

LA LLORONA

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Gray clouds hover above a quiet suburban street.

SUPER: LOS ANGELES, 1973

Quiet. Until...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Look out!

INT. KITCHEN

THUD - a child's rain boot lands in the middle of the table. Cereal and milk splatter. A glass tips, rolls to the edge...

ANNA (early 30s), flustered and hurried, catches the glass just before it hits the floor. *Whew.*

SAMANTHA (7) takes the boot from the table. Pulls it onto her foot.

SAMANTHA

Sorry.

But she's not. Her excited eyes are on the window, where a light rain has started to fall. Anna follows her gaze...

ANNA

Not now. We're late.

CHRIS (O.S.)

What else is new?

CHRIS (11) stands with his bookbag over his shoulder. He also holds a red Raggedy Ann lunch box. Gives it to Samantha, who cranes her head to watch the rain outside.

Anna rushes to dump the dishes in the sink, swipes a quick cloth over the table. Not enough, but it'll have to do.

Now Samantha's nose is pressed against a window.

ANNA

Honey. Move it.

(to Chris)

Where's your poncho?

CHRIS

I'm not wearing that.

ANNA

Don't fight me this morning, Chris.
We don't have time.

CHRIS

Who's fault is that?

Anna ignores the jab, goes to the closet, pulls out a rain poncho. Samantha opens the front door, and--

SAMANTHA

Uh-oh. We missed it.

Anna sees the school bus pull away.

Samantha runs outside to play in the drizzle. *Finally!*

Chris follows his sister. Without his poncho. Anna sighs.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Anna stops her car in front. Chris hops out, then Samantha.

ANNA

Hold on. Chris.

Chris turns back.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Meatloaf's in the fridge, okay?

CHRIS

Because you won't be home for
dinner?

ANNA

I will be. But just in case--

CHRIS

Yeah. I gotta go. It's raining.

He slams the car door.

INT. CAR

Anna watches her kids walk into the school, half listens to the car radio: an unusually powerful storm headed for Southern California. The rain comes down harder.

Anna twists the defrost, looks at her watch. *Late.*

INT. DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES (DFACS)

Anna hurries to her desk, sits down, gives a guilty smile to a coworker.

She puts a form into her typewriter, opens a file folder. A photo of a smug teenager stares out. Anna hits the Corona's return arm. DING.

Behind her, a COUGH.

MR. HANKINS (50s), Anna's boss.

HANKINS
Third time this week.

ANNA
I know. I'm sorry.

Hankins considers saying more... then just gives Anna a stack of phone-message slips.

Anna watches him go. *Whew.* She looks to the message slips. Picks up the phone, dials the first number.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Karen? Hi, it's Anna, Department of Family and Children-- yes, that Anna. I'm following up with you about our conversation last week...

LATER

A half-eaten salad sits on Anna's desk. Lunch forgotten, Anna's on a phone call..

ANNA
(into phone)
I do understand. Promise me you'll think about it. And you have my number. Call anytime.

Anna hangs up. Hankins walks through again. He stops at a desk nearby. Talks to another social worker, KRISTY (20s).

HANKINS
Did you close the Alvarez case?

Suddenly, Anna's all ears.

ANNA
Patricia Alvarez?

They ignore Anna.

KRISTY
She wouldn't let me in.

ANNA
That's my case.

Hankins waves her off.

KRISTY
I'm taking patrol over there.
Something's up at that house--

Anna walks up to them.

ANNA
What's going on? Mr. Hankins?

HANKINS
(to Anna)
We got a call from the school. The
Alvarez boys haven't been to class
all week.

ANNA
But why is Kristy--

Hankins pulls Anna aside.

HANKINS
I transferred some of your cases.
Kristy has more time and energy--

ANNA
She's younger.

HANKINS
She doesn't have the outside
responsibilities you have--

ANNA
No kids.

HANKINS
She's got support at home...

ANNA
You mean, her husband's not dead.

Hankins sighs. Yes, she said that out loud.

HANKINS
Anna, we both know you're having
trouble keeping up. Less time here
and more time at home... may help.

Yes, he said that out loud.

ANNA
Patricia Alvarez isn't going to
talk to someone like Kristy. You
just listed all the reasons why.
Patricia knows me. She trusts me.

HANKINS
(beat)
All right. Keep the case. Check
in with patrol and head over there.

ANNA
I don't need patrol.

HANKINS
Take an officer. That's not a
request.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES - LATE AFTERNOON

Lower middle class neighborhood.

Anna steps from her car. Behind her, a cop closes the door
to his patrol car.

The rain's lightened up, the wind hasn't -- it whips through
Anna's hair. She approaches the cop, OFFICER SIMMS.

ANNA
I can handle this myself.

SIMMS
Sorry, ma'am. I'm already here.

ANNA
Then, please let me do the talking.

They approach the door. Thunder CRACKS overhead.

Anna notices the windows. They're boarded up. *Weird.* She
knocks on the door.

No answer. Anna puts her ear closer. Hears movement.

She knocks again. Harder this time.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Patricia? It's Anna. Open the
door please.

Nothing. Simms reaches around Anna, POUNDS on the door. She
pushes his arm away.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Will you just go back to your car?

Sounds from inside. The CLICK of a lock turning...

The door opens -- the chain stops it after a few inches.

Patricia stares out with a bleary red eye. She looks crazed.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Patricia? Can you let us in?

Patricia shakes her head. No.

SIMMS

Ma'am, open the door.

Anna turns to him.

ANNA

Back off. Now.

Patricia notices this. Gives Anna a grateful look.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Patricia, where is Carlos? Tomás?
Where are your sons?

Patricia's eyes fill with fear. She shakes her head again.

Anna gets closer to the door, talks quietly.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I don't know what's going on,
Patricia, but I'm your best chance
of clearing all this up. Let me
in. Talk to me.

Patricia eyes Simms.

ANNA (CONT'D)

He can stay out here. Just let me
in. Let's start there.

Patricia hesitates, looks at Anna, Anna nods. The door
closes... and they hear the chain slide free.

The door opens, Anna steps through. Simms starts to follow,
Anna puts a hand on his arm.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I told her I'd come in alone.

SIMMS

Out of respect for Officer Bennett--

Those words hurt Anna. Simms notices, stops talking.

ANNA

Please. I'll yell if I need you.

Simms doesn't like it. But he stays on the porch.

INT. PATRICIA'S HOUSE

Creepshow. Candles provide the only light. The house is dim and dank. Water runs down the walls. Around the living room, pots collect water.

Anna stares at all the leaks.

ANNA

This can't all be from the rain.

Patricia's only half paying attention. Her fingers nervously twist a CHARM hanging around her neck.

Wait... Anna looks closer. It's not a charm. It's a KEY.

And there's a strange BURN MARK on Patricia's neck. Dark red, blistered.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Patricia. Where are the boys?

Patricia's a mess: her hair's ratty, her eyes are bloodshot and puffy, her skin's sallow.

But she's calm for the moment, focused on Anna.

Empty booze bottles are strewn around.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(gently)

If you're drinking again, we can--

Anna hears a SCRATCHING sound. From upstairs.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What's that?

Anna heads that way. Patricia grabs her.

PATRICIA

We don't need your help. *iVete!*

ANNA

Patricia, what's going on?

Anna doesn't notice Simms slip into the house. His eyes scan the room: windows boarded-up and nailed shut, water soaking every inch of carpet, no lights...

He covers his nose and mouth. *The smell.* He looks down -- foul water seeps up through the carpet, surrounds his shoe.

Anna's at the foot of the stairs. Again, she hears the SCRATCHING. She takes a step--

Patricia grabs her again. Anna touches Patricia's hand.

ANNA (CONT'D)
It's okay. It's all right.

Anna moves up the stairs. Then she hears... humming.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Carlos? Tomás?

Anna disappears up the stairs. Simms quietly talks into his two-way.

Patricia follows Anna at a distance. Her eyes are crazed, she grips the key around her neck.

PATRICIA
(chants)
*No te acerques. No te acerques.
No te acerques.*

The carpet under Anna's feet squishes.

At the end of the hallway -- a door. It's closed, a large PADLOCK hangs from the top corner.

Patricia whimpers.

Anna taps on the door. She hears scratching, mumbling. And HUMMING.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
No no no nonononono. No!

Anna turns to find Patricia right behind her. Anna's eyes fall to Patricia's neck -- to the KEY.

ANNA
Patricia, give me that key.

Patricia snarls. *Yikes.* But Anna holds her ground.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Give me the key.

Patricia CHARGES. She plows into Anna and KATHUMP knocks her to the floor. Anna throws her arms up as Patricia claws at her face, her hair.

PATRICIA
Leave us alone! Get out!

Suddenly, Patricia's YANKED off of Anna.

Simms. He drags Patricia away from the room, pins her to the floor at the other end of the hall. Anna gets to her feet.

ANNA
You promised to stay on the porch.

SIMMS
The situation seemed to warrant
intervention, ma'am.

Patricia thrashes and snarls under Simms' grip.

ANNA
Thank you.

Simms cuffs Patricia. Anna checks out the MasterLock. Water drips from its keyhole.

Anna opens her hand. There's the key, taken off Patricia during the scuffle. She slides it into the padlock.

Patricia goes crazy. She fights, spits, hisses.

PATRICIA
¡Los matarás! Don't open the door!
You'll kill them!

Anna turns the key -- SNIK. The lock releases. The door swings open...

ANNA
Oh, my god.

Inside the room: CARLOS and TOMÁS. Patricia's sons.

Carlos, the older boy, stares up at Anna with pitiful eyes. His fingertips are wrapped in bloody bandages.

Tomás rocks back and forth, HUMMING a creepy lullaby.

INT. CARLOS & TOMÁS' ROOM

Anna steps in. The boys scramble away from her.

ANNA

Hey. Remember me?

The kids move farther away. Anna studies the room. Dingy. Candy wrappers, soda cans litter the floor. Dirty plates, utensils. The kids have been here a while.

Along the ceiling, the wallpaper's wet. Bubbled.

And on the inside of the door: deep scratches. Like someone -- like a little boy -- was trying to get out.

Anna looks at the marks. At Carlos' bandaged fingers.

Outside in the hallway, the sounds of a scuffle. Patricia SCREAMS. Desperate. Feral.

Tomás covers his face. Carlos touches Anna's leg.

CARLOS

(whispers)

Close the door.

Anna kneels in front of the boys.

ANNA

It's okay.

A THUD from the hallway.

SIMMS (O.S.)

Ow! Shit!

CARLOS

Close the door!

Suddenly, Carlos' eyes go wide.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

She's going to hurt us.

He stares over Anna's shoulder.

Looming behind Anna: Patricia. She broke away from Simms. Her hands are still cuffed behind her back, but is that BLOOD on her mouth?

Anna rears back, but Simms - a fresh BITE MARK on his cheek - is already there. He hauls Patricia out of the room.

Anna's hands are shaking. She tucks them into her pockets.

ANNA
Okay. It's okay. We're going to
get you out of here.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATRICIA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Anna loads the kids into the back of Simms' car. Patricia, kicking and screaming, is shoved into another cruiser.

Neighbors peek through curtains and blinds. Anna climbs into her car. Pulls away.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CHILDREN'S SHELTER - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Anna turns in paperwork for Carlos and Tomás. The boys sit quietly, timid and afraid.

Anna squats down in front of them. Carlos flinches. Tomás clings to his brother.

ANNA
Hey, guys. You know me. You know
I'd never do anything to hurt you.
You'll have warm beds, hot food,
showers. You'll be safe here.

CARLOS
(whispers)
We're not safe anywhere.

Anna takes his freshly bandaged fingers in hers.

ANNA
I know your mom's had her problems
in the past, but we worked it out,
didn't we? She loves you boys.
We'll get through this one, too,
okay? All of us. Together.

Carlos pulls his hands from Anna's, wraps his arms around his little brother, who starts to cry.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Anna heads to her car. It's dusk. She looks at her watch.
Shit, it's late.

EXT. STREET

Anna pulls into her driveway.

INT. ANNA'S HOME - ENTRY

Anna drops her purse and keys on a side table. Hears the SOUNDS of a television...

LIVING ROOM

Samantha's on the couch, watching "All in the Family." A Baby Crissy doll is propped up next to her.

ANNA
I'm sorry I'm late, Doodlebug.

Samantha's eyes stay on the TV...

ANNA (CONT'D)
Did Chris warm up the meatloaf?

Nothing from Samantha, she's too absorbed.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Sam.

Zilch.

CLICK. Anna turns off the TV.

SAMANTHA
Uuunnhhhhh!

ANNA
Dinner.

SAMANTHA
I don't know.

Anna gives her a look: seriously?

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Chris made meatloaf. Can I watch
TV now?

CLICK. Archie Bunker's on some colorful rant.

ANNA
Not this.

She changes channels. CHK CHK CHK.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Where's Chris?

SAMANTHA
I don't know.

CHK. "The Waltons." *Better.*

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anna heads down the hall. Sees a door open. Frustrated.

ANNA
Not supposed to be in here, how
many times do I have to...

She gets to the half-open door. Takes a beat. Too tired for
an argument. She looks into the room -- her HOME OFFICE.

Chris is role playing, acting out a cops-and-robbers story.
BANG BANG -- it's a shoot-out with the bad guys.

A GLINT of silver. *What was that?* Anna watches.

Chris twirls something. Another flash of shiny metal. *What
IS that?* Anna opens the door a little more...

Chris confronts the mirror, making the arrest:

CHRIS
Hands behind your head.

He points a GUN. A real one. Police-issue service revolver.

Anna's eyes dart to her desk. An open LOCKBOX. *Ohmygod.*

She storms in...

HOME OFFICE

ANNA
Christopher Patrick Bennett!

Chris whirls, surprised. The .38 points right at Anna.
Hammer cocked back.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Put that down right now. That is
not a toy--

CHRIS
I'm old enough!

ANNA
That was your father's, it's
dangerous--

Chris argues like kids do, arms flailing. The business end
of the revolver gets waved around the room.

CHRIS
You're never around. I need to
know how to shoot so I can protect--

The gun slips from Chris hands... hits the hardwood. BLAM!
It fires.

A SCREAM from the other room. Samantha!

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna rushes in. Her daughter's lying on the floor.

ANNA
Sam!

Anna gingerly turns her over. *Ohnopleasegod*-- Samantha's
fine. Just scared out of her mind.

SAMANTHA
I was getting a drink and there was
a boom sound and...

Anna looks at the nearby wall. A BULLET HOLE's punched into
the wallpaper.

Chris stands at the edge of the room. Anna goes to him.

She's about to let him have it. But his eyes are wet with
tears. He's shaken, scared.

Anna softens, but then sees something pinned to his shirt:

Her husband's POLICE BADGE. She takes it.

ANNA
Stay out of that room.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna watches from the porch as DETECTIVE OLIVER CLARKIN
(30s), walks away from the house with two uniformed OFFICERS.

She can't hear what Clarkin's saying, but the officers nod, get into their cruiser, drive away.

Clarkin rejoins Anna on the porch.

CLARKIN

Don't worry. They're not even going to file a report.

Anna's embarrassed.

ANNA

What was he thinking?

CLARKIN

Chris is just acting out. Look at what's he's gone through. What you've all gone through.

