

"I think he wants to hurt people with his movie. I think he really wants to make a movie that will hurt people."

-- Stephen King on Stanley Kubrick

EXT. NEW YORK STREET (1981) - NIGHT

New York is dead tonight. *I mean really dead.* There's not a soul in sight.

The brownstones are quiet. The bars are empty. An abandoned hot dog cart on the corner. A YELLOW CAB sits vacant in the street. A rat skitters past. The only sign of life.

WOOSH! An old newspaper rides the wind, skips across the ground, and soars over the head of --

A WOMAN walking down the middle of the street in slippers and BLOOD-SOAKED BATHROBE.

This is ANNIE LONG. The last person on Earth. She's doe-eyed and gangly, with high cheekbones. The blue of her eyes have dulled from lack of closing. She's muttering to herself. Emotionless.

ANNIE

Stay away. I'm not crazy. I know what you did. I'm not crazy--

She climbs into the yellow cab.

INT. YELLOW CAB - NIGHT

Annie SLAMS the door shut. There is no driver. She sits there in silence. She digs into her bathrobe pockets and pulls out A FRAYED AND FADING PHOTOGRAPH. It trembles in her hand.

Annie hugging her smiling mother -- MARY (70s). They look alike. The same brilliant blue eyes, before the dulling. Annie is a different person in this picture, full of life.

She gives the picture a kiss. Stuffs it away. Knocks on the glass partition, and says to the imaginary driver --

ANNIE

Take me home please, George.

George doesn't respond. Because George doesn't exist. But it feels good to say the words anyway.

She closes her eyes, and takes the journey home in her mind.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm not crazy. I know what you did.

As she starts to finally... drift... to sleep-- *KNOCK! KNOCK!* Annie jumps out of her skin, and SCREAMS.

She turns to find a FACE IN THE WINDOW -- LASZLO (17). His smile crinkles his eyes.

LASZLO
I make you jump.

Annie pulls it together as Laszlo opens the door for her. He wears a fading "I LOVE NEW YORK" tee-shirt and speaks in a thick Eastern European accent, like Nosferatu's kid brother.

LASZLO (CONT'D)
He looks for you all over, miss, but
I know where you hide.

ANNIE
I like it here. It reminds me of home.

Laszlo's smile falls off his face --

LASZLO
I'm sorry... But, it is time.
You must be shot.

Annie nods sullenly, accepting her fate. He helps her out, and they start down the empty street. The moon is full.

LASZLO (CONT'D)
I will miss you when you're gone.

ANNIE
You're the only one who's been nice
to me. You know that?

LASZLO
It has been hard to watch you
suffer. But, you are so very good at
it, miss. The way you cry. The way
you scream. Your screams are like
music. They give me nightmares.

ANNIE
You really mean that?

LASZLO
No one goes mad like you go mad...

ANNIE
Honestly, Laszlo, that means a lot
coming from you.

LASZLO
People talk. They say for this you
will get a little golden man.

ANNIE
From your mouth to God's ears.

LASZLO
No. Not God. God will not win you
an Oscar.

ANNIE
How about a Golden Globe?

They round the corner and we see the support beams that hold up the false fronts and facades of NEW YORK. A *dirty lie*.

LASZLO
No... It is Mr. Bloch you should be praying to...

He leads Annie towards a GIANT SOUND STAGE.

B L O C H
FILM STUDIO / KINO STUDIJA
Csendet Kérek -- Quiet Please

She looks up at a large BRONZE STATUE of the great genius HOWARD BLOCH. A towering figure in the annals of cinema. A towering figure in the courtyard, too. He lords over everything. An all-seeing sentry. He's a tall man with thick black hair, a dark beard, and glasses. *An auteur*.

Annie notices the bird shit on his head. She snarls.

ANNIE
Amen.

Humming "New York, New York," Laszlo opens the door for her. She peers into the DEEP DARKNESS. She takes a breath like she's about to dive underwater, and enters the stage. Laszlo follows. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

We BOOM UP to reveal the BLOCH STUDIOS BACK LOT --

The giant barbwire fence that surrounds the permitter.

The old growth trees behind the fence.

The swollen moon hanging over a studio -- stranded in the middle of the endless woods like an unwelcome burl.

And from way up here, the drab gray concrete sound stage almost looks like A SKULL half-buried in cement. The massive sliding doors are unseeing eyes. A swarm of bats SCREAM PAST.

We're somewhere in Eastern Europe.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

MARY LONG (70s) lies in the sterile coffin of her hospital bed, strapped to BLEEPING monitors. The real Manhattan skyline soaring outside the window.

Gaunt and afraid, she wears a gown and a chemo beanie. She's reeling from over-medication.

A dim shadow of the women from the picture. She peeks down the bright hallway and sees a NURSE rush by. She's shivering with fear.

INT. ANNIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Drab. Icky green wallpaper. More of a closet than a dressing room. Photos of New York City hang. More photos of Mary. Her childhood apartment in Manhattan. Reminders of home.

Sticking out like a sore thumb -- A kingly portrait of HOWARD BLOCH. Frame screwed to the wall. It came with the room.

BBBBRRRRINNNNNNNNNNGGG -- *THE PHONE SCREAMS!!!* Annie snaps awake at her vanity. Grabs the rotary phone.

ANNIE

Hello?

MARY LONG'S VOICE is weak. Groggy and confused. We hear the BLEEPs and BLOOPs of hospital machines.

MARY'S VOICE

...Gummie Bear?

ANNIE

Mom--

MARY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

What... happened? Where are you-- Can't-- I... .. are--

GZZZZT. The connection is bad.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Mom, can you hear me?

MARY'S VOICE

Annie? Are you there?

GZZZZZZTTTTT--- *SHHHHHHHHH--*

ANNIE

Mom, I'm here--

MARY'S VOICE

Where? Where are you?

ANNIE

Didn't you get my message? I'm still on the set.

MARY'S VOICE

No one told me anything. I didn't know where you were...

ANNIE

They were supposed to tell you, we went late, we went over again. I had to move my flight.

MARY'S VOICE

But... you've been there so long...

A BLAST OF STATIC makes her jump. She rips the phone away from her ear for a second.

ANNIE

We still have one more shot to do. We went over last night, so we had to come back. It's my big scene.

MARY'S VOICE

You're such a wonderful actress... You'd given Vivian Leigh a run for her money...

Howard Bloch is staring at her from the wall. She sees it out of the corner of her eye. His expression seems to have changed ever so slightly. He looks... disappointed.

MARY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Annie... They gave me pills.... I'm so confused...

ANNIE

You're okay. You're safe, you don't have to worry...

MARY'S VOICE

I don't like it here. I don't want to be alone...

ANNIE

You're not alone, I'm coming to you. One last shot and we're done. I'm flying into JFK, I'm coming straight to the hospital. I'll be there before you go in for surgery. I promise, ma, I promise.

Annie unconsciously runs her hand through her hair, pulls out a CLUMP. She cringes, puts it in the trash with all the rest.

MARY'S VOICE

(breaking down)

...I don't want to die...

GZZZZZTTTTTT. Static.

ANNIE

Ma, stop that, don't say that. You have the best doctors in the world over there taking care of you--

MARY'S VOICE

...Gummie bear?

GZZZZT.

ANNIE

I'm coming. I love you so much, ma. I told you, as soon as you're better, you're going to come on set with me, on my next movie you're coming with me no matter what, and you're gonna get to see me work, like you always wanted, ma, like you always--

A BLAST OF STATIC.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Mom, are you there?!

Dial tone.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Annie SLAMS the phone down on the receiver. She takes a breath, and pulls herself together. Swells with determination as she stares at her weary reflection.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Go big or go home.

The droning DIAL TONE casts its spell... Her eyes flutter. The tone... slowly... lulling... her... to sleep--

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! Annie jumps.

LASZLO (O.S.)

Miss?! He's ready for you!

Annie shakes away the sleep.

ANNIE

Just a minute!

She snatches a pill bottle. Little red uppers. She hesitates, swelling with guilt. And then fuck it -- she chews one down and dry swallows like the pro she is. Her pupils pin.

And Howard Bloch watches her from the wall.

INT. BLOCH STUDIOS - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Annie's eye is twitching from the drugs. She wanders down the long snaking corridors of the industrial sound stage, lost. Labyrinthine lefts and rights. The speed has put a bounce in her step.

REEEEEEEEAHHHH! The endless rattle and moan of the snaking duct work above. It sort of sounds like a sad child is trapped in the vents.

She takes another wrong turn --

LASZLO (O.S.)
Left, miss!

Turns to find Laszlo coming to her rescue.

ANNIE
You'd think after a year, I'd be able to find my way to set.

LASZLO
You should ask catering for bread crumbs, miss...

ANNIE
(laughs)
I swear this place is alive, it's changing...

They round another sharp corner and --

There's a LUNATIC standing there with a butcher knife. Blood spilling down his face. ANNIE SCREAMS.

LUNATIC
(growls)
...Why the fuck am I still here?

ANNIE
You scared the shit out of me, Charlie...

CHARLIE (30s) is the star of the show. Severely handsome, even when he's covered in blood and latex wounds. He's vibrating with cocaine energy.

CHARLIE
I should be on my jet right now, somewhere over the mid Atlantic.

As Charlie joins them on the journey to set, he starts running in place. Running and SCREAMING and stabbing the air with his knife. Getting violent. Sniffing.

ANNIE

Did he say anything? I really thought I did good work last night, I don't understand--

CHARLIE

You didn't give him what he wants.

ANNIE

How can I give him what he wants if he doesn't tell me what he wants. Sometimes I wonder if he even knows what he wants.

CHARLIE

He knows what he doesn't want. It's Howard Bloch. The man's a genius. You know how many *girls* would kill to be where you are right now? Would die to be in this picture? Don't blow it.

Annie nods sullenly.

LASZLO

We are very lucky filmworkers!

CHARLIE

AHHHHHHH!!!

Annie jumps. Charlie starts dancing around, getting into character. Laszlo screams, too, just for fun.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

AHHHHHHH!!!!

LASZLO

AHHHHH!!!!

They turn another corner and she looks around, confused. Because it suddenly looks familiar.

In fact, it looks like we're back where we started. Right by her dressing room.

Laszlo ushers her towards the ELEPHANT DOOR. Impossibly heavy. Laszlo pushes it open -- *REEEEEEEEEE!!! A million nails on a chalkboard in hell.*

INT. MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Charlie and Annie enter. Laszlo struggles to close the door. It SLAMS and reverberates. This place is massive.

They pass the prop tables. Hundreds and hundreds of FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS. All exactly the same: Charlie and Annie, in character as a loving couple.

Another table filled with so many BUTCHER KNIVES. Some rubber, some real.

TIMO (50s), a manic prop man, is building picture frames, fingers bleeding from over-work. He hasn't slept in a year. One of the frames breaks and he POUNDS the table in frustration, rattling the knives. He SCREAMS in his language.

A WORKER runs up behind him to calm him down.

As they keep moving across the stage and we reveal --

A BISECTED BEDROOM in the middle of the cavernous stage. It's unsettling. Like an umbrella opened indoors.

Air conditioning is pumped into the bedroom window by snaking tubes connected to a SQUEALING unit. Constant white noise.

CHIRP! CHIRP! Annie cranes. A BLUEBIRD is flying around. Beating against the rafters. Trying to break free. It makes her smile. Rooting for it.

INT. THE BEDROOM SET - NIGHT

Annie enters into the bedroom set. A thick choke of cigarette smoke hangs over the place.

She instantly feels the hard stares of the small SKELETON CREW. Like a mob of angry villagers, only its boom poles instead of pitchforks. Romanian? Hungarian? Gypsies maybe.

One thing is clear -- Annie is the only woman on set.

Charlie enters, and throws his hands in the air.

CHARLIE

"Jó éjszakát everyone!" Magic Time!

The room gets brighter, and the crew comes alive.

THE SKELETON CREW

MAH-GEEK TIME!

They surround "Mr. Charlie," the great movie star, checking his hair, his make up, putting on his wireless mic, getting a light reading of his face. Making sure he's comfortable.

Annie just watches this happen, feeling neglected. She crosses the drab bedroom. Claustrophobic and sparsely furnished. A lumpy brass bed with tattered blankets. A stained forest green carpet.

Oppressive wallpaper with a faded floral pattern and ORANGE BUTTERFLIES.

The FRAMED FAMILY PORTRAIT of Charlie and Annie hangs in Timo's cheap wooden frame.

A bedroom window with view of A SPOOKY FOREST at night -- an incredibly realistic backdrop painting.

BELA (50s), the first AD, materializes out of thin air. He's dressed in frumpy wool sweater that looks like it was made out of his own sheep. A cigarette dangling from his lips.

BELA
The sooner you give him what he
wants... the sooner we go home.

He hands her the sides --

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A COCKROACH skitters past and makes Annie SCREAM. *WHAM! WHAM!* Bela STAMPS it dead -- instinct kicking in. He lifts his boot to reveal the spattered remains.

BELA (CONT'D)
Laszlo! *Csótány!*

Laszlo wipes up the mess with militaristic precision.

Annie keeps moving towards the eye-patched cinematographer SVEN (70), who is lighting the STAND-INS.

JAKOB, a rail-thin young man dressed-up like Annie, is wearing a wig and bathrobe with the very same blood stains. He actually kind of looks like her if you squint.

ABBOT (50s) is wearing the same clothes as Charlie, although he's twice his size. A hulking farmer with a cleft lip and a milky eye. He speaks in a dialect of grunts and wheezes.

Annie trades places with Jakob, her stand-in. Now she's standing beside Abbot, who is gripping his knife tighter. His gaze is always fixed on Annie. It gives her the creeps. She forces a smile.

And he just stares at her. Hungry. He reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a tin of sardines. Offers it to her.

ABBOT
Szardínia.

ANNIE
Um, no thanks.

Charlie, all dolled up, trades places with Abbot, who is reluctant to leave Annie's side.

CHARLIE
Thank you, Abbot.

Abbot gimps away. Eying Annie with his good one.

ANNIE
God, he creeps me out.

CHARLIE
It's just a little crush. He's
harmless.

GABOR (60s) limps over. The weathered hair and make-up man. His own hair is insane. He wears a make-up and blood-stained smock. Fake blood, hopefully. He does the finishing touches on Charlie's facial wounds. Glances at Annie.

GABOR
Are those dark circles mine or
yours?

ANNIE
I think they're mine.

GABOR
You make my job easier every day.

Laszlo peers down the stairs, gasps --

LASZLO
The Eagle lands!

A hush falls over the set. Just the WHEEZE of the AC unit. Everyone waits. Ears perked.

FOOTFALLS up the stairs. Slow and deliberate. He comes. Step by step. Clop. Clop. Clop.

We scan the faces of THE CREW -- Swelling with reverence. Shaking with fear.

Timo chews on his lip, eyes darting. He has an armful of framed photos and prop knives. One falls.

Annie wears no expression. She just watches his shadow play on the wall, moving up the stairs. Closer and closer.

She sees A HAND on the railing. Then the man behind the hand:

HOWARD BLOCH (50s) graces the set with his presence, walking into a world that he spun out of thin air.

He's much shorter than his statue lets on. Older too. Also, he looks homeless. Tired. Bedraggled. Flailing black hair. Male pattern baldness. A patchy beard. Pupilless obsidian eyes magnified by aviator glasses and a batwing brow. Grease stained slacks, and an army surplus jacket.

He's gripping a viewfinder like a gun.

Annie shudders. *She is terrified of this man.*

Everyone holds their breath as he looks around the set. Wrinkles his nose. Something is wrong.

Bloch stares Annie down. And then he approaches her. Studying her face. Very intently.

