

# THE SISTERS

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SCRATCHES and FLICKERS fill the frame. A few audible CLICKS, POPS, and then - A VINTAGE CARTOON.

We push through an IDYLLIC FOREST. Songbirds SING. Sprightly, bucolic MUSIC. Happy everything. Early Warner Brothers-style animation. Cheery even through faded colors and PRINT DAMAGE.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Everywhere you look, the hand of the Divine is at work. In the whispering of the wind, the song of the bird; in the regal quietude of the trees. For all these creatures, God has a special plan...

A TREE LINE parts to REVEAL a group of LAUGHING CHILDREN at play in a CLEARING. We PUSH IN on them, emphasizing TWO outcast GIRLS with their backs toward us.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

... But there is perhaps none quite so special as the plan God has for you, as one of His *Selected*.

The girls turn toward camera. IDENTICAL TWINS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hello, Hemmingway twins! Why the forlorn faces?

The other CHILDREN - NOT TWINS - point and sneer at them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Pay them no mind, little ones. God has an important plan for you!

We TRANSITION to a more clinical-looking image of CHILDREN with raggedy-doll smiles against a NEUTRAL background.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

God graces us in many sizes, shapes, colors, with no two quite the same. But for those touched by His grace, a miracle occurs -

We CLOSE in on one of the HEMMINGWAY GIRLS, who SPLITS INTO TWO IDENTICAL HALVES. They study one another, confused.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

- And *Twins* are born. A twin is like any other child, but shares the DNA of his or her sibling. For some, being a Twin doesn't amount to much;

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 they'll grow old like any other boy  
 or girl. "*False Ones*", they're  
 called. But for *The Selected*,  
 around the onset of adolescence, a  
 change occurs, and one of you will -  
*Turn!*

A Hemmingway twin shakes and trembles, face DISTORTING... And  
 before our eyes, she abruptly *TURNS INTO A TOWERING BEAST!*

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 There is no prevention, no cure, no  
 warning signs. It effects all; boy  
 or girl, rich or poor. Man has no  
 means of predicting who will *Turn*.  
 And now, an important task lies  
 ahead for the surviving *human* twin.

HEMMINGWAY TWIN #1  
 Special task...?

Another CARTOON TRANSITION. Back in the FOREST. The MONSTER  
 TWIN stalks the clearing, chasing other CHILDREN about.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 The *Turned* is no longer human in  
 body or mind. Their memories,  
 sorrows, joys - all are forgotten  
 once they transform.

Hemmingway twin #1 watches her *Turned* sister MARAUD ABOUT  
 from behind a tree. She sniffles, heartbroken.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Their human soul, the essence that  
 made that person so special, is now  
 trapped within a beast. It must be  
 set free - a task only *you* can do.

HEMMINGWAY TWIN #1  
 (wiping eyes)  
 But how, mister...?

*POOF!* A SHOTGUN appears in her hands!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Just like father's gun, isn't it?  
 And you know - once upon a time he  
 used it to hunt *his* twin, too. For  
 this is the long-standing tradition  
 amongst our kind. The ritual of the  
*Hunt* to set your twin's soul free -  
 An act that can only be carried out  
 by the *Blessed*, or he who survives!

Hemmingway Twin #1 looks to her *Turned* sibling, gaze narrowing as her fingers tighten around the shotgun.

MOMENTS LATER

We're on the MONSTER as it blindly uproots TREES, throws BOULDERS, topples a FENCE, punts an attacking HUNTING DOG clear from frame with a comical HOWL...!

... Only to spin, its snout colliding with the SHOTGUN. The beast blinks as it stares down the nose of the rifle...

... And BOOM! A GUNSHOT RINGS OUT! SMOKE PLUMES, obscuring any carnage - and as it CLEARS, the CHERUBIC-LOOKING SOUL OF TWIN #2 rises Heavenward, waving to Twin #1 below!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So you have it: It is only once you've slain your *Turned* twin that you may become an individual unto yourself, and a functioning member of larger society - *The Menagerie*, we call them - forevermore...

Hemmingway Twin #1 is embraced by the same CHILDREN who previous chastised her, basking in their acceptance. We HOLD on this image, pulling back to REVEAL we're in an -

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

- Where the cartoon is REVEALED to be a worn FILM PRINT screened in a CLASSROOM filled with IDENTICAL TWINS. Mostly FOUR or FIVE years old. Rapt gazes filled with excitement.

We move along a row of TWINS to reach AURORA and GABRIELLE (5). Through identical EVERYTHING, we can tell them apart immediately: AURORA, the obedient one, is a good moppet.

GABRIELLE regards the cartoon with incredulous, calculated eyes. Contemptuous as the NARRATOR coerces the class into HYMN-LIKE SONG OF PRAISE FOR THE CEREMONY OF THE HUNT...

All give VOICE to it except Gabrielle, who looks to the WINDOW. As we FOLLOW her gaze, we soon look upon the -

SCHOOLYARD

- where an OLDER group of ADOLESCENT students flock outside. Distant BELLS TOLL, announcing MIDDAY.

MOVING OUTSIDE

It's the SAME GROUP we saw in the classroom, TEN YEARS LATER, the group's numbers having THINNED during the interim decade.

AURORA and GABRIELLE, now SIXTEEN, are amidst this group. They make their way toward the distant town CENTER where, across a sea of rolling HILLS, sits an -

ISOLATED TOWNSHIP/COMMUNE

CLOSE-BUILT HOMES comprise an INSULAR community with a CHURCH, COMMUNITY CENTER and few CARS on its UNPAVED ROADS.

It'd be almost bucolic were it not for the GIANT PERIMETER FENCE surrounding the commune AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE - designed to keep things IN rather than OUT.

It's like an AMISH COMMUNITY crossed with a WWII JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMP - a jarring mix of PASTORAL and MILITARIZED.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN / PERIMETER FENCE - CONTINUOUS

The ADOLESCENTS move alongside the fence. About 15 FEET HIGH with INTERMITTENT GUARD POSTS, and BARBED SLATES throughout.

The group think nothing of it as they make UNHEARD SMALL-TALK, but GABRIELLE cranes her neck to study the BARBWIRE atop the fence as she runs a STICK along its chain-links.

She feigns absentmindedness until lodging onto a WEAK SPOT. She stops to examine it. Pulls a broken SLATE back. Not quite big enough to slip through, but maybe if one *really* tried...

Her eyes go from this small, unnoticed breach up to the rolling HILLS beyond and finally rest upon the FAR HORIZON - Where SOARING MOUNTAINS rise through a PERMANENT FOG BANK.

A beautiful sight no one else seems to notice but Gabrielle. Her eyes fill with longing, and she reluctantly joins the flock again only when AURORA nears to coax her onward.

EXT. COMMUNE - MAIN STREET - LATER THAT DAY

The commune's epicenter. The ADOLESCENTS pass YOUNGER TWINS moving in the other direction, single file. A LITTLE GIRL makes eye contact with GABRIELLE - who just scowls back.

TWINS everywhere. With PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS. None as old as the adolescents - nor certainly as AURORA and GABRIELLE, whose maturity makes them stand out like black sheep.

Aurora doesn't pay the STARES and subtle GLANCES they receive much attention... But GABRIELLE sure does.

INT. TOWN MESS HALL - LATER

Boisterous TWINS dine with FAMILY. TWO BROTHERS collaborate on a drawing of one of them as a MONSTER, being cheerfully EVISCERATED by the surviving HUMAN twin.

AURORA converses with AARON and VIRGIL ROGERS (15), otherwise-eldest amongst the group. They're sharp, chipper. Kind souls.

GABRIELLE ignores them, studying a WALL MURAL DEPICTING THE HUNT: YOUTHS pursuing *TURNED*, depicted here as HIDEOUS MONSTERS; think HIERONYMUS BOSCH meets MAURICE SENDAK.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

*"- So sprawled before me the land,  
and I was struck with a vision of  
great promise to the tidings of our  
fate as spoke to me this voice of  
the earth, in her eldest tongue - "*

INT./EXT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - NIGHT

An unremarkable NINETEENTH CENTURY-STYLE ABODE. The inside filled with RUSTIC FLOURISHES consistent with commune chic and 19TH CENTURY MUSKINESS. A WOODEN RADIO seems incongruous.

There are hand-made DOLLS everywhere, elaborate ARTISINAL creations in many shapes and sizes. A WORK TABLE is shown, where OTHERS are in the early process of CONSTRUCTION.

This is the home of some sort of TOY MAKER.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

*" - A voice which awoken me to what  
this land could become, to how we  
Blessed might yield a peace unto  
ourselves, bound not by affliction,  
but common blessing - "*

The only concession to the *HUNT* is a FRAMED PHOTO of a GIRL and her MOTHER, SHOTGUNS handy, with a HULKING MONSTROSITY - all CLAWS and TEETH and FUR - DEAD and BLOODY at their feet.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

AURORA and GABRIELLE sit in TWO SEPARATE BEDS, listening on:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

*" - A place where the Hunt may play  
out indefinitely, far from the  
menagerie's damning gaze - "*

Our speaker the now-grown GIRL from the photo: Stern-faced, dressed elegant but joylessly. This is MIRIAM (early 40's).

AURORA

... Mother? If Saint Darius founded the communes just for people like us, why the need for fences...?

MIRIAM

There was a time before fences. During the days when we walked freely with the *Menagerie*...

GABRIELLE

No, the *Menagerie* forced us to put up fences. *State of Alabama vs. Jacobs*, 1952. A *Turned* escaped, ate a flock of the governor's sheep, he retaliated by passing legislature requiring armed perimeter fences at the commune and soon it was -

MIRIAM

- *Gabrielle!*

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

What!? It's true. All there in plain English at the Archives...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'll be having a word with that archivist again, I see. You know there is only one true text...

She places her BOOK on a bedside table: *THE GOSPEL OF SAINT DARIUS*. She rests it next to a set of DOLLS bearing clear likeness to the girls - Miriam's own handiwork.

AURORA

(mind turning)

... The fences were a willful concession, I'm sure. A selfless act from within that commune to keep the *Turned* from harming the *Menagerie*, since it's our burden, not theirs. Soon all communes saw virtue in this measure and followed suit. I'm sure that's correct...

Gabrielle rolls her eyes at this. A moment as Miriam studies them both, her eyes softening a little. She smiles.

MIRIAM

I don't know which of you will be *Selected* or *Blessed*, or if either shall *Turn* at all.

(MORE)

## MIRIAM (CONT'D)

However fate shall manifest itself -  
 You are both my sun, my moon and my  
 stars.

She touches Aurora's nose with a BOOP. She giggles. Does the same to Gabrielle, who feigns annoyance. An irrepressible grin betrays otherwise. Miriam douses the BULB and leaves.

## GABRIELLE

No kiss good night, mother?

Miriam gazes at them with unreadable eyes. Gabrielle's grin falters as she closes the door, the request left unanswered.

## INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

GABRIELLE clicks on the lamp. AURORA, annoyed, buries her head in her pillow and groans sleepily.

Reaching beneath her mattress, Gabrielle produces a series of SCIENTIFIC PERIODICALS from the TOWN ARCHIVES, along with her most treasured belonging - HER JOURNAL.

An inner sanctum overflowing with her thoughts, musings - even ILLUSTRATIONS - and on its cover, the embroidered face of a GREY WOLF stares outward. *Hands off my book.*

## MOMENTS LATER

Gabrielle's eyes dart between periodical and journal. The odd PHRASE most appealing is copied scrupulously into the diary.

Fleeting glimpses of the content reveal HEADLINES like this: *THE ETHICS OF THE SELECTED - WITH GENETIC PRE-DETERMINATION ON THE HORIZON, HOW DOES SCIENCE RECONCILE A DOGMATIC FAITH?*

Gabrielle is surprised to see PASSAGES have been UNDERLINED in PENCIL. Someone else has already perused this new issue.

Elsewhere, other magazines cover CURRENT WORLD EVENTS: Protests over the Vietnam War. The Sexual Liberation movement. Youth protesting any and all things governmental.

People alive with ideas, passionate agendas and deep moral woes they won't let go unheeded. This is the pack Gabrielle was meant to run with. Her eyes simmer with jealousy.

Her DOLL seems to watch her. She faces it away from herself, staring at Aurora.



GABRIELLE

Come to the archives tomorrow. They don't like to talk about it, but things are changing outside. Look -

She holds up a copy of *GENETICS IN REVIEW, BIANNUAL EDITION*.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

They're gonna pass new laws against us... Never mind fences, the *Menagerie* want us behind walls, big walls, guarded by armed men.

AURORA (O.S.)

I wish you wouldn't put mother on the spot like that.

(turning toward Gabrielle)

You know why she doesn't kiss us good night anymore. Same reason our Elders keep us at an arm's length.

GABRIELLE

... We're long past due.

AURORA

Still hope we're *False*, don't you? Even with the shame that would bring our namesake...?

GABRIELLE

You're smart, Aurora. I wish you'd consider another path sometime.

AURORA

You're smart, Gabby. I wish you'd understand there *is* no other path.

Gabrielle turns away from her, deeply annoyed off of this.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

GABRIELLE stares at the MOUNTAINS on the horizon, attention soon drawn to the front of the class - where MELISSA & ASHLEY DESMOND (14) give a PRESENTATION.

They perform a DARIAN HYMN, a piece of sacred MUSIC within commune culture. Melissa SINGS the LYRICS as Ashley plays accompaniment at a dusty UPRIGHT PIANO.

Melissa finishes, smiling. Not a missed note. Less true for Ashley, who butchers the CODA. ELDER JEFFERS (65), the kind-faced TEACHER, winces - but pretends not to notice.

ELDER JEFFERS

Thank you, Desmond Twins. A lovely rendition of one of Saint Darius' finest hymns. Can you explain the context of the piece to the class?

ASHLEY

Saint Darius speaks to the Unification of the Soul in the Great Hereafter. How we must forgive our fallen twin -

MELISSA

- Forgive the *Menagerie*, she means; Darius' father was not able to see past their transgressions, so Darius sought understanding through empathy...

ELDER JEFFERS

... I'm hearing two very different interpretations. Unification of the Fractured Soul, forgiveness of the *Menagerie* - Which is it, then?

The Desmond Sisters look at one another, panicked.

ELDER JEFFERS (CONT'D)

Saint Darius would not mince words as you have implied, would he... ?

The sisters are quick to turn on each other:

MELISSA

Ashley was the one who interpreted the hymn as one of forgiveness, I just -

ASHLEY

- I did not! I said Saint Darius speaks *only* of the Soul's Unification!

ELDER JEFFERS

(raising a calming hand)  
... Have a seat. Thank you.

The Desmond sisters sit down, exchanging scornful looks.

ELDER JEFFERS (CONT'D)

Neither of you are wrong. The lesson here isn't who is correct in their interpretation, but who chooses to hold steadfast to their belief. Saint Darius speaks in abstraction; he wanted discourse and debate amidst disciples, as life has no finite answers...

Students mull this over, struggling with the concept.

AURORA

Does that mean... The word of Saint Darius is *not* absolute?

ESSY FOREMAN (14), posh and oozing arrogance, glares at her.

ESSY

The word of Saint Darius is *always* absolute! Takes a wicked tongue to say otherwise...

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

You know what's *absolute*, you snotted bitch - ?

(shocked silence)

The *Menagerie* have devised tests that genetically pre-determine who will *Turn* and who won't. They've known how to for *years*; the only reason it isn't spoken of here is because our "wise elders" know it threatens their backward-ass ways!

SHOCK WAVES rock the class! Elder Jeffers BOOMS for order! She points at him, yelling over her pious, shrieking peers;

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

- And you know it! You know it and all the Elders know it, sure as you know every consonant and syllable of Saint Darius' goddamn *lies* - !

ESSY

*False one! Lover of the Menagerie!*

MELISSA

*Venom-tongued bitch! Worse than the Lowell twins!*

ELDER JEFFERS

*Twins! Please, settle! Please!*

A tenuous silence follows. Jeffers proceeds delicately:

ELDER JEFFERS (CONT'D)

The *Menagerie* tell many lies with accord to us. They've spread such fabrications for a long time now.

ESSY

(simmering)

Hideous lies, they tell...

ELDER JEFFERS

Sister Foreman, you or your sister might one day walk in their midsts. It's important to respect and understand the way they choose to falsely interpret -

GABRIELLE  
*Absolutes*, Elder Jeffers. The  
*Menagerie* traffic in truths,  
 not us; ours is nothing but  
*interpretation*, you said that  
 yourself -

ESSY  
 Lowell twin, Lowell twin,  
 listen to this *Menagerie*-  
 loving Lowell twin! Lowell  
 twin! Lowell twin, LOWELL  
 TWIN - !

OTHERS join in, chanting "*Lowell Twin!*" OVER AND OVER until -

AARON (O.S.)  
 - *Stop calling her that!*

All eyes go to the back of the class. AARON and VIRGIL ROGERS are the only two who haven't engaged in the damning chorus.

ESSY  
 Do you also believe Saint Darius to  
 be a liar, Aaron Rogers?

AARON  
 No. And I don't fully agree with  
 what Sister Rosewood says. But I  
 believe that Darius himself said  
 forgiveness of the *Menagerie* was  
 our burden to bear; "*For we must  
 carry always, on heavy shoulders,  
 that which we know as truth -*"

ESSY  
 " - *In order to let reconcile  
 our hearts with theirs whence  
 walk us in their midst as  
 Blessed,*" Book Ten, Verse  
 Three. Don't mock me, I've  
 read the gospel more than -

AARON (CONT'D)  
 Did you not read close? " -  
*But to damn within our own  
 rank those who might choose  
 to follow the path of the  
 Menagerie, we must bow with  
 respect, as be us Blessed or  
 Selected, both carry the seed  
 of the Menagerie within us."*

Essy has no rebuttal. Gabrielle and Aaron hold eyes.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

STUDENTS flock from the schoolhouse along the FOOTPATH. GABRIELLE storms ahead, AURORA calling after her. Gabrielle turns, glaring. Aurora can only shake her head.

Their attention is diverted as AARON separates from his peers, nearing them. He pauses clumsily before Gabrielle.

AARON  
 Before mom passed, she told us the  
 most terrible thing one can do for  
 the soul is to stop being curious.

VIRGIL separates from his peers to egg Aaron on.

AARON (CONT'D)

I'm not sure my heart's as open to the *Menagerie's* ideas as yours. All that talk of genes, bio-markers...

GABRIELLE

(quietly, eyes changing)  
Pencil marks in the periodicals.  
Aaron - You've read them also... ?

She trails off. Aaron smiles embarrassedly.

AARON

I don't know what I believe. The Gospel of Darius fills my heart with conviction... And yet...

Gabrielle nods, understanding. Puts a FINGER to her lips - *Your secret is safe with me.* Off this, he hands her a folded PAPER, which she pockets without studying its content.

AARON (CONT'D)

Mom would've admired you very much.

He rushes to join the others. Gabrielle unfolds the piece of paper, on which he's scribbled a DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM NUMBER. Off her curious gaze, we find ourselves at the -

EXT. TOWN ARCHIVES BUILDING - LATER THAT DAY

Atop the HILLSIDE the schoolhouse sits on is one additional structure, the ARCHIVES BUILDING. GABRIELLE nears it alone.

INT. TOWN ARCHIVES BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

An ARTHRITIC HAND struggles with a CROSS-WORD PUZZLE, tapping a pencil against it. Town Archivist SISTER MOLLY doesn't look up as GABRIELLE enters, toting a stack of periodicals.

MOLLY

Another word for "*Kismet*", ten letters. Help me get this and I'll wave all your growing late fees.

GABRIELLE

Put 'em on Miriam's account.

MOLLY

Hell will freeze, thaw and freeze again before your mother steps foot in here. New issue of *American Scientific* arrived. Interested?

GABRIELLE

In the market for something a little different this week.

MOLLY

Well, closing in ten. Whatcha need?

Gabrielle drops the stack of SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS she looked through last night before her, followed by AARON'S NOTE. Molly leans forward, studies it. Then raises an eyebrow.

MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE follows MOLLY. The Archives packs a lot into small dimensions, mostly dedicated to 'unbecoming' topics: NATURAL HISTORY, BIOLOGY, SPACE EXPLORATION. It's EMPTY, of course.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I hope you'll make an effort to learn the Dewey Decimal System before I'm planted, kiddo.

She finds the desired BOOK with an "ah ha" and hands it to Gabrielle... Who quickly regards it with disappointment:

*DARIAN DISCIPLINE FOR UNBECOMING YOUNGSTERS*. The faceless binding promises as much excitement as its title suggests.

GABRIELLE

Oh. The number's... Correct?

Molly snorts at the accusation. Gabrielle considers, unsure.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Can I read it here? Know where you hide the key. Tan rock by the door.

Unconvinced, Molly crosses her arms and raises an eyebrow.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

"Providence". Another word for "Kismet". Ten letters. I'll remember to shut off the lights when I leave this time - I promise.

Molly grins, studying her smudged glasses. She turn to leave.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
 (remembering suddenly)  
 Sister Molly. "Lowell Twins" mean  
 anything to you...?

MOLLY  
 That's an old one. Two siblings so  
 vile that they *both Turned*, killed  
 their parents and fled the commune.  
 They'd return on moonless nights to  
 snatch sleeping children from their  
 beds. That's why "Lowell" is still  
 a taboo surname around here...  
 (snorting, amused)  
 It's just an Urban Legend, Gabby.  
 Every commune has its boogeymen.

She turns and takes her leave. Gabrielle stares, haunted.

LATER THAT EVENING

Gabrielle sits by the solitary glow of a LAMP, cuddled into a  
 dusty arm chair as she peruses the pages of this "book"...  
 And finally comes across a HANDWRITTEN NOTE from Aaron.

Gabrielle straightens, practically jumping out of the chair.  
 She unfolds it and peers at the tiny font:

*"We cannot give open discourse to the things that keep you  
 and I awake at night. This clandestine manner of  
 communication is far from ideal - but it's a start."*

The note ends there. Gabrielle, confused, turns more pages -  
 and comes to find COPIED EXCERPTS from other MAGAZINES. Older  
 periodicals that Gabrielle's never seen, her eyes tell us:

"SCIENCE OF THE *BLESSED* - A DISSERTATION."

"NOTES ON BIOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF *TURNING* ACCORDING TO  
 CHARLES DARWIN - LONDON GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, NOVEMBER 1841."

"IN SEARCH OF THE MITOCHONDRIAL INFLUENCE OF THE CONDITION  
*DRACONIA VULGARIS*, KNOWN COLLOQUIALLY AS THE *BLESSED*."

Aaron has drafted highlights from these and other sources,  
 including "NOTES TO GABRIELLE" in the margins. She beams,  
 realizing he seeks an ongoing dialogue with her.

A final NOTE concludes; *"I'm unsure of the truth of this  
 rhetoric. Perhaps a correspondence with another curious soul  
 shall break me of my stigma."*

Gabrielle grins as she begins writing a RESPONSE in the margins: *"Stay unsure. Stay curious, as your mother said. I've enough conviction for us both for now. A start indeed."*

She looks up at nothing in particular, beaming.

EXT. PERIMETER FENCE - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - THE NEXT DAY

Grey, overcast. STORM CLOUDS hug the horizon line. The SISTERS flank the PERIMETER FENCE. Gabrielle grins as Aurora eyes her, suspicious and humorless.

AURORA

What's got you, hmm?

(Gabrielle says nothing)

Some conspiracy with Aaron Rogers, then? Great. My sister the martyr.

GABRIELLE

I don't think you have any idea what that word means.

AURORA

Well, I know enough to know you'll be getting in a lot of -

Gabrielle ignores her - something has caught her eye beyond the fence. Aurora follows her gaze to a LONE TREE in a FIELD, where A SHADOW FIGURE moves under its canopy.

GABRIELLE

Well!? Just gonna stand there!?

The timid shadow moves from behind the tree, REVEALING a BOY (10) with a 35MM STILL CAMERA slung around his neck.

