

THE LIVE ONES

By

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Based on True Events

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FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Grey skies. Rush hour traffic. Impossibly steep streets.

EXT. SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

On the steps, a bevy of CAMERA CREWS and news REPORTERS ad-lib filler to lead into their big story.

NEWS ANCHOR

--a land mark ruling in the Giro Petroleum case will hold the oil conglomerate responsible for the pipeline rupture in Santa Barbara County. I was just told that the Plaintiff's lead council, Danielle Lewis, is actually the daughter of the late Spencer Lawson who was a high profile attorney in the eighties.

INT. COURT ROOM

DANIELLE LEWIS, 32, steely, hard-edged confidence. A small heart-shaped birthmark on her right cheek.

The packed courtroom hangs on every word from JUDGE MURRAY...

JUDGE MURRAY

...Considering the sheer risk you took with raw data to prove liability in your case and the outright dishonesty from the Defense, Miss Lewis, I am awarding your firm the full attorney multiplier of three.

LEAD COUNSEL for the defense wilts just a bit.

PETER LEVINWITH, 50s, sits just behind Danielle and the plaintiff's table, discreetly pumping his fist.

JUDGE MURRAY (CONT'D)

You have thirty days to submit an appeal.

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle and Peter move down the crowded hallway with a team of legal aids trailing them. Speaking in hushed tones--

PETER
This'll make you partner.

DANIELLE
They'll get the appeal.

PETER
So you do it again. Follow the same path - partner guaranteed.

DANIELLE
So, one more hurdle is what you're saying.

They approach the front doors where a mob of PRESS awaits.

PETER
You're a lock for partner and under thirty-five.

INT. O' DWYER'S COCKTAILS - NIGHT

A boisterous 'Happy Hour' of PROFESSIONALS throughout the upscale Nuevo-Irish Pub.

Danielle and Peter, sit at a table with JIM, 30s, and another legal aid - LAUGHING and joking. Jim clearly desires the arresting Danielle.

Many empty glasses and bottles scattered across the table. Danielle suddenly stands, slightly tipsy...

DANIELLE
Okay, okay, I have to call it a night.

Peter checks his watch.

PETER
It's barely ten thirty.

DANIELLE
I'm lining up the Chamberlin depositions for Monday.

PETER
You win a case like this, you get tomorrow off. Candace can do it.

DANIELLE
Nope, got a system I'm married to.

PETER
Get a divorce or you'll burn out.

She smiles. Slings her coat on. Peter references the TV near the bar--

PETER (CONT'D)
And, hey - I'm still pissed you
never mentioned in the seven years
you've been with us that your dad
was Spencer freakin' Lawson.
I gotta find out on the news?

She shrugs.

DANIELLE
Never came up, I guess. Thanks for
the drinks.

Jim stands.

JIM
I'm going, too.

She walks away as Peter ogles her with a lustful glint.

PETER
(calling after her)
Great job, kid!

EXT. O' DWYER'S COCKTAILS - NIGHT

Danielle buttons up her coat. Jim steps out--

JIM
Can I give you a ride?

DANIELLE
It's only four blocks.

JIM
I'll walk you.

She postulates an appropriate response.

JIM (CONT'D)
Just to talk.

She crosses her arms... Smiles.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS - LATER

Danielle and Jim round a corner, strolling down the dimly lit street of a Fashion District...

Passing a darkened alleyway, something peripherally snags her attention--

--20 feet away, a SMALL CHILD lying face down--

She slows. Jim continues, oblivious...

A better look reveals that it's a child mannequin - Her tension breaks.

JIM (O.C.)
You coming?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO HIGH RISE - LATER

Danielle and Jim stop in front of a marble and glass spectacle.

DANIELLE
Thanks.

JIM
Sure.

She turns to start up the front steps...

JIM (CONT'D)
Nightcap?

He grins.

DANIELLE
Fine. One drink. But you're taking half the deposition files with you. Price of admission.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO HIGH RISE

They step out of the elevator laughing. Jim puts his arm around her - She doesn't mind.

Strolling around a corner, they continue toward her condo.

Danielle notices an 8x10 envelope leaning against the door.

DANIELLE
Hmmmmp.

She kneels and picks it up.

INT. DANIELLE'S CONDO

A modestly appointed space with a spectacular view of the city.

Danielle tears open the envelope.

JIM
C'mon, you can read that later.

She removes numerous legal documents and photocopied news articles.

She reads a page. Jim looks over her shoulder, growing impatient--

JIM (CONT'D)
What is it?

Sets a page down, he picks it up. It shows an overview of a home.

JIM (CONT'D)
This thing's from the seventeen-hundreds.

She reads a legal document. Shakes her head in disbelief--

DANIELLE
I inherited this.

JIM
How?

DANIELLE
(absorbed in the page)
I'm next in line.

JIM
What about your mom?

DANIELLE
No, no - my biological family.

JIM
What? How'd they find you?

She continues to scan the page...

DANIELLE
Not sure.

Exhilaration flashes across her face.

JIM (O.C.)
That's great, right? Maybe you can
get some answers.

INT. LOEB, SCHEIER & LEVINWITH - DAY

Danielle, all business as she walks a long hallway. A young
PARALEGAL smiles respectfully as she passes.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - LATER

A well appointed office. Peter sits behind a large Oak desk,
Danielle across from him.

DANIELLE
--So, I want to get Bryant in for a
deposition, too. If we wait until
trial they're just going to change
their story.

Peter chuckles.

PETER
Hold on. We're way out in front on
that.

DANIELLE
Good. Because Jim's going to take
point on those.

PETER
You're making that call?

DANIELLE
Well, I'm almost a partner, right?

He considers, carefully...

PETER
Yes. But--

DANIELLE
Relax. I'm still lead on the case.
But, I have some family business
back in New York.

PETER
A vacation? It's just the timing...

She stares him down.

PETER (CONT'D)
If this is you trying to force the
partner vote...

DANIELLE
No. It's important to me. I'll be
back in a week.

He reads her for a moment...

PETER
Fair enough.

INT. DELTA FLIGHT - NIGHT

Danielle reviews the documents. Insert: *...the 18th century home known as 'The John Lawson House' lost its historical status due to severe budget cuts...*

LATER

She sketches on a drawing pad-- an incredible rendering of the paunchy MAN sleeping in front of her, right down to the multiple skin tags. Artistically talented for sure.

EXT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT NYC - MORNING

Planes touch down and take off in the early morning light.

INT. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Danielle drives across the Throgs Neck Bridge which crosses the East River heading out of the city.

Her phone in the cup holder with GOOGLE MAPS opened.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATSKILL MOUNTAINS - EVENING

The rental car travels a lonely two-lane road that slices through the thick pines.

INT. RENTAL CAR

Danielle seems mildly uncomfortable being so far out of the pulse of a city.

She glances down at her phone: *'22 Miles to destination'*

DANIELLE
Who moves here?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The car passes a sign: 'ORWELL - 5 mi'

Moonlight glimmers off the Hudson River to the right of the road as the car disappears into the night.

EXT. ORWELL - NIGHT

The rental car stops at a 'T' in the road. Vast countryside in all directions. She turns left.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

She passes by:

- A short row of worn brick buildings in the small village. Most are boarded up...

- A gas station on the left. Still operational but in desperate need of a face-lift. Looking back at the road--

Slams on her brakes, stopping inches short of hitting an OLD MAN with wild hair and a sunken face, skin taut against bone.

He seems to stare directly at her through milky, cataract clouded pupils. She offers a wave to say 'sorry'.

After a beat, he shuffles to the other side.

She takes a breath to ease her heart rate. Continues on...

Several rustic, colonial-style homes that seem to have acres separating them.

GOOGLE MAPS
Your destination is in one-hundred feet.

In the distance, the silhouette of an exquisite Victorian monstrosity shielded by several large willow trees that stretch across the lawn of the deep property--

This is the LAWSON HOUSE.

At the edge of a field behind the home, Railroad tracks run parallel to an Oak tree forest.

She pulls into a dirt path 50 yards or so from the home.

Checks her surroundings with caution before shutting off the car. She listens for a moment... Opens her door, steps out.

EXT. LAWSON PROPERTY - NIGHT

A vacuum of utter silence. A foreign concept to her.

She activates the light on her iPhone which casts a soft glow around her. Slowly makes her way across the lawn.

She checks the landscape in both directions... not one other home can be seen in the dusky moonlight.

Approaching a sign affixed to an upright post, she shines the light: *'Historical Landmark - The John Lawson House - 1745 One of the first homes erected on the Hudson waterfront.'*

She continues toward the home in the distance...

Standing near a large window that's been boarded with heavy plywood, she scans the entire side of the house - all of the windows on the first floor are boarded.

Taking a step back, she gazes toward the roof and the second floor windows. She sees a faint light originating from within one of the rooms.

She's momentarily lost in the view of the shotgun scattered stars set against a canopy of black sky. The kind of night one can only find in the country.

SLAM-- whipping her head around -- a dust cloud settles near a fallen piece of plywood, 20 feet to her left.

Hurrying around the side of the wide porch in front, two human silhouettes stand near the front door. She stops--

Neither form moves. She raises the phone-light to see that they are actually mannequins. She shakes off her jitters and walks up the front steps. Approaches...

These aren't mannequins you'd find at Macy's but rather something from a bygone era. The faces look almost like yellowed ivory.

She quickly retreats to the car.

EXT. A-OK MOTEL - MORNING

A neglected joint with zero curb appeal.

INT. A-OK MOTEL - SAME

A telephone on the night stand RINGS. Danielle rolls over on the second RING, eyes filled with sleep. Lifts the receiver--

Through the phone receiver-- a HIGH PITCHED whirring, which slowly bleeds into faint, fuzzy, 20s-era music...

DANIELLE

Hello?

The POP and CRACK of the music continues...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Annoyed, she hangs up. Checks her cellphone. Mild surprise that she'd slept so late.

-She brushes her teeth.

-Roughly combs her hair, finally giving up and pulling it back into a ponytail.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Danielle drives through the small village... Brownstone buildings. Scarce foot traffic on the sidewalks.

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Danielle's car pulls into the lot of the small brick building. A weathered, hand-stencil-painted sign above the door. 'ORWELL PRESERVATION SOCIETY'

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Danielle enters...

A frail curmudgeon of a woman, GENEVIVE, 60s, stands at the front counter, working a crossword puzzle with a pen.

DANIELLE

Hi, I'm Danielle Lewis.

Genevive's face sours as Danielle sets a folder down and searches for a document.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

I was sent a package regarding the Lawson house?

Genevive stares at her with little regard.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Can you help me?

GENEVIVE
To some degree, I 'spose.

DANIELLE
Hey, why are all the windows
covered?

Genevive focuses on her puzzle.

GENEVIVE
We've had some vandalism over the
last week.

DANIELLE
Oh. I read where it was a walk
through museum--

GENEVIVE
DONATED over a hundred years ago.

Danielle offers a smile, which does not melt the ice.

DANIELLE
Yes, I read that, too. I'd like to
see about getting the keys--

GENEVIVE
Nope. I've filed a petition to
reinstate the historical status.

DANIELLE
(delicately)
Understood. In the meantime, it's
in my name and I want to have a
look before bringing in a realtor.