ANNA

I don't know, Oliver. They're all I have left, and I feel like I'm losing them, too.

CLARKIN

Give it more time. They'll be fine. You're their mom. Nothing can take that away from you.

ANNA

Okay. Okay.

Clarkin glances across the street at an ELDERLY LADY in a nightshirt, watching from her front door.

CLARKIN

I'll tell Mrs. Hudson that everything's okay.

ANNA

Thanks for taking care of this.

CLARKIN

Of course. Let me know if you or the kids need anything. Okay?

INT. HOME OFFICE

Anna sits at the desk.

Her eyes stare at a framed PHOTO of a handsome, uniformed police officer -- the kind of photo that would be on a casket, or at a memorial service.

A necklace dangles from the frame. A St. Michael pendant.

Anna takes the necklace, studies the pendant: an sword-wielding angel fighting a serpent.

She catches a sob, sucks it up. Wipes her eyes.

She tucks the necklace inside the lock box, between the badge and the gun, and a police cap.

Anna takes a last look, then snaps the box shut.

DRING. DRING. The phone.

ANNA

Hello? What? Are you... what?
Yes, I'll be right there.

She hangs up, mind racing. She picks up the phone. Dials.

ANNA (CONT'D)

It's Anna. Hi. Any chance you can come over? Right now. I have this work thing, it's urgent. I'll pay you double.

CUT TO:

INT. YOUTH SHELTER - OFFICE

Anna looks over the shoulders of a couple of POLICEMEN, watching a CRT screen.

A SECURITY GUARD operates a Sony U-matic videotape machine.

The U-matic hums, gently CLICK-CLACKS. Grainy black-and-white images start playing on the screen.

Not full-motion video -- it's a time-lapse recording:

FIRST SHOT: A dorm, lights low, lots of kids in beds laid out Army-bunk style. The children sleep peacefully.

Patricia's kids are asleep, together in the same bed.

ANNA

That's them. Right there.

SECOND SHOT: Patricia's kids are still asleep. The metal outside door is open. Just a crack.

THIRD SHOT: Carlos and Tomás still sleeping. The door's wide open now. Rain slashes in.

FOURTH SHOT: The boys are awake, sitting up in bed, staring at the open door.

FIFTH SHOT: static

SIXTH SHOT: static

SEVENTH SHOT: Patricia's children are gone. The door's still open, the floor around it wet with rain.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Back. Go back.

WHIRRR-CLICK-CLICK. Back to the fourth shot. Anna points.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Look at that.

Just outside the open door, what looks like the bottom of a long white gown... and a woman's dirty bare FOOT.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Was there anyone--

BRRNNGG! The phone startles them. The Security Guard grabs it, starts to speak-- shuts up and listens for a beat.

Then he looks at Anna, at the officers.

SECURITY GUARD
They found them.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. RIVER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Patricia's neighborhood. A light drizzle falls. Anna climbs out of her car, sees Clarkin talking with some POLICEMEN.

She joins him as the cops leave.

ANNA
What are you doing here?

He starts walking, she follows.

CLARKIN
It's my case now.

They make their way through a crowd of gawking neighbors...

ANNA
But you're...

It's a crime scene: yellow barricade tape is pulled across the top of an embankment that leads down to the L.A. River.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Homicide. Oh no.

He holds up the tape for Anna. She hesitates, stares down the concrete embankment. Finally, she ducks under.

INT. L.A. RIVER

Flashcubes POP. Lying on the cement edge of the river: the bodies of two children, draped in cloth.

CLARKIN
Looks like they were drowned.
Bruising indicates they put up a
hell of a fight, but... damn it.

ANNA
Where is she? The mother?

CLARKIN
We're searching the area.

Anna stares at the bodies. Stunned. She pulls herself out of her disbelief and turns, walks up the embankment...

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

...and back under the crime scene tape. Some of the gathered neighbors watch her. Looks like they're whispering.

Or maybe Anna's just being paranoid.

She gets past the crowd. Glances up at Patricia's house. As Anna walks away from the crime scene, the night gets quiet.

Quiet enough to hear... something.

What is that?

Is it... CRYING?

Anna stops. Looks around. Houses on both sides of the streets. Parked cars. An alleyway.

That definitely sounds like a woman crying.

ANNA
Patricia?

Anna catches a glimpse of movement. A FIGURE across the street, in the shadows.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Patricia!

Anna hurries across the street but the woman flees silently down the sidewalk.

Anna goes after her, catching glimpses of white in the dark.

Then Anna loses her. She stops. Listens. From an alley: that same sound. Crying.

INT. ALLEYWAY

The streetlights bleed away behind Anna as she heads into the alley. She follows the sobbing sound.

With each step, it's getting louder... louder...

Anna rounds a corner and sees--

A WOMAN, in white. She's kneeling, her back towards us. She SOBS-- a strange, deep weeping, her face buried her hands.

ANNA
Hello?

Instantly, the sobbing stops. The woman freezes.

Anna takes a step towards her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Patricia?

Nothing from the woman. Like a statue.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I just want to know if you're okay.
Are you hurt?

Anna takes another step--

The woman STANDS. It's abrupt, unnaturally fast. And it's the only movement -- her back's still towards us.

Anna takes a sudden step back-- BUMP. She knocks over a TRASH BAG sitting on a full garbage bin. Junk spills out.

When Anna looks back up-- The woman's gone.

Wait. What?

She looks around again. No one. She's alone.

She listens. Silence. Even the rain's stopped. *Weird.*

Anna shakes off the vibe. She steps over the spilled garbage-- stops. Something in the trash catches her eye.

A PHOTOGRAPH. Of Patricia and her boys. Smiling. Happier days. Anna grabs it, wipes away the dirt.

A whisper from behind:

THE WOMAN (O.S.)
Mis hijos.

Anna turns--

--and the WOMAN's right there, in Anna's face. The woman SHRIEKS. Lunges. Hands shoot out, GRAB one of Anna's arms--

Anna's world DIMS. Hazy. She skitters back, trips. THUMP. She lands on her ass.

Her vision clears and... the woman's gone again.

Ow. Anna rubs her arm. There's no wound. *Wait* -- a tiny, light pink mark. Barely visible.

A HAND reaches down to her. Startled, Anna scrambles away.

But it's only Clarkin. He helps her up.

CLARKIN
We found the mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Shaken, Anna follows Clarkin towards Patricia's house.

CLARKIN
It's always rough, but when it's kids... none of us will sleep tonight.

Outside the house, Patricia's escorted to a cruiser.

CLARKIN (CONT'D)
We're booking her. For murder.

Patricia seems broken, passive. But then she sees Anna. She goes nuts, the officers fight to hold her back.

PATRICIA
*¡Es tu culpa! Dejas que se los
lleve. I tried to stop her. Ahora
están muertos!*

The cops wrestle her into the back of the car.

Anna forces her way past the officers. Grabs the car door:

ANNA
Who? You tried to stop who?

Patricia looks at Anna. For just a moment, fear seems to swallow her anger.

PATRICIA
La Llorona.

A cop steps in, slams the car door. The cruiser pulls away.

EXT. OUTSIDE ANNA'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna pulls into her driveway.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

She walks through the rain onto the porch. At the front door she hears it again:

CRYING.

She turns. It stops. Anna waits... but it's gone now.

INT. ENTRY

Anna closes the door. Listens. All quiet. She heads for the living room.

LIVING ROOM

A teenaged BABYSITTER's asleep on the couch in front of the TV. Anna goes to wake her.

FRONT DOOR - MINUTES LATER

Anna lets the sitter out.

ANNA
Thanks again, Tammy.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Anna pours herself a glass of wine-- PLOP. *What's that?*
PLOP... PLOP.

She follows the sound back into...

ENTRY

There: PLOP -- a drop of water falls on the entryway rug.

Anna looks up. Sees water pooling on the ceiling and then:
PLOP. A leak. *Great.*

KITCHEN

Anna digs in a cabinet for a pot. Outside the kitchen window, droplets of rain glide down the glass.

Then: a DARK FORM darts past the window.

Anna seems to sense it. Looks up. Doesn't see anything.

ENTRY

Glass of wine in hand, Anna drops the pot under the leak.

CHILDREN'S ROOM

Anna peeks in. Kids are asleep. All's good.

She closes the door behind her. Just as it clicks shut...

Outside the kids' window: FOG huffs onto the glass. Like something's breathing.

Samantha rolls over, sighs.

INT. ENTRY - NEXT MORNING

PLOP. The drip-catching pot's half full of water.

And several more pots, pans, and bowls have been placed around. TING, PING, PANG.

KITCHEN

SPLOOSH - Chris empties a water-filled pot into the sink.
Anna's at the stove, making pancakes.

CHRIS
Mom, you should call someone.

ANNA
Already did. They're backed up
because of all this crazy rain.

Chris sits down in front of a plate of pancakes.

Samantha positions Baby Crissy in a high chair. The doll has her own plate and a tiny glass of orange juice.

Anna puts pancakes on Samantha's plate, and a miniature pancake on Crissy's plate.

Anna sees Chris not eating -- he's just picking at the food.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I know they're not as good as
Dad's.

Her head's down. Chris looks at his pancakes. At her.

He takes a big first bite. Through a full mouth:

CHRIS
They're good, Mom.

Anna ruffles his hair, returns to the stove. Samantha eats, but it's mechanical: her eyes watch the rain outside.

From the ceiling, three drops of water fall into one of the pots. But this time, they SIZZLE when they hit.

HISSHH. POP. HISSHH.

Anna turns from the stove. Chris leans over, looks into the pot. Shakes it. Just water. He shrugs at Anna.

Then, more PINGS and TINGS from the other rooms.

The sounds seem to organize, become rhythmic. Almost melodic. Samantha starts humming along.

It's the lullaby. Anna listens, it doesn't quite click yet.

ANNA
That's a nice song.

SAMANTHA
It's a lullaby.

Anna puts a pancake stack on the table, sits down, takes one.

ANNA

Pretty. Where did you learn it?

SAMANTHA

The lady in my dream taught me.

Just as Anna starts to ask more, Chris reaches for another pancake. His arm hits the syrup bottle. It teeters...

Anna grabs it just before it spills.

ANNA

Careful.

Something catches her eye: the mark on her arm. It's a smudge now, a darker pink.

Chris takes the syrup. Samantha still hums.

Anna rubs at the blemish, it doesn't come off. *Huh.*

She glances at the wall clock. She doesn't want to do it, but she has to:

ANNA (CONT'D)

Hey. I know we were planning on going to the movies--

Chris stops chewing.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I have to go out for a little bit this morning, there's a--

He puts down his fork, stands.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris.

But he's already at the back door.

CHRIS

It's fine. See you later.

He leaves, closes the door behind him. Anna sighs.

SAMANTHA

(pouts)

Can we still play in the rain?

ANNA

We'll do that when I get back.
I'll bet my splash will be five times bigger than yours!

SAMANTHA
(brightens)
My splash will be SEVENTY-ITH times
bigger.

ANNA
Seventy-ith? Geez, that might put
our whole house under water.

EXT. BACK YARD - SAME

Chris climbs up a ladder to a TREE HOUSE. It's more of a
raised cabin: four walls and a roof.

He reaches a hatch in the floor, pushes it open.

INT. TREE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A couple of beanbag chairs, scattered comic books, a table.

Chris clicks a battery-powered TRANSISTOR RADIO. 70's Rock.

He opens a "Gunsmoke" lunchbox, takes out a photograph of him
and his dad. Smiling. Happy.

He looks through the plexiglass window. A section of the L.A.
River runs along the edge of their property.

The rain's filled the concrete channel. Chris stares into
the rushing water below.

ANNA (O.S.)
Chris!

INT. ANNA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

MEEP MEEP! Samantha watches Roadrunner cartoons on TV.
Chris plops down next to her.

Wile E. Coyote skids off a cliff, falls. Samantha gives a
little giggle, leans her head against Chris' shoulder.

Anna comes in, keys and umbrella in hand. Stops at the sight
of her kids being... okay. It's nice.

ANNA
Love you guys.

She leaves. Chris watches her go.

Samantha bounces on the sofa, squeals at the TV as an anvil
DOINGS onto Wile E.'s head.

But Chris is thinking about something. He nudges his sister.

CHRIS

Hey. Tell me about that lady in
your dream. I think... I think I
dreamed about her, too.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. RIVER - THAT AFTERNOON

A vigil of a few dozen people have gathered near the spot
where Patricia's kids were found. Anna's among them.

Rain TAPS on umbrellas, everyone holds a lit candle.

A priest prays. It's FATHER PEREZ.

FATHER PEREZ

...during this season of loss and
sorrow, we ask for the peace of
God, a peace that surpasses all
understanding.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME - SAME

Chris is still on the couch, watching TV.

Samantha's on the rug in the den, playing Baby Crissy.

The rain starts to come down harder. Samantha eyes the
window. She tucks Crissy under a little blanket.

ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha opens the front door, holds her hand out. The
rain's cool, soft. She smiles.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH

The vigil heads towards a church. Anna walks with the group.

A few folks speak quietly in Spanish. Suddenly Anna hears
someone say it:

"La Llorona."

Anna stops cold. *Who said that?* The group walks past her,
she can't pick any one out.

She looks down to see that her candle's been snuffed out.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY

Upstairs in the sanctuary, Anna sits alone in a pew.

Two large photographs of Carlos and Tomás are propped on display easels. Lighted vigil candles surround them.

FATHER PEREZ (O.S.)
Hello, Anna.

Anna's startled.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. May I?

She nods. Perez sits.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
I haven't seen you since David's funeral.

ANNA
I had to go back to work, it's been so busy, it's been...

FATHER PEREZ
It's been hard.

She nods again.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
I'm not trying to guilt you. I know you're doing the best you can. We're here if you need us.

They sit in a comfortable silence for a while.

ANNA
Father, can I ask you something?

He smiles gently. Nods.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Have you ever heard of... "La Llorona?"

Perez freezes. Then, he turns to her.

FATHER PEREZ
La Llorona.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME - FRONT YARD

Samantha's having a ball in the rain, arms swinging.

Her red rain boots splash as she jumps in puddles.

Another puddle. *SPLASH. Rain is fun!*

But, mixed in with the sound of the falling rain, there's something else... *CRYING.*

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
The weeping woman.

It's quiet, comes and goes. Samantha thinks she hears it...

Nah. She targets another puddle -- *SPLASH. Wheee!*

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
Centuries ago, in a small Mexican village, the most beautiful woman in town set her sights on a rich ranchero. They married, had two children.

Head back, she sticks out her tongue to catch rain drops.

IN SAMANTHA'S POV: we see only the gray sky above and the rain falling down. Hints of *CRYING* return...

....but Samantha's too distracted.

With her face looking straight up, someone could be standing **RIGHT NEXT** to her, but she wouldn't see it.

She makes a quick movement to catch a drop. She **TRIPS**, lands on the wet grass, giggles.

FATHER PEREZ
But the woman was vain, selfish.
Her husband grew tired of her.

More *CRYING*. Samantha definitely hears it now.

She starts to look for the source... but sees a **WORM** squirm on the stone walkway. *Poor thing.*

And at the front fence:

The gate sloooowly swings open.

Samantha gently rolls the worm off the wet cement, oblivious.

Then: **SPLIT SPLAT** -- the sound of footsteps. Samantha looks up. No one's there.

