
(pointing to Marina)
She... she's the one who went all--

ALICE
Get off my property.

WILL
What?

ALICE
You ever mess with me or my family
again I will personally put your
balls in a blender. Go.

WILL
You're as crazy as she is.

ALICE
GO!

Will walks to his truck, yelling over his shoulder.

WILL
Thanks for the introduction, Alice.
Really great to meet the family. Your
psycho sister, your freak son--

Alice THROWS the apple pie. Will barely dodges it. It lands
with a splatter by his feet.

WILL (CONT'D)
Damn it.

Alice walks back inside.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Alice slams the door. She's furious, breathing hard. She looks up to Marina and Bryce staring at her.

BRYCE

Mom...

(beat)

That was awesome.

Alice gasps - half a sob, half a laugh.

ALICE

I don't think we'll see him again.

I'm sorry. I know you liked him.

BRYCE

He was a douche, Mom.

Alice and Marina look at one another and bust out laughing.

Alice puts a hand to her forehead.

ALICE

I'm just sorry I wasted a whole pie
on that jerk.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Alice, Bryce, and Marina sit around the dining table. A half empty box of takeout pizza lays open before them. All three are laughing as the two sisters tell Bryce stories.

ALICE

Oh, I hated baths. Just refused to
take them.

MARINA

Oh, more than just refused. Mom and
Dad would get her undressed and she
take off through the house. And Dad
would call --

ALICE

Naked escapee!

MARINA

Naked escapee!

All three laugh harder.

Alice wipes her hands and stands.

ALICE

Okay, so we don't have pie. But who
wants ice cream.

Bryce raises a hand. Marina smiles and raises a hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Three bowls of ice cream on the way.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Alice opens a cabinet and retrieves three bowls. She turns and sees the *Blood in the Woods* paperback on the table.

ALICE
(sotto)
Such a dick.

She grabs the book, opens up the kitchen side door.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - SIDE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The outdoor light above the door creates a circle of light. Alice drops the book on top of nearly full trash can and replaces the lid. She shivers in the cold.

Rolph comes out the door, tail wagging.

ALICE
Rolph, if you see Will you have my
permission to bite him. Go do your
thing, boy.

Rolph barks happily and trots off. Alice smirks and closes the door.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bryce and Marina sit across from one another. The laughter has melted to a fragile quiet. Both a little unsure of the other.

BRYCE
Mom says you played soccer.

MARINA
I did. Not very well.

BRYCE
I play goalie.

MARINA
Important position.

BRYCE
Mom says it's perfect for me because
nothing gets past me.

MARINA
(smiling)
I'm sure that's true.

Alice enters with three heaping bowls of ice cream.

ALICE
Dessert is served!

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Alice and Marina stand at the sink washing the night's
dishes. Marina notices Alice's worn expression.

MARINA
I'm sorry about Will.

ALICE
(shaking her head)
Don't be. He's an asshole.

MARINA
(smile)
He was cute.

ALICE
(smile)
Yeah, well, he's available if you're
interested.

Marina laughs. She glances to the dining room. Through the
ajar door she sees Bryce coloring at the table. Marina looks
back at her sister.

MARINA
(quieter)
Listen, maybe I should move out.

Alice stops and looks at her, surprised.

ALICE
Are you kidding? You just got here.

MARINA
I know, I know, but you and Will...
Your son is frightened of me.

ALICE
He's not frightened, he's--

MARINA

Alice, I've messed up a lot of lives.
Mine included. I don't want to mess
up yours.

Alice thinks a beat, then turns back to the dishes.

ALICE

You're not going. No more discussion.

MARINA

Alice, I--

ALICE

I don't want to talk about it.

Marina looks at her for beat, perplexed. Alice takes the half-cleaned plate out of Marina's hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I tell you what, I'll finish the
dishes. They're almost done anyway.

Marina nods, giving in.

MARINA

Okay.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marina stands in the shower. She smiles into the hot water with her eyes closed.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - SIDE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Alice closes the back door and grabs the trash can handles. It's heavy, but she rolls it down the driveway toward the curb.

She hears a noise - a scratching. She turns and looks back at the house.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marina lathers her hair with shampoo. Though the shower curtain is a frosty translucent, she doesn't see the door to the bathroom slowly open.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Leaving the trash can, Alice steps toward the back of the house. Just past the light above the side door, the yard is lost in black shadow.

Alice
Will?

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marina continues to wash her hair as a small, dark figure enters veiled by the wet shower curtain and the steam.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alice creeps past the side door toward the corner leading to the unlit back of the house. She grabs a rake leaning against the house.

Alice
Will, I'm going to rake your face if
you're back there.

A strange whine comes from behind Alice. She turns and looks at the trash can. It moves. She hesitates, confused.

The can falls on its side, the lid opened and blocking her view of the inside.

She steps toward it.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marina hears a CLICK of the door. She turns and looks through the curtain. Nothing. The door is closed.

She quickly turns off the water and opens the curtain. There on the edge of the sink lays the 1900's-era school book, *Every Boys Reader*.

Marina steps from the shower and slowly picks it up. A piece of folded paper flutters out and lands open on the bathroom floor.

It reads: **I CHOOSE YOU.**

Alice SCREAMS from outside.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alice has a hand covering her mouth as she stares into the fallen trash can. Marina, in a robe, and Bryce rush out the side door. Alice puts out a hand.

ALICE
(strained)
Stay back, Bryce, okay? You stay
there.

Bryce looks to Marina. Marina gives him a reassuring nod. He stays by the door as Marina joins her sister.

As she reaches Alice, we see what's in the trash can. Rolph, a rolled newspaper shoved in his mouth, lies dead. His eyes are open.

MARINA
Oh Jesus.

ALICE
That freak.

Marina puts an arm around Alice.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Just can't believe... that freak.

MARINA
Do you want to call the police?

ALICE
I'll do one better. Can you watch
Bryce?

MARINA
You're going?

ALICE
That dick killed my dog. I'm going to
kick his ass.

Alice runs to her truck and speeds out of the dirt drive. Marina puts an arm around Bryce as the truck's tail lights fade.

BRYCE
What happened?

MARINA
Your mom needs to explain.

BRYCE
Did something happen to Rolph?

MARINA
(turning to the door)
Let's get back inside.

Bryce spots the paperback book on the ground. As his aunt turns, he reaches down and picks it up, hiding it under his pajama top.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bryce sits in bed reading *Blood in the Woods* under a single bedside lamp. His face is drawn and pale.

He hears a noise and moves to the window. Below he sees Marina, dressed, wrapping the dead dog in a tarp.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As the first flakes of snow fall, Marina finishes wrapping up the dog, then heaves the load to the side of the house.

She's a little out of breath as she heads back to the side door. She wipes her hands on her pants as she opens the door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Marina opens the door to see Bryce standing in the kitchen staring at her. He's eerily quiet.

MARINA
Hi, Bryce.

BRYCE
Did the Boy do it?

The blood drains from Marina's face.

MARINA
Bryce...

BRYCE
Did the Boy kill my dog?

Marina touches her chest, struggling with how to respond.

MARINA
You know about the Boy?

Bryce nods almost imperceptibly.

