

22 Apple Tree Drive

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

We are at the top of the stairway looking down towards the front entrance. The interior is that of modern executive house, built in the mid-eighties, that has been impeccably maintained. It is clearly unoccupied, devoid as it is of any furnishings, save for the plush carpet. A small pile of mail sits on the floor mat in front of the main entrance.

Through the rippled glass of the front door we see movement, the distorted image of a man unlocking the door and other figures shifting behind him. Their conversation is muffled.

The door opens. CARL EDWARDS, a smartly dressed estate agent in his thirties, stoops to pick up the post, then steps inside.

The Walker family follow immediately behind. They are: ANDREW, 42, likeable, despite his erudite persona; his wife LOUISE, 40, warm, kind, emotional; ALICE, a bookish and mature 14 year old; and endearingly precocious EMILY, aged just 5. The family are the epitome of Guardian-reading, granola munching, Volvo-driving middle-class affluence.

LOUISE

...Isn't that right, darling?

ANDREW

That's right. We've been planning to upsize for some time. It's just that we haven't been able to make it work financially up until now.

CARL

I see. Well, the vendor's keen on a quick sale, so there is room for negotiation on the price.

LOUISE

Really? That would be fantastic.

CARL

Why don't you look around? See what you think first. Let me know if you have any questions.

INT. BEDROOM #3, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Emily runs into the empty room excitedly. Alice follows her in.

EMILY

This is going to be my bedroom!

Alice scoops up her little sister in her arms playfully.

ALICE

Oh, really?!

EMILY
(giggling)

Yes!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Andrew and Louise stand inspecting the room admiringly. Louise is smitten with the place. And it's her decision that counts.

Andrew turns to face Louise. He slides his arms around her waist, pulls her in close.

ANDREW

Well?

LOUISE

Perfect. Just perfect.

ANDREW

It certainly ticks all the boxes.

LOUISE

I think we're going to be very happy here.

ANDREW

I think so too.

He kisses her fondly.

Carl walks into the room, interrupting them.

CARL

What do you think?

Andrew looks to Louise for the go-ahead. She simply smiles and gently nods her head in confirmation.

ANDREW

We'd like to put in an offer.

CARL

Great. Shall we talk money?

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The house on a crisp, sunny autumn day. It's a detached, double-fronted affair with a two-car garage. Impressive without being showy.

The family's two cars are parked on the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

A typical workday morning: Louise is rushing around trying to prepare the kids' packed lunch while Emily sits at the table happily eating breakfast and Alice pours herself some cereal. The radio plays in the background.

Andrew enters looking harried. He hunts around the room.

ANDREW
Where's my car key?

LOUISE
In the usual place.

ANDREW
It's not. I've searched high and low. We've only been here a month and already things are vanishing.

LOUISE
Check again. It can't have gone far

ANDREW
Last week my favourite tie disappears, and now this.

Alice opens the fridge door to retrieve a carton of milk and immediately starts to giggle. The key is lying on one of the shelves inside appliance. She picks it up, then dangles it teasingly.

ALICE
Somebody been sleepwalking by any chance?

Andrew is not amused, but Emily is.

EMILY
(giggling))
Silly Daddy!

Andrew wags his finger admonishingly at the two girls.

ANDREW
Pranksters. I'll talk to you both when I get home.

ALICE
(playfully indignant)
Excuse me! I didn't put it there.

ANDREW
Somebody did. Give it to me, please. I'm late.

Alice walks over and hands him the key as instructed. Andrew snatches it from her impetuously.

ANDREW
Right, I'm off.

Louise holds up his sandwich box.

LOUISE
Wait. Don't forget this.

He gives her a quick kiss as he grabs his lunch.

ANDREW

What would I do without you.

She smiles at him ironically.

INT. LABORATORY, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A clinical, state-of-the-art affair, packed with high-tech gear: a scientist's dream playground.

Andrew, dressed in a lab coat, is beavering away. He carefully injects a solution into a gas chromatography machine, programs it, then lets it run.

The machine starts to whirr and the printer it is attached to jumps to life. Andrew scribbles notes while he waits for the printer to spew-out the results.

Andrew tears off the completed readout from the printer and heads for the door.

INT. CORRIDOR, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Andrew pours over the readout as he walks down the passageway. His Manager, BRYAN GIBSON, a rotund fifty year old, comes out of a meeting room and spots him.

BRYAN

Andrew.

Andrew stops to chat.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Great presentation the other day. The board were really impressed with your work on the coffee substitute, and so am I.

ANDREW

Thanks, Bryan, I appreciate it.

BRYAN

Keep this to yourself, but I just heard a rumour that Tom Edwards is thinking of moving on.

ANDREW

I can't say I'm surprised. Ambitious man like him...

BRYAN

Exactly. If he does, I'm going to put your name forward. You're the best man for the job, as far as I'm concerned.

Andrew is genuinely surprised and flattered by the revelation.

ANDREW

I don't know what to say. Thank you.

Bryan pats Andrew on the arm.

BRYAN

Thank me when it's in the bag. In the meantime keep up the good work. We'll talk more on Tuesday.

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is putting out the rubbish for collection.

MARY THOMAS, an affable and spritely retiree, comes out of her house with her Alsatian, Bruno. She stops to chat.

MARY

Ah, you've just reminded me. I completely forgot it's collection day today.

LOUISE

Easily done. Especially when you have a hundred other chores to do.

Mary extends her hand. Louise shakes it.

MARY

Mary Thomas. I live at number sixteen. And this is Bruno.

LOUISE

He's beautiful.

Mary gently tugs on Bruno's lead, tries to bring him closer, so Louise can pat him, but he strains, refusing to join his owner on the driveway.

MARY

Come on, Bruno. What's the matter?

Bruno adamantly refuses to budge.

MARY (CONT'D)

I give up. I think he's in one of his silly moods today. So, have you settled in yet?

LOUISE

Just about. It's been a hectic few weeks, though, what with the move, work and trying to get the girls' new schools sorted out all at the same time.

Bruno's agitation grows. He starts to growl and bark aggressively while staring intently at the master bedroom window of Louise's house.

MARY

I can imagine.

Irked by his behavior, Mary interrupts her conversation to chide the dog.

MARY (CONT'D)

Shush, Bruno! I'm sorry, he's normally quite placid.

Louise follows Bruno's line of site to the bedroom window, but there is nobody there. She's puzzled, but dismisses his behavior.

MARY (CONT'D)

House moves are so stressful. My two have flown the nest and my husband and I are both retired, so we've considered downsizing, but I just don't think I could handle it.

LOUISE

I envy you. I'd retire tomorrow, if I could.

MARY

I was a geography teacher at Compton Grammar for thirty years. You can only take so much of the little darlings, believe me.

LOUISE

I know what you mean. I work as an admissions officer at Stonebridge University and I could write a book about some of the antics I've seen on campus over the years.

Bruno continues to bark inexplicably.

MARY

I'm sorry, he's not usually like this. I'm going to have to go. He's obviously spotted somebody inside.

LOUISE

But I'm home alone today.

MARY

Oh...

Mary is thrown by Louise's answer, but she doesn't dwell on it long enough to think of an alternative explanation.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, I'd better get going. Lovely talking to you.

LOUISE

Yes, and you. Bye.

MARY

Bye bye.

The two women wave to each other as Mary leads off the recalcitrant dog.

INT. STUDY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The desk clock glows in the darkness. It reads 3am - the witching hour.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew and Louise sound asleep.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice lies in bed equally dormant.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Emily is sound asleep too, one arm clutching her teddy.

INT. STUDY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The all-in-one computer suddenly switches on by itself. The screen displays the BIOS information momentarily, followed briefly by the Windows logo, before halting on the login page.

The mouse pointer mysteriously sweeps down to the password box on the screen and we hear the gentle CLATTERING of the keys as the password is typed in. Except there is nobody there!

The desktop appears on the screen. The sentient, but invisible, presence working the computer proceeds to fire up the image viewer from the start menu. A grid of tiny image files appears. The pointer is clicked on one of these files specifically. A happy family snap of the Walkers unfurls instantly, filling the screen.

The brightness radiating from the screen casts an ethereal glow, illuminating the uninhabited room to haunting effect.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is wiping clean the breakfast table. She's alone in the house.

The aura of calm blanketing the house is palpable.

The tranquility is rudely shattered by a sudden loud bang emanating from upstairs.

Louise immediately stops what she's doing and listens intently, trying to figure out the cause. There is nothing more, only silence. But the noise was too obvious, too deliberate, to ignore. She goes to investigate.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise tramps up the stairs, more mystified by the interruption than rattled by it.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise enters the master bedroom. Nothing is out of place; no clue as to what caused the bang.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

She pokes her head in the bedroom. It is undisturbed too.

Louise is perplexed, but decides not to dwell on it. She shakes her head dismissively and leaves.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise walks back in to the room. She immediately stops in her tracks. Gasps. She can't believe what she's seeing.

The chairs have been stacked on the breakfast table in an improbable pyramid fashion.

She just stands there, rooted to the spot, and takes in the spectacle, her expression one of utter awe and confusion.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew is sitting on the sofa, his tie loosened, a drink in his hand, listening to Louise as she relates her experience while pacing the floor excitedly.

LOUISE

Chairs don't suddenly jump two feet and land on tables, Andrew. It's almost as if the bang was deliberate. You know, a distraction, so I wouldn't actually be there when the chairs moved.

ANDREW

I hear you, but there's got to be a logical explanation, there always is.

LOUISE

Like what? I'm telling you, there is no rational, worldly explanation
(MORE)

LOUISE (cont'd)
for what happened today. I've gone
over it again and again. Nothing.

ANDREW
Oh, come on, Louise, you're not
seriously suggesting that it was
something supernatural, are you?
You know we don't believe in that
nonsense.

LOUISE
No, correction: YOU don't believe
in the supernatural; I've always
kept an open mind.

ANDREW
Which is now causing you to jump to
conclusions.

LOUISE
I just wish I'd had the presence of
mind to photograph it. I was just
too shocked.

ANDREW
And prove what with it? Look, let's
just forget about it, whatever the
explanation. If it happens again,
then we'll look into it further.

Alice enters the room looking harassed.

Andrew and Louise immediately kill their conversation.
Neither of them wants to worry the girls unduly.

Alice picks up on the awkward silence, but she is too
discrete to comment on it.

ALICE
Dad, the light in my room keeps
flickering on and off. I can't
study.

ANDREW
The bulb probably needs replacing.
I'll come up and check in a minute.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Emily is alone in her room playing make-believe with her
collection of dolls and cuddly toys. They are sprawled all
over the floor in disarray.

Louise disturbs Emily's play by calling loudly from
downstairs.

LOUISE

I've gone over it a hundred times and I just can't think of any other reasonable explanation.

ANDREW

And that's what you call a reasonable explanation?

LOUISE

I was totally alone in the house. All the doors and windows were shut. There's no other way to explain it.

ANDREW

I'm sure there is, if we spend long enough to figure it out. But life's too short.

Louise is mildly exasperated by Andrew's stance.

LOUISE

Just indulge me. There's no harm in me doing a little research. I'm sure you'll be proved right in the end - as usual.

ANDREW

Look, we've charted the depths of the oceans and sent man to the moon. If the paranormal existed, don't you think someone would have proved it by now?

LOUISE

Just because we can't see it, touch it or feel it doesn't mean it doesn't exist, Andrew. Maybe it's science that needs to catch up.

ANDREW

Have you ever heard of Ockham's Razor?

LOUISE

Actually, I have. It's the principal that the simplest explanation is usually the correct one.

ANDREW

Exactly. I rest my case.

LOUISE

You do realise that Ockham was a Franciscan monk who believed in God, and therefore in the existence of good and evil, don't you?

He didn't know that! Touché.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice is sitting at her desk doing her homework. She's absorbed in the task.

The peace is broken by a clear knocking sound. She answers without breaking her flow or looking up:

ALICE

Come in.

Nothing happens. She pays no attention and continues with her work.

A beat, then another series of knocks, this time slightly louder. Alice replies a little more emphatically:

ALICE

Come in. The door's unlocked.

She goes back to her work. Still nothing. A long beat.

Suddenly, the knocking starts up all over again. It is much louder and more insistent this time, as if conveying a sense of urgency.

Vexed, she gets up from her desk abruptly and strides over to the bedroom door.

ALICE

You're not funny, Em. I'm trying to work.

Alice opens the door tetchily. There's nobody there. She peeks out into the landing.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The space is empty. There is no one in the vicinity.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice gently closes the door, then stands there a moment, slightly perplexed.

The knocking suddenly starts up again. Alice slowly turns her head, realizing the source of the disturbance. Her apprehension starts to rise. The noise isn't coming from the landing, but from inside the wardrobe that is situated right next to her!

Alice takes a few steps back, faces the wardrobe. Now that the source has her attention, it abruptly halts the knocking.

ALICE

Em, is that you? You're not funny.

No reply. Alice gulps. Her shaky voice betrays her fear.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Emily?

No reply, but the knocking starts up again. Bursts of rapping delivered at regular intervals.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Who is it? Who's there?

Alice knows what she has to do. Her curiosity, if nothing else, demands it. Slowly and with great trepidation, Alice approaches the wardrobe, her arm out-stretched, ready to grasp the door knob. One fearful step follows another as she inches interminably closer to the wardrobe.

Her breathing quickens as her hand gradually, deliberately reaches for the door knob. Unable to stand the frenzy any longer, Alice yanks the door open with a sudden lurch.

