

THE GROWN UP

Written by

Natalie Krinsky

Based on
The Grown Up
By Gillian Flynn

August 11, 2017

Hell is empty and all the devils are here.

-- William Shakespeare, The Tempest

OVER BLACK

The wet, beating sounds of a hand job. The squelch of lubricant and skin-to-skin contact. The strokes begin slow and deliberate, but like the violin in Flight of the Bumblebee, hastily pick up speed.

Movements fast, furious, bordering on frantic. A climax--

The defeated groan of release. A soft sigh. Silence.

THE GROWN UP (V.O.)
I didn't stop giving hand jobs
because I wasn't good at it. I
stopped giving hand jobs because I
was the best at it.

REVEAL:

EXT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - STAMFORD, CT - DAY

We could be ANYPLACE, USA. But for our purposes, let's call it STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT.

A small clapboard HOUSE, wholesome, inviting, converted into SPIRITUAL PALMS; edifice of fortune and fluid. A NEON SIGN perched in the window.

Tarot cards and crystal balls up front. Balls of a different persuasion in the back.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - HAND JOB ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Close on **THE GROWN UP**, 28 *our heroine*. She currently goes by **EMILY KENT**, (probably) not her given name. She is headed somewhere, though her path often leaves blood in the water.

A face that gives nothing away.

Behind the cool facade, an unquenched thirst to belong.

The room is set up like a doctor's office; paper towels, disinfectant, exam table.

Emily smiles absently at her **CLIENT**, 50s, slight paunch, a kind, if not pathetic face. His penis rests on his thigh like a gutted fish. His frayed black socks pulled to mid-calf.

CLIENT
I think we're going to need more
Kleenex.

Emily is zoned out, dreaming of a *different, better* life.

CLIENT (CONT'D)

Emily, I said, *I think we're going to need more Kleenex.*

Emily snaps back in.

EMILY

Baby, I've got a *whole box.*

This is their "bit."

Emily pulls several TISSUES, letting some fall to the ground, placing one atop his penis, using another for herself, wiping her hands methodically.

EMILY (CONT'D)

They fix the old Radcliffe Bridge?

CLIENT

Nope. It's a real logjam out there.

EMILY

Clever way of keeping the riff raff out of the Heights if you ask me.

He zips up.

CLIENT

Loads of thanks, Em.

EMILY

Go Jets.

He raises his fist in solidarity and exits.

Once he's gone, Emily's shakes her throbbing wrist, closes her eyes, takes a deep, meditative breath. And then-

EMILY (V.O.)

The key with a hand job is not to over-think it.

QUICK CUTS; FINGERS on a woman's HAND bending and stretching; FEET slipping out of cheap, square-toed LOAFERS; a BELT unbuckling; smiley face BOXERS dropping to the floor; a row of LOTIONS -- Midnight Pomegranate, Pink Chiffon, Autumn Heat; a squirt of milky LUBE into a PALM; an ELBOW bowing; a WRIST rotating; a man's FIST clenched tightly, and releasing; a FLY zipping; a TEN stuffed in a TIP JAR.

EMILY (V.O.)

If you start worrying about technique, if you begin analyzing rhythm and pressure, you lose the essential nature of the act. You have to shut off your brain and trust your body to take over. Basically, it's like a golf swing.

EXT. TROPICANA GARDENS - NIGHT

A boxy beige apartment building. TROPICANA GARDENS written in script above the door. Two dead potted plants flank the entrance.

Emily's 2002 FORD MUSTANG GT sputters into the deserted PARKING LOT.

EMILY (V.O.)

I jacked men off six days a week, eight hours a day, with a break for lunch.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is small, one room. A MATTRESS on the floor, thirteen BOOKS stacked neatly next to it - DuMaurier, Dickens, Bronte, Christie, Highsmith, Waters.

Plastic LAWN FURNITURE moonlights as a dining set. A fridge and a few cabinets approximate a kitchen in the corner.

Emily enters, drops her purse and keys on the "dining table," sorts through the mail (addressed alternately to EMILY KENT, MARY SEYTON, ELIZABETH BRADDON, REBECCA DANVERS...); junk, junk, junk.

She comes upon an envelope from AMERICAN EXPRESS. It reads "CONGRATULATIONS EMILY! YOU HAVE BEEN SPECIALLY SELECTED FOR A UNIQUE OFFER!"

EMILY (V.O.)

I took two weeks of vacation every year.

She drops the rest of the mail in the TRASH and opens a DRAWER in the "kitchen." It is filled with similar offers in pristine condition - you've been selected, you've been chosen, we want you!

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Wearing OVEN MITTS, Emily pulls a TURKEY out of the oven, large enough for an entire family, places it on a table set for one. A single, beautiful porcelain plate, silverware, an elaborate crystal goblet.

Emily pours herself a glass of wine.

Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* plays on a brand new Mac - this is Emily's prized possession.

Emily watches the dinner table scene where Uncle Charlie derides "horrible, fat, fading women."

EMILY (V.O.)

I never worked holidays, because holiday hand jobs are sad for everyone.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Emily paces her "bedroom" wearing a headset. Her LAPTOP sits on her bed. She wears PROTECTIVE GLOVES.

One NICE BLACK DRESS hangs in the closet.

On the CARDBOARD BOX that serves as the night stand, a GOLDFISH swims in endless circles in its BOWL.

EMILY

'What are you doing?' cried Ilaria wrathfully, her eyes flooding with fear. 'Where is my son?'

C/U on her computer. Emily's WORDS appear on SCREEN as she speaks.

Emily is writing a novel.

She rereads her words, satisfied. Closes the WORD PROCESSOR. Behind it; an open BROWSER WINDOW - "SELF PUBLISH YOUR NOVEL FOR \$3000! EDITING, COVER ART, PROOFREADING INCLUDED! CLICK HERE TO EMBARK ON YOUR LITERARY ODYSSEY!"

Emily's MOUSE hovers over "CLICK HERE." Click she does not.

EMILY (V.O.)

So over three years, I'm estimating that comes to about 23,546 hand jobs. So don't listen to that bitch Shardelle when she says I quit because I didn't have the talent.

Emily closes her laptop, switches off the light, gets in bed.

She stares at a WATER STAIN on the ceiling above her bed. Initially abstract, it morphs into a WOMAN pointing to a DARK CLOUD hovering above a CITYSCAPE.

Emily blinks.

It's just a stain.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A **DOCTOR**, 40s administers NERVE TESTS / X RAYS on Emily's LEFT WRIST. He fits her with an unsexy ATHLETIC BRACE.

EMILY (V.O.)

I quit because when you give 23,546 hand jobs over a three-year period, carpal tunnel syndrome is a very real thing.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Emily checks out with the monotonous **RECEPTIONIST**, 50s.

RECEPTIONIST

Your insurance card, Ms. Kent?

Emily puts on a dazzling smile, assumes a SOUTHERN DRAWL.

EMILY

(Correcting.)

Missus, actually. Just got hitched. Gorgeous ceremony down at the Rockrimmon Club.

She holds her wrist up.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Caught one too many rounds of mixed doubles on the honeymoon. Anyway, can't find that darn card. Maybe I could e-mail over a copy--

RECEPTIONIST

You'll be paying cash then?

A moment slides by.

Emily blinks.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - SUPPLY CLOSET - LATER

Emily pleasures the Doctor using her RIGHT HAND, with all the enthusiasm of a court stenographer.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAMFORD - DAY

The sidewalk bustles with the morning shift; men in suits, women in nude stockings and tennis shoes, sullen smoking teens, homeless schizophrenics.

Emily weaves through the tableau, watching passersby, always searching for opportunity.

A **FRAZZLED MOM** holding a **SCREAMING TODDLER**, drops FIVE DOLLARS. Emily picks it up, like she's going to return it, pockets it instead.

EMILY (V.O.)

I came to my occupation honestly.
Maybe 'naturally' is the better
word. I've never done much honestly
in my life.

Emily arrives outside of--

EXT. HIP COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

She surreptitiously UNTIES a YIPPY DOG waiting outside.

The dog takes off. Emily messes her HAIR, scoops the dog in her arms, entering the coffee shop, breathless, frantic, clutching the "runaway" pet.

She approaches the **OWNER**, 20s, gesturing wildly, retelling the story of how the poor mutt narrowly escaped death.

EMILY (V.O.)

I was raised in the city by a one
eyed mother (the opening line of my
memoir). My mother didn't have a
drug problem or a drinking problem,
but she did have a working problem.

(Beat.)

She was the laziest bitch I ever
met.

The gushing Owner nuzzles her dog, insists on buying Emily COFFEE. Emily accepts, points to some GLUTEN FREE THINGS in the case - she'll take those too.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

Emily greases a **NORDSTROM SECURITY GUARD**, 30s, with a BOX OF PASTRIES. He checks that the coast is clear, lets her in.

INT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

Emily trolls the beauty department; Eloise gone naughty.

EMILY (V.O.)

Twice a week we'd hit the streets downtown and beg. Get as much money in as little time possible, and then go home and eat Zebra Cakes and watch arbitration-based reality court TV on our broken mattress amongst the stains.

CLOSE on her LIPS as she applies a slash of scarlet LIPSTICK.

EMILY (V.O.)

That's what I remember most about my childhood: stains.

She gives herself a satisfied once over. Emily grabs a BRONZER (soupy brown) and GOLD SHADOW (piss yellowish). She shoves them both in her JACKET POCKET.

EMILY (V.O.)

I couldn't tell you the color of my mom's eye, but I could tell you the stain on the shag carpet was a deep, soupy brown, and the stains on the wall were a vibrant hungover-piss yellow.

She wanders into the adjacent ACCESSORIES DEPARTMENT, picks out a BLACK PORTFOLIO and expertly removes the SECURITY TAG with some PLIERS she keeps in her PURSE.

EXT. ANYWHERE CITY, USA - DOWNTOWN - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Emily weaves her way down a CROWDED section of MAIN STREET. The types of PEOPLE she describes pass; a **LONE WOMAN** in a hurry, a **WELL-HEELED MAN** on his phone, a **GRUNGY GUY** wearing a thick, silver THUMB RING.

EMILY (V.O.)

We'd sit on a bench and target the right people to beg off. Look for women in sets of two. Solo women can dart away too quickly;

(MORE)

EMILY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 a pack of women is too hard to
 wrangle. Don't stop men in suits:
 that cliché is true, they're all
 assholes. Also skip the thumb
 rings. I don't know what it is, but
 men with thumb rings never help.

Emily's eyes land on a **SWEET, CHUBBY WOMAN**, who picks her
 wedgie, flustered. She *really* hopes no one saw.

She notices Emily watching, blushes scarlett. Emily smiles at
 her, radiating empathy.

EMILY (V.O.)
 Final choice is a single woman who
 has that open look. You know it:
 The same woman you stop to ask for
 directions.
 (Beat.)
 Also youngish men with beards or
 guitars.

Emily follows the woman into a DINER. She passes a **YOUNGISH
 MAN** with a BEARD, busking, tosses him the FIVER from earlier.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

The WOMAN joins her equally **SWEET CHUBBY FRIEND** in a booth.

Emily looks defeated - but then her eyes land on the TAKE OUT
 COUNTER near the KITCHEN. Emily approaches--

EMILY
 Postmates?

The RESTAURANT MANAGER whose name tag reads **TONY**, hands her
 an order. He's got cheesy hip hop vibez.

She swipes his BUSINESS CARD flirtatiously.

TONY
 My cellie's on there. Hit me up.
 I'm open like 7/11.

EMILY
 I'll make that hotline bling.

He winks at her. Emily exits.

EMILY (V.O.)
 The ones we picked? We didn't call
 them marks, or prey or victims.
 (MORE)

EMILY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We called them Tonys, after my dad
 because he could never say no to
 anyone

She unwraps a poor soul's breakfast, takes a satisfied bite.

EMILY (V.O.)
 Although he must have said no to my
 mom at least once, when she asked
 him to stay.

INT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

Emily picks up dry-cleaning.

She searches through her wallet (MULTIPLE IDs inside).
 Frowns. "Can't find her ticket." She points to a group of
 LADIES' BUSINESS SUITS.

EMILY (V.O.)
 Once you stop a Tony, you can
 figure out in two seconds which way
 to beg. Some want it over with
 fast, like a mugging. Some want to
 luxuriate in your misfortune.

The **CLERK** hands her the bill. Emily slides the RESTAURANT
 BUSINESS CARD across the counter, assumes a brusque tone.

EMILY
 Incompetent waitress spilled a
 bloody straight down my Ann Taylor.
 Shows me for not sticking to my
 usual chard. Manager promised he'd
 cover the bill - that's his card.
 Give him a call.

The Clerk hesitates. Emily taps her foot impatiently.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 I haven't got all day.

The Clerk steps away to make the call. Emily exits quickly,
 dry cleaning slung over her shoulder.

EMILY (V.O.)
 I'm not blaming them. You go to the
 theater, you want to be
 entertained.

INT. EMILY'S 2002 FORD MUSTANG GT - DAY

Emily drives, her sharp gaze fixed on the NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE in the distance.

EMILY (V.O.)

I was barely thirty and I had the wrist of an octogenarian. I took it as a sign; maybe it was time for a fresh start.

It gets CLOSER and CLOSER. Its nearly within her grasp.

EXT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

Emily sits in her CAR, parked outside of the WALPOLE PUBLISHING BUILDING. A towering steel and glass structure, 48 floors high, infinite with possibility.

Emily watches as well-heeled PEDESTRIANS hurry past. They are all in on a joke no one bothered to tell her.

INT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN; reveal Emily. She wears a BUSINESS SUIT, hair pulled back in a CONSERVATIVE CHIGNON, the BLACK PORTFOLIO tucked under her arm.

EMILY (V.O.)

I read constantly but I lack formal education. I've always wanted to be around the really smart people - the kind that went to universities and drank wine and spoke Latin.

She checks in with the **YOUNG RECEPTIONIST**, 20s.

Emily takes a seat in the WAITING ROOM. A POSTER announces the RELEASE of **MAGDALENA VANSTONE'S** newest novel in the **SLAUGHTERHOUSE CHRONICLES SERIES** published by WALPOLE.

Emily grabs a copy of PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY. She pretends to read, but instead watches the Young Receptionist flirt with a **HANDSOME EDITOR**, 20s. They discuss their weekend plans - dinners, concerts, readings, gallery openings.

In another life, she could be them.

EMILY (V.O.)

The question is: How do you find smart people?

MALE VOICE (O.C.)

Elizabeth?

Emily comes face to face with a CROTCH draped in pleated GREY WOOL. Does she recognize the bulge? Not offhand.

She looks up to find editor, **AMBROSE ROWE**, 40s, a nice man with a fat ass.

AMBROSE

Elizabeth Braddon?

Emily smiles brightly.

EMILY

Guilty as charged.

She stands, they shake hands.

AMBROSE

Ambrose Rowe. Pleasure to finally make your acquaintance. Everyone here has spoken very highly of you. Come on back.

He begins walking towards the BULLPEN. Emily follows.

INT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - AMBROSE'S OFFICE - LATER

Mid-job-interview. Behind Ambrose BOOKSHELVES lined with HORROR / THRILLER GENRE NOVELS. An impressive view of MANHATTAN.

Ambrose fiddles with his WEDDING BAND, absently.

AMBROSE

My colleagues have told me that you're remarkably well-studied.

EMILY

I did re-read all 17 novels in the Slaughterhouse Chronicle series.

He leans back in his chair, folds his HANDS behind his HEAD.

AMBROSE

Magdalena has a small but ardent cult following. Do you think she'll ever reveal her identity? She's never been seen in public.

EMILY

I think a woman's greatest asset are the things we don't know about her. A woman without secrets has no texture.

Ambrose chuckles, pitches forward, intrigued.

AMBROSE

That leads me quite nicely to my next question. I like to know *the essence* of the person I'm hiring. Elizabeth, who are you? And where do you see yourself in ten years?

A look of absolute conviction passes over Emily's face. She leans in towards Ambrose, looks him dead in the eye.

