

THE HARROWING

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OVER BLACK

DRY BRUSH CRUNCHES beneath a single pair of plodding
footsteps -- CRUNCH..... CRUNCH..... CRUNCH.....

CARS SPEED PAST. A highway nearby, slowly GETTING CLOSER...

EXT. FIELD - DAWN

The sun's faint glow peeks above the horizon, illuminating
the VACANT EYES of --

ALEXIS ROSE (16). She's dressed in a nightgown, covered with
dried blood. *Her own.* And in her arms lies --

A NEWBORN BABY, still caked with vernix and blood. It COOS as
Alexis continues toward the highway, staring blankly ahead.

As Alexis reaches the busy highway --

HOOOooooonk! A passing car swerves, barely missing her!

Right on its heels, an SUV approaches at high speed.

Suddenly, emotionlessly, Alexis TOSSES HER BABY --

CRASH -- THE SUV'S WINDSHIELD SHATTERS!

ERRK! TIRES SCREECH! THE SUV AND OTHER CARS SKID TO A STOP!

DISTANT, TERRIFIED SHOUTS ERUPT FROM ALL AROUND AS AN
EARDRUM-PIERCING DIN OVERWHELMS OUR SENSES!

And in the midst of the chaos --

ALEXIS, her eyes as vacant as the Heavens above...

OVER CREDITS

CHRISTIAN IMAGERY clashes with OCCULT ICONOGRAPHY, signifying
the neverending war between good and evil.

We settle on an IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS as we --

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - AUSTIN, TX - DAY

A LARGE BLUE CROSS LOGO adorns the upper facade of the
massive hospital. A symbolic sentinel.

INT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Lugging an overflowing messenger bag and flowers in a vase, LAUREN MADDEN (30ish) swims against the tide of NURSES and DOCTORS.

Lauren's flowing red hair and striking cobalt eyes contradict her bookish nature. And while she's eight months pregnant, you'd never guess it by how nimbly she approaches --

DETECTIVES WALTERS (50s) and BRYSON (30s), who stand outside a closed hospital room. Walters is fit, spartan, like a Marine. Bryson's short, barrel-chested and Napoleonic.

LAUREN

Lauren Madden, D.F.P.S.

She extends her hand to Bryson -- He SNICKERS in disbelief.

BRYSON

They sent a pregnant woman for this?
Jesus Christ...

WALTERS

I'm Detective Walters.

Walters shakes her hand. Gestures to Bryson --

WALTERS

This asshole's Detective Bryson.

LAUREN

Is her lawyer here?

WALTERS

He was. All morning. Finally gave up
about an hour ago.

LAUREN

So she's still not speaking?

WALTERS

Speaking? She hasn't even blinked.

Lauren moves toward the door --

BRYSON

Whoa, gotta leave your stuff out here --

-- places her messenger bag and jacket on the chair beside the door. *She's done this before.*

BRYSON

Flowers, too.

Lauren keeps the vase of flowers. Turns to Walters --

LAUREN
You're right. He is an asshole.

-- and enters the room. Walters shoots Bryson a dirty look.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Alexis stares into space, absolute emptiness behind her eyes. Same as before. Her wrist is cuffed to the guardrail of her hospital bed. A prisoner of her room and her mind.

Seated beside the bed, Lauren touches Alexis' arm, looks into the young woman's eyes.

LAUREN
Alexis, I'm Lauren. I'm a Clinical
Social Worker with the Department of
Family and Protective Services.

No reaction.

LAUREN
I'm not a cop, I'm not a lawyer. I'm
a friend. My job is to help you. Do
you understand...?

Still nothing. Lauren smiles as she remembers --

LAUREN
I brought you flowers. Thought it'd
make the room a little more homey.

Lauren reaches down. Picks up the vase of WHITE LILLIES, RED AND WHITE ROSES mixed in. Places it on the bedside table.

Alexis stares vacantly ahead. Lauren places her hand over Alexis' clenched fist...

LAUREN
Sweetie, you've been through something
that you're struggling to process.
Believe me, I understand what that's
like. But I want you to know, there's
no hurry. You don't have to talk right
now. To me, to your parents, to
anybody. The world can wait. But when
you're ready, I'll be here.

... and THE TENSION IN ALEXIS' FIST BREAKS. A *sign*.

INT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - A SHORT TIME LATER

Lauren exits Alexis' room where TED ROSE holds his crying wife, KELLY. They're well-dressed, career-obsessed types.

WALTERS

Mrs. Madden, these are Alexis' parents, Ted and Kelly Rose.

LAUREN

Sorry to meet you under these circumstances --

KELLY

Did she say anything?

Lauren shakes her head. Kelly again collapses into Ted's arms. He hugs her tight. Fights back tears. Rage.

LAUREN

She needs your strength right now. Your love and support is all she has --

TED

And what do we have? How could she do this? Our little girl...

KELLY

She needs me. She needs her mother.

Kelly rushes into Alexis' room. As the door closes after her, Ted watches, tortured, as Kelly sits on the bedside. Hugs Alexis tight, weeping over her...

TED

Need to clear my head.

Ted storms off down the hall and out of sight.

Now alone, Walters hands Lauren her jacket and bag.

WALTERS

Sorry about Bryson. I sent him home. Never seen him like this. He's got a thirteen year old daughter, so...

Lauren nods -- *I get it*. Walters hands her a CARD.

WALTERS

Here's my info. I'm never in the office, so call me on my cell.

(hands it to Lauren)

How do ya make sense of this shit?

(MORE)

WALTERS (CONT'D)

Normal kid. Bright future. Then outta the blue, she does this? Christ...

LAUREN

This isn't the kind of thing that comes out of the blue. There were signs. You just have to be around enough to notice.

Walters follows Lauren's pointed gaze into the room at Kelly who impotently strokes her daughter's hair.

EXT. D.F.P.S - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A large, uninspired building on a busy city street. A sign reads: "TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES."

ACROSS THE STREET, cars in metered spots are parked along a popular, sprawling public garden. Lauren feeds her meter, sees a break in traffic and jogs toward --

INT. D.F.P.S. - MAIN AREA - DAY

Lauren strolls past row after row of cubicles. Greets CO-WORKERS with warm smiles and "hellos." Approaches the corner office where a wall placard reads "SHELDON MORITZ - BRANCH DIRECTOR." The door's closed. About to knock, she hears --

SHELDON (O.S.)

(hushed, flustered)

You're really backing me into a corner, here. You can't do this --
Hello? Hello? Goddammit!

He SLAMS the phone down.

Lauren hesitates, then pushes the door open, revealing --

INT. D.F.P.S. - SHELDON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SHELDON MORITZ (60s). Horn rimmed glasses. Wool sport coat. Cultured, grandfatherly. He sees Lauren. Forces a smile.

LAUREN

Everything okay...?

SHELDON

Nothing I can't handle.
(knowingly)
What about you? You okay?

LAUREN

Nothing I can't handle.

Sheldon smirks as Lauren sits across from him.

LAUREN

Like we discussed this morning, I know we have to consider the possibility that she's faking --

SHELDON

I'd say it's likely, given the bizarre circumstances. She pleads insanity and she's off the hook --

LAUREN

Yeah, but Shel, I think it's legit. I couldn't pick up on any non-verbals that would suggest otherwise.

Shel nods, skeptically. But before he can speak --

LAUREN

We had a moment. Before I left. Like, a recognition that I was there. And it felt real.

SHELDON

But...?

Lauren smiles at how well he knows her.

LAUREN

But... My gut's telling me it's more complicated than it seems.

SHELDON

Usually is, kiddo...

LAUREN

Her parents are hardly around. Her home life's probably a disaster. I can't help feeling for this girl...

SHELDON

Just promise me something? If this all gets to be too much, tell me?

INT. LAUREN'S OFFICE - D.F.P.S. - LATER

Lauren looks up from ALEXIS' FILE and a stack of CRIME SCENE PHOTOS from the highway just as KYLE IRVING (30s) enters.

He's attractive, in a nonconformist kinda way. Maybe it's his fiery eyes. Or perhaps it's his calming presence. But there's definitely something about him.

KYLE

Shel told me about your new case.
Sounds awful.

LAUREN

Yeah... Crazy...

KYLE

You gonna be okay working on
something like that in your state?

LAUREN

(teasing)

In my "state"? Wow...

KYLE

You know what I mean. You're eight
months pregnant. Plus, you've already
been through a lot this year. By the
way, my offer still stands...

LAUREN

I know it's coming from the right
place, Kyle. And I appreciate it. But
the idea of going to church right
now... I learned how to separate my
professional life from my private
life a long time ago. I'm fine.

KYLE

Okay, independent woman, I feel you.

LAUREN

You're such a dork.

They share a laugh.

KYLE

By the way, pregnancy looks really
nice on you. You're, like, glowing.

LAUREN

Glowing? Okay, bit of advice? Don't
tell a girl she's glowing when she's
shaped like a lightbulb.

Kyle FLICKS OFF HER LIGHT. LAUGHS as he exits...

KYLE (O.S.)

Not glowing anymore...

LAUREN

Kyle! Seriously?

EXT. D.F.P.S. - NIGHT

Lauren crosses the busy street. Unlocks her car, hops in --

INT. LAUREN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She tosses her messenger bag into the passenger seat --
Accidentally drops her keys on the floor. *Shit.* Ducks down,
fishes around for them. Finds them. Sits back up to find --

A MAN (40s) STANDING JUST OUTSIDE THE DRIVERS SIDE WINDOW --

Lauren jumps back. Quickly surveys the man: He's white,
dressed conservatively. *But something's not right.* It's like
he's surveying her right back. He shakes his head, reaches
into his pocket as he takes a step back --

MAN
(muffled, through glass)
They're wrong about you.

PULLS A PISTOL FROM HIS JACKET! LEVELS IT AT LAUREN'S FACE!
She recoils just as --

WHAAAM! A MACK TRUCK LEVELS HIM AS IT WHIPS PAST! BLOOD
SPLATTERS across Lauren's window. She looks on, stunned.

EXT. D.F.P.S. - STREET - A SHORT TIME LATER

POLICE LIGHTS strobe across Lauren's shocked face. She's
still trying to calm herself as two POLICE OFFICERS flip
their notebooks closed.

POLICE OFFICER 1
We need anything else, we'll call ya.

LAUREN
Do you know who he was?

Lauren looks at the pavement where a bloodied white sheet
covers the body of her attacker. THE STREET IS A MESS.

POLICE OFFICER 2
He wasn't carrying identification.
Gonna be hard to I.D. the body, too.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Truck driver says he fell asleep.
Doesn't even know how he got here.

LAUREN
He saved my life.

The officers head over to the nearby TRUCK DRIVER (50s) who's seated on the curb, crying. Lauren watches on, trying to make sense of what the hell just happened.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lauren tosses in her sleep. Despite being alone in a king-size bed, she's way over on one side. *Her side.*

She thrashes, in the throes of a nightmare --

GASPS! Springs up, panicked. Instinctively turns to THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BED. IT'S EMPTY. She brings the pillow there to her face and breathes in its scent...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Light from the TV reflects off Lauren's teary, longing eyes. Curled up on the couch in the dark, she watches --

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE of her wedding day -- Surrounded by LOVED ONES, she dances with her husband, BEN (handsome, 30s), to the ethereal '60s song "GOD ONLY KNOWS" by the Beach Boys.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - NURSERY ROOM - PRE-DAWN

Eyes still red from crying, Lauren opens a brand new BABY MONITOR BOX. Places its contents -- the main BABY UNIT and the portable PARENT UNIT -- atop the changing table. Tosses the empty box beside a couple other empty boxes...

She turns to face the nursery. It's all ready for baby. A warm, inviting room: baby crib, rocking chair, bookcase... Even a mini tepee made of baby blue cloth in the corner. Whole thing's like something out of a Pottery Barn catalog.

Lauren caresses her belly. Smiles, despite her distress.

LAUREN

Do you like your room?

Lauren shakes her head, chuckles to herself.

LAUREN

Still feels weird talking to you in my belly, but Dr. Epperstein says you can hear me, so...

She looks over at the beautiful crib beneath a white canopy draped from the ceiling --

LAUREN

This is your crib. Ben's mom, your grandma, sent that for you. She's sweet, and she loves you so much.

Her eyes move to the rocking chair, full of stuffed animals --

LAUREN

The rocking chair's from my mommy. It used to be my grandma's. It's very old. And I got you those stuffed animals so you have lots of friends --

A RUSTLING SOUND draws Lauren's attention. Her eyes dart to --

THE MINI TEPEE in the corner. Pitch black inside. Except for TWO POINTS OF LIGHT THAT SEEM TO STARE BACK FROM THE VOID...

Unsettled, Lauren squints, willing her eyes to see into the darkness to no avail. *What the hell is that?*

Slowly but surely, SHE STEPS TOWARD THE TENT... Bends down... Swallows the lump in her throat and peers inside to find --

A STUFFED BEAR, sitting upright. *Out of place.* Lauren grabs it, touches its GLOSSY, REFLECTIVE EYES. Chuckles to herself as she returns it to the rocking chair with its friends...

LAUREN (PRE-LAP)

The doctors told me the good news that Alexis seems to be recovering.

INT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - FAMILY AREA - DAY

Lauren sits across from an emotional Kelly. Ted paces like a caged lion. None of them looks like they slept.

LAUREN

I'm here to help. But before I can do that, I need you to help me. Why do you think Alexis would've done this?

KELLY

We already told the police, we don't know.

LAUREN

History of depression? Destructive tendencies? Nothing like that?

KELLY

No. She's always been a happy kid. She was so excited about Eli...

LAUREN

Eli?

KELLY

That's... That was gonna be --

TED

What the hell does it matter now?!

Ted's voice quivers. He is a man consumed by the anger of a powerless father. And a grieving grandfather.

LAUREN

No, that's important. Hearing the baby's name might get her to open up. Anything else you can think of?

TED

What the hell is talking gonna do? She's a murderer. Even her lawyer already walked.

LAUREN

I provide a recommendation to the court on whether she gets treated like a criminal, or someone who needs help. My assessment goes a long way toward keeping your daughter free.

TED

The girl I raised would never have done this. I don't know who that is.

He points toward Alexis' room. Lauren stares at him, incredulous.

LAUREN

Regardless of what she did, she's still your daughter --

TED

My daughter died with that baby.

INT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - HOLDING ROOM - DAY

Curled up in a ball, still handcuffed to the rail, Alexis lifts her head as Lauren lowers into a chair beside the bed. Her gaze hangs on Lauren's pregnant belly.

Lauren starts up an AUDIO TRACK on her phone. SOUNDS OF A SOOTHING RAINSTORM. She waits for a moment, letting it play.

LAUREN

I listen to this whenever I can't sleep. Which is most nights.

Like an abused animal, Alexis keeps her gaze on the floor.

LAUREN

My husband's name was Ben. He was my whole world. I'd never felt so loved by anyone. Then we decided to try to have a baby...

This gets Alexis' attention. Lauren doesn't notice, off in her own world now.

LAUREN

One evening, he called me to tell me he was going to grab groceries on his way home. He wanted to cook me a romantic dinner. He knew how much I loved his cooking.

Lauren smiles to herself... Then a somber realization.

LAUREN

It was the last time I ever spoke to him. The last thing I ever said to my husband was, "Don't forget the wine." I can't even remember if I told him I loved him.

Tears puddle in Lauren's eyes --

LAUREN

A car ran a red light. Ben was in a coma for a month before they told me he wasn't coming back. And I had to choose what to do. It was the worst day of my life. I miss him so much. Sometimes I just stare across at his side of the bed and cry...

A hand covers Lauren's. Alexis'. Lauren looks up to find Alexis looking right at her. Sharing her pain.

LAUREN

I know what it's like to lose someone so close, it's like they're a part of you. I know how empty you feel. How helpless. You probably feel like you can't trust anyone right now. Like you're alone and everyone's out to get you. But I promise you can trust me.

(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Whatever happened to Eli, we'll face it together. I just need you to help me understand the truth.

ALEXIS
(terrified, weak)
I'm going to Hell.

LAUREN
No. No, you're not --

ALEXIS
They said I killed my baby. That I threw him -- I can't. Help me. Please. Oh God, someone help me --

LAUREN
It's okay. I'm here to help you.

ALEXIS
I don't remember what happened. I can't remember anything!

LAUREN
Just tell me what you do remember. Tell me about that day.

Alexis struggles to compose herself and hold it together.

ALEXIS
I was hurting. All morning. I'd had these weird pains before, but this was different. Something was wrong.

LAUREN
Did you call your doctor?

ALEXIS
Every time I went in, Dr. Bellamy said we were both healthy and developing fine. He just gave me this cream stuff and had me rub it on my belly. He said it would help. And then -- I don't know. I can't remember anything after that. Just waking up here and my baby's...

She clutches her belly like it's not her own.

LAUREN
Can you tell me more about the pain you were having. What kind of pain?

ALEXIS

It was like, stabbing. Inside. So bad
it was like he had claws. I was
having these crazy nightmares where
people were trying to kill him. It
all made me think...

She trails off, burying her face in her hands as a new bout
of tears threatens to push free.

ALEXIS

... he was evil or something.

Lauren tries to process this. It doesn't sound good.

LAUREN

Is it possible, maybe you feeling
that way might've led you to --

ALEXIS

I would NEVER kill my baby!

Lauren's struck by the strong reaction. Recalibrates.

LAUREN

What about your boyfriend? Did he
notice anything strange?

ALEXIS

I don't have a boyfriend.

LAUREN

The father then? Whoever he is.

ALEXIS

(embarrassed)

I don't know who the father is.

Lauren stares at her, unconvinced. Proceeds delicately.

LAUREN

Alexis, this is all confidential. You
won't get anyone in trouble --

ALEXIS

No. You don't understand.

Alexis glances at the door. Her voice lowers.

ALEXIS

I'm still a virgin.

INT. LAUREN'S OFFICE - DAY

ON A COMPUTER MONITOR: ALEXIS ROSE fills in letter by letter in the search bar of the state juvenile database. NO RESULTS.

Lauren leans back, both relieved and frustrated. She looks to the door at the sound of FOOTSTEPS.

SHELDON

I just got off the phone with Austin P.D. Someone pulled a gun on you last night? Were you even gonna tell me?

LAUREN

Please don't give me shit about this. It's over, I'm fine.

