

BORN

An original screenplay

by David S. Goyer

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Over darkness we hear a YOUNG BOY WHISPER:

CHILD'S VOICE
Some people are doorways.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - PORTLAND, OREGON - DAY

FADE IN on a gray, drizzly morning. We are gliding behind a YOUNG WOMAN as she jogs down a leaf-strewn path. She has a lean, athletic body. We follow her for a good while.

CASEY (V.O.)
It starts with me running. My usual route. It's early, so the park is completely empty.

Presently, the woman slows to a stop, her shoulders rhythmically rising and falling as she breathes.

ANGLE ON THE WOMAN

Attractive, intense, with soulful brown eyes. This is CASEY BELL (19). Casey stares at an object on the ground -- a RED KNIT GLOVE. She picks it up. As she rises, she tenses --

CASEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Then I get the feeling that someone is watching me.

She slowly turns around --

A LITTLE BOY (9)

Stands in the path. He is pale, with haunted eyes, dressed in clothes a half-century out of date. On his left hand is the matching glove. We will come to know this boy as BARTO.

Casey stares at the boy, gripped by rising apprehension -- only now a DOG sits in the boy's place, resting on its haunches. A bull terrier. A papier-mâché mask of the boy's face is strapped to the dog's head with red ribbon.

The dog trots off into the nearby trees. Casey follows.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - WOODS - DAY

Casey pushes her way through branches and brambles, coming upon the discarded mask. The dog is nowhere to be found.

Casey reaches for the mask, but realizes that the end of the ribbon is buried in the soil. She digs with her fingers, unearthing a MASON JAR. Casey brushes dirt from it.

CLOSE ON THE JAR

A HUMAN EMBRYO rests within formaldehyde. About nine weeks into development. Suddenly, the embryo OPENS ITS EYES.

ROMY'S VOICE

That's disgusting. *

INT. NEILSON HOME - LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off and Casey is nestled on a couch, a cellphone in one hand, a fashion magazine open on her lap. A TV is on, the sound muted. *

CASEY

I know. So what does **the dream** mean? *

INT. **MARSHALL** HOUSE - ROMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT) *

ROMY MARSHALL (19), Casey's slightly neurotic best friend, leafs through a book on dream symbols. *

ROMY

That your vagina is completely disease-infested.

CASEY'S VOICE

Shut up. For real.

Romy sighs, reads from the page in question.

ROMY

"Babies are symbolic of change and renewal. If the baby is a stranger to you, it may represent something developing within yourself that is not yet ready to be born."

(beat, deadpan)

It doesn't say anything about babies in formaldehyde.

INT. NEILSON HOME - LIVINGROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Casey stretches out, slinking further down into the couch.

CASEY

What about dogs?

ROMY'S VOICE

It doesn't say anything about dogs
in formaldehyde either.

CASEY

Fuck you, Romy.

ROMY'S VOICE

Okay, okay --

(sighing, flipping pages)

"Depending on its actions, a dog
may represent the dreamer's natural
drives and instincts, whether they
be restrained or unleashed. In
mythology the dog was often seen as
the guardian of the afterlife, or a
messenger between the visible and
the hidden --" Then it just goes
on with more psycho-babble.

(beat)

Forget about it. So how were the
kids? Did you have to change
diapers and shit like that?

*

CASEY

(laughing)

No. The baby was down when I got
here. And the four year-old conked
out as soon as I read to him.

*

ROMY'S VOICE

Do you think they have a nanny-cam?

CASEY

Come on.

ROMY'S VOICE

I would if I had kids. There's no
way I'd trust them with some random
teenager.

(conspiratorially)

Do you think they have any porn in
their DVD collection?

CASEY

Like I really want to know what Mr.
Neilson beats off to.

ROMY'S VOICE

Well it's not Mrs. Neilson, that's
for sure.

(MORE)

ROMY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You know, Lisa was sitting for the Stapletons and she found, like full-on gay porn in their media closet.

Just then, a THUMP sounds from overhead. Casey looks towards the ceiling, suddenly alert.

CASEY

Hold on.

ANOTHER THUMP. Definitely coming from upstairs. Casey leans over the coffee table, reaching for a baby monitor. She turns up the volume, listening.

We slowly PUSH IN on the monitor. Through the HISSING STATIC a barely discernible WHISPER. Unintelligible, and then:

CHILD'S VOICE

Some people are doorways.

INT. NEILSON HOME - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Casey turns on a light, peering up the carpeted stairs to the landing above. She calls out.

CASEY

Matty? You up?

No answer. Casey starts up the stairs.

CASEY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Romy, hang on. I think one of the kids is awake.

INT. NEILSON HOME - UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

At the end of the hall, light shines out from the open nursery door. Casey approaches with mild trepidation.

CASEY

Matty?

CASEY'S POV

As she rounds the corner MATTY NEILSON (5) becomes framed in the doorway, clad in superhero pajamas. A chair has been pulled beside the crib. Matty stands on it, leaning over the crib rail, holding a small mirror. He pivots the mirror back and forth, reflecting light into the baby's face.

CASEY (CONT'D)
What are you doing, Matty?

Matty doesn't respond. He is intent upon his task.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Matty.

Again, no response. Casey steps forward, gently tugging at the boy's arm. He resists her. Then the baby begins to CRY and Casey renews her efforts.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Matty, stop that.

Suddenly, Matty twists around and SMASHES the mirror into Casey's face. The mirror SHATTERS and Casey staggers back, dropping her cell phone. She stares at Matty, stunned.

CASEY (CONT'D)
MATTY!!!

Matty glares back, emotionless, hands immobile at his sides.

MATTY
Jumby wants to be born now.

And just like that, whatever spell has taken hold of Matty seems to lift. He seems disoriented. Then he begins to WAIL. On the floor, Romy'S VOICE is heard from the fallen phone:

ROMY'S VOICE
Casey? What's going on there?

INT. NEILSON HOME - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Some time later, Casey stands opposite ROGER and GAIL NEILSON (30s), who have returned from their night on the town. Both are apologetic, agitated. Gail holds the baby in her arms.

Casey dabs at her left cheek with a Kleenex, having received what amounts to little more than a scratch.

GAIL
Are you sure you're alright?

CASEY
It's fine, it's nothing.

ROGER

I can't even imagine what got into him. He's never done anything like that before.

CASEY

I probably just startled him. Honestly, he was more upset than I was afterwards.

*

GAIL

All the same, I'd feel better if you had your eye checked out.

Embarrassed and anxious to put the whole thing past her, Casey edges towards the front door.

CASEY

I will. I promise.

EXT. NEILSON HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

It's quiet. Just the sound of WIND CHIMES coming from a neighbor's porch. Casey exits, the Neilsons trailing her out. Halfway down their driveway, she pauses and waves, then starts in a catty-corner direction across the street towards --

THE BELL HOME,

An upper middle-class Colonial Revival with an S-class black Mercedes parked in front.

As Casey approaches her house, she pauses. On the ground is a RED KNIT GLOVE. Casey freezes, eyes wide. She fearfully looks behind her -- but no one is there.

Casey looks back to the glove. She shakes her head, dismissing it as nothing. But as she continues onward, she gives the glove a wide berth.

INT. BELL HOME - ENTRY WAY/LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Casey enters, shedding her coat at the door, trying to shake the feeling of unease. We FOLLOW HER into the livingroom.

CASEY

Hey, Dad. Allison.

GORDON BELL (40s), is cuddling on the couch with his girlfriend, ALLISON THAYER (30s). They're watching a movie.

ALLISON
How was sitting, Casey?

CASEY
(not wanting to engage)
Fine.

Though they're cordial enough, we sense that Casey and Allison aren't particularly friendly.

GORDON
There's cheesecake from Ricardo's,
if you want it.

CASEY
Thanks, but I think I'm just going
to crash. Night, you guys.

Casey continues on her way.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey, now wearing a T-shirt and panties, stands at the sink. She opens the medicine cabinet, takes out her birth control pills, pops one from a blister pack and downs it.

As she closes the medicine cabinet, she inspects the scratch on her cheek in the mirror. It's minor. She turns off the bathroom light, exits.

A few steps into her darkened bedroom, she pauses. There's a TAPPING behind her, like someone rapping on a window pane.

Casey turns. It's coming from behind the cabinet mirror.

Casey opens the medicine cabinet. There's nothing inside but toiletries. She shuts it again, dismissing it as nothing. *

MOMENTS LATER,

Casey climbs in bed. She stares at the ceiling, then looks to a framed photo -- CASEY as a GIRL, laughing in the arms of a WOMAN (30s). Casey studies the photo, shuts her eyes.

ANGLE ON THE MEDICINE CABINET MIRROR

Slowly PUSH IN. The TAPPING is heard again, but slightly lower in volume now. FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BELL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

FADE IN as Casey hurriedly fixes breakfast. The TV is on, some inane morning show. Casey has a pan on the stove, some eggs ready nearby. She pours herself a glass of juice, chugs it down. Then she cracks one of the eggs open into the pan. As it SIZZLES, she reaches for a second egg, cracks it too --

AS THE EGG SPILLS OUT

Something squirms amidst the yolk. A creepy-crawly POTATO BUG, over an inch long. It's on its back, legs writhing.

Casey gags, dumping the pan's contents into a wastebasket. Thoroughly grossed out, she looks through the window above the sink -- at the Neilsons' house across the street.

ROMY (PRELAP)

And that was all the kid said?

EXT. GARRISON COMMUNITY COLLEGE - COMMONS - DAY

*

Casey sits at a table with her boyfriend, MARK HARDIGAN, who has his arm draped around her. He's tall, good-looking, thoughtful. The perfect boyfriend. Across from them are Romy and LISA SHEPHERD, another student. It's lunchtime.

CASEY

Yeah. "Jumby wants to be born now." And then he hit me.

LISA

That's creepy.

MARK

The kid's four. He probably didn't even know what he was doing.

ROMY

It's bad luck, you know.

CASEY

Breaking the mirror?

ROMY

Well, that. But what he was doing with it, too. Newborns aren't supposed to see their own reflections until they're at least a year old. It means they'll die soon.

MARK
According to who?

ROMY
It's just one of those
superstitions.

MARK
You're completely fucked in the
head.

ROMY
(defensive)
It's not like I believe it. It's
just one of those things.

MARK
Where do you get all this useless
information? It's amazing.

ROMY
I read, okay? You should try it
some time. They string all these
words together on a page and they
spell out a message. It's awesome.

Mark rolls his eyes, making a "retardo" face. Lisa,
meanwhile, has lost interest in the conversation and is
checking her text messages.

LISA
Hey, you guys want to go to St.
Andrews on Saturday night?
Brandon's **brother is DJing**. *

ROMY
I'd be up for that. *

Mark nods as well, but he's got his eye on Casey, who looks
preoccupied. She catches him watching her, smiles at him.
Just then, the SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

INT. SCIENCE **HALL** - DAY *

Casey sits near the back, a few **rows** away from Mark. She's
got a notebook open and is doing her best to pay attention. *

MR. SHIELDS (30s), cute and energetic by **professor** standards, *

paces before the chalkboard at the head of the class. He's
already written the day's subject on the board:

"THE GREAT IMPONDERABLES".

Now he's finishing a question beneath that.

"WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE TIME BEGAN?"

SHIELDS

As far as we know, the universe is roughly fifteen billion years old. So if the universe had a beginning, what happened before the beginning?

Shields scans the faces of his students. They're stumped.

Casey blinks, distracted. She rubs her left eye (the one Matty had hit) as if she had something in it.

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

Okay. Fair enough. People have been wracking their brains over that one for thousands of years. Einstein would tell us that there was no before, since time itself didn't exist yet.

Casey continues to feel discomfort. She's got an itch, so she scratches behind her ear, brushing her hair away.

CASEY'S POV

Her vision WARPS, the words on the blackboard blurring.

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

So here's another question -- how big is the universe?

Mr. Shields turns to the board, writing a second question:

"HOW BIG IS THE UNIVERSE?"

Casey shuts her eyes, massaging her temples. She opens them again. From her perspective, the new question now reads:

"JUMBY WANTS TO BE BORN NOW."

Casey looks at her notes, SEES that she's written the same statement repeatedly, covering virtually the entire page.

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

Does the universe go on forever? And if it doesn't go on forever, then what's beyond the edge?

A STUDENT raises his hand and Shields nods to him.

STUDENT

Nothing?

SHIELDS

Maybe yes, maybe no. Here's the catch. Since our universe was created, the light from the Big Bang has been steadily travelling outward. Now by definition, nothing's faster than light -- so we'd never be able to catch up to that boundary. Be even if we did, you could never go beyond it, because space itself bends. You'd wind up back where you started. It'd be like walking into a mirror.

*

Casey looks back to the board once more, SEES that the question has reverted to its original state. She feels another itch, brushes her hair away again. But when she brings her hand back in front of her face she SEES --

A POTATO BUG

Crawling across her hand, like the one in the egg yolk!

Casey SCREAMS, flinging the bug onto the floor. She STOMPS on it repeatedly. The others look at her, concerned.

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

Is everything alright, Casey?

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - WOMEN'S GYM - DAY

*

Casey is in the showers with a few OTHER GIRLS, clutching herself beneath the warm spray, tuning out the CHATTER.

MOMENTS LATER,

Casey stands at a sink, brushing out her hair. Romy is there too, wrapped in a towel, applying makeup.

ROMY

-- so then he texted me the day after we went out. "I miss you". But when I texted him back, he never replied. And that was like two days ago. What do you think's up with that? Should I call him?

CASEY

He's probably seeing someone else too.

ROMY

So why bother saying he misses me, then?

CASEY

He probably texted both of you. He was seeing who would answer first. It was a booty text.

ROMY

Case --

Casey looks up, registering concern on Romy's face.

ROMY (CONT'D)

There's something wrong with your eye.

CASEY

What are you talking about?

ROMY

Go look.

Romy nods to the mirror. Casey looks.

CLOSE ON CASEY'S LEFT EYE

The eye Matty struck. A good portion of her brown iris has turned BRIGHT BLUE. Casey blinks and we --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OPHTHAMOLOGY EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

THE SAME EYE, the pupil constricting as light shines over it.

DR. CALDWELL (O.S.)

It's called heterochromia, meaning one iris is a different color than the other. Usually, it's congenital.

REVEAL Casey in an examination chair, her hands rigidly clasping the armrests. Mark sits beside her, while DR. CALDWELL (50s) inspects her eye with an ophthalmoscope.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Normally, it's the entire iris.
Sectoral or partial discolorations
like this are much more uncommon.

MARK
Is it dangerous?

DR. CALDWELL
Not in of itself. Sometimes it
occurs after blunt trauma. Blood
might pool in the anterior chamber
and you'll get iron deposits. On
very rare occasions it might be
indicative of a melanomatous tumor.
In order to rule that out I'll need
to take a few digital pictures.

Caldwell sets down the scope and reaches for another device.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)
This is a retinal camera. We put a
little topical gel on your cornea
and the imagining head rests
directly on top of that. It feels
a bit strange, but it's perfectly
safe. I'll put some anaesthetic
eye-drops in first.

CASEY
Okay.

Caldwell applies the eye-drops, then reaches to a tray where
a Q-tip rests in a dish of gel.

Casey grasps Mark's hand. Caldwell spreads apart the lids of
her left eye with his thumb and forefinger. With the other
hand, he gently applies the gel to the surface of her cornea.

DR. CALDWELL
Now you'll feel some mild pressure.
Try not to blink, alright?

Caldwell picks up the handheld camera and positions the
imaging head directly onto her eye. Mark winces, focusing
instead on a nearby LCD monitor where a real-time view of the
anterior segment of Casey's eye can be seen.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Okay. We're done.

Caldwell removes the camera and Casey blinks reflexively. Caldwell swivels his chair over to the LCD screen and uses a mouse to click through the captured images.

CASEY

See anything?

DR. CALDWELL

(shaking his head)

Not really. No evidence of any hemorrhaging or lesions.

(turning back)

I admit I'm stumped. I'd like to run a blood panel, just to be safe. I'm also going to recommend an MRI of the surrounding orbital cavity.

INT. MARK'S CAR - DAY

Mark drives while Casey lounges in the passenger seat, her head propped against the window. She's watching the passing landscape, wearing a pair of those dark, disposable sunglasses that are given to eye patients post-examination.

CASEY'S POV (THROUGH THE WINDOW)

Her vision is blurry, with halation obscuring any bright highlights. Up ahead, a MAN is walking a bull terrier along the road. As we pass by, the dog looks up at the car -- it's wearing the papier-mâché mask from Casey's dream.