Drops her pen, looks up--

GENEVIVE
Sell it? That's your idea?

DANIELLE
I live in San Francisco. It's just
not feasible for me to keep it.

Genevive glares at her.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
May I have the keys?

Genevive stares her down.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
No?... Okay- Where might I find the
local judge?

Stewing for a moment, she finally relents and slides a set of
keys across the counter along with a legal document on
official letterhead.

GENEVIVE
This is a copy of the moratorium
which prevents you from selling it.
And you aren't to remove anything.
I've got an inventory.

DANIELLE
Nice to meet you, Genevive.

Danielle takes the keys.

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Danielle walks to her car.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Hey there.

She turns to see a thin MAN, 40s, smiling at her.

DANIELLE
Hi.

MAN
(timid)
I'm Paul. I work in archives.

DANIELLE
Oh.

He extends his hand. She takes it.

MAN/PAUL
Sorry about Genevive.

DANIELLE
I'm sure she's normally quite nice.

He shakes his head--

PAUL
Not at all.

She blurts a LAUGH.

DANIELLE
How many historical buildings do
you oversee?

PAUL
A handful or so. This area's rife
with colonial era farms and such.
Your house is a kinda special case.
Been getting flak for years from
local Native American groups.

DANIELLE
I don't follow.

PAUL
Well, they've wanted the museum
angle of the place shut down. This
was a fast tracked case with it
being taken out of historical
register so quickly. Finally caved
to the pressure I guess.

She's caught off guard.

DANIELLE
Why did they want it closed?

PAUL
Well, you know, history stuff.
Eighteen hundreds. Some
mistreatment when the government
was trying to assimilate them.

DANIELLE
And the mannequins? You put those
up there for display?

PAUL
They were used when it was a walk
through tour years ago.
(chuckling)
Folks nick named 'em the live ones.

She smiles politely.

DANIELLE
Well, nice meeting you.

He nods. In the BG, Genevive spies them from a window.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Danielle pulls down the long dirt driveway. The mannequins from the previous night are gone. She scrunches her brow.

She parks in front of the house. Shuts the car off and gazes about the property for a moment.

Walks up the clapboard front steps. The wide boards of the front porch CREAK in several areas.

Pulls back the screen door and inserts the key. It sticks momentarily before turning. She pushes the heavy door open.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She steps into a large sitting room. The entire first floor is dark with all of the windows boarded.

A shaft of sunlight from the staircase that leads to the second floor allows her to make out Authentic Shaker furniture. High ceilings - at least 15 feet.

Ornate, hand-carved trim along the ceiling which matches the baseboards - they truly don't make 'em like this anymore.

Closing the door, she turns on her cellphone light, illuminating a large living room to her left...

A massive red brick fireplace against a far wall with a heavily varnished oak mantle above it. Several tintype framed photos displayed across it.

She moves toward the room...

FIREPLACE MANTLE

Danielle studies the photos with the scrutiny of a very personal inquiry. DANIELLE'S POV: A photo of a MAN, WOMAN and several young CHILDREN, smiling playfully.

She turns slowly about the room, noting the incredible craftsmanship.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Every last detail in the space appears authentic.

Large, twin porcelain sink tubs. She turns the faucet. A dark red viscous fluid putters out in an uneven flow.

Shining her light on it - rusty water which gradually runs clear.

INT. STAIRCASE - LATER

Danielle climbs the steeply pitched stairway. Thick, hand lathed bannisters line the way.

INT. 2ND FLOOR - DAY

She steps onto the landing. Bright sunlight pours in through the windows on this floor.

Looking down the long, weather-warped hallway... A closed door at the end. Numerous other doors line the way.

She walks...

Looking left as she passes - a period-authentic bedroom with floor-to-ceiling, faded pink floral print wallpaper...

Walking further--

On the right, a bedroom with dark varnished wood floors and a leather reading chair...

She continues...

Looking left-- her heart drops-- a mannequin stands in the doorway, almost face to face with her.

DANIELLE

Shit.

She shakes her head, not amused.

Approaching the closed door at the end, she can hear a FAINT RUSTLING from within.

She reaches for the door handle... it sounds almost like WHISPERING now. She listens carefully, trying to establish if it's what she thinks...

Gathering her nerve, she bursts into the--

BEDROOM

Quiet now, except for a sheet covering a 4 foot rectangular box that flaps in the breeze near the open window.

She moves to the box.

Reaching for the sheet, it suddenly blows out at her! She jerks back. CHUCKLES to herself. Removes the dusty sheet, revealing a Victrola.

Opens the lid. Puts the hood latch in place. A thick, phonograph disc rests on the turntable.

On a dresser nearby - more framed tintype photos.

She looks closely at one. A group of men and women standing near a steam engine locomotive. Probably taken around the turn of the century.

One of the women in the photo has very similar features to hers... The eyes.

She turns--

A mannequin sits in a chair at an antique vanity table, dressed in the height of 1800s fashion. It looks similar to the one she'd discovered the previous night.

HALLWAY

Danielle passes a room lined with large bookcases that feature glass doors. She enters--

LIBRARY

Scanning the aged texts behind the glass doors -- first edition works of Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe... A lock on the doors.

Peering through another display case containing photo albums and journals. One in particular with the word LAWSON written down the spine. She tries the door - locked...

Slides her hands along the top of the cabinet in search of a key. No luck, just thick dust.

Catching her attention- the warm orange glow of the setting sun through the lace window curtains. With mild surprise, she checks her watch.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DUSK

Danielle drives along the main drag of the small village.

In the distance, the weather-abused 'A-OK MOTEL' sign--

Closer, she sees smoke pouring from the roof of the charred remains of what had been the Motel.

Pulling along side the road in front, near a Fire Truck.

DANIELLE
Unbelievable...

A thin FIREMAN stands near a water truck. She rolls her window down.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Excuse me?

The man turns-- it's Paul.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
It's you.

He points the insignia on his fire coat: 'ORWELL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT'

PAUL
We all do our part.

DANIELLE
What happened?

PAUL
Looks like old wiring. Been out of code for a couple decades. Did you have anything valuable inside?

She shakes her head.

DANIELLE
Just some clothes.

PAUL
You can file a claim with the owner.

DANIELLE
Is there another motel around?

He grins.

PAUL
Not really. Closest would probably be Maple View, about sixty miles north of here.

She looks forward, down the road...

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Danielle parks at the end of the long driveway. Looks up at the monstrosity through the windshield.

She gets out. Turns on her cellphone light. Retrieves her suitcase and a brand new sleeping bag from the back seat, leaving behind the summer dress she'd been wearing that day.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Danielle sits on a small cushioned sofa holding her laptop, phone cradled with her shoulder.

DANIELLE
(into phone)
Don't file my case extensions yet.
I need to see how quickly I can
work this local judge.

INT. JIM'S APARTMENT - EVENING - INTERCUT AS DESIRED

Jim sits at the desk with a stack of folders to his left.

JIM
Got it. So, hey... How is it?

DANIELLE
What?

JIM
The house.

DANIELLE
My motel burned down so I'm staying
in it.

JIM
What? Are you alright?

DANIELLE
Oh, yeah. I wasn't there when it
happened.

JIM
Jesus. I'm glad you're okay. Hey,
that house has quite a history
according to Google. Used to be a
department store. A brothel at one
time. Bootleg hub. What's it like
inside?

She scans the room...

DANIELLE
A museum. Lot's of mannequins.

JIM
No thanks. Any family stuff?

DANIELLE
Technically it's all family stuff,
I guess. Haven't seen much, yet.

JIM
Seriously, though. I hope you get
the answers you're looking for.

DANIELLE
Thanks. Good night.

She ends the call.

Danielle's POV: Laptop screen. Google search. She types: JOHN
LAWSON HOUSE - ORWELL. Hits 'Enter'

Several pages come up... 'ONE OF AMERICA'S FIRST CLOTHING
STORES'

'WAY BACK HISTORY - THE JOHN LAWSON HOUSE: DRESSES,
BOOTLEGGERS & BROTHELS'

She opens a link.

*'--located in the vicinity of the Orwell train station in
upstate New York -- a mystery in its own right. You couldn't
really say it's haunted, but it has its own share of secrets
that no one has managed to reveal. Once a famed mercantile
store known for unique dresses from Europe.--'*

*'--fell into bad standing with the community when rumored
prostitution became widespread in the 1860's.'*

*'--known in the 1920's as a Bootlegger's hub for Lake Ontario
via Canada.'*

She yawns. Closes the laptop.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danielle lies awake in a sleeping bag atop a large king-sized
bed adorned with steep, ornately carved bed posts.

Moonlight spills in through the lace day-curtains.

Her mind drifts as she gazes aimlessly across the decorative tin ceiling overhead. Her eyes slowly droop, heavy with sleep... darkness...

A long CREEEAAAK overhead. Her eyes flash open. *Did she really hear that? A fragmented dream perhaps?*

She listens...

CREEEAAAACK... She props up on her elbows, studying the area above. A soft SCUTTling...

Squinting as she fumbles for her glasses on the night-stand. *Poor night-vision.*

She quietly stands and moves to the small fireplace. Grasps a fire-poker from an upright rack.

Carefully steps into the--

HALLWAY

She softly toes toward a door at the end.

Turning the door knob, slowly pulling it open to find a dark staircase leading up to an attic.

She tugs on a string attached to a light socket -- CLICK-- a dull, yellowed light weakly illuminates...

Carefully ascends. The dry-aged stairs MOANING under foot...

ATTIC

Sweeping her phone light across the room... Surprisingly void of excess clutter.

She proceeds to the rear of the attic space.

A FLEETING SHADOW in the corner pulls her eye, she turns--

Nothing there...

The phone light peripherally illuminates something to her left, she turns-- startled to see another mannequin.

DANIELLE

(under her breath)

Hello, super creepy mannequin.

Stepping closer to it, she examines the face.

Danielle aims the light toward the further recesses of the attic. She takes quiet steps...

Notices a few antique children's toys, several paintings tilted against the pitch of the roof. Another step...

CREEEAK -- an area where the wooden floor slat bows considerably more than anywhere else. She gently pushes her foot up and down on the area, repeating the SOUND.

Shining her light at the area, a glimmer beneath the floorboards catches her eye. She kneels to look through the slight gap - can't make out what it is.

Eyeing a metal ruler nearby...

She wedges the ruler into the space between the planks. Rocks it slightly and a section of the board lifts quite easily.

Reaches in... Removes a tintype photo.

DANIELLE'S POV: A group of twenty or so Native American Girls with meek expressions, dressed in fashionable English attire of the period.

She places the slat back in place, stands up, still studying the photo.

Turning to exit, she notices the head and arm of the mannequin, pointing at approximately the same area where she'd found the photo...

She shakes it off with a grin and walks back to the stairs.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - MORNING

Danielle descends the stairs carrying a briefcase. She opens the front door to find--

A mannequin standing near the porch railing, wearing her sun dress from the previous day.

DANIELLE
Are you fucking kidding me?

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Agitated, Danielle drags the mannequin to the--

INT. RENTAL CAR

She tosses it into the back seat. Slams the door.

It seems to stare at the back of her head as she backs out.
We see the eyes are two different colors - Light blue and the other, dark brown.

She throws the car in DRIVE and speeds away.

