

EVERLASTING EXILE

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Historical society member's dream pad. Gothic, baroque, charming, menacing, all at once. Expansive dwelling framed amid a wooded area.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Polar opposite. Modern, colorful. An ocean motif, throughout. Distant sound of yelling from another room.

PARLOR ROOM

Walls papered with tacky zebra pattern. Massive fireplace, the centerpiece.

Indecipherable hollering gets closer.

BEDROOM

Cluttered. Moving boxes everywhere. Painter's easel folded up in corner.

Framed snapshot of father and son goofing off. Ratty shirt drops over it.

From behind, a mane of blonde dreadlocks. Rummages through drawers, tossing clothes aside.

This is TREE GUTHRIDGE. He's fifteen, but you'd never guess it. Makes up for his meager frame with endless attitude.

TREE

Ma, you wash my jersey?

He fishes around in box marked TREE'S CLOTHES. No luck.

BASEMENT

Creepy as hell.

Laundry room's at far end. Tree's hesitant to cross the divide.

Door's closed. Thread of light glows underneath. Reassuring CLATTER of activity rings out behind it.

Clearly less tense, Tree treks up to it.

TREE

Mom?

He casually swings door open.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Goes pitch black.

No movement, apart from a partially visible, dangling light bulb. Swings side to side.

Pull string sways like it just got yanked.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

(yelling from upstairs)

Tree? You down there?

Visibly shaken, he takes a panicked breath.

TREE

Fuck no.

STAIRWAY

Screw step by step. He bounds upstairs, four at a time. Barrels into...

KITCHEN

Right smack into his mother, HOLLY (late 30's). She careens backward. SLAMS against the adjacent wall. Slowly peels herself from it.

Like the house she resides in, her features are contradictory. Delicate, attractive, yet a hint of wearied edges. Eyes, soulful but shrewd.

Her icy demeanor augmented, by the fact, she just got pulverized by her kid.

HOLLY

What the hell?

TREE

Something creepy's goin' on. Down in the laundry room.

HOLLY

What?

TREE

Don't know.

HOLLY

Sure Corrine's not down there?

Shakes his head "no."

HOLLY

Let's scope it out.

Shakes it again. He's spooked.

HOLLY

C'mere, look at me.

Examines his eyes.

HOLLY

Whatcha been smokin'?

TREE

You should know.

HOLLY

Wasn't long ago you'd snoop through my purse for gum.

TREE

I'm a big boy now.

HOLLY

Who's afraid of basements?

TREE

Pretty sure it's a universal fear, regardless of age. People probably hate basements in Bangladesh.

HOLLY

There are pussies everywhere.

TREE

You're a puss.

She breaks into a "baby talk" voice.

HOLLY

Big boy sensitive? Got a biiiig imagination, too. How big? Soooo biiiig.

TREE

Cut it out.

HOLLY

Nothing's down there. Get some
breakfast, while it's still warm.
So you can get biiiig and strong...

Unable to convince her, he reluctantly shuffles away.

HOLLY

...puss.

Holly glances uneasily at the run down staircase. Flicks off the stairway light switch.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Balloons, festive decorations, and a "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TIFFANY" banner, adorn the fenced off property.

NINE KIDS lounge on a neatly groomed lawn, spellbound.

A MAGICIAN performs his routine. Decked out in traditional attire. Cloaked black tuxedo, white gloves, top hat. Children seem amused by his less standard feature.

He's a dwarf.

Saddled with the additional misfortune of being an albino. His cursed skin clashes with the sun kissed youth.

Raises his glove. Flames ignite from each fingertip. Other hand reveals a miniature cake with six candles. He fires them up.

Sets his sights on TIFFANY, hard to miss in her Toddlers & Tiaras getup. Puts cake in front of the birthday girl. He makes a blowing gesture.

She closes her eyes. Huffs and puffs them out.

Behind her, cheers erupt from the deck of the house.

SIX WOMEN, guzzle Merlot, getting pretty sloppy. They've co-opted the kiddie party.

Tiffany's mother, SHANTEL (early 30's), lets out a piercing, two fingered whistle. She exudes suburban white trash. Too loud. Too tan. Too many tats in all the wrong places.

SHANTEL

Baby doll, you make a wish?

TIFFANY

Yup.

SHANTEL

Hopefully for daddy to pay his back child support.

BOOB JOB MOM

Tru' dat.

Magician prepares to wow them with another illusion.

SHANTEL

Tiff honey, can we borrow the magic man for a spell?

Tiffany nods.

BOOB JOB MOM

Come up and party, Harry Potter.

He shifts attention away from the gig. Wobbles up deck stairs. Gives a courtly bow.

FLOPPY HAT MOM

A little gentleman.

Shantel offers a taste of her wine.

SHANTEL

Must be parched, wearin' a monkey suit in June. Care for a little drinkie?

He grabs the glass. Drops a handkerchief over it. Voila! A Capri Sun cooler. He stabs a straw in the juice pouch, sucking it down like a six year old.

SHANTEL

O-kay then, so where's my drink?

Slings his fancy rag down on patio table. Pulls it back. Presto! Another fruit drink. Shantel grudgingly accepts it.

SHANTEL

Hey y'all, wine chaser! Got any other slick tricks to show us?

Glances up from his beverage.

SHANTEL

We've all been deprived of action lately. Can you make our punani's purr in unison, or somethin'?

BOOB JOB MOM

Shantel!

He gives a nonchalant nod.

SHANTEL

He's not shy. He's a punani devotee. Ain't cha, sugar? Know what I'm hopelessly devoted to?

FLOPPY HAT MOM

Neiman Marcus.

SHANTEL

Get out my head, bitch.

FLOPPY HAT MOM

It's transparent.

Boob Job Mom high fives her.

SHANTEL

Ain't no secret, gettin' Neiman packages in the mail straight gets me hot. Specially cute little ones, with bows and trinkets and shit tied round 'em. Only good things come in 'em. Speakin' of which...

Lewdly tongues her juice straw.

SHANTEL

... why don't ya whip out your little package. The magical wand.

She caresses his leg. He wards off her hand with his finger flame.

SHANTEL

Owwwww sugar! That's kinky. Kinda likin' it.

He gives a thumbs up. They really hoot and holler over this. Shantel takes a sensuous slurp off her Capri Sun.

SHANTEL

You're a horny midgetian.

She covers her mouth, trying not to laugh.

SHANTEL

Midgetian! Oh my god, I totally didn't mean to say that!

His eyes lower, dejected. Sets his drink down. Sulks away like a puppy dog that's been slapped across the ass.

In unison, they "awwwwwwwww" with mock sympathy.

SHANTEL

Maybe you need to conjure up a sense of humor.

He grabs his box of tricks. Heads for back exit. Children frolic around him.

Shantel's disoriented. Inspects juice container, as if it were spiked.

Magician swings open gate to depart. He stops, setting his case down. Glides back behind Tiffany, enjoying her treat.

Shantel can barely focus. Just enough to witness the magician extract a straight edge razor from his pocket.

He stares down Shantel. Flashes a wicked smile.

SHANTEL

Someone stop him!

Tiffany raises her chin. A lamb, succumbing to the slaughter.

SHANTEL

Tiff, don't!

He runs it across her throat. Jugular severs. Arterial blood sprays.

SHANTEL

Oh my god! Fucking midget!

BOOB JOB MOM

Why you freakin'?

Shantel points toward her daughter.

Magician's still behind her. Her chin raised. He reaches around Tiffany's neck.

Ties a birthday bib around it.

She merrily chomps away on her cake, oblivious to her mother's outburst.

SHANTEL

I'm gonna be sick.

She drops tainted juice pouch. Turns toward Boob Job Mom.
Heaves all over her halter top.

BOOB JOB MOM
No you didn't! Ewwwwwwwww!

She strips off her shirt, exposing her enhancements. Scurries away.

Floppy Hat Mom's amused by this.

Magician slithers around to face Tiffany, slips off his hat.
Pulls out an extended rainbow of twine.

Fastened around the scruff of a mutilated rabbit.

Shantel gasps in horror.

Her daughter cradles the droopy eared bunny. It springs to life. Hops out of her embrace. She joins her playmates, chasing it down.

Magician casually drifts among the kids. Randomly slashes at them with his razor. Geysers of blood shoot everywhere as he rips a path through the children.

SHANTEL
Help them!

FLOPPY HAT MOM
Someone! Please! Help sober up this
glug.

Magician waves goodbye. Quick burst of light, followed by giant cloud of smoke. It clears, and he's gone.

Applause rings out. Kids, parents, everyone claps, but not Shantel. She cowers on the deck, shielding eyes from nightmarish visions, apparent only to her.

Over the fence, a white van pulls away.

MISCIO "THE TEENY HOUDINI" written on the side.

Show's over. Remaining parents try to console Shantel.

She manages an awkward shrug, breaking down in tears. Her bizarre behavior renders them speechless, except...

FLOPPY HAT MOM
Told y'all she'd find an excuse to
show off her new tits.

INT. GUTHRIDGE HOUSE/KITCHEN NOOK - DAY

Tree and his sister CORRINE (17) eat breakfast. She's gorgeous, knows it, and acts accordingly. Holly, phone to her ear, paces around them.

HOLLY

Like I said Renee, it's none of your business... yup, I'm just thrilled you're so interested in my financial well-being... right back at cha.

Hangs up.

HOLLY

Your aunt's a bitch.

TREE

Why even talk to her?

HOLLY

Out of respect, maybe?

CORRINE

Dad couldn't stand her.

HOLLY

Anyways, you're on your own for supper tonight. I have a date.

CORRINE

Eharmony?

HOLLY

Work.

TREE

Climbing your way up the ladder?

HOLLY

Gotta keep food on the table.

CORRINE

What's up with you lately?

TREE

(pantomimes a headline)
From Nun To Naughty.

Holly does the same.

HOLLY

Single Mother Dares To Have A
Social Life. Believe it or not, I
had one before I met your father.

TREE

Where's your social life taking you
this evening?

HOLLY

Dunno? Some club. He's in a band.

CORRINE

Like a rock band?

Holly glances at her watch.

HOLLY

Shit, I'm running late.

Rinses her plate in the sink.

HOLLY

There's leftovers in the fridge.
Corrine, I read something this
morning about Virgo's being
mentally distracted. So don't
forget, your turn to do the dishes.

CORRINE

I know.

Tree

What'd it say for Gemini?

HOLLY

Something about keeping life simple
and uncluttered.

TREE

Devising bogus horoscopes to get us
to do our chores?

HOLLY

Check it yourself if you don't
believe me.

TREE

I so will.

Nimbly throws her high heels on.

HOLLY

Tough to paint your bedroom if you can't even walk through it. Find your Dodgers jersey?

TREE

No.

HOLLY

Pick up your disaster area and I'll bet it miraculously appears.

Tree shoots her a "whatever" sneer.

CORRINE

Or check the laundry room, sissy.

TREE

Screw you, I'm never goin' down there again.

Holly slips into lab coat, grabs tote bag, heads out the door.

HOLLY

Gotta go. Love you both.

She leaves, momentarily. Pops back in doorway.

HOLLY

Clean your room.

TREE

Goodbye!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Tree, not cleaning his room, strolls the sprawling backyard. House seems to gaze down, as he lights a joint. Wanders into:

DENSE FOREST

He grabs a stick to clear a path. Whacks away at tangles of vine and twisted branches. Hops over a log.

PLUNGES, into a deep ass pit.

Tree, sprawled awkwardly, spits out the doobie. Tries to catch his breath. There's movement from above.

A nerdy African American tomboy, around the same age, checks him out. This is Billie.

BILLIE
Damn boy, you okay?

Sets her shovel down, reaches in, pulls Tree out.

BILLIE
You cool?

TREE
What's your deal?

BILLIE
I'm a poacher. That's a trap.

Tree glances at the massive hole.

TREE
Whadda ya trappin', bear?

BILLIE
Coons, possums... little white
boys.

She grins. Tree spots potential buried beneath her baggy
camouflage outfit. Smiles back.

BILLIE
Should've saw your face. Priceless.
Ain't seen you round here before.
Y'all live in that big ass house
dere?

TREE
Moved in a few weeks ago.

BILLIE
Where from?

TREE
California.

BILLIE
I'm from the other side of the
woods.

TREE
My name's Tree.