Casey does a double-take. She removes her sunglasses, starts rubbing her eyes.

CASEY

Jesus.

*

Mark glances over at her, concerned.

MARK

Does it hurt?

CASEY

No. The light's just a little bright because of the eye-drops.

*

Casey forces a smile and reaches for Mark's hand.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Thanks for driving me.

MARK

No problem.

CASEY

You want to stay over for a while?
My Dad won't be back from his
deposition until tomorrow morning.

MARK

So does that mean you're feeling
frisky?

CASEY

(shrugging)
Maybe.

MARK

Awesome, cause those glasses are
definitely giving me a boner.

*

Casey rolls her eyes, puts the dorky glasses back on.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey and Mark are just finishing having sex. Mark rolls
off, winded. Casey rests her head on his chest. They stay
that way for a while, lost in their own private thoughts.

MARK

It really screws with your head.

CASEY

What?

MARK

The whole idea that the universe
doesn't have an end.

CASEY

That's what you were thinking about
just now?

*

Mark props himself up on an elbow.

MARK

When I was a kid, there was this
picture book on myths that I used
to check out from the library. And
there was this one entry about how
the American Indians believed that
the whole world rested on the back
of a giant turtle.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

And I guess someone asked this
Indian chief, "well what's
underneath the turtle?" And the
chief shot back that it was turtles
all the way down.

*

*

Casey smiles at this.

MARK (CONT'D)

And that's what the picture showed -
- the world on this huge turtle,
then another turtle beneath that
one, and so on. All these turtles
dwindling away into the distance.

*

Mark pauses, finding himself oddly haunted by the memory.

MARK (CONT'D)

And for some reason, that picture
always upset me. I couldn't wrap
my head around there being these
turtles going on forever. I'd try
to imagine what it would feel like
if you fell off and were falling
past them. Knowing that you'd
never land. That you'd just keep
falling forever.

*

*

*

*

*

CASEY

I still get that way when I think
about dying.

MARK

You don't think there's an
afterlife?

After a long beat, Casey answers:

CASEY

No.

MARK

Why?

Casey turns around now, searching Mark's eyes with her own.

CASEY

Because I don't feel her anywhere.

Mark looks to the nearby photo of Casey and her Mom, then
pulls her closer, as much for his own comfort as hers.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I remember the last time I saw her.
We went to the hospital. She was
just sitting there in her room,
staring into the corner. It was
like she was already gone.

MARK

Did she say anything to you?

CASEY

Yeah. She said she'd found out who
her mother was.

MARK

What do you mean?

CASEY

Well, she was adopted. And she
never knew who her birth mother
was. So I guess she found out or
something.

MARK

So who was it?

CASEY

She never said. The next day she
was dead.

(beat)

They say it takes a really long
time when you hang yourself, that
sometimes people have second
thoughts, but then they can't do
anything about it.

(shaking her head)

I used to hate her for leaving us.

Mark nods. What can he possibly say? Then he notices the
time on the bedside table clock -- 11:11.

MARK

Hey, four sticks.

CASEY

Hmmm?

MARK

(re: clock)

11:11. Close your eyes and make a
wish.

Casey shuts her eyes, thinks. The clock changes to 11:12.

MARK (CONT'D)

Okay, good. You got that one.

Casey opens her eyes and smiles. Then she sits up, gives Mark a kiss, reaches for a robe at the foot of the bed.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Casey sits on the toilet, finishing a pee. She flushes, stands, opens the medicine cabinet and takes out her birth control pills. She closes the cabinet.

CLOSE ON CASEY'S REFLECTION

The patch of discoloration in the afflicted iris is growing.

Disturbed, Casey flips off the light and exits --

-- but only gets a few steps before she stops. She hears that TAPPING again, coming from within the medicine cabinet.

Casey opens the cabinet. As before, nothing is amiss. Just a bunch of toiletries inside. Casey removes a couple of the larger items, checking behind them, but there's hardly room to conceal anything hidden. *

Feeling foolish, Casey returns the items and shuts the cabinet. But even as she steps away, the TAPPING resumes.

Casey stares at the cabinet. It's not her imagination. The sound is definitely coming from behind the mirror. Summoning her strength, Casey flings open the cabinet --

A HOWLING FACE STARES BACK AT HER

The little boy from her nightmare! He reaches out, his entire body having been somehow wedged into the tiny confines of the cabinet. Casey SCREAMS, throwing herself backwards.

Mark is there in an instant, having pulled on his boxers.

MARK

What, what --?!

Casey points to the partially closed medicine cabinet --

CASEY

Inside -- inside it!!!

Mark cautiously swings the cabinet open -- but the boy is gone. Mark steps aside, offering Casey a clear view.

MARK

I don't see anything. Was it a spider or something?

Casey stands, drawing closer. Everything in the cabinet is as it was before. Her brow furrows.

INT. BELL HOME - ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

Mark, now fully dressed, is at the front door. Casey, still in her robe, is seeing him out.

MARK

You sure you're okay? Because I can stay.

*

CASEY

It's fine, honestly. I just need some sleep.

MARK

Okay. But if you get freaked out, you call me, alright? Any time.

Casey nods. They kiss and Mark exits. After Casey shuts the front door, she leans against it, collecting herself. Then she looks upward, at the stairs leading to the second floor.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Moments later, we find Casey with a screwdriver, removing the bottom hinge of the cabinet mirror. Having freed the mirror, she sets it on the floor in the corner, face down.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey climbs in bed, pulling the covers up. She stares at the ceiling, glances over at the photograph of her mother.

A MEMORY FLASH

CASEY (8) in the doorway of a hospital room with her father. JANET BELL (30s) sits at a table in a hospital gown, doped up on drugs, staring into the void.

BACK TO CASEY IN THE PRESENT

As she turns away from the photo and shuts her eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BELL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

FADE IN on Casey finishing a cup of juice. She's in her running clothes. She sets the empty cup in the sink, then reaches for her iPod Shuffle. She inserts the ear buds and heads out the door.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

A gray, drizzly morning. Much like the one in Casey's dream. Casey runs the same route, lost in her music. As she rounds the bend where she had seen the glove and the boy, she slows. But there is no glove and there is no boy.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Exhausted from her run, Casey walks back home. We hear WIND CHIMES coming from a neighbor's front porch.

ACROSS THE STREET

TWO POLICE CARS are parked in front of the Neilsons' house, along with a white COUNTY CORONER van. TWO OFFICERS linger by the cars. A number of NEIGHBORS have gathered as well.

Casey turns to MRS. BYRNE, an elderly neighbor who'd been walking her dog.

CASEY

Mrs. Byrne -- what's going on?

MRS. BYRNE

It's the baby. She wasn't breathing.

Just then, a CORONER INVESTIGATOR and a FORENSIC ASSISTANT exit the house, maneuvering a wheeled gurney onto the walkway. A TINY FIGURE covered by a sheet has been belted to a backboard. Gail Neilson rushes alongside it, sobbing.

GAIL

No, no, please don't take her!
Please, please, she's not dead!!!

Roger, Gail's grief-stricken husband, pries her away.

ON CASEY,

shaken. Then she catches sight of Matty in the Neilson's upstairs window. He makes eye-contact with Casey. As if the two of them shared some hidden knowledge. Casey edges away.

DR. CALDWELL (PRELAP)
 We've gotten your lab results back
 and everything's fine.

INT. OPHTHAMOLOGY EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Casey is back in Dr. Caldwell's office. He's got the results from her MRI up on a light box and is pointing at it.

DR. CALDWELL
 As you can see, there's no evidence
 of a tumor or any other kind of
 pathology. So we can rule out
 retinoblastoma.
 (beat)
 But there was one oddity --

Dr. Caldwell reaches for a clipboard with various test results. He studies them a beat, then looks up at Casey.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)
 Are you a twin by any chance, Ms.
 Bell?

CASEY
 No. I'm an only child. *

DR. CALDWELL
 Hmmmm. Are you familiar with the
 term genetic mosaicism?

CASEY
 Uh, no.

DR. CALDWELL
 It's a medical condition in which an
 individual has two or more
 genetically-distinct cell
 populations. For instance, a person
 might have more than one blood type,
 which happens to be the case with
 you. You're predominantly type-A,
 but then you've got a little B as
 well.

CASEY
 How is that possible?

DR. CALDWELL

Well, occasionally, when you're dealing with twins, the placentas can become fused and a certain amount of blood will be exchanged back and forth. If you did have a twin, I suppose the emerging pigmentation in your affected iris could be a result of that foreign genetic strand.

(beat)

I don't think it's anything you need to worry about. But you may want to see a genetic counselor, just to be on the safe side.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gordon is in the midst of a heated deposition for a divorce case. Sitting with him are the WIFE, her HUSBAND, his ATTORNEY, and a COURT REPORTER. The wife is upset, while the husband projects an air of hostile detachment.

GORDON

Now Ms. Beckett, as difficult as this may be, I need you to recount for us how you came upon your husband and the woman in question.

*

WIFE

I was on **his** computer, looking for a recipe online -- and I happened to check the history menu on the web navigator. There was a page for this bed and breakfast --

*

Someone KNOCKS. Gordon looks up, SEES his SECRETARY in the doorway. He shakes his head, trying to will her to leave.

SECRETARY

Sir, I'm sorry --

(approaching, sotto)

Your daughter's here. She's quite upset.

*

INT. LAW FIRM - GORDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Gordon enters his well-appointed office, SEES Casey standing by the window, defensively hugging her arms.

CASEY
I got my test results back.

Gordon stops short, concerned.

CASEY (CONT'D)
It's okay. I'm basically fine.

GORDON
Basically?

CASEY
Am I a twin, Dad?

GORDON
What does that have to --?

CASEY
It's a simple yes or no question.
Am I a twin?

Casey's stern gaze gives Gordon pause. He back-tracks, shuts his office door.

GORDON
Yes. You had --
(correcting himself)
-- you would have had a brother.
He died while the two of you were
still in utero.

Upon hearing this, Casey's agitated demeanor deflates.

CASEY
How?

GORDON
Casey, it was a long time ago --

CASEY
Dad, I need to know.

GORDON
(sighing)
It was a freak thing. The
placentas became fused. It's not
supposed to happen with fraternal
twins.

CASEY
And that caused him to die?

Gordon looks pained. He really doesn't want to elaborate.

GORDON
One of the umbilicals got twisted
around his throat.

Instinctively, Casey knows what's about to come next.

CASEY
My cord?

Gordon nods. Casey blinks, trying to process it.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Why didn't you ever tell me about
this?

GORDON
You have to understand -- it was a
difficult period for your mother
and I. And then, with everything
that happened afterward --

He hates having to dredge all this up again.

GORDON (CONT'D)
By the time you were old enough to
understand, it just didn't seem
relevant anymore.

CASEY
Is that why Mom killed herself?

Gordon is horrified at the suggestion.

GORDON
Your mother was clinically
depressed, Case.

CASEY
And losing one of her kids pushed
her over the edge. *

GORDON
No. See, this is exactly why I
never brought any of this up. Your
mother took her own life because
she was mentally ill. Period. Now
if you're looking to ascribe blame
you could point to me. Or her
parents. Or society for making her
feel inadequate. Or a million
other things.

(gentler)

(MORE)

GORDON (CONT'D)

Or you can just accept the fact that some people come into this world less equipped for life than others.

CASEY

Like my brother?

Gordon shakes his head, saddened.

GORDON

He was never your brother, Case. It was too early in the pregnancy for that. **You have to understand --** we hadn't fully accepted the reality of either of you guys.

*
*

CASEY

Did he have a name?

*
*

GORDON

Neither of you did yet. We just had nicknames for you.

*
*
*

CASEY

What were they?

*
*

GORDON

(smiling at the memory)
You were Pongo.

*

Something is gnawing at Casey now.

CASEY

And what was his nickname?

*

GORDON

Jumby.

Casey blanches, ice water flooding her veins.

CUT TO:

INT. BELL HOME - ATTIC CLOSET - DAY

A light comes on, illuminating a dusty shelf. We SEE personal effects labeled "JANET'S THINGS", PHOTO ALBUMS. REVEAL Casey removing the photo albums from the shelf.

Casey sits on the floor of the attic, paging through the albums by flashlight, occasionally using a magnifying glass to get a closer view. Some of the photos make her smile.

THE FIRST ALBUM

We SEE family vacations, childhood birthdays, school portraits of Casey. Beneath each photo is a dated caption, penned in Janet's meticulous print. Because the albums are arranged chronologically, we are moving backwards in time.

THE SECOND ALBUM

Baby photos of Casey, alongside her proud and happy parents. We SEE Casey as a toddler, an infant, a newborn. Then Janet is pregnant, carrying the yet-to-be-born Casey.

Casey reaches a page where one photo is conspicuously absent. The date is there: "11-6-89", but the photo is gone. Casey flips through the rest of the pages, but it's nowhere.

Casey returns to the closet, sweeping the flashlight around. And there, tucked near the back, is a CARDBOARD FOLIO. Casey pulls it down. Inside is a Super 8 film reel along with a SINGLE PHOTO paper-clipped to an old newspaper story.

THE PHOTO

On the back is a date, which corresponds to the caption of the one missing from the album. The photo depicts Janet, mid-way through her pregnancy. To her left is a mirror.

Casey looks at the newspaper article entitled: "HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR REMEMBERS FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T". The article mentions an elderly woman named "SOFI KOZMA" and the name is underlined in pen. In the margins of the article is a phone number, again, penned in Janet's script.

Casey sets the article aside, picking up the photo again. She pays closer attention now, focusing on the mirror to Janet's left. SOMEONE'S REFLECTION can be seen in it. Casey picks up the magnifying glass, centering it on the reflection.

ENLARGED IMAGE

The haunted face of the boy from her nightmares stares back.

EXT. ELDON ESTATES RETIREMENT RESIDENCE - DAY

A flock of birds take wing, spreading out over a collection of brick buildings nestled within several wooded acres.

ROMY (PRELAP)

I can't believe I let you talk me
into coming here.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - LOUNGE/NURSES STATION - DAY

Casey and Romy make their way through a sparsely populated lounge. Romy looks around, unnerved. A few RESIDENTS play cards. Most simply sit by themselves.

CASEY

Look, clearly my Mom thought this woman was important. Why else would she have kept that article? Why would it be with that creepy photo?

ROMY

The kid from your dream.

CASEY

Yes.

ROMY

I don't know, Case. If this were me, I'd just take a Xanax and call it a day.

*

CASEY

So wait in the car.

ROMY

Oh no. No. This is gonna be way too bizarro for me to miss out on. Plus, I love the smell in here. It's like baby aspirin, mixed with old people's shit.

As they reach the nurses' station, they pass an "IN LOVING MEMORY..." obituary board with photos of the recently deceased. Nearby, a lineup of SENESCENT PATIENTS await their medication. Casey approaches the CHARGE NURSE.

CASEY

Hi. We're here to see Sofi Kozma?

CHARGE NURSE

She's on Floor Three. Room 307.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Casey and Romy make their way down a corridor incongruously decorated with scenes of an English fox hunt, glimpsing a variety of grim vignettes within the rooms they pass:

-- PATIENTS comatose on their beds, wearing thin blue nose catheters attached to oxygen tanks.

-- PATIENTS leaning on walkers, backs bent by osteoporosis.

-- PATIENTS aimlessly wandering the halls, demented and lost within their fortress of memories.

Near the end of the hall a slack-jawed man, ELI WALKER, sits in a wheelchair, his wrists bound to the armrests. The edges of a diaper can be seen peeking out from his sweat pants.

ROMY

(a horrified whisper)

That guy was wearing a diaper. How
messed up is that? Jesus, I don't
want to grow old.

*
*

SOFI (O.S.)

No one does.

SOFI KOZMA (70s), leans on a cane in the doorway of her room. She has fleecy white hair, a face quilted with wrinkles. But her eyes are clear, focused, and her outfit is well put together given her circumstances. She nods to the man in the wheelchair, speaking in a mild, Eastern European accent.

SOFI (CONT'D)

Mr. Walker suffered a stroke. And now he is paralyzed from the waist down. But I don't think he suffers much anymore. His mind is elsewhere.

She sighs, a mixture of empathy and resigned fatalism.

SOFI (CONT'D)

One of you is the young woman I spoke to?

CASEY

That was me, Casey Bell. This is my friend Romy.

SOFI

Please, come in.

