

THE STORMCROW

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - SUNSET

SUPER: CENTRAL IRAQ, 1932

Through a gnarled valley of unearthly rock formations, a Kurdish guide named ECO leads a mysterious westerner on camelback...

THE STORMCROW is a wiry, academic man in tweed - with a heavy leather duster and travel boots to protect him from the elements.

Under a wide-brimmed hat, his spectacles glint in the last amber rays of the sun.

His camel is laden with a bundle of arcane books, tools for digging - and a small arsenal. Thompson submachine gun. Shotgun. By his side, a pistol.

Here, the Kurd stops:

ECO
(in Kurdish)
I will go no further.

THE STORMCROW
Our agreement says you will go further.

ECO
So it is.

Patiently, the Stormcrow waits for a better explanation.

ECO
The place you travel to is a place where God cannot see. That is what they say.

Reaching into a belt pouch, the Stormcrow produces a gold coin and tosses it to Eco.

THE STORMCROW
No, Eco. What they say is that it is a place God does not dare to look. Pray we go unseen by Older Gods than yours.

ECO
You would curse my family for a thousand generations.

Pulling the pouch from his belt, the Stormcrow tosses Eco a full purse.

With a jingle, Eco catches it... and tosses it back.

ECO
I tell you, sir. I will go no
further.

Weary, the Stormcrow produces an ancient, occult-looking piece of jewelry and dangles it from his fist.

THE STORMCROW
Zgarath hollod dool.

Suddenly, Eco cannot look away.

THE STORMCROW
And you see the Eye of Agoth.

ECO
And I see it.

THE STORMCROW
And you see your will is weak.

ECO
And I see it.

THE STORMCROW
You will take me to the tomb of
Medo.

Wordlessly, Eco leads the Stormcrow's camel into the valley.

INT. THE TOMB OF MEDO - EVENING

Through a piled caved-in at the tomb's entrance...

CHINK!

...a pick-axe rakes aside the rubble. Through the hole, the last red rays of sunset pierce the darkness.

Scraping through the opening, Eco climbs through.

THE STORMCROW
Light your torch, Eco.

Striking a match, Eco sets his torch ablaze. Climbing in after him, the Stormcrow lights a second torch and steps into the center of the room.

THE STORMCROW
Stand here. Raise the torch high.

Eco obeys, and the Stormcrow takes stock of the claustrophobic chamber...

Many of the walls have fallen and crumbled into dust. Those that remain are covered in weathered reliefs and cuneiform writing:

In the old, Assyrian style, the reliefs are more Greek than Egyptian in detail, but the poses are sideways, like hieroglyphs. Men with curly hair kneel before...

Is that a mass of curled tentacles? Uncertain, the Stormcrow blows years of dust from the relief and cleans his spectacles.

Over the entire procession, someone has written a chronicle in what looks like jagged scratch marks. Ancient writing, from when civilization was young.

THE STORMCROW
Much of the text is far too ruined
by time to be transcribed.

In a recess, the Stormcrow finds a broken sarcophagus. Empty.

THE STORMCROW
Where are you, Medo?

Crawling through the broken pieces of relief, he finds...
...a skeleton...

THE STORMCROW
You are not Medo. Who are you?

...seated upright, protected, behind a large relief that fell from the wall. Inspecting the outward side of the stone, the Stormcrow checks to see what it is he's destroying before -

Picking up the pick axe, he levers the broken stone relief onto the ground.

Sitting on the dusty floor, he finds a skeleton seated at prayer, wearing the remains of a robe.

At his side, the Stormcrow inspects a sword.

THE STORMCROW
Eleventh century.

Around the skeleton's neck, inside the robe, he finds a necklace:

THE STORMCROW
St. Benedict.

In a disintegrating satchel: Ink, dried. Parchment, which crumbles in the Stormcrow's hands.

Clutched in the skeleton's hand, the Stormcrow finds an ARCAN E AMULET. This, he collects.

On the flakes of paper, he can make out handwriting:

THE STORMCROW
Brother Antonius Cato.

Sitting down on the fallen slab, the Stormcrow regards the skull.

THE STORMCROW
You're a long way from The Holy
Land, young crusader.

Taking a sip from his canteen, The Stormcrow glances around at all the ruin, and then brushes some rubble off Brother Cato's robes.

THE STORMCROW
The first man to read these words
since Medo etched them in stone,
and you didn't even live long
enough to -

Noticing again the leaves of parchment, the ink, and the satchel's rotting remains... Suddenly, the Stormcrow looks back at Eco.

THE STORMCROW
Brother Cato was a scribe.

ECO
I do not understand.

THE STORMCROW
Somewhere, there is a manuscript.

ECO
I do not want to know these things.

The Stormcrow smiles in understanding.

THE STORMCROW
No man does.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

SUPER: South Carolina, 1936

The forest is dead silent, but for the WIND in the trees and a CRACKLING bonfire.

THEIR LEADER

It's time for you to see.

Light flickers across the dirty, bloody face of a 24 year old white woman - GWEN LAWSON. Leather bindings lash her head back to an upright sacrificial pole, covering her eyes.

Her face is already cut and bleeding.

Reaching to remove Gwen's blindfold, THEIR LEADER reveals himself... but his face is obscured beneath a brown cloak and hood.

GWEN

God...

THEIR LEADER

There are older truths than God, my
lamb.

Gwen murmurs as Their Leader touches her face, runs his white-skinned hand down her bare shoulder, down her arm to her wrists, bound behind the sacrificial pole.

THEIR LEADER

(very quietly)

Uuldza Baagrth.

The firelight is slowly blotted out by cloaked, hooded figures as They gather round to watch - dozens of THEM.

THEIR LEADER

Uuldza Baagrth!

THEM

Uuldza Baagrth.

THEIR LEADER

Present the tome.

Stepping forward, a robed acolyte passes Their Leader a book, bound in something black and foul. With careful adoration, he opens it.

THEIR LEADER

The language you hear is not Latin
and it is not Uruk.

(MORE)

THEIR LEADER (cont'd)
 It is the Gjrod hollod. It is the
 voice of the unceasing wind.
 Present the bowl.

Another acolyte steps forward with a wooden bowl - full of rancid, chunky red fluid.

Two acolytes drive round wedges into the corners of Gwen's mouth, prying it open.

Their Leader removes a small vial from around his neck and touches Gwen's face with it.

THEIR LEADER
 Hajd Xthradd Gthutuul. This is the
 essence of all those who have given
 themselves to the unceasing wind.

Indeed, the vial is mostly full of old blood. Uncorking it, Their Leader holds the vial out for Gwen to smell - she chokes.

Topping off the vial with the blood running down Gwen's face, Their Leader pours just one drop into the bowl of meaty soup, corks the vial, and hangs it around his neck once again.

Then, he reads from the book.

THEIR LEADER
 Gjorod cthuul, xazth harad.

The initiate holds Gwen's nose, while Their Leader forcibly empties the bowl into her gullet.

THEIR LEADER
 Zradthra kollux djoll.

Standing around Their Leader, They begin a low chant:

THEM
 (chanting quietly)
 Koll Dulzgh.

THEIR LEADER
 Hrurud gxthadu gjex aladno.

They continue to chant.

THEIR LEADER
 Kyollxum. Kyollxum. Kyollxum!
 Present the knife.

Receiving an ornate, sacrificial knife from a third acolyte, their Leader cuts deep into Gwen's abdomen.

THEIR LEADER
Fxo1 gollatx cthuul.

Pulling up his sleeve, Their Leader reaches into the hole he has cut, deep into her tummy...

...trying to grab hold of her heart by reaching around her ribcage. He buries his arm in her innards past his elbow...

Gwen's eyes remain wide open, and she inhales with surprise against the added pain and pressure of Their Leader's arm filling her body cavity...

THEIR LEADER
(still quietly)
Baargth krzavaal dohl.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - MORNING

Gasping, Gwen bolts up out of a tired, old bed.

Warm morning South Carolina sunshine streams through the window, into a wholesome bedroom on the second floor of a poor, dusty house.

The sheets are clean, and so is Gwen.

Clothes - not hers - are folded neatly on a chest at the foot of the bed.

Gwen tries to speak out, but all she can manage is a CROAK.

TRUDY (O.S.)
I hear you. Just you sit tight.
Just you sit tight.

GERTRUDE "TRUDY" WASHINGTON WILSON trundles through the door, a 62 year old black woman tired beyond her years, with a kindness in her eyes that's hiding something deeper...

TRUDY
Well look at you, wide awake. I
got you some water. You just sit.

Trudy passes her a tall clear glass of water from the bedside table, and she drinks deep, finishing half the glass in one gulp before Trudy takes it from her lips and hushes her.

TRUDY
You better take it easy.

A swirl of blood dissolves in the water as Trudy places it back on the bedside table and puts her hand on Gwen's forehead.

GWEN
I... Hrmmm...

TRUDY
Don't you try to talk, Miss.

GWEN
Where am I?

TRUDY
I found you on the road, Miss. You sure a mess when I found you on the road.

GWEN
Where am I?

TRUDY
Know where Pride is?

Gwen nods.

TRUDY
You in Goshen, Miss. You about ten miles outside of Pride. My name's Gertrude Washington Wilson, but folks call me Trudy when they know me.

Tears start to stream down Gwen's face.

For a reason Gwen can't fathom, Trudy starts to cry as well.

TRUDY
Praise Jesus. You finish this up, and I'll get you another, ok?

Trudy passes her the glass again, and Gwen finishes the water.

TRUDY
If you're asleep when I get back up here, I won't mind you.

Trudy rubs her back as Gwen drinks the water, a bit more slowly now. She takes the empty glass.

GWEN

I don't know who I am.

TRUDY

Ok, then. Ok. Try not to talk.

She gets up, and walks to the door.

SPLAT. A drop of blood hits the ground by Trudy's feet.

The warm sunlight chills in color. Darkness pools in odd places, as though the Sun's daylight were coming from somewhere inside the room.

At the door, Trudy turns back to look at Gwen. From Trudy's face to her pelvis, there's a deep, bloody seam.

CRACK!

Trudy splits open like a frog on a dissection plate.

Gwen SCREAMS.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - LATER

Gwen opens her eyes. It's noon. No sign of dissected Trudy.

Next to the folded clothes there's a glass of water, a glass of lemonade, and a plate with a sandwich on it.

Starved, she drinks the water and stuffs her face with the sandwich. Downstairs, Gwen can hear Trudy talking to someone...

She slips into the dress Trudy left for her. Looking into the window, Gwen tries to make out her reflection.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Stepping through the door into a rickety but tidy hall, Gwen appreciates the home Trudy has made here. Finding the stairs, Gwen steps toward the voices.

EXT. TRUDY'S PORCH - DAY

Trudy sits in her rocking chair on the porch. Sitting in the other chair is ISSAC, a 26 year old black handyman. His posture is confident and friendly.

Both Issac and Trudy have said their piece, whatever it was. Now, they're just sipping lemonade.

The porch door creaks open, and Gwen steps out into the quiet sun.

TRUDY

This here's Isaac Fairbanks.

Isaac sizes Gwen up.

GWEN

Hi.

ISAAC

Hello, Miss.

GWEN

Do you know who I am?

For a moment, Isaac considers Gwen.

ISAAC

You going to have to leave.

And with that, Isaac puts his lemonade down on the porch railing and walks down the stairs and off along the bright, dusty road.

TRUDY

We're gonna see about that!

ISAAC

Yup.

Without looking back, Isaac marches down the road.

TRUDY

Don't think harsh of him. He's a good man. Nothing been decided yet.

GWEN

(hoarse)

Um...

TRUDY

Have a seat right there.

GWEN

Do you who I am?

TRUDY

Just you have a seat, Miss.

GWEN
Is anyone looking for me?

TRUDY
I don't know how you come to Goshen
Road, Miss.

Gwen sits down in the empty chair.