Marina frowns. It's clear she'd rather not revisit the past, but this child needs an answer. She meets his eyes.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I could use some hot cocoa. How about you?

INT. DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Marina and Bryce sit across from each other at the large table, each with a bowl of ice cream. For a few beats the only sound is the clank of spoons against the bowls.

Finally, Marina puts down her spoon and watches Bryce. He pauses, his spoon hovering above the bowl.

BRYCE

You never went to art school, did you?

Marina smiles and shakes her head.

MARINA

When I was a little girl, Bryce, I had a friend. Her name was Rebecca.

BRYCE

Was she your best friend?

MARINA

She was. She was very smart. She would tell me all kinds of stories, Made up stories.

BRYCE

Like Superman?

MARINA

Yes. Like that. She told me about this boy... a boy who had drowned.

BRYCE

(excited)

His mother stabbed him to death and washed his body in the lake. He--

MARINA

But it wasn't true. It was a story Rebecca made up. He said the Boy, his spirit, wanted to be our friend. She wrote me notes pretending they were from him. I wrote notes back. I believed he was real. I wanted to believe.

BRYCE

Why?

MARINA

I don't know. I wanted to be loved. I wanted to be chosen. I think... I think I was a little sick.

BRYCE

Like the flu?

MARINA

(smiles slightly)

Like the flu, but in my head. That's why I was away for so long. I was getting better.

BRYCE

What happened to Rebecca?

MARINA

She had to go away, too.

BRYCE

Did she get better?

Marina pauses.

MARINA

I don't know. I don't know where she is.

BRYCE

Don't you want to know?

She shakes her head.

MARINA

No. No, I want all of that to stay in the past. I don't even want to remember it.

(beat)

Rebecca lied to me. And I believed that lie. I did things I wish I hadn't done.

BRYCE

What did you do?

She waits a long beat.

MARINA

I hurt someone.

BRYCE

For the Boy?

MARINA

For a lie. Just a lie, Bryce. That
Boy... he is not real.

Bryce thinks for a quiet beat. He stands and walks over to his Aunt. He takes her hand and gently pulls her. Marina, a little confused, stands and follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Bryce leads Marina to the couch. He sits and she sits beside him. He opens up the laptop sitting on the coffee table. He types in the search engine: **THE BOY**

Thousands of links and images appear on the screen. As Bryce clicks through them, we see Marina's horror grow. The glow of the laptop illuminates her face as she realizes how much the legend of the Boy has grown.

Bryce touches her hand and she almost jumps.

BRYCE

All these people talking about him.
All these people frightened of him.
How can he not be real?

EXT. EARL'S ROADHOUSE BAR - NIGHT

Alice's truck skids into and isolated bar well outside of town. Close to a dozen automobiles are parked outside.

Alice jumps from her truck and slams the door.

INT. EARL'S ROADHOUSE BAR - CONTINUOUS

BREAK. Pool balls scatter.

Will, wearing his ACE PLUMBING HAT, stands with his pool cue and admires his break. Another POOL PLAYER waits his turn.

CUSTOMERS line the bar and the few tables and listen to the rock music playing from the bright jukebox.

POOL PLAYER

So you and your lady had a falling
out?

WILL

(cocky)
She'll come crawling back. Don't you
worry.

Alice busts in, slamming the door against the wall. She's angry as hell and the whole place turns to look.

WILL (CONT'D)

Alice!

She strides toward him, grabbing a free pool cue as she does.

ALICE

You goddamn asshole.

Will backs up, holding his cue in front of him in defense.

WILL

Whoa. Whoa.

Alice raises her cue to take a swing, but the Pool Player grabs her arms.

ALICE

You killed my kid's dog, you freak.
Killed my kid's dog.

WILL

Killed your... what the hell are you
talking about?

ALICE

Tonight. You were at my house and you-
-

WILL

I've been here since six, right Earl?

EARL, behind the bar, frowns.

EARL

I'm not your goddamn babysitter.

WILL

Alice. I didn't touch your dog.

ALICE

Oh really.

WILL

Really! Damn it, Alice. You're
worried about me? Look who's living
in your house.

Alice glares at Will for a long beat. She throws down the cue, shakes loose of the Pool Player's hold and walks from the bar.

The Pool Player turns to Will, who is still holding his cue across his chest.

POOL PLAYER
She's gone. You can relax.

Frowning, Will lowers the stick.

INT. ALICE'S TRUCK - LATER

Alice drives along the highway, still visibly upset. She punches the wheel.

ALICE
Damn it!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marina looks in on Bryce sleeping in his bed. She closes the door, her face troubled.

EXT. EARL'S ROADHOUSE BAR - LATER

Only a few cars are parked outside the bar now. A light dusting of snow already covers the ground. Will stumbles out, releasing a moment of the loud music from inside.

His truck is parked by the drainage ditch that lies on the far side of the bar. He walks to his truck, weaving a little. By his truck, he fumbles with his keys, dropping them.

WILL
Shit.

He bends down and hears a child's laugh.

He stands quickly, smacking his head on his truck's side mirror. Holding his head, he looks around for the source of the sound.

Seeing nothing, he shakes it off and tries to work the keys again.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
William.

WILL
Who's there?

Will looks toward the ditch on the other side of the truck. The voice seemed to come from there. The child's laughter echoes again.

Will rounds the truck and slowly approaches the lip of the ditch.

WILL (CONT'D)
You're okay. Steady, Will.

He reaches the edge of the dirt. He looks down six feet to the bottom. He sees nothing but a trickle of water.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
William.

The water runs into a drainage pipe, four feet in diameter. The voice comes from there.

WILL
Hello?

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Help me, William. Please.

Will takes a step. He slips and lands on his backside, sliding a bit. He quickly regains his feet and looks to the drainage pipe. It's black inside.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please, William.

Will stumbles a little closer to the opening. He's close now.

WILL
Who's in there?

Will waits. There's no answer. Will straightens and swallows.

WILL (CONT'D)
Screw this.

Will turns to go. A small hand holding a paring knife reaches from the blackness of the pipe and slices Will's Achilles tendon.

Will falls with a scream. He hits his head on a rock, knocking him out.

Two thin arms reach from the pipe and begin pulling Will in. His face drags along the mud.

As his shoulders reach the pipe, Will begins to come to. He scrapes at the mud, but is pulled further into the pipe.

Will yells as he disappears into the darkness. His screams echo from the black for a few seconds.

Just as the screams fall silent, TWO MEN exit the bar, laughing and stumbling to their cars.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

The old stone church stands tall in the bright winter morning light. The singing of hymns can be heard from inside.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

(singing)

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my
heart; Naught be all else to me, save
that Thou art.*

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The modest CONGREGATION half fills the church, standing and singing. Toward the back, Marina stands alone.

CONGREGATION

(singing)

*Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee
one.*

LATER

The PRIEST stands before the congregation reading from the Gospel.

PRIEST

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Marina listens intently.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

(beat)

The word of the Lord.

CONGREGATION

Thanks be to God.

LATER

The Priest, now flanked by two young ACOLYTES, sets up the elements for mass.

The Congregation falls quiet as the Priest continues the ceremony. Marina stares at one of the Acolytes. A boy no older than ten.