Nothing. There is nothing there but her hanging clothes.

She heaves a huge sigh of relief, then simply stands there rattled, staring into the wardrobe, trying to figure out what just happened.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is busy with household chores. She enters the room laden with a jumble of clothes that need to be laundered.

Bending down precariously, she collects the clothes strewn on the floor, adds them to her growing pile, then leaves.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise enters to find the TV has been left on, tuned into some inane daytime chat show. She tuts, mildly dismayed by the oversight. She picks up the remote control from the bedside cabinet and switches the TV off to standby.

She turns her back, to pick up the clothes on the valet stand, only for sound to fill the room again. She turns to find the TV switched on once more. She's baffled and slightly perturbed, but tries not to read too much into it.

Louise picks up the remote control and switches the TV off again with a firm, if slightly petulant, push of the button.

Satisfied it is truly off this time, Louise turns and pads to the en-suite carrying her laundry.

INT. EN-SUITE, MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise proceeds to empty the laundry basket in the room.

As she does so, the sound of the talk show starts to flow intrusively again. Louise pauses, looks over her shoulder.

She's anxious now, starting to imagine the worst. She goes to investigate.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The TV is, indeed, on again. Louise is as annoyed as she is intimidated by this paranormal display. She sweeps up the remote and aims it squarely at the set. She hits the off button hard, but it does nothing. She tries again. Then again. The TV will not switch off. She's spooked.

Trying hard to maintain her composure, she strides over to the set. She kneels down on the floor and reaches for the extension lead. She tries to figure out quickly which plug belongs to the TV, so she can unplug it.

She pulls out one plug, only to cause a tablet that is charging to go off.

LOUISE

Shit!

She hastily plugs it back in. Tries another. No luck. Then it dawns on her: there is one plug simply lying to one side on the carpet. Surely, it can't be that one?!

Louise slowly picks up the plug and regards it with disbelief before slowly turning her attention to the image on the screen. She is a agog, unable to reconcile what she is seeing - a TV functioning without power!

At that moment, the picture vanishes from the screen in an instant, leaving Louise staring at an inert expanse of black. The sudden termination of the broadcast brings Louise out of her daze. She inserts the plug back into the extension lead, then monitors how the TV responds.

There's a gentle CLICK and the standby light glows momentarily as the current surges back into the appliance. This is quickly followed by the sound of applause, then an image on the screen, as the broadcast of the chat show resumes.

Louise is floored, left utterly baffled and disturbed by the anomaly.

EXT. STONEBRIDGE UNIVERSITY - DAY

A large sign on a grass verge reads:

'Admissions Office. Stonebridge University, Oxford.'

Behind it stands an impressive classical style building.

INT. ADMISSIONS OFFICE, STONEBRIDGE UNIVERSITY - DAY

Louise is at her desk reading a website about ghosts while snacking on a sandwich.

FRANCES HAMMOND, 43, a hard-headed colleague, arrives at Louise's desk clutching some files and catches her unawares. Louise scrambles to minimise the browser, but she's too late to stop Frances catching a glimpse of the website. Louise is a little embarrassed, but decides to brazen it.

FRANCES

I'm sorry to disturb your lunch,
Louise.

LOUISE

That's OK.

FRANCES

I have to leave early today for my
doctor's appointment. Is there any
chance you could assess these
applications for me this afternoon?
They're all overseas students.

LOUISE

Sure, no problem.

Louise takes the documents from Frances a little too keenly, hoping she'll leave. Frances lingers. Drat!

FRANCES

Have you got to the bottom of your
chair incident yet?

Louise shakes her head no. She opens up reluctantly.

LOUISE

I just can't stop obsessing about
it. I've racked my brains endlessly
and it just doesn't make sense.

FRANCES

Ninety-nine percent of so called
'ghostly activity' is anything but.
There's usually a totally mundane
explanation for it.

LOUISE

I know, I know. I'm just worried
I'm one of the remaining one
percent.

FRANCES

It's not the end of the world even
if you do have something in your
house, you know.

Louise is slightly taken aback by Frances' remark.

LOUISE

What do you mean?

FRANCES

A friend of mine told me that her relatives live in a haunted house. The wife saw a woman in Victorian clothing at the foot of her bed once. And they experience strange activity every now and again.

LOUISE

Like what?

FRANCES

Oh, low-level stuff: things moving, the TV switching off by itself...

Louise shifts uncomfortably in response to the last example.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

...the odd magazine being ripped in half. The point is, though, that they've just learned to live with it. They ignore the ghost, leave it alone, and it leaves them alone. I think you're worrying too much.

LOUISE

You're probably right.

FRANCES

I have to go. Thanks for your help.

Frances starts to walk away.

LOUISE

Frances.

Frances halts, turns to face Louise again.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You won't tell anyone else about this will you?

Frances smiles sympathetically, her friend worries too much.

FRANCES

I won't say a word.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Uninhabited. Dark. The oven clock shows it's 3am.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The couple are fast asleep, oblivious to the world.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Serenely still and silent.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Yet another oasis of calm in the early hours.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

A long beat. Then, slowly, the door on the American size fridge-freezer gently opens by itself, as if being pulled by an invisible hand.

The door stays open for a moment, as if held ajar while a ghostly night time forager explores the fridge. It then closes again, equally deliberately.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Emily is at the kitchen table happily playing with alphabet fridge magnets by herself. Louise is rushing around checking the windows and door are secure. Both are wearing coats, ready to go out.

LOUISE

Right, come on, Emily, we've have to go now.

EMILY

But I'm busy.

LOUISE

We've have to go shopping, darling, or there won't be anything for tea tonight. You can play with those when you get back. Now, come on.

Alice walks into the kitchen. Her attire emphasizes fashion at the expense of warmth. Louise looks at her and frowns.

LOUISE

It's freezing outside, Alice, couldn't you wear jeans.

ALICE

(peevisly)

These are fine, Mum!

LOUISE

Never mind. I haven't got the time to argue. Let's go, both of you.

All three depart. Louise closes the door behind her, leaving the kitchen looking spic and span, save for Emily's alphabet magnets, which the little girl has left strewn on the table.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise unlocks the front door and struggles in carrying two big bags of groceries; Emily comes skipping in behind her, unencumbered; Alice trails behind with another bag chock-full of provisions.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise enters the kitchen and simply freezes, dumbfounded by the scene that greets her:

Every cupboard is wide open, the contents strewn everywhere; ingredients like ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise have been squirted liberally all over the room like a splatter painting; cereals and pulses carpet the floor. The place doesn't look as if it has been burglarized, but vandalized.

The girls, who are right behind her, are equally stunned.

LOUISE

Oh, my God!

EMILY

Mummy, what's happened?

ALICE

Who did this?

Louise puts the bags down and surveys the mess. She then turns to Alice and instructs her in a calm, quiet voice:

LOUISE

We've been burgled. They could still be here. Wait outside with your sister and call the police while I check the house.

ALICE

But Mum, look at the fridge!

Alice points to the fridge-freezer.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Burglars wouldn't do that. It's got to be vandals.

Louise looks over at the fridge door. What she sees fills her with dread. Scrawled on it in magnetic letters is a chilling message: 'GET OUT!'.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Andrew and Louise are bickering with each other in angry whispers.

ANDREW

Are you positive you locked every door and window before you left?

LOUISE

Yes, positive! And they were still locked when I got back.

ANDREW

Well, how on earth did they get in?

LOUISE

You tell me!

PC MARK REEVES, a uniformed policeman in his thirties, descends the stairs. Louise immediately cuts short the argument.

PC REEVES

I'm stumped. I can't find any sign of forced entry anywhere.

ANDREW

Well, they got in somehow.

PC REEVES

Have you given a spare key to anyone? Family, friends, neighbours, that sort of thing?

LOUISE

No, we don't know anyone well enough in this area to give one to, and neither of us have family nearby.

PC REEVES

And you say you had the locks changed recently.

ANDREW

Yes, we called in the locksmith as soon as the sale of the house went through.

PC REEVES

Anyone in the family lost their key - even temporarily?

LOUISE

No. In fact, the girls don't even have a key.

PC REEVES

Well, somebody has got hold of a copy somehow. There's no other logical explanation.

Louise bites her tongue. She knows who she thinks the culprit is.

ANDREW

What happens next?

PC REEVES

I'll file a report and arrange for forensics to come over and check for fingerprints, footprints, tool marks, that sort of thing.

ANDREW

What about the message? Surely that's significant.

PC REEVES

It could be someone with a grudge, but then again it could just as easily be somebody playing a prank. I'm sorry, Mr Walker, but we can't open an investigation without proper evidence of a threat.

LOUISE

Do you have a reference number you can give us, for the insurance company?

PC Reeves tears a form from his notepad and hands it to Louise. He indicates the CRN number at the top of the page.

PC REEVES

Yes, it's this number here. Just make a list of any damaged or stolen items and forward it on to them quoting that reference. And forward a copy to us as well.

LOUISE

I will. Thank you.

PC REEVES

Given what's happened today, I recommend you switch the alarm on every time you leave the house from now on. And get your locks changed again.

ANDREW

We will. You can be sure of it.

PC REEVES

I'll be off then. I'm sorry this happened to you. I realise how distressing it is.

Andrew opens the door. PC Reeves smiles politely to the couple, then steps out.

ANDREW

Thank you for your help officer. Goodbye.

PC REEVES

Bye.

Andrew closes the door, then leans his head against it, takes a moment.

ANDREW

(sighs)

I thought this was supposed to be a safe area.

There's a palpable chill in Louise's voice and demeanour. She addresses him with her arms crossed.

LOUISE

It's not the area that's the problem, Andrew, it's this house. Why can't you see that?

ANDREW

Oh, no, not that again. Please.

LOUISE

Items going missing or misplaced weekly, the chair incident, the TV, knocking in Alice's bedroom...Do you not see a pattern? Can you not connect the dots? There's something here.

ANDREW

I'm sorry, but I'm not venturing into the Twilight Zone with you.

LOUISE

Fine. Have it your way.

She turns on her heels and heads off to the kitchen.

Andrew shakes his head in exasperation.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Emily is sitting at a child desk alone in her bedroom. She's occupied with her colouring book.

Her concentration is suddenly broken by the unintelligible whisper of a male voice. She stops what she's doing and cocks her head, tries to listen harder. The whispering stops abruptly. She dismisses it and goes back to her colouring.

A moment later, the murmuring starts up a second time. It's slightly louder this time, but still unintelligible. Emily immediately stops what she's doing once more and listens out for it. Nothing but silence again. Except, this time she's certain she heard something - someone - and that it wasn't just her imagination.

EMILY

Who is it?

An uncomfortable hush.

She feels uneasy, but reluctantly goes back to her colouring.

A beat, then the murmuring recommences. This time it lasts much longer. It's a barely audible babble, a stream of quietly spoken words. But then, suddenly, clearly, we hear her name whispered teasingly.

ENTITY

Emily...Emily...

Discomfited by the voice, but unable to place its origin or make any sense of it, Emily gathers up her crayons and her colouring book, and heads on out of the room.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Andrew is at his desk making a call. He's riled, speaking more loudly and forcefully than he realises, despite the unfailingly polite tone of the overseas CALL CENTRE AGENT.

ANDREW

(into phone)

Look, there is no way on earth that I could have consumed five hundred pounds worth of electricity in a month. It's impossible.

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)

According to our readings, Sir, the bill is correct.

ANDREW

(into phone)

Only someone with a cannabis farm in their loft could get close to this figure and I can assure you I don't have one of those in my house!

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)

Cannabis, Sir?

ANDREW

(into phone)

Never mind. Look, the reading cannot be correct, there must be some mistake.

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)

There is no mistake, Mr Walker. You were billed correctly, according to your meter reading.

ANDREW

(into phone)

Well, I'm not going to pay such a ridiculous sum, and I demand that you send somebody to check the meter and our connection - urgently!

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)
 We can certainly do that for you.
 I've noted your number. Rather than
 keep you on hold, would you mind if
 I arrange for the relevant team to
 call you back shortly?

ANDREW
 (into phone)
 Yes, you do that.

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)
 Very well. Is there anything else I
 can do for you today, Mr Walker?

ANDREW
 (into phone)
 No, thank you.

CALL CENTRE AGENT (V.O.)
 Thank you for...

Andrew slams the phone down and sighs in exasperation. He takes a breath, tries to reign-in his indignation.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The couple are both in a deep slumber. The bedside alarm clock reads 3am. It's witching hour once more.

The house alarm suddenly jumps to life, BLARES deafeningly. Andrew and Louise awake with a startle.

LOUISE
 Jesus Christ!

ANDREW
 What the hell!

Louise flicks on the bedside lamp. They both sit up in bed disorientated, as they struggle to adjust to the sudden glare.

ANDREW
 I'll go and check. You stay
 upstairs.

Andrew throws the bedsheets back and heads for the door. Louise follows.

LOUISE
 Wait. What if there's somebody
 there? You've got no protection.

Andrew realises she's right. He racks his brains, trying to think of a suitable weapon. He grabs a can of hairspray from the dressing table and heads for the door.

ANDREW

This will have to do. Keep your mobile handy, just in case.

Louise snatches her mobile phone from her bedside cabinet.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew flicks on the light.

A groggy Alice and Emily come out of their respective bedrooms.

ALICE

What's going on?

LOUISE

(whispering sharply)
Get back in your rooms, both of you!

The two girls obediently retreat to the safety of their bedrooms, closing the doors behind them.

Andrew starts to descend the stairs guardedly.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

(whispering)
Andrew, be careful.

