

THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU

written by

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based on the novel by

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THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.

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FROM BLACK:

FRANTIC MUSIC SWELLS and we feel that we're in the midst of a chase sequence.

We hear FOOTSTEPS and a MAN'S HEAVY BREATHING.

ATMOSPHERIC SOUNDS start to FADE IN and we can hear that we're inside of a CROWDED MALL.

FADE IN:

INT. LA CROWDED MALL - DAY

MAX TATE (30s) fights his way through SWARMS OF PEOPLE. Born of money, he uses his charm and his looks as a superpower. The type of guy who's used to getting what he wants. He stops for a second to catch his breath and take in his surroundings. He wears AIR PODS in his ears.

MAN ON THE PHONE (O.S.)
I can't hear myself think with you
breathing in my ear like that,
Maxi.

MAX
(on the phone)
...and I can't hear myself think
with you going yap, yap, yap non-
stop in my ear.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - CONTINUOUS

A dimly-lit room is littered with COMPUTER SCREENS, we discover who's on the other end of Max's phone call. RAY (30s) wears a GAMING HEADSET so that he can keep watch over his virtual world, without missing a beat. Hacker, deep web mastermind type; with a deviously charming smile.

RAY
(joking)
Ouch. You know it hurts when you
speak to me like that.

We can hear Max RUN INTO SOMEONE.

MAX
(overheard through the
phone)
Oof. Sorry.

RAY
What was that?

Max is WALKING away from a NUN and a GROUP OF SCHOOL CHILDREN. He's picking up pace once again, trying to locate his target.

MAX
Mother Teresa, and her posse. Who the hell brings a group of twenty kids to a mall? I thought malls were dead anyway?

RAY
Welcome to LA, baby!

MAX
Still can't believe I let you talk me into this. Two trans-con flights in one day...

RAY
It'll be worth it. I promise.

MAX
I've heard that before.

RAY
When have I ever steered you wrong? Take the stairs to your left.

Max GOES UPSTAIRS.

MAX
What if I miss it?

RAY
(frantic)
Wait!!!

Max STOPS.

MAX
What?!

RAY
Turn to your left and look up.

Max looks up at a SECURITY CAMERA.

Ray waves at one of his computer screens, which shows Max's confused face. Ray's tapped into the security cameras of the mall.

BEAT

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm waving at you. Oh, you look so
cute when you're confused.

Max rolls his eyes.

RAY (CONT'D)
Barnes & Noble three o'clock.

Max notices the STORE on his right and RUNS over.

An ASSOCIATE stands guard at the ENTRANCE.

MAX
(to the associate)
Has it started yet?!

ASSOCIATE
We're running a bit behind
schedule, so you haven't missed
anything. I'll just need to see
your invite.

MAX
My invite?

RAY
(on the phone)
Shit.

MAX
(insinuating Ray)
No one told me this was a private
event.

RAY
(apologetic)
My bad...

Max takes a BEAT, then dials up the charm.

MAX
I don't think we've properly met
(extending a handshake)
I'm Max.

ASSISTANT
Katarina.

MAX
Katarina? What a beautiful name.

KATARINA

Thank you.

MAX

And, I'm assuming you're the store manager.

KATARINA

(flattered)

No. Haha. Maybe someday.

RAY

(over the phone)

Shameless.

MAX

I have no doubt. Say, Katarina, I get that this is a private event; and I'm sure the guest list has a pretty tight cap, right?

KATARINA

Fifty.

MAX

Oh, very exclusive. And all fifty have checked-in?

KATARINA

Actually, no. We're missing about ten.

MAX

I see. You know, these sort of events make for good PR. Social media posts and such. Good for your store.

KATARINA

Uh-huh.

MAX

What if they're no-shows? Ten less people doesn't just mean a smaller crowd in photos, but ten fewer people posting about it.

KATARINA

I hadn't thought of that.

MAX

I don't believe that for a second.
You're management material,
Katarina. I noticed it the moment I
met you.

KATARINA

Yeah?

MAX

These are the sorts of things a
manager would be thinking about. I
mean, PR is my job, so I should
know.

RAY

Easy Casanova.

KATARINA

(looks around)

You know what, you're right. Head
on in, Max. Here's your pass;
compliments of the future store
manager.

Max PUTS ON the VIP PASS and HEADS INSIDE.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE - CONTINUOUS

MAX

(on the phone)

And, that, ladies and gentleman is
how it's done.

RAY

Sounds like someone gave themselves
a hard-on.

MAX

We all have our talents.

RAY

So, now that you're in...have you
thought about what you're gonna say
to her?

MAX

Nah, but I'll think of something.
At least I don't have to convince
her, ya know?

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)

Ray?

BEAT

She IS on board, isn't she? You promised me she was.

RAY

Well...

MAX

Goddamn, it Ray. I shoulda known you'd pull this shit!

RAY

I said she'd be willing. You're gonna have to pull some of that fuckery that makes all the girl's panties drop.

MAX

You didn't say anything about me having to convince her. I didn't come prepared to give a pitch.

RAY

C'mon Maximillian. You can't expect me to do everything...

O.S. We can hear MURMURS and a CROWD SETTling INTO THEIR CHAIRS, as POLITE APPLAUSE ensues.

RAY (CONT'D)

I deliver you the leads, you---

MAX

(cutting Ray off)

It's starting, I gotta go. I'll call you later.

Max HANGS UP the call.

RAY

Max? Hello? Motherfu---

Max closes his eyes and takes in a DEEP BREATH...it's showtime.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE - MOMENTS LATER

ANDIE STERLING (30s) is both beauty and brains, shielded in a thick armor of sarcasm.

She's perched in front of A CROWD OF ABOUT FIFTY PEOPLE, all gathered to hear her read a chapter from her latest published BOOK. As she speaks, we get the sense that she knows it's not her best work.

ANDIE

(reading)

...the face was old, and writhed
with grief. The years had not been
kind.

The camera pans across the audience, and we see Max listening. While the rest of the crowd seems to be enjoying the reading, Max and Andie appear to share a similar opinion on the quality of the writing.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Not kind, indeed. History would
later say that the lines had been
the traces of joyous smiles. Of
laughter...

The camera cuts back to Andie.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

But she alone knew the truth. There
was never any joy. Nor laughter.
Only pain. Pain that she would've
never willingly chosen for herself.

Andie looks up at the camera, solemnly.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

This pain was chosen for her.

Camera cuts to Max. He looks intently at Andie. She doesn't see him, but he sees her. These words describe her pain, and he understands that. He doesn't know the extent of it, but he will, in time.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE - MOMENTS LATER

Max is waiting in LONG QUEUE OF FANS, leading up to a TABLE where Andie SITS, signing COPIES OF HER BOOK.

ANDIE (O.S.)

Next.

As the FAN in front of him WALKS away, Max takes in a DEEP BREATH and STEPS up to the table.

Andie doesn't look up, she robotically keeps looking at the table, waiting for the next book to appear in front of her.

She seems generally annoyed by the whole ritual; perhaps it's because she feels like this current book doesn't deserve this sort of pomp and circumstance. She knows it and she feels that her public knows it.

From Andie's P.O.V. we see the COVER OF HER BOOK. It OPENS. Inside the front cover we see Max's BUSINESS CARD.

Her P.O.V. looks up, and we see Max. Smiling from ear to ear. That famous smile. Usually the smile is enough for him to get his way, but he's never met a worthy opponent like Andie before. She's not impressed.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
(holding up the card)
What the hell is this?

MAX
It's got my info on it.

ANDIE
I can read. In my line of work,
that's always a plus.

MAX
I just wanna talk.

ANDIE
I've already got a publisher, what
makes you think I wanna talk to
you?

A hand reaches out from behind, TAPPING Max on the shoulder. He WHIRLS AROUND to see who's the culprit. A FAT MAN stares him down, with an equally-annoyed group of fans glaring on behind him.

ANNOYED MAN
C'mon man. Hurry it up, we're all
waiting.

MAX
(smiling, politely)
Almost finished.

ANDIE
I guess I'm waiting too.

MAX
Waiting?

ANDIE

For your answer. I've already told you that I've got a publisher, yet you're still here...and I wanna know why?

ANNOYED MAN (O.S.)

Hurry it up!

MAX

Look, you and I both know that your current publisher is holding you back.

ANNOYED MAN (O.S.)

Let's go...

MAX

(trying to ignore him)
I wanna offer you the freedom to make your own choices---

ANDIE

(uninterested)
Next!

MAX

(pleadingly)
No, no! Wait...

ANNOYED MAN

Move it, buddy! She said 'next' I'm getting tired of standing here.

Something in Max snaps. He WHIPS AROUND to the man behind him.

MAX

Listen, fatass, why don't you go sit down and take a load off the floor, huh? I'm sure your knees and kankles will thank you for it!

Without missing a beat, Max is face to face with Andie, whose eyes are wide with disbelief.

MAX (CONT'D)

And as for you, Ms. Sterling, true. Your first book was a smash, but we both know that this one's a total shit-show! Why's this you ask?

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

Well, honestly, it seems like a shoddy rush-job, with piss-poor editing, and not enough in the publicity budget to make anyone give two shits about it. Now some of that may've been your fault, but I think the majority of these problems lie with your lame-ass publisher who doesn't realize what a gift they've been given just to have you on their roster. In fact, the only reason I'm buying a copy of this hideous, Lovecraft wannabe, is so that we can look back on it a year, two years, from now, when you've got a fuckin' string of Pulitzers behind your name, and then we can laugh and laugh about how you wasted the first three years of your writing career at some do-nothing publishing house!

