

THE OTHERS

by

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Over a black and white illustration showing a star-studded sky, a rising sun, a lake, palm trees, a fawn and two children holding hands, we hear the persuasive, dulcet tones of a woman's voice.

GRACE'S VOICE

Now listen carefully while I tell you a very beautiful story. It began many thousands of years ago, though it ended in only seven days. None of the things we can see now...the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the animals and plants...not a single one existed. Only God existed, and so only He could have made them. And that's just what he did...

The drawing dissolves into other similar ones while the credit titles are introduced. The illustrations show scenes from the film, but sufficiently modified so as to suggest the essence of the story without giving away the key facts of the plot.

1. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

Dawn breaks

Long distance shot of an enormous, Victorian style house. A dense wood spreads out around it. A thin, wispy layer of fog covers the ground.

Only the whisper of the breeze can be heard and perhaps the distant screaming of a seagull.

A subtitle reads:

Jersey, the Channel Islands, 1945

2. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

Close up of GRACE, letting rip a blood-curdling scream. Suddenly, she becomes silent, her eyes red and staring. She takes several deep breaths in order to regain her composure. As the camera pulls back, we see that she is in bed.

Beads of sweat glisten on her forehead.

GRACE is a very attractive woman, in her early thirties, of a somewhat delicate but, at the same time, stern appearance. She sits up and anxiously rubs her head. Then she checks the clock on her bedside table and gets out of bed.

Dissolve to

3. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

The house can now be seen more clearly in the growing light.

Three figures walk slowly towards the main door. They are BERTHA, a woman of about sixty, kind-faced and pleasantly plump; Mr. TUTTLE, an old man in his seventies, lean and with a splendid white moustache, and LYDIA, a young girl with a melancholy expression and a faraway look. All three are dressed in a manner that strikes us as old-fashioned, even for 1945.

BERTHA and TUTTLE are laughing.

BERTHA

Ah, good old Mr. Simpson...whatever became of him, I wonder?

TUTTLE

Oh, I imagine he's dead, like all the rest.

BERTHA

(sighing)

Ah, those were the days...

They stop in front of the door. BERTHA, who appears to be the best dressed of the three, rings the doorbell and then looks her two companions up and down, as if she were inspecting them. She combs her hand through the old man's white hair.

BERTHA

Mr. Tuttle, when are you going to learn to comb your hair properly?

TUTTLE nods as he raises a hand to his head.

TUTTLE

Oh, my hair, ay, o'course, my hair.

The door half opens and GRACE appears.

BERTHA

(smiling)

Good morning, ma'am. We've come about...

GRACE

Yes, of course, come in. *(She opens wide the door).* I didn't expect you so soon.

BERTHA, TUTTLE and LYDIA exchange puzzled looks.

GRACE
(Rather forcefully)

Well, come in, then.

4. THE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. INT./DAY.

They enter the house. The hall has a rather dismal air about it, boasts very little furniture and in general seems dull and grey. However, its spaciousness and architecture are impressive.

GRACE
(closing the door and looking at BERTHA)
You are...?

BERTHA
Bertha Gray, ma'am. And this is Edmund Tuttle.

TUTTLE
(politely shaking GRACE's hand)
Pleased to meet you, ma'am.

GRACE
You must be the gardener.

TUTTLE
Ay, that's right, the gardener...though I can turn my hand to most things, if needs be.

GRACE
Well, I'm sure you'll find plenty to keep you busy around here.

BERTHA
And this young lady's called Lydia.

GRACE looks the young girl up and down, making her shrink away in embarrassment.

GRACE
Himm, I was hoping for someone a little more experienced.

BERTHA
Oh, don't let that baby face fool you, ma'am. She's older than she looks.

GRACE
Have you had much experience of being in service?

LYDIA nods.

GRACE

Can you iron?

She nods again.

GRACE

What's the matter? Has the cat got your tongue?

The girl looks at BERTHA, as if seeking her help.

BERTHA

She can't talk, ma'am. The poor girl's a mute.

GRACE

Mute!?

BERTHA

But she's a good little worker, ma'am, I promise you.

GRACE

Well, all right. The girl I had before talked too much anyway. Follow me.

They cross the hall. To their right is a wide, uncarpeted staircase; the wooden steps have been worn down by years of use.

GRACE

(to BERTHA and the girl)

You two can sleep in the attic, at the top of the stairs. *(To TUTTLE:)* You can use the shed round the back. As you can see, there's dust everywhere; but it's five days now since anyone cleaned up.

BERTHA

What happened to the servants, madam?

GRACE

Last Monday they all disappeared. They didn't give me any notice...they didn't even collect their wages or take their belongings with them.

They reach a side door. GRACE takes out a huge bunch of keys.

BERTHA

Why on earth did they do that?

GRACE

There are days when this house isn't the best place to live, as you'll soon discover. That's why I put the advertisement in the newspaper asking for honest, hardworking people, as I'm sure you understand.

BERTHA

Oh, yes, ma'am. There's none more honest and hardworking than us, is there, Mr. Tuttle?

TUTTLE

(Absentmindedly)

Oh, ay, we're very honest...

GRACE opens the door and enters...

5. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

...the kitchen. It is spacious and rather more welcoming than the rest.

TUTTLE

...And very...hardworking.

GRACE gives the old man a suspicious look, as she locks the door behind her.

GRACE

The kitchen. I have breakfast at eight and the children at nine. Lunch is at one and dinner at half past seven.

BERTHA

What about the master?

Silence. For a second, GRACE seems thrown by the question, but she quickly pulls herself together.

GRACE

The master was killed in the war a year and a half ago. Which of you does the cooking?

BERTHA

I'm so sorry, madam.

GRACE

Which of you does the cooking?

BERTHA

We both cook, madam.

GRACE

(to LYDIA)

Let's see, you can take charge of cleaning the bedrooms every day, and at least three other rooms: the dining room, the kitchen, and the bathrooms...do you understand?

LYDIA nods vehemently.

GRACE

The rooms are all very large, but contain very little furniture, so they won't give you a lot of trouble. And you can prepare lunch, too.

BERTHA

What about me, ma'am?

6. THE HOUSE. HALL - PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

GRACE leaves the kitchen and walks down a narrow passage towards a door. The servants follow her.

GRACE

You can help her whenever she needs a hand. How old are you?

BERTHA and MR. TUTTLE exchange a rather knowing look

BERTHA

Sixty-six.

GRACE

*(searching among the keys
for the right one to open the door)*

I assume you've looked after children before.

BERTHA

Actually, they're my speciality, ma'am. I adore little kiddies.

GRACE opens the door and they go through...

7. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./DAY.

...into the music room. It is completely empty, except for a grand piano standing in the corner.

GRACE

You may not think that once you've met the twins. They aren't like other children. Have you noticed what I am doing? *(She locks the door)*. In this house you must not open any door without first locking the previous one. It's vital that you remember this. Bertha, from tomorrow onwards I'm leaving the keys in your charge.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

This is the music room. That old piano was already here when we moved in. Don't let the children thump away on it, it sets my migraine off. Silence is something we value highly in this house. That's why we don't have a telephone, a radio or anything else that makes a lot of noise. Let's continue...

BERTHA

Ma'am, there's no need for you to show us round the whole house, we already...

GRACE

On the contrary. Because, half the time, you never know where you are in this house. You're quite likely to bump into a table, a sideboard, a door, or one of my children playing Hide-And-Seek.

BERTHA

What do you mean?

Silence.

GRACE

Perhaps I'd better introduce you to the children.

8. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

The group returns to the hall. GRACE approaches a sideboard on which there is an oil lamp.

GRACE

Mr. Tuttle, you can go to the garden now. You'll find tools in the shed.

TUTTLE

Yes, ma'am.

The old man leaves, as GRACE picks up a box of matches from beside the oil lamp.

GRACE

(lighting the lamp)

You two can start closing all the curtains.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

BERTHA gestures to LYDIA to close the curtains of an enormous window to the right, while she takes care of the one on the left.

The hall is plunged into darkness; the only light is the dim glow of the oil lamp.

GRACE moves to the foot of the staircase. The stairs disappear into the darkness.

GRACE

Follow me upstairs.

Rather apprehensively, BERTHA and LYDIA begin to follow GRACE up the stairs.

9. THE HOUSE. 2ND FLOOR LANDING. INT./DAY.

They reach the top floor. GRACE turns to the right and walks down a narrow passage until she reaches a door. The light is so faint that it is difficult to make out the furnishings.

GRACE places the oil lamp on a small table.

GRACE

I'm going to wake them. Wait here. *(Before entering the room, she turns to the servants and whispers:)* Whatever you do, don't open the curtains.

BERTHA shakes her head. GRACE disappears into the darkness.

BERTHA and LYDIA's eyes meet in the flickering light of the oil lamp. The young girl seems a little scared.

Over the shot of their faces, we hear GRACE waking her children.

GRACE

(off)

Have you had a good sleep, my little angels? *(Kisses)*
Come on, time to get up. I want you to say hello to someone.

ANNE'S VOICE

Are they here already?

GRACE

(off)

Yes.

ANNE'S VOICE

What are they like?

GRACE

(off)

Like the rest. No better, no worse.

ANNE'S VOICE

Are they going to leave us, too?

GRACE

(off)

No one's going to leave us. Now, come on, hands together.

ANNE & NICHOLAS

Blessed be, at light of day,
Jesus, to whom now I pray.
Blessed be the Virgin pure
Whom I greet with faith so sure.
Blessed be St. Joseph, too,
Faithful husband, good and true.
Jesus, Mary, Spotless Rose,
Keep us till the day doth close.

GRACE appears in the doorway with her two children, one either side. ANNE and NICHOLAS are about seven or eight years old. Their faces are extremely pale, almost as white as the nightgowns they are wearing. NICHOLAS rubs his eyes, as if the light of the lamp dazzled him.

GRACE

They're still half-asleep.

BERTHA leans forward, resting her hands on her knees.

BERTHA

What sweet little children!

GRACE

Well? What do you say?

NICHOLAS

'Lo.

ANNE

'Lo.

GRACE

No, "low" is the noise cows make. Now speak properly.

NICHOLAS

Good morning.

ANNE

Good morning.

BERTHA

Good morning, children. My name's Bertha and this is Lydia. And what are you called?

The children do not answer.

GRACE

Don't take all day.

ANNE

Anne.

NICHOLAS

Nicholas.

BERTHA

Anne and Nicholas. What pretty names!

ANNE

Are you going to be our nanny?

BERTHA looks at GRACE, as though waiting for her approval. GRACE nods.

BERTHA

Yes, my dears. I'm your new nanny.

GRACE

It's time for their breakfast. Lydia, *(handing her the bunch of keys)*, go to the kitchen and close the shutters.

LYDIA obeys and disappears into the darkness.

GRACE takes the oil lamp and walks ahead with the children, followed by BERTHA.

GRACE

The doctors were never able to find a solution. The children are photosensitive, or in other words, they're allergic to light. They must never be exposed to light stronger than this. Otherwise in a matter of minutes, they'd break out in sores and blisters and would begin to suffocate. It would eventually be fatal.

BERTHA

Good Heavens!

GRACE

As I said before, living in this house is not easy for someone who's not used to it. The slightest strange sound, a creak, a door, a gust of wind, seems completely different in the dark. Are you easily scared? Do you believe in ghosts and all that nonsense?

BERTHA

No, ma'am...not so far.

GRACE

Good, good...

10. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

A candle lights the table in the centre of the kitchen. ANNE and NICHOLAS, sitting opposite each other, are both half-heartedly eating a slice of toast.

BERTHA stands with her back to them, in front of the cooker.

BERTHA

Your milk's almost ready, children. Your mother told me you were not to leave a crumb.

ANNE

I don't like it.

BERTHA

(turning towards the girl)

What don't you like?

ANNE

This toast.

BERTHA

Why not?

ANNE

It tastes funny. I liked it better before.

BERTHA

That's because, before, somebody else made it.

ANNE

When are they coming back?

BERTHA

They won't be coming back, Anne.

NICHOLAS

Just like daddy.

The children exchange looks. BERTHA wrings her hands. The boy's remark has made her feel uncomfortable.

ANNE

But daddy is coming back, though. Nanny, did you know our father is fighting in the war in France?

NICHOLAS

It's the World War.

ANNE

I know, but he's in France.

BERTHA

(turning back to the cooker)

That's enough talking...finish your food.

Silence.

ANNE

(in a deliberately enigmatic tone)

I know why she left.

BERTHA

Who?

ANNE

The other nanny. And all the other servants.

NICHOLAS stops chewing his toast.

NICHOLAS

(coldly)

Shut up.

ANNE

They couldn't stand mummy. Especially after what happened the other day.

BERTHA turns round.

BERTHA

What happened?

ANNE

She went mad.

NICHOLAS

Nothing happened.

ANNE

Yes it did.

No it didn't!

NICHOLAS

ANNE

Yes, it did!

GRACE

Quiet!

We don't know exactly when, but GRACE has entered the kitchen. She walks towards the table, glaring at the children.

GRACE

(with restrained anger)

What's going on? I want to see those plates empty in less than a minute. And don't think for one moment that anything is going to change in this house. There'll be no talking at breakfast. Ever. Is that clear?

The children nod as they chew their food.

GRACE

(with a suddenly gentle, almost seductive tone)

Anne, what were you saying when I came in?

ANNE

(with the same smoothness)

Nothing, mummy.

GRACE observes her daughter in silence. She seems about to scold her, but at the last minute she checks herself.

GRACE

I want you dressed and ready in the study room by half past ten. Bertha, come outside a moment, I want a word with you.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

11. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE draws the curtains of a large window and turns to face BERTHA.

GRACE

The postman comes every Wednesday, but I've just checked and this week he didn't.

BERTHA

I'm afraid I don't follow.

GRACE takes a letter from the pocket of her dress.

GRACE

I left this letter in the post-box five days ago. It contains the add I intended to put in the newspaper asking for servants to live in. So how come you are here if this letter was never delivered?

BERTHA

Oh, now I understand. Well, you see, ma'am, that's exactly what I was about to explain to you when you answered the door and invited us in. We didn't come in answer to the advertisement.

- GRACE

Who sent you then?

BERTHA

No one, madam. We just came by on the off chance. A big house like this needs to be looked after by someone who knows the ropes.

GRACE

You mean you've served in a house like this one before?

BERTHA

It may come as a surprise, ma'am, but we did, in fact, use to work here. A few years ago...and if you don't mind me saying so, they were the best years of my life. That's why we came by, because this house means a lot to us...a lot. Perhaps I'd better show you our credentials and then you can decide for yourself...

GRACE

No. Don't bother, it's not necessary. So, you say you know the house well?

BERTHA

Like the back of my hand...*(Smiling)*...Well, always assuming the walls haven't upped and moved since then.