EMILY

There is something about words, Ambrose. In expert hands, manipulated deftly, words are hypnotic. They consume you. Take you prisoner. I have spent my entire life folded between the pages of books. In the absence of human relationships, I bonded with paper characters. I have traveled the world, lived, loved and lost through stories. In ten years, I will be sitting in your chair, the editor of a major publishing house, interviewing a candidate just like me - giving her a chance, a foot in the door. And once I have learned everything I can about telling stories, I will take a year long sabbatical, wherein I will pen a novel that will be published to much fanfare, and manages, in it's own way, to change the world.

AMBROSE

Wow. Your focus and determination are... singular. That question tends to mystify most people.

EMILY

Anything else?

AMBROSE

Don't think so. Let's give it a shot.

Emily looks perplexed.

EMILY
Give what a shot?

AMBROSE
It's yours.

EMILY
I got the job?

AMBROSE
Welcome to Walpole Publishing.

For the first time, Emily looks genuinely happy. This is the moment she's been waited an eternity for.

A shot at a better life.

EMILY
Thank you. This is a dream come true.

Emily gathers her things, stands to shake Ambrose's hand.

AMBROSE
Before you leave we've got some pesky bureaucracy to take care of.

INT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - AMBROSE'S OFFICE - LATER

Close on JOB PAPERWORK;

"HAVE YOU BEEN CONVICTED OF A FELONY OR BEEN INCARCERATED IN CONNECTION WITH A FELONY IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS?"

There are two boxes a "YES" and a "NO." Emily's pen hovers between the two; back and forth. Back and forth.

Finally, she checks the NO BOX. She hands her paperwork back to Ambrose, who exits. And then--

A SERIES OF SHOTS; A FLASH of a CAMERA; Emily's MUGSHOT taken, Emily's THUMB pressing down on a BLACK INK PAD, fingerprinted; Emily's FEET chained, shuffling under an ORANGE JUMPSUIT.

INT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - AMBROSE'S OFFICE - LATER

CLOSE on a WALL CLOCK. Emily watches as the minutes tick by.

Ambrose finally re-enters, he looks at Emily with PITY.

AMBROSE

Your name isn't actually Elizabeth
Braddon, is it?

EXT. WALPOLE PUBLISHING - LATER

Emily runs out of Walpole Publishing, pushes through a
pedestrians, glancing over her shoulder.

She gets into her Mustang, slams the door. Puts the KEY in
the ignition - the engine sputters and sticks, but doesn't
start. She slams her fist on the steering wheel, frustrated.

EMILY

FUCK!

INT. PISANO BROTHERS AUTO REPAIR - NIGHT

DALE PISANO, 28, well-intentioned, mechanic, in love with
Emily since HIGH SCHOOL, has his head under the hood of her
car. Think TIM RIGGINS - he makes you wet in the no-no, but
is he smart? No, no.

Emily chain-smokes sullenly nearby.

DALE

I thought you quit the cancer
sticks.

EMILY

Get fucked, Dale.

DALE

Be stronger than your strongest
excuse.

EMILY

I'm not in the mood for your cat-
poster one liners. I just pissed
away my big shot.

DALE

Come on Em, you're the smartest
girl I know. Remember what you used
to say in high school?

EMILY

High school was a decade ago.

DALE

I remember you won the English
prize, best in the whole school.

(MORE)

DALE (CONT'D)

And I remember you said you're gonna get your first break writing short stories that get printed in the New Yorker, which is read by all the most important intellectuals of our time. And once you get big enough off that, you'll write a book. And then one day you're going to be one of like ten chicks to win the Noble Prize for literature.

Dale seems very pleased with himself.

EMILY

Nobel. Nobel Prize. And I can't even afford a subscription to the New Yorker much less publish anything in it.

Emily stubs her cigarette out in a full ASHTRAY. Sits in a PLASTIC CHAIR.

DALE

Point is, you can still make it to the top. But, your engine is shot.

EMILY

This really isn't the time to question my motivation.

DALE

What? Naw. Your car. This stang is on it's last legs.

EMILY

I don't have the cash for a new whip. You know I'm saving up to self publish my novel.

Dale sits down next to Emily, puts a big hand on her leg, rubs her thigh.

DALE

I could loan you the money.

EMILY

And where are you going to come up with three grand?

Dale moves closer, begins kissing her neck. Despite herself, Emily succumbs.

DALE

You know I got a good chunk of change saved up for my Crossfit. Just a couple grand away from my very own box.

EMILY

A small, wet tunnel to squat in. But I wouldn't feel right taking your money.

DALE

Why don't you pick up some extra shifts at the Genius Bar? Or talk to the boss lady about a promotion?

Emily turns this over in her mind.

EMILY

Yeah. A promotion could do the trick. Smart Dale.

This compliment makes Dale hot. He grabs Emily, pulling her onto his lap, pushing little BLACK DRESS up her thigh--

DALE

You're so fuckin' hot when you dress professional. Like you work at the bank.

INT. OLIO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An upscale, white table cloth restaurant. Well-to-do couples order Pinot Noir and "shared plates" in the soft glow of candlelight.

A **HANDSOME MAN**, 40s sits at a TWO-TOP, waiting for someone. A **WAITER** deposits a SCOTCH in front of him. The man says something to the Waiter. The Waiter laughs, charmed.

PULL BACK: Emily stands outside of the restaurant, watching, transfixed.

She is jolted from her reverie by A MANGY DOG on a leash, sniffing the TAKE OUT BAG in her hand. She recoils, disgusted. Looks up to see his owner, an aging, scrawny **METAL-HEAD TWEAKER** covered in fading prison tattoos.

They lock eyes. Emily turns away.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily lies in bed, awake. The GOLDFISH swims, banging into the side of his BOWL, over and over again.

She stares up at the WATER STAIN on the ceiling.

It MORPHS into STONES raining down on an OLD HOUSE.

Emily blinks. It's just a stain.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - OFFICE - DAY

The office is small, cramped and messy.

VIVECA (nee Jennifer), might be 40, 50 or 60, proprietor of Spiritual Palms, does some accounting behind the DESK. Viveca is heavy like an octopus, with beads and ruffles and scarves floating around her, hair dyed the color of fruit punch, insists she's a natural redhead.

(But does the rug match the drapes? Methinks not.)

Emily, enters, her athletic brace wrapped around her wrist. She watches Viveca for a moment, who ignores her and keeps punching her CALCULATOR feverishly.

EMILY (V.O.)

This is my boss Viveca, bona fide palm reader. Although Viveca isn't her bona fide name, her bona fide name is Jennifer, but people don't believe that Jennifers can tell the future; Jennifers can tell you which cute shoes to buy or what farmer's market to visit.

VIVECA

Whatcha want nerdy?

Emily sits across from Viveca, adopts a plummy, clear voice.

EMILY

Have I ever told you about my visions?

VIVECA

What now?

EMILY

Whenever I meet someone, I have this immediate vision of who they are and what they need.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

I can see it like a color or a halo around them. Basically, I'm a clairvoyant.

VIVECA

Oh yeah nerdy? It so happens I'm a fucking clairvoyant too, and I'm picking up on the distinct vibe that you're askin' me to move up front. Read palms instead of growin' hair on yours. Am I right?

EMILY

I've got to hand it to you Viveca, your intuition is impenetrable.

VIVECA

A week ago you told me you were outta here cause you scored some hoity toity desk job.

EMILY

I've reconsidered. I decided I really like it here.

VIVECA

Good.

Viveca goes back to work. Emily isn't giving up.

EMILY

But I feel as if I've hit a ceiling in the field of manual manipulation.

VIVECA

You know we don't do blowies here. I've run a clean shop since '99.

EMILY

And I admire your principles. Look Viveca, our tarot business might be lower volume, but with the right approach, I can get these ladies to part with their greenbacks. I'll cultivate a loyal clientele just like I have with our consortium of gentlemen.

Viveca leans back, considering.

EMILY (CONT'D)

At least give me a shot, if it doesn't work out, I can always keep rubbing and tugging, no harm, no foul.

VIVECA

Fine nerdy. You're movin' up front. Remember, tell 'em what they want to hear. Work 'em like a rib.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - FORTUNE DEN - CONTINUOUS

A MANTLE cluttered with OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, CANDLES, TAROT CARDS and CRYSTALS. Emily sits behind a round table, draped in a burgundy and gold embroidered TABLE CLOTH.

Across from her, a **BRIDE, 20s**, clumpy mascara, tiara, cheap veil and a SASH that reads BACHELORETTE. She is flanked on either side by chatty, cheesy **GIRLFRIENDS**. Emily flips her cards; THE TOWER, UPSIDE DOWN KING OF SWORDS, SEVEN OF CUPS.

EMILY (V.O.)

According to Wikepedia, this hand is a garbage fire. Her groom is a drug addled sex-addict with a mountain of debt.

BRIDE

Shit. It looks bad. Is it bad?

EMILY

On the contrary, this card, the upside down king of swords indicates your fiance is a successful warrior who will slay any beast to protect you.

BRIDE

Brad's a CPA.

Emily points to the next card.

EMILY

The Tower is a castle, it represents the place you will eventually make your home.

BRIDE

Is it nice? Four beds, three baths?

EMILY

I see a happy home--

DARK GIRLFRIEND, 20s, interrupts.

DARK GIRLFRIEND
A.K.A a shithole. Look at it this way, if it doesn't work out, you can kill the fucker and snag the insurance money.

An awkward beat.

DARK GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)
Kidding.

Suddenly an ORGASM YELP from the BACK ROOM.

BRIDE
What was that?

EMILY
New puppy.

EXT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - BACK ALLEY - DAY

Lunch Break. Emily eats a yogurt with Viveca, who smokes, putting too much of the filter in her mouth.

VIVECA
I gotta hand it to ya nerdy, your ESPN has turned out to be legit. I'm gonna give Shardelle your HJ client list.

EMILY
Shardelle is a rube coated in body glitter. My guys are sophisticates. They come to me for a curated experience.

VIVECA
Shardelle's new and she deserves a helping hand. This is the perfect way for her to build her rolodex, take the reigns on some D.

EMILY
That ungrateful bitch has been talking shit on me all over town.

Off Viveca's look--

EMILY (CONT'D)
Fine. She can have 'em. Except one.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - HAND JOB ROOM - DAY

CLASSICAL MUSIC plays.

CLOSE ON: **MICHAEL AUDLEY, 43**, handsome, brainy, compulsive jogger. His face contorts with pleasure as Emily administers an enthused jerk-off.

We recognize him as the MAN from the FANCY RESTAURANT.

MICHAEL

The darkness in The Haunting of Hill House stems from the mundane -- the house, the person, the action. None of them is quite what they seem to be.

EMILY (O.S.)

True. But Eleanor is drawn to Hill House because it's an expression of her own inner darkness, the ugliness that lives inside of her, her incipient madness.

Emily's strokes quicken. Michael groans with pleasure.

MICHAEL

So the dissolving boundary is the one between the mind and the exterior world. Is Eleanor the target of the haunting? Or is the haunting coming from within her?

EMILY

The point is that mania lurks inside all of us.

MICHAEL

Mmm. Madness is the modern version of damnation. To be trapped in one's own mind is the equivalent of being condemned to an eternal hell.

EMILY

But aren't we all a little bit crazy? An army of demented lonely girls imprisoned in a big sinister house.

MICHAEL

Yes! Emily. Yes!

Michael comes with a groan. A moment of silence.

Emily leans into him, her lips graze his ear. CLOSE ON HER MOUTH, as she whispers;

EMILY

"...silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone."

MICHAEL

God, that opening line--

EMILY

Makes me wet.

Emily puts a copy of *The Haunting of Hillhouse* on his chest.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm ready for my next assignment
Professor Audley.

Michael zips up.

MICHAEL

I've got just the thing.

He removes a copy of *The Woman in White* from his briefcase and presses into Emily's hands.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The Woman in White is one of the all time best. Published in 1859, but still holds up today. It's widely thought to be the foundational text of sensation fiction. Essential to your education.

EMILY

I'll start reading immediately.

MICHAEL

I don't doubt it. And how's your opus coming along?

EMILY

I wouldn't exactly call it an opus.

MICHAEL

I beg to differ.

EMILY

You haven't even read it.

MICHAEL
Not for lack of trying.

EMILY
It's not ready. *If you ever see it,*
I want it to be... perfect.

MICHAEL
"Don't tell me the moon is shining,
show me the glint of light on
broken glass."

Emily smiles (blankly).

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Recognize the quote?

EMILY
You underestimate me.

MICHAEL
I would never.

He pushes a strand of hair out of Emily's face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'll wait with baited breath for
your draft, as I do for our weekly
rendez-vous.

EMILY
I didn't know you spoke French.

MICHAEL
Un peu. I spent the summer after
college working in a small
restaurant outside of Bordeaux. I
learned the language and how to
cook Coq au Vin.

He leans in, as if telling her a secret.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Trick is to marinate the bird
overnight. Perhaps I'll make it for
you sometime.

EMILY
That would be nice.

They both know this is never happening.

MICHAEL
See you next Tuesday, Emily.

EMILY
Goodbye, Michael.

He exits. She cuts the music, jolted back to reality.

Emily turns to the mirror (she is now dressing a little more "psychic chic"), tousles her hair, smooths her peasant blouse, tucks *The Woman in White* under her arm and makes her way to the front of Spiritual Palms into--

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - FORTUNE DEN - CONTINUOUS

Emily sits at the card table reading *The Woman in White*, waiting for her next client. And then--

The CLACK, CLACK, CLACK of HIGH HEELS across a WOOD FLOOR. Emily looks up to see--

SUSAN BURKE, 41, nervous, monied, blonde, red-rimmed eyes and pale lashes. Everything about her is *tasteful*; ecru cashmere COAT, ivory FERRAGAMO HEELS. Even her skin is a pale, creamy alabaster. She is translucent, like paper.

Susan smiles tightly. Emily stands to greet her, the book still in her hand.

EMILY
Welcome to Spiritual Palms. I'm
Emily.

SUSAN
Susan. Burke.

She extends a hand, Emily goes to shake it and drops her BOOK. They simultaneously retrieve it, bump heads, clumsily.

EMILY
I'm so sorry.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
No it's my fault.

Each giggles nervously. Susan's eyes linger on the BOOK.

EMILY (V.O.)
Susan Burke was different. She
seemed smarter from the second I
saw her.

EMILY
Why don't you have a seat?

Susan nods, obliges. Emily sits as well.

EMILY (CONT'D)

So, Susan, what brings you in today?

SUSAN

My life is falling apart.

Then Susan begins to CRY. At first just a few tears, but then a deluge. Emily watches the CLOCK, lets Susan weep, assumes her best sympathetic face.

Finally, Susan composes herself, wipes her eyes.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I don't know why I'm here.

EMILY

Well, what exactly is going on in your life?

Susan looks up sharply, a flicker of sparkle in her eyes.

SUSAN

Don't you know?

EMILY (V.O.)

Sense of humor. Unexpected.

SUSAN

So how does this whole thing work?

EMILY

I'm a psychological intuitive. All my senses play a part in my work. I can feel vibrations coming off people. I can see auras. I can smell misery, or dishonesty, or depression. It's a gift I've had since I was a small child. My mother was a deeply unbalanced woman. She smelled of despair, which presents itself to me as the scent of bread.

SUSAN

Bread?

EMILY (V.O.)

I needed to pick a new eau de sad girl. Not dying leaves, too obvious, but something earthy. Mushrooms? No, inelegant.

Susan shifts uncomfortably.

SUSAN

I don't mean to be rude, but I don't think this is for me.

Emily says nothing. Waiting.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

OK. So what do you read off me?

EMILY

There's something going on in your house.

SUSAN

I already told you that.

EMILY

No. You told me your life was falling apart. I'm saying it's something to do with your house. You have a husband, I sense a lot of discord: I see you surrounded by a sick green, like an egg yolk gone bad. Swirls of a healthy vibrant turquoise on the outer edges. That tells me you had something good and it went very bad. Yes?

Susan glares at Emily. She's touched a nerve.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're desperate, you're in exquisite pain. You're not sleeping.

SUSAN

I sleep eight hours a night.

Emily seamlessly course corrects.

EMILY

But it's not a *genuine* sleep. You have unsettling dreams. Maybe not nightmares, but you wake up feeling worn, achy.

Susan nods.

EMILY (V.O.)

This woman was in her forties; people in their forties usually wake up feeling achy. I know that from commercials.

EMILY

Also you smell of peonies. Do you have a child?

Susan considers Emily's words carefully, making a decision. Finally, she lowers her voice, leans in.