SHELDON

I've been telling the board for two years we need more security, but with all these goddamn budget cuts... Maybe now they'll listen. Bastards.

LAUREN

Can we please just focus on the case? I'm recommending house arrest while her case comes together. I just left the report on your desk.

SHELDON

If that's what you think, I'll back you. Seems like you'll be done with this case quicker than we thought. That's certainly welcome news.
(turning to leave)
Don't overwork yourself, I mean it. Until Reed gets his shit together, that's the closest thing to a grandkid I'm gonna get right there.

Lauren shoots him a look as he heads back down the hall. She rubs the back of her neck. Bends down to massage her swollen ankles. But as she does, she spots something...

A UNIQUE SYMBOL. On the underside of her desk. Four adjoining circles create a phallic shape at the center of a seven pointed star. Odd. She touches it -- it's been CARVED into the wood. Looks like it's been there awhile.

Lauren traces it with a finger, intrigued. But sitting hunched isn't easy on her belly. She gives it one last look, then goes back to working.

EXT. PARK - DAY

In the park across from their office, Lauren and Kyle eat lunch in the shade of a large tree, watching CHILDREN play.

HIGH ABOVE THEM IN THE TREE, a CROW lands. CAWS.

KYLE

No record, huh? Well, at least it supports the idea she went nutso.

LAUREN

Alexis has such conviction when she says she doesn't remember killing her baby. But some of the things she said... Like not knowing who the father is. And actually believing she's a virgin. It's just so strange.

KYLE

Did you get the toxicology report back? Maybe she's on drugs?

LAUREN

Nope. All negative.

KYLE

Then maybe it was so shocking when she killed her own child, she's already repressing it.

MORE CROWS join the first. SQUAWKING and vying for position directly above Lauren.

LAUREN

I don't know. The despair in her voice, the look in her eyes -- Maybe I'm crazy too, but I think I might actually believe her.

KYLE

Your pregnant brain's finally losing it. That's what I think.

Lauren TOSSES A BIT OF SANDWICH at him playfully.

LAUREN

I'm serious! Something's off about this whole thing. And if I can't figure it out, that girl's going to suffer.

A CROW hops over, grabs the piece of sandwich, then takes off -- CAW! Lauren and Kyle look up as --

DOZENS OF CROWS POUR OUT OF THE TREE ABOVE THEM. BLACK BODIES AND WINGS blocking out the sun. Off Lauren's surprised face --

MALE VOICE (PRE-LAP)
... as more black smoke is seen
rising from the Sistine Chapel...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HEART-TO-HEART HOSPICE - RUTH'S ROOM - DAY

ON A TV SCREEN, BLACK SMOKE pours from the chimney over the Sistine Chapel.

MALE VOICE (FROM TV)
... that smoke, of course, signifying
the Conclave has completed yet
another round of votes without a
successful election of a new Pope.

Propped up in a hospital bed watching the report, RUTH (late 60s) struggles to breathe from an oxygen tube. This is a woman who has faced Hell itself in the form of a vicious battle with cancer, one that looks days away from being lost.

Sitting at her bedside, Lauren looks uneasy. Her gaze moves around the room, avoiding her mother's frail frame.

MALE VOICE (FROM TV)
Authorities still investigating the
unexpected death of Pope Francis...

Ruth winces in pain and Lauren helps adjust Ruth's pillows.

RUTH
My last days and no one's heading up
the church. How did I get that luck?

LAUREN
I told you to stop talking like that.
You need to keep your spirits up.

RUTH
Honey, I've made my peace with it.
God wants me to come home, who am I
to argue?

LAUREN
Please don't say that kind of stuff
to me anymore. You know how I feel.

RUTH
It's easy to keep the faith when
everything's good, Lauren --

LAUREN

The doctor said six months. It's only been three. You don't need faith. You need to fight.

RUTH

There's a difference between giving up and knowing it's time to let go.

Lauren gives her mother a chiding look as a COUGH draws her gaze out the door to --

A DYING WOMAN in the room across the hall.

RUTH

I'm more worried about you. You don't seem like yourself.

The woman's bones are visible through her pallid skin gleaming with sweat. BROKEN, RAISED LESIONS cover her body. Lauren watches a single DROP OF BLOOD seep from the woman's ear and trickle down to disappear into her sweat-soaked hair.

RUTH

.... Lauren...?

A NURSE closes the door, cutting off Lauren's view of the dying woman... Lauren snaps back to reality.

LAUREN

It's work stuff, but I don't wanna unload my crap when I come see you.

RUTH

Even in the womb, a child shares its mother's stress. You shouldn't be putting that angel in harm's way. I've got just enough time left to fall in love with him once he's here.

LAUREN

Mom, you're going to have plenty of time with him.

Ruth LAUGHS, giving a glimpse of the woman she once was. Before the pain and sickness.

RUTH

As long as he hears my voice at least once, it's all the time I need.

INT. HEART-TO-HEART HOSPICE - HALLWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Lauren holds her lower back as she ambles out of Ruth's room. She spots a YOUNGER WOMAN headed toward her. Same red hair as Lauren but with more youthful energy in her step, this is Lauren's sister, GINNY (early 30s).

GINNY

Wow, look at you. You're so... what do people say so it doesn't come off offensive? Radiant?

LAUREN

Thank you for trying, and not saying "glowing." I hate that word now.

GINNY

(passive-aggressive)

Well, then you're that too. Mom must've been surprised to see you again so soon.

LAUREN

Are we going to do this every time?

Ginny gives Lauren a contemptuous look.

GINNY

You don't think it's just a little fucked up that you wouldn't visit Mom until they moved her here?

Lauren's jaw tightens. Anger swelling.

LAUREN

You know what I went through with Ben. Sorry if I couldn't bring myself to go back to a hospital so soon.

GINNY

I get that. But you know, the thing about sick people, visitors make them feel better. She may seem okay now, but you missed the part when she was really suffering. Chemo, radiation -- that was all on me.

LAUREN

Yeah, but I'm here now.

GINNY

I guess three visits in two weeks is better than none in four months.

(MORE)

GINNY (CONT'D)

You're the local one, and her favorite, but I'm the one driving down from San Antonio every week to be here. Do you know how shitty that makes me feel?

That sentiment hits Lauren hard.

LAUREN

You're right. I'm sorry. You guys deserve better. I just... I don't know... I'll try to be stronger.

And now it's Ginny's turn to feel guilty.

GINNY

Look, the doctors told me that since you've been coming, Mom's spirits have been higher. Even I've noticed she's feeling better. So, just keep coming, okay?

Lauren nods. They embrace. *Relief.*

LAUREN

Love you.

GINNY

Love you too. Even though I'm always bailing your ass out...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Detectives Bryson and Walters look up from a MESS OF NOTES covering a table as Lauren enters the shop, sits with them.

LAUREN

Funny place to meet up. You guys really hate your office, huh?

BRYSON

Yeah, it's a shithole the size of a closet. You prefer that to this?

LAUREN

No, this is great. I can't drink coffee right now so surrounding myself with the smell helps me get through the day.

BRYSON

Heh. I like that. All right, let's hear it.

LAUREN

Well, it seems clear that Alexis was, and probably still is, suffering from full-blown postpartum psychosis.

BRYSON

Psychosis? So worse than depression?

LAUREN

Absolutely. Postpartum psychosis is a life-threatening disorder. It causes new mothers to experience delusions, hallucinations, bouts of mania, and most importantly, suicidal and homicidal thoughts. She needs help.

WALTERS

What exactly led you to think that? That she's sad about what she did?

LAUREN

Listen very carefully. She doesn't remember what happened. She repressed it. You don't repress memories that make you sad, or regretful; you repress memories so traumatic that your mind can't even comprehend them. She truly believes she's still a virgin. So no, I don't think she's just sad about what she did. I think she's had a mental break caused by postpartum hormones and stress, and it is my professional recommendation that she receive house arrest and in-home psychiatric treatment until she passes evaluation.

Sufficiently chided, Walters jots down her recommendation.

BRYSON

Great. Just like the last one.

Walters stares daggers at Bryson.

LAUREN

Last one? What do you mean?

WALTERS

We'll share this info with you because the cases are related, but you cannot speak a word of it to anyone. This gets out and there's no question people will panic. That happens, it'll be your ass.

BRYSON

There have been two other girls.

Bryson slides a pair of MANILA FOLDERS across the table to Lauren. Lauren opens them, begins scanning...

WALTERS

Six months ago, a seventeen year old named Constance Ochoa pops out a kid, murders it within an hour. She was homeless, no parents, had the kid in an alley behind an Italian restaurant. Whole thing was chalked up to drugs. Wasn't even an investigation, just a clean-up. But then a little over a month ago, girl named Haley Starkwell tosses her newborn out a window.

BRYSON

"Haley's Comet," right?

WALTERS

But this is a suburban girl -- witnesses, 911 calls, the whole bit. We pick her up, she's a wreck. Doesn't remember doing it, why, nothin. But now there's two, it's got some people worried. We get assigned to look into it. Then lo and behold... They say bad things come in threes.

LAUREN

What happened to them? Where are they?

WALTERS

Constance is dead. Committed suicide the night after the murder. But Haley was deemed psychotic by the court shrink. She got house arrest too.

BRYSON

Shit that came out of that kid's mouth, it's a wonder she didn't end up in a straitjacket...

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - AUSTIN, TX - DAY

Driving through an upper-crust, well-to-do Barton Creek neighborhood, Lauren checks her phone's GPS. Parks...

She grabs a piece of paper from the manila envelope on the passenger seat marked "HALEY STARKWELL." She scans it. Then glances out the window at --

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Lauren approaches the front door... KNOCKS... After a moment, CHARLENE STARKWELL (50s), opens the door, just a crack, revealing her face: frigid demeanor, pale, dressed in black.

CHARLENE

Who are you?

LAUREN

Charlene Starkwell? I'm Lauren Madden, D.F.P.S. I'm wondering if I can speak with Haley?

CHARLENE

I don't remember scheduling this.

LAUREN

I'm sorry, nothing was scheduled. It won't take long. I'm working on another case that Haley's insight might help. But if you'd like, I can have my office call to reschedule --

CHARLENE

No. I don't wanna deal with that. Just... Fine, come in...

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lauren scans the place as best she can in the dull light that seeps in through closed blinds. It's oddly austere, almost empty. Bare hardwood floors, an old couch, cast in shadows...

CHARLENE

Wait here. Got the stove on.

Charlene disappears into the kitchen.

Lauren looks around. Notices nails in the walls where there should be photos or paintings. Along the base of the wall, a few OPEN BOXES lay side by side.

LAUREN

Are you moving?

CHARLENE (O.S.)

No. Just changing the place around.

Inside one of the open boxes are CRUCIFIXES and other RELIGIOUS ORNAMENTS, as well as PICTURE FRAMES.

CHARLENE (O.S.)
Thought it'd be good for Haley if we
had a bit of a fresh start. Out with
the old, in with the new.

Her eyes move over to THE OTHER BOX. She stoops down to get a
closer look. Sobers at the sight of THE ORNAMENT SITTING ON
THE TOP. She picks it up, realizes --

IT'S THE SAME SYMBOL CARVED INTO HER DESK! A bit jarred,
Lauren stands --

CHARLENE
What're you doing?

TO FIND CHARLENE RIGHT THERE! Lauren accidentally drops the
ornament -- SMASH! It shatters into a million pieces.

LAUREN
I'm so sorry. Let me clean it up.

CHARLENE
It's fine. Leave it.

LAUREN
I didn't mean to be nosey. I just,
saw the crosses and --

CHARLENE
Ya know, you're wasting your time.
(off Lauren's confused look)
Our doctor says she might be a
paranoid schizophrenic. Haley thinks
everyone's out to get her. You can't
believe a word she says.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALEY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlene opens Haley's door revealing an unremarkable
bedroom. A normal teen sanctuary. Except for HALEY (16),
rocking incessantly in a chair, eyes staring ahead --

HALEY
Who the fuck is she?

CHARLENE
Watch your mouth! I mean it!

LAUREN
It's all right. I'm just here to ask
you a few questions, Haley. Okay?

Haley stares at Charlene, hate oozing from her eyes.

LAUREN
Do either of you mind if we talk
alone for a few minutes?

HALEY
Yeah, Charlene. Get the fuck out.

Charlene's unsure, but --

HALEY
Get out!

CHARLENE
You calm down, goddammit!
(reluctantly)
I'll be downstairs.

She exits, closes the door behind her.

Cautious, Lauren sits on the edge of the bed. Can't help noticing Haley's unkempt appearance. The *UNDONE RESTRAINTS* on her chair. The *BLACK MONITOR* around her ankle. *Her prison.*

Lauren smiles at Haley, trying to be warm. Normal.

LAUREN
So. I won't take up much of your
time. I just want to ask about --

HALEY
My baby.

A bit taken aback, Lauren proceeds.

LAUREN
I guess you've had to talk about that
a lot lately.
(off Haley's silence)
I know how hard it all must be, but --

Haley LAUGHS. Shakes her head -- *You don't get it.*

HALEY
Hard? I'm glad that baby's dead. I
don't remember killing him, but you
fucking ingrates should thank me.

Haley's detachment disturbs Lauren deeply. She does her best to hide it.

LAUREN
Why do you feel that way --

HALEY

Because he was the Antichrist.

Lauren chews on that. The girl's definitely psychotic. *Maybe this is a waste of time after all...*

LAUREN

Thank you. Think I have all I need --

HALEY

It happened again, didn't it? Another girl. Another dead baby.

Lauren's shocked face says it all. Haley smiles menacingly.

HALEY

He needs a vessel. I wasn't gonna let it be me. Because fuck him! But it won't stop until he finds one.

LAUREN

Who's "he"? A vessel for what?

HALEY

Are you even listening to me?!

Haley angrily swipes a bunch of PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLES from her bedside table, flinging them across the room --

Lauren shields herself, frightened. A couple PILL BOTTLES ricochet onto her lap. She looks down and sees both were --

"PRESCRIBED BY DR. BELLAMY, DAVID". Lauren's stunned.

LAUREN

Dr. Bellamy? You're his patient?

HALEY

"Patient"? He keeps me drugged, so I can't tell anyone the truth. So no one believes me when I do.

Lauren lowers her voice, throwing a glance back at the door.

LAUREN

What truth?

Haley leans forward. Lowers her voice as well.

HALEY

You think I would've just let him put that thing inside of me?

(MORE)

HALEY (CONT'D)

My mother, her friends -- Those sick fucks all watched him do it to me. They called him to do it.

LAUREN

You mean Bellamy? Did he rape you?

For the first time, what looks like fear washes into Haley's eyes. She looks right into Lauren's eyes. Dead serious.

HALEY

No. It was the Devil.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

At her computer desk, an anxious Lauren scans the web --

ON HER SCREEN, WE SEE VARIOUS WEBSITES, the name "DR. DAVID BELLAMY" prominent on each. HIS PHOTO -- A handsome man (50s), salt and pepper hair, dark features, suit and tie. Intimidating. Then --

HEADLINES about a MEDICAL MALPRACTICE LAWSUIT -- "CHARGES SUDDENLY THROWN OUT..." "NO SETTLEMENT..." "CASE UNEXPECTEDLY DROPPED BY PROSECUTION..."

Lauren considers a moment. Begins typing --

ON HER SCREEN, a Google image search for "STRANGE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS." The page scrolls past countless SYMBOLS. Finally, Lauren spots --

THE SYMBOL FROM HER DESK AND HALEY'S HOUSE. Lauren CLICKS on the IMAGE, taking her to ANOTHER WEBSITE where --

A LARGER PICTURE OF THE SYMBOL sits beside a lengthy background article about its origins.

AS LAUREN'S EYES SCAN, WE SEE KEY BITS AND PIECES --

AN IMAGE of a SEVEN POINTED STAR that makes up the foundation of THE SYMBOL:

"The seven pointed star symbolizes Babalon, the mother of abominations; the harlot or whore..."

Then ANOTHER IMAGE -- FOUR CIRCLES that create a PHALLIC SHAPE and MAKE UP THE CENTER OF THE SYMBOL:

"... represents the male genitalia..."

NOW WE SEE THE FULL SYMBOL -- FOUR ADJOINING CIRCLES CREATING A PHALLIC SHAPE AT THE CENTER OF A SEVEN POINTED STAR --

"THE MARK OF THE BEAST: Symbolizes the beast copulating with the whore of Babalon to bring forth the Antichrist."

Lauren sits back in her chair with an eerie feeling. Then --

SCREECH! She hears a HIGH-PITCHED WHINE coming from somewhere in the house. The hair on her arms stands straight up as she bolts up out of her chair. Listens for a moment, petrified. Then grabs a HEAVY BOOKEND and heads out into the...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She creeps down the hall, following the sound. The whine cuts out, replaced by SHORT BURSTS OF CRACKLING. Definitely coming FROM THE NURSERY. She pushes the door open to see...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - NURSERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE BABY MONITOR, both units still in a pile on the changing table, CRACKLES WITH SPORADIC FEEDBACK.

Lauren picks up the PARENT UNIT. The FEEDBACK IMMEDIATELY STOPS. Creeped out, she checks the battery compartment. Empty. She waves the receiver past the BABY UNIT. Nothing.

Lauren glances nervously at the tepee in the corner. Then takes the parent unit with her and rushes out of the room...

INT. SHELDON'S OFFICE - D.F.P.S. - DAY

Sheldon and Kyle abruptly stop chatting as Lauren enters --

LAUREN

You're not going to believe this.

She slaps the two folders onto the desk. HALEY and CONSTANCE.

LAUREN

Alexis isn't the first girl to kill her baby. There were two others.

Sheldon grabs a folder, pages through. Kyle just listens on.

SHELDON

Where did you get these?

LAUREN

Walters and Bryson. That's why they're on the Alexis Rose case. They were already investigating the pattern.

KYLE

How the hell has something like that not been on the news?

LAUREN

Because they're keeping a lid on it.
The cops know the public would panic.
They weren't even sure it was a
pattern until Alexis made it three.
Shel, something big is going on.

SHELDON

Let's not jump to conclusions. Are
there even any ties between them?

LAUREN

You mean besides the fact that they
all killed their newborns and have no
recollection of doing so? Come on.

Kyle snorts. Smiles at Lauren. Sheldon shoots him a look.

KYLE

Sorry. But she does have a point.