For the first time, GRACE gives an almost imperceptible hint of a smile.

GRACE

The only thing that moves here is the light. From one side to the other...Everything changes. *(She sighs and approaches the window)* It's...rather inconvenient, to say the least, one might almost say unbearable. And the only way of enduring it is by keeping a cool head.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

I don't like...fantasies...strange ideas. Do you know what I mean?

BERTHA

I think so, madam. You told me before that...

GRACE

My children sometimes have strange ideas, but you mustn't pay any attention to them. Children will be children.

BERTHA

(somewhat confused)

Of course, ma'am.

Silence.

GRACE

All right, you can stay. I'll write to the newspaper anyway just to clear this matter up.

GRACE turns and walks off.

BERTHA

Thank you very much, ma'am.

GRACE nods her head slightly and disappears into the shadows.

12. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

BERTHA enters the kitchen once more and begins to clear the table. The children are drinking from their mugs.

ANNE

(taking her mug from her mouth)

It did happen.

She carries on drinking.

Fade out.

13. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

Fade in.

Long distance shot of the house. Mr. TUTTLE is raking dead leaves.

14. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

Close up of GRACE screaming, as we saw in Sequence 2. She shows signs of having cried.

She sits up as we hear someone knock at the door.

BERTHA

(off)

Are you feeling all right, ma'am?

- GRACE

(feigning calmness)

Yes.

15. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

As she eats breakfast, GRACE gazes into space, her expression distorted, as if tormented by some thought.

BERTHA

You've had that nightmare again, haven't you, ma'am?

GRACE nods.

GRACE

Pass me the sugar, please.

BERTHA

(placing a sugar bowl on the table)

Why don't you tell me about it? Sometimes it helps...

GRACE

No!...what I mean is...telling a dream is almost as absurd as dreaming it. I'll get over it. *(She looks at her watch).*

It's time to wake the children.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

16. THE HOUSE. STUDY ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE and her two children are sitting round a small table. A candle in the centre sheds enough light for them to read by.

NICHOLAS

(reading)

"On a certain occasion, two children called Justus and Pastor, refused to worship..."

GRACE

Just a minute. Where's the stress on *P*astor?

ANNE puts her hand up.

ANNE

(whispering)

Me, me, me...

GRACE

No, let him answer, where's the stress?

NICHOLAS

On the "a".

GRACE

On the "a". So it's pronounced...

NICHOLAS

(after a moment's hesitation)

*P*astor.

GRACE

*P*astor. Not *pastor*. Start again.

NICHOLAS

"On a certain occasion, two children, called Justus and Pastor, refused to worship the false gods of the Romans. They said: 'We are Christians and we only worship the true God'. The Roman governor tried to change their minds afterwards..."

GRACE

"To make them change their minds." Full stop. "Afterwards..."

NICHOLAS

"Afterwards, he ordered them to be beaten. But Justus and Pastor..."

GRACE

*P*astor.

NICHOLAS

"...Justus and Pastor...far from being afraid, rejoiced and showed themselves ready to die for Christ. When he saw this, the Roman governor became very angry and ordered their heads to be cut off."

ANNE lets slip a giggle. GRACE glares at her. Her laughter is infectious and it is not long before NICHOLAS follows suit.

GRACE

What do you find so amusing? Well, Anne, where's the joke?

ANNE

Well...

GRACE

Well, what?

ANNE

Those children were really stupid.

GRACE

Why?

ANNE

Because they said they only believed in Jesus and then got killed for it.

GRACE

Ah, and what would you have done? Deny Christ?

ANNE

Well, yes. Inside, I'd have believed in him. But I wouldn't have told the Romans that.

GRACE

Is that what you think, too, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS, rather more reserved than his sister, hangs his head, but eventually nods.

GRACE

I see. So you would have both lied, to the point of denying Christ. And that way you'd have avoided the Romans cutting off your heads...But what would have happened afterwards?

ANNE

When?

GRACE

In the next life, the one that's waiting for us after we die.
Where would you have gone?

ANNE

Oh, oh.

GRACE

Oh, oh...where, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

To the children's Limbo.

GRACE

And what is the children's Limbo?

NICHOLAS

One of the four Hells.

GRACE

(to ANNE)

What are...?

ANNE

(reciting)

There's the hell where the damned go, then there's
Purgatory, and Limbo, or the Bosom of Abraham, where
the Just go, and the Limbo where children go.

GRACE

At the centre of the Earth. Where it's very, very hot.
That's where children go who tell lies. But remember,
they don't just go there for a few days, oh no. They're
damned forever, till the end of eternity. Think about it.
Try to imagine the end of eternity. Come on, close your
eyes and imagine it.

The children close their eyes, screwing up their eyelids very tightly.

ANNE

I'm getting dizzy.

Laughter.

GRACE

That's what eternity's like...for ever...pain forever. Now
do you understand why Justus and Pastor told the truth?

The children nod seriously.

Right, open your readers at Lesson 6.

ANNE

Can't we go and play?

GRACE

You most certainly cannot. First you're going to read the lesson and learn it by heart.

ANNE

All of it?!

GRACE

Anne, any more protests and there'll be no playing for you at all today. You can study in separate rooms...

ANNE & NICHOLAS

No, no, no!

GRACE

Yes, yes, yes...!

ANNE

But we get scared if we're separated.

GRACE

You get scared...! As if you weren't used to this house by now.

NICHOLAS

What if we see a ghost?

GRACE

Has your sister been telling you one of her stories?

ANNE

I haven't told him anything.

GRACE

Well, if you see a ghost, say hello and carry on studying. Anne, come with me to the music room.

ANNE

Why me?

GRACE

Because I say so! Come on, take your book. Nicholas, I want that learning by heart in less than an hour.

GRACE and ANNE start to leave the room. NICHOLAS seems very uneasy.

NICHOLAS
(pleading)

Mummy...

GRACE
(turning round)

What?

Silence.

NICHOLAS
Give me a kiss.

ANNE
(imitating him)
"Give me a kiss, give me a kiss..."

GRACE
Anne, you've been asking for a clip round the ear all morning. Wait for me outside.

The girl leaves.

GRACE approaches her son and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

GRACE
Darling, I can't be with you all the time. You must learn to be on your own. Let's see, where's your rosary?

The boy pulls a rosary from his pocket.

GRACE
Whenever you feel afraid, squeeze it with all your might and say the Lord's Prayer, and then your fear will go away.

NICHOLAS
It won't...

GRACE
Yes, yes it will. Honestly. Don't you see that when you do that, the Lord is with you? There's no reason to be afraid.

NICHOLAS nods. GRACE leaves the room.

Silence.

NICHOLAS fingers the rosary, as if it would bring him luck. Then he opens his reader at Lesson 6. The title of the text is:

THE HOUSE AND THE FAMILY

On the right hand page there is an illustration showing, in bold outlines, a man dressed in a suit and tie, reading the newspaper in an armchair. In the background, a woman in an apron is tying the cord on a curtain. Seated on the floor, a child is playing with an electric train. In another armchair an old woman sits knitting. Next to her, a girl is playing with a doll.

NICHOLAS

(reading)

"We all live in a house with our family. The main rooms in the house are: the kitchen, the dining room, the bedrooms, and the bathroom..."

17. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the hall, locking the door behind her. The curtains are open: outside it is gloomy and overcast.

BERTHA is dusting with a feather duster.

GRACE

Bertha, tell Lydia not to go into the music room. My daughter is studying.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am. She can't anyway...I've got the key. How did you get on with the children?

GRACE flops into a chair and closes her eyes.

GRACE

The same as usual. In the mornings they're particularly naughty.

BERTHA

They're unsettled. It's natural.

GRACE

They have to pay more attention during their lessons, otherwise I'll never have them ready for their First Communion.

18. THE HOUSE. STUDY. INT./DAY.

NICHOLAS is reading slowly, while fingering his rosary.

NICHOLAS

"Nice houses have big windows and are spotlessly clean. The family is usually made up of parents, children, brothers and sisters and grandparents. We must be..."

Dissolve to

19. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE is reading on the floor, resting her chin in her hands.

ANNE

"...obedient and kind towards the other members of our family and we must never argue or fight with our brothers and sisters..."

Dissolve to

20. THE HOUSE. STUDY. INT./DAY.

NICHOLAS, eyes closed, is trying to memorise the lesson.

NICHOLAS

"Nice houses have big windows and are spotlessly clean. Nice houses have big windows and are spotlessly clean..."

Dissolve to

21. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./DAY.

Like her brother, ANNE, too, is trying to memorise the lesson.

ANNE

"We must be obedient and kind towards other members of our family. We must be obedient and kind towards other members of our family. Obedient and kind..."

22. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

BERTHA

Are you teaching them their catechism, ma'am?

GRACE

Well, since Father Lebrun no longer seems to have time...I don't have much choice. *(She gets up and moves towards one of the windows.)* He's hasn't been back for over a month.

BERTHA

I'm sure something unexpected must have cropped up.

GRACE

In which case, he should have got in touch with me. I realise this house isn't the easiest place to get to, but he knows full well that the children can't go out.

BERTHA

Don't they ever play outside?

GRACE

Not during the day. That's why we bought such a big house and got rid of most of the furniture...so they could play and run around freely in its big rooms without falling over things, and so they don't feel as if they're imprisoned within these four walls...though I'm afraid that's inevitable, poor little dears.

BERTHA

You can tell you really love them, ma'am.

GRACE

What else can a mother do? Did you never have children?

23. THE HOUSE. GARDEN. EXT./DAY.

Subjective shot of GRACE in which we see the gardener, working in the garden.

BERTHA

(off)

No, ma'am. Mr. Tuttle and the girl, Lydia, are all I've got. And I'm all they've got.

GRACE

(off)

Was she born like that?

24. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

BERTHA

Beg your pardon?

GRACE

The girl, was she was born a mute?

BERTHA

(after a moment's hesitation)

No... It's going to rain again. I'd better bring the letters back in from the post-box or they'll get soaked.

GRACE

I don't believe it! The postman's another one who hasn't shown up for over a month. I'm beginning to feel totally cut off from the world.

BERTHA

I'm sure it must be on account of the fog.

GRACE

It's never lasted this long before. Even the seagulls have gone quiet.

BERTHA

Ma'am, if you like, the next time I go into to town, I can ask after them.

GRACE

Yes, I suppose you better had. I'd go myself, but I still can't bring myself to leave the house, even just for a couple of hours. I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to the children while I was out.

BERTHA

Don't say such things, ma'am. I'll just go and get those letters.

BERTHA leaves the house. GRACE watches her from the window.

25. THE HOUSE. GARDEN. EXT./DAY.

Subjective shot of GRACE. BERTHA walks quickly towards the post-box.

GRACE

(off)

What awful clothes that woman wears...!

26. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE frowns, as if she were concentrating on something.

A child's crying can be heard in the distance, distorted by the reverberation of the house.

When the sobbing is clearly recognisable, GRACE walks quickly towards a side door.

GRACE

Nicholas.

She exits.

27. THE HOUSE. DOWNSTAIRS ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters and shoots across the room like lightning.

We can still hear the child's crying.

GRACE reaches the door of the study and looks for the right key.

GRACE

Nicholas, I'm coming!

28. THE HOUSE. STUDY. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the room.

NICHOLAS is sitting in front of his book, apparently quite calm.

GRACE
(*confused*)

Nicholas...?

NICHOLAS

What's the matter?

GRACE

Why were you crying?

NICHOLAS

I wasn't crying.

GRACE

But I just heard...

The moans echo in the distance.

GRACE

It's Anne!

29. THE HOUSE. DOWNSTAIRS ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE runs desperately towards the music room.

30. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE flies across the hall.

31. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE bursts into the room. ANNE is lying on the floor, beside an oil lamp.

GRACE

Anne!

ANNE

I still haven't learned it yet, mummy.

GRACE moves towards her.

GRACE

Are you all right?

ANNE

(surprised)

Yes.

GRACE

Why were you crying?

ANNE

I wasn't crying.

GRACE pulls up the piano stool and sits beside her.

GRACE

(gently)

Anne, I heard you a moment ago. There's no need to feel ashamed.

ANNE

I don't. If I'd been crying, I'd tell you.

GRACE

Oh, right. So, I imagined the sobs, did I?

ANNE

No. *(Pause)*. It was that boy.

Silence.

GRACE

What boy?

ANNE

Victor.

GRACE

Who's Victor?

ANNE

(as if it were obvious)

The boy who was here a moment ago. I told him to let me study, but he wouldn't stop crying. I told him: "When my mother comes and sees I haven't learned my lesson, I'll be in trouble". But he didn't care. I think he's a spoilt brat. He said we have to leave the house.

GRACE gives a wry smile.

GRACE

Oh, really? You don't say. And why was he crying?

ANNE

Because he doesn't like this house but he has to live here. You see, his father's a pianist and...

GRACE

Ah, so he's a pianist, is he?

ANNE

Yes. He says that this house is just what he's looking for and that they're going to move in and live here. I've already told him that he's not allowed to touch the piano,...he isn't, is he, mummy?

GRACE

So, you've spoken to his father as well?

ANNE

No, only with Victor. His father is with the others in the hall.

GRACE

I've just come from the hall and there was no one there.

ANNE

They must have gone upstairs. They're viewing the house. Where are they going to sleep, mummy? I hope you don't give them our room.

GRACE

(rising from the piano stool)

That'll do, Anne. I've had quite enough of your stories. Why were you crying?

ANNE

Mummy, it was Victor.

GRACE takes a deep breath, in an attempt to contain her anger.

GRACE

So where is he now?

ANNE

He went out through there.

GRACE

Do you mind telling me how that boy could get in and out of this room if it was locked...?

GRACE notices that the door at the back is ajar.

GRACE

(moving towards the door)

Who opened this door? Anne, tell me, who opened this door?

ANNE

(almost in tears)

It was Victor!

32. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE walks up and down the room. BERTHA and LYDIA stand in the centre, looking rather distressed.

GRACE

I thought I made it quite clear! Rule number one: no door is to be opened before the previous one has been closed. Is that so hard to understand? This house is like a ship. The light has to be contained as if it were water, by opening and closing the doors. The health of my children is at stake!

BERTHA

But, ma'am, I...

GRACE

But madam nothing! I'll have no excuses! Who was the last person to enter that room? Lydia?

The girl looks down and shakes her head.

BERTHA

She hasn't got a key, I already told you.

GRACE

Well, that leaves you, then.

BERTHA

I was in the hall the whole time. Then I went into the garden. Madam, you saw me with your own eyes.

GRACE

I hope you're not suggesting it was me! Do you think I'm capable of such an oversight, of endangering the life of my own daughter?

BERTHA looks the other way, lost for an answer.

GRACE takes a key from the key ring and places it in BERTHA's hand.