SUSAN

I wasn't going to say anything because... it's early and we've been trying for a while... I'm eleven weeks pregnant. Only my husband knows.

Susan pauses, puts her hand over her mouth, like the secret escaped on its own. Then she darkens.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And my step son. He knows too.

A glimmer of hope shoots through Emily.

EMILY

Something is wrong in your house. Your stepson?

Susan stands abruptly, protective hand on her belly.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

SUSAN

How much do I owe you?

Before Emily can answer, Susan throws some a crisp HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL on the table and exits hastily. Emily stares at the money, the CLACK CLACK CLACK of Susan's heels disappearing into the parking lot.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - HAND JOB ROOM - DAY

Emily cleans up Michael's cum.

MICHAEL

I needed that. Work has been trying lately. I'm burning the candle at both ends.

EMILY

So what's the next tome for our sticky book club?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL

Is that what you call it?

Emily reacts, embarrassed.

EMILY

I'm sorry. Is that silly?

MICHAEL

You amuse me.

(Beat.)

Unfortunately we'll have to put our "SBC" on hold. I'm going out of town next week on a speaking tour to promote my latest oeuvre; *Stroke of Genius; the Art of the Novel*.

EMILY

Shaping young, supple minds with your abundant literary knowledge.

MICHAEL

At least I'll give the illusion of expertise. An elaborate exercise in manipulation for profit.

EMILY

Like Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*.

MICHAEL

Ha. The student becomes the master.

EMILY

Or maybe I've known more than you all along.

Michael laughs, enjoying the flirtation, reaches for his fly.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Allow me.

She zips him up. An intimacy passes between them.

MICHAEL

The truth is, Emily, I'm in awe of you. I've always admired the writer as artist.

EMILY

You're a professor. You write books all the time.

MICHAEL

It's different. I critique,
analyze, hover at a safe distance.
I never get my hands dirty.

EMILY

So what's stopping you?

MICHAEL

Fear. And fiction doesn't exactly
pay the bills--

He stops, aware of his audience.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I didn't mean--

EMILY

It's okay. I do what I have to do.
Words are my passion.

MICHAEL

Passion left my life long ago.

Emily waits for him to elaborate. He doesn't.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I brought something for you.

Michael reaches into his briefcase and pulls out a beautiful,
leather bound copy of *The Turn of the Screw*, hands it to her.

EMILY

We've read this one already..?

MICHAEL

I remember. It's your favorite. But
this isn't a loaner. It's for you
to keep. A first edition copy, I
found it at The Strand in
Manhattan. I saw it and thought,
Emily has to have this.

Emily repeats;

EMILY

The Strand.

Emily opens the book, astounded, caressing its pages. Michael
watches her, pleased.

MICHAEL

Emily, would you consider having a drink with me when I get back from my trip?

Emily looks at him, eyes shining.

EMILY

I would love nothing more.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily gently places her new copy of *The Turn of the Screw* on top of her pile of books - new tally, 14. She steps back, admiring it.

Emily FEEDS the FISH who eats hungrily.

She looks up at the WATER STAIN. It has shrunk.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - DAY

CLOSE on EMILY'S PHONE. She GOOGLES Michael's quote from earlier; "Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass."

CHEKHOV. Huh.

She CLICKS on a LINK and begins reading, jotting down notes in a SMALL NOTEBOOK, completely engrossed.

CLACK. CLACK. CLACK. Emily looks up, closes her notebook.

Susan Burke is back. She shifts uncomfortably.

SUSAN

Mind if we try again?

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - FORTUNE DEN - DAY

Susan sits across from Emily. Her hands folded primly.

EMILY

You're still withholding. Even when I asked about your job you said you "define and eliminate problems."

SUSAN

(Defensive.)
But that's what I do.

EMILY

That's vague. If you want our sessions to be effective, we need to delve deeper.

Susan chews a well-manicured nail, nervously.

SUSAN

I'll try.

EMILY

Why don't we go back to your husband? How are things with him?

SUSAN

Ever since we moved back to the city and into the new house Miles has been... I don't know. Acting out.

EMILY

In what way?

SUSAN

Miles was never a sweet boy. I'm the only mom he's known - I've been with his dad since he was four. But he's always been cold. Introverted. He's just empty. I hate myself for saying that. I mean, introverted is fine. But in the past year, since the move... he's changed. Become more aggressive. He's angry. Dark. Threatening.

EMILY

I can sense that some of that... blackness has rubbed off on you. The scents and colors around have soured into something... acidic. Like rotting teeth.

SUSAN

That's revolting.

Emily nods slowly, in agreement.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It scares me, especially with a baby on the way.

Emily pauses, deep in thought.

EMILY

Susan, have you considered that the house is affecting your son's behavior?

Susan leans in, her eyes wide.

SUSAN

Yes! Yes I do. Is that crazy? That's why I came back. Because... there was blood on my wall.

EMILY

Blood?

SUSAN

Last week. I didn't want to say anything... But it was there. One long trickle from the floor to the ceiling. Am I... am I insane?

EMILY

You're not insane. It's just as I suspected - your house needs a cleansing. I specialize in domestic auras.

SUSAN

What do you mean "domestic auras?"

EMILY

Well, I recently had a client who's dog, was acting strangely, barking at all hours of the night, refusing to come indoors, even in the dead of winter. And you know how cold it's been lately.

SUSAN

Frigid. I pulled my furs out of storage a month early.

EMILY

I realized there could only be one reason for the bitch's behavior. A spirit was occupying her home. You see they had just moved back to the city from the suburbs into an old house. Beautiful but...

SUSAN

But?

EMILY

An a hundred year old house has a lot of... leftover vibes.

SUSAN

I think that might be what's happening with us.

Emily nods knowingly.

EMILY

That's exactly what I feared.

SUSAN

Emily, what are you doing next Tuesday?

EMILY

It just so happens my regular appointment cancelled.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - OFFICE - NIGHT

Viveca and Emily pack up, getting ready to leave for the evening. Viveca is annoyed with Emily.

VIVECA

What do you think you're doing, Nerdy? We don't make fucking house calls around here.

EMILY

Look, my Mom didn't teach me shit about life, but she showed me how to spot a mark. I've got a whale on the line with Susan Burke. When is the last time a Rolex waltzed in to Spiritual Palms?

Viveca doesn't say anything.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Never, is the answer. I'm thinking repeat cleansings, once a month for a year. Twelve visits for \$3500. That's a pretty penny. I'll even toss you a few hundred as a finder's fee.

VIVECA

I'll definitely take my cut. But that doesn't change the fact that you're holding your mitts awfully close to the flame.

Emily's not listening. She's off in her own world.

EMILY

A year gives the stepson time to adjust to the new school, new kids. Soon enough he's cured and I'm the hero. Susan begins referring all her rich, nervous friends to me. Maybe Susan and I become friends. She invites me to her book club. We'll sit by the first and nibble brie. I finish my novel, publish it in time for the Frankfurt Book Fair-

Viveca interrupts, jolting Emily from her reverie.

VIVECA

And what if the house really is haunted?

EMILY

We live in the real world, *Jennifer*. That house is not haunted.

EXT. RADCLIFFE BRIDGE - DAY

Emily drives over the (now repaired) bridge, to the *nice* part of town. On the passenger seat next to her a copy of a book; *Secrets of Gothic Architecture*.

INT. EMILY'S MUSTANG - DAY

Emily drives down SOMERSET ROAD, lined with boxy new construction and bright green, well manicured lawns. This is how the other half lives.

Emily stops in front of Susan's house. Ext. Carterhook manor (susan's house) - day

Susan's house is the only remaining Victorian on the block. The mansion's front is elaborate, carved stonework, dizzying in its detail: flowers and filigrees, dainty rods and swooping ribbons. Two life-sized angels framed the doorway, arms reaching upward.

TRASH and RECYCLING BINS set out on the curb for trash day.

A CHILD-SIZED PIANO, WARPED and BURNED sits on the curb.

EXT. WEST SOMERSET ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Emily gets out of the car, takes an optimistic breath of spring air. But then--

She looks up and the house - stops, stares, gives a slight shiver.

The house is vile. It lurks.

Standing at one window Emily spots a **CHILD** - gray trousers, black sweater, a maroon tie perfectly knotted at the neck. A thicket of dark hair covering his eyes. Then, a sudden blur, and he disappears behind heavy brocade drapes.

Emily shakes off the dread. She starts towards the house--

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Emily knocks on the door. At her feet, carved in stone, an inscription; **CARTERHOOK MANOR, ESTABLISHED 1893, PATRICK CARTERHOOK.**

The door swings open. REVEAL; Susan, eyes red-rimmed, hair matted. She puts on an air of fake grandeur.

SUSAN

Welcome to Carterhook Manor. I've finally stopped sleeping.

Emily steps inside, the door closing heavily behind her.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the house stands in stark contrast to the outside. It had been gutted and looks like every other rich person's house - recessed lighting, wide plank wood floors, granite counters.

All the newness can't hide the feeling that something evil lives here.

A large foyer, with a grand staircase on the left. The foyer leads to a hallway that opens to an eat in kitchen ahead. The formal living and dining room to the right.

Emily looks around appreciatively. And then, with authority;

EMILY

Let's start with the blood trickle.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Susan and Emily stand at the base of the stairs, next to the hallway closet. The stairwell is open, with two more floors above them.

Emily looks up through the banister to see a FACE peering down at her. Black hair and dark eyes set against the porcelain skin of an antique doll. This is **MILES, 15**. He stares at Emily, then disappears abruptly.

SUSAN

Here. It was right here.

Susan removes a large print from the wall and points--

SUSAN (CONT'D)

The entire length of the wall. I scrubbed it with bleach. I need my walls to be white. I take comfort in the cold pale shade. Makes me feel in control. I guess because most of the time... I feel so out of control.

Emily nods understanding. Leans in, examining the wall.

EMILY

There is a tremendous feeling of pain, right here. Throughout the whole house, but definitely here.

SUSAN

The house creaks all night long. It shouldn't. Everything inside is new. Miles's door slams at strange times. And he... he's getting worse. It's like he carries a darkness on his back. I'd move, but we spent so much money buying this house, and then almost that much renovating, and... my husband won't let me anyway. He says Miles is just going through growing pains. And that I'm a nervous, silly woman.

Susan lets out a joyless laugh.

EMILY

That is something powerful men say to women to make us second guess ourselves. He shouldn't treat you as if you're self-indulgent when really you're endangered.

This lands on Susan.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I sense something awful too. Do you mind if I take a closer look?

SUSAN

Please. Go ahead.

Emily removes a SHAWL from her purse, and places it gently over her head. She puts her hands on the wall, bowing her head, muttering a few words to herself.

She RECOILS abruptly. Shaking, Emily turns to Susan.

EMILY

What's behind this wall?

Susan shakes her head.

SUSAN

Nothing. Just a closet.

EMILY

I need to get inside that closet.

Susan walks a few paces around the corner and opens the door, uncertainly. Emily slips inside.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

EMILY'S POV: Expensive COATS hung neatly in a row. Some HAT BOXES on a shelf. Expensive SKI EQUIPMENT leans against one wall. Along the floor, Emily notices a SMALL DOOR that looks like it might contain an ELECTRICAL PANEL, but has been PAINTED SHUT. Interesting. Emily examines it closely. She turns back to Susan.

EMILY

Where does this door lead?

SUSAN

I'm not sure.

EMILY

You said you did renovations. This door wasn't in the plans?

Susan shakes her head.

SUSAN

My husband handled construction. I mostly busied myself with design elements.

Susan lets out a hollow laugh.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Silly "lady" things.

Emily doesn't answer. She turns back to the panel. Give is a push. Nothing. Shoves harder. Still nothing.

One last time. It breaks open. Emily peers inside - a cramped, DARK PASSAGE behind it, like an animal's burrow. Susan looks over her shoulder, fearful.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh my god. What is that?

EMILY

Secret corridors are common in Victorian homes. They are where spirits and energies get trapped.

SUSAN

Do you think that's happening here?

EMILY

Susan your instinct was right. Something wicked lives here. Remove everything from this closet. Immediately.

SUSAN

I should be writing this down.

EMILY

Why don't you show me the rest of the house?

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - DAY

A long narrow hallway, naturally dark. The CLACK CLACK CLACK of Susan's heels echo on the wood floors. She flick lights on as they walk.

SUSAN

Miles turns them off. Then I turn them back on. When I ask him to keep them on, he pretends he has no idea what I'm talking about.

At the end of the hallway Susan opens a door to reveal--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

A cavernous room with wall to wall bookshelves.

SUSAN

This is our den.

Emily takes a sharp breath in.

EMILY

It's a *library*.

Her eyes take in the thousands of volumes, their covers made of soft leather. Emily runs her hand over an ARM CHAIR.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Do you feel this? Do you feel the... heaviness here?

SUSAN

I hate this room.

EMILY

I'll need to pay extra attention to this room.

Susan nods and walks out of the room. Emily stays for a moment taking it all in.

She's spent her life dreaming of a place like this.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They walk back into the hallway, where the lights are again, off. Susan sighs and begins turning them on.

The lights flicker.

From behind a CLOSED DOOR up ahead, a scratching sound, compulsive, repetitive. Emily looks at the DOOR, uneasy.

Susan notices and motions to it.

SUSAN
I'd show you Miles' room, but I
don't have a key.

EMILY
It's locked?

SUSAN
I'm scared of him.

Emily frowns.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I know that seems extreme, but you
should see what Miles did to the
babysitter he didn't like. I want
my husband to discipline him the
old fashioned way, but he doesn't
believe in corporal punishment. He
had your typical, WASPY upbringing,
a cold drunk mother that slapped
him silly, withheld affection. Said
he would divorce me if raised a
hand to Miles. So instead I live in
constant fear...

She turns to Emily sharply.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I shouldn't have said that. The
babysitter thing wasn't... major.
Possibly an accident. I don't know
anymore. Maybe I am just goddamn
crazy.

She laughs, roughly, unhinged.

EMILY
Why don't you show me the third
floor?

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

They walk passing a series of rooms, wallpapered and painted,
with fine VICTORIAN FURNITURE arranged haphazardly.

One room holds only a LITTER BOX.

SUSAN
For our cat, Wilkie. Luckiest cat
in the world: his own room for his
own crap.

EMILY

I'm sure you'll find use for the space.

SUSAN

He's actually a sweet cat. Almost twenty years old.

Emily smiles, like she cares.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

We obviously have more room than we need. It's like we're living in an expensive storage facility. My husband likes antiques. He says they give the place authenticity. He didn't like the renovation, but I insisted.

Susan wrinkles her nose.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I can't stand old, dusty things.

She turns into--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

A pretty room, the walls striped pink and white. An ANTIQUE BASSINET in the corner, made of WICKER sits on ROCKERS. It sways back and forth gently.

The rest of the room feels NEW, out of POTTERY BARN KIDS.

SUSAN

This is the nursery. My husband insisted on that hideous crib. It's been in his family for generations. It was Miles' when he was a baby.

EMILY

That's nice.

SUSAN

Is it? Given the way Miles turned out..? But you know how old money is about tradition.

(Beat.)

This room is the furthest from his. That's why I chose it for Poppy.

EMILY

Is that the baby's name?

SUSAN

That's what I'm calling her. For now. When I was first pregnant, the doctor told me the baby was the size of a poppy seed. I don't know, I thought it was adorable.

She shrugs.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Name kind of stuck.

EMILY

That's sweet.

Susan looks a little embarrassed.

SUSAN

I never thought I'd be this kind of woman -- this cliché of mommyhood. But here I am, stocking up on American Girl Dolls and buying frilly pink dresses by the dozen.

EMILY

I'm sure it's exciting, having a little girl.

SUSAN

Are you close with your mother?

EMILY

We were alike. In many ways.

Emily looks away, "sad."

SUSAN

I'm sorry for your loss. Do you have kids?

(laughs roughly)

What am I talking about? You're practically a child yourself. You have plenty of time.

EMILY

That's what people say. But I'm not sure I'll ever have children.

SUSAN

I've often wondered why people are so desperate to have children. I've concluded that it's our way of repairing what we've broken.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

These little beings are our chance at undoing our mistakes and disappointments. We duplicate ourselves and hope that they will succeed where we have failed. These little vessels of optimism with limbs.

