

10-31

Written
by
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Based on the story by Laurie Ashbourne

Screen story by Kathy Charles

BELLEVUE PRODUCTIONS



help kidnapped
go to Kiki
me

Sweet Smiles
Collect Smiles

Sweet Smiles
Collect Smiles

[Signature]

"These rural homesteads have always filled me with a certain horror. Look at the lonely houses behind their fences. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness going on in such places, year in and year out, with none the wiser..."

--Arthur Conan Doyle

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - NIGHT

Nightfall on a quiet suburban cul-de-sac. The street is lined with Craftsman homes, picket fences, lush trees.

We drift through darkness. Watchful. Silent. Toward one particular cozy little home... and a first-floor window.

It's *always* a first-floor window.

The Bowens live here. And The Bowens, well, they're about to become famous. They just don't know it yet.

INT. SAMANTHA BOWEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tight on a framed photo: 2 girls, both age 15, in Halloween costumes. A shy redhead in a modest GHOSTBUSTERS jumpsuit, and a brash punk in a "SEXY STAY PUFT MARSHMALLOW MAN" get-up. Best friends, thick as thieves, smiles frozen in time. The picture gets TAKEN OFF THE WALL as we REVEAL--

SAMANTHA BOWEN

The redhead, older now: 18, smart, wallflowery. Bubble-wraps the pic, in the middle of packing her room into suitcases. PURDUE COLLEGE ORIENTATION PAPERS on her desk.

As she packs, our focus drifts to the WINDOW. *That window.*

It's OPEN just a bit... cool breeze ripples curtains...

...and then -- for just a second -- something MOVES PAST.

ELAINE (O.S.)

Sam honey?

Samantha looks back as her mother **ELAINE BOWEN** (40s, tiger mom) appears in the doorway, holding up couple of WINTER COATS that resemble Reagan-era sleeping bags.

ELAINE

Which one do you like?

SAMANTHA

("neither")

...the one on the left?

ELAINE

Pack 'em both. Winter in Indiana is a nightmare.

Elaine hands the bulky coats off to Samantha and exits. Samantha starts stuffing them into a box as...

...our focus drifts BACK TO THE WINDOW...

...and we see something that Samantha misses entirely.

A SET OF HANDS REACHING IN...

...PUSHING the window up, silently, inch by inch, when...

CREAK. Samantha FREEZES. Piano-string tension...

SAMANTHA
(doesn't turn around)
Nice try, dummy.

She turns to the window, forces it open, revealing...

LILA WAKEFIELD -- the other girl in the photo. 18. Habitual line-stepper, envelope-pusher, shit-stirrer, the insouciant devil perched on Samantha's shoulder. You might notice she and Sam have matching VINE TATTOOS on their wrists, though Samantha's barely peeks out of her long sleeved shirt.

LILA
Ok ok, so I know your mom *said*
you can't go out tonight--

SAMANTHA
(whispers)
--will y'keep it down?--

LILA
--and you're getting up at 6 for
the big drive and blah-blah-blah--

SAMANTHA
--she is literally gonna bite
your face off if she sees you,
she's already pissed you talked
me into the tattoo--

LILA
It'll grow on her! Or she'll,
y'know, hate it forever. Either
way, not your problem. Because
you are a grown-ass lady who can
do what she feels like.

SAMANTHA
Oh, is *that* what I am--

LILA
Yes. And what you *feel* like doing
is sneaking out with me. 'Cause I
got you a going-away present.
(off her look)
C'mon, it's your last night in
town. Tell her you gotta return a
library book or some shit, I'm
not taking no for an answer--

SAMANTHA
 (folds her arms)
 No.

LILA
 Did you not hear what I just--

SAMANTHA
 (trying not to laugh)
No.

LILA
 Yes. Yes. **Yes.**

Samantha's resolve is crumbling, same as it always does in the face of Lila's rambunctious spirit. MUSIC TAKES OVER--

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

--as *VROOM!* Lila's hand-me-down Crown Victoria *BLASTS* down the lonely highway, radio cranked, Lila and Sam singing with the music. Young, free, at home in each other's company.

In a better world, their story would end here.

EXT. PIKE'S POINT - NIGHT

Looking down from above, we find the two girls on a picnic blanket atop a LOOKOUT POINT, Crown Vic parked down the hill by the road 100 feet behind. In the distance, their hometown is a spark in the vast darkness.

LILA (PRE-LAP)
Open sesame.

WITH LILA AND SAMANTHA

Lila hands Sam a LITTLE SQUARE GIFT BOX from her purse.

SAMANTHA
 Why do I feel like this is going to be a giant nug of weed?

LILA
 What would history suggest?

Samantha opens the box, and takes out a pair of RETRO-HIP BANGLE EARRINGS. She lifts them, touched by the gesture.

SAMANTHA
 You. You are amazing...
 (puts them on)
 How do they look?

LILA
 Way better than those Michelin
 Man winter coats your mom packed
 for you. Here--

Lila hands her Gift Number 2: a larger box with a bow. Sam opens it, revealing A CAKE featuring a grumpy stick figure indignantly pointing towards the door and the letters **GTFO**.

LILA
 (lifts her Solo cup of
 champagne)
 Cheers, dummy.

They toast Solo cups. And sit there, sipping their bubbly and eating the GTFO cake, enjoying the quiet intimacy...

LILA
 ...thanks for coming out. I have
 no idea when we're gonna have a
 night like this again.
 (off her look)
 You'll be off at college...
 meeting interesting people and
 doing cool shit... and then you
 and me will start texting less
 and less... then, eventually...

Samantha's stung by the implication.

SAMANTHA
 That's not fair--

LILA
 --it's not you; it's just the
 natural order of things. Changing
 of the seasons, y'know?...

SAMANTHA
 You're making it sound like that
 movie where Joaquin Phoenix falls
 in love with his phone and I'm
 the phone.

LILA
 I'm not wrong.

SAMANTHA
 You're 100% wrong. Here's what's
 gonna happen...
 (refills her own cup)
 I'm gonna go to school...
 (fills Lila's cup)
 ...and you're gonna go to New
 York and discover awesome bands
 that no one's ever heard of--

LILA
 (snorts)
 Yeah, right--

SAMANTHA
 --and next thing you know, you'll
 be running your very own badass
 little record label...
 (raises her cup)
 ...then we'll meet back here over
 the holidays and freak out about
 how amazing we've both become.
 That's the plan, sound good?

It does sound good to Lila. Better than good. But before she
 can say anything...

...a phone **RINGS**.

LILA
 Shit. Probably your mom.

SAMANTHA
 (frowns)
 It's not my phone.

Lila holds up her phone.

LILA
 Not mine either.

RING goes the phantom phone.

Coming from somewhere nearby.

They glance at each other. Then Lila looks around....

...and sees a GLOW from the weeds a few yards away. She
 starts to get up--

--Sam grabs her arm. Bad vibes suddenly in the air.

SAMANTHA
 Leave it. Let's just go--

LILA
 It's right over there--

Lila's already heading off to the find the phone. Samantha
 sighs and follows after her...

EXT. PIKE'S POINT, IN THE WEEDS - CONTINUOUS

Lila moves through the weeds, ringing getting LOUDER--

--she digs around and finds it: A SMARTPHONE -- some cheap,
 off-brand burner phone WITH A SMILING EMOJI on the case.

The number on the screen: unknown.

RING goes the phone, before--

LILA
(answers it)
Hello?

For a second, there's nothing on the other end.

Just silence. Maybe the faintest trace of a breath.

Lila's about to hang up when--

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
Hi there.

A MAN'S VOICE comes through. Confident. Relaxed. Maybe even a little stoned.

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
I'm pretty sure you have my
phone.

LILA
Pretty sure you're right. You
left it up at Pike's Point.

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
Wow. All the way up there? Out in
the middle of nowhere?

LILA
Yeah, I found the poor little
thing shivering under a tree.

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
That's funny. You're very funny.

LILA
("okay, weird")
...thank you?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
No, thank you. You are my
personal hero. My savior. A
veritable saint.

He's wandering a little. Lila grins at Samantha. She puts it on speaker so Samantha can hear.

LILA
Ok, professional curiosity: how
high are you?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
I'm actually as lucid as I've
ever been in my life right now.

LILA
Not even a little?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
I have to be. It takes immense
concentration to do what I do.

Lila snorts back a laugh, Samantha nudges her to be quiet.

LILA
And what do you do?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
(cold statement of fact)
You're both about to find out.

CLICK! The line goes dead. The girls pause, freaked...

SAMANTHA
(quiet)
...how'd he know there's two of
us?

They look at each other, blood running icy. What was fun
moments before has gone dangerous and creepy in a blink.
Samantha grabs the phone, CHUCKS IT AWAY--

SAMANTHA
Let's go. Now.

LILA
(yells to the woods)
Hey asshole! You out there?!

She peers into the darkness. No answer.

Samantha's outta here. She grabs Lila's purse, fishes out
the CAR KEYS as she makes for the Crown Vic parked 100 feet
down the hill, calling over her shoulder as she goes--

SAMANTHA
C'mon, I got your keys, let's get
the hell outta here--

LILA
(yells into the woods)
*Hey fucker, y'got something to
say??*

No response from the dark woods.

Except... did something move in there?

Lila's eyes narrow.

What the hell did she just see?

Chill running down her spine, she turns to run after Samantha, picking up speed as--

100 FEET AWAY, AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL

--Samantha beats a path toward the shadowy turn-off where Lila's car is parked, yelling up the hill to her--

SAMANTHA

C'MON!

She turns to the car 10 feet ahead, her trembling thumb TRIGGERS THE KEY FOB--

--the Crown Vic BEEPS and its headlights FLASH, illuminating the blackness for just a second--

--and in that moment, Samantha's fear-blown pupils see HIM.

A DARK FIGURE. WEARING A YELLOW SMILEY EMOJI MASK.

Blocking her path to the car, moving straight toward her. Holding a GNARLED TREE BRANCH like a nightstick.

Up the hill, Lila sees it--

--the breath catches in her throat as--

CRACK! Smiler takes Samantha down with a HARD SWING OF THE BRANCH. Then grabs her by her hair and drags the shrieking girl into the car, ripping the keys out of her hand as--

LILA

SAM!

Lila SPRINTS FULL TILT, panicked breath sawing in her lungs, brain motormouthing *no-no-no-no-NO* as--

SMILER

--pins Samantha to the passenger seat as he climbs behind the wheel, slamming the door shut as--

LILA

--rushes hell-for-leather down the hill towards the car--

VROOM! The Crown Vic roars to life.

CLICK! Its high-beams turn on, BLINDING HER--

Then, with a guttural ENGINE GROWL, the car LURCHES AHEAD.

STRAIGHT TOWARD HER. Lila turns to DIVE OUT OF THE WAY, but--

CRUNCH! The CROWN VIC PLOWS STRAIGHT INTO HER--

--she SMASHES INTO THE WINDSHIELD, CRACKS IT, BOUNCES OVER--

--TUMBLES to the ground behind it with a sickening CRUNCH.

The car SCREECHES TO A HALT a few feet in front of her. Smoke billowing from the tailpipe as the engine RUMBLES.

Is it gonna reverse back and run her over??

Lila lies there, trying to move. Trying to Get Up. She barely manages to lift up to her elbows to see--

--Samantha, bleeding, battered, trying to crawl into the back seat, SMASHING at the back window. SCREAMING.

SAMANTHA

LILAAA--

A BLACK GLOVED HAND GRABS HOLD of Samantha and she's SUCKED AWAY from the window, out of view, as the CAR FISHTAILS out of the turn-off and onto the road. Leaving Lila for dead.

We find ourselves DRIFTING up and away, wraith-like... Lila receding in our vision as we float to the lookout point...

...and down to the PHONE dropped on the ground. The phone with the SMILING EMOJI CASE.

We DESCEND into the grinning mouth, until...

EVERYTHING GOES PITCH BLACK.

And in the blackness, we hear...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

*Close your eyes... and think
about what you want from your
life.*

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - MORNING

FADE IN on Lila, eyes shut. We linger on her subtle scars from the accident, her face drawn and pale, like some piece of her soul's been sucked out. She's harder. Tougher. Wounds masked by layers of gallows humor and nihilistic swagger.

TWO YEARS LATER

Across from her is **MAUREEN COLGAN**, 40s, her court-ordered therapist. She's used to seeing all sorts of malcontents; Lila won't be the first or last to try to bullshit her.

LILA

I want peace. And... tranquility.
And I wanna get my, y'know, bad
habits under control. And just...
stay on the straight and narrow.

MAUREEN

And get your court paperwork signed as quickly as possible.

LILA

I didn't say that.
(digs out COURT-ORDERED THERAPY paperwork)
But I mean, if you're offering--

MAUREEN

I'm not.

LILA

No rush.

MAUREEN

Tell me something: if what you really want from your life is "peace" and "tranquility"... why did you break Brett O'Shea's jaw?

A flash of *something*. Anger on Lila's face. Quickly buried.

LILA

I didn't. It got dislocated when he fell off his bar stool--

MAUREEN

--after you punched him.

LILA

Which he 100% deserved.

MAUREEN

Ok, what he said was reprehensible. But I didn't ask why you *wanted* to punch him. I asked why you did.

That throws Lila a little.

LILA

...come again?

MAUREEN

Brett's an asshole. We know that. He's an asshole to 20 people a day. But out of those 20, *you're* the one who took a swing. Why?

LILA

It just happened. But I promise I don't see myself punching Brett, or anyone else, ever again--

MAUREEN

--what about breaking and entering into Mr. Mapes' house?

LILA

You make it sound like I was wearing a ski-mask.

(when joke doesn't land)

Gimme a break, my doc put me on Percoset, I had a *little* too much to drink, and I went into the wrong house. And Mapes didn't seem to mind.

MAUREEN

His wife did. And you're avoiding the questions.

LILA

Which are?

MAUREEN

Why did you punch Brett?

LILA

Because he said the guy who kidnapped Samantha was "lucky to snatch such a hot piece of ass."

MAUREEN

Again, not why did he deserve it. Why did you hit him?

LILA

(getting riled up)

What do you want from me--

MAUREEN

Answers. Why'd you hit Brett? Why'd you WANT to hit Brett? What are you really looking for in your life?

LILA

Revenge.

She didn't mean to say that last part, it just popped out. And she wants to shove it back down, like it never existed.

MAUREEN

You're never gonna get that. Will Halforth committed suicide in jail. The guy who did this to Samantha is dead. And if you can't get it from him, who's left? Who are you *really* trying to get revenge on?

Lila's silent. Jaw clenched. Stonewalling against the answer she can't bring herself to face. And we SMASH TO:

EXT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

CLICK! Lila lights a smoke before she's even out the door. Looks out at the main street of...

COTTAGE GROVE, OREGON

Pop 3,192. Squint and it's still 1950. Today's Halloween morning, everything's a riot of fall colors.

Lila gazes at all the happy costumes and decor poking fun at a dark, scary world. But it's not fun to her, because she knows what happens when the world pokes back.

She makes for the sidewalk... and suddenly pauses. Eyes on an APPROACHING CAR. On the PASSENGER...

...who has long red hair...

SAMANTHA. Staring back at her.

Then Lila blinks...

...and it's just some other girl. The car drives past. Lila shakes her head. *Gotta stop doing that*. And we CUT TO:

EXT. COTTAGE GROVE DRUG STORE - DAY

A small town five-and-dime, decked out for Halloween. The windows are filled with costumes, and a window-banner indicates "Trick or Treat Yourself!"

