

THE MEZZOTINT

written by

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INT. AN ART GALLERY. NIGHT

A square room in an art gallery. Paintings of various sized canvases adorn all four walls and there are two entrances into the room diametrically opposite each other from which two corridors lead off. A tall elderly man, CREEST, is inspecting the artworks. He has a full head of long grey shaggy hair and a lined face as if half the world lived in it. He has a professional demeanor and exudes an air of accomplishment. He crosses from one half of the room toward the other.

Behind him through one of the entrances a light is extinguished in the corridor. He doesn't notice and as he moves into the other half of the room at the bottom of the darkened corridor an indistinct figure skips in and out of view.

Creest moves toward the far end of the room. Something has caught his eye. He looks carefully at a painting positioned in the middle of the wall. It is a crudely painted picture of what looks like a schoolyard. Creest scratches his head.

CREEST

Where on earth...?

Behind him, the figure skips in, across and out of the room. The clicking of its shoes causes Creest to turn around but the figure has already exited.

He looks back at the painting and a figure that was not there before has appeared in the schoolyard. Creest rubs his eyes bewilderingly. He gets in closer and touches the figure with his finger. Immediately a giggle is heard from one of the corridors.

He looks at the entrance to the lit corridor.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Hello?

There is no reply. Then suddenly the light goes out. He shuffles a few steps toward the entrance of the long dark corridor. There is another giggle.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Hello...who's there?

The giggle increases

CREEST (CONT'D)

The gallery is shut. Are you playing a dare?

As the giggling becomes louder Creest recognizes that it's coming from behind him. He turns again to look at the picture. Where one child stood, there are now a dozen in the playground. They seem to be moving. Creest backs away until he is standing in the middle of the room and equidistant between the two entrances. He hears skipping from his right from his right and stares into the darkness beyond. Behind him a figure looms up in the opposite corridor. Creest's attention remains fully in front of him as the figure starts to move toward him. At the last moment he turns...

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN, A SMALL VILLAGE IN RURAL NORFOLK, ENGLAND. A MISTY MORNING

A montage of rustic scenes - a village green, a pub and a church - St Helen's in the Wold Reverend Daniel Harker incumbent. A small high street with a local shop and a post office. A small brook runs through the village and a small slate bridge fords it at a point allowing access for walkers to the village center through the church and its graveyard. The pathway beyond snakes away hugging the contours of the brook, shaded by weeping willows, toward the outer fringes of the community. Through the morning fog a lanky figure emerges: CREEST

He crosses the bridge into the graveyard and walks toward the church.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH GRAVEYARD. MORNING

He ambles through the yard glancing at the gravestones lined each side of the path. He stops abruptly at one particular stone which reads:

Samantha Felice

A dear daughter taken from us too soon

13th April 1956 - 13th April 1964

Creest notices a bunch of fresh wild flowers resting there. He picks up a bluebell and sniffs it

CREEST

New blood?

Around him there's an echo of someone skipping. He looks about quizzically but can see nothing. Then he catches a glimpse of a tartan skirt disappearing behind the south wall of the nave of the church.

He steps off the path onto the graveyard for a closer look. He spies a hand clutching another bunch of flowers but before he can discern who it is the hand vanishes.

Curious he walks toward the spot and around the other side of the church. There is no-one there. He looks down at the flower he has been clutching. A worm is curling around the base of it. He slings it to the ground.

CREEST (CONT'D)

A little too fresh perhaps

Wiping his hands on his trousers he is about to continue his walk when he spots the back of a head, its hair bobbing up and down, just above the privet hedge that lines that side of the graveyard beside the gate leading out of the church and toward the village center.

CREEST (CONT'D)

How did she...?

Suddenly a large hand grabs his shoulder. Creest wheels in panic.

A thick set man, the VICAR, is facing him. A congenially happy man whose positive outlook on life sits on an uneasy border between inspiration and irritation.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Bloody hell Vicar, you trying to add to the current population in here?

VICAR

Sorry old man. Off to the art class?

Creest nods, breathing heavily

CREEST

Rather queer

VICAR

Well we are a modern church and welcome all genders

Creest ignores the joke

CREEST

Over here

He takes the vicar back to the Felice gravestone

CREEST (CONT'D)

Look.

VICAR

Yes I know. We have several varieties as you can see.

Creest tuts and shakes his head

CREEST

I must've walked this way a hundred times over the last two years and I've never ever seen flowers on this grave.

The vicar looks at the stone closely.

VICAR

Oh, the Felice girl

CREEST

You know her?

VICAR

Know of her, or of her sad, brief little history I should say.

CREEST

She has family here?

VICAR

Oh no, no. They moved away, after the...incident

CREEST

Then why?

VICAR

Why what?

CREEST

Don't you think it a little odd that a girl who's been dead for 50 years and who has no family living in Greeven, suddenly inherits a bunch of wild flowers?

VICAR

Maybe, but perhaps one of the
villagers felt sorry for her

CREEST

Did you see anyone around the
churchyard Vicar?

VICAR

I don't think so and would you do
me a favor? When it's just us
would you call me Dan? They're so
traditional here they insist on
Vicar.

CREEST

Alright...Dan. I'm sure there was
someone here a moment ago?

VICAR

Oh I say, a mystery. Old Greeven
could do with livening up a little.
Male or female?

CREEST

Not sure. It felt female.

VICAR

I don't know how one interprets
that.

CREEST

Okay. I had the impression it was
a young girl

VICAR

Samantha perhaps? After fifty
years of neglect she returns as a
ghost and puts flowers on her own
grave. How wonderful. I could
start a ghost tour.

The Vicar makes a money gesture with his fingers. Creest
looks askance

VICAR (CONT'D)

For the restoration of parts of St
Helen of course

CREEST

I rather thought it could have been
the figure I saw. These flowers
were picked fresh this morning

The Vicar's face grew thoughtful

VICAR

You know there was a strange occurrence in the church about two days ago.

Creest looks at the Vicar sardonically

VICAR (CONT'D)

No, really. I had just finished Vespers and was saying my farewells to those hardy few that still attend and as I shut the door and was walking back to the sacristy I thought I heard a skipping sound.

CREEST

I heard that too, but out here.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH. EARLY EVENING.

The Vicar is moving among the pews collecting the odd missal and hymn book.

VICAR

(voice over)

Yes, at the time it was most disconcerting, being sunset and the church darkening around me. Suddenly it ceased. I was convinced then the noise had come from outside and carried on.

He walks toward St Nicholas's statue perched around four feet upwards on the wall beside the sacristy

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

As I approached the statue of St Nicholas I thought I saw someone standing there. I called out that the service was over and that I was locking up. At that point I was convinced we had burglars and was about to ring for the police when the skipping started again.

The Vicar turns nervously back toward the nave but sees nothing.

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

It seemed to echo all around so that it was difficult to pinpoint where it was coming from. Once again it stopped. I tell you my ears at that point were bursting with silence, my heart galloping like a thoroughbred.

The Vicar looks back toward the opposite corner beside the altar. A shadow seems to be lurking in the recess

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

At the far end of the altar next to the baptismal font there seemed to be a shape of some sort, shifting almost imperceptibly in the murkiness. I was foolish I suppose but I had a choice to either run for the exit and risk being caught from behind or confront them head on. I took a heavy breath of faith and strode forward.

He moves cagily toward the recess across the altar but stops beside the baptismal font

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

As I reached the font the shape was gone.

He peers into the dark, edging forward slowly. A small thin light seems flicker within.

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

The alcove beyond was pitch black except for a small weird light that seemed to dance about.

He is standing beside the recess but within cover of the weak light of the dying sun coming through the stain glass windows. Whispering can be heard

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

I could hear a faint whispering
from within. I shouted "Come out"
But nothing happened. I admit at
this point that fear had overcome
the spirit and I turned to go.

As the Vicar turns a face looms out of the darkness

VICAR (CONT'D)

(voice over)

Suddenly a face loomed out at me
from the black

CUT TO:

EXT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH GRAVEYARD. MORNING

CREEST

My god - was it the stranger?

VICAR

No, it was the bloody Verger. Oh
dear excuse my...

CREEST

Is this a joke?

VICAR

No. It actually happened. The
Verger had dropped one of his keys
and had been fiddling about looking
for it with a small torch,
muttering away to himself.

CREEST

But didn't he hear you shout?

VICAR

Deaf as post. To be honest I don't
know, out of the two of us, who
scared who the most.

CREEST

And the skipping?

VICAR

As I said - deaf as a post.

CREEST

You don't need a history to start
up a Ghost Walk. You're a natural.

VICAR
Why would I make it up?

CREEST
I'll be late

VICAR
Come by this week, for a small
glass. I will tell you all about
the Felice girl. Now that is
something quite gruesome.

CREEST
A small glass? Make it substantial
and it's a deal.

VICAR
Insobriety?

CREEST
Is that a major sin?

VICAR
I don't decide the grade. I only
accept the confession.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN VILLAGE HALL. MID MORNING

A small functional room with windows on either side and a pitched roof above. Its furniture set out with accompanying easels with wide notepads thereon. All seats are occupied by a mixture of elderly retired men and women. There is a desk and a whiteboard and easel at the front which Creest uses in his role of 'tutor'

CREEST
Good morning Picassos

ALL
Morning Professor

A small sprightly white haired women around 70 DOROTHY, and nearest to the Creest's desk, addresses him after the initial 'Halloes'

DOROTHY
Morning Charles

CREEST
Ahem, morning Mrs Wilberforce

She bends down and picks up a cake from beneath her chair, gets up and approaches Creest.

DOROTHY

I hope you like it. It's Red Velvet.

(Whispers)

You can call me Dorothy you know

CREEST

Thanks you Mrs Wilber...Dorothy

She turns, smirks at her friend and rival ELIZABETH, slightly older but who has retained her dark hair, and sits back down

ELIZABETH

I'm surprised.

DOROTHY

At what?

ELIZABETH

Aren't you a little ways past the finishing post to be flirting?

DOROTHY

Not if you're riding the right horse my dear

ELIZABETH

Dotty, for goodness sake, your language is most crude and besides Harold has been dead less than a year

DOROTHY

Eleven months and twenty two days to be precise Betty and besides sex is best crude.

ELIZABETH

I always thought of Harold as a gentleman.

DOROTHY

He was a gentleman. More's the pity

Elizabeth looks at her with incredulity. Creest clears his throat and begins his class

CREEST

Now if I recall the assignment last week was to create a landscape but in the style of Turner rather than Constable and we can can through your efforts to start with before we move on to...

Creest stops talking. All of the members of his class are not looking at him any more but at something behind him. He turns around and framed within the doorway is a young girl, HOPE LINCOLN, dressed in a clinging thin white top and a short blue and black tartan skirt with black socks pulled up to the knee and wearing stilettos on her feet. She is aged around mid twenties but her coquettish demeanor suggests that of a rebellious teenager, almost childlike. Creest reddens immediately unable to control an instant magnetic pull toward Hope.

HOPE

Professor Creest?

He tries to address her but is dumbfounded

HOPE (CONT'D)

This is the art class and you are Creest, yes?

Creest's tongue unlocks

CREEST

Of course, yes. May I help you?

HOPE

I've just rented a small cottage, Restless Wind, on the outskirts of the village.

DOROTHY

But that's a ruin isn't it?

HOPE

I've had it renovated.

ELIZABETH

Really? You're builders must've have been very circumspect.

CREEST

This is a very quiet village, how on earth...?

HOPE

Oh, I acquired it some time ago.
It's been coming along piecemeal.
I've been abroad for some years.

DOROTHY

Your parents emigrated?

HOPE

No. I went alone.

ELIZABETH

Dotty, the young today are far more
independent than you were in your
teenage years.

DOROTHY

Betty, I doubt if I'm alone in
feeling I belong to an older,
kinder world, but Miss Lincoln, you
must've been a child.

HOPE

That's very flattering but I am not
as youthful as you make me out to
be.

CREEST

Still, strange no-one's noticed
even one builder's van.

HOPE

Well after all it is a little out
of the way and neglected. I
thought you'd be happy to see it
resurrected.

