

CHATTER

Chris Grillot

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Matt Rosen/Mazo
Bryant Barile/CAA

OVER BLACK, we hear GROSS, WET SQUISHING.

SUPER: CYPRESS GROVE, LOUISIANA 1992.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a child's fingers wiggling a BABY TOOTH back and forth and... POP. It releases. Blood runs from the gums above.

Pull back to: LOUIS (6, Black, adorable) standing in front of a bathroom mirror with his loving mom, JEANINE (20s). Louis proudly holds his tooth. A bloody, toothless grin on his face.

JEANINE

Nineteen more to go.

ARMAND (30s, Creole, wearing grimy deck hand attire) steps into the doorway. Louis shows him his tooth --

LOUIS

I pulled it myself, dad!

Armand smiles warmly at his son. Then his demeanor shifts. He gives Jeanine a serious look.

ARMAND

Make sure he puts it under his pillow.

Jeanine almost laughs at the suggestion. But Armand's serious.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Jeanine...

JEANINE

Alright. Sure.

ARMAND

Thank you... I'm headed to work. Love y'all.

He kisses Jeanine. She eyes Armand in disbelief as he leans over to hug his son.

INT. LOUIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Louis holds his baby tooth, staring at it with childhood amazement. Jeanine tucks him in.

LOUIS

I wanna keep it.

JEANINE
You can, silly.

LOUIS
But the kids at my new school say I
have to put it under my pillow for *Le
Feu Follet*. Or else it's really bad.

That Cajun term is pronounced *lay fee-folay*. It'll be used
interchangeably with *Tooth Fairy*.

JEANINE
None of that's real.

LOUIS
But even dad said to.

JEANINE
Your dad's just superstitious.

Louis doesn't understand that word...

JEANINE (CONT'D)
That means he sometimes believes
things that aren't real. Like that *Le
Feu Follet* Tooth Fairy nonsense...
That's all just to make kids scared.
And I don't want you doing anything
'cause you're scared.

Louis glances at a DEVICE built into the corner of the room --
CATTY CORNER MIRRORS with a CANDLESTICK in the center.

LOUIS
We should light a candle though. Just
in case.

JEANINE
Why would we need that if there's no
such thing as *Le Feu Follet*?

Louis shrugs. Jeanine smiles. She kisses her son then puts his
tooth on his nightstand.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
I'm the only Tooth Fairy around this
house, and you don't gotta put
nothing under your pillow for me,
alright?... I love you.

LOUIS
Love you too, mom.

She leaves. Louis closes his eyes, drifting off.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Popcorn POPS on the stove. Nearby, Jeanine refreshes a rocks glass with VODKA. A TV plays local news in another room.

INT. LOUIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis sleeps through the muffled sounds of bursting popcorn. After a sec, the popping stops in the background.

But the sound continues -- IN HIS ROOM.

There's a low *PopPopPopPop* like the sound of teeth rapping together. It gets LOUDER and --

Louis wakes. The sound STOPS. After a second, he GRIMACES -- something smells like SHIT. He pulls his hand to his face and smells his breath. Nope. He pans the room, unable to find the source.

So he covers his nose and rolls to his side, staring at his tooth on the nightstand. Just dead bone, lying there still...

Until something catches his attention. His eyes narrow --

The tooth is SHAKING. Confused, he reaches to stop it --

It FLICKS to the floor. He FLINCHES. Sits up and peers over the edge of the bed at the tooth. What in God's good fuck?

LOUIS

Mom.

LIVING ROOM

Jeanine lies on the couch, cupping her drink and watching TV. She doesn't hear her son.

LOUIS'S ROOM

A spooked Louis leans off the bed, watching the tooth, just sitting there... He reaches for it, nearly grabbing it as --

It SLIDES UNDER THE BED.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Mom!

No response. Louis cringes as the smell in the room GROWS WORSE. He centers himself in bed, pulls the covers up to protect himself.

PopPop... He turns right toward the sound. Nothing there.
PopPopPop... Looks left -- same.

PopPopPopPopPopPopPopPopPopPop -- the sound SURROUNDS HIM.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

MOM!

It STOPS. Louis peers around, terrified. All is still...

PopPop. That came from in bed with him. His eyes go to his blanket. He works up the courage and quickly LIFTS IT --

There's NOTHING. He slowly lowers the blanket... to his plain ass room. All appears normal. He exhales, relieved.

PopPopPopPop. Above him. He looks up as --

UNNATURALLY LONG, TOOTH-CLAWED FINGERS JET DOWN FROM ABOVE AND SINK INTO HIS FACE.

LIVING ROOM

LOUIS SCREAMS. Jeanine perks up. Stumbles to her feet.

JEANINE

Louis?... Louis?!

She bolts through the house. The screaming GETS LOUDER. She makes it to Louis's door as the screaming CEASES. She throws the door open and --

JEANINE (CONT'D)

LOUIS!?

The room is DARK. EMPTY. Aside from his TOOTH, resting on the bed.

Off Jeanine's horrified eyes we --

CUT TO BLACK.

That toothy *PopPopPopPop* rises, growing louder and LOUDER...

Then THUNDER RUMBLES. This time, it's just rain.

EXT. REHAB FACILITY - NEW ORLEANS

It's day, but it may as well be night. 'Cause the sky's black, and the heavens pour onto this old brick building.

SUPER: NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 2022.

INT. REHAB FACILITY - ROOM - DAY

A plain dormish room. An open duffel bag sits on a bed.

CELIA (29, Black) snatches dirty clothes from the floor. She stuffs them in the bag and turns to a desk where a stack of a few heavily-used NOTEBOOKS rests.

She grabs one off the top. Skims the pages -- filled with DESPERATE SCRAWLS like someone psychotic wrote it. It's painful for her to see.

She closes the book. Carries the stack toward her bag but passes it... so she can toss them in the TRASH.

Finally, she opens a nightstand drawer, pulling a PHOTO out --

It's CELIA with a YOUNG GIRL (6) at a birthday party. Celia looks vibrant. Her icy demeanor warms up a bit.

PSYCHOLOGIST (PRE-LAP)
It's about staying accountable to
yourself. And others.

INT. REHAB FACILITY OFFICE - DAY

But not for long. Celia's got a *been there, done that* look on her face. A PSYCHOLOGIST (40s, male) sits across from her.

CELIA
(sarcastic)
Ohhh wow, that all makes sense. I
totally get it now.

PSYCHOLOGIST
You seem worried.

CELIA
Me? Worried?

PSYCHOLOGIST
Why is that?

CELIA
I'm not. You're just condescending.

Psychologist doesn't understand.

CELIA (CONT'D)
You say all these cute sober living
sound bites like it's easy. But you
know there's a 91 percent chance my
ass is getting right by the morning.

PSYCHOLOGIST
But we gave you the-

CELIA
Tools?

PSYCHOLOGIST
You seemed to be very receptive.

CELIA
This is my third time here. I've had practice.

Psychologist leans back in his chair.

CELIA (CONT'D)
You keep teaching me how to be sober in a fucking prison... Not out there.

She gestures out the window to a stormy NOLA.

PSYCHOLOGIST
You need to believe in yourself.

CELIA
I believe I'm about to get high.

Psychologist levels with her --

PSYCHOLOGIST
That's because you refuse to go a whole night sober. But I promise you, if you make it through tonight, tomorrow will be easier because you'll believe you can do it, Celia. It's all about what you believe.

Celia appears to consider...

CELIA
That's pretty woo-woo. Gonna send me off with a crystal in my ass?

Psychologist doesn't get paid enough to deal with this shit. He slides over a release FORM.

QUICK CUTS:

- Celia snags a pen from a corny "Believe in Yourself!" mug.
- She scribbles her signature.
- A hand slides her a zip-lock of KEYS, CASH, and an IPHONE.

EXT./INT. NEW ORLEANS/CELIA'S CAR - EVENING

A ratty Corolla dovetails water on the I-10. The city of New Orleans is obscured ahead by the torrential rain.

RADIO NEWS (V.O.)
Tropical Storm Esther is pummeling
southern Louisiana tonight.

In the car, Celia drives and dials on her phone.

RADIO NEWS (V.O.)
Residents can expect nearly a foot of
rainfall over the next eight hours.

The phone RINGS on speaker. Goes to VOICEMAIL.

VOICEMAIL
It's Eric. Text me.

BEEP -

CELIA
It's me again. I'm out. I just, uh...
I just wanna see Imani, man. I think
it'll be good for me. I'm like doing
fine and shit, but maybe I could stay
over tonight and-

BEEP BEEP -

VOICEMAIL
This voicemail box is now full. Your
message could not be saved.

CELIA
Shit.

She dials again. *RingRing. RingRing.*

CLICK. Someone picked up. Celia SLAMS on the brakes in the middle of the I-10. Good thing she's the only one driving.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Eric?

ERIC (V.O.)
She don't wanna see you.

CELIA
Can I just talk to her?

A beat. He hangs up.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Asshole.

She dials again. It's rings and rings --

CELIA (CONT'D)

Answer. The. Fucking...

VOICEMAIL.

CELIA (CONT'D)

FUCK!

Celia rears back to PUMMEL the wheel but CATCHES HERSELF. She takes a few deep breaths, trying to settle --

BEEEEEEEEEP! BEEP BEEP! A car driving up behind her honks.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Oh fuck off, man! Pull around!

The car does. It disappears into the rain. Celia looks down at her hands -- shaking like she's freezing.

Her lip quivers. About to cry. She swallows the feeling. Then glances back out to the storm, a sick determination filling her eyes. What a shitty start to sober living.

INT. CELIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Celia drives through the 7th Ward, a seedy neighborhood that resisted even the most wealthy post-Katrina gentrifiers.

EXT. SKRIM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Celia knocks on a door, shielding her face from the rain. The door CRACKS. Eyes peer from behind a door chain.

INT. SKRIM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An Altoids TIN drops on a coffee table in front of Celia, who sits on a grimy couch you'd rather not even stand near.

SKRIM (20s, white, sad-rap face tats) stands across the table.

SKRIM

I got that hook up on the reg. Homies calling me the fuckin' Ox Daddy now, ya heard?

Celia has not heard this news.

SKRIM (CONT'D)

Two hundred... Or we just, you know, *hang*. Ain't no one else coming up in here tonight.

CELIA

I got cash.

SKRIM

Ain't rehab expensive?

CELIA

Not when it's court-ordered.

Celia pulls a wad of 20's from her pocket. A few coins fall into the crease between the cushions. She reaches for them, hitting something HARD --

The GRIP of a GLOCK 19, hidden in the couch. She pretends that didn't happen. Grabs the money. As she counts --

CELIA (CONT'D)

You see Eric lately?

SKRIM

Nah. Fuck him.

CELIA

He short you again?

SKRIM

Nah-ah. He just a fuckhead to that kid he got.

Celia stops counting. Looks up.

CELIA

My kid?

An *oh shit* look crosses Skrim's face.

SKRIM

I don't-

CELIA

What you hear?

He shakes his head. Celia can't catch herself this time --

She SPRINGS up and shoves Skrim against the wall. She coulda been a cop in another life. Skrim's sweating bullets.

CELIA (CONT'D)

The fuck did you hear, Skrim?

SKRIM

He, uh, fuckin' I dunno. Hurt the kid
or some shit.

CELIA

How?

Skrim just shakes his head. Celia presses harder.

SKRIM

I dunno. He's a fuckin' tweaker. Just
G-money told me it was bad this time.

Celia lets go and sinks back into the couch, letting all this
wash over her. Skrim motions to the tin...

SKRIM (CONT'D)

Just take it, C. You need it.

Celia believes she does. She snatches the tin and stands.

And we may notice there's no longer one of those classic couch
crease Glocks hidden in the cushions.

EXT. 9TH WARD - NIGHT

Remember the 7th ward? Think worse. Celia's car sits on a
curb, water flowing like the mighty Mississippi in the gutter
beneath.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

New Orleans five-oh and fire say
they've been ordered to stand down
'til the worst of the storm's passed.

INT. CELIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Celia grinds up WHITE PILLS into a fine powder in the Altoids
tin. She looks out the window to a SHODDY HOUSE. Windows dark.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

Y'all hear that? Great time to commit
a murder. And we'll be providing the
soundtrack, baby.

A HIP HOP song beats onto the radio. Celia stares at the
powder. Lusting for it.

She CLOSES the tin.

And shuts her eyes, taking a moment to herself. She opens them. And reopens the tin. Hands shaking as she tries to reject this little pharmacological god.

CELIA

Fuck it.

Celia leans toward the powder to Hoover it up --

A LIGHT pops on in the house, stopping her. She looks over --

There's the SILHOUETTE of a SMALL FIGURE in the window. A girl.

Celia eyes her. Longing.

SNAP. She closes the TIN.

She takes a few calming breaths, staring at that illuminated window. Picks up her phone and readies Eric's number, but can't bring herself hit call again.

Then the light goes DARK.

Celia stares at the window, an urge rising inside of her --

DING DING. She opens the door and exits. We sit in the car, watching her jog to the house then disappear around the side.

Just the pitter-patter of rain, rain, and more rain...

The front door OPENS. Celia ushers a GIRL (10) toward the car. She pulls the door open. Shoves the girl across the vehicle.

She kneels in the passenger seat. Wet. Bewildered.

GIRL

What the fuck, Celia?

This is her daughter, IMANI (from the earlier photo, now older). She's foul-mouthed. Rad. Has a CAST on her left arm.

Before Celia answers. A light in the home turns back on. Now, there's now a LARGER SHADOW moving in the window. Another light pops on. Then another. She's been caught.

Celia looks from Imani to the house.

IMANI

What. Are. You -

Celia slams the door, leaving Imani inside. Imani huffs, watching her mom vanish around the side of the house.

She reaches for the door handle, but damn, it's raining hard. She glances back toward the house, nervously TONGUING something near her bottom lip.

The large figure in the window abruptly turns.

Voices. Faint arguing over the storm. She turns the radio off, trying to hear. But the rain's too loud.

The large figure disappears from the window --

CLAP. A BRIGHT LIGHT flashes in the window. Imani flinches.