BILLIE
Parents hippies or sumptin'?

He shrugs. She sizes him up.

BILLIE

More like a stump than a tree.

Tree dusts dirt off his jeans. Brushes off the comment, too.

BILLIE

Just fuckin' witcha. Got my own
cross to bear. Given name's
Jubilee, but everyone calls me
Billie. Behind my back, they
callin' me hillbilly or goat girl.
I'm like, whatever, get it out your
system. You know how they be?

TREE

Ever hear the expression hung like
a tree? I get that sometimes.

Billie laughs her ass off.

BILLIE

You alright, man. You alright. Up
for takin' a tour of this wild
jungle?

Tree nods.

BILLIE

Thought I'd ask first, case you had
any broken limbs.

TREE

Tree limbs? Nice one.

They hike away through tall weeds, while a bird's-eye view
reveals about twenty holes, identical to the one Tree fell
into.

INT. TIFFANY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's Bratz meets Hello Kitty, from a canopy bed to posters
scattered on the walls.

Tiffany sports black, footie pajamas. DREAM ON written across
the front. Plops her doll into a beauty salon playset.

Shantel disposes gift wrapping paper. Tucks birthday card
money into her bra. Dumps the unread Hallmarks into waste
bag.

SHANTEL

You hit the jackpot, girl.

TIFFANY

I even got Sasha Shimmers. Look.

She doesn't.

SHANTEL

Alright, play time's over. We both need to go nite nite. Mommy's still feelin' groggy and Grandma Joyce is comin' to pick you up in the morning. I'm takin' the garbage out and I'll be back in a jiff to tuck ya in, kay?

Tiffany's preoccupied, lopping Sasha's hair off with a pair of scissors.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Shantel drags overflowing trash can to the curb. She fights with the lid. Bangs down on it.

Across the street, a dog BARKS. She peers in that direction.

A parked white van, idles. MISCIO "THE TEENY HOUDINI" on the side. Appears unoccupied.

Panic-stricken, she sprints back toward house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

She storms inside. Slams door. Locks it. Peeks out blinds. It's still there.

TIFFANY'S BEDROOM

She rushes in. Look of relief. Tiffany's right where she left her.

KITCHEN

Dashes to the counter, frantically searching her purse. Flustered, she gives up. Heads back to her daughter.

TIFFANY'S BEDROOM

SHANTEL

Tiff, you seen mommy's cell phone?

Tiffany sits cross-legged on carpet.

In front of her, a cake with six candles lit.

SHANTEL
Where is he?

TIFFANY
He disappeared... poof.

Shantel snatches Tiffany's scissors from floor. For the sake of her daughter, fights the urge to cry.

SHANTEL
Stay put. Mommy's gotta find her phone.

Weapon stays at her side. Poised to kill the little son of a bitch, if necessary.

Lights go out.

SHANTEL
Fuck.

Unable to hold her shit together any longer. Bursts into tears.

TIFFANY
Mama?

Snatches cake away from her daughter.

TIFFANY
Mommy!

SHANTEL
I'll bring it back.

Holds it like a makeshift lantern. Apprehensively, ventures into blackness of the house.

HALLWAY OFF TIFFANY'S ROOM

Doorway to bathroom's wide open.

BATHROOM

Shantel, cautiously glances in. It's empty.

LIVING ROOM

Candlelight bounces off the walls. Her illuminated eyes scan every nook and cranny.

KITCHEN

No one's there.

Eerie silence broken by cellular RING tone. It's distant, but it shakes Shantel up.

She leans against the wall, weeping. Gathers herself. Makes a bee line toward sound.

It's coming from the bathroom.

HALLWAY OFF TIFFANY'S ROOM

Bathroom door's shut now. Shantel gives it an elbow nudge. Door swings open.

BATHROOM

Shower's at far end. Ring tone emanates from behind the curtain. She approaches, carefully.

Curtain moves.

Shantel sets cake down on the sink. Through the plastic, the dwarf's visible. Top hat and all.

Ringings stops.

No hesitation. She thrusts scissors through shower curtain.

High pitched SHRIEK of pain.

Shantel tears it open, ready to stab again.

It's Tiffany. Top hat on her head, grasping at her wounded shoulder.

SHANTEL

My baby!

Cradles Tiffany. Tries to calm her down.

TIFFANY

We were playing a game, mama!

SHANTEL

It's okay, baby doll. You're gonna
be okay.

Ring tone blares, again. Phone rests by shower drain.

TIFFANY

Don't answer!

She does.

SHANTEL

Whatever I did, I'm sorry. Whatever
I called you, was-- I'm so sorry.
Leave us alone, please. Just leave.

Instant darkness covers them.

Cake's vanished.

Shantel peeks through lacerated curtain, living room in view.

Candlelight burns deep within it.

MISCIO (pronounced Me-see-oh) leers back at her in a freaky
translucent mask. Holds cake below his face, for dramatic
effect. Head cocked sideways, phone to his ear.

Shantel drops her handset, moves Tiffany aside.

Springs to her feet. Blazes from the washroom, scissors
outstretched.

LIVING ROOM

Candlelight whisks away. Miscio's on the move.

Shantel's in hot pursuit.

KITCHEN

She follows the glowing confection racing ahead of her. It
zips around the corner like a firefly. Descends into:

BASEMENT

Shantel hesitates at the top of the stairs, adrenaline
pumping.

Elusive light waits for her at the bottom.

This is it. Do or die.

She indecisively, ambles down staircase.

Guiding flames of Miscio's cake draw her further into stagnant cellar.

Echo of her heavy breathing.

Frenetic eyes riveted on the cake.

Light grows more intense. She's gaining ground.

Shantel raises clippers in anticipation.

Now close enough to feel the heat.

It comes to a halt.

Candles extinguish.

Darkness blankets her.

Momentary silence.

Broken by Shantel's hyperventilating gasps.

Candles reignite behind her.

No more games. She spins around, lunges in for the kill.

Scissors aimed at his throat.

Jabs, repeatedly. Every thrust accentuated with a wrathful scream. Over and over.

All at once, she freezes up.

Miscio's not there.

Cake hasn't moved an inch.

Shantel waves scissors into the darkness, above and below it.

It levitates.

Dumbfounded by this wicked trick, she fails to notice the diminutive figure lurking from behind.

Silver flash of a jury rigged blade emerges from his sleeve.

Shantel faces him.

Too late to react, he slices her midsection wide open. Weapon magically retreats into his jacket.

She collapses on the concrete floor.

SNAP of Miscio's fingers.

On command, the hovering cake descends to ground level.

He studies Shantel like a lab rat. Every last twitch.

As a finishing touch, dabs his white glove in her stomach cavity. Finger paints a solitary red tear running down her cheek.

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Mama?

SNAP. Cake sails away from Shantel, traversing the room, to flush out the snoop.

Magician's cap tumbles off Tiffany, as she darts from the shadows. Scurries under the staircase, far as she can.

Miscio draws near, calmly retrieving his hat. Gestures for her to come out.

Tiffany stays put, shivering.

SNAP. Lights out.

INT. TREE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Still a wreck.

Water trickles down old fashioned wallpaper. Step ladder teeters back and forth. At the top, Tree sponges down wall.

He peels back a layer of loosened wallpaper. Underneath, saintly eyes peer back at him. A concealed painting.

Tears off another section. Unveils an angelic halo atop curly blonde locks.

Tree's clearly enamored with his find.

Distant LAUGHTER erupts. It's Holly's voice. Some guy, too. She has company.

He leaps off the ladder, stealth style. Hastily shuts bedroom door. Kills the lights.

Lays on the ground, exhibiting textbook eavesdropping form. Gap beneath the door, his observatory. Strip of light casts across Tree's face.

Within his limited vantage point, Holly's stilettos appear. Indistinct chatter becomes clear.

HOLLY

Trust me, the cabbie saw everything. You didn't catch him adjusting his rearview?

Pair of two tone Durango cowboy boots stroll in. They belong to NATHAN.

NATHAN

Feel sorry for Shreveport taxi drivers. Car's out of the shop in a week. They'll be missin' the backseat shows I've been puttin' on lately.

HOLLY

Lately? Who besides me?

NATHAN

Kidding!

HOLLY

Shhhhhhhhh. They're sleeping.

Tree's eyes retreat into the shadows. Return, just as quick.

NATHAN

That's hot. Do the shhhhhhhhh thing again.

HOLLY

What?

NATHAN

Told you earlier, I'm easily aroused.

HOLLY

I'm sorry.

NATHAN

Yes ma'am, it's a curse. Just the other day I was at a bookstore--

HOLLY

--Bookstore? You southern boys. Always slipping in a line about how literate you are. Tad self-conscious about the country bumpkin stereotype, or what?

NATHAN

So, I'm out and about, and there's this total fox. Li'l baby on her shoulder, cryin' away. She's tryin' to soothe it. Doin' the whole shhhhhhhhh thing, for like ten minutes. Swear, it got me stiffer than a whiskey straight.

Tree tilts head, fighting to get a glimpse of this dweeb.

NATHAN

Just that constant... shhhhhhhhh.

High heel playfully wraps around Nathan's leg.

HOLLY

Shhhhhhhhh.

He backs her against adjacent wall. Legs straddle him.

NATHAN

Shhhhhhhhh.

Tree shows glimpse of aroused shame. Hesitantly reaches into his shorts.

HOLLY

Come read me a bedtime story.

They retire to her room across the hall. Nathan kicks the door shut. Holly giggles and moans, faintly.

Underneath Tree's door, spying eyes have withdrawn.

INT. MISCIO'S VAN (MOVING) - NIGHT

Strange children's lullaby blares. Tiffany lays sideways, clear in the back. Hands and feet bound like a rodeo calf.

Her eyes dance back and forth, as an animatronic clown doll performs a bizarre ballerina routine.

Miscio, no longer veiled behind his ghoulish mask, peeks back from driver's seat. Seems delighted by his creation.

She catches sight of him. SCREAMS, top of her lungs.

Van makes sharp turn.

Doll does herky jerky pirouette. Tips over, crashing against the wall.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET

Vehicle fishtails into driveway. Snakes up a winding bend. The surroundings, familiar. Drifting back, the Victorian designed residence becomes recognizable.

It's Tree's house.

INT. MISCIO'S VAN

Makes an abrupt stop, launching Tiffany forward. She wallops against front seats.

Miscio hops into the back. Tugs at his pocket handkerchief. An endless magic rope of silk flows out. He gags her with it. Yanks her out the back doors.

INT. TREE'S KITCHEN

From the window, moonlight cascades across driveway. Provides ideal view of Miscio lugging Tiffany up to the house.

Door opens. He shoves her in.

Retractable dagger sprouts from it's hiding place. She tries to squeal. Finger to his mouth, motions to "be quiet."

Miscio cuts binding from her hands and feet. She darts away.

LIVING ROOM

Automatic lights pop on. Interior's different. Gloomy and aged. Contemporary oceanic design, gone.

Tiffany rips off muzzle. Flees into:

TREE'S BEDROOM

It's vacant.

No clutter, no boxes, no escape.

She hunkers down, back to the wall. Unaware of the towering mural behind her.

A mammoth scale depiction of Miscio rendered as divine angel. Accompanied by a cryptic verse.

"Enlightenment is attained with an angel's guiding hand."

She glances up, recoils at his ethereal image.

Retreats to:

PARLOR ROOM

She dead bolts the door. Grips her injured arm, inspecting the area.

It's completely empty. Trendy zebra wallpaper, absent.

This IS the Guthridge home, at an earlier point in time.

Right now, it's Miscio's domain.

Tiffany falls to the floor, spent. Out of nowhere, a bloodied, white glove strokes her hair.

She gazes up at the deranged dwarf.

He clutches a handful of her curls. Pulls hair taught, dragging her to the fireplace. Tiffany BAWLS.

Beside the mantle, Miscio triggers a secret latch. Like a spy movie, wall swings open. He hauls her through the recessed chasm.

TIFFANY

Mommy!

Fireplace wall swallows them up.

Total silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PARLOR ROOM - DAY (**PRESENT**)

Fireplace hearth roars with activity.

Tree feeds it scraps of wallpaper, stoking embers with an antique poker.

SPIRAL STAIRCASE

He ascends.

CORRINE'S BEDROOM

Complete opposite of her brother's. Organized with OCD precision.