AURORA

Pretty far from home, aren't you?

COLIN

M-My name's C-Colin and I, uh -

GABRIELLE

Listen to him. Good grief.

AURORA

I'm sure your parents wouldn't want you speaking with our kind, Colin.

COLIN

Well, uh, m-my friend Clifford says that if I t-take a picture at the fence with a t-twin ta prove I was brave 'nuff, he'll let me go to his birthday party next week...



GABRIELLE

Some friends you have! Well come  
on, you wanna picture, on with it!

AURORA

What!? We're not allowed,  
Gabby! If we're caught -

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

- Oh, calm. A little outside  
fraternizing won't kill you.

Colin beams, rushing for the fence. Gabrielle pulls Aurora  
close as Colin crowds them into frame and snaps a picture.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

No charge, boy. Enjoy that party.

Colin giggles. A moment as Aurora warms over a little.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

- COLIN! Get away from them!

Colin JOLTS as a trio of teens (TRISHA, DELL and JOHN) charge  
over the hill. Panicking, Colin stumbles and DROP HIS CAMERA.

From TRISHA'S POV, it looks like the twins just let go of  
Colin's arm through the fence - which she reaches and  
promptly SPITS at the girls. They jump back, repulsed.

TRISHA

You know you inbred *beasts* aren't  
allowed to touch us, right - !?

GABRIELLE

... We didn't.

TRISHA

I didn't tell you to speak to me!  
(beat, stepping forward)  
Look what you monsters did to my  
poor brother's camera...

Trisha lifts a boot and brings it STOMPING DOWN onto the  
camera, BREAKING IT. Colin cries out, devastated.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

... And his clothes...

She PUSHES Colin. He lands on his chest in the MUD. John and  
Dell help him up, surprised even by Trisha's cruelty.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

My father works for county police.  
Can have you both *lynched* from that  
very tree there. That whatcha want?

JOHN

Trisha, let's go. They don't even understand what you're saying, look at them. They're clueless...

Colin lifts his ruined camera, crying softly.

COLIN

D-Din't do nothin' wrong, Trishy. They were bein' nice to me so I could go to Clifford's b-birthday -

TRISHA

- I told you to stay away from here! *And Clifford doesn't even like you!*

Gabrielle's smoldering, reserved eyes tell us this isn't her first rodeo with angry *Menagerie*. Trisha studies them both.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

Which of you lepers is *it*? Look pretty damn old not to have... Whatcha call it? Must be lookin' forward to your *Hunt*...

AURORA

(quiet, timid)

'Tis a sacred honor for those who walk our path...

Trisha revels in this. John and Dell pull her from the fence.

TRISHA

Is that what they tell you? Our government's planning to castrate your men and cut out your ugly wombs. That a sacred honor, too?

Aurora trembles. Gabrielle just glares at Trisha.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

Somethin' to say, leper!?

There's a lot Gabrielle wants to say - but she turns from the fence with Aurora instead. Overcome with rage, Trisha pulls free of her friends, charging forward, sweeping up a ROCK...

Gabrielle hears her too late, turning just as THE ROCK COLLIDES WITH AURORA'S TEMPLE AND SENDS HER CRUMBLING DOWN.

There are shocked GASPS from all. Even from Trisha herself - just a short flash of regret - replaced quickly with glee.

Gabrielle drops to Aurora's side. She BLEEDS from her temple as her fuzzy, dazed eyes settle on Gabrielle.

AURORA  
*... Must forgive of the Menagerie.  
 Don't know their own ways, Gabby...*

Gabrielle's eyes take in Aurora's kindness.

GABRIELLE  
 Then I'll show them. Be still.

She runs a hand under Aurora's WOUND, pooling BLOOD into her palm. She rises and, reaching the fence, forces her hand through the BARBED SLATES, GRABBING HOLD OF TRISHA'S HAIR!

TRISHA SHRIEKS IN DISGUST AS GABRIELLE SMEARS AURORA'S BLOOD ALL OVER HER FACE! JOHN AND DELL BOLT TO FREE TRISHA, RIPPING AT GABRIELLE'S HANDS, BALKING AS BLOOD GETS ON THEM, TOO - !

Gabrielle barely notices as HER OWN ARM IS LACERATED severely by the BARBS! She leans forward, gritting through her teeth;

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
*- Pray I'm the unlucky one during  
 our Hunt, because Heaven help your  
 sorry ass, if I live to walk out  
 this gate I WILL FIND YOU!*

She THROWS Trisha free! She tumbles into MUD FACE FIRST, her face awash in BLOOD! She rises, grabs Colin and flees!

Gabrielle beams victoriously, regarding her FLESH WOUND like a badge of honor as she turns and rushes back to AURORA!

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

AURORA lies on a couch, wincing as she's tended by a TOWN DOCTOR. She'll live. GABRIELLE sits at the WINDOW as a NURSE bandages her throbbing, badly-lacerated ARM.

OUT THE WINDOW, MIRIAM speaks to POLICE OFFICERS from the outside world, stammering remorsefully. Village ELDERS try to mitigate as WHISPERING TOWNSFOLK stand at the property line.

None are less enthused to be here than OFFICER HARLOW (50's), who shoots a biting, sustained glance toward Gabrielle.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The GIRLS sit obediently at their DRESSER as MIRIAM works their hair over with a BRUSH. Scrubbing FORCEFULLY. Gabrielle has her arm in a cast; Aurora, a BANDAGE over her temple.

## MIRIAM

Nineteen years. That was the last time there was an incident between the *Menagerie* and a member of this commune. Did you know that? Do not speak. Nod.

(they both nod)

Does the commune protect you? Are your bellies full, minds engaged, beds warm? Do not speak. Nod.

(they nod again)

Are you aware how difficult you make it for *all communities* like ours when you act on petty impulse? I don't care if they started it; *Menagerie* always have the last word - hope you're not too stupid to fathom that. The elders are deciding on a punishment for you both, and as for this household - for the next month you will come home directly after school. You won't fraternize, won't engage in recreation. And Gabrielle, you will not be returning to the Archives ever again. Is that understood?

A long moment before Gabrielle proceeds carefully:

## GABRIELLE

Mother... I accept the consequences of my actions. Please don't punish Aurora. She did nothing wrong. Even after they threw the rock, she told me to forgive...

Aurora regards her from the corner of her eye, surprised.

## MIRIAM

You know that is not possible. You are to be punished as one, per the Gospel. "*For the two halves of the fractured soul are as one and shall be regarded always in kind...*"

## GABRIELLE

(growing irate)

She is not me, nor I her -

SNAG! Miriam works the brush through Gabrielle's hair too hard, and she CRIES OUT as it pulls at her scalp.

MIRIAM

Be still! You will accept your  
punishment with grace, both of you.

She dislodges the brush, rises, and heads for the door.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Turn off your lights.

Jumping to her feet, Gabrielle KICKS her stool and sends it  
across the floor. Miriam spins and gapes in disbelief.

GABRIELLE

Stop. Treating. Us. As one.

Miriam gawks. Begins backing away from her.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

... You're *afraid* of us, aren't  
you, mother? Think it might happen  
any moment now? And then what...?

She presses forward. A tense moment... Until AN ALARM WINDS  
TO LIFE. Like an AIR-RAID SIREN, but with its own unique  
WHINE. Abruptly, terrified, the women FLOCK FROM THE ROOM.

MIRIAM

*Downstairs! Windows, doors! Hurry!*

No one disobeys her this time.

DOWNSTAIRS

The women sweep through their home. AURORA unlocks DISCRETE  
BARS from the tops of WINDOWS, which fall and LOCK into place  
- turning quaint sills into IMPENETRABLE, FORTIFIED WINDOWS.

IN THE DEN

Miriam rips a PAINTING from above the FIREPLACE, revealing a  
RECESSED CUBBY holding a SHOTGUN. She pulls it out, AMMO  
spilling with it. GABRIELLE rushes in, headed for the RADIO.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Bathroom windows - ?

AURORA (O.S.)

(calling out)

Got 'em - !

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Upstairs, too?

GABRIELLE

*Upstairs!?* Do they get that tall!?

AURORA  
 (entering room)  
 Some climb! Remember Will Barrows?

A shiver goes through the room. They remember "Will Barrows" alright. Gabrielle switches on the OLD-FASHIONED RADIO:

<p>RADIO VOICE (V.O.)          - reported in Zone 4. If you          are in the immediate          vicinity, please take shelter          in the nearest structure and          stand by for further updates -</p>	<p>GABRIELLE          Have they said who it is?</p>
--	---

Miriam shakes her head as she loads the shotgun.

<p>GABRIELLE (CONT'D)          How don't they know yet!?</p>	<p>MIRIAM          They will soon! Stay calm!</p>
--	---

A sudden, curt KNOCKING at the door. The trio freeze.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
*Sister Rosewood, it's Sister  
 Foreman! Please, we need help!*

Miriam rises, cursing. Throws open the front door to find MARGARET FOREMAN, Essy's impish mother. Behind her, TOWNSFOLK rush for shelter as the SIREN BLARES loudly in the night.

MARGARET FOREMAN  
 Sister Rosemary's home is under  
 construction, it's unprotected...

MIRIAM  
 Bring her to your home.  
 Hurry!

MARGARET FOREMAN (CONT'D)  
 Her legs fail her! If she  
 tries to, that *thing* might...  
 Might get her... Someone  
 needs to protect her,  
 Miriam...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 George Wheaton has a rifle,  
 go to him!

MARGARET FOREMAN (CONT'D)  
 He won't help! Please,  
 Miriam!

Gabrielle steps to Miriam's side in the doorway.

GABRIELLE  
 Who is it? Do they know who *Turned*?

MARGARET FOREMAN  
 Sayin' it's one of the Rogers boys!

The blood DRAINS from Gabrielle's face at this.

GABRIELLE  
 No... Who? Virgil? Aaron?

MARGARET FOREMAN (CONT'D)  
 Please, Miriam. Sister  
 Rosemary is without aid...

Miriam's ready to turn her away. Goes to close the door...  
 But can't. She nods and pulls her daughters close to her.

MIRIAM  
 Lock up behind me. Bring the radio  
 upstairs. Don't open the door 'til  
 the radio says it's safe...

AURORA  
 How long will it last? How  
 long until -

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 - I don't know. *Hunts* take as  
 long they take.

She kisses them both on the foreheads.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 You are my sun, my moon and my  
 stars, both of you. Stay in your  
 room - no matter what you hear!

The sisters nod. She eyes Gabrielle mistrustfully - then  
 charges off with Margaret, who babbles her gratitude. Aurora  
 BOLTS the door as Gabrielle's eyes sink in despair.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Vacuum-silent save the muffled RADIO and the WIND HOWLING  
 outside. AURORA and GABRIELLE are huddled in their BEDROOM,  
 the RADIO quietly looping the same MESSAGE as before.

AURORA  
 (whispering)  
 Been the longest while since one of  
 these, it feels. Must be a record  
 gap between a *Turning*, no...?

Gabrielle, disinterested, regards the WINDOW. She rises and  
 unlatches the SHUTTERS, opening it. Nothing to see out there.

AURORA (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 ... Why'd you stand up for me like  
 that? She could have hit you,  
 Gabby, or worse. And for what?

Gabrielle shrugs. Aurora smiles, knowing that's the best  
 answer she'll get - And then a HOWL CUTS THROUGH THE NIGHT,  
 sending Gabrielle REELING from the window!

Aurora kills the RADIO. SILENCE prevails - just one quick, monstrous staccato jab leaving an indelible mark on the ear.

Gabrielle goes to close the window, but a new SOUND carries in: HEAVY FOOTFALLS. Something HUGE marauds past them in the night, just below their bedroom window...

Through her fear - a burning need in Gabrielle's eyes. *She must see.* She throws open the door and LAUNCHES DOWNSTAIRS.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the bottom of the stairs, GABRIELLE listens, orienting the beast outside. AURORA stands at the top of the stairs.

AURORA

... Not our *Hunt*. I can't join you.

GABRIELLE

I'm not asking you too.

EXT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE sticks her head out the FRONT DOOR, studying the nearby WOODS. Shrubbery TREMBLES in the wake of something HUGE that THUMPS off into the night. Gabrielle follows.

EXT. UNPAVED ROAD - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

Armed with only a FLASHLIGHT, GABRIELLE stalks a FOOTPATH in ceaseless, disorienting WIND. Only the faintly glowing COMMUNE CENTER aids navigation.

Tiny LIGHTS move between buildings - TORCHES of prowling ELDERS. Unnerved, Gabrielle HUMS a DARIAN HYMN for comfort - UNTIL CRUNCHING GRAVEL THROWS HER INTO A SPIN.

AURORA has followed her. Gabrielle shakes her head, '*You needn't come along*'... But Aurora ambles quietly to her side, and onward they go together.

EXT. PERIMETER FENCE - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - LATER

The SISTERS study a length of fence from behind dense shrubbery. An ELDER stands guard in the usually-empty ARMAMENTS, wielding a DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN and a TORCH.

The sisters SEE ALL THE ARMAMENTS are MANNED along its endless length. There will be no proceeding that way.



EXT. ROGERS' PROPERTY - LATER THAT NIGHT

A Dutch Colonial with a FAMILY PLAQUE at the front. Quaint, were it not for the CHASM ALONG THE SIDE where something huge EXPLODED OUTWARD FROM WITHIN.

The SISTERS approach cautiously, taking in the DEBRIS and RUBBLE. Aurora picks at the breach in the wall, overwhelmed.

Gabrielle finds SHREDDED REMNANTS of the DARWIN PERIODICAL Aaron recommended amidst the debris. Her heart breaks at it.

Another ROAR reaches them, RIFLE BLASTS responding in kind. The girls look at one another - *It's time to flee...*

EXT. COMMUNE - MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

MOVING FAST, the GIRLS HALT as an ARMADA of TOWNSFOLK reach a CROSSROAD before them. The girls cut between TWO BUILDINGS -

- Only to discover MORE TOWNSFOLK beyond, these ones CLOSER. The sisters are bewildered by what the TORCHLIGHT REVEALS:

The villagers brandish RIFLES, DAGGERS, other PRIMITIVE WEAPONS. No FACES VISIBLE; just a mass of pious SHADOWS. The sisters steal down an OUTLET and spill into the COUNTRYSIDE.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

The SISTERS cut across the sloping FIELD toward the ARCHIVE BUILDING. Shadows everywhere seem to hold unseen threats.

They SCREAM as a BESTIAL GROWL cuts through the night! This draws the VILLAGER's attention, who FLOCK the hill en masse!

Gabrielle pulls Aurora upward; not stopping until they crest the hill and the darkened ARCHIVE BUILDING becomes visible.

They turn to survey the land, faces numb as we REVEAL THE HILLSIDE SWARMS WITH SCORES UPON SCORES OF PURSUING TORCHES.

The sisters' overwhelmed eyes tell us this is not part of the ritual of the *Hunt* as they've imagined it since forever...

MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE swipes a ROCK away, retrieving Molly's hidden KEY, and then the girls are whisked into the -

INT. ARCHIVES BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE slams and locks the door. A moment as they sit in DARKNESS, wind howling outside, breathing HEAVY as Gabrielle finds a LIGHT SWITCH and snaps it on -

- But it remains dark. Nothing. Confused silence fills the air for a moment... Until a LOW, DRAWN-OUT GROWL ANNOUNCES A NIGHTMARISH PRESENCE INSIDE THE ARCHIVES WITH THEM.

Gabrielle clicks on her FLASHLIGHT. Studies AURORA, then points the light into the archives' recesses... And both sisters, breath stolen, simply gaze in HORROR.

Having forced its way into the Archives through a decimated rear ENTRANCE, the *Turned* huddles between the narrow walls.

As light befalls it, a huge CLAW rises to shield itself; realizing there's no threat, the beast RISES, its REFLECTIVE EYES GLOWING visible, set far apart on an elongated HEAD...

A head framed by boar-like TUSKS protruding upward at the base of large JAWS, from which misaligned teeth spill from an exaggerated under-bite...

It's like the love-child of a DINOSAUR, a GOBLIN and a forgotten entry of the GREEK BESTIARY, yet most unreal is its frightened *sympathetic look*, which compels Gabrielle forward.

The beast lumbers forward on digitigrade legs and halts before her, faces AGLOW in dusty LIGHT from a WINDOW - The light of TOWNSFOLK'S TORCHES as they surround the Archives.

The beast raises a CLAW. Something's in its grasp. Gabrielle reaches out, turns the paw over with a shaky hand... And her gaze widens as she sees a TORN SCRAP OF PAPER.

She reaches out and turns the scrap over in the immense paw... And is startled to find her own FAMILIAR HANDWRITING:

*"Stay unsure. Stay curious, as your mother said. I've enough conviction for us both for now. A start indeed."*

GABRIELLE  
(gazing up, breathless)  
... Aaron...?

He throws back his head. BELLOWS a cry of DESPAIR. A wave of SHOUTS carry outside, snapping a transfixed, stupefied AURORA from her daze. She THROWS HERSELF OUTSIDE -

- Where the TORCH-WIELDING VILLAGERS whisk her into the safety of their midst. Gabrielle touches Aaron's monstrous FACE, her own eyes just devastated...

Eyes that betray no fear as tears swell in them... And then TORCHLIGHT fills the Archive, and Gabrielle finds herself being PULLED outside as well.

She doesn't protest as Aaron's affected gaze holds her own. He lifts a CLAWED FINGER to his lips in secrecy, *the exact gesture Gabrielle made earlier...* Then she can see no more.

EXT. ARCHIVES BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

GABRIELLE is pulled into the night, where a sea of TOWNSFOLK wield all manner of WEAPONRY. At the epicenter of all this is the ROGERS FAMILY, who stalk toward the building.

VIRGIL ROGERS is shoved to the front of the crowd. Gaze wide as he's shepherded to the Archive's door, where HE SEES GLOWING EYES awaiting within the darkened structure.

We're ON GABRIELLE and AURORA as they take in FAMILIAR FACES; Even kindly ELDER JEFFERS is swept into the horrid fervor.

VIRGIL takes in AARON'S transformed shape, the firelight and dancing SHADOWS painting him more SINISTER that he really is.

INSIDE THE BUILDING

AARON swings his body to escape, only to find MEN positioned there to keep him corralled. They douse GASOLINE about the jagged entrance, quickly setting his escape route ABLAZE.

BACK TO SCENE

VIRGIL watches this, disbelieving, his FATHER crowding in.

VIRIGL'S FATHER

'Tis not your brother. 'Tis a thing  
most dragonish. Save his soul...

His father helps Virgil's shaking hands lift an ANCESTRAL CROSSBOW, a family weapon scored with engraved depictions of the PAST HUNTS of so many prior generations, toward AARON.

Virgil trembles as other villagers crowd close with canisters of GASOLINE, ready to douse the building if need be! He lifts the crossbow between Aaron's eyes -

- And it dons on him, Aaron's *fearful, all-too-human* eyes. He falters, confidence gone. Face sweating as he wills his finger around the trigger again...

But instead he FAINTS, the weapon falling away. His father catches him, exchanging a quick nod with nearby VILLAGERS -

- Who move in to empty the GASOLINE CANISTERS as Virgil's father carries his son to safety. GABRIELLE SHRIEKS, fighting her way toward the front of the crowd - but she's too late!

IN THE ARCHIVES

AARON tries lurching past the MEN dousing the building, but they brandish TORCHES at him! He falls back, claws raised!

He could easily overpower ten or more able-bodied men with a swing of these claws - But instead he withdraws deeper into the building like a confused, frightened child.

He take in the fate about to befall him, the MEWING sound he makes gut-wrenching and pityingly HUMAN...

OUTSIDE

Just as GABRIELLE claws to the front of the crowd, THE BUILDING ERUPTS IN FLAMES! CHEERS carry on the wind as SMOKE curls into the night, and AARON WAILS WITHIN!

We're ON Virgil's MOTHER as her eyes fill with pain, maternal instinct ignited by the terrible CRY. Virgil's FATHER holds his son, stoic face failing to mask deep remorse...

Some OLDER or more sensitive townsfolk cover their ears to block the CRIES, or turn away toward the comforting night...

... But for most this is an UNGODLY CELEBRATION and soon the ENTIRE BUILDING IS AWASH IN FLAMES, the adulatory SHOUTS overpowering the sound of AARON BEING BURNT ALIVE WITHIN!

Gabrielle numbly regards the crowd through bleary eyes, haunted by the dawning realization that *this is The Hunt*, the endgame, the ritual of old that all before her have endured!

AURORA finds and pulls her into an embrace. She returns it, eyes trained on the FAR SIDE of the CROWD where, a dozen yards away, is MIRIAM - just another ANGRY, PIOUS FACE here.

GABRIELLE

It's a lie, Aurora. All of it...

NEARBY, Virgil's FATHER watches the building burn. VIRGIL, numb but coming to his senses, gazes into the night.

VIRGIL

I'm sorry, father. I failed.

VIRIGL'S MOTHER

Rituals are but pageantry... Your brother's soul is now free, my son.

The crowd steps back, letting the FIRE do its job. As quiet overtakes the crowd, MIRIAM's eyes lock with Gabrielle's.

She pushes through the crowd, and as she's about to reach the girls - THE FRONT WALL OF THE ARCHIVES TOPPLES OUTWARD!

THE CROWD RECOILS AS AARON, HIDEOUSLY BURNT, uses his dying strength to escape the burning tomb! Men fire BUCKSHOT, their fear baseless; he crawls a few yards and simply COLLAPSES.

The POPS of ammo stop as townsfolk crowd in close, seeing his monstrous CHEST rising and falling with dying inhalations...

ELDER JEFFERS

*Still alive! It's still alive!*

VIRIGL'S FATHER

You've a chance yet, my son...

He pulls VIRGIL to his feet. Shepherds him forward. AURORA and GABRIELLE follow, but MIRIAM sweeps them into her arms.

MIRIAM

Why are you here!? Why didn't you listen!?

VIRGIL'S POV: Moving through the crowd, the townsfolk part to open a corridor toward Aaron's HEAPED FORM. His MOTHER'S SHAKY VOICE is there to keep him on point all the while -

VIRGIL'S MOTHER

Cut out this vile thing's heart.  
Cut it out to free your brother...

She places an ANCESTRAL DAGGER in his hand; a more personal choice than the crossbow. Virgil looks to his fallen brother.

MIRIAM

Look away, my loves...

Aurora obeys. Gabrielle does not.

VIRGIL sinks to his knees. Hollow, passionless. Raises the dagger - but HUMMING stops him. Deep, strangely musical, familiar to our ears. The DARIAN HYMN FROM THE CLASSROOM...

Emanating from the huge, pipe-like vocal chords of AARON HIMSELF. The crowd transfixed into sobering SILENCE by this.

A final look exchanged between Virgil and Aaron, whose TAIL curls inward on itself as VIRGIL PLUNGES THE DAGGER DOWNWARD.

We're ON GABRIELLE as the dagger breaches Aaron's flesh AGAIN AND AGAIN, eyes REFLECTING hellish FLAMES as her world burns.

EXT. ARCHIVES BUILDING - THE NEXT MORNING (EARLY DAWN)

BOOKS, WALLS, ancient FILES and PERIODICALS. Nothing's left untouched by FLAME or ASH. This doesn't bother a ZEALOUS PHOTOGRAPHER, who enthusiastically arranges his CAMERA -

- Posing VIRGIL'S FAMILY with the DESTROYED BUILDING behind them and AARON'S CARCASS at their feet. He directs them cheerfully, as one might a wedding photo.

Still covered in AARON'S BLOOD, VIRGIL looks half-dead.

EXT. COMMUNE CENTER - LATER THAT MORNING

MEN hoist AARON'S CARCASS atop a large TARP toward the commune CENTER, his LIZARD-LIKE TAIL dragging behind them.

