

THE BELIEVED

Written by

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EXT. RURAL DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

SMOKE wafts up into the darkness. It's coming out of the window of a car, a late 2000s sporty sedan.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The smoke is coming from the passenger seat, where SHEILA smokes a blunt. She is 25, pretty, shy, and comes across as trying a little too hard.

In the driver's seat is SIMON. He's 35, conventionally handsome, with a smile that constantly curls up his lips.

Sheila coughs a little.

SIMON

I wasn't lying when I said it was strong stuff!

SHEILA

I don't usually smoke. It is nice though, once the burning in the lungs goes away.

She holds it out for him to take.

SIMON

No thanks. None for me tonight.

SHEILA

You're the one who brought it. You're so weird.

SIMON

But I won't say no to a little secondhand...

They smile at each other, and move in for a kiss. Simon makes a biting motion with his mouth and grabs Sheila's lower lip between his teeth. Sheila laughs loudly.

SIMON

Ssshhh! Someone might hear you!

SHEILA

Oh what's the big deal if anyone knows we're together? It's not our fault everyone in town is backwards and old-school.

She moves in on Simon, her arms going around his shoulders.

SIMON
Why don't we...let's not do this here. I've got another place in mind.

SHEILA
Yeah? Better than a smoky car?

SIMON
Much better.

He smiles, and turns on the car.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Simon drives them through the woods, toward the lights of the tiny little town.

SIMON
So what are you studying?

SHEILA
Biology. And I can't wait to graduate. Truth be told, I just want to get the hell out of this town.

SIMON
Truly, most people born in Solace tend to die in Solace. Just look at me. I'm still here even after all the college I went to. Biology, anatomy, psychology...

SHEILA
Fuck. Why don't you just leave?

SIMON
The people. Not that I...not that I like the folks here...But they sure are entertaining.

He stops the car. Sheila looks up and sees where they are...
Simon steps out of the car, and Sheila follows reluctantly.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

It's a rustic, tiny church. Cautiously the couple walks toward it. There are a few cars in the dim parking lot.

SHEILA
So, the church, huh?

SIMON

I was dragged here when I was a kid, every Sunday. I can't think of a better *fuck you* to all that...

SHEILA

Than...fucking in there?

Simon nods eagerly, and Sheila laughs.

SHEILA

Shit. I'm in. But what if there's someone here?

SIMON

It's Wednesday night. Who's gonna be in church?

He reaches for the church door. It opens up with a creaking sound. Simon gestures for her to enter first.

SIMON

After you.

Sheila giggles and enters the dark building.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The door shuts behind them. It's completely dark inside.

SHEILA

So what's the plan?

SIMON

Hold on. I'll find a light switch.

SHEILA

Then someone might know we're here. I don't think I like this plan...

Just then, a single CANDLE lights up in the darkness.

SHEILA

Okay. Candles. Nice touch.

Then another candle lights up. And another...

As more and more candles light, they illuminate about ten dark, HOODED FIGURES, all standing in a wide half-circle.

SHEILA

Um...what's going on? Simon? You said nobody was here...

Simon appears behind her, a HYPODERMIC NEEDLE in his hand.

One of the hooded people speaks in a low, muffled tone.

HOODED 1
Blessings upon you and upon us all,
you who are to be offered.

Sheila spins around, but Simon grabs hold of her.

SIMON
Ssshhh. It's alright. You'll be
fine.

HOODED 1
Does the spirit of the commune
accept this offering?

All the others nod. Sheila panics.

ALL HOODED FIGURES
It does.

SHEILA
Simon!

SIMON
It does.

He jabs the needle into her arm. Sheila tries to cry out, but her eyes roll back, she exhales and falls to the ground.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT, A LITTLE LATER

Sheila's eyes open. Everything slowly comes into focus. She's tied up, surrounded by the hooded figures.

The church is lit by candlelight. The CROSS of the church has been turned upside down, and all the pews have been moved to make room for this strange ceremony.

One of the figures passes an unmarked PILL BOTTLE to the others. Each reaches beneath his hood to swallow a pill.

HOODED 2 [SIMON]
Together we consume the sacrament
that will free our spirits and
allow us to do what must be done.

ALL HOODED FIGURES
Free our spirits.

One of the hooded figure reaches down to a nearby table and picks up a long, nasty-looking BONE SAW. He steps forward toward Sheila, who watches in a daze.

HOODED 1

Be not afraid, little one. The spirit we release shall gift us all eternal life, and you too will revel in the pleasure of his triumph.

Sheila is too weak to speak, but her eyes open wide as the hooded figure lifts the bone saw to her arm...

He cuts through her arm, while others hold her steady. Sheila's face contorts with pain. Weakly, she screams.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT, A LITTLE LATER

Through her heavy eyelids, Sheila looks around at the space around her feet. Her ARMS and LEGS are all arranged on the floor in front of her.

Her torso is supported on a plastic-wrap-covered pew. Her blood is draining out of her body and into several chalices.

The first hooded figure opens up a BOOK that's thick, ancient-looking, and full of strange markings.

HOODED 1

Azazel. Thou art the greatest angel of God but thou dwellest in darkness, hiding away far from the empty rituals of man's failed religion. Take, therefore, this offering, that in time thou mayest come forth from where thou dwellest in the pits of hell, to free mankind from depravity, from disuse, from discontent and bring us the rich rewards that God intends for us.

Another of the hooded figures lifts up one of the chalices of blood, and passes it through the ranks of the others. Each in turn takes a sip of the blood.

Then a loud, deep voice booms out through the church.

DEMON VOICE

I, Azazel, accept thine sacrificial offering, the second of five.
(MORE)

DEMON VOICE (CONT'D)

In time shall I enter the world to
purge away the weak, and thou shalt
be rewarded.

Then all the hooded figures converge around Sheila. They pick up her limbs, and one by one start to take bites.

Sheila, too dazed to fully understand, watches the whole scene play out. Then her eyes roll back for the last time.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Serenity and stillness surround the church. Some birds sing.

A woman walks briskly toward the door, carrying a stack of pamphlets. This is RUTH (50, sharp, well-kept and uptight).

Reaching the church with a set of KEYS, she fumbles at the door...then she pulls to find the doors already unlocked.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Everything is normal and church-like. The cross is rightside-up, the pews are clean and neatly arranged.

REVEREND DAVID (40 and beginning to look paunchy) is already busy, setting out the bible and lighting candles.

He turns to look as Ruth enters. He nods to her.

RUTH

Good morning Reverend. You don't usually beat me here.

DAVID

Actually, I got an early start today, and did something I haven't done in a long time. I went for a run. I felt great, too.

RUTH

That's really wonderful. Now, I'm going to leave the new hymns by the door, so that you can pass them out before the service.

David nods obligingly.

DAVID

You didn't happen to see if my...my wife was on her way yet, did you?

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the simply-furnished little house, LEAH (30, thin, conservatively dressed, sad eyes) is working at an EASEL, applying brush-strokes to a LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

Then there's a knock at the door.

Shaken out of her focus, Leah looks at a clock. Muttering, she stands and runs to the door.

She opens it to reveal SAM, her brother. He is 28, tall, well-built, with a military haircut and a brash presence.

SAM

Hi, sis.

LEAH

Sam, I lost track of time...

SAM

If you didn't want to walk with me you could have just said so. My wife at least is honest about never wanting to go to church.

LEAH

Let me just get my shawl. I'll be right there.

SAM

Can you do me a favor? Your husband asked me to get communion bread, but now thanks to you I'm running late.

Abruptly, Sam hands Leah an empty BASKET.

LEAH

Uh, yeah. I guess so.

SAM

He keeps it in the cellar.

LEAH

In the cellar...

SAM

I hate missing the first hymn so I gotta run. I'll see you there, Leah.

Sam turns and runs off. Leah stares blankly at the basket.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Reverend David greets the churchgoers as they come in the door, and hands each one a hymn pamphlet. David is friendly - too friendly. People treat him coldly in return.

DAVID

Good morning, Andrew. Good morning,
Mrs. Bartholomew. A very good
morning to you, Mayor Lately!

The MAYOR (55, plump and self-important) nods politely and walks over to Ruth, holds her hand and sits beside her.

Most of the congregation is made of older folks. Once they are seated, David holds up a pamphlet and begins to sing:

DAVID

*Like Jacob in his Bethel rest,
The angels are looking on me;
They watch my pillow—I am blest,
The angels are looking on me.*

He walks up the aisle toward the pulpit, and all the people join in the refrain:

CONGREGATION

*All night, all night,
The angels are looking on me;
All night, all night,
The angels are looking on me.*

Sam comes in last, visibly frustrated that he's late.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Leah opens the cellar door, basket in hand. She breathes heavily, psyching herself up.

She reaches upward and pulls on the string of a LIGHTBULB, which casts a soft yellow light through the cellar.

Leaving the door cracked behind her, she starts to go down the stairs, step by step. The stairs creak.

The door behind her is caught by a breeze, and clicks shut.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Leah looks at the various shelves, full of canned foods and five-gallon buckets.

Putting on a brave face, she starts to softly hum the tune to the angels song that is being sung at the church.

She sees that one of the buckets is labeled "FOR COMMUNION." She breathes deeply and goes toward the bucket.

Behind her, the LIGHTBULB starts to flicker. She sighs, as if she expected this. She opens the bucket full of bread.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

David reaches the front of the church and opens the bible, while everyone keeps singing:

CONGREGATION

*Each night I lay me down to sleep,
The angels are looking on me;
I know I'm safe, for angels keep,
The angels are looking on me.*

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Still humming the tune, Leah lifts a couple handfuls of the bread into the basket she's holding.

Suddenly she hears a MAN'S VOICE humming the tune in unison with her. She looks up. Her forehead is beading with sweat.

The voice is coming from a dark corner of the cellar.

Leah stops humming, and the voice stops too. When she resumes humming, the voice picks up again with her.

LEAH

No. No. Please no.

The light flickers. The figure of a MAN emerges faintly in the corner. Then the light goes out.

All that can be heard is Leah breathing fast, panicking.

LEAH

No! Get away. Let me out!

We hear Leah's footsteps running up the creaky stairs, and then the sound of her falling with a thud.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The congregation are finishing up the hymn, as David stands at the pulpit.

CONGREGATION

*All night, all night,
The angels are looking on me.*

DAVID

Good morning, everyone. Today I will talk about angels, their various appearances in the bible, and the many reasons they may come to visit our world. In Job, we learn that the angels were created long before man came into being, and what's more, they can experience joy, as we do. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: 'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? While the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?'"

David's preaching is stilted and awkward. Public speaking is not his best skill. Some of the old folks in the pews glare at him. Some yawn.

The Mayor glances around, bored. He sees FRED (60, balding) asleep in a pew. The Mayor and Ruth share a frustrated look.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The door opens, and the cellar fills with light. A woman enters and starts walking down the stairs with a FLASHLIGHT.

This is MICHAELA. She is around 35, though her age is hard to guess. She has an aura of mystique; her mood is always unreadable.

MICHAELA

Leah?

Leah comes to. She's lying at the foot of the stairs, with a gash in her forehead where she hit the floor. She starts to panic and hyperventilate again.

LEAH

Get off me. Get off me!

MICHAELA

Shhh! Leah! It's me.

Michaela rushes down the stairs and puts her hands on Leah's shoulders firmly but gently.

MICHAELA

Look at me. Tell me your name.

LEAH

I'm...Leah Darning.

MICHAELA
And who am I?

Leah's breathing finally calms down. She even smiles.

LEAH
Michaela...

MICHAELA
You're being silly again, seeing
things that aren't really there.

Leah sits up quickly. Pulling herself together, she wipes her eyes and picks up the basket of spilled bread.

LEAH
You're right. It's stupid.

She stands up, rushes up the stairs and out the door. Michaela walks after her, and calmly switches off the light.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The service is over. The people stream out from the church. Many of the churchgoers gather to chat in the parking lot.

David comes out last, with Leah. She is holding a towel against her head. David talks in a hushed, agitated tone.

DAVID
Why didn't you go right to the
doctor?

LEAH
He isn't in his office on the
weekend. I'll be fine til tomorrow.

Sam walks past, alongside the Mayor and Ruth, all pointedly ignoring David. David reaches out to get Sam's attention.

DAVID
Sam, you sent your sister down into
the cellar? You know she...can't go
down there.

Sam stares blankly at David for a moment. Then a realization dawns on him.

SAM
Oh...Leah I'm sorry.

LEAH

It's fine. It's been years since any of that...how could you have known?

Old Fred walks by, and glances at Leah's head wound.

FRED

You hurt yourself, hun? That's just like little Leah. Looking for attention, that one.

Leah glares at him, but chooses to ignore him.

LEAH

I think I'm gonna go home and rest.

As she starts to turn around, two more figures approach the church together. One is Michaela, the other is the SHERIFF (60, tough as nails but world-weary, with a white mustache).

David waves at them. Michaela brightens up and waves back.

MICHAELA

Well there everyone is! I thought that service was *never* gonna end! How much time time you all waste sitting around in a boring old building!

All the old men perk up at the sight of Michaela.

MAYOR

Well if it isn't Mrs. Waters? Good to see you on this fine morning.

Michaela grabs the Sheriff by the hand and moves toward Sam.

MICHAELA

Sam, my lover, I met the Sheriff on my morning walk and he's been telling me some dreadful things. You're looking handsome by the way, dear.

Michaela throws her arms around Sam's neck and kisses him on the mouth. This inspires some looks of jealousy from the Mayor, the Sheriff, and even David.

SAM

What sorts of dreadful things has he been telling you?

SHERIFF

Nothing any of these fine folks
want to hear.

Another bitter old man, JONAH (60), chimes in.

JONAH

Things would be a lot less dreadful
if we got some jobs back. Hell, I
think it's just the Sheriff and the
Reverend still working these days.

MAYOR

Things are gonna change, Jonah.

RUTH

Michaela, a word of advice. I know
you've only been in town a few
months, so you ought to know that
everything Sheriff Hobbs says is
dreadful.

MICHAELA

I'm learning new things every day.

The Sheriff glares at Ruth. The Mayor slaps him on the back.

MAYOR

She's just joking around, Don!

Leah watches the whole scene with a shy smile. Sam looks
back and forth with frustration, feeling left out.

MICHAELA

Maybe you and I can go for a walk
sometime, Mayor, and you can tell
me all the ins and outs of my new
town.

Her manner drifts between flirtation and sarcasm.

The Mayor glances nervously at Ruth, who looks at David.

MAYOR

I'd...yes. That would be wonderful
sometime.

Michaela turns to Leah.

MICHAELA

I did promise the Sheriff I'd bring
him lunch this week. As a sort of
care package for everything he's
got to deal with.