The Priest raises a communion wafer and snaps it.

PRIEST

Take this, all of you, and eat of it,
for this is my body, which will be
given up for you.

CONGREGATION

Thanks be to God.

The Priest raises a silver goblet. Marina's attention return to the Priest.

PRIEST

Take this, all of you, and drink from
it, for this is the chalice of my
blood of the new and eternal
covenant, which will be poured out
for you and for many for the
forgiveness of sins.

For Marina, these words are a lifeline. She nods and closes her eyes, smiling slightly with gratitude. She joins the call and response.

CONGREGATION

Thanks be to God.

MARINA

Thanks be to God.

Marina opens her eyes. An Acolyte is now the Boy and he's staring directly at Marina. His eyes cold.

Marina gasps and drops her hymnal. A few members of the Congregation turn and frown. The Acolyte is once again himself. Marina averts her eyes, ashamed.

She reaches down to retrieve the hymnal from the floor. As she touches the black book, a small hand darts out from under the pew and grabs her wrist.

She pulls back, but is yanked to the ground, landing hard. Under the pew in front of her is the face of the Boy. He smiles and pulls her under...

She screams.

The Priest looks from the front of the sanctuary. Faces turn, concerned. One of the faces is Mrs. Bellows.

INT. PRIEST'S OFFICE - LATER

Marina sits in a leather chair in a wood paneled office. Her eyes are wide, terrified. But she sits calmly.

The Priest is taking a glass of water from an OLDER WOMAN at the office door. The Woman tries to peek over the Priest to get a look at Marina.

PRIEST

Thank you, Doris. This is fine.

The Priest closes the office door and hands the glass to Marina. She takes it... her hand shaking as she sips.

The Priest lowers himself into his chair behind his desk.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I've had plenty of people fall asleep
in my services, but never faint.

He smiles. Marina doesn't respond. She touches the silver cross around her neck.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Do you have something you want to
talk about?

(beat)

How is your faith?

Marina looks at him. The priest smiles knowingly.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I can sense a Dark Night of the Soul
from a mile a way.

(standing)

It can be hard having faith in what
we don't see. Thomas was invited to
touch the wounds. Lucky, right? But
remember the reading. "Blessed are
those who have not seen and yet have
believed."

MARINA

I don't want to believe.

The Priest sits on the corner of his desk.

PRIEST

Ah, hunted by the Hound of Heaven,
are you? I was too. Young man,
engaged, I was studying to be a
lawyer.

He shivers at the thought.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
But sometimes he pursues us with such
passion that we have no choice but to
believe.

Marina stares, her face white. The Priest moves to her,
squatting beside her.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
He has shown himself to you.

Marina nods.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Do not turn from his love. Do not
deny him.

MARINA
He... he claims me. He wants.

PRIEST
Of course he does. He loves. And he
will for all eternity. You are his.
He has redeemed you with blood.

The Priest smiles. Marina's face quivers.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Alice cradles a black trash bag holding, it appears, the
dog's corpse. She awkwardly loads it into the back of the
truck. It lands with a thud.

She rubs her hands on her jeans, disturbed by the choir.

She looks up at the house. From a second story window, Bryce
looks down. He's smiling gleefully.

Alice frowns, but waves. Bryce does not wave back. Just
smiles and draws the curtain closed.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Snow falls on the old house. A few dim lights burn. A front
window flickers from a television screen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alice lays asleep on the couch under a small throw blanket.
The television runs a late-night infomercial.

INT. MARINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marina kneels by her bed praying. She whispers her prayers fervently.

An old baseball rolls across the floor and gently stops at Marina's knee. She opens her eyes and stares at.

A child's laughter.

She stops. The laughter came from somewhere past her open door.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Marina steps out into the hallway. She hears the whispering, hushed laughter.

MARINA
Bryce? Is that you?

INT. LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Marina walks up to the landing railing and looks down to the FOYER.

The front door is cracked open. Bryce stands by the door, whispering to someone just outside.

MARINA
Who are you talking to?

Bryce doesn't respond, just continues whispering and listening to whoever is outside.

Marina runs down the stairs.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She flings open the door. No one is there.

Marina turns to Bryce. She squats and checks him over.

MARINA
You're cold. Are you all right?

She looks into his face. He's smiling, his eyes bright.

BRYCE
(quietly)
I know what you did.
(MORE)

BRYCE (CONT'D)

(beat)

And I know why.

Bryce races up the stairs leaving Marina alone.

INT. MARINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Marina's eyes open. She's laying in bed in the quiet of morning.

Her brow furrows. She pulls down the blanket and finds the dog's collar laying on her chest.

She yelps, pushing it away and retracting from it.

She steps out her bed. Keeping her eyes on the collar, she steps backward to the wall by the window.

Out the window Bryce and a group of CHILDREN play along the snow-covered SIDEWALK. Their laughter is audible in the room. The Boy stands among them, staring up at Marina's window.

Marina, sensing something, turns to the window. She sees the Boy.

He smiles at her.

MARINA

No! No!

Marina races from the room.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Still in her nightgown, Marina rushes down the stairs and through the front door.

In the adjacent...

LIVING ROOM,

Alice is roused by the sound.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marina runs barefoot from the house to the crowd of Children.

MARINA

Where is he? Where is he?

She grabs each of them by the shoulders, quickly studying them before moving on to the next. The Boy is not there.

Alice has joined them, pulling Marina back.

ALICE
What the hell, Marina? You're scaring
them.

The Children stare at the confused Marina standing in the snow in her nightgown. Only Bryce smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You kids go... go play somewhere
else.

BRYCE
But, Mom.

ALICE
Go.

Alice leads a sedate Marina back to the house.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Alice stomps into the kitchen. Marina, quiet but still confused, follows.

ALICE
Jesus, Marina. People here... people
are willing to forget. But not if you
keep reminding them. You've got to
pull it together.

Alice turns and sees Marina lost in thought.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Marina? Marina?

MARINA
(looking up)
Can I use your phone?

Alice waits a moment. Then sighs and hands Marina her cell.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Marina paces the foyer alone, listening to the ringing through the phone pressed against her ear. She's agitated, waiting for someone to pick up.

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DR. WARD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A phone rings on the desk in the empty, unlit office.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Marina rubs her forehead, listening to the ringing.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. WARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A phone lays on a table near the front door of Dr. Ward's house. A few framed pictures of her daughter, now a pre-teen, and her husband share the table.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Finally...

DR. WARD (O.S.)
You've reached the voicemail of Dr.
Shelia Ward. Please leave a message.

BEEP.

MARINA
Dr. Ward. This is Marina. I'm... I'm
not doing very well. The anxiety...
The...
(whispering)
...I'm seeing things... Please. Can
you call me? I need... I need your
help.

Marina hangs up, but grips the phone like it's a lifeline.

ALICE
Marina.

Marina spins. Alice is standing just inside the dining room. She clearly heard Marina's message.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Can we go for a walk?

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Marina and Alice, both dressed for the weather, walk along the road passing old houses on wide lots.

ALICE
Bryce is my main concern, always. I
don't want any of this touching him.

MARINA
He asked me about the Bo-

ALICE
(firm)
I don't want him hearing about any of
that.