BLOCH
No, Annie.

He speaks in a NASALLY BRONX ACCENT. Very soft spoken. Dead pan. Not a hint of emotion to betray his resting poker face.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
You're wrong.

ANNIE
What's wrong?

Bloch circles Annie like a prize pony. He is compulsively pushing his glasses up his nose.

BLOCH
It's your eyes.

He looks into her eyes, trying to glimpse her soul. Annie is staring back into the endless abyss.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
There's something wrong with your eyes, Annie.

She grips her rubber knife a little tighter.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Make-up!

Gabor limps over.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
You went a little overboard with the dark circles, didn't you, Gabor? She looks like Doctor Calagari. Lighten her up please.

Gabor bows, weirdly.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Last looks. We're already behind and we haven't even started.

BELA
Yes, mast--
(catches himself)
Mister. Mister Bloch. LAST LOOKS!
UTOLSÓ NÉZETEK!

Bloch walks away. Gabor gets to work on Annie's face.

GABOR
First my job to give, now my job to
take away.

He raises his Polaroid camera and -- *KTCHAAA!!!* Snaps a photo of her. The SHOCK OF LIGHT blinds her.

GABOR (CONT'D)
Cheez.

ANNIE
(blinking)
You're supposed to say cheese first.

BLOCH
(looking around)
We're two stops off in this light.

SVEN
Yes, sir, yes, sir--

Sven hurries off to check the lights as Bloch shuffles over to his throne. It's an elaborate playback system. A primitive video village with several TV sets and a giant reel-to-reel video tape machine.

BLOCH
(checks his watch)
Let's get it up on its feet.

Everyone SNAPS INTO ACTION.

BELA
QUIET PLEASE! *CSENDET KÉREK!*

On the table before his director's chair -- A CHESS BOARD. He's in the middle of a game. Always. He sits.

Charlie starts jogging in place and SCREAMING. Annie breaks away from Gabor and approaches Bloch with her tail between her legs.

ANNIE
Howard? Sorry, just quickly-- Is there anything you want me to do differently?

BLOCH
(to the chess board)
Differently?

ANNIE
I mean, how do you want me to do it?

BLOCH
I'd like you to do it again.

ANNIE
Again. Yes. But, I mean, is there something you'd like me to adjust this time around?

BLOCH
Just do it again please, Annie.

Bloch moves the Queen to Rook 5. Turns the board around. He's playing himself.

ANNIE
...I'll make the adjustment.

She returns to her mark.

CHARLIE
What about me, Boss? How was I?

BLOCH
Great, Charlie, as always. I'm sorry I had to bring you back, but this is important. I didn't want to use the double.

Annie looks over at Abbot the double, sitting in the corner staring at her keenly. *This fucking guy.*

Sven is perched on a dolly with a massive Panavision camera mounted on a track.

Bela grips a microphone. IT PUMPS HIS VOICE THROUGH THE RUSTY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM, bathing the set in Bloch's dictates.

BELA
Places everyone. *Pozitie!*

Annie and Charlie are in position. Gabor applies some movie blood to Charlie's facial wound. There are four giant drums of blood off to the side.

BELA (CONT'D)
Picture's up. Kill the Air Conditioning please.

Laszlo flips a switch. The snaking tubes rattle. The cool air hacks and wheezes and dies. Instantly sweltering.

BELA (CONT'D)
Close in the walls!

Timo pulls a lever, and lowers the bedroom wall like a curtain -- *CLANK!!* Locks it into place. Everything is suddenly much more claustrophobic.

CHARLIE
Magic Time.

JAN (30s), the sweat-stained camera assistant, sticks a clapper board way too close to Annie's face.

JAN
"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take One. Marker.

CLAP! It makes her jump. He rips the board away.

Something changes in Annie. Her eyes come alive, powering on. The weariness falls away. She swells with purpose.

SVEN
Camera set.

BLOCH
Settle. And Action, Annie.

Sven dollies in and --

WE'RE PLUNGED INTO THE SCENE WITHIN THE SCENE --

Annie is HYSTERICAL -- backing up from Charlie in horror. She is choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE
Stay away from me! Stay back!

Charlie is bleeding from the gash in his face, blood spilling down his face and neck, it makes him look monstrous. His smile makes it worse.

CHARLIE
Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE
I know what I saw!

CHARLIE
Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE
I'm not crazy! I know what you did!

CHARLIE
--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues. Annie is screaming as they fight. Charlie pushes her down, and lands hard.

And as he raises the knife to finish the job, she SCREAMS. All the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out. Like an exorcism.

BLOCH (O.S.)
Okay. Cut. Print that one.

BACK TO SCENE:

Annie and Charlie abruptly power down. Catching their breath. The AC rattles to life. Timo swoops in, and starts cleaning up the family photo. He replaces it with a new one.

Bloch just stares at his actors. We see his mind spinning. Everyone is waiting for his verdict. Bloch looks at Annie. She tries to catch a read.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Let's go again.

Annie deflates a little.

ANNIE
Anything you want me to do differently, or...?

BLOCH
Again.

ANNIE
Just because that's how I did it last night and--

BLOCH
Again please.

Annie forces a smile, and nods.

BELA (LOUDSPEAKER)
GO AGAIN! *WIR WERDEN ES WIEDER TUN!*

Sven is changing the roll of film, Jan stacks the metal canister of shot film against the wall.

ANNIE
You can do this, you can do this.

BELA
Picture's up.

Charlie starts screaming, jumping up and down like a madman, getting in the zone.

CHARLIE

Ooooo. I'm gonna get you, I'm gonna get you, Nancy. FUCK! Slap me. Slap me in the face--

Annie winds up and -- *WHAP!* Smacks him across the face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

AH! FUCK! YESSSSSSSSS!!!!!!

LASZLO

(wide-eyed)

This is gonna be some picture!

CHARLIE

Magic time, it's fuckin' magic time, bitch.

Jan sticks a clapper board much too close to Annie's face.

JAN

"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take Two. Marker.

CLAP! It makes her jump.

SVEN

Camera set.

BLOCH

Settle. And action, Annie.

THE SCENE

A hysterical Annie backs away from Charlie. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE

Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE

I know what I saw!

CHARLIE

Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

*He grabs for the knife. She swings it. **This time she SCREAMS:***

ANNIE
I'M NOT CRAZY!!!! I KNOW WHAT YOU
DID!!! I'M NOT CRAZY!!!!

CHARLIE
 --GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues. Charlie pushes her down, and lands hard. And as he raises the knife to finish the job, she screams. All the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out. Like an exorcism.

We see the performance fall of Annie's face. She looks straight AT US -- INTO THE CAMERA LENS. There's a darkness in her eyes. It's a stunning take.

BACK TO SCENE:

BLOCH
 Okay. Cut. Print it.

Annie is still in the moment, trying to catch her breath. Charlie helps Annie to her feet. They look at Bloch. Waiting for his verdict.

ANNIE
 That felt good, I think... is that more like what you're thinking?

Bloch considers. Staring Annie down. Everyone waiting.

BLOCH
 Let's go again.

Annie nods, dejectedly.

BELA
 We're going again.

ANNIE
 (whispers to Charlie)
 I thought that was good...

BLOCH
 Charlie? You were great. Exactly like that. Don't change a thing.

CHARLIE
 You got it, boss.

ANNIE

Are there any adjustments for me,
Howard? I mean, was something wrong
with it? Was I too big?

BLOCH

Too big?

ANNIE

I mean, was I too broad?

CHARLIE

(grins)

There's no broad too big fer my
tastes.

She shoots him a look.

BLOCH

Just do it again please, Annie.

ANNIE

I know you hate these kind of
questions, but it may help me give
you what you want if I know what
you're thinking. Am I crazy?

BLOCH

Are you crazy?

ANNIE

I mean, is she crazy? Is Nancy
crazy?

BLOCH

What are you asking me?

ANNIE

Well, it could be interpreted
either way, technically, and I have
my thoughts, but I think maybe it
will help me... if I know your
opinion. I mean the way you see it.
Is she crazy, or is this happening?

BLOCH

...Yes.

Bloch's knight takes the bishop. He turns the board around.

ANNIE

(sinks)

I understand...

Sven brings the camera back to one. Annie checks them time.
9:30pm.

She whips out the photo of her mother, and stares at it, trying to ground herself. Rubs Mary's face with her thumb.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I'm coming, mom.

Bites her lip. Stomach in knots. And then she finds herself walking over to Bloch. Bloch is studying the chess board. He doesn't look up. She's working up the courage.

BLOCH
Yes, Annie?

ANNIE
There's something else I need to talk to you about. It's a small emergency.

BLOCH
A small emergency. Okay.

Bloch is carefully considering his next chess move.

ANNIE
It's just--

BLOCH
Your mother.

ANNIE
Oh... Bela told you?

Bloch picks up the bishop.

BLOCH
Pancreatic cancer, isn't it?

ANNIE
...How did you... I don't think I--
How did you know that?

BLOCH
I'm sorry, Annie. That's one of the nasty ones. Is the prognosis poor?

ANNIE
Actually, she's doing very well.
But, she's going into surgery soon.

BLOCH
No. I don't think so. I'd imagine an EGFR inhibitor would be a better treatment option. That combined with chemo...

ANNIE
Sorry? What?

BLOCH
What?

ANNIE
I don't understand.

BLOCH
What are you asking me, Annie?

ANNIE
I'd like to be there for her.

BLOCH
I see. I thought you were asking
for medical advice.

ANNIE
No, they're, um, very good doctors.
It's Mount Sinai.

BLOCH
Well, then what are you asking me?

He goes back to the chess game.

ANNIE
It's just that... I had to ask them
to move the surgery to tomorrow. It
was sort of a big deal. They're not
going to move it again.

BLOCH
I see. That's why you keep looking
at the clock.

ANNIE
I'm sorry. It's just that my flight
is at five AM and... I'd like to be
there for her...

BLOCH
Instead of here with me.

She shudders. Bloch looks up from the chess board.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
It shouldn't be a problem. It's
only a pick-up shot after all.

ANNIE
(relief)
Thank you, Howard.

BLOCH
There's no reason why we should go
over today. Or any day for that
matter.

She stops. Tensing up. He speaks louder, for all to hear --

BLOCH (CONT'D)

In fact, the only reason I've ever gone over was because of my actors. Because my actors weren't prepared. Are you prepared, Annie?

Annie looks around and notices that ALL EYES ARE ON HER. The hard, judgmental stares of the crew.

ANNIE

I am prepared.

BLOCH

Good. Because it's the most important scene in the picture. In fact, without this scene there is no picture. Without this scene, the last year of your life, of my life, Sven, Bela, Gabor, Charlie -- all the work of the men on this stage has been meaningless. A total waste of time. Do you understand?

ANNIE

I do.

He studies the chess board as he talks.

BLOCH

You know, directors call me every day. They call me all the time asking for advice. They pick my brain. Heads of studios. Brian De Palma. They all call. They call me Uncle Howie, and I let them. They ask about this Annie Long. *Annie Long. What's her story? Where did you find her? Why did you hire an unknown when the studio wanted Jane Fonda so desperately?* I'm not a liar, Annie. That's why they call. So, what am I supposed to tell them? What am I supposed to tell Brian when he asks about you? That I took a gamble and it paid off? Or that you couldn't land the plane. That you couldn't give me what I want.

She's trying to not scream.

ANNIE

...What do you want, Howard?

BLOCH

I want you to do it right.

ANNIE
But, what am I doing wrong?

He says nothing, just stares looks at her with those penetrating eyes, magnified by coke-bottle glasses and framed by batwing brows.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I just wish you'd tell me how to do it. Tell me what you want me to do.

BLOCH
I want you to do it again.

Bishop takes the queen. He squeezes the queen in his palm. He turns the board around.

Annie nods, the twitch in her eye is getting worse.

ANNIE
I'll try and do it better.

He gives her a nod, and that's all he gives her.

BLOCH
Annie. That twitch *reads*.

She gasps, slaps her eye, covering it.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Let's go again.

BELA
We're going again! Back to one!

She slinks back to her mark, covering her eye. Head swimming.

CHARLIE
You're blowing it.

She hears a WOMAN CRYING SOMEWHERE.

ANNIE
Is someone crying?

CHARLIE
It's probably me.

THE CRYING trickles away...

BELA
Picture's up.

CHARLIE
MAGIC TIME!

THE SKELETON CREW
MAH-GEEK TYYYYYME!

Annie and Charlie get in position. Annie hears a CHIRP. She looks over and sees --

THE BLUEBIRD perched on the craft service table. She smiles. It flies away.

Jan sticks a clapper board even closer to Annie's face.

JAN
"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take three. Marker.

CLAP! She jumps. It throws her off --

ANNIE
Jan? Excuse me, can you just move the clapper a little bit away from my face next time?

Jan just glowers at her.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
It's okay. It just really throws me off every time, so-- thanks.

BLOCH
Settle, Annie.

ANNIE
Sorry. I'm ready.

Annie reaches into her pocket to pet her mother's face. She gasps. Desperately searching her pockets.

BLOCH
Ready?!

ANNIE
(looking around)
WAIT. Have you seen a picture?

Her left eye is undulating, she squeezes it shut.

CHARLIE
Picture?

ANNIE
I lost my picture, it's a picture of me and mom, I just had it--

CHARLIE
I don't see it.

ANNIE
 (calling out)
 Does anyone see a picture on the--

BLOCH
 --ACTION!

Annie jumps, snaps back into character --

THIS TRIGGERS A RAPID MONTAGE -- *ALWAYS ON ANNIE'S FACE*

ANNIE
 I'M NOT CRAZY! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!
I'M NOT CRAZY!

CLAP!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M NOT CRAZY! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!

CLAP!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M NOT CRAZY! I KN--

CLAP!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M NOT CRA--

CLAP!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M NOT--

CLAP!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M N--

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!

TAKE AFTER TAKE UNTIL IT SOUNDS LIKE STEADY APPLAUSE --

BLOCH (O.S.)
Cut. Print.

BACK TO SCENE:

Bloch is staring at his chess board, not even looking at her.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Let's go again.

Annie is so spent. Charlie tries to help her up again, she jumps at his touch. Still in the moment. It's getting harder for her to get out of it.

She is blinking over and over, trying to stop the twitch. She tries to quell it. She checks the clock: It's 2:00 AM.

Charlie starts running in place, and blowing raspberries.

ANNIE
Charlie? I hate to ask this, but do you have room on your plane in case we go over tonight? It's sort of an emergency, my mom is--

CHARLIE
--Full flight, hon. Sorry. There's a weight limit.

ANNIE
Oh. No problem. I get it.

Sven is changing the magazine on the camera. Annie double takes -- *his eye patch his on his left eye now.*

Jan stacks the canister of shot film with the others against the wall. FORMING A PYRAMID. Hundreds of thousands of feet of film.

Timo swoops in, and starts cleaning up the family photo, muttering to himself.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Timo, have you see a photo anywhere? I can't--

He shows her the photo of her and Charlie.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
No, not that, it's a picture of--

He brushes by, ignoring her. Shaking her head, Annie pivots to check her make-up in a standing mirror and GASPS -- HER STAND-IN JAKOB'S FACE IS STARING BACK AT HER!

She YELPS, and realizes there's no glass in the mirror. It actually is Jakob. He smiles.

She hurries to her mark. Looks around to make sure no one is looking, and then stealthy chews on one of her red pills.

LASZLO
(approaching)
Be careful with those, miss.

ANNIE
Lasz, can you turn on the AC?

LASZLO
It's broke down, miss.

ANNIE
I need to drink some water... I'm
all out of tears--

Annie is fanning herself. Sweltering. Watching Sven.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Wasn't that patch on the right eye
before?

