

A Haunting in Connecticut

by

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Based on the True Story

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CREDITS ROLL OVER:

1 **EERIE, OLD FASHIONED BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS:** 1

- Twin boys sit one each on Mother and Father's lap. The children seem stiff and awkward as dolls.
- an old man in a bed - surrounded by family who all stare into the camera - only the old man's eyes are closed.
- a mother and new born infant lie together as if sleeping.
- an entire family - Mother, Father, Three children. All sit frozen before a painted backdrop of clouds as if seated in Heaven.

All dead.

These are not family photos but memorial photos from the 1920's - staged final portraits of the dead.

End Credits as the last images fade to black and:

SUPER:

Based on the true story.

**The names have been changed to
protect those who survived.**

FADE TO BLACK.

SARA (O.S.)
Why do bad things happen to good
people?

FADE IN:

2 INT. CAMPBELL HOME - UPSTATE NEW YORK - DAY 2

The dim light and anonymously silhouetted angle of a documentary interview. We can barely see the woman we will come to know as SARA CAMPBELL.

SARA
That's the real question, right?
Why us? That's what everybody wants
to know. Some pity us. Others seem
to think I wanted all this -

She sweeps her hand over the table in front of her - reveal a spread of tabloids and magazines with lurid headlines: 'Haunting in Connecticut!' 'Trapped in the House of the Dead!' 'The REAL Hell House' etc.

SARA (CONT'D)

God knows why - attention I suppose. Are they kidding? Truth is, I don't know why it happened to us. We're just regular people, like any other family. Not especially good enough to be worth testing the way the Lord tested Job. Or wicked enough to deserve what happened. Nobody deserves that.

She falls into silence. Then - hearing an *off-mike question*:

SARA (CONT'D)

A silver lining? I guess...I guess it did make me more certain that Heaven exists.

(straight into camera)

It must - right? I mean - maybe that's the one good thing... about glimpsing Hell...

CUT TO:

A RED SWEATY FACE

Burning with a feverish sweat, a teenage boy leans against a car window, spattered with rain.

SUPER: **JUNE 19, 1987**

WE ARE:

3 INT. SARA'S CAR - NIGHT - ON A CONNECTICUT HIGHWAY

3

A worried woman drives at night: SARA CAMPBELL, 38. In the back seat her son MATT, 16, though the cancer and the treatment conspire to make him seem much older. She looks at him in the rear view mirror: Lying in the backseat. Sleeping.

Close on her: A mother's worry. Eyes try to focus on the road - while images mix and melt with rain on the windshield:

4 RAPID IMAGES:

4

X-rays. MRI. body scan. PET Scan. CAT scan. Not whole scenes - just close-ups and details: Medical graphics. Tight close-ups in claustrophobic machine interiors. Needles draw blood. Blood cells seen through a microscope. The works. The diagnostic hell that brought them here.

DOCTORS AND THEIR AUTHORITATIVE VOICES ALL MERGE:

VARIOUS DOCTORS

Six months maybe less./Experimental treatment./No guarantee./Waiting lists./Nothing in New York. Can you get to Connecticut?

5 BACK TO THE PRESENT ON THE INTERSTATE:

5

The car passes a sign announcing that we have just left Connecticut and entered New York.

3B IN THE CAR:

3B

As we come back to her face we barely hear her hushed prayer.

SARA

Please God. Let it work. Please.

Matt suddenly sits up behind her.

MATT

Talking to yourself? You know what they say, first sign of losing it.

SARA

I wasn't talking to myself. I was talking to God.

MATT

I think that's the second.

SARA

I thanked him for giving me you.

MATT

Pull over Mom. I'm gonna be sick.

SARA

Very funny.

MATT

It's the chemo. I'm really gonna be-

She pulls over - he throws open the back door - we hear but don't see him RETCHING. She turns instinctively to help -

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

Mom - don't look. I'm OK.

She winces with every retch. Matt comes back in.

SARA

Feel better?

He nods. She knows he's lying as she starts the car moving.

6 INT. CAMPBELL HOME - UPSTATE NEW YORK - THE KITCHEN - DAY 6

Sara makes breakfast as her husband PETER, 40, walks in from the bedroom, plastering an unruly boyish cowlick which belies the strain and age in his eyes. He's off to work.

PETER

Morning, babe. I didn't hear you come in. When did you get home?

SARA

About 4.

PETER

I know it's two hundred miles, but how did that take you eight hours?

SARA

Do you really want to know how many times we stopped so he could vomit?

PETER

Oh, man. How is he now?

SARA

He's okay now. He's asleep.

PETER

Lemme get breakfast. You go to bed.

SARA

No it's alright - I'm still wired from driving - and Wendy's helping.

WENDY - Sara's 17 year old niece - enters trailing the RAUCOUS SOUNDS OF KIDS behind her.

SARA (CONT'D)
Thanks, Wendy. Sorry for the chaos.

WENDY
It's better than my house.

SARA
My sister loves your daddy - they
just have funny ways of showing it.

WENDY
I knew love was a four letter word,
just not those four letter words.

SARA
Take these pancakes in to the
hungry hordes.

Wendy exits. And through the open door we catch a quick
glimpse of two younger kids at the table. And a bleary and
pale faced Matt stumbling out of a bedroom.

PETER
It's not good. One of these nights
you're gonna drive off the road
you'll be so tired.

SARA
I wish we could just move there.
Just for the summer, until -

Behind them we see Matt and Wendy opening the kitchen door -

PETER
And in the meantime what? Pay
mortgage and a rent? Every penny we
got is in the damn store. When we
bought the franchise we didn't plan-

SARA
Nobody plans to have a child get
cancer.

PETER
You know that's not what I meant.

See behind them: Matt and Wendy exchange embarrassed glances
and step back - not wanting to hear them fight about Matt.

PETER (CONT'D)
Look. You're right. He's gotta come
first. Let's just do it.
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Find a rental in Connecticut, near the Hospital. We'll make it work.

SARA

You mean it? What'll you do? How will we afford it?

PETER

Come on weekends. Take a second mortgage on our second mortgage. Whatever it takes.

SARA

We're gonna make it through this, right?

PETER

Definitely.

His eyes, though, have none of the certainty of his words.

7

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

7

Victorian Gothic Hospital with concrete '70's additions.

**SUPER: St. Michael's Hospital. Goatswood, Connecticut.
June 20. 10:00 A.M.**

8

INT. ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

8

Sara with the Oncologist, DR. Brooks.

DR. BROOKS

He's doing great.

SARA

He vomited twice more this morning. That's doing great?

DR. BROOKS

That's doing chemo. It's his stomach cells dying. And being reborn. Right now - we're waging war. Total war. Inside Matt's body. And the battle is just beginning.

SARA

That's what I'm afraid of.

MONTAGE: - INTERCUT

Tight shots of Matt's treatment with Sara's house search:

Sara's hand circling house-to-rent wants ads; some say "no kids or no pets" then crossing them out; seeing a few of the available places through her eyes: they're dumps;

SARA (O.S.)

They're all too small, too pricey
or have roaches as big as rats.

9 **Matt strapped down on a tilted gurney beneath a forbidding 9**
piece of equipment covered with radioactive warning signs.

SARA (O.S.)

- But I'm not giving up.

10 INT. THE CAR - LATER 10

After more scratched off lists, Sara is near tears. She looks out the window and sees it's the cemetery she's passing. She turns away and rams her foot down on the gas as if she could out run the grim reaper - or at least her tears.

9B **Gloved hands place a fitted mask to hold Matt's head in 9B**
position. Metal rods and leather straps keep his body
immobilized. With a mechanical WHIR the radiation commences.

10B INT. SARA'S CAR - SAME TIME 10B

Just past the edge of the cemetery she does a double-take and slows down as she glimpses out of the side of her vision: A man clumsily hammers a 'FOR RENT' sign into the ground.

11 EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 11

Sara pulls up and rolls down the window. Squinting into the setting sun she sees a squamous purple Victorian house.

SARA

I don't want to waste your time.
What are you asking?

The man turns around - AZIZ SINGH, realtor. Warm, persuasive.

MR. SINGH

Hello. Welcome. I give you first
month free if I don't have to
finish hammering this darn sign!

9C **Close Shots: Needles, needles, needles. In Matt's veins. 9C**
Spine. The back of his neck. Drawing blood. Drawing marrow.
Injecting things. Until he's a pincushion of pain.

MR. SINGH (O.S.)
It just needs some love and care...

12 INT. HOUSE - SAME TIME 12

Singh guides Sara past the time-faded wallpaper and chipped paint of a once elegant old interior.

MR. SINGH
...and a good family to bring it
back to life.

SARA
And you don't mind children?

MR. SINGH
Where would we be without them? On
a cold empty rock.

Suddenly - a RUMBLING, GROANING CLANKING sound.

MR. SINGH (CONT'D)
Old houses are like old stomachs.
They make a lot of noise.

SARA
It's everything we need. And then
some. It's beautiful, spacious,
affordable. I mean, it's too good
to be true. So what's the catch?

9D **Matt seems to be hanging upside down - as hot lava flows into
his veins - he slowly rotates - But in fact he is not moving -**

MR. SINGH (O.S.)
The catch? Yes, well it does have a
somewhat *peculiar* history...

**- it's the camera spinning: Matt's in a chair attached to a
machine; tubes from the machine give multiple injections
simultaneously. While another filters his blood.**

13 INT. PHONE BOOTH - LATE AFTERNOON 13

Sara nearly at the end of her rope, talking to Peter.

SARA
I saw one that was almost perfect
but...it just wasn't quite right.

14 INT. SARA'S CAR - A BEAT LATER 14

Driving home. She looks at Matt in the rear view mirror.

SARA

They say you might have some body
ache - but no nausea.

MATT

(through clenched teeth)
Doctor says to patient; I got bad
news. You've got cancer. And you've
got Alzheimer's.' Patient says
'Whew, least I don't have cancer.'

Sara laughs not to cry. As each tiny bump sends paroxysms of
pain through Matt's body.

MATT (CONT'D)

At least I don't have nausea.

He's putting on a brave face - but his groans can't be
stifled. Every small bump in the road sends shockwaves of
pain through his young body. Sara steals glances in the rear
view mirror at him - and it tears at her heart. She turns the
car around and heads back the way they came...

15 EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER 15

Mr. Singh stands out front with Sara, near her car. We see
he's brought a big mattress, two sleeping bags, a portable TV
and even some take-away food.

Both of them helping a frail Matt out of the back seat of
the car, one putting a blanket around his shoulders.

SARA

I don't know how to thank you.

He leans in to her - out of Matt's hearing.

MR. SINGH

Really, don't worry - and remember -
a house is just bricks and wood and
plaster. That's all. Anything else -
is just imagination...

16 INT. HOUSE - LATER 16

Two sleeping bags lie on the mattress beside the table.

Matt, half asleep, watches TV. Behind him we see Sara on the phone.

SARA
I made a decision. You weren't
there.

She pulls the phone into the next room - so Matt can't hear.

As Matt nods off we MOVE IN on the TV screen. In reflection we can see Matt in front of it- but also - something else:

Someone standing behind him. Or is it just the flickering ghosts of bad TV reception?

Sara steps into the next room - so Matt doesn't hear.

SARA
You didn't have to hear him
groaning, Peter. I just couldn't
take it.

17 INT. PARLOR - LATER THAT NIGHT

17

Looking down on Sara and Matt. Each in their own sleeping bag. But lying close. The dark room seems filled with muffled voices. The walls seem to whisper like faint swarms of bees.

A close POV of the sleeping mother and son - as of someone standing right over them...

Matt stirs, looks up uneasily at the spot where a second ago it seemed someone was standing observing them. Nothing there.

Matt slips out of bed as quietly as he can. He starts into the nearest bathroom - but realizes the sound will wake her - so he goes looking for another one upstairs.

18 INT. SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

18

He finds a bathroom. He leans over to retch. Splashes cold water in his face. Then freezes. Did he hear something?

VOICE (O.S.)
Matthew.

MATT
Mom?

He opens the door. No one's there. He pads back downstairs.

19 INT. PARLOR - CONTINUOUS 19

But he sees she's still sound asleep. He's about to get into his sleeping bag when again he hears--

VOICE (O.S.)
Matthew...

From behind him this time. He tries to follow the sound.

20 INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS 20

He steps into the darkened stairwell. Suddenly the silence is torn by a GRINDING sound - from deep inside the house: the clanging of old elevator chains...

Stepping out of the darkness of the stairs, Matt thinks he sees a mirror - but then sees it is a half wood, half thick glass wall with a door. The mirror effect is because someone seems to be standing on the other side of the glass.

He approaches - closer - cups his hands to try and see through the distorting glass -

MATT
Hello? Who's there?

Seen through the distorting glass: A face - impossible to say if it is just a distorted reflection of his own face in the thick glass or *another face* on the other side looking back at him - blackened and burnt and mouth open in a *scream* as a *hand jerks the head away by the hair* -

MATCH CUT TO:

21 INT. PARLOR - MORNING 21

- and it is Matt who SCREAMS as he jerks awake, woozy, his face red and covered in sweat.

MATT
What? Wh-where?

Sunlight pours in. A hand strokes his brow.

SARA
Honey? You alright?

MATT
Yeah. Just a dream. I guess.

22 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING 22

She gives him a can of protein shake.

SARA

Pick of the house for any bedroom
you want: if you drink this. Deal?

Matt tries his best to get some of the protein shake down.

23 INT. SECOND FLOOR - LATER 23

Matt starts upstairs, checking out the rooms.

24 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 24

Matt steps into the first room. Faded Victorian wall paper covered with an intricate pattern of caged song birds. The feeling is utterly lonely, and a place out of time.

25 INT. DOWNSTAIRS PARLOR - CONTINUOUS 25

Sara's in the front parlor, damp dusting down the room and cabinets. She pulls at old built-in wooden cabinets beneath the windows. They're stuck shut from years of warping and dust. She pulls harder - and the wooden door opens, revealing a cabinet filled with small frames stacked on their sides.

She pulls one out - then another - they're old framed photos - from the teens or twenties by the dress of the people - we recognize the photos - we saw them in the credit sequence:

- Twin boys sit one each on Mother and Father's lap. The children seem stiff and awkward as dolls.

- an old man in a bed - surrounded by family who all stare into the camera - only his eyes are closed.

- a mother and new born infant lie together as if sleeping.

- a family - Mother, Father, Three children. All sit frozen before a painted backdrop of clouds as if seated in Heaven.

Suddenly Sara recognizes what they are - DEAD PEOPLE. Then looks around her and recognizes the room she's standing in - is the same as the room in which the photos were taken -she can make out the faded painted over clouds of the heavenly backdrop still visible beneath the fading paint on the walls, and drops the photos on the floor, breaking the glass.

26 EXT. BACKYARD - A BEAT LATER 26

Sara bends over the large garbage cans out back dumping the photos into the garbage cans. Looking around back at the house to make sure Matt hasn't seen her.

27 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 27

In the hall Matt stops by small metal doors with a button. He opens the doors into a small elevator shaft covered inside with what looks like centuries of dust. He peers down into the blackness. He pulls a penny from his pocket and drops it down the shaft. We hear it PINGING and KNOCKING all the way down...suddenly a GRINDING of GEARS and CLANKING CHAINS.

28 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS 28

Stepping into the kitchen Sara hears the grinding elevator.

SARA

Matt?

She walks to the stairs and peers up to the hallway.

SARA (CONT'D)

Matt? Did you pick a room?

MATT (O.S.)

Yeah. I did.

The voice doesn't come from upstairs. But from downstairs.

29 INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS 29

Sara finds Matt in the middle of the basement.

MATT

Or it picked me.

SARA

What do you mean, it picked you?

MATT

I dunno. It's the meds mom.

SARA

So, which room?

(Matt gestures, *this* room)

Down here?