INT. COMMUNE CENTER - MEDICAL ROOM - LATER

AARON is sprawled on a large table. An IMPORTANT-LOOKING WOMAN rounds it, contemplating his remains. A moment... And then she quietly and mechanically sets to work:

Measuring Aaron's CLAWS, TAIL. Propping open his JAWS to study his TEETH; Observing her reflection in a CATARACTAL EYE, taking TISSUE SAMPLES and so on and so forth...

TWO ASSISTANTS record stats with rigorous detail, working quietly alongside their superior as a MEDICAL ILLUSTRATOR produces meticulous ANATOMICAL RENDERINGS of Aaron's body.

ELDERS observe this process - silent, stone-faced, curious. As the archival work is completed, a MAN with a HACK SAW enters the room, to whom the woman NODS solemnly...

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - LATER THAT MORNING

SEVERAL MEN help bury the SEVERED LIMBS and BISECTED TORSO on the far side of the commune, which stretches across INFERTILE LAND filled with ANCESTRAL GRAVES JUST LIKE THIS NEW ONE...

ELDER JEFFERS (PRE-LAP) (O.S.)  
Do you recall Saint Darius' *Parable*  
of the *Lamenting Tree*... ?

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

RAIN hammers the windowsill as the GIRLS lie in their beds, Gabrielle a human train-wreck as she sobs into her PILLOW.

ELDER JEFFERS, his usual warm self, sits by their window and studies a TREE outside. MIRIAM stands in the doorway, quietly contemplating her daughters' grief.

ELDER JEFFERS

*"There was once a sapling who wanted to be tall as the eldest willow, to kiss the crowning face of endless blue as did others - "*

AURORA

*" - But he did not heed the warning of the wise willow, who longed to again be small, for the knowledge of her far reaches had changed her forever-more, but to what end, she would dare not say - " I can't remember the rest...*

GABRIELLE

*(beat, tearful)*

*" - At last the day came whence the sapling's limbs did know the breadth of the endless blue, and only from heights so towering did he understand the lament of the willow tree - for on the far horizon, moving always closer, day by day, were the devouring fires of something vast and dragonish, soon to devour all - And the tree was helpless to do anything but await the flames of his own damnation. For this terrible knowledge he now possessed and could not un-see... Did all the willows of the forest, as one... Weep."*

A moment. Elder Jeffers regards her sympathetically.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Elder Jeffers... You speak of absolutes and interpretation... The discourse Saint Darius desired of us. I turn his words over in my mind, looking for a reason - But I cannot reconcile why I've been lied to my entire life.

ELDER JEFFERS

*(beat)*

It is not our place to understand some things, but to accept and... Respond with grace.

*(MORE)*

ELDER JEFFERS (CONT'D)

It's an honor to bear our burden.  
It should fill you with reverence,  
not despair.

GABRIELLE

Sixteen years I've listened to that  
rhetoric. And even now, with what  
I've seen, you sit there and throw  
false platitudes at me. How...?

ELDER JEFFERS

You've experienced something very  
difficult. Best that you both take  
a reprieve from schooling until  
your spirits are about you again.  
And given the circumstances, I  
think it fair that I speak with the  
others about having the sanctions  
pending against you for yesterday's  
incident... Reversed.

He regards Miriam, who nods in forced agreement, and rises.

ELDER JEFFERS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry you had to discover the  
truth in the manner you did, but  
try to find virtue in this path.  
You'll walk it soon enough.

Gabrielle stares blankly as a TOLLING BELL carries us to the -

EXT. COMMUNE OUTSKIRTS / MAIN GATES - EARLY AFTERNOON

GATES part at the edge of the commune, heralding empty  
TERRAIN beyond. It's here that a LARGE BELL TOLLS.

TOWNSFOLK gather to see VIRGIL and his PARENTS off, the *Hunt*  
absolving them of further need to remain part of the commune.

His parents do their best to appear joyful. VIRGIL looks  
broken as he's hugged by PEERS or back-patted by ELDERS. The  
only ones sharing his disposition are AURORA and GABRIELLE.

They bitterly regard FAMILIAR FACES that cried bedlam and  
blood lust just a night ago, but here smile jovially. The few  
who notice Gabrielle's piercing gaze look away quickly.

A HIGH PRIEST raises his arms, calling for SILENCE. He  
unfurls a SCROLL before Virgil, from which he reads loudly:



## HIGH PRIEST

Virgil Claremont Rogers, son of Dwight Stephen Rogers and Meredith Emmanuel Rogers, you are hereby recognized by followers of the Gospel of Saint Darius as *Blessed*. You have fulfilled the Ritual of the *Hunt* and set free the soul of Aaron Stephen Rogers, who walks now amidst the spirits of the divine Hereafter. You may choose to live now in rank with the *Menagerie*, or live out your days here with your kind. The choice is yours to make.

Virgil looks to his parents. A moment.

## VIRGIL

I choose... To walk amidst the *Menagerie*.

The high priest nods, holding out a SCROLL-LIKE CONTRACT on elegant parchment. Virgil signs it with shaking fingers.

## HIGH PRIEST

So concludes your life amidst the *Blessed*, Brother Rogers. While you are not permitted to return evermore to this or any Darian lands, in spirit you are forever kin. Live fully, live wisely, and be always of humble spirit. Go now, and in all your days to come, find reverence knowing you and your brother's soul shall see divine reunification in the Hereafter.

Virgil looks like he's ready to vomit.

## MOMENTS LATER

Holding the hands of his PARENTS like a child many years his junior, VIRGIL passes through the massive gates.

We see on Virgil's tortured face that there's no glory, no divine sense of passage - just pain and doubt for his future.

We're ON GABRIELLE as the GATES BEGIN TO SWING SHUT - And in a reckless moment of despair, SHE RUNS AFTER VIRGIL.

Worried eyes follow as it seems she dashes to escape, but as she reaches Virgil, who turns in surprise - SHE PULLS HIM INTO A DEEP EMBRACE, HOLDING HIM CLOSE.

His parents try and wrench them apart, as do the GATEKEEPERS who arrive to wrangle Gabrielle back toward the commune.

GABRIELLE

I know. I saw. I'm sorry...

VIRGIL'S FATHER

That's enough, young lady. Your time will come soon enough...

Gabrielle allows herself to be pulled away from Virgil and through the GATES as they SWING SHUT. The Rogers' walk down the unpaved ROAD beyond, headed for an uncertain future.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

Gabrielle's BOOKSHELF has been EMPTIED. She sits at the window, cheeks stained with drying tears as she picks hollowly at her BANDAGED ARM. AURORA sits on her bed, numb.

AURORA

It was a facade. It tried to tempt you with a likeness Aaron's soul...

GABRIELLE

In many ways you and I are as unlike as can be, Aurora. In spirit, belief. But I know you saw as I... That was Aaron Rogers. Not a monster, a devil... It was him.

Aurora turns this over, her confused mind reeling.

AURORA

Why wouldn't they tell us?

GABRIELLE

You saw their eyes, their faces. They don't want to know. Don't want to *think* about it. Aurora... They've taught us lies our entire lives, as were they. Everything we're raised to believe -

AURORA

Stop, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

- The entirety of Saint Darius' gospel, parables, the whole Divine Narrative...



GABRIELLE

But we did see. We did. And now  
we're *awake*. And everything can be  
different for us. We'll find our  
way. Together.

A long moment. Aurora holds her gaze, calming.

AURORA

I promise.

Gabrielle closes her eyes. Rest her forehead on Aurora's own.  
The sisters just hold each other.

EXT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

All the WINDOWS of the house begin falling dark, until only  
the sisters' window glows. And then that, too, goes DARK.

EXT. COMMUNE - MAIN STREET - DAY

Business as usual in the commune's heart. CHILDREN file from  
the MESS HALL toward the schoolhouse, flanking older KIDS.

AURORA and GABRIELLE are among them, the BANDAGE on Aurora's  
temple gone. Gabrielle sees the curious LITTLE GIRL from  
before - this time beaming instead of scowling at her as we -

BEGIN MONTAGE

CLOSE SHOTS on GABRIELLE'S DIARY. BLANK PAGES fill quickly as  
Gabrielle's hand traces a series of LINES or POINTS...

INT. COMMUNE CENTER / MESS HALL - LATER

GABRIELLE animatedly jabbars with her PEERS (UNHEARD). Even  
ESSY FOREMAN is engaged, to our surprise, and her own...

INSERT: More details on Gabrielle at work in her JOURNAL...

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - NIGHT

GABRIELLE reads aloud to MIRIAM from *THE GOSPEL OF SAINT  
DARIUS*, to Miriam's delight. Gabrielle beams at her approval.

INSERT: The JOURNAL lines and shapes suddenly begin to avail  
themselves as LANDMARKS. HILLS, VALLEYS, a RIVER...

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

As Miriam sleeps, Gabrielle sneaks into the kitchen, where she removes a discrete PLANK in the FLOORBOARDS.

Beneath it, a stockpile of CASH. Useless in the commune... But she knows they'll need it elsewhere. She SWIPES IT ALL.

INT. TOWN MUSIC HALL - DAY

The GIRLS sing DARIAN HYMNS in commune CHOIR, the conducting MUSIC DIRECTOR delighted by the changed behavior.

INTERCUT WITH

Gabrielle's FINISHING TOUCHES on the JOURNAL. We see that the elaborate creation she's made is, in fact, a MAP TO THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS - A MAP OF THEIR PLANNED ESCAPE...

Her HAND slams it SHUT, bringing the CHORAL MUSIC to an ABRUPT END as we hold on the embroidered, defiant WOLF FACE.

INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - MORNING - END MONTAGE

Familiar trappings we've seen before. HUMBLE FURNISHINGS, hand-sewn TAPESTRIES. Everything in its tidy place.

MIRIAM, looking ten years younger than her usual self, exits her bedroom and moves toward the GIRLS' DOOR - Only to find them GONE. She falters, confused.

Only GABRIELLE'S DOLL has been left behind, but not Aurora's. Miriam gazes at their CLOSET DOOR. Enters and pulls it open - only to find it almost COMPLETELY EMPTY.

EXT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

MIRIAM bursts from the house. A sunless dawn with HEAVY FOG. No sign of the girls as SEVERE PANIC fills her face...

EXT. PERIMETER FENCE - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - SAME

A familiar length of fence - the one with the small BROKEN SECTION Gabrielle discovered with her stick. Now FORCED ASIDE wide enough to permit the girls' escape into the countryside.

We PULL BACK to see a small series of objects mistakenly abandoned in their flight:

An article or two of CLOTHING, a SHOE. GABRIELLE'S JOURNAL. Pages fly open in blustering WIND, revealing the ILLUSTRATION of the distant MOUNTAINS and a rudimentary MAP to reach them.

EXT. ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE - LATER THAT DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Lonely FARMLAND ebbs and flows endlessly before us, thick FOG making it impossible to navigate.

In the distance, AURORA and GABRIELLE move hurriedly through these landscapes. Avoiding roads, never stopping or looking back the way they came.

Day grows into EVENING into NIGHT until a THUNDER STORM brings their journey to its first stop.

EXT. ABANDONED BARN - NIGHTFALL

RAIN HAMMERS a disused structure.

INSIDE

AURORA tends a small FIRE as GABRIELLE rips into a SATCHEL she brought along. Frustrated, she realizes what she's looking for isn't amidst the meager inventory.

AURORA

Will we... Find our way without it?

GABRIELLE

I have the map committed to memory. But that journal is everything I've felt since I was twelve. It's -  
(beat, looking at Aurora)  
Guess it's dead to me is what it is.

She joins Aurora by the fire, warming her hands as they listen to the BARN CREAK with the WIND and RAIN.

AURORA

Remember when we slept in Essy and Milly's barn, and their father told us ghost stories...?

Gabrielle reminisces as she digs an APPLE from her satchel.

GABRIELLE

Before Essy became a pious bitch.

AURORA

Gabby! What's that make me, then?

GABRIELLE

Don't worry. You're not like her.

Aurora smirks, cheeks flushed. Gabrielle takes a bite of the APPLE and hands it to her as silence settles over them.

AURORA

They really hate us out here, huh?

Gabrielle picks at her waterlogged BANDAGE, which is beginning to look filthy.

GABRIELLE

... Just gotta reach the mountains.

She ponders darkly, doubt crossing her face for the first time. Aurora studies her with weary eyes as a PRE-LAP SOUND rises into the mix - an OVERWHELMING MECHANICAL STRUMMING...

EXT. ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY DAWN

In the deep blue of pre-dawn, the STRUM is revealed to be from a SEARCH AND RESCUE CHOPPER SURGING LOW OVERHEAD! It barely misses AURORA and GABRIELLE hiding behind a BOULDER!

On the run once more, they find themselves pursued in these early hours! They crane to look after the chopper, Aurora's eyes brimming with fear, but Gabrielle electric off of this!

AURORA

... I suppose that's for us?

GABRIELLE

Woo! You better believe it! We're regular *outlaws* now, Aurora! Come on, before it circle back 'round!

Aurora looks like she's might throw up, but Gabrielle PULLS HER as, sure enough, the distant CHOPPER begins to make a gradual, sweeping turn for their direction once more...

... And as they reach another large BOULDER to hide behind, Gabrielle cries out triumphantly as - again - the CHOPPER SWEEPS LOW BUT MISSES THEM ENTIRELY!

AURORA

I'm glad you appear to be having the time of your life!

Gabrielle glows despite her paling COMPLEXION and the ruinous BANDAGE on her arm. She stands, offering and hand to Aurora.

GABRIELLE

C'mon. Probably have 'em searching  
by foot as well. Dogs, too...

A wary Aurora takes her outstretched hand. Onward they go.

LATER

Dreary clouds linger in the sky. The SISTERS move through the land, oblivious to a BUZZARD perched afar, gazing at them.

From atop the safety of a hillside, the SISTERS study an isolated ROADSIDE GROCERY STORE/MOTEL COMBO. In the deep blue-grey haze, its BUZZING NEON SIGNS are a garish eyesore.

They're unaccustomed to sights like this. Aurora looks at Gabrielle, fearful. But they're soaking WET and SHIVERING...

Gabrielle opens their FOOD SATCHEL. There's little of sustenance. Even as Aurora shakes her head, No, we can see in Gabrielle's eyes that she's committed to a daring plan...

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER THAT DAY

GABRIELLE steps into a world of garish LABELS, BUZZING FLUORESCENT LIGHTS and UNGODLY COLORS. Attention split a million ways by the noise of it all until -

STORE CLERK (O.S.)

... Like curry?

She spins. An OLDER CLERK at the counter studies her eagerly.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

Chicken curry. Never tried my hand at it. Found my late wife's recipe the other day. No charge since you'll be the first person to try -

It finally dawns on the man that Gabrielle is shivering, damp. Her shoes MUDDY. He raises a concerned eyebrow.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

Oh... You break down?

(she shakes her head)

... 'Kay. How about it? Never had curry? Perfect. A blank slate!

He enthusiastically disappears to the side. Gabrielle rounds a corner, still marveling at the pageantry of this place.

STORE CLERK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

- Ahem!



Gabrielle hustles to a FOOD kiosk next to the counter, where the clerk pours the content of a PRESSURE COOKER into a cup.

Shooting a look toward the glass doors, she sees AURORA peeking in from outside. She swats at her to step away -

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

Here we are!

She snaps to face him as he places the cup before her. Nods, "go on". Gabrielle lifts a spoon. Gingerly sips the curry. Eyes WIDENING as more sips follow, each bigger. She digs it.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

(prideful)

Mine's nothing. The old lady coulda made the pope sing with hers.

He regards a FADED PORTRAIT of a WOMAN above the cigarettes.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

Watchin' me always. Keeps late nights feelin' short. Anyway! Anything else, miss?

Gabrielle leans close to the counter. Clearing her throat and does her best to mimic the clerk's vaguely Midwestern drawl:

GABRIELLE

Look. Pops' on a drinkin' spell. Nothing serious, but I'm hopin' ta spend the night elsewhere. Ya dig? Just 'til his temper's past...

STORE CLERK

Just you? Curry's free, but a room -

Gabrielle slaps down a handful of crinkled BILLS. He studies her and the money. Incredulous, he scratches his beard. She slaps more SNACKS onto the counter, and a few more BILLS.

GABRIELLE

Sorry 'bout your wife. Lost the special lady myself. Tough break.

STORE CLERK

Life's a real fucker sometime, huh?

GABRIELLE

You got no idea.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The ground-level room is cozy and clean. GABRIELLE gazes about the space as the CLERK leads her inside.

STORE CLERK

Extra linens in the closet. Faucet gets temperamental at night. Need drinkin' water, come ta the store. Ma daughter Emma will be at the counter in the morning ta take yur key, but I'm mannin' the roost 'til the wee hours if ya need anything.

Gabrielle nods, grateful. He lingering a moment longer.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

... Sure everything's alright?

GABRIELLE

Father's survived these spells 'fore, he'll do it again. He's got a liver like a damned oil drum.

STORE CLERK

What'd ya say his name was...?

GABRIELLE

I didn't. New to the area, wouldn't know 'im. Keep drinkin' as he does, I 'spect everyone this side a the state line 'll know 'm soon enough!

STORE CLERK

... 'Kay. Right. Nighty.

He nods politely and leaves. Gabrielle exhales, relieved.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - LATER

GABRIELLE ushers AURORA - who sprints through an unpaved parking strip at the rear of the motel - toward her. Some minor acrobatics are involved in getting her inside.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE sweeps the shades CLOSED. She and Aurora study their REFLECTIONS in a TELEVISION SET. Gabrielle reaches for a nob, flicking it ON. STATIC soon greets them.

Through it, they realize there's something... Oddly familiar. And then they gasp. IT'S THEM. ON THE NEWS.

ILLUSTRATIONS of AURORA and GABRIELLE are seen over a NEWSCASTER'S SHOULDER between spikes in STATIC. Aurora KILLS the TV, their fearful REFLECTIONS filling the blank screen.

AURORA

Let's not turn that on again.

Gabrielle nods in shaky agreement.

MOMENTS LATER

Gabrielle dumps the content of a paper bag onto the bed. CANDY, SODA. Gaudy-looking stuff. She unwraps a CANDY BAR. Bites, eyes widening in surprise. She hands it to Aurora.

She hesitates, bites - and reacts in kind. Then they frenziedly tear open MORE CANDY WRAPPERS...

LATER THAT NIGHT

CANDY WRAPPERS everywhere. Overturned SODA cans are strewn amidst the twins' meager BELONGINGS from home.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The TWINS are huddled in the BATHTUB, draped in a blanket. Suffering a debilitating sugar-crash.

Gabrielle, half-asleep, removes her BANDAGE, barely noticing how SWOLLEN and INFECTED her WOUNDS look. She tosses the BANDAGE into a TRASH CAN by the toilet.

She's MUCH PALER than usual. Aurora eyes her nervously.

AURORA

(rubbing temple)

Been thinking about the Lowell  
Twins a lot tonight...

GABRIELLE

(groggy)

'S a fable, Aurora. Pro'ly invented  
to discourage what we're doing...

Aurora just stares. That's obviously not her point.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(eyes closed, groggy)

I get it. You want mother.

AURORA

I want to sleep better tonight than  
last. See how we feel tomorrow.

(MORE)

AURORA (CONT'D)

(rising from tub)

You're a brave soul, Gabby. Nothing will change that...

Gabrielle exhales. Scratches her WOUND. Aurora gazes down with conflicted eyes and then lifts a CUP beside the sink.

She turns on the FAUCET - and nothing happens. Just a GROAN from pipes in the wall.

GABRIELLE

(groggy)

Plumbing doesn't work at night. Get water in the store if you must...

Aurora shudders at the thought of leaving the room.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(exhaling, groggy)

Just speak as they do. You'll be fine. Just no more sugar...

She drifts to sleep as Aurora's eyes fall on the BANDAGE in the trash can, her parched lips grimacing.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Wearing the BANDAGE, AURORA stalks along the row of motel rooms. Shudders as a TRUCK passes. And out in the night: Is that the distant strum of a - *HELICOPTER*? She rushes onward.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The CLERK studies Gabrielle's wadded BILLS. Turns them over scrupulously. They're OUTDATED, like they've been out of circulation for a very long time.

AURORA enters the store like she might trigger a landmine, but the rapt clerk doesn't even look up.

STORE CLERK

... More curry?

(beat, he looks up)

Oh, water? Damn pipes. One second.

He nears a PITCHER. Studies Aurora's REFLECTION in a glass display case as she looks around the store in bewilderment.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

Don't suppose your old man will come looking for you here...?

AURORA  
... No father.

STORE CLERK  
Hmm. Sorry to hear that. Mother?

AURORA  
Away. On business.

The clerk turns toward her with a PITCHER of water. Studies her, feigning normalcy, even as he sees the remnants of the BRUISE on her temple that wasn't there before.

Aurora nods a thanks, sweeps up the pitcher, turns to leave -

STORE CLERK  
Miss? One more thing.

He points to the photo of his deceased wife on the display.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)  
That's my daughter, Emma. She'll collect your key in the morning. Best wishes on your travels.

Aurora nods, hurrying out. The clerk rubs his nape, settling into his high stool. Looks at the photo of his wife -

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)  
Sorry, Mammy. Know you wouldn't approve...

He sighs and reaches for a ROTARY PHONE by the desk.

EXT. MOTEL - SAME

Through the WINDOW, Aurora watches him begin to DIAL a NUMBER. Eyes wide as they accidentally make EYE CONTACT...

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

AURORA pours in and immediately tries to wake GABRIELLE.

GABRIELLE	AURORA
... Arm's burning, Aurora, just need a little more -	- We're not safe here. <i>He knows.</i>

Gabrielle's eyes float open, flooding with cognition. Frenzied, she pulls herself up from the bathtub.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Panic fills the room as the girls hastily PACK. Gabrielle peaks through the curtains. Eyes fevered, paranoid.

AURORA

I tried to wake you.

Gabrielle storms around, ignoring her and recklessly shoving belongings into their satchels.

GABRIELLE

Leave whatever will slow us down.

Her eyes fall on Miriam's DOLL, which she tosses into a TRASH BIN. Aurora lunges for it, but Gabrielle pulls her away.

They glare at each other - Aurora flustered, emboldened - Until CRUNCHING GRAVEL OUTSIDE numbs their faces.

Gabrielle parts the curtains far enough to see a POLICE CRUISER pull into the parking lot, lights doused, moving slowly. The CLERK dashes out to meet the officer.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Bathroom window.

They rush for the BATHROOM, and as she plies open its window, A FLASHLIGHT SNAPS ON. Another OFFICER awaits back there.

Gabrielle slams the window. Draws the curtains... And then there's a KNOCK AT THE MOTEL DOOR. The girls freeze.

OFFICER'S VOICE (O.S.)

*Gabrielle? Aurora? Please open the door. You aren't in trouble. Lot of worried people are looking for you.*

Gabrielle, ruined, slides down along the length of the bathroom door. Aurora looks about for a hiding place, or something to defend themselves. There's nothing.

OFFICER'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Your mother's concerned about you two. Your whole commune is. This is a dangerous place for your kind...*

The twins are silent. Gabrielle broods, forlorn.

GABRIELLE

Just open the door.

Aurora stares, disbelieving... And as KEYS JINGLE at the door, Aurora takes a bold breath - And rushes for the BED, pushing it toward the door. It's heavy; the frame resists...

But as the DOOR CREAKS OPEN - *SLAM!* Aurora jams the bed into it, SMASHING IT SHUT! She steps back, adrenaline spiking; Gabrielle can only gawk in disbelief at her sudden boldness.

OFFICER'S VOICE (O.S.)

*Please step back from the window.*

SILENCE... And then the WINDOW CRUNCHES. Aurora jumps back as GLASS rains to the floor, another SMASH sending HUGE SHARDS cascading inward! Aurora lifts one, wielding it awkwardly!

GABRIELLE

... What are you doing...!?

AURORA

Like you said... In many ways you and I are unlike. In spirit, belief... But I saw as you did in Aaron Roger's eyes, whether I want to believe it or not...