CREEST

Yes, yes, of course. So you heard
about the art classes.

HOPE

Saw the notice in the post office.
Thought it would be a nice way to
introduce myself.

DOROTHY

This class is for retirees

Hope looks crestfallen like a child who has been refused a
toy and looks at Creest who reacts immediately

CREEST

I can't recall any age requirements.

ELIZABETH

Quite correct. If I remember George Chambers's grandson was with us last year, before he went to University.

The class nod and murmur a general consensus.

DOROTHY

That was an exception. The Chambers are old Greeven

ELIZABETH

I think young blood might transfuse things a little around here. Surely you would agree Dotty, being such a sprite yourself?

Creest looks curiously at her

CREEST

Not a metaphor I've ever come across before Mrs Smithers but I can't argue with the premise.

He smiles at Hope and she returns it

CREEST (CONT'D)

Could we set up another space then?

Two gentlemen at the rear of the class grab the same chair and wrangle with it. Hope saunters up to them.

ELIZABETH

Miss Lincoln? You should set up next to Dotty here. It would be a lovely contrast.

HOPE

Talent wise I assume? No, I shall be fine at the rear but do you have another easel?

CREEST

Use mine for this week. I have another easel at home, take the Notepad too, there are more in the cupboard.

He clammers through the class toward the rear and places the easel in front of her chair then retrieves another note pad from a small cupboard beside his desk.

HOPE

You're very kind Mr Creest

CREEST

Please call me Charles

Dorothy shoots Elizabeth a look festooned with daggers. Elizabeth grins broadly. Creest returns to the front.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN VILLAGE HALL. MIDDAY

Creest is discussing the golden triangle or divine proportion in reference to landscape painting. He is demonstrating using a note pad as a replacement for his easel and notices that while the other members of the class are copying him Hope is staring intently directly his way. Once again the force of her attraction embarrasses him so much so that he moves across the front so that her head is hidden behind the easel. After a couple of minutes he looks up and she is again staring unblinkingly at him not seeming to have moved her position. He looks to where he's standing and finds that, unwittingly he has moved back to his original position. Again he moves to the right to block her stare. Another two minutes and he looks up to find for a third time her eyes burning into the back of his head but uncannily he hasn't moved this time. Her stare appears to be coming through the easel and notepad. His own slips from his grip.

DOROTHY

Charles, are you okay?

Creest looks up from the floor. Hope is busily sketching away at her easel.

CREEST

Yes, a touch arthritic I guess

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN VILLAGE HALL. AFTERNOON

The class have broken up and start to file out. Dorothy lingers longest as Hope hasn't left either.

DOROTHY

Now you just enjoy that cake
Charles. No sharing. It's all for
you.

CREEST

Yes, I promise. It may take me a
while, I don't have too great an
appetite these days.

Hope finally gets out of her chair and motions to leave

DOROTHY

Experience bakes a cake you know.
Like great painting.

She leaves, almost reluctantly, Creest shuffling her out
leaving just him and Hope together

HOPE

Shame

CREEST

Oh she's really a very nice lady.
I'm afraid she sees me as a 'catch'

HOPE

No, I mean your appetite. I was
going to invite you to dinner
tomorrow night.

Once again Creest reddens profusely.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Goodness Professor, you're crimson.
My motive is purely physical I'm
afraid in the muscle sense that is.
There's a piano I want shifting.

CREEST

I may struggle with that. Didn't
your removal men...

HOPE

They did, but I am extremely
ephemeral in nature. Capricious,
if you like. I thought it looked
nice where it was and now it
doesn't.

CREEST

Aren't there any stronger men in
the...

She looks at him patronizingly

CREEST (CONT'D)

Yes, you're probably right. There aren't many hearty males to choose from locally.

HOPE

So it's a date?

CREEST

Eh?

HOPE

Honestly professor, you are old enough to be my Father, maybe even...

CREEST

Steady now; one more word and you're a piano mover

She gestures zipping her mouth.

HOPE

Seven o'clock, yes?

CREEST

Fine. I'm looking forward to it.

HOPE

Italian?

CREEST

Yes, splendid. Spent a lot of my career over there.

She ambles out, her gait seeming to be a combination of floating and skipping. She half turns back toward him, her head almost resting on her angled shoulder.

HOPE

Mind you if I wanted a sugar daddy I could do worse.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. EVENING

Hope opens the door and Creest walks in, The decor is typically English cottage style, small windows and a large open fireplace. There is an upright piano against the far window in the small lounge.

CREEST
Ah, the villain

Hope looks at him with a coy, guilty half smile

HOPE
It has castors on the feet but it's
still rather heavy

CREEST
I'm sure I can manage. Where do
you...?

HOPE
Over against the staircase

CREEST
Alright. That shouldn't be too
much of a struggle.

Creest grips one side of the piano and Hope the other.

CREEST (CONT'D)
It's okay I'll try first and if
needed.

She lets go. He braces himself and then heaves quite
forcefully. The piano barely moves.

CREEST (CONT'D)
Perhaps if you could...

She smiles and grips the piano again. It moves easily, so
much so that he nearly careers into the fireplace. He
recovers himself and looks at her

CREEST (CONT'D)
You seem to be a lot stronger than
you think you are.

HOPE
Oh I expect it was sticking on a
nail or something. I just helped
get it free.

HOPE (CONT'D)
That's much better. Please
professor sit down. Would you like
a drink before dinner?

CREEST
What have you got?

HOPE

As a choice you can have a whiskey
or a...whiskey. I'm saving the
wine for the food.

CREEST

Well then whiskey would be fine.
No ice, no water please

She disappears into the kitchen adjacent and returns with a
glass half full.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Generous

HOPE (FROM KITCHEN)

I bought it for a house warming but
to be honest I didn't really expect
the demographics to weigh so
heavily on the...

CREEST

Geriatric side of things?

She walks back in with a large spoon in her hand dripping
with tomato sauce and a line of the same sauce hanging below
her lower lip.

HOPE

Present company of course

Creest stares at the dripping sauce. Impulsively he gets out
of the chair and walks toward her and starts to lick away at
her chin. Then in an instant he is back in the chair. She
is standing over him with the whiskey.

He shakes his head as if he'd been daydreaming

HOPE (CONT'D)

No ice, no water

He takes the drink.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Please come through.

He follows her into the kitchen. A small round table and two
chairs has been set up with a small red and white tablecloth.

HOPE (CONT'D)

A little too bijou

CREEST

No, it's very quaint.

She starts to serve

HOPE

Now Charles, tell me all about
yourself

CUT TO:

INT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. LATE EVENING

They both repair back into the small lounge. Creest sits in
the same chair and Hope lights the fire

CREEST

Are you cold?

HOPE

It's a little chilly

CREEST

Well I'm roasting. That was a
pretty decent red.

HOPE

I guessed that. You had most of it

CREEST

I did, didn't I?

HOPE

I'm not much of a wine lover.
Another whiskey?

CREEST

Oh, I don't...

HOPE

I'm not much of a whiskey drinker
either. Pity to waste it

CREEST

A small one then

She goes back into the kitchen. He can hear her continue to
talk about the things they'd discussed at dinner but after 5
minutes of staring into the hot fire, her voice starts to
become unclear as if she were talking in a bubble. His eye
lids start to drop. The room grows dark even though the
lights are on and then Hope walks in silently. She is
wearing the same outfit she wore to the art class. She
glides to the front of his chair and places her hands gently
on his chest. He notices her mascara and lipstick is smudged
as if she had been crying.

Then Hope slowly moves her hands down and begins to unzip his trousers. He cannot move, neither does he want to. Hope's head then moves down towards his crotch. He braces himself for her touch and she smiles at him as her face dips toward his zipper. When she raises her head again and smiles her mouth is full of razor sharp teeth. She rocks back to attack his genitalia. He screams

He is back in the chair. Hope comes through from the kitchen with the whiskey

HOPE
Are you okay?

CREEST
Sorry, I dropped off. I didn't mean to scream

HOPE
What scream? I thought you were crying for a minute. How silly.

CREEST
Perhaps that piano was a little heavy. If you don't mind can I skip the drink?

HOPE
Okay. Why don't I save it for next time? Maybe you can do something for me.

CREEST
I'm hopeless in the kitchen.

HOPE
I could teach you.

CREEST
I'm afraid I'm a very poor pupil, that's why I became a professor.

HOPE
In my experience learning continues right up to the end

CREEST
You have a very young looking 'old' head on your shoulders then. I should go. It's late

HOPE
Oh, I have something for you

Creest looks awkwardly at her. She runs upstairs. Creest goes to the door and holds onto the handle as if he expects something untoward to happen. She runs back down with a painting in her hand.

HOPE (CONT'D)
It's for you. A present

Creest looks at it uneasily

HOPE (CONT'D)
Recognize it?

CREEST
Yes, yes, it's my cottage. I thought you'd just moved here.

HOPE
Yesterday afternoon after your class. I was touched by the muse.

CREEST
Indeed. Touched is right.

He opens the door. She proffers the painting

HOPE
Charles, your painting

He takes it.

CREEST
Well goodnight. Dinner was...lovely

HOPE
Goodnight professor. See you soon

She shuts the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. NIGHT

He walks away down her path. Inside the cottage he hears a kind of light tapping like someone skipping.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. NIGHT

Creest enters and closes the door. He exhales deeply reflecting on what has just happened to him. He makes his way to the kitchen and grabs a couple of paracetamol and swallows them with a glass of water.

He pulls across a chair and almost collapses into it. He takes another drink of water and looks at the painting. It is a crude, childish rendition of his home. He lets out a loud anxious laugh and slings the picture across the floor tiles. It slides into the corner. He goes upstairs to bed.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH GRAVEYARD. MORNING

Creest ambles up to the Church on his usual route. He is carrying Hope's painting in his hand. He glances, as usual, at the Felice headstone and above the inscription it reads "Hope Lies Here". The flowers from yesterday are withered. He bends down and places his finger into the words and rubs away at them and then looks at his fingertips. He scratches his head and goes into the church.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH, GREEVEN. MORNING

The morning service is just about to finish. There are around a dozen parishioners seated sporadically around the pews. The Vicar, resplendent in his vestments, closes with the final prayer. Creest walks in but remains at the back.

Behind him he hears a prayer being whispered in Latin. He doesn't turn in respect. The prayer is repeated again. On the altar the priest blesses the congregation and the mass finishes. He moves toward the sacristy.

Creest turns to inquire of the parishioner what prayer they were invoking but sees no-one. The congregation file past him and greet him in turn. He heads to the sacristy.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. MORNING

The Vicar is disrobing. There's a tap at the door

VICAR

Come in

Creest steps in

VICAR (CONT'D)

Professor. You're a little early.

The Vicar makes a drinking sign and Creest shakes his head

CREEST

That's the last thing on my mind.

VICAR

Feeling a little fragile today?

CREEST

Whiskey and wine

VICAR

The good Lord only proscribes the latter in a communional context.

CREEST

Is that even a word?

VICAR

Well, how did the dinner go?

CREEST

How the? I didn't tell a soul.

VICAR

Dotty Wilberforce.

CREEST

I thought she left. Eavesdropping eh?

VICAR

It's the fabric of every small village. It's how they operate.

CREEST

You make them sound like a geriatric mafia.

VICAR

The 'Cosy Nostra' as it were

He laughs at his comment. Creest groans

CREEST

It was just dinner Vicar and she wanted me to move her piano.

VICAR

It's Dan, remember? And that's a new one.

CREEST

It's not a euphemism. I'm surprised at you.

VICAR

We're a very broad church these days. Remarkable endeavour.

CREEST

I'm sorry.

VICAR

This young lady renovating 'Restless Winds' A small sherry?

CREEST

Honestly, nothing. You go ahead.

VICAR

I daren't. I have my rounds today and some of the faithful would have a seizure if I were emanating the merest whiff of alcohol before evensong.

The Vicar notices the picture

VICAR (CONT'D)

What have you there?

CREEST

Hope Lincoln gave it to me last night as I left.

The Vicar takes it and holds it up

VICAR

This is your place isn't it? Just dinner then?

CREEST

For God's sake Vicar I'm fifty-nine. She's got to be twenty, something but...