Then there's nothing. But. Unnerving. Silence. For. An. Unsettling. Amount. Of --

The front door OPENS. Celia runs back to the car. Gets in, soaked. And without a word, she throws that Corolla in gear and speeds off.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Rain pelts the shit out this backroad highway, flanked on both sides by swamp. HEADLIGHTS appear speeding toward us.

INT. CELIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Celia's driving too fast for this weather, but how else is she gonna put miles between them and the Crescent City?

She keeps glancing to the rearview, fear in her eyes, not noticing Imani trying to get her attention...

IMANI
Celia... CELIA!

Celia looks over, corrects her --

CELIA
Mom.

Imani just glares. Not calling her that.

IMANI
Where are we going?

CELIA
California.

IMANI
What?

CELIA
We're gonna live there now.

Imani nervously TONGUES her bottom lip again.

IMANI
I live with dad.

CELIA
(re: her cast)
Not after that.

IMANI
He didn't mean to.

CELIA
You really believe that?

Imani doesn't. Continues tonguing her lip. Celia notices.

IMANI
It's just a loose tooth.

CELIA
Since when?

IMANI
Like two weeks ago.

CELIA
How long you had that cast?

IMANI
Two weeks...
(realizing)
Shit.

CELIA
He didn't mean to... Why'd he do it
this time, huh?

Imani doesn't want to answer.

CELIA (CONT'D)
You step on his pizzo?

She doesn't respond. Celia shakes her head, disgusted. She slows, barely able to make out a SIGN --

WELCOME TO
THE TOWN OF
CYPRESS GROVE
POP. 482

Imani eyes the sign, worried as hell.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Everything's gonna be fine. I'm
better now.

IMANI
Never heard that before.

Ahead, the highway dips -- and it's flooded as far as the eye
can see. Celia slows to a stop.

IMANI (CONT'D)
You can't drive in that.

She's probably right. But Celia eyes the rearview again. The
past seems scarier than a little water. She drives and --

The car splashes into the water. Continues ahead.

Imani peers out the window -- the flooding is higher than the
clearance of the car, but they cut through it like a boat.

Celia smiles, relieved. She continues on, making headway --

THUMP THUMP. The car rocks.

IMANI (CONT'D)
What was that?

CELIA
Probably shit all over the road.

THUMP THUMP. Celia punches it. THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP --

CRACK.

The car HALTS. Stuck. VRRRRRR. Celia gives it gas, but it's
not moving. Turns the wheel. Nothing.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Fuck.

She smashes the accelerator.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Come on.

The wheels spin in the murky water. She throws it in reverse.
But that Corolla ain't moving.

The car settles. And the lights begin to FLICKER. Then the
engine KILLS. Celia turns the key -- nothing happens.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Shit.

Imani looks to the floorboard. WATER leaks in. She picks her feet up to the seat.

IMANI

We're deadass gonna drown.

Celia looks around for anything to help. Ahead, she notices the DIM GLOW of GAS STATION LIGHTS.

CELIA

Grab your stuff.

IMANI

You didn't let me bring anything.

Celia snatches her duffel.

Imani reluctantly opens the door, stares down at the muddy floodwater beneath.

While Imani's not looking, Celia moves the Glock from her back waistband into the duffel. She snatches her phone from the console, activating the screen --

A DOZEN missed calls from an UNKNOWN NUMBER make her nerves TWIST. She turns the phone off. But realizing that's futile, she opens the door and drops the phone into the flood.

Then she steps in, sinking up to her calves.

EXT. CELIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Imani meets Celia near the front of the car.

IMANI

There could be snakes in there.

CELIA

Snakes hate the rain.

Celia takes Imani's hand. Trudges toward the lights ahead.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Celia and Imani walk through the flooded parking lot past a large RAISED TRUCK resting above the water outside the door.

They step up onto a walkway, just an inch above the flooding.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

DING. An overhead bell chimes as they walk in.

Celia clocks a REGISTER BOY (18, white, lip packed with Skoal), watching the news on a TV behind the counter. He looks over, eyeing Celia like wild game in a spotlight.

Celia shoots him a *what the fuck are you looking at* glance. He turns back to the TV.

They head toward a rack of ridiculous gas station CLOTHES.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - NIGHT

This hell hole is exactly as you think. Or worse, 'cause the floor is sopping wet.

Imani tongues her loose tooth and tip-toes on SOAKED TOILET PAPER. She changes into sparkly PANTS and NEON airbrushed t-shirt reading, OLD SOUTH 4 LYFE.

Beyond her, rain clatters off a small, BARRED WINDOW. And through that window, there's a DROOPY CYPRESS TREE behind the gas station, silhouetted in moonlight.

Celia dries her face at a cracked mirror, attempting to make herself presentable. Her attention is drawn to cryptic GRAFFITI etched into the corner of the glass:

offer or suffer

She's unsure what to make of it. Turns to Imani --

CELIA

Ready?

Imani nods. She leans over to tie her shoes when she winces, smelling something. Celia notices it, too.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Gross.

IMANI

It's like ass breath.

CELIA

Drains are probably backing up.

Outside, the rain wanes to a pitter-patter. But there's a SOUND, something we've heard through the scene but haven't been privy to. That droning, insidious *PopPopPopPop*.

TEETH CHATTERING. Imani hears it.

She looks out the window -- eyes drawing to the cypress tree, like she feels something is watching her. She leans closer, peering into the branches...

Celia GRABS her shoulder.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Come on.

Imani shakes it off and follows Celia out the door, revealing that droopy tree. Rustling in the wind. Like a normal tree.

Until something MOVES. Meshed in with the branches.

It's ELONGATED and HUMANOID --

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Celia's mid-argument with the dip-lip Register Boy.

REGISTER BOY

Y'all can't just sit around here.
That'd be a loitering issue.

CELIA

That's why I'm asking for a ride. You got that big ass rig out front.

REGISTER BOY

I'm on duty here, honey. This look like the kind of job I can just up and walk out of?

CELIA

It kinda does, yeah.

REGISTER BOY

Just head up the road. Can't miss the B&B.

CELIA

How far?

REGISTER BOY

Two miles-ish.

CELIA

Come on, man. No one else...

Celia's distracted by the TV behind the counter -- her and Imani's PHOTOS are posted on the NEWS, an AMBER ALERT.

Register Boy follows her gaze toward the TV --

CELIA (CONT'D)
 (stopping him)
 No one's coming in here.

Register Boy eyes her a moment... then tilts his head like he hears something. The rising *VRRMMM* of a motor sounds over the storm. Celia turns to the glass doors as --

An AIRBOAT, a skiff with a massive box-fan-looking motor on the back, glides through the shallow water out front.

REGISTER BOY
 Guess you were wrong, honey.

He spits in a Mountain Dew bottle.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

A MAN wearing an old grey canvas raincoat steps off the boat. He ties it to a handicap parking sign. Heads toward the store.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Celia and co. watch the Man enter the shop.

This dude's BIG. Imposing. Maybe six-five. He removes his hood, revealing a 40-something-year-old white man with an old-world structured face.

REGISTER BOY
 What can I do you for, buddy?

The Man looks to Celia. He speaks with a low southern drawl:

MAN
 That your car up the road, ma'am?

Celia nods.

CELIA
 We broke down. We're just looking for a ride. My boy Chewy here says there's a B&B nearby.

MAN
 (to the Register boy)
 You ain't offer to drive them?

Man eyes Register Boy, who spits in his bottle.

REGISTER BOY
You need gas or something?

Man ignores him.

MAN
(to Celia and Imani)
Y'all follow me...

Celia snags two RAIN PONCHOS off the counter, tosses a few crumbled bills at Register Boy. She flips THE BIRD over her shoulder as they follow the Man to the door.

Register Boy shakes his head, turns to the TV -- now on commercial break.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The Man walks a poncho'd Celia and Imani toward his boat.

CELIA
Hey man, we really appreciate it.

MAN
Happy to help.

The Man helps Celia on then leans down to Imani, noticing her tonguing her tooth. A warm smile crosses his face. What a cute kid. He offers a hand.

But Imani ignores it. Steps onto the boat herself. The Man follows behind her.

CELIA
I'm Celia by the way.

MAN
David.

CELIA
Well, good meeting you, David.

DAVID
Yup.

At the console, he turns the ignition. The engine SPUTTERS... kills. Celia clocks his hand on the key -- LIGHTLY TREMBLING.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Old boat.

He turns the key again, and -- VRRRRRM -- it fires to life.

EXT. CYPRESS GROVE - NIGHT

David navigates the airboat up a flooded street. He approaches a large iron farm gate, then throttles through.

AHEAD, ancient towering oak trees line a road. And at the end, warm lights glow in windows on a huge structure.

The closer they get, more of that structure comes into view. And maybe B&B was the wrong term 'cause --

This is a full-on ANTEBELLUM PLANTATION. Two floors with massive wrap-around porches. The flooding stops at the bottom of the porch steps. A *holy shit* look crosses Celia's face.

David navigates to the steps.

DAVID

Imma tie her up and meet you inside.

Celia grabs her bag and helps Imani off the boat.

INT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

The massive door CREAKS OPEN. Celia and Imani walk into a grand foyer and give the place a once-over.

Ornate furniture and decoration abound. The place screams southern royalty.

They turn toward a front desk, where RICKY (17, braces) is kicked back with his feet up while DRUNK BETTY (50s, Karen) sits on the inside of the desk, dangerously close to him.

CELIA

Yo, man...

Ricky and Betty spin around like two teens caught making out.

CELIA (CONT'D)

We're just-

RICKY

Dripping!

CELIA

We just wanna get a room-

RICKY

Ponchos! They're dripping!

Celia scoffs. She and Imani take off their ponchos and hang them on a coat rack. They approach the desk.

CELIA
We need a place to sleep.

BETTY
Here?

Whoa Betty. Celia lets that roll off.

CELIA
Yeah. Here.

RICKY
Let me see what I got.

Ricky picks at his braces while thumbing through his books.

Imani studies a rug-sized PORTRAIT of a Civil War CONFEDERATE GENERAL on the wall behind the desk. Betty notices.

BETTY
That there's Gen. Longstreet. Hero in this town. Left his riverboat fortune to fight for the Confederacy... Hub and I are staying down here to learn about the legend.

RICKY
Mhmm.

CELIA
Legend for the losing team.

BETTY
It's a shame really. They say he lost his will to fight when he learned the Union killed his family. Perhaps things would have been different if the North had decency.

RICKY
So they say... All right, we got a couple rooms open in the big house, but I'll tell you what, I think you'll find the carriage houses out back more affordable.

Et tu, Ricky? Celia pretends to consider his false graciousness. Then she leans across the desk.

CELIA
Problem is, sir, I didn't arrive via carriage.

RICKY

Via?

The door OPENS. Everyone's attention shifts to David entering. Ricky clocks his dripping raincoat. He doesn't say shit.

CELIA

He's dripping.

Ricky side-eyes her. David walks up to the desk like he owns the place.

DAVID

She'll stay in the French room.

Ricky glances at his papers. Clears his throat.

RICKY

It does seem to be available.

DAVID

Good.

Celia smirks at David.

INT. PLANTATION DINER - NIGHT

Imani and Celia sit on one side of a booth, food in front of them. David's across the table, sipping coffee in silence.

Now that we can really study him in the light, we realize his skin's pallid. Eyes sunken. Like he's unwell.

CELIA

I appreciate all this, man, but I don't know how I can get you back.

He shakes his head --

DAVID

No need.

CELIA

Okay.
(off David's silence)
So, you from here or what?

DAVID

Lived all over Acadiana. Born in Arnaudville though.

CELIA

No shit. My grandpa grew up there.

DAVID

Nice town. But I ain't been back there much since I enlisted... What about y'all, where you coming from?

CELIA

New Orleans.

DAVID

Where you headed in this storm?

CELIA

L.A.

DAVID

Peculiar time to be traveling.

CELIA

Could say the same for you.

DAVID

I guess I just had a feeling someone might need a hand. Sure enough.

CELIA

Maybe you got a sixth sense for it.

DAVID

Something like that.

David reaches for his coffee. Celia notices his hand is SHAKING AGAIN -- like he's jonesing for something.

CELIA

You alright?

He eyes his trembling hand. Nods.

DAVID

Just gotta take my medicine... Well, I should get moving. Storm gets worse, I won't be able to get home.

David glances over to Imani tonguing her loose tooth, an untouched GRILLED CHEESE in front of her. He smiles --

DAVID (CONT'D)

But you, miss, you should eat. Might help you shed that dangly tooth.

Imani nods. Grabs her sandwich. David's hand STOPS shaking.

He stands. Celia steps out of the booth with him. She lightly touches his arm.

CELIA
Thank you, man. Really.

David nods.

DAVID
I'll be back in the morning. Help you
get that car to a shop.

Celia sits. Her gaze lingers on David as he exits. Then she looks to the 4'5 elephant in the room who's a bit concerned by the events that have transpired.

CELIA
Quit looking at me like that.

Imani doesn't.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Just eat. Please.

Imani glances at her greasy grilled cheese.

CELIA (CONT'D)
If you don't, I will.

Celia reaches for it, but Imani snags it first. She reluctantly munches on a bite. WINCES.

IMANI
Ow!

Blood dribbles down her lip. She rubs her chin.

CELIA
Let me see.

Celia softly touches her face, pulls down her bottom lip. Examines the tooth. She snags a paper napkin.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Hold still.

She caresses the tooth with the napkin. Gently pulls --

It POPS free. Celia smiles, hands the tooth to her daughter and passes her a fresh napkin.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Bite down on that so it don't bleed.

JEANINE (O.S.)
Gonna offer that to *Le Feu Follet*
tonight, right?

They look to JEANINE (from the teaser, now in her 50s) bussing a table nearby.

CELIA

Le what?

JEANINE

Feu Follet. What we call the Tooth Fairy around here.

Celia nods -- oh. Looks to Imani, who shakes her head like *of course not*. Celia's surprised.

IMANI

Dad told me it's bullshit.

CELIA

Cheap ass.

Jeanine walks over, looks Imani directly in the eyes.

JEANINE

It is real. And you need to put that tooth under your pillow tonight, you understand?

CELIA

Or else what?

JEANINE

You don't wanna find out.

Imani looks spooked. Celia scoffs at this psycho old lady.

CELIA

(dismissive)

Yeah, well, we're actually eating right now so...