On the porch:

The front door swings shut. CLICK.

INT. ANNA'S HOME

Chris, on the couch, thinks he hears the door. Looks up. No one's there. Looks back to the TV.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME - FRONT YARD

Samantha watches the worm wriggle in the grass. *Saved!*

A nearby puddle SPLASHES. Samantha looks at it.

SPLAT. The puddle splatters again -- like an invisible rock was tossed in. Samantha looks around. She's alone.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
But he treasured his sons. He gave
them all the attention he no longer
gave to her.

Again: SPLAT. As if beckoning Samantha to play.

The girl giggles and -- SPLASH. Jumps into the puddle.

Another puddle splatters. Samantha jumps to it.

She hops across the side of the yard -- towards a wall of ungroomed BOUGAINVILLEA that runs along the property line.

Another puddle splats. Samantha hops into it. *This is fun!*

She hops closer to the bougainvillea bushes.

The top-heavy wall of bougainvillea hangs down like a curling wave. A dark, cave-like void beneath its canopy.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
In a fit of jealous revenge, this
mother lured her innocent children
to the river.

CANOPY POV: through the dense growth, we see Samantha getting closer with each splash.

At the edge of the bougainvillea: a larger puddle. Half in shadow. Rain from the plant's canopy WEEPS into the puddle.

SPLAT. The puddle beckons.

Samantha grins, gets ready to make the jump. *Wait... those flowers look really scary.*

Samantha shifts her feet. Looks at the puddle. The bush.
Her eyes try to see through the weeping blooms.

The puddle gives another playful SPLAT.

Samantha gives a small shake of her head. Afraid.

She starts to turn away-- suddenly she JERKS forward. She barely keeps her balance.

Did someone push her? She looks around. No one.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
She dragged them to the water...

Another JERK forward. She falls, lands on her knees, just a few feet from the bougainvillea.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
...held their heads under...

Scared now, she backs away from the bushes, gets to her feet.

WHOMP! She hits the ground hard, face down in a large puddle. Limp.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
...until they stopped fighting.
Stopped moving...

Samantha jerks her head up out of the water, gasps for air. She scrambles to her feet and RUNS towards the porch.

In the dark canopy of the bougainvillea, something MOVES.

INT. ANNA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Chris hears the front door: BANG BANG BANG.

ENTRY

He hears Samantha SCREAMING, BANGING. He rushes to the door.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
She went to her husband, convinced that his devotion would now be hers alone. But when he discovered what she had done to his beloved sons, he nearly killed her himself.

Then Chris hears, from outside, a long WAIL.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
And so she returned to the river.
She wailed, screamed, cursed God.
In fury and desperation, she sank
to the bottom and let the water
fill her lungs. Drowned.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Another WAIL.

Samantha hears it, too. She screams. Bangs harder at the door, her eyes locked on the bougainvillea.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
Now she is La Llorona, the weeping
woman. Cursed to wander, searching
for the souls of her children...

INT. ANNA'S HOME - ENTRY

Chris tries to pull the door open. It won't budge!

CHRIS
Sam!

More BANGING. SCREAMING.

FATHER PEREZ (V.O.)
...or, children she *believes* to be
her own.

A final SCREAM. Then: silence.

CHRIS
Samantha! Sam!

Chris fights with the door, pulls as hard as he can.

Suddenly it opens. Samantha half-falls inside.

She's clinging to the door knob, crying.

EXT. PORCH

Chris pulls her to her feet. She's terrified, clings to him.

CHRIS
What happened? Sam?

She just sobs. He brings her inside.

INT. ENTRY

Chris helps Samantha out of her rain coat. Then her boots. A cold wind blows in -- the front door's still open.

Chris goes to it. Closes it. Turns the deadbolt. Locked.

INT. SANCTUARY

Anna's eyes are fixed on the photos of Carlos and Tomás.

FATHER PEREZ

In many Hispanic cultures, children are told to behave and listen to their elders, or *La Llorona* will come in the black of night and steal them away.

Anna tears her eyes away from the boys' photos.

ANNA

So... she's just a bogeyman. A story used to keep kids in line.

Father Perez gives a wry smile.

FATHER PEREZ

Some say the same thing about the Bible. I guess it depends upon what you believe.

ANNA

But, you don't believe it?

Father Perez thinks about that.

FATHER PEREZ

Three years ago, I placed little stock in legends, myths, things that go bump in the night. Then there was an... incident. It opened my mind to possibilities that are, let's just say, out of the ordinary.

Anna studies him. He's serious. It gets a little awkward.

ANNA

Okay then. Thank you, Father.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME - LATER

Anna lets herself in.

INT. ANNA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM

Chris is waiting for her on the sofa.

CHRIS
Where were you?

ANNA
It was a work thing. One of the families I'm responsible for.

CHRIS
Oh that's right. You're taking care of all the kids in town -- except your own.

ANNA
Don't talk to me like that.

CHRIS
Why not? It's the only time you listen.

This stops Anna. She softens.

ANNA
That's not true.

She sits next to him.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I promise to do better.

CHRIS
(quietly)
Don't make promises. You never keep them.

Chris gets up, walks away.

KID'S ROOM

Samantha has Baby Crissy holding a xylophone mallet. Together they bang out the Spanish melody on the instrument.

Samantha hums along.

Chris comes in. Anna's right behind.

ANNA
I'm home, Doodlebug. Want to go
jump in the puddles?

Samantha doesn't answer, lost in her own little world.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Sam? Let's play in the rain.

Her eyes still on the xylophone:

SAMANTHA
I don't like the rain, Mommy.

What? Anna looks at Chris. He just shrugs.

ANNA
Alright then. I'll fix some lunch.

CHRIS
We had sandwiches.

Anna sighs. She gives up.

INT. ANNA'S HOME OFFICE - THAT NIGHT

Anna's at her desk, with a glass of wine and a stack of bills. She reads a mortgage statement stamped "OVERDUE."

Overwhelmed, she looks at a photo of her family: Anna's head leans cozily against her husband's shoulder.

David holds Samantha in one arm, his POLICE CAP tilted awkwardly on her little head. His other arm's thrown around Chris' shoulders.

The family that was.

Suddenly, reflected in the photo-glass: something darts by, outside the window. A hazy, white blur.

Anna looks up. *What was that?*

She goes to the window, peers out.

Just rain. Lots and lots of rain.

She returns to the desk, turns off the lamp, leaves.

We linger on the dark window... the rain taps against the glass...

We wait some more...

But that's all it is. Just rain.

KIDS' ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Anna stands in the doorway, watches her kids sleep. She starts to pull the door closed when...

SKRITCH. SKRITCH.

Anna's eyes go to the kids' bedroom window, rain running down in rivulets.

SKRITCH. Something scrapes against the glass.

What is that? Anna's eyes narrow.

A HAND! Withered FINGERS. Nails scraping across the glass.

Anna hurries to the window--

It's just a skinny TREE BRANCH, twigs touching the window.

Ha, just being paranoid. She turns to leave.

But at that moment, just as she turns her back...

KATCHOW! Lightning cracks. And outside the window:

The face of La Llorona.

INT. DFACS OFFICE - NEXT DAY

A few case files are open on Anna's desk, with photos of children stapled to the paperwork.

Anna checks her watch. It's getting late. She looks at all the pictures of other people's kids. *Maybe Chris is right.*

She closes the folders, turns. Her boss is right there.

HANKINS

There's a detective here to see you. Oliver Clarkin.

HANKINS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Anna, Hankins, and Clarkin are in Hankins' office.

CLARKIN

Her alibi seems airtight. Several parishioners saw her at the church at the time the kids were taken. But we're certain Patricia Alvarez was involved in the deaths of her sons. And she's not talking. Not one word since she was brought in. To anyone.

HANKINS

How is Anna going to help?

Clarkin ignores him. Talks directly to Anna.

CLARKIN

There's got to be someone else, someone involved. We'd like you to speak with Alvarez. You know her, knew her children. You're still technically her caseworker--

ANNA

I'm the last person she's going to want to see.

CLARKIN

Exactly. She's angry at you. Angry people talk.

HANKINS

I don't think--

CLARKIN

Anna? Will you help me out?

Anna glances at Hankins. He doesn't look happy, but:

ANNA

I'll try.

ANNA'S DESK - MINUTES LATER

Anna grabs her purse, Patricia's file. Hankins hovers.

HANKINS

You seem awfully eager to help that detective. Friend of yours?

She fumes at the implication, but holds her temper.

ANNA

Oliver was my husband's partner.

She tucks the file into her briefcase, walks away.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Asshole.

EXT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - TWILIGHT

Anna runs through the rain to the entrance.

INT. L.A COUNTY JAIL

A SHERIFF's DEPUTY leads Anna to an "interview" room.
Clarkin's waiting at the door.

CLARKIN
Remember, just get her talking.
Right now we have nothing, so
anything she says will help.

INTERVIEW ROOM

Patricia sits at a small table, in a blue County jail
uniform. A twitchy mix of grief, anger, alcohol withdrawal.

Anna sits across from the devastated woman.

ANNA
Patricia. I'm so sorry for your
loss. Such wonderful boys.

Patricia won't look at her, but her nails dig into the wood
of the table. Anna sees it.

ANNA (CONT'D)
How did they get out of the
shelter? They were safe--

Patricia's hands SLAM down on the table.

Anna glances to the door. Gathers her resolve.

ANNA (CONT'D)
This isn't like you, Patricia.

Patricia explodes.

PATRICIA
My sons would be alive! ¿No te das
cuenta? I had it under control.

ANNA
You had them locked up.

PATRICIA
No. No. I had them hidden.
Protegidos. Now she has them. She
has them. *Mi Carlos. Mi Tomás*.
She has my babies.

ANNA
Who? La Llorona?

Patricia's eyes flash, glazed with grief and fury. Anna
leans in, sincere, concerned.

ANNA (CONT'D)
La Llorona is a ghost story. What
really happened to your children?

Then Patricia sees it: the mark on Anna's arm. It's now DARK
RED, like a burn. Recognition flashes in Patricia's eyes.

PATRICIA
Ella vendrá por ti.

Her hands dart across the table, grab onto Anna's. She
stares into Anna's face and she starts to HUM.

Anna tries to pull away. Patricia's grip tightens.

ANNA
Stop.

Patricia's fingers dig into Anna's skin.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Patricia. Stop!

She hums louder... Louder... LOUDER. Suddenly, it clicks.
Anna recognizes that song. She stops struggling.

ANNA (CONT'D)
What are you singing?

Patricia keeps humming. She pulls Anna's hands closer.

ANNA (CONT'D)
What does it mean?

Patricia stops. Stares at Anna.

PATRICIA
Have you heard it?

Anna nods. Yes. She's heard it.

Patricia JERKS Anna towards her, across the table, hisses right in her face:

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
She will come for you.

ANNA
Guard!

Clarkin and the Deputy rush in.

But Patricia's already leaning back in her chair, chill. Anna rubs her wrists.

Patricia gives her a friendly smile. As if nothing happened.

INT. ANNA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Anna sits with the kids on the sofa. The kids are watching HAWAII FIVE-O. Anna's tries to pay attention, but she can't stop looking at the burn on her arm.

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - LATE THAT NIGHT

Rain slashes against the house.

INT. ANNA'S BEDROOM

Anna sits on her bed, Patricia's casefile in her lap. She flips through the pages...

CLINK.

Anna freezes. *What was that?*

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Anna steps out into the dim hallway. CLINK.

She sees something in the dark, at the end of the hall...

A FIGURE in white.

CLINK. CLINK.

Anna fumbles for the wall switch. The light reveals:

A long white TOWEL. Hanging from the open bathroom door.

Anna sighs. *Get a grip!* But then:

Another quiet CLINK. From downstairs.

Anna edges down the hall, gets to the top of the stairs.

STAIRWELL

Anna creeps down the stairs. CLINK. With each step, the sound gets louder. CLINK.

The wood under her foot CREAKS. *Shit.* Anna freezes. Then:
CLINK.

ENTRY

At the foot of the stairs, Anna sees movement by the front door. Eerie shadows. A figure. CLINK.

She reaches for the light. CLINK. She hits the switch, sees:
Chris.

He pulls the front door. The security chain stops it. CLINK. He closes the door. Opens it again, the chain catches: CLINK.

ANNA

Chris? Come away from the door.

He pulls it open: CLINK. Closes it. Anna moves closer, looks at him. He's sleepwalking.

Anna stares at him, unsure what to do. Chris tries again to open the door. Closes it.

She reaches out, then pulls back. Uncertain. Finally, she touches his shoulder.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris. Wake up.

He opens the door. CLINK. He closes it.

Anna puts her hand against the door. Chris pulls. She holds it shut. He pulls again. It doesn't budge. His hand drops.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris? Honey?

Nothing. He's still asleep.

Anna's baffled. She turns the dead bolt... gently takes her son by his shoulders. Leads him to the stairs.

KIDS' ROOM

Anna guides Chris to his bed. Pulls the covers over him. He sleeps soundly. Anna watches him for a moment. *Weird.*

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Anna heads towards her bedroom-- CLINK. Again from downstairs. Anna freezes. *Impossible.*

CLINK.

Her mind races. *How?* She goes back to the kids' room. Peeks inside. Both kids are in their beds.

CLINK. *What the hell it is?*

She forces one foot in front of the other, toward the stairs.

STAIRS

Anna slowly makes her way back down the stairs...

CLINK.

ENTRY

It's dark, hard to see. CLINK. Anna stretches out a trembling hand, slaps the light switch. Reveals:

The door's cracked open again. The wind blows-- CLINK. The chain catches. The wind subsides, then another gust: CLINK.

Anna looks around. No one.

She wraps her arms around herself, goes to the door. Studies the deadbolt. *Didn't she lock this?* CLINK.

She pushes the door closed-- KRAK!

A sudden BLAST OF WIND wallops the door. The security chain RIPS right off the jamb, the door blows wide open.

Just as quickly, the wind's gone. It's quiet.

Anna stands there for a beat, stunned.

She shoves the door closed. Turns the deadbolt. Grabs the door handle, gives it a pull. Locked for sure this time.

But then... she looks down.

Just inside the front door, on the hardwood floor:

Two wet footprints.

Anna stares. *Chris'? Hers?* She grabs a handful of Kleenex from a box on the end table. Kneels, wipes up the prints.

Suddenly, she freezes. Slowly stands. Turns. Nothing.

She forces herself to relax, heads for the stairs. Starts to turn out the lights. Changes her mind. Leaves them on.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Anna walks down the darkened hallway. Passes the open bathroom door... the blurry white of the hanging towel...

But this time, as Anna passes... it MOVES.

A FIGURE drifts into the hallway behind Anna.

ANNA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna walks into her bedroom, looking down at the burn mark on her forearm. Her fingers touch it.

...while we watch the door-framed darkness behind her. Something will be coming through, any moment now...

Anna looks up. *What the?*

The pages of Patricia's file are SCATTERED across the bed.

She looks around. Nothing else out of place.

She goes to the bed, takes one of the pages -- it's WET.

Behind her: PLOP. She slowly turns... PLOP. A tiny splash hits the bed. Anna looks up. A big leak. *Shit. Shit shit.*

She gathers the papers, drops them on the vanity.

She pulls the wet sheets from the bed.