MATT

I like it. It's nice and cool. And best of all, my own private toilet - nobody has to hear me.

SARA

You don't need to hide from us.

MATT

Knowing everyone can hear me puking just makes me feel worse. Alright?

Matt tries the locked door in the half-glass wall that divides the space. The door is not locked. And the knob turns. But it just won't open.

MATT (CONT'D)

What do you think's back here?

They both have their faces pressed against the glass trying to see in. HONKS and SHOUTS from upstairs startle them.

PETER (O.S.)

Hello? Anybody home?

30 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

30

Matt's brother BILLY, 11, and sister Mary, 7, race upstairs arguing over bedrooms. Wendy follows them, giving chase.

WENDY

You wait until Aunt Sara and Uncle Peter tell you where your room is. Wait! You little monsters!

31 EXT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

31

Matt and his Dad behind the rented U-Haul, which is connected to a shiny late model pickup truck - Peter's pride and joy. Peter's pulling boxes out of the back.

MATT

Hand me that one.

PETER

No, no -

MATT

I can -

PETER

You might -

MATT

Dad, I'm not gonna croak from carrying cushions.

PETER

That's not what I meant. You might scratch my truck.

They laugh. Peter lifts a chair onto his head and walks inside. Matt follows carrying couch cushions.

32 BACK UPSTAIRS:

32

Sara leads Wendy into a room down the hall.

SARA

Now I think this room would be a perfect girl's room.

33 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

33

The room with the caged birds on the wall.

WENDY

Why do you say that?

SARA

Good light. Nice wall paper. And a big mirror.

They both laugh, and as she closes the closet door with the mirror on it we see **SUPER-BRIEF FLASH: A young man - wearing very old fashioned clothes - stands staring sullenly at them.**

34 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - LATER

34

Peter finishes putting Matt's bed together down there.

PETER

A little dark. But hey - I was a teenager once. Cool bachelor pad.

MATT

Cool pad? Dad, this is the 80's?

PETER

Trust me - the 70's will be back.
(Tries the door)
What's back here?

MATT

Don't know. We couldn't open it.

PETER

Hmm. Lock works fine. Knob turns.
Just must be stuck. Step back -

He really leans into it. Nope. Just won't open.

PETER (CONT'D)

Maybe the owners sealed it for
storage. Or the house settled and
the door frame's jammed.

They're interrupted by Sara who walks in with mop and bucket.

SARA

If you're gonna live down here - I
need to give it a good wash. You
know your immune system is weak. I
don't like all this dust. Out, out!

Matt and Peter know better than to argue so they leave.

35 INT. THE BASEMENT - SOME TIME LATER

35

Sara mops the floor of the room. As she moves backwards, the
glass wall is behind her.

Matt comes down stairs - sees his Mom still cleaning and
smiles and shakes his head - but then he sees:

*Behind her it seems he sees two figures back there. One a
tall thin man. The other, a boy - about Matt's age. The same
sullen boy we glimpsed in the mirror upstairs. They are bent
over tables. Working.*

Matt says nothing but takes a step closer and for a second we

FLASH TO:

*In this exact same space a body'S exsanguinated, drained of
blood. The tall thin man and the boy are embalming a body.
Hosing the blood into a concave ditch that ends in a drain.*

BACK IN THE PRESENT

Matt stifles a scream - his mother hears him and looks up
from her mopping with a smile -

SARA

Honey? You feeling alright?

Matt looks up - the morticians are gone. He looks down at the floor and sees a horrific red mess of congealing blood all around her mop.

Noticing nothing Sara lifts the mop back into the water - squeezes it out - clear water pours out. Matt blinks and sees it's all normal. But when she puts the mop back down on the floor: again the water turns a thick coagulated red.

MATT

Mom!

She stops and looks up again - a bit annoyed now but trying not to show it.

SARA

What now?

He looks at the dripping mop - no blood, just water. All normal. And behind the window no figures leaning over cadavers. *The floor is spotless.*

MATT

Um, nothing - just, thanks - for cleaning my room.

She gives him a peck on the cheek on her way out of the room. Matt lingers in the door for a second - looking back at his room - daring it to show him something again.

36 EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

36

Tending a barbecue grill, turns to look at Matt - who's looking up at the just appearing stars in the night sky.

Peter sees something in Matt's face. Something vulnerable. Fearful. Angry? He can't tell. Maybe all three.

PETER

I remember when we used to go camping. When you were little. And every night you'd fall asleep counting the stars and could never finish. Used to drive you nuts.

Matt just stares at him. He's a long way from that kid now.

MATT

Yeah. But then I learned. All the stars we see are already dead. We just haven't gotten the news.

Peter, worried, has no reply to that as Matt turns and walks into the house. Passing Sara, who is coming out with burger buns. Sara saw the worried look on Matt's face, and it is mirrored in her own worried expression.

PETER
Something on your mind?

SARA
Of course there's something on my mind. There's always something on my mind. The same as always.

37 INT. MARY'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

37

Mary and Wendy are kneeling by the bed -

WENDY
You get your own room - like a big girl- you sure you won't be scared?

MARY
I don't think so.

WENDY
Good. Okay, you start.

MARY
Now I lay me down to sleep -

As we hear the prayer we PAN ACROSS the shelf above her bed - lined with all her stuffed animals and dolls: including her favorite, a featureless soft *thing*, worn to almost nothing, impossible to say whether it was once a teddy-bear or rabbit or what. Its remaining shoe-button eye hangs by a string.

MARY O.S.
If I should die before I wake...

We continue out down the hall to the next room where -

38 INT. BILLY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

38

MARY O.S.
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Billy's a bit spooked. He closes his door most of the way. He looks in the closet. Then checks under the bed too.

39 EXT. THE HOUSE - THAT NIGHT 39

On this moonless night the darkened house looms like a shadow's shadow. Darker than the night itself.

40 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 40

Matt in bed, face covered in sweat. His closed eyes twitch from the force of rapid eye movement. Suddenly he sits upright in bed. Eyes still closed. Then they snap open. But blank and unseeing - staring not merely across the room - but across decades of time past into the glassed in room.

MATT'S POV:

In the next chamber he sees a tall thin man - the one he earlier saw embalming a body - AICKMAN - who now seems bent over some writing on pale parchment.

Beyond him the boy, JONAH - watches Aickman writing with a look of growing horror - then looks up across the space and locks eyes with Matt -

And suddenly it is as if Matt can see through Jonah's eyes - a close vision of Aickman's strange writing:

Aliquem Mortuum Suspiria

Magical words and symbols fill the screen. Thin scratchings in red on parchment. Arcane words in an ancient languages of necromancy. And as we see them, we hear them:

AICKMAN (O.S.)
*Aliquem mortuum suspiria, talis
ordo tenebrum est.*

And suddenly we widen to see: Aickman is not writing on parchment - he is not writing at all - he is carving these letters with a thin scalpel directly into the pale flesh of an embalmed corpse!

AICKMAN (CONT'D)
*...per nomina sancta deus...Adonai,
Alpha et Omega, Sabaoth...*

See now scores of incantations carved upon every inch of the dead white flesh by the thin grey hands of Aickman

Behind him, we glimpse several other bodies bound in cloth - and from arms and ankles sticking out we can see: They too are carved with signs and words.

The boy - JONAH - stares horrified - his face a mirror to Matt's face across the room staring blindly at the strange things happening right in his bedroom!

And now we understand the shocked look of abject horror in the eyes of the boy Jonah who sees:

E.C.U:

As Aickman's long fingers pull gently on the corpse's eyelid - stretching the delicate flesh out from the head. And with a horrible SNIPPING sound -

WE CUT TO:

41 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 41

Matt's own eyes, for the first time, blink. And he is suddenly awake. He looks around - disoriented. As if it were all just some horrific, and horrifically detailed, nightmare.

He looks across the room - to the half glass divider - behind which he saw - or dreamt he saw - such abominable things.

Matt wipes the sleep from his eye and gets closer to the window - he sees nothing. He tries the door knob.

MATT

Ow!

He pulls his hand back. And we can see his skin blistering - as if he had grabbed burning metal.

42 EXT. THE HOUSE - MORNING 42

From the back yard, looking at the kitchen windows. In the bright summer sun the place looks almost homey.

Super: July 20th 8:30 am

43 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING 43

Sara's making breakfast. Matt's there too, taking plates from a cupboard and putting them on the counter. Then he gets out silverware and carries it back to the dining room.

As he starts to set the knives and forks around the table, he hears, faint but distinctly, VOICES. He can't tell at first.

From the walls? The ceiling? Or is it the floor? Or all of them? He turns around, no one's there.

Shaking it out of his mind, Matt walks back to the kitchen - only to find the plates he set out on the counter are gone - and they're back in the cupboard where he got them. Sara is at the stove, tending to the eggs and pancakes.

MATT

Why'd you put the plates back?

SARA

What?

MATT

I put the plates out and now --

SARA

I didn't touch them, sweetie.
Are you okay?

Matt nods, then steps back to the cupboard. **CRASH!** He spins, the plates are on the floor, broken. Sara hurries over. She also notes for the first time his hand - it looks burned.

SARA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry honey. That was stupid of me. The dishes were too heavy for-

MATT

I didn't drop them.

SARA

Then how -

MATT

I don't know! I swear - I - saw -

Sara touches his forehead, checking for fever.

SARA

Dr. Brooks said to tell him if you were seeing things. He said -

MATT

- I remember what he said. He said if I was seeing things - or even thinking weird things - it meant they'd drop me from the trial. We didn't come this far, turn our lives upside down, move house, just to call it all off.

SARA

But if you're -

MATT

No Mom. It's nothing. I'm not seeing things. I swear. Nothing's wrong. Really. I'm just tired. I remember now - I just left them sitting too close to the edge.

SARA

Well, alright. But you tell me if anything like that happens again. Promise?

MATT

Promise. Sorry I broke the dishes.

SARA

That's alright sweetie. Your Grandmother used to kiss me when I broke a plate or a glass. Said it meant something worse won't happen.

44 INT. DR. BROOKS'S OFFICE - DAY

44

With Sara and Matt there, the Doctor, wearing latex gloves, gingerly probes the peeling skin on Matt's hand.

DR. BROOKS

His skin may well turn black. Start peeling off. Perfectly normal. It's a bit early. But that could be a good sign.

He pulls a thermometer out of Matt's mouth.

DR. BROOKS

No fever - excellent. Less nausea? Good. Even a bit of appetite. Outstanding. And no visual or auditory hallucinations or other behavioral abnormalities?

She's silent for a beat. The Doctor looks up at her, and at Matt. Matt looks at her - worried she's going to mention this morning...

DR. BROOKS

Anything?

She hesitates for a beat, but only a beat.

SARA

No, no. Sorry I was just
distracted. He's fine, I guess.
Considering.

Matt nods in agreement.

DR. BROOKS

Excellent. Then we can continue to
stage two.

45 INT. CHEMOTHERAPY ROOM - DAY

45

Matt sits in a room with six Barcaloungers facing six televisions. Each chair attached to one of the modules which controls the chemo. Some of the people, all in street clothes, in the other five chairs have already lost their hair. Some still look robust. Some will die, and soon.

In the chair next to him a strangely young pair of eyes peer curiously out of an older man's face - POPESCU.

Matt hears a SCRABBLING sound and looks down at the floor to the right of his chair and sees with a jolt: A large black CRAB scuttles across the floor and scrambles under the chair.

Matt looks around - no one else seems to have noticed. He leans over and tries to see under the chair. Nothing.

And before he can sit back up a black claw whips out and closes on the soft part of his forearm -

And he screams -

NURSE (O.S.)

Now that didn't hurt.

REVEAL WE ARE:

45A INT. CHEMOTHERAPY ROOM - DAY

45A

A nurse pulls a needle out of his arm as Matt snaps awake in the chemo room. The old man, Popescu, lays a reassuring hand on his arm leans in conspiratorially close:

POPESCU

You were dreaming.

MATT

What? Oh. Yeah.

POPESCU

And breathing heavy. Which of course can mean either a very bad dream. Or a very good one. Which was it?

MATT

I've had better.

His eyes seem to look right into Matt - spreading a kind of warmth as they do.

MATT (CONT'D)

Sometimes lately - It's been hard.

POPESCU

What?

MATT

To tell which is a dream.

POPESCU

Are we men dreaming we're butterflies? Or butterflies dreaming we're men?

MATT

Do you ever...

POPESCU

What?

MATT

I dunno, see things? Hear things. Things that... aren't - that can't be - there?

Popescu makes a zipping gesture at his lips - and turns an invisible key and tosses it away.

POPESCU

Don't ever tell them you can see things. They won't understand. When my wife was dying - the whole last day - I sat there praying and crying. She never once looked at me. Just looked all around her - as if at all the others in the room - but we were alone. Or so I thought. Now I know better. She was where we are. In the valley.

MATT

The Valley?

POPESCU

Of the shadow of death. And you know what to do when you find yourself in the valley of the shadow of death?

MATT

What?

POPESCU

Easy. Fear no evil.

He hands Matt a card: **Fr. Nicholas Popescu.**

POPESCU

If you need to talk, call me.
Any time.

46 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

46

The children all asleep, Sara's still awake at a table covered in bills and insurance forms. She's on the phone talking to Peter:

SARA

Right, this was gonna be *free*.
Sixty bucks for five pills... No, that they'll cover. But not the follow-ups... The blue one for the nausea? Yes. But the pink one that stops him feeling restless *because* of the blue one?... I tried, Peter. I was on hold for an hour!

47 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

47

Matt lies in bed. Tossing. Groaning. He wakes, raises his head and searches the room - nothing - or... This is so like one of his dreams. Is he asleep? He looks down at his arm - and pinches himself - hard. Awake, he sits up and looks at the glass wall across the room. Is there a shape in there?

Looks harder. Yes. Definitely. Around his size - a bit smaller - standing just the other side of the glass. The shadow moves in the other chamber to the door.

Matt looks at the door. It slowly swings open.

Matt stares into the widening blackness - He stands up - shaky - and moves towards the door - and into the darkness. For a moment we see through the glass:

Two figures face each other.

48 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING 48

BILLY (O.S.)
Matt? Where are you? Matt?

Billy comes down the stairs. But the bedroom is empty.

MATT
In here.

Then Billy sees - the open door to the *other* room.

BILLY
Whoa. How'd you get in there?

And we see it really wasn't a dream. The door is open.

49 INT. EMBALMING CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS 49

From Billy's POV, we get our first good look inside there.

BILLY
What is this place?

MATT
Hop on.

Matt's standing behind a heavy stainless steel gurney - practically gleaming considering how old it is.

MATT (CONT'D)
Take you for a ride.

Billy gets on. Matt pulls him roughly - so he's flat on it. Matt starts turning it around - faster and faster. As he does - he sees - while spinning around - *glimpses of Aickman and Jonah removing a body from a coffin. The coffin then filled not with a body, but with sandbags, and re-sealed shut.*

He seems oblivious to his brother who's holding on to the gurney which Matt is turning faster and faster.

BILLY
Matt - slow down - Matt! Stop!

PETER (O.S.)
 (Descending the stairs)
 Dammit, what is going on down here?

Matt stops. Billy nearly thrown from the gurney.

BILLY
 What's the matter with you?

MATT
 Sorry.

As their Dad steps into the bedroom and sees the open door.

PETER
 I guess I loosened it, eh?
 (entering the room)
 What the hell...

About three feet from the floor, along all four walls runs a continuous shelf about three feet in width. In a corner there's a dull porcelain embalming TABLE. Pile of old yellowed TOE TAGS next to a dusty glass EMBALMING PUMP.

Creepy old EMBALMING TOOLS, trochars, big metal syringes scattered on the shelf. Old rust-stained PORCELAIN SINKS. Then the clincher: an old bottle labelled *formaldehyde*.