GWEN
Did I have clothes...

TRUDY
Nothing worth saving, Miss.

GWEN
My name?

TRUDY
I don't know your name, Miss.

GWEN
Oh.

TRUDY
But Miss, I know you in trouble.

GWEN
Thank you.

TRUDY
Thank me for what, Miss?

GWEN
Thank you for taking care of me.

TRUDY
You're welcome, Miss.

GWEN
I should go.

TRUDY
Begging your pardon, Miss. Leaving
sounds like about the last thing
you should do.

GWEN
If someone's looking for me, you
don't want them finding me here.

Trudy looks at the ground.

TRUDY

Miss, you see that missing banister
right there?

Sure enough, there's a banister missing - looks torn out.

TRUDY

Big Jack and I, we had Belle.
Belle was nine. I've never seen a
little girl pull a porch apart like
that.

Trudy chokes up a little bit - this is a hard story for her
to tell.

TRUDY

They had her by the legs, and she
got herself a good grip on that
railing and tore it loose. And Big
Jack and I, we stood right here.
We stood right here and we watched
Them... We watched them run off
with our Belle.

Trudy looks at Gwen.

GWEN

I saw them.

TRUDY

I know you did, Miss. I know that.
Don't you worry.

GWEN

Who are they?

TRUDY

That was Them, Miss. You know who
them is.

GWEN

No.

TRUDY

Then Miss, you ain't from around
here.

Trudy clears her throat, leans in...

TRUDY

Folks done heard you screaming,
Miss. Folks know, and we ain't
gonna have it easy, you and I.

(MORE)

TRUDY (cont'd)
 But don't think low of Isaac now.
 They took a brother from him.

GWEN
 Trudy?

TRUDY
 Yes Miss?

GWEN
 Who are They?

TRUDY
 You my blessing, Miss. I'm gonna
 hang on to you this time, and maybe
 the Lord Jesus will give me back my
 baby and my Jack when Kingdom Come.

There's nothing more to say. The two of them sit, watching
 the shadows move on a dusty South Carolina road.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - LATER

To the side of the house, Trudy has the neighborhood's only
 hand-pumped well. Gwen places the bowl from her room on the
 ground and starts to pump. Water splashes everywhere.

As he walks back down the dirt road towards Trudy's house,
 Isaac watches the white girl carefully.

ISAAC
 Miss? It's time.

Without another word, Isaac turns and leaves down the road
 again. Gwen picks up the bowl of water and heads back
 inside.

INT. GOSHEN BAPTIST CHURCH - EVENING

Inside a stubborn Baptist church with white walls, the door
 CREAKS open and lets in the late afternoon sun.

Trudy leads Gwen in and makes her way between the pews.

Filling the wooden benches, the people of Goshen have
 already arrived. Everyone has left the children at home,
 and Gwen is the only white face in the room.

Isaac sits near the front, and PASTOR MADISON stands
 adjacent the pulpit.

As she looks into the faces of the assembled people, one in particular pulls her in, a thirty-year old man, tall but not enormous, with slightly sunken eyes...

Again, the light shifts cold. His face takes on a spectral quality, like looking into the soul of a hollow, dying man -

PASTOR MADISON

May the Lord bless this congregation. Before we begin our Christian deliberation, let us pray. Dear Lord in Heaven, please give us the wisdom to see your righteous path, and Lord give us the strength to walk along it. Amen.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

PASTOR MADISON

Amen. Now, I know we all afraid. I know we all seen hardship, and I know we all afraid. And I know you been talking. I call it wisdom to do away with rumors, so I'm gonna ask Trudy Wilson to come on up here and tell us all what she seen. Mrs. Wilson, do you mind speaking on this morning?

TRUDY

Don't mind if I do. Not at all.

Trudy makes her way out of the pew.

TRUDY

Not at all.

Trudy makes her way up to the pulpit herself.

TRUDY

In the morning I go fishing, and I was walking South down the road, and I get up before the first light just like my Big Jack, God rest his soul. My eyes ain't so good but I can hear someone comin'. Here she comes, and I'm telling you, she was covered in filth, and... filth, you understand?

Looking into the crowd for support, Trudy pulls a handkerchief from her pocket.

TRUDY

I mean to say she was covered in blood, and other things. Beg your pardon for saying so.

Carefully, she mops her mouth with the hankie.

TRUDY

Just staring straight ahead, staring right through me, walking on down the road like she been worked to her death. I ain't never seen a white girl walk like that. Breathing all raspy, and I'm telling you. Listen to me. She didn't have a hardly a stitch on her, all torn and ragged, but you wouldn't know it because... Her hair was all matted, and the filth. You hear?

Trudy looks to see that folks know what she means.

TRUDY

There can't be no doubt. There can't be no doubt. God saved this girl from Their Wicked Revels and God delivered her here, praise be to God.

Pastor Madison puts his hand on Trudy's back, offering her strength.

In the crowd, Trudy finds looks of shock and anger.

TRUDY

So here's what I done. I done the Christian thing. She let me take her hand, so I lead her down to the river, and I wash her up. I wash her clean in the river. I wrap her up in my fishing blanket, and I lead her home, and tuck her into bed, and the poor girl went right to sleep and I prayed. That's the Christian thing, and that's what I done.

PASTOR MADISON

Yes you did.

TRUDY

When she woke up, she got the terrors and that's what you heard.

(MORE)

TRUDY (cont'd)

What they done to her, it robbed
her of her mind and she don't
remember none of it. Not her name
or where she come from, and Jesus
brought her down that road to me,
and we got to carry her into Grace.

PASTOR MADISON

That what we come to pray on.

Trudy looks out at the people of Goshen.

TRUDY

No, you listen to me. We got to be
Christians. We got to stand up and
be Christians.

Trudy takes a moment to make sure that's all she has to
say...

TRUDY

For wickedness burneth as the fire:
it shall devour the briars and
thorns, and shall kindle in the
thickets of the forest, and they
shall mount up like the lifting up
of smoke.

...and then steps back to her seat in the pews. She gives
Gwen a pat on the leg, gives her knee a squeeze for comfort.

Nobody says anything and nobody moves.

After a moment, Isaac hesitantly stands up. Pastor Madison
nods, and Isaac heads to the pulpit.

ISAAC

Some folks are gonna call Gertrude
Wilson a liar. Some folks got to,
on account of they afraid.

There's a pregnant silence as Isaac plans out what to say
next.

ISAAC

So if you ain't up to talk this
over, how about you just go on
home.

Isaac looks for some kind of reaction.

ISAAC

Ain't no shame in it. It is how it
is.

PASTOR MADISON

So long as you're willing to set by what we decide right here in this room, you're welcome to leave.

Slowly, first one, then three, then finally about half of the folks in the pews get up and shuffle out the door. Some look confident in their decision, and others look ashamed.

Isaac looks down the aisle as the heavy wooden doors close with a THUNK.

ISAAC

Yeah. Ok. Early this morning I was patching the Douglass roof down by Trudy Wilson's, and I heard the terrors just like she say. When I called on her about it, she told me about the river and I went on into Pride. Ain't nobody talking about a white girl gone missing.

CURTIS

That don't mean they won't!

ISAAC

No, it don't. But maybe They ain't taken her from Pride.

CURTIS

Maybe They ain't taken her at all. Maybe she's up to some kinda trouble all on her own.

GWEN

They.

PASTOR MADISON

What now, Miss?

GWEN

They were chanting. They wore robes of coarse cloth.

OLIVER TRAVIS

Maybe she's one of them.

PASTOR MADISON

Come on now, Oliver.

OLIVER TRAVIS

Because she a white woman don't mean nothing to me.

PASTOR MADISON
 Oliver Travis, this is a house of
 God.

OLIVER TRAVIS
 Then maybe you ought not of brought
 her here to begin with.

Pastor Madison flips through his bible:

PASTOR MADISON
 For out of Zion shall go forth the
 law. And the word of the Lord from
 Jerusalem. He shall judge between
 the nations, and rebuke many
 people; They shall beat their
 swords into plowshares, and their
 spears into pruning hooks; nation
 shall not lift up sword against
 nation, neither shall they learn
 war anymore.

Oliver Travis wipes his nose.

PASTOR MADISON
 Do not fear the truth in the house
 of the Lord, Oliver Travis.

Everyone is quiet.

PASTOR MADISON
 Miss, why don't you come up here
 and tell us what you can.

ISAAC
 Yeah. Ok.

Gwen gets up, walks over to the pulpit. She watches as
 Isaac steps back, and turns to see the assembled - still a
 good number of people.

GWEN
 There was a fire... and chanting.
 My hands were... My hands were
 tied, I think. They were reading
 from a book. There was a book, and
 the words were... I don't know.
 They made me drink... Filth.

Looking back at her, with shamed empty eyes, each person in
 the crowd waits for someone else to speak.

GWEN

In the name of Jesus, please tell
me what is happening to me!

A ripple of shock runs through the crowd as the silence
cracks.

GWEN

Someone must be out there looking
for me. Please, just help me find
my way home.

An older man named CURTIS looks her square in the eyes. He
looks through her...

CURTIS

My dog run off this morning. My
cats run off too.

TRUDY

That don't mean nothing Curtis, and
you know it.

PASTOR MADISON

And you say your hands were tied.

GWEN

I think my hands were tied.

PASTOR MADISON

Who was it set you free?

Unable to answer, Gwen looks back at Pastor Madison.

PASTOR MADISON

Seems like a simple thing, but it
ain't easy.

MURMURS spread through the crowd.

PASTOR MADISON

Seems like a simple thing to turn
water to wine, but Lord knows it
ain't easy.

More MURMURING from the pews.

PASTOR MADISON

Seems like a simple thing to cast
down the devil! Lord knows that
ain't easy!

TRUDY

But we gotta be Christians!

A YOUNG WOMAN addresses Trudy.

YOUNG WOMAN
We don't want no troubles here!

The MURMURING grows louder - many agree. Isaac looks up.

TRUDY
You done had troubles! The Lord is
testing you right now!

PASTOR MADISON
Yes he is. Yes he is. The Lord is
testing us.

Pastor Madison directs his attention towards Gwen.

PASTOR MADISON
Do you love Jesus in your heart?

GWEN
Me?

PASTOR MADISON
I'm asking if you're a Christian
woman.

GWEN
I think I am.

PASTOR MADISON
Do you know the bible?

GWEN
Yes.

PASTOR MADISON
Do you believe?

GWEN
Yes.

PASTOR MADISON
Jesus be praised for that.

GWEN
Please help me.

PASTOR MADISON
Tell me. Do you trust in God's
love?

GWEN
Yes I do.

PASTOR MADISON

Praise Jesus. Then to God's love
we will defer, now and ever. Will
the assembled please bow their
heads in prayer.

Gwen watches as everyone, together, casts their eyes
downward in prayer.

Gwen breathes deep, relaxes her shoulders, and prays.

PASTOR MADISON

Dear Lord, we need your light to
light up the darkness before us.
You know I prayed on this many,
times, Lord. You know we all have
prayed Lord, and you know our
parents and our grandparents prayed
on this, and we know you're trying
to tell us what to do, Oh Lord, and
we're trying so hard to hear you.
You got us in your hands, Lord, and
we are your vassals. You got us in
your hands, and we give ourselves
over to your grace.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

The hand of Their Leader brushes Gwen's bloody face.

THEIR LEADER

It's time for you to see.

He grabs the bindings that cover her eyes and hold her head
back.

As Gwen takes in the sight before her, they grow wide with
shock-

INT. GOSHEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Gwen's eyes are wide wide open.

Looking out into the pews, she sees...

The throng of people are there, but hollow, ghastly, like
Curtis was before. Dark, spectral faces look up at her
interruption...

Her face is full of unspeakable terror.

PASTOR MADISON
Do you fear the might of our
prayer?

Suddenly, everything is normal.

PASTOR MADISON
Do you fear the word of the Lord?