Max SLAMS the copy of Andie's book down on the table. He's OUT OF BREATH. His confidence is quickly draining out of him as he realizes the entire room has gone silent. Stunned by his profanity-laden outburst.

Andie sits there for a moment. We're not sure what she's thinking. Is she mad? Is she about to laugh? She's holding those cards close to her chest. Then, very matter-of-fact, she OPENS THE COVER, SIGNS IT, and HANDS THE BOOK TO MAX.

Unsure of how to recover the situation, Max FOLDS THE BOOK UNDER HIS ARM.

MAX (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He looks back at the queue of spectators behind him. Then TURNS to leave.

As we watch him WALKING away:

ANDIE (O.S.)

Mr. Tate?

Max STOPS and LOOKS BACK.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

...I'll call you.

Without a second's delay, Andie SIGNS the BOOK of the next person in line, but her eyes and smile tell us that Max's rant was just the pitch she needed to impress her. She's onboard.

Max smiles as relief washes over his face.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - DAY

Max's face transitions from the bookstore to his office.

Title Card: 4 Years Later

Max's P.O.V. reveals the inside cover of Andie's signed BOOK. Again, Max smiles, reflecting the memory of the day they first met.

The PHONE, on MAX'S DESK, RINGS jarring him back to the present. He PICKS UP the receiver and promptly REPLACES IT, declining the call.

Max draws in a DEEP BREATH. We can feel the tension. Something's about to happen.

The phone RINGS again. Once more, he PICKS UP the receiver and HANGS IT BACK UP.

We hear a BEEP on the phone's intercom.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
I'm sorry to keep bothering you
mister Tate, but---

Max TURNS OFF the intercom.

One last, deep SIGH.

BEAT

In an instant the doors BURST open and a swarm of POLICE OFFICERS RUSH INTO the office. They are followed by a SERGENT.

SERGENT
Maxwell Tate?

Max STANDS UP without a word. The sergent nods and a pair of officers take their place behind Max.

SERGENT (CONT'D)
You're under arrest for the murder
of Andie Sterling...

The officers draw Max's hands back and HANDCUFF him, as the sergeant continues.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can, and will, be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford one, an attorney will be provided for you by the state of New York. Do you understand these rights as they've been read to you?

The camera pushes in on Max's face. Max stares down the camera.

BEAT

SERGEANT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mr. Tate?

Max is still staring down the lens as we...

CUT TO:

TITLE AND CREDITS

A haunting, and eerie music, littered with vocal sounds swells. The camera tracks across a loosely-scattered stack of time-worn, vintage TAROT CARDS. As we push in on each tarot card, the camera seems to pass into the world shown in the face of the card, bringing all characters and scenes to life in a fanciful, yet ominous animation style. When the camera pushes back out of the card, all motion ceases and it becomes just a simple card once again. Through these cards we see various, dark, Art Nouveau scenes. Each card will bear words to describe its scene.

One depicts a man and a woman, wrapped in a lover's embrace, when an unseen force pulls each apart from the other, leaving them distraught and alone; this card reads "The Lovers." Another reveals an eerie black night, with a long procession of ominous figures-cloaked in blood red hooded robes, carrying flickering LANTERNS; which reads "Danger." The next shows a decadent masquerade ball, all revelers are wearing sinister WHITE MASKS; this card reads "The Stranger." The next shows a man dressed in 19th century opulence while two period ladies stand idly behind him, each look at the camera menacingly; this reads "The Hanged Man."

The final card will show a splendid EDWARDIAN MANSION, proudly sitting before a beautiful, sunny sky; then the sky grows dark, smoke fills the windows. Fire consumes the house and eventually fills the frame. The camera pulls out of the card, revealing the card's name, "Death."

EXT. HOLLINGSHEAD MAINE - DAY

Aerial shot of a lush mountain landscape reveals a VINTAGE STEAM TRAIN, winding its way towards the horizon. We can hear it CHUGGING along.

Title card reads: Hollingshead Maine, 1853

INT. 19TH CENTURY STEAM TRAIN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

JACOB (30s) dressed in 19th century clothing WALKS into frame, while his wife, AMELIA (30s) sits with their young son, CARLISLE (3) on her lap.

JACOB

The conductor says we should be able to see the town soon.

He SITS down on the BENCH SEAT across from Amelia.

Amelia doesn't look at her husband. She SOFTLY SINGS a Romanian song to her son, choosing to keep her focus on him, while ignoring her husband. This act isn't lost on Jacob.

AMELIA

(singing, softly)
Abua-bua-bua, Abua, tucu-l maica...

JACOB

(coaxingly)
This is going to be a great move for us.

AMELIA

(still singing)
Nu te teme tu de zmei, I-a goni maica pe ei.

Jacob is annoyed, but he restrains himself.

JACOB

(softly scolding)
English, Amelia. English. You do not want him to be treated like an outcast. He must fit in with the other children.

She looks at her husband for the first time. Her eyes carry a resentment that they've held for some time now.

AMELIA

He needs to know the language of his people.

JACOB

He is an American. Born in this country. Just as you and I are Americans, so long as we live in this country.

AMELIA

(under her breath)

We do not belong in this country. I should have never let you talk me into---

JACOB

You want to give him every opportunity in this life, do you not?

AMELIA

(boiling)

He could have had a life, in Romania. A good life, Jacob. But, no, you had to drag him to America. To fill his head with fancy ideas about New York. Of riches.

Jacob glares at her, in silence.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Well? Where are the riches? We moved to New York. Your son was born in an alley, nearly froze to death in tenement housing. And for what?

AMELIA (CONT'D)

So that you could live your dreams, Jacob. This is your dream. Not his.
(Looking out the window)
Not his...

Her words sting. She's right and Jacob knows it.

In an instant, Jacob's countenance shifts and he turns on the charm, the charm that's opened every door for him thus far.

JACOB

You are right. New York was a mistake. It is not meant for us, for Carlisle? Perhaps. But we belong in Maine. You'll see. Hollingshead is going to be the start of a new life for us. A good life, Amelia.

Amelia keeps looking out the window. Silent.

JACOB (CONT'D)

How about you, Carlisle? Are you excited to see your new home?

Jacob GRABS his son, and PULLS him onto his lap.

Amelia instantly looks up. Jacob throws a snide smile at her that says, "I win."

JACOB (CONT'D)

(to Carlisle)

You're going to love Hollingshead.

Jacob looks up at his wife.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(cocky)

...we **all** will.

Amelia stares down the camera, draws in a DEEP BREATH, then--

EXT. HOLLINGSHEAD MAINE - CONTINUOUS

As if hearing Amelia's furious exhale, we hear the train WHISTLE BLOW, as the camera pushes out from a cloud of black smoke, the vantage grows higher and higher until we are once again looking over the expanse of the mountains, the train CHUGGING towards the horizon, which now reveals the town of Hollingshead Maine waiting in the distance.

INT. ROOM ADJACENT TO POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The opening P.O.V. looks through a TWO-WAY MIRROR, revealing Max SITTING in an interrogation room, head down, hands clasped on top of a TABLE. No one else is in the room.

OFFICER 1 (O.S.)

...have you gotten him to talk yet?

OFFICER 2 (O.S.)
Nothing. Guy hasn't said a peep
since we brought him in. Wouldn't
even take a glass of water when it
was offered to him.

Cut to: the two OFFICERS watching Max behind the two-way
mirror.

OFFICER 1
Smart.

OFFICER 2
But a fuckin' glass of water?
C'mon, drinking water doesn't make
you guilty.

OFFICER 1
No. But he's got media training. He
knows to keep his mouth shut.

OFFICER 2
You really think he did it?

OFFICER 1
Of course he did. Look at him.

Cut back to: the officer's P.O.V. shot of Max.

OFFICER 1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pretty boy. Born with more money
than God. Used to getting whatever
he wants.

OFFICER 2
Except for her.

OFFICER 1
Yep. Except for her. The one that
got away. And pretty boy just
couldn't handle that.

OFFICER 2
So he killed her.

OFFICER 1
'...if I can't have her no one
can.'

Cut to: shot of officers.

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Jury's gonna crucify him.

OFFICER 2
I feel sorry for his lawyer.

OFFICER 1
I hear he's got MIA LING.

OFFICER 2
Is she good?

OFFICER 1
Fuckin' best. Tough as nails. And,
from what I've heard, she's a total
cunt.

Both LAUGH.

MIA (O.S.)
(in stern agreement)
The cuntiest.

Both men spin around to find that MIA (30s) has been standing behind them, listening to their conversation for some time. She's attractive, with a powerful stance. No nonsense due to her love for her profession, and her position as a female in that very cut-throat world.

MIA (CONT'D)
(sarcastically thinking
aloud)
Wait, did I use that right?
Cuntiest...cuntiest...?

OFFICER 1
(stammering)
I...uh...

OFFICER 2
Ms. Ling! We were just---

MIA
Displaying an utter lack of
professionalism and the reasons why
you'll always deign to be rookie
cops instead of lead investigators
on a high-profile case? Yeah, I
heard.

Silence.

MIA (CONT'D)
This is the part where you leave.

Embarrassed, the men TURN to exit the room.

MIA (CONT'D)
 (stopping them)
 Oh, one last thing.

They STOP.

MIA (CONT'D)
 I'm sure, even as dim-witted as you
 two are, that you know about a
 little thing called attorney-client
 privilege, yeah?

Both men nod.

MIA (CONT'D)
 Good. So if I see either of your
 coffee-stained breath fogging up
 the other side of this mirror, I'll
 know that you're trying to listen
 in on our little conversation. And,
 if that happens, well, let's just
 say that you'll come to learn a
 whole new understanding of the word
 "cunt."