LASZLO
Ummm... When's the last time you
slept, Miss?

Annie looks at Laszlo. And then she is suddenly overcome with emotion. She finds herself wrapping him in a hug. He jumps, unsure of what do to at first. But then he hugs her back.

Bloch clocks this and doesn't like it.

LASZLO (CONT'D)
Are you... sure you're okay?

ANNIE
(pulling it together)
Sorry. I'm fine.

LASZLO
Go easy on the pills. It's too
much.

ANNIE
They help me focus...

Her nose is twitching now too. She looks around and sees the snarls, and shaking heads of the sweaty crew.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
God. Look at them. They hate me.

LASZLO
No. Please, don't think that.

ANNIE

It's true. They hate my guts.

LASZLO

No. You can't take it personal, miss. He tells them to.

ANNIE

What? What do you mean?

Laszlo bites his tongue. He's said too much.

LASZLO

I'll bring you some water, miss.

ANNIE

Laszlo, what do you mean he--

LASZLO

--Mr. Bloch is a fine director. Everything he does is for the good of the picture. Everything he does is for the good of the picture.
(dashes away)
Everything he does is for the...

BELA

--Picture's up.

She closes her eyes, trying to get present.

JAN

"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take forty-six. Marker.

CLAP! WAY TOO CLOSE! It makes her jump out of skin and SCREAM! Everyone looks at her.

ANNIE

You did that on purpose! What the fuck is wrong with you?

BLOCH

Annie?

Annie rips the clap board out of Jan's hand.

ANNIE

Sorry, but I told you not to put that thing near my face, ten times!

Jan just stares at her, blankly.

BLOCH

Annie. The slate needs to read.

ANNIE

But I--

BLOCH

You're being difficult.

This word makes her shudder. She instantly backs down, and hands Jan back the clapper.

ANNIE

I'm sorry, it's just-- it throws me off. I'm sorry. Not so close, please. Sorry. Thank you, Jan.

Jan just glowers at her.

CHARLIE

She's worse than Streisand.

Jan sticks the clapper *only slightly further away* --

JAN

Second sticks. "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take fifty-six. Marker.

ANNIE

Wait. Fifty six?

SVEN

Camera set!

ANNIE

I thought it was forty-six.

JAN

Fifty six.

She looks at the clock -- Somehow, it's 3:00 AM already. An hour passed in minutes.

ANNIE

Wait--

BLOCH

And action, Annie.

The Camera dollies in. Annie snaps back into character --

THE SCENE

Annie backs away from Charlie in horror. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE

Honey. It's gonna be okay. You need help.

ANNIE

I know what I saw!

CHARLIE

Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE

I'M NOT CRAZY!!!! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!!! I'M NOT--

She crushes this line, but stops when she sees someone on the far end of the darkened stage -- An OLD WOMAN IN A HOSPITAL GOWN limping through the shadows. She seems lost, dazed. We can't see her face clearly.

CHARLIE

--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall.

She's trying to stay in the moment, but her eyes are on the woman. She's far away... But she seems lost... wandering... She moves out of view, blocked by the bedroom facade.

ANNIE

I-- I... um...

BLOCH (O.S.)

Cut!

BACK TO SCENE:

Bloch rises. He's clearly furious, but his face is blank.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

ANNIE

I got distracted... There was a--

BLOCH

--No. You never stop. You know this. You never, ever stop unless I tell you to stop. Let's go again, straight away.

ANNIE
There's a woman in my eye-line...

BLOCH
What?

Annie walks off, set.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

ANNIE
I saw a woman--

She moves through the stage to look for her. They all look.

The woman is gone.

BLOCH
There are no women here, Annie.
Only you. You are the only woman
for miles.

She looks at him. She looks at Abbot, Charlie's double.
Spying on her from the rafters. Still grinning at her. Evil
in his eyes.

CHARLIE
What's going on with you?

ANNIE
Nothing. I'm sorry, I thought I saw
someone... I was wrong.

BLOCH
You're acting strange. Are you okay?

Suddenly, Jakob, the stand-in in his "Annie wig" and bloody
nightgown, walks back on to the set with a coffee.

Everyone bursts into laughter.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Ah. A satisfying conclusion to the
case of the mysterious woman.

But Annie is not so sure.

CHARLIE
Can I give you one quick adjustment
before we shoot?

ANNIE
Seriously? God yes. Please.

CHARLIE

Listen to your instincts. Really tune in. And whatever they're telling you to do, do the exact fuckin opposite. I want to go home.

BLOCH

Okay, back to one, let's go again.

ANNIE

Has he been telling you to do this?

CHARLIE

Huh?

ANNIE

He has been telling you to be mean to me? To get a performance out of me or something? Like when Carl Dreyer made Falconetti kneel on cobblestones all night to experience the suffering of Joan of Arc?

CHARLIE

Who the fuck is Falconetti?

ANNIE

Is this some kind of *technique*?

CHARLIE

No, honey, I'm being mean to you in my spare time.

Timo swaps out the photograph. Sweeps up the glass. Bela passes by with his coffee.

ANNIE

Bela, have you seen a photo of me and my mom? I dropped it, and--

He brushes by.

LASZLO

Are you okay, miss?

Annie is dizzy now. Concussed. The muscle pulsing behind her hooded eye. The tick is worsening.

ANNIE

I can't find my picture.

LASZLO

I'll keep looking, it must be here somewhere.

ANNIE

It's so hot.

LASZLO
You're doing very fine work.
Nightmares tonight for ol' Laszlo.

ANNIE
Really? It's not too big?

LASZLO
I don't think so.

ANNIE
Or is it not big enough? Should I
go bigger?

LASZLO
It's good, miss. Good and big.

ANNIE
I'm all... confused...

LASZLO
Yes. You've been living in this
movie too long.

And Bloch is watching them out of the corner of his eye.
Always. His knight takes his queen. She checks the clock.
It's 4:30 AM.

LASZLO (CONT'D)
You can still make it to the airport
if we leave after this next take.

She nods. Determined.

BLOCH
Excuse, young man? Remind me your
name.

LASZLO
(bows)
Laszlo, sir. At your service.

BLOCH
Why are you distracting my actress?

LASZLO
I'm sorry, sir.

ANNIE
He's not distracting me,
Howard, he's--

*

BLOCH
--He's been distracting you all
night, Annie. At Bloch Studios, the
PA's are forbidden to speak to the
talent.

LASZLO
I'm sorry, sir, it won't happen
again.

BLOCH
No. It won't. Your services are no
longer needed.

ANNIE
What?! No--

LASZLO
But, sir!

BLOCH
Get off my set please.

ANNIE
Howard, he didn't do anything--

LASZLO
But... I need this job, sir. I must
take care of my papa. He is blind
from the pox and cannot work.

BLOCH
Security!

LASZLO
Kérem! Kérem! Please!

The Security Guard rushes in and starts SCREAMING at Laszlo
in his language, and starts PUSHING him towards the door.
Gone. Timo gives himself the sign of the cross.

ANNIE
You didn't have to do that.

BLOCH
He's expendable. And it's been hard
enough keeping you focused, Annie.

They stare each other down. Annie blinks first.

BELA
Picture's up!

Suddenly, Annie starts to MOAN. Her moans turn to SCREAMS.
Halting to life, like something yanking the chain on a
lawnmower -- and now she's SHRIEKING!!! SHE'S GETTING IN THE
FUCKING ZONE!!!! Screaming at Bloch, who has to look away.

Not to be outdone, Charlie starts SCREAMING, too, and running
in place. It's a horrible harmony. And Annie is WEEPING,
tears streaming down her face. Long, painful tears.

ANNIE

I'm not crazy, I know what you did,
I'm not crazy I know what you did,
MOTHER FUCKER! YOU FUCKKKKK!!!
AHHHHHHA!!! I'm not crazy--

Snorting snot spills. They're both running in place and screaming and screaming.

CHARLIE

YAH YOU FUCK! AHHHHHH!!!!!!

ANNIE

AHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

AHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

BLOCH

(dryly to himself)
*Oh horror, horror, horror. Tongue
nor heart cannot conceive nor name
thee. Confusion now hath made his
masterpiece.*

BELA

Picture's up.

JAN

"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.
Pick up. Take fifty-seven. Marker.

CLAP! WAY TOO CLOSE!

A SARDINE falls at her feet. She cranes up and sees Abbot smiling at her from the rafters.

ABBOT

I love you, my pet.

ANNIE

What the fuc--

BLOCH

--Action, Annie!

THE SCENE

Annie backs away from Charlie in horror. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE

*Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm
not gonna hurt you. You need help.*

ANNIE
I know what I saw!

CHARLIE
Nancy. I worry about you. You're
not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE
I'M NOT CRAZY! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!
I'M NOT CRAZY!

CHARLIE
--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues.

Charlie pushes her even harder this time, so hard that she nearly falls out of character, but only nearly. It hurts.

Annie is screaming as they fight. Charlie pushes her down, and she lands hard, and all the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, all comes out. Like an exorcism.

It's too real. It feels dangerous, and painful to watch. Like we're voyeurs, like we shouldn't be seeing this. It's like she's not even acting, she's just being. We are witnessing greatness. It cannot get any better than this, it just can't.

BLOCH (O.S.)
Cut. Print.

BACK TO SCENE:

Annie is spent. Head spinning, tears streaming down her face. She stands up too fast and nearly faints, and Bela catches her. He sets her down slowly on an apple box, and she cries and cries, like she's trapped in the scene.

Bela grimaces and wipes her tears off his sleeve. He rises, and fetches her A GLASS OF WATER. Shoves it at her.

BELA
Drink. Your tears must feed.

Trembling and twitchy, Annie chugs the water. So thirsty.

BELA (CONT'D)
Finish.

She does, wipes her face with her sleeve.

She looks at the time. **5AM.** Now or never. She's trying like hell to work up the courage.

Suddenly -- THE BLUEBIRD FLIES PAST ANNIE'S HEAD -- soaring around the set, and DIVE BOMBS BLOCH!

BLOCH
(jumps up)
That bastard bird again! Will someone please kill that pest before it ruins a take!

The crew snaps into action, and chase after it. Bela snatches a broom, jumping and swatting.

Annie looks worried, but the bird escapes high into the rafters, and she breathes relieved.

Finally, she sets the empty glass on the apple box, and goes to Bloch. Manages to paste on a smile.

ANNIE
Howard? That felt... good. Was that, um... what you want? Do you think... we h-have it?

Everyone's staring at Bloch as he considers.

He looks at the clock. And he's about to say something...

Everyone is hanging on every word.

Annie wipes away tears.

BLOCH
Yes. We have it. It's in the can.

Everyone gasps. Annie's jaw drops.

ANNIE
Really?! I can still make the flight, but we have to leave n--

BLOCH
--I like the "I'm" from take ten. The "not crazy" from take sixteen. The "I know" from take thirty one. The "what" from take fifty. And the "you did" from the very last take. We have it. I can cobble you together on my Moviola. Like I'm Victor Frankenstein. And you are my little patchwork monster.

She sinks.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Or. We can do it again. And do it right.

ANNIE

(struggling)

It's just... I really need to go home...

BLOCH

You haven't given me what I want.

ANNIE

(rising)

I'll never give you what you want, Howard! Because you won't tell me what you want! How can I give you what you want if you won't tell me, if I don't know?!

BLOCH

Okay. If you insist, I'll tell you.

ANNIE

Tell me! Please!

BLOCH

I want you to do it again.

She grits her teeth. She hates him so much. She puts her hand in her pocket to touch her mother's picture. But remembers it's not there.

ANNIE

My mother needs me.

BLOCH

I need you.

Bloch is walking over to her.

ANNIE

She's scared, she's all alone. I can't let her down, I promised her.

Now they're face to face.

BLOCH

Your mother is a rare bird, isn't she? She always encouraged you to pursue your wildest dreams.

ANNIE

My mother believed in me when no one else did.

BLOCH

Not no one. Me. So did I, Annie.
When no one else did. And look
around -- these are your wildest
dreams. Right here and now. They've
come true for you.

ANNIE

She gave me everything. She paid
for college, my apartment,
everything while I struggled out in
LA... I need to be there for her...

BLOCH

(darkening)

If you quit now you'll let me down.
And then all of her sacrifice will
have been in vain, I promise you.

A threat? He stares her down. And then, his face lightens.

He surprises Annie with a hug! It's jarring. And she's thrown
off by his prickly warmth.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

(whispers)

I'm going to win you the Oscar,
Annie. And you will thank your
mother in your acceptance speech.
And she will be so proud of you.
Her beautiful, talented daughter.

He pets her hair. The withholding father holding her. She
feels sick to her stomach. But it also feels good to be held.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

So?

ANNIE

(resigned)

Let's go again.

Everyone exhales the breaths they've been holding in. For the
very first time -- we see Bloch smile.

BLOCH

We're going again!

BELA

Going again!

SVEN

Going again!

CHARLIE

Magic time.

Annie's eyes flutter. Her face slackens... like she's
suddenly a million miles away.

AND WE PUSH INTO A CLOSE-UP OF ANNIE'S FACE... We hear the THRUM and WHIRR of a phantom movie projector...

YOUNG ANNIE (V.O.)
*As God is my witness, as God is my
 witness, they're not going to lick
 me! I'm going to live through this!*

As we get closer... Flickering light is projected on her face. The light is warm, and so are the memories. As we move closer INTO HER BLEARY EYE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER 8 HOME MOVIES --

YOUNG ANNIE (12) stands before the Christmas tree, doing Vivian Leigh's speech from GONE WITH THE WIND -- the entire family is gathered around her as she hams it up. She's good.

YOUNG ANNIE
 ...And when it's all over, I'll never
 be hungry again -- no, nor any of my
 folks! If I have to lie, steal,
 cheat, or kill, as God is my witness,
 I'll never be hungry again!

MARY
 Don't you forget to thank me in
 your Oscar speech, gummie bear.

Annie giggles. Mary is proud of her daughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BLOCH STUDIOS - CORRIDORS

Annie moves through the snaking corridors back stage, like a rat in a endless maze. She takes hard lefts and rights, lost.

BLOCH (V.O.)
*Let's go again. Let's go again. Let's go
 again. Let's go again. Let's go again.
 Let's go again. Let's go again.
 Let's go again. Let's go
 again. Let's go again.
 Let's go again. Let's go
 again. LET'S GO AGAIN!*

The vents scream and howl, like they're in their death rattle throes. Annie takes a wrong turn, and she's back at her dressing room.

MARY (O.S.)
GUMMMIE BEAR?!

Annie looks around -- but there's no one there.

ANNIE
MOM?!

MARY (O.S.)
WHY DIDN'T YOU COME?!!!!

ANNIE
Mom?! Where are you?!

She hears a RUMBLE and sees --

THE WALL AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR CLOSING IN -- *CLOSER! AND CLOSER!* SHE TURNS AND RUNS, BUT IT'S NO USE -- THE WALL IS BEARING DOWN ON HER -- AND *SPLATTTT!!!!* FLATTENS HER DEAD.

LET'S GO AGAIN!

THE RATTLE AND DRONE OF AN AIRPLANE...

INT. PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Annie opens her eyes. Confused. She's soaring through the night sky. The RED LIGHT blinking on the wing.

She looks around the empty plane. She's the only soul aboard. She looks out the window at the dark clouds pulsing.

LIGHTING FLASHES. ROLL OF THUNDER. But she can't keep her eyes open, try as she might.

A RATTLE OF TURBULANCE SHAKES THE PLANE AND --

INT. BEDROOM SET - REALITY

Annie snaps awake, and falls off her apple box. She hits the ground hard, and yelps.