Corrine chats away on her cellular.

Tree barges in, waving. Demands attention.

TREE

That Alex?

CORRINE

What do you want?

TREE

Hi Alex.

CORRINE

Hi Tree. Now go.

TREE

Tell him that--

CORRINE

--Tree's bein' a douche. I'll call you right back.

TREE

Take it easy, Alex.

CORRINE

Get out.

TREE

Chill a sec. Wanna hear somethin' juicy?

She's indifferent.

TREE

Guess who brought her work home last night?

Now mildly surprised.

CORRINE

Really?

TREE

Thought that was a big no no.

CORRINE

All's fair, I suppose.

TREE

Not fair, when you share a wall and some dude's pounding her like a nail for two hours straight.

CORRINE

T.M.I.

Tree flashes a sly grin.

CORRINE

Why'd she bring him back here?

He shrugs.

TREE

Don't care, so long as it's not keeping me awake.

CORRINE

I'm calling Alex back.

He spots a plastic bag hanging around the bedpost.

TREE

Bulimic décor? Very chic.

CORRINE

Out of my room.

TREE

Sure mom would approve having a yack sack right out in the open?

CORRINE

Think she approves of you thieving weed from her purse?

Tree looks confused.

CORRINE

Didn't think so. We done here?

TREE

Thought you knew?

CORRINE

Knew what?

TREE

An unspoken arrangement mom and I have. When Dr. Keppler suggested I take Adderall, she started hinting about an alternate remedy. An herbal one. Way down in the bottom left hand side of her purse. Now, whenever I have trouble focusing...

CORRINE

An enabler. Lovely.

TREE

She a hippie?

CORRINE

She's not opposed to free love on the first date.

TREE'S BEDROOM

Wallpaper's history. Miscio's mural completely exposed. Corrine and Tree gawk at it.

TREE

Weird, right?

CORRINE

All that banging last night inspire you to paint this? You're fucked up.

TREE

I didn't paint this, numbnuts.

CORRINE

Obviously, it's really well done.

TREE

Out of my room.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Corrine reads magazine, lounging on a hammock. Tree, perched on ledge, peers over her shoulder like a cheating schoolboy.

TREE

What ya reading?

She shows him the cover. It's Allure.

TREE

Discovering fascinating new ways to
bleach your anus?

CORRINE

You're the only gross asshole I
wish I could get rid of. Mom said
you found a new butt buddy. Why
don't you go bug him?

TREE

He's a she, and I don't know where
she lives exactly.

CORRINE

Well go figure it out, stud. Since
when are you interested in girls?

TREE

She's a friend.

CORRINE

Maybe an imaginary friend?

TREE

Gee, yeah. Think you might be on to
something.

CORRINE

Maybe she's a dead ghost girl that
lives in the laundry room. Go
downstairs and see if she wants to
come out and play.

TREE

Hilarious.

CORRINE

Done pestering me? Got a half hour
before mom picks me up for work,
so...

TREE

Actually, you gave me an idea.

BACKYARD

Tree concentrates intensely at a canvas panel, propped up on
an easel. Dabs brush in pallet, searching for an ideal mix of
acrylic shade. Applies short detailed strokes.

In front of him, the house provides a perfect panoramic backdrop. So fully engrossed in his art, doesn't notice Billie stroll right up behind him.

BILLIE

Sweet on.

TREE

You reaallly need to announce your arrival.

BILLIE

My bad. It's a trapper's nature to walk soft. You got skills. How long it take to paint that?

TREE

Few hours?

BILLIE

Why am I a ghost?

Over Tree's shoulder, painting's now in full view. A spot on depiction of Billie, except her bottom half has a Casper physique.

TREE

My sister says you're my made up spooky friend.

BILLIE

Spooky? She racist?

TREE

No, no dude. She didn't mean--

BILLIE

--Just fuckin' witcha. Where she at? I'll show her I'm flesh and bone.

TREE

At work. Keep your flesh and bone to yourself.

BILLIE

What she do?

TREE

Lifeguard.

BILLIE

Bet she over at Crestview. Place is all rundown. Don't even have no divin' board.

She checks out painting again. Background landscape's unfinished. House, only a rough sketch, at this point.

BILLIE

Meaning to ask you, what y'all need a king sized house like this for?

TREE

Actually, it's a Queen Anne.

BILLIE

Probably fit da whole damn royal family in there.

TREE

Mom's hell bent on turning it into a bed and breakfast someday.

BILLIE

Folks rich?

TREE

She's a clinical dietitian.

BILLIE

Pops must be filthy with da stuff. He live with y'all?

TREE

Not since I was seven.

BILLIE

Least he stuck it out seven. My old man split 'fore I was born. Momma said bein' with him was the worst mistake she ever made. She also say I was the best mistake she ever made. So there you go.

TREE

My dad, he didn't leave us. Just disappeared.

BILLIE

Like milk carton missin'?

TREE

Eight years ago.

Billie's eyes well up. Gives him a warm, sisterly embrace. Tree's hands wander. Mistakes her intentions as amorous. She pulls away.

BILLIE
Your tree limbs gonna get you in
trouble someday.

TREE
Not smooth, huh?

She beams, nonchalantly wiping her misty eyes.

BILLIE
Nah, you smooth.

DRIVEWAY

Family jeep pulls in. Corrine notices Tree has company. Jiggles out the passenger seat. Little extra strut in her step.

BACKYARD

Billie's clearly captivated.

BILLIE
That your family?

Tree nods. Mom and sis fetch groceries out of vehicle.

BILLIE
Seem nice.

DRIVEWAY

Kids roam down to it.

HOLLY
Could use a hand, Tree. This your
new friend? Billie, right?

BILLIE
Yes ma'am.

HOLLY
Just Holly, okay?

BILLIE
Sorry, Ms. Holly.

Holly sets her bags down. Gives an overzealous hug.

TREE

Jeez, don't smother her.

Arms full, Corrine gives a quick smile. Keeps on going.

HOLLY

Corrine Guthridge.

CORRINE

What?

HOLLY

Be nice.

Corrine, irritated, drops her grocery sacks. Prances over to Billie. Channels her inner valley girl.

CORRINE

Soooo bitchin' to meet you. Blah, blah, blah.

Lifts up her shirt. Billie lets out a little girl shriek.

CORRINE

Happy mom?

She whimsically picks up bags, strolls inside.

HOLLY

I'm so sorry.

BILLIE

(under her breath)

Sorry? Don't be sorry. I'm not sorry.

Tree's taken aback. Swats Billie upside the head.

INT. ATTIC BAY WINDOW

Hangs half open, shrouded in cobwebs. Displays Tree and Billie in the distance. They slap box around the yard, like miniature chess pieces on a vast game board.

ATTIC STORAGE AREA

Abandoned timeworn preschool desk the only object. Keepsake of a lonely childhood.

Closer view shows etching on desk surface. A remedial rendering of an ascending angel, chain tethered to it's foot. Reigns in the free spirit.

Desk OVERTURNS, violently.

EXT. BACKYARD

Kids horse around, oblivious to attic window behind them. SLAMS shut.

Holly carries up last sack of goodies. Marches over to them.

HOLLY
Time out, guys. Stop goofin' off a minute. Billie?

BILLIE
Ma'am?

Holly sighs.

HOLLY
Got an Italian feast in the making. Welcome to stick around.

TREE
You really shouldn't, her spaghetti's meatless.

BILLIE
Appreciate the invite, but momma don't like me walkin' through the woods after dark.

HOLLY
We can give you a lift home.

BILLIE
Truth is, Wednesday's gumbo night, and that's a bowlful of heaven right there. Can't turn Judas on momma's soup. She'd disown me.

HOLLY
Never bite the hand that feeds you? Pretty lame, Billie. You can do better than that.

BILLIE
I dig meat?

Tree chuckles.

HOLLY

I serve flesh, quite frequently.
Next time I do, you and momma have
some grub with us. Alright? Just
not on gumbo Wednesday.

BILLIE

Sweet on.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A culinary jamboree. Oldies rock station blares from counter
top radio. Holly shimmies, chopping veggies. Corrine sways,
prepping sauce on stove.

Mom croons away. Pretends her carrot's a microphone.
Daughter, follows suit. Serenades her spoon.

Tree sneaks in from outside. Tries to fly under the radar of
the Doo Wop girls.

HOLLY

Hey. No, no, no. You got garlic
bread duty. Get on in here.

He boogies between them. Busts out some crazy ass dance
moves.

HOLLY

Tree!

CORRINE

What was that?

TREE

Something I've been practicing.

HOLLY

That was-- wait. You do dance
routines in your room?

TREE

Not sure routine's the right word.

HOLLY

No one can even move in that pit,
but you prance around?

TREE

I adapt to my surroundings.

CORRINE

Glad I haven't walked in on that.

TREE

Worse things you could walk in on.

HOLLY

Really? What's worse?

CORRINE

Yeah?

HOLLY

We want to know.

TREE

Nothing. My dancing's the worst thing. Jesus people, get a sense of humor.

They get a kick out of seeing him squirm.

INT. KITCHEN NOOK

Supper time. Tree and Corrine chow down. Holly nibbles bread, screwing around on her computer.

HOLLY

Got quite the appetite since we got here, Corrine.

Tree fingers his tonsils. Corrine wallops him underneath the table. Mom notices none of this.

CORRINE

Gotta stay healthy, in case some brat wades into the deep end and I gotta fish him out.

HOLLY

How's the job?

CORRINE

Hot and humid.

HOLLY

How 'bout your social life, that heatin' up?

CORRINE

At work? I try not to mix business with pleasure.

TREE

Ouch.

HOLLY

Stir a little spice into boring
stew and it's a lot easier to
stomach.

TREE

Don't get bored at work, get busy?

CORRINE

With whoever's in the next cubicle.

HOLLY

I'll never be stuck in a cubicle,
thank you very much. You're looking
at my office.

Taps on her Macintosh.

HOLLY

And you guys suddenly expect to get
conventional parental advice from
me?

CORRINE

Be a nice change of pace.

HOLLY

You'd call bullshit if I pretended
to be cookie cutter mother, so
don't even go there. Speaking of
bull, I know for a fact you're not
opposed to flings at work.

CORRINE

Actually the pool manager's kinda
cute.

HOLLY

Knew it!

CORRINE

He's twenty seven.

HOLLY

Really?

CORRINE

Don't worry, he's too churchy for
me.

HOLLY

Bible Belt. Get used to it.

CORRINE

He'll walk right behind me and I totally overhear him sayin' "lord have mercy" and "hallelujah." Like he's got Jesus Tourette's or something. It's so annoying.

TREE

Know what's annoying? When your sister won't shut up about highlights and pedicures. You got Vanity Tourette's.

CORRINE

You have Irritable Mouth Syndrome.

TREE

Pool dude was probably checkin' out some other chick's ass. Get over yourself. Amen.

She flips him off. Mother and son bust up laughing.

HOLLY

Looks like you're finally getting over Alex.

Corrine hasn't quite left her past behind. Gives Holly the dirtiest of glares. Huffs away.

HOLLY

Or not.

TREE

She still talks to him.

HOLLY

Yeah, I got that. Better go do damage control.

TREE

You'll piss her off worse. Want me to talk to her?

HOLLY

Do something else for me, alright? I have to get an outfit ready for tomorrow. Would you load the dishwasher? I really don't need this drama tonight.

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Screaming women point dramatically at each other, on wall-mounted flat screen TV.

Array of formal skirts and pleated blouses line the bed.

Ironing board's set up and in use. Steam pours upward. Holly presses out wrinkled garments. Can't peel her eyes off the reality show catfight. She actually digs this garbage.

KITCHEN

Tree dumps Cascade in dishwasher. Loud clattering from upstairs gets his attention. Curiously gazes at ceiling.

WORKOUT ROOM

Converted guest bedroom, doubles as gym. Corrine keeps brisk pace on treadmill, blowing off some steam of her own.

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Holly smooths over last crease in her dress. Hangs it on coat rack of her closed door. Unplugs iron.

Out of the blue, her top pulls open. Buttons pop loose, one by one.

Stunned, she tries to close her blouse. Unobservable force pulls her arms down.

Shirt peels back, exposing her. She tries to scream, but nothing comes out.

Impression of a hand forms around her bare breast. Something's feeling her up.