GWEN
You are all dead.

Pastor Madison holds his bible high.

PASTOR MADISON
Holy Father, Jesus, cast these
devils-

Very quickly, very sudden, every person in the room but Gwen is ground into flying hamburger-sized pieces, head first, down to their feet. It's as if a gigantic blender were pressed upside down over each and every person in the church.

Maggot-sized bits of flesh and bone are flung into every nook and cranny, covering everything, and the blood...

As Gwen SCREAMS her lungs out, she's covered in the indistinguishable remains of the people of Goshen, her eyes as wide as madness can make them...

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - EVENING

BLINK.

The light isn't right.

BLINK.

A spectral form kneels by her side. Gwen starts to bolt upright...

GWEN
Gaaaah!

TRUDY
Shhh...

Trudy puts her hand on Gwen's forehead, pressing her back into the bed, and puts her bible down.

Just Trudy. Everything is fine.

Evening light streams through the old curtains, lighting the room dimly. This is just a room.

 GWEN
Trudy?

 TRUDY
Yes, Miss?

 GWEN
 (sobbing)
Something is happening to me...

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Dusty amber light fills the air.

Wrapped in a blanket, Gwen sits at a small dining table while Trudy brings her a steaming cup of coffee, along with one for herself.

Gwen looks at Trudy for some kind of signal - Trudy just looks broken.

 GWEN
Which way should I go?

 TRUDY
I packed a bundle for you.

 GWEN
Should I go to Pride?

 TRUDY
Just be careful on the road. They know these parts.

 GWEN
Trudy, which way should I go?

 TRUDY
I can't tell you, Miss.

 GWEN
I remembered something.

Trudy looks up, afraid to hear. After a moment, she nods her consent.

 GWEN
I remember someone's hand on my face.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Trudy looks over towards the door. Isaac opens it slowly.

ISAAC
Mrs. Wilson.

EXT. TRUDY'S PORCH

Stepping through the threshold onto the porch, Gwen INHALES sharply. Looking around through the twilight, she can see glimmers of the spectral all around...

Reaching around her neck, Pastor Madison drapes a cross over her shoulders.

PASTOR MADISON
May the Lord walk by your side.

Gwen looks at him, and then looks out across the porch. Everything is the way it should be.

Most of the folks in Goshen have gathered to see Gwen leave. Some of these folks have tools handy. One or two have guns.

Slowly, hesitant, Gwen steps forward, and her hand slips out of Trudy's.

TRUDY
No.

Pastor Madison reaches for Trudy.

TRUDY
No, Pastor Madison.

Trudy puts her hand on Gwen's shoulder and shoves past, and puts herself on the steps of the house, between Gwen and the mob.

PASTOR MADISON
Mrs. Wilson.

TRUDY
No, sir!

PASTOR MADISON
You have got to trust in God's will.

TRUDY
Pastor Madison, that is just what I intend to do!

OLIVER TRAVIS
You best step aside, Trudy.

OLIVER TRAVIS steps forward with a gun.

TRUDY
What you say to me, Oliver Travis?

OLIVER TRAVIS
Step aside.

TRUDY
You see where I'm standing?

PASTOR MADISON
Trudy, please.

TRUDY
Did you hear me ask you a question?

OLIVER TRAVIS
Yeah.

TRUDY
Yeah, what.

OLIVER TRAVIS
Yes, I see where you standing.

TRUDY
Good. 'Cause there ain't one more
baby getting pulled off this porch
while I'm standing here alive!

PASTOR MADISON
Mrs. Wilson, you seen this girl has
the devil inside her. Is she the
one you stand beside on Judgment
Day?

TRUDY
You ain't lost no children, Pastor
Madison.

PASTOR MADISON
Maybe that can't be helped. Maybe
that's the Lord's plan for you.

TRUDY
Maybe it's the Lord's plan to put
me here right now!

PASTOR MADISON
Just think on what you're doing.

Oliver Travis points a shotgun at Trudy - she's shaking.

PASTOR MADISON
Oliver, drop that gun down.

OLIVER TRAVIS
We ain't gotta suffer no hardships
for that girl right there.

Oliver Travis begins walking towards the porch, driving Trudy up one stair, then the next...

PASTOR MADISON
Drop that gun down, Oliver.

Trudy's on the porch when Oliver Travis gets to the bottom step.

BLAM!

Silence. Everyone has frozen, shocked that someone fired, shocked they're not hurt...

CLICK-CHOCK.

Walking towards the crowd, The Stormcrow holsters his pistol and levels his submachine gun.

Around his neck, the Stormcrow wears the ARCANES AMULET FROM MEDO'S TOMB.

Behind him on the road, he's parked his car.

THE STORMCROW
Lay your weapons on the ground.

OLIVER TRAVIS
This ain't your business, Mister.

BA-DA-BAP! Riddled with holes, Oliver Travis hits the ground.

THE STORMCROW
Lay your weapons on the ground. I
will not ask again.

The men with guns toss them onto the ground, and the Stormcrow takes a moment to behold the scene.

THE STORMCROW
This is something I'm only going to
tell you once. Take that road,
walk as far as you can, and do not
stop for nightfall.

PASTOR MADISON
If you mean to strike us down...

THE STORMCROW
I'm not the reason you need to
leave, and you know that.

PASTOR MADISON
For two hundred years, our families
have prayed against the darkness of
this -

The Stormcrow SNORTS.

PASTOR MADISON
It is the strength of our faith
that has allowed us to endure.

Picking up the weapons and tossing them through Trudy's
door, he ascends the porch steps and inspects Gwen's face
with his fingers.

PASTOR MADISON
You may think you're doing right by
us, and then again you may be one
of those who plague our nights and
take our children. Either way sir,
I will have you know that we are
not -

THE STORMCROW
Quiet.

Looking into Gwen's eyes, he sees what he's looking for.

THE STORMCROW
Gwen Larson.

Gwen widens her eyes in surprise.

GWEN
You know my name?

THE STORMCROW
Go inside. Wait for me there.

PASTOR MADISON
You know this girl.

THE STORMCROW
No. But her father is looking for
her.

Keeping his gun on the assembled townsfolk, the Stormcrow collects the guns they tossed on the ground.

PASTOR MADISON

Take her with you. We want no part in this.

THE STORMCROW

Go inside. I will not say it again.

Gwen retreats into the house. Waiting only a moment, Trudy takes after her...

THE STORMCROW

Do you know where your children were taken?

PASTOR MADISON

Who are you, sir?

THE STORMCROW

Do you know where your children were taken?

PASTOR MADISON

No.

THE STORMCROW

Do you know who took them?

PASTOR MADISON

White men.

THE STORMCROW

Who?

PASTOR MADISON

We do not know, sir. They hide themselves in cloaks.

THE STORMCROW

I'm here for a book those men will have in their possession. If you can tell me where I'll find it, I can be on my way.

PASTOR MADISON

What kind of book?

THE STORMCROW

The kind you want me taking elsewhere.

PASTOR MADISON

What kinds of things are written in
this book?

THE STORMCROW

Unclean things. Can you tell me
where the book is?

PASTOR MADISON

No sir.

THE STORMCROW

Pastor, we have no further use for
one another.

After a moment, The Stormcrow looks down at Oliver Travis'
body:

THE STORMCROW

Take him with you when you leave.

Picking up the guns, the Stormcrow heads inside to -

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

As he scans Trudy's living room, the Stormcrow rolls a
cigarette, strikes a match on his coat, and lights it. He
inhales deeply, thinks a moment.

Then, the Stormcrow unpacks the notebook lashed to his
thigh, pulls a knife from his boot -

- Gwen and Trudy recoil in fear -

- and begins carving ancient symbols around the edge of the
room.

THE STORMCROW

I'll be staying the night.

One glance at Trudy, one more drag at the cigarette, and he
resumes his work with the wood floor.

THE STORMCROW

It's getting dark. I need this
room cleared of furniture. Put it
all on the porch.

TRUDY

Who in the hell do you think you
are?

THE STORMCROW
Do you know where They are now?

GWEN
No.

THE STORMCROW
You know who I'm talking about.

GWEN
Yes.

THE STORMCROW
How much do you remember?

GWEN
Only a little.

THE STORMCROW
You'll remember more. You'll
remember everything. You and I (to
Trudy) have got to keep ourselves
alive until she does.

After another long, satisfying drag, the Stormcrow returns
to his carving.

THE STORMCROW
You've seen the tome.

Gwen swallows.

THE STORMCROW
An illuminated manuscript, written
by a Benedictine Monk in the
Eleventh Century. It contains the
only complete record of a much
older text, by an ancient Uruk
priest named Medo. Bound in flesh,
written in the ancient tongue of
the Koll -

TRUDY
I know you're lying. The Devil
always lies.

THE STORMCROW
If you can keep believing that,
it'll be better for you.

TRUDY
No holy man could bring himself to
write that wickedness.

THE STORMCROW

Brother Cato did not stay holy.
Reading Medo's words drove him mad.
The book describes the ritual
joining of a window of souls,
through which something ancient and
other can anchor itself to our
world.

TRUDY

You dare to bring the Devil's work
into my home?

THE STORMCROW

You a widow?

TRUDY

Yes I am.

THE STORMCROW

Where's your family?

Trudy chokes down an angry cry.

THE STORMCROW

Hell is a thing men created to make
sense of the darkness that lurks
between the stars. Those who took
your family are serving something
far older, something that knew this
world and the dark heavens above
long before the first child wailed
in all it's terrible frailty.

The Stormcrow puts his cigarette butt out under his boot.

THE STORMCROW

Take all the furniture outside
before it gets dark. With luck,
we'll have the time we need before
your memory comes back. Once that
happens, you can lead me to the
tome and I will be on my way.

TRUDY

You'll just take this book and go.

THE STORMCROW

You have my word.

She and Trudy pick up the dining table and start to move it
out, while the Stormcrow unpacks a book from his backpack
and opens it on the floor in front of him.

BREATHING LOUDLY, The Stormcrow puts all his focus into the carving.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen sits in the middle of the now empty wooden floor, as the Stormcrow carves arcane symbol-work into the floor - he's nearly worked his way around the perimeter of the living room.

He uses a candle for light, and he frequently references his book.

THE STORMCROW

You father is Caleb Lawson of Charlotte, South Carolina. He called on me at my office in Boston two days after your disappearance.

Trudy is cooking some kind of stew over a wooden stove in the kitchen.

TRUDY

That's a long way to travel for -

THE STORMCROW

For a missing person? I've been looking for the tome in South Carolina, so your disappearance did not come as a surprise to me.

GWEN

Take me to him.

THE STORMCROW

When your father exhausted all conventional assistance, someone I've been in contact with referred him to me. He'd heard rumors about who might have taken you. I hoped the rumors were correct, and it turns out they were.

GWEN

Please take me to my father.

THE STORMCROW

Not yet. Before I take you to your father, I need you to tell me where it is.

GWEN

I don't know where it is.

THE STORMCROW

You'll remember. Then I'll send you home.

GWEN

Why is the tome important?

THE STORMCROW

Every other record of Medo's prophecy has been destroyed.

GWEN

Destroyed by you?

THE STORMCROW

Destroyed by time or madness. But this book has allowed Medo's prophecy to survive, and for the rituals to be continued. What these men have done, men have done for thousands of years.

GWEN

What would make men do such things?

THE STORMCROW

Hope of reward.

GWEN

Reward from... who?

THE STORMCROW

I will not speak it's name. Neither should you.

Finished, the Stormcrow SIGHS, stows his boot knife and his hip notes, and puts the big book back in his leather rucksack.

THE STORMCROW

There's going to be... discomfort. Bagagrzth adingh hxor. Bagagrzth adingh hxor. Zgrathchyu xdalath fxylluh dwmuth youzdh.

Gwen rests her eyes, looks down at the floor...

And very subtly, the floor begins to writhe. Ever so slightly, she's sinking into it, it's pulling her apart, reaching inside her...