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - DAY

Danielle swerves into the parking lot, slams on the brakes.

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Genevive sorts through stacks of papers.

The door shoves open, Danielle enters with the mannequin under her arm...

She leans it against the counter.

DANIELLE
Is Paul in?

GENEVIVE
Nope.

Danielle turns to leave--

GENEVIVE (CONT'D)
You shouldn't stay at the house.

DANIELLE
(pointed)
Look, I'm trying to be nice about this. I don't want to be here any more than you want me here. But that's it - stay off the property.

GENEVIVE
I don't like what you're implying.

DANIELLE
How did you know I stayed at the house?

Genevive, caught off guard...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Good. Then you do understand--

GENEVIVE

I just didn't know what you meant!

Danielle unzips the dress from the mannequin, slides it off, turns and walks out.

GENEVIVE (CONT'D)

Take this with you!

Genevive picks up the phone and dials.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Danielle jogs up the front steps...

Behind her, a Sheriff's cruiser pulls into the long driveway. Parks near her car. Danielle turns--

CURTIS RED FOX, 30, climbs out of the cruiser and strides toward her. Native American cheek bones, tranquil dark eyes. Positively handsome.

He smiles, apologetically.

CURTIS

Hi. Danielle Lawson?

DANIELLE

It's Lewis, actually.

CURTIS

Sorry. I received a call about a disturbance.

DANIELLE

Is that what she called it?

He chuckles.

CURTIS

You left some property behind--

DANIELLE

Excuse me, *they* left that on the front porch wearing my dress. Which also means they went into my car.

He waits for more...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

That's where I left the dress. Look, I don't want anyone on the property until I'm gone. Okay?

CURTIS
Just kids messing with you.

DANIELLE
It's that woman, Genevive. She's
pissed off about the house.

He smiles, gestures to his cruiser - the mannequin leaning awkwardly against the rear window.

CURTIS
You want me to carry it in?

DANIELLE
(flippant)
I told you, it's not mine!

CURTIS
Well, I know but if it belongs to
the house. With the moratorium and
everything... if it were an antique
it may be worth some money.

She raises her eyebrows--

DANIELLE
Wow. Moratorium. Word travels fast.

CURTIS
Small towns. Blood runs thick and
makes loose lips.

DANIELLE
Is there anything else?

CURTIS
No, ma'am.

She glances at the front door, then back to the mannequin...

DANIELLE
Fine, you can bring it inside. And
don't call me Ma'am.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis leans the mannequin in a corner. Looks up to the top of the stairwell where Danielle waits.

CURTIS
This okay?

She shrugs.

DANIELLE

Sure. *I... don't really care.*

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis steps from the basement door, into the hallway. Shuts the door behind him.

DANIELLE

Thanks... Hey, sorry. I didn't mean to be rude back there. Let me make you some coffee.

LIVING ROOM - DAY

She sits across from him, two cups of coffee on the table between them. The room lit by a table lamp.

Curtis looks about the room. Notices the boarded windows.

CURTIS

What's with the windows?

DANIELLE

I was told kids were breaking them.

CURTIS

Never heard about that.

A pregnant pause... *almost* uncomfortable--

CURTIS (CONT'D)

So, you're an attorney?

DANIELLE

Small towns, again?

He nods, curls a smile.

CURTIS

I bet you're good.

DANIELLE

Why?

CURTIS

You're very... *quick*. Aggressive even.

She grins.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
I'm betting you could be scary-- in
a court room, that is. Family back
in California?

She's charmed by his strange awkwardness.

DANIELLE
Some. Did you grow up in the area?

CURTIS
Yup. Onondaga Reservation. Then
Public school my last two years.

She suddenly stands--

DANIELLE
Oh, hey, there's somethi-- *WAIT*,
I'm sorry - were you going to say
something else?

He holds up his hands in mock surrender.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Professional habit of talking over
people.

She crosses to the mantle, grabs the photo of the Native
American Girls, returns to her chair and sits.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I found this in the attic.

She slides it across the table. He cranes his neck forward.

CURTIS
Those are the Cartwright girls.
This was in the attic?

He picks it up. Looks at it closer.

DANIELLE
Yeah, why?

CURTIS
Fair warning, you won't see it in
the history books. It's not
pleasant.

DANIELLE
Well, now I have to know.

Curtis raises his eyebrows.

CURTIS

Cartwright was a guy that lived up in Vermont in the mid-eighteen hundreds. Those girls, like most Native kids back then, were taken from their families. Sent to boarding schools to learn the English ways. Erase the culture - 'Kill the Indian, save the child' was the idea.

DANIELLE

That's terrible.

He nods.

CURTIS

Lawson was worse. He conned the guy into sending the girls to him. Said he was going to help integrate them. He ran a brothel out of this place when the town was growing fast. That's how he integrated them.

DANIELLE

Does the Historical office know this story?

CURTIS

Sure, but they'll only admit to part of it. Lawson was found out by a radical church in the area. They let him keep his other businesses as long as he gave up the brothel and made penitence to the church.

He shakes his head.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'm not talking Hail Mary's, either. Those girls were tortured to death. By Lawson. Then buried right out there in that field by the tracks.

Danielle takes a moment. Truly disturbed.

DANIELLE

Christ, *those are my relatives.*

CURTIS

You can't control that.

An awkward silence pervades. He smiles, uncomfortable.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
Sorry. I didn't mean to open *that*
can of worms.

DANIELLE
Don't be silly. I asked you.

He stands.

CURTIS
I still need to swing by my ma's.
Dropping off tomatoes from my
garden.

Almost disappointed, she stands as well.

DANIELLE
It was nice to meet you.

CURTIS
You, too.

He hands her a business card.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
If you have any more problems,
that's local dispatch.

DANIELLE
Thanks.

She watches him as he moves toward the front door.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Danielle removes a butter knife from a drawer and exits.

INT. STAIRCASE

She steps onto the second floor landing. Takes a long look at
a painting of a distinguished looking man from the 1800s,
given his attire.

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

She moves to a bookcase. Eyes the binder with LAWSON written
down the spine. She tugs the handle - nothing.

Slides the knife into the gap between where the doors meet.
Fishes the blade up under the lock several times - no dice.

Disappointed, she wanders out of the room...

INT. HALLWAY

Walks languidly to the...

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Moves toward the dresser with the framed photos.

She leans over to observe the photo of the people near the
steam engine.

Something in the photo grabs her focus...

She moves to the bedside dresser, opens the drawer. Removes
the picture of the Cartwright Girls. She holds it next to the
framed photo--

The tree behind the Girls is the same as the one seen in the
corner of the photo with the steam engine.

As she turns to leave the room -- the pose of the mannequin
at the vanity catches her attention...

It sits in the same position as previous but the angle of the
head and hand gives her pause... the hand points in the
direction of the vanity's side drawer.

She pulls open the drawer - empty. She slides it closed...

TINKLE-- something hits the floor behind the table.

She bends over to search... An aged brass key on the floor.
She grasps it and stands back up, turning it over between her
fingers several times.

She turns her attention to the mannequin once more -- that
perceived gesture.

DANIELLE
(to the mannequin)
Thanks.

INT. LIBRARY - DUSK

Danielle jiggles the key into the lock. Turns clockwise... It opens. She smiles with the anticipation of a child on Christmas morn.

Carefully removes the LAWSON album. Opens the cover and turns a few pages--

- An illustration of the house as it probably looked in the 1700s

- A photo of several men and women sitting on the front porch of the home circa 1800s.

- Another photo - an interior shot of the house, possibly from the Parlor. A hanging sign: 'FINE EUROPEAN FASHIONS'. The room is filled with clothes on display racks and numerous mannequins outfitted with fine dresses of the era.

She takes a closer look at the mannequins - exactly as the ones she'd found in the house.

DANIELLE'S POV: Some of the mannequins have darker complexions... WAIT! --They're actually the Cartwright Girls standing amongst the resin mannequins, modeling clothing.

Next page: Several photos of people during a 4th of July celebration. It's evident that a photo is missing.

She fishes the picture of the Cartwright Girls from her breast pocket, sizes it to see that it fits perfectly in the photo mounting tabs.

She flips to the back of the volume: an 8x10 color photo that takes up an entire page - A large group of people on the front porch. At the top of the page 'FAMILY REUNION - 1975'

First and last names type-written at the bottom of the photo. She squints to make out the faded print.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danielle sits on the bed, contemplating the photo. She slides her finger under the names as she looks at the faces of each.

DANIELLE'S POV: *Spencer Lawson, Robin Denny-Lawson...* She smiles in recognition. Emotional.

LATER

Moonlight spills through the day curtains, illuminating the room...

Danielle sleeps atop the bed. The album beside her.

The floor vent - a HISS softly emits... no, a voice. As soft as a breeze across the night...

FEMALE VOICES

Danielle...

Danielle wakes abruptly. Sits up, squints, looking about the room as if expecting to see someone or thing.

She slips her glasses on, checks the time on her phone.

SMASH-- glass breaking from below, the sound coming from the floor vent. Since the furnace is in the basement, it probably originated there.

She gets off the bed. Pulls on sweatpants.

Grabs the fire poker from the hearth, creeps to the doorway.

HALLWAY

She listens intently, moving cautiously toward the stairs.

FIRST FLOOR

She steps carefully around a blind corner, aims the flashlight beam down the hallway...

SMASH-- from the basement once more.

She punches in the password for her cellphone. Brings up her contacts. Calls 'Jim'.

Phone to her ear, it RINGS...

It RINGS again... We hear a VM greeting. She ends the call, continues on...

Standing in front of the basement door, she slowly opens it.

Steps inside, shining the light onto the floor down below.

Weapon raised to strike as she descends...

BASEMENT

Alert, Danielle moves across the room.

She slowly clocks the stone foundation walls, then proceeds to the root cellar...

She takes a breath, opens the door, shines the light inside--

ROOT CELLAR

She steps in. Sees several broken mason jars on the floor near the rack that they're on. - *has to be rats.*

Something to her left catches her attention. She turns--

DANIELLE

FUCK!!!!

--A mannequin stands in the corner. Its arm and head position would almost give the impression that it's pointing or indicating mutely to something.

Nerves bristled, she turns back to the broken glass on the floor. Listening carefully... SUUUUUK -- The sound seems to come from the mannequin. She quickly exits--

BASEMENT

She races back across the room to escape...

As she passes the other mannequin, in the corner where Curtis had left it... The head slowly turns to follows her.

HALLWAY

She hurries toward her bedroom - terrified.

BEDROOM

She locks the door behind her, moves toward the vanity as she digs the Sheriff's card out of her wallet. Punches the number into her cellphone. Pauses...

Thinking better of it, she sets the phone down on the tabletop... something dawns on her- the mannequin seated at the vanity is gone!

In the mirror, standing behind her, dozens of mannequins-- a hand seizes her wrist!

DANIELLE
NOOOOOO!

Danielle jerks awake, wild-eyed terrified. She lurches upright, takes in her surroundings...

Sees the mannequin at the vanity. She slides off the bed, grabs a bedsheet, walks over... drapes it over the figure.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
No offense.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Danielle opens the door to the root cellar, steps inside--

ROOT CELLAR - MOMENTS LATER

A mannequin stands in the corner where it was in her dream.