Andrew simply nods to her, then steels himself before carrying on down the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

He advances down the hall, his improvised weapon at the ready, his breath on hold, his heart working overtime.

He heads into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew enters, trepidatious and alert. He flicks on the light and scans the room. Nothing untoward. He moves on.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The lights come on. Andrew enters, wary. He checks for signs of an intruder. There are none. Everything is as they left it.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew silences the wailing alarm by keying-in the code on the control panel.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

A relieved Andrew walks back in. Louise is waiting anxiously.

LOUISE

Well?

ANDREW

Nothing. There's probably a fault in one of the motion detectors or maybe the wiring in the control panel. I'll get it checked out, along with Alice's flickering light and the meter.

LOUISE

Well, it hasn't happened before.

Andrew flops back into bed.

ANDREW

We'll worry about it in the morning, Louise. I need to sleep. I've got a 5 o'clock start, remember?

It is obvious from the look of consternation on Louise's face what she thinks caused the alarm to trip unexpectedly.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

BARRY JENKINS, a potbellied electrician in his late fifties, is testing the burglar alarm control panel. He finishes up, then turns to address Andrew and Louise, who are hovering nearby, waiting patiently for him to finish.

BARRY

There's nothing wrong with your alarm. Just as there's nothing wrong with your TV or the flickering light in the bedroom.

LOUISE

Do you have ANY explanation for the problems we've been experiencing with the electrics or the huge bill?

BARRY

None, Mrs Walker. I'm completely baffled. I really am. I've been in this game for over thirty years and I can guarantee you there's nothing wrong with the wiring in this house.

ANDREW

It just doesn't make sense.

BARRY

I still recommend you get your supplier to send out one of their engineers to check the meter, though.

ANDREW

Oh, don't worry, I will. It's the only way I'll get them to admit they've cocked-up the bill.

Louise shoots Andrew a chagrined look. He doesn't notice.

BARRY

I think you're right, but you know what it's like trying to talk to these big companies. You might as well be banging your head against a brick wall.

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Barry steps out of the house and waves goodbye. Andrew waves back as he closes the front door.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Andrew pushes the door shut, then turns to face Louise.

LOUISE

You heard the man, there's nothing wrong with the wiring in this house.

ANDREW

Then there must be some other explanation. There has to be.

LOUISE

Really? Well, let me know when you find it.

Infuriated by Andrew's intransigence, she turns on her heels and marches off to the kitchen, leaving him looking sheepish.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

It's the dead of night. Andrew is fast asleep with his back to Louise. She lies awake next to him, unable to sleep, restive, apprehensive. Her bedside lamp is on for comfort.

Louise scans the room for the source of her unease, but there's nothing there but darkness. She lies there a beat, tries to calm herself, to regulate her breathing. She feels foolish for being so scared, but at the same time can't shake off the feeling that her fear is valid.

It is no use. With reluctance, she gently shakes Andrew, to wake him.

LOUISE

Andrew.

Andrew stirs.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Andrew, I can't sleep. I'm scared.

He turns to face her.

ANDREW

Scared of what?

There's a quiet desperation in her voice.

LOUISE

I know it sound's stupid, but I can't shake off the feeling of being watched all the time. Like there's someone or something in the house with me, lurking.

Andrew pulls her close to him and wraps his arms around her reassuringly.

ANDREW

Look, we've both been under a lot of stress with the move and it's still a new environment. It's normal to feel unsettled at first. You'll be fine, I promise.

LOUISE

It's not stress, Andrew. It's more than that. Like there's something profoundly evil inhabiting this house. Even now, right here in this room. Can you not sense it?

He sighs with frustration.

ANDREW

Look around you, darling. There's nothing here but the two of us. You're working yourself up into a tizzy about nothing.

LOUISE

I know. I know. But...there's something that's just not right about this house. I'm worried.

ANDREW

Ghosts - if they exist - are usually associated with old houses
(MORE)

ANDREW (cont'd)
with lots of history. I doubt very
much they rattle around modern
places like this.

LOUISE
What if something happened here to
trigger a haunting? What if
something evil followed a previous
occupant here and settled?

He caresses her face gently.

ANDREW
I doubt it. I think your suffering
from a classic case of cognitive
bias.

LOUISE
(irked)
So you think I'm just making this
up?!

ANDREW
No. It's just that if you believe
in ghostly things to start of with,
then you're more likely to explain
strange or random events in those
terms, rather than rationally.

LOUISE
But what if something defies
rational explanation?

Andrew is keen to wrap up the conversation.

ANDREW
(gently)
Look, we've both got an early start
tomorrow. Why don't you try and get
some sleep and we'll talk about
this more in the morning, OK?

Without waiting for a reply, Andrew releases his embrace,
turns his back and tries to go back to sleep.

Louise retreats to her pillow. She feels hurt and neglected
by his lack of comprehension, his close-mindedness.

As she lies there in the dark, her resentfulness starts to
well up and she begins to cry quietly. Despite their close
physical proximity, they are still worlds apart on this
issue.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is busy preparing a meal. She's alone in the house.
It's a normal day, calm and quiet

LOUISE

I know you're in there. Come on out. Show yourself.

No reply. She tries to calm her breathing. Thinks what to do next.

She peers into the room from the safety of the doorway.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Empty. There's not even a hint of the shadow she saw traversing moments earlier. It has vanished into thin air.

Louise enters the room. Guardedly, hastily, she scopes the small en-suite from the relative safety of the bedroom.

INT. EN-SUITE, MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Unoccupied. No sign of the Entity.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise then scans the bedroom for anything untoward. She catches site of the source of the thud: a large suitcase lying on the floor, at the foot of the bed. It's fallen out from the top of one of the wardrobes where it was stored.

She stands reeling, feeling profoundly perturbed and perplexed by the latest turn of events.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

It's early evening. Andrew is still in his work clothes and looks as though he's been dragged up here by Louise the moment he arrived home.

The two are quarrelling. Louise is as vehement in her argument as she is frustrated by Andrew's unwillingness to open up to what is really happening in the house. She's almost on the verge of tears, a bubbling cauldron of emotion. Andrew just looks annoyed.

ANDREW

It fell. There's no need for any other explanation.

LOUISE

But how? What caused it to fall? Tell me that. And why today and not before? Suitcases don't just fall out of wardrobes of their own accord.

ANDREW

Random things happen, Louise. It doesn't mean there are paranormal goings-on in our house.

LOUISE

There's no rational explanation for what happened today, nor for any of the other happenings. You need to face facts. Open up your mind. Science can't explain everything. Test tubes and mathematical equations don't tell the whole story.

ANDREW

No, you need to face facts: there's nothing supernatural going on here. This house is perfectly normal.

LOUISE

(counting on her fingers)
Really? Normal? You're not even here when half of the stuff happens. If you were, you'd see!

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The family are eating a meal at the table.

Louise is sullen. Everybody eats in awkward silence.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - LATER

Louise dries the dishes while Andrew washes up. She's still giving him the silent treatment.

He tries to 'reason' with her.

ANDREW

Fine. Let's say for a moment you're right and we do have a ghost in our house. What can we do about it? Who are we going to turn to, heh? The police? The council? The church? I can't even remember the last time either of us set foot in a church.

LOUISE

We have to do something, Andrew. We can't just ignore it. It's getting worse by the day.

ANDREW

What if the neighbours find out or, worse, what if the media get wind of this. We'll become a laughing stock. Do you really want that?

LOUISE

No, of course not. But I'm not going to have my happiness in this house jeopardised either.

ANDREW

That's exactly what you're doing
with all this paranormal mumbo
jumbo.

LOUISE

I need your support to get to the
bottom of this. If I don't get it,
then make no mistake, I will look
for a solution by myself.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is rushing to cook the evening meal before Andrew gets home. The two girls are helping out by setting the table. Of the three, Alice is the only one facing the breakfast bar.

From her vantage point, Alice witnesses the well-stocked fruit bowl slide a couple of inches across the breakfast bar with a sudden, jerky movement. She stalls, startled, and can't quite believe what she saw happen.

ALICE

Mum, look! The fruit bowl moved by
itself!

Louise turns around, sees the panic on the girl's face.

LOUISE

What do you mean?

ALICE

It just moved by itself. It slid
across. Watch!

The bowl is static once more. But Louise knows better than to discount any unusual activity in the house these days. She keeps her eyes peeled. They all do.

All of a sudden, the same thing happens again, the bowl progresses sideways by several inches in the same jerky manner as before. They are all astounded.

ALICE

Jesus Christ, Mum!

LOUISE

Good Lord!

EMILY

I'm scared.

LOUISE

Alice, go get your phone, so we can
film this and show your Dad.
Quickly!

LOUISE
 (to Alice)
 What happened?

ALICE
 I don't know. I just heard her
 scream, then found her like this
 when I came in.

Louise cuddles Emily, tries to soothe her.

LOUISE
 It's alright, sweetheart, it's
 alright. Tell Mummy what happened,
 hmm?

Emily speaks haltingly, with shuddering sobs.

EMILY
 Somebody touched me.

These are words no parent wants to hear. Louise is alarmed.

LOUISE
 Who touched you? Where?

EMILY
 In bed.

ANDREW
 But there's nobody here except you,
 darling.

EMILY
 I was lying awake, because I
 couldn't sleep. Then I saw the door
 close all by itself. Then I felt
 this hand touch me like this...

She strokes her cheek gently three times, to demonstrate.

Louise suddenly feels sick to her stomach. She turns to
 Andrew, tries to communicate her alarm to him silently.

ANDREW
 Emily, the door probably closed by
 itself, because the hinges are
 loose. And when you found yourself
 in the dark suddenly, you got
 scared and thought somebody had
 touched you, that's all.

Louise is annoyed with him. Emily is adamant.

EMILY
 No, Daddy! I felt a hand; it was
 really cold and horrible.

LOUISE

I believe you, sweetie. I believe you. I'll tell you what, why don't you come and sleep with me tonight, and Daddy can stay here. Would you like that?

Emily nods her agreement. Louise picks her up and heads for the door, along with Alice. As she goes, Louise gives Andrew a stern and disapproving look that says it all.

Andrew sits forlornly on the bed, alone, feeling like he's the bad guy.

INT. LIBRARY, STONEBRIDGE UNIVERSITY - DAY

Vast. Monastic. Populated by scholars studying in silence.

Louise is in the section marked Paranormal. She scans the shelves and selects a handful of books on ghosts, poltergeist and hauntings.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew and Louise lie in bed. Andrew is dead to the world, snoring gently in his slumber. Louise shifts impatiently, desperately trying to fall asleep. She gives up and simply lies on her back, staring into the gloom.

She glances over at the bedside clock. It reads 2:59am. She sighs defeatedly. The time on the clock advances to 3am.

The scene remains the same for a long beat: Louise killing time in the murk of a seemingly endless night.

Out of nowhere, without warning and with deliberate slowness, the bed sheet on Louise's side begins to bulge, as if someone is sliding in on top of her from the foot of the bed.

Louise senses something perverse. She lifts her head up from the bed slightly to check. She struggles to make out the form that is creeping towards her. Then she realises there's an intruder in the bed with her. Her eyes bulge with horror and her body instinctively stiffens with fear in response.

The Entity is almost on top of her now. The contour of the raised sheet outlines what appears to be a human form.

A second later and she feels something heavy weighing down on her whole body. She tries to push it off, but the invisible load pins her down hard.

Panicking, she tries to cry for help, but her voice barely even registers as a whisper.

LOUISE

Andrew. Andrew. Help. Help.

She tries to move, determinedly, to push the Entity off her. No use, it's too powerful. She's helpless, and she knows it.

After what seems like an eternity to Louise, but is in fact mere seconds, the Entity lets go and vanishes in an instant. The bulge collapses and the sheet reverts to its normal, flattened form.

Screaming hysterically, Louise leaps out of bed like a cat on a hot tin roof and paces the floor, holding her head in her hands.

The commotion snaps Andrew awake. He jumps out of bed and rushes to her side, concerned. He tries to calm her.

ANDREW

What is it? What happened?

Louise is hyperventilating, she's so spooked. Andrew manages to pacify her enough that she can at least talk with some semblance of coherence.

LOUISE

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! It was here! It was right here!

She points to the bed emphatically.

ANDREW

What was here? What happened? Tell me.

LOUISE

That thing! That thing! It...it got into bed with me!

ANDREW

What thing? Calm down. You're not making sense.

LOUISE

Whatever's in this house! The presence! It got into bed with me. It pinned me down. I could feel it's weight on top of me.

It's all too much for her. She starts to sob. Andrew hugs her.

ANDREW

You had a nightmare, that's all.

He's just lit her touchpaper. Incensed, she pulls away from him abruptly, then explodes:

LOUISE

It wasn't a fucking nightmare, Andrew! I was awake the whole time.

(MORE)

LOUISE (cont'd)

Just like I am most nights now,
because I'm too scared to close my
eyes.

ANDREW

OK, OK. I believe you. Just take
some deep breaths. Do you want me
to get you anything?

LOUISE

I want you to believe me, that's
what I want. I want you to make
this thing go away, to leave us
alone.

He looks at her helplessly. He's a man lost, totally out of
his depth as well as his intellectual comfort zone.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

A consulting room in a modern surgery. The doctor, LIAM
MARCUS, a presumptuous man in his forties, sits behind his
desk. A frazzled-looking Louise sits facing him.

She waits in silence as he fills out a prescription form.
She seems quietly sullen and resentful.