Slowly, Gwen becomes the floor.

Looking up, she sees a spectre standing over her, a burning fire in his chest, this one less hollow, more ferocious than the specters from the church...

THE STORMCROW
Xrathyul, dolluh xol bharaxh.

Everything is normal.

Trudy looks up as Gwen's SCREAM gets caught in her throat. Standing over her, the Stormcrow holds MEDO'S ARCANE AMULET forth.

THE STORMCROW
(to Gwen)
You shouldn't sleep in here.

Draping the ARCANE AMULET back over his shoulders, the Stormcrow sits and relaxes.

THE STORMCROW
(to Trudy)
You should sleep in here if you want to live. The food smells delicious.

Trudy eyes him in distrust.

Behind him, Gwen spits up on the floor. SPLAT.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Accepting a fresh mug of stew from Trudy, the Stormcrow tears a piece of bread, sogs it, and savors it.

GWEN
I have to leave. I need to find my father.

Silently, the Stormcrow eyes Gwen with insight and disbelief.

GWEN
This room is doing something to me.

THE STORMCROW
This room is keeping you sane. When you've had your dinner and you're feeling a little stronger, you need to go upstairs and rest.

GWEN
No. I should go.

THE STORMCROW
It's the only way to make you
remember.

GWEN
I don't want to remember.

THE STORMCROW
Of course not. Sooner or later,
the doors in your mind will open.

GWEN
What does that mean?

THE STORMCROW
Our best chance to find the tome.

GWEN
I'm going home.

THE STORMCROW
If I don't find it, someone else
will.

GWEN
I'm leaving.

TRUDY
I'll go with you.

Pulling out her chair, Gwen stands up. Trudy follows...

...and the Stormcrow reaches for the book lashed to his
thigh. Pulling it out, flipping through it...

...as Gwen opens the door and Trudy gets her coat...

THE STORMCROW
Gxarad hxul fzadra mjol. Kollux
mjol!

SLAM! Every door and window in the building slams shut with
monumental force. Reaching for his pistol, the Stormcrow
closes his book.

THE STORMCROW
A famous writer once said that the
sum of humanity's understanding is
a rocky island in the middle of a
vast and dark sea, into which we
were never meant to sail. You have
seen the Gjrod Hollod, the window
of souls... and it will drive you
mad.

(MORE)

THE STORMCROW (cont'd)
 But if you lead me to the children
 who have done this thing...

GWEN
 And what have they done?

THE STORMCROW
 They've opened your eyes.

GWEN
 Opened my eyes to what?

THE STORMCROW
 That is what I hope to learn in
 Cato's transcriptions -

GWEN
 What have they done to me?!!

THE STORMCROW
 You are just the memory of a girl.

All the Stormcrow can do is eat his soup.

TRUDY
 I know devils like you.

THE STORMCROW
 If you knew any devils like me, we
 would have met before now.

TRUDY
 You think she'll crawl to you for
 her salvation.

THE STORMCROW
 What's your name?

TRUDY
 Mrs. Trudy Washington Wilson

THE STORMCROW
 There is no saving her, Mrs.
 Wilson. But I can be her guide.

Gwen tries the door - and finds it locked.

Picking up a chair, SCREAMING, she swings it at the window -
 which cracks plenty, but will not break open.

Standing in front of the Stormcrow, Gwen HOWLS and SHRIEKS
 in the throes of tantrum... until she is reduced to weeping.

THE STORMCROW
Are you hungry?

Casually, the Stormcrow sets a mug of stew in front of her - which she can't even stand the sight of.

THE STORMCROW
Get some rest. You're going to need your strength.

TRUDY
I'll take her upstairs.

THE STORMCROW
You stay here.

TRUDY
I'm taking her upstairs.

Trudy stands up, helps Gwen to her feet... walks over to the front hall and the stairs. After a moment, the Stormcrow follows Trudy up the creaky steps.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Standing in the doorway, the Stormcrow watches as Trudy unmakes the bed.

TRUDY
He ain't a Christian man.

GWEN
I'm pretty sure he knows what happened to your daughter.

TRUDY
And I will fear no evil.

GWEN
I will fear no evil...

TRUDY
Who, this king of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

GWEN
The Lord.

Gwen begins to weep. After a moment, Trudy cries as well.

TRUDY

I'm sorry I done what I done. Lord
forgive me for what I done.

Gwen tightens her grip around Trudy, and Trudy does likewise, and they begin to shake.

TRUDY

You my salvation, Miss.

Briefly, Trudy prays over Gwen. Then, the Stormcrow steps into the room.

THE STORMCROW

Are you ready?

GWEN

No.

THE STORMCROW

I threw myself headlong into the
current; the sole witness of my
fate being a solitary crow.

GWEN

What's that mean?

THE STORMCROW

It's from a poem called "Angel of
the Odd". As with most madmen, I
find it's best to take Poe
literally.

TRUDY

That's a fact.

With that, the Stormcrow pulls the ARCANES AMULET from his neck and holds it forth.

THE STORMCROW

Miss Lawson, speak: Hollod Koll
Dulzgh.

GWEN

Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW

(repeating)
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

GWEN

Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

Watching her a moment with the AMULET outstretched, the Stormcrow considers.

THE STORMCROW
(to Trudy)
You'll want to be in the living
room when she falls asleep.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

When Trudy tromps down the stairs, she finds the Stormcrow cleaning and oiling his guns.

THE STORMCROW
She's sleeping?

TRUDY
Don't you fear the devil?

Wordlessly, the Stormcrow continues his work.

TRUDY
You ought to.

The Stormcrow finished reassembling his Tommy Gun and begins dissecting his shotgun.

THE STORMCROW
Do you sin?

TRUDY
Lord have mercy, I do sin.

He works a bit with the smaller pieces of his shotgun and starts reassembling it.

THE STORMCROW
Do you believe that the Bible is
the Word of God?

TRUDY
With my very soul.

THE STORMCROW
You have no doubt at all.

TRUDY

No.

THE STORMCROW

Then it's simple for you. God has given you a very direct set of instructions. If you follow them, the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. If you falter, you will become the embodiment of suffering so others may learn from your failure. Every moment of every day, you are given a choice. You know which choice is right.

TRUDY

Yes. That I do.

THE STORMCROW

Why would you ever commit an act of sin?

TRUDY

The flesh is weak.

THE STORMCROW

No. That's what you were taught to say. You sin because you don't fear the Devil and you don't fear God. What you fear is that at some point in your life, something will happen for absolutely no reason at all.

Trudy is silent in the face of truth.

THE STORMCROW

There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

TRUDY

That's what they say.

THE STORMCROW

Imagine this. Imagine just one fleeting moment in which God can't see you. Imagine what that would mean.

A shiver runs down Trudy's spine.

TRUDY

He's watching.

Loading his guns, the Stormcrow fetches himself another cigarette and lights it.

THE STORMCROW

Then I'd quit sinning, if I were you.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

Gwen is bound to the sacrificial post, lit by the bonfire...

Her neck is drenched in hot gore. Her face is shaking, closed...

In the dark, a robed INITIATE holds a large, fresh piece of flesh, and is gently, delicately, deliberately sponging her face with it.

GWEN

I see you.

THEIR LEADER

Uzhx ylurth hollod.

Having covered her face in blood, the initiate cuts a piece of meat from the large mess in his hand, and chews it carefully.

THEIR LEADER

These words were given to me by my father, and to him by his father, and so it has been for ten generations. Our window will be the first. I know you can feel it.

Their Leader puts his hand on Gwen's face.

THEIR LEADER

Koll Dulzgh.

THEM

(softly and repeatedly)
Koll Dulzgh.

THEIR LEADER

Through a window of souls, Koll Dulzgh will find our world. As it is written.

Their Leader smiles with obvious care and pleasure.

THEIR LEADER

Almost five thousand years ago, the prophet Medo of Uruk built a tomb to house himself and his revelations, and in the writing of his people he carved a litany that came to him in dreams. First the Sumerians, then the Akkadians, then others ruled Empires through the city of Ur, and the beckoning of Koll Dulzgh went unheard for many centuries, buried beneath the adulations of men to lesser gods.

Their Leader takes a moment to reflect on his disgust.

Once the initiate has chewed the meat into a thick paste, he is passed a wooden bowl full of thick gore, into which he spits the chewed remains.

They stand around her, in clean, brown robes, with arcane amulets hung about their necks. These amulets differ from the Stormcrow's - they seem more crude, for one.

Eyes wide with terror, Gwen sweats and SCREAMS through the pain and fear to digest and understand precisely what is happening to her

THEIR LEADER

In the year 1099 AD, a crusading monk by the name of Antonius Cato was stranded when his company was slain by a Muslim raiding party. He found himself in desolation, and he wandered lost through the ancient river valleys, and came unto the temple of Medo. Lovingly, he transcribed Medo's words to be taken to the West. Lovingly, he bound the tome in the skin of Medo himself.

Their Leader closes the book.

THEIR LEADER

From hand to hand, for thousands of years, this book has served to forge the window.

Their leader stretches out his hand, and a crude but ornamental knife is placed inside it.

THEIR LEADER

Now it has passed to us. Now the window is complete, and so now, It comes.

Holding Gwen's nose until she cries out for air, he lifts the wooden bowl to her face and jams it between her teeth, forcing her to choke down the contents.

Once the bowl is emptied, Gwen SCREAMS out in maddened horror.

THEIR LEADER (O.C.)

Uzhd zlydh hollod.

The hand of Their Leader brushes Gwen's face.

THEIR LEADER

Behold. The unceasing wind. It's time for you to see.

He slips the sacrificial knife slips between the leather and the sacrificial pole, and he pulls -

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen sits upright against the headboard of Belle's bed, eyes wide with terror, motionless. Her arms are spread out against the headboard - bound.

The sound of her BREATHING dominates the soundscape.

At the foot of the bed, Their Leader is standing quite still, watching her intently. Surrounding him, THEY stand in silent unison.

Gwen is too terrified to speak...

THEIR LEADER

The bowl.

Two of the assembled "Them" lean in and drive round wedges into the corners of Gwen's mouth and hold them there, keeping her jaw as wide open as it can get.

As Gwen GAKS and WHIMPERS in terror, Their Leader leans in and cuts her tongue out.

Reaching into her mouth as she chokes on the blood, he gets a solid grip on it and passes it to the initiate, who places it in the wooden bowl and begins to cut it with the knife and pass the pieces around for chewing.

In her shock, Gwen's attempts at breathing and sound produce a sort of GURGLE.

THEIR LEADER

The language you hear is not Latin
and it is not Uruk. It is the
Gjrod hollod. It is the voice of
the unceasing wind.

The bowl is passed between Them, and into the receptacle each spits his piece of chewed tongue. When the bowl is returned to Their Leader, he removes the vial from around his neck.

THEIR LEADER

Hajd Xthradd Gthutuul. This is the
essence of all those who have given
themselves to the unceasing wind.

After Their Leader tops the vial off with blood running from Gwen's chin, he pours one drop into the bowl. The rest, he corks and drapes around his neck.

THEIR LEADER

Gjorod cthuul, xazth harad.

Once again, Their Leader forces the bowl of chewed tongue and spittle down Gwen's choking face.

THEIR LEADER

Zradthra kollux djoll.

Standing around Their Leader, They begin a low chant:

THEM

(chanting quietly)
Koll Dulzgh.

THEIR LEADER

Hrurud gxthadu gjex aladno.

They continue to chant.

THEIR LEADER

Kyollxum. Kyollxum. Kyollxum!

THEIR LEADER

The knife.

With the sacrificial knife, Their Leader cuts deep into Gwen's tummy....

THEIR LEADER

Fxol gollatx cthuul.

...and reaches into her, reaching for her heart...

Gwen's eyes grow wide open.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As the Stormcrow studies his field journal, and as Trudy slumbers against the wall

- a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM shakes the house! Automatically, the Stormcrow clutches his amulet...