JEANINE

And I'm closing up, so I'll box that for you. Show you to your room.

Celia slides Imani's plate over -- *be my guest*.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. A door swings open. Jeanine flips a light on and enters, Celia and Imani in tow. Celia's eyes go wide --

CELIA

Damn.

The room is GRAND. Ornate furniture lines the walls. A MASSIVE BED with a veil rests in the center of the room.

IMANI

This place haunted or some shit?

JEANINE

(to Celia)

Got a mouth on her.

CELIA

Sure as fuck does.

Jeanine shakes that off, pulls two HALF-BURNT CANDLES from a room service caddy she's carried in. She set one in one of those catty-corner mirror contraptions -- similar to the one we saw in the teaser. Lights it.

JEANINE

In case we lose power later...
bathroom's over here.

They follow her into the --

BATHROOM

Equally as ornate. Large clawfoot tub. Massive antique mirror. Jeanine places a SECOND CANDLE in a similar stand with catty-corner mirrors. She lights the candle.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Toiletries and towels're in the drawers... I'm Jeanine, by the way. I manage the operations here. So if you need anything, y'all holler... And keep them candles lit. We always lose power.

Celia gives Jeanine a thumbs up. As she turns on the bathtub faucet, Jeanine crouches next to Imani.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll put that tooth under your pillow.

IMANI

Yeah. Alright. Whatever.

Jeanine nods -- *good* -- and heads for the door.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Celia nervously stares out the window at the flooded drive up to the plantation.

BATHROOM

Imani takes a BUBBLE BATH. She's got her cast-covered arm in a trash bag above the water and uses the other to wash herself.

A drop of RED hits the bubbles. Imani wipes her lip, noticing her hand is smudged in blood. More red drips down her chin. She reaches for the toilet paper but... she's shy an inch.

CELIA (O.C.)

I got it.

Celia walks in and grabs the paper for her. She pulls a strip and folds it over.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Here.

Celia gently cleans the blood from her chin.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Open up...

Celia dabs her gums.

CELIA (CONT'D)

How many you lost so far?

Imani holds up 10 fingers. Celia nods, glances to her broken arm.

CELIA (CONT'D)

What happened? Really...

Imani seems embarrassed to admit.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Imani, I needa know.

IMANI

I used his phone.

That makes Celia SICK.

IMANI (CONT'D)

What'd you do to him?

Celia shakes her head.

IMANI (CONT'D)
When you went back inside...

CELIA
He's not gonna bother us anymore.

IMANI
But they never let me stay with you.

CELIA
We're gonna sort that out in
California.

IMANI
What if you get sick again?

CELIA
Told you I'm better now.

IMANI
You always say that.

CELIA
This time I'm serious.

IMANI
I don't want you to leave again.

That hits Celia. Hard.

CELIA
I'm not going to, Imani. I promise. I
need one more chance. I just need you
to trust me.

Imani nods. Celia pulls the makeshift gauss from her mouth.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Smile.

Imani gives a halfhearted one -- it's goofy. Toothless.

CELIA (CONT'D)
You look like a pirate. Give me an
arrrrrrggg matey.

Imani just stares. Celia scoops up some bubbles onto her face
like a beard.

CELIA (CONT'D)
*What be this frothy matter upon my
seas?*

Imani really smiles this time.

IMANI
It be fuckin' bubbles.

Celia laughs.

BATHROOM - LATER

Celia brushes her teeth while curiously studying the candle in the corner. It's half-melted, but there appears to be something etched into the wax -- in the shape of a T.

She spits toothpaste. Flips the light switch as she heads into the bedroom. She stops and looks back -- the candle casts a STRANGELY ILLUMINATING GLOW through the room. She 180s --

It's bright EVERYWHERE. She turns her hand over -- she's completely bathed in light no matter where she stands.

She looks back to the catty-corner mirror, realizing it directs rays to other small mirrors positioned in the corners of the room. Recessed lighting, circa the 1860s.

BEDROOM

Celia turns the OLD LOCK on the door. It fires with a distinctive *CL-CLAACK*.

She kills the main lights. The corner candle casts a similar cradle of light. She climbs into the bed next to Imani, who stares off UNCOMFORTABLY --

CELIA
 You still awake?

Imani nods. Celia kisses her on the head, but Imani doesn't react. She follows her gaze to HER TOOTH on the nightstand.

Imani GRABS it. Lifts her pillow.

Celia STOPS her.

IMANI
 Jeanine made me promise.

CELIA
 That lady's nuts. I'm not gonna let her scare you. Okay?

After a second, Imani nods. Celia takes the tooth from her hand and places it on her own nightstand.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 I'll give you a couple bucks tomorrow, alright? I love you, Imani.

Imani nods again. She closes her eyes.

Celia lies back. Shuts her eyes. But it's bright still. She looks over to that damn candle. BLOWS it out.

Then turns to her side. Something's uncomfortable. The TIN in her pocket. Her breath begins to ELEVATE...

Her hand shakes. She's lusting for it. She drags her hand to her pocket. Begins to slide it in --

Imani turns over. Celia halts. Imani eyes her mom. Lightly smiles. Then she closes her eyes.

Celia takes a deep, calming breath. And another. Slowly, she drifts off to sleep --

CUT TO:

INT. SHODDY HOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM

CELIA'S POV: On a WHITE MAN (30s, strung out). Standing in a hallway. Fire in his eyes, jaw tense. This is ERIC. Celia AIMS Skrim's GLOCK toward him. Her finger QUIVERS on the trigger.

Eric wants to kill her. He steps toward her. Celia shifts her aim JUST OVER HIS HEAD --

CLACK... the sound of a door CLOSING.

BACK TO:

Celia wakes in a panic. She immediately looks over to the DOOR, considering the sound she just heard. But all is still. Just a dream... After a second, she settles. Lies back on her side, facing the nightstand, noticing --

The tooth is MISSING.

She turns to Imani, sound asleep. Eyes Imani's pillow curiously. Celia reaches under...

She doesn't feel anything so she slides her hand farther... NOTHING. She carefully reaches under Imani's head and --

Bingo. She pulls her hand out.

Clasped between her fingers is IMANI'S TOOTH. Celia shakes her head, both amused and annoyed.

CL-CLAAACK. Celia whips her head back to the door. *Did someone just lock it?* She looks to the threshold --

Where there's a SHADOW. Someone's just outside the door.

The shadow MOVES AWAY. She looks back to the tooth.

Her blood begins to BOIL.

INT. PLANTATION - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Celia BEELINES down the grand stairs. She cuts into the main hall, headed directly for the front desk where Drunk Betty's getting closer to a statutory charge --

Ricky slides his rolling chair back as Celia approaches.

RICKY

Can I help-

CELIA

Where the fuck is she?!

RICKY

Huh?

CELIA

Don't fuck with me, braces.

BETTY

Christ, lady. We haven't seen anyone.

CELIA

Bullshit. She came in my room!

BETTY

Ricky, get her away!

FOOTSTEPS draw Celia's attention to Jeanine pacing away down a hall. Celia locks on --

CELIA

Hey!

BEDROOM

LIGHTNING CRACKS, startling Imani awake. She turns over. Thunder RUMBLES in the distance, preventing her from more sleep. She gets up and heads to the bathroom...

Not realizing she's alone.

DOWNSTAIRS

Celia's now in Jeanine's face.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Is this fucking funny to you?

JEANINE
I needed to make sure it was under
her pillow.

CELIA
What the fuck is wrong with you?

JEANINE
I'm trying to help you.

Celia holds up the tooth... Jeanine's eyes go wide in terror.

CELIA
We're not buying into your dumb --

JEANINE
Get back up there! She's in danger.

CELIA
Yeah, of you, you crazy fuck.

JEANINE
Get it under her pillow now!

Celia stares at her like she's utterly insane.

BEDROOM

Imani finishes peeing on the toilet. Glances back at the open bathroom door to the bedroom. Candlelight casts out a few feet but drops off to DARKNESS. Spooky.

But she deals with worse every day. She grabs the toilet paper when she curls her nose.

IMANI
Ew...

It's that cavity breath smell again. She brushes it off and FLUSHES. She turns, headed back toward the bedroom. She walks to the doorway, looks to the bed --

It's EMPTY. She halts. Just inside the doorway.

IMANI (CONT'D)
Celia?

No response. She pans the dark room. There's no one. But something piques her attention -- that toothy *PopPopPop* over the rain. She looks for its source when it abruptly STOPS...

CLACK.

Something falls to the floor in front of her -- just out of the light. She squints for a better look --

It's a TOOTH.

IMANI (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

She looks up to the dark ceiling. Nothing there.

CLACK. She pans back down -- another TOOTH drops to the hardwood. This one is BROWN and ROTTEN.

She looks up again. Still nothing but a high empty ceiling. She looks left into the corner of the room. Nothing. She works up the courage and peers right. Nada. Weird.

She takes a cautious step out of the bathroom and kneels. Reaches for the cleaner tooth.

PopPop.

She HALTS, hand just over the tooth. Looks up --

Ahead of her, concealed in the shadows is the ELONGATED FIGURE we saw in the tree outside the gas station. Imani SQUINTS, trying to figure out what the hell it is --

Pop!

Its SINEWY ARM REACHES FOR HER --

DOWNSTAIRS

Celia's laying into Jeanine when a SCREAM pierces the plantation. Celia's attention goes back to the stairs.

CELIA

Imani...?

JEANINE

GO! GO TO HER! NOW!

Celia bolts back toward the stairs. Jeanine heads down a hall.

Drunk Betty eyes this *like what the fuck*. But Ricky's a bit more concerned. He starts toward the stairs to see what's up.

UPSTAIRS

Celia ascends the stairs. Imani's screams are LOUDER.

CELIA
I'm coming!

Celia darts to her room. Yanks the door OPEN --

BEDROOM

The room is dark. Bathroom door closed. Imani's cast is RIPPED APART on the floor.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Imani?! IMANI?!

IMANI (O.S.)
In here!

Celia beelines for the bathroom door. Yanks it open --

BATHROOM

Imani's pressed into a corner, clutching her now cast-less broken arm, terrified. Celia kneels at her side.

CELIA
Are you okay? What happened?

Imani just shakes her head. Celia eyes Imani's arm -- it's covered in PURPLE BITE MARKS, like something with thousands of teeth chomped down.

CELIA (CONT'D)
What the fuck happened?!

IMANI
It ripped my cast off.

CELIA
What did?

IMANI
The fucking shadow thing.

Celia peers to the dark bedroom, approaches the doorway --

IMANI (CONT'D)
Don't go in.

Celia halts at the edge of the light. Looks around --

THE DOOR OPENS, startling her -- Ricky's there.

RICKY
Y'all good?

CELIA

Does it seem like we're fucking-

As Celia lights him up, we drop DOWN --

-- Through the heavy CYPRESS holding this building together --

-- Past the towering GEN. LONGSTREET PORTRAIT again --

-- And into the floor, eventually emerging in the --

BASEMENT

Jeanine turns the lights on, revealing a musty room filled with ancient chairs, desks, and relics of the Antebellum era. Water dribbles in from windows near the ceiling that barely manage to hold back the pressure of the flooding outside.

Jeanine heads to a CLOSET. She yanks the door open and digs through. She finally pulls down a dusty HANDCRAFTED WOODEN BOX, etched with †††.

UPSTAIRS - BEDROOM

Celia argues with a dumbfounded Ricky.

RICKY

Then where the hell'd this guy go?

Celia lifts the shredded cast into his face.

CELIA

You think she did this herself?

Ricky's suddenly a tad more concerned.

RICKY

We should call the cops.

Celia steps toward him, shaking her head.

CELIA

No.

RICKY

Huh?

CELIA

(stumbling)

They'll take forever in this storm.
You need to secure this place first.

Ricky's not quite the hero she's asking him to be. But he'll try. He whips out a POCKET KNIFE. Flips it open. Then he pulls a master key ring.

RICKY
I'll check the rooms.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Betty leans in a doorway across the hall, watching her nervous boy crush checking rooms. A MEATY HAND grabs her shoulder --

Her husband, CLIFF (50s, rotund). He's half-drunk, groggy.

CLIFF
The hell's all the commotion about?

BETTY
This bitch that just checked in is loco. Thinks someone went in their room.

CLIFF
Wasn't me.

BETTY
I know, Clifford.

BZZZZT. Cliff's phone buzzes in his pocket. So does Betty's.

They pull their phones -- AMBER ALERT.

CLIFF
Classic.

And like everyone on Earth, Cliff dismisses it immediately.

But Betty DOESN'T. The description catches her attention. She clicks for MORE INFO.

BASEMENT

Jeanine sets the wooden box on a table and opens it -- it's lined with RED VELVET. There are a dozen EMPTY SLOTS, like the case was made for something delicate. She lifts the liner to reveal another row below --

There are five WHITE CANDLES, identical to the half-burnt ones she lit in the bedroom --

TINK. Above her, one of the windows SPIDER-WEBS. Shit. Jeanine quickly closes the case --

BOOM. The window BREAKS -- water RUSHES in, knocking the box from the table. Jeanine searches for it as the room FILLS.

UNDERWATER, the candles are SCATTERED. Jeanine's hands swipes left and right, just missing them in the murky water.

ABOVE, the light FLICKERS. Jeanine frantically searches.

UNDERWATER, Jeanine brushes a candle. She grabs for it -- but knocks it FARTHER AWAY.

ABOVE, the water rises past her knees. LIGHTS FLUTTER.

UNDERWATER, Jeanine finds the candle. Lifts it ABOVE WATER as the basement light POPS OUT. Barely able to see, she gives up and sloshes through rising water toward light in the stairwell.

BATHROOM

Celia tries to coax Imani from the corner.

CELIA
Please come out.

IMANI
But it wouldn't come in here.

CELIA
What does that mean? Because you
locked the door?

IMANI
No. It stopped at the candlelight.

Celia looks to the candle, now barely burning in a heaping pile of wax near the mirrors.

CELIA
Jesus, Imani, look.

Celia walks out of the bathroom into the --

BEDROOM

She turns in a circle in the dark.

CELIA (CONT'D)
There's nothing here. Let's go where
everyone is. It's better to be around
the rest of those assholes if
someone's here.

Imani begins to get up.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Thank you, baby.