She hides the shard behind her back as a BOOT STEPS INSIDE.

AURORA (CONT'D)

... And I'm not going back there.

Gabrielle's eyes change off this, swelling as TWO OFFICERS tear into the room. Aurora regards them, tensed. Hands hidden. Gabrielle just can't stop staring at Aurora, awed...

One of the officers is FAMILIAR from the earlier altercation. HARLOW. He looks the girls over as Gabrielle rises. The OLDER OFFICER is more cautious, hand nearing his holstered GUN.

OFFICER

Careful. They're *overdue*, Harlow...

Harlow ignores him and lifts a confident, beseeching hand toward Aurora. She steps forward, fingers tightening over the shard, drawing her own BLOOD. Eyes wide, Gabrielle CRIES OUT -

- Too late! Aurora LASHES, misses! Harlow staggers back as she lunges again, certain to make contact with his forearm -

- But the OLDER OFFICER grabs her wrist, rending the shard from her grasp and throwing her over his shoulder! Aurora SCREAMS, thrashes, pounds uselessly on his back!

Gabrielle can only SCREAM as Harlow barrels forward and pulls her from her feet, and we're left holding on Aurora's DOLL on the floor, amidst shards of BROKEN GLASS.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - MOMENTS LATER

The GIRLS are FORCED into the back of a CRUISER as the CLERK watches nearby with remorseful eyes.

HARLOW slams and locks the cruiser as he and the OLDER OFFICER convene to speak with the Clerk (UNHEARD). Gabrielle PANICS as Aurora glares at them, her eyes bullish.

<p>GABRIELLE (sobbing) I want to go home, Aurora, oh God I want to go home... Terrible mistake doing this, I see clearly now -</p>	<p>AURORA - No no no, it wasn't, it wasn't... We'll find a way...</p>
--	---

Aurora tries the locked DOOR HANDLE, emboldened still.

<p>GABRIELLE (CONT'D) The elders will punish us terribly, and mother, she'll -</p>	<p>AURORA (CONT'D) - Gabby. Look at me. Look at me!</p>
--	---

Gabrielle levels her tearful eyes on Aurora as the OLDER OFFICER shoves their BELONGINGS into the cruiser's trunk.

AURORA (CONT'D)  
What's your favorite Darian hymn?  
His song cycle, which is it?

GABRIELLE  
What? You know I hate them all. I  
dunno, *Psalm of the Endless Meadow*?

AURORA  
Good, good. I want you to sing it,  
can you do that? I want you to sing  
it in all the days to come, should  
danger befall us again. Do this for  
me. Okay? Can you...?

The OLDER OFFICER cracks open the door. He stares at them for a moment, then lifts a hand - offering out MIRIAM'S DOLL. Aurora snatches it from his hand as he closes the door again.

He and HARLOW step into the cruiser before Gabrielle can process this. They study the girls.



OFFICER HARLOW

Taking you to county medical as a precaution. Arranged for your mom to meet us there. Almost home...

From OUTSIDE, we see the CLERK'S SYMPATHETIC REFLECTION in the window. Aurora presses her hand to the glass, smearing BLOOD as the CRUISER STARTS and PULLS AWAY into the night.

EXT. DESOLATE HIGHWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

The CRUISER moves through pitch-black emptiness.

IN THE CRUISER

The SISTERS stare out their windows. There's nothing to see. Gabrielle rakes her nails on her wound, which BLEEDS freshly.

GABRIELLE

You were right, Aurora. I fought you time and again, but you were right all along...

AURORA

Quiet, Gabby.

GABRIELLE

I see why the Elders do what they do now. It's to protect us. There's no place for us in this world...

AURORA

Gabrielle. *Quiet.*

Aurora presses her temple to the window to find uneasy SLEEP as a SIGN enters view: *COUNTY MEDICAL - 10 MILES - NEXT RIGHT*

Aurora's eyes close at last as the cruiser approaches the fork leading to the HOSPITAL. Harlow slows... And takes an abrupt LEFT down an UNMARKED, UNPAVED ROAD instead.

The cruiser SHUDDERS as it leaves asphalt, but not enough to alert the girls to anything unusual. TAIL LIGHTS vanish down a dark road through OPEN COUNTRYSIDE that leads NOWHERE...

INT. POLICE CRUISER - LATER THAT NIGHT

GABRIELLE's eyes flick open. It takes her a moment to realize THE CRUISER ISN'T MOVING. She straightens, alert.

The officers are NOWHERE TO BE SEEN and it's very DARK. She grabs AURORA, who jolts awake, immediately attuned to danger.

AURORA

Thought they were bringing us to -

Gabrielle points out the back window. Against dim STARLIGHT, the SILHOUETTE of an ABANDONED FARMHOUSE is discernible. A triangular STRUCTURE stands nearby.

Dancing FLASHLIGHTS REVEAL the outline of a DOOR FRAME, beyond which a PASSAGE slopes downward into a STORM SHELTER.

AURORA (CONT'D)

I've been wondering why we've never heard stories of other runaways. Have there been others like us? Fleeing into the *Menagerie's* land?

Gabrielle's face hardens, jaw clenched.

GABRIELLE

There have been others. Most have never been found.

AURORA

You never mentioned that.

GABRIELLE

We were supposed to be different.

The FLASHLIGHTS emerge from the shelter. The SILHOUETTED OFFICERS carry lengths of ROPE, CHAINS. Their LIGHTS fall upon the girls' faces as they approach.

They can't hear the OFFICERS' MUTED CONVERSATION as the duo CIRCLE the cruiser. HARLOW regards AURORA closely - Until the cruiser's RADIO SPIKES, VOICING a GARBLED DISPATCHER:

RADIO DISPATCHER (V.O.)

*Car 24, what's your 10-20...?*

Gabrielle launches her palms against the WIRE PARTITION, SCREAMING for help! Seizing the moment, the officers throw open the doors and a flurry of VIOLENCE FOLLOWS -

Harlow wraps his arms around Aurora, who worms and SHRIEKS! Gabrielle manages to hold the grated partition with claws of steel, belting until the older officer rends her loose!

The twins are dragged behind the cruiser, where the CRIMSON GLOW of the TAIL LIGHTS cast a hellish glow over them.

A quick SERIES OF SHOTS as the twins are restrained with ROPE. The officers work quickly, carelessly; the girls' struggling and SCREAMING give little aid to the work.

Harlow places BURLAP SACKS over the girls' heads, bringing uneasy silence. The older officer steps back, chilled.

OFFICER

What about the one that won't *Turn*?

He studies the girls as the burlap sacks expand and contract with fearful breaths. He's deeply uncertain about all this.

HARLOW

I'm sure that *thing* will take care of that issue for us.

The twins just release low, devastated MOANS at this.

OFFICER

... And if neither *Turns*...?

A moment. Harlow stares. He hadn't considered this.

HARLOW

Cross that bridge 'n we get to it.

The officer stares at the girls again, growing uncomfortable.

OFFICER

I know Janine's gettin' sicker by the day, and the medical bills are piling up fast -

HARLOW (CONT'D)

- *Piling up*? Buried to my eyeballs in em, Lou, 'd take me a lifetime's salary to even put a dent in 'em.

The older officer (LOU) just shakes his head.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

... You out?

Lou hesitates. Doesn't answer.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

Sit and wait in the car for me. We'll talk afterward.

AURORA (O.S.)

*Please help, mister, please...*

Gutted, Lou turns away as Harlow HOISTS the girls up.

HARLOW

We're gonna move now. I'll guide you both. One of you tries to run, I put a bullet in the other's leg.

Harlow stares mistrustfully at Lou's back, then shepherds the girls toward the storm shelter - a miserable, stumbling trek.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

... Got a lil' one at home. A terrible illness 's found its way into her life, one a humble cop's salary can't contend with. Done all in my power, and little Janine's a fighter. But it's not enough...

They reach the shelter stairs. Gabrielle almost tumbles down; Harlow narrowly saves her from an unforgiving fall.

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

*No no please I don't wanna go down -*

Harlow presses forth, unyielding. The girls begin a slow descent down the SHELTER STAIRWELL, Harlow's fevered eyes glinting as they all descend together.

HARLOW

I don't hate your kind; grew up 'round 'em all my life. Not doin' this for any kinda malice, but I've watched my Janine waste away for three years and... World's fulla strange men willin' to pay fortunes to own whatever you *become*. Some sorta private collection, I gather. In another life I'd sooner put a bullet 'n my head than stand where I do now, doin' what I'm doin' - but Janine needs whatever help I can get 'n fate don't favor yur kind in the long run anyhow...

They reach the bottom of the stairs.

EXT. POLICE CRUISER - SAME

LOU slowly turns toward the shelter, conflicted mind reeling. He studies the dim glow of the STORM SHELTER... And then Miriam's dropped DOLL on the ground...

INT. STORM SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

A claustrophobe's nightmare. Much of the girls' CLOTHING has been brought down and two DOG BEDS are laid out by their belongings. And there are, of course, RESTRAINTS.

Harlow walks the TWINS to the back wall. Turns them around. Working numbly, he lifts Gabrielle's arm, CHAINING her to a STEEL BAR. He tests it, satisfied. She won't be escaping.

He begins to repeat the process with Aurora. His eyes WET in the dim LANTERN GLOW. He fights back overwhelming self-disgust as he CROUCHES to secure her chains as well.

CLICK. Harlow freezes, turns. LOU stands at the bottom of the stairs. GUN in one hand, Aurora's DOLL in the other. Harlow slowly rises from his crouch, gazing at him.

LOU

Enough. Let's take 'em to county medical 'n be done with it. We'll never speak of this again. Girls?

Aurora and Gabrielle hurriedly NOD beneath the sacks.

HARLOW

You don't got kids, Lou. You can't possibly understand...

LOU

You're right. I can't. But I know that if I let you go through with this... Whether Janine recovers or not... Every time you look in her eyes, you'll see these girls' faces. Not hers. You'll see their suffering, hear their screams. You've more to lose here than I do, but I'm the one who's killed a man, Harlow. Not you. And I live with it every moment of every day.

Harlow's resolve wavers, even as his hand drifts toward his holstered GUN. Lou sees this and raises his gun at Harlow.

Not much confidence in his aim, but it's close quarters in this shelter and it'd be awful hard to miss.

LOU (CONT'D)

There's a better way than this.

A moment as the men stare at one another... And then Gabrielle's MUFFLED SINGING breaks the icy silence. *PSALM OF THE ENDLESS MEADOW*. A beautiful hymn-like MELODY.

Both officers regard the plaintive vocalization, eyes heavy. Lou steps forward, lowering his weapon - And Harlow, jumpy and on-edge, turns and SHOOT HIM IN THE GUT. POINT-BLANK.

A quick, deafening POP that dampens quickly into the dusty walls. No shouting follows. No screams. The girls' song falls silent as Lou just stares at Harlow, and Harlow back at him.

Lou sinks to the floor and drops his gun. A pained, disappointed look in his eyes. Harlow catches him, easing him down, disbelieving of his own actions.

Not knowing who shot who, the girls simply press against the wall. They find one another's free hand, wrapping their fingers tightly around each other's...

And in the process, Aurora realizes the length of CHAIN binding them is looser than expected. Harlow rises, staring down at Lou. He places his gun on a SHELF, pushing it away.

Lou reaches a trembling hand for Harlow, who staggers back toward the girls. Aurora, sensing what's happening, braces herself. Takes the deepest breath of her life...

... AND BRINGS HER CHAINED ARM AROUND HARLOW'S NECK, WRENCHING WITH ALL HER MIGHT! Harlow makes a horrible WHEEZE as he's swept backward off his feet and his KEYS SCATTER!

AURORA

*Gabby! The gun, get his gun - !*

Gabrielle snaps from her fear, ripping at the sack's drawstring to free herself.

Clutching his neck and too dazed to fight back just yet, Harlow rises on his arms and knees; Aurora lunges with the chain again, JUMPING ON HIS BACK...

She wraps the chain around his neck, but Harlow was prepared this time. Eyes burning, he GRABS AND TWISTS AURORA'S ANKLE!

Gabrielle rends the sack from her head, assessing the chaos - Sees bloodied LOU and his fallen GUN. She reaches for it to no avail; it's just beyond her grasp...

Harlow flips Aurora over, jumps on her, violently ripping the sack from her head, any remorse now GONE from his face... And as she takes in his twisted face, he PRESSES ON HER THROAT!

Gabrielle's eyes fall upon the GUN ON THE SHELF! She lifts it, shoving it against Harlow's forehead. Barely fazed, the adrenal officer SWIPES it away with the sweep of his hand -

- Causing Gabrielle to FIRE a shot into a wall, BLOWING OUT HARLOW'S EARDRUM! He clasps his hands to his head, dizzied, Aurora SPUTTERING as her airway clears and she gasps in air!

As Harlow rises and lumbers for his GUN, Gabrielle reaches for his KEYS. Quickly unlatching her PADLOCK and freeing herself, she moves toward Aurora -

- Who points in terror as Harlow wraps his fingers around his discarded gun... UNTIL LOU GRABS AND PULLS HIM TO THE FLOOR!

Using what little strength he has, LOU CLIMBS ATOP HARLOW and REPEATEDLY STRIKES HARLOW WITH HIS OWN HANDGUN! Freed, the girls edge around the struggling men, Lou gazing up at them -

LOU

*Go! Run - !*

Harlow PUNCHES him in his WOUNDED GUT, causing Lou to SHRIEK! His GUN flies to Aurora's feet; she sweeps it up as the men go at one another!

She pulls Gabrielle toward the STAIRS, managing to bend and sweep up MIRIAM'S DOLL in the process...

Harlow looks up, one of his eyes a nightmarish network of BURST BLOOD VESSELS, and LUNGES after the girls with a snarl!

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS, Aurora and Gabrielle pour OUTSIDE. Looking back, Aurora aims the gun downward, but it won't fire - safety engaged on Lou's weapon - so she TOSSES it at him!

It misses Harlow's head as he barrels up the stairs toward them in a blind fury, reaching the top just as the sisters THROW THE HEAVY DOOR CLOSED WITH A RATTLING THUD!

Harlow SMASHES against it with a shoulder; the girls, though physically weaker, have the advantage of better footing...

AURORA fumbles with the KEY RING as Gabrielle shrieks for her to hurry; Aurora locates an older key unlike the rest -

- And jams it in the lock, turning it with a triumphant CLICK! On the other side HARLOW throws his weight against the door OVER AND OVER - but the metal frame holds strong!

Harlow SHRIEKS, raging beyond the means for rational speech as the girls stagger backward and simply FLEE INTO THE NIGHT!

INSIDE THE SHELTER

Harlow SMASHES his shoulder against the door, BELLOWING for the girls - Until, slurring, he recalls the other GUN below.

He launches down the stairs. Stops at the BOTTOM. Sees LOU dragging himself toward the remaining GUN with the last of his strength. Frozen, the men make eye contact.

They're about equal distances from the weapon, both within an easy LUNGE. Neither man moves for a moment - and then BOTH DO AT ONCE, LEAPING, and in a final fateful moment -

- Lou accidentally knocks over the LANTERN, CASTING DARKNESS OVER THE TOMB-LIKE SHELTER.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - SAME

The GIRLS are SILHOUETTES against a sky BRIMMING WITH STARS. Running across open land as the thunder of a SINGLE GUNSHOT rings distantly, muted within the earth.

They halt, listen. Nothing more is heard as the muffled shot dies away... So onward they run into the night.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY DAWN

CLOSE ON AURORA'S sleeping face. Her troubled eyes flutter, slowly drifting open as a chilling WIND tousles her hair.

She's sore, neck covered in BRUISES. Her head rests in GABRIELLE'S lap, the DOLL nestled at her side. They sit atop a HILL, the morning sky SUNLESS and GREY. Aurora sits up.

Gabrielle is DEATHLY PALE. Her wrist INFECTED. Aurora SHIVERS terribly but numb, unreadable Gabrielle appears unaffected by the cold as she just gazes into the distance.

GABRIELLE

I learned more about myself in the past day than I'd like to know.

Aurora studies the horizon. TREES, sloping hills, FARMLAND. No trace of the MOUNTAINS. Gaze finally landing on a LIGHTED FARMHOUSE near the TREELINE, SMOKE wafting from its CHIMNEY.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(beat, indifferent)

I want to go home, Aurora. Can you believe it? I want mother. I want to read Darius' word behind the safety of the fences. I want my journal. I want it all back. Even if it's just for a while, before...

Aurora nods softly. Looks to the farm's inviting WINDOWS. Gabrielle, smiling softly, looks like she's losing her mind.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Let's sit a while longer. I want to remember this moment...

She plays a hand through Aurora's hair. A flicker of jealous resentment in her eyes is buried quickly.



GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

You're much stronger than I could  
have imagined. Stronger than I.

They sit, WIND howling around them as their journey comes to a bitter end.

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - LATER THAT MORNING

FOG hangs over a WELL-MANICURED LANDSCAPE. WOODWORKING PROJECTS are EVERYWHERE in interim form. A far cry from the rustic commune chic - POST-MODERN, NEW-AGE. Very 1970's.

Aurora stops shy of the DOOR but Gabrielle continues up to it on her own, standing before it. INVITING MUSIC WAFTS from within and Gabrielle raises her fist to knock -

AURORA

What about our promise? Thought we  
wouldn't walk in path of others...

A moment of deliberation from Gabrielle - Then one, two, three KNOCKS. Aurora looks gravely disappointed by this.

Inside the house, the MUSIC STOPS and FOOTSTEPS APPROACH from within. Gabrielle turns to look at Aurora, eyes apologetic.

The FRONT DOOR OPENS. Gabrielle turns. We HOLD as she stares at the UNSEEN homeowner, who says nothing for a quiet moment.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING

A MISSING PERSONS FLIER slides across a rustic KITCHEN TABLE, adorned with the ILLUSTRATIONS of AURORA and GABRIELLE. Beneath it are WARNINGS of their "dangerous condition".

The TWINS look at the flier, then across the table at an OLDER WOMAN - late 60's with boyish short hair, wry grin, intelligent eyes - who studies them intently.

WOMAN

They didn't get the noses right.

She rises and nears a CABINET, producing a bottle of WINE.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

My brother and I got in all sorts a  
trouble when we were your age.

She takes her time uncorking it, pouring three glasses. As she does this, Aurora notices a LITTLE GIRL (10) popping her head in the kitchen. An off-putting and odd-looking child.

Aurora tries not to notice as the girl leers at them, almost relieved when the woman returns to the table.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Ma always caught but never scolded us. Wasn't her style. Instead we'd do - *Wine Talk*. Got us so drunk we'd confess all transgressions without her saying a word. Clever bitch. You girls ever had a snort?

She slides two glasses over to them. Seeing their reluctance, the woman raises her own glass and takes a generous sip.

GABRIELLE

Spirits are forbidden to us.

WOMAN

Not in this house.

Aurora lifts her glass, shakily sipping. She holds it down as she takes in the DECADENT ANIMAL STATUES about the room, lavishly forged from stained wood. The woman sees this.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Do you like my home? Everything you see, I built with my own hands. Got the callouses to prove it.

She turns, addressing a FOX STATUE nearby. Unlike everything else, it lacks VARNISH and appears to be UNFINISHED.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

That was a collaboration between my brother and I, before he passed. Didn't have the heart to complete it without him, so I left it as is.

The girls ease a little as she turns to study them again.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Aurora and Gabrielle. Expected something more robust, given the state's entire police force is looking for you. But you look like starved dogs. No offense...

She raises an incredulous eyebrow as she surveys their wounds, particularly the DARK BRUISES on Aurora's neck.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Don't hear about your kind running away that often. What prompted it?

AURORA

We became aware of unsavory things.

WOMAN

Bit old not to have, you know...  
 Maybe it won't happen then, right?  
 (the girls are silent)  
 Touchy. I understand. So - What's  
 next for our neophyte Houdinis...?

AURORA

Are you not going to...

WOMAN

Turn you in? Haven't had enough  
 wine to make that decision yet.  
 Why'd you stop drinking? I didn't  
 say stop drinking...

The girls sip gingerly from their glasses.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

So. Unsavory things. Learned about  
 what happens after your, uh, *Hunt*?  
 Common knowledge out here, afraid  
 to say. Everyone knows the sales  
 pitch about freeing your sibling's  
 soul and all the rest - barbaric  
 stuff, really. No offense.

Gabrielle slides the glass away. Eyes dark. The LITTLE GIRL  
 pokes her head into the kitchen again, and KNOCKS on the door  
 frame - ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES. Almost like MORSE CODE.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Dotti.

The girl saunters in. Takes a seat on the woman's lap. A  
 mistrustful creature with white-blond hair and OVERSIZED,  
 strangely BULKY CLOTHES, like ill-fitting hand-me-downs.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

This is Dotti. She can't speak, so  
 don't take her as standoffish. Her  
 parents aren't in the picture any  
 longer, so she's mine to care for.  
 We're something of wayward souls  
 ourselves, so I can sympathized  
 with you girls. Not sure what to do  
 with you, so let's start with  
 proper introductions and see where  
 that takes us. Who's Aurora, and  
 who's Gabrielle? Truth, please.

AURORA  
I'm Aurora. This is Gabby.

WOMAN  
Aurora and Gabby Rosewood. The two  
who flew the coop. I'm Marty.  
Welcome to our home.

She rises, crumbling the MISSING PERSONS FLIER.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER THAT DAY

MARTY tends to GABRIELLE's wounded WRIST. Wrapped snugly in a bathrobe, AURORA exchanges hopeful looks with Gabrielle.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Marty consults an expansive library of RECORDS, pulling one and putting it on a TURNTABLE hooked up to an INTERCOM-LIKE SYSTEM on the wall. She TURNS IT ON as stylus meets vinyl.

EXT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - MOMENTS LATER

From DISCRETE SPEAKERS mounted in TREES, CLASSICAL MUSIC CARRIES sonorously across Marty's property. Less a farm and more an ARTIST'S RETREAT where play always comes before work.

Arm NEWLY BANDAGED, GABRIELLE follows MARTY closely as she shows the girls about. AURORA lags behind, unimpressed - even a little put off - by the bohemian extravagance of it all.

The beginnings of a PRIVACY FENCE have been partially constructed around the property, presently UNFINISHED.

MARTY  
Property goes back to the fence,  
but don't go beyond it. Something  
of a wolf problem out here. Stay  
outta the woods and you'll be fine.

GABRIELLE  
I love wolves...

MARTY  
They don't always care to  
reciprocate, I'm afraid.

GABRIELLE  
You built this... By yourself? You  
two are alone on all this land?

MARTY

I cut my tethers with the rat race long ago. You might even say this place saved my life. We keep busy, Dotti and I. A farm can only be as fruitful as the hands that tend it. Keeps us... Humbled.

They near an UNFINISHED BARN in the rear of the property, an ongoing project in the midst of new construction. AURORA eyes the wooded outskirts behind it, paranoid. No fence there.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Property's posted, Aurora. Nearest neighbor is ten miles out. You're safe - no one bothers us here...

GABRIELLE

My head's spinning...

MARTY

Of course, you're tipsy. Don't worry, secret's safe with me.

Gabrielle smiles. Drifts closer to Marty. Aurora broods, mistrustful of the whole situation - and especially DOTTI, who trails clumsily behind her like a wild animal.

MARTY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

You want to go home? Really?

EXT. MARTY'S FRONT PORCH - EVENING (DUSK)

MARTY and the GIRLS arrive back at her house, the tour ending just in time for rain.

DOTTI sits on the porch steps, using a knife to carve an unrecognizable SHAPE from a piece of wood. She gives Aurora stormy glares as Marty swirls her glass, pontificating:

MARTY

Even after all the trouble you've gone through? S'pose I understand. *Selected* who leave communes after their *Hunts* fail to assimilate with, whatcha call us, the *Ménage*? Most of your kind become addicts, criminals, depressives, transients. World collapses when your faith isn't there to catch your fall. Probably for the best that you return, in that case...