SHELDON

All right, fine. But the police are
on it. You already turned in your
report on Alexis. Your job's done.

LAUREN

My job is to ensure Alexis, and girls
like her, get the help they need.
(braces for impact)
That's why I visited Haley Starkwell.

SHELDON

You did what?! Not only is that
against the law at this point, it
could've been dangerous. Her file says
she's psychotic, for Christ's sake.

LAUREN

I needed to hear her story from her
mouth. Not filtered through some cop
who just sees a murderer. Both Alexis
and Haley believed they were pregnant
with something evil.

KYLE

That's some "Rosemary's Baby" shit.

LAUREN

They also had the same doctor, who
was sued for malpractice until the
case was mysteriously dropped. He's
involved somehow, I know he is.

SHELDON

And how are you going to prove that?

LAUREN

I'm going to go ask him.

SHELDON

Lauren, I cannot condone you putting yourself, and your baby, at risk. Not for this, or anything else.

Lauren looks to Kyle for support. He's as shocked as she is.

LAUREN

Shel, one of these girls committed suicide over what she did. Another went crazy, and the future of the third now hangs in the balance. Doesn't that matter to you?

SHELDON

I understand you feel connected to these girls. You're pregnant, how could you not? You want to help them. But you need to let the authorities handle it. It's not your job --

LAUREN

Forget my job then! Someone is behind these girls killing their babies. I can't just let that get swept under the rug! And if it takes a pregnant woman to finally listen and figure out what's going on to stop it from happening again, then I guess there's a reason I was put on this case.

Lauren storms out of the office, leaving Sheldon and Kyle staring at each other, speechless.

EXT. D.F.P.S. - DAY

Steaming over her meeting with Sheldon, Lauren heads to her car parked on the street. As she does, she spots a MAN just ahead, at the corner of the intersection. *Is he watching her?*

Recalling the truck incident, she puts some pep in her step and hurries to the car. Hops in, locks her doors. Keeps an eye on him as she starts the car.

Lauren pulls out, but just as she hits the gas, THE LIGHT AT THE INTERSECTION TURNS RED. She SLAMS THE BRAKES --

Shitshitshitshitshit. Lauren stares straight ahead, but she can feel the man looking at her from the corner.

Trying to calm herself, Lauren takes DEEP BREATHS. Finally works up the courage to look over, only to find --

THE MAN LOOKING RIGHT AT HER AS HIS FACE TRANSFORMS! HIS EYES START TO BLEED, LESIONS BREAKING OPEN ACROSS HIS CHEEKS AND FOREHEAD AS UGLY BLACK VEINS COIL BENEATH HIS SKIN!

Is this really happening?! Lauren's terrified eyes dart to the RED LIGHT! It can't turn green fast enough! Unable to fight the compulsion, her gaze whips back to find --

THE MAN IS TOTALLY NORMAL. Just a regular guy, checking his cell phone, waiting to cross the street...

Rattled to her core, a shaking Lauren stares at him. Blink. Blink. Still normal. *What the hell is going on?!*

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - BELLAMY'S OFFICE - DAY

A young MEDICAL ASSISTANT leads Lauren into a bright office. Two walls of windows overlook Lakeshore Park. At his desk, DR. DAVID BELLAMY (50s) stands and offers his hand.

BELLAMY

Ms. Madden, David Bellamy. Please, have a seat. I wish you would've told me on the phone you're expecting. Thirty... five weeks along, right?

They both sit. Lauren does a quick scan of his desk, the degrees on the wall.

LAUREN

Thirty-five as of yesterday, yeah.

BELLAMY

Not so impressive when you've been doing this as long as I have. But honestly, I feel bad. We could've met somewhere a little more comfortable.

LAUREN

No, this is perfect. I love the view. So... removed. Gives you perspective.

BELLAMY

So, what can I help you with? You mentioned a case you're working on?

LAUREN

Yes. It actually involves a patient of yours. Alexis Rose.

BELLAMY

I do have an obligation to maintain patient confidentiality, especially given she's a minor. But I'm happy to answer any general questions.

LAUREN

She's in custody for the death of her baby.

Bellamy's smile cracks.

BELLAMY

The death...? I'm sorry, are you saying she killed her child?

LAUREN

It's under investigation. But her baby is dead, yes. I'm looking to learn more about Alexis. Can you give me your impressions of her?

Bellamy copes with the news as he talks.

BELLAMY

She's a sweet kid. Funny, spirited. Always happy. I can't believe...

LAUREN

Alexis claims she's still a virgin, despite the pregnancy. Any idea why she'd believe that?

Bewildered at all the strange news being tossed at him so quickly, he searches for an answer that could make sense.

BELLAMY

When I examined her following her positive pregnancy test, I found her hymen intact. It does happen in some cases that the hymen isn't broken during intercourse. She may have taken that to mean she was a virgin?

LAUREN

But you never actually told her she was still a virgin?

BELLAMY

Of course not.

LAUREN

Working on her case, I was informed of another teenage mother who recently killed her newborn child. Another patient of yours, actually.

Bellamy starts to sweat now.

LAUREN

Can you tell me about her?

BELLAMY

She was troubled. Homeless. Near starving. How she even managed to reach full term is beyond me.

LAUREN

Homeless?

BELLAMY

I met her at a shelter where I volunteer. She reminded me of my niece. She had no medical care, so I offered to treat her for free. Thought I could at least give Constance and her child a chance.

Hearing the name, Lauren's eyes go wide. *Constance Ochoa was his patient too!* She lets him go on, takes vigorous notes.

BELLAMY

With a past like hers, I doubt anyone could've helped. Dead mother. Abusive father. Ran away at fifteen. Then the way she got pregnant...

LAUREN

What do you mean, "the way"?

BELLAMY

That would violate confidentiality. Let's just say she was terrified.

LAUREN

Terrified? Of what?

BELLAMY

Of the baby. She said it was evil. She even used to say she was carrying the Antichrist.

Lauren's pen stops. *The same thing Haley and Alexis said.*

BELLAMY

The thought of delivering it into the world petrified her. Even so, when I heard what she'd done, and that she killed herself... I was devastated.

LAUREN

I'm sorry to hear that. But I wasn't talking about Constance Ochoa. I was talking about Haley Starkwell.

Bellamy goes silent. Distraught to guarded instantly.

LAUREN

Three teenage girls murdered their newborns. All under your care.

Bellamy's eyes narrow, starting to catch on.

BELLAMY

What are you implying exactly?

LAUREN

I'm just trying to figure out what's going on before this happens again --

BELLAMY

I'm going to have to ask you to leave, Ms. Madden. Now.

LAUREN

Excuse me?

BELLAMY

You want to interrogate me, get the police and a warrant. Until then, I better not fucking see you again.

EXT. PARK - DAY

At a picnic table in the park across from the D.F.P.S., Bryson and Walters sit with Lauren. They're not happy.

LAUREN

We need to get a warrant.

WALTERS

You weren't even supposed to have visited Haley, let alone her doctor.

LAUREN

Did you even know that Constance Ochoa was Bellamy's patient?

Walters and Bryson share a look. Clearly they didn't.

WALTERS

Doesn't change the fact that we did you a professional courtesy, yet you had no problem going behind our back.

LAUREN

Doesn't change the fact that we need to get a warrant. Three patients with nearly identical stories? It would be ridiculous to ignore that connection.

WALTERS

No one's ignoring that, but being their doctor isn't a crime.

LAUREN

Haley says he keeps her drugged. Alexis told me he gave her a cream to rub on her belly, and that's when she blacked out. He's involved somehow --

WALTERS

"Somehow" doesn't get judges to issue warrants. And did you forget, these girls are clinically insane? Nothing they say counts for shit.

LAUREN

So what, we just let this scumbag continue preying on young girls?

BRYSON

Jesus. There such a thing as pre-partum psychosis?

Lauren shoots Bryson the look of death. *Fucker.*

WALTERS

The D.A. is already scared shitless about these cases. It's a political nightmare. Teen moms. Dead babies. He's already itching to throw the book at Alexis if it goes public. How ya think he's gonna take the news that there's some crazy, pregnant social worker rattling cages? You're making things infinitely worse. For you and the girl.

LAUREN

And what happens when another girl goes to him? Or the one after that?

WALTERS

We'll do some digging. Just don't do anything this reckless again. If you're right about this guy, he might be dangerous.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lauren dozes, propped up in bed, face aglow in the light of an iPad, surrounded by PAPERWORK covered in POST-ITs.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A view of the hardwood floor. Everything silent and still. Then a MAN'S BOOT steps into frame.

DR. BELLAMY, dressed in black, moves quietly down the hall. Determination in his eyes. HUNTING KNIFE in his gloved hand.

He reaches the stairs. Starts up --

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fully asleep now, Lauren nestles her face into her pillow. Unaware of the man standing at the bedside. Bellamy kneels, bows his head as he raises the knife over his head...

BELLAMY

(whispers; praying)

*Servitio tenebris Dominus lux mea et
salutare tuum ensem.*

... and PLUNGES THE KNIFE DEEP INTO LAUREN'S PREGNANT BELLY!

Lauren SCREAMS, CLAWING at her attacker. He wrenches the knife and she goes rigid in pain. Helpless, she watches as Bellamy SAVAGELY PRIES THE FETUS FROM INSIDE HER.

But as Bellamy holds it over his head in triumph, Lauren sees the fetus is distinctly NOT HUMAN. FLESHY WINGS, GRAY SKIN, MATTE BLACK EYES. The thing that is supposed to be her son SHRIEKS, revealing needle-sharp teeth, and Lauren SCREAMS --

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- HERSELF AWAKE IN HER BED. THRASHING at the nightmare, her kicks strike only paperwork and her iPad. Out of breath, heart still pounding, she calms down.

She slides out of bed, freezes at the sight of BLOOD ON HER NIGHTGOWN BETWEEN HER LEGS. Like she's had a miscarriage.

LAUREN

Oh God!!

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY WARD - PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

Lauren sits alone atop an exam table wearing only a hospital gown. Waiting. Hands shaking as she clasps them for strength.

The sterile, silent room taunts her. The only place in her life where she's ever felt powerless. Her gaze moves to the VENTILATOR pushed against the wall. The OXYGEN TANKS...

DR. ABBY EPPERSTEIN (30s) enters, sets her LAPTOP down.

EPPERSTEIN

Okay, you can relax. I have good news. The baby's just fine.

LAUREN

What was it then? All that blood...

EPPERSTEIN

Could have been late-stage decidual bleeding. Just a spike in hormones. But that's very rare, I'll be honest. I'm more concerned that it's stress. You're still working, yes? We've talked about this.

LAUREN

I can't leave yet. I have open cases.

EPPERSTEIN

And you won't when the baby arrives? November 1st is coming up fast.

Lauren searches for another defense. Can't find one.

EPPERSTEIN

Too much stress this late into your pregnancy is going to have mental and physical effects. Has anything else happened? I want to make sure we stay on top of this.

Lauren averts her gaze, ashamed to admit the truth.

LAUREN

No.

EPPERSTEIN

Regardless, you really should be on bedrest. I'd suggest wrapping up whatever you need to over the next few days. It's time for maternity leave. For your sake, and the baby's.

EXT. LAKESHORE PARK - NIGHT

The moon blazes over the rushing black waters of the Colorado River that cut a swath through the city. Dr. David Bellamy paces beneath the lights on a boardwalk along the river.

Burner phone at his ear, his gaze darts from shadow to shadow like an animal on guard for predators in the night.

BELLAMY (INTO PHONE)

I don't want to hear that, goddammit!
I did exactly what you said. My debt
is paid, you understand me?

A late night JOGGER approaches. Bellamy slips a hand into his jacket, grips something holstered inside. Eyes the jogger suspiciously until she's past...

BELLAMY (INTO PHONE)

No! I want to hear you're gonna take
care of this woman. She's onto
me and she's pissed. She's not gonna
.... Because if she goes to the cops,
what am I gonna say? Fuck you! I
don't care who you think she is, you
better not turn your backs on me
after I Hello? Hello?! FUCK!

He CLAPS the shitty flip phone closed and wrings his hands in frustration. Fear even. After a moment of contemplation, he throws the phone into the river. Hurries off into the night.

A CELL PHONE RINGS OVER --

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Still fully clothed, Lauren's out cold on her couch beneath a throw blanket. An empty mug sits on the coffee table beside a few case files and her RINGING CELL PHONE...

Lauren stirs. The looping MENU SCREEN of her wedding video on the TV. She reaches for her phone -- "KYLE IRVING" calling. She picks up, clearing the cobwebs from her voice --

KYLE (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)

Ah shit, I woke you up, didn't I?

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)

No, it's fine. I should get up
anyway. Stayed up way too late going
over these cases...

KYLE (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
 That's kinda why I'm calling. So...
 Okay, no pressure, but I'm headed to
 Bible study, actually, and figured
 maybe it'd lift your spirits if you
 came. Whatta ya think?

Lauren makes a face -- *This again?*

KYLE (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
 I can practically hear you cringing --

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)
 No, no, I'm not. I appreciate that
 you keep offering, I just --

KYLE (O.S.) (FROM PHONE)
 Sometimes when life gets tough, it
 helps bring me peace. Figured, if it
 could do that for you, too...?

Lauren gazes at the TV -- A frozen image of her and the man
 she loves so much. A man who's no longer there.

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)
 What church do you go to?

EXT. THE RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - ESTABLISHING - DAY

With the appearance of a contemporary business center, no one
 would guess this building was a place of worship. Yet a sign
 out front reads, "*THE RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH.*"

INT. THE RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - BASEMENT - DAY

Spotty, fluorescent drop ceiling lighting barely illuminates
 the open room, casting eerie blue-hued shadows across the
 outdated carpeting, 70s-era furnishings, and each of the --

CHURCH MEMBERS gather in a seated circle at the center of the
 room and chat with one another as Lauren enters with Kyle.

One conversation in particular captures everyone's attention.
 A black woman with magnetic presence and neo-soul style,
 SELMA (30s), speaks passionately --

SELMA
 It really could be the end of days.
 I'm telling you. Doesn't matter if
 the source is recognized by the
 church or not, everything that's
 happening is part of the prophecy --

CHURCH MEMBER 1
I saw a YouTube video about that.

As Kyle and Lauren take their seats...

KYLE
You guys don't seriously believe
that's true, do you?

SELMA
Whole world's falling apart around
us. What better time than now?

LAUREN
I'm sorry, what's the prophecy you're
talking about...?

The austere study leader, RAYMOND (60s) interjects --

RAYMOND
Much as we love your theories on the
end of days, Selma, Kyle brought a
guest, so let's try not to scare her
off already, okay?

The group CHUCKLES. Selma laughs it off, embarrassed.

SELMA
Sorry, Raymond. Floor is yours.

RAYMOND
This week, we'll be discussing the
Light. After all, God's presence is
the light; to be surrounded by it is
to know He's near.

Lauren and Selma meet eyes. Selma smirks -- *See what I'm up
against?* Lauren smiles back as Raymond preaches on...

RAYMOND
When we walk in the Light, we banish
all darkness from our lives...

INT. THE RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - BASEMENT - LATER

STUDY ATTENDEES crowd around the refreshments table. Kyle
pours himself a coffee, lets Lauren breathe in the scent.

KYLE
So what did ya think?

LAUREN

It was okay. I just -- Since Ben died, I've had a hard time finding the same comfort in all of this. Was hoping maybe I could find it again.

KYLE

You will. Just gotta keep trying.

Kyle realizes she's not listening. He follows her eye line to Selma who's at the refreshment table, subtly taking food, wrapping it in napkins and putting it in her purse...

KYLE

Classic Selma. She's our resident oddball. Every Bible study's got one. She's into all kinds of weird stuff.

LAUREN

Like what?

KYLE

I dunno. Demonology, Astrology, the Occult... Basically anything taboo. Like stealing food at Bible Study...

Lauren looks back over at Selma, to find her leaving, purse over her shoulder, keys in hand --

EXT. THE RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - PARKING LOT - DAY

Selma approaches her car. As she's about to get in --

LAUREN (O.S.)

Selma...?

Selma turns to find Lauren's hopeful eyes gazing back at her.

INT. DINER - DAY

At a corner table, a quizzical Selma sits opposite Lauren. A few other PATRONS dine within earshot.

LAUREN

I wanted to talk earlier, but your study leader didn't seem to approve.

SELMA

Raymond? Eh, he's a prick. He thinks talking about anything that's not word for word from the Bible is gonna land him in Hell.

LAUREN

Think he's right? I mean, if you believe the end really is near...

SELMA

(chuckling)

Wow. So you want to just dive right in, huh? People usually get a little freaked out by this stuff.

LAUREN

A few weeks ago, it probably would have freaked me out. But some strange things have been happening in a case I'm working on. I don't know what to believe anymore.

Selma smiles warmly.

SELMA

You're a good person. I can tell. I get a sense about these things.

LAUREN

A sense? You mean like a psychic?

Selma unclips her purse. Reaches in, grabs --

A BUSINESS CARD. Slides it across the table to Lauren. Lauren scans it: "*Selma's Tarot and Psychic Readings.*"

SELMA

My mother says we're conduits.

LAUREN

She has it, too? Your mother?

SELMA

Whatever "it" is. I have moments of vivid intuition. When I was young, I always felt like there was a cloud hanging over me. My mother told me that when you have a gift like we do, it's like anything else in life -- There's good in it, and there's bad. The bad stuff, the dark energy, was something I knew nothing about. So I set out to study it. "Know thy enemy."

LAUREN

That's exactly how it's felt. Like there's this cloud hanging over this case, and the girls involved in it.

SELMA

Because it's the same thing. Dark energy. And it's very real.

LAUREN

How do you know?

SELMA

Because, sweetie... I can see it. Like you can see color. And right now, I see it everywhere. There are times when dark energy is higher. It corresponds with astrological shifts, like when Mercury's in retrograde. You've heard of that, right?

(off Lauren's nod)

That same kind of energy is even higher during cosmic alignments. The prophecy predicts an alignment event that no human eyes have ever seen.

LAUREN

What prophecy? Where did you hear it?

SELMA

From my mother. When I was young. My family's known it for generations. I don't know how far back it goes, but it's about the end of days.

LAUREN

And you believe it's happening now?