Imani enters the bedroom. Celia ushers her into the --

HALLWAY

They turn right into --

BETTY, CLIFF, and RICKY. Blocking the stairs like a wall of low-IQ bullies.

CELIA (CONT'D)
What?

BETTY
Hey, Imani...

Imani perks up. Betty nods to Cliff and Ricky.

CELIA
How do you know her name?

BETTY
Why don't you come to me, Imani?

Celia puts her arm in front of Imani to block her.

CELIA
How the fuck do you know her name?

CLIFF
We can't just let you walk, lady.

RICKY
They told me what you did.

Ricky edges toward Celia, who steps in front of Imani. He reaches for her arm. Celia swats him away. She backtracks.

Cliff advances on her.

CELIA
Stay the fuck back!

She turns to run -- Ricky grabs her from behind and wrestles her to the ground.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Run, Imani!

Imani runs for a door. Tries to open it, but it's LOCKED.

She turns around to Cliff.

CLIFF
Come here, girl.

CELIA
Don't fucking touch her!

He picks her up. Imani kicks at him.

IMANI
Get off. Celia!!

CLIFF
Calm down, sweet girl. Jesus!

Cliff carries Imani toward his room.

CLIFF (CONT'D)
We're gonna get you back home.

IMANI
Celia!!!! HELP!

Ricky holds Celia on the ground.

CELIA
IMANI!

CLIFF'S BEDROOM

Cliff carries a squirmy Imani into the room.

CLIFF
Chill, baby girl!

He puts her down. Shuts the door behind him.

CLIFF (CONT'D)
We're gonna stay here till help
comes, all right?

Imani tries to run past him. He drunkenly lunges, knocking a lamp over. The light stretches Cliff's huge SHADOW onto the far wall and ceiling.

CLIFF (CONT'D)
Bad girl! You stop it! Right now.

He steps toward her. Imani cowers under his looming gut. She backpedals when something catches her attention --

That awful ELONGATED SILHOUETTE unfurling from the corner of the high ceiling. She gasps. DROPS to the floor --

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Hey!

And rolls --

UNDER THE BED

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Chunky Cliff painfully kneels next to the bed. Reaches under.

Imani inches away with her good arm.

HALLWAY

Ricky wrestles with Celia on the floor, using one arm. In the other, he's got his knife. Betty stands nearby, blocking the stairs in case Celia breaks free.

RICKY

Quit moving! I don't wanna cut you!

Celia lands an ELBOW into Ricky's side. He drops the knife. Celia reaches for it but...

Ricky BODY SLAMS her back to the floor.

BETTY

She's rabid!

RICKY

Can I get some help?

Betty starts over --

CRACK CRACK. Bursts of lightning outside illuminate the windows.

BOOOOOOM. THUNDER RUMBLES, shaking the foundation of the home. The lights overhead BUZZ in and out...

... in and out...

in...

and...

OUT. The room goes **INKY BLACK.**

Heavy breathing. Movement. Grunting.

RICKY (V.O.)

Hey! She's up! Where is she?

Betty's WHITE IPHONE LIGHT cuts the darkness --

Celia's on her feet. She's got Ricky's knife. And she's ready to spar with this hick.

CELIA

Get the fuck out my way.

CLIFF'S BEDROOM

Cliff's on his arthritic knees grunting, struggling to fit his burly arms under the bed.

UNDER THE BED, Cliff's paw scrapes at the ground, inches from Imani who's backed up to a board supporting the bed.

Cliff really sucks in his gut and extends his arm farther --

He NABS Imani's shirt. She bats at his hand. But you know what they say about thick hands...

IMANI

Get off! Get off! AHHHH!

CLIFF

Just come out, little girl, come on!

They're strong. He drags her toward the edge of the bed --

Imani presses her good arm against the frame, keeping herself from sliding out. SKRRRT. Her shirt RIPS.

Cliff examines his handful of sparkly t-shirt. Drops it.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

God damnit.

UNDER THE BED, Cliff's arm rockets ahead. Imani cowers. Just as it's about to grab her again --

It RETRACTS like it was bitten by a snake.

CLIFF (O.S) (CONT'D)

FUCK!

IMANI POV: Just Cliff's socked feet are visible. He GASPS. Liquid drips on the socks -- BLOOD.

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

Someone fuckin' bit me. Hey! You stay the fuck back! I'll break your ass!

HALLWAY

Celia swings the knife, forcing Betty and Ricky to backtrack. But they're blocking her exit.

CELIA

Move.

BETTY

What're you gonna do, kill us?

CELIA

Yep.

Celia lunges. Betty and Ricky flinch back. Suddenly CLIFF SCREAMS like he's being skinned alive from the bedroom.

Celia glances to the door. Ricky and Betty look back.

WHAM! The door slams open --

And Imani bolts out of the room past a startled Betty and Ricky into Celia's arms.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Imani's so scared she can barely form words. Then Cliff's screaming goes QUIET.

BETTY

Cliff?

Betty stares at the bedroom door, illuminated by her iPhone.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Cliff?! Clifford?!

He grunts in PAIN.

Ricky isn't sure what to do. He takes a step toward Celia --

Who warns him with the knife. He stops.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Clifford?!

No response. Frustrated, Betty charges into --

CLIFF'S BEDROOM

She pans her light, but Cliffy ain't nowhere to be seen.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Where are you, asshole?

She aims her light to the floor -- where a few SHINY objects catch her attention. She bends down for a closer gander --

Those be PEARLY WHITES. She studies them, equally unsettled and confused.

Then she crawls around the bed, seeing there are MORE TEETH spread along the carpet. Like bread crumbs. What the fuck?

She follows them, anxiety growing until she gets to the far side of the bed.

WHAM. Cliff's arm stretches out for help.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Cliff!

She moves around the side of the bed to Cliff, WHEEZING, his TOOTHLESS GUMS OOZING BLOOD.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Oh my God...
(to the door)
Someone help!

RATTLING. On the floor.

The trail of teeth. They're shaking. Then ONE-BY-ONE they ascend to the ceiling as if pulled by invisible strings.

CHATTER. *PopPopPopPopPop*. Behind her.

Betty TURNS. SCREAMS --

HALLWAY

Ricky and Celia watch through the bedroom door as --

Betty's iPhone light flashes across the room like it's being tumbled in a dryer. Then her body is THROWN through the doorway, face-planting, sliding across the floor.

RICKY

Betty?

No response. Ricky and Celia stare in horror at the unmoving body, unsure of what to do.

RICKY (CONT'D)

(whisper yelling)
Give me the knife.

Celia shakes her head -- *hell no*.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Cliff, this is fucked up. Me and
Betty... We didn't do anything, man.

Ricky cautiously paces to Betty. Turns her over. Her bottom
jaw's been RIPPED OFF. Top teeth MISSING.

He looks toward Imani, piecing things together --

RICKY (CONT'D)
Did she... lose a --

CELIA
WHAT THE FUCK?!

Celia gawks in shock as those TOOTH-CLAWED fingers skitter down
Ricky's face like the demented legs of a demonic tarantula.

RICKY
Oh shit --

The fingers work their way inside his mouth like a FISH HOOK
and WHOOSH -- he's ripped into the high dark ceiling.

GASPING and GURLGING are heard from the darkness.

Celia pushes Imani behind her, unsure if they should make a
move for the stairs. Might be too far. She begins to slowly
pull her toward a nearby open door --

CLACK. Ricky's braces fall from the ceiling.

Imani gasps. Celia puts her finger to her lips to keep her
quiet as they inch along...

getting closer...

... and closer...

... and closer to the door...

WHAM! Ricky smashes headfirst into the ground with a bone-
crunching SNAP.

CELIA
GO!

They SPRINT through the door into the --

PIANO ROOM

Celia SLAMS the door shut. Throws an old bolt lock. She puts
her ear to the door -- all is silent.

DUMMMM DUM DUM. A beautiful piano-played Em chord rings out.

Their heads SWIVEL to a GRAND PIANO in the corner.

There's NO PLAYER. No bueno.

DUM DUMMM DUMMMM DUMMMMM. The chords work into a melody --

The Civil War banger, "Battle Cry for Freedom."

Celia stares, trying to figure out what the fuck is happening. Then she realizes -- there are two, SIX-FOOT SINEWY ARMS stretching from the shadows to the piano keys.

Then the DARK SILHOUETTE of a HUMANOID BODY begins to float closer from behind the piano. It's elongated, broken appearing. The playing grows louder and LOUDER.

They RUN to the next door. It's locked. Celia throws her shoulder into it. Nothing. AGAIN --

It DOESN'T BUDGE.

The music beings to SWELL.

She rears back one last time and --

The DOOR OPENS.

Jeanine's there.

JEANINE

Get in.

She pulls them in, slamming the door.

LIBRARY

It's pitch black. SPARKS cut the darkness. Then a match ignites, revealing Jeanine. She lights a CANDLE. Then attempts to place it in another catty-corner mirror device...

But she can't reach it.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Get me a chair!

The music STOPS. The toothy PopPopPopPopPop starts.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Hurry!

Celia grabs a chair and rushes it over. Jeanine climbs on it. The CHATTER gets CLOSER --

CELIA
What are you doing?!

The unnerving noise SURROUNDS THEM --

JEANINE
Keeping y'all safe.

Jeanine sets the candle. The room goes BRIGHT.

The chatter CEASES as if it never was.

Celia holds Imani and pans around the room, ready for that thing to attack again. But all seems fine. Safe.

Jeanine steps down, glares at Celia. Then walks toward them, FAST. Celia pushes Imani out of the way, ready to defend her daughter again... But Jeanine passes.

Jeanine reaches for another mirror on the wall, adjusting it a hair to ensure the candle glow is as thorough as possible.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
It's gone for now.

CELIA
What the fuck was that?

JEANINE
Le Feu Follet.

Celia's eyes narrow.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
The Tooth Fairy.

Celia's known shadow people from drug addiction. But a real-life tooth fairy, I mean, damn... She struggles to find words.

Imani whines in pain. Celia looks down at her daughter, holding her broken arm.

INT. PLANTATION - LIBRARY - NIGHT - LATER

Jeanine runs her finger along a large bookshelf on the far wall. She stops, pulling an OLD BOOK down.

Across the room, Celia sits with Imani. She rips strips of her shirt, then wraps it around the severed SPINE of a textbook to fashion a splint for Imani's arm. She ties it off.

CELIA
How's that?

IMANI

Fine.

Celia kisses her on the head. She walks to Jeanine, who's got that old book open on a table.

CELIA

You got a lot of shit to explain.

Jeanine directs her toward the book. Printed on the page is a SWAMP SCENE PAINTING --

What appears to be a pleasant picture is interrupted when you realize HUMAN TEETH are blending with the cypress roots and tree trunks.

On the ground, there's a LIFELESS CHILD. And just above it, meshed in with the trees, is a DARK CONTORTED HUMANOID SILHOUETTE... *Le Feu Follet*.

CELIA (CONT'D)

If that is what you say it is, why didn't it just take her tooth from my hands?

JEANINE

It only accepts offerings.

Celia is having a hard time processing.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

It's haunted this town since the end of the Civil War... One night, the children who'd put their teeth under their pillows found gold coins in the morning. The ones who didn't were missing from their beds. No one could find them... It happened every night after that to the ones who didn't offer. Like a punishment... And it killed anyone who tried to stop it.

CELIA

So this happens a lot here?

Jeanine shakes her head -- *no*.

JEANINE

Once all the children started offering, it stopped... It's only happened once in the last century. Thirty years ago.

Celia chews on that.

CELIA
Then what's with the candles?

JEANINE
They're blessed by the Church. Casts
God's light.

Celia glances back at the candle. She realizes now that the T
shape she saw came from a melted down †.

CELIA
Like sunlight.

Jeanine nods.

JEANINE
The Fairy's demonic, so they keep it
away. I lit them just in case.

CELIA
So we wait it out until morning.

Jeanine shakes her head.

JEANINE
That candle won't last the night.
Once it's out, it'll be back for her
and keep killing whoever gets in its
way.

CELIA
Then we'll light more.

JEANINE
That's the last one. We have to get
her out of town before it burns down.

CELIA
How the fuck are we gonna do that?

Jeanine looks back toward the candle.

JEANINE
Still got that knife?

CUT TO: Jeanine standing on the chair, using Ricky's knife to
carefully cut the candle into fourths, leaving the top burning
in the mirrors.

She hands one piece of it to Celia then cuts another.

CELIA
Just take the whole thing down.

JEANINE

We have to keep the top burning.

Celia doesn't understand.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

We need to be blanketed in light for the candle to protect. Anything left in the dark is vulnerable.

She steps down with the remaining two-fourths.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

We'll need to move in a line and keep the candles burning.

Jeanine places the three candles -- now tea-sized -- on the table and pulls the wicks straight.

CELIA

They won't burn as long now.

JEANINE

Exactly. So we have to move fast.

Jeanine turns back to the candles. Celia stops her.

CELIA

Why are you helping us?

JEANINE

Because the last child it took, that was my son... Now, we're burning time.

Celia nods. Heads over to Imani, resting against a wall.

CELIA

We gotta go.

Imani shakes her head.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Jeanine's going to take us where it's safe. If we stay in the light, we'll be okay.

IMANI

Fuck that.

JEANINE

You don't have a choice. Once those candles burn down, it's going to come for you. Let's go.

Imani reluctantly stands. Jeanine hands her a lit candle.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
You stay in the middle. Hold that in
front of you.

Jeanine hands two candles to Celia.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
Keep one in front and the other
behind you so you stay fully covered.

Jeanine climbs up on the chair and lifts the fourth candle from the mirrors and retreats the group, forming a line of holy light.

Jeanine leads the way. Behind her, Imani holds a candle to illuminate Jeanine's back and her front. And finally, Celia's at the back, walking sideways with two candles -- one illuminating Imani's back and her side, and the final one, behind them all.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
Alright now.

They make their way toward the door. Jeanine opens it to --

A pitch-black entrance to the upstairs hall. She takes a deep breath and steps in --

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

It's calm. Imani nervously looks around as they advance.

Celia steps over Ricky's bloody braces, teeth still cemented to them. Perfectly aligned.

CRRRRRRRRRK. Wood scraping wood. From somewhere in the dark.

