

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

Written by

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INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

SERENA BERKIN (mid 30s) stops at a supply closet. Quiet as a mouse even if her anxiety is like a hummingbird's heart rate.

Down the hall, the sickly glow of the TV streaks the living room. Her husband, ISAAC BERKIN (late 30s) fixates on the TV.

His arms stretch over the couch, filling the space. Bruised knuckles and a scratch mar the back of one hand.

Serena creeps into the supply closet.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET

Serena pushes aside multiple containers, reaches into an unmarked box --

And retrieves a compact of BIRTH CONTROL.

Serena swallows a pill. Hides the compact back in the box.

Isaac stands at the entrance to the closet.

SERENA
(panicked)
Isaac. I was getting more supplies--

Isaac rushes Serena. Pins her against the wall as he plunges his hand into the box. Comes up clutching the compact.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Please. I can explain.

They fight over the compact. Serena refuses to let go.

The pair stumble over the messy floor. Isaac RAMS a rolling tool cabinet at Serena and CRUSHES her right hand.

Serena SCREAMS and drops the compact. Her eyes plead to Isaac, streaming with tears.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Isaac, I love you.

Isaac SLAPS her in the face.

BLACKOUT.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 9 YEARS LATER

Shrouded in darkness. A LIGHT flicks on --

Serena stands awash in an unforgiving glare.

Her face is riddled with SCARS, FRESH CUTS and BRUISES.

Serena stares blankly at her mangled visage in the mirror. A haunted soul with no fight left.

CLICK. She takes multiple pictures with her cellphone.

She ties her long, dark hair up and turns the faucet on.

A wet bristled brush dabs at a GASH on her cheek. With gentle prodding the gash PEELS off and we realize --

All the wounds are special effects makeup prosthetics.

Serena strips away the grisly trauma with adhesive remover and a warm washcloth. But her eyes remain lonely and bereft.

UNKNOWN POV: Someone watches Serena from a crack in the bathroom door.

Oblivious, Serena uploads the pictures off her phone to a gallery on her special effects makeup WEBSITE.

Serena unbuttons her shirt to clean off makeup on her neck. Her WEDDING BAND hangs from a chain necklace.

Serena's right hand twinges from her old injury. She massages it, flexing her fingers and wrist.

CREAK. Startled, Serena whips around to the door. No one's there. Only the sound of SOFT FOOTSTEPS retreating.

RRR-RRR. Serena's phone receives an email. She reads it. Surprise blooms across her face.

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS - DAY

Serena stands by her car. Double-checks her directions.

Nature sprawls before her, immense and deathly quiet.

She fails to get service on her phone.

SERENA

Damn it.

A TWIG SNAPS. Serena peers into the dense woods, on edge.

In the dappled shadows, between swaying branches -- A DARK FIGURE LOOMS -- or is it a mere trick of the light?

EDWIN (O.S.)
Mrs. Berkin?

EDWIN TALLON (late 20s) rounds the bend, a pretentious hipster wearing glasses. But his passionate zeal is genuine.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Hi, I'm Edwin.

Serena glances back at the woods. Nothing but trees.

SERENA
Please, call me Serena. It's nice to meet you.

EDWIN
My office is around the corner.
Mind the fire ants.

Serena's car door opens and her curious daughter CHARLOTTE (8) hops out. Same dark hair as her mother.

CHARLOTTE
Wait, Mommy, I want to go too!

SERENA
No, Charlotte, stay in the car. You can take a nap while Mommy talks to the nice director.

But Charlotte has already glued herself to Serena's side.

EDWIN
You brought your daughter?

SERENA
I'm sorry. Everyone I know is working and I don't like leaving her at home alone. I swear she won't cause any trouble.

CHARLOTTE
Pinky-swear! I promise. Please?

Edwin shrugs and walks on. Serena and Charlotte follow.

EDWIN
We were in the middle of shooting when without warning our makeup artist left. Thanks, Craigslist.

The woods thin out. They reach a --

CLEARING

And come upon Edwin's office -- a shabby TRAILER.

SERENA
Is this a non-union shoot?

EDWIN
Would only slow us down.

Edwin gestures them inside.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

DEMONIC DRAWINGS plaster every inch of the walls.

EDWIN
Have you heard the story about the
Man at the Crossroads?

SERENA
Can't say that I have.

CHARLOTTE
Why are they so ugly?

Charlotte marvels at a gruesome drawing.

SERENA
Save your questions for later.

EDWIN
It's said the man will grant you
whatever your heart most desires.

SERENA
What's the catch?

Edwin gathers the concept art into a folder.

EDWIN
Some claim the man's actually the
mischievous demon Beynael. Beynael
grants you your wish in exchange
for your soul.

SERENA
Pretty hefty price to pay.

EDWIN

Dark forces shadow the target until finally Beynael appears as a man, dressed in black.

Edwin hands her the folder of all the drawings.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

People would go to a crossroads and deposit remnants of Hoodoo and Voodoo rituals -- incense ash, candle wax. This is an authentic mask of all those things mixed together.

Edwin presents Serena with a grotesque, misshapen HOODOO MASK. It has a melted, lopsided mouth and eyes like slits.

SERENA

I'd love to be part of your production.

EDWIN

I need a camera-ready full body demon makeup by this weekend.

SERENA

That's rushing it, don't you think?

EDWIN

Budget's tight. I can give half up front and half when filming wraps. Kit fee's waived until a distribution deal's made.

SERENA

Little unconventional.

EDWIN

That's my offer. We're in this business to make art. This film is a study on the dark side of temptation.

Edwin extends his hand. Serena hesitates before shaking it.

LANDON (30s) trips on the door frame as he enters. He's a lanky deadbeat who picks at acne scabs peppering his face.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Perfect timing. Landon's my production assistant. He should have my contract for you to sign.

Edwin cell DINGS with a text. He checks it and heads out.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
I'll send the actor over. Great to
have you on board, Serena.

Edwin leaves. Serena sits down and briefly skims through the lengthy contract.

She checks the time on her phone. It's getting late. Serena digs a pen from her purse to sign the contract.

LANDON
Hope you know what you're getting
into.

Landon examines skin from a scab he's picked at. Charlotte makes a disgusted face.

Landon smirks and flicks the skin off his fingernail.

Serena merely skims the pages and signs the contract.

Serena puts the pen down and rubs her right hand.

LANDON (CONT'D)
You alright?

SERENA
Fine. Can't wait to get started.

Serena grabs the Hoodoo mask and ushers Charlotte out.

EXT. SANTA CLARITA BACK ROADS - DAY

The houses thin out as Serena drives back home.

The Hoodoo mask rocks in the passenger seat next to Charlotte. Charlotte is in full on pout mode.

CHARLOTTE
But you said we were going to stop
to get ice cream.

SERENA
Maybe later. This is a big project
with a short deadline.

CHARLOTTE
I want ice cream!

She grabs the Hoodoo mask and throws it against the window.

SERENA

Hey! We do not throw things! Or
else no presents for your birthday.

Charlotte stews in silence. She glares at the Hoodoo mask.

CHARLOTTE

If you're making him a mask, can
you make me one? A pretty one. I
want to be a butterfly princess.
That could be my birthday present.

SERENA

What did I just say? I'm busy.

CHARLOTTE

Daddy doesn't like it when you get
too busy.

SERENA

Daddy doesn't like a lot of things
but he takes care of us. He...

A BLACK MAN in DARK CLOTHES stands on Serena's driveway.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Serena parks. Her house sits at the crossroads of a
dilapidated street.

The black man is TED (early 20s). Fresh off the farm with
stars in his eyes. Can't shake the southern accent. He waves.

TED

Hi, there. You're not late or
anything. The bus dropped me off
early.

SERENA

Who...?

TED

I'm the demon.

SERENA

Edwin doesn't waste any time. So
you're the guy everyone's running
from.

TED

Beat out five other guys for the
role. This is my big break.

SERENA

Then let's show them what you got.

She clicks open the garage.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The attached garage is Serena's sanctuary. A special effects makeup artist's treasure trove.

Serena lugs bags of makeup purchases onto a table. Ted marvels at Serena's workshop.

TED

I've been practicing my demon voice.

(deep, demonic voice)

The hour draws near. Soon you will be mine.

SERENA

That's... Good.

TED

Hey, I didn't write the script.

Serena opens various cupboards. Assembles her supplies.

TED (CONT'D)

Look at that spread.

SERENA

I've been freelance for a while.

TED

You work in any studios?

A sore spot for Serena.

SERENA

Not yet.

TED

No room in the inn so you make do.

Serena nods. She pats a rickety table.

MOMENTS LATER

Ted lies shirtless on the table. Serena coats his face and torso in greasy Vaseline. Ted squirms.

TED
Why so much Vaseline?

SERENA
It keeps the plaster from ripping
out your hair.

TED
Could use a free chest wax. All
those movie stars do it. No hair,
Hollywood bare.

White, viscous alginate coats his torso for his body mold.

Serena notices a CROSS NECKLACE around Ted's neck.

SERENA
Your necklace. I don't want
alginate getting on it.

Ted lifts his head. Serena takes the cross off him.

TED
In church I learned you never say a
demon's name out loud. Talk or even
think about a demon enough and
he'll seek you out.

SERENA
(skeptical)
Really.

TED
Fortune telling, voodoo dolls,
horror movies -- that's rolling out
the welcome mat.

SERENA
So you think the legend of the Man
at the Crossroads is real?

TED
(re: his necklace)
That's the only cross I trust with
all my heart. Everything else could
be tall tales and superstition.

Serena sets the cross necklace on a table. She grabs her
alginate bucket and winces from the pain in her hand.

TED (CONT'D)
You able to work with your hand
like that?

SERENA
It won't be a problem.

Ted quiets as Serena pours the alginate over his mouth. Ted screws his eyes shut as the rest of his face is covered.

SERENA (CONT'D)
It'll set in a few minutes. Try to relax if you can.

The alginate covers Ted's entire face. It rolls over his nostrils, blocking the airway. Amateur move on Serena's part.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Blow out through your nose for me?

Ted clears his nostrils. Serena wipes the rest away.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

Serena checks the time. She quickens her pace.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - SUNSET

Serena briskly leads Ted to the edge of her driveway. Ted picks at a stubborn bit of dried alginate on his jaw.

SERENA
I ran short on time. We'll have to get the hands and feet done another day.

TED
Just let me know and I'll hitch a ride over.

He waves goodbye.

A patch of dirt at the end of the driveway catches Serena's eye. "CHARLOTTE" is written in the dirt.

Serena wipes the name out with her foot.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - SUNSET

Serena washes and dries her hands. She pulls out EDWIN'S CHECK to her for the project.

Serena opens a drawer. It's filled with her beauty makeup. She pulls out a tray --

Revealing stacks of big bills. Serena deposits the check and drops the tray back, hiding her money.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - SUNSET

Charlotte's in the workshop standing before an open display cabinet stuffed with HORROR LATEX MASKS.

Their blank, cut-out eyes leer at her. Charlotte's fingers roam over the terrifying faces.

SERENA

Charlotte, what are you doing in here?

Startled, Charlotte bumps the cabinet. Masks rain down.

SERENA (CONT'D)

The garage is off limits.

CHARLOTTE

But how will I know you're okay? You're always in here.

Charlotte scurries to hang all the masks back up.

SERENA

This gig can really help Mommy save up money.

CHARLOTTE

Daddy has money. He buys us lots of stuff.

SERENA

You can watch as much TV as you want. Please? And then after dinner I'm all yours.

CHARLOTTE

Okay...

SERENA

Thanks, munchkin.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not a munchkin, I'm a butterfly princess.

Charlotte bounds back into the house.

Serena checks the time again.

She judges a sketch she's drawn of a terrifying demon in shades of black and white. It's ready.

BEGIN MONTAGE -- SCULPTING A DEMON:

SLAP.

Serena toils nonstop, slapping wet CLAY on Ted's plaster bust.

She pinches and prods while listening to MUSIC on her cell. She pauses only to get a drink of wine.

The Hoodoo Mask sits propped up on the table for additional source reference and inspiration.

Gray clay speckles Serena's skin, hair and clothes.

She doesn't care. All attention is directed on her career.

At a VACUFORM TABLE, a heated, plastic sheet collapses down on some of the accessories Serena's created and form exact replicas in thin yet durable plastic.

Serena turns back to Ted's bust. With each cut of her tools, a new feature emerges. She transforms clay into --

-- weathered skin.

-- protruding eyebrows.

-- pointed chin.

-- angular cheekbones.

Serena massages her weak hand.

SERENA

(to mask)

If I ever met you at the crossroads
I know what I'd wish for.

She shuffles her songs. A fast-paced SONG PLAYS.

She holds jagged, piranha-like teeth up to the mouth to see how they will look. Perfect.

As Serena refines the details, the music grows more FRENETIC. Serena adjusts her pace despite fatigue setting in.

Her X-acto knife strips away more clay.

Peel, shape, round, hollow out, pierce.

The music's tempo increases. The VOLUME indicator amps up even though Serena isn't near her cell phone.

More sculpting. Nick, jab, indent, cut, slash --

SLICE. Serena's weak hand falters.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch!

END MONTAGE.

BLOOD dots the demon's cracked lips. Lips that twist into a lopsided smile.

The Hoodoo Mask topples to the ground as Serena pushes away from the table.

Serena wraps a clean towel around her bleeding thumb.

The cut's not too deep, just an annoyance. But her right hand shakes nonetheless. Serena sighs, defeated.

Serena STOPS the music. Turns back to her demon sculpture --

The blood on its lips has VANISHED.

Serena feels the demon's lips, comes up with nothing.

Serena stoops to pluck the Hoodoo mask off the floor.

A small BLACK KINGSNAKE slithers out from under the mask!

Serena jumps away, knocking over buckets.