GRACE

Right, as from today, I'm holding you entirely responsible for the music room...and for anything that happens to the children as well.

BERTHA

Ma'am, I...

GRACE

That's all. You may leave.

33. THE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. INT/NIGHT.

ANNE and NICHOLAS are sitting opposite one another, having dinner.

NICHOLAS

Did you really see a boy?

ANNE

Yes, he's called Victor.

NICHOLAS

Is he a ghost?

ANNE

Don't be silly. Ghosts aren't like that.

NICHOLAS

What are they like?

ANNE

(wearily)

I've told you a thousand times. They go about in white sheets and carry chains.

NICHOLAS

How do you know?

ANNE

Because I've seen them. They come out at night.

NICHOLAS

Fibber! Where?

ANNE opens wide her eyes and points to the back of the room, over NICHOLAS's shoulder. He turns round with a start. Behind him there is only darkness.

ANNE giggles.

NICHOLAS

You're stupid.

ANNE

Not half as much as you.

NICHOLAS

Well, I don't believe you saw that boy.

ANNE

That's your lookout. You'll soon be begging us to play with you.

34. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./NIGHT.

Long distance shot of the house, in the moonlight.

The branches of the trees sway in the gentle breeze.

Dissolve to

35. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./NIGHT.

Long distance shot of the hall. The pale moonlight shines through the windows, outlining the staircase.

All is in silence.

Dissolve to

36. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

Close up of NICHOLAS, sleeping. A hand rests on his shoulder and shakes him. We pull back and see that it belongs to ANNE.

ANNE

(in a low voice)

Nicholas.

NICHOLAS wakes up, testily.

NICHOLAS

What?

ANNE

Look.

NICHOLAS sits up in bed.

In the background, an enormous window can be made out. Moonlight pours into the room.

NICHOLAS
(alarmed)

Why have you opened the curtains?

ANNE

It wasn't me.

NICHOLAS

Who was it then?

ANNE
(accusingly)

It was Victor.

NICHOLAS looks silently at his sister. Then he reacts.

NICHOLAS
You're a liar and I'm going to tell mummy.

ANNE

So I'm a liar, am I?

NICHOLAS
Yes, and you're going to end up in Limbo.

ANNE looks into the darkness at the back of the room, between the wall and a cupboard.

ANNE

Victor, come out of that corner so my stupid brother can see you.

NICHOLAS jerks round, wrapping himself in his sheets, with his back to his sister.

NICHOLAS
(in a thin voice)

Leave me alone.

ANNE
So now you don't want to see him, eh? You're a cowardly
custard,...cowardy, cowardy custard...

NICHOLAS sits there in silence, still wrapped tightly in his sheets. Behind him we see the silhouette of his sister, dark and unfocused.

ANNE
I'll have to do it myself, then.

ANNE's outline leaves the bedside and moves towards the window.

As we focus on NICHOLAS's face, we hear the curtains being closed. The room is left in semi-darkness.

ANNE returns to the bed.

Almost immediately we hear the noise of the curtains being thrown open again.

ANNE tuts in annoyance.

ANNE
That's enough, Victor... Nicholas...Nicholas. Tell him to
leave the curtains alone. He won't listen to me.

VICTOR'S VOICE
(in an angry whisper)
Stop it! Get off my bed, both of you!

NICHOLAS gives a start and hunches up even more. His breathing quickens.

ANNE
(coldly)
This is our bed.

VICTOR'S VOICE
No, it's mine.

NICHOLAS
Anne, please, stop putting on that voice.

ANNE
You be quiet, cowardy custard. Listen, Victor, if you
don't stop, I'm going to call my mother and she'll kick
you out. You don't know my mother!

BOY'S VOICE

(threatening)

And you don't know my parents.

Silence.

NICHOLAS feels someone tug sharply on his sheets, uncovering him.

VICTOR'S VOICE

Who's this?

ANNE

It's my brother. Leave him alone, he's a scaredy pants.

NICHOLAS is quivering like a jelly. With his eyes clenched shut, he feels around for his sheets and covers himself again.

NICHOLAS

(almost in tears)

Anne, I'm going to tell mummy about you.

ANNE

Don't be stupid! Can't you see it's not me...? Victor, touch his cheek so he knows your real.

Silence. All we hear is NICHOLAS's frantic breathing.

A child's hand approaches his face and strokes his cheek...

NICHOLAS screams, jumps out of bed and runs to the door.

NICHOLAS

Help! Mummy! Help!...

He pummels the door. A hand shoots out from behind him and covers his mouth.

37. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE opens her bedroom door and runs along the passage.

NICHOLAS's stifled screams can be heard in the distance.

38. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

NICHOLAS struggles to free himself from the hand, which covers his mouth. Behind him a voice whispers menacingly.

VICTOR'S VOICE

Be quiet! Be quiet!

GRACE rushes into the room, followed by BERTHA.

NICHOLAS clings on to his mother, in floods of tears. GRACE comforts him, stroking his hair. Then she glares at ANNE. The girl, seated on the bed, is a picture of innocence.

GRACE

What's been going on here?

NICHOLAS

(between sobs)

She was frightening me and...I told her to shut up and...and...

GRACE

(approaching the girl)

I'm fed up, d'you hear me?...fed up of your stories! You're a wicked little girl!

ANNE

(insolently)

I didn't do anything.

GRACE strikes her. The girl falls off the bed.

GRACE

A nasty, wicked little girl!

GRACE picks the girl up from the floor and continues beating her mercilessly.

ANNE's screams mix with those of NICHOLAS who runs to his mother and pulls at her waist.

NICHOLAS

Noooo!

GRACE continues hitting the girl, who by now is bleeding at the mouth. BERTHA, observes the scene from the doorway, uneasily.

NICHOLAS

You promised, mummy, you promised! You promised!

BERTHA

Ma'am, please, stop it!

GRACE stops, as if suddenly conscious of what she's doing. ANNE crouches, trembling, in a corner. Her pale skin is covered in red patches, as a result of the beating.

39. THE HOUSE. SEWING ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE sits embroidering the dress for her daughter's first communion.

Bright daylight illuminates the room.

ANNE

(off)

"And the Lord God said: Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken..."

40. THE HOUSE. HALL-UPPER LANDING. INT./DAY.

ANNE is standing on the upper landing of the staircase, holding a Bible. An area of bruising can still be seen on her forehead.

The dim light she is reading by comes from a nearby oil lamp.

ANNE

"So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."
(Pause) Finished...! Mummy!

GRACE enters the hall, closing the door behind her.

ANNE

I've finished.

GRACE

(climbing the stairs to join her)

Very good. Now you can ask the Virgin for forgiveness.

ANNE

What!? That's not what we agreed.

GRACE

(taking the Bible)

We didn't agree anything, young lady. Today you're being punished and you'll do as I say.

ANNE

You can't make me ask the Virgin for forgiveness.

GRACE

How dare you!?

ANNE

Mummy, beat me, if you want, but I won't ask forgiveness for something I didn't do.

GRACE

You told your brother that there was someone else in the room!

ANNE

There was!

GRACE

You're lying!

ANNE

I don't tell lies!

GRACE

But you love making up stories! Don't you realise you're perverting your brother's mind with all this nonsense about ghosts and fairies...

ANNE

Before, I was making it all up. Now it's true.

GRACE adopts an attitude of patience. She crouches down so that she can look her daughter in the eye.

GRACE

Anne, remember the story of Justus and Pastor. Children who don't tell the truth end up in Limbo.

ANNE

That's what you say. But I read the other day that Limbo is only for children who haven't been baptised. And I have.

Pause. GRACE stands up.

GRACE

Oh, so clever clogs has learned to read on her own, has she? Very well...*(She hands her the Bible again)*...since you find it so enjoyable and informative, you can continue to stand here for three hours a day reading the Bible until you're prepared to ask the Virgin for forgiveness.

ANNE

I'll lose my voice!

GRACE goes downstairs towards the door.

GRACE

I couldn't care less. Begin.

ANNE

What do I do when I've finished?

GRACE

(sarcastically)

Don't worry, it'll be a long, long time before that happens.

ANNE

Yes, but when I do, what then?

GRACE glares daggers at her daughter as she opens the door.

GRACE

You can start again.

She slams the door behind her.

ANNE stands for a while in silence. Then she opens the Bible and starts reading.

ANNE

(in an exaggeratedly loud voice)

"Cain and Abel. And Adam knew Eve, his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said: *(even louder)* 'I have gotten a man from the Lord'. And she again bare his brother Abel. *(A certain tearfulness begins to mingle with her shouting)*. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

41. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

Long distance shot of the house, against a stormy sky.

Muted by the wind, we hear the biblical verses that ANNE is shouting out.

Dissolve to

42. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

Sunlight floods the kitchen.

BERTHA is folding a white tablecloth on the ironing board.

ANNE

(off)

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said: 'My father'. And he said: 'Here I am, my son'. And he said: 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said: 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering'. So they went both of them together..."

BERTHA picks up a pile of tablecloths and serviettes and leaves the kitchen.

43. THE HOUSE. HALL-UPPER LANDING. INT/DAY.

BERTHA enters the hall, closing the door behind her. The light comes from a gas lamp, situated on the upper landing, next to ANNE, who is sitting on one of the stairs, reading.

ANNE

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound his son Isaac..."

When the girl sees BERTHA, she interrupts her reading and watches the old woman walk to the opposite door and leave.

44. THE HOUSE. SEWING ROOM. INT/DAY.

As in the kitchen, the light here is very bright. GRACE is sitting in a corner, embroidering.

BERTHA enters and walks towards a sideboard.

BERTHA

Excuse me, ma'am, I've finished ironing the table linen.

GRACE

Oh, good. It goes in the second drawer.

BERTHA opens the drawer and carefully puts the tablecloths and serviettes in place.

GRACE

(without looking up from her sewing)

How's Nicholas?

BERTHA

Fine...he's having a nap, ma'am.

GRACE

What about her? Did you notice if she was still standing up?

BERTHA

(after a moment's hesitation)

Yes, ma'am, she was. *(She moves to the centre of the room and wrings her hands in her apron as if she were afraid of what she's about to say).* How much longer is this punishment going to last? It's almost a month now.

GRACE

That's none of your business, Bertha...nor mine. It's up to her. She's got to learn to swallow her pride and ask for forgiveness.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

Anne, it's gone rather quiet up there! *(To BERTHA:)* By the way, I've had to put up with the noise of Lydia running around over my head all morning. She's been hurtling backwards and forwards as if there were three of her up there. Kindly tell her that, to do a bit of cleaning, it's not necessary to kick up such a rumpus. I don't want to have another migraine attack.

BERTHA

But...

ANNE

(off)

Mummy!

GRACE

What do you want?

ANNE

(off)

Can you come here a minute?

45. THE HOUSE. HALL - UPPER LANDING. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the hall, closing the door behind her as usual. She looks expectantly at her daughter.

ANNE

(with a certain shyness)

I want to ask the Virgin's forgiveness.

GRACE smiles and walks towards the girl.

GRACE

At last!

ANNE

Yes.

GRACE

And do you admit you made up that story of the little boy and his pianist father?

ANNE

Yes.

GRACE

Was it so hard to admit it, my love? *(She kneels beside her and strokes her hair).* Was it worth going through all this, eh, making us both feel bad day after day?

They embrace. GRACE kisses her daughter.

GRACE

(standing up)

Right, now you can carry on reading...

ANNE

(in a plaintive voice)

No, no...

GRACE

Yes. Until you finish the chapter. The reading of the Word of God should never be left unfinished.

ANNE

But I don't like this chapter.

GRACE

What do you mean?

ANNE

Abraham...was evil.

GRACE

No. Abraham was a good man.

ANNE

So, why did he want to kill his son?

GRACE

One day you'll understand. Come on, carry on reading. *(She goes downstairs towards the door).* You'll see how in the end he didn't kill him.

Silence.

ANNE

Mummy, you'd never kill me, would you?

GRACE feels the question like a stab in the back. She turns slowly towards her daughter and gives her a look of bewilderment, of terror...and also of anger. The girl quickly resumes her reading.

ANNE

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said..."

GRACE leaves the room, closing the door slowly behind her.

46. THE HOUSE. SEWING ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the room. We see that BERTHA is no longer there.

She crosses the room diagonally, walking a little like an automaton, as if still affected by the question her daughter had just asked her.

A noise above her head makes her look up to the ceiling. Rapid steps run up and down from one side to the other. GRACE follows the path of the noise as if watching a fly.

There is a sudden silence.

Something falls to the floor with a crash.

GRACE

(to herself)

Now she's gone too far...*(Looking at the ceiling)* Lydia, dammit, get down her immedi...!

GRACE catches sight of something through the window which leaves her awe-struck.

47. THE HOUSE. GARDEN. EXT./DAY.

Long distance shot of GRACE: BERTHA is standing in the central pathway, talking to LYDIA, who is holding a basket of flowers.

BERTHA points to the second floor of the house and the girl shakes her head.

48. THE HOUSE. HALL - UPPER LANDING. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the room and stops at the foot of the stairs, staring at her daughter.

GRACE
What's going on up there?

ANNE
(with slightly sheepish look)
Nothing, as far as I know, mummy. I'm just reading, like you told me.

GRACE
Did you hear it as well?

ANNE
Hear what?

GRACE climbs the stairs. ANNE resumes her reading.

ANNE
"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said: 'By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing...'"

GRACE reaches the landing and looks around her.

GRACE
(to the girl)
Sshh...

Another creak is heard in the darkness.

GRACE
Who's there?

ANNE
(without looking up from the Bible)
I don't know, I haven't done anything.

GRACE stands looking at her daughter. It's clear that the girl knows something.

GRACE
Who's making that noise, Anne?

Pause.

ANNE
I can't tell you, mummy.

GRACE
(containing her anger)
Tell me.

ANNE

If I tell you you'll hit me and punish me again.

GRACE

(rushing towards the girl)

Anne, I want the truth!

ANNE

I don't know what I'm supposed to say any more! If I say I've seen them, I get into trouble, and if I say I haven't, it's just as bad!

GRACE takes her daughter by the shoulders.

- GRACE

Anne. Tell me if there's anyone upstairs and, if so, where.

ANNE looks at her mother in silence. Then she points to behind her.

GRACE turns round: we see a door at the end of the passage. Daylight filters through the cracks, outlining her silhouette in the darkness.

ANNE

There. They're in there.

GRACE walks slowly to the door. Although she is a courageous woman, she is obviously very nervous.

She reaches the door, inserts a key in the lock, turns it and slowly opens...

She stands for a few seconds in the doorway, looking cautiously within, as if she dare not enter.

ANNE

Mummy...mummy...

GRACE looks at the girl.

ANNE

(hiding her face behind her hand)

You're letting the light in. Make up your mind...either go in or shut the door.

GRACE swallows. She goes in and closes the door behind her.