(MORE)

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

And as Sam knows well I can't cook worth a damn...

SAM

Language, Michaela...

MICHAELA

...so you'll help me make dinner for him, won't you Leah?

LEAH

Of course I will.

Michaela smiles and goes back to Sam's side.

MICHAELA

Wonderful! I think it's time we got going.

DAVID

Oh! For anyone who is still here, I'm going to be offering religious counseling. I invite those who are interested to join me in a dialogue about their spiritual lives.

As David has talked, nearly everyone has walked away in an unsubtle show of disinterest.

Only Leah still stands beside him. She smiles wryly, and takes his hand, almost out of duty. David sighs.

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

David, Michaela and Sam sit around the dining room table. Leah is bringing out dishes one by one.

SAM

You know, Reverend, I was thinking... I could give you some, um, pointers.

DAVID

Pointers?

SAM

Talking pointers.

MICHAELA

Ha! If anyone's gonna give talking pointers, it sure ain't gonna be you, ya big oaf.

With a little pout, Sam tries to ignore that.

SAM

All I mean is, I learned a lot from my...from my dad...

DAVID

I see. So you want me to be a preacher who's more like your father?

SAM

Well no. Well yes. Isn't it what people sort of expect at this point?

MICHAELA

Here's a tidbit I hadn't heard before. What sort of preacher was your daddy?

Leah sets down the final platter of food with a thud.

LEAH

We don't need to talk about all that.

Sam nods reluctantly. Leah sits beside David.

DAVID

You're well within your right to think I'm lacking in qualifications. Lord knows I spent my youth drinking, fighting and... But which of us isn't a sinner?

Michaela looks at Sam, sensing his disappointment.

MICHAELA

Well fuck me sideways.

SAM

Language.

MICHAELA

Don't tell me you wanted to be a preacher yourself?

SAM

Doesn't matter.

LEAH

He was so inclined, for a time.

SAM

But things didn't work out that way.

MICHAELA

I'll say. Things worked out quite a lot differently. Haha, maybe if that had worked out, you'd actually have a job right now!

Sam's fist slams on the table, and everyone goes silent.

LEAH

I'm starving. I think it's time to say grace. David?

David puts his hands out.

DAVID

Let's join hands.

MICHAELA

Oh! Can I say grace? Seems to be such an important part of being in this family.

All eyes turn to her.

SAM

Darling...you don't go to church.

MICHAELA

Just because I don't sit around and worship with you all, my words with the big guy upstairs don't count?

SAM

It wouldn't be right.

LEAH

Jesus Christ, Sam. Let her say grace.

Sam looks at David, who nods. Sam pouts and tightly grips his hands together in front of his mouth. Michaela shuts her eyes with exaggerated fervor.

MICHAELA

Lord, Lord Lord. You've done a lot of mean and nasty things to people throughout the history of the world, and you're likely to do lots more.

(MORE)

MICHAELA (CONT'D)
 Give our little family the strength
 to always do what's got to be done,
 in the name of your holy justice.

With these last words she opens her eyes and looks straight at Leah, a subtle smile on her mouth.

MICHAELA
 Amen.

LEAH, DAVID, SAM
 Amen.

Leah keeps her eyes locked questioningly on Michaela, but Michaela is fully engrossed in the food before her.

After a few moments of awkward silence, Michaela looks back up, her eyes wide and her mouth full of food.

MICHAELA
 Was that not a good enough prayer?

EXT. SAM & MICHAELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah and David are preparing to leave, Leah holding a pot full of stew. Sam and Michaela join them outside.

DAVID
 Thank you for having us over.

LEAH
 Are you sure you don't want the
 leftover stew?

SAM
 I would probably...

MICHAELA
 No! You cooked it - it's yours.
 Besides, Sam's getting paunchy. He
 could use some starvation.

Sam looks hurt and a little angry.

LEAH
 Well...goodnight you two.

Leah turns to go, and Sam turns toward the house, but Michaela suddenly grabs David's hand.

MICHAELA

Walk with me a while, Reverend. I'm curious about that spiritual counseling you mentioned.

David looks sheepishly at the others, then shrugs.

DAVID

Alright. Uh, will you be alright heading home, Leah?

MICHAELA

Yes Leah, will you be alright?

Michaela looks at Leah with uncalled-for intensity. Leah just smiles.

LEAH

I'm fine. I'll see you in a bit.

Michaela drags David off into the darkness. Sam looks after them for a moment, frozen in confusion and anger.

LEAH

Goodnight Sam.

Sam goes inside and shuts the door behind him.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah walks into the living room. She takes a moment to pause and consider her PAINTING.

She considers it for a moment...but walks on by.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alone in her room, Leah changes into her nightgown. She yawns, and momentarily holds her hand up to her bandaged head. Then she lays down, and rolls the covers over her.

Her eyes scan the room. She seems apprehensive.

Sighing, she reaches for the LAMP and shuts it off. The room is plunged into darkness.

In silence and blackness she rests for a peaceful moment.

Then...footsteps. *Thump, thump*, somewhere in the house.

LEAH

David?

There's no answer. The footsteps get closer, and the door of the room creaks open.

Leah makes a move to reach for the light switch on the lamp beside the bed...but her covers are pulled down tight around her shoulders and she can't move her arms.

Her eyes go wide and her breathing gets heavy.

LEAH

No...not again. Please no...

She shuts her eyes.

LEAH

I'm dreaming. And I'm waking up in
10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4...

GHOST

Three!

The man's voice is a hoarse whisper from near the bed.

GHOST

Three is the number of angels who
came to Sodom and Gomorrah.

The GHOST materializes, standing by the window and looking out. It's the ghost of REVEREND WATERS (50, intense, angry).

GHOST

They came to warn only one family.
The rest were destroyed. We are in
the midst of a great war; if you
aren't part of God's redemption,
then you're part of the devil's
damnation!

Leah is stuck in her bed, unable to move or cry out. Every time she blinks or turns her head, the ghost appears in a different part of the room, always facing away from her.

LEAH

D...daddy?

The ghost seems to hear her, and he turns his head a little...then vanishes.

Everything is silent for a moment. Leah holds her breath...

Then the ghost's face is right on top of hers! Leering, smiling with a predatory pale face. Leah tries to scream.

Then it's over. In the ghost's place is David, gently trying to shake Leah awake.

DAVID
Leah! Wake up! Wake up!

She looks around. The light is on, and there's no ghost.

DAVID
There you are. Are you alright?

LEAH
Yeah...yeah...

DAVID
It's happening again, isn't it?

Frustrated with herself, Leah sighs and rolls out of bed.

LEAH
I'll walk it off. I'll be fine.

She grabs a sweater, throws on some slippers, and paces out of the house. David watches her helplessly.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Leah wanders through the dark town in her sweater and slippers. She's whistling the tune of a hymn.

She's surprised by Michaela, sitting on a nearby bench.

MICHAELA
Couldn't sleep?

Leah whips around, startled. Seeing Michaela, she smiles.

MICHAELA
I couldn't either. Your brother is one hell of a snorer.

Leah sits beside Michaela without a word.

MICHAELA
We don't spend enough time together, just you and me. Everyone else is such a bore. I like being able to just...be myself.

LEAH
I'm pretty sure I'm a bore too, if we're being honest.

MICHAELA

You? Don't be so hard on yourself.
That's not at all how you find
inner peace or whatever. Want a
cigarette?

Michaela holds out a cigarette. Leah reluctantly takes one.

LEAH

Thanks. David doesn't know.

MICHAELA

He doesn't have to. There are
things he doesn't know about you,
and plenty you don't know about
him.

Michaela lights her cigarette, and then Leah's.

LEAH

Michaela...if he's ever...if he and
you ever...I don't want to know...

Michaela throws her head back and laughs.

MICHAELA

Ha! Him and me?! Haha!

She stops laughing abruptly, then takes a long draw on her
cigarette, almost a suggestive motion. Leah looks confused.

MICHAELA

I think I'm gonna be leaving soon.

LEAH

Leaving?

MICHAELA

Going back, where I came from.

LEAH

But...it's been a few months.
You've been settling in... Does Sam
know?

MICHAELA

Nah. Nobody knows. Except you, now.
How about you? Why don't you leave?

LEAH

Leave Solace? I've always lived
here.

MICHAELA

Sure. You gave it your life, and what has it given you aside from some fucked up night terror ghost shit?

Leah chuckles uncomfortably.

LEAH

Nothing. It hasn't given me anything, but that's okay. I'm still here because, let's be honest, David and Sam would fall apart without me. And if David falls apart, so does his church.

Michaela nods slowly, a grin growing on her face.

MICHAELA

You've just got to always fix things. That's why we get along. So, you're going to see the doctor tomorrow? For your head?

LEAH

Yeah, I guess so.

MICHAELA

Lucky bitch. I'd like a piece of that doctor myself. What? No harm in saying it. You're more his type anyway, than I am. I think he'd go for the young, pretty, shy girls.

She smiles. Leah is completely lost and confused by the whirlwind that is Michaela.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Leah and David sit next to each other in the waiting room of the tiny, rural medical office. They're cordial with one another, but silent and distant.

Footsteps come out from the back room. Fred walks out, speaking to someone still offscreen.

FRED

And just making sure, I should apply the cream twice a day? Thanks Doctor.

Seeing the others in the waiting room, Fred blushes, nods curtly, and walks out of the office.

The doctor steps into the room. It's Simon, the psychopath.

SIMON
Alright. Now I believe Mrs.
Darning, you're next! Come on back.

Leah nods to her husband.

LEAH
You can come back with me.

Leah follows Simon, and David follows.

INT. MEDICAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

While Leah sits on the bed, Simon applies some ointment to her head. David stands in the corner of the room, patiently.

SIMON
Took a pretty nasty fall, did you?

LEAH
In our cellar. Tripped and fell
down some stairs.

SIMON
I see. You didn't call me when it
first happened?

DAVID
She didn't want to bother you on
your day off.

SIMON
Well, it is always a pleasure to
see you, so you should feel
comfortable calling me any time,
day or night if you need me.

He switches to another bottle of ointment and starts applying it to the wound.

DAVID
And there was something else...

Leah shakes her head at him, and mouths the word "no."

SIMON
Yes? If it's health-related, it
can't hurt for me to know about
it...

David steps forward and blurts out:

DAVID
 She's having some difficulty
 sleeping, too.

Leah looks at him angrily.

SIMON
 Difficulty sleeping? Insomnia? Or
 wait...you shouldn't have to remind
 me...you used to have the night
 terrors, didn't you?

LEAH
 Mostly when I was much younger.
 Since then it's been sporadic, at
 best.

Simon reaches for a thermometer and puts it in Leah's ear.

SIMON
 Well, night terrors are often
 associated with stress, fatigue and
 fever. And...we can rule out fever.

LEAH
 It's not...it's none of those
 things.

Simon thinks for a moment.

SIMON
 Well...I don't want to speak out of
 turn, but I can refer you to a very
 good psychologist.

DAVID
 Psychologists are snake oil
 salesmen. They won't solve anything
 that God can't solve through
 prayer.

Simon looks at David with giddy disbelief, but Leah focuses
 on Simon.

LEAH
 What do you think, Doctor?

SIMON
 We've been friends for a long, long
 time. I've treated your brother.
 His skull has several old
 fractures. We all remember old
 Reverend Waters, in our own ways...

Simon says that last part with a hint of vengeful anger.

LEAH
What about it?

SIMON
Abuse...can lead to a lot of things. I do recommend a psychologist, but I'm also more than happy just to talk if it will ever help.

He smiles and softly touches her hand. Leah smiles a little.

DAVID
Can you help her to sleep better?

Simon goes over to a notepad on the counter.

SIMON
I'll write a prescription for something that'll help you sleep. I'll have to be filled in the city, of course.

DAVID
I can drive to get that. I think I have time before my...poker night.

SIMON
If you're in a hurry, the old forest road is actually a shortcut to the highway. It's an awful road and nobody drives out there, but it'll shave about twenty miles off the drive.

He hands over the prescription.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The Sheriff is sitting in his office chair, fast asleep.

There's a knock on his door, then a click of the door opening. He stirs, snorts and stands up.

SHERIFF
Yes? Hello? Who is it?

Michaela and Leah walk inside. Michaela is carrying a large bowl of stew, while Leah holds a cup of coffee.

MICHAELA

Surprise! It's your favorite people
in the whole wide world!

SHERIFF

Oh, Mrs. Waters. Mrs. Darning. To
what do I owe this visit?

MICHAELA

I told you I'd bring you food,
remember? As promised, I convinced
my sister-in-law to cook it for me.

LEAH

I figured it's the least I can do.
Michaela said you were having a bad
time of it lately.

The Sheriff, exhausted, plops back down into his chair as
Michaela sets the stew pot on the desk.

SHERIFF

I guess you could say that.

He digs in to the stew hungrily.

Michaela and Leah watch him for a moment. When he doesn't
seem to notice them anymore, they both turn to quietly
leave. It's a surprise when the Sheriff says something.

SHERIFF

Why just today I went out to talk
to old Mrs. Gunderman. You know Mrs
Gunderman? Works in the pawn shop.
Well her daughter went missing.
Said she was going out to see a
movie with some boy, and didn't
come home. Twenty-five year old
kid. Her name was Sheila. I told
Mrs. Gunderman that things were
gonna be alright, but I think I
lied. That's the third young lady
who's gone missing this month.
Here, in Solace - a town with less
than a thousand people. Folks don't
just go missing like that unless
there's some damn rotten person
around, just snatching them up
and...God knows what. And the other
folks around here, the town
council, the mayor... It's not
their jobs to talk to the mothers
and see them crying like their
hearts are about to break.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

These folks just nod and go about their business. And if they feel the least bit bad about what's going on in this town, they just go to church so they can feel better about themselves. It's been that way as long as I can remember. Ever since your old man, Mrs. Darning, was doing...what it was he did. Nobody did a damn thing. They go to church to learn about hell so that they can forget that hell is right here.

When he's done, he turns back to the stew. Leah frowns. Michaela puts a hand on the Sheriff's back.

MICHAELA

Know that I'm here to help you.

SHERIFF

That's real nice. I appreciate the food.

LEAH

The things you say about the people here...they're not wrong.

Michaela turns and walks out of the room, leaving the Sheriff to the food.

Leah nods politely, and follows Michaela out.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Michaela walks briskly away from the office. Leah runs to catch up with her.

They walk together in brooding silence for a moment.

LEAH

David's out in the city for a couple more hours. Sam said he was gonna go look for a job again. Maybe we can get a coffee?

MICHAELA

I've got a lot to do, and I feel like I'm running out of time.

LEAH

What do you mean, running out of time? Don't tell me you're leaving town already?