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Well now we know why the rent was so cheap. The question is -

50 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

50

Peter bears down on Sara, who's trying to avoid facing him.

PETER
 - what did you know and when the hell did you know it? Jesus!

SARA
 (reacts to his anger)
 Know what?

PETER
 What this place was. Aren't you the one who says we can't live on lies?

SARA
 Yeah. But that was because you were a drunk. And a liar.

He'd like to return fire but Peter calms himself, accepts it.

PETER

Right. But I'm not now. Thanks to you. And the children. And that's not how we work. Right?

SARA

I know. I'm sorry. I should have told you. I just - we needed some place. And it just seemed perfect. Like a gift from God.

51 EXT. CEMETERY - SUNSET

51

Wendy and Matt on a walk, approaching a foot entrance to the cemetery near their house. Matt gestures, let's go in.

WENDY

You sure?

MATT

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. For I am the baddest mutha in the valley.

They walk in past Victorian mortuary sculptures, blackened and moss covered. Walk slowly between rows of older Puritan stone monuments bearing only a simple winged skull and some even older, rubbed blank by the scouring winds of time.

Matt looks across the cemetery to where a *small group in period attire stand around an open grave where a coffin is lowered into the ground while the minister says his last and mourners toss handfuls of dirt.*

MINISTER

(far off voice)

"I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death..."

Matt turns back to Wendy who bends to smell wild flowers. He looks back up at the funeral - but there is no funeral. Just an empty cemetery where he and Wendy are the only - living - people present. He shudders and rubs his eyes.

WENDY

You alright?

MATT

Yeah. Sure.

They walk past old headstones that look ready to tip over.

MATT

You ever ask yourself, what's the point?

WENDY

The point of what?

MATT

Anything. Doing anything. Being anything. You just end up here anyway. Why be alive at all?

Matt makes a cynical snort that startles Wendy. Matt suddenly and viciously kicks a tottering tombstone, knocking it flat.

He's about to kick another one, to kick them all over if he can. But Wendy grabs Matt, and holds him.

WENDY

I used to wonder about that. I'd lie awake at night - just hearing my parents yelling. Seems like day and night all they did was curse at each other. Some nights I thought he'd kill her. Other times I wished they'd kill each other. Or me. Just to stop the hate.

He looks at her - for a brief moment lifted out of his pain.

WENDY (CONT'D)

But then I moved in with you guys. I realized it didn't have to be that way. I don't know what happens when we die. If anything happens. But I know what can happen when you're alive. You can love. And be loved. And every minute you're one or the other...

52 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

52

At the table, the whole family is sitting down for a meal.

WENDY (O.S.)

...is a gift.

Matt just looks around at his loving family. Wendy's words echoing in his ears. There's a lot of chatter and passing dishes. Then Peter quiets everybody down.

PETER

Okay, so, everyone knows now this used to be a funeral home. Big deal. It's not anymore, and hasn't been for years and years. It's just a house. Bricks, nails, wood. And it's our house for the rest of the summer. Until Matt's finished at the hospital. We're all under pressure and we all have to pull together, like a team. Okay?

He holds out his hands - and they all join hands. And the INSTANT they do - it's as if they have formed some kind of electrical circuit and a strange current JOLTS Matt -

PETER (CONT'D)

Who wants to say grace? Matt?

They all look at Matt. Who is staring behind them - beyond them - as if there were others in the room.

SARA

Matt, you alright?

He's not alright. He's not even there any more...

HE IS:

53

INT. PARLOUR - 1927

53

The same parlor where they now sit - but now it is arrayed for a different sort of ritual. Six people seated around the circular table, holding hands. Holding a seance.

Aickman, eyes lit with an uncanny fire, stands behind the circle. Move around the table and see their faces: skeptical, nervous, mournful, others nearly joyful.

- and at the end of the circle we come to the boy, JONAH...

- in whose pale impassive face only the liquid green eyes show anything at all: abject dread.

We circle around them faster and faster - Sometimes from in front of their faces - sometimes from behind their heads - The candle light throws fantastic shadows - Dizzying us - with the swaying and the singing - and the movement -

Suddenly stop: The table begins to tremble beneath their fingers - the legs rattling against the floor.

52B INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

52B

PETER (O.S.)

Matt!

Angle on Matt who looks up in mirror and sees not himself but *Jonah staring back at him.*

PETER (CONT'D)

Matt!

Matt suddenly focuses on them. And sees that of course they don't see what he sees. He giggles. Weirdly. It's that or scream at the top of his lungs.

PETER (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

Matt can't stop laughing. He's hysterical. Mary starts to cry - and Billy staring at his brother on the verge of it -

PETER (CONT'D)

(fiercer)

Matt -

SARA

Peter. Please. It's the medicine.

Wendy gently steps over to Matt.

MATT

Did you see..?

But he doesn't finish the sentence - because he can see that she didn't - that none of them - saw what he saw.

He just shakes his head sadly and allows himself to be led out of the room - and downstairs - to his room.

54 INT. BASEMENT - A BEAT LATER

54

She sits next to him on the bed.

WENDY

What happened up there?

MATT

I - nothing.

WENDY

You seeing things?

MATT

No. I am not seeing things. I can't be.

WENDY

What do you mean?

MATT

If I was seeing things - they'd stop the treatments.

WENDY

So what happened?

He wants to tell her but he can't, outright. So he tries the only way he can.

MATT

You remember that book when we were kids? With the weird pictures? We used to love that one. "The man who was not there."

WENDY

I do. I do remember.

MATT

'As I was walkin' up the stair/
I saw a man who wasn't there/He
wasn't there again today.'

MATT/WENDY

'Oh how I wish he'd go away'

They laugh. She looks at him tenderly.

MATT

Remember the other one?

WENDY

No - maybe, which one?

MATT

'One bright day in the middle of
the night. Two dead boys got up to
fight. Back to back they faced one
another. Drew their swords and shot
each other...'

He looks over her shoulder - to the glass divider - where someone else seems to be standing looking back in -

MATT (CONT'D)
'...A deaf policeman heard the noise. He came and killed those two dead boys.'

He seems even now to be seeing past her - to someplace, or someone not there...

WENDY
Matt, you're scaring me.

He turns back to her, his skin going a whiter shade of pale.

MATT
Join the club.

55 EXT. THE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

55

Sara holds Peter beside his truck.

PETER
Before he got sick, we were already in over our heads. Now we're headin' for the bottom of the pool. I'm just sorry you have to work. We moved out here so you wouldn't have to be gone all the time.

SARA
It's easier than driving him was. And besides. We need the money.

PETER
We gotta get through the summer. Then Matt'll be fine. And business will pick up before Christmas.

SARA
Do you have to go back tonight?

PETER
If I'm not there to open in the morning and if we don't meet the minimum days open we might as well -

She stops him with a kiss.

SARA
I know. I'm proud of you.

PETER
Of me? For what?

SARA
For working so hard. And for
keeping your promises. All of them.

56 INT. WENDY'S ROOM - NIGHT 56

Wendy is painting her toenails, cottonballs between them.
Slowly, she begins to feel there is a Presence behind her.
But when she turns: no one is there.

57 INT. TRUCK - ON THE ROAD - LATER 57

Peter drives by a road house. Then stops and pulls over.
Turns around. And pulls in. He sits in the car in front of
the bar. Looks up at the Rolling Rock Beer sign flashing on
and off. His hand reaches for the door - then stops. Instead,
he starts the truck again and pulls back out into the road.

Promises.

58 INT. THE HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT 58

Sara comes out of her room to go to the kitchen for a glass
of water. We follow Sara down the stairs and around a corner -
where we see a shade lurking -

- Sara rounds the corner - and gasps out loud. But it's not a
ghost; just Matt standing blankly against the wall in a black
t-shirt and black sweats. He seems somehow barely there.

SARA
What are you doing?

He doesn't respond. She sees he's out of it, and just leads
him back to his room.

SARA
Come on, back to bed...

59 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 59

The kids, including Wendy, eat lunch.

Super: August 1st 12:30 P.M.

Matt's skin, recently so red, has turned to black scales, even on his face. He nibbles a sandwich while Wendy rubs a soothing cream on his neck and arms. Billy and Mary take turns shaking and checking a silvery "Krystal Ball" (a toy "oracle"). Through a small window one sees a 20-sided die with stock answers printed on each side floating in fluid.)

BILLY

Is Mary a total Goon?

"Oh Yes!"

Mary grabs it from him.

MARY

Is Billy a Poop Head?

"But of course, my dear!"

SARA

Okay, cut it out. I gotta go to work. You have my number. Wendy's in charge, so you listen to her!

MATT

If you don't then you deal with *me*.

He extends his blackened arms like he was Frankenstein or some creature from a lagoon. The little ones giggle. Sara, behind Matt, kisses him on top of the head, looking at Wendy, both of them relieved for now he's still the old Matt.

60 INT. STAIRWELL - LATER

60

Matt covers his eyes and counts...

MATT

56- 57- 58 -

61 QUICK GLIMPSES:

61

Mary climbs into a cabinet beneath the sink in the kitchen; Billy squeezes into a storage space at the base of the stairs; Wendy hides behind the thick parlor curtains.

60B INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

60B

Matt finishes -

MATT

59 - 60.

He moves slow and awkwardly - but he's trying.

62 INT. UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

62

He looks down the hallway.

MATT
Ready or not...

Sees a couple of the bedroom doors open - steps up to the doorway of the first one which is -

63 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

63

- the one with the faded birdcage wall paper. At the edge of the open door he glimpses a shadow moving inside...

MATT
...here I come!

Inside the room, for an instant we see the wall paper *un-fade* - as Matt pushes open the room expecting to see one of his siblings or his cousin - but instead sees:

JONAH, gathering meagre belongings - stuffing them into a pillow case.

Before a speechless Matt can react - *Jonah walks right past him into the hallway!*

Matt spins - but there is no one in the hallway - he turns back to the room - it too is empty - and the wall paper is once again faded and peeling.

Matt breathes and collects himself. Shakes it off - and tries to continue the game.

Matt steps back into the hall and sees out of the corner of his eye: someone moving down the stairs.

MATT
Now I gotcha.

He pads quietly to the stairs and looks down the railing in time to see: *Moving as silently as possible, trying to avoid every creak of wood, Jonah sneaks down the stairs -*

Matt hurries downstairs following him, but when he gets there - there is no one.

64 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

64

Matt peers into the parlor, through mottled glass. It's empty - Then he hears a sound behind him - like a doorknob turning - he spins back to the hall - towards the front door and sees:

Jonah at the door - his hand on the door knob - slowly turning, quietly easing the front door open...

Matt's about to cry out - when he sees *a big grey hand slap the back of Jonah's neck - and another grab him by the hair. It's the tall thin man, AICKMAN. Jonah twists and struggles as Aickman drags him back - **right past the wide-eyed Matt.***

Matt opens his mouth to say something - to scream but no sound comes out - as he sees *the ghostly figures disappear down the basement stairs...*

65 INT. VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

65

Each of the others in their hiding places. Trying to hold their breath and not make a sound.

66 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

66

Matt comes down the basement stairs and sees across his own room to the other chamber and, for just an instant, sees:

Jonah surrounded by shrouded corpses. Then the door slams shut on its own, blocking Matt's view...

The game is forgotten now - Matt races the few steps from the stairs across his bedroom to the dividing wall door - and throws it open and sees:

67 INT. MORTUARY CHAMBER - PAST & PRESENT CONTINUOUS

67

It is not the empty room we've seen but the active Embalming Chamber it once was: Blood stained tools. Buckets of blood - bottles of reeking fluids. And gurneys with covered corpses.

As he steps into the room - the door slams behind him - he spins and tries the door - but it's locked - he can hear sounds from behind him - but is too terrified to turn around - he hears the sounds of shrouds slipping from bodies -

Slowly Matt turns around - All the breath slips from his lungs, the blood drains from his face as he tries to understand what he sees:

He is now where Jonah was - trapped - alone - sealed in a room with the defiled, engraved corpses. All the bodies are inscribed with the incantations. And worse they seem like human candles - their features flicker between the states in which they died - the embalmed look, and their face inscribed with Aickman's spindly red handiwork.

Thinking he saw one of the bodies actually move, Matt backs towards the door, hyperventilating in terror.

68 UPSTAIRS: 68

The kids run from their hiding places at the sound of Matt SCREAMING downstairs - They all run to the basement stairs.

67B INT. EMBALMING CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS 67B

Matt trapped between the pressing dead - their lidless eyes stare wide - their lipless mouths press at his ears - their nail-less hands paw at him -

MATT
For God's Sake -

Just as the other three run into the room -

MATT (CONT'D)
- leave me alone!!

But they think he's yelling at them - since there's no one else there.

Billy looks disgusted, while Mary buries her face in Wendy - who just shakes her head at her cousin.

WENDY
It's okay. Let's go.

She sweeps the little ones away with her back upstairs. Matt looks back: the ghosts are gone, leaving him utterly alone.

69 INT. KITCHEN - LATER 69

Matt presses the phone to his ear and nervously clutches something in his hand - Old Fr. Popescu's card.

MATT
I don't know who else to talk to.

70 EXT. ST BENEDICT'S/OLD CHURCHYARD - LATE AFTERNOON 70

The last light of day illuminates an old Catholic churchyard. The church itself is shuttered. And weeds have grown over the small plot of graves at its edge.

POPESCU (O.S.)

They said there weren't enough parishioners to make it worth the upkeep. But I think they knew I'd never move to another parish - so it was the easiest way of putting me out to pasture.

We find Matt - and the old priest, Popescu, near a large stone angel whose moss covered eyes seem to weep black tears.

POPESCU

She loved this spot. This angel who weeps black tears.... After the cremation I walked around here for hours - pockets filled with ashes - sending her back home to the sky.

Matt follows the old man's gaze - up into an impassive grey sky as if he could see her ashes swirling upward in the wind.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

Tell you a secret. There is no heaven. No hell. No separate place way up there or way down there.

MATT

I see why they retired you.

POPESCU

Yes, well. I didn't stop believing. Sometimes I think they did. See, it's all here. All right here.

MATT

Here?

POPESCU

All around us. All the time. The living and the dead. But invisible to every one. Or almost every one. We're not like other people anymore. Most people spend all their life firmly in this world - then one day they go straight to the other side.

(MORE)

POPESCU (CONT'D)

Some of us - we take a more roundabout path - spend quite a lot of time in the border land. And who knows - when you pass this close to the next world - maybe we see across the border. Maybe not. Either way only one thing matters.

MATT

What?

POPESCU

Like I told you: Fear No Evil. Be fearless. And open.

MATT

Open?

POPESCU

This is your destiny. The light and the dark. I know it's not easy. Have you ever seen a *smiling* Saint?

Beat.

MATT

So what do I do?

71 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT 71

The house painted by sickly yellow moonlight.

POPESCU (O.S.)

Find out what he wants from you.

72 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 72

Matt asleep. A candle lit beside him throws a huge shadow on the wall. But it is not his shadow. Not a shadow at all. It's Jonah. It almost looks as if the dead boy were bent over *whispering* to a sleeping Matt.

73 INT. MINI-MART - NIGHT 73

Sara sits behind a glass window at the cash register. Suddenly A DEMON presses its face against the glass. Sara SHRIEKS. It's not a demon but A GUY guy on PCP. Sara shrinks back as SECURITY appears and ushers the man out of the store.

74 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 74

CREAKING of steps. The basement step door opens. MATT steps up out of the basement stairs - and into the hall. He walks eyes open but unseeing. Like a sleepwalker.

75 EXT. THE CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT 75

Sara finished the 5 to 1 shift, and is just now driving home.

76 EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT 76

The house - strangely lit from within by weirdly flickering light - looks like a lunatic's grimacing face as Sara pulls up the drive and slumps exhausted at the wheel.