The men's eyes widen.

MIA (CONT'D)
 Do we understand each other,
 gentleman?

They nod, fear-stricken.

MIA (CONT'D)
 Good.

BEAT

GO!

The officers SCRAMBLE to leave, almost tripping over each other in an effort to be the first one out of the room.

Mia draws in a DEEP BREATH. Despite her confidence with the officers, she knows she's fighting an uphill battle to defend Max. Still, she agreed to take the case, time to see what he has to say about it.

She OPENS the DOOR, and enters the interrogation room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Max is still seated in the same manner. He doesn't look up, he doesn't even flinch when Mia ENTERS the room.

By contrast, Mia asserts herself from the second she enters, THROWING her PURSE, COAT, FILES, ETC. about the room. She speaks as she moves non-stop; speaking her first words to Max as if she's starting mid-conversation.

MIA

We've got our work cut out for us, Max. I'm not gonna lie. Can I call you Max? I'm gonna call you Max. Why waste time being formal? We're gonna get to know each other pretty well these next few weeks. Usually I start building the case before I even meet with a client, but your case was thrown into my lap very last-minute. I'll cut to the chase, no one wanted it Max. I mean, it's a high-profile case. Andie Sterling's murder? Jesus. That's a sexy one. Everyone's gonna be watching, ya know? Probably gonna be the next fucking OJ trial. But, in our case Max, we don't have a glove that doesn't fit. All we've got is a pretty, young woman who's dead. So I thought I'd come in here first, meet with you, get a sense of who 'Max' is, then we'll go from there. Sell them on you as a person, and hopefully steer them away from the death penalty.

For the first second she stops herself from talking.

MIA (CONT'D)

(apologetically)

Not that they're talking the death penalty. But, I mean, it isn't looking too good. We gotta work with all we've got.

She SETS her RECORDER on the table, in front of Max, and PRESSES 'record.' *BEEP SFX

MIA (CONT'D)

Ok, Max. Let's go. Tell me about yourself, huh? Who is Maxwell Tate. And don't be afraid to sugar-coat it, k?

Max, still looking down, sits in silence. No movement.

MIA (CONT'D)

Ok, Max, I get it. You've been taught to keep your mouth shut, but you've been in legal meetings enough to know all about attorney-client privilege. You can tell me anything. And we don't have time to waste. Let's go. Chop, chop.

Nothing.

MIA (CONT'D)

(serious)

Max. Look. I'm telling you, a jury is not gonna go easy on you. They're gonna see you as a spoiled little nepo baby who didn't get what he wanted, so he got even. I'm here to defend you. You need somebody in your corner, who believes you. I don't even wanna know if you did it or not, you just have to give me something, anything I can use to help you. Honestly, if we could get a plea deal that's gonna be our best bet. Keep the death penalty off the table, keep the ball in our court...at least that much. If this goes to trial, it's anyone's guess. But you're gonna have to give me something. Tell me your story.

Still, no response.

Mia sizes up the situation, just to realize it's hopeless.

MIA (CONT'D)

(sigh)

You know what? Fuck you. I don't need this. Nobody else wanted this case because it's hopeless, but I thought, maybe, just maybe you weren't the stupid prick the media's made you out to be. Everybody deserves a shot, ya know? But I guess they're all right, after all.

She STANDS up, COLLECTS her things.

MIA (CONT'D)

Best of luck to you Max. I thought you could prove them wrong, but I guess not.

She TURNS to the door.

MAX (O.S.)

(speaking from behind her)
Does your family know you're a lesbian?

Mia STOPS. Baffled. TURNS around.

MIA

Wha? How did you---

MAX

Why haven't you told them?

MIA

(hesitant)
Max, I haven't told anyone. My wife and I...we've both agreed that it would have a negative impact on our careers if we---

MAX

So you kept silent.

MIA

Yes.

MAX

Because you knew that, no matter what you say, people's minds wouldn't be changed. They would still feel the way they feel. They'd still believe what they want to believe...so you decided to let them.

Mia's face softens.

MAX (CONT'D)

Because deep down you know the truth, and that's all that really matters.

BEAT

I didn't kill Andie.

BEAT

I didn't kill her.

Without another word, Max soberly STANDS up, and BUZZES the door, and EXITS the room.

Mia stands there, silent, motionless, taking in his words. The last thing she expected was to share some common ground with him, but yet, that's where she now finds herself.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - LATER

A carry-over shot reveals Mia's face in the same expression from the previous scene, while the setting changes from the interrogation room to that of an upscale restaurant. Her hair and clothing also shift before our eyes, but her face hasn't left that very moment.

AUDIO FADE IN on Mia's wife, LISA (30s) talking over their MEAL.

LISA

...and I told him that if he wants to run for re-election, now is the time. We have to start building his strategy now.

Cut to: both women seated at the table.

LISA (CONT'D)

I mean, the polls show that the public is still in favor of him, but the platform we ran on the last term is outdated. Different issues. Different political climate. Whole world's shifted since the pandemic, right? We have to show that we've grown too...

Lisa becomes aware that Mia's expression is distant.

LISA (CONT'D)

Mia?

Mia's still gone.

LISA (CONT'D)

(snapping)

Mia!

MIA

(coming to reality)

Huh?

LISA

Babe, where were you?

MIA

What? I'm listening...you were talking about the uh, the campaign, right?

LISA

Alright. What's on your mind? Is it the adoption?

MIA

No. I mean, the adoption is...is part of it. But.

LISA

But what?

MIA

(hesitant)

You know that case I was talking to you about last week, Maxwell Tate?

LISA

The publisher that killed one of his authors?

MIA

I never said he killed her.

LISA

You didn't have to. His face is all over the news. That boy's guilty as sin.

MIA

I'm not so sure.

LISA

Hold up. Don't tell me you're thinking about taking him on.

MIA

If you could've seen the look in his eye. My gut's telling me that he didn't do it.

LISA

Mia, that is not a fight you can win. Even if he didn't do it.

Push in on Mia's face as her expression returns to where it was just moments ago. She's still not sure what to do with this.

CARLISLE (V.O.)
Don't blow it out...

INT. 19TH CENTURY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amelia's mouth hovers over the CHIMNEY of an OIL LAMP, she stops just before blowing it out.

Carlisle (9) is tucked into BED, right beside the lamp.

CARLISLE
Please.

AMELIA
(smiling)
Alright. Just for tonight.

CARLISLE
Don't tell father though, please?
He says I'm too old to be afraid of
the dark.

Amelia SITS on the bed to comfort him.

AMELIA
He does, does he?

CARLISLE
Says there's nothing in the dark
that isn't there in the light.

AMELIA
You're never too old to be afraid
of anything; even the dark.

CARLISLE
Really?

AMELIA
Mnhmm. But your father's right
about one thing. There's nothing in
the dark that isn't there in the
light, too.

CARLISLE
Then why does it feel different?

AMELIA

Because when we can see things,
we're not afraid of them. It's the
things we can't see that make us
feel afraid. And when we're afraid
of them...they have power over us.

Carlisle SITS up in bed.

CARLISLE

Are you ever afraid of those
things? The things in the dark?

AMELIA

I used to be. But then I realized
that I had the power to keep them
hiding in shadows. So long as I
never gave in to that fear, I had
the power over them, they were the
ones who were afraid.

CARLISLE

How?

AMELIA

Magic.

CARLISLE

Magic? It's real?

AMELIA

Very real. And it's in you.

CARLISLE

It is? I don't feel like I'm magic.

AMELIA

You were born in America. People in
this country only believe in what
they can see. But, the blood that
flows through your veins is that of
your mother country, Romania.

She PATS his chest, over his heart.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

And you'll always be a Romanian,
deep in here.

CARLISLE

Tell me another story about it,
please? The one about the dark
forest.

The door CRASHES open in the next room, and Jacob ENTERS O.S. in a drunken state.

JACOB (O.S.)
 (slurring)
 Amelia! Amelia! Goddamn it woman,
 where's is my dinner?

AMELIA
 (calling out)
 I'll be right there!

She returns her focus to Carlisle.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 Tomorrow night. Deal?

CARLISLE
 Father's drunk again, isn't he.

AMELIA
 (tenderly)
 Nothing you need to worry about. I
 can handle him.

CARLISLE
 Don't be afraid of him. Remember,
 he doesn't have the power-so long
 as you're not afraid.

She KISSES his forehead.

AMELIA
 Goodnight, my Romanian prince.

She STANDS and WALKS to the DOOR.

CARLISLE (O.S.)
 You can blow out the lamp.

She TURNS around.

CARLISLE (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 We will both use our powers
 tonight.

Amelia smiles, proudly.

She LEANS over the chimney of the lamp and BLOWS IT OUT.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Mia SITS at the INTERROGATION TABLE, waiting for Max.

The DOOR on the opposite side of the room OPENS and Max ENTERS with a GUARD.

Mia STANDS.

MAX
You came back.

MIA
Surprised? That makes two of us.

MAX
It was the lesbian comment, right?
You came back to find out how I---

MIA
(cutting him off)
Shut up.

Mia addresses the guard who's escorted Max.

MIA (CONT'D)
Can we have the room, please?

The guard LEAVES.

MIA (CONT'D)
Sit your ass down.

Max WALKS over and SITS down.

Mia SITS across the table.

MIA (CONT'D)
These last few days I've gone back
and forth on this. I mean, is your
case hopeless? Probably. Are you a
dick? No question.

MAX
But...?