DANIELLE
(under her breath)
No fucking... way.

She takes a closer inspection of its face -- Intricately detailed. Expressive, almond-shaped eyes.

She turns toward the far wall, following the direction that its arm and head seem to point to - the canning shelves.

She smiles to herself--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
You're losing it, Danielle.

She sweeps some of the broken glass away with her foot...

Turns to find a wooden apple crate, sets it upright near the shelf, carefully steps up on it...

Shining the flashlight across the remaining jars on the shelf, she notices something in the rear corner.

She strains to reach for it... just out of grasp.

Stretching further she finally grasps the item in question--

--A handmade circular pendant about 3 inches in diameter. A ring around the outside looks to be fashioned from small bird bones, each fastened together with dried sinew.

At the center, a flat clay button with an insignia etched into it - the symbol of Bapomet.

She carefully steps down, studying the piece.

INT. HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY - DAY

Genevive flips through stacks of photos at the front desk.

The door NUDGES open, she looks up... Frowns as Danielle enters carrying her briefcase and the LAWSON album.

DANIELLE
Is Paul available?

GENEVIVE
(re: album)
You can't remove property!

DANIELLE
I'll put it back--

GENEVIVE
No! I'm calling the Sheriff--

DANIELLE
Technically, I can take anything in there--

GENEVIVE
No, you can't neither and I've told you not to be staying there.

DANIELLE
Okay. Fine. I'll just get a hold of him later.

Genevive scowls.

Paul emerges from the back, behind the counter.

PAUL
Hello--

GENEVIVE
(to Paul)
I need those pages tagged!

DANIELLE
I won't keep him long.

Paul gazes at Genevive, sheepishly. Genevive reluctantly nods.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Danielle seated across from Paul at a table. She slides the book over to him, which is opened to -'FAMILY REUNION - 1975'

DANIELLE

Do you know anyone in this photo?

He looks at it.

PAUL

Hmmmm... Wow, seventy-five. Aaaaa, most of these folks are gone.

He studies it closer--

PAUL (CONT'D)

In fact, I don't think any of 'em are alive. Of the ones I recognize, anyway.

She points to her parents--

DANIELLE

Did you know them?

PAUL

Aaaa, yeah, well, I didn't *know* 'em but they were from California, I think. They drowned in the river.

DANIELLE

What? No, these two.

He looks back down at it.

PAUL

Yeah, his name was Spencer...

He inspects the printed names to see that he's right.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yeah, Spencer and that's his wife.

DANIELLE

(skeptical)

They drowned in what river?

He gestures at the window--

PAUL

The Hudson. They drown about ten years after this picture was taken. Right here in the river.

DANIELLE

Excuse my shock, but I was always told that they died in a car accident. In California. They were my parents.

PAUL

I can find you the archive copy from the paper if you'd like.

DANIELLE

Yes. Thanks. Are there any Lawson relatives in the area?

He taps his finger, pondering...

He stands and turns to a floor-to-ceiling shelf behind him, crammed with volumes of ledgers and scrapbooks.

Searching the book spines--

PAUL

Only living one in the area I know of is up Pulaski way. Tram Lawson. Not sure now, though.

DANIELLE

Where?

PAUL

Pulaski. Hour north of here. Bit of a hermit, last I'd heard. You'd have to ask around to find him...

Paul finds what he's looking for and carefully tugs a worn volume out.

Moves over to Danielle's side, sliding the book in front of her. He opens the cover.

PAUL (CONT'D)

This is a good portion of the Lawson tree. We keep these registers on prominent family names in the county.

He flips pages, searching...

He stops on a page that has a staggered, lineage bracket trees with hundreds of names written in ink on various lines.

Paul uses his index finger to locate, scrawled in ink- *'Spencer Lawson'*. Below his name- *'Robin Denny-Lawson; Spouse'*

PAUL (CONT'D)
Here we are...

He searches up and down the columns...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Here.

He points to a line next to her parent's names where
'DANIELLE' is written.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hmmm. Doesn't show anything more.

DANIELLE
I was adopted by a family in
California.

Paul continues to search the tree.

PAUL
(focused on the tree)
Ah, must've been a sealed file and
all that, cause I woulda' still had
something on you.

She remembers something--

DANIELLE
I meant to ask about the clothing
shop. At the house?

PAUL
Oh sure, popular place for dresses
going way back to the 1820's.

She indicates the 'Lawson' album--

DANIELLE
Yeah, I saw the ad in here.

She opens the Lawson album. Flips a few pages. Stops on the
advertisement with the mannequins and Cartwright Girls...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
What do you know about these girls?

Paul leans forward to look. Nods slowly, clearly more than a
little uncomfortable.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Why were they dressed like the
mannequins?

Paul looks toward the door, checking his surroundings, then back to her.

PAUL

He a... supposedly liked using girls as... mannequins. Like living mannequins. He liked the idea that men shopped for dresses with their wives during the day, while at the same time *they* shopped... for who they'd have... relations with that night.

DANIELLE

That's disgusting.

He looks down.

PAUL

That it is.

She gathers her things and stands.

DANIELLE

I'd appreciate it if you could make a copy of that for me.

Paul half-smiles, nods once.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danielle, reclined on the sofa, the Lawson photo album open on her lap. Studies the advertisement with the Cartwright Girls amongst the mannequins as she sketches the image.

A candle burns on a side table.

She slowly turns the pendant between her fingers, with her free hand - thoughts drifting...

As if suddenly becoming aware of the piece in her hand-- she stops moving her fingers. Tosses it onto the coffee table.

Eyes heavy-lidded, she places the album and sketch pad on the table. Leans back, her head easing into the cushion...

LATER...

The room is completely dark, save for the candle. Danielle sleeps on the sofa.

From an inky black shadow near a boarded window behind her, stands the silhouette of a human-like figure...

The minimal light, decreasing by the second with the waning candle, makes it difficult to see it...

It silently moves away! Impossible to tell what- but, *something*.

Danielle wakes. Sits up, looking about as though she'd heard or sensed something. She turns her phone light on, blows the candle out...

Sweeps the light around the room. Finally walks out.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danielle sleeps on the bed.

On the bedside table - the photo of the Cartwright Girls with their haunted expressions. The bone pendant beside it.

From across the room - that faint whisper once again--

FEMALE VOICES

Danielle...

The floor vent - blackness below... a slow vacuum sound--
SUUUUUUUK... SUUUUUUUK... SUUUUUUUK...

She flinches several times in a fitful sleep...

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Danielle walks onto the front porch. Looking off into the distance - a train stopped on the tracks...

Striding across the field toward it, someone takes her hand... she looks to see-- her mother, Robin, from the reunion photo...

Danielle softly weeps with joy. No words are spoken, as if sound were in a vacuum. Robin hugs her while softly patting her back...

Her mother pulls away, smiles, gently leads her toward--

Standing at the tree near the train tracks. She turns, her mother is gone-- Panicked, she looks about her surroundings, then down to the base of the tree--

--Her feet begin to sink into loose soil as if it were quicksand... quickly submerging...

Lying on the ground several feet away - the Cartwright Girls. Hands bound above their heads. Dresses pulled up to their waist...

A MAN moves into the group wielding a red-hot steel rod as the Girls cry in terror.

BLACKOUT...

A flash of lightning reveals-- the Girls are now mannequins.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Danielle bolts upright, chest heaving. Tears in her eyes. She looks around, gaining her bearings...

Her eyes move to the photo on the night stand next to her. Suddenly focusing on something, she grabs the photograph.

DANIELLE'S POV: She focuses on one of them in particular.

She glances at the pendant on the night stand. Picks it up. Examines it closely, then back to the photo...

One of the girls wears a pendant that looks identical. She studies it for a another moment...

Exhausted, she gets out of bed and shuffles toward the door. Looking down, she stops - her feet are covered with dried mud. She eyes the bed, then the hallway.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Muddied footprints leading to her door. She moves toward the stairs.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - DAWN

Danielle moves across the field toward the--

TREE

She studies the soil at the base, discovering her footprints. Scopes the general area.

Pulls out a sketch pad.

- The defunct railroad tracks, corroded with brown oxidation.
- Further across the horizon, the Hudson River.

She looks back to her footprints. Kneels down, struggling with the idea that she walked this far in her sleep.

LATER

Danielle sits facing the tree as she sketches.

DANIELLE'S POV OF SKETCH PAD:

- A crude depiction of the tree near the train tracks.
- The Cartwright Girls standing near the tree.
- An abstract, human skull on the ground near their feet.

Her eyes grow heavy with fatigue. Suddenly, she notices something... strains to focus on-- the skull. Puzzled as if unaware of having drawn it.

EXT. CATSKILL MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE - DAY

Danielle's car moves along a two-lane road that threads through the dense copse of trees.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Open fields surrounded by thick Maple and Oak forests dotting the perimeter.

GOOGLE MAPS
Your destination is in six hundred
feet.

She flips the turn signal. A sign near the exit: 'WELCOME TO THE VILLAGE OF PULASKI'

EXT. PULASKI, NY - DAY

The car passes over a long, concrete bridge which connects one side of the town to the other.

Deep below it, a fast moving river. Steep shale stone ledges on either side.

Rows of houses, many turn of the century and in need of TLC.

INT. RENTAL CAR

Danielle drives down the main drag of the quaint village.

- A Ma&Pops Submarine Sandwich Shop...

- A theater marquee of a boarded-up movie house. Several crooked letters tell the last show that played: 'JAWS 3'

Next door, a dive-bar with a faded, neon sign: CHAMPNEY'S.

EXT. CHAMPNEY'S

She pulls curb-side of the dingy watering hole. A sign in the window: **NO FISH POLES ALLOWED!**

INT. CHAMPNEY'S

The half dozen PATRONS at this midday hour, turn to her as if she'd just entered 'The Slaughtered Lamb'.

She offers a polite smile and stands at the bar.

A husky BARTENDER, 50s bent down below a speedwell sink, revealing a plumber's backside.

DANIELLE

Excuse me?

He cocks his head, never turning--

BARTENDER

Yeah?

DANIELLE

Would you happen to know where I might find Tram Lawson?

He stands.

BARTENDER

Tram? Shit, I dunno.

He turns to a man at the far end of the bar, SKEETER, 70s--

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Skeet?!

Skeeter turns. The Bartender waves him over.

Skeeter approaches...

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
You know where she might find Tram?

The old man turns an ear to him.

SKEETER
Huh?

BARTENDER
TRAM. TRAM LAWSON.

Skeeter acknowledges the name--

SKEETER
Oh! Well, now, see, now he don't
come into the village much of ever.
Who're you?

DANIELLE
A relative.

SKEETER
Oh. He expecting you?

DANIELLE
Probably not.

Skeeter studies her a moment.

SKEETER
Okay, well you're gonna wanna take
the Petrie Road, which the road out
front will run into. Go left on
Petrie. Take it till it turns to
dirt, then keep on it till you get
to the end almost. His place is way
off to the right. But he don't like
company.

She smiles.

DANIELLE
Petrie road. Thanks. Thank you
both.

The Bartender shrugs and turns back around.

EXT. PULASKI - DAY

Danielle's car moves along a rutted dirt road. Empty fields
on the left side. Maple tree forest on the right.

INT. RENTAL CAR

A roadside mailbox in the distance.