He finishes writing the prescription and hands it to her,
along with some pamphlets and print-outs.

DR. MARCUS

Here's a prescription for some
sleeping pills, and here's some
literature on insomnia that you may
find useful.

Louise accepts the papers.

DR. MARCUS (CONT'D)

As I said earlier, anxiety,
depression and especially stress
related to a major event like a
house move can all induce
hallucinations. Occasionally, these
can be paranormal in nature. The
feeling of somebody pressing down
on you is surprisingly common,
you'll find.

Louise just stares back at him, endures the lecture.

DR. MARCUS (CONT'D)

I suggest you complete the course
of medication I've given you and
attempt the relaxation techniques I
described earlier. Give it a month.
See how you get on.

LOUISE

And if there's no improvement?

DR. MARCUS

Well, then we can discuss other options, such as referring you to a psychologist for a course of CBT.

LOUISE

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy?

DR. MARCUS

Yes, that's right. It's been proven to help with insomnia. There is a three month waiting list for treatment, though.

LOUISE

I see.

DR. MARCUS

Personally, I don't think we'll need to go down that road.

LOUISE

No?

DR. MARCUS

No. A little sleep and relaxation usually work wonders. And don't worry, there are really no such things as ghosts. We all know that.

He smiles reassuringly. End of debate.

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice is bathing in the shower, luxuriating under the jet of hot water. The room is engulfed in a haze of steam.

She stops showering, opens the door and retrieves her towel.

Alice steps out of the cubicle and begins to spray her hair with conditioner. As she does so, she hears a tiny but strangely familiar SQUEAK. She immediately shifts her attention to the source of the noise. It's the mixer tap in the wash basin.

To her utter amazement, the lever lifts up slowly, deliberately, as if operated by an invisible hand. Steaming hot water starts to gush out. She's unnerved by the display.

ALICE

Muuuum! Mum!

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise is busy sorting the the laundry. The noise from the washing machine drowns out Alice's cries completely.

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The tap begins to turn off in the same fashion as it came on. Alice calls out again, but with greater urgency.

ALICE

Mum, come upstairs! Quickly!

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise carries on sifting through the laundry oblivious.

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice's nightmare deepens: she hears the shrill squeaking of a finger dragging on moist glass. She looks up, and to her profound horror she sees letters forming on the steamed mirror, seemingly by themselves.

'L...E...'

Alice, petrified, starts to scream at the top of her lungs. She rushes to the door and tries to open it. It won't budge.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise steps out of the laundry room encumbered with a basket full of clothes and hears Alice's screams for the first time. She drops the basket on floor and races out.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise bounds up the stairs, panicked.

LOUISE

Alice?! What's the matter! I'm coming!

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice continues to pull on the handle maniacally, using all her strength, but the door will not open. She twists and turns the swivel lock every which way, but it makes no difference.

She glances over at the mirror. The Entity continues scribing on the steamed surface of the mirror in bold, clear letters.

L...E...A...

Alice starts to become even more hysterical.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise rushes to the bathroom door. She's frantic.

LOUISE
What's happened?! Alice!

She turns the door handle, pushes it. It doesn't open.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Alice, unlock the door!

ALICE (O.S.)
It is! It just won't open!

Louise strains to push the door open from the outside, but try as she might, the door will not budge.

LOUISE
(to herself, imploring)
Come on! Come on!

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice is in a fear-fuelled frenzy. She continues to pull at the handle frantically. It's no use. It is as if the door has been hermetically sealed.

ALICE
Mum help me! Help me! Oh God!

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

LOUISE
I'm trying, Alice! I'm trying!

Louise engages every sinew in her body, but she has no more success in unbarring the door than her daughter.

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice continues to tug at the handle furiously. No luck.

All of a sudden, Alice's long hair start to rise up slowly until they are all standing on end above her head. It is a chilling and gravity defying display.

She starts to hyperventilate.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise is beside herself with worry, but utterly helpless. She vents her fury at the Entity:

LOUISE
My baby! Don't you touch my baby!

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice's hair suddenly drops down, as if let go of.

At that same instant, the obstruction disappears and the door flies open, catching both mother and daughter unawares.

JOHN

Do you know how many years I've been researching and lecturing on the paranormal?

LOUISE

No.

JOHN

Thirty. Three decades. When I started out, I was a complete skeptic, determined to prove that parapsychology was basically all bunkum. Things didn't exactly go according to plan. Over the years, I witnessed paranormal phenomena with my own eyes that defied all logical, all scientific explanation, and forced me to change my stance. But it's evidence that I can't talk about openly - not if I want to be taken seriously as an academic. Do you follow?

LOUISE

You mean the management forbid you, lest you damage the university's reputation?

He shrugs his shoulders dismissively.

JOHN

You work here too, you know how they operate.

LOUISE

Then talk to me off the record, John. I need help.

JOHN

Strictly of the record?

LOUISE

Absolutely.

John studies her a moment. Sizes her up. Considers if she'll be able to handle what he's about to reveal.

He rises from his chair and retrieves a tome from one of the surrounding bookshelves. He thumbs through it, searching.

JOHN

I'm afraid the events you've described carry all the hallmarks of a perpetrator much, much worse than a ghost or poltergeist.

LOUISE

What could possibly be worse?

He returns to his desk, perches on the edge, facing Louise. He puts the open book down in front of her, then taps the page, pointing to a medieval drawing of a demon.

She studies it, incredulous.

LOUISE

The devil?

JOHN

Not quite. A demonic entity.

LOUISE

Surely demons are purely mythical?

JOHN

Demonologists believe that demons are very real. That they're a higher dimensional entity than ghosts or poltergeist. Some even believe that they are fallen angels who work for Satan himself.

Louise throws her hands up, overwhelmed by what she's hearing.

LOUISE

Wait, this is too much! I mean, demons! Satan!...

She's reacting exactly as he feared she might. He pauses a moment for her before continuing.

JOHN

I know it's difficult, but you need to consider every possibility, if you want to drive this thing out of your home.

LOUISE

I am, believe me, but this is...it's just...

She realises he's right. She takes a breath. Starts over.

LOUISE

You're right. I'm sorry. Go on.

JOHN

Demons are considered to be fundamentally evil. They feed off human emotions, especially fear and anger.

LOUISE

Meaning they exist simply to cause chaos and terror?

JOHN

Precisely. Worse, demons can latch onto humans, possess them, take over their minds and bodies. In extreme cases they can appear in physical form, even disguise themselves as others.

LOUISE

Whatever is in our house was there before we moved in. I'm certain of it. But where did it come from? And why our house?

JOHN

It could have entered the property any number of ways: followed someone there, a ouija board, satanic worship. We'll never know.

LOUISE

How do we get rid of it? Would an exorcism work?

JOHN

Possibly. But be warned, it could just as easily make matters worse, act as a provocation. Demons are hard to expel, because they're thought to draw on satanic power for strength.

Louise lets the profundity of the information sink in.

LOUISE

What do you suggest we do?

JOHN

Gather more evidence, so we're certain of what we're dealing with.

LOUISE

We don't have time for that. This demon, this entity, whatever it is, it wants us out.

JOHN

It's essential. Otherwise, you'll be battling an enemy you don't even understand?

He has a point. Louise relents.

LOUISE

I can't do it alone.

JOHN

You don't have to. A former student of mine set up a paranormal investigation team with some like-minded colleagues. I can give you their details, if you wish. They'd jump at a case like yours.

Louise simply nods in the affirmative.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise hovers by the telephone, clutching a sheet of paper. She goes to pick up the handset, but then backs off, hesitates.

She looks down at the sheet pensively. It is a print out of the website of the Oxfordshire Paranormal Investigation Group, their phone number clearly visible on the page.

She considers for a moment, her mind flip-flopping. She then picks up the handset in a resolute fashion and dials the number. She waits anxiously to be connected.

A young man answers.

MATTHEW (V.O.)

Oxfordshire Paranormal
Investigation Group. Matt speaking.

Louise pauses, not sure if she really wants to go down this road and all that it entails. Then:

LOUISE

(into phone)

I think we might have a presence in our house. We need help.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The doorbell rings. Louise pads to the front door. Opens it.

Standing before her, lugging equipment, are three young men in their late twenties: MATTHEW CARVER, the leader, handsome and charismatic; DAVID BROOKS, a stout, bearded hipster; and PAUL BENNETT, a diffident Afro-Caribbean anorak in nerdy glasses. They make for an unlikely trio.

MATTHEW

I'm Matt, from the paranormal team. We spoke on the phone. You must be Mrs Walker.

LOUISE

I am. Please, come in. I've been expecting you.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Louise enters first, followed by the trio. Andrew rises to greet them.

LOUISE
This my husband, Andrew.

Andrew shakes hands with Matthew.

MATTHEW
Hi, I'm Matt. This is Dave, our videographer, and Paul, our techie.

DAVID
Hello.

Andrew shakes hands with David and Paul too.

ANDREW
Hi, guys

LOUISE
Can I get you something to drink before you start? Tea, coffee?

MATTHEW
I'm fine, thanks. Guys?

DAVID
I'm good too.

PAUL
No thank you, Mrs Walker.

LOUISE
Please, call me Louise. No need for formalities.

MATTHEW
The truth is, we'd like to hit the ground running. We're keen to gather as much evidence as we can, as quickly as we can.

DAVID
Yeah, we have lot of kit we'd like to rig up and that's going to take up most of the morning, so we need to get cracking, if you don't mind.

LOUISE
I understand. That's fine. If you do need anything, then just let me or Andrew know.

Andrew can't resist the urge to express his skepticism, no matter how subtly.

ANDREW

If you don't mind me asking, how long have you guys been investigating?

Matthew knows exactly what's behind the question, as dealing with rationalists and doubters is an occupational hazard.

MATTHEW

No, not at all. I became fascinated with the paranormal while studying for my psychology degree. These two got into it even before me.

ANDREW

I see.

DAVID

Yeah, we've investigated more than sixty cases over the years. I'd say, between us, we've got over two decades of experience with the paranormal.

PAUL

Your case is by far the most intriguing we've come across so far, though.

Louise chuckles nervously.

LOUISE

I'm not sure 'intriguing' is the best description.

Andrew continues, barely disguising his cynicism.

ANDREW

And what's your take on the supernatural, exactly. Do you think it exists?

MATTHEW

We like to keep an open mind.

ANDREW

Good. Well, I think I'll let you get on. I'll be in the study if you need me.

Andrew exits.

Louise shares an embarrassed look with the three men.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

David sits prepping a camera. Lots of other equipment is strewn over the table. A cola bottle sits on the table too.

Emily stands watching him, clutching a cuddly toy. David doesn't mind her being there, he's comfortable with her presence.

EMILY

What is that?

DAVID

It's a special camera. It only comes on when it senses something move in front of it.

EMILY

Like a ghost?

DAVID

Yeah, like a ghost.

EMILY

I have one in my room, you know? I can feel it near me sometimes, when it's around.

David is slightly taken aback by the candour of her revelation, but recovers quickly.

DAVID

Well, let's see if we can chase it out of the house, shall we?

Just as soon as he's finished uttering those words, as if in remonstrance, the cola bottle slowly starts to drag across the table by itself.

David and Emily both turn their heads slowly, to watch the bottle move. They then turn back and look at each other. David gulps nervously, discomfited.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Matt and Dave are fast asleep on the floor in sleeping bags.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Judging by the mass of equipment that has been set up there - laptops, TV screens, directional microphones, sensors and other paraphernalia - the room is clearly serving as the trio's command centre.

Paul is on the night shift, monitoring the equipment for any signs of activity. There is none. All is quiet.

He yawns, leans back in his chair and stretches his arms. He gets up and walks out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

As Paul enters the kitchen, we see that the clock on the oven reads 3am.

He's feeling peckish. He walks over to the new wire fruit bowl and helps himself to an apple. He takes a bite from it, then heads back to the dining room with it.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

He enters the room and immediately stops in his tracks. The lights on the REM pod are flickering wildly and it's beeping.

He shouts out to alert the others.

PAUL

Guys, wake up! I think I've got something!

Psyched, he rushes to the table and sits down. He picks up the spirit box and sees that it's recording. He grabs his headphones and sticks them on. He then starts to fiddle with the controls, adjusting them, trying to tune in, trying to get a clearer signal.

Matthew and David rush in. They are totally amped up too.

Matthew gestures to David to helm the camera.

MATTHEW

Camera! Now!

David knows the drill and complies without a word. They work seamlessly, as a team. Each one of them knows what is expected of him in a situation like this.

Matthew grabs a K2 meter from the table, holds it up, then addresses the Entity confidently.

MATTHEW

Is there somebody there? Would you like to communicate with us? If you do, can you make the light on my meter blink once for no and twice for yes for me please. Do you want us to go away?

A long beat as they wait for a sign. Nothing. Silence.

MATTHEW

Are you angry with us? Do you want us to help you?

Still no response.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Did you used to live here?

Any activity that was registering on their equipment stops abruptly.

PAUL
It's vanished, Matt.

MATTHEW
Shit! We almost had it! We came
that close to communicating with
it!

He holds his forefinger and thumb close together to indicate.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Dave, did you get anything?

DAVID
(shaking his head)
Nothing, mate.

MATTHEW
God, this is so frustrating. It's
like it's playing with us, teasing
us.

Paul sits listening intently to something on his laptop. He looks troubled. He pulls off his headphones and looks at the other two with a spooked expression.

PAUL
I think you need to listen to this.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - LATER

Andrew and Louise sit huddled around the table with the trio. The couple are dressed in their nightgowns and still look a little groggy. Matthew, David and Paul look deadly serious.