Jeanine stops. Scans the hall but can't see shit.

CRRRRK. CRRK. CRRRRRRRK. It's getting closer.

It stops.

At the edge of the light, WOODEN CHAIR legs are visible --

WHOOOSH. THE CHAIR FLIES through the air at them.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
DOWN!

They duck -- WHAM. The chair nails the wall behind them.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

It's trying to knock the candles out.
Let's go!

They move quickly, everyone panning in all directions.

Another CHAIR flies... OVER THEM... and smashes into the wall.

Imani glances up, catching the Fairy's elongated silhouette APPEARING and VANISHING on the walls and ceiling.

ThwwwtThwwwtThwwwtThwwwtThwwwt... BOOKS flutter off a shelf toward them, barely missing.

Jeanine turns her light, illuminating the shelf.

And the horror stops.

They glance in every direction. *Where is it? Where is it?*

But nothing happens.

CELIA

You see it?

Jeanine shakes her head. Ushers them to the grand staircase.

AHEAD, there's a window. And through it, a LARGE OAK TREE blows in the wind. A branch scratches the glass.

They begin to descend.

CRACK! The branch smacks the window. *Tink Tink*.

Celia eyes it -- as a fissure runs down the glass.

And in the tree behind it, the Fairy's silhouette emerges.

CELIA (CONT'D)

GO!

They move FASTER...

CRASH! The branch breaks through the window.

WIND and RAIN stream through, putting out Jeanine and Imani's candles. Down to TWO CANDLES.

Celia tries to protect hers --

Clink. ClinkClink. Above them.

Jeanine looks up -- the Fairy is near a HANGING CHANDELIER.

JEANINE

MOVE!

CRACK. The chandelier's CHAIN BREAKS --

Celia DROPS ONE OF HER CANDLES, yanks Imani to the side as the chandelier PLUMMETS toward the floor --

Jeanine lunges the other direction, tumbles down the stairs --

The chandelier CRASHES down, just feet from Celia and Imani.

Celia shakes, holding the LAST CANDLE. But it's not like they're gonna get a break, 'cause the Fairy appears on a far wall. Imani points.

Celia turns the candle toward it -- it DISAPPEARS.

Then its DARK SHADOW APPEARS out of focus on the opposite wall beyond them.

PopPopPopPop --

Celia turns the light, and it disappears.

Only to REAPPEAR on the other side of them.

CLOSER. *POP POP POP POP* -

She turns. It VANISHES.

And now, it's on the opposite wall now. EVEN CLOSER!

The CHATTER IS PIERCING --

Celia pulls Imani to a wall, keeping the candle ahead of them.

With a high-pitched HISS, the CHATTERING stops. The Fairy disappears.

IMANI

Holy shit holy shit.

Celia tries to protect the flame from the wind and rain.

AT THE BOTTOM of the stairs, Jeanine turns over, a GASH bleeding on her forehead.

CELIA

You good?

Jeanine blinks a few times, out of it. She finds a fallen candle on the ground.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Jeanine?

Jeanine stands. Concern smatters her face --

ON CELIA AND IMANI

Holding still, back against the wall.

JEANINE

Get down here!

CELIA

Bring us another candle!

Behind them, there's low muffled CHATTERING...

JEANINE

Your backs are exposed.

The chatter grows LOUDER --

Imani SCREAMS as the Fairy's GNARLED hand wriggles from around her back. It GRIPS HER STOMACH --

Celia turns the candle, and the hand VANISHES --

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Come on!

Celia grabs Imani's hand and RUNS --

VICIOUS CHATTERING surrounds them, so Celia continues turning in circles. The chattering CHANGING LOCATION each time she turns the light, the Fairy's incisor-nailed fingers driving from the darkness with every chance it gets but Celia's fast --

At the bottom of the stairs, Jeanine lights her candle.

Finally, Celia and Imani get down. They run to Jeanine when --

The Fairy lifts Imani into the AIR! She SCREAMS.

Celia turns the light back. Imani FALLS to the ground. Celia grabs her shirt. She hears something behind her and WHIPS to --

Jeanine, who's joined them. Now with two candles, they're protected by enough of a field of holy light.

Fuck. All of that.

Ahead near the stairwell, the *Le Feu Follet* floats in a doorway, watching them. Then it vanishes.

They take a much-needed breather.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
To the door. Slowly.

They take a step in unison. Then another.

IMANI
What are we gonna do when we get in
the rain?

JEANINE
I don't know yet.

They take another step, bringing them in front of a MASSIVE window looking out to the plantation's flooded front drive.

As they're about to take another step, HEADLIGHTS turn onto the road.

IMANI
There's a car! They can pick us up
off the porch.

This is promising. Smiles form on their faces as the vehicle draws closer then --

BLUE and RED FLASHERS pop on.

CELIA
Fuck.

A relieved Jeanine turns to Celia.

JEANINE
You called the cops?

Celia shakes her head.

IMANI
They'll help us, right?

Celia doesn't want to answer that.

OUTSIDE

A Louisiana State Police SUV crawls just above the water. It stops near the patio. Two detectives -- CHARBONNET (40s, jaded) and his younger new partner JAMES (30s, do-gooder) -- in raincoats step out and head for the front door.

INSIDE

The trio watches the cops cross the porch.

There's a LOUD CREAK as the front door opens. Flashlight beams splice the foyer ahead of them as the detectives slowly enter.

JEANINE
We're in here!

The cops turn toward them, directing their flashlights in the trio's eyes, guns aimed.

DET. CHARBONNET
HANDS! LET ME SEE YOUR HANDS! NOW!

Celia reluctantly leans over, placing the candle on the ground. Holds her hands out. Jeanine follows suit, placing her candle on the floor to ensure they're still illuminated.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)
Celia Hardesty?

Celia doesn't acknowledge that. So Charbonnet looks to Imani.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)
Imani, that you?

CELIA
Don't.

Imani doesn't respond.

DET. JAMES
(realizing)
That's them.

DET. CHARBONNET
Celia, put your hands on your head.
Don't reach for shit.

Celia complies, but Jeanine's unsure what's happening.

JEANINE
What's going on here, officers?

DET. CHARBONNET
We're trying to figure that out...
Alright, Imani, I need you to walk
straight to us.

Imani looks to Celia, scared. And she's not the only one who's spooked --

DET. JAMES
(to Charbonnet)
I don't like this, man. Like some
True Detective shit.

Charbonnet ignores him.

DET. CHARBONNET
Come on, Imani. Right to us.

Celia shakes her head, no.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)
Celia, tell your daughter to walk to us. Now.

IMANI
I can't.

DET. CHARBONNET
And why is that?

IMANI
Deadass there's a monster here.

Charbonnet scoffs.

JEANINE
It's *Le Feu Follet*. She can't leave the candlelight.

DET. CHARBONNET
(under his breath)
These fuckin' tweakers.

DET. JAMES
That's the Cajun tooth fairy, man.

Charbonnet is cringing inside for James.

CELIA
It killed everyone upstairs.

DET. CHARBONNET
Wow. That's terrible. We'll take a look once we get this settled down here.
(to James)
Approach right. Move up.

James reluctantly follows as Charbonnet makes his approach.

Celia scans the darkness, waiting for that damned fairy to take these cops out, too --

But no. Maybe it's the bulletproof vests?

Charbonnet approaches Celia and takes her into custody. James detains Jeanine.

JEANINE

We're telling the truth.

DET. CHARBONNET

I've heard all about the shadow people, lady.

(to Celia)

Celia Hardesty, you're being placed under arrest for the armed kidnapping of your daughter.

Jeanine glares at Celia.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an --

CELIA

You need to listen, man. If you take us out of the light that fucking thing will kill us.

Charbonnet takes a second, considering.

DET. CHARBONNET

Let's see, then.

Charbonnet holds his hand out for Imani.

CELIA

Don't.

Imani doesn't move.

DET. CHARBONNET

I don't want to have to pick you up. Let's go.

Imani shakes her head so Charbonnet grabs her good arm.

DET. JAMES

Hang on.

Charbonnet glares at James, then pulls Imani into the dark.

CELIA

NO!

Imani braces. But NOTHING HAPPENS. Charbonnet shakes his head.

CHARBONNET

Bring 'em up front.

Imani throws a glance back over her shoulder as James leads Celia and Jeanine into the dark.

Again, nothing happens.

EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

They're all on the front porch out of the rain. Jeanine uses her shoulder to wipe blood dripping from her forehead.

James sits Imani on a bench. She's spooked, looking in every direction.

IMANI

We have to go before it comes back.

JAMES

I think your mom was just seeing things...

IMANI

Fuck off. That thing picked me up.

Across the porch, Charbonnet places Celia against the wall. Spreads her legs. He pats up her ankles, her thighs, then to her waistband, then moves back down, and he feels something --

In her pocket.

He reaches in, pulls the Altoids TIN. Looks at Celia knowingly.

CELIA

Gotta have fresh breath.

A few feet away, James still tries to calm a jumpy Imani.

DET. JAMES

Look, it's gonna be okay. We're gonna get this all settled then get you back to your dad.

Dad. That gets Imani's attention.

IMANI

I'm not going back with him.

DET. JAMES

I know it's confusing, but your mom doesn't have custody of you.

IMANI

I know... My dad does because of Celia's problem. But he's an asshole. And she's good now.

DET. CHARBONNET

James.

James turns. Charbonnet tosses him the Altoids container.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)

Want an mint?

DET. JAMES

Sure?

DET. CHARBONNET

(re: Celia)

It's hers. Take a look-see.

James opens it -- it's lined with POWDER and a few PILLS.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)

So?

James looks to Imani, a heaviness in his eyes. Celia clenches her jaw, bracing...

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)

Percs? Vikes?... What?... Oxy?

James nods. Hands it back to Charbonnet who pockets it. Imani begins to tear up. Celia glances at her. She looks away.

CELIA

Imani...

IMANI

You lied.

CELIA

I didn't take them.

DET. CHARBONNET

Let's go.

Imani hangs her head, unable to believe she was duped. Charbonnet pulls Celia into the shallow flooding toward the SUV. He opens the back door, pushes her inside --

CELIA

Please don't do this. Her dad broke her arm. Knocked her fucking tooth loose. She can't go back to that.

Charbonnet CLOSES the door on her. He walks back to the patio where James has Jeanine cuffed.

DET. CHARBONNET
She's clean?

DET. JAMES
Yeah.

DET. CHARBONNET
What's your deal?

JEANINE
I work here. I was just helping them.
I don't know what the hell she did,
but listen to me, you need to go back
inside and get those candles.

DET. CHARBONNET
Come on, lady.

JEANINE
Imani needs to be covered in their
light.

DET. CHARBONNET
You sure she's clean?

James looks nervous. Pulls Charbonnet aside.

DET. JAMES
You never heard about this, man? *Le
Feu Follet*. My grandpa used to talk
about it.

DET. CHARBONNET
It's some thin-brained Cajun
bullshit. Pat her down again.

James turns Jeanine to the wall to pat her down once more --

PopPopPopPop. From the open door.

The detectives' heads swivel to the dark portal.

It stops.

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)
Who else is in there?

JEANINE
I told you... they're dead.

What sounds like FOOTSTEPS comes from the second floor.

DET. CHARBONNET
 Guess they resurrected.
 (to James)
 Bring whoever's up there down so we
 can keep an eye on them.

James would rather die. But Charbonnet may kill him if he doesn't. He draws his gun and light. Heads back to the door.

JEANINE
 Get the candles.

IN THE SUV

Celia nervously watches James head into the house.

INT./EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

James shines his light across the dark main hall.

DET. JAMES
 State Police! I need anyone in here
 to announce themselves and come out.

Nothing.

He pans across the place, noticing the Gen. Longstreet
 Portrait above the check-in desk --

**The MOUTH has been TORN OUT along with the eyes like something
 vandalized it out of spite.**

James nearly shits himself. He looks over at the candles.
 Quickly paces to them. He leans down to pick one up --

ThumpThump. He turns his light across the room. *ThumpThump*.
 It's coming from the ceiling. He starts toward the staircase.

DET. JAMES (CONT'D)
 State Police! Who's up there?!

Nada.

OUTSIDE

Charbonnet peers in the doorway but can't see shit. Jeanine
 looks at him with deep concern in her eyes.

DET. CHARBONNET
 Look at the wall. Not at me.

JEANINE
 You need to get him out of there.

DET. CHARBONNET
Look at the wall!

Jeanine turns.

IN THE SUV

Celia sees a flashlight beam cross an upstairs window.

INSIDE - UPSTAIRS

James pans his light across the mess of books and chairs in the upstairs hallway. More THUMPS up ahead, coming from the PIANO ROOM. He curls his nose at that shitty smell.

DumDUM DUMMMMMM. A few off-chords strike, making him jump.

DET. JAMES
HEY! Come the fuck out right now!

Yeah... no. He aims his gun. Steps forward, shining his light through the doorway onto the piano --

Behind it, there's the Fairy's LONG SLINKY SILHOUETTE.

But James doesn't recognize it because he hasn't seen it yet.

It WHISKS AWAY. He saw that.

DET. JAMES (CONT'D)
Whoaa shit.
(louder)
Bro, don't fuck around. Come out or I'll pump your ass with 40.

The Tooth Fairy does not heed this warning. James grabs a radio on his belt --

DET. JAMES (CONT'D)
Got a suspect up here.

WHAM! The door slams closed.

DET. JAMES (CONT'D)
They're barricaded in a room. We're gonna need additional units...

DET. CHARBONNET (V.O.)
Requesting 'em now.

DET. JAMES
Copy.

James keeps his gun trained on the door. It's dead silent aside from rain pattering the roof.

CREEEEEAAAAAK.

Behind him.

He spins to another door EDGING OPEN in the hall. Nothing emerges...

Pop. Just one. Above him.

James shifts his aim up, mouth open --

Something FALLS -- TINGS off his gun -- and lands IN HIS MOUTH. He doubles over, coughing.

Spits that something up into his hand.

His eyes widen. He gags, 'cause that's a fucking MOLAR.

PopPopPopPopPopPopPop. From above. He AIMS UP, now realizing...

RICKY, BETTY, and CLIFF'S toothless bodies are contorted, hanging upside down from the rafters --

AND THE FAIRY MOVES IN THE SHADOWS BEHIND THEM.