The girls consider, looking gloomy. Marty studies them.

MARTY (CONT'D)

... Of course, there *is* a guest room. Bit dusty, but I think you'd find it suitable if you were to choose to stay for a spell.

(the girls look uncertain)

Or not, discuss at your leisure. Shall you move on, I wish you both the best; if we don't meet again in this life, perhaps in the next. Inside, Dotti, rain's coming!

Dotti storms into the house. Marty stands on the porch a moment longer, taking in the sunset before CLOUDS bury it.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I heard an old proverb or parable of your people once. Something about a willow tree...

Marty takes her leave, closing the door gently. The twins sit in silence until the TURNTABLE spins to life and MUSIC wafts through the door once more. The girls look to one another.

AURORA

Let's go.

Gabrielle doesn't budge. She just stares at the house.

AURORA (CONT'D)

You said we should trust no one.

GABRIELLE

(softly)

I also said that I've longed to be in their midst my entire life...

AURORA

We could've *died* yesterday -

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

- And we didn't. We were tested like Saint Darius, and endured.

AURORA (CONT'D)

(appalled)

What? Where is *this* coming from...?

GABRIELLE

I... We must forgive them of their ways - *You* said that, remember?

(beat)

I think I'd like to stay here.

(MORE)

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

For a just a while. I feel safe.  
What do you say, dear sister... ?

She looks at Aurora, hoping for a sign of agreement. Aurora steps close, smoldering, instead looking utterly betrayed.

AURORA

You convinced me to follow you into a world you know *nothing* about. You *lied* when you said you could show us safe passage to the mountains. You coerced me into leaving everything I know behind to follow you into the arms of near-death... So you could find your calling on a farm with some strange woman. Am I forgetting anything, 'dear sister'?

A long moment as the girls stare at one another.

GABRIELLE

You're smart, Aurora. I wish you'd consider another path sometime.

AURORA

I wish I'd never followed yours.

Gabrielle backs away from her. Shaking her head, apologetic but unwilling to waver. She reaches the door. Opens it and, without looking back to meet Aurora's gaze:

GABRIELLE

Give my regards to mother.

She disappears inside, leaving Aurora alone on the porch.

EXT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - OUTSKIRTS - MOMENTS LATER

AURORA marches off the property as fast as the muddy earth allows, crying softly. She crests a HILL to see the SUN sitting on the horizon, RAIN CLOUDS passing before it.

She stares out at the vast, unforgiving country. LIGHTNING flashes soundlessly in the distance. No sign of the mountains, nor anything else she recognizes.

She can't possibly navigate this terrain alone. She looks down at the DOLL in her hands, wiping her betrayed eyes... And turns back for the farm as we launch into a -

MONTAGE

As several WEEKS are implied to elapse:

- The girls help out around the farm, their WOUNDS HEALING, the life returning to their faces. GABRIELLE gets close to MARTY during this, but Aurora maintains a more wary distance.

- The sisters help Marty finish constructing the new BARN behind her home, showing them (UNHEARD) the fine art and craft of building something from the ground up by hand.

- GABRIELLE takes charge during this, always close by Marty's side as she works, like an apprentice, absorbing everything her master has to teach her.

- Lacking much clothes of their own, Marty sets to work SEWING THE GIRLS A NEW WARDROBE from scratch. Attire much closer to her own aesthetic leanings than commune apparel.

- We see the women drinking WINE by the warm glow of the fireplace, laughing and having a good time - all but DOTTI, who watches jealously from the top of the STAIRS.

- MARTY teaches the girls to WOOD CARVE in the kitchen; Aurora grows frustrated by her own lack of artistic merit as Gabrielle skillfully crafts a statue of a HOWLING WOLF.

- That night MARTY reads to the girls as they're tucked warmly in GUEST BEDS, Gabrielle besotted by Marty's every word. Aurora warms to this - if only a tiny bit.

- Aurora walks along the outskirts of the property one morning, happening upon a RAVEN with a BROKEN WING on the ground. She stares at it, sympathetic, moving in close...

... Only for DOTTI to step in from behind her to cradles it. She holds it close, allowing Aurora to watch her SKILLFULLY TENDS ITS BROKEN WING using only a small strip of fabric.

LATER

They watch the RAVEN fly away, wing good as new. Dotti gives Aurora a faint glimmer of a smile... And then shambles off with her odd gait. Aurora studies after her thoughtfully.

DAYS LATER

All signs of any former wounds now long-healed, GABRIELLE helps MARTY with her newest project: completing the PRIVACY FENCE around the property.

The irony of this action appears lost on her as she and Marty exchange playful quips (UNHEARD) while working, two peas of a pod. We END MONTAGE as we PULL BACK to see -



- The women are watched from the BEDROOM WINDOW by AURORA, who, in turn, is watched from the doorway by DOTTI. She KNOCKS on the door - twice, three times, like Morse code.

Aurora turns to regard her - a defiant, feisty look in her eyes. A look we've altogether never quite seen from here.

AURORA

Did I see a pair of sheers lying  
around somewhere, Dotti?

Dotti looks at her, confused.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Long sections of HAIR fall to the ground by Aurora's feet. DOTTI stares at her through the bathroom door, bewitched, as Aurora trims her locks (UNSEEN).

GABRIELLE flies up the stairs, calling out for her sister with a sprightly chipper musicality in her voice:

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

Aurora! We're going to start  
painting the fence, you should -

She finally rounds the corner, staring into the open bathroom door... And halting in her tracks at the stranger before her.

AURORA turns, her hair cut into a defiant BOB. In her own quiet way, Gabrielle is in awe of the change.

INT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

A FIRE CRACKLES as MARTY, GABRIELLE and AURORA drunkenly unwind from a hard day's work. MUSIC plays on the turntable.

AURORA

What'd ya say it was called? Your  
ma, what'che call it...?

GABRIELLE

*Wine talk!*

AURORA (CONT'D)

That was it, that was it!  
Alright Miss Marty, time to  
confess!

MARTY

Oh, I've had too much to drink for  
that...

AURORA

No! No, you confess now. Why you live all alone out here, huh? Whatchu runnin' from...?

Aurora!

GABRIELLE

AURORA (CONT'D)

No, no I wanna hear it! Whatchu hate the world so much for, Miss Marty? It ain't all so bad...

MARTY

Oh? Is that right? You seem to forget you came crawling onto my doorstep half-dead...

AURORA

Yea, well, coulda just as easily been good folks who found us.

MARTY

... But they didn't.

AURORA

You sayin' the only place we safe is here, then? In all the world?

GABRIELLE

She understands us is what she sayin'. And you *really* don't hold alcohol too good by the way...

AURORA (CONT'D)

No, I - I *reject* that. I've never met a *Menagerie* I've liked one bit - all due respect to yur hospitality, ma'am - but I refuse your cynicism and your disdain for the world 'cause that's the very attitude that put my people behind fences in the first place, and still keeps 'em there today...

MARTY

Reject it all you like, the world's gonna go right on hating you and your kind for all time.

Aurora rises, stumbling a little, looking down at the women.

AURORA

... Then lemme be the one ta stand tall 'n love 'em back for makin' me stronger. Right, flabby Gabby?

GABRIELLE

Don't call me that.

AURORA

Lemme stand tall and lemme the strength to be the better one... Me against the world... So be it. Right, Gabby? That's how you used to act. Flabby Gabby versus the world. Look what it gotcha!  
 (beat, Gabrielle simmers)  
 Alright. G'night.

She drunkenly stumbles up the STAIRS, marching past DOTTI, who sits on the staircase with a small WOOD CARVING in hand.

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

*Gonna find out one way or another  
 whatchu runnin' from, Aunt Marty!*

Gabrielle regards Marty awkwardly, apologetically.

MARTY

She just misses home. Can't hold it against her... She's just not as strong as you are.

Gabrielle nods, grateful for Marty's understanding. She rests her head on her shoulder as they watch the fire burn. Dotti regards this quietly nearby - dejected, melancholy...

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - EARLY DAWN

We're CLOSE ON AURORA's sleeping face as a series of muted THUDS pull her eyes open. Sitting up in bed, she listens for a long moment. Realizes the sound is coming from OUTSIDE.

AT THE WINDOW

Aurora looks into the BACKYARD. In the dim grey-blue of early dawn, the BARN DOOR stands ajar, warm LIGHT spilling out. MARTY emerges, pulling a LARGE GOAT with her.

It BUCKS and sweeps its horns in protest until Marty pulls a HAMMER from her waistband AND STRIKES IT BETWEEN THE EYES AS HARD AS SHE CAN. Aurora GASPS, jumping back from the window.

The animal topples, twitching. Marty sweeps it over her shoulders and marches to the WOODS. Aurora watches her disappear with appalled eyes...

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

AURORA sneaks out the front door. Unaware that DOTTI sits on the porch SWING, working a sliver of WOOD with her knife.

Her CARVING has slowly taken SHAPE, discerning two separate FIGURES cut from the same piece. She glares after Aurora.

EXT. FARM PROPERTY OUTSKIRTS - MOMENTS LATER

MARTY carries the GOAT into the WOODS - the same stretch she warned the girls to avoid - as AURORA follows after her.

INT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

AURORA stays a good distance from MARTY, who traverses an obscure FOOTPATH and WHISTLES to herself as she navigates the trees - a MELODY Aurora realizes is oddly FAMILIAR...

Marty soon arrives at a HUGE BARN about TWO-HUNDRED YARDS into the woods. Covered in decades of OVERGROWTH, you'd never notice it if you weren't seeking it out...

Marty candidly drops the dead GOAT and proceeds to unlock a CHAINED PADLOCK holding the sliding DOORS closed.

She laboriously pushes them open, revealing DARKNESS beyond. She lifts the goat by one leg and, resuming her WHISTLING, drags it inside.

It's quiet and still for the longest time as Aurora watches and waits. She absentmindedly hums Marty's MELODY to herself, and with growing unease, realizes she knows it clear as day.

Even its LYRICS, which she SINGS quietly to herself. The DARIAN HYMN the Desmond sisters presented to the class. Aurora's eyes flood with realization. *How could she know - ?*

A LOUD CREAK pulls her unsettled gaze back to the BARN, where MARTY exits - sans goat - and closes the sliding doors. She LOCKS it and nonchalantly proceeds back for the house.

As Aurora leans from behind a tree to watch after her, she almost loses her footing and accidentally steps on a BRANCH.

MARTY'S WHISTLING FALLS SILENT as she hones in on the tree Aurora hides behind. Can't see her, and doesn't need to. She holds her scornful eyes on it before turning back...

... And DROPPING THE KEY RING right onto the footpath, whistling the HYMN ALOUD once more as she disappears. AURORA just listens as the melody trails off into the distance.

EXT. OVERGROWN BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Aurora navigates the barn. Though oddly WINDOWLESS, it's nothing special. Just an old construct in the woods...

With FORTIFIED DOORS and PADLOCKED CHAINS binding it SECURELY from entry for some unknown reason...

Aurora lifts the padlock. It's the size of her palm. The FORTIFICATION of the sliding doors is more RECENT than the barn itself, doubtlessly owing to Marty's handiwork.

It's a close cousin to the fortification used in COMMUNE HOMES when *Turned* are loose, a similarity not lost on Aurora.

Overwhelmed, she turns and rushes down the footpath back toward the farm until the KEY RING catches her eye on the ground, halting her. She just stares down at it as...

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - SAME - INTERCUT

GABRIELLE slowly wakes. Turns over, realizing Aurora is gone. She sits up, hearing the FRONT DOOR OPEN downstairs...

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - MOMENTS LATER - INTERCUT

PITCH BLACK until the door SLIDES OPEN. AURORA wedges inside, fumbling to find a newly-installed SWITCH. She flips it ON. Small BULBS buzz to life, casting a dim GLOW about the space.

HEAVY FABRIC covers what appears to be lumps of partial HAY STACKS on one side. RUSTY TOOLS line a wall, the kind one might use to corral large ANIMALS.

In the middle of the shed is a RAISED PLATFORM with a PADLOCKED TRAPDOOR and a WORK TABLE to its side; adjacent to that, an EMPTY CAGE for housing modest-sized animals.

Aurora covers her nose, grimacing at a FOUL SMELL for which there isn't a clear source. She lifts a trembling hand to study the KEY RING - there are only TWO other keys.

One is OVERSIZED and ANTIQUATED; whatever it opens is nowhere in sight. *But the other?* Her eyes settle on the PLATFORM...

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER - INTERCUT

GABRIELLE steps in to find MARTY at the table with a glass of WINE, back turned. She stares at the UNFINISHED FOX CARVING. Gabrielle, hung over, winces as she rubs her temple.

GABRIELLE

Little early for that again  
already, isn't it... ?

MARTY

(beat)

Tell me something. Do they still  
preach Saint Darius' *Parable of the  
Deceitful Wolf*...?

(Gabrielle stares)

Never heard of it? Might have been  
swept under the rug. There's been  
some... Revisionism since my days.  
No fences back then, either...

Marty takes a long sip from her glass and clears her throat.

MARTY (CONT'D)

*" - There was once a wolf, who was  
the cleverest of all the forest  
creatures. She stole into the old  
farmer's pasture by night to kill  
his chickens, just to prove she  
could do as no other - for the old  
farmer was the finest shot in the  
land and no creature survived his  
all-seeing eye unscathed..."*

Marty kills the glass of wine. Pours herself another.  
Gabrielle's mind reels. *What the hell's going on...?*

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME - INTERCUT

AURORA nears the PLATFORM, until spying something PROTRUDING  
from the TARP over the rotting HAY - A SLENDER BONE.

Kneeling, Aurora glances at the open door once more, where  
murky daylight provides a meager lifeline to the outside...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

*"... This went on for the longest  
time, until one night the wolf  
found herself ensnared in a trap  
set by the old farmer..."*

Aurora takes a deep breath... And pulls back the tarp far  
enough to reveal the dusty remnants of a VERTEBRAE. Brow  
furling, she pulls the fabric back a little more...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

*"... The farmer approaches and asks  
the wolf, 'why do you kill my  
chickens?'"...*

... But the spine DOESN'T END and soon Aurora realize that's because it's not a spine but a LONG, SLENDER TAIL.

She GASPS. Continues retracting the tarp to REVEAL CLAWS, a BARREL-SIZED RIB CAGE, a HUGE SKULL with ELONGATED JAWS...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

*"... To which the wolf replies,  
'because I can, and no one else.'  
This impresses the farmer, who  
strikes a deal with the wolf..."*

Frazzled, Aurora SWEEPS the FABRIC AWAY FULLY, filling the space in a PLUMING DUST. She coughs as it CLEARS, gazing down, eyes suddenly welling in ABJECT HORROR...

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME - INTERCUT

MARTY takes a long swig before continuing. GABRIELLE slowly rises to her feet, horror welling in her eyes...

MARTY

*"... He'll release her in exchange  
for her services hunting other  
creatures of the forest, as the  
farmer had grown old and could not  
hunt as ably as before - so long as  
she leaves his chickens be. The  
wolf agrees to this, and begins  
tricking her forest brethren into  
the farmer's snares..."*

A moment. She continues to drink, lost in thought.

MARTY (CONT'D)

*"... This went on until the wolf  
became known as the most terrible  
of all forest creatures; more  
feared than the bear, the fox, than  
the cruel farmer even. She became  
emboldened, and decided she might  
kill yet another chicken right  
under the old farmer's nose, taking  
him for a fool, taking his kindness  
for blind devotion, perhaps, even,  
for love..."*

(beat)

Can you guess how the parable ends?

Gabrielle doesn't answer as she backs from the kitchen, shaking her head...

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME - INTERCUT

The DUST clears, revealing a cavalcade of HORROR before AURORA's eyes. It's not a single SKELETON the tarp covered - THERE'S AT LEAST A HALF-DOZEN OF THEM.

Things with BEAKS, TUSKS, FANGS, HORNS and other BONY EDIFICES that defy DESCRIPTION. A whimpering, devastated Aurora takes them in with disbelief...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

My brother and I always felt alienated by the idea of the *Hunt*, the fervor of our peers, the crude pageantry of it all...

As she stumbles away, WE PULL BACK to reveal the scope of the MANY SETS OF STREWN, MONSTROUS *TURNED* SKELETONS...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

We made a pledge to one another that we'd have nothing to do with it all. But then that day came...

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME - INTERCUT

MARTY wipes her nose as she studies the UNFINISHED STATUE. GABRIELLE backs into a wall, frozen, shaking her head...

MARTY

... Just after our thirteenth birthday. Derrick was the unlucky one. I hid him in the forest at first. Said he ran off. While they searched high and low, I'd sneak out to be with him, to carve that fox with him. It was the only thing keeping us... Who we were.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME - INTERCUT

AURORA backs into a SUPPORT BEAM, colliding with a series of dangling MASON JARS FILLED WITH BASEBALL-SIZED EYEBALLS. She spins and SCREAMS - Igniting UNGODLY MUFFLED HOWLING SOUNDS!

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)

I didn't want to kill my parents. Never told Derrick I did it; he thinks they're alive to this day...

Her eyes dart frenziedly for the source of the HOWLING, finally landing on the PLATFORM...



Which *isn't* a platform at all but a raised TRAP DOOR over a SUBTERRANEAN CHASM, from which the MONSTROUS HOWLS rise BENEATH AURORA'S VERY FEET - !

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)  
I'm sure the story goes otherwise,  
but I didn't hate them. I loved  
them both... *But I loved him more.*

And then Aurora is just RUNNING THE HELL OUT OF THERE AS FAST AS SHE HUMANLY CAN, dropping the KEYS in her flight - !

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME - INTERCUT

For a moment we hear nothing but the monotonous TICKING of the CLOCK in the kitchen. Marty swims in painful memories.

MARTY  
I just didn't see any other way...  
And as Derrick and I fled into the  
night, a little girl saw us and  
cried out her pious damnation...

EXT. WOODED AREA - SAME - INTERCUT

AURORA RUNS and RUNS as fast as she can for the farm house, eyes filled with horrific understanding...

MARTY'S VOICE (V.O.)  
I'll never forget the hatred in her  
voice as she shrieked into the  
night, over and over and over...  
Oh, those words...

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME - INTERCUT

GABRIELLE has backed from the kitchen, eyes glued to the back of MARTY's head. She shakes with disbelief -

MARTY  
*"Lowell Twins, Lowell Twins, There  
go the vile, filthy LOWELL TWINS!"*

- And as Gabrielle nears the door she GASPS as AURORA SLAMS THROUGH THE DOOR, SCREAMING WORDLESSLY, and Marty turns to REVEAL she's held her RIFLE in her lap all this while -

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Deceitful wolves...

- AND WITH THAT, ALL. FUCKING. HELL. BREAKS LOOSE.

Aurora THROWS HERSELF at Gabrielle, SHRIEKING for her to run! MARTY rises, swift for her age, moving across the kitchen -

- And SMASHES THE BUTT OF HER RIFLE INTO AURORA'S NAPE! She COLLAPSES, knocked out cold! Gabrielle claps her hands to her mouth, eyes wide as saucers!

MARTY (CONT'D)  
 (stalking forward)  
 Do they still say it? Do they still  
 whisper my namesake like hellfire?  
 Am I still a monster to them as  
 well, Gabby...?

Gabrielle's hand finds the doorknob and she BURSTS from the house as Marty watches Gabrielle run past DOTTI, who appears on the porch as the screaming girl flees.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
 Guess the fun's over. If you will,  
 Dotti. Side B...

She gives chase to Gabrielle as Dotti steps inside. Looks like she wants to intervene - but obediently nears the TURNTABLE instead and flips the current RECORD sitting on it.

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - MOMENTS LATER

A SPRIGHTLY *PRESTO* BELTS ACROSS THE PROPERTY through OUTDOOR SPEAKERS! The hunt is on as GABRIELLE runs through the open field while MARTY, calm and measured, simply WALKS after her!

She tries one direction, only to come face-to-face with the very FENCE LINE SHE HELPED BUILD! She's trapped, changing direction for the WOODS instead!

INT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE stumbles through trees. MUSIC blares its SONIC ASSAULT from all directions, drowning her CRIES!

LATER

The tumultuous music has given way to a languid ADAGIO. We TRACK WITH MARTY'S BOOTS as she stalks along, drawn to the VOICE of GABRIELLE as she trembles at the base of a tree.

She sings the *PSALM OF THE ENDLESS MEADOW* brokenly, wincing as MARTY'S SHADOW looms over her. The barrel of the SHOTGUN lifts her chin upward, where Marty holds her gaze...

MARTY

Should've kept running, Gabby. I actually *forgot* to load this thing before I followed ya. Imagine that!

Gabrielle squeezes her eyes shut, despair overwhelming her.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - LATER

AURORA's eyes drift open. She rubs her nape, groaning as she realizes she's in the nightmarish lair again - and this time CAGED with GABRIELLE, who huddles comatose at her side.

DOTTI picks at the LOCKED TRAP DOOR with her CARVING KNIFE, eyes darting at the girls as she sees they've come around. She glares conspiratorially before turning away from them.

AURORA

Dotti. Please, help...

Dotti looks at her again. Considers... But doesn't have too long to dwell as a RATTLING THUD announces MARTY's arrival. She sees Dotti and freezes, appalled at her presence.

MARTY

What are you doing!? You're not allowed in here. *Get out! OUT - !*

She lurches in and GRABS DOTTI, pulling her toward the door.

MARTY (CONT'D)

There is *one* place you are not permitted! Be gone!

She THROWS DOTTI into the woods, SLAMMING the door. She gathers herself and approaches the WORK TABLE, where she begins to CHOP APART a flank of GOAT MEAT.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Where were we? Right. The *Deceitful Wolf*. "*So after a spell, the wolf decides to kill another chicken, no longer fearing repercussion from the trusting old farmer...*"

Aurora looks around for something to aid in escape, but there's nothing within reach in this house of horrors.

MARTY (CONT'D)

*"... So one night the wolf enters the barn to discover the farmer has already killed the rest of his own flock, and sits in tears.*

(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)

*'Why do such a thing?' Asks the wolf, and the old farmer cries, 'Because I loved you as my own, but I saw in your mistrustful gaze that this moment was always to come, for you are the deceitful wolf, and you know only one way.' Only then did the wolf understand her own wickedness - so she, too, wept amidst blood and feather."*

She turns, holding the SEVERED GOAT HEAD by a HORN. Aurora rises as much as the cage allows, hands on the bars.

A series of MUTED ROARS carry from beneath their feet, pulling Gabrielle from her stupor with an unnerved gasp.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Your sister's curiosity has spoiled our paradise, Gabby. I'm sorry.

Gabrielle looks at Aurora with confused, furtive eyes. MARTY nears the cage, a quiet intensity overtaking her:

MARTY (CONT'D)

Derrick and I tried as you have. Ran and never looked back. Thought we might find a fairy-tale life...

AURORA

Whatever you think you're doing... This won't bring him back, Marty.

Marty gawks stupidly at her, amused.

MARTY

Derrick didn't go anywhere, child.

Another ROAR beneath their feet. Aurora groans, sinking.

MARTY (CONT'D)

He and I had plans, dreams... Most of which can't come true. But others... He needs love, like any of us. A family. I've done what I can. I returned to the commune in years past, pulled children from their very beds. I've... Offered *myself* to him, on occasion, so he might be given that which he is owed... But I've been too old for that for a long time now...

She stares off, darkening. The girls stunned into disgusted stillness by the implication.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I've tried building him a family down there, but it's mostly been - unsuccessful. Few made it to adulthood; all eventually succumbed to one ailment or another...

Aurora looks at the heaped SKELETONS in the corner, suddenly understanding what they are, eyes softening at them.

MARTY (CONT'D)

So far, that brat Dotti has turned out most... *Human* of the lot.