MIA
But, you're right. I know how it
feels for everyone to be wrong
about me. And my gut tells me that
there's more to you than the
public's seen. So consider this
your last shot at getting your
story told.

MAX

What makes you think I want it
told?

MIA

Because **both** of us agreed to come
back into this room today.

Max hesitates. Then:

MAX

Here's the deal, even if you
believe me, a jury won't. This
story is so fuckin' bizarre, I
don't even know that I believe it
myself...and I was there.

MIA

Try me.

BEAT

MAX

Where do you want me to start?

MIA

How about you and Andie's
relationship? You were intimate,
yes?

MAX

No.

MIA

No?

MAX

Well, there was one---

MIA

Tell me.

MAX

Uh, ok. It was the night of my
dad's funeral...

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

A grey sky covers a small crowd of MOURNERS, gathered around
a freshly-dug GRAVE.

SOFT THUNDER and a GENTLE RAIN further set the somber mood.

MINISTER

...we therefore commit this body to
the ground...

The camera starts to pan the group of reflective mourners.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Earth to earth...ashes to
ashes...dust to dust...

The camera stops on an older woman, Max's MOTHER, who's
stricken with grief. Max stands beside her.

His face reads of sadness, but he's being strong for his
mother, who SILENTLY WEEPS.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

in sure and certain hope of the
Resurrection to eternal life.

We PULL FOCUS from Max and his mother to see Andie standing
directly behind Max. Watching soberly.

FOCUS shifts back to Max and his mother.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Amen.

CROWD

(collectively)

Amen.

MAX

(as if to himself)

Amen.

BEAT

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EVENING - LATER

Various establishing shots of New York City, depicting a
cold, RAINY evening.

INT. DARK NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

CLUB MUSIC fills the air as Andie WALKS into the front
ENTRANCE of a posh NYC nightclub.

She SHAKES OUT her UMBRELLA, and SHRUGS the rain off of her
RAINCOAT.

She looks around the room as she STEPS IN.

P.O.V. shot of the club reveals typical club scene, DANCERS, PEOPLE engrossed in intimate conversations, everyone seems to be having a great time.

Settle on a shot of Max, alone at the bar, his back to the camera.

Andie STOPS when she sees him.

She takes a DEEP BREATH, then, WALKS over.

CUT TO:

Max sitting at the bar, drinking a SCOTCH. Feeling very sorry for himself.

ANDIE (O.S.)
How ya doin'?

Max stops and TURNS AROUND.

BEAT

ANDIE (CONT'D)
...yeah. Stupid question. Dunno why
I even--- Um, mind if I join you?

Max TURNS BACK AROUND, without a word.

Andie CLIMBS ONTO THE BARSTOOL next to him.

A BARTENDER approaches.

BARTENDER
(to Andie)
Can I get you anything?

ANDIE
I'll have whatever he's drinking.
And another for him too.

BARTENDER
You've got it.

The bartender EXITS.

ANDIE
Max, I...I really don't know what
to say.

Max's eyes are raw from crying. He looks like he's on the verge of a breakdown.

MAX
It was so sudden, ya know?

ANDIE
(tenderly)
I know.

MAX
I mean, there were no signs.
Nothing.

ANDIE
Yeah.

MAX
And he was...I mean, he just...

Max starts to lose it. Andie isn't ready to see him like that, not again.

ANDIE
Hey.

Max keeps looking down at his scotch.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
(mildly assertive)
Look at me.

He does.

She PLACES A HAND on his back and GENLTY RUBS him.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
I am not good with these sort of things. I mean, you of all people know just how much I'm lacking in the social interaction department. But, just know that I've got you. Ok? Anything you need...doesn't matter what it is...I'm here for you.

They exchange a longing glance. Both of them are feeling the same thing in this moment.

INT. MAX'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Both of them sit naked, in silhouette, before a CRACKLING FIREPLACE.

MAX
(whispering)
...is this...ok?

ANDIE
(whispering)
Shhhh.

She PLACES A FINGER to his lips.

The two begin to CARESS each other.

Their movements progress from a tender, intimate moment, into a full-on love making session.

INT. MAX'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Andie and Max have fallen asleep on their separate sides of the BED.

DISEMBODIED WHISPER (O.S.)
(menacingly)
Andie.

Andie WAKES UP to a dark room.

The fire's gone out.

She assumes the whisper came from Max, perhaps hoping for a second round of sex.

Andie's P.O.V. checks her peripheral, revealing Max still asleep beside her.

He GENTLY SNORES.

Thinking the whisper was all a dream, she decides to leave while he's asleep; save the awkward conversation about what this hook-up means in terms of their relationship. She's resolved that it was a one-time thing.

But, as she goes to sit up, she realizes that she can't move.

All of her limbs seem to be tied down to the bed. But they're not. Something unseen is keeping her paralyzed.

As panic sets in, Andie tries to scream. But she can't make a sound.

Frantically, her eyes shift over to Max, who's still sleeping.

Then, something catches her eye.

A wispy, black mist SWEEPS across the room. It BUZZES like a fly, moving with such force the walls SHAKE.

Still, Max doesn't wake up.

MIA (O.S.)
Hold up!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MIA
You lost me.

Max SITS BACK in his CHAIR.

MAX
I shoulda known. Look, I told you,
this story has a lot of weird---

MIA
Ok, fine. Let's say I'm down to
believe all the spooky, dark mist
shit. You were sleeping. How'd you
know any of this was going down?

Max SHIFTS IN HIS SEAT and SCRATCHES HIS HEAD.

MIA (CONT'D)
Did Andie tell you?

MAX
(hesitant)
Kinda.

MIA
Kinda?

Max PULLS OUT a small BOOK and HOLDS IT UP.

MIA (CONT'D)
What's that?

MAX
(quietly)
Andie's journal.

Mia's eyes grow wide.

MIA
(harsh whisper)
Her...journal?! Max, you have her
journal?!

MAX
(whispering)
Keep it down.

MIA
Max, that's evidence! You're
withholding evidence. We have to
turn that over!

MAX
Not a chance.

MIA
Max, I can be dis-barred. Besides,
you holding a piece of property
that belonged to the victim...that
doesn't bode well for you. I mean,
how did you get it?

MAX
Wrong question. The right question
is, if a court-appointed
handwriting analyst can verify that
it's Andie's handwriting, and the
things in here back-up my story,
could this help exonerate me?

Mia thinks for a moment.

MIA
Maybe. Possibly. But Max, we're
gonna have to turn it over...or
you're as good as guilty.

MAX
48 hours. Can you give me that? You
listen to my story, and then we
find a way to submit it for
evidence. Deal?

Mia SIGHS HEAVILY.

BEAT

MIA
What choice do I have. I'm already
an accomplice at this point.

MAX
(joking)
I believe the term is accessory.

Both LAUGH.

MIA
 Alright, mother-fucker. This had
 better be worth it.

INT. MAX'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Andie is still WRITHING AROUND ON THE BED, trying her best to
 get up; to move at least. But she's still bound by an
 unseeable force.

DISEMBODIED WHISPER
 Andieeeee. Annnnnddddiiiiieeeee...

ANDIE (V.O.)
 (internal subconscious)
 What are you? What do you want from
 me?

DISEMBODIED WHISPER
 You know who I am. You know what
 you have to do...

ANDIE (V.O.)
 (internal subconscious)
 Max! Dammit, Max, wake up!

DISEMBODIED WHISPER
 Come on, Andie. Do it...

Andie's still feverishly trying to move, to scream, to do
 anything; but it's futile.

Just then, the black shadow DIVES under the bed in a WHOOSH.

Suddenly, something in Andie changes.

Her eyes become possessed.

She begins to MOVE, determinedly, as if she's a human-sized
 marionette, being controlled by invisible strings.

She SITS UP in the bed, LEANS OVER to the NIGHTSTAND beside
 her. She OPENS the drawer and REACHES inside, PULLING OUT a
 sharp pair of gleaming SCISSORS.

She SPREADS the razor sharp scissors, which SHINE in the glow
 of the moonlight.

She LICKS her lips, fiendishly, admiring their sharp edges;
 then looks over at Max, who's still sleeping.

Something about the sight of Max jolts Andie back to reality.

ANDIE (V.O.)
 (internal subconscious)
 What the actual fuck?! Why are you
 doing this?

DISEMBODIED WHISPER
 Come on, Andie...

Andie's eyes go back to their trancelike state, and she once again looks at Max.

We can see his bare chest as he's BREATHING, in and out. In and out.

DISEMBODIED WHISPER (CONT'D)
 Yes. That's it, Andie...do it...

She LEANS over to Max, cautiously. Instinctively she TOUCHES the open scissors to his throat.

Once more she's snapped back to reality.

ANDIE
 (aloud)
 I can't do this!

She realizes that she's able to speak, to move freely. Has this been her doing all of this the entire time?

DISEMBODIED WHISPER
 Go on, Andie. Do it, do it NOW!

She's BREATHING uncontrollably, with the scissors still resting on Max's throat.

DISEMBODIED WHISPER (CONT'D)
 Do it NOW!!!

INT. ANDIE'S AIRBNB - 3:30 A.M. - CONTINUOUS

ANDIE
 NO!!!

Andie SITS UP in BED and looks around.

She's not in Max's bed, she's in her Airbnb, in Hollingshead. Everything is quiet. It had all just been a dream. Too close for comfort, but a dream nonetheless.

As reality sets in, she realizes it's still dark outside.

She TAPS her PHONE SCREEN to read the time, which displays 3:32 am.

Knowing it's pointless to go back to sleep, knowing she'd rather not-fearing yet another nightmare. Andie ROLLS out of bed, STANDS UP, and WALKS to the BATHROOM.