We're back in the BEDROOM SET. The beautiful jet was all a dream. She looks around. All of this is so unpleasant, the cigarette smoke wafting. The lights are so fucking hot. Everyone on set is drenched in sweat. Everyone except Bloch.

Gabor is pasting Annie's continuity Polaroids in his thick leather bound CONTINUITY BOOK. So many photos of her.

Sven stacks more spent film in against the wall. The stacked canisters loom so high, like a holy towering monolith.

Annie looks over at the clock. But it's gone. Just a dusty circle where it used to be.

BELA
Picture's up.

ANNIE
What time is it?

BELA
(checks watch)
Eight.

ANNIE
AM or PM?

But he's gone. Annie goes to Charlie at her mark. Something catches her eye. The floral pattern wallpaper. The butterflies are YELLOW now.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Howard? Why did you change the wallpaper?

BLOCH
Excuse me?

ANNIE
The butterflies are yellow. It's not going to match for continuity.

BLOCH
They were always yellow.

ANNIE
(stops)
They were orange before.

BLOCH
No. They've always been yellow.

She looks at Charlie --

CHARLIE
They were yellow.

ANNIE
I swear they were--

BELA
--They were yellow.

SVEN
 Yellow.

GABOR
 Yellow.

Annie shakes her head, confused.

BLOCH
 Are you okay, Annie?

ANNIE
I'm fine.

She blinks a hundred times to stop the twitch.

CHARLIE
 MAGIC TIME!!!!

THE SKELETON CREW
 MAH-GEK TYME!

Closes her eyes. Breathing. Breathing.

ANNIE
 (whispers)
 You can do this, you can do this,
 give me strength mom.

JAN
 "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
 Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.
 Pick up. Take ninety. Marker.

CLAP! WOOSH! A PHANTOM BREEZE blows her hair.

MARY'S VOICE
...Gummie Bear? I'm so afraid--

Annie's eyes snap open. That voice is unmistakable.

ANNIE
 What?

BLOCH
 Action, Annie--

ANNIE
 Who said that?

BLOCH
ACTION, ANNIE!

Annie hesitates, and then she dives into the scene.

THE SCENE

A hysterical Annie backs away from Charlie. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE

Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You're sick, you need help.

ANNIE

I know what I saw!

CHARLIE

Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE

I'M NOT CRAZY!! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!!! I'M NOT--

WHAMMM!!! Annie jumps as the security guard blasts through the door, interrupting the scene --

BACK TO SCENE:

Bloch jumps up, enraged --

BLOCH

What the hell do you think you're doing?! This is a closed set!

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Bloch, segélyhívás történt!

The guard marches over to Bloch, nervous.

BLOCH

*(backing down)
Kinek lesz?*

The security guard stares at Annie as he whispers in Bloch's ear. They both stare at her. Bloch nods.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Thank you, Putniss.

The security guard does and about face, clicks his heels fascistically, and marches back out. Bloch just stares at Annie. Pitifully.

ANNIE

Is everything okay?

Bloch rises. Goes to her. Everyone watching.

BLOCH

Annie. I'm afraid I have some bad news...

Off Annie's horrified look--

INT. ANNIE'S DRESSING ROOM

Annie sits at her vanity in her cramped and peeling dressing room, sitting before the mirror, talking on the phone. She's talking to the hospital. Ashen. Smoking like a chimney.

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE

...It happened yesterday around one PM, her heart just gave out. And unfortunately, she didn't survive--

ANNIE

One PM?! That's seven here -- That was right after we spoke! Jesus Christ, why didn't anyone call me?!

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE

We've been trying to reach you for hours, Miss Long, the lines were down, we couldn't get through to the switchboard over there.

ANNIE

(almost inaudible)
....God. Oh, God. She must have been so scared...

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE

It was very quick. As you know, she was DNR, so we respected that.

ANNIE

(distant)
I didn't get to say goodbye...

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE

I'm sorry, Miss Long. It was so sudden.

ANNIE

(stunned)
Thank you, doctor. I'll... I'll be there as a soon as possible.

She hangs up. Sits there in resounding silence. But she's all out of tears. Bloch took them all.

Annie hurls the phone at the mirror -- *CRASH!!!* IT SPIDERWEBS, splitting her face in two.

She grips the edge of the vanity, afraid she'll fall off the edge of the world. Her face darkens as she stares at her cracked reflection.

BLOCH (O.S.)
I'm sorry, Annie.

Annie whips around to find Bloch in the doorway. There's something different about him now. The way he speaks. Lighter. A little nervous. Maybe guilty. Like we're finally seeing the cracks in the facade.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
I'll charter you a plane... I have ties with the government. They owe me. I'll have Bela take you to the airport. We'll cut our losses here.

She glares at him. Eyes on fire.

ANNIE
...Did you get what you want?

BLOCH
I'll make it work. Don't worry about that now. Not now.

ANNIE
(dark)
Do we have the scene, Howard?

A short stare down.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Do we have it?!

BLOCH
No, Annie. We don't. We don't have the scene.

ANNIE
Then we're going again.

BLOCH
What?

ANNIE
We're going again.

BLOCH
I don't think that's a good idea. You're in no cond--

--*WHAM!* Annie pounds the table, shutting Bloch up. The phone rattles. He backs away a little.

ANNIE

(rising)

I'm not leaving this fucking sound stage until we get that scene exactly right. I'm not leaving here until you get whatever THE FUCK IT IS YOU WANT!

Her voice EXPLODES, shaking old dust loose. It rains.

Annie and Bloch stare each other down.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Let's go again.

Bloch nods.

Suddenly -- her eye stops twitching.

BLOCH

Okay, Annie.

He leaves.

And then she sees something stuck in the broken phone receiver, and narrows her brow. She plucks it out --

A TINY MICROPHONE. Weird. She looks back at the painting of Bloch. Staring at her.

Something changes in Annie's eyes. They harden. Darken. She looks a photo of her mother tacked to the wall.

ANNIE

He's not gonna win.

Her eyes pop with grit.

EXT. BEHIND THE SET - NIGHT

Annie is reading the pill bottle. Her eyes keen as she reads the side effects. Two words catch her eye --

Muscle spasms, hallucinations--

Annie dumps her bottle of little red pills in the garbage. A million thoughts speeding through her sleep-deprived head.

INT. BEDROOM SET - NIGHT

The walls look smaller still, squeezing Annie like a vice. She is vibrating with hate -- leg bouncing, jaw grinding, the speed thrumming through her veins.

The crew stands around in a circle, holding hands. Bela is reciting a prayer in his native tongue. Abbot is holding Annie's hand. He lifts up the tin of sardines, it trembles.

ABBOT
(angrily)
Szardínia?

She rips her hand away, and wipes it on her costume.

CHIRP! She locks eyes with BLUEBIRD perched on the rafters. She smiles big. Like it gives her strength somehow.

EVERYONE
Amen.

BELA
From all of us at Bloch
Filmindustri would like to extend
to you our deepest sympathies.

They all take off their hats at once, and bow. It's weird.

THE SKELETON CREW
NAVE DEEPRESTOVÉ SYMPATIE!

ANNIE
...Thank you.

BLOCH
I'm very proud of our young ingenue
for soldiering on during this
difficult time. She's under quite a
bit of mental strain, as you can
imagine, so let's all try and be
conscientiousness of--

ANNIE
--Amen. Alright, thanks. Let's
shoot. We're burning daylight.

Annie moves to her mark. All business. Everyone still bowing.

BLOCH
Uh, yes. Again, straight away.

The bow ends instantly, and they resume production.

Charlie takes his place.

CHARLIE
Hey. If you need to talk... about
anything... you know you can always
count on me. Support-wise.

He touches her gently, she pulls away.

ANNIE
Let's just do this please.

Looks backs at those yellow fucking butterflies on the walls.
Her eyes start twitching from speedy exhaustion.

BELA (LOUDSPEAKER)
WE'RE SET!!!!

The clapper enters FRAME.

JAN
"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.
Pick up. Take ninety one. Marker.

CLAP! Way too close and -- ANNIE SNAPS, SUDDENLY ENERGIZED --

ANNIE
NO! NO-- ABSOLUTELY NOT! HOW MANY
FUCKING TIMES, JAN?! HOW MANY
FUCKING TIMES?!

She rips the clapper out of his hands, breaks the stick off,
and HURLS it across the room. Jan glowers at her hatefully.

JAN
You shouldn't have done that.

Something evil in his eyes. She backs down a little.

ANNIE
I told you it was too close.

JAN
You shouldn't have done that.

BLOCH
Annie, what's going on?

ANNIE
I told him a hundred times.

JAN
(whispers)
You shouldn't have done that.

BLOCH
Are you sure you're okay, Annie?

Jan's hands ball into fists, he's trembling with RAGE.

ANNIE
(nervous)
Let's roll. Let's go please, let's
shoot. I'm ready.

She hears Abbot laughing. A sardine falls from above like a raindrop. She doesn't dare look. Bloch smiles.

BELA (LOUDSPEAKER)
WE'RE SET!!!! JSME PRIPRAVENI!

BLOCH
(to Jan)
You'll have to go without.

Jan approaches Annie, face to face. But she's not afraid.

Clapperless, Jan slowly... lifts... HIS HANDS... right in front... of Annie's eyes -- they stare each other down.

JAN
Second sticks. "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take ninety two. Marker.

CLAP! His finger grazes her nose. Annie's eyes pop.

SVEN
Camera set.

BLOCH
And--

ANNIE
--ACTION!!!!

Bloch balks. She stole his line. Everyone looks at Annie, but she's already in the scene--

THE SCENE

Annie backs away from Charlie in horror. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE
Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE
Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE
I know what I saw!

CHARLIE
Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE

**I'M NOT CRAZY! I
KNOW WHAT YOU DID!
I'M NOT CRAZY--**

It's so good and loud and powerful it makes Bela jump.

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

But Annie fights harder this time, and cracks Charlie in the chin with her elbow -- his head cracks against the wall. He snaps out of character momentarily.

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues. BUT ANNIE GASPS WHEN SHE SEES THE BROKEN FAMILY PHOTO ON THE FLOOR -- BECAUSE IT HAS CHANGED --

IT'S THE PHOTO OF ANNIE AND HER MOTHER!!!!

ANNIE (CONT'D)
NO!!!! STOPPPP!!!! CUTT!!!!

BACK TO SCENE:

Annie struggles to her feet, dizzy. She snatches the photo from the broken glass, cutting her finger, but she doesn't care, she's so angry.

Charlie is in pain, and rubbing his sore head.

CHARLIE
You hurt me--

ANNIE
Who did this?!

BLOCH
What are you doing, Annie? What did I tell you about stopping? No one ever says cut but me.

Annie points a bloody finger at Bloch.

ANNIE
You. I know what you're doing -- You're fucking with my head, aren't you? You think this is a some kind of game? Like I'm your little pawn?

Everyone is staring at her.

BLOCH
Annie. Calm down, and explain it to me slowly, I'm not understanding what you're telling me.

ANNIE
You don't have to literally drive me crazy, it's called acting, I can act! I went to Juilliard! Who did this?

She shoves the blood soaked photograph into his chest. He looks at it.

BLOCH
(unimpressed)
Timo. I believe he did it with the optical printer.

He slowly turns the photo around and it to her. It's the same photo it's always been. Charlie and Annie. A loving couple.

ANNIE
No.

The CREW is staring at her. Jan is eyeing her hatefully.

BLOCH
Annie... Have you been taking those pills again?

ANNIE
I thought it was--

BLOCH
You thought it was... what?

ANNIE
I'm sorry. I made a mistake.

BLOCH
You thought it was what, Annie?

Before she can answer --

BOOM OPERATOR
AHH! HELP ME! *Segítsen bezárva
vagyok!*

Annie looks at the BOOM OPERATOR holding the mic.

SOUND MAN
I can't lower my arms!

BLOCH
Not again.

BELA
Switch him out! *kapcsolja ki kérem!*

BLOCH
Quickly.

Bela and Sven take the boom out of the Sound Man's hands. His arms still reaching heavenward, locked in place from overuse.

Annie can't stop looking at those yellow fucking butterflies on the wallpaper. Her eyes narrow with suspicion.

WOOSH! The BLUEBIRD dive bombs Bloch! He ducks, and gasps as it bounces around the set --

BLOCH (CONT'D)
*WILL SOMEONE PLEASE KILL THAT
LITTLE FUCK!*

The crew snaps into action, chasing the bird around the set with blankets and brooms, crying to corner it.

Annie watches with bated breath, biting her lip. Once again the bird escapes. She smiles.

INT. GABOR'S STATION

Annie approaches the make-up table. Gabor is making blood.

ANNIE
Can I see my continuity book?

GABOR
Vat for?

ANNIE
I need a reference.

He huffs, annoyed. Pulls a leather bound book from his satchel. She walks off, and flips back to the start.

And the pictures tell a story. The first photo of Annie -- more than a year ago -- bright eyed and bushy tailed. Her searing blue eyes brimming with hope.

As she flips through of photos like a flip book, and we see the light slowly draining from her eyes, her smile fading, the hope dying. She finally finds what she's looking for --

Photos of Annie standing before the bedroom set wallpaper. The butterflies were ORANGE here. Just as she suspected.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I'm not crazy, I know what you did.

She steals the photo, and slaps the book shut. Puts it back. Snarls at Bloch, who is studying the chess board.

A NEW BOOM OPERATOR APPEARS out of nowhere as the old limps towards the exit with his arms still raised in the air.

BLOCH
Let's go again, straight away.

Annie goes to her mark. Still reeling.

BELA
Picture's up!

Jan approaches.

JAN
"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.

But Annie stops when she hears MUFFLED CRYING.

And catches a glimpse of an OLD WOMAN moving past the sally port of the elephant door. Her eyes bug.

BLOCH
Annie?

ANNIE
Um, excuse me just one minute,
silly me, I left something in my,
um-- once sec--

She dashes off the set --

BLOCH
WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?

ANNIE
JUST A SECOND!!!!

INT. CORRIDOR

Annie groans as she throws open the elephant doors, and peers into the dark, twisty corridor.

ANNIE
HELLO?!

Her voice is chewed up and spit out. The corridors are endless and EMPTY. Except for that rat skittering by.

AND A FAMILIAR VOICE... coming from around the corner. Just a wisp, against the rattling pipes...

MARY'S VOICE
Gummie bear?

ANNIE
...mom?

She chases down the sound, rounds the corner and --

There's nothing there. No one. She's about to turn back, but stops when she sees --

THE LOUDSPEAKER on the wall. Hidden in the shadows.

Annie's eyes narrow. The wheels turning.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I'm not crazy, I know what you did.

Her new mantra.

JAN (O.S.)
You shouldn't have done that.

Annie jumps. She turns around to find Jan standing behind her at the end of the corridor. Rabid.

GRIPPING HIS CLAPPER STICK LIKE A BATON. He takes a few steps towards her.

ANNIE
Jan, what are you--

JAN
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT!

His voice shakes the dust loose. *WHAMM!!!!* The door besides Annie SLAMS open, scaring the shit out of Annie.

BELA
He waits.

Annie clutches her heart. Looks at Bela. And then back to Jan -- who disappears around the corner.

INT. BEDROOM SET

Annie blasts on to the set, sweating her ass off, and hurries back to her mark, still reeling.

ANNIE
Sorry, about that, I found it-- I'm ready, I'm ready, LET'S GO AGAIN, LET'S SHOOT THIS FUCKER!
(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 I'M GONNA GET IT THIS TIME, HOWARD,
 JUST YOU FUCKING WATCH-- BACK TO
 ONE! LET'S GO AGAIN!