Another muted ROAR floats up from underground, accompanied by a deep THUD that sends a tiny plume of DUST reigning down from a rafter. The girls stare at her with appalled eyes.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I don't like sequestering him away, but the world's cruel to our kind. If he were found, it'd all be over.

(beat)

As for you two... One of you will *Turn* sooner than later. If I can't give him a human child, perhaps...

(beat)

All the others he bred with hadn't *Turned* yet. It'll be different with you; I'm sure. Whichever of you it is shall become his Queen...

Gabrielle sobs, too horrified to protest her fate. Aurora barely holds together. Marty smiles sadly off of this.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I fought the urge to do this. I wanted you for me, both of you. Thought we could live a happy life together, if only for a while...

Gabrielle throws herself at the bars. She reaches for Marty's face, blabbering tearful vies for mercy, forgiveness...

Marty allows her hand to run down her cheek. Revels in it for a moment... Then rises and moves away from the cage.

She near a WINCH SYSTEM she's constructed in the barn and pulls a LEVER - and with a startled JOLT, the CAGE RISES...

Marty holds the girls' eyes as the cage is HOISTED over the TRAP DOOR, which GROANS OPEN.

A SNARL rises unencumbered into open air. The girls give Marty a final, pleading look... And she pulls the winch, THE BOTTOM of the cage GIVING OUT, SENDING THE GIRLS INTO THE -

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - CONTINUOUS

It's a mercifully short fall into MUD. The GIRLS are DAZED by the impact, until a SNARL sends them scampering into one another's arms, eyes clenched. The SOUNDS stay at bay.

MARTY (O.S.)  
The wall. There's a switch.

Aurora looks up. Fifteen feet above, MARTY stands over them.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
To your left. Don't be afraid, he can't reach you...

Aurora rises and stumbles to finds a damp, rough-hewn WALL - and on it, an ELECTRIC PANEL. Another low GROWL sounds, accompanied by rattling CHAINS and thudding FOOTFALLS...

AURORA  
... I love you, Gabby.

Gabrielle stares into the darkness, emotional and confused.

AURORA (CONT'D)  
You showed me that there's more to the world than fences and hymns. You... Made me stronger.

Gabrielle, eyes heavy, lowers her head. There's another LOW GROWL... And then Aurora SNAPS ON THE LIGHT.

CAGED INCANDESCENT BULBS wired about the lair pulse to life, REVEALING PULVERIZED SKELETAL REMAINS of hapless ANIMALS.

Festering MAGGOTS wriggle about the floor, ruled over by swirling FLIES. An uneven dip in the floor has created a rudimentary VERNAL POOL in which URINE and FECES swirl.

Breathless, the girls take in these details, overwhelmed by the DEPRAVITY of it all. As MARTY'S face beams up above -

WE FINALLY SEE THEM. Sitting nonchalant in a corner, staring as if a conversation had been interrupted by eavesdropping strangers. TWO YOUNGLINGS THE SIZE OF CALVES.

Whereas Dotti is a successful approximation of humanity, these are not. One is a synthesis of INFANT, SALAMANDER and DOLPHIN, all pale flesh, stubby limbs and flabby TAIL.

The other - hunched SIMIAN BODY, CANINE FACE - has a SINGLE BLOODSHOT EYEBALL in the center of its sloping forehead, which rolls lazily toward the new arrivals.

The malnourished beasts should be diabolical but Aurora's brimming eyes are filled instead with COMPASSION and HEARTBREAK for the existence of such horrid things.

The girls stare in shock, and the creatures right back at them with eyes that never blink - a moment played not for horror or shock but SOBERING MELANCHOLY.

A SNARL issues from a PASSAGEWAY behind them - a tall, arching DEN recessed into the wall. DERRICK'S LAIR. The BARK brings the YOUNGLINGS RISING to shuffle into the dark.

A PAIR OF HUGE EYES tower over them, stalking with thudding FOOTFALLS, yet hesitating on the cusp of the darkened den...

MARTY

Go on, my love. You needn't fear  
them. Show yourself. Let them see.

A moment of hesitation... And DERRICK stalks into the light. Gabrielle GROANS and looks away. Transfixed, Aurora doesn't.

Derrick's SNOUT peeks from shadows, atop which a bulbous PROBOSCIS sniffs at the air. Sniffing deeply, Derrick's lips part to reveal interlocking TEETH as sharp as switchblades.

He lumbers from his den on DIGITIGRADE LEGS as powerful FOREARMS draw him forward, his gait gorilla-like. AURORA holds her ground, taking in other alarming details:

An EMACIATED TORSO terminating in a TAIL with FINGER-LIKE APPENDAGES, and jutting from his back, two short pinion-like APPENDAGES resembling FEATHERLESS WINGS...

Or the crimson EYES located on either side of his skull, causing him to tilt to the side to see straight. He clocks one toward the girls, the beady PUPIL NARROWING at them.

Mobility limited by a CHAIN bound around his neck and fixed to a wall in his den, Derrick cannot reach the girls - but doesn't seem eager to either. Merely curious.

MARTY (CONT'D)

One of them is to *Turn* soon;  
whomever it is shall be your Queen.  
(MORE)

## MARTY (CONT'D)

Patience now, and treat them well,  
for they shall see to your needs  
until that day comes - !

She tosses the severed GOAT HEAD into the pit and begins the arduous process of closing the TRAP DOOR above them. DERRICK looks from Marty back down at the strangers, and they at him.

As the trap door CLOSES above with a deep THUD, Derrick throws back his head to release an UNEARTHLY BRAYING. Aurora takes in this madness, utterly overwhelmed as we GO TO BLACK.

INT./EXT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Perhaps a WEEK has elapsed. Deep GREENS and foggy atmosphere abound. We look upon the unfinished WOOD WORKING PROJECTS, the now-empty GUEST ROOM, the RECORD COLLECTION...

The TURNTABLE on which an LP SPINS and disseminates its music about the many hidden SPEAKERS on the property.

## ON THE FRONT PORCH

DOTTI sits on the SWING, WOOD SHAVINGS piling beneath her. Fevered at work on her prize creation, which finally takes clear definition:

A CARVED LIKENESS OF HERSELF and AURORA, tending the injured BIRD, hands locked around it.

## ELSEWHERE

BLOOD SPATTER TRICKLES along aged WOOD. A lifeless GOAT EYE is seen, and the HAMMER used to bludgeon it. MARTY stares at the blood, POOLING CLOSE to her BOOTS on the BARN FLOOR.

## EXT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - WOODS - DUSK

MARTY as she nears the dilapidated BARN, SEVERED GOAT HEADS in either hand.

## INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - MOMENTS LATER

The doors slide open to cast gloom upon the *TURNED* SKELETONS.

## INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - CONTINUOUS

As the TRAP DOOR CRANKS OPEN overhead, the twins' BELONGINGS can now be seen amidst strewn BONES, on which SPOILED MEAT clings. The GOAT HEADS land dully in the mud.



DERRICK'S TAIL snakes into view and collects one of them into his den as the MUSIC echoes off into nothingness.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATER THAT DAY

MARTY CHOPS FIRE WOOD in the front yard. She stops, suddenly aware - through intuition afforded by a lifetime of hiding terrible secrets - that she isn't alone.

She surveys her property. A FIGURE stands in the path leading to open country. A VAGRANT...? Marty plants her AXE into the tree stump as DOTTI, sitting on the porch, gazes quietly.

MARTY

Go inside.

Dotti obeys before REVEALING the approaching figure is no vagrant - It's MIRIAM. But not as we remember. Hair and face redolent of DESTITUTION. Marty softens at her.

INT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - KITCHEN - LATER

MARTY's hands unfurl a stained copy of the MISSING PERSONS FLIER with AURORA and GABRIELLE'S LIKENESS. MIRIAM looks at her from across the kitchen table, eyes pleading.

MARTY

(feigning concern)

Heard on the radio. Sounded like the whole state were after 'em for a spell. Must confess I don't keep as close tabs on affairs since my late husband passed. Thought surely they'd have found 'em by now...

Miriam produces GABRIELLE'S DIARY from her SATCHEL, the WOLF embroidered on the cover immediately catching Marty's eye.

She shifts, realizing Gabrielle's OWN WOOD-CARVED INCARNATION of the same animal sits right over her shoulder.

MIRIAM

... Wrote about mountains to the North. Safe havens in their midst. Must've passed this way to get there, I'm sure of it.

Marty studies the journal and Gabrielle's ILLUSTRATIONS of high, snow-capped and overwhelmingly majestic peaks within.

MARTY  
 North of here? There is no such place. Not for thousands of miles. Just open prairie, farms...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 (ignoring her)  
 Must've sought refuge somewhere in their travels. Must have...

MARTY (CONT'D)  
 You think they made it this far? Across all this open country crawling with trackers, police?

MIRIAM  
 They bear a special kind of will.

MARTY  
 Mm. Special kind of will. And you?

MIRIAM  
 The moment they defected from ancestral land, it was decided that my girls were no longer the commune's responsibility. And for the transgressions they caused, the shame they brought to our people with their unruly behavior - I was chastised. Violently so...

She sweeps her hair behind one ear to reveal a DEEP SCAR on her temple, one that looks likely to remain indefinitely.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 ... For my own good, and the welfare of my people, it was decided my continued place in the commune was not amenable...

Miriam looks toward the window, deeply shameful.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 I was pious. A devout follower of Darian word. I have no life beyond those fences. So I shall... Redeem myself. I shall bring them back.

Miriam's eyes fall to the journal. She leafs through it.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 There's a person in these pages I never knew. I've read it over and over, in awe each time by what's written by this strong mind...

Marty looks to the window. Feigning introspection.

NEARBY

DOTTI sits in the living room, LISTENING through the door. The CARVING of SHE and AURORA clutched in her hands.

BACK TO SCENE

Miriam studies the journal, eyes wet.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

So many things I'd like to say to the person who wrote this, so many things I'd like to ask... I don't know where she is... But she lives. They both do, I am certain of it.

Marty leans forward, taking Miriam's hands into hers. She holds her gaze for a long moment.

MARTY

You really believe that... Even after the world has turned its back on you? Even your own kind?

(Miriam nods)

I admire your will, I must say.

MIRIAM

... I admire theirs. I once had flights of fancy about life beyond the fences, just as they have. I thought a life might await me out here... But then I got pregnant with them, and after their father defected... I knew it was not to be. But they... Resist. They're brave, strong. Different somehow.

MARTY

Perhaps there are things the young and wild can teach us yet.

MIRIAM

Perhaps.

Miriam draws hope from these words. Her eyes flicker toward the GABRIELLE'S WOLF SCULPTURE.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Gabrielle loves wolves. She'd like that piece very much.

Marty beams at her, nodding.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATER

The bulk of Miriam's belongings are on the porch, including her RIFLE. MARTY eyes it as MIRIAM gathers her things.

MARTY

I've a guest room here. Not much,  
but you're welcome to it.

Miriam's eyes say she can't. Marty nods in understanding, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder. Miriam returns it, then sets off without looking back.

Marty studies her coyly for a moment before returning to her CHORES about the property...

A watchful DOTTI, however, never once takes her eyes off Miriam's retreating form through the living room WINDOW.

EXT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - OUTSKIRTS - LATER

MIRIAM crests the same HILL Aurora deliberated on, marking the edge of the tree line and start of OPEN COUNTRY beyond. The tiny, distant figure of DOTTI enters frame.

Miriam eventually stops, turns. Walks back toward her.

MOVING CLOSER, she sees that Dotti carries an object. The WOOD-CARVING OF AURORA AND HERSELF holding an injured bird. Not a *perfect* likeness, and yet...

Producing the CRUMPLED FLIER, Miriam kneels. Holds it up to Dotti, who points toward the WOODS - then RUNS BACK FOR THE HOUSE. Miriam gawks, turning her attention to the TREELINE.

INT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - MOMENTS LATER

DOTTI sneaks into the house. Races UPSTAIRS. Her flight stopped short by CREAKING FLOORBOARD. She looks up to see MARTY'S SHADOW LOOMING atop the stairs, waiting for her...

EXT. FOREST - LATER (DUSK)

MIRIAM wanders about. Not certain of anything. Just looking. It's getting DARK and she soberly notes a chorus of ROLLING THUNDER CLAPS that don't sound remote enough for comfort.

She's in a part of the woods we RECOGNIZE. The obscured FOOTPATH to the dilapidated BARN is beneath Miriam's feet, to her total oblivion. She stops to take in the SILENCE.

PULLING WIDE, we see how ALONE she is... Until REVEALING the length of a RIFLE, aimed by MARTY'S level, unflinching grasp.

MIRIAM takes in the silence a moment longer. Another fifty yards and the dilapidated barn might become visible...

MARTY keeps the gun trained on her watchfully. Miriam takes a wavering breath and, as another ROLL OF THUNDER sounds, TURNS AND LEAVES - and finally, slowly, MARTY lowers her weapon.

INT. MARTY'S FARM PROPERTY - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DOTTI sits on the couch. Eyes downcast as she sits by the glow of the FIREPLACE. Outside, THUNDER fills the night.

MARTY stands in the doorway, arms crossed. The WOODCARVING is on the table before her like a shameful discovery she's made.

It takes very little for her to communicate grievous disappointment as she flicks her eyes toward the fire.

Dotti lifts the statue. Rises. Plays it over lovingly in her hands as she readies to cast it into the DEVOURING FLAMES...

But her face hardens. She steps back. Returns it FORCEFULLY to the table and gives Marty a defiant stare.

MARTY

Know the consequences. You sure?

(Dotti's eyes sink)

Turn around.

Time seems to slow as Dotti turns her back to the fire and... Unbuttoning her shirt. Slowly. Letting it fall past her SHOULDERS as Marty nears the fireplace.

She lifts a FIRE POKER off a wall-mounted hook. Levels it into the FLAMES. Holds it there, gazing at the fire.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I let you live in this house.

Afford you freedoms I didn't give the others...

Behind her, Dotti lets her shirt fall a little further to expose her back - and to our disbelief, SOMETHING BEGINS WRIGGLING FREE OF HER BAGGY CLOTHES.

WINGS. DOTTI HAS WINGS.

They resemble the featherless PINIONS on Derrick's back, but slightly BETTER-DEVELOPED, FLESH-TONED and, when folded, they COMPRESS DISCRETELY against her shoulder blades.

The limbs shimmy free of the fabric - *now we know why she always wears unsightly oversized clothes* - and unfold, the MEMBRANOUS WEBBING BACKLIT BY THE GLOWING FLAMES.

Her SILHOUETTE casts an almost angelic SHADOW on the wall as the flightless appendages STRETCH BROADLY.

Satisfied as the FIRE POKER BEGINS GLOWING RED-HOT, Marty turns. Studies Dotti's wings with contemptuous eyes.

Dotti SHUDDERS as Marty takes slow, purposeful steps forward, tendrils of HEAT unfurling from the poker.

As she closes in, we see there are OLD WELDS and BURN MARKS covering the OUTER AREA of Dotti's WINGS. Tonight's is not Dotti's first punishable offense.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Last chance.

Tears stream down Dotti's face and she trembles, eyes never once leaving the CARVING of she and Aurora. She STRAIGHTENS HER WINGS. Ready to endure a world of pain.

Marty frowns. Moves in as we ANGLE AWAY onto the fire-lit WOOD-CARVING, which sits unaffectedly as the FLESH-SEARING SOUND OF DOTTI'S UNSEEN TORTURE SESSION BEGINS.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - LATER THAT NIGHT

MUSIC BELTS from an overhead SPEAKER mounted along a length of electrical PANELING. Hideous in the damp acoustics. A set of SMOLDERING EYES stare daggers, maddened by the thing.

AURORA. We take in her appearance. Days in this subterranean hell have been unkind to her. A layer of GRIME coats her skin, to say nothing of her muddy, tattered CLOTHING.

Yet the FEISTINESS we've seen awake within her is untarnished, eyes burning strong in her dirty face.

She looks across the chamber at GABRIELLE, who lies against a wall and stares straight ahead at nothing - her boldness of spirit relinquished by a week of malnutrition and despair.

She doesn't even acknowledge the more AMPHIBIAN-LOOKING of the YOUNGLINGS as it LICKS HER EAR with a long TONGUE.

DERRICK sits halfway into the main chamber, himself licking the unblinking EYE of the CYCLOPEAN YOUNGLING - which has no eyelid of its own.

Gabrielle studies this exchange. It's precious somehow. Her eyes take it in sadly as she SINGS an off-key DARIAN HYMN.

Aurora tries to ignore it, but the flat vocalizing outstays its welcome quickly. She rises and nears Gabrielle, towering over her and looking a pinch INSANE.

Gabrielle CROONS ON, mind a thousand miles away as the YOUNGLING licks her ear and a sortie of FLIES envelop them.

She keeps intoning quietly - so Aurora SLAPS HER, HARD. The YOUNGLING scampers away as DERRICK looks up, releasing a territorial WARNING GRUMBLE.

Gabrielle tenderly strokes her struck cheek, lips still moving slowly with the HYMN. She stares straight ahead, totally still for a moment.

GABRIELLE

In book one of the Gospel, when Saint Darius describes his time imprisoned following his son's *Turning...* When he was beaten day and night, set upon with stones of villagers, stripped, partially castrated and dragged through the streets for all to see...

Aurora, having heard enough, GRABS HER SISTER BY THE HAIR and THROWS HER against the ground. But Aurora isn't done yet.

She KICKS Gabrielle. A blow to the ribs that sends her into the wall with a pained GROAN.

AURORA

Get up! Fight back! This is what you wanted, dear sister!

Gabrielle slowly rights herself. Aurora PULLS HER to her feet and THROWS her against the wall. Gabrielle stares, dazed.

GABRIELLE

... Every night Saint Darius would lie awake in his dungeon, maggots festering in wounds, covered in the excrement of his captors. Yet he describes such overwhelming love...

AURORA

SHUT UP - !

She THROWS Gabrielle to the ground! Failing to break her own fall, Gabrielle's splayed HAND lands directly on a SHATTERED section of a RIB CAGE, SLICING DEEP INTO HER FLESH!

Even DERRICK balks at this, watching on with fretful eyes. Aurora towers over her sister, breathing heavily.

GABRIELLE

... Love for not only the *Menagerie* but for God *Blessing* him, allowing him to know this agony... For no angel of darkness could feel such earthen pain as he did in that moment. It meant he *was* human, not an engine of blasphemous design as the *Menagerie* insisted... And that realization is what set him on his path to lead our people...

She lifts her hand from the serrated bones to reveal a DEEP GASH in her palm, from which BLOOD run freely.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

... How fortunate we are to know *real* suffering, as Saint Darius did. We will die down here, of that I am sure - but for now...

She holds up her hand toward Aurora, allowing the BLOOD to play in the dim light, crimson and oily as it mixes with mud.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

... How does my lifeblood flow.

Aurora stares down at her. Anger draining. She kneels to eye level with her, taking Gabrielle's bloody hand into her own.

AURORA

... You saved us once, Gabby. You were strong when I was not. You... Willed us from our fate behind that fence. Did as no one else could...

GABRIELLE

... No one else, you say...?

Aurora suddenly becomes aware that DERRICK leans close as his shackles allow, listening. The girls hold one another's eyes.

AURORA

You made me a promise, and I you.

Gabrielle's eyes change a little. Pious wonderment dimming. She's come back down to earth - for just a moment.

GABRIELLE

I thought I could save us, but I failed.

(MORE)



GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

If we are fortunate, we shall  
perish before one of us *Turns*.

With that her face goes slack again, eyes glazing, and she resumes singing the HYMN. Aurora stares hopelessly at her as DERRICK studies them, looking somehow sympathetic.

INT. DOTTI'S BEDROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

DOTTI sits in bed, arms drawn inward. A SINGED WING is WRAPPED over her torso like a membranous BLANKET. Not life-threatening injuries, but HORRIBLE and DISFIGURING.

She hugs her WOOD-CARVING as MARTY stands in her doorway.

MARTY

Put that thing away. It's hideous.

She closes and LOCKS the door. Eyes seething, Dotti draws the carving closer as THUNDER RUMBLES OVERHEAD in the night.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - LATER THAT NIGHT

AURORA, sleepless, rends chunks of MEAT from a GOAT SKULL, chewing angrily and barely holding the rancid meat down.

She's watched closely by DERRICK, who sits with his massive FOREARMS crossed, appearing sphinx-like in this pose.

AURORA

You stink. You always stink. Curse  
your filthy stinking shitty smell!

Bored, Derrick SNORTS and rises. Shakes off FILTH and stalks away, dragging his CHAIN noisily.

FLIES crawl about on GABRIELLE'S sleeping face nearby as a FAMILIAR VOICE comes to her. A voice we hadn't expected to ever hear again - AARON ROGERS.

AARON (O.S.)

... I'm unsure of the truth of this  
rhetoric. Perhaps a correspondence  
with another curious soul shall  
break me of my stigma...

Gabrielle's eyes drift open, finding cognition.

Standing over her, staring down like a curious animal, is a VISION OF AARON ROGERS in *TURNED FORM*, horrifically BURNT and desiccated as when we saw last his earthen form.

Gabrielle stares up at him... And smiles.

GABRIELLE  
 (whispering)  
 Stay unsure. Stay curious, as your  
 mother said. I've enough conviction  
 for us both... For now.

The *TURNED* CREATURE smiles down at her. Lifts a finger to her lips, "shh". Gabrielle returns the gesture.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
 A start indeed...

The vision of AARON is gone. Replaced with darkness. Sitting up, Gabrielle sees the SALAMANDRINE YOUNGLING at her feet.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
 (smiling)  
 "Kismet". Another word for  
 "Providence". Ten letters...

NEARBY

AURORA has plucked a GOAT EYEBALL from the skull. She grimaces as she brings it to her mouth with shaky fingers...

Until a RESOUNDING SHRIEK EXPLODES THROUGH THE LAIR! She jolts, eyes wide as the would-be morsel slips from her grasp!

SHE SEES GABRIELLE holding the YOUNGLING, using her dwindling strength to keep it from escaping as DERRICK LUNGES, ENRAGED!

SHE'S JUST BEYOND HIS REACH, the CHAIN buckling but HOLDING STRONG! HIS MASSIVE CLAWS scrape at the air, gnashing, but Gabrielle stands unwavering!

AURORA  
*What are you doing - !?*

Gabrielle looks at her. A hint of that exacting stare we once knew. Aurora sees this, her eyes changing as DERRICK BELTS and SNARLS. GNASHES HIS TEETH, THRASHES HIS TAIL!

GABRIELLE  
 Derrick Lowell.

The beast is shocked into SILENCE.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
 We've spoken ten words to you in  
 about as many days. Let's fix that.

Derrick bares his TEETH, his growling low and guttural.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Why does she keep you down here?  
 Why are you chained like a dog?  
 Your sister speaks of love, so why  
 are you and your children shunned?

Gabrielle ventures a step forward, causing the YOUNGLING TO WRIGGLE in her grasp. Derrick BARKS a warning at her.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

This isn't love, Derrick. She's  
 manipulating you, as she did us.  
 That's not what family does. This  
 is exploitation, imprisonment, this  
 is the exact fate the *Menagerie*  
 would force upon you if they ever -

Derrick ROARS, smashing a GOAT SKULL TO DUST with his fist. Gabrielle is unfazed, but AURORA tries to pull her away.

AURORA

Stop, Gabby, I don't know what  
 you're doing but please stop -

Ignoring her, Gabrielle steps forward again. She's now within Derrick's easy reach, should he choose to lash out. She holds the YOUNGLING close, studying its wide, disk-like EYES.

She strokes its face. Rocks it gently like a big, diseased baby. Slowly but surely it calms, as does Derrick, who melts as the YOUNGLING licks Gabrielle's FACE - now totally docile.

GABRIELLE

Look what you've created. How can  
 she shun such a beautiful life?  
 When was the last time she came  
 down here, held you, sung Hymns of  
 joy and told you, no, *showed you*  
 how much you mean to her...?