Jeans slowly unzip. Holly's mouth quivers, incapable of crying out for help.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Attic ceiling hatch is open. Stair ladder extends to floor.

Step by step, tiny black dress shoes shuffle down.

Ivory gloves hold onto side rails. Heels land gently down to the ground.

Stairs fold back into upper level. Loft door closes.

WORKOUT ROOM

Corrine runs incline, drenched in perspiration. It streams down her forehead, clouding her vision.

Can barely make out someone observing her from the doorway. Same stature as her brother.

CORRINE
Not in the mood.

She towels off her face.

It's Miscio, in full costume. Hides behind a ceramic Mardi Gras mask.

CORRINE
Not funny.

She hops off the exercise machine.

He's no longer there.

Corrine tenses up. Not so sure it was Tree, after all.

HALLWAY

She marches to spiral staircase. Peers down.

On the landing, magician gawks back up at her, with his emotionless disguise.

CORRINE
Tree?

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Holly's still in the grip of an unseen presence.

However, her initial petrified expression has changed to something else...

Excitement.

She's simultaneously turned on and petrified.

Not fighting it anymore, her back is arched. Hips gyrate with pleasure. In synch, with whatever's going down, below her undone pants.

LIVING ROOM

Twisted game of cat and mouse is underway. Corrine guardedly, checks behind recliner.

CORRINE

I'm beatin' your ass. Advance warning.

Low hanging drapes flutter, drawing her attention. She's found the rat.

Underneath the window dressing, petite black shoes protrude. A dead giveaway.

CORRINE

Come out, come out, little fucker.

She unleashes a Bruce Lee style karate assault on the fabric curtains... and whoever's concealed behind them. Kickboxes them into submission.

They fall to floor in defeat. Exposes a naked unclosed window, and nothing else.

Corrine seems disappointed, that no one was on the receiving end of her fury. Apart from, an empty pair of leather Wingtips.

TREE'S BEDROOM

Corrine charges in.

Curled up under blankets, Tree blasts away aliens on some first-person shooter.

TREE

What's your deal?

CORRINE

Someone's in the house. Get up.

TREE

I'm almost on level four.

She ain't waiting. Peels bedspread off him.

Tree's decked out in the magician's suit.

She goes apeshit. Smacks him so hard, the game controller flatlines against the wall.

CORRINE
I'm telling!

TREE
Whatever!

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

They both barge through the door.

CORRINE
Tree's a little fucker!

Mom tugs her shirt closed. Yanks up her jeans.

TREE
She hit me!

Holly's still transfixed by her encounter.

TREE
You okay?

HOLLY
I'm fine. You guys could knock next
time, but that's asking a lot.
Alright, why is this happening?

They're unable to answer in turn.

CORRINE
Your son's a dick--

TREE
She broke my Xbox--

HOLLY
--One at a time. What's with the
outfit?

TREE
Found it up in the attic... in the
rafters.

HOLLY
Why you screwing around up there?

CORRINE
Cause he's a rat!

TREE

Heard something movin' around.
Thought a coon or a possum might've
got in.

CORRINE

Or a rat!

HOLLY

Enough.

Directs them to leave.

HOLLY

You can kill each other for all I
care. Just get out. Told you
both... no drama tonight.

Kids mope into hallway. Holly shuts them out. Trace of
unbridled exhilaration crosses her face.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Painting's coming together nicely. Tree layers on coats of
deep color. Style is purely impressionistic. He doesn't even
bother referencing the house behind the canvas.

Holly shatters his concentration.

HOLLY

Having company tonight. Pick-up
your pigsty.

TREE

I'm not feelin' good today.
Seriously, I might be comin' down
with something.

HOLLY

If that's true, I suggest you go
lay down for awhile.

TREE

Doin' this makes me feel better.
Why does anybody need to see my
room?

HOLLY

Uh, duh... your creepy wall
painting.

TREE

Who wants to see it?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tree's still not cleaning. Locked in a game of rummy with Corrine, at coffee table.

Back door CREEEEAAKS open, WHAMS shut.

Attention shifts from card game. The all too familiar, oyster shell and teal colored, Durango shit kickers... swagger in.

It's impossible not to rubberneck at them.

HOLLY

Sorry to interrupt. I'd like to introduce you to Nathan. He works down at the hospital, too.

Nathan nervously tucks his shirt into torn hipster jeans. Resembles mid-eighties Michael Douglas, minus the charm and cool chin.

NATHAN

Hey ace... heard lots about cha. Your mom tells me you're quite the little da Vinci. Not to brag, but I used to--

TREE

-- Shhhhhhhhh.

NATHAN

Am I bein' too loud?

TREE

Shhhhhhhhh.

HOLLY

What is this?

TREE

Shhhhhhhhh.

HOLLY

Tree Guthridge, be nice.

TREE

Just settin' the mood for ya, ma.

Tree charges past them.

HOLLY

Don't know what's gotten into him lately.

NATHAN

Yeah, that was... I'm not exactly sure what that was.

HOLLY

You could probably use a drink. Corrine, could you hook Nathan up, please and thank you?

Holly chases after her son.

Nathan spots his window of opportunity. Lecherously x-rays Corrine, up and down.

NATHAN

My, my, my. Appears one of y'all was blessed with their mother's looks.

She laps up moments like this. Instant smile.

TREE'S ROOM

Holly stumbles over boxes.

HOLLY

Going on three weeks. Unpack this crap, now.

Tree lays in bed, ignoring her.

HOLLY

Seriously? Couldn't just reel off a standard "hi, nice to meet you too?"

TREE

I'm tired of pretending to be all buddy buddy with random guys.

HOLLY

Maybe they're tired of being buddy buddy to random kids.

He wipes at his nose. Tries to conceal his smirk.

TREE

Maybe we should skip the formalities and be honest. Nathan ain't gonna be around for long.

HOLLY
Formalities? Sesame Street's got
you talking all grown up and shit.

Unable to contain their amusement, they giggle.

HOLLY
Scootch.

Holly cozies up beside him.

HOLLY
Oscar The Grouch feeling neglected
again?

She tickles him.

TREE
Maybe, a little bit. Sure you
haven't forgotten anything
recently?

HOLLY
What?

TREE
Figure it out.

Tickling intensifies.

HOLLY
Tell me.

He can't take it.

TREE
Cut it out. I'm not telling.

HOLLY
Tell me why this room's still a
wreck? I have a theory.

He motions to "get to the point."

HOLLY
You're keeping things boxed up for
a quick getaway cause you think we
live in Amityville.

TREE
Nah, I'm just lazy. This place is
growin' on me. It has a lot of
potential, especially the laundry
room.

HOLLY

We're here, that's reality, babe.
Might as well enjoy the summer. The
housing market sucks. I can't put
this place up for sale cause you're
afraid of a little ectoplasm.

TREE

Ectoplasm?

HOLLY

Oh come on... who ya gonna call?

Tree don't care who she's calling.

HOLLY

I know you guys miss Laguna.
There's things about it I miss.

TREE

Dad?

HOLLY

The ocean. There's a gulf, though.
Five hours away.

He seems disappointed that she dodged the question.

HOLLY

This place is an investment for us.
All I care about is making sure you
go to art school and your sister
marries a doctor, that's all. The
last part was a joke.

TREE

No it wasn't.

HOLLY

Know what's a joke? You two
thinking the move hasn't been hard
for me. I must hide it well, 'cause
there's a million things cluttering
my brain. Probably why I've been so
forgetful lately.

Holly tickles him again, attempting to regain levity.

HOLLY

So tell me, what did I forget?

TREE

Nathan's probably gettin' impatient
out there.

HOLLY

Big whoop. Pretty sure he's not in it for the long haul.

She checks out Miscio's painting.

HOLLY

Far as this house goes, I'll level with ya. I think there's an energy force within this place. I really do. I felt something last night.

TREE

What?

HOLLY

Can't really describe it. It was kind of, transcendent.

TREE

You a hippie?

HOLLY

When I was your age, I was terrified of the unknown. Older I got, easier it was to embrace. This house isn't haunted. It's radiant.

TREE

Far out, man.

KITCHEN NOOK

Nathan takes drag off a smoke, plucking air guitar. Runs his drink along the imaginary neck, all up on Corrine.

NATHAN

... and I'm usin' the fifth of Jack as my slide. It was epic.

CORRINE

What's your band called?

NATHAN

Fellatio Alger. Come check us out sometime. Leave mom at home, if ya want.

Holly wanders in.

Nathan, intuitively, drifts away from her daughter. Greets Holly with a peck on the cheek.

NATHAN
I was tellin' your lovely offspring
'bout my little honky tonk group.

TREE (O.S.)
Whatta ya play?

Surprised, Nathan and Holly turn around to acknowledge him.

NATHAN
Like songs?

TREE
Instrument.

NATHAN
Guitar. Steel guitar.

TREE
Totally cool.

Holly gives an appreciative grin. She REALLY loves the kid.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Tree and Billie scrutinize his painting.

TREE
Now check out the house. See it?

She glances up from the canvas, right at the first story.

BILLIE
You added an extra window.

TREE
Not intentionally. At that point, I
was like painting with my mind's
eye. Freeform, you know.

BILLIE
Guess so.

TREE
There's obviously supposed to be a
window there, right? I added one
without even looking up at the
house. Making it symmetrical with
the other ones.

BILLIE
Think it was walled over?

TREE

Maybe.

BILLIE

Know what I think?

Tree shrugs, sets painting on the lawn.

BILLIE

Y'all got cabin fever. Stay in one place too long and goofy shit go on in your brain. Need to get away from here.

TREE

Let's go. Where you wanna go?

BILLIE

Could go to Crestview? Sister got a swimsuit that'd fit me?

TREE

Don't even mention Corrine right now. Her or my mom.

BILLIE

What's up?

TREE

Wake up this morning, and understand, I've been dropping hints for like... weeks. Get up like it's any other day, and neither one of those bitches wish me a happy birthday. Not a peep. Nada.

BILLIE

Oh, snapdragon.

Tree nods, dejected. Playing up the fact he got slighted.

BILLIE

Enough mopin'. Let's go grab a bite to eat. Gotta enlighten you to some of our local flavors. You down?

TREE

Enlightenment is attained with an angels guiding hand.

She gives him a curious glance.

BILLIE

Say what?

TREE

Enlightenment is attained with an
angels guiding hand?

BILLIE

Just reminded me of sumptin'. We
changin' plans. Gonna show you an
attraction unique to this area.

TREE

Crocodile farm?

BILLIE

Fool, only alligators down here.
Whatchu 'bout to see is way cooler
than any old gator.

INT. CORRINE'S BEDROOM - WINDOW

Halfway open. Ventilating breeze blows drapes aside.

Outside, towering live oaks sway. Spanish moss swings from
the limbs. Beneath them, a taxi sputters up the driveway.
Stops halfway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Nathan steps out, passes the driver cash. It reverses back,
same way it came.

EXT. FOREST

Kids trample through thick brush.

TREE

Much further?

BILLIE

Gettin' real close.

Tree spots a sagging Weeping Willow. Heart-shape crudely
etched into it's bark. Surrounds an inscription... Jordan &
Billie.

TREE

Jordan?

BILLIE

Third grade crush. Only other person to see what I'm 'bout to show you. You in privileged company.

TREE

I do feel special. Do I get my own public display of affection?

BILLIE

There's that gooey west coast foo foo ya always hearin' 'bout. Jury's still out on you, Tree. Paintin' pictures of me, and what not.

She smirks.

FOREST - CLEARING

A massive fallen Cypress tree. Trunk overgrown with vines and ivy. Surrounding terrain pockmarked with numerous holes.

TREE

You poach around here?

BILLIE

Once upon a time.

She pulls at the creeping weeds on the tree. Pitches them aside, like a giddy archeologist unearthing an ancient artifact.

Tree's unimpressed.

Billie yanks at a tangled mass. Uncovers, what appears to be a human femur bone.

BILLIE

Happy birthday.

Tree perks up, joins in. Rips at the blanket of vegetation, trying to unveil what lies beneath.

TREE'S FRONT YARD

Nathan marvels at the flamboyant architecture of the estate. Renaissance style turrets. Greek inspired columns. Cathedral stained glass windows.

Notices curtain close abruptly, in second floor window.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He forgoes a courtesy knock. Lets himself in.