She pushes Sven and his camera back to one on the dolly herself, and then goes to her mark.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Charlie! Get the fuck over here,
 we're going again! Places!

He nods, a little scared of her and takes his mark.

Annie doubles takes, howls at Sven --

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 That fuckin' eyepatch has a mind of
 its own, Sven, what are yah
 smuggling under there, huh?!

Confused, Sven touches his patch, back on his right eye.

BLOCH
 I think we made a mistake. You're
 in no condition, Annie. It's time
 we cut our losses and --

ANNIE
NOW!

BLOCH
 (sighs)
 Very well. We're going again.

ANNIE
 I'm ready. Let's go. I'm ready.

Annie lifts her knife. The plastic blade falls off.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Shit! Timo! My knife broke again!
 This cheap shit--

Timo swoops in, shirtless for some reason, and hands Annie a new knife. He bows, sweating and delirious, and mutters away. The only person in the world more tired than she is.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 ...Thanks.

BLOCH
 Straight away please.

BELA (LOUDSPEAKER)
 WE'RE SET!!!! *JSME PRIPRAVENI!*

Jan approaches, like nothing happened. He smiles warmly at Annie. This is unsettling. He lift his hands a respectable distance from Annie's face -- she's suspicious --

JAN
 "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
 Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.
 Pick up. Take ninety-three. Marker--

Clap.

Suddenly -- AN HONEST TO GOD ORANGE BUTTERFLY FLUTTERS PAST HER FACE. Her jaw drops as she watches it fly up towards Abbot who is still staring at her. He catches it and eats it.

BLOCH (O.S.)
 Oh, and Annie...

She looks at him, studying his chess board.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 You are crazy.

His knight takes the queen, and he GRIPS the piece in his hands so tight his fist whitens.

ANNIE
 What?

BLOCH
 It's all in your head.

ANNIE
 ...What do you--

BLOCH
 --I've been thinking more about the question you asked me earlier. And that is my answer. You're crazy.

ANNIE
 You mean, my character. My character, Nancy.

CHARLIE
 Magic Time!

BLOCH
 ACTION, NANCY!

This throws her off, too, but she goes with it --

THE SCENE

Annie backs away from Charlie in horror. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

CHARLIE

Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE

I know what I saw!

CHARLIE

Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE

I'M NOT CRAZY!!!! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!!! I'M NOT--

CHARLIE

--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- **ATTACKS, way too hard --**

The knife cuts her, and draws blood. IT'S A REAL KNIFE! IT CATCHES THE KINO JUST RIGHT AND GLINT! THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues. Annie is screaming as they fight.

ANNIE

CHARLIE!!!!

HE CUTS HER -- SHE'S BLEEDING. Charlie SCREAMS snatches the knife from her and pushes her down HARD -- She cracks her head against the wall -- BAMM!! And all the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out. Like an exorcism. **Charlie raises the knife to finish the job and ANNIE HOWLS--**

ANNIE (CONT'D)

STOPPPPP!!!!!!!!

BACK TO SCENE:

BLOCH

Annie, that was perfect! Why did you--

ANNIE

(bleeding)
Oh, God, Oh God --

BLOCH

(stops)
Annie? What's wrong? That was it!
(MORE)

BLOCH (CONT'D)
That was the take, it was some of
the best acting I've ever--

ANNIE
--I WASN'T FUCKING ACTING, HOWARD!
IT WAS A REAL KNIFE!

Charlie gasps and drops the knife. It CLANKS on the ground.

CHARLIE
Oh shit!

BLOCH
Jesus Christ--
(screams)
MEDIC!

BELA (LOUDSPEAKER)
MEDIKUS!

The scrawny uniformed MEDIC sprints in with a first aid kit.
He examines Annie.

BELA (CONT'D)
He gave her the hero prop by
accident!

The MEDIC is cleaning her cut, and bandaging her up.

BLOCH
Is she okay?

ANNIE
I'm... fine.

BLOCH
Where the fuck is Timo?

Timo stands in the corner, shuddering. His eyes bugging.

TIMO
Sajnálom! sajnálom!

CHARLIE
Annie, I'm so sorry--

BLOCH
Fifty years in this business, and
no one has ever been injured on one
of my sets!

Annie backs away from everyone, on guard. Trusting no one.
Bloch turns to Timo. He has a urine stain around his crotch.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
You're finished, Timo.

TIMO
 PLEEEEEEZE!!! NO!!!! I BEG YOU!

He falls at Bloch's feet and kisses his shoes.

TIMO (CONT'D)
 (bawling)
 PLEEEEEEZE! I AM SORRRRRRRRRRRYYY!!! I
 DO NOT SLEEEEEEPP!!!!!!

BLOCH
 Get off my stage.

TIMO
 AHHHHHHHH!!!!!! NOOOOO!!!!!! I LOVE
 YOU, SIR! I LOVE YOU!! I no
 sleeeeeeeeeeeeeeep!!!!

Timo falls at Bloch's feet and kisses his shoes.

BLOCH
 Someone call security.

WHAMM!!! Security BLASTS in, and carries Timo away kicking
 and screaming -- spit flying.

ANNIE
 Howard?

He looks at her. She's holding her wound.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Did you do that on purpose?

BLOCH
 ...What?

ANNIE
 Timo's in on it, isn't he? You're
 all in on it. He did that on--

They're all looking at her.

BLOCH
 Annie, what are you--

TIMO (O.S.)
 --NOOOOOOOOOO!!!! YOUR FAULT! YOUR
 FAULT! YOU TERRIBLE ACTRESS!!!!!!

Timo breaks free from security, scoops up THE REAL KNIFE and
 charges Annie, screaming --

TIMO (CONT'D)
 A FILMEK AZ ÉLETEM! WHY DON'T YOU
 DO IT RIIIIIIIGHT!!!!!!

ANNIE CRIES OUT AS -- *SLISH!!!!*

TIMO SLICES HIS OWN THROAT AT ANNIE -- A GEYSER OF BLOOD SPLATTERING HER FACE LIKE A MONOCHROMATIC POLLOCK --

WHUMP! TIMO SLAMS TO HIS KNEES, AND CRUMPLES LIKE A RAG DOLL.

Everyone screams -- CHAOS!

THE BLUEBIRD from the rafters flies through the set, right past Annie's nose!

She collapses, covered in gore. Her cries shakes the world --

GZT! A MOVIE LIGHT SHORT-CIRCUITS -- SPARKS FLY AND --

WE'RE PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS! PITCH BLACK.

JAN (O.S.)
Baszd meg magad!

Annie is whimpering in the dark.

BLOCH (O.S.) SVEN (O.S.)
Damn it! What's going on?! The breaker.

Annie hears THE OLD WOMAN CRYING JUST AHEAD...

JAN (O.S.)
I will fix.

BLOCH (O.S.)
NOW! FIX IT NOW!

MARY'S VOICE
I'm so confused...

ANNIE
What? What?! Mom?!--

MARY'S VOICE
Gummie Bear?

It's Mary's voice -- it's unmistakable.

Annie sparks her lighter in the dark.

ABBOT'S SWEATY FACE IS INCHES FROM HERS --

ABBOT
Szardínia.

She screams and the light dies. The sound of Abbot scurrying away. She flicks her lighter again. Burnt orange flashes of --

THE OLD WOMAN IN HOSPITAL GOWN, STANDING IN THE WINDOW BEFORE THE DEEP DARK WOODS, SCREAMING TEARS...

It's hard to see in the shadows, but it looks a lot like--

ANNIE
MOM?!!!

GZTT!!! The light EXPLODE back on.

She shields her eyes and looks around, confused. Annie looks around -- But the woman is gone.

BLOCH
IS HE BREATHING?! TIMO?!

Annie looks over at the Medic performing triage on Timo, but the life is draining from his eyes. He gurgles.

Annie runs to the window where the woman was and looks out.

ANNIE
Where is she?!

She looks around, but there's no one there. She sees something else --

BELA'S LOUDSPEAKER. Her face twists into a hateful sneer.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I'm not crazy. I know what you did.

She looks back and sees Bela and Charlie helping the Medic to stop Timo's bleeding. Blood spurts.

Annie snaps into action, searching the set, throwing shit around, opening the prop closet, bleeding all over herself. Nothing inside. She falls to her knees and inspects the floor, everyone watching her, worried.

BLOCH
Annie! What are you doing--

ANNIE
--You have a trap door here, don't you? Where is it?! What have you done with her?!

BLOCH	ANNIE (CONT'D)
Do with who? What are you--	--The double you hired to play my mother! I know what you're doing!

MEDIC
He's dead, sir.

Bela gives himself the sign of the cross. Bloch staggers. Like he's about to faint. He has to sit.

ANNIE

It's part of it-- he's not dead,
it's all part of it--

BLOCH

Annie...

Annie looks at Timo lying there. The Medic closes Timo's eyes with a swipe of his fingers. And he really looks pretty good and dead. Annie's suddenly unsure. Annie stamps down her doubt and points to it the loudspeaker.

ANNIE

No! My mother's voice came from that speaker! You recorded our calls, my mother and me! You dressed up a double and Timo gave me that knife on purpose!

BLOCH

Timo is dead!

ANNIE

LIAR! IT'S MOVIE BLOOD! WAKE UP,
TIMO, YOU'RE A TERRIBLE ACTOR!

She shakes Timo's corpse. He jiggles.

She cocks her head.

BLOCH

You're manic! It's those pills,
isn't it?! You took too much again!

ANNIE

You changed the butterflies to fuck with me! This set is smaller,
you're closing in the walls!

BLOCH

You are not well. You're under too much pressure, it's my fault, I should have never let you go on, this was a terrible mistake--

CHARLIE

--Frances fuckin' Farmer over here.

Annie winds up, and PUNCHES CHARLIE IN THE FACE! He reels back, trips over Timo's body, and hits his ass.

Everyone gasps, and goes to Charlie's rescue, pampering him, and make sure he's okay.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM BARRY COHEN!

It dawns on her. She stops.

ANNIE

(gasps)

She's not dead is she? My mom's not
dead either! She's in New York!
Right now! That doctor was a
fucking plant, you lied to me, the
doctor was one of your minions!

BELA

Minions?

GABOR

Durva no vagy!

ANNIE

(checks the time)

She's still in New York waiting!
She's in surgery right now!

BLOCH

Oh, you poor thing.

ANNIE

MY MOTHER IS ALIVE!

She lunges at Bloch and latches on to him, screaming.

The Skeleton Crew SNAPS INTO ACTION -- detaining her, and
Annie bucks and kicks and screams AND SCREAMS.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Let me go! Let me go!

BELA

Shall I call the police?!

BLOCH

Let her go.

They let her go, and she falls on her ass. The Medic covers
Timo with a blanket from the bed. They carry him out.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Your mother is dead. She's dead.

ANNIE

No.

BLOCH

SHE'S DEAD--

ANNIE

WELL THEN WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS!!!!

She digs through her pocket and pulls out the continuity
Polaroid. She chucks it at him like a Ninja star.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I told you those butterflies were
orange --

BLOCH
I don't know what to say.

BELA
Shall I call the white coats, sir?

ANNIE
My mother is ALIVE AND
the fuckin butterflies
were O R A N G E !

Annie climbs to her feet. She grabs the Chess Board and HURLS it at Bloch. The board hits him in the eye and he cries out.

EVERYONE JUMPS ON ANNIE -- she fights them off, and for the first time, Bloch loses his temper --

BLOCH
YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD AND THEY'VE
ALWAYS BEEN ORANGE!

Everyone freezes. Annie too. They all look at him, trembling. A bloody tear falls down his face from the cut under his eye.

ANNIE
What?

They let her go. He points to the wallpaper. The butterflies are orange.

BLOCH
They've always been orange.

SVEN
And you've always been crazy.

His patch is back over the right eye.

ANNIE
NO!

She jumps on Sven and PULLS OFF THE EYE PATCH -- REVEALING AN EMPTY SOCKET, GAPING BACK AT HER --

Everyone gasps, Sven covers his eye in horror.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(weak)
...no.

She drops the eyepatch. It falls like a leaf.

BLOCH
Yes.

Yes. BELA Yes. JAN

She sits on the floor. Her mind spinning. Humiliated, Sven returns the patch to his eye.

BLOCH
Nancy. Your mother is dead.

CHARLIE
So is your career.

ANNIE
She's not dead, I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming, it's all a dream!

BLOCH
You've spoiled your dream. Your wildest dreams. You let me down, Nancy.

ANNIE
STOP CALLING ME NANCY! MY NAME IS ANNIE!

CHARLIE
She wants to be called by her character name now.

ANNIE
My character's name is Nancy!

BLOCH
You poor little ruin. Your character's name is Annie.

CHARLIE
Is that method?

She takes out her sides. The same pages she's always had. Her character's name is ANNIE.

ANNIE
NO! YOU SET THIS ALL UP, YOU'RE ALL LYING! MY MOTHER IS ALIVE! SHE'S IN NEW YORK! SHE'S WAITING FOR ME! I SAW A WOMAN! I SAW A WOMAN!

BLOCH ANNIE (CONT'D)
Grab her, Charlie, we have to STAY AWAY!
get her to a hospital--

Charlie is slowly inching towards Annie. Annie backs into the prop table. Snatches one of the REAL KNIVES --

ANNIE (CONT'D)
STAY AWAY FROM ME! STAY BACK!

CHARLIE
 (walking to her)
 You're seeing things, Nancy.

ANNIE
 STOP CALLING ME NANCY! I'M ANNIE!
 I KNOW WHO I AM!!!!

Annie is backing away from Charlie in horror. She is choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I KNOW WHAT I SAW!

CHARLIE
 You're sick, you need help.

ANNIE
 YOU SET THIS ALL UP, YOU'RE LYING!

CHARLIE
 Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy. Just give me the knife --

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE
 I'M NOT CRAZY!! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID! I'M NOT CRAZY!!

CHARLIE
 ----GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR.

It's the photo of Annie and her mother again. And she gasps -- because There are no butterflies on the wallpaper -- AND REAL BUTTERFLIES FLUTTERING AROUND THE ROOM.

AND THE WALLS ARE CLOSING IN -- CLOSER -- CLOSER -- TOO CLOSE! A struggle for the knife ensues. Annie is screaming as they fight. Charlie pushes her down, and she lands hard, and all the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, all comes out. Like an exorcism.

MARY (O.S.)
GUMMIE BEAR?!

A SPOTLIGHT EXPLODES, REVEALING --

Mary, in her hospital gown. A living skeleton. Walking out of the dark corridor, walking towards Annie. Lost. Confused.

THIS IS NO DOUBLE -- THIS IS MARY IN THE FLESH!!!

AND THEN ANNIE SCREAMS AND SCREAMS AND --

HER SCREAMS TRIGGER HER MOTHER, AND MOTHER AND DAUGHTER SCREAM TOGETHER --

**MARY (CONT'D)
...ANNIE! I'M LOST. WHERE WERE YOU!? WHY DIDN'T YOU COME?! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! OH GOD HELP ME!!!! OH GOD!! OH GOD!!! HELLLLLL ME!!!!!!**

ANNIE SEES HER MOTHER AND SCREAMS SO LOUD SHE SHAKES THE STAGE -- BLOOD VESSELS EXPLODE IN HER EYES--

**ANNIE
AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!**

AND SHE FAINTS DEAD, HITTING HER HEAD AGAINST THE WALL.

WHIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR ---

SUPER 8 HOME MOVIES --

YOUNG ANNIE (11) is dressed in a princess costume. She stands before her mother's whirring camera, holding an Oscar made out of paper mache.