77 INT. THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER 77

She steps quickly but quietly into the house. That strange flickering light pervades the whole place.

78 INT. PARLOUR - A BEAT LATER 78

And then she sees why - a roaring fire in the fireplace on this hot summer night.

That's not all. Every candle in the house has been found, and lit - including many along the walls, and dangerously close to the drapes; some of the drapes are already burning.

And the paint on one wall has begun to blacken and peel beneath the combined heat of all the candles lined up there. Sara quickly bats the fire out of the drapes. And then she smells it. Gas. She follows the smell - to

79 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 79

At the threshold of the room - the center of the smell - she stares:

Matt stands like a statue in the middle of the room - a candle is burning down to only a few inches - the kitchen is lit only by the candle held in the stiff hand of her son.

His fist is covered in melted wax - his skin seared - but no reaction.

Sara blows out the candle, then runs over to the stove - puts out the burners and turns off the oven. She throws open all the windows.

SARA

Matt! Matt!? What's going on in here?

But no response from Matt.

80 INT. HOUSE - A BEAT LATER

80

She rushes upstairs to the other kids' rooms. Wendy already out of her room, in the hall, she heard the commotion.

SARA

Get the kids - outside - now - NOW!

81 INT. PARLOR - A BEAT LATER

81

She runs in carrying a bucket of water from the kitchen - she throws most of it on the drapes, some still smoldering - then tosses some on the candles everywhere - blows the others out - all this time Matt still sits unmoving - oblivious to it all.

82 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

82

She runs back to the kitchen. Grabs Matt's hand but he won't move. Nothing will rouse him. She slaps him - hard across the face - Nothing. No reaction. Again. Nothing. Now with all her strength she slaps him again - and he blinks - and is awake -

83 EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER

83

The kids are mystified. All talk at once - they have no idea what happened. Sara stares at Matt. He looks back at her.

SARA

What were you doing?

MATT

I - I don't know. I remember lying in bed. And next thing I remember is you slapping me in the kitchen.

SARA

You kids go back to bed. Wendy...

Wendy herds the kids inside. Sara remains looking at Matt.

SARA (CONT'D)
 You could have killed them all. And
 yourself. Is that what you're
 trying to do? Kill yourself?

MATT
 No, Mom - I swear -

Sara's about to blow her stack, but when she looks at him he
 seems so weak and vulnerable, she holds herself back. He
 notices her staring at him, and misinterprets it.

MATT
 I know - I look horrible - I-

SARA
 No! It's not that. I could never
 care how you look. You're my son, I
 love you. It's how you're acting.
 All this skulking around - scaring
 the others... Talk to me Mattie.
 Tell me what's going on.

He just shakes his head - like she could never understand.
 And walks alone back into the house.

84 INT. SARA'S BEDROOM - LATER - ON THE PHONE WITH PETER 84
 She's fragile, exhausted and on the verge of a fight.

SARA
 He could have burned the house
 down.

85 INT. BASEMENT OF NEW YORK HOUSE - SAME TIME 85

Peter's in the basement at a makeshift office - table covered
 in invoices, bills, and threatening collection notices. And
 pages of inventory and other work papers.

PETER
 You sure you're not...exaggerating?

SARA
 You didn't see it, you weren't
 here. As usual.

PETER
 What do you want from me!? I can't
 be in two places at once!

SARA
 (apologetic)
 I know. It's just. Hard.

PETER
 Do you want me to talk to him?

84A INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

84A

SARA
 No. No. It's okay. I better go.
 This is expensive.

She hangs up the phone and sits there - feeling completely alone. She opens the small drawer of the bedside table and pulls out some rosary beads. She begins to pray...

SARA
 Our Father, who art in Heaven...

But she stops. Unable to continue the prayer. She closes her eyes to concentrate. But then just shakes her head, sticks the rosary back into the drawer. And turns out the light.

86 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

86

Matt - face blackened, hair patchy - is being helped out of the minivan by Sara. Looking closer at Matt, as Sara helps him to the front door, it's more than hair he's lost. It looks like his will to live isn't there anymore, either.

SARA
 Can you just stand here a minute
 babe? I left my purse in the car.

MATT
 Sure. I'm fine.

He stands at the doorway, swaying a bit. He puts his hand out to grab the door frame of the house to steady himself -

But instead of finding solid wall his fingers sink into rot and he pulls a fist full of rancid material from the house -

- he looks down in his hand at a handful of rotted meat with WHITE MAGGOTS squirming in it.

SARA (O.S.)
 Matt?

He looks back at his mother, then down at his hand. It is empty. The only thing is the blackening and peeling of his own skin. He looks at the house. Everything looks fine.

87 EXT. THE HOUSE - EVENING 87

The sun is just setting behind the house. The sky is on fire.

Super: August 10th. 6:30 P.M.

88 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 88

Everyone's in the kitchen, finishing a quick dinner.

SARA
I wish you'd go with us.

MATT
Hey, I'm alright. I - wasn't used
to the meds. I'm fine now.

She just looks at him.

MATT
I'm not gonna burn the house down,
alright?

SARA
I know that, honey.

WENDY
You just need to get out more.

MATT
Why?

They all look away - don't know how to face his bitterness. Sara impulsively hugs him - fiercely. Matt winces in pain.

SARA
Sorry. I just love you so much.

MATT
Like the man says. Love hurts.

89 INT. THE BASEMENT - LATER 89

Matt's listening to Joy Division - Love Will Tear Us Apart. Reading a music magazine. Puts it down. Too sick to read.

As he lowers the magazine JONAH'S FACE is inches from him.

Matt GASPS. He can't move or even breathe from terror.

The two faces so similar - both blackened - and gaunt - for a moment it's almost as if Matt were looking into a mirror. Only Jonah's intense GREEN eyes distinguishes them.

Within his terror Matt tries to act on Popescu's 'Fear No Evil.' To muster all his courage.

MATT

Wh-wh-what do you want from me?

Suddenly there is a TREMENDOUS SOUND of thousands of pieces of glass breaking. Followed by the even LOUDER SOUND of the whole house destroyed, like a bunker buster bomb hit it.

Matt closes his eyes in the NOISE of the BLAST. When he opens them - Jonah's gone. Matt crawls out of bed and up the stairs as fast as his weak, nauseated body allows.

He warily looks out from the basement stairwell - expecting to see the house in ruins. But everything is fine. Absolutely normal. Matt is queasy. Out of breath. Trembling.

90 EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT 90

Sara and the kids arrive home.

91 INT. HOUSE - SAME 91

Sara steps first into the kitchen, as the kids walk past her into the living room. She drops her purse on a counter and reaches for the tea pot and a packet of tea when she's stopped by the audible GASP of the children.

She turns to see into the living room - she can only see their backs huddled together - not what they see, what they gasped at.

She walks forward slowly and as they separate to let her in she sees: The room's been taken apart and rearranged - but seemingly by a very strong, and rather obsessive, madman.

Someone has gathered all the room's wooden furniture - and piled it as if preparing a bonfire. All in a pyramid, the chairs and table balanced intricately on each other. A single breath would send it all crashing down.

They stand there - not daring to breathe for fear it will all come crashing down, and then they hear it. A SCRATCHING sound from the other side of the pile. They can't see the far wall of the room - blocked entirely by the pile in the middle.

Sara waves the others to stay back and she carefully makes her way around the pile to see what is on the other side of the room making the SCRATCHING and MEWLING sounds...

And then she does see - and her eyes widen -

Sara's POV: Matt. Slumped against the wall.

The wallpaper along the wall is shredded. The wood itself torn and frayed. And spattered with blood.

Matt's hands are a mess. His fingers ragged bloody pulps, his nails literally torn from his fingers - he's been scratching through the walls with his fingers like he was buried alive.

And then he speaks - in a voice DISTINCTLY NOT HIS OWN:

MATT/JONAH

Please Sir - they wants OUT...

For the sake of the others Sara literally shoves her fist into her mouth to stifle her scream...

DR. BROOKS (O.S.)

Odd autonomic behavior.
Hallucinations. Sleepwalking.
Delirium. Mood shifts.

92 INT. DR. BROOKS'S OFFICE - DAY

92

A perplexed Dr. Brooks meets with Sara and Peter.

DR. BROOKS

You really should have told me. It could have been a sign it's moved to the brain. Tumors cause hallucinations, delusions, sudden changes in behavior and the drugs might have exacerbated them.

Sara and Peter visibly react to this.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

But it's alright. Matt's MRI's are all clear. He has no brain tumors. Whatever caused the behaviors, or hallucinations, it isn't that.

SARA

I'm afraid he'll lose his mind
before he can get better.

He can see the worry in their weary eyes.

DR. BROOKS

This is the crucial time. He's had
a complete round of treatments now.
By the trial protocols we can't
give him anymore. And I don't think
his body could tolerate it.

SARA

So what do we do now?

DR. BROOKS

We wait and see. He's still a great
candidate for this treatment. Age
counts enormously. And attitude.

PETER

Attitude? He feels like shit all
the time. He looks like hell. No
one wants to get near him. His own
family are afraid of him. How's he
gonna have the power of positive
thinking on his side?

DR. BROOKS

There's a number of good drugs.
It's quite common for cancer
patients to take something for
anxiety or depression.

PETER

That's it? Just more prescriptions?
What's the point?

DR. BROOKS

The point is not to let his
attitude interfere with the
medicine. Make sure he gets well.
The rest will work itself out.

PETER

And if it doesn't?

DR. BROOKS

If things don't improve you might
want to consider residential care.
Perhaps until he's feeling better.

SARA
"Residential care?"

PETER
He means committing him.

SARA
It's bad enough he's so sick -
you're suggesting we put him away?

DR. BROOKS
I'm just making sure you know your
options. And remember...

93 EXT. BACK YARD - SAME TIME

93

Pale and weak, Matt plays catch with Billy.

DR. BROOKS (O.S.)
He's not your only child.

They're just tossing it lightly. Matt's too weak for anything more. In fact he misses an easy toss. The ball rolls away from him towards the house. Billy starts to run after it - but Matt frustrated yells -

MATT
No. I got it.

He hobbles over to the ball. Bends so his head is right beside the lower window and hears a POUNDING on the window!

Matt stumbles back - away from the window. Nearly falling. And we see why - in the window - JONAH - blackened and open mouthed - silently screaming at Matt.

BILLY
What is it?

MATT
Can't you see him?

Billy looks at his big brother - not wanting to believe he's crazy or losing it. Matt turns from Billy's face back to the house - and we see Matt's POV:

Jonah's sullen, silent face looks out from the window with eyes filled with pain.

Billy searches all the windows of the house.

BILLY

I don't see anyone! I don't!

With all his strength Matt flings the ball at a window, smashing it. He grabs and turns Billy, to steer his eyes.

MATT

There. Face all black - and screaming - and horrible -

Billy looks at his brother- it's like Matt's describing himself at that moment.

MATT (CONT'D)

Can't you see him!?

BILLY

No! I can't. Get off of me!

He spins and all too easily knocks Matt down - that's the most horrible part - his once strong big brother drops like a sack of dried leaves as Wendy comes running out of the house.

WENDY

What are you doing! Billy stop, you're hurting him!

BILLY

He -

WENDY

What?!

Billy looks down at his older brother, someone he looked up to, who now seems so shriveled and weak.

BILLY

Nothing. We were just fooling around.

Matt throws a silent look of thanks to his younger brother. But Billy doesn't nod back. He just hurries towards the house to put distance between him and Matt. Wendy reaches out to help Matt up. He ignores her. Crawls back to his feet.

Finished with Dr Brooks, Sara and Peter exit together. But silent. Lost in their own thoughts and fears.

They pause at the hospital parking lot - separate vehicles. He's not by his truck - but a small banged up little car.

SARA
Where's the truck, in the shop?

PETER
I sold it.

SARA
You what? Why didn't you tell me?

PETER
I just did. Paid the last round of
bills and this month's mortgage.
But hey like Doc said, Attitude!

She watches him go. Not at all sure about his 'attitude'.
Or hers for that matter.

95 INT. SARA'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT 95

Breathes, to pull herself together. She picks up a book from
her bedside table, of uplifting affirmations. She reads them
one by one - out loud - as she does - we cut back and forth
between her - and Peter back in New York.

SARA
"I now put my body into a peak
state of absolute certainty knowing
that I can create any positive
result that I am committed to."

96 INT. NEW YORK HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT 96

Peter has his head in hands at the table. Beaten.

95B IN SARA'S BEDROOM: 95B

SARA
"Whenever I set a definite goal, I
take immediate action towards its
attainment to create and sustain
massive momentum."

96B BACK IN NEW YORK: 96B

Peter has an old slide projector in the basement. The room in
total darkness. Then with a whirl and a click - a frozen
moment of Family Happiness Past.

95C IN SARA'S BEDROOM:

95C

Sara's crying as she continues her 'affirmations'.

SARA

"I now relive the most joyous moments of my life. "

96C BACK IN NEW YORK:

96C

Peter fights crying, as scenes from happier days unfold in the succession of frozen moments punctuated by darkness and the whirring and shifting of the automatic slide mechanism.

On screen: Matt as a little boy leaps off a picnic table his Superman cape streaming back behind him - as if he were flying not falling.

SARA (O.S.)

"And these moments inspire me to greater confidence and a greater feeling of self-worth."

Suddenly - the old slide mechanism catches on dust. The slide sticks half in and out throwing the image at a disturbing angle. Peter tries to grab the slide and burns his hand trying to get it out and in frustration knocks the projector onto the floor where it lies still throwing a now sideways image of old family happiness against the wall.

97 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

97

Peter opens the freezer door. It's filled with frozen dinners, leftovers, and ice - he shoves his hand into the pile of ice. To cool the burn.

Then shoves things out of the way - digging through the ice till he finds - a frozen bottle of vodka. He stares at it. While we hear still hear Sara's voice - and her affirmations -

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

"I am now fearless, courageous, and bold. Filled with faith, certainty and confidence. I now create and feel these emotions in my body."

98 EXT. THE NEW YORK HOUSE - LATE NIGHT 98

There's a light on in the basement, though all the other houses around it are dark, everyone on the block is asleep. Except for Peter. Before we see him, we can hear him.

96D INT. NEW YORK HOUSE - BASEMENT - SAME 96D

Peter's down there playing an old electric guitar - get the sense he was in a garage band back in the day. He's playing some heavy metal riff, or perhaps some old Allman Brothers, like "Midnight Rider". He looks way too intense doing it.

The reason is - next to him on a table - stands that fifth of vodka he found earlier in the freezer. It's empty now, and he is thoroughly shit-faced.

Suddenly one of the guitar's wire strings snaps and nearly hits him in the eye. Enraged, Peter starts to smash his guitar, the table, smash anything he can get his hands on - in a rage against his fate, his son's fate, enraged at a God who could let an innocent boy suffer as Matt is suffering.

99 EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY 99

Bright hot summer light casts deep black shadows.

100 INT. PARLOUR - DAY 100

Inside. Wendy's reading on the couch. The two young ones fighting over a board game. They turn imploringly to Wendy.

BILLY

We're bored.

MARY

Please play a game with us.

WENDY

Why don't you ask Matt?

They remain silent, uncomfortable.

MATT (O.S.)

Yeah. Why don't you ask Matt.

Matt is standing in the doorway. Who knows how long.

WENDY
Are you alright?

MATT
Outstanding.

Wendy doesn't like the look in his eyes. Or the grim tone of his voice. And clearly the kids don't either. They're standing nervously on the verge of tears.

WENDY
OK, c'mon you guys. I'll count to 30. And let's see if you can find some new hiding places this time.

The littler ones run upstairs. Matt's still standing there, staring. His face has an odd cast to it. Head bent, one eye raised a bit above the other: he almost looks like Jonah.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Matt?
(no response)
Matt?