NATHAN

Anyone home? Corrine? Think I left my lighter here yesterday. Came to pick it up. Hello?

No response.

Props phone to his ear.

NATHAN

I'm in... yeah, pretty sure I'm alone. Holly told me your niece works during the day... uh huh, I'm checkin' out her room first... yeah, she has no idea. Thinks I work with her at Saint James Memorial...

HOLLY'S ROOM

Nathan still on cellular, rummages through night stand cabinet.

NATHAN

Already looked under her bed. What? Reception sucks in here...

Opens closet. Shuffles through stacks of paperwork.

NATHAN

Nuthin's under the mattress either, I checked... no, it's not the first time I've been in here... yeah well, ya didn't hire me for my ethics. What? Can't hear ya... that's true, they're not required in this profession...

He ignores his client. Snaps pics of documents with his phone. Resumes conversation...

NATHAN

Been at this for weeks and ain't found nuthin'... I'm gonna keep lookin', it's your money... yeah, she might've been careful, or maybe she didn't do anything. I'll figure it out, alright?

Ceiling creaks, again and again. Footsteps from Corrine's room.

NATHAN

Think someone's in here... uh huh,
I'll call ya back if I find
anything regardin' your brother.

EXT. FORREST

Twisted piles of foliage accumulate behind the kids. They step back, examining Billie's odd discovery.

An intricate shrine chiseled from the tree's timber, preserved by nature. Constructed from equal parts, wood and human remains. The sculpture portrays two cherubs holding each other's skeletal hand.

One has outstretched angelic wings. Free arm points to the heavens, it's bony fingers wrapped around a key. The other's wingless, a grimacing skull anchored to it's wooden torso.

Tree admires the detailed craftsmanship. Puzzled by the morbid symbolism.

BILLIE

Strangest tree I ever encountered,
before I met you.

TREE

This is messed up.

BILLIE

Forgot all about it, 'til you said
sumptin' about angels.

TREE

Think I know what this means.

He yanks at the key. It won't dislodge.

BILLIE

Don't bother, it's fused to the
bone. Tried to pry it away years
ago, but I didn't want to ruin it.

Tree grabs fallen branch from the ground.

BILLIE

Told my momma when I first stumbled
across it. She's real
superstitious.

(MORE)

BILLIE (CONT'D)

She be like "stay away, it's bad juju." She say this whole region steeped in Cajun folklore. She say it's to ward off evil spirits.

Tree swings sturdy plank of wood at the angel's hand. Lops it off at the wrist, shattering bone.

BILLIE

You dumbass! Tryin' to stir 'em up, or sumptin'?

TREE

You believe in spirits?

Billie raises eyebrow.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE

Nathan wanders upstairs.

NATHAN

Hello? Corrine, you home?

CORRINE'S BEDROOM

No regard for privacy, he marches right in.

NATHAN

Seen my lighter anywhere?

Gust of air billows through window, making everything creak. It's the same sound he heard.

More relaxed now, he snoops around her desk. Flips through snapshots of Corrine and friends. Fondles her trinkets.

Checks area thoroughly, making sure he's alone.

He pinpoints the dresser. Rifles through it with feverish zeal. Discovers a compact dildo buried under piles of socks.

NATHAN

Wild child.

He sniffs it.

Without a hint of shame, he licks it like a popsicle. Puts it back where he found it.

Opens the panty drawer.

He grabs a bunch. Rubs the undergarments all over his sweaty, revolting face.

Couple pair are spared this treatment, falling to the carpet. He kneels down to retrieve them.

Draft from outside, catches hold of Corrine's bulimia bag. Pulls it from framework of her bed.

Nathan watches it drift gently toward him. It's about to hit the ground and another blast of wind carries it closer.

Floats right up to him.

Breeze dies down.

Drapes fall stationary. Everything's still.

The sack remains suspended in the air.

Nathan responds with a delayed, bewildered reaction. Makes a half ass attempt to swipe it with his free hand.

The bag comes alive.

Glides out of reach. Whips behind him.

Pulls over his head, snug.

Nathan claws at it. Propelled to the ground, kicking and thrashing. Through the bag, his bloodshot eyes bulge from their sockets.

He scratches a small hole in the plastic. Manages a few life extending breaths.

Bag readjusts.

Twists around tighter, like a boa constrictor. Chokes the fight out of Nathan.

He goes limp, in all respects. Fistful of panties trapped in his death grip.

EXT. FOREST - CLEARING

Tree tightropes down a Cypress limb, cradling the statue's amputated hand. Billie trails behind.

TREE

You never answered me. You believe
in ghosts? Like in scary movies,
you know?

He almost slips.

BILLIE
Careful now. Don't really watch
'em.

TREE
How about spirits? Believe in 'em?

They jump down from the timber.

BILLIE
Believe my momma's spirit look down
on me.

TREE
What?

BILLIE
Ain't no coincidence we struck up a
friendship. I ain't no poacher, and
that hole you dropped into, wasn't
no trap.

TREE
Wait a sec--

BILLIE
--Let me finish. Me and momma live
round the way with my Aunt Ravina.
One day momma went joggin'. She
never come back. Cops can't find
her, neither. Few weeks go by,
Ravina ask if they have any leads.
They got nuthin'.

Tree nods, clearly engaged by her story.

BILLIE
Months go by. She try again. Begs
'em for any info. This time one of
da cops feels sorry for her. Tells
her in private there's a few people
of interest in the investigation.
Tells her one of them live right in
that house down there. Your house.

TREE
Nuh uh.

BILLIE
Few more weeks go by. Guy who lives
in your house up and disappears.
(MORE)

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Police tell my aunt it's kinda suspicious.

TREE

Who was he?

BILLIE

They didn't say. So one night I come down to your place, casin' da joint. It's totally empty. I smash a window, start crawlin' through, and the whole house light up like Bourbon Street.

TREE

Someone's there?

BILLIE

No one's there. Scared the hell out of me. I skedaddle up to the woods, look back, and the place goes black as coal.

TREE

I'm not nutso. That house is.

BILLIE

It's crazy, alright.

TREE

So you're digging for--

BILLIE

--my momma. Yeah, momma. Figure she might be round here somewhere.

Tree puts a consoling grip on her shoulder.

BILLIE

High time we take a tour of that house of yours.

TREE

Let's do it.

Shoves the bony cherub hand into his front pocket. Creates a prominent crotch bulge.

BILLIE

Public display of affection?

INT. TREE'S HOUSE - SERVANTS QUARTERS

Tree pulls back heavy drapes. Intense sunlight streams in.

Billie shields eyes. Dust particles dance between them. Room hasn't been used in ages.

TREE

Guess this is where the butler stayed, back in the day.

BILLIE

Nice way to start the tour. Hey check it out, this is where the nigger used to sleep.

He's speechless.

BILLIE

Just fuckin' witcha.

Something SQUEAKS upstairs.

BILLIE

Sure no one's home?

TREE

Corrine's still at work.

BILLIE

Positive?

CORRINE'S BEDROOM

Door swings open. Nathan's body... GONE.

TREE

Don't touch anything. She'll know.

Billie takes in the surroundings, and a big whiff.

BILLIE

Smells like summer breeze in a field of jasmines.

TREE

It's called hairspray. You're gettin' high on Paul Mitchell.

Spots pile of panties on floor.

TREE

There's a first. I've never seen anything out of place in here.

BILLIE

Wish I hadn't seen those. Like to leave a little bit to the imagination.

TREE'S BEDROOM

Billie checks out Miscio's painting. Silently mouths the mural's ambiguous phrase.

BILLIE

So that's where it came from.

TREE

You get it? That thing in the woods isn't some Cajun good luck charm. It's connected to this house.

He skims palm across wall, feeling for any aberrations. Detects a noticeable indentation.

Grabs a paint brush, using the handle end to pick at it. Plaster chips crumble to floor.

Unveils secret keyhole.

BILLIE

I'll be damned.

Tree pulls skeletal hand from his pants. Inserts key, stuck within it's clenched fist. Anxiously turns it.

Audible CLICK of bolt mechanism unlocking.

He gives it a tug. Won't budge.

TREE

Help me.

Billie grabs hold of hand. They yank on it, leveraging what little power their slight frames can muster.

Flakes of paint break away from wall. Outline of tiny door materializes.

Teeth clenched. Every ounce of Billie and Tree's combined force, pries it slightly open.

SECRET PASSAGEWAY

Tree shoots flashlight ray into the void. Pours it over the interior.

BILLIE
See anything?

TREE
Nuthin'.

BILLIE
We goin' in?

Tree fidgets, nervously.

TREE
Sure we can fit?

Billie squirms in, barely.

TREE'S BEDROOM

Pops her turtle head back through.

BILLIE
Have to grease our asses to get out again.

PASSAGEWAY

Cramped walls covered in Aramaic markings. Illustrations of stellar formations, planets, and moons.

BILLIE
They're engraved. Imagine how long that took?

Tree runs his fingers over them.

TREE
Mom's not gonna believe this.

They stoop along the narrow walkway. Tree points flashlight on a supersized door latch.

FOYER

Wall pops open, adjacent to a lavish grand staircase.

Billie and Tree stumble out. He realizes his whereabouts.

TREE

Bad ass.

BILLIE

This crib's insane. Seriously, how y'all afford this place. I gotta know.

TREE

Took eight years, but my dad's life insurance finally paid out. Mom told us claims on missing people take forever, in case they're fraudulent. Your mom have life insurance?

She's clearly wounded by his insensitive inquiry.

TREE

I'm a dipshit.

PASSAGEWAY

Tree and Billie continue to navigate, through a labyrinth of stairs and tunnels.

Along the way, they come across numerous covert doorways. All identical to the one they crawled in through, except one. The sliding bolt lock is missing.

BILLIE

Wonder where that goes?

Tree levels a power kick on it. Doesn't move an inch.

TREE

Beats me.

PASSAGEWAY - SMALL OPENING

Piles of ancient occult books scattered amongst vintage 70's porn mags.

BILLIE

Yuck, hairy women. Y'all had a freak up in here.

TREE

Major perv.

One esoteric journal stands out. It's hand stitched, words scraped directly onto the leather cover. Tree reads title.

TREE

"Spiritual Attainment: Necromancy
And The Transitional Soul, By
Miscio Mortier."

BILLIE

Necromancy? Ain't that like
screwin' dead people?

Billie hangs her head.

TREE

Highly doubt this has anything to
do with your mom.

He snags book, whips it open.

TREE

Listen to this.

(reads text aloud)

"Through my travels, I've studied
wide variations of faith-based
theologies... from Indonesian black
magic, Haitian voodoo, to
Aboriginal reincarnation. There's
always a constant in every one. The
certainty of death."

BILLIE

Your delivery needs work. Spruce it
up a bit.

Tree shifts into Morgan Freeman voice.

TREE

"Life's cruelest trick is deceiving
people into thinking they're going
to die. A melancholy reminder to
play it safe." That better?

BILLIE

Still a little flat.

He adopts a goofy British inflection.

TREE

"However, the immortal soul knows
differently. A secret. That
finality of death is an illusion.
Like everything else, it can be
cheated."

BILLIE

That's perfect.

TREE

"Only a few practitioners know of this trick. Among inner circles, we've been christened as Necro-Astral Spiritualists. The astronauts of the occult. Going beyond smoke and mirrors, where no man has gone before."

BILLIE

Mumbo jumbo, what dat is.

She tries to change the subject.

BILLIE

What's that, over in da corner?

Flashlight casts on a deflated sex doll.

Billie and Tree share a quick, "what the hell" glance. What happens next coaxes an even stronger reaction.

The inanimate toy inflates.

Their slack jawed expressions mimic the air filled, open mouthed, plastic woman.

TREE

Oh shit, man.

RATTLING erupts from behind.

They spin around. Light beams on EXPOSED PIPES, shaking.

BILLIE

I'm freakin' da fuck out! Let's roll.

TREE

Chill a sec.

He appears to ponder, for a moment.

TREE

Corrine must've got home. She's probably takin' a shower.

Billie's trepidation, clearly subsides.

BILLIE

Shower?

She grabs hold of a water filled pipe, silencing it.

BILLIE
Gotta be a secret way into the
bathroom, yeah?

TREE
Don't even.

BILLIE
All we gotta do is follow the
pipes.

TREE
Seriously, knock it off. She'll
kill me.