INSIDE

Lila works the front counter, wearing one of those lame red vests and a button that says "How can I assist you today?" She looks completely *Over It* already.

The store's costume aisle is mostly sold out, last minute shoppers desperately searching for digs among the dregs on the Halloween aisle. Quick shots of her day:

A MOTHER holds up a Ninja Turtles costume.

MOTHER

If I could just exchange it,
y'know, for another one...

LILA

(takes it, sniffs it)
Did someone pee in this?

MOTHER

I think it came that way.

Lila stares at her -- sure it did. CUT TO:

A BRATTY TWEEN WHINES:

BRATTY TWEEN

There's nothing here. Do you have anything sexy, like a sexy witch's costume? Or a sexy cat outfit?

LILA

How about a sexy skeleton mask? Or a sexy zombie face?

Lila lifts the 2 not-sexy masks. The tween glares. CUT TO:

AN ATTRACTIVE WIFE IN A COP OUTFIT:

WIFE IN COP OUTFIT

(quiet, embarrassed)

...ok, so this outfit came with handcuffs? And the key's kind of *not working*? And my husband would very much like to *take them off*?

LILA

I got ya. Watch and learn...

Lila takes a set of cuffs from an accessory bin, works the stem of a pen into the lock and -- Click! -- it pops open.

WIFE IN COP OUTFIT

(excited, hurries off)

You're my hero.

LILA

(waves)

Congrats on your healthy marriage.

She hears SNICKERS. Turns to see some YOUNG MEN laughing at her. Ringleader's **BRETT O'SHEA**. Yes, that Brett O'Shea. He sets down a 30-rack of cheap beer on the counter, smirking.

BRETT

Lila Wakefield. How's minimum wage treating you?

LILA

Brett O'Shea. How's your jaw?
(re: his buddies)
Must've put a crimp in their sex life when your mouth got wired shut.

BRETT

Now *that* doesn't feel like a proper attitude for an employee.
 (eyes her "how can I assist you?" button)
 I don't feel like I've been assisted. Maybe I should talk to your manager. Maybe I should get you fired.

LILA

Maybe you should go fuck yourself-

BRETT

Keep talking. Just remember I'm in college and you're working the register in some shithole store.
 (tosses \$25 at her)
 Keep the change.

Brett takes the beer, exits. She stares daggers at his back.

INT. COTTAGE GROVE DRUG STORE, BACK ROOM - AFTERNOON

WHUMPH! Lila loads boxes of OVERSTOCK COSTUMES into a cart, working alongside a couple other EMPLOYEES and her manager **ZACH** (late-20s, party animal), mid-speech...

ZACH

...alright, we'll load out the last of the Halloween shit and drop it at storage in the AM. Not too early, 'cause tonight's gonna be the rager to end all ragers...

As Zach rambles on about the party he's throwing, Lila pushes her cart out through the back of the store--

INTO THE REAR PARKING LOT

--and out towards her car. And strangely enough...

...it's the same Crown Vic that she was driving the night Samantha was kidnapped. Windshield still cracked.

A psychologically healthy person wouldn't drive this thing if you paid them.

She opens her trunk, the box tilts and spills monster masks to the ground. She bends to grab them. STOPS COLD. Because in the pile, grinning up at her...

...is **A SMILEY EMOJI MASK**. Out of place, almost as if someone snuck it in there just for her.

The hairs on the back of her neck rise...

BANG! The back door OPENS and Lila WHIPS AROUND to see Zach wheeling out overstock carts with the other employees--

ZACH

--makin' a MASSIVE vat of Green
Zombie Juice with, like, actual
glowstick fluid in it--

(sees her)

Yo Lila, you swinging by tonight?

LILA

Sorry, can't.

ZACH

C'mon, it's like stumbling-
distance from your house!

LILA

I'm watching my niece and nephew,
gotta keep it G-rated.

ZACH

Children ruin everything.

She tosses her store-keys to Zach, then gets in her car...

ZACH

(re: the Crown Vic)

Hey, uh... isn't that thing like
evidence or whatever?

LILA

Was. Cops recovered it, dusted
it, found jack shit, so...
(slaps the peeling roof)
...this beauty's all mine again.

ZACH

Ever think about trading it in?
Must feel sorta icky rolling
around in a... crime scene.

Lila looks at him. She does feel "icky" in this thing, and that's the point: it's her way of punishing herself.

LILA

Why would I trade it? It's mine.

ZACH

Y'should at least get that
windshield fixed.

LILA

I'll think about it.

THUNK -- she closes the door, and the conversation. CHIRP!
Gets a text from someone named BARRY: **Don't forget dinner.**

INT. GROCERY STORE - AFTERNOON

Lila picks up dinner supplies at the grocery store. Rolls up to the butcher's section, where in the back room, A BIG MAN with a doughy face AUTOPSIES A HUNK OF COW, expertly SLICING it into cuts. This is **DEVIN THE BUTCHER**.

LILA
Hey Devin.

DEVIN
Right wit'cha.

SLICE. SLICE. SLICE. He walks over. Tosses steaks into the display. Wipes the blood onto his STAINED APRON.

LILA
Pound of hamburger?

DEVIN
Chuck or round?

LILA
What's the difference?

He points with the knife, "fileting" her with his gestures.

DEVIN
Chuck's here. Round's the butt down here. Chuck's got more fat, but that's where all the flavor is.

LILA
Poor cow died without ever knowing how delicious it was.

DEVIN
Cows. Plural. Mix a bunch together when you grind 'em. Most people don't know they're eating a whole family at once.

Her look -- *Jesus, dude*. He winks, wraps some hamburger up for her and she turns to walk it over to her cart...

...but as she approaches, she pauses. Her CARTON OF EGGS HAS BEEN SMASHED. Yellow goo drips through the cart like pus.

Lila looks around... and catches a glimpse of a HAGGARD WOMAN eyeing her from down the aisle. We recognize her...

It's **ELAINE BOWEN**. Samantha's mom. Looking decades older than we last saw her. Sleep-starved face. Disturbing glint in her eyes. A loaded beat, then...

...Elaine storms out, leaving behind her grocery cart full of HALLOWEEN CANDY BAGS. Off Lila, rattled...

CUT TO A TRASH CAN BY THE BATHROOM ENTRANCE

SPLAT! Lila dumps her smashed carton of eggs in the trash.

NICK (O.S.)

Well, that's 12 less eggs getting
thrown at someone's house
tonight.

She looks to see a uniformed DEPUTY approaching -- **NICK FOLSOM**, mid-20s, getting a headstart on a dad-bod. Put-upon wiseass, the butt of most of his own jokes. Lila's been nursing a bit of crush on him since way back when.

LILA

Count your blessings, huh Nick?

NICK

I do count them. I have three.
3.5 on a good day. And most of
the time I can't remember what
they are.

LILA

(sees his handbasket
full of RED BULL)
Ninety-nine problems but lack of
caffeine ain't one.

NICK

Long night ahead. Not sayin' that
Halloween in this town is a total
shit-show, it's just that there
are *so many people* who need
arresting.

LILA

(re: the eggs)
Can y'start with lady who did
that?

NICK

I'll plant an egg on her, say she
pulled first.

Lila laughs. First time she's done that all day.

NICK

...you hanging in there?

LILA

There are days where I feel like
I could kill several nuns for
some Percocet, but other than
that I'm peachy.

NICK

Atta girl.

LILA
Say hi to your mom for me?

NICK
(nods, a painful
subject)
Sure thing.

As they part ways, Nick calls after her...

NICK
Oh, in case you forget? Your
house is at the END of the cul-de-
sac--

LILA
(laughing)
You prick. You. Prick.

NICK
--in case you get confused and
break into Mr. Mapes' house again--

They're both laughing now as we CUT TO:

EXT. LILA'S STREET - EVENING

As the sun descends over Cottage Grove, Lila pilots her Crown Vic through her neighborhood, onto...

PARKVIEW DRIVE

...the peaceful slice of Americana she grew up on. The cage she can't bring herself to leave. Drives into her CUL-DE-SAC, passing a dozen or so houses, watching the neighbors coming home from work, or out doing their Halloween prep...

--There's the PARTY HOUSE, a frat without a college, home to kids who never left town. Zach and some guys crack beers as a shirtless dude digs a waist-deep hole for a fire pit.

--A HAUNTED HOUSE. Demons and monsters adorn a maze of black plastic leading into the backyard. Decorating it are 40-ish local dentist **JIM PERKINS** and his wife **KIM** -- an unsettlingly cheerful couple who are way too into Halloween.

--A RUN-DOWN HOUSE. Weed-choked lawn. A DOG barks somewhere in the backyard. You can't see through the windows because they're blocked by STACKED BOXES. A hoarder lives here.

--Lila pulls into her driveway, next to A TOW-TRUCK, with a BARRY'S AUTO SERVICES logo on the side. About to climb out, she hears a HAMMERING coming from across the street...

...where Elaine Bowen stands at a phone pole with a staple gun. Over a faded, weathered **MISSING POSTER**, she hangs a fresh one: SAMANTHA'S SMILING YEARBOOK PIC.

A reward & phone number at the bottom. CLICK-CLACK! She staples the fresh missing poster in place, then makes for her tidy Tudor home.

Lila waits until Elaine's door shuts before getting out of the car and bee-lining for...

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...her home: well-worn and cozy, with a few hints of an overprotective dad (i.e. the RING CAMERA system set up around the place.) As Lila enters, we hear COMMOTION...

...and 2 KIDS FLY DOWN THE STAIRS. **TROY** (8, a tad ADHD, very into Transformers) & **MEGAN** (4, loves crocodiles and princesses.) Troy chases Megan with a toy robot.

LILA
Monsters!

TROY/MEGAN
Aunt Lila!

They MAUL LILA WITH HUGS, two little Godzillas attacking.

TROY/MEGAN
MAWWWRRR! ROAARRR! RAAAWWWW!

LILA
Do your worst, weaklings, I am
unstoppable!

MEGAN
SURRENDER!

LILA
NEVER!

TROY
(sniffs)
Your clothes smell funny.

BARRY (O.S.)
(from the next room)
That's because your Auntie Lila's
been smoking again.

LILA
No she hasn't!

The kids stop, glare at Lila -- so disappointed.

LILA
(feigns indignation)
Who are you gonna believe, me or
your lying noses? Put these in
the kitchen--

She hands the grocery bags to the kids, heads off into...

THE LAUNDRY ROOM, where her older brother **BARRY (30)**, clad in t-shirt & boxers, yanks clothes from the dryer. Permanent 5-o'clock shadow, considered to be a lovable grouch by just about everyone (except the wife who recently divorced him.)

LILA
Dude, really?--

BARRY
Told ya, wanna live in this house, no pills, no booze, no banging random dudes, and no coming home smelling like the Marlboro Man.

LILA
One, it's not even your house--

BARRY
Is until Mom and Dad get off sabbatical.

LILA
That the new term for "driving around the country in an RV having freaky old-people sex?"

BARRY
You are literally the grossest person I know.

LILA
At least I'm wearing pants.

Barry rolls his eyes as he pulls on his freshly-dried TOW TRUCK DRIVER'S UNIFORM, then huffs off into--

BARRY
Alright, you two...

--THE KITCHEN, where the kids put away groceries with zero regard to where refrigerated items are supposed to go.

BARRY
--gimme a hug, dad's heading out.

MEGAN
For how long?

BARRY
Back before you know it. Tonight's gonna be good for us, Halloween's like Christmas for tow truck drivers.

TROY
What's that mean?

BARRY

May you never find out.

He hugs the kids. Then takes Lila aside, talking quiet...

BARRY

Call me if you guys need anything. If I don't pick up, leave a message. Don't just hang up like you normally do.

LILA

(salutes)

Yes sir.

BARRY

Troy starts getting a reaction--

LILA

(lifts an INHALER)

Copy that.

BARRY

And don't mess with my speakers.

LILA

Wouldn't dream of it.

As Barry heads for the door, we hear CCR's "BAD MOON RISING" starting to blast from...

INT. LILA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

...Barry's SOUND SYSTEM (a Sonos knock-off with speakers in every room of the house.) Lila uses an app on her phone to CRANK 'EM UP TO 11 IN MULTIPLE ROOMS.

LIVING ROOM: Raucous dance party with Lila and the kids, before the song takes us into--

KITCHEN: where Lila fries up "Halloween Burgers" (patties with Jack-O-Lantern faces cut in them) for Troy & Megan, as-

THE BATHROOM: Lila does Megan's scary scary costume makeup (she's a hybrid Princess-Alligator.)

BEDROOM: Lila helps scatterbrained Troy locate his costume in his INSANELY MESSY ROOM. And as he triumphantly FINDS HIS OPTIMUS PRIME MASK, the chorus of the song kicks in--

EXT. LILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BAM! The front door SWINGS WIDE, as Lila and a FULLY COSTUMED TROY AND MEGAN exit the house, out into...

THE NEIGHBORHOOD HALLOWEEN FESTIVITIES

...the street alive with TRICK-OR-TREATERS romping from door to door. 8TH GRADE HOOLIGANS cutting loose. 20-SOMETHINGS pile into cars and jet off to parties. Everyone raised on Amblin dreamed their Halloween would be like this.

LILA
Where do you guys wanna--

MEGAN
THERE!

Megan pulls their linked hands across the cul-de-sac toward--

THE PERKINS' HAUNTED HOUSE

--a long line of TRICK-OR-TREATERS waiting to get into the spookshow, serenaded by CANNED SCREAMS from cheap speakers all over the black-tarp maze leading into the backyard. Megan drags Lila and Troy towards the line, but Lila eyes it dubiously (this thing is too scary for young kids.)

LILA
...line's kinda long here. Let's go get some candy, okay?

Lila leads them away from the Haunted House and--

QUICK SHOTS: The kids hit doorbells. Doors open. Candy gets shoveled into bags. Rinse and repeat. Then they're by--

THE FOLSOM HOUSE

--where there's a bowl of candy with a sign reading "TAKE ONE PLEASE." As the kids ransack the bowl, Lila glances through the front windows around the door at...

NICK FOLSOM

...double-timing between his police radio and trying to feed dinner to a catatonic old woman in a wheelchair: **CYNTHIA FOLSOM, his mother.**

As he coaxes her into eating, Lila watches him through the window, caught by the sweetness of the scene. Then she realizes the kids are heading toward--

THE RUN DOWN "HOARDER" HOUSE

--the windows dark, but the PORCH LIGHT is on. Upstairs, just for a second, Lila spots a HULKING SILHOUETTE lumbering past the window -- **KOVITCH**. We'll meet him later.

LILA
(steers them away)
...yeah, we're skipping that place.

MEGAN

Why?

TROY

(whispers, spooking
Megan)

A hoarder lives there.

LILA

(tries to cut him off)

Troy--

MEGAN

What's a hoarder?

TROY

His house is like a MAZE OF
TRASHBAGS piled ten feet high!

MEGAN

Gross!

LILA

(still trying)

Okay, that's enou--

TROY

--and he's got an army of hungry
RATS in his attic!

MEGAN

Eww!

LILA

ENOUGH, okay?

(to Megan)

Despite what this weirdo tells
you, a hoarder is someone who
just... holds onto too much
stuff.

MEGAN

Why don't they throw it away?

LILA

...they don't know how to.

Lila can relate. Troy grabs Megan's hand and they rush to
the next house. Lila lets them run ahead, because it's...