MARINA
I found another note. I
hear...things. I...

ALICE
It's not you, Marina. Will has been
messing with your head, for some sick
reason. He's got, I don't know,
issues.

MARINA
I can't trust what I'm seeing. I
can't trust what I'm thinking. I
don't know who I am, Alice. I'm
scared. I don't know who I am.

Alice stops. Marina walks on a few steps.

ALICE
I hated you.

Marina turns and looks at her sister.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Did you know that? I hated you.

Marina shakes her head.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I was a kid when it all... happened.
None it made sense. All I knew is you
went away and Mom cried all the time.

Marina's flinches at the words.

ALICE (CONT'D)
It wasn't Mom and Dad who kept me
from visiting you. It was me.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

I didn't want to see you. Mom and Dad would go, and I'd refuse. I just wouldn't go. I wanted to forget your face. And I did. I forgot everything about you.

Marina steps closer to Alice.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But then Dad, he said I needed to come. We had this huge fight about it, but he made me go. It was Thanksgiving. Do you remember that? I was thirteen, I guess.

Marina nods.

ALICE (CONT'D)

We sat at that round table in that cold room, all those other crazy looking girls. I was scared shitless. And then... then you came out. Wearing that hideous red pajama thing.

Alice chuckles. Marina half-smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And I remembered you - everything about you. I know who you are. You're my sister. That never changed. It never will. Now, someone is messing with your head, manipulating you...

The words hit Marina, she starts thinking.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm going to help you through this. We go to the police. We'll tell them Will's been breaking into the house, breaking in. We show them what--

MARINA

(suddenly sure)

It's not Will.

Marina steps to her sister and gives her a hug.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I know who's doing this. And I know where to find her.

Marina quickly walks off down a side street.

ALICE
(calling after her)
Marina? Find who?

Marina looks back.

MARINA
Rebecca Cline.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Bryce sits at one of the computers staring at a charcoal drawing of the Boy on the screen. The image's eyes are black, endless. Bryce is transfixed.

A hand touches his shoulder. Mrs. Bellows.

MRS. BELLOWS
Would you like to see something,
Bryce?

INT. LIBRARY - BASEMENT - LATER

The low ceiling roomed is dank, cramped, and poorly lit. Mrs. Bellows leads Bryce down a long aisle of shelves filed with file boxes.

MRS. BELLOWS
They keep most the public records
down here. The old ones. Before the
world went digital.

She flashes Bryce a smiles.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
When the... incident happened sixteen
years ago, they said the Boy was just
a story, just a clever tale made up
by precious little girls. A game they
took too far. They tried to keep it
out of the papers, but stories have
away of making themselves heard. The
Boy went viral.

Mrs. Bellows reaches up, pushing to her tip-toes, to grab an aged file box on one of the top shelves.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)
Here it is.

She places the box down and kneels before it. She looks up at Bryce and gives him an encouraging nod. He kneels too.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

They never listen to the girls. Why should they? Never questioned if there was something to their stories. But I did.

She lifts the lid. The box is filled with black and white photos, old newspapers, yellowed forms and documents. She pulls out a few papers.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

There was a boy born here in Bowsman, 1901. Henry Watkins, born to Mary and Horace Watkins. We don't have much on the family, only that they came from the east coast. New York, most likely. And before that, Germany. Henry attended Bowsman's first public school.

She hands Bryce a faded photo of a dozen boys. The Boy stares out.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

But only for a year. His mother pulled him out of school. Kept him home.

BRYCE

Why?

MRS. BELLOWS

I suppose she had her reasons.

(lifting more papers)

They lived on the outskirts of Bowsman. In the forest, not far from the lake. Kept to themselves, it seems. Nothing in records about being involved in local politics or business disputes... then there was a fire.

She hands Bryce a yellowed newspaper from November 12th, 1911 - **BOWSMAN GAZETTE**. An article headline reads: **FIRE DESTROYS HOME. NO SURVIVORS.**

BRYCE

(looks up from reading)

He died?

Mrs. Bellows shrugs. Bryce returns to the paper. Mrs. Bellows watches him and smiles.

MRS. BELLOWS

Have you been to the Bowsman cemetery? I mean, the old section. I have. There's a grave stone for Horace Watkins. And a grave stone for Mary. But Henry, the boy, he has no stone.

BRYCE

Why? What happened?

MRS. BELLOWS

No one knows. Maybe he's buried somewhere else. Maybe he survived. Maybe his mother was a witch who drowned him and no one ever knew.

She stares for a beat. Then smiles.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

This is over a hundred years ago. All we have is a hole in history where there once was a boy.

Bryce picks up a picture - a school picture of just the Boy, staring out and unsmiling.

MRS. BELLOWS (CONT'D)

There are two ways to disappear in this world. One is to hide, to have no face. The other is to have a thousand faces. To be everywhere. The Boy is everywhere. But his real story...

(tapping the box)
... is hidden.

EXT. CLINE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Marina stands before the Cline house, a tidy bungalow in a row of small houses. Marina takes a deep breath. She walks up the steps and knocks on the front door.

As she waits, she notices the flowers sticking out of the snow and trimming the house are plastic.

An older woman, MRS. CLINE, wearing a flowered dress opens the door with a welcoming smile.

MARINA

Mrs. Cline?

MRS. CLINE

Yes?

MARINA
I'm Marina Hess.

MRS. CLINE
Rebecca's friend? Little Marina? How
have you been?

Her cheerfulness momentarily throws Marina.

MARINA
I'm... I'm all right.
(beat)
Yes... I... I need to see Rebecca.

INT. CLINE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Marina follows Mrs. Cline through the carpeted hall.
Crocheted images and oil paintings line the walls.

Mrs. Cline continues her cheerful demure, as if Marina were
just home from college.

MRS. CLINE
Rebecca was the model guest, they
say. Just got along with everybody.
Of course, she always did. So she
came home, oh, a year or so back. How
are your parents?

MARINA
They... they passed on some years
ago.

MRS. CLINE
Imagine that! Well, I suppose that's
the way of things. My Henry's been
gone ten years now.

INT. CLINE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The living room is tidy, quaint. Bric-a-brac stand neatly
organized on the shelves. A number of childhood photographs
of Rebecca line a shelf above the electric fireplace.

MRS. CLINE
I'm surprised you and Rebecca didn't
keep in touch? You were such close
friends. Bugs in a rug. How about
Lily? Do you see her?

Marina is unsure how to answer.

MARINA
I... no. I don't.

MRS. CLINE
Pity how friends grow apart.

She stops and turns to Marina.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
Would you like some tea?

REBECCA
Is Rebecca here, Mrs. Cline? I really
do need to talk to her.

Mrs. Cline nods, her smile frozen on her face.

MRS. CLINE
Of course, of course.

INT. CLINE HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Cline opens the door for Marina to walk through. The late afternoon sun seeps through the thin curtains into the immaculately tidy bedroom.

By the window sits a wheelchair. The figure in the chair has a blanket draped over her head.

MRS. CLINE
(quiet)
The trains, they're so loud. They
upset her.

Marina looks to Mrs. Cline, her eyes full of questions. The corners of Mrs. Cline's mouth twitch.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
Home was hard for her, at first...
She did something rash.