Something flutters to the floor: Patricia's photo. Anna puts it on top of the file on the vanity.

She tosses the wet sheets onto the chair behind her.

Another drop hits the naked mattress. *Screw that.*

She shoves the bed. It doesn't budge. She pushes harder. Finally: the bed starts to SCRAPE across the carpet.

Anna grins. She's got this. She shoves again, the bed RASPS against the carpet. At that same moment, a CRY. Anna stops.

Did she hear something? She waits. Doesn't hear anything.

She pushes again, and there's that simultaneous CRY. *What the...?* She turns. Nothing.

Anna braces against the bed. Just before she starts to push again: CRY. She whirls. *She heard THAT.*

She goes to the door, faces the dark hall. Listens.

Then: PLOP. Another drop hits the mattress.

Anna's had it. She stomps to the bed and SHOVES. The bed GRINDS across the carpet.

And in the chair behind her, one corner of the sheet hits the floor. The pile of sheets shift. Rise. Fill out.

Anna keeps pushing. *Damn, it's heavy.* She grunts, shoves.

Her eyes glance up to the bedroom window. In the reflection, there's a sheet-covered FIGURE -- right behind her!

Anna spins. Nothing's there.

But... the sheets that were in the chair now lie crumpled at her feet. She looks to the chair. To the vanity.

From the file photo, Patricia's eyes stare out at her.

Argh. Anna grabs the paperwork, stuffs it back into her briefcase. She kicks the sheets across the room.

Falls onto the bare mattress. Worn out, but wide awake.

INT. DFACS OFFICE - NEXT DAY

A half completed form sticks out of Anna's typewriter. Fingers on the keys, she stares blankly at the page.

Puffy, dark circles under her eyes. Hair a little wild. Exhausted. Looking more like Patricia every day.

She blinks, snaps out of it. Her eyes go to a big PILE of paperwork on her desk. *Ugh.*

She rubs her eyes, looks around. No one's paying her any attention. She gets up, grabs her purse, her jacket.

Maybe she can just sneak out--

HANKINS (O.S.)
Going somewhere?

Her boss.

ANNA
Oh... I was just--

HANKINS
We both know this isn't working out, Anna. You come in late, you leave early. I just don't feel like this job is a priority for you. But... go if you want to go.

Hankins gives her a thin smile. His eyes dare her to leave.

Anna considers. She glances around the office. Everyone's watching. *Shit.* She sits back down.

HANKINS (CONT'D)
Good.

He drops a STACK OF FILES on her desk.

HANKINS (CONT'D)
New cases. They need your immediate attention.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Samantha's on the couch with Baby Crissy, watching TV.

KITCHEN

Chris makes PB&Js. He spreads the peanut butter, puts the knife down, opens the jelly. When he reaches for the knife--

It's not there. *Where* -- there it is, on the other side of the plate. *Weird.*

LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Samantha's plate is empty. Chris hasn't touched his sandwich. On the TV: Yosemite Sam yells at Bugs Bunny.

Samantha laughs, jabs Chris. He smiles. Then: the TV's volume starts to increase. The kids look at each other.

Now the cartoon's really blaring. Bugs saws Yosemite's plane in half with a ROARING chainsaw.

Chris goes to turn it down.

By the time he gets to the set, the volume seems impossibly LOUD: Yosemite's six-shooters BOOM BOOM throughout the house.

Chris grabs the volume knob, turns it down. Near silence. A CREAK of wood near the bottom of the stairs. A footstep.

Samantha's not on the couch. Baby Crissy sits in her place.

Then: thumpthumpthumpthumpthump. Someone runs up the stairs.

CHRIS

Sam?

Chris gets to the foot of the stairs. Then he hears it. CRYING. Heartrending sobs. He runs up the stairs...

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

...walks down the hall, following the crying, into...

KIDS' ROOM

Chris pushes open the door. It's quiet.

CHRIS

Samantha?

CREAK. Behind him, near the top of the stairs.

Chris looks back. Nothing.

Then, from inside the bedroom closet: CRYING.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sam?

He walks a few feet past Sam's bed... to the closet door.

The crying STOPS.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Are you in there?

Chris grabs the doorknob -- jerks his hand back. *Ew.*

WATER seeps from around the knob, runs down the door... into a puddle on the carpet. Right where he stands.

He moves his foot, his shoe SQUISHES into the shag. *Gross.*

Another WHIMPER, inside the closet.

He turns the knob, slowly pulls the door open.

He doesn't see anythi-- wait.

MOVEMENT -- in the dark void beneath the hanging clothes and the shoes lined up on the floor. A tiny SOB.

Chris kneels. Peers in...

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Come on, Sam. What's the matter?

He reaches in, slides some clothes aside.

Suddenly, in the living room, the TV blares again. And, he hears Samantha LAUGH -- downstairs. *What the--*

A gray HAND shoots out of the darkness. It GRABS Chris' arm, YANKS him toward the closet.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
No!

Chris pulls back hard. He lands on his butt, tries to dig his heels into the floor. But his arm's in a vice-like grip.

His sneakers grind against the wet carpet as he's wrenched into the closet.

One foot slides up against a hardshell SUITCASE on the closet floor, as gray fingers RAKE across his arm. *AHHH!*

Chris pushes off the suitcase with his leg. It's working. He pulls harder...

Whatever has him, Chris is pulling it towards the front of the closet...

He'll see it any second now...

Then his foot SLIPS off the suitcase. *No!* Chris gets JERKED back in.

Chris flings his body back, swings his free arm out. His fingers search for anything he can grab on to.

THERE: the leg of Samantha's bed. He grabs on, PULLS.

His foot finds the suitcase again. He pushes off, desperate. And abruptly--

He's free.

On the floor of the closet, he sees a tangled mass of wire clothes hangers, sharp edges gleaming.

Chris looks at his arm: deep, bloody grooves in the skin.

A DROP of water runs down the door frame. Then another, larger this time. Another, they're coming faster...

The clothes in the closet MOVE. Barely, but it's enough--

Chris scrambles to his feet, backs into the hallway.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Mournful CRIES drift into the hall.

Chris inches backwards, toward the top of the stairs, his eyes fixed on his bedroom doorway.

The crying gets LOUDER. Something's definitely in his room.

Chris turns to run-- BAM!

Right next to him, the bathroom door FLINGS open.

Something RUSHES towards him. BLURS of long black hair, a white gown. Chris rears back...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Samantha hears a SCREAM and several THUDS. She turns, looks over the back of the sofa...

...just as Chris TUMBLES to the bottom of the stairs. CRACK.

SAMANTHA

Chris!

She jumps off the sofa, runs to her brother.

Chris writhes on the floor. His arm's bent at an ugly angle. Broken. Tears stream down his face.

CHRIS

Sam. Sam, stay back--

Chris's eyes go to the top of the stairs. Everything's completely normal. No shadows. No scary lady.

What's going on?

Samantha follows his gaze up the stairs. Nothing's there.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

A DOCTOR examines Chris' broken arm.

FOOTSTEPS hurry toward them, the curtain's yanked open.

It's Anna. Breathless.

ANNA

Chris, honey, what--

CHRIS

I fell down the stairs.

The doctor side-eyes Anna.

DOCTOR

You're the mother?

Anna's surprised by his tone. Shhe nods.

The doctor palpates Chris' arm. Chris grits his teeth.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Chris, it's okay. Is there...
anything you else want to tell us?

CHRIS

I fell. That's all.

DOCTOR

These scratches are not consistent
with a fall down the stairs.

(to Anna)

Where were you when the, um,
accident happened?

Anna pales. *What's he implying?*

A NURSE swabs iodine on the gouges on Chris' wrist and hand.
She darts accusatory glares at Anna.

ANNA
I was... I wasn't...

There's no good answer here.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I wasn't home. I was working.

INT. CAR, MOVING - LATER THAT NIGHT

The wipers struggle against a rainy onslaught.

In the backseat, Chris holds his newly-casted arm close to his chest. It's a big L-shaped cast, from the wrist to just above his elbow.

ANNA
Honey, please. Tell me what happened.

CHRIS
There was--

Chris looks to Samantha. She's holding her breath, waiting for his words. Afraid.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I tripped, that's all. Really.

Samantha looks relieved. Chris gives her a MARKER.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Here. You be the first to sign it.

She writes in big, kiddy letters: I LOVE YOU.

INT. ANNA'S HOME, KIDS' ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Chris tries to change into his pajamas. From the doorway:

ANNA
Let me help you.

CHRIS
I can do it.

He turns... and opens the closet. Peeks in. Clothes, shoes, suitcase. No water, no puddles. Just a closet.

He shakes his head. Confused.

Anna misreads him:

ANNA

I'm so sorry I wasn't here. I...

Chris still stares into the closet.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris. What is it?

He snaps out of it.

CHRIS

Nothing. I'm good. Really.

Chris walks to the door. Anna steps back, Chris closes it.

He sits on his bed, looks back at the closet. Nothing weird.

Frustrated, he makes a fist with his broken arm. *OW! Crap.*

LIVING ROOM

Anna comes down the stairs. She stops. Her eyes follow the path of her son's fall. From top to bottom.

She fights guilty tears.

KITCHEN

Anna pours a glass of wine. A TOUCH on her back. It's Sam.

She puts down the glass, picks up her daughter.

ANNA

Did you see what happened?

SAMANTHA

I heard him scream. Then he fell.

ANNA

What made him scream?

SAMANTHA

He said he just tripped. So, that means nothing scary happened. So that's good.

Anna's not quite satisfied. But she lets it rest, for now.

ANNA

Time for your bath, Doodlebug.

She puts Samantha down, the girl runs upstairs.

Anna catches sight of herself in the window. Runs a hand through her hair-- doesn't help. She still looks like hell.

BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Samantha's in a warm bubble bath. Anna shampoos her hair.

Sam suddenly realizes:

SAMANTHA

Crissy needs her hair washed too!

ANNA

Yep, you're right. How could I forget that? Be right back.

Anna leaves. Samantha's hair is still lathered. The girl scoops up some bubble-foam, dabs it on her cheeks.

KIDS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chris sits on the corner of the bed. Stares at the open closet, waiting for any sign of... anything.

Anna walks in. He jumps.

She grabs Crissy off Samantha's bed.

Anna can see that her son's clearly afraid of something. She sits down next to him.

ANNA

Come on, honey. Talk to me.

CHRIS

(caves)

It sounds crazy, Mom, but--

DRING. DRING. The house phone. Downstairs.

Anna takes a beat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Go get it.

ANNA

I'm coming right back, and we're going to talk. Okay?

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

As Anna passes the open bathroom door, she takes a quick peek in. Samantha's playing happily in the bubbles.

DRING. DRING.

As Anna hurries toward the stairs, the bathroom door slowly swings shut.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna hurries down the stairs. Grabs the phone.

ANNA
(hurriedly)
Hello?

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERCUT

Clarkin's at his desk.

CLARKIN
Anna, it's Oliver. Wanted to let you know Patricia Alvarez has been released from custody. I don't like it, but we can't hold her any longer. Too many people put her at the church at time of death.

BATHROOM

Samantha's eyes are closed, her face covered with bubbles.

A shadow falls across the tub...

...across the little girl.

HANDS, obscured by foam, start to lather the soap in Samantha's hair. Loving, gentle.

Then, the fingers start pressing into the skull.

SAMANTHA
Ow.

The lather thins just enough for us to see:

Gray, peeling fingers. Dirty, cracked nails.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
That hurts, Mommy.

The touch goes gentle again.

Then, humming. Soft, sweet. Eerie.

Samantha smiles. Hums along.

LIVING ROOM/POLICE STATION - INTERCUT

CLARKIN
I checked into this sudden
enlightenment of hers. Patricia
Alvarez was never religious, never
a regular churchgoer. Now she's
pious and praying all the time?
I'm telling you, Anna, something's
very wrong with this story. Gut
instinct.

Anna cradles Crissy, unconsciously stroking the doll's hair.

ANNA
I just can't imagine... I don't
know, Oliver. Listen, Sam's in the
bath. I need to get back to her.
Let's talk about this later?

CLARKIN
Yeah. Have a good night.

BATHROOM

La Llorona's hands slowly push Samantha down. Down...
...toward the water.

SAMANTHA
Rinsing!

She gulps in a deep breath, puffs out her cheeks. Lets
herself be pushed into the water. All the way under.

Suds fan out from Samantha's hair.

UNDER WATER

The little girl holds her breath. Too long.

Samantha tries to sit up, but the hands won't let her.

She taps on the hands' wrists. They don't budge.

UNDER WATER

Samantha starts to thrash. She kicks, pulls at the hands holding her. Long fingers slide down, cover Samantha's face.

Samantha's mouth opens in a scream, all the air in her lungs rushes toward the surface in huge bubbles.

LIVING ROOM

Anna hangs up the phone.

UNDER WATER

Samantha makes one last-ditch effort. She braces against the sides of the tub, slides farther down, toward the drain.

She slips from La Llorona's grasp. Her face breaches the surface...

STAIRS

Anna trots up the stairs.

BATHROOM

Samantha SUCKS air into her lungs, backs up to the far end of the tub, knees pulled to her chest.

She wipes her eyes. Looks around. Mommy's not here.

And the water, covered in white soap-foam, is still, calm.

Samantha leans out, looks into all the corners. Nothing.

Fear mixes with confusion.

Then: the suds seem to SHIFT.

With scared, shallow breaths, Samantha reaches out with a trembling hand.

Tentative fingers touch the surface of the soap suds. She hesitates. Then WIPES away swath of lather.

And there, just under the water:

La Llorona's FACE stares back at her.

Before Samantha can even scream, grimy hands SHOOT out of the water and YANK the girl back under.

She disappears under the blanket of bubbles. Nothing moves.

Oh, my God. She's--

Samantha's hand shoots out. Her fingers find the TRIP LEVER for the tub drain. She TUGS down on it hard.

Water GURGLES down the drain.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Anna heads toward the bathroom. The door's closed. *Huh.*

BATHROOM

The water's still draining, the soapy water reveals the top of Samantha's head and...

She sits up and gasps for air just as:

Anna walks through the door with the Crissy doll.

SAMANTHA
(coughing)
Mommy!

She bursts into tears. Anna runs to her.

ANNA
What is it?

SAMANTHA
I want out. Out. Out.

Samantha flings her arms around Anna's neck. Anna grabs a towel, wraps it around her daughter, lifts her from the tub.

Anna tries to calm Samantha, who clings to her and cries.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Somebody was here. It wasn't you.
I thought it was you...

As Anna rubs the towel across Samantha's hair, she sees it.

A spot on the back of Samantha's head where the hair's been yanked out by the roots. Little bloody DOTS on the scalp. *Oh my God.*

Then, Anna sees: in the bottom of the tub, tangled in the drain, a big CLUMP of Sam's hair.

ANNA
I gotcha. I gotcha.

KIDS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chris STILL sits on the bed.

Anna walks in with Samantha. Sam grabs her pillow.

ANNA
Sam wants to sleep with me tonight.

CHRIS
(beat)
Oh. Okay.

Samantha studies her brother.

SAMANTHA
You come, too.

Anna looks to Chris. *Does he want to?* Chris nods.

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha climbs into Anna's bed.

Chris scoots to the far side. Samantha in the middle. Anna closest to the door.