ELAINE BOWEN'S HOME

...Lila hangs back on the shadowy sidewalk. Troy and Megan
romp up to the door to collect their candy from Elaine. She
looks out toward Lila, who avoids her gaze, as--

WE CUT TO THE OTHER HOUSES IN THE CUL-DE-SAC

--THE PARTY HOUSE: where tipsy 20-somethings TAKE SELFIES with Lila, Troy and Megan as they hand out candy.

--DEVIN THE BUTCHER'S HOUSE: Devin's in a cow costume. His wife sports a "SEXY PIG" get-up with a snout and tail.

--PRINCIPAL MAPES' HOUSE: where the kids collect their treats, and a lascivious Mr. Mapes leaves Lila with:

MR. MAPES

Barbara's out of town. If you
feel like breaking in here again--

BAM! Lila shuts the door in his face. She turns to depart with the kids--

--and STOPS. Sees TROY -- hunched in the walkway, WHEEZING:

TROY

...hhhhhhhhhhhhhuuuuhh...
huuuuuuuuuuhh...

His short, panicked breaths get LOUDER, like he's trying to suck oxygen through a straw. Asthma attack. Lila searches her pockets, realizes she left the inhaler at home-

LILA

Shit--

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

BOOM! The door flies open, Lila CARRIES TROY in, making for-
THE ASTHMA INHALER & CHAMBER ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER

FSSH! Lila puts the chamber over his mouth, and -- FSSSHT!
Gives him a hit of Albuterol. Nothing.

FSHHHT! She hits it again. Nothing. But she waits, finger on the trigger when---

His breathing SLOWS. Almost imperceptibly. Then his body relaxes slightly. Color returns to his face.

LILA

(removing chamber)
There you go... that better?

He gives a nod, then...

TROY

...can I eat my candy now?

Lila almost laughs as we--

CUT TO THE LIVING ROOM

Candy wrappers scattered across the coffee table. TV plays a black-and-white horror movie (with an alien making the same sounds as Troy's asthma attack.) Pan over to the couch...

...where Lila lounges with Megan & Troy, the kids slowly dozing off beside her, crashing from adrenaline and sugar.

Troy's candy-sack open before them. Lila reaches out and steals a Reeses out of the bag.

Eats it with her eyes on the TV. Reaches in for another...

...as on the TV, the old movie's score WHINES WITH DREAD...

...she pulls out **A STRANGE SMILING CANDY.**

Not a normal brand either, some 80's knock-off called SWEET SMILES. Slogan: "*BEHIND EVERY SMILE IS SOMETHING SWEET!*" The grinning logo looks almost like the Smiler mask.

A chill runs through Lila...

Then she notices THE WRAPPER'S LOOSE. Like someone's taken it off and rewrapped it. SOMETHING PURPLE ON IT.

She UNFOLDS it. Finds a MESSAGE WRITTEN ON THE OTHER SIDE.

CHILDISH, FEMININE HANDWRITING. PANICKED PURPLE CRAYON SCRAWL.

*IVE BEEN KIDNAPPED
GOING TO KILL ME*

Lila's face: "*Is this a joke?*"

Then: "*that's a pretty fucked up joke*"...

She dumps the bag -- everything else is normal -- Snickers, M&Ms, Skittles, etc.

Dumps out Megan's bag next, searches through it. Seeing only normal Halloween treats.

Eyes the note again, the jagged KINDERGARTEN HANDWRITING...

TROY

What's that?

Troy's watching. Lila FLIPS the wrapper, hiding the words. Holds up the smiling-face-side for them to see.

LILA

Where did you get this candy?

Troy and Megan exchange a dumbfounded look...

TROY

A house?

LILA
Which one?

TROY
Dunno.

LILA
Megan?

MEGAN
(eyes on alien on TV)
What are we watching?

LILA
Guys, focus. This came from one
of the houses we visited. Which
one?

A beat. The kids shake their heads. No idea. She thinks...
then digs out her PHONE, as we CUT TO:

INT. BARRY'S TOW TRUCK, MOVING - NIGHT

Lila's brother Barry picks up his ringing phone. He's
driving his tow truck along a remote highway, heading toward
FLASHING EMERGENCY LIGHTS around a CAR CRASH ahead.

BARRY (INTO PHONE)
Please tell me everybody's still
got roughly the same number of
fingers and toes as when I left.

LILA (FROM PHONE)
Listen, Troy had an asthma
attack. He's fine now, but I
found this weird thing in his
candy bag...

Out on the road, A COP is waving Barry over to the car
crash. And it's a bad one -- an SUV, flipped on its side.

BARRY
Look, is this an emergency?

LILA
I don't know--

BARRY
'Cause I got an emergency to deal
with here. Call y'back, okay?

He hangs up and gets out of the truck as we CUT TO--

LILA: phone in hand, jaw tense. A beat, then...

LILA
 (goes into living room)
 You guys wanna go on a field
 trip?

INT. LANE COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

Deputy Nick Folsom was right: Halloween IS a shit-show in this town. Sheriff's station is a madhouse. DUI TINKERBELL SOBS as she's lead to the drunk tank. BAR BRAWL MARIO & LUIGI in cuffs. A guy wearing nothing but a THRILLER JACKET--

LILA (O.S.)
 Oh God. Don't look. Stop looking.

Lila tries to steer Troy and Megan away from the pantsless King Of Pop, covering their eyes as she bee-lines toward a harassed **DEPUTY WIGGINS** (50s) working the front desk--

LILA
 Excuse me, I--

WIGGINS
 Have a seat, I'll get to you.

LILA
 I just need to talk to--

WIGGINS
 Have. A. Seat.

He doesn't even look at her. So she reaches over and--

LILA
Oops.

--tips his coffee, spilling it across his reports.

WIGGINS
 (leaps up as she passes)
 Hey! Hey-- hold it goddammit--

NICK (O.S.)
 Keep your shirt on, Joe.

And there's Nick Folsom, on his way out of his office, already looking like he's had a helluva night. Nick can tell from Lila's face that something's up as we CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION, NICK'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Close on the Sweet Smiles wrapper in Nick's hand. Widen to him and Lila in his office. Troy and Megan sitting in chairs outside his door, watching YouTube on a phone.

NICK

...look, do you have any idea how many calls we get all night because of practical jokes?

LILA

What if it's not a joke?

NICK

C'mon, unpack it for a second. Who abducts someone and then spends all night opening their door to people, handing out Snickers Bars? And how would a kidnap victim even get a note into the candy bowl?

LILA

I don't know, ok?

(quiet)

What if it's the same guy who...

She doesn't finish the words "took Samantha." She doesn't have to -- he reads it on her face. But...

NICK

...then we got a zombie problem on our hands, 'cause the dude who took Sam is dead. Trust me on this, I saw the cell after he--

Nick makes a slit-throat motion. Lila hesitates, then--

LILA

Will Halforth never *admitted* to it. He confessed to kidnapping and killing all those girls along I-5, but he always claimed that he had nothing to do with Samantha.

NICK

Sometimes criminals lie. That's one of the big things they teach you in Cop School, right up there with the Miranda Rights and what type of moustache you're required to grow.

LILA

Doesn't change the fact this note could actually be fucking real.

NICK

Lila, seriously, the odds of you having A SECOND run-in with a kidnapper, who just happens to live on your street?

NICK (CONT'D)

That's like getting eaten by a shark while getting hit by lightning.

(calms)

Look... we get a call about a missing kid? I'll have every badge between here and Portland banging on doors. But until then, we gotta go with the most likely answer. Which is this is a prank.

(then)

C'mon... we're talking about our neighbors. We know these people.

Off Lila, stymied...

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLICK! The front door opens, Lila ushers the kids inside.

LILA

You two go brush your fangs and get ready for bed, okay monsters? I just gotta make a quick call...

As the kids head up to the bathroom, Lila calls Barry again. Goes to straight to voicemail. Out of range. *Shit.*

CLICK! Lila ends the call. Screen switches to her wallpaper--
--which is an old selfie of her and Samantha, smiling at the beach, Lila's arm around her...

Lila looks at the photo. Pulls THE NOTE from her pocket...

...and looks out her window at her street -- all the houses there. *It's only one block.* Then, finally...

Makes a decision.

QUICK SHOTS

--Lila tucks in Megan and Troy, who are already nodding off to sleep.

--Sets up a nanny-cam in their room, links it her phone.

--Fires off a text to Barry: CALL ME.

CUT TO HER CAR: she pops the trunk and starts digging through the BOX OF OVERSTOCK COSTUMES she put in there...

EXT. LILA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Identity concealed under a cheap costume (A DOLL MASK designed to look "shattered" and glued back together, along with a BLACK CLOAK), Lila exits her house.

Takes in the neighborhood before her. It's almost 9 PM, lots of trick-or-treaters still out.

She scans the block, eyes narrow...

Sees young kids having fun, with no idea what danger is seething beneath the surface of this pleasant world. No one the wiser. No one but Lila...

LILA
(whispers)
...where are you?...

She's gonna have to retrace her steps. She heads into...

THE STREET

...and into the throng of trick-or-treaters; she can pass for a young teenager if you don't look too carefully.

And as she makes her way from house to house, spying on her neighbors from behind her mask, things that seemed playful and normal earlier now carry a sheen of menace...

...like at DEVIN THE BUTCHER'S HOUSE, his truck in the driveway with a grinning, knife-wielding pig for a logo. And the vague Wickerman-vibe she gets from seeing Devin and his wife dressed up like livestock when they open the door...

DEVIN
Happy Halloween!
(to Lila)
Spooky mask. What are you
supposed to be, young lady?

Lila doesn't respond. Just roots around in the bowl, looking for SWEET SMILES... and doesn't find any.

Moves on with the Trick-Or-Treaters to the NEXT HOUSES...

--DOORS OPEN, one after another.

--CANDY BOWLS, one after another. Lila's hand rustles through... *finding only normal Halloween treats.*

--THE FACES of the people answering the doors, one after another -- masks and ghoulish makeup.

Everything feels *off*... corrupted, rotten, perverse, as we--

WHOOSH TO LILA

--back on the street, moving along, paranoid...

...past a PACK OF TEENAGERS IN GLOW-IN-THE-DARK SKELETON SUITS, one of them craning his neck to watch her as she walks away, his rictus grin fixed on her...

...we move with Lila, as she senses she's being WATCHED, looks back as the Skeleton Mask turns away...

Fights off a shiver, moves on...

...looks in PARKED CAR'S WINDOW REFLECTION to see if she's being followed, when suddenly--

SPLAT! A GUSH OF RED ERUPTS ACROSS THE WINDSHIELD.

Then sees... it's a water-balloon loaded with fake blood.

And right then, SPLAT! She catches the next balloon in the face courtesy of some **SHITHEAD 8TH-GRADE BOYS** speeding past on their BMXs, laughing their asses off.

8TH GRADE SHITHEADS
Yeah!/BOOM!/Toldja she takes it
in the face!

And off Lila's stormy expression we CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE OF A HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

In the shadows alongside a house, Lila pulls off her doll mask, using her sleeve to clean the fake blood off. When from behind her she hears...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Aren't you a little old for trick
or treating?

She spins a 180 to see JIM PERKINS, watching from next door in the front yard of his home, dressed up as a spooky carnival barker. His friendliness feels... off-putting.

LILA
(playing it cool)
How's your Halloween going, Jim?
Your place looked busy tonight.

JIM
Would you like to see it?

He points to his HAUNTED HOUSE set-up leading into the backyard. Things have calmed down over there; no line left to get in. No trick-or-treaters at the door. Just... Jim.

LILA
Depends. Will there be treats?

JIM
There will be.

LILA
What kind?

JIM
(trace of a smile)
All kinds.

He motions her toward the Haunted House entrance.

Lila pauses. Looking into the cave-like mouth of the maze leading into the backyard. Is she walking into a trap?

Looks at Jim. Who motions: *go ahead*.

Lila moderates an internal debate. Then... decides.

Makes for the entrance.

FROM OUT ON THE STREET

...we're in **SOMEONE'S POV**. *Silently watching Lila as...*

INT. JIM PERKINS' HAUNTED HOUSE, MAZE - CONTINUOUS

...she goes into the black tarp maze of the Haunted House...

...past words fingerpainted in blood red... **HELP US...**

...past the **FACES OF LEERING GHOULS** painted on the maze walls, their eyes seem to follow her as she passes, when--

VOICE
AAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!

A **FACE LUNGES OUT AT HER WITH A SCREAM!** And then... turns into **CREEPY LAUGHTER** as it (actually a mask attached to a motion-activated machine arm) retracts.

She shakes it off. Continues past a **FLICKERING BLACK & WHITE IMAGE** of medieval people being tortured in a dungeon...

...and as she passes the projection screen, we glimpse a **SHADOW** following her on the other side, before...

...she moves into a narrow, dark tunnel leading out to...

THE BACKYARD

...where there's an outdoor **CHICKEN WIRE ENCLOSURE** the size of a carport. Inside the enclosure is the **CANDY BOWL**.

She eyes it a beat...

...then walks in, makes for the bowl...

--and her face falls. Because it's filled with BUSINESS CARDS. There's A SMILING VAMPIRE MOUTH WITH A CAVITY ON ONE FANG. The card reads: "PERKINS DENTAL - POST HALLOWEEN SPECIAL 10% OFF" and "FANGS A LOT!"

LILA
...gotta be kidding...

And right then she steps on a PRESSURIZED FLOORBOARD and THWACK! THE CAGE DOOR SLAMS SHUT BEHIND HER.

She turns to it. Grabs it. It won't budge. This auto-locking cage is the *coupe de grace* of the Perkins' haunted house.

LILA
Hey-- Jim?

SCREEAAAAAAMMMMM! A cacophony of shrieks from the haunted house speakers. FLASH! She's HIT WITH STROBELIGHTS. EVERYTHING GOES FLASHING WHITE. She's NIGHT-BLINDED.

Then just like that, it all STOPS. Her eyes slowly adjust...

LILA
Jim, seriously, this isn't--

SCREEAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMM-FLASH! Another blast of NOISE and STROBES. Somehow LOUDER. EVERYTHING WHITE and--

CLICK! It all stops. And as Lila's blown pupils adjust to the darkness of the backyard, she turns, looking around...

...and can make out *something* that terrifies her...

A FIGURE. Twenty feet behind the cage, staring at her.

A figure in a yellow mask.

A yellow SMILER MASK.

SCREEAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMM-FLASH! Another blast of noise and strobes. Everything fades from white to...

The figure is standing 10 feet behind the cage.

SCREEAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMM! FLASH! Blinded, Lila stumbles to the locked door, GRABS IT, THRASHES, straining to get out.

CLICK! It all stops. She spins.

As her eyes adjust to the darkness...

Smiler is NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

Breath staccato, she turns in a slow circle, eyes wide--

--where the fuck did he go? *WHERE THE FUCK IS HE??*

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hello Lila.

She SHRIEKS and whirls around, seeing SMILER IS RIGHT BEHIND HER OUTSIDE THE CAGE, LEERING IN AT HER--

SMILER
Having FUN?

LILA
 (stumbles back,
 terrified)
What do you want?!?

SMILER
I'm getting exactly what I want.
 (leans in)
You in your place.

Lila stops cold... because she's sensing something, *something we might also be sensing...*

LILA
 (a whisper)
Say again?

SMILER
I said "You in your--OW! OW FUCK-

He SCREAMS because Lila's reached through a slat in the door and GRABBED SMILER BY HIS JUNK. Squeezing. HARD.