Susan smiles warmly, and then lightly;

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Perhaps you haven't failed at anything. You're psychic after all, so you can see what's coming.

EMILY

Yes. It's a blessing.

Susan puts her hands on her flat belly, looks at Emily brightly, like maybe they're *girlfriends*.

SUSAN

Anyway, shall I show you Poppy's closet? We should probably check for one of those secret passageways.

Susan crosses the room and opens the closet door, she continues chatting with Emily.

INSIDE THE CLOSET: PINK DRESSES hang in a neat row.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm due next summer. I'm dreading being as big as a house in the dead heat but--

Directly below the DRESSES, a ROW OF DOLLS.

EACH missing LIMBS; ARMS, LEGS, HANDS, HEADS, in various eugenics-like configurations. The effect is jarring.

Emily gasps. Susan turns to see what she's looking at.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ.

Susan's eyes well with tears. Suddenly a ROTTING STENCH fills the air, choking them. Susan gags, Emily stifles her reflex.

EMILY

I think I smell something burning.

Susan runs out of the room, Emily on her heels.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - KITCHEN - DAY

Emily and Susan rush in. Miles sits at the ISLAND, waiting.

Susan starts when she sees him, pulls back.

Miles stands, his sullen face transformed into a bright, goofy grin.

MILES

Hi Momma.

SMOKE billows from the oven, a STENCH overwhelms the room. Susan throws open the oven door to a DOZENS of DOLL LIMBS warped and melted. Susan sucks her breath in.

Miles approaches, menacing.

MILES (CONT'D)

Do you like my surprise Momma?

SUSAN

What did you do?

He wraps his arms around Susan, nuzzling her. But the action is loaded and mean. Susan stares at Emily pleading.

MILES

I love you. Why won't you hug me?

Susan pats him, Miles releases her suddenly, as if scalded.

MILES (CONT'D)

I heard what you just told her.
About me. About the babysitter.
About everything. You're such a
bitch.

Susan flinches, hands on her belly, protective. Miles turns to Emily.

MILES (CONT'D)

I really hope you leave and don't
come back. For your own good. This
is a family matter.

Emily takes a small step back. Miles regards her cold, amused. He turns on his heel and exits, his heavy shoes clattering on the marble tile. Susan looks at the floor, defeated, takes a breath, looks up, her voice barely above a whisper.

SUSAN

I need your help.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - KITCHEN - LATER

The WHISTLING of a TEA KETTLE.

Susan sets two mugs on the island.

EMILY

It comes out to about \$3500 for twelve cleansings -- one a month, for a year.

SUSAN

Miles will kill me if we wait that long.

EMILY

I do have a more intense program. Something I reserve for my most pressing cases.

SUSAN

I think it's clear we're in dire straits.

EMILY

Two cleansings a week, for the next six weeks. It's aggressive, but--

SUSAN

You'll start tomorrow.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - DAY

The Grown Up arrives at Carterhook Manor for her first day of work. She unpacks her supplies - her sage and lavender and rosemary. Her salts. Her rags.

CLEANSING MONTAGE; Emily lights SAGE; she sprinkles SEA SALT in front of CLOSET DOORS; puts HANDFULS of ROSEMARY and LAVENDER into POT of BOILING WATER; wipes the WALLS and FLOORS, doing away with COBWEBS and DUST.

EMILY (V.O.)

Mostly I came during the day, when Miles was at school and Susan was at work. I lit my sage and sprinkled my sea salt. I boiled my lavender and rosemary, and I wiped down the house, walls and floors.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LATER

Finished with her rituals, Emily looks around. She's never been in a house this *fancy* before.

EMILY (V.O.)
Also I nosed around.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen she opens the fridge, the DRINKS arranged in perfect rows, the gourmet OLIVES, CORNICHONS, HEIRLOOM TOMATOES, crisp WHITE WINE.

It's a designer fridge.

Everything in the pantry is labeled, organized, alphabetized. Bread. Cereal. Crackers. Flour. Sugar. Salt.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER CLOSET - LATER

She walks through Susan's closet, the items color-coordinated and arranged according to category.

The colors muted; black, white, navy, grey.

Insanely organized.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Heated floors. Lush towels. Expensive lotions and potions in crystal bottles.

A CLOTH SHOWER CURTAIN. Emily fingers it, appreciatively.

The his and her vanity mirrors surrounded by little round bulbs that give off a soft, glowing light.

A single tube of TOM FORD LIPSTICK sits on a MOTHER OF PEARL TRAY. Emily fingers it's beautiful shiny black surface. The shade is named *PRIVILEGE*.

Emily applies the SOFT PINK SHADE to her lips in the mirror.

A different, better life stares back at her.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed is perfectly made, HOSPITAL CORNERS. An abundance of THROW PILLOWS.

On one night stand a neat STACK of BOOKS; WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING, EXPECTING BETTER.

Emily pulls back the sheets. They have been *ironed*. She runs her hand over the cool fabric.

Next to her, on the other NIGHT STAND a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of Susan, wearing a white button down, posed, somber.

Susan watches Emily from inside the frame, accusingly.

Emily remakes the bed. Hurries out.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LIBRARY - LATER

Emily scans the BOOKS - the titles are familiar. She congratulates herself for having read so many of them.

On the far side of the room a BEAUTIFUL OLD TRUNK. Emily approaches it. IT'S LOCKED. She considers picking the lock, but decides against it

She pulls down a copy of *No Name*, and curls into the leather chair with a satisfied sigh.

This is better than anything she could have hoped for.

Emily Kent has arrived.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily paces excitedly, drinking WINE from IDENTICAL STEM-WARE we saw at Susan's.

Dale sits on a LAWN CHAIR eating CORNICHONS out of a JAR. He regards them suspiciously.

EMILY

Their house has a *name*. Like Manderlay or Otranto or Thornfield Hall. A true sign of wealth and sophistication. And the shower curtain, it's *cloth*, no cheap holey plastic in sight.

DALE

Why are these pickles so small?

EMILY

Those are *cornichons*.

DALE

They're gross.

EMILY

They're French, Dale.

DALE

So lemme get this straight. You're tricking this broad into believing you have some magical powers so her son stops spooking her?

EMILY

I'm earning money to publish my novel.

DALE

I dunno. Seems kinda shady if you ask me.

EMILY

I didn't ask you. But since we're on the topic, this is what writers do. We have to hunt for stories, break out of our comfort zone, find characters in unexpected places. This what I call inspiration.

(Beat.)

You know, Susan would make a great fictional character.

Emily takes a thoughtful sip of wine.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I thought it would be fun to become Susan's friend. But I wonder what it's like to actually *be* Susan.

INT. FOUR SEASONS - BAR - NIGHT

Emily, wearing a CRISP WHITE BUTTON DOWN, her hair in a tight BUN, is perched nervously at the bar. A small HANDBAG next to her.

Emily's POV: Two ELEGANT WOMEN greet each other with double cheek kisses. The glint of DIAMONDS in low light. A WAD of CASH held with a GOLD MONEY CLIP pulled from a TROUSER POCKET. AMBER LIQUID poured into BACARAT TUMBLERS. A PRESSED WHITE NAPKIN draped over the BARTENDER'S forearm.

Emily is woefully out of her league.

The BARTENDER places a SILVER TRAY with small bowls filled with OLIVES, NUTS, CRUDITE and CHIPS in front of Emily.

EMILY

Oh. I didn't order this.

BARTENDER

It's complimentary.

A long, uncomfortable silence.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Can I offer you a cocktail?

Emily looks around uncertainly.

EMILY

I'll wait for my date.

BARTENDER

Very well.

Emily checks her PHONE. No texts. She pulls a COMPACT from her purse and a LIPSTICK; "PRIVILEGE" by TOM FORD.

She opens the compact and applies several layers onto her already made-up pout.

IN THE COMPACT: she sees Michael hurrying towards her. Emily's eyes light up.

MICHAEL

I'm so sorry I'm late.

Michael kisses both of Emily's cheeks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You look beautiful. More buttoned up than usual, might I add.

EMILY

Do you like the white? It makes me feel in control.

Michael takes in her comment. Surprised? We can't quite tell.

MICHAEL

They make a sublime Manhattan here. Shall I order us a round?

INT. FOUR SEASONS - BAR - LATER

Michael and Emily sip their Manhattans.

EMILY

I recently started Collins' *No Name*. The thing I love about his work is that his characters are constantly wondering what sort of story they are living, and their ability to alter the story. To change their lives.

MICHAEL

I don't want to talk about books.

EMILY

Oh. I see.

MICHAEL

I want to talk about you. Your story. Tell me something about Emily Kent that no one else knows.

EMILY

Tell me something about Michael Audley that no one else knows.

MICHAEL

Well, I got some exciting news today. My book is being given a Peabody Award.

EMILY

A Peabody? Next to the Pulitzer and the Nobel, it's among academia's highest honors.

Michael shrugs, bashful.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Congratulations. You're a big deal.

MICHAEL

I wouldn't go that far.

EMILY

That's why you told me. So that I think you're smart, powerful. Virile.

MICHAEL

I want you to think the best of me. Despite our circumstances.

EMILY

I know you're a good man.

MICHAEL

And you? What kind of woman are you?

EMILY

Isn't it better if I am your No Name? A blank canvas for your fantasies? An empty vessel to fill up with your desires?

Emily unbuttons one of her pearly white buttons.

Michael swallows hard. Aroused. His phone buzzes with a text. He ignores it. He leans in, puts his hand on her thigh.

MICHAEL

I want to take you upstairs. I want to picture my life with you. I want to be inside you. I want--

Michael's phone buzzes another text and another in quick succession a few more.

He looks at his phone.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I have to go. I...

He throws a CRISP 100 DOLLAR BILL on the bar. He rushes out.

Emily stares at the bill. After a moment, she pockets it.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Emily rides Dale. Closes her eyes, seeing Michael. She hears snippets of Dale's gym-centric dirty talk.

DALE

Yes... Engage your core... Sink down into those glutes...

Emily puts her HAND over Dale's MOUTH.

DALE (CONT'D)

Mmmhmm. Keep it pinched... beast mode babe...

Emily shoves a SHEET in Dale's MOUTH. She focuses on the Michael. Grinds her hips into Dale. Comes with a scream.

INT. DALE'S SOUPED UP 1988 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX - LATER

Dale and Emily pull up in front of a WHITE CLAPBOARD house in a MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD.

In the distance, the Radcliffe Bridge, separating the haves from the have-nots.

DALE
This is it babe.

EMILY
What's it?

DALE
I put an offer on this house.

EMILY
Congratulations.

DALE
For us. Three bedrooms. Two baths.
Enough room in the back for an
above ground pool. Whaddaya think?

EMILY
I finished my novel. I'm going to
send it to all the major New York
publishers. I think it's good
enough to be a best-seller.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - DINING ROOM - DUSK

Emily wipes the floorboards with her rags vigorously.

Suddenly a searing pain in her hand.

She pulls her hand back, she is bleeding, a deep cut in her middle finger. She wraps it tightly in one of her spare rags, watching the blood seep through.

Emily senses a presence behind her. She turns around.

Her eyes scan the growing darkness. Nothing.

The CHANDELIER swings above, back and forth, back and forth.

Illuminating her, darkening her, illuminating her, darkening her.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - ANOTHER DAY

Emily stands outside of Miles' room, debating. Makes a decision, picks the lock, pushes the door open-

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MILES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Heavy drapes keep the light out. A single wood-framed bed pushed against the far wall. Hospital corners. Inside the closet, three identical sets of Miles' SCHOOL UNIFORM hang limply.

It's all very Edward Gorey.

On the bedside table several editions of **THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE CHRONICLES** by **MAGDALENA VANSTONE**.

Next to the books, an elaborately carved WOODEN BOX. Emily picks it up curiously, sits down on the bed.

The bed CREAKS. Emily jumps, startled.

She opens the box. Inside a set of SMALL TEETH. A fistful of BLONDE HAIR.

A few POLAROIDs face down. Emily turns them over - VOYEURISTIC PHOTOS of SUSAN - taken from outside her bedroom window.

Emily hears FOOTSTEPS in the hallway.

She shoves the items back in the box. She puts the box back on the bedside table, her breath quickening.

The FOOTSTEPS grow closer.

Emily slips out of the room.

The hallway is empty, save for a BLANK POLAROID lying in the middle of the hallway. A silent threat.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily uneasily counts the MONEY Susan has paid her. She stashes it under her mattress.

She begins composing a text to MICHAEL. Hesitates. Puts her phone down.

Lies in bed, eyes wide open, staring at the WATER STAIN.

The stain MORPHS into a WOMAN who looks like SUSAN. MICE crawl over her body. First just one, then a few more, then dozens and dozens. She laughs, hysterical. Emily blinks. It's just a stain.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - FORTUNE DEN - DAY

Emily's FINGER is BANDAGED. She clumsily shuffles a deck of TAROT CARDS. Viveca enters, notices her injury.

VIVECA

What the hell happened to your finger? If you were still beating off dudes, an injury like that could put you of commission for a week.

EMILY

I cut my finger cleansing Susan's house. It was weird. When it happened, it felt like the house was pleased or something.

VIVECA

Pleased? A house can't be pleased. That's crazy talk, nerdy.

EMILY

I've started to dread my trips to Carterhook Manor. I know it sounds crazy, but I really think it could be haunted. And that stepson Miles, he might very well be a psycho killer.

VIVECA

I wish I could say I hate to say I told ya so. But I told ya so. I ain't gettin' involved in this racket. You're on your own nerdy. This is exactly what happens when you think your shit don't stink.

EMILY

Like Icarus, I flew too close to the sun.

VIVECA

Who?

Emily shakes her head. The idiocy of some people.

EMILY

Nevermind. I only have a couple of cleansings left. I'll grin and bare it. It'll be worth it in the long run.

VIVECA

Guess all that dick doesn't seem so bad anymore, huh?

Emily shakes her head annoyed, reaches for some NEOSPORIN.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - KITCHEN - DAY

Emily boils lavender over the hot stove, her cheeks are flushed from the heat. She feels a presence behind her. She turns to find Miles, wearing his school uniform, a smirk on his face, holding her prized copy of *The Turn of the Screw*.

A slow smiles spreads across his face.

MILES

You like ghost stories?

EMILY

Why are you home Miles? You're supposed to be at school.

MILES

I've been studying you. You're interesting. You know something bad is going to happen, right?

He takes a step towards her. Emily instinctively takes a step back. He moves closer still.

EMILY

I'm trying to help.

MILES

But you agree? You feel it? Evil?

EMILY

I feel it.

Miles turns his attention to the pot, traces his finger along the edge, then snatches it away, pink from the heat.

MILES

You don't look how I thought you'd look. Up close. I thought you'd be... sexy. You look like a babysitter.

Emily takes a step back.

EMILY

Are you trying to scare me Miles?

Her eyes dart towards the burner, the pot of boiling water sitting precariously between them.

MILES

Silly, stupid Emily. I'm trying to help you. I don't want you around Susan. If you come back, you will die. I don't want to say more than that. But I've warned you.

Miles turns on his heel and leaves the room. As soon as Emily hears his footsteps disappear up the stairs, she grabs the pot of boiling water, pouring it hastily down the drain, and rushes into--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She grabs her purse and keys off the console. A foul ODOR.

Emily looks inside of her bag - it is filled with VOMIT. Miles' sick covers everything inside - WALLET, PHONE, KEYS, business CARDS.

Susans bangs in the door, frantic, breathless.

SUSAN

Is he here? Are you okay? School called, said Miles never showed. He must have walked in the front door and straight out the back. He doesn't like it that you're here. Did he say anything to you?

Before Emily can answer, a loud SMASH upstairs, and then a blood-curdling SCREAM.

Emily and Susan exchange a look, run up the stairs.

Hanging from the expensive CHANDELIER, a PRIMITIVE FIGURE made of cloth, it's face drawn in magic marker. A noose fashioned from red thread.

From Miles room, a continuous haunted WAILING.

MILES (O.S.)

Nooooo! You bitch. You bitch!

Susan shakily plucks the figure from the light fixture, her eyes welling with tears.

SUSAN

I thought this was me at first. But
I don't have brown hair.

EMILY

I think it's me.

SUSAN

I'm so tired of being afraid.

EMILY

I know.