INT. ANDIE'S BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Andie checks her reflection in the BATHROOM MIRROR. She notices blonde roots coming through her auburn hair.

ANDIE
(to herself)
Shit.

ANDIE (V.O.)
Dear Journal, today's my third day in Hollingshead and the nightmares are getting worse.

Andie OPENS her TOILETRY BAG and begins to SET OUT the ITEMS to dye her hair. OPENING the BOX OF DYE, APPLYING GLOVES, MIXING the DYE, SHAKING the BOTTLE, SPREADING her hair, and APPLYING the dye.

ANDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I told myself that I wouldn't sleep while I'm here, because of the dreams, apparently my body had other plans; I don't even remember falling asleep last night. But I must have. Anyway, today will be the day that I finally prod Mrs. Taylor, Julia, for more info on this place. I could tell that she didn't wanna talk about it when I mentioned the town's history the day that I arrived, but I'm desperate. No one in this town will tell me anything.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDIE'S AIRBNB - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Andie, HAIR DRENCHED IN DYE, is sitting in the BED, WRITING in her JOURNAL. Stopping pensively from time to time.

ANDIE (V.O.)
I know there's something going on here. Something dark. I just haven't been able to put my finger on it.

(MORE)

ANDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Everyone seems hellbent on keeping
 this town's secrets, but, one way
 or another, I'm gonna expose this
 place for what it truly is.

Andie STOPS writing and thinks about the gravity of that last
 line.

INT. THE TAYLORS' KITCHEN - MORNING - LATER

It's still dark out, as JULIA TAYLOR POURS a CUP OF COFFEE,
 and REPLACES the CARAFE.

JULIA
 (to Andie)
 My goodness, you're up early.

Andie ENTERS the room. Julia's husband BENNETT (40s) and son
 JORDAN (17) are SEATED at the KITCHEN TABLE.

Julia is blonde-haired, blue-eyed, Stepford wife type, while
 Bennett is African American, gentle giant type. He possesses
 a playful charm and a friendly smile. Jordan is a mix of the
 two; bearing the best of both of his parents physical traits.
 Tan skin, light colored eyes. But, unlike his parents, Jordan
 seems timid and shy.

ANDIE
 Yeah, I couldn't sleep.

BENNETT
 The storm keep you up?

ANDIE
 Storm?

She JOINS Bennett and Jordan at the table, while Julia
 RETURNS to the GRIDDLE, PREPARING a STACK OF PANCAKES for the
 breakfast feast.

BENNETT
 (chuckling)
 You're kidding, right? I thought
 the roof was gonna blow off this
 house.

Bennett POURS some CREAM into HIS COFFEE and STIRS it.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
 This time of year, they happen
 almost every night.

ANDIE

Oh, I had my earbuds in all night,
guess I missed it.

JULIA

(light-heartedly scolding)
Oh, those silly earbuds. They're
gonna make your entire generation
deaf before you're fifty. Mark my
words.

Julia PLACES a PLATE of pancakes on the table, then RETREATS
to the stove.

JORDAN

(whispering to Andie)
She always says the same thing to
me.

Andie smiles back at him, under the radar. After a moment,
she's worked up the courage to say something to Julia.

ANDIE

So, Mrs. Taylor...?

JULIA

Julia. Please.

ANDIE

Julia. You say you've lived in
Hollingshead your entire life?

JULIA

Sure have. My family has been here
for generations. Our bloodline can
be traced back all the way to the
Hollingshead clan. Settlers from
Durham.

ANDIE

Then you must know this town's
history?

JULIA

Of course. My family immigrated to
The New World in the mid-sixteenth
century---

ANDIE

Oh, no. I mean, that's all
incredibly fascinating. But that's
not the history I was hoping to
hear about.

Julia's gaze narrows.

JULIA
 (accusing)
 Oh? Well, what was it you were
 hoping to hear about?

Andie hesitates for a moment. Julia is on to her, she might not play ball. But Andie's desperate. She's already wasted three days, here; she's vowed not to waste a fourth.

ANDIE
 I was hoping you could tell me
 about...about the disappearances.
 About the---

JULIA
 Land sake's. Now why would a pretty
 little thing like you wanna hear
 any of those dreadful stories?

ANDIE
 Just curious. I've been asking
 people around town but they---

JULIA
 (pissed)
 You what?!

Julia collects herself. She regains her composure, and goes on.

JULIA (CONT'D)
 Sweetheart, listen, you're a guest.
 Understand? Not just in this house,
 but in this town. This town, like
 any old town, has its share of old
 ghost stories. But, they're just
 stories. Old wives' tales. None of
 them true...

ANDIE
 Then why---

JULIA
 But! Even if they aren't true,
 they've caused many of the families
 in this town a great deal of grief.
 Some of them have suffered for
 generations as a result of false
 allegations that arose simply
 because of idle gossip.

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

The good folks of this town have worked hard to put those things in the past, and move on.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Then, every once in a while someone comes along, trying to stir up the past. Trying to stick their nose where it doesn't belong. And, well, let's just say, it doesn't end up well for anyone. Do you understand what I'm telling you?

Julia's tone may have been even, and seemingly sweet, but the look in her eyes told Andie that she was treading on dangerous waters. Moreover, they told her that this conversation was over.

ANDIE

I...uh...understand.

Julia smiles.

JULIA

Atta girl.

Julia goes back to PREPARING BREAKFAST for the table. Andie's gaze shifts across the table to Bennett and Jordan. Both look back apologetically.

Something tells Andie that they'd both found themselves on the wrong end of that conversation at least a time or two.

EXT. HOLLINGSHEAD MAINE - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

It's still before sunrise, as we see an establishing shot of the exterior of the Taylors' home.

The shot rises and we're now looking out aerially over the neighborhood. The camera MOVES as the the crow flies, over the town of Hollingshead, still bathed in moonlight.

Dark streets are dimly-lit by pools of light, by GLOWING STREET LAMPS.

As we cross a mammoth, ornate COURTHOUSE on the central square of the town, we get a sense that we're in the old money part of Hollingshead. The HOUSES are bigger and much more ornate.

As the camera's flight SLOWS down, we focus on a massive red brick colonial MANSION. We push in on the house, until our vantage SHIFTS (*WHOOSH SFX) from the outside to the inside.

INT. THE BOND KITCHEN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

ELEANOR BOND (60s) is listening to MUSIC and HUMMING along, as she PREPARES BREAKFAST in her vast, LUXURIOUS KITCHEN.

She's clad in a SILK VERSACE BATHROBE, nearly DANCING as she GLEEFULLY MOVES about the room. We see and hear SIZZLING BACON on the STOVE. She DRIZZLES a few tablespoons of SYRUP into the FRYING PAN, as we hear excited DOGS BARKING playfully.

Eleanor LEANS OVER to the two corgis WHIRLING around her feet, to DROP THEM A FEW CRUMBLES OF BACON.

ELEANOR

Shhh. Be quiet babies, mommy's making breakfast for daddy.

She RETURNS to her work on the stovetop.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(speaking her thoughts aloud)

And today everything's gotta be just perfect.

Eleanor continues HUMMING to the MUSIC as we see various shots of her preparing TOAST, COFFEE, SETTING a NEWSPAPER at an EMPTY CHAIR at the head of the TABLE, POURING coffee, etc.

INT. THE BOND DINING ROOM - MORNING - LATER

TILMAN BOND (60s) SITS at the head of the TABLE, reading his NEWSPAPER between SIPS of his BLACK COFFEE.

Eleanor SITS beside him, NIBBLING on HALF A GRAPEFRUIT. Watching her husband expectantly. Wondering if he'll notice anything out of the ordinary about his morning breakfast.

TILMAN

(chewing bacon)

The bacon's delicious this morning

ELEANOR

You like it?

TILMAN

And three eggs? What did I do to deserve all of this?

ELEANOR

Oh, I just like taking care of my husband.

TILMAN
 (chuckles)
 Hmmmm.

ELEANOR
 You just work so hard, and I think
 you deserve a little extra today.

TILMAN
 (playfully)
 Well, if I had to guess I'd say
 you're just trying to butter me up
 for something.

ELEANOR
 Why Tilman Bond---

TILMAN
 Either it's good news or you're
 wanting something. Now, which is
 it?

Eleanor realizes the charade is up.

ELEANOR
 Alright, fine. You've got me.

TILMAN
 Mmhmm.

ELEANOR
 Darling, there is something I want.

TILMAN
 I'm listening.

ELEANOR
 Andie Sterling is in town...

TILMAN
 Who?

ELEANOR
 The writer.

TILMAN
 I've never heard of her. What's she
 written?

ELEANOR
 Nothing you've read; I'm sure.

TILMAN

Oh. So some of your ghost stories,
eh?

ELEANOR

Tilman, please. She's one of my
favorite authors...

TILMAN

(already shutting down)
Nora, I don't think---

ELEANOR

I was hoping you could figure out
where she's staying, I'd love the
chance to meet with her while she's
in town.

TILMAN

My dear, you know I'd do anything
for you; honestly, truly. But, no.
I just don't think that's such a
good idea.

ELEANOR

Oh, you're just being stubborn.
What harm could it do?

TILMAN

Nora---

ELEANOR

She's a writer, Tilman. One of my
favorites. All I'm wanting is to
grab a simple cup of coffee with
her, maybe have her sign a book or
two. What good is it to have a
mayor for a husband, if he isn't
willing to pull a few strings for
you every now and then?

TILMAN

My dear, why do you think she's
here? Here? Of all places...