Approaching the mouth of an overgrown driveway, she notices the vacant, haunted fields surrounding a small farmhouse set several hundred yards back.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She parks next to a battered pick up truck. Scans the immediate surroundings.

DANIELLE
(under her breath)
This looks like a terrible idea.

She opens her door and makes her way to the front porch...

Takes a step up--

MAN (O.C.)
Hey!

She jumps back.

MAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Watch the line.

She looks where the voice originates... the front door opens a sliver.

MAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
At your feet.

She glances down-- notices monofilament fishing line stretched tight across the second step, disappearing at either end into shrubbery.

The front door widens revealing TRAM LAWSON, 70s. Loose, sun-weathered skin droops from his rawboned features.

MAN/TRAM
What do you want?

DANIELLE
Are you Tram Lawson?

TRAM
Who're you?

DANIELLE
Danielle Lewis. I inherited the
house in Orwell. We're cousins.

His pale, milky eyes reveal grave concern upon hearing this.

INT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle follows Tram into the dusty, cluttered kitchen.

TRAM
Don't sit. Gotta feed 'em out back.

Tram takes hold of a metal bucket and continues to the back.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

Tram stands inside an enclosure of chicken wire, shaking feed
at dozens of hungry hens.

Danielle on the other side of the fence, trying to avoid the
smell of chicken shit.

TRAM
So, who in hell told you where I
live?

DANIELLE
A guy in town.

TRAM
(under his breath)
God damn loose mouths.
(to Danielle)
What did you want?

DANIELLE
My parents died when I was young.
Spencer and Robin?

He looks to the floor, a shade uneasy.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Did you know them?

TRAM
Not really. Maybe met 'em a long
time ago. How'd you get involved
with the house?

DANIELLE
Oh, the house lost its Hist--

TRAM
Yeah, yeah, but you were adopted.
Aren't those... the... records
sealed or whatever?

DANIELLE
I'm not exactly sure how they
located me, to be honest.

Tram ponders this carefully...

TRAM
What did you need from me?

DANIELLE
I never met my parents. I'm curious
about this family I never knew.

Her insecurity on the subject is palpable.

He hangs the bucket on the fence post. At war with his mind
and a dawning fear that he masks...

TRAM
Maybe you shouldn't go digging
things up.

She bites her tongue-- he sees it...

TRAM (CONT'D)
I just mean that all families
usually have things. In their past.

DANIELLE
I'm sorry, I don't follow you.

He shrugs, frustrated.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
What did you tell them when they
contacted you?

He scrunches his brow...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
The Historical Society. Regarding
the house -- They went deep enough
to find me, they must have come to
you first.

Tram checks the surroundings as if expecting someone is near.
Speaking in a softer tone--

TRAM

Technically, you're the next in line since they passed. If you weren't found, then it'd pass to someone else.

She tries to deduce his sudden, strange behavior.

DANIELLE

Did you know about me?

The question catches him off guard--

TRAM

Wh-- well, what?

DANIELLE

When you heard they had died.

TRAM

Well, yes. I knew they had a baby girl. You. And uhhh... yeah, it was a damn awful thing, them drowning.

DANIELLE

I'd always been told they died in a car crash.

She looks for a response... Nothing.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Why would someone lie about that?

Tram, again, with the poker face. She gestures for him to offer *anything*.

TRAM

Maybe to keep you away from here.

DANIELLE

I'm not unders--

Exploding--

TRAM

I don't know! Okay? I can't-- I don't have god damned answers for you.

Taken aback by his sudden shift, she backs up a few paces.

DANIELLE

Sorry. Thanks for your time.

She moves toward the side of the house, noticing more monofilament strung around the boundaries of the yard with bells tied in intermittently.

TRAM (O.C.)
Hold on a minute.

He ambles toward her.

TRAM (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to come off that way.
Would you like a drink?

INT. FARMHOUSE

Danielle sits at a card table set-up in a cluttered, haphazard kitchen. A glass of water in front of her.

Tram shuffles toward her carrying a photograph.

DANIELLE
What are the lines for?

TRAM
Huh?

DANIELLE
With the bells?

TRAM
Oh, tripwire. Yeah, just cause we're out in the big nothing don't mean there's nothing coming.

She nods, placating. He carefully lowers onto a chair. Slides the photo across to her. She leans forward to see--

DANIELLE'S POV: A color, studio portrait of her parents.

Danielle smiles, touched deeply.

DANIELLE
Thank you. This means a lot.

TRAM
I'm gonna be direct with you, and I'm not good with people since I don't see many...

This comes hard for him--

TRAM (CONT'D)
My wife and I wanted to adopt you
after your folks passed--

She's struck with deep emotion - leans forward--

TRAM (CONT'D)
--Hold on, let me finish. You don't
know about the Lawson history,
trust me. The fact is, there aren't
many left.

He fidgets with seam of his pants.

TRAM (CONT'D)
My wife, well, she believed in...
She read into signs and tried to
avoid certain things. She gave up
the idea of raising you, thinking
we'd be protecting you if we
didn't. I know, sounds backwards
but, well... She believed in her
heart that we were hexed. These
Native girls--

DANIELLE
(entranced)
The Cartwright girls.

TRAM
Then you know.

DANIELLE
Only a little.

He focuses with great intensity.

TRAM
Somehow, it tried to lure certain
family members to the house at
different times.

DANIELLE
What did?

He fumbles for the words...

TRAM
... I don't know exactly. Just...
No other reason your folks woulda'
come here all the way from
California when they died in the
river.

(MORE)

TRAM (CONT'D)

Besides, your mom couldn't swim, so
we never figured out why they were
on a boat and at night, no less.

She takes this in. Tram watches her askance to determine if
she might believe him. His eyes search for his next words. He
opens his mouth to speak--

TINKLE TINKLE DING DING -- various bells and chimes RING
outside...

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Close on--

A small bell tied to the monofilament, shaking as if someone
has tripped the line.

Another bell near the woods' edge, rattles and CHIMES.

Several others near a garden, JINGLE from the tripwire.

BACK TO:

FARMHOUSE

Tram, terrified, peeks out the window. Danielle, not sure how
to react--

DANIELLE

What's the matter?

He searches out the window, desperately. Never looking back--

TRAM

Wind, I 'spose.

She's got so many questions for him, but his sudden paranoia
makes her uncomfortable. She stands to leave.

DANIELLE

I should go.

He turns to her, contemplating telling her something more...
Finally, he simply nods regretfully.

TRAM

I'm sorry. And... uh... I hope your
life worked out good.

She smiles. He seems to silently plead with her, his mind consumed with worry. She reaches into her purse, hands him a business card.

DANIELLE
Here's my number if you ever want
to reach me.

Clearly troubled, he waves with a hollow look.

TRAM
Keep the photo.

DANIELLE
I appreciate it.

She slides the photo into her briefcase-- never noticing that she'd left her sketch pad on the table amongst the clutter.

TRAM
Just let that place go. It's old
and more trouble than it's worth.

She smiles.

DANIELLE
I can't wait to get home.

She sets the business card on the counter.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Danielle sits at the dining table, laptop open...

DANIELLE'S POV: Types a Google search: 'Cartwright Girls/ Murder/ Orwell' hits ENTER - A list of pages to various sites and articles for Orwell, but nothing involving 'Cartwright'.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK - she jumps.

FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle opens the door -- Curtis holds a bowl covered with aluminum foil.

DANIELLE
Hi.

CURTIS
Hey, just wanted to see if
everything's okay?

She's flattered.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
Brought you some of my ma's famous
corn harvest soup.

DANIELLE
Wow. Do you want to come in?

His eyes light up a few ticks...

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Curtis heats up the soup in a cast iron pan on the stove top.

CURTIS
So, what've you been doing in our
little town to pass the time?

DANIELLE
Hired a realtor. Poked around
trying to find out about my
parents.

CURTIS
Roots are important. Any luck?

She shrugs, removes something from her purse--

Hands him the photo of the Cartwright Girls.

DANIELLE
Look at this again.

He examines the photo. She holds up the bird-bone pendant. He
looks at her, squints- 'huh?'

She holds it near her neck, nods at the photo. He looks back
at it...

His eyes widen.

CURTIS
Where did you find *this*?

DANIELLE
In the basement.

He reaches for it. Examines it closely.

CURTIS
Looks like Kotori.

DANIELLE

What?

CURTIS

Used in Iroquois magic.

DANIELLE

Think it's the same one?

Curtis looks at the photo again. Studies the insignia.

CURTIS

Hard to tell. These markings in the middle are different, though.

DANIELLE

How could I find out?

CURTIS

I think I can help you out. We can ask someone on the Rez tomorrow.

DANIELLE

Sure. Great.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danielle sits on a sofa eating the soup. Curtis next to her.

DANIELLE

This is so good.

CURTIS

My ma's pride.

She eats another spoonful.

DANIELLE

So have you lived here your whole life?

He smiles.

CURTIS

I left right after High School. Spent time in Vermont. Florida. L.A. for a year.

DANIELLE

Impressive.

CURTIS

That I moved around so much?

DANIELLE
No, that you left.

He gives her a look--

CURTIS
Had me figured for an
institutionalized hick, huh?

She laughs, shrugs playfully.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
Very provincial attitude,
counselor.

DANIELLE
The area does have a certain charm.

CURTIS
It's home. My ancestors lived in
this region for hundreds of years.
Probably thousands. Full of blood
memories.

She nods, sets the bowl on the table.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
I believe we carry the history of
our families forever in our DNA.
It's stronger if you live on the
same soil.

DANIELLE
Corny, but I like it.

He smirks.

CURTIS
What're you? Italian? German?

DANIELLE
Irish, Italian and about three
other ingredients I've never
verified.

CURTIS
I think if a person visits the land
where their blood originated, in
your case say, Italy? You'd feel
it. In here.

He places a hand over his heart.

DANIELLE
I like that.

CURTIS
Trouble is tracing it in so many
directions with you white mutts and
your watered down blood lines.

She looks at him, opens her mouth: *"No you didn't!"*

DANIELLE
Okay, that's harsh!

They chuckle... fading to--

Silence becoming awkward...

With a sideways glance, she catches him looking at her. He quickly diverts his eyes.

Uneasy, she turns to say something--

He kisses her lips. Shocked for a split second, she aggressively pulls him into her. The intensity is palpable.

His hands move across her back, down across her taut hips and ass. She grabs his face, pulling him closer as if some pent-up emotion had been released...

She stands suddenly, shaking her head--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Wow...

He's charmed by her vulnerable unease.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I haven't -- it's been a while...

CURTIS
It's okay.

DANIELLE
Yeah. I just need-- I'm sorry-- I
should sleep. Like I said, it's
been a while.

He stands.

CURTIS
Call me if you need anything?

She nods. Smiles.

DANIELLE

And thanks. I'm glad you came by.

He turns to leave.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Actually... would you mind staying?
Just to sleep. Seriously. I know
that sounds bad. I just, I guess
this place is starting to get to me
a little.

He nods, completely sincere.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danielle sleeps on her side, in the bed. Curtis fast asleep
next to her, wearing his clothes.

A suction-like whisper from across the room... registering
from the floor vent--

SUUUUUUK SUUUUUUK

Danielle rouses slightly.