Mrs. Cline pulls off the blanket. Rebecca's eyes are open. Her face is blank, aged. Mrs. Cline adjusts the loose strands of her hair.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
She took one of Henry's best ties
and... wrapped it around her neck
and...
(shrugs)
I cut her down... when I found her.
(smiles)
Saved her life.
(loud, to Rebecca)
(MORE)

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
Rebecca! Your friend Marina is here
to see you.

No reaction. Mrs. Cline touches Rebecca's unresponsive face.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
(quiet)
You never stop being a mother, do
you?
(facing Marina)
I'll get that tea. Leave you two to
catch up.

Mrs. Cline shuffles out of the room, leaving Marina alone
with Rebecca.

Marina lowers herself and looks into Rebecca's eyes,
searching for some sign of comprehension.

MARINA
Rebecca?

At first there is no reaction, then Rebecca moves her eyes,
and only her eyes, to look at Marina. Marina moves closer.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Things have been happening again,
Rebecca. Someone is... doing things.

Marina takes a breath. Calms herself.

MARINA (CONT'D)
I need to know. All those stories...
the love notes from... him. That was
you. Yes? It was just you. Just a
game.

Rebecca just stares, expressionless.

MARINA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I see him.
(beat)
Someone is doing this... someone...

Rebecca turns her face away from Marina.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Do you know who it is? Who's doing
this to me?

Marina pulls one of the notes from her purse and places it on
Rebecca's lap. It reads:

I FOUND YOU.

Rebecca's eyes slowly twitch down and see the paper.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Rebecca I--

Rebecca SCREAMS. A deep, guttural scream.

Marina falls back. Rebecca's eyes follow her. She continues screaming, growing louder and louder.

Mrs. Cline rushes back in.

MRS. CLINE

Oh dear, oh dear.

She throws the blanket over Rebecca's head. Still, the screaming blares.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)

Hush now, Mamma's here. Hush.

MARINA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Cline doesn't seem to hear her. Marina backs out of the room.

EXT. CLINE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Marina rushes from the house, down the path to the road. She stops, puts a hand to her mouth and sobs.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DUSK

Snow falls harder on the farm house.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Bryce sits at the kitchen table coloring with a huge box of crayons and colored pencils. He's humming. Alice bustles around him preparing dinner.

She moves past Bryce and catches sight of what he's drawing -- a simple picture of a boy in the woods. She leans a hand on the table and studies his drawing.

ALICE

(hiding her uneasiness)

Who's that, honey?

BRYCE
(not pausing his drawing)
A friend.

ALICE
From school?

Bryce doesn't answer, just keeps drawing.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Bryce?

Bryce stabs his pencil at Alice's hand. She moves it just in time.

BRYCE
LEAVE ME ALONE.

ALICE
Bryce!

BRYCE
LEAVE. ME. ALONE.

Alice backs away.

INT. STAIRWELL - LATER

Glancing back to make sure she's not seen, Alice climbs the stairs.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alice quietly pushes the door open and slides inside. It's nearly dark out, so she clicks on the light. At first glance, everything seems normal in the cluttered room.

She moves to his bed. Under the pillow she finds the paperback of *Blood in the Woods*.

She looks around the room and notices the corners of construction paper sticking out from under the wardrobe. She gets on her knees and pulls them out.

It's a series of crayon images of the same boy -- the Boy. One shows him standing in the farmhouse yard.

Another by a lake.

One picture shows what appears to be Bryce, Alice, and Marina sitting around the dining table. The Boy watches them from outside the window.

Under the images are notes:

I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR FRIEND.

I'M WATCHING.

DON'T LET THEM LIE TO YOU.

Alice's eyes catch something further under the wardrobe. She reaches under and pulls out Will's bloodied ACE PLUMBING HAT.

Alice puts a hand to her mouth and drops the construction paper. One notes flutters to the top. In black crayon are the words:

I'M OUTSIDE RIGHT NOW.

RING. Alice's cell phone rings in her pocket and she jumps. Quickly moving from the room, she pulls out the phone and answers it.

ALICE

Hello?

OFFICER (O.S.)

(through the phone)

Alice Hess?

ALICE

Yes?

As Alice talks on the phone she makes her way out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice walks down the hallway listening to the phone.

OFFICER (O.S.)

This is Office Hamilton of the
Bowsman Police Department. Do you
know a William Drakes?

ALICE

Yes. He's my... well, he was my... we
broke up, recently...

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Alice walks down the stairs looking increasingly disturbed.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Ms. Hess, would you be able to come
down to the station and answer some
questions?

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Alice walks through the unlit foyer and toward the dining
room.

ALICE
What's this about?

OFFICER (O.S.)
If you could just--

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alice is looking frightened.

ALICE
What's happened?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alice steps into the kitchen. Bryce's crayons and paper are
at the table, but he is nowhere to be seen.

OFFICER (O.S.)
William Drakes was found dead earlier
today. His body was... mutilated.
Would you be able to come down to the
station and answer a few questions?

There's a folded piece of paper on the kitchen table. Alice
moves toward it.

OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ms. Hess? Ms. Hess?

ALICE
Tonight?

OFFICER (O.S.)
I can send a squad car if that would
be easier.

Alice picks up the note.

ALICE
No. That's fine. I'll come right
away.

She clicks off the phone. She holds the paper, afraid to open it. Finally she opens it. In the same childish writing are the words:

I'M IN THE HOUSE.

Someone runs past the kitchen door behind her. Alice spins.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Bryce?

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alice rushes through the room searching for her son.

ALICE
Bryce? We can't play right now.

The house is now a gloomy dark. Alice clicks on the light, but nothing happens.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Damn it.

A small figure runs across the foyer, giggling. She squints in the dim light.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Bryce?

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Again she sees a shadow. It races along the landing above her. Is it Bryce?

ALICE
Bryce, you come down here right now.
I am not kidding. Now.

No reply.

Alice tries to keep her voice firm, but the fear can be heard.

ALICE (CONT'D)
If I have to come up there...

She steadies herself and starts climbing the stairs. She can hear undecipherable whispers and hushed laughter.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Bryce. Is someone with you? Bryce,
can you hear me?

She continues up the stairs, slowly.

INT. LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Standing at the top of the stairs, Alice squints down the dark hallway. A small figure stands in the shadows staring back.

ALICE
Bryce. I need you to come to me.

The figure doesn't move.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Right now, Bryce. Please. Come to Mommy.

The figure remains still.

BRYCE (O.S.)
Mommy?

Alice turns and looks down. Standing in the foyer below her is Bryce.

She spins around. The small shadow is immediately before her. Two small arms push out and shove Alice.

Alice falls backward, down the stairs, landing hard on the floor of the...

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Her eyes blink. She sees Bryce's legs. She hears giggling from somewhere as everything goes black.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Marina walks along the deserted road. It's dark and cold. While she is still a good distance away, she see the ambulance lights flashing against the farmhouse.

She runs.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Marina arrives breathless. An ambulance and police squad fill the drive. A woman POLICE OFFICER talks with Bryce on the porch. As Marina approaches she can just hear the conversation.

BRYCE
(nodding)
I guess she slipped or something.