VICAR

She's going to need plenty of lessons. I've seen better subjects in the village school.

CREEST
 Rudimentary is probably an
 understatement

VICAR
 Where will you hang it?

CREEST
 In the shed, probably

VICAR
 She may not forgive you. Mind
 you...

The Vicar adjusts the painting so he is looking at one of the
 corners

VICAR (CONT'D)
 Oh, that's clever. Perhaps there's
 a spark there after all.

CREEST
 What do you mean?

VICAR
 The small figure poking through the
 privet at the bottom of the garden

CREEST
 There is no figure

The Vicar turns it around

VICAR
 Look for yourself

Creest scrutinizes the picture and is shocked to see the head
 of a hooded figure sticking through the hedge at the bottom
 of his garden.

CREEST
 Well I never. I could swear that
 wasn't there last night

VICAR
 You did mix Whiskey and wine

CREEST
 Perhaps. Even so it still doesn't
 qualify as a Constable. Must be my
 week for seeing things afresh.

VICAR
 A time of revelation?

CREEST

Samantha Felice's stone out there.
I always stop at it because her
dying on her eighth birthday always
fascinated me but in two years I
have never noticed that it said
"Hope lies here" above the
transcription.

VICAR

Can't say I noticed that. One
buries so many these days it's hard
to keep track.

CREEST

You said you knew the background to
her death.

VICAR

I know of it or have been
acquainted with it over the years.
As with all mysteries, for it
surely is one, it has been open to
exaggeration. I shall relate it to
you as told to me by my predecessor
the Right Reverend Hall, as a man
of cloth and someone, who by
profession, was called on for
consolation by the family and as a
man of the cloth I will consider
his version as gospel but you can
be the judge of that. I think tea
may be in order. My mouth does get
dry when I blether on.

He goes to the door and shouts for the verger. A voice
returns his call.

VICAR (CONT'D)

Could you bring some tea please?

VERGER (FROM INSIDE THE CHURCH)

Yes your reverence

Vicar closes the door

VICAR

Let's both sit down

There is a small table with two stools in the corner of the
sacristy. Creest shuffles uncomfortable on his seat.

VICAR (CONT'D)

Would you like to repair to the Vicarage?

CREEST

No, I'm fine

VICAR

To be honest we're better suited sitting here with what I'm about to tell you.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. MIDDAY

Creest and the Vicar are talking. The tea is laid out.

VICAR

I arrived at St Helen's just over thirty years ago. I had contracted a rather nasty dose of malaria on a mission in Sierra Leone and was sent to St Helen's to convalesce. As I was about to move on Reverend Hall fell asleep for the final time and the powers that be in the diocese decided to keep me on in a temporary capacity.

CREEST

So your replacement's due any time then?

VICAR

Yes, quite. About a month before he died Reverend Hall and I were having a quiet supper one evening.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. THIRTY YEAR AGO. EVENING

A younger Reverend Dan Harker is sitting at a table beside an open window opposite an elderly man REVEREND HALL. He is aged around eight and has long white hair hanging down at the sides. He is shifting uncomfortably in his chair and has hardly eaten a thing.

VICAR

Are you unwell your reverence?

The old man says nothing but stares out into the sun setting across the hill beyond. The Vicar takes the old man's arm gently.

VICAR (CONT'D)
Reverend Hall, are you ill?

Hall turns to face the Vicar. He has tears in his eyes.

HALL
Today is the 13th April Dan

VICAR
Not an anniversary you look forward to I assume?

HALL
There's a grave out there Dan, a young girl's grave: Samantha Felice. Twenty years ago she died on her birthday.

VICAR
13th April?

Hall nods.

HALL
She was a lovely thing. Her family were French, migrated to England when she was three with her parents Philippe and Angelique. She was bright, popular with her peers and the rest of the villagers alike. Then around three months before her eighth birthday party her whole demeanor altered. She was sullen, her schoolwork suffered and all her friends avoided her but she didn't seem to mind, preferring her own company.

VICAR
What about her parents? Did they confide in you?

HALL
Being French they were raised as Catholics, but didn't practice their faith. I did approach them but they shrugged the whole thing off as growing pains.

VICAR

What about Samantha? Did you ever talk to her?

HALL

I recall after one of the Children's services she came up to me and asked me why I worshiped a God that was so cruel. I was stunned. That sort of vehemence one normally expects from adults who have experienced tragedy and trauma, who see prayer as a kind of unanswered meaningless mantra. A few days before her party she seemed to pick up and was herself again. To be honest it might have been a damp squib had she not. I was invited and arrived just as the games were in full swing. Then it was time to cut the cake. All gathered round this beautiful cake. The candles were lit. We all sang Happy Birthday and she blew out all eight in one go. He father handed her a knife to cut the cake and I swear I will never forget the smile she gave him just before she did it.

VICAR

Did what?

HALL

She ran the blade across her throat severing the artery.

VICAR

Good God

HALL

There was pandemonium. Children were screaming, parents were grappling them, pulling them away and in the middle Philippe, frantic, grabbing the girl's throat trying to stem the blood.

VICAR

The mother, where was she?

HALL

Angelique collapsed.

VICAR

It must have been horrific. Such a waste of life.

HALL

I've never forgotten it.

VICAR

Why did she do it?

Hall shrugs

HALL

The official verdict was suicide of course but why a young girl with the whole of her life ahead of her decides to end it, and in such a way? That smile she gave her father, it haunts me. I see it in my dreams. It will be the last thing I see before I die.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. PRESENT DAY. AFTERNOON

Creest is looking ashen.

VICAR

It's harrowing isn't it?

Creest answers but his inflection is flat, monotonic

CREEST

I...I...poor little thing. What a terrible tale.

VICAR

If only that were the end of it.

CREEST

What could be worse

VICAR

I mentioned a mystery and Samantha Felice's suicide will remain one while we wend our weary way through this world but what befell her father is, if not a greater mystery, certainly on par with his daughter's sad demise.

CREEST

So the Reverend Hall hadn't quite finished?

VICAR

No. It took several minutes and some gentle probing from me but eventually he elaborated on what happened to her parents, in particular Philippe.

Creest clears his throat.

VICAR (CONT'D)

More tea?

CREEST

Anything stronger?

The Vicar smiles

VICAR

No tales now

There are some books on a small shelf behind him. The Vicar moves a large volume to reveal a small bottle of whiskey. He pours some into Creest's tea cup

VICAR (CONT'D)

Camouflage.

CREEST

You?

VICAR

No, I'll indulge by proxy

Creest looks at the book

CREEST

Isn't that out of place?

The vicar takes it down and hands it to Creest. It flops open at a particular place

CREEST (CONT'D)

The Dhammapada?

He reads from the open page

CREEST (CONT'D)

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thought.

(MORE)

CREEST (CONT'D)

If a man speaks or acts with an
evil thought, pain follows him..."

CUT TO:

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. AFTERNOON - OVERCAST

The sound of children laughing can be heard inside. Party
poppers go off. The glow of candlelight can be seen inside.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. AFTERNOON - OVERCAST

VICAR

Looks like rain. It may get heavy

CREEST

Looking for an excuse to stay in?

VICAR

I'm only glad to have people who
still want to see me. The numbers
are dwindling fast. Faith hasn't
enough gears for the modern world
I'm afraid. It's becoming an
anachronism.

CREEST

It's old. Like us. Surplus to
requirements.

VICAR

Did you ever?

CREEST

Believe? No

VICAR

You must've seen all those great
works of the renaissance
and...haven't you ever
considered...?

CREEST

Not really, certainly not in a
loving God context, but maybe in a
judgmental kind of way.

VICAR

Old Testament eh? Making people
believe through fear not love.

CREEST

Oh come on Dan, you can't tell me you've never doubted.

VICAR

I won't lie. It happens. Incurable, cruel diseases; senseless atrocities and tragedies, awful things one can't just rationalize away as part of a larger plan. But, you know, for every illness, car accident, murder, there are thousands that don't happen. Should we not give God credit for that?

CREEST

I'm not sure the Felices would.

The Vicar takes a deep breath.

VICAR

They moved back to France and settled in a another village like Greeven, somewhere in the Auvergne, out of the way, presumably trying to come to terms with what happened and putting as much distance between themselves and Greeven.

CREEST

How do you hide a secret like that?

Creest's tone was flat as if he were addressing someone that wasn't present.

VICAR

At first they kept to themselves. They were polite but private. Then a year later they had new neighbours, the Lecuyers, principally Henri, a psychiatrist, Juliette, his wife and their eight year old daughter Harriet, a blonde blue-eyed little angel if I'm led to believe and quite the artist

CREEST

I expect this brought back all the trauma from the year before

VICAR

Strangely yes and no. Having the little girl next door seemed to bring Philippe out of his misery. He helped her with her drawing, brought her little gifts.

CREEST

And Angelique?

VICAR

She was in transit as it were; outwardly happy for her husband yet not quite ready to commit herself back into the world. Philippe became almost a second father to Harriet in the end he made Angelique jealous and so she refused to have the child anywhere inside their house.

The Vicar notices Creest shuffling uncomfortably on his seat

VICAR (CONT'D)

Would you prefer me to stop?

CREEST

No, no. I'm fine.

The Vicar looks less than reassured but proceeds.

VICAR

One day in January Henri had attended a conference in Geneva and had been delayed getting home and had to stop overnight. Juliette had promised to visit a maiden Aunt in Clermont-Ferrard and asked Philippe if he would mind stopping next door to look after Harriet until her father got home. He agreed. It was a frosty day but dry and around noon he decided to take her for a walk in the woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. AFTERNOON

The interior continues to glow from candlelight but the vivacity of the children has dissipated and replaced with a low chanting.

CHILDREN (UNSEEN)

"Videte ne contemnatis unum ex his
pusillis dico enim vobis. Dico enim
vobis quia angeli eorum in caelis
semper vident faciem Patris mei qui
in caelis est"

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. AFTERNOON. DARK THUNDERY
SKIES

VICAR

Little Harriet took her pencils and
pad with her and they took off to
the woods to do some drawing.
Juliette arrived home at eight.
Henri was still making his way home
but she was surprised to see the
house in darkness and assumed
Harriet was next door with the
Felices. When she knocked on the
door she was met by a manic
Angelique.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RURAL HAMLET IN THE AUVERGNE, FRANCE. NIGHT

A blonde middle aged woman ANGELIQUE is arguing frantically
with JULIETTE, a smaller dark haired woman around her early
thirties

JULIETTE

Angelique, where's Harriet?
Where's Philippe?

ANGELIQUE

I don't know. I've looked all over
the village. No-one has seen them.

Behind them a group of a dozen men and women arrive. A
spokeswoman calls out, ignoring Angelique completely.

WOMAN

Juliette, we've organized a search
party. Maybe you should come with
us.

JULIETTE

Why would they be missing?

One of the men speaks

MAN

We've had reports of wolves

The spokeswoman digs him in the ribs

WOMAN

I'm sure they're okay. This is the
Auvergne after all. Come, we have
torches

Juliette looks hard at Angelique

ANGELIQUE

I don't want to go

Juliette turns and joins the group and they walk into the
woods

As they enter the woods it starts to snow. Their torch beams
pick up the flecks as they get ever larger and more frequent.

JULIETTE

My poor baby

CUT TO:

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. LATE AFTERNOON. DARK THUNDERY
SKIES

The chanting of the children increases in intensity and
volume. The glow of the candlelight is all pervasive seeming
to extend outwards piercing the dark clouds overhead like
inverse lightning strikes

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS. NIGHT

The group continue deeper into the trees all the while
calling out Harriet and Philippe's names.

They halt suddenly as at their feet there is a drawing pad,
half covered with fresh snow.

JULIETTE

It's hers, it's Harriet's

An impetus spurs the group on quicker. They reach a nearby
clearing. A clicking sound can be heard close by.

Those holding torches point them in all directions to look for the source but see nothing. To their right they catch the sound of a child giggling. The torch beams switch in that direction and there beside a huge tree is a small white figure. Juliette reacts first.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
Harriet, Harriet, my Harriet

She runs clumsily through the snow. She grabs and embraces her. The child has no expression on her face. The others join them.