A bucket lands top-side down and SEVERES the snake's tail.

The snake wriggles towards the front of the garage. Serena hurries to the wall and presses a button.

The garage door rises. The snake slithers out of sight as --

EXT. DRIVEWAY

A TRUCK pulls in and parks.

Isaac tumbles out of the passenger seat, laughing his drunk ass off.

He's dressed sharp, the embodiment of style and class. But clothes don't make a man.

He clutches a bottle labeled: DEMON'S HEAD WHISKEY and a big black leather bag.

His buddy MITCH (30s) gets out. Even behind the wheel he's buzzed. Likes to test his limits and play with fire.

Isaac hunches over, trying to catch a breath without heaving.

MITCH

You keep that down, that's good
whiskey.

Isaac staggers over to Serena, who keeps her distance.

INT. GARAGE

Isaac sets the black bag on her workshop table. Medical equipment spills out -- pulse oximeter, stethoscope...

Isaac smothers his wife with a hug.

SERENA

Hey, honey.

Isaac puts a finger to his lips. He dons the stethoscope and listens to Serena's HEARTBEAT. It beats fast and irregular.

Serena smiles, nervous. She breathes deep. Heartbeat slows.

ISAAC

Diagnosis? You're jealous of the
new pediatrician for the Acton
Medical Clinic.

SERENA

That's great, Isaac.

Mitch grabs a latex mask off the floor that Charlotte knocked down earlier.

MITCH

Who buys this crap?

Mitch crams the monster mask over his head.

ISAAC

I keep telling her it's a waste of
time.

Serena hides her hurt with a smile.

MITCH

All you gotta do is cast an ugly-ass dude and the job's done.

Mitch waggles his tongue through the mouth hole.

ISAAC

Are you volunteering?

Mitch slings the mask at Isaac. Isaac punts it back. Serena opens her mouth to object but holds back.

MITCH

I better get going. Congrats again, buddy.

ISAAC

Be seeing you, Mitch.

Mitch hops into his truck and drives off.

Serena goes back to work on her prosthetic.

Isaac sidles up to her. Nuzzles the back of her neck.

He breathes her in, warm and gentle --

Until he grabs her left hand.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Where's your ring?

SERENA

You know I always take it off for work. Would get all kinds of gunk on it if I didn't.

She shows him her ring strung on the chain necklace.

ISAAC

You don't need to work anymore with what I'll be bringing in.

SERENA

A girl has her hobbies.

Serena reaches for her brush but Isaac tightens his grip.

Charlotte watches from the doorway. She fearfully clutches a doll to her chest.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Please, not tonight. I'm sorry,
I'll stop. Dinner will be ready in
thirty minutes, I promise.

Isaac weighs his options. Serena waits, at his mercy.

Isaac kisses each knuckle before releasing her hand.

ISAAC
Such a beautiful, busy bee.

He BUZZES into Serena's ear. Gives her one more whiskey kiss.

Isaac sees Charlotte spying on them from the doorway.

CHARLOTTE
Daddy.

Isaac approaches Charlotte, arms spread.

ISAAC
There's our girl. Coming in for a
landing.

Charlotte takes her cue and jumps into Isaac's arms. Isaac
swings her around, making AIRPLANE SOUNDS.

Serena carefully monitors Isaac.

Isaac sets Charlotte on the ground.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
You're getting big. Can you put
away your dolls for me? We're about
to have dinner.
(to Serena)
In *fifteen* minutes.

Serena tempers her emotions and weakly nods.

Charlotte runs into the house. Isaac laughs and chases her.

Serena drains the rest of her wine from her glass.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte stows her dolls in a toy chest.

BLACK ANTS crawl in from a partially opened window.

Charlotte curiously watches them weave a trail towards an
EASEL set up at the foot of her bed.

There's a hand drawn picture of three stick figures -- Isaac smiles but Charlotte and especially Serena wear frowns.

DEMONIC VOICE (O.S.)
(barely a whisper)
Charlotte...

Charlotte looks at her closet door, slightly ajar.

GARAGE - LATER

Serena sweeps her mess to the side. Time for cleanup later.

She slips her wedding band back on her ring finger.

A child's WAIL emanates from the house. Charlotte.

Serena rushes out of the garage.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte is with Isaac. He pets her hair.

ISAAC
She must have bumped her head.

A nasty BRUISE blossoms above Charlotte's eyebrow.

Serena hugs Charlotte. Near tears herself.

Charlotte balls her hands into fists. A drop of blood stains her skin.

Isaac nudges Serena aside to tend to Charlotte.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
(ordering Serena)
Go get a bag of peas from the
freezer.

Serena stands there numb.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Go get a bag!

Serena shuffles over to the fridge in a daze.

She watches Isaac lightly brush his finger over the bruise. Charlotte cringes.

Serena glares at Isaac, anger boiling over. She alters course and whisks over to the landline phone on the table and dials.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

SERENA
(on phone)
I'd like to report child abuse.

ISAAC
You think I did that to her?

SERENA
(on phone)
1815 Oakwood Lane--

ISAAC
Get away from the phone!

Isaac shoves Serena, sends her rocketing into the wall.

He upturns the table and the whiskey bottle. Pitches the phone into the wall.

Charlotte WAILS.

Isaac is suddenly aware and ashamed of his outburst. He kneels down to Serena. She bleeds from a cut on her forehead.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Let me help you get cleaned up. I'm so sorry, baby. It won't happen again.
(to Charlotte)
Charlotte, get your pj's on. Daddy's gonna tuck you in right after he--

Serena BREAKS the bottle over Isaac's head. He collapses.

Serena takes Charlotte and they flee down the hall.

MASTER BEDROOM

They lock themselves in. A small window's above the bed.

Serena forces the rusted latch open but can't get the window up higher than a few inches. She hoists Charlotte up.

SERENA
Through the window. I'll push you.

CHARLOTTE
I won't fit. It's too small.

SERENA
You'll have to try--

BAM! BAM! BAM! Isaac's on the other side of the door.

ISAAC (O.S.)
Serena! Open the door! Charlotte,
open for Daddy. Open up!

Charlotte slips. She and her mother tumble onto the bed.

A framed photo of Serena, Isaac and Charlotte falls off the night stand and CRACKS.

ISAAC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Serena!

The incessant banging causes bits of ceiling plaster to fall.

CHARLOTTE
What do we do? I don't want him to
hurt you again.

Serena trembles. Her eyes dart to a LOCKBOX on the top shelf in their closet.

Serena remains paralyzed on the bed in fear.

FISTS pound the door in time with Serena's HEARTBEAT.

BAM! Isaac busts down the door to the bedroom.

Another CRASH offscreen.

OFFICER GARRETT (O.S.)
Freeze!

OFFICER GARRETT (40) and another OFFICER train their guns on Isaac. Isaac raises his hands up in the air.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
Get down on the ground, now!

Isaac obeys, never taking his eyes off Serena and Charlotte.

Officer Garrett cuffs Isaac.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Morning light creeps up the walls.

Serena places a headband on Charlotte's head that masks her bruised forehead. Serena wears a WRIST SPLINT.

Charlotte admires her look in the hallway mirror.

SERENA

Very pretty. All right, get your things. You don't want to be late for school.

Charlotte runs to her room.

The door to the SUPPLY CLOSET is wide open.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Charlotte, what did I tell you about playing in the closet? Dangerous materials are in here.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

I wasn't playing in there.

SERENA

This door remains shut at all times, understood?

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

I didn't open it.

Serena shuts the door.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DROP OFF - DAY

MRS. REINHORN (40) greets every child as they walk to school. A woman who not only likes her job but seems born to do it.

Mrs. Reinhorn opens Serena's car door. Charlotte hops out.

MRS. REINHORN

Hi there, Charlotte. Good morning.

SERENA

Be a good girl today, sweetie.

CHARLOTTE

'Kay.

Mrs. Reinhorn's smile drops as soon as Charlotte's inside the school. She dips her head down to Serena's window.

MRS. REINHORN

Mr. Margave has informed the staff of what's happened. How terrible.

Serena's face registers no emotion, impassive.

MRS. REINHORN (CONT'D)
I'll make sure no one gives her any trouble at recess. No questions asked.

SERENA
Thank you. That would mean a lot to me.

Soccer Mom NANCY (30s) waves and heads over to Serena's car.

NANCY
Serena? I'm saying it right? Serena Berkin?

SERENA
Yes.

NANCY
Hi, I'm Beth's mom, Nancy. Listen, The medicine Isaac prescribed has made Beth feel so much better. I can't get her off the field. Isaac's so good with kids. Will you give him my best?

Mrs. Reinhorn ushers Nancy away from Serena's car.

MRS. REINHORN
Sure, she will. When is Beth's next game? I'd like to see her play...

Serena drives away.

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

The GUNS of SHOOTERS fire nonstop.

Serena stares intimidated as a sharp-shooting HOUSEWIFE (40s) makes quick work of her target.

Serena's weak hand can't grip her semi-automatic pistol strong enough to rack back the slide. Her wrist splint makes it even more cumbersome.

A kindly RANGE OFFICER (late 60s) smiles at Serena, eyes crinkling to fine slits.

RANGE OFFICER
New shooter?

Embarrassment flushes Serena's face.

He demonstrates how to rack the slide on Serena's gun.

RANGE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Arthritis sucks at any age. Just remember it's all technique versus strength.

SERENA
I'll keep that in mind. Thank you.

Serena focuses on her paper target.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

She flinches with each shot despite goggles and earmuffs.

Any hits to the paper are outside the target area.

SERENA (CONT'D)
So when do I become Annie Oakley?

Range Officer chuckles and walks on down the line.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Serena totes the pistol in its lockbox. Same one from her closet at home. The lockbox is marked: ISAAC BERKIN.

Serena trudges back to her car, lost in thought.

A FLASH OF BLACK blows by her head.

A RAVEN feeds on discarded food in the parking lot.

Her cell RINGS. An unlisted number.

SERENA
Hello?

ISAAC (V.O.)
You didn't have to turn her against me. I never laid a hand on her.

Color drains from Serena's face. Her eyes scan the lot.

SERENA
This violates the restraining order, Isaac.

ISAAC (V.O.)
Just listen to me, dammit. This is bad. I could lose my job. Just have Charlotte tell the truth.

SERENA

We finally are getting to the truth. How does it feel to be so exposed?

ISAAC (V.O.)

I didn't do it. I think... I think something else did.

SERENA

You stay away from her or I swear to God I'll--

ISAAC (V.O.)

It'll be her birthday soon. She's growing up so fast.

SERENA

Where are you?

CLICK. Isaac ends the call.

Horrified, Serena jumps into her car.

INT./EXT. SERENA'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Serena speeds past a red street light.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Charlotte plays tag with a group of KIDS.

An UNSEEN POV behind a nearby tree watches her play.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DROP-OFF - MOMENTS LATER

Serena illegally parks and races for the --

PLAYGROUND

Serena clashes into the iron-link fence.

SERENA

Charlotte!

Serena doesn't see her. She runs in, scattering rocks right and left.

The playground is a sea of unknown children until Charlotte emerges out of a tube slide. Serena pulls her close.

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong?

Serena's eyes scout the perimeter but turn up with nothing out of the ordinary.

She stalks off the school grounds guarding Charlotte.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Charlotte sits impatiently nearby in the RECEPTION AREA.

AT HIS OFFICE

Officer Garrett's on the phone, stuck behind a desk overflowing with paperwork. He holds onto Serena's cell.

OFFICER GARRETT

(on the phone)

Yes, okay. Thank you.

Garrett hangs up. Serena sits across from him, impatient.

SERENA

It was him.

OFFICER GARRETT

Calling from an unlisted number.

There's nothing more we can do.

SERENA

I thought he was in jail.

OFFICER GARRETT

His mother posted bail.

SERENA

He was there at her school.

OFFICER GARRETT

The man's not that dumb. If he gets within a hundred yards of you or Charlotte it's back in the tank.

SERENA

Can the county monitor him? A tracer, anything?

OFFICER GARRETT
 Those are reserved for sex
 offenders, ones where a violation
 is the difference between life and
 death.

SERENA
 You don't think this is serious?

OFFICER GARRETT
 I never said that.

SERENA
 You don't know him like I do. He's
 not the person who everyone thinks
 he is. He's a fucking monster.

Her heated exchange draws the attention of other officers.

OFFICER GARRETT
 He may have called but it's
 speculation at best. I'm sorry.

Serena takes back her phone and turns to leave --

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
 Wait.

Garrett writes on a Post-It "629" and offers it to Serena.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
 You can reach me through my badge
 number. Give it to the receptionist
 the next time you need to call the
 station.

SERENA
 That your way of brushing me off?

OFFICER GARRETT
 I'm not passing the torch. You
 call, I'll respond.

Charlotte wanders up to Officer Garrett.

CHARLOTTE
 Do you have a doughnut?

SERENA
 Charlotte, I told you to wait.

CHARLOTTE
 My friend told me all police
 officers eat doughnuts.

OFFICER GARRETT
 Sorry, little lady, all I have are
 gluten-free rice crisps.

He shows off a framed PHOTO of his DAUGHTER (5) and blonde-haired WIFE (30s), a natural beauty.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
 Gotta stay in shape for my little
 girl. We all have someone we want
 to protect.

Serena begrudgingly takes the Post-It.

She leaves the station with Charlotte but not before
 Charlotte's grabbed a handful of rice crisps.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

As Serena pulls her car into the drive she runs over a glass
 bottle. The bottle CRUNCHES into pieces.

Charlotte gets out of the car and runs into the house.

SERENA
 Homework first, then TV!

Serena stoops to pick up the glass pieces.

She turns over the label. Demon's Head Whiskey.

Ted stands by the crossroads.

Serena notices him and yelps, startled. Bumps into her car.

TED
 Jumpy today, aren't we?