Billie rubs her chin, envisions...

STEAMY BATHROOM

Corrine slips out of T-shirt.

BILLIE (V.O.)
It's swelterin' outside.

Kicks flip flops aside.

BILLIE (V.O.)
She been waitin' all day long to
rinse off.

Shorts fall around her feet. Heads for shower.

PASSAGEWAY

Billie hauls ass down the corridor. Tree in full pursuit,
tries to dissuade her.

TREE
Aren't you slightly disturbed? A
balloon woman spontaneously
ballooned, right in front of us.

She halts.

BILLIE
Normally I'd be scared shitless,
but when I think 'bout your
sista...

BATHROOM SHOWER

Corrine lathers. Caresses. All that good stuff.

BILLIE (V.O.)
 ...she makes me spontaneously
 balloon.

PASSAGEWAY

TREE
 (to himself)
 Identity crisis.

BILLIE
 Throw some light over here.

He guides it at vibrating pipes. They dead end into the wall.

BILLIE
 Bingo.

She puts ear to wall, trying to pick up the sweet sound of water hitting flesh. Gropes around. Unlocks a partially visible entryway.

TREE
 What about leaving a little
 something to the imagination?

Billie pays no mind. Crawls through.

BATHROOM

Cabinet below sink opens. Billie wades through Maxi Pads and toilet paper. Tree follows, setting flashlight on counter top.

Running water echoes behind the closed curtain.

Billie grins, ear to ear. Tiptoes toward the shower.

Tree keeps his distance. Edges forward, like a prisoner on a death march.

Pretends to cover his eyes. Steals a peak of Corrine, through his fingers.

Billie slides the curtain open.

Reveals, to her dismay, an empty shower.

BILLIE
Where your sista at?

TREE
Be thankful she's not slapping the
shit out of you.

BILLIE
Tree, look behind you.

She points toward fogged over mirror, above sink. Written
within the condensation, three letters...

"B O O."

BILLIE
Come on, man. Let's roll.

He's unresponsive, distracted by an object in the water
filled bathtub.

BILLIE
What you see?

Tree shuts off running shower head. Stares intently at the
reflective water.

Faded blue and white fabric rests at the bottom. His missing
Dodgers jersey.

TREE
What's goin' on here?

His hand plunges in to retrieve it.

Successive metallic SNAPPING from above.

Tree jerks up. Glimpses, curtain tear away from the rings.

BILLIE
Look out!

It drops down on Tree. He thrashes. SCREAMS. Curtain
envelopes him in a cocoon, forcing him down into the tub.

Water cascades over side, drenching Billie's shoes.

She comes unglued. In a flustered panic, grabs a plunger.

Tree, wrapped up beneath the water, continues to struggle.

Billie races to the tub, raising the plunger above her head.
Mindlessly, WHACKS the hell out of shower curtain, like a
piñata.

Unable to fight for air, or fend off Billie's blows, Tree's body goes limp.

Billie, plunger poised to strike again, is grabbed from behind. It's Corrine.

CORRINE

Billie!

BILLIE

(motions toward the tub)
Sumptin' got Tree.

CORRINE

Help me!

They hoist him out. Rip off curtain. Kneel over Tree's motionless body.

Corrine snaps into rescue mode. Utilizes her lifeguard training. Lifts Tree's chin, tilts forehead back, pinches nose.

Rhythmic drip, drip, from tub spout.

Tree jolts upright.

He coughs up water. No resuscitation needed.

Corrine embraces, then shakes him.

CORRINE

My god! You trying to scare me to death? Get him to the couch.

Billie ushers him out.

Corrine inspects the submerged washroom. Cluttered toiletries strewn about. She crouches down to tidy up. Notices cabinet unclosed.

She spots hidden door, under the sink.

Curiosity gets the best of her. She snatches flashlight off sink top. Directs it toward opening.

Leans in closer.

And closer.

There's movement in the hole.

EYES.

Someone stares back at her.

Corrine totally freaks. Hightails it out of there.

Under the sink, in the passageway, the inflatable doll's head retreats back into darkness.

EXT. BACKYARD

THUD. Mallet pounds final stake into soil. Tree fastens down a freestanding dome tent. Camping gear and leftover tent pieces, beside it. Their lodging for this evening.

TREE

Instructions would've been nice.

CORRINE

Mother won't let anyone tell her what to do. Not even Coleman.

TREE

She makes everything an adventure.

He wrings out his dreads.

TREE

Days like this, I wish I had normal hair.

CORRINE

Must be contagious.

TREE

What?

CORRINE

Vanity Tourette's.

Tree chuckles, takes drag off a joint.

TREE

Thanks for saving my ass.

CORRINE

Anytime, little brother.

Behind them, Holly's jeep zooms up driveway. Grinds to a halt.

She rushes up to Tree, shifting into maternal mode. Inspects her cub, thoroughly. Holds him tight.

HOLLY

Tamra's putting the house back on the market.

CORRINE

Thank god.

HOLLY

She's helping to line up temporary housing. We just gotta hire some movers. I guess it's a done deal.

TREE

You tell her everything? About the dude who lived here before us? Weird shit in the walls? Billie's mom disappearing?

He takes another puff.

HOLLY

She said Johnson Property isn't aware of problems with previous owners. Obviously, she's full of shit.

Snatches doob from Tree's mouth.

HOLLY

Keep out of my purse, for real. Looks like you guys worked out sleeping arrangements.

CORRINE

We grabbed your bedspread and stuff we thought you'd need tonight.

TREE

Billie's asking her aunt if she can stay with us. Is that cool?

HOLLY

We can't all fit in this tent. No, no, no. No way... I'm sleeping in my own bed tonight.

TREE

Are you joking? Something in there tried to kill me. What don't you get?

CORRINE

It's not make-believe. I was there.

HOLLY

I believe you... I do. I'm just devastated, okay? It's been one fucking thing after another. I put all my hopes and dreams into this place, and it's turned into a nightmare.

CORRINE

You can't go back in there.

HOLLY

Guys, trust me on this, alright? I know it sounds crazy, but this house, it... it doesn't want to harm me. I know it.

TREE

How?

HOLLY

I just know.

TREE

That's bullshit, you're staying with us.

HOLLY

I'm happy you're safe, sweetie. Outside of that, I'm downright pissy. Being stuck in a cramped tent's only gonna exacerbate it.

CORRINE

Seriously, are you nuts?

HOLLY

Maybe. I'm mentally exhausted, for sure. But my feelings are clear, okay? I'm not threatened at all by this house.

Tree drops his only leverage.

TREE

Today's my birthday.

HOLLY

What?

TREE

My birthday?

HOLLY

Shit.

Corrine laughs hysterically. Belts out...

CORRINE

"Sucky birthday to you."

Tree chuckles at the absurdity. Joins in.

TREE

"Sucky birthday to me."

Holly too.

HOLLY

"Sucky birthday, dear Tree."

They finish off "Sucky Birthday To You" with harmonious gusto. Billie returns, just in time to hear the rendition.

BILLIE

Y'all are nuts.

HOLLY

You even tried to remind me the other day. You're right, I'm mental. I'll make this up to you, I promise.

TREE

It's cool.

HOLLY

No, it's not cool.

TREE

It is. Just do one thing for me.

HOLLY

What?

TREE

Get us a hotel room tonight.

Holly clams up, gazing downward. Her mind's already made up. Doesn't want to disappoint him.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Corrine paints toe nails. Billie, her volunteer flashlight support, holds steady.

TREE

Billie?

She shines it on Tree.

CORRINE

Tree, stop! If I have to redo these...

BILLIE

My bad.

Redirects it on her feet.

TREE

(snickering)
I'll quit.

Tent zips open. Billie steers it away, again.

CORRINE

I fuckin' give up.

Holly pokes her head in.

HOLLY

Having fun?

CORRINE

Loads.

HOLLY

See you found a little helper.

CORRINE

More like helpless.

HOLLY

Don't let her abuse you.

BILLIE

No ma'am. This was my idea. She can abuse me all night long.

Tree shakes his head.

HOLLY

I'm hittin' it soon, so if you guys need anything from the house, now's the time.

TREE

We're cool.

Hands him his Dodger's jersey, dried and folded.

HOLLY

Happy birthday, sweetie.

He throws it on. About twice his size, it droops down to his knees. Gives her a bear hug.

TREE

This is gonna sound strange coming from me.

HOLLY

Doubt it.

TREE

Maybe Nathan can spend the night?

HOLLY

Jesus, you're really troubled over this. I'm a big girl. I can take care of myself. Besides, we broke up yesterday.

CORRINE

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah.

HOLLY

Think maybe he took it kind of hard. Didn't see him at work today.

TREE

I'll miss his rodeo clown boots.

CORRINE

What happened?

HOLLY

Typical weirdo. Just met him, and he's already tryin' to dig into my past. Men have absolutely no tact, I swear. Plus, he joked he was dating me to get to you.

CORRINE

What a scuzz.

HOLLY

Water under the bridge. Now, I just gotta make my peace with this house. I truly fell in love with it and it's not going to be in my life anymore. Just need one more night to let it go.

INT. BATHROOM

Smooth jazz resonates from portable stereo on the sink.

Holly luxuriates in a bubble bath.

Overhead curtain rod's bare, aside from the rings. Lone reminder of the traumatic incident earlier.

Her eyes covered by a sleeping mask. A caveat, DO NOT DISTURB, stitched into the fabric. She lifts it, sneaking a defiant peek.

Perhaps an indication, her relaxed mannerisms may be an act of false bravado.

Outside of this possible tell, she appears unfazed by what happened to Tree. This is therapeutic for her.

INT. TENT

Tree discovers a joint, in front pocket of his jersey.

TREE

I love her.

CORRINE

Remember when dad took us to Yosemite?

TREE

Sorta.

CORRINE

Probably not. You were like four, or something. I'll never forget his campfire stories. He'd tell really freaky ones. Scared the crap out of us. He was so full of glee, you know? That he could provoke that reaction from us.

TREE

He could get under mom's skin pretty easy.

CORRINE

Yeah, you inherited that trait. Anyhow, seeing you wearing that has me thinking about him. I'm trying to understand what the hell happened in that house. Why was dad's shirt in the bathtub?

BILLIE
That belongs to your pops?

INT. BATHROOM

Lazy saxophone melody fills the air.

Holly's dialed in, soaking up the atmosphere. She reaches down beside the tub.

Unfolds towel resting on the tiled floor. Grabs a neon green vibrator tucked within.

HOLLY
Aqua Friend... it's you and me,
baby.

Switches it on. Teeters Aqua Friend on side of the tub, like a platform diver. Somersaults her adult toy into the water. Swims it back and forth like a rubber ducky, plunging it below the surface.

All of a sudden, soothing music stops.

Lights go out. No electricity.

Faint buzz of Aqua Friend underneath water.

Holly strips off her bedtime blindfold.

HOLLY
Took you long enough.

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Numerous candles flicker. Arranged in fetishistic fashion. This isn't pragmatic lighting, more like an erotic film set.

Holly, attired in slinky silk robe, sashays to the make-up stand. Martini in her hand.

Table's littered with candles and cosmetics. No room for her mixed drink, she moves plate of burning tealights onto the bed.

Sets martini down, admiring herself in the mirror. Dabs a touch of perfume on her neck, as if preparing for a hot date.

Reaches for lotion, inadvertently tipping over her cocktail glass. It shatters against hardwood floor.

HOLLY

Shit.

She kneels down, salvaging a few shards. Glances toward the mirror and turns sickly pallid.

Her reflection's accompanied by a bizarre inquiry. Scrawled haphazardly in lipstick...

"MOTHER, MAY I."

She swivels around, distraught.

No one's there.

Holly closes her eyes, regains composure. Takes in a deep breath. Whispers in a tranquil, measured tone.

HOLLY

Yes, you may.

Eyelids open wide. She's visibly emboldened by the reckless invitation. Waits for her visitor to respond.

INT. TENT

TREE

Think dad's haunting us?

CORRINE

For all we know, he could be living in Tahiti with a whole new family. Who knows? I mean, something's in there. I don't know what to believe anymore.

TREE

Me neither.

CORRINE

It's a crazy coincidence his shirt was there, that's all.

TREE

It's not him, it can't be. Why would he hurt me?

INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Palpably vulnerable, Holly clutches her robe, gripping it tight at the collar. Tries to gauge whether or not she's alone.

HOLLY

Hello?

No reaction.

HOLLY

You know, I... I felt your presence the second I stepped into this house. Like I was destined to be here, or something. I had an immediate connection to this place. So, when you... felt me the other night, it was totally communal. Like we already had a bond.

Peers around for a reply.

HOLLY

You afraid of me?

Nothing.

HOLLY

I'm the one who should be scared, after what you did to my son. You jealous of Tree?

Dead quiet.

HOLLY

Don't need to be. There's plenty of me to go around.

She unfastens her robe. Exposes herself... in a seductive gesture to tempt the unknown.

Anxiously reclines back on the mattress. Writhing.

In a hot blooded state of arousal, six desperate words slip from her lips.

HOLLY

I want you inside of me.

A RATTLE reverberates. Glass against glass. Candle holders vibrate on the plate beside her.

Holly snaps out of her rapturous haze. She springs up from the bed.

Sheets ripple with motion, spiraling inward toward the middle. A satin whirl pool.

Holly backs against the wall.

A figure takes shape underneath the fabric, rising up from the bed's center.

Tealight candles shake. Knock over.

Candle wax drips down the pale mattress cover. Creates a makeshift face, similar to a Slipknot mask.

Holly trembles, as the classic ghost figure materializes. Except much smaller.

A pint-sized dwarf apparition, covered by bed sheet, floats atop the mattress.

Less intimidated, she gawks at THE SHEET with abject pity. No longer a sexual conquest. Now a carnival freak.

HOLLY
You're a midget?

It's head cocks sideways. Candle wax eyes and mouth, blankly return her stare. Moment of brief tranquility transpires before... The Sheet lunges.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE

Holly's window in clear view. Dim light filters through closed blinds.

EXT. TENT

Tree's head sticks out.

CORRINE (O.S.)
Mom still up?

TREE
Yeah... probably online trolling
for a new boyfriend.

INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Violation has already begun.

Holly CRASHES into the makeup table. She's damaged. Faint resemblance to the lovely woman from earlier. Her blackened, swollen eyes implore compassion.

The Sheet, decorated with smears of Holly's blood, glides back and forth around her. A serpent preparing for it's final strike. Swoops in on Holly.

She lifts into the air. Floats toward the bed without any perceptible support. The Sheet guides her naked and battered, onto the mattress.

Hovers above her. Circles the ceiling, like a broom riding witch.

Terrified, she focuses on it's movement.

HOLLY
Please, forgive me.

The Sheet lingers, forsaking mercy. Dives down on it's prey. Mounts her.

HOLLY
Not like this! God, no... not like this!

The Sheet's in a frenzy. She's helpless to stop this invasion. This rape.

HOLLY
Don't do this!

She attempts to fight it, flailing aimlessly. Latches onto it, ripping The Sheet off.

There's nothing underneath.

Invisible force pins her arms back. Flips her face down on the bed.

Holly BELTS out one last cry for help.

EXT. BACKYARD

Turmoil gives way to nature's tranquility. Cricket chirps drown out any trace of commotion.

TENT

Hunkered down, Tree keeps vigilant watch on:

BACK OF HOUSE

No sign of anything out of the ordinary.

Holly's blinds open.

Mother and son exchange a fleeting look.

She carries a candle, beckoning him to come inside.
He get's a brief glimpse of her disheveled condition.
Blinds, snap shut.

INT. TENT

TREE
Something's wrong.

CORRINE
What?

TREE
Try mom's phone.

She dials, waits.

CORRINE
Nope.

TREE
Gotta check on her.

CORRINE
What'd you see?

TREE
Don't know. Something's not right.
We gotta get in there.

She plucks out the cotton balls, between her toes.

CORRINE
Second coat's not even dry.

TREE
You'll live. Billie, you coming?

BILLIE
Wherever she go, I go.

CORRINE
You're something else.

INT. KITCHEN - BACKDOOR

Creaks open. Fluorescent beam invades the room. All three
kids quietly slip through.

TREE

Mom?

Flicks the light switch.

TREE

Told you something's up. Power's out.

CORRINE

Mom!

TREE

Go downstairs and find the fuse box. One of 'em must've blown.

Gives Corrine the flashlight.

TREE

I'll check her bedroom.

BILLIE

You crazy? Stick with us.

CORRINE

Safety in numbers?

TREE

I told you, I'm never going into that basement again. No way.

CORRINE

We need--

TREE

--It's not an option. Gimme your cell phone so I'm not running into shit.

She reluctantly hands it over.

TREE

Only takes a minute to change. Hurry up, I can barely see.

BASEMENT

Billie and Corrine, side by side, on the lookout for electrical box.

CORRINE

That chickenshit. I barely know how to change a light bulb, let alone a fuse.

BILLIE

We'll figure it out. Might be a circuit breaker.

CORRINE

This is fucked. I hope she's okay.

BILLIE

Don't worry your pretty li'l head. She fine.

CORRINE

Once the power crashed, she probably did too. She can't function without internet.

BILLIE

I'm sure your brother's talkin' to her right now.

Corrine gives her an impulsive smooch, right on the lips. Billie appears unsure how to react.

BILLIE

Sweet on.

A low-pitched GROAN.

Something's alive down here.

She huddles against Billie.

CORRINE

Shhhhhh. Okay! Shit! Right over there!

BILLIE

Huh?

She's still swooning from the kiss.

Corrine drowns the far corner in light.

It's her mom.

Tucked into a ball, shivering like a wounded animal.

CORRINE

Why're you down here? You okay?

Holly sneaks a look at them through folded arms.

CORRINE
Come downstairs! Mom's hurt!

HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Tree doesn't hear. Cell phone glow, reveals clutter of debris.

TREE
Corrine, get up here! Something happened!

Picks at broken remains of the night stand.

TREE
Mom?

BASEMENT

Holly rises up, rigid. Reminiscent of robotic ballerina from earlier. Flimsy robe can't conceal her bruised physique.

BILLIE
What da hell happened?

Corrine audibly gasps. Drops the light, holds her tight.

Billie swipes it up. Shines it right on Holly's mangled face.

CORRINE
Oh my god.

TREE'S BEDROOM

TREE
Mom, where are you?

Moonbeam glistens upon the easel. His portrait of Billie, so close to being done, is defiled. Picturesque backdrop slathered over, with a crude bloody hangman's noose.

BASEMENT

Holly's entire torso is limp. A stringless marionette in Corrine's arms.

CORRINE

Stand up. We need to get you to the hospital. Billie, come here and help me.

Holly snares Corrine around the waist. Hand in hand, she forces her daughter into an ungraceful waltz.

Stops Billie cold.

CORRINE

What're you doing? Let go.

An unwilling partner, Corrine struggles to break free.

Billie's light captures every step of the macabre dance performance.

CORRINE

You delirious? Stop... stop it!

Holly plants a protracted, open mouthed, bloody kiss on her.

Corrine wiggles out of her embrace.

BILLIE

She hopped up on sumptin'?

CORRINE

She's totally lost it. Let's get her up--

Corrine's body goes stiff. Mouth hangs open in shock.

BILLIE

You alright?

Over her daughter's shoulder, Holly locks eyes with Billie. Lips curl into a contorted, broken toothed sneer.

She continues to dance. Twirls Corrine around, allowing a better view of her back.

Blood-soaked.

Knife protrudes from red stain. Imbedded so deep, the handle's hard to see.

BILLIE

Oh shit.

Billie gets the hell outta there.

STAIRWELL

She runs into Tree halfway up.

TREE
Where's my sister?

BILLIE
You don't wanna go down dere, man.

TREE
You find her?

Billie's poker-faced.

BILLIE
Tree. . .

TREE
Give me the light.

Fights through Billie's grip.

BASEMENT

Light zeros in on Corrine's body. Eyes froze open. Blood tear, smeared down her lifeless face.

RUSTLING noise, inside the laundry room.

TREE
Mom?

From the doorway, Holly pops her head out, and back in.

HOLLY
Peek-a-boo.

She advances on him, fast.

He blinds her with the flashlight.

Holly claws at the beam, ready to gouge her son's eyes out.

She pounces at him.

Tree jerks back forcibly, just out of her reach.

By the tag end of his shirttail, Billie drags his little ass upstairs.

TREE
Let go!

KITCHEN

Takes him straight out the back door.

EXT. BACK PATIO

TREE
Let fuckin' go!

Billie obliges.

She grabs the back door handle. Braces her foot against frame, to keep Holly at bay.

BILLIE
Your mom's gone psycho.

TREE
What happened to my sister?

BILLIE
Your mom, man. She lost her mind,
for real. Don't go back in there.

Tree twists his prized jersey around. It's a goner, backside's ripped out. Bigger problems to deal with.

TREE
Corrine needs help. She's-- I gotta
help her.

BILLIE
Don't.

TREE
My family's in there.

Doesn't realize Holly's right beside him. Pressed against the kitchen window, observing him like an aquarium fish.

Drifts back into the shadows.

BILLIE
Need to find out where she at. Can
you spot her through the window?

INT. KITCHEN

Tree's flashlight ray streams through window. Pans around room.

No trace of her.

Beam extends clear back to sink, across counter top, over to refrigerator.

Holly's silhouette LURCHES into frame.

EXT. KITCHEN WINDOW

Light's trained directly on her.

TREE

She's right inside.

Holly snatches juice box from fridge. Inserts straw, goes to town on it.

EXT. BACK PATIO

TREE

I gotta go talk to her.

BILLIE

We need to call da cops, man. Ain't fuckin' witcha. I ain't goin' back in.

TREE

Don't blame you, but I don't have a choice. Alright? Keep an eye on me through the window.

BILLIE

Be careful.

TREE

Still by the fridge?

Billie, cautiously peeks through. Nods "affirmative."

Tree, man of the household. Bound by kinship. Enters the fray.

EXT. KITCHEN WINDOW

From her lookout position, Billie observes:

Tree hesitantly approach his mom.

She drops her drink.

BILLIE
(mutters to herself)
Keep your distance.

Tree does. Way, way, back.

Holly gesticulates wildly.

Swollen lips jabber, like a ventriloquist dummy.

She extends her finger toward window.

Point blank at Billie.

Tree back pedals out the door.

EXT. BACK PATIO

Returns to Billie, clearly traumatized by his chat with mom.

BILLIE
What happened in there?

TREE
Not sure how to say this.

BILLIE
What she say?

TREE
She...

Doesn't want to tell her.

TREE
She said...

BILLIE
Spit it out.

TREE
She said she knows where your mom
is.

INT. KITCHEN

Billie and Tree, far away from Holly as possible.

BILLIE
Whatchu know 'bout my momma?

HOLLY
Mahogany child... I know
everything.

BILLIE
Told you, man. She trippin'.

TREE
We need to get you and Corrine
help, alright?

Shakes her head "no."

BILLIE
How you know where my momma's at?

HOLLY
Little birdie told me.

BILLIE
Where is she?

HOLLY
Right over there in the pantry.

Tree glides flashlight in that direction, midway between them
and Holly.

BILLIE
Keep the light on her.

He does.

HOLLY
Kept her fresh for you.

TREE
Don't listen to her.

BILLIE
Nah... she's full of shit.

HOLLY
Afraid?

BILLIE
Nuthin' to be afraid of.

HOLLY
Then go see momma.

Closet's only nine feet away.

Billie approaches at a snail pace. Makes it feel far as a football field.

Holly can't hide her thrilled demeanor. Inherent suspense whips her into orgasmic euphoria.

Billie stalls.

HOLLY
Cold feet?

She confronts her fear. Flings pantry door open.

Swiffer Sweeper, mop, and bucket fall out.

Startled, Billie stumbles backward. Bumps into something. Pats at whatever's behind her.

Hidden within murky shadows, propped up against the wall... is Nathan. Sack still over him.

Billie shrieks.

TREE
Look out!

She has momentary paralysis. Can't react fast enough. Deceased body topples on her.

BILLIE
Get him off me!

She's face-to-face with Nathan on the ground. Bugged out eyeballs, showcased through transparent bag.

TREE
I'm comin'!

Too late.

Holly's already there. Shoves her son aside.

TREE
Leave her alone!

Perched atop Nathan, she watches Billie squirm at the bottom.