MICHAELA

Leaving town? Don't worry. Not yet.

Michaela smiles gently and puts a comforting hand on Leah's shoulder, then strides away, leaving Leah standing alone.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In her living room, Leah once again sits by her easel, paintbrush in her hand.

She stares at it for a long moment. Reaching forward, she paints two small female figures, side-by-side, watching a sunset.

She smiles, and tears well up in her eyes.

Just then there's a noise at the door. David walks into the house from outside, holding a PILL BOTTLE.

DAVID

Sorry. I didn't think it would take so long. There was an accident on the highway. Maybe I should have taken the doctor's shortcut after all. Anyway, I got you the pills.

He sets the pills on a table beside Leah.

LEAH

Thanks for getting these for me.

David gives her a kiss. But they're both distracted.

LEAH

It may be cold by now, but there's casserole sitting on the counter.

DAVID

Oh. Delicious. But, it's Wednesday. Poker night with the Mayor.

LEAH

Right. The week's gone by so fast.

DAVID

You'll be okay, right? Now that you have the sleeping pills?

Leah smiles at him and nods.

David returns the smile, and hurries out the door.

Leah sighs to herself and turns back to her painting.

TIME PASSES

The night grows late. She works on the painting, adding details like trees, ponds, etc.

As it gets late, Leah grows nervous. She shifts uncomfortably in her chair, looking at the dark corners of the house.

She glances at the pill bottle. She shakes her head and pushes it a little farther away from her.

Then she freezes...there's a sound of BREATHING nearby.

Her eyes widen. She stands up slowly, moving sideways until she can see the dining room table in the other room.

At the dining room table, holding a bottle of liquor, sits the Ghost, wearing a tank top. His smile is predatory.

GHOST

There you are. Get in here!

Leah jumps, startled, dropping some of paint supplies on the floor with a crash. She looks down at the fallen pieces.

When she looks up, the dining room is empty. She sets her jaw in angry determination.

LEAH

Shit. Not tonight.

She reaches for the pill bottle, then decides against it. She throws on a jacket and walks out of the house.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Leah walks briskly along through the dimly-lit town. She's looking mostly down at her own feet.

LEAH

Ten years. It's been ten years. Why is he bothering you now? It's just a passing thing. Just a passing...

She looks up as HEADLIGHTS approach. She shields her eyes.

As the car passes and she can see the vehicle more clearly, she spots the Mayor in the driver seat. He glares at her for a moment, then waves.

After the car passes by, she watches after it for a moment. Disbelief fills her eyes, then resentment.

LEAH
Poker night...

She exhales in resignation. Then she turns down a side street and walks faster.

EXT. SAM & MICHAELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah walks briskly toward the house.

She approaches the door and lifts her fist to knock... but there are loud voices coming from inside. An argument.

The voices are muffled, so Leah can't hear any details. Curious, she walks over to one of the windows.

She looks inside, and sees:

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michaela is standing still in the middle of the room, apparently calm. Sam is pacing around her angrily.

SAM
...the flirting! And I never even said anything! I've watched you run your hands all over the mayor and the sheriff and even the Reverend, and talk in that goddamn voice that's supposed to be seductive or something. And you do it right in front of me! You make me look like a stupid idiot! Then you don't even try to understand how important church is to me, but you just mock it. You mock me, you mock God! I know David's sermons aren't all that enlightening, and I'm sick of his mopey bullshit too, but come on!

MICHAELA
What do you want me to say, Sam?

SAM
What do I want you...? Me?
Shouldn't you want to apologize?
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

You...you're the one who got me to fall in love with you and marry you and bring you back here. And now you're just gonna leave me? Do you want to make me look like a fool? Is it all a game?

He pants heavily for a moment, his rage building up. Michaela remains utterly, eerily calm.

SAM

No. You know what? You're not leaving. I'm not letting you leave. If I have to chain you up in this house and bring you food, you're staying here.

Sam is getting in Michaela's face, becoming really physically threatening to her.

EXT. SAM & MICHAELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah watches and listens to the exchange, and starts to panic as it gets out of hand.

LEAH

Sam. Sam you idiot!

She takes a step closer to the window, and raises her hand to bang on the glass...but she stops...

Inside, Michaela looks directly at her, with an eerie grin on her face. Leah keeps her arm raised, frozen in place.

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michaela turns her eyes from the window, and back to Sam.

MICHAELA

Is that how you like your girls? Tied up and kept down? Just like your daddy liked them? Let's be honest, Sam. Me, here, in this town, with you...I've been in chains this whole time. Little bird's got to fly away. What are you gonna do? Cry?

That's it. Sam snaps. He swings his arm around and his fist catches Michaela on the side of the head.

Michaela falls like a sack of potatoes. Before she hits the ground her head - *crack* - catches the corner of a table.

A moment later, she's lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

EXT. SAM & MICHAELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah sees the whole thing.

LEAH

Sam! No!

Her fist finally comes down on the glass. She pounds on the glass repeatedly as she becomes more frantic.

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam is startled. He stands still, staring down at the body.

SAM

Mic...Michaela? Are you alright?

He sees Leah at the window; he's too confused to respond.

He stoops down to the ground, and tries to shake Michaela's head. Then he feels her neck.

SAM

Michaela. Wake up. Come on.

Leah is still banging on the glass. Dazed, Sam stands up slowly and goes to the front door.

He opens the door and Leah hurries in. She runs straight for the body.

LEAH

Michaela!

SAM

She was...she fell and hit her head
on the table...she's okay, right?

Leah holds Michaela's face. The blank stare and the lack of breath are clear signs that Michaela is dead.

Leah's face is wracked with grief and shock.

SAM

No. No. No no no no. This isn't
real. This isn't real.

LEAH

It is, Sam. This is real.

SAM

No no. She fell and hit her head...

LEAH

I saw what happened!

Sam bows his head. Slowly collecting his wits, he collapses into a couch.

Leah sits up, away from the body.

SAM

Don't tell anybody. You won't tell anybody, will you? I don't want to get in trouble.

LEAH

That's what you're thinking about right now?

Sam starts to babble a little bit.

SAM

I...I can't seem to do anything right. I wish they hadn't kicked me out of the army, because then I'd still be someplace else, and I wouldn't have had to deal with...

LEAH

They kicked you out of the army for your temper. Why couldn't you just figure it out then that you're...you're angry!

SAM

I was angry because she...deserved it! She was a real bitch.

Leah stares at the body. The eyes are open, and seem to be looking up at Leah.

Shivering, Leah reaches out and shuts the corpse's eyes.

LEAH

Somebody is gonna find out about this. That's just the way this works.

Sam leaps to his feet, desperate.

SAM

No! Nobody has to find out, you understand? We'll take the body and burn it somewhere, and mop up the blood, and tell people she ran away.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
They'll believe me because everyone
knew she was a fucking...bitch.

Leah stands up and coldly walks over to Sam. She smacks him
in the face, spattering Michaela's blood over his cheek.

But Sam is undeterred. The smack makes him angrier.

SAM
You can smack me all you want. But
you know you've got to help me.

LEAH
Why do I got to help you?

Sam almost can't believe what he's about to say...

SAM
Because you owe it to me. I covered
for you once before.

A change comes over Leah. She's enraged, defensive.

LEAH
You don't get to say that.

Leah smacks him again.

Then she turns around, looks down at the body, and sighs.

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT, A LITTLE LATER

Time has passed. Together, Leah and Sam roll the body into a
rug. Then they each stand at one end of it.

LEAH
One, two, three...

They pick up the rolled rug, and head toward the front door.

EXT. SAM & MICHAELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They carry the body toward Sam's TRUCK, and less-than-gently
set it in the back.

SAM
I don't know where you want me to
take it.

LEAH
Nowhere. Give me your keys.

Sam hesitates.

LEAH
Give me your damn truck keys.

Sam slowly reaches into his pocket, then hands her the keys.

LEAH
It's best you don't know where it
is.

SAM
You don't trust me?

LEAH
You're too stupid to keep secrets.
I'm doing this to save your ass, so
I'm not taking any chances.

Sam nods sheepishly.

LEAH
Don't go to bed until you clean up
the blood. All of it.

Again Sam nods. Leah gets in the driver's seat and drives
the truck away into the night.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Leah sits peacefully in the living room, staring at the
blank canvas in front of her.

There's a knock at the door.

Leah stirs excitedly, but then footsteps come from the other
room. David stomps toward the door.

LEAH
No! Let me get it!

She runs to get to the door before David, and opens it.

INT/EXT. LEAH'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Standing at the doorway is Sam, wearing army camouflage,
with suitcases in his hands.

SAM
Hi sis.

LEAH
Oh my gosh, Sam! You're back!

She throws her arms around his neck before he's had time to put down the suitcases.

SAM

It's good to see you too.

LEAH

I was so worried that the next time I'd see you would be in a casket under an American flag. I'd much rather you come home this way.

David steps out of the door behind them.

DAVID

And all he had to do was punch a commanding officer in the face. Don't mind me. Welcome home Sam.

Sam looks at him angrily. But David holds out a hand. Though reluctant and a little cold, Sam shakes his hand.

SAM

I hear you're about to be ordained. Never thought I'd see the day David became our new Reverend.

From Sam's truck, parked out behind him, another figure approaches, carrying another bag.

DAVID

Who's the lady?

SAM

I know I didn't write about it, but I'd like you to meet...my wife.

LEAH

Wife?

Michaela steps closer, and holds eye contact with Leah.

SAM

This is Michaela. We met...well, it's a funny story how we met. She's really the one who found me.

MICHAELA

Hello, David. Hello, Leah...

END FLASHBACK

INT/EXT. TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Michaela's corpse's head has come unrolled from the rug, and it's bouncing up and down in the truck bed.

Leah drives, her hands clenched on the steering wheel.

The truck passes by the Church. There are lights on in the windows, but Leah is too preoccupied to notice.

She takes a turn onto a rough dirt road, by a sign reading "FOREST ROAD."

The truck rumbles along for a while, going deeper into the middle of nowhere.

Leah tries to stay calm, but her breathing remains nervous.

Headlights appear on the road in front of her.

LEAH

There's not supposed to be anyone
out here...

The two vehicles drive closer to one another. Leah pulls farther to the right to make room on the narrow road.

The vehicles pass one another. In the darkness, Leah can't see who is driving the other car.

As she drives on, she looks in her rearview mirror. The other car has hit its brake lights and stopped.

LEAH

Keep driving. Keep driving.

After a moment, the other car goes on, disappearing into the night. Leah sighs in relief.

EXT. RURAL FOREST - NIGHT

The truck pulls off the road in an isolated field.

Leah gets out of the truck. She opens the truck's tailgate, and grabs a shovel from inside.

Nervously, she walks a little way off from the truck, finds a patch of dirt and weeds, and starts digging.

EXT. RURAL FOREST - NIGHT, A LITTLE LATER

A little time has passed, and the hole is a few feet deep. Leah is covered in dirt and sweat.

She goes back to the truck and grabs the rolled rug.

As she strains to get the rug out of the truck, it falls to the ground, unrolling. The body flops out onto the ground.

Startled, Leah falls backward with a shriek.

The body lies on the ground, its eyes open. It seems to be looking at Leah again.

Panicking, Leah stands up and grabs hold of the corpse's arms. She drags the body toward the hole she's dug.

As she drags the body, its eyes hang open, still looking at her. Leah doesn't stop; she keeps dragging, anxiously.

She gets the corpse to the hole, and rolls it in.

Just as the body is about to roll over into the ground...its hand GRABS hold of Leah's arm.

LEAH

Shit!

Leah pulls back.

The body lifelessly rolls into the ground.

Leah sits on the ground for a moment, recovering her senses.

LEAH

Not real. Not real.

Then she stands, grabs the shovel, and fills in the hole.

Michaela's eyes are still open, watching Leah as she covers the corpse with dirt.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN

The sun breaks over the horizon, lighting the little town.

The church can be seen in the distance, quiet and deserted.

INT. TRUCK (MOVING) - DAWN

Leah keeps her eyes aimed straight ahead. She's dazed while she drives back down the main road.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens and Leah walks in, still covered with dirt from head to toe. She doesn't seem to care. She plods through the house, leaving dirt behind her where she steps.

As she passes the pill bottle sitting on a table, she picks it up, looks at it.

She glances at the painting, but ignores it and walks by.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leah looks down at the bed - David is there, asleep, spreading himself over the whole bed.

With some disgust Leah looks at him for a moment, then walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Leah stands in the shower, the water flowing brown down to her feet.

She holds the bottle of sleeping pills in her hand.

Thoughtfully, she opens the bottle and swallows one of the pills. Then she opens her mouth to let in shower water to wash it down.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leah goes back into her bedroom, now wearing her nightgown.

She sighs when she looks at David. She pushes him out of the way and lays herself down on the edge of the bed.

She rubs her eyes and wipes away a tear. Then her eyes shut.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Her eyes open. She seems a little bit confused.

She rolls over, and sees that David isn't there.

She stands up, groggy and dazed.

INT. LEAH'S KITCHEN - DAY

She makes her way out into the kitchen. There she sees David, sitting at the table, reading a newspaper.

He sees her and his eyes brighten. He makes the effort to actually stand up from the table.

DAVID

Darling! You're awake! I didn't want to bother you at all, but I couldn't help worrying.

Leah glances at the clock on the wall. It reads 10:30.

LEAH
I didn't sleep all that long. I
came in late. Or, early.

DAVID
Yes. Yesterday.

Now Leah is even more confused.

DAVID
It's Friday. Have you ever slept
that well? You must have needed it.
Did you have any...dreams?

LEAH
No.

DAVID
Must've been those pills. Never
thought they would work so well!

LEAH
Yeah...yeah that must've been it.

She stares aimlessly off into the distance, lost in thought.

The camera wanders over to the painting, and focuses on
something that has changed... Instead of two female forms
watching the sunset, now there is only one.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. LEAH'S BATHROOM - DAY

Leah dips her makeup brush, and raises it to her face.

Looking in the mirror, she sees that she's done an awful
job. The colors are too bright on one cheek, and the
eyeliner is smeared. Leah sighs and tries to fix it.

As she looks in the mirror, Michaela walks up behind her.

MICHAELA
You're no good at that.

LEAH
No, I'm really not. Guess I don't
have many occasions to practice.

Michaela approaches, takes the brush in her hand and starts
fixing the makeup on Leah's face.

MICHAELA
What's the occasion now?

LEAH
Church.

MICHAELA
Isn't that an every-week thing?

LEAH
Today's David's first time
preaching. He's wanted this for so
long, and today's his big day.

MICHAELA
Well, good for him. You think he'll
be any good at it?

LEAH
That's not really for me to say.