TRUDY
Good lord.

THE STORMCROW
Hardly.

Pushing herself to her feet, Trudy makes for the stairs.

THE STORMCROW
This room is the only safe place
for you.

TRUDY
She needs me.

With casual frustration, the Stormcrow watches Trudy take a lantern and head up the stairs.

INT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Trudy makes her way up the rickety staircase, she can hear murmurs coming from...

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carrying the light, Trudy steps into her Belle's room... and sees Gwen drowning in sweat, clutching her abdomen and her face.

GWEN
Muh... muh...

Slowly, carefully, Trudy takes a cautious step towards the bed.

TRUDY
You hear me?

One step closer, and another...

TRUDY

Gwen?

Reaching out with a hand, Trudy touches Gwen's shoulder -

- Gwen's eyes bolt open - they're JET BLACK.

Out of her gut, Gwen VOMITS BLOOD ALL OVER TRUDY

TRUDY

Dear Lord almighty!

Gwen blinks, and her eyes are normal.

GWEN

Mbuah.

TRUDY

Oh God...

GWEN

Mbuah... My mouth. I... Oh God.
I saw them. They were here.

TRUDY

No.

GWEN

They were here. They found me.

BANG! From outside -

- the window cracks. There's a bullet buried at the center of the break, frozen in place.

TRUDY

Miss, get -

BANG! Another bullet breaks a second window pane, caught before entering the room...

In her shock, Gwen opens the window.

TRUDY

Lord! Lord, no! NO!

BLAM! GWEN'S HEAD EXPLODES ALL OVER TRUDY'S FACE!

Trudy falls to the ground. Frantic, she wipes the gore from her eyes...

TRUDY

No!

...recoils from the mess, backs down the stairs, falls, tumbles...

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

...and lands in a heap at the bottom of the steps.

TRUDY
Good Lord, No!

THE STORMCROW
Is that your blood?

TRUDY
What?

KNOCK KNOCK...

At the door. Trudy stops cold.

CURTIS (O.S.)
(from outside)
Mrs. Wilson? We done half of what
we got to do, Mrs. Wilson. You
hear me, Trudy? Open that door
right now!

In shock, Trudy stares helplessly at the Stormcrow.

From outside, someone tries the door.

CURTIS (O.C.)
Let us in, now!

Whoever is pushing on the door puts their weight into it. While the wood creaks, it shows no give.

CRACK! Outside, someone kicks at the door.

CRACK! Again.

CURTIS (O.S.)
Lay off that right now, Mrs. Wilson

TRUDY
You can't come in!

CURTIS (O.S.)
What's that now?

TRUDY
You can't come in!

CURTIS (O.S.)
We here to do what's right!

TRUDY
I know!

CURTIS (O.S.)
So let us in!

TRUDY
I can't!

CURTIS (O.S.)
Are you in trouble?

Trudy doesn't answer.

CURTIS (O.S.)
How come you can't?

TRUDY
I don't know!

CRACK! Another kick at the door. Patiently, the Stormcrow
leafs through his journal to find a passage of text.

GWEN
Mrs. Wilson?

Suddenly, everyone stops.

One by one, the stairs creek and warble... until Gwen steps
down from the stairs into the living room.

CURTIS (O.S.)
What's that now?

GWEN
I'm all right!

Like a maiden of battle, her garments are soaked in blood...
but she is whole. Changed. But whole.

CURTIS (O.S.)
What's that now?

GWEN
I'm all right!

CURTIS (O.S.)
Is that the girl?

Looking up for a brief moment, the Stormcrow keeps looking
for the passage...

THE STORMCROW

Ah.

CURTIS (O.S.)

Is that the girl in there?

Staring at Gwen in transfixed horror, all Trudy can do is INHALE in SHOCK.

CURTIS (O.S.)

Who'd we shoot in there?

Grabbing his guns, the Stormcrow heads upstairs.

THE STORMCROW

Come with me.

Gwen follows the Stormcrow upstairs.

CURTIS (O.S.)

Who'd we shoot in there, Trudy?
You hear me Trudy?

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Setting his Tommy Gun by the window, Stormcrow readies his shotgun.

THE STORMCROW

Have a seat.

Gwen sits on the bed. Her brains are all over the ceiling and wall.

Outside the window, a crowd has assembled in front of Trudy's porch.

THE STORMCROW

You open any other windows?

GWEN

No.

CURTIS (O.S.)

(yelling outside)
You open that door, Trudy Wilson!

THE STORMCROW

How much do you remember?

GWEN

I remember what they did to me.

THE STORMCROW
Do you remember where?

CURTIS (O.S.)
Trudy, don't make me come in.

GWEN
Here. This room.

THE STORMCROW
It wasn't in this room.

GWEN
They came for me. They held me to
the bed.

THE STORMCROW
Try and remember.

GWEN
You don't know!

CURTIS
I hear you up there! I know you
hiding up there!

Holding it to the window, the Stormcrow PUMPS his shotgun.

THE STORMCROW
Your past and your future are
bleeding into the present. You're
seeing... You're seeing more. Try
and remember.

After standing outside the window a moment, Curtis leaves
without an answer.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CURTIS
Trudy, you got one last chance to
open that door. You gonna open
that door, Trudy.

Outside, there's a flicker of light. Someone is lighting a
rag...

CRASH!

A bottle with a flaming rag crashes into the porch...

Fire begins to spread.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clutching her head, Trudy SCREAMS. Through the front windows, there's a flickering glow as more bottles SMASH against the front of the house...

TRUDY (O.S.)
Oh my Lord!

Downstairs, Trudy RATTLES the door uselessly.

CRASH! Another bottle smashes into the roof. Fire blooms.

SMASH! Someone lobs a bottle through the open window into Gwen's room.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

BLAM! Ducking out of the window, The Stormcrow BLOWS AN ASSAILANT AWAY.

COCK-SHOCK. He recocks his weapon.

THE STORMCROW
Miss Larson.

GWEN
Yes.

THE STORMCROW
Miss Larson, have you fired a gun before?

Suddenly, Trudy bursts into the room and sees the fire. As she dashes for the open window, the Stormcrow levels his pistol at her.

THE STORMCROW
Go back to the living room.

TRUDY
It's on fire.

THE STORMCROW
Miss Larson, please tell her to go back to the living room.

GWEN
Go back to the living room.

THE STORMCROW
Now, if you please.

After a moment of awkward uncertainty, Trudy complies.

THE STORMCROW
Have you fired a gun before?

CRASH! Another bottle hits the porch. Now, the fire is ROARING.

GWEN
Yes.

THE STORMCROW
A pump-action shotgun?

GWEN
Not like that.

THE STORMCROW
You fire. You pump. You fire again. There's four shots left. Here. Extra ammunition.

The Stormcrow passes her the gun.

THE STORMCROW
Mind the window.

GWEN
What about the fire?

THE STORMCROW
Mind the window.

GWEN
No!

Snatching the tommy gun off the floor, the Stormcrow steps downstairs.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ignoring the flame, the Stormcrow steps over Trudy and makes his way to the porch doorway.

THE STORMCROW
If you hope to continue living in this world, then you must accept it for what it is.

TRUDY
What is it, then?

THE STORMCROW
 Unspeakable horror.

TRUDY
 Lord, why would a person accept
 such a thing?

THE STORMCROW
 The next world is far, far worse.

BLAM! BLAM!

THE STORMCROW
 Here we go.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ducking by the window with the shotgun, Gwen hides as
 another bullet tears apart the house.

BLAM!

At this point, the fire upstairs is all-consuming.

GWEN
 They're shooting at me!

THE STORMCROW (O.S.)
 Shoot back at them, will you?

GWEN
 I can't!

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Standing in the burning living room, surrounded by his
 runes, the Stormcrow shouts at the ceiling:

TRUDY
 We got to help her.

THE STORMCROW
 No.

GWEN
 Help me, please!

TRUDY
 We got to go to her!

THE STORMCROW

If you leave this room, you will die.

GWEN (O.S.)

Help me please!

THE STORMCROW

Mrs. Wilson, don't move from where you are.

TRUDY

You're playing with people's lives!

THE STORMCROW

I'm playing with forces beyond my comprehension. The lives are just in the way.

As the house burns around her, Trudy prays.

TRUDY

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

GWEN

There's no place left to hide!

THE STORMCROW

Then shoot them!

GWEN

I can't!

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Now, the room is so hot and so bright that it's a wonder
Gwen hasn't caught fire

THE STORMCROW
Shoot them!

GWEN
I can't!

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE STORMCROW
Let go of yourself, Gwen Larson!
Remember what you are become!

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

GWEN
I'm not ready!

THE STORMCROW
Let go!

Gwen's dress catches fire.

GWEN
I'm on fire! Help me, I'm on fire!

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE STORMCROW
Gwen, can you hear me?

GWEN
I'm burning!

THE STORMCROW
That's good! Let the pain reach
deep within you!

GWEN
Help me, please!

THE STORMCROW
Let the pain awaken the seed inside
you!

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

By now, Gwen is well and truly aflame.

THE STORMCROW
Stop trying to be Gwen Larson and
let the world fall away! Remember,
Gwen!

GWEN
I'm scared!

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE STORMCROW
That's reasonable, I suppose.

In the middle of all the mayhem, the Stormcrow opens his notebook to the page he'd marked earlier.

Hefting his tommy gun with the other hand, The Stormcrow ducks below the window adjacent to the front hall.

TRUDY
It's hot!

THE STORMCROW
Stay where you are!

Trudy's lamp CRACKS in the heat.

Holding his notebook in front of him, he begins to recite:

THE STORMCROW
Xthis falchxid kogth! Bxarad cthux
hollod oond gjoroth bxarad! Ixth
zjarom doorg! Hollod!

With no more preamble than this, the flames are literally shut off. Reaching out, Trudy finds her house is cool to the touch - despite being carbonized in many places.

Without waiting for the shock to wear off, The Stormcrow charges into the front hall -

THE STORMCROW
Mjol kollux!

INT. TRUDY'S FRONT HALL - NIGHT

- kicks the burnt, broken front door to pieces -

EXT. TRUDY'S PORCH - NIGHT

- and charges onto the porch, firing in bursts!

The light from the tommy gun's muzzle flashes lights up his eyeglasses as he grimly sets about the task of mowing down the crowd assembled at the front of the house to burn him out.

Most folks run for the treeline, and the Stormcrow has to change barrels pretty quick to keep picking them off.

After the second barrel runs dry, he loads the third one and waits a moment to spot the stragglers.

Lowering the tommy gun, he levels it at a young man running down the street.

BA-DA-BAP! SPLAT.

Twenty or so lie dead or dying within sight of the house.

Before going back inside, the Stormcrow notices his car is burned out.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Stormcrow doesn't breathe a sigh of relief until he's back inside the arcane perimeter of the living room. Once he's safely inside, he rests himself down and cleans his glasses.

THE STORMCROW

They burned my car. When she's ready, we'll have a long walk ahead.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Leaning up against the wall, unharmed in her burnt dress, Gwen begins to doze... Moonlight streams through the window.

SHREIK! Opening her eyes, Gwen sees the moonlight as distorted and wan. Looking out the window, she sees the fallen corpses.

INT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

Blinking, she sees THEM fleeing from the clearing -

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

- and the people fleeing from the porch as the Stormcrow fires his tommy gun.

Looking more closely, she can see a glow from the porch -

- and as the Stormcrow steps out under the moonlight, he glows with spectral light.

Gwen reaches for him...

...with what seems like a black wisp of fog -

- and the AMULET around his neck bursts with white fiery power. She can't touch him...

...but as she looks up, she sees the others. Spectres all over the place, falling under his hail of bullets. Hitting the ground.

Standing up, as the flesh dies away.

Beholding Gwen, in all her unthinkable power.

Staring up at her, in hopeless awestruck abandon.