Sofi steps aside, inviting them to enter.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - SOFI'S ROOM - DAY

Sofi's room is modest, a few personal decorations helping to offset the institutional furnishings. A mezuzah has been affixed to the entryway. By the window are a number of tiny bells, hanging from a series of red strings.

Sofi settles into a chair, gesturing for Casey and Romy to do the same. Sofi grasps a SILVER CHARM -- a two-thumbed downward-pointing hand contained within a Star of David and surrounded by six eyes. Known as a "HAND OF MIRIAM".

Romy glances around, trying to be cheerful.

ROMY

It's homey in here.

SOFI

It's tolerable. I've certainly endured worse.

Casey notices a rectangular portion of wallpaper not as sun-faded as the rest. There are screw holes in the four corners of the area, as if something hanging had been removed.

CASEY

What was over there?

SOFI

Oh, there used to be a mirror. I had it removed.

Casey suppresses a shiver at this, riled by the coincidence. Sofi studies Casey more carefully now, pointing to her face. *

SOFI (CONT'D)

Your eyes --

CASEY

Yeah, it's, um -- sort of a hereditary thing. *

Sofi nods, but she seems unsettled by Casey's appearance.

SOFI

Are you a twin, Ms. Bell?

The question gives Casey pause. She looks to Romy, who raises her eyebrows. That was weird.

CASEY

I was. I had a brother that died in childbirth. Why do you ask?

SOFI

I used to have a twin brother as well. I can sense it sometimes, in others. A certain kind of manner.

CASEY

Well, it's funny -- I just recently found out about my twin. And that's sort of what lead me here.

Casey takes the newspaper article and photo from her purse.

CASEY (CONT'D)

My mother's name was Janet Bell. She passed away a few years ago, but I found this in her things --

As Sofi takes the article, we glimpse a faded concentration camp number tattooed on the inside of her wrist.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Did you know my mother?

SOFI

No, I'm afraid not.

CASEY

She never tried to contact you? *

Sofi shakes her head. Casey hands her the photo. *

CASEY (CONT'D) *

This is her. Will you just look at that for a moment. Make sure you've never seen her? *

Sofi studies it. And we may notice that her hand is trembling. After a beat, she looks up again, apologetic. *

SOFI

I'm sorry, dear. *

Frustrated, Casey points to the mirror alongside her mother.

CASEY

What about the person here? In the reflection? Do you know who that is?

Upon registering the reflection, Sofi's face grows pale. She looks up at Casey with a mixture of fear and outrage.

SOFI

Get out.

CASEY

I'm sorry, what --?

Sofi thrusts the photo back at Casey as if it were poison.

SOFI

GET OUT!!! *Menjen innen!*

Casey backs away, shocked by Sofi's sudden transformation. Sofi rises, SCREAMING in a mixture of English and Hungarian.

SOFI (CONT'D)

How dare you? *Az Isten atkozzon
meg a sok rosszszasagodert! Go!
Leave now! Menjen! MENJEN!!!*

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Casey and Romy retreat into the hall even as OTHER RESIDENTS wander from their rooms. Some throw accusatory glances at the girls. A FRIEND (EVELYN 60S) appears, moving to Sofi's side, trying to console her. Sofi is SOBBING now. *

EXT. ELDON ESTATES RETIREMENT RESIDENCE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Casey and Romy are back at Casey's car. Romy paces, compulsively dragging on a lit cigarette.

ROMY

That was completely fucked up.

CASEY

How did she know I was a twin?

ROMY

A guess -- I don't know --
(wanting to just drop it)
Look, she's crazy. She's probably
got Alzheimer's. *

But Casey shakes her head, not willing to let it go.

CASEY

No, she knew something.

ROMY

Like what? Why your mother "killed herself"? Get real.

Casey reacts, surprised to find herself considering it.

CASEY

But what if she does know.

ROMY

She doesn't, Case. This whole thing is bullshit. You had some weird dreams and then this thing with your eye. Then you found out you would've had a brother -- and believe me, that alone would be plenty enough to send me into therapy. But that's all we're talking about here. Just a bunch of weird coincidences.

*

CASEY

What about the Neilsons' baby dying? And what Matty said?

(emphatic)

He said "Jumby", Romy. The nickname my parents used for my brother. Explain that.

Romy looks away. The truth is, these happenings frighten her and she's loathe to seriously consider the implications.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You're the superstitious one. Tell me there's not something really going on here. Because you know there is. I'm not crazy, Romy --

Casey's eyes start to well up as the stress and worry of the last few days begins to overtake her.

CASEY (CONT'D)

-- but ever since the night Matty freaked out, I feel like something's changed. I've been --
(scared to admit this)
-- seeing things.

ROMY

What kind of things?

CASEY

The boy from the photo. Other things --

(beat)

Do you believe in ghosts?

ROMY

You know I do.

CASEY

Do you think it's possible to be haunted by someone who was never even born?

The sound of a DOORBELL pre-laps from the next scene as --

INT. BELL HOME - ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

-- Casey opens her front door. Mark is standing outside, holding an old Super 8 Bolex film projector in his arms.

MARK

You owe me. These things are hard to find nowadays.

INT. BELL HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Casey sits with Mark as he sets up the projector before a blank basement wall.

MARK

Okay, give me the film --

Casey hands Mark the Super 8 reel she found with the article and photo. He fastens it to the forward film arm, then feeds the leading end of the film into the upper sprocket shoe.

MARK (CONT'D)

Alright. You sure you want to see what's on this?

(off Casey's nod)

Hit the lights, then.

As Casey kills the lights, Mark turns on the projector lamp.

SUPER 8 FILM FOOTAGE

Lots of film scratches. The footage is handheld. We are looking at the exterior of a collection of old, institutional buildings. A hospital, perhaps. Built nearly a hundred years ago. Then the footage FLARES and the image jumps to --

A CORRIDOR

Within the aforementioned hospital. Long, with windows lining either side that presumably look in on rooms flanking the corridor. The footage FLARES AGAIN and we jump to --

A WOODEN DOOR

At the end of the corridor. Wide and heavy-looking, with a large, tarnished brass knob. There is something ominous about this door.

Casey and Mark find themselves tensing up as they watch.

BACK TO THE FILM

For a great many seconds, nothing happens. Then, slowly, we notice the doorknob turning (as if someone were opening it from the other side). Then the film FLARES and the reel ends. Nothing but the harsh glare of the projector lamp now.

Mark turns off the projector. He and Casey sit for a beat, trying to make sense of what they've just seen.

MARK (CONT'D)

Does it mean anything to you?

Casey slowly nods.

CASEY

That was the psychiatric hospital
where my Mom died --

(shaken)

That door -- that's where the staff
found her. That's where she hung
herself.

INT. ST. ANDREW'S - NIGHT

Casey and Mark are tucked in the corner of a crowded nightclub housed in the basement of an old performance hall, trying to deaden their jangled nerves in alcohol.

CASEY

I feel like my Mom left all that
stuff for a reason. Like she was
trying to tell me something.

She stops herself, suddenly concerned by Mark's expression.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You think I'm nuts, don't you?

MARK

No.

CASEY

Come on, Mark. I'd think I was nuts if I heard all this. I mean, my Mom went crazy. What if that's hereditary too?

MARK

You're not crazy.

CASEY

But I'm seeing things.

Just then, Romy and Lisa Sheridan swoop in alongside of them.

ROMY

Hey, kids. Are we **drunk** yet? *

MARK

Trying.

(setting his empty aside)

I'm going to hit the bar for a re-fill. You guys want anything?

ROMY

Red Bull and vodka.

LISA

Me, too.

Casey shakes her head. Mark gives her a peck on the cheek and wades off into the crowd.

ROMY

How come I can't find a guy like that?

LISA

Cause you're too neurotic. It's like a perfume. Guys smell it on you. And besides, you only go for the freaks.

Elsewhere in the club, a DJ takes the stage and the MUSIC takes a darker, more aggressive turn. The house lights follow suit, dimming, becoming more stroboscopic.

Casey blinks, feeling woozy. As her friends continue, their words become muted, the music progressively taking over.

ROMY

But I want a normal guy.

LISA

Please. I fixed you up with Craig Fikse and you totally blew him off. You wouldn't even talk to him.

CASEY'S POV - THE CROWDED DANCE FLOOR

Her vision is warping again, becoming febrile. Faces melt and stretch, as if in a Francis Bacon painting.

ROMY

I can't help it. I'm shy. I get nervous.

Casey sways. She rubs her eyes, trying to clear them.

LISA

So maybe you're gay.

ROMY

I'm not gay.

LISA

You made out with Wendy Rockwood.

CASEY'S POV - THE DANCE FLOOR

We GLIMPSE dead-eyed Barto between the writhing bodies.

ROMY

It was a dare! We were both
totally high!

*

Lisa just shrugs, giving her an "I'm just saying" gesture.

ROMY (CONT'D)

I could never go down on another woman anyway.

Casey backs up, stumbling. Romy grabs her arm to steady her.

ROMY (CONT'D)

Case, you okay?

CASEY

Sorry, I'm just feeling sick --

Casey pushes away from them, plunging into the crowd.

INT. ST. ANDREW'S - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Casey rushes into the unoccupied bathroom -- it's old, with cracked tiling and water-damaged, graffiti-strewn walls, a gas radiator encrusted with paint. BUZZING overhead lights.

Casey turns on the tap, splashing water over her face. She grabs some paper towels. Then she inspects herself in the mirror. Her afflicted iris is almost completely blue now.

Casey vision warps. She's gripped by nausea and heads for --

THE NEAREST STALL

Casey kneels over the toilet, heaving up the contents of her stomach. The place is disgusting, but she doesn't have the wherewithal to care.

Casey finishes and flushes the toilet. Slumps back against the stall, tries to calm her spinning head. As her stomach settles down, she focuses on some graffiti in the stall: "IN THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND, THE ONE-EYED MAN IS KING".

There's a patch where the paint has bubbled and flaked away and a rust-hole has worn through the metal panel. Someone has drawn an eye around the rust-hole, with the iris placed where the negative space would be.

PUSH IN ON THE RUST-HOLE EYE

We hear NOISES coming from the neighboring stall. MUMBLINGS, MOANING. Then a FLUTTERING, like a bird trapped in a box.

Casey looks down at the gap between the bottom of the stall panel and the floor, SEES the shadow of someone moving there.

She looks back to the graffiti eye, the rust-hole. SOMETHING pokes through and wriggles about -- the tip of a tongue.

Casey stiffens. Then we hear the TOILET FLUSH -- but the water starts GURGLING, like the toilet is going to overflow.

A PUDDLE OF CLOUDY WATER

Seeps towards Casey, with tendrils of BLOOD swirling about it. SQUIRMING POTATO BUGS are awash in the widening puddle.

Casey BOLTS from her stall, flattening herself against the bathroom wall. In seconds the back-flow has increased to the extent that she won't be able to exit without crossing though the expanding puddle.

The lights above her briefly FLICKER OUT, plunging the bathroom into darkness. Then they flicker back on --

The back-flow keeps coming. MORE POTATO BUGS are spilling out from under the stall now. HUNDREDS OF THEM, legs squirming as they grope frenetically about.

Casey GAGS and the lights flicker out again. Having no other choice, Casey crosses through the bugs, which make sickening CRUNCHING and POPPING SOUNDS as they are crushed under foot.

She reaches the door and turns the handle. It's stuck. She tries it again, more desperate. It's still stuck. Casey loses it, starts frantically tugging on the door knob. Starts POUNDING on the door.

CASEY

Help! HELP ME!!! PLEASE!!!
SOMEBODY HELP ME!!!

The bathroom lights flicker. The tide of bugs and water and blood keeps coming. The creatures are everywhere, crawling up the walls, Casey's legs.

And now the stall in question begins to open as well, the metal door slowly CREAKING outward --

A FIGURE

Is rising up and out from the stall. Half-glimpsed in the stroboscopic light. Human-like, but not human. Covered from head to toe in the squirming bugs.

Casey SCREAMS as the lights suddenly come back on and --

THE BATHROOM DOOR BURSTS OPEN!

Mark, Romy, and Lisa are all standing there, concerned.

MARK

Case --?

Casey GASPS, looking around -- the bathroom is as it was before. No bugs. No blood. No nightmarish figure.

EXT. BELL HOME - NIGHT

Mark's SUV pulls up to the curb. Casey climbs from the passenger seat, then turns back to Mark, who now leans across the cab and lowers the window.

MARK

What did you see back there?

CASEY

Nothing. I just had too much to drink.

Mark nods, but he doesn't look too convinced.

MARK

You're scaring me, Case.

CASEY

I know.

(trying to lighten things)

You can send me back, if you want.

I'm sure the warranty's still good.

*

MARK

But I like damaged goods.

Casey smiles at this. Mark stares at her, not really knowing how to end the conversation. Casey glances at her watch.

CASEY

Hey. Four sticks.

MARK

Make a wish.

Mark smiles back at her. Then he puts his car in drive and heads off into the night.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey is getting ready for bed. Her laptop CHIMES. She moves over to it. There's an invitation to a video iChat from Romy69: "YOU ALIVE?"

Casey accepts. A view of Romy in her bedroom appears.

CASEY

I'm okay. Just a little wiggled.

(beat)

I saw him.

ROMY

Ghost boy?

Casey nods.

ROMY (CONT'D)

You should put a pair of scissors
under your pillow, with the points
open.

CASEY

Why?

ROMY

That's what my grandmother used to
do. It keeps evil spirits away.

Casey smiles at this.

CASEY

You're a freak, Romy.

ROMY

Isn't that why you love me?

CASEY

Good night.

Casey ends the iChat. After a moment's consideration, she
pulls open her desk drawer and finds a pair of scissors. She
opens them, places them beneath her pillow.

FADE OUT.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM - LATER

FADE IN as Casey stirs awake, unsure of what roused her.
Then she looks "upward" and her eyes widen with alarm. The
CAMERA ROTATES NOW, PULLING BACK TO REVEAL --

-- that Casey is stretched out on her bedroom ceiling. She's
defying gravity, pinned there like a balloon filled with
helium. "Upward" is actually downward. And below Casey is -- *

-- HERSELF, asleep in bed. *

BACK TO THE CEILING

as the "awake" Casey panics. She tries to get down, but
whatever force is keeping her there is holding her fast. Her
efforts are slow, as if she were struggling beneath tons of
water. Then Casey notices -- *

-- MOVEMENT beneath the covers draped over her sleeping self.
A CHILD'S HAND emerges from beneath the blanket. Slowly, the
hand pulls the blanket down, revealing that --

BARTO,

the boy from the nightmare, curled up next to sleeping Casey. *
 He slides his hand over her nightie, exposing her belly.
 Then he digs his fingernails into sleeping Casey's abdomen,
 tearing into her flesh. BLOOD swells up --

On the ceiling, awake Casey SCREAMS, but **we hear no sound.** *

Barto keeps digging, sinking his entire hand into sleeping Casey's abdomen. Then he drops his head, SHOVING IT DOWN into the widening wound. Almost as if he were trying to force himself into Casey's womb.

Awake Casey keeps SCREAMING and SCREAMING and --

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - LATER STILL

We hear a cellphone on VIBRATE. Casey wakes up, disoriented, * realizing that she was dreaming. Nevertheless, she convulsively throws off her bedclothes, checking to make sure that the nightmare boy is nowhere in sight. He's not.

Relieved, Casey turns her attention to her cellphone on the dresser, the call-indicator light is BLINKING.

Casey rises, checks the number on the phone display. She debates whether or not to answer it. Finally:

CASEY

Hello?

SOFI'S VOICE

I need to speak with you. Can you come to the retirement home?

CASEY

Sofi?

SOFI'S VOICE

I am sorry for what happened before. The photo gave me such a shock. I wasn't ready to face this again. But there are things you need to know. You must come.

Casey looks to the clock --

CASEY

It's after midnight.

SOFI'S VOICE

It doesn't matter. This can't wait. I lied about knowing your mother. She did come to see me. Just before she died --

*
*
*
*

Then something clicks for Casey as she realizes:

CASEY

You're the one she told me about. You're my grandmother.

*
*
*

SOFI'S VOICE

Yes. Please come. A door has been opened. And now your life is in danger.