WOMAN
Is she okay?

Juliette runs her hands up and down Harriet.

JULIETTE
She feels fine, cold but fine

MAN
Harriet, where's Mr Felice?
Where's Philippe.

She doesn't answer

JULIETTE
She's in shock. She can't talk.

They hear a creaking sound from above them and direct the torches up. There, swinging from a large branch, is Philippe, his round eyes wide-open and bulging.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. LATE AFTERNOON. DARK THUNDERY SKIES

The chanting ceases and the candlelight is extinguished.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRISTY, ST HELEN'S CHURCH. AFTERNOON. DARK THUNDERY SKIES

VICAR
They took the little girl home.
The coroner's report said Philippe
had been hanging there for less
than an hour.

CREEST

So he was alive when the search party started out. Why didn't she run - get help?

VICAR

No-one ever found out. She never spoke of the incident nor did it seem to affect her.

CREEST

But why would you do that in front of a little girl especially after what happened to Samantha? Unless he was...

VICAR

Murdered? Official report was suicide. The motive? According to the coroner it was repressed guilt. Rather than help him out of his misery his relationship with Harriet brought it all to a head.

CREEST

It's tragic but hardly mysterious.

VICAR

I haven't finished. When they found Philippe hanging there didn't seem to be any means for him to climb up. The sides of the tree were completely smooth and there were no footholds.

CREEST

He had a rope didn't he? He simply throws it over the branch, climbs up and uses it to kill himself.

VICAR

The witnesses who helped cut him down said that the rope was no more than three feet long. The branch was a good seven or eight feet off the ground.

CREEST

Then it was murder. Someone else strung him up, maybe two people.

VICAR

There were only two sets of footprints. Philippe's and Harriet's.

Creest mulls over the situation

VICAR (CONT'D)

They checked. The footprints in the new snow matched both Philippe and Harriet's shoes. There were no others.

Outside a huge crack of thunder bursts and a lightning streak illuminates the window behind the Vicar's head. Creest nearly jumps out of his chair. The Vicar reacts calmly.

CREEST

Jesus! Oh...sorry Dan

VICAR

I think the weather has rather beaten me today.

He pours himself a whiskey

VICAR (CONT'D)

Just a small one. Another professor?

CREEST

A large one

VICAR

Oh I nearly forgot the last and perhaps strangest detail.

Creest takes a gulp of whiskey

VICAR (CONT'D)

When they looked at Harriet's footprints they didn't correspond to someone walking or staggering in the snow.

CREEST

I don't follow

VICAR

It looked as if she'd been running or skipping.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH. LATE AFTERNOON. CLEARING SKIES

Creest takes his leave of the Vicar. He walks through the graveyard deep in thought, his expression disconcerting. He passes Samantha Felice's stone. There is no sign of the 'Hope Lies Here' inscription. The flowers on the grave are rotten as if they had aged far more quickly than expected.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREEST'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. LATE AFTERNOON

Creest walks through his gate but rather than enter the house goes around toward the garden at the rear. He stands beside the kitchen door and looks down toward the privet hedge at the bottom some thirty yards away. Swallowing hard he starts down. The grass is wet and mud sticks to his shoes, nevertheless he pushes on. He arrives at the place where the figure was poking through the privet in Hope's picture. He can see nothing. He stoops down and tentatively pulls back the hedge but there is nothing there. He stand up again and turns back toward the house. In the lawn between him and the house is the back of a small hooded figure seemingly motionless. Creest is frozen to the spot. He opens his mouth to say something but cannot. To his right a black shape hurtles toward him and a screech cracks the silence. It is a sparrowhawk and Creest ducks to avoid it. When he recovers he notices the hooded figure has gone. He rushes into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. LATE AFTERNOON

He rushes into the kitchen and into the lounge. Behind the couch he pulls out Hope's painting and looks at it.

CREEST

No, this can't be true. This can't
be real

In the picture the figure that was in the hedge has moved into the middle of the lawn. It is hooded and its face is hidden. It is in exactly the same place as it had been outside in the real world.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. MORNING

Creest is standing beside the gate to Hope's cottage. He pushes at it and it half falls off its hinges. The prettiness of the cottage on his previous visit has turned to decay. The paint on the door and windows is peeling and cracks emanate across the woodwork. He knocks on the door but there is no answer. He peers through the lounge window. It looks deserted. He raps gingerly at the frame. He is about to walk away when he notices the front door ajar when it had been closed. He prods it open.

CREEST

Hope

There's no answer. He walks in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. MORNING

Creest walks slowly into the small hallway and wanders into the kitchen. As with the lounge there is no sign that anyone has lived there in years. Underneath the worn and dilapidated table he spots a birthday candle, its wick tinged, as if it had only been used recently. He exits and starts upstairs. Again, conscious of being seen as intruding, he calls out her name.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. HOPE'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. MORNING

Standing in the door of the master bedroom he closes his eyes sensing her, opening them to find the empty bed now occupied by Hope lying beneath the sheets, curled to one side and sleeping deeply.

He moves on tiptoe not wanted to disturb her but also fascinated by her seeing her slumbering. As he reaches the end of the bed she turns and, as if sensing him, slowly opens her eyes. He stops deep in anticipation bracing himself for her to scream. She doesn't. She smiles and then beckons him closer.

He obeys helplessly until he stands above her. Silently she grips the top of the blanket and peels it back. He collapses onto his knees unable to bear the weight of his trembling body.

As the blanket rolls back she is dressed in a doll's outfit. He stares at her unblinking.

She starts to suck her thumb as if she were performing fellatio. He shoots back away from her. Her head seems enormous as if in the process of transformation and her tongue lolls outside of her mouth and lists from corner to corner. Then the piercing shriek of a child wailing reverberates throughout the cottage, seeming to emanate from within the walls and up through the floorboards. Creest spins around facing the mirror but the glass is without reflection. It has become a window displaying a view of a long garden enclosed on three sides by privet. It's Creest's house. A small hooded figure faces him. The face hidden under the folds of the hood. Slowly it moves toward him. He turns to run but finds his arms pinioned at his sides. Hope has grabbed him, her strength a direct contradiction to her mass. He wrestles to free himself but in vain. He can hear her giggling like a schoolchild behind him. Ahead of him the figure is almost upon him. The face beneath the hood is featureless except for two piercing eyes shining from within. It leaps from the mirror as if to devour him.

He wakes up across the bed. The room visible within the mirror. Creest gathers his wits, runs downstairs and back outside.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. MORNING

Creest goes upstairs. He looks at picture again. Nothing has changed. He places it on the bed and heads into the back bedroom overlooking the back lawn. He looks down onto the garden. There is no-one there.

CREEST

This is a trick. Christ I've been around the whole world and seen all sorts of so called 'black magic'. That dinner. She gave me something there, maybe the wine or the whiskey.

He sits at a small dressing table and opens one of the drawers. Underneath some towels is a laptop. He pulls it out and switches it on. He starts to surf the internet. He types in 'pentimento' and starts to examine the responses. A name is prominent in the first few search replies: Professor August Brevocet. Creest clicks on a link. Brevocet is listed as resident at University College, London. Creest leans back in his chair.

CREEST (CONT'D)

I think I worked out your little
game Hope and I think I have found
the man who can prove it.

He closes down the link, closes the bedroom door and pulls
over the curtains, despite it being a bright day, and carries
on browsing.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. GREEVEN VILLAGE HALL. MIDDAY

Creest's art class is gathered. Hope has not shown up.

DOROTHY

Charles, where's the new girl?

CREEST

I have no idea Dorothy.

ELIZABETH

I saw her

Creest looks shocked

CREEST

You did?

ELIZABETH

Yes I was visiting a friend in
Wisham and I just happened to see
her outside the school house, oh, a
couple of days ago.

DOROTHY

She has children?

ELIZABETH

I don't think so. I mean I don't
really know her as well as others

Creest looks embarrassed, Dorothy daggers

CREEST

What was she doing in Wisham? It's
a good five miles away.

ELIZABETH

She seemed to be playing games with
the children.

DOROTHY

Isn't that a little queer? I mean these days I thought schools had to be careful.

ELIZABETH

Actually the teacher was outside watching. She didn't seem unconcerned.

DOROTHY

Does she have children then Charles?

CREEST

How would I know?

DOROTHY

Didn't she invite you to dinner?

CREEST

With the ulterior motive of moving a piano.

DOROTHY

I can see that. A young man like yourself.

ELIZABETH

Dotty

DOROTHY

Yes Betty

ELIZABETH

Maybe you should get yourself a piano

The group start to laugh. Dorothy's face turns red

CREEST

I think we had better move on. For what it is worth I rather think Hope Lincoln has tired of our little community already.

DOROTHY

She's left? Oh.

Dorothy smiles as if she has pulled victory from the jaws of defeat.

ELIZABETH

But she's barely been here a week

CREEST

Well she was very young in comparison to the majority of Greeveners.

DOROTHY

Perhaps she's moved to Wisham and renting 'Restless Winds' out

CREEST

Yes, her cottage. Are you sure nobody in the village ever went out there while these so called works were going on?

ELIZABETH

Funnily enough I happened to mention the new girl a few days ago in the pub. Said that she'd had the place done up. Old Tom Livermore thought I was pulling everyone's leg. Said he often walked his Springer out past the cottage, it having a nervous nature and all. There's never anyone out there so he can let it off the lead.

DOROTHY

Betty dear, come to the point, before my watercolour dries.

ELIZABETH

The point is, Dotty my dear, that Tom claims the cottage is as much of a ruin as it has been these past twenty years and no-one could be living in it, except squatters maybe.

Creest is ashen and silent. Dorothy interrupts his thoughts

DOROTHY

Charles. Perhaps we can get on now?

Creest says nothing and turns to stare bleakly out the window.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Professor?

Creest walks toward the door.

CREEST
No class today, sorry

He walks out to the class's astonishment.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. MID-MORNING

CREEST
I tell you she's gone

Creest is in the kitchen with the Vicar who is making tea.
He has the painting with him.

VICAR
I don't understand. Are you sure?

CREEST
I called on her. The cottage
doesn't look like anyone has been
in it for years.

VICAR
And yet you had dinner there the
other night? I did think it
remarkable at the time.

Creest looks bewildered, scared and irritated simultaneously

CREEST
Do you think she gave me something,
that night I had dinner?

VICAR
How did she cook it? With a match?

Creest looks irratingly at him.

VICAR (CONT'D)
You did say it was still a ruin
didn't you? Maybe she ordered in.

CREEST
Is there another cottage out there?

VICAR
Where are you going with this?

CREEST
Perhaps I went to an adjoining
cottage?

VICAR
There isn't one

CREEST
How do you know? Have you ever
been out there?

VICAR
I have but not since I buried the
last occupant of 'Restless Winds'

CREEST
Another ghost story?

VICAR
This is an ancient part of the
realm my dear man, there are always
ghost stories.

Creest sits down at the kitchen table. The Vicar places a
pot of tea down in front of him and fetches two cups and milk
from a well stocked fridge.

VICAR (CONT'D)
Would you like a little...?

CREEST
No, I'll take the next ghost story
neat.

The Vicar also sits.

VICAR
Greeven village dates back to the
middle of the fifteenth century.
The original hamlet was founded
some two miles to the west.

CREEST
So Hope's cottage...

VICAR
Indeed. 'Restless Winds' was one
of the first buildings in Greeven,
established by the lord of the
district, one Ronald Wolf,
apparently related to William the
Conqueror, and included extensive
farmland. He built a dozen small
cottages for the serfs who worked
the farm for him. 'Restless Winds'
was one of the twelve although it
hadn't acquired its title then.

CREEST

These are the facts then?

VICAR

It is also a fact that a mysterious blight gripped the farm. Animals died, crops failed and yet other manors within the district flourished.

CREEST

Did he have enemies?

VICAR

You didn't stay powerful in Medieval England with acts of kindness.

CREEST

He built homes, doesn't that count for anything?

VICAR

Mere convenience. He wasn't giving away land and rent was deducted from their wages.