MICHAELA
Sure it is. See, I think everyone's
got church all wrong.

LEAH
How do you mean?

MICHAELA
People think it's all about what a
higher power's got to say, through
a book or a preacher or whoever.

LEAH
Isn't it though?

MICHAELA
Honey, pucker your lips. Church is
about being told exactly what you
want to hear, or else why would you
go? Your husband's new job isn't
telling people what the Lord's word
is - it's trying to figure out what
they want God's word to be. Does
church control the people, or do
people control the church?

She turns Leah around to face the mirror.

MICHAELA
Look at you. You could almost be an
angel.

Leah smiles as she looks at herself in the mirror.

LEAH
I'm no angel.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It's deep in the past.

CHILD LEAH (13), sits in the pew beside CHILD SAM (12).

Around them, all the middle-aged churchgoers are fervently praying, trembling, occasionally shouting along.

Reverend Waters is the one preaching. He's fiery, loud, sharp, effective. Every word he says elicits a response.

REVEREND WATERS
Who among us can be counted in the Lord's army? Who among us is worthy to be like one of his angels? He gave us free will and with it we've chosen filth! We've chosen depravity! Shall we continue to be sinners like all the others out there who wallow like lazy swine in comfort and sloth, who talk about God's love and never his punishment? No! We will take into our own hands his justice, and his fire, and with it we will build up his kingdom into one where we will all earn our eternal place!

Child Leah sighs. Even at so young an age, she sees through her father's performance. She seems bitter.

She looks at her brother beside her. Child Sam is invested in the sermon. Child Leah sees a bruise on his eye and a scar on his chin, and she frowns.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Leah sits in the pew, her eyes focused dead ahead. The scar on her head is healing.

David's sheepish style is in sharp contrast to old Reverend Waters'. The church is about half-full.

DAVID
Today I want to study a passage that's a favorite of mine.
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Hebrews 13, where St Paul tells us: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters." That of course should be self-explanatory. Then he says: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

Leah suddenly becomes aware of what David is saying.

LEAH

What did you just say?

All eyes turn toward her. David smiles kindly.

DAVID

Paul says to "show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

Leah nods at him, a little embarrassed.

DAVID

Where was I..."Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the..."

David looks guilty, and goes red in the face. He looks up into the congregation, and briefly locks eyes with Ruth...

DAVID

Again, that one's pretty self-explanatory, isn't it? Next...

EXT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - EVENING

A hot dog roasts on a barbecue grill, oozing and dripping grease. The Mayor is roasting the hot dogs.

On the front lawn of the house, there is a small gathering. Ruth, David and Leah are there, among a dozen others.

FRED

Remember the year of the big forest fire? Almost hit the town?

MAYOR

I do remember the fire. Every man in Solace went out with a shovel and we dug out a trench. Saved the town.

FRED

Don't see that kind of courage anymore in young people, do we?

RUTH

Doesn't compare with the tornado.

MAYOR

Oh yes. The tornado.

RUTH

Uprooted the town hall. Plucked it right out of the ground.

FRED

We had to rebuild it from scratch. It took us what, a week, maybe?

MAYOR

Then of course the flood hit that same year.

David finally sees his chance to butt into the conversation.

DAVID

The flood - I remember that! Did anyone else think it would be a good idea to float on a mattress down West Pine Hill Street? It was a lot of fun for about five seconds, before I realized mattresses don't float!

David laughs at his own story, but nobody else is humored.

FRED

No.

MAYOR

I believe I was busy sealing up the church. With Reverend Waters.

Leah, a disposable cup full of beer in her hand, wanders to the middle of the gathering, finding herself in between all the conversations and isolated from them.

She is zoning out, completely lost in thought. The voices echo around her without much meaning.

She looks into her cup of beer. In the reflection, it almost looks as if there is a woman standing beside her... She turns around. There's nobody next to her.

Instead, she finds herself looking at her husband. David is chatting with a woman (ISABEL, 40) from his congregation. While he talks, he slips his hand onto Isabel's shoulder.

Leah shakes her head to consciously ignore what she sees.

Behind Leah, looming over her shoulder, a figure resembling Michaela appears standing behind her for a moment. The figure reaches out her hand for Leah's shoulder...

Leah turns around again. No Michaela. But instead, Leah finds herself focused on a whispered conversation taking place between the Mayor, Ruth and Jonah.

Turning again, she focuses on Fred, who is shamelessly staring at Leah, his mouth hanging open with an angry glare.

Behind Leah again, the ghostly figure of Michaela appears, reaching out for her shoulder...

Leah turns around as a hand does fall on her shoulder. But it's the hand of the Sheriff.

Leah intakes a quick breath, a little startled.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Darning, I'm sorry. Didn't think I'd startle you like that.

LEAH

It's...it's nothing.

SHERIFF

How are you holding up?

LEAH

I'm alright.

SHERIFF

I was driving by and saw you here and...I already told your brother, but I figured I should tell you too that I've been doing everything I can to figure out what happened to your sister-in-law. I've sent her picture out to a few other departments. It's been less than two weeks - if she shows up anywhere within a hundred miles, I'll know about it.

LEAH
Of course. Thank you, Sheriff.

SHERIFF
I know you two were good friends. I hope Sam's right and she just...ran off.

Leah nods.

SHERIFF
Well, have a good Sunday.

The Sheriff tips his hat and walks off, ignoring everyone else in the crowd.

Leah's eyes go wide. Her calm demeanor vanishes and a panic starts to rise. She tosses her cup away in a nearby trash can, puts her hands in her pockets, and stomps away.

Fred had overheard the Sheriff. He turns to David.

FRED
Is it true that Michaela bailed on Sam and left town?

DAVID
Unfortunately it's true, I'm afraid.

FRED
Shame. She was a...

He mouths the words "hot piece of ass."

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Leah walks through the park, as the sun sets.

She's surprised to see Simon there, sitting alongside Sam. Sam is smoking a cigarette.

Simon waves at her.

LEAH
I was wondering where you got off to.

SAM
Just needed time alone.

SIMON

It's a rough time for you guys. I wish there was more I could do to help than offer my emotional support.

LEAH

Thank you. You're a good friend.

SIMON

How have you been sleeping?

LEAH

Better, actually.

SIMON

The pills are working?

Leah nods, though she looks doubtful.

SAM

That must be nice.

Sam takes a spiteful drag on his cigarette.

LEAH

What?

SAM

Getting a full night's sleep. Glad you're feeling good about yourself.

Leah looks at him with panicked concern.

LEAH

What are you talking about?

SAM

Everything's falling apart. Everything. But I think I figured out when it started: when your fucking husband started preaching.

LEAH

What does that have to do with...anything?

SAM

We all rely on the preacher. Don't you get it? If he's weak, we all end up falling apart. Whatever else dad was, he wasn't weak. If I'm a mess it's because I'm not getting what I need in church.

LEAH

So with dad, you were getting what
you needed?

Sam leaps to his feet, looking violent and confrontational.

Simon stands up and wraps his arms around Sam's shoulders.

SIMON

Take it easy, big guy. Remember
what I said about letting your
temper get the better of you. Let's
walk it off.

He walks away, keeping a firm grip on Sam's shoulders.

SIMON

Leah, I'm glad you're doing better.
Have a good night.

They walk off into the darkness. Leah looks after them
angrily, then turns and goes her own way.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah storms into the house and slams the door behind her.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leah crashes straight into bed, not bothering to undress.

She reaches for the pill bottle on the nightstand. It's no
longer full of pills, but there are plenty left.

She stares at it for a moment, shaking it slowly in her
hand. She whispers a hymn:

LEAH

*They watch my pillow—I am blest,
The angels are looking on me.*

She puts the pill bottle back down on the nightstand, then
rolls over and shuts her eyes.

She stirs a few times...she opens her eyes to check the dark
corners of the room...but everything is quiet.

With a peaceful smile on her face, she drifts off to sleep.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL FOREST AT SUNSET - EVENING

The dream is nearly identical to Leah's painting; Leah is
sitting by herself, overlooking a gorgeous landscape, with a
soft wind blowing through her hair.

She turns to look beside her. Michaela is approaching from over a field of grass. Leah smiles.

LEAH
I thought you'd be here.

Michaela opens her mouth to say something...but a man's voice comes out...David's voice.

MICHAELA
(*in David's voice*)
Leah. Are you asleep?

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leah wakes abruptly. Frustrated, she rolls over to see David has come home and laid down in bed beside her.

DAVID
If you're awake, I wanted to see if you felt like talking...

LEAH
I was asleep.

Curtly, she rolls over again, nestling against her pillow.

DAVID
Oh. I'm sorry. Did you take a pill?

LEAH
Sure.

DAVID
Okay. Well, goodnight.

He looks at her with longing. She ignores him, and shuts her eyes again to find sleep.

Sadly, David himself lies down.

Leah's face goes lax as she again falls asleep...

EXT. BEAUTIFUL FOREST AT SUNSET - EVENING

Again, she finds herself in the forest, looking at a sunset. She turns to see Michaela approaching her.

LEAH
I thought you would be here.

Michaela smiles, then moves directly in front of Leah and sits down. They're now face-to-face.

MICHAELA

I wouldn't leave you alone, would I?

LEAH

I didn't know quite what to think.

MICHAELA

How are things in that little town where you live?

LEAH

Worse, without you. But it was always bad. It's like everything and everyone is broken. Everyone's angry and pretend they're not, and everyone keeps secrets from each other.

Michaela puts her hands on Leah's shoulders.

MICHAELA

Dear, don't forget you're keeping secrets of your own. But you don't have to worry for much longer. Here, with me, you're safe. I'm just going to need you to trust me.

Leah smiles.

LEAH

Why wouldn't I trust you?

MICHAELA

There's something I've got to do.

The scenery suddenly changes... Behind Leah appears a CELLAR DOOR. It's identical to the one at home.

LEAH

What are we doing here?

MICHAELA

Trust me...

Michaela gently but with superhuman strength pushes Leah backward toward the cellar. The door swings open on its own.

LEAH

No! Please, Michaela, I can't go in there!

Firmly Michaela pushes Leah into the darkness.

The last thing Leah sees is the haunting silhouette of Michaela standing outside the door.

LEAH
Michaela!

MICHAELA
Sshhh. It's okay. He's not here.
You'll be safe.

Then the door shuts.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leah's eyes open. The look in her eyes is cold, lifeless...this is no longer Leah.

She quietly pushes herself out of the bed. David, beside her, is softly snoring and doesn't notice anything.

Still in her daytime clothes, Leah moves with trance-like steps out of the room.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah walks silently. She reaches the painting. Looking at it with no expression in her face, she grabs a paintbrush and makes a small adjustment to the painting.

Then she glides out of the house, shutting the door without a sound behind her.

INT. DREAM CELLAR - NIGHT

Leah sits at the top of the stairs in her dream, banging on the door of the cellar.

LEAH
Michaela, are you there? I don't
want to be here!

She keeps banging on the door, with no answer. Fearfully she looks down into the darkness at the foot of the stairs.

Finally she stands up, reaching for the lightbulb. She pulls the cord. The light turns on.

The bottom of the cellar fills with light. Instead of a dark storage area, she sees a brightly-lit room full of paint and paintbrushes. In the center stands a massive EASEL.

Awestruck, Leah walks down the stairs and wanders through the colorful room. A hint of a smile appears on her face.

She sits down in a stool, and stares wide-eyes at the easel. Then she suddenly remembers where she is, and she turns around to look back at the stairs leading up.

LEAH

No. You can't trap me like this.

She storms up the steps and, with her full force, slams herself against the door.

LEAH

Let me out! Why am I here? What are you doing??

With one final, powerful slam, she manages to break the door open. She pushes it outward and steps out into the light...

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Leah's eyes blink, and a confused expression appears. She's awake. She looks around, frightened.

She's standing squarely in the middle of the church. None of the lights are on, and she's alone.

She leans on one of the pews, catching her breath.

After she regains her composure, she runs out of the church.

INT. LEAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah hurries into her house, and crosses the living room.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She reaches her bed, and lays down as softly as she can, trying not to disturb David.

But David too is awake. He turns over, concern in his eyes.

DAVID

Leah? Where did you go?

LEAH

No need to worry. I was just out for a walk. Go back to sleep.

He frowns, and rolls over.

Leah too rests her head on her pillow, looking off into the darkness of the room.

She shuts her eyes for a few moments.

Then she opens her eyes suspiciously.

Sure enough, standing in a dark corner of the room...Michaela, watching her.

Leah keeps her eyes open, unwilling to shut them.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Leah walks through the town's small store, filling up a handbasket with groceries.

She passes a woman in one of the aisles: Isabel.

LEAH
Good morning Isabel.

Isabel glares at her and doesn't respond.

Leah appears hurt by the cold reception. She looks around at others in the store. From across aisles and behind shelves, it seems like everyone is looking at her coldly.

She reaches onto a shelf for a box of cereal. As she removes it, she quickly intakes a sharp breath: the face of Michaela looks back at her from the aisle on the opposite side.

Leah drops her basket, sending her food items scattering.

A few other shoppers stand around staring, none making a move to help her out.

As Leah recollects herself, the vision of Michaela vanishes.

LEAH
Shit. Come on, Leah.

She bends down to start picking up the mess. As she puts things back into her basket one by one, someone reaches down and helps her. It's Simon.

SIMON
Here. Here.

LEAH
Oh...you don't need to...I don't know why I'm such a disaster today...

SIMON
Don't beat yourself up. Everybody's made a mess in a store at some point. Deep breaths. Take deep breaths.

Together they finish cleaning up everything and putting it back in the basket. Leah forces a smile.

LEAH

Thanks.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Leah walks alongside Simon. They exit the front door of the market, Leah carrying a paper bag.

SIMON

How are things at home?

LEAH

Nothing's ever easy. But we're making it through. Sam...and David and me.

SIMON

I didn't really think Michaela would stick around.

LEAH

What do you mean?

SIMON

Outsiders never stay, just like the people born here never leave. And that just means nothing ever changes.

LEAH

I guess not.

SIMON

I'm probably overstepping by saying this...but I continue to be shocked and outraged at how everybody still treats you, after all this time.

LEAH

Yeah, well. People hold onto things.

SIMON

Small-minded people. Both of us are surrounded by small-minded people.

LEAH

It does make me so...tired sometimes.

SIMON

You and I...we went through a lot
back then. Don't carry it with you.

She can only shrug and give him a bitter smile.

SIMON

Some advice. Don't try to be like
other people. Embrace the
difference. Have fun with it.
That's how I've kept myself halfway
sane. Halfway.

She smiles at her reassuringly.

SIMON

This is my street. I'll catch up
with you later, huh Leah?