Anna turns off the lamp on the nightstand.

Samantha whines. Anna hugs her.

ANNA
We're okay, Doodlebug. Tomorrow, we'll figure all this out.

CHRIS
Don't you have to work tomorrow?

Samantha stares at her hopefully. Anna considers...

ANNA
No.

Chris turns to look at his mom. Gives her a small smile.
Anna kisses her fingers, presses them against Chris' hair.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I love you, honey.

Chris reaches up, lays his hand on the spot where his mom touched him.

LATER

Rain raps against the windows. Anna and her kids sleep.

Samantha starts to quietly HUM. Anna, in a sleepy haze, pulls her close.

ANNA
Shhhhh.

Samantha goes quiet.

Chris twitches. He sits up, eyes closed. His head swivels left. Then right. He slides from the bed.

In her sleep, Anna scoots closer to Samantha.

Chris, still asleep, stands over his mother for a long moment. Then he turns, walks out of the room.

HALLWAY

Chris disappears down the steps.

ENTRY

He shuffles toward the front door. Stops for a moment. Pivots and heads toward the kitchen.

ANNA'S BEDROOM

Thunder BOOMS. Anna jolts awake. Samantha's HUMMING again. Anna sits up, looks over. Chris is gone.

ANNA
Chris.

She jumps from the bed. Starts for the door. *Wait!*

Turns back, wakes Samantha. Picks her up.

KITCHEN, BACK DOOR

His fingers turn the dead bolt...

INT. ENTRY

Anna races through the living room, Samantha clinging to her neck. The chain's still on the front door. That leaves--

SAMANTHA

Mommy!

She points toward the kitchen. The back door hangs open.

EXT. BACK YARD

Trance-like, Chris walks across yard.

INT. KITCHEN

Anna runs to the back door, sees only darkness -- and the faint outline of a SMALL FIGURE moving away from the house.

ANNA

Chris!

Anna puts Samantha down. She opens a kitchen drawer, pulls out a Rayovac FLASHLIGHT.

While their attention is turned: A FLASH of lightning. And in that split-second of illumination we see:

La Llorona.

Walking beside Chris.

Holding his hand.

Anna tests the light. Good.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Stay here.

EXT. BACK YARD

It's dark. Anna can only see what falls into her flashlight's beam.

ANNA

Chris! Chris!

She sweeps the light across the yard. Nothing. *Where could he have gone?*

Suddenly A FIGURE runs through the circle of light.

Anna swings the Rayovac, tries to follow the figure's trajectory...

The beam falls on the raised wood porch. Anna sees something disappear into the small CRAWLSPACE underneath.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris?

Anna goes over. The lattice skirt around the crawlspace is old and rotting, there's a BREAK in it.

Anna sticks her head through...

INT. CRAWLSPACE

She points the flashlight into the space...

ANNA

Chris?

Rain DRIPS through the boards into the cobwebbed crawlspace.

EXT. YARD

With her head and arms underneath the crawlspace, Anna can't see the topside of the porch, the yard.

She's unaware... exposed... vulnerable. We push in...

INT. CRAWLSPACE

Meanwhile, Anna moves the beam of light across the space...

Dirt. A frisbee. An empty soda can.

Wait, what was that? She swings the light back, tries to make it out. Oh, just a half-deflated soccer ball.

She starts to move the light-- suddenly, right at the edge of the beam, a figure SURGES towards her.

EXT. YARD

On her hands and knees, Anna SCRAMBLES backwards, away from the lattice, back into the yard. The flashlight rolls.

She stares at the break in the lattice. Waits.

Nothing. Nothing comes.

Anna reaches for the flashlight. It's submerged in a PUDDLE. *Shit.*

She pulls it out of the muddy water. The light flickers.

Then she hears something.

CRYING.

She jumps to her feet, swings the light into the yard.

The waterlogged beam is weak, sputters.

In the distance, in the very farthest reach of the Rayovac's halo, Anna sees something through the falling rain.

It's at the very edge of the circle of light. Just the barest view of:

Is that a woman? Wearing, maybe, a dirty white gown?

Just a fraction of her body touches the light. An arm, some of one leg. The rest remains in darkness.

Anna snaps the Rayovac towards the figure, but the woman somehow follows the beam and stays on the very fringes of light. Never revealing more of herself.

ANNA

Who's there?

Then, her flashlight dies.

Darkness. *Shit. SHIT!*

Anna shakes the light. The Rayovac comes back to life. The woman's still there, still obscured, but now...

Closer.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Who are you?

Anna tries again to swing the light onto the woman, but again the woman stays on the barest edge of illumination.

The flashlight flickers off again. Anna SLAPS it. The light flicks back on...

And there's the woman, still on the very margin of light, and a whole lot...

Closer.

The light goes off. Darkness.

Then, RIGHT NEXT TO Anna, right next to her ear:

LA LLORONA
Él es mío.

Anna LASHES out with the flashlight... but only finds air.

She sees nothing more in the flickering light.

But across the yard: a GLOW. Through the tree house window.

INT. TREE HOUSE

Anna bursts through the hatch, standing on the ladder:

ANNA
Chris!

The glow's coming from Chris' transistor radio -- from the illuminated station-tuning window.

SHHHpresidentnixHHHtieayellowriSSH HHgasprices...

The radio's volume is on high and it seems to be dialing endlessly through frequencies.

SHHHkillingmesoftlySHHHaugustopinoSHHHHcrocodilerock....

Anna looks around the space, only partially visible by the light of the radio. She points the flashlight, but it's not working. She shakes it. Dead.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Chris?

She climbs the rest of the way into the tree house.

Goes to the radio.

SHHHegyptandisraelssignSHHHdriftwaySHHHHmountainhigh...

She turns the radio towards one corner that's in shadow.

Nothing. No one's here.

She reaches for the radio's OFF switch

SHHHsunshineofmySHHH...Él...Es...Mío--

CLICK.

And in the silence, she hears:

drip... hisshhh.

It's coming from behind her. *drip... hisshhh.*

She turns her head slowly...

There... on the floor. *drip... hisshhh.* Water drops onto the wood -- drip -- when it hits, a little curl of smoke -- *hissshh* -- puffs into the air. As if the water were...

ACID.

Anna's eyes travel up to:

LA LLORONA. Just a hazy silhouette. Acid tears drop from her dark form, onto the floor. *hissshh.*

She LUNGES at Anna... Anna screams, covers her head.

But La Llorona doesn't stop. She flies PAST Anna--

And THUD! The tree house hatch SLAMS shut.

Anna raises her head. She's alone. It dawns on her-- Chris!

She jumps to the hatch. Pulls on it. It won't open.

Trapped.

She runs to the window facing the house. It's a fixed sheet of thick plexiglass.

She rushes to the opposite window, finds the same. BAM! BAM! She hammers at it with her fists, then happens to see:

Chris. Walking towards the fence that runs along the river.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Chris!

Desperate, she looks for a way out. She grabs the Rayovac.

POUNDS at the hatch with the butt of the metal flashlight. WHAM! CRACK-- the wood starts to give.

EXT. FENCE

Chris sleepwalks up to the old fence. GAPS are eaten into the rusty chainlink.

He mechanically lifts his arms. His hands grab the chainlink and he PULLS, enlarging one of the breaks in the fence.

He starts to step through--

HANDS grab him.

Chris is shocked awake. He fights, but--

ANNA

Chris! It's me, honey! Chris!

Chris snaps out of it. Confused. Afraid.

EXT. BACK YARD

Anna quickly leads Chris back through the rain to the house.

INT. KITCHEN

At the back door, Samantha clings to Anna's leg, Chris wraps his arms around Anna's waist.

KACHOW! More lightning. And that's when Anna finally sees her. Standing in the yard.

All of her.

Undeniable.

La Llorona. Staring right at Anna.

The darkness swallows her and she's gone.

EXT. CHURCH - NEXT MORNING

Anna walks up the church steps with her kids, huddled together under one umbrella.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY

It's quiet, a few parishioners in the pews.

In the POV of one of the congregants: we see Anna and the kids head toward Father Perez, who stands near the altar.

The POV focuses on Chris and Samantha, walking together.

The camera PANS to reveal: Patricia watching them.

Her eyes go wet with tears. She squeezes them shut and starts to pray.

NEAR ALTAR

Perez meets Anna. Before he can speak--

ANNA

La Llorona. She's real.

(beat)

You said if I ever needed help...

FATHER PEREZ

Come into my office.

PEREZ'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

In a nearby vestibule, Chris reads a book to Samantha. But his eyes wander to his mom and Perez, talking intently.

Perez unconsciously grips his Bible, white-knuckled.

ANNA

...I, God, I saw her. Actually saw her. Right there, in my backyard.

(beat)

You probably think I'm crazy--

FATHER PEREZ

I believe you, Anna.

Anna stops. *He believes her.*

ANNA

Chris almost got through that fence. With him, with Sam in the tub, I'm always a second too late.

FATHER PEREZ

No, Anna. You're always just in time. Each occurrence, you've been there -- just in time.

ANNA

What if next time, I'm not?

FATHER PEREZ

There won't be a next time.

He stands. His eyes bold. Determined.

ANNA
You can help us?

FATHER PEREZ
I know someone who can.

EXT. CURANDERO'S STORE - LATER THAT DAY

A small storefront: "Botánica Olvera"

INT. CURANDERO'S STORE

A quaint, tidy store packed with herbal medicines, books, oils. And Catholic candles, statuary, amulets.

Chris and Samantha explore the oddities.

Anna watches curiously as a tall Hispanic man (50s) intently examines the cracked wooden foot of a Baby Jesus doll.

This is RAFAEL OLVERA - a *Curandero*. He moves to a table, picks up a small bottle. Shakes it.

Father Perez whispers to Anna:

FATHER PEREZ
Holy water.

A female CUSTOMER wrings her hands. Rafael carefully drips the holy water onto the cracked wood. Waits.

ANNA
(whispers back)
You said he wasn't a priest.

Rafael wipes away the water. Studies the crack.

RAFAEL
(to the customer)
I've got others ahead of you...

Anna notes a dozen more Baby Jesus dolls, some in ornate long gowns, some naked -- missing fingers, toes.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
...but I can repair this.

The customer sighs in relief, pulls from her bag a doll-sized AQUA BLUE DRESSING GOWN. Rafael takes the garment.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You pray for prosperity this year?

The lady nods, smiles, leaves.

PLINK. Anna whirls.

Samantha picks something off the floor, faces her mother with a guilty look. Anna takes it -- a tiny glass vial filled with coarse, golden fibers.

RAFAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Careful with that.

Anna turns. Rafael smiles at her. She hands him the vial.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Hair of Panthera. These are from a Jaguar. Very potent stuff.

FATHER PEREZ
Rafael, this is Anna.

Anna's hands clench on her purse, fingers nervously tap out a rhythm -- the rhythm of La Llorona's lullaby.

Samantha picks it up. Humming.

Rafael sees the little girl's far-away look as she hums. He notes the dark circles under Anna's eyes. The fear there.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
Anna's, well, she's having a problem with--

Rafael's eyes quickly scan Anna's body. He takes her arm, lifts it. Looks at the burn mark on her arm.

RAFAEL
La Llorona.

Rafael turns a sign on the door from "*abierto*" to "*cerrado*."

CURANDERO'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Rafael reaches PAST jarred oddities sitting on the shelves.

CLICK -- a hidden latch.

The shelves swing open to reveal:

A secret demon-fighting ARSENAL. Daggers... amulets... potions... keys... a jar of old *teeth*?... scroll canisters.

RAFAEL

You are correct that I am not a priest.

Anna shoots Perez a look.

THUMP. A leather-bound BIBLE is dropped on the counter in front of them.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

I am... more.

Perez shoots him a dirty look. For a moment, it seems tense, then the men laugh.

FATHER PEREZ

What Rafael means to say is he was never good at playing by the rules. Our third year in robes--

RAFAEL

Luis...

FATHER PEREZ

Rafael went on a "wilderness retreat."

Rafael turns to Anna.

RAFAEL

Luis mocks me, but I experienced an awakening. My journey began in the Catholic church, yes. Everything I do, everything I believe, is deeply rooted in my faith in God.

He looks to Perez.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

But the Catholic church is a lot like the government. Too expensive and too slow to get things done.

(whispers to Anna)

He knows it, too, or he wouldn't have brought you to see me.

Perez holds up his hands in playful surrender.

FATHER PEREZ

I give. I give.

Rafael turns serious. He chooses a VIAL of holy water.

RAFAEL
La Llorona was once human. Mortal.

ANNA
(to Perez)
So, the story you told me...

Perez gives a solemn nod.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Who was she?

Rafael and Perez share a look.

RAFAEL
To speak her name is to engage with
her. In battle. We do not do it.

Sets the vial beside the Bible and the jars.

ANNA
But she's... not human now.

RAFAEL
No, she's not. Her murderous
vanity opened her to possession by
a very powerful demon.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Now, she is one dark and demented
spirit. Unholy. Forsaken by God.

THUD. A big cardboard box of CANDLES.

Anna's a little overwhelmed.

ANNA
I'll take the kids to a motel--

RAFAEL
She is attached to *them*. Not your
house. If you move the children,
she will follow them. And you.

Anna turns to Perez. He nods. *It's true.*

ANNA
So, what do we do?

Rafael pauses. Looks at her.

RAFAEL
What do you want to do?

Anna looks at Chris, Samantha. Then:

ANNA
She came after my babies. I'll do
whatever it takes.

Rafael nods his approval, lays one final item on the counter:
a simple RATTLE. Made from a dried gourd.

He turns to Perez.

RAFAEL
Father Perez. I'm going to need
your help.

FATHER PEREZ
No. I... I've already seen--

RAFAEL
You've seen evil. And it's made
you stronger. We're going to need
that strength, Luis.

Small fingers wrap around Perez's hand.

SAMANTHA
Please?

Perez looks down at the child's sweet face...

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S HOME, FRONT DOOR - LATER THAT DAY

Rafael slides an EGG along the frame of the front door.
Across the bottom sill, up the side-jamb, along the header.

Anna and the kids join Rafael. Anna carries an egg.

ANNA
We're done.

Footsteps come from the kitchen...

It's Perez. Holding an egg of his own.

FATHER PEREZ
Me, too.

Rafael lays a hand on his friend's shoulder.

RAFAEL
Thank you.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rafael spreads an altar cloth (white, fringed in purple) on the table...

RAFAEL

This ritual, the *limpia*, is used to detect the presence of evil spirits.

Chris brings a BOWL from the kitchen.

Rafael places the three eggs on the cloth.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

The bloodier the contents, the greater the evil.

He takes one of the eggs, closes his eyes, shakes the egg gently while saying "The Breastplate of Saint Patrick" prayer under his breath...

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Yo armadura mí mismo hoy con el poder de la Santísima Trinidad, en la unicidad de Dios...

Then: CRACK. He breaks the shell on the edge of the bowl.

Out pours a rank, oily-black paste flecked with puss and pulsing with parasitic worms. The stench is horrific.

Suddenly: the other two eggs start SPINNING on the table.

They watch in fascination and horror until... POP! POP! The eggs burst open, spraying 360 degrees of putrid nastiness.

SPLOK -- a splash of the filth lands on Anna's face.

Anna wipes the muck from her face. Looks to the men.