HOLLY
Nifty trick, yes? The closet was
misdirection.

BILLIE
Get off me!

HOLLY
This is sleight of hand.

Signature one hand over the other move.

Ta Da! A steak knife.

TREE
Mom, don't!

Swipes in Tree's direction. Wards him away.

BILLIE
Ma'am... please.

Waves knife above Billie's face.

HOLLY
Dying to know what happened to your
mother, yes?

No chance for Billie to beg or reason.

Holly jabs serrated blade through her neck.

HOLLY
Now you know.

TREE
Don't!

Billie gurgles her last word.

BILLIE
Momma.

Holly towers proud over her handiwork. Bodies piled together
like two halves of a death sandwich.

Tree's in a daze, unable to fathom the carnage around him.

Holly drops the knife. Looks confused.

HOLLY
Dear lord, what happened? Tree?
Help me, I'm lost.

TREE
I'm callin' 9-1-1.

HOLLY
I need help.

TREE
I'm gettin' some.

HOLLY
Don't, please! They'll see
everything. All of this. They'll
put me away.

TREE
We need help!

HOLLY
Don't call! I swear, I'm okay. I'm
all better now. Where's your sister
at?

TREE
I gotta get an ambulance.

HOLLY
Can't you help me, sweetie? You
could do that for me?

TREE
Mom, I--

HOLLY
--Don't hate me. You hate me don't
you?

TREE
I love you.

HOLLY
If you love me, give me a hug.
Could really use one right now. A
birthday hug.

Tree stays put.

HOLLY
Only want to wish you happy
birthday, babe. It's me, mom.
You're mad at me, aren't you? I
know how I can make it better.

She gropes herself.

HOLLY
Plenty of mommy to go around.

Tree pivots light away. Diverts his eyes. Can't accept that
THIS is mom.

She cackles.

HOLLY

Not falling for my games, anymore?
I knew we had more in common than
stature alone. You're a clever boy.
Pleasure to finally meet you face
to face.

Gives a cultivated bow.

HOLLY

Name's Miscio.

Tree's speechless.

HOLLY/MISCIO

No need to introduce yourself.
Mommy made the mistake of inviting
me inside her. Now I know
everything, about both of you.
Enough chit chat, come to me.

TREE

No fucking way.

HOLLY/MISCIO

I said come here.

Tree shakes uncontrollably.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Need to calm down, boy. Poke your
sticky fingers into mommy's purse.
Puff the magic dragon, relax a bit.

Holly giggles, tries a different tactic.

HOLLY/MISCIO

How touching, you're wearing the
shirt. You made it exceedingly
obvious how attached you were to
it. An easy lure to entice you to
play my games. Your father's, yes?

Tree's not playing along.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Know a little secret about him.

TREE

Mom? Why are you--

HOLLY/MISCIO

--get over here, I'll tell you.

TREE

You don't know shit about dad.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Know all of mommy's secrets, so many of them inside here. One in particular, concerning the death of your father, should be very interesting to you.

TREE

Mom, snap out of this.

HOLLY/MISCIO

I've been a street magician most of my life. Learned every trick in the book. My all time favorite's making people disappear. Apparently, your mother shares this passion.

TREE

You're lying.

HOLLY/MISCIO

She found a way to make daddy disappear. Come here, I'll tell you how.

TREE

(crying)

Please, wake up. We gotta get out of this house.

HOLLY/MISCIO

She's not sleepwalking. She's my possession... my toy. I control her inner conscious. She's not going anywhere, and neither are you.

Holly snatches the knife.

TREE

Don't!

Runs it across her already disfigured face.

HOLLY/MISCIO

This house has secrets, just like your mother. Hidden things, you need to discover.

She storms at Tree.

He takes off. FULL SPEED.

LIVING ROOM

Holly stays right on his heels, slashing at his back.

HALLWAY

Tree can't elude her. Almost gets flayed as he rounds a corner.

TREE'S BEDROOM

He weaves through the obstacle course of boxes, no problem.

Holly, in close pursuit, trips over them. Crashes head first into the easel.

HOLLY/MISCIO

This wouldn't happen if you
listened to your mother.

Tree wedges his way, into secret corridor.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Atta boy.

PASSAGEWAY

He rests briefly. Still in a state of shock. Pulls Corrine's phone from his pocket. Tree's scrawny frame quivers from adrenaline. Can't even dial.

His heightened emotions exacerbated as ring tone BOOMS from phone.

Caller ID displays ALEX. He tries to answer.

Holly's arm SMASHES through the plaster.

Clenches him around the neck, like a slaughterhouse chicken. Cellular skids away.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)

I know these walls like the back of
my hand.

Pries himself loose, keeps moving.

Holly steals a peek through broken wall. Wails a guttural howl.

Tree spots a distant beacon of flickering light. Derives from the door with no lock, wide open now. He enters.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Reminiscent of a castle dungeon.

Elevated wrought iron torch stands encircle the lair. They're ablaze, flames licking the limestone walls.

All pageantry for the main attraction, located at the heart of the room.

This ghastly tableau greets Tree:

From the crossbeam, thick rope dangles. Noose at the end.

Looped tight around the neck of a mummified dwarf corpse. Still clothed in his illusionist attire, apart from hat and shoes.

They're covered in cobwebs, on the ground. Probably slipped off in the final moments.

Vintage portable tape player, strapped around his midsection.

Fallen chair lays sideways, below the body.

In front of it, a chain. Connected to a trap door, built into the floor.

Tree nudges carcass with flashlight. It sways back and forth.

PARLOR ROOM

Holly's snug against the wall, listening for any trace of commotion. She yanks on covert latch by the fireplace.

CHAMBER OF LIME

A GRATING sound. Plaster against concrete.

Wall breaches open.

Tree panics. No time to think. He lifts trap door, hides inside.

Holly slips through the wall chasm. Surveys the confines.
Dwarf body swings to and fro.

Knows she's not alone.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Welcome to my Chamber Of Lime.
Everything... walls, ceiling, the
floor beneath you, is encased in
slake and quick lime. Little trick
of nature you might not know. Soaks
up the smell of decay.

She pauses, tries to pinpoint Tree's whereabouts.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Fossilization through
demineralization... but I won't
bore you with the details. Painted
yourself into a corner, haven't
you? Might as well show yourself.

CRAWL SPACE

Tree covers his mouth, fumbles the flashlight.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Ray of light. Shoots up through the wooden floorboards.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Atta boy.

Holly runs chain from trapdoor, through a shackle, attached
to the ground. Padlocks it.

Tree's a prisoner.

CRAWL SPACE

He bangs on flashlight, shuts it off.

Holly stomps back and forth, trickling soot down on him.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)

Pardon my eternal blabber. Been
ages since I've last spoken.

Through the slots, Tree watches her pace.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)
 Lost the ability fifteen years ago.

She drops to the floor. Stares through the gap, eyes wild as a rabid dog.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)
 Pagan freaks shouldn't speak.
 Columbian priest told me that, just
 before he extracted my tongue.

Flicks her tongue through the crack. Tree cringes.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Holly gets up, pokes at audio device harnessed to the dangling dwarf.

HOLLY/MISCIO
 Lack of voice forced me to
 requisition a few unwilling
 recruits.

She ejects the cassette, flips it around. Reinserts, pushes play.

From the speaker... a female recites phrases in an antiquated language.

VOICE FROM SPEAKER
 (trembling)
 Menador, angelek butarak. Noomarra
 ghattar savaltay.

She's unable to complete the invocation. Different woman performs final verses.

SECOND VOICE FROM SPEAKER
 (faltering)
 Beclemay jaridah laclesis. Katalah.
 Exitira eternula exilium.

Holly hits stop button.

HOLLY/MISCIO
 This time, I have the luxury of
 saying the words myself.

Trapdoor rises. Chain reaches it's limit. Enough for Tree to get less obstructed view of his mom.

TREE
 Mom, fight this. It can't be real.

CRAWL SPACE

HOLLY/MISCIO

I understand your skepticism.
You're witnessing a spectral
manifestation in the flesh. No
one's seen this before.

She kneels to Tree's level.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Only two other Spiritualist's have
attained a conscious celestial
state. I'm the first to occupy a
mortal being.

TREE

Let me out!

CHAMBER OF LIME

Holly gives hanging cadaver a spin. Twirls like a top.

HOLLY/MISCIO

Every five years, this particular
location falls in perfect alignment
with the sun. Right as it enters
the Gemini constellation. It's the
only interval a spiritual
transition can occur. This is that
time.

Whirls it faster.

TREE

Miscio! Let her go, please!

HOLLY/MISCIO

Oh, you believe. How nice.

Faster still.

HOLLY/MISCIO

To achieve this state, a ceremony
is required. This ritual must be
observed by a witness, and take
place on the exact day this
spectator was given birth to. In
coordination with a turn of
phrases. Spoken in correct order,
but I won't bore you with the
details.

Body twists so fast the head pops off. Falls out of noose, hitting the floor with the rest of the remains.

CRAWL SPACE

TREE

Why are you doing this to us?

HOLLY/MISCIO

Nothing personal. In your case, it's an instance of unfortunate astrology. You're the unlucky birthday boy.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Tightens trap door chain, limiting Tree's viewing options.

Sets chair upright. Steps up on it. Readjusts noose to proper height.

TREE (O.S.)

Don't do this.

HOLLY/MISCIO

It's a lonely existence being different, in life and death. Seemed like an eternity, waiting for someone to keep me company. Your mother couldn't fathom the concept of damnation, but she's about to join me in it. Good thing she loves this house. She's about to become a permanent fixture.

Loops rope around her neck. Tightens it.

CRAWL SPACE

TREE

Miscio... stop this.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)

Ready or not.

TREE

No!

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)
 Menador, angelek butarak. Noomarra
 ghattar savaltay. Beclemay jaridah
 laclesis.

Incantation stops prematurely. Interrupted by a force of will.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Holly breaks free from the demon inside her. Gasps for air as if it were her last breath.

HOLLY
 Tree! Oh my god, Tree! Help me!

He pushes at the trapdoor.

TREE (O.S.)
 Mom!

Padlocked chain extends to it's limit.

HOLLY
 I love you, so much.

CRAWL SPACE

With every ounce of strength remaining, Tree BASHES at the wood hatchway overhead. Hook fastening down the chain almost breaks.

TREE
 Mom, let me out! Mom?

Mischievous hyena cackle resonates above him.

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)
 Pardon the interruption.

TREE
 Miscio!

HOLLY/MISCIO (O.S.)
 Katalah. Exitira eternula exilium!

Tree shines light through the floorboard slats.

Can't see much.

Glimpses chair legs wobble back and forth. They buckle.

Two distinct simultaneous sounds erupt.

A thunderous CRACK, as the chair topples to the ground.

The other... a vertebrae SNAP.

TREE

No!

Flashlight glows upward through the gaps.

Focused on the bottom of Holly's bare feet.

They hover inches from the floor, swaying side to side.

He trembles, dropping the light. Full gravity of the situation crushes in.

Tree's all alone.

He releases a furious wail. Kicks and claws the trapdoor. A temper tantrum of anguish.

Grabs for the light, grazing it's side. It rolls away until something blocks it's path.

Luminous glow projects across the front of a decomposed corpse.

DREAM ON printed on her jammies.

It's Tiffany.

The unlucky birthday girl.

Only other witness to Miscio's death ritual.

Tree, completely unnerved, seizes light. Guides it in the opposite direction.

More victims. Human remains lined up methodically, far back as he can see.

Emotionally crippled, he curls up in a fetal position.

Resigned to his fate.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Dawning sun lends a golden hue to the manor. Less menacing in this morning glow.

INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM

Otherworldly perspective glides high above the wreckage, over trails of broken glass, following Holly's bloody footprints.

Movement is elegant, dizzying.

BASEMENT

Floats down at Corrine's inert body.

KITCHEN

Over Nathan and Billie, united in a pool of blood.

PARLOR ROOM

Soars through opening in the wall.

CHAMBER OF LIME

Drifts around ceiling framework above Holly's suspended, lifeless body. Deviates from it's overhead flight pattern.

Dives toward trap door, swooping in on secured chain. Directly to padlock.

Lock opens with resonating CLICK.

Veers over to gap between floorboards.

Right up to Tree's weary eyes, peeking through.

TREE

Mom?

THE END.