Matt turns and walks back out of the room, down to his lair.

101 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 101

Billy races past Mary. Both heading straight for the little elevator door in the hallway. But Billy's already in there.

MARY
There's room for me too.

BILLY
Find your own place.

He pulls the door shut.

102 INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS 102

Uncomfortably tight and dark in there. Just cracks of light.

101B INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 101B

Mary runs in and out of the rooms.

WENDY (O.S.)
28-29-30. Ready or not here I come.

Then Mary looks to the end of the hall - the attic stairs.
A short flight up to a shortened door. And the door is open.
Giggling, she races up the stairs on little cat feet.

103 INT. ATTIC - A BEAT LATER 103

Sound of little FOOTSTEPS. Something seems to be running in the far back of the attic as Mary opens the door and enters.

That same extreme of dark and light from outside - but here with darkness winning and just a few shafts of high hot light through dust.

101C INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 101C

Wendy comes up the stairs - not in any hurry to find any one.

104 INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS 104

Billy's trying to make no noise - but it's dark - and stuffy - and a little scary in there. It seems for an instant like there's something else in there - something behind him.

103B INT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS 103B

Mary's tiptoeing into the back of the little attic. Looking for a good hiding place. The section of the floor in the rear is so rotten it just dissolves. Mary screams as her leg breaks through the rotted floor -

101D INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 101D

Wendy hears the scream from the attic.

104B INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS 104B

Billy sees something behind him: he's sharing the elevator with JONAH. He screams in terror.

101E INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 101E

Hearing the scream, Wendy yanks the door open and Billy comes tumbling out of the empty elevator.

BILLY
I saw - there was-

But another scream from the attic cuts him off - and Wendy bolts down the hall and up the attic stairs.

105 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 105

Matt hears too. And makes his way upstairs as fast as he can.

103C INT. ATTIC - A BEAT LATER 103C

Wendy runs in. The door slams shut behind her. Plunging the attic back to near total darkness but for the shafts of dust strewn light from cracks and narrow windows.

She can't see well, has to mostly feel with her hand - she finds Mary's leg but not before her hand breaks through wood so rotten you can see spiders and silver fish crawling in it.

Matt comes in followed by Billy. He hurries to where his sister and cousin are.

WENDY

Be careful. Floor must be rotten.

MATT

Rotten? Where?

As he walks he tests the floor and gestures it's all fine.

WENDY

Well here for sure. Where Mary's leg fell through.

Matt walks to that spot - sees a small circle is fetid and rotting. He looks up at the ceiling above that spot.

MATT

The floor's fine everywhere except here. No sign of a leak. Weird. Why should only this spot be rotten?

Matt gently pulls Mary's leg free. He looks down at the hole his sister's foot made. And sees something down there. He reaches in - and pulls out a metal box and a sheaf of thick papers stuffed in a bulging rotting leather notebook.

Wendy opens the box, glances, then immediately slams it shut.

MATT/BILLY/MARY

What?

She looks at Matt. Her face drained of color.

MATT
OK. Game over.

He shoos the little kids out.

106 INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

106

After the kids are asleep. Matt and Wendy sit at the table. In front of them are the cigar box and the notebook. We've seen these before. When Aickman was inscribing the corpse.

In the cigar box - a mass of small photos - mourning cards featuring the photo of the deceased. Many coffin shots: Old people. Middle-aged people. Kids. Babies even. Lying there on satin, all peaceful and serene and dead. There's more than a hundred of the business-card sized photos.

And something else too - the box is nearly filled with what at first appear to be dead moths.

WENDY
What are these?

Matt picks one up -

FLASH CUT TO:

Aickman's long fingers pull gently on a corpse's eyelids.

MATT
I don't know.

He drops the little thing back into the box. Then pulls out the memorial cards. Spreads them out in front of him -

FLASH CUT TO:

67C MATT'S HORRIFIC EXPERIENCE BEFORE IN THE EMBALMING ROOM: 67C

Matt/Jonah trapped between the pressing dead - their lidless eyes stare wide - their lipless mouths press at his ears - their nail-less hands paw at him - we recognize some of these tormented faces as identical to the memorial cards.

107 BACK IN THE PRESENT:

107

Matt drops the photos on the floor.

WENDY
You alright?

MATT
 (bending to pick them up)
 Y-yeah. Sure.

Wendy opens the notebook. Much is in Latin - and other stranger languages - unreadable ciphers. And drawings. Diagrams. What looks like a hand drawn plan of a house with strange inscriptions and lines all over it - almost like an electrical plan. She turns to the photos.

WENDY
 These are really weird.

ANGLE ON:

These are different. Not photos of the dead. But of the living contacting the dead. Seances. Spirit photographs. We might recognize the setting and the participants from Matt's glimpse of the seance while saying grace.

Stiff black and white photos that yet have a kind of unspeakable horror about them. Unposed, off-angle, capturing sitters in states of horrid fascination and terror.

And the boy medium, Jonah, in mid-spirit possession: slightly out-of-focus, his body wracked, twisted, face contorted, mouth gaping wide as translucent tendrils of smoke-like *ectoplasm* flow out of him.

In others the ectoplasm can be seen more clearly and looks like strings or slabs of grey, greasy meat that extrude from his hands, his chest, even his face, during the sittings.

WENDY
 These have got to be fake.

MATT
 Let me see.

He takes one look - and Wendy notices Matt turning a whiter shade of pale than usual.

WENDY
 What?

MATT
 Nothing.

WENDY
 Matt. Stop it. Talk to me.

MATT
 You don't want to know.

WENDY
Give me a chance.

He stares at her - as if silently measuring her - can she take it, will she believe? Only one way to find out.

MATT
I've seen him.

WENDY
Who?

MATT
(tapping photo of Jonah)
Him.

WENDY
Shut up.

MATT
(getting up)
OK, forget it.

WENDY
No. Wait, I'm sorry. Go on.

MATT
Here. In this house. I thought I was hallucinating. But I'm telling you. I've seen him nearly everyday since we moved here. Sometimes I can see him in my room. And other times I wake in the night and it feels like he's been inside me - looking out through my eyes...

She just looks at Matt.

MATT (CONT'D)
One bright day in the middle of the night/Two dead boys got up to fight
(pointing to Jonah)
Me and him. Just two dead boys.

The two of them stare at these photos of a by-gone era, feeling their horror in the here and now.

WENDY
Maybe the place is haunted. Or maybe you picked up some kind of vibrations of the past. Either way, what were these things and these photos doing hidden under
(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)
the floor boards? Who put them
there and why? We need to find out
who lived here. Who these people
are. Or were.

MATT
How?

Wendy leans in and whispers, conspiratorially:

WENDY
Don't tell anyone. But there's
buildings all over the country
where secret knowledge is kept.
Mysterious places known only as ...
The library!

Matt smiles. His first in a very long time.

MATT
Thank you.

WENDY
For what?

MATT
For believing me.

108 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

108

Wendy's research takes her from Microfilm to the back rooms
of the stacks where dusty volumes of forgotten periodicals
and esoteric tomes hide from the mice and the silverfish.

And as Wendy begins her quest, we begin to Intercut: all
she's learning and how she's learning it(in bold) with her
sharing her discoveries with Matt in the parlor that evening:

109 INT. MICROFILM READERS - MONTAGE

109

**Her face illuminated by the old microfilm readers as she
hunts through old issues of the local paper. First some from
the 1920's. Featuring photos of Aickman. And some of Jonah.**

WENDY (O.S.)
Check it out: 'A Case of
Materialization' by Mr. Ramsey
Aickman, of Goatswood, Connecticut.

110 INT. THE PARLOR - EVENING

110

Wendy's research is spread out on the table. She points to a picture of Aickman.

WENDY

That's Ramsey Aickman. This was his mortuary. He had an interesting hobby: psychical research.

Sliding quickly across the screen we see Microfilm of old newspaper. Glimpse fragments and sentences from articles:

HEADLINE:

**LOCAL MAN CONTACTS THE DEAD!
SKEPTICS CONVINCED!**

WENDY (O.S.)

Your guy, the dead kid? Jonah.
Aickman's assistant. And a *medium*.

ARTICLE:

**With the help of a Boy Medium,
Aickman holds weekly seances...
"Rare manifestations of
ectoplasm..."**

WENDY (O.S.)

Supposedly they contacted the dead through Jonah - and people came to have little chats with their dead hubby or wife or to find out where Auntie Mame hid the family jewels.

More clippings slide over the screen, funerary announcements in the name of R. Aickman, Funeral Director and Mortician. And small listings in the local events pages of Spiritualist Evenings held at the Aickman Mortuary and Funeral Home.

110B INT. PARLOR - EVENING

110B

Back with them:

WENDY

He claims he discovered how to 'amplify' seances, not just contact the dead. He made things appear.

MATT

What things?

WENDY

Ectoplasm.

MATT

Ectoplasm? What's that?

108B INT. BASEMENT LIBRARY STACKS - DAY

108B

A row of dusty volumes marked on the spine: Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research. She pulls down the volumes from 1927. Wendy reads from her notes:

WENDY (O.S.)

"A mysterious protoplasmic substance streaming out of the body of mediums.' Check this out -

Books stacked around her; She pores through the dusty volumes - staring at old gray photos, making copious notes. See horrific spirit photographs like the ones from the attic.

WENDY

(quoting again)

- "photographs of ectoplasm often show a gelatinous material oozing from all the natural orifices of the medium; from mouth, ears, nose, eyes, and even the lower orifices, and sometimes from the top of the head, the breasts or fingertips."

110C INT. PARLOR:

110C

She points to the photos they found in the attic: the ectoplasm coming from Jonah.

WENDY

People came from all over and were convinced. Harvard professors and other big shots. Aickman and Jonah's seances were famous.

MATT

So do we know what became of them?

WENDY

OK. Now it gets weirder.

Fill the screen with Microfilm of old newspaper:

HEADLINE:
SEANCE OF DEATH! SIX DEAD; ONE MISSING

WENDY (O.S.)
 There was a seance. Led by Aickman with Jonah as the Medium. Aickman and all five sitters were found dead. Cause of death not clear.

Glimpse fragments and sentences from the article:

ARTICLE:
...bodies scorched but no sign of fire...spontaneous combustion?
Contorted faces...Boy Missing...

MATT (O.S.)
 Jonah? Did he kill them?

WENDY (O.S.)
 Nobody knows. No sign of him. Vanished. Missing. And never seen again.

MATT (O.S.)
 Till now.

WENDY (O.S.)
 Here's the weirdest part of all.

Now papers blur past - some from decades later -

HEADLINE:
ROAD EXTENSION SCANDAL

SUB-HEAD:
WHERE ARE THE BODIES?

WENDY (O.S.)
 Thirty years later - in the '50s, when they expanded the highway, they did a detour through the county cemetery -

MATT (O.S.)
 We've been on it a million times on the way to the hospital.

Hear all this while seeing bits and pieces of the microfilms:

ARTICLE:

Excavations to link the town with the Turnpike reveal shocking... Coffins filled with sand bags and stones... Over one hundred bodies unaccounted for... Possible links with mysterious death of local mortician thirty years ago...

WENDY (O.S.)

Right. But when they tried to re-locate some of the old plots they found something odd. Or didn't find.

MATT (O.S.)

What?

WENDY (O.S.)

More than a hundred bodies that were supposed to be there? Weren't. Coffins just filled with rocks.

END MONTAGE

110D INT. BACK IN THE PARLOR:

110D

Where the two sit sifting through xeroxes, photos, off-prints, and a mystery too immense for them to unravel:

WENDY

Someone jacked the bodies.

MATT

Aickman? Jonah?

WENDY

Maybe. But why?

MATT

I have no idea. But I know someone who might.

111 EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

111

A very old, well maintained 1966 Mercedes Benz pulls up in front of the house. Popescu gets out.

112 INT. THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER

112

Popescu and the teens sit at the table with a candle and cups of tea. Popescu's looking through Aickman's papers filled with diagrams and incantations - and the seance photographs.

POPESCU

Remarkable.

WENDY

You don't think it's real do you?

POPESCU

I've seen plenty of fakes. And I've seen the real thing. Once. In Paris. Most horrible thing I've ever seen. Now... this.

He holds up the strangest of the photos. Caught in the glare of a flash an eerie Black and White moment -

- the table sitters with varying degrees of shock and horror on their face - as what looks vaguely like an out-of-focus jelly-fish made of liver extrudes from Jonah's face.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

He must have been a very powerful medium.

Wendy pushes the box towards him for Popescu to inspect. He looks at the contents of the box. And recoils. He pulls out some of the photos, shaking his head in sorrow.

He picks up several of the delicate 'moths' from the box. Pieces of skin. He holds them over the candle - and drops them into the flame - At the instant the things burn we -

113 INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

113

Mary's not asleep. She's up, playing with her doll house and dolls. Talking aloud, playing all the parts of various dolls.

MARY/FEMALE DOLL

Well you said so, but you lied!

MARY/MALE DOLL

No I didn't!

MARY/FEMALE DOLL

Oh yes you did, you said you would!

While she's moving the dolls around in their house, we see through it and out the little doll window to the walls behind Mary where: Suddenly we can see someone standing there behind her - naked, and covered in Aickman's inscriptions and their head is flickering horribly. But Mary doesn't notice.

112B BACK DOWNSTAIRS:

112B

The little things burning in the candle trail a grey line of smoke. Popescu leans over, and with a wave of his hand draws the smoke into his nostrils - smelling it -

MATT

What are you doing?

POPESCU

Being sure. And now I am.

MATT

What are they?

POPESCU

Eyelids. Human eyelids.

WENDY

You could tell by the way they smelled?

POPESCU

Burning. Yes. And don't ask why I know that smell.

WENDY

What are they for?

POPESCU

Necromancy. Corpse bothering. A loathsome form of magic. Seeking power through the control of the dead via relics of their bodies.

MATT

Why eyelids?

POPESCU

Good question. To make them ever watchful? Are they the guardians of this house - or of his secrets? Maybe. But either way, somewhere there are bodies that belong to these people. And he used them.

(MORE)

POPESCU (CONT'D)

I think ultimately Aickman meant to enhance Jonah's powers.

WENDY

He 'amplified' his seances.

POPESCU

Somehow he used the dead, yes, as an amplifier. Perhaps buried outside the house. Perhaps still in the cemetery.

WENDY

Not in the cemetery.

She pulls out the clipping about all the empty coffins. He scans it. Then gets up - and begins to move about the room.

POPESCU

I don't know. But -

His eyes search the place. Nothing. Though something out of the corner of his eyes.

He doesn't turn his head - but attends to it - sees it - and we do too - It's Jonah.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

They're not here. But him...

He taps on the photo of Jonah.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

He's here. He's the one who's been trying to reach you. I can feel it. I even saw him for a moment there.

Both kids snap their heads around, "looking" for Jonah.

MATT

Why is he still here?

POPESCU

Hard to say. If he committed a terrible act he might be trapped-

WENDY

-at the scene of the crime.

POPESCU

Crime? Who knows? Sometimes the most evil actions are committed in the very name of the good. Did Aickman perform necromancy?

(MORE)

POPESCU (CONT'D)

Perhaps. But whatever blasphemy he may have wrought, Mr. Aickman was after the greatest Good of all.

MARY

What good?

POPESCU

To prove to a world sunk in doubt that there is light beyond the dark, life beyond the grave, and a benevolent God at the heart of the universe... Pray with me. For those that died here. And for the boy, too...

He reaches out his hands to the young people across the table - they all join hands to pray - But the INSTANT they do - **once again it's like some infernal circuit completed** - Matt's eyes widen and we go shooting into his eyes and back out to what he sees:

He sees not here and now - but there and then - this same spot - 60 years ago - during the seance -

AND WE ARE:

53B INT. THE PARLOR - **BACK IN 1927**

53B

...right back to the original seance. Right where we left it:

The table begins to tremble beneath their fingers - the legs rattling against the floor.