Derrick falters, eyes brimming with pained thoughts. He BACKS AWAY as Gabrielle takes another bold step forward. She lowers the YOUNGLING, which licks her hand amiably.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

The way you treat them... That's  
 the kindness of spirit Saint Darius  
 beseeches of us. Even Dotti, she -

Irate again, DERRICK ABRUPTLY LUNGES AND GROWLS IN HER FACE, ROW AFTER ROW OF TEETH GLINTING BEFORE HER FACE! Aurora BALKS but Gabrielle holds out, unimpressed by the bravado!

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Oh yes. When was the last time you saw Dotti? Do you know how old she is, what she looks like now? Do you know how your sister *mistreats* her?

Derrick releases a low MEWING. Gabrielle takes the opportunity to lift a cautious hand toward his face...

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Marty hurts her, Derrick. Hurts her like she hurt us, and you...

ANGER simmers on Derrick's face. Aurora shakes her head, fearing the worst from Gabrielle's touch - But she makes contact with Derrick without protest.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

... Been a long time. Hasn't it?

She softens as Derrick looks up at her with devastated eyes. Gabrielle steps back, pulling Aurora's hand into her own.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

This is Aurora. I'm Gabrielle. We're wayward souls, like you. Help us get out of here, and I give you my word, you will see Dotti again.

Derrick stares between them. Indecision playing over his monstrous features as muffled THUNDER CRACKS in the night.

INT. BARN - LATER THAT NIGHT

MARTY nurses a WOODWORKING PROJECT in the newly-completed barn, lost in focus as she perfects its edges. MUSIC plays loudly here as we move over to the WINDOW to see -

- DOTTI sneaking out her bedroom window, CLOSING IT and nimbly RAPPELING off the low roof to DISAPPEAR from frame. Seen fleetingly between FLASHES OF LIGHTNING...

MARTY moves to an adjacent table to locate a particular type of VARNISH. Her back TURNED to the worktable and the OPEN DOORS for a moment as she searches the shelf.

Behind her, DOTTI, SOAKING WET from the RAIN, has snuck into the barn. She stands stock still mere YARDS AWAY from Marty, to the woman's total oblivion.

Her eyes narrow in on the worktable table, and two objects resting upon it: MIRIAM'S DOLL and the BARN KEYS.

She teeters indecisively - Then steps forward and quietly lifts both objects. She turns and WALKS out of the barn, back turned to Marty...

Who still hasn't turned around as Dotti walks free of the barn in total disbelief - and soon BOOKS IT FOR THE DARKENED WOODS AS FAST AS SHE CAN.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - MOMENTS LATER

The DOOR CRASHES OPEN as DOTTI pours in. Eyes narrowing on the PADLOCK on the TRAP DOOR, and then the KEY RING...

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Marty moves over to the window, setting out a series of BRUSHES for the WOODWORK PROJECT. The seasoned craftswoman, she takes a moment to select the perfect tool for the job.

But something's... Off. We see it in her eyes. She looks up toward the house, almost absentmindedly. Dotti's WINDOW is dark, curtains drawn. Nothing unusual. *And yet...*

Selecting her brush, Marty moves over to the table. Halts. Immediately notices certain objects are MISSING from it. And beyond the table, WET FOOTSTEPS LEADING OUTSIDE...

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - CONTINUOUS

DOTTI turns the KEY to TRAPDOOR's lock without resistance. She rips away the CHAIN and tries PUSHING the trapdoor open, but it won't budge under her feeble strength.

Her efforts cut short as the MUSIC STOPS, ABRUPT SILENCE overtaking the entire PROPERTY. Not a natural end to the piece of music - a HARD CUT as the system SWITCHES OFF.

Dotti steps back. Throws tense glances toward the open BARN DOOR, beyond which nothing can be seen except RAINY DARKNESS.

Not knowing what else to do, Dotti simply JUMPS on the trap door... And RASPS HER KNUCKLES LOUDLY. ONE, TWICE, THREE TIMES. Regular purposeful INTERVALS, LIKE MORSE CODE.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - SAME

AURORA, GABRIELLE and DERRICK'S heads jolt up in surprise. The girls are lost on the sound's meaning, but DERRICK is not. His eyes CHANGING as he realizes what he hears...

He SNIFFS at the air, eyes widening. Rearing back, he HOWLS a strangely PATERNAL SOUND, flooded with longing.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME

DOTTI beams at the MUTED SOUND, the first time we've seen such radiance from her, even as she fails to notice the LANTERN BOBBING ITS WAY through the night behind her...

Sliding open a small VIEWING SLATE on the TRAPDOOR, Dotti SHOVS THE KEY RING into the darkness below... And, after a moment, does the same with Miriam's DOLL.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - SAME

DERRICK and the GIRLS watch in surprise as the glinting KEY RING rains down, the DOLL shortly behind. They step toward these items, brightening. Aurora beams at the doll.

Derrick SNIFFS the key with his large proboscis, eyes WIDENING as Aurora looks up at the viewing SLATE.

AURORA  
Dotti...? Help us!

The twins share an exacerbated, hopeful smile, as DERRICK releases a sound we might liken to one of JOY.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME

DOTTI bangs her palm once more in Morse code-type cadence. Positively ecstatic for a moment, until -

MARTY (O.S.)  
I knew you were special from the  
moment I first held you, Dotti.

Dotti slowly rises, faced away from MARTY (UNSEEN).

MARTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
The others were unfortunate... But  
you were a diamond.

Dotti turns to see MARTY in the doorway. Pose nonchalant, shoulders relaxed. Soaked with RAIN and carrying a LANTERN.

She steps into the barn and advances toward Dotti, who backs into the SKELETONS of brethren more monstrous than herself. Marty stops at the TRAPDOOR, studying the padlock and chains.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Remind me a lot of myself at your age. Rebellious, untenable. Like your father. Two peas of a pod...

She proceeds to the WORK TABLE, on which she sets the LANTERN and studies the various TOOLS set upon the work space. She considers each one, eyes very dark.

MARTY (CONT'D)

In a way, I loved you, and did all I could to show it. That's why this behavior has me feeling betrayed...

Below them, DERRICK'S MUTED BARKING vies for attention. A distressed and disconcerting sound Marty ignores as she lifts a rusted HANDSAW and studies its brutal, serrated edges.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I can see that it hasn't been enough. My warmth, generosity. You need what I can't provide you. Yes?

DOTTI just stares at her mistrustfully.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Do you want to be with him, Dotti? With your father? With those deceitful girls who spoke ill of you behind your back...?

Dotti doesn't fall for it. Marty looks disappointed as she lowers the saw, a different tool gleaming her attention (UNSEEN). She nods a vague, unreadable gesture.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Sad, Dotti. Sad, sad, sad. But so be it. Bring me the keys and we'll be done with this.

A moment. A panicked look from Dotti draws Marty's gaze.

MARTY (CONT'D)

... Dotti? The keys?

Dotti looks toward the viewing slate on the trapdoor. Marty bites her lip, shaking her head with a tisk - and Dotti's brow furrows as Marty lifts a small HAND TORCH...

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - MOMENTS LATER

DERRICK PACES FRANTICALLY. WHIMPERS. Tail WHIPPING about. AURORA tries to calm him, nearing with the largest of the KEYS to try and unshackle the confines about his neck.

In his furor, she's unable to get close; even his YOUNGLINGS cower fearfully by Gabrielle's side.

GABRIELLE

What's she doing up there...?

A THUMP overhead. The TRAPDOOR GROANS OPEN, taking an eternity, DERRICK reared on HIND LEGS all the while. The TRAPDOOR grinds to a halt as MARTY's SILHOUETTE enters view.

MARTY

I want those keys.

DERRICK ROARS up at her! A savage, defiant sound!

MARTY (CONT'D)

Dotti is hurt and wishes very much to see her father! I will let you see her once I have my keys!

Derrick looks down at the girls. Gaze narrowing in on the KEYS in Aurora's hands - and then he's LUNGING FOR HER, reaching, falling short and SHRIEKING BEDLAM AT HER -

AURORA

No, Derrick! She's lying to you!

MARTY

Deceitful wolves! Don't listen to them! They *hate* Dotti, they said as such, they show her nothing but -

GABRIELLE

It isn't true! Don't listen to her! She has you *chained* down here, she's keeping you prisoner in -

DERRICK JUST ROARS HIS LUNGS OUT! Yanks at his chains, desperate, DRAWING HIS OWN BLOOD in the process!

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

The keys! Get it from them!

ROW AFTER UNGODLY ROW OF TEETH SLASH AND GNASH at the girls! He kicks DEBRIS at them and lashes his TAIL, until finally, in a moment of cornered desperation -

AURORA

- *She killed your parents, Derrick!*

DERRICK falters. Stares at her. Teeth bared, eyes crazed... But alarmed and caught off guard by the outburst.



AURORA (CONT'D)

How do you think you escaped so easily all those years ago? She *killed* them, Derrick, right in their own beds - !

MARTY

- Don't listen to them! They're trying to manipulate you, brother, don't listen to such hideous lies!

But Derrick just gazes at the girls, mind REELING...

MARTY (CONT'D)

Kill them at once! I thought one may serve as your queen, but I see that these whores don't know how *privileged* they are! Kill them both and *give me back those keys* - !

A long moment as Derrick stares at the girls, conflicted. Aurora offers out a hand within his easy grasp, the key SHAKING in her trembling, muddy palm...

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Is this the life your parents would have wanted for you...?

Derrick, affected, reaches out with his TAIL. The finger-like APPENDAGES delicately pluck the KEY RING from Aurora's hand and she steps back, nodding confidently...

She nears the ELECTRICAL PANELLING with the LIGHT SWITCH - rests a hand upon it while lifting a finger to her lips to beckon silence from Derrick - and TURNS IT OFF.

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - MOMENTS LATER

MARTY balks as the pit goes DARK and VERY QUIET. She peers down, quickly growing antsy. The RAIN ON THE BARN ROOF is loud enough to mask what sounds like KEYS JINGLING BELOW...

MARTY

Derrick? Answer me at once, or you shall not see her, ever again - !

A long moment. Silence below, save the clang of SHIFTING CHAINS... And then, soaring out of the dark and just missing Marty's face, a LARGE METAL OBJECT FLIES UP FROM THE PIT.

Marty reels to watch it spin through the air and come CRASHING DOWN at the foot of the tiny ANIMAL CAGE...

In which DOTTI is locked up, half-dead, her WINGS A BURNT MESS WITH MOST OF THE FLESH HORRIBLY BURNT AWAY, leaving just the SKELETAL NUBS of her once beautiful wings...

The object SPINS like a hubcap for a moment before coming to a rest at the foot of the cage. DERRICK'S UNLOCKED COLLAR.

Marty, realizing this, makes the greatest "Oh, fuck" face in cinematic history as she slowly turns toward the pit... JUST IN TIME TO SEE DERRICK'S CLAW GRAB HOLD OF THE LEDGE!

She DASHES for the LEVERS to swiftly close the TRAPDOOR!

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - SAME

DERRICK, one powerful forearm holding the edge of the TRAPDOOR, offers the other downward to lift one of the twins. AURORA pushes GABRIELLE, who climbs onto Derrick's huge arm.

With all his might, he tries to SWING HER up to the ledge, but it's an awkward maneuver he can't quite manage - And to their horror, the TRAPDOOR BEGINS INCHING SHUT!

Startled, Derrick loses his grip on GABRIELLE! She FALLS into the mud as he GRABS hold of the TRAPDOOR - And PUSHES WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH, causing it to BUCKLE and SPUTTER!

The winch mechanism resists at first, but quickly loses the battle! The girls stare upward, huddling close as they watch Derrick give their only hope at escape his absolute all!

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - SAME

MARTY backs away, panicking. She pulls another LEVER and the TRAPDOOR GROANS, beginning to win its battle with Derrick...

Behind her, severely mutilated DOTTI's face drifts up and, through bleary eyes, sees DERRICK, hears his exacerbated CRIES...

... And she weakly RAPS ON THE CAGE with her knuckles. One, twice, thrice. HER LITTLE CODE.

DERRICK'S EYES BULGE and, with a TORTURED GROAN of WOOD and METAL, the TRAP DOOR BUCKLES and SNAPS, SENDING PARTS FLYING EVERYWHERE INTO THE BARN!

MARTY DUCKS to avoid SPEWING MACHINERY, barely avoiding decapitation as a massive GEAR flies past!

It collides with and SHATTERS Marty's LANTERN, SPLASHING Kerosine and SPEWING FLAMES EVERYWHERE!

Marty crawls toward Dotti's cage; the girl continues KNOCKING with increasing force, and all a panicked Marty can think to do is pull the DUSTY TARP OVER IT.

DERRICK ROARS as the TRAPDOOR SLIDES away, and Marty reaches for the only weapon in sight - DOTTI'S WOOD-CARVING KNIFE.

MEANWHILE

AURORA is hoisted into the barn, and then GABRIELLE; DERRICK follows laboriously and looks around with wild, disbelieving eyes after so many years locked away underground.

FIRE has begun crawling up a WALL of the barn, consuming it with increasing veracity...

Derrick takes in the SKELETONS in the corner, a flicker of painful memories, and then hears Dotti's KNOCKING AGAIN.

His eyes fall on MARTY, who still sits on the floor, gaping at him; one hand hidden, the CAGE COVERED with a TARP behind her. ROARING, DERRICK lunges forward as Marty SCREAMS!

He stops before her, gritting FANGS, face SHOVED ANGRILY IN HERS as the growing FLAMES simmers in his huge eyes!

Marty touches his face - not with genuine compassion as Gabrielle did but a forced, fearful kind...

AURORA and GABRIELLE huddle, trying to edge around him as the FIRE GROWS, but Derrick's MASSIVE BODY blocks their escape!

MARTY

How I've longed to touch you... But  
I've had to protect you from the  
world, from evils like these girls.

Derrick regards them from the corner of one eye, smoldering.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Everything's alright now...

He calms a little, until there's another KNOCK AND SHAKE in the cage behind Marty... And as Derrick's lifts his head, it exposes the soft flesh of his throat -

MARTY (CONT'D)

*I'm sorry, brother - !*

MARTY SWIPES THE CARVING KNIFE THROUGH THE AIR WITH ALL HER MIGHT, SLASHING DERRICK'S THROAT! HE CAREENS BACK, SMASHING INTO THE BURNING WORK TABLE! EMBERS PLUME EVERYWHERE!

MARTY SCAMPERS to escape, huffing and puffing as she dashes for the night! She's almost vaulted herself to freedom when -

- DERRICK'S TAIL WRAPS AROUND HER ANKLE, PULLING HER BACK INTO THE BURNING BARN!

DERRICK, BLEEDING OUT and clutching one massive hand to his THROAT, pulls himself toward the PIT with his other arm as MARTY is dragged behind him, unable to free herself!

She reaches for the TWINS as she passes their huddled forms -

MARTY (CONT'D)

*Help me - !*

- But instead AURORA JUMPS CLEAR OVER HER and rushes to help DOTTI, throwing the TARP off the cage, eyes taking in the depravity reaped upon her...

On the far wall the FIRE HAS SPREAD UP TO THE RAFTERS! CURLING BLACK SMOKE QUICKLY FILLS THE HIGH CEILING!

AT THE PIT

Using what little strength remains, Derrick LIFTS MARTY IN FRONT OF HIS FACE, UPSIDE DOWN, DANGLING HER ABOVE THE PIT...

A moment of eye contact between the two of them, woman and beast, decades' worth of tortured memories swirling beneath their depraved eyes... AND DERRICK DROPS HER into his -

LAIR

- Where Marty THUDS to the packed floor! She's on her feet in an instant, adrenaline skyrocketing as she looks up to see GABRIELLE SILHOUETTED at DERRICK'S side.

SCREECHING SOUNDS snap her head downward, where the YOUNGLINGS approach, appearing territorial without their father present - more MENACING than we've seen them before...

Marty BALKS as DERRICK BARKS a series of GRUNTS at them. *TALKING TO THEM.* The Younglings look at her and BARE THEIR MONSTROUS JAWS.

They may not physically resemble Derrick - but their CONCENTRIC ROWS OF DAGGER-LIKE TEETH sure do. Marty backs away as the Younglings ready themselves to pounce...

MARTY (CONT'D)

(shaky, panicked)  
We are... We are kin, young ones... We share blood, I'm your godmother -

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

- *They don't understand you, Marty!*

Marty looks up, eyes flooding with confused TERROR.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

- Derrick can't speak any longer,  
and you never made the time to  
teach them our own tongue - they're  
not worthy of your love, remember?

Marty releases a doomed, cathartic breath -

MARTY

... *Clever bitch* ...

- And with an AFFIRMING BARK from DERRICK, THE YOUNGLINGS LAUNCH THEMSELVES at MARTY, KNOCKING HER OVER! She SCREAMS as they quickly SUBDUE and begin EATING HER ALIVE!

INT. DILAPIDATED BARN - CONTINUOUS

GABRIELLE glares into the pit as MARTY'S SHRIEKING SCREAMS echo up to her. A gleeful tremor shakes her body even as she looks away in disgust...

... And a final GURGLING CRY cuts off abruptly down below as the tortured saga of Marty Lowell comes to a violent end.

AT DOTTI'S CAGE

AURORA hopelessly tries to rend open the cage as DEVOURING FLAMES CONTINUE to move CLOSER.

DERRICK, weak from blood loss, pulls himself toward the cage. Aurora clears out of his way and, with the last of his strength, DERRICK BENDS THE THIN STEEL BARS like MATCHSTICKS.

The twins step back, momentarily forgetting the FLAMES around them as DERRICK pulls DOTTI free, holding her adoringly...

He studies her RUINED WINGS that Marty reduced to CRISPS, her life draining before his eyes...

As THUNDER RUMBLES in the night, DERRICK REARS BACK and releases the MOST UNEARTHLY WAILING WE'VE EVER HEARD! A cry of adulation, despair, many things all at once...

He lowers his head, glancing at the TWINS through the thickening SMOKE - a look of appreciation, expressed in a vague nod - and then he sweeps toward the pit...

... And in the process, allows the girls safe passage to the OPEN BARN DOORS and into the safety of the night beyond.

Pulled from their stupor as BURNING RAFTER crumble about them, GABRIELLE tugs at AURORA's arm, yelling at her to flee (UNHEARD); Aurora can only stare after Derrick and Dotti...

She watches as DERRICK'S TAIL DISAPPEARS into the PIT, his massive CLAW pulling the TRAPDOOR CLOSED BEHIND HIM to seal the fate of he and his offspring...

Only then, as a section of BURNING CEILING COLLAPSES onto the pit, does AURORA allow GABRIELLE to pull her into the night.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAIR - MOMENTS LATER

DOTTI's eyes drift open. She stares up into the face of her father - huge, monstrous, eyes full of love. She reaches a tiny hand into his own.

The YOUNGLINGS, awash in MARTY'S BLOOD and VISCERA, crowd close, taking in the sight of their big sister for the first time ever. The salamandrine one LICKS HER FACE.

It's a LOVING FAMILY REUNION as DERRICK holds his children close, adoringly, totally rapt and enamored...

And as SMOKE fills the space and the BULBS FLICKER, the inferno above soon to collapse into this subterranean space -

- Dotti beams radiantly at the attention, at the loving touch of her *real* family, eyes chocked with tears of fulfillment...

And then the lights FLICKER OUT for the final time.

EXT. DILAPIDATED BARN - LATER

The TWINS watch wordlessly, eyes emotional as the BARN IS ENTIRELY DEVOURED BY FLAMES and CRASHES INWARD upon itself.

Gabrielle has managed to cling to Miriam's DOLL, which hangs absentmindedly from one hand... And as a column of flames TOWER into the sky, the girls lock their free hands together.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY DAWN

We're CLOSE on the sleeping, dirty face of MIRIAM. She sniffs at the air, wincing. Opens her eyes.

PULLING BACK, we see that she sleeps in a makeshift shelter amidst open land. This is her miserable, nomadic life now.

She sniffs again, brow furrowing. Rising and stepping out of the shelter, she scans the horizon -

- And SEES, downwind of her, a huge, PLUMING FIRE sitting against the grey sky. From the direction of MARTY'S FARM...

EXT. DILAPIDATED BARN - LATER THAT DAY

Little more than SMOLDERING RUBBLE that plumes into the grey sky. The fire didn't spare much. MIRIAM, SHOTGUN drawn, eyes the destruction. The FOREST silent, earth MUDDY from rain.

She takes her fill of the ruins, when a chance flick of the eye downward avails something of interest in the MUD.

FOOTPRINTS. TWO SETS. BARE FEET moving away from the barn and down the FOOT PATH. Miriam stares after them, gaze softening.

MOMENTS LATER

MIRIAM HURRIES AFTER THE PRINTS, trying not to let them fall from sight. They soon trace clear of the FOREST and into OPEN, EMPTY NORTHWARD LAND beyond.

On such an OVERCAST day it's impossible to tell if the girl's fabled MOUNTAINS lie just beyond this fog or not.

Miriam takes a moment to assess the terrain - but with nowhere else to go, her eyes narrow... And off she goes.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE / RIVER - LATER THAT MORNING

The TWINS, half-dead, stalk drearily along a fast-moving RIVER. The enveloping FOG makes their journey heedless...

... Until Gabrielle's eyes float toward the horizon. She straightening, Aurora following her line of sight...

And the twins gaze in reverence as just a few miles hence - THE MOUNTAINS REAR FROM THE FOG. As glorious this close as Gabrielle's illustrations. TOWERING, MAGNIFICENT.

Exhilarated, they RUN, an end to their quest beckoning!

LATER THAT DAY

Following the RIVER as it winds through the land, the GIRLS' journey has brought them to an INCREASINGLY-FORESTED AREA.

The mountains must be close now, but we can't see them for the oppressively low CLOUDS that once again threaten rain.

WIND RIPS at the girls' hunched forms, slowing their progress. AURORA leads, determined. GABRIELLE trails behind.

It's getting DARK FAST and with no shelter or means of making fire, a doomed silence holds over them...

<p>GABRIELLE</p> <p>Aurora! I don't feel... I'm not well... Please, we need shelter -</p>	<p>AURORA</p> <p>- There will be shelter in the mountains! Not much further!</p>
---	--

Gabrielle, unconvinced, slows to a stop. Wavers... And then COLLAPSES. Aurora turns and rushes to her.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

I think... We ought to go...

AURORA

Don't you say it, Gabby. We're close now. So close...

She takes Gabrielle's hands into hers, trying to warm her even as she shivers terribly herself.

GABRIELLE

Our warm bed... I can feel my sheets now... Mother holding us...

AURORA

We're dead to her.

GABRIELLE

No. She'll embrace us in our return. We must go back...

Seemingly DELIRIOUS, she climbs onto her hands and knees, ready to crawl home. Aurora, frustrated, sweeps her sister up, who STRUGGLES in her grasp...

<p style="text-align: center;">GABRIELLE (CONT'D)</p> <p>No no home! Wanna go wanna go home!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AURORA</p> <p>Shut up. You'll thank me later for -</p>
--	---

But Gabrielle PUNCHES and KICKS and SCRATCHES until AURORA DROPS HER, and falls herself... In the process, Gabrielle drops MIRIAM'S DOLL, which falls away to her total oblivion.

THUNDER RUMBLES as the girls stare, mistrustful.

AURORA (CONT'D)

We've come this far.

GABRIELLE

Marty was right. You do ruin everything...

Aurora balks, deeply hurt off this.



GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(laughing, humorless)

You were always so meek. Think you can lead us? Think you have what it takes? You'd be dead by now if it weren't for me. I'm going home - with or without you.

She rises. Studies Aurora with scathing eyes, then turns and leaves. Aurora just stares after her.

AURORA

Our promise, Gabby...

But Gabrielle can't hear her and soon DISAPPEARS from view.

MOMENTS LATER

GABRIELLE, dozens of yards away in the failing light, marches blithely the way she came, mumbling bitterly to herself...