SUSAN

You don't. But you will.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LATER

Emily works maniacally, washing every square inch of the house with rosemary and lavender.

Miles' SCREAMS pierce the dead air, punctured by Susan's violent SOBS.

Emily continues to work; smudging sage, repeating her magical gibberish words like prayer.

The screams intensify.

The wails sharpen.

Emily's heart pounds in her chest.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - NIGHT

Dusk.

Emily unlocks her CAR, exhausted, hands trembling. She gets inside, she turns the key to start the engine, but it stalls. She turns it again. It stalls.

Suddenly, an **OLDER WOMAN**, 60s, well-powdered and plump-cheeked knocks on Emily's window, **STARTLING HER**, motions to Emily to roll down her window. Emily obliges.

OLDER WOMAN

I just want to thank you for what
you are doing for this family. For
helping little Miles.

EMILY

I haven't done anything.

The Older Woman pantomimes locking her lips, scurries away.

Emily watches her go.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily tries to read. She wears multiple sweaters. She shivers, despondent, jittery. Her eyes flit around the room, searching for danger.

A KNOCK at the door, startling her. Emily peers through the peep-hole. A WARPED Dale stands, fidgeting in the hallway, carrying a BOUQUET OF CARNATIONS.

Emily unlatches the chain. Opens the door. Dale enters, handing her the flowers.

EMILY

Thanks for coming over. I don't know. I couldn't be alone tonight.

DALE

Em that kid seems like a dangerous creep. And you hurt yourself. Why are you still working there?

EMILY

Susan and her husband poured millions of dollars into a house that made them resentful of one another instead of happy. A house that reeks of misery and depravity. Money is wasted on the rich, Dale. But why should it be? I want a cut too. I deserve it. If I can get through this, maybe I have a chance at something better. At a life like Susan's. Maybe I'm risking everything, but without this? My life is hopeless.

DALE

It's not hopeless. I wanna marry you Em. I want us to have our very own chain of Crossfits, a buncha kids and an RV for camping in the summertime.

EMILY

Imagine we were sitting in that RV--

She looks Dale in the eye.

EMILY (CONT'D)

What on earth would we say to each other?

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily lies in bed. She rolls over - coming face to face with the WATER STAIN - it has grown. It now covers the CEILING and the WALL next to her bed. It has turned a sickening RED, like a RUSTY TIDAL POOL. Emily touches it tentatively.

EMILY (V.O.)

This stain reminded me of my mother. Of my old life. All the transactions - this for that, that for this - and none of it had made any difference until now. Once the transaction was complete, my mind was a blank. But Susan Burke and her family, they stuck with me. Susan Burke and her family and that house.

Emily crosses the room, opens her lap top. She types PATRICK CARTERHOOK into the search engine. a LINK from a UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: *Victorian True Crime: The Grisly Tale of the Patrick Carterhook Family.*

Emily clicks on the link.

WE FLASHBACK (in the hands of a skilled director) and watch the ominous history of CARTERHOOK MANOR unfurl, it is MILES who narrates the story.

Miles, who has invaded Emily's psyche, the demonic presence that occupies her thoughts.

MILES (V.O.)

The year is 1893, and department-store magnate Patrick Carterhook moves into his splendid Gilded Age mansion in the heart of the city with his lovely wife, Margaret, their son, Robert and their daughter Penelope. Robert was a troubled, violent boy, and by age fourteen, he proved unable to control himself. The Carterhooks chose to keep him away from society: In 1895 they locked him inside the mansion.

(MORE)

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Robert steadily grew more vicious in his gloomy, gilded prison. He smeared his family's belongings with his own excrement and vomit. A nursemaid was sent to the hospital with unexplained bruises; she never returned. No one knows exactly what went on in that house the night of January 7, 1897, but the bloody results are indisputable. Patrick Carterhook was discovered stabbed to death in his bed; his body was pocked with 117 knife wounds. Patrick's wife, Margaret, was found struck down by an ax - still in her back - as she was fleeing up the stairs to the attic, and young Penelope, age two, was found drowned in a bathtub. Robert hanged himself from a beam in his room. He had apparently dressed up for the occasion: he wore a blue Sunday suit, covered in his parents' blood. It was still wet from drowning his little sister.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN: A PHOTO of the CARTERHOOKS. A slender MAN in his forties, his white-blond WIFE, their youngest DAUGHTER an imprint of the mother, and the older SON... a shock of dark hair, piercing black eyes...

Emily stares at it, takes a sharp breath in.

EMILY (V.O.)

Miles. Not a perfect match, but the essence was exact: the smugness, the superiority, the threat. Miles.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - HAND JOB NOOK - DAY

A gaunt, tired Emily jerks Michael off. He's sporting a five o'clock shadow. She's lost weight. The blades of her shoulders sharp, her skin mushroom pale, violet pouches under her eyes.

MICHAEL

Hope you don't mind the beard.
Didn't get a chance to shave.

EMILY

Looks nice.

MICHAEL

I apologize about the way we left things last time.

EMILY

I thought there was something between us.

MICHAEL

There is. But my life is complicated. You know that.

EMILY

Doesn't mean I have to like it.

MICHAEL

I'm glad I get to see you before I hit the road again for the Peabodys in Charleston.

EMILY

Yeah.

Emily speeds up her stroke.

MICHAEL

Emily, stop.

Michael stops her hand. Sits up, zips up his pants.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You can talk to me.

Emily sighs heavily.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Come on.

EMILY

Why do you love the horror novels we read, so much?

MICHAEL

Gothic villains represent the darkest parts of ourselves. They're a mirror. A warbled, dusty mirror, but a mirror nonetheless. The reason the monsters seem unstoppable? Why they're always one step ahead? Why they tap right into our nightmares?

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's because they're basically just an extension of ourselves. We are all haunted by our own demons.

EMILY

You don't seem to have any demons.

MICHAEL

I hide them well.

EMILY

Mine aren't so well hidden.

MICHAEL

That's what I like about you. Your darkness lurks just below the surface. Sometimes I feel like I can touch it.

EMILY

And what about houses? Can they be born bad, like people? Can a house be disturbed? Deranged? Like Eleanor? Mad in its very guts?

MICHAEL

I guess the answer lies once again with the person. The inhabitant of the house. The supernatural attacks when minds are the weakest.

EMILY

Meaning?

MICHAEL

If you recognize the demon, if you let it in, it has the ability to bring you fear, to inflict pain. To interfere with your life. The demon is your mind.

EMILY

And if you reject it? If you never acknowledge it to begin with?

MICHAEL

Then you're always in control.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Emily sleeps fitfully. She dreams vividly.

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A heavy FIGURE, it's back to us, sits at Susan's kitchen table. A baby wails in the background. Emily approaches, tentatively. The figure turns--

REVEAL; EMILY'S MOTHER. One eye a grotesque socket, empty, dry, rotting like meat, filled with maggots. The other eye, stares at Emily, hungrily. She is ugly and chinless. She reaches her gnarled hands towards Emily, begging.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Come to Momma. Please, baby. Come.

Emily shakes her head, frightened.

A wild laugh escapes Emily's mother.

EMILY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

You're too good for me, Emily? Too good for me you fool? You're not too good. You're just like me.

Her voice rises crazily, taunting.

EMILY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

You're just like me. You're just like me, you stupid bitch. Just like me. Stupid bitch. Just like me.

Emily tries to speak but words get caught in her throat. The BABY'S WAILING intensifies to a HOWL.

Emily's Mother stands, pushing her chair back, LUNGING at Emily her rough hands wrapping around her throat. Squeezing--

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Emily thrashes violently. Wakes from her nightmare with a start.

Outside, a thunderstorm swirls, violent.

She gets out of bed, dresses hurriedly.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - NIGHT

Emily knocks on the door. The rain beats down heavily. Susan opens the door, her depthless grey eyes glassy, her skin sallow and pale.

She wears her HIGH HEELS, as always.

SUSAN

You are psychic. It's gotten worse.
It's not stopping.

She leads Emily inside, collapsing on a couch in the living room.

EMILY

Is Miles here?

Susan nods, trembling.

SUSAN

Miles told me last night, quite calmly that he was going to kill me and the baby.

She wraps her arms around herself, begins to cry.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And I actually worry because...
Wilkie... oh god.

A CAT pads into the room, slow and worn.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Look what he did to poor Wilkie!

The cat's back haunches with only a frayed tuft of hair.

EMILY

He cut off his tail?

Susan nods, her eyes wide with fear and exhaustion.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Susan do you have a laptop? I need to show you something.

CUT TO:

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LIBRARY

Susan and Emily sit in front of a laptop, their faces glow, the story of the Carterhooks displayed on the blue screen.

EMILY

Does Robert Carterhook remind you of anyone?

Susan nods, as if in a trance.

SUSAN
What does it mean?

EMILY
Susan, I like you. I don't like many people. I want the best for your family. And I don't think it's me.

SUSAN
What are you talking about?

EMILY
There is something wrong with this house. It's bigger than me, I can't help you. I think you should leave. I don't care what your husband says.

SUSAN
But if we leave... Miles is still with us.

EMILY
Yes.

SUSAN
Then he'll be cured? If he leaves this house?

EMILY
Susan, I don't know. But I'm not qualified to fix this. I think you need to leave tonight. Go to a hotel. Get two rooms. Lock the adjoining door. And then... we'll figure it out. But all I can really do for you is be your friend.

Susan stands dizzily, overwhelmed, holding her throat.

SUSAN
Excuse me.

She rushes out the door.

EMILY (V.O.)
No parties here for me. No referrals to rich, nervous friends. I was ruining my big chance; I gave her an answer she didn't want. But I felt, for the first time in my life, decent. Not telling-myself-I-am decent, but actually decent.
(MORE)

EMILY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Like maybe badness wasn't baked
 into my DNA. Like I wasn't rotting
 from the inside.

Susan flickers past the door again, and a moment later, Miles behind her. Emily yells out;

EMILY
 Susan!

Emily stands, rushes towards the DOOR, peers down the dark hallway. She hears URGENT, ANGRY MURMERS and then... nothing. She fears the worst.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Susan! Watch out!

She yells into the BLACK HALLWAY. Miles appears at the door, blocking the exit.

MILES
 I told you not to ever come back
 here, and you came back – you came
 back again and again. You know
 you're going to die right?

Emily backs away from him, trying to keep her voice steady.

EMILY
 Where's your step-mom Miles? What
 did you do with Susan?

MILES
 You still don't understand, do you?
 Tonight is when we die.

EMILY
 I'm sorry Miles, I didn't mean to
 upset you.

He laughs, his eyes crinkling. Complete mirth.

MILES
 No, you misunderstand me. She's
 going to *kill you*. Susan is going
 to kill you *and* me. Look around
 this room. Do you think you're here
 by accident? Look closely. Look at
 the books.

Emily approaches a shelf, her hands tracing the hundreds of volumes; *Rebecca, The Woman in White, The Turn of the Screw, The Haunting of Hill House.*

EMILY (V.O.)

I wasn't a well-read bookworm; I was just a dumb whore in the right library.

Emily turns to face Miles.

He pulls a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH from THE ETERNALLY LOCKED TRUNK, handing it to Emily. Inside the TRUNK are DOZENS of FRAMED PHOTOS - this is where Susan has been hiding the evidence.

Miles hands the PHOTO to Emily. She looks at it; the summer sunset behind a bride and groom on their wedding day.

The BRIDE is a radiant, stunning Susan.

The GROOM? **MICHAEL AUDLEY.**

MILES

Susan is going to kill you. And I'm pretty sure she's going to kill me too.

EMILY

What do you mean?

MILES

She's calling 911 right now. She told me to stall you. When she comes upstairs, she's going to shoot you, and she's going to tell the cops one of two things. One: You are a con artist who claims she has psychic powers in order to prey on the emotionally vulnerable. You told Susan you could help her mentally unstable son - and she trusted you - but instead, all you've been doing is coming into the house and stealing from her. When she confronted you, you became violent, you shot me, she shot you in self-defense.

EMILY

I don't like that at all. What's the other option?

MILES

You are legit. You really did believe that the house was haunting me. But it turned out I'm just a run-of-the-mill teen sociopath. You pushed me too hard, I killed you.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

She and I struggled with the gun,
she shot me in self-defense.

EMILY

Why would she want to kill you?

MILES

She doesn't like me, she never has.
I'm not her son. She tried to pack
me off to my mom, but my mom has
zero interest. Then she tried to
ship me to boarding school but my
dad said no. She definitely would
like me dead. It's just how she is,
how she makes her living: She
defines and eliminates problems.

Bewildered, Emily turns this story over in her mind.

EMILY

But she seems so-

MILES

Mousy? She's not. She wanted you to
think that. She's a beautiful,
successful executive. She's a
goddamn overdog. But you needed to
feel like you were preying on
someone weaker than you. That you
had the upper hand. I mean, am I
wrong? Isn't that your whole
business? Manipulating the
manipulatable?

EMILY

Susan wants to kill me because of
your dad?

MILES

Susan and my Dad were a Norman
Rockwell painting, the perfect
couple living in the perfect house,
and you ripped the fantasy to
shreds.

Emily's voice rises. Panic.

EMILY

Does your Dad know I'm here?

MILES

No. But once my dad learns we're
dead, hears Susan's story?

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

Once she tells him about being so scared, and coming across the business card for the psychic in his copy of Rebecca, and desperately asking her to help... imagine that guilt. His kid is dead because he wanted a hand job. His wife was forced to kill because he got a hand job. He'll never be able to make it up to her. Which is the point

EMILY

That's how she found me? My business card?

As Miles speaks, we watch the EVENTS HE DESCRIBES UNFOLD. They have a DREAM-LIKE QUALITY, appearing in GRAINY FLASHES, as if Emily is watching a FILM.

Susan DUSTS the LIBRARY, A CARD falls out of *Rebecca*; Susan stares at the CARD, perplexed;

MILES (V.O.)

Yes. She thought it was odd. My dad loves ghost stories, but he's the world's biggest skeptic - he'd never see a palm reader. Unless... she wasn't really a palm reader. She followed him.

-- A RAINY Tuesday afternoon, Michael's LEXUS pulls out of WOLFENBACH CONSULTING OFFICES, splashes through a puddle, drives towards DOWNTOWN, a few seconds later, SUSAN pulls out behind him, following him

-- Susan watches Michael enter SPIRITUAL PALMS, a woman pushing a baby stroller walks by, a dog barks somewhere in the distance.

MILES (V.O.)

She made an appointment. And then you were reading his copy of *The Woman in White*, and she knew.

-- VIVECA answers the phone at SPIRITUAL PALMS, makes an appointment for SUSAN BURKE.

-- THE GROWN UP sits at the round table at Spiritual Palms, reading THE WOMAN IN WHITE, hears the clacking of heels, looks up, smiling warmly.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Miles PACES in front of Emily, urgently.

MILES

My Dad and Susan were trying to get pregnant. She would ovulate, they would fuck missionary like a couple of metronomes, and then... nothing. He was leaving all his good sperm crumpled on a wetnap at Spiritual Palms.

EMILY

But Susan is pregnant. She got what she wanted. My relationship with Michael is purely... transactional. I swear.

MILES

Even if that's true, Susan needs to make sure that my dad would be the best father ever. Michael, Susan and Poppy would be the picture perfect family. But you and I? We're black marks, stains on her pristine, perfect life.

Emily looks around. The library, the walls of books which were once so inviting now feel... claustrophobic. Her breath quickens. A cold sweat on her brow. She moves to the door-

EMILY

I have to get out of here.

MILES

Yes. We leave tonight.

EMILY

We? I want nothing to do with any of you. I work alone.

Miles holds up a SMALL METAL OBJECT.

MILES

Well good luck getting out of here without the spark plug to your car.

Susan's heels CLATTER up the stairs, moving fast.

SUSAN

Emily! Don't move! I'm coming.

Emily looks around, scared, searching for an alternate exit.

Miles grabs her HAND.

MILES

I'm your only option. Come on. We
have to get out. Now.

The duo run out into--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Susan is rushing down the hallway towards them.

SUSAN

Where are you going? Emily! Don't
listen to anything he says, he's a
psycopath. A dangerous demon child.

Miles pulls on her hand. Gripping it tightly.

MILES

Come on Emily! Let's go!

SUSAN

He's a liar! He'll kill you!