CREEST

Why cut your own throat? It may have been his land but it was their livelihoods.

VICAR

They wouldn't of course, unless...

CREEST

Unless?

VICAR

Witchcraft

CREEST

Here comes the folk lore.

VICAR

No, this is fact.

Creest rises from the chair.

CREEST

Come on Dan, there's a rational explanation to what's happening to me, it's not witchcraft.

VICAR

Patience my dear Creest. I'm not suggesting that, but maybe something in our history may have a bearing on your relationship with Miss Lincoln.

CREEST

There was no...

The Vicar smiles. Creest frowns.

VICAR

Let me fetch the old parish journal. It's all in there.

The Vicar leaves the kitchen. Creest goes to the window and looks out toward the Church.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST HELEN'S CHURCH GRAVEYARD. MID-MORNING

There is a figure knelt down beside Samantha Felice's gravestone.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. MID-MORNING

Creest strains to see who the figure is. Behind him in the hall a phone rings and he hears the Vicar answer it. He looks back at the headstone and the figure has gone. The Vicar hangs up and then appears carrying a large volume. Creest doesn't mention the sighting.

VICAR

Unfortunately I need to leave on Church business. Can I leave you to it? I shan't be more than twenty minutes.

Creest looks uncertain.

CREEST

I couldn't...I couldn't borrow it?

VICAR

Afraid not. It's not a trust issue you understand. As a historical document I'm responsible for it and if anything out of the ordinary.

He places the book on the table and finds the entries he is looking for.

VICAR (CONT'D)

This is it.

Creest takes another look out of the window. The Vicar notices his concern.

VICAR (CONT'D)

Is something the matter?

CREEST

No, no.

VICAR

You look a little unsettled. Would you prefer to come back later?

CREEST

I'll be fine. Please attend to your call.

The Vicar goes out into the hall. Creest watches him as he slips on his coat. He calls from the front door.

VICAR

(off-screen)

We'll have an early night cap when I return. You may need it. We can have a little chat about old Greeven and toast to the ghosts that may or may not be with us still.

Creest hears the front door shut. He looks out the window again. The graveyard is empty.

CREEST

He must be a wow in the pulpit.

He sits down and begins to read.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN, FIFTEENTH CENTURY. MORNING

A man, GRANGER, exits what was 'Restless Winds' cottage in medieval Norfolk. He is stockily built but with an unfortunate natural sullen demeanor. Behind him his wife, ALIZON, appears in the doorway, with a small blond girl, HEATHER. She scowls at him as he leaves.

He walks through the small hamlet toward an expanse of fields at the western edge of the village.

ALIZON

I expect ye back before sunset

GRANGER

Aye, aye.

ALIZON

Watch the master don't blame ye for all this trouble. I told ye, Cooper be a wrong 'un. Mind he don't land it all on yer plate.

GRANGER

I'll take care of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS WITHIN THE GREEVEN MANOR. MORNING

Granger is seen with several men pulling at withered crops. Some are shaking their heads. A burly looking man, COOPER, approaches him.

COOPER

I can't explain it Warden, b'aint our fault. Land just seems to have given up.

GRANGER

Aye, that'll pacify the master. Save our jobs.

COOPER

How's the wife?

GRANGER

Worse. Can't abide the woman. Can't even touch her, not since the bairn.

COOPER

You better be careful.

GRANGER

Meaning.

COOPER

Bain't no secret - you and young Maggie.

GRANGER
My business.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANGER'S COTTAGE. NIGHT

Granger stalks around the kitchen. He hears a light tap on the door to the yard and opens it. A young girl aged around 15, MAGGIE, hands him a bag. He kisses her passionately and bids her to go. He closes the door. He walks to a corner of the kitchen and empties the contents of the bag behind a barrel.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, GRANGER'S COTTAGE. NIGHT

Granger enters. Alizon is asleep in the bed and the child in a smaller bed near the window. He creeps slowly toward his wife. He bends over her, careful not to wake her and gently presses his right hand into hers. He tiptoes across to the smaller bed. Heather is not asleep. She looks directly at him. He strokes her hair with his left hand. She whimpers. Behind them Alizon starts to stir. Granger turns and leaves quietly.

CUT TO

INT. GRANGER'S COTTAGE. NIGHT

Granger is at the sink washing his hands. A grim smile breaks across his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS WITHIN THE GREEVEN MANOR. NEXT DAY

Granger and his gang are approached by WOLF, the Lord of the Manor. He is dressed regally compared to the shabby clothes of the workers and has a walking stick. Granger throw up his hands in frustration as Wolf starts to berate him. Cooper and the others back away.

WOLF
Are you trying to ruin me Granger?

GRANGER
No sir, but we've done all we can.

WOLF

That sounds like a resignation
speech.

GRANGER

No sir, I want to serve. I need to
serve.

WOLF

Then serve someone who can afford
failure, I can't.

GRANGER

I've done as good as any other man
you could employ.

WOLF

So is it sabotage?

GRANGER

I suspect so sir but maybe not in a
direct kind of fashion.

WOLF

Riddles won't save your position
Warden.

Wolf raises his stick and beats Granger over the head and
shoulders

GRANGER

Sir, I fear the land has been
cursed but my blame in all of this
was unknown to me until last night.

WOLF

Explain man and make it good or
I'll beat you every inch of the way
out of my Manor.

Wolf puts down his stick.

GRANGER

It may be easier to show you sir.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANGER'S COTTAGE. LATER, SAME MORNING

Granger opens the door and is followed by Wolf and two men. Granger leads them to the barrel and pushes it away to reveal a dead butchered chicken covered in blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANGER'S COTTAGE. MORNING

The men are pulling out Alizon who is screaming to Granger for help. Her hands are stained with blood. Granger ignores her and addresses Wolf instead.

GRANGER

She's been worshipping the evil one
behind my back. Bain't any wonder
my work's been suffering

A skeptical Wolf stares at Granger

GRANGER (CONT'D)

Ii's in all ignorance I carried
that curse out into the fields with
me.

There is a small crowd of villagers surrounding them. They are baying at Alizon. Voices cry out 'Witch' and 'Burn Her' Wolf's skepticism turns to disdain. He addresses Alizon, who is being held by two of the men.

WOLF

Do you worship Satan, woman?

ALIZON

No, I married him.

She spits at Granger. The crowd react. Wolf looks at her husband.

WOLF

Why shouldn't we burn you?

GRANGER

I'm not the cursed one. I be
cursed like the land is. Will ye
burn the land too?

Behind him Maggie bursts to the front carrying a kettle of water.

MAGGIE

Master, Granger's a good man, I
tell ye. She's the witch.

Wolf turns around to confront her

WOLF

Why should ye know of her, are ye a
kinswoman?

MAGGIE

I'm no kin of hers but I seen her
pass my cottage and go out into the
woods around midnight. Only one
reason to go into the woods at that
time and that's to meet the Devil.

The crowd are becoming more and more animated in their desire
for 'justice' Wolf questions Alizon.

WOLF

Is it true?

She ignores him and turns her attention to Maggie.

ALIZON

So it's ye he's seeing then?

She looks directly at Wolf and whispers to him but within
earshot of her husband

ALIZON (CONT'D)

Master, I be innocent. My husband
cannot abide to touch me. I
guessed he had a lover but I didn't
know who until now. I don't know
nothing about crops so how could I
cause 'em to fail. Making me a
scapegoat won't serve you a table
of food but it may save my
faithless husband a job for now and
the liberty to wed his mistress.

WOLF

Not if I burn him too.

Maggie overhears this. She produces a wooden cross from her
skirt and throws it on the ground

MAGGIE

If Granger be cursed, let him take
up the cross.

It lands in mud in front of Granger. The crowd's attention is drawn to the challenge. Wolf looks at Granger.

WOLF

Pick it up then.

All eyes are on the scene except Maggie who opens up the kettle top. Steam rises from within. She produces another cross, a metal one, from her skirt and dips it into the boiling water using her fingertips. Granger picks up the wooden cross. He kisses it and holds it aloft. The crowd cheers.

GRANGER

I told you sir, bain't no devil,
not me. She admitted I bain't slept
with her for years. The good in me
knew she were bad.

Maggie throws the other cross at Alizon

MAGGIE

Let her take up the cross too.

Wolf nods to the men. They release her. Alizon freely bends down and picks it up only for the heat to scald her palm and she releases it. The crowd gasp. Granger grabs his wife's hand and shows it to the crowd. It is red and burnt.

GRANGER

Proof enough. I took the same
challenge and passed.

Repeated cries of 'burn her' reverberate. Wolf gestures to the men. They drag Alizon away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS WITHIN THE GREEVEN MANOR. AFTERNOON

Alizon is tied to a stake with wood stacked all around her. In the crowd Granger stands dispassionately holding Heather's hand. The little girl is visibly upset but Granger insists she watches. Maggie is there but keeps her distance at the back.

Alizon spots her smiling triumphantly and stares deeply at her, so much so that Maggie's smile dissipates and she looks at the ground. She directs her attention to Granger. She murmurs something inaudible as they light the wood beneath her. Granger clutches at his stomach as if in pain but then it eases. As the flames grow she looks at the child, Heather, last. She shouts above the flames.

ALIZON

Don't cry daughter. We will be together in paradise but only after we visit Hell upon the living.

The flames engulf her feet, her lower body and then across her chest and finally completely. She remains silent throughout the ordeal.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS WITHIN THE GREEVEN MANOR. MONTHS LATER. MORNING

Granger and his gang are reaping wheat.

COOPER

Ye getting married then?

GRANGER

Aye, after the harvest is in.

COOPER

Fine lass.

GRANGER

She is, and young Heather needs a proper mother.

COOPER

How long ye reckon she be practicing?

GRANGER

Don't ask me, ask Satan. He'd have the answers, only let on you be speaking to him.

COOPER

I was only curious.

Cooper looks at him strangely

GRANGER

What?

COOPER

I have to admit for a while I thought you'd planned it. Never reckoned Alizon for that kind of thing but...

GRANGER

Didn't ye hear me? I told ye something about her repulsed me. I were driven into Maggie's arms. I needed a wife's comfort and grace even it meant getting them elsewhere. A man's a man after all.

COOPER

I don't doubt that but I were meaning the manner of her death. How could anybody burn and not cry out? Only a witch I said to me'self. Warden were right all along.

GRANGER

Land recovering was just a coincidence then?

COOPER

Just saying is all. Co-incidences 'ave to be, otherwise wouldn't need the word would we?

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. PRESENT DAY. NOON

Creest leans back and behind him the kitchen window is rapped. Creest nearly leaps out of his chair. He can see the Vicar beaming at him. He enters.

VICAR

I expected you'd have finished by now.

CREEST

Lucky it's not me that's finished. You strike me as a little unorthodox Dan.

VICAR

No I'm strictly Protestant.

CREEST

This isn't helping. What's happening to me isn't witchcraft.

VICAR

I'm not suggesting it is. I don't believe in it any more than you do.

CREEST

Are you saying that maybe I've a relationship to Granger? Is it Alizon's curse haunting the village and is as ineffective today as it was back in the fifteenth century?

VICAR

Ineffective? Where are you up to?

He sits down beside Creest and examines the book.

VICAR (CONT'D)

Oh you haven't got to the good bit yet.

CREEST

There's more?

The Vicar turns the page over

VICAR

Unfortunately the account of poor Alizon's death and the end of the page does mean a lot of readers assume that is the end of the story.

(pause)

CREEST

You seriously believe one can burn to death at the stake and absorb the agony?

VICAR

Hardly. I would assume Alizon had a coronary before the flames seared any part of her flesh. Watching it this would provide further proof of her witchcraft.

CREEST

It claims here the land recovered. Did Granger marry the girl?

VICAR

Read on, I'll fetch us some sustenance.

Creest reads

CUT TO:

INT. GRANGER'S COTTAGE. NIGHT

Granger and Maggie, newly wed, are making love. Heather lies in the small bed beside them. She is awake but is covering her ears to drown out the exertions of her father and step-mother. After they finish Maggie turns over to sleep. Granger lies on his back but remains awake.