Reaching for their very souls, she wraps her wispy black tentacles around the spectres and consumes them.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sitting against the wall, shotgun in hand, the Stormcrow lets his eyes close for a moment.

His eyes open.

CREAK. Leading Gwen gently back into the living room, Trudy gives the Stormcrow a cold look.

Casually, the Stormcrow lights a cigarette and begins cleaning his tommy gun.

TRUDY

I'm taking her away from here.

THE STORMCROW

You're careless with your fate,
Mrs. Wilson.

Taking a drag, the Stormcrow exhales casually.

GWEN

Take it out of me.

THE STORMCROW

I intend to, once I have the tome.

GWEN

Do it now. Please.

THE STORMCROW

Do you remember where the tome is?

GWEN

I can remember if you help me.

Finishing his field strip, the Stormcrow loads a round into the chamber of his Thompson.

TRUDY

I see. I see what you been about. You keeping all the horror in front of her, so she'll remember what it is she tried so hard to forget.

THE STORMCROW

Try to imagine that you're a maggot. Try to imagine that your whole life, you've lived inside a rotten piece of wood in the forest. That wood has been the only world you've known, and it provides you with everything you need to survive.

TRUDY

It's time to leave.

THE STORMCROW

Now, imagine there comes a bear. Is the bear evil? Is the bear benign? No. The bear is hungry, or it soon will be. Nothing more than that. It's simple... But not to the maggots. All they know is that something vast and unknowable is tearing their world apart. Will they experience the bear's tooth, or perhaps it's tongue, as it peels the bark away and begins the easy work of prying open that flaky, sodden wood to get at all those plump morsels inside?

Taking a long drag off his cigarette, the Stormcrow continues:

THE STORMCROW

To the maggots, the bear is a God.
Full of meaning. Full of hope.
For even one of those maggots to
realize something closer to truth
would be madness.

TRUDY

Her father is waiting for her.

THE STORMCROW

I'm well aware of her father.

TRUDY

Isn't that why you're here?

THE STORMCROW

I've told you why I'm here. And
you're right. I need her to
remember where she's been, and that
means I need her to stop fighting
what she's seen and what she knows.
I need the maggot to know the bear.
Something's woken up from a long
slumber, and it's tearing the world
apart - and that's not an odd
thing, Trudy Washington Wilson.

Trudy pulls Gwen towards the door.

TRUDY

I'm taking her home.

For a moment, Gwen picks at the burnt wood.

GWEN

It's going to get worse.

THE STORMCROW

What you are experiencing is the
first bleary step of a thing that
has slept for longer than men have
walked the earth.

GWEN

He's right, Mrs. Wilson.

TRUDY

Nonsense.

GWEN

Whatever is wrong with me -

TRUDY

Miss, there is nothing wrong with you.

GWEN

- it doesn't belong with my family. It doesn't belong in a city full of people.

TRUDY

The Lord will see to it that you're all right. You got to have faith. Miss, you got to have faith.

GWEN

You stood right next to me when I was shot.

TRUDY

You weren't never shot.

GWEN

I was shot by a man from outside the house. Shot in the head.

TRUDY

No such thing happened.

GWEN

You saw it. You stood right there.

TRUDY

I saw no such thing!

GWEN

My head flew apart, and you saw it!

TRUDY

By God, hush your words!

GWEN

I'm here, Trudy! I'm here! Something is very wrong with me!

TRUDY

There ain't nothing wrong with you, baby! I got to save you! Don't you see I got to save you, Miss?

KNOCK KNOCK.

ISAAC
Mrs. Wilson?

Standing by the shattered door, Isaac leans his head in.

COCK-CHOCK! Reflexively, the Stormcrow levels his tommy gun.

TRUDY
Isaac.

ISAAC
I heard all the yelling.

THE STORMCROW
Step in slowly. Hold up your hands.

Stepping towards the door, the Stormcrow pats Isaac down.

ISAAC
They sayin' they shot her.

THE STORMCROW
Step into the living room.

ISAAC
They sayin' they shot her in the head an' she got back up.

Isaac steps into the living room, as the Stormcrow relaxes his gun.

TRUDY
Look at me Isaac!

ISAAC
Yeah, I...

TRUDY
The Devil is come to Goshen.

ISAAC
That's what I heard.

TRUDY
The Devil working his magic in this place.

ISAAC
I know it.

TRUDY

We don't even know which is the
evils, and which is the angels.

Trudy touches Isaac's face with tears in her eyes. Isaac
doesn't know what to make of any of this.

ISAAC

I come to take her back to the
church.

Trudy looks at the Stormcrow.

ISAAC

We'll keep her safe, and we'll pray
on it, and we'll see. But the
Devil's on Earth tonight. Can't
let him have his way.

TRUDY

No, we can't.

ISAAC

Then let's take her.

The Stormcrow watches with a strange detachment in his eye.

Gwen looks into the Stormcrow's face for something...

GWEN

Can they help me?

THE STORMCROW

Yes, they can help you remember.
You should go with them.

GWEN

No. No. Nooo.....

Gwen POUNDS the wall with her fist -

GWEN

NO! NO!

- before sliding to the floor in bawling tears, SCREAMING
like a woman clinging to the shreds of her own sanity for
dear life.

Gwen looks Trudy in the face.

GWEN

NO! NO!

Gwen slams a wall and looks back at Trudy, challenging the old woman to beat some humanity into her. She SCREAMS madly to emphasize the point.

THE STORMCROW

Once you remember where the tome
is, I can send this thing back to
where it came from. I promise you.

Grabbing her from behind, Isaac begins forcing her to the ground.

SCREAMING, HOWLING, she fights back at Isaac, but he wrestles her to the ground and pins her arms behind her, holding her down from on top, riding out the fit.

Through it all, the Stormcrow just watches.

ISAAC

Can't let you go until you done.

GWEN

Trudy?

TRUDY

Yes, baby.

GWEN

Will you stay here?

TRUDY

Miss, I think it's best I pray on
this.

Trudy puzzles at Gwen's bloodshot gaze.

GWEN

Please.

TRUDY

We'll be safe in the House of the
Lord.

GWEN

Please stay here.

TRUDY

Prayer is all I got left to offer.

GWEN

Please stay here. Please.

Trudy puts her hand on Gwen's shoulder, keeping her down with the force of a feather, while Isaac climbs off her back. Gwen sits up, completely redfaced.

GWEN

Please don't leave this room.

Isaac leads Gwen to the door, and as they pass out of the living room towards the porch she takes his hand...

GWEN

You told me I was your salvation.

TRUDY

Yes I did.

GWEN

Let me save you.

ISAAC

Everything's got to be all right.

GWEN

All right.

ISAAC

Let's go.

GWEN

All right.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The moon shines down on the burnt two-story home.

Stepping off the porch, Isaac leads Gwen down the road to the Church. Along the way, she scuffs the dusty road with her shoe.

INT. LAWSON FAMILY AUTOMOBILE - DAY

PETER HARDING covers Gwen's hand as she reaches for the stick shift.

PETER

Gwen, that's fast enough!

GWEN

Don't be a daisy!

PETER

A daisy, she calls me!

EXT. PRIDE COUNTY ROAD - DAY

With Gwen at the wheel and Peter riding shotgun, her family's topless auto speeds down a country road. The day is young and the weather is fine indeed.

INT. LARSON FAMILY AUTOMOBILE - DAY

Peter leans back into his seat, comically resigned to his fate.

PETER
Gwen Lawson.

GWEN
Peter Harding.

She swats him smirkingly, and he blocks her arm - they tussle playfully as she steers the car with one hand.

Modesty and safety forbid Peter from committing fully to the contest, and Gwen wins another victory.

Satisfied, Gwen returns her focus to driving.

GWEN
I'm hungry.

PETER
What's in the basket?

GWEN
Chicken, peaches, pecan pie, and a bottle of wine.

PETER
Should we just pull off the road?

GWEN
Let's find a field.

She starts to smirk again.

GWEN
A big field full of-

PETER
Don't say it!

He reaches over to roughhouse-

GWEN
Stop yourself. Someone's stuck.

EXT. PRIDE COUNTY ROAD - DAY

A produce truck is pulled over to the side of the road. A little steam escapes from under the open hood, and TWO MEN are fiddling with the engine in exasperation.

Gwen pulls the car over alongside.

Eager to help, Peter leaps from the car and runs over to the smouldering breakdown.

One of the stranded truckers steps back until he's got Peter and Gwen both in front of him. He stands there, takes his hat off, shaking off his frustration.

Gwen gets down to the road and walks over to watch.

MAN BY TRUCK

Think I cracked my radiator...

PETER

Yeah? Maybe...

MAN BY TRUCK

Yeah, I figure. You know what you're doing in there?

Peter, meanwhile, is wrapping his hand in cloth, bumbling with the hot parts of the engine in futility.

From the opposite direction, a car approaches.

PETER

Aw, look, I don't know the first thing about cars-

PASSING DRIVER

Hey!

The new car pulls up and stops alongside the truck. There's four THUGS inside.

PASSING DRIVER

None a y'all local?

MAN BY TRUCK

Nope.

PETER

No sir. Sorry-

BANG! The man behind the wheel shoots Peter in the gut, and he drops.

GWEN

What?

MAN BY TRUCK

Now y'all just stay still. Y'all
just stay still.

...as the four thugs disembark from the "passing" car.

GWEN

What did you do?!?

MAN BY TRUCK

Just stay still.

GWEN

What?

In terror and confusion, Gwen rushes for the woods...

One of the thugs runs around the car in the road to pull a sack from the trunk.

Everyone else gives chase to Gwen.

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

Rushing into the thick brush of South Carolina, Gwen runs herself breathless with five strangers in pursuit...

She trips over a root, and catches her footing, BREATHING HARD...

Grabbing the trees, pulling herself along, she's gaining distance -

- until a hand grabs her shoulder!

Wrenching free, she pushes herself forward -

- and trips! Someone tackles her.

MAN BY TRUCK

We got you.

As she tries to squirm out from under him, the man from the truck shifts his weight and pins her.

MAN BY TRUCK

No, no. We got you.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

THWIK! With the sacrificial knife, Their Leader cuts the blindfold from Gwen's face.

"They" gather round.

THEIR LEADER
It's time for you to see.

GWEN
God...

Their Leader smiles.

THEIR LEADER
There are older truths than God.

Gwen murmurs as Their Leader touches her face...

THEIR LEADER
(very quietly)
Uuldza Baagrth.

THEM
Uuldza Baagrth.

THEIR LEADER
The tome.

Stepping forward, one of the acolytes hands Their Leader the tome of Koll Dulzgh. Reverently, he opens it.

THEIR LEADER
The language you hear is not Latin
and it is not Uruk. It is the
Gjrod hollod. It is the voice of
the unceasing wind. The bowl.

"They" lean in and drive the wedges into Gwen's jaw, prying it open.

With the sacrificial knife, Their Leader leans cuts her tongue out. One of the initiates cuts it up in the bowl, and passes the meat around for chewing.

Their Leader, removes the vial from around his neck.

THEIR LEADER
Hajd Xthradd Gthutuul. This is the
essence of all those who have given
themselves to the unceasing wind.

Patiently, he collects the blood running from Gwen's face in the vial, mixes it gently, and pours a careful drop into the bowl.

THEIR LEADER
Gjorod cthuul, xazth harad.

Corking the vial, Their Leader forces the bowl of chewed tongue and spittle down Gwen's choking face.

THEIR LEADER
Zradthra kollux djoll.

THEM
(chanting quietly)
Koll Dulzgh.

THEIR LEADER
Hrurud gxthadu gjex aladno.

THEM
(chanting quietly)
Koll Dulzgh.

THEIR LEADER
Kyollxum. Kyollxum. Kyollxum!

Again, Their Leader digs the sacrificial knife deep into Gwen's tummy....

THEIR LEADER
Fxo1 gollatx cthuul.