MATTHEW
Ready?

Andrew nods his agreement. Louise doesn't look so sure.

Paul clicks play on the recording software on his laptop. The computer is rigged up to a pair of high fidelity speakers, so that any sound comes through loud and clear.

We hear the recording from earlier played back: the commotion and excitement as they prepare to communicate, Matthew asking the Entity to respond, etc.

A long, agonising beat. Andrew and Louise sit with bated breath.

Then...

A low, demonic growl suddenly emanates from the speakers. Andrew focuses, intrigued. Louise shifts uneasily. She looks at Matthew, as if for reassurance. From his look, she realises there is worse to come. She shifts her focus back

to the laptop.

In a clear, emphatic, but inhuman voice, bestial and angry, the Entity speaks:

ENTITY

You have to go!

A chill runs down the spine of everyone present, be they a skeptic or a believer. Louise gasps loudly, covers her mouth with her hands. Her eyes bulge with horror. It's her worst nightmare come true.

She slowly turns to Andrew, gives him a look of vindication. He looks back at her, suddenly a little less certain of his stance on the paranormal.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Close on bathroom door. We hear the toilet flush, then water gushing from a tap.

The door opens and out comes David.

Something catches his attention almost immediately. He halts abruptly. Watches it, enthralled.

On the landing wall in front of him, he can see a dark, vaguely human shadow moving, just as Louise did earlier. He tracks it in astonishment as it crosses into the master bedroom. It does so slowly, with intent, as if wanting to be seen. David shouts down to the others.

DAVID

Matt, Paul, get up here now!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

David enters. Looks around the room. It's empty. The shadow has vanished into thin air again.

He stands in the middle of the room nonplussed. In the background, we can hear his team mates' footsteps thundering up the stairs at speed.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Coming!

Without warning, all the doors on the wardrobes and all the cabinet drawers explode open with a thunderous burst, ejecting their contents. Clothes and other possessions fly out in every direction, scattering like confetti. David steps back, startled.

Matthew and Paul arrive a moment later, equipment in hand. They look around gobsmacked, trying to take in the shambles the room has been left in.

Calmly and without turning around to face either of them:

DAVID

Did you at least hear it?

Still surveying the mess in the room, and equally calmly:

MATTHEW

Yeah, we heard it.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

A lull. David is on his laptop viewing a series of photos taken in various parts of the house. As he cycles through the images, he notices that several of the snaps feature strange orbs of light. His curiosity is piqued.

A series of feeds from the various cameras set up around the house play on a second laptop next to him.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise serves Matthew, Paul and the girls breakfast with Andrew's assistance. They are all still in pyjamas.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The tripod-mounted camera suddenly whirs into life and pans, as if tracking something enter and then cross the room.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The camera's movement displays simultaneously on the second laptop and is accompanied by a BEEP. David springs out of his chair and heads for the door.

He shouts out to the others as he goes.

DAVID

We've movement in Alice's bedroom,
folks!

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

David leads the charge up the stairs. Matt, Paul, Andrew and Louise follow.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The group enters the room. They look around. Normality.

Matthew begins to prowl steadily with his EMF meter, analysing the reading as he goes.

MATTHEW

Make sure you get a reading, Paul.

PAUL

Don't worry, I've got it covered.

The needle on Matthews device almost goes off the scale.

MATTHEW

My meter's going crazy.

PAUL

(thermometer gun in hand)

Me too. The thermometer plunged as soon as I stepped into this room.

MATTHEW

It's definitely colder here than anywhere else.

David fiddles with the controls on the video camera.

DAVID

This camera's suddenly shut down. It's dead.

MATTHEW

(to the Entity)

Come on, stop teasing. Give us another sign.

Louise stands frozen, sensing the atmosphere. She bristles, suddenly alarmed.

LOUISE

It's here. I can feel it.

The atmosphere is charged, febrile. Everyone is expectant, but not sure of what.

A beat.

Suddenly, Matthew is lifted from the ground and flung upwards at lightening speed, like a paperclip to a magnet. He screams as he zooms up. He hits the ceiling with incredible force.

DAVID

Shit!

PAUL

Jees!

Louise screams. The others freeze with shock. They look on powerless as Matthew is pinned flat to the ceiling.

He stays there for about two seconds. Then, as quickly and as suddenly as he was elevated, Matthew is thrown back down again, as if forcibly ejected. He clips the bed on his way down, breaking his fall somewhat, before tumbling to the floor with a resounding THUD.

Andrew rushes to Matthew, to check on him.

ANDREW

Matt, are you OK?

Matthew nods yes. He is winded but otherwise unhurt. His shocked expression says it all.

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Paul and Dave hurriedly load the last of their gear into their van while Matt converses with a distraught and pleading Louise on the doorstep.

The investigating trio look harried, desperate to leave the cursed property.

LOUISE

But we need your help!

MATTHEW

I'm sorry, Louise, but we're not prepared to risk physical injury, or worse. Not even in the interests of science. This thing wants us out.

LOUISE

Please, we need evidence. We won't be able to get anyone to help us without it. Nobody will believe us.

MATTHEW

I'll send you everything we've gathered so far. I promise. But we can't stay. I'm really sorry.

LOUISE

How are we supposed to cope alone? You saw what it's capable of.

MATTHEW

Look, the situation in your house is much, much more serious than we anticipated. You don't need us, you need a medium or a priest.

With that, Matthew turns and leaves. He jumps into the awaiting van. The vehicle tears out of the driveway and off down the road.

Louise stands in the doorway watching them go. She looks dejected and profoundly worried.

EXT. PLAYGROUND, OAKVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY

The end of the school day. Mothers are picking up their infants. Louise is among them.

Emily comes running out of her class with her school bag. Her teacher, NATALIE BURRIDGE, 25, follows behind. She's kind, nurturing and very good at her job.

Natalie approaches Louise. It is clear from her grave expression that she wants to discuss something important with Louise.

NATALIE

Mrs Walker, do you have a moment?

Louise is immediately concerned.

LOUISE

Yes, of course. Is everything OK?

INT. CLASSROOM, OAKVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY

Natalie and Louise sit facing each other. Louise silently sifts through a series of drawings and paintings by Emily. All the images are macabre and disturbing, featuring themes of blood, death or demons.

Natalie tries to be as sensitive as she can, but she knows there is no easy way to tackle such an awkward conversation.

NATALIE

You can see now why I'm so concerned.

Louise looks up, aghast.

LOUISE

Yes. I had no idea.

NATALIE

Children often have trouble settling in at the start. But this...this is unlike anything I've seen before. I'm sorry, I have to ask, but is everything OK at home?

LOUISE

(slightly flustered)

Yes, yes, everything is normal. No issues at all.

NATALIE

It's not just the pictures, you see.

LOUISE

What do you mean?

NATALIE

Emily's been very moody and tearful in class recently too. I'm very concerned. Are you sure there's nothing you want to share with me?

Louise is genuinely surprised and perturbed to hear this. She speaks as if she's trying to convince herself as much as she is Natalie:

LOUISE

No. You know kids, they're so sensitive at that age. Emily's probably still stressed out by the house move and the fact that this is a new school. I'll have a chat with her, I promise. She'll be fine.

But Natalie is not persuaded and just smiles politely.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Alice and Emily sit morosely at the top of the stairs listening to their parents arguing in the living room. Alice has one arm around her little sister's shoulder to reassure her.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Andrew and Louise are both arguing loudly and vehemently.

ANDREW

We can't afford to move. You know that.

LOUISE

We can't afford not to. I'm not prepared to put my children's life at risk any longer, Andrew.

ANDREW

Neither am I, but I don't want to plunge us into debt either. You're still part-time, remember?

LOUISE

We'll manage, we always have.

ANDREW

If we sell now, we'll lose thousands, tens of thousands if you want a quick sale.

LOUISE

We don't have an alternative. Why can't you see that?

ANDREW

I'll spell it out to you again: we'll end up drowning in debt.

LOUISE

Better than ending up dead!

Andrew sneers dismissively.

ANDREW

Oh, don't be so melodramatic,
Louise.

LOUISE

You saw what it did to Matt. It
could physically attack any one of
us next, or worse...It wants us
out.

ANDREW

Have you thought about the
disruption a move will cause to our
lives?

LOUISE

Right now the only thing I'm
concerned with is our safety. And
so should you!

They've hit an impasse. They pause, both catch their breath.
Andrew paces, thinks. He decides to use the brief cessation
to dial down the anger, to be more reasoned, less emotional.

ANDREW

Selling up is not a quick fix. It
could take months.

Louise responds in kind, switches to a more measured tone.

LOUISE

Which is precisely why I want us to
put the house on the market now.

ANDREW

But there are still alternatives,
Louise. You said that yourself the
other day. We can find a fix for
this. We don't have to throw in the
towel just yet.

LOUISE

I'm not throwing in the towel.
Look, put the house on the market
and if a medium or an exorcist is
successful in the meantime, then
we'll just take it off again. We
don't lose anything that way. We
can't just sit around and do
nothing.

ANDREW

If we sell, then we're letting this
thing - whatever it is - win,
letting it drive us out of our own
home.

She shakes her head, her mind made up.

LOUISE

We don't have a choice, we have to
put the house on the market.

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

A young ESTATE AGENT hammers a for sale sign into the turf on the front lawn.

Louise stands at a distance, her arms folded, watching with satisfaction. Andrew, the unwilling facilitator of the sale of their beloved home, stands beside her. He feels every bit as gloomy and resentful as he looks.

Unable to witness any more, he petulantly turns and goes back inside the house, leaving Louise to supervise.

INT. GIRLS' TOILETS, MARKHAM HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A dull, utilitarian place. Alice enters. She's the only one there. She heads straight into one of the cubicles and locks the door behind her.

She deposits her bag on the floor, pulls down her knickers, then settles on the toilet with a sigh. She sits gazing vacantly as she urinates. A rare moment of solitude in a hectic school day.

She suddenly shrugs her right shoulder abruptly, irked, as if giving someone the brush off. She turns her head sharply, to check behind her. Of course, there's nothing there but the wall. She dismisses the incident as just her imagination and goes back to what she was doing.

A moment passes. Then, equally suddenly, she cries out loudly as she is gripped by a searing pain across her back. It is paralysing in its intensity, and all she can do is wince and endure it. Mere seconds later, it subsides as quickly as it started.

Alice flies out of the cubicle. Heads straight for the mirror. Wincing, she checks her back. There are bloody streaks on her blouse. Alarmed, she starts to hastily unbutton her blouse.

SANDRA PRITCHARD, the Deputy Head, a stern and doughty woman aged 45, barges in and confronts her.

SANDRA

What's going on in here? Why are
you screaming?

Before Alice can reply, Sandra spots the blood stains and rushes over in concern.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

What happened?

ALICE

I don't know.

Alice anxiously pulls down her blouse. Sandra gasps at what she sees. Alice contorts her body, so she can examine her exposed back more clearly. She too is astounded by what she sees. Scarring the area beneath her right shoulder are three deep gashes, bloody claw marks, fresh and raw.

SANDRA

Good God! Who did this to you?

ALICE

No one, Miss.

It is obvious from her terrified expression, though, that she has more than an inkling of who is responsible. The Entity has shown its power by striking outside the home for the first time. It's a game changer.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is at the kitchen table opening a large delivery box. She removes the bubble wrap from the box, then pulls out a wooden wall hanging crucifix from it, one of several. She regards it with quiet satisfaction.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

HAMMERING can be heard emanating from the living room.

Andrew comes through the front door. It's been a long, hard day and he's weary.

As he puts his briefcase down, he notices that a copy of the Bible has been placed on the sideboard and a crucifix pinned to the wall above it. He frowns.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Andrew walks in to find Louise standing on a two-step ladder hammering crucifix to the wall above the fireplace.

ANDREW

Crucifixes? Bibles? What's going on?

Louise continues to hammer while she engages with Andrew.

LOUISE

It's a deterrent, a spiritual one. I've put them in all the rooms.

ANDREW

I thought we didn't believe in this nonsense.

She finishes mounting the cross, then turns to address him.

LORRAINE

It's very unusual for the schools of both children to contact us at the same time. That's what's prompted our visit today, Mr and Mrs Walker.

Fretful, Louise tries to be as placatory as she can.

LOUISE

I understand. I appreciate how it must look from the outside.

Lorraine targets Louise, calculating that she's more likely to confess than Andrew.

LORRAINE

Are you sure there are no issues you that you'd like to air today? Any mitigating circumstances?

Lorraine arches her brow to coax Louise.

LOUISE

Well...er...

Louise wants to speak, to pour her heart out about the goings-on. She hesitates, looks at Andrew. He bristles, knows she wants to spill the beans. He stares back at her sternly, willing her not to broach the subject.

Lorraine follows Louise's gaze, registers the couple's interaction. Sensing Louise's resolve is evaporating fast, she gently places her hand on Louise's to encourage her.

LORRAINE

(sympathetically)

I'm listening, Mrs Walker.

A beat while Louise thinks, her heart battling with her mind.

Fearful that Louise is about to crack and spill her heart out, Andrew interrupts, seizing the moment and bursting the tension.

ANDREW

(congenial)

There's really nothing to report back on here, Mrs Foster, I assure you. Alice had a fall at school. And Emily, well, she's just had a difficult start in her new school, that's all. She'll adjust. I'm sure of it. She just needs time.

Lorraine, annoyed at being headed off by Andrew, pointedly turns back to address Louise.