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER

Ted browses Serena's makeup portfolio as his plastered feet
 dry. Serena is already onto making a lifecast of Ted's hands.

Ted notes the years her past creations were made. As the
 years progress the number of creations thins out.

TED
 Very nice work you've done.

SERENA
 Thanks. I could really go crazy
 back then.

TED
They stop making as many monster
movies?

SERENA
Time got away from me.

Charlotte peeks into the garage.

CHARLOTTE
Mommy, can we play hide and seek?

SERENA
Charlotte, can't you see Mommy is
with a client?

TED
Hi, I'm Ted.

CHARLOTTE
Hi, Ted. Want to play hide and
seek?

SERENA
What did I just say?

CHARLOTTE
But I want to practice in case
Daddy comes.

Serena ignores Charlotte and pries the plaster mold off Ted's
feet. Ted leans forward, concerned.

TED
It may not be my place to ask but--

SERENA
Then don't.

Sharp KNOCKS on the front door break the awkward silence.

Charlotte runs away.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

Serena leaves Ted alone.

HALLWAY

The supply closet is wide open. Serena hisses inside.

SERENA

Charlotte, if you're in there, come out.

No answer. Exasperated, Serena shuts the door, making extra sure the latch is shut.

KITCHEN

More angry, fervid KNOCKS.

JEANIE (O.S.)

Serena, open this door!

Serena reluctantly opens the front door.

MRS. JEANIE BERKIN (60s) pushes her way in without so much as a hello. She circles the room like she owns the place.

JEANIE (CONT'D)

You plucked Charlotte out of daycare without telling me? What was I supposed to think happened?

Ted enters, struggling to put on his shoes.

TED

I better get going.

JEANIE

And now you're bringing strange men into the house?

TED

Pardon me, M'am.

Ted eagerly slips past and leaves out the door.

SERENA

He was only here for the makeup job I got.

JEANIE

I waited an hour thinking Charlotte had been kidnapped.

SERENA

Wouldn't have to look any further than where Isaac's staying.

JEANIE

You leave my son out of this. He's
a good man with a tarnished
reputation.

SERENA

Of course nobody's as biased as his
own mother.

JEANIE

I don't want a little girl living
in a workshop filled with dangerous
chemicals.

SERENA

She's not allowed in the garage.

Charlotte pops out from under the sink.

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Grandma! Come find me!

She scurries away, giggling.

JEANIE

There's bleach under the sink.

Jeanie shakes her head, dismayed.

SERENA

I explained everything to CPS.
Charlotte told them the truth.

JEANIE

He'd never--

SERENA

There's a bruise on her head,
Jeanie. At least someone was brave
enough to finally say something
about it.

JEANIE

I didn't come to hear you play
victim.

Jeanie marches to the bedroom.

MASTER BEDROOM

Jeanie heaps Isaac's clothes into a suitcase.

Serena leans against the wall, keeping watch.

Serena's eyes drift to the closet. On the top shelf, Isaac's lockbox peeks out.

Serena stealthily slides the closet door shut another inch.

Jeanie finishes with the clothes. She scans the room.

Jeanie's feet accidentally crunch the framed photo of Isaac, Serena and Charlotte still on the floor.

JEANIE

It's not too late to fix it all.
For her sake.

SERENA

I've been saving my earnings. I can
take care of Charlotte on my own.

JEANIE

A family needs a backbone or else
it'll stay broken.

SERENA

I think I should be the only one to
pick Charlotte up after school.

Jeanie carelessly drops the framed photo into the suitcase.

JEANIE

Because you know best? Why try so
hard now when you couldn't give a
damn before?

Jeanie stalks over to the closet. She nudges Serena and
slides the closet door open.

Jeanie grabs Isaac's black medical bag. She almost drops it
upon seeing Charlotte, tucked into the corner of the closet.

CHARLOTTE

You guys are supposed to come find
me.

Charlotte runs out of the room.

JEANIE

Poor girl. Doesn't realize her own
mother didn't want her.

Serena glares at Jeanie and leaves the room.

KITCHEN

Charlotte streaks into the kitchen. She looks back --
 And sees the supply closet door slowly close on its own.
 Serena steps out of the bedroom and grabs Charlotte, too
 stunned to move.

SERENA

Got you! Is the game where I'm the
 Venus fly trap and I eat tasty
 little flies?

Charlotte snaps back to attention and wriggles to be free.

CHARLOTTE

Butterfly! I'm a butterfly!

Serena lets her go. Charlotte dashes off --
 -- past Jeanie who scrutinizes the interaction.
 Charlotte shuts herself in her bedroom.

JEANIE

I'm leaving Charlotte's birthday
 presents here. She'll need
 something more than just hide and
 go seek to stave off boredom.

Jeanie sets the presents on the table. She crumbles a bit of
 plaster between her fingers.

JEANIE (CONT'D)

Table's dirty.

Jeanie leaves the mess behind and heads out the door.
 Serena angrily swipes the plaster bits off the kitchen table.
 Serena waits until Jeanie drives off her property. Once she's
 gone, Serena quickly returns to the master bedroom.

MASTER BEDROOM

She slides back the closet door. Relief washes over her. The
 lockbox is still there.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Serena wrenches open the thick demon mask mold -- CLUNK!

Serena cleans out the clay from the mold.

She pours foam latex into the negative.

The work on the mask done, Serena celebrates with a sip of wine and then shifts to sculpting the demon's hands and feet.

The time on her cell hits 3AM.

RING. An unlisted number is calling.

Serena answers, anger boiling.

SERENA

You fucking with me again, Isaac?

She waits for a response. Other line sounds completely dead.

SERENA (CONT'D)

You're wasting your time.

Serena hangs up.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Mommy?

Charlotte's in the doorway. She rubs tears from her eyes.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I had another nightmare.

Serena looks back at the unfinished demon hands and feet. She sighs and puts down her tools.

SERENA

Well, that won't do. A princess needs her beauty sleep. You want to sleep in my bed? Or are we too old for that now?

Charlotte shakes her head. Serena wipes clay off her hands.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Serena sleeps. Alone in her bed.

SOFT FOOTSTEPS patter around the room, then the CREAK of springs. Someone climbs onto the bed.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

(whispering)

She still worries a lot. Daddy got angry. You promised.

Serena stirs.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 How would you do that?
 (pause)
 I'm not supposed to go with
 strangers.
 (pause)
 No, you're hurting me. Go away. GO
 AWAY!

Serena jerks awake. Charlotte jumps off the night stand.
 Above the night stand is the small window, slightly ajar.

SERENA
 Who were you talking to?

CHARLOTTE
 Nobody.

Serena notices the time. Jumps out of bed.

SERENA
 I overslept. Give me ten minutes.

Serena darts into the bathroom.

Charlotte climbs the night stand and locks the window.

BATHROOM

Serena hastily showers. Lathers on the shampoo.

She rinses, runs her fingers through her hair --

-- and comes back with a handful of dark strands.

Serena sticks the loose hair on the shower wall.

She scrubs down with soap.

The mass of hair on the bathroom wall MORPHS -- shaped by
 splashes of water.

The clump twists and draws down into a FACE.

Serena stares at the image as water drips into her eyes.

The strands elongate down the wet tile and bleed into one
 another. Human-like features become something else familiar --

The face of the demon.

Serena wipes away the hair. It spirals down the drain.
 Her right hand radiates pain. She drops the soap.
 Serena kneels in the shower, massaging her palm.
 Water sprays her back.

HALLWAY

Serena's damp hair soaks the back of her second-hand shirt.
 Charlotte has her backpack for school. She wears a jacket.

CHARLOTTE
 I made us burritos we can eat in
 the car.

Charlotte has two burritos wrapped in foil. Serena,
 embarrassed, takes them from her daughter.

SERENA
 Thank you. Okay, let's go.

Serena ushers her towards the door. Charlotte puts on her
 backpack, ruffling her jacket

SERENA (CONT'D)
 You cold?

Charlotte nods her head. They exit.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 You cold?

Charlotte nods her head. They exit.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DROP OFF - DAY

Serena watches Charlotte go inside.

Ahead of Serena's car, Nancy is deep into serious gossip with
 another SOCCER MOM. They sneak looks at Serena.

Serena hides behind her sunglasses and drives away.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

The wind picks up. A CRACKED BRANCH hangs low off a tree. It
 SCRAPES the driver's side of Serena's car as she parks.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE

Serena breaks open the hands and feet cast. The foam latex has hardened into a perfect piece.

She drapes them over Ted's plaster hands and feet. The appendages transform into sharp pointy claws and talons.

Serena meticulously applies paint to the fresh latex.

GARAGE - LATER

Serena enjoys a steaming cup of coffee. She lets the heat warm her sore hand. Ignores the paint smear on the mug.

BING! Serena checks her laptop. She has a new email:

SENDER: I'm interested in placing an order for facial scars?

Serena responds:

SERENA: Great! Did you see the products on my website? I have many different scar appliances as well as painted silicone cuts and bruises.

Before Serena can take another sip of coffee --

BING!

SENDER: Actually I'm looking for a custom made piece.

SERENA

Cha-ching.

She types.

SERENA: Sounds good, prices vary. What type of appliance would you like me to make?

The emailer sends an attachment. Serena opens it --

Serena's computer screen fills with an IMAGE of HER FACE.

It's the photo she took of the battered and beaten makeup she made as practice on herself.

BING!

SENDER: As realistic as possible...

Serena SLAMS her laptop shut.

She hastily pulls out Officer Garrett's badge number and dials on her cell.

INT. POLICE STATION - GARRETT'S OFFICE - DAY

Officer Garrett picks up the phone. A POLICE RECEPTIONIST is on the other line.

OFFICER GARRETT

Hello?

POLICE RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Officer Garrett, I have Serena Berkin calling for you.

OFFICER GARRETT

Send it through.

(beat)

Serena? This is Officer Garrett.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE

INTERCUT.

SERENA

Isaac just sent me these horrible emails. He's stalking me.

OFFICER GARRETT

Calm down. When did you receive them?

SERENA

Just now. Send someone over.

OFFICER GARRETT

Isaac couldn't have sent them. He's locked up at the station. Has been for the last eight hours.

SERENA

I'm coming over.

Serena hangs up. She grabs her purse but pauses, her gaze fixed upon her workstation.

The demon hands and feet are missing. Nothing on the table but paint splatter.

Serena punches the garage opener. The garage door rolls up.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Serena freezes. KEY MARKS run down the length of her car.

Serena bends down to survey the damage. Deep grooves in the paint. Almost too sharp to have been a key...

The wind RUSTLES the branch on the other side. It brushes along the driver's side of the car.

SCREEETCH, SCREEETCH, SCREEETCH--!

Much too loud to be a branch.

Serena dashes around to the driver's side.

More scratch marks. Three to be exact -- matching the number of scrapes she heard seconds ago. Deliberate damage.

Serena flings open her car door and peels out of the drive.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Serena marches towards the holding tank. Garrett follows after her.

OFFICER GARRETT

Serena, stop!

Officer Garrett throws his weight into the tank door.

SERENA

Let me in.

OFFICER GARRETT

And what do you tell the judge when you're the one charged with violating the restraining order?

All attention is on Serena. She lowers her voice.

SERENA

Say it was an accident. I came to get your advice on something.

(imploring)

I have to speak with him.

OFFICER GARRETT

Sure you don't want your lawyer to instead?

SERENA

Two minutes.

OFFICER GARRETT

You got one. And on my watch. Don't know what you expect to get out of him. He got really wasted last night.

Officer Garrett opens the door for Serena.

INT. HOLDING TANK

Serena strides in. Garrett keeps watch by the door.

Isaac is locked up with a DRUNK CELLMATE. The Drunk Cellmate WOLF WHISTLES at Serena.

DRUNK CELLMATE

Cells are co-ed now, eh? Come here, baby. Help me sleep it off.

POW! Isaac knocks Drunk Cellmate flat on his back. Isaac rubs his throbbing head. He squints from a killer hangover.

SERENA

Is that supposed to impress me?

ISAAC

I should have treated you better.

SERENA

Stay away from me.

ISAAC

(re: jail)

Not much place else I can go.

SERENA

You can get Mitch or your mother to bail you out again.

ISAAC

The clinic hasn't returned my calls. They said they'd take everything into review. I've given them everything, I--

Isaac bows his head against the bars. Tries to keep it together.

SERENA

Did you key my car?

ISAAC
I'm not a vandal. I'm trying to do
right by my girls.

SERENA
You may have everyone else fooled
but I know what you're really like
so you can drop the act.

ISAAC
How's Charlotte?

SERENA
Leave her out of this.

ISAAC
I want us to be a family again.

SERENA
We never were a family.

ISAAC
Can't say I didn't try. He tricked
me. Before Charlotte, I--

SERENA
Who?

Isaac seizes Serena's hand. There's a bandaid on her finger.

ISAAC
(terrified)
How did you get this?

SERENA
I pricked it. Let me go!

Officer Garrett hurries over and shoves Isaac back.

OFFICER GARRETT
Time's up.

Garrett leads Serena out. Isaac pushes his face against the
cell bars and calls out after her.

ISAAC
Serena, don't make a deal with him!
Take Charlotte and get out of here!

SLAM! Door shuts after her.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Serena storms out. Officer Garrett trails behind. She vents some of her rage on the building's structure.

Serena squats on the steps, panting.

OFFICER GARRETT
I told you we had him locked up.
What were you hoping for?

Serena doesn't answer.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
I appreciate you calling. But at
some point you have to trust the
law is doing its job.

SERENA
So I can let it fail me like it has
so many others?

OFFICER GARRETT
But it's not going to happen to
you. Not on my watch.

Officer Garrett keeps his gaze fixed on Serena, unflinching to the point where it makes her uncomfortable.

SERENA
Must really want that promotion.

Serena trudges down the steps.