YOUNG ANNIE
I'd like to thank the Academy, and God, and most of all, I'd like to thank my mama who always believed my dreams and supported me and lets me stay up late to watch Carson and is the best mama in the whole wide world. Go to bed kids!

So cute. And we see Mary in the mirror behind her.

MARY
You're a star, Gummie Bear.

INT. ANNIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Annie snaps awake and GASPS -- She's back in her dressing room. She's on the couch. She looks around. Horrified. Sweating. Her arm is bandaged.

A bouquet of flowers beside the smashed phone. A fifth of scotch. A bottle of Aspirin. A portable tape player. A small card the the words *PLAY ME* written on it.

She obeys. CHARLIE'S VOICE cuts through the HISS AND CRACKLE. *He sounds different.* Calmer, and more sincere.

CHARLIE'S VOICE

Annie! Charlie here, your favorite evil husband. I just had to say thank you. You did an amazing job. It was truly an honor to work with you, I have never seen anything like what you did. I hope Bloch didn't go to far in his quest for "the truth." I had to play along, I hope you understand. Whatever it takes to get the performance, right? I do think you'll find it was worth it, in the end when you're on stage accepting your Oscar. See you in LA! That's all for me. Your fan, Charlie. Magic Time!

CLICK. The tape stops. A beat.

And then Annie grabs the player and HURLS IT AT THE WALL! It explodes.

She tears up the flowers and THROWS THEM ACROSS THE ROOM.

She opens the fifth, and takes a swig. It feels like a thousand butterflies fluttering in her gut. She caps it, and stuffs it in her pocket.

She grabs the phone, tries to call New York, but its caput. She rips out the tiny mic and hurls it across the room.

She looks at the broken mirror. Sees Bloch standing behind her and SCREAMS. But it's only the panting. She tries to take it down, but the framed has been screwed to the wall. She grabs a shard of glass and tears out his eyes.

And gasps when she sees something behind it.

She rips way the canvas to reveal A PEEPHOLE.

ANNIE

Sickfuck.

Annie backs away. She tries the door. But the door is locked. She takes a beat. And then her face curls into an ugly snarl. She backs up like a bull, and with a running start --

WHAMMM!!!! Crashes into the door. It doesn't budge.

INT. BLOCH STUDIOS - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! The door is bowing as Annie hits it harder and harder. Giving it everything she's got and -- *WHAM-- CRACK!* Splinters fly as the door blasts off its hinges, and Annie kicks her way through. *Here's Johnny!*

She stumbles into the hallway. Looks around.

Empty. Dank. Drippy. A rat skitters by. She creeps down the dark and twisting corridors, towards the house phone. Picks it up, dials out.

ANNIE
(whispers)
Operator?

FEMALE OPERATOR
Mit akarsz kurva.

ANNIE
Thank God, I need to make a long
distance call to--

And suddenly, the operator switches to ENGLISH, and we recognize her voice --

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE
*Go back to your room, Annie, Howard
will be with you soon. He'll
explain everything.*

She gasps, and SLAMS the phone back down on the receiver.

Hears a throaty giggle behind her.

Turns to find --

ABBOT. Standing at the end of the hallway, he's so tall his head almost touches the ceiling. A hulking, infected beast.

Annie freezes. Abbott reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a tin of sardines. Offers them to her.

ABBOT
Szardínia.

Annie turns and BLASTS OFF -- RUNNING DOWN THE HALLWAY.

Abbot gives chase, the walls shaking as he SCREAMS. She turns a corner, picking up speed. Abbot is slow and lumbering, but his eyes are brimming with WANT.

Another sharp turn, and she SLAMS into a brick wall. stops.

ANNIE
FUCK!

She doubles back, and goes the other way, Abbot grabs after her, but she speeds up, and he slips, and eats shit.

ABBOT
SZARDÍNIA!!!!!!

He picks himself up, a rabid dog, and takes off after her.

Annie runs. Abbot is gaining on her. She is lost in this wild snaking labyrinth. Abbot mewling. Coming.

ANNIE
STAY AWAY FROM ME!!!!!!

Abbot bearing down, drooling, reaching for her -- She finds another door. Throws it open.

INT. DARK HALLWAY

Annie slams the door shut behind her, just as ABBOT SLAMS AGAINST IT -- and *CLICK!* Locks it.

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! He's banging on the door. Annie turns on the lights, and -- *GZZTTT!* Bright, buzzy fluorescence explode on, one by one, revealing --

A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR.

She moves down it. Slowly. She hears the familiar BLEEPS and BLOOPS. She turns the corner and sees --

A NURSES STATION. A NURSE walks past, but we only catch a glimpse of her.

ANNIE
What the fuck?

She sees the name on the hospital room before her --

"LONG, MARY." Her eyes widen. She enters the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Out the window, the stunning NEW YORK SKYLINE. The city is alive. A plane flying by. The HONK OF TRAFFIC.

Annie's jaw drops. She moves towards the hospital bed, shrouded by a curtain. Annie throws it open and gasps.

IT'S MARY!

ANNIE
Mom?!

MARY
Gummie bear?

ANNIE
How are you here?!

She bursts into tears and hugs her mother.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Oh thank God, mom. Thank God. I
knew they were lying, I knew it--

MARY
You came...

ANNIE
I'm here, mom. I don't know how,
but I'm here, and I'm never leaving
again...

MARY
Annie, you're full of blood.

ANNIE
It's fake, it's my costume. Have
you had your surgery?

MARY
I was supposed to have it
yesterday, but they brought me to a
new hospital. I'm so confused. I'm
having dreams. They have me on all
kinds of things, I'm dizzy, I'm all
confused with these medicines.

Annie is just vibrating with rage. Her hands balling into
punch-hungry fists.

ANNIE
It's okay now. I'm here.

MARY
(dazed)
I don't like this hospital. No one
helps me, they make me do things, I
have bad dreams, I'm in a big empty
place -- and there's a house... and
lights... and cameras... you're
there, too, and a man is trying to
kill you and -- the ugly nurse
comes in and gives me shots, and
she doesn't even say anything...
they make me all funny, I feel
funny, and I don't like it here...
I want to go back to Mount Sinai.

ANNIE
 Okay, ma. We're leaving. We're
 getting out of here, wherever we
 are, come on.

She grabs the wheelchair in the corner and opens it.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Come. Get in the chair.

Annie helps her mother down off the bed, very carefully. She
 puts her in the chair.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 How do you feel now?

MARY
 Fuzzy... These medicines.

ANNIE
 We're going back to New York.

MARY
 New York? But, where are we now?

Annie looks out the window at Manhattan.

ANNIE
 ... I don't know...

VOICE
 Deeeed someone call for a nurse?

She turns to find, JAKOB, the stand-in. Wearing a nurses
 costume.

MARY
 It's her!

GAZT! Suddenly, the New York Skyline sputters and dies.

Nothing but a vivid rear projection screen.

REEEEEEEE!!!!

THE HOSPITAL WALLS BREAK AWAY, AND ROLL OFF.

Annie gasps. And we're back on the MAIN STAGE. The HOUSE SET
 just beyond.

And there is THE SKELETON CREW. Smiling. Applauding. Charlie
is noticeably absent. Bloch is sitting in his chair, staring
at his chess board.

Annie grips her mother's wheelchair. Cowering. Mary is still
 dazed and confused from the meds.

MARY (CONT'D)
Annie... am I dreaming?

Annie grips the handles of the wheelchair so tight her knuckles whiten.

ANNIE
It's okay, ma. It's okay.

Bloch approaches. Annie stares at him. Hate pops in her eyes.

MARY
Is he the doctor?

BLOCH
Close. I'm the director. Hello, Mrs. Long! We meet at last! I've heard so much about you!

Bloch kisses her hand.

ANNIE
Don't touch her, you sick fuck.

MARY
This is the place from my dream.

BLOCH
Mine too, dear. Mine too.

Bloch stares at Annie, who is blocking him from her mother.

ANNIE
How did you get her here?

BLOCH
A magician never reveals his secrets.

ANNIE
Why are you doing this?!

BLOCH
...Anything worth doing is worth doing again.

Beat.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Annie... Have you ever heard of "The Red Shoes?"

ANNIE
...The movie?

BLOCH
The fairytale within the movie.

She says nothing. Just stares at him. Bloch circles her.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
It's a fairy tale by Hans Andersen. The story of a young girl who is devoured with an ambition to attend a dance in a pair of red shoes. She gets the shoes and goes to the dance. For a time, all goes well and she is very happy. At the end of the evening, she is tired and wants to go home, but the red shoes are not tired. In fact, the red shoes are never tired. They dance her out into the street, they dance her over the mountains and valleys, through fields and forests, through night and day. Time rushes by, love rushes by, life rushes by, but the red shoes go on.

She looks at him.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
I'm the Red Shoes, Annie. And you are the feet. And this is the fairytale within in the movie.

He turns the MONITOR around, and hits play --

ON SCREEN: *We see THE LAST TAKE -- Annie losing her mind -- for real. There's no acting happening here. ANNIE SEES HER MOTHER (OFF SCREEN) AND SCREAMS SO LOUD SHE SHAKES THE STAGE - - BLOOD VESSELS EXPLODE IN HER EYES--*

ANNIE
AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

AND SHE FAINTS DEAD, HITTING HER HEAD AGAINST THE WALL.

SVEN (O.S.)
Tail slate!

Jan swoops in and raises a fresh clap board a respectable distance from Annie -- passed out in a heap on the floor.

JAN
Tail slate. "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Pick up. Take ninety-six. Marker.

CLAP!

Bloch kills the video. Annie is in shock.

MARY
Annie? Was that your movie on the television? Was that you?

BLOCH
Wasn't she great? She has you to thank for that.

The Skeleton Crew applauds and whistles.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
Your last take was perfection, Annie. Your mother brought it out of you, not me. Well, me too. A little. You see, you're a talented young thing, but you need unlocking. I knew this from the start. And I knew your mother was the key to the lock. You went beyond acting, into veracity. You gave me the truth. That's all I ever wanted from you...

The shock falls off her face. Replaced by uncut rage.

MARY
Who is that man?

ANNIE
(trembling)
It's okay, mom, we're leaving.

MARY
I know that man...

Annie knows it's hopeless, but she pushes her mother towards the exit anyway. Sure enough, Jakob and Bela block her path.

BLOCH
We're not finished.

She turns back.

ANNIE
You said it was perfect.

BLOCH
Yes. But now we need to push in for your close-up.

A beat.

And then Annie snaps -- LUNGES AT BLOCH! SCREAMING -- SHE TACKLES HIM TO THE GROUND AND CLIMBS ON TOP OF HIM AND -- WHAPP!! CONNECTS A SINGLE CONCUSSIVE BLOW --

The Crew pulls her off of him and she's kicking at the air, rabid and howling --

MARY

Annie! Annie, be nice!

Bela helps Bloch to his feet. Bloch wipes the fleck of blood from his lip with an embodied hanky. Smiles --

BLOCH

Save it for the scene, dear.

The Crew wrangles Annie as she kicks and screams and spits at him. They hold her down, and she's no match.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

This is the most important shot of the picture. In fact, without this shot there is no picture. This is what we've been working towards all along, Annie. The human face. The height of cinema. The close-up is the greatest invention of the twentieth century. Give me the gift of the human face.

ANNIE

LET GO OF ME!!!!

BLOCH

(to the crew)

Let her go.

They do, and she violently rips herself away.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Let's go again.

ANNIE

(breathless)

...And if I say no?

BLOCH

Would you like to know what happens at the end of the Red Shoes?

She says nothing.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Ask me, Annie. Ask me what happens.

She doesn't.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

(dark)

Ask. Me.

ANNIE
What happ--

BLOCH (CONT'D)
In the end, the young woman
tries to chop off her feet,
but that doesn't work either.
Her amputated feet, still
dance in the red shoes, they
dance before her. They dance
on, forever.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You're a psychopath.

BLOCH
No. I'm an auteur.

Annie goes to her mother and grips her wheelchair tightly.

MARY
Annie? What is this?

ANNIE
It's okay, ma... it's okay...

BLOCH
I made you a promise. I'm going to
win you an Academy Award. One way
or another. That's what you wanted,
isn't it? That's all you ever
wanted... since you were small.
Standing before your mother's
camera, gummie bear.

MARY
...I know you, mister... You're
Howard Bloch.

BLOCH
Yes, ma'am.

MARY
Can I have your autograph?

BLOCH
Absolutely.

Annie cringes.

MARY
I love all your pictures. I was so
happy when Annie told me she was
working for you.

BLOCH
You've raised a very talented young
actress, haven't you? She's going
to win an Oscar.

MARY
She's got the goods, mister. I
always told her so...

BLOCH
You've been a good mother to her.

Bloch autographs the call sheet for her. She's overjoyed,
even in her medicinal delirium. Annie shudders.

ANNIE
She needs her surgery.

BLOCH
Yes. And she'll get it. Just so
long as you... give me what I want.

Annie snaps, and tries to attack again, but doesn't get far --
The crew was ready.

ANNIE
I'm going to fucking kill you.

MARY
Annie! What's gotten into you?

ANNIE
(frazzled)
Sorry-- sor--

BLOCH
(smiles)
Are you ready for you close-up?

ANNIE
Over my dead body.

BLOCH
No. Over hers.

Click. Jakob pushes a pistol up to Mary's temple.

ANNIE
No, no. Those guns aren't real.
This is part it, it's all part of
your lie.

BLOCH
Jakob?

Jakob lifts the gun and -- *BLAMM! BLAMM!* Fires a few rounds
at the BLUEBIRD perched on the rafters, making Mary cover her
ears. Annie gasps as the bird flies away.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
No more lies.

MARY
Annie?! What is this?

ANNIE
It's okay, Mom... It's...

MARY
ANNIE?! WHAT IS HAPPENING?! I'M
SCARED! I-- I--

The light bulb goes off.

ANNIE
It's only a movie!

MARY
What?

ANNIE
It's a movie, mom, all of this --
it's movie magic.

MARY
Am I... in a movie?

ANNIE
Yes, ma, see the camera? You have a
small part, you have a cameo!

MARY
(clapping)
Like Hitchcock?!

ANNIE
Act scared. Real good and scared.

Mary acts "scared" as Jakob pushes the gun into her temple.

MARY
I'M SO SCARED!

Mary is not a great actress.

Annie is horrified... acting brave. If she deserves an Oscar
for anything, it's this.

BLOCH
Clever, Annie. If you put half of
that creativity energy into your
performance, we would have been
done long ago. Now. You're about to
give the performance of your life.
For your life. And for your
mother's life. Give me what I want,
and I'll let you go.

ANNIE
WHAT! DO! YOU! WANT!

BLOCH
Verisimilitude.

They march her over to her mark. She looks over and sees live butterflies in cages. A butterfly net. Rolls of wallpaper. A table of framed photos. The framed photo of her and her mother. She wasn't seeing things.

TIMO APPROACHES, very much alive.

ANNIE
Timo?!

He takes a clumsy bow. And then he gives her the real knife. It glints. She looks down at it...

ANNIE (CONT'D)
...This is real.

BLOCH
That is what I want.

Timo pulls a MASSIVE LEVER, and like a slot machine, the butterflies on the wallpaper turns from orange to yellow.

MARY
Annie... Is this a horror movie?

Annie stamps down her UTTER TERROR -- AND MANAGES A LAUGH!

ANNIE
Yes, mom! Yes! Isn't this wild?!

MARY
Like The Texas Chainsaw?

ANNIE
Exactly like that, mom! It's make believe, it's movie blood!

MARY
(claps)
Ooooo, nasty.

BLOCH
(screams)
ABBOT!

Abbot, still dressed in Charlie's costume lumbers on to the stage, smiling toothlessly at Annie.