SUUUUUUK SUUUUUUUKK

She sits up, half asleep, eyes heavy-lidded. Swings her feet
around to the floor and slowly stands.

FEMALE VOICES

Help... Usssss...

HALLWAY

Danielle softly pads toward the staircase.

STAIRCASE

She steps down with a fluid motion.

SUUUUUUK

FEMALE VOICES

Free... us...

FIRST FLOOR

At a low angle, bare feet striding slowly past the living room --

As she passes, we hold on: standing in a row, numerous other legs, maybe twenty or so, wearing antiquated dresses--

Upon closer view - the legs of mannequins.

At the end of the hall - the front door is open.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Danielle walks out onto the porch...

Looks in the distance toward the tree near the train tracks.

Striding across the field toward the tree...

Approaching, she sees a BLACK RAVEN in a branch...

Standing at the foot of the tree, she looks up at the bird of prey. It CAWS horribly, then takes flight.

Danielle looks to the ground -- the bird-bone pendant lies in the loose dirt at her feet. She reaches down and picks it up.

Standing behind her, a row of mannequins. Their faces look to be pleading in misery--

FEMALE VOICES

Release... usssss...

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Danielle wakes, covered in perspiration. She HUFFS deep breaths to center herself.

Leans over to look at the floor - no muddy footprints.

Rolls toward Curtis-- a mannequin lies under the sheet, facing her! -- Split reaction, she kicks at it repeatedly, sending it crashing to the floor.

DANIELLE

What an asshole.

She peers over the side of the bed at it. She calms a bit. Checks her phone on the night-stand... Notices the mannequin at the vanity...

Still covered with the sheet, but now it faces the bed. She stills with dread...

Slowly, she gets off the bed, walks toward it...

Stopping when it appears that there is actually a live person underneath. Hard to tell in the moonlit room, but whatever is under there seems to waver ever so slightly...

She takes another step, now within several feet of it. Studies it for a long moment...

Leans toward it, gently pinching a piece of the sheet... Slowly tugs it off, revealing the mannequin, left arm extended toward the floor behind her.

She turns to see... the pendant on the floor near the bed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Danielle, bed-head and sweat pants, sits in a chair across from the mannequin at the vanity.

She avoids eye contact, as if it were human. Catching her absurdity, she looks at it directly...

Locked in, she studies it further...

Tears form in the corner of Danielle's eyes...

Emotions swell, though she can't be sure why... She covers her mouth, hit with overwhelming grief...

Through tears, she looks back at it, scanning the entire mask area.

DANIELLE

What do you want to say?

The eyes have narrowed to more of a squint than the doe-eyed look from a moment ago... or did they?

Danielle leans back to get the big picture--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Can you hear me?

In the reflection of its eye-- she sees a shape speed across the room behind her-- she whips around - nothing there.

Her phone vibrates: it's JIM. She picks it up--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?

INT. JIM'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT AS DESIRED

Jim sits at a small kitchen table, laptop open.

JIM
Hey. You never called me back.

She focuses back on the eyes--

DANIELLE
(absent)
Sorry.

JIM
You okay?

DANIELLE
Yeah.

JIM
I was thinking, maybe I should come
out and keep you company... I miss
you.

DANIELLE
(flat)
I miss you, too. Peter's not going
for that, though. Besides, I need
you to file the three motions on
the Dubinski case.

Jim looks at his laptop screen, disappointed. On the screen
we see booking information for an Airline flight to New York.

JIM
Already did it this morning.

He clicks 'CANCEL' for the reservation.

DANIELLE
You're a lifesaver.

JIM
Uh-huh. You sure you're okay?

She thinks a moment...

DANIELLE
Yeah.

JIM
And? Any closure for you?

DANIELLE
I guess. Some.

A car HORN outside. She looks at the clock on her phone--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Shit! I have to call you later.
Sorry. Bye.

JIM
Okay, talk to--

She ends the call.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Danielle, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, hustles out the front door, glides down the porch steps carrying a backpack.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER

Danielle closes her door.

DANIELLE
You have a sick-fuck sense of humor.

CURTIS
Whoa! What?

DANIELLE
What. The god damn mannequin in my bed?!

CURTIS
No idea what you mean.

DANIELLE
Are you kidding? I ask you to stay and you do that?!

He raises his hands--

CURTIS
(baffled)
Stop! You never asked me to stay.

She takes him in... he's telling the truth.

DANIELLE
(concerned)
No. We ki...

CURTIS
Hey. It's okay. I can tell you
haven't been sleeping.

DANIELLE
Then how did it get there? It was
in the bed.

CURTIS
Do you sleepwalk?

This gives her pause.

DANIELLE
Not like that.

She looks out the window, trying to play it off... But deeply
disturbed to her core.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - LATER

Danielle takes in the passing countryside. Something weighs
on her mind like a cocktail of fear & anxiety.

DANIELLE
Do you believe in curses?

He grins, not sure how to answer.

CURTIS
A... how's that?

DANIELLE
Something my cousin said.

CURTIS
From yesterday?

She nods.

DANIELLE
He was so frightened when he
mentioned those girls and the
house. I've had terrible dreams
about them.

CURTIS
That's 'cause I told you that
story.

DANIELLE

It's more than that. And I'm not saying some of it isn't just in my head, but those mannequins...

He CHUCKLES.

CURTIS

What?

DANIELLE

I'd only say this in the company of a stranger - I swear they've been... *communicating*. With me.

He waits for more. Expressionless.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

I appreciate you not laughing. The other day I was looking for a key. Later, I notice a mannequin and it... seemed to be indicating a drawer. I check- a key falls out. And the fruit cellar- where I found the pendant. There was a mannequin pointing-- *Seemed* to be pointing.

He turns to her, then back to the road. Silence...

CURTIS

Maybe you're caught up in it. Emotionally, ya know?

She leans forward -- a sign on the shoulder of the road: LEAVING THE VILLAGE OF ORWELL. But it's not the sign that she's looking at... Just past it--

DANIELLE

Holy shit.

DANIELLE'S POV: A one level motel near the side of the road:
THE HUDSON INN

CURTIS (O.C.)

What's that?

DANIELLE

Paul said there wasn't another motel in the area.

CURTIS

He's not all there.

DANIELLE

C'mon. How could he not know?

He shrugs, glances at her - *whadaya want me to say?*

EXT. ONONDAGA INDIAN RESERVATION - LATER

They drive:

- through a wooded landscape... beautiful lush ferns and pines intertwined in a soft dance...

- by a peaceful lake...

- a mobile home, torn and tattered from neglect. Cardboard over one of the windows. Several junk cars in the front yard, oxidizing into the earth...

- Another trailer home with various rusted appliances strewn about the lawn: refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers. A sign: 'PARTS 4 SALE' staked by the road...

- An overgrown cemetery surrounded by more woodland.

EXT. RESERVATION PARK - LATER

A ceremonial earth dance performed by 3 men dressed in traditional garb. Several dozen people watch them...

Native American children playing with water guns...

Curtis parks near an oversized teepee that houses a clothing vendor. They both get out and walk toward the infield.

She spots a poster stapled to a community information board, stops to look at it: 'CURTIS RED FOX for TRIBAL COUNCIL' Curtis shakes his head, embarrassed.

DANIELLE

It's great that you're involved.

Curtis takes her hand, and moves toward a small crowd.

Weaving through the people, it seems as though everyone smiles and wants to shake Curtis' hand. He works it like a grateful celebrity on a red carpet.

They approach a large, Carnival-style canvass tent.

Curtis opens a flap and they step inside.

INT. TENT

Several ELDERS sit at a table in the far corner--

Curtis approaches with Danielle-- One of them is BLACK ELK--
the Old Man with the wild hair that she'd almost hit.

His milky eyes widen just a bit...

Danielle looks up-- She doubles-takes, remembering him...

They stop at the table--

CURTIS
(whispering to Danielle)
He's blind.
(to Black Elk)
Grandpa, this is my friend,
Danielle.

He repeats it to Black Elk in NATIVE TONGUE.

Black Elk nods politely and smiles a near toothless grin,
almost giddy.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
This is Black Elk. Smartest man I
know. He's a hundred and three.

Black Elk tugs on Curtis' sleeve and SAYS something to him in
a very deliberate, serious tone. He becomes almost maniacal
in his insistence...

Curtis nods, reassures Black Elk with a pat on the shoulder
and turns back to Danielle.

Black Elk speaks rapidly to the others.

DANIELLE
(hushed tone)
What did he say?

Curtis shakes his head, trying not to smile...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
What?!

Curtis hesitates. Pulls her to the side.

CURTIS
Okay, for the record - I don't
believe in this stuff...

Off her impatient look--

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Those girls in the picture you found... There's legends about them. That a Shaman begged Lawson to spare them. Instead, they forced him to watch. Sent him over the edge. Stories say he crossed his gifts with something like Witchcraft. Elders believed their spirits were kept, held; whatever you want to call it - Bound to an object so they could be reborn one day.

DANIELLE

The mannequins.

He shakes his head, emphatically.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

It would fit what I said.

CURTIS

These are just folk tales.

Black Elk repeats a PHRASE -- "Ahtunowiho"

DANIELLE

What's he saying?

Curtis shakes his head, embarrassed.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

What?!

Danielle crosses her arms, laser-focused now.

CURTIS

Relax. They're ghost stories.

Black Elk stares at her--

She removes the bird-bone pendant from her purse-- walks past Curtis and holds it out to Black Elk...

CURTIS (O.C.) (CONT'D)

He's blind.

DANIELLE

Then why is he staring right at me?

Black Elk snatches it from her. Studying it carefully, he runs his fingers over the piece...

He begins to tremble and convulse...

Falls off the chair to his knees, begins digging at the ground like a dog.

None of the others aid him...

Danielle watches, horrified--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
What's wrong with him?

CURTIS
Nothing. He believes he's a seer.

Black Elk SHOUTS desperately to Curtis, almost pleading.

BLACK ELK
AHTUNOWIHO! AHTUNOWIHO! AHTUNOWIHO!

Curtis takes the pendant from Black Elk.

DANIELLE
(To Curtis)
Ask him what I'm supposed to do.

CURTIS
Not now.

DANIELLE
Please.

CURTIS
He can't get this worked up at his age.

Curtis gives the pendant to Danielle, gestures for her to follow him.

Black Elk suddenly calms as if nothing had happened.

EXT. RESERVATION PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis exits the tent with Danielle...

Everyone outside stares at her - quietly sinister...

DANIELLE
(whispering)
What's going on?

Curtis leads her back to the car.

CURTIS
Nothing. Must've heard him yelling.

Danielle looks cautiously over her shoulder at the numerous prying eyes, clearly rattled.

Curtis puts an arm around her.

DANIELLE
What was he shouting? Autunwhee?

CURTIS
He's old.

DANIELLE
(frantic)
He pointed right at me! What does it mean?!

A beat. He checks his surroundings, turns to her...

CURTIS
It's an Iroquois word. It's like an affliction. They thought if the dead speak to you from the other side and you ignore them. You lose your mind.

She stops. Shocked. Wheels turning...

Seeing her reaction--

CURTIS (CONT'D)
This is why I don't want to tell you this shit-- it gets in your head and you start believing it. It's just how they used to explain mental illness before science.