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| SMILER | LILA |
| FUCK-OH-GOD-OH-FUCK-LET GO! | Take it off. The mask is |
| AAAAAAAH! | wrong! Your voice isn't <u>his</u> . |
| (writhing) | (squeezes harder) |
| JESUS OW GOD-- PLEASE! OKAY! | Take off the mask or I take |
| OKAY! | your balls. |

Smiler YANKS off the mask (which we now notice is *cheap plastic, different from the one we saw in the beginning*) and--

--we reveal it's our old pal Brett O'Shea. Mouth open, making an absolutely indescribable noise, as his BUDDIES react from their hiding spot in the shadows.

BRETT
 I'm-sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.
 Leggo! Leggo!

LILA
 Let me guess: you were
 embarrassed about a little girl
 breaking your jaw, so you decided
 to scare the shit out of her?
Learn to take a fucking L, Brett.
 (to one of his pals)
 Open the door. Now.

One of boys rushes over, fumbles for the latch, pulls opens the door. She gives a final SQUEEZE, Brett HOWLS and crumples to the ground. Lila walks out, his buddies backing away as if from a feral dog, as she stares down at Brett...

LILA

Asshole.

CRUNCH! Lila steps on Brett's plastic Smiler mask. Walks on--
--past a worried Jim Perkins approaching from the house--

JIM

What's going on out here?

She makes it to--

THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

--and stops, hands shaking. Coming down off the fear that --
for a second -- she thought she was facing *you-know-who*...

LILA

...Jesus...

After a moment, she pulls it together as--

JIM

(exiting backyard)

The heck happened to that guy?

LILA

Migraine. Are you actually
locking people in a cage as part
of your haunted house?

JIM

It's not a cage, it's an escape
room!

LILA

Kiiiinda seemed like a cage!
Also, giving out business cards
instead of candy? Foul play, bro.

JIM

Hey, I'm giving the gift of
scares. At least I'm not handing
out expired sugary crap like
everybody else.

She pauses. That word "expired" dings for her. She reaches into her pocket and digs out the SWEET SMILES wrapper.

LILA

...like this?

JIM
 (points across street)
 Elaine's been handing out that
 dollar-store junk all night.

Lila takes that in...

LILA
 Thanks, Jim.

Then pulls on her broken doll mask and bee-lines for Elaine Bowen's house as we CUT TO:

EXT. ELAINE BOWEN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

We move with Lila toward Elaine's house. Pauses by the "MISSING" POSTER of Samantha on the phone pole outside.

Up close, there's something disturbing about the poster. Slightly askew. Certain words in all-caps ("darling DAUGHTER") betraying the frayed mind that wrote them. The phone pole is GOUGED and SPLINTERED, COVERED IN OLD STAPLES.

Lila glances to Elaine's house, then back to the poster...

LILA
 (a whisper)
*...what'd she do, Sam?... Did she
 take someone to replace you?*

Samantha, smiling in the photo, gives no answer. No indication of what her grieving mother is capable of.

INT./EXT. ELAINE BOWEN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Ding-Dong! A doorbell rings inside the dim confines of Elaine's home. Elaine approaches the door. No costume, just in the same clothes she's been wearing all day. Opens up--

TRICK-OR-TREATERS (O.S.)
 Trick-or-treat!

The group of trick-or-treaters at her door is a marginally older crowd at this later hour; Fortnite characters and rappers with Sharpie-tattooed faces...

...and at the back of the group, Lila The Porcelain Doll.

ELAINE
 Take as much as you like... there
 you go... enjoy...

And as the other trick-or-treater's depart, it's Lila's turn to step up to the door.

ELAINE

Oh my. That's quite the costume...

Elaine holds out the bowl... and sure enough, Lila sees its full of OLD OFF-BRAND JUNK... including **SWEET SMILES**.

ELAINE

Go ahead. Dig in.

Lila pretends to look for a specific candy, *all while subtly peering past Elaine, trying to see into the house...*

...sees only a dim room in need of housekeeping. Early stages "Grey Gardens." On a wall: a photo of Sam, smiling.

ELAINE

Decisions, decisions...

Lila picks some candy. Nods a thank-you. Turns to go--

ELAINE (O.S.)

Is there something you'd like to say to me, Lila?

Lila freezes. *How does she know it's me??* Elaine approaches her, motions to the VINE TATTOO crawling up Lila's wrist.

ELAINE

Same tattoo you talked Samantha into getting.

Elaine lifts Lila's mask, revealing the scared girl beneath.

ELAINE

...why don't you come inside?

INT. ELAINE BOWEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A lit stove burner licks the bottom of a large POT OF STEW simmering on the stove. Way too much for one person. Lila, standing awkwardly in the kitchen entrance...

LILA

Expecting company?

ELAINE

I like to cook. Keeps my mind occupied.

Elaine lifts a KITCHEN KNIFE, chops carrots. Lila peruses the room... sees a table crowded with FLYERS; Samantha's "missing" posters. Duct tape, staplegun, tacks, pliers...

LILA

That's good. Keeping yourself busy.

ELAINE

I've got a lot of hours to occupy now. Nothing else to do.

Lila tries a conversational gambit, dangles a piece of bait.

LILA

I'm sorry. I know I've said it before. But I really am. I know what you must be feeling.

ELAINE

"I know what you must be feeling." I hear that a lot. From everyone. But they don't. Not really. And I find myself wishing I could show them what it really feels like.

Lila freezes.

LILA

(quiet)

...you mean... what it feels like to lose someone? To be alone?

ELAINE

Is that what you *think* I feel? Alone?

(a little manic)

Would you like to know what I feel, Lila? What I really feel? What the worst is for me?

Lila waits for Elaine's next move, jaw tight. Elaine's hand tightly gripping that very sharp knife as it starts cutting fleshy mushrooms. Knifework gaining intensity...

ELAINE

(chop-CHOP-CHOP)

It's not that she was never rescued.

(chop-CHOP-CHOP)

It's not that her *body* was never found in a *ditch* somewhere...

(CHOP-CHOP-CHOP)

It's not even having to *smile*. To pretend like you're some normal human being like everyone else--

She GASPS. She's just SLICED open a finger. She holds it up, staring at the blood welling out.

ELAINE

No. It's the *not knowing*. It's the *not knowing* what was done to her. *Not knowing* if it was quick.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Or if her screams were for her mother at the last moment. It's the not knowing what happened.

Blood dribbles to the floor. The stew pot BUBBLES FASTER...

ELAINE

But what I do know? It was your idea to sneak her out that night. It was your idea to go up on that hill. It was you who answered that phone. It was all your choices, and yet it was my sweet girl who paid for them.

Elaine STEPS FORWARD, knife gripped tight, looming over her.

ELAINE

I have something for you.

The stew boils over. Abruptly Elaine TURNS, takes the pot off. Sets the knife down as she rifles through a drawer as--

--Lila STARES AT THE KNIFE from the cutting board -- *should I grab it?* Then Elaine turns around, holding--

--nothing more than **A FRAMED PHOTO**. The one from our opening. Lila & Samantha on Halloween years ago.

ELAINE

I don't want it in the house, but I couldn't bring myself to throw it away.

Lila realizes she was misreading the situation; *this isn't a killer, just a woman shattered by grief.* Elaine notices...

ELAINE

You're shaking...

Lila's hand is, indeed, trembling with adrenaline.

ELAINE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. I sometimes scare myself these days, to be honest...

(eyes far away, quiet)

...there are times when I think I hear her... *calling for me*... I hear her voice in my head, and...

Elaine trails off, fighting back hot tears.

LILA

(puts a hand on her)
It's ok...

ELAINE
You should go.

LILA
I understand--

ELAINE
I'm sorry. About all of this.
(dries her eyes)
And for smashing your eggs.

Those last words trigger something in Lila... *we see a flash of it, earlier at the grocery store, Elaine storming out, leaving her cart full of Halloween candy behind.*

LILA
You left your candy in your cart
at the store tonight.

ELAINE
Yeah. Had to borrow some from
next door.

Motions over to KOVITCH'S HOUSE next door...

...Lila puts it together: the kids got the Sweet Smiles from the Bowen's, but the candy itself came from Kovitch.

As Lila backs out of the house, Elaine picks up the bloody knife, rinses it, then starts chop-chop-chopping...

EXT. LILA'S STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Lila walks over to the old, rusting WROUGHT IRON FENCE and GRIPS the BARS, peering through them up at--

KOVITCH'S CREEPY HOARDER HOUSE

-old, unkempt, paint flaking. Structure sagging from disrepair. Barren front lawn. Fenced-in backyard. The front of the house like a malformed face looking back at us.

In a far side-window, there's a FLICKERING -- the glow of someone watching TV.

Lila drifts, trying to get a better look... but the side window is too smudgy to see much. So she sneaks...

AROUND THE HOUSE

...along the exterior of the backyard fence...

...and stands on tippy-toes, peeking over at the rear-windows, at the TV-lit glow of the living room, when--

PITBULL
ROWROWROWROW!!!

BAM! A **PITBULL** SLAMS INTO THE FENCE, JAWS SNAPPING AT HER--

Lila FALLS BACK as the dog THROWS ITSELF AGAINST THE WOOD, ROCKING THE WHOLE RICKETY STRUCTURE--

--HOWLING, paws SCRAPING, dying to break through and gut her. This thing isn't a dog; it's a mobile bear-trap.

Catching her breath, Lila looks back up at the house to see--

--A HUGE SILHOUETTE suddenly APPEARS at the window, peering out. *Does he see her?*

Instinctively, she slips deeper into the shadows. Watching the dark shape as it remains, then... eventually...

...turns and disappears back into the house.

Jesus. Fucking. Christ.

The dog paces back and forth behind the fence like a caged hyena, searching for a way out, snarling, as--

--Lila backs down the street... then makes a decision.

Takes out her phone and makes a call as we SMASH TO:

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC, JEAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick Folsom stands before a house that's been vandalized with EGGS and FAKE BLOOD WATER BALLOONS (courtesy of the 8th Grade Shitheads who splatted Lila earlier.) He's talking to an OLD LADY (**JEAN**) who doesn't have to dress up because she's already a witch every day of her life.

JEAN

Are you understanding me? *I want you to find who did this and arrest them.*

NICK

And how would you like me to do that?

JEAN

(as if it's obvious)
Check the eggshells for fingerprints.

NICK

You want me to... fingerprint the eggshells.

JEAN

Yes.

NICK

(a beat, deadpan)

No problem, I'll just have CSI dust for prints and cross-index them with the vast database of 6th graders' fingerprints we keep at the station.

JEAN

Thank you.

NICK

(as his phone rings)

Excuse me.

(answers the phone)

This is Nick-- What? Are you kidding me?

(eyes Jean)

You know, sure. Yeah, I can come over. I can absolutely do that.

Anything to get away from *this* lady. We hear:

LILA (PRE-LAP)

I'm telling you, it's him...

EXT. HOARDER HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick with Lila, standing by his cruiser by Kovitch's house.

NICK

So that's your theory? Boo Radley did it?

(off her look)

From "To Kill A Mockingbird"--

LILA

I know who the fuck Boo Radley is--

NICK

--and just because he's weird, you automatically think it's him? The guy can't even hold down a bagging job at Safeway. How the hell is *that dude* gonna kidnap someone and not get noticed?

LILA

What if you're wrong? What if that note is real, and he's holding someone in there, and you don't do anything about it? That shit's gonna haunt you forever.

He stares at the house for a moment, then...

NICK
 ...if I get fired for this, I'm
 gonna haunt you forever.

With that, he opens the iron gate and walks through the front yard. Beyond the backyard gate, the pitbull BARKS.

NICK
 Hey, hey, hey-
 (whistles)
 Come on. Come on...

The dog GROWLS through the wooden gate-boards as he moves up the creaky front porch to the door. He KNOCKS.

Back at the cruiser, Lila watches as...

The door opens. Inside she can see him: **KOVITCH**.

A mountain of a man. With a face that's all wrong angles. Eyes like polished stones.

Nick talks to him, one hand resting on his gun.

NICK
 Sorry to bother you tonight.
 Listen, we got a report...

ON THE STREET

Lila spies from the shadows. Watching as Nick talks... then Kovitch nods, and takes a reluctant step back to let him in.

Nick shoots a glance back - *here goes nothin'* - and goes in.

Kovitch pauses in the doorway. Peers into the darkness. Like he can *sense* her out there too. Then closes the door as--

--Lila's out of the shadows, moving closer, *watching* through front windows. Behind the fence, the pitbull GROWLS...

INSIDE

Nick moves past windows. Hand near his holstered gun.

He goes from room to room, obscured, only briefly visible as he goes. Kovitch leads sometimes, follows others...

As they head to the back of the house, Lila follows along the fence, peeking through slats as the pitbull paces her, throat rumbling, separated by a half inch of rotted wood...

...eyes locked on KOVITCH'S WINDOWS. Searching for Nick. Trying to keep track of him. To make sure he's *safe*.

Nick moves past a window. Kovitch FOLLOWS.

And then... nothing. They're just gone.

They don't appear at the next window. They don't come back.

She waits... And waits...

Nervous now. Trying to see through the fence slats. She grabs a lawn chair. Climbs atop to peer over the fence.

The pitbull paces. GROWLS. She watches, but nothing. Then--

Kovitch and Nick appear upstairs. Moving through the house.

She lets out a breath of relief. Nick searches the last few rooms, and then she can see it--

Nick's whole posture RELAXES. There's nothing there. He warms up to Kovitch. Grins sheepishly. And they head down.

LILA

Shit.

EXT. HOARDER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick shakes Kovitch's hand. As Kovitch closes the door and goes in, Nick heads out of the gate, walking up to Lila--

NICK

Well, I've earned my overtime tonight, thank you very much.

(off her look)

Is the dude creepy? Yes. Is his house so gross I think it should be nuked from orbit? Also yes. Is the Health Department gonna shit a cinderblock when I tell 'em about this? Abso-fucking-lutely. But, is there a kidnapped kid in there? No. I looked in every room--

LILA

Every room? You sure? What if he's got one you don't know about?

NICK

Like a "secret torture cave" or something? The guy who can barely tie his shoes built a Jigsaw dungeon in his house? And the kid's not gonna be screaming for help?

LILA

What if the kid's tied up and gagged? Or unconscious? Or dead and stuffed in the freezer?

NICK
I didn't check the freezer. Want
me to go back and check the
freezer?

LILA
I'm serious.

NICK
Lila...

And Nick seems torn, on the fence, when suddenly his radio
CRACKLES. It's **SHERIFF BETANCOURT**.

SHERIFF BETANCOURT (FROM RADIO)
Folsom, come in, you copy?

NICK
Talk to me, Sheriff--

SHERIFF BETANCOURT (FROM RADIO)
Good news, pancho... found out
who's pulling that bullshit with
the notes.

Interesting. Nick and Lila share a look...

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick's cruiser pulls up to a home at the end of the block--
the PARTY HOUSE, where costumed revelers stumble about,
hooting the mating calls of the young and intoxicated.

In the driveway, **SHERIFF BETANCOURT** (older, wiser, and
tireder than Nick) motions Nick and Lila over--

SHERIFF BETANCOURT
Neighbor called in a complaint.
Apparently these idiots have been
handing out candy with messages
inside. Found half a dozen in
their bowl...

He holds up a bunch of candies, and a couple of wrappers
with messages scrawled inside. Nick reads them. Snorts.

NICK
"Help they're trying to sodomize
me with a Baby Ruth bar." Spelled
sodomize with two D's. Any idea
which of these Rhodes Scholars
did it?

SHERIFF BETANCOURT
No one's fessed up. Best I can do
is a noise violation.

SHERIFF BETANCOURT (CONT'D)

Makes me long for the days when
we could just beat 'em with the
Yellow Pages...