OFFICER GARRETT
Serena. Don't do anything you might
regret.

Serena's stoicism masks her face. Each step puts more distance between her and Officer Garrett.

EXT. LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Most houses are for lease along the dated street. Desperate to attract new blood.

INT. SERENA'S CAR - DAY

Serena sits in her car, drumming up courage.

She rummages in a shopping bag and digs out a GPS TRACKING DEVICE and MICRO VOICE ACTIVATED AUDIO RECORDER.

She breaks open their packaging.

EXT. MITCH'S SPLIT-LEVEL HOUSE - DAY

Serena sneaks across the overgrown front lawn.

She presses her back against the wooden gate. Scales over the gate into the --

BACKYARD

Serena's foot CRUNCHES an aluminum beer can. The yard is littered with them.

Serena looks through the house windows. Cheap venetian blinds obscure the interior.

She creeps along the back. One window is open. A flimsy mesh screen keeps the bugs out. Serena hesitates, doubting her resolve but she shakes it off and pops off the screen.

GRRR...

A LARGE BLACK DOG stalks up the yard, mere feet from Serena.

No collar but Serena's not worried about lost and found. She gulps at the canine's massive teeth.

She hugs the house, inches her way back.

BARK! The dog herds her back. Lips curl in a fierce snarl.

Serena's lips tremble but no words come out.

Propped up against the wall of the house is an unopened case of beer. Serena steps a foot on it.

The dog's GROWLS grow louder. Now or never. Serena turns her back on the dog. She pushes against the beer case. Scrabbles up the stucco.

The dog charges. Serena heaves her body through the window.

INT. MITCH'S SPLIT-LEVEL HOUSE - BATHROOM

Serena lands on a disgusting never-been-washed bathroom rug.

OUTSIDE, the dog BARKS, but can't follow.

LIVING ROOM

Sparse. Definitely a bachelor's pad. Deck of cards splayed on the coffee table. Pillow and blanket on the couch.

Seeing no one, Serena quickly goes to work.

She searches every drawer, every pile of paper but turns up nothing of interest.

She peels off sticky pads she's attached to the new micro audio recorder.

She sticks it underneath the coffee table. Her fingers graze an ENVELOPE taped to the bottom --

Mitch's truck pulls up the drive outside.

Serena panics. She abandons her search and runs back for the bathroom but Mitch is already at the door, keys JANGLING.

Serena dashes back and hides behind a coat rack designed to look like a crossroads. Many coats hang on it, obscuring Serena from view.

FOOTSTEPS on the wood as Mitch shuffles in, wearing lived in scrubs from work.

Serena tries to stay calm as her heart pounds.

Mitch breathes in deep. He smirks.

MITCH (O.S.)
Find what you're looking for?

The micro audio recorder ACTIVATES upon hearing someone talk.

Mitch saunters to the kitchen. He grabs a beer and slurps it down. Biding his time.

Serena emerges from behind the coat rack. Stands sheepishly in Mitch's living room.

MITCH (CONT'D)
You always wore the cheapest perfume.

SERENA
Where were you last night? And today?

MITCH
Working. Had an overflow of snot-nosed kids with the flu.
(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

You should really invest in good health care. Never know when you'll need it.

SERENA

You should've been watching Isaac. He's been sneaking around my house.

MITCH

So you thought you'd do the same?

SERENA

You let him roam free.

MITCH

He's not an animal. He's a fucking human being. And my friend.

SERENA

Some friend. I could tell him about you. What you tried to do. You don't owe him anything. If you have any proof he violated his restraining order--

MITCH

You'd be forever grateful, is that it?

Mitch presses in closer towards Serena.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What makes you so high and mighty? You think you don't make mistakes?

Serena backs into a wall. Mitch has her pinned. Hot breath on her cheek. Serena is the first to tear her eyes away.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I can think of one. We could pick up back where we started.

SERENA

At zero?

MITCH

I know why you didn't want to pop out a kid for Isaac.

SERENA

You're delusional, Mitch.

MITCH

Don't hold out on me. It doesn't
have to be just those fucking masks
you spend time with.

Mitch kisses Serena. His lips meet Serena's teeth.

Mitch backs away. He presses his fingers over his bloody
lower lip.

SERENA

Touch me again, asshole and there
will be people a lot worse than me
coming into your house.

MITCH

Fucking cunt. What the hell's wrong
with you?

SERENA

Tell Isaac to stay away.

MITCH

He won't listen. Not when you're
involved. What's a man to do about
that?

Mitch opens the door, gestures for her to leave.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Now get the fuck out of my house
before I call the cops on your ass
for trespassing.

EXT. MITCH'S SPLIT-LEVEL HOUSE - DAY

Serena exits, head held high. She glances at the gate.

SERENA

I didn't know you had a dog.

MITCH

I don't. Except for the bitch on my
doorstep.

Mitch slams the door in Serena's face.

Serena passes Mitch's truck. Reaches up to scratch her head --
-- and drops the GPS device into Mitch's truckbed. The device
lands with a soft plop on a dirty grease rag.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DROP OFF - DAY

Serena parks her car at the end of the drop off.

INT. SERENA'S CAR - DAY

Serena configures the tracking app on her phone.

An alarm is set to go off when the GPS device gets within a hundred yards of her house.

Mrs. Reinhorn pales at the sight of Serena.

MRS. REINHORN
Serena. We already called
Charlotte's grandmother to take her
home.

SERENA
No, I should have been notified.
Where's Charlotte?

Mrs. Reinhorn winces.

MRS. REINHORN
Nurse's office.

SERENA
(alarmed)
What?

MRS. REINHORN
I'm sorry, they should have called
you too!

Serena runs into the school.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Jeanie steps out of the nurse's office, in deep conversation with PRINCIPAL MARGAVE (50s).

Serena gets in between them.

SERENA
We established this. I'm the only
one now who picks Charlotte up.

JEANIE
I'm all the poor kid has left to
defend against you!

Charlotte walks out of the nurse's office, unresponsive.
A BRUISE purples her forearm -- as if someone grabbed her.
Serena is caught off-guard, mind-reeling.

SERENA
She must have gotten it in the
playground.

Serena ignores the dubious looks and kneels by Charlotte.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Honey, did you fall?

JEANIE
Mrs. Walters noticed it before
recess. You can't deny it, Serena.

SERENA
Maybe she was bullied. You think I
would do this to my own daughter?

PRINCIPAL MARGAVE
Charlotte?

Charlotte looks at Serena, dazed.

CHARLOTTE
I fell out of bed.

Serena withholds her questions and plays along.

SERENA
She did. She had a nightmare.

JEANIE
Look at her, she's traumatized.
Tomorrow I file for guardianship
and custody for my poor grandbaby.
She's suffered enough. Come on,
Charlotte.

Charlotte shies away from Jeanie.

CHARLOTTE
No, I want to go with Mommy!

PRINCIPAL MARGAVE
Jeanie, please, I don't want to
cause a scene.

Serena picks Charlotte up. Charlotte drapes her arm over
Serena's back.

Jeanie sees the bruise again. Fresh tears well in her eyes as her loathing for her daughter-in-law grows.

JEANIE

You've ruined my son's life. I
won't let you ruin hers.

Jeanie charges off down the hall.

Serena rubs Charlotte's back, brow furrowed with worry.

INT./EXT. SERENA'S CAR - DAY

Serena parks. SOMETHING lays on the porch.

SERENA

Wait here.

Serena gets out of her car and cautiously picks her way over.

The DEMON HANDS and FEET are neatly arranged side by side.

Next to them is an unopened bottle of Demon's Head Whiskey.

Serena pitches the bottle off her property.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Serena mixes different flesh colored concealers together. She dabs them on Charlotte's bruise using a makeup sponge.

Charlotte sits on the toilet lid in her nightgown.

SERENA

It'll take a while to disappear
completely but in the meantime...

She has to use another dab to cover the whole bruise.
Charlotte remains unresponsive. Serena's face darkens.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What happened? Was it a kid at
school?

CHARLOTTE

No.

SERENA

A teacher?

CHARLOTTE

No.

SERENA

Grandma?

Charlotte shakes her head.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Who then? Charlotte, I can't help you if you don't tell me.

CHARLOTTE

This morning.

SERENA

You didn't fall out of bed. I was there. Why did you lie?

No response from Charlotte. Serena's voice becomes strained.

SERENA (CONT'D)

This is bad, baby. They blame me. They think I did this to you--

CHARLOTTE

Maybe I should live with Grandma.

Serena tries to hide her hurt.

SERENA

You want that?

CHARLOTTE

Will it be safer?

SERENA

He can't get you anymore. I'm here, baby. I'm not going anywhere.

CHARLOTTE

That's what I'm scared of.

Charlotte starts crying.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Do you love me?

Serena balks at Charlotte's simple question.

SERENA

Did Grandma say something? Because Grandma hates Mommy and wants to take you away just because she--

CHARLOTTE

Then why don't you ever say it?

SERENA
Sometimes people say the word a lot
and they don't mean it.

CHARLOTTE
Then mean it, say it!

SERENA
I love you.

Charlotte dissolves back into tears.

CHARLOTTE
He said you didn't.

SERENA
Isaac said that?

CHARLOTTE
He was by my window.

SERENA
Oh God...

Serena hugs Charlotte. Stares hard into her daughter's eyes.

SERENA (CONT'D)
I promise you. We are going to get
through this. I won't let him get
you. All right?

Charlotte smiles, small and sad. But hopeful.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Serena marches outside. She gets in her --

CAR

And cries. Sobs for no one to hear but herself.

Serena quiets down. She wipes away the tears --

-- and retrieves Isaac's lockbox underneath the passenger
seat. She opens it with a key around her neck.

Her fingers brush over the cold metal of his gun.

Serena shuts the box and hugs it close to her chest.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DROP-OFF - DAY

Serena drops Charlotte off. Rolls down the passenger window.

SERENA
Have a good day, sweetie.

CHARLOTTE
Thanks, Mom.

Charlotte heads inside. Serena flags down Mrs. Reinhorn.

MRS. REINHORN
Serena, hi, I'm sorry--

SERENA
Mr. Margave knows not to let my
mother-in-law take Charlotte. I
will sue the school if that
happens, is that clear?

MRS. REINHORN
Yes, m'am.

Mrs. Reinhorn opens her mouth to say something more but
Serena's stern demeanor stops her cold.

Serena drives off.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The location is abuzz with crew gearing up for Edwin's film.
Day one of shooting.

Serena totes her kit across the bumpy earth, her arms laden
with makeup tubs.

INT. TRAILER

Serena unloads prosthetics and delicately lays them out.

Ted sits at a makeup vanity with half its lights burnt out.

SERENA
Excited for the big day?

TED
I stayed up all night practicing.

SERENA
Yeah? I stayed up all night
painting.

Serena opens up a makeup tub. Pulls back some wrapping.

A fully-painted demon stares back at her.

The mask matches the drawing Serena drew but now in living color. It's a perfect, custom-made interpretation of Beynael.

Ted shivers, a ball of nervous excitement.

TED

Gives me goosebumps.

Crew Members Landon and an ENERGETIC GIRL (early 20s) approach Serena. The girl beams, happy to be on set.

ENERGETIC GIRL

Do you need any help?

SERENA

Yeah, if you could hand me the plasticizer over there I'm ready to apply the Prosaide transfer.

Energetic Girl's surprised expression says it all.

SERENA (CONT'D)

You guys have no experience with special effects makeup, do you?

LANDON

Does it matter? PAs do everything on set.

ENERGETIC GIRL

I apply makeup to my face?

Serena reigns in her exasperation.

Edwin bounds into the trailer. He admires the prosthetics.

EDWIN

Yes. Holy shit, yes! I knew I hired the right girl for the job.

Serena basks in the compliment, as if a heavy burden's been lifted off her shoulders.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

We're just running a bit behind schedule.

SERENA

How much?

EDWIN

Two hours.

Serena's eyebrows raise up. *Really?*

SERENA

Well, at least it gives me a big enough window for application.

EDWIN

That's the spirit.

(to Crew)

Take note.

Edwin's walkie-talkie CRACKLES.

WALKIE-TALKIE VOICE (V.O.)

Edwin.

EDWIN

Let's make a monster, people.

He claps Serena on the shoulder and dashes out.

Landon toys with a loaded airbrush. It spurts out paint. Serena glares at him. He shrugs.

LANDON

Sorry.

Serena leans Ted back in the makeup chair.

SERENA

Relax. This is going to take a while.

Ted reacts to every little brush stroke and spritz as Serena and her crew make movie magic happen.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Serena lays the demon cowl over Ted's skull-capped head.

-- Demon feet are laid down on top of the actor's own feet.

-- Piercing claws replace the actor's nimble digits.

-- Ted closes his eyes and drifts off.

-- More face prosthetics on Ted. The slow transformation from man to demon.

Minutes tick into --

HOURS LATER

Serena and Crew glue a jaw prosthetic to Ted.

Ted SNORTS in his sleep. Energetic Girl suppresses a laugh.

Serena eyes the clock. Instructs Landon and Energetic Girl.

SERENA

Make sure the edges are smooth. I
need to make a phone call.

Serena steps out.

Ted's eyes roam underneath his eyelids. Deep in REM cycle.

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS

Serena wanders away from the trailer, on her cell.

SERENA

She doing okay? I'm sorry, the
shoot is running long and I know
you're in charge of carpool.

(pause)

Thanks for looking after her. I'll
try to make it back in time.

Serena hangs up. She flexes her aching right hand.

A BLACK CAT emerges from the woods. Sits and cleans itself.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Hey, Kitty. What are you doing so
far from home? You live out here?

Serena reaches to pet it.

The Cat HISSES, swipes at Serena's hand and dashes off.

SERENA (CONT'D)

You're not the only one who wants a
piece of me. Get in line.

Serena sighs and heads back.