ELEANOR

You're obsessed, Tilman, really---

TILMAN

Nora! The Festival of Leaves is
coming up next month. You know how
that draws in the tourists. It also
means millions in revenue.

ELEANOR

Of course I do. What does that have to do with---

TILMAN

This town has worked hard to clean up its reputation.

TILMAN (CONT'D)

But every once in a while one of these fiction writers comes around, poking their nose where it doesn't belong. Hoping to find a story that we don't want told.

ELEANOR

That was years ago. What's the harm---

TILMAN

The harm is that we become a town with a dark past. A town that's diseased. The tourists stop coming, at least the ones who spend any money. Our economy dries up and we become a town of unemployed, meth addicts.

ELEANOR

(laughing)

Do you hear yourself? Don't you think you're being the least bit overdramatic?

TILMAN

(serious)

Nora. Honey. Let's not forget that your family has ties to that past. Your own, grandfather---

ELEANOR

I know that Tilman.

TILMAN

Well, think about what would happen to all the charities you run. The organizations that you spearhead. If word were to get out that he-

ELEANOR

Fine, Tilman!

She stops herself from saying what's really on her mind.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 (calmly)
 Fine.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 If you're that serious about this,
 then, let's just forget the whole
 thing.

TILMAN
 (apologetically)
 It's for the best, my dear.

Nora smiles. She's not sincere, but she fakes it well.

ELEANOR
 Finish your breakfast.

She plants a KISS on his lips, and goes back to her grapefruit to distract her from the anger she's feeling in this moment.

As Tilman goes back to EATING HIS BREAKFAST, Nora glares at him in silence; something he doesn't notice.

EXT. THE TAYLORS' DRIVEWAY - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

It's still dark as Andie is WALKING to her CAR.

When she reaches the car DOOR:

JORDAN (O.S.)
 (stifled whisper)
 Hey.

Andie TURNS AROUND to see who's speaking.

ANDIE
 Um, what are you doing out here?
 Shouldn't you be---

JORDAN
 They aren't just ghost stories.
 They're true. All of them.

ANDIE
 I don't think your mom would want
 you to---

JORDAN
 I don't care what she wants. She's
 a liar. Just like everyone in this
 town.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

They wanna bury the past to make themselves look good. But none of them are innocent. This whole town's got blood on its hands.

ANDIE

What do you mean, Jordan?

He looks down, silently.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

If you know something, tell me. Please? I really want to know.

He LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER, as if the devil himself were watching.

JORDAN

I...I can't. Sorry.

ANDIE

(sigh)
I understand.

JORDAN

But the mayor's wife. Eleanor Bond she knows everything. Really into the dark stuff. Knows all the town's history. She's the one you wanna talk to.

He LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER again.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

I...I've gotta go. Good luck, Ms. Sterling.

ANDIE

(smiling)
Andie. Please.

JORDAN

(smiling)
Andie. I hope you find whatever it is you're looking for.

He TURNS AROUND and WALKS back to the HOUSE.

ANDIE

(thinking aloud)
Me too, Jordan.

BEAT

Me too...

MIA (O.S.)

So whose idea was it for Andie to go to Hollingshead?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

TAKEOUT CONTAINERS litter the INTERROGATION TABLE as Max and Mia are in the middle of their conversation. Both are comfortable in this space, we can tell they've been here for awhile.

MAX

Hers.

MIA

And you went with her?

MAX

No. She went alone.

MIA

But you wound up there?

MAX

Eventually, yes.

MIA

Before or after she went missing.

MAX

(sigh)
Before.

MIA

Why?

MAX

It's complicated.

MIA

Isn't it always?

MAX

Andie received an email...

INT. ANDIE'S OFFICE - DAY- FLASHBACK

Andie SITS in a CO-WORKING SPACE in the building of Max's office. She's TYPING on her LAPTOP, when an ALERT reads:

New Email.

She OPENS the email. The email is brief. It reads:

"13 lie dead, buried beneath a million secrets, the truth lies in Hollingshead."

There's a PHOTO ATTACHMENT. Andie OPENS the photo, revealing an overexposed, black and white image. The image shows the charred remains of a once-splendid MANSION.

She SCROLLS the rest of the email trying to locate more information, but there's nothing else to see. The sender's email address is blocked.

Andie sits there, contemplating the message. Emails like this are routine for her, all of them in hopes that it'll inspire her next story, but she rarely bites. Something about this one strikes her though. It's familiar. It speaks to her.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Max SITS at his COMPUTER, TALKING on the PHONE.

Andie comes BURSTING IN, unannounced.

ANDIE

Max! Did you get the email I sent?

MAX

(into the phone)

I'm gonna have to call you back, k?
Thanks.

He HANGS UP the phone.

MAX (CONT'D)

(to Andie)

Hey Max, are ya busy? Oh, nah, just talking to Penguin Random House...c'mon in...we'll make it a conference call.

ANDIE

(insistent)

Did you get the email?

MAX

Hmmm. The 13 dead email?

ANDIE

That's the one.

She COMES AROUND and SITS on the corner of the DESK, looking over his shoulder at the SCREEN.

Max realizes how intimately close they are.

MAX

What am I looking at?

ANDIE

It's a house. Or what's left of it...

MAX

Yeah, but what is it?

ANDIE

I have no fucking idea.

MAX

Great. Glad we could chat about it. Now, if you don't mind one of us has to get back to work.

Max starts TYPING.

ANDIE

Max, listen to me. My gut is telling me there's something here.

MAX

Here, I googled it. Hollingshead Maine. Conde Nast calls it The Hamptons of---

ANDIE

MAX!

MAX

Andie there's nothing there! It's a bedroom community. Beds and Breakfasts. Old money.

ANDIE

Exactly. They're hiding something I can feel it. Call it a sixth sense.

MAX

And, what? You think they've scrubbed the internet?

ANDIE

Possibly.

MAX
You're impossible.

ANDIE
Max please. Let me look into this.
If I'm wrong, you can say 'I told
ya so.' But I'm not wrong.

Max SIGHS.

MAX
Fine. Do I think you're wasting
your time? Yes. But, if you're
seriously sensing something here,
then you have the publishers
resources at your disposal.

ANDIE
Thank you.

MAX
Just don't be wrong. Please?

ANDIE
(playfully)
When have I ever steered you wrong?

MAX
Ok, well I have meetings all day on
Friday, but we can head up there
this weekend.

ANDIE
Oh. Um...we?

MAX
You don't want me to go?

ANDIE
I know you're busy, so there's no
need to---

MAX
(hopeful)
I don't mind.

ANDIE
No. Max, stay. I'll go at this
alone.

MAX
Oh.
(dejectedly)
Alright. If that's what you want.

ANDIE
 (tenderly resolute)
 It is.

BEAT
 Thanks Max. You really are the
 best.

Andie gingerly GETS UP and LEAVES the office, leaving Max
 alone with his thoughts.

After a moment, a thought strikes Max. He PICKS UP the PHONE,
 and DIALS.

MAX
 (on the phone)
 Ray? Yeah...I need you to do some
 digging for me. It's a town called
 Hollingshead, Maine.

INT. 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK OFFICE BUILDING BATHROOM - DAY

Title card reads: New York City 1875

Carlisle (early 20s) stands over a SINK, GRABS a handful of
 WATER and SPLASHES his face.

He looks up at his reflection in the MIRROR. He's tense, we
 can sense this. He's building himself up to encounter
 something he is hesitant to face.

O.S. We hear a KNOCKING ON A WOODEN DOORFRAME.

INT. 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

THE HAND KNOCKING on the DOOR is revealed as the camera pans
 into the OFFICE, where we see MR.BRADLEY, a businessman in a
 TAILORED SUIT, SEATED behind a DESK. He's polished and
 important, but there's something that's peculiar about him.
 Something unsafe; hidden below the surface. He's busy reading
 over a DOCUMENT; but looks up just as the camera spots his
 face.

MR. BRADLEY
 Can I help you?

CARLISLE
 Mr. Bradley? We have an
 appointment. I'm Carlisle Gheata.

MR. BRADLEY
(coldly)
Ah, yes. Please, come in, have a
seat.

Carlisle ENTERS and SITS across the DESK from Mr. Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY (CONT'D)
I was just looking over your file.

CARLISLE
I really appreciate your help---

MR. BRADLEY
(cutting him off)
I'm going to stop you right there,
son.

CARLISLE
Is there a problem?

MR. BRADLEY
Carlisle, I'm a busy man. A very
busy man.

CARLISLE
I understand.

MR. BRADLEY
I've got far too much on my plate
to accommodate every immigrant with
a sob story, who waltzes into my---

CARLISLE
(interrupting)
I'm not an immigrant.

MR. BRADLEY
(a bit dejected)
Excuse me?

CARLISLE
I...uh...what I meant to say is, I
was born in America. I'm a citizen.

MR. BRADLEY
Ah. I see. So what exactly is it
that you need from me?

CARLISLE
I was told that you could help me
find a job.

MR. BRADLEY

Mr. Gheata---

CARLISLE

A reference. That's all I need. A foot in the door.

MR. BRADLEY

Why should I go out of my way to help you?

CARLISLE

Because you know what it's like to be a stranger in a strange world. You too come from immigrant parents, yet you are an American. You had to fight tooth and nail to get anyone in this country to take you seriously. To give you half a chance.

MR. BRADLEY

I did.

CARLISLE

And, now, here you are. Sitting in your own office. With a secretary to organize your schedule. People within your company who not only listen to your advice, but they rely on it.

MR. BRADLEY

Yes, son, but---

CARLISLE

And you didn't get here alone, did you, sir? You made connections. Connections that opened up doors for you. You wouldn't be sitting here otherwise.