POLICE OFFICER
Had your mother been drinking at all?

BRYCE
I don't know. Maybe.

TWO AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS carry Alice on a stretcher from the house. Marina runs to her side. She's out. Her face is bruised and her neck is braced.

MARINA
Alice?

Alice's eyes flutter open. She moves her lips, delirious. Marina leans in close to hear.

ALICE
(whisper)
Watch out for Bryce.

MARINA
Of course, I'll take care of him.

Alice grimaces.

ALICE
No. Watch out for him.

The Attendants load her into the ambulance.

MINUTES LATER

Marina stands on the porch holding Bryce's hand as the ambulance drives away.

Bryce looks up to Marina.

BRYCE
She's going to be okay.

Marina nods.

Snow begins to fall again.

Bryce walks back inside. Marina waits a moment, watching the snow.

INT. FOYER - LATER

Marina walks into the dark foyer.

MARINA

Bryce?

To her right a match strikes illuminating Bryce in the LIVING ROOM lighting an old oil lamp.

BRYCE

The wiring is all jacked up. Mom says she'll fix it. I don't know.

He lights a second lamp. Carrying one lamp and leaving the other, he walks toward Marina.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

I'm not afraid of the dark. Are you?

MARINA

How did your mom fall?

Bryce shrugs.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Was someone else in the house when it happened?

Bryce doesn't answer. The glow of his lamp surrounds the two like a bubble.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Bryce are we alone now?

BRYCE

I'm never alone.

INT. CLINE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Cline spoons another swallow of soup into Rebecca's mouth. Rebecca sits in her bed, hardly reacting. Mrs. Cline dabs at the soup on her daughter's chin.

MRS. CLINE

Wasn't that nice to have a visit from Marina? And she's all grown up. You three girls... you were inseparable. Do you remember.

Rebecca moves her head toward the window, her eyes incredibly sad. It's clear she remembers much more than her mother.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)

All right, beddy-bed time.

Mrs. Cline stands and using both arms carefully lowers her daughter in the bed and kisses her forehead.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
Would you like to watch the snow? I
know how you like that.

Mrs. Cline pulls open the curtains. She picks up the tray holding the soup bowl and moves to the door.

MRS. CLINE (CONT'D)
Should be clearing up before morning.
Won't it look pretty.
(clicking off the light)
Sleep tight.

She backs out the door, closing it behind her.

Rebecca lays in the dark watching the snow fall outside her window. Her eyes are filled with sadness. Her mouth moves, at first making no noise. Then she quietly speaks one name.

REBECCA
Lily.

Rebecca hears a creak of a door. She slowly turns her head from the window to the closet. The closet door drifts partially open.

Rebecca watches, staring into the blackness of the closet.

A noise. A shadow falls on her. Rebecca turns her head back toward the window. Someone is there. We don't see who. All we see is Rebecca's face - an expression not of fear, but relief... her eyes wet with gratitude.

Rebecca nods slightly. A small hand flashes forward, thrusting the small kitchen knife into Rebecca's throat.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Marina sits beside the bed with the open book in her hands.

MARINA
(reading)
You approach the cave and see the
same man-eating tiger blocking the
entrance. You step forward. "No,"
says your guide. "Turn back before
it's too late!"

The room glows yellow from the flickering flame of an oil lamp. Bryce lays in bed in his pajamas.

MARINA (CONT'D)

(reading)

If you choose to take your guide's advice, turn to page forty-three. If you choose to move forward, turn to page one hundred and nine.

BRYCE

Keep going toward the cave.

MARINA

Okay. Page one hundred and nine.

INT. DR. WARD'S HOUSE - EVENING

The front door opens and Dr. Ward's daughter rushes in, laughing. Dr. Ward follows, her arms full of grocery bags.

DR. WARD

(smiling)

Okay, okay. You get the stove on.

Dr. Ward sees the cell phone on the table reading: **ONE VOICEMAIL**

Her smiles fades as if she knows what the message will be.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)

Damn.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Marina sits watching Bryce asleep in his bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alice's cell phone glows and vibrates.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marina quietly stands and moves to the door.

BRYCE

Would you stay?

Marina stops.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Just a little bit longer.

MARINA
Of course.

She returns to her beside seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Scratch - an red flare is lit by a POLICE OFFICER. He adds it to the dozen or so burning flares surrounding a jack-knifed eighteen wheeler laying on its side and blocking the highway.

Another 2nd POLICE OFFICER waves cars toward an exit.

As the snow falls, a long line of slow moving traffic is being diverted from the highway.

INT. DR. WARD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Ward frowns as she slowly follows the other cars.

DR. WARD
Come on.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - LATER

The snow falls about the sleeping house.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marina dozes in the chair. Bryce sleeps in the bed.

The house is quiet, still.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Nothing moves.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The table is clear. The chairs pushed in.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The colored pencils lay on the table, unmoving.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM

Bryce lays asleep. Marina still dozes in the chair.

Bryce's eyes open. He breathes quickly.

BRYCE
(whisper)
He's here.

Bryce sits up. Marina wakes up and rubs her eyes.

MARINA
You okay, Bryce?

BRYCE
(frightened)
He's here.

He jumps from the bed and runs out of the room.

MARINA
Bryce? Bryce?!

She quickly shakes off the sleep as she stands, grabs the lamp, and follows him.

HALLWAY

The hallway is empty. She lifts the lamp and stares into the darkness. She begins walking to the...

LANDING.

Bryce runs from behind her and toward the stairs.

BRYCE
(frightened)
He's here!

MARINA
(firm)
Bryce!

Bryce stops, surprised at her stern tone. He turns.

She kneels down to his level and locks his eyes.

MARINA (CONT'D)
(firm)
Listen. Listen to me. There is no
Boy. There is no Boy.

Bryce is breathing quickly. His drifts behind her. She watches his face grow more and more terrified, his eyes on something behind her.

She keeps her eyes on him and shakes her head.

MARINA (CONT'D)
There. Is. No. Boy.

Bryce looks back to her. His breathing slows. His terror recedes.

Marina nods.

Bryce slowly moves to her, calm.

He puts up a hand slowly, palm forward. Marina raises her palm too.

Bryce slowly brings his hand closer, touching his thumb to Marina's pinky. Then, moving his hand to the words, he softly sings...

BRYCE
(singing)
*Itsy bitsy spider went up the water
spout. Down came the rain and washed
the spider out.*

Marina's face twists...

MARINA
Stop. Stop now.

Bryce quiets.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Something in your head is lying to
you. Look at me. Look at me. The Boy
is not real. He never was.

Bryce listens... Marina's words are reaching him. He nods and almost smiles.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Bryce.

The smiles dies.

The voice comes from the foyer below. Marina's face flashes pale.

BRYCE
He's here.

Bryce throws his arms around Marina's neck. Marina is too terrified to speak.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
(whispering, frantic)
I don't want to go. I don't want to
see him. Please, Marina. Please.

Marina squeezes her eyes closed.

MARINA
He is not real. I do not believe in
you. I don't believe.

BRYCE
If you don't believe... nothing will
happen.

Marina opens here eyes.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Bryce...

Bryce looks toward the stairs.

Marina shakes her head.