SELMA

Look at all the problems humanity's facing. Climate change causing extreme weather, droughts, famine. There are countless socio-economic problems, which leads to political unrest. People are angry. The war on terror's out of control. Not to mention the fact that the fight for Israel is reaching a fever pitch at the same time as there's a decline in religion and morality all over the world. To me, these things mean something.

LAUREN

So when this alignment happens, what does the prophecy say comes next?

Selma stares sympathetically into Lauren's troubled eyes.
Hates having to say that --

SELMA

A baby born of darkness will arrive.
He'll have his reign before the end.

LAUREN

"Born of darkness?"

SELMA

He won't have a human father. Just as
Jesus was the child of God, this will
be the child of the Devil. The
Antichrist.

Selma looks up at the TV IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM where
CNN's non-stop coverage of the PAPAL ENCLAVE continues...

SELMA

This enclave? It's part of the
prophecy, too. Whoever the next Pope
is... he's destined to be the last.

Off Lauren's troubled eyes we --

EXT. ROSE FAMILY HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Alexis sways slowly in her childhood swing set, staring
despondently at the grass, ANKLE MONITOR visible. Opposite
her in a lawn chair, Lauren leans into the conversation.

LAUREN

You seem to be doing a little better.

ALEXIS

I just try not to think about it. My
parents still won't talk to me. Dad
can't even be in the same room.

LAUREN

It's going to take time. But they
love you. They'll come around.

ALEXIS

So is this a normal thing? You stop
by to check up on me, see if I'm
still crazy?

LAUREN

You're not crazy, Alexis. You're
strong. I know you are. Listen,
normally, my time with you would end
today. But I know that what happened
wasn't your fault. I know you loved
that baby. And I don't want you to
suffer any more than you already are.
(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)

So promise me that if you're sad or scared or if you just want a friend, you'll call me. I'm here.

Alexis tightly embraces Lauren. Happily taken aback, Lauren savors the genuine connection. Waits for Alexis to let go.

LAUREN

Can I ask you just one last thing? Your doctor, Bellamy. Are you sure there's nothing else you want to tell me about him?

ALEXIS

I dunno. Like what? He's just my doctor. He's kinda weird, but...

LAUREN

Weird how?

Alexis shrugs, feeling awkward admitting that...

ALEXIS

I told him I was seeing things. That I felt like there was a dark energy following me. He asked me a lot of weird questions. Like if I ever heard Eli speaking to me. Or if I noticed animals gathering around me.

Lauren's jaw tightens.

LAUREN

Did he ever say anything about the Antichrist?

Alexis' eyes flash -- *How did she know that?*

LAUREN

What did he say?

ALEXIS

He told me some babies have destinies written in the stars.

LAUREN

Do you know what he meant by that?

ALEXIS

That our baby was special...

LAUREN

I'm sorry, "our" baby? Who do you mean? Bellamy?

Alexis doesn't say anything, yet the grim look on her face and the tears that well in her eyes say everything.

LAUREN

Alexis, if he did something to you,
we have to let people know. Make sure
he never hurts anyone else again.

Alexis shakes her head, overwhelmed. Lauren reaches out to touch Alexis' hand -- Alexis pulls it away, crying.

ALEXIS

Don't make me think about this again!
I can't! Just let me forget! Please!

LAUREN

You're not alone. We can figure this
out together --

ALEXIS

No! You don't know what you're
talking about! You have no idea how
big it is! But you will...

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Lauren sits in her parked car, fidgeting anxiously, waiting for the Bluetooth to connect to --

WALTERS (OVER BLUETOOTH)

This is Walters --

LAUREN

It's Bellamy. He raped those girls.

WALTERS (OVER BLUETOOTH)

Jesus, we are not having this
conversation with you again --

LAUREN

Alexis Rose. I was just with her.
When I asked if Bellamy did something
to her, she started crying and --

WALTERS (OVER BLUETOOTH)

Are you not hearing me? Your job on
this case is over.

LAUREN

Why do I feel like I'm the only one
who gives a shit about the truth?

WALTERS (OVER BLUETOOTH)
Of course we give a shit. But what do
you want from us? Our hands are tied.
So unless this guy suddenly decides
to admit he's guilty, we got nothin.

Pissed, Lauren hangs up on Walters. Grabs her phone --

TEXT TO KYLE: "Meet me at Bellamy's in 15." Hits "SEND."

Lauren bangs a U-turn and PEELS away...

EXT. MEDICAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Lauren pulls into the subterranean parking entrance. Takes a ticket from the machine and disappears into --

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - SUBTERRANEAN PARKING - MOMENTS LATER

Pulling into a parking spot across from the elevator, Lauren glances up into --

HER REARVIEW MIRROR. She can see the elevator. It opens and a group of PEOPLE get out and disperse toward their cars...

Lauren TEXTS KYLE: "Where are you???"

A CAR ROARS past, jarring Lauren. She's on edge as --

A RESPONSE FROM KYLE: "Tons of traffic. 10 min."

ANOTHER TEXT: "Do NOT go in alone."

Lauren glances back up into her REARVIEW to find --

BELLAMY. He departs the elevator with a group of people, large rolling suitcase in tow.

LAUREN
Shit.

Lauren watches Bellamy as he heads toward his Mercedes S-Class, clearly in a hurry. At the car, he pops his trunk, throws the suitcase inside. Begins rummaging through it.

HEART RACING, Lauren takes a DEEP BREATH as --

INT. SUBTERRANEAN PARKING - MOMENTS LATER

Bellamy frantically searches the suitcase in his trunk --

LAUREN (O.S.)
Catch you at a bad time?

Bellamy turns, frazzled, displeased to find Lauren standing there. He keeps searching the suitcase...

BELLAMY

I don't see any cops with you, you
must not have a warrant. I told you
not to come back until you have one.

She can see he's in a cold sweat. Like he's unraveling.
Lauren's emboldened --

LAUREN

But you're not going to be here then.
Are you, Dr. Bellamy?

Bellamy doesn't respond, but he stops searching. Turns to
Lauren. She has his attention. And she knows it.

LAUREN

The cops know everything.

Bellamy sobers...

LAUREN

How you raped those girls. Then
forced them to kill their babies.

BELLAMY

Is that... really what you think?

Lauren glares back at Bellamy, strong, assured. Any levity on
Bellamy's face drains. Turns to anger.

BELLAMY

You have no idea what's going on.

LAUREN

No? Then tell me --

BELLAMY

I WAS JUST DOING WHAT THEY TOLD ME!!

Shocked by his own outburst, an eerie calm washes over him.

LAUREN

Who are "they"? What did they tell
you to do?

Bellamy reaches into his trunk. Digs in his suitcase and
pulls out -- A .45 PISTOL.

BELLAMY

You should've left me alone.

Dread fills Lauren's eyes as Bellamy wheels around, grabs her. Pushes her up against a nearby concrete column.

LAUREN

No! Please! My baby!

Bellamy grabs Lauren's belly as she weeps with fear.

BELLAMY

They took everything from me! Now I'm gonna take everything from them! They want this godforsaken baby so much?

A sudden clarity in his eyes, Bellamy LEVELS THE GUN AT LAUREN'S FACE --

BELLAMY

They can't have him!

BLAM! AN INTENSE RINGING OVERCOMES OUR SENSES AS --

IMPOSSIBLY, LAUREN OPENS HER EYES TO FIND --

BELLAMY'S BODY, ON THE GROUND BEFORE HER, A HIDEOUS PILE, HIS HEAD AND ITS CONTENTS COATING HIS MERCEDES, THE CONCRETE GROUND ALL AROUND HER!

LAUREN STUMBLES AGAINST THE WALL -- VOMITS...

INT. SUBTERRANEAN PARKING - A SHORT TIME LATER

Strobing police lights illuminate the crime scene, packed with COPS and FORENSIC DETECTIVES.

Sitting on the bumper of an ambulance, clothing covered in Bellamy's blood, a shaken up Lauren is tended to by an EMT (30s). Kyle sits beside her, arm around her in support.

EMT

You're all set.

Lauren nods appreciation. She and Kyle head toward Lauren's car, parked nearby.

KYLE

You could've been killed. I just can't get that out of my head.

LAUREN

I should've waited for you. But when I saw his suitcase... Cops said it was packed like he was fleeing.

As she and Kyle reach her car, Walters and Bryson approach. Walters flashes his BADGE at Kyle.

WALTERS

We need a few minutes.

Kyle turns to Lauren -- *That cool?* She reluctantly nods. Kyle heads off... Walters and Bryson stare daggers.

WALTERS

You're lucky he turned the gun on himself instead of you --

LAUREN

He did turn the gun on me. This wasn't a suicide. He pointed it right at my face and pulled the trigger --

BRYSON

Then why're his brains all over the ground and not yours?

LAUREN

I don't know. He pointed the gun at me and... I closed my eyes --

WALTERS

Exactly, you closed your eyes. So you didn't see him turn the gun on himself at the last second.

LAUREN

He said he wanted to kill me!

BRYSON

We had one solid lead. Now he's dead.

WALTERS

You say you care so much about these girls. Where does this leave them?

LAUREN

I came to get a confession!

BRYSON

And how'd that work out for ya?

Lauren's reeling, growing more and more unsure of herself.

WALTERS

There's someone else who wants to talk to ya.

Walters nods toward a car parked a row over. Inside the car, Sheldon sits, watching, troubled.

WALTERS

He promised this will be the last
time we'll see you. It better be.

INT./EXT. SHELDON'S CAR - SUBTERRANEAN PARKING - MOMENTS LATER

The passenger side door opens, Lauren hops in. Sheldon immediately hugs her. Tight. *Thank God she's all right.* Lauren fights back the tears that wanna come.

LAUREN

I'm okay.

Sheldon nods, releases her. Looks her over. Shakes his head in disbelief.

SHELDON

What am I going to do with you?

LAUREN

Shel, I knew Bellamy was involved --

SHELDON

And it almost got you killed. I don't
know what the hell you were thinking.

They sit in silence a moment.

SHELDON

Look, I get that since Ben died,
you've been putting your energy into
your work. When Nancy died, this job
was what got me through it. Kept me
going. But I could afford to be
selfish. No one else was depending on
me. You've got to put the needs of
that baby boy above everything else.

LAUREN

Shel... I've just... got this feeling
that something is going on. Like
people are out to get me.

SHELDON

Why would you think that?

LAUREN

Bellamy said something. So did Haley.
That "they" want me. And my baby...

Sheldon grabs a small LEATHER CASE from the back seat...

SHELDON

I don't know what the hell's going on. But I do know you need to be able to protect yourself, God forbid something like this happens again.

... hands it to Lauren. She looks at him -- *What is it?* She unzips it, revealing... a STUN GUN.

SHELDON

I've seen that thing take down a 300-pound crackhead. Promise me you'll keep that with you from now on.

Lauren puts the stun gun in her purse. Hugs Sheldon.

SHELDON

If there is still someone out there, we'll face them together. Okay?

Lauren nods. Wipes her eyes.

SHELDON

Now will ya please go on maternity leave, for Christ's sake?

INT. HEART-TO-HEART HOSPICE - RUTH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Seated beside the bed, Lauren watches Ruth sleep. Lost in her own thoughts --

Ruth COUGHS VIOLENTLY... Can't stop... Concerned, Lauren places her hand on Ruth's face -- The coughing fit subsides. Ruth looks up at Lauren. Smiles at the sight of her.

RUTH

When did you get here?

LAUREN

I didn't want to wake you.

RUTH

I'd rather spend the time I have left with you. Got all eternity to sleep...

LAUREN

(smiling)

Sounds to me like you can do both. I spoke to your nurse.

RUTH

It's just one scan. I don't want you getting your hopes up --

LAUREN

Why not? Mom, your tumors are shrinking. Now is exactly the time to get our hopes up.

Ruth smiles. Touches Lauren's face lovingly.

RUTH

What about you? How's that case? The one that was giving you trouble?

Lauren hides her worry behind a smile...

LAUREN

You don't have to worry about that anymore. It's all over.

INT. D.F.P.S. - DAY

Lauren and Kyle walk down the hall together. Kyle carries Lauren's bag for her. Lauren rubs her neck and winces.

KYLE

You should be home. I can tie up any loose ends. I want to --

LAUREN

Stop feeling guilty. You don't have to make anything up to me.

Kyle goes silent. Lauren immediately regrets the outburst.

LAUREN

I'm sorry. It's just... Alexis' family should hear the news from me.

INT. LAUREN'S OFFICE - DAY

Building her resolve, Lauren dials her phone. Still unsure how to tell Alexis' parents that their one chance to keep their daughter free just killed himself. The line RINGS --

AUTOMATED VOICE (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)

We're sorry. You have reached a number that has been disconnected --

Confused, Lauren checks Alexis' file, confirms the phone number. Dials again --

AUTOMATED VOICE (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)

We're sorry. You have reached a --

She hangs up. Stares at the phone, lost. Her eyes move to Alexis' address in the file. She considers for a moment.

We HEAR a KNOCK, KNOCK over --

EXT. ALEXIS' HOUSE - DAY

Lauren waits at the front door. But no one answers. She KNOCKS again, more insistent this time.

LAUREN

Hello...? It's Lauren Madden. I have to speak with you.

Still nothing. Not believing she's really doing it, but desperate, she moves to the windows, peers inside, to find --

THE HOUSE IS COMPLETELY EMPTY! All the furniture that was there before is gone!

Lauren tries opening the door, but it's locked. She backs away to the front walk. *What the hell is going on?*

Digging her phone out of her purse, along with a POST-IT, she DIALS Haley Starkwell's number. It RINGS...

LAUREN

Come on...

AUTOMATED VOICE (O.S.) (FROM PHONE)

We're sorry. You have reached a --

She gives the house one more look, then rushes to her car.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Peering in the window, eyes wide, Lauren can't believe it. THE HOUSE IS EMPTY, just like Alexis'. With one exception...

THE BOX OF CRUCIFIXES. CHARRED AND BURNT. The wall black.

Lauren spots something else on the floor. Leaning in for a better view, she sees Haley's ANKLE MONITOR, the light green.

Checking for anyone watching, Lauren picks up an edging stone from beside the porch. She moves to the sidelights and smashes the rock into the glass --

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lauren cautiously searches the house. Everything's gone.

She freezes as the floor CREAKS in the hallway connecting the first floor rooms. *The hall back to the front door.*

Eyes glued on the hall, she moves to where she can see down it. No one there. BUT THE BASEMENT DOOR IS OPEN.

Sneaking down the hall, ready to run, Lauren chances a peek down the basement stairs. On the landing at the bottom, she sees a massive MARK OF THE BEAST SYMBOL carved into the wall.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Bryson's car pulls up to the curb where Lauren sits waiting. Holding Haley's ANKLE MONITOR, now BEEPING and BLINKING RED.

Bryson and Walters get out and Lauren stands to meet them.

LAUREN

Good, I was hoping it would be you --

Bryson grabs Lauren's arm and turns her around forcefully. SLAPS HANDCUFFS AROUND HER WRISTS.

LAUREN

What the hell are you doing?!

WALTERS

What is wrong with you? Huh? Didn't you learn your lesson last night? This isn't a game! We've had it. We're taking you in.

LAUREN

On what charge?

Bryson snatches away the ANKLE MONITOR. Holds it up for her.

BRYSON

Breaking and entering. Criminal damage of state property. Interfering with an investigation. For starters.

WALTERS

Where's Haley? How'd you get this?

LAUREN

It was in the house! Haley and her mother are gone!

WALTERS

Then you call us and we put out an APB. You don't break into the house.

LAUREN

I wouldn't have! But Alexis is gone too! Something is going on!

WALTERS

Put her in the goddamn car. I'm done.

LAUREN

No! Wait! You have to see something inside the house. Let me show you. If I'm wrong, you can take me in.

Walters considers. Nods at Bryson.

WALTERS

Leave the cuffs on.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

Bryson and Walters stop on the landing, disconcerted. Lauren stands safely behind them, though her eyes couldn't be wider.

ON THE CONCRETE FLOOR, A HUGE PENTAGRAM has been drawn in black paint, melted candles at each point. A SATANIC ALTAR against the wall is covered in RITUAL INSTRUMENTS and OCCULT TRINKETS beneath blacked-out windows.

BRYSON

How do we know you didn't do this?

LAUREN

Do you see any paint on me, asshole?!

WALTERS

All right, calm down --

LAUREN

Haley said her mother was in a cult.
Bellamy said he was doing what "they" told him to.

Walters inspects the altar. Reaches down and picks up a SNIPPET OF HAIR. The same color as Haley's.

LAUREN

What if Haley was right? What if this is all connected to a cult?

WALTERS

Enough. We'll get CSI to clean this out. In the meantime, two fugitives and their parents are out there.

Walters uncuffs Lauren...

LAUREN

Those girls are in danger. You have to find them --

WALTERS

And we will. Now look, I know your heart's in the right place, but you slip up one more time, those cuffs won't come off. Final warning.

INT. D.F.P.S. - SHELDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheldon looks up from the mountain of paperwork on his desk as Lauren comes in.

LAUREN

You're going to be pissed, but you need to hear this.

Sheldon flicks his pen onto the desk, already in a bad mood.

LAUREN

It's all tied, Shel. I know it is. Bellamy's suicide, the girls not remembering killing their babies. And now Alexis and Haley are both missing.

Sheldon listens, a look of growing trepidation on his face.

SHELDON

Lauren. You have to stop this.

LAUREN

Haley's basement was full of occult symbols and ritual instruments, and both girls said they believed their babies were evil. I think a cult is behind all of it somehow --

SHELDON

Lauren! Let it go. All of it. Please.

LAUREN

Let it go? Shel, how the hell am I supposed to let this go? What if these people are after me?!

He considers his answer, careful with what he says.

SHELDON

Then you need to get as far away from this as you can. Let the police handle it.

LAUREN

The police? By the time they figure out what's going on, me and my baby could be dead.

SHELDON

Or, there's no one after you and it's all in your head. There's a level of paranoia here I don't think is healthy. With all the stress you're under, I'm not surprised, but --

Lauren glares at him. Betrayed on a level she never thought possible.

LAUREN

Paranoia? I can't believe you!

SHELDON

I'm putting you on maternity leave. Effective immediately.

LAUREN

What?! You can't do that!

SHELDON

You're losing control, and I won't allow it to continue. You've given me no choice. Pack up and go home. Now.