*
*
*
*

INT. BELL HOME - UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Casey, fully dressed now, creeps down the hall, pausing at the partially open door of her father's bedroom to peer inside. Her father is sound asleep. Casey continues on.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A bird's eye view looking down at Casey's car as it winds along the lonely road. Isolated. The only car in sight.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - LOUNGE/NURSES STATION - NIGHT

Casey makes her way through the empty lounge. With the exception of the nurses' station, all is dark.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A moonlit corridor. Casey rounds a corner and is startled --

A CROUCHING SILHOUETTE

Framed against a window. But then we realize that it's just Mr. Walker. As before, he sits slumped in his wheelchair, wrists bound to the armrests, eyes vacant, head lolling.

SOFI (PRELAP)

You must understand -- this is very difficult for me. But in order for it to make sense, I must start at the beginning.

*
*
*

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

REVEAL Casey and Sofi, each nursing a cup of tea. They are in a large, high-ceilinged room. Beyond the dining room windows, tree limbs rustle, casting skeletal shadows.

Sofi clutches the silver charm, compulsively rubbing it as if it were a string of worry beads. As before, Casey holds the photograph of her mother. Sofi nods to it.

SOFI

The boy in the reflection -- this was the twin brother I spoke of. Barto. **Your great-uncle.** He died in 1944. When we were together in Auschwitz.

*
*

Sofi pauses, dreading what she's about to relate next.

SOFI (CONT'D)

My family was deported from Hungary. The journey took a week by cattle car. When the train arrived at Auschwitz there was a ramp leading down to where the guards would sort the new arrivals.

*
*
*

As Sofi continues, we begin to hear the DISTORTED SHOUTS and SOUNDS of that terrible experience. And then we are --

EXT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU - THE RAMP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

-- back in the past. Chaos. Slow-motion. CROWDS OF JEWS being herded from cattle cars. The hellish glow from the crematoria smokestacks permeates the soot-shrouded gloom.

Amidst the milling bodies we find SOFI (9) and her twin brother BARTO (9), hand in hand. Barto looks just as he did in Casey's nightmare, wearing a single red glove. The only difference is that his eyes are brown.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sofi briefly closes her eyes, trying to wall herself off from pain these memories evoke. She continues:

SOFI

I remember hearing the guards shout
"Zwillinge! Twins!"
(MORE)

SOFI (CONT'D)

We want twins!" My parents did not know if this was good or bad, to be a twin. My mother asked a guard, and he **said** it was good. And so Barto and I were separated from the others.

*
*

EXT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU - THE RAMP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Sofi and Barto are led by a GUARD towards a tall, impeccably dressed SS officer holding a riding crop -- JOSEPH MENGELE (30s). Upon seeing the twins, Mengele smiles.

SOFI'S VOICE

We were taken to see the doctor in charge -- Joseph Mengele. He was very handsome. Very polite. He gave us candies. I looked back at my mother. She nodded. We thought we'd been rescued.

*
*

Mengele leads the twins by the hand, off through the crowd.

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)

But I soon learned otherwise.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to Sofi and Casey.

SOFI

The twins were housed in **separate** barracks. Because we were 'valuable', we were given more food. We were special.
(with disdain)
Uncle Mengele's *children*.

*
*

INT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU - TWINS BARRACKS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Now we see THE CHILDREN -- twins of all ages, arranged alongside their counterparts, staring back at us from their bunks with sunken eyes and shattered spirits.

SOFI'S VOICE

Mengele believed **that twins** held the **keys** to the mysteries of genetics. And so he conducted experiments on us. Horrible experiments.

*
*

INT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU - MEDICAL LAB - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A series of nightmarish images, interspersed with darkness. *
We SEE Mengele in a lab coat, assisted by OTHER TECHNICIANS. *
Darkness.

We SEE young Sofi and Barto as they are forced to strip and stand naked before their tormentors. Both look frail and malnourished. Sofi hugs herself. Darkness.

SOFI'S VOICE
Every day would bring some new
horror.

We SEE various twins on examination tables, side by side, every detail of their anatomy being examined and measured. Sofi and Barto are among these. Darkness.

We SEE twins having blood drawn. Being irradiated. Darkness. *

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Among the doctor's obsessions was
eye color. By trial and error he
attempted to fabricate blue eyes
from brown.

We SEE Mengele injecting various blue chemicals and dyes directly into the eyes of his young test subjects. Darkness.

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
The injections were painful. Some
caused blindness.

Later, we SEE the same subjects, having now gone blind from the injections. Among these are Barto, who now stares back at us with strangely clouded BLUE EYES. Darkness.

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Some caused death.

Later still, the dead are neatly arranged under autopsy lights, ready for dissection. Barto is there. Darkness.

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Barto was one of the subjects that
died. *
*

A DOCTOR draws a sheet over Barto's face. Darkness.

SOFI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Two days later, he came back.

Slowly, Barto sits up, the sheet slipping from his face. The boy stares straight ahead, emotionless. His eyes are now preternaturally blue. Darkness.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sofi grows silent, studying the spiderweb of shadows being cast from the skeletal trees outside the windows.

SOFI

Except that it wasn't really Barto.
A doorway had been opened.
Something else was now inhabiting
his body.

CASEY

Something else?

SOFI

There is a belief amongst my people
that our souls wander when we
sleep. That is why we always say a
prayer upon waking. We give
thanks to God for reuniting our
souls with our bodies. And for
making sure that **nothing unwelcome**
has taken up residence during our
absence.

*
*
*

Casey can't help but flash upon her recent dream -- watching herself sleeping.

CASEY

Like what?

*

SOFI

Have you ever heard of a *dybbuk*?

Casey shakes her head.

SOFI (CONT'D)

It's the soul of a dead person that
has been barred from entering
heaven. A soul so tainted that it
has been denied even reincarnation.
So it endlessly wanders the
borderlands between the worlds,
trying to find a **new** body.

*
*

Sofi takes a sip of her tea, pacing herself.

SOFI (CONT'D)

In certain places, where great evil
has taken place, the borders
between the other world and ours
become weakened. I believe
Auschwitz was such a place.

(beat)

But in other cases, the borders
within people can become weakened
as well.

Sofi's words strike a chord within Casey.

CASEY

"Some people are doorways."

SOFI

(nodding)

Especially twins. For what is a
twin but another kind of mirror?
And mirrors have always been
doorways to the *yenne velt*. The
Other World.

Casey stares back at Sofi, chilled by what she's hearing.

CASEY

What happened to your brother?

Sofi looks down at the Hand of Miriam amulet she clasps.

SOFI

From the moment he came back, I
knew it wasn't Barto. A *dybbuk* had
crossed over and taken **his place**.

INT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU - TWINS BARRACKS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Barto *dybbuk* stands rigid in the corner of the barracks.
The other children keep clear of him, frightened.

SOFI'S VOICE

The other children knew it as well.
It was his manner, his eyes.
Everything about him was *wrong*.

Barto faces the window, staring out at the crematoriums.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

We see Barto's pale face framed in the glass, superimposed by the reflection of the red sky and flame-belching smokestacks, the piles of bodies waiting to be cremated. Darkness.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sofi suppresses a shudder at the memory.

SOFI

The children killed him. And in this way, the *dybbuk* was driven back to the borderlands. It's been trying to find its way out ever since.

*
*
*

CASEY

Why didn't you tell me this earlier?

*
*
*

SOFI

I was too frightened. For sixty-five years I've lived in fear. Dreading the day I would look upon those eyes again --

*
*
*

She shuts her own eyes, staunching an onslaught of tears. Then she opens them again, indicating Casey's blue eye.

SOFI (CONT'D)

-- but when I saw you yesterday, I knew the *creature* had returned.

*
*

Sofi reaches for Casey's hand now, her eyes beseeching. As if she were seeking some kind of forgiveness.

*

SOFI (CONT'D)

Our family is *cursed*, Casey. That's why I gave your mother up for adoption. I hoped the *dybbuk* wouldn't find her. But it did.

*
*
*
*
*

Casey reacts with shock to this admission.

SOFI (CONT'D)

And so she sought me out.

*
*

She takes a breath, her voice beginning to quaver.

SOFI (CONT'D)

This thing, this entity -- it had
tried to take hold of your brother.
And when it couldn't have him, it
turned its gaze to the other child.

*
*
*
*

CASEY

(realizing)

Me.

*
*
*

SOFI

Your mother's suicide. She tried to
trap the dybbuk in herself, rather
than letting it take over you.

*
*
*
*

CASEY

But it's still coming, isn't it?

*

SOFI

You took its place. By living, you
denied it entry into our world.

*

CASEY

But I wasn't even born yet. How it
can it blame me for that?

SOFI

You cannot ascribe human
motivations to it, Ms. Bell. You
could no more reason with it than
you could with a shark. Or a
stone. It is *kívülálló*, an
outsider. Not of this universe.

CASEY

Why now? Why didn't this start
happening before?

*
*
*

SOFI

It takes time to find its way back
from the other side. Decades. And
when it arrives here, it's weak.

*
*
*
*

Casey doesn't want to believe what she's hearing.

SOFI (CONT'D)

It enters our world in stages.
Testing. Making forays. Like a
moth beating against glass, trying
to reach the light. Perhaps you've
witnessed such an attempt?

*
*

MEMORY FLASH

Matty Neilson leaning over the crib with the mirror.

SOFI (CONT'D)

Always, it inhabits the helpless creatures first, from insect to animal, slowly working its way up the ladder of life-forms. Feeding off them. Gaining strength.

*
*
*
*

MEMORY FLASH

Casey cracking open the egg, the potato bug squirming within.

MEMORY FLASH

Casey being driven home from the eye doctor's by Mark, SEEING the bull terrier trotting alongside the road.

SOFI (CONT'D)

But a living, breathing adult twin is what it most desires. And when it finds such a twin, it cleaves to them, attempting to permanently house itself within their form.

*

CASEY

And the twin? What happens to them?

SOFI

They cease to exist. They become dybbuk, just like Barto did. Their souls are cast into the borderland and the cycle begins anew.

*
*

CASEY

How do I stop it?

SOFI

It's already started, my dear. Your eyes are a clear indication of its presence.

*

CASEY

But there must be something I can do.

Sofi places the Hand of Miriam in Casey's palm.

SOFI
Take this. It's called a Hand of
Miriam. It protects against the Evil
Eye. It is a small thing, but --

CASEY
What?

SOFI
Stay away from mirrors.

A MEMORY FLASH

Casey's previous visit with Sofi -- taking note of the blank
area on the wallpaper where her mirror used to be.

SOFI (CONT'D)
If you have any in your home, you
must destroy them.

INT. BELL HOME - VARIOUS - DUSK

As Sofi speaks, we SEE Casey performing the tasks as
dictated, using a crowbar to SMASH every mirror she can find:

-- the medicine cabinet mirror in her father's bathroom.

-- the standing mirror in his bedroom.

-- the mirror above the livingroom mantle.

We SEE her sweeping the shattered fragments into a dustpan.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to Sofi and Casey.

SOFI
Burn the pieces of broken mirror.

INT. BELL HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Now Casey is crouching before the fireplace, dumping mirror
fragments into the already powerfully burning blaze. The
mirror fragments blacken, begin to melt.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to Sofi and Casey.

SOFI
Bury what remains.

EXT. BELL HOME - BACK YARD - DUSK

Casey dumps a dustpan of charred mirror remains into a hole she has dug. She follows that with another. And another.

Casey piles earth atop the fragments, using the back of a shovel to finally tamp the earth down.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to Sofi and Casey.

SOFI
There are signs that may betray its presence. Bells, wind chimes, these are signs that the spirit is near.

A MEMORY FLASH

Casey on her previous visit with Sofi, taking note of the tiny bells hanging from red string by the window of her room.

ANOTHER MEMORY FLASH

Casey walking home from her run, the neighbor's WIND CHIMES.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - DUSK

Casey affixes bells and red string above her window.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - DINING ROOM

Back to Sofi and Casey as we hear the WIND SIGHING, the steady CREAKING of the tree limbs.

SOFI
You must be vigilant, Ms. Bell. It will seek to isolate you, to weaken your resolve. **To tap into your fears.** It will gnaw away at your strength until you can no longer resist. For a worm can only penetrate into fruit that has already begun to rot.

*
*

CASEY
Can it be killed?

SOFI
Your mother asked the same
question. *

Sofi looks away from Casey, filled with fear and remorse.

SOFI (CONT'D) *

I told her about the *Sefer ha-*
Marot, the Book of Mirrors, which
includes the rites of exorcism.
(beat)
I told her that in order to destroy
the *dybbuk* for good, she would have
to cross over. Through a doorway.

CASEY
To where?

Sofi looks back at Casey now, pointed.

SOFI
To the *yenne velt*. The Other Side.

CUT TO:

INT. BELL HOME - BASEMENT - DUSK

CLOSE ON fingers threading Super-8 film into a Bolex
projector. REVEAL Casey as she turns on the projector lamp.

ON THE FILM FOOTAGE

Once again, we see the hospital, the corridor, the door --
solid and unyielding. Exuding menace.

Casey stares intently at the unfolding images, desperate to
divine more clues.

BACK TO THE FILM FOOTAGE

As before, nothing happens for a great many seconds. Then,
ever so slowly, we notice the doorknob slowly turning.

At this point, the images FLARES briefly and Casey shifts,
fully expecting the film to reel itself out --

-- but the film continues. Past where it had previously
ended. Casey tenses, her mind reeling --

FILM FOOTAGE

The door begins to swing open. In the slowly expanding gap beyond we see only darkness. Then briefly, though it's difficult to make out, we get a quick glimpse of a CHILD'S HAND slipping out from the opening!

CUT TO:

EXT. BELL HOME - DUSK

A Mini-Cooper cruises down the street. Romy is at the wheel, listening to the radio.

INT. ROMY'S COOPER - DUSK

Through the windshield, we SEE Casey's house. But **then** she senses MOVEMENT in her peripheral vision **and sees** --

*
*

MATTY,

The Neilson boy, racing down their driveway on his plastic Big Wheel. Right into the path of Romy's car!

Romy GASPS, stomping on the brakes. Immediately, she unbuckles her seatbelt and bolts from the car.

EXT. BELL HOME - DUSK

Romy rushes around the front of the car, terrified by what she'll discover --

ROMY

OhmyGodareyoualright?!!!

-- but Matty appears unharmed, the front bumper of the Cooper a mere inch from his body. He looks up at Romy, intense.

Romy kneels in front of the boy, still quite shaken.

ROMY (CONT'D)

Sweetie, what are you doing? I could've killed you.

Matty continues to stare at her. Creepy. Then:

MATTY

He doesn't want you to help her.

*

ROMY
What --?

MATTY
If you try to help her, he'll kill
you.

Romy rears back as if she'd been slapped.

ROMY
Fuck off, you little shit!

She stands, gets back in her Cooper. Then she backs away from Matty, veering around him and into the Bell's driveway.

MOMENTS LATER,

She's standing at the Bell's front door, KNOCKING. She looks back over her shoulder -- Matty is still watching her.

After an eternity, the front door opens. Casey stands there in the darkened foyer, looking strung out, wary.

ROMY (CONT'D)
Can I come in?

Casey nods and steps aside.

INT. BELL HOME - ENTRY WAY/LIVINGROOM - DUSK

As soon as Romy enters, Casey locks the front door again, dead-bolts it. Romy motions back towards the outside.

ROMY
I ran into Damien from across the
street. There's something
seriously wrong with that kid.

Casey nods, distracted, her face partially hidden in shadow. She's got the Hand of Miriam in her palm and she's compulsively running her fingers over it. Romy takes note of it, as well as Casey's bedraggled appearance. Then, as Casey shifts a bit more into the light, Romy SEES --

CASEY'S EYES

Both irises are completely blue now.

ROMY (CONT'D)
Your eyes --

CASEY

I know.

ROMY

What's going on, Case? You **haven't
been in class.** You haven't been
answering your phone --

*
*
*

Casey wanders into the livingroom. Romy follows. It's dark in here as well. Casey has pulled all the curtains. Romy notices that the mirror above the mantle has been broken.

ROMY (CONT'D)

What happened to the mirror?

*

CASEY

I broke it.

ROMY

Why?

In the background, we hear the GARAGE DOOR OPEN.

CASEY

Because Sofi told me to.
(making eye contact now)
It's real, Romy. Everything that's
been happening. It's real. It's
some kind of ghost or --
(struggling to define it)
-- or demon or something. It tried
to take over my brother. **That's**
why my mother went crazy. She knew
it wouldn't stop there. She knew
it would eventually come for me --

*
*

Casey thrusts the heels of her palms against her eyes, as if she could pressure them back to normalcy.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You need to stay away from me. It's
not safe to be around me anymore.