49. THE HOUSE. THE ROOM OF THE NOISES. INT./DAY.

GRACE looks around her. The room has more furniture than the rest of the house put together, as if it had been used as a storeroom.

There are so many nooks that it is difficult to form an idea of how much space there really is, and much less so, to know if there is anyone lurking behind some hidden corner.

GRACE moves forward and stands in the centre. Her look is distant, as if she were paying more attention to what she can hear.

We slowly approach her ear...

Very vaguely, mingled with the noise of the leaves in the garden, we detect an amalgam of confused whispers. It is almost impossible to distinguish what they are saying.

We hear a sort of supernatural moan followed by a deep breath. GRACE steps back, trying to locate the voices, but though they seem to be right beside her, she is unable to pin them down.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

She's here, she's here...

VICTOR'S VOICE

Mummy, she says she's here.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

She's watching us. *(The voice turns into a plaintive moan)*
She's watching us...she's watching us!

MRS. MARLISH'S VOICE

Sshh...

GRACE opens wide her eyes, trying to see in greater detail what she has in front of her, but she can only see a couple of pieces of furniture and a wall.

She sees that the door of the room is open, and what is more, that it is closing slowly. The fact that there is only darkness on the other side makes it impossible to tell who is pulling on the doorknob.

She runs towards the door and into the passage.

50. THE HOUSE. HALL - UPPER LANDING. INT./DAY.

GRACE walks quickly towards her daughter.

GRACE

Where did they go?

ANNE

They just came past here. Didn't you see them?

GRACE

Which way did they go?

ANNE

(pointing in various directions)

Over there, and over there...and over there, as well.

At the end of the passage, in the half-light, at least two doors seem to shut.

ANNE

They're everywhere. They say the house is theirs.

GRACE runs quickly downstairs and stands in the middle of the hall, looking frenziedly in all directions.

ANNE

And they said they're going to take down the curtains.

51. THE HOUSE. STUDY ROOM. INT/DAY.

BERTHA, holding NICHOLAS in her arms, watches GRACE place a notebook in front of ANNE, who is seated opposite an oil lamp.

GRACE

I want you to draw them, one by one, and tell me everything you know.

ANNE stands up and walks towards a corner.

ANNE

Wait.

GRACE

Where are you going?

ANNE

(reassuringly)

Wait...

BERTHA

Ma'am, please calm down.

GRACE

I will not calm down! During five whole years of German occupation I managed to avoid a single Nazi setting foot in this house! And now there's someone here, here under my very nose, opening and closing doors!

BERTHA

Ma'am, this is an old house. Old houses have their quirks: the floorboards creak, the plumbing clanks...You said so yourself...

ANNE returns to her mother's side with her textbook, and tugs at her skirt.

ANNE

Look, mummy.

GRACE

They were voices, human voices! A boy and two women, they were talking together.

ANNE

Mummy, look. I did it the other day.

ANNE shows her the drawing from her colouring book. The members of the family have undergone a considerable transformation thanks to Anne's infantile scribbles. The girl has drawn long lank hair and a moustache on the father. The mother now has a shock of black, curly hair on her head. The boy has hardly been altered. Neither has the old lady, except that in her case, she has not drawn in her pupils, which gives her a somewhat inhuman look (rather like that of a zombie). The girl is scribbled out.

Beside each drawing there is an arrow and an identifying label.

ANNE

This is the father, this is the mother, this is Victor and this is his grandmother.

GRACE

What do these numbers stand for?

ANNE

(as if stating the obvious)

That's the number of times I've seen them. The girl doesn't exist, that's why I've crossed her out. I saw the father twice, in the hall; the mother as well - once in the hall and once in the kitchen; Victor five times, all in different places...and...her...I see her more and more often.

Next to the old woman is written the number 14.

GRACE

My God! Bertha, go and call Mr. Tuttle and tell him we have to search the whole house, right away, before it gets dark.

BERTHA

(putting the boy down)

Yes, madam...

BERTHA leaves the room. ANNE points to the drawing of the grandmother.

ANNE

Look, mummy, she really scares me.

NICHOLAS hugs his mother.

NICHOLAS

(trembling)

Mummy...

GRACE

It's all right, darling, nothing's going to happen to you while mummy's here.

ANNE

She's got really funny eyes, see? It's as if she's not looking at you, but she can see you. And she's always around, saying: Cooome to uuuuuus...

GRACE

Anne, don't lie to me!

ANNE

Honest, mummy. And she asks me things. Victor told me she's a witch.

GRACE

What does she ask you?

ANNE

Things. And her breath smells.

52. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE, holding a hunting rifle, is looking in a drawer for cartridges. The old man TUTTLE and LYDIA are standing behind her.

GRACE

We have to open all the curtains. I don't want any dark corners where someone could hide.

TUTTLE

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE begins to load the rifle.

GRACE

You both search the right side and I'll take the left. Then we'll search upstairs.

The servants leave.

GRACE snaps the rifle shut. Then she looks at it strangely, as if recalling some distant...and unpleasant memory.

She shakes her head and leaves the room.

53. THE HOUSE. ROOMS. INT./DAY.

We see various shots of curtains being opened by TUTTLE, LYDIA and GRACE.

Daylight floods into the different rooms.

54. THE HOUSE. FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

Evening falls.

We zoom in on one of the windows of the house and discover GRACE, as the curtains are suddenly flung open.

She looks behind her, holding the rifle with both hands. Then she takes a lamp and moves towards the next door.

55. THE HOUSE. JUNK ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters another room. In spite of the prevailing darkness, it is clear that the room is full of junk, some of it scattered over the floor.

GRACE moves cautiously forward. She places the lamp on a table and walks towards one of the curtains...

As she draws the curtain, the light illuminates a thin-faced figure dressed in old-fashioned clothes, who seems to observe her from a corner of the room.

GRACE gives an involuntary shout, and points her rifle at him...

...until she realises that she is standing in front of a Pre-Raphaelite style portrait.

GRACE stands looking at the painting for a while.

Then she inspects the room, in the brighter light of day. However, rather than looking for signs of people, she seems to pay more attention to the objects that surround her.

Among the huge number of objects she finds several portraits, almost all of them daguerreotypes and photographs.

56. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE is playing with a doll, on a corner of the bed. NICHOLAS is sitting on the floor, looking bored.

BERTHA is snoozing next to a table on which there is an oil lamp.

ANNE

Why do we have to stay in here?

BERTHA stretches.

BERTHA

Because your mother is opening all the curtains. She's looking for the intruders.

NICHOLAS

What does "intruders" mean?

BERTHA

"Intruders" are people who go into someone's house without permission.

NICHOLAS

Why have they come to our house?

BERTHA

Perhaps they were planning to steal something. Or perhaps they're just looking for shelter.

ANNE

I know why they've come. They reckon the house belongs to them and that we're the intruders.

BERTHA

Where did you get that idea?

ANNE does not answer. She carries on playing with her doll.

NICHOLAS

(scared by his own words)

Perhaps they're ghosts who lived in this house before and who...and who...

ANNE

Don't be stupid. I already told you that ghosts go about in white sheets and go..."ooOOOooo!". And they walk about clanking chains.

BERTHA

Anne, why do you make up such stories?

ANNE

I don't make them up. I read it in a book.

BERTHA

You shouldn't believe everything you read in books.

ANNE

That's what my mother says...she says that when people die, their souls go to Heaven, or Hell or Purgatory, and that all this stuff about ghosts is rubbish. But then she expects us to believe everything that's written in the Bible.

BERTHA

Don't you believe it?

ANNE

I believe some things... But, for example, I don't believe that God made the world in seven days...or that Noah got all those animals into one boat. Or that the Holy Spirit is a dove.

NICHOLAS

No, I don't believe that either.

ANNE

Doves are anything but holy.

NICHOLAS

They crap on our windows.

ANNE

...And I don't believe that Jesus cast out demons into a herd of pigs and made them jump into the sea and drown. Poor pigs! It wasn't their fault!

BERTHA smiles at the idea. Then she becomes serious.

BERTHA

Have you mentioned this to your mother?

The children are quick to shake their heads, as if the very thought of it scared them.

ANNE

Do you believe in ghosts, Bertha?

BERTHA, finding the question difficult, takes her time in answering.

BERTHA

(rather nervous)

Of course not.

Dissolve to

57. THE HOUSE. JUNK ROOM. INT./DAY

GRACE is lost in thought, her eyes glued to the portraits piled up in front of her.

After a few moments' mental debate, she eventually takes out of her skirt pocket the page from Anne's colouring book and places it beside the portraits, as she goes through them one by one, comparing them with her daughter's drawing.

From time to time she looks towards the door, as if she were afraid to be caught red-handed.

She opens a very dusty, black bound album. Faces from the previous century pass before her gaze, with a solemnity characteristic of old-fashioned poses. They all have something in common: the subjects are all sitting or lying down, with their eyes closed.

BERTHA

(off)

Ma'am...

GRACE stands up, quickly hiding her daughter's drawing in her pocket.

GRACE

Yes...?

The door opens and BERTHA appears.

BERTHA

They've searched everywhere. There's no one downstairs.

GRACE

Good. Then tell them to go upstairs. I'll join them in a minute.

BERTHA

(turning to leave)

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

Bertha?

BERTHA

(turning back)

Yes?

GRACE

Have you any idea what this might be?

GRACE goes up to the old woman and shows her the album.

BERTHA

(as if stating the obvious)

It's a photograph album, madam.

GRACE

Yes, but everyone's asleep, look.

BERTHA

They're not asleep, madam... They're dead.

GRACE looks at the old woman, with a mixture of surprise and terror.

BERTHA

It's a book of the dead.

GRACE

(flipping through the pages with the tips of her fingers)

I've never seen anything like it.

BERTHA

It was common practice during the last century. They photographed the dead in the hope that their souls would live on in the portrait.

GRACE

There are even group portraits... And children! It's macabre. How could those people be so superstitious? It shouldn't have been allowed.

BERTHA

Grief over the death of a loved one can lead people to do the strangest things.

On the last page there are some faint tear marks in the form of an X, as if someone had hastily ripped out a photo. GRACE gazes at the marks, absentmindedly, while she runs her fingers over the torn paper.

GRACE

How odd, someone has ripped out the last photo.

BERTHA

Ma'am, I hope you don't think...

GRACE

I'm not suggesting it was you, Bertha.

BERTHA

Perhaps someone took the photo years ago...

GRACE

No, the marks are recent.

BERTHA

Maybe...maybe it came unstuck.

GRACE

(not really convinced)

Yes, that must be it.

58. THE HOUSE. LOUNGE. INT./NIGHT.

Through the window we can see the trees in the garden waving in the wind.

GRACE is curled up in an armchair, in front of the hearth, staring absently into the fire. The rifle lies at her feet.

Behind her, sitting near the door, is BERTHA, reading the Bible.

GRACE

(without taking her eyes off the fire)

Bertha, why don't you go to bed? It's very late.

BERTHA

(looking up from the Bible)

You look as if you could do with a good night's rest yourself, ma'am.

For a moment, GRACE seems to betray the hint of a smile.

GRACE

I employed you to take care of my children, not me.

BERTHA

You must rest. You go and lie down, I'll keep watch.

GRACE

You don't know how to handle a rifle.

BERTHA

I can learn.

GRACE smiles again. Then she turns to the old woman.

GRACE

It's cold. Come and sit by the fire.

BERTHA

Thank you, ma'am, but don't worry, I'm fine where I am.

GRACE

(with a glimmer of tenderness)

Come on...

BERTHA

Thank you very much, ma'am.

BERTHA sits timidly in an armchair near GRACE and warms her hands in front of the fire.

GRACE

Tell me about when you worked here before.

BERTHA

What do you want to know?

GRACE

Did you have children to look after then as well?

BERTHA

No. No, the master and his wife didn't have any family. I was in charge of organising the housework.

GRACE

Were there many servants?

BERTHA

About fifteen. But in the end there were only the three of us left.

GRACE

Why?

BERTHA

My employers moved to London. They came here less and less, what with it being so out of the way and all... And so the house was gradually left empty.

GRACE

It's the same old story. Everyone ends up leaving this damned island. My family went in the summer of 1940, just before the invasion... And that was the last I ever heard of them...

BERTHA

Oh.

GRACE

It makes no difference, I don't blame them. All's fair in love and war.

BERTHA

Actually, we left, too. Although...well, (*she looks around her wistfully*) sometimes you leave a place, and it's as if it's there with you all the time. I always felt like I'd never left this house.

GRACE

Why did you leave?

Pause.

BERTHA

It was...on account of the tuberculosis.

GRACE

(*surprised*)

Tuberculosis?

BERTHA

The whole area was evacuated.

GRACE

When was that?

BERTHA

In...a few years ago.

Pause. Burning logs crackle in the hearth.

GRACE

Was that when Lydia was left dumb?

From the old woman's expression it is clear that she does not like talking about this subject.

BERTHA

Yes, I think so... (*She smiles nervously*). This poor old memory of mine is a bit rusty these days.

GRACE

What happened to her?

BERTHA

Suddenly, one day, she just stopped talking.

GRACE

But there must have been a reason...

BERTHA shakes her head.

BERTHA

If there was, I never found out.

GRACE

But people don't just stop talking like that, for no reason. These things are always the result of some sort of trauma...*(To herself)*. Something must have happened to her... *(Pause)* Were your employers good to you?

BERTHA

Oh, they were very pleasant indeed.

GRACE

You don't have to lie, Bertha.

BERTHA

No, no, madam, I'm serious. They were always very kind to us, and...well, we'll always be grateful to them for the way they...

BERTHA cuts herself short, as if she had said more than she should.

GRACE

The way they what?

BERTHA

The way...the way they treated us. Ma'am, if you'll excuse me, I'd better go to bed, or there'll be no getting me up in the morning.

GRACE

Off you go. I'll stay here a while longer.

BERTHA stands up and walks towards the door.

GRACE

Do you know what became of them, whether they're still alive or not...?

BERTHA

No, to be honest, I don't. Goodnight, ma'am.

GRACE

Goodnight, Bertha.

The old lady leaves the lounge.

GRACE stares at the fire, deep in thought.

59. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

NICHOLAS approaches the bed where ANNE is sleeping.

NICHOLAS
(whispering)

Anne...Anne...

ANNE

What do you want?

NICHOLAS

I'm peeing myself.

ANNE

Well, you'll have to wait till tomorrow.

NICHOLAS

I can't.

ANNE

You know mother doesn't let us leave the room.

NICHOLAS

But, I can't hold it in any longer.

ANNE thinks for a moment. Then she makes a gesture of impatience and gets out of bed.

ANNE

Face the wall.

NICHOLAS, as if he were already accustomed to this, turns round and faces the wall. Behind him we see ANNE rummaging around in some part of the room.

NICHOLAS

Hurry up, I'm bursting.