ANNIE
No.

BLOCH

Charlie's wrapped. He's somewhere over the mid-Atlantic. We don't need him for your close-up.

Bloch takes Abbot's hand, and leads this hulking monster over to Charlie's mark. He looms over Annie, built like a brick shithouse. Bloch speaks loudly, in that condescending tone reserved for the feeble minded and the elderly.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Abbot...

ABBOT

Igen.

BLOCH

Your motivation, Abbot, is to try and get Annie. If you get her, you can have for your pet.

ABBOT

Igen.

BLOCH

Annie, your motivation is to kill Abbot, so he doesn't take you for his pet.

ANNIE

--kill him?!

BLOCH

No more lies, Annie. I told you. Only the truth from now on. The truth. That's all I ever wanted from you. Everything. That's all.
(beat)
Let's get it up on its feet.

Bloch walks away.

MARY

I love scary movies!

Annie goes to her mother, kneels down before her. Trying like hell to stay calm --

ANNIE

(struggling)
Isn't this fun?! You're gonna get to see me act like you wanted.

MARY

I'm excited. I have butterflies.

ANNIE
 (snaps)
Where?!

MARY
 In my belly.

ANNIE
 Whatever happens, remember it's
only a movie. Say it.

MARY
 It's only a movie.

ANNIE
 I'm gonna win an Oscar for you. And
 you're gonna be my date to the
 ceremony. Like we always said.

MARY
 Break a leg, Gummie Bear.

BLOCH
 Yes, Annie. Break a leg.

Jakob wheels Mary over to the set. Gun cocked.

MARY
 (acting)
 HELP ME, I'M SCARED!

Mary giggles, having fun.

BELA
 Picture's up. Places.

Annie goes to her mark. Abbot licks his lips.

ABBOT
 You my pet. MINE!

MARY
 Ooh. He must be the bad guy!

Abbot farts. Mary groans. Abbot giggles. He's so big.

ANNIE
 ...God help me.

Jakob presses the barrel even harder against Mary's temple.

MARY
 (whispers)
 Not so hard, young man.

CHIRP! CHIRP!

Annie looks over at her friend, THE BLUEBIRD. Perched on the MASSIVE PYRAMID OF SPENT FILM. Million of feet, the holy celluloid tower. Almost touching the ceiling.

Jan lifts a MINIATURE CLAPPER up to Annie's face. One used for close-ups.

JAN
 "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Close-up. Take One. Marker.

WHAPPP!!!! Annie stares into the lens, like a hostage staring down the barrel of a gun.

SVEN
 Camera set.

BLOCH
 Settle. And Action, Annie.

Sven dollies in and --

WE'RE PLUNGED INTO THE SCENE WITHIN THE SCENE --

Annie is backing up from Abbot in horror. She is choking on tears as she wields the very fucking sharp knife. Abbot has the sweet, sweet kill in his beady, hepatitis eyes.

BLOCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 DO THE LINES, ANNIE!

She looks at Bloch -- are you kidding?

BLOCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 DO THE FUCKING LINESSSSSSSSSS!!!!!!!!!!

ANNIE
 STAY AWAY FROM ME! STAY BACK!

And Abbot is actually trying to act --

ABBOT
 GAHHH. GIMMIE KNIFE, PET. I NOT A HURRRRRRT YOU. YOU NEEEEED HELPING.

ANNIE
 I know what I saw!

ABBOT
 NANCY. I WORRY SOOOO. YOU'RE NOT WELLLLLLL. YOU SOUND ORÜLT--

Abbot grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE
 I'M NOT CRAZY! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!

ABBOT
 --GIMMMMMMMMMIE!!!!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. Crying in fright, as she fights for her life.

ABBOT BARRELS AT HER, SCREAMING! REACHES FOR HER --

She STABS Abbot in the arm -- hard, and he cries out in pain.

Now he's grunting, foaming at the mouth like a rabid water buffalo. He grabs after her and she pivots and he LUNGES, pushing her against the wall!

ABBOT (CONT'D)
 AHHHHHHHHH!!!!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR. A struggle for the knife ensues.

WE HEAR MARY SCREAMING.

ANNIE
 MOM!!! IT'S ONLY A MOVIE!!!!

ABBOT
 YOU ARE MY PET!

Panicking, Annie manages to grab the knife just as Abbot falls on top of her, and --

SLISHHHH!!! THE KNIFE PLUNGES INTO HIS CHEST!

Abbot sucks in a breath, falls on his back, spurting blood.

ABBOT (CONT'D)
 I love you... My... Pet...

The light dies in his eyes. Annie falls over, screaming -- dripping in sweat and tears and blood.

All the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out in an exorcism.

BACK TO SCENE:

THE CAMERA DOLLIES IN ON HER -- Bloch's eyes wide with delight -- transfixed by the wonder of her performance.

BLOCH
 Okay. Cut. Print that one. Wow.

They turn Abbot over. The knife sticking out of his chest.

Annie's scream turns into a pathetic moan as she curls up in the fetal position, shivering, in a daze--

ANNIE
 (muttering)
 Is it real? Is this real?

The Crew carries Abbott out. He's so heavy, it takes four of them. His limbs flopping.

MARY
 ...This is going to be rated R.

Annie manages to prop herself up on one arm, slowly coming back to planet earth. Trying to catch her breath, wiping Abbot's blood from her eyes.

ANNIE
 Is he--

BLOCH
 (jumps to his feet)
 --It's so real, Annie! So real!
 It's so good. You're wonderful! It was perfect!

Annie's jaw drops.

ANNIE
 (rising)
 ...what?

BLOCH
 Annie, that was superb...

After hundreds and hundreds of takes, she finally gets a compliment.

A smile flashes across her face, almost like a reflex...

And then --

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 There's more there to explore.

Hate deforms Annie's face.

She just stands there, like a statue.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 Let's go again. You're doing a wonderful job...

Timo swaps out the props.

Gabor approaches to clean the blood off of her --

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 Leave it, Gabor. I like it.

GABOR
It won't match, sir.

BLOCH
Continuity is for kids.

Annie swallows her pain, quelling her fear for mom.

MARY
Annie, you're the best actress I've
ever seen in my life. And I'm not
just saying that because you're my
little baby girl.
(to Jakob)
That's my daughter.

Jakob smiles at her, gripping the gun tighter. Sven changes
the camera roll, and Jan adds the film to the holy tower.

Jan and Bela enter with --

Laszlo, dressed in Charlie's costume.

Petrified. He has a black eye.

ANNIE
No.

BLOCH
Again, Annie.

They push Laszlo over to the mark.

ANNIE
Lasz.

LASZLO
(tears)
I'm sorry, miss.

Laszlo points to the corner where Gabor marches LASZLO'S
FATHER on to the set. Dressed in ratty clothes.

His eyes are lookless and cloudy. Trembling with fear,
muttering in his foreign tongue.

LASZLO (CONT'D)
It's my papa, miss.

Timo sits Laszlo's Father next to Mary. An uzi aimed at him.

MARY
That plot thickens! Hello, sir. I'm
Mary Long, Annie's mother.

LASZLO'S FATHER (SUBTITLED)
*Laszlo? My son? Are you here? What
 is happening to me?!*

LASZLO (SUBTITLED)
*I'm here, Papa. Everything is okay,
 Papa, I'm here.*

Bloch approaches Annie and Laszlo.

BLOCH
 Okay. Laszlo, your motivation is to
 kill Annie. Here are the stakes. If
 you don't, I will kill your father.

Laszlo shudders.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 Annie, your motivation is to kill
 Laszlo. If you don't, I will kill
 your mother. Is that clear?

They say nothing.

Jakob tickles Mary's temple with the gun.

MARY
 Ooh lala.

BLOCH
 (claps)
 Great.

Timo stabs the gun into the father's ribs.

LASZLO'S FATHER
 Laszlo?!

LASZLO
 PAPA! IT'S OKAY!

BELA
 Picture's up!

LASZLO
 Miss... I... I don't know what to
 do. I didn't know he was... mad. I
 just thought he was a genius.

ANNIE
 Come here.

Annie gives Laszlo a hug. They both have tears in their eyes.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Whatever happens, Lasz, I just want
 to thank you for being so good.

LASZLO

And... I want to thank you for letting me watch you work. You are a great, great talent.

ANNIE

You've been a good friend to me.

LASZLO

I'm sorry... I'm sorry I have to kill you now.

They lock eyes.

JAN

"Untitled Howard Bloch Horror Project." Scene one eighteen alpha. Close-up. Take two. Marker.

WHAP! Jan slaps Annie harder. She cringes.

SVEN

Camera set.

BLOCH

Settle. And action, Annie!

THE SCENE

A hysterical Annie backs away from Laszlo. Choking on tears as she wields the knife.

ANNIE

Stay away from me! Stay back!

LASZLO

Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE

I know what I saw!

LASZLO

Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it.

ANNIE

I'M NOT CRAZY!!!! I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!!! I'M NOT CRAZY!!!!

LASZLO

--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now.

She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR.

A struggle for the knife ensues.

Laszlo TACKLES HER. Falls on top of her. Pins his knee into her stomach. Annie is fighting like hell.

LASZLO (SUBTITLED) (CONT'D)
IT'S ALRIGHT, PAPA! HAVE NO FEAR!
FOGOK BETOLNI, HOGY TETSIK A HALAT!

Laszlo SLASHES her across the shoulder and she screams -- SLISH!! Again, in the stomach -- blood everywhere --

As he raises the knife to finish the job, Annie manages to KNEE HIM IN THE GROIN.

He screams out and drops the knife, keeling over --

Annie falls on top of her friend and snatches the knife--

LASZLO (CONT'D)
No! Please! No!

ANNIE
I'M SORRRRRRY!!!!!!!

She's about to bring it down on him -- But she sees HIS EYES.

The fear. The kindness.

She drops the knife, and collapses beside him.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I can't--

Laszlo, lying beside her, catching his breath. He starts to cry, too... destroyed...

LASZLO
Miss... I'm sorry, miss...

BLOCH (O.S.)
Annie. What did I say about stopping?

BACK TO SCENE:

Bloch snatches the gun from Jakob.

ANNIE
I can't...

BLOCH
 (waving the gun)
 Never stop. Unless I tell you to
 stop. Never. Ever. STOP.

ANNIE
 I CAN'T DO IT! I WON'T!

Laszlo is picking himself up off the floor.

BLOCH
 You can. You will. Annie, you must.
 He puts the gun back to Mary's temple himself. Cocks it.

MARY
 Ouch!

BLOCH
Kill him. That is the truth of the
 scene...

ANNIE
 I WON'T DO IT! HE WAS THE ONLY ONE
 WHO WAS EVER NICE TO ME!

BLOCH
 Because that is his job!

ANNIE
 What?

She turns to Laszlo. Confused.

BLOCH
 ...I told Laszlo to be nice to you,
 like I told him to tell you I told
 them to be mean to you. You see? He
 does what I tell him. They all do.

ANNIE
 That's not true.

Laszlo rises, and bows. A horrible smile creeps across
 Laszlo's face.

LASZLO
 (dark)
 I am a good actor, too, miss.

ANNIE
 ...You sonofabitch...

BLOCH
 Yes. Yes, use it!

ANNIE

You piece of shit, Lasz. You--

She hears Laszlo's father whimper. She calls out --

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(to his father)

CUT THE ACT, "DAD!" YOU'RE REALLY
OVERDOING IT WITH THE WHOLE BLIND
PEASANT THING, ALRIGHT!!!

BLOCH

Kill him, Annie, finish the scene.

MARY

I don't think I like this movie
anymore...

ANNIE

Mom. It's okay. It's almost over, I
promise. This is the climax now.
This is the scariest part.

(dark)

This is the part where Nancy gets
her revenge, and slits her
pathetic, sniveling husband's
throat. And then she goes mad and
kills everyone around her, one by
one. Guts 'em like fish.

She locks eyes with Bloch.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(lightening)

And after that, it's the
resolution, and everyone learns
their lessons, and becomes
stronger, and better, and everyone
lives happily ever after.

MARY

...Promise?

BLOCH

Go back to your mark, Annie.

ANNIE

There's always a happy ending, mom.
Always.

MARY

Even in a horror picture?

Annie hesitates. *It's a good point.*

Bloch takes her back to her mark.

ANNIE

It's going to be the great pleasure of my life, killing you, Howard.

BLOCH

This anger you have towards me. This resentment. I want you to use it, Annie. Use it. We're so close!

ANNIE

What is that supposed to be, direction? You have NO CLUE how to talk to actors.

Bloch balks a little.

BLOCH

Yes I do.

ANNIE

Mom, we're doing it again, we're going one more time--

MARY

Why? The last one was perfect.

ANNIE

I know, mom, but we're going again, that's how movies work. There are many, many takes -- so the director can make choices in the editing. Especially directors who are weak, and unprepared, and indecisive, and don't know what they want.

Bloch narrows his brow.

BLOCH

And some directors, Mrs. Long, are forced to do many takes to get their actresses to stop acting, and start being.

MARY

That's very interesting trivia... I'm a film buff.

ANNIE

Howard is more of a "selector" than a director.

BLOCH

And Annie has so much to learn. And so little time to do it in.

Sven starts rolling.

LASZLO

Annie Time Now. Annie Time Now.

Suddenly, Annie tilts her head back and HOWLS, like a million banshees screaming in hell. Her eyes POP WITH HATE, spooking Laszlo --

ANNIE

I'm not crazy I know what you did,
MOTHER FUCKER! YOU FUCKKKKK!!!
AHHHHHHA!!! I'm not crazy--

She spits at him.

BLOCH

Roll camera! Tail slate!

LASZLO

AHHHHHHHH!!!!

Laszlo runs at her and --

STABS ANNIE IN THE COLLAR BONE!!!

Sven is capturing everything --

THE SCENE

A rabid Laszlo falls on top of Annie. Hell dancing in his eyes as he raises the knife, possessed and --

Laszlo lunges and STABS, but Annie ducks and --

WHAM!!! KICKS HIM IN THE FACE!

ANNIE

You little fuck!

His teeth chatter across the floor. He drops the knife.

LASZLO

KURVA!

Annie snatches the stray knife and --

Stabs Laszlo in the gut, falling on top of him. TWISTS.

The life falls from his eyes. And a death rattle escapes his lips -- Blood spilling out of his mouth.

ANNIE

AHHHHH!!! HAAAAAAA!!!!

SHE TWISTS THE KNIFE AGAIN, BURYING IT DEEPER, DEEPER--

And he sucks in his last breath, as she spills his insides.

LASZLO
 (dying)
*...nightmares... tonight...
 misssssssss....*

Laszlo is dead.

She jumps to her feet.

BACK TO SCENE:

LASZLO'S FATHER
 (gagged)
MY SONNNNNN!!!!!!!!!!

Annie turns to his grieving father who is screaming through his gag.

ANNIE
 YOU'RE NOT HIS FATHER, AND HE'S NOT
 DEAD!

BLOCH
 Kill him, Gabor.

ANNIE
 Hold on...

BLOCH
 KILL HIM!

ANNIE
 Bullshit, that's not really his--

Gabor sprays Laszlo's father with bullets --

RATTTATATATATATAATATA!!! He crumbles to his knees, dead.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 NO! NO, NO--

She hits her knees, the breath ripped from her lungs.

BLOCH
 I told you. Only the truth, Annie.

ANNIE
*HE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH
 THIS!!!*

BLOCH
 Only the truth from now on.

She topples over.

All the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out. Like an exorcism.

THE CAMERA dollies in on her.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 Okay. Cut. Print it. FANTASTIC!
 FANTASTIC, ANNIE! THIS IS THE BEST
 ACTING I'VE EVER SEEN! SUPERB!