...and reaches into her gut, driving his arm in as far as it will go as he reaches for her heart...

Gwen's eyes grow wide open. From inside her, a BLACK WIND bursts forth.

From her sacrificial pole, she sees Them as a collection of hollow specters. As the DEAFENING SHADOW WIND pours forth from her, the wispy specters blow away like smoke...

Reaching out, breaking through her bonds, Gwen grabs Their Leader by the throat as his spectral self is torn apart by the wind...

She holds him so close, she can smell his panicked breath. His face isn't lit by the firelight - something is blotting it out - but it's visible in the ghastly light of his soul.

GWEN
In the house, I thought you'd found me.

THEIR LEADER

What?

GWEN

In truth, I found you.

THEIR LEADER

I don't understand.

GWEN

I know where you are.

THEIR LEADER

Forgive me master, I don't understand.

GWEN

There is no time. There is no space. There is only this one moment, spread across the stars. And here I am. Would you like to see it?

THEIR LEADER

Show it to me.

INT. TRUDY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The Stormcrow opens his eyes. Wan sunlight streams through the dusty window and lights the air.

He is lying on Trudy's floor, bathed in golden South Carolina glow. He inhales deeply, and smells something on the air.

Seeing Trudy on the ground, he checks her breathing. Under his careful touch, she wakes...

...and he motions to his lips to keep quiet. Checking to make sure the AMULET is still around his neck, the Stormcrow heads for the door.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

The bright warm morning sun illuminates the damage done to Trudy's house over the night - much of it is blackened and charred by the fire.

As the Stormcrow steps out onto the bright porch, he scans the area.

Down the road, curled and fetal under a proud old willow tree, Gwen is sleeping on the bare earth.

From her head to her toes, matting her hair and jammed up underneath her fingernails, she is covered in gore and filth. Small, hamburgery chunky bits cling to her skin. Her clothes are shredded and matted with gore. The ground around her is relatively undisturbed, not blood soaked...

TRUDY

Lord have mercy.

Trudy has followed him onto the porch. She hesitates...

THE STORMCROW

No. Go to her.

She runs up to Gwen. The Stormcrow follows patiently.

TRUDY

Oh, baby... Oh Lord. Oh, baby...
Oh, Lord... Oh, sweet Jesus...

Trudy kneels beside her, touching her body....

TRUDY

Oh, Lord... Where's Isaac? Lord,
where's Isaac?

Trudy begins to look around, stirring herself into a panic.

TRUDY

(calling out)
ISAAC!

Gwen bolts upright and grabs Trudy's face, shocked into awareness. She looks up at the Stormcrow, back at Trudy...

Trudy breaks down and cries.

TRUDY

Praise Jesus. Praise Jesus...

Trudy wraps her arms around.

THE STORMCROW

Do you remember how you got here
yesterday morning?

Gwen puts her gory hand on Trudy a moment.

GWEN

I remember everything. I can find
it from the road.

TRUDY
Praise Jesus!

The Stormcrow puts his hand on Trudy with a strange and sudden urgency.

THE STORMCROW
Wash her at the well. Bring
clothes down for her.

Trudy looks up at the Stormcrow, then quietly helps Gwen to her feet and back towards the house.

Holding her beneath the well, Trudy begins to pump water over her.

TRUDY
Praise Jesus.

As the Stormcrow hesitatingly follows, he reaches up to brush the bottoms of the willow leaves with his fingertips...

His fingers come away bloody.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The blood and gory bits are beginning to fairly run off Gwen's body by the time The Stormcrow steps up behind them.

THE STORMCROW
What's the fastest way to find
Pride County Road from here?

TRUDY
Through town.

THE STORMCROW
Through town. Clothes, please.
You'll take us to where you found
her.

As Trudy leaves, the Stormcrow begins to pump water over Gwen.

Once Trudy has turned her back and is on her way, he runs his hand under the water...

That blood on his fingers washes away clean.

Behind him, there's a strange kind of rain falling under the weeping willow...

Meticulously, the bottoms of the leaves have been painted with a coat of blood. The undersides of the boughs and branches have been plastered with gore - the creamed remains of Isaac.

A slight breeze causes the branches to rustle, and the blood rains down in a brief torrent before once again subsiding.

EXT. THE ROAD TO GOSHEN - DAY

From Gertrude's house, the dusty road winds through the thin woods on the way to town - made up of the Church and some ramshackle homes.

Rounding a bend in the road, Gwen comes face to face with the Church. Immediately, she takes Trudy's hand, squeezes it.

TRUDY

What is it?

GWEN

Can you smell it?

Inhaling, Trudy freezes.

TRUDY

What's that smell?

GWEN

I saw it.

TRUDY

What did you see?

Doubling over, Gwen vomits.

TRUDY

What did you see?

THE STORMCROW

We have someplace to go. We should be on our way.

Glaring coldly at the Stormcrow a moment, Trudy moves to open the church doors.

THE STORMCROW

The deepest weakness is wanting to know.

Hesitant, Trudy enters. Resigned, the Stormcrow helps Gwen up and follows her...

INT. GOSHEN BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

The big heavy double doors open, and Trudy steps in out of the beaming light.

The church is clean, devoid of the gore of Gwen's vision. Gwen breathes deep in relief as she walks down the pews...

TAP.

TRUDY

What is this?

Something SPACKS against the leather brim of the Stormcrow's hat.

A bit of gore falls against Trudy's face.

More or less completely creamed, the people in the Church have been smeared evenly across the ceiling.

TRUDY

What is this?!!

Closer inspection of the room reveals bits of blood and hamburger spattered around from the drip drip dripping...

Gwen sets her hand on Trudy's shoulder. Trudy spins suddenly to see her face, specked by a few drips of blood from above...

Trudy SHREIKS, and Gwen puts two hands on her for stability. Trudy looks at the blood on Trudy's face, looks up at the Stormcrow for answers...

TRUDY

Unholy thing!

GWEN

No!

TRUDY

This is a house of God! These people were in a House of God!

THE STORMCROW

They were warned. The first thing I told them was to leave.

TRUDY

This is a sacred house!

More blood and guts dribble from the ceiling.

THE STORMCROW

Quiet.

TRUDY

You harbinger of evil -

THE STORMCROW

QUIET, I SAID!!!

Stunned into silence, Trudy holds herself quiet.

THE STORMCROW

Listen very carefully to me. Until the book is recovered and the - the beast's gateway into this world is closed, we are in peril. Our lives are in peril, and if you value the lives of others than you must believe -

TRUDY

I know what I must believe.

GWEN

This is only the first day of what's to come.

TRUDY

This is my home!

GWEN

I can see. I can see where I was, and I can see the places where I will go. This world does not belong to you, and it does not belong to your God.

TRUDY

Close your mouth, girl.

GWEN

They were right to worship it.

Hauling back, Trudy smacks Gwen across the face.

THE STORMCROW

Your temper changes nothing.

Adjusting his pack and his weapons...

THE STORMCROW

You're angry because you feel helpless, and you are. Gwen Larson, take me to the manuscript.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOSHEN - MORNING

In the center of Goshen, there is nary a soul in sight.

The only sound is the WIND in the trees and the FOOTSTEPS of the odd trio making their way along the gravelly thoroughfare.

Blood runs in eerie trickles down awning banisters. Curtains hang wet from the top, as the blood drips from the ceiling and is slowly drawn down the fabric. Some windows appear dark, when in reality they are merely coated.

A child's swing appears clean on the surface, but underneath blood drips down onto the dry earth.

Blood oozes from the keyhole in a white door, pooling on the white-painted boards that make up the porch and spilling through the cracks.

Trudy turns to one of these houses in particular, but Gwen grabs her arm with an iron grip and drags her on down the road. Trudy begins to fight, but doesn't have the strength.

Standing there in the middle of Goshen, helpless, Trudy WAILS into the empty streets. She balls her fists and WAILS.

With a touch of impatience, Gwen holds her a moment, makes eye contact, and pushes her onwards. With his sack slung over his shoulder and the tommy gun at his side, the Stormcrow maintains a cautious vigil.

There's no need. The people of Goshen are dead. All of the people of Goshen are dead.

TRUDY

Where are all the flies?

THE STORMCROW

They're dead or they know better.

Leaving Goshen, Trudy's face takes on the slacked look of a trauma victim.

EXT. PRIDE COUNTY ROAD - LATER

The shadows are finally starting to grow the other way. Noon is past.

Close by, the river RUSHES through the woods. Trudy catches glimpses of it through the trees.

Gwen stops.

GWEN
I know this place.

Trudy looks at her with tired eyes.

GWEN
You held me. I saw you coming down
the road, and you held me, and you
led me home.

TRUDY
Where you found the strength to
walk, I'll never know.

GWEN
(to the Stormcrow)
I know the way from here.

With grim resignation, Gwen trods down the road. The Stormcrow follows her, pausing only to give her a bit of a lead.

Trudy stands there a moment alone.

TRUDY
Jesus walk with me now. Jesus walk
with me.

EXT. PRIDE COUNTY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Thick forest has risen up on either side of the road. The river has slithered away.

Gwen is looking very intently to the left side of the road, away from the river, for the place she came out of the wood.

GWEN
Follow me.

Before making her way into the woods, Trudy watches the Stormcrow climb the embankment.

EXT. THE EDGE OF THE WOODS - AFTERNOON

Gwen leads The Stormcrow and Trudy into the long shadows of the gnarled South Carolina wood. The going is tough, especially for Trudy, but Gwen is a patient leader and proceeds slowly and steadily.

As they pass through the forest, the Stormcrow finds signs that Gwen passed this way a few days earlier...

In the far off distance, a murder of crows takes flight.

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

Twigs SNAP and CRACK as Gwen, The Stormcrow and Trudy make their path through the forest, increasingly golden with the setting sun.

Reaching down, The Stormcrow fingers a broken branch. Blood smears one of the leaves.

THE STORMCROW

Do you remember passing this way?

GWEN

Yes.

TRUDY

I can pray.

THE STORMCROW

Excuse me?

TRUDY

That's what I can do. What I can do is pray.

THE STORMCROW

The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For it was he that founded it upon seas, and established it upon floods. Who shall ascend into the mount of Jehovah?

Clearing his throat...

THE STORMCROW

Into the mount of Jehovah. Into the mount. That's stayed with me, somehow.

TRUDY

Jehovah is a mighty name.

THE STORMCROW

Yes.

TRUDY

It's a name they don't preach no more.

THE STORMCROW

Why would they?

TRUDY

It's the name of God.

THE STORMCROW

But Lord is a name men can take upon themselves. In time, all men seek to become their Gods.

TRUDY

Is that what brings you out here?

THE STORMCROW

Absolutely.

TRUDY

Pride's what done it.

THE STORMCROW

Pride is for the weak. Hubris brings me here.

SNATCH! Seizing the opportunity to get close to the Stormcrow, Trudy snatches the gun from his holster.

Her hands are shaking as she levels it at him. Slowly, he puts his hands up.

GWEN

Trudy...

BLAM! Trudy FIRES a round into Gwen's heart, and Gwen drops to her knees.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Trudy empties the gun into Gwen at close range, making chowder of her chest with the pistol's impressive stopping power.

BLAM! CLICK.

Finally free to act, the Stormcrow swings his tommy gun -

CRACK!

- clobbering Trudy in the head with the butt of the rifle.

Barely after Trudy hits the ground, the Stormcrow grabs the gun from her, empties the shells, and reloads it.

COCKING the gun, he levels the weapon at Trudy's head -

GWEN
Do not touch her.

Freezing, the Stormcrow snatches his amulet and slowly turns around.

His eyes are wide with fear as Gwen's wounds close. Her eyes are jet black. Black smoke issues from her mouth while she speaks.

THE STORMCROW
Gxul gkollam fxalha Koll!

GWEN
You are a stormcrow.

THE STORMCROW
Gxul gkollam fxalha Koll!