He rubs both his shoulders as if a shrill cold wind had blown in. Outside he hears a sound. He rises up and looks toward the open window.

GRANGER

Are ye mad woman? What I tell ye
about shutting up at night?

MAGGIE

I shut up every night. Usually
afore and after...and during.

She giggles. Granger gets out of bed and walks toward the window. Heather hears him and puts her hands down at her side and pretends to sleep. Granger grabs the latch and pulls the window to. He notices a dark figure which seems to be looking up at him. He opens the window for a better look but its gone. As it closes it up a sharp gust rains in past him. He shivers and slams the window tight. He looks down at Heather and for a second it seems she is the same figure. He draws back but the illusion is replaced by the sleeping child.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm cold husband. Come back to bed
and warm me.

He climbs in beside her

GRANGER

You'd be a lot warmer if ye mind to
this house.

MAGGIE

Never be as warm as her what slept
here a'fore me

GRANGER

Let's leave the dead below.

They turn to sleep. After a second they can hear Heather fidgeting.

GRANGER (CONT'D)

Heather, girl, go sleep now. I got
a long day ahead of me.

Crying comes from the smaller bed.

GRANGER (CONT'D)

See to her

MAGGIE

Not my problem. You got rid of her
mother - you suckle her.

GRANGER

Watch I don't get rid of you.

He rises again to be faced by a dark hooded figure standing beside his bed. The face is hidden beneath the shadow of the hood

GRANGER (CONT'D)

Merciful Jesus

The figure brings a knife down into Granger's neck. Maggie, disturbed by Granger's words, turns around, sees the attack and screams. Granger is frantically clutching at his neck to stop the blood pumping out. The figure slowly walks around toward Maggie's side. She is frozen with terror. She tries to scream again but nothing emanates from her throat. The figure descends on her.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. LATE AFTERNOON

Creest is still reading the parish records, a large glass of whisky in front of him. The Vicar is sitting beside him. He also has a drink.

CREEST

(reading)

They were both found dead from stab wounds in the morning. The field workers had gone there after Granger didn't show up for work. The girl, Heather, was asleep in her bed, unharmed. It goes on here to say a hooded figure was seen running from the cottage with the open window behind them.

Stops reading

CREEST (CONT'D)

Alizon?

VICAR

Rumors passed down it was the Devil sent on her behalf for vengeance, but there's your connection. I must admit it took me a while to marry the two together. I've only ever read the Parish journal sporadically and that out of sheer boredom one night when the village was snowed in. Quite unnerved me. Still, Christmas is the season for ghost stories.

CREEST

So my hooded figure is the same one that slaughtered Granger and Maggie and nowt she's coming for me because I happen to live in the same cottage?

VICAR

Calm yourself dear man. You are probably quite right suspecting this the work of a student you have rebuffed in the past. They have obviously familiarized themselves with the history of Greeven and in particular this cottage with the intent of trying to scare you witless to extract some compensation for their rebuttal.

CREEST

But drugging me into hallucination, painting figures into landscapes - it seems an extravagance if all I'm guilty of is telling a student the truth.

VICAR

Most murders are committed by people that are scared of, or perhaps cannot accept, what the truth of their own lives is.

CREEST

Nothing like providing solace to a troubled man.

The Vicar smiles

VICAR

It's just an observation. No-one is trying to kill you.

CREEST

What happened to the little girl?

VICAR

The Villagers burned her too.

Creest looks horrified. Reads the next section.

CREEST

But she was only eight.

VICAR

Superstition breeds extreme human behavior. If Heather presented a risk to the livelihood of the Manor so be it.

CREEST

And Wolf?

VICAR

Wolf was a businessman. He needed workers. He needed stability.

CREEST

And 'Restless Winds'?

VICAR

It was reoccupied and as far as the records state there were no unusual events relating to Granger's place after his murder, although you'll find sporadic and unsubstantiated reports of strange figures roaming the Village. All attributed to Alizon looking for lone victims to drag down to hell with her. She would become the threat parents used to threaten mischievous children.

CREEST

She looking for me now? In the guise of Hope?

VICAR.

I'm sure Miss Lincoln is a lot more substantial than Greeven's ghost.

Creest reads again

CREEST

It says the name 'Restless Winds' was attributed to an ex-sailor that lived here circa 1803. He was it's last resident.

They exchange looks.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Here comes the folklore

VICAR

There is just one small postscript to the story.

CREEST

I'm all spooked out Dan

VICAR

This has a direct correlation to Granger's cottage.

He takes the journal from Creest. He thumbs several pages on from the point where Creest has stopped reading. After a few seconds he finds what he is looking for.

VICAR (CONT'D)

Ah, here we are. Shall I read this?

Creest nods wearily

CREEST

Could we make it brief.

VICAR

After the sailor's death, early in the 1800s, the cottage fell into disrepair. Inexorably linked with the Alizon myth, it became a kind of Boo Radley house.

CREEST

Funny, I always hated that book.

VICAR

Greeven's growth in the 19th century necessitated a schoolhouse. Restless Winds had been unoccupied for some years and was chosen to be renovated and extended to suit.

Creest shuffles uncomfortably on his chair and takes a swallow of the whiskey.

VICAR (CONT'D)

In 1853 a teacher was engaged for a class of 12. All seemed well, the school flourished.

CREEST

There's another huge but coming isn't there?

VICAR

One final passage. It dates from the following year, 1854.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEVEN VILLAGE SCHOOL. MIDDAY

Several CHILDREN are playing in the schoolyard. A hooded figure hovers just outside the yard fencing. The gate swings open and the children file out following the hooded figure off into the fields beyond.

CUT TO:

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. LATE AFTERNOON

Creest looks incredulous.

CREEST

What happened to them?

VICAR

It's a mystery to this day. They were never found

CREEST

Is this true?

VICAR

It's in the records.

CREEST

But what made them follow the strange figure? How could they just disappear?

VICAR.

The parents believed it was the curse of Alizon.

CREEST
 Why? What could they have to do
 with it?

VICAR
 Every child was a direct descendant
 of the original families that
 watched her burn.

Creest closes his eyes

CUT TO:

INT. AN ART GALLERY. NIGHT

Creest examining the painting of the school as in his dream

CUT TO

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. LATE AFTERNOON

VICAR
 Of course there was more folklore
 attached to this. Hardly a year
 went by without a death in the
 district being a precursory
 sighting of one of the missing
 children.

CREEST
 How many?

VICAR
 Too many to be true but the
 'victims' always seemed to be
 particularly nasty individuals.

CREEST
 Criminals?

VICAR
 More of the domestic kind. Slowly
 that part of Greeven died as people
 built homes here.

CREEST
 I don't understand. Why is
 Restless Winds the only one
 standing?

VICAR

There was a fire, probably started deliberately. I guess the new Greeven wanted to obliterate the old and all its connotations, real or mythic. Restless Winds wouldn't burn.

CREEST

That's not in the records is it?

VICAR

The fire? Yes that's recorded but no-one was going to document supernatural events. This part of the legend has been passed down through generations of Greeveners.

CREEST

Where are the other ruins?

VICAR

They cleared the site except for Restless Winds. No-one would touch it.

CREEST

Superstition in deed not word eh?

VICAR

So you see, what appeared to be a sleepy little backwater has a rather murky history, used by your tormentor in a quite deliberate fashion. There's nothing Satanic here dear man.

CREEST

Really? How do you explain this?

Creest hands him the picture. The Vicar looks at it. The hooded figure can be clearly seen in the middle of Creest's garden.

VICAR

My word that is clever. I take it this is the figure from the hedge?

CREEST

I've seen it

VICAR

What...for real?

CREEST

I believe so. Right where it is in the painting.

VICAR

You are telling me that this...whatever...is standing in your garden now?

CREEST

No, of course not. I only glimpsed it for a second.

The Vicar pours Creest another drink.

VICAR

I see what you mean. Could she have switched the paintings?

CREEST

Even allowing her the abilities of a cat burglar, look at it. All the other detail is the same. She hasn't the wherewithal to make a copy that good.

VICAR

For an art historian you're observation skills have been somewhat lacking.

CREEST

It's not Sunday Dan, spare me the sermon.

VICAR

Well you did fail to spot the figure in the hedge...and now this.

He turns the picture around and displays it back to Creest. His finger traces across the lawn toward the cottage and then upward until it rests on the back bedroom window which is now open.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. ST HELEN'S VICARAGE. AFTERNOON

VICAR

The clergy occupy a strange twilight position in the world I suppose. We need to be relevant to both Man and God.

(MORE)

VICAR (CONT'D)

We must be grounded in humanity and
sounding boards for the Almighty.

Creest is lost in his own world

CREEST

I've been a harsh taskmaster in the
past.

VICAR

An ex-pupil? This level?

He holds up the painting

CREEST

Yes, but maybe she had a certain
talent and I dismissed her and what
you see now is her way of
embarrassing me, proving me wrong.

VICAR

Didn't I read somewhere that with
certain paintings an original idea
which was painted over by the
artist reappears from underneath.

CREEST

Yes, pentimento. I know of it but
have never seen it used in this
context. I found an expert online
last night.

VICAR

Who?

CREEST

August Brevocet. University
College, London.

VICAR

Have you spoken to him? What does
he think?

CREEST

I haven't elaborated and besides he
would need to examine it.

VICAR

Ah, so you a trip to the metropolis
is in the offing?

CREEST

Tomorrow. I plan to be in London
around eleven.

(MORE)

CREEST (CONT'D)

I'll stay at the Russell. It's not far to walk from there.

VICAR

This is quite exciting. You must visit me as soon as you return.

CREEST

I may extend my stay.

VICAR

And keep me here on tenterhooks? That's simply not fair old man.

CREEST

You're right. I need to play dirty Dan just like my nemesis. Absconding to London for a few days may scupper any design young Hope has in mind for me.

VICAR

Or do you really believe, despite whatever logic tells you, that some night soon that fiend will actually come through the window?

Creest smiles

CREEST

I won't be there to find out.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S BACK BEDROOM. NIGHT

Creest is asleep. The glare from his laptop illuminates the room. He wakes up. The curtains on his window are open. Outside the shadows of trees throw their shapes on the walls. A distant but effervescent moon ducks and weaves behind dark clouds. He watches the sky for a while when without warning, a gale springs up. He looks outside fearing the wind may break the delicate glass in his windows but hears no roar and the trees are, contrarily, still and yet behind him their shadows dance on against the bedroom walls.

Suddenly the silhouettes began to coalesce to form a single figure that slinks languidly against the white wall of Creest's bedroom.

After a few moments the figure peels itself way from the wall and takes on a third dimension standing there motionless in the ebony void.

It's head has no discernible features but the force of it is immense as if it incorporated all the dark matter from the universe that moved, imperceptibly, above the roof of his cottage. He starts to scream but his throat is restricted and his head locked tight against the bed. The covers on his bed fold back to reveal Creest in his pyjamas. Suddenly a pair of hands emerge from the mattress beneath him and begin to move towards his crotch.

The shape slides along the end of the bed toward the window. slim arm reaches for the latch and pushes it open. A pale moonshine illuminates the shadow and he sees that it is Hope. Her hair is carelessly tied in braids and her face has a colorless countenance which accentuates her garish make-up of over applied mascara and smeared lipstick giving her the appearance of two nuggets of coal pushed into a meringue base face of a tragic clown, almost as if she'd let a child make her up. Her silhouette is clothed in a white bib like shirt above a short pleated royal blue skirt. From the hem her legs stretch toward the floor dressed in long socks and flat red shoes.

The two hands are kneading at his crotch like a baker with dough. Hope stares at the professor and then grins malevolently. Feeling pain he peers down towards his pyjama bottoms and sees that the hands are claws. The cloth is being ripped away and he can feel the skin being torn around his genitalia. He cries aloud

CREEST

Take your picture back Hope..please.

She skips away from the window, runs her fingernail across his laptop like a malicious student scratching a blackboard and crosses to the other side of the bed.

HOPE

But it was a present for you,
daddy.