MR. BRADLEY

Even if what you say is true, it still doesn't explain why I should go out of my way to help you.

CARLISLE

Because they didn't help you for free. They got something in return. You paid them back in dividends. Perhaps you still are, help like that doesn't come cheap.

MR. BRADLEY
Just what are you insinuating?

CARLISLE
Consider this an investment
opportunity. You invest in me, and
I'll deliver.

MR. BRADLEY
Deliver what? Wealth? I'm already a
wealthy man, Carlisle.

CARLISLE
Wealth is nothing. You crave power.
Influence. You've had a taste of
both, but you can feel them fading.
You need fresh blood, a minion,
someone to infiltrate their system,
play the game, to keep yourself on
the inside.

Mr. Bradley is contemplating this.

MR. BRADLEY
(playing hardball)
What makes you so sure?

CARLISLE
Because you let me into this
office.

BEAT

CARLISLE
I'm not stupid. I've got youth,
charm, looks, and I'm smart, sir.
Smart as hell. Invest in me, and I
promise you, you will never run the
risk of losing your power.

BEAT

Mr. Bradley is thinking.

BEAT

MR. BRADLEY
We're going to need to do something
about that name.

CARLISLE
My name?

MR. BRADLEY
Gheata? What is that, Polish?

CARLISLE
Romanian.

MR. BRADLEY
Looks and charm are one thing. But
that name, it screams foreigner.
They don't trust foreigners,
Carlisle.

Mr. Bradley STANDS, WALKS around the desk and STOPS in front
of Carlisle.

MR. BRADLEY (CONT'D)
But if you can convince them that
you're one of them, they'll give
you the keys to the kingdom.

CARLISLE
(chuckling)
You sound like my father.

MR. BRADLEY
Your father sounds like a smart
man.

O.S. We hear a RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

EXT. HOLLINGSHEAD MAINE - DAY

Aerial shots of the Maine COASTLINE show a juxtaposition of
lush greenery and treacherous, jagged rocks.

The sky is grey, and the THUNDER continues to SWELL in the
distance.

As a winding, coastal ROAD is revealed, we can hear the ROAR
of a CAR'S engine coming into frame. Pushing in on the car,
we can see it's fighting to keep its pace as the unsteady
terrain battles against it.

INT. ANDIE'S CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Andie's trying her best to keep the car in the center of the
road. She's also lost.

GPS COMPUTER VOICE
In one point four miles, your
destination is on the left.

ANDIE

(mimicking the GPS)

"In one point four miles, your destination is on the left." Yeah, right, bitch. You've been saying that for over an hour.

Andie's eyes are heavy. The lack of sleep, due to the constant nightmares, is taking its toll. A prolonged blink results in Andie drifting off for a split second.

As she jolts herself awake, she jerks the car back to the center of the road.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Shit!

BEAT

Come on, Andrea. Snap out of it!
You've gotta focus.

Andie looks down at her bare arm, noticing the SCRATCHES wrapping around them.

INT. MAX'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

In the dark BEDROOM we see various, tense shots of Andie paralyzed in Max's BED. She's trying to move, trying to scream but she can't.

A BLACK SHADOW hovers over her body, keeping her immobilized. A THIN, BLACK LIMB EMERGES from the shadow, displaying a TERRIFYING THREE-PRONGED CLAW. It REACHES for Andie's arms and starts SCRATCHING at her skin.

Andie lets out a MUFFLED SCREAM, even if it's only in her mind.

O.S. A phone VIBRATES as it RINGS.

INT. ANDIE'S CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Andie is torn from her daydream, back to reality.

The PHONE continues to VIBRATE and RING.

The phone's SCREEN reads: Max Calling

Andie GROANS, then CLICKS to accept the call.

ANDIE

Hey Max.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We see their respective ends of the conversation, from their own location(s). Andie in her CAR, Max in his OFFICE.

MAX

(on the phone)

Good morning! How goes the hunt?

ANDIE

Not great.

MAX

Oh no? What's going on?

ANDIE

Nothing. Literally. This whole fucking town seems to have taken an oath to keep their mouths shut to outsiders.

MAX

Shit. What about the house? What's it like?

ANDIE

I still haven't found it.

MAX

You're kidding.

ANDIE

I'm literally driving around with a hand-drawn map right now, trying to find it. And, of course, my GPS is a freak show out here.

MAX

(phone signal cutting out)

Wait? A map? Where'd you get a map?

Andie only hears STATIC.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hello? Andie?

ANDIE

I'm still here.

(Yawns)

(MORE)

ANDIE (CONT'D)

And, to top it off, I'm literally about to fall asleep. Haven't slept a wink since I got here.

MAX

(genuinely concerned)
Really? How come?

Andie pauses. Debating whether to tell him about her nightmares. Ultimately, she decides against it.

ANDIE

Uh, the...bed. Last time I book an Airbnb with no reviews, huh?

MAX

(regretfully)
I shoulda went with you.

ANDIE

(a bit more forceful than intended)
No!

MAX

What?

ANDIE

(recovering)
I mean, no. You know how I get when I'm writing. I'll look for any reason to procrastinate. No, it's better if I'm alone.

O.S. THUNDER CRASHES so loudly that Andie nearly runs her car off the ROAD.

MAX

Oh my god. Was that thunder?!

THUNDER continues CRASHING as RAIN starts POURING in sheets.

ANDIE

(frantic)
Yeah! It just started pouring out of nowhere!

MAX

(gently pleading)
Ok. Well, I'm going to let you go so that you can drive. But please, please call me when you're safe.
Ok?

ANDIE
 (rushing)
 Ok, ok...

She HANGS UP the phone without saying goodbye.

MAX
 Andie? Hello?

He realizes she's hung up on him.

The STORM is now in full swing as Andie finds herself in the eye of it.

Her P.O.V. watches through the WINDSHEILD, trying desperately to see the road, but it's impossible.

Suddenly we see A LARGE, DARK SHAPE directly in her path.

ANDIE
 Shit!

Andie SLAMS on her brakes, missing the obstruction by a hair.

Tension is high as Andie CATCHES HER BREATH, trying to focus on whatever is directly in front of her car's hood.

Nearly filling the expanse of her windshield's view, it doesn't seem to move. We're not sure if it's a person, an animal, or something else entirely.

The RAIN and THUNDER continue to ERRUPT into a cacophony.

Andie's HEARTBEAT is RACING.

She HONKS the car's HORN repeatedly, while FLASHING the HEADLIGHTS.

The thing doesn't move.

Gathering her nerve, Andie takes several DEEP BREATHS, then GRABS her UMBRELLA.

As she OPENS the CAR DOOR, rain starts POURING into the opening, and she STEPS OUTSIDE, OPENING THE UMBRELLA.

WIND HOWLS. As a strong gust RUSHES past, Andie's umbrella is WHIPPED INSIDE OUT; leaving her standing uncovered in the DOWNPOUR.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
 UGH!

The second her BOOTS TOUCH THE GROUND, she SINKS into the MUD, until it's all the way to her shins.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Are you fuckin' kidding me?!

Even outside, in the near total darkness, Andie can't make out the figure. Mysteriously dark, nearly seven feet tall, it stands rigid; motionless.

As she struggles to MOVE THROUGH THE MUD, carefully inching towards the dark figure, she SWINGS the mangled umbrella like a sword. She SHOUTS with every SWAT, every STEP, in a futile effort to scare the thing away. Still it doesn't move.

As she reaches the CAR'S HOOD, face to face with the dark figure, a BOLT OF LIGHTNING FLASHES across the sky, ILLUMINATING everything in a split second of daylight.

For the first time, Andie can see what has been staring her down. In a moment of relief, she starts LAUGHING.

The object is revealed to be a MAMMOTH BOULDER, situated directly in the middle of the road.

Her eyes notice a PATCH OF SOMETHING, right at eye level. She REACHES OUT and DIGS her fingers into the dense, WET MOSS that clings to the boulder's surface. Her fingers can feel something hiding beneath it. A few more SWATS and the moss is all gone. Now her fingers can GLIDE more easily across the rock's surface. Andie can feel CARVINGS, carvings that felt like letters. But it's still too dark to see anything.

The rock seems to watch Andie as she WALKS back to her car, then REEMERGES with her PHONE.

As she CLOSES IN on the rock, she PULLS her JACKET up over her head, pressing her forehead to the rock and making a canopy with the COLLAR of the jacket.

There, in the FLASHLIGHT of her phone, she can clearly see the rock. The carvings are indeed LETTERS. Frantically carved, but letters nonetheless.

Andie reads the carvings, aloud.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Shrouded in darkness she lies in wait, luring foolish men to tempt their fate, for her coffers filled with treasures untold, but hasten their escape lest their souls she should hold.

BEAT

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Oh my god! This is incredible!

Andie OPENS the CAMERA APP to take a picture of the carving.

As she SNAPS the photo, a CRASH of THUNDER catches her off-guard, causing her to drop her phone. The phone SMACKS the car's hood, then BOUNCES onto the GROUND, SHATTERING into a THOUSAND PIECES.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

FUCK!

With the storm still raging on, Andie RETREATS to the safety of her car's interior.

She CLIMBS into the DRIVER'S SEAT and CLOSES the door. PEELING OFF her jacket and SHAKING OUT her drenched hair, she SETTLES IN, and tries to wrap her mind around what she's just witnessed.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

(thinking aloud)

Shrouded in darkness...

As the adrenaline starts to subside, she begins YAWNING.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Who's shrouded in darkness?

More and more Andie starts to fall victim to the, now GENTLE ROLLS of THUNDER; the SOFT TAPPING of the RAIN on the WINDSHEILD.