Seething, Lauren storms out. Sheldon stares after her, nearly as angry. But not at her. He glances at the picture of his SON (REED, 20s) on his desk. Then grabs his coat...

SELMA (PRE-LAP)

I knew you were going to visit today.

INT. SELMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lauren's freaked the hell out after what just happened. Standing just inside the house, she looks around at Selma's odd decor style.

SELMA

You've been on my mind.

Relics from a slew of world religions cover the walls. CRUCIFIXES, MENORAHS, CHINESE BAGUA MIRRORS, BUDDHA STATUES, NORSE RUNES, SAMOAN AITU PAINTINGS, the list goes on... A BOOK catches Lauren's eye -- "*DEMONOLOGY AND THE DARK ARTS*."

LAUREN

I need you to tell me more about the Antichrist.

SELMA

Is this still for your case? You're much more... direct than before.

Lauren considers long and hard. SIGHS, embarrassed...

LAUREN

I know how this sounds, but...
there's some kind of cult after my
baby. I think they believe he's the
Antichrist. I need to know why.

Selma goes to her bookshelf and retrieves a few BOOKS. Opens
them all on the table to specific passages showing STAR
ALIGNMENTS and MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS.

SELMA

Have you heard of Astrogeographia?

LAUREN

Is that like Astrology?

SELMA

Astrogeographia has nothing to do
with predictions, girl. It's about
destiny. Studying the stars to know,
not guess, what will happen on Earth.

Selma guides Lauren through the open books as she talks.

SELMA

Every location on Earth is linked to
a certain star. Vienna, Austria for
example, is tied to Aldebaran, the
red eye of Taurus. Those trained in
this art study the stars and their
movements to extrapolate specific
places where important events will
occur here on Earth... as well as the
people who will play key roles.

LAUREN

How do they find connections to
people?

SELMA

Have you heard of Edgar Cayce,
Aleister Crowley, Nicolas Flamel? All
masters of the Occult. They knew that
dark energy peaks on certain days,
and Astrogeographia points to where
and with whom it is strongest. Beyond
that, it's a mystery, even to me...

LAUREN

I'm sorry, but that sounds ridiculous.
How does that explain a cult thinking
my baby is the Antichrist?

Selma opens a new book, shows Lauren A LIST OF SATANIC HOLIDAYS throughout the year.

SELMA

The Antichrist is a child like any other. The destiny of his mother is written in the stars too.

Lauren LOOKS OVER THE LIST... Her finger traces... FINDS A DATE... Her eyes widen.

LAUREN

My birthday's on a holiday.

Lauren suddenly grimaces, grabbing onto the table for support. She holds her belly, teeth gritted.

LAUREN

Feels like he's clawing...

Selma places her hand on Lauren's belly. The wide smile on her lips suddenly disappears. She drops to her knees, CLUTCHES HER CHEST as though in agonizing pain.

LAUREN

What's wrong!?

Selma quivers, A LOOK OF UTTER DESPAIR ON HER FACE. After a few moments, SHE YANKS HER HAND FROM LAUREN'S BELLY and BACKS AWAY IN TERROR. She cowers, can't even look at Lauren...

SELMA

Stay back! Keep that thing away from me! Get out of my house!

LAUREN

Selma, what happened? I don't --

Selma suddenly rears up -- HER FACE MORPHS INTO A RICTUS SCREAM! BLACK VEINS BULGE BENEATH HER SUDDENLY COLORLESS SKIN! 8-BALL HEMORRHAGES IN BOTH TERRIFIED EYES --

SELMA

GET OUT! DON'T EVER COME BACK!

Lauren stumbles back and runs out the front door --

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Wiping away tears, Lauren speeds through the city, nerves shot. Her PHONE DIALS OVER BLUETOOTH. Then --

KYLE (O.S.)(OVER BLUETOOTH)

I was just talking about you --

LAUREN
Can you meet me at my house?

KYLE (O.S.)(BLUETOOTH)
Whoa. What's wrong? Are you crying?

UP AHEAD, Lauren spots a POLICE DETOUR. Slows to see...

A CRASHED 18-WHEELER blocks the road. A COP redirects traffic, forcing her down a side street...

LAUREN
Just, can you?! Please?

KYLE (O.S.)(BLUETOOTH)
Of course. I'll leave right now.

Lauren hangs up as --

A FLAGMAN at a construction zone steps into the street, diverting her down yet another side street...

RED LIGHT AHEAD, Lauren slows to a stop as PEDESTRIANS fill the crosswalk. Frustrated, she cries, shaking the wheel. But as she looks up, she locks eyes with --

ALEXIS?! Dressed in black with a dark disposition to match. Nothing like the innocent girl-next-door Lauren met before. Alexis stares at Lauren, shocked, then --

LAUREN WATCHES THE GIRL RACE OFF INTO THE SEA OF PEOPLE! The light can't turn green fast enough -- *Come on, come on!!*

SCREECH! LAUREN RUNS THE RED, NARROWLY AVOIDING A COLLISION. She scans the crowded sidewalk as she drives. *Where is she?!*

There! She spots the girl across the street, amidst the swarm of pedestrians. LAUREN PEELS TO THE CURB and hops out. Sees a break in traffic and rushes across the street --

UP AHEAD, Alexis rushes on, head down, but no longer running.

Lauren catches up, grabs her shoulder. Spins her around --

It is her. As hope spreads across Lauren's face --

LAUREN
Alexis! Oh my god, are you okay?!

-- Alexis' eyes fill with dread at the sight of Lauren. She immediately scans passersby, paranoid. Terrified.

LAUREN
What happened?! Did they hurt you?!

ALEXIS
You're gonna get us fucking killed.

LAUREN
By who?! Who's doing this?!

Alexis sees the pain on Lauren's face. *Should I help her?*

LAUREN
Alexis, please! They want my baby! We
can help each other!

ALEXIS
No one can help you. Leave me alone.

Alexis turns, runs off --

LAUREN
Alexis! Alexis!

Lauren gives chase, but Alexis deftly weaves through the crowded sidewalk, determined to escape. Lauren struggles, tries to keep up, but --

HOMELESS MAN (O.S.)
... his life must be protected!

A HOMELESS MAN (60s), dressed in worn black rags, cuts into her path! Lauren GASPS at the sight of him --

HIS CLOUDY, BLIND EYES BLEED DOWN HIS PALE, EMACIATED FACE. His skin is almost translucent, UNNATURALLY BLACK VEINS BRANCHING UP FROM HIS NECK TO HIS FACE. ALMOST DEMONIC.

THE MAN REACHES FOR HER PREGNANT BELLY!

HOMELESS MAN
He is the future!

LAUREN SCREAMS! Two YOUNG MEN (30s) rush over, pulling the homeless man away, restraining him!

Breathless, Lauren looks at her saviors, only to find --

THEY ALSO LOOK DEMONIC, blood dripping from their eyes --

LAUREN SHRIEKS, backing away in fear!

PASSERSBY GASP AND STARE! ALL OF THEM TURN DEMONIC AS LAUREN STARES, TERRIFIED! Their seemingly OMNIPRESENT GOSSIPING VOICES overwhelm Lauren, REACHING A FEVER PITCH!

"What a psycho!" "What's wrong with her!?" "Freak!"

She closes her eyes tight, covers her ears, drowning it all out as best she can! And after a moment...

EVERYTHING IS BACK TO NORMAL. Lauren looks up to find --

The homeless man wanders away, MUMBLING to himself while the crowd of ONLOOKERS stare back at her, disturbed.

And then Lauren remembers -- Alexis! She pushes through the parting crowd. Looks up the block just in time to see --

ALEXIS. About to hop onto a TRANSIT BUS. She gives one final look back at Lauren, DEEPLY CONFLICTED... Then boards --

Lauren watches in despair as the bus drives off...

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - LAUREN'S HOUSE - LATER

Lauren pulls into her driveway. Overwhelmed by everything that's been going on, she leans her head back, closes her eyes and SIGHS DEEPLY. When she opens her eyes, she sees --

A DARK SILHOUETTE, LIKE A MAN IN A HOODED ROBE, IN HER BEDROOM WINDOW ON THE SECOND FLOOR! As dread overwhelms her --

KNOCK-KNOCK -- Lauren jumps! Turns to find Kyle in the passenger side window, bag of groceries in hand. His smile disappears, realizing she's terrified about something.

KYLE
(muffled through glass)
Whoa -- Are you okay?

Lauren looks back up to her bedroom window to find --

THE DARK SILHOUETTE IS GONE...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

The door swings open revealing --

Kyle, metal softball bat in hand. He enters the room, Lauren just behind him, and flips on the light. No sign of anyone.

LAUREN
The closet.

Kyle makes his way to the walk-in closet. Grabs the doorknob. Swallowing his fear, he yanks open the door to find --

Nothing. Just a closet full of clothes and shoes. Relief.

KYLE
There's no one here.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

Lauren sits on a stool at the island counter, biting her nails, as Kyle cleans up their dirty plates at the sink. He grabs Lauren's plate -- She hardly touched her food...

LAUREN

I think I'm losing my mind.

KYLE

Nah, it's just stress. Happens to the best of us.

LAUREN

Seeing things happens to the best of us?

KYLE

That could've been anything. Weird shadows, or reflections, or like --

LAUREN

Why do you think Alexis said I was going to get us killed?

Kyle throws out the empty grocery bag. Sits on the stool beside her.

KYLE

I think she's just scared. She probably just said that so you'd leave her alone.

LAUREN

No, her fear was real. She must know something about my --

Lauren stops herself.

KYLE

Something about your what?

She shrinks, embarrassed -- *How could he believe me?*

KYLE

Look, you called me for a reason. Whatever it is, you can tell me. It's poison if you keep it inside.

LAUREN

It's nothing. Really. It's just... It's being pregnant, it's work, it's my mom, it's... Okay, it's everything. But I'll be fine. I always am.

KYLE

I know you will be. You're strong.
It's a lot right now, but we'll get
through it.

(realizes what he said)

-- You'll get through it. I meant.
Sorry. Freudian slip?

Kyle blushes. Lauren manages a smile, a bit distant.

KYLE

I know we've only known each other for
a little while, but I do want you to
know that... Ya know, I care about
you. And... I'm glad you called.

They meet eyes for a moment as --

ScreeeeEEEECH! The teapot on the stove SCREAMS -- Nerves
still frayed, it's like nails on a chalkboard to Lauren. She
bolts up before Kyle can. Turns it off. Grabs a coffee mug
from a cabinet...

Lauren pours the boiling hot water into the mug. Misjudges
how full the teapot is --

TSSSS! SPILLS A GOOD AMOUNT ON HER HAND --

LAUREN

Shit!

KYLE

Don't move!

Kyle rushes to the freezer. Grabs a couple ice cubes... and
holds them on her hand, his hands enveloping hers.

KYLE

You okay? Let me look...

Kyle removes the ice, wipes away the water revealing --

NOTHING. No trace of a burn whatsoever. *What the hell...?*

KYLE

Does it hurt?

Lauren shakes her head, bewildered.

KYLE

Wow. I thought you burned yourself.

Kyle checks the water in the teapot. It's very VISIBLY
SCALDING HOT, steam rising...

LAUREN

Me too. I guess it missed...

But Lauren's troubled eyes betray her words.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Sitting on the couch, empty tea cups on the table and the baseball bat between them, Kyle works up the courage to say:

KYLE

Hey, I was thinking. You shouldn't be alone tonight. Just in case, ya know? I could stay. Down here, on the couch. Obviously.

LAUREN

God, I must seem like a train wreck.

KYLE

What? Not at all. But even if you were, I'd be on board for that.

Lauren smiles despite herself.

LAUREN

You sure you don't mind staying...?

KYLE

Lauren, seriously? I'm happy to.

LAUREN

Thanks. I haven't felt safe. For a while. But, when I'm with you...

KYLE

You never have to be alone if you don't wanna be. Okay?

Something stirs in Lauren. She lets go of her past, if only for a moment. She leans over... Kyle leans in... AND THEY KISS. It's everything a first kiss should be, until --

Lauren pulls away, her past catching back up with her. But before she can even apologize --

KYLE

Hey, it's okay. I know this is hard for you. You should go get some rest.

She nods, heads for the stairs -- Stops and turns back.

LAUREN

I meant it though. The kiss...

KYLE

Sweet dreams. If you need anything,
I'll be right here.

Lauren heads up the stairs and out of sight...

Once he's alone, Kyle does a quick dance move, ecstatic.
Plops down on the recliner, softball bat at his side. Grabs
the TV remote -- CLICK --

ON THE TV, a NEWS REPORT, live from the ongoing Papal
Enclave. BLACK SMOKE again rising...

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

... that black smoke signifying that
yet again, the Cardinals have been
unable to reach a consensus.

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Lying in bed, the cracked bedroom door casting a sliver of
light on Lauren's face, she listens to the faint SOUNDS OF
TELEVISION COMING FROM DOWNSTAIRS. Kyle. She smiles, happy
she's not alone. She settles in, closes her eyes --

AND A SHADOW MOVES OVER HER FACE. SOMEONE JUST PASSED BY THE
DOORWAY...

Lauren's eyes open. She sits up, looks at the doorway.
Nothing's blocking the light. Then --

KA-CHUNK -- A door closes somewhere in the upstairs hallway.

LAUREN

Kyle...?

No response. Panic rising, she quietly makes her way to the
door, swings it open. Steps into --

THE HALLWAY. The faint glow from downstairs illuminates the
dark length of hallway just enough for Lauren to see there's
nothing down there. *That she can see.*

She peeks over the second floor landing to see Kyle below in
the recliner, watching TV --

BEHIND LAUREN, far down the hallway in the darkness,
SOMETHING SHROUDED IN A BLACK HOODED CLOAK PASSES, leaving
one room and entering another --

KA-CHUNK -- Another door closes down the hall.

LAUREN

Kyle!

KYLE JUMPS! Baseball bat in his grip, he looks up, relieved to see Lauren looking down from the landing.

KYLE
Holy shit, you scared me.

LAUREN
I heard doors closing.

Kyle bolts up the stairs to her side. Looks down the hall into the darkness.

KYLE
Which doors?

LAUREN
I don't know.

Kyle FLICKS ON THE HALLWAY LIGHT. Light surrounds them.

KYLE
Wait right here, okay? I'm gonna check every room. If you hear anything, get out of the house.

LAUREN
Why don't we just call the cops?

KYLE
Call them. But if someone's in the house, we could be in trouble before the cops get here.

Lauren nods. Pulls out her cell phone and dials as Kyle heads down the hallway...

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
911, what's your emergency?

... disappears from Lauren's view into the spare bedroom. LIGHT fills that room, reflecting into the hall.

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)
Someone's in my house. 2718 Field Drive. Please send someone.

Kyle enters another room, again disappearing from view. CLICK! -- More light floods out in to the hall.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
We're dispatching someone now, ma'am.
Are you in a safe place?

Then Lauren hears it. WHISPERING, down the hall. Seemingly coming from the closed door of the baby's nursery.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
Ma'am? Are you there?

She's oddly drawn toward it. She moves down the hall. Approaches the nursery. Almost paralyzed with fear, Lauren reaches for the doorknob... Forces her hand to turn it --

CLICK -- The latch releases, but Lauren holds the door closed. Gulps down her fear. Finally, she shoves the door open and flicks on the light revealing --

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
Ma'am? Hello...? Ma'am, are you okay?

THE BABY'S NURSERY. Lauren walks into the room. The WHISPERS immediately draw her attention to --

THE TEPEE IN THE CORNER. In its recesses, TWO POINTS OF LIGHT STARE BACK. Lauren instinctively turns to the rocking chair --

THE STUFFED BEAR IS IN ITS PLACE AMONG THE OTHER ANIMALS!!

Terrified, Lauren meets THE EYES IN THE TENT again. They blink as, from the CACOPHONY OF UNINTELLIGIBLE VOICES, ONE SUDDENLY RISES ABOVE THE REST --

DISEMBODIED VOICE (O.S.)
... kill your baby...

POOF! THE TENT BLOWS OUT -- LAUREN SCREAMS IN TERROR!

KYLE (O.S.)
LAUREN!?

Kyle bolts into the room and she grabs onto him, dissolves to tears. Kyle hugs her tight.

LAUREN
Did you hear them?! The voices!

KYLE
I didn't hear anything. What happened? What'd you --

But then his face sinks at the sight of --

THE MARK OF THE BEAST! Spray-painted on the vaulted ceiling!

KYLE
Oh my god...

Lauren looks up to see the symbol, eyes bulging with fear, as Kyle rushes her out of the room...

INT. SHELDON'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Sheldon looks like shit. A half empty bottle of single malt on the desk beside a .9MM PISTOL. He paces back and forth, cell phone to his ear. Someone picks up --

SHELDON

We need to meet. No, in person.
.... I need to know he's okay.
Please! Goddammit! Don't you
hang up on me! Please --

CLICK! Enraged, Sheldon dissolves to tears. As he WEEPS --

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

A BEAT COP (30s) jots in his note pad. Lauren looks like she's been through hell. Kyle has a supportive arm around her.

BEAT COP

House is empty. No signs of forced
entry. I'd recommend changing your
locks just in case.

LAUREN

Doesn't that seem odd to you?!
Someone was able to get in here
without a key, spray paint my baby's
nursery and leave without a trace?

BEAT COP

We see this sort of thing fairly
often. Worst case, you call us if
something turns up missing.

LAUREN

This wasn't a thief! This was
something... paranormal!

The cop flatly stares at Lauren. *Did she really just say that?*

KYLE

Thank you for checking it out.

Kyle closes the door. Turns to find Lauren holding her belly.

KYLE

You all right?

She meets his gaze, dread filling her eyes. WE HEAR a rapid
HEARTBEAT that BECOMES --

INT. EPPERSTEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

THE RAPID WOOSH WOOSH of the baby's HEARTBEAT projects from the ULTRASOUND MONITOR's speakers as Epperstein moves the wand around Lauren's naked, gel-covered belly.

EPPERSTEIN

There he is. Heartbeat sounds healthy, and he's sleeping soundly.

Lauren watches the image of BEN JR. on the screen. Part of her, yet still so alien after all these months.

LAUREN

Something's wrong. I know it is.

EPPERSTEIN

Nothing's wrong. You're both doing very well. We should really start planning for his arrival.

LAUREN

You're not listening. I'm seeing things! I'm hearing voices!

EPPERSTEIN

And what do they say?