NICK

Simpler times.

Betancourt nods *g'night* as he climbs into his cruiser and
departs. Nick approaches Lila, holds up the wrappers...

NICK

That's it I guess.
(off her silence)
You okay?

LILA

I'm just...
(laughs)
...wrapping my head around how
stupid I must look right now.

NICK

Hey. Cut that out.
(quietly)
Weird as it sounds, I wanted you
to be right. I wanted this to end
with us kicking down the door and
saving the day. Because there's
no one I know who needs a win
more than you.
(then)
But sometimes... life's just
simpler than we want it to be.

He hands her the wrappers. She flips through them. Messages
scrawled in purple. Just a horrible, horrible prank.

LILA

...I guess so.
(beat)
Thanks.

NICK

I gotta get back to patrol. But I
won't be far. Need anything, you
know my number.

LILA

Nine-one-one, right?

Nick cracks a smile -- *Lila's still Lila*. He gets in his
cruiser, gives her a wave, drives out of the cul-de-sac.

Lila starts walking back to her house...

...looks up at KOVITCH'S HOME as she passes...

...then eyes Samantha's photo on the wreath on the phone pole across the street from her house...

...before she finally walks inside.

INT. LILA'S HOUSE, KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lila heads up the creaky stairs into THE KIDS' BEDROOM. Troy shifts in his bed and wakes up, tired.

TROY

Lila?

LILA

Shhhh.

TROY

I heard you on the stairs.

LILA

It's okay. Go back to bed.

He drifts back to sleep. She pulls a kicked-away blanket over Megan in the bottom bunk...

...then heads back down the stairs; only this time, she's careful to step over the squeaky steps.

INT. LILA'S HOUSE, DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

CLICK! Lila flips on the kitchen light.

BZZZZ. Her cell phone lights up -- Barry. She sighs. Answers-

INT. BARRY'S TOW TRUCK, MOVING - SAME (INTERCUT AS NEEDED)

Barry's towing a smashed up car down a dark road.

LILA

Hey. How's it going out there?

BARRY

"Tonight's car accident has been brought to you by Jose Cuervo, author of such thoughts as '*fuck that cop*' and '*I think I'll cut my own hair.*'" How's things at home? Said something about a note?

Lila pauses. Holds up the note on the Sweet Smiles wrapper.

*IVE BEEN KIDNAPPED
GOING TO KILL ME*

Does she tell him about her night? Fuck no.

LILA

It was nothing. Everything's fine. Totally fine...

(then)

Kids're asleep. All good.

BARRY

Sure? You sounded frazzled earlier.

LILA

Under. Control.

BARRY

Ok well, I got two more cars to tow. Be back in a coupla' hours.

LILA

I'll leave the light on for you.

Click. She hangs up. Everything is quiet. CUT TO:

INT. LILA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

CLICK! Lila turns on the kitchen TV. Flips through horror movies. Pillages kids' pumpkin-buckets, sugar-medicates.

On TV: *the floorboards of a haunted house CREAK under a terrified girl's feet as the movie's sound drains away, priming the audience for a motherfucker of a jump-scare...*

A second CREAK of a floorboard.

Lila pauses -- that creak sounded weirdly like it was coming from inside her house, not on the TV.

She looks behind her, scans the room. Sees nothing. Everything as it should be.

Looks back to the TV. And as she does so...

A DOOR HINGE SQUEAKS BEHIND HER

Skin suddenly rippling with gooseflesh, Lila turns...

...and sees the PANTRY DOOR is slightly ajar.

What the fuck?...

BANG! Lila damn near jumps out of her skin -- but it's a noise from the TV, a trapdoor EXPLODES OPEN and up comes a LUMBERING SHAPE WITH A SHRIEKING BUZZSAW.

CLICK! She turns off the TV. All goes silent.

Looks back to the pantry. At its slightly-open door.
The floorboards beyond the door emit a barely audible CREAK.

LILA
Troy? Megan?

No response.

Knees trembly, Lila makes for the pantry door.

Pushes it open.

A shaft of light cuts a wedge through the darkness.

Nothing inside here. Just food and kitchen supplies.

But... in the very back of the pantry, something glints in the black. Lila squints and sees it's...

Eyes. Staring at her.

SAMANTHA'S FACE emerges from the murky depths of the pantry. Her skin is purplish-white and her eyes are full of erupted veins, like she's been choked to death. Her voice rattles...

SAMANTHA
*...behind every smile is
something sweet...*

WHAM! A GLOVED HAND slams around Samantha's mouth and she's SUCKED BACKWARDS INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE PANTRY as--

A CRY flies out of Lila's mouth as-

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

LILA'S EYES SNAP OPEN. She JOLTS up from the couch from where she was... sleeping.

She takes it in. It was all just a dream. Still--

--she stumbles into the kitchen-- throws the light-switch and YANKS open the pantry, which is, of course--

Empty.

Just her trauma-bruised mind playing tricks on her.

Lila can't suck air fast enough, flees out of the pantry--

--into the living room, looking around for threats both real and imagined. Seeing nothing.

Nothing but the CANDY on the coffee table.

Samantha's words on her lips...

LILA
 (a whisper)
*"Behind every smile is something
 sweet"...*

She takes out the Sweet Smiles wrappers. Re-reads them...

Her expression changes to a FROWN. Flips through them again.
 And again. Something's wrong.

...the original has feminine handwriting... purple scrawl...

She puts the original wrapper next to the ones that came
 from the Sheriff, and we notice at the same time as her...

LILA
 (whispers)
 ...the handwriting's different...

And it is. Subtle... but different. Harder, blockier.

She runs a finger over the old one -- it's crayon. But when
 she rubs one of the new ones, it SMEARS. They're NOT WRITTEN
 IN CRAYON, BUT PURPLE MARKER. DIFFERENT PEOPLE CLEARLY WROTE
 THESE. They're decoy notes, made to throw her off the scent.

LILA
 (whispers)
 ...holy shit...

She looks from the candy wrappers to her WINDOW, staring out
 at... KOVITCH'S HOUSE. And we SMASH TO:

EXT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE, SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Lila sneaks towards Kovitch's house...

...looks up to a window... sees the TV flickering...

...and through another window, Kovitch on his chair...

How the hell is she gonna get in there?

Then-- the sound from behind her. A PORTABLE SPEAKER playing
 MUMBLE RAP. She turns--

--and sees the source: the 8th-grade shitheads on their BMXs
 cruising past on the cross-street, heading for...

THE PARK ACROSS THE BLOCK

Lila watches them, wheels turning, and we CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

A lighter ignites and roasts some weed inside a beer can refashioned as a marijuana pipe. WIDEN TO--

--the 8th Grade Shitheads, smoking up on the playground of this big wooded park. As one of them pulls in a MASSIVE HIT--

LILA (O.S.)
Smile, douchebags.

CLICK! They're blinded by the flash of an Iphone camera. Lila's just shot a picture of them as she approaches.

KID (SCOTTY)
(coughing up smoke)
The fuck--

LILA
Hi, Scotty. Hi, Scotty's Gross Friends. How's your Halloween going? Finding lots of fun shit to throw at people?

SCOTTY
What do you want?

LILA
Remember when your stepdad caught you with a cigarette? You spent every Saturday sweating your ass off doing yardwork for a year?
(lifts the phone-pic of him smoking weed)
Whaddya think he'll do when he finds out you're smoking weed and smashing out lights in the park?

SCOTTY
(confused)
We didn't smash any--

She WHIPS a rock at a park light. SMASH. It goes out.

SCOTTY
(stares)
...you're crazy.

LILA
100%. So do what I say and don't fuck with me.

And before Lila can tell them her demands, we SMASH TO:

INT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We're in Kovitch's living room, focused on his TV set -- an old tube job with bunny ears, playing a sitcom.

The show's laughtrack CACKLES. In his armchair, Kovitch remains silent. Eats a popsicle, tosses the stick away when--

SPLAT! A waterballoon filled with fake blood ERUPTS across the window behind the TV, the room now cast in a crimson glow from the streetlight outside, as--

--Kovitch just sits in his armchair. Unfazed.

EXT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hidden in the shadows of the front yard, Scotty and the boys HURL WATER BALLOONS AND EGGS at Kovitch's place.

SPLAT! SPLAT! One after another. Lila watches from her hiding spot in the front, checking for lights to come on.

LILA
...c'mon... c'mon...

Nothing. Kovitch isn't coming. The kids look to Lila.

SCOTTY
What now?

Lila thinks. Hears the PITBULL barking in the back. Beat...

LILA
Get on your bikes and ride as
fast as you can.
(off their "What?"
looks)
GO.

Right as Lila UNLATCHES THE GATE AND USES IT TO CORNER HERSELF AS SHE SWINGS IT OPEN--

--and ERUPTING OUT OF THE BACKYARD COMES THE PITBULL.

The kids BOLT FOR THEIR BIKES -- *oh shit, oh shit*--

Riding like the wind away from the house--

--Kovitch's dog CHASING AFTER THEM, BARKING ITS HEAD OFF as--

INSIDE KOVITCH'S BEDROOM

--he hears the barking in front of his house, moving away at a rapid clip. CLICK! He shuts off the TV as--

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

A moment later, the front door OPENS. Kovitch steps out.

KOVITCH
(calls for the dog)
Boonie! Here, boy!

The dog doesn't come. Kovitch lumbers down the front step to go retrieve his pet as we PULL BACK...

...to find Lila stealthing her way through his backyard...

...to the porch's DOGGY DOOR. She breathes in DEEP and wedges into the tight space... Slithering INTO THE HOUSE...

INT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

...and FINDS A RAT eating out of the DOG BOWL by her face.

She swallows a SCREAM, SCAMPERS back and away, eyes adjusting to the gloom, hyperventilating...

CLICKS on her cell phone flashlight...

RATS SCAMPER into HOLES IN THE WALLS, disappearing, as...

...she sees the kitchen is a fucking haz-mat disaster area. Stacked plates of DECAYING FOOD everywhere.

She holds her light over a MILKY GLASS, she can see SOMETHING SWIMMING INSIDE it. MOSQUITO LARVAE. *Jesus*.

LILA
(looks around)
Hello?!?

Nothing. Eyes round and wide and scared, trying to X-ray her way through the darkness, she moves...

THROUGH THE KITCHEN

...notices the refrigerator door is ajar... She hesitates. After her Nick conversation, does she check the freezer?

She pulls it open. No body. But it's stacked floor-to-ceiling with popsicle boxes. Nothing else. Opens the fridge--

--and GAGS from the stench: the fridge side is so CRAMMED WITH ROTTING FOOD that the door will barely close.

Lila stuffs the door shut and moves on...

DEEPER INTO THE HOUSE

...past his armchair in the living room, which is surrounded by a lake of DISCARDED POPSICLE STICKS. Ants crawl all over them. It's like the carpet is moving.

Lila grimaces and moves on...

...through a MAZE OF STACKED BOXES AND SHELVES, like an unholy mix between a museum and funhouse.

-On one shelf are OLD DOLLS. BARBIES. RAGGEDY ANNE'S. ANTIQUE PORCELAIN with heavy lidded eyes. One fucked-up doll is huge, as big as a 3-year old kid. Smiling at us.

-And the next shelf? Used McDonald's cups. 100's of them.

--She passes a PAINTED CLOWN COLLECTION smiling its dead-eyed smile. MASKS on walls like some TRIBAL nightmare.

-A pile of vintage WORN PLAYBOYS opened near an OVERFLOWING BUCKET OF USED TISSUES. The women's faces are scratched out.

Lila almost gets sick at the sight of that. She looks away... and then STOPS COLD.

Because she hears something. A tiny, faint, distant voice.

DISTANT VOICE
...heeeeeeeeeee...

She stops. Did she hear SOMETHING? There it is again:

DISTANT VOICE
...heeeeeeeeeeeeeelp...

Is that a person? Or the wind?

LILA
Hello? I'm here to help! Is there anyone here?
(off the silence)
Hello!

She turns, trying to place it. Looks to a window. Seems like the noise came from this direction.

She approaches it slowly. Breath held. Silent.

Then... a LOUD SHRIEK makes her jump out of her skin.

But as she looks out the window, she sees it's just the sound effects from THE HAUNTED HOUSE next door.

LILA
(a whisper)
...goddammit...

She turns and moves onward...

UP THE STAIRS

...on old carpet worn thin to the smooth wood underneath.

LILA
Hello? Anyone?

As she reaches...

THE SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

...MORE rats scurry from the light. They SLITHER in the walls, CHITTERING within the ceilings above her...

...through the CEILING ACCESS DOOR TO THE ATTIC, she can hear what sounds like a DEAFENING SYMPHONY of squeaking rats. The central hive, teeming with unseen swarms.

She HURRIES into...

A BEDROOM

...the one room that's not cluttered with shit, perhaps because this room is more like a museum. 4 poster-bed with a dusty floral bedspread. Perfume bottles on the wall.

Pictures of AN OLD WOMAN who doesn't smile, and her SON, a younger, unhappy version of Kovitch. And there's a cut-out OBITUARY. "Local seamstress passes away at 73."

LILA
Hello? HELLO?

And then, at last, she sees HER. The SILHOUETTE of a BLONDE LITTLE GIRL across the LAST ROOM.

LILA
Hello...? I'm not going to hurt
you...
(approaches, cautious)
I got your message... I'm here to
help.

She touches the girl... who TOPPLES over.

Just a STYROFOAM HEAD with a WIG on it.

As she shines the light, she sees MORE on shelves around her. The room is filled with sewing machines. Bolts of old fabric. And then--

WOOF! WOOF!

She flicks off the light as--

OUT THE WINDOW

--she can see KOVITCH coming home. Dragging the PITBULL by the collar. And it's BARKING at kids as they pass.

WITH LILA

--panic rising in her, she SCRAMBLES to get out of the room. Heads to the stairs as--

KA-CHUNK. The front door OPENS and KOVITCH enters.

Lila pulls back on the top landing so she can't be seen.

KOVITCH
Easy, boy. Easy.

He pets it. Calms it. Releases it. It bolts into the house. She WAITS atop the stairs to see which way Kovitch goes.

He pauses for a second, as if *sensing* for something. Then shakes it off, heads...

BACK TOWARDS THE LIVING ROOM

...where he takes his seat, and turns the TV back on.

But the pitbull heads to the doggie door in back, and STOPS.

SNIFFS the entrance. Catching HER SCENT on the plastic as-

BACK ON THE STAIRS

Lila creeps down the SQUEAKY STEPS, covered by the sound of the TV, heading to the front door. Trying to get out, as--

--the pitbull sniffs through the house. Tracking her.

Both moving towards the SAME DOOR, on a collision course.

As she reaches the landing it appears, feet away.

She FREEZES. If it turns, she's dog food. It sniffs, then... FOLLOWS her scent into the OTHER ROOM.

She BACKS up the stairs. Slowly. Carefully. Then... SQUEAK. A floorboard creaks under her foot.

The pitbull FREEZES. Turns. Heads for the stairs and finds--

Nothing.

Lila's up on the landing, hurrying back down the hall, into--

THE LAST ROOM

--where she HIDES BEHIND THE BED. But the dog has her scent now. And it's fresh. It's SNUFFLING ALONG, coming fast-

-as it ENTERS she SLIPS UNDER the BED, holding her breath as-

...click-click-click...

Dog feet PAD PAST HER FACE, inches away.

And she realizes: she's NOT the only one HIDING UNDER HERE.
RATS shrink back from the animal, trying to get away.