OUTSIDE

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM. Gunshots erupt from inside. *BLAM.*

DET. CHARBONNET

Fuck.

(into radio)

Shots fired! 103 - 103!

Charbonnet shoves Imani to the ground. He heads toward the door as more gunfire rings out.

Imani watches Charbonnet take a step inside --

DET. CHARBONNET (CONT'D)

JAMES? WHERE YOU AT? JAMES--UUGHH...

He WHEEZES. His pistol CLATTERS to the ground.

IN THE SUV

Celia watches in horror as Charbonnet's body floats from the front door of the house.

It's hard to see details through the rain-smattered window, but the Fairy's HUGE slinky shadow hovers, holding the body.

OUTSIDE

ON CHARBONNET'S FACE. Tooth-clawed hands squeeze his face. Crunching bones. Ripping his jaw down, exposing his teeth.

PopPop-Pop. Teeth burst from their sockets like your gross cousin's backne.

IN THE SUV

Celia watches the Fairy drop Charbonnet's body to the ground.

CELIA
RUN IMANI! RUN!

ON THE PORCH

Imani cowers. Out of focus over her shoulder, the Fairy floats around the side of the plantation, poised to strike --

IN THE SUV

Celia SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER --

Then *Le Feu Follet* -- just a blur -- RUSHES toward Imani, engulfing her. They VANISH into the night.

Celia SCREAMS, violently kicking the door.

CELIA (CONT'D)
NO NO NO NO!!!!!!!!!!!!

ON THE PORCH

A terrified Jeanine climbs to her feet. She runs to Charbonnet's body in the rain and scrounges through his pockets. She finds the keys and unlocks her cuffs.

She rushes to the SUV, where Celia hasn't stopped pounding the door. Jeanine opens it, and Celia falls to the ground, crying.

JEANINE
Hold still.

CELIA
BRING HER BACK! GOD FUCKING DAMNIT
YOU BRING HER BACK! YOU FUCKER!

Jeanine unlocks her cuffs. Celia stands, screaming at the sky.

CELIA (CONT'D)
BRING HER BACK!

But God only responds with more rain.

She begins to sob. And that helpless feeling sets in --
Her hand instinctively goes to her pocket. But nothing's there. She looks to Charbonnet's body.

JEANINE

Celia...

Celia BOLTS to the body. She feels through his pockets, pulls the Altoids tin.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Stop!

CELIA

I can't do this.

Jeanine tries to stop her, but Celia SHOVES her to the ground.

Celia rushes to the patio and collapses to her knees, head against the side of the plantation. She opens the tin --

Jeanine GRABS HOLD of her from behind.

Celia fights to break her grasp, but Jeanine holds strong.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I promised I wouldn't leave again.

She begins to sob. Jeanine holds her lovingly a moment, like she's her own child. Calmly whispers in her ear --

JEANINE

It's alright. It's okay.

Then --

JEANINE (CONT'D)

I know someone who might be able to help find her.

Celia stops fighting.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

I don't know if she's alive. But if you do this now, there's no chance.

Jeanine pries the tin from her hand. Celia sucks back tears. Stifles tremors running through her hands. Jeanine snaps the tin SHUT and puts it in her jacket pocket.

After a second, Celia turns to Jeanine. Nods.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
Grab whatever you need. We're not
coming back here.

Jeanine pulls her to her feet. They head inside --

MONTAGE:

- Jeanine snatches her KEYS from a rack.
- Celia pulls the GLOCK from her bag.
- An old lifted F-250 diesel truck rattles to life.
- The truck drives off just above the floodwaters, leaving the plantation behind.

EXT. SWAMP ROAD - NIGHT

The truck rolls down a flooded road.

INT. JEANINE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

A 12-year SOBRIETY CHIP dangles from the rearview.

Jeanine drives, holding a bloody towel to her head. Celia sits passenger, hands anxiously shaking.

CELIA
Can you drive any faster?

JEANINE
Not in this weather.

Celia grits her teeth, barely able to keep her composure.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
You gotta calm down.

CELIA
Fuck off.

JEANINE
That's not gonna help.

Celia ignores her. Jeanine considers...

JEANINE (CONT'D)
So what, you took her from her daddy?

Finally, Celia glances over. Nods.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

I take it he was the one responsible
for that cast.

CELIA

Loose tooth, too. Fucking tweaker.

Jeanine side-eyes her.

CELIA (CONT'D)

What?

JEANINE

Heavy judgment coming from you.

CELIA

(re: sobriety chip)

Sorry we can't all hang our Sober
Sally coins as decoration... And I
never did crank.

JEANINE

Just pills, huh?

(Celia's silence confirms)

By that logic y'all should be
splitting custody.

CELIA

All of this is his fault.

Jeanine -- *tell me more.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

One day he shows up after being gone
half the week tweaking. He's talking
about a shadow that followed him
home, so I told him get the fuck out.
I didn't want Imani seeing none of
that. He wouldn't leave. Was too
afraid to go back outside. So I tried
to make him... He hit me. Broke my
collarbone. When he came down, he
apologized, said it'd never happen
again... So I told the docs I
slipped. They gave me Oxy... You ever
try that?

Jeanine shakes her head.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Like floating on cotton. Makes
everything better.

JEANINE

You got hooked on them?

Celia nods.

CELIA

He helped me get more. Then his hook-up ran dry. So I left him. Imani went back and forth, and I kept using and I... I eventually... I became a monster.

Celia holds back bad memories. Jeanine lets that sit.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Eric used all that as an excuse to get custody.

Celia eyes the Glock in her lap.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I shoulda killed him. Wouldn't have had to drive on these backroads. We'd be in west Texas now.

Celia looks down -- her hands aren't shaking anymore. The venting has given her some relief.

CELIA (CONT'D)

What's your deal with all this?

JEANINE

When it took Louis, my son, it broke me. My marriage.

CELIA

So you didn't save him?

Jeanine shakes her head.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Then why do you think we have a chance?

JEANINE

My husband became obsessed with trying to find that demon. So much so it split us up... But he did find it.

CELIA

Then he should have killed it.

JEANINE

He never tried. He wanted my help, but he didn't know if we'd come back alive... It was my fault my son died. I'd put that vengeance in Armand. I wasn't going to let it kill him, too.

CELIA

How's it your fault?

JEANINE

I was like you when we moved to this town. I heard the warnings, but I didn't believe them. And I refused to make my kid act out of fear. Not like everyone else here.

CELIA

Everyone shoulda done something about it a long time ago.

JEANINE

Sometimes it's easier to comply with evil. Keeps you safe.

Jeanine turns onto another swampy road. Ahead, there's a glow in the windows of a HOUSEBOAT tethered to the edge of a flooded-over dock.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

This is it.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

The truck pulls up, and the engine kills. Celia and Jeanine step out and walk up the dock, visible inches below the water.

JEANINE

Watch your step.

They step up onto the houseboat's patio. GATOR HEADS, BOBCAT PELTS, and RACCOON TAILS decorate the exterior.

Jeanine approaches the door. She raises a fist to knock. Hesitates a moment, a weight holding her back. She KNOCKS --

The door SWINGS open on loose hinges.

The interior is dimly lit. No one apparently there --

Jeanine steps in, Celia following.

A distinctive 12-gauge *CLLL-ICK* halts them in their tracks.

CREOLE MAN (V.O.)
Y'all turn around now real slow.

Celia's terrified. But Jeanine's annoyed. She turns --

To ARMAND (now in his 60s, weathered), holding a double-barrel SHOTGUN. He gives Jeanine the once-over. Lowers the gun.

ARMAND
Well, you ain't aged a day.

JEANINE
You have.

Armand grins.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT - LATER

Oil drips into a plate covered in ash.

Armand mixes it into a paste, then he scoops some up. He presses it into the gash on Jeanine's forehead. It stings. She tries to pull away.

ARMAND
Na-ah.

He holds her still. She endures.

Across the room, Celia sits against a couch, eyeing a photo on an end table -- A YOUNGER JEANINE and ARMAND fishing at the edge of a dock with LOUIS.

Armand gently brushes off the excess ash.

ARMAND (CONT'D)
Alright then. Couple days. It'll heal.

JEANINE
So what do you think?

Armand glances at Celia anxiously awaiting his answer. He shakes his head.

CELIA
What?

ARMAND
Ain't worth it.

JEANINE

You'd finally have an opportunity to kill it.

ARMAND

I made peace with my vengeance long ago.

CELIA

Then take me there.

ARMAND

You won't make it alone.

CELIA

I don't give a shit --

ARMAND

You don't understand, girl. Even if we get past it, I don't know where it takes the kids.

Jeanine eyes him, curious. Celia glares.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

I only found where it lives.

CELIA

Then we'll find them. They can't be far.

Armand shakes his head.

CELIA (CONT'D)

It's my daughter.

ARMAND

Probably gone by now.
(he glances to Jeanine)
Don't let it ruin your life.

Celia's BOILING. Jeanine isn't sure what to say.

CELIA

Please, man.

Armand bores into his ex-wife as he speaks...

ARMAND

You shoulda listened.

Celia's lost hope. She's trying to hold it together. Her hands SHAKE. That helpless feeling is back. Enslaving her.

JEANINE

Celia...

Celia's eyes skirt Jeanine's jacket on the table next to her. She snatches it. Swiftly paces toward a bathroom at the back of the houseboat --

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Celia! Stop.

BATHROOM

Celia locks the door and slides down to the floor. She pulls the Altoids TIN from the jacket pocket.

HOUSEBOAT

Jeanine bangs on the door.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Celia! CELIA!
(to Armand)
You got a key?

ARMAND

It's latched.

JEANINE

She could kill herself.

Jeanine shakes the handle.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Celia, open up!

BATHROOM

Tears well in Celia's eyes. She cracks more pills, creating a little Everest of oxy.

OUTSIDE

Jeanine hammers the door with her fist.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Open the damn door!

BATHROOM

JEANINE (V.O.)

Please, Celia!

Celia ain't complying. She taps some powder into the crook between her thumb and fingers.

OUTSIDE

Jeanine continues to bang.

JEANINE

Open the door. Celia. Open the
fucking door! FUCK!

Jeanine gives up. Rests her head against the door.

BATHROOM

Celia's about to suck up that bitter dust. A SOB from beyond
the door stops her.

OUTSIDE

Armand eyes a weeping Jeanine, unsure what's going on.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

When it took Louis, I couldn't take
it. I drank myself stupid to make it
easier. Every day for years.

BATHROOM

Celia stares at the powder, listening.

JEANINE (V.O.)

That's the reason we never stopped
this thing. It's not because I didn't
want Armand to get hurt. I couldn't
get my ass up to even try. I hid
behind that bottle like a coward.

OUTSIDE

Armand eyes Jeanine, resting her head against the door.

JEANINE

But I'm ready to try tonight.

BATHROOM

Celia lets that all sink in.

OUTSIDE

Jeanine looks to Armand across the room.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

And I want to do it with you.

Armand studies her.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
We can't let evil exist 'cause we're
too afraid to face it.

Armand considers.

BATHROOM

Celia chokes back a sob. She considers the tin in her shaking hand.

OUTSIDE

Jeanine stares at the door for what seems like an eternity...

CLACK. The door unlocks, then it opens. Celia emerges. She BORES into Armand.

He looks between Celia and Jeanine -- both ready to go. After a second, he begins to nod.

CUT TO: Armand uses a hammer claw to PRY a board from the floor, revealing an old storage compartment. Inside, there's a HARD-SIDED RIFLE CASE, covered in years of dust. He pulls it out and opens it --

Inside are a few BLESSED CANDLES, SHOTGUN SHELLS, and an ORNATE BONE STAFF. He grabs the shells.

CELIA
You can't shoot it. The cops tried.

Armand holds up one shell. There's a † etched into it.

ARMAND
Magnesium shot. Burns when fired.
Been blessed. Has the same effect as
the candles.
(beat)
Archbishop of New Orleans has a
secret sect that produces all this.

Then he grabs the bone staff -- it's a three-foot WOODEN SPIKE with a whitetail BUCK SKULL resting atop it. The deer's eyes are filled with dried moss.

CELIA
The fuck is that?

ARMAND
The Light of the Swamp.

Celia doesn't understand.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Archbishop also played with Voodoo...
Light the moss, it forces all evil to
retreat. It won't end it, but it buys
you time.

Celia nods -- okay.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Once used it on a *Rougarou*.

Armand closes the case.

CELIA

A what?

EXT. HOUSEBOAT/SWAMP - NIGHT

The passing storm has waned to a tranquil drizzle.

The trio stands on a METAL SKIFF. HOLY CANDLES hang in four
LANTERNS at each corner of the boat to create a barrier of
protective light. Armand pulls a ripcord on his little
outboard motor.

VrmVrmVrm. The engine sputters to life. He twists the
throttle. The skiff motors off, a beacon of light in the
shadowy bog.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT - LATER

Armand navigates the boat through a minefield of gnarled
cypress roots. Above, Spanish moss dangles from trees like
thick cobwebs. Armand turns a corner --

Ahead, there's a BREAK in the cypress trees, leading down a
hidden bayou.

Armand kills the engine and lets the skiff silently glide
through the opening...

Where a low fog hovers over the water.

Above them, BLACK ORBS hang from trees. As they inch closer...

The lanterns illuminate them -- toothless HUMAN SKULLS,
dangling from the branches like ornaments.

And beneath, TEETH have been nailed into the tree trunks in
sinister geometric patterns.

A disturbed Jeanine glances back to Armand, who's stoic, having seen this all before.

He pulls a WOODEN PADDLE from the hull and sweeps his little boat deeper into this forbidden section of the swamp.

MOMENTS LATER, Armand directs his boat to the shore.

ARMAND

We'll get out and search.

Celia nervously surveys the dark swamp ahead of her. She grabs hold of a cypress root and steps onto dry ground.

Armand lifts his shotgun and pans the swamp around them.

Jeanine hands Celia the staff. Armand tosses her an old ZIPPO.

As Jeanine brushes past Armand to unfasten a lantern from the boat, Armand catches eyes with her. There's admiration in the way they look at each other -- how they saw each other when they were once in love.

Jeanine takes his weathered hand in hers.

JEANINE

I'm sorry we never did this before.