ROMY

I'm your best friend. I'm not just
going to abandon you.

In the nearby foyer we hear APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS.

GORDON (O.S.)

Case? What happened in the powder
room? The mirror's broken --

REVEAL Gordon entering the livingroom. He takes in Romy, Casey -- the mantle where the mirror used to hang.

GORDON (CONT'D)
What's going on here?

Romy puts her hand on Casey's shoulder, squeezes it.

ROMY
I'll call you.

Romy exits, leaving Casey to explain things to her father.

GORDON
What the hell was that? Did you guys have a fight or something?

Casey sighs, knowing there's no good way to explain it. The gulf between them is maddening.

CASEY
I can't really get into it right now.

GORDON
Well you're going to have to try.

CASEY
Dad, can you please just give me some space here? I know what this looks like. I know you think I've flipped. But I haven't. I just need some time to figure this out.

Casey moves to leave. Gordon follows her into the foyer.

GORDON
Figure what out, Case? Come on, you can't just shut me out like this. Whatever's going on, we need to get a handle on this.

Casey spins, points to her eyes.

CASEY
Look at my eyes, Dad. Do you really think this is something you can handle? It killed Mom, okay? And now it's coming for me.

*
*
*
*

Gordon stares at Casey, scared, confused.

GORDON
Casey, I don't under--

CASEY
I know you don't, Dad. So don't
even try. You can't fix this.
Nobody can.

*

Casey storms away, stomping up the stairs.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey rushes into her room, SLAMMING the door. She drops
onto her bed, burying her face in her hands. A gentle RAP is
heard at her door.

*

CASEY
Go away, Dad.

*

We hear the RAP again. Casey looks up, annoyed now. In the
thin space between the bottom of her door and the floor we
can just make out a SHADOW OF SOMEONE standing there.

Casey rises, walking to her door. She flings it open --

CASEY (CONT'D)
I said, GO AWAY!!!

-- but no one is standing in the hallway outside.

Beat. Then we hear the TINKLING of bells. Casey slowly
turns towards the window, regarding the BELLS strung there.

With mounting dread, Casey searches her room. She focuses on
her bed. Or rather, the darkened area beneath it. Casey
kneels, pulls her dust ruffle up --

Nothing is there. Casey stands, looks to her closet. She
opens it, turning on the light. Nothing.

Casey returns to the window where the bells are strung. She
unlocks it, raises the lower sash, poking her head outside.

CASEY'S POV - THE BACK YARD

The trees are swaying in the wind. And there, tucked amongst
the pooling shadows of the far corner of the yard is --

THE BULL TERRIER,

*

staring up at her. And then it's --

*

BARTO,

his pale face illuminated in the moonlight. He's there for just a heartbeat, then he's gone, receding into the darkness.

BACK TO CASEY,

Framed by her bedroom window. We pull away from her and the safety of the house. Back into the woods and darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. ELDON ESTATES - SOFI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sofi wakes with a start. She holds a hand over her heart, silencing her nerves as she WHISPERS an oft-recited prayer.

SOFI

I am thankful to You, Eternal King,
who has mercifully returned my soul
within me; your faithfulness is
great. Amen.

Sofi takes a beat. What was it that wakened her? Then she hears it -- the TINKLING OF BELLS. She looks to the window, SEES the tiny bells swaying on their red thread. *

Sofi reaches to her bedside lamp, but it won't turn on. She finds the nearby CALL BUTTON, depresses it once, twice. But no voice responds from the speaker inset in the wall.

Sofi rises, pulling a wrap over her nightgown. She finds a flashlight, her cane, then she ventures out into the hall.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The corridor is dark, empty. Even the red exit sign isn't on. Sofi works her way to a light switch, tries it. But like everything else, it too appears to be not working.

Sofi hears a CREAKING NOISE behind her. She looks back, SEES nothing. She heads for the stairwell and SEES a HUMAN SHAPE crouching in the stairwell, but it's just --

ELI WALKER,

Slouched in his wheelchair. Eyes vacant, a rope of spittle hanging from his chin.

Sofi descends, rests her hand lightly on Eli Walker's head.

SOFI

Did they forget to put you to bed,
Eli? Don't worry. Just wait here.
I'll alert the nursing staff.

Sofi descends to the next landing, trying the light switch there. But again, it appears to be inoperative. Just as Sofi is about to continue onward, we hear a THUD from the landing above. She shines her flashlight upward --

SOFI (CONT'D)

Eli --?

Eli's wheelchair is empty, having turned over on its side, its uppermost wheel slowly rotating.

Puzzled, Sofi directs the flashlight all around her -- but Eli is nowhere to be found. Then, sensing a presence behind her, she looks back down the stairs she just ascended --

ELI WALKER

Is there, dragging the rest of his broken body up the stairs!
His eyes are heterochromic, one brown iris and one blue. *

Sofi restrains a scream. And then something worse happens. *

Eli's wizened head begins to turn. And turn. And turn. We hear his NECK VERTEBRA CRACKING until his head is now nightmarishly upside-down! His mouth, where his eyes should be, is twisted into a rictus, making a horrible RASPING. *

On top of this, a strange kind of MOBILE BULGE, about the size of a walnut -- shifts beneath Walker's flesh. It works its way across his chest and up his neck, briefly causing his throat to balloon outward. Then it travels upward into his inverted head, through his nasal cavity, causing his forehead to protrude. The rasping, clicking SOUND seems to follow the progress of the bulge -- as if the spirit possessing Walker was actually localized within that tumour-like area. *

Walker's body moves unnaturally in herky-jerky lurches, his nervous system having been somehow rewired in a completely inhuman way. He claws at Sofi's robe with a skeletal hand. Sofi tears herself free, retreating up to the third floor.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sofi hobbles down the corridor as quickly as she can. She pauses mid-way, looking back --

SOFI'S POV

The stairwell. We HEAR Walker's shambling body first, accompanied by the hiccuping click and SPITTLE-RATTLE of his inhuman vocalizations.

Then Walker himself appears -- only he's now moving in a completely unnatural way, no longer simply dragging his lower body along, but partially employing it in a crab-like crawl. He is doubled-up, a bony leg contorted and hooked over his head, so that his face and one arm scrape along the floor.

Terrified, Sofi continues onward, heading for the opposite end of the corridor where an emergency stairway is located.

She reaches the door, pressing the push-bar which SHOULD sound a fire alarm, but no noise issues forth. Even worse, the door itself seems to be stuck. She can't force it open! Sofi looks back the way she came --

The Walker-thing keeps coming, closing the gap between them!

Sofi SOBS, repeatedly trying to force the push-bar. And just when we think she is completely trapped, the door opens --

INT. ELDON ESTATES - EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

-- spilling her into the narrow stairwell. She tumbles down the flight of stairs. In the fall she drops her flashlight, which continues bouncing down to the second floor landing.

Sofi clutches at her ankle, which has been painfully twisted. Worse, she managed to drop her cane. It's back up near the top of the stairs. Near the dybbuk. We hear a SHUDDER as it reaches the door, then HAMMERS itself repeatedly against it.

In agony, Sofi crawls across the floor, looking down at her flashlight. The beam is still on, illuminating a trapezoidal section of the lower landing.

Sofi grasps the handrail for support and hauls herself up, hobbling down the stairs step by excruciating step, trying to shut out the horrible HAMMERING SOUNDS from above.

After a harrowing stretch of seconds, she makes it to the second floor landing. But she's exhausted now. She picks up the flashlight. The beam illuminates a storage closet.

Sofi makes for it, praying that the closet door is unlocked. It is. She opens the door, trying to keep the CREAKING of the hinges down to a minimum.

WHAM! The door above flies open. The dybbuk is in the stairwell now!

INT. ELDON ESTATES - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Sofi shuts the closet door, tucking herself down amongst the cleaning supplies. She clasps the flashlight to her chest, clamping her hand over the lens so that just the tiniest amount of light leakage is now illuminating her face.

Outside, we HEAR the *dybbuk* approach. Then the sounds stop. Is it gone? Or is it waiting just beyond the closet door?

Sofi holds her breath -- and in the absence, we hear SOMEONE ELSE BREATHING now. Close, inches away. Sofi glances left --

-- Barto is just behind her, perched over her shoulder!

Sofi SCREAMS. The closet door is wrenched open. The Walker *dybbuk* is standing there, swaying on skeletal legs. Its mouth stretches open in a HOWL, wider than any human mouth should be able to open. Then it LUNGES at Sofi.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - EMERGENCY STAIRWELL/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We PULL AWAY from the closet, back up the stairs. Into the empty corridor as Sofi's SCREAMS echo out over deaf ears.

CUT TO:

GORDON (PRELAP)
Casey?

*
*

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Casey stirs awake. She's on her bed, still fully-clothed. She looks down -- in her open palm is the Hand of Miriam.

*

GORDON (O.S.)
Casey.

*
*

Casey looks, sees her father standing in the doorway, holding a cordless phone.

*
*

GORDON (CONT'D)
There's a woman on the phone. She says something happened to a friend of yours named Sofi --?

*
*
*
*

*

EXT. ELDON ESTATES RETIREMENT RESIDENCE - DAY

Casey pulls her car into the visitor lot, exits. As she heads towards the main entrance of the residence, she slows --

An AMBULANCE is parked outside the main entry way. Two police cruisers and a CSI van are there as well.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - LOUNGE

Casey enters. The lounge is crowded with RESIDENTS and STAFF, who are being questioned by POLICE. A few of the people are crying. A sinking feeling settles over Casey.

INT. ELDON ESTATES - THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Casey exits the elevator into a similarly crowded corridor. At the corridor's end, a full-blown CRIME SCENE has been set up, with a FORENSICS TEAM scouring the area for evidence.

Then Casey SEES a UNIFORMED POLICEMAN stepping out of Sofi's room with an evidence bag -- and Casey knows what's happened.

Emotional free-fall. Casey slowly turns back. At the end of the hall, near the stairwell, she SEES --

ELI WALKER

Once again, he's in his wheelchair, wrists velcroed to his armrests. But as Casey studies him he slowly lifts his head, making direct eye contact with her. His eyes are a bright, unnaturally blue color. And there is awareness in those eyes. Then that sub-dermal bulge briefly pulses into view, protruding his voice box outward. He bares his teeth at Casey.

EXT. ELDON ESTATES RETIREMENT RESIDENCE - DAY

As Casey heads back to her car in a daze:

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ms. Bell?

Casey looks up and SEES the elderly woman who had rushed to Sofi's aid. Call her Evelyn. She sits on a nearby bench beneath a tree. She makes her way over. In her hand is an envelope, which she now extends towards Casey.

EVELYN

It's Evelyn. I was the one who
called? Sofi wanted you to have
this. In case something happened.

*
*
*

Casey takes the envelope.

CASEY

Thank-you.

Evelyn nods and continues on her way. After a moment, Casey opens the envelope, taking out a handwritten letter. As Casey reads it, we HEAR Sofi's voice narrating:

SOFI'S VOICE

Casey. If you are reading this, then I am already dead. But you needn't mourn for me. In the Book of Proverbs it says: "Better the day of one's death than the day of his birth." We say this because when a person is born, no one knows what will become of him, which path his life will take. But when a person dies, his path is certain. He is going home, like a ship returning to its harbor.

(beat)

I was taught that when we are in the womb, our minds span the universe and we receive all the wisdom God has to offer. But at birth, an angel slaps us on the face and we forget all that we had learned. Life, then, is the journey to regain that knowledge. I have lived a great long while. And learned many things. So now my journey is complete.

(beat)

*But yours is just beginning. It has fallen upon you to finish what began in Auschwitz. Your mother tried to close the doorway, but it is still ajar and I fear the gap is steadily widening. You must find The Book of Mirrors. You must end this. *Your grandmother, Sofi.**

*

*

*

*

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY RESEARCH AREA - NIGHT

Casey sits at a study carrel, researching *dybbuks* via a computer terminal and a stack of reference books. As she makes notes on a pad, we glimpse various phrases and images she's sifting through, hearing the words in her own VOICE:

-- 15th century woodcuts of rabbis driving spirits out from people.

-- translations of classic Hebrew liturgical formulas.

CASEY

(reading)

*"I adjure you by the seal which
Solomon placed on the tongue of
Jeremiah".*

-- depictions of kabbalistic amulets like the HAND OF MIRIAM.

CASEY (CONT'D)

*"At the hour when the world
requires mercy --"*

*

-- accounts of exorcisms, snippets of phrases --

CASEY (CONT'D)

*"-- bind them to the souls of the
dead --"*

*

Faster and faster the images come, beginning to blur even as Casey's whispered voice overlaps itself.

Suddenly, we pause on one particularly horrific Medieval image of a demon's hand reaching out from a victim's distended mouth. Casey SLAMS the book in question shut.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

We see a search result page for the *Sefer ha-marot*/Book of Mirrors in the Library's Special Collections online catalog.

INT. LIBRARY - RARE BOOK READING ROOM - NIGHT

Deathly quiet. Sparsely populated by a few ardent researchers. A LIBRARIAN sets a box before Casey, places a pair of document gloves alongside the box.

The librarian lifts the cover from the box, revealing a leather-bound 17th century manuscript housed in a protective foam and cardboard cradle.

LIBRARIAN

Please exercise care when handling the manuscript. Do not remove it from its cradle, do not touch it with your bare hands. To turn a page, just lift the top outermost corner and slip your fingertips down the fore-edge, alright?

Casey nods.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

No pens or high-lighters are allowed. If you need to take notes, use the pencils and notepads we've provided.

CASEY

Thank-you.

As the librarian exits, Casey studies the book. The leather is ancient, embossed with gilt-stamped Hebraic script. She slips on the gloves and carefully opens the cover. The pages are written in arcane Hebrew, with parallel Spanish text presented in a double-column format.

Casey closes the manuscript. Clearly, the contents are of no immediate use to her. She looks over to --

-- a GUARD manning a desk by the reading room entrance, which is in turn secured by a walk-through metal detector. Casey rises, leaving the manuscript on the table.

INT. LIBRARY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Casey exits the reading room. Nearby is an emergency exit with a push-bar alarm. Casey waits for the hallway to clear of people, then shoves the bar, triggering the ALARM. Then she steps back beside the door leading to the reading room.

Moments later, the Guard steps out (Casey having been blocked from his view by the outward opening door). As the Guard investigates, Casey slips back into the reading room.

INT. LIBRARY - RARE BOOK READING ROOM - NIGHT

Casey returns to her previous workspace. Once again, she checks to see if anyone is watching her. But the other researchers are engrossed in their work. She lifts the book from its protective cradle.

Then she brazenly approaches the walk-through metal detector, passing the book from hand to hand around the outside of it.

INT. LIBRARY - MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

As Casey heads down the stairs towards the main doors, she slips the book within her coat. Then she hears:

SHIELDS (O.S.)

Casey!

Casey turns, SEES Mr. Shields, her professor, waving from the landing above. He descends, carrying an armful of books. *

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

I saw you upstairs. I was trying to get your attention.

CASEY

Sorry. I'm a little out of it.

Shields glances around, as if looking for someone.

SHIELDS

Was that your brother I saw?

CASEY

Brother?

SHIELDS

The little boy you were walking with.

CASEY

I wasn't with anyone.

SHIELDS

He was right beside you.

He raises his hand to about chest height.

SHIELDS (CONT'D)

About this high, blond hair, blue eyes --

Casey stiffens, realizes who Shields is describing. She looks around, doesn't see Barto in view. Then she spots --

THE GUARD

From the reading room, on the landing above. He's scanning the entry way, clearly looking for Casey.

CASEY

Sorry, but I have to go.

But even as Casey turns to exit down the last flight of steps to the outer doors, the Guard spots her.

GUARD

HEY!!!

Casey RUNS, KNOCKING another patron aside as she exits.

EXT. BETH EMETH REFORM TEMPLE - DAY

A modern building surrounded by trees. At one end is a fenced-in playground, filled with PRESCHOOLERS. REVEAL Casey outside the playground, clutching her backpack. *

INT. BETH EMETH TEMPLE - HALLWAY - DAY

Casey makes her way down a hall decorated with children's art. We hear CHILDREN SINGING, accompanied by a MUSIC TEACHER who is playing PIANO: "Sing A Song About A Rainbow". *

INT. RABBI - SENDAK'S OFFICE - DAY

An office crammed with books. RABBI SENDAK (50s), full bearded and avuncular, sits at his desk with a watch repair tool kit splayed out before him. At the moment, he's engrossed in a vintage Gruen, cleaning and oiling it via the aid of a jeweler's loupe attached to his glasses.