LORRAINE

And what do you think, Mrs Walker?

Louise shakes her head as if she's just snapped out of it, suddenly come to her senses. What was she thinking?! Social Services don't believe in ghosts, they deal in facts!

LOUISE

My husband's right. There's absolutely no need for Social Services to worry. We're a happy family unit.

Lorraine is peeved, but knows there is nothing more she can do. She turns to Ainsley, gives him a deflated look. He lightly shrugs his shoulders in defeat.

LORRAINE

Very well. I'm going to recommend that we take no further action on this occasion.

Louise breathes a sigh of relief. Exchanges a look with an equally relieved Andrew.

LOUISE

Thank you. Thank you so much.

LORRAINE

However, if we receive any further reports of this nature, then we'll have no choice but to open a safeguarding inquiry. The welfare of your daughters trumps all other considerations for us.

ANDREW

You won't have any more cause for concern, Mrs Foster. I promise.

Lorraine pulls out a business card and offers it to Louise. A parting shot.

LORRAINE

Here's my card, Mrs Walker. In case you ever need to contact me.

Louise understands the subtext. She accepts the card quietly.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The hallway is bathed in early morning sunlight.

Louise, still dressed in her pyjamas, pads down the stairs resignedly, trying to shake off the last vestiges of drowsiness. Her progress suddenly slows dramatically, as she takes in the spectacle before her.

FATHER O'NEIL
Of course. Come inside, please.

INT. ST MARY'S CHURCH, OXFORDSHIRE - DAY

Louise and Andrew sit talking with Father O'Neil in the vestry.

FATHER O'NEIL
I'm afraid an exorcism is not possible at this stage.

LOUISE
Why not?

FATHER O'NEIL
Despite media portrayal to the contrary, exorcisms are not performed lightly by the Church. They are very much a last resort, used when all other avenues have been exhausted.

LOUISE
But given all the things that have happened to us, surely we qualify. We're at our wit's end. We need help now, Father.

FATHER O'NEIL
You have to provide a lot of evidence and jump through a lot of hoops these days before the Catholic Church will sanction an exorcism - doctor's reports, psychological assessment, witness statements, permission. It all takes time.

LOUISE
So we could be waiting weeks, possibly months, while this evil angel, as you put it, turns our lives upside down?

FATHER O'NEIL
Those are the rules. The Church has to protect itself. I'm sorry.

LOUISE
Is there no fast track process? No dispensation for extreme cases?

FATHER O'NEIL
I'm afraid not. I hate to say this, but the fact that you were not brought up in the Catholic faith and that your husband is an atheist
(MORE)

FATHER O'NEIL (cont'd)
 doesn't strengthen your case, I'm
 afraid.

ANDREW
 Great, so just because we're not
 fully paid-up members of God's
 club, we go to the back of the
 queue, right?

Father O'Neil maintains a diplomatic silence.

Louise is annoyed with Andrew's outburst.

LOUISE
 Andrew!

He snipes back at her:

ANDREW
 Well, it's true, isn't it?

FATHER O'NEIL
 You have to understand, Andrew,
 even if I wanted to break the
 Church's rules and perform an
 exorcism, I wouldn't be able to.
 Only a specialist can perform one,
 and he won't be forthcoming unless
 the Church reviews all the evidence
 and is convinced by it. Exorcism's
 are surprisingly rare these days.

LOUISE
 Father O'Neil, please. We don't
 know where else to turn. All this
 activity in our house is taking a
 terrible toll on all of us,
 especially the girls. Is there
 nothing you can do?

FATHER O'NEIL
 There is one option. An interim
 solution, if you will, while we
 gather evidence.

LOUISE
 What's that?

FATHER O'NEIL
 I could perform a blessing on your
 house. I wouldn't need anyone's
 permission for that.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Father O'Neil is in the centre of the living room reciting a
 prayer from his prayer book. The Walkers are all present
 too: Emily fidgeting, Louise concentrating, Alice quiescent;

Andrew doing his best to keep his natural skepticism in check.

FATHER O'NEIL
 ...for your kingdom is an eternal
 Kingdom, to you alone is the
 Kingdom, and the Power, and the
 Glory, with the Father and the Holy
 Spirit, now and ever and unto ages
 of ages. Amen.

THE WALKERS
 Amen.

Father O'Neil closes his prayer book, then reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out an aspergillum.

FATHER O'NEIL
 (to Louise)
 Now, we'll go and bless every room
 in the house. Would you like to
 lead the way?

Louise exits into the hallway. Father O'Neil follows, as do the others.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

In the hallway, the priest starts to recite a blessing, sprinkling holy water in his path as he goes:

FATHER O'NEIL
 Holy God, we ask your blessing upon
 this room. Fill it with your
 presence. Banish any restless
 spirits or evil spirits in the name
 of the Father, the Son and the Holy
 Spirit. Amen.

He follows Louise up the stairway, repeating the blessing and continuing to liberally sprinkle holy water as he advances. The others trail behind him.

FATHER O'NEIL
 Holy God, we ask your blessing upon
 this room. Fill it with your
 presence. Banish any restless
 spirits or evil spirits in the name
 of the Father, the Son and the Holy
 Spirit. Amen.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK, OXFORDSHIRE - DAY

Verdant and beautifully manicured grounds on a cold but sunshine filled spring day.

Alice helps Emily hunt for conkers. Andrew and Louise sit contentedly on a bench together, watching the girls from a distance. Louise seems simultaneously lost in her thoughts,

though. Andrew glances over at her.

ANDREW

What are you thinking?

LOUISE

Just how nice it is to be a normal family again. To have our house back to ourselves.

ANDREW

Yeah, it's been a tough few months.

LOUISE

I'd almost forgotten what it's like to sleep soundly through the night, to not feel scared in my own house in broad daylight, to not have that thing lurking constantly.

ANDREW

Well, it's been a whole month since the blessing and still no sign of our unwanted guest. With luck, it'll stay that way.

LOUISE

(nodding towards the heavens)

I think maybe we have the man upstairs to thank for that, Andrew, not luck.

Andrew smiles.

ANDREW

I'm glad one of us still believes in that stuff.

Andrew holds out his hand. Louise takes it. They look at each other, share a moment of closeness. By sticking together they beat the Entity. Together they can do anything.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The family are enjoying a lighthearted meal together.

Alice is pleading with her mum to let her attend a concert.

ALICE

Laura's going to be with me, so I won't be going on my own.

LOUISE

No, Alice, I'm not going to let the two of you go into London late at night unaccompanied.

ALICE

But, Mum! Laura's mum and dad are letting her go. Why can't I?

LOUISE

Because it's not appropriate and it's too costly, that's why.

ALICE

That's not fair!

Alice switches focus to her dad.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Dad, tell Mum to let me go.

ANDREW

I'm sorry, Alice, but I agree with your mother. It's not appropriate for a girl your age to be out in the centre of London in the middle of the night.

ALICE

But you can pick us up and drop us off.

Louise glances over at Emily and notices that she's sitting motionless, fork and knife still in her hands, her head bowed.

Louise becomes slightly concerned.

LOUISE

Emily, sweetheart, is everything alright? Emily?

Emily remains inert, subdued. Louise's concern switches to alarm.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

(to the others)

Shush! One moment...

Andrew and Alice abruptly stop their jabbering and look over.

ANDREW

What's the matter, Emily?

A beat. Then, Emily slowly lifts up her head and looks directly at Andrew. She appears vacant, entranced. Her eyeballs start to roll up until just the whites of her eyes are visible.

Emily speaks. Except, it is quite clearly not her voice, but the angry, bestial prolation we heard played back on the laptop earlier.

EMILY/ENTITY

Get out of my fucking house you
cunts or you'll all die!

Louise gasps, holds her hand over mouth in horror. She inadvertently knocks over her wine glass as she recoils.

LOUISE

Oh my God, it's back!

Alice looks on, shocked, tears welling.

ALICE

It never went away, you mean.

Andrew looks on, repelled, his mouth agape.

Emily suddenly slumps, released from her trance. She looks around, bewildered. She addresses Louise in her normal voice:

EMILY

Mummy, what happened?

Louise gets up and throws her arms around Emily, clutching her protectively, then begins to cry.

LOUISE

Oh, my baby.

Andrew sits there, struggling to come to terms with the latest twist. Just when he thought it was all over...

ANDREW

This can't be happening again.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night. The curtains are drawn and the room is illuminated by the soft glow of a floor lamp situated in one corner.

The furniture has been rearranged to make space for two large inflatable mattresses; Andrew and Louise share one, Alice and Emily the other. The temporary beds dominate the floorspace.

Andrew snores loudly. Emily is sound asleep too. But Louise lies awake, ruminating, passively watching Alice struggling to fall asleep as well, not daring to disturb her.

The dark circles around their eyes attest to the tormenting sleeplessness they've both had to endure in recent nights.

Alice turns over testily and huffs. She sees that her mum is still awake.

ALICE

It keeps poking me, Mum. It won't let me sleep.

Louise throws back her duvet in invitation.

LOUISE

Come here.

Alice joins her without hesitating, glad to be shielded.

The two cuddle, lie face to face. Louise begins to stroke Alice's cheek reassuringly.

LOUISE

I know it's hard, but try to get some sleep.

Alice is at the end of her emotional tether and starts to sob, shedding tears of bitterness and hopelessness.

ALICE

I've got my mocks next week. How am I supposed to revise when I'm not getting enough sleep?

Louise wipes away Alice's tears, but they keep streaming. She tries to be positive and supportive of her daughter.

LOUISE

Take the day off tomorrow, so you can catch up on your sleep. I will as well, just in case anything happens while you're at home. OK?

ALICE

Fine. But I can't keep taking days off.

LOUISE

I know.

ALICE

This is the third night on the trot it's been bothering us; banging all last night, lights going on and off the night before and now the poking. I've had enough!

Louise takes Alice's face in her hands, talks to her determinedly.

LOUISE

We're going to find a way out of this, I promise. Especially now that your Dad's on board.

Alice nods, wipes away her tears.

ALICE

I know I shouldn't say this, but I'm glad he's finally experiencing what we've been going through for months.

LOUISE

I think that whatever is in this house has been playing a game of divide and rule up until now.

ALICE

What will you do to get it out?

LOUISE

First, we're going to go back to the Church, to see if they'll agree to an exorcism this time.

ALICE

You've seen how powerful it is. What if an exorcism doesn't work?

LOUISE

Then we'll just move out.

ALICE

Even if the house isn't sold?

LOUISE

Yes.

ALICE

What if it follows us?

LOUISE

I think it just wants us out of this house, off its territory.

ALICE

Why did this have to happen to us? Why this house?

Louise doesn't have an answer. Indeed, they are the very questions that haunt her constantly too.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Andrew is diligently sifting through scientific data on his computer.

As he works, a dark shadow starts to loom over him. It is not the kind that would be cast if a person was nearby, because he is still alone. Instead, it is amorphous and sentient in nature. It creeps up over him gradually, like a dark cloud, until it overshadows his back completely.

Once it is eclipsing him, the shadow passes quickly.

A beat.

There is a subtle and sudden change in Andrew's demeanour. It's as if he's been put under a spell or a hypnotic trance.

Andrew stops what he's doing, places his hands on his lap and starts to just stare at the screen vacantly.

He stays like that for a long beat.

Then, guided by the unseen Entity, Andrew gets up and walks out of the room.

INT. CORRIDOR, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Andrew walks along in a waking trance. We see that he's located on the fourth floor of a bright, airy, ultra-modern, glass and steel complex.

He heads towards an elevated walkway that connects two interior wings of the building. The place is thronging with STAFF. One or two of them acknowledge him as they wander past, but, to their mild bewilderment, he does not respond.

Andrew stops, when he reaches the midpoint of the walkway, and robotically climbs over the railing. He perches dangerously on the thin outer ledge skirting the walkway, gripping the guard rail behind him.

Staff suddenly begin to notice him and stop in their tracks in disbelief. Anxiety starts to ripple through the crowd.

Two CO-WORKERS approaching the walkway see what is happening.

CO-WORKER #1

Is that Andrew?

CO-WORKER #2

What is he doing?

Andrew prepares to jump by letting go of the railing and balancing on the ledge precariously.

CO-WORKER #1

Oh, no.

They glance at each other for a second, horrified, then both run to save Andrew.

CO-WORKER #2

Andy! Andy!

They reach him in the nick of time and grab his arms from either side.

Andrew suddenly snaps out of his trance. He looks around, bewildered, not sure of what happened or how he got there. His co-workers help him back to the safety of the walkway.

CO-WORKER #2

There you go. Nice and easy does it.

Andrew looks at them both, shaken and confused.

ANDREW

What happened?

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, ELI FOODS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A morose Andrew sits opposite Bryan Gibson, his head lowered. Bryan is watching Andrew intently, waiting patiently for a reply. None is forthcoming.

Bryan is carefully trying to tread the line between protocol and compassion. It is a thankless task. He decides to gently break the silence.

BRYAN

Look, Andrew, I fully understand if you don't want to discuss the background to today's, erm...incident, I really do. But I strongly recommend you speak to someone who can help. Employee Services are there if you want them, but if you prefer a professional counsellor, that's fine too. The company will pay.

No response. Andrew keeps his head bowed.

Bryan waits, bites his lip nervously. Then continues reluctantly.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I'm signing you off on medical leave. Take as long as you like. Your position will be kept open for you.

Andrew just nods his head weakly in response.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Call me when you're ready to return; I'll arrange a meeting with Medical Services for you. They'll need to give you clearance before you can come back.