CREEST

I don't want it. I don't deserve
it

HOPE

Then take something else

She leans toward him, shuffling off her pants with both thumbs and climbs astride him. The claws have gone and he winces as she corrals herself around him. She writhes not like a lover but like a demented demon. The love making is painful for Creest and he cries out in agony

CREEST

Stop, please stop. You're hurting
me

And she stops. Creest is breathing heavily and clutches at his chest. He is about to speak when she covers his lips with her forefinger and shushes him.

HOPE

Someone is here to see you
professor.

She turns and looks out the window at something in the distance and begins to beckon it inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S BACK BEDROOM. MORNING

He wakes exhausted. Everything is as it should be.

CREEST

This isn't real. I need to end
this.

He gets up and starts to dress. There is a train ticket on the dresser. He picks it up. Before he leaves he closes the laptop and places it back into the drawer underneath the towels.

INT. CREEST'S LOUNGE. MORNING

In the lounge he checks the picture. Nothing has altered since yesterday.

CREEST

Maybe the trick is unraveling

He wraps it in brown paper.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREEST'S COTTAGE. MID MORNING

Creest leaves with the painting and a small overnight case.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON. MORNING

Creest is walking toward the Wilkins Building. He is carrying Hope's painting. He has wrapped it in brown paper. He ascends the steps and enters the college

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON. MORNING

Creest heads down a corridor. He finds a door marked Prof. A Brevocet and knocks. A voice hails him from within. He enters

CUT TO:

INT. BREVOCET'S ROOMS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON. MORNING

He is faced with a lean and elegant gentleman, BREVOCET, his head festooned with wiry gray hair. He wears a suit and his shoes are immaculately polished. His angular head and cheek bones belie the fact that he is in his late fifties. Originally from Lille, but spending the majority of his teaching career in England, he speaks excellent English with just a trace of accent. His rooms are furnished excellently but spacious with a large oak desk and chair situated in front of an elegant rectangular window.

BREVOCET

Ah Creest, it is a pleasure to meet you.

CREEST

And you, professor. You understood my email?

BREVOCET

Yes and no. Nevertheless it has the essence of mystery even if we can eventually explain it all away and in today's terms mystery is always welcome. You know Creest I took a lecture the other day on Rembrandt. It was concerning the final self-portraits. It's a favorite topic of mine ever since I saw the 1669. All that humanity, all that pain.

CREEST

Yes, it's a very moving portrait.

BREVOCET

It's wonderful. No-one should need any excuse to be captivated other than to look at the genius of the art and yet I had to chastise two of my pupils for texting.

CREEST

I never have that problem with mine.

BREVOCET

I thought you had retired

CREEST

I have but I was pressurized into running a small weekly group of enthusiasts, elderly enthusiasts.

BREVOCET

If you have their attention you are ahead of me regardless of the demographic or the geographic.

CREEST

Maybe not so talent-wise.

BREVOCET

One never knows. But if they are not texting you have a chance eh? So I take it this is the culprit here?

He takes it from him.

BREVOCET (CONT'D)

May I?

CREEST

Of course

He walks over to his desk and lies it flat. He leaves it wrapped.

BREVOCET

No professor. Stay where you are I want to examine it first in natural light, no shadows.

Creest steps back

BREVOCET (CONT'D)

You understand that pentimenti are usually invisible to the eye and only discovered under infra red or x ray scans?

CREEST

I read extensively about them the other night.

BREVOCET

The artist, how skillful would you rate him?

CREEST

Her. On first look, hardly prodigious.

BREVOCET

Experience? Age?

CREEST

Unknown. Early twenties.

BREVOCET

And you have never met her before?

CREEST

She may have been a student but I...

BREVOCET

She is attractive non? Memorable? No matter, she may have altered her own appearance to suit her task.

CREEST

Yes, it's possible.

BREVOCET

There are no instances that I can recall of deliberately over painting subjects and revealing them later in this manner.

CREEST

Couldn't they cover them up with some kind of solution that fades after a few days and voila?

BREVOCET

But how could one do that without affecting the background to the subject you are trying to reveal?

CREEST

But isn't that the point? The artist has found a way, a way to cheat if you like but in her case she wants to discredit me.

Brevocet mutters to himself.

BREVOCET

A New York born artist, Basquiat, hid paintings within paintings using invisible UV paint but one would need a UV flashlight to see them.

CREEST

No, these appearances were seen in normal daylight.

BREVOCET

You saw them taking place?

CREEST

No, I never did. They occurred randomly.

BREVOCET

At intervals as it were?

CREEST

Yes. I assumed they were timed in order to make me believe this figure was looking for me, wanted to enter my house. At first there was no sign of it and then a hooded head appeared in the privet and then it emerged onto the lawn.

BREVOCET

No further revelations?

CREEST

Yes. My bedroom window was open

Brevocet looks quizzically at Creest.

BREVOCET

Have you been under any inordinate amount of stress recently?

Creest considers his hallucinations

CREEST

I haven't been sleeping too well.

BREVOCET

Do you drink at all?

CREEST

No more than the next man.
Brevocet, I came here for the
opinion of an art expert not a
doctor.

Brevocet looks concerned

CREEST (CONT'D)

Perhaps this, this nonsense has had
the desired affect, if that's what
it was designed to do, but surely
that's the reaction of any normal,
sane human being. I was fine
before this bloody monstrosity was
pressed on me.

BREVOCET

But why take it at all? It is
infantile, I agree. Why not just
refuse? Was she pretty?

CREEST

I felt compelled.

BREVOCET

By what? If I had approached you,
a late middle aged Frenchman with
no discernible talent, would you
have taken it from me?

CREEST

For God's sake she could be my
grand...my daughter

BREVOCET

My assumption is correct then?

Creest looks downward

BREVOCET (CONT'D)

There isn't any violent or
unspeakable history associated with
the cottage at all?

CREEST

I came here to discredit this mumbo
jumbo, not give it some credence.

BREVOCET

Perhaps this young lady is linked
to the village in some way? Did
she even paint this?

CREEST

Are you insinuating the picture
belongs to the cottage?

BREVOCET

It's possible. Its charm could be
more sentimental than than
aesthetic.

CREEST

Painted by someone who lived there?

BREVOCET

Maybe many years ago.

Brevocet removes a pair of scissors from his desk drawer,
snips the string and removes the cover. He holds the
painting up to the light with its back to Creest.

BREVOCET (CONT'D)

In my country we use paper fish.

CREEST

Pardon?

BREVOCET

Poisson d'avril. April fool.

CREEST

What do you mean?

He turns the painting around and points it at Creest.

BREVOCET

où est la figure? I see nothing.

Creest's bottom lip droops as he gapes at the picture. The
figure is not visible within it, neither is the bedroom
window open.

CREEST

It can't be

BREVOCET

This is no joke?

CREEST
Christ, it's gone inside.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BREVOCET'S ROOMS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON. AFTERNOON

Creest is standing looking out of the window. Brevocet enters

CREEST
So?

BREVOCET
Rien. Nothing.

CREEST
It's not possible

BREVOCET
Sit down, please

Creest sits.

BREVOCET (CONT'D)
Consider this. Within this rather closeted world, this art world we frequent, there are many unscrupulous characters who are in complete antipathy to the way you and I would approach the subject of good portraiture. Why plot to steal a masterpiece? For ransom, perhaps but to have what one cannot have and then who can you show it off to? How about forgery? If one can paint in the style of a master why fool people? Why not develop your own style and earn a living that way? Is it us? Are we, the critics, the so called experts, in fact the painters of our own downfall? A game between people that use art as a weapon and those that use it as a social distinction?

CREEST
I know I've been severe and a little intolerant with poor students in the past but I always felt that was the kindest thing for them.

(MORE)

CREEST (CONT'D)

Crush foolish dreams to prevent
future nightmares but few have the
ability to personify them.

BREVOCET

I understand, but do they? No-one
was aware of what Basquiat was
doing until they found it.

CREEST

So is it some kind of paint or oil
that can somehow appear or reappear
without trace?

BREVOCET

I cannot prove it. But then again
I cannot disprove it. If you're
being duped, I can't work out how.
I'm sorry.

CREEST

So I'm left with the supernatural?

BREVOCET

You're left with a mystery, if...

CREEST

If I'm not imagining it all. You
forget I have a witness; the Vicar

BREVOCET

Isn't this sort of thing in his
interest? Demons and fiends.

CREEST

He's hardly a Satanist.

BREVOCET

No but it provides a balance
doesn't it? Where there are demons
there must be...

CREEST

So I should start praying?

BREVOCET

I'm French but I'm not Catholic.
My advice? Burn it

CREEST

I can't bring myself to do it.

BREVOCET

Creest, this is not art. If its
causing you so much torment...

CREEST

Something tells me I need to give
her it back. If I can find her and
do that it will all stop.

Brevocet hands him back the painting and then stops abruptly.

BREVOCET

C'est impossible

CREEST

What is?

He shows him the picture. The bedroom window is open.

BREVOCET

It was closed, I know it was
closed.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOWER ST, LONDON. AFTERNOON

Creest crosses the street heading towards the Russell hotel. He checks both ways and starts to walk. He is carrying the painting now re-wrapped. As he nears the far side a horn sounds and a taxi swerves around him. Creest jumps onto the pavement and glowers back at the vehicle. In the back window he can see Hope, glaring at him with that seductive smile and sharp razor teeth.

On the corner are some building works and a builder's skip close by. He toys with throwing the picture in but the changes his mind.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM, RUSSELL HOTEL, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON. EARLY EVENING

Creest is lying down on the bed fully clothed. The room has two large windows both with sets of pelmet curtains fully pulled across so that the room is dark despite still being light outside. The furnishings include a writing desk and chair in the bottom right of the room and a chaise-lounge at the foot of the bed, left of which is a large wardrobe. The painting is lying against the wardrobe. To the left on the other side of the wardrobe is the door to the bathroom.

A light comes on in the bathroom and illuminates part of the room. The sound of running water follows. Creest starts to stir. His eyes open and he rolls to the side of the bed lit up by the bathroom.

CREEST

Can't remember being in there
earlier

He then notices the running water

CREEST (CONT'D)

Damn, I didn't run a bath did I?

He rises shakily and stares at the floor for the tell tale signs of a flood but sees nothing. He feels at his face with his fingers and looks at the tips. They're wet. He rubs his eyes gingerly and steps away from the bed toward the bathroom.

Barefoot he steps inside the bathroom. Creest looks behind him back into the room and then moves fully into the bathroom. In the far left corner is a large shower with a glass cover that retracts on a runner to allow entry. He can see that although the shower cubicle is completely misted over, there is a a shape within. At his feet lies a set of clothes: a pleated uniform skirt, a white tee-shirt, a pair of white pumps with socks tucked inside, a small bra and a pair of small, thin panties. He slides back the door. The person showering has their back to him. It is beautiful. The skin unblemished like ivory or marble without a freckle or wrinkle as if Michelangelo had sculpted it. The figure turns to face him. He stands unable to manufacture any physicality beyond the movement of his eyes. It is Hope Lincoln but not the woman he had first encountered in Greeven. Her breasts are smaller and her vagina is shorn of hair. It seems to be a younger incarnation of her and yet her potency is magnified. She smiles that coy smile and looks down towards his crotch. Creest looks down at himself and sees that he too is naked and his penis erect.

She turns her back to him again and puts out her hand and grabs the shower coil. She beckons him with a swirl of her bottom to enter her from behind. He complies but finds her vulva tight. After several painful attempts he manages to penetrate her. Throughout she never flinches but her grip on the coil becomes intense. Creest steadies himself by pressing hard on her back and finds he is thrusting with the energy of a younger man.

Hope moans and whimpers, prompting the professor to climax immediately. His arms enfolds her midriff as ballast.

Suddenly the intense pleasure etched on his face turns to intense agony as an excruciating pain strikes him in the groin. He wriggles like a madman to get free of her but Hope's buttocks have closed in on his member like a vice. She is giggling like a schoolgirl waving her bottom moving him from side to side. Desperate he finds a last source of strength and detaches himself. He collapses in exhaustion. Lying there he looks down and sees blood gushing from his crotch. He has been emasculated.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM, LATE AFTERNOON

Creest screams himself awake. An early September sun filters into his room from the window. Shivering with terror, he coils up in a fetal position under his bed clothes, sobbing.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM, EVENING

Creest is dressing. He is drawn, his face haggard, his eyes red. He reaches out his arm toward the wardrobe handle and hesitated. The door was shut but there was an object on the floor beside it. He picked it up. It was the small remnant of a boiled sweet.