In the distant background, we can still hear the CHILDREN SINGING. Their voices will continue throughout this scene.

CASEY (O.S.)

Rabbi Sendak?

Sendak looks up from his desk, SEES Casey in his doorway.

SENDAK

Yes?

CASEY

My name is Casey Bell. I, um -- I was wondering if you could maybe give me some advice --?

She pauses, nervous, unsure how to begin. Sensing her anxiety, Sendak gestures for her to take a seat.

SENDAK

Please, have a seat.

Casey does so, her eyes wandering to the watch repair tools. Sendak smiles, setting aside his glasses and jeweler's loupe.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

Sorry, you caught me on break.

(re: tools)

It's a hobby of mine, repairing vintage watches. The mainspring on this Curvex is killing me right now.

(beat)

So how can I help you?

Casey reaches into her backpack, pulling out the stolen copy of *The Book of Mirrors*. She sets it on the desk before him.

CASEY

Can you read this?

Sendak takes the book, respectful of its age. He cracks open the leather cover, carefully leafing through the velum pages. *

SENDAK

Well, the left-hand text is Hebrew, so yes, I can. It's from the *kabbalah*.

(off her look)

Jewish mysticism. Where did you get this?

Casey frets, knowing this will be difficult.

CASEY

Look, I know this is going to sound crazy, believe me --

(diving in)

But I need an exorcism performed.

Sendak raises his eyebrows at this.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I'm being haunted by something. There was a person helping me, a Holocaust survivor -- she said the thing that was after me was a *dybbuk*.

Sendak takes a beat. He certainly wasn't expecting the conversation to take such a bizarre turn.

SENDAK

May I ask you a question? Are you Jewish, Ms. Bell?

Casey shakes her head.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

Do you belong to any other particular faith?

CASEY

I was raised Protestant, I guess. But it's not like my family ever went to church or anything.

*

SENDAK

So why come to a rabbi?

*

CASEY

Because my friend is dead now. And I don't know where else to turn.

Sendak sighs, sitting back. He tries to phrase the following as delicately as he can, for Casey is clearly distressed.

*

SENDAK

There's no such thing as a *dybbuk*, Ms. Bell. At least not outside the realms of folklore.

*

(elaborating further)

You have to understand, back in the Middle Ages, things like spirits and demons were really just a catch-all for conditions people weren't capable of properly diagnosing. There wasn't any concept of ailments like schizophrenia or epilepsy. Mental illness as we know it didn't exist back then.

CASEY

(defensive)

I'm not mentally ill. What's happening to me is real.

SENDAK

Even assuming it is, what you're asking is outside my realm of expertise. I've never performed an exorcism before. I don't even know anyone that has.

CASEY

(gesturing to the book)
But you could read the book. It
would tell you what to do.

SENDAK

And then what? For a religious
ceremony to be effective, the
person asking for help has to
actually believe in the spiritual
aid they're calling upon. And you
don't believe.

*
*
*
*

Sendak pauses, pained by Casey's obvious distress.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

Look, maybe I could do a little
research, make some calls --

*

Casey scribbles her phone number onto a piece of paper,
slides it across the desk.

CASEY

Here's my phone number, then.

She rises. Sendak nods to the Book of Mirrors.

SENDAK

What about your book?

CASEY

Can you translate it?

*

Sendak hesitates. Casey steps closer, tears welling up in
her eyes.

*

CASEY (CONT'D)

My life depends on this. You can
think I'm crazy, if you want. But
if I don't find out what these
words mean --
(indicating the book)
-- I'll die.

And with that, Casey leaves him.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Casey stands before her mother's grave. Then she kneels,
holding onto the headstone for support.

CASEY
 (quietly)
 I need help, Mom. I don't know
 what else to do.

MEMORY FLASH

Happier times. A young and vibrant Janet Bell playing with CASEY (3) in a park, laughing, their lives full of promise.

MEMORY FLASH

The psychiatric hospital. Casey at age eight, holding her father's hand as they enter the room where Janet is residing. Janet sits by the window, wearing a grimy hospital gown, dead inside. A far cry from the woman she used to be.

BACK TO THE CEMETERY

As Casey exits. She'll find no comfort here.

EXT. BELL HOME - DUSK

As Casey walks down the sidewalk, she slows. Her father's girlfriend, Allison, is sitting on the front porch. She looks up as Casey approaches, her face puffy from crying.

CASEY
 Allison --?

ALLISON
 It's your father, Casey --
 (off Casey's confusion)
 He's at the hospital.

*

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU WARD - NIGHT

Casey consults with a soft-spoken NEUROLOGIST (50s).

NEUROLOGIST
 Your father's had what we call an
 ischemic stroke. A blood clot has
 formed and blocked arterial access
 to part of his brain.

CASEY
 Will he be okay?

NEUROLOGIST

We won't know for a while. The good news is, we diagnosed it fairly early. We've already got him on a tPA regimen, which is a clot-busting drug that should reduce the risk of another incident. But as far as any long-term effects go, we'll just have to monitor him.

CASEY

Can I see him?

NEUROLOGIST

(nodding)

I need to prepare you, though. He's suffered some paralysis. And his ability to speak been significantly impaired.

Casey takes a deep breath, steeling herself.

INT. HOSPITAL - GORDON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Casey enters. Gordon is awake, propped up in bed, hooked up to an IV and a variety of monitoring leads. He looks deflated, like a degraded Xerox of the man he used to be. But upon seeing Casey, he MOANS.

Casey moves to his side, trying to hold back her tears.

CASEY

Hey, Daddy.

Gordon MOANS again, trying to communicate something.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I know, I know -- they said you couldn't speak. Just try to relax.

Gordon manages to shake his head. He seems frustrated. He motions with his right hand, towards a bedside table. There's a pad of paper there. A pen.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You want that?

Gordon nods. Casey sets the pad in Gordon's lap, places the pen in his right hand. He starts to write, employing every ounce of concentration -- but the script is garbled.

CASEY (CONT'D)
 Daddy, I'm sorry, I don't know what
 you're trying to say --

Tears of frustration slide down Gordon's cheeks. He tries again even as Casey attempts to decipher his message. Gordon finishes. It looks like: "I SAW HIM."

CASEY (CONT'D)
 You saw him?

Gordon nods, relieved his message came across.

CASEY (CONT'D)
 Who?

Gordon writes again, underlining two words: "THE BOY".

Casey pales. Her entire world is caving in.

CASEY (CONT'D)
 Where, Daddy?

Suddenly, Gordon's eyes widen with fear. He MOANS. A horrible sound, much more urgent than his previous vocalizations. He frantically gestures with his good hand again, motioning at something beyond Casey. She turns --

BARTO

is crouched outside the hospital room window, peering in at them. Casey SCREAMS, even as Barto darts from view --

-- but now Gordon seems to be going into some kind of cardiac arrest. His body THRASHES, his mouth foams. The EEG and EKGs begin BEEPING a warning.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU WARD - NIGHT

Casey bolts from the room, shouting to the nurse's station.

CASEY
 Help! Please! My father --!!!

A DOCTOR and NURSE come running, pushing past Casey into Gordon's room. Casey lingers in the doorway, a hand over her mouth, trying to stem the rising tide of horror. As the staff work to stabilize Gordon, we hear Sofi's voice:

SOFI'S VOICE

It will seek to isolate you. It will do everything it can to gnaw away your strength. For a worm can only penetrate into fruit after it has truly begun to rot.

Casey starts to walk away, fast. Then she begins to run. It's all too much for her. She rounds a corner, nearly colliding with --

MARK

Casey!

-- Mark, who quickly recovers, reaching for her.

MARK (CONT'D)

I just heard. Is he okay?

Casey is fully crying now, barely able to keep it together.

CASEY

I don't know --

MARK

Casey, what's going on?

CASEY

I can't explain. It won't make any sense --

Casey tries to extricate herself from his arms, but Mark stubbornly clings to her.

MARK

Casey, just tell me.

Casey looks up at Mark, in agony.

CASEY

I can't. I don't want it to come after you too.

Casey finally wrenches herself free of Mark's grasp. She backs away, holding up her hands as if to fend off any further attempt by him to comfort her.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Please. Please, Mark. You can't be near me right now.

Casey backs a few more paces down the hall, then turns and hurries away --

-- leaving Mark feeling baffled and utterly impotent.

CUT TO:

INT. RABBI - SENDAK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sendak works late. He has the Book of Mirrors before him, assorted reference texts at hand. He's using a magnifying lamp, running his finger over each line as he translates:

SENDAK

*B'shaym Adonoy Elohay yisro-ayl, mi-
mini Michoa-ayl --*

Sendak pauses, writing the English translation onto a legal pad, quietly mouthing some of the words. As he speaks, we notice that the lights in his office begin to dim.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

In the name of Hashem, God of
Israel, may Michael be at my right --

Sendak pauses. He's noticed the dimming lights too. He cocks his head, listening. Outside, we hear the distant sound of WIND CHIMES.

Sendak feels uneasy, but is unable to pin-point the reason. Presently, the lights resume their full strength. Sendak shakes the feeling off and continues reading the text.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

*-- u-mismoli Gavri-ayl, u-milfonai
U-ri-el, u-may-achorai R'fo-ayl,
a'al roshi sh'chinas Ayl.*

The lights dim once more, extinguishing themselves completely. Sendak rises, futilely trying a number of light switches. He reaches into a desk drawer for a flashlight.

INT. TEMPLE BETH EMETH - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sendak steps out into the hall, senses alert. He hears a SOUND coming from the sanctuary. But as he moves in that direction, his flashlight beam weakens and dies. He taps the flashlight, trying to jiggle it to life, but it's no good.

INT. TEMPLE BETH EMETH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Sendak enters the area where prayer services are conducted.

AT THE FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY

is the *bimah*, a raised platform. Above that is the ark containing the Torah scrolls. The cabinet doors are open and the scrolls are scattered.

A BULL TERRIER

stands in the center of the *bimah*, regarding Sendak. *But like the possessed figure of old Eli Walker, the animal's head is upside down -- its baleful eyes stare from below its muzzle.*

*
*
*
*

Sendak is frightened, but forces himself to advance. He CLAPS his hands loudly, trying to startle the beast.

SENDAK

GET OUT OF HERE!!! GO!!!

The dog emits a strange, KEENING WAIL, a fusion between a GROWL and the ECHOLOCATION CLICKS of a dolphin. Then the dog slowly backs away, off the *bimah*, into a shadowed corner of the sanctuary. Darkness swallowing it up.

Suddenly, the lights in the sanctuary come back on, illuminating the corner -- but the dog has vanished.

ROMY (PRELAP)

Maybe you should leave town.

CUT TO:

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey sits at her laptop, corresponding with Romy via iChat.

CASEY

It wouldn't help. It'll follow me, wherever I go. It's going to kill me, Romy.

ROMY

(on video screen)

It's not. Even if it's real, it doesn't have that kind of power.

CASEY

It killed my Mom.

ROMY

(on video screen)

You don't know that.

CASEY
Come on, Romy. Look what it did to
my Dad.

INT. ROMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Romy sits at her computer, we hear the DOORBELL.

ROMY
Hold on. Someone's at the door.

CASEY
(on video screen)
Don't answer it.

ROMY
Would you stop being so paranoid?
I'll be right back.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Casey waits before her laptop, watching as Romy leaves the frame of the video conference screen. Now, all Casey can see is a partial view of Romy's empty chair and bedroom.

CLOSE ON THE POP-UP VIDEO WINDOW

Though it's dark in Romy's bedroom, we sense MOVEMENT.
Something seems to be creeping out from beneath Romy's bed.

Casey leans forward, trying to discern what's happening. But it's difficult to see. Whatever's moving is at the edge of the screen. Briefly, the figure drops from view completely --

-- then it REAPPEARS, closer to camera now. It's Barto. We SEE him for just a second, then the video connection is lost.

Casey just about jumps out of her skin. She reaches for her cell phone, quickly dialing Romy's number.

CASEY
(under her breath)
Come on, Romy, come on --

She gets an ERROR TONE, then an out of service message.

CASEY (CONT'D)
FUCK!!!

Casey rises from her bed, pulling on a coat and shoes as she dials another number. Then we hear:

MARK'S VOICE

Casey?

CASEY

Meet me at Romy's house!
Something's wrong.

MARK'S VOICE

What?

CASEY

JUST DO IT! GO!!!

CUT TO:

INT. MARSHALL HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The DOORBELL chimes again as Romy comes down the stairs. She tries to turn on the foyer lights, but something is wrong. They're dim -- as if they were outputting only a fraction of their capacity. And as we watch, the lights dim further.

Romy moves to a peephole at the front door, looks out.

ROMY'S POV (THROUGH PEEPHOLE)

She doesn't see anyone on the front porch.

Romy opens the door, startled to find --

MATTY NEILSON

Standing there (too short to seen via the peephole).

ROMY

What're you --?

MATTY

The doorway is open.

*

*

Before Romy can reply, Matty PLUNGES a kitchen knife into her belly. Romy GASPS. She looks down at the knife handle protruding from her abdomen, unable to comprehend what's just happened. Matty wrenches the knife out, PLUNGES it in again --

*

Romy staggers, sinking against the newel post of the stairs. She clutches her midsection, blood seeping between her fingers.

Matty steps across the threshold. The front door closes behind him, as if on its own accord. He starts towards --

ROMY,

Who pulls herself up via the newel post. Terrified, she starts up the stairs, but she's not moving all that quickly.

ON THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING,

Romy STUMBLES, half-crawling, half-limping down the hall. She sinks to her knees, winded, continuing to lose blood. She tries for a doorway to her right --

-- but the doorway SLAMS shut. She tries to turn the knob, but it won't budge.

Romy keeps moving. There's another doorway up ahead -- but it too SLAMS SHUT. Her bloodied hands scrabble at the door knob, to no avail. She looks back --

MATTY

Has reached the top of the stairs. As he precedes down the hall, the lights continue to dim around him, his very presence sapping the luminance away. There's something unearthly about his strange, shuffling gait. It's as if he were walking underwater. Like the physics commanding his body were behaving under a different set of conditions.

A BULGE works its way to the surface of Matty's head, travelling from one side of his tiny face to the other, distorting his features as it burrows. And the ACCOMPANYING SOUND issuing from his mouth is something no human vocal cords could utter. He draws close, knife ready --

Romy raises her hands to ward off the oncoming blows. The knife comes down, SLICING into the webbing between her outstretched fingers --

Then Matty is on top of her, stabbing repeatedly. Romy traps his wrist, briefly forestalling another blow. But she's weak now and even Matty's limited strength is overpowering her.

CLOSE ON MATTY,

his facial muscles constricted in a horrible rictus, continuing to utter that UNEARTHLY SOUND. As he struggles against Romy, he convulses, like he's COUGHING something up.

Suddenly, Matty's throat bulges wider still and the fingers of a GNARLED, SPITTLE-COVERED HAND emerge from his abnormally dilated mouth!

Romy SCREAMS HYSTERICALLY, can't process what she's seeing. The hand keeps coming, followed by ANOTHER CHILD'S BONY FOREARM, with a concentration camp number tattooed on the inside of the wrist! Reaching for Romy's face.

EXT. ROMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey's car SCREECHES into the driveway even as Mark comes RUNNING down the sidewalk on foot. As Casey BOLTS from her car and heads up to the front door, Mark joins her. Casey RINGS the doorbell, POUNDS her fist against the door.

CASEY

Romy! ROMY!!!

She move to a side-light adjacent to the front door, but it's too dark inside to see anything. Then we hear a SCREAM.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Mark!

Mark THROWS his weight against the door, trying to force it.

CASEY (CONT'D)

The back, around back!!!

Casey leaps from the porch, leading Mark around the side to --

A BACK PATIO

Where glass sliders open out onto the lawn. Mark grabs a deck chair and SMASHES OPEN one of the sliders, SHATTERING it. Then he reaches for a garden fork resting nearby, using the prongs to clear the remaining glass from the frame.

INT. ROMY'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Mark and Casey rush inside the darkened house. Mark still clutches the garden fork, the only immediate weapon at hand. They reach the foyer, where the dimmed lights still weakly pulse. They hurtle up the stairs, finding --

INT. ROMY'S HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT

-- Matty crouched atop Romy, looking back at them like the imp from Fuseli's *Nightmare* painting. He bares his teeth.