LAUREN

... Nothing good.

EPPERSTEIN

Lauren, you stressed your mind and body to their limits, just like I said you would. With everything you saw and heard before you finally took maternity leave, it's no wonder you're going through this. But it will pass.

LAUREN

What if it doesn't? What if there is something wrong and you just can't see it?

EPPERSTEIN

Then I wouldn't be very good at my job. Luckily, I'm the best in Austin.

Epperstein pats Lauren's hand reassuringly. Lauren stares at the being growing inside her. IT TURNS. *IS HE LOOKING BACK!?*

Epperstein switches off the monitor. Ben Jr. disappears...

EPPERSTEIN

Have you thought about who will bring you to the hospital? Will they stay with you in the delivery room?

LAUREN

I'm not really sure. After Ben died in January, my mom got sick and my sister's been taking care of her --

EPPERSTEIN

January? I thought -- When exactly did Ben die?

LAUREN

January 26th. A car crash, remember?

EPPERSTEIN

You never said it was January.

LAUREN

I guess -- Ok. What does that matter?

EPPERSTEIN

Lauren, with your due date, the conception couldn't have occurred prior to February.

LAUREN

Ben and I were intimate the night before the crash. And January 26th is practically February --

EPPERSTEIN

No. Even if that were the case...

LAUREN

What? What are you saying?

EPPERSTEIN

Lauren... I don't know how to tell you this, but... There's no way this baby is Ben's.

Her worst fear seemingly confirmed, Lauren blanches...

INT. RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - NAVE - NIGHT

At this late hour, the pews are empty. The church seeming abandoned save for one lonely occupant.

Exhausted, frightened, Lauren cries before a STATUE of JESUS CHRIST, its arms outstretched and inviting. In a bank of VOTIVE CANDLES, a couple FLAMES silently keep vigil.

Staring at the statue's eyes, Lauren awkwardly bows her head to pray. It's clear she hasn't done this in a while.

LAUREN

Please God. I know I haven't spoken to you since Ben -- since you took him from me. I hated you. How could you let him die? How could you --

She cuts herself off. Tearing up, she wills herself to keep it together. Her knuckles white as she clasps her hands.

LAUREN

I know you probably gave up on me. I understand if you did. I would've --

FUP... ONE OF THE VOTIVE CANDLES IN THE BANK LIGHTS ITSELF. Her eyes closed, she doesn't notice.

LAUREN

But I'm scared. I don't know where else to go. So I'm here to make peace. With you, with what happened.

FUP, FUP... A COUPLE MORE CANDLES IGNITE IN THE BANK.

LAUREN

If you are still there, protect my baby. And me. Fix whatever's wrong with me. Take it away --

FUP, FUP, FUP... MORE CANDLES LIGHT UP ALL AROUND THE CHURCH.

LAUREN

I don't know what's happening to me. If there's something wrong with my baby -- I can't do this alone...

Finally sensing the brightness around her, Lauren opens her eyes to find... FLAMES SURROUND HER ON ALL SIDES.

She turns and sees the candles down the long aisle to the door light themselves -- FUP, FUP, FUP, FUP, FUP!

Terrified, she bolts to her feet and backs away. In the flickering candlelight, JESUS' FACE LOOKS SINISTER.

LAUREN

No --

She turns and runs for the door.

INT./EXT. SHELDON'S PASSAT - MOVING - NIGHT

Still a mess, Sheldon maneuvers through dense city traffic. Glances up into his --

REARVIEW MIRROR. Clocks a RED CHEVY IMPALA. Four cars back.

Sheldon switches lanes... SO DOES THE IMPALA. *He's being tailed.*

INT./EXT. SHELDON'S PASSAT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Sheldon pulls into his driveway. Waits a moment. Then --

The red Chevy Impala cruises past. Windows tinted. Too dark for Sheldon to see inside.

Gripping the wheel, Sheldon's anger rises. He considers. *Fuck this.* He backs out of his driveway and speeds off...

INT. SHELDON'S PASSAT - CONTINUOUS

Sheldon leans over the steering wheel, focused on the red Impala ahead. Trying to avoid hitting the cars in his way.

SHELDON

Move! Goddamn people!

As he nears the Impala, he matches its speed. Keeping his eyes on the prize, he reaches down and comes up with a LEGAL PAD and a PEN. Jots down the license plate...

SHELDON

(writing aloud)

B20... D.D.X. Got you now, asshole.

EXT. RURAL STREET - OUTSKIRTS OF AUSTIN - A SHORT TIME LATER

The Impala zips along a country road with no streetlights. HEADLIGHTS burning a path through the pitch darkness that stretches to forever.

EXT. COMPOUND GATE - OUTSKIRTS OF AUSTIN - CONTINUOUS

A single SPOTLIGHT illuminates a GOLDEN ADDRESS PLAQUE fixed to the stone arch housing an ORNATE WROUGHT IRON GATE.

HEADLIGHTS approach and the Impala pulls up, stopping at the arch. The GATE LURCHES and swings open to reveal a long DRIVEWAY. The car rolls through the gateway and snakes along the driveway into the darkness...

A MOMENT LATER, Sheldon's Passat crawls into view, stopping across the road from the gate. Headlights off.

The passenger window rolls down and Sheldon leans over the seat to get a better look. Watches the fading RED GLOW of the Impala's taillights until the GATE CLOSES, blocking his view.

His gaze moves to the address plaque...

SHELDON

134...

As he grabs his LEGAL PAD, we see --

A SECURITY CAMERA mounted on the top of the stone archway. Hidden by the darkness. Then we CUT TO --

INSERT - SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE

Sheldon in a GRAINY, BLACK AND WHITE shot from the gate. He WRITES in the legal pad, then gives one more look directly at us (the camera). His face clear as day. Then he turns back to the wheel and puts the car in gear.

BACK TO SCENE

Sheldon's Passat SWINGS AROUND in a U-turn, then speeds off for Austin. A SLOW, OMINOUS BEEP... BEEP... BEEP rises as --

INT. SETON MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

A HEART MONITOR BEEPS in a healthy rhythm. Her skin a healthier color, her eyes brighter, Ruth sits in a hospital bed looking better than we've ever seen her. Except for the concern on her face.

RUTH

That's impossible. Were you having an affair?

Lauren, perched on the edge of the bed, looks terrible.

LAUREN

No! Of course not. But my OB said the dates don't line up. She said the baby can't be Ben's.

RUTH

Why would you believe that then? Doctors are wrong all the time! Look at me, for Heaven's sake. I had three doctors tell me I had no chance. Now my tumors are almost gone.

LAUREN

Yeah, but... Things have been happening. To me. Around me.
(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)
People have been hurt. I think it's
because of me. Because of --

Ruth stares at her, confused and disturbed. *Because of what?*

LAUREN
What if God gives up on you?

RUTH
God doesn't give up on anyone. I'm
living proof of that.

LAUREN
You've always gone to church on
Sunday and said your prayers every
night. Not everyone keeps that up.

RUTH
You have to keep the faith that
you're a part of God's plan, honey.
We all do.

Somewhat relieved, Ruth takes Lauren's hand. Lauren can't
deny it, though she's clearly fighting.

RUTH
Nothing is wrong. With you or the
baby. In the end, everything will
work out just like it's supposed to
and we'll all be together. I promise.

INT. D.F.P.S. - SHELDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sheldon's face glows in the light of his computer monitor.
His troubled eyes digest --

ON THE SCREEN, a DMV REPORT for Texas license plate B20*DDX.
The license plate number from last night. Sheldon scrolls
down the page, lands on THE REGISTRANT'S DRIVER'S LICENSE --

IT'S BRYSON. Only his hair is longer and the name on the ID
is "ROGERS, CLIFTON P."

SHELDON
What have I done?

A NOISE IN THE HALLWAY captures Sheldon's attention. He
listens, on edge. Silence. Then --

POWER IN THE BUILDING GOES OUT, light from outside casting
odd shadows across the office as a BIZARRE QUIET settles over
the room, like a pall. Shadows seem to move. *Impossible.*

Sheldon watches, frozen, his QUICKENING HEARTBEAT AUDIBLE in the dark, until --

CRASH! THE GLASS ON HIS OFFICE DOOR SHATTERS!

Sheldon bolts to a window. Throws it open and falls out. Runs off, terrified for his life...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

WATER RUSHES from the faucet into the bathtub. Lauren turns the knobs to stop it, the tub full. HEAVY RAIN CLAPS against the roof and windows as --

Lauren undresses, putting her SMARTPHONE on the vanity. SHE DOESN'T NOTICE THE BABY MONITOR ATOP THE TOILET as --

BZZZT -- Her phone vibrates to life. It's "SHELDON" calling. Lauren lets it RING, then slides down under the water. As she relaxes into the warmth --

WE TILT UP, drifting out to --

EXT. LAUREN'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

IT'S PITCH BLACK. THE RAIN IS RELENTLESS. IT'S ALL WE CAN HEAR IN THE DARKNESS --

BA-DOOOOM! THUNDER CLAPS IN THE DISTANCE...

A moment later, a streak of lightning illuminates the backyard revealing --

HOODED CULTISTS. Twenty of them, on their knees, in a circle. They bow in unison, performing some sort of PRAYER RITUAL. A CHANT is BARELY AUDIBLE through the downpour --

BA-DOOOOOOOM! Another THUNDER CLAP. A flash of lightning strobes in the sky, again illuminating --

THE CIRCLE OF CULTISTS. Only now, in the middle of them, a VANTABLACK VOID HOVERS PRETERNATURALLY.

Oddly, even once pitch blackness returns, we can still see the void, somehow darker than the night.

EXT. SHELDON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheldon's car flies up the driveway. He jumps out, reaching back in for his briefcase, but --

THE DOOR VIOLENTLY SLAMS ITSELF SHUT. Freaked out, he stares at it a moment. But in his peripheral vision he sees --

THE ONLY STREETLIGHT ON THE BLOCK GROWS BRIGHTER, THEN EXTINGUISHES. DARKNESS FALLS LIKE A SHEET. The moonlight casts ODD SHADOWS on the ground all around. *Not again.*

Terrified, Sheldon runs for his front door, but THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ENCIRCLES HIM. FROM THE DRIVEWAY BEHIND. THE PORCH AHEAD. He freezes, clutching his briefcase to his chest.

SHELDON
I've done everything you asked!

But then he sees them --

THE ODD SHADOWS ON THE LAWN MOVE! SPINDLY, UNNATURALLY LONG LIMBS UNFURL FROM EXAGGERATED HUMAN FORMS, LIKE SHADOWS CAST AT DUSK. TWO-DIMENSIONAL BODIES FILL OUT TO THREE AS THEY RISE FROM THE GROUND!

Sheldon races for his front door in terror, not chancing a single look back! Not seeing what we see: SEVEN-FOOT SPIDERY SHADOWS CHASING... REACHING... NEARLY ENSNARING HIM --

INT. SHELDON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SLAM! Sheldon makes it inside, locks the door. Braces it with his body. HEART POUNDING. But nothing tries to get in. He glances through the window outside. SEES NOTHING.

He turns and takes a step, but his eyes go wide as he sees --
HIS SON, REED (20s). Tied to a chair. Bloodied, beaten. DEAD.

SHELDON
Reed?! Reed --

CLICK -- Sheldon turns back, finds himself face-to-face with the cold steel of HIS OWN .9MM PISTOL. WE CAN'T SEE WHO'S HOLDING THE GUN, but as SHELDON STARTS TO SCREAM, THE GUN RAMS INTO HIS OPEN MOUTH --

BLAM!

GORE AND BRAIN FRAGMENTS SPLATTER the inside of the window. DRIP... DRIP... DRIP...

INT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

DRIP... DRIP... DRIP... Water drips slowly from the faucet as Lauren lies with her head back, eyes closed. Then --

A CRACKLE OF STATIC FROM THE BABY MONITOR.

Lauren's eyes open. She lifts her head, looks to the vanity. THE BABY MONITOR IS GONE. Where is it? The CRACKLE again... FROM ANOTHER ROOM --

She sits up, instantly on high alert as the static suddenly breaks into "GOD ONLY KNOWS" BY THE BEACH BOYS. HER AND BEN'S WEDDING SONG. Lauren goes rigid in fear. Helpless. Naked. Unsure what to do. Then --

THE POWER CUTS OUT. PITCH. BLACK. INSTANTLY. But impossibly, THE SONG KEEPS PLAYING!

A frightened NOISE escapes Lauren before the SOUNDS OF SPLASHING. Then LAUREN'S FACE lights up in the darkness. She's out of the bath, SMARTPHONE in trembling hand.

Using the phone as a flashlight, she grabs a towel, whips it around herself. Builds her courage. Then runs. Out of the bathroom. Through the completely dark hallway. Into --

LAUREN'S BEDROOM

She SLAMS the door shut, turns the lock on the handle. She takes a terrified breath, then holds it as she hears a HEAVY FOOTSTEP on the other side of the door --

HER SMARTPHONE SUDDENLY DIES. CASTS EVERYTHING INTO BLACK...

WE LISTEN, BLIND, to a series of SOUNDS: LAUREN'S BARE FEET SCURRYING ON THE HARD WOOD FLOOR. HER DESPERATE WHIMPERS. A DRAWER YANKING OPEN, CONTENTS RUMMAGED THROUGH FRANTICALLY --

THEN THAT SAME HEAVY FOOTSTEP. THE FLOORBOARDS CREAK UNDER WEIGHT. AND "GOD ONLY KNOWS" KICKS UP AGAIN -- IN THE ROOM! BUT THE DOOR NEVER OPENED! Then --

BZZZZZT! A BRIGHT SPARK. The STUN GUN in Lauren's hand. Like a strobe light, the electricity creates a short burst of CRACKLING LUMINESCENCE that reveals Lauren's face.

AND A FEW FEET BEHIND HER, A GHASTLY WHITE FACE ATOP A DARK FORM. EYES FOCUSED ON HER. TEETH BARED IN A CHILLING GRIN. A DEMON. Then --

BLACK. The stun gun powers down...

BZZZZZT! Lauren triggers it again and THE DEMON'S GONE. She wheels around, searches the dark quickly. Sees nothing.

BLACK.

LAUREN
No, come on. Come on!

BZZZZZT! She rushes to her bureau, throws open the doors. Sets the stun gun down on a shelf to search inside...

BLACK. The sounds of LAUREN FEELING AROUND. Then --

BZZZZZT! She puts the stun gun down again. Reaches in and this time, pulls CANDLES from the bureau. A LIGHTER.

BLACK. We hear her PICK THE STUN GUN UP AGAIN. Then we hear the FLOORBOARDS CREAK. DANGEROUSLY CLOSE. Lauren YELPS.

BZZZZZT! THE GHASTLY WHITE FACE APPEARS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER! TEETH. BLOOD. HOLLOW, EVIL EYES, LIKE A SHARK! Lauren SCREAMS as THE DEMON LAUNCHES AT HER --

Just as it's CLAWS are about to skewer her, a BLINDING FLASH FILLS THE SCREEN AS EVERY LIGHT IN THE HOUSE SUDDENLY GLOWS BRIGHT, FAR BRIGHTER THAN NORMAL. EVERY BULB PUSHED BEYOND ITS NORMAL WATTAGE.

THE DEMON LETS OUT AN UNHOLY SHRIEK, DISAPPEARS along with the darkness -- "GOD ONLY KNOWS" abruptly cuts out. The lights dim back to normal and it's over...

BZZT -- Her cell phone vibrates to life on the floor. She grabs it and bolts out of the house --

EXT. LAUREN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rain still pouring, Lauren hurries toward her car as --

HOODED CULTISTS BLEED FORTH FROM THE DARKNESS AROUND THE HOUSE! THEY CHANT UNINTELLIGIBLY AS SHE HOPS INTO --

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She turns on the car, headlights illuminating --

HOODED CULTISTS AT THE FRONT END OF HER CAR! Lauren SCREAMS!

IN THE REARVIEW, Lauren sees the cultists surrounding the car, CHANTING LOUDLY IN AN UNFAMILIAR LANGUAGE!

EEERK! She hits the gas! PEELS past the parting cultists -- KACHUNK! -- Flies over the curb, onto the road. Speeds off...

Lauren SOBS, eyes darting back and forth between the road and the rearview. *What the fuck is going on!?*

A CALL RINGS over BLUETOOTH -- LAUREN SCREAMS! Realizes it's just a call. From "RESTRICTED." She hesitates. Answers --

FEMALE VOICE (OVER BLUETOOTH)

Lauren?

Lauren instantly recognizes that voice --

LAUREN
Alexis!?

ALEXIS (OVER BLUETOOTH)
I need to talk to you.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

The place is empty, save for the bored BARISTA (20s). It's near closing time and it's still downpouring outside.

Lauren and Alexis sit at a table together. Both on edge, they speak with a hushed urgency...

LAUREN
People are trying to kill me!

ALEXIS
They're after me, too.

LAUREN
Who?! Who are they?! Alexis --

ALEXIS
My name's not Alexis. It's Julia.

LAUREN
No it's not. Your parents signed legal documents. The police --

JULIA
They're not my parents. None of that was real. It's a lie. All of it.

Off Lauren's disbelieving look --

JULIA
Everything that's happening to you is manufactured. My parents, Haley, her mother, Bryson, Walters... They're not who they say they are. I've seen some of them. I know Haley --

LAUREN
You've seen some of them? What does that mean?

JULIA
At worship. Picture a big church with lots of members. You don't know everyone, but you recognize faces.

Lauren tries to contain a sudden burst of anger. Fails.

LAUREN

I don't believe you! How do I know
you're not the one who's lying!?

Julia's eyes fill with tears, rage...

JULIA

Because I fucking hate them! For
taking my baby from me!

She struggles to continue, but knows she has to...

JULIA

I was born into it. My parents are in
The Circle. So were Haley's.

LAUREN

The Circle?

JULIA

It's what they call themselves. But
it's a fucking cult. When I was
growing up, I was like any kid --
Your parents tell you to believe, so
you do. But it was fine. I'd go to
worship, but I never took any of it
that seriously. Then two years ago,
on my sixteenth birthday, my parents
brought me to meet with the elders.

LAUREN

Who are they? Do you know?

JULIA

No one knows. They wear these big
goat masks. Fucking freakshow. They
told me there was a bigger plan for
me. That I was now a woman and that
I'd been chosen by the stars to do
something to save the world. My
mother and father were so proud. That
was the last time I saw them.