Rafael and Perez cross themselves.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone washes up at the sink.

RAFAEL

It will take three days to exorcise her and cleanse your home.

He splashes water on his face, rinses the goop off. Anna wipes some slime off of Samantha, glances at Perez.

ANNA

Three days?

FATHER PEREZ

The Bible speaks of three days that passed between Jesus' death and his resurrection. Theology teaches that during those three days Jesus descended into hell, conquered the forces of evil, and achieved final victory over death.

Rafael grabs a dish towel, dries his hair.

RAFAEL

La Llorona thrives in darkness. The children are in the most danger from sunset to sunrise. At the dawn that ends the third night, she will be defeated.

(beat)

Tonight is going to be rough.

DOWNSTAIRS - LATE AFTERNOON

Perez walks from room to room. He wears a liturgical STOLE scarf, carries the BOX OF CANDLES.

RAFAEL (V.O.)

La Llorona is inside your home. She will oppose our efforts to drive her out. She will be fierce.

Perez places a candle in one corner of a room, blesses it with the sign of the cross, saying in Latin:

FATHER PEREZ

*Ecce crucis signum, fugiant
phantasmata cuncta.*

UPSTAIRS

Rafael goes from room to room with a handheld *chiminea* (a ceramic version of a thurible) filled with smoldering herbs.

RAFAEL (V.O.)

We must be bold despite our fear.
We must not back down.

He carries the sweet incense-smoke through the house.

LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Anna looks out the window at the gathering darkness. Rafael comes in with his *chiminea*.

Samantha has the RATTLE. She's showing it to Baby Crissy.

RAFAEL
(urgently)
Don't shake it, Samantha.

SAMANTHA
It's leaking anyway.

RAFAEL
It has holy water in it.

He leans down to her, holds out his hand.

SAMANTHA
What's it for?

RAFAEL
Spirits like La Llorona don't like this sound. And they really don't like this water. She will want to make it stop. So if we shake it, she's going to show herself...

Samantha suddenly gets the drift. Yikes. Using two fingers, she very... carefully... hands Rafael the rattle.

He gives her a pat on the head.

Some of the smoke from his *chiminea* drifts into her face.

SAMANTHA
That smells like Christmas.

Rafael holds it out so she can see it. She runs her fingers through the smoke tendrils.

RAFAEL
This smoke purifies all it touches.
Know what that means?

SAMANTHA
It makes everything clean!

Rafael chuckles, places the rattle on the coffee table.

Chris paces, picks at his cast. Lets out a sigh.

Rafael goes to him, looks at the boy for a moment. He points to Samantha's writing on the cast: I LOVE YOU.

RAFAEL
That's a really good thing to have.

CHRIS
A cast?

RAFAEL
Love.

Chris looks to Samantha, who holds Baby Crissy up to her mom.

Anna puts a band-aid on the doll's leg. She kisses Baby Crissy's "boo boo," then Samantha's cheek.

CHRIS
I'm the man of the house, now. I'm supposed to protect them.

Rafael gives him an understanding nod.

RAFAEL
Come help me. Bring Samantha.

Rafael puts the incense-burner on the coffee table, next to a group of small glass jars. He takes the lids off.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Five pinches of each of these.
Careful, the bottom's hot.

Chris and Samantha get to work.

Rafael joins Anna at the window. She watches her children happily working, keeps her voice low:

ANNA
I just want to take them and run.

RAFAEL
You'd be running forever. She will never let them go.

Anna looks unconvinced.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
We stand our ground. We face her here, with determination and faith.

ANNA
(beat)
Faith... is a little hard for me.

RAFAEL

I understand. I have many days
where faith feels like a far away
thing. Just know that what we are
doing is not magic. It is a work
of God. It is only effective if
you have faith. Otherwise, this...
(gestures to the *chiminea*)
...is just empty theater.

Anna considers. Then:

ANNA

I'll try. I will.

RAFAEL

That's all I can ask. It's all God
asks. That we try.

EXT. PORCH - LATE THAT NIGHT

It starts to rain.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Rain patters on the roof. Lights are on, candles are lit.

A sunburst-design wall clock clicks to:

3:00 A.M.

Anna's on the sofa with the kids, sleeping, a child tucked
under each arm.

Rafael sits in a chair, his thoughts far away, fingers
playing with his crucifix necklace pendant.

Perez reads softly from the "Rite of Exorcism."

FATHER PEREZ

"...hasten to our call for help,
and snatch from ruination and from
the clutches of the noonday devil,
this family made in your image and
likeness."

The rain comes down harder, THRUMS against the house.

In her sleep, Samantha mumbles. Chris groans.

Perez and Rafael look over. Wait. The kids keep sleeping.

As the rain starts to POUND on the roof and windows:

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
Strike terror, Lord, into the beast
now laying waste to your
vineyard..."

KACHOW! Lightning cracks.

Suddenly:

WHUMP. The power goes out. The room glows in candlelight.

Beneath the drumming rain... there's another sound.

Quiet, distant.

ding cling dong.

It's coming from upstairs.

dong ding cling. It's the XYLOPHONE.

The notes fall into a rhythm, and it becomes clear:

La Llorona's tune.

Rafael and Perez share a look. *Here we go.*

Perez grabs his Bible. Rafael puts a hand on his shoulder.

RAFAEL
I will go.

FATHER PEREZ
That's what she wants.

Rafael stands.

RAFAEL
Stay with the family.

Perez looks at Anna, the kids.

ding cling dong.

Rafael grabs his RATTLE.

STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Rafael climbs the steps. He shakes the rattle -- *shuk shuk* -- sprinkling holy water ahead of him.

Some water splashes on the wall. As Rafael moves past, we linger on: CLEAR DROPLETS slide down the wallpaper.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

The candles burn low, dim. As if struggling to stay lit.

ding cling dong. The xylophone. Coming from down the hall.

Squish. Rafael's foot sinks. The carpet's soaked.

The flickering candles highlight the ceiling -- crisscrossed with leaks. Trails of MOLD smudge across the walls.

Rafael's footsteps squish down the hall. *shuk shuk* -- he shakes the rattle, sprays holy water.

As he gets closer to the kids' room, the music's tempo speeds up, gets louder. *DingClangPing.*

shuk-shuk -- some holy water lands on a closet door. The clear drops slide down the wood.

Rafael's almost to the kids' room when:

The candles Perez placed in the hall start going DARK -- one at a time like a procession of dying fireflies.

In seconds, they're all OUT. No light.

Rafael fumbles with a box of MATCHES. He sparks one, bends down to one of the candles.

Water-logged. *Shit. Now what?*

The match burns down-- ow. Rafael drops it. The flame snuffs out on the drenched floor.

He can barely see. Gropes for another match. Strikes...

A spark, but no flame.

DINGCLANGPINGDINGCLINGDONG. The xylophone's overwhelming now. Loud, frenetic.

Rafael keeps trying matches, trying, trying, *oh shit*-- finally, a flame!

He moves the tiny light, looking for anything that will--

There! On the wall: a CANDLE WALL SCONCE.

The sconce is mirrored, and as Rafael holds the flame to the wick... he sees a warped REFLECTION.

La Llorona. Right behind him.

Rafael whirls, rattle in hand-- the music STOPS. Silence.

The kids' bedroom door is now cracked open. Beckoning.

He pulls the candle off the sconce, moves to the door.

OUTSIDE KIDS' ROOM

The door's covered in moldy yellow mildew.

Rafael grips the rattle. *shuk - shuk*. He sprays a healthy dose of holy water on the door.

He steels himself. Pushes the door open. Looks in.

But behind him, on the door, the sprinkled holy water runs down... and turns BLACK.

Inky-dark droplets creep slowly down the mildewed door.

KIDS' ROOM

It's dark. Quiet. Water DRIPS around him.

Rafael holds his candle up, looks around.

There's the xylophone. But no La Llorona.

He carefully steps over the threshold, shakes holy water onto the floor in the center of the room. Moves farther in.

Rafael raises his rattle.

shuk-shuk. Holy water spatters into the first corner.

He makes a quarter turn.

Two shakes into the second corner: *shuk-shuk...*

And behind him, the door slowly, silently, swings shut.

Another quarter turn.

His candle flickers. He waits. The flame steadies.

shuk-shuk into the third corner.

In front of the closed door -- a dark SILHOUETTE.

Rafael's about to come face-to-face with it.

shuk-shuk. Fourth corner. One more pivot and--

That's when he realizes -- the door's CLOSED.

He slowly turns his head... lifts the candle... and--

Rafael's candle goes out.

DARKNESS.

Rafael thinks he sees something shift in the blackness. A shadow within a shadow. It moves towards him.

Rafael SHAKES the rattle in every direction.

shuk-shuk shuk-shuk shuk-shuk.

The blackness in front of him thickens. He takes a quick step back and-- THUMP. Trips and lands on his ass.

The rattle CLATTERS across the floor.

He feels around for it. Can't find it. *Oh, no. No no no.*

He calms himself. Stands. It's quiet. It's dark.

And then...

shuk-shuk.

His rattle. Coming from somewhere in the room.

shuk-shuk. It gets closer. His head whips around, but he can't see a damn thing.

He scrambles to the door, tries the handle. Nope.

shuk-shuk.

He turns back into the room, peers into the darkness.

shuk-shuk. Louder.

He gathers himself. This is it. Time to fight.

RAFAEL

Demon, your name is known to me.

Maria. Maria Diez de Sollano.

Silence.

Suddenly -- a FLASH behind Rafael's eyes.

EXT. RIO GRANDE RIVER - A LONG TIME AGO

Beautiful Maria drags TWO BOYS by the scruff of their necks. Her long hair blows in the wind like a black halo.

The boys fight as they're dragged into the river.

INT. KIDS' BEDROOM - PRESENT

Rafael gasps. Blinks. Now he sees nothing. But he hears:

BOY (V.O.)
No! Mama! No!

Then the desperate SCREAMS of the drowning boys surround him.

Rafael shakes his head but he can't make it stop. The GURGLING, the SPLASHING, the GASPING for air.

Rafael finds the strength to proclaim into the darkness:

RAFAEL
Your children are gone, Maria. You
have no claim on Chris and Samantha
Bennett. You are not their mother.

The screaming boys' voices evaporate. It's quiet again.

Until... *shuk-shuk*. Very close now.

Rafael's wide eyes search, but he only sees blackness.

shuk shuk shuk-shuk-shukshuk...

Rafael closes his eyes, starts to pray in Spanish...

La Llorona moves right in front of him...

...her faces is inches from his. Rafael's eyes stay closed, he keeps praying...

Another FLASH:

EXT. RIO GRANDE RIVER

Maria's dead children float facedown in the river. She sinks to her knees in the water...

Reaches up to her face. CLAWS at her skin in mad regret.

WAILS.

Rafael covers his ears.

LIVING ROOM

Downstairs, an awful SCREAM can be heard. It wakes Anna and the kids. She jumps up--

FATHER PEREZ
No. Stay with them!

He rushes to the stairs.

INT. KIDS' ROOM

Rafael's eyes slowly, hesitantly open.

La Llorona's face is inches from his. Veiled in darkness. Her gaping mouth open in that awful WAIL.

Rafael's frozen. Can't tear his eyes away.

She lifts a bony hand toward his face...

BLAM! The door's kicked in -- Perez. Flashlight in hand.

He rushes into the room. Grabs Rafael, who's dazed, shaken.
rulk-rulk-rulk.

Perez whips the flashlight towards the sound-- it's just the rattle, rolling to Rafael's feet.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Perez drags Rafael from the room.

FATHER PEREZ
Rafael?

No answer. Perez shakes him.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
Rafael!

Rafael stirs. Groggy, as if waking from a drugged sleep.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
What happened?

RAFAEL

She... got in my head. I saw her
do it. I saw her drown her boys.
They were screaming... screaming.

Perez looks closely at the curandero.

FATHER PEREZ

No, my friend. It was you. You
were screaming.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM

All the candles in this room have also gone OUT.

The only one still burning is the one Anna's holding.

She and the kids are huddled in a corner, their backs to the
wall so they can see the whole space.

CHRIS

Are they coming back?

ANNA

Yes, they're coming back. Stand
close to the light.

They squeeze closer together, Anna holding the votive.

The golden light spills over them.

They stare at the burning wick.

Samantha clutches Baby Crissy protectively.

SAMANTHA

It's staying on.

ANNA

Father Perez said the light will
protect us. It's working.

But behind them...

Their bodies create a patch of SHADOW in the small area
between their backs and the corner.

And from that darkness, SHE RISES.

A small DROP OF WATER hits Baby Crissy. Samantha looks, sees
it SIZZLES on the plastic. Burns. Not water.

Acid.

Out of the side of her eye, Samantha can just barely see something. Something behind them. She trembles, whispers:

SAMANTHA

Mommy?

Anna turns... and there she is:

La Llorona.

Smoky TEARS track down deep grooves in her withered cheeks. Her black, dead eyes stare into Anna's.

Anna SCREAMS.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Perez's head whips toward the sound.

But suddenly: the screams are CUT OFF.

Silence.

Rafael's still dazed...

RAFAEL

Go, Luis. Go.

LIVING ROOM - WITH PEREZ

A beam of LIGHT bounces into the room. A flashlight.

Perez rushes in.

In the pitch darkness, he hears a soft WHIMPERING.

Perez swings the flashlight, searches for the source.

The room's empty. No Anna. No kids.

Movement. Near the sofa. He trains the beam:

FATHER PEREZ

Anna?

Nope. Nothing's there.

The rain POUNDS outside. Wind shakes the windows.

More WHIMPERING. Perez searches. *Where? Where?*

He listens... the entryway closet!

ENTRY

Perez moves slowly. At the door, he hesitates.

Then... he YANKS it open. Shines the light inside.

Nothing.

Behind him... the CREAK of footsteps. Headed down the hall.

Perez turns. Follows.

As he passes the kitchen, the crying STOPS. *Huh.*

KITCHEN

Perez shines the light around. There's nothing here-- wait. He points the beam.

The table's messy. Plates facedown, glasses knocked over, tablecloth askew. And... a heavy darkness. Under the table.

Perez swallows. Leans down. Points the beam down to see:

Just the tablecloth, touching the floor on the other side.

Then the cloth SHIFTS. Perez whips the light back up to the top of the table.

The place settings are neat and perfect again.

Perez stares. *Did he just see that?*

The CRYING starts again. Loud now. Perez listens. Turns...

The pantry door. Slightly open.

Perez creeps over... reaches out... gives the door a tug.

Inside, a woman's crouched on the floor, her back turned, head down, shoulders heaving. WEEPING.

Perez takes a breath, braces himself... and aims the light.

It's Anna. Crying into her hands. She's alone.

He crouches down, puts a hand on her shoulder.

FATHER PEREZ
Anna? Anna!

She stops sobbing.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
Anna, where are Chris, Samantha?

Anna seems come out of a trance.

ANNA
The candle... it went out.

She staggers to her feet. Realization dawns on her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Where are they? She has my babies!

Suddenly: a THUD. Perez whips his light towards...

PEREZ
The garage.

He heads that way. Anna starts to follow. Then:

She hears something else. *wrrrwrrrwrrr - click.*

Anna listens. *wrrrwrrrwrrr - click.* She looks for Perez. She can see his light moving under the door of the garage.

wrrrwrrrwrrr - click.