LEAH

Yeah, alright. Thanks again,
Doctor.

SIMON

Why the titles? When did I stop
just being your buddy Simon?

LEAH

Simon.

He takes a side street to his office. Leah keeps walking.

INT. LEAH'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah, David and Sam sit around the dinner table. They're
eating quietly, and the mood is a somber one.

DAVID

Can you pass the salt, Sam?

Sam does, sullenly.

Leah clears her throat, smiles, and then addresses Sam.

LEAH

Any job leads, yet?

SAM

There's nothing left.

LEAH

I, um, I ran into Doctor Simon
today.

(MORE)

LEAH (CONT'D)

I only mention it because it made me think about how glad I am you've gotten to be such good friends.

Sam grunts.

SAM

I guess. He's smart. Helps me think about things. I've been doing a lot of thinking.

They eat in silence a moment more. David clears his throat, tilts his head, and becomes a little bit confrontational.

DAVID

What kind of thinking? You looked at me when you said that. I have to assume it's about me.

SAM

Not everything has to be about you.

Leah again intervenes with a forced smile.

LEAH

Is anyone in the mood for apple pie? I think it's done now. Smells good.

Sam hits the table.

SAM

Alright! You're a coward, and you're a phony. Why should anyone bother going to church, if you're just gonna skim the surface, telling us what we already know about the bible? People want to be challenged! Engaged! You're supposed to be a goddamn general in God's army, not a Sunday school teacher!

LEAH

Yeah. I'll go get the pie.

David glances at the clock.

DAVID

I don't have to listen to this. I have my poker game at the Mayor's.

SAM

And we all know goddamn well that
the Mayor would never invite you to
no poker night!

Silence. Leah shuts her eyes, in silent frustration.

At the same moment, both Sam and David grab their coats.

DAVID

I'm going.

SAM

I think we shouldn't have these
family dinners anymore. Are we even
a family, anyway?

Leah throws the apple pie onto the ground. It shatters,
sending sticky pie filling all over the floor.

LEAH

I don't care what people think
about in church, or how much money
this town is losing, or how much
people like us or don't. We've got
to be a family. We've had more than
our share of problems, but we're
all we have.

Sam and David look at her, guilt on their faces.

But Sam grunts, shrugs, and stomps out of the house.

David looks at Leah a moment more, and sighs.

DAVID

I think to be a family is what we
all want. We just never all want it
at the same time or in the same
way.

He leaves the house now, too.

Leah grimaces, and sets her jaw in an angry expression.

She looks down at the mess of pie on the floor.

LEAH

Fuck it.

She steps over the mess and heads toward her bedroom.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leah strips to her underwear and lies down on the bed. She wears a resolute expression: she's resolved to face down whatever the night should bring.

She reaches for the pill bottle, and throws it across the room, out of reach.

She lays on her back, staring at the ceiling. She breathes deeply and rhythmically, finally shutting her eyes...

EXT. BEAUTIFUL FOREST AT SUNSET - EVENING

Leah looks around in her dream world. The wind softly blows through her hair. She smiles a little.

Behind her stands the cellar door, waiting for her.

Michaela appears at her side, a gentle look on her face.

MICHAELA

I knew you'd come back.

LEAH

Being awake out there is worse.

Michaela makes a gesture, and the cellar door opens.

MICHAELA

There'll come a time when we can spend this time together. But now there's something I've got to do.

LEAH

What's it all for?

Michaela just smiles. Leah nods reluctantly, and walks down freely into the cellar.

MICHAELA

I made this place for you. For now.. You'll be safe here.

Michaela shuts the door, leaving Leah in darkness.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Her eyes open. Once again, she's sleepwalking.

She rises out of the bed and silently leaves the room.

EXT. LEAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In only her undergarments, Leah leaves the house. In bare feet she steps onto the street.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Leah drifts past the doctor's office. She stops near the window, staring inside with a zombie-like blankness.

There are no lights on and nobody is around.

Leah moves on.

EXT. SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

This house is unidentified as of yet but belongs to Simon.

Leah walks over the driveway. There is no car parked there.

As before, she stands near the window, staring inside.

The lights are off and there's nobody to be seen.

Leah moves on.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Leah walks ghostlike toward the church.

There are lights on inside, and faint sounds of voices.

Seeing this, the sleepwalking Leah nearly smiles, and her eyes become a little more focused and sentient. She walks closer to the church and stands by a window.

The windows are covered so she can't see anything inside, but Leah stands there anyway, blankly listening.

INT. DREAM CELLAR - NIGHT

Leah once again finds herself in the colorful paint room.

She sighs in resignation, and sits down in the stool.

She dips the paintbrush. After just a few brush strokes, she has painted a magical, otherworldly beautiful landscape.

When she turns her head to look around...she sees that she's in this very magical landscape, the wind again blowing through her hair. She smiles to herself.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Sleepwalking Leah paces slowly down the street. At various storefronts and houses she stops, stares, and moves on.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

She finds herself in front of the Sheriff's office.

Again she goes through the motions: she stops, stares...

INT. DREAM CELLAR - NIGHT

Leah finishes yet another dream painting, once again changing the setting around her.

Suddenly her whole world shakes violently.

A loud male voice resonates through the room with a boom.

She's once again in the cellar filled with paints. She whips her head around to see that the cellar door has flown open.

A harsh, violent wind pulls Leah toward the door.

LEAH

I want to stay! I want to stay!

She fights against it, but it's no use.

She's pulled out the door.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The sheriff shakes Leah awake.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Darning! Wake up or you're gonna freeze to death!

Leah's eyes become fully awake and sentient. She looks around with some disappointment.

SHERIFF

There...there you are. You gave me a fright, looking out the window and seeing you like this.

LEAH

Oh...I guess I was sleepwalking.

SHERIFF

Yeah, no shit.

The sheriff chuckles, then quickly averts his eyes from her mostly-bare body.

Awkwardly, he takes off his jacket and drapes it around her.

SHERIFF

Really though, you better get home
or you're gonna get sick.

LEAH

I'm so sorry. I'd been sleeping so
well lately. This is...this is new.

SHERIFF

Here, I'll drive you home. Come on.

He leads her toward his car.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

The sheriff drives while Leah sits in the passenger seat.

Leah stares straight ahead, thoughtfully.

She glances into one of the rearview mirrors...she gets a
look at the back seat of the car. Michaela is sitting there.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. SAM & MICHAELA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

It's a family dinner when Michaela was still alive.

David and Sam dig hungrily into heaping portions of apple
pie. Michaela and Leah watch with satisfaction.

SAM

It's...it's really good, Michaela.

MICHAELA

Don't thank me. Thank the cook.

Leah blushes.

David reaches for a second helping.

DAVID

I'm going to have to go for a walk,
myself, or it's not going to do any
favors for my expanding midriff.

SAM

You can say that again.

Sam and David give each other a stink eye.

MICHAELA

Speaking of going for walks...
strangest thing. The other night -
I think it was Wednesday, I saw
lights on in the church. I didn't
know you had night services, David.

SAM

Night services?

DAVID

No. There's no night services.

MICHAELA

Huh. So what do you think it was?

DAVID

I think you must've been mistaken.

MICHAELA

I saw what I saw.

SAM

Could someone else have been in
there?

DAVID

There are only two keys to the
church. I have one, and the other
is Ruth's - Mrs. Lately's...

He trails off, staring at his pie. Then he forces a smile.

DAVID

Neither of us could have been
there. I must have left the lights
on at some point.

Michaela nods slowly, thoughtfully. Almost knowingly.

David quickly changes the subject.

DAVID

I do believe, at any rate, that
this pie is the best in the world.

LEAH

Thank you.

MICHAELA

Do you believe it, or do you know
it to be true?

SAM
Is there a difference?

MICHAELA
A big one.

Everyone looks at each other awkwardly for a moment.

LEAH
Well...it's not actually the best
pie in the world.

DAVID
Well then...I choose to believe it
is. Is that enough?

LEAH
It is.

MICHAELA
Hmm.

DAVID
Hmm?

MICHAELA
Just funny, that most people really
don't know the difference.

Sam scoffs as he stuffs his face with more pie. David looks slightly bewildered, while Leah is thoughtful.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH - DAY

David walks up the aisle as the thin crowd sings a hymn:

CONGREGATION
*To God be the glory, great things
He hath done
So loved He the world that He gave
us His Son
Who yielded His life our redemption
to win
And opened the life-gate that all
may go in.*

David reaches the pulpit and smiles at the gathering. He opens up the bible in front of him.

Something catches his eye. He looks below the bible.

Nestled in a shelf inside the pulpit sits the BOOK, the ancient tome that the cannibal cult read from.

David looks at it with mixed emotions: confusion, fear, anger.

Leah and all the others look up at him expectantly.

David nearly starts to talk several times. Finally he just puts the bible on top of the other book, smiles as well as he can, and continues as if he hasn't seen anything.

DAVID

Faith, hope, and love. Now of course, as we find out in Corinthians that love is the greatest of these three, but I'll get to that in a moment. I'll take these one by one, beginning with faith, and its importance to the Christian life. Is blind faith required of us? For that, let's look to Corinthians once again...

David's voice is shaking a little. Leah can tell that something is wrong, and she looks at him with concern.

Suddenly the Mayor stands up in the congregation. He's holding a small bible of his own.

MAYOR

Read Psalms, 50:21.

David goes silent for a moment, and nods obligingly. He flips through the pages of his bible.

DAVID

Psalms 50, verse 21: "When you did these things and I kept silent, you thought I was exactly like you. But I now arraign you and set my accusations before you."

He looks at the Mayor, expecting an explanation.

DAVID

Was there a reason you bring up this text, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR

Doesn't it sound familiar? We've become comfortable, thinking we know God.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

But will we be ready when he brings his accusations against us?

DAVID

Not sure what you mean.

The Mayor steps out of his pew and walks toward the door.

MAYOR

You heard what I said. I've got no more use for your services, Reverend.

He opens the door and leaves. Ruth looks after him for a moment, then shrugs and follows him out.

A handful of other old folks also stand and walk out.

DAVID

But...I don't understand. Just say what you mean and I'll...I'll...

He frowns. Leah looks at him with compassion.

Unable to say any more, David walks away from the pulpit and goes out the side door.

Leah stands up, ready to chase after him. As she does, she looks out back, through the open main door of the church. She sees and hears the Mayor arguing with Ruth.

RUTH

Did you think it was a good idea, when we're so close? Why spook him? What if he figures it out?

Leah doesn't quite know what to think. She sits back in her pew, at a loss.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah sits quietly beside her painting, staring at it. We can see the slight alteration that she'd made while sleepwalking: there's now a CHURCH in the distance.

David sits on a couch across from Leah.

Then they both begin to talk simultaneously.

LEAH

I wanted to ask you when the last time was...

DAVID
In church today, there was a...

They both pause again.

DAVID
Please. Go ahead.

LEAH
Have you noticed that I've been
sleepwalking?

David thinks about it for a moment.

DAVID
I sleep well, so I haven't noticed
anything.

LEAH
Nothing at all this past week?

David shakes his head, no.

LEAH
Can you keep an eye on me tonight?

DAVID
Sure. I can't promise I'll stay
awake...we can figure something
out.

Beat. David still looks very preoccupied.

LEAH
What did you want to say?

DAVID
In the church today... There was a
book, at the pulpit. But it wasn't
the bible. It was something evil. I
think somebody is trying to send me
a sign that I'm not welcome.

Leah listens with curiosity. She looks beside her; in the
couch, sitting next to her, is Michaela, apparently very
interested in the conversation.

MICHAELA
Had you ever seen this book before?

LEAH
Had you ever seen this book before?

DAVID

No. I shouldn't even have touched it. I opened it, you know. Then I felt weak in the knees, like I'd opened some sort of gate to hell.

MICHAELA

What did you see in the book?

LEAH

What did you see in the book?

DAVID

I only glanced...there were drawings, and there were things written about a fallen angel, coming to our world.

Leah looks beside her. Michaela has vanished. Leah frowns.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leah opens her eyes from a deep sleep.

The room is quiet. She rolls over in bed, to see David sitting calmly beside her, reading a book. He smiles at her.

LEAH

Did I...?

DAVID

No.

He tilts his head to indicate a dusting of FLOUR over the floor around her side of the bed. It's undisturbed.

LEAH

Good.

Seeming a little bit disappointed, she gets out of bed.

INT. LEAH'S KITCHEN - DAY

Leah stands in her kitchen, making breakfast. She stares into empty space, her mind a million miles away.

From outside, she hears the roaring sound of an engine. She looks out the window.

LEAH

What the...

She pauses her food preparation and rushes out of the house.

EXT. LEAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam has his truck pulled up in front of the house. The truck bed is full of personal belongings and boxes.

Leah approaches him.

LEAH
Sam? What's going on?

SAM
I figured it would be alright if I stayed with you for a while.

LEAH
Why would you figure that?

SAM
Still haven't found a job, if you haven't noticed. Can't pay the landlord when nobody's hiring.

LEAH
You got kicked out?

Sam grunts and picks up a box, heading toward the house.

LEAH
Don't you think we should all sit down and discuss this? Maybe see how David feels about it?

SAM
David? Hell, Leah, this is our family's house. Why should you need to clear it with your husband?

LEAH
Because he's the one covering all the bills now.

They glare at each other for a moment. Leah is standing between Sam and the house. Sam rolls his eyes.

Leah looks inside the box he's carrying. There are some women's clothing items inside.

LEAH
Are these...Michaela's things? You still have Michaela's things?

SAM
What am I supposed to do, sell them?

LEAH

Just...don't bring them in here!

She grabs the box from Sam and carries it back to the truck.

SAM

I see what's happening here. You've got your perfect little life and you don't want me to ruin that because everything's so fucking perfect for you all the time and I'm just a big stupid fuck up.

LEAH

Why would you say any of that?

SAM

Don't pretend that's not what everybody thinks. You, and him, and everyone else. Michaela thought it too. I bet the two of you would get together and laugh about me.

LEAH

No! No, that's absolutely...you're out of line, Sam.

SAM

I'm out of line? Who's the one who started all this? If it weren't for you, our family might all still be together, and I'd be the one living in that house, and nobody would be...you know...dead.

LEAH

Don't you dare! You remember what it was like! And if those knocks on the head made you forget, well then I'm the one who's got to carry that memory for both of us!

Both of them pause for a moment. Both are worked up.

They look around. David has emerged from the house, and he's watching them.

Simon steps gingerly out of Simon's passenger seat.

SIMON

I...I swear I'm not eavesdropping. I'm just here to help with the move. He asked me.

The argument is now completely deflated.

LEAH

Go home.

SAM

This is the only home I've got.

SIMON

You can stay with me for a little while, Sam. Just until you get back on your feet.