ANNE approaches him and hands him two keys.

ANNE

This one is for here, and this one for the bathroom.

NICHOLAS

No, I don't want to go on my own.

ANNE

(frowning with impatience)

Here we go!

NICHOLAS

(a little ashamed)

I'm scared. What if I bump into the *intruders*?

ANNE

Intruders...All right, come on.

The children stealthily open the door and leave the room.

60. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE WITH VIRGIN. INT./NIGHT.

The children step into the passage. Moonlight shines through the windows.

They proceed on tiptoe.

Suddenly, NICHOLAS stops dead, staring towards the end of the passage.

ANNE

What is it?

NICHOLAS

(in an almost imperceptible whisper)

There's someone there.

ANNE

Where?

NICHOLAS

(gesturing with his head)

Look.

At the end of the passage there is a statue of the Virgin with a raised arm. Next to it a human silhouette can be made out.

ANNE stands for a few moments scrutinising the darkness. Then her expression relaxes.

ANNE

It's the shadow of the Virgin, silly.

NICHOLAS

No, no.

ANNE

Nicholas, it's the shadow of the Virgin.

NICHOLAS

Let's go back.

ANNE begins to walk to the end of the passage.

ANNE

Don't be stupid.

NICHOLAS

Don't go, don't go.

ANNE

(walking)

Cowardly custard.

NICHOLAS watches in horror as his sister stands next to the shadow.

ANNE

(looking at NICHOLAS)

See? It's only a shad...

The shadow suddenly shoots out a black arm and grasps the girl.

ANNE screams. NICHOLAS steps back.

Moonlight shines on the silhouette. It is GRACE.

GRACE

(in an angry whisper)

Do you mind telling me what you're doing? *(She looks toward the end of the passage)* Nicholas, come here.

The boy walks slowly towards his mother.

ANNE

I was only taking him to the bathroom, mummy. He said he was bursting for a pee.

GRACE

How did you get out of the room?

ANNE

The door was open.

GRACE

(tutting)

That Bertha's going to feel the sharp end of my tongue when I see her...And how were you thinking of getting into the bathroom?

ANNE

We were going to ask you for the key.

Pause. GRACE looks at NICHOLAS

GRACE

You should have gone before you went to bed. Come on, then, be quick.

NICHOLAS

(looking very distraught)

I don't think I need to now.

The boy has an enormous stain on his pyjama bottoms.

61. THE HOUSE. BATHROOM. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE is vigorously washing NICHOLAS who is standing in the bath, holding up his pyjama jacket.

The boy watches his mother.

NICHOLAS

Mummy.

GRACE

(still annoyed)

What?

NICHOLAS

When's daddy coming home?

The question upsets GRACE and she pauses momentarily. Then her expression hardens and she continues scrubbing his legs.

GRACE

When the war's over.

NICHOLAS

Why did he go to war...I mean, nobody's done anything bad to us?

Pause. GRACE's eyes redden and tremble. It is obvious that she does not like talking about the subject.

GRACE

Daddy went...*(with slight sarcasm)*...Daddy went because he's very brave. And he wasn't prepared to let the Germans tell him what he had to do.

NICHOLAS

Why?

GRACE shakes her head. She seems on the point of bursting into tears.

62. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE, lying on the bed, bursts into tears.

GRACE
(groaning)

Why, why...?

She stretches out her hand and takes a handkerchief from the bedside table. She blows her nose, and tries to pull herself together.

A sudden noise changes her expression. She sits up and listens...

The piano is playing.

The gentle, mysterious melody, reminiscent of Satie, cannot be clearly distinguished as it echoes through the house.

GRACE quickly puts her slippers on.

63. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE - STAIRS. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE rushes out into the passage, grasping the rifle and an oil lamp.

The melody can be heard more clearly.

She stops at the head of the stairs, as if having second thoughts about going down.

She descends the staircase slowly. The wooden stairs creak

GRACE looks around her nervously as she descends, although her attention is almost totally directed towards the music room.

64. THE HOUSE. HALL - PASSAGE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE stops in front of the music room door. She places the oil lamp on the floor in order to have better control of the rifle and slowly pushes on the door handle.

Almost instantaneously the music stops, vanishing in a sort of melange of notes, as if someone had suddenly stopped playing but without releasing the sustain pedal.

GRACE pushes the door wide open and, with the rifle raised, peers around the room: there is no one sitting at the piano, although the lid is raised.

GRACE takes a deep breath and enters the room.

65. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE walks slowly towards the piano...

Behind her, the door slowly closes (with the inevitable squeaking of hinges, needless to say) leaving the oil lamp outside. Now the only light is what filters in from the night through the windows.

GRACE stops, uneasily, as if unsure whether to go back and open the door again or to continue towards the piano...

She moves towards the piano.

She closes the lid and locks it.

She looks around, without lowering the rifle: there is no one in the room.

She returns to the door, opens it and leaves.

66. THE HOUSE. HALL - PASSAGE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE bends down to pick up the oil lamp, beside the door. As she does so, the door closes behind her, very, very slowly.

Pause. GRACE opens the door again...

She swings it gently backwards and forwards, as if checking the state of the hinges.

She leaves it open for some time, looking continuously to the back of the room.

Absolute silence...

The door slams in her face with unexpected violence. The movement is so brusque that GRACE almost falls to the floor.

On the other side of the door, we hear someone turn the key firmly in the lock.

GRACE turns and runs up the passage.

GRACE

Bertha!!

67. THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRS. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE runs up the stairs.

GRACE

Bertha!!

BERTHA appears on the upper landing.

BERTHA

(very scared)

What's the matter, madam?

GRACE

The key to the music room! Give it to me!

BERTHA searches quickly in the pocket of her dressing gown.

GRACE

Quickly!

BERTHA takes out her bunch of keys.

BERTHA

What's happened, madam?

GRACE grabs the keys and hurtles downstairs.

GRACE

Come on!

68. THE HOUSE. HALL - PASSAGE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE runs towards the music room door. She puts the key in the lock and turns it.

69. THE HOUSE. MUSIC ROOM. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE and BERTHA burst into the room.

It is empty.

GRACE looks in horror towards the piano.

GRACE

Oh, my God...!

The lid of the piano has been raised again.

70. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAWN.

BERTHA pours boiling water from the kettle into a white mug. She then places the mug and two tablets on the table where GRACE sits gazing into space with a tense expression on her face.

BERTHA

Drink this and take these tablets, ma'am. They'll do you good.

GRACE grasps the mug firmly, trying to bring her trembling hands under control.

GRACE

(almost to herself)

I checked that room myself. It was empty. And yet I felt that someone else was there. A...presence...moving around me. And it wasn't human. Those beings...whoever they are, are challenging us...me and my children.

- BERTHA

You mustn't say such things, ma'am. You should get some rest...

GRACE

(banging her fist on the table)

I don't want to rest! I can't. And I know I'm not mad. *(She stands and walks around the table).* My daughter's visions, the whispering voices, the doors that open and close, the piano... *(Thoughtfully:)* That's why that poor girl went dumb. There's something in this house that she saw or heard...or felt!! Something demonic.

BERTHA

(crossing herself)

Ma'am!

GRACE

(looking around her)

Something which is not at rest...You don't believe it, do you?

BERTHA looks down.

GRACE

I don't blame you. I had my doubts as well.

BERTHA

(plucking up courage)

I do believe it, madam.

GRACE looks at her, slightly surprised.

BERTHA

I've always believed in those things. They're not easy to explain...but they happen. We've all heard stories of the beyond, now and then... And I think that, sometimes, the world of the dead...gets mixed up with the world of the living.

GRACE

But that's impossible! The Lord would never allow such an aberration! The living and the dead will only meet at the end of time. It says so in the Bible.

BERTHA

There isn't always an answer for everything, ma'am.

Pause.

GRACE runs out of the kitchen.

BERTHA

(worried)

What are you going to do?

71. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE goes to a cupboard, near the door, and takes out an overcoat.

GRACE

It's time I went to the village and paid Father Lebrun a visit. If he won't come here, I shall go to him. And I'll bring him back.

BERTHA

But, ma'am, you should wait for the weather to improve...

GRACE

I've waited long enough.

GRACE leaves the house. BERTHA follows her.

72. THE HOUSE. GARDEN. EXT./DAY.

GRACE rushes down the drive. BERTHA walks behind her.

BERTHA

The priest told me he would come as soon as he could...

GRACE stops and turns to face the old woman.

I'm tired of hearing what he tells you! I want him to tell me, personally. He's going to come today. The sanctity of this house is at stake.

BERTHA

What are you going to tell him?

Pause.

GRACE

(pointing to the house)

I've searched every room in there, inch by inch. Now I want them to be blessed.

GRACE walks off. BERTHA watches her anxiously.

73. THE HOUSE. GARDEN - TREES. EXT./DAY.

TUTTLE, with a wheelbarrow beside him, is raking together three piles of dead leaves.

GRACE approaches him, through the trees.

BERTHA

(off)

Ma'am, please, wait, it's still very early!

TUTTLE

Good morning, ma'am.

GRACE

Tuttle, I want you to search the whole garden and tell me if you come across any gravestones.

TUTTLE

Gravestones?

BERTHA catches up to them.

GRACE

When my husband bought this house three years ago, we were told there was a little cemetery among the trees.

TUTTLE

I've not seen anything.

GRACE

(beginning to walk off)

Check carefully. The graves could be overgrown.

TUTTLE

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

I want to know if there was a family buried here...a family whose father was a pianist.

74. THE HOUSE. GARDEN GATE - ROAD. EXT./DAY.

GRACE pushes open a huge wrought iron gate and comes out onto a dirt road that disappears round both sides of the property.

A thin fog blurs the distant countryside.

75. THE HOUSE. GARDEN - TREES. EXT./DAY.

BERTHA and TUTTLE look towards the exit.

Suddenly, the old woman's face, usually kind and almost naive, acquires a troubled, sombre expression.

BERTHA

(with complicity)

Now she's convinced they're ghosts.

TUTTLE

(leaning on his rake)

Don't you think it's risky to let her go?

BERTHA

(coldly)

Don't worry. The fog won't let her get very far.

TUTTLE

Oh, yes, the fog. The fog...of course.

TUTTLE resumes his work, raking the dead leaves. Suddenly he stops and leans on his rake again.

TUTTLE

(pointing to the three piles)

And when...when do you think we should tell her about...all this?

BERTHA

All in good time, Mr. Tuttle. All in good time. Oh, you'd better add some more leaves to that pile.

One of the piles has partially collapsed, revealing a weathered stone cross. GRACE takes a handful of dried leaves from the wheelbarrow and scatters them over the tomb, hiding it from view once more.

76. ROAD. EXT./DAY.

GRACE walks briskly along the roadside.

The fog has thickened.

Even though she is outdoors, not a single bird can be heard twittering.

The further GRACE walks on, the thicker the fog becomes.

The silence also becomes more and more enveloping; not a leaf rustles, nor is there the slightest hint of a breeze...

There is a total stillness, which amplifies the sound of her steps and her rapid breathing.

GRACE looks behind her, rather uneasily: the fog is now so thick that she can hardly see anything.

Only a grained, grey curtain stretches before her. It is now impossible to detect even the branches of the trees.

GRACE stops, aware that she is losing her way.

Total silence.

She stretches her arm out into the fog. Her hand disappears into the mist.

GRACE's breathing becomes more and more panicky. Wherever she looks, she can see only whiteness. Not a single shape is visible.

GRACE is overcome by panic. She turns to face the other way, - or so it seems, at least, - with the intention of backtracking...

But she cannot escape the blanket of fog.

GRACE seems to be running literally through nothingness.

She stops once more to get her breath back.

In spite of herself, she is unable to stifle the occasional moan of desperation.

Suddenly, a warm ray of sunlight reaches her. In the distance, a figure is outlined against the light.

The figure approaches slowly. GRACE feels so helpless and disconcerted that she can only remain rooted to the spot.

When the figure is barely a metre away, GRACE lets out a groan of utter shock, and puts her hands to her mouth.

The man, about thirty five years of age, is dressed in military uniform. He carries a knapsack on his back. He is tall and slim, with deep set eyes and a cadaverous jaw. He has several scars and bruises on his face. His expression is sad and absent, as if he had lived through some terrible experience.

GRACE
(almost breathless)

Charles...

The man looks at her in silence without reacting, as if he did not recognise her. Then his eyes widen a little.

CHARLES
(stuttering)

Grace...

They embrace slowly. The knapsack falls to the ground.

GRACE begins to cry.

GRACE
(between sobs)

This can't be true. It's not possible. They told me you'd been given up for dead...that you stepped on a mine and were swallowed up by the earth.

CHARLES takes some time to answer.

CHARLES
(looking into space)

They...say a lot of things.

GRACE
(pressing herself even more closely to him)
Oh, thank you, God, thank you. Every night I've prayed for this moment, asking for the impossible, begging God to return my husband and the father of my children. (She pulls away from him slightly and looks him in the eyes). They don't know anything. I told them the war wasn't over yet, and that one day you'd come back. (She embraces him again). And you have, you're back, you're back... But...where have you been all this time?

CHARLES
Out there...looking for my house.

GRACE runs her hand over his forehead and through his hair.

GRACE

My God, you're so...different.

CHARLES

Sometimes I bleed.

GRACE is unable to stifle a burst of hysterical laughter. They both smile, looking at each other.

Meanwhile, a stiff breeze has swept the fog away among the trees, making the road visible once more.

Dissolve to

77. THE HOUSE. GARDEN - FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

CHARLES leans slightly on GRACE's arm as they approach the house.

78. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE and CHARLES enter the house. BERTHA comes to meet them.

BERTHA

Ma'am.

GRACE

Bertha, this is my husband.

BERTHA's reaction is little short of astonishment.

BERTHA

Pleased to meet you, sir.

GRACE

He's very weak. Prepare a hot bath, some clean clothes and something to eat.

BERTHA

Right away, ma'am.

BERTHA leaves the room.

CHARLES

Where are the children?

GRACE

Upstairs. Wait, I'll call them.

CHARLES stops her with a gesture of his hand and moves to the foot of the staircase. Then he begins to climb the stairs one by one, like an old man of eighty.

GRACE observes his slow ascent, visibly moved, though we do not know whether it is out of joy or sadness at seeing him in such a lamentable state.

79. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE and NICHOLAS are asleep.

The door opens and the outline of their father appears.

CHARLES

(whispering)

How are my little ones?

ANNE is the first to open her eyes and see him. She leaps from the bed and runs towards him.

ANNE

Daddy!

CHARLES sweeps her up into his arms, as she clings to his neck.

ANNE

Why did you take so long?

CHARLES looks at NICHOLAS. The boy's breathing is very staggered, as if he were shivering with cold. He stares fixedly at his father.

CHARLES

Hello, titch.