INT. TRAILER

Landon and Energetic Girl's walkie-talkies BUZZ.

WALKIE-TALKIE VOICE (V.O.)

All crew on set.

They examine their work on Ted. Some of the prosthetic edges are still a little rough or curling up.

LANDON

Guess that will have to do.

They leave the trailer.

Ted shifts uncomfortably in his sleep. His eyes roam faster under his lids. Left, right, left-right, leftrightleft --

Serena comes back in to inspect her crew's work on Ted.

The prosthetic edges have seamlessly bonded to Ted's face.

His visage is full demon -- all paint applied.

Serena marvels at the sudden skill of her amateur crew.

SERENA

Wow, they did a really good job.

Serena applies a few more touch ups to Ted's face.

Ted twitches as Serena flecks his cheek with paint splatter.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Did I wake you?

Ted's eyes remain closed as he turns his face towards her.

TED

No...

His voice has taken on an uncharacteristically RASPY, DEEP TONE. He takes in a deep breath.

TED (CONT'D)

I've been awake for some time now.

She assumes he's getting into character. She humors him.

SERENA

And with whom am I speaking?

TED

Beynael.

SERENA

You aren't afraid of saying the name anymore.

TED

It is my name.

SERENA
Of course, that's right.

Serena smiles. Does more touch-ups on Ted's face.

SERENA (CONT'D)
What brings you to LA, Beynael?

TED
Business. Someone required my assistance.

SERENA
He must be real brave to deal with the likes of you.

TED
Not a man.

SERENA
That's what the script says.

Ted chuckles. Deep and rumbling.

TED
Would you trade a soul for a new life?

SERENA
Think I'll take a vacation instead. Or curl up with a good book.

TED
Would you do it to save someone else?

SERENA
I couldn't handle it on my own? I don't want a demon as my first line of defense.

TED
Would it be your last?

Serena scoffs, a little confused by Ted's ramblings.

SERENA
I don't need to add a demon to my life. It's crazy enough as it is.

TED
I wouldn't be here if someone hadn't already asked, Serena. If we hadn't made a contract.

SERENA

Damn. You're pretty creepy, Ted.
Props to that.

Ted takes a low, long breath. Serena opens the contact case.

Two RED DEMONIC CONTACTS float in the solution.

Serena tilts Ted's chin up. Her hand reaches to grasp Ted's eyelids, contact on the tip of her finger.

Ted's eyes spring open.

They burn with the same red demonic color as the contacts.

Serena stumbles back. The contact lenses drop to the floor.

Ted chuckles maniacally. His demonic eyes bore into Serena.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What's going on?

SMOKE rises off his face. Chuckles give way to SHOUTS --

Shouts of excruciating pain.

Ted's eyes clamp shut as the demon mask MELTS onto his skin.

These are Ted's screams, helpless and tortured.

Latex BLISTERS on his cheeks, hairline and mouth with an acidic HISS. Ted's normal eyes stream with tears.

TED

It hurts!

Serena hurries over and pulls at the mask, prying pieces off.

PUSTULES and HIVES have broken out all over Ted's skin.

Ted tears off other demon appliances stuck on his body.

The amateur crew and Edwin rush in. They stand aghast.

Ted collapses.

EXT. TRAILER

Energetic Girl speeds out of the woods in her car with Ted reclined in the passenger seat, shivering.

Serena rounds on Edwin.

SERENA

He needs an ambulance.

EDWIN

We can't even afford one of those
for my shoot. What the fuck was
that back there?

SERENA

I don't know.

EDWIN

You didn't bother to ask the actor
if he had an allergic reaction to
latex that's what. I'm dealing with
a fucking amateur.

SERENA

It was more than that.

EDWIN

This could kill the whole project.
You're off.

Serena's attitude immediately switches. Suddenly vulnerable.

SERENA

No, please. You have to keep me on.
You need me.

EDWIN

DP said he knows a makeup artist.

SERENA

What would the city say about this
shoot? Filming without a permit.
Going overtime with minors? You can
only cut so many corners until
you're boxed in.

EDWIN

You threaten me and I'll make sure
you never work in this town again.

SERENA

(lying)

My husband is a reporter. He's very
well respected in the community.

Edwin glares at her like an animal trapped in a cage.

SERENA (CONT'D)

I just want to work. I signed a
contract.

EDWIN

Ted's back on set in two days.

SERENA

Two days?

EDWIN

He can rest up 'til then. You worry about making me another demon.

SERENA

I can cast it in silicone. Ted shouldn't have an allergic reaction to that.

EDWIN

Fine, whatever. Just make it happen!

SERENA

One more thing.

EDWIN

Christ, what is it?

SERENA

Where did you get the Hoodoo Mask from?

EDWIN

I told you. It's from the remnant of all these rituals made at crossroads--

SERENA

Did you buy it from somewhere?

EDWIN

I sent Landon looking for one. I think he found it at a consignment shop in Valencia.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Serena drives at a brisk clip.

INT. SERENA'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

The makeup tubs rest in the backseat.

Serena's mind replays the terrible day over and over.

SERENA
 Contract. Hadn't already made a
 contract?

The demon mask leers at her from the backseat. It's mangled
 face is pinned to a foam head.

Serena averts her eyes. She exits the highway.

EXT. VALENCIA CONSIGNMENT SHOP - DAY

A quaint little store. Serena speeds into the tiny lot and
 hops out.

INT. VALENCIA CONSIGNMENT SHOP - DAY

A BELL JINGLES Serena's entrance.

An old SHOP KEEPER (70) wearing thick bifocals examines a
 music box through a magnifying glass.

She glances at Serena, whose face is clammy from her rush.

SHOP KEEPER
 Poor dear, you're practically
 melting. We have antique fans for
 sale if you're interested.

SERENA
 Actually, I'm inquiring about a
 mask.

SHOP KEEPER
 Venetian?

SERENA
 Hoodoo. Made from wax and a lot of
 other stuff.

SHOP KEEPER
 Ugly thing. Housekeeper was eager
 to get rid of it.

SERENA
 Please. I need to know everything
 about that mask.

SHOP KEEPER
 She said it had cursed her
 employer's son. History buff. He
 found it in Louisiana while
 interning there.
 (MORE)

SHOP KEEPER (CONT'D)

Had plans of going to grad school when suddenly his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

SERENA

What happened to them?

SHOP KEEPER

His mother went out for a walk and was found a week later in the woods. Terminal dehydration.

SERENA

And the son?

SHOP KEEPER

Starts up his second semester at UCLA this year.

SERENA

Can I have their names? Them or the housekeeper.

SHOP KEEPER

Sorry, that's private. And I've long since sold the mask. Marvel I did. Had blood crusted in the lips. Truly, an ugly thing.

Serena processes the info. Realization dawns on her.

SERENA

That's how they make the deal...

SHOP KEEPER

I wouldn't take much stock in this "curse". It's a senseless, cruel world, so we distract ourselves with the things in it.

Shop Keeper examines the music box with her magnifying glass.

SERENA

But I'm sure even you would be able to tell an antique from a knockoff.

The Shop Keeper knowingly nods and polishes her bifocals.

SHOP KEEPER

My shop's the best in Valencia. And to think they were going to tear it down and put in a condominium. People have been coming to me for years. I have a keen eye.

The Shop Keeper leers at Serena. Her eyes tinge with RED.

SHOP KEEPER (CONT'D)
Word of mouth travels fast. It's
been a very prosperous year so far.

Serena backs away towards the door.

The Shop Keeper dons her glasses. Any trace of malice is gone. She smiles warmly at Serena.

SHOP KEEPER (CONT'D)
Were you thinking of bringing
something in?

Serena smacks into the door. It JINGLES as she rushes out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Serena drives back the way she came.

INT. SERENA'S CAR (MOVING)

Serena's worry eats at her. She peels back the bandaid on her thumb. Stares down her old cut when she was sculpting.

Serena checks the time. 3pm.

SERENA
Shit.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DROP OFF - DAY

Mrs. Reinhorn waits with Charlotte. She's the last kid to be picked up. Serena drives up.

MRS. REINHORN
The school was about to call. I
told them I didn't mind waiting.

Serena hugs Charlotte longer than normal.

SERENA
I'm sorry, honey.

CHARLOTTE
It's okay.

Charlotte gets into the car.

MRS. REINHORN
 Jeanie came by. I didn't let her
 talk to Charlotte.

SERENA
 She wants custody. I don't know
 what's going to happen, I--

MRS. REINHORN
 Don't let that woman walk all over
 you. You have to be strong. For the
 both of you. You're Charlotte's
 mother. Not mother of the year but
 no one's perfect.

SERENA
 What kind of mother am I?

MRS. REINHORN
 A good one.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Serena throws the mutilated latex demon mask into a vat of
 GELATIN and amps up the heat.

SERENA
 If you think I agreed to anything,
 consider our contract null and
 void.

The mask melts and liquefies, blending in with the hot,
 gelatinous goo.

Serena searches everywhere on her cluttered workshop table.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 Where did the Hoodoo mask go?

Serena gives up and switches focus to creating a new demon
 mask.

She mixes and pours silicone into the old demon negative.
 Pours new demon hands and feet as well.

Serena catches Charlotte about to dump over the demon
 negative with the wet silicone still in it.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 Stop, what are you--?

CHARLOTTE
 You need to destroy all of it.

SERENA

This is my work, honey. I can't
take care of you if I don't make
any money.

Charlotte reaches for the negative again. Serena grabs her
little arm and pulls her away.

Charlotte cries out. Serena immediately release her.

CHARLOTTE

You're wrong!

Charlotte retreats back into the house.

SERENA

I took care of it.

Serena calm downs and goes back to work.

She fails to notice the TEMPERATURE RISING on the vat.

Hot goo BUBBLES and SPITS.

The vat leaks from a hole in the bottom onto the table.

A trail of gelatin creeps towards Serena's phone.

INT. MITCH'S SPLIT-LEVEL HOUSE - NIGHT

A SCREAM of rage. A bottle of beer SHATTERS against the wall.

Isaac paces back and forth like a caged animal.

MITCH

C'mon man. They had to follow
protocol. The board has an image to
keep. I know that's bullshit, but--

Isaac lunges for the door. Mitch stops him from opening it.

ISAAC

I don't care about that anymore. I
have to see them.

MITCH

They don't wanna see you.

Isaac moans, seeks solace in another beer. He rummages under
the coffee table and retrieves the envelope hidden there.

The envelope contains PHOTOS of Charlotte on the playground.
He pours over them.

ISAAC
Did you get the footage?

MITCH
Last night those pictures were all
over the damn table. I'm not going
to jail for this.

ISAAC
Did you get it?!

Mitch reluctantly sets a digital camera on the coffee table.

Isaac pushes a button.

FOOTAGE plays in the camera's viewfinder.

Isaac's agitation subsides. Mitch watches over his shoulder.

*Charlotte's on the playground, being chased in a game of tag.
Breathless and happy.*

Charlotte stops running. Stares directly at the camera.

MITCH (O.S.)
(on camera, muttering)
Shit.

Footage abruptly cuts to Charlotte from a different angle.

Charlotte swings on the playground's swing set.

*Charlotte stops swinging. She seems to be listening to
someone. HAPPY CHILDREN playing dominates the audio.*

Charlotte nods her head "yes".

Camera ZOOMS IN.

Charlotte sits on the swing when an UNSEEN FORCE PUSHES HER.

*Gentle at first. Then harder. Charlotte swings back and forth
in her seat without using her body.*

*Higher and higher she goes until Charlotte LEAPS out of her
seat.*

She skids to the ground. Runs for Mrs. Reinhorn.

The empty swing SWAYS, lifeless.

MITCH (CONT'D)
How'd she do that?

Footage ends. Isaac fumbles to eject the card from the camera.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

Isaac crams the card in his pocket.

Mitch peeks through the peephole. He reluctantly lets Jeanie in. She lugs a big tote.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Mrs. Berkin, what are you doing here? It's late.

JEANIE

I'm sorry, Mitch. I had to check in. You've been so gracious to let Isaac stay here while my house is being fumigated. Don't think I'll forget it.

Jeanie hugs her son.

JEANIE (CONT'D)

How you holding up? I met with an attorney today. He'd like to speak with you. If all goes well, they'll let Charlotte stay with me versus a foster family.

Jeanie hands Isaac a folder from her tote. It contains pictures she took of Charlotte's new bruise.

ISAAC

When did this happen?

JEANIE

(voice quivering)

Yesterday. CPS just got a warrant to enter the house. No child should grow up in fear of abuse. She'll be living with us before the end of the month if we can just get your case dropped. Mitch told me what happened. I'm sorry I forgot to give this to you sooner.

Jeanie pulls out Isaac's black medical bag from her tote.

Isaac quiets. A silent fury kept just under the surface.

ISAAC

If Mitch told you what happened then you'd know I won't be needing this anymore.

JEANIE

Oh, honey. Those doctors will hire you back. No one really believes you're at fault.

MITCH

There's even been a few protests at the clinic. You've got fans.

JEANIE

The one good thing I've heard all day. Love you.

Jeanie kisses Isaac on the cheek and hugs him.

ISAAC

Love you too, Mom.

JEANIE

I must be off. Lots to do but don't worry. I'll get your daughter out of the hands of that monster.

She leaves. Isaac reverts back to his sullen self. Studies the picture of Charlotte's bruise.

ISAAC

Serena can't protect Charlotte. She let her get hurt.

MITCH

She could've gotten that falling on the playground. She's fine. Kids bounce back, like rubber. Don't let that bitch Serena get under your skin; she'll tear you apart.

Mitch's cell BINGS with a text. He checks his phone.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Shit! Fucking newb switched up a patient's file. Stay here until I get back. Or no more videos.

Mitch leaves.

Isaac slings his medical bag into the corner of the room.