All the sitters eyes now on Jonah who clamps his eyes shut. Beads of sweat rise from every pore on his face. Tiny bumps all over his skin.

Then as a low unearthly moan rises from the depths of his belly, his face grimaces - the skin stretches tight - as if there were a tremendous wind bearing down upon him - except there is no wind.

As Jonah shakes, and shudders convulsively, another sound rises from within him - it begins as a moan - a wet moan - with a kind of slurping shucking sound as if something were literally rising from some internal sea within him.

With a sucking gasp, Jonah's mouth opens suddenly - wide - wider - impossibly wide - as if his face must rip in half.

Suddenly a CHOKING SOUND from the boy - as something finally begins to emerge from his mouth...

The ECTOPLASM.

We only see it for briefest flashes: This is not an airy substance of light and spirit. More like an infernal combination of dusty smoke and crumbling rotted meat - as if smoke were a kind of flesh.

SPIN AND FLASH RAPIDLY BETWEEN:

The ectoplasm emerging from the boy's mouth and nose, and even pouring like living tears from his eyes and the horrified faces of the sitters staring at Jonah.

Suddenly their horror seems to rise - even Aickman stares at us - at JONAH - as if something worse than anticipated were happening - something monstrous emerging from him - *and then in an instant something unseen - Flesh? Light? Fire? - hurls Aickman and the sitters back and to the ground.*

112C BACK IN THE PRESENT:

112C

In the parlor - Popescu and Wendy are raising their heads at the end of Popescu's prayer - while still holding each other's and Matt's hands. Suddenly they hear an eerie GROAN. It's come from Matt. They turn to him -

He is gagging as if something were rising in his throat - and though there are no open windows they both suddenly feel a strong cold wind blow through the room.

WENDY

Matt? Was it?

Popescu sees that Matt's in a kind of trance and releases his hand. Wendy still holds the other.

POPESCU

Let go of his hand -

She tries but in his trance Matt is squeezing her hand tighter and tighter.

WENDY

I can't!

Popescu reaches out and with all the strength he has pulls her hand free from Matt's. As soon as their hands are separated Matt gasps and falls face first down on the table.

SARA (O.S.)

What is going on here?!

Sara - home from work - has walked right into this odd scene.

SARA (CONT'D)

What happened to Matt? Who are you?
What are you doing in my house?

Popescu checks Matt's pulse and temperature.

POPESCU

He's alright. I think he fainted.
Let's get him to the couch.

They talk as they carry a woozy Matt to the nearby sofa.

SARA

Are you a doctor?

POPESCU

No.

He hands her his card. She glances at it and drops it into her coat pocket.

SARA

A priest?

WENDY

We asked for his help -

POPESCU

We met at the hospital. I'm
receiving treatment there.

SARA

What are you doing here this time
of night? What happened to Matt?

Sara leans over Matt, as he comes to, waving her away.

MATT

I- I'm alright.

POPESCU

He called me. For advice. It's hard
to explain.

SARA

Try.

POPESCU

I believe there is something evil
in this house. Something no longer
living. But not passed over.

(MORE)

POPESCU (CONT'D)

And it wants your son. That's a very dangerous situation for someone who is potentially close to death -

SARA

He is not -

POPESCU

- I am as hopeful as you. But tell me - have you not felt something strange here?

Of course she has. But can't admit it. Or won't.

SARA

I have no idea what you're talking about. I appreciate your trying to help my son but I think it's best if we leave that to the doctors.

POPESCU

Of course. But please. If you ever...need any help.

SARA

I'm sure we won't need your help. And if I do - I'll call Doctor Brooks.

POPESCU

Yes, of course.

113B INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

113B

As Mary plays with her dolls we see a *shape* behind her - moving. She doesn't see it. One of the inscribed dead looms over Mary.

Staring down over the top of the doll house. Mary senses the presence and slowly, slowly, looks up...

114 INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

114

As Sara is coming up the stairs, Mary comes running out of her room - SCREAMING.

She runs like a straight into Sara - nearly knocking her down. Sara quiets Mary down.

SARA
It was just a bad dream, honey.
That's all it was.

MARY
What does he want?

SARA
Who?

MARY
The ugly man.

SARA
Just a monster in your dream.

MARY
He had tattoos. And I wasn't
sleeping. I was playing with my
dolls.

Sara leads her back into her bedroom.

SARA
There's no one here. It was just a
bad dream.

Sara tucks her into bed and reaches for the light.

MARY
No Mommy. Please. Leave it on.

SARA
Alright. If you're a good girl and
go back to sleep.

She shuts the door and doesn't hear Mary muttering.

MARY
But I wasn't asleep.

And as she pulls the cover around her we drift away out the
window into the summer night - pulling back until we are:

115 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

115

A moonless night. The house a dark shadow in a sea of deeper
darkness. With one light still shining - from Mary's room.

SUPER: August 22nd. Two nights later. 1:00 A.M.

Now we float back towards the house - but not to Mary's now continuously lit window but to the dark window of...

116 INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

116

Where Sara's asleep. She shifts in her sleep. Perhaps distantly aware of the strange sound in her bedroom: FOOTSTEPS. Pacing. Back and forth in front of the bed.

Sara's eyes snap awake. She hears the FOOTSTEPS. She raises her head - can't see anything in the room. But can distinctly hear FOOTSTEPS in the room. Marching back and forth in front of her bed.

SARA

Peter?

No reply. But suddenly the footsteps stop - right next to where she's lying.

SARA (CONT'D)

Matt?

She reaches out a hand slowly - to light the bedside lamp - and when she does for a flash it illuminates neither her husband nor her son but:

The same inscribed ghost who was in Mary's room. His hideous face just an inch from her face as it whispers in a foul hissing voice:

DEAD MAN

Do... you... know... what... they
did ... to.. us?

Sara screams, leaps out of bed and turns the overhead light on. The room is empty.

117 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

117

In the still dark and moonless light there are now two lit windows.

SUPER: August 23rd. The next night. 1:00 AM

118 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

118

Wendy's asleep. As she tosses and turns we hear strange sounds in the darkness - as if cages were opening - and birds were flying out of the cages and around the room - though in the darkness we can't see it. It sounds as if they are flapping all around her, wilder and wilder.

Suddenly with a THWACK it sounds like one of the birds smashed against the window next to the bed.

Wendy wakes and looks around in the darkness, heart pounding. She throws her arm out of the covers and lights the lamp beside her bed. This lights her bed - and stops the sound of flapping wings - but the corners of the room are still dark.

No birds sounds now. Just a low heavy rasping breathing...

And she senses: the room is not empty. Someone is there in the shadows, staring at her.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Matt? What are you doing? What do you want?

No reply. She just sees one of the eyes in the dark, staring at her. For a second it seems as if we can see the frozen mist from someone's breath.

Then a mouth opens - and a small faint croak. Barely human. Wholly unintelligible. Wendy tilts the lamp shade towards that corner of the room -

- and for a second illuminates a corner where not Matt - but a horribly burned and scared Jonah crouches staring at her!

She leaps out of bed and turns the full room light on. Then looks around. The room is empty. No Matt. No Jonah. Just her.

119 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

119

Lights on now from the basement to the upper floor. Against the big dark sky the house seems like a doll house. Transparent and vulnerable - visible to the invisible.

Super: August 23rd 1:30 a.m.

Hear, then we see, Peter's car creeping slowly, overly cautiously down the street, the way some drunks drive.

The car has trouble finding the curb. And given his mumbling and awkward door closing - we can smell the alcohol on him. He looks up at the house all lit up. Checks his watch.

PETER

Now I see why I hadda sell my
Goddamn truck.

120 INT. THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER

120

Peter comes into the house - masks his drunken clumsiness beneath belligerence which only makes him seem drunker.

He storms down and back up the stairs. See that each of the kids is sleeping with the light on. He stands on the landing of the stairs and yells:

PETER

Every body in this Goddamn house is
sleeping with the light on. And I
want to know why.

They all peep from their rooms. And look at each other. But even more at the frightening spectacle of their drunk and rageful father and husband.

PETER (CONT'D)

Why do you all keep the lights on?

They all look at each other - who's gonna say something?

PETER (CONT'D)

I don't care what little games you
all are playing -

He grabs a footstool - and goes room to room - with a handkerchief around his hand - unscrewing the light bulbs, ignoring everyone's pleas for him to stop.

PETER (CONT'D)

There!

Peter even grabs the night lights from the little one's beds. Mary is trembling and crying - Billy's sniffing and just as scared. Sara seems speechless with rage.

PETER (CONT'D)

You're all too old to be sleeping
with night lights.

Peter storms out. We hear him outside: SMASHING the bulbs in the trash cans. Sara storms out after him.

Wendy comforts the younger children. The house is now truly dark - without a light bulb left in the bedrooms. She looks out a window and sees Sara confronting Peter outside - She turns the kids away and leads them upstairs.

121 EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

121

Peter tosses the last of the bulbs in the garbage can.

SARA

That was a cruel and childish thing to do. All you've done is scare everyone in this house.

PETER

Yeah, what scares me is trying to pay for two sets of bills every month.

SARA

Stop it. This isn't about any of that anymore. That's it.

PETER

What?

SARA

That was it right there.

PETER

What?

SARA

Your second chance. You asked a long time ago - for a second chance. And I said, if you ever came home drunk and violent and scaring or hurting me or the children again, that was it. I should've known then. How weak you are. That you'd fold at the worst possible time.

He opens his mouth as if to begin to defend or explain.

SARA (CONT'D)

Don't. This is it, Peter. This is where you step up to the plate. Or you don't. And you didn't. Now I will not let you hurt this family. Not again. Is that clear?

Peter slams the door of his little car. His big frame almost too big to fit in it. Starts it up. And pulls out. Sara, as sad as she is angry, watches Peter pull out of the driveway, headed home. With no idea if he's coming back.

122 INT. THE HOUSE - LATER 122

All the lights are off. For the first time in many nights. And we see why:

123 INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 123

ANGLES ON:

The ceiling fixture. The bedside lamp. No bulbs in either.

124 INTS. THE OTHER TWO BEDROOMS - SAME TIME 124

In Wendy's room. And down in Matt's. No bulbs in any of the fixtures. Thanks to Peter's rage there's not a single bulb in the house. Just empty sockets, and inextinguishable darkness. Not a good feeling.

And now a sound. A KNOCKING. At first as if at the door downstairs. And then at the windows upstairs. And downstairs.

Soon - they are all awake. All listening to the insistent, and incessantly moving - KNOCKING.

And then. Suddenly. In all of those rooms. As well as the two little ones' bedrooms where the bulbs were also removed. Lights FLASH ON. And OFF. ON. AND OFF. From all the lights where there are no bulbs. Light. And off.

SARA

What in the name of God...

Wendy comes out of her room. Matt weakly walks up the stairs. They all end up huddled with Sara on her bed - as the lights go on and off. They all come together. Then all the lights go out. **Total blackness.** And silence.

125 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY 125

Sara's alone on the phone. She looks as if she hasn't slept. She hasn't. None of them have. She's on hold -

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

(on phone)

I'm sorry Dr. Brooks's on rounds
this afternoon. Can I take a
message?

SARA

No - no - it's- nothing. Thanks.

She puts down the phone and just stares. Lost. Who can she call? Who would believe? Or have any idea? She grabs her wallet and looks hurriedly through it- whatever she's looking for isn't there. She tries the purse. Nope. Then she steps into the hallway where her coat is hanging and reaches into the pocket and pulls out a card.

Fr. Popescu's card that he gave her the night he was there.

126 EXT. THE HOUSE - EVENING

126

An old car parks in front. Out steps the rather tiny old man.

Super: August 24th 9:00 PM.

From the front window, Sara watches Popescu come up the walkway. As he walks up the path he's dwarfed by the dark old house. He stops on the threshold and visibly shudders.

From Sara's POV he looks tiny. Even smaller than last time she saw him. She can't help but wonder - this is the man who's going to save them? She opens the door for him.

SARA

I'm so sorry. I didn't know who
else to call. Are you sure you're
feeling up to this?

POPESCU

(with a twinkle)

Let's put it this way. I'm in
exactly the right state of being
to traffic with ghosts.

127 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

127

He puts down his little black bag. And opens it. Takes out his Bible. And what appears to be a cross.

SARA

You're not actually a priest
anymore. Are you?

POPESCU

There's what I am. And then there's what I am permitted officially to do.

He does something odd with his 'cross' - he pulls it apart. It's actually two metal bars. Magnets.

SARA

What is that?

POPESCU

Iron magnets. One of the few constants in human thought. From Ancient Babylon to the most modern construction - people have always know Iron has special properties. They may not know why. Or even why they still use it. But the truth is Iron defends from Evil. And the iron magnet can detect it. It's no accident prisons have iron bars. Not merely to contain the body but the evil that may lurk within it.

Without waiting for Sara he begins moving about the house. Looking around.

SARA

What are you looking for?

POPESCU

Where he died. Sometimes - when a death is violent - or filled with anger, fear, or any strong emotion - it's as if the spirit doesn't pass on - but moves instantly into the nearest body, the house itself. It's why we cover mirrors and open window shades in the house of the dead - to help them find their way out. A house where a soul is trapped is not so much haunted, as *possessed*.

Moving his magnets near the walls - when he thinks he might feel something. He walks towards the basement stairs.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

What's down here?

SARA

Matt's bedroom. Where they used to -

POPESCU
Keep the children upstairs.

128 INT. THE BASEMENT STAIRS - A BEAT LATER

128

Sara leads Popescu down. Popescu stops. Moves his magnets. Then carries on, into Matt's bedroom. Matt lies weakly on his bed. Popescu stares at him - no not at him - but next to him.

Popescu's POV: Jonah - blackened and frightened looking - stands over Matt - threatening or protecting? We cannot tell.

POPESCU
Yes. He's here. Do you see him
Matt?

Matt nods weakly. He's very ill.

SARA
I don't see anything.

POPESCU
Good. You're strong. Healthy. You
shouldn't see.

SARA
This is turning my world upside
down.

POPESCU
We live in a small corner of a vast
spiritual universe, the night sky
is not filled merely with the light
of dead stars...
(straight at Matt)
...but with the active presence of
a Divine spirit. Faith is the
knowledge of things unseen. But
it's also knowing - deep in your
heart - that even the worst
experiences of your life have
meaning and Divine purpose - and
having the courage to face them.

Suddenly - the GRINDING OF THE GEARS AND CLANGING CHAINS of
the elevator from up above. Popescu walks slowly - magnets
out front - towards the open elevator doors - through which
he can see the crematory oven.

POPESCU (CONT'D)
So that's where you are trapped.
Don't worry.
(MORE)

POPESCU (CONT'D)

Whatever you have done we are not
here to punish you. That is not our
place. Only to free you. Like a
bird caught in a room---

Suddenly the open elevator near Popescu SMASHES down in front
of him, then suddenly lifts back up, faster than it should be
capable of - back up a floor - then SMASHES down again.

MATT

(weakly)

He doesn't want to leave.

Matt looks bad. Paler. Less there. More like Popescu. One
foot in the grave. Popescu meanwhile can't get at the oven.

POPESCU

There must be another way.

129 INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

129

The children cower together on Sara's bed - fingers in ears
from the noise of the elevator. And not just the elevator -
the whole house seems to be shaking. Huge pounding noises
coming from inside the walls.

130 EXT. THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER

130

Sara follows Popescu as he feels his way with his hands along
the base of the house.

POPESCU

There has to be another way to
empty it.

Even outside you can hear the NOISE of the elevator - moving
up and down in the house... As Popescu makes his way around
the outside - searching with his hands. Then Popescu stops.

He's found a small metal door about the size of a vent rusted
shut and over grown with the vine that grows on that side of
the house.