Emily hesitates. She looks between Susan and Miles. Susan all
in white, her hand extended towards Emily. She looks almost
ANGELIC.

Emily looks towards Miles - dark, angry, his expression
BLANK. BEHIND HIM, hanging from the stairs the EMILY VOODOO
DOLL he made.

Miles GRABS Emily's BAD WRIST roughly.

MILES

Let's go!

Emily SCREAMS OUT in pain. She pulls her arm away sending
MILES flying back, tumbling down the STAIRS.

He lands in a crumpled heap.

SUSAN

Come on! Now's our chance. Let's
go!

Emily SCRAMBLES after Susan into--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Susan slams the door shut, and LOCKS IT.

The sound of water running comes from the BATHROOM. WATER leaks into the MASTER BEDROOM.

SUSAN

Shit! I was running a bath. My floors are ruined!

EMILY

That doesn't matter now.

Susan nods.

SUSAN

There's a door in the closet that leads to the back stairs. I'll meet you in there.

Emily turns, and moves towards the closet. Susan stops her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Thank you Emily. This nightmare is almost over. We'll be safe soon.

Susan squeezes Emily's hand.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Emily rifles through Susan's clothes looking for the door.

She pushes aside a pile of PRESSED WHITE SHIRTS - and there it is - shorter than a normal size door, but large enough for her to fit through. Success. She kneels in front of it. Reaches for the knob.

AND THEN--

The BARREL OF A GUN enters the frame. Mother of pearl. Ladylike. White.

She presses it to EMILY'S TEMPLE. Emily takes a sharp breath inward.

SUSAN

Stand up.

Emily doesn't move.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I said get the fuck up.

EMILY

Don't kill me. Please.

SUSAN

Put your grubby little cum-mitts
where I can see them.

Emily puts her hands up, trembling.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Did your psychic powers see this
coming? Did you smell the malice?
How did it present to you? Putrid
and wet? Like semen, perhaps? What
good is seeing the future if you
don't have the power to change it?

EMILY

Susan. Please don't do this. I came
here tonight because I wanted to
help you. I wanted do the right
thing.

SUSAN

The right thing? You've been
knuckle shuffling my husband's cock
while I lean in at the office
vaulting the corporate ladder. In
my free time, I wake up at 5am to
keep my abs tight and my skin taut.
Eight hours at the hair salon to
achieve ice blonde. I shoot myself
up with hormones so my last lazy
ovary - the only lethargic part of
me - can get a move on. And still
my husband steps out on me. But I
am not a woman who breaks under the
weight of his absence. No. I have a
bloodthirsty sense of justice.

EMILY

If you kill me your picture perfect
life will be shattered.

Susan cocks the pistol in her hand, cocks her head to the
side.

SUSAN

Really? When was the last time
someone came looking for a dead
hooker?

CLOSE on Susan's finger, pressing slowly on the trigger.

CLOSE on Emily, eyes twitching, breath quickening. The barrel
of the gun against her temple.

And suddenly in a BLUR Miles appears at the door with the VICTORIAN ERA PROSTHETIC ARM raised high above his head.

He slams it down on SUSAN'S HEAD.

CRACK.

Her FACE CONTORTS WITH PAIN. She hits the ground, the GUN dislodges from her grasp and SLIDES away.

Miles STRIKES her in the face again, leaving a SCRATCH along her cheek.

Emily scrambles towards the gun, but Susan KICKS HER in the stomach. Susan SLAMS Emily's head into the ground and then GRABS the GUN, gets on her feet.

Emily pulls herself up and RUSHES towards the adjoining MASTER BATHROOM, it's WHITE TILES blinding, TUB overflowing, the ground WET and SLIPPERY.

A STRUGGLE ENSUES between MILES AND EMILY AND SUSAN. Emily manages to PUSH Susan into the tub.

Emily holds her HEAD firmly under the water.

Susan thrashes, scratching at Emily.

Emily SLAMS Susan's head against the tub. Holds it in place. Determined.

Miles watches.

Susan struggles.

Emily pushes harder, further. Susan's beautiful blonde mane floats like a halo around her head.

Susan's body jerks, shakes.

Emily holds firm.

SUSAN SHUDDERS ONCE, TWICE, THEN LIES STILL.

Silence.

Emily lets go of Susan, who's body slumps LIFELESS into the TUB.

SUSAN IS DEAD.

A suspended moment.

Miles and Emily stare at each other, gauging, assessing.

In the distance SIRENS WAIL.

MILES
You killed her.

Emily stares at Miles. The NATURAL WORLD DROWNED OUT,
replaced by a DULL RINGING.

THE RINGING CONTINUES OVER--

-- Emily and Miles roll Susan's body in a THICK, WHITE BATH
MAT.

-- Emily and Miles STRUGGLE under the weight of SUSAN'S BODY
as they carry her down the stairs.

-- Wilkie watches as they load Susan's body into the TRUNK of
EMILY'S MUSTANG.

-- Emily and Miles get in the car.

-- A shot of CARTERHOOK MANOR framed against the BLACK NIGHT.

INT. EMILY'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

The dull ringing CONTINUES. Emily drives, CATATONIC. Miles is
YELLING AT HER, trying to get her attention.

The LIGHTS of an ONCOMING CAR pass, BLINDING HER. She
squints, THE OTHER DRIVER STARES BACK AT HER. Emily sees--

*EMILY'S MOTHER. One eye a grotesque socket, empty, dry,
rotting like meat. She drives, her hair WILD around her head.
RAIN beating into her car from an open window. LITTLE DROPS
dot her face.*

EMILY'S MOTHER
*I'm proud of you baby. This is who
you really are.*

Emily can't take her eyes off of her.

Suddenly a CAR speeding towards them.

MILES
Emily!

Emily SNAPS OUT OF IT, SLAMS on the breaks. The car SKIDS on
the WET PAVEMENT, steers the wheel trying to regain control.

EXT. EMILY'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

The car spins 180 degrees and comes to a stop on the SHOULDER of the HIGHWAY.

INT. EMILY'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Emily and Miles look at each other, breath heavy, eyes wide.

MILES

What the fuck are you trying to do?
Get us killed?

EMILY

I need a cup of coffee.
(beat.)
And I need to think.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

A single gas pump. A fluorescent sign reads "DINER." A payphone, receiver off the hook, dangles by its cord.

A couple of 18-wheelers parked outside.

INT. REST STOP - DINER - NIGHT

Emily sit at the COUNTER. The air is thick and hot. A film of sweat and dirt covers every surface.

Emily drinks COFFEE. Miles eats PIE.

EMILY

We have to go see your Dad in
Charleston. Get ahead of the story.
It's only a matter of time before
someone realizes Susan is missing.

MILES

Do you think she called the cops?

EMILY

We chatted about her plans for
murder one and then braided each
others hair.

MILES

There's a dead body in the trunk of
that car. Would be good to know if
we were fugitives.

EMILY

We have time but not a lot. If we can convince your father that she disappeared somehow, left you--

MILES

We moved the corpse. Like fucking amateurs.

EMILY

Look, if her body was still there, and she did call the cops, we'd be screwed. We left no evidence and we have some lead time. A day to get our heads on straight and our stories to align. Your Dad is our ticket out of this mess--

MILES

Fine. So we dupe the nutty professor. What do you propose we do with Susan?

EMILY

We dump her. As soon as we get our story straight. We dump her. Somewhere random. Somewhere far away. Somewhere that can't be traced to us.

Just then TWO COPS enter the DINER. Emily and Miles fall silent. They HEELS of their BOOTS and the CLANKING of their GUNS marking their slow steps.

They stop behind Miles and Emily. **OFFICER 1** nods at Emily.

OFFICER 1

Evening Ma'am.

EMILY

Evening.

OFFICER 1

That your car outside?

EMILY

Which one?

The OFFICER looks out the DINER WINDOW. Emily's MUSTANG is the ONLY CAR.

OFFICER 1

The only one parked in the lot.

Emily takes her sweater off, underneath, a revealing tank top. No bra. Miles watches her. So does the Officer.

EMILY

You're makin' me sweat.

He looks Emily up and down slowly. Elevator eyes. Glances over at Miles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I never breast fed. Keeps things...
erect. Plus my ex would get
jealous.

She winks. The officer shifts uncomfortably.

OFFICER 1

You're parked illegally.

EMILY

I'm sorry Officer. We were just
settling up. I'll move it right
away. You have yourself a great
evening.

The Officer nods. Walks off with his PARTNER. Emily signals at the WAITRESS for the check.

Miles FIDDLES with a PLASTIC CONTAINER that has some TOOTHPICKS and CHEAP DINER BUSINESS CARDS in it.

CLOSE on his twitching hand as he does. Emily watches him.

Something in her shifts.

INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT

Emily drives. Rain clatters against the Mustang's tinny rooftop.

Miles' pale face reflects passing headlights like a sickly moon. Raindrops glide from his forehead down his cheeks and off his chin.

EMILY

How did my business card end up in
Rebecca?

MILES

I put it there.

EMILY

Why?

MILES

Part of what Susan said is true: She does think I'm weird. When we moved here - after I told her I didn't want to; I was very clear that I didn't want to - I started making things happen, in the house. Just to screw with her. I made up that website. Me. I made up the story of the Carterhooks.

Emily turns Miles' story around in her mind, inspecting it.

EMILY

So Susan was telling the truth about all the scary things in the house? You really did throw your sitter down the stairs?

MILES

Please. She fell. I'm not violent, I'm just smart.

EMILY

That day, with the vomit in my purse and the fit you had upstairs and the doll hanging from the light?

MILES

The vomit was me because you weren't listening to me. You weren't leaving. The doll too. Also the razor-blade tip in the floorboard that sliced your finger. That's actually an idea inspired by ancient Roman warfare. Have you ever read-

EMILY

No. The screaming you did? You sounded so furious.

MILES

Oh, that was real. Susan had cut up my credit card and left it on my desk. She was trying to wall me in. But then I realized you were my way out of that stupid house. Away from Susan. I set the dominoes up. She just knocked 'em down. Though I didn't foresee this murder one scenario.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

I just thought she'd bang you up a little, try to scare you away.

Emily thinks for a while. Miles stares out the window.

EMILY (V.O.)

The kid was sharper at fifteen than I was at twice his age. I was starting to think this whole going legit, thinking-of-others, benevolent thing was *fer the berds*. Plus, nothing a con girl could use more than a great con kid.

MILES

You know America's first female serial killer lived in Charleston. Lavinia Fisher.

EMILY

How do you know shit like that?

MILES

I'm smart. And I'm obsessed with criminals. That's why I like you.

EMILY

I'm not a criminal.

MILES

Semantics. I go to school with a bunch of automatons. Everyone wants to get straight As and join model UN and get into Harvard. They worship the system.

EMILY

And you?

MILES

I wanna game the system. I want to be Frank Abingdale. Bernie Madoff? That guy was a genius. Lived like a king for forty years and no one gives him a lick of credit for it.

EMILY

Don't you want a regular life?

MILES

Do you?

EMILY

I want a *privileged* life.

MILES

You think you do. Once prettily installed in the lap of luxury. You'll get the itch again. The same itch I have. You'll want to fuck with people. Not cause you're evil. You aren't totally evil. But you're smart. You're smarter than them. That's the big secret all these rich fucks are hiding behind their black cards and their Benzes. They're all basic shit for brains.

EMILY

You can reject it because you've had it. You're a part of it. You've been on the inside.

MILES

What's your point?

EMILY

I'm not gonna know what I think till I've walked a mile in those white high heeled shoes. Till that library is mine. Till I'm amongst the smart people. Till I'm on the inside too.

Miles leans back. Takes her in.

MILES

I guess the only bit of unfinished business is what are we going to tell my Dad?

EXT. BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Emily and Miles stand outside, near the Mustang, watching.

Inside--

A **SEXUALLY AMBIGUOUS TEEN**, drinks coffee sullenly.

A **TRUCKER**, 40s, with a GAUDY BELT BUCKLE scratches at a LOTTO ticket. He's got a rough look.

A **MOUSY WOMAN**, 50s wearing a WOODEN CROSS.

Emily's gaze settles on this last woman. Bingo.

EMILY

When people lie, some tic gives them away. They blink, or break their gaze, or touch their nose with their fingers. Polygraph machines operate on the principle that the physical signs of lying exist inside the body - breaths quicken, heart rates jump.

MILES

So how do you game the system?

EMILY

Passionate conviction. You have to believe what you're saying without reservation. A good lie always starts with a germ of a truth and builds from there.

INT. BUS DEPOT - LATER

Emily chats amicably with the MOUSY WOMAN. A PALE MILES lies on some hard plastic chairs next to her.

Every minutes he SHUDDERS VIOLENTLY.

EMILY

Spent my last dollars traveling down here from Maine. That's where we're from. Came to see about a fancy doctor who claimed he could help my baby.

MOUSY WOMAN

What's wrong with the poor dear?

Emily reaches for Miles' her hand.

EMILY

Few years back he was diagnosed with S. Burke disease. It's a real rare blood disorder. He gets plasma replacement ever three weeks. It's so tough on the poor kid. There's no cure. But we don't have insurance so the fancy doctor couldn't find it in his heart to help. He turned us away. People like that don't care about hillbillies like us.

Emily looks at Miles hopefully.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I just have to trust that the Lord
has a plan for us.

MOUSY WOMAN

He does, my dear.

EMILY

People say that. But it's hard not
to give up hope when you're
invisible.

Miles' head lolls back. He STARES out the WINDOW at the
MUSTANG.

EMILY (CONT'D)

D'you mind watching my baby for a
minute while I run to the rest
room? Sometimes there's loose
change in the tampon dispenser.

(beat)

Every bit counts.

Miles smiles weakly at the Mousy Woman.

INT. BUS DEPOT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A dingy, dirty bathroom. One stall. No toilet paper. An OLD
TAMPON DISPENSER in the corner. The mirror, dusty, warbled
and cracked.

Emily catches sight of herself, pushes a few rogue strands of
HAIR out of her face.

She inspects the TAMPON DISPENSER, slams her hand against it,
with force. Two TAMPONS fall out.

She slips them in the BACK POCKET of her jeans. Enters the
stall, closes the door.

INT. BUS DEPOT - MINUTES LATER

Emily exits the bathroom and Miles is CONVULSING on the
ground. His EYES rolling back in his head.

The MOUSY WOMAN is panicking, screaming.

Emily rushes to Miles, gets on her knees next to him. She
quickly pushes her FINGER into his mouth, CLEARING it of
SALIVA, she then rolls him onto his SIDE.

She reaches into her BACK POCKET, finding an EPI PEN, slamming it into his THIGH.

A tense moment.

The convulsing stops. Miles breath normalizes. His eyes are still closed.

INT. BUS DEPOT - LATER

The MOUSY WOMAN sticks a WAD of CASH in Emily's hand, makes the sign of the cross over her chest.

INT. EMILY'S MUSTANG - LATER

Emily drives. Miles, pale and weak, finally opens his eyes.

He gives Emily a sidelong glance and then grins.

MILES

S. Burke disease. What'd you use for the "medicine."

EMILY

Tampon. Slides into itself. Looks like an epi pen, if you hold it right.

INT. ROADSIDE - GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

CLOSE on a little bell over the door, ringing cheerfully as it opens...

EMILY (V.O.)

I had convinced so many people of so many things over the course of my life, but this would be my greatest feat.

Emily and Miles troll the aisles. A team. Grabbing--

A SHOVEL

A BASEBALL CAP

A TENNIS BALL

PLASTIC SHEETS

DUCT TAPE

INT. ROADSIDE - GENERAL STORE - LATER

Emily sidles up to the counter. A HOT TEENAGER chews gum absently. He checks Emily out. Miles scowls at him.

He rings them up. Emily pulls out a twenty. Points to a PACK OF CIGARETTES over the counter.

EMILY (V.O.)

Not hiding Susan's death, far stupider people have gotten away with murder, but rather convincing myself what I was doing was reasonable. Not decent, but reasonable.

The HOT TEENAGER grabs the CIGARETTES. AS he does, she replaces the TWENTY with a TEN.

He gives her CHANGE for a TWENTY.

Emily and Miles out the door before he realizes his mistake.

INT. EMPTY FIELD - NIGHT

CLOSE on Miles' face. His dark beady eyes shift back and forth nervously.

MILES

Do it.

EMILY

You sure?