Sam grunts in Leah's direction.

SAM

I wasn't even asking for very long. Everything's about to change. Soon things are gonna be much different for this town. For everyone.

Then Sam turns and gets back in his driver seat.

SIMON

Go ahead. I'll be right along.

Sam starts the truck and drives away.

LEAH

It's very kind of you, Doctor. Are you sure you want him?

Simon shrugs.

SIMON

It's just Simon, to you. And like he said, he thinks it won't be for long.

Leah nods. David walks up behind her now.

DAVID

Thank you for standing up to him...

LEAH

I'm going for a walk.

She heads off at a brisk pace.

SIMON

Is she alright?

DAVID

I can never tell. Best to leave her alone.

Simon thinks hard for a moment, then walks after her.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Leah walks into the church. With a determined pace, she goes up the aisle to the pulpit.

She gets there and lifts up the bible. Underneath, sure enough, she finds the demonic book.

Curiosity in her eyes, she opens it.

When she reaches the final page, she sees: a roughly-drawn diagram of a horribly disfigured female corpse. Out of the corpse's mouth ascends a demonic figure.

The church door opens again. Leah, startled, shuts the book.

Simon walks into the church.

LEAH

Simon?

SIMON

I always feel weird walking in here. Like I'm about to get struck by lightning. Are you practicing to take over from your husband?

LEAH

Me? No...

She steps away from the pulpit, but not before Simon walks up and sees the book.

SIMON

Huh.

LEAH

Yeah, I don't know what this...David saw it and it spooked him pretty bad.

A rare wave of rage passes over Simon's face.

SIMON

That's...odd. Certainly doesn't look like the usual Christian material. I guess someone must have just...forgotten it.

LEAH

I should get it out of here.

SIMON

I have a friend, in the city, who's a historian. He's got a degree in, I guess, demonological studies, which I suppose is a real thing. I can have him take a look at it.

Leah nods.

LEAH

Okay. That's probably a good idea. I don't know what I would actually do with it. Burn it, maybe.

SIMON

But then, how would you ever find out how it got here?

Leah nods and hands the book over to Simon.

SIMON

Well...that's added to the list of things I didn't expect to be doing today. Walking into church and holding a...demon book.

LEAH

Sorry to ruin your day.

SIMON

Not ruined at all.

He smiles at her.

SIMON

I need to get back to my house before your brother dumps all his belongings in my kitchen.

LEAH

Of course.

Simon walks out of the church, and Leah leans thoughtfully on the pulpit.

EXT. LEAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens and David walks out of the house. He calls out to Leah, who's still inside.

DAVID

I'll say a prayer for you tonight.
I think you'll sleep soundly.

He shuts the door and walks out to his car.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah sits in the living room, contemplating her painting.

LEAH

Yes. Say a prayer at poker night.

She seems unable to move her brush. No changes have been made to the painting.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Still fully clothed, Leah rests her head on her pillow, and shuts her eyes.

Some moments pass. Her sheets rustle as she stirs a little, then she lies still.

Her eyes open. The sleepwalker is back. She rises up from the bed moves noiselessly through the room.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The sleepwalking Leah pauses by the painting to make a change. Then she moves on out of the house.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Leah sleepwalks to the church.

She stops and stares at the doors.

There are lights on inside. Muffled screams can be heard.

Then...the muffled sound of a deep, booming male voice.

Leah doesn't react. She eventually walks away.

INT. DREAM CELLAR - NIGHT

Safely sitting in the cellar full of paint, Leah gazes at the blank easel.

Then smiling, she starts to paint.

The easel is quickly occupied by a female form. It begins to take the shape of Michaela...

EXT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah sleepwalks up the driveway belonging to the Mayor.

There are cars in the parking lot. Leah looks at them for a moment with an empty stare, before she goes toward a window.

She stares inside. All the lights are out.

Leah nearly moves on... Then she sees one light on in the house, in a back room.

Leah glides around the side, toward the back yard.

INT. MAYOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the bed, Ruth is sitting upright, forcefully making love to somebody.

Beneath her, barely covered by the sheets...is David.

DAVID

Oh, dear God...that's good,
that's...

RUTH

Shut up. Shut up!

Ruth slaps him, and David turns his head to the side...

At the window, looking in like a ghost, stands the eerie figure of Leah. David sees it and panics.

DAVID

Oh God!

INT. DREAM CELLAR - NIGHT

Leah continues painting her dream easel.

The figure in her painting has come to resemble Michaela completely. The figure is naked.

Leah smiles when she looks. Then a thought occurs to her...

She paints on a pair of white wings.

She hears a sound like wind behind her. She turns around.

Just behind her in the cellar is Michaela, naked, and wearing white wings.

Leah smiles, then frowns to see that Michaela is grimacing.

MICHAELA
I'm so sorry...

Then...the booming voice of David shakes the whole cellar.

DAVID (O.S.)
I'm so sorry!

EXT. MAYOR'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Leah still stands by the window. She blinks, and wakes up.

David has his pants on but no shirt. He's on his knees in front of Leah, sobbing uncontrollably. Ruth stands behind him impatiently.

DAVID
I'm not here because I want to hurt you. I never want to hurt you. I...I can't tell you how sorry I am that you found out like this. I shouldn't be here at all.

As she snaps awake, Leah slowly begins to realize just what she's looking at. She shares a quick glance with Ruth.

DAVID
Please say something. Just say anything!

RUTH
How did you know he was here, anyway?

A tear falls out of Leah's eyes. She looks around, shocked. Her eyes widen. She takes a step back.

LEAH
I...I didn't want to know. I didn't need to know!

Disgusted and confused, she runs out of the yard.

DAVID
Wait! Please! I'm sorry!

RUTH
Come inside and put your shirt on. Don't be so fucking weepy.

EXT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the front yard, Leah runs past the cars. She recognizes her husband's.

LEAH
You...you...no...

In anger, she punches the top of the car.

Hardly thinking, she reaches into her pocket, and pulls out a set of KEYS.

She opens the car door and gets inside.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Hitting the steering wheel in frustration, Leah screams.

LEAH
Why?! Why, why why? Why do I need
to see this shit?

She puts the key in the ignition and starts the car.

The car backs down the driveway and pulls off down the street.

EXT. RURAL DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

The car rumbles along down the forest road.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Leah looks forward with grim resolve, a few tears running down her cheeks.

EXT. RURAL FOREST - NIGHT

Leah stops the car.

Frantic, she storms off through the woods, toward the small clearing where she'd buried the body.

LEAH
Why? What do you want from me?

When she reaches the patch of loose dirt, she starts digging with her hands, frantically.

After several minutes, she uncovers Michaela's face.

The face is displaying signs of rot. It's covered in worms, and the bone is showing through in a few places.

A few tears fall from Leah's eyes as she displays a range of expressions from smiling to crying.

LEAH

What do you want? Who are you? I didn't want to know the things you keep showing me. I wanted to believe they weren't true. So why? I want to trust you. Can I? Or maybe my brother was right...maybe you're really just a heartless bitch.

A moment passes.

Then...the corpse's eyes open.

MICHAELA

Run.

There's a sound from behind Leah. She turns around.

A light is coming through the woods.

There's a car approaching.

Leah panics. She kicks dirt back over Michaela's face...and then she turns to run, away from the car's headlights.

The headlights stop short of where Leah's car. But the light covers the area where Leah needs to cross to get to the road. She doubles back, going deeper into the woods.

She hides behind a tree, and peers out at the new arrival.

Someone steps out of the car. The silhouette - face unseen - is Simon. He holds a flashlight and walks in Leah's direction. She can't tell who he is.

Leah turns and runs farther away, trying to stay as quiet as she can...but the flashlight keeps coming behind her.

She goes farther, into a dense copse of trees.

She trips over something in the darkness. She lands in a pile of soft things she can't quite see. But when she runs her hands over them she feels where she is...

She's in a pile of dismembered bodies.

She very nearly screams, but stifles it. The flashlight is coming closer.

She rolls herself off the corpses and moves back farther into the woods.

She hides again, catching her breath and trying not to cry, or scream.

The flashlight comes closer. Simon is dragging a plastic bag. He dumps the bag, and a new dismembered body falls out, torso separate from arms and legs.

After dumping the body, Simon turns to leave.

Then Leah, hand over her mouth, lets out a little squeal.

Simon stops. He swings his flashlight around, aiming it toward Leah.

She stays still.

Simon walks slowly closer to her, and closer. The flashlight is about to illuminate the place where she's hiding.

She breaks out and starts to run.

She goes back deeper into the woods, then loops around wide to get back to the road the long way.

The flashlight pursues.

Leah gets to the road. In the darkness, she stumbles into Simon's car, which is parked and turned off.

She rolls and stands up, running to where her own car is hidden a little off the road.

The flashlight is not far behind her.

She jumps into her car, her breaths coming fast and frantic.

She turns on the car.

She hits the gas, and the car shoots forward. She turns it in a wide u-turn.

The figure of Simon ducks behind his own car avoid of the path of the oncoming vehicle. Leah never sees his face.

Then, as her car drives away, Simon steps out into the road, watching with menace as Leah drives away.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Covered in sweat, dirt and tears, Leah catches her breath. She's stunned, wide-eyed, and in a total daze.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah stumbles into the house, still looking like a complete mess.

David is sitting on the couch. His head is in his hands.

DAVID

Leah...thank God. I didn't know if you were come home. I was so worried... Where have you been?

LEAH

It doesn't matter.

DAVID

Can we talk? Or we can talk later. If you'd rather shower and sleep, yeah, we can talk later.

LEAH

It doesn't matter.

David becomes more and more distraught.

DAVID

I know I'm in the wrong. I know...it's rotten, stupid, fucking wrong. But please, I need you now. I've needed you so many times. Can you please give me just a little time, and talk?

Leah looks at her painting. Something unexpected catches her eye: the newly-painted church is on fire.

Leah snickers with a hopeless sense of humor. Then she looks at David.

LEAH

No.

She turns and goes into the bathroom.

David falls back onto the couch, sobbing.

INT. LEAH'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Leah showers off the dirt. She shuts her eyes and sets her jaw in resolved decision.

She steps out of the shower. The mirror over the sink is fogged over. She stares into the mirror.

As if knowing exactly what she'll see, she wipes her hand over it, defogging it.

Behind her...stands Michaela.

LEAH
Goodbye.

Michaela watches her as Leah steps out of the bathroom.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Leah has a suitcase open on the bed. Into it she throws clothes, books, a small amount of money.

David steps into the room just as she shuts the bag.

DAVID
I know I can't convince you to stay. But what can I say to get just one conversation, before you go?

Leah pauses as she picks up the suitcase.

LEAH
Nothing. But it's not because of you. Everything's not about you.

She shoves past him to leave the bedroom.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Leah pauses by her painting. Abruptly she picks it up off the easel and carries it away.

Painting in one hand, suitcase in the other, she leaves the house. David watches her sullenly as she walks away.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Leah stands all along on the lonely train platform, a single track running through.

She taps her foot impatiently, looking up and down the track.

A car pulls up nearby. Simon steps out.

SIMON
Is that you, Leah?

LEAH
Hmm?

SIMON

Your husband came to tell Sam he thought you were leaving town.

LEAH

I'm guessing Sam didn't give a shit.

SIMON

He acted like he didn't. But you know, he does.

LEAH

Does anybody, really? If I leave, nobody will know or care.

Simon approaches the platform.

The track starts to rumble, with the sound of the approaching train.

SIMON

I don't think that's true. I'd know. I'd care.

Leah looks at him and smiles wryly. Then she looks back at the train that's rolling toward them.

SIMON

Let me call my psychologist friend. I can get you an appointment. You can finally talk all this through with somebody who can really help...

LEAH

We've been friends a long time, Simon. You know it's not that simple.

SIMON

Where are you gonna go?

LEAH

I don't know. Just...not here. That's all that matters.

SIMON

Leah. Stay.

Michaela suddenly appears beside Simon.

MICHAELA

Stay.

Leah looks back and forth at both of them.

The train pulls up behind her, braking to a stop.

MICHAELA

Stay.

Leah has had enough. She screams at the vision.

LEAH

I'm done!

Simon is taken aback by Leah's outburst.

SIMON

Oh...okay.

Leah grabs her things and steps onboard the train.

INT. TRAIN (MOVING) - DAY

Leah sits on the train, looking wistfully out the window.

She looks at her own reflection. The reflection looks back. There's no sign of Michaela.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Leah stands at the motel desk, handing over some money.

MOTEL CLERK

That'll be room 13.

He hands her a set of keys.

LEAH

Okay. Um...this is a weird question, but...it wouldn't happen to be a room where anyone's ever reported...seeing things at night, or weird noises, or anything?

The clerk snickers.

MOTEL CLERK

No, ma'am. If you want ghosts, then you'll be wanting room seven.

Leah looks at the clerk with concern.

MOTEL CLERK

I'm joking! To the best of my knowledge this is a haunting-free establishment.

Leah nods and exits the lobby.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Leah sets her things down on the floor of the motel.

With sadness and loneliness in her eyes she looks around.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Leah sits on the toilet. She's highly alert, watching the room's door keenly. But nothing happens.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting on the bed, Leah flips through a phone book.

She finds an ad for a job agency.

She sighs, and puts a bookmark on that page.

She sets the phone book aside, and lays down in the bed.

She reaches out to turn off the light.

She stirs, nestles into the bed, and shuts her eyes.

Then her eyes open. There's a creaking sound.

The bathroom door swings open by itself.

She watches, paralyzed, as the Ghost of Reverend Waters walks stiffly out of the bathroom and over toward the bed.

All is silent except for the soft impact of the ghost's steps on the carpet.

Leah can only move her eyes.

The ghost stops at the foot of the bed, staring vacantly.

LEAH

No...No... Michaela? Are you here?

The ghost's mouth opens, and an unearthly scream comes out, and he utters a fast string of shrieked obscenities.

GHOST

Come here! Bitch! You're a cowardly cunt bitch! Stand up like the lady you are. Take off your clothes. That's right. Why do you think you're worth more than your cunt mother? Come here.

(MORE)

GHOST (CONT'D)

Your brother is next. You're a fucking failure. Fail. Fail. Fail. Stand up. Face down the devil. Why are you running? You need my help to face down the devil. Without me you're nothing. Nothing! The demon'll get you. You need me. You need God. You need me. I'm your God. I'm your fucking God. Kneel!

Leah struggles against her paralysis. Finally she shuts her eyes and whispers.

LEAH

I need you. I need you.

She opens her eyes again.

Behind the ghost stands Michaela. She smiles at Leah. Leah smiles back.

Suddenly the paralysis is broken.

Leah leaps out of the bed.