One SLITHERS ACROSS LILA'S arm. She stifles a scream.

The DOG SNUFFLES at the bed's edge, right next to her so-

Lila GRABS the RODENT and SHOVES it out. It SQUEAKS and RUNS--
--and the PITBULL gives chase.

Relieved, Lila turns to go and then realizes what the rats were eating...

...Candy. *Sweet Smiles candy.* They pulled a bag under here.

LILA
 Motherfucker.

She gets out from the bed. There's a PAINED SQUEAK as -- in the next room, the PITBULL KILLS the rat.

She creeps up. It turns to see her and--

SHE CLOSES THE DOOR, locking it in. It BARKS, THROWING itself at the door, but--

DOWNSTAIRS

--Kovitch hears the scrambling upstairs.

KOVITCH
 QUIET!

He turns up the volume on the TV.

UPSTAIRS

Lila looks at the Sweet Smiles wrapper in her hand. Then sees SEWING EQUIPMENT back in the room she just left: needles, thread, stitch removers, and LOTS of SCISSORS.

...takes her pick. Tries a couple on for size, feeling their weight. Then finds one she really likes: a GIANT BOWIE KNIFE-SIZED PAIR. Razor sharp. She heads back...

DOWN THE STAIRS

...creeping down. Making the landing. Sees Kovitch with his back turned, watching TV.

She stalks him. Scissors ready.

Closer. Closer. Closer. When suddenly...

BUZZ goes her phone. She darts into a SIDE ROOM as Kovitch turns. She silences the phone *just as* he SILENCES THE TV.

KOVITCH

Boonie?

He can hear the dog barking upstairs.

KOVITCH

Boonie?!

Silence. Lila looks at her phone. The call reads **HOME**.

Kovitch growls, and walks past, heading up to see what the fuck is wrong with his dog.

As he SQUEAKS up the stairs, her PHONE VIBRATES AGAIN. A SECOND CALL. She puts the phone to her ear...

LILA

(whispers)

Troy?

MAN'S VOICE (THROUGH PHONE)

No.

Lila's blood runs cold. She knows this voice. It's the one that lives in her nightmares. The VOICE she heard on the phone the night Samantha was taken.

MAN'S VOICE (THROUGH PHONE)

You've got a bad habit, Lila.

Lila hears Kovitch talking upstairs at the same time.

KOVITCH (O.S.)

How'd you get the fucking door closed? Fucking mutt...

Shit. *Whoever her masked psycho is, it ain't Kovitch.*

MAN'S VOICE (THROUGH PHONE)

You're always poking around where you shouldn't be... leaving the people you care for alone.

CLICK! The call disconnects. Lila's lips part as she realizes the implications of the caller's final words.

LILA

(whispers)

No. No-no-no-no-no--

TAP! She opens the Ring Camera app. Looks at the grainy footage inside her house. And in the LIVING ROOM CAM--

--and something suddenly fills the frame: a SMILER MASK. One of Smiler's gloved hands reaches up, as if it might come through the phone and take hold of her throat--

--and SWITCHES THE CAMERA OFF, LEAVING HER SCREEN BLACK.

ALL AT ONCE

Lila BOLTS out through the FRONT DOOR into--

EXT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE - SAME

--the street where she can see her house in the distance.

And she SPRINTS. Running on pure, lung-gnawing panic--

--BEE-LINING TOWARDS HER FRONT DOOR.

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BAM! Lila bursts inside. Breath sawing, head on a swivel, eyes scanning. Still gripping the scissors, she runs for--

THE STAIRS

--the floorboards CREAK under her feet as she moves up them, into the upstairs hallway, and through the door to--

MEGAN AND TROY'S ROOM

--where she stops cold. Clasps a hand over her mouth.

Because... THE BEDS ARE EMPTY.

Blankets strewn aside. No sign of the children.

Heart bruising her ribcage, scissors trembling in her hand, she turns in a slow circle through the room--

--mind swirling with a thousand panicked thoughts--

--grabs her phone, calls 9-1-1.

9-1-1 OPERATOR

9-1-1 emergency please hold--

Behind her, the bedroom door SWINGS SLOWLY shut REVEALING SMILER. The REAL one this time, holding A STAINLESS STEEL **SURVIVAL AXE** (a hatchet with a curved grin for a blade).

He stalks slowly behind her as she moves through the upstairs room, scissors like a knife in front of her.

9-1-1 OPERATOR

--9-1-1, what's your emergency?--

Squeak. The creaky floors in the old house give him away.

She DUCKS as the AXE whistles through the air above her.

She spins as he LUNGES towards her, SCREAMS, drops the phone, and SLASHES at him with the scissors.

He dodges, FALLS BACK, and she races past--

--but he GRABS HER LEG. She tumbles ass over teakettle. Loses the scissors, but gets away. Kicking, scrambling as--

--he crawls after, trying to grab her as she backs into--

BARRY'S BEDROOM ACROSS THE HALL

--kicking him in the face and just managing to shove the door SHUT, LOCKING IT. Presses her back against the door.

RATTLE. Someone on the other side tries the locked handle.

FOOTSTEPS walking away.

Then silence. For a beat. And another. And another. Then--

SUDDEN HEAVY FOOTFALLS APPROACHING AND--

CRACK! The AXE SPLITS the old thin-wooden door RIGHT NEXT TO HER HEAD. She screams, scrambles away as--

--Smiler WAILS on the door like a lumberjack. The door is tissue paper. Gonna be through in seconds.

Lila SPINS toward Barry's BEDSIDE TABLE. She yanks open a drawer, revealing--

--his HANDGUN. She grabs it, turns toward the door--

--where the AXE hacks through the wood, seconds from cutting out the section with the locked doorknob.

She steels herself, raises the gun, finger scrabbles at the trigger and--

--*nothing happens.*

There's a TRIGGER LOCK on the gun. Shit!

She WHIPS back to the bedside table, digs in the drawer...

LILA

(whispers)

--c'mon, keys, keys, keys--

Some loose bullets, but NO KEYS. Shit! And right then--

THWAK! A HAND GRABS HER ANKLE.

Scream caught in her throat, she JOLTS--

--and sees it's TROY. Having just crawled from his hiding spot under the bed, Megan next to him, scared shitless. Barely a few seconds for them to communicate, as--

AT THE DOOR

THUNK! The section of door with the doorknob is finally cut free and hit the floor. WHAM! The door's kicked open and--

--Smiler steps in. Sees the empty room before him...

Beelines for the BED, looks under -- nothing.

Looks to the floor-to-ceiling curtains. WHOOSH! Pulls them aside with the survival axe -- nothing.

Then looks to the MASTER BATHROOM. Door open an inch. Moves toward it. And as he goes, we REVERSE POV TO REVEAL...

INSIDE THE WALK-IN CLOSET

...Lila and the kids are hiding behind hanging clothes.

Trapped in here. Listening to Smiler stalking into the bathroom just mere feet away, hunting...

Through their terror, everyone does their damndest to be silent. Hands clamped over mouths. Eyes bulging.

Then... Troy makes a noise. A familiar sustained WHEEZE. Tries to fight it, but he can't...

Lila looks down and realizes: he's having an asthma attack.

Her face: *oh dear god not now, please, not now...*

IN THE MASTER BATHROOM

WHOOSH! Smiler yanks back the shower curtain. Nothing.

But then he pauses. Hears something.

Little ripples of staccato breath. Coming from back in Barry's bedroom...

INSIDE THE WALK-IN CLOSET

Our heroes hear Smiler's boots approaching...

...step by horrible step... *thump, thump, thump...*

...Troy fighting like hell not to wheeze, holding his breath, body wracked with tremors...

...*thump, thump, thump...* Smiler's boots exit the bathroom and beeline across the bedroom for the closet door...

...nowhere to run, hiding spot about to be breached...

...we tighten on Lila...

...and see an idea form in her eyes... she looks to Megan and Troy, eyes silently communicating: *get ready...*

...and then we see it: she's holding her PHONE, open to BARRY'S SPEAKER APP. Her shaking thumb uses the controls to prime every speaker in the house to maximum volume...

...and just as the footsteps arrive at the closet door...

ALL AT ONCE

BOOM! Lila hits play and the room is **BLASTED WITH EAR-SPLITTING MUSIC** -- CCR'S "BAD MOON RISING" BLARES AS--

SMILER

--jolts a 180 toward the noise coming from the BEDROOM SPEAKERS behind him, just as--

LILA

--KICKS OPEN THE CLOSET DOOR WITH ALL HER MIGHT--

--CRACK! Straight into Smiler's back, knocking him forward--

--the axe goes spilling out of his hands onto the floor and he lunges to grab it, as behind him--

--Lila hauls Megan into her arms and bolts toward the bedroom door with Troy, fleeing into--

THE HALLWAY

--straight toward the stairwell, Troy's lungs SEIZING UP as they sprint, Lila pulling him along--

--off Megan's SCREAM, Lila looks back to see--

SMILER

--emerging from Barry's room, axe in hand, giving chase--

DOWN THE STAIRS

--our heroes get to the front door, RIP it open--

--and NICK FOLSOM steps in, gun drawn--

LILA

He's inside-- He's inside-Right
behind us--

NICK

STOP!

--Nick shoulders past them, aims his pistol and BANG! FIRES his gun at Smiler at the top of the stairwell--

--but Smiler FALLS back and the shot barely misses as--

BANG-BANG-BANG! More bullets whiz past him--

--SPRAYING PLASTER off the walls--

--but Smiler's gone, vanished somewhere upstairs.

NICK

*Go to the street and don't stop
until you see another cop--*

Lila keeps moving with the kids, digging out Troy's inhaler to stop his asthma attack, as--

WE MOVE ALONG WITH NICK

--racing up the stairs, service pistol aimed--

--moving through the rooms. Covering the angles. Breath heavy. Scared. Searching.

Finally, he gets to Barry's room...

...and sees an OPEN WINDOW, curtain blowing in the wind.

Smiler's gone.

EXT. LILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The street is bathed in the FLASHING LIGHTS OF COP CARS. The block's been shut down, trick-or-treaters banished indoors, some adult LOOKY-LOOS hanging around their front yards.

Barry's TOW TRUCK is parked out in front of the house. Lila sits on the curb with Troy & Megan as Nick talks to Barry, filling him in. After a beat, Barry comes over, angry.

BARRY

You thought there was a kidnapper in the neighborhood... snatching up children... and you left my kids at home alone?

LILA

It wasn't like that--

BARRY

I don't know what the fuck is wrong with you--

LILA

Barry--

BARRY

--but enough. I don't want you around my kids ever again.

LILA

Hold on--

BARRY

Get the fuck out. Tonight.
Understand? OUT.

LILA

Where am I supposed to go?

BARRY

Not my problem.

Barry picks his kids up, holding them tight. He doesn't look at her again, but their scared eyes watch her as he carries them into the house and closes the door. Off Lila, hurt...

OVER WITH THE COPS

Sheriff Betancourt has Nick and four other OFFICERS (**TOBLER, SHERMAN, ROTHERT, and CALHOUN**), gathered around...

SHERIFF

Jones, Tobler -- street patrol.
Every block between here and the
highway. Rothert, Calhoun --
you're on checkpoints. Folsom...

A BEAT LATER, OVER WITH LILA

Nick heads over to her...

NICK

Well, here's the good news:
you're officially in protective
custody.

LILA

Perfect timing, considering I
just became homeless.

NICK

Let's get you indoors before you
get busted for vagrancy.

That'd normally get a laugh from her. But not tonight.

She glances over at Kovitch's across the street. Defeated.

LILA

...I thought it was him.

She eyes her neighbors, watching quietly from their yards...

...Elaine Bowen, Jim Perkins, Mr. Mapes... Devin the Butcher, watching her with a flat, neutral face. On the porch of the party house, Brett O'Shea smirks and goes inside. Nick kneels down before her, voice quiet...

NICK

We're gonna catch this fucker.
Okay? That's a promise. And I'm
sorry I doubted you. I was wrong,
you were right. You wanna record
me saying that and use it as your
ringtone, I'm cool with that.

And finally that gets a little laugh out of her. As they
rise and head for his house, we CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They go inside. Nick's mom sits in her wheelchair, blanket
on top of her, drooling as she watches TV. He walks over,
gives her a smooch on top of her head.

NICK

Need anything, ma?

She doesn't respond. He takes a cup, gives her a sip of
water. She accepts it. He wipes her lips. Comes back over.

LILA

That's gotta be hard.

NICK

(shrugs)

One time when I was five, I peed
in her jewelry box, so I guess
taking care of *me* wasn't exactly
a picnic. I need a beer, you need
a beer?

LILA

Like a fish needs water.

He heads for the fridge, nods to her dirty clothes...

NICK

Wanna' borrow a change of clothes
to sleep in?

She nods, as we CUT TO:

POV SHOT - From outside the house. Someone watches them from
the darkness, through the windows.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Fresh from the shower and clad in a towel, Lila wipes fog
off the bathroom mirror. Stares at herself. She looks raw.

BEDROOM: she finds the clothes Nick laid out for her. Pair
of running shorts, flannel shirt. She changes into them...

...and discovers that she likes the way his shirt smells on her. A certain subliminal intimacy at play...

INT. NICK'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lila pads into the kitchen, barefoot. Nick looks up. The sight of her legs in running shorts have an effect on him.

NICK
Uh... hey. Beer?

She takes the bottle. Sits on a stool.

LILA
Thanks.
(toasts her bottle)
Here's to tonight: may it get
fucked forever.

NICK
(clinks it)
Face down on a gravel road.

LILA
It's weird...
(takes a drink)
...you ever feel like you're a
car crash just waiting to happen?
Like you're barely held together,
and all it's gonna take is one
good hit and you'll explode?

NICK
Sounds like me on one of my
better days.

LILA
You're a good guy, Nick.

NICK
(tired)
People seem to think so.

She considers him. Their faces close. Electricity.

She KISSES HIM.

And suddenly they're all over each other.

She claws at his belt. His cop-gear slides to the floor --
thunk. She reaches for his zipper--

NICK
(panting)
Hang on. Hang on.
(nods to bathroom)

NICK (CONT'D)

Be right back, kinda drank my weight in Red Bull tonight.

He kisses her again, then heads into the bathroom. She can hear him start to pee.

There's a bowl of candy next to her. She takes a Tootsie Roll, eats it. Sets the wrapper down...

...and pauses.

There's a **PURPLE MARKER** on the counter.

She stares at it.

Then... at the open TRASH CAN next to her.

A HALF-DOZEN CRUMPLED WRAPPERS inside.

Her blood runs cold. *What if?...*

She hesitantly fishes them out. Unwraps them and...

...finds messages scrawled on the inside.

Half written, over and over -- like someone practicing, trying to get the handwriting right.

The same harder, blockier handwriting she found on the decoy notes, written in purple marker.

It hits her: **Nick wrote the decoy notes.**

Her heart's like a boxer trying to pummel out of her chest.

The TOILET FLUSHES.

Her eyes DART down to Nick's police belt. Rushes for it--

--but there's no gun. The holster is empty. *Oh shit.*

OVER WITH NICK

He comes down the hall and around the corner--

--and Lila's back where she was before. Trying to play it cool. To pretend like she's okay. Nick picks up his beer.

NICK

(smiles)

So... where were we?

LILA

I... uh... I shouldn't have done that. It's been a crazy night...

(beat)

I should just go to bed. Before I do anything I might regret...

NICK
I would be thrilled to be one of
your regrets--

LILA
(cuts him off)
I'm sorry. I should just go.