Julia again dissolves to tears. Lauren finds the compassion
TO TAKE JULIA'S HAND. Julia fights through the tears.

JULIA

(re: Lauren's compassion)

That's why I'm here. You were kind to
me. I hadn't felt kindness in a long
time.

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

I wish I could do more, but I don't know how to help you, except to tell you the truth.

Lauren nods appreciation. Julia sobers at her next thought.

JULIA

They raped me. In some fucked up ritual. I don't remember much because they drugged me. And then I was pregnant. I wanted to hate that baby. But it wasn't his fault. He was more of a victim than I was. I knew I had to love him. I never understood the bond mothers have with their children. But as he grew inside of me, I felt real love for the first time in my life. And they took that away from me.

LAUREN

But why? It doesn't make any sense. Why would they want the three of you girls to kill your babies?

JULIA

As a sacrifice. To the dark forces. Once they're appeased, they grant you powers. I know it sounds insane, but it's true. They're powerful. Beyond anything you could imagine. I've seen things. They were in control of me. I was just a vessel. And my baby --

Devastated, Julia SOBS.

LAUREN

They did that to Haley and Constance?

JULIA

Haley did it herself. She's a true believer. Has been since we were kids. But Constance didn't grow up in The Circle. She was homeless. Vulnerable. They found her, took her in, helped her... Then they did it to her. But once her baby was gone, she was empty. We were friends...

LAUREN

I don't understand. How can they do all that? How do they control people?

JULIA

Gimme your purse.

LAUREN

What? Why?

SNATCH -- Julia grabs it from Lauren's hands. RIPS into the interior lining --

LAUREN

What are you doing? Stop --

Julia's fingers disappear into the lining. Pluck out an ONYX PENDANT SHAPED LIKE THE MARK OF THE BEAST!

Lauren can't believe it.

JULIA

Have you seen this mark anywhere else?

Shaken by this confirmation, Lauren nods.

JULIA

Your home, your office... Everywhere you go has been marked. The power in this symbol provides influence over the marked one. You. Have you been having visions? Hearing things?

(off Lauren's stunned silence)

You're seeing the other side.

LAUREN

How do I stop it?

JULIA

You can't. It won't stop until they have what they want.

Julia looks down at Lauren's belly. Lauren recoils --

LAUREN

What do they want with my baby!?

JULIA

You have to run. You have no choice --

LAUREN

Tell me, goddammit!

Julia builds her resolve. Glances at the barista who's thankfully not listening.

JULIA

They think he's the Antichrist.

All hope inside Lauren crumbles. Her worst fear realized.

JULIA

Just because those sick fucks believe
it doesn't make it true.

LAUREN

What are they going to do with him?

JULIA

I don't know. They never told me --

LAUREN

But you can find out. Please. You can
go back to them, pretend and --

JULIA

Are you crazy? I can't go back! Those
people don't leave loose ends. I'm
leaving on a train tonight or I'm dead.

Julia reaches across the table, grabs Lauren's hand --

JULIA

You should too.

FLASH! Lauren sees a VERITABLE CORPSE where Julia sits!
Lauren SCREAMS, backs away, toward the front doors!

The Barista rushes over, concerned, fearful --

BARISTA

Lady, are you okay?

But Lauren just keeps backing away, fright-filled eyes
transfixed on the corpse-like Julia.

JULIA

What? What did you see?! Where are
you going?! Lauren --

But Lauren turns and bolts out into the rainy night, as WE
HEAR the SOUND OF SOMEONE KNOCKING ON A DOOR --

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Kyle opens his front door to find Lauren standing there,
distraught, dripping wet. He pulls her inside --

LAUREN

Kyle. Help me, please!

KYLE

Lauren? Jesus, come in...

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Wrapped in a blanket on the couch, Lauren pleads, distraught, with Kyle beside her, rubbing her shoulders to warm her.

LAUREN

It's real! There's a cult. They set this all up. The murders, the girls. It was all just to find me. They're trying to kill me and take my baby --

KYLE

Hey, it's okay, you're safe. Calm down. How could they have done all that? Those girls killed their babies.

LAUREN

I don't know! But they did. You have to believe me.

KYLE

We need to call the cops --

LAUREN

No! They're part of it!

KYLE

How can the cops be part of it?

LAUREN

Kyle, please! Just trust me!

Kyle's not sold, but sees the desperation in her eyes.

LAUREN

Just keep us safe. Please --

KYLE

I will. You're safe. You'll always be safe with me. I promise.

Kyle wraps his arms around Lauren. Kisses her forehead as she closes her eyes, nuzzling into his chest. Temporary relief. Kyle struggles with something. But finally manages --

KYLE

... I love you.

Caught off guard, Lauren peers up into Kyle's vulnerable eyes. *Does he mean it?*

KYLE

I know maybe you're not ready, and
that's okay, I just... I wanted you
to know --

She leans in and kisses him. Deeper than their last kiss.
They don't hold back, months of build-up finally indulged.

A tea kettle SCREAMS from downstairs. They ignore it for a
moment, but then Kyle reluctantly pulls away. Worry washes
back across Lauren's face.

KYLE

It's all right. I'll get your tea and
be back in a sec. Okay?

Off Lauren's nod, Kyle exits. Closes the door after him...

BZZT -- Lauren reaches into her pocket, pulls out her --

CELL PHONE. On the screen, a notification reads, "NEW
VOICEMAIL FROM SHELDON MORITZ." Lauren hits "PLAY." Listens.

SHELDON (VIA SPEAKERPHONE)

Lauren, wherever you are, stop what
you're doing and call me. There's
something I've been keeping from you.
I thought I could protect you but --
(becoming emotional)
I was wrong. They've got Reed. I had
no choice. I'm so sorry. I love you
like you're my own. I only did it out
of love. Please know that.

As silence returns, Lauren dials quickly. But Sheldon's phone
goes straight to voicemail.

SHELDON (O.S.)(FILTERED)

Hello, you've reached the voicemail
of Sheldon Moritz. Please leave a
message and I'll get back to you.

BEEP.

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)

Shel, it's me. Whatever is going on,
I forgive you. Just, please call me.

She hangs up, shaken.

INT. AMTRAK STATION - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN - CONTINUOUS

Julia's seated, headphones on, trying hard to not give a shit. She looks up at the departure board. Her eyes catch one in particular --

LOS ANGELES -- 11:45PM -- ON TIME

Knee bouncing nervously, her eyes then fall on --

A MOTHER (30s) pushing a stroller stops nearby. Peeks around the canopy to look at her BABY DAUGHTER, fast asleep. The mother smiles down lovingly.

Julia frowns, tries to ignore it. But her gaze keeps drifting back. She watches the mother kneel down and gently lift the baby out of the stroller into her arms. Needing to hold her.

Reluctantly affected by the sight, her guilt wins over. She grabs her bag, rushes out of the station...

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Kyle enters to find Lauren sitting on the bed, right where he left her. He hands her the cup of tea --

KYLE
Careful. It's hot.

-- sits down beside her.

LAUREN
I think Shel's in trouble. He left me
a message. He sounded really scared.

DING -- The doorbell RINGS. Lauren bolts to the window. Looks down to see --

BRYSON AND WALTERS. At the front door.

LAUREN
What the hell are they doing here?!

KYLE
I called them.

LAUREN
What?! Why would you do that? I told
you, they're in on it!

KYLE
In on what, Lauren? They're cops. You
know these guys. Look, I meant it
when I told you I love you.
(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)

But I'm worried about you. That's why
I called them. They're here to help.

Lauren paces, feeling trapped, not getting through to him.

KYLE

Listen, I'll let them in and we can
talk. Next step is your call, okay?
Just wait here. It's gonna be fine.

He exits the room. Lauren immediately LOOKS TO THE WINDOW.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kyle heads down the stairs. Walks down the long hallway to the front door. Opens it to find Bryson and Walters, drenched --

A CAR ENGINE ROARS TO LIFE. They turn to find Lauren PEELING AWAY in her car. SHE FISHTAILS for a moment, too much gas for the soaked pavement. But she quickly rights the vehicle as --

Bryson and Walters scramble to their car. Kyle stares after them, in shock, as they REVERSE out and SPEED AWAY...

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Lauren zips down the road, cars whipping past. Looks --

IN THE REARVIEW. Bryson and Walters' car is closing in!

Panicked, she hits the gas, maneuvering through traffic!

THE CAR FOLLOWS, matching her speed! Gaining ground!

Lauren peels around a turn -- TAKES IT TOO SHARP --

EEEEEEERK -- WHAM! The car rolls -- WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! SLAMS INTO A TELEPHONE POLE! SPINS TO A STOP IN THE ROADSIDE GUTTER.

THE STALKING CAR slows to a stop. Walters and Bryson step out to search the wreck for signs of life, but a few CONCERNED CITIZENS run up to help. Not wanting to be seen, Walters and Bryson hop back into the car. Speed away. *No way she survived.*

INSIDE LAUREN'S OVERTURNED CAR, LAUREN AWAKENS. Upside-down, somehow alive. Her car has been reduced to a crushed heap of metal. Dazed, she unbuckles --

WHAM! She plunges to the ground on her back. Sees her cell phone beside her, shattered. *Shit.* She COUGHS. Blinks away the cobwebs, facing skyward. Can't believe her eyes as --

IN THE NIGHT SKY, SEVEN STARS ARE QUITE VISIBLY ALIGNED AND BURNING BRIGHT.

ONLOOKERS gather around as Lauren crawls out from under the twisted wreck. They COMMENT -- *"Did you see it?" "Miracle she's alive." "She should be dead."*

One GOOD SAMARITAN (male, 40s) checks on her --

GOOD SAMARITAN
Take it easy. We gotta get you to a hospital --

LAUREN
No. We're fine.

Lauren touches her belly.

GOOD SAMARITAN
Holy shit, you're pregnant! Someone call 911!!

IN THE CROWD, various onlookers speak on their cell phones. *Are they reporting the crash to the police? Or someone else?* Overcome with paranoia, Lauren rushes away from the crowd, but the Good Samaritan GRABS HER BY THE ELBOW --

GOOD SAMARITAN
Ma'am, you gotta get checked out --

LAUREN
Let go of me!

Lauren thrashes away, breaking free, jarring the man. As she disappears into the night...

EXT. COMPOUND GATE - OUTSKIRTS OF AUSTIN - NIGHT

Below the ODD CONFIGURATION OF STARS IN THE SKY, a CAB pulls up to the GATE. Hair tied back, dressed in black, Julia steps out. As the cab pulls away, she stands rooted in the cone of light from the single sconce, the only break in the darkness.

She stares up at the GOLDEN ADDRESS PLAQUE. "134." An address she clearly never thought she'd see again. And still fears.

Gathering her courage, she moves to the stone wall beside the gate and scales it. Drops into the darkness beyond.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Stealing through shadows and trees, Julia stops to scan the compound ahead...

A MANOR HOUSE looms large at the end of the long driveway. GUEST BUNGALOWS surround it, and farther into the hundred acres of walled-in pasture, a FARMHOUSE, BARN and STABLE.

Julia waits, looking for movement, but no one's around. Just the THICK DRONE OF CRICKETS. She races out of cover to the --

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She runs up to a SIDE DOOR, quickly CRANKING THE BULB of the exterior light above it. The light winks out. Crouching, she chances a quick peek through the 9-LITE WINDOW.

Scared but determined, she picks up a FIST-SIZED ROCK and SMASHES OUT THE LOWER LEFT PANE of the 9-lite. Waits... Listens... No one comes... No alarms raised...

She reaches in and unlocks the door, ducks into the house --

INT. MANOR HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

Julia sneaks through VARIOUS ROOMS of the house, stopping at each doorway to cautiously peek into the next room.

STONework and OLD WOOD mixed with HEAVY FABRICS and GOLDEN ACCENTS make the enormous house feel claustrophobic. ANTLERS and ANIMAL SKULLS adorn overly large FIREPLACES in each room.

BUT NO PEOPLE. As she darts through the place, Julia grows more terrified with each moment. *Where is everyone?*

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Nursing her head and wobbling on her feet, Lauren stumbles to a PAY PHONE outside the store. Grabs it to steady herself. She pulls the HANDSET free, tries to focus on the numbers...

A YOUNG COUPLE come out of the store, see the pregnant woman barely able to stand upright.

YOUNG MAN

Ma'am? Are you okay? Can we help --

Lauren cowers from them, squeezes her eyes shut before she can see what horror they'll transform into. She YELLS...

LAUREN

Get away! Leave me alone!

Startled, the young couple heads off. On the verge of tears, Lauren reads the instructions to make a collect call. But she can't remember anyone's phone number to dial. Except one...

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)

Ginny! You're there. Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God...

She devolves into SOBBING, relieved but still terrified.

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)
 Ginny, please! I need your help. I
 can't trust anyone. No, you have
 to believe me! I lost my phone and
 all my money In a car accident!
 Forget about that! Just please,
 please come get me. I'm so scared!

Her voice gives out to the SOBS. The body-shaking, ugly SOBS
 of utter despair and exhaustion. Reacting to what Ginny's
 saying, she pulls it together and looks around. *Where am I?*

LAUREN (INTO PHONE)
 It's a 7-11. Corner of... 10th and
 Lamar. Please hurry!

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - LATER

A WHITE BUICK ENCORE pulls up to the pay phone. The TINTED
 WINDOW ROLLS DOWN to reveal Ginny looking for Lauren.

After a moment, Lauren darts out from behind the dumpster at
 the side of the building. She runs to the car and jumps in.

INT. GINNY'S ENCORE - CONTINUOUS

Covered in grit and dirt and sweat from the accident and
 successive hours on the street, Lauren looks insane.

GINNY
 Oh my God. What happened to you?

LAUREN
 Just drive! Drive!

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

The Encore pulls out into the streets and speeds off.

LAUREN (O.S.)
 I need to get out of Austin!

INT. GINNY'S ENCORE - CONTINUOUS

Ginny keeps her hands on the wheel and her eyes on the road,
 speeding fast. Lauren cradles her belly as she hangs on.

GINNY
 Why? What the hell is going on?!

LAUREN
 You wouldn't believe me if I told
 you. Just get me out of here! Please!

Ginny tries to process whatever is happening to her sister.

GINNY

You said you were in an accident. Are you okay? Should I take you to the hospital --

LAUREN

Goddamn it, just drive, Ginny! We're not safe here!

GINNY

Where the hell do you want me to go?

LAUREN

I don't know...! I don't know...! I can't think anymore! Just not here!

GINNY

Okay, Jesus! Is my place far enough?

LAUREN

They can't be in San Antonio, can they?

Lauren's paranoid eyes scan other vehicles as Ginny takes her hand. Squeezes it tight. Lauren looks over to find Ginny in tears. Trying to process what's happening and failing.

LAUREN

Thank you. For coming for me.

GINNY

I won't leave you alone. I promise.

Lauren squeezes back, afraid to let go.

EXT. FREEWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Encore zips past, coursing through the dark. Leaving Austin in its taillights.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Julia creeps down a long hallway. Flickering wall lanterns barely illuminate the dark space. It's still eerily quiet.

She comes to the final room on the floor, enclosed by a large, ornately-carved wooden door. SEVEN STARS run vertically down its center.

Julia turns the knob -- CLICK. It opens. She eases the door open and steps into --

INT. THE WORSHIP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The light fixtures and walls are a deep red, casting a burgundy hue across all things in the sprawling room, including Julia. Rows of wooden pews fill the center of the space, leading up to --

A LARGE ALTAR. It takes up the entire width of the far wall. All manner of symbols are carved into the entirety of its flesh, like scars. At the base of the altar, a long glass case sits atop a thick oak mantle.

Julia balks, knowing that whatever lies within that glass case is powerful. Dangerous. She approaches nonetheless...

IN THE GLASS CASE is a LARGE, LEATHERBOUND BOOK. Covered with dried blood, as if to seal some sort of unholy deal. THE MARK OF THE BEAST EMBLAZONED ON THE COVER. The language of the text is unrecognizable. Ancient. But that's not what grabs Julia's attention, her eyes transfixed upon --

THREE PIECES OF ROTTING FLESH. They sit symmetrically inches apart in front of the book. Julia instantly realizes. They're UMBILICAL CORDS. Haley's baby. Constance's baby. Her baby --

APPROACHING VOICES ECHO IN from down the hall. Julia ducks in between two pews, terrified. She takes a peek to find --

A CULTIST ENTERING. Wearing a FULL HEAD MASK MADE FROM A REAL GOAT'S HEAD AND MANE. TALL HORNS reach up, making him over seven feet tall. He heads straight for the glass case and removes the blood-soaked book, tucking it into his robe.

As he heads out of the room, he stops, as if sensing something. Julia puts her hand over her mouth. *Don't breathe.*

And he exits leaving behind a relieved Julia...

INT. SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - CANCER WARD - SAME

WE FOLLOW A MAN IN A LAB COAT as he passes NURSES, DOCTORS, PATIENTS, VISITORS. He approaches a familiar door where a PAIR OF NURSES exits. As they continue past...

NURSE 1

It really is a miracle...

INT. RUTH'S ROOM - SETON HALL MEDICAL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Ruth is sound asleep, the TV DRONING in the background. Our UNKNOWN MAN enters, closes the door behind him. Reaches into his lab coat, pulls out --

A SYRINGE. Quickly sticks it into the medication port on Ruth's IV bag. Injects. The newly introduced fluid swirls in the IV bag, clouding it. Slowly makes its way down the tubing and into Ruth...

The unknown man exits the room as Ruth's HEARTBEAT BEGINS TO RACE -- BEEP... BEEP... BEEP, BEEP, BEEP-BEEP-BEEP --

INT. GINNY'S ENCORE - NIGHT

SOME TIME LATER, the car rolls to a stop. Lauren stirs in her seat, sits up and looks around. THROUGH HER OPEN WINDOW, nothing but dark wilderness. *What the hell?*

LAUREN
Where are we?

GINNY
It's okay. Just relax.

Lauren looks THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD to see --

WALTERS AND BRYSON standing in the beam of headlights. A gate behind them with a GOLDEN ADDRESS PLAQUE -- "134."

Lauren freaks, turns to Ginny as Walters and Bryson approach.

LAUREN
Ginny, go! Go! Drive! PLEASE!