DANIELLE
(insistent)
"Those that ignore them"? What am I supposed to do?!

Curtis grins, shakes his head.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I'm serious!

CURTIS
Folktales.

DANIELLE

(overcome)

You said that already! Flatter me.
I've had dreams that seem so real.
I walked in my sleep the other
night. Out to those railroad
tracks. I'd never walked in my
sleep before. I don't care if it's
myths or whatever you want to call
it - what would *folklore* say to do?

Curtis pauses a moment, searching for the right words...

CURTIS

Your mind's getting the better of
you.

DANIELLE

Stop! Okay? They are asking me to
do something!

A beat.

CURTIS

(placating)

Hypothetically, you'd need to find
some of the remains.

She waits for more...

CURTIS (CONT'D)

They'd be returned to consecrated
land. A burial ground.

DANIELLE

Where would I find remains?

CURTIS

C'mon--

DANIELLE

Just... *Where?*

He studies her for a moment, wanting to smile but seeing her
intensity, he doesn't.

CURTIS

How would I know? These are
campfire tales that've been handed
down for ages.

DANIELLE

Take me home.

EXT. LAWSON PROPERTY - NIGHT

The Sheriff's cruiser slows near the long driveway.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - NIGHT

The car rolls along the driveway.

CURTIS
Sorry he upset you.

The car stops in front of the house. She opens her door--

DANIELLE
The burial ground. It's that
cemetery we passed?

CURTIS
Hey, no. It's illegal for you.
Look, I can show you if you wait
until the morning.

She calms just a bit. Nods.

DANIELLE
I'll wait. Where is it?

A beat. He finally relents--

CURTIS
Behind the reservation cemetery. On
the hill.

DANIELLE
Thanks.

CURTIS
I can stay if you want?

DANIELLE
No. I'm fine. Thanks.

She forces a smile. Nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Danielle sits rigidly on the sofa while looking at the pendant. Wheels obsessively spinning. The mannequin from earlier, next to her.

She turns to it, studying the face once more. Searching.

BEDROOM - LATER

Danielle sleeps on the bed. Moonlight spills through the day curtains.

From the floor vent--

FEMALE VOICES

Help usssss...

Danielle stirs in her sleep.

HALLWAY

Danielle walks to the basement door.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

She pulls the string for the overhead light.

BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

She moves across the room, past the root cellar...

Approaches the far wall of the basement...

Walks along the stone foundation wall. A SCRATCHING on the other side... Becoming frantic...

Then, from behind the stone wall--

FEMALE VOICES (O.C.)

Help usssss...

Danielle sees several stones with no mortar...

She pulls at one of the rocks... wiggles it... tugs, it rolls to the cellar floor.

Her eyes widen with excitement. Anxiety. Fear.

She strains to see into the space beyond. Steps closer, tentatively moving her face closer to the opening...

As she leans over, we see someone standing next to her...

Danielle's mother, Robin, wearing a dress, circa 1800s.

ROBIN (O.C.)

Hi, sweetie.

Danielle stands. She smiles, brimming with overpowering emotions.

DANIELLE

Mom--

Robin smiles, lifts her index finger to her lips. She takes Danielle by the hand, to lead her toward the stairwell.

EXT. FRONT DOOR

Danielle and Robin seemingly glide across the porch.

-Down the steps.

-Across the field. Danielle turns to see that her mother is still there.

Near the tree in the distance, frantic, mosquito-like WHISPERS of what sounds like dozens of people.

Reaching the tree, her mother lets go of her hand. The WHISPERS becoming louder.

Danielle sees the Bird-Boned pendant on the ground, partially covered with dirt. She digs it out, picks it up-- Silence.

ROBIN (O.C.)

Help them, my sweet girl...

She turns to her mother - she's gone, replaced by dozens of mannequins standing in a row looking at her - Faces etched with grief.

INT. BEDROOM

Danielle wakes up PANTING. Her eyes dart about the room, frantic.

She sits up, looks to the bedside table. Sees the pendant.

Checks her hands - dirt under her finger nails. She reaches for the pendant, hesitates upon seeing-- fresh soil across the face of it.

She takes it. Rubs some of the dirt between her fingers.

Checks the clock on her cell phone: 5:34 AM

Dials 'CURTIS'... It rings several times. Voicemail answers.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - MORNING

Hell-bent determined, now, Danielle marches across the field-
Shovel in one hand, flashlight in the other.

Breaths of steam billow from her nose in the early morning
air.

She reaches the base of the tree, quickly scans the soil for
footprints - nothing there.

SHHHHHT - the cutting edge of the shovel slices into earth.
Digging upward with a clump of sod.

Danielle swings the shovel sideways, flinging the sod away--
Rams the shovel into the ground, repeating the same maneuver.
Her face a mask of determination, GRUNTING with each load.

The hole is several feet deep. She stops, PANTING heavily.
Eyes void of emotion, almost robotic.

She brushes a few stray hairs out of her eyes and slams the
shovel back into the hole.

Dumps the load. Slams the shovel in again - CRUNCH!

She tosses the shovel aside and drops to her knees.

Reaches in, scoops out loose soil.

Searching the bottom, she leans in to remove a stone the size
of a softball.

She tosses it aside.

CAW CAW! She looks up - a black Raven perched on a twisted
branch high above. Tilts its head, seemingly studying her.

SNAPS its large wings, and takes flight. A black feather from
its wing floats toward the ground...

She watches the bird disappear into the early morning haze...

Looks back to the ground --

The feather stuck in the soil several feet from the hole.

She fixates on it momentarily... Plucks the feather up.
Studies it... An idea forming...

The cutting edge of the shovel slams into the earth--

SHHHT - plop - SHHHT - plop - SHHHHT

Danielle has quickly dug several feet down at the spot where the feather was. She doggedly hacks into the earth, slice after slice...

CRACK!

She looks into the hole. Drops the shovel, kneels down to reach in and dig with her hand...

Her expression turns to surprise. She frantically digs several more hand fulls out. Her eyes widen as she pulls out--

A human skull - Lower jaw missing, skull cap broken in several places.

She kneels down, exhausted but strangely relieved.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle rips off several large trash bags from a roll.

TREE - MORNING

The hole is much wider now. Danielle removes a femur and slides it into the trash bag.

FIELD - MORNING

Danielle drags the bag of bones through tall, dew-wet grass.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Dark overcast skies threaten rain.

Approaching the 'IROQUOIS NATION RESERVATION' sign...

Turns down the dirt road she'd been on the previous day.

She passes some of the run down trailer homes.

EXT. RESERVATION CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle's car approaches, slows to a crawl...

Finally turning down a severely overgrown road that enters the graveyard.

INT. RENTAL CAR

The car rocks as it rolls over deep ruts.

The fairly dense forest of Oak trees, coupled with the grey skies, makes it difficult to see.

She stops, shuts the car off. Scans her surroundings.

DANIELLE'S POV: Cellphone screen- 'Dialing Curtis'

She nervously waits as it RINGS... Voicemail again.

EXT. RENTAL CAR

She opens the trunk and removes the trash bag and shovel.

BURIAL GROUND

Danielle walks toward a large clearing in the trees where stones have been placed in a large circle with several inner rings of the same design.

Outside the ring are four wooden totem poles, spaced equally around the loop.

At the base of the totems are various charms and necklaces.

BURIAL GROUND - MOMENTS LATER

SHHHT - plop - SHHHHT - plop

Danielle digs with a desperate determination...

Suddenly, she stops to listen-- VOICES nearby!

She kneels down, peering through the dense surrounding of trees...

Spots three young BOYS walking by on the dirt road in the distance.

Waiting until they've passed, she stands and resumes...

SHHHT - plop - SHHHHT - plop

The narrow hole is roughly 3 feet deep.

She carefully dumps the contents of the trash bag into it, repulsed by the thought.

Quickly shovels earth into the hole.

Tamps the earth flat with the shovel.

Checks her surroundings once more before quickly moving to her car.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME

Tram scrapes chicken bones from a plate into a trash can. Sets the plate in the sink. Turns the HOT water on.

He scans the immediate area for any other dishes.

Something on the cluttered dining table catches his eye. He turns the water off...

Moves to the--

TABLE

Danielle's notebook. He picks it up. Looks at the various crude pencil sketches.

TRAM'S POV:

-The tree near the railroad tracks.

-Loose renderings of the Indian girls standing nearby.

-The crude, human skull on the ground near their feet. Next to the skull, an oval shape that's been circled so many times with a pencil point, the paper has worn through in a few spots. It appears to be the depiction of a hole.

Next to the hole, written in pencil: question marks '??????'

His hands begin to tremble. He swallows hard and reaches for his rotary phone... Stops and scans the table top- *'where is that phone number?!'*

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Danielle scrubs her hands and forearms in the sink. A look of tranquility for the first time in a while.

She shuts the hot water off, dries her hands...

Remembering something, she tosses the hand towel onto the counter top next to her cellphone and exits.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL

Danielle steadies a flashlight as she descends.

BASEMENT

She moves across the room...

Gets to the stone foundation wall. Carefully looking at the area she'd dreamt about...

Spots several stones with no mortar...

Grips one of the rocks with her fingertips... wiggles it... pulls-- it rolls to the cellar floor - *Déjà vu*.

Steps closer, tentatively pushing her face near the opening to see inside--

A corridor roughly 3 feet wide. She pulls several more stones loose. Leans into the hole to shine the light down the pitch-black space...

Carefully looks in the other direction-- almost 30 feet away, the narrow hallway turns a corner...

Something snags her vision in the foreground-- scattered along the pathway, several mannequins lying on the ground.

She looks behind her, back across the cellar one last time before slowly stepping into the hole...

CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Transfixed, she trains the light on the mannequins...

A faint SUUUUK sound. She kneels to decipher its source... Very faint - SUUUUK... SUUUUK... SUUUUK...

She leans forward while holding the light--

Behind the mannequins, trail marks in the dirt running the length of the passage, as if someone had dragged them here... *or they crawled*...

She looks back at the hole in the foundation wall, fear setting in just a bit...

Quickly rises and walks to the opening, stepping through.

EXT. BASEMENT

Danielle hastily stacks the rocks back in the opening, more less balancing them to stay in place.

Contemplates the wall for a moment. Satisfied, she casually moves toward the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

She closes the basement door behind her.

Starts up the stairs to the second floor when-- DING - The 'MISSED CALL' alert from her cellphone.

She walks toward the kitchen...

Passing by the living room archway, we see the mannequin stiffly sitting on the couch where she'd left it previously.

KITCHEN

She picks up the phone from the counter. Checks the screen--

DANIELLE'S POV:

315-298-5040 Missed Call

315-298-5040 Missed Call

315-298-5040 Missed Call - Voicemail

She punches the 'Voicemail' icon, hits 'Play', holds the phone to her ear...

TRAM

Get out of the house. Now. Don't wait. NOW!

She ends the message. Looks at the screen, bewildered.

RING TONE, the screen lights up 315-298-5040.

It RINGS again, she answers--

DANIELLE

Yes?

INT. FARMHOUSE - INTERCUT AS DESIRED

Tram paces near a cluttered bookshelf--

TRAM
Did you dig anything up on the
property?!

His hysteria gives her pause...

TRAM (CONT'D)
DID YOU?!