Bryce steps back slowly, pulling himself from Marina's grip. Marina, still kneeling, topples against the landing wall. She tries to say, "No." But can't make the words.

Bryce moves to the top of the stairs.

CHILD'S VOICE (CONT'D)
It's time.

Bryce turns and looks at Marina. She reaches out, but cannot move from the wall.

Bryce walks down the stairs.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A car pulls up to the dark house. Dr. Ward climbs from the driver's seat, leaving the headlights on.

She runs to the front door.

INT. LANDING/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Marina, still frozen in fear, hears the front door open.

DR. WARD (O.S.)
Hello. I'm sorry. I'm Dr. Ward. Are
you alone here?

The sound of her doctor's voice helps Marina break through.
She crawls toward the landing banister.

MARINA
(quiet, nearly inaudible)
Dr. Ward.

BRYCE (O.S.)
My Aunt's here. She's--

MARINA
(loudly)
Dr. Ward!

Marina pulls herself to her feet and looks down into the
foyer. Dr. Ward stands alone with Bryce in the middle of the
foyer, lit by the headlights streaming through the window.

Dr. Ward smiles reassuringly up at Marina.

DR. WARD
It's all right, Marina. Everything is
fine.

MARINA
I heard him. I heard his voice.

DR. WARD
It was a psychological relapse. Just
games your mind is playing games.
Come on down.

Marina moves to the stairs, gripping the bannister.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)
We're going to get you help. We'll
get past this.

MARINA
But...

DR. WARD
You're safe, Marina.

Marina takes the first step down. She stops. The heater grate
on the wall is off. Her mouth opens.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)
Marina, nothing can--

A tiny pale hand reaches from behind Dr. Ward and slices her throat.

Marina falls to her knees on the stairs. She grabs for the railing, but slides forward.

MARINA'S POV - the foyer is a moving blur. Someone stands above Dr. Ward writhing on the floor. Marina sees the figure's shoes - worn, brown leather. The figure takes Bryce's hand and leads him out the door.

Marina struggles to her feet and runs down to Dr. Ward.

Dr. Ward, her eyes wide, stares into Marina's. She tries to speak, her hands pushing against her slashed neck.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)
Go! Go help...

With one hand Marina holds Dr. Ward's head. With the other she grips her silver cross.

DR. WARD (CONT'D)
Go help him.

Marina shakes her head, gripping the cross.

MARINA
God will protect us. God will protect
us.

Dr. Ward reaches up and grabs the hand holding the cross. She yanks. The necklace snaps off of Marina's neck.

DR. WARD
Go!

She stops moving. Her eyes are still open.

Marina stands, leaving the cross on Dr. Ward's chest.

She looks to the door. The fear is still there, but with something new. An anger. A determination.

She opens the front door completely. Two sets of small footsteps lead away from the house and toward the nearby wood.

EXT. MEADOW - NIGHT

The moon lights the snowy landscape. Marina follows the footprints. In a shot that parallels the opening shots of the film, we watch her move toward the woods.

As she approaches the first line of trees she can hear the faint echo of "Itsy Bitsy Spider" she and the girls sang so many years before. Her memories are returning.

She hesitates for a moment before the trees then steps on.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The woods are shadow and light - bare trees casting black shadows on the new, moonlit snow, moving as she walks.

She can hear the echo of Rebecca, Lily and herself.

YOUNG LILY (O.C.)
It's colder than I thought.

YOUNG REBECCA (O.C.)
It's not that cold, Lily.

Marina looks through the trees and sees Lily walking just as she was sixteen years before.

YOUNG LILY
Feels like it's freezing.

Marina closes her eyes and reopens them. There's nothing but trees and snow.

She keeps her focus on the footsteps in the snow. They are more difficult to follow in the woods.

She walks on, growing more and more confused.

She sees Rebecca and Lily. Lily runs her hands along a birch tree.

YOUNG LILY (CONT'D)
It's even colder here.

YOUNG REBECCA
We're out of the sun, that's all.

MARINA
(whispering)
No.

Lily and Rebecca disappear into the night like mist.

DEEPER IN THE WOODS...

Marina stumbles on, disoriented. She runs into a row of trees.

Marina can hear the tapping of Lily's stick against these same trees. Lily, small and pale, walks in front of her.

YOUNG LILY
All the trees are dead.

Marina shakes her head, trying to shake off the memories.

Lily screams from somewhere, everywhere.

YOUNG LILY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Please! Wait! Please!

Marina walks forward, struggling.

MARINA
(sotto)
No. I don't want to remember.

YOUNG REBECCA (O.C.)
Do it, Marina. Do it!

MARINA
No. Please.

Lily's cries and struggle seem to fill the woods all around Marina.

Marina sees Lily's unmoving, small, bleeding body lying in the snow.

MARINA (CONT'D)
Oh, God. Lily!

Marina rushes to her and tries to block the bleeding. The body disappears as she touches it. Marina's hands sink into the icy brook.

YOUNG LILY (O.C.)
(choked whisper)
Marina! Marina!

Marina closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - BROOK - 16 YEARS BEFORE - DUSK

IN THE MEMORY, Marina faces Rebecca holding Lily before her. She holds a small black-handled kitchen knife in her hand.

YOUNG REBECCA
Do it now. Marina. It's what he wants. Now.

Marina breathes. She grips the knife but has not moved.

YOUNG REBECCA (CONT'D)

Now!

Marina shakes her head.

YOUNG MARINA

No.

Rebecca looks furious. She shoves Lily down into the water. Lily limply crawls in the water.

Rebecca stomps to Marina, putting her face an inch from Marina's face. Rebecca's face softens for just a moment.

YOUNG REBECCA

(whisper)

It's okay.

Rebecca smiles and kisses young Marina's cheek.

YOUNG REBECCA (CONT'D)

He always loved me most.

Rebecca snatches the knife from Marina's hand. She turns, raises the knife, and pounces on Lily.

Marina screams.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WOODS - BROOK - PRESENT - NIGHT

BACK IN THE PRESENT, Marina opens her eyes.

Standing before her is her younger self. Young Marina reaches out a hand to Marina. Marina takes it.

Young Marina leads her through the woods.

YOUNG MARINA

He's this way.

The young girl stops and points through the trees. Marina stares down at the girl, unsure, unbelieving.

BRYCE (O.S.)

Help!

Marina leaves the ghostly figure and rushes through the brush, branches snagging on her clothes and hair.

She pushes through a wall of brush. She hears Bryce's frantic breathing nearby. She falls forward through the branches and lands on the ground of a clearing.

From the ground, Marina looks forward and sees the worn leather shoes standing beside Bryce's sneakers. She looks up...

In the center of the clearing, Bryce stands, the point of the paring knife pressing against his throat. Beside him, in the worn shoes, stands a petite woman... Mrs. Bellows.

MRS. BELLOWS

Hello, Marina.

Marina stops, staring. She squints at Mrs. Bellows. Her left hand, which holds Bryce's chest, is missing the pinky finger.

MARINA

Lily?

Mrs. Bellows - Lily as an adult - smiles, a little sad, a little insecure.

LILY BELLOWS

It's been a long time. I wasn't sure you'd remember.