Andrew continues to keep his head down.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

I informed Louise. She's waiting outside for you. Is there anything else you want to add, before I let you go? Anything you need from us?

Andrew raises his head slowly. He looks directly at Bryan, dazed, haunted. He speaks in a quiet voice.

ANDREW

I don't know what happened to me...I don't remember a thing.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Louise is putting the finishing touches to a special breakfast. Emily is helping her.

Alice walks in and throws up her arms in defeat.

ALICE

You try. He's not answering me at all.

Louise is disappointed, but not surprised, to hear this. She stops what she's doing and leaves the room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

An unshaven and unkempt Andrew is sitting rigidly on the edge of the bed in his pyjamas, staring vacantly into space. He looks sallow and deflated, a shadow of the thrusting, ambitious scientist he used to be.

There is a gentle knock on the door.

Andrew does not react.

After a brief pause, Louise enters the room. She stands and regards him for a beat. She wells with pain and sadness, but reigns in her feelings enough to deal with the matter in hand.

Louise walks over to Andrew and kneels before him. She takes both his hands in hers and addresses him gently, with feeling and compassion.

LOUISE

Andrew, please come down and eat with us. The girls want to spend time with you. They miss you...I miss you.

She's met with a stony silence. Andrew continues to stare directly ahead, blanking her.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You've been like this for weeks now. I want to help you, but you're just shutting me out. I don't know what to do any more.

Still no engagement from Andrew.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

What happened at work...Well, we can work through that together. Your just going through a rough patch, that's all. We can go and see Doctor Marcus together, if you wish, or Father O'Neil, get some outside help.

Louise clasps Andrew's hands close to her chest. Overwhelmed, She starts to tear up.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

That thing is still in our house. It's behaving worse than ever and I can't cope on my own. I need you by my side to fight it. I need you to be well again.

Still no engagement from Andrew. It is as if the real him, his essence, his soul, has checked out, leaving just a functioning shell.

Louise starts to weep quietly.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Andrew, I need you. I love you.

Finally, a flicker of reaction from Andrew. He addresses Louise without looking at her. His voice is cold, quiet:

ANDREW

Just leave me alone.

With that, Andrew turns away, disengaging once more.

Louise pauses, lets the words sink in. She realises she's not going to make any headway. Defeated, she wipes away her tears, then quietly gets up and exits the room.

The familiar and malevolent shadow starts to creep over Andrew. He just sits there passively, in its thrall, letting it loom over him.

INT. TOILETS, STONEBRIDGE UNIVERSITY - DAY

A tiny space with a single toilet.

Louise enters and locks the door to the room. She looks overwhelmed, emotional, like she needs to be alone.

She stands in front of the expansive mirror and gazes at her reflection, breathing heavily. She looks frayed and vulnerable, and she knows it.

It's all too much. She feels utterly alone and helpless. Unable to restrain her emotions a second longer, she breaks down and begins to sob bitterly.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The whole family - Andrew included - are gathered around the table, tucking into their evening meal.

Though a little subdued, Andrew appears to have shaken off his torpor and seems well on the way to recovery, evidenced by the fact that he's shaved and dressed properly.

Emily is loudly dominating the conversation, much to everyone's amusement.

EMILY

Sophie's going to have a bouncy castle in her garden, and a swing, and a trampoline for us to play on.

ALICE

Is she?! Wow!

EMILY

Yes, and she's going to have a princess theme. We're all going to wear princess outfits and even her cake is going to have a princess picture on it. And there's going to be a disco as well, so we can all sing and dance together...

As Emily continues to babble in the background, Andrew sets down his cutlery and regards each person at the table with warmth and affection, alighting on Louise last.

She catches his gaze and becomes a little shy and self-conscious.

LOUISE

(smiling)

What?

ANDREW

I love you.

Louise leans over and kisses Andrew tenderly.

LOUISE

I love you too.

Alice spots them smooching. Interrupts them with mock distaste.

ALICE

Ew! Guys, please! Your putting me off my food!

Emily giggles.

Andrew addresses all of them, speaking with sincerity:

ANDREW

I love you all. I mean it. I know I haven't been myself lately, but everything is going to be OK. I'm sure of it.

Louise rubs his arm reassuringly. Relieved.

LOUISE

We know. We all missed you terribly. It's good to have you back.

EMILY

Yes, Daddy, it's good to have you back!

Everybody laughs at Emily's precociousness. She basks in the attention.

ANDREW

It's good to be back, believe me.

Louise gently cups Andrew's hand in hers and regards him fondly.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

We all have to stick together from now on, understood. No matter what.

Louise nods her agreement. The girls beam, glad to have their dad back.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The family are sound asleep on the inflatable beds.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Tranquil. Just as it should be at this hour.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Empty. Silent. Peaceful.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Unoccupied. Hushed and dormant.

The time on the oven clock progresses from 2.59am to 3am.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew stirs from his slumber.

He quietly gets up and heads out of the living area.

Although he is fully alert, he appears to be on auto-pilot, as if acting in a preprogrammed manner. He moves and

functions in a way that suggests he has a specific set of tasks to complete and nothing is going to get in the way of him fulfilling them.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew comes in. His activity is purposeful, his movements hushed and economical, to ensure he doesn't disturb the others unduly.

He retrieves a torch from a cupboard. Switches it on.

He retrieves a bunch of house keys from a wall hook.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

By torchlight, Andrew key locks the front door, then checks the handle to ensure the entrance has been properly secured.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew draws the curtains fully.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew engages the window lock, then pops the key into a clear bag containing several others.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew pads gently down the stairs by torchlight. His demeanour is creepy.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew stands expressionless over Louise in the dark, studying her intently as she continues to sleep, oblivious to his presence.

After a beat, he turns and heads out of the room again.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew walks back into the darkened room. He's clutching something at his side, but we can't see what. He manoeuvres deftly through the murk and comes to a halt by Louise's bedside. He kneels down beside her.

Reaching out in the gloom with his free hand, he locates the switch and flicks on the nearby floor lamp. Louise stirs, roused by the sudden light. She senses he's up and addresses him while still half-asleep.

LOUISE

Andrew, what are you doing? Go back to sleep.

Andrew replies with a low, demonic growl, then lifts up his hand to reveal what he's holding - a large kitchen knife!

He raises the knife and plunges it into her chest with a sweeping motion.

Louise shrieks in response. Her eyes bulge and her body paralyses as she's gripped by a searing pain.

Andrew pulls out the knife and plunges it in again. Screaming, she attempts to fight him off, but she is no match for his strength, especially in her debilitated state.

Her screams awaken Alice. She sees what is happening to her mother and starts to scream manically too.

ALICE

Dad, no! Stop! What are you doing!!

No!! No!! Stop!!

Ignoring her, he pulls out the knife and strikes again, then again, then again, building into a frenzy.

The screams awaken Emily. She tries to take in the scene through blinking, sleep encrusted eyes, tries to make sense of the carnage.

Alice immediately covers Emily's eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)

No! Don't look!

A hysterical Alice looks on helplessly, horrified, frozen with shock and fear.

Emily tries to struggle free.

EMILY

What's happened to Mummy? Why are you screaming?

Andrew continues to puncture Louise's now lifeless body with strike after strike, like a man possessed - literally. He interrupts his frenzy and looks up at Alice, then speaks in the Entity's voice:

ANDREW/ENTITY

Don't worry, bitch, you're next.

He goes back to piercing his wife's corpse.

Alice suddenly comes to her senses, starts to think, to react. She picks up Emily and rushes out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

With Emily clinging to her, Alice tries desperately to open the front door.

EMILY

Why is Mummy bleeding? Is she hurt?

No use, it is locked.

ALICE

Shit!

EMILY

What are you doing?

ALICE

(hushed tone)

Shush!

She turns and runs towards the kitchen carrying her sister.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice scurries into the moonlit room, moving as quickly and discretely as she can.

She heads straight for the back door. Tries it. Locked.

She starts to panic.

Just then, the lights come on. Alice sweeps around to look.

It's Andrew, standing in the doorway, breathless, bloodstained, knife in hand. He looms ominously.

Alice is trapped and she knows it. She hugs Emily tightly.

ANDREW

I've hidden the keys. There's no getting out.

She glances at the key hooks. He's right, they're all empty.

ALICE

Daddy, please!

He slowly starts to move closer.

Time for action. Alice thinks. Her eyes dart around the kitchen looking for something she can use as a weapon. She spots the knife rack, but it's too far away.

Andrew is getting closer with each calculated step.

Emily cowers in her sister's arms, starts to cry.

To buy time, Alice grabs the water filter jug and hurls it at Andrew, drenching him and the floor.

She searches again. Her eyes alight on a spray bottle of cleaning fluid. It's within easy reach. She grabs it just as Andrew reaches her. She aims and starts to pump the handle furiously, liberally spraying the contents in his face.

Andrew drops the knife and staggers backwards, screaming in agony, squirming, rubbing his eyes frantically in an attempt

to rid them of the caustic substance.

ANDREW
FUCK!...FUCK!

As he smarts, he slips on the puddle of water on the floor, hitting his head hard on the marble worktop behind him as he goes down. He slumps to the floor unconscious.

Alice heads out of the kitchen, pausing for a brief second on the way to grab a knife from the selection in the rack.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice races up the stairs as fast as her legs will carry her.

Scared and breathless, she trips on one of the steps near the top, almost losing her balance and dropping Emily.

She recovers quickly and presses on, clutching her younger sibling as she goes.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew lies there knocked cold.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice pulls down the loft ladder with the assist pole while a tearful Emily stands nearby.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew comes to. The chemical in his eyes still burns.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice kneels down in front of Emily, wipes away her little sister's tears and clutches her by her shoulders.

EMILY
What's the matter with Daddy? I'm
scared.

Alice addresses her little sister earnestly and urgently.

ALICE
Daddy's hurt Mummy. We need to hide
or he'll hurt us too. Now, quickly,
up the stairs.

EMILY
No. I'm scared up there.

ALICE
Em, please!

Emily shakes her head no, adamant.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

His eyes red and raw, Andrew hauls himself up and staggers blindly to the kitchen sink, blinking hard as he goes.

He turns on the tap and starts to wash the fluid from his eyes. The relief can't come soon enough.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice and Emily both hear Andrew moving about downstairs and freeze momentarily.

ALICE

Please! You have to hide!

Emily, spooked, suddenly understands the gravity of the situation. She nods her agreement.

ALICE

Good girl. Stay really quiet, so Daddy doesn't hear you and I'll come and get you. I promise.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Able to see again, Andrew flies into a rage and impetuously sweeps away the crockery on the sink drying board. A thunderous CLATTER, as various items of glass and china smash to the ground.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice helps Emily negotiate the loft ladder.

They both startle on hearing the commotion from the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew stands in the middle of the room, panting, furious, still smarting from the attack. He bellows, so the girls can hear him:

ANDREW

Do you really think you can hide from me?! In my house?!

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Emily's anxious little face peeks out from the loft as Alice closes the hatch door.

ALICE

(whispers)

Hide!

Alice props the loft ladder assist pole against the wall, grabs her knife and dashes into her parents' bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew picks up his blood-drenched knife off the floor and heads out after the girls.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice dives across the bed and grabs the cordless phone from the bedside cabinet. She dials the emergency number frantically. She puts it to her ear, waits for the line to connect.

ALICE

Come on! Come on!

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The cable from the land line phone to the wall jack has been severed deliberately. Andrew's thought of everything.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

No dial tone, nothing. She realises the lifeline's been cut. She's horrified. Her panic mounts.

ALICE

No, no, no!

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew stands at the foot of the stairs and addresses the girls at the top of his voice, tauntingly:

ANDREW

I'm going to finish you both off,
just like I did your mother!

He starts up the stairs clutching his knife, a grim, determined expression on his face.

The stairs creek gently with each slow step he takes.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alarmed, Alice throws the phone on the bed and secretes herself in one of the wardrobes that stretch wall-to-wall.

She peers out from inside the wardrobe, through the crack between the two doors. She has a partial view of the landing from her vantage point.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew pauses on the landing momentarily before proceeding to Alice's bedroom.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew checks the wardrobe and under the bed.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew enters. He looks around. He spots the handset abandoned on the bed. Bingo!

He stands completely still, alert, straining to listen for any sign of movement. A deafening silence. But he's certain she's in here somewhere, he can sense it. His lips crease into an evil smile. He taunts her in a mocking sing-song voice:

ANDREW

I'm going to find you, then I'm
going to dice you.

Andrew moves towards the wardrobes. He opens the first one, but it is empty. He opens the second. The same story: empty.

From inside the wardrobe Alice hid in, through the crack in the doors, we see him approaching.

Andrew reaches out, then yanks the door open with a sudden movement, as if to surprise her, certain she's in there.

At that very second, right behind him, Alice bursts out of the en-suite and heads straight for the door.

Andrew, though, is in full hunting mode, on the prowl, his senses fully primed. He swings round as fast as a ninja, knife in hand, in time to see Alice make the dash. He lunges at her, slashing the back of her upper arm.

ANDREW

Come here!

Alice yelps in pain, but manages to clear the door and reach the landing. He chases after her.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice is at the top of the stairway when Andrew comes out onto the landing. He takes another swipe at her. She shrieks in fear.

He misses, but he's close enough to unnerve Alice to such a degree that she loses her balance and goes tumbling down the stairs with bruising force.

Her knife slips out of her grasp as she goes, landing on an upper step.