She turns her head, listens. *Where is that coming from?*

Then she hears a frantic whisper:

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Mommy. Mommy.

Anna's head whips around. The hallway!

DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

It's dark, Anna traces the wall with her hand.

wrrrwrrrwrrr - click.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
(whispers)
Mommy mommy mommy...

Anna hurries toward the direction of her daughter's voice.

wrrrwrrrwrrr - click.

She feels her way through the dark, gets to the office door.

Inside the room: *wrrrwrrrwrrr* - *click*.

Anna opens the door part way and sees:

Samantha.

The girl stands in the middle of the room. Frozen in fear.

ANNA

Sam!

Anna shoves the door all the way open, rushes in--

And there's Chris. With: the REVOLVER. Eyes closed.
Swaying gently. Sleepwalking.

He spins the gun's cylinder -- *wrrrwrrrwrrr* -- and pulls the trigger -- *click*.

Thank God she took the bullets out.

But then -- *wrrrwrrrwrrr* -- Anna's eyes land on:

An OPEN BOX of .38 SHELLS.

No!

cli-- Anna rushes over, grabs the--BAM!

The gun fires. CRASH -- glass shatters. The slug punched through a window, breaking a large pane.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Rafael's against the wall, head down. He hears the:

BAM!

His head snaps up. In his eyes: determination.

HOME OFFICE

Chris comes out of his trance. He blinks. Dazed.

His horrified eyes land on something BEHIND Anna.

CHRIS

Mom--

Anna turns-- WHAM!

She's tossed against the wall, her head SNAPS back hard enough to CRACK the plaster.

She slumps to the floor.

Through the low light and a concussion-fog, Anna half-sees:

La Llorona.

Chris runs to his sister, wraps her in his arms.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You stay away from us!

The demon moves towards Sam and Chris. She gets closer.

The kids SCREAM. To Anna, the sound's distant, smeared.

She tries to get to her feet, but she's woozy...

ANNA
No...

Through blurred eyes, she sees La Llorona reach for her kids.

HOME OFFICE DOORWAY

Perez runs in, sees La Llorona standing over the children. He makes the one-handed sign of the cross.

FATHER PEREZ
Tu autem effugare, diabolus!

Suddenly, Perez is shoved aside.

It's Rafael.

He marches into the room. Straight towards La Llorona.

The demon whirls on the men. Perez freezes.

Rafael does not.

RAFAEL
I do not fear you. I will not fear
you! The light is with me.

La Llorona moves towards Rafael. He stands his ground.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You will leave this house.

Rafael spots the shattered glass. He snaps the crucifix-
pendant off his neck, moves towards her with fierce purpose.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
*¡Tiembra y huye, serpiente
ancestral!*

La Llorona WAILS in fury. Rafael holds out the crucifix:

PEREZ
*¡Termina con esta maldición,
transgresor!*

The walls SHUDDER... and La Llorona VANISHES.

But her awful WAIL continues.

The shrill sound moves around them, in circling surround-
sound, faster and faster, spiraling, growing louder...

...and louder...

And LOUDER... until...

RAFAEL
*¡Sométete, espíritu maligno,
permite el haz paso a Cristo!*

KA-BOOM! A massive thunderclap EXPLODES inside the room.

Then silence. They wait.

THWEEP. The power comes back on.

Anna runs to Chris and Samantha, throws her arms around them.

Rafael and Perez watch on. Anna looks at the men:

ANNA
Is it over?

FATHER PEREZ
She's been driven from your home...

RAFAEL
But no, it's not over.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY

The they all sit in the living room. Rafael explains:

RAFAEL
 Last night was *Ruptura de a Maldición* -- "The Breaking of the Curse."

INT. HOUSE, VARIOUS

SERIES OF SHOTS:

RAFAEL (V.O.)
 Yesterday we cast La Llorona out of the house...

-- Father Perez dabs holy oil onto the top casing of each doorway, says a quick blessing.

RAFAEL (V.O.)
 Today is *Seto Protector*. We build a protective hedge.

-- To each doorframe, Rafael nails *milagros* -- small amulets made of pewter, depicting praying saints.

RAFAEL (V.O.)
 Tonight, we must KEEP her out.

-- Rafael spreads the red seeds of the *frijolillo árbol* (Mountain Laurel tree) across the front door threshold.

RAFAEL
 As long as these lines remain unbroken, La Llorona will not be able to re-enter.

-- Outside the kids' room, Rafael hammers an amulet onto the door frame. His eyes stray into the room. He shakes it off.

Then he notices -- the discarded wall-sconce candle.

He picks it up, notices what looks like cloudy water pooled around the wick...

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
 Now there's a stroke of luck.

He opens his bag, digs out a small amber glass bottle.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Rafael spreads the altar cloth on the table. He places on it the amber-colored bottle in the center.

Perez stares at the bottle.

FATHER PEREZ
It's unholy. It should be
destroyed. Or locked away.

RAFAEL
That is what the church teaches.
And it is correct.

Perez gives him a look: *well then?*

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
In most cases. But these tears are
a transmuted, defiled vestige of
long-lost goodness. A mother's
sorrow. If we consecrate them,
return them to what they once were,
they can be used against her.

Perez is still unconvinced.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You are a priest. Your blessing
holds a greater authority. Luis.
Father Perez. Please.

Perez looks at the bottle for another beat. He goes to his tools, digs around.

Comes back with a small St. Benedict medallion.

Rafael smiles at his old friend, who's wary but willing.

FATHER PEREZ
Okay. Let's do it.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM - SUNDOWN

Perez and Rafael join Anna and the kids in the living room.

Samantha's crying, her head buried in Anna's arms.

FATHER PEREZ
What's happened?

ANNA
It's Crissy. Her doll. We can't
find her, not since... last night.
(to Samantha)
We'll find her, Doodlebug.

Perez kneels down to Samantha:

FATHER PEREZ
Crissy will be okay. She's brave.
Like you.

Rafael takes a look at the back of Anna's head.

RAFAEL
That's some bump.

ANNA
I'm fine.

It's then that the sunlight blinks out. Night has come.

They wait. And...

Nothing.

CHRIS
It's quiet. That's good, right?

BOOM! Something POUNDS on the front door. BOOM -- the back door. BOOM -- the roof. All within seconds of each other.

SKKRRIIRRTCH. Fingernails scrape along windows panes, raking across the glass with an impossibly loud, screeching whine.

BRRRUUUUM--the entire house SHAKES. Like an earthquake.

Everyone holds on as the house rattles around them. Pictures fall off the walls, lamps topple.

Over the sofa, A LARGE MIRROR shifts precariously.

Anna pulls her kids to the middle of the room, protects them with her body.

Perez stumbles across the quaking room, gets his hands on the wall mirror, holds it in place.

On the coffee table, the corked AMBER BOTTLE tips over, rolls... Rafael catches it just before it hits the floor.

The St. Benedict medallion, hanging around the bottle's neck, slips off.

Suddenly -- silence. Calm.

Perez gingerly lets go of the mirror.

Rafael retrieves the medallion, puts the amber bottle back on the table.

They all look at each other.

In the quiet, the weight of the wall mirror finally gives -- CRASH! Shards of glass fly.

Startled, they all jump backwards.

Whew. No one's hurt.

FATHER PEREZ
She's not done, is she?

RAFAEL
Not by a long shot.

An angry WAIL, outside the house. The walls give one more massive SHUDDER. Then:

BAM! THUMP! CRASH! **SERIES OF SHOTS** as every window and door in the house FLIES open. Wind and rain whip in...

...and the lines of *frijolillo* seeds that lie across the sills and thresholds start to break apart. Separate.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
We've got to keep these windows closed. The seeds must stay intact. Luis, upstairs! Anna, hammers, nails!
(to Chris)
You take the kitchen.

ENTRY

The front door's wide open, but the line of seeds on the threshold is not yet broken.

La Llorona's foot creeps right up to the line. Stops. She can go no further.

But the wind and rain start to push the seeds apart...

Anna runs in. La Llorona's gone. Anna slams the door shut, bends down and pushes the seed-line back into place.

KITCHEN

Chris closes windows. As he shuts them, they snap back open, one by one. *Crap!* He can't keep up.

LIVING ROOM

Samantha hears a TAPPING sound. TAP. TAP. *What is that?*

She gets up... cautiously goes to the window. TAP. She's scared... doesn't want to look but...

She peeks out.

Just the empty front yard, the street beyond, streetlights glowing. Rainfall runoff flows down the blacktop.

That's when Samantha sees it:

Baby Crissy. On the asphalt, near the curb. The doll's slowly being pushed down the street by the runoff.

KIDS' ROOM

Perez latches the window shut, straightens the seeds.

GARAGE

Anna digs through a toolbox. Frantically gathers nails.

HOME OFFICE

Rafael shuts the windows, checks the *milagros*. Still secure.

KITCHEN

Chris struggles to keep the windows closed.

LIVING ROOM

Samantha jumps to the next window, following Crissy's progress.

That's when she realizes that Crissy's being pushed towards: a storm drain. *Oh no!*

Samantha looks around. She's alone. No one to help. Her gaze goes back to poor, helpless Baby Crissy.

ENTRY - MOMENT LATER

Samantha's now at the front door, hand on the door knob.

She turns the knob, but holds the door closed. Her little fingers tighten...

She looks down at the seeds. The line's intact.

Sam knows she shouldn't, but...

...she pulls the door open a crack, careful not to disturb the seeds.

Her wide eye peeks through the crack. Can't see enough.

A little wider. Still not enough. *Dang it.* Holding her breath, she pulls the door open all the way.

Looks down. The seeds are still there.

SAMANTHA

Okay. Okay.

She peers through the rain towards the storm drain. Crissy's not there! *Oh no!*

But then: her eyes fall to the porch.

There she is. The doll lies just a few feet from the door. Dirty and wet but safe.

And so close.

The rain STOPS. The wind calms.

Almost like an invitation.

Samantha gets down on her knees, right behind the line of laurel seeds.

Steels herself. Then...

She leans out -- over the seeds. Reaches for Crissy.

Her fingers can't... quite... reach.

She stretches as much as she can... the tips of her fingers just brush against the doll.

Just. A little bit. More. Samantha's hand closes around Crissy's leg. *Yes!*

She pulls the doll across the wood of the porch and inside.

She did it! She did it!

Samantha cradles her doll, runs her hands over Crissy's hair.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Shhh. I gotcha. I gotcha.

LIVING ROOM

Anna and Rafael cross paths, she hands him a handful of nails and a hammer. Rafael keeps moving, headed down the hall.

Chris comes in from the kitchen. He's alone. Then:

ANNA
Where's Sam?

ENTRY

ANNA (O.S.)
Sam!

By the still-open front door, Sam gets to her feet.

Anna rushes in...

ANNA (CONT'D)
Samantha!

Samantha turns to her...

SAMANTHA
It's okay, mommy, I got Crissy. I
didn't leave the house.

Anna looks down at the door's threshold -- to the line of *frijolillo* seeds...

...to a BREAK in the seed-line, made when Samantha pulled the doll inside.

ANNA
Sam, get away from the--

Samantha's YANKED out of the house.

SAMANTHA
Ahhhh!

ANNA
Sam!

EXT. FRONT YARD

Baby Crissy hits the porch as Samantha's DRAGGED across the front yard, her fingers clawing uselessly at the wet grass.

Anna jumps the porch steps, runs after her daughter.

But La Llorona has a head start and Samantha's already halfway across the yard.

POP. One of the streetlights goes out.

As Samantha's pulled through the garden gate, she gets both hands around a fence post and manages to HANG ON.

SAMANTHA

Mommy!

POP. Another streetlight goes dark. POP POP POP. They all blow out in rapid succession.

Samantha's body JERKS. One hand slips off the wet wood.

ANNA

Hold on, baby!

Anna's nearly there when...

The girl's WRENCHED away, the garden gate SLAMS shut.

POP POP.

Only one streetlight left -- spotlighting:

The storm drain.

Anna leaps over the gate, charges down the sidewalk.

Samantha's pulled onto the blacktop, sliding quickly towards the storm drain -- an open black maw waiting to devour her.

Samantha SCREAMS as the drain RUSHES towards her.

SAMANTHA

No no no no no!

Her feet are about to be pulled in--

--and Anna GRABS her daughter's arms.

The last streetlight blows. It's nearly pitch-black.

Anna grabs Samantha up, clutches her to her chest, and runs.

A GUST of WIND. A blur -- *argh!* Long SCRATCHES slash across Anna's arm.

Anna doesn't even slow down. She holds onto Samantha, keeps running for the house.

Another GUST as La Llorona attacks again. SLASH -- this time through the back of Anna's shirt.

Anna stumbles, stays on her feet. Sam clings to her mother.

Nearly at the sidewalk: WHOMP!

Anna's shoved from behind. She hits her knees. Skids. One hand hits the pavement, the other stays wrapped her daughter.

Anna staggers back to her feet, still clutching Samantha... They make it to the sidewalk just in front of the house and--

THWAM-- Anna and Samantha are tossed toward the garden gate.

Anna manages to twist so her back takes the impact. CRACK! Some of the wood pickets SNAP.

Suddenly, Chris is at the front door.

CHRIS

Mom! Sam!

Anna's back on her feet, running for the house.

He steps out onto the porch but is hauled back into the house by Father Perez.

FATHER PEREZ

Anna!

WAP! Anna skids through the slick grass, manages to stay on her feet. They make it to the porch steps.

ANNA

Ahhh!

Something's got Anna from behind, stops her in her tracks. Anna lets go of Samantha.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Go go!

Samantha scrambles up to the steps... across the porch... and into the house. *Safe.*

Anna fights to follow, but she's being held back. She drags herself forward.

INT. ANNA'S HOME - ENTRY

Perez rushes to the coffee table, grabs the AMBER BOTTLE.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME - PORCH

Anna forces herself up onto the porch. Samantha and Chris scream. Suddenly:

FATHER PEREZ

Anna. Duck!

Anna drops to her knees. Behind her: La Llorona. Attached to Anna's back, claws digging into the flesh.

Perez grabs Anna's hand, pulls her as he raises the bottle.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)

Vade retro infernalis adversarii!

He SLINGS the open bottle in the demon's direction. The reclaimed acid tears SPLASH across La Llorona's face.

They SIZZLE.

La Llorona HOWLS. Perez drags Anna inside.

INT. ANNA'S HOME

Perez slams the door, turns the deadbolt.

Rafael rushes into the room, hammer in hand.

RAFAEL

Anna, what...?

Chris and Samantha run to their mother. Hug her.

WHAM! Something smashes into the door. Again: WHAM!

Then: a furious WAIL that slowly fades into the distance.

SAMANTHA

Crissy!

Chris has the doll. Samantha gratefully takes it.

Anna turns to her son, Chris sure he's going to get it this time. Stammers--

CHRIS
It was right there. When Father
Perez threw that bottle I just--

ANNA
Good thinking.

She smiles, pulls him into a hug.

LIVING ROOM

Anna slumps onto the sofa. Looks at her skinned knees.

CHRIS
I'll get the kit.

Perez and Rafael hover close by.

FATHER PEREZ
That could have been--

RAFAEL
But it wasn't.
(beat)
Anna went out there without thought
to her own safety. Concerned only
with protecting her daughter. She
had faith that she would prevail.