For a second, Mark seems paralyzed -- his rational mind having a hard time coping with what he's seeing --

Then Mark DRAGS Matty off Romy, THROWING him against the wall. The knife falls from the boy's hand. Mark raises the garden fork, ready to sink into the demon-child's face, but --

CASEY

STOP!!!

Mark freezes, the improvised weapon still held high.

CASEY (CONT'D)

It's not in him anymore.

Mark looks back at Casey, fearful.

MARK

How can you tell?!

CASEY

I just can.

Mark looks back to Matty -- the boy lies slumped against the wall now, breathing shallowly, completely out of it.

MARK

So where is it?!

A SOUND comes from Romy's corpse. She's clearly dead, awash in her own blood. And yet -- MOVEMENT pulses in her throat.

A POTATO BUG creeps from her mouth. Then another. Romy's corpse shudders, as if some external force were trying to seize hold of her via her fading nerve impulses. Mark backs away, overcome with revulsion.

CASEY

Get Matty -- we have to go --

Romy's corpse convulses, flops onto its stomach. It reaches a palsied hand towards them, fingernails digging into the floorboards, dragging itself forward.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Mark, let's go! COME ON!!!

Mark snaps out of it, lifting Matty from the floor. As they descend the stairs, they hear Romy's corpse HOWLING behind them. The howl becomes an EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. ROMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The aftermath. The POLICE and CSI UNIT are there in force. TWO DETECTIVES question Casey and Mark. ANOTHER PAIR OF DETECTIVES and a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Child and Family Services are huddled with the Neilsons, who look completely shell-shocked.

ON CASEY,

barely able to process what the detectives are saying. She nods from time to time, replying in monotone.

CASEY'S POV

Matty sits in the back of an open ambulance, clutching a stuffed animal while TWO EMTs give him a thorough checkup.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT

An island of light amongst a commercial strip mall. Mark and Casey sit across from one another in a booth.

INT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT

The setting is banal. Bright colors, garish signage, all laid bare beneath a harsh fluorescent glare. Aside from the ASIAN GUY behind the counter, the place is otherwise empty.

ON MARK AND CASEY

Mark stares at his coffee cup, in a state of shock. He still has a smudge of blood on his face.

MARK

I can't believe it.

CASEY

I couldn't either. I didn't want to. But now --

Mark looks up at Casey, lost.

MARK

Where did it come from?

CASEY

I don't know.

MARK

And you can sense when it's near?

Casey nods.

CASEY

I've been having these -- glimpses
ever since my eyes changed. Shadows
and things in my peripheral vision.
I think I'm seeing what it sees.

(beat, a confession)

It's getting stronger. It can
enter anything now. Anyone.

Just then, BELLS JINGLE as the front door opens. A HOMELESS
MAN enters, looks at them. Is he more than he appears to be?
After a beat, he shuffles towards the back.

MARK

So no place is safe.

A statement, not a question. Casey averts her gaze, a single
tear sliding down her cheek.

CASEY

I don't think the world was ever
safe. We were just trying to
pretend that it was. You see --
(struggling to explain)
-- everything around us seems
normal, but it's not. It's like
there's this other world laid on
top of ours. Like a double image
or something. We can't see it, but
it's there. It's always been
there.

(beat)

The only difference is, we're
starting to notice it now.

EXT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT

PULL BACK from Mark and Casey framed in the glass window.
Amidst the nightscape, they seem exposed and vulnerable.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CHESS PARK - DAY

FADE IN on a group of CHESS PLAYERS hunched over a series of
prefab concrete tables, deeply immersed in their games.

Beyond the chess area is a larger park, replete with STROLLING COUPLES, IN-LINE SKATERS, PEOPLE with their DOGS.

SENDAK (O.S.)

I've decided to help you.

ANGLE ON A PICNIC TABLE

where Mark and Casey sit opposite Sendak and ARTHUR WYNDHAM (50s), a kind-faced Episcopal priest wearing jeans and a simple tab-collar shirt. Sendak has The Book of Mirrors with him, along with a folder of papers.

CASEY

You're willing to perform an exorcism? Why now?

SENDAK

I can't say whether I truly believe in what's afflicting you. But I think you believe. And if you're convinced that this is what you need, then who am I to turn you away?

MARK

Look, I may be just getting up to speed here -- but if you'd seen what I saw last night, you wouldn't have any problem believing her.

SENDAK

This is Arthur Wyndham. He's a good friend of mine. He's also an Episcopal priest. We compare notes from time to time and, well -- he's had a bit more experience with this kind of thing than I have.

CASEY

You've done exorcisms?

WYNDHAM

(shaking his head)
No, but I've studied the phenomenon. I did my dissertation on the subject back in college. The Catholic Church's position on these incidents is very conservative. They regard genuine demonic possession as something that's exceedingly rare.

CASEY

I'm not looking for a Catholic exorcism.

WYNDHAM

I understand. But there are certain elements to these kinds of rites that are common amongst virtually all religions. And these elements I am familiar with.

*

SENDAK

I've translated what's in the book --
 (re: Book of Mirrors)
 -- so I'll be leading the invocation. Arthur and a few others will be backing me up.

MARK

So you're covering all bases. A rabbi and a priest.

SENDAK

(good-natured)
 I figured it couldn't hurt to stack the odds.

WYNDHAM

Before we go any further, we need to take care of a few formalities. Can I see your IDs? We need to verify that you're both of legal age to be consenting to this.

As Casey and Mark reach for their driver's licenses, Wyndham produces two sheets of paper from the folder, then a pen.

WYNDHAM (CONT'D)

These are releases. To be honest, I'm not even sure they're legally binding. We're sort of in cloudy waters here. But just in case something does goes wrong --

He shrugs, leaving the rest unsaid. Wyndham inspects the IDs as Casey and Mark sign the releases. Satisfied, he hands the IDs back.

CASEY

When do we do it?

SENDAK

Tomorrow night, the sabbath.

CASEY
At your synagogue?

SENDAK
Are you crazy? No, no way. Given how *unorthodox* this all is, I think we'll find another venue. Is there a place that has a particularly negative resonance with you? Somewhere where you might've incurred great pain?

Casey nods, an immediate place coming to mind.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DUSK

Having been closed some years ago, the sprawling facility has now fallen into disrepair. The front entrance has been chained shut, while the ground floor windows have been boarded up. Many of the windows on the second and third floors have been broken and there are other signs of vandalism as well (graffiti, etc).

In short, it's the kind of place that teenagers come to scare themselves and drunkenly grope one another.

SENDAK (O.S.)
As I said, we'll need a few others to help us. Typically, a Jewish exorcism rite involves ten people.

CASEY (O.S.)
Why ten?

Presently, HEADLIGHTS appear on the wooded drive leading up to the main building.

SENDAK (O.S.)
Ten is the number of the *Sephirot*, which are the known attributes of God. The idea is that these ten form a protective circle around the afflicted person.

FROM OVERHEAD

We SEE MORE CARS arrive, making a rough circle in parking area. PEOPLE are exiting their cars.

Sendak and Wyndham are unloading supplies -- battery-powered xenon lanterns, a collapsible ambulance gurney, portable space heaters, as well as a long, leather carrying case (like the kind used to transport a musical instrument).

One of the helpers, RICK HESSE (30s), climbs from a vintage Land Cruiser. He's a rough and tumble biker-type. Tall, clutching a to-go cup of coffee and a medical tackle box. He eyes the facility with skepticism, looks to Sendak.

RICK

Hell of a place to get religion,
Rabbi.

SENDAK

The State has it scheduled for
demolition this Spring.
(holding up some keys)
Luckily, I've got a friend on the
Mental Health Board.

Sendak nods to Rick, introducing him to Mark and Casey.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

This is Rick Hesse. He's a member
of an interfaith recovery group
Arthur and I moderate. He's also
an EMT. I thought it'd be good to
have him here, just in case.

Rick extends his hand to Mark and Casey.

RICK

Nice to meet you.

SENDAK

The others are part of the group as
well. They've all been through
hardship of one kind or another and
they're willing to help.

Casey looks to the others -- people from all walks of life. One looks like a GRANDFATHER, another like a HOUSEWIFE. They nod back at Casey in turn, acknowledging her.

CASEY

Thank-you for doing this.

SENDAK

Once we get inside, Casey will be
in the center of the circle. I'll
read the original text in Hebrew,
the rest of you will follow me in
English, call and response format.

As Sendak speaks, Wyndham passes out pamphlets outlining each step of the ceremony.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

The heart of the ceremony is Psalm 91. *Yoshev B'Seter*, the Psalm of Protection. At the beginning and end of the invocation, I'll sound the *shofar*.

(to Casey)

It's an animal horn used in religious ceremonies. In this case, the sound is intended to shock the spirit hiding within the victim. Once the spirit is more compliant, then we can start drawing it out.

He looks to the others now.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

Any questions?

MARK

What's up with the gurney?

WYNDHAM

That's for Casey's protection. As well as ours. Sometimes, people thrash around, try to lash out. It's just a precaution.

Casey gives a nod that it's okay.

*

SENDAK

Alright, then. Let's get started.

The group heads towards the front entrance.

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - SICK WARD - NIGHT

A wide open space that once housed dozens of sick beds, with a row of windows looking out onto the adjoining hallway. Some of the walls are partially torn open. The piles of plaster and debris scattered here and there, along with the occasional empty beer bottle, are further evidence of vandalism.

IN A SERIES OF DISSOLVES

we SEE the group set up shop. The xenon lanterns are arranged in a circle. The space heaters are turned on.

The gurney is lifted and locked, the back support tilted semi-upright. Sendak opens the aforementioned carrying case, revealing a long, curlicued *shofar* made from the horn of a kudu. Wyndham sets up a small video camera on a tripod.

Hesse, meanwhile, gives Casey a cursory medical examination, checking her pulse, blood pressure, pupil dilation. Satisfied, Casey is then helped onto the gurney.

MARK

You sure you want to go through with this?

CASEY

I just want it to end.

Wyndham starts the video camera, then walks in front of it, addressing it.

WYNDHAM

My name is Arthur Wyndham. This will be a video record of an attempted exorcism of Casey Bell. Everyone participating tonight, including Casey, is here of their own free will. Do you agree, Casey?

CASEY

Yes. This is what I want.

Wyndham and Hesse secure Casey's ankles and wrists with the gurney restraints.

SENDAK

Now if, and this is a big "if" -- but assuming a spirit actually manifests itself on your person, it may take the shape of a -- kind of bulge beneath the flesh. Try not to be alarmed by this. Even though we're dealing with a spiritual phenomenon, the entity still needs to be housed in some degree of physical mass. So if your body produces a reaction like that, it means what we're doing is working. Do you understand?

Casey nods. Wyndham then produces a rubber block.

WYNDHAM

I'm going to place this in your mouth so you don't accidentally bite your tongue.

Casey nods again. Wyndham inserts the mouthpiece between her teeth, then turns to Sendak to indicate that they're ready.

At Sendak's direction, the group makes a circle around Casey. Mark is positioned by her head, Sendak near her feet.

Sendak draws the *shofar* to his lips, emitting three short calls. Finished, he lifts up the Book of Mirrors and turns towards the North:

SENDAK

Yud.
(turning to the East)
Hay.
(turning to the South)
Vuv.
(turning to the West)
Hay.

Sendak now pivots back to face the North.

SENDAK (CONT'D)

This circle is now made whole and sacred.

(reading from the book)

B'shaym Adonoy Elohay yisro-ayl, mi-mini Michoa-ayl, u-mismoli Gavri-ayl, u-milfonai U-ri-el, u-may-achorai R'fo-ayl, a'al roshi sh'chinas Ayl.

The group responds in English, reading from their booklets:

GROUP

In the name of HASHEM, God of Israel, may Michael be at my right, Gabriel at my left, Uriel before me, and Raphael behind me; and above my head the Shechina.

At this, Casey looks to the ceiling, at the pattern of shadows cast from the harsh xenon lanterns.

SENDAK

Yo-shayv b'sayer el-yon, b'tzayl sha-dai yis-lonon.

GROUP

You who dwells in the shelter of
the Most High, who abides in the
shadow of the Almighty --

SENDAK

*Omar la-donoy machi-si um'tzudoi,
elohai ev-tach bo. Ki hu ya-
tzil'cho mi-pach yokush, mi-dever
havos.*

GROUP

I say to you of the LORD, who is my
refuge and my stronghold, my God,
in whom I trust, that he will save
you from the fowler's snare and
from the destructive pestilence.

Casey starts to sweat. Are the shadows above her
lengthening? The lanterns dimming? She looks at the others,
but they don't seem to notice.

SENDAK

*B'ev-roso yosech loch v'sachas
k'nofov tech-seh, tzinoh
v'sochayroh amito.*

Outside, the wind picks up.

GROUP

He will cover you with his feathers
and you will find refuge under his
wings; his truth will be your
shield and armor.

Casey's breathing quickens. She shivers uncontrollably. It's
not her imagination. The lanterns are dimming! And some kind
of LIQUID now appears to be seeping through the ceiling above
her. Black and tar-like.

SENDAK

*Lo siro mi-pachad loy-soh, may-
chatyz yo-uf yo-mom --*

Sendak and the others look up as a VIBRATORY MOAN sounds in
the hallway outside, RATTLING the windows. Surely, it's just
the wind? Sendak continues, his voice faltering:

SENDAK (CONT'D)

*Midever bo-ofel ya-haloch, mi-ketev
yoshud tzo-horoy-im.*

GROUP

You will not fear the terror of
night, nor the arrow that flies by
day, nor --

The SOUND comes again, the lanterns flickering in lock-step.

CASEY'S POV - THE CEILING ABOVE

The black liquid continues pooling on the ceiling. Suspended droplets are forming, gaining in volume. One of them looks like its ready to slip free and fall onto Casey's face.

Then Casey notices a BULGE FORMING near her clavicle. It starts working its way up into her throat, causing her mouth to involuntarily open.

Casey MOANS, fighting against her restraints, tries to twist her head around and make eye contact with Mark, warn him --

-- but the WIND is causing too much commotion. It's kicked up a draft within the ward as well. Wyndham continues the recitation, RAISING HIS VOICE to spur the others onward:

WYNDHAM

NOR THE ARROW THAT FLIES BY DAY --

The group follows suit, with decidedly less conviction.

GROUP

-- nor the pestilence that stalks
in the darkness, nor the plague
that wasteth at noonday.

The lanterns continue to flicker and dim. The suspended droplet of black-tar liquid falls --

SENDAK

*Yipol mi-tzid'cho elef ur'vovo mimi-
necho, aylecho lo yigosh. Rak b'ay-
necho sabit, v'shilumas r'sho-im
tir-eh.*

GROUP

A thousand may fall at your left
side, ten thousand at your right,
but it will not come near you. You
need only look with your eyes, and
you will see the punishment of the
wicked.

The MOANING WIND reaches a crescendo, ripping pages from people's hands. Then it suddenly stops altogether, sucking itself into silence as the lanterns simultaneously go dark.

Darkness, a few GASPS from the silhouetted group members.

SENDAK

Everyone just stay calm. Don't move.

The lanterns BUZZ, coming back on at full strength, momentarily blinding everyone. We hear a few relieved CHUCKLES, some HALF-WHISPERED COMMENTS. And then the faces of the group members go white as they fixate on --

BARTO

He's standing beside Casey's left shoulder, projecting a glare of evil so palpable that it could strike a person dead!

Three of the group members DROP LIKE STONES, eyes rolling to white. Two more simply RUN FOR THEIR LIVES.

FLASH! The lanterns SPARK, BURST APART. The windows RATTLE, CRACK, SHATTER!

FLASH! Sendak and the others back away, frozen with fear.

FLASH! Barto disappears amidst the intermittent darkness.

FLASH! Casey THRASHES VIOLENTLY, desperate to get free. Mark appears at her side, removing her mouthpiece, hurriedly loosening her restraints. She's SCREAMING --

CASEY

Get me out! GET ME OUT!!!!

FLASH! Barto now appears atop one of the fallen group members -- the housewife, who's foaming at the mouth. Then Barto is gone, INSIDE HER.

THE HOUSEWIFE

LURCHES from the floor, back arching unnaturally, as if she were being jerked upward by a rope. We see a BULGE travelling in a corkscrew fashion up her torso, then around her neck, then ballooning out her cheek and eye-socket. She SCREAMS, vomits out a SPRAY OF BLOOD, then crumples back to the ground in a heap.

ON CASEY

Even as Mark helps her to her feet, the gurney collapses beneath her on its own volition. It SPINS AWAY, flipping end over end, SMASHING Hesse back against the wall.