Nick stops. Eyes her. He's a cop, used to people lying to him. He can smell it a mile away, and he smells it now.

NICK
Not sure your brother's gonna be
ready to talk yet...

LILA
He's got an Irish temper.

She looks past him, toward the door. He's blocking her path.

NICK
Planning on bringing your clothes
with you? Your shoes?

She looks down -- realizes she's shoeless.

Nick examines her for a beat...

...then spots the purple marker left out on the counter. Oh.
He immediately *Gets It*. Smiles.

And the mask is lifted. His softness evaporates like breath off a mirror, and the *real* him appears.

NICK
Looks like I fucked up.

He takes a step closer to her. She plays innocent...

LILA
What are you talking about?

NICK
Can plan for just about
everything. But something *always*
slips past.

LILA
I don't--

NICK
Come on, Lila. You're smart.
That's what I've always liked
about you. It makes you fun. It
makes you a *challenge*.

She backs away as he closes in. Pulse throbbing...

NICK

I had you there for a second.
Think of all the places tonight
could've gone. We both could've
had fun...

On his next words, his voice drops an octave. Becoming the
voice from the phone that night.

NICK

...instead it'll just be me.

He reaches into his jacket... and pulls his pistol--
But Lila *did* grab something off his belt: his MACE CAN.
FSSSHT! She sprays it point blank into his face--

NICK

AAAAAAH!!!

He CLAWS his face as SHE RUNS.
Winds through the house, past the drooling old lady.
Nick stumbles after. She rips the door open--
RACES OUTSIDE
--into the waiting arms of KOVITCH.
Who TASERS HER IN THE THROAT. She goes down twitching.
She looks up with swimming eyes and sees..
...Kovitch and Nick looming over her, pulling her inside.
FZZZT! She's zapped again. BLACKNESS.

INT. FOLSOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lila drifts in and out of consciousness: Nick and Kovitch
are carrying her through Nick's house. Drift to blackness.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRS - NIGHT

Awake again. Down the basement stairs, into a corridor...

...there's a dimly-lit TUNNEL connecting Kovitch and Nick's
houses under the street.

Dirt floor, wooden planks holding up the ceiling, lit by gas
lanterns. A haphazard piece of construction work, done by
passionate amateurs.

We drift to BLACKNESS.

INT. MURDER CAVE - NIGHT

Lila wakes up. Shifts. CLINK. Finds herself HANDCUFFED to a bar on the wall. She panics and SITS UP as we REVEAL...

...she's in an UNDERGROUND ROOM, with CINDERBLOCK WALLS, and layers of SOUNDPROOFING. Gas lamps HISS, throwing shadows across the floor. Scared, she YANKS on the cuffs--

VOICE (O.S.)
(a whisper)
...won't help.

Lila spins. Across the room is a DARK CORNER.

A HAND reaches out of the shadows... also cuffed to a bar. Lila stares, lungs clenched in terror...

LILA
...who... who are you...?

Clink. The person steps toward the light...

...is it Samantha?...

No -- it's a girl named **KRISTEN**. 15. Voice hoarse. Clothes streaked in grime, sweat, blood. Been here a while -- days, maybe weeks. Zombie-like with fear and trauma.

LILA
You... you're the one who wrote this...

She pulls the ORIGINAL NOTE from her pocket. The girl nods. Seeing it, here, crushes her last glimmering hope of escape.

KRISTEN
I tried... didn't matter...
they're gonna kill us like they
did the others...

LILA
Others?

Lila follows her gaze to a ROW OF SHELVES. She didn't notice at first, but now she realizes...

...there's something on the shelves.

She moves toward them, cuffs sliding along the bar, slowly getting closer. Closer. Closer. And finally--

CLINK. The bar runs out. But she's CLOSE ENOUGH...

Close enough to see JEWELRY across the shelves: Bracelets. Rings. Necklaces. A dozen pieces. 12 victims. It's a SHRINE. A collector's treasures.

And among them... a familiar pair of earrings. Lila realizes: it's the BANGLE EARRINGS she gave to Samantha on their last night together.

Lila can't help it; A SCREAM escapes her mouth.

KRISTEN

Don't. It only makes them angrier. I've been screaming for days, no one hears anything.

LILA

I did. I did. I heard... in his house, I...

And she realizes... Kovitch is the only one who'll hear. From somewhere above, she hears a BOOM. Like a door opening.

Kristen's face fills with fear. She retreats into shadows.

Footsteps. Two sets. Getting closer.

Lila backs up as far as she can go. Waits, as...

...Nick and Kovitch enter. Nick's eyes still red from the mace. In the flickering gaslight, he looks demonic.

NICK

Good. You're awake.

Kovitch grabs a chair to sit. Nick TAKES IT FROM HIM. Gives a warning look, like an Alpha Dog over his dog bowl. And strangely, Kovitch looks away, cowed...

NICK

Did you know bootleggers used to build hidden tunnels to smuggle their hooch? That's where I got this idea. Benefits of being a cop: besides being able to hide the evidence, you learn all the tricks.

KOVITCH

We should do it. Do it now. I want her now.

Kovitch is practically drooling, twitching hands reaching towards his pants.

NICK

Down boy.

WHACK! Nick CUFFS him across the head. Kovitch shrinks back. Like a naughty kid caught, and now ashamed. The difference between the two? Nick's all ego and control. Kovitch is a child, barely-controlled id. Nick lifts a hand to hit him again, Kovitch flinches away...

NICK

(to Lila)

That's his problem. He's impulsive. Doesn't think things through.

(to Kovitch, re:
Kristen)

Like when you gave our *guest* a piece of candy and didn't notice she snuck a fucking note into the bowl.

KOVITCH

(quiet)

It's Halloween. I like Halloween--

WHACK! Nick backhands him. Kovitch cowers, shielding his head. Nick looks back to Lila, with a look that seems to say "See what I'm working with here?"

LILA

(stares, whispers)

...the fuck is wrong with you?...

NICK

Better question, Lila, what the fuck is wrong with *you*? Anyone else would've left town after what happened to you. But you didn't. You stuck around. You never even got rid of the car.

(off her stare)

The way you tortured yourself... I found it inspiring, honestly.

She stares at him, jaw trembling.

LILA

...why... why do you... do this?

NICK

Same reason people climb Everest, drop acid, walk to Meccca.

(lifts up Smiler mask)

Looking into a girl's eyes, when she realizes this face is the last thing she's ever gonna see? Get one taste of that, all you want is more. I've gone looking for it everywhere...

(re: Kristen)

Had to drive all the way to Washington to find it this time.

He goes over to the trophy shelf and, almost reverently, lifts Samantha's bangles...

NICK

Still trying to figure out what happened that night?

Kovitch is getting excited. Shifting back and forth. Breathing getting heavier...

NICK

Found a murdered prostitute in a truck stop bathroom up off the 82, coupla' years back.

(looks to Kovitch)

Didn't take me long to track it back to this fine specimen here.

If Kovitch detects Nick's sarcasm, it doesn't show.

NICK

Could've put him in jail, but there was just *so much raw talent* there. So we started working together. Brains and brawn.

LILA

There were two of you... that night up on the point...

FLASH -- *Nick watching Lila and Samantha from the forest.*

LILA

And in the house...

FLASH -- *in the house, Nick CHOPS at the door. Kovitch comes up the stairs -- Nick hands the axe off, pulling off his mask, heading down the stairs...*

NICK

You were getting too close. We needed to throw everyone off--

LILA

--so you could blame it all on someone else. Like you did with Will Halforth. For Sam's death.
(off his stare)
...why her?

NICK

Could've been anyone. But personally, my theory?...

He puts Samantha's bangle earrings down on a little pedestal, just out of reach...

NICK

I think it was fate. I think it was God rewarding us with a gift.

LILA
 (dripping with venom)
 She was my friend. Yours too.

NICK
 And we saw how that worked out
 for her. She was the second-most
 disposable person I've ever met.
 (smiles)
 Any guesses who the first one is?
 (to Kovitch)
Hold her down.

Kovitch rises, unleashed, excited. Heads towards her. Lila tries to back away... but she can't. She fights. He pins her down with his huge, powerful arms.

NICK
 Start with her mouth.

Kovitch uses one big meaty paw to open her mouth. Nick grabs a pair of PLIERS, reaches them inside...

...and clamps down on a tooth.

She HOWLS IN AGONY as he works the tool back and forth.

Kristen grinds her face into her hands in a silent scream.

The pliers in Lila's mouth PULL A TOOTH FREE as--

INT. LILA'S HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

THUNK! A key twists in a lock and a car trunk UNLOCKS as we reveal Barry with Megan and Troy in the garage, loading hastily packed suitcases into the trunk of his sedan...

BARRY
 (mid-spiel)
 ...it's gonna be an adventure,
 alright? We're gonna find a nice
 hotel to stay in until the house
 gets fixed up. How's that sound?

MEGAN
 (ignores the question)
 Is Lila really not coming back?

BARRY
 We'll talk about that in the
 morning, okay?

TROY
 You said you didn't want her to
 ever see us again.

BARRY

Kiddo, your Aunt Lila has a lotta things she needs to work out--

MEGAN

I don't want her to go away.

(beat)

And you were mean to her.

Barry looks to his kids. Coming to grips with how he feels like shit about how he blew up at Lila as we CUT TO:

INT. MURDER CAVE - NIGHT

Lila's BLOODY TOOTH, held in Nick's fingers, gets set down on the trophy shelf. Lila seethes in pain, hand to her mouth, red leaking from between her fingers...

...as Nick kneels down before her. Watching her keen.

NICK

There you are. There's my pretty girl.

She SPITS BLOOD into his face.

LILA

You're fucking weak.

(off his look)

You're big and strong when you've got your gun, and your mace, and your badge, and your fucking monster to hold women down. But without them, you're fucking weak, and pathetic, and small. You like hurting women because you don't stand a chance against anyone else.

NICK

(re: Kovitch)

Did okay with this sasquatch, didn't I?

Kovitch looks angry and hurt at the same time.

LILA

I'd like to see how long you last down here, Nick. I bet you'd break in seconds. I bet you'd cry and beg and piss yourself.

NICK

(hands Kovitch the scalpel)

Cut something off. Something fun.

DING-DONG! They freeze. A DOORBELL CHIME on a speaker...

NICK

Fuck.

KOVITCH

We don't have to answer.

NICK

Yes. We do. I'm already gonna have to lie my ass off about why she's disappeared.

(a beat, then)

FUCK. Watch her.

He puts the scalpel down on the shelf, then exits, leaving Kovitch behind.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE, FRONT ENTRY - NIGHT

Barry waits outside Nick's door. Nick opens the door, yawning, looking sleepy, like he's just woken up.

BARRY

Hey, sorry-- can I talk to Lila?

NICK

I wish. She took off, probably six shots deep at Maloney's by now.

BARRY

Thought she was in protective custody?

NICK

Thing about protective custody is: you have to want to be in protective custody.

(off his "what?" look)

She's gone. You told her you didn't want her coming back. I think she took it kinda hard.

BARRY

Oh Jesus...

NICK

Now I told her that you'd change your mind. That you'd probably be fine in the morning. But she said you were right. That she always hurts the people she cares about.

BARRY

(beat)

But... her car. She left her car-

NICK

Kinda bender she's goin' on? Be glad she's on foot. Besides, y'really think she wants that around her tonight? That reminder of what happened?

BARRY

(pales)
Oh fuck. Oh fuck me.

As Barry looks away, Nick's mask slips. We can see him enjoying the pain he's causing.

INT. MURDER CAVE - SAME

Kovitch watches them. Lila meets his eyes. He looks away.

LILA

You don't like it when people look at you. When they see what you're doing.

He won't meet her eyes. Bingo.

LILA

He's not your friend. He's not your buddy. He's not like... what's your dog's name? Boonie? You're sweet with him. Like you really care about him.

KOVITCH

He's my dog.

LILA

You're nice to him. I've seen it. But that asshole upstairs? He treats you worse than a dog.

KOVITCH

He saved me... he coulda put me away...

LILA

He's using you. He treats you like you're worthless.

(reaching)

I know what that feels like. To be seen as worthless.

Kovitch meets her eyes. She's getting through to him.

LILA

You know how people see me here. How they think of me. How they think of us...

LILA (CONT'D)

(still reaching)

You think Nick's keeping you around because he's your friend? No. Nick's keeping you around because he's going to use you as a patsy.

KOVITCH

That's not true--

LILA

Think about it. When the cops get too close, who better than the creepy hoarder--

(quickly, off his hurt)

--not my words, that's what he'll say. Who better than you to take the fall when things go wrong? He already did it once with Will Halforth. Probably killed him in jail so he could blame all his sick shit on him. Why not do it to you too? He doesn't care about you.

KOVITCH

He does, I know it, he--

LILA

He doesn't CARE.

KOVITCH

NO!

He raises a fist to come after her. She shrinks back...

...and tries a gambit on him. Something we recognize from her therapy session this morning.

LILA

What do you really want from life? No... really. *Close your eyes. And think about what you want.*

Kovitch hesitates...

LILA

Just try it. We're not going anywhere. What can it hurt?

And then... he does. He closes his eyes.

LILA

Now imagine the future...

Lila looks around. Sees the pedestal. The bangle earrings. Tries to reach it with her hand...

LILA

...do you want to be his dog? Or
do you want to be free? Do you
want kindness? Do you want people
to like you... to love you?

Kovitch's face smooths. Like a stormy ocean calming on a placid day as...

...Lila's hand can't quite reach...

...so she looks at KRISTEN. The pedestal is closer to her.

Gives her a look.

Kristen shakes her head; *please, no, you'll get us killed.*

LILA

Imagine people smiling at you.
You're the one who saved
everyone. Don't you want that?

Kovitch has no answer, but there are TEARS flowing down from his tight-shut eyes. Kristen sees it...

...and overcomes her fear. Reaches with her leg. Just BARELY manages to touch the pedestal with her foot. Applies pressure. TIPS IT... *silently begging for the earrings to slide off toward Lila's outstretched hand...*

LILA

Imagine people applauding for
you...
(the earrings start to
slide a bit)
...imagine... beautiful women
calling your name...
(and a little bit more)
...imagine them... imagine them
in love with you.

The bangles FALL off toward the floor....

...and Lila's fingers PLUCK THEM FROM THE AIR. A glance between her and Kristen -- *holy fucking shit*. Lila, shaking hands holding the bangles, keeps talking...

LILA

Imagine women... wanting you...

Lila silently works an earring into the lock, trying to pick it like we saw before...

LILA

They want you... inside them...

Twisting, turning, tugging... Kristen watching with wide eyes, breath frozen in her throat...

LILA
They want you to do whatever you
please with them...

It POPS OPEN. She's free. Then Lila creeps along, inching
toward the SCALPEL on the shelf, almost in reach...

...gets her hands on the blade...

LILA
They want you to die.

Confused, he opens his eyes and--

SHE LUNGES AT HIM.

SLASH! SLICES his throat open. He clutches at his wound,
horrified. BLOOD COMES SHEETING OUT THROUGH HIS FINGERS--

LILA
(swings the scalpel)
You sick FUCK--

HE COMES BARRELING AT HER. Trying to hold his throat closed
with one hand, grabbing at her with the other as--

--Lila backs away, SLASHING with the scalpel, locked in a
gruesome two-step -- nicking his fingers, forearm, face--

--but Kovitch SLAMS INTO HER, shoving her back--

--she drops the scalpel, it skitters away--

WHAM! He's pinning her against the wall, forcing her to a
sitting position--

--forearm smashed against her throat, his neck wound GUSHING
onto her, his breath coming out in SLURPS--

--Lila's face starts to go PURPLE--

--SHE CLAWS AT HIS HANDS, LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS WHEN--

SHUNK! He suddenly has a SCALPEL STICKING OUT OF HIS EAR.