Anna looks up at him. He nods. *That's right. He said it.*

He leaves Anna to think about that. Perez follows him.

Samantha dries her doll with a kitchen towel.

Chris returns with a first-aid kit. The back of Anna's shirt
is slashed. Her skin oozes blood from deep scratches. *Ouch.*

Moments later we hear:

BAMBAMBAM as Rafael drives more nails into the window frames.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Rafael's hand grabs an egg. CRACKS it on the edge of a bowl.
It's streaked with blood.

CHRIS
Oh, no. That's--

RAFAEL
Just a bad egg. Normal.

He pours the bloody egg into the sink. Rinses the bowl.
CRACKS another egg. This one's clear. Good.

Rafael gives Chris an egg. Hesitantly, Chris CRACKS it.
Clear. Chris smiles.

LIVING ROOM

Anna wakes up on the love seat.

Samantha's still asleep on the couch. It's gloomy outside
and a light rain falls. But the second night's over.

Anna hears Rafael and Chris in the kitchen. CRACK.

KITCHEN

Anna walks into the kitchen, wary.

Chris and Rafael stare into a bowl. Rafael nods to Chris,
who carefully drops three pinches of salt into the bowl.

ANNA
Another ritual?

Rafael picks up the bowl and a fork, starts to whisk.

RAFAEL
Breakfast.

ANNA
(to Chris)
Stay with your sister for me?

Chris heads out.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Did you say you're a priest, a
shaman, or a chef?

He smiles. She pours a cup of coffee.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I think maybe you still are one.

RAFAEL
One what?

ANNA
A priest. But... more.

Rafael smiles gratefully.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Why did you leave the priesthood?

RAFAEL
It was too restrictive. God
inhabits the words of the Bible,
but he is not limited by them. The
methods I use are not sanctioned by
the church. And yet to work, my
methods still require deep faith.

Anna looks away, sips her coffee. He flips the eggs.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
There's that word again.

ANNA
Look, it's... I trust you.

He turns off the stove, scoops eggs onto a plate.

RAFAEL
Hmmm. I trust God. You trust me.
Yet, you don't trust God.
(beat)
Do you have any *salsa*? Tabasco?

ANNA
Ah, no, I'm sorry.

RAFAEL
Now THAT is a sin.

Anna smiles. She sits down at the kitchen table, sees the
amber glass bottle. Carefully picks it up.

ANNA
Why do you think she cries?

RAFAEL
She was a mother. No power of hell
can fully burn that from her heart.

ANNA
But this only slowed her down.
Rafael, are we going to make it
through this?

RAFAEL
Faith, Anna.

Anna's eyes go to the living room. Perez sleeps slumped in a recliner. Her kids, together on the couch. Peaceful.

ANNA

(beat)

My husband was investigating a hit and run. Canvassing door to door, taking statements. Routine. But the last door he knocked on... where was God then?

RAFAEL

I can't pretend to know the mind of God, Anna, but I do know this. We've survived two nights against La Llorona. Do you think we could have done that on our own?

Anna looks at him. Looks away. He's got a point.

INT. HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

The house is quiet. Calm. Even the leaks have stopped.

LIVING ROOM

The gang's all here.

Perez has placed the altar cloth on the coffee table and is making some preparations with holy oil and Rafael's *chimenea*.

Rafael talks to Anna and the kids:

RAFAEL

Tonight is *Proscripción*. We stay within this blessed space for one more night. When the sun rises, La Llorona will be banished.

(beat)

There is one final ritual. When you're ready.

Anna glances over to her kids.

Chris puts a big brother arm Samantha's shoulders, pulls her close. She holds Crissy up to him for a kiss.

Embarrassed, Chris gives the doll a peck. Then he laughs.

CHRIS

I remember the day Dad got that doll for you.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

We drove to every store in town.
They were all sold out. But then
he found one in Pasadena. He
turned on the sirens so we could
get there before anyone else bought
it. That was a really cool day.
It was right before your birthday.
Right before...

He trails off, unwilling to finish the sentence.

Anna watches her brave children. She holds a finger up to
Perez: *one minute*. She slips from the room.

HOME OFFICE

Anna goes to the lockbox on her desk. Opens it. David's
gun, his CAP, his BADGE, the ST. MICHAEL PENDANT.

She takes a deep breath, stares into the box.

LIVING ROOM

When Anna returns, Rafael has seated everyone else in a
circle on the floor. Anna sits next to Chris.

Anna opens her hand: David's BADGE shines in her palm. Chris
looks at her. *Really?*

Anna pins it on his chest.

ANNA

Yours.

Chris beams. Samantha smiles at Chris, touches the badge.
Then, something big settles on her head.

Sam reaches up -- it's her father's POLICE CAP.

SAMANTHA

Daddy's hat!

Then, Anna's other hand opens. It's the ST. MICHAEL PENDANT.

Anna stares at it. Not sure if she's ready.

She glances up, sees Rafael and Perez watching her. Two good
men. Solid men. Men of God.

ANNA
(to Father Perez)
What we're doing here, all this.
Why didn't it work for Patricia?

Perez looks at the family, gathered together.

FATHER PEREZ
Patricia... Patricia found her way
back to the church after her sons
were already lost to her. After La
Llorona had taken them. Now she
prays constantly for their return.

He glances at Rafael.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
It's a prayer, Anna, that will
never be answered.

Anna looks at the medallion, glinting silver in her hand.

She slips the necklace over her head. The pendant nestles on
her chest. She covers it with a hand.

ANNA
We're ready.

Perez begins the ritual. He dips a finger into a small bowl
of oil mixed with ash.

With the paste, he paints the sign of the cross on the
foreheads of Anna, her children, even Rafael. Each time:

FATHER PEREZ
In the name of the Father and the
Son and the Holy Spirit.

Rafael stands, lights an herbal pipe. He breathes deeply of
the smoke, then blows it out, across the family.

FATHER PEREZ (CONT'D)
Lord, through the strength of your
grace, may Anna, Chris, and
Samantha be forever free of this
evil. And may they always possess
the gift of their love for one
another.

Chris scoots closer to his mom. Anna puts a hand on his. He
twines his fingers with hers.

He leans over, smiles at Samantha. She grins back.

Anna's eyes fill with happy tears.

Rafael brings out an EGG.

He moves it across the bodies of Anna... Samantha... Chris.

Then, back at the coffee table: CRACK.

He pours the contents into a glass. Clean and clear.

RAFAEL

When the sun rises, La Llorona will
be gone from your lives forever.
It is done.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - LATER THAN NIGHT

Anna checks on her children. Sound asleep in their beds.

LIVING ROOM

Anna finds Rafael and Perez snoozing in their chairs.

She grabs a couple of blankets, lays them across the men.

ANNA'S BEDROOM

Her head hits the pillow. Ahhh.

ANNA'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's quiet. Peaceful. It's raining, but the sound is gentle, comforting.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

The rain softly lands on the grass. A soft wind blows the drops toward the porch steps...

...where a filthy bare foot moves into the frame.

ENTRY

CREEEEEAK. The front door swings open.

The feet stand at the line of laurel seeds spread across the threshold. Toes curl into the floor. Then:

The pewter *milagros* hanging from the doorjamb drops to the floor, lands in the seeds.

The foot lifts...

...and steps OVER the seeds.

KITCHEN

A KITCHEN DRAWER hangs precariously from the hinges. Open.

skkkrrttchhh. The gleaming edge of a CHEF'S KNIFE scrapes across the tile countertop.

Reflected in the blade: long black hair. White nightgown.

STAIRS

Up the stairs...

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

...down the hall. As we pass each door, the amulets nailed on the frames fall to the floor.

We stop at the children's bedroom. PLOP -- the *milagros* lands outside the threshold.

The foot steps right onto the seeds. WIPES the line away.

KIDS' ROOM

The door swings open. Soft HUMMING. It's the lullaby. La Llorona's song.

Moonlight washes through the window, spills across Samantha's sleeping face. Sweet. Happy.

The shadow of a HAND falls over the girl's blanket.

The silver light catches the hand... we trace up the body... to the face of...

Patricia.

ANNA'S BEDROOM

THUMP. Anna wakes with a start. *What was that?* She jumps from the bed.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Anna sees the *milagros* lying uselessly on the floor. And there, on the floor: Baby Crissy. She grabs the doll.

ANNA
Chris! Sam!

KIDS' ROOM

Anna rushes in. Her children are gone.

LIVING ROOM

Anna races into the room, yells at the sleeping men:

ANNA
She has them! She has my kids!

EXT. BACKYARD

Anna bursts out the back door. It's not raining, but a dense fog mists the ground.

She sees them. But it's NOT La Llorona. *Holy God, it's:*

ANNA
Patricia? Patricia!!

Patricia yanks on a leather belt that she's used to bind the kids' hands, pulls them toward the LA River.

In her other hand: the kitchen knife.

Beyond them, across the river, along the edge of the concrete aqueduct, standing with stoic expressions:

Children. Dozens. Differing ages, dressed in clothes from all eras.

The Crissy doll falls from Anna's hand into the mud...

ANNA (CONT'D)
All those children. Oh, God.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Perez and Rafael grab their Bibles, holy water, crucifixes.

EXT. BACKYARD

Patricia pulls the kids with a crazed strength, but Sam and Chris aren't making it easy. They're fighting. Resisting.

Giving Anna just enough time to catch up to them. Anna reaches out, almost touches the belt...

Patricia whirls. She presses the knife's blade against Samantha's neck. Her eyes burn with mad grief.

Anna freezes. Scared to move. Eyes locked on the knife.

PATRICIA

She will give them back to me.

She motions towards the river. Her two sons, Carlos and Tomás, stand among the children.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Mis hijos. They wait for me.

INT. KITCHEN

Perez and Rafael rush to the back door--

BAM! It swings shut on them. Rafael tries the door handle. It won't turn, the door won't budge.

RAFAEL

Try the front!

WITH ANNA AND PATRICIA

Samantha sobs, eyes wide with fright.

ANNA

This isn't who you are. Patricia,
please. Let them go.

Patricia looks down at the kids' faces, their tears, their fear. She hesitates.

Then her eyes cross the river, to Carlos and Tomás.

Her face hardens. She YANKS at the belt. Samantha screams.

CHRIS

Let my sister go. You can have me.
I'll go with you.

ANNA

No!

Anna lunges toward them.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Let them go!

Patricia lashes out, swings the knife -- THWUMP. The hard-resin handle connects with Anna's temple.

Anna goes down -- not unconscious, but dazed.

CHRIS

Mom!

INT. ENTRY

Perez is at the front door, trying to get it open. No good.

EXT. BACK YARD

Patricia pulls Samantha and Chris closer to the river.

Then...

...there she is. La Llorona. At the river's edge.

The fog swirls around her, magnificent in all her foul glory.

Patricia's stunned. *Such evil.* She stops. Looks at her sons... then at Anna's kids... then back to La Llorona.

WITH ANNA

Anna tries to get back on her feet, head bleeding.

WITH PATRICIA

La Llorona WAILS.

Samantha and Chris scream, fight Patricia.

And for the first time: Patricia hesitates.

But she takes another look at Carlos and Tomás. Her resolve returns.

She starts to pull the kids towards the river--WHOMP!

Anna SHOVES Patricia to the ground, grabs the knife, flings it away. Samantha and Chris run into their mom's arms.

Anna faces La Llorona.

ANNA
These are my children! I am their
mother!

La Llorona stretches out her long gray arms...

And Samantha and Chris start getting PULLED towards her.

SAMANTHA
Mommy!

CHRIS
Mom!

Anna holds onto her kids but she's dragged with them towards the river...

WITH PATRICIA

Patricia's on her knees, she sees Samantha and Chris plead and scream, and Anna desperately trying to hold on to them.

ANNA
You can't have them!

Patrica turns to look at her own two boys.

Tomás. Carlos.

PATRICIA
Mis queridos hijos...

But the boys just stare back at her. Their faces blank. Their eyes dead.

RIVER'S EDGE

Anna holds on. Samantha and Chris dig in their heels, but it's no good. They get hauled down the embankment toward the concrete edge of the river...

...where La Llorona stands. Behind her, the rain-swollen aqueduct churns with fast-moving water.

La Llorona reaches out.

Her dead fingers touch Chris and Samantha--

A YELL.

Patricia charges La Llorona. WHAMP -- she tackles the demon and they both go over the edge and disappear from sight.

BACKYARD

Anna comes up from the river with her kids. They're bruised, bleeding, worn out. But they're together. Alive.

Anna looks back across the river, to the children standing there. She sees Patricia's kids among them. Carlos. Tomás.

Tomás looks at her. He smiles.

Suddenly, his smile twists into fear.

And all the children VANISH.

Rising over the concrete edge: La Llorona. Her unholy gaze fixes once again on Anna and her family.

She WAILS, comes towards them. Her grimy hands reach out...

Behind her, the sky lightens with the coming dawn.

But it's too late.

Anna glances back at the house. They'll never make it.

La Llorona SURGES towards them with hateful power.

Chris and Samantha pull at Anna, trying to get her to move.

CHRIS

Come on!

SAMANTHA

Mom!

Anna's hand goes to her husband's pendant, St. Michael, around her neck.

She steps in front of her kids.

Terrified, but finally ready, Anna takes a stand.

La Llorona's almost upon them, wailing her wicked cry.

Anna's eyes go past La Llorona. Toward the sun that's just about to break the horizon, but it's taking too long.

Time's run out.

But Anna closes her eyes, clenches the medallion. And then:

ANNA
I believe.

La Llorona's hand is inches from Anna's face when...

...she stops cold.

Is it the sun? Is it Anna? No...

La Llorona's black eyes are fixed upon something that stands behind Anna. Something that Anna cannot see:

David. Anna's husband. He looks at La Llorona without fear.

Anna opens her eyes. Sees La Llorona stopped in her tracks.

But not for long.

La Llorona SHRIEKS. She SURGES towards Anna...

And the morning sun finally CRESTS the horizon. Light STABS into the demon.

A horrific WAIL, an EXPLOSION of white light and...

La Llorona is gone.

For a moment, no one moves.

Anna looks over her shoulder. *Was someone there?*

The back door bursts open. Rafael runs toward them.

Anna turns to her children. They rush to her, cling. Chris looks at his mother in awe.

CHRIS
You. Are. Awesome.

Anna laughs through her tears.

They move a little closer to the river. Watch the waters roll by, carrying away the past.

The rain ends.

Anna holds her precious children close.

Then...

A SHUFFLE from behind. *Oh no.* But:

It's Perez. He's holding something. A muddy Baby Crissy.

Samantha SQUEALS in delight as she takes the doll.

Anna looks at Perez, at Rafael.

ANNA

Thank you.

Samantha goes to a puddle. Looks at the water, hesitant.
Then she bends down... and washes the muck off of Crissy.

Anna goes to Chris, adjusts the police badge still pinned to his chest.

ANNA (CONT'D)

My brave little man.

She has a sudden thought, looks down at her arm.

The skin is clear. Unmarred. The burn mark is GONE.

It's over.

WITH SAMANTHA

Her doll's clean, and the little girl eyes a puddle that's bigger than all the rest. She thinks for a moment.

Then she grins, runs straight for it... and JUMPS.

SPLASH!

FADE OUT:

-- the end --