CHARLES stands by the edge of the bed. The boy bursts into tears.

ANNE

What a cry baby! I told you he'd come back.

CHARLES puts the girl down, sits on the bed and embraces NICHOLAS. Only then does the boy react and stretch his arms out to his father.

ANNE sits on the other bed.

CHARLES

Have you both behaved yourselves?

ANNE

We've been very good.

CHARLES

Have you been good to your mother?

ANNE

Very good. Every day we study for our First Communion.
Daddy, did you kill anyone?

CHARLES

(stroking his son's head)

No, but I've seen a lot of dead men.

ANNE

Really? What do they look like?

Pause.

CHARLES

(with a distant look)

Like me.

80. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE is kneeling beside her bed, her hands clenched against her forehead. She is visibly moved, almost in tears.

GRACE

(whispering)

Forgive me, Lord, for ignoring your voice, for not feeling your presence... your great mercy, which never fails to succour me and my children, giving meaning to our lives. Thank you for hearing my prayers, for showing me yet again that you are able to work miracles. I promise, Lord, that I shall never again be weak, that I shall never again allow myself to be carried away by stupid superstitions. I can see everything clearly once more... You and only You are the Way.

81. THE HOUSE. SEWING ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE hums softly, as she embroiders ANNE's communion dress.

BERTHA enters the room.

BERTHA

Lunch is ready, madam.

GRACE does not look up from the dress. She is lost in her thoughts, smiling constantly.

GRACE

Uh huh.

BERTHA

With your permission, I thought I'd lay the white tablecloth and the silver cutlery.

GRACE

Uh huh.

BERTHA moves towards a sideboard.

BERTHA

Aren't you giving them a lesson today, madam?

GRACE

No. I want them to spend time with their father.

BERTHA opens a draw and carefully takes out a white tablecloth.

BERTHA

And what about...that other matter?

GRACE

Other matter? *(She stops sewing)*. Oh...

For an instant, GRACE's expression clouds over.

BERTHA

(taking cutlery from a drawer)

Are you still thinking of going to see Father Lebrun?

GRACE resumes her embroidery, and the smile returns to her face.

GRACE

You know, I think just lately we've all let ourselves get rather carried away. This house would drive anyone mad, don't you think so? It's so big...and so dark. But, now my husband's back, things are going to change. With him here, there's nothing to fear.

BERTHA looks rather sceptical, but finally agrees.

BERTHA

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE continues humming.

Suddenly, a door is heard opening.

GRACE

(standing up)

Here he comes.

82. THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

GRACE, followed by BERTHA, walks towards the staircase.

Upstairs, we hear her husband's slow steps.

GRACE

Darling, we've prepared you some lunch. Are you coming down or would you rather we took...?

A door closes. GRACE turns to BERTHA and gives her an apologetic look.

GRACE

He must be very tired.

BERTHA nods and leaves the room.

83. THE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE and the children eat in silence.

Clatter of knives and forks on plates.

GRACE

Anne, hold your spoon properly.

ANNE

(looking bored)

When's daddy coming down?

GRACE

Daddy's very tired.

ANNE

He said he's seen lots of dead men.

GRACE

Sssh...

Silence.

ANNE

Mummy, when people die in the war, where do they go?

GRACE

What a question! It depends.

NICHOLAS

On what?

GRACE

Well...on whether they fought on the side of the "goodies" or the "baddies". In this war, for example, your father fought for England, on the side of the "goodies".

ANNE

And how do you know who the "goodies" and the "baddies" are?

GRACE

All right, that's enough questions. Eat your food. You'll never go to war.

NICHOLAS

(disappointedly)

We'll never go anywhere.

For an instant, GRACE looks at her son with tenderness. Then her face hardens.

GRACE

You're not missing anything out there. You're better off here at home with mummy and daddy, who love you.

Silence.

ANNE

And the intruders.

GRACE goes rigid and glares at her daughter.

GRACE

(icily)

There are no intruders here.

ANNE

But you said that...

GRACE

(even more icily)

I said that there are no intruders here. And I don't want to hear another word on the subject.

ANNE

But...

GRACE

(banging her fist on the table)

That's enough!

They carry on eating, in silence.

Can I say someth...?

ANNE

No!

GRACE

Why not?!

ANNE

Because you can't!

GRACE

ANNE shuffles in her seat, breathing rapidly.

GRACE
(furiously)

Stop breathing like that.

The girl stares at her plate, unable – or not wishing – to control her breathing.

GRACE
(between her teeth)

Stop...breathing.

ANNE intensifies her breathing even more. She seems on the point of crying.

GRACE
Right, go to your room. There's no dessert for you today.

The girl stands and runs out of the room.

84. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

ANNE runs through the kitchen. BERTHA blocks her path and embraces her.

BERTHA
There, there, stop crying...

BERTHA bends down and attempts to pull the girl's hands from her face.

BERTHA
Look what an awful face you've got when you cry!

ANNE
I don't care!

BERTHA takes out a handkerchief and dries ANNE's tears.

BERTHA
I've seen them, too.

ANNE looks at the old woman, surprised.

ANNE

So why don't you tell my mother...? (*BERTHA shakes her head*). She might believe me then.

BERTHA

There are things you mother would rather not hear. She only believes in what she was taught. But don't worry. Sooner or later she'll see them. And then everything will be different.

ANNE

Why?

BERTHA

(with an enigmatic smile)

You'll see...there are going to be some big surprises. There are going to be...*(opening wide her eyes)*...changes.

ANNE

(whispering)

Changes...

85. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE slowly opens the door and goes in.

CHARLES is laid on the bed, in the foetal position, with his eyes open. He has not even taken off his boots.

GRACE looks at him tenderly and sits beside him. She strokes his hair.

GRACE

Tomorrow we'll go for a walk in the woods, like we used to do. Do you remember?

Silence.

GRACE

Do you remember, darling?

Pause. CHARLES's breathing speeds up.

CHARLES

No. I don't want to. I don't want to go out.

GRACE

Why not?

CHARLES curls up even more.

CHARLES

I'm afraid. (He starts to cry). I'm afraid...I'm afraid...

GRACE's initial surprise turns into absolute stupor.

Then she rests her head on him.

GRACE

(as if she were comforting one of her children)

Sshh...take it easy, my love. Everything will be as it used to be. You'll see.

86. SHED. INT./NIGHT.

TUTTLE enters the shed carrying a pile of logs.

BERTHA and LYDIA are sitting in front of an open hearth. In the background we can see a bed and a small table. Tools hang from the walls.

TUTTLE places a few logs on the fire and stokes it with a poker.

BERTHA

Now she behaves as if nothing had happened.

TUTTLE

What about her daughter?

BERTHA

She's not so mule-headed. She knows things are going on in the house. The children will be easier to convince. But the mother is going to give us problems.

TUTTLE

Do you think her husband suspects anything?

BERTHA

I doubt if even knows where he is. The poor man has lost his mind.

Silence.

TUTTLE

Oh, dear.

87. THE HOUSE. GARDEN - FAÇADE. EXT./DAY.

Long distance shot of the house.

TUTTLE slowly crosses the frame, pushing his wheelbarrow.

ANNE

(off)

Mother of Jesus and Mother mine: To you, on this blessed day of my First Communion, I do consecrate my heart, my body and all my being. Turn, oh Lady,...

Dissolve to

88. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

LYDIA is cooking. She moves to and fro, keeping an eye on the steaming saucepans.

ANNE

(off)

...your merciful eyes unto my soul, which this day has become the sanctuary of Jesus. Make me yours, oh most holy Virgin, and help me to love you as the child Jesus loved you.

Dissolve to

89. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

CHARLES is lying on the bed, his eyes wide open, staring into space.

He is trembling.

ANNE

(off)

And you, who are goodness itself, hold me in your heart, as you did Jesus. Keep Jesus in my heart, make me to love him forever and deliver me from all dangers and evil.

Dissolve to

90. THE HOUSE. STUDY ROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE, holding a catechism, is seated opposite the children.

ANNE

Ehm...from all evil.

Silence.

GRACE

(prompting her from the catechism)

If I should ever...

ANNE

If I should ever offend him, let me not forget that I am yours and make me to return repentant to his sweet and divine heart. Amen.

GRACE gives a satisfied smile. She closes the catechism and gives the girl a resounding kiss.

GRACE

Very good.

ANNE

What about my treat?

GRACE

My treat, my treat. That's all you think about.

91. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

Facing their reflection in the mirror, GRACE places a white veil on ANNE's head.

GRACE

Look what a pretty daughter I've got.

ANNE is wearing her First Communion dress.

GRACE lets the transparent tulle veil fall over the girl's face.

GRACE

Mummy has made this veil especially for you.

ANNE

I look like a bride.

They laugh. GRACE kisses the girl and stands up.

GRACE

I just need to shorten the sleeves a bit. You can take it off now.

ANNE

Nooo...

GRACE

Anne, this dress has to be spotless for your First Communion.

ANNE

I promise I won't dirty it. But let me wear it for a little longer. Just a little.

Pause.

GRACE

All right. I'll be back shortly.

GRACE walks to the door.

GRACE

But no sitting on the floor or leaning against the walls!

The girl nods her assent eagerly.

GRACE leaves the room.

92. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

GRACE goes into the passage and walks off.

93. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE admires herself coquettishly in the mirror.

ANNE

Monsieur, would you like to dance with me...? I'd love to.

The girl begins dancing alone, humming to herself.

94. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE tiptoes in, carrying a tray of food.

CHARLES is resting on the bed.

GRACE places the tray on a table and sits next to him. She caresses his hair.

95. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE continues dancing, admiring herself in the mirror.

96. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE whispers into her husband's ear.

GRACE

Charles... Darling... You can't go on like this. You must eat something.

CHARLES does not reply. The prevailing half-light prevents our seeing whether his eyes are open or closed.

97. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE has disobeyed her mother and is sitting on the floor, making her two dolls dance with each other in her hands.

She is singing softly.

98. THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE, with a sigh of resignation, gives a last look at her husband, lying motionless on the bed, and leaves the room.

99. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

GRACE reaches the door of the children's bedroom.

GRACE

Anne.

There is no reply.

GRACE

Anne...?

ANNE

(off)

Yes, mummy.

GRACE

Get changed now, my love.

ANNE

(off)

Already?

GRACE

Yes, come on, now, don't make me mad.

ANNE

(off)

Yes, mummy.

GRACE sits down on a chair, and raises her hands to her face in a clear gesture of tiredness.

ANNE's humming.

GRACE

Anne, have you taken it off?

Humming.

GRACE

Anne, have you taken the dress off?

Humming.

GRACE stands and takes out the bunch of keys.

GRACE

That girl...!

100.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the room.

At the far side of the room, by the light of an oil lamp, we can make out the white form of the girl as she sits with her back to us. We can see only the dolls dancing in her hands.

GRACE

Anne, what did I tell you about sitting on the floor?

ANNE

But I'm on the carpet.

GRACE

It makes no difference. You'll still soil it. Do you mind telling me why you never do as you're told...?

Silence. GRACE shows an expression of absolute terror.

The hands which are playing with the dolls are long and bony. At that moment we are aware that the girl's silhouette could be that of an older woman, crouching in the corner. In fact, the seams of the dress seem to be about to split. Nevertheless, ANNE's voice is unmistakable.

GRACE walks slowly toward the figure...

FIGURE

(with ANNE's voice)

I didn't know how to take it off.

GRACE stands opposite the figure, and for a moment seems to have been left breathless by the shock...

Behind the tulle of the veil we can just distinguish the drawn and wrinkled face of an old woman, with unseeing eyes, who continues singing with the girl's voice.

The old lady looks at her – or so it seems – and stops singing.

OLD LADY
(with ANNE's voice)

What's the matter?

GRACE with great difficulty manages to say something.

GRACE

Where is my daughter?

The old lady stares at her in silence. Then she lets out a giggle.

GRACE

What have you done with my daughter?!

The old lady suddenly hunches up, hiding her face with her arm.

OLD LADY

Don't hit me, don't hit me...*(She turns her head, like a little girl).* Why are you mad? I haven't done anything wrong.

GRACE utters a cry of terror and fury, and rushes at the old lady. She also screams. GRACE drags her into a corner and rips the veil from her head.

OLD LADY

(with a blood-curdling shout)
Mummyyyyyy...!!

GRACE

(beating and scratching her)
You're not my daughter! You're not my daughter!

The Communion dress is torn in several places.

GRACE digs her nails into the old woman's white hair and tries to tear it out.

Suddenly, we see the reflection of their struggle in the mirror: GRACE is horrified to discover that it is her daughter she is grappling with. She immediately releases her grip and the girl runs into a corner.

Just then, BERTHA enters the room. The girl throws her arms around her, sobbing.

BERTHA

Ma'am, I heard shouts...

GRACE says nothing. She is unable to react, as she tries to take in what has happened.

ANNE

She wants to kill me! She's wicked! *(Looking at her mother and screaming:)* You're wicked! Wicked!

BERTHA

Anne, don't say such things!

ANNE

She won't stop until she kills us!

BERTHA

Ssssh...calm down, calm down...

ANNE

She tried it once! She won't stop until she kills us!

GRACE raises her hands to her mouth to stifle her crying.

BERTHA takes the girl from the room.

101. THE HOUSE. KITCHEN. INT./DAY.

GRACE is sitting with her arms folded.

She has put the kettle on to boil. The door opens and BERTHA appears.

GRACE

(anxiously)

How is she?..

BERTHA

I've never seen her like this before, ma'am. There's no calming her down. I've left her with her father.

GRACE gives her a surprised look

BERTHA

She insisted on talking to him.

BERTHA removes the kettle from the heat and pours some of the contents into a mug.

BERTHA

What happened, ma'am? Why did you fight?

GRACE

It wasn't her. It was...that woman. *(She takes out of her pocket the page of the colouring book, which is now very crumpled. We see again the drawing of the grandmother.)* The woman with the sightless eyes, imitating my daughter's voice. I'd swear to God that it wasn't my

daughter. But, all of a sudden...*(She closes her eyes and draws her hand across her forehead. Sobbing:)* God help me. I don't know what's the matter with me.

BERTHA

You must get more rest, madam. *(She places the mug and a couple of tablets on the table, in front of GRACE).* You can't take on all the responsibility of this house. Leave it to us. We know what has to be done. Come now, drink this up...

Silence.

GRACE

What's all this about, you knowing what has to be done? What did you mean by that?

BERTHA

Nothing, ma'am. I was just suggesting that...

GRACE

There's nothing to suggest! Who do you think you are! You have no idea what has to be done! *(Pause).* Or do you?

BERTHA does not reply. She turns away and begins to put the pots and pans away.

GRACE

(almost to herself)

All this began...when you people arrived.

GRACE looks at the tablets beside the steaming mug.