The ghost leers at her.

GHOST

Bitch! Get down where you belong!

Leah grabs the painting from beside the bed. She picks it up and swings it at the ghost.

LEAH

Get out! Get out!

GHOST

What the fuck do you think you're doing?

Leah continues swinging the painting. It actually connects with the ghost, impacting him and knocking him back.

Michaela smiles...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

We see a little girl - Child Leah. Her dress is torn, and she's swinging a crowbar angrily at Reverend Waters, who's wearing a stained tank top and is clearly drunk.

REVEREND WATERS

Stay down! What are you doing, you little bitch?

The child swings the crowbar again and again, finally breaking Reverend Waters' face.

The Reverend falls to the ground, bleeding. He's dead.

Child Leah stands over the body, breathing heavily but looking victorious.

She turns around.

Standing on the other side of the cellar is CHILD SAM, whose face is bruised and bloody.

Child Leah looks at Sam sternly. She raises a finger to her lips, to indicate silence.

Child Sam, in a state of complete shock, nods his head.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The painting is in pieces. Leah stands victoriously over the Ghost, who lies dead just as Reverend Waters did.

Michaela smiles at Leah. Leah's nostrils flare with pride.

Leah walks over to the mirror in the room. She stares at herself.

LEAH

I'm in control. I'm in control.

She looks to the side. Michaela nods to her, in agreement. Leah puts out her hand. Michaela walks to her and takes it.

LEAH

I trust you. I want you with me.

MICHAELA

Then you know what we need to do.

Leah looks back into the mirror, and breathes out shakily.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

David kneels at the front of the church, facing the cross.

He mumbles under his breath, his face a mess of tears.

DAVID
 Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your unfailing love;
 according to your great compassion
 blot out my transgressions.
 Wash away all my iniquity
 and cleanse me from my sin.

He smacks himself in the face. He smacks himself again, and again.

EXT. LEAH'S HOUSE - DAY

David, his face stained with salty dry tears, unlocks his front door and walks inside.

INT. LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

David enters his house, sniffing.

He's startled to see Leah there, sitting on the couch.

LEAH
 Good morning David.

DAVID
 Oh! Are you...are you...?

LEAH
 I'm back. And we need to talk.

David smiles with relief.

DAVID
 Yes. Thank God. Yes we do.

LEAH
 About something important.

David's hopeful expression falls away.

LEAH
 I'm going to make two phone calls,
 and set up a meeting.

DAVID
 What...what's this about, Leah?

LEAH
 The book you found in the church. I
 know what it was for.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The Sheriff is sitting in his chair, pouring over stacks of paper files. The phone rings and he answers.

SHERIFF
Sheriff's office.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The cellar door opens, and David steps inside.

Leah is already inside, waiting for him.

DAVID
I thought you didn't like coming down here.

LEAH
Things are different now. Besides, we had to meet somewhere secret.

DAVID
I wish you'd just tell me what's going on.

LEAH
I will. Once they get here.

The door opens again, and the Sheriff enters. He steps cautiously, a little confused at the choice of location.

SHERIFF
Hello? Mrs. Darning?

LEAH
We're in here, Sheriff.

SHERIFF
Alright. I still don't understand why you couldn't just stop by my office.

Sam appears at the door, behind the Sheriff.

SAM
David's here too? Aw, hell. What are you doing, Leah? Some kind of big kumbaya where we all reconcile with each other? I'm not interested.

LEAH

It's not that, Sam. Close the door behind you.

Sam is surprised at her firm tone. He shuts the door. They all gather together at the bottom of the cellar.

LEAH

You both parked your cars and walked, like I asked?

Both the Sheriff and Sam nod.

SHERIFF

I'm not moving too fast these days, but I did what you wanted.

LEAH

Good. Nobody else can know we're all meeting here. Understand? Nobody.

They all nod in agreement. Leah begins, nervously.

LEAH

The reason I'm talking with you three, specifically, is because I've...I've seen you all at home on Wednesday nights. That is, at home or...otherwise occupied.

David turns red in the face.

SAM

What's this got to do with Wednesday nights?

LEAH

Sheriff, you've been looking into the cases of missing girls.

SHERIFF

For over a month, sure.

LEAH

Every week, on a Wednesday, a new girl's taken. Someone's holding a ceremony in the church on those nights. They're performing a ritual, reading out of that book that you saw, David. They kill the girls.

DAVID
For God's sake...

SHERIFF
Hell.

LEAH
Sheriff, if you go up the forest
road about seven miles, you'll find
where the bodies are piled.

Sam glares at Leah nervously.

SHERIFF
I'll head up there right away.

LEAH
No. No. We can't do anything yet.

Sam sighs in relief.

SHERIFF
Well why not? I've got to call the
marshals, we've got to shut it
down.

LEAH
But we've got to do it...on
Wednesday night. I know I can trust
you three, but I don't exactly know
who is gonna be there. If we show
our hand now...someone'll see. And
we've got to get them. We've got to
get them all.

SAM
How do you know all this, Leah?

Leah takes a deep breath, and looks at each of them.

LEAH
You wouldn't believe me.

SHERIFF
So without any hard evidence yet
from you, what are you proposing we
do?

LEAH
Wednesday evening, we wait around
the church until they all go in and
start. Then, before they get a
chance to hurt anyone, we break in.

They all look at her doubtfully. The Sheriff considers it all for a long moment.

SHERIFF

Leah, not a day goes by when I don't wish I hadn't let you down when you were kids. I should have...I should have known. So I'm gonna take your word for it. You all stay home on Wednesday night. Don't talk to anyone. Leave this to me and the Marshals.

LEAH

Thank you, Sheriff.

The Sheriff turns to go back up the stairs. He leaves the cellar, shutting the door behind him.

SAM

Alright then...

Sam starts to follow him. Leah grabs him by the arm.

LEAH

Don't all leave at once. Nobody can know we were here together.

SAM

A little paranoid, aren't you?

DAVID

Sam...can you just be reasonable, for once?

SAM

Who's not being reasonable? My sister's lost her fucking mind. Talking about secret ceremonies and dead girls...like we wouldn't all know about something like that.

LEAH

We should have all known. Nobody was paying attention.

SAM

This is ridiculous. I'm leaving.

He starts up the stairs.

LEAH

Sam.

He pauses and turns back to look at her.

LEAH

We're even now, remember? I trusted you, then you trusted me. Please, let's trust each other right now.

Sam grimaces, then opens the door and leaves.

David and Leah look at one another awkwardly.

DAVID

I'm so...confused.

LEAH

That's okay. I was too.

DAVID

What's going to happen...with us?

LEAH

Let's talk about that after all this is over. I'm not quite myself just now.

David nods, and Leah starts to climb the stairs.

DAVID

Just...one question. Why did you agree to marry me? I was never the kid anybody liked.

LEAH

Because...I guess I was the girl nobody liked. And I felt safe.

She leaves the cellar.

EXT. SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam walks toward Simon's house, where his truck is parked.

He gets to the front door. It's unlocked. He walks inside.

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam walks inside, only to hear Simon yelling at someone. The Mayor is sitting sheepishly on a couch, taking the abuse.

SIMON

The only reason we had the book last week was because I went and I retrieved it from the church. Do you know how risky that was?

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

He saw the book! More than one person saw the book!

MAYOR

I wanted to scare him. I wanted to give him a taste of what's coming...

SIMON

You want to give him a taste? Wait until we're done with the five chalices! Wait for that night! After that you take back the church, you take back the town, you do whatever you want with the Reverend. But you need to be patient! You lose the book, we fail at what we've been working toward, you understand?

MAYOR

Yes. I do. I'm sorry.

Simon turns around, aware that Sam has entered the room.

SIMON

Luckily we're almost done now. There's only one offering left to be made. Can I count on you not to fuck up anything else?

MAYOR

Of course. Everything is gonna go off without a hitch.

SAM

Except...

Both men turn to look at him.

SAM

There is one hitch.

SIMON

Yes, Sam? I was worried that's what you were going to say.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

David holds a basket, and he goes through the store, picking out basic food items.

The other shoppers, particularly the older folks, glare at him angrily, but he seems completely oblivious to them.

He comes around an aisle, and finds himself beside Ruth.

DAVID
Oh...excuse me.

He tries to move away from her, but she keeps close, tagging along beside him. He whispers at her:

DAVID
What are you doing? You want someone to see us?

RUTH
Ha. As if that matters anymore. Listen. Something came up and my husband is going to be home on Wednesday, so we're going to need to reschedule for tonight.

DAVID
Ruth, I...

RUTH
What?

DAVID
I can't do it anymore.

RUTH
Why, cuz your wife saw us?

David hangs his head.

RUTH
Okay, so, say we stop seeing each other, because you can't handle the guilt. Well, you're sure not gonna get your dick sucked at home anymore, that's for sure. And you're not getting any younger.

David turns red in the face. He looks around, but nobody seems to be paying attention to them.

RUTH
Eight o'clock, tonight. I know I can count on you.

Ruth softly and quickly runs her hand over his groin...then she walks away.

David lets out a trembling sigh. He stands in place, looking blankly at the food items on the shelves.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Leah sits alone, peacefully enjoying the beautiful day. The breeze is blowing in her hair, and the sun is shining brightly. It almost looks like a painting.

She looks beside her. Michaela sits on the bench too. They're both silent, and happy.

Then Simon sits on the bench next to Leah. Michaela smiles subtly, then vanishes.

SIMON

Secretly, I thought you would come back. No, that's not true...I hoped you would.

LEAH

Did you really?

SIMON

It's always been lonely. Do you know what I mean? When our parents were around, this town was something. So they got old, most of them died, and the ones who are left just hold on to that illusion. People like you and me, like Sam, even David...we're left with the scraps. It's sad when one of us leaves. I didn't want you to go.

Leah smiles at him.

LEAH

I do know what you mean. To be honest, I'd pretty much given up hope for this place. I don't think Solace is going to outlive our generation.

SIMON

You're right about that.

LEAH

But...maybe instead of letting it burn and walking away, we should go down fighting for it.

SIMON

And that's why you came back?

Again, she smiles at him.

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Simon unlocks the front door. He gestures for Leah to go inside, and she does.

LEAH

Where's Sam? I figured he'd be here.

SIMON

He's running errands, I think.

Simon smiles at her, and takes her coat.

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT, A LITTLE LATER

Simon and Leah sit across from one another at a small dining room table, eating dinner.

LEAH

Thanks for having me over. I haven't had a chance to shop, and to be honest I really don't feel like cooking. David can't cook to save his life, so I was dreading anything he might try to put together.

SIMON

David won't mind eating by himself tonight?

LEAH

No...I think... No, nevermind. Do you want help with the dishes?

SIMON

Oh no. Not at all. I'll manage.

LEAH

It's getting a little late. Maybe I should get going.

Leah stands up.

SIMON

Are you sure? You're welcome to stay as long as you like.

Leah looks around. She sees Michaela standing nearby.

MICHAELA

Stay.

Leah is a little confused and concerned.

SIMON

I was actually going to remark earlier that you look incredibly tense. I don't know if you know this about me, but I am a registered masseuse. How long has it been since you had a good back rub?

Leah shuts her eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michaela rubs Leah's back. Leah closes her eyes with pleasure.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leah opens her eyes.

LEAH

It's been a while.

Simon gestures toward his couch, invitingly.

Leah smiles, with relief on her face.

She goes over to the couch and lies down.

Simon grabs a bottle of lotion. He rubs his hands together.

SIMON

Take off your shirt. If...you don't mind.

Leah, shrugging off any discomfort, takes off her shirt.

She looks ahead. Michaela is smiling at her, so Leah is able to feel comfortable.

SIMON

Perfect.

He starts to rub Leah's shoulders. Leah sighs and shuts her eyes, a comfortable smile appearing on her face.

SIMON

Somehow I get the idea...and stop me if I'm intruding too far...that your husband isn't much of an intimate toucher.

LEAH

Ha.

SIMON

Or rather, I'd bet he is, but not in any of the right ways.

LEAH

You're intruding too far. But...you're not wrong. Ooh...

SIMON

Stop me again if this is too much...I remember when David first started seeing you. I was so jealous.

LEAH

You were?

SIMON

I was. I didn't think he deserved you. Clearly, he didn't. Given present circumstances.

LEAH

Present circumstances? How do you...

Simon massages harder, silencing her.

SIMON

I just felt that we were the ones with the special bond, you and I. Since we were kids.

LEAH

We did have a special bond.

SIMON

Not just friends, Leah. It's a bond we all share, you, me, Sam. Something really, really special.

LEAH

What are you talking about?

SIMON

Your dad. He didn't mean to, being the drunk motherfucker he was, but he gave us all something in common. And after what he did to us...I've wanted to take what he took.

Simon seems to be talking himself into a psychotic, lustful frenzy. His grasp tightens on Leah's shoulders.

Leah opens her eyes, starting to panic.

Simon grabs her hips tightly, leans in, kisses her neck.

LEAH

Simon, no...

She tries to stand up, but Simon has her pinned to the couch.

SIMON

I've always known I can love you like nobody else has ever loved you.

LEAH

Let me...let me up.

He keeps her pressed down, and starts to slide her pants off with one hand...

LEAH

Where's Sam? Sam!

SIMON

It's just us. Just us.

Leah turns her head to see Michaela watching. The vision's eyes are sad, but she watches with reluctant approval.

LEAH

What?

SIMON

What do you say? Just you and me? Just once?

But Leah's anger now is directed toward Michaela.

LEAH

You bitch!

Her sudden outburst surprises Simon.

Leah uses the opportunity to throw him off of her. She jumps up off the couch and runs for the front door.

It's locked from the inside.

Leah runs for the kitchen, and she grabs a knife.

Simon walks after her calmly, a confident predator.

SIMON

I want you to enjoy tonight, Leah.
I'm doing this for you.

LEAH

Shut up. Get back.

She brandishes the knife. Looking down, she sees that Simon has a hypodermic needle in his hand.

SIMON

I can't let you spend your last
night never having enjoyed being
with a man. I need to be that man.
I can undo all the damage your dad
caused us both.

LEAH

Last night? Simon. This isn't you.

SIMON

You don't know me very well.

Leah turns and runs from the kitchen into a bedroom.

She opens a window and tries to push herself out.

But something catches her eye. On a table near the bed...the demonic book.

She freezes.

LEAH

It was him.

Then Simon appears outside in front of the window. He pushes the needle into her shoulder, and she falls to the floor. Weakly, she murmurs.

LEAH

It was him. Why didn't you tell me
it was him?

Michaela stands above her, watching her sadly.

MICHAELA

You have to trust me. You have to trust me.

Leah's eyes roll back, and she goes unconscious.

EXT. SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Simon opens the trunk of his car.