MARINA

(standing)

Please. Please don't hurt him.

LILY BELLOWS

You were the weak one. Rebecca, she was strong. A natural leader. And me, I was the boldest. But you... you just followed.

MARINA

I'm so sorry, Lily. I am so sorry for what we did to--

LILY BELLOWS

(angry)

We agreed! We agreed! I would be the sacrifice! Me! He chose me. But you... you couldn't even raise the knife, couldn't even finish the job.

MARINA

Lily...

LILY BELLOWS

You failed him. You failed me. I trusted you. I trusted you.

MARINA
Please, Lily.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - LAKE BOWSMAN - 16 YEARS AGO - EARLY EVENING

IN THE MEMORY, Young Marina is kneeling by the bloody body of young Lily. Lily's lips are moving and Marina lowers her ear to Lily's mouth.

LILY
I want to see him. I want to see him.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WOODS - LAKE BOWSMAN - PRESENT - NIGHT

Marina shakes her head. Lily points her knife, her voice breaking with emotion.

LILY BELLOWS
You left me bleeding here all alone.
I asked him to take me. I begged him.
Till the moment they found me, I
begged him.

MARINA
He's not real, Lily.

Lily shakes her head. She looks sad for Marina.

LILY BELLOWS
Oh, Marina, you just don't
understand. The moment the knife cut
my skin, he was real.

As she speaks she presses the point of the knife more firmly against Bryce's neck. A thin line of blood trickles from the point where the knife meets the neck.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)
The most real thing in the world.

Marina steps forward.

MARINA
Please. Let him go, Lily. You can do
whatever you want to me. Just let him
go.

LILY BELLOWS

I had to lure you back. Had to break
in to your house, leave you notes,
do... things... had to make you
remember, Marina. You are not your
own. He claims you. I had to help you
see with the eyes of faith again so
you could see him...

Marina looks to Bryce.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

But he doesn't want you anymore,
Marina. He wants this boy. I'm going
to do what you couldn't do! What you
wouldn't do! I'm going to do as he
asks.

Bryce kicks back into Lily's knee and tears free. She turns
to pursue Bryce.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Come here, Bryce. Come back.

Bryce stands, confused.

MARINA

Run, Bryce!

Bryce darts away. Lily moves after him, but Marina runs and
tackles Lily.

Lily pushes her off and gets to her feet, brandishing the
knife. Marina stands, ready to fight.

Lily slashes with the knife, cutting through Marina's jacket
to her arm. Marina swings her arms, her fist slamming against
the side of Lily's head. Lily staggers sideways, but recovers
herself.

Lily runs at Marina and thrusts the knife into Marina's
belly.

Marina falls back onto the snow. Lily straddles her,
stabbing. Marina lifts her hand, her palm absorbing some of
the stabs. But many hit Marina in the chest.

Lily stops, staring at the bloody, still-breathing Marina
beneath her. Lily leans in close to Marina's ear.

LILY BELLOWS

(whispering)

I'm going to leave you like you left
me. Alone. Hurting. Dying. And I'm
going to cut your nephew's throat.

Lily stands. Marina tries, but can't move from the ground.

MARINA

Don't.

LILY BELLOWS

You never had the faith, Marina.
Never had the eyes to see.

Marina watches helplessly as Lily walks in the direction Bryce ran.

EXT. WOODS - LAKE BOWSMAN - NIGHT

Bryce runs through the woods, frantic and unthinking.

He bursts from the brush to Lake Bowsman, the frozen surface gleaming like silver in the moonlight.

Positioned on rocks along the shore he sees a series of objects: a baseball, a small pair of antique wire-rimmed glasses, and the school book *Every Boy's Reader*.

He turns back to the woods, listening for any pursuing footsteps. His breathing is the only sound. He waits, expecting something. But no one comes. He turns and comes face to face with Lily. She brings a finger to her lips.

LILY BELLOWS

Shhhh.

Lily grabs Bryce by the neck of his sweater. He loses his feet as she walks out onto the lake. She drags him by the sweater collar, his struggling body sliding along the ice.

Lily wipes some tears from her eyes.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Bryce... we're going to see him.
We'll see him, you and me. What a
beautiful night.

The ice cracks beneath her feet, but Lily doesn't seem to care. She doesn't slow her stride.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Years. I've been faithful for years.
What a beautiful night. We'll him
blood. We'll be his forever.

BRYCE

Let me go! Let me go!

LILY BELLOWS
I struggled too. It's just instinct,
I think.

Lily pauses and looks up at the clear winter sky.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)
That moon is wonderful, isn't it?

She pulls out a pair of hand clippers and looks down at Bryce. She lifts her four-fingered hand.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)
People just don't respect things
unless it costs them something.

Bryce cowers as Lily bends toward him.

MARINA (O.S.)
Lily.

Lily looks to see Marina standing near holding a large branch. She swings it, connecting with Lily's head. Lily lands on the ice with a loud smack, the ice cracking out in every direction.

Marina helps Bryce to his feet.

MARINA (CONT'D)
I've got you. I've got you, Bryce.

She falls to one knee, holding her wounds.

Bryce helps her stand and the two stagger back toward the shore. Marina limps, leaning on Bryce.

Behind them, Lily slowly stands and stares.

LILY BELLOWS
Please, Marina.

MARINA
(to Bryce)
Keep walking.

LILY BELLOWS
Please.

MARINA
Don't listen.

The two are near the shore now.

LILY BELLOWS
Don't fail him again.

Crack. Lily falls, disappearing through the ice.

Marina and Bryce turn. Lily splashes in the freezing water.

Marina locks eyes with Bryce.

MARINA

Get to the shore. I have to help her.

BRYCE

(shaking his head)

No.

MARINA

I have to.

Marina turns back to Lily, moving as fast as she can on the ice.

Bryce backs off the ice on to the shore.

Marina moves slowly as the ice cracks more under her feet. She gets to her belly, crawling out to the hole, leaving a long smear of blood on the ice.

Lily flails in the water.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Hold on, Lily! Hold on.

Marina reaches out to the thrashing woman. She manages to grab a sleeve of her coat and pull her.

LILY BELLOWS

(yelling)

No!

Lily's eyes are wild and open.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Let him take me.

Marina tries to pull Lily from the water.

LILY BELLOWS (CONT'D)

Let him have me.

Lily meets Marina's eyes, both are still for a moment.

From out of the ice water two small hands emerge and clasp on to Lily's shoulders. Marina can make out a face just under the surface - the Boy.

Feeling the hands, Lily SCREAMS. Her eyes never leave Marina's. The hands tighten their grip and yank her under.

Marina lays by the hole, gasping in breaths of air. She stares into the water as it grows still.

She rolls over on her back, gazing at the sky above her. Three black birds fly by.

BRYCE
(calling out)
Aunt Marina!

Marina sits up, seeing Bryce standing on the shore.

She struggles to her feet. Stepping forward, she takes a deep breath and smiles toward Bryce.

She looks back at the hole. The water is still, quiet.

She turns back to Bryce. Just behind him stands the Boy.

MARINA
Bryc--

Two arms reach from the ice, grab her ankles. She falls forward, still on the ice for half a second, then is pulled back and into the hole.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END