Her eyes are growing incredibly heavy.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Max SITS at his DESK, but he's not focused on work, his mind is lost with thoughts of Andie.

He keeps looking at his CELLPHONE, waiting to see it light up. Waiting to see Andie call, to tell him that she's ok.

INT. MAX'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Max's mind wanders back to the night of his dad's funeral. To a few quick images of he and Andie having sex in his apartment.

O.S. a PHONE VIBRATES as it RINGS

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Max is jarred back to reality as the PHONE continues to VIBRATE and RING.

He looks at the PHONE SCREEN, then his face falls when he reads who's calling.

He CLICKS to accept the call.

MAX
(on the phone)
Hey Ray.

RAY
My man! How's it going Maxi-boy?

MAX
(annoyed)
You know, living the dream, hashtag blessed, and all that bullshit.

RAY
Haha. I feel ya man, I feel ya.

MAX
So, what's up?

RAY
I got some info on that place you asked me about, you know, that town up in Maine?

MAX
Oh, no way?! I thought you'd come up empty-handed.

RAY
C'mon M&M, you know ya boy Ray always gets the goods.

MAX
So, whataya got for me?

RAY
It's a lot to cover over the phone. Why don't we meet up for coffee in an hour or so? How about that local shop on the same block as your office?

MAX

Why can't you just give me what you got? Email the details and we can discuss it over the phone.

RAY

No can do. This shit ain't even on the internet. I had to pull quite a few strings to get it. Trust me brother, you'll wanna hear it. One hour, cool?

MAX

(under his breath)
Shit.

BEAT

Sure man. One hour.

INT. LOCAL COFFEE SHOP - DAY - LATER

Max is standing at the COUNTER, face to face with an unenthusiastic BARISTA.

MAX

I'll take a venti Americano, please.

BARISTA

(annoyed)
Sir, we don't have venti sizes here.

MAX

Oh, uh, my bad. I guess a large, please?

Max flashes that famous smile, the barista's not impressed.

RAY (O.S.)

Maxine, over here!

Max looks around to spot Ray, waving his hands from a SMALL TWO-TOP. Max rolls his eyes, annoyed by the stupid nicknames and the fact that Ray forced him out of the office for this.

The barista SETS MAX'S COFFEE ON THE COUNTER and WALKS away.

Max APPROACHES Ray's table.

MAX

Hey Ray. Whatcha got for me?

RAY

Got theAmericano, I see. I was in the mood for something cold, myself.

Max SITS.

MAX

(uninterested)

Uh huh. So, you got something for me, or what?

RAY

(chuckling)

Always business with you. Yeah, man, I got it.

Ray PULLS OUT a tattered NOTEBOOK, and OPENS the COVER. Max can't read the chicken-scratch handwriting, at least not from upside down.

RAY (CONT'D)

So, this place in Maine, Hollingshead; it's become notorious for a series of strange disappearances. Thirteen in the last hundred years, to be exact. All men. All were last seen heading up the coastline a few miles outside of town, never to be seen again---

MAX

(cutting him off)

Suicides.

RAY

(annoyed)

Excuse me?

MAX

Well, that would be the obvious explanation, right? I mean, a handful of people living in an area that's known for being dreary and depressing, throw themselves into the sea. Happens in the Pacific Northwest all the time. These are facts we already knew.

BEAT

RAY

(annoyed)

Ya finished? Are you ready for me to continue, or would you rather try and just Sherlock Holmes the shit outta this yourself?

MAX

(apologetic)

Sorry, my bad.

RAY

As I was saying, you already know about the thirteen. What you don't know is that there's many more than that.

MAX

How many?

RAY

A hundred and fifty-seven confirmed.

MAX

Wait. What?!

RAY

And, just like those thirteen unlucky bastards, these were all men. All last seen heading up the coast. No bodies were ever found.

BEAT

MAX

I don't believe this. So, you're saying a hundred and fifty men went missing---

RAY

A hundred and fifty-seven.

MAX

A hundred and fifty-seven, right? And only thirteen of them were ever reported? How is that possible?

RAY

(chuckling)

Oh man.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

You're making me feel smart. I had this figured out faster than you and you're always mister smart-guy.

Ray LAUGHS, loudly.

MAX

(pissed)

Alright, jackass. Enlighten me.

RAY

(calming down)

Ok, ok. So, think about it. A hundred and fifty-seven, out of a town of less than two thousand. And all of them men, which makes up more than half of the population, so there's no way that many locals could disappear, unnoticed.

MAX

(still confused)

Ok...?

RAY

They weren't all from Hollingshead!

MAX

(getting it now)

Fuck, you're right...

RAY

In fact, only the thirteen were. The reason the others weren't recorded is because---

MAX

(cutting him off)

Because they came from somewhere else!

RAY

(annoyed)

Right...

MAX

And the reason no one thought to connect the dots is because these men came from all over, they had no connection to one another!

RAY

(still annoyed)

You're doing it again.

MAX
 (apologetically)
 Sorry, I'm just...oh my god! This
 opens up so many possibilities! How
 did you find all of this out?!

RAY
 (chastising)
 You really think I'm gonna give you
 my sources?

MAX
 Touché. But, oh my god! Ray! Thank
 you.

RAY
 You owe me one, brother.

MAX
 You've got it, man! Next
 time...I've gotta make a call!

Max TAPS HIS FIST on the TABLE in a fury of excitement, then
 promptly EXITS.

Ray LEANS BACK in his CHAIR, smiling to himself.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Max PACES the SIDEWALK outside the coffee shop. He's working
 up the nerve to make that PHONE call.

One last DEEP BREATH, then he DIALS the number.

The phone RINGS twice, then

ANDIE'S VOICEMAIL
 Hi, it's Andie. Sorry I missed your
 call---

MAX
 Shit.

Max HANGS UP the call.

In a moment, his face becomes resolute. He knows what he has
 to do.

INT. 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

We're right back in Mr. Bradley's office, exactly where we
 left the men's conversation.

CARLISLE
How about Cartwright?

MR. BRADLEY
Cartwright, eh?

CARLISLE
It's a good English name. Name of
my father's old employer, back in
Maine.

MR. BRADLEY
(thinking aloud)
Carlisle Cartwright. Yes, sir, it
does have a nice ring to it,
doesn't it?

MR. BRADLEY (CONT'D)
(calling out)
LILIAN?!

Mr. Bradley's secretary LILIAN ENTERS.

LILIAN
Yes, sir?

MR. BRADLEY
Draft a letter of reference, will
you, for Mr. Carlisle Cartwright.

Mr. Bradley nods at Carlisle.

LILIAN
(looking flirtatiously at
Carlisle)
With pleasure.

The secretary EXITS.

Both men share a somewhat devious smile.

NORA (O.S.)
(reading quietly to
herself)
...she carried within her a light.

INT. THE BOND LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Nora sits in a CHAIR, reading one of ANDIE'S BOOKS. The book
cover reads: The Deadly Truth by Andie Sterling.

NORA

A brilliant purpose. A crusade
which was just as crucial as it was
concealed. A mystery, even unto
her. For now.

O.S. The BACK DOOR QUIETLY CLOSES as Tilman arrives home.

NORA (CONT'D)

But, the fate of humanity would
soon be---

TILMAN (O.S.)

(calling out)

Nora?

Nora scrambles to hide the book as Tilman ENTERS the living
room.

NORA

(covering)

Darling, you're home early.

He gently KISSES her forehead.

TILMAN

I thought I'd work from home,
today.

She hides her disappointment from him well. Her mind is lost
in thought.

BENNETT (O.S.)

I'll dry.

INT. THE TAYLORS' KITCHEN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Julia stands at the SINK, mindlessly SCRUBBING a PLATE, while
her gaze is lost, looking out the WINDOW.

BENNETT

Babe?

No answer.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

Babe!?

Julia's focus comes back to reality.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

You ok?

Julia looks distantly back out the window.

JULIA
There's another storm coming.

BENNETT
(joking)
You might have to fight Siri on that. She says no more than a forty percent chance.

JULIA
(annoyed)
I'm not talking about the weather.

Julia DROPS the PLATE into the DISHWATER and WALKS away, leaving Bennett alone. At first he's confused by the shift in her mood, then he starts to realize what she's talking about. She's right, a storm is coming.

Bennett WIPES his hands with the DISH TOWEL, TOSSES it onto the COUNTER, then WALKS out of the room.

The camera follows him as he EXITS, revealing Jordan, who's been listening unnoticed, from just OUTSIDE THE ROOM.

INT. AIRPORT CONCOURSE - AFTERNOON - LATER

We see Max's hurried pace from behind as he makes his way down a busy concourse.

Generic PUBLIC ADDRESSES can be HEARD as PEOPLE SCURRY about the crowded path.

MIA (O.S.)
So what happened next?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MIA
After your meeting with this Ray, character?

MAX
I had to share this information with Andie...

INT. ANDIE'S CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Andie is sleeping in her CAR.

A FAINT, BLACK SHADOW gently WHISPS over her.

She SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY, as if she's having another nightmare.

MAX (O.S.)
I mean, I vowed to help her succeed
in writing this story.

INT. AIRPORT CONCOURSE - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Max APPROACHES the GATE AGENT.

GATE AGENT
Boarding pass, sir?

Max SCANS his PHONE on GATE SCANNER.

GATE AGENT (CONT'D)
Thank you, Mr. Tate. Enjoy your
flight.

As Max WALKS into the JETWAY, the camera pans over the the DEPARTURE SCREEN at the gate, which reads: Bangor Maine.

THE END.