The Book of Mirrors is TORN from Sendak's hands, some of the pages SHREDDING and FOUNTAINING around him. The *shofar* whirls madly about, SKEWERING ITSELF into Sendak's shoulder.

Wyndham sinks to his knees, all reason escaping him. He looks upward, mouth agape --

Barto is on the ceiling, clinging spider-like. He scurries in circles at high speed, LEAPS at Wyndham.

Mark DRAGS Casey towards the hallway, but she resists --

CASEY (CONT'D)
THE BOOK!!!

Casey retrieves the Book, clawing up the pamphlet pages as well. As she and Mark make for the doorway --

WYNDHAM

LURCHES towards them, dead-eyed, moving in a herky-jerky manner. The BULGE is travelling up Wyndham's arm, just beneath the flesh. Barto is inside him.

Mark scoops up one of the fallen lanterns, SMASHES Wyndham across the face with it! Then Mark and Casey are free --

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

-- STUMBLING out into the hallway, making a mad dash for freedom. They round a corner, finding themselves --

IN THE CENTRAL STAIRWELL AND FOYER

The front doors are just ahead. But even as Mark and Casey reach them, the doors SLAM SHUT. Mark pulls against the door handles, trying to force them back open, but it's no good. Even worse, the nearby windows are completely boarded up.

Mark whirls, spotting a metal waste can. He picks it up and tries to HAMMER his way through the plywood covering the nearest window. The wood starts to splinter and give way --

-- but then we hear a CRASH coming from back the way they came.

CASEY

MARK!!!

ANGLE ON HESSE,

staggering towards them in FITFUL LURCHES. He'll be upon them in seconds! And if the CLICKING MOAN issuing from his slack mouth left any doubt that he's been taken over, the SHIFTING BULGE that distorts his face doesn't.

Mark and Casey have no choice but to retreat up the central stairway. They take the first flight of steps two at a time --

BELOW THEM,

Hesse moves with alarming speed, quickly gaining upon them. His HOWLS are ECHOING throughout the stairwell.

Mark and Casey continue past the second floor landing, racing up another flight of stairs.

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - 3RD FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

FOLLOWING Hesse's hulking form now as he emerges into the third floor hall. He looks right, SEES no sign of Mark and Casey in the moonlit corridor. He looks left, SEES no sign there as well. As he shambles off to the right --

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - 3RD FLOOR WARD - NIGHT

-- we find Mark and Casey inside one of the treatment rooms, having just barely managed to duck out of sight. They flatten themselves against the wall, crouching down beneath the bottom of the windows looking out onto the corridor.

As Hesse approaches, Mark and Casey hold their breath. We can SEE Hesse's silhouette now. He pauses, looking through the windows. His mouth sags open, issuing guttural CLICKING NOISES. Mark and Casey are just beneath his gaze. He might even see them if he casts his eyes downward --

-- but he moves on, FOOTSTEPS retreating. Silence. Mark turns to Casey, is about to whisper something --

-- when the wall beside him EXPLODES OUTWARD! Hesse's hands grasp Mark, DRAGGING him back through the newly made opening.

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - 3RD FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

Hesse THROWS Mark to the floor, BLUDGEONING him repeatedly with his fists. The blows are raining down so viciously that Mark can't even fend them off --

Casey appears in the doorway, LEAPING onto Hesse's back. He SHRUGS her off, turning towards her --

Casey winces as she sits up. Hesse steps over to her. Casey tries to scoot back, finds herself hemmed in by the wall.

As Hesse bends down towards Casey, she frantically reaches to her throat, pulling out the Hand of Miriam, which now rests on a silver chain around her neck. She holds it up --

-- and Hesse actually pauses, tilting his head as an animal would. Does he find the amulet distasteful? It seems like it. He HISSES at her and --

WHAM!!! A two-by-four comes down atop Hesse's head! It's Mark, having found himself a weapon. His nose is broken, bleeding down over his chin. Nevertheless, he comes at Hesse again, swinging the two-by-four repeatedly.

Hesse staggers beneath the blows, then SOMETHING SNAPS in his neck and he drops like a marionette with its strings cut. Mark keeps PUMMELING the body, wanting to make absolutely sure the man isn't getting back up.

Mark stops. He sinks to his knees, chest heaving as he leans against the wall. But he still keeps his eyes on Hesse's corpse, half-expecting it to reawaken.

Beat. Mark shuts his eyes, the surge of adrenaline leaving him. Casey moves to his side.

CASEY

You okay?

MARK

-- yeah, just a little banged up --
(weaker)
-- feel funny --

Mark absently reaches for Casey's hand, clasping it tightly.

CASEY

We'll get out here, get some help.

Mark nods absently. He opens his eyes again, his gaze focused on Hesse's corpse.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Can you get up, sweetie?

Mark doesn't respond. Instead, his grip on Casey's hand begins to tighten.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Baby, you're hurting me --

Mark's grip continues to tighten as a tremble courses through him. Casey tries to pull her hand away, but Mark resists.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Mark, stop --

The trembling continues. We realize that we're witnessing a war. Mark is struggling against his own nervous system. And he's losing. His breathing begins to hiccup, like a cat trying to cough up a fur-ball.

Casey WHIMPERS. She knows what's happening now.

Mark turns his twitching head towards her. Because we're so close to him, we can SEE his eyes transform. The pigment in his irises is draining away, TURNING BLUE. And the nearest eyeball is ballooning up, BULGING from its socket.

Casey pulls back, KICKING at Mark with all her strength. Somehow, she manages to break free of his grip. Mark is on all fours now, lifting his head towards her. Ropes of drool uncoil from his slack mouth.

Casey retreats. She doesn't want to leave him, but --

Mark stands, summoning a HELLISH HOWL from the pit of his belly. He starts BASHING his head against the wall, cracking the plaster, causing chunks of it to fall away. It's awful to watch. The *dybbuk* is destroying Mark before Casey's eyes.

Casey has no choice but to run --

FURTHER DOWN THE HALLWAY,

into a wing of the hospital that is in even more disrepair. She rounds a corner, stumbling and slipping over debris.

Casey SEES a door to another stairwell. She tries it, but it's locked. She moves on, having lost her precious lead.

ON MARK,

unstoppable now, fueled by a bottomless wellspring of rage.

Casey rounds another corner, finding herself in front of --

THE DOOR FROM THE SUPER-8 FILM

Wide and unyielding, with a large and tarnished brass knob. Exuding an overpowering sense of menace. But for this doorway, we are at an absolute dead-end.

Casey looks back, SEES Mark's shadow approaching as he nears the corridor. She's got a half-dozen seconds at best --

Casey reaches for the door knob, turns it. The door opens.

INT. CORRIDOR - BORDERLAND - NIGHT

Casey steps into a world that mirrors ours. The corridor has the same basic geometry as the one she just left, but the surface of everything is different, like a theatrical flat that's been re-skinned.

We understand instinctively that we've entered the borderland. A demarcation between our universe and the *yenne velt* -- the place the dybbuk comes from. The corridor seems to extend forever. And the further it extends, the more reality seems to degrade, eventually fading into complete darkness.

Black, tar-like liquid drips from the ceiling and walls, pools on the floor. It's viscous and sticky.

Gravity seems heavier here as well. For Casey, it feels like she's walking with lead shoes, moving through a murky and oppressive body of water. Every physical action creates a fleeting, visual echo, tiny trails of motion that disperse like ripples in a pond. Sound waves behave in the same manner, propagating outward as if under water.

As Casey proceeds, crossing a carpet of potato bug husks.

CASEY'S POV

Down at the other end of the hall, where the darkness overtakes the corridor, SOMETHING undulates towards us in slow-motion. Human-shaped, but moving in a serpentine fashion, swimming through the air as it would through water.

Casey doesn't want to face whatever it is. She turns --

TO THE RIGHT

is an open doorway, dim light emanating from the room within. Casey approaches, dreading what she will find inside.

INT. ROOM - BORDERLAND - NIGHT

Casey enters. The room is empty, save for a rusty, metal chair. A WOMAN sits with her back to us, clad in a soiled hospital gown, rocking back and forth. She's hunched over, hair obscuring her face, clutching something in her hands.

Casey instantly recognizes the woman.

CASEY

Mom?

Casey draws closer, slowly circling around. And now we SEE what Janet is holding. The jar from Casey's dream, with the little embryo floating inside. The embryo is conscious, looking up at Casey from within its tiny prison.

Casey extends her hand, gently touching Janet's shoulder. The woman responds, slowly lifting her head, revealing --

ANOTHER FACE

A hell-maw. No eyes or nose. Just a GAPING MOUTH extending from the lower jaw up to where the brow should be. The teeth are far too numerous, blackened with decay and worn down to nubs. As the creature BELLOWS, the maw opens wider still, offering a nightmare view of its flapping epiglottis.

Casey recoils, rushing back the way she came, out into --

INT. CORRIDOR - BORDERLAND - NIGHT

-- the black tar corridor. To her right, the "Swimmer" is still coming, undulating through the heavy air.

Casey turns left, RUNNING in slow-motion. She TRIPS, skidding face-first into a puddle of black goo and potato bug husks. She drops the Book of Mirrors, the scattered pages of the ceremony. She GAGS, having gotten some of the molasses-like gunk in her mouth. Then she DRAGS herself up, tries to reach for where the door should be and --

INT. LANDING/STAIRWELL - BORDERLAND - NIGHT

-- finds herself back by the grand stairwell. Or at least the other side's analog of it. Every inch of the stairwell and landing is covered in the tar-like substance. And it's flowing upwards, seeming to defy gravity.

ON MARK,

rearing up before us. His hand clamps around Casey's throat, SQUEEZING with inhuman strength. He lifts Casey off her feet.

Casey struggles, CHOKING. Mark pulls her closer, nose to nose. He opens his mouth, extending his tongue, as if he were going to French kiss her. One side of the tongue BULGES, a kind of mobile pustule forming.

And the tongue keeps coming, unfurling from its root for at least another two inches! The pustule-tip of his tongue reaches Casey's lips, probing, forcing its way between them --

Casey SQUEALS. She knows that the *dybbuk* is finally trying to enter her. She gives up trying to pry Mark's fingers free. Drops a hand to her chest, searching for the only weapon she has -- the Hand of Miriam strung around her neck.

Her fingers close around the amulet and she RIPS it free, DRIVING the star up into Mark's jugular. Mark drops Casey. BLOOD seeps out from around the amulet, which is now wedged deep in his voice-box.

On the floor, Casey COUGHS, sucking in air. She SEES the fallen Book of Mirrors and scattered pages. Her only chance.

She grabs the book, hugging it to her breast. She scoops up the pages with her other hand, picking up the ceremony from where the group had left off. Her voice is weak and raw from her near-strangulation and the words come haltingly:

CASEY

(reading)

"-- You need only look with your eyes, and you will see the punishment of the wicked --"

Mark looks down at her, unsteady on his feet. Casey continues, her voice trembling:

CASEY (CONT'D)

"-- because you have said "The Lord is my shelter" and you have made the Most High your haven, no evil will befall you, no plague will come near thy dwelling. For he will command his angels in your behalf, to guard you in all your ways --"

A wind picks up. Mark leans into it. The flesh on his face ripples, his cheeks becoming rubbery -- like those of a test pilot responding to the crushing weight of 4 Gs.

The black-tar substance on the walls and ceiling reacts similarly, retreating as if from the wind. Like motor oil diluting and fanning itself away from a high-pressure stream of water.

CASEY (CONT'D)

"-- they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the dragon."

The *dybbuk* begins HOWLING. It doesn't like this. In fact, it seems to be fighting for its life now, thrashing wildly.

CASEY (CONT'D)

"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. "He will call upon me, and I will answer him;"

Tears stream down Casey's face as she fights to be heard over the noise.

CASEY (CONT'D)

"I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him."

The *dybbuk's* HOWLS cycle upward, becoming deafening as the black-tar substance continues to dilute and --

CASEY (CONT'D)

"With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

-- Mark is suddenly HURLED BACKWARDS by a great force. He strikes the balustrade and topples over it, falling into the open space between the stairs, HOWLING all the way down. We HEAR his body hit, then silence.

Beat. The environment has returned to normal. Casey moves to the balustrade, hazarding a look --

CASEY'S POV

Mark is sprawled two stories below, his limbs twisted unnaturally. BLOOD pools beneath him. He's not moving.

Casey blinks, dead inside. Slowly, she pulls herself away from the balustrade, starts down the stairs.

INT. RIVERVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

Casey descends the final few steps, keeping a distance from Mark's corpse. Somehow, more time has elapsed than Casey would have thought possible. Dawn is approaching and ambient light is beginning to seep in through the boarded up windows.

ON MARK

as he suddenly COUGHS, expelling bloody spittle. Miraculously, he's still alive.

MARK

-- Case --?

Casey cautiously approaches. Mark seems himself again, but quite scared, and in terrible pain. His breathing is shallow. Instinctively, we know the *dybbuk* has left him.

MARK (CONT'D)

-- did --
(weak, disoriented)
-- did we stop it --?

Casey nods. Mark smiles. Then his brow knits with concern.

MARK (CONT'D)

-- I can't -- feel anything --

Casey kneels beside him. She wants to help, but she doesn't know where to begin. She tries to cradle his head in her hands, but the back of his hair is slick with blood.

MARK (CONT'D)

-- am I dying?

Casey shakes her head, tears spilling down her cheeks. She doesn't want to answer him. But it's obviously the case.

MARK (CONT'D)

-- I'm dying, right?

CASEY

(shushing him)
Listen, listen -- I need to tell
you something --

Mark COUGHS again, his eyes briefly closing.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Sweetie, listen --

Mark's eyes flutter open again.

CASEY (CONT'D)
When a baby's born -- nobody knows
where his life will lead him.
That's why he cries. Because he's
scared --

Casey stops, hiccuping through her own tears.

CASEY (CONT'D)
But when he dies, he knows. He's
going home, so he's not scared
anymore. You understand, baby?
(beat)
You understand?

Mark's breathing becomes even more shallow. Casey lowers her head, kissing him.

MARK
Hey, Case --

CASEY
Yeah?

Mark stares past her, eyes focused on something unseen.

MARK
-- am I going to keep falling
forever?

And Mark grows still, the last of his life leaving his body.

PULL BACK

A wider view of the pietà-like scene -- Casey kneeling, Mark resting in her arms, dappled with rays from the emerging dawn.

Presently, a FIGURE steps into the foreground. It's Sendak, limping his way into the foyer, battered but still alive. He takes in the scene before him.

After a moment, Casey glances up at him. They share a look, the kind of unspoken exchange only two survivors could ever comprehend. And that's how we leave them, with the dawn's light growing stronger, gradually bleaching the world --

TO WHITE:

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - WOODS - DAY

FADE IN on a gray, drizzly morning. Once again, we are gliding behind Casey as she jogs down a leaf-strewn path. Her stride is strong and measured, her thoughts quiet, numbed by the comfort a repetitive routine can instill.

She reaches the point where'd she'd always sensed someone watching her, but this time she powers on, not even slowing.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Casey walks beneath a bower of tree limbs, cooling down. Presently, she finds herself at her mother's grave. She stares at it for a beat, moves on.

INT. COLLEGE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Casey is signing up for her **Sophomore** classes, one of DOZENS OF STUDENTS going through the **process**.

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INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Casey is kneeling over the toilet, just finishing being sick. She gives the toilet a flush.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Casey sits on her bed, counting backwards through the days on her pocket calendar.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Casey moves down one of the aisles, picking up something for anti-nausea. Further down, she SEES a selection of home pregnancy tests. On impulse, she put one in her basket.

INT. BELL HOME - CASEY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Casey stands at the sink, studying the wand from the home pregnancy test. A PINK LINE slowly develops.

INT. OB/GYN'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Casey rests on an examination table as an OB/GYN slides an ultrasound transducer over her abdomen. He studies a real-time output on a nearby monitor.

OB/GYN

Well you're definitely pregnant. I
can clearly see the gestational
sac.

He continues to slide the transducer back and forth.

OB/GYN (CONT'D)

And it looks like double-
congratulations are in order.
(off Casey's look)
You're carrying twins.

Casey's face goes pale. Not the reaction the doctor was expecting. He pivots, offering her a view of the monitor.

ULTRASOUND MONITOR

A 3-D scan of Casey's womb. Two vague, but immediately discernible EMBRYOS can be seen nestled side by side.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END