She BOUNCES a TENNIS BALL on the ground. HARD.

Miles nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

She ever actually raise a hand to you?

MILES

Every great lie begins with a germ of truth.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

The sun rises. A hopeful new day.

Sort of.

Emily's Mustang speeds down a DESERTED stretch of HIGHWAY. A sign reads CHARLESTON, 50 MILES.

EXT. WENTWORTH MANSION - CHARLESTON - DAY

Establishing. A stately, historic Charleston mansion, converted into a Five Star hotel.

Emily and Miles pull up outside, park the car. Gets out.

Miles wears a BASEBALL CAP.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - RESTAURANT - DAY

Michael sits across from Emily and Miles. Miles looks down at his hands, his face hidden by a BASEBALL CAP.

Michael's face etched with concern.

EMILY

After our drink at the Four Seasons, I couldn't get you out of my head. I looked through the University's faculty directory to find out where you lived.

Emily looks down.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm so ashamed.

MICHAEL

It's alright.

EMILY

I was only planning on texting you if I saw your car outside the house. Telling you to meet me. I didn't want to cause a scene. But there Miles was. Sitting on the curb. Sad. Alone. Abandoned. I know what that feels like.

MICHAEL

I still don't understand how you ended up here. *Together.*

Emily touches Miles' arm.

EMILY

Show him.

Miles shakes his head. Emily LEANS IN, whispers something in his ear.

Miles takes off his BASEBALL CAP, looks up, REVEALING a BLACK EYE.

Michael GASPS at the sight of his son.

MICHAEL

What the hell happened to you?

MILES

Susan and I got in a fight and she hit me. She took off in her car and locked me out of the house.

MICHAEL

What did you fight about?

MILES

She told me she wouldn't bring me here. I couldn't come to see you accept your award. I told her you were my hero. She said she didn't care. She said once Poppy came along your new family would be cemented and I would be on my own.

MICHAEL

You must have pushed her. Triggered her somehow. You're not innocent in all of this. You've been torturing her for months. Tell me what you did.

MILES

What I did? What about what you did? You left me in that house with that woman! Every day she reminds me that I'm a worthless little shit. The fly in her lemonade. So maybe I fuck with her a little. Scare her into thinking our house is haunted. But she's the parent. I'm the child. She's supposed to stick around and so are you. When are you going to remember that?

Miles' lower lip quivers, eyes flashing, genuinely hurt. Michael looks around the restaurant *embarrassed*.

Emily puts her hand over his.

EMILY

Why don't we all calm down? Take a deep breath.

Michael rises abruptly.

MICHAEL

I need to get in touch with Susan.

Emily and Miles exchange a look.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - LOBBY - DAY

Michael DIALS Susan repeatedly. No answer.

EXT. WENTWORTH MANSION - PARKING LOT - DAY

Emily's Mustang parked outside. Susan's body in the trunk.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Michael returns to where Emily and Miles sit.

MICHAEL

She's not picking up. She was supposed to be here hours ago.

MILES

She's not coming. She told me if I was here she wouldn't be. She's gone, Dad. But I'm still here.

Miles' voice cracks he begins to cry. Michael looks around helpless.

Emily envelops Miles in an embrace. Caring. Mothering.

EMILY

It's been a long day. We drove all night so Miles could come see you. I'm going to take him upstairs so he can lie down and then you and I can have a Manhattan at the bar. Talk about this like grown adults.

MICHAEL

I don't know--

Emily gives him a look.

EMILY

Miles needs us right now. Let's try and support him.

Miles looks up at Michael with watery eyes.

Michael nods. Emily escorts Miles out.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Miles and Emily walk through the lobby.

MILES

Manhattans? Do you think we're in a Woody Allen movie? I thought we had a deal. We get to Charleston, we convince Michael that Susan is a child beater on the lam, and then we bury the body. It's only a matter of time before the old bag starts to reek like your mother's eye socket.

EMILY

I told you about that in confidence.

MILES

There's a dead woman in your trunk. It's all fair game hooker.

EMILY

Look, you got what you wanted. Your stepmonster is in the early stages of rigor mortis. You went on the lam and lived out your little con-man fantasy. Now it's my turn. I've been waiting for an opportunity like this my entire life. We'll bury her tonight, after the ceremony.

MILES

But--

EMILY

Lavinia's childhood home is two blocks away. I booked you a private tour.

Emily holds up a ticket. Miles eyes it.

MILES

When the hell did you manage that?

Emily holds the tickets out to him. Miles take them reluctantly.

MILES (CONT'D)

Tonight.

EMILY

Tonight.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - BAR - LATER

Emily and Michael drink Manhattans.

MICHAEL

I've never seen Miles this...
fragile.

EMILY

We all have our breaking points.
Even you, Michael. Are you happy?
Is Susan right for you?

MICHAEL

I'm not a bad guy. Sometimes I do
bad things, but Susan... is
pregnant with my child... We're
family. I could never abandon her.

EMILY

Seems to me that she's abandoned
you. On the most important day of
your career, no less.

MICHAEL

She'll be back. Susan is a master
manipulator. A cancer, an incurable
disease. You can't get rid of her,
you can only manage the symptoms.

Michael laughs, uneasy.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The only way she'll give me any
peace is when she's dead.

Emily smiles to herself. Dead you say?

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Emily's MUSTANG still parked outside.

Dead you say?

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily stands in front of room 217. Knocks.

EMILY

Hello, you.

REVERSE TO REVEAL: Michael.

MICHAEL

Emily. I wasn't expecting you.

EMILY

It's Tuesday. Four P.M. Are you alone?

He nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Journeys end in lovers meeting.

Michael opens the door wider, letting her in.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emily looks around the room, her back to Michael. He stands a few feet behind her.

MICHAEL

What do you think of the room?

EMILY

It's nice.

MICHAEL

Can I get you anything?

Emily faces him.

EMILY

Undress. I want you naked.

Michael hesitates.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Do it.

Michael obliges. He takes off his t-shirt. Unbuckles his pants. Drops his boxers to the ground.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Lie on the bed.

Michael does.

Emily crosses the room, stands next to the bed. She looks down at him. She has all the power. She takes his dick in her hands, begins playing with him. He moans.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I've always been intrigued by the narrator in *Rebecca*. She has no name. She's cast adrift in the world.

MICHAEL

It's in order to convey the overpowering essence of *Rebecca*, Maxim's dead wife.

His eyes are closed. He's enjoying himself.

EMILY

I disagree. I think it's so she can be whomever she likes. Whomever she chooses. She is mistress of her destiny.

Emily leans in. Kisses Michael deeply. Her mouth on his mouth. The softness of her lips. The warmth of her breath.

And then Emily bites his lip - HARD - drawing blood.

MICHAEL

Ow! Fuck!

Michael puts his hand to his mouth. Emily pulls away. She has his blood on her lips.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You fucking bit me.

EMILY

Did I hurt you?

MICHAEL

Yes.

EMILY

Good.

She kneels by the bed, puts Michael's dick in her mouth.

CLOSE on Emily's BACK. Hair loose and swaying around her shoulders.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Michael and Emily lie in bed. Michael is nervous. Emily is blissed out.

EMILY

What time is the ceremony tonight?

Michael sits up.

MICHAEL

Emily you can't come with me this evening.

EMILY

Why not?

MICHAEL

It wouldn't be appropriate. These are my work colleagues.

EMILY

Are you ashamed of me? Were you just using me because I'm ambidextrous? Because you don't want people to know you pay for this?

MICHAEL

No. Not at all--

EMILY

I took care of your son! You said you wanted to know me. You wanted to spend your life with me. Didn't you mean it?

Her voice rises to a high pitch.

MICHAEL

Of course not. Of course I meant it.

EMILY

Then what's the problem?

MICHAEL

I'll see you in the ballroom at eight.

SMASH CUT TO:

QUICK CUTS: A woman's HAND running a BATH, skimming through the water; LACE PANTIES dropping to the ground; HAIR unclipped from a bun; a row of LOTIONS; a squirt of LOTION into a PALM; a THIGH being LOTIONED, a STOCKING slipped over an ANKLE; a BRACELET clasped on a WRIST; a DRESS zipping up; a TEN stuffed into a CLUTCH

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The DOORS open. REVEAL Emily - a vision dressed all in BLACK. She embodies the women she first ogled at the FOUR SEASONS with Michael.

A woman you want to *inhale*.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Emily walks through the expansive lobby.

She is ripe for the picking.

Heads turn as she passes.

INT. WENTWORTH MANSION - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emily enters the BALLROOM. Tastefully decorated. Candlelit. White and green flower arrangements dot every table. The din of a well-heeled crowd.

Emily swipes a GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE from a TRAY.

Emily GLIDES through the crowd, looking for Michael. She finally spots him and Miles, makes her way towards them.

And then--

As the CROWD parts, her eyes focus more intently on Michael, sharp in his suit, glass of wine in hand, commanding the room.

Emily is mere feet away, and then she sees--

SUSAN.

Flawless. Not a hair out of place. Dressed head to toe in white, the color of control.

Make up covers the SCRATCH along her face from the prosthetic. Susan smiles, raises a well-manicured hand, and gives a small, elegant wave.

SUSAN

Emily. So lovely to see you.

Emily is frozen in place. Unable to move. Michael blanches.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

This is Emily, the babysitter I was telling you about.

MICHAEL

Hello.

Emily swallows hard. Finds her voice.

EMILY

Hi.

SUSAN

Thank you for bringing Miles all the way here. I was panicked when I got stuck at work and then to hear that Miles was beat up at school.

She shakes her head.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Rest assured I will be having a stern talk with the headmistress as soon as we're back in Connecticut.

Susan puts her hand on Miles shoulder. The simple act, in itself, menacing.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Right Milesy?

Miles nods, meekly.

MILES

I have to use the bathroom.

He slinks away from Susan's grasp.

Susan turns to Michael, even and fresh. Like an ice cold beer on a hot day.

SUSAN

Emily has been invaluable these last few weeks. I've been so ill from the pregnancy and she's been... a godsend really. Helping around the house, looking after Miles. She's really quite intuitive. It's like she knows what I want her to do before I even ask. She's saving up to move to the big city. Emily wants to be a writer. Isn't that right?

Emily nods slowly. She doesn't remember telling Susan she wanted to be a writer.

EMILY

That's right.

SUSAN

Break a leg. Would you consider yourself more of a Sylvia Plath? Or Virginia Woolf?

EMILY

They were both manic depressives who killed themselves.

SUSAN

Indeed.

A NERVOUS ASSISTANT wearing a HEADSET approaches.

ASSISTANT

Professor Audley? We're ready for you now.

MICHAEL

Excuse me.

Susan grabs his arm tightly.

SUSAN

Rub Poppy for luck.

Susan grabs his hand, places it on her belly.

Michael hurries off, leaving the two women alone. Susan watches Miles go. She turns to Emily.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I was captain of the Yale swim team four years running.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I can hold my breath for up to eight minutes. I was never dead.

Susan holds Emily's gaze for a moment and then smiles a tiny, infuriating smile.

She turns and walks away. Her white heels CLACK CLACK CLACK on the polished wood floor.

EXT. WENTWORTH MANSION - NIGHT

Emily shivers in the cold air.

Standing in the spot where her Mustang used to be.

Alone.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Emily stands alone along a DUSTY STRETCH OF HIGHWAY. She wears LARGE DARK SUNGLASSES, head wrapped in a SCARF, arms folded across her chest, face devoid of expression. DALE pulls up in his souped up 1988 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX. Emily gets in the car.

DALE

What happened to the 'stang?

EMILY

It died, just as you predicted.

DALE

Should we tow the old beast? I can call up my pal Eugene, he's got a shop up the road.

EMILY

Let's just consider it collateral damage.

DALE

How'd you end up all the way down in the Carolinas anyway?

EMILY

Long story, Dale.

DALE

You know I love your stories.

They peel away, the tail end of Emily's scarf fluttering out the window, in the breeze.

EXT. STAMFORD, CT - A FEW DAYS LATER

Establishing. It's a sad, grey day in Stamford.

EXT. TROPICANA GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

Same old boxy beige shithole. The potted plants are still very much dead.

Emily UNLOCKS an OLD BIKE from the chain-link fence. She halfheartedly gets on it, starts pedaling.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - DAY

Emily rides her bike past the house.

The PLUMP OLD WOMAN with ROSY CHEEKS watches her.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily lies in bed. Her GOLDFISH floats in its BOWL, DEAD.

She stares at the WATER STAIN on the ceiling. It grows larger and larger until it seems to morph into a GIANT MIDDLE FINGER. She blinks. It's still a MIDDLE FINGER.

INT. SPIRITUAL PALMS - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Emily enters, putting LOTION on her hands, ready for a day of work. Viveca looks up, blanches at the sight of her.

VIVECA

What the fuck are you doing here?

EMILY

It's Monday. I'm on the schedule.

Viveca shakes her head vigorously. Her beads clink against one another angrily.

VIVECA

No no no no no no. You don't work here anymore.

EMILY

What the hell are you talking about?

Viveca rushes to the WINDOW and looks outside visibly shaken. She pulls the DRAPES closed, her hands trembling.

VIVECA

That 'whale on the line,' you were so damn proud of came to see me. She works at the health department. Told me you confessed everything about the racket I've been running in the back. She came in here with a blacklight and it was like Room Raiders. They're shuttin' me down, nerdy. I knew you were uppity but I never pegged you for a rat.

EMILY

Viveca, Susan is lying to you. She's not a health inspector. She's a con.

VIVECA

Out. Out damn spot. Get out.

Emily exits. No more yob.

INT. TROPICANA GARDENS - HALLWAY - DAY

Exhausted, Emily trudges down the hallway. She arrives at her door. An EVICTION notice hangs on it.

The door is BOLTED SHUT.

INT. TROPICANA GARDENS - HALLWAY - LATER

Emily BANGS on a door labeled SUPER. No answer.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAMFORD - DAY

The sidewalk bustles; men in suits, women in nude stockings and tennis shoes, sullen smoking teens, homeless schizophrenics.

Emily weaves through the tableau, watching passersby, always searching for opportunity.

She stops in front of her usual coffee shop--

EXT. HIP COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

She approaches the TELEPHONE POLE where YIPPY DOGS are tied up.

Notices a POSTER. On it her FACE STARES BACK AT HER. EMILY'S MUG SHOT. Underneath the text: **WARNING: WATCH OUT FOR THIS CUNT BITCH.**

Emily TEARS DOWN THE POSTER. A few feet ahead another one. And then another and then another.

They are all over Downtown Stamford.

EXT. HALCOMBE MOTEL - NIGHT

Establishing. A basic one story L-shape with a pool. The kind where guests park three feet away from their room. A neon "Vacancy" sign buzzes on and off by the curb. It's completely quiet at this hour. No lights in the windows save for the manager's office.

A single streetlight flickers overhead.

INT. HALCOMBE MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Emily enters. A queen bed, polyblend coverlet, dingy PLASTIC SHOWER CURTAIN.

She eyes the shower curtain wearily. Lies on top of the covers. She stares at the ceiling.

Her cell phone buzzes with a CALL. She sees the 212 AREA CODE. Her eyes light up.

AMBROSE

Is this Mary Seyton?

EMILY

It is.

AMBROSE

This is Ambrose Rowe from Walpole Publishing.

EMILY

Ambrose, what a pleasure to hear from you. I assume you're calling about my manuscript, Hand of Darkness? Walpole is my ideal publisher--

AMBROSE

Do you take me for a fool?

EMILY

What?

AMBROSE

Your manuscript is a lightly doctored version of Rebecca.

EMILY

Excuse me?

AMBROSE

Your novel is plagiarized.

EMILY

No it isn't. That's an original manuscript. I've been working on it for years! How dare you accuse me--

We hear RUSTLING on AMBROSE'S SIDE of the CALL.

AMBROSE

"Men are simpler than you imagine. But what goes on in the twisted, tortuous minds of women would baffle anyone."

EMILY

I didn't write that!

AMBROSE

Correct. Daphne DuMaurier wrote it, quite famously may I add.

EMILY

No. Susan Burke switched the manuscript. She intercepted my draft and put Rebecca in its stead. She must know someone at Walpole. Someone very senior. I can get you my real manuscript. The one I submitted. Tonight. I'll get in my car. Well I don't have a car but I will get to New York--

AMBROSE

Don't bother.