POPESCU

Help me.

His old hands aren't strong enough. But with Sara's help they
rip away the vine and pull the little door open.

POPESCU

He's here.

Inside we see a small pile of dust, a portion of skull, and other bone bits. Jonah's remains.

129B INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 129B

Wendy and the little ones huddle together on the bed as the bedroom door swings open and shut SLAMMING each time as if of its own accord. The whole house shakes with the BOOMING sound of the elevator slamming again and again.

It feels like the entire house is about to collapse around them - suddenly it's too much and Mary begins to SCREAM

MARY

Make it stop! Make it stop!

130B EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 130B

Popescu bows his head and murmurs a prayer for the dead in Latin. As he does the elevator POUNDS TWICE AS LOUD, like it was angrily and malevolently alive.

Starting to tremble, Popescu reaches behind him for his black bag. And from within it pulls out a white silk prayer shawl.

Wiping his brow with the back of his shaking hand Popescu gently sweeps Jonah's last remains and folds them into the silk. He murmurs a last prayer and as he does - the elevator suddenly stops.

The shaking and pounding noises stop. The whole house is suddenly still and quiet. Popescu has won the battle, but he looks as though he won't live through the night, he is spent.

129C INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 129C

Deafening silence. Wendy and the little ones on the bed. Cautiously take their fingers from their ears - and adjust to the quiet. She looks around. Takes a breath. The place undeniably feels different.

WENDY

I think...it's over.

131 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT 131

At his open car, Sara hands Popescu the silken bundle with Jonah's remains in it, and he puts them gently on the seat.

SARA
Will Matt be alright now?

POPESCU
(haltingly)
The house should be quiet now and at peace. But I must warn you... sometimes for a day or so after a spirit has been removed from a house.... there are strange events - like aftershocks from an earthquake. If anything.... happens, don't be alarmed. They will pass... within a day or two at the most.

SARA
Thank you, thank you for everything.

POPESCU
(wry)
I'd like to say it was my... pleasure but...

Sara smiles, realizing she likes this old man, a lot.

SARA
Are you okay to drive?

Popescu gathers what's left of his strength, and waves off her concern.

132 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

132

POPESCU O.S.
We're all in God's hands.

Matt's whole body silently convulses. Tears flow down his worn cheeks. He senses something and looks up and behind him - at the high window which looks out at the street above.

In the window:

Jonah - OUTSIDE - he looks not scary - not angry - sad. He's shaking his head. Worried.

133 INT. NEW YORK HOUSE BASEMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

133

Home from work, a chagrined Peter cleans up the mess he made the night when he was drunk down here and playing the guitar.

He puts the battered Fender guitar - once the repository of his Big Dreams - back on its stand.

Sweeps broken glass and dirt into a can. And rights a fallen shelf unit - replacing the old LPs and boxes of cassette tapes that he knocked to the floor.

His eye catches on one of the tapes, labelled 'Matt at Camp'. He pulls out the tape and slots it into a dusty cassette player and hits play. At first nothing - then the slightly distorted wavery SOUND OF HIS SON'S VOICE - from eons ago -

MATT

(12 years old on tape)

...only 5 more sleeps till Parents' Day. I can't wait. I have a lot to show you, Dad. You need to see how I shoot the bow and arrow. And how far I can swim. And they're having a Father and Sons race - it's gonna be great - I bet you and me beat all the others.

(teasing)

If you do your job, of course.
Okay, I better go. Bye, dad.

Peter lets the sound of his innocent son's voice wash over him - as if washing all the fear and weakness out of him. He wipes tears from his eyes.

132B INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

132B

In the darkness we can see Matt's form - but not make out any details. He wakes up with a low groan. As he rises in the dim light we can see a bit better - he looks odd - something on his face - he raised his hand - something covering his hand.

134 BACK UPSTAIRS:

134

Sara, Wendy and the Kids gathered in Sara's room.

SARA

Whatever was here - is gone. We've all had some bad nights, but it's over. And now we can get ba-

She's interrupted by ROUGH RAGGED SCREAMING from downstairs.

135 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - A BEAT LATER

135

Sara runs in, finds Matt standing in the darkness screaming.

MATT

It hurts! Oh God it hurts!

She flips on the light and we see: Matt is completely covered in Aickman's inscriptions. Tiny lines of blood everywhere -

SARA

What have you done to yourself!?

MATT

I didn't! I didn't!

136 EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

136

Sara stands anxiously at the door way of her house. Illuminated by the flashing lights from the ambulance.

SARA

It's okay, it's okay. Everything's gonna be okay.

One paramedic opens the back door while another holds Matt wrapped in a triage bandage-blanket already soaking through with all the lines of blood - while a third injects him with something to stop the pain and calm him down.

Peter pulls up and runs out of his car to Sara. As they're about to close the door, Matt turns and looks at his parents:

MATT

Doesn't matter. Now that I'm out of the house? It'll be after you.

The ambulance closes on Matt. He's gone. Sara turns to Wendy -

SARA

We'll be back as soon as we can. And then we're getting out of here.

Sara finally acknowledges Peter's presence.

PETER

Oh God Sara - I'm so sorry. If only I'd been here -

Looking at him closely, Sara can tell Peter is sober and resolved. That he made his choice.

SARA

You're here now. That's what counts.

She takes his hand and climbs in the car with Peter and they take after the ambulance.

137 INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

137

Matt zoning in and out of consciousness. Two paramedics gently peeling back the blanket to look at his skin.

PARAMEDIC 1

How did he do that to himself?

See the sinuous lines of the weird engraved words but notice they're not cut from the outside - but seem raised as if...

PARAMEDIC 2

I dunno it looks more like it was scraped - from the inside out...

138 INT. SARA'S BEDROOM - LATER

138

Wendy looks in on the kids. They're quiet, if traumatized. Billy's on the bed. Playing with the Krystal Ball. Mary holds a doll, having a whispered conversation with it.

Wendy has a perfect apple in hand. She takes a bite - but almost instantly chokes. The apple is completely rotten.

139 INT. THE KITCHEN - A BEAT LATER

139

Wendy runs into the kitchen - but as she enters is hit by a wall of smell. She gags. Something horribly rotten - she glances round the kitchen and sees:

The flowers which a little while ago were bright are now past dead. The fruit bowl - at first looks fine - but literally before her eyes the fruit decays into a festering pulp.

She opens the refrigerator. The light is off. It's not cold. Everything inside's covered in mold. She slams the door.

140 INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

140

Mary whispers with her doll. We hear only bits of it.

MARY
(to her doll)
Really? They're all here?

Though she's playing - there is nothing 'playful' about it -
Something eerie about her intense, one sided conversation.

141 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 141

Between the door to that bedroom and the one to hers. See
into her bedroom. A pile of toys. Suddenly the pile stirs.
And we hear a little bell tinkle.

ANGLE ON:

A stuffed animal with a tiny bell round its neck - The
really worn and almost shapeless one with the shoe button eye
hanging by a string. Did it just move? Or was that just the
wind?

140B INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM 140B

Billy absorbed in his Krystal Ball. Staring into the little
window at the purple waters inside - seeking answers to
whispered questions. Mary looks up from her doll at the door
way - in time to see:

That worn old stuffed animal sits on the floor in front of
the door. She looks back down at her doll then hears the
tinkling bell. When she looks up, the stuffed animal is gone.

Mary gets up and goes to the door and looks down the hall.

There's the little thing standing at the top of the stairs -
facing her - as if looking right at Mary whose eyes widen at
what seems to her wonderful magic.

Mary runs down the hall after it. Billy pays no attention -
too absorbed in his oracle.

142 INT. HALLWAY 142

Mary stands in the little hallway. Looks for the stuffed
animal. Can't see it in either direction. But she hears the
little bell. Then she sees it at the bottom of the stairs.

143 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS 143

Mary at the top of the stairs headed down to follow it.
Thinking what a wonderful game this is...

144 INT. THE BASEMENT STAIRS - A BEAT LATER 144

Mary gets to the stairs too late to see the doll - but she
can hear its bell disappearing into the darkness of what was
Matt's bedroom, and is now more like the black hole of
Calcutta. Or just a black hole. The cave of all nightmares.

Mary hesitates but only for a second - then giggles nervously
and trundles down the stairs - and quickly disappears after
it into the darkness at the bottom of the stairs.

145 INT. THE KITCHEN 145

Wendy pulls the rotted food out of the fridge and shelves.
But it seems never ending. A first glance shows a normal loaf
of bread so she turns to the rotted tomatoes beside it. But
when she looks back at the bread it is now green with mold.

She nearly gags as she stuff the last of the reeking rotted
food into two bulging garbage bags.

146 INT. SARA AND PETER'S BEDROOM 146

Billy's alone nervously playing with the Krystal Ball. He's
clutching it fiercely. Eyes shut -

BILLY

Is Mattie gonna be alright?

He shakes the ball then looks intently -

147 ANGLE INSIDE THE KRYSTAL BALL: 147

From the liquid depths the oracle spins - and rises:

KRYSTAL BALL

"Never again"

Billy shakes it again - not wanting it to be true -

BILLY

Is he gonna die?

KRYSTAL BALL
 "The oracle has spoken"

He shakes it again. Determined to get the answer he wants.

FILL THE SCREEN:

With the little plastic window and the churning sea of fluid beneath it as the plastic oracle comes spinning up towards us filling the screen:

But the side that floats up doesn't hold any of the proverbial phrases. Instead it is covered in the strange words and signs that we recognize as the ones Aickman carved onto dead bodies:

Mortuum Suspiria Tenebrum

Billy's startled and shakes it again and again - but now every one of the twenty sides holds only words in that creepy Necromantic language!

Billy hurls the ball across the room where it smashes leaving purple dye streaming down the wall.

148 INT. POPESCU'S CAR - SAME TIME

148

He grips the steering wheel and squints against the glare of on coming headlights which as he passes them pass over the white silk bundle behind him on the back seat.

Popescu looks bad. Cold sweat. Having trouble focusing. And as he does - images coming to him:

He's blinking - and seeing the lights from opposing traffic going by - and seeing eyes without eye-lids, and lids with out any eyes - open and shut - open and shut.

POPESCU
 Of course. Why didn't I see? He removed their eyelids. Not to uncover their eyes. But to cover ours... So that no one would ever see that they were there...

Behind him - we hear a sound of rustling silk. Something rises from the back seat... Popescu looks up in the rear view mirror - his eyes transfixed by the sight:

The white silk begins to swirl and rise as if lifted from within by some materializing *thing* -

- Popescu staring into the rear view mirror doesn't see that he is drifting into the other lane into the oncoming traffic -

- He tears his eyes away from the mirror to see headlights coming straight at him!

He swerves just in time off the road - plowing into a road sign. The car comes to a halt. Popescu breathless but unhurt.

149 EXT. THE SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

149

He looks back up into the rear view mirror and sees: JONAH in the back seat!

Popescu slowly turns around - dreading what he will see in the back seat - Jonah - looks back at him. Their eyes lock - Popescu's eyes widen - his mouth opens and we

CUT TO:

53C INT. PARLOUR - 1927 - NIGHT

53C

Right back where we were.

Jonah raises his head. He looks around in horror - the room has changed - is still changing - the walls themselves have a crumbly ectoplasmic appearance, bits of it crumble, revealing cracks and holes through which we see not the outside - but some infinite black space -

Jonah reels back and sees that he is the only one alive. The sitters all lie on the floor in frozen dead rictus of terror.

He hears a GROAN. It's Aickman. He lies on the floor - he's not quite dead. And he's trying to speak.

Jonah brings his face close to the dying man - can barely hear what Aickman is saying from his hideously shredded lips - just elusive fragments -

AICKMAN

Get out. They'll be after you now.

Jonah looks up just as the table where he had been sitting begins shaking again - suddenly the shaking becomes wilder and the table hurls itself straight at Jonah.

He rolls out of the way. Kneels on the floor - looks down and for a second sees: the floor itself seems to be a sea of angry dead faces trying to thrust up at him -

He reels back and up to his feet - runs out of the room and into the photo salon.

For a second all is quiet but then we hear WHISPERING and MOANING - growing - and Jonah looks around at all the funerary portraits on the walls:

In each photo - the dead seem to come alive their faces now covered in Aickman's engravings - they SCREAM at Jonah from within their frames -

Jonah runs for the front door but it SLAMS in his face. And no amount of force will open it.

He turns and runs up the stairs followed by the sound of BANGING as every door in the house swings open and slams shut - open and shut - again and again - louder and LOUDER - making it impossible for him to enter or exit any room -

Where can he go? Where can he hide from the madness all around him?

We can't tell what is real and what may be his terrified mind - but it seems that every part of the house has come alive - and either physically threatens him - or seems itself to be filled with angry accusing faces and hands -

And then he sees - one door open - not swinging open and shut - just open. It's the elevator door. It seems dark and safe and quiet in there - The shaking sobbing boy crawls into the dark womb of the elevator.

And as he does - for a second the whole house goes quiet - no sound except the heavy breathing and sobbing of Jonah.

Suddenly the metal elevator door slams shut. And with a grinding groan we hear the elevator begin to descend.

Hear Jonah's pounding fists on the metal walls. And the howling and wailing and pounding of the whole house resumes as if an angry mob demanding satisfaction...

Down in the embalming room we stare at the closed door of the furnace into which the elevator descends.

We can hear the thudding of Jonah pounding from within the elevator as it descends and lands down here in the basement.

Suddenly -we see the lever of the furnace move by itself - and we see the FLASH OF FLAME as the fire ignites in the furnace and we hear Jonah's SCREAMS muffled yet deepened by the enclosure of oven and elevator.

And as the boy burns all other sounds fall away - everything grows silent except the terrible muffled screams of the burning boy.

UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

As the boy downstairs dies - the room begins to return to normal - the walls restore - the ectoplasmic sheen and smoke - begins to dissipate - dissolve - into just smoke - which with a blast of wind from nowhere - disappears - leaving only the empty room - the overturned table - and the corpses of Aickman and the five seance sitters.

150 EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT 150

Popescu sits in the car, tears stream from his eyes. He rolls down the window and lets the wind blow open the silk and lift a thousand particles that once were Jonah into the air.

151 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 151

The room is empty. But we can hear the shower running.

152 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 152

Wendy sobs in the shower trying to wash the rot reek off her.

153 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT 153

Popescu in a phone booth by the side of the road. The old man is weak and has to hold himself up in the booth. He finishes dialing a number - which rings and rings and rings...

154 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 154

In the kitchen the phone rings. And rings.

152B INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME 152B

As Wendy turns the shower off the curtain itself sways oddly - moves with ripples like the wing of a manta ray -

-then suddenly - as if it were alive and possessed of a mind of its own - the curtain wraps around Wendy -

For a mad second it's almost comic - as if she were just tripped up in her shower curtain - but the wet white plastic seals tighter and tighter around her - now thrusting itself down her mouth when she opens it to scream - choking her -

155 INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME 155

The answering machine sits on the counter beside a vase of bright flowers. It finally kicks in -

ANSWERING MACHINE

You've reached the Campbells.
Please leave your message at the
beep.

156 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT 156

Popescu in the phone booth by the side of the turnpike.

POPESCU

(weak, halting)

I've made a terrible mistake. The missing bodies - they're there. That was his amplifier; their spirits. But it backfired. All those souls in torment... The boy wasn't evil. *His* spirit... held them all back. A finger... in the dike. And I removed him. You must get out, now!

152C INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 152C

Wendy rips at the curtain - shredding it - tearing it - till she's free - gulping air on the cold tile floor.

157 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - A BEAT LATER 157

Wendy pulls clothes on when she hears SCREAMING and runs to the window and looks down. She can't see anything. But it seems to be coming from outside.