GWEN
You believe that you fly on the winds of change, but they have blown deeper rooted life from the surface of this world than yours.

THE STORMCROW
(madly)
Gxul gkollam fxalha Koll!

Looking at him from inside the black eyes, Gwen sees:

She sees the spectral Stormcrow, his spirit flickering with struggling brightness as he holds the FIERY AMULET forth. His spectral voice unleashes a GHASTLY HOWL!

THE STORMCROW
Gxul gkollam fxalha Koll! Gxul
gkollam fxalha Koll!

After a thoughtful pause, Gwen reaches out with the BLACK SHADOW WIND.

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

The Stormcrow stares at her physical, frozen, eyes wide with unfathomable fear. His hand clenches his amulet, his knuckles white, his muscles taught with the exertion.

His tweed is soaked clean through with blood. His leather trenchcoat is dripping.

Trudy is splayed open, dissected, and spread out - the act is alien in it's clinical precision.

Her ribcage is cracked open to reveal her organs. Her face is similarly opened, and her arms and legs are in a position one might describe as unnatural.

Every part of her is neatly, tidily accounted for. This is Trudy as Gwen saw her in Belle's room.

GWEN
Guuuuuhhhh...

Gwen recoils, even from herself. She's trying to step outside her body. She's electric with revulsion.

GWEN
Guuuuuuuhhh... Guuuuhhhhhh...

She tries wiping the blood off...

GWEN
Uhh! Uhh! Gaaaaahhh!

She backs up against a tree, and with her back against it, she is forced to confront what she sees. Once again, Gwen is covered in blood and gore with her clothes tattered.

Meanwhile, the Stormcrow is reduced to fetal helplessness by some unspeakable horror.

GWEN
No.

She takes a step towards him...

GWEN
No!

She gets down on her knees and grabs his face -

GWEN
No!

She turns it away from the sight of Trudy, towards herself...

GWEN
No!

His eyes move - he looks at her, wide eyed, he inhales sharply, looks back at Trudy -

As he opens his mouth to SCREAM, he lets out a mouthful of BLOOD.

Gwen backs away in terror. After a moment, The Stormcrow finds his composure and releases his bloody deathgrip on the amulet, letting it drape around his neck.

Too weak with fear to run effectively, Gwen backs herself up into the roots of a big old tree.

Himself too weak to move, the Stormcrow just takes his bearings. Masters them. Dismisses them. Now he turns his attention back to Gwen.

The Stormcrow takes off his coat.

Looking back at Gwen, he holds the coat up and puts it over her.

GWEN

What am I?

THE STORMCROW

There is a good chance I know more about what you are than any living man, and still I'm hardly qualified to tell you.

GWEN

What am I?

THE STORMCROW

You are the thing binding something vast, ancient and other to this world. You are a link to the Outer Deep. You are a window.

GWEN

What does that mean?

Gwen swallows her tears. She looks to the Stormcrow for a little more strength.

GWEN

Send it back.

THE STORMCROW

I will.

Looking back down at Trudy, then at the Stormcrow, Gwen calcifies her resolve.

GWEN

Let's go.

Waiting only for him to pick up his sack, she begins to lead the way through the forest barefoot.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

The night is delicately cut by hints of starlight. Without Trudy following, they are able to move much more quickly.

GWEN

You knew she would die.

THE STORMCROW

I knew.

GWEN

But you tried to keep her alive.

THE STORMCROW

Would you have trusted me if I didn't?

GWEN

No.

For a moment, the two of them trek through the lonely woods in quiet.

GWEN

I called you a stormcrow.

THE STORMCROW

You're not the first.

GWEN

How did it happen?

THE STORMCROW

How did what happen?

GWEN

How did you begin to see what you've seen?

THE STORMCROW

In the war. A machine gunner in France. The doctors saved me.

GWEN

What were you before the war?

THE STORMCROW

I was a professor. An archaeologist.

GWEN

And then?

THE STORMCROW

And then I spent six years in a house of the mad, trying to make myself into someone they would be willing to release.

GWEN

Because you remembered dying.

THE STORMCROW

I remembered what came after.

GWEN

And now?

THE STORMCROW

Much like yourself, I'm looking for a way to live in the face of what I know. It's foolish.

GWEN

It's hopeless.

THE STORMCROW

I know, but one must do their best.

GWEN

Koll Dulzgh is something more vast and more ancient than anything men can know. This thing will swallow the sun.

THE STORMCROW

Koll Dulzgh is a tiny shadow in the sky. There are countless others between the stars.

GWEN

That can't be.

THE STORMCROW

So sayeth the maggot.

Suddenly, the Stormcrow holds a finger to his lips. Inhaling deep through his nose, he tests the air.

THE STORMCROW

We're here.

Gwen looks around, surprised at how easy it was for her to find... They keep their voices down.

GWEN
I don't hear anything.

THE STORMCROW
Nor I.

He takes a few cautious steps forward. As they near, Gwen smells it and doubles over in revulsion.

GWEN
Ughmm...

The Stormcrow sees a large splinter of bone with bits of meat clinging to it -

- stabbed deep into the heart of a tree.

The fallen brush CRACKS underfoot as they emerge from the woods...

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

...and step into the clearing.

Bits of bone and flesh have been driven, much like living shrapnel, into the posts and the trees surrounding the firepit.

Bloody scraps of robe litter the area, as though "They" were literally blown out the backs of their own clothes.

GWEN
I was going to be married.
She reaches out and touches the mess.

THE STORMCROW
Hmm.

The intensity of the smell makes her gag when she brings her gory fingers closer to her nose.

GWEN
It's Them.

THE STORMCROW
They were never my concern.

GWEN
How could they open such a book?

THE STORMCROW
I would. You would.

GWEN
Were they mad?

THE STORMCROW
Perhaps. This ritual was started
by their fathers' forefathers, many
generations back. From father to
son, the knowledge was passed down
as a birthright. It's not a new
story.

The Stormcrow, inexplicably, finds an eyeball intact in the
mess.

GWEN
And you?

THE STORMCROW
Hmm?

GWEN
What do you want with the book?

THE STORMCROW
Does it matter?

All the rotting gore covering the ground is splayed out from
a single radius - Gwen's sacrificial pole.

THE STORMCROW
That's where we'll bind you.

GWEN
What do I do?

THE STORMCROW
Trust me.

Using cord from his pack, he deliberately and firmly binds
Gwen back up against the pole.

He takes a few big steps back.

THE STORMCROW
Try now.

Even struggling as hard as she can, there's no way she can
get free of those restraints.

Satisfied, he draws out his hip notebook and starts flipping
through the pages.

THE STORMCROW
This will most likely cause you
pain.

Deliberately, he pulls the amulet from around his neck. It hangs on a leather strap, which he wraps tightly around the hand not holding the notebook.

GWEN
I'm ready.

The Stormcrow breaths deep.

THE STORMCROW
Hollod Koll Dulzgh. Say the words.

GWEN
Say the words...

Gwen swallows.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Good. Again.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Again.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Continue.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Continue.

GWEN
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

The Stormcrow looks her in the eye, prompting her to keep going. He nods approvingly as her voice falls into a rhythmic chanting. While Gwen focuses on her mantra, The Stormcrow holds the amulet out, and swallows dry. He looks at his notes one last time...

THE STORMCROW
Koll Dulzgh!

One last swallow... The light begins to shift...

GWEN
You're going to die.

THE STORMCROW
Speak the words!

GWEN
(chanting)
Hollod Koll Dulzgh.

THE STORMCROW
Bzaradh kollox gxarga foll! Bjud
kollod!

The amulet begins to glow a spectral white light, and a bloody seam slowly opens on Gwen's stomach.

THE STORMCROW
Gxul gkollam fxalha whjar!
Jxyllodzh... Jxyllodzh...
Jxyllodzh... Gjor jxyllodzh.

Gwen SCREAMS as the seam opens, and a black murk begins to spill out of Gwen's abdomen, writhing, spreading...

THE STORMCROW
Gjor jxyllodzh!

Koll Dulzgh seems to react a bit to what he is saying, sort of...

As the murk grows and fills the night, the light of the amulet highlights tentacles, eyes, writhing in the inky mass, but these features only serve to mask deeper, more unfathomable horrors...

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad! Domdjad!

The amulet glows brighter, and Koll is a little more illuminated - it's all around the Stormcrow now, washing over him.

Gwen disappears in the murk and the writhing, and soon the Stormcrow is incased in a bubble of light in the middle of the writing black horror... Koll can't come too close to the amulet, but the bubble is shrinking...

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad. Koll
 djurud fxal domdjad. Koll djurud
 fxal domdjad. Koll djurud fxal
 domdjad. Koll djurud fxal domdjad.
 Koll djurud fxal domdjad...

The Stormcrow's sanctuary in the middle of this mass of writing blackness is closing in on him...

He is forced down on his knees. The amulet is so bright it's burning him - his hand sizzles as he struggles to keep from casting it away!

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad. Koll
 djurud fxal domdjad. Koll djurud
 fxal domdjad. Koll djurud fxal
 domdjad. Koll djurud fxal domdjad.
 Koll djurud fxal domdjad...

Slowly, carefully, the Stormcrow is finding a rhythm in his awkward mantra, even as his energy and his sanity are slipping away.

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad. Koll
 djurud fxal domdjad. Koll djurud
 fxal domdjad...

The distinctive look of madness floods the Stormcrow's eyes, and slowly begins to spread to the rest of his face...

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad. Koll
 djurud fxal domdjad. Koll djurud
 fxal domdjad...

Koll Dulzgh begins to withdraw from the burning amulet. The bubble grows.

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad. Koll
 djurud fxal domdjad. Koll djurud
 fxal domdjad...

The Stormcrow gets to his feet.

THE STORMCROW

Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

He looks at the notebook one last time...

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

...and slips it into it's pocket on his leg.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

He takes a step forward.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

Then another.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

As he slowly fights his way through the unspeakable writhing otherness, the bubble, slowly, surely, comes to encompass Gwen.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

The Stormcrow draws his shotgun with his free hand. Gwen looks on in horror.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

He points the shotgun at her head. Mad tears stream down her cheeks. Comprehending, she looks at him. He looks back at her, intense, mad, but connecting with her somehow.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

GWEN
Will I see Heaven?

He must not break the chant.

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

Strangely, there is still a kind of wild hope in her eyes.

GWEN
Will I see Hell?

THE STORMCROW
Koll djurud fxal domdjad.

BLAM!

Gwen's head explodes like an apple.

The night shatters like glass.

The amulet is dowsed, sizzling, as if by water.

The Stormcrow collapses... succumbs to an exhaustion more profound than men will ever know.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - MORNING

Warm bright South Carolina sun streams through the trees, filling the clearing, warming his broken body... Warming his broken soul.

For a while, the Stormcrow lies there motionless, just breathing, lying in the filth.

He stirs. He COUGHS. He GROANS. Slowly, deliberately, he works himself to his feet, nursing wounds deep below the surface...

Testing his legs, he walks over to Gwen's pole. Holding the pole for support, he draws his boot knife, cuts her free...

Unceremoniously, she falls headless to the ground.

Rounding the shorn tree trunk, he reaches down to Gwen's fallen corpse...

...and lifts his leather duster off her shoulders. Slowly, he eases into it, gore and all, and pulls it over his own shoulders. With the reassuring weight of the leather on his back, he stands there a moment...

Two moments.

He's looking for something. Looking...

Ahhh.

Walking over to one of the heaps of bloodied robe, he kneels down and brushes the rags aside...

The BOOK.

He hefts it's reassuring weight. Walking over to his bag, he places the book inside it.

Careful not to overly disturb his belongings, he hefts the sack over his shoulder. He takes a moment to understand the weight... to prepare his worn out body for the journey home.

Then, we watch as he walks away. Towards the edge of the forest. Towards the road.

FADE TO BLACK.