Isaac opens a bottle of Demon Head whiskey. He sits looking over Charlotte's picture. His finger brushes her cheek.

A DEMONIC VOICE wafts through the air, soft yet resolute.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Before you know it, she'll be full
 grown. Just like her mother.

Isaac bolts up, almost knocking over the coffee table. His eyes dart wild about the room.

The coat rack that looks like a crossroads is cast in shadows in the corner. A long black coat and hat hang off it.

ISAAC
 Where are you?

Isaac takes an empty beer bottle and SMASHES it against the wall, ready for a fight.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Charlotte's lost some of her
 innocence now so we have to act
 fast and close on a deal that's
 been nine years in the making.

The coat on the rack fills up from the inside. Sleeves puff into shape as if an arm slipped into them. The coat's fullness ebbs in and out like it was alive and breathing.

ISAAC
 Leave her out of this.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Why? I helped bring her into this
 world.

ISAAC
 No, you didn't. You tricked me.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Serena tricked you. Had you believe
 you two were infertile. I just
 opened your eyes to the truth.
 Serena's the one who cost you your
 soul.

ISAAC
 Please, leave us alone.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 You want that filthy bitch to keep
 poisoning Charlotte?
 (MORE)

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Turning her against you. Calling
 you a liar, a criminal, a dog.
 Cutting you out. Abandoning you.
 After all that you've done?!

Isaac weeps.

ISAAC
 I'll do anything. Another deal. I
 just want my family back.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 You will. Through me.

The hat on the rack tilts down over the coat.

DEMONIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Because I want your family too.

The figure of an intangible MAN IN BLACK inhabits the coat.
 The hat on top of his head masks his features.

Isaac races for the door. He fingers grasp the knob --

But he's suddenly thrown backwards by an invisible force.

He lands hard on the carpet. In front of him is his open
 medical bag.

The Hoodoo mask peeks out of the bag.

The SHADOWS cast by the crossroads coat rack widen and spread
 out. They slink along the walls and carpet towards Isaac.

Tears spill from Isaac's eyes.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Serena airbrushes GLOW-IN-THE-DARK PAINT on a beautiful
 BUTTERFLY MASK.

She jots down a message on a scrap piece of paper from the
 folder Edwin gave her: HAPPY 9TH BIRTHDAY, CHARLOTTE!

A sketch juts out as she closes the folder. A sketch of a
 dark figure at a crossroads with notations in the margins.

Serena reads a notation: NO GAIN WITHOUT SACRIFICE.

BING! A kitchen timer goes off. She silences it.

Serena pries open a silicon mold. It's formed a better, more
 realistic version of the demon mask.

Serena lays the new mask on Ted's plaster bust and applies flesh tone. Her paint brushes over all the creases and folds.

MINUTES LATER

Serena flicks a brush to splatter more color onto the mask, adding another layer of realism.

The demon's nearly finished now.

She sets the kitchen timer for an hour.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Serena totes clean laundry. She peeks in the kitchen --

KITCHEN

Charlotte decorates paper crafts at the kitchen table.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - DAY

Serena loads Charlotte's tiny dresser with clean clothes.

The easel and the paper pad are knocked over on the floor.

Serena uprights the easel and pad.

The pad shows the same picture of the three of them. Happy Isaac. Sad Serena and Charlotte.

Serena flips the page over.

A drawing of just Serena and Charlotte. Both are smiling.

Charlotte's drawn herself as a princess wearing a butterfly mask and wings. Full of color.

Serena smiles.

Serena flips another page over. It's a finger-painting of a big green tree, made with Charlotte's thumbprints.

One "leaf" stands apart from the others. It's a dull brownish-red. Dried blood.

The dried blood has left a trail down the tree trunk. Charlotte's name is signed at the bottom.

DING-DONG. KNOCKS on the door. Serena abandons the easel.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

DING-DONG. More KNOCKS on the door.

Charlotte reaches for the door knob.

SERENA

Don't open the door for strangers.

Serena cautiously cracks the door open.

DENISE TALBERT (50) is all business, dressed in a CPS case worker uniform.

Officer Garrett stands behind her, apologetic.

DENISE

Serena Berkin?

SERENA

Yes, can I help you?

DENISE

I'm Denise Talbert. I'm with child protective services. I have a warrant to come in and ask you and your daughter some questions.

Denise shows Serena the warrant.

Serena ducks her head out of sight of Denise. She steels herself before letting Denise and Officer Garrett in.

OFFICER GARRETT

We don't want you to worry--

SERENA

(to Denise)

Did Isaac's mother call you?
Charlotte won't be safe with her.

DENISE

I'm not here because of Jeanie. I'm here for Charlotte and her well-being.

OFFICER GARRETT

It'll only take a few minutes.

BRIIIING! The timer goes off in the garage.

SERENA

The paint is done curing. Excuse me, I'll be right back. Charlotte, can you come with me, please?

CHARLOTTE

You said I shouldn't go into the garage.

SERENA

I know I said that but this time is different.

(to Denise and Garrett)

I just don't like leaving her alone with strangers.

Serena gently places a hand on Charlotte's shoulder.

CHARLOTTE

I don't want to go in there.

Charlotte shrugs off Serena's hand and drizzles glue on her paper craft.

SERENA

Charlotte--

CHARLOTTE

No!

Denise CLICKS her pen on. She makes a note on her clipboard.

Serena gives up.

SERENA

Okay, honey, I'll be right back. You don't have to answer any questions if you don't want to. I just have to turn off the timer.

Serena dashes off to the garage.

GARAGE

Serena closes the door behind her. Turns off the timer. Back and forth she paces, racking her brain for what to do when --

BAM! On the garage door.

TED (O.S.)

Serena!

SERENA

Ted?

Serena pushes the garage button and the door revolves up.

Ted staggers in, face covered in bandages. Blisters and burns peek around the edges of gauze.

Serena motions for quiet.

SERENA (CONT'D)

You can't be here right now. What are you doing out? You should be in the hospital.

TED

I had to see you.

Serena lets him catch his breath. Ted hits the button on the garage door. It rolls back down.

TED (CONT'D)

Why'd you take this job?

SERENA

Money.

TED

That can't be all. What did you agree to?

SERENA

Edwin had me sign a contract--

TED

Not Edwin! What did you promise the demon?

SERENA

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

Ted squints hard at her.

TED

Yes, you do.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Denise walks around the kitchen. She opens the fridge. Not much food in it.

A cabinet reveals Serena's ample supply of wine. She makes a note on her clipboard.

Denise smiles at Charlotte, overly saccharine.

DENISE

Charlotte, honey, do you have enough to eat?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah.

DENISE

You've never felt hungry?

CHARLOTTE

Sometimes at school I trade Margaret my string cheese for her chips.

Charlotte douses her paper in BLACK GLITTER.

DENISE

Does your Mommy give you a lot of toys to play with?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. But she still hasn't made me a butterfly mask.

Charlotte dumps the excess glitter into a tray.

Glitter falls off the paper revealing Charlotte's drawing --
-- of a Man in Black.

The tiny figure stands in the middle of a crude rendition of a crossroads.

DENISE

Oh, that's nice. Friend of yours?

Charlotte shakes her head. She dusts her glittery hands.

CHARLOTTE

Let's play hide and seek.

DENISE

I'd like to ask you some questions, first.

CHARLOTTE

Close your eyes and count to a hundred.

DENISE
Does your mother leave you alone in
the house?

Charlotte jumps out of her chair.

DENISE (CONT'D)
I really don't think we should play
games now.

CHARLOTTE
But I have to hide.

Charlotte runs down the hall. Denise drops her sweet facade.

DENISE
(under her breath)
I fucking hate hide and go seek.

Denise jots some notes down on her clipboard.

INT. GARAGE

TED
You seen something. You feel him.

SERENA
I... If a problem comes, I'm ready
to take care of it.

TED
Take care of it, how?

SERENA
I've been going down to the range--

TED
No, no, no. Violence begets
violence. We have to do it
traditional. Do it right. We can
get a priest here tomorrow morning.
Until then--

Ted pulls small VIALS from his pocket.

TED (CONT'D)
My Mom gave me some Holy Water
before I made the move out here.

Ted flits around the garage sprinkling HOLY WATER.

SERENA
What's water going to do?

TED
 You're scared, Serena. I can see it
 in your eyes. You heard his voice.
 I heard it too. Before he took me.

SERENA
 It's a stupid myth. There is no Man
 at the Crossroads. The demon
 Beynael doesn't--

TED
 Don't say his name!

Ted throws away an empty vial. It CRACKS on the cement floor.
 Ted is suddenly very alert. His eyes widen.

TED (CONT'D)
 He's here.

Ted jerks his head towards Serena's workshop table.
 The silicone demon mask fixes him with a cold, vacant stare.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Denise closes the door to Charlotte's room. No luck in there.
 Denise's hunt leads to her to the Master Bedroom.

MASTER BEDROOM

Denise checks under the bed. Empty.

DENISE
 You're really good at this,
 Charlotte. It's time to come out
 now.

There's MOVEMENT amongst the clothes hanging in the closet.

Denise timidly nudges aside the clothes. Comes up with
 nothing. She finds the disturbance is actually from --

A BREEZE. Wafting in from the open window above the bed.

BACK IN THE HALLWAY

Denise notices Charlotte's left behind a trail of glitter.

Denise follows the black glitter to --

The SUPPLY CLOSET. Door slightly ajar.

Denise pushes open the door to the dark room.

She flicks on the light from the panel in the hallway.

Stacks of unused clay, alginate, latex and other buckets of supplies line the walls and flood the floor space.

Some containers are stacked so high it's hard to see behind. Perfect for hiding spots.

DENISE
Charlotte, you in here? I found
you. Come out.

No response.

Something SHUFFLES in the corner. Behind one of the stacks.

DENISE (CONT'D)
Charlotte?

Denise squeezes inside the --

SUPPLY CLOSET

Denise sweats in the claustrophobic space.

DENISE
Please come out, honey. I don't do
well in tight spaces.

Denise tries licking her lips but her mouth's dry.

A FAINT WHISPER reaches her ears.

The supply door SLAMS shut on her.

HALLWAY

Concerned, Officer Garrett follows after Denise.

He passes by Charlotte's room, where a DARK FIGURE lurks. The Figure wears a coat, obscured by a dark, wide-brimmed hat.

Officer Garrett barely has his finger on his holster when the Figure SHOVES Officer Garrett back with inhuman force.

Garrett CRACKS his head on the kitchen counter. Down he goes.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET

Denise is locked in. She POUNDS on the door, frantic.

DENISE

Let me out! Let me out!

The lights go out. Denise is stuck in TOTAL DARKNESS.

Something SHUFFLES towards her.

Denise trips over a couple of boxes. Scatters supplies.

She tries to quell the fear gripping her when she hears it --

Deep, RASPY BREATHS that aren't her own.

Someone else is in the room.

Denise SHRIEKS in sheer terror, banging around in the dark.

INT. GARAGE

Ted gawks incredulously at the silicone demon face.

TED

You remade the mask?

SERENA

I had to. The other one was too damaged and we thought you might be allergic to latex.

Ted empties another vial of Holy Water. He scours the workshop. A madman bent on a new quest, searching --

Denise's SHRIEKS just barely reach through the garage wall.

Serena looks at the door leading to the house.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What was that?

Ted swipes Serena's X-Acto Knife and HACKS into the mask.

Serena pushes him away.

SERENA (CONT'D)

No, please, you're ruining it!

TED

He's got to be stopped.

Ted shreds delicate silicone. Cuts the beast's horns, cheeks, eyes. Inflicts two gashes around the mouth.

SERENA

Ted, no!

Serena throws herself on Ted but he shirks her off. Serena hits the back of the table, stunned.

Ted furiously slashes the mask. As he deals more damage --

The air in the room goes STALE. Lights inexplicably DIM.

Gashes around the demon's mouth make the silicone fall down the sculpt's chin --

-- as if it's SILENTLY SCREAMING.

Ted glares at the demon, resolute. It glares right back.

Ted raises the X-acto knife to deliver maximum damage.

Serena lunges for Ted. Grabs his wrist and spins him around.

They wrestle. Ted steps backwards --

-- into the gelatin that's pooled on the floor.

Ted breaks away from Serena, turns and SLIPS.

Ted crashes down into the gelatin. He lays there, immobile.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Ted?

Serena flips him over.

The X-acto knife is lodged in his stomach.

Serena covers her mouth, horror-stricken.

Ted gulps in air, tries to stand.

SERENA (CONT'D)

No, stay down. I'm going to call for help. I--

BEEP, BEEP! The GPS tracking ALARM on Serena's cell goes off.

Gelatin pools around Serena's phone.

The screen shows Mitch's truck breaching the hundred yard zone before Serena's cell SHORT-CIRCUITS and dies.

Ted staggers upright. His hand grips the X-acto knife.

TED

You think that's going to stop me?

Ted tugs on the knife but can't pull it out.

In fact, it seems to be stuck.

Ted SHOUTS, furious.

TED (CONT'D)

Leave them alone! You can't have
them. Christ as my witness -- gah!

Ted inexplicably shoves the knife DEEPER into his abdomen.

He tries to pull it out but the blade sinks in... And TWISTS.

TED (CONT'D)

Serena, destroy it!

Serena sobs and throws the silicon demon mask into the vat.

The gelatin heats up to a rolling boil. What fluid drips out
hits the workshop table with an angry SIZZLE.

Ted's body suddenly flies back and bashes the control panel
on the wall.

The garage door activates, raising up.

Serena rushes to Ted's side.

SERENA

Ted!

His eyes are fixed open but expressionless.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Shit, where's your phone.

She can't find it on Ted. She stuffs the X-acto knife in her
back pocket.

There's an unopened vial of Holy Water in Ted's dead hand.

A TINK, TINK sound echoes beyond where light hits the drive.