158 EXT. THE HOUSE - A BEAT LATER 158

Wendy looks around. Where's the scream? Hears it again - it's coming from the basement. She looks to the low windows that look into Matt's room and sees Mary standing on a table pounding on the window.

159 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 159

Wendy runs back in and tears down the stairs to Matt's room.

160 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - A BEAT LATER 160

She looks around the room - no sign of Mary - then she sees her on the other side of the glass - screaming.

Wendy runs to the door - but it won't open. She tries and tries and tries - Billy runs in too - drawn by the screams.

Wendy looks around - for something - anything - finally she grabs the little wooden chair by the table - motions Billy to get back - and swings the chair with all her might at the glass window and SHATTERS it into a million pieces.

WENDY

C'mon Mary - come to me!

Mary runs over - and Wendy reaches over the wood and picks her up and lifts her into the bedroom. They turn to run from the room and she looks back over her shoulder and sees the Oven open - the little toy sitting at the edge of it - as if laughing at her - and behind it - the flames shoot up!

Super: 2:15 a.m.

161 INT. PSYCH CELL - NIGHT 161

Matt sits in bed. Head nodding from sedatives. His skin has cleared. No trace of the markings. But he's in hell now, with real demons. The OTHER PATIENT in his room frozen with the thousand yard stare of heavy anti-psychotic meds.

Matt just covers his face with his hands. Then there's a strange SILENCE as a shadow falls over him - he looks up.

It's JONAH, his head strangely tilted. Matt looks around. Nobody else sees him.

DR. BROOKS (O.S.)

He's sedated and comfortable.

162 INT. DR. BROOKS'S OFFICE - NIGHT 162

The Campbells look worried - but for the first time in a long while they seem together. Peter's holding her hand.

DR. BROOKS

The markings are gone. The skin is
really an extension of the mind.
Just some kind of dermatitis.
Dermographia. Nothing dangerous.

They look relieved. But the Doctor looks grim.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

But we ran his panels. I'm afraid
it's not good news. The treatment
has frankly had no effect.
His cell count is worse than
before.

PETER

There must be something else, some
other treatment -

DR. BROOKS

I wish I could tell you there was.
I believe in fighting till you die.
But not fighting when you're dead.
With these numbers I have no idea
what's keeping him alive.

161B INT. PSYCH CELL - CONTINUOUS

161B

Jonah stands now before Matt. Matt's cell mate stares - but
we can't tell if he sees Jonah too or not.

We cannot tell what Jonah intends. Matt rises woozy. The two
boys approach each other - closer and closer...For a moment -
almost a mirror effect - as the two boys stand in front of
each other - once again - only Jonah's intense GREEN EYES
distinguish them -

NEW ANGLE - MATT'S CELL MATE

suddenly squawks, for reasons unknown.

BACK ON MATT

he looks different - we can't at first say how, maybe its the
slight tilt of *his* head now - then we notice - Jonah's
intense green eyes peer out from Matt's face...

DR. BROOKS (O.S.)

Given his state it might be best
for him just to stay here.

162B INT. DR. BROOKS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

162B

Peter has to practically hold Sara from collapsing.

DR. BROOKS

But then again the choice is yours.
I can connect you with a hospice,
or if you think you can handle it -
bring him home.

PETER

How long do you think he has?

DR. BROOKS

There's really no way of saying for
sure. He could go tonight. Or in a
week. Probably not more.

SARA

Can we see him?

DR. BROOKS

Of course.

161C INT. PSYCH CELL - A BEAT LATER

161C

Dr Brooks and Matt's parents arrive at Matt's door and when
they push it open, they find only the cell mate there.

He's rocking on his bed. Mumbling to himself. We can barely
make it out...

PATIENT

(mumbling tunelessly)
'One bright day in the middle of
the night. Two dead boys got up to
fight...'

Matt's gone. Behind him the curtains flutter in the wide open
window - whose metal bars have been impossibly bent open...

Dr. Brooks grabs a phone from the wall to call security.

DR. BROOKS

(on phone)

He can't have got far. He's
literally dead on his feet.

163 EXT. THE CEMETERY - NIGHT 163

For a boy who should already be dead, Matt/Jonah seems strangely strong as he runs down the road by the cemetery, the surrounding trees bent over in the heavy wind.

Super: 3:20 a.m.

A BANGING SOUND in the night. The garage door - smashed open - bangs open and closed in the increasingly heavier wind.

164 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 164

Wendy hears a slamming sound outside and looks out the window and sees the garage door slamming in the wind.

165 INT. KITCHEN - A BEAT LATER 165

Wendy opens the back door. She sees the garage door swinging in the wind, but in front of it now stands Matt/Jonah holding an axe. She is stunned for a moment.

WENDY

Matt?

Matt just stares blankly at her - then starts running right at her - axe in hand...

She slams the door and throws the latch. With a sudden splintering CRASH - The axe rips through the back door - stopping just short of her face.

She turns to run, and sees a worried Mary standing right in front of her. Wendy swoops her up and bolts down the corridor to the front stairs. The axing noise continues behind her. She puts Mary down.

WENDY

(whispers)

We're going to be play hide and seek now. I want you to hide upstairs, okay? And don't come out no matter what, unless I say it's okay? You understand?

Mary nods and runs up the stairs.

Now Wendy sees Billy is cautiously moving through the parlor to investigate the noise. She quietly slips over to him and turns him around.

Wendy gets him to follow her, but before she turns she notices the axing has stopped. She looks towards the back door.

Unseen behind her we see Matt silently (in bare feet) charging towards her, axe raised!

Billy sees him and leaps away. Wendy spins and backs against the wall.

WENDY
(tears of terror)
Matt. No.

Wendy stumbles and falls to the ground then Matt/Jonah brings the rusted axe slicing down - straight into the pulpy wood where Matt/Jonah had scratched the wall earlier in the movie.

He pulls the axe back ripping out chunks of wall revealing a FACE.

Chop Chop. There is a body inside! Covered in Aickman's inscriptions and rags. It rolls out, still weighty and solid as if it was freshly dead.

Wendy rolls aside as the body thumps to the ground where she just was.

Matt/Jonah axes the wall again. Then uses the pick side of it to pull floor boards open - and reveals right there:

BODIES. Bodies stacked side by side like cords of wood. Each covered in Aickman's necromantic engraving. Eyes staring wide - because they have no eyelids.

Matt continues cutting and more bodies come tumbling out.

166 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - A BEAT LATER

166

The little kids are crying and Wendy's pleading with Matt/Jonah - He shoves them roughly out the door -

MATT/JONAH
Whatever you do - don't let them
put out the fire.

WENDY
But what about you?

For just a second - within the blackened grim face shines a glimpse of the old Matt - and an almost smile -

MATT/JONAH

Don't worry. They can't hurt me.
I'm already dead.

He slams the door. Then turns with grim purpose back towards the parlor.

167 EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 167

The kids beat at the door - calling to Matt. Wendy tries a window. Locked.

168 EXT. CAR - NIGHT 168

In the car. Sara sobs and sobs. We can't hear her. Just watch her wracked body - and the O of her mouth as she moans.

169 INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS 169

She seems lost. Empty. The lowest we've seen her. Peter's turned a corner though. He takes her by the shoulders -

PETER

We'll find him.

SARA

And then what? He's -

PETER

We'll face that then. If nothing
else let him die in our arms,
instead of in a hospital bed.
We'll find him. And bring him home.

170 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 170

Matt/Jonah has barricaded the doors. Piling furniture and anything that can move - in front of the doors.

From within we hear a pounding and ripping sound.

171 INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 171

He's ripping at the walls with the axe. Splintering the wood. Breaking it apart. And as he does - we see:

More corpses. Embalmed and perfectly preserved - and covered in Aickman's engraved spells.

Twenty, thirty - more - they're everywhere. Behind every wall - beneath every floor board.

Everywhere he tears back the wall - there's more dried - engraved corpses.

The house is a living tomb - literally stuffed to the rafters with all the bodies that have been stuffed in the place.

Jonah/Matt's shaking hands finally succeed in lighting the inside of the walls which begin to burn rapidly. Igniting the dry corpses around them - filled with flammable embalming chemicals - the bodies blaze like man-sized Duraflame logs.

172 EXT. THE HOUSE - PRE-DAWN

172

A police car pulls up as thick smoke pours off of the house making it hard to see how much is burning.

Then Peter and Sara pull up. He runs out and tries to make for the house. A cop puts a restraining arm on him -

COP

Let 'em do their job. You'd only endanger them and yourself.

Peter sees from out of the smoke.

BILLY (O.S.)

Mom! Dad!

Wendy leads he and Mary out of the smoke.

PETER

Where's Matt?

WENDY

Inside.

173 INT. PARLOUR - CONTINUOUS

173

Matt/Jonah has torn the stuffing out of all the furniture and is thrusting it in with the corpses. He's in the dark heart of the house now.

His hands are weak and shaking. And he keeps convulsing and shifting between Jonah and Matt. As he mumbles to himself sometimes in one voice and sometimes in another -

Behind him - the whole house seems to be shifting - changing.

The room itself - the entire interior is changing - almost as if becoming that same rotted meat that Matt once saw it as.

The floor splinters and rots before our eyes as if it were all turning into something else. Walls now crumbling fetid flesh; squirming maggots, like termites, fill the 'wood'.

Matt/Jonah hurries to light his match, to set the pyre ablaze before it becomes something else. And lights it. And sets a furious blaze growing back there.

Matt/Jonah tosses things from the room into the blaze. Grabs the box filled with photos and eyelids - opens it - scoops them out and flings them into the fire - all of them.

The photos curl and blacken in the flames. And the eye lids all burn to dust - and as they do:

The room begins to fill with people - we recognize many of their faces from the old photos we've seen of the dead - as all the souls - trapped in all the bodies in all the walls and floors of the house now appear flickering between all the states from their death to their embalming and engraving.

They are everywhere: coming down stairs - stepping out of walls - rising from the floor - all headed for Matt/Jonah.

174 EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

174

Popescu's old car arrives. The fireman are already there. Popescu tries to calm Sara.

SARA

I don't understand. You said it was over!

POPESCU

Matt's trying to end it now...

173B INT. PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

173B

Our sight of Matt/Jonah is lost a beat amidst the shifting flickering forms that crowd now around him - and the growing flames of the burning room - but when we do see him we see:

He is dying.

POPESCU (O.S.)

Trying to reach the heavens Aickman created a hell of trapped souls.

(MORE)

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

Jonah felt responsible and he waited all these years for someone who might help him make it right - someone who could free him - and them. Someone like Matt...

In a room that seems at this instant to be made up of nearly equal parts rotten meat and burning walls, crowded with wailing ghosts pawing angrily all around him - his body is wilting.

You can only run on dead man's legs for so long.

174B EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

174B

The weak older man is all that's holding Sara up.

SARA

Matt. We've got to save him.

POPESCU

Pray with me. Pray with me now.

SARA

To who?

Fr. Popescu, not unfamiliar with Sara's doubt, begins to recite St. Michael's prayer anyway.

POPESCU (CONT'D)

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil...

The firemen knock the door away - and when Sara looks up for a moment she can see straight into the parlor - where, through the dust and the flames - she sees Matt/Jonah covered in soot and smoke - She doesn't see the things that crowd all around him - only sees him - rigid as if frozen and covered in burnt flesh and soot.

Peter starts to run into the house but gets tackled by a cop - another cop comes and they both hold Peter down.

PETER

My Son's in there for God's sake - let me go!

For just an instant before he's taken down he and Sara lock eyes - He struggles harder - bringing more cops to wrestle him to the ground - Which allows Sara to make a dash for the house....

Sara runs straight at and into the house - past startled firemen and cops too slow to stop a determined mother as the very ceiling begins to collapse.

175 INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

175

As Sara runs in, the house falls down around her. Behind her a beam collapses, blocking the entrance she came through. She's now trapped there too. She ducks her way into the parlor where she sees with her own eyes what is happening:

She sees the walls torn open and filled with burning tattooed corpses. She sees through the flames - and as she begins to choke on the fumes - and weaken - she sees more - sees all the hideous shapes and forms around - sees her dying son trapped alone in a burning room filled with death.

SARA

Matt!

She throws herself straight through flame at Matt/Jonah and grabs hold of her boy and pulls him to the ground - just as the ceiling comes down - the two fall on the safe side of it - but are trapped in a burning corner - under ceiling that can't last much longer.

She's holding her son and that's all that matters as she rolls with him on the floor.

She drags him beneath the table - just as more of the ceiling collapses and covers them in debris.

She looks down at her boy - who is out - possibly dead - but sees Jonah's horribly charred face-

Suddenly his eyes open. And look up at her - the saddest expression in the world.

At first she recoils in horror - this is not her son - this burnt battered flesh is someone else and someone else's son.

But something in her just sees a child.

SARA (CONT'D)

Here. I'm here. Momma's here.

She brings her face down to his. Kissing the blackened skin. Her tears spilling on his charred face. And when she looks down at him - she can clearly see it is Matt's face beneath the ash.

SARA

Oh Mattie. My Mattie.

More pieces of the ceiling collapse around them. They are soon to be buried beneath burning beams. Sara looks around frantically - for any way out - any chance of escape.

There is none.

She looks down at her son - his breathing grows lower and lower. It seems he's at the end.

She holds him to her and closes her eyes as fire and debris rain down around them.

SARA

Our...our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom
come. Thy will be done. On earth as
it is in heaven.

A huge CRASHING sound - and she holds him tighter - thinking this is it for both of them... Flames rise all around them...

SARA

...though I walk through the Valley
of the Shadow of Death...

A faint voice joins her...

MATT

(weakly)
I will fear no evil...

She looks down and sees Matt looking back at her.

SARA & MATT

...for Thou art with me...

Just then a chunk of the wall gives way and a huge spray of water shoots in from the outside - forcing the flames back.

Arms suddenly grab both of them - It's Peter and a fireman who together pull them out to the air.

We are left for a second still in the burning room - and as it completely fills with smoke and flame it seems we can hear a faint voice continuing...

JONAH (O.S.)

...and I shall dwell in the house
of the Lord for ever.

174C EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

174C

As the hose blasts away the ash and char we see Matt - not Matt/Jonah - just Matt. And he looks better than we have seen him look so far. Eyes bright. Skin clear. He looks damn good. Especially for a dead boy.

It's impossible - no burns - no wounds - and no signs of either the disease or the cure or anything he's been through. He looks practically pink and new as the day he was born.

Old Popescu sees this and falls to his knees in prayer.

And as all three of them reach the lawn they are mobbed with joy by Wendy and the kids.

Peter then puts his arm around his son and they hug. Then they look up at the pre-dawn sky, still full of stars.

PETER

They don't look dead to me.

MATT

No. They got plenty of life left.
Millions of years of life.

Behind them - sections of the house collapse as the firemen pour water at it.

The blasts of water and wind send debris churning out into the street and into the gutters. And the water that pours down the edge of the street carries odd horrifying bits of the nightmare that reigned inside:

Skulls, charred bones, fragments of drawings and photographs glowing with ash and a half burned stuffed animal, it's button-eye still hanging by a thread, all flow down the gutter towards a storm drain sewer.

SARA (O.S.)

I don't really care if people don't believe.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

2B That Documentary-style silhouette of Sara talking.

2B

SARA (CONT'D)

I know what happened. The doctors and nurses know. My family knows. And my son's alive. And well. And that's all that matters. They do say the Lord works in mysterious ways. But they never warn you just how mysterious those ways really are.

(straight to camera)
Consider yourself warned.

FADE TO BLACK AND...

ROLL SUPER:

Matt Campbell was found to be a completely healthy, normal teenager.

His cancer has never reappeared. The case is recorded in Connecticut hospital records as a rare case of 'spontaneous remission.'

The Aickman house has been rebuilt, restored, and resold. No subsequent occupants have complained of any disturbing manifestations.