GINNY
They're gonna help you --

LAUREN
No! They're trying to take my baby!

GINNY
They're not! You're delusional! These men are cops! They called me because they care. We all do. You need help --

BUT A RACKING PAIN SUDDENLY GRIPS LAUREN'S BELLY. She touches her seat, finds her WATER HAS BROKEN. *She's in labor!*

Through clenched teeth, Lauren begs...

LAUREN
PLEASE, GINNY! DRIVE!

GINNY
Lauren, don't make this harder than it already is --

LAUREN
THE BABY'S COMING!

GINNY
What do you mean? Like right n--

BANG!! WALTERS SHOOTS GINNY IN THE HEAD!! Blood splatters throughout the car, all over Lauren's clothes as Ginny's lifeless body folds into her seat.

Lauren SCREAMS. In pain. In agony. In despair. All at once.

Walters gives her a little wave through the window as --

A GLOVED HAND SUDDENLY DARTS IN THROUGH LAUREN'S OPEN WINDOW AND SMOTHERS HER CRIES WITH A DAMP CLOTH!!

Lauren flails wildly as her gaze moves to the HOODED CULTIST holding the cloth. Then the CHLOROFORM takes hold, and the fight slowly drains out of Lauren's body...

More HOODED CULTISTS open her door. They reach in, lift her out, taking care not to injure her --

Walters and Bryson remove Ginny's body, carry her over to the now empty passenger seat. Slide her in...

Bryson hops into the back seat as Walters jumps behind the wheel and pulls the car through the parting gate doors...

LAUREN'S POV: As she succumbs to the darkness, being carried through the woods, EVERYTHING GETS FUZZY. BLACK COLLAPSES IN.

OVER BLACK

WE HEAR A HEART BEAT AND ONLY A HEART BEAT... And with each beat WE CATCH BLURRY GLIMPSES --

GA-GLUG -- HANDS. HOLDING OUR ARMS. LEGS. MOVING US...

GA-GLUG -- OUR FEET BEING DRAGGED DOWN STONE STAIRS...

GA-GLUG -- SHADOWY FACES, OBSCURED BY HOODS, SURROUND US...

GA-GLUG -- CANDLELIGHT REFLECTING OFF RITUAL INSTRUMENTS...

GA-GLUG -- ROPE. ON OUR HANDS. OUR FEET. FACES...

GA-GLUG -- A DISTANT VOICE. MUFFLED. INDISCERNIBLE. Then the VOICE GROWS SHARP as THE BLACK CLEARS to reveal...

INT. UNDERGROUND RITUAL ROOM - NIGHT

LAUREN STARTLES AWAKE. The voice continues SCREAMING.

KYLE (O.S.)
 -- ren! Wake up! You have to wake up!

Her eyes regaining their clarity, Lauren shakes off the delirium only to discover SHE'S TIED TO A CONCRETE SLAB. Legs spread wide. And then she feels it. SHE'S IN LABOR!

SHRIEKING in pain, Lauren tugs at her restraints. Can't get free. A CONTRACTION makes her body go rigid. She SCREAMS...

... and the ROBED CULTISTS filling the room watch in glee. They QUIETLY CHANT something we can't make out as FOUR ELDERS DRESSED IN RED ROBES AND WEARING GOAT HEADS bow before Lauren.

Lauren's wild eyes move across the crowd, and she sees FAMILIAR FACES scattered throughout: Walters, Bryson, Haley, Charlene, Epperstein, Selma, Kelly and Ted Rose...

... AND UNNATURAL DEMONIC FIGURES LURKING IN THE DARK RECESSES OF THE ROOM.

And then her gaze finds KYLE. Tied to another SLAB beside hers. His face bruised, one eye swollen, blood pooled around his nose. Barely conscious but fighting to stay alert.

KYLE
 Lauren! Lauren, thank God!

LAUREN
 Kyle?! No! I'm sorry! I'm --

Another CONTRACTION racks her body. It's bad. Her SCREAMS deafening. At the foot of her slab, Epperstein takes a peek.

EPERSTEIN
 She's crowning! Not long now!

KYLE
 (despairing)
 Lauren, listen to me! I saw it! They showed me what your baby is.
 (barely getting it out)
 It's evil! You were right! It's going to be the end of us all!

LAUREN
 No. No, I can't believe that!

KYLE
 You have to! It's the truth!

FLASH! WE INTERCUT TO --

INT. MANOR HOUSE - LIBRARY - SAME

Rushing table to table, Julia scans all the OPEN BOOKS left lying around. Someone was doing a last-minute cram session.

WE CAN'T SEE WHAT SHE'S SEEING AS SHE PAUSES TO READ, just her reactions...

JULIA
(to herself)
It's impossible... Holy shit...

She backs away, stunned, eyes welling. But then resolution pushes away the tears. She RUNS out of the room with purpose.

BACK TO SCENE

KYLE
Lauren, please ... I'm so sorry! You
can't let him live! You --

Bryson steps over and SMASHES HIS FIST INTO KYLE'S FACE.
Lauren WAILS, her terror combining with her labor pains.

BRYSON
(to Kyle)
Shut your fucking mouth!

Kyle spits blood. Possibly teeth.

KYLE
Fuck you! FUCK ALL OF YOU!

LAUREN
(through her pain)
Leave him alone, you lying bastard!

KYLE
Lauren, you can stop them! Only you!

Haley Starkwell emerges from the group and steps between the slabs. Pulls an ORNATE KNIFE from inside her robe's sleeve...

LAUREN
No! Don't --

... and turns her back to her. RAISES THE KNIFE OVER KYLE...

LAUREN
NO! Kyle! Kyle, move!

KYLE
(yells at Haley)
YOU MOTHERFU --

... and PLUNGES IT DOWN INTO KYLE'S CHEST!! Kyle GRUNTS.

LAUREN
KYLE!! KYLE!! OH GOD!!

Kyle stares up at Haley in disbelief. A RIVULET OF BLOOD runs from the corner of his mouth down his cheek. Haley YANKS THE KNIFE out and Kyle's body jolts with the motion.

LAUREN
Kyle, no! Look at me! Look at me!!

He slowly turns his head toward her, dying quickly. With pleading eyes, he manages to get out his final words...

KYLE
You have to -- You have to kill the baby. You can't let him live...

Kyle EXHALES, and life leaves his body with THE DYING BREATH. Lauren immediately SCREAMS, WAILING for him... and for her.

LAUREN
NO!! NO! Oh my God, oh my God!!

Haley rubs her hand over Kyle's chest. Turns back to Lauren. FINGERS RED WITH KYLE'S STILL WARM BLOOD. She uses it to draw an INVERTED CROSS on Lauren's forehead. Then RUNS HER FINGER ACROSS HER LIPS, leaving a RED STREAK.

The cultists CHANT LOUDER as suddenly, another hellish contraction grips Lauren. THIS IS IT. Her body violently shaking, her gaze flies between DEMONS, CULTISTS, KYLE...

The CHANTING DROWNS OUT ALL SOUNDS as her mouth goes wide in a scream we can't hear. She BEARS DOWN AND PUSHES, nature taking over. Despite her suffering. Not wanting to let them win. Unable to stop what's happening. And then...

A BABY CRIES...

EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

IN THE SKY above the compound, the STARS COMPLETE THEIR ALIGNMENT AND A RADIANT, SUPERNATURAL LIGHT washes over everything. Turning the night bright as day.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The SUPERNATURAL LIGHT catches Julia as she sneaks quickly past a window on her way back out. She freezes, gazing out at the stars causing it. Equal parts terrified and awed.

INT. UNDERGROUND RITUAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Epperstein rises, holding a MOVING BUNDLE in her arms. HER RING IS THE MARK OF THE BEAST SYMBOL! Then she turns and holds BEN JR. up for all to see.

EPPERSTEIN

Behold! The child has come!

The cultists CHEER, the whole room filling with jubilation. All their years, decades, generations of work culminating in this moment.

All the attention away from her, LAUREN FIGHTS HER DESPERATE EXHAUSTION AND RABIDLY PULLS AT HER RESTRAINTS. NOW LOOSENED BY THE VIOLENT BIRTH...

Turning from the celebrating cultists, Epperstein lowers the baby so Lauren can see it...

EPPERSTEIN

He's beautiful, Lauren. He's going to change the world. With our help.

Lauren looks at the face of her newborn son for the first time. So peaceful in the arms of a deceitful stranger. Like he already accepts the dark fate that awaits him.

EPPERSTEIN

You should be so proud.

Lauren suddenly LASHES OUT, PUNCHES EPPERSTEIN with all the strength she has left. The cultists oddly keep their distance as Lauren slides off the slab, SNATCHES THE BABY AND RUNS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Lauren spills up the stairs into the dilapidated kitchen. Supernatural light beams in through the windows, casting frightening shadows everywhere as she gets her bearings.

She runs for the back door of the house just ahead --

SLAM! WITH AN UNHOLY GROWL, A TABLE LAUNCHES OFF THE FLOOR BARELY MISSING LAUREN. EVERY PIECE OF LOOSE FURNITURE FLIES UP TO CRASH INTO THE DOOR AND FORM A BARRICADE...

Her escape cut off, Lauren runs for the front of the house.

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS POUND up from the basement. Ben Jr. starts to CRY, and the FOOTSTEPS take on purpose, gaining on Lauren, who's still too weak and sore to move very fast.

LAUREN
Ben, shh! Stop, baby, please!

Lauren rushes for the front door, but as she nears it --

SHE SHRIEKS AS A PAIR OF THE SHADOW FIGURES peel out from the shadows to bar her way. She rushes back toward the kitchen and the back door, but the cultists emerge from the basement. Lauren veers up the stairs to the second floor...

INT. FARMHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Lauren crests the stairs and runs down the hall toward a bedroom. Ben now SCREAMING in her arms...

WHAM! THE BEDROOM DOOR SLAMS INTO HER AS SHE TRIES TO ENTER, driving her back out into the hallway.

She CAREENS backward, her head SMASHING into a MIRROR on the wall. A SPIDERWEB OF CRACKS stretches across the glass, and in the broken reflection, she sees a GROUP OF DEMONS just behind her. She SCREAMS and runs for the next bedroom...

LAUREN
Goddamn you! He's not yours, he's mine!

THE DRESSERS IN THE ROOM SHOOT TOWARD THE DOOR and Lauren jumps back just in time as they CRASH across the doorway.

A FRIGHTENING RUMBLE SHAKES THE ENTIRE HOUSE. A HUGE CRACK splits the ceiling above, DUST and DEBRIS raining down over her. The MIRROR EXPLODES, GLASS SHRAPNEL FILLING THE AIR.

Lauren SCREAMS, turns and runs the other way as --

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Julia bursts out of the house, sprinting for the nearby woods. PHONE at her ear, her face crumples as she hears --

LAUREN (O.S.)(FROM PHONE)
Leave a message after the beep. BEEP!

JULIA (INTO PHONE)
Lauren, I did it. I went back and broke in. The prophecy, what they're planning... IT'S SO MUCH BIGGER THAN WE THOUGHT! Your baby, he's --

She suddenly spots GINNY'S ENCORE, its headlights beaming bright. FAMILIAR RED HAIR in the driver's seat -- Lauren!

She pockets her phone, races over to the SUV...

JULIA
Lauren! What the hell are you --

Julia stifles a SCREAM as she sees --

INSIDE THE CAR, Ginny stares lifelessly up at the STAR ALIGNMENT in the sky, the bottom of her face a bloody crater.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shielding Ben, Lauren rushes into the bathroom. SLAMS the door. Locks it. She puts Ben down in the sink and pushes everything she can against the door.

Running to the window, she slides it up... BUT THE WINDOW SUDDENLY, VIOLENTLY WRENCHES DOWNWARDS, SLAMS SHUT ON HER HAND, CLEARLY BREAKING HER FINGERS. She CRIES OUT --

EXT. GINNY'S ENCORE - CONTINUOUS

Julia pulls Ginny out from behind the wheel. As she's about to hop in, she HEARS LAUREN'S PAINED CRY ECHO OUT OVER THE COMPOUND. Her gaze snaps to the FARMHOUSE as behind her --

A FIGURE APPROACHES, STANDARD ISSUE HANDGUN DRAWN. WALTERS smirks as he trains the gun on Julia's head, mere feet away, enjoying the moment --

INT. FARMHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crouched in the far corner, cradling a now quiet Ben, it's Lauren's turn to CRY. In the distance, from outside, she hears a SINGLE GUNSHOT. She jolts up, looks out the window --

BAMBAMBAM!! She whips around to face the bathroom door. VOICES reach her through the barrier. An unintelligible cacophony of cultists JEERING and TAUNTING her --

LAUREN
You can't have him! I won't let him
become what you want him to be!

Lauren looks at Ben. Tears slipping down her cheeks.

LAUREN
It's not true! It can't be true! How
can you be the Antichrist?

The LIGHTS SUDDENLY DIM TO NOTHING. Darkness sweeps over Lauren's face, enveloping the bathroom. CREEPY, UNHOLY WHISPERS COME FROM ALL AROUND HER.

Ben stops crying. He stares at her, suddenly calm. Like he can hear the voices too. *And they're soothing to him.*

LAUREN

No... Stay away from us! Stay away!

Lauren watches in horror as the SHADOW FIGURES appear in the bathroom with her. Closing in, come to steal her son. There's nothing she can do. The WHISPERS growing LOUDER. The JEERS from the army of cultists at the door. There's no escape.

She looks at Ben. His dark eyes glinting in the supernatural light. So calm. So intelligent...

The SHADOW FIGURES inch toward her, just a step away...

In desperation, she grabs a towel. Drapes it over Ben...

The DOORFRAME RATTLES as the cultists try to break it down...

CULTIST (O.S.)

Let us in now! He's ours!

WEeping LOUDLY, HER WHOLE BODY SHAKING AS SHE FIGHTS EVERY MOTHERLY INSTINCT, LAUREN PRESSES HER HAND OVER THE LITTLE FACE BENEATH THE TOWEL...

LAUREN

Oh God... Oh my God, I'm sorry --

... AND SMOTHERS HER ONLY CHILD!!

EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

THE SUPERNATURAL LIGHT IN THE SKY INSTANTLY GOES OUT --

INT. FARMHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The cultists stop kicking the door as they hear the LOCK TURN. The door opens and they back away --

Completely spent, emotionally, physically and spiritually, Lauren emerges from the bathroom. The light in her eyes gone. The body of Ben still in her arms. Limp, not breathing.

But despite all that, she freezes in horror. Standing there, at the front of the cultists... is KYLE.

LAUREN

Kyle? No... I saw... What's going on?

Kyle looks down at Ben Jr. with an expression that mixes a father's joy and a zealot's reverence.

KYLE

You killed Him.

The cultists stand in silence for what seems like an eternity. Then...

THEY START CELEBRATING. CHEERING. EVEN MORE PASSIONATELY THAN AT THE BIRTH. IT'S PANDEMONIUM as Kyle grabs Lauren and embraces her.

KYLE

You killed Him! You actually did it!

Utterly confused, on the verge of madness, Lauren SHOVES Kyle away. She SNATCHES BRYSON'S GUN from the cultist's holster.

LAUREN

Everyone get back! BACK!

She waves the GUN across the gathering of cultists, whose celebration peeters out as they give her space.

KYLE

Whoa, careful now. Let's not turn this occasion into tragedy.

Through fearful, confused tears, she can't find her voice.

KYLE

Hey, it's okay. It's all over now. I know how hard this has been, but you did it. You saved us all.

LAUREN

What the fuck are you talking about?! Saved you from what?

KYLE

All the omens and prophecies. The divine mathematics we pored over for years, again and again to make sure we were right. It all pointed to this night, to you, to your son...

Lauren stares at him, desperate.

KYLE

He was the Second Coming of Christ.

Lauren reels at his words.

LAUREN

No. You said he was evil... YOU TOLD ME I HAD TO KILL HIM!

KYLE

He was evil! He would have brought about the end of the world. Judgment day. Nothing could stop it once He grew up, realized what He was.

LAUREN

But the demons. The horrible things I saw. The dark forces...

KYLE

All powerless to stop Him. Anyone who tried would be smited by the power of God...

FLASH! We see the gun-toting man who was hit by the truck...

KYLE

Nothing could endanger Him... Or the mother who still carried Him.

FLASH! The car crash. Lauren escaping, unscathed...

KYLE

Only she would have the power to stop Him. To make that choice.

FLASH! Bellamy points the pistol at Lauren's face -- BANG!

KYLE

But why would she? Unless...

LAUREN

You lied. Everything you did, everything you said. It was all lies.

KYLE

Not all of it. He would have ended the world. What's more evil than that? But you stopped Him, Lauren.

He kneels before her, kisses her hand. The rest of the cultists kneel as well. All of them honoring Lauren.

KYLE

You're the savior of all mankind.

Realizing what she's done, surrounded by all those who forced her to this tragic end, Lauren looks down at her baby. The savior. DEAD. Murdered by his own confused mother.

LAUREN

Forgive me...

She raises the gun to her own head. SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER.

BLAM!

SMASH TO BLACK

OVER BLACK

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
... at the Vatican tonight as after a
record-breaking period of doubt, a
new Pope has been elected.

FADE IN ON: NEWS FOOTAGE OF WHITE SMOKE billowing out of the
Vatican. CROWDS in St. Peter's Square SINGING in celebration.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

BLACK SMOKE. Billowing from the BURNING BUILDING. FLAMES
consume the farmhouse as CULTISTS dance and drink wildly in
the firelight. A celebration out of Satanic iconography.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

FLAMES RAGE all around, destroying everything. Amidst the
chaos, Lauren lies still, exactly where she fell after
killing herself. And still cradled in her arm...

The body of Ben Jr. The would-be savior of mankind.

The SOUND of RUSHED FOOTSTEPS suddenly approaches. Someone
falls to their knees beside Lauren...

JULIA. WALTERS' GUN in her hand. Shirt and face spattered
with the BLOOD of her would-be murderer.

Hands shaking, Julia drops the gun to the floor and CRIES
over Lauren. She scoops Ben out of Lauren's arm, hugs him to
her chest, SOBBING. Knowing exactly what he was meant to be.

JULIA
Please, God. Have mercy on us.

Then, her eyes go wide as miraculously...

BEN JR. TAKES A BREATH.

SMASH TO BLACK

THE END... IS JUST THE BEGINNING.