A GLASS BOTTLE rolls out of the shadows, towards the garage.

Serena hits the garage door button on the wall.

The garage door winds down, excruciatingly slow.

The bottle rolls down the decline, gains momentum.

The bottle bumps the raised concrete edge at the entrance.

Serena glimpses the bottle's label -- DEVIL'S HEAD WHISKEY.

The garage door shuts, sealing her in. But before she can take another breath --

OUTSIDE, FOOTSTEPS kick up gravel on the drive.

Serena forgoes the Holy Water in Ted's hand. She snatches car keys out of her purse.

Something SHUFFLES behind her.

Her eyes dart around the room. Nothing out of the ordinary. The only person Serena can see is with her is Ted.

A BUCKET shifts behind Serena. She stares at it, waiting for something to pop out. Or are her eyes playing tricks on her?

The bucket RATTLES. Serena kicks it over --

-- and the black kingsnake's tail is still there from when it was first severed. It wriggles like a live wire.

Repulsed, Serena backs up, feels a cool breeze on her neck --

-- coming from the ajar GARAGE WINDOW on the side wall.

CLICK. Someone's turned the garage lights off.

The sound of SLAPPING FEET against concrete echoes through the garage.

Serena darts into the house.

HALLWAY

Denise BANGS on the supply closet door, trapped inside.

DENISE (O.S.)

Help me!

Serena opens the door and avoids being trampled as Denise dashes out of the house, terrified and unable to talk.

SERENA

Charlotte!

Serena desperately searches for her daughter.

She flees past the prone body of Officer Garrett.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Serena sprints for her car and opens it to get her --
Lockbox. But it's gone.

There's a CRUNCH on the pavement behind her. Serena turns --
WHAM! The lockbox smacks the side of her head.

Serena hits the gravel drive and everything goes BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Serena painfully wakes looking up at glaring garage lights.

Her entire face glistens with a clear gel. Even her hair
glistens with the greasy stuff. Vaseline.

As her senses return, she realizes she's on something hard --
Her workshop table.

Her hands and feet feebly pull against rope restraints.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Mommy...

Charlotte is duct-taped to a chair below Serena. Her head is
fixed over a basin, the kind used in hair salons.

On the other side of Serena --

The Hoodoo Mask watches her with sharp red eyes.

Isaac pushes the Hoodoo Mask onto the top of his head. His
eyes are normal in color.

The coat and wide-brimmed hat lay on a table.

ISAAC

Was wondering when you'd decide to
wake up. I didn't hit you that
hard. You're always so dramatic.

Isaac reaches for Serena's neck. Serena squirms but the
restraints keep her prostrate on the table.

Instead of strangulation, Isaac's hands remove the chain necklace from around Serena's neck.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

My beautiful busy bee has been
buzzing every which way. So I have
to take matters into my own hands.

Isaac takes Serena's wedding band off the chain necklace.

He jams the ring on Serena's finger and kisses her hand.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

We're going to be a family again.

Isaac slathers Vaseline onto Charlotte's face. She whimpers.

Serena fights her binds but gets nowhere.

She feels the X-acto knife in her pocket. Her fingers slip it out and saw it against the rope binding her hands.

SERENA

Don't do this.

ISAAC

I want to know what is so goddamn
interesting about this line of work
that you chose it over us.

SERENA

She's innocent.

Isaac runs the grease through Charlotte's long, dark hair.

ISAAC

Not if you're her mother. Her hair,
her smile, the way she tells lies --
she's growing up to be just like
you, Serena. A carbon copy. I want
a copy that keeps her the way she
is. Forever my little girl.

SERENA

The GPS tracker went off. The
police will be here any second.

Isaac shrugs. He doesn't care. He goes back over to the gun.

ISAAC

Let them come. They can't hurt me
anymore than you have.

SERENA

We can't be together again if
you're not there.

ISAAC

That's not true--

MITCH (O.S.)

Isaac! Serena!

POUNING on the garage door.

SERENA

Help us! We're in here!

Isaac opens the lockbox. Only gets one bullet into the pistol
before Mitch's body clamors in from the garage window.

Isaac's large hands easily rack the slide. He points the gun
at Mitch. Mitch's hands go up.

MITCH

Whoa, Isaac. Buddy. What's going
on? You gotta stay away from this
bitch. Doesn't matter if she
deserves it. You do this and
there's no going back.

ISAAC

That's the point.

MITCH

I'm trying to reason with ya here.
Put down the gun, man. What's come
over you? Come on.

ISAAC

Fuck, what am I doing?

Isaac sets the gun down. He screws his eyes shut, in anguish.

MITCH

It's okay. I can take you home.
Take that fucking mask off your
head and let's--

Isaac SLAMS Mitch's head down onto the workshop table. Mitch
can't fight him off. Isaac grabs a fistful of Mitch's hair
and dunks him --

Into the vat of bubbling gelatin.

Mitch SCREECHES as the gelatin burns his flesh. He falls to
the floor, twitching in torture. His cries go silent.

Serena desperately works her knife over her fraying rope.

Isaac calmly mixes PLASTER in a bucket. Swirls around the thick paste.

Charlotte squirms. Isaac cups her cheek.

ISAAC

You see? Nothing can keep me away from you. We'll be together. Once the plaster dries.

SERENA

Isaac, no!

Isaac tilts the bucket up just before the plaster drips down on Charlotte. He grins wickedly at Serena.

ISAAC

Or... You can make a deal with me.

SERENA

What are you talking about?

ISAAC

Like the kind made to the Man at the Crossroads.

CHARLOTTE

Don't do it!

SERENA

You're not him.

ISAAC

Then who am I?

Isaac's eyes briefly shine with a reddish color last seen on Ted when he was possessed.

Isaac dips the bucket over Charlotte. A thin stream of plaster dribbles over Charlotte's forehead.

Serena's X-acto knife rips through her bonds. With her free hand she shoves the bucket into Isaac's face.

Isaac reels back, nose gushing blood. The bucket clatters onto a table. It rolls to a stop against a steel makeup kit --

Directly above Charlotte's head.

Plaster pours down on Charlotte. It spreads over her face, covers her hair, pools around her neck.

Charlotte sputters, jerking her head back and forth.

SERENA

Charlotte!

Serena cuts the binds on her other hand and feet.

Isaac staggers back. Grabs the gun and aims it at Serena.

BANG! The bullet rips through Serena's shoulder.

Serena has no choice but to go after Isaac. She shoves the table as she charges, causing the lockbox to fall. Ammo skittters to all corners of the garage.

The bucket rolls away from Charlotte, giving her a chance to breathe.

Serena in her blind rage tackles Isaac to the ground. She knees him in the groin and gets control of the gun --

But Isaac pins her hand down on the vacuform table.

Isaac flips the lid down on top of Serena's gun hand and presses the button.

WRRR! The machine collapses down and seals off the section.

Instead of making prop replicas, the machine traps Serena's gun hand between two sheets of plastic.

The hot plastic MOLDS to Serena's gun hand as the machine vacuums out the air.

Serena kicks Isaac away, sending him sprawling --

As 200-degree plastic burns her hand. Serena SHRIEKS in pain.

Isaac sprawls into the table. The bucket slowly rolls back into position above Charlotte.

Before Charlotte can shout for help --

A big glob of plaster plops over her nose and mouth.

Serena collapses, cradling her blistered hand.

Isaac gathers what bullets he can find off the floor. He slips on a glove and retrieves the hot gun off the table.

With her left hand, Serena slings an opened bottle of flow enhancer at Isaac. Chemicals leech into his eyes and skin.

Isaac drops the gun.

Serena scrabbles for bullets. Hand throbbing, she loads half a magazine and shoves it into her pistol.

She levels the gun at Isaac, hand shaking. Her strength fails to load a bullet into the chamber.

ISAAC

You can't shoot me.

Isaac's eyes become red again. Serena's shoulders sag. The pain's too intense.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

You'll never work again. You ruin my life, I ruin yours. Unless you make the deal. Listen to me, Serena. I'm the head of this family, you goddamn bitch!

Serena's scalded hand grips the handle tight. A glimmer of confidence flicks over her face.

SERENA

Not anymore.

Serena RACKS THE SLIDE.

BANG! A bullet lodges square between Isaac's eyes.

Dead before he hits the ground. The Hoodoo Mask slips off Isaac's head and slides across the garage.

The reddish tinge fades from Isaac's eyes.

Serena shudders as pain returns to her right hand. She pushes it out of mind. All that matters now is --

Charlotte.

Charlotte's face is encased in semi-dry plaster. Every detail of her terrified face imprinted on the white mask.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Charlotte!

Serena abandons the gun on the workshop table.

She pries with both hands at her daughter's frozen face. Bloodies her finger tips on the rough edges.

CRUNCH! The plaster gives way. Charlotte's head THUNKS lifelessly. She's not breathing.

SERENA (CONT'D)

No!

Serena frees Charlotte's body from the chair. She pumps on Charlotte's chest. Breathes air into her mouth.

Plaster bits flake around Charlotte's glistening skin.

Serena's tears spill onto Charlotte's cheek as she does CPR.

She tilts Charlotte's head back to give her air. The tears slide into Charlotte's tear duct.

Serena sobs, never giving up.

Charlotte CHOKES out a breath. Weakly sucks in air.

Serena kisses Charlotte's cheek and unties the rope around her hands and feet.

Serena rocks Charlotte on the cement floor, overjoyed.

Her foot slides on wet paint that's spilled on the floor.

The paint is in the shape of CLAW PRINTS. Wet, demonic hands and feet leading away from her.

Serena keeps Charlotte close to her breast. Eyes scan the garage, wary.

There's a NOISE off to the left of her.

Serena snatches up her gun off her workshop table and stands, defiant. Charlotte clings to her leg.

CHARLOTTE

He's coming.

SERENA

Isaac can't hurt us anymore.

CHARLOTTE

Not him.

Charlotte looks up at her Mother, lip trembling.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Beynael.

WRR! BZZ! SFEWW! CLANG! POP! All of Serena's workshop appliances inexplicably turn on.

The gelatin tub BUBBLES, vacuform table sucks in air. Hair dryers, airbrush motors all rumble to life.

The noises fill the garage, overpowering their ears.

Charlotte grabs an airbrush, trying to arm herself like her mother.

Serena's hand aches. She fights to keep her gun steady.

UNDERNEATH THE WORKSHOP TABLE

Demonic, leathery FINGERS reach for Serena's ankles.

With a GROWL, they claw at Serena's flesh!

Serena cries out. Charlotte whirls around.

PAINT sprays out from Charlotte's airbrush gun -- splatters the table in a cloud of green.

Serena SHOOTS aimlessly at her mystery attacker.

CHARLOTTE

I got him.

Serena SHUSHES Charlotte and backs them up against the garage wall beside Ted's dead body.

She kneels down and gets the vial from Ted's clenched hand.

Charlotte reaches up for the garage light.

SIRENS cry off in the distance. Help is on the way.

Serena relaxes a little, momentarily relieved when --

CLICK. Charlotte turns off the light.

SERENA

What are you doing?

Charlotte points.

CHARLOTTE

There.

Serena's eyes dart to the glowing green mass of GLOW-IN-THE-DARK PAINT that Charlotte sprayed moments earlier.

But Charlotte points beyond that --

-- to the FIGURE crouched by the garage entrance, face half-covered in the glowing paint.

Serena FIRES. The Figure GROWLS and scurries away at lightning speed.

Serena shoots again -- CLICK. She's out of bullets.

She grabs Charlotte and runs inside the house.

HALLWAY

She locks the garage door entrance. They barrel down the hallway to the --

MASTER BEDROOM

BAM! Serena hears the garage door bust open. Serena hides Charlotte in the closet.

SERENA

Stay there and don't come out.

Serena faces her opponent back in the --

HALLWAY

She turns the gun around to use as a bludgeon.

A deep GROWL reverberates down the dark hall.

A SKYLIGHT casts intermittent light down the hallway.

SERENA

Come and face me, you bastard!

Neon green flashes in the dark, growing larger as the Figure draws near. The GROWL CRESCENDOS.

Serena remembers the vial of Holy Water in her pocket.

In a hasty, last minute decision, she opts for the vial instead of the gun.

Serena rushes forward and slings the Holy Water in the Figure's face.

The Figure HOWLS as flesh SIZZLES. Smoke clouds the hall.

Serena is thrown back against a wall. Her legs buckle underneath her.

The Figure steps in the faded light, exposing --

THE DEMON'S FACE. Identical to Serena's design. The face of nightmares.

Serena scoots backwards. Grits her teeth from the exertion.

The Demon snarls at Serena. Advances on its prey. It extends its claws towards her -- reaching -- ready to tear her apart.

Serena glares at the beast. Refuses to break down in her last moments.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Do your worst.

The Demon charges, swings its arm back --

BANG!

The Demon ROARS! Blood pours from its chest.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The Demon collapses.

Officer Garrett stands behind the Demon, gun smoking.

Backup OFFICERS come to his aid, entering from the busted garage door. Garrett winces from his bleeding head wound.

OFFICER GARRETT

Are you okay?

Serena nods.

SERENA

Charlotte's in the bedroom.

Backup Officers go to retrieve her.

Officer Garrett shines a FLASHLIGHT on the body.

The Demon lies on its side. Only the mask doesn't look as real as before.

Garrett peels the crude demon mask made of congealed gelatin, latex and silicone off the face of --

Mitch. Blistered and deformed. He coughs up a wet, bloody chuckle.

MITCH

He wouldn't listen. What's a man to do about that...?

The light behind Mitch's eyes dies. He coughs his last.

SERENA
(disbelieving)
I thought he was a demon.

Garrett checks Mitch's pulse. EMTs arrive on the scene.

GARRETT
(checking his watch)
T.O.D., one-forty-two, AM.