Kovitch pauses. STIFFENS. And we reveal...

KRISTEN

...standing behind him, at the very end of her strained-to-
the-max chain. She backs away as--

Kovitch twitches. Blinks. Focuses on Lila...

...who winds her hand back and--

BAM! Hits the scalpel handle with her palm, like a hammer to
a nail. BAM! BAM! Until half of the scalpel's handle

disappears into his skull. Then...

WHUMPH! He falls back and COLLAPSES in a heap. Dead.

LILA
(gasping for air)
...*holys*hit...*holys*hit...

She rises, an angel in crimson... nods a thank-you to Kristen, who nods a freaked-out one back...

...then Lila takes Samantha's other bangle earring and uses it to pick the lock on Kristen's chain.

EXT. NICK'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Nick finishes up talking to Barry...

NICK
...look, don't beat yourself up.
I'm sure you'll hear from her.

BARRY
Yeah... I, uh...

NICK
I'm sure she'll forgive you. You
just wait for that call... Okay?

BARRY
Thank you... I uh... I gotta go.

NICK
Of course.

From across the street, they hear a SCREAM. But it's just the pre-recorded bullshit from Jim Perkins' Haunted House.

BARRY
I'm gonna tear that fucking thing
down. G'night.

He pats Barry on the shoulder. Notices... a tiny bit of blood gets on Barry's shirt. Shit.

But Barry's too broken to notice. He heads back to his house. Nick watches him go as--

INT. MURDER CAVE - NIGHT

CLICK. Kristen's shackles come off. Lila looks at the earrings and whispers....

LILA
Thank you, Sam.

She puts them in a pocket. Picks up a hammer. Holds Kristen's hand in hers.

LILA

I'm gonna get you out of here.

They go out of the room, up the stairs...

...but it SPLITS outside the room. Which way?

With no idea, they just take one, heading up one set of stairs. There's a SOUNDPROOFED door at the end.

They open it to reveal...

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...NICK FOLSOM'S HOUSE. We realize: what looked like a bookshelf was actually a secret entry down to the tunnel.

They peer through the crack. But see nothing.

Panicked breaths, and then... *one, two, three...*

...they creep out of the door.

Heading towards the front when--

A MOAN.

They turn to see CYNTHIA FOLSOM, Nick's mother, in her wheelchair. Staring at them.

For a moment, they worry she'll give them away. The old lady raises a HAND and--

CLINK. We see it's HANDCUFFED to her wheelchair.

A RATTLING SOUND emerges from her damaged vocal cords, her wide eyes wordlessly begging for help, when--

--they DART INTO HIDING as Nick appears, carrying a breakfast tray with a BOTTLE OF MEDICINE and a SYRINGE.

Nick's mom frantically tries to push it away.

NICK

Hold still.

CYNTHIA FOLSOM

(a raspy croak)

...leggo... lemmego...

NICK

Hold. Still.

CYNTHIA FOLSOM

...stop... please...

She looks past Nick, to them for help. But he INJECTS her, and we watch her whole body collapse.

Consciousness FADES from her. She looks like a stroke victim again. And then--

Nick SEES them watching in the reflection of the window.

He spins. The women run. The only way they can, back into--

THE STAIRWELL

Nick races to follow. But Cynthia grabs onto his belt. He struggles to get away, SLAPS HER--

She doesn't let go. He hits her again, and again-- it's her last defiant moment -- she CLINGS ON STUBBORNLY until--

He grabs a HEAVY STONE SCULPTURE and CAVES IN the side of her head. She goes down. Dead.

But she's bought our heroes time. They run down...

THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE

Nick hits the stairs, but they're already running up the OTHER SET OF STAIRS. WHAM! They hit the door to--

INT. KOVITCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

--Kovitch's house. She pulls Kristen along as she races for the front door--

LILA

Follow me.

--weaving through the HEDGE MAZE OF PILED TRASH.

Her bare feet get PUNCTURED by bits of glass and sharp debris on the floor. She hisses in pain, wincing back tears--

--and keeps rushing ahead as--

UPSTAIRS, the pitbull still BARKS, trapped in the room.

They hit the front door. But it's got all those locks on it. Lila tries to tear them free, but Nick is right behind them, charging around the corner--

--barely a second to spare, nowhere else to go--

LILA

RUN.

UP THE STAIRS THEY GO

Nick grabs a KITCHEN KNIFE from one of the plates. Follows them up the stairs to...

THE UPPER LEVEL

Lila and Kristen run for their lives. Lila can hear the DOG BARKING and the rats scampering in the ceiling...

...what sounds like HUNDREDS OF THEM contained by the thin membrane of drywall above her...

As Nick comes up the stairs toward them...

...Lila's eyes settle on something we don't yet see, a plan forming in her mind...

...then she spins to face him and--

WHOOSH! She throws her hammer at him--

--HE DUCKS. IT MISSES! THUNKS INTO THE DRYWALL by his head.

Nick, grinning, looks from the hammer over to her--

--and the grin vanishes off his face as she GRABS THE CORD TO THE ATTIC ACCESS DOOR IN THE CEILING, YANKS IT -- WHAM!

Pouring out of the attic comes AN AVALANCHE OF RATS, coming down the sloping access door, dumping like rain down onto--

NICK

--who SCREAMS as he falls back, covered in a plague of flesh-hungry rodents.

Swats at them as one BITES HIS FACE, takes a chunk of cheek. He rips it free and SMASHES IT INTO THE WALL--

--STOMPING others until they're squashed hairy blood-bags.

Then STORMS after our heroes, down the hall as--

BOW-WOW-WOW-WOW! The pitbull throws itself into the door, trying to get out, hearing the sounds outside as--

--Lila turns the handle, letting the door loose, then darts into the next room, shutting the door as--

--the pitbull LEAPS again, and the door SLAMS open, and the dog lands, attacking the first thing it sees -- Nick.

Nick STABS the dog. It YELPS. STABS it again. Kicks it away, the dog scampers off with his KNIFE still in its body as--

--Nick reaches into his pocket for a new weapon as--

IN THE NEXT ROOM

Lila pushes Kristen out onto the roof.

LILA

Go! Go!

She climbs out as-

--THUNK! A hypodermic needle smashes into Lila's back. Courtesy of Nick, using his mom's "medicine" against her.

Lila's legs give out--

--and she's sent rolling off the roof, taking Kristen with her, as they go flying off the ledge into...

THE NEIGHBOR'S YARD

...crashing through wooden slats and chicken wire--

--slamming hard into the ground. WHAM! A door SLAMS SHUT across from them as they realize they've fallen into...

EXT. JIM PERKINS' BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

...THE AUTO-LOCKING CAGE IN THE PERKINS' HAUNTED MAZE.

The hypodermic needle's still sticking out of Lila's back. The plunger never got depressed. Thank God. Wind knocked out of her, she PULLS it free and tosses it away with shaking hands. Tries to scream out to the neighborhood--

LILA

...heeeeelp...

(getting her wind back)

HEEEEEELP!!!

But there's just another SCREAM from the sound effects around her. No one reacts. No one comes to help.

They try to tear the cage open when--

WHAM! Someone *does* appear -- Brett O'Shea, everyone's favorite, coming over from the party house next door, entering through the side fence.

BRETT

(bemused)

The hell y'doing out here, Lila, they shut everything down--

LILA

--help us-- open the door--

BRETT
 (sees Kristen, to Lila)
 Are you, like, *babysitting* or
 something?

LILA
Brett LOOKOUT--

BRETT
 What?

GUSH! Nick, wearing the Smiler mask, appears behind Brett and stabs him between the shoulder blades.

Brett stumbles around, scream caught in his throat. Face to face with the killer he was merely *pretending* to be earlier.

BRETT
 (a wheezy whisper)
 ...*what the... fuck*--

SLASH! Nick GUTS BRET, pelvis to sternum. As Brett drops to the ground, insides spilling out--

Nick approaches the cage. Pulls open the door.

Backs Lila into the corner, ignoring Kristen, intent on killing the one who's caused him so much trouble.

But Kristen sees the hypodermic needle on the ground.

She grabs it--

--and STABS his leg with it. Depresses the plunger.

Nick falls, yanks the needle out as--

--they race past him--

He comes after, stumbling a little now as...

...our heroes make it OUT INTO THE STREET...

...and LILA sees it: her CAR, parked across from them. Her Crown Vic with the cracked windshield.

LILA
Come on--

She grabs Kristen, and they race to the car. Lila digs her car keys out of her pocket, gets in. Ditto Kristen.

FIRES UP THE ENGINE, and--

WHAM! Nick SLAMS into the side, lunging through the window, CLAWING at her face -- drugged but not down for the count--

NICK

You can't get away from me.

--she fumbles the car into drive, SCREECHING away--

He YANKS the rear door open, and DIVES INTO the rear seat, hooking an arm around her neck from behind--

Kristen SCREAMS as Lila STRUGGLES, BENT BACK, GAGGING--

--HER FOOT INADVERTENTLY STOMPS on the gas and they SPEED OUT OF CONTROL, Nick's open door flopping wildly--

--and hit the intersection, FLYING over the curb into--

THE WOODED PARK

--the Crown Vic CRASHING through BUSHES, MOWING down SAPLINGS, TREE LIMBS SCRAPING the roof, BRANCHES SEVERED CLEAN OFF TRUNKS, and then--

--she CLIPS a tree, and they SPIN OUT OF CONTROL-- and Nick TUMBLES out, the car SLIDING TO A HALT.

She stares out the cracked front window as Nick rises, standing in her high-beams, chest heaving. Mask broken on his face -- showing half Nick, half Smiler.

He GRINS at her.

Lila stares at him. And then GRINS BACK. Past and present blur as WHAM! Lila throws it into DRIVE, slams the gas--

--Nick's face turns to OH SHIT-- he tries to dodge, but Lila beelines straight at him--

PLOWS INTO HIM-- THWACK! He SMASHES INTO THE WINDSHIELD--

--SPLINTERS IT INTO A MASS OF CRUSHED ICE, BOUNCES OVER--

--TUMBLES to the ground behind it with a sickening CRUNCH.

The car SKIDS TO A HALT a few feet in front of him. Smoke billowing from the tailpipe as the engine GROWLS.

Is it gonna reverse back and run him over?? Nick lies there, trying to move. Trying to *Get Up*.

Manages to lift up to his elbows to see the car door open. Lila pads back towards him. He can barely move or speak.

NICK

...kill you... gonna fuckin' kill you...

On the ground, there's A HEAVY, GNARLED TREE BRANCH severed from its trunk by the crashing Crown Vic. Lila picks it up. Grips it tight. Looks to Kristen in the car.

LILA
What's your name?

KRISTEN
(barely a whisper)
...Kristen...

LILA
Look away, Kristen.

Kristen does as told, and... BAM! LILA SWINGS THE BRANCH AT NICK'S HEAD. We DRIFT UP from the bloody scene, SPIRALING INTO THE DARKNESS ABOVE, into the FULL MOON, as we CUT TO:

INT. MURDER CAVE - NIGHT

Nick's eyes open. He's on the floor, chained to the wall inside his TORTURE CAVE. Face smashed from the branch and the windshield impact. Rat bites all over.

WHAM! He's rolled onto his back. Groans. Looks up to see... Lila. Taking a seat in his chair.

NICK
Kovitch! KOVITCH!

LILA
Took him upstairs. The cops have his body. Everything you've done tonight, they think he did it.

NICK
...you're not gonna get away with this... they'll come looking for me...

LILA
They'll never find you. Because they'll be searching *out there*... and you're down here.
(smiles)
And you hid this place so well, didn't you?

NICK
What do you want?

LILA
Tell me what you did to my friend. Everything. Every last detail.

NICK
What... you wanna know that I broke her bones? Cut her fingers off?

NICK (CONT'D)

Kept her alive for months as I took every little piece of what made her human? You sure that's what you wanna hear?

She gets up and walks along the wall, looking at all of the tools that are sitting there.

NICK

You think you can scare me? You think you can do anything to me? I know you. You don't have it in you. You're not like me.

LILA

You're right.

(turns)

I'm not like you. I'm not that angry. Not with you. Not him. Not even me, anymore. Because what you are? Nobody can plan for that. You're just a disease. An infection. A sudden illness. A mistake in the universe. So no, I'm not angry.

(comes close)

But I know someone who is.

The door behind her, which was ajar, opens fully now. To reveal Elaine Bowen. Samantha's mother.

She steps in like a cold winter's wind. Clear that this woman heard EVERYTHING he just said.

Colors drains from Nick's face. Gut-shredding TERROR.

LILA

Mrs. Bowen?...

Lila hands her the same **PLIERS** that Nick used on Lila.

LILA

Happy Halloween.

And with a shared look of understanding between the two women, Lila heads for the exit. Elaine makes for Nick.

NICK

Don't... please *please oh GOD NO--*

Nick's words become gibberish as Elaine put the PLIERS into his mouth. He SCREAMS as she goes to work.

Lila shuts the door behind her. Leaving us only with Nick's garbled screams of agony as we *SMASH TO BLACK*.

SIX MONTHS LATER

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Tight on a suitcase. Clothes get put in. Widen to Lila packing her bags. She picks up the picture of her and Sam, the one that Elaine gave her.

She packs it. Then... puts on some earrings. The ones she gave to Samantha. Dinged and damaged, but intact.

Stares at the mirror. Likes what she sees for a change.

EXT. LILA'S HOUSE - DAY

Megan and Troy tag along as Barry helps Lila get her bags into her NEW CAR. The old Crown Vic is long gone.

BARRY

You sure you're ready for this?
New York's a big jump.

LILA

(a nod; for Samantha)
I'm ready.

He's quiet. Guilt-ridden. Gives her a hug. Tight.

BARRY

I'm sorry about everything. You
don't have to leave--

LILA

No. I do.
(kindly)
You're a good dad. And a good
brother. And we're alright.

He hesitates, then nods. Ok.

BARRY

See you over the holidays?

LILA

Any one but Halloween.

She looks around the community for one last time. Eyes Nick Folsom's old house. A **FOR SALE** SIGN out front.

BARRY

Can't believe they're trying to
sell that house. Who the hell's
gonna buy that thing?

LILA

Nobody.

Some KIDS come down the sidewalk, warily watching the house as they pass it, keeping their distance. Troy, watching them-

TROY

My friends talk about that place.
They say on quiet days, if you
listen just right, you can hear
ghosts of dead people in there...

LILA

Y'got some weird-ass friends.

TROY

Not as weird as you.

LILA

(ruffles his hair)

No one is.

She hugs the kids goodbye and heads for her car.

TROY AND MEGAN

Bye Aunt Lila!/Love you!/Have fun
in New York!

LILA

Love you, monsters! Be good!

She blows them kisses as she drives off. Watches her family
get smaller in her rear-view mirror. Then looks over at...

NICK FOLSOM'S HOUSE as she passes it.

Slows down to a stop. Idles.

Rolls down the window and... listens.

Then a trace of a SMILE forms on her face.

She rolls up the window. Drives off. Leaving us behind.

Then, slowly, slowly... we push in on the house.

The ambient sounds of pleasant suburbia rise, louder...

Faint, almost inaudible... perhaps it's just the wind...

NICK (O.S.)

...heeeeeeeellllpppp
meeeeeeee....

And we **SMASH TO BLACK.**