Annie can't stop crying.

Suddenly, Laszlo's "father" leaps to his feet, making Annie jump. He's very much alive. And definitely not blind. He dusts himself off and BOWS.

BELA
 That's a wrap on Sandor.

The CREW claps for Sandor.

ANNIE
 WHO THE FUCK IS SANDOR?!!

BLOCH
 Sandor Egressye, Annie. The
 Hungarian Vaudevillian.

Sandor takes the cloudy contacts out of his eyes. And does a little dance for them all.

Annie falls back. She is so spent now, destroyed, confused. She has nothing left. She can't even react anymore. She just stares off into space. Her mouth slowly falling open.

MARY
 Annie?! Annie, are you okay?

Bloch hovers over Laszlo's body.

BLOCH
 It's sad to see Lasz go. He was a a
 very good filmworker. But he died
 doing what he loved.

The crew picks up Laszlo's body and carries him out of there.

MARY
 Annie...?

ANNIE
 (snaps out of it)
 IT'S ONLY A MOVIE!!!!!!

BELA
 Back to one.

ANNIE

No. I'm... losing too much blood...

BLOCH

Keep bleeding it adds something.

MARY

Annie?

ANNIE

...It's okay, mom.

MARY

Annie... I want this movie to end.
I want it to end. I don't like it.

BLOCH

Everyone's a critic.

Mary starting to get worried.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

Let's go again.

Annie gasps, because --

The entire skeleton crew is putting on Charle's outfit now.

Gabor, Sven, Jan, Timo, Bela, the Medic, and Security and the Sound Guy. All doubling Charlie. All holding knives.

Sven is not wearing an eye patch. Two perfect green eyes.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

I knew you were the girl for me.
From the get. There was never
anyone else. You are Nancy, Annie.
Annie, Nancy. You were born to play
this part. And maybe you'll die
playing it. This is the take that
will win you the Oscar. Maybe
posthumously.

ANNIE

I don't give a fuck about the
Oscar. I never did. I wanted to get
nominated so I could take my mom to
the ceremony. That's all it was...
something for her to live for.

BLOCH

Well. Now it's something for her to
live through. Which will be just as
motivating for the both of you.

ANNIE

AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

She runs at Bloch and TACKLES HIM TO THE FLOOR.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
CUT!! CUT, YOU FUCK!!

He panics, and grabs her hand, she stabs him in the SIDE--

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 The shoes loose!

Before she can bring the knife down again, the crew pulls her off, kicking and screaming.

And Bloch is bleeding. For the first time, he looks shaken.

The medic runs to him, checks him out. Bloch pushes him away--

BLOCH
 I'm fine! Leave me alone!

ANNIE
 I've never wanted anything more in my life than to see the life drain from your beady little auteur eyes.

BLOCH
 (shaken)
 I'm willing to die for my art, Annie. Are you?

ANNIE
 No, Howard. But I'm willing to kill for it.

BLOCH
 LET'S GO AGAIN!

BELA
 Picture's up.

ANNIE
 REMEMBER MOM--

MARY
 I know... It's only a movie.

The crew drags her to her mark.

Gabor comes. Stands on Charlie's mark. Gripping the knife. He glances at her bruises, her blood --

GABOR
 You make my job easier every day.

BLOCH
 Let's go again.

Just stares at him. He looks at her.

CHIRP. CHIRP.

Annie looks back to the BLUEBIRD perched canisters. So much film. So much hard work. The bird shits on the canisters, and flies away.

Jan sticks the small clapper board up to Annie's face.

JAN
 "Untitled Howard Bloch Horror
 Project." Scene one eighteen alpha.
 Close-up. Take four. Marker.

WHAPP!!!

BLOCH
 Action!

And then something breaks in Annie. The light dies in her eyes. She just stands there. In a trance.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 Annie?

Finally --

ANNIE
 ...I'm not crazy...

BLOCH
 From the top please, Annie--

ANNIE
 (muttering)
*I'm not crazy I know what you did
 I'mnotcrazyIknowwhatyoudid--*

BLOCH
 Let's go again.

She falls to her knees. Shooting delirious looks around. Like she has no idea where she is --

ANNIE
 I'm not crazy I know what you did.
 I'm not crazy. I'm not crazy, I'm
 not crazy, I'm--

Muttering it, mumbling, slurring. Her eyes wet with insanity.

GABOR
 Uh-oh.

MARY
 Annie?

BLOCH
Keep filming, Sven...

BELA
Master. I think she's looney tunes.

GABOR
Give her some room.

Annie starts screaming, moaning, too far gone, SLAMMING HER HEAD AGAINST THE FLOOR, harder and harder and --

ANNIE
I'M NOT CRAZY! I'M NOT CRAZY! I'M--

MARY
(to Jakob)
Sir? Is this part of the movie?

--Annie climbs to her knees, starts stumbling around the set, ripping out her hair, blood falling down her face, tripping over herself as she stumbles towards the tower of film.

She starts tearing at her costume, laughing now -- LAUGHING WITH TERMINAL GLEE ---

ANNIE
HAAAAAAAAA!!!!!! I'M
NOOOOOTTTTTTTTTT CRAZZZZZY!!!

BLOCH
(teeth gritted)
Beautiful, Sven, stay tight, it's beautiful! It's so beautiful--

Sven is filming, handheld, Bloch holding his shoulders, guiding the shot --

Annie starts slapping herself in the face as she moves towards the tower of film cans, screaming, her insane eyes pin-balling in her head --

ANNIE
I'M NOT CRAZY! I'M NOT CRAZY! I'M
NOT CRAZY! I'M NOT CRAZY!

She reaches into her pocket and grabs the fifth of whiskey from her dressing room. Pounds it --

BLOCH
Tighter, Sven!

ANNIE
I'MMMMM NOOOOTTTTTTTTTT
CRRRAAZYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!

Bloch is Suddenly --

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Howard...

The *crazy* vanishes from her face.

Her eyes are *hers* again.

She smiles.

Bloch is jarred.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(calmly)

I'm not crazy.

Annie turns and hurls the whiskey at the magnificent tower of film cans. The bottle breaks a spills. She sparks her lighter.

BLOCH

No-- NO!

ANNIE

That's a wrap.

She tosses her lighter at the pooling booze and --

WOOOOOOOSHSHHHHH!!!!!!! THE HIGHLY COMBUSTIBLE NITRATE GOES UP IN FLAMES!

BLOCH

MY MASTERPIECE!!!!!!!

Bloch screams in utter horror and runs to his beautiful, burning film.

BLOCH (CONT'D)

NO! NO! NO! HELP ME!!! HELP ME!!!

A roiling Jan grabs after Annie, but she snatches the mini clapper from his hand and --

ANNIE

MAGIC TIME!

WHAPPPP!! STABS HIM IN THE EYE with the checkered stick! He runs around screaming, trying to pull it out of his socket.

The panicked skeleton crew are too busy to notice -- hard at work, hollering in their natives tongues, trying to put out the fire with blankets.

Timo catches fire, running like a chicken with his head cut off. Bela runs for the fire extinguisher as the fire spreads, engulfing Bloch, and the stage around him --

BELA
 MASTER!!!!

When Bela looks back -- Annie and Mary are gone.

INT. CORRIDORS

Annie pushes Mary town the long endless, winding halls and passages, she's lost. Trying to find her way.

MARY
 Where are we going?

ANNIE
 Home, mama.

MARY
 There's no place like home.

But Annie hears the crackle of fire. Feels the warmth. Turns to see --

The orange flicker playing on the wall -- like the fire is spreading around the corner...

BLOCH (O.S.)
 LET'S GO AGAIN!!!!

Annie gasps when she sees the orange glow getting closer and--

BLOCH, ENGULFED IN FLAMES, ROUNDING THE CORNER!!! Running down the hall with THE FILM CAMERA ON HIS SHOULDER -- WHIRRRRRR -- a ball of flames, filming them --

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 LET'S GO AGAIN! LET'S GO AGAIN!

Annie pushes harder, barreling down the hallway.

BLOCH (CONT'D)
 LET'S GO AGAIN! LET'S GO AGAIN!
 LET'S GO AGAIN! LET'S GO AGAIN!

Bloch's fire spreads to the walls as he gives chase, committing them to fiery celluloid, and he is his own light source. And Bloch burns to death as he runs.

MARY
 Annie!

Bloch can't run any more... And crumbles into a heap on the floor. A burnt and smoldering husk.

Annie goes to him, looming over him. She picks up the Panavision camera like a boulder.

Ashes billowing off his head like dead snow. Mary covers her eyes.

BLOCH
Let's... go... aga--

WAMMM!!!! Brings the camera down on his skull. *SPLAT!*
Flattening him like a pancake.

ANNIE
I'm not crazy. I know what you did.

Annie scoops Mary out of the chair, into her arms, and carries her like a child. She's light as a feather.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
This is the end! We're gonna wake
up in Kansas, it was all a dream!

Annie carries Mary down the endless hallway... Snaking around the corner. Through a familiar door.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Annie enters with her mom in her arms, running down the hospital hallway. She takes another turn. Sees an EMERGENCY EXIT beside the nurses station.

INT. STAIRWELL

Annie carries her mother down the stairs. Flight after flight, sweat pooling down her face.

ANNIE
Don't worry, hang on. We're almost
there... you can hear the music
swelling, the credits are about to
roll --

And ANNIE HUMS THE THEME SONG FROM "GONE WITH THE WIND," lulling her terrified, confused, drugged up and exhausted mother to sleep. She gets to the bottom and sees --

THE EXIT. She takes a breath, and pushes it open -- BLINDING WHITE LIGHT! And she walks through it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Annie emerges with her mother in her arms. Looks around.

As the door shuts behind them -- HER FRIEND THE BLUEBIRD FLIES OUT IN THE NICK OF TIME!

Up into the sky -- Soaring over the tall buildings -- free! THE HEAVY HONK OF TRAFFIC, and as Annie's eyes adjust, she sees the yellow cabs. The homeless man. The pizza shop. The rat. The above ground subway. Manhattan across the river.

MARY
Where are we?

ANNIE
(shocked)
We're in Brooklyn.

MARY
We're home...

ANNIE
How the fuck did we get here?

MARY
Movie magic?

ANNIE
He drugged me. That plane... it wasn't a dream, it was real. He didn't bring you to me. He brought me to you.

MARY
(oblivious)
Well. I'm glad he brought us together, dear.

She breathes in the shitty city air. Beautiful. As she carries her mother into the street. Hails a cab.

INT. CAB - DAY

Annie climbs in.

CABBIE
Are you okay, miss?

ANNIE
Take us to Mount Sinai.

He nods. And they pull away. And Annie looks back at --

THE ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE THEY CAME FROM. IT'S STARTING TO SMOKE. Where there's smoke there's fire.

She holds her mother, who is asleep. And cooing. Petting her hair. A good daughter.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - TWILIGHT

It's winter now.

Annie stands on her balcony in a puffy jacket, staring out at the soaring city. It shines. She sips hot tea from a mug.

There's a calmness in her eyes.

A light snow starts to fall. It makes her smile.

MARY (O.S.)

Annie?

She turns to find her mother standing by the door. Mary has gained some weight. Her hair is starting to grow back too. Her eyes are lucid.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's almost time.

Annie nods, and starts inside.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

It's a sleek apartment. Annie and her mother sit on the couch, watching TV. A bowl of popcorn before them.

The 1982 OSCARS come back from commercial.

MARY

Here we go! You're up!

But not the Best Actress race. It's the *In Memoriam*.

Annie shudders as -- BLOCH'S SEVERE FACE FADES UP FROM BLACK.

HOWARD BLOCH
1927 - 1981

Applause in the Kodak theater.

ANOTHER PICTURE OF BLOCH STANDING WITH HIS ENTIRE CREW,
POSING FOR A GROUP PHOTO:

IN MEMORY OF THE BLOCH FILMINDUSTRI CREW

We see CHARLIE, in a tux, jump to his feet and applaud, wiping tears.

And then they move on to the next tribute. Mary takes Annie's hand. Smiles warmly.

MARY (CONT'D)

You won, Gummie Bear.

Annie nods. Grips her mother's hand tight. The light from the TV playing on her face as she basks in the THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Annie sits at her oak desk. Staring at an Alder typewriter.

Mustering up the courage to face the blank page. All work and no play. She takes another sip of tea, and places her fingers on the keys. Finally, she types --

"EXT. SOUND STAGE - SOMEWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE - NIGHT"

ANNIE (PRELAP)
Stay away from me!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Annie is hysterical -- backing away from a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN. He looks a lot like Charlie. But he isn't.

NOT CHARLIE is wearing the same outfit Charlie wore, further confusing the matter. Annie wields the knife.

ANNIE
Stay back!

Not Charlie is bleeding from the gash in his face, blood spilling down his face and neck, it makes him look monstrous. His smile makes it worse.

NOT CHARLIE
Honey. Just give me the knife. I'm not gonna hurt you. You need help.

ANNIE
I know what I saw!

NOT CHARLIE
Nancy. I worry about you. You're not well. You sound crazy--

He grabs for the knife. She swings it at him.

ANNIE
I'm not crazy! I know what you did!

NOT CHARLIE
--GIVE ME THE FUCKING KNIFE!

Annie backs herself into a corner now. She stabs the knife at him, he pivots and -- ATTACKS, pushing her against the wall!

THE FAMILY PHOTO SMASHES ON THE FLOOR.

A struggle for the knife ensues. Annie is screaming as they fight. Not Charlie pushes her down, and lands hard.

And as he raises the knife to finish the job, she SCREAMS. All the pain, everything she's kept in for so long, it all comes out. Like an exorcism.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Okay. Cut. Print that one.

BACK TO SCENE:

Annie and Not Charlie abruptly power down.

REVEAL the small SKELETON CREW filming this scene on a cramped sound stage. ALL MEN. Like a mob of angry villagers, only its boom poles instead of pitchforks. Romanian? Hungarian? Gypsies maybe.

The AC rattles to life. A TIMO LOOKALIKE swoops in, and starts cleaning up the photo. He replaces it with a new one.

ANNIE
How was that?

WIDEN TO REVEAL --

"The Fly" era GOLDBLUM, sitting at video village before a chess set. He looks homeless. Tired. Bedraggled. Flailing black hair. A patchy beard. Pupilless obsidian eyes magnified by aviator glasses and a batwing brow.

JEFF GOLDBLUM
Let's go again.

Annie deflates a little.

ANNIE
Is there anything you want me to do differently, or...?

JEFF GOLDBLUM
Again.

ANNIE
Just because that's how I did it last night and--

JEFF GOLDBLUM
Again please, Annie. Do it again.

Goldblum moves the knight and takes the queen. A long beat. And then --

ANNIE
Cut.

FEMALE AD

We're cut!

THE SOUND STAGE BELL RINGS.

Goldblum falls out of character.

WIDEN TO REVEAL --

A SECOND FILM CREW filming the first film crew.

This is the real film crew. It's made up entirely of WOMEN.

Jeff Goldblum goes to Annie, his director.

JEFF GOLDBLUM

How was that? Was it too big?

ANNIE

It was perfect.

JEFF GOLDBLUM

Are you sure it wasn't too big? I felt big. Mustache twirly. I dunno.

ANNIE

It was perfect, Jeff. Really.

(shouts)

Moving on!

FEMALE AD

MOVING ON!

FEMALE VOICES

MOVING ON!

The Women get to work setting up the next shot.

And Mary sits in a director's chair embroidered with the word "MOM," watching Annie work. She leans over to the FEMALE GAFFER and glows.

MARY

That's my daughter.