ARMAND

Wouldn't do it without you.

Jeanine smiles. Nods. Goes back to unlatching the lanterns.

On the bank, Celia pans their surroundings. CRACKLING across the bayou draws her attention. Bushes SHUFFLE. She points --

CELIA

Armand...

Armand lifts the gun -- as a RABBIT rushes across the bank.

Celia and Jeanine let their guard down. But not Armand.

CELIA (CONT'D)

What?

ARMAND

Something spooked it.

ARMAND POV: Stares down the IRON SIGHTS at the darkness.

There's something there he senses. But we don't see it. Yet.

A FAMILIAR SHADOW MOVES --

BOOM! Armand fires. WHITE HOT MAGNESIUM sparks through the air like an exploding firework, illuminating the tree.

The shadow disappears. It's here.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Let's go!

Jeanine quickly unlatches another lantern.

Celia hears POPPING ABOVE HER HEAD --

She looks up to the FAIRY IN THE BRANCHES.

BOOM! Armand fires into the trees. It vanishes.

Armand cracks his shotgun. Reloads --

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Get in the light!

Celia steps closer to the boat.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Where is it?

CELIA

I don't see it. Give me a lantern!

Armand slips two fresh shells into the gun. Jeanine finishes unlatching a lantern --

TUNG.

A metallic chime rings through the hull of the boat.

Armand and Jeanine's eyes go to their feet. He snaps his barrel back.

Celia watches from the shore nervously...

But nothing happens. Armand nods to Jeanine. She hands a lantern toward Celia --

WHAM! The boat is ROCKED.

Armand grabs hold of the edge while Jeanine topples off the boat, SPLASHING into the bog with the lantern. The force sends the boat drifting from shore.

ARMAND

Jeanine!

A second later, Jeanine pops to the surface.

On the shore, light draws a way from Celia.

CELIA

Shit.

She pulls the zippo and readies it to the staff.

ON THE BOAT

Armand reaches for Jeanine, swimming toward him. A RIPPLE appears in the bog behind her.

ARMAND

Down!

Jeanine drops her head into the water.

BOOM! Armand fires. BRILLIANT MAGNESIUM plunges into the water, momentarily lighting up the bog.

But the light quickly fizzles out.

And the insidious ripple RETURNS.

BOOM! He fires again. The ripple vanishes.

Jeanine's just feet from the boat. Armand cracks his barrel to reload as the RIPPLES REAPPEAR...

GAINING ON JEANINE.

Armand snaps the barrel closed. AIMS --

And the ripples CEASE. Armand braces the edge of the boat and reaches for Jeanine. He snatches her hand, pulls her closer.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

I gotcha.

She latches hold of the edge of the boat. Armand grabs a handful of her shirt to heave her in and --

THE FAIRY'S HAND JETS from the bog, grabs hold of his arm, and RIPS him under, OVERTURNING the boat. The swamp goes DARK.

JEANINE

No!

AIR BUBBLES frantically burst to the surface from the bottom of the swamp. Jeanine paddles in circles, feeling for Armand.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

ARMAND!

But she's coming up empty.

CELIA
Get out, Jeanine. SWIM!

Jeanine ain't giving up.

JEANINE
WHERE ARE YOU?! ARMAND!!!

Bubbles BURST at the surface. White froth becomes RED.

CELIA
GET OUT!!

Jeanine reluctantly turns and swims toward shore.

BOOM! The magnesium shot lights up the bottom of the bog.

For a split second, we see the silhouette of Armand's body FLAILING at the bottom of the swamp.

Jeanine makes it to the edge. Celia pulls her out. They look back at the water --

ARMAND SPLASHES to the surface, blood flowing from his mouth, jaw hanging loose.

ARMAND
RUN.

He's ripped BACK DOWN.

BOOM! The bog lights up again.

CUT TO: Celia and Jeanine RUNNING through the swamp, barely able to make out where they're headed in the moonlight.

They're whipping through dangling branches and Spanish moss.

PopPopPopPopPop. Teeth chatter draws close in the trees.

CELIA
Faster!

They pick up the pace. Jeanine's foot catches a CYPRESS ROOT --
WHAM. She face-plants.

JEANINE
AHHH!

Celia 180s to Jeanine painfully clambering to her feet when --

The FAIRY'S SILHOUETTE floats down from the trees above, long sinewy arms reaching for her. The CHATTER OVERTAKES OUR EARS --

Celia reaches for the lighter.

Jeanine looks up in utter terror.

Crrrk Crrrk. Celia sparks the Zippo at the back of the staff.

The toothy fingers spider across Jeanine's face, incisors digging into flesh --

Celia keeps at it -- *Crrk. Crrrrrk.*

CELIA

Come on...

Crrk --

WHOOOOOOOSH!

Brilliant flames explode from the buck's hollowed-out eyes, illuminating *Le Feu Follet* in all its nightmarish glory --

It's genderless but humanoid. Cavity-ridden molars protrude like boils on its skin, which is pulled tight like a sheet over the indentations of millions of teeth forming its skeletal structure. Bouquets of gnarled teeth fill its lidless eyes. A droopy mouth where rows and rows of all different kinds of teeth fold over one another like a shark.

They POP together, LOUDER FASTER. And with a HISS --

It VANISHES into thin air. Like it was never there.

Celia holds the staff higher, turning, trying to see if the demon will return. It doesn't.

On the ground, Jeanine tries to catch her breath. Wipes dribbles of blood from the small punctures on her face.

JEANINE

Is it gone?

CELIA

I think so...

Celia helps Jeanine up. Jeanine looks her in the eyes.

JEANINE

Thank you.

Celia nods. Jeanine glances back the way they came. A deep sadness fills her gaze.

CELIA

I'm sorry...

Jeanine solemnly stares off. Celia looks to the flames, waning in the staff.

CELIA (CONT'D)

It's almost out.

Jeanine steels herself. Turns. Celia leads her ahead to a break in the trees -- what appears to be a TRAIL, lined with ADULT HUMAN FOOTPRINTS.

Both their looks spell confusion.

Then they start down the trail, using the last bit of light to navigate. Ahead, the trail leads up the side of a small levee. They climb it, then crest it --

A warm glow strikes their faces. They HALT, eyes wide.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

The trail has opened to a clearing.

Ahead, there's a CIVIL WAR ERA RIVERBOAT washed-up in the swamp. And there are so many candles glowing in the windows, the place may as well be strung with Christmas lights.

Celia tosses the staff to the side. She pulls the Glock from the back of her pants.

Looks to Jeanine. Nods.

EXT. RIVERBOAT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The duo quietly navigates the exterior of the ship. It's massive, two stories, two hundred feet long. Dense rust coats the steel hull. Their ears perk up --

CELIA

You hear that?

Somewhere in the vessel, a piano plays. Jeanine nods. They step onto a ramp made of dirt and logs, leading to the ship.

They emerge at deck level. The music is LOUDER now.

Same tune the Fairy played -- "The Battle Cry for Freedom."

They peer inside old cracked windows --

Ancient BLACKJACK and POKER tables line the gambling floor. Chips and gold coins scatter the place like broken puzzle pieces. But there's no sign of anyone.

Celia spots an illuminated STAIRCASE at the back of the room, leading into the bowels of the ship. She waves Jeanine ahead.

They enter into the --

GAMBLING FLOOR

And head toward the staircase. They stop, just before it. Celia holds up a finger to Jeanine --

She counts under her breath. *One, two, three...*

She turns, aiming down the staircase. Empty.

STAIRCASE

They slowly descend. With each step they take, the piano music gets LOUDER. They finally emerge from the stairwell into a hall.

BELOW DECK - HORIZONTAL HALL 1

The hall runs the WIDTH of the ship, with THREE other halls (HALLS 1, 2, and 3) intersecting it, beelining LENGTH-WISE toward the bow of the ship.

They slowly advance, realizing the passageways are strategically marked with burning CANDLES to ensure there's no instance of darkness.

The place is dank, dripping with stagnant water, buzzing with mosquitos. The wooden supports holding the candles are melted over with what seems to be centuries of wax. The place feels like a crackhead's den. A personal hell covered in holy light.

Celia directs Jeanine's attention to the floor -- where more MUDDY HUMAN FOOTPRINTS lead down the hall.

They quietly follow the prints to a COAT hanging on the wall. They study it. It's OLD and GRAY. Woolen. Military Garb.

JEANINE

Confederate.

A disturbed Celia heads toward the far left hall -- farthest from the piano playing.

HALL 1

They enter. Celia clocks a candle at the entrance, nearly burnt to a waxy heap.

CELIA
It'll burn out soon.

JEANINE
They all will.

Celia continues... There are a few doors off the hall. They peer through a porthole into one -- totally dark.

CELIA
(whispering)
Imani?

No response. They move to another door. The porthole is completely black. Celia peers in --

Jeanine nudges her and motions down the hall to a porthole in a door that's GLOWING.

They pace to it. Celia spins a wheel lock and pulls the heavy steel door open --

To a WELL-LIT room where a WOOD and ANIMAL BONE EFFIGY of *Le Feu Follet* rests in the center. And in each corner of the room, there's an IRON LANTERN holding a blessed candle.

It's horrific and beautiful at the same time.

Celia looks down at a small table inside the door. There's a MORTAR and PESTLE resting on it, coated in CHALKY WHITE DUST. Celia leans closer -- there are fragments of ground-up TEETH in the bowl. Just like the pills in her tin.

The women look at each other, trying to make sense of it --

They hear a WHIMPER from the hall. Celia swivels her head toward it. She hears it again. Her eyes light up.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Imani.

She runs down the hall. Jeanine tries to keep up. They turn into --

HORIZONTAL HALL 2

That leads back across the width of the ship. Halls 2 and 3 are off to the right, but on the left, there's a single passageway, a door slightly ajar.

Another WHIMPER. Celia darts to the door. She heaves it open --
And GAGS. Jeanine averts her eyes, sickened.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Oh fuck.

Ahead is THE TROPHY ROOM --

They enter. A CANDLE in a mirror above the door illuminates a large storage room once used for booze to fuel the riverboat's voyages. Now, it's used to house DEAD CHILDREN.

Thirty or so strangely preserved CORPSES in 19th-century woolen garb are roped to the walls like sadistic trophies. Mouths gaping, each MISSING A TOOTH.

Celia and Jeanine stare in disturbed disbelief. Another whimper echoes through the room --

CELIA (CONT'D)

Imani?

Celia pans the room. Where the fuck is this girl? Come on...

One body's head LULLS to the side --

IT'S IMANI. Cocooned in the middle of a few long-dead kids. Celia shoves her pistol in her waistband and rushes to her.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Help me.

Celia lifts Imani while Jeanine unties the ropes binding her to the wall. Once freed, Celia lays her on the ground. Rubs her hair behind her eyes. Gently wipes her face.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Imani blinks, trying to find her bearings.

IMANI

Celia?

CELIA

Holy shit.

Celia lifts her, hugging her.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Jeanine throws a glance over her shoulder to the door. The piano still chimes. Nothing moves.

She pans across the dead children... back to Celia and Imani. But something dawns on her. She turns back toward the wall of children. Her adrenaline-fraught expression begins to WANE.

Celia helps Imani sit up.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
Can you walk?

 IMANI
I don't know.

 CELIA
Try to stand for me.

Celia helps a woozy Imani to her knees.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
Okay, that's good.

Celia pulls her to her feet. Imani takes a step forward. Manages a drunken nod -- she's alright. Celia smiles.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
 (to Jeanine)
Let's go.

No response.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
Jeanine?

She's got her back to them, looking up at the wall.

There's a SNIFFLE. Unsure what's happening, Celia leads Imani to her. Jeanine wipes tears from her eyes.

'Cause on the wall ahead of her is her son, LOUIS.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
Is it?

Jeanine nods. She reaches up, lovingly holds his cold hand.

Celia nervously glances to the door.

 CELIA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Jeanine, but we gotta go.

Jeanine can't seem to drop that hand. She presses it to her cheek. Tears fall.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Jeanine...

The piano STOPS PLAYING in the ship. Celia pulls the Glock.
Then HEAVY METALLIC FOOTSTEPS reverberate through the hull.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Please. We need to leave...

The steps grow closer, and Jeanine ain't moving.

Celia aims the gun toward the door. The sudden rush of adrenaline makes Imani's senses return --

IMANI

He's coming back.

CELIA

Who?

IMANI

The man.

Celia trains her pistol toward the door. Ready to fire.

IMANI (CONT'D)

From the boat.

Celia cocks her head -- *what?*

A SHADOW APPROACHES IN THE HALL. Jeanine turns to look as --

A MAN'S SILHOUETTE appears in the doorway. We just hear deep raggedy breathing. Celia trains the gun on him.

CELIA

Don't fucking come closer.

He steps forward, allowing his face to be fully illuminated --

And someone might as well have punched Celia in the gut.

It's DAVID.

Their savior who brought them to the plantation.

He's wearing the Confederate coat they just saw, and he looks like he's in the throes of WITHDRAWAL. His shaking is worse now, face red, eyes sunken and bloodshot. Breath tormented.

DAVID

Celia.

Jeanine glares, recognizing something even more disturbing --

JEANINE
(under her breath)
Longstreet?

Well, he does look awfully familiar in that battle garb now that you say it, Jeanine.

DAVID
Yes, ma'am.

He sucks in a tortured breath.

CELIA
Longstreet?... What?

DAVID
General. First Infantry. Just under
Mr. Robert E. Lee.

Celia looks like she's trying to solve a differential equation as that sinks in. David leans on the door for support.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You see, all I ever wanted was to
finish the war and get back to my
family. But the Union'd got to 'em
first. So left my post and went into
the swamps to let the gators take me.

His hands shake.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Instead, I met a priestess. She gave
me something that took my pain away.

He stretches his jaw then bites down, clenching.

JEANINE
Children's teeth?

David smiles at the mere thought of it.

DAVID
The ones offered up... They make you
immortal. A god.

His shaking intensifies. He balls his trembling hands. Celia's starting to understand.

CELIA
Until it wears off and you need more.

David nods.

DAVID

A man can't go around taking
Children's teeth. That priestess
helped enslave me *Le Feu Follet* to be
my collector... It sensed your
daughter was about to shed a tooth
and stalked you. I stepped in to make
sure she had a place to offer it...