GRACE

What are these?

BERTHA

(with her back to her)

Tablets for your migraine, ma'am. The ones you always take.

Silence.

GRACE

Go and see to the children, please. I need to be on my own.

BERTHA

Yes, madam.

BERTHA leaves the kitchen.

After staring for a considerable time at the tablets and the drink, GRACE gets up and washes them down the sink with the contents of the mug.

102. THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

The door to GRACE's bedroom opens and BERTHA and ANNE come out, with the Communion dress in tatters. The girl shows signs of having been crying.

GRACE watches them from the other end of the passage.

BERTHA and the girl walk past her. ANNE does not look at her mother.

GRACE watches them walk away.

103. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE lies on the bed, clutching a pillow.

NICHOLAS sits behind her.

NICHOLAS

(whispering)

Anne... Anne, what happened?

ANNE

She hit me again. She said she'd never do it again. You remember, don't you?

NICHOLAS looks disturbed, as if some unpleasant memory had flashed into his mind.

NICHOLAS

When?

Pause.

ANNE

The day she went mad.

NICHOLAS lies on his bed, with his back to ANNE.

NICHOLAS

I don't remember.

ANNE

I do. She's a liar.

NICHOLAS

Why did she hit you?

ANNE

Because she went mad again. And she hates me.

NICHOLAS

Don't say that. Mummy loves you.

ANNE

She always thinks she's right. And if you disagree with her, she won't let you speak... But not anymore.

NICHOLAS turns over to face his sister.

NICHOLAS

Why do you say that?

ANNE

Nanny told me. There are going to be...changes.

104.THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters and closes the door behind her.

She leans back against the door.

CHARLES is sitting on the bed. He is wearing his soldier's uniform. A faint light filters through the closed shutters onto his back. He's looking down, so we can hardly see his face.

Silence.

CHARLES

Anne told me everything.

GRACE looks ashamed. She speaks slowly, halfway between desperation and exhaustion.

GRACE

I wish I had an explanation, but I haven't. At first, I thought there was someone else in the house. I even thought there were ghosts...

CHARLES

I'm not talking about the ghosts. I'm talking about what happened that day.

Pause.

GRACE

When?

CHARLES

Tell me it's not true. Tell me the girl is lying.

GRACE

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

CHARLES

Tell me you didn't do it.

Long silence.

GRACE knows what her husband is referring to. She sobs and presses herself even harder against the door.

GRACE

(tearfully)

It happened three months ago...the thought of it still keeps me awake...And when I do manage to get to sleep, I wake up again in a sweat, shouting! *(She calms down a little)*. I told the servants to take the day off. They never came back. I still don't know why... Have you eaten anything?

Silence.

CHARLES

Tell me what happened.

It is a while before GRACE speaks again. And as she nears the moment of confession, she finds speaking more and more difficult.

GRACE

I told the children to get ready for their bath. But they didn't take any notice... There are days when they don't do what I ask. *(She cries again and adopts a tone of self-justification:)* I don't know why they have so much trouble understanding...that I give the orders around here...! Because I'm their mother! And you weren't here to help me... Damn it! Where were you?!

CHARLES does not reply. He does not even move.

GRACE

They laughed... I threatened to take the belt to them, like you used to do... But they didn't care. *(Sarcastically:)* They thought it was funny to see their mother trying to be their father...trying to restore order. And the more I shouted at them and hit them, the more they laughed...At me!! *(Her legs weaken and she begins to slide down the door until she reaches the floor. Her voice trembles more*

and more, fading out.) So...I put a pillow, (she reproduces the gesture with her hands) over their little heads...so that...they'd stop laughing.

She cries bitterly for some time, as if she had just received a thrashing. CHARLES does not appear to be moved.

Little by little, GRACE recovers her composure.

GRACE

I almost killed them...My God, I almost killed them...

CHARLES

(sadly)

So it's true. You did do it.

GRACE

But nothing came of it! It was just an accident!

CHARLES

(coldly)

You did do it.

GRACE

You must forgive me. Charles...

CHARLES

It's not me who must forgive you. It's the children.

GRACE

I already talked to them, and promised them I'll never lay a finger on them again. They know I love them, and that I could never...

CHARLES stands up. With the light behind him, his figure acquires a menacing air.

GRACE

What are you going to do?

Pause.

CHARLES

I came to say goodbye to my wife and children. Now I must go.

GRACE

Go where?

CHARLES

(absently)

Out there.

GRACE

But, the war's over. You've no need to go.

CHARLES

(with a psychotic look)

The war hasn't finished.

GRACE

(standing up)

But,...what the hell are you talking about?! You're not going anywhere, do you hear me? You left once already.

(Pause). Why?

GRACE goes over to the bed and slumps down, staring into space.

GRACE

Why did you have to go to that stupid war that had nothing to do with us...? Why didn't you do what the others did?

CHARLES

The others surrendered.

GRACE

We all surrendered! There was nothing else we could do! This is a small island and it was crawling with Germans, damn it! Is that so hard to accept? *(She slowly lies down, resting her head on the pillow)*. What were you trying to prove by going to the front? You were born here, for God's sake! Do you remember...do you remember when you told me...I know a house, in the middle of a meadow. No one will bother our children there. And you brought us to this cold, cheerless place, where I don't even know who I am, because no one knows I exist! And then you left us... In this house we are all guilty of something.

Suddenly, GRACE feels CHARLES's lips on her neck. He gently embraces her.

They give each other a long look.

They kiss on the mouth and begin to undress. Against all expectations, GRACE shows a sexual passion little in keeping with her religious fervour.

They make love.

105.THE HOUSE. GARDEN - FAÇADE. EXT./DAWN.

Long distance shot of the house.

106.THE HOUSE. GRACE'S BEDROOM. INT/DAY.

GRACE wakes slowly and placidly.

She stretches and realises that CHARLES is no longer there. The door is open.

GRACE

Charles...

GRACE slips on her dressing gown and leaves the room.

107.THE HOUSE. STAIRCASE - HALL. INT/DAY.

GRACE runs downstairs to the main door.

GRACE

Charles!

108.THE HOUSE. GARDEN. EXT/DAY.

GRACE runs down the driveway, with tears in her eyes.

GRACE

Charles...!!

She reaches the iron gate.

109.THE HOUSE. GARDEN GATE - ROAD. EXT/DAY.

GRACE looks up and down the road. The fog only allows a visibility of twenty metres in all directions.

She stands motionless, not knowing what to do.

110.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT/DAY.

A pale, ghostly white light illuminates the children who are asleep in their beds.

ANNE opens her eyes and sits up, dazzled and puzzled.

When she has stretched and is fully conscious of what is happening, she lets out a piercing scream, her eyes glued on the window.

111.THE HOUSE. GARDEN GATE - ROAD. EXT/DAY.

GRACE hears her children's screams.

She turns and runs towards the house.

GRACE

Bertha!! The childreeseen...!!!

112.THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRCASE. INT./DAY.

GRACE runs up the stairs two at a time.

None of the servants shows signs of life.

113.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters the room. The children are crouched behind one of the beds, trying to protect themselves from the daylight.

GRACE runs to the window, but instantly realises that there are no curtains on the curtain rail.

She picks up the two children, who are still screaming, and leaves the room.

114.THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

GRACE runs along the passage carrying her children. She puts them down in front of a door and anxiously looks for her bunch of keys.

GRACE

Oh, my God,...oh, my God...!

115.THE HOUSE. EMPTY ROOM #1. INT./DAY.

GRACE and the children burst into a spacious, empty room and run to the windows.

There are no curtains.

GRACE

Where are the curtains?!

116.THE HOUSE. ROOM #2. INT./DAY.

GRACE and the children enter another room full of windows.

There is not a single curtain.

GRACE

Bertha!

117.THE HOUSE. HALL. INT./DAY.

BERTHA, standing in the centre of the hall, directs a sinister look at the upper floor, where GRACE's shouts are coming from.

GRACE

(off)

BERTHAAAA!!

BERTHA remains motionless, like a statue.

118. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

GRACE enters with the children and pulls a mattress off one of the beds. She drags it to the window, to cover it.

ANNE and NICHOLAS cry incessantly.

After resting for a few seconds, GRACE runs to her children and examines their faces and their arms.

GRACE

Don't worry...it's all right.

119. THE HOUSE. STUDY ROOM. INT./DAY.

LYDLA is quietly dusting the furniture.

GRACE enters and goes up to the young girl. She grabs her by the shoulders.

GRACE

Who was it?! Who was it?! Dammit!

LYDLA drops the feather duster in fright.

GRACE

You know what's happening here...you know because it happened to you, too! Tell me! Tell me!

LYDLA opens her mouth in an exaggerated way, uttering a wordless gargle, though we do not know if it is out of fear or because she wants to say something.

GRACE drags her to a table where there is a notepad and a pen.

GRACE

Write it down. Come on. (She puts the pen in her hand).
Write!

BERTHA

That attitude won't solve anything, ma'am.

BERTHA is standing in the doorway, wearing a serious, solemn expression. GRACE turns to face her.

GRACE

(with an angry look)

Oh, yes it will! It will if I can make her confess.

BERTHA

Even if, as you say, she did have something to confess...she can't write.

Pause. GRACE releases LYDLA who runs into a corner with a look of torment on her face. She then approaches the old woman.

GRACE

Where are they?

BERTHA

What?

GRACE

The curtains in this house! The curtains my children's lives depend on! Someone has taken them!

BERTHA

(coldly)

I've already noticed, you've no need to shout, madam...
Oh, Mr. Tuttle, I was just on the point of calling you.

The old gardener appears in the doorway.

BERTHA

Did you know someone's taken all the curtains?

TUTTLE

(with his usual absentmindedness)

The curtains? Oh, dear... Why should anyone...want to take all the curtains?

BERTHA

(watching GRACE out of the corner of her eye)

To let the daylight in, I imagine.

TUTTLE

(as if it were obvious)

Daylight...of course, daylight.

GRACE

Someone wants to kill my children!

BERTHA

But how do you know the light can kill them?

Pause.

GRACE

Have you gone mad, or are you just plain stupid? The children are photosensitive! I already told you!

BERTHA

Yes, but that was before. It's a disease that might have cleared up spontaneously. How do you know they're not cured, if you never expose them to the light?

GRACE cannot believe her ears, but is lost for an answer.

TUTTLE

My sister-in-law used to get terrible attacks of rheumatism in her legs and back... Then one fine day...*(Long pause)*...they disappeared.

BERTHA

You see?

Silence. GRACE points a menacing finger at the three servants.

GRACE

(containing her anger)

I'm going to find those curtains, and when you've helped me to hang them, you will leave this house.

GRACE walks to the door. BERTHA's voice stops her.

BERTHA

What about the master? What has he got to say about all this?

GRACE goes up to the old lady, holding out the palm of her hand.

GRACE

Give me your keys.

BERTHA obeys instantly, though her attitude is icy.

120.THE HOUSE. ROOMS. INT./DAY.

We see GRACE frantically searching several rooms in the house.

121.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./DAY.

ANNE is drawing next to an oil lamp. NICHOLAS, sitting opposite, rests his head on his arms on the table.

NICHOLAS

What's mummy doing?

ANNE

(without leaving her drawing)

I already told you. She's gone mad.

NICHOLAS

Liar.

ANNE

She's gone mad.

NICHOLAS

Liar, liar...

ANNE

She's gone mad, she's gone mad, she's gone mad...

NICHOLAS

Liar! Liar! Liar!!

NICHOLAS crumples up his sister's drawing. ANNE glares at him furiously.

ANNE

Say you're sorry.

NICHOLAS

Shan't.

ANNE

Say you're sorry.

NICHOLAS shakes his head timidly.

ANNE leaves her chair and goes to the mattress, which is blocking the window.

NICHOLAS

(alarmed)

What are you doing?

ANNE pulls at the mattress, trying to make it fall.

NICHOLAS

No, no, no, please! I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...!

The mattress falls to the floor and moonlight floods into the room.

ANNE giggles.

ANNE

It's night-time, silly.

122.THE HOUSE. SMALL ROOM. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE, holding the rifle and an oil lamp, opens the door of another room. It is very small and completely empty.

123.THE HOUSE. UPPER STAIRCASE. INT./DAY.

GRACE is about to open yet another door, when her attention is drawn by the last flight of stairs, which is narrower than the rest.

She climbs it slowly until she reaches a small door...

She hunts through her bunch of keys...

After a few seconds, she tuts in annoyance.

124.THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRCASE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE, still carrying the rifle, runs down the stairs.

BERTHA is standing there, cuddling LYDIA, who still shows signs of having cried. The two women and TUTTLE, calmly waiting downstairs, appear to be expecting her.

GRACE

The key.

BERTHA

What key?

GRACE stands facing the old woman.

GRACE

The key to the attic is missing.

BERTHA

Of course, madam. You told me and Lydia to use that room, don't you remember? And then you gave us a key each...

GRACE

Exactly. And now I want them back.

BERTHA

But, what for?

GRACE breathes in.

GRACE

I'm not going to say it twice.

BERTHA does not seem to be intimidated. She moves away from LYDIA and looks at TUTTLE.

BERTHA

Mr. Tuttle, why don't you tell the mistress what you discovered this morning...?

The old man takes a few seconds to react, as if he did not know what she was talking about.

TUTTLE

Oh, yes! Ma'am, do you remember the graves you were looking for? Well, I found them.

GRACE

I don't want to see any graves!

BERTHA

You ought to see them, madam. Then you'd see for yourself...*(the tone of her voice is more sinister than ever)*...that ghosts exist.

GRACE

Ghosts do not exist!

TUTTLE

(approaching GRACE)

Oh, yes, ma'am. I assure you they do...They exist all right.

GRACE steps back. For an instant, she seems intimidated by her servants.

GRACE

I know what you want. You want to frighten us. You want to get us out, me and my children. You want to take over this house. Ever since the day you arrived...

The servants do not say a word.

GRACE

Now, give me the keys and we'll see what it is you're hiding in that room.

BERTHA

Ma'am, you should try and calm dow...

GRACE

(pointing the rifle at her)

Give me the keys, you bitch!

After several tense seconds, BERTHA hands GRACE her key and LYDIA's.

GRACE

(still pointing the rifle at them)

And now, get out of here.

The servants turn and leave the house. GRACE locks the door behind them. Then she looks towards the top of the staircase...

She begins to climb slowly.

125.THE HOUSE. ATTIC STAIRCASE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE climbs the last flight of stairs until she reaches the door to the attic.

126.THE HOUSE. GARDEN - TREES. EXT./NIGHT.

BERTHA, TUTTLE and LYDIA are standing in front of the three gravestones.

BERTHA

(with a distant look, deliberate in her speech)

First she screams abuse at us, then she mistreats Lydia, she takes our keys away and to top it all she kicks us out into the bloody street. You know something, Mr. Tuttle...? I think I've run out of patience...what about you?