The line goes DEAD.

A KNOCK at the DOOR.

Emily crosses the room. Unlocks the door.

EXT. HALCOMBE MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

No one is outside. Instead, a small WHITE BOX on the DOORSTEP.

Emily picks it up tentatively. Opens it. Inside a USB KEY.

INT. HALCOMBE MOTEL - EMILY'S ROOM - LATER

Emily sits on the bed, inserts the USB into the DRIVE of her computer.

CLOSE on EMILY'S COMPUTER SCREEN.

SECURITY FOOTAGE of EMILY and MILES in CARTERHOOK MANOR--

DROWNING SUSAN IN THE BATHTUB

ROLLING HER UP IN A RUG

HAULING SUSAN DOWN THE STAIRS

COMMITTING A MURDER

Emily slams her computer shut.

Her eyes land on a COCKROACH crawling out of the CORNER of the room, from under the RUG.

Emily walks over to the ROACH, pulls BACK the rug.

AN INFESTATION. Rotting from the inside out.

Emily gags. Begins STAMPING the ROACHES, desperate. Frustrated. Alone.

INT. HALCOMBE MOTEL - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Emily gets out of the shower. The bathroom filled with STEAM. She grabs a cheap, thin towel, off the HOOK. Wraps it around her body.

She clears the mirror with her hand.

Her eyes dark and tired, sunken. Her cheekbones sharp. Her skin sallow.

Emily shivers, despite the warmth of the bathroom.

Her eyes land on the TOM FORD LIPSTICK sitting on the edge of the sink.

She picks it up. Considers it. Turns it around. Reads the label. PRIVILEGE.

PRIVILEGE.

PRIVILEGE.

Emily puts the lipstick on.

EMILY (V.O.)

No one fucks with Emily Kent.

(beat.)

Or Elizabeth Braddon.

(beat.)

Or Mary Seyton.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MORNING

A single dark cloud, the color of a bruise hovers above Carterhook Manor.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - CONTINUOUS

From outside the WINDOW, we watch as Miles, Michael and Susan go through the motions of their morning routine.

A picture perfect family.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Michael stands under the hot shower. Eyes closed.

Thinks of Emily.

Masturbates.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MILES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Miles wearing his school uniform, stands in his closet. Eyes wide open.

Thinks of Emily.

Masturbates.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - FOYER - LATER

Miles grabs his backpack. Michael grabs his briefcase. Susan stands at the base of the stairs in her WHITE ROBE, a small BABY BUMP protruding underneath.

MILES
I'll wait in the car.

Michael turns to Susan.

MICHAEL
Remember I have that speaking engagement at the Rockrimm Club tonight. I'll pick Miles up on my way home.

He kisses her, turns towards the door.

SUSAN
Oh sweetheart?

Michael turns back.

MICHAEL
Yes dear?

SUSAN
You know how we divide up the chores? You do the dishes. I take out the trash. You handle the dry cleaning. I tend to the rose bushes?

MICHAEL
Of course. It's all right there on the chore wheel.

SUSAN
We both know she wasn't the babysitter. I took out the trash. If you ever humiliate me like that again, I'll kill you and make it look like an accident.
(beat)
Have a wonderful day.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - DAY

Michael's car pulls out of the driveway.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Susan enters the bedroom. Hears the WATER running in the bathroom.

She enters--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Water overflows from the tub. It drips over the edge.

Disturbed, Susan crosses the room to turn off the faucet.

FLOATING INSIDE THE TUB, WILKIE, DEAD.

Susan stares at the cat.

INT. SUSAN'S WHITE MERCEDES - LATER

Classical music plays. Susan drives.

She stops at a RED LIGHT. Fishes through her PURSE for her LIPSTICK.

She finds it, looks up, pulls down her mirror.

Next to her, in the WINDOW, **A ONE EYED BEGGAR WOMAN** dressed in rags. Her other eye, a grotesque socket, empty, dry, rotting like meat.

Susan SCREAMS. PRESSES on the gas.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a SPIDER. It's black round body, beady eyes, spindly hairy legs. It cleans itself.

A long SHADOW passes OVER THE SPIDER.

Clack. Clack. Clack. The sound of SUSAN'S WHITE HEELS striding down the hallway.

Her FOOTSTEPS approach. The spider scuttles along the wooden floorboards, moving as quickly as it can to evade--

The WHITE SHOE. Too late. The spider is crushed underfoot.

Dead spider.

REVEAL; SUSAN, BABY BUMP protruding, striding down the HALLWAY.

She makes her way towards her bedroom.

Stops short. Up ahead the hallway is covered with VOYEURISTIC SECURITY STILLS of her.

Susan making dinner.

Susan on the toilet.

Susan polishing her gun.

Susan wide awake in bed as Michael sleeps.

She GATHERS them angrily. Rushes into--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sitting on the bed is Emily. Dressed all in white. Her hair newly shorn into a BLONDE BOB.

She is the spitting image of Susan.

Privilege.

EMILY

Hello Susan.

SUSAN

What the fuck are you doing here?

EMILY

You invited me. I'm here to exercise your demons.

Emily smiles. Stands. Walks towards Susan.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Powerful people like you, rich, educated, erudite... ish you were born lucky. Your circumstances gave you certain advantages. You're in on all the jokes. You know where the forks go. Brecht references roll of your tongue. You know that Gstaad is pronounced "shtaad." No hard G. But me? I had to teach myself all of those things. There is a single piece of paper that differentiates us. Yours is a Yale diploma. Mine is a rap sheet. Two pieces of paper, two fates.

SUSAN

Get out of my house before I call the cops.

EMILY

The cops aren't coming. I cut your phone line. I also disabled the security cameras. Fool me once shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Susan laughs.

SUSAN

You're pathetic. Look at you. A sad clone. A cheap imitation. I pity you. You can pretend to be someone with breeding and potential, but your stench will always stick to you. No matter how many books you read. You're still nobody. No matter how high your thread count. Nobody. No matter what side of the bridge you reside. Nobody.

EMILY

That might be true, Susan. But there's a difference between you and I. You've lived a life of luxury. Unimaginable comfort. Your limousine liberal problems are a bad dye job and lapsed country club membership. Eventually, that makes you soft. Weak. You overlook details. You get sloppy. But, me? I know plenty about "just in case." Contingency plans. What to do when things don't work out. Cause guess what? Things never work out for people like me.

(beat)

I'm a cockroach. I will survive nuclear holocaust.

SUSAN

Yet, I still have all the power. I took away your job. Your apartment. Your prospects. And still, you want to go to war with me? Haven't you read any Machiavelli?

Emily smiles.

EMILY

I have. And you committed the cardinal sin of warfare. You let the enemy in your house.

FLASHBACK TO EMILY IN CARTERHOOK MANOR --

As she "cleanses" she also snoops.

-- An airplane-sized bottle of vodka tucked between the cushions of the couch.

-- Soft gourmet cheeses in the fridge. Wrapped in pretty cellophane, newly purchased from the market.

-- A container of take out sushi in the trash.

-- A SPOT of BLOOD next to the toilet. Emily wipes it away.

-- Prescriptions stuffed in the night stand - Xanax, Lortab etc. Emily looks at the PRESCRIPTION DATES. Hoards a few pills.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back to present. Emily and Susan face each other.

EMILY

Booze on your breath. Raw fish in your belly. Blood on your tampons and a one way ticket to Xanitown. A woman like you would never take those kinds of risks with a *geriatric* pregnancy. Unless--

Emily PUNCHES Susan in the stomach. HER BELLY INDENTS.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're not pregnant, cunt.

Susan LUNGES for Emily's throat, wraps her hands around it tightly.

Emily gasps for air.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Michael is on his way to your fertility doctor's office right now. To hear the news - that this was all a ruse. A desperate attempt at keeping your marriage together. Of holding on to your perfect life.

Emily escapes Susan's grasp and rushes into the hallway.

The woman WRESTLE - matching one another BLOW FOR BLOW near the stairs, above the IMPRESSIVE ROTUNDA.

The chandelier swings above them.

The fight is FIERCE, VIOLENT. Each WOMAN DESPERATE TO KILL THE OTHER.

Emily finally takes the UPPER HAND.

Emily PUSHES Susan against the RAILING on the stairs. The WOOD cracks. Susan CLAWS at Emily's face.

Emily pushes SUSAN HARD, over the railing. Susan begins to FALL. She GRABS onto the LEDGE, her feet dangling below.

Susan tries to pull herself up, struggles mightily. Emily watches her.

SUSAN

What do you want? Money? Power?
Your book published? Name your
price.

EMILY

Too late Susan.

SUSAN

It's never too late. There's always
a way. I told you, I define and
eliminate problems. Let me help
you.

EMILY STEPS ON SUSAN'S FINGERS with her HEEL. Susan CRIES OUT in PAIN.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I can undo what I've done.

EMILY

If I'm not mistaken Yale's motto is
lux et veritas. Light and truth.
Isn't it?

Susan nods, weakly, losing her grip.

SUSAN

Yes.

EMILY

Light and truth. I've always known
the truth - that I'm smart.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

But I always thought if I ever got around really smart people – people who went to universities and drank wine and spoke Latin – that they'd be bored as hell by me. It's a lonely way to go through life.

Emily shakes her head, thinking of her existence up until now. Up until Carterhook manor. Up until Susan. Miles. Michael. Those books. That house.

EMILY (CONT'D)

But Susan, what you've done, is enlighten me. Turns out I was wrong. There is no difference between you and I. If I rip up that rap sheet, well, we're exactly the same. Aren't we?

Emily steps on SUSAN'S FINGERS one last time. HARD. Like she means it.

CLOSE on Susan's grip, loosening, one perfectly manicured finger at a time. Her diamonds sparkle in the light of the chandelier.

And then--

Susan falls. THREE STORIES DOWN to the ROTUNDA below.

Emily watches her.

Susan's body slams against the ground.

Bounces. Once. Twice.

Finally rests. Immobile.

Emily looks down at her for one long moment.

And then like LIGHTENING she grabs a LOOSE WOODEN RAILING in her hand. RUSHES down the three flights of stairs.

Emily stands over Susan's body. The one with the power.

She raises the railing over her head. Brings it down HARD over Susan's skull.

This time that bitch better be dead.

SMASH TO BLACK.

An infinite expanse of BLUE SKY high above a sheet of ruffled CLOUDS. The blazing sphere of the AFTERNOON SUN gives the world a bright and shiny hue.

WE BURST THROUGH CLOUDS--

EXT. WOODLAND CEMETERY - DAY

A WHITE CASKET poised above an OPEN GRAVE.

Hills, trees, blue sky, green grass. A nice place to be buried.

A respectable turnout. Michael, somber, accompanied by Emily and Miles, sits in the front row.

Emily wears LARGE BLACK SUNGLASSES, An EXPENSIVE SILK DRESS compliments her figure, a lily among the reeds.

A **REVEREND, 70s**, intones the traditional platitudes. The sound of his voice rises and falls.

REVEREND

...Susan Burke was above all else, dedicated to her family. A doting wife to her husband Michael, a loving step-mother to Miles...

We hear SNIPPETS of CONVERSATION snake through the crowd...

LADY 1

Closed casket.

LADY 2

They're saying she slipped and fell down the stairs. But you know how that woman loved her Lortab.

LADY 1

And her vodka.

A light breeze blows through the trees. They SWAY gently.

REVEREND

...Susan Burke was a pillar of our community. She generously gave her time to many worthy causes...

The ladies continue to gossip.

LADY 3

...got her tubes tied three years ago.

(MORE)

LADY 3 (CONT'D)

She was going to fake cancer next.
They found forged medical records
among her papers.

LADY 4

Anything to keep that marriage
together.

LADY 3

Well he's the one with all the
money.

REVEREND

...Susan Burke was taken from us,
by a cruel twist of fate, for
reasons unknown and unknowable...

Towards the back of the crowd, the chatter continues.

LADY 5

That the new girlfriend? The
brunette?

LADY 6

I hear she's a *writer*.

LADY 7

I would have killed for Susan's
crystal. And don't even get me
started on the closet.

LADY 6

Once things settle down we should
see if she wants to speak at book
club.

The Grown Up smiles a tiny smile.

REVEREND

...Let us bow our heads and pray...

EXT. WOODLAND CEMETERY - LATER

The crowd has dispersed. Michael stands alone above the open
void, holding a PERFECT WHITE ROSE in his hand. He drops the
flower on top of the coffin.

MICHAEL

You're in a better place now.

A SHOVEL dumps a pile of DIRT in the hole, covering the rose.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Emily sits facing forward in the backseat, hands folded in her lap. Her eyes unreadable behind her sunglasses. Miles sits next to her, facing forward as well. (As they talk, neither looks at the other).

EMILY

That was a nice funeral.

MILES

Very tasteful.

EMILY

Mmmhmmm. Miles, have I ever told you about my oldest friend, Dale?

MILES

Doesn't ring a bell.

EMILY

Dale is a mechanic. Helpless in everything else in life, but when it comes to engines, and machines, motors and turbines - there's no one better than Dale.

Emily removes her sunglasses.

EMILY (CONT'D)

In high school, Dale was my only friend. All the other kids shunned the poor, mangy beggar girl with the one-eyed mother. But not Dale. He saved me from the stifling loneliness of adolescence, the unyielding cruelty of high school. You understand that, don't you Miles? What it's like to be completely isolated? To be surrounded by people who will never accept you, who make certain you know you don't belong?

Miles doesn't respond.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Dale has been in love with me for years. He's asked me to marry him dozens of times. Which is sweet. So sweet. But it goes without saying that I could never be with Dale. He wants a *regular* life.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

And what's a relationship without a worthy sparring partner? An equal foe? A bore, really. A pitiful waste of time. I believe it was Chekhov who wrote, "Only entropy comes easy."

Emily pauses, looks out the window, watches as a DUCK swims in endless CIRCLES in a nearby pond.

EMILY (CONT'D)

But occasionally I can call on him for a favor. To answer questions, for example. Like where I was the night of November 17th. Who I was with. What I was doing.

(beat)

He's a very useful *tool*.

Miles turns to face Emily, their faces INCHES apart. So close they could kiss.

MILES

When do we hit the road again, Momma? I've got an itch I need to scratch.

EMILY

Name your day. I'll be ready.

MILES

Are we friends?

EMILY

We don't need to be friends.

(Beat.)

We're family.

Michael gets in the car.

MICHAEL

Ready to go?

EMILY

Absolutely.

EXT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - DAY

Miles, Michael and Emily walk up the FRONT STEPS. Miles enters the house first.

Michael holds Emily back--

MICHAEL
Welcome home.

EMILY
No name no longer.

Michael smiles, takes his face in her hands, kisses her gently, looks deeply in her eyes. And then in a whisper--

MICHAEL
My money was always on you.

Michael steps inside. Emily watches him for a moment, and then she steps inside as well.

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE on a pair of FERRAGAMO HEELS. They CLACK CLACK CLACK.

EMILY (V.O.)
I didn't stop giving hand jobs
because I wasn't good at it. I
stopped giving hand jobs because I
was the best at it.

REVEAL; Emily, her belly swollen from PREGNANCY, elegantly draped in IVORY CASHMERE. She holds a TRAY carrying three steaming MUGS of hot chocolate. She enters--

INT. CARTERHOOK MANOR - LIBRARY - NIGHT

She joins Michael and Miles by the FIRE. They are the picture of quaint, privileged domesticity.

Emily removes *REBECCA* from the bookshelf, settles into the big leather chair. She places the book on her lap, Michael by her side, Miles at her feet and opens to the first page. She rests her hand serenely on her belly.

She reads aloud, her VOICE sing-songy and richly theatrical. A double edge of MENACE and IRONY;

EMILY
Last night I dreamt I went to
Manderley again. It seemed to me I
stood by the iron gate leading to
the drive, and for a while I could
not enter, for the way was barred
to me. There was a padlock and a
chain upon the gate.
(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

I called in my dream to the lodge-
keeper, and had no answer, and
peering closer through the rusted
spokes of the gate I saw that the
lodge was uninhabited...

CAMERA PULLS OUT of this quaint tableau. We notice a small
trickle of blood dripping from a crack in the ceiling.

It rolls slowly down the wall.

Outside a crack of thunder. It starts to pour. And we--

SMASH TO BLACK.