He looks down to his at his violently shaking hands.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I - needed - THAT - TOOTH! It's been
weeks.

CELIA

Then you shoulda fucking taken it.

DAVID

The offering activates its power.
It's no good without it.

Jeanine's piecing it all together...

JEANINE

So you have that demon take the kids
who don't...

DAVID

They become examples so the rest
obey.

A tremor rumbles his whole body. This dude NEEDS his fix.

DAVID (CONT'D)

*"Damnation will be wrought unto those
who do not offer their bodies to the
Lord."*

CELIA

What is that, the old testament?

DAVID

The Book of Paul.

Celia raises the gun toward him. Over it.

CELIA

Well, this is the book of I'm gonna
cap your ass.

David smiles once more. They wait for him to reply. He just looks at the candle above the door. Lightly shakes his head.

Then he takes a step back into the dim doorway --

CELIA (CONT'D)

Hey!

He grabs the door, begins to pull it shut --

BLAM! Celia fires, skimming David's arm.

WHAM! He slams the door, causing the candle to SHAKE --

Back and forth...

CELIA (CONT'D)

Fuck.

SLOW MOTION: Celia runs for it as it --

FALLS. Shadows elongate and bend until it WHISPS OUT, plunging the room into PITCH BLACKNESS --

HALL 1

David stumbles down the hall, holding his bleeding arm. He gets to the effigy room, stares up at the terrifying statue.

DAVID

Kill 'em.

TROPHY ROOM

DARKNESS. We hear the trio frantically pacing around the room.

CELIA

Where's the candle!?

JEANINE

I don't feel it.

The Fairy's *PopPopPop* rises in the room.

CELIA

Hold on to me, Imani!

Celia LIGHTS the Zippo, casting a tiny bit of light.

The CHATTER gets closer --

Celia spots the candle. Snatches it up. She lights it, and holds it HIGH, but she's 6 feet from the mirrors, so it's not providing the full effect.

BARS of darkness etch the room like massive window blinds.

Imani's next to Celia. But not Jeanine. She's across the room, separated from them by a long lane of DARKNESS.

And in that darkness, we catch glimpses of the Fairy's nightmarish silhouette whisking by, CHATTERING loudly.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Let me see if I can get closer...

Celia takes a step toward the mirror, and the SHADOW elongates in front of Jeanine. While the light protecting her SHRINKS.

JEANINE

STOP!

Celia halts.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

You're gonna lose the light you're in before you get it back.

CELIA

I'll move fast then.

Jeanine shakes her head.

Celia stretches, trying to find a better position, but it's making things worse.

JEANINE

No.

CELIA

Then what...?

The Fairy raps its jaws somewhere in the darkness. Jeanine turns back to her son, hanging on the wall...

CELIA (CONT'D)

You could run.

Jeanine stares at Louis. Longing. Shakes her head.

CELIA (CONT'D)

What do I do?

JEANINE

I'm going to meet him and Armand.

Celia realizes what she's saying.

CELIA

No no no...

Jeanine nods.

CELIA (CONT'D)

There's got to be another way.

Jeanine shakes her head.

JEANINE

I only ever wanted us to be together again... On three, Celia.

CELIA

We're not gonna do this.

JEANINE

One...

Celia realizes she's serious.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Two...

Celia grabs Imani's hand.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Imani, Celia. Godspeed.

Jeanine takes a step forward into the darkness.

And she's ENGULFED by the fairy's silhouette. She SCREAMS.

Celia YANKS Imani. They bolt for the mirror.

Shadows go wild as the candle changes position. She reaches the mirror and sets the candle --

The room is BRIGHT. Quiet. Jeanine's dead on the ground. Celia chokes back a sob. But there's no time to focus on it.

Celia unlocks the door. She nudges it open. Then heads through, gun ready to fire --

HORIZONTAL HALL 2

It's empty. They step into the candlelight. Celia leads Imani to hall 1.

Celia lunges around the corner, gun aimed.

David's at the end of the hall.

He extinguishes a candle, creating a barrier of darkness.

Celia quickly pulls Imani toward the next hall. David's voice echoes through the hull of the ship.

DAVID (O.S.)
I can't let you leave.

She juts around the corner to the middle hall --

Just as David puts out another candle.

DAVID (CONT'D)
The town can't know about me.

He starts toward the next hall. Celia RUNS --

And turns into HALL 3. David's already blown out a candle.

So she draws a bead on David.

CELIA
Light the candle, or I'll kill you.

DAVID
You'd still have to get through the darkness.

Celia shifts her aim off of him... David grins.

CELIA
So will you.

BOOM! She shoots at a candle behind him. Just misses. She shifts her aim and --

David disappears, darting back toward the middle hallway. Celia runs for it.

CELIA (CONT'D)
I know you're afraid of it! You wouldn't have these candles...

At hall 2, she takes aim -- BOOM. Hits a candle behind him, but she's a smidge too late. 'Cause he's already sprinting for the first hallway -- where the STAIRWELL to the surface rests. She beats him there. Takes AIM --

But there's no candle to shoot. The light comes from somewhere in the stairwell.

David appears. He's got the upper hand again.

DAVID
Surely it hates me the most. I'm its
master.

Celia aims at him, trying to decide what to do... David rests
a shaking hand on the wall to steady his body.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Killing me won't get you nowhere.

Celia's finger quivers on the trigger. Just like she did with
Eric. Then her aim shifts off his body. Like with Eric as
well. David steps into the stairwell beyond --

CELIA
I know what it's like, man.

David stops.

DAVID
To be a god?

CELIA
To feel like one. I know what you'll
do to keep that feeling.

Imani looks up to her mom --

CELIA (CONT'D)
I lost my daughter because of it.

David stares at her, clenching his jaw.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Maybe I can help you.

David looks down at his trembling hands. His eyes welling,
appearing to consider. Then he steels himself. Looks up.

DAVID
More will offer... I'll be fine.

David disappears into the stairwell.

CELIA
HEY!

She runs ahead, stopping at the bar of darkness.

CELIA (CONT'D)
FUCKING COME BACK, MAN! LET US OUT!

Imani lingers behind her, terrified.

The FAIRY appears in the darkness, contorting its body, rapping its jaws. Celia steps back.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Help me get the candles.

Celia runs to the candle just behind them in the hall -- it's more or less a clump of wax, the wick floating within.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Check the others.

Imani runs off. Celia tries to carefully pry the wax up. The now free-floating wick bobs like a buoy on the ocean.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Come on...

FOOTSTEPS. She looks to Imani returning.

IMANI
They're all melted.

Celia tries again to free the candle. She's sweating, trying to get it just right, but the wick bounces over into the wax --

It goes DARK.

CELIA
No!

Celia and Imani fall into the light behind them. Now, they're BLOCKED IN -- darkness in both directions. And yep, the candle keeping them safe is a useless waxy mound as well.

Imani looks around for something to help. Her eyes land on the open door to the effigy room behind them --

IMANI
Celia!

EFFIGY ROOM

Celia runs in, gazing up at the massive statue. She turns to the candles, secured in heavy IRON LANTERNS.

But realizes the latches to access the candles are LOCKED with ancient padlocks. She grabs the base to lift it, but it's bolted to the floor.

CELIA
Shit!

Celia beats the lock with the pistol. Once. Twice. Again.

It's useless.

Imani peers back into the hall at the final candle burning down, NEARLY OUT. Just past it, the Fairy rips across the ceiling. Down the walls. Chattering LOUD.

Celia bangs at the heavy crystal glass --

IMANI

Can you shoot the lock?

CELIA

It'll put the candle out.

She pans the room, looks at the horrific effigy, noticing LATIN etched into its bone chest. As she considers it...

Imani peers into the hall at the candle wisping down, barely a flame left -- then it's GONE.

POP POP POP POP! The Fairy's silhouette appears just outside of the light emanating from the door. Imani falls back.

IMANI

What do we do?!

Celia stares at the statue. She looks over the candles in each corner. Then it dawns on her. This is how Gen. David Longstreet is keeping the Fairy enslaved.

CELIA

Cover your ears.

IMANI

What?

CELIA

Do it!

Imani does. Celia takes aim at one of the candles -- BLAM!

She bullet shatters the crystal and puts it out.

IMANI

What the fuck are you doing?!

CELIA

Freeing it!

BLAM! She shoots the next candle.

Outside the room, there's a WILD FRENZY of teeth chattering.

She aims for the third -- BLAM! If Celia weren't nearly deaf from the gunshots, she'd be screaming, 'cause the chatter is EARSPLITTING.

There's one candle left, and the room is still just bright enough to keep the Fairy at bay. Celia aims at it --

Then lowers the gun. She walks to the edge of the door. The Fairy materializes outside the light. Imani cowers behind her mother, who STARES the Fairy down --

CELIA (CONT'D)

I know what's he's done to you. He enslaved you to feed his addiction.

The Fairy's ivory eyes bore into Celia...

CELIA (CONT'D)

Fuck him. You're free.

She raises the gun at the final candle in the room --

BOOM! It goes DARK. The smoldering wick casts a dim glow.

Celia braces. Imani holds on to her waist.

The Fairy appears just inches from their faces. Unmoving. The fierce rapping slowly wanes to unnerving SILENCE.

A terrified Celia takes Imani's hand and...

STEPS PAST IT.

The Tooth Fairy, *Le Feu Follet*, simply stares ahead at the effigy, now cast in darkness.

HORIZONTAL HALL 2

Celia pulls Imani toward the light at the end of the hall, each step, taking them farther from the Fairy.

They make it to the candlelight. To safety. Celia glances back. And the Fairy is GONE.

She turns toward the stairwell --

To DAVID, aiming a SHOTGUN at them, barrel violently shaking.

DAVID

I told you, you don't get to go.

Celia drops her gun and DIVES, shoving Imani out of the way --

BOOM! Dave fires. Buckshot CLANGS off the hull behind them.

Celia looks back up --

BOOM! He just misses them again. He cracks his barrel to reload. Celia pans for the Glock -- doesn't see it.

David snaps the barrel back and --

Celia RUSHES him, shoving the barrel away --

BOOM! He fires into the ceiling. Celia lands on top of him, clawing, scraping, gouging, unleashing fury. But David is simply stronger. He uppercuts her jaw, stunning her.

Then he shoves her over onto the floor. He leans over her and HAMMER FISTS her head back. Blood smatters the ground. Celia blinks, trying to find her bearings.

Imani crawls away, terrified. She glances down the hall -- the Fairy's there, CHATTERING loudly just outside the light.

David walks back over to his shotgun. He picks it up.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I gonna get right, Celia. Nobody gets
in the way of that.

His hands tremble as he reloads the gun.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You know how it is.

Celia turns her head, seeing the PISTOL. She reaches for it -- but David STEPS on her wrist, pinning her.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Nah ah.

IMANI (O.S.)
Get the fuck off of her.

David looks to Imani, sitting next to the one remaining candle.

IMANI (CONT'D)
I'll blow it out.

David considers. Looks to Celia on the ground, just a little too far from the Glock. Then back to Imani. He scoffs --

DAVID
You first then, girl.

He lifts the shotgun at her --

Imani BLOWS. The hall goes **PITCH BLACK --**

Pop!

DAVID SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER.

BOOM! The shotgun blasts, illuminating *Le Feu Follet* holding David IN THE AIR, its jaws vice-gripped over his face.

Blood and teeth drip onto Celia, lying on the ground. Imani helps her to her feet. They bolt for the stairwell.

STAIRWELL

Imani helps her mom one step at a time into the morning sunlight beaming through the riverboat.

Behind them, somewhere in the darkness, David yells in pain, being tortured by his former slave, now freed.

GAMING FLOOR

They emerge onto the floor. David's screams go silent behind them.

They glance back at the stairwell leading down to the bowels of the ship. The candlelight WISPS out.

Celia stares. Imani grabs her hand. Pulls her away.

EXT. RIVERBOAT - MORNING

The morning sun casts brilliant colors through the remainder of the passing storm clouds.

Imani helps Celia down the stairs, off the boat. They cross to the far edge, where David's airboat is docked in the bog.

Celia collapses in an exhausted heap at the base of a cypress tree. Imani sits next to her. They stare out, listening to the infinite sounds of the swamp creatures waking.

Celia remembers something -- that sweet cottony bliss in her pocket. She reaches in and pulls the Altoids tin. She holds it, in pain, her hand trembling.

Imani swallows hard, 'cause Celia's gonna let her down again.

CELIA

The first night's the hardest... then
you believe you can do another.

She laughs under her breath.

CELIA (CONT'D)
That fucker was right.

She tosses the tin into the swamp. It sinks into the dark, murky water forever. Celia looks at her daughter, tearing up.

CELIA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Imani.

IMANI
It's okay, mom.

Mom...

Celia smiles. Genuine this time. Out of love. Not sarcasm. She hugs her daughter. Celia lets go.

They climb onto the boat. Celia steps to the console and fires the engine. The massive fan begins to spin.

She throttles it, turning the boat around, carrying them off into the swamp, yet again headed for a new life.

THE END.

Just kidding. As the credits roll...

FEMALE ANCHOR (PRE-LAP)
We've got breaking news this morning
out of Galveston, Texas...

TV NEWS - FULL SCREEN

A MALE and FEMALE ANCHOR (40s) sit behind a news desk.

FEMALE ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Police report five children went missing from their homes without a trace overnight.

MALE ANCHOR

Fox 8 was able to obtain this footage taken from a Ring camera inside one of the missing boy's room. We warn you, the image you're about to see may disturb you.

GRAINY night-vision Ring camera footage plays. ANGLE from a high corner --

A SMALL BOY (8) sleeps in bed with his CAT. All is still. Until the cat spooks, arching its back, staring off into the darkness. Then it BOLTS AWAY.

The boy keeps sleeping. Something MOVES from the shadows beyond him... That LONG SINEWY SILHOUETTE we know so well.

As it gets closer, the *PopPopPopPop* rises, growing louder as the camera ripples with violent STATIC until we can't see. Then it clears, and the *popping* stops.

The boy is GONE.

BACK TO -- The rattled anchors.

FEMALE ANCHOR

Police say the victims did not know each other, but there was one factor linking them all... Each lost a tooth last night.

SMASH TO BLACK.