TUTTLE

Oh, yes, of course.

Pause.

BERTHA

(taking command)

We'll go in through the kitchen.

They turn and walk towards the house.

127.THE HOUSE. ATTIC. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE enters the tiny room, lighting her way with the oil lamp. It has a low, sloping ceiling.

There are two beds - or rather, camp beds -, a bedside table, a chair and a small cupboard.

GRACE places the lamp on the bedside table and begins to search frantically.

128.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

Someone knocks at the door.

ANNE

Who is it?

BERTHA

(off)

It's nanny. I've brought your dinner, children. Open the door.

ANNE

We can't. It's locked.

BERTHA

(off)

I know...but I also know that little Annie has got another key.

ANNE is astounded. Then she gives her brother an angry look.

NICHOLAS

(awkwardly)

I didn't tell her anything.

BERTHA

(off)

Come on, open up.

ANNE

Why don't you use your own key?

BERTHA

(off)

I've lost it. And if your mother finds out, she'll be really, really angry with me...So, let's make a bargain. You open the door, and I won't tell your mother that you've got another key.

129.THE HOUSE. ATTIC. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE has turned the room upside down.

Among the objects strewn over the floor, she sees something that looks familiar...

It is a rectangular piece of cardboard with a black X, like the one she saw in the photo album.

She takes the card and turns it over. It is a photograph...

130. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

ANNE and NICHOLAS stand motionless next to the door.

BERTHA

(off)

Come on, open the door, will you? Or your sausages will get cold.

NICHOLAS

(whispering enthusiastically)

Sausages!!

131. THE HOUSE. ATTIC. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE, stares in wide-eyed disbelief at the old photograph she is holding.

It is a portrait of BERTHA, LYDLA and Mr. TUTTLE. Their bodies have been positioned carefully on a sofa, creating a strange triangular composition.

All three have their eyes closed.

Printed at the bottom of the photo, we read:

December, 1891

GRACE

(stuttering)

D-d-dead...*(She sobs and raises a hand to her mouth).*
They're dead!!

132. THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT./NIGHT.

ANNE opens the bedroom door.

BERTHA, TUTTLE and LYDLA appear.

ANNE

Where's our dinner?

BERTHA

(sweetly)

Now, children, we're going for a little walk.

133.THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT/NIGHT.

GRACE walks wearily along the passage, holding the photo with shaking hands.

Something at the end of the passage makes her jump...

134.THE HOUSE. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. INT/NIGHT.

The door of the children's bedroom is open.

GRACE enters and looks frantically around: the children are not there...

She lifts her hands to her head, gasping in panic.

The children can be heard shouting in the garden.

135.THE HOUSE. STAIRCASE. INT/NIGHT.

GRACE, still holding the rifle, goes downstairs.

136.THE HOUSE. FAÇADE - GARDEN. EXT/NIGHT.

GRACE goes out of the house and looks towards the garden.

In the moonlight, we see the children, running, terrified, towards their mother. Behind them we can make out the three figures of the servants, walking slowly in a line, like three cowboys in a gunfight.

GRACE

Run! Run!

The children reach their mother, who pushes them into the house.

GRACE aims her rifle at the three figures.

GRACE

Don't come any closer! One more step and I'll shoot!

The servants keep walking.

GRACE does not hesitate a second longer and shoots.

The figures do not flinch.

BERTHA

(still walking towards her)

Don't trouble yourself, ma'am. Consumption finished us off...more than half a century ago.

GRACE continues shooting, until she runs out of cartridges.

She goes into the house.

137. THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRCASE. INT/NIGHT.

GRACE locks the door and backs up to the foot of the staircase, without letting go of the rifle.

The children, further behind her, are sitting on the stairs, clutching the banister. They are quaking and panting.

Silence.

Through the translucent glass of the front door, we see the silhouettes of the three servants.

The doorknob moves.

GRACE

Go away!

BERTHA

(off)

You must all leave the house, ma'am. It's for the best.

GRACE

What do you want?

ANNE

(in a faint voice)

Mummy, don't open the door, don't...

NICHOLAS

We've seen their graves.

GRACE

Go upstairs and hide... Go on!

NICHOLAS

(in a whining voice)

Mummy...

GRACE goes up to the boy and gives him a kiss and a hug.

GRACE

Don't sep...

ANNE suddenly rushes up to her mother and embraces her. GRACE responds with an awkward kiss on her cheek.

GRACE

Don't separate whatever you do.

The children nod. Then they run upstairs and disappear into the darkness.

BERTHA

(off)

We only want to speak with you.

GRACE

About what?

BERTHA

(off)

About the house...about...the new situation.

GRACE

What situation?

BERTHA

(off)

We must learn to live together...the living and the dead.

GRACE is seized by an attack of hysterical crying.

GRACE

My God... If you're dead, leave us in peace!

138.THE HOUSE. UPSTAIRS PASSAGE. INT./NIGHT.

ANNE and NICHOLAS run along the passage, desperately trying to open the doors on either side.

ANNE opens a door and signals to her brother.

ANNE

In here.

139.THE HOUSE. LOUNGE. INT./NIGHT.

The children enter a room in which we can just make out a round table and a cupboard. ANNE runs towards the cupboard and opens it.

ANNE

We'll be safe in here. Get inside.

140.THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRCASE. INT./NIGHT.

GRACE continues sitting at the foot of the staircase, pointing her rifle at the main door.

BERTHA

(off)

Supposing we do leave you in peace, ma'am...do you think they will?

GRACE

Who?

BERTHA

(off)

The intruders.

GRACE

(like a little girl)

No...no, no...there are no intruders...there are no intruders...

TUTTLE

(off)

It was they who took the curtains down, oh, yes, I assure you it was.

GRACE

There are no intruders...

TUTTLE

(off)

And now they're in there...with you and the children.

BERTHA

Waiting for you!

GRACE

Nooo!!!

BERTHA

(off)

Yees!! Listen to us and leave the house. Sooner or later they'll find you, and, believe me, that's not a comforting thought.

141. THE HOUSE. LOUNGE. INT. NIGHT.

ANNE and NICHOLAS are crouched opposite each other, inside the cupboard.

NICHOLAS is shaking like a jelly.

They speak in whispers.

ANNE

(determinedly)

We have to help mummy.

NICHOLAS

But...we c-can't do anything. Th-th-they're g-g-ghosts...

ANNE

I don't care. I'm not afraid of ghosts. Listen, wait for me here, I'll be back in a minute...

NICHOLAS

No, no, no...! Mummy said we shouldn't separate.

ANNE

I can't leave her on her own!

NICHOLAS is verging on hysteria. ANNE makes a gesture of annoyance and decides to stay with her brother.

Suddenly, the girl frowns, as if something were disturbing her. She looks intently at NICHOLAS.

ANNE

Stop breathing like that.

The boy is unable to control his panting.

ANNE

Nicholas, stop breathing like that.

NICHOLAS becomes even more nervous and his breathing even heavier.

ANNE

Stop breathing!

ANNE pounces on her brother and puts her hand over his mouth.

She holds her own breath, and looks towards the door.

A deep, cavernous breathing can be heard on the other side.

ANNE

(in a tiny voice)

Can't you hear it? There's someone there.

Silence.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

... Come to us, children... Come to us...

NICHOLAS is about to cry out, but his sister's hand over his mouth prevents him.

Someone suddenly opens the door. The children jump. NICHOLAS screams.

142. THE HOUSE. HALL - STAIRCASE. INT/NIGHT.

NICHOLAS's sudden scream makes GRACE turn abruptly towards the staircase.

GRACE

Nicholas...?

Noise of footsteps and chairs. The children do not answer.

GRACE

Anne...? Children, are you there...? Answer me!

BERTHA

(off)

The intruders must have found them. There's nothing we can do now.

TUTTLE

(off)

You'll have to go upstairs and talk to them.

GRACE drops the rifle and runs upstairs.

She pulls a rosary from her pocket and fingers it nervously.

GRACE

(in an almost inaudible whisper).

Oh, God, help me. Help me...

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come...

We begin to hear, very faintly, the voice of the old woman.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

Why are you afraid, children...? Why don't you want me to be your friend? Come on, speak to me, speak to me...

143. THE HOUSE. LOUNGE. INT/NIGHT.

GRACE enters the room in which all the intruders are gathered together.

NICHOLAS is crying, curled up in a corner.

ANNE is standing, beside the group, consisting of five people sitting at a round table: three men and two women. One of them (the Assistant) is placing sheets of paper next

to a tiny old lady (the same one we saw in the Communion cross), who speaks and scribbles on the paper, while her eyes roll blankly.

OLD WOMAN

Tell me..what happened?

NICHOLAS

(sobbing)

Don't tell her! Don't tell her!

ASSISTANT

(reading matter-of-factly)

"Don't tell her."

ANNE

(to her brother)

If I tell her, they'll leave us in peace.

NICHOLAS sees his mother and embraces her.

NICHOLAS

Mummy!

ASSISTANT

(reading)

"Mummy."

OLD WOMAN

Why are you crying, children? What happened in this house? What did your mother do to you?

ANNE looks guiltily at her mother, and then whispers something into the OLD WOMAN's ear.

ASSISTANT

(reading with difficulty)

Something about a pillow...

OLD WOMAN

Is that how she killed you? With a pillow?

ANNE looks at her mother with puzzlement, and then at the OLD WOMAN.

ANNE

She didn't kill us.

GRACE moves to the table.

OLD WOMAN

Children, if you're dead, why do you continue in this house?

ANNE

We're not dead!

GRACE

We're not dead!

OLD WOMAN

Why do you continue in this house?

ASSISTANT

(reading)

"We're not dead..."

GRACE and ANNE

We're not dead, we're not dead, we're not dead...!

NICHOLAS

We're not dead!

ASSISTANT

(reading)

"We're not dead, we're not dead..."

GRACE pushes the children back and grabs the sheets of paper, tearing them and throwing them into the air, while the spiritualists shout in fear.

Suddenly we see the same shot, with the same framing, but without GRACE and the children, in such a way that the sheets of paper seem to be being torn and thrown in the air of their own accord.

There follows a long silence. The OLD WOMAN seems to come out of her trance.

One of the three men (Mr. MARLISH), with long hair and a moustache, exactly as ANNE had drawn him, approaches the old lady.

MR. MARLISH

Mother, are you all right?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, just a bit dizzy. What happened?

MR. MARLISH

They made contact.

OLD WOMAN

All three?

ASSISTANT

Apparently, yes. The mother and the two children. Quite interesting, don't you think?

MRS. MARLISH

Interesting? I was scared stiff!

MR. MARLISH

Darling, calm down.

MRS. MARLISH

No. So far we've handled this matter your way. But now you listen to me. We can't stay in this house any longer. It's quite clear that these beings don't want us to live here.

MR. MARLISH

We hardly know anything about them yet.

MRS. MARLISH

Yes, we do. We know that the mother killed her two children and then shot herself. That's quite enough.

The group slowly disappears at the same time as GRACE and the children reappear, hugging each other in a corner of the room.

MRS. MARLISH

(off)

Think of our son.

MR. MARLISH

(off)

Our son is perfectly all right.

MRS. MARLISH

(off)

He is not! He has nightmares, he says he has seen that girl. And your mother has even been possessed by her. Please, let's get out of this house.

ASSISTANT

(off)

Before you make a decision, I beg you to consider the importance of this phenomenon. It's not every day one is able to make contact with a spirit...

MRS. MARLISH

(off)

Listen, I have no objection to your coming here and combing the house with your magnetophones and ectoplasm gauges...but not while we are inside.

MR. MARLISH

(off)

All right. We'll leave tomorrow morning.

MRS. MARLISH

(off)

Thank God for that. I'm going to look in on Victor.

We hear the noise of chairs and footsteps walking away.

GRACE continues hugging her children.

A long silence.

GRACE

I tried to wake you up... But you didn't move. I said to myself: It's happened... I've killed my own children. I put the rifle to my forehead and pressed the trigger... But nothing happened, and instead of the shot, I heard your laughter in the bedroom. *(With a bitter smile:)* You were playing with the pillows, as if nothing had happened. And I thanked the Lord over and over again for being so merciful with our lives, for giving us...another chance... But now, now I don't know what to think...*(sobs)*. Now I don't know what to think!

BERTHA

(off)

The girl said the very same thing.

GRACE and the children turn towards BERTHA, standing at the end of the passage.

BERTHA

Then she went dumb...forever. *(Pause. Recovering her servile tone:)* Ma'am, shall I have breakfast prepared?

GRACE and BERTHA look at each other without rancour. GRACE nods.

BERTHA

The intruders are leaving, but others will come. Sometimes we'll sense them and other times we won't. That's how it's always been.

BERTHA moves away.

NICHOLAS

(whispering)

Mummy...where's daddy?

Pause.

GRACE

I don't know...

ANNE

(whispering)

Mummy...if we're dead, where's Limbo?

GRACE hugs her children even tighter and cries.

GRACE

I don't know any longer if there even is a Limbo... I'm no wiser than you are now. But I do know that I love you. And that the house is ours. Repeat after me, children: the house is ours, the house is ours...

CHILDREN

The house is ours, the house is ours...

144.THE HOUSE. ROOMS. INT./DAWN.

A sequence of dissolving shots of various places in the house, receiving the light of dawn.

CHILDREN

(off)

The house is ours, the house is ours, the house is ours...

145.THE HOUSE. PASSAGE. INT./DAY.

GRACE and NICHOLAS continue hugging each other on the floor next to the door.

ANNE

(off)

Mummy...look.

We see ANNE, dancing next to a large window, bathed in sunlight.

ANNE

It doesn't hurt.

GRACE gives a bitter smile of resignation.

he stands, takes NICHOLAS by the hand, and moves to the window where...
ands. She puts a hand on the girl's shoulder.

GRACE

No one will throw us out of this house...while we're dead.

The camera pulls back from the window until the three figures melt into the darkness.

146.THE HOUSE. FAÇADE - GARDEN. EXT./DAY.

Near the main entrance there is a black 1945 Ford.

A boy comes out of the house, and helps the OLD LADY to get into the car.

MRS. MARLISH sits in the front.

The boy looks towards the house. MR. MARLISH rests a hand on his shoulder.

MR. MARLISH

Come on, Victor.

VICTOR and his father get into the car.

The car drives off down the main driveway.

147.THE HOUSE. GARDEN GATE. EXT./DAY.

The car drives towards the entrance gate.

A fat man in blue overalls is hanging something on one of the iron bars of the gate. He waves to the occupants of the car.

The car passes through the entrance and drives away up the road.

The man in the blue overalls closes the gate. We then see that what he has hung on the gate is a sign which says:

FOR SALE.

The End

September, 1998

Translation: Walter Leonard.