DANIELLE
Yes.

TRAM
What?!

DANIELLE
Listen. Your wife was onto
something. I know this sounds
insane but I a--

TRAM
What did you dig up?!

DANIELLE
...Bones...

TRAM
What'd you do with them?!

DANIELLE
I took them where they belong.

TRAM
(horrified)
You weren't supposed to move those.

DANIELLE
No, it's okay. It's to free those
girls-- They were tormented... I
could... *understand* them--

TRAM
They were put there to keep those
things locked!!! And it's not those
Indian girls that's trapped in
there. It's us.

DANIELLE
No, it's--

TRAM
LISTEN! Lawson's are the ones
trapped.... They've been held
there... starving... for us.
(MORE)

TRAM (CONT'D)

The souls are trapped... they can only feed on the next Lawson in line. This is REAL! A conjure woman gave those to my wife to bury, to stop them. Right after they got your parents!

Danielle - in shock.

DANIELLE

...that's... crazy...

TRAM

The only one who can release them is you! You're the next in line--

DANIELLE

Who's 'they'?...

Her phone dies--

She looks at the screen, shaken. Grabs her car keys.

HALLWAY

She walks quickly toward the front door some 40 feet away...

Passing the living room, we see the mannequin is gone.

She reaches for the knob of the front door, tugs - locked!

The same 20s-era MUSIC she'd heard on the phone at the Motel, faintly trickles down from upstairs - the Victrola!

She yanks and twists the doorknob several more times. Panicked, she digs into her jeans pockets for the key--

Where did she leave it???!!

She hustles to the--

LIVING ROOM

Stops in her tracks upon looking into the dark, empty room-- wheels turning as to whether she'd left the mannequin there or not.

She looks over her shoulder, uneasy. Looks back into the room --the key lays on an end table...

She speeds over and snatches up the key.

FRONT DOOR

She jams the key in and turns it-- nothing.

Wrenches on the handle several times. Panic rising, she turns to the kitchen at the far end of the hallway- the back door.

HALLWAY

She takes long strides down the hallway, eyes nervously searching over her shoulder, tears streaming...

KITCHEN

She speeds to the door, turns the handle - locked.

Jams the key in, twists it - nothing. She tugs on the handle.

Slams her fists repeatedly against the thick plywood that covers the glass.

She moves to a counter, pulls open a drawer...

Using a butter knife to remove the wood screws that hold the plywood in place - no traction, the knife spins out of the flathead groove.

She jams the butter knife in between the plywood and wood, pries... the knife breaks, and slices her hand.

DANIELLE

Shit!!

CREEEAK - from the basement stairwell.

She drops the knife, and clutches her hand that has started to bleed all over the floor.

HALLWAY

She passes the cellar door...

CREEEEEAK from inside...

She watches the door while backing away from it, toward the stairs to the second floor...

She reaches for the bannister...

Behind her, in the Living Room, a mannequin stands just inside the archway...

Its appearance is different than before-- The mouth hangs open unnaturally wide with a disturbing gape. The large split in the resin where the mouth would be gives an appearance of needle-like teeth.

SUUUUK--

She takes a step onto a riser. Looks back - the mannequin, motionless. Eyes trained on it, she takes another step up...

SUUUUUUUUK--

The mannequin steps forward with a jerky, twitching motion.

DANIELLE
Jesus fucking Christ!

Suddenly, knees bending, fingers hooking as if it were organic, not fiberglass - it pursues with rabid ferocity.

STAIRCASE

Danielle races up as the thing climbs after her on all fours.

2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

She speeds with dogged desperation toward the bedroom at the end of the hall-- The thing ravenously closes behind her with the same jerky movements -- and almost supernatural speed...

BEDROOM

She slams the door, turns the lock--

Eyes pooled with dread, she sees the chair at the vanity, rushes to it.

Jams the chair under the door handle.

She GASPS for air, listening for the thing outside...

Silence.

Early moonlight casts long shadows across the room.

She hurries over to the window. Picks up a bedside table, lifts it and smashes the window out. Leans out--

DANIELLE
HELP ME!!!! Somebody, PLEASE!!!

Looking down at the long drop to the ground, she sees Curtis leaning casually against his cruiser, arms folded--

Paul stands near the passenger door.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Curtis! Help me!

He looks up-- smirks.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Hurry!

He waves at her, then nonchalantly opens the car door and gets in. Paul nods once and climbs into the passenger's seat.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
What are you doing???!!!

Behind her, the large floor vent slowly opens... something with serpentine movement crawls out from it.

Tears flowing, she slowly turns... sees the floor vent is open. She puts a hand over her mouth, shaking with fear...

Lightning quick, a mannequin latches its mouth onto hers, viciously ripping its head back and forth, like a shark attack. Stealing her breath-- SUUUUUUUUK

Danielle swings wildly, finally tearing away from it. Blood pours from puncture wounds around her mouth.

She hurries to the door, knocks the chair away--

HALLWAY

Races to the attic door, pulls it open--

ATTIC STAIRWELL

Slams the door behind her. Flips the lock. Climbs the stairs, grimacing from her seeping wound.

ATTIC

She pulls the drawstring for the light - no power.

Fishes the phone out of her pocket. Presses the power button. The white Apple icon displays over a black screen as it tries to power back on...

The low battery icon flashes as the home screen illuminates her face and...

Standing behind her, a dozen mannequins, both adult and children - some sitting on furniture, others standing-- all with jaws agape... staring directly at her.

Beat.

No sounds except Danielle's shallow breathing...

They lunge at her.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Tram leaning forward as he speeds down a country road, nerves frayed.

A familiar silhouette in the distance - The Lawson House.

The truck slows as he reaches the mouth of the driveway...

He sees Danielle's car in front and pulls in...

Slowly approaching her car.

EXT. TRUCK

Tram slides out of the truck, quietly pushes the door closed.

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE

He carefully climbs the front steps...

Stepping up onto the porch, eyes intensely drilling into the night as he scans the area.

He crosses himself as he approaches the door, squinting narrowly as he fights against a paralyzing fear.

Standing still for a moment, he slowly turns to leave... Then, as if struck with a sudden surge of bravery--

Turns back to the front door, shuffles over to it and turns the handle, opening the door with ease.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE

Tram stands just outside the threshold. CLEARS his throat--

TRAM
Danielle?

Utter silence.

He looks back down the long, dark hallway.

Aims his flashlight. Steps inside.

TRAM (CONT'D)
Danielle?!

Taking several more steps down the hall, he tries a light switch on the wall - no power.

Shines light into the living room -- All seems fine.

He continues on toward the kitchen.

TRAM (CONT'D)
 I need you to come with me!

Continues to the kitchen...

From deep in the bowels of the basement below--

DANIELLE (O.C.)
 (muffled)
 Hello?! Hey, down here!

He turns and paces to the basement door. Opens it, shines the light down into the darkness.

TRAM
Danielle?!

DANIELLE (O.C.)
 I'm stuck!

BASEMENT STAIRWELL

He quickly descends...

BASEMENT

Scans the perimeter with the beam of light.

TRAM
 Where are you?

DANIELLE (O.C.)
 Over here.

He walks deeper into the basement, squinting into the barely lit recesses...

Finally seeing the hole in the foundation wall-- several rocks on the floor near it.

He cautiously approaches...

Kneeling down by the hole--

TRAM
You in there?

Slowly leans forward to look inside.

DANIELLE (O.C.)
Down here. I'm stuck.

Shining the light in both directions...

He sees a faint glow at the end of the narrow corridor, where it appears to turn a corner.

Reluctantly, he steps into the--

CORRIDOR

He moves slowly toward the end, roughly 30 feet away...

TRAM
You down there?

Nearing the end where the wall opens into a larger room...

He can see partially into the room.

TRAM (CONT'D)
Hello?

Strafing the wall, he peers around the edge--

A dank room filled with mannequins, looking as they had before their change-- Two seated in chairs, seemingly deep in conversation -- others stand--

A group of five sit on a long sofa, heads turned in various angles, as if in various stages of a discussion.

The room is weakly lit by numerous candles.

Tram stands frozen in place, unsure wether to move or not. As if the motion may snag their attention.

TRAM (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Where are you?

From his left--

DANIELLE
(playful whisper)
Hi...

He turns-- Danielle, mouth agape in an unnaturally large grin. Her desperate eyes the only thing human. The face, hands and body look plastic.

Tram recoils in mute horror...

As he backpedals, we see the other mannequins are now standing, crowded behind him, mouths ravenously slack-jawed...

SLAM TO BLACK

EXT. LAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Jim walks up the front porch steps. A sedan parked in the driveway behind him.

Three mannequins stand on the porch. Their poses give the impression of celebratory revelry.

He walks to the front door. Takes another sideways glance at the figures before knocking...

The door gently opens a crack. He pushes it open further.

He steps inside.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE

He scans the brightly lit area. All of the windows now uncovered. Walks toward the...

LIVING ROOM

He takes a brief glance at the area. Two mannequins seated on the sofa. Turns and walks toward the staircase.

2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

He walks slowly down the hall, clocking some of the photos on the wall as he passes.

BEDROOM

He walks to the broken window. Looks out. Reflective.

CURTIS (O.C.)

Hey.

Jim, startled, turns around...

Curtis wearing his uniform.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Sorry about your friend. Co-worker?

Jim nods.

JIM

This is where she fell?

CURTIS

Yeah. You might've heard we found
booze bottles. Oxycontin, too.

JIM

I did. It doesn't make any sense.
She didn't drink or take pills.

An uncomfortable pause...

CURTIS

She's already been moved to
California.

JIM

I know. Here to pick up her things.
Maybe look around. Did they ever
determine what the marks were
around her mouth?

Curtis shakes his head.

Jim notices something behind Curtis.

JIM (CONT'D)

What's with those? She'd mentioned
them being all over the house.

Curtis turns to see two mannequins wearing 1800s-era dresses, seated at the vanity, like silent witnesses.

CURTIS (O.C.)
Decorations, I think. This place
used to sell clothing a long time
ago.

JIM
(under his breath)
So creepy.

Push in on the face of one of the mannequins - A sad and faraway look with a heart shaped birthmark on its cheek...

The other has the two different colored eyes.

We hold on the vanity top - Close on the color studio portrait of Danielle's parents that Tram had given to her--

The woman has one blue eye and the other, dark brown.

FADE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HOUSTON, TX - DAY

A rundown neighborhood only a few steps from being a ghetto.

A MAIL CARRIER knocks on the door of Apartment #4.

Another KNOCK. The door opens. A YOUNG WOMAN, 20s, holding a baby in diapers against her hip.

MAIL CARRIER
Deborah Lawson?

She nods.

MAIL CARRIER (CONT'D)
Sign and print, please.

She takes the pen and signs. He tears off the receipt, exits.

The return address on the envelope: ORWELL HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

The Young Woman/Deborah tears the seal open. Reads the first page as the child grasps at it, clumsily.

A YOUNG MAN, 20s, approaches from behind her.

YOUNG MAN (O.C.)
What's that?

She finishes reading the cover letter. Holds it against her chest, takes a deep breath. Smiles from ear to ear, finally whipping around--

YOUNG WOMAN/DEBORAH
We just... inherited a HOUSE!!!

FADE TO BLACK

THE END