Sam walks out of the house, carrying Leah over his shoulder. He carefully sets her in the trunk.

SAM

I still don't understand why it has to be her.

SIMON

We moved up our schedule. I didn't have time to find another.

SAM

I don't like it. I don't want to hurt her.

SIMON

This is the last night, Sam. You've seen the book. You know what's going to happen.

SAM

Yeah. Still, it doesn't feel right.

SIMON

Think about how special it is. Your sister is chosen for the final offering. She's going to be the vessel of Azazel. You don't think she'll be rewarded for that? Just like the rest of us. More, even. Come on.

Sam is given confidence by that. They both get into the car, and drive away toward the church.

EXT. MAYOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ruth walks out of her house. She looks out into the night, and sighs. She takes a few steps down her driveway...

Then a car pulls up. It's David's car.

Ruth sighs in relief.

David steps out of his car.

RUTH

I was about to come to you. I was worried you forgot the change of plans.

DAVID

I didn't forget.

RUTH

Well, come on in.

David reluctantly follows her inside.

INT. MAYOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruth holds David's hand, dragging him into the bedroom.

RUTH

You know, you were twelve minutes late. Ruth doesn't like to be kept waiting.

DAVID

No, I'm sorry ma'am.

RUTH

What's that?

Ruth slaps David on the back side.

DAVID

I said, I'm sorry, ma'am!

Ruth slaps him again.

RUTH

That's better. Now lie down.

David sits reluctantly on the bed.

RUTH

Not on the bed. On the floor.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The ceremony has begun.

The half-circle of hooded figures is gathered around the unconscious form of Leah, who has been tied up.

HOODED 1 [MAYOR]
Blessings upon you and upon us all,
ye who art to be offered. Does the
spirit of the commune accept this
offering?

Most of the others nod.

OTHER HOODED FIGURES
It does.

A tall hooded figure (Sam), steps forward.

SAM
Perhaps we should take a
consideration. The book says the
offered must be innocent. My
sis...this woman might not be
innocent.

All heads turn to look at him.

MAYOR
And can you speak with certainty to
what may have blighted her soul?

The hooded Sam stammers, and looks back and forth between
Leah and the others.

HOODED 2 [SIMON]
Who is more innocent an offering
than Leah Waters? Never has she
acted except in the service of
others. What better testimony than
that of her father, Reverend
Waters, who practiced upon her,
feeling the spirit of innocence
within her? Who better now to open
up the gate between us and the
world of spirits?

All the others murmur their agreement.

Sam bows his head.

MAYOR
Then let us proceed.

He picks up the bone saw.

INT. MAYOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David lies on the floor.

Ruth begins to violently unbutton his shirt, all while squeezing him between her thighs.

RUTH
Who's been an awful, sinful little preacher?

DAVID
I have.

RUTH
Say it again. Say it loud enough for the lord to hear you.

DAVID
I have! God, I have!

But he's not having fun. He pushes Ruth off of him, and stands up.

RUTH
What are you doing? Get back down. On all fours.

David is torn between desire and guilt. He stares at Ruth, and at the door, and at Ruth...

DAVID
I...I...can't...

He turns and briskly walks out, his face in his hand.

Ruth, sitting on the floor, slaps the bed in anger.

RUTH
Goddamn it!

She quickly throws her shirt back on, and runs after him.

EXT. LEAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

David walks to the door of his house. He puts his hand on the doorknob, then stops, in shame. Resting his hand on the door, imagining Leah is inside, he murmurs:

DAVID
No. Forgive me.

And he turns away from the house.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

David walks briskly through town.

DAVID

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

He makes his way toward the church.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Approaching the church, David sees the lights on inside.

Glancing at it curiously, he hurries toward it.

Ruth runs up behind him.

RUTH

Reverend! I didn't think I'd catch
you. Maybe we can go try the other
thing. Where I back you up against
the wall and sit on your...

DAVID

Who has the key for the church?

RUTH

What?

DAVID

You and I have the only two keys.

RUTH

Oh, I must have left the light on.

DAVID

No...

He storms up toward the church. Exasperated, Ruth rushes
after him.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Leah starts to drowsily wake up. She looks around her at the
hooded figures.

Leah's arm is taken all the way off, and a chalice put down
to catch the blood.

One of the other hooded figures reads out of the book.

HOODED 3 [FRED]

And thus our sacrament begins.
Azazel, if you can hear our prayer,
answer us, for tonight is the night
of revelation. Tonight is the night
of purgation. Tonight is the night
of accusation. Tonight is the night
of salvation.

The church door bursts open.

David rushes in, shocked at what he sees in front of him.
All the hooded figures turn their heads to look at him.

DAVID

Jesus, Mary and Joseph...

Ruth rushes in behind him.

RUTH

I tried to stall him! I swear, I
tried as best I could!

Then, the hooded figure of the Mayor points at David.

MAYOR

Take him.

Many of the other members, including Sam, rush to grab hold
of David.

DAVID

What's going on? What are you
doing? Leah! What the fuck are you
doing to her? Leah!

Leah wakes up more. She looks around. Looks at her arm. She
seems not to feel it, but she comprehends what's going on.

The Mayor whispers to Simon, who whispers back to him.

MAYOR

The intruder matters not. He shall
bear witness. He is the false
prophet, and he shall be the first
to perish by the sword when the
spirit comes.

DAVID

God damn you all! I'll kill you!
I'll kill you if you don't let her
go right now!

MAYOR

Silence him.

Sam stuffs something into David's mouth. It takes five hooded figures, but they restrain him.

The Mayor and Simon nod to one another.

Fred keeps reading. The Mayor begins to cut into one of Leah's legs.

Meanwhile, Simon moves toward the pulpit...

FRED

Oh Azazel, hear our plea. Too long have we been deaf to the true word of God, the word that is of fire, and war, and damnation. The way of peace, of friendship and love is for the idolaters, for the false prophets. Those who followed not the true faith of the God of the old testament shall tonight perish, when we unleash your wrath upon first this town of Solace, and then the world world. It shall burn in your name. Azazel, if you can hear us, speak!

Simon happens to be standing near the pulpit, which has a microphone. A loud voice booms out in the room.

DEMON VOICE

I, Azazel, accept thine sacrificial offering, the fifth of five. Tonight, once the offering hath been consumed, shall I enter the world to purge the weak, and thou shalt be rewarded.

Leah looks around. She's observing the scene with unnatural clarity and calmness.

From her point of view, Michaela is standing in the room beside her. This time, Michaela is wearing her angel wings, and she's dressed in glowing white.

Leah smiles, as if she finally understands everything.

MICHAELA

This is why, Leah.

Leah starts to laugh.

The Mayor pauses in his sawing.

All hoods turn toward her, in visible confusion.

Leah's laughter is loud and creepy, almost inhuman.

HOODED 4 [JONAH]

Why is she laughing? Is this in the book?

LEAH

Small-minded people! The trap has been laid, and you've walked right into it!

MAYOR

This doesn't seem right. Simon?

Simon stands still and watches her. Even with his hood on, he seems to be fascinated.

LEAH

Within me there is another, stronger! She is light to your darkness, and no demon will pass through me except before it faces her!

David watches with horror, eyes open wide.

MAYOR

What's happening? What's she doing?

Leah smiles widely. Then she whispers in a voice only she can hear.

LEAH

This is what it's all for.

Then, the camera shot seems to go into Leah's eye, into her mind. The following plays out as seen by her.

First, the booming voice rings out through the church.

DEMON VOICE

None shall stand in my way. None shall prevent the eternal rule of Azazel!

A dark mist flows out of Leah's mouth.

Michaela, glowing white, steps in front of the black mist.

The blackness takes the vague shape of a shadowy figure. Michaela confronts it, and pushes it back. It is forced backward, as if a wind is driving it.

BLACK MIST FIGURE

I am Azazel, and for this moment I have long waited.

MICHAELA

For this moment I came to this town. For this moment I gave up my life, that I might possess your offering and take a form to stop you, and send you back to the abyss of hell!

The white figure of Michaela succeeds in disintegrating the black mist. It is pushed back down into Leah's mouth. Michaela pursues, going into Leah as well.

Leah blinks a few times...

Now we see the room as normal, with no spiritual sights to be seen.

Leah shouts again, in wild happiness.

LEAH

It is done! She won over your demon! All your secrecy, and your hateful shit, has been for nothing!

All the hooded figures look at her in silence.

A few of the heads pivot to look at Simon. He remains transfixed in fascination.

Then, Sam steps forward.

SAM

It's all for nothing! You cut up my sister for no reason! We need to get her to a hospital.

He forcefully steps forward and unties her.

One of the other figures pushes him.

FRED

No! Don't release the offering!

JONAH

But the ceremony failed!

David sees his chance, and takes it.

He pulls away from the men holding him.

Leah looks at her stump of an arm. She looks up with a psychotic smile.

David presses one of his assailants up against the back of the church.

Many of the hooded heads still look toward Simon. He waits a moment, and then declares:

SIMON
Kill them all.

David screams, and smashes the throat of the man he was holding against the wall.

Someone attacks Sam. He succeeds in untying Leah, then fights back. His anger unleashed, he smashes through the other hooded figures.

SAM
You told me everything would be better! But it's not! You just hurt my sister!

He smashes a few heads.

As hoods fall off, it's revealed that most, if not all the hooded figures are the older members of the congregation, who have been seen in church many times.

Ruth tries to get out the door. She gets halfway out of it, but David, completely unhinged, smashes the door against her, splitting her head open.

DAVID
You knew! You set me up! Again and again!

The Mayor makes a run at Sam. He drives the bone saw deep into Sam's neck. Sam shouts and breaks the Mayor's neck.

The figure of Simon tries to make his way to the side door.

It's locked from both sides.

SIMON
Well. Okay.

He turns to look at the room full of chaos. The main church doors are on the other side of that. He takes a deep breath and runs for it.

The confusion is complete. Most everyone has their hoods off now, and there's blood everywhere.

Simon is nearly out of the room. Then somebody trips him, and he falls down on his face. His hood flies off.

It's Leah. She stands over Simon with one of the nasty cutting implements.

SIMON

Leah. I do love you. Truly. I wouldn't lie to you.

Leah looks at him with pity in her eyes.

LEAH

You didn't need to do what you did.

With her one arm, she smashes the saw down on Simon's face.

She looks back up, filled with a strange bloodlust.

She looks through the room. She sees David. He smiles at her. For the first time they share a moment of connection in their eye contact.

Then David is knocked down. As soon as he hits the floor, he's stabbed multiple times by Fred. He dies within seconds.

Sam charges against David's killer. He crushes Fred against the floor, breaking his neck. But the impact shoves the bone saw deeper into Sam's own neck, and Sam dies instantly.

Leah is losing a lot of blood. She sits down, weakly.

She looks around. She's the only one left upright. Most everyone else is dead.

She shuts her eyes, finding some kind of peace at last.

LEAH

Thank you...thank you. I'm happy for all this, because it's why you came to Solace. It's why you came to me.

She breathes in and out.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michaela rubs Leah's back...

Then Leah turns over, and the two women kiss passionately.

We see them lying side by side, shirtless, kissing. Then Michaela straddles Leah.

It's a memory that seems like a dream.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Leah smiles at the memory.

But a voice interrupts her. It's Simon.

Gurgling through blood, Simon is able to smile.

SIMON

No, thank you, Leah. You've made
this better than I could have hoped
for.

Leah glances down at the maimed doctor. She's a little annoyed.

SIMON

You played along so well,
considering... I made it all up. I
made the book.

The shock hits Leah like a wave.

SIMON

There was no demon, haha. Small-
minded, believing, hypocrites. I
just wanted...I wanted to watch
them, like they used to watch
us...when they watched him and did
nothing...

Simon gurgles one last time...then goes silent and still.

There's a sound of police sirens. Lights begin to flash, seen even through the covered windows.

A fearful tear comes into Leah's eye.

She looks around the room. In a half-whispered plea, she tries to get someone's attention - anyone's.

LEAH

Didn't you see that? Did you hear it? Tell me you saw what happened. Tell me you saw...her...

But nobody answers. Everyone is dead.

A few moments later, the door of the church opens.

The shocked sheriff rushes in, followed by other MARSHALS.

We fade out slowly from the horrifying scene.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Leah wakes up in bed. Drowsy, she looks around the room.

There's a man sitting beside her. This is DETECTIVE ANDREWS (35, dressed sharply).

DETECTIVE ANDREWS

No, please, don't bother moving. God knows, you've had a time of it.

Leah rests her head back against the pillow.

DETECTIVE ANDREWS

I'm Detective Andrews. How are you feeling?

LEAH

Fine.

DETECTIVE ANDREWS

Are you well enough to answer a few questions?

LEAH

Questions?

DETECTIVE ANDREWS

You're the only survivor of the incident in the church. What we want is to help you, and we can do that best by gaining some clarity as to the sequence of events. Sheriff Hobbs has been so kind as to inform us of your meeting with him prior to the...ceremony. He directed us to a location off of Forest Road 291 where, thanks to your provided information, we discovered four...no, five...bodies.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE ANDREWS (CONT'D)
 May I ask how you came by the
 information leading to that
 discovery?

While he talked, Leah has been zoning out, staring straight up at the ceiling. His words fade away almost entirely before she cuts in:

LEAH
 I don't want to know.

DETECTIVE ANDREWS
 Pardon me?

LEAH
 I don't want to know what happened.

DETECTIVE ANDREWS
 I'm sorry, Mrs. Darning, but...we
 were hoping you'd be the one to
 tell us what happened.

LEAH
 I don't want to know. I want to
 believe.

A NURSE in the room shakes her head, and Detective Andrews shrugs, and stands up.

DETECTIVE ANDREWS
 Well, please let me know when you
 do feel like talking.

The nurse hurries the detective out of the room. Leah remains behind, staring at the ceiling.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

The nurse pushes Leah in a wheelchair down the hallway. Leah is missing her arm, but both legs are intact.

NURSE
 Doctors tell me they think you'll
 be able to walk again in just a few
 weeks. That's great news, don't you
 think? That's why we're moving you
 out of ICU and into regular bed
 rest. It's gonna be a different
 room, and a different set of
 nurses, but we're gonna do our best
 to make sure there's always someone
 available to keep you company.

(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)
There's nothing worse than being
alone in a strange new place.

Leah looks to the side. As the wheelchair passes by various
mirrors, she looks at herself.

As she passes each mirror, she gets a look at the woman in
the wheelchair: instead of seeing herself, she sees Michaela
sitting there, in Leah's own body, smiling back at her.

LEAH
It's alright.

NURSE
I'm sorry dear, did you say
something?

LEAH
It's alright. I'm not alone.

She smiles.

THE END