Andrew pauses, watches her topple.

INT. HALLWAY, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

Alice lands at the bottom of the stairs. She's dazed and in pain, but she knows she has no time to lose. She scrambles to her feet just as Andrew starts down the stairs.

She races down the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice storms into the living room. She gasps as she catches sight of her mother's butchered cadaver. She can't help but linger, staring at the carnage.

ANDREW (O.S.)

You won't get far! I've locked every door, every window, in the house.

She snaps out of it, realising she's wasting precious seconds. She looks around frantically for her mobile. It's on a side table. She grabs it, starts to dial the emergency number. Her whole body trembles with nerves as she does so.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - '9...9...'

A sound. She looks up. It's Andrew heading straight for her.

WHAM! Alice is hit in the face by Andrew. She falls to the ground, losing her phone in the process.

She quickly gets up and runs. Flings open the dividing doors to the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice storms through the room screaming, Andrew hot on her heels.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice races into the kitchen and slips on the puddle of water. She falls flat on her face.

Andrew enters. He grabs her legs from behind. She struggles fiercely, but can't escape her father's hold.

He turns her over, then pins her down with his knee. She tries to gouge him but he grabs hold of her arms. She continues to squirm.

ALICE

Don't do this! Don't do it!

Alice manages to free one arm. She starts to flail blindly, searching for one of the many shards littering the floor.

ANDREW

Stop fighting. It's all over.

He raises his knife, readies to plunge it into her torso. He pauses to look into her terrified eyes, to savour her fear.

At that instant, Alice thrusts a jagged piece of glass into his arm with all her might.

Andrew reels, clutches his arm, howls with pain.

Alice breaks free, scrabbles backwards, desperate to put some distance between her and her demented father.

He glares at her, seething, panting heavily.

ANDREW

You'll pay for this!

Alice scrambles to her feet and runs into the laundry room.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice locks the door latch. She breathes with terrified, gasping breaths. She's survived, but now she's trapped.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew lets out a long, guttural cry as he digs the shard out of his arm. He's positively raging with fury now, more determined than ever to finish the job.

He gets up and tries the handle on the laundry room door. He realises it's locked. He pounds the door repeatedly.

ANDREW

Open the door! Open it!!

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice is starting to lose her mind with fear.

ALICE

Daddy, please, no!

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew retrieves a domestic fire extinguisher from one of the kitchen cabinets.

He starts to pound the laundry room door with it, hitting it again and again with all his might, reigning blow after blow.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Alice retreats to the corner, cowering, screaming in terror, watching the door being destroyed.

She looks for a way out. Hastily checks the window, but it is too small. There is no escape.

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

The blows to the door continue. Andrew succeeds in smashing a hole right through it that is big enough to reach through.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew's hand comes through the hole and blindly searches for the latch.

In a last desperate bid for survival, Alice grabs the iron and smashes it on his hand repeatedly.

Andrew yelps, but doesn't relent. His fingers reach the latch and release it. He's in!

Alice backs into a corner. She's frantic. Stands armed to strike with the iron again.

Andrew swings open the door and enters, knife in hand.

ANDREW

Now then...

ALICE

Please, Daddy, I'm begging you!

He takes a step forward.

Alice takes a swipe at him with the iron, but he deftly grabs her arm and disarms her.

He grabs her by her hair aggressively and pins her to the wall. He yanks her head back, exposing her neck.

Alice goes berserk, shudders with fear.

ALICE

I don't want to die! Don't do this!

Andrew lifts the knife and with one surgical cut slashes open Alice's throat.

Alice's eyes bulge with horror, blood starts to well up and overflow along the length of the gash. She clutches her throat in desperation. Lets out an unintelligible gurgle.

Her life force starts to ebb. Her body sags and she begins to slide down slowly. By the time she hits the ground, she's dead.

Alice's lifeless body sits slumped against the wall, her frozen visage one of wide-eyed shock.

Andrew stands back and admires his handiwork. He wipes his sweaty brow with his arm, pauses to catch his breath.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew arrives on the landing clutching his blood-spattered knife, then stops. He speaks loudly:

ANDREW

Come out, Emily. Come to Daddy. I won't hurt you.

INT. LOFT, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Emily sits alone crying, wiping away tears. She shudders at his voice, wonders what to do.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Let me explain. I won't hurt you, I promise.

She quietly retreats further into a corner, cowering, petrified.

INT. MAIN BATHROOM, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew gives the room a quick visual check. Satisfied Emily's not hiding there, he leaves.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew shuts the bathroom door behind him. He looks around, considers where to target next. His eyes alight on the airing cupboard.

He approaches it quietly. His hand hovers over the handle a beat. Then, with a sudden and aggressive movement, he grabs the handle and yanks the door open, as if to catch any occupant unawares.

No sign of Emily, just shelves full of bed linen and towels.

He's exasperated, agitated. He pauses to think: where would he hide, if he was her? His eyes scan the vicinity as he considers. They alight on loft ladder assist pole.

He glances up at the loft hatch. Of course! A malevolent smile cracks across his face. He shouts up to Emily, all pretence gone.

ANDREW

I know where you are, Emily. I'm coming after you.

INT. LOFT, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Emily freezes, horrified, fearful. She determines her options, looks around desperately for a hiding place.

She spots a large box in the opposite corner. She scurries over to it stealthily, just as the loft hatch is opened.

The sound of GROANING, CREAKING metal as the ladder unfolds ominously.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Andrew starts to climb up the stairs.

INT. LOFT, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - NIGHT

Emily clambers into the box just in the nick of time.

Andrew pops his head above the hatch, glances round quickly.

He enters the loft. Stands. Surveys the scene. The place is full of various sized removal boxes, storage containers and assorted possessions the family either didn't need or didn't get around to unpacking. No obvious sign of Emily.

He roars menacingly:

ANDREW

Emily! Emily, I know you're here.

The little girl skulks in the box, trembling with fear, tears streaming down her face.

Andrew prowls around the place, searching for Emily, his impatience growing.

ANDREW

Stop playing games, Emily. I need to talk to you. To explain.

He passes the box Emily has retreated to.

She sees him pass by through the crack in the flaps. She stiffens, holds her breath. She knows it's only a matter of time now before she's discovered, but she's hoping against hope.

Andrew pauses, looks around again. He has no choice, he's going to have to search the boxes one by one.

He targets the first one, lifts the flaps, peers inside. Nothing but his old books inside. He moves to the next one.

Emily hears him rustling nearby. She tries to stifle her crying, accidentally snuffles. She freezes, realizing her mistake.

Andrew stops what he's doing, listens intently. He turns around slowly and focuses on the box Emily's hiding in.

ANDREW

I know where you are, Emily. I'm coming for you.

Emily hears Andrew's footsteps as he approaches.

A dark, foreboding shadow looms over the box from Emily's perspective, as Andrew comes closer to inspect it.

She cringes, hunches up, her eyes bulging with dread.

Andrew reaches out and slowly pulls the flap back to reveal Emily trembling inside. She blanches with fear, overcome with panic.

EMILY
(whimpering)
Please, Daddy, don't hurt me.

The evil look on Andrew's face is explanation enough of what is going to happen next.

INT. LANDING, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

We hear a struggle ensue, SHUFFLING, KNOCKING, BANGING, along with Emily's desperate, heartwrenching pleas.

EMILY (O.S.)
Daddy, no, please! I'm
scared!...Daddy, no!. No! No,
no!!...

Andrew doesn't answer her.

Then...

Piercing screams fill the air. Sickening shrieks that can only hint at the sheer physical agony, and sense of horror and betrayal the little girl must be experiencing as her father starts to butcher her.

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The family's two cars are still parked in the driveway. The property itself seems preternaturally dormant. The curtains in all the rooms are fully drawn, despite the late hour, giving the house an almost shuttered appearance.

Frances peers impatiently through the rippled glass of the front door, straining to look for signs of activity inside. Nothing.

She hits the doorbell again assertively, ringing it for an unreasonably long time. She steps back to check for any signs of life. Nothing. Not a single curtain twitches in response.

Her concern mounts. Reluctantly, she bends down and shouts through the letterbox.

FRANCES
Louise, it's me, Frances. Louise
are you home?...Anybody?

Silence.

Something is just not right, she can sense it. Frustrated, she marches towards the back of the house.

Frances reaches over awkwardly and manages to unlock the fence door, gaining access to the back garden.

The main window and the patio door servicing the kitchen are curtained, but a small side window isn't.

Frances approaches the window. She peers through it. She immediately lets out a blood-curdling scream...

INT. KITCHEN, 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

We see what Frances can see:

Hanging from the ceiling, a rope tethered tightly around his neck, is Andrew's limp, lifeless body. A knocked-over chair lies at his feet.

INT. TV NEWS ROOM - DAY

The regional spot on the main evening news. A studio NEWSREADER segues into the story:

NEWSREADER

Police in the quiet Oxfordshire village of Greening have launched an investigation into a potential murder-suicide, after a mother and her two children were found stabbed to death, and the father hanging, in their home earlier today. The family have been formally identified as Andrew Walker, a 42-year-old food scientist, his wife Louise, 40, and their children - Alice, 15, and Emily aged 5. Police forced entry into the property after a co-worker, concerned that Mrs Walker had failed to report for work for over a week, raised the alarm. Our crime correspondent, Nisha Sangha, who is at the scene, has more details.

The Newsreader turns to face a TV screen with a live feed from Apple Tree Drive.

NEWSREADER (CONT'D)

Nisha.

EXT. APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

The CORRESPONDENT stands to one side and a little distance from number 22, giving us a clear view of the house.

The property has been cordoned off with crime scene tape, and is crawling with POLICE and SOCOS. One OFFICER stands guard while the rest of his colleagues drift in and out of the house gathering evidence. Their vehicles dot the road.

CORRESPONDENT

Robert, this prosperous and idyllic community in the heart of Oxfordshire is in a state of shock today, and struggling to come to terms with the news of these tragic killings. In fact there's been a steady stream of villagers all morning, here at Apple Tree Drive, leaving flowers and messages of condolence. Police say that the two officers who gained entry to the property reported that Louise Walker and her daughters, Alice and Emily, had been subjected to a horrific and violent knife attack. Their bodies were apparently found in different parts of the house, while Mr Walker's body was found hanging in the kitchen, with a large knife - believed to be the murder weapon - lying at his feet. The bodies were taken away for a post-mortem a short while ago and scene of crime officers and forensic teams have been conducting a painstaking search of the property all morning.

INT. TV NEWS ROOM - DAY

NEWSREADER

What do we know about the family, so far?

EXT. APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

CORRESPONDENT

Well, officers from the Oxfordshire constabulary have been making door to door enquiries all morning, to try to piece together a detailed picture of the family. What has emerged so far is that they only moved into the area last September, after Mr Walker took up a position as head of the food sciences laboratory at Eli Foods, which is head-quartered in nearby Oxford. Mrs Walker worked part-time as an admissions officer at Oxford Stonebridge University, just a few miles down the road, and the two girls were enrolled in local schools. Neighbours describe the family as happy and loving, and say that they didn't appear to have any problems. Another local said that

(MORE)

CORRESPONDENT (cont'd)
 Andrew Walker kept himself to himself, but always came across as 'pleasant and mild mannered' whenever he spoke to him.

INT. TV NEWS ROOM - DAY

NEWSREADER
 And have the police suggested any possible motive for the killings?

EXT. APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

CORRESPONDENT
 The focus of the investigation is on Andrew Walker and police say that they are not currently looking for anyone else in connection with the killings. The police haven't actually released any other details formally yet, but interestingly, and in contrast to neighbours' comments, one anonymous source said that Mr Walker was actually suffering from depression. I contacted management at Eli Foods and they confirmed that Mr Walker was sent home a month ago, after suffering what they are describing as 'stress-related health issues'. However, some of his colleagues, who I spoke with earlier, said that he'd become increasingly withdrawn in recent weeks and that he was sent home on enforced sick leave after he attempted to commit suicide while at work, by jumping off an aerial walkway in full view of staff. There have also been suggestions that the family were experiencing financial difficulties and that this may have impacted his emotional state.

INT. TV NEWS ROOM - DAY

NEWSREADER
 Nisha, thank you.

The newsreader turns to face the screen again.

NEWSREADER (CONT'D)
 Nisha Sangha there, reporting from Greening in Oxfordshire. The 24-hour rail strike planned for next week is still on after talks between management and the rail workers union...

EXT. 22 APPLE TREE DRIVE - DAY

A beautiful summer's day. The kind that maximises the house's already considerable kerb appeal.

A car emblazoned with 'Madisons Estate Agents' pulls up by the pavement directly outside the house.

INT. CAR - DAY

At the wheel sits KIM TAYLOR, 25, a distractingly beautiful young letting agent.

Next to her, in the passenger seat, sits MIKE KAUFMAN, a suave, tanned executive-type in his early forties. His alluring and sophisticated wife, CINDY, also in her forties, sits in the back, pinched between their two late teenage children, HANNAH and ETHAN, both of whom are preoccupied with their phones, one texting, the other playing a game. The family are American.

KIM

This is it, 22 Apple Tree Drive.
What do you think?

Mike regards the house, nods appreciatively.

MIKE

Well, from the outside it looks perfect. Just what we're looking for.

He turns to Kim, smiling.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm impressed.

He twists his neck, to address Cindy.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Cin?

She's equally enthusiastic about the property.

CINDY

Yeah, I like it. It has a real presence about it.

And with those prophetic words we abruptly cut to black.

FADE OUT

THE END