He goes into the bathroom and checks the shower. He looks at himself

CREEST

Christ, I've aged ten years.
Brevocet was right. I'm going to
burn it, here and now. Where's my
bag?

He checks his luggage and removes a box of matches

CREEST (CONT'D)

This is finally going to get what
it deserves

He rips open the covering on the painting and removes it. He looks closely at it and lets out an agonizing moan

He throws the painting face up on the bed. The figure has returned but this time it is coming across the lawn toward the viewer. Beneath the hood there is a faint glow like a light. This time it is clear the fiend is holding something, as if he has stolen it from the cottage. Beneath the folds of the cloak something silvery can be seen.

Creest's face takes on the aura of an eureka moment as everything starts to begin to make sense.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Oh my God. I've got to get home.

Suddenly he cries out clutching at his chest as if in severe pain. He leans forward onto the bed for support. It eases but as he tries to stand again the severity of the sting drives him back to the same position. The picture is just inches from his face. He can see that the shape's body language is different. Whereas before there was a purposeful stride to it going towards the house, now it is tentative.

He starts to hyperventilate but each time he leans back to draw in some oxygen the agony of doing so drives him back, his movements resembling a macabre dipping toy. His gasps become shorter and louder. He begs to feel faint. The last physical action he is capable of is to clutch at his chest as if to rip out his heart. Finally his legs give way and he collapses.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/WARD. NIGHT

It is a private single room yet perfunctory. Creest wakes up. Behind him a cardiograph bleeps away in rhythm. He notices he is wired up to it. A NURSE enters

NURSE

Welcome back

CREEST

Where have I been?

NURSE

I couldn't say. I'm haven't seen that world yet.

CREEST

What are you talking about?

Creest rises off his pillow and the Nurse sees Creest getting stressed

NURSE

Calm down, it's just my way. You had a cardiac arrest and we brought you back that's all.

CREEST

I died.

NURSE

In a sense.

Creest flops back onto his pillow

CREEST

Why?

NURSE

Why what?

CREEST

Couldn't you have just left me there?

NURSE

You're in the safe hands of the NHS, not the Grip Reaper.

CREEST

At this moment in time it'd be like meeting Santa Claus.

NURSE

Usually the elderly people I take care of have a desire for life, even the really ill ones.

CREEST

You don't really know what you've done do you?

NURSE

We've done our job.

Creest closes his eyes.

CREEST

Why put off the inevitable? What good will it do me to die tomorrow rather than today?

NURSE

It's been an ordeal I'm sure, but it doesn't mean that whatever the good Lord doled you out when you first came kicking and screaming into this world, won't be curtailed. I know a man of eighty who survived two heart attacks in his sixties and runs marathons.

CREEST

Cut me loose then and cheer me up
the Mall when I finish.

Creest opens his eyes

CREEST (CONT'D)

The good Lord? You believe?

NURSE

In God? Why yes.

CREEST

Do you believe in evil?

NURSE

Of course. I meet it every day

CREEST

I don't mean human evil but...non-
human, supernatural, demonic.

NURSE

The Devil is real. Whether he
exists as a being or simply a force
within us all that some can temper
others can't, I have no idea. You
look scared.

CREEST

I am and I need to go.

NURSE

Leaving? You? I heard you are an
art professor. Well if you would
like me to put your present
condition in terms you may
interpret fully, you look like Van
Gogh's Scream.

Creest sighs

CREEST

Munch.

NURSE

Was he? As well as a painter? I
wanted to be a Nun when I was a
little girl.

She props him up and makes him comfortable.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Anyway what do I know? I won't tell you about your art, you don't tell me about your heart.

CREEST

I hope my coronary wasn't as bad as your poetry.

NURSE

Doctor will be along shortly and run you through what's happened and how we go forward. Okay?

CREEST

That sound ominous.

NURSE

You have microvascular angina and it can be controlled but you never heard it from me.

CREEST

Munchs the word. By the way where am I?

NURSE

St Thomas's. We found your private medical insurance details in your wallet, that's why you have a nice bed.

CREEST

Better than American Express. Who found me?

NURSE

A steward. Apparently he delivered room service to the wrong door, heard groaning and let himself in.

CREEST

Looks like fate is saving me for something.

NURSE

That's a lot more positive. Who knows, you might give the world a great gift.

Creest leans back.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Just rest now, doctor will be along soon.

CREEST

Where are my things? My painting?

NURSE

I would think the hotel has your belongings. I know nothing of a painting.

CREEST

No, my clothes. You didn't bring me in naked did you?

NURSE

Oh, in the drawers. Your valuables too. We can wash them if you can't get fresh clothes.

CREEST

Would you?

She stoops down to the drawer

CREEST (CONT'D)

Oh no, not now, after all I guess I'll be in here for a few days. We can arrange that tomorrow.

NURSE

Sure?

He nods and she goes out

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/WARD. NIGHT. TWENTY MINUTES LATER

A DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR

Well Mr Creest, I learn you are awake and how...

He looks at the bed - its empty, the wires leading to the cardiograph draped across the covers along with a hospital gown. A drawer is open. Creest's clothes and wallet are gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIVERPOOL STREET STATION, LONDON. NIGHT

Creest is standing below the departure notice board. He looks for the 21:35 to Norwich. He finds it. It shows it leaving from Platform 10. He shuffles slowly away toward the gates, places his ticket in the slot, pulls it out and climbs aboard the train just three minutes before departure.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT

Creest makes his way to the first class carriage and slumps into a single seat. The carriage has only one other passenger sitting ahead of him three rows down. He is sweating profusely with the effort of absconding from the hospital. He leans his head against the window and falls asleep.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT. HALF AN HOUR LATER

The train pulls into Colchester station. Creest wakes up but is still groggy. Outside on the platform he catches a glimpse of a black figure jumping onto the train. The train moves out and he drifts off again.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT. TEN MINUTES LATER.

Creest is shaken awake. He looks up to see the TICKET INSPECTOR standing over him.

INSPECTOR

Sorry sir but I need to see your ticket.

CREEST

Sorry. I have it here

INSPECTOR

Hated to wake you. You look like you need the rest.

CREEST

Bad day all round.

INSPECTOR

Hey, you're very hot but it's not exactly warm in here. Are you okay?

CREEST

I've got a chill. Best keep your distance.

INSPECTOR

I will. But let me know if you need anything.

CREEST

You're very kind.

She smiles and moves down to the only other person in the carriage. Creest watches her and then balks when he catches sight of the other passenger who appears to be wearing a cloak. The inspector asks for their ticket. Creest strains over to overhear the passenger's voice but they simply offer the ticket silently and do not engage in conversation. The hand giving the ticket is gloved. The inspector is polite but notices that when the passenger looks away the inspector makes a strange face. The inspector leaves the carriage and moves on.

Creest shifts uncomfortably in his seat. After a few seconds the unmistakable sound of giggling comes from the passenger. Creest gets up again straining for a better view of them but as he does the passenger sinks down in their seat and becomes almost invisible.

Creest backs up toward the carriage door intending to leave. Confident he can get away he challenges the figure

CREEST (CONT'D)

I know what you are

The figure does not react

CREEST (CONT'D)

This is a trick. I don't know how you're playing it but I know now I can beat you.

No reaction again. Creest breathes deeply and feels his heart. He suddenly surges forward and stands directly behind their seat. He can see the back of the heavy cloak.

CREEST (CONT'D)

Answer me you fiend.

No answer. He lunges and grabs the cloak

CREEST (CONT'D)

I said answer me.

The figure shoots out of the seat. The hood drops to reveal a young man dressed and made up as a GOTH. He has on earphones.

GOTH

What you fucking playing at man?

Creest rocks back, shocked and then embarrassed.

CREEST

I'm...I thought you were someone else.

GOTH

Every fucking time. Just cause I dress like this don't mean I ain't got money. Fucking old farts like you think you're the only ones good enough to travel in style

CREEST

It's a mistake. I've been...I'm ill.

GOTH

Well cough on someone else Granddad. The best thing the old can do for the young is die.

Creest goes back to his seat and the Goth sits down

CUT TO:

EXT. A LANE IN GREEVEN. MIDNIGHT

A taxi pulls up and drops Creest who gets out and pays the driver. The vehicle moves off. Creest starts to walk toward his cottage from around 200 yards away. There is one lamppost close to his gate. It's light is weak but enough for Creest to make his way in. He pulls his jacket collar up with the chill in the air and pushes through.

He waits a moment for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, checking the lawn where he last saw the hooded figure in the painting. He creeps up the path to his door. Halfway there he hears a skipping sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREEST'S COTTAGE. MIDNIGHT

A black figure looms out of the dark and stops beside Creest's garden gate. It is the vicar. He spots Creest but doesn't recognize him. He pulls a cell phone from his pocket and makes a call.

CUT TO:

INT. CREEST'S COTTAGE, GREEVEN. MIDNIGHT

Creest pushes at the hallway light but nothing happens. He walks into the kitchen and peers out at the garden beyond. A mysterious light seems to glimmer and float but he cannot be sure from where.

He fiddles about in a drawer and finds a small torch and switches it on. The light dances about the kitchen walls creating strange shadows out of the silhouettes of pots and pans hanging from the oven range. He quickly directs its light to the floor and follows it out into the hallway. He aims it at the top of the stairs. Three quarters of the way there is a dogleg to the left.

The old staircase creaks and groans with every footfall. He grabs the balustrade. It is cold to the touch. As he reaches the juncture he stops to take a breather. As he exhales his breath becomes visible and he was suddenly aware that the temperature within the cottage had dropped substantially.

CREEST

They're here.

He presses on. The door to his bedroom is closed. He grips the handle and walks in. Light floods into his eyes and blinds him for a moment. He shields his eyes looking down at the floor. There are tiles where there should be floorboards. Toys are skewed across the floor and a small doll's house sat in the corner. There's a single bed where his double should be. Above it is the painting with his tormentor as clear as ever looking at him.

CREEST (CONT'D)

So they took it and brought it here.

He glances to his left. His desk is untouched. He sits at the chair and pulls open the drawer. He scrabbles among the towels and pulls out his laptop.

CREEST (CONT'D)
It's still here. The beast hasn't
got it.

He logs on. Behind him he could hear a pathetic whimpering.
It seems to be coming from beneath the bed

CREEST (CONT'D)
I know what you are. You're too
late.

In front of him the computer boots up. His laptop springs to
life. He maneuvers the mouse over his documents and clicks.
Another file opens up. He clicks again and again. Deeper and
deeper Creest delves into the recesses of the laptop's
memories. The moaning beneath the bed stops. Behind him the
bedroom window opens up.

CREEST (CONT'D)
Nearly there, nearly there.

The lights go out again. Creest's face is illuminated
against the light emanating from his computer. He looks
around and sees his bedroom transformed back into the way it
should be. A kaleidoscope of flashing blues and reds filter
in from outside, followed by the scrunch of rubber on gravel
but Creest ignores it.

CREEST (CONT'D)
I've won. I've beaten them.

At last the file he is looking for is before him on the
screen. He selects the entire contents and eyes the delete
button with relish.

CREEST (CONT'D)
Screw you Harriet or Hope or
whatever demon you are.

He takes a victorious look around him. Below there is a huge
crash as his door is kicked in and torch lights flash around
the stairwell.

He moves his finger over the delete button and starts to
lower it. Below him to the right a hooded hand shoots out
and grabs his own, holding it. vice like. in the air
millimeters above the delete button.

Thumps are heard as someone starts climbing the stairs.
Creest stresses and strains to move his finger to the delete
button but his attacker has too much strength.

He reluctantly turns to face his aggressor. He follows the line of the arm and there within the dark spot beside him is the hooded figure.

CREEST (CONT'D)

What, what are you?

The hood falls away and beneath is the face of a beautiful young girl with golden eyes.

END