Charlotte breaks away from the Backup Officer leading her out of the bedroom. She buries herself in Serena's arms.

Serena and Charlotte are escorted out of the house.

Serena looks behind her --

The mask MELTS where it lays in a puddle of Holy Water. It emits a soft HISS...

CUT TO:

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - PORCH - LATER

Serena sits on the porch. Her right hand and shoulder are heavily bandaged.

Charlotte is inspected by a FEMALE OFFICER a few yards away.

EMTs wheel the dead out in body bags. Ted, Mitch, Isaac...

An Officer ushers Denise to a patrol car. She rambles, feverish, unintelligible words. Hair askew, eyes wild.

Officer Garrett sits on the porch with Serena.

SERENA
You must be a shoe-in for the promotion now.

OFFICER GARRETT
Never was a promotion. Just didn't want history to repeat itself and leave another little girl without a mom.

Serena eyes the wedding band around Officer Garrett's finger.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)
Lost her in a fatal shooting at a hair salon.
(MORE)

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)

An innocent bystander caught
between a woman and her abusive ex-
boyfriend.

SERENA

I'm so sorry. I had no idea.

Serena takes off the wedding band Isaac jammed on her finger.

SERENA (CONT'D)

When Isaac and I were married and
things got bad, I'd make excuses.
"He just had a bad day at work."
"He's providing so much for you."
"It was my fault." He always made
up for it by acting sweet. He
wanted a family. I had my work. I
wanted to make something great. And
I did. I just didn't realize it'd
be the daughter who was supposed to
tie me down.

Serena looks over at Charlotte, answering the Female
Officer's questions.

SERENA (CONT'D)

The best job I will ever have is
raising her. I wish I could've
learned that without her enduring
so much.

Officer Garrett nods, understanding.

OFFICER GARRETT

Good night, Serena.

Officer Garrett walks to his car. He slips his wedding band
off. Feels the weight of it in his palm before pocketing it.

The Female Officer lets Charlotte rejoin Serena. Serena holds
her daughter close.

SERENA

It's over, baby.

Charlotte stares off into the dark woods.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah.

SIRENS BLARE as the ambulances drive away.

FADE OUT/IN:

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Sunlight pours in through the open garage door.

Serena air brushes the finishing touches onto a cute BUTTERFLY MASQUERADE MASK. The mask's adorned with tinkling jingle bells, colorful ribbons and lace.

Serena mainly uses just her left hand for the job. Her right hand is heavily-bandaged, fingers poking out of the wrap.

She holds the mask up to Charlotte's face. Charlotte wears the old, less ornate butterfly mask Serena sprayed with glow in the dark paint.

SERENA

What do you think, Miss Butterfly?

CHARLOTTE

I love it! Can I get wings too?

SERENA

What do you think I'm running here,
a sweat shop?

Serena playfully ruffles Charlotte's hair. Charlotte "flies" around the driveway wearing her new butterfly mask.

Serena checks her website email. She's got another order for a butterfly mask. Serena smiles.

She grabs the pre-made mask from her display cabinet where all the other horror latex masks used to hang. All gone now. Replaced by rows of whimsy.

IN THE DRIVEWAY

Charlotte jumps off the porch, pretending to be a butterfly.

She stops her play. Suddenly very serious as she stares off into the woods.

BACK IN THE GARAGE

SHUCK! Serena tapes a box containing a mask. Presses it against her side for leverage.

Officer Garrett drives up in the patrol car.

SERENA

You don't have to keep coming by
like that.

OFFICER GARRETT
I'm here on business. Your
business.

SERENA
I don't make effects for horror
movies anymore.

Officer Garrett hands Serena a PHOTO of a 40-year old woman.
He's written notes in the sides of the photo.

OFFICER GARRETT
I'm dating this girl. She's
throwing a masquerade ball for her
birthday.

SERENA
(reading the notes)
And you need a mask with cherry
blossoms growing out of her head?

OFFICER GARRETT
It's her favorite flower. I want to
surprise her.

SERENA
Charlotte's going to be so jealous
when she sees it.

Serena looks around the drive.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Charlotte?

Charlotte isn't there. Serena is immediately concerned.

OFFICER GARRETT
Did she go back inside the house?

SERENA
No, she was out here. At least I
thought she was. Charlotte?

GARAGE

Serena scours her crowded workshop. Charlotte's not there.

Her feet kick something on the floor. The Hoodoo Mask. Serena
picks it up, confused.

The WIND picks up. JINGLE, JINGLE.

DRIVEWAY

Serena finds the Butterfly Mask's jingle bell at the edge of the driveway, close to the road.

Across the road, one of the mask's RIBBONS floats lazily along the grass, heading towards --

The woods.

OFFICER GARRETT

What did you find?

Serena takes off like a shot into the trees, carrying the Hoodoo Mask with her. Officer Garrett lags behind.

OFFICER GARRETT (CONT'D)

Serena, wait!

EXT. WOODS

Serena tears through the dense brush. Branches scrape her arms but she pays them no mind.

SERENA

Charlotte!

FURTHER BACK

Disoriented, Officer Garrett loses sight of Serena.

SERENA

Tries to keep calm. She powers through a cluttered area, ends up tripping on a log. Down she goes. Instinctively her hands fly out to break her fall.

SERENA

Ah!

Serena curls up in the fetal position, nursing her already injured hand. She blinks back tears and staggers back up.

JINGLE, JINGLE.

Serena blindly follows the sound.

The brush thins out, enough to make out a path that cuts through the trees, leading Serena to a --

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - DAY

Surrounded on all sides by the woods.

There's another path to the north and to the sides. All paths meet at this small clearing. A grassy CROSSROADS.

In the middle stands a MAN DRESSED IN BLACK.

A wide-brimmed hat conceals his features but his skin seems to sag. Ill-fitting around his bones.

Charlotte is only a few yards away from him. She holds the Butterfly mask by her side.

It's Landon, the production assistant on Edwin's set.

SERENA

Landon? What are you doing here?
Did Edwin send you?

LANDON

No, he did not.

Serena kneels by Charlotte.

SERENA

Charlotte, are you okay?

LANDON

New business is booming, I take it?

SERENA

It's a good start.

LANDON

I miss your old work. The other masks.

Landon scratches at his acne scars. The skin FLAKES OFF, revealing dark, decayed flesh underneath.

SERENA

Come on, let's go.

Serena hurriedly leads Charlotte back through the clearing.

And INVISIBLE FORCE DRAGS them back. Serena and Charlotte tumble down into the grass. Serena drops the Hoodoo Mask.

Serena position herself in front of Charlotte.

Landon advances on the two. More of his skin flakes. Serena finally recognizes him as the MAN IN BLACK.

LONDON / MAN IN BLACK

We made a pact, Serena. I've made life better for you two. All I asked for was a soul. Where were those smiling faces I saw moments ago?

SERENA

No. You're not real.

The Man in Black rips at his cheek. Long gashes of putrid, grey flesh peeks out.

Charlotte cries in terror. Serena shields her little eyes.

MAN IN BLACK

Makeup can only do so much.

SERENA

I never agreed to anything.

MAN IN BLACK

"No gain without sacrifice."

Serena stands, numb. Charlotte tugs on Serena's clothing.

CHARLOTTE

Mommy.

SERENA

Charlotte, stay behind me.

The Man in Black cracks a lopsided grin.

MAN IN BLACK

How noble. But you're not who I've come to claim.

Charlotte steps in front of Serena.

SERENA

No.

Serena pulls Charlotte back and shields her from the Man in Black.

MAN IN BLACK

What daughter doesn't want her Mommy to be happy? That's all she wished for. So Daddy had to go.

(MORE)

MAN IN BLACK (CONT'D)

Because it's hard for a man to control his temper when he knows he made a deal with the Devil he didn't have to make. You can't keep a secret from me, Serena.

Man in Black narrows his eyes at Charlotte.

MAN IN BLACK (CONT'D)

Has your bruise healed yet, Charlotte? I may have been a little too rough. Let me look at it.

The Man in Black beckons with his finger.

Charlotte SHRIEKS as her long dark hair jerks towards the Man in Black, pulled by an invisible force.

Serena holds Charlotte back.

The invisible force lets go of Charlotte's hair --

-- and thrusts her body away from Serena and into the Man in Black's arms.

SERENA

Give me back my daughter, demon!

MAN IN BLACK

You can't reclaim what's now mine. She gave herself of her own free will.

-- **QUICK FLASH** --

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Man in Black towers over Charlotte.

Charlotte cuts her thumb on a sharp edge on the easel.

She plants her bloody thumb in the middle of her green finger-painted tree picture. Black ants crawl over the paper.

Blood rolls down the page. The Man in Black extends his arm. Blood pools into the underside of his jagged, long nail. He brings it to his mouth and licks it up.

Charlotte gazes fearfully up at the Man in Black. He strokes her head --

Before shoving her at her dresser. The easel falls.

-- **BACK TO SCENE** --

The Man in Black brushes back Charlotte's hair, exposing her bruise. Faded now to a small yellow patch.

MAN IN BLACK

You make a deal with me and I can make people go away. But I get to keep you. And now it's time to collect.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry, Mommy.

SERENA

No!

Serena charges towards the Man in Black, reaches to grab --

The Man in Black glowers at Serena.

Suddenly, Serena FREEZES in place.

MAN IN BLACK

Let's test what you'll miss most.

Serena's right hand bends backwards, further, further --

SNAP! Serena cries out. The invisible force HURLS her back.

Serena hits the ground hard, churning up dirt.

The Man in Black backs away with Charlotte. Returns to the middle of the crossroads.

A HARSH WIND blows through the clearing.

Serena thinks, wheels spinning in her head.

SERENA

You take her away, I have nothing. Everything I've done is to protect her. I work for her. I do it for her.

MAN IN BLACK

You don't really want her. Not after all these years of thinking her a nuisance. You're lying.

SERENA

Fight me. See if I am. Or better yet, let's trade.

MAN IN BLACK
Change her deal?

SERENA
Improve on it.

Serena wearily stands, heart racing. Charlotte struggles in the man's grip.

CHARLOTTE
No, Mommy!

MAN IN BLACK
I prefer the child.

SERENA
You would turn down the opportunity
for more souls?

The Man in Black glares at her.

Serena roots in the grass and turns up with the Hoodoo Mask.

SERENA (CONT'D)
I can make it happen. More movies,
more masks. Who else will come to
know the Man at the Crossroads? Who
else will make a deal with Beynael?

MAN IN BLACK
There are many willing to suffer
for their pleasures. I don't need
your help.

SERENA
But you do! You must have waited a
long time to claim Isaac's soul
only for him to die. You're wasting
your time. Don't fool yourself,
Beynael. You made a deal with Isaac
to get to me.

MAN IN BLACK
You sure do think so highly of
yourself and your work.

SERENA
Am I wrong? Why else would you make
the film? You need an audience with
your name on their lips. Leave your
search behind and let the weak come
to you. I can introduce you so many
others but you can't have her!

Serena clenches the Hoodoo Mask tighter. Bits of ritual remnants making up the mask crumble off.

The Man in Black bares his FANGS and HISSES.

SERENA (CONT'D)

"No gain without sacrifice."

Swarms of black ants band together and make a circle around the clearing.

The demonic, black animals emerge from the woods --

Raven, Kingsnake, Dog and Cat.

They cover each cardinal point -- North, East, South, West.

The WIND kicks up. Builds to a tempestuous HOWL.

The Man in Black's skin ERODES as the wind spins faster around the clearing like a tornado.

Charlotte tears herself away from his grasp. She rushes into Serena's arms.

Animals merge with the wind, becoming a whirlwind of DARK SHADOWS and leaves.

A piece of wood whizzes by and scrapes Serena's arm. Her blood swirls into the turbulence.

Serena and Charlotte make a break for it but the dark vortex corrals them back to the center.

From all sides they hear the HISSING, BARKING ANIMAL SOUNDS.

The Man in Black sheds his worldly disguise, exposing his true self as --

The DEMON BEYNAEL.

Very briefly we see the Demon without human skin or clothing.

Beynael uncannily resembles Serena's original sketch only with more horns and garish protrusions. A terrifying demon who's jumped from imagination into vivid reality.

The vortex narrows.

CHARLOTTE

Mommy!

SERENA

Come here, baby.

Charlotte runs into Serena's arms, terrified.

Serena drops the mask and squeezes Charlotte tight, shielding her from the surrounding mayhem.

SERENA (CONT'D)

I love you, Charlotte. I'll always
love you.

Beynael BELLOWS at Serena. His body DISINTEGRATES and adds to the dark mass swirling around her and Charlotte.

Charlotte CRIES OUT. Serena grits her teeth. Her eyes turn skyward, pleading --

Until the dark, swirling vortex blocks the light.

Serena closes her eyes. Prepares for what's to come.

The vortex ENGULFS Serena and Charlotte.

BLACK OUT.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - LATER

Officer Garrett stumbles into the calm, serene clearing.

The wind blows normally. Birds CHIRP in the trees.

Serena and Charlotte crouch in the middle of the clearing.

Completely unscathed.

OFFICER GARRETT

Serena!

Officer Garrett races towards them.

Serena picks Charlotte up, drapes her over her shoulder.

Together they silently retrace their steps.

SERENA

Sorry, Officer. I just got a call
to go back into work.

Garrett stands there, confused. Unsure how to react.

Serena calmly walks past Officer Garrett. She drops something as she leaves him behind in the clearing.

Officer Garrett picks it up. It's a jumble of BANDAGES. The Hoodoo Mask lays not too far off.

Charlotte whimpers. A tear runs down her cheek.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Shh, it's okay, baby.

CHARLOTTE
I'm not gonna let you go.

Charlotte buries her face into her mother's neck.

Serena smiles and brushes her daughter's hair with her hand.

Her no longer bandaged, perfect right hand.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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