Then suddenly stopping short with a dreadful GASP. A FIGURE strides before her, MERE YARDS AWAY with their BACK TURNED.

ROBED, HOODED. A LANTERN held high one hand and a SHOTGUN under the other arm. *Clearly searching for something.*

We recognize this as MIRIAM. Gabrielle, unable to see her face, does not.

Overcome with a forbode, she turns and runs back the way she came and RUNS. Thinking she heard something, MIRIAM TURNS in kind, just missing Gabrielle's fleeing form...

EXT. SLOPING FORESTED HILL - MOMENTS LATER

AURORA uses a WALKING STICK to aid her trek. More TREES loom, and DARKNESS with them. She grows desperately weak and cold, her eyes bleary. She's about to keel over when suddenly -

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

*Aurora!*

Turning weakly, Aurora straightens to she see GABRIELLE dashing through the woods toward her. She reaches her, breathing heavily through parched lips.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

A man... With a gun... Looks like a tracker. Think he's looking for us.

The girls shudder as THUNDER RUMBLES here and in the -

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - SAME

MIRIAM's made her way to the onset of the wooded region where the girls had their argument. LANTERN raised, the world around her deep shades of BLUE. Nothing of interest to see...

Studying the ground before her with each meticulous step, Miriam stops with a sudden GASP. Eyes welling. She kneels.

A shaky hand lifts Aurora's DROPPED DOLL - her very own handiwork - the breath taken from Miriam's lungs as its familiarity and unexpectedness overwhelms her...

She trembles, taking the deepest breath she can muster.

MIRIAM

*AURORA! GABRIELLE - !!!*

EXT. WOODED AREA - SAME

SPRINTING through darkening trees, the GIRLS slam to a HALT as her VOICE reaches them, utterly disbelieving...

AURORA

(sickly)

*No. It can't be...*

NEARBY

MIRIAM, stammering madly to herself, throws herself into the TREELINE, running and searching, calling out AGAIN -

THE GIRLS

- Hear this, certain this time that they recognize her voice. Aurora, about to faint from fatigue, just shakes her head...

An ecstatic GABRIELLE couldn't care less what she has to say and turns toward the source of Miriam's VOICE, bewitched!

AURORA (CONT'D)

*Gabby. I think... I don't...*

AURORA (CONT'D)

*Mother! MOTHER, HERE - !*

NEARBY

Hearing this, MIRIAM cries out, eyes bugging! She lunges and stumbles forward as fast as she can, dropping her pack!

BACK TO SCENE

An overwhelmed, tearful GABRIELLE just brims with child-like joy and need as her mother draws near in the murky light, not far now, surely entering view any moment and, and -

She turns back to AURORA, face just beaming, and - Her smiles freezes. Then disappears.

AURORA'S FACE is... Wrong. SWELLED. AND SUDDENLY, with a SICKENING INTERNAL CRUNCH OF BONES, IT ABRUPTLY DISTENDS OUTWARD TO FORM A HIDEOUS SNOUT.

AURORA'S EYES DISAPPEAR ALTOGETHER, SUCKED INTO HER SKULL, and as she lifts her TREMBLING HANDS to her plighted head, those too EXPLODE OUTWARD INTO WEBBED CLAWS...

It's literally JUST LIKE THE FUCKING CARTOON SAID. NO FANFARE, NO BUILD-UP. IT'S JUST SUDDENLY, APPALLINGLY HAPPENING BEFORE OUR EYES. AURORA TURNS.

And Gabrielle can only SCREAM HER LUNGS OUT.

NEARBY

MIRIAM hears GABRIELLE'S SHRIEK. Freezes... And then REDOUBLES HER SPEED FORWARD...

BACK TO SCENE

We're close on GABRIELLE in the murky blue light as her wide eyes just stare, face CRANING HIGHER as Aurora Turns.

The sound of CRUNCHING BONE and STRETCHING FLESH and TENDONS is AUDIBLE even over the raging WINDS.

Gabrielle, shell-shocked, backs away from a TOWERING SHADOW as her sister releases an unearthly moan, a sound both HUMAN and BEASTIAL at the same time...

And as MIRIAM'S LANTERN bobs into view behind Gabrielle, we REVEAL AURORA'S TURNED FORM:

She rises on stalky legs, replete with WEBBED FEET. Huge ARMS cover her FACE, dropping away as we take in her hew VISAGE:

Somehow evoking a PREHISTORIC AMPHIBIAN, she bears watery EYES and an enormous MOUTH distending across a wide SKULL.

HORNS crest her skull, jutting from a short MANE; DORSAL SPIKES sweep down her back and terminate in a SCALY TAIL.

She gazes in shock at her own CLAWS - fanning MONSTROSITIES sharp enough to turn nearby trees into pulp. She stares from those to GABRIELLE with a face like a despairing child...

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
Get away from it! Get back!

Gabrielle turns to see MIRIAM's devastated face take in her daughter's *Turned* form, the pious fervor of her lineage resurfaces immediately and fully!

She lifts her rifle, training it on Aurora!

GABRIELLE	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
- No, mother, no don't - !	- Get back get back get away! Get away from it, now - !

Gabrielle OBEYS out of fear, darting behind her mother, TERRIFIED beyond rational thought...

Even as AURORA REACHES OUT, WHIMPERING, Miriam shakes the RIFLE in her face, sending her reeling back on four clawed appendages. Realizing the opportunity, Miriam SHOVES the rifle into Gabrielle's hands! She balks, dropping it!

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
No no no, I can't I don't want -	- Yes, you must! You will redeem us, you must, you must! 'Tis our way! Kill this abomination - !

AURORA rears back and BELLOWS a cry of despair - not a threatening sound - but that doesn't matter because all the women see are ROWS AND ROWS OF FANGS inside her huge MOUTH!

Miriam shrieks unintelligible, pious nonsense, lifting the rifle; she and Gabrielle FIGHT OVER IT, waving it carelessly, accidentally firing a SHOT -

- Which tares into a TREE next to AURORA's HEAD, sending splinters raining into one eye! AURORA ROARS, stumbling!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
*Send it to hell - !*

AND THAT'S WHEN AURORA HAS HAD ENOUGH. She lifts her head, lips folding back into a GRIMACING SNARL, PUPILS NARROWING... And SHE LUNGES FOR MIRIAM.

Gabrielle CRIES OUT - BUT TOO LATE! Moving swiftly, Aurora wraps a huge CLAW around MIRIAM'S NECK, a claw so large it covers her HEAD, and HOISTS HER MOTHER OFF THE GROUND!

Gabrielle shrieks for Aurora to stop, but all we see is a predatory, fevered GAZE as she lifts Miriam TO HER FACE...

She TIGHTENS HER GRIP, causing Miriam to GASP and SPUTTER; if she so desired, she could crush her skull like an eggshell...

Miriam just stares into her *Turned* daughter's eyes, failing to recognize any humanity in them.

A long moment as it seems certain Aurora will kill her - And then GABRIELLE lifts the rifle, aiming it at Aurora!

Aurora sees this, unaffected, training her angry gaze on her sister. Gabrielle just holds the rifle level. Aurora begins to oblige, slowly lowering Miriam...

And as Gabrielle lowers the gun, letting her guard down...

AURORA ANGRILY THROWS MIRIAM AT A TREE. HARD. MIRIAM CRUMBLES and falls. Totally still as she lands. No screams, no flails.

Gabrielle's mouth drops. She rushes to Miriam's side as Aurora just watches, eyes DEVASTATED at her own actions. Panicking, not knowing what else to do, she BACKS AWAY...

Reaching her, GABRIELLE lifts MIRIAM's head. She's alive, even as a HUGE GASH on her forehead spells major HEAD TRAUMA.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 (softly, choking)  
*The Hunt. Must fulfill duty of our  
 people... Must...*

Gabrielle's eyes float over to AURORA, who stares at her for a moment, fear replacing remorse as Gabrielle rises, the GUN WRAPPED TIGHT IN HER FINGERS...

With a muted WHIMPER, AURORA turns and GALLOPS into the TREES. Gabrielle looks after her, eyes hardening.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
*Free her soul, Aurora...*

Gabrielle looks down. AURORA? Gabrielle falters, confused.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
 Always knew you'd be the *Blessed*  
 one, my love... That Gabrielle's  
 rebellious spirt would spell her  
 end. Now... Free her soul. End her  
 earthen misery, Aurora...

Gabrielle's bewildered gaze just holds Miriam's. Hoping her own mother will realize... *But she doesn't...* She just stares up, smiling weakly, UNABLE TO TELL HER OWN DAUGHTERS APART.

Gabrielle's too heartbroken to muster words. She lifts the LANTERN, her bloodshot eyes falling on its ENGRAVED CARVINGS.

Sexless HUMAN FORMS HUNT PAST *TURNED* BEASTS, ancient and faded with so many generations' use...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Go, Aurora. End her. Let us find  
peace... Together. Just us...

With that twist of the knife, Gabrielle stares at the woods.

As surely as she ran from it once before, she now rises and gives chase, gun raised, eyes seething with resentment, uncertainty and frustration - AND THE HUNT HESITANTLY BEGINS.

EXT. WOODED AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The RIVER at her side, GABRIELLE stalks the DEEP BLUE MURK. Every SOUND and CREAK and GURGLE of the WATER a threat.

She swings the gun this way, that. SINGS the *PSALM OF THE ENDLESS MEADOW* to herself, broken, voice many years younger as it cracks, eyes darting all around...

A LOW GROWL sends her spinning! She FIRES, wasting a perfectly good round on nothing but darkness! She whirls again, the GROWL CLOSERS YET! Eyes frantic, nerves fried!

She curses, her finger tight around the trigger as, unbeknownst to her, AURORA FOLLOWS CLOSE BEHIND, staying just clear of the lantern's throw...

Stalking low along the high grasses like a predatory cat...

Gabrielle stops. Eyes flicking. Pretending not to hear AURORA'S LOW GROWL behind her. She takes another step forward. Another, another...

It's suddenly DEATHLY QUIET behind her and she doesn't like that one bit. So she SPINS! But Aurora is not where she had anticipated - she completely miscalculated her position...

And as another GROWL sounds right in her ears, her brow furrows and she realizes the fatal tactical error she made.

Behind her, AURORA'S HUGE FORM REARS on hind legs, exposing her huge, soft UNDERBELLY to Gabrielle's back... And as she lifts a CLAW to SWIPE HER SISTER OFF HER FEET...

Gabrielle, smaller and more agile, makes a lightening fast decision to DUCK, SPIN - AND FIRE THE RIFLE.

Lucky for her, she did not miscalculate this time. She lands a GUT SHOT right into AURORA'S EXPOSED ABDOMEN! AURORA WAILS, drowning out even the THUNDER overhead!

The LANTERN falls, casting DEMENTED SHADOWS ACROSS THE TWO as GABRIELLE darts backward to assess the damage to her sister.

Aurora clutches her wound with a massive claw, eyes panicked. It doesn't appear to be FATAL but it isn't pretty, either, and the sight of her own BLOOD sets her SCATHING...

She looks up at Gabrielle, pupils narrowing, teeth bearing. Gabrielle lifts the rifle to fire once more, but THE GUN LODGES - the CEASELESS RAIN has done it no favors.

Realizing this with a faint whimpers, Gabrielle looks at AURORA... Who drops to ALL FOURS and LUMBERS TOWARD HER, malice filling her eyes, DROOL SPILLING from her JAWS!

Gabrielle falls to the ground, her legs giving out and refusing to cooperate as fear paralyzes her fully...

She just stammers and fidgets with the gun and curses and whimpers AND SOON AURORA IS ON TOP OF HER, REARING UP, THROWING HER FISTS INTO THE AIR with a THUNDEROUS ROAR -

SHE CLENCHES THEM, READY TO BRING DOWN WITH THE FULL WEIGHT OF HER BODY UPON GABRIELLE'S SKULL... And as Gabrielle SHRIEKS a FINAL DEATH SCREAM INTO THE UNFORGIVING NIGHT -

THUMP! The massive FISTS come SMASHING INTO THE EARTH on either side of Gabrielle's HEAD. Missing her skull, literally, but fractions of fractions of merest inches!

Gabrielle opens her eyes to find AURORA'S SIMMERING FACE gazing down at her, teeth bared, eyes alight with rage -

- But she hasn't killed her yet and with each passing moment it becomes more obvious she isn't going to, nor ever was...

And finally, weak from the GUT SHOT, AURORA blubbers a PAINED SOUND and draws her fists away from Gabrielle's, revealing deep INDENTS in the earth that quickly pool with RAIN.

The sisters stare at one another for a moment longer. Then Aurora lifts herself away from Gabrielle, limping painfully.

Gabrielle sits up, taking in her sister's dragonish form as she saunters over to the RIVER BANK and COLLAPSES with a heavy GROAN, the fight gone from her altogether.

For the longest moment, Gabrielle just stares, and then finally, legs shaking still, rises and picks up the RIFLE.

GABRIELLE'S POV: Approaching AURORA, who is sprawled out on her side, limbs splayed, her body probably a full TWENTY-FIVE FEET in length from snout to the tip of her tail.

Without the energy to even lift her head, Aurora's huge EYES just roll up toward Gabrielle, and then to the GUN... Which it seems she quietly beseeches her sister to LIFT...

Gabrielle does so, shaking it. An internal CLICK sounds. READY TO FIRE its single remaining round.

Aurora lifts a WEBBED CLAW toward the muzzle and drifts the weapon onto her own TEMPLE, beneath her majestic horns.

Aurora closes her eyes as Gabrielle considers. Eyes wet, lips quivering. And as LIGHTING FLASHES ACROSS THE SKY BEFORE HER -  
- THE MOUNTAINS ARE ILLUMINATED. JAGGED, VAULTED SILHOUETTES THAT TOWER INTO THE HEAVENS. A split-second impression of their coveted haven only they shall ever know...

Looking downward, Gabrielle lifts the gun. Aurora's COMPOUND EYELIDS slide shut, a deep EXHALE escaping her FOUR NOSTRILS as she prepares for death -

- BUT GABRIELLE LIFTS THE RIFLE, FIRING INTO THE SKY INSTEAD.

EXT. WOODED AREA - CONTINUOUS

MIRIAM's eyes float out into the night as she hears the GUNSHOT ring out, a tired, wary smile crossing her face...

BACK TO SCENE

AURORA's EYES roll open. She looks up to see GABRIELLE studying the ancestral family rifle: The carvings, the engravings from elders both recent and remote...

And straightening, defiant - the Gabrielle we've missed for so long now CASTS THE WEAPON INTO THE RIVER. It disappears unceremoniously into the dark waters, gone forever.

Aurora lifts her monstrous head, confused.

GABRIELLE  
(quietly)  
Mountains aren't far. River will  
take you there. You'll be safe...

NEARBY

MIRIAM uses her forearms to propel herself forward through MUD, ignoring her grievous WOUNDS as her fevered eyes move closer and closer to the distant LANTERN GLOW by the RIVER.

BACK TO SCENE

Kneeling, GABRIELLE speaks urgently to AURORA:



GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

She thinks I'm you, Aurora. I'll let her think I'm dead. You'll be safe out there, and...

Aurora studies her, incredulous, wincing as one CLAW floats down to her WOUNDED GUT. Gabrielle stammers, mind spinning.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

... One day, long after everyone's forgotten... Be it near or far... I'll come back to you. I promise.

Aurora considers her with pained, heartbroken eyes.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

But you have to go now. She needs to think you're... No more.

Aurora slowly sits up, groaning; the WOUND on her stomach perhaps worse than Gabrielle first realized, or perhaps not. Impossible to assess in the MUD and RAIN...

Gabrielle steps back, assessing Aurora's form. They study one another for a long moment, breathing heavy, half-dead. A loving, unspoken glance shared between them.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Near or far, dear sister. My word to you. I promise.

Finally, Aurora looking away and slinks into the RIVER. She takes to it easily, her streamlined, amphibious form tailored for swift-moving currents like this one.

Her head floats to the surface, EYES BOBBING ABOVE THE WATER. They stares at one another for a long moment - eyes wistful, sad, brimming - and then AURORA DISAPPEAR BENEATH THE WATER.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

I promise...

Gabrielle stands at the water, alone, NIGHT having fully taken hold. She turns to see MIRIAM pulling herself near the river, and rushes to her side.

MIRIAM

Aurora... Is it...?

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

It's dead, mom. Gabby's soul is free. The river took it's body away...

Miriam studies her. Hard to tell if there's a flicker of doubt or incredulousness in them... But soon she just pulls "Aurora" into an embrace, sighing deeply.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I know how hard it is... But your souls shall be reconciled in the eternal Hereafter.

(beat, quietly)

You're the love of my life, Aurora.  
My sun, my moon and my stars...

They hold one another in the rain, shivering, half-dead as the RIVER RAGES and the STORM DRONES. As we go to BLACK, these SOUNDS FADE AWAY, replaced by TOLLING BELLS...

EXT. COMMUNE OUTSKIRTS / MAIN GATES - EARLY AFTERNOON

A *Parting* ceremony commences. TOWNSFOLK gather on a brisk AUTUMN DAY. GABRIELLE - dressed elegantly, wounds healed and color returned to her cheeks - is the center of attention.

Nearby is MIRIAM, permanently WHEELCHAIR-BOUND, her more grievous injuries still a long way from recovered. She's pushed by Essy's mother, ROSEMARY, her de facto caregiver.

The HIGH PRIEST stand before Gabrielle ("AURORA") reading the conclusive boilerplate prompt of the *Parting* ceremony:

HIGH PRIEST

... You are hereby recognized by followers of the Gospel of Saint Darius as *Blessed*. You have fulfilled the Ritual of the *Hunt* and set free the soul of Gabrielle Eleanor Rosewood, who walks now amidst the spirits of the divine Hereafter. You may choose to live now in rank with the *Menagerie*, or carry out your days here with your kind. The choice is yours to make.

(beat)

What choose you, Sister Rosewood?

"Aurora" looks to Miriam, then the OPEN GATES, beyond which yawns endless flat terrain. She needn't a single moment to make up her mind - but pretends to, clearing her throat:

GABRIELLE

I choose... To remain in our midst.

GASPS and WHISPERS from the CROWD. An atypical choice. MIRIAM looks a little embarrassed. The High Priest leans forward:

HIGH PRIEST

This is a most unusual choice.

## GABRIELLE

Now that I've gotten a taste of what awaits our kind... I'd like to stay and help other *Blessed* prepare for what's to come. To give them - hope.

(re: Miriam)

I owe it to her. She loved Gabrielle, and I know she'd have stayed to care for mother had it been her standing here instead of me. This is what I choose, yes.

The High Priest nods slowly, then smiles.

## HIGH PRIEST

That is a very selfless gesture, Sister Rosewood. Despite its unusual nature... I shall grant your request to stay in our midst. Your experience amidst the *Menagerie* will be welcomed...

Gabrielle nods and smiles back at him, grateful.

## INT. AURORA AND GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Only ONE BED NOW. One SEAT at the MIRROR, one COMB on the SHELF. No trace there was ever a dual occupancy of any sort.

GABRIELLE studies her water-logged JOURNAL, largely RUINED in Miriam's journey. She flips to a BLANK PAGE, where there is still room for thoughts and musings as yet unwritten...

Gabrielle stares out the window at the TREE for a long moment and then, just like old times - proceeds to scribble her most private musings into the yellowed pages:

## GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

These words shall be for you, dear sister, and you alone. I'll record my every thought each day, until which time we might meet again.

## INT. AURORA'S BATHROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

HAIR falls to the floor as we hear SHEERS at work, soon REVEALING that Gabrielle has cut her hair into the same defiant BOB as Aurora did. It suits her well also.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

I think often about what life might be like for you. I'm sure it's been hard to adapt to a new environment, a new body, but you're strong. Stronger than I, most certainly...

She studies herself in the mirror as MIRIAM watches from her wheelchair in the hall, baffled by the behavior.

"Aurora" approaches and kisses her on the forehead - and even gives her a little "BOOP" on the nose before jauntily walking down the hall. Miriam just stares, bewildered.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - LATER THAT MORNING

YOUNG CHILDREN flood into the SCHOOL BUILDING. We see, on the distant part of the same hill, that the ARCHIVES BUILDING is in the process of being RE-BUILT from the ground up.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

THE FAMILIAR, OUTDATED CARTOON FLICKERS before the bright, eager eyes of CHILDREN. FOUR or FIVE years old, with nary a hint of fear to be found amidst their bright young eyes.

At the back of the classroom, GABRIELLE - now a TEACHER'S APPRENTICE - studies the children's eager faces.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

You'd be proud of me, dear sister. I plan to change things for the next generation, change how this whole thing works. I don't know how I'll do it yet, and it will be slow-going, as our ways are a rigid and dogmatic one, and will not sway so easily - But then, neither shall I.

She realizes she's being watched, and her eyes fall on ELDER JEFFERS nearby, his arms crossed. Somehow, in this unspoken exchange... We see in his eyes that... *He knows.*

Gabrielle's smile falters off of this... But Jeffers lifts a silencing finger to his mouth. *Secret's safe with me.*

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

So long as I've the beating heart and unbreakable spirit, I shall fight the good fight, always.

(MORE)

## GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And when that work is done, when  
I've changed things forever more -  
that is when I shall return to our  
mountains of the North...

Gabrielle returns the gesture, smiling... Until a FAMILIAR  
SOUND FILLS THE ROOM, rising above the cartoon. THE DREAD-  
INDUCING AIR-RAID SIREN. IT'S HAPPENING! AGAIN!

Almost on cue the DOOR flies open and in pours a hapless  
TOWNSMAN, gasping for breath as he spouts the terrible news:

## TOWNSMAN

It's Essy Foreman! Poor thing's  
*Turned* and I swear it's the  
biggest, ugliest damned thing I've  
*ever seen!* Keep these doors locked!

He bolts off to join other ARMED MEN behind him, and just  
like that, Gabrielle and Jeffers spring into action!

## ELDER JEFFERS

Stay calm, children! Under your  
desks, like we practiced - !

The children hurriedly obey as Jeffers kills the PROJECTOR,  
just as the CARTOON MONSTER makes its first appearance!

## GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

In many way, you and I are as  
unlike as can be, dear sister - in  
spirit, belief. I wasn't strong  
enough to make it to the mountains  
on my first try. But one day yet...

Gabrielle bolts the DOOR and fortifies the WINDOWS as Jeffers  
loads a PISTOL hidden in a secret compartment at his desk.

Arriving at the last unenforced WINDOW, Gabrielle stares  
outside for a long moment. People HURRY PAST in search of  
safe haven as a ROAR CARRIES LOUDLY across the land...

## GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)

... I don't know that you'll ever  
read these words, nor if you even  
lived to see the end of that  
fateful night...

Gabrielle's eyes float past these fleeing denizens, past even  
the FENCE itself and up to the ROLLING HILLS beyond...

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)  
... I don't know what the winds of  
fate have in store for us, but as  
Saint Darius said himself ...

Her emotional gaze falls on the SOARING MOUNTAINS as they  
rise through a PERMANENT FOG BANK. A beautiful sight meant  
for no gaze but her own...

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)  
... It's a matter of choosing to  
hold steadfast to your belief...  
And for my part, I shall hold to my  
conviction that we'll meet again in  
this life - and that things will be  
different for us then.

Her eyes fill not with longing as before - but hope;  
radiance, beguilement.

JEFFERS yells for her to bolt the window, but his voice seems  
to be a million miles away.

The SIREN BLARING outside and the *TURNED* BEAST ROARING NEAR,  
Gabrielle takes a final, wistful eyeful of the mountains -

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (V.O.)  
I choose to keep my promise to us.  
A start indeed...  
(beat)  
'Til then, dear sister.

- And with an exhilarated breath and wistful smile, Gabrielle  
SLAMS THE SHUTTERS CLOSED AND BRINGS US -

TO BLACK.